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Journal



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The Alabama MUNICIPAL Journal

Official publication of the Alabama League of Municipalities

Fall 2022 • Volume 80, Issue 2

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On the Cover:

In September, the long-standing Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program officially became a program of the Alabama League of Municipalities, an ACE partner for many years. Established in 2002, ACE was formed specifically to aid select communities with populations of 2,000 to 18,000 to strengthen economic success. (Cover art/logo design by Karl Franklin, Graphic Designer, ALM.)

ALM Strives to be Your Resource

Gregory D. Cochran • Executive Director

As I write this message, children have started back to school, and many adults are back to juggling their personal, professional and social schedules around the new academic calendar. Many of the League staff members are no different than your municipal staff members – they’re getting children up, dressed and fed then dropped off at school before that first bell rings in the day. From there they make their way to the office to accomplish great tasks on behalf of your constituents. Following the workday, they’re back home to assist with homework, class projects, extracurricular activities and to prepare dinner. This speaks loudly to the unwavering commitment of our staffs in fulfilling the essential needs of municipal government.

Each and every day Alabama’s municipalities deliver essential, quality-of-life services to their citizens and businesses. Services such as reliable clean drinking water, removal of wastewater and trash, providing safe communities with law enforcement and first responders, and creation and maintenance of parks and recreational areas ... just to name a few. And these services did not stop during the past two years as we struggled with the realities and complexities of a pandemic.

During the pandemic, Congress provided federal funding to citizens and private and public entities in an attempt to soften the impact on families, businesses and communities. Now comes the harder work, how do we utilize these one-time resources in a way that most benefits our citizens and communities?

By now, cities and towns have received their second tranche of funding from the American Rescue Plan (ARPA). The League staff has worked diligently with the congressional delegation, Governor Ivey and legislative leadership to provide municipal officials timely updates and resources as it pertains to the ARPA.



ALM Advocacy Team pictured with Congressman Carl during Alabama’s First Congressional District luncheon

I encourage you to visit our website, www.almonline.org, for more information.

Before we look ahead to the remainder of 2022, I would like to thank the six congressional members, their staff, lawmakers, League members and strategic partners for joining us at our congressional luncheons that were held across the state in August. Overall, we had more than 300 attendees gather to network with their local, state and federal representatives! I appreciate our Advocacy Team coordinating these luncheons – they were an outstanding networking opportunity for all who attended.

I would also like to commend our Legal Team: Lori Lein, Rob Johnston, Kaleb Beck and Sharon Carr, as well as Cindy Price, League Corporate Relations Manager, on five successful CMO Regional Training sessions held around the state this year. Combined, there were more than 200 municipal officials and personnel who attended these one-day trainings on fundamental topics in municipal government!

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Attendees gathered during Alabama’s Fourth Congressional District Luncheon in Guntersville to hear from Congressman Aderholt.



Leadership Perspective

Mayor Lawrence "Tony" Haygood, Jr. • Tuskegee • ALM President



Our League staff had a very busy spring and summer hosting full-day regional CMO training sessions and Loss Control seminars as well as congressional luncheons throughout the state. Then, as we made the transition into fall, the League's Legal team hosted its Fall Law Conference, which had a record attendance, and our organization welcomed a 20-year community program into the fold when Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) became part of the League's programming in September. You will learn much more about ACE in this issue of the *Journal* and I hope you will be as enthusiastic as I am about this exceptional opportunity for the League to expand programming to our smaller cities and towns. ACE has always had an excellent reputation for providing invaluable technical assistance, particularly through strategic planning and leadership development, to enhance the quality of life in communities that don't generally have access to the same resources as their larger counterparts. I applaud the League's efforts to embrace this program and to further strengthen local government in Alabama!

But that's not all! Fall is proving to be every bit as active as the Spring and Summer. Our Municipal Leadership Institute (MLI) is scheduled for November 8-10 and – even though we've held this conference for several years – it, too, is evolving and expanding. For the first time, we will gather en masse along our beautiful Gulf Coast at Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach. And this year we will celebrate graduates from *two* different League programs: the Certified Municipal Official program and the Economic Development Academy, which will recognize its inaugural graduating class. This year, MLI topics include: Outdoor Recreation: An Important Economic Development Opportunity for Cities and Towns; Rethinking Public Spaces; Public Art – An Economic Driver in Your Community; and Alabama's Regional Councils – Empowering Local Government through Regional Resources. In addition, the 2022 MLI will provide sessions on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Reserve Police Officers (What is the Risk?). An expanded Expo Hall will also be featured. I look forward to seeing you in November! ■



Councilmember Adam Bourne • Chickasaw • ALM Vice President

As we finish out this year and head into the holidays, I want to thank our League staff for their unwavering professionalism and dedication to the mission of our organization. We're all well aware of the advocacy the League provides and the excellent legal guidance offered through the Legal Department; however, there are *many* moving parts to the Alabama League of Municipalities – from meeting, event and trade show planning to educational programming to database maintenance and technology support to website development, social media platforms and publications to the maintenance and upkeep of our beautiful building ... not to mention the financial and logistical operations of our association. Compared to many of our sister Leagues, our staff is small; even so, the team is mighty and they never fail to work diligently on our behalf – in person and behind the scenes.

Over the past two years, they have developed and successfully implemented a completely new program, the Economic Development Academy (EDA), and have brought a seasoned program, the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE), on board. Both programs expand our already impressive package of value-added services, and I'm very grateful for this organization and the employees who make it so successful. I know you join me in thanking them for making us more efficient municipal officials and for helping us improve the quality of life in our communities!

Next year will bring many new opportunities and challenges. The Alabama Legislature begins a new quadriennium, and the 2023 Regular Session will convene on March 7th with a significant number of first-time lawmakers. Senator Richard Shelby, a stalwart Congressional leader for more than four decades and an undeniably powerful advocate for our state, will have retired and Alabama will begin a new and noticeably different era of representation in D.C. Therefore, we have even more reasons to be grateful for our excellent staff and an organization that understands what lies ahead and is ready to aid us in navigating a new political landscape while continuing to develop and expand the services and resources necessary for us to best serve our cities and towns. Because regardless of political dynamics or economic challenges, proactive municipal government will always be critical. ■

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To my League Family with Gratitude

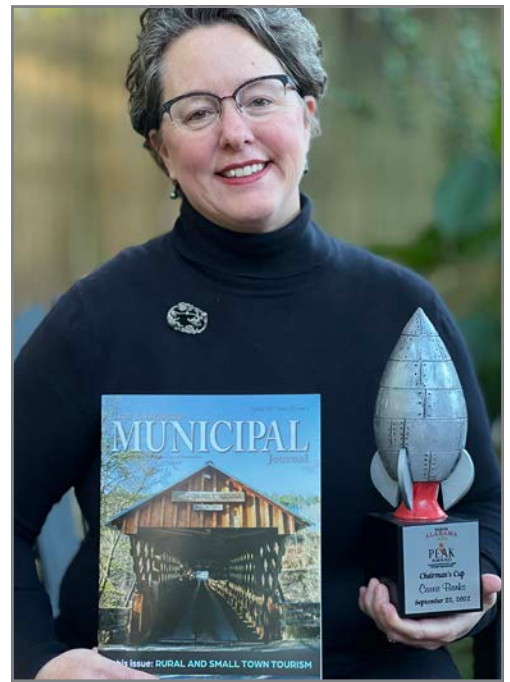
During the summer of 1997, a decade prior to the introduction of the original iPhone, I learned that the Alabama League of Municipalities was hiring for a public relations/publications position. This was when connecting to the Internet was generally done with a dial-up modem through Microsoft Internet Explorer, and less than 40 percent of households had a PC. I was 28 years old and didn't have an email address. The League was 62 years old and didn't have a website.

At that time, I was working for another statewide association in Montgomery. After learning what I could about the League through first-person research, I called Perry Roquemore (Executive Director from 1986-2011) and told him I'd like to make an appointment to discuss ALM's job opening. It never occurred to me to try a different approach and, thankfully, Perry was amenable to meeting with me. I'd graduated with my master's degree in Communications from the University of Alabama in 1992 and had been working in Montgomery since 1994 following a brief return to North Carolina, my home state, after graduation. So, with an advanced degree, five years of experience and the eagerness of youth, I met with Perry. A few weeks later, in August 1997, I began what ultimately became my professional calling for the next 25 years – serving as the League's Communications Director.

Working for a membership association is an interesting and challenging career path. No two days are the same. That's especially true when the members are cities and towns and the people you represent are elected officials and municipal personnel. It has, indeed, been my good fortune to work closely with *hundreds* of dedicated servant leaders in an effort to protect and preserve local government and to enhance the quality of life for Alabama's citizens. Every new project, program, publication, platform, legislative session and election cycle has been an opportunity, a challenge and a learning experience. I'm grateful for them all.

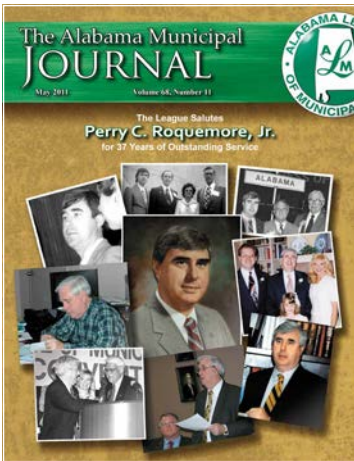
I was part of the team that put the Alabama League of Municipalities on the worldwide web when we launched our original website, www.alalm.org, in 1998. That domain changed to almonline.org in 2020 and we now operate five additional independent sites (for Loss Control, AMFund, MWCF, MIS and ACE). I was also involved in bringing the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC) in-house and creating the materials for the Loss Control Division, the Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation (AMFund), Municipal Intercept Services (MIS) and ALM's Economic Development Academy (EDA). I served for several years as the League's representative on the board of the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE), which began as a nonprofit in 2002 to provide technical assistance to communities with populations of 2,000 to 18,000, and I was integral in the transition process that transferred ACE into the League's family of programs this past September (featured in this issue of the *Journal*) where it will continue to work closely with our smaller cities and towns. Researching the League's unique and compelling history for our 75th Anniversary (2010) will always be a career standout, and I was deeply honored to represent Alabama's municipalities by serving on our state's Bicentennial Advisory Committee from 2014 through our Bicentennial in December 2019, as well as serving as the Co-Chair for the Alabama Bicentennial Commission's Local Activities Committee where \$900,000 in state grants was distributed to 261 local bicentennial committees representing every Alabama county and many of our cities and towns.

But perhaps my most recognizable League role is our many published resources (print and digital), particularly the *Alabama Municipal Journal*, which has been in continuous publication for more than eight decades and my responsibility for the past 25 years – everything from research and writing to editing, layout, deadlines and design. The *Journal* has taken me into cities and towns throughout our incredible state and allowed me to forge invaluable relationships and enduring friendships that have greatly contributed to who I am personally and professionally. From covering the state's worst tornado outbreak in 2011, to highlighting the important role of our municipal clerks, to interviewing state and federal lawmakers as well as featuring impressive projects, initiatives and leaders from small towns, downtowns and everywhere in between, it has truly been an honor and a privilege.



Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association presented Carrie with the Chairman's Cup PEAK award at their Annual Meeting in September for the Spring issue of the *Journal*, which focused on rural and small town tourism.





In the summer of 2010, the Communications Department grew from one person – me – to two when Perry hired the League’s first (and thus far only) graphic designer, Karl Franklin. For the past 12 years, I’ve had the good fortune to work alongside one of the most talented, conscientious, humble and kind people I’ve ever known. Together we’ve made the *Journal* one of the best League publications in the country. We’ve also worked closely with all of ALM’s *outstanding* staff in every League department to greatly enhance the brand of the League and its affiliate organizations as well as continually revise and expand member programs and services.

So here we are, 25 years and a few months later, at the point where I formally announce my retirement effective December 1, 2022. And what I want you to know more than anything is:

I am grateful.

I am blessed.

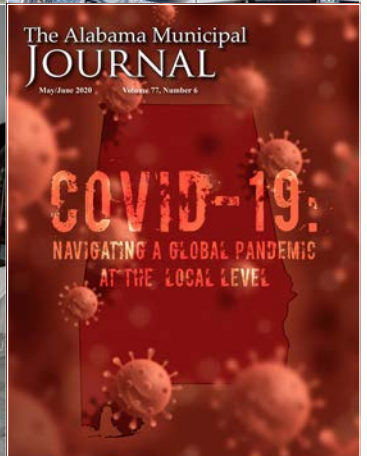
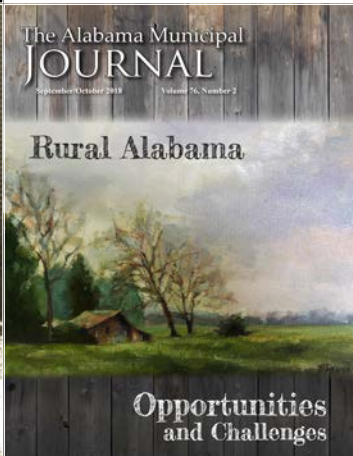
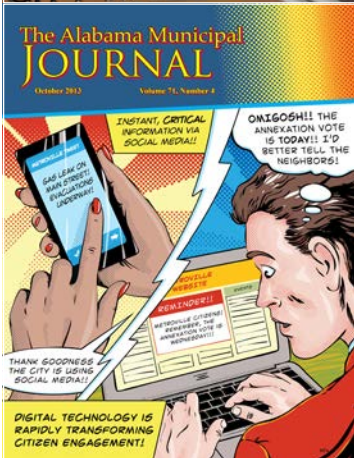
I could not have asked for a more wonderful professional home.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you, to learn from you and to grow into the person I am because of you.

Thank you for your encouragement, your guidance and your selfless leadership. My cup runneth over.

I know the Alabama League of Municipalities will continue to shine. Onward!

Carrie Banks





By Lori Lein, ALM General Counsel

Whose Decision Is It Anyway? The Mayor or the Council?

For those officials who have attended our training sessions on the Duties of the Mayor and Council, the following information will hopefully be familiar to you. Despite our repeated training on the issue, however, some of the most frequent questions we receive in the League Legal Department relate to the powers exercised by the mayor and council. Typically, these questions arise because of heated disputes and disagreements between the mayor and the council over who gets the final say over decisions involving hiring employees, spending money and entering into contracts.

This article will address these three areas and provide your municipality with guidance so that when these disputes arise, everyone involved has the same information and understanding of who gets to make the final decision.

Hiring Authority

Section 11-43-81, Code of Alabama 1975, states that the mayor has the power to appoint all officers whose appointment is not otherwise provided for by law. In *Scott v. Coachman*, 73 So.3d 607 (Ala. 2011), the Supreme Court of Alabama held that the mayor has the authority to hire most municipal employees. This overturned a long-standing interpretation that allowed the council to remove the mayor's power by ordinance. *Coachman* interpreted Section 11-43-81 of the Code, which provides that the mayor has the "power to appoint all officers whose appointment is not otherwise provided for by (state) law." Since at least 1957, the Attorney General had interpreted this phrase to mean that the council could pass an ordinance - a law - to assume the power to appoint employees and officers. *Coachman* overturned this interpretation and stated that unless a state statute authorized a different appointment method, the mayor had the power to appoint all officers and, presumably, employees. So to be clear, except in very rare circumstances, as discussed below, the council cannot remove the mayor's authority to appoint/hire employees by ordinance. To determine what those rare circumstances are, we must look to state law.

