

What's Next, Montevallo?

In addition to celebrating our Nation's Semiquincentennial this year, Montevallo Main Street proudly celebrates its 10th Anniversary—a decade marked by remarkable progress and the transformation of our historic downtown into a vibrant place to live, work, and gather. However, our work has only just begun.

What comes next - what our next 10 years will look like - depends on all of us - our residents, business owners and employees, property owners, students, and other community stakeholders. That's why we were pleased to join with the National Issues Forums Institute as part of **What's Next, America?** – a national initiative designed to help communities like Montevallo come together to talk, decide, and act on the issues that matter most to us.

In partnership with the David Mathews Center for Civic Life, Keys to the City Community Coaching, Make Your Mark Foundation, and IMPACT Montevallo, Montevallo Main Street convened a series of four deliberative conversations in June – three targeted to adults and one to our local youth. These conversations revealed a variety of creative ideas and inspiring visions for Montevallo's future which will help to ensure that our next chapter reflects what our community truly wants and needs. Participants included residents, business owners, educators, nonprofit leaders, city officials, university representatives, area youth, students and community volunteers.



Community Conversation Summary

American Village Rotunda – June 9, 2026

Why Participants Care About Montevallo

Participants expressed a deep personal investment in Montevallo and its future. Common themes included:

- Preserving and strengthening downtown.
- Supporting thoughtful growth while maintaining the town's character.
- Creating opportunities for families, youth, seniors, and underserved populations.
- Strengthening connections between the city and the University of Montevallo.
- Ensuring Montevallo remains a welcoming, thriving, and inclusive community.
- Moving beyond planning discussions toward tangible action and implementation.
- Creating a community future that serves all generations.

How Would You Describe Montevallo on a Postcard?

Participants described Montevallo as:

- A quaint college town
- Walkable
- Historic
- Charming
- Diverse
- Relaxed and welcoming
- Artistic and creative
- Community-oriented
- Conveniently located
- Small-town in scale but rich in opportunities
- Home to beautiful landscapes, parks, trails, and natural resources

- A place where "something is always happening"

What Makes Montevallo Unique?

Historic and Cultural Assets

- University of Montevallo
- American Village
- College Night tradition at UM
- Historic downtown buildings
- Alabama National Veterans Cemetery
- George Washington Museum relocation to American Village
- David Mathews Center for Civic Life
- Home to Alabama 250 and other commemorative events

Arts and Creativity

- Public murals
- Tinglewood Festival
- Art Walk and Arts Festival
- Performing arts, concerts, and cultural programming
- Container stage at Pecan Grove

Natural Resources and Recreation

- Orr Park and Tim Tingle tree carvings
- Ebenezer Swamp
- University Lake
- Shoal Creek
- Extensive park system
- Walking trails and greenways
- Fire Hydrant Trail

Community Characteristics

- Strong civic engagement
- Diverse faith community
- Blend of rural and urban environments
- Ability to "walk from preschool to Ph.D."
- Strong nonprofit presence, including Shelby Emergency Assistance
- Frequent community events and parades

Participants repeatedly noted that Montevallo combines educational, cultural, recreational, and civic assets in ways that are unusual for a community of its size.

Vision for Montevallo in Five Years

Downtown Revitalization

Participants would like to see:

- Every downtown building occupied and actively used. Fewer vacant storefronts.
- Greater investment in underutilized properties.
- More property owners actively improving their buildings.
- Additional investors and stakeholders attracted to Montevallo.

Mixed-Use Development

Participants discussed:

- Redeveloping Housing Authority properties. Adding retail on ground floors with housing above.
- Increasing downtown residential density.
- Creating mixed-income housing opportunities.
- Revising zoning and development regulations to encourage walkable, higher-density development near downtown.

Housing

Participants identified the need for:

- More housing options at all income levels.
- Additional market-rate housing.

- Affordable and workforce housing.
- Housing that supports seniors, young families, and workers.
- Increased residential density near downtown.

