

2019 Alabama State Economic Report



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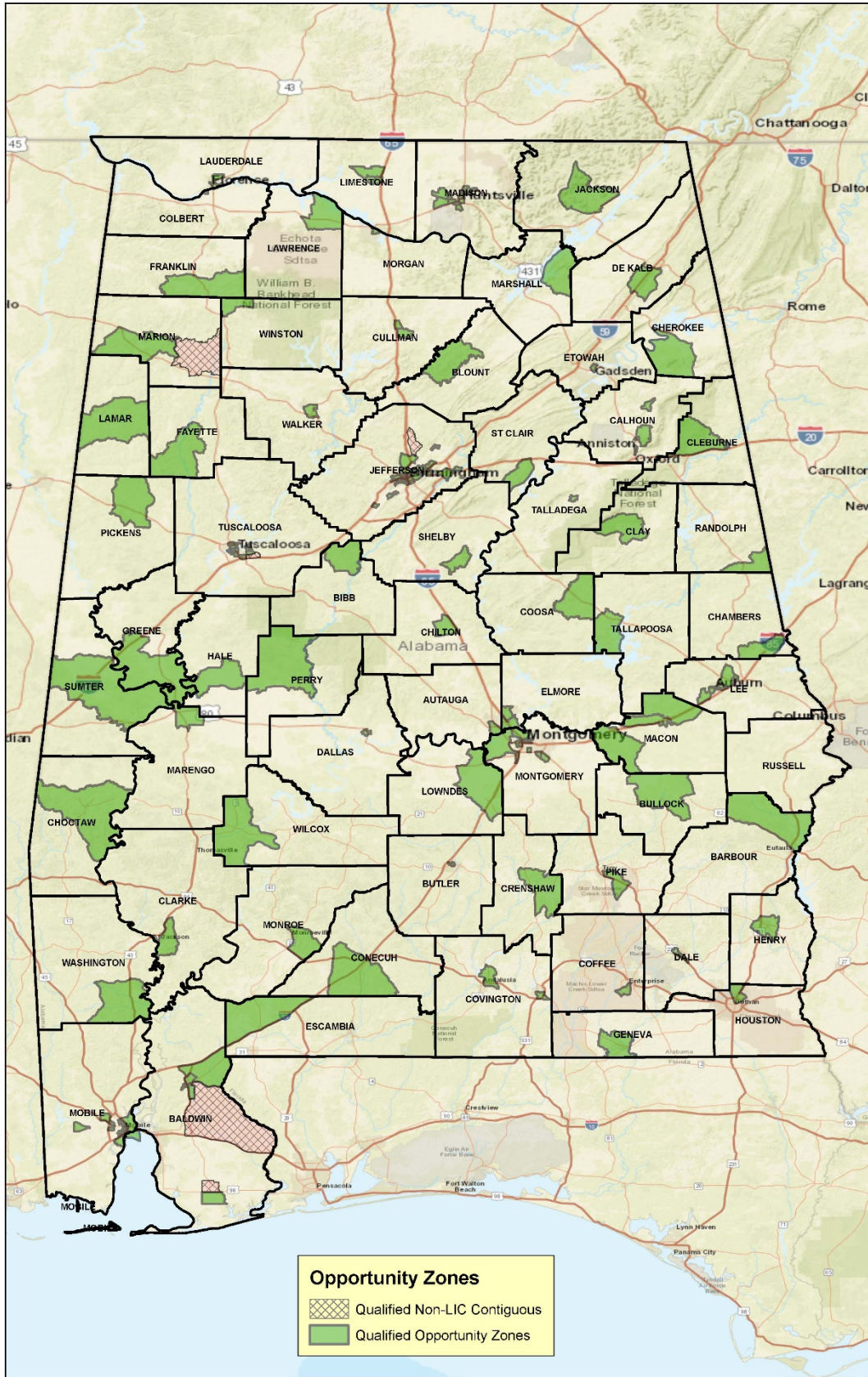
GOVERNMENT & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



2019 Alabama State Economic Report

Prepared for the Economic Development Administration:

Atlanta Regional Office





INTRODUCTION

The Government and Economic Development Institute (GEDI) at Auburn University, part of University Outreach, leads Auburn's EDA University Center along with its partner, the Office of External Engagement and Support-Vice President of Research and Economic Development. Auburn's University Center approach is to apply a cross-disciplinary team that will more effectively benefit Alabama's innovation, entrepreneurship and community development across the state.

This report was prepared for the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Atlanta Regional office. Special thanks to GEDI's Jon Gross for his contributions to this report throughout the year.

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[About this Report:](#)

The content and analysis included in this report provides a high-level analysis of the State of Alabama's performance against national statistics. Included in the analysis, is a narrative covering the state's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The report provides a holistic rather than a comprehensive overview of the events occurring during the period of January 2020 through early December 2020.

Information included in this report has been consolidated from various news media reports, economic forecasts and other state and private sources. The sequence of this report follows the guidelines outlined in EDA's "Guidelines for University Center Annual State Economic Reports."

The content of this report does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Economic Development Administration, nor Auburn University.

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1. Statistical Snapshot of Alabama

| Metric | Alabama | National |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Population -2018 ¹ | 4,887,871 | 327,167,434 |
| Population Change since 2010 | 2.3% | 6% |
| Per Capita Income -2018 | \$42,238 | \$54,430 |
| State per Capita Income % vs National | 77.6% | |
| Unemployment Rate – October 2019 (Not Seasonally Adjusted) ² | 2.8% | 3.6% |
| Educational Attainment, population 25 or older with High School Diploma or more | 85.3% | 87.3% |
| Percentage of Workforce in Durable Goods Producing—August 2019 | 9% ³ | 5% ⁴ |
| Percentage of Workforce in Non-Durable Production—August 2019 | 4% | 3% |

Employment by Industry⁵

| BEA Major Sectors | 2018 Earnings (\$000) | Average Earnings per Job | Rank | 2018 Jobs | Percent Distribution in State | Percent Distribution in U.S |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total by place of work | \$135,019,614 | \$50,165 | 45 | 2,691,517 | 100.00% | 100.00% |
| Wage and Salary | \$97,873,235 | \$46,662 | 40 | 2,097,496 | 77.9% | 76.9% |
| Proprietors | \$14,008,545 | \$23,583 | 44 | 594,021 | 22.1% | 23.1% |
| Farm | \$939,507 | \$26,867 | 14 | 34,969 | 1.3% | 0.9% |
| Nonfarm | \$13,069,038 | \$23,377 | 46 | 559,052 | 20.8% | 22.2% |
| Farm | \$1,118,887 | \$26,501 | 16 | 42,220 | 1.6% | 1.3% |
| Nonfarm | \$133,900,727 | \$50,542 | 46 | 2,649,297 | 98.4% | 98.7% |
| Private | \$106,448,637 | \$47,419 | 46 | 2,244,830 | 83.4% | 86.5% |
| Forestry, fishing, etc. | \$628,785 | \$39,559 | 20 | 15,895 | 0.6% | 0.5% |

¹ [U.S. Census 2018 Population Estimates](#)

² [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

³ [Bureau of Labor Statistics State and Area Employment, Hours, and Earnings](#)

⁴ [Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Economic Statistics Table b1a](#)

⁵ [StatsAmerica, Alabama's Workforce](#)

| BEA Major Sectors | 2018 Earnings (\$000) | Average Earnings per Job | Rank | 2018 Jobs | Percent Distribution in State | Percent Distribution in U.S |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mining | \$795,228 | \$75,306 | 18 | 10,560 | 0.4% | 0.7% |
| Utilities | \$2,024,219 | \$142,792 | 29 | 14,176 | 0.5% | 0.3% |
| Construction | \$8,179,423 | \$55,145 | 47 | 148,326 | 5.5% | 5.5% |
| Manufacturing | \$19,271,393 | \$69,367 | 40 | 277,818 | 10.3% | 6.7% |
| Wholesale Trade | \$6,005,402 | \$74,632 | 41 | 80,467 | 3.0% | 3.2% |
| Retail Trade | \$8,541,858 | \$30,082 | 47 | 283,951 | 10.5% | 9.6% |
| Trans. and warehousing | \$4,931,960 | \$53,305 | 22 | 92,524 | 3.4% | 4.7% |
| Information | \$1,648,640 | \$58,689 | 45 | 28,091 | 1.0% | 1.7% |
| Finance and insurance | \$7,254,404 | \$63,979 | 35 | 113,388 | 4.2% | 5.2% |
| Real Estate and rental and leasing | \$1,954,932 | \$17,758 | 48 | 110,086 | 4.1% | 4.7% |
| Professional, technical services | \$11,808,899 | \$76,387 | 22 | 154,593 | 5.7% | 7.1% |
| Management of companies, enterprises | \$1,882,404 | \$101,950 | 33 | 18,464 | 0.7% | 1.3% |
| Administrative and waste services | \$5,128,649 | \$27,572 | 50 | 186,008 | 6.9% | 6.2% |
| Educational services | \$1,138,533 | \$26,725 | 47 | 42,602 | 1.6% | 2.4% |
| Health care, social assistance | \$14,844,550 | \$58,592 | 33 | 253,353 | 9.4% | 11.3% |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation | \$637,535 | \$15,270 | 48 | 41,751 | 1.6% | 2.3% |
| Accommodation and food services | \$4,191,283 | \$20,816 | 50 | 201,350 | 7.5% | 7.5% |
| Other services, exc. public admin. | \$5,580,540 | \$32,553 | 49 | 171,427 | 6.4% | 5.6% |
| Gov. and gov. enterprises | \$27,452,090 | \$67,872 | 36 | 404,467 | 15.0% | 12.2% |

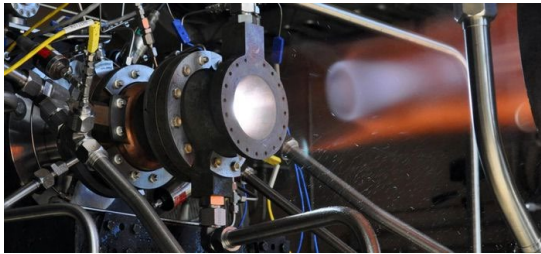
| BEA Major Sectors | 2018 Earnings (\$000) | Average Earnings per Job | Rank | 2018 Jobs | Percent Distribution in State | Percent Distribution in U.S |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total by place of work | \$135,019,614 | \$50,165 | 45 | 2,691,517 | 100.00% | 100.00% |

2. Alabama's Targeted Industry Strategy

The Alabama Department of Commerce's economic development plan—Accelerate Alabama 2.0—focuses on seven industry sectors and six foundational business targets on which to focus recruitment, development, and workforce training.

