

GATEWAY NEWS



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NEW DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCED

ATMORE - On Monday, May 22, Mayor Howard Shell along with the Atmore Industrial Development Board announced the establishment of *Rivercane*, a 643 acre development located at Exit 57 on Interstate 65.

Rivercane is approximately 4.5 miles north of the City of Atmore and encompasses three of the four corners of the intersection of Alabama 21 and Interstate 65. *Rivercane* is owned by the City of Atmore and will include areas for retail/commercial, industrial and recreational activities.

"For many years to come, the initial impression of the City of Atmore will be generated once people exit I-65 here at *Rivercane*," Mayor Shell said. "We want that impression to be one of a progressive and first-class city."

The *Rivercane* development is a multiphase project that will hopefully produce more income producing jobs and jobs for residents of Atmore and surrounding areas. Shell hopes the *Rivercane* property will increase the "economic development factors for Atmore," since Interstate 65 is such a viable part of the city.

Phase I of the project will consist of about 60 acres. Of the acreage, 46 will be used for developing and the remaining 12 will be used for common areas including lakes with pedestrian pathways, a gazebo and parks.

Construction of Phase I is slated to begin in mid-June. The City of Atmore has fronted \$3.6 million for the construction of roads, utilities and all common areas, not including the \$3

million spent for the initial cost of the property. Of that, \$290,000 has been allotted for signage and \$890,000 for landscaping. The balance will pay for streets and utilities, *Rivercane* Project Manager Jim Corman said.

"I think that part of what we are trying to do with *Rivercane* is to create an image that is No. 1, very attractive and No. 2, very progressive," Corman said. "That is why we want to use extensive landscaping, why we wanted water features and why we wanted all of the public and common areas, to create a kind of beauty. That is why we are requiring all underground utilities, roadways to be all curbed and guttered and mandating that all traffic ingress and egress into Hwy. 21 come through major intersections. What we are trying to do is to present an organized, progressive, well-planned development because essentially, our image as a community is going to be created when people pull off the interstate and we want that to be very positive."

Phase I, which will consist of primarily retail, is expected to be complete by the first week of September.

Industrial Development Board Chairman Richard Maxwell announced the sale of the first three parcels of property in Phase I.

"Our purpose here today is at least two-fold," Maxwell said. "One, obviously is to announce the opening of *Rivercane* and the other, which we are equally excited about, is to announce the sale of property. Some property has been sold and construction will start in the next few months."

Locally owned Diamond Oil purchased the first

piece of property for construction of a state-of-the-art service station, which will also include a food establishment.

Vision Hospitality of Dalton, GA purchased the second two parcels of land for construction of two hotels, a Comfort Suites and a Hampton Inn.

Phase II of *Rivercane* is tentatively scheduled to begin the first week of September and be completed by the end of 2006.

Phase II will include some expansion of retail on the southwest side of *Rivercane* and gain access to the first industrial sites on the southeast.

Phase III, which is intended for mostly industrial prospects, is scheduled to begin in January 2007 and will include the north property across I-65.

Coastal Gateway Economic Development Authority President Wiley Blankenship and Escambia County Industrial Development Authority Executive Director Marshall Rogers will serve as primary industrial recruiters.

Corman estimates 150 - 160 acres of the 643 acres included in *Rivercane* will be included in Phases I, II and III.

"Phase III is not the end, it's just the beginning," he said. "I told the mayor that I do not expect a bulldozer to leave this site for five years. I want one phase to end and another to begin."



When the debate over the name of the 643 acre project arose during Atmore IDB meetings earlier this year, board members and city officials wanted to stay true to its culture. In doing so, they called on officials with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians to help them come up with the name. The board unanimously voted *Rivercane* in, beating out Menawa, Talwa, Pacova and Muskogee. The name Escambia, which is an Indian name, means land of the cane breaks.

"Since river cane is native to this part of the country and was such a vital part of the Indian economy, we thought that since we have an economic development, which is vital to our economic future that *Rivercane* taps our roots and taps the name Escambia. It just has a nice ring to it," Corman said.

COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM NAMED TO TOP 10

The Escambia County School System has been named one of the Ten Great Rural Education Environments in the South by Southern Business & Development magazine, a publication devoted to providing information to companies considering expanding or relocating to the south.

Escambia County Superintendent of Education, Buck Powell, said the designation is a great honor for the system.

Southern Business & Development contacted him about the county school system and asked him what makes this system unique. Powell's first thought was the Turtle Point Environment Science Center. There were, of course, other things he talked about such as test scores.

"We were not picked solely because of Turtle Point," Powell said. "Other factors were considered as well, and went into the decision to honor Escambia County; however, they concentrated on Turtle Point in

the write-up about the system."

Escambia County Industrial Development Director Marshall Rogers was delighted to hear of the system's selection.

"Education is a very vital part of economic development," she said. "We are pleased and proud that the Escambia County Board of Education has been recognized by Southern Business & Development magazine as one of the top 10 in rural education."

In introducing the honorees on the website, SB&D writer Amy Murray wrote: "Ask any CEO which corporate asset is most crucial to success, and you'll increasingly get the same answer: human capital. The 10 communities listed here prove that when it comes to educating a workforce that can meet companies' demands for talented, capable employees, rural areas are up to the challenge."

About Escambia County, Turtle Point in

particular, Murray wrote: "Here, exceptional environmental education is literally within arms reach thanks to the Turtle Point Environmental Science Center, where every learning experience is hands-on. Because the center is owned by the board of education, teachers and students have free access to the facilities and can work with center staff to design customized programs that complement a class's ongoing science curriculum. Exhibits include gardens, a butterfly room, active honeybee hives, a wetlands walk and a 'touch tank'. (Think a salamander and a snake feel the same? Students here know better)."

The other systems named to the top 10 were Charlotte County Public Schools, VA; Cleveland, MS; Mount Airy City Schools, NC; Crossville, TN; Stillwater, OK; Statesboro/Bulloch County, GA; Oldham County, KY; Orangeburg, SC; and Kilgore, TX. You can find the top 10 list on the SB&D website at www.sb-d.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- A public meeting will be held at the Evergreen Depot on Tuesday, June 13 at 8:00am to address litter issues for Conecuh County. A representative with Alabama PALS (People Against a Littered State) will be the speaker and refreshments will be provided by Conecuh Soil & Water Conservation District.
- The Alabama Technology Network (ATN) will hold a Lean Manufacturing 101 class at the Thomasville Campus of Alabama Southern Community College on July 14. Lean Manufacturing 101 is a dynamic, hands-on class that will demonstrate the different tools used in Lean Manufacturing. It gives attendees an opportunity to actually apply the tools in class and see the process improvement results right down to the bottom line. The objective of the class is to train attendees in process improvements, cost reduction, planning and scheduling and quality control issues. For more information contact Becky Pilkington at 334-636-9642 Ext. 625 or bpilkington@atn.org.

Point To Ponder



Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.

- Vince Lombardi



Regional Economic Development Authority

A Partnership of

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