In cities having a population of more than 6,000, there shall be elected by the council, at its first regular meeting or as soon thereafter as practicable, a city treasurer and a city clerk, who shall hold office until the next general election and until their successors are elected and qualified, and such council may

elect an auditor, and any officers whose election is required by ordinance, and, except as otherwise provided, the council shall have authority to fix the terms of office, prescribe their duties and fix the salaries of the officers. Section 11-43-3, Code of Alabama 1975. (Emphasis added). This section specifically gives the council the authority in municipalities of over 6,000, to identify "officers" of the city by ordinance and provide for their election by ordinance.

In cities having a population of less than 6,000 and in towns, the council shall elect a clerk and fix the salary and term of office and may determine by ordinance the other officers of the city or town, their salary, the manner of their election and the terms of office. The clerk and such other officers elected by the council shall serve until their successor or successors are elected and qualified. Section 11-43-4, Code of Alabama 1975. (Emphasis added). While worded differently than §11-43-3, this section also gives the council, in municipalities of under 6,000 population, the authority to identify officers of the city by ordinance and to elect those officers or provide for another "manner of appointment" by ordinance. The council may provide for a tax assessor, tax collector, chief of police, and chief of the fire department and shall specifically prescribe their duties. The council shall designate the persons who shall administer oaths and issue warrants of arrest for violations of law and the ordinances of the city or town and the persons authorized to approve appearance bonds of persons arrested. This section identifies specific officers of a municipality and gives the council the authority to provide for these officers should it choose to do so by ordinance.

In combination with Section 11-43-3 and Section 11-43-4 of the Code of Alabama 1975, the council, in providing for these officers could, by ordinance, provide for their manner of appointment, including appointment by the council rather than the mayor. In addition to the above listed code sections, Section 12-14-30 of the Code of Alabama 1975, specifically gives the council the authority to appoint, by vote of a majority of its members, the judges of the municipal court. Also, Section 11-43-20 of the Code of Alabama 1975, authorizes the city council to provide for, by ordinance, a city manager. The council is authorized to establish a police force under the general supervision of a police chief. Section 11-43-55, Code of Alabama 1975.

continued page 45

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League Welcomes New Team Member Kaleb Beck

Kaleb joined the League's Legal Department as Associate Counsel in July and is responsible for advising municipal officials and employees from more than 450 member cities and towns, writing legal articles and addressing municipal officials, employees and attorneys on municipal matters. Prior to joining the League, Kaleb worked for a law firm in the private sector which primarily represented and provided legal advice to municipalities and municipal officials. During his time in the private sector, Kaleb conducted extensive legal research on municipal liability issues and developed a strong foundational knowledge regarding municipal issues. Additionally, Kaleb spent a semester interning for the Attorney General's Office Criminal Appeals Division which involved drafting appellate briefs on behalf of the State of Alabama.

Kaleb is originally from Smith Station, Alabama; however, he moved to Dadeville in the eighth grade where he would graduate high school. He earned his B.A. from Hamilton College in upstate New York in 2017 and his J.D. from Thomas Goode Jones Law School in Montgomery in 2021. Outside the office, Kaleb and his wife, Bailey, enjoy playing tennis, visiting new places, going to the movies, playing with their dogs Lucy and Bear and spending time with their families. ■



Director's Message ————— continued from page 4

Looking ahead to November, we hope to see you at the annual Municipal Leadership Institute, November 8-10 at the Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach. The Institute will start on Tuesday, November 8, with a special graduation ceremony recognizing municipal officials that have earned their Basic, Advanced and Emeritus Certified Municipal Official (CMO) designation and the inaugural Economic Development Academy (EDA) class. In addition to the graduation, we will have several other special recognitions, which include the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) Star Awards. Following the graduation ceremony, the League will host a reception honoring graduates and to welcome MLI attendees. On Wednesday and Thursday, attendees will have an opportunity to learn from national, regional and statewide experts regarding timely issues focused on enhancing the quality of life in their communities. Visit our website, www.almonline.org, for additional information.

Following MLI, we hope you'll make plans to join the League in Kansas City, MO, November 16-20 for the National League of Cities City Summit. The League will host an Alabama Caucus reception on Friday, November 18 for the Alabama delegation. To register, visit www.nlc.org.

Both of these conferences offer you the opportunity to network with peers from across the state and nation, and to take back the most up-to-date resources and tools to implement in your community. We look forward to seeing you in Orange Beach and Kansas City!

Lastly, as you will notice in this issue of the *Journal*, our



ALM's legal team with Mayor Mike Lockhart at a CMO Regional Training session this summer in Muscle Shoals.

association has adopted the ACE program. We look forward to maintaining the integrity of the current program and working with our communities and partners to enhance services offered through ACE.

We appreciate your commitment to building communities where businesses want to invest and people want to live, work, play and prosper. We strive to be one of your resources in attaining these goals.

Peace be with you. ■

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Local Infrastructure Hub Designed to Aid Small Cities

Clarence Anthony • CEO/Executive Director • NLC

Cities, towns and villages across America are already reaping the benefits of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, with many large cities already announcing projects that will help repair major roads, build new bridges in efforts to alleviate supply chain issues, and upgrade transit systems. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law offers communities a historic opportunity to kickstart innovative infrastructure projects using competitive grants, which cities can apply for. But it's critical that smaller communities – like many of those in Alabama – don't miss out on this unprecedented infrastructure opportunity because of their size alone.

As a former mayor of the small town of South Bay, FL, I know how frustrating it can be to know about federal resources for community projects, but not have the networks, capacity or expertise necessary to apply for or receive them. It's a challenge I confronted constantly as a local leader. And because of those resource constraints, I know that many smaller cities like mine might not even consider applying for federal grants in the first place, despite their availability.

The National League of Cities' new Local Infrastructure Hub, www.localinfrastructure.org, which launched this summer in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies, helps smaller communities address that exact challenge. Our Hub provides specialized training courses for small and mid-sized cities, to help them take advantage of some of the first grant programs available under the new law.

This means new opportunities for cities and towns, like expanding access to much-needed broadband and repairing long-broken sewer systems. It means improving railways, creating safer roads and remediating brownfield sites. And it means making those changes right here, in small communities across Alabama.

Cities like Tarrant, AL, which has experienced flooding so dramatic its highways have become impassable at points and cost millions of dollars in property damage, will be able to apply for technical support through the Hub to help the community apply for a grant to bolster its flood mitigation plans. Other towns, like Henagar, AL and Orrville, AL, will have opportunities to apply for support to improve fueling and electric charging infrastructure. Still other communities will be able to access resources for resilience grant applications, supporting projects for river stabilization in places like Selma and storm preparedness in Orange Beach.

NLC's Hub is expected to benefit around 2,000 small communities with populations under 150,000 over the next two years – many of which could be here in Alabama. Our initial support is focused on helping cities compile strong applications for five of the law's first federal grant programs, which represent \$4 billion in funding opportunities altogether.

Those initial programs include grant support in the areas of resilience, energy efficiency, flood mitigation, mobility and transportation and electric vehicle charging and fueling. But our support doesn't end there. Over the next two years, the Hub will offer at least 30 bootcamps corresponding with



CITIES STRONG TOGETHER

select grant programs in the law, covering topics including broadband, water and sewer systems, clean energy and so much more.

NLC is here to ensure you can access this money to implement the projects that you know will meet the unique needs of your communities. This is a new era for infrastructure – and this law offers a ripe opportunity to improve the ways we build our communities to last in the long run.

To learn more about the cities currently participating in the first phase of the program and explore future opportunities and programming that will be available through the Local Infrastructure Hub later this fall, visit www.localinfrastructure.org. Not only does this law present a historic opportunity for America's cities to reinvent their infrastructure – it's also a chance for *all* communities, large and small, to have a seat at the table. The federal government has laid the groundwork and now, it's on local leaders to partner with each other and organizations like NLC and the Alabama League of Municipalities to take advantage of these resources

Let's get to work together. ■



Clarence E. Anthony is the CEO and Executive Director of the National League of Cities, and previously served as the Mayor of South Bay, Florida.

Alabama Community College System Offers Free Rapid Training to Help Meet Municipal Workforce Challenges

Houston Blackwood • Workforce Director • ACCS Innovation Center

Businesses in Alabama of every size and across every industry report they are facing unprecedented challenges in finding enough skilled workers to fill open jobs. Scores of “Now Hiring” signs displayed in shop windows across the state back up this claim, and a labor force participation rate of 57 percent means thousands of able-bodied Alabamians have – for whatever reason – chosen not to participate in the workforce.

In short, Alabama has a lot of jobs, but not enough skilled workers to fill them.

This shortage of skilled workers hasn’t spared Alabama’s municipalities. Cities and towns find themselves facing the same staffing challenges afflicting the private sector, which can create difficulties in delivering basic services in some areas.

ACCS Credential Quick Training: Skills for Success

In direct response to the need for more skilled workers, the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) has brought together the state’s community colleges, business and industry and community partners to launch Skills for Success.

Skills for Success is the statewide, rapidly delivered workforce training program. The training offered through Skills for Success is industry-recognized, non-credit training that was developed for employers by employers. Those who partner with the ACCS can quickly upskill current employees and recruit prospective employees to create a qualified workforce pipeline that eliminates hours of on-the-job training.

With Skills for Success, Alabamians can get trained quickly – sometimes in as little as two weeks – with courses that start online and end on a community college campus or a worksite with in-person, hands-on training, and the awarding of an ACCS Credential.

The ACCS Credential signals to employers and institutions of higher education alike that the skills taught in the program have been mastered by the individual, who is now ready for employment or additional education. The ACCS Credential meets all the tenets of quality as defined by the National Skills Coalition, including the availability of a substantial number of employment opportunities for credential holders; partnerships with business and industry to develop the training courses; and evidence of employment outcomes of individuals after obtaining the credential. By developing this rapid training with Alabama’s business and industry groups, Skills for Success ensures the training and credentials are continually aligned with the jobs that employers say they need to fill right away.

“Every Alabamian deserves an opportunity to succeed in the state’s economy,” said ACCS Chancellor Jimmy H. Baker. “Someone doesn’t always need two years at a community college to attain the skills that make them viable for the labor

market, so we have found a way to expedite the training so we can rapidly move people into in-demand jobs.”

Training Offered at No Cost

Key to the success of the program is it is offered at *no cost* to participants or employers thanks to a \$10 million investment by the state, and proximity to a community college campus is not a limitation to receiving Skills for Success training. All courses require students to complete two parts – virtual instruction for theory and in-person labs with a certified instructor. The theory portion done virtually includes “how to” video tutorials featuring Alabama companies and workers, online lessons and tests on knowledge learned. The in-person labs simulate real work experience and test students for mastery of skills.



Each Skills for Success course is required to have direct input from relevant business and industry associations so the training is customized and always meets the real-time needs of Alabama’s employers.

Although it started just a few months ago, Skills for Success is already having a positive impact on filling in-demand jobs. Nearly 1,000 Alabamians have signed up for Skills for Success. In addition, a number of industry and community partners are already benefitting, including the state’s \$16 billion hospitality industry, the state’s 112,000-job trucking industry and several municipalities.

However, it is the personal impact on individuals and their families that is truly immeasurable. Kevin, for example, is 67 years old and worked as a dishwasher at a restaurant. After quickly completing the

Skills for Success Food and Beverage Industry training at Coastal Alabama Community College, Kevin was promoted to a position in front-line food preparation where he will earn an estimated \$10,000 more per year. Similarly, 50-year-old Synthoria completed this training and will earn an estimated \$15,600 per year in higher wages in her new position.



Courses Include Commercial Driver’s Licenses, Facilities Maintenance, Heavy Equipment Operators

In addition to rapid training courses for the Food and Beverage Industry, other Skills for Success trainings include Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) Class A, Class B, Class B Passenger and Class B School Bus and Heavy Equipment Operator training for Skid Steers. Among the municipalities that have partnered with the Innovation Center on some of these trainings are the cities of Dothan, Oneonta, Foley, Fairhope, Troy and Northport. Additionally, 71 school systems across the state have hired school bus drivers who completed Skills for Success training.

Courses that will be available soon include CDL Hazardous Materials endorsement and Dump Truck operation, Facilities Maintenance, Fiber Optic Technician and Heavy Equipment Operator training for Bulldozer and Roller. Many other trainings that will be of particular interest to municipalities, including for water and wastewater technicians, are in development.

Partnerships with Alabama’s businesses, industries and municipalities to deliver Skills for Success rapid training will help sustain Alabama’s economic vitality, build the workforce we need and change our state for the better. Learn more by visiting the ACCS Innovation Center website at www.innovation.accs.edu. ■

Training for: Commercial Driver’s Licenses (Class A, Class B, Class B Passenger and Class B School Bus); Facilities Maintenance; Heavy Equipment Operator – Skid Steers, Bulldozer, Roller, Dump Truck; Fiber Optic Technician; Water and Wastewater Technicians

Houston Blackwood, Workforce Director of the ACCS Innovation Center, is coordinating with the state’s community colleges to offer the Skills for Success training courses. Municipalities interested in enrolling employees in Skills for Success can contact him at Houston.Blackwood@accs.edu. Prior to joining the Innovation Center, Houston served as the Director of Workforce Solutions at Calhoun Community College. He has also spent time as a teacher, assistant principal and principal in K-12 in the state. Houston earned a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Master of Arts in Education from the University of North Alabama. He has an Education Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from The University of Alabama.



COACH SAFELY ACT Requires Safety and Injury Recognition Training for Volunteer Youth Coaches

Alabama Recreation and Parks Association
and CoachSafely Champion Safety in Youth Sports

Coach Safely Act

In 2018, Alabama became the first state to pass a law requiring annual safety and injury recognition training for youth coaches. The Coach Safely Act (AL Code 2018-496) requires every volunteer coach of children ages 14 and younger in the state that coaches a “high-risk youth athletics activity where there is a likelihood that a child or youth can sustain a serious injury,” to complete a no-cost course in youth sports injury recognition and prevention.



Representative Elect Curtis Travis speaks to parents and youth coaches at an ARPA Community Huddle.

Gov. Kay Ivey said she signed the act because youth sports injuries “have become far too common” and “trained coaches can reduce or prevent the impact of an injury.” It is designed to address public concerns about sports injuries for youth athletes ages 14 and younger, a population that is estimated to be seven times larger than older athletes.

The Coach Safely Act is administered by the Alabama Department of Public Health, which approves the courses that meet the law’s standards. The CoachSafely Foundation’s medical advisory board, led by Dr. James R. Andrews, developed its online training course, which exceeds the law’s comprehensive mandate by covering a variety of subjects from concussions to overuse injuries to mental health.

