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30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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# RURAL SOUTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

AUGUST 17-19, 2023 - COTTON HOUSE - CLEVELAND, MISSISSIPPI







# The 1st Annual Rural South Economic Development Summit

**August 17-19, 2023, Cotton House Hotel, Cleveland, Miss.**

*"The Most Southern Place on Earth"*

Southern Business & Development has officially launched the first annual Rural South Economic Development Summit, the debut being in the Mississippi Delta at the new and outstanding Cotton House, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel in Cleveland, Miss., the "Worldwide Birthplace of the Blues" and the "Most Southern Place on Earth."

The Summit is scheduled for August 17-19, 2023. It will begin with a reception Thursday night and discussions Friday and Saturday until the early afternoon.

There is a limit (50) on the number of rooms available at the Cotton House, but, there are rooms available a short distance away at the Lyric Hotel. Directly between the two hotels is the GRAMMY Museum in Cleveland, Miss. Maximum number of attendees is set at 80.

This invitation-only event gathers many of the rural South's finest economic development minds together in one room to discuss ways to improve the region's economy, and ways to improve the profession of economic development in the rural South.

The Rural South Economic Development Summit will operate much like that of the invitation-only Southern Economic Development Roundtable that SB&D has hosted for 10 years on the beach in Northwest Florida. SB&D's events are more about discussion than that of a formal conference.

Feel free to ask anyone that has been invited and attended SEDR@WaterColor or SEDR@ThePearl for their own assessment of that gathering. One invited member of SEDR told us, "It's the only meeting I have attended where I never looked at the clock or left the room for fear of missing something."

Opportunities for growing companies, especially manufacturers, have never been greater with what the rural South offers today. The electric vehicle industry alone will transform the rural South's economy for years to come. In fact, SB&D's data shows that total investments and total deals made in the last 30 months exceed what has been made in the rural South in the last 21 years.

Thank you so much and we will see you at the "Most Southern Place on Earth!" At the Cotton House in Cleveland, Miss, August 17-19, 2023, for the Rural South Economic Development Summit. There is still time to attend.

To put your name in the hat to receive an invitation to attend or to sponsor RSEDS, simply email [michael@sb-d.com](mailto:michael@sb-d.com) or call 205.370.6039. 🌟

Clockwise from top left: Bardstown, Ky., is a shining example of a great small town. The conference will be held at The Cotton House Hotel in Cleveland, Miss., "The Most Southern Place on Earth." The GRAMMY Museum Mississippi, located in Cleveland, Miss., highlights the musical achievements of Mississippians.





# All of These Companies Have Something in Common ...




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2.1 million square feet

2.5 million square feet




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1 million square feet






500,000 square feet

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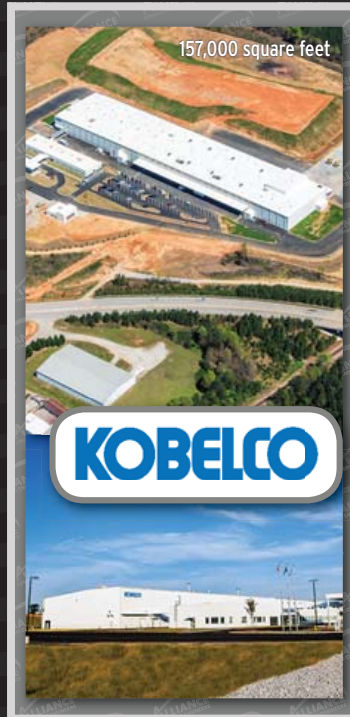


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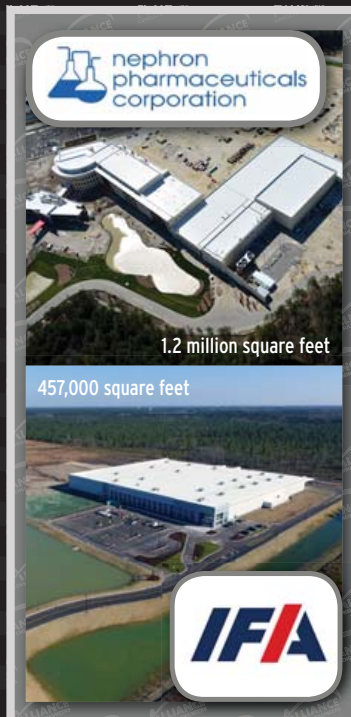
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JUSHI

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nephron pharmaceuticals corporation

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457,000 square feet

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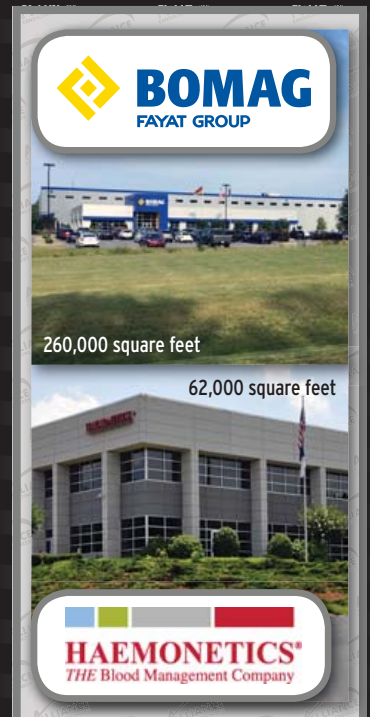


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# SOUTHBOUND

By Michael Randle, EDITOR

## The Rural South Rules the Economic Development World



WE ARE WITNESSING AT THIS VERY MINUTE A MIRACULOUS MANUFACTURING SURGE. I have never seen anything close to what is happening in the rural South with regard to project activity over the last two years.

To repeat, in my 40 years of reporting on economic development in the region, nothing like the massive number of jobs announced and especially the hundreds of billions (that's with a "B") in capital investments in the South's rural areas has ever occurred.

The entire rural South would be fortunate to capture two of these massive projects shown below over a two- or three-year span. All of these — and so many more — have occurred in just over two years.

In fact, over the last two years, nearly 50 percent of projects meeting our thresholds of \$30 million and/or 200 jobs or more have been captured by rural communities in the South. That has never happened! The 30-year average (and we have that data) is just over 80 percent metro and just under 20 percent rural.

These deals will generate hundreds of similar projects as mobility and other industry sectors shift to clean energy. And these have all been announced in just over two years:

Company	Investment	Jobs	Location
Ford and SK	\$5.6 billion	6,000	Stanton, Tenn.
Ford and SK	\$5.8 billion	5,000	Glendale, Ky.
Hyundai	\$6 billion	8,000	Bryan County, Ga.
Rivian	\$5 billion	7,500	Morgan, Walton Counties, Ga.
GM, Ultium Cells	\$2.5 billion	2,000	Spring Hill, Tenn.
Hyundai/LG Energy	\$4.3 billion	3,000	Bryan County, Ga.
Hyundai/SK	\$5 billion	3,500	Bartow County, Ga.
Toyota	\$4 billion	2,500	Randolph County, N.C.
Envision AESC	\$2 billion	2,000	Bowling Green, Ky.
Vinfast	\$4 billion	7,500	Chatham County, N.C.
<b>Total for 10 projects</b>	<b>\$44 billion</b>	<b>46,000 jobs</b>	

The above don't even count the dozens of suppliers, many of which are billion-dollar deals themselves, or any of the other clean energy projects like carbon capture, LNG, solar and wind.

So, why is this happening and developing so quickly? The moon, the sun and the stars have all aligned. Reshoring and clean energy have shown up at the same exact time, meaning all of this is centered around "Make it where you sell it!" (I wrote that phrase for the first time in 2010.)

This and more will be discussed at SB&D's Rural South Economic Development Summit in Cleveland, Miss., August 17-19 at the Cotton House Hotel. Email me at Michael@SB-D.com or call at 205-370-6039 if you would like an invitation to attend. All kinds of economic development legends will also be in attendance. 🌟

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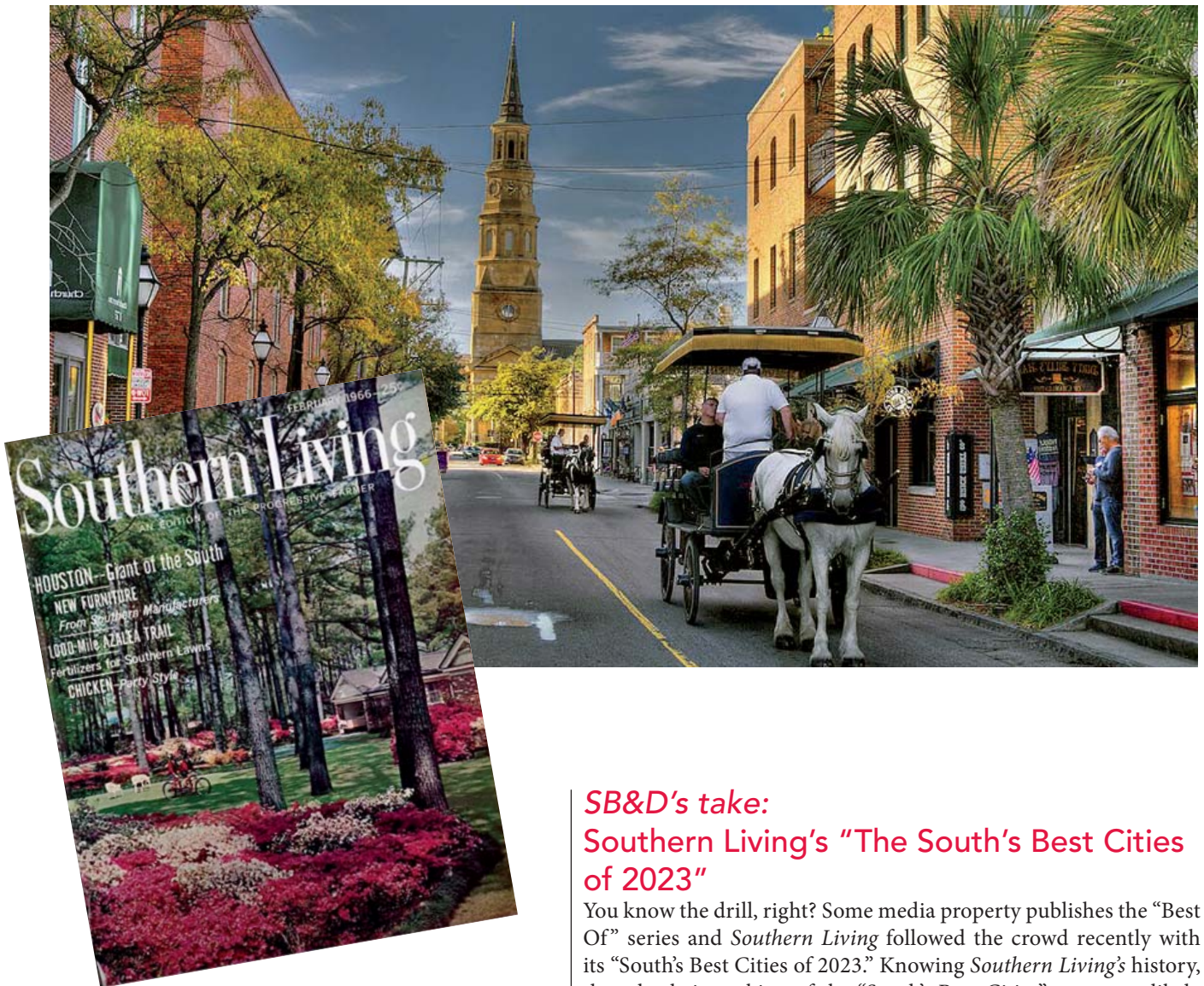
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# AROUND THE SOUTH

For real-time news on business, politics and economic development in the South, go to [RandleReport.com](http://RandleReport.com). For all economic development projects announced in the South, go to [SB-D.com](http://SB-D.com). For more information on the automotive industry in the South, go to [SouthernAutoCorridor.com](http://SouthernAutoCorridor.com).



## **SB&D's take: Southern Living's "The South's Best Cities of 2023"**

You know the drill, right? Some media property publishes the "Best Of" series and *Southern Living* followed the crowd recently with its "South's Best Cities of 2023." Knowing *Southern Living's* history, though, their ranking of the "South's Best Cities" was most likely the first of its kind back in the day.

When it comes to the South's lifestyle stories, then and now, *Southern Living* was what you read. Now, there is the Charleston-based publication *Garden & Gun*.

The first issue of *Southern Living* appeared in 1966 (inset). Since then, circulation has grown from an initial 200,000 to 2.5 million. As usual, Charleston, S.C., tops its "best" list.



*Southern Living* is a Birmingham, Ala.-based publishing business founded by Emory Orgustus Cunningham in 1966. *Progressive Farmer* was the publication that helped launch *Southern Living*. *Progressive Farmer* was first published in 1886.

*Progressive Farmer* is among the oldest and most widely read of the nation's agricultural periodicals. The history of the publication reflects dramatic changes in Southern rural life and journalism. The paper was founded in Winston (now Winston-Salem, N.C.) in February 1886 by Leonidas L. Polk, a former Confederate officer and North Carolina commissioner of agriculture.

*Southern Living* has been owned by several different companies, such as Southern Progress and Time Inc., when that conglomerate bought all of Southern Living's media assets in 1985, including titles such as *Cooking Light*, *Health* and *Coastal Living*. *Southern Living* is now owned by IAC's Dotdash Meredith.

Here is an excerpt of an article written and published by the *New York Times* when Emory Cunningham, the founder of *Southern Living*, died in Birmingham in January of 2000.

"Emory Orgustus Cunningham, a publishing executive who served up recipes for sweet potato pie and a rosy view of a new suburban South emerging from the region's rural poverty and decades of racial strife, died of pneumonia on Monday in Birmingham, Ala., where he lived. He was 78.

