

Live Locally Alabama Celebrates First Anniversary with Call to Action:

# Strong Communities Start with You

Lori Johns • Communications Director • ALM

The Alabama League of Municipalities is proud to recently celebrate the first anniversary of Live Locally Alabama! We launched this statewide, quality-of-life campaign to increase awareness of the critical role local governments play in our daily lives and to empower citizens of all ages to engage in building stronger, more vibrant communities.

Alabama is comprised of 466 cities and towns, each with their own strengths and challenges. Over the past year, Live Locally Alabama has served as a platform to highlight the range of services they offer, which depends on strong leadership, active community support and sustainable funding through local tax dollars, licenses and fees. Common examples include: police and fire protection; water and wastewater services; street and sidewalk maintenance; economic development; schools; garbage and recycling collection; parks, recreation and youth programs; libraries; and senior centers not to mention community events and festivals.



## How to Get Your Municipality Engaged

The League created various campaign assets such as a strategic plan, press releases, a campaign logo style guide, over 40 graphics and videos for municipalities to utilize to promote their communities and everyday quality-of-life services. All items are available for free to download on the League's website.

Over the past year, we have promoted the campaign at all of our events; shared it with state and federal leaders; conducted several interviews on TV and radio; aired over 200 TV spots on Alabama Public Television; and contracted Yellowhammer News and SoulGrown to share articles, video reels and ads on their platforms. We continue to brainstorm ideas and work on more partnerships to help support Alabama's cities and towns.

There is no right or wrong way to get engaged with the campaign. We simply ask that you just get involved!

### Consider:

- Setting up media interviews to discuss how your community provides a good quality of life for your citizens
- Asking your local TV or radio station to air the campaign videos
- Visiting the schools in your community and talking about civic education by sharing our *Your Municipality and You* booklet. Scan the QR code for the booklet.
- Creating a volunteer Live Locally Alabama committee to help your community get involved by creating positive social media content or planning events



*Midfield councilmembers Velma Johnson and Janice Anderson show off their pride for the new Live Locally Alabama campaign.*

- Asking a community celebrity to do a video tour of what they love about your community or have each member of the council do it

## How Can Citizens Support Live Locally Alabama

Live Locally Alabama is not just a campaign; it is a movement that welcomes participation from citizens of all ages. Following the recent municipal elections, now is the perfect time for citizens to become more engaged with new and incumbent leaders alike as they prepare their visions for the next four years or more.

There are many ways citizens can get involved and support their cities and towns.

### Adults can:

- Attend city council or town hall meetings to stay informed and speak up on local issues
- Volunteer with community organizations, clean-up events or local boards and commissions
- Support local businesses, farmers markets and civic fundraisers
- Report issues such as potholes, code violations or safety concerns to your local government
- Join neighborhood associations or start community improvement initiatives
- Serve on local advisory boards or task forces
- Mentor youth in civic leadership programs
- Share information about municipal services and the campaign with others
- Vote in every election
- Share Live Locally Alabama campaign graphics and videos on social media

### Youth can:

- Join student government or local youth councils
- Participate in community service projects
- Learn about how local government works through school or library programs
- Help organize local drives or clean-up days with family and friends

## Celebrate and Commit

As Live Locally Alabama enters its second year, the Alabama League of Municipalities invites every Alabamian to celebrate by committing to take one new action in support of their city or town whether that is voting, attending a council meeting or simply thanking a public servant—every action counts. For more information, engagement ideas and stories from communities across the state, visit our website by scanning the QR code on page 45. As you can see, the possibilities for getting involved are endless. Reach out to me any time at [ljhons@almonline.org](mailto:ljhons@almonline.org) if you need help or want to discuss ideas.

The following pages of this magazine will showcase campaign articles featured on the SoulGrown digital platform about Albertville, Alexander City, Atmore, Centreville, Enterprise, Guntersville, Loxley, Millbrook, Muscle Shoals, Opelika, Rainbow City and Tuskegee. ■



*Director Lori Jhons shared campaign resources with the Alabama Higher Education Partnership's Student Retention Council on Oct. 8, 2025.*



*ALM Deputy Director Kayla Bass unveiled the campaign to board members on July 11, 2024.*

Live Locally Alabama:

# East Alabama Cities Elevating Everyday Living

SoulGrown Staff and Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM



*This article is printed as it appeared in the SoulGrown digital publication on Aug. 28, 2025.*

The Alabama League of Municipalities’ (ALM) Live Locally Alabama campaign celebrates the heartbeat of our state’s communities—the people who live, work and give back right where they are. Across Alabama’s 466 cities and towns, citizens are the backbone of progress, shaping healthy, vibrant places to call home in ways they may not even realize. From volunteering at local events to supporting small businesses or simply showing up for neighbors, everyday actions make a difference.