Communication and Community Information

Participants envisioned:

- A centralized community information hub.
- A master community calendar.
- Better communication among organizations.
- Improved business websites and online information.
- Stronger collaboration among Main Street, the Chamber, the University, the City, and other organizations.
- Expanded use of text notifications and digital communication tools.

Walkability, Accessibility, and Connectivity

Participants would like to see:

- More walkable neighborhoods.
- Better trail signage.
- Mileage and directional markers.
- More accessible public spaces.
- Greater awareness of existing trails and parks.
- Improved trail maintenance.
- Better connections between downtown, parks, University Lake, Shoal Creek Park, and future county recreational facilities.

Accessibility for residents with disabilities and mobility limitations was emphasized as an important consideration.

Recreation and Quality of Life

Ideas included:

- Periodic street closures for walking, biking, and community activities.

- Expanded recreational opportunities.
- Community wellness facilities.
- A community recreation center.
- Public fitness facilities and gym space.
- A public swimming pool.
- Increased outdoor recreation opportunities.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Participants emphasized:

- Stronger partnerships with Shelby County.
- Collaboration around the University Lake recreation area.
- Continued cooperation among the City, University, Main Street, Chamber, nonprofits, and community organizations.
- Leveraging outside investors and regional partners.

Youth, Families, and Intergenerational Programming

Participants expressed interest in:

- More youth-focused activities.
- Hiking clubs and outdoor programs.
- Life-skills workshops.
- Trade and vocational demonstrations.
- Mentoring opportunities.
- Intergenerational learning experiences.
- Programs that connect youth with retirees and skilled tradespeople.

University-Community Connections

Participants would like to see:

- More engagement between students and downtown businesses.
- Greater participation by university families and visitors in local activities.

- More summer programming to offset seasonal slowdowns.
- Educational opportunities for seniors and lifelong learners.
- Expanded university-sponsored community classes and programs.

What Is Missing?

Entertainment and Gathering Spaces

Participants identified:

- An entertainment district downtown.
- Additional event and gathering spaces.
- Expanded opportunities for social activities.
- Family-friendly and youth-friendly venues.

Public Amenities

Participants suggested:

- Public restrooms downtown.
- Additional public seating areas.
- More welcoming infrastructure for visitors and event attendees.

Economic Development

Participants discussed:

- Expanding the local tax base.
- Recruiting new industry and employers.
- Attracting additional investment.
- Encouraging more people to live and work in Montevallo.
- Capturing more economic activity currently flowing to surrounding communities.

Tourism and Visitor Infrastructure

Suggestions included:

- Developing an RV park.

- Better leveraging tourism generated by events, trails, American Village, and outdoor recreation.
- Capitalizing on the new hotel and other visitor-serving facilities.

Representation and Community Engagement

Participants noted the need for:

- More diverse voices at community discussions.
- Broader participation in civic decision-making.
- Greater inclusion of underrepresented populations.
- Continued efforts to engage all generations and backgrounds.

Major Themes Emerging Across the Discussion

1. **Protect Montevallo's unique character while encouraging thoughtful growth.**
2. **Revitalize downtown through mixed-use development and full occupancy of buildings.**
3. **Expand housing choices and increase residential density near downtown.**
4. **Improve walkability, accessibility, trails, and connectivity.**
5. **Strengthen collaboration among community organizations and public entities.**
6. **Create more opportunities for youth, families, seniors, and intergenerational engagement.**
7. **Build a stronger local economy through investment, tourism, and business development.**
8. **Improve communication through centralized information-sharing and community calendars.**
9. **Move from planning to implementation, with visible action and measurable results.**

TOP 3 ACTIONS FOR NEXT 5 YEARS

1. **Designate an Entertainment District downtown.**
2. **Tied –**

- **Develop Public Restrooms downtown.**
- **Revise zoning and development regulations to encourage walkable, higher-density residential development near downtown.**
- **Ensure that every downtown building is occupied and actively used. Fewer vacant storefronts.**

3. Tied –

- **Redevelop Housing Authority properties as Mixed Use.**
 - **Create a Community Event Calendar.**
 - **Develop a Community Center.**
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University Baptist Church – June 11, 2026

Why Participants Care About Montevallo

Participants expressed a strong commitment to Montevallo because of:

- Lifelong family ties to the community.
- Connections through the University of Montevallo.
- Small business ownership and economic investment.
- Service through local government, nonprofits, churches, and civic organizations.
- A desire to create opportunities for future generations.
- A shared appreciation for Montevallo's unique character, historic downtown, and sense of community.
- Interest in ensuring Montevallo remains both welcoming and prosperous while preserving its identity.