The Course

The course is comprehensive, policy-driven, evidence-based and peer-reviewed. It includes nine subject areas: Coaching the Youth Athlete, Mental Health, Communicable and Infectious Diseases, Concussions, Overuse Injuries, Conditions Unique to Youth Athletes, Sudden Cardiac Arrest, Emergencies in Athletics and Emergency Preparedness. Training is offered online or in-person and takes approximately 90 minutes to complete. The course may be completed at the user’s pace.

CoachSafely Partners with ARPA

In 2019, CoachSafely partnered with the Alabama Recreation and Parks Foundation (ARPF) to deliver the course to youth coaches through the Alabama Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA), which has 93 agency and community members in cities and towns throughout the state.

“The ARPA/CoachSafely Initiative is providing, at no cost to the coach or community, education and training that enables our coaches to facilitate safe environments for our kids,” said Natalie Norman, ARPA’s executive director. “This is not a static endeavor but a growing service, helping our coaches to help our kids. Keeping the youth of Alabama safer and healthier through athletic activity – it’s a win-win. The ARPA is proud to be the boots on the ground in this effort.”

The Greenville Parks and Recreation Department joined in this statewide initiative, encouraged by Mayor Dexter McLendon, who wanted his city to be an early adopter of CoachSafely training. He explained his motivation in requiring all parks and recreation coaches and staffers to complete the course before their seasons begin in simple but powerful terms:

“I want to keep the kids safe.” The mayor also added “through our membership with the Alabama Recreation and Parks

Association, there is no cost to the volunteer coaches and to the city of Greenville for the CoachSafely training. We feel that by being in compliance with the law, we are managing risk associated with youth sports, through our parks and recreation department.”



Greene County, Alabama, was the most recent area to provide the CoachSafely training to volunteer coaches. This “Community Huddle” was sponsored by Greene County Parks and Recreation, Robert Young Community Center and ARPA. More than 40 youth coaches, volunteers and parents attended this important training as they began their sports season.

“This program will help keep kids safe and teaches our coaches and parents how to recognize and help prevent injuries with our youth sports programs,” said Frank Smith, director of Greene County Parks and Recreation. Smith reached out to the ARPA CoachSafely Initiative to host a Community Huddle after reading the story of Ronni Vinson from Greenville, Alabama.

“CoachSafely helped save my daughter’s life.”

Those are the sentiments shared by Jessica Vinson whose six-year-old daughter suffered a head injury playing outside at their home. The Vinson’s have twin daughters who participate in youth sports through the Greenville Parks and Recreation department. As volunteers, they were required to complete the CoachSafely training course in injury recognition and prevention provided for all volunteer coaches in the youth sports programs in Greenville. Just two weeks after completing the course, the Vinson’s needed the knowledge they gained to respond to their daughters at-home injury.



ARPA Director Natalie Norman with Ronni Vinson and family.

While playing outside one afternoon at their home, Ronni hit her head swinging from a vine. At first, it seemed like a typical childhood mishap, so the family headed to Montgomery as originally planned to eat and run an errand. After dinner, Ronni’s pain increased and while her dad ran into Walmart for some over-the-counter medicine, she vomited. Jessica remembered her CoachSafely concussion training and decided she needed to go to the hospital.

A CT scan revealed bleeding on Ronni’s brain. The gravity of the situation dictated a Critical Care Transport to Children’s of Alabama. When they arrived at Children’s, Dr. Rocque described Ronni’s “acute epidural hematoma, a very large blood clot under very high pressure,” between her brain’s outer membrane and her skull. Immediate surgery was necessary to remove the clot. Dr. Rocque and his team did exactly that, but the initial fear for Ronni’s life shifted into a concern for the quality of her life moving forward. Jessica remembers hearing, right after the surgery, “I don’t know if she’ll be the same kid as before.” Two days after the scariest night of her young life, Ronni went home “the same little girl,” Jessica said, “maybe a bit more wild.”

Jessica Vinson can’t help but replay the chain of events, from signing up her girls for softball to volunteering to coach to taking the CoachSafely training, that preceded the family’s nightmare with a happy ending. “I’m just so thankful we took that course,” she said. “It was so fresh in my mind. God prepared me for what was to come.”

Today, Ronni is thriving and looking forward to participating in gymnastics and softball this season.

Schedule Training and/or Learn More About CoachSafely and ARPA

To learn more about CoachSafely, the CoachSafely Act (AL Code 2018-496), the ARPA CoachSafely Initiative or to inquire about training for volunteer coaches in your parks and recreation programs, contact Steve Brown at sbrown@coachsafely.org or visit www.CoachSafely.org The law requires every volunteer coach of children ages 14 and younger in the state that coaches a “high-risk youth athletics activity where there is a likelihood that a child or youth can sustain a serious injury,” to complete this course in youth sports injury recognition and prevention. The course is provided at no cost through the ARPA. For more information about the Alabama Recreation and Parks Association and its benefits to the communities in which they serve, visit www.arpaonline.org. ■



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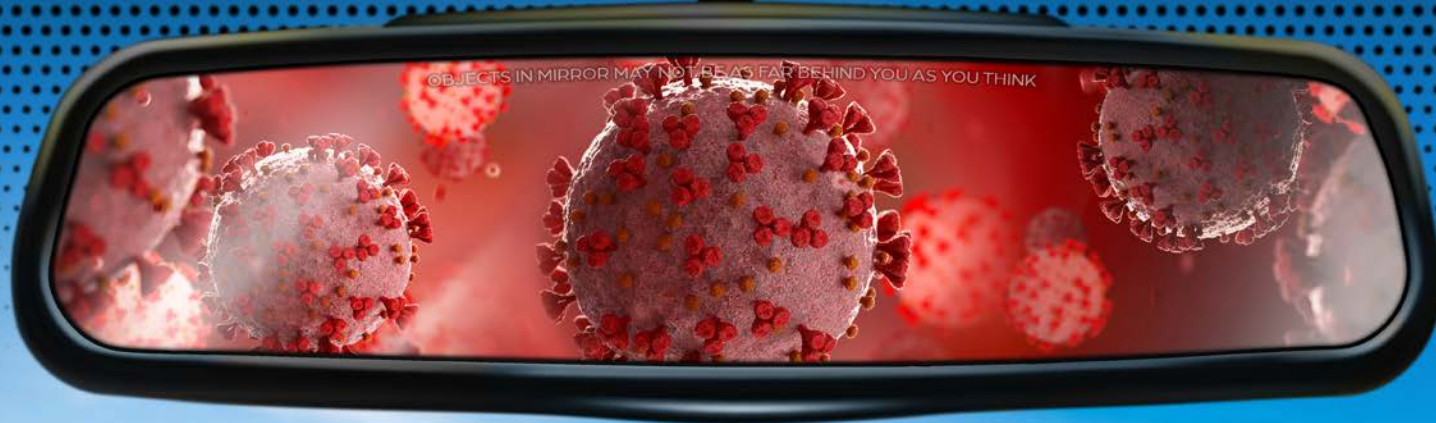
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Alabama Department of Public Health COVID Pandemic Response Moving Forward



By Carolyn Bern • Director of Governmental Affairs and Community Relations • ADPH

Alabama's first case of COVID-19 occurred on March 13, 2020. Four days later, protective orders were issued as additional cases of COVID-19 were confirmed. Alabama prepared for the possibility of dealing with an unparalleled novel virus that was quickly spreading. Healthcare providers, infectious disease scientists, community leaders and governmental officials at all levels struggled to get information about this new coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2.

With little known about the virus and no treatments or vaccines yet available, federal, state and local officials worked to deal with overwhelmed hospitals and healthcare systems. Many unprecedented challenges had to be faced as states were competing for scarce resources such as necessary personal protective equipment and ventilators.

COVID-19 spared no one – every demographic was affected. Special efforts were made to reach those people at the highest risk of death and hospitalization, which included the elderly, chronically ill, immunosuppressed and vulnerable populations. A research study later found Alabama ranked ninth best in the nation in providing vaccine accessibility to people in high-risk marginalized communities.

Sadly, COVID-19 has been the cause of death of more than 20,000 Alabamians. With increased mortality, there were more deaths than births in the years 2020 and 2021 in Alabama for the first time in the history of the state.

Shifting from Emergency Response to Disease Management

Today, over two and one-half years later, the COVID-19 landscape looks much different. Vaccines help protect against severe illness, hospitalization and death for infants 6 months through people of advanced age. Adequate amounts of testing supplies, personal protective equipment and effective treatments are available. Immunity in Alabama's population has increased considerably, both from vaccination and from past infection.

However, as we return to normal pre-COVID-19 routines, the virus mutates and vaccine effectiveness wanes in time. More than 2,000 cases of COVID-19 are reported each day in the state and there have been 3,500 deaths attributed to COVID-19 so far in 2022. Keeping up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations is key, especially now that new bivalent boosters which combat Omicron subvariants are available.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet behind us, Alabama is shifting from emergency response to a disease management strategy that minimizes daily disruptions to our lives. The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) encourages citizens to speak with a trusted healthcare provider as they consider their own risks and determine their own actions to protect themselves and their families from serious illness. ADPH, in partnership with local, state and federal entities, continues to work on operational preparedness and recovery; improve processes that prepare our state to react nimbly to ongoing changes in the COVID-19 virus and response; improve data to inform decision-making; and prioritize resources for the highest risk communities/individuals.

ADPH looks forward to our continued work with the Alabama League of Municipalities and its members as we promote, protect and improve Alabama's health. ■

Carolyn Bern, MPA, currently serves as ADPH's Director of Governmental Affairs and Community Relations. She has worked in underserved and rural communities for 25+ years. Focus areas included public health issues, economic impacts of healthcare access in rural communities, rural recruitment and retention of healthcare providers and the importance of early learning, quality childcare and language acquisition in children Birth to Five. Currently, Carolyn is focused on reinvigorating ADPH's Office of Health Equity.

What's Your Community's Water Vision?

Laura Bell • Project Manager • Auburn University Water Resources Center

A kayaker enjoying Chewacla State Park

When many of us think about our community water resources, we think about our drinking water, but there is so much more to community water. Stormwater, flooding, development and infrastructure are all related to fishing, swimming and clean drinking water. Alabama deserves cities and towns that are healthy, economically vibrant and safe, but that all depends on well-managed water resources.

Ask yourself: “What will my community’s water look like 30 years from now? What needs to happen now to create the community we envision?” Here are a few points to consider as you consider your local water future:

What are your community’s water assets?

Alabama boasts more surface water area per square mile of territory (3.4 percent) than Tennessee (2.2 percent), Mississippi (3.1 percent) and Georgia (3.2 percent) according to the National Hydrography Dataset¹. Alabama has plentiful water resources; identifying and prioritizing your community’s water resources can be both economically and ecologically rewarding. According to a report compiled by Montgomery-based Southeast Research Inc., hunting and fishing had a \$3.2 billion impact on Alabama’s economy in 2018². The Alabama Bass Tournament Series in 2017 exceeded \$3.1 million dollars in economic impact for Alabama’s communities, with \$185 million generated in state and local taxes.

The value of Alabama’s rivers includes their ability to grow the state’s economy while promoting recreation and tourism. Working with the Alabama Innovation Commission in 2021, the Stanford University Hoover Institution released a report of recommendations for growing an innovation economy in Alabama³. One of the report’s chapters explores how Alabama’s communities can leverage their natural water resources into recreation and tourism opportunities to attract a stronger workforce.

“Whitewater rafting, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, backpacking, bird-watching ... and the like tend to draw high-skill workers and entrepreneurs and then reveal to them the other benefits that will come when they relocate, such as lower housing costs, shorter commutes and friendlier communities,” the report said. Alabama’s rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands are home to more species of aquatic and semiaquatic animals than any other state in the country, which is a major boon to kayakers, canoeists, fishers and birdwatchers.

Here’s the catch: water recreation relies on clean healthy waterways and public access points. We must protect our waterways to protect our hunting and fishing assets and give people access to those resources. Defining your community’s water resources as an asset requires considering potential concerns and opportunities for improvement and putting plans in place to protect and enhance those resources.

It’s your community’s water – how will you plan for it?

When it comes to water, we need to think beyond political boundaries and start to consider how water flows in our watersheds and why. A watershed is a naturally defined area of land that determines how precipitation collects and drains water into a common basin (river, lake or stream). Everyone lives in a watershed. As water flows over our rooftops, roads, fields and driveways, it collects in our rivers and streams. Water also seeps into the ground to refill the aquifers that can be used to supply well water. Each watershed is different depending on the land activities, geography and climate of the watershed.

Many water quality concerns are best prioritized, addressed and solved at the watershed level rather than at the individual waterbody level. Groups interested in maintaining and improving water quality at a watershed scale develop strategic Watershed Management Plans. For example, the Choctawhatchee, Pea and Yellow Rivers Watershed Plan contains information for state and local leaders on current demographics, land use, water quantity and quality, conservation, management strategies, and more.

Watershed planning is important because it specifically addresses water problems in your community and watershed by assessing sources of pollution and prioritizing restoration and protection strategies. Once a plan is in place, communities are better able to pursue grant funding for water-related projects since they have already identified concerns, potential projects, and partners.

Water is worthy of funding. Is your community ready?

Having a plan for how to use and protect your water will allow you to capitalize on funding opportunities. Funding sources like the Clean Water and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs can be used for nature-based water solutions, green infrastructure, nonpoint source pollution mitigation, water conservation/reuse and agricultural runoff projects. Additionally, the recent Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will invest billions of dollars in rural communities across the country for safe roads and bridges, modern wastewater systems, clean drinking water and more. For example, the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program, a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) program, will distribute funds to support communities undertaking hazard mitigation projects to reduce risks from disasters and other natural hazards. The Geographic Program includes funding for communities close to the Gulf of Mexico to help make on-the-ground improvements for clean and safe water, protected and restored habitats, and more.

Even if your community doesn't have a written watershed management plan, communities can still identify priorities and best management practices to put in place when funding sources become available.

Get the community involved.

Communities that are given opportunities to get involved in cleaning their waterways are more likely to do so in the future. Two simple ways to do that are through creek cleanups and local volunteer water monitoring. There are many programs like Keep Alabama Beautiful, People Against a Littered State (PALS) and other nonprofits that provide free litter pickup supplies. Organizing a stream cleanup is a great way to bring the community together in both recognizing and improving their water resources⁴. There may be water-oriented organizations already in your region. Examples include The Friends of Lake Martin, the Friends of Pinchgut Creek near Trussville, and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, all of which host community engagement and outreach events that help improve local waterways. Alabama Water Watch is a statewide citizen science water monitoring program that offers water monitoring certifications so locals can keep track of water quality.

There are no easy and fast solutions when it comes to water. It is never too soon to begin to develop a vision for your community's water resources. There are organizations across the state that can begin to answer your questions. The Alabama Stormwater Association can help answer stormwater questions for communities. Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committees, NRCS, and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System can assist with other community water questions.

The Auburn University Water Resources Center provides educational outreach programs related to water. Alabama Watershed Stewards provides educational outreach and on-the-ground projects that encourage the adoption of water management strategies. The Alabama Private Well Program provides resources for private well owners on how to test their drinking water. Alabama Water Watch provides training on citizen science water monitoring opportunities. To learn more about these resources, visit the Auburn Water Resources Center website at [aes.auburn.edu/wrc](https://www.aes.auburn.edu/wrc).

