

Smart Growth America  
Re: Atmore project

6.19.19

Smart Growth America - Atmore progress update – First Report

Since the Workshop hosted by SGA in February 2019, the following actions have been complete with high energy, fantastic cooperation and inspired participants.

The Atmore committee of 23 people meet every two weeks to work on the next steps as outlined by SGA guidelines. The committee collectively meets to discuss actions by each sub-committee in the conference room of Atmore Public Library. The next meeting date is broken out in sub-committee meetings which meet at separate locations to manage their responsibilities.

Meeting to date: April 18<sup>th</sup>, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, June 13<sup>th</sup>

To date, three collective meetings and two sub-committee meetings have been held. The sub-committees have no less than five members and each group has elected a chair person to guide their efforts, providing reports to the general committee. The **City of Atmore** has generously supplied lunch for the collective meetings, which are held from 11:45 till 1pm.

Director of Atmore Smart Growth America project: Tucson Roberts

Assistant Director: Jerry Gehman

Sub-committees include:

1. RiverCane - Working to connect RiverCane to downtown Atmore

Chair: Jerry Gehman – General Contractor/City of Atmore, Stephanie Rolin – General Contractor, Councilman Chris Walker, Emily Waters – United Bank Atmore President, Justin Stabler - Chief of Staff Poarch Creek Indians

2. Hospital - Working to evaluate and present reasons to maintain or relocate the hospital in Atmore proper.

Chair: Emily Waters – United Bank President, Ann Gordon – Realtor, Pastor Willie Hawthorne, Tim Ramer – Windcreek Atmore GM, Amanda Rounsavall – Business Owner.

3. Downtown Trailblazing- Targeting ways to enhance downtown to attract more customer, businesses and better use existing spaces and parking.

Chair: Beth Drew – Escambia County School System Assist Superintendent, Emily Wilson – Chamber Director, Kenny Smith – West Escambia Utilities, James McNeil – Business owner

4. Housing – Look for opportunities to bring modern housing concepts to downtown and to work with the City of Atmore to enforce existing codes to enhance the appearance of the City.

Chair: Debbie Rowell – Realtor, Steven Van Pelt – Vice President First National Bank & Trust, Chris Harrison – Councilman City of Atmore, Celia Lambert – City of Atmore Mayor’s Assistant

5. Building Remodel/Preservation – Saving existing historic businesses and buildings.

Chair: Dale Ash- Pepsi Bottlers of Atmore President, Greg Vaughn – Chief Inspector City of Atmore, Tracy Morgan – Atmore Nursing Home Administrator, Hope Lassiter – Librarian City of Atmore

6. Artwork- Focus on City-wide image.

Chair: Emily Wilson – Chamber President, Mary Beth Lancaster – Assistant President Coastal Community College Atmore Campus, Amanda Rounsavall – Business Owner, Tim Ramer – Windcreek Atmore GM,

Accomplishments to date:

- April 18<sup>th</sup>: Handout SGA workbooks, discuss and agree to meeting schedule. Determine who is best for each sub-committee based on interest and talent.
- May 2<sup>nd</sup>: Assigned committees and task with reading the SGA guidelines for their scope of work
- May 16<sup>th</sup>: First sub-committee meetings
- May 30<sup>th</sup>: Summary of Sub-committees knowledge of their scope of work.
  1. Determined that the Hospital Committee should be dissolved and members re-assigned to other committees. The Escambia County Hospital Board is firm in their decision to relocate the hospital to RiverCane and there is nothing that will be beneficial for our involvement in changing or challenge of the move. Committee members were re-assigned.

2. Sub-committees were instructed to prioritize their scope of work to the top 3 action plans and begin implementing efforts to secure permission, funding and schedule of action.

Results of Sub-committee reports:

- RiverCane Committee – 1) City provide land at I-65/Hwy 21 for digital signage. 2) Directive Signage is every important but will need to work with the Downtown Committee to form a city-wide image for signage. 3) Produce professional multi-page City of Atmore book high lighting events, locations, services, web-site to be installed in the 440 hotel rooms in the Atmore hotels. 4) Explore billboards for I-65 corridor
- Hospital Committee: Dissolved and re-assigned
- Downtown Trailblazing Committee: 1) Provided cost and quality of paint for painting concrete light poles downtown. (Full Committee recommended to present proposal to City Council). 2) Reviewed areas downtown that need trash cans and benches. Agreed that a uniform color of both should be decided upon. Will seek funding. 3) Work with the Chamber of Commerce in an ongoing effort to secure parking signage downtown. 4) Explore creating more parking and how it can be funded. 5) Suggest sidewalks are pressure-washed for clean appearance. 6) Look for ways to bring existing City events to the downtown area.
- Housing Committee: 1) Focus efforts to clean up residential areas but pushing City to enforce existing codes. 2) Learn City codes pertaining to downtown residential & hostile codes. 3) Look for ways to promote walk-ability to existing residents through publicity. 4) Pursue multi housing projects for existing buildings.
- Building Remodel/Preservation Committee: 1) Join and support the efforts of “Pride of Atmore”, a non-profit organization, project to save the Strand Theater, providing supporting letters for grants. Many of the SGA committee have provided letters and a \$50k grant was announced to help the project. 2) Identify the missing teeth and pursue efforts to attract start-ups and businesses that may want to open here. A new Butcher Shop is the latest business to open downtown, renovating an existing building. 3) Learn of grant opportunities to help owners preserve historic buildings. 4) Pointed out the need for a full time grant writer. Full Committee will pursue a federal grant writer with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians and help to have her time donated to SGA efforts.
- Artwork Committee: 1) Discussed natural events that may lead to a common theme that would be promoted to the City as well as local businesses and any trailblazing signage. 2) Identify locations such as the grain silos downtown that may become host of what artwork is agreed upon. 3) Promote growth of artwork in the community through both school and private ventures. A new “art

studio” is included in the Pride of Atmore effort downtown. 4) Look to the Chamber and the City of Atmore to promote the art theme on all electronic communications.

- June 13th: Sub-committee meeting
- June 27<sup>th</sup>: Collective meeting to review each sub-committee report and determine the next course of action.

Respectfully submitted by

Jerry Gehman