How Would You Describe Montevallo on a Postcard?

Participants described Montevallo as:

- A beautiful historic college town.
- A community centered around people and relationships.
- Friendly, welcoming, and inclusive.
- Rich in arts, culture, and history.
- A place where people come for college and choose to stay.

- A city with strong civic engagement and community pride.
- A destination for festivals, events, and celebrations.
- A town that successfully combines small-town charm with cultural opportunities often found in larger cities.

What Makes Montevallo Unique?

Historic and Cultural Assets

Participants identified:

- University of Montevallo
- American Village
- Alabama National Cemetery
- Historic downtown district
- Historic architecture
- The Olmsted-designed university campus
- The growing George Washington artifact collection at American Village
- Montevallo's longstanding Sister City relationship with Echizen, Japan

Participants repeatedly emphasized that few communities possess such a concentration of historic, educational, and cultural assets.

Arts and Creativity

Participants highlighted:

- University art galleries
- Public murals
- Tim Tingle's carvings in Orr Park
- Montevallo Main Street Players
- Children's theater programs
- Performing arts opportunities
- A strong visual and performing arts culture

Many felt Montevallo punches far above its weight in terms of arts and cultural offerings.

Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources

Participants identified:

- Orr Park
- Shoal Creek Park
- Montevallo's extensive green spaces
- Natural beauty and ecological resources
- Walkability and outdoor recreation opportunities

The community's natural environment was repeatedly described as one of its greatest assets and something that should be protected.

Community Character

Participants described Montevallo as:

- Friendly
- Social
- Accepting
- Diverse
- Culturally aware
- Community-oriented
- Collaborative

Participants emphasized that Montevallo supports people from many different backgrounds while maintaining a strong sense of belonging and shared identity.

Civic and Community Engagement

Participants noted:

- Strong volunteer involvement
- Active churches and nonprofits
- Community-wide support for local organizations
- Robust communication through Chamber Chatter and local networks

- Residents who consistently step forward to support community initiatives

Many participants viewed this level of engagement as one of Montevallo's defining characteristics.

Vision for Montevallo in Five to Ten Years

Downtown Revitalization

Participants would like to see:

- Every downtown building occupied and actively used.
- Vacant buildings renovated and repurposed.
- Downtown properties used more efficiently.
- Continued preservation of historic buildings.
- Increased investment in downtown development.

Several participants emphasized that downtown Montevallo is one of the community's greatest competitive advantages and should remain a central focus.

Housing and Redevelopment

Participants discussed:

- Redeveloping existing Housing Authority properties.
- Constructing new, accessible housing for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Ensuring current residents are not displaced.
- Exploring mixed-use development with retail below and housing above.
- Creating mixed-income housing opportunities.
- Utilizing redevelopment as a way to expand downtown opportunities while preserving affordability.

There was strong support for planning housing improvements in partnership with residents and stakeholders.

Youth Opportunities and Recreation

Participants repeatedly identified the need for:

- More youth activities and gathering spaces.

- Recreation opportunities beyond athletics.
- A skate park.
- Community center facilities.
- Expanded programming for children and teens.
- More opportunities for young people to develop interests and build relationships.

Participants noted that organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club and local theater programs are already at or near capacity.

Community Center and Shared Facilities

Participants envisioned:

- A community recreation center.
- Shared-use public facilities.
- Greater use of school and community buildings.
- Expanded opportunities for arts, recreation, senior programming, and community gatherings.