Targeted Business Sectors

Aerospace and Aviation



Alabama has a strong national and international presence in the aerospace and aviation industry. Aerospace manufacturing accounts for approximately 13,200 jobs in the state and Alabama ranks in the top five states for aerospace engineers. Over 300 aerospace companies from more than 30 different countries have a presence in Alabama, including Boeing, Lockheed Martin,

GE Aviation, Raytheon, and GKN Aerospace. Airbus produces the A320 passenger jets at its Mobile facility.

In addition to a second production line for the A220 series and its Mobile facility, Mobile also celebrated its inaugural flights from its new downtown airport, an infrastructure investment that will capitalize on Mobile's existing road/water/rail transportation hubs.

Agricultural Products and Food Production

Alabama's food and beverage exports increased from \$123 million in 2000 to \$276 million in 2018. The more-than 33,000 people employed in Alabama's agriculture workplace accounts for over 13 percent of Alabama's jobs. Alabama ranks second in U.S. freshwater fish sales, third in U.S. poultry production, and third in U.S. peanut production.

Automotive

Alabama is home to many automobile and auto-parts manufacturers from around the world. Transportation equipment is Alabama's number one export category, with the state ranked third nationally in auto exports. Employment in this sector now exceeds 40,000 people, with approximately 27,000 of those employed in the automotive supplier network.



Alabama’s automotive industry will grow even stronger in 2021 as the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA joint assembly plant goes online, adding 4,000 workers and 300,000 vehicles to the 1 million cars and light trucks Alabama workers currently produce. Autocar-maker of severe-duty work trucks-will add even more to the state’s automotive manufacturing profile as it launches the production of the DC-64R, the brand's first new conventional truck in 31 years at the company’s new \$120 million plant in Birmingham.

Alabama’s automotive industry isn’t just about production either, but innovation as well. Hyundai announced that Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama will be one of the first plants in the world to produce the world’s first continuously variable valve duration engine.⁶

Bioscience

Approximately 780 bioscience companies either call Alabama home or have a strong presence here, creating an estimated \$7.3 billion impact on the state. The life-science and biotechnology sector employs almost 18,000 people with high-paying jobs (an average annual income of over \$67,000). The University of Alabama at Birmingham is responsible for about 53,000 jobs, and Huntsville’s Cummings Research Park—the second-largest research and technology park in the country—employs nearly 30,000.

Alabama bioscience companies such as the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology and Southern Research are leaders in their field. Across the state, organizations in the biosciences sector received \$350.7 million in research funding from the National Institutes of Health in 2018.

Chemicals

The chemical sector is Alabama’s second-largest export category, with \$2.6 billion in overseas shipments in 2018. 2018 also saw new capital investment in the industry top \$320 million. Alabama’s 230 chemical companies employ 10,400 people, and provide ample reason for many of Alabama’s universities to offer degrees and research opportunities in chemical engineering.

Forestry Products



Alabama has the second-largest timberland base in the U.S. with nearly 23 million acres. The industry was responsible for \$1.3 billion in exports in 2016, employed nearly 25,000 people, and saw \$1.1 billion in investment. 2019 saw several new mills or improvement to older mills, and several companies consolidating their out-of-state operations into Alabama.

Metal and Advanced Materials

Alabama has a long history with metals production, and in 2018 the 1,100 primary metal manufacturing companies in the state employed almost 45,000 people. Exports of primary metal manufactured goods were close to \$1.6 billion and fabricated metal exports were over \$380 million. Decatur, Athens, Auburn, and Huntsville are also home to research and production in carbon fiber, 3-D printing of engine parts, and ultra-lightweight engine components.

⁶ [Hyundai to build innovative engine in Alabama](#)

Foundational Business Targets

Corporate Operations

Alabama has consistently ranked among the top states for doing business, and companies both domestic and international take advantage of our favorable business climate to house either their corporate headquarters or their U.S. corporate headquarters.

Cyber Security

Alabama has 7 PhD-granting universities in the state, and this provides ample opportunity for research into the most pressing security problems of the day. The state's modern manufacturing base includes aviation, automotive, defense, finance, healthcare, intelligence, and power industries, providing abundant possibilities for partnerships in critical infrastructure protection, cloud security, big data, and others.

Data Centers

Alabama's concentration of highly-educated workers and a strong business climate has contributed the continued growth of Alabama as a data-center hub. In addition to Google's \$600 million data center in Jackson County, Facebook is building a \$750 million center in Huntsville and Atlanta-based DC BLOX is developing a data center operation in Birmingham with an estimated investment of \$785 million.

Distribution and Logistics

The Port of Mobile, Huntsville International Airport, and Mobile's new downtown airport are the centerpieces of Alabama's central role in shipping and distribution. Railways and major interstates crisscross the state, and major companies such as Amazon and Carvana have either just recently opened distribution centers or have announced plans to do so in 2020.

Information Technology, Research and Development

Combined with Alabama's focus on cyber security, the institutions and corporations that call Alabama home perform world-class research in cutting-edge disciplines in medicine, aerospace engineering, new materials, genetics, new production methods, and more. There are 5,000 jobs dedicated to research and development in the state, and Alabama is a top-5 state for aerospace engineers. As of November 2019, UAB had received a record \$600-plus million in research funding for the year⁷.

⁷ [UAB breaks record with \\$600 million in research funding](#)

3. Alabama's Economic Condition

Economic Development News for 2019

January

The Edge business incubator opens new doors in west Tuscaloosa⁸

While an open house is planned next month for the \$11.6 million, 26,300-square-foot facility, tenants and budding entrepreneurs already are setting up shop inside the Tuscaloosa's state-of-the-art, business-based facility.

City leaders hope the center will help diversify the local economy and create career opportunities that will keep more educated talent in the community while helping fledgling businesses grow.

James Morton, Tuscaloosa News

Governor Ivey awards more than \$1 million in grants to improve rural broadband access⁹

Residents in seven Alabama communities will be afforded access to high-speed internet thanks to grants awarded by Gov. Kay Ivey under the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund which was signed into law by Ivey in March 2018. The grants total almost \$1.1 million are the first awarded from the fund which was made possible through the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Act signed into law last year.

Caroline Beck, Alabama Daily News

MGMWERX tech hub opens in Montgomery¹⁰

Montgomery's MGMWERX innovation hub opened today - a tech collaboration center its creators hope will not only foster creativity within the U.S. Air Force, but also in Alabama's capital city. The MGMWERX collaboration space uses the Montgomery Internet Exchange for high-speed connectivity, but also hopes bringing together industry, academia and business will create non-traditional, groundbreaking strategies for the military.

Lora McClendon, vice president of strategic initiatives & federal affairs for the Montgomery area chamber, said MGMWERX is part of a greater plan locally of creating and harnessing Montgomery's tech talent.

William Thornton, al.com

AerBetic's diabetes management device makes splash at CES 2019¹¹



⁸ [The Edge business incubator opens new doors in west Tuscaloosa](#)

⁹ [Governor Ivey awards more than \\$1 million in grants to improve rural broadband access](#)

¹⁰ [MGMWERX tech hub opens in Montgomery](#)

¹¹ [AerBetic's diabetes management device makes splash at CES 2019](#)

Birmingham-based AerBetic Inc. last week participated in CES 2019 in Las Vegas, where it demonstrated an innovative device that helps diabetics better manage their blood sugar. AerBetic was awarded a \$50,000 Concept Track prize in the Alabama Launchpad competition in the fall of 2018. During CES, the company won several awards, including “Best of the Best at CES.”

Dawn Azok, Made In Alabama

How Alabama's forest products sector is one to watch in 2019¹²

Alabama has the benefit of a very strong timber resource base, where available growth greatly exceeds current harvests. That means there is a significant volume of wood resources that can be made available on a sustainable basis. Alabama’s annual volume of surplus growth is the second largest among the Southern states. (Targeted Industry Strategy)

Other attributes that Alabama offers include a good geographic location relative to U.S. population centers located within the fast-growing U.S. South, where over 50% of U.S. housing starts are occurring. Alabama has an excellent transportation network of highway, rail, and navigable waterways. Additionally, the Port of Mobile allows us to export about 10% of the state’s forest products output.

Amendi Stephens, Amazing Alabama

Confidentiality, infrastructure key targets for Alabama economic developers¹³

Alabama’s economic developers say they will support two legislative measures this year that will address significant issues that affect recruitment and retention of industry in the state.

Most pressing is a bill to prevent site consultants from having to register as lobbyists under the state’s ethics laws. A bill was passed in the final hours of last year’s session offered this exemption for one year, but it is scheduled to sunset April 1.

Alabama Commerce Secretary Greg Canfield said ethics are important to everyone in economic development, but site consultants must operate with a degree of confidentiality. Not offering that degree of secrecy early in the process will prevent Alabama from being considered for most major projects, he said.

“Confidentiality, particularly in the earliest stages of economic development and working projects, remains important,” Canfield said. “It’s a competitive world out there. Companies, for a variety of reasons, don’t want the world to know when they’re thinking about investing in a new location. There are lots of reasons for that, but the main thing is they don’t want their competitors to know what they are doing.”

Michael Tomberlin, Alabama Newscenter

¹² [How Alabama's forest products sector is one to watch in 2019](#)

¹³ [Confidentiality, infrastructure key targets for Alabama economic developers](#)

February

Kemira investing \$71 million to expand Alabama operation, creating 20 jobs¹⁴

Finland-based Kemira announced this morning that it is investing \$70.8 million to expand production at its Mobile facility. The company is a polymer producer serving the pulp and paper, oil and gas, and water treatment industries. The project will create an additional 20 jobs, growing Kemira’s mobile workforce by 32 percent, to handle new process operations, increased logistics, and the support functions at the site.

Jerry Underwood, Made In Alabama

U.S. Steel restarting Fairfield furnace project, adding 150 jobs¹⁵



U.S. Steel Corporation is resuming a \$215 million construction project on what it is calling a “technologically advanced” electric arc furnace steelmaking project in Fairfield. The project will add about 150 full-time employees, and will include modernization of the existing rounds caster. Construction is expected to begin immediately and the furnace is projected to begin producing steel

rounds in the second half of next year.

William Thornton, al.com

Airbus continues to ramp up, and to hire, in Mobile¹⁶

Airbus has announced an end of production for its A380 superjumbo, but it continues to ramp up production for the A320 jets it builds in Alabama, and its hiring. Kristi Tucker, director of communication for Airbus Americas, said the Mobile Final Assembly Line is producing about four and a half jets per month. “We’ll be at rate 5 by the end of the year,” she said. It has been suggested the plant will eventually accelerate to rate 6, but Tucker said that goal has not been formally set. Increasing production means expanding the workforce, and Airbus continues to hold recruitment events.

