



## Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce Blueprint for Tomorrow Community Update ~ October 2007

### **Technology/Research Park Task Force**

The Technology/Research Park Task Force, led by Scott Koser, developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) to seek a consultant to conduct a feasibility study for the creation of a Technology and/or Research Park on the Eastern Shore. The task force conducted interviews and heard presentations by consultants who submitted proposals. The Board of Directors approved a recommendation to contract with George Henry George Partners. In addition, the Task Force recently awarded, a \$70,000 USDA grant to use toward the completion of the feasibility study.

### **Business Academy Task Force**

The Business Academy Task Force, chaired by Eric Nager, spent the last few months implementing the start up business plan for the new Business Academy, scheduled to launch in 2008. This task force vetted the proposals from many business management experts and selected those that will be offered in 2008. The task force will be announcing an exciting half-day seminar in February featuring national business leaders.

### **Local Business Research Task Force**

The Local Business Research Task Force, chaired by Jim Byrd, has been actively conducting Synchronist Surveys of local businesses. They reached their goal to complete 30 surveys to gather data specific to economic development and workforce issues. Mr. Byrd presented his task force's findings to the Board of Directors and to the city councils of Daphne, Fairhope, and Spanish Fort.

### **Transportation/Infrastructure Task Force**

The Transportation/Infrastructure Task Force, led by Paige Thatcher, recommended contracting with Gresham Smith and Partners to the Board of Directors, which was approved. The firm has been busy conducting surveys of the community to determine transportation needs and learn about preferred transportation modes. There are public meetings scheduled to gather input. The chamber also provided the publicity for Bayline, a new round trip bus route between the Eastern Shore and Mobile by BRATS and the WAVE.

### **Governmental Affairs**

The Governmental Affairs Task Force, co-chaired by Walter Penry and Rob McElroy, held a special luncheon to introduce Chancellor Bradley Byrne of Alabama's Two-Year College System. Members of the task force, Board of Directors and BFT partners were in attendance at the luncheon. Chancellor Byrne provided an overview of proposed plans for the two-year system. The committee also promoted the "Get Out and Vote" campaign, challenging employers to encourage their employees to vote in upcoming elections.

### **Tourism Council Task Force**

The Tourism Council Task Force, chaired by Bill Tunnell, completed appointments of tourism leaders to serve. The task force now meets monthly and recently made a recommendation to the Board of Directors for the Scenic Overlook Welcome Center to be open seven days a week – Mondays, 9 am – 5 pm, Tuesdays – Fridays, 8 am – 5 pm, Saturdays, 10 am – 3 pm and Sundays, noon – 4 pm starting in January. In addition, surveys are currently being conducted one-on-one with local business owners and community leaders to determine tourism needs and to develop a brand for the Eastern Shore. There is a survey available online for visitors to the Web site as well.

### **Environmental Committee**

Walter Ernest, IV, of the Weeks Bay Estuary Foundation, is the chairman of the Environmental Committee. The Chamber recently assisted the Weeks Bay Foundation with registration of the Land Conservation and Financial Strategies for Professional and Landowners Seminar, as well as promoted and assisted with the Alabama Coastal BirdFest.

### **Business Education Committee**

The Business Education Committee, led by Ramona Hill, selected *Choices* to be the "economic life basics" curriculum for all seventh graders in public and private schools on the Eastern Shore. Thirty-two classes will be taught by chamber members to instill basic soft skills to our youth. Training for presenters will be in February. The program is expected to be initiated in the Spring of 2008.

### **Administration**

The Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce has made additional renovations to the Web site. Visitors may now go online to participate in surveys and learn more about the new Shore Rewards Card program. In the works is a special linked Web site just for chamber events. Also coming up is a special link for those wanting to learn about the Business Academy and to sign up online. The chamber's Web site logged 121,661 hits during the month of September resulting in 6,728 visits.