



RBGA plays big role in positive strides for local economic development

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
October 13 2015 5:00 PM



The RiverBend Growth Association has made great strides since its beginning and under President Monica Bristow's leadership has worked hand in hand with legislators, businesses and industries to get the word out about the area.

Appropriately, the RBGA's President Monica Bristow was the moderator of the recent groundbreaking for the Multi Modal Transportation Center on Golf Road in Alton.

From the beginning, Bristow said the RBGA offered letters and multiple forms of support for the project.

"When I look at the blank space where the Multi Modal Transportation Center will be and now that we are seeing dirt move, you can see it has potential for so much," Bristow said. "Seeing the dirt move is like putting a primer coat on that area."

The new Multi Modal Transportation Center is one of the biggest business developments in many years around the River Bend area, Bristow said.

"I know many people don't realize how big this investment is in our community," she said. "Some think we don't need it. We have to remember we are planning for the future and not living only for today."

The Multi Modal Transportation Center will be from initial \$13 million and above investment in the River Bend and should lead to several other business developments. The City of Alton and Madison County Transit were awarded a TIGER II (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant of \$13,850,000 for the Alton Regional Multi Modal Transportation Project in Fiscal Year 2011. The grant has been combined with \$7,400,000 of designated High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail program funds from the Federal Railroad Administration for the Alton Amtrak Station replacement project.

Bristow has assembled quite a team of people at the RBGA. Director of Member Services Joell Aguirre coordinates ribbon cuttings, event planning and recruitment of new members.

The RBGA Board guides the organization and the executives rotate from year to year. The board is always represented by some of the top business and industry executives in the region. Nearly every business facet is represented on the board.

Debbie Hagen is the research and publications manager for the RGBGA and she also does research for economic development. Hagen is also in charge of the organization's website and member communications. She is responsible for event flyers and marketing.

Jan Strickland is the officer manager and is responsible for any bookkeeping-related matters and Dawn Formea is the receptionist.

The RBGA team is constantly visible throughout the region and regarded as a necessary resource to grow business with its networking and other capabilities.

Hampton Inn is investing in a new multi-story hotel across from where the new transportation center will be located. Bristow said she believes that hotel development is mostly due to the investment of the Multi Modal Transportation Center and the traffic it will bring to Alton.

Bristow said with the train station, the new hotel, the renovation of the Atrium Hotel near the transportation center, she said she believes there will be more office space in that region.

“When people see the government invest a bunch of money into a community, it leads to other investments,” she said. “I think you will see development up and down Homer Adams Parkway and also see the area around I-255 to continue to be developed.”