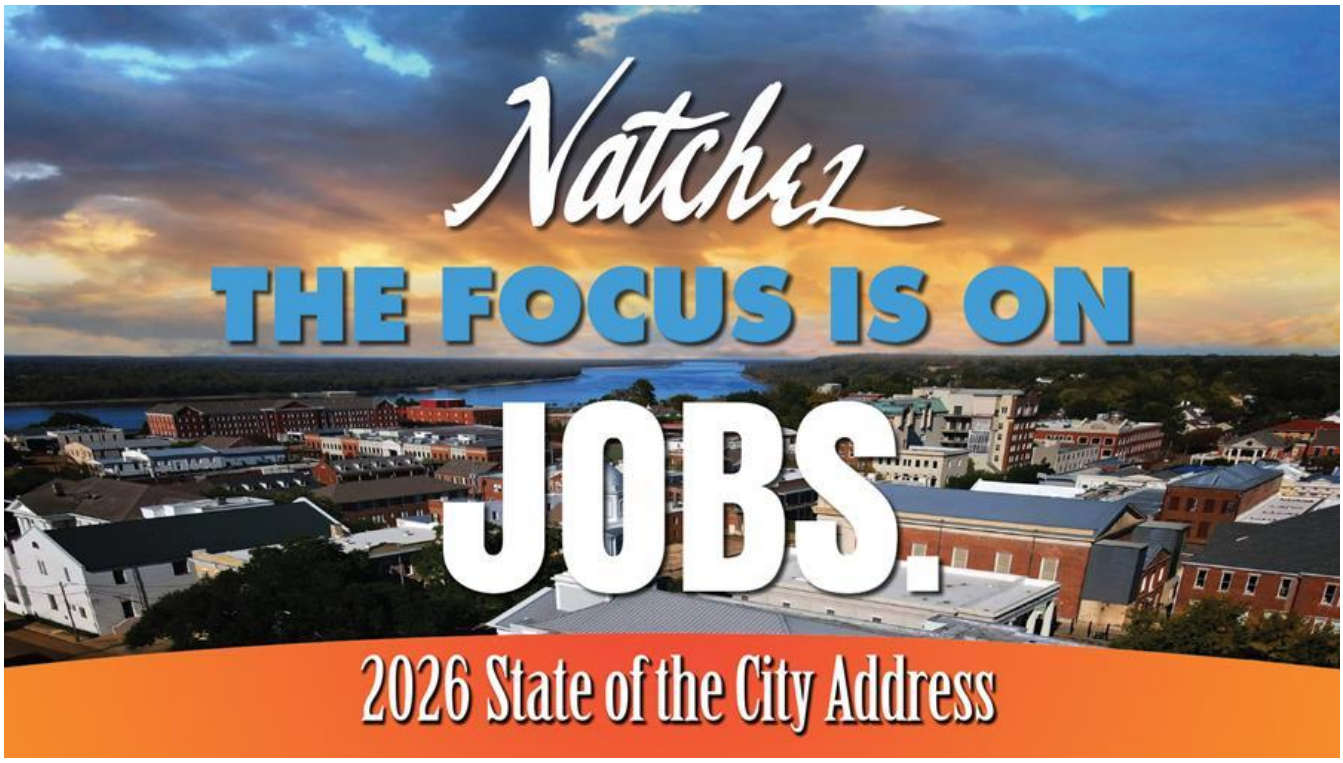


2026 STATE OF THE CITY

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

THE NATCHEZ RENEWAL

Dan M. Gibson, Mayor | October, 2026



“Recruit the jobs. Prepare the people.”

This comprehensive report records the progress of the Natchez Renewal and sets out the work ahead: build on renewed population growth, strengthen existing employers, recruit new investment, prepare our people for careers, and ensure that opportunity reaches every part of our community.

We have come a long way together. And I remain convinced that our greatest days are still ahead — Because Natchez Deserves More.

HON. DAN M. GIBSON

44th Mayor of Natchez

CITY OF NATCHEZ

DAN M. GIBSON, MAYOR

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

VALENCIA HALL, WARD ONE • BILLIE JOE FRAZIER, WARD TWO

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THE STATE OF OUR CITY

The central theme of the 2026 State of the City is simple: JOBS. When we speak of Jobs, we mean jobs for the young person wondering whether there is a future for them here; jobs for the parent working to provide a better life for a family; jobs for someone ready to work but needing the skills and training necessary to be hired; and jobs that allow businesses to grow, families to prosper, neighborhoods to become stronger and our entire community to move forward — together.

When we took office in July 2020, we were in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. There was tremendous uncertainty about the future. But we had a vision. We called it "The Natchez Renewal".

Over these past six years, working together, we have invested in our streets and infrastructure, brought our parks back to life, beautified our community, invested in public safety, strengthened workforce development, welcomed new businesses and helped existing businesses grow. And on July 1, 2026, after more than 30 years, scheduled commercial air service returned to Natchez!

But we must do more than look backward – we must ask ourselves, "What's next?" **The next chapter of the Natchez Renewal can be summed up in two priorities: RECRUIT THE JOBS. PREPARE THE PEOPLE.**

NATCHEZ IS GROWING AGAIN

For decades, our community experienced population decline. The recent US Census population data provided to the City show that something important has changed. Natchez/Adams County grew from 28,383 residents in 2022 to 30,061 in 2025 — a gain of 1,678 residents, or 5.9 percent, in just three years. The series shows three consecutive years of growth: 28,717 in 2023, 29,776 in 2024 and 30,061 in 2025.

- **Even more impressive is our growth compared to other river cities. Among the Mississippi River cities of 10,000 or more south of St. Louis in our comparison, Natchez joined Festus and Cape Girardeau, Missouri, as the only three river cities experiencing population growth, making Natchez the only river city south of Missouri above 10,000 in population to be in a growth pattern. Out of the four lower states, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee, this makes Natchez the only river city above 10,000 that is not in a state of population decline.**
- This turnaround has occurred during the Natchez Renewal — a period marked by new businesses, new jobs, expanding industries, infrastructure investment, downtown revitalization, stronger tourism, workforce development, retail growth and the return of commercial air service. The data establishes the growth; the

broader pattern of investment shows the environment in which that growth has occurred.

The message is significant: for the first time in forty years, Natchez is growing again. Our responsibility now is to build upon that momentum.

INCOMES ARE RISING

- **Median household income in Natchez/Adams County increased from $36,519 in 2020 to $45,515 in 2024, an increase of approximately 24.6 percent, and is projected to grow to $48,500 in 2026. Per capita personal income increased from $39,540 to $48,640 over the same period, approximately 23 percent, and is projected to grow to $52,500 in 2026.**
- **Our population is growing. Incomes are rising. Businesses are investing. Employers are expanding. Jobs are being created. Our task is to turn that momentum into lasting prosperity.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BEGINS AT HOME

One of the most important principles of economic development is also one of the simplest: take care of the employers who are already here.

- Since 2020, **City-tracked economic-development activity**, drawn from privilege license data, has included approximately 530 new businesses, 1,484 building permits, more than $133 million in permitted construction and improvements, approximately 3,760 electrical turn-on permits and more than $584,000 in combined permit revenues.
- Accumulated **local economic-development records** associate approximately 1,265 jobs with new businesses, expansions and related economic activity since 2020. This is a City-tracked development measure and should not be confused with a state or federal net-employment series.

INDUSTRIAL AND LARGE BUSINESS GROWTH

Since 2020, Natchez has seen significant growth and reinvestment within our industrial sector. Some of our most important economic-development successes have come from companies already here—businesses choosing to expand their operations, invest additional capital, purchase additional property and create new jobs in Natchez.

- **Loss Prevention Services (LPS)** is a major employment success of the Natchez Renewal. In September 2020, during the first months of our administration and in the midst of the pandemic, LPS announced that it would locate its corporate

headquarters in downtown Natchez, representing a **$2.97 million investment and 200 announced new jobs**. The company established its headquarters in the 45,000-square-foot former Regions Bank building on Franklin Street, bringing a major private employer into the heart of downtown. **Today, LPS employs approximately 250 people in Natchez. And the company's growth since relocating here extends well beyond employment: LPS reports that its asset recovery volume has grown 1,250 percent.** That growth demonstrates how a company recruited to Natchez in 2020 has not simply fulfilled its original commitment, but flourished and positioned itself for more growth. With approximately 250 employees working from its downtown headquarters and serving clients across the country, **LPS is a powerful example of recruitment becoming sustained business growth, jobs and economic activity right here in Natchez.**

- **Jordan Carriers** is one of the strongest examples of large business growth in Natchez since 2020. The homegrown company broke ground in 2022 on a new corporate headquarters in Natchez, representing approximately **$11 million in investment**. But the company's growth extends well beyond the headquarters project. **Since 2020, Jordan Carriers reports adding approximately 300 positions—including 93 administrative employees and more than 200 additional employed drivers. In addition they have added 260 additional contracted drivers.** The company also reported adding approximately **400 trucks** to its fleet during that period. Today, federal motor-carrier records report **807 drivers and 880 power units** companywide. Jordan's growth is a powerful example of a company founded in Natchez choosing not only to remain here, but to make Natchez the headquarters from which it continues to grow across the country.
- In 2026, **Bishopric Industries** announced a **$5.75 million expansion** of its Natchez operation, with **28 new jobs** and additional manufacturing equipment, infrastructure and production capacity. Natchez Inc. reported that the new positions would average approximately **$62,000 annually**. The expanded capabilities are also positioning the Natchez facility for additional technically demanding manufacturing work, including aerospace-related projects. The Mississippi Development Authority is supporting infrastructure improvements at the site, while workforce partners are assisting with training.
- Also in 2026, **Winnwood Forest Products** announced a **$2 million expansion at the Mississippi River Energy Complex**, purchasing an additional **17 acres, creating 15 new jobs and retaining 30 existing jobs**. The investment will expand the company's sawmill capabilities and increase production capacity. Natchez Inc. worked directly with company and local leadership to facilitate the expansion.
- **Marcal Paper** is another important example of continued industrial growth in Natchez. The Natchez manufacturing operation has been expanding its workforce and recruiting for skilled manufacturing, technical and management positions as the company works to increase production and strengthen its local operation.

Marcal is currently recruiting for positions ranging from electrical and instrumentation technicians to senior mill management and human resources, reflecting continued investment in the Natchez facility and its workforce. The company describes itself as growing and offers competitive wages and benefits, while its current Natchez recruiting includes highly skilled industrial positions paying approximately **$38 to $40 per hour**. Marcal's continued growth is particularly important because manufacturing jobs create payroll, support suppliers and contractors, and strengthen the industrial base upon which future economic development can build.