"Mr. Cunningham launched his Martha Stewart-like vision of a glossy new Dixie in 1966 in a magazine called *Southern Living*. Its circulation grew from an initial 200,000 to 2.5 million.

"The magazine, along with its sister publications, was acquired by Time Inc. in 1985. At the time, the price was the largest ever paid for a publishing company." —*New York Times*, January 28, 2000.

Okay, so that's enough about *Southern Living's* history, which is a noted one. Let's get back to the publication's "South's Best Cities of 2023."

On the list are the modern-day standards, you know, successful Southern MSAs that are great places to live, work and operate a business.

Richmond, Va., the old-line, blue blood of the group, came in 20th place, or at the end of *Southern Living's* ranking. Richmond was followed by Bentonville, Ark., at 19, which is growing its own Southern blue-blood population base since it is home to Walmart and much of the Walton family.

Huntsville, Ala., made *Southern Living's* "Best Cities" in the South list, as did Dallas, Fort Worth, Orlando, Charlotte, Raleigh and Austin. Okay, you get it, right? Just another list of cities that readers kind of go, "Well, we've read that before."

What impressed us? Birmingham; Alpharetta, Ga.; Chattanooga; Greenville, S.C.; and New Orleans ranked in the top 10 of the media property's list.

Then the usual boilerplate rankings appeared. You know Nashville, Atlanta (how can any author list "Alpharetta, Ga." — an Atlanta suburb — and "Atlanta" on the same list?). Then there was Asheville, followed by Savannah and Charleston at No. 2 and No. 1, respectively.

The North Charleston-Charleston, S.C., MSA and the Savannah MSA are rocking with huge economic development announcements such as Hyundai, Volvo, Boeing and the like. But to *Southern Living*, I guess they were just looking at pretty places. It's always about the methodology, right?

Here is a sample of what was published in *Southern Living* in their latest "The South's Best Cities of 2023."

"Set your sights on these cities, and you'll be in for a trip filled with the best museums, restaurants, shopping districts, and parks the region has to offer. Pack your bags and embark on a trip to one (or all!) of these treasured communities. You simply can't go wrong with a trip to one of the South's best cities."

### Half of "Best Places to Live" are in the South

*U.S. News & World Report* ranked its annual "Best Places to Live" in the U.S., and five are in the South. The top 10 included (1) Green Bay, Wisc.; (2) Huntsville, Ala.; followed by (3) Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; Boulder, Colo.; Sarasota, Fla.; Naples, Fla.; Portland, Maine; Charlotte, N.C.; Colorado Springs, Colo.; and Fayetteville, Ark.

### Amazon delaying construction on second Virginia HQ

Amazon has decided to delay construction on its second headquarters in Virginia. The first headquarters is under construction and is expected to open in the summer. The original announcement for a second U.S. headquarters came in 2017, and over 20,000 jobs were projected.

### Amazon employees move into HQ2 in Virginia

Over 2,000 employees moved into the celebrated Amazon HQ2 in Arlington, Va., in the spring quarter. The company has hired 8,000 employees in Arlington so far.

### Workers relocating for new jobs at lowest level ever recorded

According to executive coaching firm Challenger Gray & Christmas Inc., just 1.6 percent of job seekers relocated for new positions in the first quarter of 2023. According to the firm after surveying 3,000 job seekers, that figure is down from 3.7 percent in the last quarter of 2022 and down from 4.6 percent during the first quarter of 2022. In fact, it is the lowest percentage ever recorded, the company said in the report.

### Well, this was predictable: Post pandemic office space vacancy rates are climbing

According to *Triangle Business Journal*, "Office vacancy rates in the U.S. are expected to keep climbing into next year, according to the latest outlook from the Urban Land Institute. They could



# AROUND THE SOUTH



Georgetown, Texas, has been named the fastest-growing U.S. city for the second year in a row, says the U.S. Census Bureau. Georgetown is the fastest-growing by percent change in 2022 for cities with a population of at least 50,000 people.

approach 20 percent by 2025 before stabilizing — the 20-year average is 14.6 percent. And commercial real estate transaction volume is forecast to drop in 2023 to \$425 billion, half of the record volume seen in 2021 and well below the \$730 billion figure for 2022. Even by 2025, the figure is forecast to still be below \$700 billion. It was \$600 billion in 2019.”

### Enterprise Florida folds

In May, the Florida House and Senate passed a bill to close the Orlando-based Enterprise Florida, the public-private economic development organization that took over those duties for the state in 1996 from the Florida Department of Commerce that was based in Tallahassee. None of the state’s incentive programs have been changed according to Laura DiBella, who was the CEO of Enterprise Florida. However, according to reports, numerous incentive programs would be fully repealed, including the Office of Film and Entertainment. The new Department of Commerce will take in 20 positions as part of the shift. The state will revert back to the Florida Department of Commerce this fiscal year.

### Georgetown, Texas, is America’s fastest growing city

According to the *Austin American Statesman*, “For the second year in a row, Georgetown — 30 miles north of Austin — is the fastest growing city in the U.S. It set that growth record among all cities with a population of 50,000 or more, according to new data released by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Williamson County city’s growth rate was 14.4 percent from July 1, 2021, through July 1, 2022, resulting in a population estimate of 86,507. Georgetown added 10,887 more residents than it had in the census estimate from a year ago.”



### Louisiana LNG exports soar

Louisiana's three export facilities delivered more than 2.45 trillion cubic feet of LNG in 2022. Overall, the nation's seven export terminals exported 3.86 trillion cubic feet of liquefied natural gas last year.

### Mississippi makes investments in industrial sites.

In the spring quarter, Gov. Tate Reeves announced the state of Mississippi will invest \$56.7 million in site development projects throughout the state. Site development grant funds made available through the Mississippi Development Authority and Appalachian Regional Commission are

assisting local economic development entities in their efforts to spur economic growth by attracting new industry to competitive, shovel-ready sites.

### One of the South's oldest economic development agencies celebrates its 75th year

The Community Development Foundation (CDF), based in Tupelo, Miss., celebrated its 75th anniversary in the spring quarter. CDF was previously directed by the late legend Harry Martin and is now directed by David Rumbarger.

### Mississippi town named "Most Affordable Beach Town"

Gulfport, Miss., was named the "Most Affordable Beach

Town" in the United States by Realtor.com for 2023. Others included Newport News, Va.; Navarre, Fla.; and Corpus Christi, Texas.

### Kentucky has the longest running, lowest unemployment ever recorded in the state

The record comes with a 3.8 percent unemployment rate over the last 15 months. Governor Andy Beshear also announced the state has added 46,000 more jobs in Kentucky since February 2020, a 2.3 percent growth in jobs.

### Georgia has received \$17.5 billion in investment by Korean firms since 2020

Supporting 23,000 total jobs in the state, Korean com-

panies like KIA, Hyundai Motor Group, SK Group and others are continuing to invest.

### Georgia takes over New York for sound stage square footage

Georgia now has over 3 million square feet of sound stages. Topping that mark made the state the second largest in film and television production space in the nation. The report came from FilmLA, a nonprofit that serves as the official film office for the city and county of Los Angeles, which has 6.2 million square feet of production space. New York has 2.8 million square feet. The report also tracks other "competitive jurisdictions" including the United King-



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# AROUND THE SOUTH



Shown above is one of Italy-based Enel's battery energy storage plants. The company is investing more than \$1 billion in an Oklahoma solar panel factory in Inola, Okla.

(OPPOSITE) Harnett County, N.C., is home to the old Erwin Cotton Mills plant that has stood for more than 100 years. Once called the "Denim Capital of the World," the site is about to see a regeneration as a new business park in Erwin, N.C.

dom, Ontario and British Columbia. Georgia ranked fourth overall among all the locations, according to the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*.

## Battery storage plants rule

Battery plants are being built and expanding at rates never before seen as utility-scale energy storage facilities are one of the hottest projects in the South today. BlackRock, SK and UBS are investing billions in the energy storage industry. . .SK in particular. The Korean company has contracted with many of the electric vehicle plants currently being built in the South.

## Spending on film productions in North Carolina tops \$258 million in 2022

Filmmakers spent more than \$258 million on productions in North Carolina last year, the sixth highest year-end total since 2000, when the state started offering incentives to support its film industry. "North

Carolina continues to attract great film, television and streaming projects that bring good jobs to our state," said Governor Roy Cooper. "Last year, these projects helped create 16,000 job opportunities, including 3,000 crew and talent positions for our state's highly skilled production workforce." In 2022, 74 film, television and streaming projects had production-related activities in all eight of the state's prosperity zones, including previously announced North Carolina Film and Entertainment Grant awardees.

## A new Research Triangle county is now the fastest growing

Franklin County, located in the Research Triangle of the Raleigh-Durham region, is now the fastest growing in population between 2021 and 2022, according to new population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. At 3.8 percent, Franklin County's population expanded greater than Johnston or Chatham counties. John-

ston County is still red hot from a growth perspective. The county grew its population by 3.3 percent during the one-year interval. And it's three times as large as Franklin, so its actual gain of residents was much higher for the year at 7,500 compared to 2,700 for Franklin, according to the *Triangle Business Journal*.

## Old denim mill south of Raleigh to breathe new life

Harnett County, N.C., is home to the old Erwin Cotton Mills plant that has stood for more than 100 years. Once called the "Denim Capital of the World," the site is about to see a regeneration into a new business park in Erwin, N.C. The small town of 5,000 people is about 50 minutes south of Raleigh between U.S. Highway 421 and the Cape Fear River. Erwin is about 10 minutes west of Interstate 95. The buyer of the facility will transform it into more than 1 million square feet of spaces ranging from 2,000 to 400,000 square feet for prospective tenants.

## FDI in Alabama soars

Foreign direct investment, mostly in automotive and aerospace, is on the rise in Alabama. Since 2018, foreign companies have launched investment projects valued at more than \$13 billion across the state, generating nearly 17,000 job commitments, according to the Alabama Department of Commerce.

## Alabama sets \$10 billion investments record

Manufacturers and service providers made an estimat-



ed total of \$10.1 billion in investments in Alabama last year. The total broke the previous record of \$8.7 billion in 2018. The numbers are from the 2022 Alabama Economic Development Impact Report, which the Alabama Department of Commerce released in the spring quarter.

### Investments in Louisiana topped \$20 billion in 2022

Companies invested nearly \$21 billion in capital in 2022, according to Louisiana Economic Development. The investments created about 18,000 new jobs.

### UAB Birmingham economic effect: \$12 billion, over 107,000 jobs

A report from the University of Alabama at Birmingham shows that the school and its massive healthcare complex generated more than \$12 billion for Alabama's economy in 2022. This includes wages, job generation and other factors. In comparison, UAB was responsible for \$4.6 billion in economic impact in 2008. The University also sustained or supported over 107,000 jobs and \$256 million in local taxes last year.

### Record-breaking year for Georgia trade

In the spring, Gov. Brian Kemp joined the Department of Economic Development in announcing that the State of Georgia achieved a record-breaking year for international trade for the second year in a row. In 2022, Georgia's total trade exceeded \$196 billion across 221 countries and territories.

### Georgia Power's Plant Vogtle reactor is sending power to homes

The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* reported in the spring that Plant Vogtle's first of two nuclear reactors is now 100 percent operational at its site near Augusta. Georgia Power said Unit 3 reached its maximum output of 1,100 megawatts in the spring quarter.

### Arkansas unemployment reaches record low

In April, Arkansas saw its unemployment rate reach a record low of 2.8 percent. The U.S. jobless rate in April was 3.4 percent, down one tenth of a percentage point from March.

### Southern mega-markets surge in job growth

Dallas, Atlanta, Houston and Miami have surged in job growth since the beginning of 2020. Employment levels as of January 2023 increased by 9 percent in Dallas, followed by Atlanta, Houston and Miami with increases of 4.9 percent,

3.9 percent and 3.6 percent respectively.

### Tennessee Governor Lee signs Transportation Modernization Act into law

Governor Bill Lee signed the historic, bipartisan legislation, creating a \$3.3 billion investment to modernize Tennessee's transportation needs in rural and urban communities.

### Kentucky town wins 2023 Best Southern Small Town

In the spring quarter, Maysville, Ky., was named Best Southern Small Town by *USA Today* readers. The publication explained in its piece that the small town cited "embodied charm and hospitality while also attracting visitors worldwide."

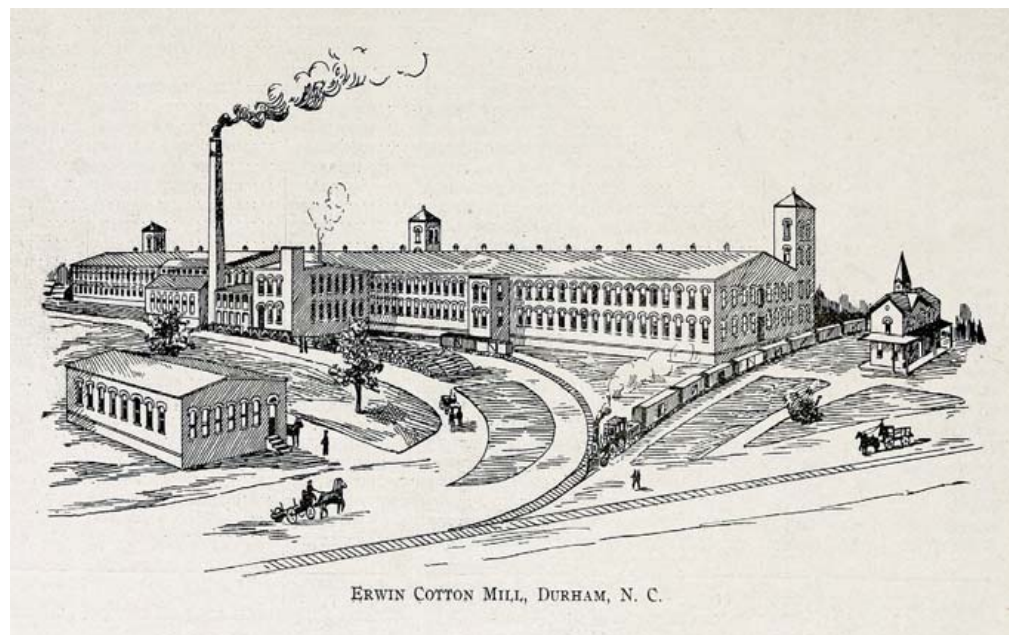
### Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear to lead Tennessee-Tombigbee

Waterway and its economic and trade potential. A release from Beshear's office announced his election as the 2023 chairman of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority.

