working as

The Chamber
of Commerce of West Alabama

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A Call to Action

The 21st Century economy is rich with opportunity for the West Alabama region. The Chamber has chosen to capitalize on these opportunities by developing a five-year path that builds on the foundation of our existing companies, while embracing change and the expanding retail, commercial and knowledge economies. To this end, The Chamber is working to build a vibrant business economy by:

- Promoting K-16 and workforce skills excellence to meet the existing and future work force skill sets demanded by business and industry.

- Helping our existing businesses to not only remain competitive, but to grow and thrive and by recruiting new retail and commercial companies we want and need to strengthen and further diversify our region’s business mix.

- Partnering and collaborating with governmental and community organizations dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in our communities.

- Nurturing an innovation culture that maximizes entrepreneurship.

- Serving as the leading advocate for the business community at all levels of government.

To undertake and accomplish these ambitious goals, The Chamber is seeking continued and broadened investment of time, talent and treasure in the organization. By working together, we will achieve our objectives.
Message from Campaign Chair

Dr. Robert Witt

Economic growth in the greater Tuscaloosa area has been dramatic over the past several decades and has brought unprecedented opportunities to our region.

The University of Alabama System and The University of Alabama campus will continue to increase our strong partnership with the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama as The Chamber fulfills its role in leading economic development throughout the region. We will join The Chamber in collaborating closely with business and government leaders to ensure that our community continues to be a premier place to learn, live, work, play and operate a business.

It is important for our community leadership to create a center of commerce and innovation located in an area providing an unmatched quality of life. Working together under The Chamber’s leadership, we will create, collaborate, and lead regional economic development initiatives that are directly tied to producing a highly skilled, educated and innovative workforce and enhance a collection of communities powerfully bonded together and strategically aligned under a regional brand. A region that is global in thinking and action. We will be connected to the world and it to us.

I have been personally involved in the planning phases and fully believe both in the process and the product of The Chamber’s new five-year plan. I am confident that each of you will be among the many public and private sector leaders who are already on board.

Join us on this vitally important journey as we work to define our future!
Education and Workforce Readiness

Mission

The Chamber will fully engage with local officials to improve the quality of public K-12 education, resulting in an increase in test scores and a reduction in drop-out rates. We will serve as the primary liaison between the business and education communities, ensuring that all levels of educational curriculum meet the existing and future workforce skill sets demanded by business and industry.

“The Chamber provides cutting-edge information and support as to the existing and emerging skill-sets required of its workforce by the business community.”

— Glenn Smith,
Tuscaloosa Center for Technology
Objectives

- Be actively engaged in the development of education policy through consistent interaction with local school administrators and by encouraging successful business leaders to seek election to boards of education.
- Partner with business, public sector, and academic institutional leaders at all grade levels to assure maximum emphasis on the hard skills in demand in today’s global economy.
- Expand and enhance the successful Adopt-A-School program through an increased number of adopters and improved programming.
- Significantly expand the access to high-quality early childhood and Pre-K education.
- Advocate for and support educational initiatives that have been proven successful in improving test scores and reducing drop-out rates, such as the Alabama Math Science and Technology Initiative (AMSTI), Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and The Leader In Me programs.
- Provide coordination, leadership and accountability for the implementation of a business-driven, comprehensive regional workforce development plan.

Outcomes

- The Chamber will recruit seasoned business leaders to seek elected office on local boards of education, beginning in 2013, to significantly improve the policy-making, financial management and operations of local public school districts.
- We will expand and enhance the successful Adopt-A-School program to ensure that every public school in Tuscaloosa County will have multiple adopters and an increase in classroom-level participation by 2014.
- We will partner with education officials to significantly increase the number of children entering kindergarten who have had a high-quality early childhood education experience, beginning in 2013. High-quality early childhood and Pre-K education is proven to improve reading ability, increase test scores, reduce dropout rates and positively affect the lifelong success of children exposed to it. In turn, the community is fundamentally improved due to a population of higher wage earners, one that is less dependent on social services and, due to reduced crime, a decrease in incarceration rates.
- We will interact with education professionals to increase AMSTI and STEM curriculum to improve the math and science skills of local students—subject areas that are in high demand in today’s globally competitive workforce, beginning in 2013.
- The Leader In Me, an internationally-recognized initiative based on the late Dr. Stephen Covey’s 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, has been shown to improve the learning environment and culture within schools when implemented in early elementary grades.
- “The importance of The Chamber’s emerging role in convening the education, workforce and business communities as partners in developing a public education system that fully equips our students to fuel our workforce here at Nucor cannot be overemphasized.”
- Randy Skagen, Nucor Steel Tuscaloosa, Inc.

