

SOUTHERN BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT



Volume I

The South is home to the most talented professional economic developers in the world. After all, the practice of economic development was invented in the South with the first government-sponsored initiative called “Balance Agriculture with Industry” (BAWI) that was passed by Mississippi lawmakers in the 1940s. Soon after, almost all Southern states followed suit with their own industrial development programs.

Prior to BAWI, the “electrification” of much of the region was launched from the federal level in the form of the Tennessee Valley Authority and many other energy companies in the region in the form of the “New Deal” in the 1930s. Within a few years, environmentally-friendly hydropower had lit up much of the South where basic infrastructure was nonexistent.

The talent level of economic development practitioners in the South is truly unmatched anywhere in the U.S., especially those who are in their forties as they hone their craft, with peak careers in their fifties.

So, Southern Business & Development has put together the first volume of our first-ever “Under 50 to Watch” in economic development in the South. Volume II and possibly Volume III will be published in July and September respectively.

Methodology: In 32 years, SB&D has made thousands of visits to cities and counties from El Paso to Richmond, meeting more than a thousand different economic developers. Many of the most famous and successful from the early days of the profession are gone or retired.

But there has been an influx of thousands of new practitioners and we have the deal data on just about every county in the South in those four decades. We also know many of the personalities through our events like the Southern Economic Development Roundtable (SEDR), the Southern Economic Development Council, and state economic development associations.

Over the next two or three issues we will featured approximately 400 professionals that just turned 50 or are under 50 who have impressed us with their prowess and their capture of job- and investment-generating projects that create wealth in the areas that they serve.

Karel Abboud
Tennessee ECD

Hunter Aycock,
Community Development Foundation,
Tupelo, Miss.

James Bateman
Greenwood, S.C. Economic
Development

Chelsea Baulch
TVA Economic Development

Robert Bennett
Savannah River Site Reuse Org.

Chris Berryman
H+M Company

John Bevington
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John Blair
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Jenn Bosser
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Beth Bowman
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ECO|RESTORE Restoration Contractors

David H. Broussard, Jr.
England Airpark, Alexandria, La.

Joseph Burchfield
TVA Economic Development

Adrian Cannady
Temple, Texas EDC

Maureen Carpenter
Glasgow-Barren County, Ky. IDEA

Gretchen Carson
Charlotte Regional Business Alliance

Page Castrodale
Cabarrus County, N.C. ED

Tyler Chaffee
TVA Economic Development

Anna Chafin
Development Authority of Bryan
County, Ga.

Gary Chandler
Three Rivers PDD, Pontotoc, Miss.

Cathy Chambers
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Chris Chung
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Brian Clark
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Hunter's 14-year career-long devotion to CDF has spanned many roles leading him to become VP of Economic Development. Hunter has helped leverage over \$1.3 billion in capital investment by foreign and domestic companies that have located or expanded to Tupelo/Lee County, creating over 9,000 jobs. Most notable is the recruitment of German-based auto supplier Grammer to Tupelo in 2014. Hunter is a past Mississippi Economic Development Council (MEDC) President and holds degrees from Mississippi State University and the University of Southern Mississippi.



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Chris' 25-year professional career has focused on targeted industrial markets such as Automotive, Primary Metals - Aluminum & Steel, Plastics, and Advanced Manufacturing projects. Chris has helped leverage well beyond \$10 billion in capital investment creating thousands of new jobs for communities across the Southeastern U.S. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee system earning both bachelor and graduate degrees.



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In two years in Rockingham County, N.C., Leigh Cockram transformed the rural county's economic landscape earning her the prestigious title of North Carolina Economic Developer of the Year in 2021. Through strategic initiatives and partnerships, Leigh helped existing industries expand and recruited new manufacturers to the area, creating sustainable growth and leaving a permanent mark on the state's economic development landscape.

