

MARKETPLACE



ON THE RECORD | MAC HOLLADAY, RESEARCHER HELPING AREA DEVELOP ECONOMIC PLAN

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you have for people,
the better off the region
is going to be.

It's not about 'either/or,'
it's 'both/and.'



The man who could have the most sway over where the metro area is headed in the future is not running for Birmingham's mayor. In fact, he doesn't even live here.

Mac Holladay, head of Atlanta's Market Street Services, is charged with crafting the strategic plan for the metro area's economic growth for the Birmingham Business Alliance — a plan that could have influence beyond the next three or four mayors.

The process is still in the early stages, with online survey results still coming in and data from focus groups and interviews being analyzed. What will emerge — as in similar studies Market Street performed in Austin, Nashville, Oklahoma City and other cities — is an accurate picture of where Birmingham stands today, where it realistically has a chance of going in the years ahead and which industries the region should target for expansion or recruitment.

The final report will not be completed until the summer. Until then, Holladay and his team are learning about Birmingham, intent on taking a fresh view of how it fits into the state, national and global economies.

Q. *One of the goals of the strategic plan is to determine what industries to target for expansion. Do you have a general idea what they will be today?*

A. Frankly, it makes it more interesting and more difficult because right now besides health care, no one is willing to say where the jobs are going to come from. It's a wild guess at this point. But we're going to take a hard look at the trend line and get some real ideas.

For instance, I don't think there is any question that you're going to get some logistics jobs. How do we take what's going on there to another level? Is there a niche there in the whole supply chain management thing that makes real sense for us to focus on? The same is true for health care. There are lots of possibilities there. The report will help us zero in on those targets.

Q. *Could there be some industry that is not really on everyone's radar right now?*

A. It could be some nontraditional things, like green manufacturing. A

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► **Title:** Chief executive, Market Street Services

► **Age:** 64

► **Education:** Bachelor's degree, political science, Washington and Lee University; honorary doctorate in business, Johnson and Wales University

► **Military:** Five years as a U.S. Navy aviator, including nearly three years in the Far East and Vietnam

► **Experience:** Founder and CEO of Market Street Services since 1997; chief operating officer, Governor's Development Council of Georgia (1993-1997); executive director, Mississippi Department of Community and Economic Development (1988-1992); executive director, South Carolina Development Board (1985-1988); CEO, Charleston Trident Chamber (1979-1985); CEO, Columbus Indiana Chamber (1976-1979); various staff executive positions, Memphis Area Chamber (1972-1976)

► **Hometown:** Memphis, Tenn.

lot of the questions for the United States on economic leadership are going to be: 'Are we smart enough and innovative enough?'

For me, the green economy is about job creation. It isn't about saving the planet, although that's OK, too. That's what we're after — what makes sense for the Birmingham region to do.

Q. *Jefferson and Shelby counties are where the bulk of the jobs are in the seven-county metro area. What role will the other counties play?*

A. We don't know the answer to that yet. It's going to be interesting. You could actually have some of the targets that fit better in some parts of the regions than others. We may have some things specifically related to downtown or specifically related to other parts of Jefferson County. There may be some new opportunities for different things in other parts of the region.

Q. *The focus groups allow for direct interaction. Has there been any push back on any one subject?*

A. No. My staff came back to me and said, 'These people are enthusiastic.' They're as frustrated as they can be, but they are really very positive about wanting to move ahead.

And, this is not unusual, but some of the younger people, college students, said, 'We don't know if there is a future here for us.'

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people, the better off the region is going to be. It's not about 'either/or,' it's 'both/and.'

Q. *Is what this plan ends up valuing going to more closely mirror what the younger generation values?*

A. It's going to be interesting to see. There will be some pieces of that. We're certainly going to give great credibility to what the young people say. So far, the leadership is real clear about not sugarcoating anything. They want us to tell them what we need to tell them. What we do from here may be very different than what we were doing before. I think there is going to be realignments, new emphasis, new programs. The other thing is you may stop doing some things you were doing.

Q. *Does the national decline in manufacturing shape the strategy?*

A. What I do think most people are saying is there are going to be niches and things that do grow. Defense is probably going to grow. Aerospace is going to grow. Certainly manufacturing as it relates to health care is going to grow. That's one of the things when we're talking about health care in the Birmingham region, it's 12 or 13 different sectors, it's not one sector. One of the questions we're going to end up answering about this region is, "What do you all do well now that has a chance of growing?"

Q. *How much does the state of the economy have to do with the successful implementation of this plan?*

A. Remember that it is a strategy that could involve everything from parks to schools to transit to everything else. The economy will not affect the implementation of it. What it will affect is some benchmarks and measures.

We are going to measure the net job creation. We are going to measure per capita income and the poverty rate and other things that are affected by the economy, obviously. But we're also going to measure activities. It will be both activity measures and results measures.

Q. *You said you want the strategic plan to be relevant down to the household level. What's necessary for that kind of buy-in?*

A. I think in the case of Birmingham it's going to take some confidence, it's going to take some leadership, it's going to take reversing some of these negatives. People just need to believe things have changed. That's why I think this process and people participating in it are so important.