

CALHOUN • COUNTY

The Anniston Star
Sunday, April 30, 2017

BUSINESS

The Economic Development Game



WELCOME | BOB DAVIS

Putting the pieces together

Have you ever started one of those 500-piece puzzles and quickly realized it was too much for one person?



Bob Davis
Editor and Publisher

The pieces are scattered across a table. It seems almost impossible that each little jagged piece with a dash of color could fit together into the pony in a pastoral scene depicted on the puzzle box.

Now what, you wonder?

One way to go from overwhelmed to finished is to enlist friends, particularly ones with a keen eye for detail and puzzle-solving skills. The experienced among us know to take their time. They know each piece goes in a certain place. They know that there's a system to solving it.

Developing a region's economy is much the same. It's not a job for one city or one person. Putting the pieces together requires a team.

The task also dictates that each piece is appreciated for its role in the big picture.

Public schools attract parents looking to put their children in first-rate schools. The graduates of those schools are prepared to either move on to a job or a college. Industries are attracted by a smart and well-trained workforce.

Higher education works with local governments. Public utilities work with prospective businesses. Business groups work with civic organizations. And on and on and on.

This edition of Business Calhoun County focuses on some of the personalities who are part of putting our region's economic development puzzle together. There are no solo acts among the key players. They affirm that growing an economy requires teamwork.



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- Major road & sidewalk reconstruction
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 - New pavillions
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 - Expanded and improved parking
 - Water system
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- Under current negotiation with a retailer on Hwy. 21
- Announcement coming for a large gun retailer
- New grocery store near Buckhorn Subdivision
- Growth in realty



TEAMING UP



Photos by Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

Pappy Dunn Boulevard, which runs through the McClellan Industrial Park in Anniston, was made possible by leaders from Calhoun County's local governments agreeing to work together toward a common goal of regional economic development.

Economic development is not an individual game, according to players on Calhoun County's teams

BY PATRICK MCCRELESS

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Slicing through the McClellan Industrial Park is a stretch of near-pristine asphalt and concrete. Named after a long-time Calhoun County commissioner, Pappy Dunn Boulevard doubles as a showcase entrance to the park and a reinforced route for heavy trucks from current and future companies there to easily move materials and products.

None of it would have been possible had all of Calhoun County's local governments not agreed in 2013 to pitch in toward \$2 million that paid for upgrades of the road. But getting the leaders of all those governments together to work toward a common goal of regional

economic development didn't just happen on its own.

It took about six months of work, but it wasn't that difficult, at least not according to Phil Webb.

"It's all about having a positive attitude, it's not complicated," said Webb, chairman of the McClellan Development Authority and one of the architects of the compact that made the Pappy Dunn upgrades a reality.

Some economic developers say that regional cooperation is the best way to attract new industry and jobs. One city alone is not enough — multiple cities and even sometimes counties must pool their efforts for mutual benefit, they say.

And while local governments in a region have different agendas, it's not too hard to get them on the same page and keep them there if leaders continually work on relationships and communication, some economic

developers and officials say.

THE PROCESS

"You have to take the time to build those human relationships," said Kent Davis, Anniston's city manager. "You've got to take the time to come down to someone's office and talk."

Tim Hodges, chairman of the Calhoun County Commission, said politicians have a habit of looking out for themselves, but that officials have to move past that to make regional economic development happen.

"It's all about communication and cooperation," Hodges said. "It takes all of us doing it, not, 'well, Oxford's got this and Anniston's got this.'"

Hodges said that greater cooperation and trust springs

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DEVELOPMENT

Continued from Page 5

from mutual give-and-take among governments. For example, the city of Anniston gave the commission the long-unused Woodland Park and its multiple baseball and softball fields in exchange for helping it with other construction projects.

"Now we've got 26 teams that play out there," Hodges said.

Don Hopper, executive director of the Calhoun County Economic Development Council, said that when companies search for a new location to open, they review entire regions, not just one city or county. Companies want to be sure a sufficient workforce is available, along with sufficient infrastructure, like easily accessible interstates to transport goods.

"Access to the interstate is always one of the top criteria a company is looking for," Hopper said.

And that's where regional development comes into play. McClellan is miles from Interstate 20 in Oxford, but with McClellan Veterans Parkway and Pappy Dunn Boulevard, travel to the freeway is quick and makes the former fort a viable site for industry, Hopper said.

"McClellan is an easier sell with Pappy Dunn," Hopper said.

Hopper said it's not hard to get area leaders to work together on economic development if they can see it's mutually beneficial. Hopper said just because an industry locates in Oxford, doesn't mean that company won't hire people from Anniston or Jacksonville.

"Honda employs almost as many people from Calhoun as they do from Talladega," Hopper said, referring to Honda Manufacturing of Alabama in Lincoln.

Hopper said area leaders worked together to get Canadian-based auto supplier Kobay Enstel-South LLC to locate in Oxford last year. Hopper said Kobay looked at different sites in the region before deciding on Oxford.

