



TABLE OF CONTENTS



EARTH Mission	3
The Goal & Model	4
The Opportunity	5
The Vision	6
SAFE is the Cornerstone	7
SAFE + EARTH Ecosystem Partners	8
Innovation Pillars Descriptions	9-11
Front of building rendering	12
Site Map	13
Interior Renderings	14-22
Aerial & Site Photos	23-24
Tiny Home Construction	25
Campus Capital Stack	26
Boards (EARTH & SAFE)	27-28
Project Lead Info	29
Extended Team	30
Closing Message	31-32

earth

is a multi-disciplinary, integrated, whole-life workforce development program, dedicated to the growth of human capital and the increase of sustainable, economic, and social growth within communities.

THE MISSION



EAST ALABAMA RURAL INNOVATION & TRAINING HUB

THE GOAL & MODEL



The goal of **EARTH** is to increase regional prosperity by being a globally competitive, business-friendly region, comprised of healthy communities that sustain a high-quality of life.

The model for this project will provide a comprehensive approach to develop human capital, foster innovation, create jobs, leverage local resources and infrastructure, and expand community, county, and regional engagement.



THE OPPORTUNITY



EARTH is reclaiming the connotation of the word 'rural' with positive, forward-thinking, and progressive momentum. Rural America has faced significant setbacks over the past century - companies shutting down, people leaving, and environmental problems impacting humans, education, and business.

The rural areas of Talladega County and the East Alabama region have unique assets to create economic change, with affordable cost of living, acreage for expansive industries, strong communities, and hard-working people.

EARTH has identified, utilized, and continues to enhance and create regional assets that support economic competitiveness utilizing an Asset-Based Economic Development framework created by the Center for Sustainable Communities.



THE VISION



EARTH is an economic development solution that includes incubation and innovation of rural ideas while focusing on knowledge-based skills and education, technology growth, and entrepreneurship across the lifespan.

The campus will be expansive, allowing organizations the space to serve, collaborate, and solve regional and global problems.

SAFE



SAFE is the cornerstone of the EARTH ecosystem.

SAFE (Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement Inc.) is a community-based, nonprofit organization whose purpose is to provide meaningful opportunities for families, to contribute to the growth of our community, and to promote community cohesion.

