

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

3800 Words

By Rauf Bolden

December 23, 2016

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

Executive Summary

There is much work to be done. There is much to contemplate.

I will introduce you to the rich-workplace environment we have at the City of Orange Beach, showing migratory patterns for jobs, housing differences as they affect the workforce market, narrating a little bit of the history, highlighting one family from 1700 to today.

Employees working for the City of Orange Beach, residing in the County, spending \$3.50 per day for the round trip, totaling approximately \$875.00 per year, knowing the non-discounted fare at the toll bridge is \$7.00 both ways, appreciating our Mayor negotiating 50% off the full fare for City Employees. Workers may see eliminating the toll as a wage increase, seeking employment north of the bridge.

Finding creative ways to retain talent without subsidizing commutes or increasing the cost of benefits is the responsibility of local-elected officials, being stewards of the taxpayers' monies, without losing some unpredictable percentage of people. We will discover what it really costs the City when highly trained, capable employees chose to work elsewhere, summarily detailing the financial burden of re-hiring, re-training and re-supervising new hires.

In the City of Orange Beach's case, the Benefits Package is key for retention, particularly insurance for workers' families, deciding to stay employed at the City of Orange Beach or to submit applications for one of the 3,500 jobs on offer north of the bridge.

Introduction

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

“Reverse-Ghettoization is an interesting concept,” I thought.

The grand perspective, creating 3500 additional jobs north of the bridge starts with understanding population growth for the geographic area, impacting the City of Orange Beach both fiscally and physically in some ways more than others, understanding how people migrate across counties for work is the first step.



WHERE WORKERS LIVE WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN MOBILE AND BALDWIN COUNTIES

Figure 1. Mobile Area Regional Workforce Commute (Employees)¹, 2014



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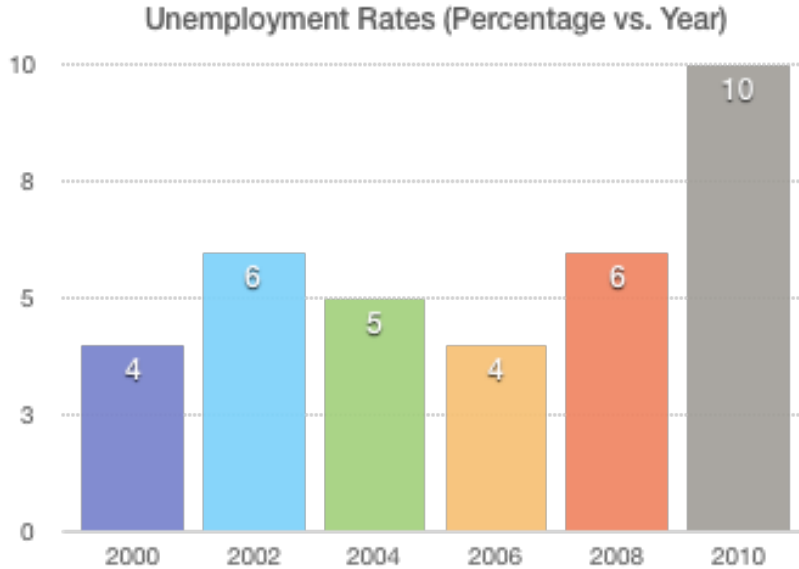
The graph above¹ illustrates that mobility, underscored by a good-highway system, allowing people a wide range of choices for work from Mobile County to Baldwin County to Escambia County to the Panhandle. Employers in South Baldwin County should not be hamstrung, finding a sufficient workforce without poaching employees from the City of Orange Beach.

Unemployment rates can stress job opportunities and were varied, during the time of boom-to-bust from 2000 to 2010 along the Alabama Gulf Coast, calculated mathematically: Gulf coastline unemployment rate = (sum of all unemployment levels)/(sum of labor force levels) x 100, putting unemployment at 4% in 2000, 6% in 2002, 5% in 2004, 4% in 2006, 6% in 2008, 10% in 2010, understanding we had Hurricane Ivan in 2005, a property bubble

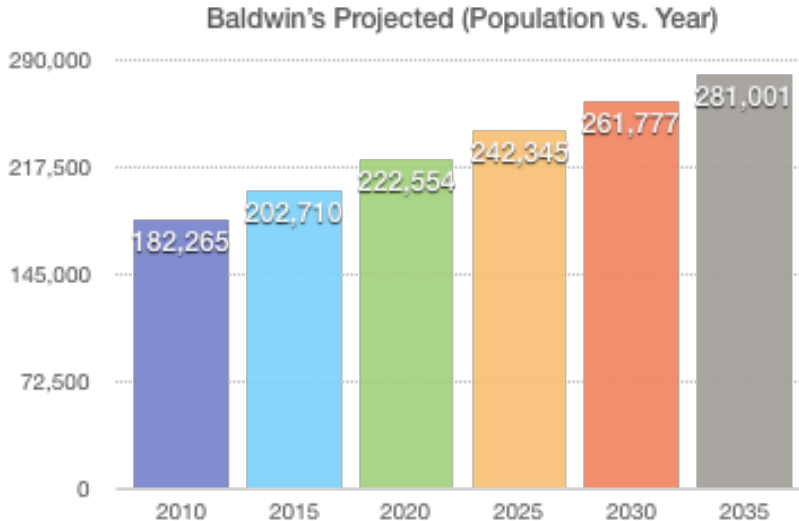
¹ Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, *Where Workers Live Who Are Employed in Mobile and Baldwin Counties*, Accessed December 6, 2016, GulfCoastNewsToday.com

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

in 2006, a recession from 2007-2009, an oil spill in 2010, reflecting the unemployment impact on Baldwin County².