"They met with several elected officials and were told, 'we want you in the region,'" Hopper said. "If they go outside the region, nobody benefits ... all the communities understand that."

THE NEXT STEP

Leaders have moved toward more regional economic development in recent years, but John Beehler, president of Jacksonville State University, wants to push the concept further.

In November, Beehler proposed that JSU help Calhoun and the surrounding 10 counties create an overall strategic plan for economic development. The hope is that having a single vision and like-minded goals will make it easier to find more prospective companies for the region and explain why they should move there. Since his initial announcement, Beehler has visited leaders and entrepreneurs in the region to further sell the idea.

Beehler said he has had experience with regional development before when he worked as associate provost for economic initiatives and dean of the College of Business at Northern Kentucky University. Beehler said that while there he worked with the Northern Kentucky Tri-County Economic Development Corporation. According to its website, since 1987 the Northern

Kentucky Tri-ED has used public and private money to foster economic development and cooperation among Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties in Kentucky.

"I was heavily involved with the entrepreneurial part, gathering entrepreneurs together to get grants together and to work together," Beehler said.

Beehler said that before the Tri-ED, there was an inherent rivalry between northern Kentucky and nearby Cincinnati.

"But the leaders of that area had a vision that if they got everyone together on the same page, they could attract entrepreneurs," Beehler said.

Don Tobergte, president and CEO of Tri-ED, said the organization has worked well to foster economic development since elected officials and the private sector pooled \$300,000 to create it 30 years ago.

The Tri-ED website states that since its founding, the organization has led the successful relocation or expansion efforts for 645 business projects, representing more than 55,000 primary industry jobs created with a capital investment of more than \$7.6 billion.

"Up in our area we figured it would be easier to compete together than apart," Tobergte said. "Before companies would look at us, but there was no central agency to represent us all that well."

Tobergte said the regional partnership helped the state too.

"It helped out the state tremendously because they could count on one entity to represent the entire region instead of individual areas," Tobergte said.

Tobergte noted that the Tri-ED doesn't favor one county over another when it comes to where to encourage a new industry to locate.

"It's up to each county to have the best facility and the best laws to attract the industry," Tobergte said. "But it's worked because whatever happens in one county is beneficial to another."

Beehler said regional leaders in Northeast Alabama could have similar success.

"I think we have a lot of people here with a strong vision," Beehler said. "I think if we concentrate on major



industries and industries of the future, I think we can have great success."

Beehler said communication with entrepreneurs was key to his work in Kentucky and the same tactic applies in Alabama.

"One thing I tried to get across was if you collaborate, you can get a lot done and have a lot more power than if you don't," Beehler said. "You'll be able to go for more

grants and will have more influence. I think the whole idea is if every little city and county competes and doesn't collaborate, they have a lot less chance to attract an industry."

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DON HOPPER — Economic Development Council

‘We’re continuing to see good relationships with all our cities’

BY ZACH TYLER

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Calhoun County has seen about \$600 million in industrial expansion over the last five years. Don Hopper, chief of the county’s development deal-closers, sees those victories won on the strength of relationships forged.

Age: 53

Primary job: Executive director, Calhoun County Economic Development Council

Board memberships, other endeavors: Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce

New development, though, hinges on having something to offer. Hopper says that’s why the Economic Development Council is spending money getting an industrial park west of Oxford “shovel ready.”

The husband and father of two has lived in Calhoun County about 15 years. Hopper believes that if one sells Chevrolet trucks, one ought to drive the same — so he’s not just an industry pitchman, but the county’s cheerleader, too.

What’s your role in economic development?

I want to win the competition — but my care is that somebody out there is able to provide for their family better because of the effort we put forth.

What are Calhoun County’s biggest development assets?

Our people make a difference Eighty percent of the growth in the last few years is due to expansion. Companies are willing to invest because they’re getting a return — if they didn’t, they’d find other places to grow.

What are the area’s most important development priorities?

We want to make sure our axe is sharpened ... and make sure that people know about us. You want to make sure there’s something on the shelf if someone comes into your store.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

We’re continuing to see good relationships with all our cities, but ... That’s the one thing, to be pro-business ... When everybody is at the table saying, ‘When do you need it?’ and ‘How can we help?’



BARRY ROBERTSON — Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce

‘Calhoun County is ripe for new growth’

BY EDDIE BURKHALTER

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Barry Robertson envisions job growth, tourism and cooperation among local communities in Calhoun County's future.

As chairman of the county's Chamber of Commerce he's been working to see his vision come true, Robertson said, adding that it will take a combined effort to make it happen.

Robertson said current discussion of the development of the former Fort McClellan is an example of such cooperation among local governments and private and public organizations.

Calhoun County is ripe for new growth, but local leaders should work to support existing businesses, Robertson said. Doing so promises job growth in the many small businesses that make up the community, he said.

Age: 50

Primary job: Commissioner of licenses for Calhoun County.

Board memberships, other endeavors: Chairman of Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, member of the Alabama Association of Tax Administrators and the Anniston Kiwanis Club.