- **Delta Fuel** represents one of the major headquarters recruitment successes of the Natchez Renewal. In 2021, the company selected downtown Natchez for its corporate headquarters following a competitive process involving locations in multiple states. The project represented a **$2.75 million investment and 54 announced new Mississippi jobs**, while also bringing new life to existing downtown property. Since then, the company has continued to grow substantially. By 2025, Delta Fuel was reported to employ **more than 200 people** while serving customers across the country. Following the devastating 2026 fire at its Natchez facility, the company's continued operations, hiring and commitment to Natchez demonstrate both resilience and confidence in its future here. Delta Fuel's story is especially significant because it combines headquarters recruitment, good-paying jobs, downtown investment and a company whose reach extends far beyond our region—all based right here in Natchez.
- **Kaiser Petroleum** is another homegrown company demonstrating significant growth in Natchez. In 2024, Kaiser expanded its headquarters on Colonel John Pitchford Parkway with construction of a new multimillion-dollar facility. The company reports **tremendous growth since 2020 and now employs more than 40 people, with continued growth underway**. Kaiser's decision to expand its headquarters here is another example of an established Natchez company investing capital, adding employment and choosing to build its future in our community.
- **Phibro rCB** represents both new investment and the rebirth of an important industrial property. Phibro acquired the assets of the former Delta Energy Group operation in December 2023 and has been working to restart and expand the Natchez facility, which converts end-of-life tires into recovered carbon black and renewable oils used by manufacturers. The company reports that its Natchez operation already supports **more than 50 employees, with plans for additional growth as production and customer demand increase**. In 2025, Phibro and Natchez Railway completed restoration of rail service directly to the facility, substantially strengthening its ability to move raw materials and finished products throughout North America. Phibro has said the 34.6-acre Natchez property has infrastructure capable of supporting **five additional recovered-carbon-black plants**, giving this operation considerable potential for future expansion.

- **Other major employers** include more than just the ones highlighted above. **Merit Health Natchez, Adams County Correctional Center, Walmart, Magnolia Bluffs Casino Hotel, Natchez-Adams School District, the City of Natchez and Adams County Government** are all significant employers in our community.
- **Across the river and throughout the Miss-Lou,** other employers—including **Syrah Technologies**—add to our regional employment base. Natchez and Vidalia share one workforce and one regional economy, and opportunities on both sides of the river strengthen the entire Miss-Lou.

These employers remind us that economic development is not only about recruiting the next company. It is also about supporting and retaining the employers already here, helping them grow, and creating the workforce and quality of life they need to succeed.

An important partner throughout this work has been **Natchez Inc.**, our area's lead economic and community development organization. Natchez Inc. works not only to recruit new industry but also to help **our existing businesses grow**, while partnering with the City of Natchez, Natchez/Adams County, the Mississippi Development Authority, utilities, workforce organizations and the private sector to prepare sites and infrastructure for future investment.

- That work is increasingly visible in our industrial properties. The **Mississippi River Energy Complex**, the former International Paper property, is being transformed into marketable industrial acreage along the Mississippi River. In addition to Winnwood's expansion there, Natchez/Adams County has secured millions of dollars in state assistance to clear, clean and prepare the property for additional investment. Most recently, another **$1.77 million** was awarded for clearing, concrete removal and leveling of the remaining 106 acres, building on earlier multimillion-dollar site-development assistance. Natchez Inc. has said the work will return the entire footprint to shovel-ready condition.
- At **Belwood**, years of public investment have likewise been directed toward creating additional industrial acreage with access to the Mississippi River. A **$1.26 million Delta Regional Authority investment, along with a $1 million contribution from private industry,** helped fund an 8,000-foot ring levee designed to protect approximately 110 acres of industrial property. Natchez/Adams County had already invested approximately $900,000 to acquire the property and another $700,000 in infrastructure improvements.
- Natchez Inc. now markets a portfolio of industrial properties that includes **Belwood, the Mississippi River Energy Complex, Johns-Manville, Majorca and Liberty**. And perhaps one of the clearest measures of the demand we are now experiencing is this: **according to current information from our local economic-development leadership, every square foot of available ground in our industrial park is now under option.**

- That is an extraordinary position for Natchez/Adams County to be in. But it also presents us with our next challenge. **We have to stay ahead of the demand.** If our available industrial acreage is being committed, we must continue preparing the next generation of sites—land with the infrastructure, utilities, transportation access and due diligence necessary to compete for major projects.

This is where the work of Natchez Inc. becomes especially important. Modern industrial recruitment is intensely competitive. Companies considering major investments often compare multiple sites in multiple states. Communities that have already invested in site readiness, transportation, utilities, workforce development and permitting have a significant advantage.

- Natchez has assets few communities our size can match. We have the **Mississippi River and our port. We have Natchez Rail and access to the national rail network. We have important highway connections. And now we once again have commercial air service.** Natchez Inc. markets that combination of port, rail, road and airport connectivity as part of our economic-development strategy.
- **Our strategy must remain focused on both recruitment and retention: help the companies already here grow, while competing aggressively for new investment.** The story since 2020 demonstrates why both matter. Existing companies are reinvesting. New capital is being committed. Industrial sites are being improved and optioned. Outside funding is helping us prepare additional acreage. And companies are creating jobs with wages capable of supporting families and careers.

Economic development does not begin with a ribbon cutting. It begins years earlier—with prepared sites, infrastructure, relationships, workforce development and persistent recruitment. Working with Natchez Inc. and our many local, state, federal and private partners, we are doing that work today so that Natchez will be ready for the jobs and investment of tomorrow.

WESTWIN ELEMENTS: A TRANSFORMATIONAL INDUSTRIAL OPPORTUNITY

On October 5, 2026, Westwin Elements announced plans to invest **$502 million over five years** to establish a commercial-scale **Class 1 nickel refinery at the Belwood Industrial Site in Natchez**.

- The project represents one of the largest industrial investments announced in our community in many years. **Phase 1 is expected to create 134 full-time jobs**, with those positions averaging approximately **$84,000 annually**—representing more than **$11 million in annual payroll**.
- Westwin plans for the Natchez facility to produce approximately **19,800 tons of high-purity Class 1 nickel annually**, with commissioning targeted for **2029**. Nickel

is a critical material used in advanced manufacturing, energy storage, defense applications and other sectors important to the American economy.

- The project also demonstrates the importance of maintaining competitive industrial sites and infrastructure. The Belwood Industrial Site gives Natchez/Adams County an opportunity to compete for a new generation of advanced manufacturing and industrial investment while creating high-paying career opportunities for our people.
- The Westwin project is **planned and announced** and remains subject to financing, engineering, permitting and other requirements before construction can begin. But its selection of Natchez represents an important vote of confidence in our community and another example of the opportunities now before us.

Our goal is not simply to recruit investment. It is to recruit jobs, prepare our people for those jobs and make certain that the economic opportunities coming to Natchez benefit the people who live here.

PORT, TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

The Mississippi River has shaped Natchez for more than three centuries and remains one of our greatest economic assets. Today, that historic location is complemented by something increasingly important to modern economic development: **the ability to move people and products by river, rail, highway and air.**

- The **Natchez/Adams County Port** gives our industries direct access to the Mississippi River and domestic and international markets. The Mississippi Department of Transportation reports that the port provides access to ports in approximately 50 countries and handles petroleum products, chemicals, fertilizers, lumber and wood products, metals and manufactured goods, with bulk, liquid, break-bulk, general cargo, storage, transload and rail-served capabilities.
- **Our rail connection is equally important**—and one that could easily have been lost. Years ago, the rail line between Natchez and Brookhaven faced possible abandonment. Instead, our community and its partners worked to preserve and strengthen this critical economic-development asset. Today, **Natchez Railway extends approximately 66 miles from Natchez to Brookhaven**, connecting with Canadian National's Class I rail system and the national rail network. **Over the years, more than $25 million in federal, state and private investment has been committed to preserving and improving the corridor.** Those investments have rehabilitated bridges, strengthened track and crossings, increased capacity for modern 286,000-pound railcars and improved freight movement. A railroad once threatened with abandonment now serves existing industries, connects the Natchez/Adams County Port to the national rail system and gives Natchez a competitive advantage in industrial recruitment. Natchez Railway is also

supporting new growth, including the restoration of direct rail service to Phibro's growing Natchez operation.

- Our **highway network** provides another critical link. U.S. Highways 61 and 84 connect Natchez with the region, while Interstate 55 is accessible through Brookhaven. Together, our highways, port and rail system give manufacturers and distributors multiple options for moving materials and products.
- And today, **air is once again part of that transportation network.** United Express service operated by SkyWest connects the Natchez/Adams County Airport with George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, giving Natchez direct access to a major international aviation hub. The historic return of commercial air service—and the arrival of commercial jet service for the first time in Natchez history—is discussed more fully later in this report.

Taken together, these assets give Natchez something unusual for a community our size: **a working Mississippi River port with international reach, an approximately 66-mile rail corridor connecting to a Class I railroad, major highway connections and commercial jet service to one of America's largest international aviation hubs.**

That four-mode connectivity—**river, rail, highway and air**—strengthens existing industries, makes our industrial sites more marketable and gives Natchez Inc. another powerful tool for attracting investment.

For manufacturers, logistics companies, forest-products businesses and other industrial prospects, connectivity matters. **Natchez can move people and products by river, rail, highway and air—and our job is to keep strengthening each connection as we compete for the jobs and investment of the future.**

NATCHEZ AS A REGIONAL RETAIL HUB

Perhaps nowhere is the transformation of Natchez's retail economy more visible than at **Trace Town Shopping Center**.

- Built in the 1960s, Trace Town was once one of Natchez's premier shopping destinations. But after losing its major anchors, the property entered a long period of decline. For nearly four decades, our community watched a once-thriving commercial center become increasingly vacant and deteriorated.
- Today, **Trace Town is coming back to life**. The redevelopment began after the property was acquired in 2023. Environmental issues, including asbestos and hazardous materials, had to be addressed, and much of the deteriorated property was demolished to make way for an entirely new retail center. According to Natchez Inc., the redevelopment represents **more than $30 million in private investment, more than 120,000 square feet of new retail space and approximately 150 projected jobs**.

- **Hobby Lobby is now open**, providing the first major anchor for the reborn Trace Town. And more is coming. The next phase is bringing an impressive lineup of retailers, including **TJ Maxx, Ulta Beauty, Five Below, Shoe Department and Bath & Body Works**, along with Flying Dollies and additional restaurant, salon and retail space.
- What stood for decades as a symbol of decline is being transformed into a major center of investment, employment and commercial activity. Trace Town is becoming one of the most visible examples of the **Natchez Renewal**.

But Trace Town is not an isolated development. It is an important part of a strategy we began discussing several years ago: establishing Natchez as the **regional retail hub of the Miss-Lou**.

- The numbers demonstrate why this strategy makes sense. Natchez is the **only incorporated municipality in Adams County**, which means our city serves as the principal commercial and service center for all of Natchez/Adams County. The 2025 population of Natchez/Adams County is approximately **30,061 people**. But even that number substantially understates the market Natchez businesses actually serve.
- The Downtown Natchez Alliance retail market analysis examined customer behavior beyond municipal boundaries and identified a **primary trade area of approximately 67,400 people and more than 27,500 households**. Even more important for retailers considering Natchez, the analysis estimated **average household income in that primary trade area at approximately $62,100**.
- Our reach extends even farther. A **35-mile radius around Natchez** reaches communities on both sides of the Mississippi River and encompasses a regional population of roughly **87,000 people**. Natchez therefore should not be evaluated simply by the population within our city limits. We are a regional commercial center serving Natchez/Adams County, Concordia Parish and communities throughout the wider Miss-Lou.
- The Downtown Natchez Alliance analysis also identified one of the strongest arguments for continued retail recruitment: **retail leakage**. Consumers within our trade area have substantial purchasing power, but millions of those dollars leave our market each year because particular goods and services are not sufficiently available here. The study estimated approximately **$1.17 billion in annual demand for retail, food and beverage purchases within Natchez's primary trade area**.
- The analysis identified substantial opportunities in individual retail categories, including approximately **$46.3 million in supermarkets and grocery stores, $13.9 million in family clothing, $9.8 million in furniture, $6.8 million in full-service restaurants and $5.8 million in snack and non-alcoholic beverage establishments**.
- Those numbers are important because retail leakage is not simply money leaving our community. **It represents opportunity.** The DNA analysis projected that, without additional retail supply, the overall market gap could approach **$46.9**

million by 2029, including approximately **$42.7 million in retail trade** and another **$4.1 million in food services and drinking places**.