Baldwin County's population is projected to grow, needing jobs to feed its families: 182,265 in 2010, 202,710 in 2015, 222,554 in 2020, 242,345 in 2025, 261,777 in 2030, 281,001 in 2035, calculating a 65.1% increase from 2010 to 2035.³



From Orange Beach's Comprehensive Plan of 2006, the population was 5330 in 2005, projected to be 6356 in 2010, 7382 in 2015, 8408 in 2020.⁴ Orange Beach defied

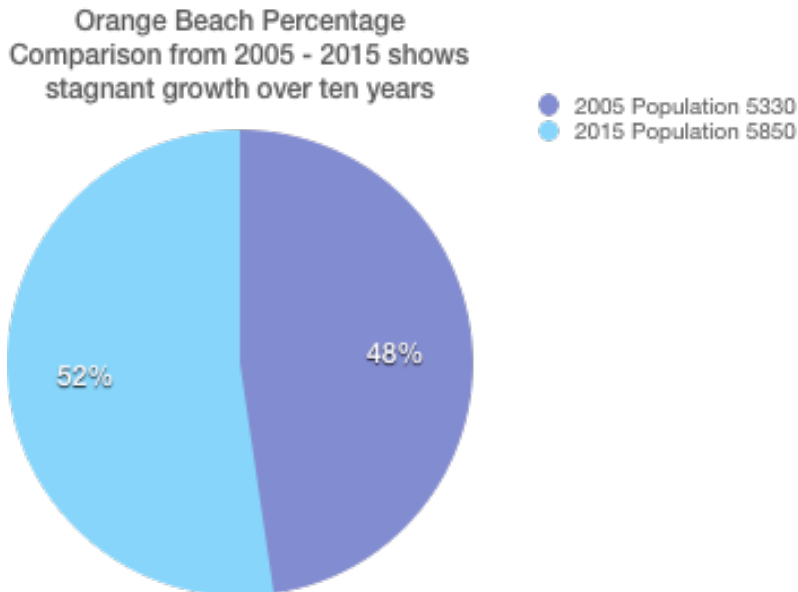
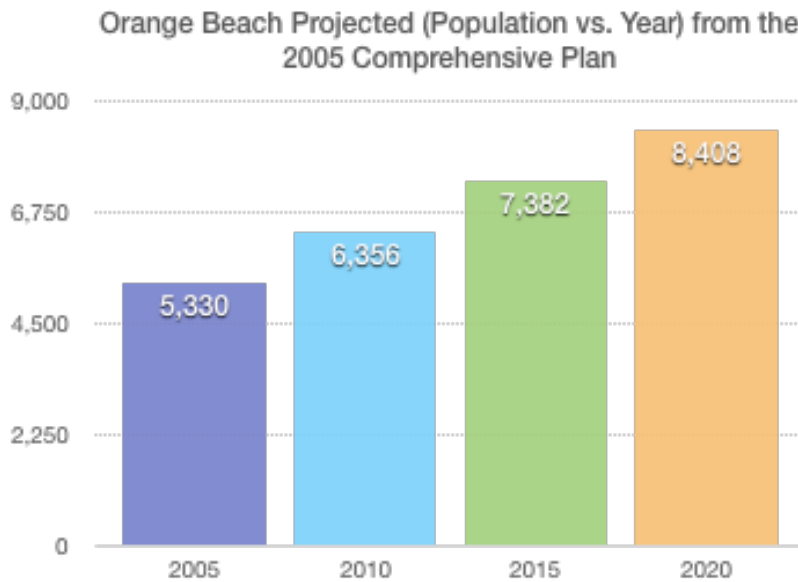
² Coughlan, John, *Gulf Coast unemployment trends, 2000 to 2010: hurricanes, recessions, oil spills*, Monthly Labor Review, August 2012

³ U.S. Census Bureau and Center for Business and Economic Research, *Alabama County Population 2000-2015 and Projections 2020-2040*, The University of Alabama, August 2016

⁴ U.S. Special Census, *2005 Projections*, South Alabama Regional Planning Commission

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

these projections with a minimal-growth resident population of: 5850 in 2015 up from 5330 in 2005, calculated at a rise of 9% in ten years, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The difference between Baldwin County's projected growth and Orange Beach's stagnation is huge, making one wonder why the resident population in a seaside-beach town stalled at 530 new residents over the last ten years.



Demographics in Orange Beach may give us a hint, knowing the median household income for Orange Beach in 2014 dollars was \$57,750, having a per capita income in 2014 dollars of \$35,908, perhaps implicating reverse-ghettoization as the cause for stagnant-

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

resident growth, because it is just too expensive for the average person in Baldwin County to live in Orange Beach.⁵

History

“It all started with a fish,” she said.

