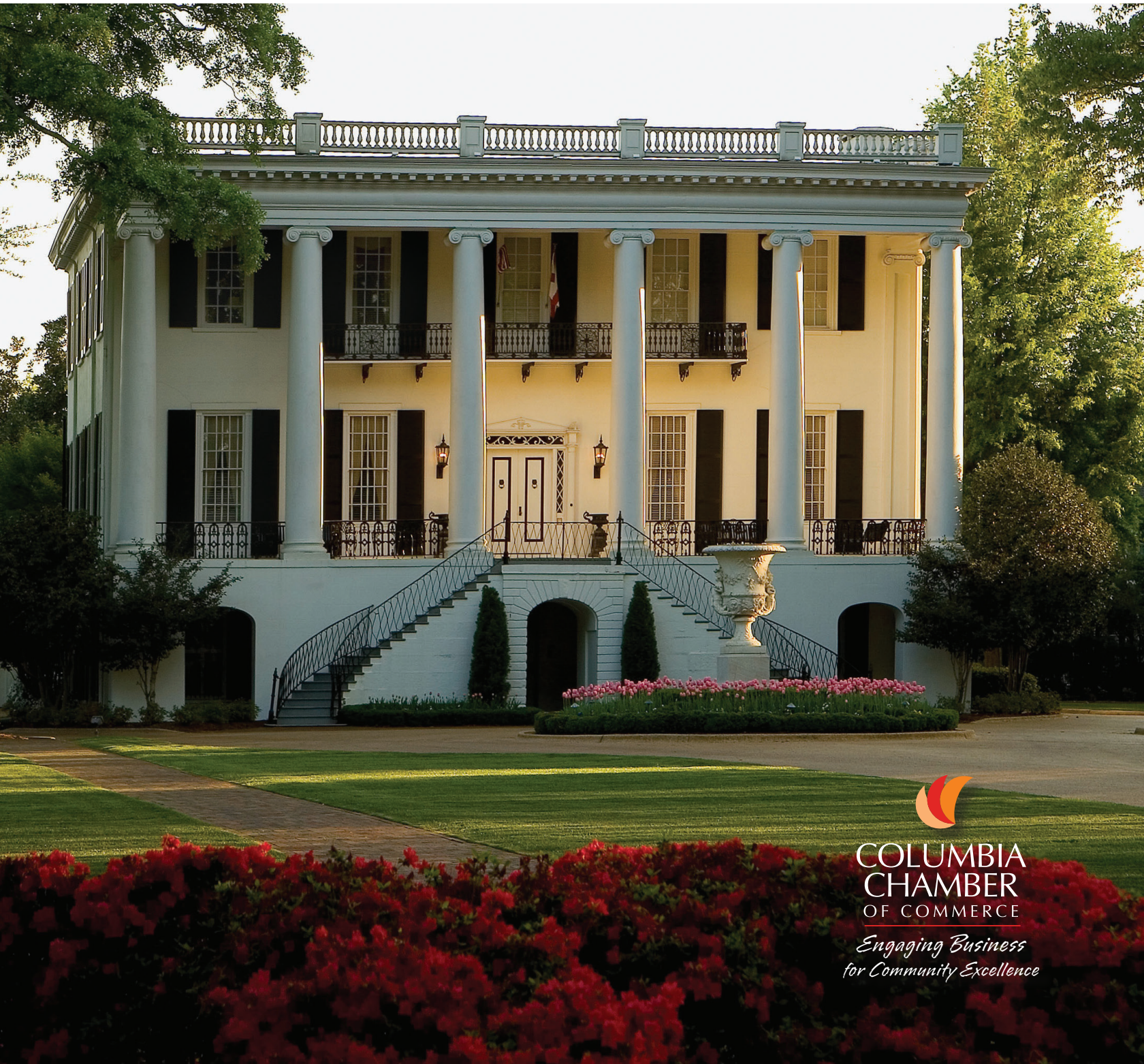


# Leadership Visit 2019

Columbia Chamber of Commerce

## *Tuscaloosa, Alabama*

### *Summary Report*



**COLUMBIA  
CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE**

*Engaging Business  
for Community Excellence*





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*Photo of the President's Mansion courtesy of Barry Fikes Photography*





Image courtesy of Tuscaloosa Tourism & Sports

# Background on the Leadership Visit Program



Matt McCormick,  
President, Columbia  
Chamber of Commerce

The 2019 Leadership Visit to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, marked the 6th consecutive such trip the Columbia Chamber of Commerce has coordinated for our community. When the program was envisioned seven years ago, we recognized that the businesses, public entities, and nonprofit organizations in our membership regularly undergo their own strategic planning, and many are actively involved in daily work to make our community a great place to live and do business. However, much of this happens separately, and our idea was to create a regular opportunity for various segments of our community to come together for collective community visioning and problem-solving on behalf of Columbia, Boone County, and Mid-Missouri.