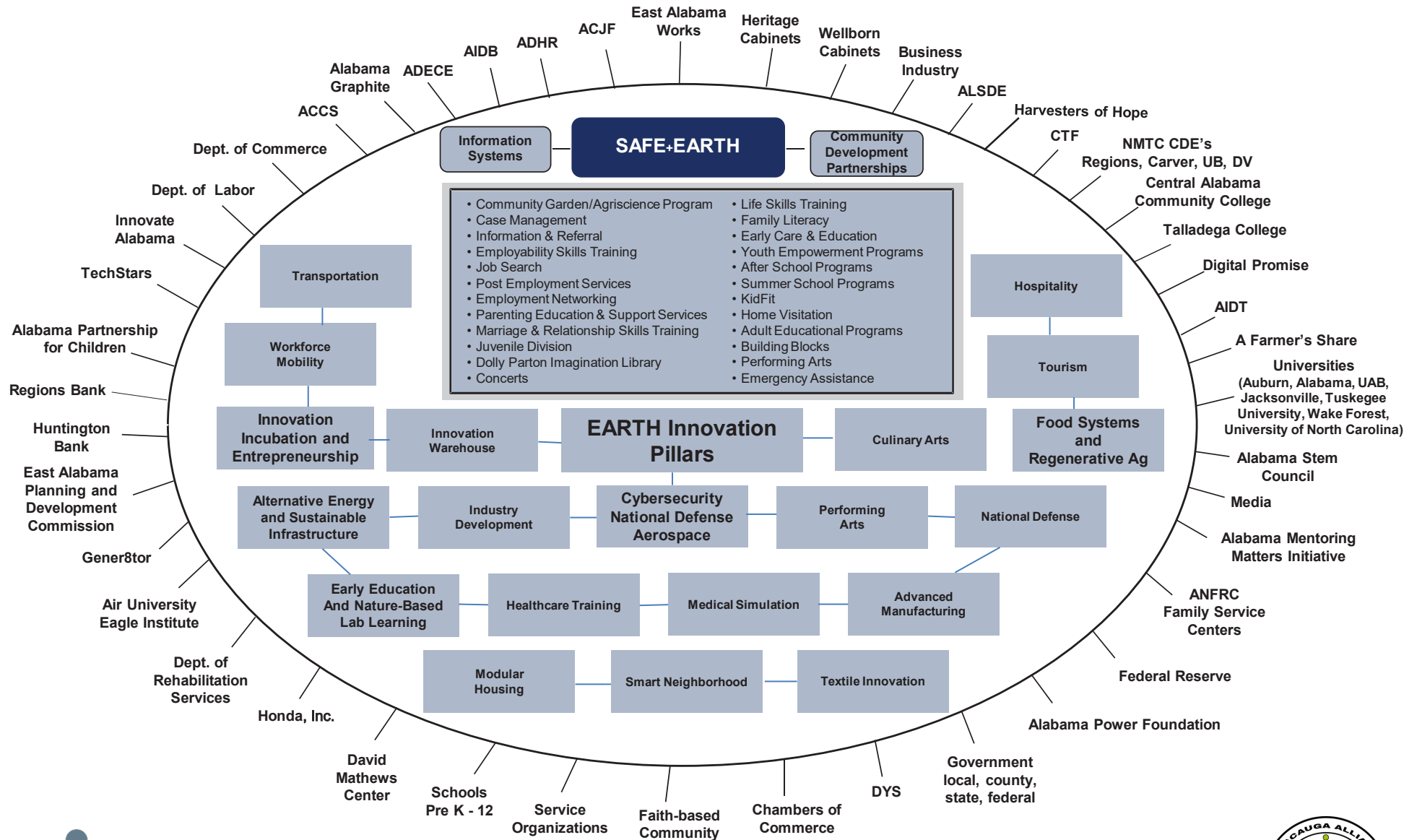
SAFE established three goals for its strategic agenda:

- 1) Identify critical needs
- 2) Investigate feasible solutions and funding sources
- 3) Develop a plan of action to improve the quality of life for youth and families.

For over 29 years, SAFE has been committed to its mission, vision, and values to empower and impact families and the community in order to foster the positive and healthy development of our youth, families, community, state, and nation.



SAFE Year-End
Review QR Code
FY 24-25



Alternative Energy and Sustainable Infrastructure

The transition to renewable energy presents significant workforce opportunities. EARTH is developing alternative energy training programs focused on solar energy, battery storage systems, microgrid technology, and energy-efficient construction.

Training labs allow students to gain hands-on experience with renewable energy systems while supporting research and demonstration projects related to sustainable infrastructure development.

Early Education and Nature-Based Learning

The EARTH Early Education and Nature-Based Lab School provides early childhood education for children ages 0–5 while also serving as a training site for educators. The program integrates outdoor learning, environmental education, and STEM-based early childhood pedagogy.

This initiative addresses childcare access challenges that often prevent adults from participating in workforce training while simultaneously strengthening the early childhood education workforce pipeline.

Transportation and Workforce Mobility

Access to reliable transportation is a major barrier to workforce participation in rural areas. EARTH is developing transportation solutions that connect workers to training centers and employment opportunities.

Digital scheduling platforms, logistics systems, and transportation partnerships enable workers to travel efficiently between rural communities and employment hubs.

Cybersecurity, National Defense, and Aerospace

EARTH provides cybersecurity education and credentialing programs designed to prepare students and adult learners for careers in information security, cyber operations, and digital infrastructure protection. These programs are developed in partnership with Digital Promise and regional education partners and are aligned with national workforce priorities.