Orange Beach (pop. 5723 in 2013) sits on the eastern end of a 14.70 square mile barrier island, founded in 1984. The entire island has a population density of 370 people per square mile. The other City on the island is Gulf Shores, founded in 1958, sitting on the western end (pop. 10,765 in 2013).⁶

Employers at the newly minted complex north of the bridge may not look to Orange Beach Residents to staff their facility. The argument that Orange Beach is too expensive for most Baldwin County Residents holds, illustrated by average housing prices, according to the MLS (single family and condos).⁷

	<u>Single Family</u>		
	Orange Beach	Baldwin Co	Baldwin County (Excluding OB)
2010	\$338,320	\$195,413	\$185,786
2011	\$382,315	\$193,086	\$178,966
2012	\$347,847	\$207,030	\$197,544
2013	\$380,759	\$217,804	\$207,594
2014	\$356,769	\$227,120	\$219,058
2015	\$418,032	\$246,885	\$237,285
2016	\$512,536	\$253,644	\$238,891

	<u>Condo</u>		
	Orange Beach	Baldwin Co	Baldwin County (Excluding OB)
2010	\$337,507	\$242,353	\$176,598
2011	\$369,683	\$255,078	\$166,634
2012	\$447,773	\$312,678	\$177,582
2013	\$429,828	\$323,064	\$200,142
2014	\$432,016	\$322,405	\$203,906
2015	\$381,629	\$294,952	\$216,515
2016	\$405,236	\$306,988	\$224,358

Let’s take a look back, exploring how Orange Beach got to the point where reverse-ghettoization exists, having crafted an affluent community, impaired growing the resident population.

According to Gail Walker, curator of the Indian & Sea Museum in Orange Beach, her ancestors were Creek Indians, having settled this area in the 1700s, founding the

⁵ U.S Census Bureau, *Quick Facts Orange Beach City, Alabama*, Accessed December 6, 2016, <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/0157144>

⁶ U.S Census Bureau, *Quick Facts Orange Beach City, Alabama*, Accessed December 7, 2016, <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/0157144>

⁷ Hart, Andrew, *MLS Listings*, Accessed December 6, 2016

communities of Bear Point and Caswell. By the 1800s the idea of an orange beach germinated, prompting Gail's ancestors to plant Orange Hybrids that were a cross between Oranges and Satsumas, beloved for their vibrant-orange color.

For Gail's ancestors the Civil War was about holding onto their land. Her great-grandfather Lemuel, being a full-blooded Creek Indian, enlisted in the Confederate Army in Ft. Morgan when he was 14 years old and marched to fight in Tennessee, returning with two soldiers, wounded by musket balls the Indians could not cure. They are buried in the cemetery at Bear Point. Lemuel rode his horse to Washington, DC, securing a land deed for \$200, signed by President Lincoln. The Creeks in Ft. Morgan somehow avoided the Trail-of-Tears March to Oklahoma when the Federal Government rounded up the Indian Tribes in Alabama after the Civil War.

The 1900s saw change, Gail's father was born in 1910 in Caswell, inheriting his family's turpentine business, milking the local trees for their sap, collecting it in barrels, sailing it to Mobile where the pitch was converted to turpentine. Her relatives also owned and operated the old Orange Beach Hotel, consisted of hand-made bricks on the walkways and in the chimney, destroyed in 2015 to create the Coastal Art Center. Most of Gail's relatives were fisherman, founding the island's charter-fishing business when a chance encounter with a tourist in 1956 sent them offshore, landing a sailfish onboard a small boat, becoming the economic driver that it is today.⁸

Quality-of-Life

"This is not Thomas More's Utopia," I thought.

I propose, taking a closer look at what makes Orange Beach different from the rest of Baldwin County, highlighting exceptions, countering opponents for trading a few cents on the dollar to work north of the bridge, arguing when the newness wares off Orange Beach has more character as a city, surpassing anything else in the area.

Quality-of-Life can be summarized with many variable, arguably one element in the equation is schools, pointing out that schools will always need better funding to succeed, the Federal Government being one source of additional funding. Title 1 Schools in Baldwin County are spread across the county, encompassing Private Schools as well. If a School District qualifies for Title I funding like the Baldwin County Board of Education (BCBE), it is entitled to the money. This is not a Competitive Grant. The Districts (BCBE) have wide discretion in determining how the money is to be used, having an approved plan from the State Education Agency. Gulf Shores Elementary is the only *bona fide* Title 1 School on the island, interestingly the Private Schools of St Benedict's (Elberta) and St. Patrick's (Robertsdale) are also Title 1 Schools, entitling them to Federal Funding as well, according to the Baldwin County Board of Education website.⁹

One project on the table, ostensibly improving schools is to form a Special Tax District, tacking on three mils of property tax on the entire island, funding to build a new \$60 Million High School in Gulf Shores. Orange Beach opponents argue, paying for a school that is not in our jurisdiction does not improve the Quality-of-Life for Orange Beach residents, their counter proposal is to build a \$25 Million Middle School in Orange Beach, having \$35 Million in

⁸ Walker, Gail, *Family History*, Orally Recited, December 6, 2016 at the Indian & Sea Museum, Orange Beach, Alabama

⁹ Baldwin County Board of Education, Federal Programs Baldwin County Title 1 Public Schools, Accessed December 7, 2016, <http://www.bcbe.org/Page/10142>

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

reserves, bussing kids from Gulf Shores, solving the overcrowding problem at Gulf Shores High School, within the Special Tax District.

