

THE PELHAM

PATHWAY

Issue 8

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Pelham's News Magazine

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A path apart.

CITY DIRECTORY

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Building Department

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Municipal Court

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Police Department

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Fire Department

205.620.6500

Library

205.620.6418

Parks & Recreation

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Senior Center

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Ballantrae Golf Club

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Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena

205.620.6448

Pelham Racquet Club

205.621.3380

PELHAM CITY SCHOOLS

Central Office

205.624.3700

Pelham Ridge Elementary School

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Pelham Oaks Elementary School

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Pelham Park Middle School

205.624.3702

Pelham High School

205.624.3701



Pelham City Hall, 3162 Pelham Parkway

CR-52 FLYOVER FUNDED

BY: AINSLEY ALLISON



The City of Pelham received word Monday, June 5, 2023, that it will receive \$41,766,038 to eliminate two existing at-grade railroad crossings on Shelby County Road 52. It is the largest individual grant in the nation to be awarded under the Federal Railroad Administration's Railroad Crossing Elimination Program. It is also the largest grant the City has ever received.

"This is unprecedented," said Mayor Gary W. Waters. "Staff spent months collecting the necessary data to put together a thorough and thoughtful application, and their work should be commended because a project no one thought would ever happen is now a reality and fully funded."

CSX supported the application and committed funding for the project very early on. "CSX is proud of the longstanding partnership we have had with the City of Pelham and are very pleased that they were granted the largest award under the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program by the Federal Railroad Administration," said CSX spokesperson Sheriee Bowman. "The application was a joint effort, and CSX appreciated working in conjunction with the City of

Pelham to devise a project that will improve safety, vehicular traffic flow, and train traffic flow through this rapidly growing area," Bowman added.

The project is designed to increase safety and mobility in the heart of Pelham and solve a longstanding and worsening problem with blocked crossings. Shelby County Road 52 currently cuts the city in half. When blocked by stalled or slow-moving trains, emergency and HAZMAT responders are prevented from accessing half the city.

"Stalled or stopped trains have added several minutes to public safety response times in dozens of instances. We are grateful the FRA saw the merit in the City's application," said Fire Chief Mike Reid. "This is a great day for our residents, and it is a really great day for public safety."

The infrastructure improvements will establish a permanent, reliable route for emergency responders and decrease delays for the 24,000 drivers utilizing County Road 52 daily. The road carries the second-highest traffic volume of any east-to-west route in the area, connecting the City of Helena and other parts of unincorporated Shelby County to Interstate 65.

The new bridge will increase capacity to five lanes with a multi-use path to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

The City partnered with the City of Helena, Shelby County, and CSX and committed to a 20% funding match in the grant application. The estimated cost of the project is \$52,410,313.

"The grant that the City of Pelham secured to eliminate the two at-grade railroad crossings benefit the City of Helena by allowing easier access in and out of Helena. This access is critical for emergency care and streamlines our residents' commutes," Helena Mayor Brian Puckett said.

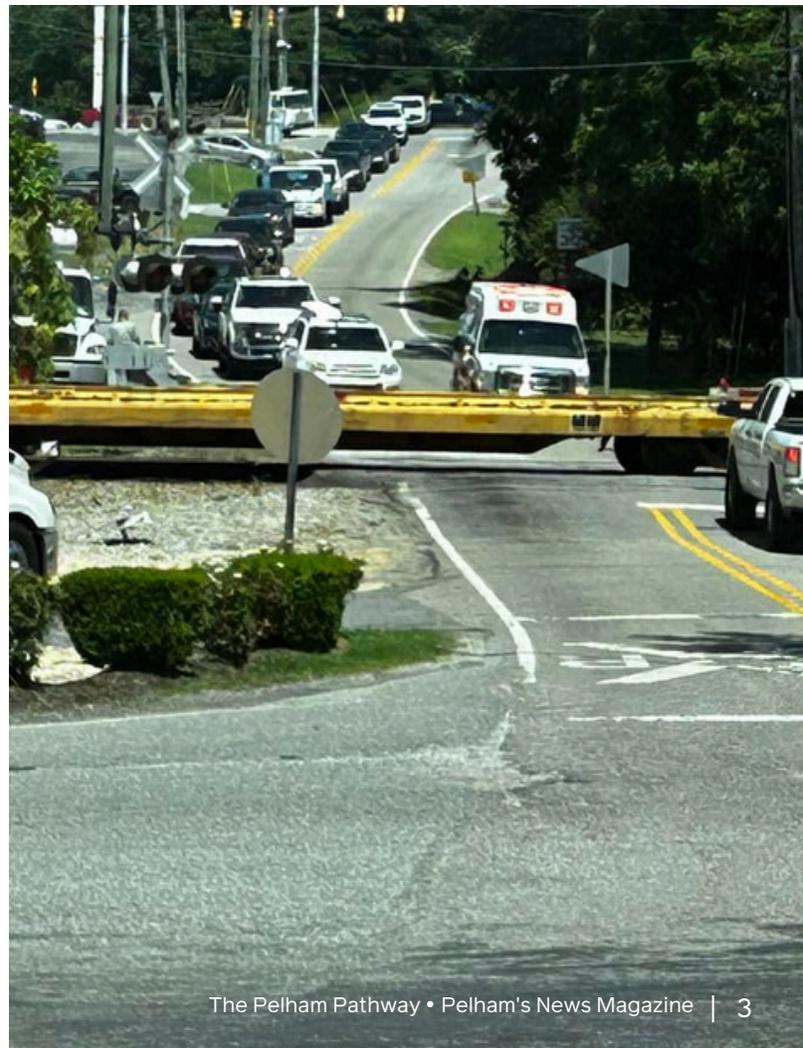
"This is an example of several partners collaborating for the good of the people who live, work and visit Shelby County. Pelham took the lead on this and should be commended for taking the initiative to go after this grant," said Shelby County Commissioner Ward Williams. "The County is always willing to partner with its municipalities."

"The project this grant will help fund is a model of collaboration. The improvements from this project will result in a safer, more efficient travel corridor. ALDOT looks forward to helping advance these significant improvements," said ALDOT spokesman Tony Harris.

"Improving safety along our railroads for trains, cars, and pedestrians is critically important for communities across Alabama. This grant awarded to the City of Pelham is a perfect example of how a targeted federal investment can help address a vital need and improve the quality of life for residents. As a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, I look forward to continuing to work with local leaders across Shelby County and our entire state to identify opportunities and work to advance our shared priorities," Senator Katie Britt said.