CONTINUED

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Lowrey Crews is the Founder and CEO of The 18th Ward, a New Orleans-based non-profit that builds community and promotes equity through high-quality sports and workforce development programming. After graduating from Vanderbilt University, Crews served as a teacher and principal in public schools for 15 years. He started The 18th Ward in 2019 to provide low-barrier access to youth sports, job experience for teenagers, and a place for kids and families from all 17 wards in New Orleans to build positive, social connections.

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Mallory Darby, currently serving as Vice President of Economic Development for Mississippi County, has amassed a significant track record in economic development since graduating with a BBA in Marketing and Management from Mississippi State University in 2012. Darby has played a pivotal role in facilitating substantial investments and job creation through notable projects from Mississippi to Arkansas totaling investments worth millions and generating thousands of jobs. Her career highlights include Director of Research and Development at the Golden Triangle Development LINK, Project Manager at the City of West Memphis, Ark., and her current role as VP managing grant funding from prestigious bodies such as the Delta Regional Authority.

Keith Espadron
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Keith Espadron serves as the project manager of the Gulf South Commerce Park, Southeast Louisiana's premier 1,000-acre advanced manufacturing and logistics commerce park with the region's only pad-ready sites available for immediate development. With Keith's technical expertise and stakeholder coordination experience, he nimbly leads the effort to attract direct investment to the megasite and the creation of a comprehensive plan for the Gulf South Commerce Park. This strategic public-private partnership is a result of the proactive business development strategy initiated in St. Tammany Corporation's 5-year economic development strategic plan.

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- Leigh Cockram**
Rockingham County, N.C.
- Cedric Colbert**
Global Location Strategies
- Jonathan Coleman**
Laurens County, S.C. DC
- Ryan Combs**
Research Triangle Research Partnership
- Jennifer Conoley**
Florida's Great Northwest
- Callie Cook**
Tennessee ECD
- Lowrey Crews**
18th Ward, New Orleans
- Kendrick Curtis**
Middle Tennessee IDA
- Mallory Darby**
Mississippi County, Ark. ED
- Sarah Davasher-Wisdom**
Greater Louisville Inc.
- Pablo Diaz**
Vicksburg-Warren County, Miss. Chamber
- Laura DiBella**
FloridaCommerce
- Meredith Dubree**
Breckinridge County, Ky. United
- Kyle Edney**
Marlboro Development Team
- Ryan Egly**
Lawrence County, Miss. Chamber
- Jason El Koubi**
Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- Keith Espadron**
St Tammany, La. Corp.
- Wil Evans**
Maury County, Tenn.
- Mac Farr**
Strategic Development Group
- Walt Farrell**
Georgia Power

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WE STRUCK GOLD



Congratulations to all *Under 50 Economic Developers to Watch* in the South.

Thanks for making our region the gold standard for launching, growing and expanding business.

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TVA  Economic
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Josh Fenn is the Executive Director for The Henry County Development Authority which serves as the Economic Development Organization (EDO) for one of Metro Atlanta's fastest growing counties with a strong manufacturing and distribution base along the I-75 corridor. In his brief tenure there, HCDA has set all-time records in Jobs and Investment attraction in 4 of the past 5 years. His work, both in the public and private sector, has helped attract thousands of jobs and billions in investment into Georgia. Fenn earned a Bachelor's of Arts in Political Science from LaGrange College where he is a past recipient of the Shackelford Alumni Award.

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Jason Giulietti boasts over 18 years leading economic development and marketing across various levels. Recognized nationally as a top economic developer, he's spearheaded innovative strategies fostering business growth and partnerships. Notably, he served as President and CEO of the Greater San Marcos Partnership, achieving significant job creation and capital investment. Formerly, he excelled as Vice President at the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, focusing on international company attraction. Giulietti holds a Master's in Public Administration and a Bachelor's in Political Science from the University of Connecticut.