The cybersecurity program is strategically positioned within Alabama's aerospace and defense corridor and maintains alignment with key regional institutions, including Eagle Institute, Air University by preparing students for careers supporting national defense and aerospace technology systems. Critical Infrastructure needs for this program include secure data centers, cyber ranges, high-performance computing environments, and enterprise-grade network simulation tools.

Food Systems and Regenerative Agriculture

EARTH's food systems initiative integrates culinary arts training, regenerative agriculture, and regional food distribution systems. The initiative includes a culinary workforce training program, food entrepreneurship incubation, and partnerships with regional farms and food producers.

A training farm and regenerative agriculture research space provide opportunities to explore sustainable agricultural practices while strengthening regional food security.

Modular Housing and Smart Neighborhood Development

Rural communities across the United States face significant housing shortages. EARTH addresses this challenge by launching a modular home construction and smart neighborhood development initiative.

Within the warehouse facility, modular construction programs train individuals in construction technology, digital fabrication, robotics, and energy-efficient building design.

Homes produced through these programs are designed to integrate renewable energy systems, smart infrastructure, and sustainable building materials.

These initiatives not only create workforce opportunities, but also support the development of resilient rural housing.

Advanced Manufacturing and Textiles Innovation

Building upon the region's historic textile manufacturing legacy, EARTH is revitalizing advanced manufacturing through programs focused on smart manufacturing, robotics, digital fabrication, and sustainable textile production.

Training and production spaces within the warehouse facility support innovation in advanced textiles, automation systems, and materials science. These programs prepare workers for careers in modern manufacturing while supporting industry innovation.

Healthcare Training and Medical Simulation

Healthcare workforce shortages are among the most significant challenges facing rural communities. EARTH addresses this challenge by developing advanced healthcare training and simulation environments that prepare individuals for careers in nursing, allied health professions, telemedicine, and biomedical technology.

Clinical simulation labs allow students to gain hands-on experience using advanced training equipment and real-world medical scenarios. Partnerships with healthcare systems and medical device manufacturers enable EARTH to provide training aligned with industry needs.

These programs support workforce development while also improving healthcare access across the region.

Innovation, Incubation, and Entrepreneurship

A core function of EARTH is to support innovation and entrepreneurship. The campus provides incubation services, mentoring, prototyping facilities, and commercialization support for emerging businesses.

Programs such as the gener8tor gAlpha accelerator, Digital Promise innovation initiatives, and local entrepreneurial networks provide structured support for startup founders. Entrepreneurs have access to shared workspace, advanced manufacturing labs, and professional mentorship.

This ecosystem encourages the development of locally rooted businesses that generate long-term economic growth.

Performing Arts, Hospitality, and Tourism

The growth of the creative economy creates significant opportunities to strengthen workforce development, enhance placemaking, and reinforce regional identity. Through programs in performing arts, hospitality, and tourism, EARTH is leveraging culture, storytelling, and community engagement to drive economic growth, attract visitors, and cultivate a vibrant, connected community.

Flexible performance spaces, event programming, and hands-on training in hospitality and tourism management allow students and community members to gain real-world experience while supporting local events, cultural initiatives, and destination-based experiences that strengthen the region's visibility and economic vitality.



