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## New community digital innovation center coming to Selma

Progress Partners for Selma, AL, is partnering with the Selma Housing Authority to launch the Selma Community Digital Innovation Center. This partnership was recently presented to city government officials, business leaders, and community members during a luncheon in Selma on Thursday, May 7.

This initiative will provide essential digital resources and support for the Selma community. The redevelopment is tentatively planned for 528 Washington Avenue in Selma. Investments are being sought and welcomed, with an opening date of July 1, 2027.

"We look forward to the positive impact this center will have on Selma," said Collins Pettaway, Jr., a recently retired judge and President of Progress Partners. "Technology is rapidly changing how we all do business, and we must prepare our students to compete in a workforce that is very different from the one we entered several generations ago."

Selma City Schools, Wallace Community College Selma, and Selma University are essential partners in this collective effort to ensure that students and adult learners benefit from the coming technology-based programs. These initiatives are designed to help individuals learn, develop, and excel within their chosen fields and workforce.

Progress Partners entered into an agreement early in 2026 with Metro Digital Group, a nationally operated company that empowers brands and schools with gaming, STEM, tech education, and the metaverse. Metro also hosts live events and digital spectacles that forge deep connections with a diverse and tech-savvy audience.

"We are honored to partner with Progress Partners, the City of Selma, the Housing Authority of Selma, Selma University, and the Selma City School District on a transformational initiative designed to help bridge one of America's most historically significant cities into a more innovative and economically empowered future," said Shaon Berry, CEO Metro Digital Group.



“Together we are reimagining a historic Selma building as a next-generation Digital Innovation Center,” Berry continued, “focused on workforce development, entrepreneurship, AI, digital skills, creator economy pathways, and community opportunity. This project aligns directly with Metro’s mission to build inclusive technology and innovation ecosystems that create long-term economic mobility, workforce readiness, and future-facing opportunities for underserved communities, while transforming a space once associated with struggle into a beacon of innovation, creativity, and hope for future generations.”

Progress Partners and Metro Digital Group will work with the local public school system and local institutions of higher learning to develop curriculum that challenges students with digital tools that will open the world to their learning opportunities.

“I am pleased to share this significant part of our vision for our upcoming initiatives at Progress Partners,” said John Deamer, Vice President for the newly established nonprofit in Selma. “We are committed to supporting digital programs designed by Metro to meet students exactly where they are, regardless of their location or current level of knowledge. Our goal is to remove the traditional ceilings on learning for students of all ages. By supporting the unique potential of every individual, we will empower them to explore any field they choose—including having the tools to work in new workforce opportunities not yet created.”

Progress Partners Director of Technology, Roger Blackmon, and owner of Computer Data and Network Services, in Selma, expressed excitement not only for the technology that will be included, but how dynamic the technology rooms will be designed. “People will feel like they are stepping way into the future when they step inside this new building” he said. “It will most definitely make the student, young and old, excited to learn, compete and create. The center will also create an environment where families will have the opportunity to learn together, which is extremely important.”

Selma Councilwoman Lesia James expressed great optimism regarding the partnership developed for this project and its potential to uplift the community.

“The future of Selma depends on coming together, as demonstrated by the collaboration between local government, the Selma Housing Authority, our school system, and institutions of higher learning,” said James. “The Metro project will provide opportunities for our community on a new scale. By offering futuristic avenues for education, we can ensure both our youth and adults are prepared for a rapidly changing workforce, which is critical for the local economy. This project is a win-win on many levels and represents a significant turning point for Selma.”

Progress Partners for Selma, AL, was established in November 2025 to drive economic development, education, and community pride in Selma and Dallas County, AL. The organization is founded and driven by committed local and regional leaders who have been engaged in Selma for sustainable change and results.