I am proud to say we have been achieving this aim since year one, with each year getting better and better.

The purpose of the Leadership Visit program is to expose local leaders to the best ideas of nationally

recognized communities throughout the United States. The location of each year's trip depends on the issues Columbia is facing, and how other communities have responded to similar trends and needs.

For the past three years, we have made a decision to cap the trip attendance at 70, which allows for a wealth of various voices, while also keeping our delegation small enough for attendees to truly get to know each other in a mid-size group setting. This magic number also allows us to give our participants a number of unique experiences – from touring the Mercedes-Benz U.S. International plant this year, to visiting the University of Michigan's test track for connected and autonomous vehicles in 2018, to touring multiple airport terminals.

Our goals for each trip include providing our delegation the opportunity for:

- Honest dialogue with leaders in the host community about their challenges, opportunities, location advantages, and innovative approaches they have used to tackle issues.
- Honest dialogue about Columbia and Boone County's own challenges and opportunities.
- Exploration of innovative programs and influential projects that may be adapted and implemented in our community.
- Exchange of best practices and lessons learned among participants, in order to address specific issues or concerns in our community.
- High-level networking and relationship-building with other business and community leaders in a non-typical environment.

We have been encouraged by the energy coming from our past trips, including an initiative for a High School 2.0 program and most recently, an action committee to assess opportunities in the area of workforce development programming. We are truly grateful for the support and enthusiasm that has embraced the Leadership Visit program over the past several years, and look forward to seeing continued outcomes in our community as a result.



# Reflections on the 2019 Trip



Matt Garrett, Chair,  
Columbia Chamber of  
Commerce Board of  
Directors

On behalf of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, I want to thank all who attended, followed, and supported the 2019 Leadership Visit to Tuscaloosa. This year's trip was attended by an equal number of return attendees and new faces, and we are grateful to each for dedicating time to better understand what makes Columbia and Boone County so wonderful, but also where we can improve.

In selecting the location of our sixth trip, some of the things about Tuscaloosa that initially stood out included their population and energy as another college town, their enthusiasm as a community to host us, and some of the areas where they have been making great strides – in transportation funding, workforce development programming, and incubation of entrepreneurs. As we moved further into the planning process, we were excited to build out a robust itinerary of topics on which to engage leaders in Tuscaloosa. While some of the similarities between our communities made it a solid choice for the trip, we also learned through the three days where there are differences.

On the 2019 trip, we held sessions on the following topics: incubation and retention of entrepreneurs, economic impact of university research, sports and tourism, building an experience economy, workforce development solutions, infrastructure funding, and growth and development. On the final day, participants had an option to participate in small group tours on the topics of local art, commercial development, and Civil Rights history in Tuscaloosa.

Each of these sessions were extremely educational or impactful in their own ways, but the one that stood out most was the workforce discussion. When participants were



**Each of these sessions were extremely educational or impactful in their own ways, but the one that stood out most was the workforce discussion.**

asked during the wrap up to submit a “top takeaway” from the 2019 trip, overwhelmingly the feedback indicated participants across industries wanted to know how they

can support efforts going forward to address gaps in our local workforce. As a result and upon return, the Chamber Board of Directors directed staff to put together a plan for an Action Committee of strategic partners to assess the possibility of forming a regional workforce collaborative under the Columbia Chamber of Commerce. This group began meeting in November 2019, and we look forward to hearing their recommendation later this winter and seeing how we can progress.

Each time we return from a Leadership Visit, we are enthusiastic about how we can continue to improve Columbia, but we're also reminded how many good things are already happening. Thank you again for all who were part of this exchange, and for supporting me as the Chamber Chair this year.



# Tuscaloosa Bound!

More than 70 Chamber members head to Alabama on annual Leadership Visit.

Around 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 10, more than 70 members of Columbia's Chamber of Commerce boarded a plane for Tuscaloosa, Alabama, for their annual Leadership Visit.

Why Tuscaloosa? Home to the University of Alabama, higher education is a significant driver in the Tuscaloosa economy, and our towns are similar in size and median age. Downtown is a vibrant area of growth for Tuscaloosa, and they have been nationally recognized for their workforce development system.

They are also collaborating on an innovative transportation infrastructure investment and recently opened an incubator and accelerator as a partnership between

the University, the Chamber, and the City.

Over the three-day trip, activities included a tour and presentation at The Edge Incubator and Accelerator, as well as tours of the community, Bryant-Denny Stadium, Mercedes, and City Hall. Community officials and experts were also on hand to lead discussions on entrepreneurship, transforming the county and county roads, sports and tourism, workforce development, and urban development and planning.

Registration for the trip was open to Chamber members who were interested in coming together to share ideas and make positive changes in our community.

