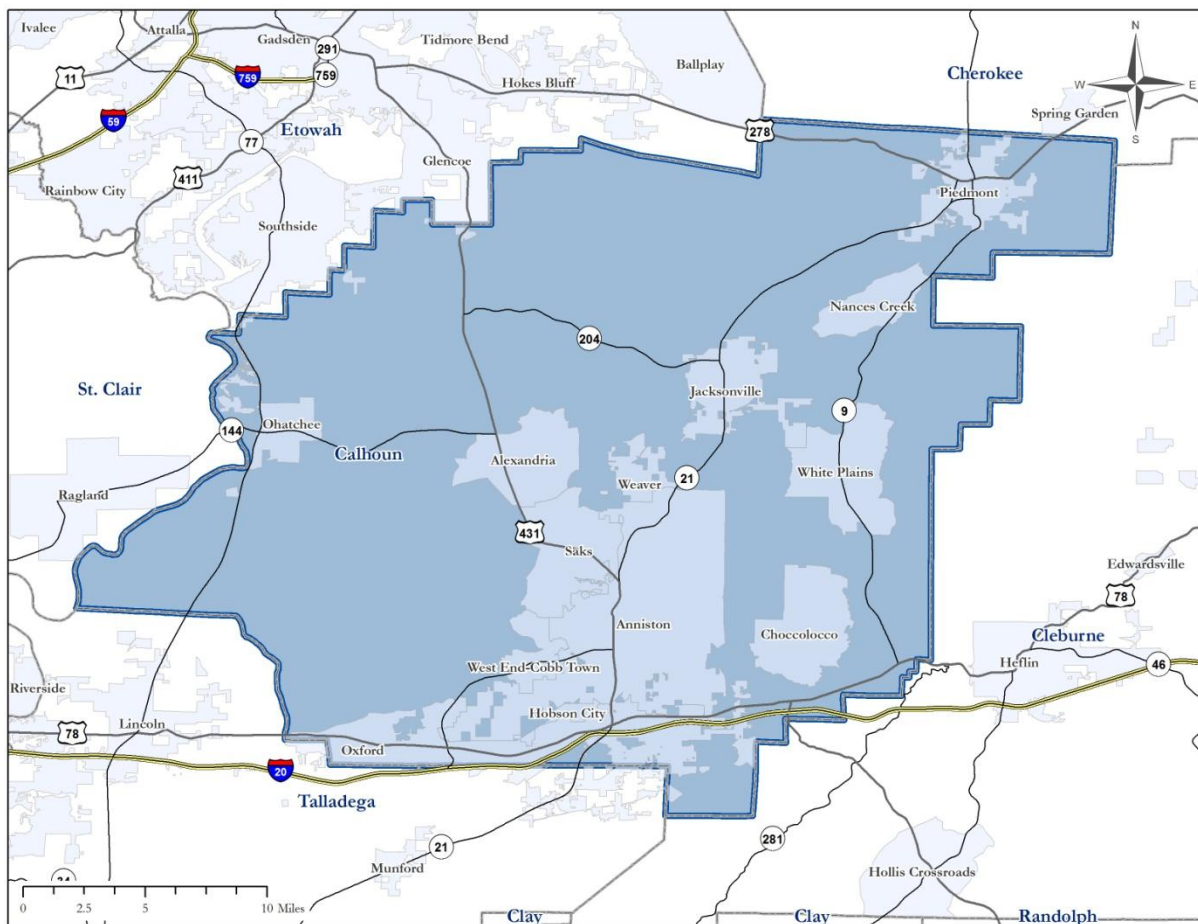


Anniston-Oxford



The Anniston-Oxford economy recovered slightly in 2010 after a difficult 2009, which saw the loss of several hundred jobs in manufacturing. Jobs in Anniston-Oxford increased slightly, with total nonfarm employment at 49,900 in October, a 0.4 percent increase from one year earlier. Job creation only occurred in service providing industries, where employment was up 0.7 percent to 42,600. Goods producing industries lost 100 jobs and employed 7,300 people in October 2010. Manufacturing industries accounted for all of this loss.