Once again the argument for reverse-ghettoization holds, being too affluent to qualify for Title 1, making us prey to more adequately funded Public Schools, leaving parents distraught when their children need special-reading teachers that Orange Beach Elementary cannot provide, as if waving their finger at us, clearly Gulf Shores Elementary has the resources for reading teachers because they are Title 1.

Public Safety

Feeling safe in your bed at night, knowing your family is protected, definitely contributes to the Quality-of-Life. Orange Beach enjoys a small resident population of 5850 in 2015, augmented by 56 Police Officers, 3 Part-Time Officers, 1 Animal Control, 3 Support Techs and 47 Fire Fighters with Fire Fighters doubling as EMTs or Paramedics, 8 Part-Time Firemen and 14 Resident Firemen. These data seem distorted for such a small town, understanding that Orange Beach swells to 150,000+ occupants from Spring Break to Thanksgiving, characterizing the enormous problem we have in managing our labor-intensive customer service model. Keeping trained talent at all levels of staffing is essential, because residents and visitors expect polite, informed ambassadors providing customer service, during their visit.

Voting

Elections are certainly another part of Quality-of-Life, participating in our democracy. Plato said, "One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors."¹⁰ From our 2006 Horizon 2020 Plan, the Quality of Life Committee recommended: "If an election is held for a local district, look at ways to educate the community about the facts."¹¹ In the 2016 General Election we did not take our own advice, having several Constitutional Amendments on the Ballot that people did not understand, defeating the establishment of a Toll Authority in Baldwin County that was needed for building an additional bridge¹², perhaps allowing the City of Orange Beach to defer tolls for their employees who live in Baldwin County, saving them \$875 per year at the present rate.

¹⁰ Brainyquote, Plato, Accessed December 7, 2016,

<https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/p/plato.html>

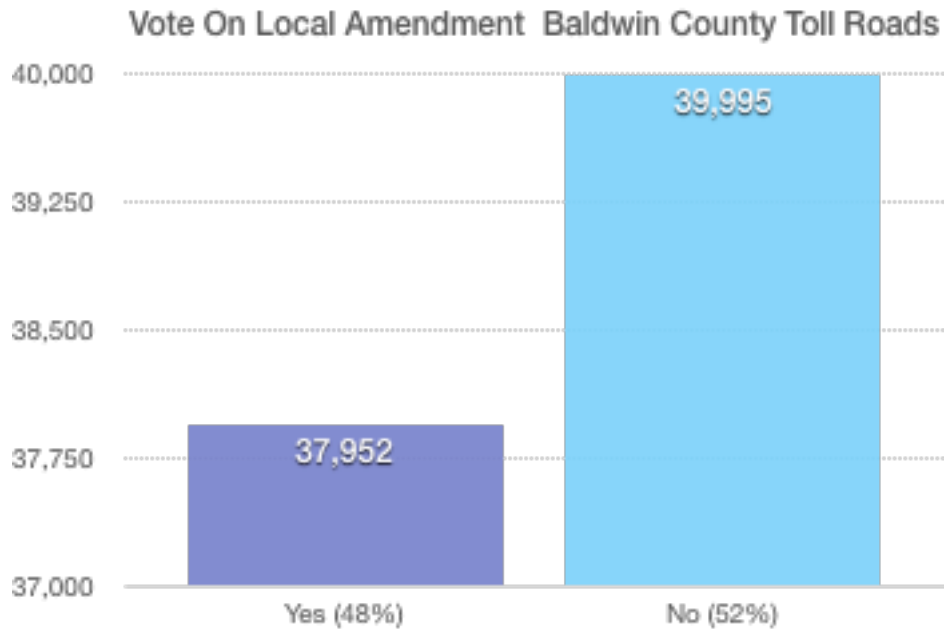
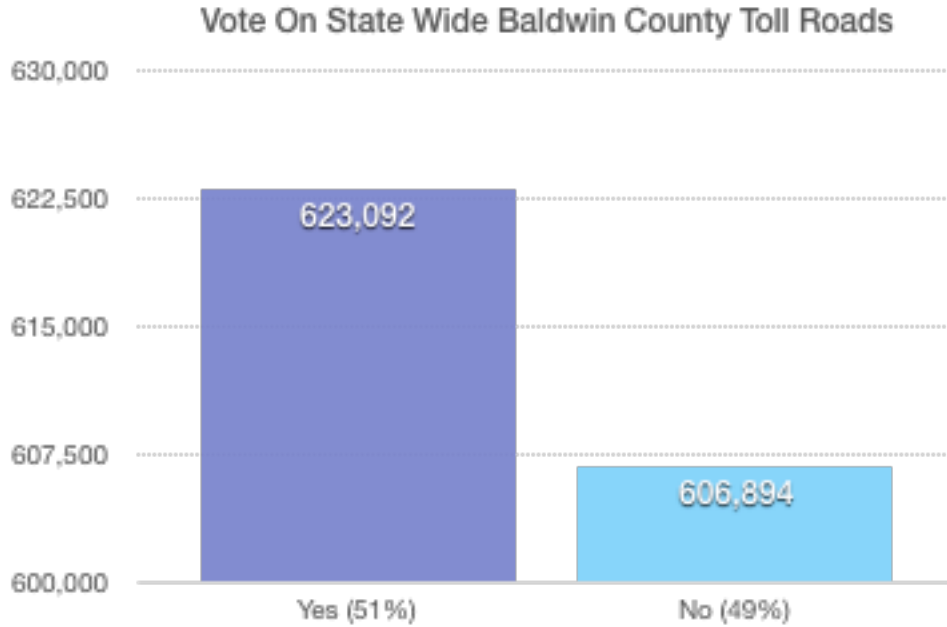
¹¹ Horizon 2020 Plan, City of Orange Beach, Accessed December 7, 2016,

http://www.cityoforangebeach.com/pages_2011/pdfs/community_development/horizons_2020/Final_Horizons_2020_Quality_of_Life.pdf