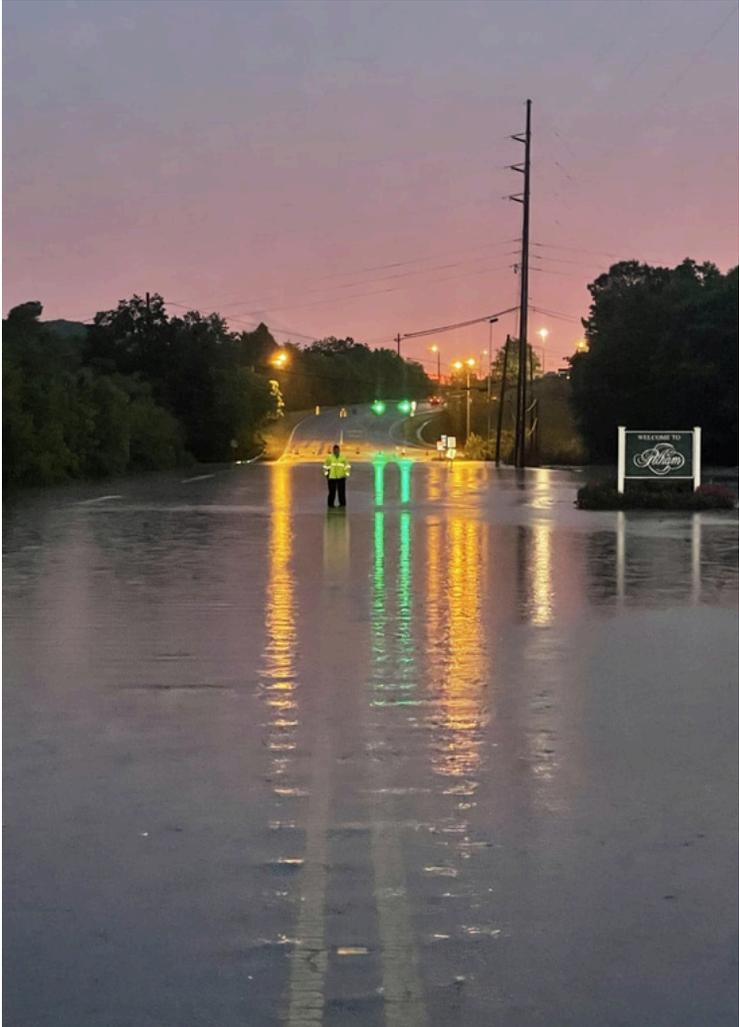
These safety improvements will also strengthen the state's supply chain, as more than 30 daily trains destined for the Port of the Mobile travel the CSX line through Pelham.

"The City of Pelham is a thriving intersection of recreation activity and economic growth for our state. Our supply chains depend on reliable transportation and infrastructure so that goods may arrive at their intended destinations on time. We never want to threaten Alabamians' safety or disrupt their mobility. I'm pleased to see Pelham awarded a grant to make much-needed infrastructure updates so that Shelby County residents can continue safely going about their daily routines with minimal disruption," said Senator Tommy Tuberville.



PROJECT AT A GLANCE

The project will realign CR-52 West with the existing CR-52 East alignment and construct a bridge over the two crossings. The intersection of CR-52 and US Highway 31 will be reconfigured, and improvements will be implemented along Highway 31. The project will also widen and reconstruct CR-52 East of US Highway 31 to increase capacity and update the roadway to current design standards.



THE NUMBERS



\$52,410,313

Estimated project cost



\$41,766,038

FRA grant award



\$10,644,275

Local match

PROJECTED TIMELINE

2023



Grant awarded

2026



Construction begins

2028



Project complete

**Projected timeline is an estimate & subject to change*



FIRST RESPONDERS HONORED

BY: GINA WOMACK

Three City of Pelham first responders were honored by American Legion Post 555 for their service to the community. Dispatcher David Fuentes was named the 2023 Public Safety Telecommunicator of the Year, Police Officer Iliana Hayakahua was recognized as the Officer of the Year, and Fire Medic Brent Rejonis was named Firefighter of the Year.

Fuentes was honored by the American Legion at the state level as Alabama's Public Safety Telecommunicator of the Year. In April, he was named the City of Pelham's Dispatcher of the Year, making the American Legion award his third recognition of 2023. Fuentes joined Pelham's dispatch team in 2012 and became a Dispatch Supervisor in early 2022. According to his fellow dispatchers, Fuentes is always quick to lend a hand, and since he is bilingual, he provides much-needed translation services.

American Legion Post 555 selected Officer Hayakahua as Officer of the Year for her exceptional performance and dedication. She has demonstrated outstanding leadership and professionalism as a Field Training Officer and Crisis/Hostage Negotiator. She is a member of the Pelham Police Bike Unit and works with the Alabama Torch Run for Special Olympics.

Fire Medic Rejonis is the American Legion Post 555 Firefighter of the Year. Rejonis joined the Pelham Fire Department in February 2015 and has 22 years of fire service experience. He was also named the Pelham Fire Department's Firefighter of the Year in April. Pelham Fire Chief Mike Reid commended Rejonis for his dedication to improving the services provided by the Pelham Fire Department. Rejonis obtained his specialized dive instructor certifications and is a leader in the department's Underwater Search and Recovery Team. He is also a Tactical Medic for the Pelham Police Department's Tactical Team.





David Fuentes

Alabama's Public Safety
Telecommunicator of the Year

PROPER DISPOSAL

BY: GINA WOMACK



Many Pelham residents proudly fly the American flag at their homes. Unfortunately, the flags can become worn and tattered after seasons of exposure to the elements. Most of us know that an American flag should be disposed of properly and respectfully. Now, a local group is making it easier for citizens to follow the proper etiquette of flag disposal.

Pelham's American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555, recently unveiled the SAL 555 Worn Flag Deposit Box at its July meeting. The box was conveniently placed in front of the Pelham Senior Center at 50 Racquet Club Parkway. Citizens can place their worn flags in the box at any time, and a member of Post 555, also known as the "Triple Nickel," will collect the flags so that they can be retired with respect.

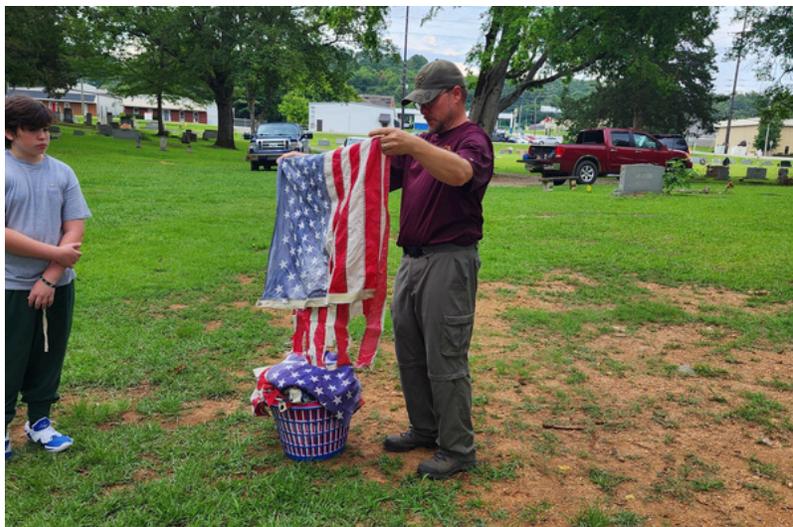
The Pelham Boy Scouts Troop 404 assisted with the project and refinished, painted, and applied graphics to the flag deposit box.

On July 9, 2023, Troop 404 partnered with Arrow of Light (AOL) Scouts from Pelham Cub Scout Pack 404 to hold a flag retirement ceremony at the Pelham Cemetery. A new fire pit was previously constructed at the cemetery and was an Eagle Scout project by Shawn Winn of Helena Troop 2.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense website, the American Legion passed a resolution regarding flag retirement ceremonies in 1937, a vital ritual still followed today. The resolution states, "The approved method of disposing of unserviceable flags has long been that they are destroyed by burning." While burning a U.S. flag in an undignified manner constitutes desecration, these ceremonies are held in a specific manner."

The DOD website states, "During an American Legion ceremony, participants stand aligned in two parallel rows about 20 feet apart, facing each other. A small fire burns beyond the row of members opposite the Legion commander. The flags that are no longer serviceable are presented to Legion commanders, who inspect them to make sure they should be discarded. When it is agreed upon that they've reached their current worn state due to proper service of tribute, memory, and love, a color guard presents the colors, and a chaplain offers prayers. As the crowd salutes, the flag detail dips the retired flags into kerosene and puts them on a rack over the fire. A bugler sounds 'o the Colors.'"

The American Legion's mission is to support veterans and their families. The group also promotes patriotism and is focused on programs that benefit youth.