Discussion included the recently renovated Boy Scout Lodge as a potential resource and the possibility of greater collaboration with existing facilities.

Senior Services and Lifelong Learning

Participants discussed:

- Senior-focused recreation opportunities.
- Gathering spaces for older adults.
- Continued educational and cultural programming.
- Better utilization of existing facilities to support senior engagement.

There was interest in creating opportunities that serve both younger and older generations.

Walkability and Connectivity

Participants would like to see:

- Sidewalk connections extended throughout the community.
- Enhanced pedestrian access from downtown to new destinations.

- Sidewalk connections to the new hotel.
- Long-term pedestrian connections to American Village.
- Continued investment in walkability infrastructure.

Many viewed walkability as essential to Montevallo's identity and future development.

Library and Educational Resources

Participants expressed interest in:

- Expanding library space.
- Creating additional community learning spaces.
- Supporting youth programming.
- Better utilizing nearby public facilities to supplement library activities.

Participants noted that demand for library programs continues to grow.

Governance and Civic Infrastructure

Participants emphasized:

- Strengthening city boards and commissions.
- Improving board engagement and effectiveness.
- Increasing transparency and communication.
- Encouraging broader citizen participation.
- Ensuring boards maintain active goals and long-term vision.

Participants noted that strong boards contribute directly to successful community outcomes.

Economic Development and Workforce Growth

Participants would like to see:

- Increased median household income.
- More quality jobs.
- Recruitment of employers that provide living wages.
- Growth in the local tax base.

- Economic development that supports long-term community sustainability.
- Continued attraction of businesses and investment.

Several participants stressed that economic growth is necessary to fund future community amenities and services.

Preservation and Smart Growth

Participants expressed a desire to:

- Protect Montevallo's natural beauty.
- Preserve ecological resources.
- Reuse and repurpose existing buildings before consuming additional open space.
- Balance economic development with environmental stewardship.
- Ensure future growth aligns with community values.

Many participants emphasized that growth should enhance, rather than diminish, the qualities that make Montevallo special.

Planning for Emerging Development Challenges

Participants discussed:

- The need to proactively address large-scale developments such as data centers.
- Protecting community resources before problems arise.
- Ensuring appropriate public review and oversight.
- Updating regulations as necessary to address emerging development trends.

Several participants emphasized planning ahead rather than reacting after major projects are proposed.

What Is Missing?

Youth-Focused Facilities

Participants identified:

- Recreation space for teens.
- Activities beyond traditional sports.
- Gathering spaces where youth feel welcome.

- Additional arts, cultural, and educational opportunities.

Community Gathering Space

Participants expressed a desire for:

- Community centers.
- Shared-use facilities.
- Flexible spaces for events and programs.
- Recreation and wellness opportunities.

Expanded Housing Choices

Participants noted the need for:

- Accessible housing.
- Senior housing.
- Mixed-income housing.
- Housing integrated into the community rather than isolated from it.

Coordinated Long-Term Planning

Participants emphasized:

- Stronger board leadership.
- Clearer community vision.
- Better coordination among organizations.
- Planning that balances growth, preservation, and quality of life.

Major Themes Emerging Across the Discussion

1. **Preserve Montevallo's historic character while preparing for future growth.**
2. **Revitalize downtown through full occupancy, redevelopment, and mixed-use development.**
3. **Expand housing options while protecting affordability and accessibility.**
4. **Create more opportunities and gathering spaces for youth and families.**
5. **Invest in community facilities that serve all generations.**

6. **Strengthen walkability and connections between community destinations.**
7. **Increase economic opportunity through quality jobs and business growth.**
8. **Protect natural resources and pursue thoughtful, sustainable development.**
9. **Strengthen civic infrastructure through active boards, partnerships, and community engagement.**
10. **Plan proactively for emerging development pressures while preserving Montevallo's unique identity.**

One interesting observation is that this second conversation strongly reinforced many of the priorities that emerged from the first session — particularly downtown revitalization, housing, walkability, youth opportunities, community gathering spaces, and the desire for action-oriented implementation. It also introduced stronger themes around environmental stewardship, board effectiveness, economic development, and proactive growth management.

