

Smart Growth America

Smart Growth Atmore

Summary report: February 13th meeting

Presenter: Vice Chair – Jerry Gehman

Present: Kenny Smith, Greg Vaughn, Morgan Smith, Emily Waters, Dale Ash, Ann Gordon, Jennifer White, Debbie Rowell, Emily Wilson, Beth Drew, Stephanie Rolin

Transportation update: Jerry Gehman

The option for return of Amtrak Service to Atmore, the official Rail Welcome Center for the State of Alabama, may happen following decisions made by the City of Mobile and Mobile County Commission. A proposed bus route to connect Mobile to Atmore would allow Amtrak to sell tickets to Atmore as a destination and the terminus for the revised daily passenger service to New Orleans. Amtrak officials discussed two options for Atmore service including a connector bus service or Amtrak may exercise the right to restore the tri-weekly service from New Orleans to Atmore thanks to Positive Train Control already operational on CSX railroad. While bus service may be the last resort, returning Amtrak trains to Atmore is the goal of Amtrak and SRC. A 25% federal tax credit would be available for any building within ½ mile radius of downtown Atmore that would be renovated for a “transportation center”. That offer was made known by John Robert Smith of Transportation for America along with Todd Stennis of Amtrak. The Poarch Band of Creek Indians have been included in the conversation of provide bus service or building a service center to serve the Amtrak equipment if the tri-weekly passenger train service is restored. Returning to Atmore is a goal of Amtrak.

Downtown Committee- Emily Wilson

- Great news was announced by Ann Gordon. The City of Atmore has agreed and put under contract the empty lot of land on the corner of North Trammell and West Ridgeley Street. The property, which was identified in the original walk-thru by SGA officials as a great parking area, will be cleared and turned into parking. Engineers will determine how many vehicles can use the property. No date has been released as to when the project will begin.
- The Walmart Community grant was applied for and granted to the Chamber of Commerce. The funds will provide money to update the Chamber’s website and also purchase all domain names that could be used with Chamber of Atmore name. The current website will be updated shortly.
- Train Art Walk project: 5 train metal art work are now completed including paint. 7 will be picked up next week and the balance will be built in the next two weeks. A total of 17 train

metal art work will be installed throughout the City. It has created great interest so a second order for 13 trains will be offered to area businesses, civic groups, etc for purchase at \$500 each.

- Art in Downtown: The American Legion has agreed to allow a mural to be painted on the south side of the 3 story Legion building. The image will be one of soldiers getting off a passenger train returning from war. A veteran artist will do the work. The image will keep in line with the train image of Atmore Art
- Wayfinder signage: 12 signs have arrived and will be installed by the City. 2 will be located at Rivercane directing travelers to downtown Atmore. 10 will be located on the primary entrances to Atmore and the balance will be located in downtown at specific points of reference.
- MainStreet Alabama: Atmore is currently applying to become a MainStreet member. The application process is underway now and is due in May. There will be 2 community forums to discuss the application. If accepted, a person will be hired by the Chamber to deal directly with businesses in promotion, marketing and social media visibility.

Buildings downtown update:

- First National Bank has begun demolition of the downtown buildings for a green space. The project is expected to take 16 weeks.
- Trammell Square complex, which has been a state of major disrepair may be torn down due to condemnation processing from the City against the owner, who has refused to clean up or repair the buildings. This may lead to a large parking area, depending on the actions of the owner.
- Atmore Nursing Care Center installed a digital sign and will renovate 24 beds of the 100 bed long term health care facility to a "locked down dormitory" for patients with dementia. Morgan Smith, Administrator, announced that Atmore Nursing Care Center received a 5 Star rating.
- Sidewalk pressure wash is 60% complete downtown. The change is immediate and has positive impact on aesthetics. Several businesses have refused to allow their sidewalk to be cleaned but conversations continue.

Rivercane Committee:

- Windcreek Casino has committed SGA Atmore the use of large digital displays in the entrance of each casino entry point. 3500 people per day attend the casino. Content for digital display will need to be provided.
- Brochures for 440 hotel room pamphlets were nearly \$35 thousand dollars. By reducing the number of pages to a single page, the cost drops to \$1800.00 per printing. Committee will make recommendation in March.
- Trailblazing signage will be installed in two locations including Rivercane at Windcreek Casino.

Next meeting: March 12th