This year's attendees included representatives from MU, MU Health



Care, the City of Columbia, City Council, Columbia Public Schools, Moberly Area Community

College, Stephens College, Columbia College, Columbia Mall, Shelter Insurance, Veterans United Home Loans, the Columbia Board of Education, Columbia Board of Realtors, and the District, as well as local bankers, architects, small business owners, manufacturers, and more.

At a pre-trip mixer and briefing the Wednesday before the trip, KOMU General Manager and Chamber Chair Matt Garrett encouraged those attending to focus their attention during the trip on one big idea. "What's our one thing?" he encouraged them to ask. "The thing we can sink our teeth into when we get back."





# It All Starts with an Idea

Chamber members tour The Edge,  
Tuscaloosa's home for innovation and  
collaboration.

After a short flight out of Columbia Regional Airport, 70 members of Columbia's Chamber of Commerce arrived in Tuscaloosa for their sixth annual Leadership Visit, thanks to Lindner Properties, the trip's presenting sponsor.

The first stop on the agenda was a tour and entrepreneurship discussion at The Edge

Incubator and Accelerator, a collaboration between the University of Alabama, City of Tuscaloosa, and the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama.

Jim Page, president of the local Chamber, and Bobby Bragg, the chairman-elect, welcomed the group, followed by a tour of the 26,300-square-foot, \$11 million, entrepreneur-

focused space that opened in February.

"It really is a collaborative entity," Bragg shared. "The building is owned by the city and the university pays for the staff."

The Edge was built from disaster relief funds following the 2013 Tuscaloosa tornado, and is currently at 40% of capacity.

The space features 20 offices, 100 workstations with standing desks, conference rooms, working lounges, privacy booths, a breakroom, outdoor patio, and receptionist with guest waiting area.

The space is equipped to house about 125 people – everyone from an out-of-town salesperson to the founders of a start-up business. All the spaces are flexible and can be configured for a variety of uses. Clients choose the resources they need from a menu of space and services, and monthly prices range from \$50-750.

How long do businesses stay? "Our goal is to grow people out," Bragg says.

The group heard from founders of three start-up companies as well, including Kinematic Sports LLC, the creators of SidelineER, the collapsible and portable medical triage shelter that was seen on the sidelines of many football games this past fall. All three owners attribute much of their success to the incubator's services and sense of community.

"I applaud what they are doing here," says Bill Turpin, president of the Missouri Innovation Center. Turpin works with faculty, students, and local

entrepreneurs to start and grow technology-based companies at the Mizzou Life Science Business Incubator.

Turpin likens The Edge to a larger version of REDI's Innovation Hub, a local place for entrepreneurs to create and connect with a community of peers and resources to grow their business and skills for leadership. Run by Stacey Button, the Innovation Hub operates in a much smaller space, but operates at full capacity currently.

Although he works more with high-tech labs that require specialized space, Turpin says that seeing a facility like this makes him wonder "if we shouldn't double down and create more space like this in Columbia."

The afternoon also featured a conversation on the economic impact the University of Alabama and its research has on the City. Dr. Russ Mumper, vice president for economic development, shared their five-year strategic plan to double their research awards in the next five years.

"We want to be the go-to university for company engagement," Mumper says.

The University of Alabama recently joined MU as one of 131 higher education institutions designated by Carnegie as an R1 school.

"It's fascinating," says Piyusha Singh, vice president of academic affairs at Columbia College. "It's all just change management. It's intriguing to see how the city and university are tackling the problems."





# Elevating the Future

Tuscaloosa implements plan to move from retail to experienced-based economy.

The second day of the trip began with a discussion with Tuscaloosa's Mayor Walt Maddox at the beautiful River Market Pavillion. Elevate Tuscaloosa is a city-wide initiative to embrace the economic paradigm shift and move Tuscaloosa from a retail-based economy to an experience-based economy. Mayor Maddox initiated the change, which is focused on elevating the arts, connectivity, parks and recreation, and education.

What necessitated the shift? Maddox attributes the need to four factors: the City's decrease in retail sales, the preference of millennials for experiences, workforce needs to fill the jobs of the future, and hitting the peak enrollment for students at the University.

"We have to move from recruiting students to retaining them," Maddox explains. "Right now, we're only retaining 10%."

Another driving force of the program is to increase tourism. "Eight weeks a year we're Alabama's largest city," Maddox says. "We have a desire to grow that."

The initiative includes improvements to the airport, an expanded transit system, road improvements, a water recreation and trail experience, upgrades to the Bama Theatre, an athletic and events complex, tennis center, senior center, additional



**"You don't gain job security by raising people's taxes, but it was the right thing to do."**

river walks, improved park systems, and an improved educational system.

The initiative will cost \$60 million, be completed by 2025, and is funded by a 1% sales tax increase.