What's your role in economic development?

I'm chairman of the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, where we're striving to work equally with all municipalities, the county and businesses to create job growth and economic development.

What are Calhoun County's biggest development assets?

In Calhoun County it's tourism. To me, it's a big economic development indicator. There's the creation of Choccolocco Park in Oxford and various activities at the Agri-Center in Alexandria, which brings in poultry shows, cattle and horse shows. And of course we have the economic development of McClellan, the Anniston Army Depot, the Army National Guard in McClellan and the Center for Domestic Preparedness.

What are the area's most important development priorities?

I think right now we need to work on bringing some technological jobs to McClellan, and we definitely want more residential development as well. That's going to increase our sales tax base. I think it's also important what's been done at New Flyer and encouraging expansion of our current providers. We need to focus on our small businesses to enhance what they do and encourage job growth.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

What you're seeing right now is a group working together to focus on what we can do with McClellan. There's been some discussion of dissolving the McClellan Development Authority and transferring the land to the city of Anniston and to the Calhoun County Economic Development Council. We have all the of the pieces working together to make this happen. You've got private industry, public sector partners, municipal and county governments working together. That's very encouraging.





Where there is no vision, the people perish.

- Proverbs 29:18



Alberta C. McCrory – Mayor

Susie B. Jones – Place No. 1

O'Mildred Ball – Place No. 2

Deneva Barnes – Place No. 3

Frederick Striplin – Place No. 4

Joe Cunningham – Place No. 5

The area we now know as Hobson City was first known as Mooree Quarter, and was a part of Oxford until the late 1890's. Once a black man was elected Justice of the Peace in Oxford, causing some confusion. A local politician went to Montgomery and officially had the boundaries of Oxford redrawn, leaving the black settlement (now Hobson City) in the county. Hobson City was established on August 16, 1899 and is the oldest incorporated African America city in the State of Alabama.



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JULIA SEGARS — ALABAMA POWER CO.

BY EDDIE BURKHALTER

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Julia Segars believes that Calhoun County has a quality workforce capable of attracting new industry, and the resources to keep it here. But it takes more than that to land major industries, Segars said,

and as vice-chair of the Calhoun County Economic Development Council she's helping lead the effort to strengthen the area's economy.

Segars, who heads Alabama Power's Anniston-based Eastern Division, believes that new industry requires developed sites with infrastructure in place and a coordinated plan to market them.

Important, too, is to have everyone working together as one voice when those companies come calling, she said.

Age: 54

Primary job: Eastern Division vice president, Alabama Power Co.

Board memberships, other endeavors: Vice chair, Calhoun County Economic Development Council; Knox Concert Series board of directors; co-chair CORE4; Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind Foundation board; Leadership Alabama 2016 graduate; Jacksonville State University Foundation board; Rotary Club; chair, Longleaf Botanical Gardens advisory board

What's your role in economic development?

As a member of the EDC, I am part of a team that works hard to recruit new industries to our area or help existing industries expand, with the ultimate goal of bringing good jobs to Calhoun County and the region...The members of Core 4 support our associated professional economic development teams in Calhoun, Cleburne, Talladega and St. Clair counties in marketing the I-20 corridor as a region at economic development conferences, as an example, giving them more weight with site selectors and demonstrating regional cooperation.

Finally, in my role with Alabama Power, I am part of a team that works hard to keep electric rates competitive for industrial recruitment and expansion, and to build and maintain the infrastructure necessary to provide our customers with the best quality electrical service possible as inputs into their production processes.

What are Calhoun County's biggest development assets?

Workforce quality; location; several attractive industrial sites in our portfolio; JSU, Gadsden State and other education and workforce training resources; and existing industries that complement segments we may target in recruitment.

What are the area's most important development priorities?

Investing in the infrastructure necessary to have shovel-ready, attractive sites on hand to market when companies come calling. You get ruled out before the race begins otherwise.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

Pool resources and eliminate redundancies of effort so that we get the most bang for our buck, and so that we develop a reputation of unity when site selectors or the Alabama Department of Commerce are working to locate industry to the state. Having one person or team who can speak with one voice — literally — and know that all the local parties will support any commitments they make for the greater good would be a tremendous step forward. I've seen great progress on this front in recent months, and am encouraged that we can get where we need to be quickly to get us into the race on opportunities we would have otherwise missed out on.



ALTON CRAFT — MAYOR OF OXFORD

‘The biggest hurdle we have to overcome is shrinking’

BY ZACH TYLER

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Since becoming mayor last year of a city that’s already the center of retail activity for the region, Alton Craft has found the job leaves him with little time for much else.

He’s also found that he’s boss of perhaps the best testimonials for new economic development in Oxford — the city’s employees and the services they provide, especially police and fire protection.

Despite the wins Oxford has seen in the last decade, Craft sees the challenges, too — a flagging mall in the city’s center, a stalled development at its newest retail hub, and the inexorable change technology promises for shopping habits.

