



CLEAR PLAN 2030

ACTION • CONNECTIONS • LIVABILITY

Livability Magazine

VOLUME 1: ISSUE 1

What is the Clear Plan?

*The People of East Alabama have
Spoken....
What are They Saying?*

What is Livability?

*Assets and Opportunities for the Future of the
Residents of the East Alabama Region*

MARCH 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>What is Clear Plan 2030?: A Brief Description</u>	pg.3
<u>Livability</u>	pg.4
What is Livability?.....	pg.4
Partnership for Sustainable Communities.....	pg.6
Establishment	pg.6
Six Principles of Livability.....	pg.7
Examples of Livability (Case Studies)	pg.8
Two Cities Envision a Sustainable Future Together—The Power of Partnership.....	pg.8
Aiming to be “New England’s Greenest City—The Power of Partnership.....	pg.10
Providing Transportation Choices in a Rural Area—The Power of Federal Cooperation and Community Engagement	pg.11
<u>Planning for Livability in the East Alabama Region</u>	pg.12
Project Timeline.....	pg.12
Consortium and Livability Resource Teams.....	pg.13
Public Engagement	pg.14
Communication and Input.....	pg.14
Survey Says.....	pg.15
<u>About the East Alabama Region: Assets and Opportunities</u>	pg.21
Baseball Legend Yoggi Berra.....	pg.21
Assets	pg.21
An Economic Engine	pg.21
Relax and Allow the East Alabama Region to Take the Driver’s Seat	pg.22
Alabama’s Largest Forest and Tallest Mountain	pg.22
Let’s Give a 21-gun Salute	pg.23
Let Us Take You on a Trip Through History and Around the World	pg.23
Gentlemen Start Your Engines	pg.24
Yes Sergeant... but	pg.24
Water On Top of A Mountain.....	pg.25
A Bicyclist’s Paradise.....	pg.25
Crappie Capital of the World.....	pg.26
Conquer the Americas!	pg.26
Fallen Love	pg.27
Most Beautiful Lake in the South	pg.28
Opportunities.....	pg.28
Education	pg.29
Economic Competitiveness.....	pg.30
Housing.....	pg.31
Transportation	pg.32
Community Engagement	pg.33
Healthcare	pg.33
<u>What You Can Do to Help Promote Livability in Your Community: Practical Tips</u>	pg.35

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Good things rarely just happen. They usually start with an idea; a spark that grows into a glowing ember which can ultimately become a burning passion. There are many contributors to this project that are passionate about truly livable communities and without their support and commitment, this project would have never evolved to where it is now.

The residents of the East Alabama Region

East Alabama Partnership for Livability

Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers

Alabama Power: A Southern Company

Calhoun Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Collaborative Solutions, Inc.

Community Action Agency of Talladega, Clay, Randolph, Calhoun and Cleburne Counties

Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama

Coosa Valley Resource Conservation and Development Council

East Alabama Mayors Association

East Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission

Gadsden/Etowah County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Jacksonville State University

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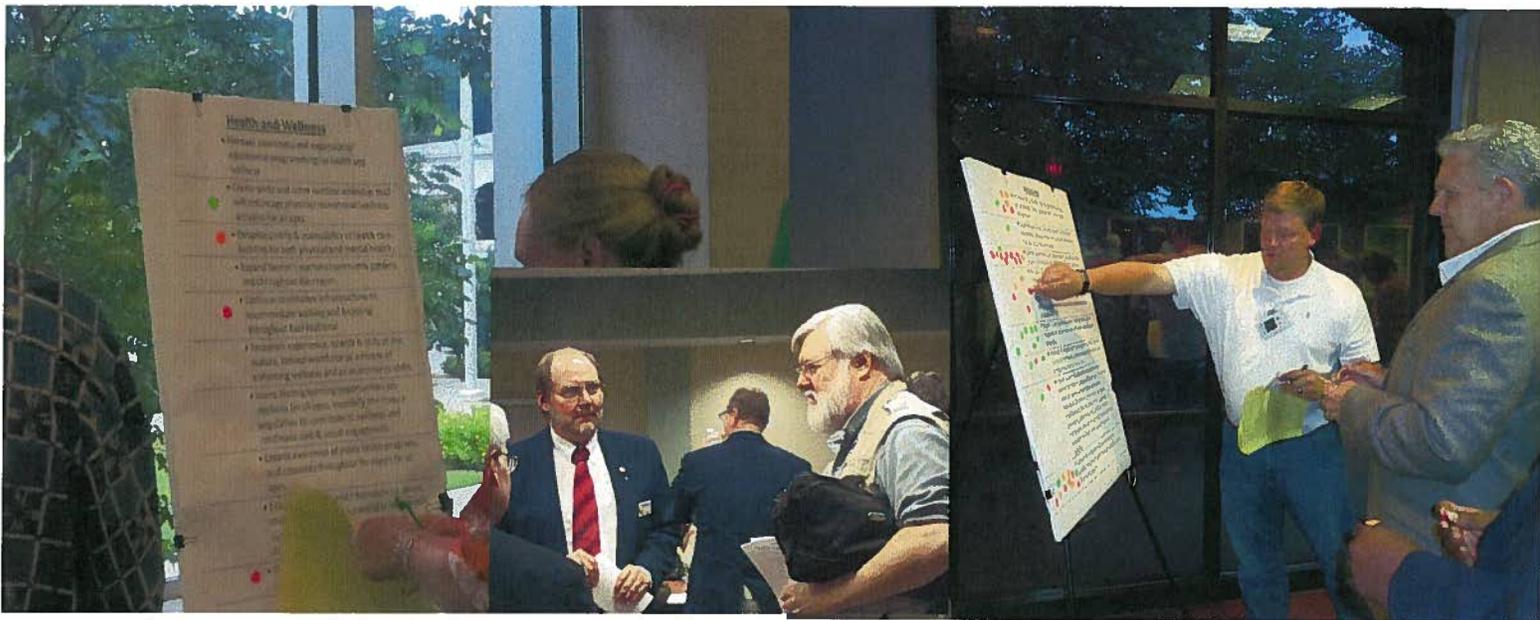
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What is the Clear Plan? CLEAR PLAN 2030 (Community Livability in the East Alabama Region) is a plan intended to fully utilize available resources in order to promote and enhance community livability throughout the 10 county East Alabama Region. The planning process for the plan chiefly involved community participation in order to determine barriers and solutions to livability as well as goals and strategies for continued improvement.

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

Henry Ford



Livability

What Is Livability?

Livability. The word conjures a state of comfort and positive feelings. However, many people have a wide variety of different ideas and thoughts as to what livability means to them. Some people may view livability in a community as having an attractive, affordable home to live in, along with friendly neighbors, and a variety of employment opportunities, while other people may view livability as having good schools and a safe place for children to run, walk, and play in the natural environment. Both thoughts towards livability are on target. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary the basic definition of livability is: *survival expectancy or suitability for human living*. The Partners for Livable Communities, a non-profit leadership organization working to improve the livability of communities, defines livability as: *the sum of factors that add up to a community's quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities*. Indeed, livability encompasses a wide variety of factors that makes a natural or built environment “livable” albeit on an array of personal judgments and preferences.

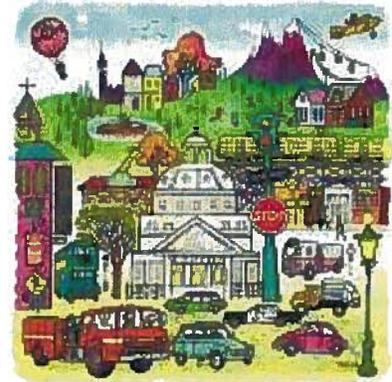


Figure 1. Livability artwork. The 27th City Livability Awards: US Conference of Mayors (grainedit.com)

Although livability may be rather ambiguous in definition, there are generally accepted principals used to identify what is and is not good livability. Perhaps the first step in identifying good livability is to determine bad livability situations. In other words, we may need to first identify some generally accepted principals of bad livability. Most communities across the nation have planned growth and

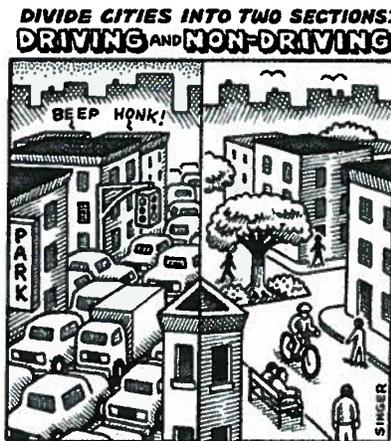


Figure 2. Driving and Non-Driving (the ALLDERBLOB)

also results in much more vehicle traffic in one district compared to another. As a community grows and

development in their communities with guidance from a zoning ordinance and the accompanying strict separation of land uses, for example residential areas existing separate from commercial and industrial areas. This separation was originally intended to protect residential neighborhoods from the noise and pollution derived from commercial and industrial production. Zoning ordinances, in general, provide useful guidance for city growth and development and still protect neighborhoods, however, in many instances strict separation of uses may not always be in the best interest of a community's goals for improving livability. Businesses and industries do not always produce as much noise and pollution as was once the case long ago. In fact, due to advances in technology, many commercial and industrial uses produce little or no noise or harmful pollution at all, but the separation is still there. Figure 2 shows that separation of uses

increases in size, so do the zoning districts, thus distancing residential uses from commercial and industrial, resulting in longer commutes to work. This in turn lengthens commute times and forces the commuter to spend more financial resources for vehicle gas, fuel, maintenance, etc. In addition, many communities have become completely auto-dependent, giving little thought to other forms of transportation such as walking, bicycling, or transit. A generally accepted bad principal of livability is a community where people have few transportation choices other than the personal automobile. On the opposing spectrum is the example of a good principal of livability where a community offers a wide variety of transportation options in order to meet growing and changing transportation needs of the community as a whole. Combining land uses, particularly commercial and residential would allow commuters the option of living closer to work, creating more convenient and efficient transportation options, such as walking or bicycling to work. Combined uses would also promote and enhance business by allowing customers to live in close proximity to shopping, dining, and entertainment establishments.

Furthermore, landscape is vitally important to community livability. Livable communities acknowledge that the general landscape of their community should be attractive to both motorists and pedestrians, creating a pleasant experience and encouraging a customer's return trip. When motorists are the central aim for business, the landscape will reflect this accommodation. Such focus often results in what planners call "strip development", where businesses feel they must have clearly viewable signage and direct roadway access along a major highway in order to catch the motorist's attention and create convenient access to their establishment. Little attention is paid to pedestrian accommodations such as sidewalks, benches, and shade trees, which promotes other transportation options, and beautifies the community. Instead you have a landscape which looks a lot like the illustration in Figure 3, but probably without the more negative signage. You get the idea.

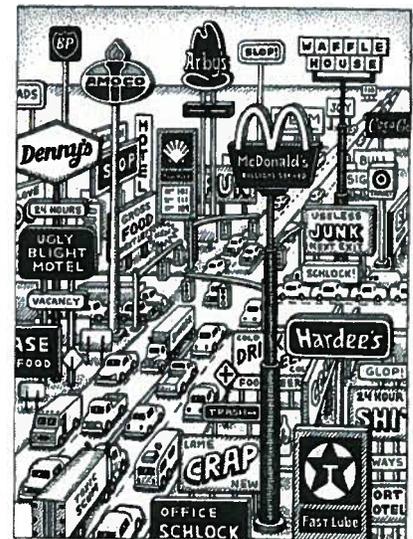


Figure 3. Strip Development Landscape (bodesignstudio.wordpress.com)

Despite the common trend, communities do not have to look like this. In order to achieve good livability a community must acknowledge choices in land use and transportation development options and work with developers, stakeholders, national, state, and local organizations and agencies, and the general public, in order to create and implement plans for improved livability in the best interest of the community as a whole. As livability improves more people, as well as businesses and development, will be drawn to the area, creating overall community prosperity.