"You don't gain job security by raising people's taxes," Maddox says, "but it was the right thing to do." The decision came after reviewing the city's data and realizing that while Tuscaloosa was receiving 2% of sales tax revenue, their competitor

cities were receiving 4-5%.

Maddox credits the Chamber for the success of passing the initiative. "When the Chamber gave the stamp of approval, it took the air out of the room and ultimately got us across the finish line," he says. The initiative was passed earlier this year with a 5-2 vote of the city council.

Tuscaloosa is currently in the middle of implementing the plan and has put together an advisory council to advise the mayor and city council.

How has the response been? "Elevate Tuscaloosa has pretty broad support across all sectors and demographics," Maddox says. "Now road construction, that's another matter!"

Chamber President Matt McCormick says there are two main reasons the

delegation was interested in learning more about Elevate Tuscaloosa. "One is their comprehensive, holistic approach to this plan related to projects that move the entire community forward. The other is how they put together, funded, and are implementing the plan."

"What Tuscaloosa has done shows us how to be a forward-thinking community and not let your fear from tax increases or other things get in the way of the future," says Susan Hart, vice president of Huebert Builders, Inc. "It's inspiring."

Maddox ended by encouraging the delegation. "If the leaders of a community collectively agree to move from point A to point B, it will get done."



# One Student at a Time

West Alabama Works provides an innovative model for workforce development.

It all comes down to workforce development. It's a growing challenge to find workers, especially in the trades. It's a struggle in Tuscaloosa, and it's a struggle in Mid-Missouri.

To understand Tuscaloosa's plan for building a highly skilled workforce, Donny Jones, chief operations officer for the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama and the executive director for West Alabama Works, led a discussion on Wednesday afternoon.

The West Alabama Works initiative began in the fall of 2015 as a concentrated effort between the public school system, business and industry, the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, the City of Tuscaloosa, and higher education to inspire their future workforce, one student at a time.

As they've grown, they continue to be a catalyst for innovative training, education, and the best ideas around workforce delivery. Their mission is to recruit, train, and empower a highly skilled workforce driven by business and industry needs and to be the competitive advantage for Alabama's economic growth.

For the future workforce, their relationship with West Alabama Works begins in eighth grade, as part of the school curriculum, with a two-day career expo called Worlds of Work, or WOW.

Worlds of Work is one of



the partnership's flagship initiatives and introduces over 4,000 students each Fall to real-world simulations and hands-on exhibits by top employers in the region. The hope is to help students experience the local career options available to them after graduation.

The relationship continues as students move into high school and culminates for many at a regional signing day where they declare their work intentions following high school.

"West Alabama Works isn't doing a job fair and expecting miracles," says Erica Pefferman of The Business Times Company. "They're creating a culture. WOW isn't just a solution for today; it's something they're building."

While West Alabama Works partnership does not include the University of Alabama, Pefferman believes that including MU in the local conversation will be critical. "Because of the Leadership Visits, the



relationships are in place at the executive level to make this work," she says.

For Stacye Smith, director of human resources for Shelter Insurance, the workforce development panel was her favorite. "I'm always interested to hear new ways of finding talent and developing underdeveloped talent," she says.

In October, the Chamber Board approved the formation of a Workforce Development Action Committee to move forward with assessing the possibility of Columbia starting a program similar to West Alabama Works, including the structure, funding,

and strategic initiatives.

The committee began meeting in late November and is chaired by Eric Morrison of Providence Bank. Other committee members include Matt McCormick, Columbia Chamber of Commerce; Cole Knudsen, Quaker Oats; John Riddick, ASI Flex; Justin Gay, Emery Sapp & Sons; Kellie Ann Coats, Missouri Department of Economic Development; Stacye Smith, Shelter Insurance Companies; Susan Hart, Huebert Builders; and Randy Coil, Coil Construction.

The committee will present a proposal to the Chamber later this winter.



# *To Mercedes and Beyond*

Chamber delegation visits the Mercedes-Benz assembly plant, Bryant-Denny Stadium, and the President's Mansion.

One of the highlights of the Leadership Visit was taking a tour of the state-of-the-art Mercedes-Benz assembly plant, which is the only one in North America.

The first vehicle rolled off the line 23 years ago, and the plant produced 240,000 vehicles in 2018.

The six million square-foot facility sits on 15 acres, employs 4000 team members, and utilizes 2600 robots. The plant is responsible for producing the GLE and GLS SUVs, and has stopped giving public tours while it produces a line of SUV's that is yet to be released to the public.

"We have the slowest production line of any car manufacturer," says Dustin, the director of the on-site museum and our tour guide. "We want to promote quality over quantity."

The delegation was able to witness the trim line and door assembly stations, where each team member has 99 seconds to perform their function. What if there's a conveyor issue, a shortage of parts, or the battery dies in their drill? Team members pull a chord that alerts the team to the problem.

Ready for the dash? With the help of a lift, the process takes two minutes.