Remember, it is never too early to start planning for your community's water future. ■

Endnotes

¹National Hydrography Dataset (2022) United States Geological Survey. <https://www.usgs.gov/national-hydrography/national-hydrography-dataset>

²Washington, D. (2019) Study: Hunting, fishing had \$3.2 billion impact on Alabama in 2018. Alabama News Center. <https://alabamaneewscenter.com/2019/11/20/study-hunting-fishing-had-3-2-billion-impact-on-alabama-in-2018/>

³Innovative Alabama: A Report by the Hoover Institution.(2021). Stanford University. <https://www.hoover.org/research/innovative-alabama>

⁴Lawhon, J. et.al (2021) Planning and Conducting a Litter Cleanup. Alabama Cooperative Extension System. <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/fish-water/planning-and-conducting-a-litter-cleanup/>



By addressing socio-ecological challenges from a human centered design approach, Laura Bell, Project Manager with the Auburn University Water Resources Center (AUWRC), strives to improve environmental conservation efforts through civic ecology, design and systems thinking. Laura joined the AUWRC team in 2018 and has also served as adjunct faculty for Environmental Design at Auburn University. She holds a B.A. from the University of Virginia in Cultural Anthropology with a minor in Urban and Environmental Planning and a M.S. from Cornell University's Department of Design and Environmental Analysis. Her work includes applying for and developing multi-year grant projects to engage local communities in improving watershed planning, implementing best management practices and developing educational programs. Projects have included: Alabama Watershed Stewards, Pepperell Branch Watershed Management Planning, Moores Creek Stream Restoration and the Alabama Private Well Program.



Creating Jobs. Keeping Character.

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Tanya Maloney • Field Service Specialist • Main Street Alabama

So just what is this dream we're trying to make work?

Partnering with the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) Program

If you look at a map of ACE communities and lay it on top of a map of Main Street Alabama Communities, you will find many of our communities overlap. ACE has been working with communities for 20 years, so oftentimes, our networks overlap. Such is the case in my hometown, Heflin.

In 2005, Heflin, like many of our small communities at one time or another, had a lot of will but no way forward. There was no Chamber of Commerce, no leadership development program, no comprehensive plan and no real grasp of how to get started. A progressive mayor and a group of motivated citizens sought help through the Alabama Communities of Excellence program and our city was designated in 2007. Working with ACE, the City of Heflin was given a strategic plan that included recommendations on utilizing community assets to the full potential. One such asset is Heflin's historic downtown. The ACE program laid the foundation that the city needed to start creating a quality of life that would entice those of us who left for college and careers in "greener" pastures, like myself, to move back home, raise families and be a part of a community that provided opportunities for growth. Soon, that foundational work led to Heflin tackling more pointed issues like industrial and economic development. In 2016, invigorated by a desire to bring life back to downtown, Heflin sought out help again, but this time from Main Street Alabama. Heflin was designated a Main Street Alabama community in 2016 and has seen significant improvements and growth in its downtown while at the same time continuing to keep the values of ACE at the center of development throughout the entire community.

Cleburne County Courthouse, Heflin, AL





The ACE Team in Ozark, AL. From left to right – Mayor Mark Blankenship; Mary Shell, Captain, Alabama Communities of Excellence; Paige Thomas, Alabama Historical Commission; Mallory Herring, Alabama Power, Matt Leavell, University of Alabama Center for Economic Development; Tanya Maloney, Main Street Alabama; Holle Smith, ODCEDC Economic Developer; and Mary Jackson, Co-Captain, Alabama League of Municipalities.

So back to that Dream the Main Street team is working on ...

An ACE community is defined as one that: fosters growth and prosperity by focusing on its distinctive assets and resources, establishes a vision based on the community’s unique values, concerns and priorities, engages a broad base of community stakeholders to develop and implement short-term and long-range plans to achieve that vision and strives to meet defined ideas that embrace leadership, planning, economic development and quality of life issues such as education, healthcare and public safety.

As the Field Service Specialist with Main Street Alabama, a lot of my time is spent traveling to communities that want to begin revitalizing their downtown. These are known as our Network Communities. (For more information on Network Communities, visit www.mainstreetalabama.org.) Before we can tackle the issues of our downtown districts, a community is in a much better position for success if they have a grasp of what ACE has defined as “excellence”.

It is for this reason Main Street is proud to be a partner with ACE. In 2021, ACE announced four new cities had been accepted into the program. Ozark, a Main Street Alabama Network Community, was one of them, and because downtown redevelopment was identified as one of their priorities, Main Street was happy to serve on their assessment team.

Main Street Alabama also enjoys a partnership with Your Town Alabama and DesignAlabama. Partnering with community organizations such as these will remain a priority, and Main Street Alabama is excited for the future of the ACE organization. We look forward to being a part of the team that continues to make the dreams of Alabama communities become a reality. ■



Tanya Maloney joined Main Street Alabama as Field Services Specialist with a variety of experience in the field of economic development and government relations. After graduating from the University of Georgia with a degree in political science, Tanya had a distinguished career for 10 years in Washington D.C. on and off Capitol Hill where she focused her efforts helping communities, universities and non-profit organizations navigate through federal policy and funding opportunities. In 2015, Tanya began serving in the role of Economic Developer for both the City of Heflin and Cleburne County. In a short five years, working with an amazing team of volunteers, Tanya oversaw the designation of the City of Heflin as a Main Street City; the private investment of over \$40 million dollars; and the creation of more than 270 jobs throughout the community. With Main Street Alabama, Tanya helps communities begin to navigate the journey of downtown development as well as helping more seasoned communities with their efforts in creating downtown economic vitality.



Alabama Department of Archives and History

New Website Offers Many Resources for Local Government Officials

Georgia Ann Hudson • Communications Coordinator • ADAH

A new resource for local governments, public libraries, educators and the general public became available in August with the launch of a new website by the Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH). Perhaps best known as a destination for fourth-grade field trips to Montgomery, the ADAH is a multi-faceted agency with a statewide mission in the areas of government records management, K-12 history and civics education, historical research and the promotion of state and local history.

Creation of the new site, www.archives.alabama.gov, was a five-year project in conjunction with the state's Office of Information Technology. Development involved the consolidation of multiple legacy databases and the creation of custom tools to serve the ADAH's diverse audiences.

"In reality, we built a half-dozen websites under a single umbrella," said ADAH director Steve Murray. "Each section is designed to meet the needs of a stakeholder group so they can find the information they need, when they need it."

Resources for Local Government Officials

Municipal officials will benefit from a large suite of resources available under the "Manage Records" tab. These include Records Disposition Authorities (RDAs) that provide guidance on the management of records held by cities and related entities such as fire departments, law enforcement agencies, public libraries, museums and more. Each RDA is provided as a PDF file as well as in Microsoft Word to facilitate adaptation of the guide into a working document unique for each municipality.

Also available are forms and sample reports for the records destruction notices required of all local governments and sample deposit agreements for municipalities wishing to place permanent records in the custody of a historical society, library or university archives. Additionally, the Manage Records section provides information on disaster planning and recovery involving records and a list of disaster recovery vendors for addressing water, mold and fire damage. Contact information for ADAH records management staff is also provided and can be used to submit questions or to request training on records issues.

Resources for Public Libraries

Many local libraries provide genealogical reference services and have unique resources on community and family history. For questions that cannot be answered with local resources, the new website provides a central location for helping patrons identify what is available at the State Archives.

On the “Research” tab, databases provide information on holdings including newspapers, maps, military service records, church records and microfilmed county records. The catalog is a guide to government records and private manuscript collections searchable by creator and key words. Digitized historical materials including photographs, maps and textual materials are available in Digital Collections. The Electronic Records link provides access to recent, born-digital records created by state agencies.

Also available are research guides on topics such as military service and legislation. FAQs can help researchers get started on particular types of research projects, and guidance is provided on how to plan a research visit to the State Archives or to request research by staff for a small fee.

Resources for K-12 Educators

The “Teach & Learn” tab brings together a variety of resources for educators and students. One of the most significant new features of the site is the Alabama History Hub, a one-stop resource for finding primary sources, lesson plans and classroom activities curated by ADAH staff. The database offers a variety of customizable filters that allow educators to search by time period, grade level, course of study standards and more. Also under Teach & Learn is information about guided field-trip tours and how to make reservations. Available to all K-12 schools, but especially useful to those unable to travel to Montgomery, are virtual field trip opportunities and the Archives’ traveling backpack program.

Teachers and principals interested in professional development opportunities for educators will want to explore the page for Alabama History Institutes – immersive workshops that take place at museums, historic sites and parks. These peer-led programs promote the use of primary sources in the classroom, develop content mastery, and help educators identify community resources useful for teaching social studies.

Announcements of upcoming public programs and new exhibitions are regularly added to the site’s homepage at www.archives.alabama.gov, where visitors will also find a link to the online museum store featuring Alabama books, artists and handmade products. ■



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RESEARCH

Explore Our Collections

Search our catalog and databases to learn about the collections at ADAH, and browse our digital records for selected items are available online.



Catalog

Information about the archival and print materials at ADAH, such as collection descriptions and finding aids.



Digital Collections

Digitized materials from the ADAH collections, such as photographs, manuscripts, maps, posters, and films.



Electronic Records Collections

Archival records created electronically and stored in ADAH's digital preservation system.



[County Records on Microfilm Database](#)



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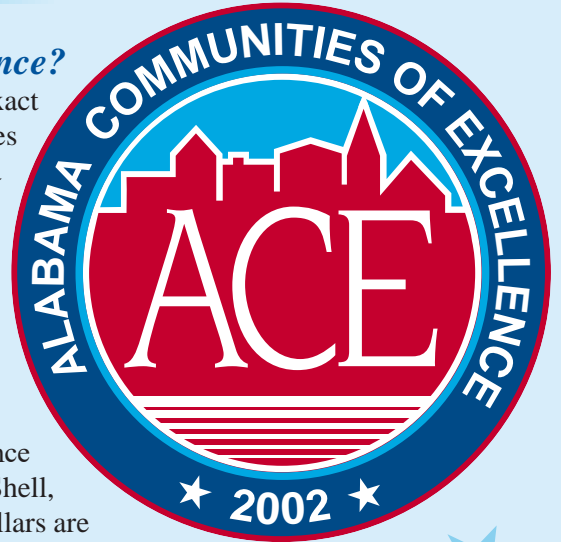
ACE Becomes an ALM

By Mary Jackson • ACE Coordinator • ALM

What does it mean to be an Alabama Community of Excellence?

Not only did I ask myself this question as a new city clerk in 2015, it is the exact same question I had to answer seven years later as the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) Program Coordinator at an EXPO booth at the Alabama League of Municipalities' (ALM) Annual Convention. When I inherited the role of ACE coordinator in Monroeville, I quickly became a student of the four ACE pillars – Leadership, Planning, Economic Development and Quality of Life – to complete the Annual Report required of Monroeville to maintain its prestigious designation as an ACE community. Through that process, I learned of the many amazing assets in Monroeville's backyard, and I was motivated to continue the ACE momentum in my community.

Fast forward to 2022, I was now able to answer that question with full confidence to each visitor of the ACE booth. Over the past year of training with Mary Shell, immediate former Executive Director of ACE, I have learned that these four pillars are what each community strives to learn on how to plan, grow and prosper. They organically find their unique qualities and build upon their assets and values to address their local concerns for long-term success. I was able to explain to each interested visitor that a community must apply to be selected for the ACE program. Once selected, they will undergo three phases towards becoming an ACE community. Phase I brings in a team of experts from all over the state to assess the community's strengths and weaknesses and then identify areas of improvement. An assessment report is then compiled and presented to the mayor for acceptance and Phase II then begins. The community will need to create and complete one round of a Local Leadership Program. A 501c3 also must be created, or identified, as a local community funding opportunity. Building the Strategic Plan for the next 3-5 years is the most important and time-consuming part of Phase II. Once completed though, the community enters Phase III and begins developing the Comprehensive Plan (20-30 years). When all three phases are completed, the city will graduate and be declared an Alabama Community of Excellence at an ALM event. The process could take two to three years depending on what the city already has in place at the time of the application.



ACE launch at ALM Headquarters in Montgomery on September 19.

Program

Representatives from several ACE communities attended the September 19th League ACE launch in Montgomery and received updated signage for their cities.



ACE as a League Program

Twenty years after its inception, ACE has now become a program under the League. The four pillars and three-phased approach of becoming an ACE community will remain in place and ALM looks forward to supporting the existing communities and gaining new communities. We want our outreach to include the 2,000 to 18,000 populations; however, we also intend to offer support to our communities with less than 2,000 through a mentorship program with our current ACE mayors and coordinators.

ALM will provide additional staff support to the ACE program and will continue building stronger partnerships with the Advisory Board members and ACE Ambassadors, formerly the ACE Associates Council. ACE will maintain a non-profit status and will seek continued funding from the current ACE partnerships as well as strive to identify and build new funding opportunities with additional agencies. The ACE Ambassadors will remain our 'boots-on-the-ground' experts and will be dispatched to our communities to aid in achieving long-term success and sustainability in each city.

Following the review of the League's survey results from our ACE mayors, we will work to improve the support for our 43 existing communities and tailor our recertification program to better address their ideas and concerns. The recertification program typically follows the Strategic Plan (3-5 years), and we want to make sure our communities are actively completing the action plans associated with their Strategic and Comprehensive Plans. We want to support our communities and help them overcome any obstacles they may have with growing their cities.

The League's in-house software system now includes a full ACE portal attached to each designated municipality that includes archived documents, quick reference facts, contact information and acts as the digital filing system for the ACE communities. The *pending* alert system feature will send an email whenever the municipal leadership changes. We will be able to reach out to the mayors and/or city clerks of the municipalities involved in our ACE programs and educate them on what it means to be an ACE community.

Our goal is to continue fostering the foundational aspects of the former program while developing new methods of support to move the program forward another 20 years. Our ACE communities will have access to more training events, personalized networking opportunities and improved staff support for years to come. Once the dust settles, we plan to open applications next year for new communities to apply.

As always, I would love to talk with your community and assist you in connecting with our affiliates to help set you up for success. My email is mjackson@almonline.org and my office number is 334-386-8120. ■



At the September 19 ACE launch in Montgomery, ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran recognized Sidney Hoover, longtime former ACE Executive Director and volunteer, for her outstanding leadership and service to ACE and its communities as well as for her guidance in the transition as ACE became a League program. In addition, Mary Shell, immediate former ACE Executive Director and longtime volunteer, was also recognized but was unable to attend the launch event.



Mary joined the League staff in 2021 as Education and ACE Coordinator. Prior to joining the League's team, she served as the City Clerk for Monroeville for six years where she received her Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) designation in November 2020 and chaired the Promotions Committee for Monroeville Main Street for four years. In addition, she served on the Main Street Alabama Board as the City Clerk representative and as Monroeville Rotary President from 2018-2020. A Denver, Colorado native, Mary graduated from the University of Colorado - Denver in 2004 with a BA in Communications and a minor in Theatre.

