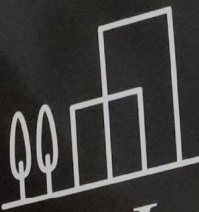


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THE FLATS
DEMOPOLIS

THE NOOK

THE NEW BLUEPRINT FOR RURAL GROWTH

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THE NEW BLUEPRINT FOR RURAL GROWTH

Tucked between the Tombigbee and Black Warrior rivers in west Alabama, Demopolis is redefining what it means to be a rural community in the 21st Century.

A historic river town with roots dating back over 200 years, Demopolis is renowned for its small-town charm, scenic beauty, and strong sense of community. Once an agricultural and industrial hub, it's now becoming a center for innovation, investment, and opportunity.

Since receiving a Main Street Alabama designation in 2022, the city has welcomed numerous new businesses and seen more than \$4.8 million in private investment.

Storefronts are filling. Sidewalks are busier. And the sense of momentum is growing.

The momentum didn't happen overnight. It came from the people who have always believed in this place, and few embody that spirit more than Hugh Overmyer.

A lifelong Marengo County resident, Overmyer is the owner of the town's top hotel, the Best Western Plus Two Rivers Hotel & Suites, and the developer behind seven residential and commercial properties in downtown Demopolis.

"Some people thought I had lost my mind investing that much in what was a dead downtown a few



years ago," Overmyer said. "But I feel great about it."

Overmyer's work isn't new to the area—it runs in his blood. For decades, his family's business, Linden Lumber Company, was the largest employer in the county.

After graduating from Auburn in 1994, Overmyer returned home to help run the family business before transitioning into local investment and development.

"I didn't understand economic development back then. I was just busy running a growing company," he said. "But since stepping away, I've had the time and perspective to see what our community really needs."

Overmyer believes Demopolis needs leadership not just at City Hall but also from committed, civic-minded business leaders willing to invest their own time, resources, and energy into shaping the future.

"We can't wait for someone from out of town to come and save our downtowns or build our neighborhoods," said Sean Parker, former Main Street Demopolis board president. "People like Hugh are stepping up and proving what's possible."

And Demopolis is proving it can meet the moment.

"This is a window in time that is unlike anything we've seen since the 1950s, when Gulf States Paper came to town, neighborhoods were built, and Demopolis grew," Parker said. "We have that chance again, and we can't afford to waste it."

The state sees the potential, too. Major public investments are signaling that Demopolis is a town that can lead the way.

The West Alabama Highway project, a product of the Rebuild Alabama Act, is a new four-lane divided corridor through Demopolis



MartinFed

that will help link the port, manufacturing centers, and rural communities that have long needed better infrastructure.

Just across town, the Alabama School of Healthcare Sciences is taking shape—a first-of-its-kind high school dedicated to training the next generation of rural healthcare workers. With students from across the state, the school will equip graduates to meet the urgent need for healthcare professionals in rural Alabama.

"Establishing this specialty school here in Demopolis is no doubt the most significant investment in West Alabama in decades," Governor Ivey said during remarks at the ceremonial establishment of the Alabama School of Healthcare Sciences. "It will change the trajectory of rural health care in our state."

With that kind of growth comes the need for housing, infrastructure, and further economic development.

Investors like Overmyer are already seeing those opportunities.

Overmyer's latest project, The Flats, is a luxury short-term rental

the next generation.

That's where his daughter, Caroline Overmyer Stephens, runs Strother, an interior design and event plan-

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—SEAN PARKER, FORMER MAIN STREET DEMOPOLIS BOARD PRESIDENT

and mixed-use development that has breathed new life into a once-vacant corner of town.

The upstairs features seven high-end apartments for short-term rental. Downstairs, Overmyer's investment in Demopolis continues with

ning shop. After graduating from the University of Alabama, she returned home to launch the business in the heart of downtown.

That sense of generational commitment and civic pride is at the heart of what makes smaller communi-



ties like Demopolis unique.

Helena Duncan, president and CEO of the Business Council of Alabama, was proud to attend the ribbon cutting of The Flats in June. She said leaders like Overmyer show how BCA can partner with small towns to help them grow.

"What we're seeing in Demopolis is the result of local leadership, long-term vision, and a strong business community that is ready to act. BCA is committed to supporting rural voices and connecting them with the resources, policy access, and partnerships they need to suc-

ceed," Duncan said.

Parker agrees. "Not every community has a Hugh Overmyer, but every community has someone who cares. What we need are more people who believe they have a voice and are willing to use it. Organizations like BCA help amplify that voice."

Overmyer says it requires working with state leaders and regional partners to share ideas and push for change.

"You learn a lot when you run companies—about people, contracts, construction—you name it," he said. "But you also learn

that local government can only do so much. It's up to the business community to step in and help solve problems."

Looking ahead, Overmyer hopes his investments and his example will encourage others to get involved.

"I live here. I want this to be a better place for my kids and grandkids. For my friends. For my wife and me," he said. "You can either sit back and complain or you can step up and help build something better."

Thanks to community leaders like Overmyer, Demopolis's best days may still be ahead.

The Business Advocate is published by the Business Council of Alabama, a non-partisan, statewide business association representing the interests and concerns of nearly 1 million working Alabamians through its member companies and its partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama. For more information on the Business Council of Alabama, please contact us at (334) 834-6000 or visit us online at bcatoday.org.