

# Jefferson County Mayors

## Good Neighbor Pledge

April 2019

### **Preamble:**

We, the undersigned mayors of the cities and towns of Jefferson County, Alabama, do hereby set forth the following principles of behavior and standards of conduct to guide our collective efforts in promoting the long-term economic health of the Jefferson County region. It is our intent to enter a new era of regional cooperation to promote economic development. To that end, we will also work closely with the Jefferson County Commission to make our communities and the region more attractive to business. While each community wants to encourage businesses to locate within its boundaries, we are determined not to do so at the expense of our neighbors. Inevitably, some businesses, for their own reasons, will choose to explore re-location from one community in Jefferson County to another. In such instances, we believe a balance should be struck between giving the first community the opportunity to retain the business while also allowing the second community or communities the opportunity to attract it. However, if a business has not expressed an interest in re-locating, we believe that other communities should not actively pursue or “poach” that company to encourage it to move from its current location.

With the global economic environment as dynamic and uncertain as ever, proactive regionalism can be a powerful economic development tool. As local economies have become regional in nature, economic growth among neighboring communities may be better facilitated by collaborative efforts in job attraction, retention and expansion of existing businesses. Movement of an existing business within the region, while beneficial in the short-run to the receiving municipality, does not benefit the region in the long-run; and, it wastes precious resources that could be otherwise utilized for attraction and growth. A regionally focused economic policy best ensures keeping businesses within the region. Regional cooperation among the Jefferson County cities – working together – in the economic development area will convince businesses that Jefferson County is an excellent place to do business.

We recognize that no commitment is of value without an inherent level of trust in the integrity of one another and a commitment from each of us to conduct ourselves at the highest levels of professional conduct. The Mayor’s Association of Jefferson County was founded on the respect and trust of its members. We also recognize that as a region, our individual municipalities are interconnected and that we share a common fate. It is within the spirit of this framework we set forth the following principles.

### **Purpose:**

This pledge represents a commitment by the signatories to work together for economic development in Jefferson County. We hereby declare our intention to collaborate with our neighboring municipalities in good faith by refusing to deploy incentives and other tools to lure businesses away from their current city of residence within Jefferson County.

### **Principles:**

- We commit to establishing trust in one another and to exhibit the highest level of professional conduct and integrity.
- We agree that Jefferson County’s economy will be stronger if its communities work together rather than against each other.

- We agree that we should focus our economic development efforts on the attraction of new businesses, the retention and expansion of existing businesses, and the promotion of our collective community as a good place to do business.
- We agree that the focus of economic development efforts should not be on encouraging companies from one community to move to another within the county, because this internecine competition results in no new job growth for the region.
- We are committed to the promotion of Jefferson County as a desirable business location for new and expanding companies.
- We are committed to sharing data and information among our membership to facilitate fair and competitive economic development efforts.

**Business Attraction and Retention Protocols:**

In the interest of promoting the economic well-being and growth of our communities, we, the undersigned, pledge our support for the following protocols.

- We will not actively pursue a business to move from its current location in Jefferson County to our municipality. ‘Actively pursue’ means to initiate contact with the business directly, with the intent of luring the business through cold calls, visits, mail solicitations, or marketing directed specifically at that business. This does not preclude a municipality from generally marketing itself as a good place to do business or generally advising its residents about the benefits of locating a business there.
- If a business is seeking to move from one municipality in Jefferson County to another: We will advise the business that we will not offer financial incentives (sales and property tax abatements, construction sales tax abatements, or any other revenue enhancements through tax relief), free or discounted land, or a lease below market value. This includes abatements and incentives sought through the Industrial Development Board (IDB) and Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DRA) where applicable.

Infrastructure issues related to city-owned right-of-way (ROW) will be referred to the **Advisory Consulting Committee**.

- Business expansions from one municipality to another within Jefferson County that result in no net job loss to the original municipality are not included in this pledge.
- New businesses to Jefferson County are not included in this pledge. When possible, however, municipalities will actively work with one another.
- Confidentiality: Cities should be committed to sharing with each other as much information as is necessary and prudent regarding relocation. The guiding principle shall be that “more information is better than less.” However, in instances where a prospect wishes to remain completely confidential with an individual city, that city shall honor the prospect’s confidentiality until the prospect chooses to announce.

**Oversight:**

- In order to provide a forum for answering questions about what constitutes poaching activities versus non-poaching activities, we will establish a 4-member **Advisory Consulting Committee** which includes a large, medium, and smaller city representative and a member of the Jefferson County Commission.
- Noncompliance with the terms of this pledge may impact consideration for regional incentives.