Lawrence Specker, al.com

¹⁴ [Kemira investing \\$71 million to expand Alabama operation, creating 20 jobs](#)

¹⁵ [U.S. Steel restarting Fairfield furnace project, adding 150 jobs](#)

¹⁶ [Airbus continues to ramp up, and to hire, in Mobile](#)

Tuscaloosa's The Edge gets anchor tenant¹⁷

Tuscaloosa's \$11.5 million entrepreneurial center The Edge is welcoming a nexus for artificial intelligence and machine learning. Starkville, Mississippi-based Camgian Microsystems Corp. has opened its new Center for Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning at the Edge, which is designed to support entrepreneurial collaboration and innovation.

William Thornton, al.com

Auburn University to build \$94.5 million culinary education center, hotel¹⁸

Auburn University is moving forward with a \$94.5 million culinary science center which will include a teaching boutique hotel and restaurant. The Tony and Libba Rane Culinary Science Center is expected to open in 2021. The university's Board of Trustees gave the greenlight for the 142,000-square-foot project last week, which will accommodate the state's only professionally accredited hospitality program.

William Thornton, al.com

German tech firm moving headquarters to Tuscaloosa¹⁹

Logistics, training and product services firm SWJ Technology plans to move its headquarters to a portion of Tuscaloosa still recovering from the devastation of the April 27, 2011 tornado. The Tuscaloosa News is reporting that the company will locate a \$1.5 million, 5,000 square-foot facility in Alberta. The company expects to have 100 employees in the area by summer.

William Thornton, al.com

\$85 million Grand River Technology Park coming²⁰

Gov. Kay Ivey announced the coming of the Grand River Technology Park, along with the relocation of the Southern Museum of Flight. The project, expected to have an economic impact of \$85 million, brings together the Alabama Department of Labor, U.S. Steel, the cities of Birmingham and Leeds, the Southern Museum of Flight, and Jefferson County. State officials estimate about 1,200 jobs could come from the project.

William Thornton, al.com

FBI receives \$385 million for expansion in Huntsville²¹

The continuing resolution budget approved in mid-February included hundreds of millions of dollars for the FBI expansion at Redstone Arsenal. The funding is part of a transfer of 1,350 FBI employees to

¹⁷ [Tuscaloosa's The Edge gets anchor tenant](#)

¹⁸ [Auburn University to build \\$94.5 million culinary science center, hotel](#)

¹⁹ [German tech firm moving headquarters to Tuscaloosa](#)

²⁰ [\\$85 million Grand River Technology Park coming](#)

²¹ [FBI receives \\$385 million for expansion in Huntsville](#)

Redstone Arsenal, which the FBI announced in February. City leaders have been anticipating the influx of about 4,000 to 5,000 FBI jobs at Redstone Arsenal over a period of years.

Paul Gattis, al.com

Chilton County gets \$100 million Alabama Farm Center²²

Chilton County has been selected as the site of the proposed Alabama Farm Center. The multi-use facility could bring as many as 400 jobs and as much as \$55 million in annual economic impact, organizers say.



Plans for the center call for a 5,000-seat air conditioned arena, 150,000 square-foot exhibition building, 400-stall horse barn, 400 RV hookups, barns and arenas. The center could play host to livestock shows, rodeos, dog shows, festivals, and other events. Together, these events could bring about 800,000 people to the area every year, planners said.

William Thornton, al.com

Decatur's Jeremy Nails wins top Alabama economic development award²³

Jeremy Nails of Morgan County was named the recipient of the David R. Echols Distinguished Service Award, the top honor for economic development professionals in Alabama. It is given in honor of David Echols, a senior project manager at the Department of Commerce who set a high standard for economic development in the state. Honorees demonstrate the highest ideals of professionalism and character.

Dawn Azok, MadeInAlabama

St. Clair County gets praise for economic resilience²⁴

St. Clair County is one of 10 regions gathering praise in a new study for economic staying power in the aftermath of the Great Recession. The Appalachian Regional Commission spotlighted the county in its new report, "Strengthening Economic Resilience in Appalachia," which names factors researchers believe are common across communities showing economic growth, even during periods of national turmoil. Other communities stretched from Ohio to Mississippi.

William Thornton, al.com

Auto supplier Guyoung Tech planning multi-million dollar expansion²⁵

²² [Chilton County gets \\$100 million Alabama Farm Center](#)

²³ [Decatur's Jeremy Nails wins top Alabama economic development award](#)

²⁴ [St. Clair County gets praise for economic resilience](#)

²⁵ [Auto supplier Guyoung Tech planning multi-million dollar expansion](#)

Hyundai and Kia supplier Guyoung Tech, USA is planning a multi-million-dollar expansion of its production line, including a new welding line facility in Evergreen, near its Conecuh County facility in Castleberry.

William Thornton, al.com

March

Israeli automotive company continues expansion in Auburn²⁶

To achieve its two-year goal to hire an additional 25 employees, the Israeli injection-molding company Arkal Automotive has invested \$2.5 million to expand once more in its Auburn facility. Our growing operation in Auburn will handle the additional business for our important customer, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, in Alabama. We are grateful for the pro-business attitude of the leadership in Auburn and the valuable support we received over the years from the economic development team.

Timothy Noordemeer, oanow.com

Auto supplier Yongsan plants first U.S. roots in Opelika, employing 150²⁷

Yongsan Automotive USA is investing more than \$5.5 million to open a manufacturing facility in Opelika that will employ 150 workers after three years. The South Korean-based company will open its facility on Jeter Avenue in the Fox Run Business Park and will begin operations in April.

Abbey Crain, al.com

Toyota to add 450 workers with \$288 million Alabama engine plant expansion²⁸



Toyota announced plans today to install two new engine lines at its Alabama manufacturing facility through a \$288 million expansion project that will create 450 jobs in Huntsville. The plant added 50 jobs in September of 2018 when a \$106 million expansion project to open a new 4-cylinder engine line was completed. This investment will boost annual engine capacity from 670,000 to 900,000 by the end of 2021.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

Valley Joist to Expand in Fort Payne²⁹

A Fort Payne existing industry employing 150 current jobs is expanding to build a new facility in Fort Payne adding 30 jobs initially and 25 more in the first year with an investment of \$8,034,000.

²⁶ [Israeli automotive company continues expansion in Auburn](#)

²⁷ [Auto supplier Yongsan plants first U.S. roots in Opelika, employing 150](#)

²⁸ [Toyota to add 450 workers with \\$288M Alabama engine plant expansion](#)

²⁹ [Valley Joist to Expand in Fort Payne](#)

Marle Jones, Southern Torch

Box manufacturer to build new facility in Baldwin County³⁰

Gulf Packaging Inc., a corrugated box manufacturer based in north Baldwin County, has announced plans to construct a new manufacturing facility to support the company's future growth and expansion near Bay Minette. The new 85,000-square-foot facility will house the company's material handling and manufacturing processes, and is expected to create 16 new jobs and more than \$8 million in capital investment to Baldwin County over the next three years, according to the company.

Staff writer, fox10tv.com

GE Aviation plans to expand Auburn plant, add more jobs, invest \$50 million³¹

GE Aviation plans to invest \$50 million to expand the additive manufacturing operation at its Auburn facility using 3-D printing technologies, Gov. Ivey announced. The move will create 60 new jobs, bringing GE's Auburn facility employment to 300 during 2019, and perhaps more importantly it will better position the plant for future production using the new technology. The company already has invested more than \$100 million at its Auburn site and today employs about 230 people at the facility.

Sara Palczewski, oanow.com

Birmingham startup among winners in first Alabama Launchpad of 2019³²

A Birmingham-based company was one of two winners in the first Alabama Launchpad event of 2019. Birmingham Medical startup CerFlux and Phenix City's VantorLux LLC were the two winners.

Tyler Patchen, Birmingham Business Journal

Alabama city third best in country for high-tech jobs³³

An analysis by 24/7 Wall Street found the Rocket City was one of the best places in the country for the number of high tech jobs. The rankings were determined by examining Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics to find the cities with the highest percentage of total jobs that are classified as STEM-intensive. Huntsville landed at number three on the list, with almost 16 percent of workers in STEM fields.

Leada Gore

Toyota donates \$1 million to fight poverty in Alabama, D.C.³⁴

In an effort to help stop poverty, Toyota on Wednesday announced a \$1 million donation to National Center for Families Learning. Over the past 28 years, Toyota has donated \$50 million to NCFL. The

³⁰ [Box manufacturer to build new facility in Baldwin County](#)

³¹ [GE Aviation plans to expand Auburn plant, add more jobs, invest \\$50 million](#)

³² [Birmingham startup among winners in first Alabama Launchpad of 2019](#)

³³ [Alabama city third best in country for high-tech jobs](#)

³⁴ [Toyota donates \\$1 million to fight poverty in Alabama, D.C.](#)

proceeds will be earmarked to benefit north Alabama and Washington, D.C., according to the announcement.

Paul Gattis, al.com

New Flyer unveils second fuel cell-electric bus³⁵

The largest bus manufacturer in North America, which has a factory in Anniston, has unveiled a fuel cell-electric transit bus that qualifies for federal funding. New Flyer has sold nearly 80 battery-electric buses in California alone, and has orders for zero-emissions buses from several cities. Anniston is one of four manufacturing facilities for the company.



William Thornton, al.com

Arkema celebrates expansion of Mobile-area plant³⁶

Officials from Arkema celebrated an Alabama plant expansion on Monday, saying a new unit in the Mobile Area is at the forefront of producing a next-generation polymer material with far-reaching uses. The expansion added about 23 new jobs, bringing the Axis plant's workforce to 110.

Lawrence Specker, al.com

Harbert, Weaver and Sons, Brasfield & Gorrie selected for Airbus assembly line³⁷

BL Harbert International of Birmingham will, in collaboration with the design firm FSB, build four additional hangar bays. H.O. Weaver and Sons of Mobile will work on site preparation, the creation of access routes and the installation of security fencing, ramps, and signage. Brasfield & Gorrie will work with the Huntsville-based design firm BPRH on design-build services for the building of the new A220 final assembly line and existing logistic center expansion.

William Thornton, al.com

April

Shipt lands huge nationwide contract for medicine delivery³⁸

³⁵ [New Flyer unveils second fuel cell-electric bus](#)

³⁶ [Arkema celebrates expansion of Mobile-area plant](#)

³⁷ [Harbert, Weaver and Sons, Brasfield & Gorrie selected for Airbus assembly line](#)

³⁸ [Shipt lands huge nationwide contract for medicine delivery](#)

CVS Pharmacy is now offering prescription and goods delivery nationwide through Shipt. Financial terms of the deal between the Birmingham tech company and the retail division of CVS Health were not disclosed. The service will be available at 6,000 CVS Pharmacy locations across the country.

Tyler Patchen, Birmingham Business Journal

Birmingham startup Moovmo is hiring drivers for accessible ride-sharing app³⁹

Darryl Harris of Birmingham is one step closer to bringing to market a ride-sharing app for people who need accessible transportation. Moovmo is currently hiring drivers, with plans to launch the service in the Birmingham metro area by the end of April 2019.

