



NEWS RELEASE

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City of Gadsden earns Innovate Alabama Network community designation

Gadsden, AL – On Tuesday, Mayor Craig Ford announced the City of Gadsden earned one of the state’s top honors for economic innovation by being admitted to the Innovate Alabama Network. This competitive designation is awarded to Alabama communities supporting innovation and the knowledge economy.

The designation program is administered by Innovate Alabama, which is a statewide public-private partnership focused on entrepreneurship, technology, and innovation. The organization was formed as a result of Governor Kay Ivey’s Alabama Innovation Commission in 2021 to implement the commission’s recommendations.

“It’s an honor to be recognized for the work Gadsden is doing,” said Ford. “I say Gadsden is doing the work because Gadsden is doing the work. Residents, investors, and entrepreneurs are cutting trails, establishing incubators, and transforming teaching for a future-focused workforce. The City of Gadsden is simply doing whatever we can to come alongside them and help move the needle for our region. We are all working together to redefine the narrative about Gadsden, and being designated as an Innovate Alabama Network community is another major step in that direction.”

The city council approved Mayor Ford’s request to apply for the Innovate Alabama Network designation in January, which comes with a financial award of \$20,000. The city plans to use



these funds to develop an innovation-related healthcare technology recruitment program in partnership with the Gadsden-Etowah Industrial Development Authority.

“This innovation designation goes a long way with industrial recruitment,” said David Hooks, the authority's executive director. “When everybody’s got the same old economic incentives on the table, the competition can be fierce. Something like the Innovate Alabama Network can make all the difference. It tells investors: ‘Hey, we’re serious about the future of your industry.’ And with our low cost of living, beautiful waterways and greenways, a thriving healthcare base, and dedicated connectivity, cities like Gadsden look much better to today's savvy tech leader.”

The Innovate Alabama organization’s primary mission is to empower entrepreneurs, business owners, and students to build a business, a career, and a life in Alabama. To accomplish its mission, the organization focuses on talent development, resource access, and lifestyle and recreation ecosystems.



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