



**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE TOWN OF
GURLEY, ALABAMA**

2018 - 2038



**ADOPTED BY THE GURLEY PLANNING COMMISSION ON
May 18, 2018**

**AS THE OFFICIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE TOWN OF
GURLEY ALABAMA**

THIS REPORT PREPARED FOR:

GURLEY TOWN COUNCIL - GURLEY, ALABAMA

Robert Sentell, Mayor
Bill Dear
Robert Wynn
Gary Boyett
Dorothy Johnson
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GURLEY TOWN PLANNING COMMISSION

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Robert Hammons, Administrator

ADOPTION OF GURLEY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopting the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Gurley

WHEREAS, the Gurley Town Council has the function and duty of developing and adopting a master plan for the physical development of the town; and

WHEREAS, this Town Comprehensive Plan was prepared to both update and supersede the previously adopted Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, this Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for guiding and accomplishing a coordinated development for the Town; and for continuing comprehensive area wide planning for the Town urbanized area to guide improvements over the next several years as well as the long-range period;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Gurley Town Council that the commission approves and adopts the Town Comprehensive Plan including maps and explanatory matter contained to serve as a guide for land use developments, and as a basis for the Council's review of proposed projects; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council transmits this plan to the Town and all its departmental units, as well as appropriate state and federal agencies, and recommends consideration of adoption as a guide for development and improvements.

Adopted this __18____ day of _May_, 2018.

Joseph F. Belles

Joe F. Belles
Gurley Planning Commission

Preface

The purpose of a comprehensive plan, as stated in the Code of Alabama, 1975, Section 11-52-9, is this:

“The plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development, including among other things, adequate provisions for traffic, the promotion of safety from fire and other dangers, adequate provision for light and air, the promotion of the healthful and convenient distribution of population, the promotion of good civic design and arrangement, wise and efficient expenditure of public funds and the adequate provisions of public utilities and other public requirements.”

The above excerpt describes the legal purpose of a comprehensive plan under the laws of the State of Alabama. A long-range comprehensive planning process should incorporate all of the issues set forth in the laws and for the reasons described therein. A comprehensive plan is good, however, only to the extent that the citizens of a community, town or city are willing to oversee its implementation and periodic revisions.

FORWARD TO THE CITIZENS OF THE GURLEY AREA:

The preparation of the Gurley Comprehensive Plan represents a major effort toward achieving a desirable physical environment for the residents of the Town.

This Plan formulates plans and policies for all development, change, and redevelopment to be undertaken by both public and private means. The proposals contained in this Plan are based on thorough analysis of the forces acting on the Town, and its environment including: population, economy, resources, existing conditions and future development potential. This analysis has provided a solid basis for predicting what the future may offer. However, for this Plan to be meaningful, it must be understood and accepted as a guideline for both private and municipal activities.

This Plan is not a specific development program for any particular element of the Town, but rather a statement of policy regarding the Town's overall development, designed to provide direction and continuing to future decisions. The comprehensive Plan, encompassing a year 2038 future target date, is based on the present Town goals. As the goals change, so too must the Plan. The Planning process, therefore is dynamic. Continual study, re-evaluation, and modification in light of the changing nature of our times, will assure desirable growth and development in the Town of Gurley.

Robert Sentell, Mayor

Town of Gurley, AL

Gurley Comprehensive Plan

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Introduction

Each year, the number of families relocating from urban areas to rural communities increases. Highways, communication technology, and the desire to raise families in a small town setting all contribute to the move. With Huntsville's growth exploding, Gurley is a natural choice for families to migrate to a small town setting. Located only 16 miles from downtown Huntsville and two miles from the Huntsville city limits, if this growth is not guided, the results may have a negative effect and result in undesired development.

The Town of Gurley, Alabama is located in eastern Madison County along U.S. Highway 72 between the Flint River and the Paint Rock River. The population of the town, according to Census 2010, is 801. Some years ago, U.S. Highway 72 was rerouted to bypass downtown through the southern portion of the town. Much of the town's commercial activity was expected to and did follow the traffic to the new highway. The town has an industrial park but is growing very slowly, with only one tenant for many years now. The town continues to aggressively manage wastewater disposal issues. It has developed a program for improvement to its sewer system. This is important for many reasons, among which are the environmental considerations of the unique ecological assets of the Flint and Paint Rock Rivers.

Gurley is a town of significant historic interest. The town's "Gurley Historic District" was included on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage on November 17, 1995 and on the National Register of Historic Places on June 2, 2004. Meanwhile, the growth of Huntsville and Madison County continues to move in the direction of this historic small community. The residents of the community are cognizant of the needs of growth while desiring to maintain the small town character of their hometown.

