



# Envision Revises Roadmap for the Future



Envision volunteers, strategy partners and elected officials from both Mobile and Baldwin counties attended the half-day planning session to update Envision program goals and objectives in the areas of economy, education, environment and equity. This activity served as Envision's kick-off event for the 2010 year.

**O**n Envision Coastal Alabama's 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary, volunteers, strategy partners and community stakeholders are updating the focus of the organization's future. In January, 75 area leaders led by Envision co-chairs Donna Watts with the South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, and Mike Hofto with Leavell Investment Management, met in Baldwin County to devise attainable short-term goals.

It is only the third large-scale planning meeting for Envision since the organization rebranded to encompass both sides of Mobile Bay in 2001.

According to Shayla Jones Beaco, director of local affairs for the Mobile Area Chamber and Envision liaison, a changing economic and environmental landscape created the need for a new strategy. She said the regional planning session emphasized developing an action-oriented community and economic framework for Envision's

four E-teams – economy, education, environment and equity.

Ramona Hill with Workshops Etc! facilitated the half-day workshop and challenged individuals to look no farther than two to five years in the future. It was an opportunity for team co-leaders and volunteers to hammer out their most pressing needs and share them with the group as a whole.

Participants included representatives from corporations, nonprofits, area government and grass-roots organizations. Sheila Dean-Rosenbohm, vice president, planning and administration for International Shipholding Corp., offered her ideas to the education team. "While in my corporate role, I was torn between economy and education teams, I felt I needed to work with education to help find ways to improve graduation rates and

provide employees capable of working for area companies," she said.

Envision equity team member and Habitat for Humanity (Mobile County) Development Director Dave Betler said he was encouraged by the workshop's potential to point all the groups in a similar direction, "This meeting demonstrated value by

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**Dave Betler**

*Habitat for Humanity (Mobile County)  
Development Director*

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Planners succeeded in identifying a concise vision for the immediate future. But meeting organizers and participants agreed, without action, their efforts would be for naught. "By bringing a number of voices together, we hope the outcome is commitment," Hill said. "This is not magic that will happen overnight. It requires staying power."

## Envision Coastal Alabama Mission

Envision Coastal Alabama facilitates co-operative action for a unified coastal region with a healthy environment, sustainable economic development, equity for all and excellence in education.

## Envision's Updated Goals

### Economy

The Economy strategies focus on the sustainable economic development of the Mobile-Baldwin region by providing more high-quality jobs and creating a stronger workforce. The strategies aim to make Coastal Alabama a competitive region in the global economy by developing and marketing the area's unique resources in technology, environment, education and human capital.

### Education

The Education strategies focus on promoting a culture that values and supports an effective education system that graduates students who are career- and college-ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

### Environment

The Environment strategies focus on protecting, restoring, maintaining, conserving and promoting the value of the natural resources of Coastal Alabama. The strategies emphasize planning, revitalizing and developing the regional infrastructure with the least negative impact, while enhancing quality of life.

### Equity

The Equity strategies focus on developing effective grassroots leadership, increasing opportunities for all citizens of Coastal Alabama to participate as full partners in the region by implementing equal access to technology, housing, education and employment, increasing access to public transportation, financial stability and healthy lifestyles.

# Spotlight on an Envision Strategy Partner – Partners for Environmental Progress

It has long been said, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” Now that axiom holds true for area industry. Hoping to keep waste out of the landfill, avoid transportation costs of by-products and do the right thing for the environment, a group of area corporations launched a project to turn one company’s waste or by-product into another’s raw material.

Known as By-Product Synergy (BPS) Central Gulf Coast and implemented by Envision Coastal Alabama strategy partner PEP (Partners for Environmental Progress), the initiative is a collaborative network of large and small businesses looking for reuse synergy.

“It’s all about making businesses

leaner, cleaner and greener – more efficient and more sustainable,” said Jennifer Denson, PEP’s executive director. She added, “BPS (by-product synergy) is industry mimicking natural ecosystems. Natural systems do not produce waste – everything is reused.”

Evonik Degussa, one of the 12 businesses partnering on this PEP initiative, sends chemical by-products to companies that use them in fertilizer and fuel, saving the plant \$750,000 annually and reducing waste by

6.7 million pounds. While Evonik Degussa started its partnership prior to the development of PEP’s program, it illustrates the savings and benefits BPS can have.

