

# **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 around the 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, tourism, cultural arts, as well as community and economic development.

The new ThyssenKrupp Steel Mill is situated *less than one hour* south of Thomasville. The four-lane Highway 43 South and multiple points of rail access make Thomasville a very attractive hub for business and industry making use of the steel manufactured at TK. Governor Bentley has called the Thomasville and Clarke County area as “Alabama’s New Metals Corridor.”

The last several years have brought many new opportunities to Thomasville. **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 and creating the Revitalization and Community Development Corporation, the City passed a referendum to allow the sale of alcoholic beverages within municipal limits.

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

Thomasville will undergo \$300 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 4,500 is amplified by at least eighteen times that number on peak shopping days. A trade area of over 85,000 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 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. Thomasville City School System completed SARS Advanced ED recertification in May of 2012 and are pursuing an exciting 1:1 computer initiative. Students in grades 5-7 will receive laptop computers in January 2013. Each ensuing year incoming 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will receive new laptops. Thomasville Schools will implement one to one computing as a collaboration to the S.T.E.M. initiative (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). With the growth of international manufacturing industries in our area, students will be prepared for a rapidly changing world, another step in preparing Thomasville's future workforce.

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 provides Thomasville with a large cluster of skilled labor.

Thomasville's aggressive economic initiatives, which are streamlined and development-friendly, have resulted in a growth rate. Like other municipalities experiencing expansion, Thomasville is in the process of upgrading its infrastructure. Construction began in 2012 on a \$27 million project including a water intake site, installation of 20 miles of 20" ductile iron pipe, and a state of the art water treatment facility.

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 Thomasville 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 Thomasville Industrial Park has also added EnergeX Tube and Metals USA and is now filled to capacity. Thompson has expanded twice, adding an equipment rental store. The branch started with two employees and now boasts 30 plus.

The Thomasville South Industrial Park features 125 acres which are available for high tech, light industrial and heavy industrial firms. As a result of a successful application to Alabama Power, a second speculative building has been constructed. This 50,000 sq ft. building is expandable to 200,000 sq.ft. This site is accessible to Norfolk Southern Railway and US Hwy 43. Lower Dixie Timber, Tutt Real Estate, and Tutt Land Management, are the first occupants in the new industrial park. Burkes Mechanical Inc. is building an office complex with enough space left for future expansion. The *North Clarke County Industrial Park*, located in the City's police and fire jurisdiction, is the site of a \$ 243 million Louisiana Pacific OSB Mill awaiting the recovery of the housing market to resume operations. Thomasville has created the North Thomasville Industrial Park, home to EnergeX Tube Finishing Works, and expanded our City

limits northeast along Hwy 5. The Industrial Development Board of The City of Thomasville has purchased an additional parcel of land that will become Thomasville's fourth industrial park upon completion of infrastructure improvements.

Thomasville features medium-range single-family housing and upscale rental housing. An influx of approximately 1000 individuals are expected over the next three years. In addition, many citizens are wishing to downsize living quarters. Therefore, the development of townhouses, garden homes, new sub-divisions, and alternative residential options is eagerly awaited.

The Thomasville Civic Center, a multi-use facility, features the Bedsole Theatre, seating 485 plus, with a large stage area, dressing rooms, and state-of-the art sound and lighting. This theatre meets or exceeds all Screen Actors Guild requirements. We are proud to host the Mobile Symphony annually and have hosted the Montgomery Ballet, as well as numerous local productions. Conference participants, in addition to the theatre, have access to five rooms for break-out sessions. Our Stafford Gallery, furnished with antiques is available for traveling and permanent exhibits as well as receptions, 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.

Thomasville's historic downtown is also home to the Alabama Regional Tourism office 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 sporting events, including hosting Dixie Majors World Series. Annually, Thomasville sponsors an Alabama B.A.S.S. Federation Nation tournament for over 300 fisherpersons, a Winter Baseball Clinic staffed by various college and Major League baseball players, Softball Clinics staffed by college coaches and players, and the Anthony Madison Football Clinic. Multiple family and alumni reunions are hosted each year in Thomasville.

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 Business Alabama and had several other articles in this magazine, and in articles in the Mobile Press Register, the Birmingham News and Alabama Seaport Magazine.

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 cooperation with projects. Increased visibility has brought many new state-wide requests for interviews concerning our business and economic growth. ***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?***