PELHAM'S PATH TO THE FUTURE

The Pelham City Council voted on Monday, August 21, 2023, to enact an additional one-cent sales tax in the city to fund significant infrastructure upgrades, life safety enhancements, and new recreation and entertainment amenities for Pelham residents.

The move aligns Pelham with dozens of peer cities throughout central Alabama with similar sales tax rates. This would be the first local sales tax increase in decades, explicitly funding capital projects and enhancing city services in Pelham.

The sales tax rate in the city was previously nine percent, with five percent going to the state and Shelby County and one percent dedicated to Pelham City Schools. The proposed additional penny in sales tax would generate revenue to pay for multi-year projects currently underway or planned. It would also allow the City of Pelham to plan for community-inspired and requested amenities long-term.

"Pelham has a reputation for being a desirable place to live, work, and play," said Mayor Gary W. Waters. "This additional funding will allow the City to construct critical infrastructure and life safety enhancements."

The sales tax rate of ten percent becomes effective November 1, 2023.

"We realize no one likes to pay taxes, and decisions such as this are unpopular, but I think the Council made the best decision for Pelham," Waters added. "This infusion of additional revenue will stimulate economic growth, ultimately improving the quality of life for residents. Additionally, new recreational and entertainment amenities will help Pelham remain a destination for those seeking adventure and leisure activities."

The 2022 Pelham Citizen Satisfaction Survey found that residents thought the following areas should receive the most emphasis over the next two years:

- Quality of the stormwater runoff/stormwater management system
- The flow of traffic and congestion management
- Maintenance of City streets and facilities

All the projects listed fall within these three categories or are related to public/life safety.

MAJOR PROJECTS

CR-52 RAILROAD FLYOVER

Eliminates ongoing problem of blocked railroad crossings

HWY 261 WIDENING

Increases traffic capacity from two to five lanes

DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

Informed by findings of a study of the City's drainage network

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Supplement private transport service and reduce wait times

FIRE TRUCK REPLACEMENT

Three of the City's fire trucks are nearing reserve status

TRAFFIC SIGNAL UPGRADES

Replace in-ground loops with new detection technology

IT INFRASTRUCTURE

Improves network stability and security resilience

LIBRARY POCKET PARK

Public-private partnership creating a new gathering space

GREENWAY TRAIL

Construction of the final two phases of the 6.5 mile trail

ICE ARENA INVESTMENTS

New Turbochiller installation and HVAC improvements

BALLANTRAE GOLF CLUB

Renovation of the greens, bunkers, and golf cart path

PELHAM RACQUET CLUB

The clubhouse needs a complete reconfiguration

BLUEBERRY HILL

Site work at future 240+ acre multi-recreational space

PARKS & REC INVESTMENTS

New amenities and upgrades at Pelham City Park complex

SENIOR CENTER UPGRADES

Addition of a pavilion, pickleball courts, and a bus carport



FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions: Sales & Use Taxes

Q

What does a 1% increase in sales tax mean?

A

People who purchase certain items in Pelham pay an extra one cent on every dollar. That money is used to fund city services, infrastructure, and amenities. Vehicles, services (like lawn maintenance, haircuts), lodging, gasoline, and SNAP-approved foods will not be impacted.

Q

What does sales tax pay for?

A

Public safety & emergency services, parks & recreation, roads, lighting, and other operational requirements. Forty-two percent of the City's revenue base comes from sales tax.

Q

Is there another way to raise revenue?

A

Cities in Alabama do not have many options when it comes to raising revenue. An increase in property tax means only property owners contribute to the growth of Pelham. With a sales tax, it's not just property owners who are helping to pay for City services, infrastructure and amenities. Visitors get to help, too!

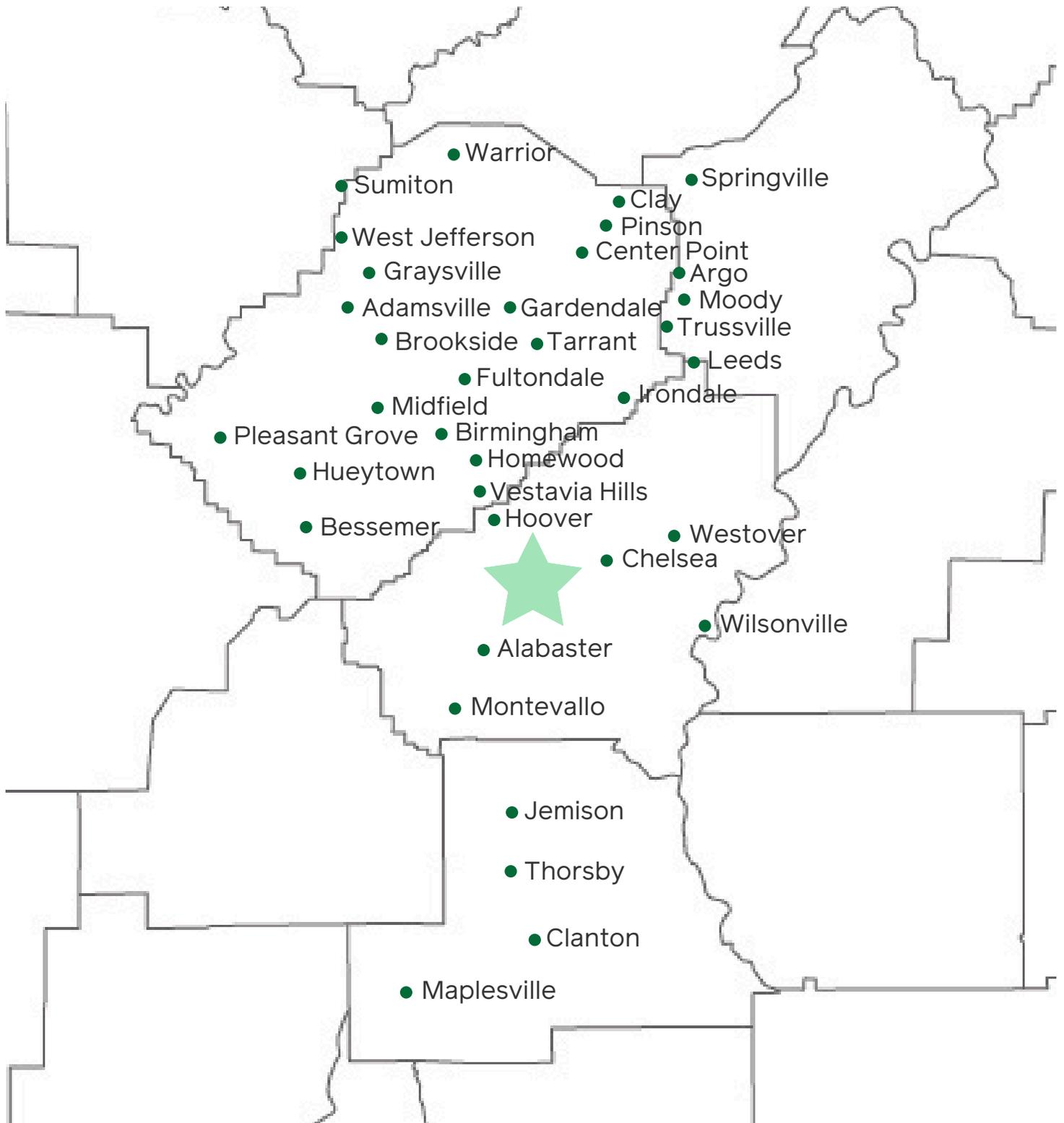
Q

How do we compare to our neighbors?