Terri Robertson, Bham Now

GD Copper investing \$3.5 million in plant, to hire 40⁴⁰

Wilcox County's GD Copper USA plans to invest \$3.5 million in its manufacturing facility, creating up to 40 new jobs. The company has operated a \$100 million, 500,000 square-foot plant in the Thomasville/West Wilcox Industrial park since 2014, producing products for its U.S. market. By the expansion's close, the plant could employ up to 400. About 80% of the plant's employees are residents of Wilcox and Clarke Counties, a major boon to Wilcox County especially, which regularly has one of the state's highest unemployment rates.

William Thornton, al.com

400 new jobs coming to Athens at Toyota Boshoku plant⁴¹

A \$50 million manufacturing facility will bring 400 new jobs to Athens in a ripple effect of the giant Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA plant under construction in Huntsville. The Toyota Boshoku facility is the first announcement of indirect jobs to come to north Alabama as a result of the Mazda Toyota plant. Those indirect jobs are expected to be possibly more than twice as many as the 4,000 direct jobs coming to the MTMUS plant once it's operating at full capacity.



Paul Gattis, al.com

\$24 million American Life building renovation kicks off Birmingham's opportunity zone initiatives⁴²

The American Life building, one of Birmingham's most visible vacant buildings, will be transformed into 140 workforce housing apartments as a part of the Birmingham Inclusive Growth Partnership. The apartments will not be low-income housing, but rents are designed to provide affordable apartments for working class people who want to live closer to their jobs.

³⁹ [Birmingham startup Moovmo is hiring drivers for accessible ride-sharing app](#)

⁴⁰ [GD Copper investing \\$3.5 million in plant, to hire 40](#)

⁴¹ [400 new jobs coming to Athens at Toyota Boshoku plant](#)

⁴² [\\$24 million American Life building renovation kicks off Birmingham's opportunity zone initiatives](#)

Five of the units will be reserved for placements by the Dannon project, which helps people reintegrate into the workforce after prison or other obstacles.

Michael Tomberlin, Alabama News Center

Expansion at Nucor Tubular Products in Lawrence County⁴³

Nucor Tubular Products is investing more than \$27 million into their Trinity plant at the Mallard Fox West Industrial Park in Lawrence County. The \$27.2 million expansion will provide new equipment and create 35 high-paying jobs. The new jobs will be rolled in over the next three years.

Steven Dilsizian, waaytv.com

The Children's Place expands⁴⁴

The Children's Place Distribution Center is expanding by purchasing new equipment with a capital investment of \$11,584,675. They will move 50 part-time employees to full time.

Kayla Beaty, times-journal.com

AGCO/GSI bringing new product line to Bremen; \$5.7 million investment will bring 50 jobs⁴⁵

AGCO is bringing its Farmer Automatic Production line to Bremen, Alabama from Germany. The \$5.7 million investment will create 50 jobs.

Christy Perry, cullmantribune.com

First steel column rises at Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA in Alabama⁴⁶

Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA has marked a milestone in its \$1.6 billion project to build an auto assembly plant in Alabama, as the first steel column is now in place at the construction site in Limestone County. The development signals that construction is well underway on the plant, which will produce 300,000 vehicles annually.

Jerry Underwood, Alabama Newscenter

Commerce creating specialist post to assist rural Alabama on projects⁴⁷

The Alabama Department of Commerce is adding a rural development manager to work with rural communities and counties across the state to enhance their competitiveness in the economic development process and better prepare them for projects.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

⁴³ [Expansion at Nucor Tubular Products in Lawrence County](#)

⁴⁴ [The Children's Place expands](#)

⁴⁵ [AGCO/GSI bringing new product line to Bremen; \\$5.7 million investment will bring 50 jobs](#)

⁴⁶ [First steel column rises at Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA in Alabama](#)

⁴⁷ [Commerce creating specialist post to assist rural Alabama on projects](#)

Toyota's \$500,000 Alabama grant will get families ready to work⁴⁸

When Toyota announced 450 new jobs at its Huntsville engine plant in March, the company also announced a \$500,000 grant to help low-income north Alabama families prepare for modern workplaces like Toyota.

Lee Roop, al.com

Lynching memorial among honored construction projects⁴⁹

Montgomery's National Memorial for Peace and Justice is one of several Alabama construction projects that took national honors from the Associated Builders and Contractors at the Annual Excellence in Construction awards. Doster Construction, the project's general contractor, received an Eagle award.

William Thornton, al.com

Boaz Industrial Park now an AdvantageSite⁵⁰

Boaz Industrial Park in Marshall County is now part of a statewide economic development database. The 68.2-acre site has received an Alabama AdvantageSite Designation. This database is used by site selection consultants, state economic developers, and companies looking to expand in Alabama.

William Thornton, al.com

Blue Origin will test Alabama-made rocket engines at historic NASA site⁵¹

Private space company Blue Origin will refurbish the historic test stands at Marshall Space Flight Center to support testing of the BE-3U and BE-4 rocket engines built at a new Blue Origin facility in Huntsville. NASA identified the 300-foot-tall vertical firing test stand at Marshall as an underutilized facility and posted a notice of availability in 2017 to gauge interest in its use. Blue Origin responded and a team began exploring the proposed partnership.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

Alabama Sets new record with \$8.7 billion in investment, 17,000 new jobs⁵²

Governor Kay Ivey announced that companies locating new facilities in Alabama or expanding existing operations invested \$8.7 billion in growth projects during 2018, establishing a new annual record for the state. Growth in the automotive and aerospace industries remained strong, and the state received \$4.2 billion in foreign direct investment in 2018.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

⁴⁸ [Toyota's \\$500,000 Alabama grant will get families ready to work](#)

⁴⁹ [Lynching memorial among honored construction projects](#)

⁵⁰ [Boaz Industrial Park now an AdvantageSite](#)

⁵¹ [Blue Origin will test Alabama-made rocket engines at historic NASA site](#)

⁵² [Alabama sets new record with \\$8.7 billion in investment, 17,000 new jobs](#)

Birmingham firm raises \$1.5 million in seed funding⁵³

Birmingham biotech firm TriAltus Bioscience raised \$1.575 million in its initial seed funding round. The company, founded at the end of 2017, uses a proprietary technology developed and licensed through UAB for the manufacturing and purifying of engineered proteins for the pharmaceutical industry. The money will be used to scale the operation, acquire more customers, and make more product.

William Thornton, al.com

Mobile launches a “game changer” with inaugural departure from Downtown airport⁵⁴

Mobile’s Downtown Airport celebrated its inaugural departure of a Frontier Airlines flight to O’Hare International Airport on Monday, May 1, 2019. The new \$8 million terminal at Brookley represents a shift of commercial aviation from Mobile Regional Airport (which sits far from downtown-and any Interstate access) to downtown Mobile.

Jeff Sharp, al.com

May

Georgia Pacific taps Choctaw County mill for \$120 million in upgrades⁵⁵

Georgia-Pacific will invest more than \$120 million into its Naheola mill Choctaw County for a new tissue machine and roll storage building to support the company’s retail tissue business. An average of 200 construction and contract-related workers are expected to be onsite at the mill every day during the project, with a potential peak of 400 contract workers per day at the height of construction.

William Thornton, al.com

New economic development project bringing jobs to Ozark⁵⁶

The city of Ozark is gearing up for a new economic development project that will bring two new companies and jobs to the area. With the newest addition of companies Motobilt Incorporated and Anvil Industrial Group to the area, county leaders hope the unemployment number will continue to fall. Motobilt is a leading manufacturer of custom fabrication parts for Jeeps, and Anvil is an industrial fabricator. The companies will relocate their headquarters and manufacturing plant to the old Petrey building on Van Huesen Drive. It’s estimated the total economic impact is over \$5 million.

Randi Hildreth, wsfa.com

Mobile-area students get direct path to Airbus jobs⁵⁷

⁵³ [Birmingham firm raises \\$1.5 million in seed funding](#)

⁵⁴ [Mobile launches a “game changer” with inaugural departure from Downtown airport](#)

⁵⁵ [Georgia-Pacific taps Choctaw County mill for \\$120 million in upgrades](#)

⁵⁶ [New economic development project bringing jobs to Ozark](#)

⁵⁷ [Mobile-area students get direct path to Airbus jobs](#)



Airbus and an array of partners have opened up a new pathway for area high school students, and others with little to no aviation experience, to find employment with the company. For high-school seniors, the first of the newly announced is a taxiway leading them directly into the second. FlightPath9 is a nine-month program of training that students attend after school. Taking place two evenings a week, it adds up to 200 hours of instruction. Upon graduation, those students are then ready to enter Airbus' Fast

Track program.

Fast Track is a 12-to-15-week experience designed to give new Airbus hires training in the basic skills, knowledge and abilities for a career in aerospace maintenance. It teaches “a program of global competencies for working on aircraft: torqueing, riveting, gauging, reading blueprints, how to use tools, ergonomics, and more.” Fast Track is not limited to students from the FlightPath9 program or to candidates from the Mobile area.

Lawrence Speckler, al.com

Birmingham fintech firm wins Alabama Launchpad⁵⁸

A Birmingham financial technology firm and a Scottsboro jewelry business started by a student took home the prizes in the Alabama Launchpad's Tuskegee pitch competition event Thursday. Earning the \$50,000 award for concept stage was Kenzie's Creations, created by McKenzie Wilbanks, a high school senior who started her online custom and original jewelry business as a sophomore.

William Thornton, al.com

Autocar to produce new model starting this summer⁵⁹

Autocar Trucks is launching the Autocar DC-64R, the brand's first new conventional truck in 31 years. The move comes a year after Autocar opened its \$120 million plant in Birmingham.

William Thornton, al.com

New Mazda Toyota supplier to create 380 jobs in Huntsville⁶⁰

DaikyoNishikawa US will open its first U.S. facility in Huntsville to provide parts to the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA facility. The new supplier, known as DNUS, will create 380 new jobs. DNUS is the



⁵⁸ [Birmingham fintech firm wins Alabama Launchpad](#)

⁵⁹ [Autocar to produce new model starting this summer](#)

⁶⁰ [New Mazda Toyota supplier to create 390 jobs in Huntsville](#)

second major supplier to make plans to locate in north Alabama in the wake of the January 2018 announcement that the MTMUS plant would be built in Huntsville.

Paul Gattis, al.com

Lockheed Martin begins construction on missile plant in Troy, Alabama⁶¹

Lockheed Martin launched construction on a new missile facility at its Pike County campus in Troy, Alabama. The company will accelerate production of strike systems.

Area Development News Desk

“Awe-inspiring” Amazon center taking shape in Bessemer⁶²

Bo Jackson attended a special tour of Amazon’s new fulfillment center in Bessemer, which is scheduled to open sometime next year. The 855,000 square-foot center will employ 1,500 people, hold millions of items, and be able to dispatch 100,000 orders a day.