- Every time we recruit a retailer that fills one of those gaps, we have an opportunity to keep more of our residents' spending at home. And because Natchez draws customers from a much larger regional market, we also have an opportunity to bring additional dollars **into** Natchez.

All of this means more than additional shopping choices. It means **new jobs, new private investment, stronger sales-tax collections and a broader tax base to help support city services without placing additional burdens on our citizens.**

At the same time, our retail strategy is not simply about national chains. Downtown entrepreneurs continue to invest in restaurants, shops, boutiques and experiences that give Natchez its distinctive character. Our goal is a healthy retail ecosystem in which **national retailers, locally owned businesses and our historic downtown strengthen one another**.

- **Natchez serves a market far larger than its municipal population.** We are the retail and service center for Natchez/Adams County, Concordia Parish and communities throughout a 35-mile radius and the wider Miss-Lou. **Our identified primary trade area includes approximately 67,400 people, more than 27,500 households, average household income exceeding $62,000, and more than $1 billion in annual retail, food and beverage demand.**
- **When people in this region shop, dine or seek entertainment, we want them to think of Natchez first.** That is what becoming a true regional retail hub means: **keeping more of our own dollars at home, bringing more outside dollars into Natchez, creating jobs, expanding our tax base and transforming properties like Trace Town that once represented decline into visible symbols of the Natchez Renewal.**

TOURISM – A PILLAR OF THE NATCHEZ ECONOMY

Tourism has been part of the Natchez story for generations. But today, it is much more than a historic tradition. **Tourism is one of our major industries—and in recent years it has experienced tremendous growth.**

- The numbers tell the story. Visitor expenditures in Natchez/Adams County totaled approximately **$108.7 million in 2019**, falling to approximately **$76.5 million in 2020** during the pandemic. By 2024, direct visitor spending had reached **$129 million**, while total economic impact reached approximately **$193.9 million**. Tourism supported 1,374 jobs, generated approximately **$48.2 million in labor income** and produced approximately **$10.3 million in state and local tax revenues**.

- According to the **2025 Tourism Impact Study provided for this report, tourism's annual economic impact has now surpassed $200 million and supports approximately 1,400 jobs in Natchez/Adams County.**
- That extraordinary rebound demonstrates why tourism must be viewed for what it is: **economic development.** Visitors stay in our hotels, bed-and-breakfasts and short-term rentals. They eat in our restaurants, shop, tour our historic properties, attend festivals and conferences and spend money throughout Natchez. Those dollars become paychecks, business revenues and tax revenues circulating through our local economy.

Conventions and Meetings – Bringing People to Natchez

- Conventions and meetings are an important and growing part of the Natchez tourism economy. They bring visitors who stay in our hotels and bed-and-breakfasts, eat in our restaurants, shop downtown and often return later with family and friends.
- The **Natchez Convention Center**, with approximately **30,000 square feet of meeting and event space**, has undergone approximately **$3 million in renovations and improvements**, strengthening our ability to compete for conferences, conventions, meetings and special events.
- That investment is complemented by the **Natchez City Auditorium**, with seating for approximately **1,200 people** and approximately **$2 million in improvements**, as well as the **Natchez Civic Center** and other meeting venues throughout the community.
- Together, these facilities give Natchez the ability to host events much larger than might be expected for a city our size.
- And Natchez offers convention visitors something a traditional conference destination cannot: **the meeting does not end when the meeting ends.** Our guests step outside into one of America's great historic cities—with restaurants, shops, historic attractions, live music, the Mississippi River and extraordinary Southern hospitality waiting for them.
- **Convention and meeting tourism fills hotel rooms, supports local businesses and gives thousands of visitors another reason to discover Natchez.**

Gaming and Entertainment

- Gaming is another important part of our tourism and entertainment economy.
- **Magnolia Bluffs Casino**, overlooking the Mississippi River, provides gaming, sports betting, dining and entertainment while attracting visitors and supporting employment in our community.
- The casino complements our hotels, restaurants, nightlife and other attractions, adding another experience for visitors and another reason to extend their stay in Natchez.
- That is important because successful tourism destinations offer visitors choices. Some come for history. Some come for food and music. Some come for festivals,

river cruising, outdoor recreation, conventions or gaming. Many experience several of these during the same visit.

- **Magnolia Bluffs helps broaden the Natchez visitor experience and strengthens the diverse tourism economy we are continuing to build.**

A Place Worth Staying

- **One of the strengths of Natchez tourism** is the variety of places available for visitors to stay. Our **historic bed-and-breakfasts** are themselves part of the Natchez experience, while substantial private investment in our **hotels** has strengthened our ability to serve leisure travelers, families, conferences, tour groups and river-cruise passengers.
- We have also experienced tremendous growth in **short-term rentals**, dramatically expanding the range of accommodations available to visitors and adding lodging capacity during festivals and other high-demand periods.
- And with the planned restoration of the historic **Eola Hotel as a Marriott Tribute Portfolio property**, another major component is being added to our downtown hospitality infrastructure.

The Mississippi River Is Bringing the World to Natchez

The Mississippi River is becoming an increasingly important part of this growth. Natchez is a major port of call for **American Cruise Lines and Viking**, two of the most important names in American river cruising.

- **Together, American Cruise Lines and Viking are now bringing almost 60,000 river-cruise visitors to Natchez annually.** That represents remarkable growth. **In 2019, 27,388 cruise passengers disembarked in Natchez. Today, annual river-cruise visitation has more than doubled to nearly 60,000 passengers.**
- Those visitors arrive directly at the foot of our historic city—taking tours, visiting attractions, eating in restaurants and shopping with local merchants.
- American Cruise Lines' approximately **$5 million investment in a new Natchez dock** advances our vision of becoming not simply a port of call, but ultimately a **port of embarkation and debarkation**. Combined with commercial jet service, that creates the possibility of passengers flying into Natchez, staying here and beginning their Mississippi River journey from our riverfront.
- Viking's growing presence, American Cruise Lines' investment and commercial air service together create an entirely new opportunity to connect **river tourism, air travel and overnight hospitality**.

A National Story Told in Natchez

People have long come to Natchez for our remarkable architecture, but our story is far richer than historic houses alone. We have Native American history stretching back thousands of years, French and Spanish colonial history, and stories of slavery and freedom, the Civil War and Reconstruction, civil rights, commerce, music and the Mississippi River.

- The **Natchez National Historical Park** is one of our greatest cultural-tourism assets. The National Park Service preserves and interprets **Melrose, the William Johnson House, Fort Rosalie, Forks of the Road and the Natchez Visitor Center**, together telling a broad story of the peoples and forces that shaped Natchez and the American South.
- **Melrose** is one of America's outstanding examples of Greek Revival architecture and a National Historic Landmark. The **William Johnson House** tells the remarkable story of a free African American businessman whose diary provides an extraordinary record of antebellum Natchez. **Fort Rosalie** takes visitors back to the city's French colonial origins.
- And **Forks of the Road** gives Natchez responsibility for telling one of the most difficult and nationally significant chapters of American history. The National Park Service identifies it as the site of the second-largest domestic slave market in the Deep South, where tens of thousands of enslaved men, women and children were brought before the Civil War.
- This broader interpretation is important because **visitors increasingly want authentic places that tell complete stories.**

More Than History

People also come to Natchez for **food and music, the Mississippi River and the 444-mile Natchez Trace Parkway**, which begins here and carries travelers through 10,000 years of history and extraordinary natural scenery toward Nashville.

- They come for our restaurants and shops, carriage rides, galleries, live entertainment and for the **Spring and Fall Pilgrimages, Natchez Balloon Festival, Natchez Festival of Music, Angels on the Bluff, Natchez Food & Wine Festival, Natchez Live at Five Concert Series (Spring & Fall), Mardi Gras, car shows, cultural celebrations and downtown events** that give visitors reasons to come throughout the year.
- And they come because Natchez is beautiful. In 2026, **Architectural Digest named Natchez the prettiest town in Mississippi**, adding to our growing national recognition.
- All of this gives Natchez something very few communities our size possess: **multiple tourism markets operating together**—heritage and architectural tourism, African American and Native American history, river cruising, festivals, food and music, outdoor recreation, conferences, the Natchez Trace, historic lodging, short-term rentals and now commercial air travelers.

Building on the Growth

Our tourism growth is broad-based. We have seen increased visitor spending and river cruising, tremendous growth in short-term rentals, investment in hotels and bed-and-breakfasts, stronger convention facilities, commercial jet service and major private investment in riverfront cruise infrastructure.

- The result is a tourism economy that is **larger, more diverse and better positioned for future growth than it was just a few years ago.** Our next step is to connect these experiences—to encourage the historic-house visitor to discover our restaurants, the cruise passenger to return for a weekend, the Balloon Festival visitor to discover Forks of the Road and the Natchez Trace traveler to spend the night.
- And ultimately, we want passengers to **fly into Natchez, spend several days here and board their Mississippi River cruise from our own riverfront.**
- That is how individual attractions become a tourism economy. With annual economic impact now exceeding **$200 million**, approximately **1,400 jobs supported by the industry**, and nearly **60,000 river-cruise visitors annually**, tourism is not simply part of the Natchez story. **It is one of the engines driving the Natchez economy forward.**

THE "LITTLE EASY": A SOUTHERN DESTINATION GREATER THAN OUR SIZE

When people think of the great tourism cities of the South, certain names immediately come to mind: **New Orleans. Charleston. Savannah.** Each has built an international reputation around history, architecture, food, culture, hospitality and sense of place. Natchez offers many of those same qualities—but on an entirely different scale. **We are the Little Easy.**

- The connection with New Orleans is natural. Natchez and New Orleans are two of the great historic cities of the Lower Mississippi River. **Natchez was founded in 1716—two years before New Orleans.** Both were shaped by the river, European settlement, African and African American culture, music, food and centuries of history.
- But Natchez offers that experience in a smaller, more intimate setting. A visitor can park the car, walk downtown, enjoy a restaurant, explore a historic neighborhood and watch the sunset from the bluff without navigating a major metropolitan area. **The Big Easy has New Orleans. The Little Easy has Natchez.**

Charleston, Savannah—and Natchez

- Charleston demonstrates the tourism value of combining historic preservation with exceptional dining, shopping, hospitality and culture. Savannah shows how architecture, beautiful trees, walkability, public spaces and atmosphere can transform an entire city into an experience.
- Natchez possesses many of those same ingredients: extraordinary architecture, historic streets, magnificent live oaks, beautiful churches and gardens, restaurants, shops, music, festivals and carriage tours. But Natchez adds

something neither Charleston nor Savannah can duplicate: **the Mississippi River and the Natchez Trace.**

- **Our Size Is Our Advantage**

Travelers increasingly want authenticity, walkable communities, locally owned restaurants and shops, and experiences that feel personal rather than mass-produced. **That is Natchez.**

- In 2026, **Architectural Digest named Natchez the prettiest town in Mississippi**, reinforcing an important point: you do not have to be a large city to command national attention. Natchez can offer the experiences of a much larger destination while maintaining the charm, accessibility and hospitality of a small city.
- For travelers who love New Orleans but want something more intimate, **Natchez is the Little Easy.** For those drawn to Charleston and Savannah, we offer remarkable architecture, history, walkability, live oaks and Southern hospitality—with the Mississippi River rising majestically beside us.
- **We do not have to become a bigger city to become a bigger destination.** We simply have to preserve what makes Natchez special, continue improving the experience we offer, and make it easier than ever for the world to come here, stay here—and **discover The Little Easy.**

COMMERCIAL AIR SERVICE: A HISTORIC RETURN. A HISTORIC FIRST

One of the most visible achievements of the Natchez Renewal took place on **July 1, 2026**, when scheduled commercial air service returned to Natchez after an absence of more than 30 years. But what happened that day represented more.