A

The new sales tax rate would align Pelham with dozens of peer cities throughout central Alabama, including multiple cities in Shelby and Chilton counties and nearly every municipality in Jefferson County. Across the state, 33 cities and counties have raised or added new taxes so far in 2023. For comparison, only 25 cities raised or added taxes in 2022 and 17 in 2021. It is becoming clear that current revenue streams are no longer sufficient to provide desired services.

CITIES WITH 10% SALES TAX



WATER & SEWER RATE CHANGES

Pelham Water Works is dedicated to providing our customers safe, high-quality water and reliable service. Improvements are continuously being made to all aspects of the water system to ensure an adequate water supply to the community.

The City recently evaluated the costs associated with operations, including a rate increase for water purchased from Shelby County. The evaluation revealed that without a rate adjustment, the system would not generate sufficient revenues to pay for itself.

Beginning October 1, 2023, the base charge for water for residential customers inside the city limits will be \$18.00 per month for the first 2,500 gallons and then \$4.42 per 1,000 gallons over the base charge. For residential customers outside the city limits, the base charge will be \$21.00 monthly for the first 2,500 gallons and then \$5.09 per 1,000 gallons over the base charge. The Consumer Price Index determines water usage rates that exceed the minimum and apply uniformly to all customers, regardless of whether they are inside or outside the city limits.

Beginning October 1, 2023, the base charge for residential sewer usage will be \$25.82 per month for the first 3,000 gallons and then \$6.38 per 1,000 gallons over the base charge. The Consumer Price Index determines sewer rates and applies uniformly to all customers, regardless of whether they are inside or outside the city limits.

The City offers a reduced rate for those on a fixed income. To qualify, residents must have a household income derived solely from Social Security or Social Security Disability.

Rates will automatically adjust annually beginning in 2026 through 2028. Despite the adjustments, Pelham's water and sewer rates remain the lowest in the Birmingham metro area. A report detailing the systems' financial health is due to the City Council every June beginning in 2024.



SCAN TO REVIEW RATES



FREESTANDING ER COMING TO PELHAM

Ascension St. Vincent's is moving forward to build a Freestanding Emergency Department in Pelham after receiving approval from a state regulatory board. The Certificate of Need Review Board, which regulates new healthcare facilities in Alabama, voted in April to approve the Pelham project. It issued the certificate of need to Ascension St. Vincent's on Wednesday, June 7, clearing the way to begin work at the site.

"This facility will meet a significant need for people living in and around Pelham," said Jason Alexander, Ascension St. Vincent's CEO. "Our goal is to ensure residents have access to emergency medical care when needed."

The freestanding emergency room will be located on the southeastern corner of the tank farm exit (242) off Interstate 65. Design and engineering work is underway, and work at the site is expected to begin in early 2024. The facility is tentatively set to open by the summer of 2025.

"We are eager to make this resource available for our residents," said Pelham Mayor Gary W. Waters, a retired fire chief who was among more than 40 local officials and leaders who supported the project. "I know from experience that a Freestanding Emergency Department like this can make a difference when minutes matter, and lives are at stake."

Numerous local officials in Shelby County supported the project, as did state senators, state representatives, economic development leaders, healthcare institutions, and many first responders. "The overwhelming response from the community indicates the need for improved services in this area of Shelby County," Alexander said. "We are grateful to so many local supporters and the Certificate of Need Review Board for clearing the way for us to proceed."

In addition to emergency services, the new facility will also offer diagnostics, primary and specialty care services.



NEW AMENITIES



Splash Pad

Pelham's long-awaited splash pad is officially open, just in time for the dog days of summer. It is a great way to beat the heat and enjoy outdoor fun. The splash pad has all sorts of water features and sprinklers that will keep visitors entertained for hours. The splash pad is handicap accessible.

Parks & Recreation employees and City leaders cut the ribbon on August 12th and flipped the switch to turn on the water. Plenty of children and families were on hand to celebrate, making it a lively and enjoyable atmosphere.

"This is such a great day for Pelham," exclaimed Martina Winston, a long-time resident and Parks & Recreation volunteer.

The aquatic play experience features many items to thrill people of all ages. The list of water features includes the Baby Long Legs, with outward-arching streams of water; the Lotus Petal, which creates a weave pattern that is fun to run through; and the Mushroom Maze, which makes a dome of water.

"We are extremely excited to bring this wonderful water feature to the citizens of Pelham," said Parks & Recreation Director Brian Cooper. "We expect it, the future playground, the Greenway Trail, and the dog park to activate the northern end of City Park and make it the place to be!"

Shade structures are on order and will be installed as soon as they arrive. Meanwhile, plenty of shaded areas are nearby to escape the sun and rest. A pavilion with picnic tables and benches is beside the splash pad, as are newly constructed restrooms.

Batting Cage Covers

Work began in early August to upgrade all of the batting cages at Pelham City Park. This is a game-changer for those who love to practice hitting, rain, or shine.

"This is a much-needed overhaul that will include roofing and lighting," said Cooper. Not only does this protect players from the elements, but it also helps to preserve equipment. Additionally, covered batting cages can provide a more controlled environment for training and help minimize distractions. The work should be complete in time for the fall season.

Campus 124 Park

Just up Highway, the new Campus 124 Park continues to evolve. Work began in late February when crews started clearing out thick brush. By April, gravel was down, creating a walking path that will eventually be paved and connected to the Greenway Trail.

Underway now is the installation of irrigation and electrical lines, landscaping, and the creek overlook. Crews are also building the monument park sign. A pavilion will be located at the northern end of the park. It has been ordered and will be installed when it arrives.



Senior Center Pickleball Courts & Pavilion

Two new pickleball courts are under construction at the Pelham Senior Center. The only work remaining is the painting of the lines and installation of the net.

"Parks & Recreation is thrilled about expanding recreation opportunities for our active adults. We are also adding a pavilion next to the Senior Center to extend our programming space to the outdoors. We expect to see both of these new features active fall."

The City worked with the Shelby County Parks & Recreation Authority to build the pavilion.



FAMILIAR FACES

MEET PELHAM'S RECREATION COORDINATORS FOR ATHLETICS

Pelham Parks & Recreation has a team of hard-working Recreation Coordinators, two of whom focus on programming and supervising a variety of recreational youth sports. Parents and young athletes will recognize Charlie Sanders and Jared Thornton as familiar faces around Pelham City Park. This duo oversees at least ten different youth sports programs over the course of the year. We recently caught up with Charlie and Jared to find out what's involved in helping Pelham children learn, enjoy, and excel in youth sports.

Charlie Sanders

Oversees:

Youth football, cheer, volleyball, boys' basketball, soccer, and flag football.

Years with Pelham Parks & Recreation:

Two years.

What do you do as a Recreation Coordinator?

"As Recreation-Athletics Coordinators, we wear many hats and remain open to any role or direction our position may pull us towards. We create, register, plan for, maintain, and help supervise and manage sports leagues and programs. We also help with the day-to-day operations of the Rec Center and City Park and assist with any events we may host as a department. Many of the kids and families we serve are involved in many of these aspects, so it is neat to see our people involved in several fun opportunities we offer."

What influenced you to follow this career path?

"I worked part-time for the City of Auburn Parks and Recreation Department for six years throughout high school and college. I had a great supervisor and experience. I struggled with what I wanted to do and planned to go into some type of ministry. I realized that I could show Christ's love to whomever, wherever, and it did not have to be confined to the walls of the church."



Charlie Sanders, Pelham Parks & Recreation Coordinator - Athletics

"I have a passion for sports and serving families and children. This combination and a knack for organizing and coordinating drove me to pursue this career and lifestyle. I owe so much to my friends, family, and former supervisor for helping me discover my career path and get it off to a positive start."

What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

"Easily, the weather! It has a major impact on every activity or program we offer."

What is the most rewarding?