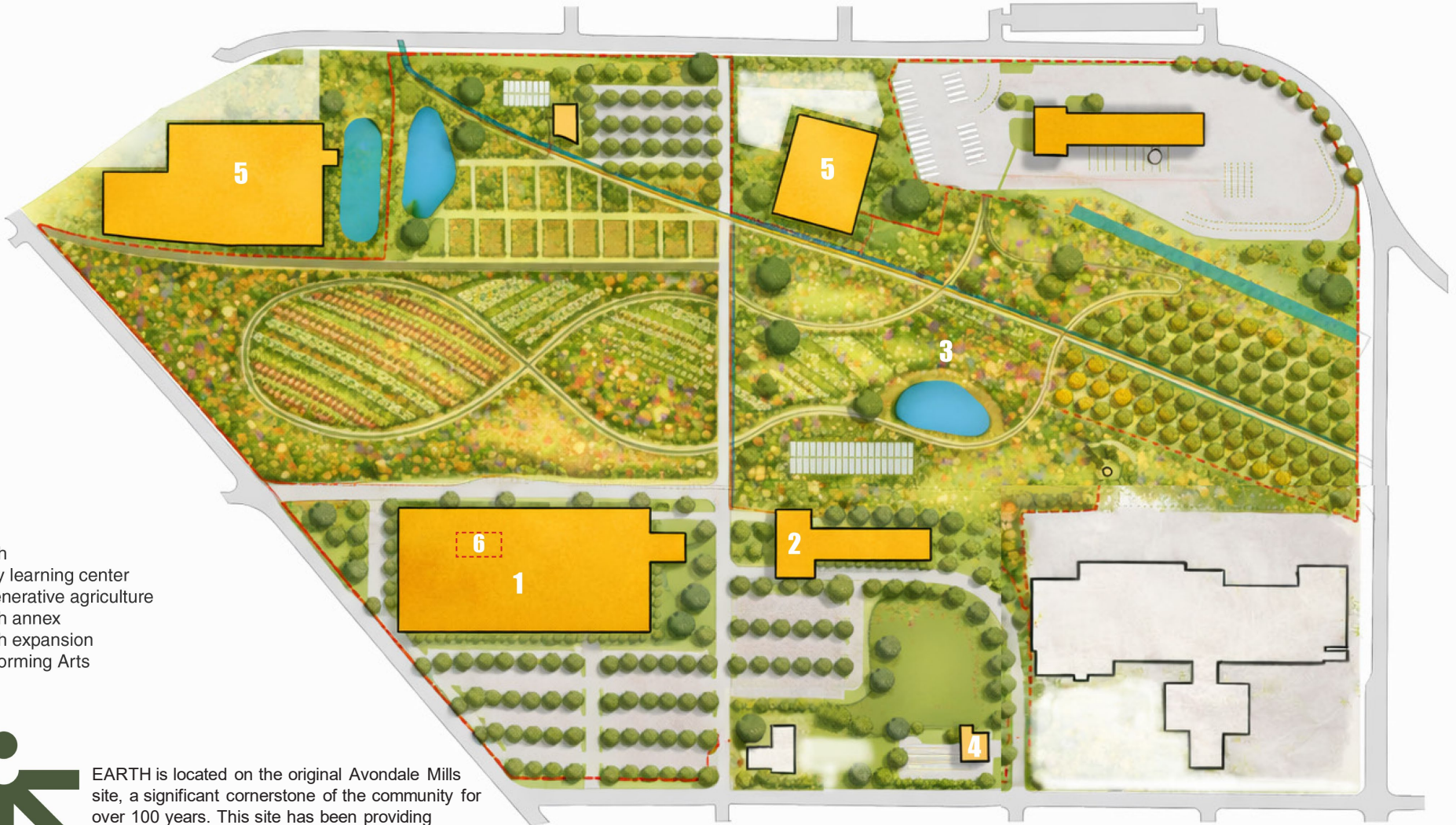
THE SITE



- 1. earth
- 2. early learning center
- 3. regenerative agriculture
- 4. earth annex
- 5. earth expansion
- 6. Performing Arts



EARTH is located on the original Avondale Mills site, a significant cornerstone of the community for over 100 years. This site has been providing families for generations, until it was shut down in 2006, and the facility burned down in 2011 from a fire due to a lightning strike.