- **For the first time in the history of Natchez, we now have regularly scheduled commercial passenger jet service.** United Express service, operated by SkyWest Airlines, connects the **Natchez/Adams County Airport (HEZ)** directly with **George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) in Houston** aboard a 50-seat regional jet. From Houston, passengers can make single-ticket connections through United's extensive domestic and international network.
- That distinction is important. **We did not simply bring commercial air service back. We brought it back better.**
- For the first time, a passenger can leave Natchez aboard a commercial jet, arrive at one of the nation's largest international aviation hubs and continue on a single itinerary to destinations across the United States and around the world.
- Getting there required years of planning, persistence and partnership. One of the greatest challenges was preparing our airport to accommodate modern commercial passenger service. In approximately **17 weeks**, an existing airport facility was transformed into a nearly **10,000-square-foot commercial passenger**

terminal capable of supporting airline operations, passenger screening and the requirements of regularly scheduled service.

- The project represented an investment of approximately **$7 million**, with the overwhelming majority of that investment made possible through state and federal grant funding. It required cooperation among local, state and federal partners, airport leadership, engineers, contractors, the Transportation Security Administration, SkyWest, United and many others.
- The result is an airport experience that is one of Natchez's newest competitive advantages: **convenient parking, quick access to the terminal, local security screening and direct jet service to Houston with connections beyond.**
- For our citizens, it means convenience and connectivity. For our tourism industry, it means making Natchez easier to reach for visitors from across the country. For healthcare, it can assist in recruiting physicians and other professionals. And for economic development, commercial jet service changes the conversation.
- When a company is considering investing millions of dollars and creating jobs in Natchez, accessibility matters. Corporate executives, engineers, consultants, investors and customers can now fly directly into Natchez rather than traveling hours by automobile from another commercial airport.
- It also makes it easier for companies already here to do business elsewhere while maintaining their operations and headquarters in Natchez. Commercial air service therefore represents much more than an airport project. **It is economic-development infrastructure.** And its significance reaches beyond any single flight or destination. For more than three decades, Natchez had no scheduled commercial airline service. Today, not only has that service returned, but our community has achieved something it had never achieved before.

Commercial jet service: It is another example of what can happen when our community refuses to accept that something cannot be done simply because it has not been done before. After more than 30 years, **commercial air service is back.**

A NEW ERA FOR RIVER TOURISM

The Mississippi River has always been central to the identity of Natchez, and river cruising has become an increasingly important part of our tourism economy. Now, a major private investment by **American Cruise Lines is creating an opportunity to take that relationship to an entirely new level.**

- In September 2026, American Cruise Lines and the City of Natchez broke ground on a new cruise dock at Ferry Street Landing, representing approximately **$5 million in private investment**. American Cruise Lines—the **largest river cruise line in the United States**, with a fleet of 28 small ships and more than 50 domestic itineraries—has described the Natchez project as its **largest port infrastructure project to date**.

- The new facility will strengthen our ability to accommodate river cruise vessels and provide important services, including water and electrical connections. But the greater significance of this investment is what it can mean for the future of tourism in Natchez.
- For years, our vision has been to move beyond being primarily a **port of call** and establish Natchez as a **port of embarkation and debarkation—a place where passengers can actually begin and end their Mississippi River cruises.**
- Today, cruise passengers on the lower Mississippi have only two options for beginning their journeys: New Orleans and Memphis. Becoming an embarkation city will allow Natchez to join their ranks, allowing us to capture more of the economic activity associated with those passengers. Instead of visiting Natchez for only a few hours during a cruise, passengers beginning or ending their journey here can arrive early or remain afterward, creating demand for **hotel rooms, restaurants, shopping, tours, transportation and other local services**.
- This partners perfectly with our new commercial air service**.** With United Express service connecting Natchez to Houston, cruise passengers can now fly commercially into Natchez. That creates an entirely new possibility: **fly to Natchez, spend the night, experience our city and then board a Mississippi River cruise right here.** Passengers ending their cruises in Natchez can do the same in reverse.
- That connection between **air service, river cruising and downtown hospitality** is especially important. As we expand our hotel inventory—including the planned reopening of the historic Eola Hotel as a Marriott Tribute Portfolio property—we are creating the infrastructure necessary to accommodate more visitors and encourage them to stay longer.
- The potential economic benefit extends well beyond the riverfront. Every additional overnight stay can mean another hotel room occupied, another meal purchased, another shop visited, another tour taken and additional tourism dollars circulating through our local economy.

Natchez is already one of the signature destinations of the Lower Mississippi River cruise experience. The opportunity now is to become something more. **Our vision is for Natchez to become a true Mississippi River port city of embarkation—where visitors can arrive by jet, stay in our hotels, experience our city and begin their journey on the Mississippi River from the Natchez bluff.**

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: PREPARING OUR PEOPLE FOR THE JOBS OF THE FUTURE

Recruiting jobs is only half of the economic-development equation. **We must recruit the jobs—and prepare our people to fill them.** As businesses expand and new employers

consider Natchez, they want to know whether we have the workforce to support them. At the same time, our citizens need clear pathways to the skills and credentials that lead to good-paying careers.

- Our goal is simple: **Classroom → Credential → Job → Career.** That is why we have built a workforce-development system reaching from high school classrooms to adult training and including the skilled trades, technology, healthcare, transportation and aviation.
- **Natchez Workforce Development** connects employers, educators, training providers and people seeking better career opportunities. Its reach extends far beyond the city, serving **nine Mississippi counties and three Louisiana parishes** and positioning Natchez as a workforce-development center for Southwest Mississippi and the Miss-Lou.
- The program provides access to career coaching, technical and short-term training, stackable credentials, apprenticeships, internships and on-the-job training. Our workforce strategy recognizes that today's employers recruit workers regionally—not within a single municipal boundary.

Building Trades: From Training to Career

One of our greatest successes is the **Building Trades Training Program**, a partnership of the City of Natchez, Natchez/Adams County, Natchez-Adams School District, Copiah-Lincoln Community College and numerous state and industry partners.

- The program provides free training in **Electrical, Carpentry, Masonry, Plumbing, Heavy Equipment Operation and Commercial Driver's License training.** Participants can earn nationally recognized NCCER credentials that can lead directly to employment.
- Since the program began, participants have earned **more than 380 NCCER credentials**, with more than 100 additional applicants awaiting placement as the program continued to expand.
- In July 2026, the Mississippi Municipal League recognized this work with its **Municipal Excellence Award for Economic Development and Infrastructure for cities over 10,000 population.** The award is gratifying, but the real measure of success is people working—a skill, a credential, a better paycheck and the opportunity to build a career.

Starting the Pipeline in High School

Workforce development should begin while our young people are still in school. The **Fallin Career and Technology Center at Natchez High School** provides hands-on education in construction, health sciences, digital media, teacher education and other career fields.

- Construction students can begin earning industry-recognized credentials before graduation. Fallin's **Health Science program** introduces students to healthcare

careers and clinical skills, while Digital Media Technology and the Teacher Academy create additional career pathways.

- **We are not asking every young person to follow the same path. We are creating multiple paths to successful careers—and increasingly, they can prepare for those careers right here in Natchez.**

Healthcare: Training Our Own

Healthcare is an especially important part of our workforce strategy. Through MED Natchez, we are working not only to recruit physicians, nurses and other medical professionals, but also to **train our own.**

- One of our greatest assets is **Alcorn State University's Cora S. Balmat School of Nursing at the Natchez Campus.** The school offers nursing education from the associate and bachelor's levels through master's and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs.
- Alcorn's nursing program is also earning important statewide recognition. **Its online nursing program has been ranked No. 2 in Mississippi by U.S. News & World Report**, demonstrating the quality of nursing education available right here in Natchez.
- **Copiah-Lincoln Community College** is another critical partner. Its Natchez Campus offers **Practical Nursing**, while Co-Lin also provides **Certified Nursing Assistant and phlebotomy training** and pathways toward registered-nursing careers.
- Together, Fallin, Co-Lin and Alcorn provide something enormously valuable: **a local pipeline for developing the nurses and healthcare professionals our community needs.** A student can begin exploring healthcare in high school, continue through Co-Lin or Alcorn, gain clinical experience locally and ultimately build a career right here in Natchez.

Technology: Preparing for Tomorrow's Jobs

- Through the **Miss-Lou Coding Academy**, Natchez Workforce Development offers a six-month software-development program at no cost to students, with training incorporating artificial intelligence, extended reality, drones, robotics, cybersecurity and IT support.
- **Workforce 360** provides another no-cost pathway for people who need foundational digital skills or want to prepare for more advanced technology training.
- These skills matter because technology now touches virtually every industry—from advanced manufacturing and healthcare to logistics, finance and hospitality. **We must prepare people for the jobs we have today and the jobs we want to attract tomorrow.**

Flight Training: A Growing Aviation Business

Our airport is also creating opportunities through flight training. What began as Natchez Flight Training has grown into **EZ IFR, an accelerated flight training program headquartered at the Natchez–Adams County Airport.** Led by owner Sam Herald, it attracts pilots from across the nation and around the world to earn private pilot certificates, instrument and multi-engine ratings, commercial certificates and flight instructor certificates in a matter of weeks.