Age: 56

Primary job: Mayor of Oxford

Board memberships, other endeavors: None.

What’s your role in economic development?

I want my staff to go out, and they too become recruiters in economic development. A case in point is our Police Department and Fire Department ... If your community is not safe, developers won’t come.

What are Calhoun County’s biggest development assets?

Access ... Though some people might say there’s too much access at the Exchange, like during holiday shopping.

What are the area’s most important development priorities?

Fiber optics, the future highways of tomorrow ... That’s the way to control when I start losing sales tax from box stores. ... If we put down a grid between Atlanta and Birmingham, it will become a hub.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

The biggest hurdle we have to overcome is this population deficit. When they consistently tell us that the population is shrinking, you’re going to get less and less development People are going to wonder why you’re shrinking.



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star



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Main Street Anniston



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2016 MARKET SNAPSHOT

A Main Street Success Story

Downtown Anniston is the city's historic and cultural center. What began as a private company town in 1879 developed into the region's center of commerce by the mid-20th century. Today, the concentration of creative shopping, dining and entertainment options amid the quaintness of Neoclassical style architecture—easily located between Birmingham and Atlanta—are attracting new generations to visit, work and live in downtown Anniston.

Anniston's proximity to abundant outdoor recreation is also enticing visitors. The State's highest peak, Mt. Cheaha, offers a scenic backdrop to downtown. Nearby Coldwater Mountain offers 35 miles of mountain bike trails. Noblefest is held each spring during the Alabama Cycling Classic, an event that attracts riders from around the world.

Retail Performance



Vibrant Downtown Anniston

Main Street Anniston is a mix-use area. We have several amazing one-of-a-kind restaurants, toy stores, farmers market, art galleries, brew pub, nightlife, retail shops and community organizations, as well as performing art services. The economic vitality piece for this area is increasing. Annual events bring "New Comers" to our downtown and keep our locals engaged and coming back for more.

Trade Area Sales Surplus and Leakage Estimates

Sales Surplus & Leakage (\$MM)	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
	Surplus/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ (Leakage)	Surplus/ (Leakage)
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink (NAICS 44 – 45, 722)	\$679.5	(\$85.8)	\$389.0
Total Retail Trade (NAICS 44 – 45)	\$642.9	(\$82.6)	\$356.0
Total Food & Drink (NAICS 722)	\$36.6	(\$3.2)	\$33.0

Source: Esri, 2015.

By the Numbers

Cumulative Totals | June 2014 to September 2016



8

Net New
Businesses



5

Net New Jobs
Created



958

Volunteer
Hours



Fast Facts

Population	Primary ¹	Secondary ²	Tertiary ³
2015 Estimate	86,273	62,659	164,640
2020 Projection	85,653	63,277	166,469
Change 2015—2020	-0.7%	1.0%	1.1%
Median Age	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2015 Estimate	39.9	39.1	41.6
2020 Estimate	41.2	40.8	42.9
Households	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2015 Estimate	34,394	24,425	65,773
2020 Estimate	34,097	24,681	66,562
Change 2015—2020	-0.8%	1.0%	1.2%
Median HH Income	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2015 Estimate	\$41,125	\$40,478	\$36,071
2020 Estimate	\$46,518	\$45,309	\$40,351
Change 2015—2020	13.1%	11.9%	11.9%
Employed Civilians 16+	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2015 Total	31,454	24,803	60,818
White Collar	52.1%	51.5%	51.0%
Services	17.8%	17.3%	17.4%
Blue Collar	30.1%	31.1%	31.6%

Source: Esri 2015

- ¹ Primary Market Area Ring = 0 to 10 Miles
² Secondary Market Area Ring = 10 to 20 Miles
³ Tertiary Market Area Ring = 20 to 30 Miles

Lifestyle Profile

The Esri Community Tapestry consumer segmentation system adds color to the demographic profile of residents and households within the defined trade area geographies.

The Tapestry Household Distribution Report identifies prevalent segments and describes the population's likes, dislikes, lifestyles and purchase behaviors for households within the defined geographies. The information can be particularly helpful for assessing opportunities for business growth and for designing marketing strategies and messages to reach targeted segments.

Primary Trade Area Households	Count	Pct.
Rustic Outposts	9,112	26.4%
Cozy Country Living	8,291	26.4%
Hometown	5,808	16.8%
Count/Percent of Primary Market	23,211	67.2%

The following tables show concentrations of the three most prevalent Tapestry LifeMode Groups found within the Downtown Anniston primary, secondary and tertiary market study rings.

Secondary Trade Area Households	Count	Pct.
Rustic Outposts	15,805	64.3%
Cozy Country Living	3,328	13.5%
GenXurban	2,238	9.1%
Count/Percent of Secondary Market	21,371	86.9%
Tertiary Trade Area Households	Count	Pct.
Rustic Outposts	26,173	39.8%
Hometown	11,182	17.0%
GenXurban	10,770	16.4%
Count/Percent of Tertiary Market	48,125	73.2%

Anniston, Alabama

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ERIC STRINGER — GADSDEN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

‘In terms of economic development, education is key’

BY ZACH TYLER

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After nearly 23 years at Gadsden State Community College, Eric Stringer keenly appreciates the role a skilled workforce plays in attracting new industrial development.