TOP 3 ACTIONS FOR NEXT 5 YEARS

1. **Adopt Smart Growth Principles – Focus on redeveloping and increasing density around downtown rather than building-out our rural areas for new residential and commercial development.**
2. **Develop a Community Center benefiting all ages and ability levels.**
3. **Attract new jobs and businesses which will increase our median income among residents.**

University Baptist Church – June 13, 2026

Why Participants Care About Montevallo

Participants described a deep connection to Montevallo through:

- Long-term residency and family ties.
- Teaching and working at the University of Montevallo.
- Operating local businesses.
- Raising families in the community.
- Civic and volunteer involvement.

- Appreciation for Montevallo's small-town character.
- A desire to strengthen community connections and preserve what makes Montevallo unique.

Several participants noted that Montevallo has historically been a community where people chose to stay after arriving, whether as students, educators, business owners, or young families. Others expressed concern that some of those connections have weakened as more employees commute from outside the city rather than living and investing in the community.

How Would You Describe Montevallo on a Postcard?

Participants described Montevallo as:

- Artistic
- Welcoming
- Accepting
- Tolerant
- Engaged
- Festive
- Active
- Small but mighty
- A beautiful life
- A place with opportunity
- A Hallmark-style small town
- A community where people can truly belong

Many participants emphasized that Montevallo offers something increasingly rare: a place where people of different backgrounds can live, work, and participate together while maintaining a strong sense of community.

What Makes Montevallo Unique?

Arts, Culture, and Creativity

Participants highlighted:

- University arts programs
- Local theater
- Public art and murals
- Artistic culture throughout the community
- Creative businesses
- Artistic fire hydrants and public spaces
- Cultural events and festivals

Many participants felt that arts and creativity are deeply woven into Montevallo's identity and distinguish it from neighboring communities.

Inclusion, Acceptance, and Diversity

Participants repeatedly described Montevallo as:

- Welcoming
- Inclusive
- Tolerant
- Diverse
- Accepting of different viewpoints and identities

Several participants noted that Montevallo offers a level of social acceptance and civic belonging that is uncommon in many communities throughout the region.

Historic and Educational Assets

Participants highlighted:

- University of Montevallo
- American Village
- Historic downtown
- Historic architecture
- Walkable Main Street
- Educational opportunities from preschool through graduate school
- African American Heritage Trail

Participants repeatedly emphasized that few communities can offer the combination of history, education, culture, and civic life that exists in Montevallo.

Parks, Green Space, and Natural Beauty

Participants identified:

- Orr Park
- Shoal Creek Park
- Stevens Park
- Walkability and trails
- Tree canopy and green spaces
- Natural beauty throughout the community

Several residents noted that Montevallo's parks and green spaces are among its greatest assets and should be protected as growth occurs.

Small Business and Local Character

Participants praised:

- Locally-owned restaurants
- Small businesses
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Business-to-business collaboration
- Community support among merchants

Several business owners described how local businesses actively help one another succeed and collaborate to attract customers and strengthen downtown.

Vision for Montevallo in Five to 10 Years

Housing and Neighborhood Development

Participants identified a need for:

- A wider variety of housing options.
- Housing that allows residents to remain in Montevallo through different stages of life.

- Starter housing.
- Move-up housing for growing families.
- Housing that encourages long-term residency and investment.
- Thoughtful residential development that protects community character.

Several participants expressed concern that families often leave Montevallo because they cannot find housing that meets changing needs.

Community Identity and Sense of Belonging

Participants expressed a desire to:

- Rebuild community connectedness.
- Encourage more employees of local institutions to live in Montevallo.
- Create stronger neighborhood relationships.
- Foster civic pride and participation.
- Help newcomers become invested in community life.
- Welcome basket for new residents.

Participants repeatedly returned to the theme of belonging and maintaining Montevallo's strong sense of community.