Waterway and its economic and trade potential. A release from Beshear's office announced his election as the 2023 chairman of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority.

### "Unprecedented" coastal restoration project granted final funds in Louisiana

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is granting \$660 million from a 2013 settlement of federal criminal charges involving the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon disaster to help rebuild Louisiana's coastline. The money is part of a \$3 billion project that will help slow losses of Louisiana land on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The "unprecedented" funding, according to the Baton Rouge Advocate, could top \$3 billion from various sources. ★





# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS

For real-time news on business, politics and economic development in the South, go to [RandleReport.com](http://RandleReport.com). For all economic development projects announced in the South, go to [SB-D.com](http://SB-D.com). For information on automotive in the South, go to [SouthernAutoCorridor.com](http://SouthernAutoCorridor.com).



## Nucor to open new facility in Decatur, Ala.

Charlotte-based steelmaker Nucor announced in the spring it will invest \$125 million in an advanced manufacturing facility in Decatur. The new venture will produce transmission towers and generate 200 jobs.

## ALABAMA

### Wood panel manufacturer Kronospan to expand

Kronospan will invest \$350 million to expand its operations in Oxford, Ala., creating an additional 150 jobs. Once complete later this year, the company will have employed 600 people and invested a total of more than \$1 billion since 2008. The Oxford facility is the largest wood products site in North America.

### Walmart to invest \$350

### million in regional distribution center

The Cullman, Ala., project will double the amount of supplies the distribution center will ship with an implementation of a robotics and software platform developed by Symbotic LLC. Walmart operates five distribution centers and 144 retail stores in Alabama and employs over 41,000 in the state.

### \$100 million invested in two new Northrop Grumman offices

Offices for defense contractor Northrop Grumman have

been completed at the Redstone Gateway in Huntsville, Ala. The Birmingham-based construction firm Robins & Morton completed the \$100 million project, including two “build to suit” facilities and a parking deck.

### Acquisition Integration to create 250 jobs in Alabama

The aerospace logistics and distribution company plans to build 170,000 square feet of hangar and office space at the Pryor Field Regional Airport in North Alabama. The \$30 million investment will create 250 jobs.

### Tech company Tquila Automation to create 200 jobs in Birmingham

The delivery hub will be located at The Switch, Birmingham’s innovation district, in the 65,000-square-foot Nextec building.

### Westwater Resources plans \$202 million graphite plant in Alabama

The Coosa County plant will supply material for EV battery manufacturer SK On.

### Delivery app bringing 200 jobs to Birmingham

Food delivery company ASAP (formerly Waitr) is





### Aerojet Rocketdyne adds 200 new jobs in Arkansas

The supplier of rocket systems to the American military will expand and modernize its facilities in Camden with a \$215 million investment from the U.S. Department of Defense. Shown here, an Aerojet Rocketdyne Camden employee prepares a solid rocket motor for shipment.

adding jobs in Birmingham. The deal will create 200 jobs.

### Canada-based manufacturer picks Tuscaloosa for plant

Epsilon Industries is investing around \$3 million to open a facility to produce prefabricated modular utility systems in an integrated factory environment at the Tuscaloosa County Airport Industrial Park. The deal will create 180 jobs.

### Aerospace supplier to relocate from Texas to Creola in Mobile County

Superior Air Parts plans to relocate its corporate headquarters and manufacturing operation producing FAA-approved replacement parts for piston-engine air-

craft. The \$24.2 million investment will create 180 jobs over 5 years.

### Window and door manufacturer to open production facility in Alabama

Sierra Pacific Windows will invest \$60 million and hire 300 people in Phenix City. Its first production facility in the American South, the company has acquired 610,000 square feet of manufacturing and warehouse space on 113 acres.

## ARKANSAS

### Little Rock MSA picks up a nice healthcare deal

RelateCare is creating 255 jobs in Sherwood, Ark. The back-office project will support hospitals and other

healthcare facilities in the U.S.

### Food sector servicer to supply 50 jobs in Springdale, Ark.

Cypress Cold Storage, a warehouse supplier for the food industry, has broken ground on a new state-of-the-art cold storage facility in Arkansas. The 170,000-square-foot facility of temperature-controlled space will accommodate 22,000 pallets of freezer storage.

### Plans finalized for wind farm in Carroll County

Scout Clean Energy has completed its plans for developing the \$300 million Nimbus Wind Farm in Northwest Arkansas. The wind farm is expected to produce enough

electricity to power nearly 30,000 homes.

### Clarksville to invest in hydrogen power plant

Syntex Industries of Little Rock will design and construct a hydrogen energy power plant to generate more than 500 megawatts of clean electricity in Clarksville. Construction will begin by the fourth quarter of 2023 and is slated to create more than 100 jobs.

## FLORIDA

### FLUENT moves U.S. headquarters to Tampa Bay from Miami

FLUENT, a multi-state cannabis company, is moving its headquarters from Miami to Tampa. The company plans to create 30 new jobs.

### Space Force selects Florida's Space Coast for new training HQ

The new Space Training and Readiness Command, or STARCOM, will bring hundreds of employees to Florida's Space Coast to train Space Force members in war gaming and tactics.

The Air Force-based command will be located at Patrick Space Force Base in Brevard County, Fla.



# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS

## Trader Joe's breaks ground on distribution facility in Kentucky

In the spring, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear joined local officials to break ground on a new Simpson County facility for Trader Joe's East Inc., a leading retail distributor and supplier of food and beverage products. The project will create 876 full-time jobs, behind a \$259 million investment.



## Life Science company announces Tampa expansion

Versea Health is expanding in downtown Tampa. The company, which is headquartered in Tampa, performs diagnostics, therapeutics and other life science functions. The deal will create 40 jobs.

## Cosentino Group to build \$270 million facility in Jacksonville

The natural stone and architectural surfaces manufacturer has announced a major investment in a

408,000-square-foot facility at the Cecil Commerce Center. The company plans to hire about 180 people with an average salary of \$56,000. This would be the Spanish company's first facility built in North America.

## GEORGIA

### Idea Nuova to invest nearly \$20 million in rural Georgia

Idea Nuova is establishing a new manufacturing facility in Screven County, Ga. The deal will create 80 new jobs.

### Medical device

### manufacturer to bring 340 jobs to Atlanta's former State Farm campus

Boston Scientific Corp. will lease nearly 250,000 square feet in Johns Creek. The largest office deal so far this year, it will bring life science research and development to the metro.

## KENTUCKY

### A \$240 million investment begins at MAGMA tech facility in Bowling Green

O-I Glass has begun construction on a revolutionary greenfield glass facility, utilizing MAGMA technology. The technology is used for manufacturing flexible, modular glass production.

### Clean energy manufacturer to establish \$264 million plant in

## Shelby County

EnerVenue will establish a new manufacturing facility in Shelby County, creating 450 full-time jobs with a \$264 million Phase 1 investment with potential for further investment. The company manufactures energy storage products and systems.

### New distillery headed to Georgetown, Ky.

A planned \$51 million distillery coming to Georgetown will be an architectural innovation from the same Danish firm that designed Google's headquarters and the Lego brand museum, according to the *Lexington Herald Leader*. According to the media property, Blue Run, which announced in August 2022 that it planned to build a whiskey operation in Georgetown, released



### Sam's Club to create 600 jobs in Georgia

Retailer Sam's Club is establishing a new fulfillment center in Douglas County, Ga. The project will create 600 jobs.



preliminary designs by Bjarke Ingels Group. Called “Meander,” the design shows one swooping half-mile-long building housing the entire operation including distilling, aging and blending. The design is meant to evoke Georgetown’s Royal Spring, according to a news release. The whiskey operation in Georgetown, home of Toyota’s largest assembly plant in the U.S., will create 45 new jobs.

#### Congo will expand its HQ in Louisville

The \$8.25 million project will produce 500 high-paying jobs. The beverage maker plans to relocate to a 110,000-square-foot location on Triton Park Boulevard.

#### Castellini creates 180 jobs, to invest \$16.6 million in Kentucky

The third-party logistics company for the food industry is expanding its Wilder operations with a \$16.6 million investment.

### LOUISIANA

#### Georgia-Pacific spends \$50 million to upgrade paper towel mill

Georgia-Pacific’s mill in Port Hudson, La., will be upgraded with increased capacity and improved equipment. Twenty miles north of Baton Rouge, the mill produces paper towels for Brawny and other brands.

#### Oil and gas refiner to relocate HQ from Dallas to Baton Rouge

Petroleum company Placid Refining will move its headquarters from Dallas

to downtown Baton Rouge. Placid is also investing \$66 million to improve its existing facility in Port Allen, La. The deal will create 20 new jobs.

#### CGI has created more than 700 jobs at its center in Lafayette

Global IT and business consulting firm CGI has created more than 700 jobs at its U.S. Onshore Delivery Center in Lafayette, La., which opened in 2014. This is almost double the number of jobs it originally expected to bring to the region. CGI’s Acadiana workforce supports federal and commercial clients across the nation undertaking critical digital transformation projects.

### MISSISSIPPI

#### Distribution center set for Byhalia, Miss.

A third-party logistics firm that is based in Massachusetts has opened its seventh Memphis-area distribution center. Barrett Distribution Centers’ new operations in Byhalia employs 100 workers at a 960,000-square-foot facility.

#### Cold-Link Logistics invests \$64 million in Mississippi

The 200,000-square-foot cold storage facility will create 84 new jobs in Jones County. In partnership with the transportation logistics company Whitestone Transportation, the corporate site will be developed with the assistance of the Mississippi Development Authority, the city of Ellisville and Jones County.



#### Vacant shipyard near New Orleans catching new sails

It’s not a big deal, but it is a start. An offshore wind hub is coming to the site of the former Avondale Shipyard in Louisiana as the region ramps up to serve the growing renewable energy industry in the U.S. in the Gulf of Mexico. New Orleans-based Gulf Wind Technology (GWT) announced in the spring that it is venturing with energy giant Shell to start a research, training and technology demonstration program at GWT’s facility within the Avondale Global Gateway in Jefferson Parish. The news comes after the Biden administration in February proposed the first-ever offshore wind lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico as part of the government’s plan to spur offshore wind deployment beyond the East Coast. The project will start off with 30 new jobs.

CONTINUED

# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS

## Steel Dynamics breaks ground on \$2.5 billion aluminum factory in Mississippi

Steel Dynamics recently broke ground on its Aluminum Dynamics mill. The \$2.5 billion project — “biggest economic development project” in state history — will be located near the Golden Triangle Regional Airport. The Lowndes County plant was announced by the Golden Triangle CEO Joe Max Higgins. The mill will produce nearly 650,000 tons of finished product for the beverage packaging, automotive and alloy industry. Shown here, Steel Dynamics CEO Mark Millett and Gov. Tate Reeves detonate a charge, sending a mound of dirt flying at the groundbreaking ceremony.



## NORTH CAROLINA

**Meta expands in Durham**  
Meta, the parent company of Facebook, announced in the spring it will create 100 jobs in downtown Durham. Meta joins other large tech companies such as Microsoft and Google that have operations in the Research Triangle.

## Energizer Holdings plans Randolph County expansion

With a total investment of \$43 million over four years in Asheboro, Energizer will create an additional 178 jobs with an average salary of \$54,000. Asheboro and Randolph County together offered \$420,000 in incentives for the battery manufacturer.

## Bosch expands its Charlotte manufacturing capabilities

The tool company announced a major expansion

with a \$130 million investment to increase its production of power tool accessories in Lincoln County. The expansion will create 404 jobs with an average annual wage of \$53,000.

## CommScope adding hundreds of jobs in Catawba County

The Hickory, N.C.-based CommScope is investing \$47 million and creating 250 jobs at its fiber optic cable plants. Ninety percent of those jobs will not require a college degree. The added manufacturing will produce rural area applications of fiber optic cable to expand broadband service to areas that are lacking high-speed internet.

## Cross Technology of Winston-Salem is expanding with a \$3.4 million grant

A 140,000-square-foot building upgrade for machining

company Cross Technology will employ 120 more people over the next two years in Yadkin County, N.C.

## Over 200 high-paying jobs created by Marshall Aerospace in North Carolina

Marshall Aerospace has selected Piedmont Triad International Airport for its first location in the United States to service C-130 aircraft. The company plans to invest \$50 million.

## TAT Piedmont Aviation to expand operations at the Piedmont Triad International Airport

The aviation repair company will create 85 jobs with a \$13.8 million investment. “Aviation and aerospace companies of every stripe are choosing North Carolina as the best place to grow their business,” said Governor Cooper.

## E. & J. Gallo Winery opens New Amsterdam Vodka production line in South Carolina

The nation’s largest winemaker will invest a combined \$423 million with a creation of nearly 500 new jobs in Chester County. Operations include a distribution center, production lines, warehousing, bottling, canning and an import and export center at the Fort Lawn hub.







### Big solar deal in Oklahoma

Italy's Enel will invest more than \$1 billion in an Oklahoma solar panel factory in Inola, Okla. According to Reuters, "The investment is one of the biggest in solar manufacturing since the passage of U.S. President Joe Biden's landmark climate change law, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), last year. Facilities built with panels containing domestically made cells may receive a lucrative IRA bonus tax credit worth 10 percent of a project's cost."