"Seeing the smiles on kids' faces when they accomplish a goal or big moment in any game or practice, and the joy they get out of it. Sometimes I witness moments that seem small but mean the world to a child. Our team playing a part in helping make it happen is so fulfilling. It's why we do what we do."

What advice do you have for parents and children participating in rec league sports for the first time?

"It's all about fun! Remember that you will not master everything at the first practice or game. Remember, youth sports are not the major leagues. It is about building relationships, learning, and growing in teamwork and particular skills."

What sports do you enjoy in your free time?

"I have been around sports my entire life and enjoy watching almost any athletic event. Growing up, I played basketball and baseball."

Where do you see Pelham youth sports in the coming years?

"I want the program to grow not only in numbers and quantity but also in quality. This could include but is not limited to, bettering our facilities, refining our equipment, connecting our entire community from the youngest to oldest players and coaches, and even offering new opportunities and programs as often as possible."

Jared Thornton

Oversees:

Baseball, softball, t-ball, and the girls' basketball programs.

Years with Pelham Parks & Recreation:

Two years.

What's involved with your job?

"Charlie and I work together towards bringing the kids in our community a fun and memorable experience."

What gets you most excited about coming to work?

"The most rewarding aspect of my job is building relationships with the kids and parents in our park. I love creating a fun experience for the kids and seeing them have a great time in whatever sport they play. Walking into the park daily and greeting them with smiles, laughs, and fist bumps is my favorite part!"

What's the most important message you have for parents?

"One thing I want parents to understand about youth sports is to let the kids have fun and enjoy being a kid. Sometimes we can get wrapped up in the moment. We are all competitive and love to win, but at this age, they need to enjoy being with their buddies and having fun, both on and off the field. One day, they will look back and remember their friends more than the wins."

What is your favorite sport to play and watch?

"My favorite sport to play and watch is baseball. I have been around the game my whole life and want to continue to spread the knowledge and love of the sport."

How did your experience as a young athlete influence the way you approach your job?

"I played basketball, baseball, soccer, and football as a kid. My experience in youth sports drives me to want to ensure these kids have a great experience. Some seasons, I didn't have the best experience because of the coaches or parents on the team I was selected to play. We try to help our current coaches be their best so their kids have great experiences in the program."

What are your future goals with the program?

"We hope to bring more programmatic offerings in the future."



Jared Thornton, Pelham Parks & Recreation Coordinator - Athletics

SUMMER SYNERGY

Academic Enrichment, Professional Development and Facility Upgrades in Pelham City Schools

BY: NICOLE KNIGHT

From academic endeavors to professional development and facility improvements, the summer was busy with learning, progress and growth.

Academic Support and Enrichment for Students

Much of the summer included days in the classroom with students and teachers participating in opportunities designed to support student achievement and expand learning opportunities.

The Career & Technical Education (CTE) Camp emerged as a standout initiative, addressing both language development and awareness of CTE classes for elementary and middle school English learners. Meanwhile, the Literacy, Numeracy, and Math Bridge Camps played a pivotal role in offering targeted academic instruction to nearly 200 students. These camps aimed to enhance proficiency and foster academic growth, ensuring that students returned to their classrooms with newfound confidence. In addition, the summer school program for middle and high school students provided opportunities for students to achieve credit advancement or catch up on expected competencies in focused academic areas.

Professional Development for Teachers

The spirit of learning didn't stop with students. Over the summer, Pelham City Schools teachers and administrators delved into professional development opportunities and participated in more than 2500 hours of immersive learning across various subjects, from academic enhancement to foundational wellness and relationship building.

One highlight was the journey of Pelham Oaks Elementary teachers Kristi Plemons and Whitney Pruitt. Their summer took them to Wales and Scotland through the prestigious Fund for Teachers Fellowship. They delved into the history of coal mining practices and the journey of immigrants who played a vital role in shaping central Alabama in the late 1800s. Their professional development included visiting archives, hands-on learning in a coal mine 300 feet underground, and experiencing the culture of these regions. They will use the resources gained to teach a collaborative unit to fourth graders about these immigrants and how they impacted changes in industry and their communities.

Facility Enhancements

The summer activities weren't just confined to classrooms. With a continued focus on enhancing the learning environments for students, several facilities improvements projects took place.

Upgrades included gym and band building renovations and new paint and flooring in the main corridors at Pelham High School; Jumbotron video display/scoreboard and seating improvements in the home side stands at Ned Bearden Stadium; repaving of Panther Circle at Pelham High School; sound equipment improvements in the auditorium and serving line renovations in the cafeteria at Pelham High School; bathroom floor improvements at Pelham Park Middle School; central office board room renovations; acoustical improvements in the cafeteria at Pelham Ridge Elementary and new furniture additions at Pelham Oaks Elementary.



Pelham BOE Acquires Land for Future School Site

On August 4, 2023, Pelham City Schools completed the purchase of 69 acres of land for a future school site. The \$9 million purchase involved the acquisition of contiguous property from seven different landowners in the city limits of Pelham.

After exploring several areas over the past two years, the Pelham Board of Education honed in on the area located north of Highway 52, west of Parkview Drive, and east of the Pelham Racquet Club. The site can be accessed from Highway 52 or from Racquet Club Parkway.

At the August 8 Special Called Board of Education meeting, superintendent Dr. Chuck Ledbetter commented, "This will be something that will be a few years down the road before anything starts happening, but it's a really big piece of the puzzle for our future and for our planning."

Based on information from a demographic study conducted in late 2022, the board of education is currently projecting that a secondary school will be built on the site. However, that final determination will be made at a later date. In order to properly budget and maintain fiscal stability for the school system, the timeframe for construction on the new school site is projected to begin in seven to eight years.

Since its inception in 2014, Pelham City Schools has invested over \$90 million in facilities, including this recent land purchase, the construction of two new schools, and many other facilities improvements.

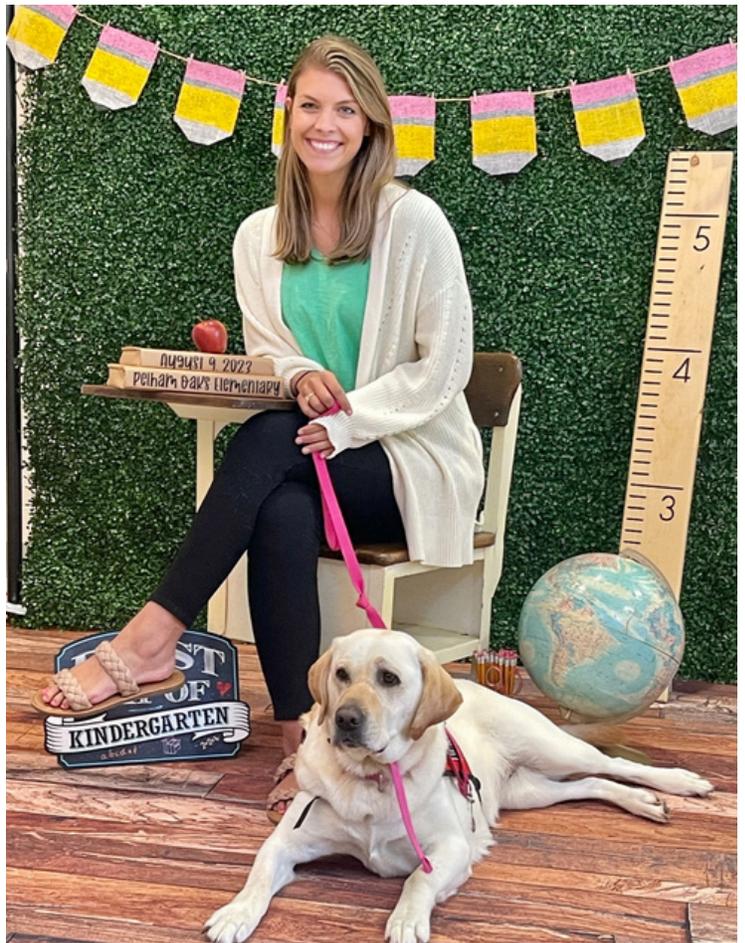
PANTHER PRIDE



It's a Great Day to Be a Panther

#PelhamFirstDay photos have been a tradition on social media over the past several years, and we love seeing so many students and teachers from the Panther family submitting their photos on the first day of school! You can check out more photos on the Pelham City Schools Facebook page or search #PelhamFirstDay.