ACE Partners Vital to Program Success

Community and economic development are critical to the health and vitality of Alabama's smaller and rural municipalities, and ACE has been a key resource throughout the state for 20 years. Becoming a League program allows ACE to not only maintain its original mission, but expand services to communities with populations less than 2,000. To that end, ACE will continue to work closely with its partners.

"ACE's partner organizations are vital to the success of the program," said ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran. "We look forward to continuing these essential relationships as the ACE program evolves to meet the needs of Alabama's smaller communities."

ACE's current partners will serve as an Advisory Board and include:

- Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
- Alabama Department of Commerce
- Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association
- Alabama Municipal Electric Authority
- Alabama Power
- Alabama Small Business Development Center Network
- Auburn University – Government and Economic Development Institute
- Byard Associates, LLC
- David Mathews Center for Civic Life
- Goodwyn Mills Cawood
- Regions Bank
- Spire
- The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development
- The University of West Alabama
- United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development.

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Helping Smaller Communities Plan, Grow and Prosper





★ 43 Designated ACE Communities

◆ 7 ACE Participant Communities



ACE's 43 Designated Communities

ALEXANDER CITY • Class of 2013 • Designated 2015 • alexandercityal.gov

With a population of just over 14,800, Alexander City, which was incorporated in 1872 as Youngsville and renamed in 1873, is the largest municipality in Tallapoosa County and is located on the shores of Lake Martin. Also known by locals as “Alex City,” the community has a rich and varied history beginning with its American Indian heritage and running through frontier roots. In addition, natural resources have always been important. This was amplified in 1926 when an Alabama Power Company project created Lake Martin, the area’s most recognizable asset with 44,000 acres of clean sparkling water and 750 miles of shoreline dotted with cabins, condominiums, restaurants, marinas and Wind Creek State Park. Before the lake was ever imagined, cotton played a major role in shaping the city, as it still does today.

The city boasts a charming downtown, and the community comes together each summer to put on the popular Jazz Fest that’s been running for 30-plus years and attracts thousands. It features live concerts from jazz, blues and rock acts in downtown’s Strand Park on Friday night and more music under the stars on Saturday night at the Lake Martin amphitheater. The city continues to be aggressive in recruiting industry and new businesses. The Lake Martin Economic Development Alliance formed in 1998 and has a full-time staff actively pursuing new industry. The Alliance is a regional partnership between Coosa and Tallapoosa Counties, and Alexander City and Dadeville. In conjunction with the Lake Martin Area Industrial Development Authority, it has developed two industrial parks where several new diverse industries are located. U.S. Highway 280 is Alexander City’s primary corridor, providing quick access to Birmingham, Montgomery and Atlanta.

ARAB • Class of 2009 • Designated 2012 • arabcity.org

Conveniently located 20 minutes south of Redstone Arsenal, one hour north of Birmingham, 2.5 hours south of Nashville and 3.5 hours from Atlanta, the City of Arab is a progressive community that provides a high level of attraction for a supportive family atmosphere through a wholesome, safe and secure environment. With a population of just over 8,400, Arab is part of both Marshall and Cullman Counties and 10 miles from Guntersville Lake in North Alabama. The city was incorporated in 1892 and its historic downtown provides unique shops and interesting places to dine in its many historic buildings as well as the historic 1883 Northern Methodist Cemetery – the only cemetery in Marshall County to be included in the Alabama Historic Register. In 1934, the infamous duo, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, visited Peoples Drugstore, which was located across from the historic Bank of Arab, shortly before they engaged in their last crime spree that would take their lives. Noticing the building across the street, Clyde asked if the bank had any money. Being suspicious, the clerk told him that because of the Great Depression, the bank had been busted for years. The criminals left empty-handed and without drawing their guns.

In addition to festivals and other attractions, the Arab Historic Village has become one of the most widely toured historic destinations in the Southeast. Development of the village began in 1991 as a centennial project to honor and pay tribute to the pioneer-spirited settlers who built the area into the prosperous, community-minded city it is today. Nestled just behind the Arab City Park, the complex showcases 10 historic buildings that portray a North Central Alabama rural community of that time. All have been preserved with authentic furnishings and décor that date back to the 1880s to 1940s. Students and visitors learn firsthand what life was like in the 1880s to 1940s, including going to school in a one-room schoolhouse.

ATMORE • Class of 2005 • Designated 2007 • welcometoatmore.com

Located in western Escambia County with a population of nearly 8,400, Atmore was officially incorporated in 1907. Its southern border is the Florida state line. The Creek Indians were the first inhabitants of Atmore, and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians is the only federally recognized American Indian tribe in the state of Alabama, operating as a sovereign nation with its own system of government and bylaws.

The development of the area began in the 1860s following the Civil War as the Mobile and Great Northern Railroad extended its line south to the Tensaw River near Mobile. Workers who moved through the area laying track for the railroad were drawn to the area’s rich farmland and abundance of timber. Agriculture and timber are still major factors in Atmore’s economy. The city now features several recreation and arts venues. The Atmore Heritage Park on Main Street includes relocated historic buildings, and the downtown Strand Theater is one of the last true small-town theaters. In addition, Atmore offers numerous annual events and excellent city recreational facilities including tennis courts, walking trails



and swimming pools. The Poarch Band of Creek Indians operates the Wind Creek Casino and Hotel five miles north of Atmore and just south of the Poarch Creek Off-Reservation Trust Land is the Poarch Creek Indians Museum. In addition, the tribe holds an annual Thanksgiving Pow Wow each November.

BAY MINETTE • Class of 2017 • Designated 2019 • cityofbayminette.org

Incorporated in 1907, the City of Bay Minette, which is the county seat of Baldwin County, got its name from nearby Minette Bay. Nestled in the pine forests of North Baldwin County, Bay Minette is conveniently located 35 miles northeast of Mobile, Alabama, 45 miles west of Pensacola, Florida, and 75 miles east of Biloxi, Mississippi. Because of its favorable location, the community of just over 8,100 enjoys the economic, social and cultural benefits of the surrounding urban areas while maintaining the charm and relaxed pace of a small southern community. In addition to being home to a thriving timber industry, surrounding forests serve as a playground for the southern sportsman, as does the nearby Tensaw River Delta and the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Bay Minette is also surrounded by restored Civil War and early American history sites perfect for history buffs, family picnics, hikers and campers.

Home to the Bay Minette campus of Coastal Alabama Community College, the city has enjoyed steady, managed growth for many years. As the seat of Baldwin County, residents have numerous employment opportunities through local government, the county board of education, as well as legal and other professional offices, which support the county government. Bay Minette also offers residents employment opportunities in manufacturing and industry and the city actively seeks new employers through partnerships with the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance and the North Baldwin Chamber of Commerce.

BOAZ • Class of 2017 • Designated 2020 • cityofboaz.org

Incorporated in 1897, Boaz is located atop the Sand Mountain Plateau in Marshall County in northeast Alabama between Gadsden and Guntersville, 77 miles from Birmingham and 57 miles from Huntsville. The Boaz economy grew from the soil of Sand Mountain, named for its sandy soil that creates ideal farmland in a mild climate. In earlier days, the city served as a magnet that drew farmers looking for supplies and other necessities of life not produced on the farm. Farmers also came to Boaz to distribute their fruits of labor. Although Boaz was primarily a town built upon the agriculture sector, with a current population of just over 10,100, it now encompasses a diverse industry base, including automotive parts manufacturing and distributing, pipe fittings, railroad and transit supplies, recycling, and parts for the aircraft industry. Boaz was the nearest shopping center for many communities atop the mountain, and the historic downtown area is still home to local small businesses. Snead State Community College is within walking distance to downtown Boaz.

Additionally, there are many historical landmarks throughout the city, including the Thomas A. Snellgrove Homestead, Snead Junior College Historic District, Edward Fenns Whitman House and Julia Street Memorial United Methodist Church. All are listed on the National Register of Historic Places for Marshall County. Boaz also has a golf course, campground, bowling alley, movie theater, and many fast-food restaurants.

BREWTON • Class of 2003 • Designated 2006 • cityofbrewton.org

Brewton, which was incorporated in 1885, is the county seat of Escambia County located just north of the Florida Panhandle. With a population of just over 5,200, Brewton provides residents many conveniences of big-city living within the comfort and safety of a small-town lifestyle. The city offers residents quality education, recreational facilities, seasonal family events and a variety of shopping venues – all at a small-town pace. For more than 30 years, Brewton has drawn approximately 25,000 people to its annual summer Blueberry Festival and the city’s quaint downtown features independent restaurants, shops and several colorful murals on historic brick buildings.

Brewton began as a train station in May 1861 under Edmund Troupe Bruton. The city was originally known as Newport when barges made runs to and from Pensacola, Florida, on the Murder and Burnt Corn Creeks before the installation of rail. During the Civil War, rail lines were severed, and small lumber mills were damaged or destroyed. After the war, those who returned or arrived rebuilt the Brewton economy, began a school, and established small businesses. In the 1870s, a new European demand for lumber opened the way for the creation of numerous timber and lumber operations. The Conecuh-Escambia River System became a timber artery to the Gulf of Mexico. In the past, Brewton was known as “the richest little town in the South.” Brewton’s high per capita income was created by a small number of “lumber barons,” who arrived at the end of the 19th century to cut pine and stay to build extraordinary homes along Belleville and Evergreen Avenues. These families include the McMillans and the Millers, many of whom still reside in town.

CENTER POINT • Class of 2017 • Designated 2020 • cityofcenterpoint.org

With a current population of just over 16,400, Center Point is a newer Alabama city located in northeastern Jefferson County that was incorporated in 2002 but grew out of a historic community beginning with the Native Americans that occupied the land in the 1700s. Center Point is in close proximity to three major interstate systems (US 65, 59/20 and 459) and has two state highway systems running through its city limits (AL Hwy 75 and 79). Alabama Highway 75 is the main thoroughfare for the city and more than 35,000 automobiles travel this road daily. A demographic survey for retail/industrial relocations in the city reported there are 65,000 people in the trade area and 100,000 within a 10-mile radius of the city. Therefore, both the employment recruitment and consumer pools are large. While these numbers are high in density, they do not detract from the small town feel and sense of community one experiences in Center Point. With multiple schools and many religious institutions, there is plenty of opportunity for community engagement. Center Point is home to three parks in its recreation department and has a strong youth sports program. There are many community events throughout the year, such as the annual Christmas Parade and tree lighting ceremony, two festivals, National Night Out and a summer farmers market that engage a large segment of the population.

Using an aggressive grant writing strategy, the city has funded significant necessities and amenities citywide without going into major debt. This places Center Point in a unique financial position. Prudent fiscal management ensures the city has a great credit record, and with the addition of Autocar (the oldest truck company in America), as well as the purchase of property that will engage a large segment of the population for a community center and library, the city is poised and primed for growth.

CHILDERSBURG • Class of 2008 • Designated 2012 • childersburg.org

Located 30 minutes south of Birmingham in Talladega County with a population of just over 4,700, Childersburg proclaims it is the “oldest continuously occupied city” in America, dating back to 1540 based on its possible location along the route Hernando de Soto and his men took through the Southeast.

The area is rich in American Indian lore and artifacts, abounding in culture and traditions. The city is located on the Coosa River and is about 10 miles northeast of Lay Lake, featuring fishing, camping, boating, watersports and other outdoor recreation. Additionally, the Charles Butler House, Kymulga Grist Mill and Covered Bridge are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Majestic Caverns (formally known as DeSoto Caverns) is one of the area’s oldest and most well-known tourist attractions featuring the first recorded cave in the United States where the main room of the caverns stands 12 stories high and the onyx-marble stalagmites and stalactites are among the most concentrated in America.

DEMOPOLIS • Class of 2003 • Designated 2005 • demopolis.gov

Incorporated in 1821 and located in Alabama’s Black Belt, Demopolis is the largest city in Marengo County with a population of nearly 7,200. The city is known for its beautiful historic homes, birding, hunting/sports tourism as well as its Christmas on the River and Fourth of July Freedom on the River festivals. Its greatest resource is the Tombigbee River, and the Army Corps of Engineers plays a huge role in the community, often serving as guides for river activities. There are many hunting lodges and opportunities for fishing and hunting. Demopolis is also known for its white bluffs along the river and the Yacht Basin. Foscue Creek Park has many walking trails, campsites and a landing for boats to launch.

Once a major cultural and economic center of the Black Belt, Demopolis boasts several notable historic structures, including Bluff Hall, the city’s oldest historic residence constructed in 1832 in the Federal-style and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Also on the Register are Gaineswood, a Greek Revival plantation home built between 1843 and 1861, and Lyon Hall, built between 1850 and 1853. Rooster Hall, located on the public square, is one of the oldest buildings in the city and was originally built in 1843 as part of the Presbyterian Church of Demopolis and Trinity Episcopal Church. Rooster Hall features several Tiffany stained-glass windows.

ELBA • Class of 2013 • Designated 2015 • elbaal.gov

The County seat of Coffee County in southeastern Alabama, Elba, which is just 38 miles from the Florida state line, has a population of just over 3,500 and is centrally situated in the Wiregrass Region alongside the confluence of Whitewater Creek and the Pea River. Its proximity to the nearby Gulf Coast beaches and major transportation routes makes Elba a perfect choice for businesses and individuals looking to relocate.

Incorporated in 1853, Elba was known as “The City of Flowing Wells” because at one point in time there were over 150 naturally flowing wells within the city limits. The historic Downtown Square has stood throughout Elba’s history and is considered by many to be a living museum. In addition, guided walking tours through historic landmarks,

including the Coffee County Courthouse, James E. (Big Jim) Folsom Birthplace and the Old Coffee County Jail, are also popular. Hawkins-Williams Park features an Olympic-size swimming pool, ball fields and tennis courts. Additional parks throughout the city offer many other amenities and activities. The city also maintains a boat ramp to the Pea River and fishing opportunities at the Coffee County Lake. While Elba is home to several industrial enterprises as well as numerous local professional and retail establishments, agriculture is a driving force in the area economy.

EUFULA • Class of 2009 • Designated 2012 • eufaulaalabama.com

Located in Barbour County near the 45,000-acre Lake Eufaula, also known as the Walter F. George Reservoir created by the construction of the Walter F. George Dam in 1963, the City of Eufaula is named for a Creek Indian Tribe called “the Eufaulas” and is a lure for outdoor enthusiasts. In addition, this southeastern Alabama city is a historical jewel with an unparalleled collection of antebellum homes and landmarks situated along the Alabama-Georgia border, approximately 90 miles southeast of Montgomery.

First settled in 1816, Eufaula, which now has a population of nearly 12,900, was incorporated under its present name in 1843. An important shipping and trade center prior to the Civil War, Eufaula is home to the second largest historic district in the state, with more than 700 historic and architecturally significant structures as well as the state’s most extensive collection of domestic Italianate architecture and a collection of intact mid-to-late nineteenth-century small-town commercial buildings. More than 50 historic structures are open to the public and each April, the city hosts the Annual

Eufaula Pilgrimage, Alabama’s oldest tour of historic homes. The event also includes tours of historic churches, art shows, concerts and other festivities.