#### Siemens Mobility to establish its first East Coast operation in Lexington, N.C.

Manufacturer Siemens Mobility has announced it is investing \$220 million in a plant to make passenger rail cars. The company picked Lexington for the 506-job project.

#### New distribution center slated for Eastern North Carolina

UPS is building a new distribution center in Onslow County, N.C. The project will create 98 new jobs.

#### OKLAHOMA

#### Big solar deal in Oklahoma

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#### SOUTH CAROLINA

#### Albemarle Corp. will invest \$1.3 billion and create more than 300 new jobs in Chester County

Approval has been granted for Albemarle Corp.'s investment in its lithium hydroxide processing facility in Chester County, S.C. The significant investment comes after previous passes for incentives by the county when the project was going under the code name Project Raven.

#### Firearm manufacturer subsidiary FN America

#### plans expansion in South Carolina

The company plans to expand in Pickens County with a \$33 million investment that will create 176 new jobs.

#### Alabama food and beverage company announces \$130 million project in South Carolina

Milo's Tea announced in March it will create more than 100 jobs in Spartanburg County. The project will entail production of tea and lemonade on site by fall 2024.

Global renewable energy company SPI Energy Co. Ltd. to invest \$65.9 million in South Carolina  
SEM Wafertech and Solar4American Technology announced an investment to establish operations in Sumter County. The solar companies' investment will create 300 new jobs there.

#### Electric deal in Lexington County

Cooperative Electric Energy Utility Supply, a consumer-owned electric materials supplier, announced plans to expand operations in Lexington County. The company's approximately \$52 million investment will create 61 new jobs.

#### Big building materials deal in the Palmetto State

IKO, a manufacturer of roofing products, announced it will establish its first South Carolina operations in Chester County. The company's \$363 million investment will create 180 new jobs.

#### Laser technology manufacturer relocating headquarters to Greenville County

Erchonia Corp., a global laser technology manufacturer, announced plans to relocate its corporate head-

# RELOCATIONS & EXPANSIONS



## Big semiconductor-related deal in South Carolina

Pallidus, a silicon carbide wafer semiconductor manufacturer, announced plans to relocate its corporate headquarters and manufacturing operations to York County. The company's \$443 million investment will create 405 new jobs. Founded in 2015, Pallidus leverages its proprietary M-SiC technology to increase the quality and lower the cost to produce silicon carbide wafers used in semiconductors.

quarters to Greenville County. The company's \$6.7 million investment will create 51 new jobs.

### GE Appliances to invest \$50 million in South Carolina

GE Appliances, a Haier company, announced plans to expand its South Carolina operations with a distribution center in Greenville County. The \$50 million investment is projected to create 45 new jobs. The company also has manufacturing facilities at its Kentucky headquarters and in Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee.

## TENNESSEE

### Manufacturer investing over \$10 million in rural Tennessee

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, Department of Economic and Community Development Commission-

er Stuart McWhorter and The Robinette Company officials announced the company will invest \$10.3 million to construct a new 100,000-square-foot facility in Piney Flats, Tenn. With a headquarters in Bristol and manufacturing operations in both Bristol and Piney Flats, the new facility will be The Robinette Company's fourth location. Through this expansion, the company will create 70 new production jobs in Sullivan County. The company employs more than 450 in Northeast Tennessee.

### Steel manufacturer to locate first U.S. plant in Memphis

MSS Steel Tubes USA plans to open its first U.S. plant in Memphis, the Greater Memphis Chamber announced in the spring. The Portuguese-owned company will hire 129 in the deal.

## TEXAS

### One billion dollars invested in a high-tech paperboard recycling mill in Waco

Graphic Packaging International plans to break ground this spring on a 640,000-square-foot facility in Waco's Texas Central Park. The mill will turn corrugated box cardboard into thinner paperboard packaging for cereal boxes and other consumer products. Production will commence in 2026, company officials said. The company is set to hire 230 people with average pay of \$65,000 plus benefits.

### Construction for Goldman Sachs' \$500 million new campus to begin later this year in Dallas

Regional offices of the Manhattan-based banking firm Goldman Sachs are to be built in the Uptown area of

Dallas. Downsized by 10 percent, the project is to be completed by 2027.

### CharterUp is relocating its HQ to Austin, Texas

The online bus-booking platform plans to add 100 jobs.

## VIRGINIA

### Church & Dwight Company will expand

The baking soda manufacturer plans to invest \$27 million in the expansion of its Chesterfield County operations, which will create an additional 53 new jobs.

### Delta Star will invest \$30.2 million in Lynchburg expansion

The industrial power equipment manufacturer will create 149 jobs by adding 80,000 square feet of manufacturing space and 14,000 square feet of new office space.



### Richmond National Group to create 100 jobs in Henrico County

The specialty insurer plans to expand its headquarters by adding 7,200 square feet of office space to its Greater Richmond footprint.

### German manufacturer picks Virginia for 100 more jobs

Zollner Elektronik AG, which is based in Germany, will invest \$18 million to expand in Virginia. The company is expanding in Danville and will add 100 jobs.

### Big apparel project in Richmond MSA

SanMar Corp., the largest supplier of wholesale printable accessories and apparel in the United States, will create an expected 1,000 jobs in Hanover County, Va. The company will invest \$50 million on an existing 1.1 million-square-foot distribution center.

### Ship repair contractor expanding in Hampton Roads

Advanced Integrated Technologies is expanding its Norfolk ship repair operations. The project will create 76 jobs.

### Healthcare project to create nearly 300 jobs in Virginia

PRINCO, a healthcare products manufacturer, is investing over \$18 million in Norfolk. The deal will create 284 jobs. The products will be sold to hospitals throughout the U.S.

### Organic poultry producer creating 300 jobs in Virginia

Farmer Focus is expanding its facilities in Harrisonburg, Va. The nearly \$18 million deal will create 300 jobs. 📍



### Richardson International, Canadian-based agri-business leader, to invest \$220 million in Memphis, Tenn.

According to the *Memphis Business Journal*, the upgrade of the Wesson Oil production plant is pending approval. Richardson expanded into Memphis in 2019 with the purchase of the Wesson Oil production plant.

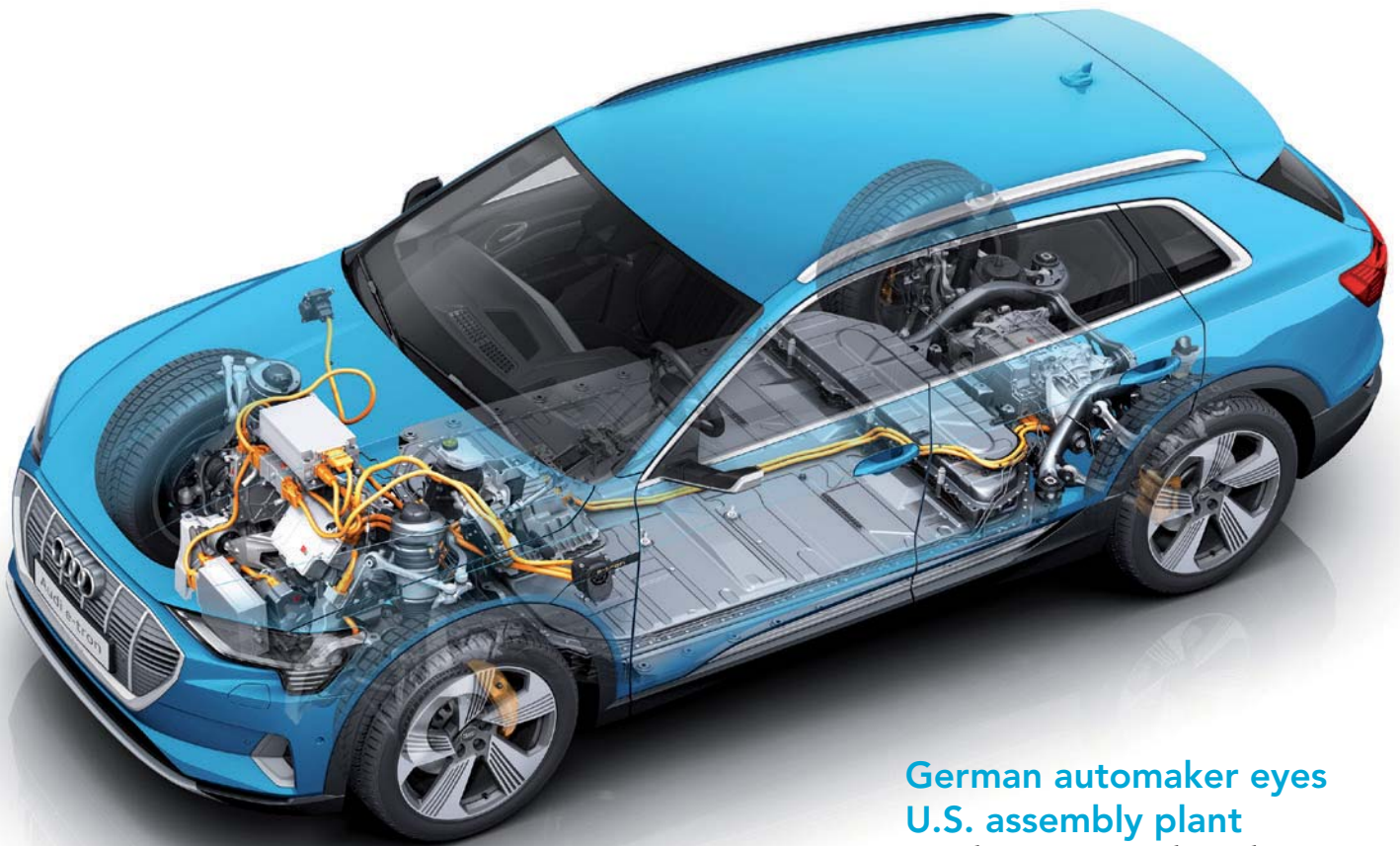


### Lego breaks ground on \$1 billion facility in Chesterfield, Va.

Lego has broken ground on the first manufacturing plant in the U.S. for the Denmark-based toymaker. The project is one of Virginia's largest economic development projects ever announced, according to Virginia Business, and will create 1,761 jobs, with production starting in 2025.

# SOUTHERNAUTO CORRIDOR★COM

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For all economic development projects announced in the South, go to [SB-D.com](http://SB-D.com). For more information on the  
automotive industry in the South, go to [SouthernAutoCorridor.com](http://SouthernAutoCorridor.com).



## German automaker eyes U.S. assembly plant

According to a report in the *Washington Post*, Audi is considering building a factory in the United States to produce electric vehicles. In just the past three years, several automakers and battery manufacturers have announced plans to spend billions on new facilities in the Southern Automotive Corridor.





The Genesis Electrified GV70 SUV was introduced in the spring quarter at Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama. The Electrified GV70 is the first Genesis model assembled outside of South Korea.

## ALABAMA

### Alabama automotive sector continues to thrive

Alabama's four major assembly plants continue to grow. Mazda Toyota is adding jobs in Huntsville. Hyundai (Montgomery) and Mercedes-Benz (Tuscaloosa County) continue to expand their electric vehicle lineups. And Honda plans updates on several models at its plant in Lincoln.

### Hyundai assembles first electric vehicle at its Alabama plant

Korean automaker Hyundai rolled out its first electric vehicle at its large plant in Montgomery, Ala. The Genesis Electrified GV70 SUV was the first model to be produced. The first EV comes 10 months after Hyundai announced that it would build the Electrified GV70 SUV and a hybrid version of the Santa Fe at the Montgomery plant. Hyundai invested \$300 million and added 200 jobs to install the EV line at the plant.

### Tuskegee, Ala., captures Korean auto supplier

Samkee Corp., a Tier 1 supplier to Hyundai's plant in Montgomery, will open a

\$128 million factory in Tuskegee, its first U.S. operation. The project will create 170 new jobs.

## GEORGIA

### EVs in Georgia account for the majority of Georgia's biggest deals

Electric vehicle plants like Rivian and Hyundai in Georgia make up seven of the 10 largest economic development projects as of April. The Hyundai project, worth billions, is one of the largest economic development projects announced in the South.

### Hyundai announces \$4.3 billion battery plant in Georgia

South Korean automaker Hyundai has added to its massive portfolio in Bryan County, Ga. In a joint venture with LG Energy Solution Ltd., the two companies will build a \$4.3 billion electric vehicle battery plant near Savannah in Bryan County. The facility will become the second battery plant Hyundai is developing in the state.

### Lithium-ion battery recycler opens plant in Georgia

A \$50 million lithium-ion battery recycling facility is now open in Cov-

ington, a critical piece of Georgia's growing electric vehicle supply chain. Massachusetts-based Ascend Elements currently employs 100 workers at the facility, which is near Rivian's planned \$5 billion electric vehicle plant in Social Circle, Ga. The battery recycler plans to increase its headcount to 185 by 2024, and called the project the largest of its kind in North America.

### Supplier adds to growth list of Korean parts makers in Georgia

In the spring quarter, Georgia announced Sewon America would invest more than \$300 million in a new manufacturing facility in Rincon in Effingham County, Ga. The deal will generate more than 700 jobs.

### Another Hyundai supplier picks Georgia

A steady stream of automotive parts suppliers has announced plans to serve the gigantic Hyundai battery and vehicle plant in Bryan County, Ga. South Korea-based PHA announced in March it will invest \$67 million in a new facility near the Hyundai plant. The deal will create over 400 jobs.

### Seoyon E-HWA joins list of Hyundai suppliers in Georgia

Gov. Brian Kemp announced that Seoyon E-HWA, a global auto parts supplier that manufactures both interior and exterior components, will create 740 new direct and indirect jobs and invest almost \$76 million in a new manufacturing facility in Chatham County, Ga.

