

**Envision 2020
Central Alabama's River Region
Working Together Working Wonders**

June 2003

Lynn Beshear, Executive Director

Just one year ago this month, due to the *Montgomery Advertiser's* generosity, Envision 2020's inaugural column appeared to share on a monthly basis progress of implementation of the Envision plan. And what a year it has been!

The then newly announced Hyundai plant is now concrete and steel and thousands have applied for jobs. The new stadium in downtown Montgomery is underway and new ordinances in the Capital City are allowing mixed-use restorations.

Prattville jubilantly celebrated completion of Phase One of downtown restoration; Wetumpka is working on a riverwalk and downtown projects, Millbrook continues to expand in housing and retail, Tallassee's quaint downtown boasts of attractive shops, and Tuskegee is focusing on development of its historic downtown. Hayneville built its first shopping mall and has restored an historic building into a bank, with both facilities enjoying spacious community meeting rooms.

Now 2 ½ years into the process, Envision and envisioning have become part of our vocabularies, and the concept of regional planning is taking on new meaning and real action. Eleven task forces have been rolled out, with development of a timetable underway currently for the remaining 14 goals.

Prattville, Wetumpka and Montgomery have agreed to contract with IBJ Associates to conduct a feasibility study for a proposed water taxi and dinner cruise project. IBJ is the consulting firm used by Savannah in developing and implementing their water taxi.

Approximately 500 citizens participated in the Financing Public Services Task Force's Crucial Community Conversations on public education in Montgomery County during April and May, and those numbers will grow throughout the summer. Community Conversations will begin in Elmore County in August and continue in the other three counties during the fall. Call the Caroline Montgomery at 264-6223 to schedule a Crucial Community Conversation for a church or civic group.

Eleventh Task Force Announced

The Board of Directors announces the eleventh Envision Task Force to be activated will be Arts and Culture. The Envision 2020 goal is: A region that encourages, promotes and supports superior quality arts and cultural activities through education, the availability of ample, diverse and accessible events, quality facilities, youth programs, promotion of individual artists, and outstanding financial support.

Al Head, Executive Director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts will be the chair of the task force and individuals who signed up to serve will be contacted soon about the task force orientation meeting. But it is not too late; anyone desiring to be part of the implementation team can sign up by calling the Envision 2020 office at 269-0224.

Roads and Mass Transportation Task Force report on Air Travel:

The Roads and Mass Transportation Task Force reported to the Envision Board in April their findings about the economic impact of Alabama's current aviation system, as well as recommendations in regard to airports in the River Region. From an economic development standpoint, general aviation airports have an impact of \$800 million and provide over 9,000 jobs with commercial airports having a \$3.89 billion impact and providing 63,942 jobs. Other findings were that one in three employees works for companies that use general aviation, Alabama airports bring 2.5 million visitors annually and for every dollar invested in Alabama's aviation system, \$163 is returned to the economy. Other surprising findings were Alabama has a \$600,000 cap on fuel tax collection, a number set by the legislature in 1979. Corresponding amounts for sister states are Florida - \$130,000,000; Tennessee - \$22,500,000 and Mississippi - \$1,800,000. This is especially significant because the tax is the states' nine to one federal matching money. Call the Envision office for further information.

Tourism and Economic Development task forces have joined around tourism as the prime economic development tool for regional cooperation. Key contacts for each county have been identified and a process is under development to communicate consistently across the region in regard to tourist attractions and special events. An orientation session will be conducted in July.

Rivermarket Day will be held for the second time on Saturday, July 19 in the historic Train Shed on the riverfront in Montgomery featuring booths with art, crafts, flowers, food and music by regional artisans and vendors. Call Gail Alsobrook at the Riverfront Foundation at 261-1114 for further information.

How to get involved

1. Go to the Website at www.envision2020.org to view the entire plan.
2. Call 269-0224 to sign up for a task force or request a speaker.
3. Use the Envision Plan in all organizations as a guide in activities and planning.
4. Call Caroline Montgomery to arrange for a Crucial Community Conversation facilitator. 264-6223