As part of the Live Locally Alabama campaign, ALM is visiting municipal leaders across the state to highlight

how local government works hand in hand with residents to build a sustainable, connected future. In east Alabama, three communities—Tuskegee, Opelika and Albertville—are proving that when leaders and citizens work together, they can create spaces and experiences that strengthen both community pride and a sense of belonging.

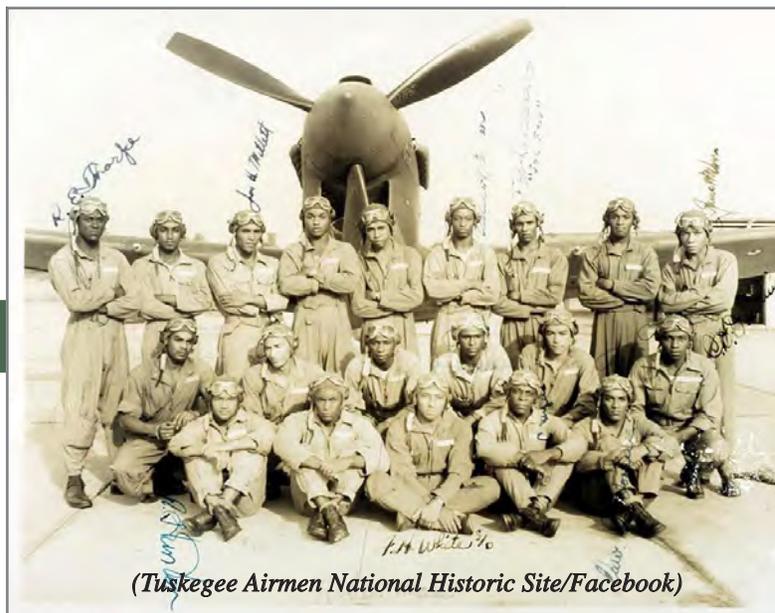
## Learn About Local History in Tuskegee

Tuskegee Mayor Lawrence “Tony” Haygood Jr., who served as ALM’s president from 2022-2023, is a lifelong resident and dedicated community leader. He is deeply proud of Moton Field, the home of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen. With decades of public service under his belt, Mayor Haygood understands the profound impact this historic site holds. “Moton Field was where the Tuskegee Airmen trained—heroes who shaped the end of World War II, the integration of our armed services and the civil rights movement,” he said.

Today, the field remains a hub of aviation activity. “We’ve come full circle. Tuskegee University students are once again being trained at Moton Field to serve the military with strength and pride,” Haygood noted.

The city works alongside the Friends of the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site to preserve and share this history nationwide. “It’s been a community-wide effort—city, county and citizens working together to honor Moton Field’s legacy,” he said.

Moton Field also serves as a gathering place for community events and fly-ins, with future aviation activities on the horizon. “When citizens are informed, they participate more actively and that makes our community stronger,” Haygood added.



*(Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site/Facebook)*

## Play at a Park for All in Opelika

Opelika Mayor Gary Fuller, who served as ALM’s president from 2021-2022, has been serving the community for over two decades with a strong focus on enhancing quality of life and fostering community engagement. He is thrilled to



*(Opelika Chamber/Facebook)*

celebrate the success of Floral Park, a 28-acre property transformed into an inclusive, multi-use destination. “Floral Park is our 28-acre jewel, rebuilt from top to bottom and now the smash hit of the summer,” Fuller said.

The park features turf athletic fields for soccer and football, large and small dog parks, picnic pavilions, a walking track and an inclusive playground designed for children of all abilities. “Parents are bringing their kids twice a day; it has exceeded all our expectations,” Fuller shared.

For Mayor Fuller, the Live Locally Alabama campaign reinforces the value of amenities like Floral Park. “It brings our community together to enjoy the things we have right here at home,” he said. He encourages residents to get involved: “Volunteer—whether it’s with the library, food bank, community market, parks and recreation or

the Literacy Coalition. Be a part of making a difference!”