In a much needed effort to provide guidance to town leaders, the general economic and environmental conditions of the town had already made the development of a new plan a for future development and improvement. Therefore, the town of Gurley desires to undertake the development of a comprehensive study and plan for the entire community.

In 2011, the Town of Gurley developed an overall Smart Growth framework for new projects to fit into the natural and historical character of the community as a whole. This effort resulted in a defined plan to guide the replacement of our existing zoning code with a new form-based code in order to solidify the community vision for the future. Corresponding to this vision, the town set forth nine guiding principles on which implementation of a new form-based code would be used to strengthen the community by reinforcing existing development and encourage new development. (See Appendix A: Smart Growth Concepts) Together, the Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan must be used as a guide to ensure smooth transitioning to the form-based code.

Part I. Evaluation of Current Conditions

A Brief History of Gurley



The Town of Gurley began its existence as a way station on the route from Huntsville to Chattanooga sometime soon after the establishment of Huntsville in 1819. Lying 16 miles east of Huntsville, Gurley was ideal for such a station, because of the location being in a valley between the Flint and Paint Rock rivers. At this time, the land was covered with the typical dense, old-growth forests common to the region. The natural springs and wells in the area were attractive to prospective settlers.

Around 1830, several families purchased land in the area, and built homes. Among them was John Gurley, who became the dominant land-owner in the area. Due to its geography, the Memphis and Charleston Railroad laid its tracks through Gurley in 1857. John Gurley seized the opportunity to construct a large cedar water tank near the railroad. The railroads of the mid-19th century were powered by steam and needed to stop to replenish their water supply. For the first time, the area had a name associated with John Gurley, as it came to be known as Gurley's Tank. Settlers in the area were also able to tap into the water tank, which made it the first community in Madison County to have its own water works.

After 1870, easy access to railroad transportation and the abundance of the forest allowed a lumber business to thrive in the valley. Gurley's Tank also developed retail businesses. Three hotels and two livery stables came into existence to serve travelers between Huntsville and Chattanooga. Proximity to the railroad also enabled it to become a shipping point for grain and hogs.

In 1890, John Gurley's son, Frank B. Gurley, donated one square mile of land adjacent to the water tank to serve as the town site. The town, then known as Gurleysville, was incorporated that year, with a population of 250 residents. It continued to thrive, and within a year of incorporation, had grown in population to 1,000. In 1891, there were three churches in the town. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church established the Robert Donnell Academy in 1893, which served as the first high school for Gurley, as well as a two-year college. Manufacturing began to move in, and Gurleysville became home to an Eagle Pencil Mill, a cedar bucket factory, a stave and hoop factory, and others. In 1896 the first post office was established, and Gurleysville became the town's official name, although it would soon be shortened to the present Gurley.

Gurley continued to thrive well into the twentieth century. In 1907, Gurley was chosen by the State of Alabama as the site for the first County High School for Madison County, on the site of the Robert Donnell School. By 1909, the local newspaper, *The Gurley Herald*, was reporting a population of 1200. Fire almost destroyed the downtown area in 1923, but as late as the 1950's, the community still had a bank, five grocery stores, a drug store and a movie theater.

Gurley began to decline in population with the construction of U.S. Highway 72. Most of the commercial businesses located in Gurley relocated to the U.S. Highway 72 corridor to take advantage of the higher traffic flow. By 1970, Gurley's population had declined to 647 (U.S. Census, 1970).

Since that time, Gurley has rebounded. The explosive growth of Huntsville has allowed Gurley to serve as a bedroom community for Huntsville businesses, and once I-565 connected with U.S. Highway 72, the increased ease of access to transportation routes led to a very modest upswing in the town's ability to attract industry.

Community Growth and Population

Gurley is a community in transition. Although Madison County has experienced dramatic population growth over the past several decades, the population of the town of Gurley has remained around 800 to 1,000 people.

As stated above, Madison County has experienced dramatic growth. It is expected that this growth trend will continue. In fact, it is expected that Madison will grow substantially over the next twenty years. Because of these areawide growth trends, historical population changes within the town of Gurley are thought to be a good indication of future growth. The local development climate, including: 1) the decision of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) to move significant military functions to the area; 2) the trend of growth and development outward from the city of Huntsville into surrounding areas such as Gurley indicate that Gurley should experience an upward trend of population growth in the near future.