¹² Alabama Secretary of State, Both of Baldwin's Toll Road Amendments Failed, Accessed December 7, 2016,

http://www.al.com/news/mobile/index.ssf/2016/11/alabama_secretary_of_state_bot.html

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach



This Amendment passed at the State Level, defeated at the Local level, meaning it failed overall.¹³

¹³ Alabama Secretary of State, Both of Baldwin's Toll Road Amendments Failed, Accessed December 7, 2016, http://www.al.com/news/mobile/index.ssf/2016/11/alabama_secretary_of_state_bot.html

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

Traffic

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is restructuring the Beach Highway (SR 182) in Orange Beach.¹⁴



This improvement, coupled with more lanes on Canal Road, simplifying traffic flow from the Foley Beach Express Bridge to Canal Road to Perdido Beach Blvd. (Beach Road). The present construction along the beach is a multi-million dollar investment by the State-of-Alabama, incorporating a landscaped median (SR 182) for beautification, adding a right-in-right-out requirement for safety with J-Turns at the traffic intersections. Better roads means more business, improving our image as a vacation destination, having experienced consecutive record-setting years for both tourism and tax revenue.

Tourism

2014 Baldwin County Tourism Facts

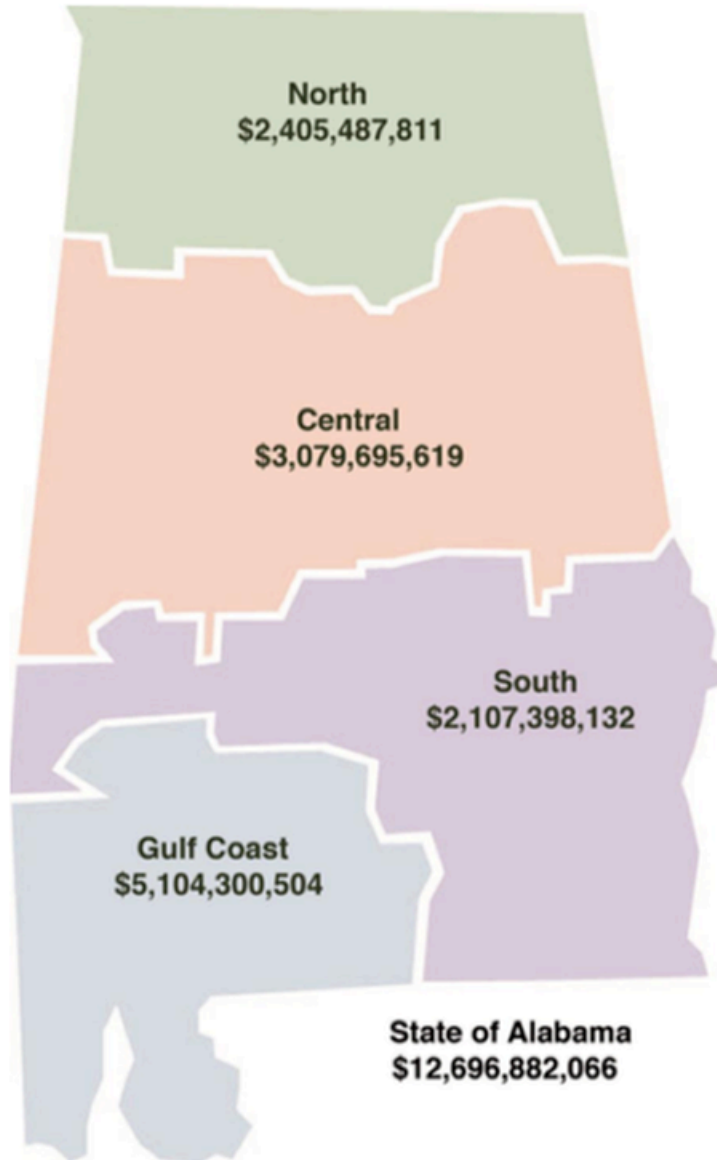
- Approximately 5.7 million people visited the area and left behind \$3.5 billion in travel-related expenditures.
- Approximately 46,000 people were employed in travel-related jobs and collected about \$1.2 billion in wages.
- Baldwin County generated the largest portion (30.6%) of the state of Alabama's lodging revenues with more than \$17.7 million in lodging tax collections.¹⁵

¹⁴ ALDOT SR 182 Median Improvements and Beautification Project in Orange Beach, Accessed December 7, 2016, <http://sr182.com/>

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

2015 Travel Related Revenue

FIGURE 2
2015 TRAVEL-RELATED TOTAL
EXPENDITURES BY ALABAMA TRAVEL
REGION



Again the reverse-ghettoization theory holds, making money like this and retaining talent, willing to travel from other areas to work and implement the City of Orange Beach's