## Explore and Enjoy Community in Albertville

Albertville City Councilwoman Jill Oakley brings over a decade of public service to her hometown and is equally enthusiastic about her community’s crown jewel: Sand Mountain Park and Amphitheater. The expansive facility features seven playgrounds, multiple sports courts—including baseball, softball, soccer, tennis and basketball—an outdoor water park and an amphitheater that highlights local music talent.

“This park meets the needs of our whole community: sports, recreation, exercise and live music,” Oakley said. “It’s an opportunity to live locally, enjoy the outdoors and make the most of our natural beauty.”

The project was the result of years of planning, community input and a dedicated one-cent sales tax to fund infrastructure, including the park’s development. “This is our way to give back to our community the things it needs to have a quality of life,” Oakley said.

She sees the Live Locally Alabama campaign as an invitation for residents to discover what is already around them. “You don’t have to go to Disney World.

North Alabama has so much to explore and enjoy right here,” she said. “Our school system, parks and local boards offer countless ways to contribute.”

No matter their size or location, Tuskegee, Opelika and Albertville share one vital truth: communities thrive when citizens are engaged and invested. Local governments can build spaces and programs, but it is the people who fill them with meaning and connection.

Through the Live Locally Alabama campaign, these east Alabama cities show that stepping up—by volunteering, sharing ideas or simply showing up—makes a hometown stronger and brighter. Living locally is not just about where you live; it is about how you help shape the future of your community.

For more information on the ALM Live Locally Alabama campaign, including municipal and citizen resources, visit [almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama](http://almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama). ■



*(Sand Mountain Amphitheater/Facebook)*

Live Locally Alabama:

# Central Alabama Communities Building Stronger Futures Together

SoulGrown Staff and Lori Johns • Communications Director • ALM



*This article is printed as it appeared in the SoulGrown digital publication on July 24, 2025.*

Live Locally Alabama is a statewide initiative developed by the Alabama League of Municipalities that celebrates the heart of our hometowns—the people who live there and the leaders who help them thrive. By sharing local stories about Alabama’s 466 cities and towns and highlighting civic achievements, the campaign reminds us that strong communities start with strong local leadership. In central Alabama, mayors are stepping up in big ways, working hand-in-hand with neighbors, businesses and city staff to create brighter futures right where they live. Take a

look at three central Alabama communities where local leadership is driving meaningful progress through signature projects and strong community partnerships.

## Shop Smart in Alexander City

Alexander City is making big strides with their Gateway Project, a vibrant retail and service hub located near the city’s bustling downtown area. Opened in 2024, the Gateway Project combines shopping, dining and essential services all in one convenient location, offering residents options they did not have before. At least six businesses have already opened their doors, including Publix, Starbucks, Marshalls and Alex City Nails. With over 25 acres developed and plans for additional businesses continuing, this project is a major driver for the local economy and a place where community members can gather.

Mayor Curtis Baird talks about what this project means for Alexander City. “It’s the only location like it around, and it gives our citizens a great place to come and access services we didn’t have before,” Baird said. “It’s something new, something elevated and everyone’s really excited about the development.”

Baird also stresses the importance of getting residents involved beyond just using these new businesses and services. “We want people to feel comfortable interacting with city government because we need folks to serve on boards, panels and other groups that help move us forward,” he said. “We’ve put together a comprehensive and strategic plan with community input, and it’s given people a real chance to engage with the city, learn more and have a say in shaping the quality of life here.”

Civic engagement remains a key pillar of the Live Locally Alabama campaign, encouraging residents to actively participate in building stronger, more connected communities across the state.



*(Alexander City Chamber of Commerce/Facebook)*

## Play with Passion in Millbrook

Millbrook’s 17 Springs is a remarkable multi-use complex designed to bring top-tier athletic facilities, family-friendly events and economic opportunity to the region. This sprawling 200-acre site includes multiple sports fields, walking trails,

playgrounds and event venues, all built to championship standards and designed to host tournaments and festivals that attract visitors from across the state. The front portion of the site will feature a marketplace with hotels, restaurants and retail shops, making it a full-fledged destination for locals and tourists alike.

