

Jefferson County Mayors' Good Neighbor Pledge *Working Together for Economic Growth*

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Jefferson County mayors form economic development pact to combat poaching and pursue net growth for region

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Mayors from 22 cities in Jefferson County today announced a pact to combat poaching between cities and to pursue long-term economic growth for the region.

Mayors who signed the “Good Neighbor Pledge” represent the cities of Argo, Bessemer, Birmingham, Brighton, Center Point, Clay, Fairfield, Graysville, Homewood, Hoover, Lipscomb, Midfield, Mountain Brook, Mulga, Pleasant Grove, Sylvan Springs, Tarrant, Trafford, Trussville, Vestavia Hills, Warrior and West Jefferson.

As part of the agreement, the mayors pledge they will not lure businesses away from other cities. They also agree they will not provide incentives for businesses relocating from one city to another.

“This is a historic achievement,” said Center Point Mayor Tom Henderson, who is president of the Jefferson County Mayors Association and served on the committee that drafted the pledge. “Our conversations leading up to this moment are already having an impact on the way business is being done in Jefferson County. Moving forward, we really believe this pact will lay a better foundation for the future of our county, each of our cities, and our children and grandchildren.”

The agreement stemmed from conversations that occurred within the Jefferson County Mayors Association over the past year. The conversations were facilitated by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, as part of its effort to foster more regional cooperation and job growth in Jefferson County.

Mayors believe the new economic development pledge will provide an opportunity to address both.

“When one of us gains a business at the expense of one of our neighbors, we’re not creating new jobs or expanding opportunity in the county,” Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin said. “What really serves our citizens is attracting new businesses and helping our existing businesses thrive and expand -- accomplishments that create real growth and will ultimately benefit us all.”

The agreement is modeled on similar no-poaching agreements in other parts of the country. It marks Jefferson County mayors’ first attempt to create a shared vision and shared standards of conduct regarding business relocations and recruitment within the county.

“In the past, our cities tended to compete rather than cooperate,” said Hoover Mayor Frank Brocato. “Today, economic development favors metro areas that work together better as a region. While businesses can still choose to relocate in our county, this group of mayors has committed that we won’t try to initiate those moves, and we will focus on a more comprehensive strategy for growth.”

Mayors say their first obligation is to serve their own cities and citizens, and they believe the pledge will help them to protect their communities and create more jobs to provide opportunity for residents now and into the future.

“We wouldn’t have run for mayor if we didn’t love our cities,” said Trussville Mayor Buddy Choat. “This pledge is a commitment to treat our neighbors the way we want to be treated and to accomplish what we all want – to build good communities where people can live and work and raise their family.”

The agreement includes a process for disputes that may arise in the future.

“As we worked through the language, we talked about situations that may not be clear-cut or that might not quite fit into our model,” Mountain Brook Mayor Stewart Welch said. “In those cases, an advisory council will provide a fair forum for us to talk through issues on the front end, offer some guidance and hopefully resolve conflicts.”

All mayors in the county were invited to join the alliance, and the invitation to all remains open.

“We recognize that we’re doing something new and different and maybe a little scary,” Warrior Mayor Johnny Ragland said. “But as we move forward, we are hopeful we will see results, and we hope other mayors will join as we go.”

Jefferson County Commissioner Steve Ammons, who worked with the committee to draft the agreement, praised mayors for their leadership and vision for the future.

“Other metro areas in the U.S. have experienced considerable success by working to rein in internal competition and focus on collective growth,” Commissioner Ammons said. “Our mayors recognized they could get better results by focusing on true economic gains rather than fighting each other for what’s already here. Their efforts will not only pay dividends for their constituents but for generations to come.”