A FAMILY AFFAIR

BY: TAMMY WALKER



Most people are shocked to find out I'm a mountain biker. I've never been active in sports, and you definitely won't find me sweating in a gym. I'm a wife and mother who works full-time as an Administrative Assistant for the City of Pelham's Finance Department. Like most women, I wear many hats, and life often gets hectic. My secret stress reliever is hitting the trails with the breeze in my hair. Mountain biking has become my therapy, and it's a whole lot cheaper than a therapist.

In 2016, my husband Kevin became interested in mountain biking as a way to get healthy. Our daughter Lauren followed and later joined her high school mountain bike team. Seeing all of the fun they were having, I decided to join them. As our family became more involved in the sport, we began looking for ways to get plugged into the mountain biking community. We joined BUMP in 2021. BUMP stands for Birmingham Urban Mountain Pedalers. Their mission is to build, maintain, preserve, and ride mountain bike trails in Birmingham and surrounding areas. We have since volunteered several weekends each year for work days to help build and maintain the trails we love riding at Oak Mountain State Park and the surrounding area. BUMP is more than just a community; it's a big family where everyone comes together for a sport they love.

It's incredible to see how everyone embraces you; whether you are a seasoned rider or someone just starting out, BUMP will welcome you. We really didn't know many people when we first joined BUMP, but now we're part of a group that makes you feel like family. We all look out for and support each other on the trails.

One of BUMP's signature events is Bump N' Grind, an annual race that has become a staple in the Pelham community and Oak Mountain State Park, drawing hundreds of riders to the area. It is one of the oldest mountain bike races on the East Coast. My husband and daughter have raced in Bump N' Grind for the past two years. Lauren placed 3rd this year, and Kevin placed 4th. Lauren will not let her dad live that down! She often reminds him that she has a medal, but he doesn't.

The race takes place during the peak of summer, and it is HOT. The heat provides a perfect opportunity for riders to put their grit to the test. The name 'Bump N' Grind' hints at the nature of the course, which is known for its rugged and diverse terrain. Riders face bumps, jumps, and challenging technical sections demanding speed and skill. It's important to remain focused and agile as they tackle these obstacles while maintaining their position within the field.

The racecourse highlights the natural beauty of Pelham while pushing riders to their limits. The Red Road Climb section is one of the highlights of the Bump N' Grind Bike Race. It's a steep and rocky climb that separates seasoned riders from beginners. Endurance and determination are tested as riders power through this demanding portion of the course. Once competitors have crested the brutal climb of the Red Road, they have a chance to recover with a few miles of less demanding trail (although this portion includes the famed "blood rock") before the descent into the race's final miles. This is where real conditioning starts to show. I can personally attest to the difficulty of the Red Road Climb. Although I didn't race in this year's Bump N' Grind, I recently rode this trail, and it is as brutal as it sounds!

Bump N' Grind is more than just a competition; it captures the spirit of cycling. It showcases the resilience and camaraderie of athletes who share a passion for two-wheeled adventures.

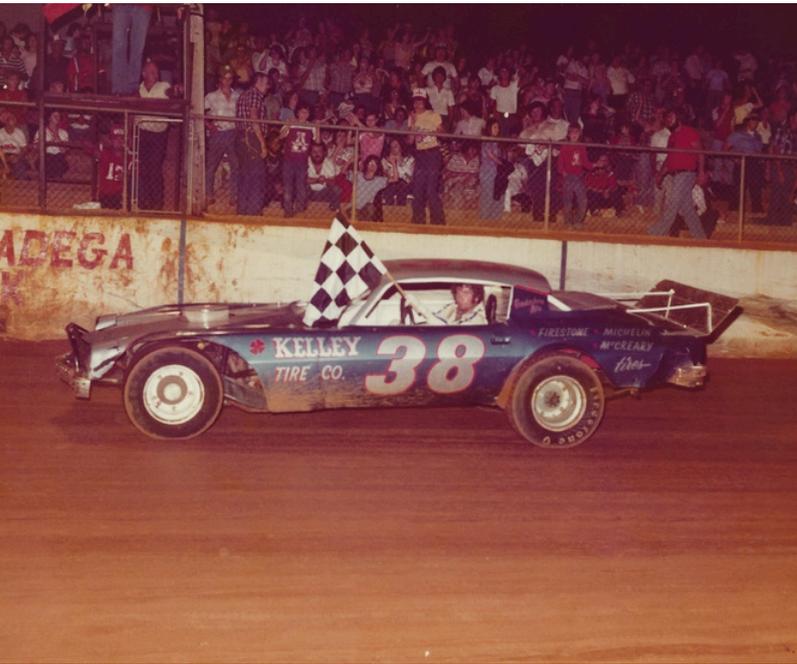
It unites our community and encourages people of all ages to appreciate the great outdoors and a healthy, active lifestyle. Safety is always a top priority, and race organizers work closely with the Pelham Fire Department and EMTs to ensure all necessary precautions are in place. The event is family-friendly, and local businesses and vendors set up booths providing food, bike washes, bike maintenance, and anything to support the riders. Children, too, can participate in shorter races around nine miles on less challenging trails, encouraging the next generation of riders to develop a passion for this exciting sport.

If you are interested in mountain biking, I encourage you to join BUMP. Fall is near and the perfect time to get out and ride. Maybe by next summer, we'll see you at Bump N' Grind. 2024 will mark its 30th anniversary, and a huge event is already in the works. If you want to know more about BUMP or become a member, visit www.BUMP.org. For more information on previous and future races, visit www.BUMPnGrindRaces.com.



DRIVE FAST, TURN LEFT

BY: GINA WOMACK



Alabama's auto racing roots run as deep as the coal and iron ore mines that fueled this area's industrial past. From the early days at Birmingham's Fairgrounds Raceway to Hueytown's famed "Alabama Gang," you could fill the front stretch grandstand at Talladega Superspeedway with the tales, tributes, and trophies associated with the auto racing history in our state.

Pelham might be the last place you'd associate with auto racing, but one family is changing all of that. Mullinax Racing is a team that traces its winning roots back to the 1960s. Tucked away in an unassuming shop just off Highway 31, two brothers, Maddux and Caden, both in their 20s, create racing magic alongside their father, team owner Chris Mullinax, who is a racing legend in his own right. On any given weekend, you'll find the brothers strapped in a race car, driving fast, and turning left on dirt tracks across the Southeast.

The Goodwin-Mullinax family is now in its third generation of drivers. It all began with Maddux and Caden's grandfather, the late Jerry Goodwin.

"We've been racing for a long time. You can track my family's history in the sport back to the early 1960s with our Pop," said Maddux. "Our dad (Chris) started racing in 1979. He raced pro throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Pop and our dad ended up on the same race team and became best friends." Later, Chris Mullinax and Jerry would form their own team, Jerry Goodwin Racing, which became USA Motorsports, and now Mullinax Racing. Racing wasn't the only thing that would forever link Jerry and Chris. Jerry's daughter Tracy caught Chris' eye. The two married and started a family. Maddux, Caden, older brother Chase, and younger sister Cassady round out the talented Mullinax siblings.