Age: 57

Primary job: Community education liaison at Gadsden State Community College
Board memberships, other endeavors: McClellan Development Authority; Hobson City Community & Economic Development Council.

A member of the McClellan Development Authority and a council focused on developing Hobson City, Stringer has previously waged several unsuccessful political campaigns — both for mayor of the town he grew up in and for Calhoun County’s Commission.

He sees the county at more than one crossroad affecting future development wins, with questions about who will oversee repurposing the former Fort McClellan, and his own belief that the five public school systems should consider consolidation.

What’s your role in economic development?

In terms of economic development, education is key. The role that Gadsden State plays is critical Industries are looking for a skilled workforce, and we provide that.

What are Calhoun County’s biggest development assets?

Location ... We’re within this 150- to 200-mile radius of several automotive manufacturers. The second- and third-tier suppliers are going to want to locate in that region — that’s huge for us.

What are the area’s most important development priorities?

In Calhoun County, we need to look at a skills education model. We’ve got too many schools, and our resources are stretched too thin.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

We talk a good game, but until we come together as a region ... There’s been some half-hearted efforts, but nothing that’s been grounded in anything ... I don’t know if we really have a regional approach.



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

KENT DAVIS — ANNISTON CITY MANAGER

‘We are in this together’

BY KIRSTEN FISCUS

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Kent Davis jumped into the economic development sphere when he was hired as Anniston’s director of economic development in May 2016, but months later was appointed as the city manager. Despite

the short time as the development director, Davis still plays an active role in economic development, he said.

As city manager, Davis said he feels it is his duty to work closely with other cities’ leadership to facilitate development opportunities that not only benefit Anniston but also the county.

Partnerships are the key to the county’s economic development health, Davis said, and he expects current and future agreements to keep the county moving forward.

Age: 54

Primary job: Anniston city manager, formerly Anniston’s director of economic development

Board memberships,

other endeavors: Chamber of Commerce board; Opportunity Center board; Berman Museum board. Formerly a member of the Board of Stewards at First United Methodist Church. Member of Anniston Rotary Club and involved in local veterans’ organizations.

What’s your role in economic development?

Economic Development is near and dear to my heart and I still spend a lot of time on economic development. When I became city manager I stepped up and back to the more strategic level and helped develop contacts with developers.

What are Calhoun County’s biggest development assets?

Right now the biggest change is a sense of partnership. All the elected leadership seems to be rolling in the same direction and there seems to be this collective — although it sounds a little corny — idea that we’re all in this together. There has been a renewed sense of cooperation.

What are the area’s most important development priorities?

The city’s priority is probably retail development because it brings in sales tax revenue, which we desperately need in the city. For the county, industrial development is probably the priority. Now with the economy on the uptick, we need to go after those industrial-type jobs that not only help people here but attract people from outside of the county.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

Keep on doing what they’re doing. The mayors of all the communities have started meeting together regularly. That’s the type of cooperative spirit we need not only for the practical aspects but it also sends an important message that we’re unified.



JOHN BEEHLER — JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

‘We have to serve our region’

BY KIRSTEN FISCUS

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With a background in accounting and a history as dean of a business school, John Beehler said it's difficult to not be involved in economic development.

Age: 61

Primary job: President of Jacksonville State University

Board memberships, other endeavors: Knox Concert Series board; Anniston Museum of Natural History board

While Beehler served as the associate provost for economic initiatives and dean of the College of Business at Northern Kentucky University, he pioneered an initiative to approach economic development on a regional level rather than a local or county level.

Now at JSU, Beehler hopes to do the same and encourage already strong industry, like the automotive and agriculture industries, and encourage others to look at not only Calhoun County but 10 other surrounding counties.

What's your role in economic development?

I've been trying to spearhead the effort to engage the region in regional strategic planning ... In my role as president at JSU, regional state universities exist to serve the region, so I've been preaching regional stewardship ever since I got here. We're here to serve our region and make it better in every way.

What are Calhoun County's biggest development assets?

Really, the natural beauty of the area, it's just a great place to live. Not to be self-serving, but I think one of the biggest of the region is Jacksonville State University. I think another strength is we already have a pretty strong base in certain industries. We have a strong base in agriculture, manufacturing, there are a lot of opportunities to grow technology. We also have strong economic development leadership in our area.

What are the area's most important development priorities?

From the tours I've taken so far, we do have strong manufacturing base so we can probably expand that ... I think we need to accentuate what we're already strong in but also identify new industries that would be good for us. It'll be fun to see what those are.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

I think they already have an agenda and a plan. What'll be good is once we have a regional plan for the individual counties and municipalities to go back and take a second look at their plan and see if it ought to be tweaked. I get the impression there has already been planning that's taking place and the strong leaders are already doing the right thing, but I think the collaboration between all the counties, cities and municipalities is what's going to make it better.