The 17 Springs development is progressing in three phases: Phase I opened in August 2023 with tennis, pickleball and multipurpose fields. Phase II followed in February 2025 with a stadium, ballfields and an indoor fieldhouse. Now underway, Phase III will add hotels, restaurants, retail and medical space—completing the sports and entertainment district.

Councilman Michael Gay, an ALM board member, shares why 17 Springs is so exciting for Millbrook. “This is a huge facility—about 200 acres—with championship-quality athletic fields and event spaces,” he said. “It’s a \$100 million project supported by the Elmore County Commission, the school board, the YMCA and the economic development authority. Out front, there’ll be a marketplace with hotels, restaurants and other businesses.”

Gay also points to how this project is sparking local entrepreneurship. “It’s been fantastic for local businesses, giving people a chance to start new ventures and embrace the small business spirit. There’s a lot of excitement—we’re seeing the entrepreneurial energy really grow.”

When asked about the importance of the Live Locally Alabama campaign, Gay explains how the initiative seamlessly aligns with his city’s goals. “Live Locally Alabama fits us perfectly because we want to be a destination—a place where people come to have fun, stay a while and enjoy the quality of life here and throughout Elmore County and the River Region. It also gives our residents a chance to experience that same quality of life through all the events and developments happening downtown and at 17 Springs. We want folks from the area and beyond to come, enjoy and keep coming back.”



*Soccer is one of the many sports youth and adults are able to play at 17 Springs.*

## Celebrate Community in Centreville

Centreville is a charming little city known for its friendly people and its beautiful location along the Cahaba River, one of the longest free-flowing, ecologically diverse rivers in the country. The city is focused on preserving its natural beauty while fostering a vibrant community life, with an emphasis on arts, culture and historic preservation. The Cahaba River Crawl is just one example of the annual events that bring residents and visitors together to celebrate the river and the city’s rich heritage.

Mayor Mike Oakley, an ALM board member, talks about the teamwork behind these efforts. “This event depends on strong partnerships—the city, main street, our board—all full of positive, proactive people. Our county leaders, hospital staff, school board...everyone plays an important role, and we work seamlessly together.”

Oakley also notes the incredible support the community shows for local events and gatherings. “Our community really steps up. Whether it’s a planned event like the Cahaba Crawl or an impromptu celebration downtown, people are always ready to get involved and show their support.”

Oakley sees the Live Locally Alabama campaign as a natural fit for Centreville’s vision and way of life. “Live Locally Alabama connects people with their local government, which is the closest to the community and really understands their needs. The best way for folks to get involved is through the Bibb County Chamber of Commerce—we have an amazing team there—and through our Centreville Main Street program, which is full of young entrepreneurs eager to make a difference.”

From new developments bringing fresh opportunities in Alexander City, to Millbrook’s dynamic 17 Springs complex, and Centreville’s strong community partnerships and natural beauty, these central Alabama cities show how local leadership and community involvement can build vibrant, thriving hometowns—exactly what Live Locally Alabama is all about.

Visit [almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama](http://almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama) to get involved with the campaign. ■



*(Centreville Main Street/Facebook)*

Live Locally Alabama:

# Showcasing South Alabama Communities' Unique Attractions

SoulGrown Staff and Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM



*This article is printed as it appeared in the SoulGrown digital publication on Feb. 4, 2025.*

The Alabama League of Municipalities' (ALM) "Live Locally Alabama" campaign seeks to highlight the crucial role that local government plays in creating healthy and vibrant communities across the state's 466 cities and towns. The state's diverse range of communities consist of an abundance of cultural, recreational and educational opportunities—all with the singular purpose of developing a sustainable future.

Local government is often described as being the government closest to the people. As part of the Live Locally Alabama campaign, we are visiting with municipal leaders in different regions of the state throughout the year to see how they are contributing to the aforementioned goal. Many Alabama municipal leaders display a sincere love and commitment to their communities; we met with three of them recently.

Let us take a look at some of their community projects in south Alabama that are contributing to Alabamians' quality of life.

## Experience One-of-a-Kind Entertainment in Atmore

Mayor Jim Staff, a lifelong native of Atmore, said, "I love Atmore because of the people here in Atmore. It's a small town, very vibrant, and everyone gets along with one another." Mayor Staff's love for Atmore and service to the community stems back more than 25 years. Mayor Staff served as a councilmember for District 5 from 2000 until 2012, when he was elected to his first term as mayor.