William Thornton, al.com

Aviation apprenticeship offers Baldwin County students free college, job opportunity⁶³

Coastal Alabama Community College held a signing day event at Foley-based Collins Aerospace for three Baldwin County high school seniors who are the first enrollees in the college’s new four-year Aviation Maintenance Technician apprenticeship. It is the first such partnership between Coastal Alabama and the former UTC Aerospace Systems, and will be implemented through the college’s Alabama Aviation Center. As part of the program, students will receive on-the-job training, credit towards and associate’s degree in airframe technology, and their Federal Aviation Administration airframe licenses.

Michael Dumas, al.com

June



New mill breaks ground in Thomasville, bringing 125 jobs⁶⁴

The Westervelt Company opened hiring for the new mill, which will create 125 jobs in Clarke County once the project is completed. The Tuscaloosa-based Westervelt Company is building a \$200 million high-tech sawmill in the North Clarke Industrial Park.

Blake Brown, wkrg.com

⁶¹ [Lockheed Martin begins construction on missile plant in Troy, Alabama](#)

⁶² [‘Awe-inspiring’ Amazon center taking shape in Bessemer](#)

⁶³ [Aviation apprenticeship offers Baldwin County students free college, job opportunity](#)

⁶⁴ [New mill breaks ground in Thomasville, bringing 125 jobs](#)

Incentives bill aims to help rural and struggling urban Alabama areas⁶⁵

A bill aimed at spurring job growth in rural and urban areas of the state has been signed into law by Gov. Kay Ivey. Sponsored by Rep. Bill Poole, R-Tuscaloosa, House Bill 540, dubbed the Alabama Incentives Modernization (AIM) Act, is a set of tax incentives designed to enhance development in counties that are experiencing slow economic conditions and to help bring new technology companies to the state.

Will Whatley, Tuscaloosa news.com

Navistar plans \$125 million Huntsville expansion, 145 new jobs⁶⁶

Engine manufacturer Navistar plans to more than double its workforce at its Huntsville facility near the airport, according to a project development agreement approved by the city council. The expansion signals a continued revival of sorts for Navistar, which in 2014 shut down its Huntsville facility that employed 280 people. But with the expansion, Navistar is obligated to carry at least 271 people on payroll. The company currently has 126 employees and the \$910,000 incentive package provided by the city of Huntsville protects those employees.

Paul Gattis, al.com

Alabama State University lands \$1.5 million grant from National Institutes of Health⁶⁷

Alabama State University was awarded a five-year grant from the National Institutes of Health that will help the school provide training to minority students in the biomedical sciences fields.

Krista Johnson, Montgomery Advertiser

Two Opelika industries expanding, to create 128 jobs⁶⁸

Two Opelika manufacturing companies have announced expansions that will result in about \$75 million worth of investment. Opelika Mayor Gary Fuller announced today that West Fraser, Inc. and Hanwha Advanced Materials America are both planning expansions.

West Fraser, Inc., will be constructing a new planer mill, costing about \$43 million. Hanwha, an auto parts and lightweight component supplier for the auto industry, will invest an additional \$32 million in its facility, creating 128 new jobs within the next three years.

William Thornton, al.com

Texas-based Ben E. Keith to open \$100M Alabama distribution center⁶⁹

⁶⁵ [Incentives bill aims to help rural and struggling urban Alabama areas](#)

⁶⁶ [Navistar plans \\$125 million Huntsville expansion, 145 new jobs](#)

⁶⁷ [Alabama State University lands \\$1.5 million grant from National Institutes of Health](#)

⁶⁸ [Two Opelika industries expanding, to create 128 jobs](#)

⁶⁹ [Texas-based Ben E. Keith to open \\$100M Alabama distribution center](#)

Ben E. Keith, a major food and beverage distribution company, plans to invest \$100 million to open an advanced foodservice distribution center in Coffee County. The facility will also serve as the company's Southeast Regional Headquarters.

The project will create 80 direct jobs over the next five years and provide an economic boost to New Brockton, a town of around 1,100 people in Southeastern Alabama. Ben E. Keith also plans to expand its manufacturing facilities at Kelley Foods, located in nearby Elba.

Jerry Underwood, Made In Alabama

Birmingham's historic 4th Avenue Business District selected for revitalization program⁷⁰

Main Street Alabama has picked Birmingham's historic 4th Avenue Business District for its revitalization program. Organizers believe the designation will help in ongoing efforts to bring new business and attention to the city's historic black business district.

William Thornton, al.com

Study shows Regions Bank generates \$7.6 billion impact on the Alabama economy⁷¹

Regions Bank had a \$7.6 billion impact on the Alabama economy in 2018, according to an economic impact study from nationally-recognized consulting firm Tripp Umbach. Regions supports 32,171 jobs (direct and indirect), provides over \$3.3 billion in loans, and generates over \$266.9 million in state and local tax revenue.

Business Wire

Birmingham and Mobile ranked among the top American Cities of the Future⁷²

Birmingham and Mobile were among the top American Cities of the Future in the 2019-2020 ranking by fDi magazine, a news and foreign direct investment publication based in London. Mobile was ranked 5th, behind New York City, Chicago, Greater Montreal, and Medellin. Birmingham ranked 9th in mid-sized American Cities of the Future overall.



Hailey Auglair, al.com

Alabama claims Gold Shovel Award for economic development efforts⁷³

⁷⁰ [Birmingham's historic 4th Avenue Business District selected for revitalization program](#)

⁷¹ [Study shows Regions Bank generates \\$7.6 billion impact on the Alabama economy](#)

⁷² [Birmingham and Mobile ranked among the top American Cities of the Future](#)

⁷³ [Alabama claims Gold Shovel Award for economic development efforts](#)

Governor Kay Ivey announced that Area Development, a national business publication, has selected Alabama for its Gold Shovel Award, recognizing the state's economic development success in 2018. It was a record year for Alabama, with \$8.7 billion in new capital investments and an anticipated 17,026 jobs across the state.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

Four ways Alabama universities are driving aerospace advances⁷⁴

Innovative research that is guiding the future of the global aerospace industry is happening in university laboratories and classrooms across Alabama. Space exploration, rocket engines, and deep space outposts, robotics, and aerospace history are just a few of the topics currently being studied by instructors and students in projects supported by government agencies, private companies, and other stakeholders in the sector.

Dawn Azok, Made in Alabama

Alabama employment hits record, metro Birmingham adds 20K jobs over past year⁷⁵

All Alabama counties saw a drop in their unemployment rates in May, and the state as a whole has again posted a record unemployment rate. Employment in Alabama rose to a record high 2,150,481, up 40,720 or 1.9% from last year.

Angel Coker, bizjournals.com

July

German auto supplier opening this week in Montgomery⁷⁶

A little more than two years after it was announced, Gerhardi's first North American plant will open this week in Montgomery. In their June 2017 announcement, Gerhardi planned to invest \$37.9 million in the new facility and employ 235 workers.

William Thornton, al.com

Demopolis Airport Industrial Park and Demopolis South Industrial Park receive AdvantageSite Designation⁷⁷

The AdvantageSite program requires that community economic development organizations provide documentation specific to a proposed industrial site, including a set of standard data related to ownership/ control, environmental and geotechnical conditions, and infrastructure status. Sites must also meet size, zoning and accessibility requirements.

⁷⁴ [4 ways Alabama universities are driving aerospace advances](#)

⁷⁵ [Alabama employment hits record, metro Birmingham adds 20K jobs over past year](#)

⁷⁶ [German auto supplier opening this week in Montgomery](#)

⁷⁷ [Demopolis Airport Industrial Park and Demopolis South Industrial Park receive AdvantageSite Designation](#)

The Demopolis Airport Industrial Park is a 108-acre site located one mile from U.S. Highway 80 a four-lane highway. The Demopolis South Industrial Park is an 80-acre site also located just two miles off US Highway 80. Both sites are publicly owned.

Staff writer, EDPA

Decatur City Schools to benefit from local industrial expansions⁷⁸

The \$109.24 million in capital investments will be made by four local industries: OCI Alabama, Yates Industries South, WHY Properties, and three Nucor Projects. These companies recently received \$5.5 million in tax abatements from the Industrial Development Board of Decatur.

Bayne Hughes, Decatur Daily

Auto supplier Motus Integrated Technologies chooses Alabama for new plant⁷⁹

Governor Kay Ivey today announced that Motus Integrated Technologies, a Tier 1 supplier of automotive interior products to the world's automakers, has selected the City of Gadsden, in Etowah County, as the location for its new manufacturing facility. The Tier 1 supplier will invest over \$15 million and create 90 new jobs at the facility, which will manufacture interior automotive parts and headliners.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

2A expanding Auburn foundry, to hire 50⁸⁰

Italian auto supply firm 2A S.p.A. announced today a \$15 million expansion of its Auburn foundry. The company plans to hire 50 people, doubling its die-casting area.

William Thornton, al.com

Sylacauga begins work on \$1.35 million spec building⁸¹

The City of Sylacauga breaks ground Wednesday morning on a new \$1.35 million, 60,000-square-foot spec building. It will be constructed in the S.B. Pinkerton Industrial Park in an effort to attract new industry, and can be modified for different uses.

William Thornton, al.com

MTC Logistics to open \$58 million distribution facility at Alabama port⁸²

⁷⁸ [Schools to benefit from local industrial expansions](#)

⁷⁹ [Auto supplier Motus Integrated Technologies chooses Alabama for new plant](#)

⁸⁰ [2A expanding Auburn foundry, to hire 50](#)

⁸¹ [Sylacauga begins work on \\$1.35 million spec building](#)

⁸² [MTC Logistics to open \\$58 million distribution facility at Alabama port](#)



Baltimore, Maryland-based MTC Logistics announced plans to build a \$58 million cold storage facility on property owned by the Alabama State Port Authority, creating between 50 and 70 jobs and providing a boost to the port's container operations.

Company officials said the 300,000-square-foot facility will be five stories tall and will contain almost 12 million cubic-feet of refrigerated space, enabling it to store 40,000 pallets of product. All of the product will transit in on containers and will be processed through APM Terminals before or after arriving at MTC Logistics.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

HudsonAlpha biotech institute's economic impact on Alabama tops \$2 billion⁸³

The HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology has had a \$2.45 billion impact on the Alabama economy since opening in 2006, according to a study conducted for the institute by the University of Alabama in Huntsville. The study measured impacts from employment, revenue and capital expenditures such as construction and equipment purchases. The biggest impact in dollars-71 percent-was made by the institute's research, testing, and medical laboratories.