welcome to
earth





TRAINING CLASSROOM SPACE

Forward Together



16

MODERN MANUFACTURING



HEALTHCARE TRAINING



CULINARY ARTS



18

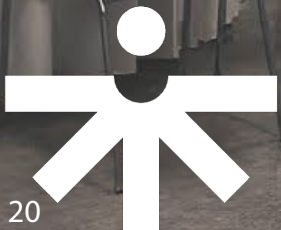
CULINARY ARTS SPACE



BLACKBOX THEATER SPACE



EVENT PLANNING SPACE



INNOVATION



INNOVATION & INCUBATION



SCULPTING TRAINING

AERIAL PHOTOS OF PROGRESS



SITE PHOTOS PROGRESS



EARTH Expansion #5



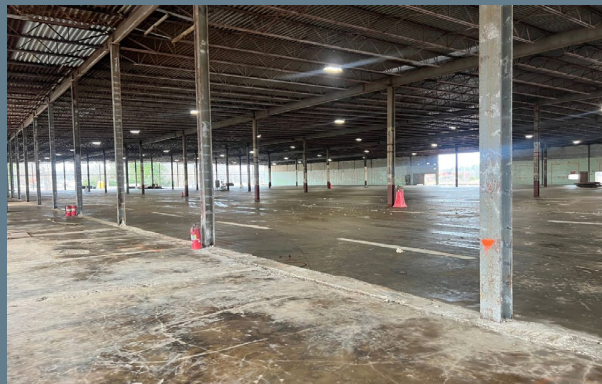
EARTH Expansion #5



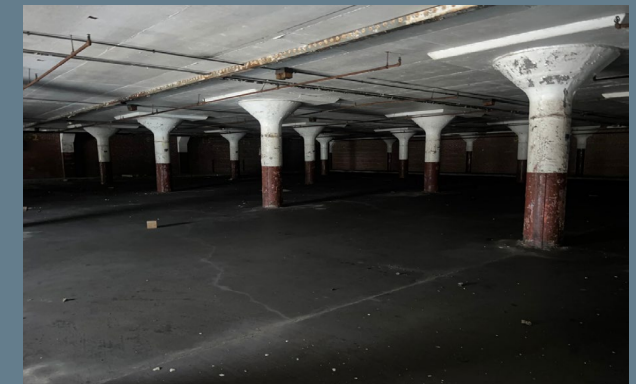