The city was recently able to bring their vision of creating a live entertainment venue to life by creating a unique stage made from a boxcar, donated by CSX. The city conducted a venue name contest and "Boxcar Willie" was the winner! Today, locals and visitors alike gather downtown at Boxcar Willie Park to enjoy musicians, including American Idol finalist Will Moseley, who performed at the Atmore venue in 2024.

## Gather with Community in Loxley

Loxley Mayor Richard Teal has seen similar success in his community through the construction of a new public gathering space in Loxley Municipal Park. "We're in the process of building a large pavilion and



*Photo credit: SoulGrown*



*Photo credit: SoulGrown*

that contributes to our annual strawberry festival that draws over 100,000 people annually,” he remarked. The Baldwin County Strawberry Festival has become a beloved tradition for the community, which raises funds for Loxley Elementary School and for ARC Baldwin County, Inc. Mayor Teal believes the new pavilion will attract even more visitors to the festival, and hopes that the community will put the pavilion to use, from birthday parties to weddings.

Since 1988, Mayor Teal has embraced what it means to “live locally” by serving on Loxley’s City Council. After four years as mayor pro-tem, he was sworn into office as mayor on June 24, 2020. He has continued to be a devoted community member and was recently honored by the Alabama League of Municipalities for 30 years of exemplary service.

In addition to the pavilion, the city is working on a new city center which will feature a new city hall, public library, museum and office space for every city department. Architects on the project, WHLC, state that the new city center, which will span over 45,000 square feet, is “where southern charm meets a growing community.”

## Explore Art in Enterprise

Enterprise Mayor William Cooper taught band students for over four decades before taking on the role as mayor in 2017. He previously represented District 1 on city council for 28 years prior to making history as the city’s first African-American mayor. Known as “the City of Progress,” Mayor Cooper has dedicated his career to maintaining that reality for Enterprise.

His city boasts a highly unique and photo-worthy public art project. “Weevil Way” is comprised of nearly 30 boll weevil statues, the city’s unofficial mascot, and many businesses proudly display their own customized weevil statues as a symbol of the unified Enterprise community.

“Our Weevil Way has been somewhat of a monumental task for our city,” Mayor Cooper said. “It encourages people to come downtown and look and take pictures. It has actually become a tourist attraction for our city!”

Regardless of these communities’ location, population or demographics, each of the mayors proudly commits to bettering the lives of their residents through the Live Locally Alabama campaign and showing off the state’s unmatched hospitality. They encourage all cities and towns to take on the challenge.

For more information on the ALM Live Locally Alabama campaign, including municipal and citizen campaign resources, visit their website. ■



Photo credit: SoulGrown



Photo credit: SoulGrown

Live Locally Alabama:

# North Alabama Cities Invite Exploration and Enrichment

SoulGrown Staff and Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM



*This article is printed as it appeared in the SoulGrown digital publication on Sept. 23, 2025.*

Nestled between rolling hills and winding rivers, north Alabama’s communities offer more than places to live—they offer ways to connect, explore and grow. The Alabama League of Municipalities’ (ALM) Live Locally Alabama campaign celebrates the residents who bring these cities to life. From discovering local shops and attending seasonal festivals to volunteering at neighborhood events, everyday actions help shape vibrant, welcoming communities—precisely the spirit the campaign aims to accentuate.

As part of the Live Locally Alabama campaign, ALM is visiting municipal leaders across the state to highlight how local government

works hand in hand with residents to build a sustainable, connected future. Today we visit north Alabama, where three communities—Rainbow City, Guntersville and Muscle Shoals—are demonstrating how partnerships between citizens and leaders create spaces, programs and experiences that strengthen both pride and belonging.

## Learn at Alabama’s First Challenger Learning Center in Rainbow City

Nestled in northeastern Alabama, Rainbow City is a rapidly growing community that blends small-town charm with ambitious development projects. With a focus on education, recreation and strategic growth, the city has become a hub for families seeking both opportunity and quality of life.

Rainbow City Mayor Joe Taylor, an ALM board member, emphasizes early preparation for children to ensure a strong future workforce. “We found out in workforce development that we’ve got to start catching our kids a lot earlier. Fifth grade seems to be that sweet spot where we can track them in the right direction,” he said.