CONTINUED



Ford's BlueOval facility, Hardin County, Ky.

# SOUTHERNAUTO CORRIDOR.COM

Charlotte-based Albemarle is investing at least \$1.3 billion and creating more than 300 new jobs to construct a new “Mega-Flex” lithium hydroxide processing facility in Chester County, S.C.



## KENTUCKY

### Massive investment in Kentucky

Microvast Advanced Membrane is investing \$504 million in a project in Hopkinsville, Ky., to build the world's first mass production facility for its cutting-edge polyaramid separator technology. The polyaramid technology is used in firefighting garments and insulating papers. The facility will help integrate the product into EV battery designs, including Microvast's cells as well as those of other third-party battery manufacturers. The project will create 562 full-time jobs.

### Study projects BlueOvalSK EV battery plant will have \$800 million economic impact in Kentucky

A new study conducted by the Kentucky League of Cities and Murray State University shows the potential economic impact of the BlueOval SK Battery Park on local governments in Hardin County and the surrounding region. Once at full employment in 2025, the Ford facility is estimated to have a yearly value-added impact of nearly \$800 million.

### Toyota Boshoku to make \$225 million investment in Hopkinsville, Ky.

Toyota Boshoku America Inc. (TBA) will invest more than \$225 million to construct a new facility in Hopkinsville and create 157 quality jobs for

Kentuckians, according to the Lane Report. The new facility will include a 365,400-square-foot building pad on 49 acres in Christian County. The plant will be the first TBA location globally to be considered a “Smart Plant.” The facility will employ innovative, cutting-edge technologies such as advanced robotics, planning and automation to streamline processes, reduce waste and enhance productivity to maximize efficiency and operations.

### EV car maker Rivian to invest \$10 million in Bullitt County

The planned remanufacturing facility in Shepherdsville will create 218 high-paying jobs, continuing the EV industries' growth in the state.

## MISSISSIPPI

### State money being invested in Mississippi megasite

The state of Mississippi recently announced it was allocating \$5.1 million to Madison County to build an additional access point to the industrial site near the Nissan factory.

## NORTH CAROLINA

### Toyota invests another \$2 billion to make batteries in North Carolina

Toyota is adding another \$2.1 billion in investment to its vehicle battery plant under construction near Greensboro. According to *The Business Journals*, the expansion of the Toyota Battery Manufactur-

ing North Carolina plant under construction near Liberty in northern Randolph County brings total investment there to nearly \$6 billion.

### North Carolina reloading megasite portfolio

After announcements by Toyota and others, most of the existing megasites in North Carolina are now occupied. The North Carolina legislature has passed funding to replenish the state's lineup of sites of 1,000 acres or more.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

### A \$1.3 billion EV investment announced in South Carolina

Charlotte-based Albemarle is investing at least \$1.3 billion and creating more than 300 new jobs to construct a new “Mega-Flex” lithium hydroxide processing facility in Chester County, S.C. The facility will support the surging demand for electric vehicles and other energy storage applications that use lithium-ion batteries. Situated on nearly 800 acres near Richburg, Albemarle's new “Mega-Flex” conversion facility will support the fast-growing global electric vehicle and energy storage markets. The term “Mega-Flex” refers to the facility's ability to process diverse lithium feedstock, including lithium from recycled batteries. The new facility is expected to annually produce approximately 50,000 metric tons of battery-grade lithium hydroxide from multiple

sources, with the potential to reach up to 100,000 metric tons, according to the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

### Another lithium-Ion battery campus being built in South Carolina

Cirba Solutions, a comprehensive battery management and materials company, announced plans in the spring to build its newest state-of-the-art, flagship operations in Richland County, S.C. The integrated lithium-ion battery materials campus will encompass an initial investment of over \$300 million and will create more than 300 new jobs. The company plans to build an approximately 400,000-square-foot, world-class lithium-ion battery recycling and materials campus that will focus on processing end-of-life hybrid and EV batteries and gigafactory scrap to extract critical materials such as nickel, cobalt and lithium.

### Tin Thanh Group to locate tire manufacturing facility in rural South Carolina; over 1,000 jobs to be created

Tin Thanh Group Americas, a tire manufacturer, announced plans to establish its first United States operations in Allendale County. The company's \$68 million investment will create 1,031 new jobs. Supplying energy from reusable sources, Tin Thanh Group Americas will provide operations in recycled energy,



closed industry-agriculture, recycled waste and tire leasing while serving the environment, energy, high-tech agriculture and technology markets.

### South Carolina leads nation in export of vehicle tires.

Gov. Henry McMaster, the South Carolina Department of Commerce and the South Carolina Ports Authority announced that the state's 2022 export sales totaled \$31.5 billion, up 6 percent over 2021, according to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce. The state remains the nation's top exporter of completed passenger motor vehicles and tires.

### A \$42.7 expansion planned by BorgWarner in Oconee County, S.C.

As part of its "Charging Forward" initiative, the Auburn Hills, Mich.-based automotive supplier will create 122 new jobs in its plans to upgrade its facility in Seneca to integrate new EV battery systems.

## TENNESSEE

### Ford and Gov. Lee celebrate historic BlueOval City in West Tennessee

In the spring quarter, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee and Ford Motor Company

marked significant progress on construction at the historic BlueOval City complex in West Tennessee. The project is the single largest investment in Tennessee history. In 2021, Ford Motor Company and SK On committed a \$5.6 billion investment to build a 3,600-acre mega-campus called BlueOval City at the Megasite of West Tennessee, where the production of Ford's second generation electric trucks will begin in 2025. The project is expected to create 30,000 jobs in West Tennessee, anchored by Memphis, including auto parts suppliers and other support projects. The construction is expected to create 6,000 jobs.

### Ford's \$5.6 billion BlueOval City complex attracting suppliers far and wide in Tennessee

The Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development reported in the spring quarter that Ford's suppliers for its electric vehicle facility in Stanton, Tenn., (located just outside of Memphis) are considering sites in more places in the Volunteer State than West Tennessee. Supplier activity is hot on the site of the 11-million-square-foot plant shared by Ford and battery maker SK.

### 6K Energy to invest \$166 million in battery material manufacturing plant in Jackson, Tenn.

Gov. Bill Lee announced the company will invest in a full-scale PlusCAM™ battery material manufacturing plant. With its initial investment, 6K Energy plans on expanding to \$250 million in future phases. The company will also be using its \$50 million U.S. Department of Energy grant for the factory.

### Electric vehicle battery manufacturer expanding in Tennessee

Microvast, a maker of batteries for EVs, is investing \$150 million to expand its facility in Clarksville, Tenn. The expansion will double the plant's capacity. "Houston-based Microvast is one of several automotive companies pouring new investment into Greater Nashville and hitching the largest piece of Tennessee's manufacturing economy to electric vehicles." So far, Microvast has committed to close to 290 jobs at its first Clarksville factory and another 600 to 700 at a potential second factory nearby, according to the *Nashville Business Journal*. Microvast reported 35 percent growth in revenue from 2021 to 2022. Its backlog of orders more than tripled to \$410.5 million.

### Volkswagen hiring 500 more in Chattanooga

VW announced in the spring quarter it is adding 500 workers at its plant in Chattanooga. That puts the German automaker's employee head-

count at 5,500 and solidifies it as Hamilton County's largest private employer.

### Tire manufacturer hiring 125 in Tennessee

Nokian Tyres is expanding its workforce in Dayton, Tenn. The project will generate 125 new jobs.

## TEXAS

### Tesla's 10 million-square-foot EV factory in Austin is killing it

Tesla's East Austin gigafactory is now making 5,000 vehicles in a week. That is more than double the 1,600-a-week milestone the factory was able to roll out a year earlier.

### Tesla breaks ground on lithium refinery in Texas

Austin-based Tesla broke ground on a new \$375 million lithium refinery in rural Neuces County near Corpus Christi in the spring quarter. The facility will produce lithium for batteries made in Austin at the company's major electric vehicle plant.

## VIRGINIA

### Auto parts manufacturer to hire more than 119 in Salem

German auto parts manufacturer STS Group AG will establish its North American headquarters in Salem. The company announced a greenfield project in Wythe County, Va., in 2001, but has chosen to move into an existing facility near Roanoke. The investment of \$39 million will create 120 jobs. ★



Ford's BlueOval City, just north of Memphis, is expected to create 6,000 jobs while under construction, and 30,000 jobs once the facility is up and running.

# The Rural American South... Wild, Wild West of the Economic Development World

By Michael Randle









A rural community is defined as one with 50,000 residents or less. Shown here is Waynesboro, Va., population 22,500.

**T**

he great musician Stephen Stills played and sang so brilliantly in Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth." That song came out in 1966 as a single, and then was later added to the band's first album.

Stephen Arthur Stills was born in Dallas in 1945 and remains one of my favorite musicians. Stills sang, "There's something happening here. But what it is ain't exactly clear."

The song "For What It's Worth" was ranked in 2004 by Rolling Stone magazine as the 63rd best song in its "500 Greatest Songs of All Time."

"For What It's Worth" was written by Stills when the fledgling group was the house band at the Whisky a Go Go in Hollywood, Calif., in the mid-1960s. Of course, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young were formed shortly after.

How is "For What It's Worth" connected to the South?

The rural South, the poorest region by any measure of the largest economy in the world since this nation was founded, is experiencing an unprecedented resurgence within its multihued settings from Texas to Virginia and thousands of the least populated communities in between.

That resurgence or what it is "ain't exactly clear" yet. But the reason "something is happening here" in the South's rural regions is becoming clearer by the day. And what "it's worth" is approaching half a trillion dollars.

In fact, in economic development terms, the rural South is now the "wild, wild west."

**Manufacturing investments being made in the hundreds of billions**

Investments in manufacturing projects

announced since the beginning of 2021, by our count, total over \$250 billion (that is with a "B") in the rural South. That total does not even count the many smaller deals — defined as \$29.99 million or less for a project.

Why do we use \$30 million as a threshold for our data? State economic development leaders in the South do the same. If a local development team is close to landing a capital investment of \$30 million or more, the leader of that team can use the state plane during the recruitment process (at least for some states in the region).

**What is a "rural community"?**

So, that defined, how do we designate or determine what is a rural community or county? Simple. It is a community or county of 50,000 residents or less. That is our definition of a rural community in the South. Of course, the \$250 billion tally in deals announced in the rural





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A newspaper reporter is swept by a tsunami at Kamaishi port in Japan on March 11, 2011. He managed to survive by grabbing a dangling rope and climbing onto a coal heap, but another 20,000 people weren't so lucky. The massive quake disrupted supply chains from Asia to all places on the globe, especially to the United States.

South in less than three years doesn't even count investments made in communities of more than 50,000 people.

So let's add a few billion to that total of \$250 billion for the "little" investment deals made in the rural South since January 1, 2021. With that, we are talking on average about \$10 billion in deals announced a month, in 30 months. Incredible!

### **The rural South has never seen anything like what is happening now**

Never before has "Small Town South" seen anything like what it is experiencing now in massive capital expenditures by private and government sources. It is being pushed by ambitious projects in steel, aluminum, aerospace, solar, wind and next-generation automotive — electric vehicles.

The electric vehicle parcel of this massive amount of capital spending by private industry is notable. More like historical. Maybe even sui generis! But is it

sustainable? With this amount of money on the table, it better be!

### **Megasite madness in 30 months**

In more than 40 years of writing about economic development in the region, I have never witnessed almost every megasite available in the South purchased within a time frame of 30 months or so.

Some of those sites, like the Glendale, Ky., megasite, where Ford and SK are building their campus, sat idle for more than 20 years. I know. I've walked them, some more than 30 years ago.

The Liberty, N.C., site, where Toyota will make EV batteries to the tune of over a \$5 billion investment and 2,000 jobs. . I've walked that site, too. I still hold dear a photograph that was emailed to me from the owner of one home that overlooks that site. She (will remain nameless) took the photograph from her back deck.

Who was in the photograph? Why, none other than former North Carolina Sec-

retary of Commerce Jim Fain and former Toyota site selection boss Dennis Cuneo. We even gave the homeowner the camera and telephoto lens that she used to take the photo. That was in 2000!

### **Reshoring is also real now**

It took more than 13 years to gather steam, but finally this surge in investments in the South, rural or not, is being driven by reshoring (Boston Consulting Group and Southern Business & Development, 2011) and "clean projects" prompted by federal tax incentives and loans for green energy, such as electric vehicles.

Reshoring is simply a correction of a supply chain that went awry as manufacturers decided to offshore production to cheaper locations, specifically Asia, in the '80s and '90s.

Most of that phenomenon of the free trade era hit the South the hardest in the 1990s with plant closures and such. If you recall, it was Ross Perot who gave



us the wonderful quote, “giant sucking sound” to describe what he believed would be the negative effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which he opposed.

### Supply chain reverses

It all began in 2011 with the earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

Called the Great Sendai Earthquake or Great Tohoku Earthquake, the magnitude 9.0 quake on March 11, 2011, was felt in Russia and China. The quake and tsunami generated waves of 11 to 12 feet in Hawaii more than 3,000 nautical miles away. Nine-foot waves were created in California and Oregon from the Japan disaster.

About 20,000 people along the coast of Japan lost their lives. Three nuclear plants in Japan, most notably Fukushima Daiichi, leaked radiation that to this day is easily detectable in much of the Pacific Ocean.

Over 100,000 workers were mobilized to deal with the crisis. Hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes. Needless to say, the massive quake disrupted supply chains from Asia to all places on the globe, especially to the United States.

CEOs — many of which had made the decision to manufacture products for North American consumption on the other side of the globe in an effort to cut costs — began to ask, “So, why are we making products halfway around the world to sell here?”

As a result, the term “reshoring” (which is technically still not a word) was born.