It should be noted that growth patterns near Gurley are extremely dynamic. Even as this information was being collected, a major subdivision has been developed within two miles of the Gurley Town limits; McMullen Cove, which contains 1100 home sites. The median price of these homes is estimated at \$800,000. When completed, the subdivision plans to contain homes from \$250,000 to several million dollars.

It is difficult to predict the population growth of the town of Gurley into the mid term frame or even the near term future. Much of Gurley's growth rate will be dependent on annexation policy and the attractiveness of municipal services. It is then that Gurley has the opportunity to decide the extent and nature of its growth and does not need merely to accommodate growth.

Demographics

See Appendix B: Demographics Summary

The following is a partial list of large employers in Madison County, AL:

Madison County Schools
Madison County
285 Technology Co/ Cummings Research Park
University of AL Huntsville
Calhoun College
A&M University
Oakwood College
Huntsville Airport
U.S. Army/ Redstone Arsenal
Huntsville Hospital
Huntsville City Schools
The Boeing Company
NASA Marshall Space Flight Center
City of Huntsville

The largest employers in the Town of Gurley include:

Alldyne Powder Technologies
Madison County Elementary
Moss Lumber Industries

Economic Diversification

Economic diversification refers to the mix or variety of industries, or lack thereof, present in a local economy. The Town of Gurley and the surrounding area is lacking in retail industry with only twenty-four establishments, this includes two full service restaurants and three fast food restaurants within the town limits. With an annual average daily traffic count, there is plenty of potential to support more restaurants and retail businesses. In a report by the University of Alabama it is noted that the available labor pool is willing to commute farther and longer for better jobs, typically for higher wages. Many are willing to commute for twenty or more minutes longer and travel twenty or more extra miles. The number of commuters will continue to increase as will the opportunity for additional retail and service industry in Gurley especially with the explosion of jobs created from the base realignment at Redstone Arsenal.

Natural Conditions

Location

The Town of Gurley, Alabama is located in eastern Madison County along U.S. Highway 72 between the Flint River and the Paint Rock River. It is located about sixteen miles from Huntsville which is the nearest major city and about ninety miles to Chattanooga.

Physiography

Gurley lies in the valley between Gurley Mountain on the North and Keel Mountain on the South. The main physiographic areas of Madison County are a remnant of the Cumberland Plateau in the eastern third of the County, and the smooth plain that is part of the eastern Highland Rim of the interior Low Plateau. In Alabama, this smooth plain includes the gray lands and red clay of the Tennessee Valley.

The Cumberland Plateau consists of the steep western facing scarp and outlying remnants that are predominantly steep to very steep, stony slopes. Small remnants of the smooth plateau occur on the crest of these outliers and on the plateau proper along the eastern County line. Hartsells, Muskingum, Rockland, and limestone soils are predominant in this mountainous country. The Highland Rim is predominantly undulating to rolling. The Highland Rim lies approximately a thousand feet lower than the crest of the Cumberland Plateau ridges.

Topography

The topography of Gurley is typical of the Cumberland Plateau (steep to very steep, stony slopes). This is the case in the Gurley area with slopes reaching 15% occurring along a narrow band following Hurricane Creek and Cove Creek. Elevation above sea level ranges from 640 feet to 1,560 feet, with the average being 640 feet over the majority of the Town.

Climate

The climate of the area is continental. It is humid, mild, and temperate, but there is a fairly wide range in temperature. The summers usually are long and have moderately hot days and fairly cool nights. In general, the winters are mild and pleasant with the temperature frequently falling below freezing during the night and occasionally remaining below freezing from one to three days or more. Snow is not common. The average date of the last killing frost in spring is April 12, and that of the first killing frost in fall is October 24. This provides an average frost-free period of 194 days. Average annual rainfall for the area is fairly uniform except for the fall season. Short periods of very dry or very wet weather are common, but severe droughts over long periods are rare. Severe windstorms are few. Electrical storms are fairly common but are usually not damaging.

Drainage

The drainage of Gurley is divided by two basins. The first basin drains to the Flint River via branches of Hurricane Creek. This basin comprises the western quarter of the Town and most drainage follows Sandy Branch. The second basin, comprising the remainder of the Town, drains east-southeast toward the Paint Rock River via Cole Spring Branch. The

local stream carrying drainage in this vicinity is known as Shanty Branch.

Geology

South of U.S. 72, the Town is underlain by the Gasper Formation and Saint Genevieve and Tuscumbia Limestone. In most of the area north of U.S. Highway 72, the Gasper Formation and Saint Genevieve Limestone have been eroded away, and the area is underlain by Tuscumbia Limestone.