Downtown Revitalization

Participants envisioned:

- Full occupancy of downtown buildings.
- More local business activity.
- Continued investment in historic buildings.
- More destinations and attractions downtown.
- Increased tourism and visitor engagement.
- Greater use of downtown as the community's gathering place.

Several participants discussed learning from successful downtown revitalization efforts in communities such as Panama City and adapting those lessons to Montevallo.

Tourism and Destination Development

Participants discussed:

- Better leveraging American Village.
- Creating a "Hallmark experience" for visitors.
- Developing tourism-related amenities.
- Creating reasons for visitors to stay longer in town.
- Better connecting visitors with downtown businesses and attractions.

Participants repeatedly noted that Montevallo has significant tourism assets but does not yet fully capitalize on them.

Community Facilities and Public Spaces

Participants expressed support for:

- A community center.
- Expanded library facilities.
- Gathering spaces for youth and families.
- Flexible public meeting space.
- Expanded recreational facilities.
- Better coordination among existing facilities.

Discussion included the library, the renovated Scout Building, Boys and Girls Club facilities, and the need for larger community gathering spaces.

Connectivity and Infrastructure

Participants identified the need for:

- Expanded sidewalks.
- Better pedestrian connectivity.
- Continued fiber and broadband expansion.
- Improved access to community destinations.
- Walkability improvements throughout town.

Several participants noted that connectivity—both physical and digital—will become increasingly important to Montevallo's future competitiveness.

Entertainment and Community Life

Participants suggested:

- An entertainment district downtown.
- Outdoor performance space or amphitheater.
- Indoor entertainment venue.
- More opportunities for live music and events.
- Attractions that serve both residents and visitors.
- Family-friendly gathering spaces.

Several participants felt that creating permanent entertainment infrastructure would strengthen downtown and improve quality of life.

Economic Development and Investment

Participants discussed:

- Thoughtful growth and development.
- Strategic investment in neighborhoods.
- Protecting community character while growing.
- Supporting entrepreneurship.
- Encouraging homeownership and community investment.
- Expanding economic opportunities without losing Montevallo's identity.

Several participants stressed that growth should be intentional and should avoid mistakes made by neighboring communities.

What Is Missing?

Entertainment Infrastructure

Participants identified:

- Entertainment district
- Amphitheater
- Outdoor performance venue

- Indoor entertainment space
- Additional gathering places

Housing Diversity

Participants identified the need for:

- Housing for growing families.
- Additional housing types.
- More opportunities to remain in Montevallo throughout life stages.
- Housing that balances affordability with quality.

Community-Wide Gathering Space

Participants noted the need for:

- A larger community center.
- Additional public meeting space.
- Expanded recreational facilities.
- More room for youth and community programming.

Better Community Awareness

Participants repeatedly observed that:

- Many residents are unaware of community assets.
- Some residents have never visited key attractions.
- Montevallo often remains hidden from people living nearby.
- More promotion and storytelling are needed.

TOP 3 ACTIONS FOR NEXT 5 YEARS

1. Create Downtown Entertainment District.

2. Tied –

- Stronger enforcement of Property Maintenance and other related, anti-blighting codes.

- Expand affordable / free childcare options.

- **Improve Communication of Events and other Opportunities.**
- **Develop a Community Center benefiting all ages and ability levels.**

3. Tied –

- **Increase variety of housing options for all age, ability and income levels.**
- **Operate a Shuttle Bus from parking lots downtown to American Village during Alabama 250, July 4th, and other large events as a way to bring more people and business to the district.**
- **Expand types of incentives for business and property owners located in downtown and elsewhere.**

Major Themes Emerging Across All Three Community Conversations

After reviewing all three sessions, ten themes consistently appeared across every conversation:

1. Downtown Revitalization

- Occupying vacant buildings.
- Preserving historic structures.
- Strengthening Main Street businesses.
- Creating a vibrant downtown destination.
- Establishing a Downtown Entertainment District

2. Housing Diversity and Availability

- Affordable housing.
- Workforce housing.
- Senior housing.
- Mixed-income housing.
- Housing options for growing families.