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Serra P. Hall's decade-long career and leadership devotion to Newton County Industrial Development Authority has offered a multitude of roles leading to Executive Director in 2021. She led multiple multi-billion-dollar investments and supported the creation of thousands of jobs in Newton County such as Archer Aviation, Rivian Automotive, Facebook's Newton Data Center, Lidl, Inc., McKinley Paper, Cinelease Studio-Three Ring Studios as well as numerous legacy expansions by General Mills, FiberVisions, Nisshinbo Automotive, to name a few, all by way of strong partnership and collaboration with local, regional and state partners. Supporting over \$100 billion dollars in investment plus staying committed and focused on workforce development initiatives through K-12 partnership is a passion and a service.

SOUTHERN
 BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT



- F.J. "Josh" Fenn**
Henry County, Ga. DA
- Austin Finch**
Unicoi County, Tenn. ECD
- Jason Ford**
Frisco, Texas EDC
- Tim Giuliani**
Orlando EDC
- Thomas Gregory**
Greenwood Laflore Carroll EDF
- Tray Hairston**
Butler Snow
- Michael Haley**
Wake County, N.C. ED
- Justin Hall**
Marshall County, Miss. IDA
- Serra Phillips Hall**
Newton County, Ga. IDA
- Meryl Harris**
TVA Economic Development
- Verdell Hawkins**
FP&L
- Jessica Helms**
Charlotte Chamber
- Kathleen Henry**
KU Consulting, Raleigh, N.C.
- Warren Hicks**
TVA Economic Development
- Nancy Blum-Heintz**
VisionFirst Advisors
- Chris Hinton**
Entergy Mississippi
- Marc Hoenstine**
Duke Energy
- Shane Homan**
Community Development Foundation,
Tupelo, Miss.
- John Hull**
Roanoke Regional Partnership
- Alex Iams**
Fairfax County EDA
- Kevin Jackson**
Shoals EDA, Florence, Ala.



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**Summit View
Business Park**



- 20-150 acres
- Quality design



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REGION
OF VIRGINIA**

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THE SEARCH IS OVER.

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Shane's 24-year professional career spans many accomplishments at CDF. Most remarkably, he was on the team that recruited Toyota to Northeast Mississippi in 2007 and on the retention team that saved the 1,200-employee Cooper Tire plant in Tupelo in 2008. Shane also led the team that obtained U.S. Foreign Trade Zone approval to remove the inverted tariff relief for Northeast Mississippi furniture manufacturers, saving some 950 jobs. Shane earned his Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration from the University of Mississippi.

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John Hull leads a program of economic development including strategies for business investment, real estate, talent solutions, and placemaking. Hull has assisted with projects resulting in the announcement of 8,480 jobs and \$1.5 billion in investment, including the 2023 Wells Fargo expansion, the largest regional jobs announcement in 40-plus years.

Lee Johnson
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Lee Johnson serves as the Executive Vice President of the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance, leading economic development efforts for the organization and Baldwin County community. He has leveraged his 12 years of experience in economic development to identify opportunities for Baldwin County to grow the local economy and quality of life. One of those opportunities is the location of Novelis in North Baldwin County, which represents over 1,000 jobs and a \$4.1 billion investment. Lee received his bachelor's degree in marketing and a master's degree in economic development from the University of Southern Mississippi.

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Spencer Johnson
Martinsville-Henry County, Va. EDC

Shane Kearney
Alabama Power

J Alex Kelly
FloridaCommerce

Blair King
Alabama Power

Colby Kirk
One East Kentucky

George Kosinski
Clarendon County, S.C. ED

Janet LaBarr
Charlotte Regional Business Alliance

Matt Largen
Williamson, Tenn. Inc.

Doug Lawyer
Knoxville Tenn. Chamber

Lee Lawson
Baldwin County, Ala. EDA

Christian Lockamy
Mississippi Development Authority

Candice Boyd Lowder
Stanly County, N.C. EDC

JD Lowery
Arkansas Electric Cooperatives

Sean Malott
CFDC, Lakeland, Fla.

Chris Masingill
St Tammany, La. Corp.