In addition to the tremendous guidance and influence of their grandfather and dad, Maddux and Caden have another racing mentor. "Red Farmer is our step-grandfather," said Maddux, referring to the Alabama racing legend, who, at the age of 90, still gets behind the wheel to compete in local races. "We've known Red our whole lives. He and our Pop were best friends," explained Maddux.

"Our Pop died in 2010, and Red's wife died a couple of years later. One day Red asked our dad (Chris) what he thought about him calling Judy, who is our Nana." The two married, and Red Farmer accepted and loves the Mullinax siblings as if they were his own grandchildren. "Caden and I have been able to do things that we would have never done otherwise because of Red." On a trip to North Carolina with Red, the brothers had a chance to meet NASCAR Hall of Famer Dale Earnhardt, Jr., and they quickly became friends.



Cade & Maddux Mullinax with Checkers, the shop tabby cat.

On a recent afternoon, Maddux and Caden are in the shop preparing for a weekend race that has a good chance of being rained out. "We have to show up and be ready to go, but we also have to pivot sometimes and quickly drive to enter a race in a different location where the weather is cooperating," said Maddux. The shop is lined with bright-colored cars, just waiting to be loaded into the hauler for an evening of adrenaline-pumping action. In the middle of all the activity, a tabby cat named Checkers, a former stray who now lives in the shop, sleeps peacefully on a workbench. "These cars are all dirt late models," explained Maddux, who indicated a line of cars on the right side of the shop. There are different forms of dirt late models, and I race crate late models. They're called crates because we run a motor that comes straight out of a crate. In this division, all the motors are the same, for the most part. There are slight differences between the people who build them, but they're all roughly the same. That keeps the competition very close. It all comes down to the driver and the car's set-up, more so than just outspending the other guy. It brings out the skill in a team." Maddux said he does not race in a specific series but instead travels and enters races he thinks are "cool." Maddux explained why he does this.

"A regular series can be brutal. You're on deadlines, and if something goes wrong, you've got to fix it quickly and get back out on the track. We would have to carry a backup car everywhere we went in case one car went down. When we're on our own schedule, we just pack up, come back to the shop, fix the problem, and head out to the next race. I like having the freedom to pick and choose my races."

Younger brother Caden is taking a slightly different approach to his racing career. He races the super late model. As the brothers explained, the only difference between the crate late model and the super late model is the motor and the type of tires they run. "I race in what's known as the Schaeffer's Oil Spring National Series. It's a pro series that races across the Southeast. We have races as far north as Virginia to as far south as Phenix City. We travel many miles over the course of the season," said Caden.

The Spring Nationals season ended in late May. When the dirt settled, Caden finished fifth in points and came in second for Rookie of the Year. The brothers told of how they started the first half of the season in a 2016 model car with a motor that was down 150 horsepower on the rest of the field. During the second half of the season, they had a new car and motor, which required a bit of a learning curve. Unfortunately, the new motor blew in one race. After it was repaired, the team struggled with gear and timing issues. "I was very happy where I finished this season, especially after all the struggles and setbacks we had to go through. We had to go to a backup car several times, but we never gave up and just kept fighting. Finishing fifth was very satisfying," said Caden.



Caden Mullinax in his #2 car at I-75 Raceway.

Not only do the Mullinax brothers approach competition differently, but their path to getting behind the wheel as a driver couldn't have been further apart. "Growing up, I never wanted to be anything other than a race car driver," said Maddux. "I got in these (crate late models) at age 13, but I had been racing go-karts since I was eight. I was obsessed with racing." He said he stopped racing full-time when he started college at UAB, but he did enter at least one race a year to keep his streak. When he came back, he said he was hardcore.

Caden, however, wanted nothing to do with the family sport. "When I was a kid, I never showed up at the racetrack if I had a choice. When the COVID lockdown happened, I was 17. I got bored. The only thing there was to do was race. Some buddies of mine and I started working on an old dirt car for a few months. At the end of 2020, we took the car out to the track for fun. That's all it took to reel me in. In a way, the lockdown was the reason I started to race." As the brothers continue to reminisce, Caden revealed he was involved with electric go-kart racing at the Autobahn Indoor Speedway in Bessemer when he was younger. "Even though I had no interest in racing, I did the Autobahn thing for fun. I won the first race, and the kid I beat was Ryan Wilson, a talented race car driver and defending National Champion. We now race against him in the Super Late Models."

In a world where most people associate auto racing with the NASCAR Cup Series, the brothers are quick to explain the similarities and differences of dirt racing. "If you want to see the best racers in the world, you go to dirt tracks. Like NASCAR, we race on both oval and short tracks that are typically between one-third to a half-mile in length, which is a little shorter than most NASCAR tracks. Like the Cup Series, we race stock cars, even though there's nothing "stock" about them. We load them up double-file with 24 cars on the track and race between 40 and 100 laps at a time. The first to the checker is the winner. It's very similar, except we race on dirt," explained Maddux. He said the major difference between the dirt-late and asphalt-late models is the rear steering. "In the dirt car, you're not as much steering with the wheel as you are steering with your throttle control, and that adds another element to it."

They also add that the talent pool in dirt racing is huge, and with thousands of drivers, the competition is fierce. "You have about 20 spots available in a race. At a recent race, 63 drivers were trying to make the field, and probably 50 of them were the best of the best. You've got to be in the top 20 just to make the field," said Maddux.



Maddux Mullinax took the checkered flag at the Talladega Short Track.

Chris Mullinax joined his sons in the race shop to talk about the triumphs and the challenges that face the small but well-established team. As a veteran race car driver, Chris is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to the business of auto racing and team ownership. "I'm telling you, dirt racing is just blowing up," the elder Mullinax said of the sport. "The purses are bigger than ever, and people are filling the stands." He pointed to a television deal that provides exposure to the circuit, which is positive; however, he worries it could hurt the sport in the long run. "TV is great, but at some point, it starts to hurt us. When people make it a habit of watching from home, they're not coming to the local tracks to buy tickets and keep the lights on. We must continue (as a sport) to build a massive following, so it doesn't dilute but feeds both sides."

While it's true some races pay well, Maddux said if a team is not winning, there's obviously no profit. "Unless you finish in the top five of one of these big races, you come out in the red. After you factor in the amount you spend just to get to the racetrack and enter the race, winning is a necessity. It all comes down to what sponsors you have and what kind of money you can pull in. We operate on a small budget compared to some teams. Our sponsor is the family business, CRM Motors, here in Pelham. It's our own money going into the team, which puts us at a little bit of a disadvantage. Everything we win goes directly back into our cars. This is the racing legacy we've built over the past 40 years. When we need something, we sell a car to get a new car. Our operation is entirely homegrown out of Pelham."

Maddux and Caden acknowledge that they're up against teams with deep pockets. "We could use a larger crew. There's usually just three or four of us at the track." He said some teams have crew members who specialize in certain areas, like tires, bodywork, and engineering," explained Caden. "Some of these guys are in the Carolinas with access to wind tunnels and expensive testing equipment. When they're not racing, they're testing and improving every little thing on their cars. Compared to them, it's an uphill battle for us."



Chris Mullinax & Jerry Goodwin of Jerry Goodwin Racing.

Maddux added, "My dad's knowledge is still one of the best out there when it comes to car set-up and car building. I've been racing for a long time, but I'm not a mechanic. Caden's relatively new. However, I'm proud of the fact that up against these bigger teams, we're not getting blown out. We're in the mix. We're competitive."