### Foreign direct investment

Perhaps “global” is the correct word when it comes to describing economic development on this scale. Foreign companies and their billions in investments (FDI) are carrying the rural South’s banner when it comes to job generation and capital spending.

The foreign automotive manufacturers assembling light vehicles in the

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### Transformation of a small town

Liberty, N.C., population 2,676, is the chosen site where Toyota will make EV batteries to the tune of over a \$5 billion investment and 2,000 jobs.



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Southern Automotive Corridor include Hyundai and Kia (South Korea); Nissan, Toyota, Mazda and Honda (Japan); and BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen and Daimler (Germany). Then there is Volvo, which has been owned since 2010 by Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, based in China. Since the 1980s, those foreign automakers have been at the forefront of the rural South's economic rebuild in the form of parts suppliers and others supporting their massive assembly plants in the South.

### Domestic automakers are moving to the South with billions of investment

Interestingly enough, domestic giants like Ford and GM are also moving the vast majority of their next-generation investments into the Southern Automotive Corridor and not to the Midwest, where they were founded in the first decade of the 1900s.

Yes, the Midwest, where automotive

began, is being given a parting gift here and there. But the South is racking up. What's more, they have all been made post-Covid, or, in roughly a little more than two years.

### EV startups

Another buzz of late are the electric vehicle startups — truly a grand game changer if they are sustainable. Those are companies like Rivian (Georgia and Kentucky), Canoo (Oklahoma and Arkansas) and Vinfast (North Carolina) for example. How they fare in coming years will help determine if there is room for more than the foreign and domestic automotive giants in what is really a brave new world in mobility.

In this transition, one of the major players is without question SK Group, an electric vehicle battery maker (among other things) headquartered in South Korea that seems to have THE answer to all things electric for both foreign

and domestic automakers. Why? SK has contracted with just about all of them as this new age of electrification is born.

### A transformational period

The transformation of the rural South's economy has happened so fast that even now it is hard to wrap your arms around, much less your mind. Multi-billion-dollar investments are like that, and no one has seen this many billions spent in the rural South in history.

That history has always been one of a brick-by-brick ascension, many times followed by a total collapse and demolition. Then, after a collapse, it seems to be followed by another comeback.

The soul of the rural South never seems to quit, though. When everything appears to be lost, the South's runt-of-the-litter economies continue to rebuild.

And many rural communities have shone because of that ability to realize

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The advertisement features a dark blue background with a stylized white and blue ship silhouette in the center. To the right of the ship is a vertical stack of colorful rectangular blocks in shades of orange, blue, and white. The text 'Capacity for your supply chain' is prominently displayed in white on the left side. The South Carolina Ports logo is in the top left corner, and the website URL is at the bottom left.

the right things to do: educate their young people and invest in attracting industry (such as industrial sites). Community development and improving their central business districts are also attracting others to their labor shed.

### The rural South's second economic revolution

To find an equal to what is occurring now in the South's small towns and counties, one would have to go back a while, like in the 1930s to the 1980s, when industries like textiles and apparel ruled the roost in the South's poorest places. Many of those relocated down here from costlier locales in the Northeast and Midwest.

At the time, that industry sector was essentially a savior for the rural South. Not as much as in prosperity creation, but in maintaining and lifting up millions of poor people living in the American South.

Much has been written about that period when the majority of those low-wage textile and apparel employers left in a herd mentality to even lower wage places such as China and Mexico. When that happened, the rural South lost 10 steps to the five it had gained since shortly after the Civil War in capturing all kinds of simple manufacturing that propped up some parts of the region for a century.

### Southern Automotive Corridor, 2.0

Starting in the mid-1980s, however, one industry began to call the South home more so than in previous decades. It is now the South's biggest industry by far. For eight decades or more in the 20th century, that industry was almost completely clustered in the Midwest, specifically the state of Michigan.

That, of course, would be automotive manufacturing. More importantly, automotive final assembly factories of such vast size that they can house thousands of workers at wages never seen in the South's rural regions at the time.

There is some debate about when the Southern Automotive Corridor planted its flag. You can go back to the 1940s, when the domestics had plants here. Really, even before then as the domestic automakers ventured out from the Midwest to just about every region of the U.S. Almost all of those are closed now. . .plants in Atlanta, Shreveport, Oklahoma City and Dallas back in the day.

It wasn't just the South where those plants were vacated. They were also closed in the Midwest, Northeast and the West. Today, you would be hard pressed to find an automobile to buy that was not made either in the South or the Midwest, if not exported from Mexico, Canada, Asia or Europe.

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Located at Mount Holly Commerce Park in Moncks Corner, Google's investment will expand the company's data center and overall footprint in Berkeley County. Google established operations in South Carolina in 2007, and this expansion brings the company's total investment in the state to \$2.9 billion.

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Essentially gone were the low wages provided by textiles and apparel, although, as a result of reshoring, some of those jobs are coming back. The textiles and apparel jobs were then replaced by automotive industry jobs of higher wages.

Five steps were gained when the automotive industry came to the South. Now, with the billions being spent by the EV industry, it could just be that the rural South is stepping up like never before.

### The electrification of the world

This new generation of clean energy investments is so much more important to the future of the rural South than when small towns attracted large employers back in the day. Then, those same towns saw their largest employers vacate, most of which made towels, t-shirts, jeans, you name it; thousands of manufacturers in the South made them all.

I remember one person in Virginia tell-

ing me in the early 2000s, “We would always know what color the towels that were being made at the mill on any given day by sitting on the bridge of the creek when the water would turn blue, green or red.”

Ironically, those industries, which were unrestricted for the most part until the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act were implemented by the federal government in the early 1970s, are now being replaced by green energy projects 50 years later.

### The Inflation Reduction Act is forcibly accelerating reshoring

One of his most far-reaching accomplishments since taking office, President Biden signed into law the Inflation Reduction Act in the summer of 2022. The law is designed to boost the renewable energy sector, lower prescription drug prices and add new taxes on large corporations. For the most part, to date, it

has done that, even though many of the benefits will not kick in for years.

Biden said in August 2022, “The American people won and the special interests lost.” In response, Republicans were documented saying that the Inflation Reduction Act would not reduce inflation. However, inflation has dropped from about 7 percent in 2021 to just under 5 percent in May of this year. It “ain’t exactly clear” if the Inflation Reduction Act had anything to do with that drop.

While inflation remains high, the Inflation Reduction Act has obviously had something to do with rapidly expanding investments in green-based projects in the South. The tax credits are performing way beyond expectations with companies near and far committing billions in clean-energy projects in the region.

I found these well-written paragraphs about the clean energy industry and the tax credits from the Inflation Reduction



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Act in a recent *Wall Street Journal* article on our aggregator, RandleReport.com.

“WASHINGTON — Green tax credits from last year’s climate law are likely to be far more popular than anticipated, potentially reducing carbon emissions — but also increasing costs to U.S. taxpayers, according to an emerging consensus of government and private-sector forecasters.

“Buyers of electric vehicles and clean-energy producers could claim tax credits worth hundreds of billions of dollars more than lawmakers expected when they passed the Inflation Reduction Act, recent estimates from Goldman Sachs Group Inc., researchers at a Brookings Institution conference and the White House Office of Management and Budget suggest.

“Our estimates reflect the enthusiasm that the global industry has shown to invest in . . . EVs, renewables, clean hydrogen, carbon capture and bioenergy as a result of the clear, attractive, long duration incentives,” said Michele Della Vigna, author of Goldman’s Carbonomics report.

### Conclusion

Let us all take this in. We are seeing multiple billion-dollar projects announced in the South, mainly by the next generation of mobility — electric vehicles.

Will you buy one? Of course you will at some point. There is just too much money moving in that direction. You will be forced to buy an electric vehicle in an effort to “save the planet.” It could be that. Or not.

That vehicle you will be forced to buy will most likely be made in the Rural South. At this point in this massive economic transition there is no doubt “There is something happening here. But what it is ain’t exactly clear.” 🗳️

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# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROCKSTARS



## SB&D's "Economic Development Rock Stars of the South" 1993-2023

Southern Business & Development is continuing its year-long celebration of 30 years of publishing and reporting on economic development in the South with its "Economic Development Rock Stars of the South" from 1993-2023. It is being followed in this issue by "Southern Economic Development Legends." Those will be inducted at SB&D's Rural South Economic Development Summit in August in Cleveland, Miss.

We began our 30th anniversary series with a detailed 30-year timeline of the most important economic development stories to emerge in the South from 1993-2023. You can go to [sb-d.com](http://sb-d.com) to view that timeline.

### Part 1 Alabama, Arkansas, Florida and Georgia

Here, we are featuring the first of three issues of "Economic Development Rock Stars" in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida and Georgia. Other editions this year will cover the other nine Southern states. The "economic development rock stars" feature (1993-2023) will also be displayed on all of our websites for years to come.

### Criteria for naming economic development rock stars

SB&D has a long history of visiting and working with economic developers throughout the South. We have a 30-year database on project activity in each Southern state. The capture of significant projects in the last 30 years is the primary criteria for choosing our "Economic Development Rock Stars of the South," 1993-2023. Enjoy!



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROCKSTARS

## ALABAMA 1993-2023

Angela Till *Alabama Department of Commerce*  
David Echols *Alabama Department of Commerce*  
Greg Canfield *Alabama Department of Commerce*  
Hollie Pegg *Alabama Department of Commerce*  
Linda Swann *Alabama Department of Commerce*  
Neal Wade *Alabama Department of Commerce*  
Seth Hammett *Alabama Department of Commerce*  
Anthony Topazi *Alabama Power*  
Elmer Harris *Alabama Power*  
Ken Novak *Alabama Power*  
Leigh Davis *Alabama Power*  
Patrick Murphy *Alabama Power*  
Lee Lawson *Baldwin County, Ala. EDA*  
Robert Ingram *Baldwin County, Ala. EDA*  
Mickey Harbin *BellSouth-AT&T*  
Emily Jerkins Hall *Birmingham Business Alliance*  
Ron Kitchens *Birmingham Business Alliance*  
David Hutchison *Butler County, Ala. CED*  
David Thornell *C3 of Northwest Alabama*  
Tom Wisemiller *C3 of Northwest Alabama*  
Don Hopper *Calhoun County, Ala. EDC*  
Valerie Gray *Chambers County, Ala. Development Authority*  
Phillip Dunlap *City of Auburn, Ala. Economic Development*  
Greg Knighton *City of Hoover, Ala. Economic Development*  
Al Cook *City of Opelika, Ala. Economic Development*  
Lori Huguley *City of Opelika, Ala. Economic Development*  
Wiley Blankenship *Coastal Alabama Partnership*  
Rick Clifton *Covington County, Ala. EDC*  
Tucson Roberts *Covington County, Ala. EDC*  
Dale Greer *Cullman County, Ala. Economic Development*  
Peggy Smith *Cullman County, Ala. Economic Development*  
Jimmy Durham *DeKalb County, Ala. EDA*  
Matt Parker *Dothan, Ala. Area Chamber*  
Bill Taylor *Economic Development Partnership of Alabama*  
Greg Barker *Economic Development Partnership of Alabama*  
Steve Sewell *Economic Development Partnership of Alabama*  
Steve Spencer *Economic Development Partnership of Alabama*  
Cary Cox *Elmore County, Ala. EDA*  
Leisa Finley *Elmore County, Ala. EDA*  
Mitch Mays *Franklin County, Ala. EDA*  
David Hooks *Gadsden-Etowah County, Ala. IDA*  
Mike McCain *Gadsden-Etowah County, Ala. IDA*  
Paul Meloun *Gadsden-Etowah County, Ala. IDA*  
William R. Greene II *Gadsden-Etowah County, Ala. IDA*  
Brian Hilson *Huntsville-Madison County, Ala. Chamber*  
Lucia Cape *Huntsville-Madison County, Ala. Chamber*  
Dus Rogers *Jackson County, Ala. EDA*



**Greg Canfield** has served as Secretary of the Alabama Department of Commerce since July 2011. In this role, he has provided consistent leadership for a statewide team of economic development professionals while helping to shape a strategic vision for sustainable economic growth and meaningful job creation across Alabama.

During Canfield's tenure, industry publications have repeatedly honored Alabama for economic development success. Since 2011, Alabama has attracted projects involving over \$70 billion in new private sector capital investment and over 180,000 jobs. Economic development efforts in 2022 attracted more than \$10 billion in capital investment, setting a new annual record for the state. He has worked with high-performing companies such as Mercedes-Benz, Mazda Toyota Manufacturing, Google, Amazon, Boeing, Airbus, Blue Origin, GE Aviation, Polaris, and many others.

Greg has also worked to enhance the competitiveness of Alabama's rural areas for economic development projects and in 2020 launched the "RurAL" campaign as an extension of the "Made in Alabama" brand to showcase the advantages of doing business in those areas.





**Phillip Dunlap** serves as the Economic Development Director for the City of Auburn, Ala. His career as the first Economic Development Director for the City of Auburn began in 1984.

Phillip designed Auburn's Economic Development program with a strategy focusing on the recruitment of technology-based, value-added manufacturing, concentrating on small- to medium-sized projects and has overseen the development of four industrial/technology parks.

Phillip is passionate about strengthening and growing Auburn's economy, enabling highly skilled and well-paid local jobs, attracting high-quality commercial development to Auburn and providing affordable housing and business opportunities for low- to moderate-income residents.