In areas underlain by limestone, pollution problems frequently occur where sewage stabilization lagoons or septic tanks are used. Even where a mantle of unconsolidated materials overlies bedrock, excessively permeable conditions may exist because of extrained chert formations, fragments or limestone boulders. Sudden lagoon failures have been documented in such areas when large parts of lagoon bottoms have collapsed into solution cavities in the underlying bedrock. The suitability of these areas for a particular method of waste disposal should be divided on a site by site basis. Since solution cavities are common in limestone bedrock, foundation studies should be made by a qualified engineering geologist or engineer prior to construction.

Built Conditions

General Land Use



A study of the existing land use in the vicinity of the Town of Gurley was performed in the course of this study. The study was conducted somewhat beyond the town limits in anticipation of growth and annexation. It was based on both aerial photography and field reconnaissance. The information was catalogued using the standardized Land Based Classification Standards established by the American Planning Association.

The vicinity of Gurley is largely dominated by agriculture, forestry and hunting lands. The quality of hunting is considered by those in the community to be a distinct asset of the area.

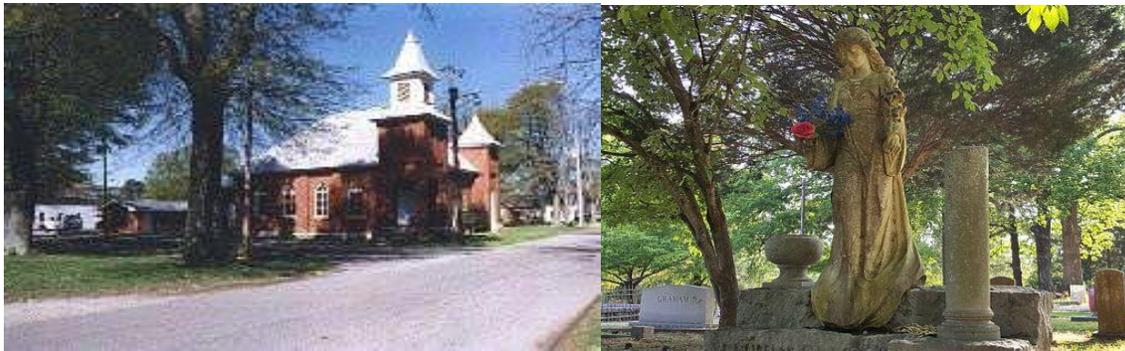
Traditional neighborhoods, some of which are located in an historic district, are clustered near U.S. Highway 72. By far, most residential development in the Town is single family residential. The overall density of residential development is relatively low. Although scattered, conventional residential areas lie to the north and south of the center

of town with an extensive, large-lot residential area just south of the town limits on Keel Mountain.

Commercial areas are almost exclusively limited to the strip along U.S. Highway 72 and Walker Street. A wood products company dominates the highway commercial area as one leaves town to the east.

A new institutional core along Walker Street includes the Town Hall, Library, Park and Fire Station. This is only one block from U.S. Highway 72 and one block from First Street. It is expected that this institutional core will develop as will a commercial core at First Street and Walker Street as well as U.S. Highway 72.

Historic District



The first thing you notice about Gurley is the beautiful mountains surrounding the town. Even though Gurley is divided by U.S. Highway 72 the town is still distinctive with Moss Lumber at one end of town and fast food restaurants at the other end. The Gurley Historic District has great appeal although it is not visible from U.S. Highway 72. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of Interior on June 2, 2004. The Gurley Historic District extends eastward along Section Line Road, Railroad Street, Maple Boulevard and Church Street between Gurley Pike and Jackson Street. There are 93 sites in the district with the majority being residential except the core commercial area along Joplin Street, four religious buildings, a cemetery, a public utility building and a school. Of the 93 sites 24 do not contribute to the historic area, these include modern ranch style dwellings, manufactured houses, and commercial buildings. The Gurley Historic District exemplifies a small rural community that prospered in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The buildings that make up the historic district were constructed from 1874 to circa 1950, with the majority dating from 1891 through 1930 which was the town's greatest period of population growth. The style of most of the buildings is common folk forms with the patterns represented gable front, gable front and wing, side gable, single pen, massed plan, pyramidal, ell, and foursquare. However, there are nine buildings that represent these major architectural styles: Queen Anne, Gothic Revival, Craftsman, and Tudor Revival. Collier Cemetery located on Cherry Tree Road was added to the state's historic register in June of 2007. The cemetery dates back almost 200 years and contains the remains of several generations of Madison County families. This is the third cemetery in the county to be added to the register.

