

# **Thomasville**

## ***"Southwest Alabama's Success Story"***



## ***Development Synopsis***

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## ***“Southwest Alabama’s Success Story”***

The City of Thomasville, a certified Alabama Community of Excellence, is pleased to invite you to visit “Southwest Alabama’s Success Story.” The City and its trade area are experiencing unprecedented interest from the outside world. Thomasville enjoys the reputation of being an innovative rural City, with the capability of reaching across municipal and county lines into the entire Black Belt Region. With its seamless approach to progress, the City promotes interaction among all functional areas, including education, medicine, tourism, cultural arts, as well as community and economic development.

The new ThyssenKrupp Steel Mill will be situated *less than one hour* south of Thomasville. The four-laned Highway 43 South and multiple points of rail access make Thomasville a very attractive hub to supply needed construction and operational products and services to ThyssenKrupp. The TK plant will break ground in 2007. Approximately 30,000 construction individuals will be on-site. In addition, 2,700 direct employees will join 4,300 indirect employees as its operation begins.

The year 2006/2007 brought many new opportunities. **The volume of activity leaves little to debate.** A ride along Highway 43 or in the Historic Downtown District reveals all. Thomasville is the "**success story**" in Southwest Alabama. The City Government, Industrial Board, and Development and Planning Department, have combined forces in the pursuit of quality rural development. In addition to passing a Master Land Use Ordinance, creating a Revitalization and Community Development Corporation, the City also passed a referendum to allow the sale of alcoholic beverages within municipal limits.

Thomasville will undergo \$400 million plus in planned development over the next three years. As a commercial hub, the municipality is "*100 miles from anywhere, but 100 miles to anywhere*". Being home to regional commerce, the City's population of 5,000 is amplified by at least thirteen times that number on peak shopping days. A trade area of over 98,500 can be documented.

A visitor from North Alabama commented "*Thomasville reminds me of Huntsville 25 to 30 years ago. This community has tremendous potential. The public schools here are as good as I have seen in the Huntsville area. The specialized training facilities available at Alabama Southern Community College in Thomasville are outstanding.*" Thomasville's School System and its Parks and Recreation Department are second to none in the region. Volunteerism is high in both arenas. A true sense of community spirit is evident.

The City's school system continues a visioning process begun in 2006, which enhanced its vocational components. A partnership was formed with Alabama Southern Community College. The college is an award winning institution recognized for its workforce development and industrial training. Dual curriculums, funded by scholarships, have been established between the two school systems. Welding, manufacturing technology and health care are the targeted programs.

The Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles established a second Life Tech Center in Thomasville which houses men. The site for the facility received a \$3 million renovation. On an annual basis, it will transition 900 trained clients back into society, utilizing a staff of 75 professionals. Visitors to the facility have increased the demand for lodging.

Near the Life Tech site, Alabama Southern Community College has constructed a \$5.5 million Community Education Center. Also serving as the Administration building, the Sheldon A. Day Building is available to Life Tech participants. Of particular interest to prospective industries will be welding and manufacturing technology training. The combination of high school students, college students and Life Tech students will provide Thomasville with a large cluster of skilled labor.

Within the Southwest Alabama region, greater than 36% of residents drive 30 minutes or more to work. Of those, 10% drive an hour or longer. If given a choice, most would elect to work closer to home. Almost every labor-intensive business in the city employs a third or more of its workforce from other counties. Companies, expanding into Thomasville, with primary locations in HUB Zones can enjoy the same incentives by employing 35% of their labor from the counties to the North, East and West.

Thomasville's aggressive economic initiatives, which are streamlined and development-friendly, have resulted in a growth rate of 10% per annum. Like other municipalities experiencing expansion, Thomasville is in the process of upgrading its infrastructure. Construction began in 2007 on a \$14 million water treatment facility. To serve adjacent rural water systems, another \$5 million will be spent on basic water system improvements. Over the next two years, \$7 million will be expended on a new sewer treatment facility and other system improvements.

In 1996, Thomasville's Industrial Board was revamped, using a comprehensive economic development strategy. An initial outcome was the location of Thompson Tractor in the Joe Davis Industrial Park. The company moved into an Alabama Power speculative building. The 30,000 sq. ft. structure had been vacant for five years. Today, the JDIP is filled to capacity. Thompson has expanded twice. In mid November of 2006, it expanded again to add an equipment rental store. The branch started with two employees and now boasts 30 plus.

In 2008, ground will be broken on a rarity in rural Alabama: a replacement hospital. The \$35 million Southwest Alabama Medical Center will be situated in a 40-45 acre complex, which is part of the Southwest Alabama Medical Park. The property will also be home to \$20 million in medical-related facilities and a nursing school. In its final phase, specialty services, clinics and pharmacies will be present. A multi story structure is planned which will house specialty services. Outpatient services are expected to triple. The further enhancement and diversification of the medical community is a substantial component in the comprehensive development strategy for the Thomasville Trade Area and Southwest Alabama.