At the heart of this effort is the Challenger Learning Center of Northeast Alabama, a hands-on STEM facility. “I did an area study that proved the standard rule of real estate still works: location, location, location. That’s how Rainbow City won the Challenger Learning Center,” Taylor explained. The center joins a network of more than 30 across 24 states, which have reached over 6 million students. Each facility features a simulator, briefing room, transport room, mission control and a space station. The Rainbow City center will include three classrooms, initially serving middle school students, with 25–40 students per room. The goal is to have it completed by the beginning of 2026, giving students hands-on, space-themed STEM experiences that extend far beyond the classroom.

The city is also experiencing robust growth through public and private investment. “Our city is growing because it needed to grow. We just got out of its way, made government run smoother and made development a priority,” he said. “We have over a hundred million dollars in private partnerships and nearly a hundred million in public funding driving projects across Rainbow City.” In the past five years, the city has added more than 50 new businesses, expanding from just three market vendors to over 20, and its population has increased by about 7% over the past decade.



*(Etowah Chamber/Facebook)*

Taylor sees Live Locally Alabama as a natural fit for the city’s approach to community engagement. “Even though we’re growing, we don’t have to grow apart—we can actually grow together. Live Locally helps us do that,” he said. Community markets are a key example. “We started with just a couple of vendors. Now, three days a week, 20 to 25 vendors bring our community together at City Hall Park,” shared Taylor.

Residents are encouraged to participate in city life. “We encourage people to come to city hall, attend meetings, and take part in public spaces. That’s how neighbors become community,” Taylor said. He also emphasizes smart, sustainable growth, noting that the city’s approach to education, location and quality of life is driving its economic development.

### Play at Refreshed Parks and Recreation Spaces in Guntersville

Located on the picturesque shores of Guntersville Lake, Guntersville has long been known for its natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities. The city blends a strong sense of community with an emphasis on high-quality amenities for residents of all ages.

Guntersville Mayor Leigh Dollar, who served as ALM’s president from 2020-2021, has focused on amenities that enhance the quality of life for all residents. “One of the projects I’m most excited about is the splash pad. Children of all ages can use it—it’s by the lake, next to the pool, and free to the public outside of pool hours,” she said.

These upgrades were made possible through collaboration and investment as part of a larger focus on renovating the city’s parks and recreation facilities through a three-phased approach. “It took time, teamwork and a lot of money to bring these projects to life. A generous corporate donation from Pilgrim’s Pride helped us make the splash pad possible,” Dollar said. The city has also updated facilities for all generations. “Our recreational amenities serve everyone, from newborns to senior citizens. We’ve even redone our senior center, so all age groups are included,” she shared.

Dollar sees Live Locally Alabama as reinforcing the value of these investments. “Live Locally aligns perfectly with our vision. We want to provide amenities that make Guntersville enjoyable so people stay and take pride in their community,” she said.

Citizen involvement is critical to the city’s success, as engaged residents help shape the programs, parks and services that make Guntersville a thriving and vibrant community. “There are many ways to get involved: through board positions,



*(Lake Guntersville Chamber of Commerce/Facebook)*

following updates on social media, reading the newspaper or simply calling to share opinions,” she explained. “We encourage people to engage with their city. That’s what matters. We’re doing it for them, and we hope everyone enjoys these amenities.”



*(City of Muscle Shoals, Alabama-Government/Facebook)*

### Shop at New Coffee Shops and Restaurants in Muscle Shoals

Situated along the Tennessee River, Muscle Shoals is a cultural and economic hub in northwest Alabama, renowned for its rich music history and vibrant local businesses. The city has become a destination for music enthusiasts and families alike, where the legacy of its legendary studios meets a growing community of businesses, arts and recreational opportunities.

Muscle Shoals Mayor Mike Lockhart, an ALM board member, highlighted the role of local investment in community vitality. “Through our comprehensive plan, we had stakeholders from our community get involved, and once that plan was done, the excitement of the vision created a sense of ownership from our own people,” he said.

Small, locally owned businesses are a cornerstone of Muscle Shoals’ success. When local people invest in their own community, they are the ones that give back. “Small businesses give back to schools, to nonprofits, and that’s exciting because we’re working together to be successful as a whole,” Lockhart said.

Welcoming entrepreneurs is equally important, and the city emphasizes transparency and accessibility to make starting a business easier. This approach has injected new energy into the community. “The community has just had a buzz about new coffee shops, ice cream shops and restaurants. It’s creating gathering places where people can come together, grab lunch or get an afternoon snack with their kids,” Lockhart added.