¹⁵ Citizen and Visitor's Bureau, 2014 Baldwin County Tourism Facts, Accessed December 7, 2016, <https://www.gulfshores.com/media/media-kit/mediakit/media-kit-detail.aspx?id=57>

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

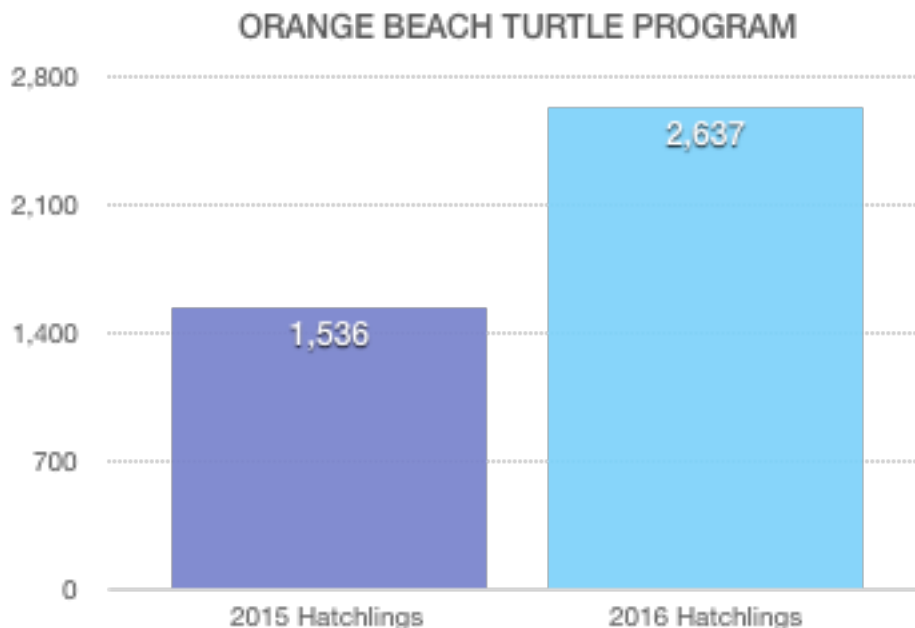
customer-service model, being loyal, honest and well trained with a high-work ethic is a treasure to hold onto. Losing these people hurts the City of Orange Beach in the long term, having invested tens of thousands of dollars into making them the envy of every employer in the region. Richard Branson said, "It should go without saying, if the person who works at your company is 100 percent proud of the brand and you give them the tools to do a good job and they are treated well, they're going to be happy,"¹⁶

Why Ecology

"Are we destroying the planet?" I asked my wife, looking around at the clean beach.

Environmental Awareness and Ecotourism all add value to the experience of vacationing and working in Orange Beach, creating an atmosphere of involvement with turtles hatching on the beach, Ospreys breeding in their nests, seeing rabbits and other small mammals on the Backcountry Trail, watching the Alligator with her babies, adding to the joy of working in a place that cares for the environment. This is something tangible, sharing with employees' families, proudly telling their children, "This is where I work and how we are protecting the environment."

According to Lisa Graham, Coordinator of the Turtle Nesting Program, reported 2,637 hatchlings survived to the water from 34 nests on Orange Beach in 2016, reportedly these numbers are up from 2015 with 1536 hatchlings from 21 nests on the same stretch of beach (see graph below), indicating we are doing more to help the species survive, having a positive impact on the lives of wildlife and people who reside and work in Orange Beach.



¹⁶ Branson, Richard, Companies Should Put Employees First, Accessed December 7, 2016, <http://www.inc.com/oscar-raymundo/richard-branson-companies-should-put-employees-first.html>

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

Frequent sampling of beach-water quality from 2016 exhibits the pride residents and employees take in this area, publishing ADEM’s (Alabama Department of Environmental Management) findings for the world to see, transparently broadening our level of customer service.¹⁷

ADEM/ADPH Beach Monitoring Program													
Microbiological Analyses													
Alabama Point, Gulf of Mexico													
			Latitude: 30.27694° N		most recent advisory status:	12/05/16	next sample 01/09/2017						
			Longitude: 87.54167° W		see advisory key below								
Date Collected		Enterococcus Count/100 ml *		Enterococcus Geo. Mean	Comments	Temp. (°C)	DO (mg/l)	pH (su)	Cond (µmhos/cm)	Salin. (ppt)			
12/05/16	<	1		xxx						32.7			
11/07/16	<	1		xxx						32.7			
10/03/16		6		2.61						30.9			

¹⁷ Alabama Department of Environmental Management, ADEM/ADPH Coastal Alabama Beach Monitoring Program, Accessed December 8, 2016, <http://adem.alabama.gov/programs/coastal/beachMonitoring.cnt>

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

09/26/16			4			2.09							30.8		
09/19/16			1			1.58							31.3		
09/12/16		<	1			1.97							31.2		
09/06/16			5			1.97							28.9		
08/29/16			2			1.78							28.8		
08/22/16			1			1.55							27.9		
08/15/16			3			2.29							28.1		
08/10/16			1			1.84							31.9		
08/01/16			3			2.11							30.0		
07/25/16			1			2.43							28.9		
07/18/16			7			3.58							31.1		
07/11/16		<	1			2.43							33.9		
07/05/16			2			3.58							33.5		
06/28/16			6			3.12							30.1		
06/20/16			7			3.64							29.7		
06/13/16		<	1			2.46							30.2		
06/07/16			7			3.25							24.2		
05/31/16		<	1			2.20							29.6		
05/23/16			13			2.20							30.6		
05/18/16		<	1			1.32							26.0		
05/09/16			4			xxx							32.2		
05/02/16		<	1			xxx							28.4		