As a first step, a community may decide to create or update the comprehensive plan, land use plan, or revitalization plan. These plans explain good planning principals and form a basis in which to identify needs and determine priority goals, objectives, and strategies for good livability. For example, without going into much detail on highway access management, the common trend is for businesses to establish multiple curb-cut access (entrances and exits) for vehicles onto their establishment, however, limiting curb-cuts allows for better traffic flow and safer, more effective pedestrian and bicycle access on sidewalks. Signage could also be regulated through smaller sign size and limitations on maximum

height. These regulations could be explained in a plan and enforced through the city’s zoning ordinance. A community may contact their city, county, or regional planning department in order to find planning assistance in creating or updating a plan and/or ordinance.

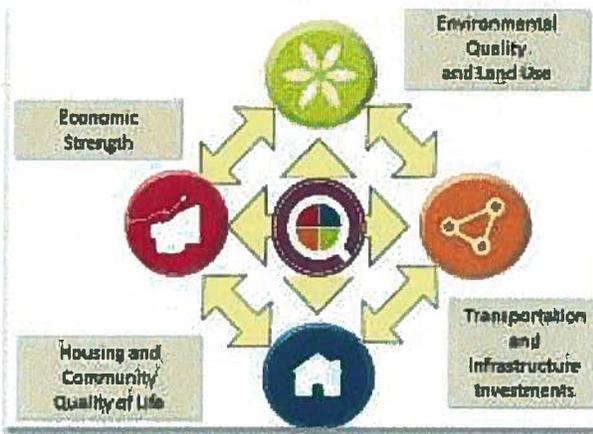
A good second step for communities in establishing their livability goals is to establish partnerships for planning assistance as well as for funding planning projects. Many small rural communities simply do not have the human and financial resources needed to carry out their plans and must seek help from an outside organization or agency. Many such organizations/agencies exist on the regional, state, and national levels. One major organization on the national level is the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, which seeks to help communities of all sizes across the nation attain their livability goals.



Partnership for SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Establishment. On June 16, 2009, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) along with the US Department of Transportation (DOT), and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined together to form the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (acknowledging that Livability and Sustainability may be used interchangeably). In October of 2010, the Partnership announced a series of grants and other assistance totaling \$409.5 million in funding to support livability investments in over 200 communities across the country. Grants were introduced on October 21st in a joint press conference at the National Press Club.

The main goal of the Partnership is to help communities across the nation become more “livable” by improving access to affordable housing, increasing transportation options, and lowering transportation



costs, all while protecting the natural environment. The Partnership works to meet community needs and improve livability by coordinating federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments in order to allow people to live closer to their jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution. This Partnership is necessary to promote livability because so many of these elements overlap and often depend on each other. President Barack Obama explains the importance of the three agencies working together by stating, “By working together, HUD, DOT, and

Figure 4. Livability Elements Diagram (Vibrant Neo 2040) *EPA, can make sure that when it comes to development—housing, transportation, energy efficiency—these things aren’t mutually exclusive; they go hand in hand. And that means making sure that affordable housing exists in close proximity to jobs and transportation. That means encouraging shorter travel times and lower travel costs. It means safer,*

greener, more livable communities.” The diagram illustrated in Figure 4. shows that elements of livability such as economic strength, environmental quality and land use, transportation and infrastructure investments, and housing and community quality of life form a mutually dependent circle, with each element dependent on each other element for continuation of the whole.



Roles of each agency in the Partnership entail the following:

HUD:

- Community Development Block Grants
- Regional Planning
- Local Challenge
- Affordable Housing Programs

DOT:

- Tiger Grants
- FTA Programs
- FHWA Flex Funding
- United We Ride
- FHWA Livability Efforts

- State/Metro Planning

Figure 5. Logos for the three agencies (epa.gov)

EPA:

- Brownfields Restoration
- Smart Growth Technical Assistance
- Water Infrastructure Funds

Six Principals of Livability. For organization of policies, programs, and legislation Partnership agencies incorporated six principals of livability, with corresponding goals, listed as follows:

Principal: Provide more Transportation Choices.

Goal: To develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation’s dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.

Principal: Promote Equitable and Affordable Housing.

Goal: To expand location and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

Principal: Enhance Economic Competitiveness.

Goal: To improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.

Principal: Support Existing Communities.

Goal: To target federal funding toward existing communities through strategies such as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling in order to increase community revitalization and the

efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.

Principal: Coordinate and Leverage Federal Policies and Investment.

Goal: To align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and



increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

Principal: Value Communities and Neighborhoods.

Goal: To enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods.

Figure 6. Livable Communities. (AARP International Journal)

For more information on the Partnership go to www.sustainablecommunities.gov

Examples of Livability (Case Studies)

Since 2009 the Partnership for Sustainable Communities has been laying the groundwork for improving livability and meeting community goals and needs by enhancing local economies, transportation, housing, and protecting the environment. The following are simply a few of the many examples of how the Partnership has enhanced livability across the nation on the local level.

Two Cities Envision a Sustainable Future Together—The Power of Partnership.

For many years the neighboring West Virginia communities of Ranson and Charles Town had been fighting the negative impacts of manufacturing closures, as well as increasing growth pressure from the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Over the past several years, Ranson lost more than 1,500 manufacturing jobs, as factories closed down, leaving the community with contaminated, vacant sites and an economic decline in the downtown area. At the same time, Jefferson County’s population was steadily growing, but with little guidance. Joining forces with the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, Ranson and Charles Town developed a revitalization plan.



Figure 7. Ranson Centennial.
(kableteam.com)

To begin the process, EPA awarded both communities brownfield assessment grants in 2001, 2004, and 2006 in order to assess the Ranson manufacturing sites for contamination and cleanup priorities. The grants also made possible the construction of a college academic center—the first LEED-certified commercial building in West Virginia—located on a former brownfield site. The local university is also transforming an abandoned manufacturing facility into a LEED-certified office building. According to Ranson’s city manager, the university investment will bring in hundreds of jobs to the community.

Continuing in 2010, the two cities received a Challenge Planning Grant and a DOT TIGER II Planning Grant from federal agencies to fund and develop a cohesive plan that uses vacant, previously contaminated land for economic development, links transportation to land use, protects the environment, and provides more affordable housing. The City of Ranson received technical assistance through EPA’s Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program to strengthen the plan. EPA worked with elected officials, stakeholders, and the public to identify areas for growth and analyze existing community tools. This assistance in planning resulted in a clear and specific action plan that helped Ranson implement the three grants. The plan centers on transforming Fairfax Boulevard, the main thoroughfare (1.6 miles) between the two cities into a “green corridor” which provides a walkable, bike-able connection between the two cities and also a “complete street” roadway design to provide enhanced safety for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Funding was also used to help transform a rundown historic building into a regional commuter center in downtown Charles Town, which will provide residents and workers with access to regional trains and buses.



Figure 8. Ranson/Charles Town Corridor Plan. (fhwa.dot.gov)

Ranson also received a Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant which allowed the city to create a downtown plan (Lakeland Place) to develop six cleaned-up brownfields and spur economic development in this area. In addition, the city plans to use a HUD Brownfields Economic Development Initiative Grant and Section 108 loan to clean up a former foundry and redevelop the land as Powhatan Place, a mixed-use, LEED-certified development with a variety of housing types, stores, and recreational areas. The Ranson/Charles Town Corridor Plan has been selected by the Partnership to serve as a national model for how small rural cities on the fringe of a major metropolitan area can foster sustainable

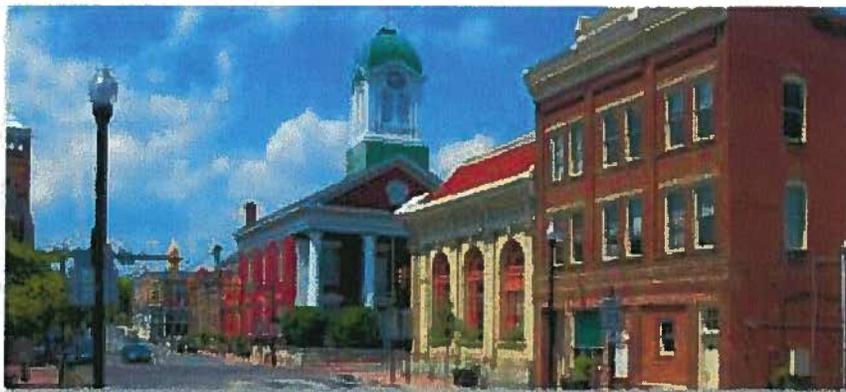


Figure 9. Downtown Charles Town, WV. (wvcommerce.org)

economic development, transit, and community livability through targeted strategic planning and infrastructure investments. The plan also models the power of cooperation in the success of two communities working to meet mutual goals for growth, development, and a sustainable future.

Ranson City Manager, Andy Blake, explains how successful the plan was by stating, “*All the stars aligned—transportation, zoning, the environment, workforce housing. The Partnership allowed us to refine our plans into implementable steps to create a sustainable community for generations to come.*” In 2010 the City of Ranson celebrated 100 years of progress, from 1910 to 2010, in its Centennial

Celebration. To learn more about Ranson go to www.cityofransonwv.net and to learn about the plan and receive updates go to www.ransonrenewed.com.

Aiming to Be “New England’s Greenest City—The Power of Partnership

The City of Bridgeport, CT, located on the Atlantic coast between New York City and Providence, was at one time a thriving industrial and shipping center for the New England Region. However, over the past 50 years, the city has been in decline. Today many residents suffer from higher asthma rates due to air pollution. Many residents also lack easy access to fresh food, jobs, and public transportation.

Bridgeport, prior to 2009, received grants from DOT, EPA, and HUD, but never in a coordinated effort to alleviate the city’s problems as a whole and persist in a positive direction. That approach changed in 2009 when the three agencies formed the Partnership and established a coordinated effort to plan and change Bridgeport’s future by examining the entire community at once. Monthly meetings with the agencies began the discussions of coordinated assistance. One of the ideas from the meetings centered around a brownfield cleanup site which would serve as a catalyst for a new transit center with nearby affordable housing, a health clinic, or a full-service grocery store. By combining efforts for funding and technical expertise, the three agencies are working together to help Bridgeport attain sustainability goals. In 2009 Bridgeport received an EPA Environmental Justice Showcase Community Grant which made many improvements in the economically distressed East End and East Side neighborhoods, including a new fishing pier and renewed access for residents to the waterfront. In 2010, Bridgeport received an \$11 million TIGER multimodal transportation grant from DOT to build and upgrade roads around the East Side Steel Point Peninsula in order to prepare the area for redevelopment.

