

Center Point Leverages Economic Development Academy Experience to Shape its Future

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The Alabama League of Municipalities, in partnership with the Alabama Community College System, created the Economic Development Academy (EDA) in 2021 to educate and engage municipal officials on the essential elements and phases of economic development. The EDA engages elected officials from participating cities and towns with municipal peers from their region to prepare their communities for growth. Up to seven people can participate per community including mayors, councilmembers, city administrators, city clerks, economic developers, business leaders and more.

In this magazine edition, we are excited to spotlight the city of Center Point for their participation in the first EDA class in 2022! The city of Center Point has existed as a long-established community in northeastern Jefferson County, Alabama for decades, but it officially gained incorporation status in 2002. It serves a diverse suburban community within the Birmingham metropolitan area, accounting for more than 16,000 residents. As a young city, it continues to build its identity through revitalization efforts, community beautification initiatives, youth engagement programs and ongoing investments in public safety, infrastructure and quality-of-life improvements.

Center Point Pursues Economic Development Education

The Center Point EDA committee consisted of Mayor Bobby Scott Jr., Councilmember Glenn Williams, Councilmember Ebonee Copeland, Councilmember D.M. Collins, Councilmember Sharon Jones, Councilmember Tiffany Moore and Buddy Aydelette, the city's economic development specialist.

Mayor Scott has served in his role since 2020, after previously serving on the city council from 2016 to 2020. Prior to public service, he worked for 17 years as a software engineer for a Fortune 500 financial, technology company as well as in hospitality roles at two major hotels.

"My experience in software engineering taught me analytical thinking, efficiency and long-term problem solving. My hospitality experience reinforced communication, responsiveness and customer service," Mayor Scott said. "Together, these experiences shape my belief that local government should be data-driven, accessible and focused on delivering practical solutions for residents and businesses."

Utilizing his experiences, he said their community applied to the League's Economic Development Academy to strengthen their economic development strategy and better position Center Point for long-term growth. Their goal was to gain structured guidance, data-driven tools and practical strategies to improve business recruitment, retention and redevelopment efforts.

**For more information
about the EDA program,
scan this QR code.**



“The most valuable aspect of EDA was collaborating with municipal leaders from across Alabama,” Mayor Scott said. “The program provided an opportunity to share challenges, exchange ideas and learn practical strategies that could be applied directly to local economic development efforts.”

Using a collaborative municipal team approach, EDA participants convene four times throughout the year to complete assignments and develop strategies to enhance their economic development efforts. Every participating community is required to complete a community economic vitality survey to assess positives and areas for improvement within their communities.

The survey highlighted strengths such as strong community pride, strategic location within the Birmingham metropolitan area and redevelopment opportunities. It also identified challenges including infrastructure needs, commercial vacancies, public perception concerns and the need for expanded economic opportunities.

Center Point Positions Itself for Long-Term Success

Each participating EDA municipality is required to implement a community project and to report on its progress. Center Point’s approved EDA project focused on developing a long-term economic development strategy centered on business recruitment and commercial corridor revitalization. A key component of this plan was securing a \$250,000 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) business development grant to attract new commercial investment and support façade improvements for brick-and-mortar businesses along State Route 75 (Center Point Parkway).

Mayor Scott added, “The program has remained active through 2026 and has proven successful, helping attract multiple restaurants and retail establishments while improving the appearance and economic vitality of the corridor.”



ALM Executive Director Greg Cochran, Center Point Mayor Bobby Scott, Center Point Councilmember Glenn Williams and ACCS Chancellor Jimmy Baker pose for a photo during the first EDA graduation ceremony in 2022.



In addition to these efforts, Center Point has continued to advance sidewalk improvements, commercial redevelopment planning and expanded partnerships with businesses and community stakeholders. The city has also increased its use of grants and strategic investments to support economic growth.

Mayor Scott adds that the city has attended International Council of Shopping Centers events, in partnership with the League, as part of its strategy to recruit national and regional businesses during the past couple of years.

Furthermore, EDA participating communities are able to work with a slate of state and federal leaders that serve on the EDA Advisory Council to provide advice, training and resources from their unique perspectives.

“Key learning areas included strategic planning, economic development recruitment, community branding, stakeholder engagement, project prioritization and sustainable development practices,” Mayor Scott said. “The program also emphasized leveraging partnerships and using data to guide decision-making.”

Mayor Scott recommends cities participate in EDA with openness and a willingness to collaborate.

“It is important to be honest about challenges while also recognizing strengths,” he said. “The greatest value comes from actively applying the strategies learned to long-term planning and implementation.”

Community Success Takes Vision and Leadership

Every successful community needs vision and strong leadership. The League loves to highlight the value of its programs and those that represent the organization exceptionally well. It is important to note that before participating in EDA, Center Point earned the designation of becoming an Alabama Community of Excellence in 2020! The League oversees the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program, which was created in 2002.

Mayor Scott serves on the ALM Board of Directors, the Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation (AMFund) Board of Directors and has earned the Certified Municipal Official (CMO) Emeritus designation. On the national level, he currently serves as president of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials and as vice chair of the Information Technology and Communications Committee through the National League of Cities.

Mayor Scott said, “Each program has provided distinct value. The CMO program strengthened municipal leadership and governance knowledge. ACE focused on strategic planning and community assessment. The League and national committee involvement expanded policy exposure, networking opportunities and innovative ideas from municipalities across the country. Together, these experiences have strengthened our ability to implement economic development strategies and prepare for programs like EDA.”

The League has had a total of 50 communities to graduate from the EDA program. The League did not hold an academy in 2026 since the majority of Alabama municipalities hosted elections in the fall of 2025. The League will open applications for the 2027 class very soon! Reach out to Mary Jackson Pollard, director of professional and community development, if you are interested in learning more about the program or scan the QR code to access the EDA webpage.

The League is excited for the future of Mayor Scott and city of Center Point as they continue focusing on their goals of redevelopment, infrastructure improvements, business recruitment and quality-of-life initiatives to support youth, working families and senior citizens. ■