Kirsten Fiscus/The Anniston Star

Calhoun County Alabama



CALHOUN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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LARRY DEASON — FARMERS & MERCHANTS BANK

‘The cooperation is the best I’ve seen in the 14 years I’ve been on the board’

BY PATRICK MCCRELESS

pmccreless@annistonstar.com

Larry Deason is an Anniston native who has worked in the banking business for more than 40 years. He has worked for about 30 years with Farmers and Merchants Bank and helped open the bank's first Anniston branch 29 years ago.

Age: 65

Primary job: President emeritus of Farmers and Merchants Bank.

Board memberships, other endeavors: Chairman of the Calhoun County Economic Development Council; member of the Alabama State Banking Department board; member of the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce board.

Deason's years in the banking industry helped earn him a spot on the Calhoun County Economic Development Council 14 years ago to help attract new business and steer economic growth. Deason has spent the last eight of those years as chairman of the development council.

Deason has recently semi-retired from Farmers and Merchants, now working only three days a week, providing public relations for the bank. Still, he's fully committed to helping with economic development in the county.

What's your role in economic development?

Works with the Calhoun County Economic Development Council to attract industry to the area and help existing industry expand. Works with the chamber to help area business.

What are Calhoun County's biggest development assets?

The county's location between Atlanta and Birmingham is a great selling point. The county has an available workforce.

What are the area's most important development priorities?

The council's industrial park in Eastaboga and the industrial park at McClellan.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

This is the first time I've ever seen every municipality in the county want to work together. The cooperation is the best I've seen in the 14 years I've been on the development council board.



JAMIE 'RED' ETHEREDGE — JACKSONVILLE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

‘What the county mainly needs is more higher-paying, industry jobs’

BY PATRICK MCCRELESS

pmccreless@annistonstar.com

Jamie “Red” Etheredge knows a thing or two about economic development.

For 18 years, beginning in 1968, Etheredge was mayor of Greenville. He spearheaded the construction of an industrial park in his city. The park was nearly filled to capacity with businesses by the time he left office.

In recognition of his success, Gov. George Wallace appointed Etheredge as director of the Alabama Development Office in 1983, where he oversaw industrial development for the entire state for four years.

Later in the early 1990s, Gov. Jim Folsom, Jr. got Etheredge to help with the project that eventually brought the Mercedes automotive plant to Tuscaloosa.

Even after he retired and moved to Jacksonville, Etheredge helped the city start its industrial development board.

Age: 84

Primary job: Retired
Board memberships, other endeavors: chairman of the Jacksonville Industrial Development Board; trustee emeritus for the Jacksonville State University board of trustees.

What’s your role in economic development?

I’ve spent about the last five years on the Jacksonville Industrial Development Board, working to attract companies to the area.

What are Calhoun County’s biggest development assets?

One asset is Jacksonville State University. If a company has a special need, the university puts in courses to teach that. Location is also an asset for the county. It is an hour or so drive away from Birmingham and Atlanta.

What are the area’s most important development priorities?

Oxford has done a great job at attracting retail, but what the county mainly needs is more higher-paying, industry jobs. If we can bring in industry jobs, people will have more money to spend.

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

I’ve always thought we have not used JSU as much as we could. We could use it to help bring in industry. I wish leaders could do more to get the state more involved in the area.



MARTHA LAVENDER — GADSDEN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

‘We all have a part to play’

BY DANIEL GADDY

dgaddy@annistonstar.com

As president of Gadsden State, Lavender is responsible for executive oversight for all of the community college’s education programs and services, its community outreach programs for the six campuses throughout the state as well as the college’s prison program.

Age: 62

Primary Job: President of Gadsden State.

Board memberships, other endeavors:

President of the Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama. She was a member of the West Anniston Foundation for many years. She’s also chair of a national development committee for the Association of Women’s Health, Obstetrics and Neonatal Nursing.

She came to Gadsden State with a background in nursing, having served as a faculty member and later dean of Jacksonville State University’s college of nursing. She retired as Gadsden State’s dean of health sciences in 2014, but came back as president in 2014.

Lavender said that attracting businesses doesn’t just mean selling the geographic area and the availability of space, but the people who can run those businesses or work in those businesses.

“And that’s what they come to us for and they talk to us about it. When I’m participating in these visits I talk about the programs, the skills training programs, how we can interface to provide the training that an industry might need.”

What’s your role in economic development?

“I believe the community college system is an engine for economic development in our area. Certainly in our state but within our area we’re very involved in all the counties we’re located in in terms of economic development and prospecting for new business and industry.”

What are Calhoun County’s biggest assets:

“The fact that we have presence of not only Gadsden State but also JSU is a tremendous asset to recruitment in Calhoun County. What we see now is that most industry wants middle-skilled workers and that’s where Gadsden State can make its greatest impact. For those high-skilled workers I think Jacksonville can with their school of business and industry and their nursing program.”