In addition, Bridgeport is a partner in the New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities Consortium, a large stakeholder group consisting of city, county, and regional representatives. In 2010 the Consortium received a HUD Regional Planning Grant, in part, to study the feasibility of opening

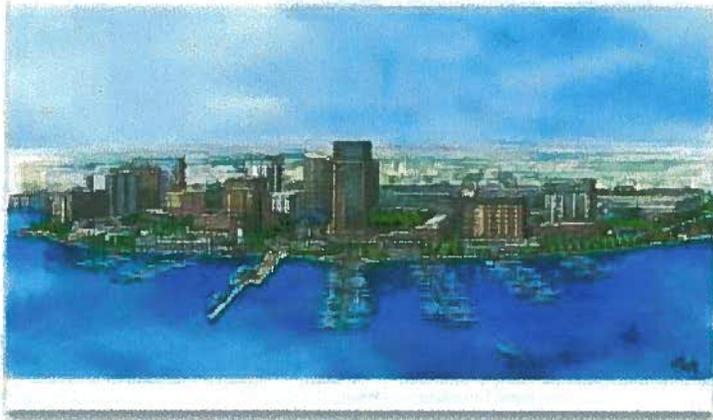


Figure 10. Barnum Station Project Visualization (ctpost.com)

Barnum Station, a proposed rail station in Bridgeport’s East End on the cleaned up brownfield site. The city currently has plans to redevelop the East End Steel Point Peninsula, Barnum Station with new business, mixed-use and transit-oriented development, and affordable housing. Barnum Station will have pedestrian and bike friendly streets that connect neighborhoods to public transit, open the waterfront to the public, and support commercial and residential development all in a single waterfront area.

Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch states the importance the Partnership plays in the development of Barnum Station in saying, “*By the federal government coordinating resources and technical expertise, we have a chance of realizing a vision such as the Barnum Station project.*” Through help from the Partnership

with revitalizations in housing, transportation, and land use the City of Bridgeport envisions becoming the greenest city in the New England region. Also in describing cooperation in the Partnership, Mayor Finch states, “*The Partnership is an example of collaborative problem-solving and unified government at its best. This collaboration has encouraged HUD, DOT, and EPA to work together to focus resources not just on transportation, housing, or the environment, but on how to coordinate all three.*”

Providing Transportation Choices in a Rural Area—The Power of Federal Cooperation and Community Engagement.

Mason County, located in northwestern Washington State, is largely rural in nature, but serves a population of over 50,000, some of whom have no other transportation options. The Mason County Transportation Authority (Mason Transit) was established in 1992 with livability goals to provide more transportation choices, coordinate policies and leverage investment, value communities and neighborhoods, and support existing communities. Although Mason Transit was founded many years prior to the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, the services provided have been an outstanding example of what a small rural area can do to provide more transportation alternatives to residents and meet growing and changing community needs. The Transit Authority provides a wide variety of transportation choices to county residents in the form of fixed and deviated route bus, dial-a-ride, volunteer driver, and park and ride services which link passengers to work, medical care, and recreational places. Through intercity worker/driver options and vanpools, commuters have access to regional employment centers. Approximately half the riders make regional trips via intercity routes and transfers to neighboring transit systems, ferries, AMTRAK, and bus service. Travel within Mason County is free, but fares apply to regional routes. In addition, Mason Transit is a leader in developing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The agency redeveloped an old warehouse into a Community Transit Center, promoting adjacent downtown pedestrian access and expanding bicycle infrastructure to support increased demand.

Mason Transit services depend largely on federal assistance and community engagement. Transit staff meet monthly with social service agencies in the county and hold public meetings to solicit input from local stakeholders on proposed route changes and other developments. Staff also work to more formally



Figure 11. Mason Transit (fta.gov)

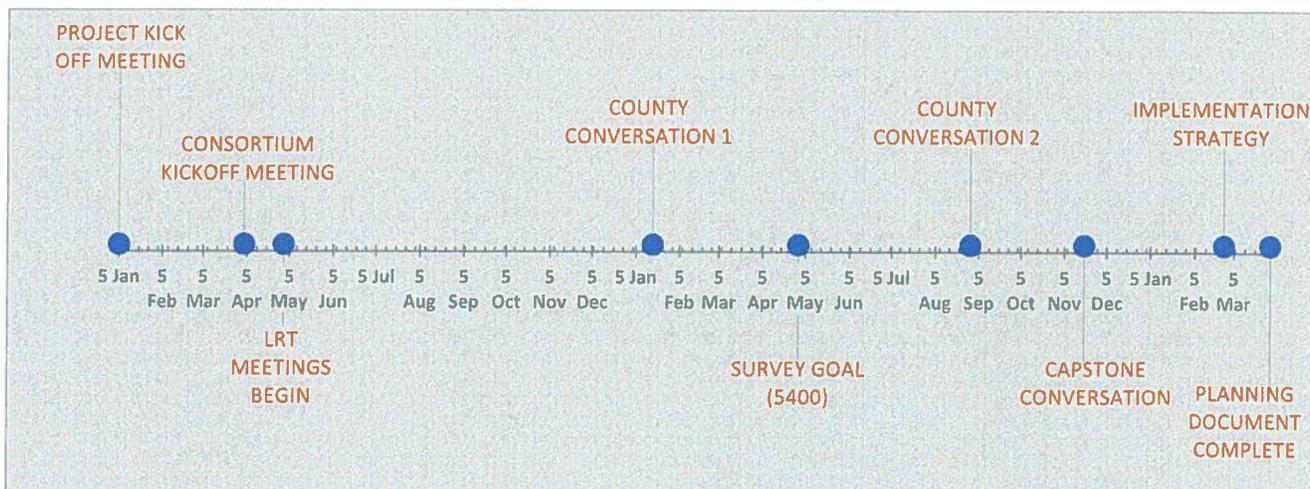
organize the volunteer drivers who bring residents to medical visits. For community educational and outreach purposes the Transit Authority Citizens Advisory Board developed a Rider’s Guide for residents with little or no experience with transit. Federal partners include the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) while state and federal funding sources comprise FTA Rural Funds, FHWA Flex Funds, grants from WA State DOT, WA Department of Ecology, and state and local sales tax revenue.

Planning for Livability in the East Alabama Region

The East Alabama Area Agency on Aging became aware of the Sustainable Communities Initiative funding opportunity and through both interdepartmental and interagency discussions formed a consortium of local entities to promote livable communities. Consortium partners are committed to the concept of planning for livable communities and promoting the six livability principles as a framework for the regional plan. The creation of the CLEAR Plan 2030 will enable residents and communities throughout the region to better understand the benefits that livable practices can offer rural and small communities.

The process to develop the plan is multifaceted. A Livability Resource Team was developed for each Livability Principle (facet) and worked to provide data and information to the residents of the region and consortium for informed decision making. The time line below describes the overall planning time frame and process.

CLEAR Plan 2030 Project Timeline



As shown by the timeline, there were several elements to this planning process. While they are individual components of the process, they did not operate independently of each other. Livability Resource Team meetings occurred throughout the project and were used to provide input and feedback to both the public and Consortium. Livability Resource Team meetings provided data – information, for the first County Conversation as well. The second County Conversation used information and output from the first County Conversation to move the project further along. So, while these may appear on the timeline as independent events, they are in fact, interconnected and occurred as a result of one another.

The foundation of this planning process is the creativity of the residents of the East Alabama Region. This is a citizen based, grass roots planning effort done by the residents of the East Alabama Region. Without their input and ideas from surveys, conversations, meetings and participation, this plan would have not evolved to the state it is in now.

Consortium and Livability Resource Teams

How does one begin the process of adding livability element to the community? The residents of the East Alabama used a three prong approach – Consortium, Livability Resource Teams and Community Engagement

The Consortium for the CLEAR Plan 2030 is composed of several public and private agencies that have a similar geographic service area as the East Alabama Regional Planning Commission.



These agencies perform philanthropic work, provide services and resources for the residents of the East Alabama region. These entities have partnered together to promote many elements of livability throughout the region.

In addition to the previously mentioned entities, departments internal to the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission have been identified as assets to this process via their missions. Entities such as the Rural Planning Organization of East Alabama, Region 5 Workforce Development Council and East Alabama Area Agency on Aging have also partnered to provide resources because of the intimate working relationships and operations already in-place throughout the region.

Livability has many facets. The 2010 Notice of Funding Availability for the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program defines livability as “a measure of integration of the housing, transportation, environmental and employment amenities accessible to residents. A livable community is one with multiple modes of transportation, different types of housing, and destinations located within an easy distance (20 minutes by transit, 15 minutes by bike or foot, 10 minutes by car) of homes”. Realizing there is much more than these elements to a truly livable community, the Consortium has suggested the CLEAR Plan 2030 contain six Livability Resource Teams (LRTs):

Community Engagement
Education

Transportation
Economic Competitiveness

Housing
Health

For the purpose of promoting the flow of information, these teams are chaired by Consortium members and consist of residents, professionals respective to each team’s topic, local elected officials, and municipal planning commission members. These teams are open to any resident who wishes to participate, regardless of race, color, religion, age, gender, socio-economic status, disability status, national origin, or veteran status.

Each LRT is tasked with specific goals and objectives; among these are collection of data relative to their area of expertise, identifying needs throughout the region, and promoting and expanding participation in each LRT. The Community Engagement LRT is no different. The Community Engagement LRT is tasked with conducting a broad based, region-wide community engagement program to build awareness, promote resident involvement in and build consensus around the livability principles and actions. Additionally, the Community Engagement LRT provides ways to engage communities traditionally marginalized from planning processes, such as low-income individuals and families, limited English speakers, persons with disabilities and the elderly.

Public Engagement

CLEAR Plan 2030 is intended to be a grass roots planning effort. Residents of the region were encouraged to participate in planning sessions, attend meetings and provide input and feedback during the entire project period and beyond. It is for this reason that outreach and education is imperative. Education of what livability is and is not, as well as how the coordinated uses of resources can improve quality of life, and how residents can become a part of the planning process played a crucial role in the success of this project.

Outreach and education was accomplished by development and distribution of printed materials throughout the region. These materials contain project background, project objective, and information on where and how to get additional information and how to get involved in the process. Additionally, once identified, outreach efforts were made to marginalized and special populations. These efforts were focused and, when feasible, made in person with as much one-to-one contact as possible.

In addition to printed material, electronic media was used to promote outreach and education. Project staff developed and maintained a project website with forum for two way communications, Facebook page and Google Plus page. These items were maintained to provide project updates, meeting dates, times and locations, and information regarding resident involvement in the project. Additionally, these elements provided open, two way forms of communication among residents, project staff, partners and interested parties.

A third form of outreach and education utilized was broadcast media. When appropriate, local access television programming was used to inform the public about the project and status, as well as promote citizen participation in the project.

Communication and Input

In addition to the previously mentioned vehicles of communication, the public was encouraged to provide information as well as feedback to the LRT's, Consortium, and project partners. One of the goals of the community engagement process was to ensure that all residents have an opportunity for their voice, thoughts and opinions to be heard and recognized.

With a substantially large area for a project of this kind, special efforts were made to have a presence in each county in the project area. This was accomplished by partnering with various Chambers of Commerce throughout the region. Virtually all counties (except one, Coosa County) have established Chambers of Commerce. These entities were used to help in outreach, education, advertising and other venues as necessary. The Chambers of Commerce also served as local champions of the project for both the business and private community members.

Project staff visited each county in the planning area to provide opportunities for the public to ask questions, give input and opinions of what they want or expect a livable community to consist of and

offer residents. Additionally, information about opportunities for residents to serve on various LRT's were offered during these visits.

In addition to open meetings in each county, a survey instrument was developed and distributed throughout the region. The population of the region consists of approximately 470,000 residents. A survey response goal of 1%, rounded up to 5,000 survey responses, was set and attained. Staff also met the 1% response goal within each county.

Survey advertisement and distribution was a considerably large task. Avenues for advertisement consisted of word-of-mouth, print media, radio and television where feasible. Press releases were sent to all newspapers throughout the region while the project website contained information regarding the survey and links to Survey Monkey to complete the survey—making it available in paper form as well as digitally. Partnerships were built with school systems and used as an avenue for survey distribution. Other avenues for survey distribution included institutions of higher learning, local civic clubs, public service entities, and human resource entities. Email distribution lists were also used, with recommendations that recipients forward the survey to family, friends, neighbors and colleagues within the region to participate in the survey. The project Facebook page contained access to the survey.