Lee Roop, al.com

Alabama earns No. 3 spot in magazine's new business climate rankings⁸⁴

Business Facilities, a national publication that focuses on economic development, ranked Alabama's business climate among the top states in a new analysis that evaluated a range of key economic categories.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

Alabama putting added horsepower behind rural economic development efforts⁸⁵

Brian Hilson, formerly the president and CEO of the Birmingham Business Alliance has taken the newly-created position of rural development strategist at the Economic Development Association of Alabama. Brenda Tuck will be the first rural development manager at the Alabama Department of Commerce. Previously, she was the regional workforce council liaison for the Workforce Development Division. Together, these two experts will provide a level of expertise, technical assistance, and development strategy that has been difficult to find in the state.

⁸³ [HudsonAlpha biotech institute's economic impact on Alabama tops \\$2B](#)

⁸⁴ [Alabama earns No. 3 spot in magazine's new business climate rankings](#)

⁸⁵ [Alabama putting added horsepower behind rural economic development efforts](#)

Michael Tomberlin, Alabama Newscenter

August

Auto supplier Vuteq to create 200 jobs at Alabama parts plant⁸⁶

Global automotive supplier Vuteq plans to invest more than \$60 million to open a manufacturing facility to serve the Mazda Toyota Manufacturing U.S.A. auto assembly plant in Huntsville. Vuteq USA will produce parts at their shared Alabama assembly plant in the Limestone County portion of Huntsville.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

\$40 million sawmill opens in Henry County⁸⁷

Southeast Alabama's Henry County saw the opening today of the \$40 Abbeville Fiber sawmill, which will eventually employ about 115 people. The facility, which received its first load of logs on July 8, will receive 40 to 45 truckloads of locally-sourced logs per day. Over the next 12 to 15 months, the sawmill will increase production and re-purpose 80 to truckloads of logs per day.

William Thornton, al.com

Toyota puts \$200,000 into Alabama auto tech training⁸⁸

With a growing engine plant already operating and a big automobile plant under construction in the Huntsville area, Toyota Alabama made a \$200,000 donation of new cars and engines to Drake State Community and Technical College to keep the flow of auto workers coming. Toyota plans to hire 450 new workers for two additional engine lines, as well as several thousand more people at their new automotive plant in west Huntsville. The 12 new engines and two new Corollas will be used by Drake students to learn the latest engine technology.



Lee Roop, al.com

University of Alabama establishes five-year plan to spur economic development⁸⁹

The University of Alabama Economic Development Council has established a five-year plan to spur growth and strengthen economic activity in the state.

Angel Coker

⁸⁶ [Auto supplier Vuteq to create 200 jobs at Alabama parts plant](#)

⁸⁷ [\\$40 million sawmill opens in Henry County](#)

⁸⁸ [Toyota puts \\$200,000 into Alabama auto tech training](#)

⁸⁹ [UA establishes five-year plan to spur economic development](#)

Honda has \$12 billion annual impact on Alabama's economy⁹⁰

Honda Manufacturing of Alabama contributed more than \$12 billion to Alabama's economy in 2018, according to a new study by the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama. Through its plant in Lincoln and its suppliers, the automaker is responsible for 45,647 jobs in the state. Honda contributes 5.4 percent to the state's total gross domestic product of \$221.1 billion.

William Thornton, al.com

September

Daikin to add 50 jobs, spend up to \$195 million on Decatur expansion⁹¹

Daikin America, Inc. announced Thursday an investment of up to \$195 million to expand its Decatur facilities on State Docks Road. The company said it expects to add an estimated 50 full-time jobs over the next few years.

Marian Accardi, Decatur Times Daily

Voestalpine announces \$2.1 million expansion in Birmingham⁹²

Railway trackwork designer and manufacturer Voestalpine Railway Systems Nortrak will invest \$2.1 million in its Birmingham plant. The majority of this investment is in infrastructure upgrades.

William Thornton, al.com

Extruflex plans \$1 million investment in Pelham, to add 16 jobs⁹³

The European company, which makes flexible vinyl strips and sheets for food production facilities and industrial, manufacturing, and construction products, currently employs 22. The money will purchase equipment to create a new factory to be housed within Extruflex's current facility and grow the plant's product line.

William Thornton, al.com

Shinwa Group plans \$42 million Auburn plant, to hire 95⁹⁴

The Shinwa Group, a South Korean auto supplier, will open a \$42 million Auburn manufacturing operation expected to create 95 jobs. The company will make drive shafts for vehicles made by Hyundai in Montgomery, and Kia in West Point, GA at this, their first US manufacturing location.

William Thornton, al.com

⁹⁰ [Honda has \\$12 billion annual impact on Alabama's economy](#)

⁹¹ [Daikin to add 50 jobs, spend up to \\$195 million on Decatur expansion](#)

⁹² [Voestalpine announces \\$2.1 million expansion in Birmingham](#)

⁹³ [Extruflex plans \\$1 million investment in Pelham, to add 16 jobs](#)

⁹⁴ [Shinwa Group plans \\$42 million Auburn plant, to hire 95](#)

IBM report ranks Alabama No. 1 for jobs from 2018 foreign investment⁹⁵

The 2019 Global Location Trends report prepared by IBM-Plant Location International, named Alabama as the top U.S. state for job creation from foreign investment in 2018. According to the report, Alabama also ranked first for job creation from foreign investment per million inhabitants, number seven for job creation from foreign and domestic investment together, and number two for job creation per million inhabitants from foreign and domestic investment combined.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

Alabama ranks fourth in ‘Top States for Business’ survey⁹⁶

Alabama is once again among the nation’s leading states for business, according to Area Development magazine. The top five states in the annual list are all from the South.

William Thornton, al.com

Alabama looking at \$1 billion from Opportunity Zone investments⁹⁷

Thirty potential investment projects are eyeing parts of Alabama to take advantage of a new provision in the U.S. tax code, according to the head of a non-profit group created to help Alabama get the most out of opportunity zones—a plan to spur economic activity in places experiencing economic decline.

William Thornton, al.com

October

Mazda Toyota looking for 40,000 applicants to fill production jobs⁹⁸

Mazda Toyota Manufacturing USA expects it'll need tens of thousands of applicants to fill the production jobs required at the \$1.6 billion manufacturing plant under construction in the Greenbrier area, said a manager with the joint venture company.

Marian Accardi, Decatur Daily

FDI in the U.S. auto industry continues unabated⁹⁹

Back in 1993, Mercedes-Benz started a new era in U.S. auto manufacturing when it opened an assembly plant in Alabama. Toyota, Honda, and Hyundai have since followed suit, helping create an industry that exported \$7.5 billion worth of vehicles and parts in 2018.

Dan Emerson, Area Development News

Alabama will soon learn the economic benefits of its airports¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ [IBM report ranks Alabama No. 1 for jobs from 2018 foreign investment](#)

⁹⁶ [Alabama ranks fourth in ‘Top States for Business’ survey](#)

⁹⁷ [Alabama looking at \\$1 billion from Opportunity Zone investments](#)

⁹⁸ [Mazda Toyota looking for 40,000 applicants to fill production jobs](#)

⁹⁹ [FDI in the U.S. auto industry continues unabated](#)

¹⁰⁰ [Alabama will soon learn the economic benefits of its airports](#)



Surrounding states have, for years, understood the full economic benefits of their airports. Alabama will soon gain a similar understanding thanks to a \$1.4 million project conducted by the Colorado-based Aviation to perform economic impact studies of the state's airports.

Jon Sharp, al.com

Counties to improve safety of 1,013 road miles, 20 bridges with Rebuild Alabama

2020 funds¹⁰¹

According to the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, the 2019-2020 work plans show that counties will be improving 1,013 miles of road and 20 bridges with the proceeds of the new gasoline and diesel fuel taxes.

Charlie Walker, Alabama Political Reporter

Aerojet Rocketdyne teams with NASA in Alabama on new 3D-printed rocket engine¹⁰²

Rocketdyne has signed a Space Act Agreement with NASA in Alabama to design and build a key rocket engine part using additive manufacturing or 3D printing. The company opened a big new rocket propulsion Advanced Manufacturing Facility in north Huntsville earlier this year.

Lee Roop, al.com

Alabama's competitive edge in the new economy¹⁰³

Through the leadership of state Rep. Bill Poole and Sen. Greg Reed, the Legislature passed the Alabama Incentives Modernization (AIM) Act, a transformative piece of legislation that primes Alabama for success by ensuring that entrepreneurs and technology-based companies have the tools they need to flourish in our state.

Katie Boyd Britt, timesdaily.com

Techstars, Alabama Power and state leaders join forces on EnergyTech Accelerator¹⁰⁴

The Techstars Alabama EnergyTech Accelerator is a startup accelerator focused on innovations in energy technology to be located in Birmingham. Techstars, the worldwide network that helps entrepreneurs succeed, is partnering with Alabama Power, with additional support from the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA) and the Alabama Department of Commerce, to launch the Techstars Alabama EnergyTech Accelerator. The new venture is a startup accelerator focused on innovations in energy technology to be located in Birmingham.

¹⁰¹[Counties to improve safety of 1,013 road miles, 20 bridges with Rebuild Alabama 2020 funds](#)

¹⁰²[Aerojet Rocketdyne teams with NASA in Alabama on new 3D-printed rocket engine](#)

¹⁰³[Alabama's competitive edge in the new economy](#)

¹⁰⁴[Techstars, Alabama Power and state leaders join forces on EnergyTech Accelerator](#)

Michael Sznajderman, alabamane.wscenter.com

November

Carvana plans to open Alabama distribution hub, creating over 450 jobs¹⁰⁵

Governor Kay Ivey announced today that Carvana, a leading e-commerce platform for buying and selling used cars, plans to invest more than \$40 million to construct an Alabama distribution and fulfillment center, creating over 450 jobs in Bessemer.



Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

Koch breaks ground on \$55 million Attalla project¹⁰⁶

State, city and Koch Foods officials shoveled corn instead of dirt Tuesday morning at the ground breaking for a \$55 million grain storage and distribution facility to be located on Jones Sawmill Road in Attalla.

Donna Thornton, Gadsden Times

Hyundai Alabama adding 200 jobs to launch production of Santa Cruz crossover¹⁰⁷

Governor Kay Ivey joined Hyundai executives and local leaders today to announce that the automaker plans to add a new vehicle to its Alabama production lineup as part of a \$410 million expansion project that will create 200 jobs at the state-of-the-art facility.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

Two Alabama Airports get \$4.7 million in federal grants¹⁰⁸

Anniston Regional Airport will receive a \$4 million grant to fund runway rehabilitation and Weedon Field in Eufaula will receive \$650,000 for construction of an airport parking area. These grants are part of the \$485 million in federal money going to airports nationally.