Community Facilities

The purpose of the community facilities portion of the plan is to inventory and evaluate, in terms of current and future needs, the location, type capacity and area served by both existing and proposed public facilities within the Gurley area.



Administration. Direct administration for the Town of Gurley is conducted from the Gurley Town Hall, located on 235 Walker Street. The building was constructed in 1970 with 1,500 square feet. The following areas are located in the building: Mayor's Office, Town Clerk's Office, Council room used for court, and Water Board.

The current town hall does not adequately meet the needs of the community and more space is needed. There a couple of different options the town may consider. The first is to build a new Town Hall. Another option would be to tear down the old town hall and construct a new one in its current location. The final option would be to renovate the current town hall. The Town Hall should be more visible and attractive to the community.



Library. The library is a 2800 square feet facility which was built in the year 2000. It is located at 225 Walker Street. An adjoining lot was purchased for the purpose of adding a wing to the existing building in the future. The library is part of the Huntsville – Madison County Library system and offers books, books on tape, videos/DVDs, and computers with internet access. It is used extensively by the community and is well maintained.

Police Protection. The Town of Gurley Police Department is located in the Town Hall and consists of the Chief, four full time officers and two part-time officers. Currently there are police vehicles for each full time officer and the Chief; who provide service to the Gurley area. Budget for the police department has been increased to \$332,148 for FY2017 which supports the community policing efforts and contributed to the low crime rates for the Town of Gurley.

Fire Protection. The Gurley Fire Department has a Chief and Deputy Chief which manage a staff of volunteer fighters and EMT's that operate out of two stations in the Town of Gurley. A third plot of land has been purchased by the Fire Department

anticipating future growth to the west and south of the current Town limits. The department services a population of 4,285 within 47 square miles. The Gurley Fire Department also backs up departments in Madison county and departments in Jackson County.

Two stations are located at 235-A Walker Street, adjacent to City Hall and the Police Department. One station has a single bay door, two truck bay, office space, bath, and kitchen area. Additional equipment storage is located at the Town Hall which houses a pumper truck and equipment.

Educational facilities. The residents of Gurley are served by two schools, both of which are administered by the Madison County School Board. The Madison County High School is located at 174 Brock Road and the Madison County Elementary School located at 173 Wood Street.



Recreational facilities. There are two parks in Gurley. The Gurley Recreation Center is located at 311 Third Street and is operated through the Madison County Rural Recreation Department. This 20-acre facility has a swimming pool, lighted baseball/softball field with bleachers, and parking. The center offers an array of youth sports including baseball, basketball, and swimming. The recreation center is in need of updating.

In addition to this center the Charles Stone Park, is located next to the Town Hall. It offers passive recreation on 3.25 acres with picnic/open space and a half mile paved walking trail. The Town plans to continue improving the park. It is a quaint park and complements the Town Hall. This park serves as a neighborhood park for the small concentration of low and moderate income residents in the Church Street and Section Line Road areas.

Low and moderate income persons have equal access to the YMCA facilities, subject to being able to afford the fee. Under certain programs, membership fees are waived

As it stands, Gurley has an acceptable amount of parkland space for its current population. As Gurley grows, it should consider additional parkland for its residents. A rule of thumb to go by would be to have one to two acres of neighborhood parks for every 1,000 people or a minimum of fifteen acres. Additionally, a town should have five to eight acres of community parks for every 1,000 people or a minimum of 25 acres. Although it is not an immediate concern, over the next five to ten years, Gurley should

consider new neighborhood parks both north and south of US Highway 72 to serve near term population growth.

Healthcare facilities. The Town of Gurley has Medical Clinic located off of U.S Highway 72. This is more than adequate for the population size of Gurley. The facility is categorized as a family practice. There are also a children's clinics located on Walker Street and Wood Street. Within 25 miles there are three hospitals that serve the residents of Gurley. There are two in Huntsville and one in Scottsboro.

Infrastructure

Transportation Facilities. The Huntsville area has a Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning which includes Madison County and the municipalities of Huntsville, New Hope, and Triana. The Town of Gurley is an active member of the Citizens Advisory Committee which provides recommendations to the MPO regarding transportation planning, however, the Town of Gurley is not included as a voting member of the organization. U.S. Highway 72 is the principle arterial through the Town of Gurley and the Town is currently in discussions with Huntsville for widening Little Cove Road to provide major access between U.S. Highway 72 and Highway 431. The Town of Gurley has over 55,000 linear feet of road surface in its jurisdiction. Madison County is responsible for the maintenance of about 35% of the paved roads in Gurley and the state is responsible for about 12%. All other roads are generally in good condition with regular maintenance supported by the tax base.