At each input phase of the project, the public was given the opportunity to review the interpretation of input as it relates to project development and provide feedback on project status. This was done through public meetings, via electronic media or by personal contact with project staff.

Survey Says...

As part of the community engagement process, residents were asked to respond to a livability survey. A survey response goal was established, based on the population of the region, to get responses from 1% of the residents. That goal was met in April, 2013. The survey is still available, and responses continue to be collected and reviewed by the project team.

The survey offered an area where respondents could write in ideas and comments as well as provide feedback on the process so far. The Word Cloud, generated at the end of this section, is a result of those ideas and comments which residents felt strongly enough about to share and bring to the forefront of the planning process.

At a quick glance, one can see ideas of most importance from those who took the survey: people, place, community, city, jobs and opportunities. These concepts represent values and cornerstones for the residents of the region, not only for themselves, but for generations. This is supported by the appearance of words such as “kids” and “children”.

Some of the comments residents took the time to share are:

“Our community/city has very few options for families of low income (ex: social service/non-profit) other than DHR we have limited restaurants, as well as limited job opportunities. There is no public transportation. Our roads are poorly maintained. The only time I have ever seen a commissioner is

during election time. It would be great to have a city/community park where all people are welcome and can enjoy outdoor time.”

“More employment opportunities. Many people in my area must drive 45 min or more to a job that will pay less than \$10 per hour.”

“We don’t have a car so it would be nice to have transportation options. More jobs need to come here.”

“Better healthcare (lower bills), better jobs, and better housing (more affordable places to live).”

To maximize responses to the survey a variety of distribution methods were employed. Working with school superintendents throughout the region, the survey was handed out to students. It was made available at public meetings such as the Calhoun Area and Gadsden/Etowah County Metropolitan Planning Organization, CLEAR Plan 2030 County Conversations, and to residents of housing authorities within the region.

Realizing the need to include the technologically savvy people throughout the region, the survey was also made available electronically – via Survey Monkey (an online survey site) and the project web site (www.clearplan2030.org). This also provided an avenue to those who could not attend a County Conversation to participate in the planning process.

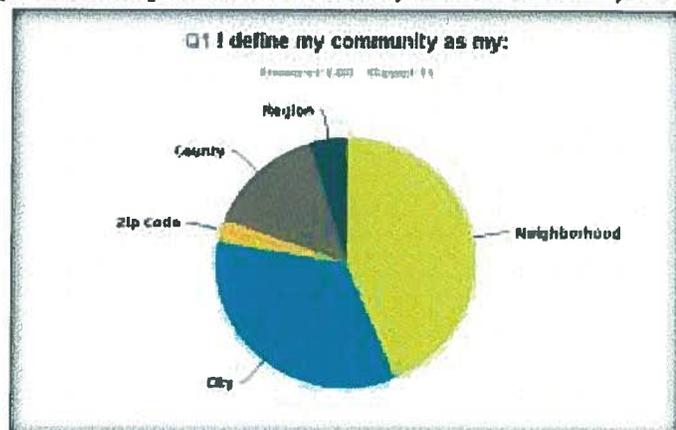
Information gathered from the survey was included in the second round of County Conversations where residents were asked to rank ideas generated from the first round of County Conversations, LRT meetings, and of course, the survey itself.

Information gathered from the survey was purely perceptual. The survey results were tallied into a regional response and that information, along with input from Livability Resource Teams, was used to guide the development on the goals and strategies for the CLEAR Plan 2030. It should be noted that this information provided the basis for a resident and community driven planning process.

Questions asked on the survey touched on the six livability principles guiding this plan. They are Community Engagement, Economic Competitiveness, Education, Housing, Transportation, and Health.

Results of the survey are online at www.clearplan2030.org and are available by individual county and for a region as a whole. Some of the more interesting responses are described below.

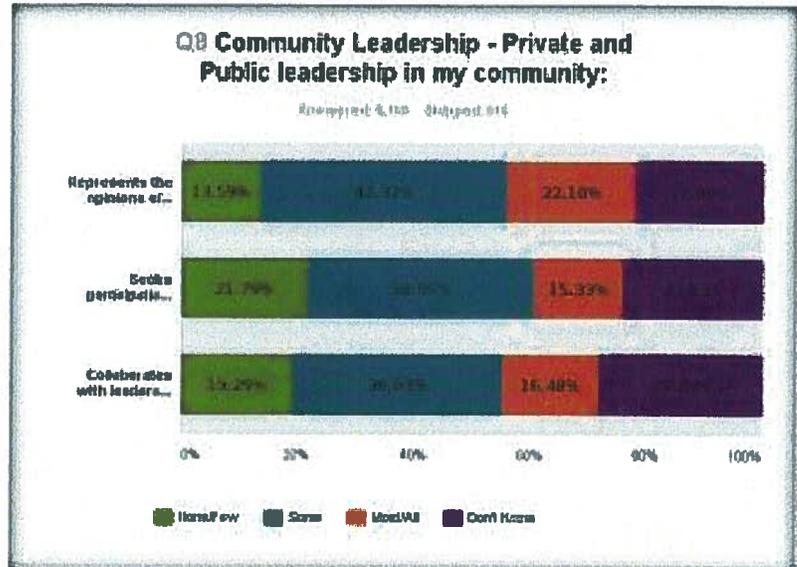
To establish this as a grass-roots planning effort, no definition of “community” was given. Residents were asked to define their community by responding to the choice they felt best described their own thoughts and ideas. Traditionally, Cities and Towns have acted independently of each other. Today, with already dwindling scarce resources, towns have been reaching out to each other



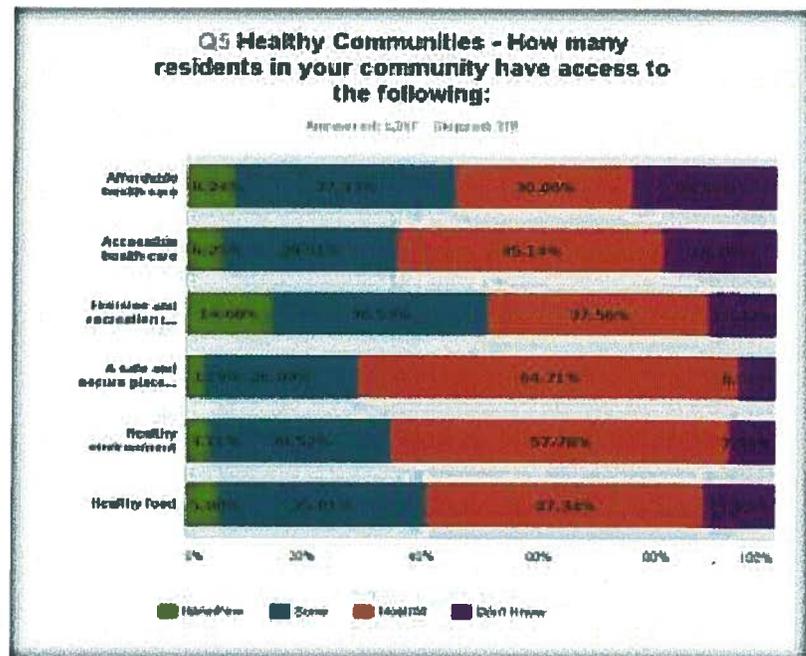
and partnering to accomplish common goals. This practice is becoming more and more the norm and proving to be beneficial to all.

When asked to define “community” most respondents replied their neighborhood was what they considered their community, followed by city. In terms of implementation for this project, one would be inclined to focus on neighborhood projects simultaneously throughout the region to meet the desired outcomes of the residents.

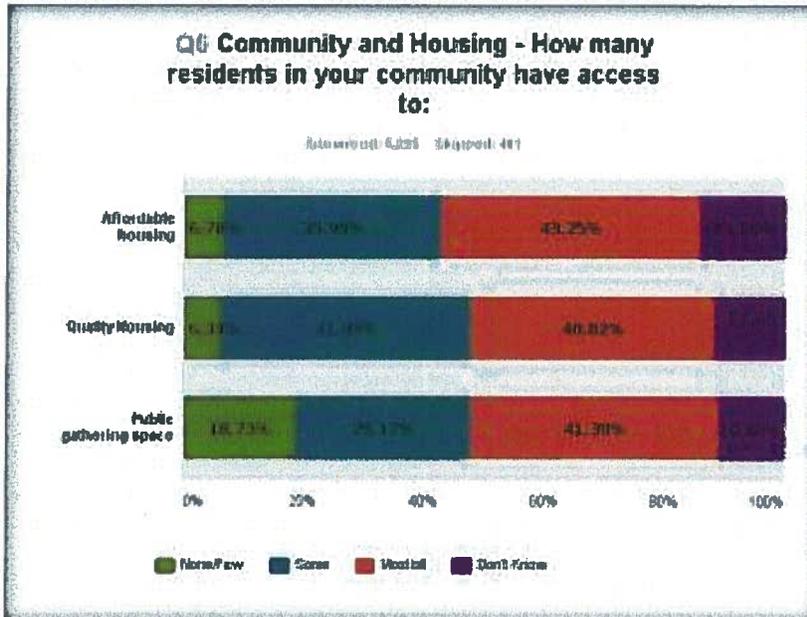
Another aspect of community that residents were asked to give feedback on was leadership and inclusiveness. The survey totals are below. Interestingly, the majority of respondents felt that only some residents were represented regarding their opinion, participation and collaboration when it comes to community involvement and leadership. The second most frequent response was “Don’t Know” and this could explain the feeling of being underrepresented – residents don’t participate. Again, this survey is perceptive and respondents were not asked to provide examples or justify their responses.



People responding to the survey were given the opportunity to express their feeling regarding the health of the region. The majority of respondents felt that most or all of the resident had access to a safe and secure place to live, healthy environment and healthy food. Those who answered this question also felt there is room for improvement in access to health care and affordable health care. A surprising 14.7% of responses indicated that none or few residents have access to exercise and recreation that promotes a healthy lifestyle. The region is known for its outdoor amenities: hunting, fishing, bicycling, hiking and even walking! Perhaps it is the lack of urban and suburban



sidewalks that leads to this perception of inaccessible exercise and recreation. Over 70% of residents surveyed responded that some or most residents have access to exercise and recreational opportunities.



Housing perception throughout the region is generally favorable. The overwhelming majority responded that residents in the region have access to both affordable and quality housing. According to the survey responses, there is room for improvement in the area of public gathering spaces. While 41% of those who responded to this question feel that most or all residents have access to public gathering space, a significant 18.7% felt that no or few residents have access to this. Some of the comments regarding gathering space are:

"I am trying to make my family and my community as healthy as possible. A big part of that is making exercise easy and inviting."

"We need more parks and community gathering spaces. We need little pocket parks that people can walk to."