Examples of industrial and business waste with reuse potential are diverse and include chemical by-products, construction debris, wooden pallets, metal drums, cardboard, plastic or restaurant grease. Waste is not limited to things you can touch or send to the landfill. Proponents of BPS say it also promotes waste avoidance by increasing energy efficiency, reducing fuel consumption for transportation of materials and decreasing virgin material use.

All add up to what Gary Criscione, director of procurement for Evonik

Degussa and PEP’s vice president, calls the triple bottom line – environmental, economic and social benefits. “From a social aspect, doing the right thing for the environment can save or create jobs,” he said. “And certainly, no company is going to deny that there’s an economic benefit too.”

According to Denson, the BPS project is a natural fit for PEP. Founded in 2000, the nonprofit organization was formed with the mission of using science and facts to promote

economic growth while enhancing air and water quality in the region. In the past, PEP has weighed in on issues such as the expansion of U.S. Hwy. 98 across Big Creek Lake in Mobile County and a proposed offshore-liquefied natural gas terminal. But, PEP board president Tom Damson with Long’s Human Resource Services said, three years ago, the group decided to find a project that would have a positive environmental impact and give value to companies.

Rolled out in July 2009, the Gulf Coast BPS program, based on a model developed by the U.S. Business Council for Sustainable Development, is one of only six such formal alliances in the nation, joining established projects in larger cities such as Chicago, Seattle and Kansas City.

Companies pay a fee to join the partnership and the search for synergy among the businesses begins by cataloguing each participant’s inflows and outflows in a confidential uniform database. Manufacturing and trade secrets are guarded as a technical team of engineers headed by Dr. John Steadman, dean of the College of Engineering at University of South Alabama, analyzes the data to identify initial synergies.

While Criscione said it only takes one match to justify time and money invested in identifying a synergy, even without a match companies can save internally by improving best practices.

Criscione and Damson agreed the future and science of PEP’s BPS efforts depend on enlisting a diverse core of new businesses as well as being aligned with area government and organizations such as Envision that advocate for both the environment and the economy.

PEP is devising a plan to make BPS affordable to smaller companies and sees the cutting-edge recycling alliance as a possible recruiting tool for bringing corporations to the area. “This is a plus for economic development. Corporations looking at our area could be run through the synergy matrix. For a

lot of companies, here’s real hard dollars in their pocket,” Damson said.

For more information visit [www.pepmobile.org/BPS](http://www.pepmobile.org/BPS) or contact Jennifer Denson at 345-7269 or [jdenson@pepmobile.org](mailto:jdenson@pepmobile.org).



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**Jennifer Denson**  
Partners for Environmental Progress  
Executive Director

## Advantages of By-Product Synergy Central Gulf Coast:

- Matches regional industries for sharing by-products
- Diverts material from the landfill
- Reduces energy resource consumption (e.g. motor fuels for transportation)
- Decreases virgin material use
- Increases company profits
- Creates or saves jobs in the local workforce

## BPS Central Gulf Coast Partners:

- Alabama Power
- Arkema
- BASF
- E.I. DuPont
- Evonik Degussa
- ExxonMobil
- Huntsman Advanced Materials
- Mitsubishi Polysilicon
- Oil Recovery
- Southern Ionics
- Veolia Environmental Services
- University of South Alabama

## Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance Introduces New Operations Manager

The Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance (BCEDA) announced the appointment of its newest team member, Amanda McKinley Selph. She will serve



as operations manager for BCEDA, following the departure of Karen Glover. Selph is a Baldwin County native and has worked with the alliance in the past through her positions at the North and Central Baldwin Chambers of Commerce.

“We are thrilled to have Amanda join our team. She brings both strong skills and economic development experience to our

organization,” said Robert Ingram, BCEDA president and chief executive officer. “As a Baldwin county native, Amanda shares our love of our region and is a wonderful asset to both the alliance and the entire lower Alabama area.”

Selph graduated from the Bay Minette campus of Huntingdon College with a bachelor’s of science degree in business management.

“I am proud to become a member of the BCEDA team. I am even more proud to call Baldwin County my home and be a part of something that will take it from great to even greater,” Selph said. “I was born and raised in Bay Minette, and I have a deep desire to see our county thrive to remain a place that I love

to live, work and raise my family.”