3. Walkability and Connectivity

- Sidewalks.
- Trails.
- Downtown access.
- Better connections among parks, neighborhoods, and destinations.

4. Youth Opportunities and Recreation

- Activities for youth.
- Recreation facilities.
- Safe gathering places.
- Programs beyond traditional sports.

5. Community Gathering Spaces

- Community centers.
- Recreation centers.
- Shared-use facilities.
- Expanded public meeting space.

6. Economic Development and Investment

- Job creation.
- Business growth.
- Increased tax base.
- Strategic investment.
- Increase personnel compensation and staffing for local Economic Development organizations – Chamber and Main Street.
- Support for entrepreneurship.

7. Preservation of Community Character

- Protecting Montevallo's small-town feel.
- Preserving historic assets.

- Protecting green spaces and natural beauty.
- Managing growth intentionally.

8. University and Community Connections

- Stronger partnerships with the University of Montevallo.
- Increased engagement by students, faculty, and families.
- Better integration of university and community life.

9. Communication and Community Awareness

- Centralized information.
- Community calendars.
- Better promotion of local assets.
- Helping residents and visitors discover opportunities.

10. Moving from Planning to Action

- Visible implementation.
- Measurable progress.
- Strong leadership and collaboration.
- Turning ideas into projects.

Overall Observation

Across all three conversations, participants consistently described Montevallo as a community with extraordinary assets: a historic downtown, a university, parks, arts, cultural diversity, civic engagement, and strong local businesses. Interestingly, establishing an Entertainment District downtown and Developing a Community Center were identified as the top action priorities by the largest number of participants. The dominant general message was not that Montevallo lacks strengths, but that it must intentionally connect, invest in, and promote those strengths while preserving the qualities that make it unique. Similarly, the strongest shared vision was for Montevallo to remain small in character but grow intentionally and proactively in opportunity, vibrancy, inclusiveness, and quality of life.

Youth Community Conversation Summary

Multiple Locations – June 20, 2026

As part of Montevallo Main Street's "What's Next, Montevallo?" initiative, local youth were asked many of the same questions posed during the adult community conversations. While participation was smaller and occurred across multiple locations throughout the day, the responses provide valuable insight into how younger residents view Montevallo today and what they would like to see in the future.

Why Youth Care About Montevallo

While this question was not asked directly, many of the responses suggest that youth value Montevallo because:

- It feels welcoming and friendly.
- People are generally happy and involved.
- It has a strong sense of community.
- There are opportunities to participate in community life.
- It offers a small-town atmosphere where people know one another.

A recurring theme was that Montevallo feels like a place where young people can belong and become involved. This mirrors themes heard in the adult conversations regarding community engagement and sense of belonging.

How Would You Describe Montevallo on a Postcard?

Youth participants described Montevallo as:

- Good Food
- Welcoming People
- People Are Happy
- Small-Town Vibes
- An Involved Community
- A Place Where You Can Get Involved

These responses suggest that young people see Montevallo primarily through the lens of relationships, atmosphere, and community culture rather than physical infrastructure.

What Makes Montevallo Unique?

Diversity and Inclusion

Participants highlighted:

- Diversity of people
- Different backgrounds and experiences
- A welcoming atmosphere

Youth participants recognized diversity as one of Montevallo's defining strengths.

Community Involvement

Participants noted:

- Strong school spirit
- Active community participation
- Opportunities to become involved

Young people clearly value the sense of engagement they see throughout the community.

Natural Beauty and Character

Participants highlighted:

- Colorful landscapes
- Beautiful scenery
- Small-town character

These responses closely align with themes raised during the adult conversations regarding parks, green spaces, and community character.

Vision for Montevallo in Five to Ten Years

Recreation and Entertainment

Participants expressed a strong desire for expanded recreational opportunities, including:

- A waterpark

- More entertainment options
- A carnival or fairground attraction
- A movie theater
- Bike parks
- Skate parks

This was by far the strongest theme expressed by youth participants.