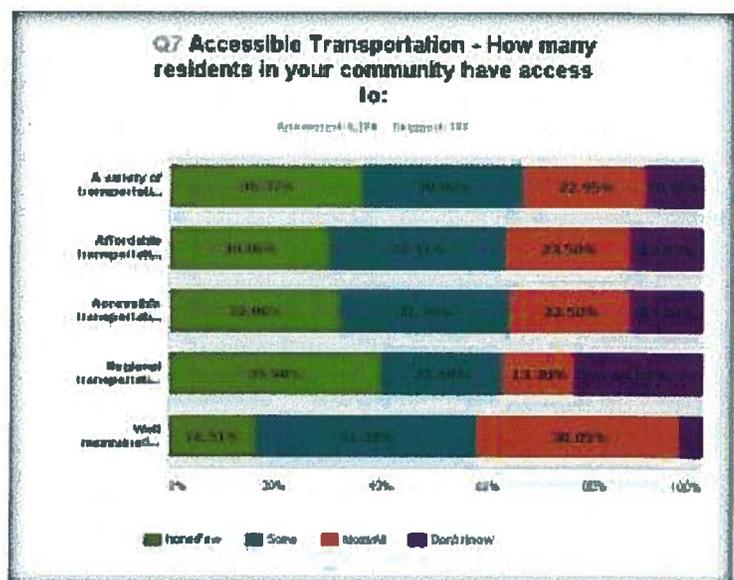
"There is so much ugliness--ugly commercial strips with chaotic signage. Somebody needs to work on design and making sure we are planning for attractive spaces."

"We need more opportunities for quality gatherings for our youth."

"A really excellent public venue for gatherings and entertainment with living accommodations attached."

"Public gathering spaces can be catalyst for revitalizing downtown areas, decrease crime, and give a community an identity – a sense of wellbeing and interconnectedness."

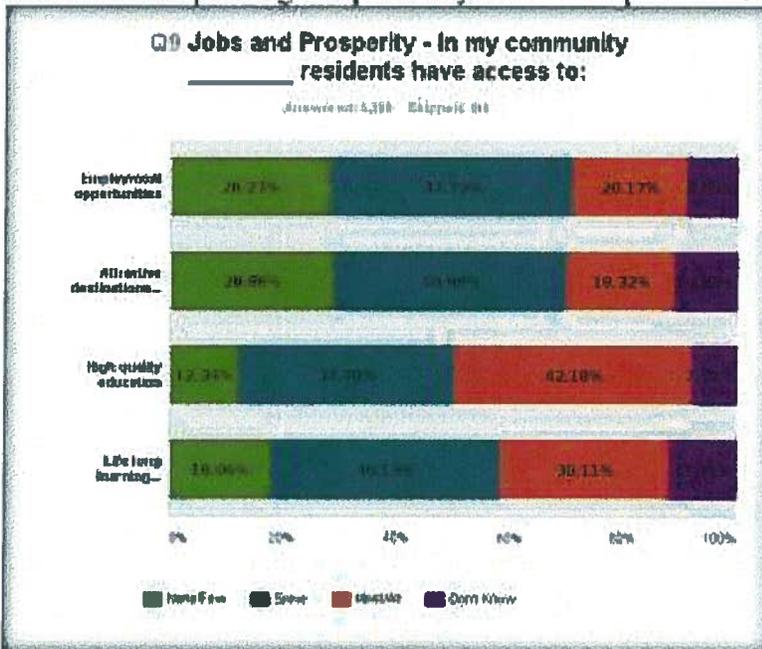
Arguably, one of the most important aspects of a livable community is that of transportation. Residents were asked to respond to a series of questions related to



transportation. It would appear from the survey responses that there is a clear need for improvement throughout the region regarding transportation needs. While the majority of respondents feel that well maintained roads are common throughout the region, there is clearly difficulty in accessing those roads. Nearly 40% of those who answered this question felt that there is no access to regional transportation. This opinion is reinforced by the fact that there is indeed no region wide public transportation system. For those lacking car ownership, merely travelling between the regions two metropolitan areas, Anniston and Gadsden can prove challenging. One resident summed up the regional transportation environment with the following statement:

“The only viable transportation for most is private automobile. Needs--lower utility bills, employment options (local), transportation (public), education opportunities, means of local communication.”

The next group of questions from the survey focused on education and employment. These two components are so closely tied together that, when the project first began, these two Livability Resource Teams met independently. After two meetings, it was apparent that these two resources should collaborate as operating independently was counterproductive. Education was not informed of the needs



of the economic sector, and vice-versa. By collaborating, these two Livability Resource teams identified needs relative to each entity, shared information, identified resources and strategized how to best resolve problems the residents of the region faced.

The survey asked resident to respond to 4 components of Economic Competitiveness. As shown by the chart at the left, only 20% of the respondents felt that most or all of the residents have access to employment opportunities. This could be due to the rural nature of the region which poses a distance, or transportation barrier to employment access. Many residents in

the most rural counties travel great distances to reach employment. Interestingly, when respondents wrote comments on the survey forms, the words “job” and “jobs” appeared 144 times. The term employment appeared 36 times. Obviously, residents feel strongly about relaying messages about the importance of jobs in their community!

Education appears to be of high quality and available to most or all residents according to the survey responses. Just under half the respondents stated that most or all of the residents in their communities had access to a quality education. Further investigation is warranted on where education is available – public or private schools, or on a primary or secondary level.

About the East Alabama Region: An Overview of Assets and Opportunities

Baseball Legend Yogi Berra...also known as Lawrence Peter, once said, “*When you come to a fork in the road...take it.*” As with many of Berra’s quotes (often called yogi-isms), most probably only Berra knew exactly what he meant by this, if anything it was most likely meant to be humorous. Of course a fork in the road indicates a choice of one of two paths to take, not an actual eating utensil. Ever since the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries in Great Britain, cities and towns often needed to make a choice between two paths. On one path the city decides that industry and big businesses forms the foundation of progress and successful growth and development, often at the expense of the community’s history and natural well-being.

Protection and preservation of the city’s history, cultural heritage, and natural well-being takes a backseat to industrial progress, often resulting in demise to some extent. Much of this philosophy was established through the famous economist Adam Smith’s writing of *The Wealth of Nations* which propositioned that, *the only legitimate goal of national government and human activity is the steady increase in the overall wealth of the nation*. The key to wealth is surplus, which is achieved by producing more with less cost, thus establishing the increasing drive for more technological improvements and innovations, even at a cost to nature. The other road forms its foundation on protecting and preserving history, culture, and nature to the extent of controlling and mitigating the type of business and industrial growth and development which would ruin the natural environment, resulting in our own harm. Environmental ethics is often based on an anthropocentric viewpoint where we have a moral obligation to preserve the natural environment because we are dependent on it for our own survival. In actuality, the ultimate goal for a city, or any type of populated geographic area, is to create a balance between commercial/industrial progress and natural/historical preservation, where both types of community assets are advanced without cost to the other, thus taking the fork, instead of just one distinct path. For progression in a positive manner the East Alabama Region strives for the fork in the road...to take it.

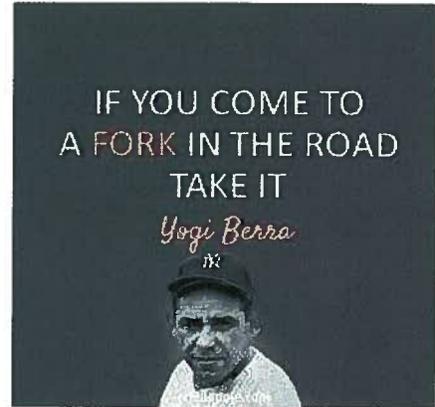


Figure 1. Yogi Berra. (wordpress.com)

Assets. The East Alabama Region showcases a wide variety of assets as foundations for business development as well as historical/cultural/natural attractions. The following is a list of a few of the major commercial/industrial and historical/natural assets located throughout the region.

An Economic Engine...is what the Honda Plant of East Alabama could be called (Honda



Manufacturing of Alabama). At the western edge of the East Alabama Region lies one of the largest automotive manufacturing facilities in the State. The Honda factory site comprises 1,350 acres, a 3.6 million square ft. plant facility, and employs approximately 4,000 associates. Models currently in production include the Honda Odyssey, Pilot, Ridgeline, Acura MDX and V-6 engines with an annual productivity at 340,000 vehicles. HMA also shares in Honda’s global leadership in environmental stewardship with commitment to the principal of “Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle”. Furthermore,

Figure 2. Honda Logo (www.zeroto60times.com)

HMA established a Zero Landfill Facility, in which factory operations sends nothing to a landfill. HMA received Energy Star awards from the US Environmental Protection Agency based on advances in curbing energy use in the production of light trucks.



Figure 3. Honda Plant in Lincoln, AL. (www.schoel.com)

Relax and Allow the East Alabama Region to Take the Driver's Seat... at the North American Bus Industry (NABI). Situated in Anniston, in the central section of the East Alabama Region is a bus manufacturing company dedicated to producing heavy-duty, attractive, utilitarian, and none-the-least eco-friendly buses intended for public transit and related applications. NABI, throughout the years, has remained "fuel neutral" as it has developed and evolved its vehicles to work equally well with conventional diesel, hybrid-electric, and natural gas propulsion systems, allowing versatility in fuel-economy and promoting the option of clean-air fuel. Recently the Anniston factory was chosen for a \$210 million contract to provide 459 natural gas-powered buses for the Dallas Area Rapid Transit System. NABI headquarters are also located in Anniston.

Alabama's Largest Forest and Tallest Mountain... is located in Talladega National Forest—with 392,567 acres and 613 square miles of mountainous woodlands at the southern edge of the Appalachian Mountains. Talladega National Forest is one of the area's major natural resource attractions. In the 1930s, before the land was purchased by the federal government, the forest was extensively overused for logging operations resulting in an abused and eroded wasteland. Today the forestland is regrown and provides abundant opportunities for hiking, bicycling, and camping among other outdoor activities. Mount Cheaha, located in Mount Cheaha State Park in the central part of Talladega National Forest, is the highest peak in the State of Alabama standing at 2,407 feet above sea level. Another important

mountain in the region is Dugger Mountain, the second highest point in the State at 2,140 feet above sea level, located in the Dugger Mountain Wilderness on the northern end of Talladega National Forest. Figures 4 and 5 show Talladega National Forest in the spring/summer and fall time from the scenic byway 281 and at the top of Mount Cheaha.



Figure 4. Talladega Nat. Forest (PL Fallin Photography)

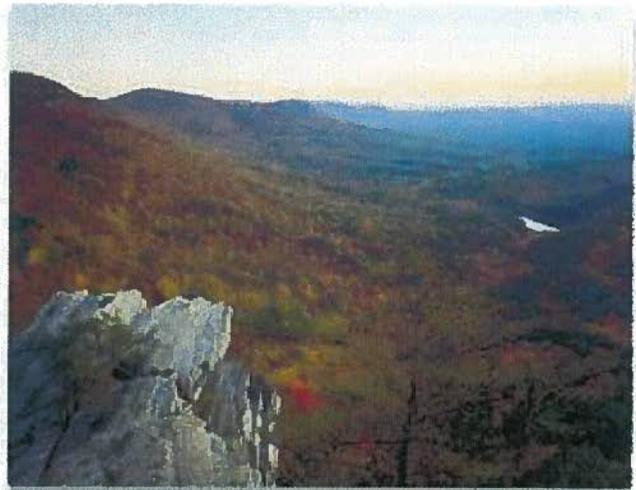


Figure 5. Talladega Nat. Forest (encyclopediaofalabama.org)

Let's Give a 21-gun Salute... to the Anniston Army Depot—which is possibly the Nation's most diversified defense resource. The Depot occupies over 25 square miles of land, just outside the City of Anniston, in the central part of the East Alabama Region, and performs depot level maintenance on military vehicles ranging in size from the small, quick assault Stryker Tank to the heavy-duty 70 ton M1 Abrams Tank, and a wide variety of military combat vehicles of sizes in-between. Additionally the depot stocks and maintains conventional ammunition and missiles, as well as seven percent of the nation's chemical munitions stockpile for demilitarization. The Department of Defense's only missile recycling center is located at the Anniston Depot. The Anniston Army Depot employs approximately 7,000 people in and around the East Alabama Region and maintains an operating budget of 880 million.

