

**Envision 2020**  
**Article for Montgomery Advertiser**  
**For February 15, 2004**

**Lynn Beshear**  
**Executive Director**

Four hundred thousand. According to noted economist and professor of economics at AUM, Dr. Keivan Deravi, speaking from experience with the economic impact and feasibility for Hyundai, Toyota, Honda and Mercedes-Benz in Alabama, 400,000 will be the population of Montgomery by 2025.

According to Gary Becker at the Center for Community Economic Development at the University of Wisconsin, creating an environment that meets human needs and stimulates interaction will enable communities to attract and keep employers looking for a high quality of life for their employees. Companies are looking for creative and innovative communities to attract young professionals. Dr. Becker sees this as integral to region's downtowns developing attractive fun public venues that promote activity, culture and historic preservation.

How do those dots connect? The answer is Smart Growth. Smart Growth links transportation, land use, economic development and housing. These represent quality of life issues.

Envision's Planning and Zoning Task Force, chaired by Joel Duke from Autauga County, and the Roads and Mass Transportation Task Force, chaired by Roland Vaughan from Macon County reported to the Envision Board on January 28. These reports are solid groundwork for Envision's first regional growth conference to be on Friday, February 27.

The River Region is growing rapidly and the task forces studied issues related to roads, mass transportation, and planning and zoning. From the wide array of bullets below, which are only a sampling from the reports, it is clear planning, zoning, roads and mass transportation impact every aspect of our lives.

Recommendations from the Roads and Mass Transportation Task Force:

- Passage of House Bill 122, which would remove the current \$600,000 ceiling on airport fuel tax collections for the entire state. This amount determines states' 9 (Federal) to 1 (State) match for funds for airport improvements. Alabama is way below Florida's \$130 million, Tennessee's \$22 million, Georgia's \$35 million and even Mississippi collects almost \$2 million. Bottom line: Alabama is losing millions of dollars.
- Endorse Airport Overlay District plans developed by the City of Montgomery's Planning Department, which prevent obstructions to air navigation and noise-related problems, protect the mission and long-term integrity of Maxwell and Dannelly airports, and promote economic development and enhanced interstate commerce. As those in power in Washington look at military base closings, the importance of a positive military-regional relationship cannot be overemphasized.

- Place more emphasis on biking and pedestrian interests and involve health departments and other agencies in planning
- Meet needs of disabled and underserved populations
- Encourage enhancement of Alabama Department of Transportation's (ALDOT) 3-year plan, based on citizen and business systematic input for modifications.
- Use Envision process for regional emphasis on planning for roadways and to develop effective ongoing citizen involvement with governmental agencies.
- Encourage immediate connection of central Alabama to west Mississippi with Highway 80 and I-85 extensions.
- Establish a regional transit authority, separate from the cities and fiscally self-sufficient, which would work cooperatively with existing or new city and county level transportation authorities.
- Look at criteria for high occupancy vehicle lanes.
- Work with ALDOT and Family Guidance Centers on rural transportation
- Educate ourselves on use of Federal Transit Administration tax credits.
- Develop transportation for low-income workers.
- Work to increase ridership on mass transit.

Recommendations from Planning and Zoning Task Force:

- Provide systematic involvement of all stakeholders in development and growth issues.
- Schedule annual training of local planning commissions and city councils on issues of growth, development patterns and capital budgeting.
- Establish speakers' bureau on growth issues: transportation, land use connections, watershed protection, historic preservation, and downtown redevelopment.
- Support actions by county commissions in the River Region to obtain modified home rule allowing for comprehensive planning and for zoning of property.
- Collect examples of the modern, proven ordinances and establish an ongoing entity in the River Region to study and recommend state and local incentives for smarter developments
- Promote preservation and planning for open spaces: including residential areas; recreational areas; scenic open spaces, such as farms, mountains, and rivers; non-developable open spaces, including environmentally sensitive areas, historically sensitive sites, farmlands and reservoirs.
- Develop a region-wide comprehensive strategy for open space planning and preservation.
- Provide pedestrian access to developments along arterial roads and safe accommodation of bicyclists to major destinations.
- Balance roadway network with the appropriate allocation of local streets, collectors and arterials in accordance with the adjacent land use

Educating ourselves is the best way to begin to deal effectively with rapid growth. **How We Grow Together: Planning for Quality Communities** conference will be at the Montgomery Civic Center on February 27, 2004 from 7:30 a.m. until noon with an

optional afternoon session. Cost for the morning session is \$35 (which includes breakfast), \$40 for all day (includes breakfast and lunch), and \$10 for students. Student scholarships are available. Registration brochures are available at the Envision 2020 office or on the envision website at envision2020.org. Pre-registration is required by February 23.

## **Twelfth Envision Task Force Activated**

Envision has rolled out the 12<sup>th</sup> task force: Linking Business with Education Through Mentoring and Tutoring. Concerned individuals in Autauga County approached Envision about establishing a program like Montgomery County's Partners in Education. It was decided the timing was right to establish Partners in Education programs in all Envision 2020 counties.

A leadership team with a representative from each county was created and the first step was a meeting with all public school superintendents to hear from Clinton Carter, MPS Superintendent and Hannah Williams, Executive Director of Partners in Education (PIE) about the 20-year history of PIE's success in Montgomery. With over 600 partnerships in Montgomery County schools, as well as mentoring and tutoring programs, the impact of positive relationships between business and the future workforce is clear. The region's superintendents will work with Hannah Williams and the PIE staff to create a Partners program in all Envision counties, and the great news is that several aspects of it are already in existence in each county. Organization and focus will be among the strengths the Montgomery PIE staff will bring.

Each public school superintendent will assemble individuals in their county to proceed. Anyone wishing to get additional information can call Partners in Education at 262-4743.

### **In Other Action:**

**Economic Development and Tourism:** a map of regional tourist attractions will be available in February.

**Crime Drugs and Public Safety** Task Force was activated on February 5

The **Culture and Arts Task Force** has divided into 7 subgroups: Art Education, Facilities, Artists Needs, Resource Assessment, Diverse Cultural Traditions, Funding and Publicity/Promotion.

Members of the **Human Relations Task Force** participated in the MLK Day Parade in downtown Montgomery.

### **How to get involved**

1. Attend **How We Grow Together: Planning for Quality Communities** conference at the Montgomery Civic Center, February 27, 2004 from 7:30 a.m. until noon with an optional afternoon session. Cost for the morning session is \$35 (which includes breakfast), \$40 for all day (includes breakfast and lunch), and \$10 for students. Student scholarships are available. Registration are available at the

Envision 2020 office or on the envision website at [envision2020.org](http://envision2020.org). Pre registration is required by February 23.

2. Call 269-0224 to sign up for a task force or arrange for a speaker.
3. Use the Envision Plan to guide activities and planning in all organizations.