- Since its first flight on June 27, 2022, EZ IFR has trained and flown with **445 pilots**, with **295 students completing courses and earning 354 ratings and certificates.** Its growth includes 8,873 hours flown, 15,349 hours of flight and ground instruction, 5,824 flights, **31 instructors who have worked for the business** and **12 aircraft in its operation.**
- These students **stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants and support local businesses** while advancing their aviation careers. Approximately 40 percent bring their own airplanes to train. EZ IFR is adding aircraft and has opened a second training location, while **remaining headquartered here in Natchez**—another example of how our **Natchez Renewal is creating opportunity and strengthening our economy.**

Connecting Training With Jobs

Training matters when it connects people with employment. One of our major job fairs brought together **35 employers and approximately 340 attendees, resulting in 51 job offers and 205 projected hires.**

- When employers tell us they have positions they cannot fill, we should determine what skills are needed and help provide the appropriate training. When someone wants a better career, we should help create a pathway to the necessary training and credentials. And when we recruit a new industry, **Natchez should be able to demonstrate that we can prepare the workforce that employer needs.**

A Regional Workforce Strategy

- **No single institution can accomplish this alone. Our progress has been possible through partnerships** involving the City of Natchez, Natchez/Adams County, Natchez-Adams School District, Copiah-Lincoln Community College, Alcorn State University, Delta Regional Authority, Accelerate Mississippi, Build Mississippi, Mississippi Construction Education Foundation, Central Mississippi Planning and Development District, employers and other public and private partners.
- **Together, we are creating a workforce ecosystem**—from career exploration at Fallin, to skilled-trades training through Natchez Workforce Development and Co-Lin, healthcare education through Co-Lin and Alcorn, technology training through the Miss-Lou Coding Academy and Workforce 360, and aviation training at our airport.

- **Economic development and workforce development are two sides of the same strategy.** If we recruit employers without preparing workers, those employers will struggle to grow. If we train people without creating jobs, our workers will have to leave Natchez to find opportunity.
- Our responsibility is to do both: **RECRUIT THE JOBS. PREPARE THE PEOPLE.** And create a pathway: **CLASSROOM → CREDENTIAL → JOB → CAREER → A FUTURE IN NATCHEZ.** That is how workforce development becomes economic development—and how the jobs we recruit become lasting opportunities for the people of Natchez and the entire Miss-Lou region.

FILM NATCHEZ: FROM FILM LOCATION TO FILM INDUSTRY

Natchez has served as **a setting for motion pictures and television productions for generations.** Our architecture, landscapes, riverfront, historic neighborhoods and surrounding countryside give filmmakers an extraordinary variety of locations. **The opportunity before us now is to move beyond being simply a place where movies are filmed and build a lasting film industry of our own.**

Mississippi filmmaker Tate Taylor has played an important role in that evolution. Taylor, director of The Help, has repeatedly brought productions to Mississippi and Natchez, including Get On Up, Ma and Breaking News in Yuba County. Taylor and his longtime producing partner John Norris established Crooked Letter Picture Company in Natchez, creating a permanent base for production activity.

A PERMANENT FILM PRODUCTION COMPLEX

The development of film-production infrastructure on Liberty Road, Southern Studios, now owned by Ryan Donnell Smith and Allen Cheney, demonstrates the scale of the opportunity being built here.

The Liberty Road, Southern Studios complex, occupies approximately six acres and includes:

- Two sound stages of approximately 75,000 and 15,000 square feet, **totaling 90,000 square feet.**
- Approximately **12,000 square feet** of production offices.
- A separate Natchez Bluff facility featuring a **10,000-square-foot** stage and additional offices overlooking the Mississippi River.

These facilities represent an important step toward establishing Natchez as a permanent center for film and television production, rather than simply a destination for occasional location filming.

A GROWING FILM HISTORY

Natchez already has a remarkable history in motion pictures, with productions ranging from Show Boat, Raintree County and The Horse Soldiers to more recent films including Get On Up, Ma, Breaking News in Yuba County and Rumble Through the Dark.

Our city offers filmmakers what Film Natchez has described as a **"living backlot"**—authentic historic architecture, extraordinary natural scenery, distinctive neighborhoods and the Mississippi River, all within a relatively compact area.

That momentum continues in 2026. **Film Mississippi has listed *Cupid*, directed by Tate Taylor and starring Catherine Zeta-Jones, for production in Natchez beginning in October 2026.** This represents another opportunity to bring production spending, national attention and professional experience to our community. And thanks to Southern Studios, **seven more productions are now in line** for filming once filming of *Cupid* is complete.

Building a Workforce for the Film Industry

Film production creates jobs far beyond actors and directors. Productions require carpenters, electricians, painters, welders, set builders, decorators, wardrobe professionals, hair and makeup artists, drivers, caterers, security personnel, accountants, production assistants, camera crews, lighting technicians and sound specialists.

These productions also purchase hotel rooms, meals, transportation, rentals, fuel, construction materials and other goods and services from local businesses.

Film therefore fits naturally into our workforce-development strategy. We need to renew efforts to provide **specialized training for careers in motion-picture and television production.** By partnering with our schools, workforce-development programs, local film professionals and the Mississippi film industry, we can create pathways from the classroom to the production set.

Our goal should be to ensure that when the next major production comes to Natchez, more of the people building the sets, operating the equipment and working behind the cameras are residents of Natchez and Southwest Mississippi. That is how we turn temporary production activity into lasting economic opportunity.

Film as Economic Development and Tourism

Film also supports tourism. People travel to visit locations associated with movies and television programs they love. Every successful production filmed here introduces Natchez to new audiences and creates another reason for visitors to discover our city.

With permanent production facilities, experienced industry leadership, distinctive filming locations and a growing workforce-development network, **Natchez has an opportunity to establish itself as an important film-production destination.**

Our strategy is straightforward: Recruit the productions. Train the people. Build the infrastructure. Keep more of the jobs and spending here. Natchez has spent generations serving as a backdrop for great stories. **Now we are building an industry of our own.**

EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY CHILD

A strong community begins with strong schools. If we want Natchez to grow, recruit businesses, attract families and prepare our young people for the opportunities ahead, **education must remain at the center of the Natchez Renewal.** Our goal should be straightforward: **every child in Natchez deserves the opportunity to receive an excellent education and to discover a pathway toward a successful future.**

Natchez-Adams School District

- The **Natchez-Adams School District** has made important investments in the future of public education, including our **new Natchez High School and the renovation of Natchez Middle School**. These investments provide students and teachers with modern facilities while demonstrating confidence in the future of our community.
- But education is about much more than buildings. It is about what happens inside them—the teachers who inspire, the students who work hard and the programs that prepare young people for college, careers and life.
- That includes the **Fallin Career and Technology Center**, where students can explore career pathways in construction, healthcare, digital media, education and other fields while beginning to acquire practical skills and industry-recognized credentials.

NECA: College Begins in High School

- One of the most exciting educational opportunities in our community is **NECA—the Natchez Early College Academy**.
- Through NECA, students have the opportunity to complete college coursework while still in high school. **More than 40 students annually are graduating with both their high school diploma and an associate degree**, giving them an extraordinary head start on college, a career and life.
- For families, that can also represent a substantial financial benefit by reducing the amount of college tuition required after high school.
- **NECA demonstrates what is possible when we challenge our young people, give them opportunity and expect them to succeed.**

Choices for Natchez Families

- Natchez is also fortunate to have strong educational choices beyond our traditional public schools.
- **Adams County Christian School and Cathedral School** have long served Natchez families and remain important parts of our educational community. **Instant**

Impact Global Prep, our charter school, has added another educational option for parents and students.

- These schools have different traditions, approaches and programs, but they share something important: **they are educating the children who will become the next generation of Natchez.**
- We should celebrate excellence wherever it occurs and recognize that strong educational choices make our entire community stronger.

Education and Our Workforce

Education also connects directly with economic development. For one student, the pathway may lead to a four-year university. For another, it may lead to healthcare. For another, construction or a skilled trade. For another, technology, aviation, entrepreneurship or public service.

- What matters is that our young people can see a future for themselves—and increasingly, **they can begin preparing for that future right here in Natchez.**
- Our responsibility is to connect education with opportunity: high school to college, classroom to credential, credential to job and job to career.

The Mayor's Book Club – Starting at Birth

But preparing our children for success cannot begin in high school—or even in kindergarten. **It begins at birth.**

- That is why we created the **Mayor's Book Club**, the first mayor-led initiative of its type in Mississippi. In partnership with **Ferst Readers of Georgia**, and **fully funded by private donors**, the program provides children in Natchez from **birth to age five with a free, age-appropriate book** delivered regularly during the most formative years of their lives.
- The idea is wonderfully simple: **put books into the hands of children and encourage parents and caregivers to read with them from the very beginning.**
- Early literacy has benefits that can last a lifetime. Reading with young children helps build vocabulary, language and communication skills, strengthens school readiness and establishes reading as a normal and enjoyable part of family life. Children who enter school prepared to read and learn have a stronger foundation upon which every later stage of their education can be built.
- And because the Mayor's Book Club is supported by private donors, **this investment in our youngest citizens is being made without cost to City taxpayers.**
- From a baby's first book to a high school student earning a college degree through NECA, our goal is the same:
- **Give every child the opportunity to learn. Give every student a pathway to succeed. And give every young person a reason to believe that their future can begin right here in Natchez.**

- Because ultimately, the greatest investment we can make in the future of Natchez is an investment in **our children.**

MED NATCHEZ: HEALTHCARE AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A strong community needs strong healthcare. But healthcare is about more than providing an essential service. **It is also one of our greatest opportunities for job creation, workforce development, professional recruitment and regional economic growth.**

- That is the idea behind **MED Natchez—Medical Economic Development.** Our goal is to establish Natchez more firmly as the healthcare hub of our region, building upon important existing assets including Merit Health Natchez, Doctors Row, Southwest Mississippi Mental Health and Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center.
- The premise is simple: **Healthy people help create healthy families. Healthy families support a strong workforce. Strong healthcare helps us recruit businesses and residents. And a growing medical sector creates good jobs and strengthens our economy.**

Natchez as the Medical Hub of Our Region

Natchez already serves a regional population far larger than the number of people living within our city limits. People come here from throughout Southwest Mississippi and neighboring Louisiana for medical care.

- Our goal through MED Natchez is to build upon that foundation. **Every additional physician or specialist we recruit can mean fewer patients having to travel to Jackson, Baton Rouge, New Orleans or other cities for care—and more healthcare dollars remaining in our regional economy.**
- That is both a healthcare objective and an economic-development objective.

A Major Economic Engine

The economic impact of healthcare in Natchez is already substantial. In 2025, **Merit Health Natchez recorded approximately 111,000 patient encounters** across its sites of care and reported an overall community benefit of approximately **$107 million**, including approximately **$31 million in payroll, $3 million in capital investment and $5 million in taxes paid.**

- Healthcare is already one of the **major components** of the Natchez economy. Doctors, nurses, technicians, therapists and other healthcare professionals earn their living here. Medical practices purchase goods and services here. Healthcare facilities invest in equipment and buildings. Patients and their families come into Natchez for appointments and procedures and spend money throughout our community.

Recruiting Doctors, Nurses and Healthcare Professionals

- Physician and specialist recruitment remains one of the **central objectives of MED Natchez.** Every physician we recruit represents much more than another medical provider. A physician brings patients into our healthcare system, supports hospital services, creates demand for nurses and other employees and can make additional specialties economically sustainable.
- The same is true of nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, therapists, technicians and other healthcare professionals. **That is why medical recruitment is economic recruitment.**

Touro - Bringing Future Physicians to Natchez

Another major step forward for MED Natchez is our new partnership with **Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine and Merit Health Natchez. Through this partnership, 28 Touro medical students will come to Natchez for clinical rotations**, receiving hands-on education and experience in the hospital setting across various areas of medicine under the supervision of practicing physicians.