Parks and Outdoor Amenities

Participants would like to see:

- Locker rooms or secure storage areas at parks
- Expanded pickleball facilities
- Better bike infrastructure
- Additional recreational facilities

Youth emphasized improving existing recreational assets while adding new opportunities.

Transportation and Connectivity

Participants identified the need for:

- Public transportation
- Bike lanes
- Sidewalk connections
- Lighting along sidewalks
- Better connections between downtown and neighborhoods such as Arden

These comments suggest that many young people are looking for greater independence in moving around the community.

Business Development and Shopping

Participants expressed interest in:

- More retail stores
- Additional clothing stores

- Greater variety of businesses
- More restaurant options
- Italian restaurants
- A local bookstore
- Antique stores

Youth participants appear to want more destinations that provide opportunities to shop, gather, and spend time with friends.

Arts, Creativity, and Learning

Participants would like to see:

- A dedicated place to make art
- Creative spaces for youth
- A teaching kitchen for aspiring chefs

These ideas reflect a desire for hands-on learning opportunities and creative expression.

Tourism and Visitor Experiences

Participants suggested:

- A visitor center
- A town tour guide program
- Unique tourism experiences
- Even helicopter rides as a way to showcase Montevallo

While some ideas were playful, they reflect an interest in making Montevallo a more visible destination.

Community Services

Participants identified:

- A hospital or urgent care facility
- A homeless shelter

Unlike many of the adult discussions, youth participants specifically identified social and health services as community needs.

What Is Missing?

Recreation and Entertainment

The most frequently mentioned missing elements included:

- Waterpark
- Movie theater
- Carnival
- Skate park
- Bike park
- Larger event stage
- Community gym

These responses indicate that youth desire more places to gather, socialize, and have fun locally.

Shopping and Dining

Participants identified a need for:

- More retail options
- Clothing stores
- Bookstore
- Antique store
- More restaurants
- Greater food variety
- Italian cuisine

Arts and Creativity

Participants noted the need for:

- An art-making space
- Creative studios
- Teaching kitchens and culinary opportunities

Transportation and Accessibility

Participants would like to see:

- Public transportation
- Bike lanes
- Improved sidewalks
- Better lighting
- Improved connections between neighborhoods and downtown

Community Facilities and Services

Participants identified:

- Hospital or urgent care
- Homeless shelter
- Visitor center

Major Themes Emerging from Youth Conversations

1. More Recreation and Entertainment

Youth want additional places to have fun, socialize, and spend time without leaving Montevallo.

2. Better Transportation Options

Youth consistently expressed interest in bike lanes, sidewalks, lighting, and public transportation.

3. Expanded Shopping and Dining Choices

More stores, restaurants, and local destinations were frequently requested.

4. Creative and Artistic Opportunities

Youth want places where they can create art, learn new skills, and express themselves.

5. Strong Community Connections

Like adults, youth value Montevallo's welcoming atmosphere and sense of involvement.

6. Small-Town Character

Youth appreciate Montevallo's small-town feel and do not appear interested in losing that identity.

7. Improved Parks and Recreation Facilities

Existing parks are valued, but youth would like additional amenities and improvements.

8. Community Health and Human Services

Participants identified urgent care and homeless services as important community needs.

9. Tourism and Destination Development

Youth want Montevallo to be a place that attracts visitors and offers memorable experiences.

10. Opportunities for Young People

Above all, participants want more things designed specifically for youth—places to gather, create, play, learn, and build community.

Comparison to Adult Conversations

Interestingly, youth participants reinforced several priorities already identified by adults:

- Walkability and connectivity
- Recreation and community gathering spaces
- Downtown activity and entertainment
- Preservation of Montevallo's welcoming character
- Community involvement and belonging

However, youth placed much greater emphasis on:

- Entertainment venues
- Recreation facilities
- Shopping and dining options
- Transportation independence
- Creative spaces
- Activities specifically designed for teens and young adults

Taken together, the youth conversations suggest that Montevallo's younger residents deeply appreciate the community's culture and character, but would like more opportunities to gather, recreate, create, and connect without having to leave town.