Community engagement is encouraged through boards and public input sessions. “We’ve had meetings in our school library where over 100 people came to give input on their vision for the community. When those opportunities arise, I encourage you to be a part of that,” he said. “We have boards throughout our city, from the library to parks and recreation to utilities, and I encourage citizens to get involved. An engaged citizen always makes for a better community.”

Finally, Muscle Shoals’ unique cultural and natural assets set it apart. “We have a lot of music heritage here, and I encourage you to come visit Fame Studios. There are others in neighboring cities that are just full of rich music history,” Lockhart said. “The Tennessee River is here, we’ve got natural resources, and it’s a beautiful place to come. We’re kind of a hidden gem in northwest Alabama with a bright future.”

Rainbow City, Guntersville and Muscle Shoals demonstrate that communities thrive when residents actively participate. Local governments can build programs, parks and amenities, but it is the people who fill them with meaning and connection.

Through the Live Locally Alabama campaign, these cities show that stepping up—by volunteering, supporting local businesses or simply showing up—makes a hometown stronger and brighter. Living locally is not just about where you live; it is about how you help shape the future of your community.

For more information on the ALM Live Locally Alabama campaign, including municipal and citizen resources, visit <https://almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama>. ■

A major component of the Live Locally Alabama campaign is ensuring our members have ready-to-use marketing assets to accomplish the aforementioned goal. This includes materials such as graphics, videos, press releases, a logo style guide, a strategic plan and more. These items can be used as is or tailored to include imagery or messaging unique to your individual communities. Scan the QR code for access to these vital materials.

**WORK LOCALLY**

**SHOP LOCALLY**

**PLAY LOCALLY**

**SERVE LOCALLY**

**Encourage civic engagement, locally!**

Visit [almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama](https://almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama) or scan the QR code for more information



Live Locally Alabama:

# West Alabama Communities Invest in People, Pride and Opportunity

SoulGrown Staff and Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM



*This article is printed as it appeared in the SoulGrown digital publication on Dec. 22, 2025.*

**F**rom historic riverfronts to growing workforce pipelines and strategic development along major corridors, west Alabama’s cities show how local leadership and citizen involvement can shape lasting progress. Through the Alabama League of Municipalities’ Live Locally Alabama campaign, municipal leaders are highlighting the ways residents, businesses and governments work together to strengthen the places they call home.

As part of the campaign, ALM is visiting communities across the state to spotlight how local governments partner with citizens to create opportunity, connection and pride. In west Alabama, three communities—Thomasville, Selma and Guin—demonstrate how investing in education, downtown revitalization and strategic

development helps communities grow stronger together.

## Learn Through Early Workforce Pathways in Thomasville

Located in Clarke County, the city of Thomasville has made workforce development a long-term priority—one that begins well before high school graduation. Nearly two decades ago, the city became one of the first communities in Alabama to fully embrace dual enrollment at the high school level, creating a model that has since been shared statewide.

Mayor Sheldon Day, an ALM board member, says the program’s success came from collaboration. “As we developed it, we found out that partnerships are critical,” Day said. “We worked closely with our local community college, the Alabama State Board of Education, our superintendent and accreditation groups to build something that could really serve our students.”

The dual enrollment program allows students to begin technical and academic college coursework while still in high school, helping them prepare for careers in manufacturing and other industries in the region. “It’s extremely important for us to develop our workforce,” Day said. “If we have more opportunities locally, students can get a jumpstart on technical training, finish their degrees faster and stay right here in Alabama.”

When the program first launched, some parents were hesitant about technical education. Over time, perceptions changed as families saw the academic and career benefits. Today, about 30% of Thomasville High School students are enrolled in the dual enrollment program, and participation continues to grow across the area.

For Day, the Live Locally Alabama campaign reflects how Thomasville approaches growth and engagement. “Living locally starts at the local level,” he said. “The state and federal levels are there to support us, but it’s really about what you want for your community—how you want it to grow and how you want to support your families, schools and businesses.”



*(Ginny Gray/SoulGrown)*

Community involvement is central to that vision. “The city isn’t just the buildings—it’s the people,” Day said. “Part of living locally is getting involved. We need everyone plugging in, sharing ideas and willing to play a role. That’s how we make our community great.”