Local labor force numbers also showed signs of improvement in 2010. The labor force totaled 53,678 in October, up 2.0 percent in the past year. Total employment of local residents was 48,870, a 4.6 percent increase from October 2009. The increase in employment caused the unemployment rate to recover significantly to 9.0 percent in October 2010, down from 11.2 percent a year earlier.

Despite marked improvement in the area's employment numbers, a few businesses closed or laid off workers during the year. Orion Technology in Anniston and American Firewear in Ohatchee closed, eliminating 96 and 76 jobs, respectively. Also, BAE Systems laid off 100 workers in October. The area's share of total employment in manufacturing was about 12 percent, down slightly from last year as area manufacturers continued to struggle to create local jobs. Government employment was relatively unchanged; it remained the largest sector in Anniston-Oxford, employing

28.1 percent of all workers. Of the 14,000 government workers in the area, 5,600 were federal government employees. Area leaders expect federal government employment at the Anniston Army Depot and related contracts to continue to drive economic development in years to come.

Anniston-Oxford saw little retail development in 2010, with employment remaining at 2009 levels. Piggly Wiggly announced plans for a new store on Quintard Avenue in central Anniston, which the city is supporting through tax rebates. The store will occupy an existing vacant building and will be complete in early 2011. However, the abundance of vacant commercial space along Quintard is a problem that could worsen when the Eastern Parkway bypass opens in early 2011.

Many expect the Eastern Parkway to help stimulate development at the former Fort McClellan, however. In 2010 development began there again, as the McClellan Development Authority (MDA) sold property to several companies and organizations, its first sales in two years. There are plans for a 235-unit retirement community at McClellan and, among others, Alagasco and a musical instrument wholesale dealer will be moving in. The MDA also has plans to develop an industrial area and a research and technology park, with hopes to start work in 2011, though funding for the \$6.9 million project remains uncertain. Other developments included the announcement by the Alabama Department of Human Resources that they will be moving to the revitalized brownfield property near downtown known as the Chalk Line, with construction to begin in 2011. The 11-story Watermark Tower downtown renovated its first three floors and attracted two tenants, with renovations to come on other floors as they are leased. Plans for a new municipal justice center in downtown Anniston were also announced.

Spending on parks and recreation was prominent in the Anniston-Oxford metro; area leaders and groups expect such projects to contribute to both economic development and quality of life for local residents. An initial 2-mile segment of the Coldwater Mountain bicycle trail near Coldwater Spring was complete by the end of the year, with plans for an additional 48 miles of trails connecting to it. Similarly, the cities of Jacksonville and Anniston are considering connecting their downtown areas to the Chief Ladiga Trail, which ultimately leads to Atlanta, to further solidify the area's reputation as a destination for cycling. The City of Oxford's sports complex was to begin construction again in January 2011, after discovery of ancient human remains stopped the project. The City of Anniston began renovation of a gym at the former Fort McClellan and construction of an adjacent aquatics center and sports complex; Anniston remained the highest per capita spender on parks and recreation of any city in Alabama.

The local housing market struggled to recover from its recessionary fall, in keeping with most housing markets around the state and the nation. There were 66 single-family permits issued and 8 permitted multi-family units in the area through October 2010, a drop of 21 and 44 units, respectively, from 2009.

Similarly, the FHFA housing index fell 3.5 percent between the third quarter of 2009 and third quarter 2010. However, total home sales in the area, which were likely boosted by the housing tax credit, rose to 817, a 10 percent increase from 2009.

Median family income in Anniston-Oxford was \$50,900 in fiscal year 2010, below the state median and down 0.2 percent from 2009. This was not an encouraging sign, as median family incomes for the state as a whole increased. Per capita income was among the lowest in the state in 2009 at \$31,809, a 1.2 percent drop from the previous year. The banking sector saw mixed results, as total deposits increased 1.3 percent between June 2009 and June 2010, but the area lost two banks and three branches during the same period. Anniston-Oxford had a total of nine banks and 33 branches in June 2010.