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# Research and Reports

## Evaluating Early Childhood Enrichment in Columbus

Understanding the present is the foundation for projecting the future. With this in mind, the Butler Center for Research and Economic Development, in continuation of its efforts to support the nonprofit community and promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the Columbus area, is pleased to present this report on early childhood development activities in the region.

Using data provided by Enrichment Services Program, Inc., the report analyzes the impact of early childhood development programs on K–12 educational preparedness. The findings indicate that early childhood enrichment enhances participants' performance across key developmental criteria, better preparing children for continued participation and long-term success within the education system.

Study highlights are attached, and the full report is available upon request from the Enrichment Services Program Inc.

[View Highlights from the Report](#)

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## 2026 Columbus Economy

We are delighted to share our recent publication, *Columbus Economy 2026*, which provides a concise, data-driven snapshot of the Columbus regional economy. The analysis highlights key trends in population, labor markets, industry composition, housing, consumer spending, and other indicators shaping the 2026 outlook, supporting informed planning, investment, and workforce development decisions.

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## Coca-Cola Space Science Center Impact Study

In continuation of our commitment to supporting the Columbus economy, the Butler Center for Research and Economic Development, collaborating with the Coca-Cola Space Science Center, conducted an economic impact study examining the Center's contributions to the regional economy and its broader relevance to U.S. national security.

We would like to thank Dr. Shawn Cruzen, Director of the Coca-Cola Space Science Center, for entrusting the Butler Center with this study and for his support and collaboration throughout the process.

Study highlights are attached, and the full report is available upon request from the CCSSC: [View Highlights from the Report](#)

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## New Research Examines Violent Crime and Congressional Behavior

A recent study accepted for publication in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* by Turner College economists Dr. Frank Mixon, Director of the Center for Economic Education, and Dr. Fady Mansour, Director of the Butler Center for Research and Economic Development, along with Dr. Steve Caudill of Auburn University, examines how violent crime influences legislative behavior in the U.S. House of Representatives. Analyzing roll-call vote-skipping during the 118th Congress (2023–2025), the study finds that Representatives from notably dangerous congressional districts—those with exceptionally high gun homicide rates—miss significantly fewer votes than their counterparts from safer districts. The findings suggest that violent crime shapes not only economic and social outcomes but may also affect how elected officials allocate their time and legislative effort.

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## **Magnet Manufacturing Economic Impact**

In September 2025, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp announced that JS Link America Inc. will establish a \$223 million rare-earth magnet manufacturing facility in Columbus, Georgia—bringing more than 520 new jobs and advancing the region’s role in high-tech manufacturing.

As the university’s hub for regional economic analysis, the Butler Center evaluates projected job growth, contributions, and the broader activity generated through supply-chain spending and household consumption. This report was developed to objectively evaluate the facility’s projected impact on the regional economy.

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## **The Butler Center for Research and Economic Development has released the Cybersecurity and IT in Georgia Study.**

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of Georgia’s cybersecurity workforce, labor market trends, and economic outlook. Using detailed data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Standard Occupational Classification codes, the study identifies ten key occupations tied to cybersecurity and information technology. Over the past five years, Georgia has outpaced national growth in nine of these ten fields and is projected to exceed U.S. growth across all ten in the next three years.

The findings highlight strong employer demand, rising wages, and a persistent shortage of qualified professionals—signaling both opportunity and urgency for workforce investment. With Georgia ranking among the nation’s lowest in cost of living and demonstrating sustained expansion in high-skill, high-wage technology jobs, the state is well-positioned to become a national hub for cybersecurity education and innovation. The study concludes that strategic investment in university-level cybersecurity programs will be critical to maintaining this momentum and ensuring long-term economic resilience.

[View Full Study](#)

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## **The Butler Center is Acknowledged in Georgia Tech’s Columbus Regional Housing Study**

The Butler Center has been acknowledged for its participation in the Columbus Regional Housing Study and Workforce Housing Needs Assessment, conducted for the United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley. The study spans eight Georgia and Alabama counties and highlights the region’s growing population, rising housing costs, and shortage of affordable “missing middle” housing. Findings emphasize the need for expanded workforce housing, neighborhood revitalization, and coordinated regional strategies to support sustainable growth and affordability across the Chattahoochee Valley.

[View Full Study](#)

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## From Barriers to Opportunities: A Data-Driven Review of the BETTER WORK Program in Columbus, GA (2025)

The Butler Center partnered with the Georgia Center for Opportunity to evaluate its BETTER WORK program in Columbus, providing survey analysis and outcome commentary on participant experiences. The evaluation found that the majority of respondents held positive views of the program—over three-quarters said they would recommend it to others, and nearly three-quarters agreed it benefited their personal and professional lives. Employment status emerged as the strongest predictor of satisfaction, underscoring the value of helping participants secure or maintain jobs. Household characteristics also played a role, with larger households and more dependents more likely to view the program favorably, suggesting its benefits extend beyond individual participants.