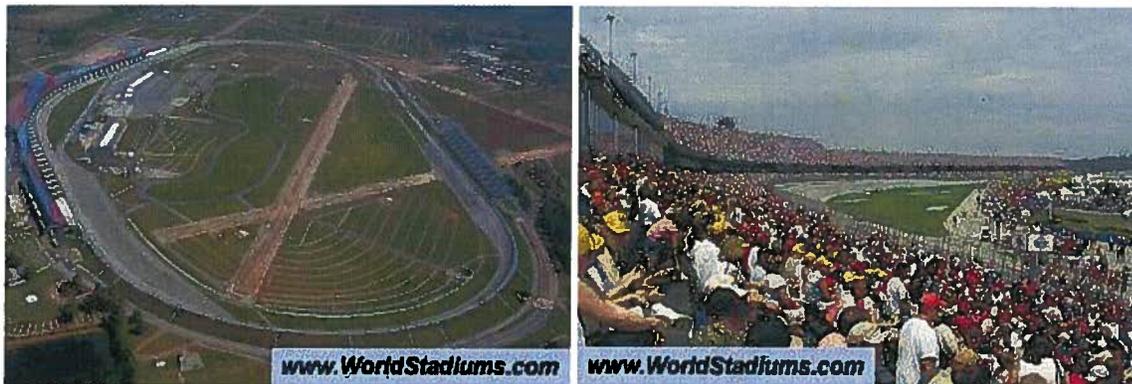
Let Us Take You on a Trip Through History and Around the World... at the Anniston Museum of Natural History and the Berman Museum of World History. Explore the wilds of Africa, the wonders of the North American wilderness, and the mysteries of 2,000 year old mummies in the seven fascinating exhibit halls of the Anniston Museum of Natural History. The museum also provides a children's discovery room, for hands-on experiences with Alabama's natural wonders, nature trails, and a museum store. After your natural history adventure take a stroll next door and journey through the history of the world at the Berman Museum of World History featuring thousands of precious historical works of art and artifacts from all over the world, such as famous oil paintings, intricate jade sculptures, expressive Remington bronzes, ancient and modern weapons, photos, clothing, hands-on displays and lifelike dioramas, which bring history to life through many of the world's most talented artists and craftsmen. Collections include crafts and artifacts from the



Figure 6. Anniston Museum of Natural History
(www.annistonmuseum.org)

American West, Europe, Arts of Asia, and World Wars I&II. For more information on the museums in Anniston see www.annistonmuseum.org and www.bermanmuseum.org.

Gentlemen Start Your Engines...for the Talladega Motor Sports Hall of Fame and Racetrack, in Lincoln, Alabama, also known as Talladega Superspeedway. The racetrack, built in 1963, costing \$4 million, is the longest NASCAR oval with a length of 2.66 miles and provides one of the largest stadiums with a seating capacity for 175,000 spectators. World-renowned NASCAR drivers such as Dale Earnhardt, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Jeff Gordon, Jimmy Johnson, Mark Martin, Clint Boyer, and Bill Elliott, among others pleased excited fans and drove victory laps here. In 2006 famed NASCAR driver Ricky Bobby showed Frenchman driver Jean Girard just what winning at Talladega was all about in the comedic movie *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*, which gave the racetrack and Alabama more attention, positive or negative left to one's opinion. Also at the speedway site lies the International Motor Sports Hall of Fame. The museum honors famous and successful drivers in every type of motor vehicle sport in the world and showcases a variety of famous racecars from the general type, such as Davey Allison's Original Havoline Car, to the more exotic such as the sleek Budweiser Rocket Car which broke the sound barrier in 1979.



Figures 7 and 8. Talladega Superspeedway (www.WorldStadiums.com)



Figure 9. Gomer Pyle USMC has been used in famous national structures such as the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the U.S. Supreme Court Building. Other museum exhibits include a historical photography gallery, archeological artifacts and geologic finds, a replica pioneer home, and paintings and sculptures from the museum's permanent collection.

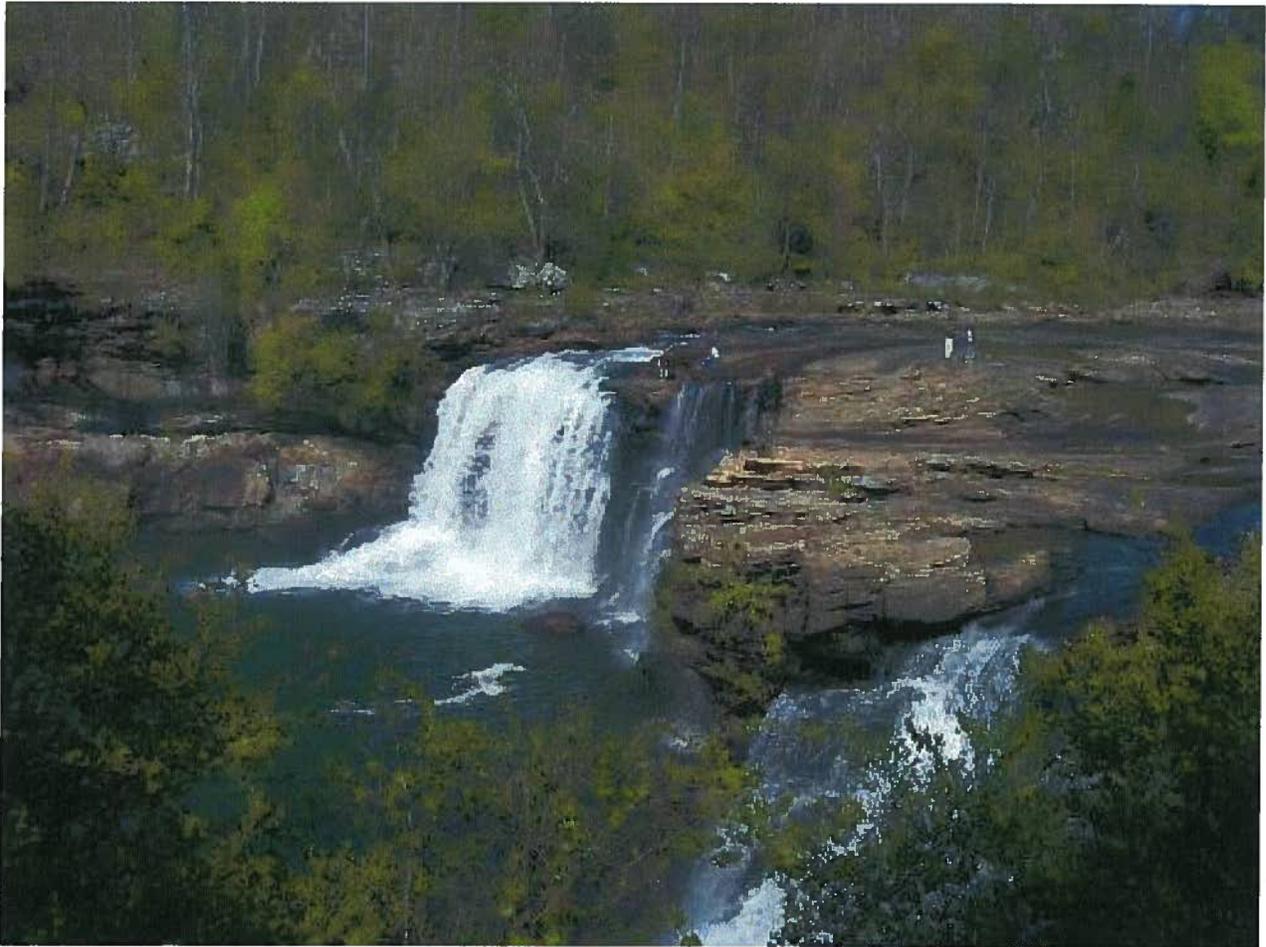


Figure 10. Little River Canyon National Preserve. (www.picstopin.com)

Water On Top of A Mountain!...is a fascinating natural dynamic of the Little River Canyon National Preserve. Located in northern Cherokee County at the most northern part of the East Alabama Region, is a mile and a half wide natural canyon system with numerous small waterfalls and creeks flowing into and along massive sandstone bluffs and large expanses of rocks and rock outcrops. The Little River flows unimpeded through five minor impoundments making this amenity unique in that it is the only river that forms and flows for almost its entire length on the top of a mountain. In 1991 the Alabama Environmental Management Commission designated the Little River an “Outstanding National Resource Water” by amending the State’s stream classification regulations. Popular activities in the Canyon Preserve include hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, rock climbing, bird watching, hunting, fishing, kayaking, and rafting.

A Bicyclist’s Paradise...is also known as the Chief Ladiga Trail. The Chief Ladiga Trail extends 32.5 miles from Weaver, Alabama to the Georgia state line where it connects with the Silver Comet Trail and continues another 63 miles into Smyrna, GA, making the combined trails the longest continuously paved rail to trail route in the US. The trail sits on the former Seaboard/CSX Railroad and was made possible by funding from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) enhancement grant in 1990. The cities of Weaver and Jacksonville opened the trail in their cities in 1998 and the final section through Cleburne County was completed in 2007. The Chief Ladiga Trail attracts bicycling enthusiasts

on an international level and bicycling events are held on an annual basis in selected cities along the trail.

Crappie Capital of the World...is a prestigious title given to Weiss Lake. Situated in central Cherokee County in the farthest northern portion of the East Alabama Region, is a 33,000 acre Alabama Power Company impoundment, well known for its water recreation, particularly fishing. Weiss Lake was formed in 1961 when Alabama Power finished construction of Leesburg Dam, thus holding back the flow of the Coosa, Chattooga, and Little Rivers, creating Weiss Lake. Weiss Lake gives claim to being the “Crappie Capitol of the World” as known by amateur and professional fishermen, both nationally and internationally, as having the highest number of crappie counted to have been caught compared to any other place.



Figure 11. Weiss Lake Crappies
(www.fieldandstream.com)

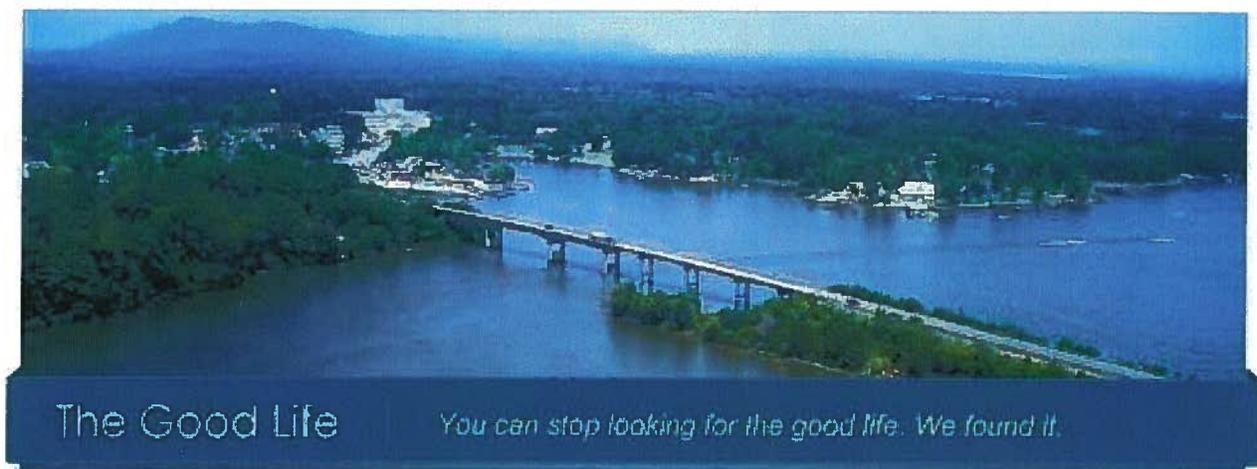


Figure 12. Weiss Lake, Crappie Capital of the World. (www.cedarbluff-al.org)

Conquer the Americas!...at DeSoto Caverns Park and Campgrounds. DeSoto Caverns was named after Spanish Explorer and Conquistador Hernando DeSoto, who, from 1539-1541, lead the first European expedition deep into the territory of the modern day United States in search for gold and fortune. The Caverns are located about 6 miles northeast of the City of Childersburg in Talladega County, and is one of the region’s main attractions. Guests to the caverns are impressed by its massive size and natural splendor, with the great cathedral room measuring wider than a football field and extending higher than a 12-story building, featuring some of the world’s largest and most spectacular onyx marble formations, over 30 feet long.



