



ALM Spotlights Guin's Economic Development Academy Experience

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The Alabama League of Municipalities is pleased to recognize the city of Guin for our second Economic Development Academy spotlight in this publication. Guin is located in Marion County in northwest Alabama and has a population of approximately 2,500. Guin city officials graduated from the first EDA class in 2022, which consisted of 30 municipalities taking part in regional trainings. Mayor Phil Segraves, Councilmember Mineo Lindsey and City Attorney

Matt LeDuke represented the city of Guin at EDA classes. The academy is specifically designed to educate and engage municipal officials and designated community business leaders on best practices and strategies for successful economic and community development. EDA also focuses on the role of elected officials regarding evaluating abatements, legal processes and implications, correctly marketing the community, gauging the community's expectations,

workforce development as well as other key aspects of the development process. Like many small towns and cities, Guin finds itself trying to attract new companies looking to invest in Alabama.

Guin owes its creation to the railroad system. Guin was established in 1889 on Dr. Jeremiah Guin's farm. This was the site where the Frisco Railroad met between Memphis, Tennessee and Birmingham. Guin is home to America's first combined senior center/disaster shelter facility called the Collins Life Center; it is home to the only public/school library in Alabama and is the location for the first high school in the county. Guin is also known for having the manufacturing company 3M; boasting several high school athletic championships in football, basketball, track and cheerleading; and being devastated by an EF-5 tornado in 1974.

Mayor Segraves was born and raised in Guin, so he has a special appreciation for helping it to expand and thrive. His father actually served on the Guin City Council for 32 years. Taking after him, Mayor Segraves decided to run for office. He was first elected as mayor in 2000 and has served 19 years non-consecutively.

Mayor Segraves said that the city participated in EDA to learn how to better prepare for economic development



Twelve Tesla charging stations have been installed at the Holiday Inn parking lot in Guin.



and growth. He said, “I was very pleased with the high expertise of speakers and material that was given to each city. The academy brought in qualified professionals, who were well respected and accomplished in their field, to teach our class.”

EDA was developed by Bryan Parker, ALM director of government affairs, and Neal Wade, former director of the Alabama Development Office. They created the curriculum and facilitate the classes in conjunction with the Alabama Community College System.

Parker said, “The many years of experience I have gained in economic development coupled with that of Neal Wade, along with the resources of ACCS, presents a unique opportunity for us to teach municipal leaders about a variety of factors that they need to consider when not only recruiting businesses but retaining them as well. We try to make the program as engaging and real world as possible by including prominent guest speakers, thought provoking activities and presenting current legislative and policy updates.”

One requirement of EDA is for participating municipalities to implement an approved project or program and follow reporting requirements. Guin’s project was focused on recruiting a housing contractor to build residential housing in their city to help with the recruitment of industry and retail development. Downtown Guin boasts a former manufacturing site that is well positioned for redevelopment as a mixed-use project to include commercial offices and downtown housing.

Although Guin is modest in size, the city in partnership with the Holiday Inn of Guin, has managed to successfully recruit Tesla for the recharging of their electrical vehicles. Twelve super charging stations have been installed and six additional universal supercharging stations will be installed in the near future. So much of who the city is has been based on access to the railroad, and now the completion of I-22, which connects Memphis to Atlanta by way of Birmingham, is giving them more leverage in their recruitment efforts to their 220-acre commercial park and their industrial park.

Furthermore, Guin has been active with the League for many years. It was designated as an Alabama Community of Excellence in 2005 and an ALM Certified Municipality in 2019. Mayor Segraves served as the League’s president in 2016 and currently serves on the board of directors.



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In 1954, 3M broke ground on a 60-acre site in Guin that used to be a cotton field. It is now one of the largest employers in the area.



The Holiday Inn of Guin is located right off of I-22.

He exclaimed, “Knowledge is an acquired commodity. Being involved in the CMO and ACE programs has allowed me to expand my base. Identifying resources, developing a plan to build on your assets, and improving your areas of concern are all part of the CMO and ACE programs. The relationships you develop along the way are priceless, and it is imperative that we stay active and current in the community.”

Guin is certainly doing all it can to make its case for being current by earning the distinction of being an Alabama GIG Community. Gigabit refers to a data transfer rate of 1,000 megabits-per-second (Mbps), which means his city’s broadband speed is by far way faster than the national standard. The Federal Communications Commission’s broadband speed benchmark is 25 Mbps for downloading and 3 Mbps for uploading data.

Mayor Segraves is very proud of all that Guin has achieved during his tenure, but he is keeping his sights set

on the future. As for those that are interested in participating in EDA, the mayor has this advice to share, “Treat this as an investment of your time and resources to improve your city.”

ALM is accepting EDA applications until August 30, 2023; up to 10 communities will be accepted. For more information, visit the EDA webpage (almonline.org/EconomicDevelopmentAcademy), or contact Bryan Parker at bparker@almonline.org. ■



Mayor Phil Segraves showcases a state marker featuring Guin's history.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

The EDA was launched in 2021 and is specifically designed to educate and engage municipal officials on the essential elements and phases of economic development while highlighting their vital role in economic initiatives and projects within their communities.

Application for 2024 class closes August 30