**Nathan Lee** Jackson County, Ala. EDA  
**Shelia Shepard** Jackson County, Ala. EDA  
**Deborah Smith** Jefferson County, Ala. EDA  
**Bethany Shockney** Limestone County, Ala. EDA  
**Tom Hill** Limestone County, Ala. EDA  
**Ted vonCannon** Metropolitan Dev't Board, Birmingham, Ala.  
**Bill Sisson** Mobile, Ala. Area Chamber  
**Sandy Smith** Monroeville-Monroe County, Ala. Chamber  
**Anna Buckalew** Montgomery, Ala. Area Chamber  
**Ellen McNair** Montgomery, Ala. Area Chamber  
**Randy George** Montgomery, Ala. Area Chamber  
**Cindy Vinson** Morgan County, Ala. EDA  
**Jeremy Nails** Morgan County, Ala. EDA  
**Brookes Kracke** North Alabama IDA  
**Cindy Burns** North Alabama IDA  
**Jason Wright** North Alabama IDA  
**Mike Roberts** North Alabama IDA  
**Tate Godfrey** North Alabama IDA  
**Shaun Culligan** Phenix City, Ala. Economic Development  
**Chase Cobb** Pike County, Ala. EDC  
**Marsha Gaylard** Pike County, Ala. EDC  
**Barbie Peek** Port of Huntsville, Ala.  
**David Roberts** PowerSouth Energy  
**Horace Horn** PowerSouth Energy  
**Jim Brook** PowerSouth Energy  
**Taylor Williams** PowerSouth Energy  
**Connie Bainbridge** Prattville-Autauga County, Ala. ED  
**Patty VanderWal** Prattville-Autauga County, Ala. ED  
**Wayne Vardaman** Selma and Dallas County, Ala. EDA  
**Kirk Mancer** Shelby County, Ala. Chamber  
**James Dedes** Shelby County, Ala. Economic Development  
**Forrest Wright** Shoals, Ala. EDA  
**Kevin Jackson** Shoals, Ala. EDA  
**Susie Heird** Shoals, Ala. EDA  
**Lamar Smith** Spire Energy  
**Mike Swinson** Spire Energy  
**Warren McCullers** Spire Energy  
**Calvin Miller** Talladega County, Ala. EDA  
**Dara Longgear** Tuscaloosa County, Ala. EDA  
**Justice Smyth** Tuscaloosa County, Ala. EDA  
**David Knight** Walker County, Ala. Development Authority

## ARKANSAS 1993-2023

**Shelley Short** Arkadelphia, Ark. EDA  
**Clint O'Neal** Arkansas EDC  
**Jim Pickens** Arkansas EDC  
**Maria Haley** Arkansas EDC  
**Mike Preston** Arkansas EDC  
**Morris Jenkins** Arkansas EDC  
**Patricia Nunn Brown** Arkansas EDC  
**Rick Pilkington** Arkansas EDC  
**Becky Thompson** Arkansas EDC  
**Bentley Story** Arkansas EDC  
**Ernie Faucett** Arkansas Electric Cooperatives  
**Alan McVey** ASU Delta Center for Economic Dev't  
**Andrea Allen** ASU Delta Center for Economic Dev't  
**Frankie Tidmore Gilliam** ASU Delta Center for ED  
**Shawnie Wilson** ASU Delta Center for Economic Dev't  
**Crystal Johnson** Batesville, Ark. Chamber  
**Graham Cobb** Bentonville, Ark. Area Chamber  
**James Bell** Bentonville, Ark. Chamber  
**Devin Howland** City of Fayetteville, Ark.  
**Courtney Dunn** City of Maumelle, Ark.  
**Jim Sharkey** City of Maumelle, Ark.  
**Judy Keller** City of Maumelle, Ark.  
**Colleen Bailey** City of North Little Rock  
**Robert Birch** City of North Little Rock  
**Ward Wimbish** City of West Memphis, Ark. ED  
**Flave Carpenter, Sr.** Clark County Industrial Council  
**Brad Lacy** Conway, Ark. Chamber  
**Bill Thomas** Cross County, Ark. Economic Development  
**Allison Thompson** EDA for Jefferson County, Ark.  
**Lou Ann Nisbett** EDA for Jefferson County, Ark.  
**Jack McNulty** EDA Jefferson County, Ark.  
**Nancy Lee McNew** EDA Jefferson County, Ark.  
**Bill Luther** El Dorado, Ark. Chamber  
**Henry Florsheim** El Dorado, Ark. Chamber  
**J.D. Lowery** Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROCKSTARS

Kirkley Thomas *Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas*  
Danny Games *Entergy Arkansas*  
Flave Carpenter *Entergy Arkansas*  
Joe Bailey *Entergy Arkansas*  
Michael Mauldin *Entergy Arkansas*  
Sherry McDonnell *Entergy Arkansas*  
Sonny Whitelaw *Entergy Arkansas*  
Steve Clark *Fayetteville, Ark. Chamber*  
Janie Glover *Fort Smith, Ark. Chamber*  
Tim Allen *Fort Smith, Ark. Chamber*  
Clif Chitwood *Great River EDF, Mississippi County, Ark.*  
Gary Troutman *Greater Hot Springs, Ark. Chamber*  
Jim Fram *Greater Hot Springs, Ark. Chamber*  
Mark Young *Greater Jonesboro, Ark. Chamber*  
Bob Largent *Harrison, Ark. Chamber*  
John Edwards *Helena Harbor & Phillips County, Ark.*  
Martin Chaffin *Helena Harbor & Phillips County, Ark.*  
Judy Davis *Hope, Ark. Chamber*  
Jay Chesshir *Little Rock Chamber*  
Joey Dean *Little Rock Chamber*  
Ellie Baker *Magnolia, Ark. EDC*  
Kay Brockwell *Marion, Ark. Economic Development*  
Tracy Brick *Marion, Ark. Economic Development*  
Kellie Wall *Maumelle, Ark. Chamber*  
Dani Pugsley *Mountain Home, Ark. Chamber*  
Jon Chadwell *Newport, Ark. Chamber*  
Julie Allen *Newport, Ark. Chamber*  
Nelson Peacock *Northwest Arkansas Council, Springdale, Ark.*  
James Lee Silliman *Ouachita, Ark. Partnership*  
Allison Hestand *Paragould, Ark. Regional Chamber*  
Sue McGowan *Paragould, Ark. Regional Chamber*  
Paul Latture, Sr. *Port of Little Rock*  
Bryan Day *Port of Little Rock*  
Raymond Burns *Rogers-Lowell, Ark. Chamber*  
Steve Cox *Rogers-Lowell, Ark. Chamber*  
Dr. Megan Selman *Russellville, Ark. Chamber*  
Jeff Pipkin *Russellville, Ark. Chamber*  
Paul Harvel *Russellville, Ark. Chamber*  
Buck Layne *Searcy, Ark. Chamber*  
Bill Rogers *Springdale, Ark. Chamber*  
Perry Webb *Springdale, Ark. Chamber*



**Clif Chitwood** has worked in economic development for more than 20 years. Prior to leading economic development in Mississippi County, Ark., as President of the Great River Economic Development Foundation, he served as the Marketing Director for the Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority. Since 2003, he has been part of a team successfully recruiting 40 new industries that created well over 4,000 jobs in Mississippi County. In 2010, the Arkansas Economic Developers association (AEDCE) distinguished Mr. Chitwood as the Economic Developer of the Year.



J.D. Lowery,  
Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas



## FLORIDA 1993-2023

**Ginger Barber** *Baker County, Fla. Development Commission*  
**Becca Hardin** *Bay County EDA, Panama City, Fla.*  
**Kelly Smallridge** *BDB of Palm Beach*  
**Sharon Hillstrom** *Bradenton, Fla. Area EDC*  
**Jim DeGennaro** *Central Florida Development Council*  
**Sean Malott** *Central Florida Development Council*  
**Marc Hoenstine** *Duke Energy Florida*  
**Lynda Weatherman** *EDC of Florida's Space Coast*  
**Michael Bobroff** *EDC of Mid-Florida*  
**Ron Thibodeux** *EDC of Mid-Florida*  
**Pete Tesch** *EDC of St. Lucie County, Fla.*  
**Bridget Merrill** *Enterprise Florida*  
**Gray Swoope** *Enterprise Florida*  
**Roger Miller** *Enterprise Florida*  
**Sena Black** *Enterprise Florida*  
**Melissa Medley** *Enterprise Florida*  
**Laura DiBella** *Enterprise Florida*  
**Steve Mayberry** *Florida Department of Commerce*  
**Eunice Sullivan** *Florida Department of Commerce*  
**Paul Sohl** *Florida High Tech Corridor Council*  
**Randy Berridge** *Florida High Tech Corridor Council*  
**Ed Schons** *Florida Power*  
**Scott Luth** *Florida West EDA, Pensacola, Fla.*  
**Jennifer Conoley** *Florida's Great Northwest*  
**Kim Wilmes** *Florida's Great Northwest*  
**Cathy Chambers** *FP&L*  
**Cliff Crut** *FP&L*  
**Crystal Stiles** *FP&L*  
**Lyn Pitts** *FP&L*  
**Rick Byars** *FP&L*  
**Robin Ronne** *Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance*  
**Bob Swindell** *Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance*  
**David Rodriguez** *Greater Osceola, Fla. Partnership*  
**William Martin** *Greater Osceola, Fla. Partnership*  
**Stuart Litvin** *Hollywood, Fla. Business Council*  
**Aaron Bowman** *JAXUSA Partnership*  
**Aundra Wallace** *JAXUSA Partnership*  
**Cathy Chambers** *JAXUSA Partnership*  
**Jerry Mallot** *JAXUSA Partnership*  
**Steve Scruggs** *Lakeland EDC*  
**Allen Cherry** *Madison County, Fla. Economic Development*  
**Sherri Mitchell** *Nassau County, Fla. EDB*  
**Steve Rieck** *Nassau County, Fla. EDB*  
**Jeff Hendry** *Northern Florida EDP*  
**Kevin Sheilley** *Ocala, Fla. Economic Partnership*



Gray Swoope

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ROCKSTARS



Lynn Pitts (left) is pictured here with his wife Judy and Michael Randle.



Becca Hardin

**Brett Wattles** *Ocala/Marion County, Fla. EDC*  
**Crystal Sircy** *Orlando Economic Partnership*  
**Dave Porter** *Orlando Economic Partnership*  
**Jennifer Wakefield** *Orlando Economic Partnership*  
**Ray Gilley** *Orlando Economic Partnership*  
**Tim Giuliani** *Orlando Economic Partnership*  
**Bill Cronin** *Pasco County, Fla. EDC*  
**Frank Tamberrino** *Pensacola, Fla. Chamber*  
**Mike Frey** *Pensacola, Fla. Chamber*  
**Buzz David** *Pinellas County, Fla. Economic Development*  
**Mike Meidel** *Pinellas County, Fla. Economic Development*  
**Dana Jones** *Putnam County, Fla. Chamber*  
**Wes Larson** *Putnam County, Fla. Chamber*  
**Rebekah Arthur** *Seminole County Chamber*  
**Bill McDermott** *Seminole County Economic Development*  
**Sue Dick** *Tallahassee, Fla. Chamber*  
**Bemetra Simmons** *Tampa Bay Partnership*  
**Chris Steinocher** *Tampa Bay Partnership*  
**Stu Rogel** *Tampa Bay Partnership*  
**Dr. Robert Rohrlack Jr.** *Tampa Chamber*  
**Bea Bare** *Tampa Hillsborough, Fla. EDC*  
**Craig Richard** *Tampa Hillsborough, Fla. EDC*  
**Michelle Bauer** *Tampa Hillsborough, Fla. EDC*  
**Keith Norden** *Team Volusia County, Fla. EDC*  
**Holly Wiedman** *The Beacon Council, Miami, Fla.*



# GEORGIA 1993-2023

Cal Wray *Augusta, Ga. EDA*  
Walter Sprouse *Augusta, Ga. EDA*  
Melinda Lemmon *Cartersville-Bartow County, Ga. DED*  
Misti Whitfield Martin *Cherokee County, Ga. ED*  
Sharon Mason *Cobb County, Ga. Chamber*  
Robert Bennett *DA of Columbia County, Ga.*  
Carl Campbell *Dalton-Whitfield County, Ga. JDA*  
Anna Chafin *Development Authority of Bryan County, Ga.*  
Peggy Chapman *Development Authority of Bulloch County, Ga.*  
Benjy Thompson *Development Authority of Bulloch County, Ga.*  
Angie Gheesling *Development Authority of Houston County, Ga.*  
Jane Fryer *Development Authority of LaGrange, Ga.*  
Willie Paulk *Dublin-Laurens County, Ga. DA*  
Ryan Waldrep *Dublin-Laurens County, Ga. DA*  
Daryl Ingram *Electric Cities of Georgia*  
Niki Vanderslice *Fayette County, Ga. Development Authority*  
Dennis Chastain *GEMC, Atlanta, Ga.*  
Joe Riley *GEMC, Atlanta, Ga.*  
Charlie Gatlin *Georgia Department of Economic Development*  
Chris Carr *Georgia Department of Economic Development*  
Chris Clark *Georgia Department of Economic Development*  
Pat Wilson *Georgia Department of Economic Development*  
Randy Cardoza *Georgia Department of Economic Development*  
J. Mac Holladay *Georgia Governor's Development Council*  
Jonathan Sangster *Georgia Power*  
Walt Farrel *Georgia Power*  
Kit Dunlap *Greater Hall County, Ga. Chamber*  
David Luckie *Griffin-Spalding, Ga. Development Authority*  
Nick Masino *Gwinnett County, Ga. Chamber*  
Josh Fenn *Henry County, Ga. Development Authority*  
Dr. Eloisa Klementich *Invest Atlanta*  
Jim Shaw *Jackson County, Ga. Chamber*  
Ron Tolley *Liberty County, Ga. Development Authority*  
Glenn Cornell *NationsBank*  
Mike Lott *NationsBank*  
Serra Hall Newton *Covington, Ga. Economic Development*  
Deven Cason *Partnership Gwinnett*  
Kevin Shea *Savannah, Ga. EDA*  
Trip Tollison *Savannah, Ga. EDA*  
Andrea Schruijer *Valdosta-Lowndes County, Ga. DA*



J. Mac Holladay is the founder of Market Street Services and a permanent member of the Southern Economic Development Roundtable.