Figure 13. DeSoto Logo
(www.pinterest.com)

As the first recorded cave in American records the caverns holds a history just as fascinating as its natural beauty. In addition to the caverns, DeSoto Caverns Park offers a wide variety of attractions for all ages such as gemstone panning, bow and arrow shoot, pedal go-carts, bumper cars, a petting zoo, butterfly house, disc golf, lost trail maze, and slip and slide, to name a few.

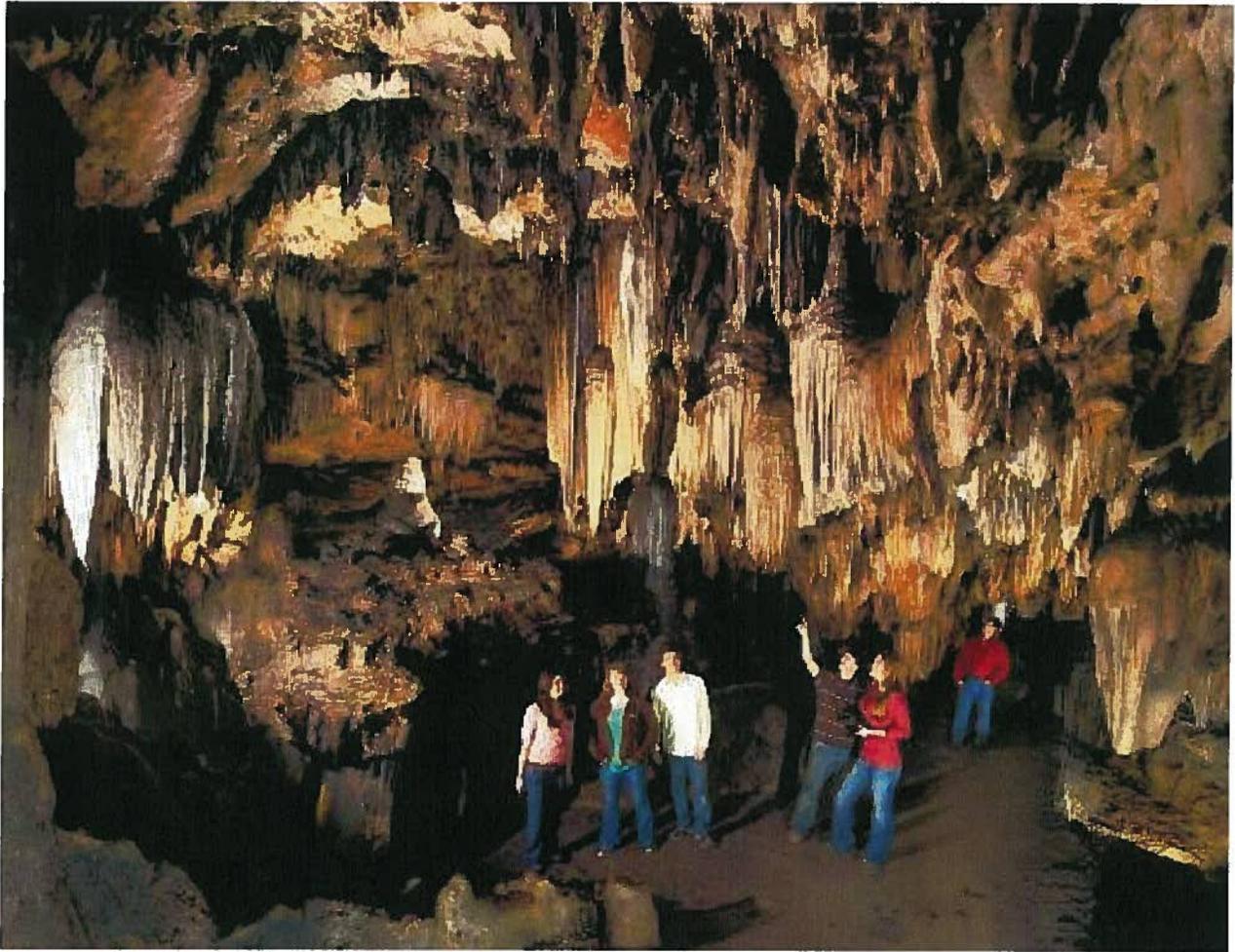


Figure 14. Stalactites and Stalagmites in the Caverns at DeSoto Caverns Park. (www.prweb.com)

Fallen Love... is the general story of Noccoalula Falls. Once upon a time there lived a fair Indian princess by the name of Noccoalula. Noccoalula was famed far and wide for her beauty and loveliness of character and many gallant braves sought Noccoalula's hand in marriage. But only one suitor was favored by the girl's father, a rich chief of a powerful neighboring tribe who had much to offer—such as wampum (white shell beads used for jewelry and trading), horses, blankets, and friendship in exchange for her hand. However, Noccoalula did not fancy the rich chief and instead loved another, a young warrior, who though noted for his skill and valor, possessed little in worldly goods as offering. Noccoalula pleaded with her father not to marry the rich chief and to instead marry the valiant warrior, but father stubbornly refused this request and ordered his daughter to be united with the chief. After all what was a maiden's silly fancy against many horses, much wampum, and union with another strong tribe. Noccoalula's lover was then driven from the land and the fair maiden married the chief, however, after the wedding festivities, Noccoalula, overcome with grief, slipped

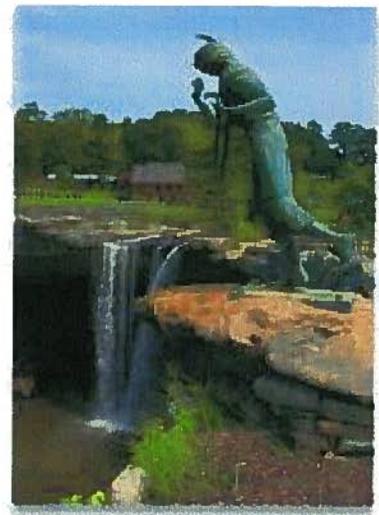


Figure 15. Noccoalula Falls. (www.cityofgadsden.com)

away to the soft rhythmical waters, poised on the brink of the yawning chasm, and leaped her troubles away. Heartbroken, the remorseful father gave the great cataract his daughter's name—Noccalula Falls. Atop the 90-foot waterfall, today, stands a bronze statue of the Indian maiden making her plunge, as a memorial to the legend.

Noccalula Falls Park, located in Gadsden, occupies 250 acres. The waterfall may be accessed from the top or through its basin. Visitors may also enjoy caves, an aboriginal fort, an abandoned dam, pioneer village, and view Civil War carvings. The park also features a petting zoo, mini-golf course, the Giliand-Reese Covered Bridge, and a train ride. The Park was listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage in 1976.

Most Beautiful Lake in the South... is Lake Martin. Located in south central Tallapoosa County and extending into Coosa and Elmore Counties, Lake Martin is known as possibly the most beautiful lake in the south, offering 750 miles of wooded shoreline and 44,000 acres of crystal clear water for fishing, swimming, skiing, sailing, and motor-boating. Lake Martin was formed from the construction of Martin Dam in 1926, along the Tallapoosa River, and was at the time the largest man-made body of water in the world. The lake area is considered one of the nation's most prestigious retirement communities due to luxurious lakefront living, a wide variety of recreational opportunities, and exceptional healthcare. Alabama Power utilizes hydroelectric power from Martin Dam.

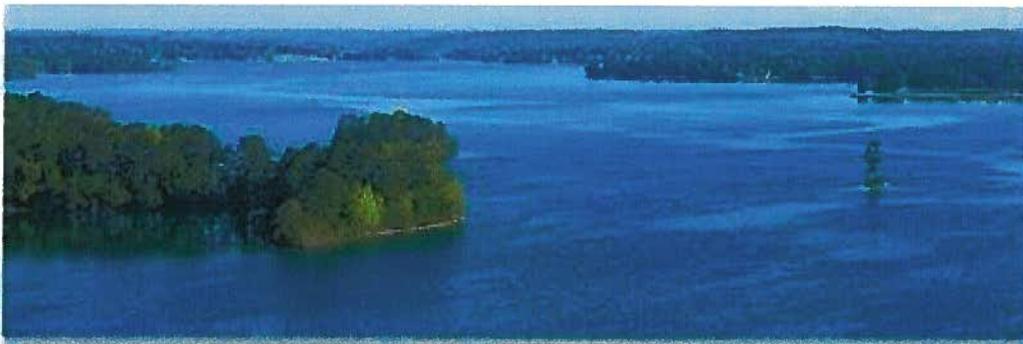


Figure 16. Lake Martin (www.alexandercity.org)

Opportunities. The East Alabama Region provides many assests to capitalize on and opportunities to explore. However, in order to accomplish goals and achieve desired results there must first be a vision and a stable foundation on which to build upon. Famous 19th century philosopher and author Henry David Thoreau stated, *“If you build castles in the air, your work need not be lost. That is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”* The foundations of Clear Plan 2030 stand as six pillars for the future of the East Alabama Region for the next 20 years. These pillars are listed, as previously explained, in the planning process:

- Education
- Economic Competitiveness
- Housing
- Transportation
- Community Engagement
- Healthcare

The overall vision of Clear Plan 2030 is for the East Alabama Region to focus community resources and funding assistance to improve and enhance each of the six pillars in the region, with each pillar being equally important to any other. As previously mentioned in the Livability section, these elements are mutually dependent on each other and must maintain equilibrium for continued successful progress with the plan. The following section shows visioning goals with opportunities/strategies (bulleted) for each of the six pillars to build upon. For more information and detail see the Clear Plan 2030 document.

Education



Goal 1: Increase educational attainment by beginning with early education and giving people the opportunity to advance their education.

- Each community develops their own planning strategies to address the issue.
- Provide information about how people who graduate from high school or obtain a GED generally have higher income than people who do not.

Goal 2: Decrease the highschool dropout rate with specific tasks, programs, and ideas for how to accomplish this.

- Involve local business and industry to introduce careers.
- Identify mentors, programs through YMCA, churches, after school programs, recreation departments.
- Wi-Fi at public places, such as recreation departments, so students have access to the internet.
- Utilize grant funding for tasks and programs.

Goal 3: Work together to use resources.

- Share successes and new initiatives across region.
- Share faculty/resources to expand offerings, using virtual education.
- Develop and expand regular communication between all groups especially universities, K-12, and agencies which are pertinent, including the Alabama Virtual Library.
- Involve Connecting Alabama in future discussions regarding resources.

Goal 4: Collaborate with regional workforce development councils to link business and industry needs with training and education.