EARTH Annex



Retention Pond

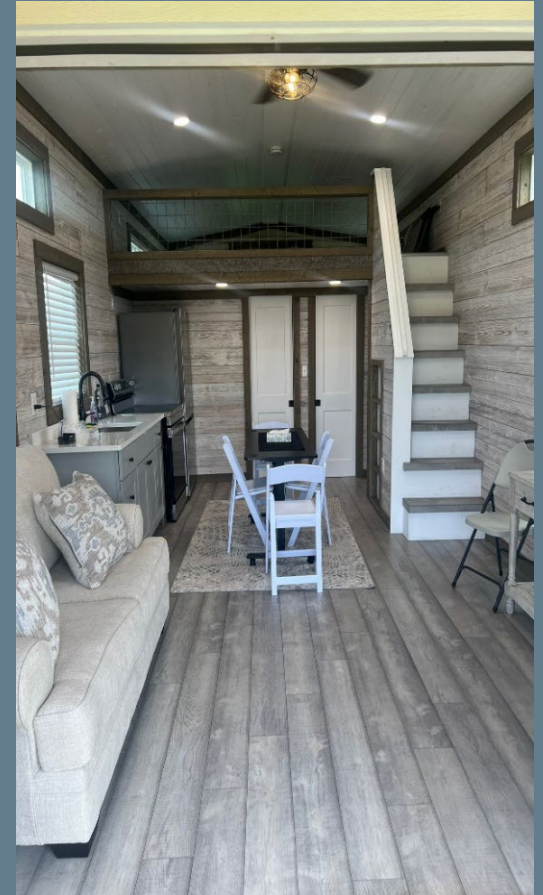


Eva Jane Building Progress



EARTH Expansion #5

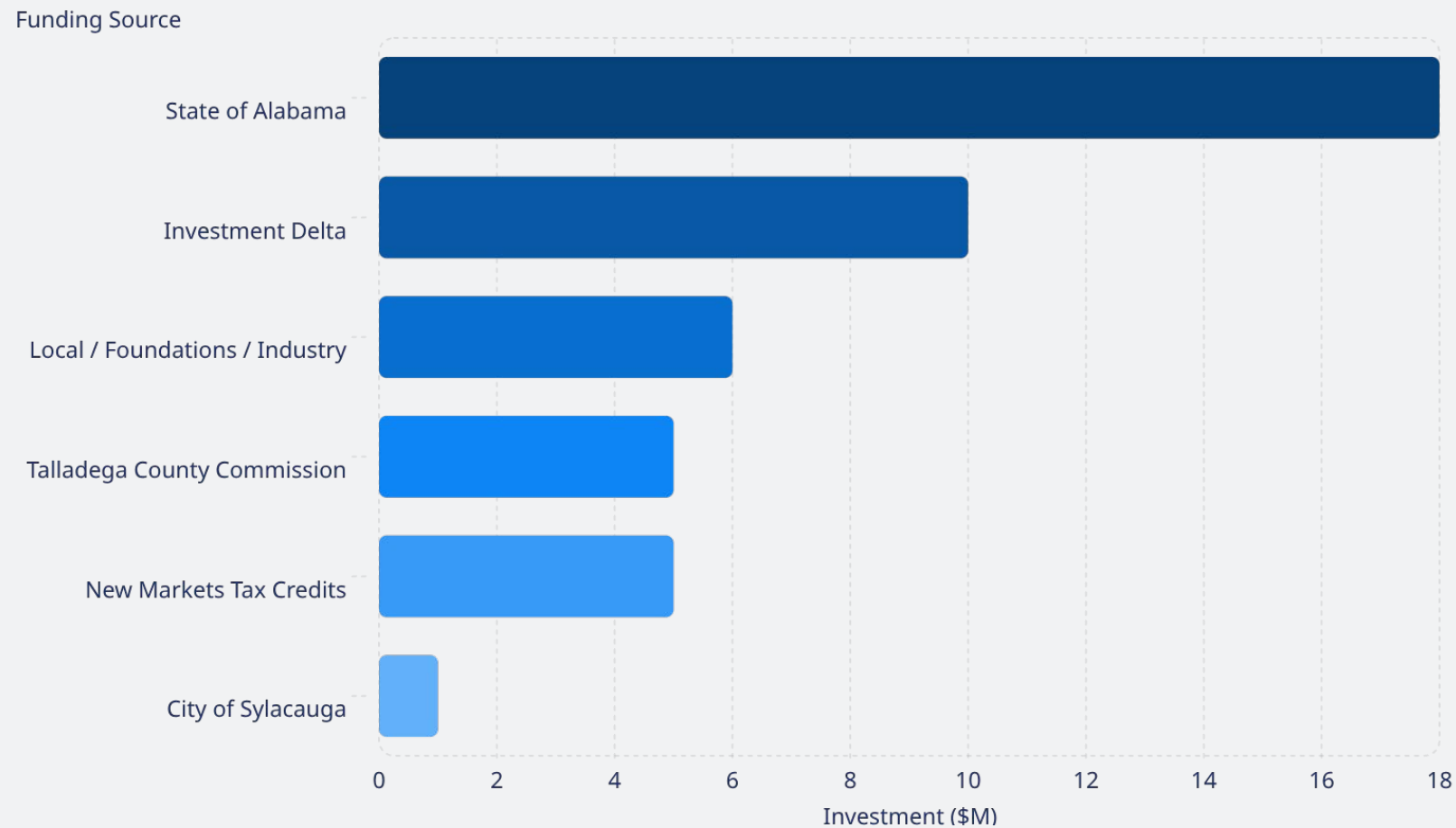
TINY HOME CONSTRUCTION



EARTH CAMPUS CAPITAL STACK



Total Project Budget: \$35M – funded through a diversified mix of City, County, State, local foundations, NMTC, and private capital. The Chart below breaks down each funding source and its contribution to the total project budget.