How do they put it all together? At the Marriage Right station, team members use pedals to lift the engine/chassis and align it to the body. It is then secured with 20 bolts.

Recruiting and retaining employees is critical for the plant, which has added an on-site daycare, medical clinic, and Starbucks to sweeten the pot. Team members work five days a week in three shifts, have weekends and holidays off, and earn between \$17-60 an hour.

Understanding the needs of the plant is a critical component in meeting the workforce development needs for the city.

While in Tuscaloosa, the delegation also toured Bryant-Denny Stadium, home of the University of Alabama's football team. The stadium was built in 1929 and can seat 101,821 fans, making it one of the 10 largest on-campus football stadiums in the country.

Following the stadium tour, the University hosted the delegation for a welcome reception at the President's Mansion. The mansion is the greatest example of Greek revival architecture in the South, was completed in 1841, and has housed the president's family ever since.







# It's a Wrap!

Participants share takeaways from Tuscaloosa Leadership Visit.

**A**fter three packed days full of learning from Tuscaloosa's City, Chamber, and University leaders, the delegation held a final session to wrap things up and share their experiences and takeaways from the trip.

"What can we do to say 'yes' more? We say 'no' too often," says Jay Lindner, president of Lindner Properties. "We need to think outside the box to solve our problems."

Kevin Czaicki, account director at CenturyLink, shares, "It feels like there's no sense of entitlement [among the Tuscaloosa team]. Instead there's ownership and a sense of community. We often build silos instead."

"I've experienced leadership on this trip," says Susan Hart, vice president of Huebert Builders. "They made hard decisions, but for the right reasons. There was also a clear vision."

Randy Gooch, chief operations officer for Columbia Public Schools, added, "They have not let obstacles stop the end result of what they want. They've found workarounds."

"There was a collaboration, a coming together," shares Lawrence Simonson of the PedNet Coalition. "We also saw the Chamber lead and be the glue."

Mike Grellner of Plaza Commercial Realty was moved by a story Tuscaloosa's Mayor, Walt Maddox, told about having to communicate some of the tough changes they were making to his own father. "What we do cannot be viewed from what we want today," he says. "It has to be about one, two, even three generations from now."

"Every person we heard from was a vision caster and message bearer," Erica Pefferman, president of the Business Times Company, notices. "They had a story to tell. We struggle to have a comprehensive communication plan. We need a succinct plan."

"They have congealed around some really big ideas," Rodney Gray of Polsinelli PC added. "Then they've found ways to fund them."

Columbia College Provost Piyusha Singh agreed. "There was a real multiplier effect in their collaboration."

Councilman Mike Trapp suggested that we need an overarching, community-based strategy for workforce development and Les Borgmeyer with Visionworks Marketing Group believes we need to be flexible on funding mechanisms to make change happen.

Dianne Lynch, president of Stephens College, shared that we often spend a lot of time right on top of problems instead of stepping back to take a look. She



reminded the group that the Elevate Tuscaloosa initiative had something in it for everyone and their children.

"The mayor has a story to tell, and he means it. And it's based on data," Lynch says. "We don't have that vision. You end up where you're headed. We don't have a common narrative. I think the tax payers would say 'yes' to that, but we haven't given it to them."

School Board Member Della Streaty-Wilhoit was encouraged. "We have the core group here to do it. We love our city and we can change it."

Marshall Stewart, vice chancellor of MU, added "You have to know who you are and who you aspire to be. We need a clarification of vision."

Amy Schneider asked everyone to remember the One Voice idea from the Knoxville trip that the group tried to rally around in years past. "No one was willing to give up their voice to have one voice. But we didn't know our end game. If we knew our end game, and could come around the table again, we could develop one voice."

In response, MU's Bill Turpin asked, "Who is our top voice?"

Lynch added, "Urgency drives outcomes. It didn't take them that long, less than two years, to get results."

As the wrap up session drew to a close, Chamber Chair Matt Garrett encouraged the group to focus on the big idea – what's the one thing we are going to commit to?

Gooch and Grellner agree that the answer is WOW, short for Worlds of Work, a two-day career expo put on to educate students on what jobs are available in the area and what form of education they would need to move down that career path.

While no decisions were made, the group had consensus around one thing. "This is one of the best trips yet. Tuscaloosa hit it out of the park for us," Lindner says.

## Civil Rights, Monsters, and City Hall

Thursday afternoon, Leadership Visit participants chose between three breakout sessions.

### CIVIL RIGHTS

The first was a civil rights history bus tour. Attendees drove past a few sites along the trail, which was unveiled earlier this year by the Tuscaloosa Civil Rights History Task Force. The primary stop was at one of the most significant sites of civil rights history in Tuscaloosa: First African Baptist Church.