In addition to her responsibilities with BCEDA, Selph will collaborate with Envision Coastal Alabama Director Shayla Jones Beaco of the Mobile Area Chamber. In 1996, BCEDA was established as the host entity for Envision in Baldwin County as counterpart to the Mobile Area Chamber. Together, Selph and Beaco will assist the Envision team chairs in the implementation of Envision projects and programs planned throughout Mobile and Baldwin counties.

Contact Selph at the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance at 947-5721 or [aselph@baldwineda.com](mailto:aselph@baldwineda.com). Beaco can be reached at 431-8628 or [sbeaco@mobilechamber.com](mailto:sbeaco@mobilechamber.com).

# Business Incubators: A Resource for a New Regional Economy



Recent unemployment rates have placed greater focus on regional economic growth strategies working to stimulate job creation, self-employment and enterprise creation. While industry recruitment efforts play a significant role in the global world of economic development, there is widespread belief the growth of small- to medium-sized companies will serve as the primary engine fueling our region's and country's long term economic recovery.

For that reason, the creation of a regional support structure helping new businesses get started and existing businesses grow, becomes increasingly important. One support system is the business incubator, a one-stop-shop business resource center offering training programs helping companies survive and grow during the start-up period when they are considered most vulnerable.

The National Business Incubator

Association defines a traditional incubator as a facility characterized by shared space, shared services and shared equipment in a controlled overhead environment with extensive on-site consulting and training. Incubators offer programming for strategic planning, legal support, networking and access to needed capital. A strong business incubation program can dramatically increase the number of new businesses making it through the critical first few years of operation.

The classic "brick and mortar" model approach was developed for the Mobile area in 1986 under a partnership between the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, the City of Mobile and Mobile County. Established as the Business Innovation Center (BIC) and later expanded to the Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence, the Mobile BIC is credited with providing

support services to an impressive list of graduate companies. Southern Light, a fiber-optic-based telecommunications company and BIC graduate ranked 151 on *Inc. Magazine's* 2007 list of the 500 fastest growing private companies in the U.S. Other BIC graduates, include Star Aviation, MapuSoft Technologies Inc., Mobile Group Inc., Professional Estimating Services, and Retail Technologies, Inc.

Baldwin County has adopted a "virtual" model of the business incubator. Companies participating in this program can be located anywhere in the county and receive mentoring services. The Baldwin County program is a joint venture of the five chambers of commerce and the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance, an Envision Coastal Alabama strategy partner. The virtual incubator utilizes existing small business assistance programs and integrates expertise from

a list of network providers including the University of South Alabama, Baldwin County Library Cooperative, Faulkner State Community College, the Service Core of Retired Executives (SCORE) and the five

Chambers of Commerce in Baldwin County. Both the Mobile and Baldwin models can provide the initial groundwork vital to the success and sustainability of up-and-coming companies.

Bob Higgins and Tom Siegwald contributed to this article. Higgins is the vice president for the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance and director of the Baldwin County Business Incubator. He serves on Envision Coastal Alabama's economy and education teams. He can be reached at 947-2445 or bhiggins@baldwineda.com. Siegwald is the co-director of the Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence. He can be reached at 660-7002 or siegwald@ceebic.org.

Individuals interested in starting a business in Mobile County can contact the BIC at 660-7002 or visit [www.ceebic.org](http://www.ceebic.org).

For services in Baldwin County contact 947-2445 or [www.baldwinincubator.com](http://www.baldwinincubator.com).

# Envision 2010 Plan of Action

*At the January regional planning meeting, the four e-teams revised their goals to reflect attainable initiatives for the near future. Each team came away with a clear plan of action for the next five years.*



## Economy

- Host quarterly mayors' meetings to identify and address common issues.
- Support the Mobile Area Chamber's Gallis Initiative (Interchange) to define a Mobile Bay area regional plan (with business input).
- Host events to support constitutional reform.
- Support the education of existing businesses regarding sustainable business practices.

## Education

- Promote awareness and support initiatives of the Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC).
- Communicate with and involve chambers, businesses and trade associations to become active partners in education initiatives and policy reform.
- Identify, connect and encourage community agencies and faith-based organizations offering programs that help achieve the goal of graduating students who are career- and/or college-ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.
- Facilitate collaborative action among all education foundations that will foster partnerships with local school districts.