EARTH FOUNDATION BOARD



Margaret Morton | CEO SAFE - Board President, EARTH Foundation

Glenn Sisk | CEO, President, Coosa Valley Medical Center, VP EARTH Foundation

Melva Tate | CEO, Tate and Associates, Sec, Treasurer, EARTH Foundation

Jesse Cleveland | President, SAFE Board

Linda Hardy | CEO, Owner, Magnolia's Gift Shops

Drew Honeycutt | CEO, Owner, Talladega Castings and Machine Company

Jason Isbell | State and Governmental Affairs and Economic Development Regions Bank

Gaines Livingston | Co-Founder, Hoist Capital Partners

Jeff Lynn | President, Central Alabama Community College

Dr. Steve Marlowe | Eastern Division Area Manager, Alabama Power Company

Caitlyn McTier | Brand Marketing Manager, Ralph Lauren

Adam Ponder | CEO, Owner of Ponder Plumbing

John Parrish | HR, Operations Leaders, Nemak Alabama

Lori Sokol | Executive Director, East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

Dr. Steven Taylor | Senior Vice President for Economic Development and Research

SAFE BOARD



Jesse Cleveland | Board President
Vanessa Green | Chief Business Development Officer, Coosa Valley Medical Center
Laura Strickland | President and CEO, Sylacauga Chamber of Commerce
Dr. Jane Cobia | Professor and Director, Eds Instructional Leadership, Samford University
Dr. Michele Eller | Superintendent, Sylacauga City Schools
John Floyd | Board of Directors
Laura Barlow Heath | City Councilwoman, City of Sylacauga
Dr. Matt Hubbard | Mayor, City of Sylacauga
Dr. Suzanne Lacey | Superintendent, Talladega County Schools
Dr. Quentin Lee | Superintendent, Talladega City Schools
Rev. Henry Looney | Senior Pastor, Reaching the World Bible Church
Jeff Lynn | President, Central Alabama Community College
Wanda McElrath-Frazier | Board of Directors
Nancy McKay | Board of Directors
Commissioner Phillip Morris | Commissioner, Talladega County District 5
Honorable Dale Price | District Judge Talladega County Place 2
Sam Royster | Executive Director and CEO, Sylacauga Housing Authority
Glenn Sisk | CEO, President, Coosa Valley Medical Center
Van Wilkins | Attorney, J Van Wilkins Law
Mable Williams | Board of Directors

WE are **EARTH**

WE live life together.
WE innovate together.
WE invest in our future together.
WE find solutions together.
WE learn together.
WE find hope together.
WE move forward together.