The new Thomasville South Industrial Park features 135 acres which are available for high tech, light industrial and heavy industrial firms. As a result of a successful application to Alabama Power, construction began in fall of 2007 on a second speculative building in the TSIP. A strategy for creating an "economy of scope" among related and complimentary companies is

being undertaken being undertaken by the City. Multiple letters of intent have been received for this park. Lower Dixie Timber, whose complex will house related entities, Tutt Real Estate, and Tutt Land Management, is the first occupant in the new industrial park.

In August of 2005, the City of Thomasville, hosted the first national supplier conference held in rural Alabama. The 2007 conference, co-hosted by Thomasville Development and Planning Department and The Boeing Company, will include prime contractors, suppliers and councils such as ATK Thiokol, Inc., NASA, Aviation and Missile Command/Redstone Arsenal, SAIC, Computer Sciences Corporation, Northrop-Grumman, UIDA Business Services, Hancock Group, Jacobs Engineering, Pratt & Whitney, Raytheon, Aetos Systems, BAE Systems, Chickasaw Nations Industries, MPCSC, and AIDT. As a direct result of these supplier conferences success stories have emerged such as Muskogee Metal Works. The company, a subsidiary of the Poarch Creek Indian organization, was awarded a protégé-mentor designation by Boeing in November of 2006. One of 2007's success stories, General Sheet Metal, now conducts interactive meetings with its mentor, The Boeing Company, and other protégée companies.

Partners in the previous conference were Senator Jeff Sessions, Governor Bob Riley, City of Thomasville, Congressman Artur Davis, Congressman Jo Bonner, Alabama Power Company, Alabama Southern Community College, Alabama Small Business Development Consortium Alabama-Tombigbee Tourism Initiative, University of West Alabama SBDC, Troy University, Clarke-Mobile Gas, Alabama Department of Workforce Development, USDA Rural Development, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, and Economic Development Partnership of Alabama. Attendees from six states were present in 2006. "Save the date" postcards for the August 2008 event will be sent out in late February.

The *North Clarke County Industrial Park*, located in the City's police and fire jurisdiction, is home to a new 800 acre Louisiana Pacific facility. The \$215 million project, which broke ground in September of 2005, will be completed in 2007. The plant will employ 150 individuals on-site and create another 300 indirect jobs in related timber industries.

Housing starts are at an all time high. However, under-addressed demands, in the Thomasville Trade Area, are medium-range single-family housing and upscale rental housing. An influx of 1000 individuals is expected over the next three years. In addition, many citizens are wishing to downsize living quarters. Therefore, the development of townhouses, garden homes and alternative residential options is eagerly awaited.

Country Club Cottages, a planned community for seniors, and Smokewood Subdivision are under construction. The Maison de Ville, located adjacent to the post office, is complete and features luxury apartments and office space. Plans are also being drawn for a retail and housing complex which will extend the front street corridor on the old Heading Mill Property. Construction on Thomasville's Boardwalk Cottages, in historic downtown, is underway. Five of the sixteen are complete. Lewis Properties is currently renovating the former Bedsole Complex, consisting of multiple buildings, into downtown apartment and retail space.

The City of Thomasville has invested \$2.5 million in Phases I and II of the revitalization of its Downtown Area. Over \$3 million of private investment has followed. From vintage lights and

benches to wrought iron railing and landscaping, the cityscape has become breathtaking. Several developers are exploring the creation of historic-appearing townhouses and shops in the district. An additional \$8 to \$10 million in private investment is occurring, including the \$1 million completed renovation of a former sewing factory known as the Crown Building.

Construction began in 2007 on the long-awaited Civic Center, a multi-use facility. The theater will seat 400 plus. Participants will have access to five rooms for break-out sessions. A gallery will be available for traveling and permanent exhibits. The civic center is within mere blocks of the City's four hotels and over twenty establishments featuring fine, fast and down-home dining. With an array of eateries and more expected, Thomasville boasts of having the "most restaurants per capita" in the state. The ability to serve alcoholic beverages with meals is attracting inquiries from the next tier of restaurants.

The historic corridor is also home to the Alabama-Tombigbee Tourism Initiative serving ten Alabama counties. It serves as the Welcome and Information Center for regional attractions and features the works of artisans from the Black Belt Treasures Gallery in Camden. Another tourist draw is the Kathryn Tucker Windham Museum on the campus of Alabama Southern created in honor of "*Alabama's Storyteller*".

Thomasville has opened its doors to many successful happenings, including the 2004, 2006 and 2007 Dixie Majors World Series Annually, Thomasville sponsors an Alabama B.A.S.S. tournament for over 300 fisherpersons and Winter Baseball and Softball Clinics. Multiple family and alumni reunions are held each year.

Momentum is building in other functional areas as well. Ways to better serve the business community are being explored. As a result, the city was featured as the "cover story" of the August, 2006 issue of Business Alabama, and in articles in the Press Register, the Birmingham News and Alabama Seaport.

Thomasville has made a practice of reaching out to assist neighbors and share expertise. Municipalities and businesses all over the region call upon the City's officials and the Development and Planning Department for guidance with projects. Increased visibility has brought many new state-wide requests for interviews and advice.

***As you can see, the City of Thomasville is currently on the economic radar of a broad variety of developers, entrepreneurs and those wishing to participate in redefining "rural development." Isn't it time we were on yours?***