William Thornton, al.com

Study: hunting, fishing, had a \$3.2 billion impact on Alabama in 2018¹⁰⁹

The Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association announced these findings, compiled by Southeast Research, showing that the sector was responsible for \$1.1 billion in salaries and wages over 73,553

¹⁰⁵ [Carvana plans to open Alabama distribution hub, creating over 450 jobs](#)

¹⁰⁶ [Koch breaks ground on \\$55 million Attalla project](#)

¹⁰⁷ [Hyundai Alabama adding 200 jobs to launch production of Santa Cruz crossover](#)

¹⁰⁸ [2 Alabama airports get \\$4.7 million in federal grants](#)

¹⁰⁹ [Hunting, fishing had \\$3.2 billion impact on Alabama in 2018](#)

jobs, generated \$185 million in state and local taxes, and contributed \$84 million to the Alabama Education Trust fund.

Dennis Washington, Alabama Newscenter

IBM report ranks Alabama No. 1 for jobs from 2018 foreign investment¹¹⁰ DUPLICATE

The 2019 Global Location Trends report prepared by IBM-Plant Location International, named Alabama as the top U.S. state for job creation from foreign investment in 2018. According to the report, Alabama also ranked first for job creation from foreign investment per million inhabitants, number seven for job creation from foreign and domestic investment together, and number two for job creation per million inhabitants from foreign and domestic investment combined.

Jerry Underwood, Made in Alabama

Alabama ranks fourth in 'Top States for Business' survey¹¹¹

Alabama is once again among the nation's leading states for business, according to Area Development magazine. The top five states in the annual list are all from the South.

William Thornton, al.com

Hyundai begins production of redesigned Sonata amid new investments¹¹²

Alabama's Hyundai plant launched mass production of the redesigned Sonata sedan on Friday, another key milestone for the \$1.8 billion, 3,000-worker Montgomery facility. The 2020 Sonata, which Hyundai unveiled last spring at the New York International Auto Show, features improved safety, technology, performance, and fuel efficiency, along with an all-new sporty design that is a departure from the brand's traditional styling.

Dawn Azok, Made in Alabama



HudsonAlpha wins \$12.4M in NIH grants for Population Genomics, Pediatric Sequencing¹¹³

The HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology has been awarded two separate multi-million-dollar grants from the National Institutes of Health to further its efforts in population-level clinical genomics and pediatric sequencing for disease research and diagnosis.

Staff Writer, genomeweb.com

¹¹⁰ [IBM report ranks Alabama No. 1 for jobs from 2018 foreign investment](#)

¹¹¹ [Alabama ranks fourth in 'Top States for Business' survey](#)

¹¹² [Hyundai begins production of redesigned Sonata amid new investments](#)

¹¹³ [HudsonAlpha wins \\$12.4M in NIH grants for population genomics, pediatric sequencing](#)

The Best Cities for STEM and High Tech Jobs Outside Silicon Valley¹¹⁴

If you're looking for a high-paying job in a high-tech or science field, you might think your best bet is to head to Silicon Valley, home to many tech giants and startups. But you'd be wrong. Yes, there are plenty of six-figure tech jobs in places like San Francisco and San Jose. The problem is that six figures is barely enough to cover your everyday expenses in these high-priced locales.

Minda Zetlin, inc.com

Mazda-Toyota ignites north Alabama¹¹⁵

The joint venture auto plant project between Mazda and Toyota is bringing a wave of supply chain investments to northern Alabama.

Alexa St. John, Automotive News

26% of Alabama children still live in poverty¹¹⁶

Twenty-six percent of Alabama children, 282,396 of them, live in poverty and about half of those live in extreme poverty in households where a family of four earns less than \$13,000 a year, according to a report out today. With the 2020 Census approaching, Alabama advocates and officials are hoping the state's kids aren't counted out for federal programs.

Mary Sell, Alabama Daily News

December

ADEM approves \$175 million wood pellet plant's permit in Sumter County¹¹⁷

Maryland-based biofuel company Enviva announced that the permit for its wood pellet manufacturing facility in Sumter County has been approved by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). In what was hailed as the largest economic development announcement for the region in 30 years, Enviva announced in October that it would build the plant at the Port of Epes, creating at least 85 direct jobs and 180 indirect jobs.

William Thornton, al.com

Birmingham launches on-demand transit service¹¹⁸

The city of Birmingham launched an on-demand microtransit service called Birmingham Direct. Rides cost \$1.50, are available Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The pilot program cost \$752,000, \$250,000 of which was paid for by the city. The remainder will be provided by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham. This service is designed to supplement existing bus service, and can be expected to boost productivity and engagement by people who use the service.

¹¹⁴ [The best cities for STEM and high tech jobs outside Silicon Valley](#)

¹¹⁵ [Mazda-Toyota ignites north Alabama](#)

¹¹⁶ [26% of Alabama children still live in poverty](#)

¹¹⁷ [ADEM approves \\$175 million wood pellet plant's permit in Sumter County](#)

¹¹⁸ [Birmingham launches on-demand transit service](#)

Anna Beahm, *al.com*

Carpenter Technology opens \$40 million 3D printing tech center¹¹⁹

Carpenter Technology Corp. has opened its Emerging Technology Center in Athens, with an advanced additive manufacturing capability. The \$40 million investment is expected to create about 60 jobs over the next five years. The company has an existing 500,000 square-foot facility in Athens that produces specialty allow products, mostly for the aerospace and energy markets.



William Thornton, *al.com*

Samuel Associated Tubing to build \$29 million plant, hire 50¹²⁰

Samuel Associated Tube Group is building a \$29 million manufacturing plant in Birmingham and will hire about 50. The new 284,000-square-foot facility, which will allow the company to expand, should be fully operational by the end of 2020. It will be built at 300 Fleming Road and will repurpose a brownfield, according to Jefferson County Commissioner Steve Ammons. The project will allow the company, which has been in the area since 1973, to consolidate its existing facilities and expand in the future.

William Thornton, *al.com*

Montgomery factory plans \$25 million expansion, will hire 51¹²¹

Hager Companies will spend \$25 million in upgrades to modernize its facility on the outskirts of Montgomery. The facility currently employs more than 240 people, and Hager expects to hire 51 more. The entire upgrade process should be finished in three years.

Brad Harper, *Montgomery Advertiser*

Alabama Business Closing Announcements¹²²

| Closing or Layoff | Initial Report Date | Planned Starting Date | Company | City | Planned # of Affected Employees |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Closing * | 10/31/2019 | 12/29/2019 | FRONTIER SPINNING MILLS | Wetumpka | 148 |
| Closing * | 10/18/2019 | 12/31/2019 | KARDOES RUBBER | LaFayette | 86 |
| Layoff * | 09/27/2019 | 12/31/2019 | AMERIS BANK | Dothan | 50 |
| Closing * | 09/17/2019 | 11/14/2019 | FLOWERS BAKING CO. | Opelika | 146 |

¹¹⁹ [Carpenter Technology opens \\$40 million 3D printing tech center](#)

¹²⁰ [Samuel Associated Tubing to build \\$29 million plant, hire 50](#)

¹²¹ [Montgomery factory plans \\$25 million expansion](#)

¹²² [Alabama Plant Closings/Layoffs, Made in Alabama](#)

| Closing or Layoff | Initial Report Date | Planned Starting Date | Company | City | Planned # of Affected Employees |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Closing * | 08/05/2019 | 10/01/2019 | INFORM DIAGNOSTICS | Daphne | 72 |
| Closing * | 07/26/2019 | 09/23/2019 | THRYV, INC | Birmingham | 111 |
| Layoff * | 07/26/2019 | 09/27/2019 | BERRY GLOBAL | Montgomery | 60 |
| Closing * | 06/06/2019 | 08/04/2019 | GEORGIA PACIFIC | Monroeville | 95 |
| Closing * | 05/16/2019 | 07/05/2019 | JOYSON SAFETY SYSTEMS | Greenville | 98 |
| Closing * | 04/17/2019 | 06/20/2019 | HANTAL ALABAMA COMPANY | Montgomery | 58 |
| Layoff * | 04/03/2019 | 06/05/2019 | INTEVA PRODUCTS | Cottondale | 56 |
| Layoff * | 04/03/2019 | 06/07/2019 | EBERSPACHER | Northport | 127 |
| Layoff * | 04/01/2019 | 05/31/2019 | FAURECIA SEATING | Cottondale | 118 |
| Layoff * | 03/29/2019 | 05/31/2019 | STRYKER SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS | Birmingham | 181 |
| Closing * | 03/29/2019 | 03/27/2019 | JESSE CREEK MINING, LLC | Alabaster | 152 |
| Layoff * | 01/31/2019 | 03/31/2019 | STANDARD FURNITURE | Bay Minette | 182 |
| Closing * | 01/09/2019 | 03/06/2019 | WESTERN MARKET | Birmingham | 107 |

4. Alabama SWOT

Strengths

1. **Business-friendly climate:** Alabama is business-friendly, and has been business-friendly for years. Business Facilities ranked Alabama third in the country for business climate. The magazine also ranked Alabama fifth in terms of economic growth potential. Other high rankings for the state included:

- Number 2 among Workforce Training Leaders
- Number 5 among Top Manufacturing States
- Number 6 for Automotive Manufacturing States
- Number 4 for Foreign Trade Zone export activities.

2. **Well-regarded urban centers:** Alabama’s cities are growing, adding high-quality jobs every year. According to a report by 24/7 Wall Street, Huntsville is the third-best city in the country for stem careers. The Business Facilities report ranked Birmingham third for economic growth potential among mid-sized U.S. cities, while among small cities Huntsville ranked second and the Auburn-Opelika area ranked 5th for growth potential.

Birmingham was recently recognized as an “All-Star City” for inclusiveness. The Human Rights Campaign, the nation’s largest civil rights organization working for the LGBTQ community in the country, gave the city—which under Mayor Randall Woodfin added a LGBTQ liaison—a perfect score on its inclusivity for its LGBTQ citizens.¹²³

3. **Expansive investment:** Companies invest in Alabama: companies either locating new facilities or expanding existing operations invested \$8.7 billion in growth projects in 2018. A significant portion of that—\$4.2 billion—came from foreign direct investment.