Attendees heard firsthand accounts from multiple individuals who were active participants on Bloody Tuesday, which took place on June 9, 1964. The peaceful march against segregated drinking fountains and restrooms at the Tuscaloosa County courthouse resulted in participants being teargassed in the church, as well as beaten and arrested upon exiting the church to walk toward the courthouse.

During the discussion, speakers began singing "We Shall Overcome" at which point tour group attendees joined hands and began singing along. After the song ended, one of the speakers, Willie Wells, put it as such: "I wanted to share my story because we have overcome to a degree, but still have a lot of work to do."

The events on Bloody Tuesday were a pivotal moment in the civil rights struggle for freedom, justice, and equality in Tuscaloosa.

### ART, CULTURE, & MONSTERS

Sandra Wolfe, the executive director of The Arts Council of Tuscaloosa, took another group on a walking tour of the arts district, including the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center and the historic Bama Theatre.

Along the way, participants were encouraged to keep their eyes open for monsters – 29 small bronze monsters hidden throughout downtown Tuscaloosa and the Riverwalk. The Monster Takeover is the byproduct of a collaboration between public school students who draw the monsters and write their



stories and University of Alabama art students who then sculpt their creations in bronze.

### CITY HALL

The tour of the City of Tuscaloosa administrative offices was much more innovative than one might think. For instance, rather than being distributed throughout many buildings across town, all client-facing personnel (yes, city citizens are referred to as "clients" and "customers") from each department were housed in one location for the comfort and efficiency of time for the client. In 30 minutes or less, and in one location, a builder can expect to handle all parts of requesting and receiving a permit.

The City Council chambers were small and unassuming. However, the big takeaway for this part of the tour was that city council meetings rarely last more than 45 minutes as most business is done very efficiently in committees prior to the meeting.

Lastly, the mayor's commitment to service to their client citizens was made evident by the investment in Disney customer service training had by all high-level leadership staff.



# 2018: Ann Arbor, MI

In 2018, Ann Arbor, Michigan, was selected due to its comparable population size at 120,000 residents, the strong presence of higher education and medical related companies as significant employers in the region (as well as high tech and automobile industries), a lower than average crime rate, and top livability and college town rankings by Livability and WalletHub. Throughout the trip, 70 trip attendees learned from Ann Arbor about its opportunities, including expansion of both student population and facilities at the University of Michigan, a vibrant downtown in terms of occupancy and mix of retail and office uses, and thriving technology and mobility sectors. One unique inside look during this trip included a visit to the University of Michigan's test facility for connected and automated vehicles, after which the delegation learned more about the facility with it as an example of partnerships with industry. However, the group also had meaningful conversations about challenges Ann Arbor faces in regards to housing affordability and demand and commute times; poverty and the disparity between neighboring communities in opportunity for economic mobility; and regional transportation needs. Other topics included a local economic forecast, efforts by law enforcement to divert those with mental health challenges from the jail system, and preparation of students for career pathways. The session on career pathways included representatives of Ann Arbor Public Schools, Washtenaw Intermediate School District, Washtenaw Community College, and Washtenaw Technical Middle College. The delegation latched on to the interesting concept of a collaboration between the community college and high schools through the



Technical Middle College program. This became one of the most widely reported items attendees wished to see come out of the 2018 trip, for how Moberly Area Community College and CPS could replicate a similar opportunity for local students who participate to graduate high school with an Associate's

degree. Columbia Public Schools and Moberly Area Community College have recently announced a High School 2.0 program based on what we heard in Ann Arbor, and the business community in particular that attended the visit is excited to hear how they can support this going forward.



# 2017: Lexington, KY

In 2017, Lexington, Kentucky, with a population of over 300,000, was selected as the destination for the Leadership Visit. The intentional choice in a city larger than usual was made for a more aspirational trip, giving attendees an opportunity to picture Columbia 50 years in the future. In doing so, attendees explored the opportunities and challenges Lexington experienced during that period of growth to consider what Columbia may experience in the coming years. Specifically, trip topics included local government service delivery, land use planning and economic development, social equity and thriving together, real estate market, health care sector collaboration, and leveraging higher education resources. With a city-county government that merged in 1974, a speaker from the government and a longtime community leader addressed how the setup enables the delivery of high-quality services to residents, but also what unique challenges result. Another session explored planning for land use and growth in the Lexington area, including the impact of an urban service boundary which was created in 1958 and last expanded in 1996, as well as the impact of the comprehensive plan and urban service boundary on economic development projects. With a visit occurring during October, the group had the opportunity to take in a late afternoon of networking while watching horse racing at Keeneland before the final day of the trip. Two very insightful sessions on the final day included a panel entitled “Thriving Together” during which the chief of police, president of the Urban League, school board representative, and chair of Commerce Lexington discussed collaboration between entities to ensure Lexington is a place where everyone can thrive.