- The first group of students recently arrived in Natchez, marking **the beginning** of what we hope will become an important and lasting **medical-education partnership.**
- These clinical rotations are part of the advanced stage of a physician's medical education leading toward graduation and residency. Just as importantly for Natchez, they give future physicians an opportunity to **live here, work alongside our healthcare professionals and experience our community firsthand.**
- **If we want to recruit more doctors to Natchez and Southwest Mississippi, one of the best strategies is to bring future doctors here while they are still training—and give them a reason to come back.**

Healthcare and Economic Growth

Strong healthcare makes Natchez more competitive. When a company considers locating or expanding here, **healthcare matters**. When a physician, executive or other professional considers moving a family here, **healthcare matters**. And when retirees decide where they want to spend the next chapter of their lives, **healthcare matters enormously.**

- A strong and growing healthcare sector strengthens our entire economy—**creating professional jobs, supporting housing, restaurants and retail, attracting families and retirees, helping recruit new businesses, and providing careers that can keep our young people in Natchez. Most importantly, it improves the quality of life for everyone who calls our community home.**
- We have the foundation. Now we must build upon it.
- **Recruit the doctors and specialists. Recruit and retain the nurses and healthcare professionals. Train our own. Expand the services available here. Keep more healthcare activity in our regional economy.**

- Continue establishing **Natchez as the medical hub of our region. That is the vision of MED Natchez—Medical Economic Development.**

HOUSING: BUILDING HOMES FOR A GROWING NATCHEZ

As Natchez grows, one challenge is becoming increasingly clear: **We need more housing.**

- Economic development does not end when we recruit a company or create a job. If the people filling those jobs cannot find the housing they need, our ability to sustain **economic and population growth** becomes limited.
- That is why housing must become one of the next major priorities of the Natchez Renewal. Our challenge is not simply to build more houses. We need the **right housing, at different price points, for people at different stages of life**—workforce housing, quality rentals, starter homes for young families, middle-income housing for professionals, market-rate and upper-end housing for executives and physicians, appropriate housing for seniors and retirees, and opportunities to rehabilitate existing homes, historic properties and underutilized buildings.

A growing community needs choices. Population Growth Creates Housing Demand

The need is becoming more important because Natchez/Adams County is growing again.

- After declining for many years, our population increased from **28,383 in 2022 to 30,061 in 2025—an increase of 1,678 people, or approximately 5.9 percent, in only three years.** More people mean greater demand for housing. New jobs, expanding employers, physician recruitment, retirees moving to Natchez and successful economic-development projects all create additional demand.
- The Census Bureau estimates that Natchez/Adams County had approximately **15,005 housing units in 2025**, while the 2020–2024 American Community Survey estimates approximately **11,464 households and an owner-occupancy rate of 68.1 percent.**
- **But housing requires more analysis than simply counting structures.** Some units may be vacant but unavailable for sale or rent. Others require substantial rehabilitation or are used seasonally or as short-term rentals. And the condition, location or price of an available unit may not match what a family or employee needs.
- **The issue is not simply housing inventory. It is usable, desirable and available housing inventory.**

Housing Is Workforce Development. We have spent considerable effort recruiting employers and preparing our workforce. **Housing is the third piece of that equation.**

- An employer may have a good job available and a worker may have the skills to fill it. But if that worker cannot find appropriate housing, we have not completed the economic-development cycle.
- As we create and recruit jobs in manufacturing, transportation, healthcare, tourism, professional services and other sectors, we must make certain the people accepting those jobs can also live here.
- That leads to an important principle for the next phase of our strategy:

Recruit the jobs. Prepare the people. Build the housing. All three must work together.

Housing Is Also a Recruitment Tool

- Housing becomes even more important when recruiting people from outside Natchez. We may successfully recruit a physician, nurse, executive or other professional, but that person also needs a place to live. They may want a historic house, a newer home with modern amenities, a condominium, an apartment while becoming established or an executive-level home for a family.
- The same applies to retirees. Natchez has tremendous potential as a retirement destination, with history, culture, restaurants, natural beauty, relatively affordable real estate and a growing healthcare sector. But retirees also want choices, including historic homes, condominiums, townhouses, apartments and lower-maintenance housing.

Housing is therefore not merely a response to growth. The right housing can help create growth.

Workforce and Attainable Housing

One of our greatest needs is housing for working people. Teachers, police officers, firefighters, nurses, technicians, manufacturing employees, hospitality workers, young professionals and families entering the housing market all need quality places they can reasonably afford.

- Census estimates place the median value of owner-occupied housing in Natchez/Adams County at approximately **$108,700**, with median gross rent of approximately **$734** during the 2020–2024 period. Those figures illustrate one of Natchez's competitive advantages: housing costs remain relatively low compared with many parts of the country.
- But affordability on paper does not necessarily mean availability in practice. We need to encourage construction and rehabilitation of attainable housing—quality homes and apartments working families can realistically rent or purchase. That includes single-family homes as well as townhouses, duplexes, apartments and other appropriate housing.

New Housing and New Neighborhoods

We also need new construction. Opportunities exist throughout Natchez/Adams County for thoughtfully planned residential development that expands our housing inventory while complementing the character of our community.

- Our job should be to **work constructively with responsible developers** by identifying appropriate sites, ensuring infrastructure can support development and removing unnecessary obstacles while maintaining appropriate standards.
- **If the market needs housing, we should not simply wait for housing to appear. We should help create the conditions that allow responsible development to occur.**
- **Bringing Existing Homes Back to Life**
- New construction is only part of the solution. One of Natchez's greatest assets is **our existing housing stock**—historic homes, cottages, traditional neighborhood houses and other properties that can be rehabilitated and returned to productive use.
- **Restoring an existing house** creates housing, protects neighborhood character, removes blight, increases property values and creates work for contractors and skilled trades.
- It also connects directly with workforce development. The same trades we are teaching—**carpentry, electrical work, masonry, plumbing and heavy-equipment operation**—are skills needed to rehabilitate existing houses and build new ones.

Downtown Living and Historic Preservation

There is also significant opportunity for residential development downtown. Upper floors can become apartments, lofts and condominiums. Underutilized buildings can be adapted for residential use, while historic structures can be rehabilitated without sacrificing their architectural character.

- More downtown residents mean more customers for restaurants and shops, greater evening activity and additional demand for neighborhood services. **A stronger residential downtown creates a stronger commercial downtown.**
- Historic preservation and housing development are not opposing goals. Rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and appropriate infill can expand housing opportunities while protecting the character that makes Natchez distinctive.
- For professionals, retirees and others who have the flexibility to choose where they live, **historic Natchez is not an obstacle to recruitment. It is one of our strongest recruitment tools.**

Short-Term Rentals and the Housing Balance

Our growing tourism economy has also changed the housing landscape. Short-term rentals provide visitors with more lodging choices and create opportunities for homeowners and entrepreneurs.

- At the same time, we should remain attentive to the balance between visitor accommodations and long-term housing for residents. **A successful tourism city needs both.** We want visitors to have outstanding places to stay, and we want the people working in our hotels, restaurants, hospitals, industries, schools and businesses to have outstanding places to live.

Housing Across the Economic Spectrum

Our housing strategy cannot be defined by a single income category. **A healthy housing market needs a continuum of choices.**

- We need rentals and starter homes for young people and families; workforce and middle-income housing for teachers, nurses, skilled workers and professionals; apartments and condominiums for those seeking lower-maintenance living; market-rate and executive housing for physicians, managers, engineers and business leaders; and appropriate housing for seniors and retirees.
- We also need private investment that helps existing homeowners maintain and improve their properties.
- **Economic diversity requires housing diversity.**

Growth Helps Create the Market

Our population is growing again. Incomes are rising. Existing employers are expanding. New jobs are being created. Retail investment is increasing. Tourism's economic impact has surpassed **$200 million**. Healthcare is expanding. Commercial jet service has returned.

- All of those developments create demand—and demand creates opportunity for residential investment.
- Our challenge is to turn that opportunity into actual housing and make housing an even more deliberate component of our overall economic-development strategy.

The Next Phase: Build the Housing

Over the coming years, our strategy should focus on **new residential construction, responsible housing developers, workforce and attainable housing, rehabilitation of existing homes, downtown residential development and adaptive reuse, market-rate and executive housing, and expanded senior and retirement options.**

- **Government cannot—and should not—build every house.** Much of this investment must come from the private sector. But the City can help create the environment in which private investment makes sense by identifying opportunities, addressing infrastructure, removing unnecessary barriers, pursuing appropriate state and federal resources and working with **responsible developers.**
- For years, one of our fundamental economic-development questions was: **How do we create more jobs?** We are making significant progress on that challenge. Now growth presents the next one: **Where will the people filling those jobs live?**
- This is a good challenge to have—but one we must address. A successful economic-development strategy must provide more than a place to work. It must create a community where people can **work, live, raise families, retire and build their futures.**

So the next phase of the Natchez Renewal is **increasingly clear**:

- **Recruit the jobs. Prepare the people. Build the housing.**

- And make Natchez a place where the people who come here for opportunity can also **find a place to call home.**

PUBLIC SAFETY: A SAFER NATCHEZ IS A STRONGER NATCHEZ

A strong community must first be a safe community. That is why **public safety has been a priority of the Natchez Renewal from the beginning.**

Over the years, **Natchez has made meaningful progress in reducing crime and strengthening public safety.** While crime can fluctuate from year to year—and every violent crime is one too many—the overall trend demonstrates the importance of sustained investment in law enforcement, strong partnerships and a continued commitment to safer neighborhoods. **Our goal remains clear: make Natchez safer for everyone who lives, works and visits here.**

Investing in Our Police

- We have backed that commitment with significant investment in the **Natchez Police Department**. Early in the Natchez Renewal, we hired **16 officers in just four months**, purchased **13 new police vehicles**, invested in new equipment and uniforms, expanded cameras and license-plate readers, and established specialized **VIPER and SWAT units**.
- That investment has continued. Today, **we have more officers on the street than we have had in many years**, supported by better vehicles, equipment, facilities and technology. Significant pay raises have made Natchez Police compensation competitive with—and in many cases higher than—surrounding agencies, helping us recruit and retain experienced officers. **Increased funding for overtime** allows officers to **spend more time on their beats and increases our presence where and when officers are needed most.**
- Technology has also strengthened the way we fight crime. **Crime cameras, license-plate recognition and other investigative tools**, together with improved neighborhood lighting, help officers identify suspects, develop evidence and solve cases. We also restored **Crime Stoppers**, providing citizens a confidential way to share information that can help solve crimes.
- In June 2022, Natchez received the **Mississippi Municipal League's Municipal Excellence Award in Public Safety** for cities over 10,000, recognizing our Police Department's VIPER Unit and its success in **removing illegal firearms** from our streets.

Solving Crime Through Partnerships

Our strategy is not simply to respond to crime—it is to **solve crime**. Our officers have demonstrated their determination to pursue cases until arrests are made, including solving cold cases.