- Involve AIDT in the effort to link industry needs with training and education.
- Meet with large employers/industries, including automotive and health care, to identify needs.
- Coordinate with existing effective career exploration programs, like the Boy Scouts of America Explorer Program, to provide resources for students.
- Work with the Workforce Development Councils to identify sustainable funding sources and employers/industries to be involved in career days, job shadowing, and other programs.
- Promote “on the job” videos with local businesses.

Goal 5: Work with state agencies to obtain grants to support training and education.

- Workshops/training seminars on grant opportunities and training in how to write grant applications.

Goal 6: School systems use the “Best Practices,” data, studies, trends and resources of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA), as well as other educational resources, in development, implementation, and assessment of their school system’s goals and objectives.

- Provide programs to assist with data and best practices collection.

Economic Competitiveness



Goal 1: Align needed skills with jobs.

- Work with the Region 5 and Region 8 Workforce Development Councils, EDAA, and AIDT to further communication between industry and education.
- Pursue low cost mechanisms and grant funding to identify needs, training, and provide real life employment experiences.
- Provide workshops/training seminars on grant opportunities and how to write grant applications.
- Promote the ACT WorkKeys program, which utilizes the National Career Readiness Certificate, across the Region.
- Create a database, which lists all available training programs throughout the region.

Goal 2: Increase the number of people prepared for high wage, high growth jobs.

- Develop a comprehensive marketing package to promote the region to the world.
- Provide informational packets in schools and online stating career paths and the steps to take to achieve the high wage, high growth jobs.
- Increase the number of career coaches promoting occupational options.

Goal 3: Provide training and job opportunities to enhance community resources.

- Work with social service and economic development agencies to communicate training and other opportunities to special populations and employers.
- Dovetail this work into as many other programs as possible to lower expenses.

Goal 4: Support existing business and spur local entrepreneurship.

- Utilize existing educational resources, i.e. University of Alabama Center for Economic Development or Jacksonville State University Center for Economic Development, to provide knowledge to galvanize collaboration and development of a business incubator, marketing brand, tourism strategy, and retain existing business and industries.
- Pursue partnerships, grant-funding sources, and other resources to relieve the financial burden associated with developing a business incubator or offering incentives /opportunities to local existing business and industry.

- Utilize technology as much as possible to connect the region, for example, conference calls and web conferencing which can bring people together.
- Collaborate with Connecting Alabama and other organizations to bring high-speed internet and other communication technology to as many people as possible in the region.

Goal 5: Capitalize on existing downtown areas.

- Organize small activities downtown to draw people to the area and building on the momentum launch an aggressive program of events to draw people to the area. Also promote biking and walking.
- Acquire research that promotes downtowns and what can happen if a community focuses their efforts on their downtown.
- Work with the regional chamber of commerce program to communicate the benefits of collaboration and identify the priorities of rural areas.

Goal 6: Assist in the development of physical infrastructure and facilities, for example utilizing or demolishing abandoned industrial and commercial sites.

- Develop partnerships for sharing best practices, identifying potential funding sources, and addressing regulatory and environmental concerns.
- Work with the existing AdvantageSite program to modify/adapt it for buildings.
- Work with transportation professionals to modernize transportation practices.
- Collaborate with housing providers to increase available affordable housing.

Goal 7: Develop and conserve the region’s natural resources by utilizing land use and growth management policies.

- Provide educational materials clearly explaining development constraints and optimal conditions for development.
- Educate the general population on the benefits of land use and growth management practices.
- Identify funding sources for implementing energy conservation methods.

Housing



Goal 1: Every Alabama resident should have the opportunity for safe, decent, affordable housing regardless of income level.

- Identify and apply for assistance to complete an assessment, increase affordable housing units, and create materials to increase awareness.
- Explain the need for affordable housing units and form partnerships to develop it.

Goal 2: Increase awareness and availability of accessible housing in the East Alabama Region.

- Identify and obtain funding resources
- Create educational materials about ADA accessibility requirements and possible modifications.

Goal 3: Increase the number of transitional programs, including services for the homeless and victims of abuse.

- Raise awareness of the needs that the general population is not aware exists, i.e. homelessness, the need for affordable housing, and services for victims of abuse, through educational programs.
- Pursue grant funding to provide transitional housing programs.

Goal 4: Increase awareness of housing assistance programs and the discrimination reporting process.

- Provide funding for fair housing initiatives program grant, which will provide funding for education regarding discrimination.
- Promote providers of housing assistance and their programs.
- East Alabama Partnership for Livability should create a list, identifying the population in need of resources over the next five years.

Goal 5: Fill in data gaps related to housing needs and discrimination.

- Identify and obtain funding resources.
- Promote the benefits of reporting discrimination through the appropriate channels, which will deter the practice in the future.
- Establish and implement a volunteer program that consists of properly training volunteers to ferret out data resources and speak to clients about discrimination.

Goal 6: Promote developing housing downtown and housing in existing neighborhoods.

- Provide training and education on how to retrofit space above businesses for residents and the appropriate costs associated with the space.
- Pursue grant funding to supplement the cost associated with retrofitting space.
- Encourage utilization of vacant lots by offering incentives to developers.

Transportation



Goal 1: Promote public and private partnerships for funding both transportation and transit.

- Work with legislators to increase property taxes and gas revenues to enable municipal and county resurfacing (not capacity building) and investment in transit as needed.
- Work with Legislature and State DoT to begin contributions to supplement transit funding.

Goal 2: Promote compact development and land/structure reuse and infill development to avoid sprawl and low density land use.

- Encourage mixed-use development with flexible parking and height allowances.
- Seek investment sources for land and structure redevelopment.

Goal 3: Address lack of county and local government authority.

- Encourage the legislature to expand powers of land use controls to county governments.

- Promote the practice of, and educate the public and officials on, the benefits of compact high-density developments, mixed-use zoning, and first floor retail/commercial.

Community Engagement



Goal 1: Provide long term communication avenues to inform stakeholders and the public of the status of livability throughout the region.

- Partner with professional communication entities (media, internet providers, local governments, etc.) to use currently existing elements to promote communication.
- Identify entities throughout the region to become champions for livability and promote communications.

Goal 2: Promote the concept and benefits of *regionalism* to local governments and the public.

- Identify and train two (2) individuals willing to champion the concept of regionalism in each county in the region.
- Promote regionalism to show that, by combining resources, competition is not so aggressive and possibly detrimental to development, resource accumulation, etc.

Goal 3: Identify and provide outreach to specialized populations.

- Identify diverse needs and partner with entities already meeting the needs (for example, translating surveys into Braille by AIDB, a translating service they already provide).
- Provide outreach and one-on-one contact throughout the region in the most remote of places.
- Seek funding partnerships and collaboration with entities already meeting needs.

Goal 4: Expand the LRT to include representation from local governments, private entities, and residents throughout the region.

- Educate on the importance of livability to overcome apathy.
- Provide planned, long term schedule of events to fit into individual's time schedules.

Goal 5: Design a sustainable funding stream to cover community engagement costs.

- Partner with local businesses to provide incentives.
- Identify funding source to provide funds (donations, foundation grants, fund raisers).

Healthcare



Goal 1: Make East Alabama the healthiest region in the State.

- Seek investment to educate the public on self-care and healthy life styles.
- Encourage the development of programs to provide services to those with no insurance.

Goal 2: Decrease non-life threatening emergency room visits.

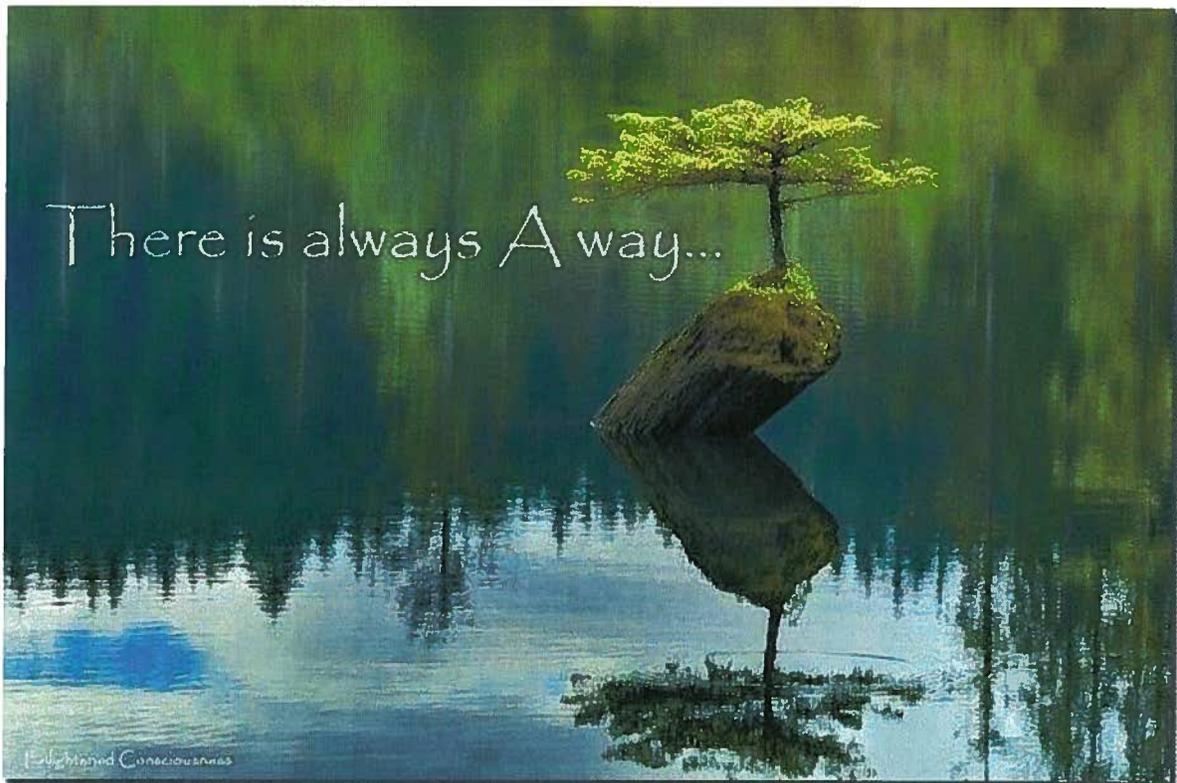
- Provide public education to inform residents of existing resources and alternatives.

Goal 3: Increase awareness of existing health programs and services in the East Alabama Region.

- Promote partnerships of existing health care and resource centers to create a resource guide.
- Identify an entity to champion the process.

Goal 4: Enhance after-care management

- Garner investment and funding from local governments, non-profit and private entities for the creation and management of a call center specialized for the medical community that would be a regional cooperative among care providers to care for and manage patient care (especially important for after-care management).



.....To Promote Livability in Your Community.

Although Clear Plan 2030 utilizes resources of many agencies and organizations, the main catalyst of change and progress lies with the people of the region. You make the difference. Mahatma Gandhi once said: *"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."*

Here are some practical means you can achieve to promote livability in your community:

- Get involved with non-profit organizations, community groups, church groups, etc. which promote volunteer activities and hold events to raise awareness of health and/or environmental issues and/or strive to improve general livability in your community.
- Seek to support and encourage health, nutrition, and nature appreciation programs for youth through colleges and schools in your community.
- Participate in a recycling program in your community and/or reuse disposable household resources when practical.
- Participate in serving your local government through volunteer opportunities should the opportunity arise, such as serving on city council, the planning commission, zoning board of adjustment, or historic preservation commission, etc. If these opportunities are not present, make plans to attend meetings to become more active in government decision-making and aware of community issues and local developments.



For detailed information about studies and other
research related to this project, go to:
www.clearplan2030.org

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