4. **Popular destination for immigration:** Overall, Alabama’s population is stagnant and the majority of counties have lost population. International migration has boosted the state’s population growth to a point where four counties—Jefferson, Mobile, Pike, and DeKalb—would be losing population if not for international transplants. Jefferson County saw the largest influx of people from outside the U.S. with 5,000 people.¹²⁴

Weaknesses

1. **Work/life readiness:** Although several new initiatives are in place to increase the percentage of Alabama high school seniors considered Work Ready, only 64% are. This is up slightly from 63% in 2017 and still well-above 2015’s 59% of students.¹²⁵

Alabama has never been very well-ranked in the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores in math and reading. This year Alabama hit a new low, ranked 52nd behind Washington DC and Department of Defense schools. Reading scores for both 4th and 8th grades were 49th in the country, 9 places lower than 2017’s results for fourth-graders and 2 places lower for eighth-graders.¹²⁶

2. **Broadband infrastructure:** Despite years of attempts to bridge the digital divide in Alabama, only 77.18% of the population has a computer and broadband internet at home, putting Alabama 46th in the nation.¹²⁷

3. **Lack of rural development and growth:** Rural Alabama is finally getting attention, but will it be enough? Growth and development is much slower—if not negative—in rural Alabama than in Alabama’s large and mid-sized cities. After almost a decade of letting rural and Black Belt initiative languish, organizations and state agencies in Alabama are putting resources towards economic development in rural areas.¹²⁸

¹²³ [Birmingham recognized as top city in nation for inclusivity](#)

¹²⁴ [Alabama’s slowing population growth relies on international migration](#)

¹²⁵ [ACT WorkKeys – An Assessment of Workforce Readiness Among High School Graduates in Alabama](#)

¹²⁶ [Alabama’s dead-last test scores wake-up call for officials](#)

¹²⁷ [Stats America Computer Ownership and Internet Access](#)

¹²⁸ [Alabama putting added horsepower behind rural economic development efforts](#)

Opportunities

1. **Our urban areas are moving the state forward:** Cities of the Future: fDi magazine, a publication focused on foreign direct investment, ranked Mobile 5th in the top 25 cities of the future, while Birmingham ranked 9th overall among mid-sized American Cities of the Future. This ranking considers how well the city has invested in jobs, education, and infrastructure in high-growth areas.
2. **Corporate investment in our workforce:** The corporations that build here invest in the education and training of future employees. Toyota is helping families in north Alabama get work ready with a \$500,000 grant to prepare for modern workplaces.
3. **Building on existing strengths:** Alabama's transportation infrastructure is improving, with the completion of the Downtown airport in Mobile, designed to more fully integrate with the area's already expansive road, rail, and water transportation options.
4. **State-level action finally taking place:** State legislators are aware of the troubles facing rural Alabama, and passed the Alabama Incentives Modernization Act, a set of tax incentives designed to enhance development in counties that are experiencing slow economic conditions and to help bring new technology companies to the state.

Funds from the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund began to be awarded early this year, giving seven communities in Alabama the opportunity a access high-speed broadband. Hopefully, this will move the state higher than 46th in home computer and broadband usage.

Threats

Rural healthcare at risk: Rural communities in Alabama have been declining for years—in employment, population, access to technology, and access to healthcare. Plans are in place at the state level to help with employment and access to technology, but rural healthcare in Alabama is teetering on a precipice. Twenty-one, or 50%, of Alabama's rural hospitals are at a high financial risk of closing. This is far higher than the national average of 21%. If there is any decent news to be had from the report by Navigant, it's that Alabama doesn't have that many essential hospitals at risk. Hospitals are determined essential through a combination of trauma status, service to vulnerable populations, geographic isolation, and economic impact.¹²⁹

Unequal distribution of economic gains: Alabama's employment levels hit record highs and unemployment hit record lows. Alabama gained 40,720 jobs between May 2018 and May 2019. However, over 20,000 of those jobs were in metro Birmingham.

A future in peril: According to the recently-released Kids Count Data Book, 282,396 children in Alabama—26% --live in poverty. About half of those live in extreme poverty (households where a family of four earns less than \$13,000 per year). The counties with the highest percentages of children in poverty are concentrated in the Black Belt, but Winston County in North Alabama has a high percentage as well. This rate is the same as it was in 2014, hinting at the long time frames that rural Alabama has to wait between serious problems being recognized and action being taken by the state.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ [Rural Hospital Sustainability](#)

¹³⁰ [26% of Alabama children still live in poverty](#)

Alabama’s population growth is nearly stagnant, with 0.26% growth between 2017 and 2018. Much of the growth that is taking place is isolated to Baldwin, Shelby, Limestone, Lee, Madison, and Russell counties. Of the remaining counties where growth occurred only St. Clair and Tuscaloosa counties saw growth over 5%. Most of those counties saw growth of 1% or less. By contrast, 45 counties have lost population since the 2010 Census, and 43 counties had more deaths than births.¹³¹

5. Economic Resiliency

Alabama’s economic future is a bright sky with heavy storm clouds on the horizon. Many of the investments by the state and the companies that call Alabama home will prepare the state for those storms.

Counties to improve safety of 1,013 road miles, 20 bridges with Rebuild Alabama 2020 funds¹³²

Alabama’s roads and bridges have been a constant “we’ll get to that next year” projects. Thanks to the proceeds from the new gasoline and diesel fuel taxes, it looks like 2019-2020 will finally be that year. According to the Association of County Commissions of Alabama, work plans show that counties will be using their shares of the gas tax to improve 1,013 miles of road and 20 bridges.

Improvements to modern infrastructure¹³³

Following up on the promise of the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund signed into law in March of 2018, seven previously-unserved Alabama communities will gain access to high-speed broadband thanks to almost \$1.1 million in grants provided to local service providers. These funds serve the purpose of accelerating private investment in broadband infrastructure in unincorporated areas or communities with 25,000 people or less. This starts the long road of providing high-speed broadband to the more than 842,000 people without access to a wired connection capable of high-speed connections.¹³⁴

Toyota donates \$1 million to fight poverty in Alabama, D.C.¹³⁵

2019 marked the 30th year of Toyota’s involvement with the National Center for Families Learning. In an effort to help stop poverty, Toyota on Wednesday announced a \$1 million donation, earmarked to benefit north Alabama and Washington, D.C. Over the past 28 years, Toyota has donated \$50 million to NCFL. Toyota has long been an economic engine in north Alabama, and the coming joint Mazda-Toyota manufacturing center will only increase their profile.

Toyota providing \$500,000 grant to get Alabama families work-ready¹³⁶

Again showcasing corporate involvement in the daily lives of Alabamians, Toyota announced a \$500,000 grant to help low-income north Alabama families get ready for employment in the modern workplace.

¹³¹ [Census: Most of Alabama’s counties are losing people](#)

¹³² [Counties to improve safety of 1,013 road miles, 20 bridges with Rebuild Alabama 2020 funds](#)

¹³³ [Governor Ivey awards more than \\$1 million in grants to improve rural broadband access](#)

¹³⁴ [Governor Ivey signs Alabama Broadband Accessibility Act to provide better internet to rural areas](#)

¹³⁵ [Toyota donates \\$1 million to fight poverty in Alabama, D.C.](#)

¹³⁶ [Toyota’s \\$500,000 grant will get families ready to work](#)

The grant also benefits from a federal fund that matches 50 cents to the dollar for this kind of program, totaling \$750,000 in funding for Alabama. Working through the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers, the program works to support the entire family. From helping children prepare for and succeed in school to teaching parents how to look for and retain jobs, the program is designed to be a means of support for families until they can be self-supporting.

High-quality, high-tech, career-ready education¹³⁷

It's not just Alabama's automotive sector that is providing solutions to its future workforce needs. Airbus and an array of partners have opened up a new pathway for area high school students, and others with little to no aviation experience, to find employment with the company. FlightPath9 is a nine-month program of training that students attend after school. Taking place two evenings a week, it adds up to 200 hours of instruction. Upon graduation, those students are then ready to enter Airbus' Fast Track program. Fast Track is a 12-to-15-week experience designed to give new Airbus hires training in the basic skills, knowledge and abilities for a career in aerospace maintenance. It teaches "a program of global competencies for working on aircraft: torqueing, riveting, gauging, reading blueprints, how to use tools, ergonomics, and more."

A strong base of renewable resources¹³⁸

Alabama's forestry industry is one of the state's constant contributors to its economy, and the state's economic development strategic plan recognizes that by considering it a key targeted industry. As Ken Muehlenfield, Director of the Forest Products Development Center at AIDT points out, Alabama has an enormous amount of forestry-related resources that can be made available sustainably. The state has the second-largest volume of surplus growth of the Southern states. With highway, rail, waterways, and the 11th-largest port by tonnage in the U.S.¹³⁹ Alabama's transportation network provides excellent logistics for imports and exports.

Local areas provide a model of economic resiliency for others to follow

The Appalachian Regional Commission recognized St. Clair County, in northeast Alabama, as one of ten highly-resilient communities, particularly following the Great Recession of 2008. The recession hit all sectors of St. Clair's economy, but the county focused on making itself a place where people want to live. They "built a new library, expanded park offerings, and engaged in proactive infrastructure investment designed to accommodate future growth."¹⁴⁰ St. Clair County also worked closely with Birmingham—one of the state's major engines of economic growth—to develop synergy between the metropolis and its rural neighbor.

Future-proofing an economy

Alabama has done an excellent job in developing a high-tech sector in its economy, at least in urban areas. By making advanced materials manufacture a key industrial target, Alabama ensures that this high-growth, high-wage sector will always have a local home. GE Aviation is investing \$50 million to

¹³⁷ [Airbus investment in career-path education](#)

¹³⁸ [How Alabama's forest products sector is one to watch in 2019](#)

¹³⁹ [Tonnage of Top 50 U.S. Water Ports, Ranked by Total Tons](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Strengthening Economic Resilience](#)

expand its additive manufacturing operation at its Auburn facility. This partnership has already been an economic and research boon, and this investment will better position the plant for future production using the new technology.

Coal industry has \$3 billion impact on Alabama's economy¹⁴¹

A report by Economic Research Services, Inc. for the Alabama Coal Association showed that the coal industry has an overall economic impact of \$2.9 billion on Alabama's economy, mainly through the mining and shipping of metallurgical coal used in the manufacture of steel across the world. The industry employs more than 3,000 people, generates \$370 million in payroll and about \$69 million in taxes. Alabama's current reserves of metallurgical coal are predicted to last for about 300 years.

AdvantageSite Designations

Coordinated by the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, AdvantageSite is a voluntary industrial site preparedness program created in order to make the state more competitive for companies considering a location in Alabama. Since the program's start in 2008, 33 projects have located on AdvantageSites across the state, investing more than \$1.3 billion and creating over 6,072 new jobs. There are currently 59 active AdvantageSites in the state. In 2019 there were five new AdvantageSite designations.

- Boaz Industrial Park
- Demopolis Airport Industrial Park
- Demopolis South Industrial Park
- The Kyser Property in Montgomery
- The Montgomery MegaSite

Closing

This report is intended to represent a high level of analysis comparing relevant national statistics to those of the State of Alabama in order to determine if our state compares favorably to national trends. We have also created a narrative identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that represent Alabama's progress and opportunities in innovation, manufacturing and business climate, shortcomings in poverty and reliance on the federal government, and menacing challenges with revenue shortfalls and government regulations.

Information contained in this report is the result of broadly conducted research and analysis of news media reports, economic forecasts, and various indicators produced from a number of responsible sources including but not limited to:

- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
- StatsAmerica

¹⁴¹ [Report: Coal industry has impact on state's economy](#)

- U.S. Cluster Mapping
- Alabama Department of Labor
- Alabama Department of Commerce
- Business Alabama Magazine
- Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