Brad Maul
East Tennessee EDA

Mitch Mays
Tenn-Tom Waterway

Kate McArthur
Ascension, La. EDC



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George has over 17 years of experience at the local level in rural economic development. During that time George and his team have accounted for the creation of over 4,000 jobs and roughly a billion dollars in capital investment. Most notably was the 1,400 job, \$500 million Continental Tire plant. At a time when rural America struggles with retention and recruitment, Clarendon County, S.C., is flourishing, because of forward thinking and product development. George has a Bachelor of Science degree in business with a focus on logistics.



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Lee Lawson boasts over 20 years of experience in economic development and has been the President of the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance since 2012. Throughout his career, Lawson has focused on diversifying the economy of one of the fastest-growing areas in the U.S. He played a crucial role in marketing the South Alabama Mega Site in North Baldwin County

and recruiting Novelis, which broke state records for capital investment of \$4.1 billion and is bringing 1,000-plus jobs to Baldwin County. Lawson is a proud graduate of Troy University.

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Candice Lowder
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Candice has served the citizens of Stanly County for over 17 years, and was appointed Director of the Economic Development Commission in 2019. She holds a bachelor's degree from East Carolina University and was in the first cohort to be recognized as a North Carolina Certified Economic Developer in 2021. Candice's knowledge and passion for rural Stanly County has established her as a trusted resource for new and existing industries as well as elected officials, site selectors, and economic and workforce development partners across the Charlotte Region and state of North Carolina.

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Sean is responsible for leading the economic development strategy for Polk County, Fla. Polk County is the e-commerce hub of Florida and one of the fastest growing communities in North America. Throughout his career at the state and community levels, Sean has been directly involved in the successful recruitment and expansion of a diverse set of companies positively impacting the lives of thousands of Floridians. Sean earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management from Purdue University and the Master Economic Development Practitioner Designation from The University of Southern Mississippi.

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Chris Masingill is an accomplished economic development professional who has championed an effort to revitalize economic development in St. Tammany Parish, La., since July 2018. Through the implementation of his strategic vision, St. Tammany Corporation has helped to directly facilitate business development and expansion projects, representing over \$330.2 million in local investment and the creation of approximately 1,396 new jobs and the retention of 910 jobs. Various strategic initiatives paired with Chris's steadfast commitment to public-private collaboration and regional engagement across the Northshore region continues to make St. Tammany the destination of choice for businesses and highly skilled talent to THRIVE.

SOUTHERN
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GT McCullough

The Alliance, Corinth, Miss.

Ryan McDaniels

Lake Norman, N.C. ED

Anthony Michelic

The Pace Group, Dallas, Texas

Ryan Miller

Accelerate Mississippi

Mandi Mitchell

LEDA, Lafayette, La.

Sherry Mitchell

Nassau County, Fla. EDB

Chris Moya

Jones Walker

Adam Murray

TVA Economic Development

Ryan Nance

North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives

Aaron Nelson

Chapel Hill, N.C. Chamber

Jeff O'Brien

Louisville Metro Government

Denzel Okinedo

Burr & Forman

Clint O'Neal

Arkansas EDC

Mark Owens

Greater Winston-Salem Inc.

Vince Perez

SE Alabama Gas

Caleb Pruden

Southern Industrial Constructors

Cliff Pyron, Jr

Wilmington, N.C. Business Development

Carl Rees

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Neal Robbins

Maynard Nexsen



Mandi D. Mitchell
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In 2021, Mandi Mitchell was selected to serve as President and CEO of the Lafayette Economic Development Authority (LEDA) after nine years with Louisiana Economic Development. In her role at LEDA, Mandi leads the organization's efforts to attract and retain jobs in Lafayette Parish and to foster a business climate that is conducive to private investment and development and entrepreneurship. Mandi works across target industry sectors — from advanced manufacturing and energy to healthcare and aviation— to position Lafayette as the location of choice for talent, business, entrepreneurs and innovators.