EVERGREEN • Class of 2007 • Designated 2012 • evergreenal.org

Known as the Emerald City, Evergreen is the county seat of Conecuh County located in southwest Alabama, almost midway between Montgomery and Mobile. With a population of just over 3,500, Evergreen boasts outstanding natural resources and specializes in outdoor activities, including hunting and fishing. In addition, the county offers year-round golf, over 400 lakes and ponds, 200 miles of streams and bountiful game hunting grounds for deer, turkey, quail, dove and squirrel seasons. The Sepulga River Canoe Trail is becoming increasingly popular with nature lovers due to its deep water, limestone walls and a few rapids offering a wilderness kayaking/canoe experience unique to South Alabama.

The original village, known as Cosey’s Old Field, was founded in 1819 when James Cosey, a Revolutionary War Veteran, settled along with George Andrews, and the Cluff brothers, within the present limits of the city on South Main Street. In 1873, Evergreen was incorporated – named by Rev. Alexander Travis, who suggested the name based on the natural abundance of green foliage. Evergreen now hosts the very popular annual Conecuh Sausage Festival, which is held on the third Saturday in October at the Middleton Field Airport in conjunction with the South East Regional Fly-In. The Collard Green Festival is also held each year on the first Saturday in March at the Middleton Field Airport. Both are family-friendly events.

FAIRHOPE • Class of 2013 • Designated 2015 • fairhopeal.gov

Located in Baldwin County along the eastern shore of the Mobile Bay, Fairhope was founded in November 1894 by a group of hardy souls seeking adventure as well as a “fair hope of success.” They chose the site of former Alabama City as a utopia single tax colony by the “Fairhope Industrial Association” with the mission to eliminate disincentives for productive use of land and thereby retain the value of land for the community. The town was ultimately incorporated in 1908.

Over the years artists, writers, craftsmen and vacationers found Fairhope to be an inspiring haven for their work and thus helped make the community what it is today. For outdoor enthusiasts, the Weeks Bay Nature Reserve offers elevated walkways through bogs and marshes, and the Grand Hotel Golf Resort and Spa, part of the Marriott Hotels Autograph Collection of boutique hotels, gives visitors access to beaches on Mobile Bay as well as restaurants, a pool complex and a renovated and expanded historic hotel. The associated golf course, The Lakewood Club, is part of the acclaimed Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. A continually and rapidly growing city of nearly 22,500, Fairhope had just over 16,000 residents when it began the ACE program. As it continues to expand, the community leads the way for others with active recycling programs, a state-of-the-art water treatment system, involved citizens and a Comprehensive Plan that seeks to maintain the city’s high quality of life through controlled growth and development.

FAYETTE • Class of 2005 • Designated 2007 • fayetteal.org

Located in the northwest-central section of the state, the City of Fayette, which originally incorporated in 1821 as

Fayette Court House, is the seat of Fayette County, which was formed in 1824 from portions of Tuscaloosa and Marion counties. The county was named for Revolutionary War hero the Marquis de LaFayette, who was touring Alabama during the county's formation. As early as 1821, a small village existed at the present Old Town (near Five Points) called LaFayette. From that location, settlers could see out over the Sipsey River Valley.

With a population of nearly 4,300, Fayette has a variety of seasonal and on-going events that make it a special place to visit any time of the year. From the Art Museum and Civic Center to summer days at the Aquatic Center; fall activities including the Arts Festival (second Saturday in September) and Frog Level Festival (first Friday and Saturday in October); wintertime Christmas Lights tour; and frequent weekend events, Fayette is a bustling area with many activities. The Fayette Art Museum and Civic Center contains more than 3,500 pieces of art, many of which were created by local folk artists, and features gallery, large event and performance spaces. The Fayette County Depot Museum, housed in a historic train station, interprets both the city and county's histories. Every August, the museum hosts an annual arts festival. Guthrie Smith Park, a 100-acre facility, offers visitors athletic fields, picnic areas, walking trails and a 10-acre lake. Fayette is also home to Beville State Community College, and the Golden Eagle Syrup Manufacturing Company has been producing syrup in the same location in the city since 1928.

FLORALA • Class of 2019 • Designated 2022 • cityofflorala.com

Home to Lake Jackson, the largest natural lake in Alabama, Florala, with a population of just under 2,000, is located in Covington County on Hwy 331S, the beach highway on the Alabama/Florida state line. In 1818, Andrew Jackson stopped at the lake with his soldiers, thus Lake Jackson is named after him. Florala was incorporated in 1901; however, since 1870, the community has served as the home of the world's oldest consecutive annual Masonic Day celebration, through Florala's Fidelity Masonic Lodge #685 (beginning with Chapel Hill and Lake City Lodge #377), and Chapter #441 of the Order of the Eastern Star. The celebration is in honor of St. John's Day, June 24, 1717, when the first Grand Masonic Lodge in England was established. The celebration is held each year on the Friday before the 24th of June and concluding on the Saturday after the 24th.

Florala City Park (formerly Florala State Park) offers visitors a variety of ways to explore and enjoy the northern portion of 500-acre Lake Jackson. The park offers picnic tables and a picnic shelter, a campground, public beaches, a pier and a paved walking trail including elevated boardwalks through Spanish moss-draped cypress forest and palmetto scrub along the edge of the lake as well as swimming facilities, a wetlands park and a boat ramp for easy access. An 11,500 sq. ft. conference center and amphitheater are available for weddings and other occasions with a breathtaking view of Lake Jackson. Additionally, Florala offers many stores for the avid shoppers, as well as eateries and 1900s-era architecture in the downtown Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

FOLEY • Class of 2009 • Designated 2012 • cityoffoley.org

Located in southwest Alabama in Baldwin County, Foley is named for John B. Foley of Chicago, who bought land in the area in 1901 and then formed Magnolia Springs Land Company. He persuaded the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (L&N) to run a spur to the area and the town incorporated in 1915. Foley is a vibrant and rapidly growing city. It has grown from a population of just over 14,500 in 2009, when it joined the ACE program, to more than 21,000 in 2022.

Foley's historic downtown district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is alive with shops, restaurants and museums – in particular the Foley Depot Museum, which houses the city archives and history museum as well as a model train exhibit. Foley has multiple municipal parks with athletic fields for softball, baseball and soccer, as well as basketball and tennis courts, and two swimming pools. The city also features a hiking and biking trail and a horse arena. In addition to hosting a number of annual events and festivals, Foley is also known for the Tanger Outlet Center, offering more than 115 true outlet stores, as well as the award-winning OWA (oh-wah) theme park with its many outdoor rides and large, indoor waterpark.

GARDENDALE • Class of 2019 • Designated 2021 • cityofgardendale.com

Located in north Jefferson County with a geographic closeness to the Birmingham Metro, Gardendale's placement along I-65 funnels many people through the city on the way to Birmingham and the beaches as well as assists in attracting medical related businesses to the community due to the proximity to the medical centers in Birmingham's expanding medical community.

Officially incorporated in 1955, what is now Gardendale was originally settled in the mid-1820s by veterans of the War of 1812 along an existing Indian trade route. It became known as Jugtown because of a local pottery industry. In

1906, local schoolteacher Hettie Thompson Cargo successfully lobbied to have the town's name changed to Gardendale, and, during the mid-1930s, Gardendale became the site of a New Deal resettlement community for people displaced by the Great Depression. With a population of just over 16,000, Gardendale hosts many events and activities, including its annual spring Magnolia Festival at the Gardendale Civic Center complex featuring more than 150 vendors, two stages of live music, a pooch parade, midway style carnival, car show, kid zone, petting zoo and pony rides.

GENEVA • Class of 2015 • Designated 2018 • genevaal.gov

Located in the Wiregrass region of south-central Alabama just north of the Florida panhandle, Geneva is a river community that is the largest municipality in Geneva County as well as the county seat. The junction where the Choctawhatchee and Talakhatchee (Pea) Rivers meet forms one of the city limit borders of Geneva. Founded by Henry A. Yonge in the early 1820s as an Indian trading post at the junction of these two rivers, early navigation of the river was by log barges followed by steamboats built in Geneva. The Lincoln Flood of 1861 all but destroyed the early settlement. As a result, the settlement was moved to higher ground thus a new town was built at the north end of what is now Commerce Street. Geneva was incorporated in 1875. The city flooded again in 1929 leading to the construction of a 2.9-mile earth-filled levee through WPA labor in the 1930s. Having been completely renovated in 2007, this structure still protects the community today. Geneva eventually became associated with the textile industry and the economy flourished with cotton mills and clothing factories until the late 1990s.

With a population of just over 4,200, the City of Geneva holds its annual Festival on the Rivers every April. Events include canoe races and other competitive sporting activities, including the Annual Worm Fiddlin' Contest. Robert Fowler Memorial Park offers Geneva residents picnicking and recreational opportunities and is home to the Constitution Oak, which is thought to be among the largest live oaks in the world with a spread of 175 feet and a height of 75 feet.

GRAYSVILLE • Class of 2007 • Designated 2011 • graysvillecity.com

Located in northwestern Jefferson County and often considered a suburb of Birmingham, Graysville, which was incorporated in 1945, was known as Gin Town until the early 1900s because it had one of the only cotton gins in the area. The original city council established the Graysville Water Works system in 1946 and in 1949, the city council established the Graysville Gas Board which eventually became the Graysville Municipal Gas System. During the 1950s and 1960s, the local coal mines and steel mills attracted families from all over Alabama. As a result of this growth, Graysville established the city's first series of home developments and subdivisions. During the 1980s and 1990s, Graysville expanded its city limits by annexing multiple acres in what was then unincorporated Jefferson County. With the opening of Interstate 22 and additional commercial growth, Graysville ushered in a new era of excellence and progress.

With a population of nearly 2,000, Graysville maintains several municipal parks that include baseball and softball fields, walking and running tracks, picnic areas and pavilions, basketball courts and a canoe park. Graysville also maintains a community center, senior center and public library, which supports students from at least seven elementary schools, five junior high schools, four high schools and four private schools.

GUIN • Class of 2003 • Designated 2005 • guinal.org

Located in south-central Marion County in the northwest corner of the state, the area that ultimately became Guin was first homesteaded in 1820 as a 680-acre U.S. land grant. After changing hands several times, it was purchased by physician Jerry Guin in 1872, for whom the town was eventually named when the community incorporated in 1899.

With a population of nearly 2,200, Guin is a vibrant community providing a high quality of living and diverse economic opportunities while preserving its past and pursuing its future. Guin took advantage of its prime location along I-22, which was completed in 2016 and connects Memphis to Atlanta via Birmingham, by developing an industrial and commercial site featuring the necessary infrastructure for growth. In addition, for more than two decades Guin has maintained a waterpark with a large waterslide and an Olympic-sized community pool that has continually brought in people from an eight-county region. The area also offers tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, picnic pavilions and a separate field to host local baseball games. Guin is also home to the Collins Life Center, a first-of-its-kind senior center/safe shelter in the United States that includes a large multi-purpose room, library, computer lab, card room and warming kitchen.

GULF SHORES • Class of 2005 • Designated 2007 • gulfshoresal.gov

The completion of the Intracoastal Waterway in 1937 and the opening of Gulf State Park in 1939 were crucial factors in attracting people to the Gulf Shores area in Baldwin County along Alabama's coast. The first post office opened in

1947. Prior to that time, the area was sparsely populated except for a small fishing community dating to the early 1800s. Incorporation activities began in 1956 and Gulf Shores officially incorporated in 1958. Now with a population of just over 15,000, Gulf Shores is a rapidly growing coastal community drawing not only tourists, but residents.

Unique to Gulf Shores is the crown of the state park system, Gulf State Park, which has two miles of protected beaches, a beachside lodge known for its sustainable tourism endeavors, a large campground, 20 cabins and access to a multitude of activities such as hiking, biking, fishing, exploring, geocaching, paddling and birdwatching. To the west, sea turtles and migratory birds thrive among the coastal habitats of Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. Farther west, 19th-century Fort Morgan guards Mobile Bay. Gulf Shores also hosts numerous recreational activities and festivals, including the National Shrimp Festival, which has been ongoing for nearly 50 years.

GUNTERSVILLE • Class of 2003 • Designated 2006 • guntersvilleal.org

Founded in the mid-1800s, Guntersville is the seat of Marshall County and is nestled in Northeast Alabama at the southernmost point of the Tennessee River along Lake Guntersville – a 69,000-acre lake formed by Guntersville Dam, which was built in the late 1930s and is still maintained by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Guntersville was originally called Gunter’s Landing and was part of a large land cession agreed upon between the federal government and the Cherokees in the 1835 Treaty of New Echota. Three years later, Gunter’s Landing served as an embarkation point on the infamous Trail of Tears, in which Cherokees and Creeks in the region were removed from eastern states to what is now Oklahoma. The town’s name was changed to Guntersville in 1854, and it soon became a busy port town for ships traveling the Tennessee River. Guntersville suffered significant damage during the Civil War, being partially burned from Union shelling from the Tennessee River in July 1862. All but seven buildings were destroyed.

With a population of nearly 8,600 and the foothills of the Appalachians as its backdrop, Guntersville is now known for many outdoor recreational options as well as a community that is continuing to grow. Fishing, leisure boating, skiing, golfing and birding are popular year-round activities. The City of Guntersville and Lake Guntersville State Park maintain miles of hiking, biking and walking trails. Additionally, Guntersville offers downtown shopping, art museums, a spa and tap rooms as well as dining ranging from quaint local bistros, farm-to-table, fine dining and relaxing casual waterfront options.

HALEYVILLE • Class of 2003 • Designated 2005 • cityofhaleyville.com

Located in the northwest corner of Winston County, the City of Haleyville is approximately 60 miles south of the Quad-Cities area, 90 miles northwest of Birmingham, and 75 miles north of Tuscaloosa. Haleyville was incorporated in 1889 and, in 1968, became the first municipality in the United States to implement the use of the emergency telephone number 9-1-1, which was hosted at the police station and facilitated by the local provider, Alabama Telephone Company. Haleyville’s physical development was influenced by several factors, including the location of the railroad, proximity to major roads, availability of a labor force and ownership of property.

With a population of just over 4,361, Haleyville has numerous local and recreational attractions, including the Palmer-Feldman House (ca. 1902) and the Feldman Department Store (ca. 1914), which are listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage. Feldman’s Department Store is also on the National Register of Historic Places, as is a nearby archaeological site dating back some 2,500 years. Haleyville’s 140-acre Rocky Ravine/City Lake Park features hiking trails, picnic facilities, fishing, and playground equipment, as well as a natural gorge. In addition, the city lies just west of the William B. Bankhead National Forest and Bear Creek Reservoir to the south, both of which provide numerous outdoor activities. The community’s annual 9-1-1 Festival honors the area’s first responders, supports downtown merchants and provides a variety of entertainment.