Such schools have seen improved classroom performance and reductions in discipline referrals. We will develop a plan whereby The Leader In Me curriculum is in place in every elementary classroom in Tuscaloosa County no later than 2017.
- A comprehensive workforce development matrix and resource guide will be created by 2013 to identify duplication of services and expose service delivery gaps. A regional plan of action that addresses the business community’s current and future workforce needs will be developed by 2014 to directly be a factor in reducing the area’s unemployment rate and in growing the local tax base.
Retail and Commercial Growth

Mission

The Chamber will expand the region’s tax base and create jobs through the aggressive recruitment, retention and growth of retail and commercial enterprises; consistently market and promote the area to local, national and international audiences.

“As a business owner in Northport, I regularly call upon The Chamber to provide up-to-date information, contacts and support on the myriad issues that constantly arise. The Chamber always comes through with the help I need.”

— Ashley Gill, Chick-Fil-A of Northport
Objectives

- In partnership with local government, lead the strategic recruitment process of new to the market retail, based on current sales tax leakage and service gap analysis.

- Facilitate a focused effort to diversify the local economic base through the targeted recruitment of high-value commercial entities, in collaboration with peer economic development organizations, higher education institutions and local government.

- Maintain an ongoing “buy local” campaign that encourages area residents to keep their sales tax dollars in the community by patronizing local merchants.

- In partnership with peer economic development organizations, develop and implement a multi-year, sustainable marketing initiative to promote the region as a quality business and career destination for economic investment, commercial and retail expansion, residential growth and job creation.

Outcomes

- The Chamber will recruit new-to-the-market retail businesses by 2014 that will significantly increase local sales tax revenue and help prevent the need for residents to shop outside of the community.

- We will assist with the successful recruitment of a diverse mix of commercial entities will create jobs for area residents, reduce the local unemployment rate, grow the tax base and ensure a more stable economic base.

- We will implement a consistent and positive “buy local” campaign by 2013 to increase revenue for local merchants and, therefore, fuel an increase in sales tax revenue. An increase in sales tax revenue helps support local school systems and improves the public services provided by local government.

- The Chamber will develop a consistent and comprehensive marketing initiative designed for a renewed “branding” of the community and increased economic investment in the community. We will complete the plan in 2013 and begin implementation by 2014.

- We will host site selection professionals for county-wide tours a minimum of twice a year beginning in 2013.

- We will organize and conduct prospect recruiting trips beginning in 2013.

- Benchmarking of our business growth against comparable communities will begin by 2014.
Leadership and Community Engagement

Mission

The Chamber will create a community that is attractive to current and potential residents by maintaining a high-quality of life and offering public, private and non-profit leadership opportunities.

“As Chair of the Minority Business Council, I know that The Chamber’s renewed focus on developing all sectors of the community and embracing and supporting minority business and diversity is making a huge positive impact in our community.”

— Lisa Riley, Accion Alabama
Objectives

- Develop and implement strategies to attract and retain young and talented professionals, in partnership with higher education institutions and groups such as Young Professionals Tuscaloosa.

- Collaborate with organizations such as the Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports Commission, PARA, and local government entities to expand cultural, recreational and entertainment opportunities for area residents and visitors, accentuating the immense natural resources of the region.

- Expand and enhance existing leadership development programs in order to create a pipeline for public, private and non-profit sector leadership opportunities.

- Promote the Non-Profit Council as the primary avenue for professional development, networking and advocacy for area non-profit organizations.

Outcomes

- The Chamber will conduct quarterly professional networking opportunities and frequent social events sponsored by Young Professionals Tuscaloosa and other organizations as a means to play a significant role in retaining and recruiting the “best and brightest” young professionals in the community, beginning in 2013.

- We will immediately begin partnering with city and special events principals to expand high-quality visual and performing arts, sports, recreation and entertainment opportunities to help make the community even more attractive to existing and future residents.