What are the area’s most important development priorities?

“We still need to educate the public about what the job market is. To me, that’s a development issue for us statewide and it’s certainly true in Calhoun County, too. We have always operated off of the belief that everyone needed a college degree. But ... two thirds of all our jobs now require middle skill-training; it does require some competencies, but it does not require a college degree.”

What more can local leaders do to work together on development?

“We all have a part to play. And so us working together is where we really need to put our efforts. And we need to break down the silos and continue to talk so that we speak with one voice. I think we’re getting there and it just takes a lot of work, attention and energy, and I think that everyone is committed to that.”



Rodney V. Snead
MD, FAAFP



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MD, FAAFP



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CALHOUN • COUNTY JULY 2017 BUSINESS

To many, it might once have seemed like a stretch: turning Calhoun County into a destination for tourists. After all, the area had most often made national headlines — even if decades ago — for racial violence and environmental pollution.

But advocates for an economy built partly on visitors pressed ahead anyway, pushing for local, state, federal and private investment in trails systems, historic preservation, and major events to draw cyclists, outdoors enthusiasts, and those interested in America's story of civil rights strife and triumph.

Those investments now are paying off, and if there still are skeptics then perhaps \$80 million could cause them to reconsider. That's how much the Alabama Tourism Department says travelers spent in Calhoun County in 2016, an 11 percent rise over the previous year. That spending, a recent Tourism Department study said, supported nearly 1,000 jobs.

The next edition of Business Calhoun County will explore the entrepreneurs pinning their hopes on hospitality. We look forward to welcoming you back to these pages in July.



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The balance sheet

CALHOUN COUNTY HOUSING MARKET DATA

New mortgages recorded in First Quarter 2017

January - 229
February - 203
March - 258

Mortgage foreclosures in First Quarter 2017

January - 19
February - 27
March - 19

Source: Calhoun County Probate Office

Number of homes sold in Calhoun County

January - 102
February - 102
March - 154

Median sales price

January - \$114,450
February - \$127,000
March - \$114,900

Average sales price

January - \$126,295
February - \$147,925
March - \$130,444

Source: Alabama Center for Real Estate



File photo

A house Anniston up for sale, one of many in Calhoun County.

CALHOUN COUNTY EMPLOYMENT STATS

Unemployment rate

January - 7.5 percent

February - 6.8 percent

March - 6 percent*

Number working

January - 42,183

February - 42,675

March - 43,137*

Number without jobs

January - 3,443

February - 3,085

March - 2,774*

Source: Alabama Dept. of Labor

**=Preliminary figures*

Average weekly wages, Third Quarter 2016 in ...

Calhoun County - \$741

Alabama - \$870

United States - \$1,027

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, County Employment & Wages Report

Per capita personal income, 2015

Calhoun County - \$33,418

Alabama - \$39,231

United States - \$48,112

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

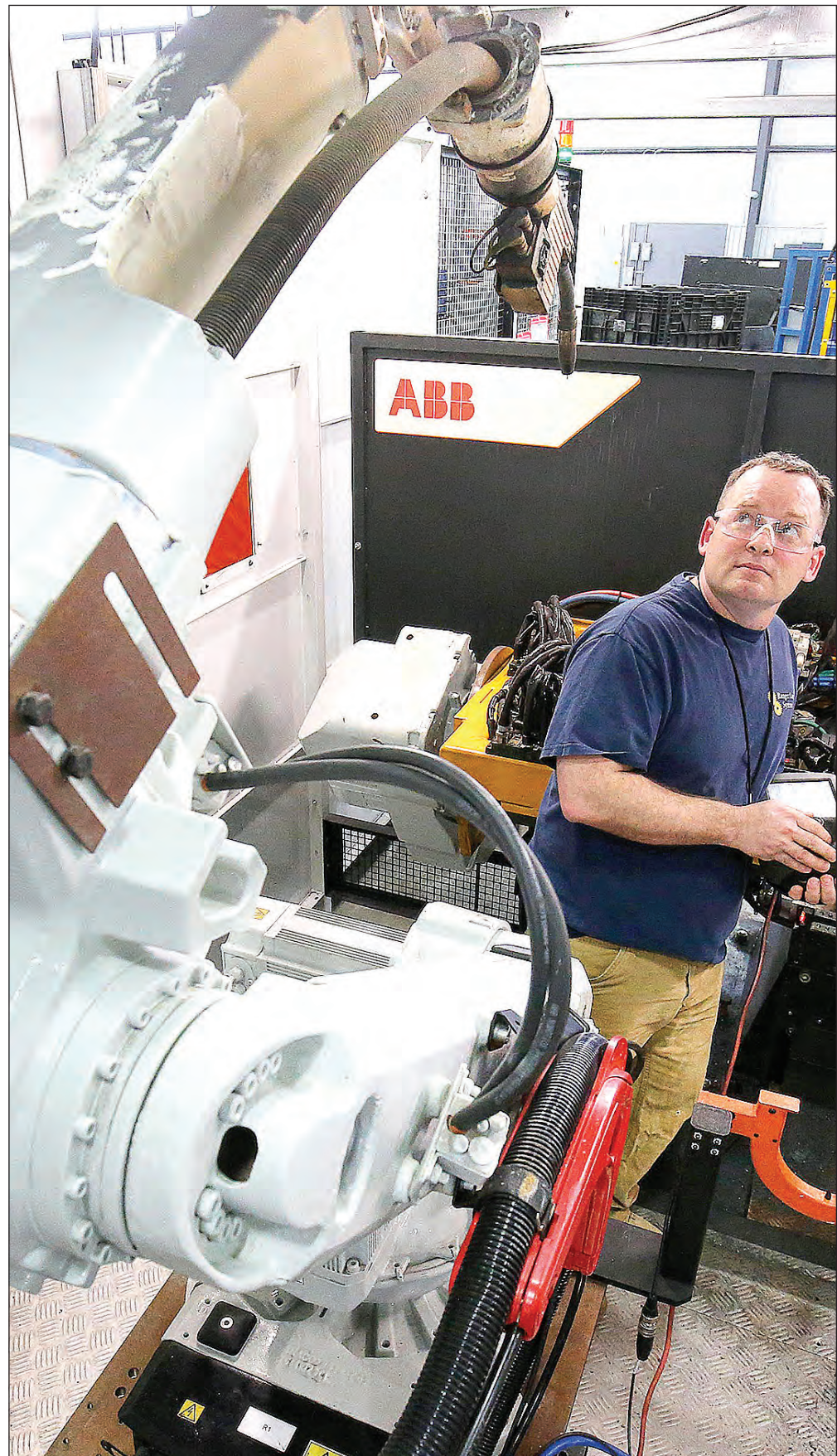
Calhoun County Gross Domestic Product in current dollars, all industries