The analysis also identified persistent barriers—such as unresolved legal issues, poor debt management, housing instability, and limited access to childcare—that may limit the program’s long-term impact for some participants. Additionally, the negative association between perceived education levels and satisfaction indicates that participants who believe they already have sufficient skills may not find the offerings as valuable, highlighting a potential gap in matching services to participant needs.

Overall, the findings reinforce the importance of comprehensive support networks. Access to support groups, quality employment, and integrated services were all strongly linked to improved life outcomes. While the text-sm sample size limits broad generalization, the evaluation shows that BETTER WORK is making a meaningful difference for many participants—especially those facing multiple barriers—and points to opportunities to strengthen connections between job training, legal aid, housing assistance, and childcare to help participants achieve lasting economic self-sufficiency.

[View Full Report](#)

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## Columbus Economic Forecast (2025)

The Butler Center for Research and Economic Development has released the Columbus Economic Forecast 2025. The report provides an in-depth look at population trends, employment, wages, consumer health, and demographic shifts shaping the local economy. While the overall population has stabilized, declines among younger age groups and persistent labor market challenges remain areas of concern. The forecast also examines interest rate pressures, wage growth, and industry hiring needs, offering insight into both risks and opportunities for Columbus in the year ahead.

[View Full Report](#)

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## Economic Impact Analysis of Hosting the Kayak World Championship and Music Festival in Muscogee County (2024)

The Butler Center for Research & Economic Development at Columbus State University recently completed an economic impact analysis of hosting world-class kayak events and an accompanying music festival in Muscogee County. Drawing on data from government and private sources, the study measured how event spending and tourism would ripple through the local economy, estimating direct, indirect, and induced effects on jobs, income, and output. The Butler Center’s analysis revealed that hosting the Kayak Championship generated 23 jobs, contributed \$2.7 million in economic output, added \$1,081,000 in income, and resulted in \$167,000 in local, state, and federal tax revenue. Beyond quantifying the immediate financial benefits, the analysis highlights how bringing high-profile sporting and cultural events to the Chattahoochee River can stimulate local businesses, attract visitors, and generate new tax revenue—strengthening Muscogee County’s reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation and cultural experiences while supporting long-term community development.

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## Columbus Economic Outlook (2024)

The Butler Center for Research and Economic Development has published the Columbus Economic Outlook 2024–2025. The report highlights key trends shaping our community, including employment, demographics, labor force participation, wages, housing affordability, and poverty. It also provides projections on population and workforce dynamics, offering insights into both the challenges and opportunities facing Columbus in the years ahead.

[View Full Report](#)

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## The Economic Impact of the Art and Culture Industry in Columbus GA

The Butler Center has published a new study highlighting the economic impact of the Art and Culture industry in Columbus, GA. The study provides a comprehensive look at how this vital sector supports the local economy through employment, income generation, and economic output.

Our research examines four key components of the art and culture ecosystem:

- Art-related occupations in the region
- The School of Art at Columbus State University
- Local art organizations and institutions
- Tourism driven by cultural events and attractions

The study estimates that the Art and Culture industry in Columbus supports over 3,100 jobs, generates more than \$120 million in labor income, and contributes approximately \$519 million in total economic output.

These findings showcase the powerful role the creative sector plays in shaping the city's economic growth and cultural vitality.

[The Economic Impact of the Art and Culture Industry in Columbus GA Study](#)

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## Economic Impact Study of a New Pickleball Facility in Columbus GA: Construction, Operations, and Tourism Effects

In continuation of the Butler Center's mission to support economic growth in Columbus, a recent study—conducted in collaboration with the [Pickleball Association of Columbus, GA](#)—highlights the significant economic impact of the city's new pickleball facility.

The study finds that both the construction and ongoing operation of the facility will generate lasting benefits for the Columbus economy. The initial construction alone is expected to produce \$11.3 million in total economic output, \$5.4 million in value added (GDP), \$3 million in labor income, and support 63 jobs through direct, indirect, and induced effects. It will also generate \$986,000 in total tax revenue—of which \$142,000 will go to local government, \$170,000 to the state, and \$675,000 to the federal level—contributing to essential public services and infrastructure.