- A pool of well-informed, community-oriented citizens will be created as future candidates for public office and to give civic, non-profit and economic development organizations qualified prospects to immediately fill volunteer leadership positions.

- The Chamber will continue to act as an on-going convener with all organizations to fully leverage professionally-managed, engaged and publically-supported non-profit sector entities so as to dramatically affect the area's quality of life by addressing the unmet needs of the community.

“The partnership with The Chamber was the difference that greatly leveraged our ability to provide our services, programs and products in the aftermath of the tornado.”

— Bob Johnson, Habitat for Humanity
Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Mission
The Chamber will facilitate collaboration among various stakeholders to foster a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation among students, budding entrepreneurs and existing business owners.

“I am living proof that if you have a great idea, are willing to take some risks and work hard, The Chamber and this community will encourage and support you in developing a thriving business.”

— Jheovany Gomez, Jalapenos Mexican Grill
Objectives

- Develop a comprehensive entrepreneurship and innovation center, in conjunction with higher education institutions, local government and area business resource providers.

- Create a formal investor network that promotes opportunities for private equity investment in innovative start-up and expanding businesses.

- Implement and support education-based entrepreneurship initiatives for area students, such as the nationally-recognized Young Entrepreneurs Academy.

- Promote the newly-formed Minority Business Council as the primary avenue for training, networking and recognition opportunities for minority-owned business enterprises.

Outcomes

- The Chamber will initiate The Edge - Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in 2012 as a “one-stop” center offering incubation space, counseling and educational training for students, budding entrepreneurs and existing business owners. The creation and growth of businesses will create jobs, help reduce the unemployment rate, grow the tax base and play a significant role in keeping promising entrepreneurs in the community.

- We will identify existing local Angel and Venture Capital sources in 2013.

- We will determine the actions, programming and structure required for an on-going investor funding mechanism; complete due diligence by mid-year 2013, and craft an investor fund strategy by year-end 2013.

- We will convene business, municipal and university leaders to devise plans to enhance curriculum, research labs and entrepreneurial efforts focused on technology transfer and commercialization beginning in 2014.

- Initiatives such as the Young Entrepreneurs Academy will begin to be implemented by 2013 to help promote a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation within area middle and high schools.

- The successful 2012 launch of the Minority Business Council will be leveraged to provide business development assistance to existing minority-owned enterprises, promote entrepreneurship within local minority communities and publicly recognize successful minority business owners.

"The University of Alabama’s partnership with The Chamber to create The Edge-Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in order to foster a culture of innovation among students, budding entrepreneurs and existing business owners is a prime example of a win-win collaboration."

— Dean J. Michael Hardin, Culverhouse College of Commerce University of Alabama
Public Policy and Advocacy

Mission
The Chamber will effectively serve as the leading public policy advocate for the business community and economic development at all levels of government.

“As both a businessman and now an elected official, I understand the advocacy role of The Chamber, and highly value its members’ input and opinions.”

— State Rep. Bill Poole, Gilmore, Poole & Rowley
Objectives

- Proactively represent the interests of the business community at the local, state and federal levels in order to foster and sustain a pro-business climate.
- Identify and aggressively advocate for policies and procedures within local, state, and federal government that promote economic development and business growth, including comprehensive zoning, design and development standards and incentives.
- Advocate for local, state and federal investment in long-range transportation and infrastructure projects that spur economic development and enhance the quality of life in the area.

Outcomes

- The Chamber will formally adopt a strategy in 2013 that assures consistent interaction with local, state and federal officials to ensure that the policy interests of the area’s business community are being effectively addressed. Include frequent attendance at meetings of local government and regular visits to Montgomery and Washington, D.C. with a specific legislative agenda to ensure issues affecting our business community are kept on the forefront.
- We will convene quarterly business forums to allow the business community to directly interface “on-their turf” with local, state, and federal officials, beginning in 2013.
- We will prioritize local regulatory and legislative needs by year-end 2013 and develop individual strategies to engage and address these needs.
- Implementation of local pro-business policies and procedures, such as those related to zoning, design standards and incentives, will continue to be an on-going focus in order to significantly improve economic development conditions.
- The Chamber will advocate for on-going public investment in transportation and infrastructure projects to spur economic and residential development and improve living conditions and overall quality of life for all citizens in the region.