- We have strengthened cooperation with the **Adams County Sheriff's Office, Mississippi Bureau of Investigation and federal law-enforcement agencies**, combining resources, intelligence and expertise to pursue offenders and solve major cases.
- But police cannot do it alone. Citizens must report what they know, and arrests must be followed by **effective prosecution and appropriate consequences**. Repeat violent offenders remain a particular concern. We have advocated for **appropriate bond decisions, stronger enforcement and sentencing for violent crime, greater attention to victims and additional resources for law enforcement and Mississippi's crime laboratories.**
- Locally, we have also strengthened penalties for illegally discharging firearms and adopted a **Chronic Nuisance Ordinance** giving the City greater authority to address businesses contributing to unsafe conditions.

Strengthening Fire Protection

Public safety also means maintaining a strong **Natchez Fire Department**.

- We have provided **pay raises for our firefighters**, helping recruit and retain the professionals who protect our citizens, businesses and historic properties. We have also invested in **new fire vehicles and equipment, including a new pumper truck**, while continuing to maintain a strong fire-protection rating.
- Our firefighters have repeatedly demonstrated their **professionalism and courage** during major emergencies, protecting lives, neighborhoods, businesses and historic properties when our community has needed them most.

More officers on the street. Better pay. More time on patrol. New vehicles and equipment. Better technology. Stronger partnerships. Crimes solved. Greater accountability for violent and repeat offenders. Better-equipped and better-compensated firefighters.

Public safety protects everything else we are working to accomplish. **A safer Natchez strengthens our neighborhoods, supports our businesses, protects our visitors and provides the foundation for continued growth.**

INFRASTRUCTURE: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

Economic development depends on something less visible than ribbon cuttings, but every bit as important: **infrastructure.**

Businesses cannot grow without dependable streets, utilities and transportation. Families need functioning **drainage and reliable public services**. New housing requires **water, sewer and transportation infrastructure**. And major employers will not invest in a community that has failed to invest in itself.

That is why infrastructure has been a fundamental priority of the **Natchez Renewal**.

Rebuilding Our Streets

- Natchez's Public Works Department maintains **more than 100 miles of public streets**, along with drainage, curbs and gutters, erosion control and rights-of-way.
- Since the Natchez Renewal began, we have undertaken major resurfacing projects across the city. By 2024, we had already paved **more than 50 streets**, with additional improvements since then.
- But street maintenance is never finished. **We need a continuing improvement program that allows Natchez to make steady progress year after year.**

Drainage and Infrastructure

Some of our most important infrastructure is rarely noticed until it fails. Natchez's hills, bluffs and historic development create significant stormwater and erosion challenges.

- In 2026, the City advanced an **EPA-funded drainage project for Rollingwood Drive and Glenwood Drive**, including stormwater and erosion-control improvements, drainage relief and new curb inlets.
- Numerous other projects have been accomplished, including erosion control projects along **our bluff and in our neighborhoods**, and improvements to communities such as **West Stiers Lane, Concord, and Roselawn.**
- These projects may attract less attention than a new business opening, but they are essential. **Good infrastructure protects private property and public investment alike.**

Leveraging Outside Partnerships

A guiding principle of the Natchez Renewal has been to accomplish as much as possible **without placing the entire burden on local taxpayers.**

- We have aggressively pursued federal and state funding, grants and partnerships for streets, drainage, public buildings, parks, public safety, airport improvements and transportation infrastructure.
- Natchez is an old city, and old cities have old infrastructure. At the same time, we must build for a growing modern economy.

Our strategy remains: **Use local dollars wisely. Leverage them whenever possible. Bring state and federal dollars home to Natchez.**

Investing in Public Facilities

We have also invested in **City Hall, Police and Fire Department facilities, the Convention Center, City Auditorium, Civic Center, Duncan Park facilities and other public properties.**

- These investments matter. The Convention Center supports tourism and economic development. Police and fire facilities support public safety. Parks support quality

of life. Maintaining these assets protects investments made by previous generations while preparing them for the next.

Infrastructure and Growth

Our strategy must go beyond maintenance. **We must build the infrastructure necessary for growth.**

- That includes our industrial sites, highways, the **Natchez/Adams County Port**, the approximately **66-mile Natchez Railway corridor**, and the **Natchez/Adams County Airport**.
- Over the years, **more than $25 million in federal, state and private investment** has been committed to the Natchez Railway corridor. Approximately **$7 million** was invested in our new commercial airport terminal and related improvements that helped restore scheduled passenger service after more than three decades.
- Our partners have also invested in industrial-site preparation, cleanup, flood protection and other infrastructure that makes Natchez more competitive.

These investments make private investment possible.

Economic development often begins long before a company announces it is coming. It begins with a road, rail spur, drainage project, utility line, airport terminal or prepared industrial site.

The infrastructure comes first. The investment and jobs follow.

Infrastructure and Housing

Infrastructure is also essential to our housing strategy. New subdivisions, apartments and other residential development require adequate streets, water, sewer and drainage.

- We must identify where Natchez can grow and make the infrastructure investments necessary to unlock private residential development.
- **Infrastructure should enable growth—not prevent it.**

Building for Growth

We have made substantial progress, but there is more to do.

- **We must continue improving streets and drainage, maintaining public facilities, supporting water and sewer systems, strengthening transportation and preparing industrial and residential sites.**
- And we must continue leveraging local resources with **state, federal and private investment.**
- Because infrastructure is about more than concrete, asphalt, pipes and buildings. **It is the foundation upon which people build their lives—and businesses build their futures.**

HISTORIC PRESERVATION: PRESERVING OUR PAST—BUILDING OUR FUTURE

Few things define Natchez more powerfully than our history. Our historic homes, churches, neighborhoods, downtown buildings, landscapes and public places are not simply reminders of where we have been. **They are among the most valuable economic and cultural assets we possess.**

- Historic preservation **drives tourism, strengthens neighborhoods, creates housing, encourages private investment and supports construction jobs and skilled trades.** It brings vacant properties back into productive use while protecting the character that distinguishes Natchez from virtually every other community in America.
- **In Natchez, historic preservation is economic development.**

The Historic Natchez Foundation

For more than 50 years, the **Historic Natchez Foundation** has been one of the great forces behind preservation in our community.

- Founded in 1974, the Foundation has helped list **more than 1,000 historic buildings on the National Register of Historic Places**, prepared nominations for **eight historic districts**, assisted with nearly **200 rehabilitation projects**, and optioned or acquired more than **50 endangered historic properties** that might otherwise have been lost.
- It has also helped property owners navigate preservation standards, grants and historic tax credits while encouraging downtown rehabilitation, housing and private investment.
- **The Historic Natchez Foundation has helped preserve not simply individual buildings, but the identity of Natchez itself.**

Preservation Through Partnership

Another important partner is the **Mississippi Department of Archives and History**, our State Historic Preservation Office. Its longstanding relationship with Natchez and the Historic Natchez Foundation has helped protect historic resources throughout our community.

- One outstanding example is the **Natchez Outbuilding Survey**, which has documented more than **150 nineteenth-century structures**, including quarters and other buildings associated with the lives and labor of enslaved African Americans.
- This work demonstrates that preservation is not simply about saving beautiful buildings. **It is about using the places that remain to tell a fuller and more accurate story of the people who lived and worked here.**

Historic Tax Credits: Turning Preservation Into Investment

One of our strongest preservation tools is the combination of state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits.

- Qualifying income-producing properties may be eligible for a **20 percent federal historic rehabilitation tax credit** and a **25 percent Mississippi historic preservation tax credit**—potentially providing incentives equal to as much as **45 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenditures**, subject to eligibility and program requirements.
- Those incentives can make the difference between a building continuing to deteriorate and becoming economically viable again.
- A vacant building can become a business. An upper floor can become housing. An endangered property can become a productive asset.
- **Preservation can leverage private investment while protecting something irreplaceable.**

Historic Jefferson College and Preservation Trades

Just outside Natchez, **Historic Jefferson College** presents another extraordinary opportunity.

- **The Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Mississippi State University and Tulane University** are developing the historic campus as a center for education, research and workforce development in **historic preservation trades**.
- That is especially important because historic buildings require specialized skills—carpentry, masonry, plaster, woodworking, historic window restoration and traditional building techniques.
- Those skills connect directly with our own workforce-development efforts. Students can begin learning construction at the **Fallin Career and Technology Center**, continue developing skills through our **Building Trades Program and Co-Lin**, and gain specialized preservation experience through programs at Jefferson College.
- **The buildings become the classroom, and the restoration projects become employment opportunities.**
- Natchez has the potential not only to remain one of America's great preservation communities, but to become a **regional center for training the craftsmen who will preserve historic buildings for generations to come.**

Preservation Creates Housing and Jobs

Historic preservation also supports two of our greatest economic-development priorities: **housing and workforce development.**

- Some of the housing Natchez needs does not have to be built from the ground up. **Some of it already exists.** Vacant historic houses can become homes again.

Upper floors downtown can become apartments and condominiums. Underutilized buildings can be adapted for new uses.

- At the same time, every rehabilitation creates work for architects, engineers, contractors, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, masons, painters and other skilled trades.
- We are training people for these occupations at precisely the time Natchez is experiencing significant demand for those skills.

Preservation is Progress

There is sometimes a tendency to believe communities must choose between preservation and progress. Natchez demonstrates that this is a false choice.

- A historic building can become a **modern business**. A vacant house can become a **home**. An upper floor can become an **apartment**. A historic property can become a **hotel or bed-and-breakfast**. And a centuries-old city can use its history to create **twenty-first-century jobs.**
- The goal is not to freeze Natchez in time. **The goal is to carry the best of Natchez forward.**
- For more than 300 years, each generation has inherited Natchez from the generation before it. Now it is our turn. Our responsibility is to **preserve what we inherited, invest in it, give it new life and pass it on better than we found it.**

That is historic preservation. That is economic development. And that is an essential part of the **Natchez Renewal.**

A WORD ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS

One of the most important lessons of the Natchez Renewal is that **we accomplish far more when we work together.**

Since July 2020, the City of Natchez has **strengthened its partnerships** with Adams County, our state and federal governments, economic-development organizations, private businesses and community leaders.

Through these relationships, **more than $100 million in grants and special appropriations was secured during our first term** for projects benefiting Natchez and our community. These investments have helped advance infrastructure improvements, transportation, public safety, parks, economic development and other priorities that would have been difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish through local tax revenues alone.

We are particularly grateful for the **support of Governor Tate Reeves, Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann, Speaker of the House Jason White, our Mississippi Legislature, Senators Roger Wicker and Cindy Hyde-Smith, our congressional and state representatives, the Adams County Board of Supervisors, Natchez Inc., and our many state, federal and local partners.**

These accomplishments belong not to any one elected official, agency or organization, but to **the many people who have worked together to move Natchez forward.**

Our guiding principle remains simple: **Use local dollars wisely. Leverage them whenever possible. Bring outside investment home to Natchez.**

The Natchez Renewal is proof that when we put aside differences, unite around common goals and work together, **extraordinary things can happen.**

Partnership is how progress happens. And together, we are building a stronger Natchez.