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

04/2 7/16		<	1			xxx							22. 7		
04/1 8/16		<	1			xxx							24. 9		
03/0 1/16			2			xxx							24. 1		
02/0 1/16		<	1			xxx							28. 3		
01/0 4/16			1			xxx							32. 2		

The Oil Spill of 2016 devastated our coastline, ruining habitat, killing jobs in the tourist industry, explaining that to the children of parents who work at the City is hard, looking to us to protect the environment, paying a small restitution for the damage caused by BP is outlined below:

BP Grants Awarded for the Environment: Governor Bentley Announces \$63 Million for Gulf Restoration Projects in Alabama¹⁸

-- Fisheries and ecosystem monitoring in marine waters and the Gulf of Mexico: about \$4.4 million.

-- Bon Secour-Oyster Bay wetland acquisition: about \$12.5 million.

-- Dauphin Island conservation acquisition: about \$3.5 million.

-- Lightning Point acquisition and restoration, Phase I: about \$6 million.

-- Fowl River watershed restoration, coastal splits and wetlands project, Phase I: about \$1 million

-- Gulf Highlands Conservation Acquisition – approximately \$36 million

The Conservative Path

“Cautious about change or innovation, holding onto traditional values are what conservatives are about,” he said.

¹⁸ Local 15 News, BP Funds Will Go Toward Keeping The Land Forever Wild, Accessed December 11 2016, <http://local15tv.com/news/local/gulf-shores-bp-funds-will-go-toward-keeping-the-land-forever-wild>

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

I have too long digressed, describing the pieces that make up this mosaic, overlooking the opposing side, espousing employees can go somewhere else if they do not like the way we do things at the City of Orange Beach, fully understanding that employees have grievances and losing people costs money. Donald Trump always said, "When somebody challenges you, fight back. Be brutal, be tough."¹⁹

This non-conciliatory stance may be abrasive to employees, continually doing their best, upgrading city infrastructure, working together, improving their customer-service skills, trying to insure their families, purposely not striving to cripple the city's budget,²⁰ seeking a compromise and not a confrontation. Donald Trump has a point, grasping his push-back comes when people challenge him, being the moment both sides comprehend, negotiating starts now.

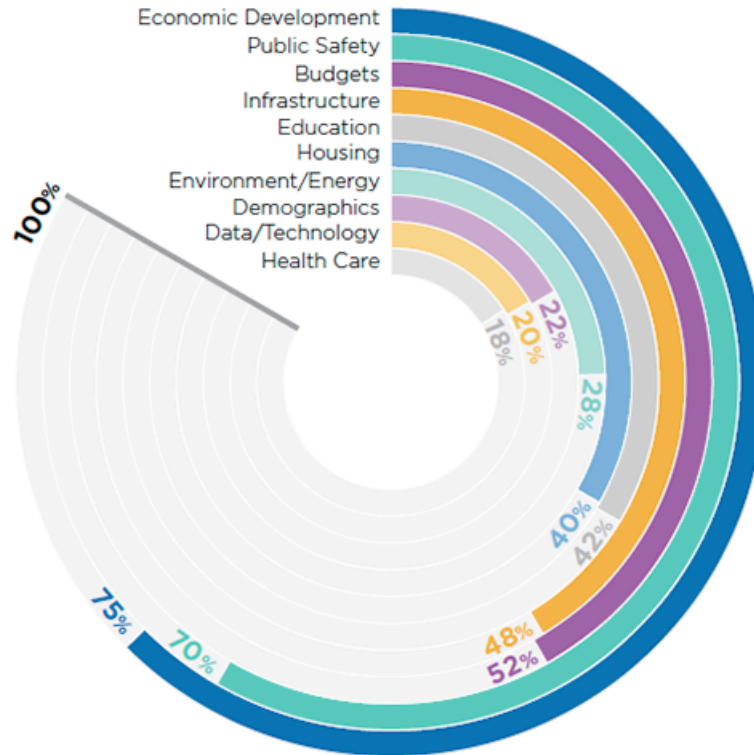
Balancing between compromise and confrontation is a dish on the plate of the nation, interpreting solutions from the conservative corner is the art form of politics. According to the National League of Cities, these points are the primary focus of all Mayors:²¹

¹⁹ Brainyquote, Donald Trump,
https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/d/donald_trump.html

²⁰ City of Orange Beach Web Site, City Financial Reports, Final 2017 Budget, Accessed December 11, 2016,
http://www.cityoforangebeach.com/pages_2011/pdfs/finance/2016/11_15_2016_BUDGET_2017_APPROVED_BY_COUNCIL.pdf

²¹ National League of Cities, Top 10 Issues, Accessed December 11, 2016,
<http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/city-solutions-and-applied-research/state-of-the-cities-2016>

Top 10 Issues



Conclusion

“Has it come to this?” I reckoned.