SAFE Website
QR Code



EARTH
Website QR
Code



PROJECT LEAD

MARGARET MORTON
CEO, SAFE; BOARD PRESIDENT, EARTH FOUNDATION
+1 256 245 4343
MORTONM@SAFESYLAUGA.COM

EXTENDED TEAM



Michael Adair | City National Rochdale
 Dr. Sam Addy | U Alabama Associate Dean, Culverhouse College of Business
 Jeremy Arthur | Auburn Government & Economic Development Institute, Director
 James Auld | NextEra Energy, Director of External Training Initiatives
 Michael Barnette | Central Alabama Community College
 Erin Beasley | Alabama Cattlemen's Association, Executive Vice President
 Nancy Beggs | University of Alabama Center for Economic Development
 Nate Brewer | Sylacauga City Council
 Ami Brooks | Secretary, Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education
 Craigger Browne | Local Marble Sculptor
 Commissioner Nancy Buckner | Alabama Department of Human Resources
 Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw | AL Department of Rehabilitation Services
 Ed Castille | Ret. Deputy Secretary, Alabama Department of Commerce
 Dr. Kelsey Hood Cattaneo | Co-Founder & CEO, A Farmer's Share
 Brian Crichton | Executive Director, Talladega County Economic Development Authority
 George Clark | Manufacture Alabama, President
 Ryan Coleman | Owner & Lead Architect, Difference Architecture
 NEMAK
 Deanna Crist | Nexus Business Solutions
 Cynthia Crutchfield | CEO, Innovate Alabama
 Commissioner Kelvin Cunningham | Talladega County Commission
 Carey Davis | Georgia Renewable Power, Executive Vice President
 Lamar Dewberry | Clay County Economic Development Council, Director
 Nancy Dickson | COO, SAFE Family Services Center

Marsha Folsom | Consultant
 Tiffany Nix | Sylacauga City Council
 Stephanie Fuller | Alabama Forestry Association
 Blake Garrett | Orvis
 John Garrison | Garrison Steel
 Casey Graham | Heritage Freight Warehousing and Logistics, SVP/CFO
 Decorey Hale | Community Volunteer
 Micah Harris | Chick-fil-A, Local Franchise Owner
 Laura Barlow Heath | Sylacauga City Council Liaison
 Patrick Hogg | Resolute Forest Products Coosa Pines Mill, Regional Manager
 Ret. Brig. Gen. Robert H. Holmes | Sylacauga Resiliency Network
 Horace Horn | Power South
 Steve Hurst | Alabama Representative, District 35
 Paige Hutto | Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama, President and CEO
 Governor Kay Ivey | State of Alabama
 Isaac Jennings | EARTH Foundation & SAFE Family Services Center
 Kay Jennings | TCR Child Care Corporation, Director
 Keith Kelly | Alabama Senator, District 12
 Julie Kornegay | Federal Reserve
 Bill Kreis | Johnsonkreis Construction
 Chad Jones | FIRST Bank of Alabama, President and CEO
 Sallye Longshore | AL Department of Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention, Director
 Michael Lynch | CHONEX
 Dr. Eric Mackey | Superintendent, Alabama Department of Education
 John Mascia | Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind

Mackenzie McKinney | Farm Manager, SAFE Family Services Center
 Amy McDonald | Sylacauga Community Playhouse
 Nick Moore | Chief Adult Education and Learning Officer, Alabama Community College
 Lisa Morales | Gadsden State Community College
 Paul Morin | Educational/Training Specialist, ALDHR Program Coordinator
 Dr. Joseph Morton | Business Education Alliance of Alabama
 Joan Witherspoon-Norris | AL Network of Family Resource Centers, Exec Director
 Chad Odom | Lake Martin Area Economic Dev Alliance, Executive Director
 Jimmy Parnell | Alabama Farmers Federation
 Commissioner Rick Pate | Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries
 Steve Pelham | Auburn U - Office of the VP for Research & Economic Development
 Dr. Beverly Price | SAFE Family Services Center
 Bill Pharr | AREA Real Estate
 Michelle Raybon | Alabama Partnership for Children, Executive Director
 Dawn Riley | Co-Founder & Chief Community Officer, A Farmer's Share
 Representative Ben Robbins | Alabama House of Representatives District 33
 Noah Sanders | Redeeming the Dirt LLC
 Brian Shuler | IMERYS, Human Resource Manager
 Terry Smiley | Alabama Power Foundation
 Vaughan Spanjer | Community Volunteer
 Todd Walker | Academy of Craft Training
 Jeffrey Wargo | Resolute Forest Products Coosa Pines Mill, General Manager
 Lecia Whiteside | SAFE Family Services Center

The beauty of the human spirit is its capacity for hope. It exists within us, and it existed within those who came before us. It existed in our ancestors, who believed in themselves and in the resources of the earth, and in a healthy dose of grit and determination, that we could do more. We could be more.