Low and moderate income residents are well served by paved streets in good condition. However, none of the streets have curb and gutter so there are drainage problems along many streets due to inadequate cross drains and inadequately sized ditches.

Potable Water Facilities. There are five full time maintenance employees and one part-time certified water/sewer personnel that maintain the water and sewer systems and also perform street maintenance and solid waste disposal. The Town of Gurley purchases groundwater from Madison County with a design capacity of 0.274 MGD which is an average production of 0.203 MGD. The maximum production is 0.466 MGD and total storage of 0.4 Mgal. There are 454 water customers and 385 sewer customers. Water is offered up to one quarter mile beyond the town limits. However, with limited exceptions, sewer is only provided within the town limits.

Wastewater Facilities. The Gurley Waste-Water Treatment Plant (WWT) is an extended aeration activated sludge treatment system used by the Town of Gurley to treat their sanitary waste. Gurley is currently receiving bids for a \$500,000 upgrade to the WWTP facilities which will considerably increase the capability to serve current and future customers. The funding for this project is locally funded from the State Revolving Fund and the town has received approval of \$200,000 principle forgiveness on the loan amount. This project is proposed to make improvements to bring the WWTP into full compliance with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. The Town of Gurley has an estimated sewer population of 89% or approximately 713

people. The remaining population of the Town that is not provided sewer service are the 11% (approximately 88 people) mostly located in the higher elevations. Approximately 89% of the Town will benefit from the improvements made to the WWTP and collection system.

Industrial users in the Town of Gurley are TARHA#1 and TARHA#2 (subsidized housing areas). TARHA#1 discharges an average of 1,370 GPD and TARHA#2 discharges an average of 600 GPD. No analyses are available for the waste stream discharged to the sewer. Wastewater amounts from industrial users are minor. Some of the discharge from the industries in Gurley is sanitary waste and does not appear to pose any significant problems to the treatment system. The existing collection system has inflow/infiltration issues. Some rehabilitation has been completed, but more is needed.

Sanitation and Solid Waste Disposal. Madison County provides solid waste disposal once a week to all residents and businesses. Also, the Town of Gurley once a week picks up for disposal items such as grass limbs, and other items that the county will not pick up. The Town disposes of these items not safe to burn in the Huntsville landfill and in addition has a site outside the town limits for all organic materials to be burned. This site is used exclusively by the Town of Gurley. There is a nominal fee charged to all residents for this service.

Flood and Drainage Facilities. Gurley is generally free from major flooding problems associated with the two major rivers in the area – the Flint River and the Paint Rock River. However, there are limited facilities for the control of stormwater runoff. Most water is carried through a system of open ditches and local streams. Drainage problems in the community are mainly attributable to undersized culverts and inadequate drainage ditches which result in restricted flow during periods of heavy rains. However, this problem has been significantly reduced due to the widening and clearing of Sandy Branch which drains storm water from the northwest part of the Town. The Town is working with Madison County and local landowners to improve drainage for eastern sections of the Town.

Community Involvement



Visioning is a process used to find out what the residents, businesses and other stakeholders citizens in a community want for the future. A vision is the overall image of what the community wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future. Meetings and workshops were held with Town officials and the citizens to gather information about the Town of Gurley. In addition, a review of community stakeholders was prepared in order to consider those who should be involved from the standpoint of implementation as well as from the standpoint of community planning.

Stakeholders

- Mayor and Town Council
- Gurley Planning Commission
- Gurley Residents
- Madison County Elementary School and Madison County High School
- Gurley Recreation Center
- Gurley Masonic Lodge
- Gurley Lions Club
- Gurley Lioness Club
- Gurley Historical Society
- Gurley Senior Center
- Friends of the Gurley Library
- Several area churches
- Gurley Senior Center
- Numerous area businesses

Public Opinion

It takes the community working together to make positive changes for the future. Three public workshops were held to discuss the future of Gurley. The first workshop was held November 21, 2006, the second on March 20, 2007 and the third on April 10, 2007. Members of the community in attendance including residents and Town officials. The overall desire of the community was to retain the small town atmosphere while encouraging planned growth. These workshops contributed significantly to basis for establishing planning goals for the Town of Gurley at the time, and many of the recommendations remain valid today. (See Appendix C: Visioning and Goals Questionnaire) The Planning Commission continues to hold monthly meetings to transact business and gather public comment which is used in the formulation of this plan. This is exemplified in a major renovation of Madison County Elementary which maintained elements of the existing historical buildings while providing the most modern learning environment for our children.