I can think on no one objection, doing everything possible, retaining good talent. Our premise hinges on the assumption that Orange Beach suffers from reverse-ghettoization, making it hard for employees to afford housing on the island. Employee Retention is a concern for the City of Orange Beach with 3,500 jobs on offer north of the bridge, eliminating the toll, perhaps closer to where an employee lives. In an earlier section I discussed, saving \$875 per year in tolls may be seen as a pay increase for some, creating an incentive, giving up their employment at the City of Orange Beach for another venue.

Let’s talk about what it costs to lose an employee, factoring in what it costs to train their replacement. “These include the costs of both the supervisor and employee’s time during on-the-job training; instruction materials, equipment and time for formal training; and the cost of a mentor’s time, if a mentoring system is in place.”²²

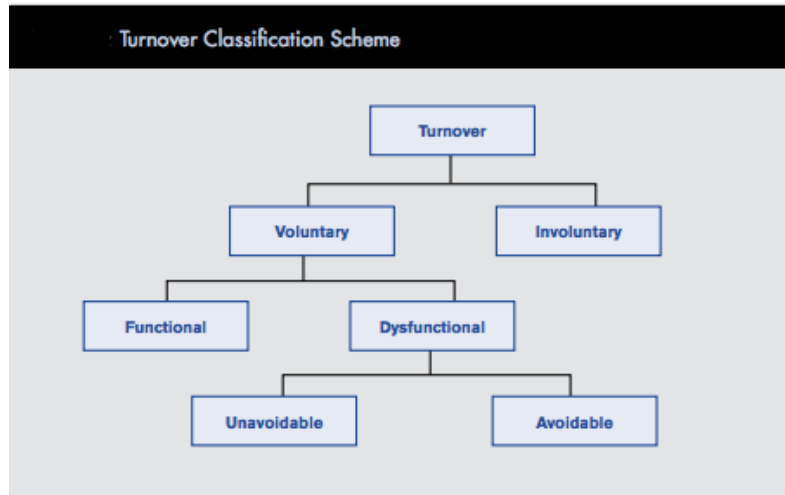
According to SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management), new-employee training costs 16% of annual salary for low-paying jobs, 20% for mid-range, 213% for Executive or

²² Thrive, The Cost of Training New Employees, Hidden Costs, Accessed December 8, 2016, <https://www.adp.com/thrive/articles/the-costs-of-training-new-employees-including-hidden-expenses-3-157>

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

Director positions. This means training new people is expensive, retaining good people is worth contemplating versus the financial consequences if people walk²³. The Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance states, the County has a 5% unemployment rate, translating that means quality replacements may be hard to find when the City of Orange Beach loses good people.²⁴

The following are from a SHRM White Paper.²⁵



Simply said, replacing employees is costly for the bottom line²⁶, calculated as a percentage of yearly salary.

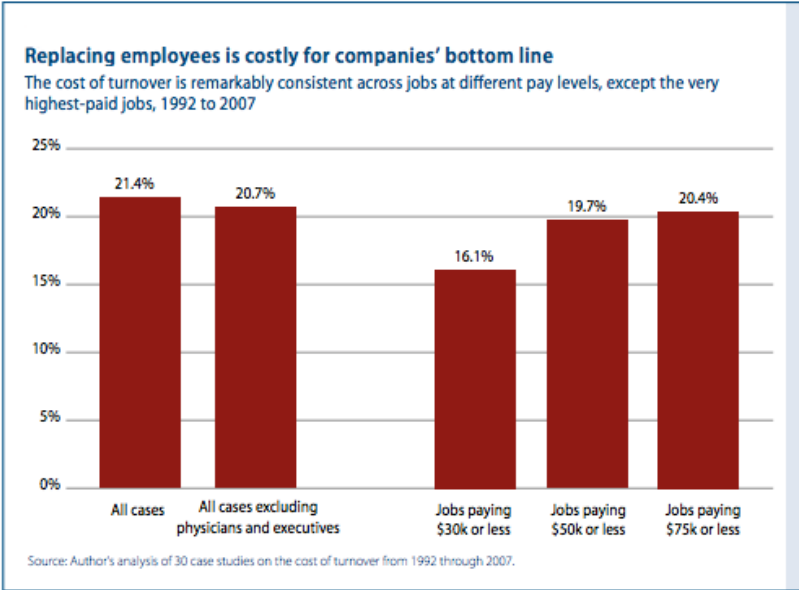
²³ ZaneBenefits, Small Business Employee Benefits, Accessed December 8, 2016, <https://www.zanebenefits.com/blog/bid/312123/employee-retention-the-real-cost-of-losing-an-employee>

²⁴ Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance, Workforce, Accessed December 8 2016, <http://baldwineda.com/data/workforce/>

²⁵ SHRM, Retaining Talent, Accessed December 8, 2016, <https://www.shrm.org/about/foundation/research/documents/retaining%20talent-%20final.pdf>

²⁶ Center for American Progress, There Are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees, Accessed December 8, 2016, <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CostofTurnover.pdf>

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach



In the City of Orange Beach’s case, the Benefits Package is key for retention, particularly insurance for workers’ families, deciding to stay employed at the City of Orange Beach or to submit applications for one of the 3,500 jobs on offer north of the bridge.

This is something to work on. This is something to contemplate.

3500 New Jobs in Foley Affect the City of Orange Beach

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