Mullinax Racing is set to compete in the World 100 at the Eldora Speedway in Ohio in September. "This is the biggest dirt late model race in the world," said Maddux. Caden added, "I'm excited to continue running in some big races and hopefully win one. We're very excited about the World 100 and preparing for it right now." He mentioned some other high-profile races they're considering, including the Peach State Classic at Senoia Raceway in Georgia and the Gateway Dirt Nationals in St. Louis in early December. They hope to enter more races in the Lucas Oil Series and the World of Outlaw Series, the two top late model series in dirt racing. "The top earners at that level are raking in 1-2 million dollars a year in winnings alone," said Maddux.

Off the track, the brothers like to take advantage of the recreational opportunities in Pelham, including ice hockey at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. "Caden and I play in the men's league. I'm the captain of one of the bronze league teams, and Caden is a star player. He's good at almost everything he does. It's kind of annoying," Maddux joked.

Maddux said the two enjoy playing golf and recently returned from a trip to watch their cousin Trey Mullinax compete in the British Open. Maddux also noted that their uncle is a PGA tour caddie currently with the Korn Ferry Tour. "This uncle used to race. When we talk about the Mullinax brothers, like my dad's brothers, he was one of them. In this family, it's either golf or racing."

The brothers are constantly busy between racing, their hobbies, and their jobs. Maddux plans to continue his studies this fall at UAB. He recently changed his major from communications to social studies education to become a history teacher. "I am a substitute teacher, mostly at Calera Middle School," he said. Caden is a server at a local restaurant and works for the family auto dealership.

For now, the brothers' focus is on the big races coming up this fall. There's a lot of work ahead, but they're determined to stay competitive in a sport that's continually growing. If you're ever outdoors on a clear, still evening in Pelham, you might hear the roar of a race car engine as the Mullinax team works in the shop to prepare for their latest competition. You'll probably smile knowing Pelham's homegrown racing dynasty is gunning for another win.



Top: Maddux Mullinax by his #3 car. Center: Chris Mullinax with sons Maddux & Caden in their race shop. Bottom: Maddux & Caden Mullinax play hockey at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena.

ACTIVITY GUIDE



SEPTEMBER 1 - OCTOBER 9

Basketball Registration

Boys and girls youth basketball is open to third, fourth, and fifth graders. Early bird registration opens on September 1st. Register by October 9th to avoid a \$10 late fee from October 10th through October 16th.

SUNDAY | SEPTEMBER 17

4:00 P.M.

Salsa in the Park

Get on your feet and move to the beat! Enjoy a night of music and salsa dancing with your friends and family at Pelham City Park. We will offer two free 30-minute dance lessons for all levels, followed by social dancing for all! All ages are welcome.

STARTING IN SEPTEMBER

STEM & STEAM

Starting in September, the Pelham Public Library will host weekly STEM/STEAM programs in the Makerspace for children ages 8-12.

STEAM Team: Homeschool
1st Thursdays at 1:00 p.m.

STEAM Team: After School
2nd Thursdays at 3:30 p.m.

STEM Family Night
3rd Mondays at 6:00 p.m.

STEM Family Homeschool
4th Mondays at 1:00 p.m.

ACTIVITY GUIDE

MONDAYS & WEDNESDAYS | OCTOBER 9
4:30 P.M.

Beginner Junior Clinics

This six-week session is an opportunity for juniors to learn to play tennis. Call the Pelham Racquet Club at 205.621.3380 for pricing and to sign up.

TUESDAY | OCTOBER 17
5:30 P.M.

Youth Soccer Clinic

This clinic offers training for new and experienced players focusing on learning skills, drills, and the fundamentals of soccer. Clinics will be run in partnership with the Pelham High School soccer coaches and players. This clinic is for children in first through sixth grades. The cost is \$10/child. Sign up: www.pelhamalrecreation.gov

SUNDAY | OCTOBER 22
2:00 P.M.

Fall Fun in the Park

Enjoy Fall fun for the whole family at Pelham City Park. There will be crafts, inflatables, trick or treating, carnival games, face painting, and a costume contest. Then stay and enjoy Music in the Park. (details on that on the next page)

NOVEMBER 7-16

Scarecrows in the Park

Everyone's invited to create a one-of-a-kind scarecrow for the competition. Individuals, families, civic groups, local clubs, businesses, or organizations can participate for fun prizes and "bragging" rights. For more information, contact Parks & Rec Assistant Director Alicia Walters at awalters@pelhamalabama.gov.

SATURDAY | OCTOBER 14
11:00 A.M.

Christmas Wreath Workshop

Learn how to make your door the most festive in the neighborhood this holiday season with the help of local floral expert Susan Reynolds Smith. This class is offered by the Pelham Public Library. Find more information at www.pelhamlibraryal.gov

SATURDAYS THROUGH OCTOBER
9:00 A.M.

Learn to Play Golf

Attend one clinic or attend all at Ballantrae Golf Club. Contact the Golf Shop at 205.620.4653.

First Saturday: Learn to putt
Second Saturday: Learn to chip
Third Saturday: Learn to swing
Fourth Saturday: Learn to drive

WEDNESDAY | OCTOBER 25
9:15 A.M. & 10:30 A.M.

Storytime in the Park

Join Ms. Rebecca & Ms. Ashley at the Pelham Park Pavilion next to the volleyball courts for fall-themed stories, songs, and more, along with a craft and a snack.

FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 24
10:00 A.M.

Iron Bowl Family Doubles

Sign up with or without a partner and represent your team. The cost is \$25 and includes a meal. Call the Pelham Racquet Club at 205.621.3380 to sign up.

RECENT READS

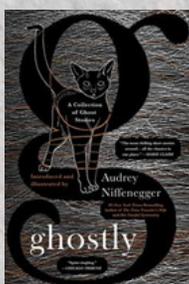
Book recommendations from our Librarians



Ashley's Pick

Camp Sylvania by Julie Murphy

Maggie Hagen wants to go to drama camp for the summer, but instead her parents send her to Camp Sylvania, where all of the food is red, there is a blood bank onsite, and campers soon start to go missing. Recommended for ages 8 - 12.



David's Pick

Ghostly: A Collection of Ghost Stories edited by Audrey Niffenegger

The author of *The Time Traveler's Wife* and *Her Fearful Symmetry* presents an excellent collection of spooky tales, both old and new, which are perfect for Halloween.



Liz's Pick

Clementine, Book One by Tillie Walden

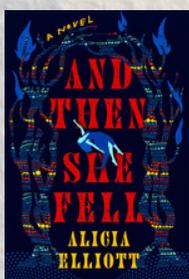
In this graphic novel set in the Walking Dead universe, 17-year-old Clementine and a group of other teens try to establish a new settlement near an abandoned ski resort, all the while battling walkers, the elements, and suspicion of each other. Recommended for Gr 9 Up.



Rebecca's Pick

Luna Oscura by Heidi Moreno

In this bilingual picture book, Luna the black cat, along with her best friend Toad, goes on a magical quest to find her forever home. Recommended for ages 4 - 8.



Russ' Pick

And Then She Fell by Alicia Elliott

Release Date: September 26, 2023

A mind-bending look at motherhood and mental health that follows a young Indigenous woman who discovers the picture-perfect life she always hoped for may have horrifying consequences.

MUSIC IN THE PARK

OCTOBER 1 - TAKE 7

OCTOBER 8 - LIZ & THE GRAND TOUR

OCTOBER 15 - THE M-80s

OCTOBER 22 - BLACK SEDAN BAND

4:30 P.M. - 6:00 P.M.
PELHAM CITY PARK





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PELHAM, AL 35124

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SAVE ^{THE} DATE



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Tuesday, October 2nd
Pelham City Park
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



SHRED EVENT

Saturday, October 7th
Pelham City Hall
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.