## Environment

- Host a summit for stakeholders interested in environmental issues to create and implement a communication and efficiency plan to improve and reach citizens and decision makers.
- Implement a social network for an environmental action warning system.
- Encourage and facilitate regional coordination and eliminate redundancy of effort in the areas of transit and stormwater management

## Equity

- Develop a grassroots leadership initiative with support from public, private and governmental organizations.
- Promote safe and healthier lifestyles among targeted populations.
- Promote financial education and literacy to help individuals from all walks of life build financial knowledge and security.
- Develop a plan to improve and maintain the "aging housing stock."
- Promote opportunities for better access to public transportation in urban and rural communities.





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## New Envision Team Leaders Passionate About Involvement

They have diverse backgrounds but common goals. Envision education team co-leaders **Amanda Outlaw** and **Terry Burkle** and environment team co-leader **Jennifer Denson** enter their new roles as Envision charts a path for the next two years. All three women see their positions as an opportunity to take action finding realistic answers to issues facing residents on the Gulf Coast.

Outlaw, an urban regional extension agent with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System brings consumer science, personal financial management and youth leadership programs to public school students in Mobile and Baldwin County. She replaces Mobile team chair **Dr. Rhonda Neal Waltman**. A volunteer with Envision since its inception in 1997, Outlaw previously offered her time to both the equity and education teams. Outlaw said she would like to build a consensus among parents, community, schools and area education foundations to develop an educated workforce. "Fifty percent of our kids do not go on to college. We need to make sure they're on track to be a viable part of our community," she said.



Outlaw

Joining Outlaw is **Burkle**, vice president of the South Baldwin Chamber Foundation, a nonprofit organization supporting education enrichment and leadership development in south Baldwin County schools. She replaces **Jim Kellen**. **Burkle** was formerly the South Baldwin Chamber's communication's director. She sees one of her objectives as improving dialogue among the eight area education enrichment foundations. "To be successful, we have to come together to establish a coalition for community wide goals. Envision is the conduit to take our goals to a regional level," **Burkle** said.



Burkle

On the environment team, **Denson**, executive director for Partners for Environmental Progress (PEP), succeeds **Dr. George Crozier**. In her role at PEP, **Denson** advocates for economic development while also protecting the environment. "As a voice of both the business and environment communities, I value the opportunity to work with other leaders in solving our most pressing environmental concerns," she said. A Mobile native, **Denson** spent 14 years in Washington D.C. managing government relations, field and research/publication programs for the national nonprofit group Federation for American Immigration Reform.



Denson

## 2010 Envision Co-Chairs



Envision co-chairs and team chairs are selected from both Baldwin and Mobile counties and are appointed to lead each of the program's four e-teams – economy, education, environment and equity. Pictured here are the 2010 Envision co-chairs and team chairs. From left to right, front row, Mobile Environment Team Chair **Jennifer Denson**, Partners for Environmental Progress; Baldwin Environment Team Chair **Bethany Kraft**, Alabama Coastal Foundation; Baldwin Economy Team Chair **Ray Moore**, Hutchinson Moore and Rauch; and Mobile Education Team Chair **Amanda Outlaw**, Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Second row, Mobile Economy Team Chair **Steve Walker**, The Walker Company; Baldwin Education Team Chair **Terry Burkle**, South Baldwin Chamber Foundation; Mobile Co-Chair **Mike Hofto**, Leavell Investment Management; Mobile Equity Team Chair **Shirley Sessions**, Regions Bank; Baldwin Equity Team Chair **Chris Miller**, South Alabama Regional Planning Commission; and Baldwin Co-Chair **Donna Watts**, South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce.

## The YWCA of Greater Mobile Takes a Stand Against Racism

Envision Coastal Alabama's equity team is supporting "Stand Against Racism," a movement aimed at bringing people together to raise awareness of the importance of justice and equality. The YWCA of Greater Mobile is hosting the event Friday, April 30.

Interested individuals, schools, churches and other organizations are asked to join

the campaign by hosting local "Stands," ranging from private gatherings to large-scale public rallies and marches.

Visit [www.StandAgainstRacism.org](http://www.StandAgainstRacism.org) to join the movement or contact the YWCA's **Lenice Emanuel** at 476-7733 or [lemanuel@ywcamobile.org](mailto:lemanuel@ywcamobile.org).

If you are interested in getting involved with Envision Coastal Alabama, contact **Amanda Selph**, Baldwin County coordinator, at 947-5721 or [aselph@baldwineda.com](mailto:aselph@baldwineda.com). **Shayla Jones Beaco**, Mobile County director, can be reached at 431-8628 or [sbeaco@mobilechamber.com](mailto:sbeaco@mobilechamber.com).