Assets

- Small town atmosphere
- Neighborly atmosphere
- Parades
- Schools, Churches

- Historic value
- Recreational Center and active sports program
- Scenic views of mountains and valleys
- Proximity to Huntsville and Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail
- Library
- World class hunting
- Potential for growth
- Traditional neighborhoods
- Traffic on Highway 72 as a business asset
- Easy access to local lakes, waterways, and hiking/biking trail systems

Challenges

Immediate challenges

- Traffic light needed on U.S. Highway 72 at Gurley Pike and Keel Mountain Road
- Lack of communications between Town officials and citizens
- Lack of visibility into the governance of the town
- Lack of enforcement of Nuisance Town Ordinances
- Historic properties being demolished without coordination with Historic Association
- Traffic safety on Highway 72
- Slow growth
- Effects of Quarries located on both ends of the town
- Absentee landlords
- Empty/vacant buildings
- No natural gas service
- Insufficient phone and cable service on Keel Mountain
- Limited police patrol in neighborhood
- Land being sold out to investors
- Renter control
- Neighborhood upkeep
- Crosswalks and sidewalks
- Downtown revitalization plan

Future Challenges

- Loss of heritage
- Encroachment from Huntsville
- Unplanned growth
- More industrial business
- Failure to plan and execute plan

Opportunities

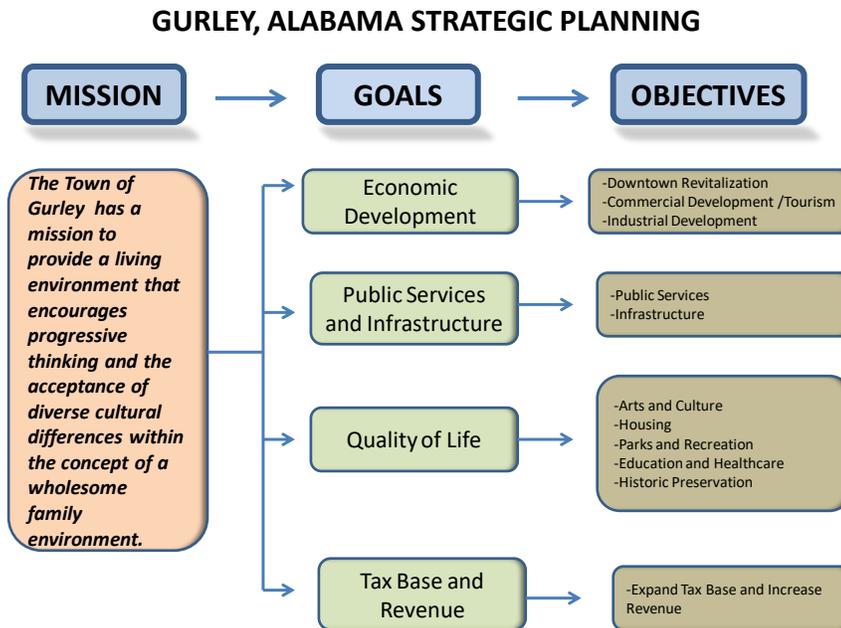
- Need for a new Town Hall
- Town limit to expand and for the community to grow
- New Zoning
- Down Town Revitalization planning and implementation
- Influx of new homes, businesses and restaurants
- Additional recreational park
- Renovation of current recreational park

- Add curbs and sidewalks to current neighborhoods
- Provide street lights
- Landscaping for U.S. Highway 72
- Improve the historic district through renovations of vacant buildings
- Implement streetscape to Walker Street
- Improve infrastructure
- Welcome Signs

Envisioned Future

(See Appendix A: Smart Growth Concepts)

Part II. Strategic Plan Vision, Strategy, and Process



Below describes the strategy developed to achieve the town’s vision for the future and the goals and objectives by which the Town will achieve that vision. The strategy begins with an overall vision for assuring that:

The Town of Gurley has a mission to provide a living environment that encourages progressive thinking and the acceptance of diverse cultural differences within the concept of a wholesome family environment.