“As a leader in the Business Council of Alabama, I know that our Chamber fills the critical role of being the ‘voice of business’ that is heard loud and clear at all levels of government—local, regional, state and federal—to ensure we maintain a healthy business environment.”

— Carl Jamison, JamisonMoneyFarmer, PC
A Record of Success

Through its effective agenda-setting process coupled with a determination to make good things happen, the Chamber has earned the role of the “Voice of Business” along with a reputation for strategic thinking and leadership of key community issues. Representing virtually every major category of business, industry, non-profit, and entrepreneurial interests, the Chamber continues to make a dynamic impact on the quality of life for our communities.

The Chamber has long been a leader in innovation and implementation of programs that make a difference in the Tuscaloosa region. Economic and Community Development Research Tools, The One Stop Business License and Permitting Center, Commercial Real Estate Website, Adopt-A-School, Leadership Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa Young Professionals, Non-Profit and Minority Business Support Councils, and a host of other programs listed below find their beginnings within the minds and hearts of Chamber members and Chamber-led efforts.

### Economic & Workforce Development
- Business Resource Center
- Career Tech Council
- Downtown redevelopment
- Economic Development Alliance
- E-Cycle event
- Entrepreneur Awards
- Environmental Task Force
- Mayor’s Business Advisory Task Force
- One-Stop Business License and Permitting Center
- Region 3 Workforce Development Council
- Retail research and recruitment
- SCORE
- Shop Local campaign
- Small business counseling
- Technology Council
- The EDGE – Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Tide-Fi wireless internet initiative
- Tornado relief work (BRIC Center, forums, ombudsman, etc.)
- Tuscaloosa Disaster Relief Fund (Give Tuscaloosa)

### Governmental Affairs
- Advocacy / lobbying
- Chamber in Session
- Future PAC
- Montgomery Drive-In
- Political debates / forums
- Public Affairs Council
- State of the Community event
- Washington Fly-In

### Leadership & Community Development
- Tuscaloosa County Civic Hall of Fame
- Forerunners
- Leadership Tuscaloosa
- Literacy Council of West Alabama
- Minority Business Council
- Non-Profit Council
- Northport Advisory Council
- Northport Citizen of the Year
- Women in Business Council
- Young Professionals of Tuscaloosa

### Education Development
- Adopt-A-School
- Counselor tours
- County School Board property (former federal courthouse)
- State of the Schools Breakfast
- Young Entrepreneurs Academy

### Member Services
- Ambassadors
- Chamber Champions campaign
- Chamber Connects (monthly Business After Hours)
- Communications (website, social media, weekly email)
- Community Calendar
- Community map
- Membership directory
- Member-to-Member Discounts
Message from your Chamber Leadership

For over 100 years, The Chamber has played an active role in enhancing the economic stability, business climate, and ever-improving quality of life in the region. Since its birth over a century ago, the Tuscaloosa Metro Area has grown into a quality international community.

Over the years, business leaders working through The Chamber have made a significant and lasting impact on a wide variety of key community initiatives and laid the foundation for the progress we enjoy today. Transportation, tourism, business recruitment and expansion, education, retail development, health care, and a host of other initiatives have directly contributed to a higher standard of living.

Today, The Chamber is still leading the way towards creating communities that are consistently improving as an ideal place to live, work and raise a family...communities that cherish their traditions, take pride in their spirit and diversity and communities that have a vision for an even brighter future.

The last several months have been particularly exciting and challenging for the leadership of your Chamber. Many interviews have been conducted with community and business leaders to assess how our region can continue to grow intelligently and prosperously. We have received outstanding input from these interviews, and we have used that information to develop a five-year comprehensive, performance-based strategy that contains clear and measurable goals.

Your chamber leadership encourages you to invest in the economic future and quality of life in our communities. Working as 1 will ensure our success.
The Investment: Our Goal

Annual Budget: $500,000
Five-Year Budget: $2,500,000

How your investment dollars are spent:

- **Education & Workforce Readiness**: 20%
- **Retail and Commercial Growth**: 25%
- **Leadership & Community Engagement**: 20%
- **Entrepreneurship & Innovation**: 25%
- **Public Policy & Advocacy**: 10%

Investor Benefits

Beginning in 2013, with the rollout of our new Working Toward 1 economic and community development program of work, The Chamber will implement a new INVESTOR BENEFIT plan. This new plan replaces Chamber Champions; adds new “bottom line” focused benefits for each of those investing in our initiatives; and creates the necessary resources to successfully implement our new program of work. With these investments and the partnership of our business and community leaders, our region is the ultimate beneficiary through greater prosperity and quality of life.