## Stay and Explore the Riverfront in Selma

With deep historical roots and a renewed focus on revitalization, Selma continues to invest in projects that invite both residents and visitors to experience its downtown and riverfront.

City Councilmember Jannie Thomas says recent riverfront development and community programming have helped bring new energy to the city. “I’m extremely proud of our downtown riverfront projects and the concert series,” she said. “We want people to stay and play in Selma.”

That vision is advancing through a multi-phase, \$4.5 million riverfront development project led by the city of Selma. The initiative is focused on expanding public access to the Alabama River while laying the groundwork for long-term economic growth, recreation and tourism in the historic downtown corridor.

The city recently began phase one of the Riverfront Boardwalk Project, supported in part by an \$800,000 Transportation Alternatives Program grant through the Alabama Department of Transportation. This phase includes construction of a boardwalk and a new boat ramp, improving pedestrian connectivity and allowing residents and visitors to safely engage with the river near the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

Before construction could move forward, the city spent years addressing foundational challenges, including riverbank stabilization in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Those behind-the-scenes efforts resolved erosion issues that had long delayed progress and made the current phase possible.

City officials say the boardwalk represents only the beginning. Future phases outlined in the city’s plans include expanded green space, improved lighting, gathering areas and additional recreational amenities designed to draw people downtown and strengthen connections between the riverfront, historic landmarks and local businesses.

Thomas notes that revitalization efforts are strongest when they extend beyond infrastructure. Downtown businesses help complete the riverfront experience, she says, pointing to Reflections Coffee Shoppe as a welcoming stop for visitors exploring Selma. “You always feel welcome when you come to Selma,” she said.

She adds that sustaining momentum requires continued community engagement. Through attending council meetings, participating in cleanups and staying connected through city communication channels, residents play an active role in shaping the riverfront’s future and ensuring it remains a shared civic space rooted in Selma’s pride and progress.



*(Ginny Gray/SoulGrown)*



*(Ginny Gray/SoulGrown)*

## Grow Strategically Along Interstate 22 in Guin

Located along the I-22 corridor, the city of Guin has focused on strategic development that supports travelers while generating long-term benefits for residents.

Former Mayor Phil Segraves, who served as ALM’s president in 2016, points to the city’s full-service Holiday Inn as one of the projects he is most proud of. “It gave Guin a presence on I-22,” Segraves said. “We can now provide lodging and meals for people traveling through the area, and it was truly a team effort with many people involved, from the city council to federal grant partners.”

The hotel has earned national recognition, receiving the only IHG award in the nation based on guest votes. Revenue

from the property helps fund city services, and the project has become a source of pride for the community.

Another milestone for Guin is the addition of a Tesla charging station at the Holiday Inn, making it the only one located along I-22. Segraves says the project has helped set the city apart and demonstrates the value of thinking ahead. “We’re proud to have Tesla as part of our family and to offer a service that benefits both travelers and our local economy,” he said.

For Segraves, the Live Locally Alabama campaign reinforces the importance of supporting hometown investment. “When you buy local, you’re pouring back into your own community,” he said. “My vision has always been for people to be proud of their city, and projects like the hotel are part of that vision.”

Thomasville, Selma and Guin demonstrate that communities thrive when residents, elected leaders and partners work together. While local governments can build programs, projects and amenities, it is citizen involvement that gives them meaning and momentum.

Through the Live Locally Alabama campaign, these west Alabama communities show that living locally means more than where you live—it means participating, supporting local businesses and helping shape the future of your hometown.

For more information on the ALM Live Locally Alabama campaign, including municipal and citizen resources, visit [almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama](http://almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama). ■



(Ginny Gray/SoulGrown)



(Ginny Gray/SoulGrown)

A major component of the Live Locally Alabama campaign is ensuring our members have ready-to-use marketing assets to accomplish the aforementioned goal. This includes materials such as graphics, videos, press releases, a logo style guide, a strategic plan and more. These items can be used as is or tailored to include imagery or messaging unique to your individual communities. Scan the QR code for access to these vital materials.



**WORK LOCALLY**



**SHOP LOCALLY**



**PLAY LOCALLY**



**SERVE LOCALLY**



**Encourage civic engagement, locally!**

Visit [almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama](http://almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama) or scan the QR code for more information