Goals. Four broad areas of attention are Economic Development, Public Services and Infrastructure, Quality of Life, Tax Base, and Revenue. The overall vision is then followed by *four goals* which are the basis for the actions that will be taken to accomplish the vision. The intent of these four goals is to:

#1 Preserve historical character

- #2 Prepare for new growth
- #3 Provide for community convenience
- #4 Funding and coordination

For each goal, a number of objectives are listed. These objectives are selected and designed such that, upon their accomplishment, the overall goal will be achieved. It is felt that these areas of activity encompass an effective strategy for achieving the stated vision. Further, for each objective, actions for implementation will be described from which an annual work program will be established.

Action. Describes the specific task required.

Responsibility. The responsibility for implementation for actions contained in the strategy will be suggested in the following statements: Final determinations of responsibility for implementing specific actions will be in the course of preparing the annual work program

Timeframe. For each action listed, a timeframe is given that indicates whether it should be undertaken immediately, in the short-range, in the long-range, or whether the action is ongoing. “Immediate” actions are those that should be undertaken within the first or second year of the planning period. If an action so indicated will not be undertaken until the second year, project planning for the action should at least be started within the first year. “Short-term” actions are those that will be undertaken within the first five years of the planning period before the five-year plan update is prepared. “Long-term” actions are those that, because of their nature or cost, will take considerable time for programming. These actions should be started but are not expected to be accomplished within the first five-year planning period. Ongoing actions are those that are of a policy nature rather than project specific. These actions should be started early in the planning period.

Cost. The cost of implementation is one of the key items in determining whether an action is doable. An action may have a high priority but, because of high cost, it may not be possible to perform. Many times, local funding for an action will not be sufficient unless it is combined with funding from other sources, such as intergovernmental grants. In any case, the performance of all actions must be made with fiscal responsibility in mind.

(See Appendix D: Goals and Objectives)

Part III. Implementation and Plan Maintenance

This Part of the Gurley Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide a process for implementation of the Plan and for periodic monitoring. It also provides for oversight and responsibility.

Adoption

This Plan is intended for adoption by the Town Council of the Town of Gurley, Alabama. Adoption of this Plan will be by a resolution contained in the front matter of this document. Adoption serves as authorization for the various implementing agencies to take action in furtherance of the objectives contained herein.

Oversight and Responsibility

Oversight. The goals, objectives and strategies contained in this plan generally indicate the agency or entity that will normally be responsible for implementation of the activities and measures called for in this plan. Oversight of these activities is vested in the Planning Commission of the Town of Gurley

Annual work program. The Planning Commission, with the advice of the Town Council and Mayor, should prepare an annual work program consisting of activities and measures considered to be reasonably attainable within the scope of each year with the intent of eventually accomplishing the objectives of the entire plan. In the course of preparing the annual work program, the Planning Commission and the Town Council should maintain communication with those agencies and entities that may be designated with responsibility for implementation of specific actions and, ultimately, make final determinations of responsibility. The Planning Commission should transmit the annual work program to those agencies and entities that have been designated with responsibility for implementation of items contained in the work program.

Annual review. This Comprehensive Plan is to be monitored by a process of annual review. An annual monitoring report should be prepared once a year by the Planning Commission. The monitoring report will indicate progress made toward implementing the activities and mitigation measures contained in the annual work program as well as changing conditions in the Town that may affect adjustments to the work program. For each item, a statement will be made regarding whether it has been accomplished and, if not, why not and what can be done to accomplish it in the future. If it is determined that an activity cannot or should not be accomplished, then that also will be stated. The annual monitoring report and the annual work program may be consolidated into a single report.

Continuing Public Involvement

Public involvement is important to the development of any plan. But it is just as important to the implementation efforts that follow. Continuing public involvement in the development and implementation of a plan helps to assure support and public acceptance in the community. Therefore, this plan includes this process for continuing public involvement.

Plan Availability. Copies of this plan will be maintained and available at the Gurley Town Hall. In addition, this plan will be placed in the public library. A public notice of availability will be posted at the Town Hall following final adoption.

Public Comment. Over the course of the twenty years between plan updates, a file should be maintained by the Planning Commission containing public comments regarding the contents of the plan. These comments should be periodically reviewed by the Planning Commission during annual monitoring of plan implementation progress and during the twenty-year evaluation and update. Public comments may be made addressed to the offices of the Town of Gurley.

Part IV. Appendices

Appendix A. Smart Growth Concepts

Appendix B. Demographic Summary

Appendix C. Visioning and Goals Questionnaire

Appendix D. Goals and Objectives

Part V. Map Supplement

Surrounding Region and Urban Areas

Gurley Area Population by Distance

Current Land Use

Gurley Community Facilities

Gurley Historic District

Traffic Counts East and West of Gurley

Gurley Development Constraints

Gurley Development Concept