**Communication About Key Issues:**
- Direct access to senior staff of The Chamber for counsel and/or communication on key economic and community development issues that impact your business or organization
- Exclusive invitations to special briefings and presentations regarding issues of specific relevance to business
- Targeted communication and opportunity by investors to provide input regarding critical business issues

**Enhanced Visibility:**
- Actively engage “one-on-one” with each investor to ensure The Chamber is delivering a return on their investment
- Provide investors opportunities to build relationships with fellow key community and business leaders engaged in implementing The Chamber’s economic and community development efforts
- Introductions within The Chamber’s investor base and newly recruited business leaders

**Recognition for Your Level of Investment:**
- Recognition as an investor will be emphasized in marketing materials, website, and all major events of The Chamber; investors by level to be highlighted in presentation videos prominently displayed in the reception area of The Chamber
- Priority positioning for investors for sponsorship opportunities for The Chamber’s programming and events by level of investment support
- Investors have preferred seating at events of The Chamber
- Specific benefits tied to your level of support as follows:
## Annual Investment Levels

### Game Changer: $25,000 +
- Membership on the Chairman’s Board of Advisors
- Table with most prominent location and special recognition at Annual Meeting, State of the Community and Chamber In Session
- Banner ad on home page of The Chamber’s website
- Unlimited access to The Chamber’s economic and workforce analysis system
- Brochure and/or company materials in all visitor and relocation packets
- Premium listing in Chamber’s on-line directory
- $1,000 credit toward advertising in the annual membership directory and resource guide
- 50% discount on all sponsorship and event purchases

### President’s Forum: $7,500 +
- Table with prominent location and special recognition at Annual Meeting
- Four tickets to State of the Community
- Banner ad on The Chamber’s website
- Unlimited access to The Chamber’s economic and workforce analysis system
- Recognition in all visitor and relocation packets
- Premium listing in Chamber’s on-line directory
- $250 credit toward advertising in the annual membership directory and resource guide
- 20% discount on all sponsorship and event purchases

### Chairman’s Circle: $15,000 +
- Membership on the Chairman’s Board of Advisors
- Table with prominent location and special recognition at Annual Meeting and State of the Community
- Banner ad on The Chamber’s website
- Unlimited access to The Chamber’s economic and workforce analysis system
- Brochure and/or company materials in all visitor and relocation packets
- Premium listing in Chamber’s on-line directory
- $750 credit toward advertising in the annual membership directory and resource guide
- 40% discount on all sponsorship and event purchases

### Investor Leader: $5,000 +
- Four tickets to Annual Meeting and State of the Community
- Listing on The Chamber’s website
- Unlimited access to The Chamber’s economic and workforce analysis system
- Recognition in all visitor and relocation packets
- Premium listing in Chamber’s on-line directory
- $100 credit toward advertising in the annual membership directory and resource guide
- 10% discount on all sponsorship and event purchases

### Growth Partner: $2,500 +
- Two tickets to Annual Meeting and State of the Community
- Recognition in all visitor and relocation packets
- Access to The Chamber’s economic and workforce analysis system
- Premium listing in Chamber’s on-line directory
- $50 credit toward advertising in the annual membership directory and resource guide

### Community Colleague: $1,500 +
- Two tickets to Annual Meeting
- Recognition in all visitor and relocation packets
- Access to The Chamber’s economic and workforce analysis system
- Premium listing in Chamber’s on-line directory
Campaign Council

Dr. Robert Witt, Chairman
The University of Alabama System

Dan Blakely
Regions Bank

Claude Edwards
Bryan Bank

Jim Flemming
First National Bank of Central Alabama

Ashley Gill
Chick-Fil-A of Northport

Jim Harrison, III
Harrison Galleries, LLC

Dr. Mark Heinrich
Alabama Community College System

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City of Northport

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Knight Sign Industries, Inc.

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DCH Health System

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Stillman College

Tim Parker, III
Parker Towing Company

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Hudson-Poole Fine Jewelers

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Nuco Steel Tuscaloosa, Inc.

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The Bank of Tuscaloosa

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