

# Thomasville:

## Setting the Standard for Rural Communities

With over \$400 million dollars in planned commercial, residential and industrial development, rural communities of Alabama can all take a lesson from Thomasville. Considered "Southwest Alabama's Success Story," the city, located at the top of Clarke County, has the highest daily traffic count of any city of town between Montgomery and Mobile. And, with the ThyssenKrupp Steel Mill locating less than one hour away, Thomasville has nothing but growth in mind for its rural community.

Leading the city for more than 10 years, Mayor Sheldon Day has been planning this kind of success for Thomasville for years. "Our community is very competitive," said Mayor Day. "We do not set glass ceilings for ourselves. We do not believe that just because we are a rural community we cannot do it."

Examples of this mentality can be seen in the current and planned development for all aspects of the municipality. Construction began this year on a multi-million dollar civic center that will become a multi-use facility complete with conference rooms, a gallery for traveling and permanent exhibits and a 500-seat theater that boasts the same quality sound system as can be found in Mobile's Saenger Theater.

"Thomasville is focused on changing, evolving and meeting the requirements needed to being a top rural class community,"



said Debra Fox, economic developer of Thomasville. "We have been preparing this community for this level of growth, and people are really stepping up and supporting the events that bring this city's success."

The city along with co-sponsor the Boeing Company recently held Alabama's Third "Rural" National Supplier's Conference in September. The city hosted hundreds of Alabama's finest businesses and representatives with more than 300 attendees, and an assortment of exhibitors including Boeing, NASA, Northrop-Grumman, Pratt-Whitney Rocketdyne, and Muskogee Metal Works to name a few. Additionally, U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner and U.S. Rep. Artur Davis along with other dignitaries were present to show their support and speak at the conference.

"This conference continues to be a great success," said Mayor Day. "I am already hearing about the great relationships that were built and the groups that were brought together at this year's conference."

"I have also received great feedback about multiple leads from the exhibitors at the conference," adds Fox. "The conference is a great place for the sharing of information and company profiles for everyone who attends."

The proximity to large industrial businesses like Ciba (McIntosh), Alabama River Companies (Claiborne), Georgia-Pacific (Naheola), Louisiana-Pacific (Thomasville) and Weyerhaeuser (Pine Hill) to name a few, is just the beginning to the benefits Thomasville has to offer. The city's population of 5,000 is ex-

Cutting the ribbon to the exhibition hall at the Third National 'Rural' Supplier conference photographed from left to right: Mayor Sheldon A. Day, Charles Allen, The Boeing Company, David Echols, Alabama Development Office, Debra M. Fox, Executive Director of Development and Planning, Judi Clark, Executive Assistant of Development and Planning. Photo taken by Barry Hendrix of the Clarke County Democrat.

Jerry Sailors, secretary-treasurer of Coalition of Alabama Waterway Associations in Montgomery. To underscore that point, the Coalition of Alabama Waterway Associations commissioned the Alabama Freight Mobility Study, a multi-year effort to identify business model shippers. The study will be used to determine the most cost-effective way to move goods from origin to destination. Sailors, who is also the project manager of the study, writes in a previous newsletter, "The purpose of the study is to provide shippers with a safe, affordable and efficient transportation alternative while alleviating road and rail congestion, thus reducing air pollution and safety hazards accompanying increases in road and rail traffic."

Phase 1 of the Alabama Freight Mobility Study has been completed. This finalized portion of the case study con-

background facts of container transportation and studies of markets for shipping. Phase 1 can be viewed at [caria.org](http://caria.org).

Sailors notes, "Phase 2 is now underway, and will be completed July 2008." This phase will assess the market for containers between the Tennessee-Tombigbee waterway and the upper end of the Tennessee River, develop the barge industry perspective for container-on-barge operations, assess the new Mobile Container Terminal from an inland waterway perspective and identify lessons learned from river systems on which containers are moving. The ultimate objective is to incorporate water transportation as a major component of the nation's intermodal transportation system. For more information, or possible membership in the Coosa-Alabama River Improvement Association, visit [caria.org](http://caria.org) or contact 334-265-5744. □



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