Once operational, the facility is projected to create an annual economic output of \$1.18 million, \$652,000 in value added, \$375,000 in labor income, and support 12 permanent jobs. This includes not only operational spending but also the influx of out-of-town visitors attending two major tournaments per year, each drawing 400 players and spectators—further fueling local businesses in hospitality, dining, and retail.

Annual tax contributions from operations and tourism are estimated at \$166,000, including \$46,000 in local taxes, \$36,000 in state taxes, and \$83,000 in federal taxes. These recurring revenues will continue to strengthen the public sector and community development.

Beyond its economic footprint, the facility is poised to enrich Columbus's social and cultural landscape. It promotes active lifestyles, enhances community engagement, and reinforces the city's appeal as a regional hub for recreational and competitive events. More than just a sports venue, the pickleball facility stands as a long-term economic catalyst—driving growth, attracting tourism, and enhancing quality of life for residents across the region.

[Read the full study.](#)

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## Columbus GA-AL MSA Online Job Ads Report

In July 2024, the Butler Center released a report highlighting notable growth in the Columbus, GA-AL job market. The study found that active online job ads for full-time positions rose by 37% from the previous year, significantly outpacing the 5.9% increase in part-time ads. Growth was observed across all education levels, with the largest year-over-year increase seen in job postings requiring doctoral degrees (up 49.2%). The number of newly posted full-time job ads also climbed steadily, rising from 1,308 in May to 1,868 in July 2024. These trends reflect strong employer demand and a broadening range of opportunities in the region's labor market.

[Columbus GA-AL MSA Online Job Ads Report](#)

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## Home Ownership Affordability in Columbus Hits New Low

In June 2024, the Butler Center reported that home ownership affordability in Columbus, GA reached its lowest level on record, with a payment-to-income ratio of 40.5%. The rising mortgage costs, driven by a 6.8% interest rate and a median monthly payment of \$2,145, have strained household budgets, while inflation continues to widen the gap between nominal and real GDP, reducing consumer purchasing power.

[Home Ownership Affordability in Columbus Hits New Low Report](#)

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## Awards and Occupations Gap Report

The findings of the recent report by the Butler Center for Research and Economic Development focused on employment trends in the Columbus area. Highlighting 10 significant occupational gaps, the report indicates the need for targeted strategies to address shortages in crucial sectors like software development, healthcare management, and business operations. Director Fady Mansour provides actionable recommendations, emphasizing the importance of tailored educational programs to bridge these disparities and promote workforce development in the region.

[Read more on Turner College of Business and Technology's Blog.](#)

[Awards and Occupations Gap Report](#)

## Programs Occupational Crosswalk

[Columbus State University Programs Occupational Crosswalk Documents](#)

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## Economic Impact of CSU Hosting NCAA Basketball Games on Columbus

A new analysis by the Butler Center for Research & Economic Development highlights the significant economic impact of Columbus State University hosting NCAA basketball games on the Columbus GA-AL economy. The study focused on tourism-related spending from visitors attending the event—such as lodging, dining, and local transportation—and found that the games generated \$237,584 in total economic output, supported 2.23 full-time equivalent jobs, added \$128,576

in value (GDP contribution), and produced \$72,889 in labor income. The event also generated \$32,887 in total tax revenue, including \$9,424 in local taxes, \$7,302 in state taxes, and \$16,161 in federal taxes. Beyond the immediate visitor spending, the analysis captured the indirect and induced effects that flow through supply chains and household spending, demonstrating how CSU's role as a host institution boosts the hospitality sector, strengthens text-sm businesses, and enhances Columbus's reputation as a destination for collegiate athletics and sports tourism.

[Contact us for the full report.](#)

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## **Economic Overview for Columbus Area**

This economic overview covers data of unemployment trends, unemployment rates, wage trends, cost of living Index Industry snapshot, occupation snapshot, industry clusters, education levels, GDP, of the Columbus GA-AL MSA area as of 2024.

[Economic Overview for Columbus Area](#)

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## **Educational Attainment Columbus GA-AL MSA**

This report covers the educational attainment of people aged 25-64 in the Columbus area and the U.S. as of 2024. The data shows that Columbus is highly comparable to Georgia and the U.S. in terms of the shrinking population with no high school diploma, high school diploma, and some colleges with no degree, while increasing the population holding associate and bachelor degrees. Educational Attainment

[Educational Attainment Columbus, GA Report](#)

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## **Strengthening Career and Technical Education**

This report takes a macroeconomic perspective of the industries and occupations that support the Columbus GA-AL MSA economy (2024). The purpose of this analysis is to help educators who want to move beyond compliance and use Perkins V to make a difference in students' education. Strengthening Career and Technical Education (Perkins V) Report

[Strengthening Career & Technical Education \(Perkins V\) Report](#)

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