THE SPIRIT OF NATCHEZ

We have come a long way together. But we have much more to do. The most encouraging thing about the State of our City in 2026 is not any single project or statistic. It is the direction we are moving. After decades of population decline, **Natchez is growing again. Incomes are rising. Businesses are investing. Industries are expanding. Tourism is strong. Commercial air service has returned. River-cruise investment is underway. Our workforce program is preparing people for careers. And employers are telling us they need more workers.**

The challenge before Natchez is therefore very different from the challenge of generations past. **We have an opportunity. And now we must seize it.**

Recruit the jobs. Prepare the people.

Most of all, we must remember that we do not do this work alone. As I have repeated in past State of the City messages, **we look to God, "the author and finisher of our faith." We "look to the hills from whence cometh our help." With His favor upon our city, there is nothing that together we cannot accomplish.**

Today we invoke once again The Spirit of Natchez. It is the **spirit of hope** that has brought us through over three centuries of many different challenges. It is the **spirit of resilience** that has made our Natchez Renewal possible. It is the **spirit of determination** that refuses to give up. And it is the spirit that calls us forward — believing that our greatest days can still be ahead.

I remain convinced: We haven't seen anything yet.

Because Natchez Deserves More.

ABOUT THE MAYOR



Dan M. Gibson ran for Mayor of Natchez in 2020 promising to bring about a Natchez Renewal, an era of economic restoration after many years of decline, and the restoration of hope in a historic city with a difficult past. Emphasizing the importance of working together, promoting *Unity* as the key word in *Community* and *Opportunity*, Dan was elected in the midst of the national covid pandemic with almost 64% of the vote. Four years later voters returned him to office by a unanimous vote, the first time a mayor ran unopposed in Natchez in over 100 years. With historic economic growth now happening together with a more complete telling of the Natchez story, "this shining city, the oldest city on the highest bluff of the mightiest river" as Dan likes to say, is quickly becoming a model for what can happen when people put aside their differences and work together.

Dan has not always lived in Natchez, growing up in Jackson, Mississippi, the youngest of four boys. His father was a WWII Veteran and US Postal Worker. His mother was a homemaker and an entrepreneur. From an early age he had the calling to serve others. He was Student Body President at both of his alma maters, Murrah High School and Mississippi State University. As a college senior he led a statewide student lobbying campaign to secure the Mississippi Legislature's passage of the 1987 AHEAD Project to four-lane most major state highways in Mississippi. Many years later, as a state lobbyist for the MS Association of Self-Insurers he would again be a part of Mississippi history, leading the effort for Mississippi Worker's Compensation Reform in 2012, bringing about many changes for both employers and employees for the first time since 1949.

Dan's interests run the gambit. He's been a teacher and a minister, an author and a musician, Mayor of Crystal Springs and a candidate for Governor. As a businessman recognized by the MS Business Journal's Top Forty Under Forty when he was thirty years old, Dan has enjoyed a successful career ranging from real estate to insurance and consulting. Acting on a lifelong passion for Natchez, Dan made Mississippi's oldest municipality his home in 2016 and began investing in the city's tourism industry. Now working tirelessly every day as mayor to make Natchez the best city it can be, with his wife and First Lady Marla at his side, Dan calls it the best move of his life.

The Hon. Dan M. Gibson, 44th Mayor of Natchez

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2026 STATE OF THE CITY

THE NATCHEZ RENEWAL — BY THE NUMBERS

SUMMARY TABLE | OCTOBER 2026

CATEGORY	ACCOMPLISHMENT OR MEASURE	FIGURE / STATUS
Population	Natchez/Adams County population	28,383 (2022) → 30,061 (2025); +5.9%
Population	Three consecutive annual increases	2023–2025, as reported
Income	Median household income	$36,519 (2020) → $45,515 (2024); $48,500 projected for 2026
Income	Per capita personal income	$39,540 → $48,640; $52,500 projected for 2026
Business growth	New businesses since 2020	Approximately 530
Development	Building permits since 2020	1,484
Development	Value of permitted construction and improvements	More than $133 million
Development	Electrical turn-on permits	Approximately 3,760
Development	Combined permit revenues	More than $584,000
Jobs	City-tracked jobs associated with development since 2020	Approximately 1,265; aggregate, not net employment
Loss Prevention Services	Headquarters relocation and employment	$2.97 million investment; 200 announced new jobs; approximately 250 current Natchez employees
Jordan Carriers	Headquarters investment and growth	Approximately $11 million; approximately 300 added employee positions and 260 additional contracted drivers
Bishopric Industries	Manufacturing expansion announced in 2026	$5.75 million; 28 new jobs
Winnwood Forest Products	Sawmill expansion announced in 2026	$2 million; 15 new jobs; 30 retained
Delta Fuel	Headquarters recruitment	$2.75 million; 54 announced new Mississippi jobs
Kaiser Petroleum	Headquarters expansion	Multimillion-dollar facility; more than 40 current employees
Phibro rCB	Industrial restart and expansion	More than 50 current employees; restored direct rail connection
Westwin Elements	Proposed Class 1 nickel refinery at Belwood	$502 million planned over five years; 134 Phase 1 jobs expected
Westwin Elements	Planned wages and production	Approximately $84,000 average annual salary; 19,800 U.S. tons of nickel annually; 2029 commissioning target
Trace Town	Retail redevelopment	More than $30 million; 120,000+ sq. ft.; approximately 150 projected jobs
Retail market	Primary trade area	Approximately 67,400 residents and 27,500 households
Retail market	Annual retail, food and beverage demand	Approximately $1.17 billion
Tourism	Annual economic impact	More than $200 million, according to the report's 2025 study
Tourism	Employment supported	Approximately 1,400 jobs
River cruising	American Cruise Lines and Viking visitors	Nearly 60,000 annually
American Cruise Lines	New Natchez dock	Approximately $5 million private investment; groundbreaking in 2026
Commercial air service	United Express/SkyWest service to Houston	Began July 1, 2026; 50-seat regional jet
Airport	Commercial terminal investment	Approximately $7 million; completed in about 17 weeks

CATEGORY	ACCOMPLISHMENT OR MEASURE	FIGURE / STATUS
EZ IFR / flight training	Pilots trained or flown with program	445
Flight training	Course completions and credentials	295 course completers; 354 ratings and certificates
Flight training	Operations and instruction	5,824 flights; 8,873 flight hours; 15,349 flight and ground instruction hours
Flight training	Business growth	12 aircraft; 31 instructors who have worked for the operation
MML Economic Development Award	Building Trades Training Program	2026 Municipal Excellence Award, Economic Development and Infrastructure; cities over 10,000
Building Trades	Industry-recognized NCCER credentials	More than 380
Workforce development	Regional service area	Nine Mississippi counties and three Louisiana parishes
Job fair	Employer participation and outcomes	35 employers; approximately 340 attendees; 51 job offers; 205 projected hires
Education	NECA graduates	More than 40 annually earning a high school diploma and associate degree
Mayor's Book Club	Early-literacy initiative	Free monthly, age-appropriate books for Natchez children from birth to age five; privately funded in partnership with Ferst Readers
Healthcare	Merit Health Natchez patient encounters, 2025	Approximately 111,000
Healthcare	Merit Health reported community benefit, 2025	Approximately $107 million
Medical education	Touro partnership	28 medical students for clinical rotations
Transportation	Natchez Railway	Approximately 66 miles to Brookhaven; more than $25 million in investment over the years
Industrial sites	Mississippi River Energy Complex	$1.77 million additional site-preparation award for remaining 106 acres
Industrial sites	Belwood	$1.26 million levee investment protecting approximately 110 acres
MML Public Safety Award	VIPER illegal-gun confiscation initiative	June 2022 Municipal Excellence Award in Public Safety; cities over 10,000
Public safety	Early police recruitment and fleet investment	16 officers hired in four months; 13 new police vehicles
Partnerships and grants	Grants and special appropriations secured during first term	More than $100 million for projects benefiting Natchez and the community
Infrastructure	Streets resurfaced by 2024	More than 50
Historic preservation	Historic Natchez Foundation	1,000+ National Register listings assisted; eight historic-district nominations; nearly 200 rehabilitation projects
Historic preservation	Natchez Outbuilding Survey	More than 150 nineteenth-century structures documented

2026 STATE OF THE CITY

THE NATCHEZ RENEWAL — SOURCE NOTES

SOURCE NOTES | OCTOBER 2026

NOTE	REPORT TOPIC	SOURCE OR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
1	**Population and income**	U.S. Census Bureau population estimates and American Community Survey; City-provided population and income comparison series. Distinguish 2026 projections from published historical estimates.
2	**New businesses, permits and jobs**	City of Natchez privilege-license, building-permit, electrical-permit and economic-development tracking records. The approximately 1,265-job figure is a local aggregate measure, not a net-employment series.
3	**Loss Prevention Services and Jordan Carriers**	Company announcements, employer-provided workforce figures, headquarters project information and federal motor-carrier records. Distinguish employee positions from contracted drivers.
4	**Bishopric, Winnwood and Delta Fuel**	Company announcements, Natchez Inc. project information and Mississippi Development Authority announcements. Distinguish new jobs from retained jobs and companywide employment.
5	**Marcal, Kaiser and Phibro**	Company information, recruiting announcements, industrial expansion information and Natchez Railway service announcements. Current headcounts are not necessarily net-new positions.
6	**Westwin Elements**	October 5, 2026 project announcement and supporting company/economic-development materials. Investment, jobs, wages, production and commissioning are planned, not completed.
7	**Trace Town and retail market**	Natchez Inc. redevelopment information and Downtown Natchez Alliance retail-market analysis. Separate projected jobs and future retail openings from completed investments.
8	**Tourism impact**	Mississippi tourism economic-impact data and the 2025 Tourism Impact Study cited in the report. Distinguish direct visitor spending from total economic impact.
9	**River cruising and dock**	American Cruise Lines, Viking, City of Natchez project information and historical river-cruise passenger counts.
10	**Commercial air service**	Natchez/Adams County Airport records, United Express/SkyWest service information, terminal project records and state/federal funding documentation.
11	**EZ IFR flight training**	Updated company operating and training statistics supplied for the report, covering flights, instruction hours, aircraft, instructors, pilots and certificates.
12	**Building Trades and job fairs**	Natchez Workforce Development, Copiah-Lincoln Community College, training-partner records and job-fair outcome reports.
13	**Education and NECA**	Natchez-Adams School District, Natchez Early College Academy and participating school information. Graduation and dual-degree figures should be tied to the applicable academic year.
14	**Mayor's Book Club**	City of Natchez program records, Ferst Readers partnership documentation and private-donor funding records. The first-in-Mississippi designation refers to a mayor-led effort involving free books every month as compared to on an infrequent basis.
15	**Healthcare and Touro**	Merit Health Natchez 2025 community-benefit information and Touro/medical-education partnership records.
16	**Railway, port and industrial sites**	Natchez Railway, Mississippi Department of Transportation, Natchez Inc., Delta Regional Authority and local industrial-site project documentation.
17	**Public safety and infrastructure**	Natchez Police Department, Fire Department, Public Works Department, capital-project records and Mississippi Municipal League award documentation.
18	**Historic preservation**	Historic Natchez Foundation, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Natchez Outbuilding Survey and historic tax-credit program guidance.
19	**Film Natchez — Film Production Infrastructure**	100,000 sq. ft. of sound stages and green-screen facilities, plus 17,000 sq. ft. of production offices.