2013 - \$3.71 billion

2014 - \$3.75 billion

2015 - \$3.82 billion

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis



File photo

R.C. Smith reprograms the flex arc robotic welder at Kobay Enstel-South in Oxford.

CLOCKING OUT — TIM LOCKETTE

Economic match-making in the age of Tinder

I've never swiped left.

For a middle-aged guy, I'm passably savvy about social media. I'm on Twitter all the time. I started using Facebook when you needed an .edu address to get on, and pretty much stopped when your grandmother got a profile. As a 45-year-old in a college town (Jacksonville), I'm surrounded by cool 20-somethings who make me feel a lot less guilty for staring at my phone constantly.

There's one social media thing I haven't done: Tinder, and all its equivalents. I've been married for almost all of the 21st Century, and I did all my dating in the more pheromone-based 1990s. People met strangers at random in bars and churches and grocery stores, trusted that they were who they said they were, and went home with them. Gross.

I bring this all up because my editor says he likes it when I bring business concept down to the personal level where

people can understand it. This time the topic is economic development. In other words, attracting a long-term partner. So, basically, dating.

Anniston was out of the market for a long time. For 70 years, we were married to a soldier, McClellan, who up and left us. We also hooked up with a chemical manufacturer who gave us a bad case of PCB.

To figure out how to do better in the future, I read up on how to date in the age of Tinder. So here are some tips, adapted from dating experts, on how to make the love stay, business-wise:

Stretch your arms wide. Seriously, a University of California Berkeley study found that people on Tinder who have outstretched arms in their profiles get more dates on Twitter. Openness is attractive. I mean, would you rather party on the friendliest campus or search for a gem in the hills?

The very name "Alabama" sends exactly the opposite message, like a guy frowning with crossed arms. There are plenty of open-armed people in Anniston, they just need to get into the picture. Even if it means standing in front of someone else.

Offer multiple views. Some scientists in Europe found that Tinder users with three photos in their profile got significantly more likes than people with one photo. People want more context than you can offer in your self-selected "best" photo. Translation for cities: if all you know about Chattanooga is "choo-choo," you're not moving to Chattanooga.

If Anniston has a profile photo, it would probably be the burning bus. Flip the script and call it a Freedom Riders photo, and it looks much better. Still, what other images do we have? Toxic Town? Bike City? Big Chair? Chemical Weapons? Tasty Tap Water? Woodstock 5K? We should probably work on getting the cool, quirky stories out there more often.

Stay proud. People who use Tinder have lower self-esteem than non-users, according to a study by the University of North Texas. Looking at other people's photos and judging them, then turning back to your own picture ... that's just not good for you. Tinder users literally liked their own faces less than non-users.

Anniston probably has that problem, too. After years without the big date we've wanted, we probably have a bit of that Tinder wobbliness. Why would someone choose us, with poorly-perceived schools, a Superfund site and all those empty lots?

Chin up, Anniston. You've got huge tracts of land. You have neat museums. Noble Street can be a lot of fun, and people never have to hunt for a parking spot.

Smile. Stretch out your arms like you want to hug the world.

There. You look great.



Tim
Lockette



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