Anna Chafin is the CEO of the Development Authority of Bryan County, Ga., and assisted in landing Hyundai's new multi-billion-dollar EV plant near Savannah.

# Economic Development LEGENDS of the South

1993-2023

As part of SB&D's 30th anniversary year, we bring you what we believe are legends in economic development in the South based on their success over the past 30 years. Following are the legends of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida and Georgia.

The "Southern Economic Development Legends" list will be expanded and revealed in full for Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee in the first "Legend" class inducted at the Rural South Economic Development Summit. That event will take place in Cleveland, Miss., Cotton House, August 17-19, 2023. Email Michael Randle at [Michael@sb-d.com](mailto:Michael@sb-d.com) if you wish to receive an invitation.





Elmer Harris



Linda Swann



Greg Canfield



Randy George

*“Michael, the state sent me and a team down to Thyssenkrupp’s massive site north of Mobile. We were tasked to find gopher tortoise homes on the site and relocate the cute reptiles. Today, we found about 20 holes and not one gopher tortoise. I think all these turtles have condos down on the beach.”*  
– Linda Swann, Alabama Department of Commerce (Spring 2007) on preparing the site for the German company’s large steel plant



Neal Wade

*“It did not go well, Randle. The Japanese prospect and I got out of the car at the spec building. We look over to the right and this dog pack, like hyenas in the Serengeti, poked their heads above the tall grass and started growling. We got back in the car.”*  
– Lamar Smith, Alagasco

## Alabama Legends

- Gov. Bob Riley
- Gov. Jim Folsom, Jr.
- Neal Wade *Alabama Department of Commerce*
- Greg Canfield *Alabama Department of Commerce*
- Ed Castile *AIDT*
- Peggy Smith *Cullman County, Ala. Economic Development*
- Lamar Smith *Spire Energy*
- Randy George *Montgomery, Ala. Area Chamber*
- Ellen McNair *Montgomery, Ala. Area Chamber*
- Jimmy Lyons *Alabama State Port Authority*
- Dara Longgrear *Tuscaloosa County, Ala. EDA*
- Calvin Miller *Talladega County EDA*
- Al Cook *City of Opelika*
- Forrest Wright *Shoals, Ala. EDA*
- Seth Hammett *Alabama Department of Commerce*
- Bill Taylor *Economic Development Partnership of Alabama*
- Ted vonCannon *Metropolitan Development Board, Birmingham, Ala. Posthumously*
- David Echols *Alabama Department of Commerce*
- Linda Swann *Alabama Department of Commerce*
- Elmer Harris *Alabama Power*
- Anthony Topazi *Alabama Power*
- Mike McCain *Gadsden-Etowah County, Ala. IDA*

*"The University system, or 'model,' was only designed to educate about 15 or 20 percent of our gene pool. The rest of those folks have no interest in that university campus; they are just being forced by our 'model' to go there. So, what happens? They go, they spend about \$10,000 to \$15,000 that first year, get deep in debt, jack up all their financial aid, come back home, can't get any more financial aid, they are \$15,000 in debt and they have no chance of getting a job with anybody."*

– Dr. Glen Fenter, Marion, Ark. Schools



Dr. Glen Fenter and Clif Chitwood



Jay Chessir



Gov. and Mrs. Mike Bebee

## Arkansas Legends

Gov. Bill Clinton

Gov. Asa Hutchinson

Gov. Mike Beebe

Gov. Mike Huckabee

Sue McGowan Paragould, Ark. Regional Chamber

Kirkley Thomas Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas

Dr. Glen Fenter Marion, Ark. Schools

Jay Chessir Little Rock Chamber

Clif Chitwood Great River EDF, Mississippi County, Ark.

Randy Zook Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce

Posthumously

Gov. Winthrop Rockefeller

Maria Haley Arkansas Economic Development Commission

Ernie Faucett Arkansas Electric Cooperatives

Jim Pickens Arkansas Economic Development Commission

Paul Latture, Sr. Port of Little Rock

## Georgia Legends

Pat Wilson Georgia Department of Economic Development

Chris Clark Georgia Department of Economic Development

Chris Carr Georgia Department of Economic Development

Dennis Chastain GEMC, Atlanta, Ga.

Joe Riley GEMC, Atlanta, Ga.

Daryl Ingram Electric Cities of Georgia

Jonathan Sangster Georgia Power

Anna Chafin Development Authority of Bryan County, Ga.

Trip Tollison Savannah, Ga. EDA

J. Mac Holladay Georgia Governor's Development Council

Randy Cardoza Georgia Department of Economic Development

Glenn Cornell Bank of America

Billy Payne Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games

Charlie Gatlin Georgia Department of Economic Development

Peggy Chapman Development Authority of Bulloch County, Ga.

Jane Fryer Development Authority of LaGrange, Ga.

Willie Paulk Dublin-Laurens County, Ga. DA

Gene Stinson Southern Economic Development Council

Posthumously

Bob Cassell Southern Economic Development Council

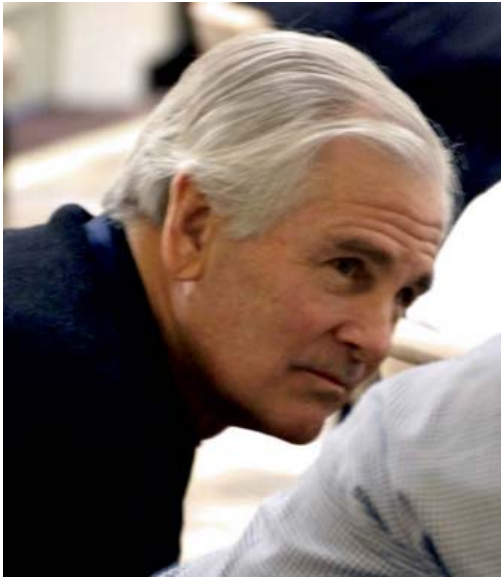
McKinley "Mac" Conway Conway Data

Mike Lott Bank of America



Bob Goforth





Lynn Pitts



Gray Swoope

*"This 'mini-megasite' program rolled out by TVA will be the new economic development mega-trend in the South; maybe the world! The 1 ½-acre mini-megasites feature housing, attractions and all are centrally located!"*

*– Gray Swoope, CEO, VisionFirst Advisors, Tallahassee*



Melissa Medley



Steve Scruggs

## Florida Legends

Gov. Jeb Bush

Gov. Bob Graham

Steve Mayberry *Florida Department of Commerce*

Roger Miller *Enterprise Florida*

Gray Swoope *Enterprise Florida*

Dr. Bob Rohrlack *Tampa Chamber*

Ed Schons *University of Central Florida*

Lynn Pitts *FP&L*

Cathy Chambers *FP&L*

Crystal Stiles *FP&L*

Bob Swindell *Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance*

Steve Scruggs *Lakeland EDC*

Brett Wattles *Ocala/Marion County, Fla. EDC*

Pete Tesch *EDC of St. Lucie County, Fla.*

Lynda Weatherman *EDC of Florida's Space Coast*

Jerry Mallot *JAXUSA Partnership*

Stuart Litvin *City of Hollywood*

Ed Schons *University of Central Florida*

Bob Goforth *Leak-Goforth*

*Posthumously*

Melissa Medley *Enterprise Florida*

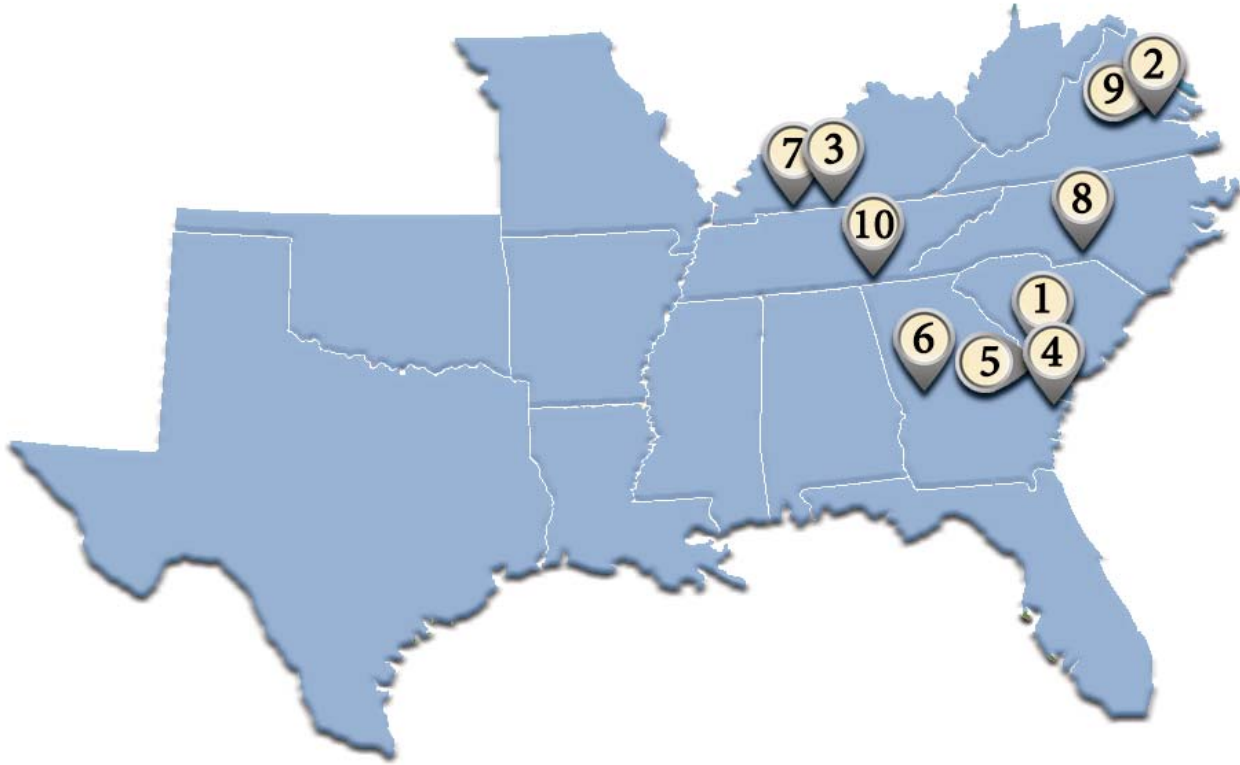
Gov. Lawton Chiles



Jane Fryer

# TOP DEALS

The American South's 10 largest new or expanded manufacturing and selected non-manufacturing job announcements



## ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE IN THE SPRING 2023 QUARTER

Development	Jobs	Investment*	N/E/R**	Location	Description
1. Tin Thanh Group	1,000	\$68	N	Allendale County, S.C.	Tires
2. SanMar	1,000	\$50	N	Hanover County, Va.	Distribution
3. Trader Joe's	876	\$259	N	Simpson County, Ky.	Distribution
4. Seoyon E-HWA	740	\$76	N	Chatham County, Ga.	EV parts
5. Sewon America	700	\$300	N	Rincon, Ga.	EV parts
6. Sam's Club	600	N/A	N	Douglas County, Ga.	Fulfillment
7. Microvast	562	\$504	N	Hopkinsville, Ky.	Polyaramid
8. Siemens Mobility	506	\$220	N	Lexington, N.C.	Rail cars
9. Lego	500	N/A	E	Chesterfield County, Va.	Toys
10. Volkswagen	500	N/A	E	Chattanooga, Tenn.	Auto assembly

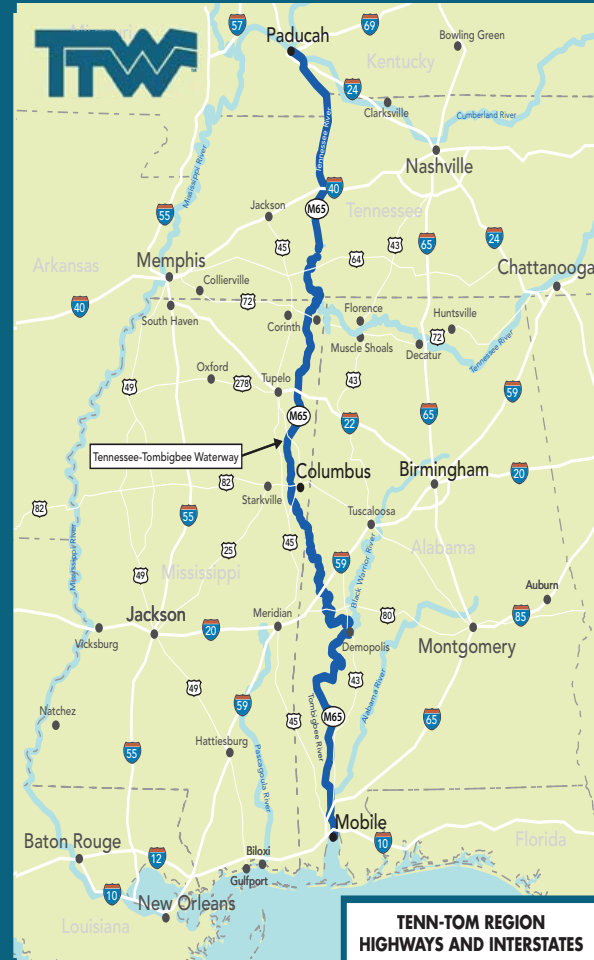
\*Investment in millions \*\*N=New, E=Expansion, R=Relocation

Source: RandleReport.com



# The Tenn-Tom Waterway

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Access to more than 16,000 miles of navigable water and nearly half of the continental U.S.

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Intermodal options

**Mitch Mays, Administrator**  
Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority  
Post Office Drawer 671  
318A Seventh Street North  
Columbus MS 39703  
Office (662) 328-3286 Mobile (256) 577-8999  
mays@tenntom.org www.tenntom.org







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