This includes dialogue forums to openly discuss challenging topics such as police and community relations, race relations, gentrification, achievement gaps, and equity – and what work has yet to be done. Examples include the Together Lexington and Courageous Conversations endeavors. Lastly, a columnist from the Lexington

Herald-Leader was joined by a longtime community leader to reflect on the past 50 years in Lexington, and what community efforts have been successful or not. Some of the social issues and impact of policies such as land use on residents were topics that rose to the top in the reflections submitted by the 2017 attendees.



# 2016: Fort Collins, CO

The 2016 trip to Fort Collins, Colorado was attended by 58 leaders. Upon arriving from Denver, participants received an overview of the community from a representative of the city, touching on everything from arts and culture, to taxes to pay for the high quality of life enjoyed by Fort Collins residents.

Over the next three days, attendees explored downtown planning and zoning, quality of life in relation to workforce and retention of employees, city partnerships and relationship with the university and private sector, local legislative issues and emerging topics, highway funding, city transit planning, and university technology transfer. Participants also toured the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery as an example of a public-private partnership between a nonprofit and the City of Fort Collins. This occurred after the 2005 passage of a “Building on Basics” tax package, which funded a number of projects, including the merger of the Fort Collins Museum and Discovery Science Center

to create a combined scientific, historical, and cultural resource. Breakout sessions over lunch on the second day allowed attendees to discuss conversationally with local leaders on topics including the state of the real estate market, arts & culture, policing and crime, and education.

To relax at the end of the second day, participants were treated to a visit to the headquarters of New Belgium Brewery. Of the many topics explored on the 2016 trip, one impactful discussion included a session called “Transportation on Parade,” which included efforts in the arena of transportation such as fixing the I-25 North corridor from Denver, complete streets and bicycle transit, bus rapid transit, and collaboration between Colorado State University and the City on the Transfort transit system. The collaboration between the City of Fort Collins, Larimer County, the Chamber, and others on the Fix North I-25 initiative had particular relevance to Mid-Missouri’s highway infrastructure needs.





# 2015: Gainesville, FL

In 2015, the Leadership Visit destination was Gainesville, Florida, for which 49 leaders joined the Chamber. The trip began with a discussion on the regional airport, which saw unprecedented growth during the recovery from the economic downturn and shared information on service availability, funding, and plans for expansion. A session entitled “Gainesville: Open for Business” focused on government and private sector partnerships such as the Small Business Growth Task Force between the Gainesville Area Chamber of Commerce and mayor’s office to address opportunities to improve the business climate and spur growth. Former longtime Columbia resident and KMIZ newsperson Randy Wright, who directs the University of Florida Division of Media Properties, led a bus tour to give the group context and bearings about the community before the next two days of the visit. A session on research to marketplace with the office of Tech Transfer touched on efforts in Gainesville to support Tier 2 businesses which are poised to graduate from an incubator setting. Other sessions included university and community relations, and efforts by the business, education, and broader community to meet the workforce development needs of the area through talent attraction, development, and retention. Breakout session options included a look at the regional health system which took place at North Florida Regional Medical Center and a Public Transportation Session at the Corrine Brown Transit facility which had recently been completed with a federal grant. One very impactful session included a discussion at the police department headquarters that discussed crime prevention and intervention initiatives in the community.





# 2014: Knoxville, TN



In 2013, the Chamber Board of Directors approved a trial of a new program for the Columbia Chamber of Commerce: the annual Leadership Visit. A small group visited Lexington, Kentucky, that year to learn how their Chamber, which is well-known in the industry for running such a program, puts together their structure and agenda. In 2014, the Chamber conducted its inaugural Leadership Visit with 36 attendees to Knoxville, Tennessee. Upon arrival, attendees met with representatives from McGhee Tyson Airport about how they have continually expanded service to become one of the most convenient and accessible regional airports in the nation. The next session explored economic development in the Knoxville area through the lens of Innovation Valley, a corridor linking Oak Ridge National Laboratory and McGhee Tyson Airport to provide world-class resources in science, technology, and business. Participants were impressed with how well various partners in the community throughout the rest of the trip were on the same page with messaging surrounding a regional

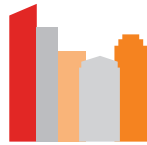


approach to economic development and the assets of their community. After leaving the airport facility, participants headed downtown to the Market Square District and beyond to visit what makes Knoxville's downtown stand out among others. On day two, the delegation heard presentations on sports and tourism, business and community relations and toured the Scripps campus, which is home to HGTV. Additional breakout tours included visits to the Knox County STEM Alliance, University of Tennessee Athletic facilities, and Knoxville Entrepreneur Center. The presentation, however, which captured the greatest attention, was



from Buzz Thomas, president of the Great Schools Partnership. Thomas shared that Knoxville believes the key to a successful future for Tennessee and Knox County is being able to provide opportunities for individuals and families to make a good living, and support quality education in preparation for entering Tennessee's workforce. The delegation returned repeating his key phrase: "The community with the best schools WINS!" The Columbia Public School District brought Thomas to Columbia the following year to share his message and participate in a World Café visioning discussion.