HANCEVILLE • Class of 2017 • Designated 2019 • cityofhanceville.net

Founded in 1879, Hanceville is located in north-central Alabama less than 10 miles from Interstate 65. With a population of just over 3,200 Hanceville is the second largest city in Cullman County and home to Wallace State Community College. The Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament Cathedral at Our Lady of Angels Monastery is located just outside the city and home to the Poor Clare Nuns of Perpetual Adoration. The Knights of the Holy Eucharist reside on the compound as well.

Listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage in Hanceville are the Burkart-Wilson Home (circa 1949), the Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church/Burkart Memorial Hall (circa 1885-86), and the Potato House (circa 1900). Hanceville parks offer tennis courts, ball fields, a swimming pool, picnic pavilions, fishing, playground areas and

walking trails for citizens to enjoy. Hanceville is also home to Alabama's oldest paintball and airsoft field, Mount Doom Paintball Field, which has been in operation since the 1980s.

HARTSELLE • Class of 2009 • Designated 2012 • hartselle.org

Located in Morgan County in north-central Alabama, Hartselle was incorporated in 1875 and named for George Hartselle, a founding father whose descendants still live in the area. Considered a strategic location alongside the South and North Alabama Railroad, the budding village was originally located a half-mile north of the present downtown area and had to relocate at the railroad's request because the slopes of the old site made it impractical as a train stop and station.

With a population of just over 15,400, Hartselle is the second largest city in the county and considered a bedroom community of Huntsville, which is 35 miles northeast. In 2022, Hartselle debuted its new municipal building (a redesign and remodel of the former Wells Fargo location), as well as a professionally envisioned municipal logo – all part of a strategic endeavor to visually update the community, not only for its citizens, but for recruiting new business and industry. In addition, Hartselle offers numerous recreational opportunities including parks, playgrounds, walking/biking trails and ball fields as well as aquatic and senior centers. A variety of popular community festivals are also held throughout the year.

HEADLAND • Class of 2006 • Designated 2019 • headlandalabama.org

The largest city in Henry County and part of Dothan's metropolitan area, Headland was founded in 1871 by Confederate veteran James Joshua Head (1839–1927) who moved to the area, patented land, plotted the town and built his home. The people of the town referred to the area as “Head's Land,” and when the post office opened on October 10, 1871, Headland was officially established. For many years, Headland remained a small community, but being surrounded by rich farmland provided the area with an agricultural boom. In 1912, Headland operated the largest cotton oil mill in Alabama.

With a population of just over 4,900, Headland grew from the timberlands of southeast Alabama into the “Gem of the Wiregrass” – a progressive community with robust commercial businesses, quality schools, community driven organizations, multiple religious institutions, a variety of recreational options and several community festivals.

HEFLIN • Class of 2005 • Designated 2007 • cityofheflin.org

Located midway between Birmingham and Atlanta on Interstate 20, Heflin is the seat of Cleburne County and a convenient location for industry, commerce and cultural activities. Incorporated in 1886, the community was named for physician Wilson L. Heflin, father of James Thomas Heflin, U.S. Senator from Alabama (1920-1931).

With a population of just over 3,400, Heflin boasts a multitude of outdoor activities, including the Loyd Owens Canoe Trail, Lake Point Disc Golf Course, the Evans Bridge Field Target, and is the headquarters for the Shoal Creek Ranger District, which provides numerous opportunities for boating, camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding and hunting. In addition, the city is minutes away from the Chief Ladiga bike trail that connects to Georgia's Silver Comet Trail and provides a scenic biking experience. Heflin is also the home to the northern portion of the Talladega National Forest, which includes a 3.5-mile Heflin Spur off the Pinhoti National Recreational Trail that leads hikers through Cahulga Creek Park and into historic Downtown Heflin. With seven trails calling Heflin home, the community has become Alabama's Trail Town ranging from bird watching and horseback riding trails to wine tasting trails.

HELENA • Class of 2013 • Designated 2016 • cityofhelena.org

Located in Shelby County in the heart of central Alabama, Helena is a thriving suburban community in the Birmingham area. Originally incorporated in 1877 thanks to the coal and iron industry, Helena is a rapidly growing city with a population of just over 20,900 and a display of well planned, progressive development.

The Helena Historic District features many architecturally notable dwellings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Numerous parks are provided within Helena featuring open green spaces, playground equipment, a fishing pond and a baseball field complex often used for tournaments and recreational leagues. The Helena Sports Complex opened in 2003 and includes a community center, spaces for baseball, softball, cheerleading, basketball and soccer. The most popular parks in Helena include Joe Tucker Park and Cahaba Lily Park. The Old Town Helena Amphitheater, along the banks of Buck Creek, features a stage and grass seating area where numerous productions are staged. The Cahaba River and its tributary, Buck Creek, run through the community. Because Buck Creek is dammed upstream of Alabama Highway 261 in the Old Town area, it forms Lake Davidson, providing many recreational activities for both citizens and visitors. Fishing, wading and canoeing are popular uses of both waterways.

The city hosts several popular community festivals, including the annual Buck Creek Festival, which has been held since 2001 on the second weekend of May and features a rubber duck race with 2,000-plus participants.

JACKSON • Class of 2006 • Designated 2008 • cityofjacksonal.com

Located in Clarke County on a rise overlooking the east bank of the Tombigbee River in southwest Alabama, the City of Jackson, which was founded in 1816, is an easy drive from Mobile. Named after President Andrew Jackson, the city was initially built as a timber town. Now known as “The Pine City,” Jackson was a thriving port and a manufacturing center in its early days due to its location along the river.

With a population of just over 4,700, Jackson is the largest city in Clarke County and is now home to many types of industry and commercial development thanks to a port on the Tombigbee River, a regional airport and two industrial parks featuring rail and highway access. The city also offers several parks and recreation facilities to accommodate many indoor or outdoor events including fishing, boating, sports, swimming and golf. In addition, the Chamber hosts community events throughout the year, the biggest of which is the Jackson Fall Festival featuring a lumberjack competition drawing people nationwide.

JACKSONVILLE • Class of 2006 • Designated 2011 • jacksonville-al.org

Nestled in the foothills of northeast Alabama in Calhoun County, 12 miles north of Anniston on Highway 21, the land that would become Jacksonville was purchased in 1833 from Chief Ladiga of the Creek Indians. Incorporated in 1836, cotton farming brought considerable wealth to the town, spurring the construction of many large homes during the antebellum period. In the early 1850s, a rail line was established between Jacksonville and Rome, Georgia, and eventually became part of the Southern Railway.

With just over 14,300 residents, Jacksonville maintains a small-town charm thanks to its historic public square and churches, antebellum homes and safe, attractive neighborhoods. Listed on the National Register of Historic places are Aderholt Mill (ca. 1825), the Downtown Jacksonville Historic District (ca. 1850), the First Presbyterian Church (ca. 1850), the Dr. J. C. Francis Office (ca. 1852) and the Profile Cotton Mills Historic District (ca. 1910). Jacksonville is also home to Jacksonville State University as well as abundant recreation opportunities including a community center featuring a full fitness area, basketball court, walking track, swimming pool and a 3-field, lighted soccer complex. In addition, the Chief Ladiga Trail, a 33-mile walking and bicycle path built on an abandoned Southern Railway railbed, passes through Jacksonville. The city also borders the Talladega National Forest’s Shoal Creek District, which offers camping, fishing, hiking, hunting, swimming and limited boating.

JASPER • Class of 2015 • Designated 2017 • jaspercity.com

Located in north-central Alabama, the City of Jasper, which was incorporated in 1886, is the seat for Walker County and was once the home of Alabama Central Railroad, which provided transportation for lumber and coal during the years of the steam engine train. Jasper was also the residence of the Bankhead family, which included famed actress Tallulah Bankhead as well as United States Congressmen, United States Senators and a U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives during the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt.

With a population of just over 14,500, the city has seven municipal parks that include athletic fields, a gymnasium and a municipal pool complex. Also nearby are Smith Lake, which offers all forms of water recreation, and the Clear Creek Recreational Area in the Bankhead National Forest with campgrounds and lodges. Each fall the city hosts the Foothills Festival, a two-day event with music, food and vendors held in rejuvenated Downtown Jasper, a thriving area filled with shops, boutiques, restaurants and breweries.

LEEDS • Class of 2008 • Designated 2013 • leedsalabama.org

Incorporated in 1887 as the primary population center of an area known as the Cahaba Valley, a region of fertile bottomland nourished by the Cahaba and Little Cahaba rivers, the City of Leeds is a tri-county municipality straddling the borders of Jefferson, Shelby and St. Clair counties. The discovery of rich and valuable natural resources accelerated the region’s growth in the mid- to late-1800s. Leeds was named for the noted industrial city in England where a bricklayer invented the Portland cement process.

With a population of just over 12,300, Leeds offers many opportunities for nature enthusiasts. From Lake Purdy to Leeds/Moody 411, bicycling, canoeing, horseback riding, nature photography and fishing abound. Canoe launches and boat landings are available near Lake Purdy and Leeds’ parks offer picnic sites on the Little Cahaba River where monuments,

flags and interpretive exhibits tell some of the local stories. Leeds is also home to world-famous Barber Motorsports Museum & Racetrack, a 750-acre park featuring an official IndyCar track with multiple annual races; a vintage museum highlighting 1,400 exhibits featuring the very best of racing history; and year-round events for the whole family to enjoy.

LIVINGSTON • Class of 2008 • Designated 2012 • cityoflivingston.com

Located in west-central Alabama between Tuscaloosa and Meridian, Mississippi, Livingston is the county seat for Sumter County in an area once inhabited by the Choctaw Indians. Livingston was incorporated in 1835 – the same year the Livingston Female Academy was established. In 1881, Julia S. Tutwiler, a well-known educator, prison reformer, writer and supporter of education for women, became assistant president of the Academy. She changed the school’s name to Livingston Normal School in 1886 and retired as president emeritus in 1910. Known today as the University of West Alabama, the campus is located just a block from downtown Livingston and offers unlimited educational opportunities as well as collegiate sports. The campus is also home to a covered bridge first built in 1861 over the Sucarnoochee River and moved to campus in 1969. Cedarwood, an extremely rare wood-framed house built in 1818 in Greensboro, is another historic gem that was relocated to the campus.

In addition to the university, Livingston has much to offer for a city with a population of just over 3,400. Courthouse Square features the Bored Well, an artisan well that was begun in 1854 and completed in 1857. A hand pump was added in 1904 and an electric pump in 1928. The Sumter County Court House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Old Southern Railroad Depot, built circa 1875, now serves as City Hall and is still located 15 feet from the railroad tracks. Each year, Livingston hosts its Sucarnoochee Folklife Festival featuring music, storytelling, a Cornbread Cook-off and artisanal works such as pottery, metal crafts and quilting.

MILLBROOK • Class of 2005 • Designated 2007 • cityofmillbrook.org

Located in Elmore and Autauga counties, 10 miles north of Montgomery, Millbrook enjoys a rich heritage dating back to the 1700s with such prominent leaders as Bolling Hall, William Wyatt Bibb and John Archer Elmore. Between World Wars I and II, the areas of Millbrook, Coosada and Robinson Springs, later to be known as the Tri-Communities, began to grow in population. The in-migration, facilitated in part by the construction of Interstate 65 in the mid-1970s, led to Millbrook’s incorporation in 1977.

With a population of just over 17,000, Millbrook has evolved around its rural features and natural resources. Nature, wildlife and the numerous waterways have helped shaped Millbrook into the city it is today. Outdoor recreational activities can be enjoyed at any of the city’s six municipal parks and public golf course, and at nearby Jackson Lake Island and Lakes Jordan and Martin. Millbrook is home to the Alabama Nature Center, a 350-acre outdoor conservation education facility that consists of boardwalks, hiking trails, a hands-on Discovery Hall and many other attractions. The Grandview YMCA, Millbrook’s local Y, is another gem with lakes, trails, swimming pools and a state-of-the-art Wellness Center. Millbrook is currently developing 17 Springs, a large multi-use sports complex, that when completed in 2024 will serve as a catalyst project for the Highway 14 gateway into west Elmore County.

MONROEVILLE • Class of 2003 • Designated 2005 • monroevilleal.gov

The seat of Monroe County in south Alabama between Mobile and Montgomery, Monroeville, once known as Centerville, was renamed for James Monroe and incorporated in 1899. As a crossroads community just outside the plantation region of the Black Belt, the community was largely agricultural. In the mid-1930s, a Vanity Fair textile mill opened and, along with wood products, contributed to a dynamic local economy.

Thanks to its unique history producing many famous writers including Nelle Harper Lee, Truman Capote, Mike Stewart, Cynthia Tucker and Mark Childress, Monroeville was designated the Literary Capital of Alabama in 1997 by a joint proclamation of the Alabama Legislature. With a population of just over 5,900, the city is home to the Monroeville campus of Coastal Alabama Community College where the Monroeville Literary Festival is held every May. Every spring, the Old Monroe County Courthouse in the Monroeville town square, now a designated National Landmark, is the site for an internationally renowned community play based on Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* presented by a local group called the Mockingbird Players. The city, Chamber and Monroeville Main Street host additional popular events that attract large crowds to this historic area throughout the year.

MONTEVALLO • Class of 2009 • Designated 2012 • cityofmontevallo.com

A Shelby County city with a population of just over 7,200, Montevallo is located 30 miles south of Birmingham on

land that the United States acquired from the Creek Indians in 1814. Incorporated in 1848, Montevallo is home to the University of Montevallo as well as the Alabama Veterans Cemetery and American Village, a living-history park focusing on the events and people connected with the American Revolution. American Village also serves as a civics education center. Its unique programming has engaged and inspired thousands of students throughout the Southeast since opening its campus in 1999.

Montevallo's Orr Park is popular for its recreational offerings, including a walking trail, six baseball fields and a football field. Its most fascinating feature, however, is the collection of carvings created by local artist Tim Tingle in dead cedar trees along the walking trail. Seventy-three homes and buildings in Montevallo have earned their place on the National Historic Register, including Reynolds Hall and other buildings on the University of Montevallo campus. Some areas have even taken shape as tourist attractions for the city, such as the Aldrich Coal Mine Museum and Farrington Hall.



ONEONTA • Class of 2015 • Designated 2017 • cityofoneonta.us

Nestled in the heart of Murphree's Valley 35 miles northeast of Birmingham, the City of Oneonta is the county seat for Blount County. Incorporated in 1891, Oneonta is named for its sister city in New York which derives its name from a Mohawk word meaning "rocks sticking out" or "open rocks". With a population of just under 7,000, this once small town comprised of a train depot, post office, telegraph office, three stores and only 12 residents, has flourished into a thriving example of how hometown ingenuity, intentional planning, focused leadership and Southern hospitality not only enhance local quality of life but attract visitors year-round.

Oneonta is minutes away from two premiere scenic parks and sports climbing venues, Historic Horse Pens 40 and Palisades Park, and has two nearby historic bridges: the Horton Mill Covered Bridge and Easley Covered Bridge. In addition, Oneonta's historic downtown hosts not only a plethora of successful mom-and-pop businesses but many year-round activities because the entire area has been designated an entertainment district. The city's annual Covered Bridge Festival and June Fling attract thousands every year.