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Since 2006, Jay has been at the helm of Sumter Economic Development and the SumterEDGE, a public/private partnership enhancing economic development. He is also the founding CEO of The Link Alliance, a two-county partnership of Sumter and Lee Counties, S.C. He has been involved in the recruitment and expansion of over \$4 billion in new capital investment and has facilitated the creation of more than 9,000 new, high caliber and high wage jobs. A distinguished economic developer with more than 27 consecutive years in a leadership position, Jay has been recognized as the South Carolina Economic Developer of the Year, Top 50 ED pros in the U.S., 40 under 40 lists, and a host of additional accolades.

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**Lindsay Frilling Theobald, CEcD
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Lindsay has facilitated the creation of over 2,500 jobs, which represent livelihoods, opportunities and hope for individuals and families within her hometown, a rural community. Her dedication and perseverance are creating a legacy of growth, prosperity and opportunity for generations to come.



**Regina Todd
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Regina Todd is a highly accomplished economic development leader in Mississippi, having worked at the international, state, regional and local levels throughout her 16-year career. Today, Regina serves as Assistant Director for Rankin First Economic Development Authority where she helps lead efforts to grow the community she grew up in by attracting new companies and investments. A highly collaborative and accomplished leader, in 2023, she was named one of the state's Top 10 Leading Women in Business by the Mississippi Business Journal. Regina is a proud graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi.



**Robert M. Van Geons, CEcD
President & CEO
Fayetteville Cumberland County Economic
Development Corporation (FCEDC)**

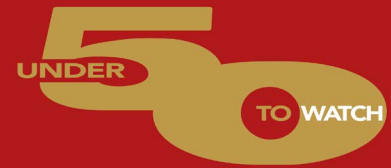
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Since 2017, Robert has announced more than \$500 million in new investment and 4,500 jobs in Fayetteville and Cumberland County. As an award-winning innovator, he has committed himself to building a dynamic and business-friendly community by cultivating relationships with partners in diverse industry sectors across the country to create opportunities for growth, expansion, and prosperity. Robert is actively engaged in state and national-level public policy initiatives and currently serves on the IEDC Board of Directors.



**SOUTHERN
BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT**



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Mobile, Ala. Chamber
- Chandler Russ**
Natchez, Miss. Inc
- Griff Salmon**
VisionFirst Advisors
- Rachel Shields**
GNO Inc., New Orleans
- Harry Schmidt**
TVA Economic Development
- Erin Schneider**
Duke Energy
- Andrea Schruijer**
Valdosta-Lowndes, Ga. IA
- Jay Schwedler**
Sumter, S.C. Economic Development
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- Rob Sitterly**
AR/TX REDI
- Justice Smyth**
Tuscaloosa, Ala. EDA
- Aaron Stewart**
Brownsville-Haywood County, Tenn. EDC
- Crystal Stiles**
FP&L
- Christina Stimpson**
Alabama Department of Commerce
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Montgomery, Ala. Chamber
- Mitch Stringer**
Cooperative Energy, Miss.
- Matthew Tackett**
SEDC
- Andrew Tate**
Duke Energy
- Lindsay Frilling Theobald**
Obion County, Tenn. Chamber

Jack Thomas

Little Rock Chamber

Josh Thornton

TVA Economic Development

Regina Todd

Rankin First, Brandon, Miss.

Trip Tolleson

Savannah EDA

Kyle Touchstone

Raleigh Economic Development

Ross Tucker

EDA of Jones County, Miss.

Niki Knox Vanderslice

Fayette County, Ga. DA

Robert Van Geons

Fayetteville-Cumberland, N.C. EDC

Shannon Viera

Statesville, N.C. Chamber

Jennifer Wakefield

Greater Richmond Partnership

Ryan Waldrep

Dublin-Laurens County, Ga. DA

PJ Waldrop

Mississippi Development Authority

John Wall

Burr & Forman

Will West

TVA Economic Development

Jordan Whichard

North Carolina DOC

Dr. Corey Wiggins

Delta Regional Authority

Cindy Williams

Cartersville-Bartow, Ga. Chamber

Taylor Williams

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