# Leadership Visit 2019

Columbia Chamber of Commerce

## Attendees

- Alexander Cartwright, Chancellor, University of Missouri
- Amy Schneider, Director, City of Columbia, Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Barry Roewe, Owner, TrueSon Exteriors
- Bert Hughes, Owner, Boone-Central Title
- Beth Bramstedt, Editorial Director, The Business Times Company
- Bill Turpin, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Economic Development, University of Missouri
- Brian Toohey, CEO, Columbia Board of REALTORS
- Carla London, Chief Equity Officer, Columbia Public Schools
- Carol Rhodes, Assistant City Manager, City of Columbia
- Chad Massman, Director of Membership, Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- Cheryl Jarvis, Senior Vice President, Landmark Bank
- Cole Knudsen, Manufacturing Director, Quaker Oats
- Dan Atwill, Presiding Commissioner, Boone County
- David Buster, Product Manager, 3M
- David Nivens, CEO, Midwest Computech
- Della Streaty-Wilhoit, Board Member, Columbia Board of Education
- Dianne Lynch, President, Stephens College
- Ed Scavone, Executive Vice President, Central Bank of Boone County
- Eric Morrison, SVP, Columbia Market President, Providence Bank
- Erica Pefferman, President, The Business Times Company
- Erik Morse, Resource for Humans, Veterans United Home Loans
- Gary Ward, Vice Chancellor for Operations & COO, University of Missouri
- Gina Rende, Broker & Salesperson, Maly Commercial Realty
- Greg Brockmeier, Financial Advisor, Brockmeier Financial Services LLC
- Jackie Walters, Major Gifts Officer, Masonic Home of Missouri
- Jay Lindner, President, Lindner Properties
- Jeff Lashley, President, Moberly Area Community College
- Jen Hedrick, President, Simon Oswald Architecture
- Joe Miller, Central Missouri President, First State Community Bank
- John Glascock, City Manager, City of Columbia
- Jolyn Sattizahn, Vice President of Community Affairs, Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- Kelly Hequembourg, Sr. Project Manager, River City Construction
- Kelly Myers, Development Director, Coyote Hill Christian Children's Home
- Keri Tipton, CEO & President, Bucket Media
- Kevin Czaicki, Account Director, CenturyLink
- Kevin Gwin, Chief Patient Experience officer, MU Health Care
- Kori Sands, Sr. Media Buyer, Bucket Media
- Lakeela Mings, Information Specialist, Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- Laura Gerding, Corporate Communications Strategist, Missouri Employers Mutual
- Lawrence Simonson, Chief Strategy Officer, PedNet Coalition
- Les Borgmeyer, VP Marketing & Sales, Visionworks Marketing Group
- Marshall Stewart, Vice Chancellor and Chief Engagement Officer, University of Missouri
- Marty Oetting, Chief of Staff, University of Missouri
- Matt Garrett, General Manager, KOMU 8
- Matt McCormick, President, Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- Matt Pitzer, City Council Member, Ward 5, City of Columbia, City Council
- Matt Pritchard, Regional Director External Affairs, AT&T
- Mike Grellner, Broker, Plaza Commercial Realty
- Mike Griggs, Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Columbia, Parks & Recreation
- Mike Ireland, Regional President, The Bank of Missouri
- Mike Parks, Airport Manager, City of Columbia, Columbia Regional Airport
- Mike Trapp, City Council Member, Ward 2, City of Columbia, City Council
- Nancy Thompson, City Counselor, City of Columbia
- Nick Allen, President, Manor Roofing & Restoration Services
- Nickie Davis, Director of Outreach, The District
- Nikki McGruder, Director, Inclusive Impact Institute
- Piyusha Singh, Provost, VP Academic Affairs, Columbia College
- Randy Gooch, Chief Operations Officer, Columbia Public Schools
- Rodney Gray, Attorney, Law Polsinelli PC
- Rusty Dutton, General Superintendent, Capital Holding Group / Paving & Construction
- Rusty Strodman, General Manager, Columbia Mall
- Sarah Dresser, Manager, Office of Cultural Affairs, City of Columbia
- Stacey Button, Director of Economic Development & President, City of Columbia & REDI
- Stacye Smith, Director of Human Resources, Shelter Insurance Companies
- Steve Smith, President & CEO, Job Point
- Steve Sowers, President & CEO, Commerce Bank
- Susan Blackburn, Board Member, Columbia Board of Education
- Susan Hart, Vice President, Huebert Builders, Inc.
- Teresa Maledy, Board Member, Columbia Board of Education
- Whitney Schieber, Director of Membership Engagement, Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- Zach Silvers, Principal Director of Advancement, MU Health Care



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