RAINSVILLE • Class of 2013 • Designated 2015 • rainsvillealabama.com

Located in DeKalb County in the northeast corner of the state, Rainsville was named for Will Rains, the first settler on the site who opened a small general store in 1902. The community, which rests atop the large scenic plateau known as Sand Mountain, was incorporated in 1956 and is ideally located near larger cities with easy access to major transportation routes. Outdoor recreation opportunities such as fishing, boating, hunting, hiking, mountain biking, bird watching and outdoor photography abound in this region filled with rivers, lakes, mountains, caverns and canyons.

With a population of just over 5,500, Rainsville could easily be considered the healthcare and financial hub of Sand Mountain due to many banks and businesses in the healthcare sector. The industrial sector's most notable products include church furniture, steel products, cardboard bailers and plastic parts for new Honda mini vans. Rainsville has a city park with a swimming pool, tennis courts, a walking track, picnic tables and a playground, as well as a sports complex with baseball and softball fields and a separate softball complex.

SARALAND • Class of 2014 • Designated 2015 • saraland.org

Located in Mobile County in extreme southwest Alabama, the area on which Saraland now stands was originally part of a Spanish land grant and was first settled by squatters as early as 1800. The town's original name was Alvarez Station. Its current name reportedly came from a retired minister who established the first post office in the area in 1895 and dubbed the town Saraland after his wife, Sara. Saraland was sparsely populated during the first part of this century until an industrial and population boom occurred in neighboring Mobile. Northward expansion of Mobile in the 1940s and 50s brought about the incorporation of Saraland in 1957.

With a population of just over 16,100, Saraland is a quickly growing area with 11 municipal parks, featuring playground areas, basketball courts as well as baseball, softball and football fields. The city sponsors youth sports leagues in baseball, softball and football. In addition, Saraland is located adjacent to the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta and is part of the Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust, home to some of the most biologically diverse habitat in Alabama. This preserved scenic area is popular for camping, hiking with multiple trails available, and bird watching.



SPANISH FORT • Class of 2015 • Designated 2017 • cityofspanishfort.com

Located in Baldwin County in southwest Alabama along the northeast edge of Mobile Bay, Spanish Fort is a relatively young city, having been established 1993. During the American Civil War, Spanish Fort was heavily fortified as an eastern



Confederate defense for the Mobile area. The Battle of Spanish Fort took place from March 27 until April 8, 1865, during which the Union Forces embarked on a land campaign to capture Mobile from the East. Following the Civil War, the area lost population and remained largely undeveloped until the 1970s.

With a population of just over 10,000, Spanish Fort, which was originally developed as a bedroom community, has experienced growth at a remarkable rate over the past decade thanks to its access to numerous recreational and outdoor activities as well as its location north of Interstate 10. Meaher State Park, an island that lies within Spanish Fort boundaries, features boating, camping, fishing and picnic facilities. Over the causeway in Mobile are historic Blakeley State Park and USS *Alabama* Battleship Memorial Park. The Five Rivers Alabama Delta Resource Center is an educational facility and outdoor recreation center that provides programming and interpretation on the geography, biology and history of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta.

TALLASSEE • Class of 2017 • Designated 2019 • tallasseeal.gov

With a population of just under 4,800, Tallassee, which was incorporated in 1835, is situated on the banks of the Tallapoosa River and resides in two counties, Elmore and Tallapoosa. Tallassee’s section of the Tallapoosa River is on the Alabama Scenic River Trail and just a few miles south of the heart of downtown lies the former capital of the Creek Nation, Tukabachi. It was here that the great warrior Tecumseh made his impassioned speech to the Creeks to become part of a confederation to fight the white settlers. Ultimately, the Creeks joined in the war party, called the “Red Sticks,” but were defeated by Andrew Jackson.

The Tallassee Riverwalk provides a place to walk, run, and picnic for any fitness level. It’s a short easy walk on Lake Talisi and the nature trail, opened in 2015, is a popular addition to the area. The asphalt trail is accessible for the handicapped, and the shady trail scattered with benches makes for a pleasant stroll or run. Community events that attract visitors include Trade Day in the fall and Tallassee Now! in June. In addition, Thurlow Dam is situated right in the heart of downtown Tallassee and when all the gates are down, it’s easy to see why it’s called “Little Niagara.” The Benjamin Fitzpatrick bridge, which spans the dam and river, is an engineering feat, and the power plant, which is open for tours during Tallassee Now!, sits on the west side of the dam. The Tallassee Commercial Historic District and the Tallassee Mill are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Confederate Arsenal House (Elliott House), the First United Methodist Church, Herron Hill and the Tallassee Mill are all listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage.

THOMASVILLE • Class of 2005 • Designated 2007 • thomasvilleal.com

Thomasville, which was incorporated in 1888, is located in northeast Clarke County in the southwest part of the state and is the center of a vast regional trade area that draws 80,000-plus shoppers to its merchants from portions of six Alabama counties. Situated 100 miles from the nearest urban center in one of Alabama’s poorest regions, Thomasville is shifting the narrative for a multi-county area within the Black Belt through collaboration, forward-thinking and steadfastly refusing to accept the status quo.

With a population of just over 3,600, Thomasville is home to five city parks with softball and baseball fields, playgrounds, picnic pavilions and a walking track; historical attractions such as the A.L. Martin Museum, Kathryn Tucker Windham Museum and site of the first Miles College; a renovated Civic Center as well as annual festivals, theatrical productions, concerts, sports and many recreational outlets. The Thomasville Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Thomasville High School is listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage.



VALLEY • Class of 2003 • Designated 2006 • cityofvalley.com

Valley was incorporated in 1980 combining the four textile mill villages of Fairfax, Langdale, Riverview, and Shawmut. The city lies on the banks of the Chattahoochee River – the state border between Alabama and Georgia – and is located in Chambers County on Interstate 85 halfway between Montgomery and Atlanta. It is 75 miles southwest of Atlanta-Hartsfield International Airport and 85 miles northeast of Montgomery Regional Airport-Dannelly Field Airport.

With a population of just over 10,500, Valley has a proud southern, textile-mill heritage and is committed to preserving the historic structures that still exist in the community. The Fairfax, Langdale, Riverview and Shawmut historic districts are all on the National Register of Historic Districts and the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage. The Valley Community Center offers fitness facilities that include racquetball courts, and an adjacent sports complex has multi-use athletics fields, tennis courts and soccer fields. Outdoor recreational opportunities include a 7.1-mile walking track built on the bed of the former Chattahoochee Valley Railway. The Chattahoochee River, which borders the town on the east, offers fishing, swimming and boating opportunities. ■



Where a municipality has created, by ordinance, the office of city attorney and the ordinance fails to designate the appointing authority, the Mayor is the appointing authority for the city attorney. AGO 2009-054. **NOTE:** Where a municipality contracts with an attorney to provide legal services for the municipality, the council must approve the contract and its terms.

After the *Coachman* case, the Attorney General opined that the specific language of Sections 11-43-3 and 11-43-4 doesn't limit the council's appointment power only to statutorily listed "offices." Instead, the Attorney General noted that "Section 11-43-3 authorizes a city council to elect any officer whose election is required by ordinance, to prescribe the duties, to fix salaries and to set the terms of office for these officers." Therefore, the Attorney General concluded that the legislature has created a method for the council to designate other positions than those specifically listed by statute and designate those positions as officers. The Attorney General, though, stated that there are limitations on the council's power to designate certain positions as officers. Using the definition in Black's Law Dictionary, the Attorney General concluded that: "any office created by a city council must be assigned specific duties and hold a position of authority. Paramount to the authority of an officer is the ability to discharge some portion of the sovereign power."

The Supreme Court of Alabama, in defining the term "office" stated the following:

"We apprehend that the term "office" implies a delegation of a portion of the sovereign power, and the possession of it by the person filling the office; and the exercise of such power, within legal limits, constitutes the correct discharge of the duties of such office. The power thus delegated and possessed may be a portion belonging sometimes to one of the three great departments, and sometimes to another; still, it is a legal power, which may be rightfully exercised, and, in its effects, will bind the rights of others, and be subject to revision and correction only according to the standing laws of the state. An employment, merely, has none of these distinguishing features.'" *State v. Stone*, 240 Ala. 677,680, 200 So. 756, 758 (1941). An employee, instead, is someone who "works within the service of another person (the employer) under an express or implied contract for hire (A)n officer must have responsibilities and hold a position that is superior to that of an employee. Accordingly, an officer is limited to a person that exercises some level of authority, presumably over employees, and performs some discretionary, policy-making functions."

In summary, according to the *Coachman* case, the mayor has the power to appoint anyone whose appointment "is not otherwise provided for by (state) law." State law clearly provides that the council shall appoint certain positions, such as clerk and treasurer. State law also allows the council to designate certain

positions as "officers" by ordinance and, therefore, fill those positions. However, not every position within the municipality can be designated as an office. In order to hold an office, a person must exercise some "level of authority, presumably over employees" and perform discretionary, policy-making functions. If so, the council may pass an ordinance making these positions officers of the municipality.

Municipal Finances & Spending Money

While the mayor plays an important role in the disbursement of municipal funds, the council, with one primary exception discussed below, has complete control over municipal funds and determines when and how those funds may be spent. Warrants must be drawn by the clerk, approved by the mayor *or such other person as the council designates* and presented to the treasurer for payment. The Alabama Supreme Court held in *Edwards v. 1st National Bank of Brewton*, 377 So.2d 966 (1979), the council may, by ordinance, remove the mayor's authority to sign checks. *See*, AGO 1990-284; *see also*, AGO 2001-260.

All expenditures of municipal funds must be specifically approved by the mayor *or by some other person designated by the council.* Section 11-43-120, Code of Alabama 1975. (Emphasis added). The council, however, may make a purchase over the objection of the mayor. AGO to Hon. Norman Plunkett, June 22, 1977.

Further, Section 11-43-120 provides that no warrant shall be drawn except by the authority of law or ordinance, and the treasurer shall allow no expenditure unless it is approved by ordinance or by the mayor. If the mayor questions the legality of an expenditure, the clerk and treasurer and, if necessary, the city attorney, should be consulted about the matter. It is important for mayors to understand that they may be held *personally* responsible for expenditures not authorized by the council and made on the basis of his or her sole approval. *See, Altmayer v. Daphne*, 613 So.2d 366 (Ala. 1993). Additionally, the council should stress that only those with authority to authorize expenditures should do so, because in *Brannan and Guy, P.C. v. Montgomery*, 828 So.2d 914 (2002), the Alabama Supreme Court held where the council has authorized the mayor to set the compensation rates of contract attorneys, a discussion of rates between the city attorney and the contract attorney at the request of the mayor does not create a unilateral contract that binds the city.

While it is unnecessary for the council to validate each disbursement individually, Section 11-43-120 requires that all claims, requisitions and demands against a municipality for goods purchased or debts incurred be presented to the council for approval, unless already provided by ordinance or resolution. Before spending money, the mayor should always

ask “where is the authority from the council for me to spend this money?”

The one exception to the council authorizing spending money is the hiring of an accountant by the mayor to perform the annual municipal audit. Section 11-43-85, Code of Alabama 1975, requires the mayor to secure an accountant to perform an annual audit. The council does not have authority to appoint its own accountant in lieu of the mayor’s appointment. Further, the mayor is authorized to fix the accountant’s fee without the approval of the council and the council is legally obligated to pay a reasonable amount for these services. If the council is not satisfied with the audit provided by the mayor’s accountant, the council may order an additional audit to be made by an auditor of its choice. In the League’s opinion, absent some further finding by a court with jurisdiction, this additional audit would not take the place of the official audit obtained by the mayor pursuant to Section 11-43-85, Code of Alabama 1975.

The council is required to appropriate the sums necessary for the expenditures of city departments, and for interest on indebtedness, not exceeding in the aggregate 10 percent of its estimated receipts. In addition, the council cannot appropriate in the aggregate an amount in excess of its annual legally-authorized revenue. Section 11-43-57, Code of Alabama 1975.

While a city is not required to adopt a budget, most municipalities do so to ensure that citizens obtain maximum service for each tax dollar. As chief executive officer, the mayor is in the best position to determine the requirements of the various municipal departments. While the mayor does not draft the final budget, he or she compiles estimates of revenues and expenses and presents those figures to the council along with recommendations for appropriations and for revenue-raising procedures, if necessary. The municipal budget is not considered permanent and, therefore, is not subject to the mayor’s veto. AGO 1991-180.

One final note about municipal finances. Section 11-43-84, Code of Alabama 1975, requires the mayor, as chief executive officer, to present a written statement to the council at least once every six months showing the financial condition of the municipality and the steps the mayor proposes to take for the protection of the city or town. This section also states that the mayor shall require any officer of the city or town to make a

report at such times as the mayor or the council directs. This authority is intended to facilitate supervision of the various municipal departments and officials and to assist the mayor in making reports to the council.

Municipal Contracts

The Alabama Supreme Court has held that, absent authorization from the council, the mayor does not have the authority to enter into and execute a contract on behalf of the municipality. While the Court recognized that the mayor is authorized to enter into and to execute contracts, it determined that the authority cannot be exercised without the direction and authorization of the council. *Town of Boligee v. Greene County Water & Sewer Auth.*, 77 So.3d 1166 (Ala. 2011). Accordingly, the general rule is that the only method by which an employee or official may expend funds or be given authority to bind the municipality to a contract is by an affirmative vote of the council reflected in the minutes. An exception is the mayor’s authority to contract for an annual municipal audit pursuant to Section 11-43-85, Code of Alabama 1975.

The mayor is required to see that all contracts with the municipality are faithfully performed or kept. The mayor is required to execute all deeds and contracts and bonds required in judicial proceedings for and on behalf of the city or town. No sureties shall be required on the bond. Section 11-43-83, Code of Alabama 1975.

Conclusion

Keeping in mind the exceptions noted in this article, the decision making authority as between the mayor and council can be summed up this way: (1) With regard to hiring, the mayor determines who is going to be hired assuming the council has authorized the money to fund the position; (2) With regard to spending money, the council is in control of and has the final decision over how municipal money is spent and who may spend it; and (3) With regard to municipal contracts, while the mayor is charged with executing contracts, the council has the final decision making authority to enter into contracts which bind a municipality. For further information or questions, please contact the League Legal Department. ■

Lori joined the League's legal department in 2001, bringing with her a solid background in local government issues after practicing law in Montgomery, Alabama, where her primary clients were county officials. In addition, she gained in-depth experience working with the state legislature while serving as a legislative analyst for the Alabama Legislative Reference Service for two years. Lori presently serves as the League's General Counsel and is responsible for advising municipal officials and employees from over 400 member cities and towns. She also works closely with the League's state and federal legislative agenda and is a frequent speaker on issues relating to municipal law in Alabama. Originally from Las Cruces, New Mexico, Lori received a bachelor of science degree from Auburn University's College of Engineering in Textile Management and Technology in 1992 and then returned to New Mexico and earned her law degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law in 1996. She is licensed to practice law in Alabama, New Mexico and Colorado. Additionally, she is a member of the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA), the Alabama Association of Municipal Attorneys (AAMA) and the American Bar Association.



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