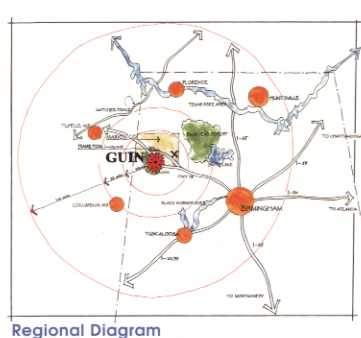


Guin, Alabama

Small Town Design Initiative • Spring 2003 • Auburn University Center for Architecture & Urban Studies • Birmingham, AL • 205 323 3592

The Center began work with Guin in the Fall of 2002 with initial meetings and information gathering. In January of 2003, Auburn architecture student Katie Houston took Guin as her thesis project. This poster is a summation of her in-depth study and investigation of the potential and opportunities that Guin revealed during her thesis work. We wish to acknowledge the help and support we received during this project from Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (Richard Hobb & Bill Matthews) and particularly from the Mayor, Phil Segreaves and the wonderful folks at City Hall as well as those throughout the community that made it clear to us why Guin is such a special place. Thank you.



Regional Diagram

Guin, Alabama is a small railroad town established in 1888 on the site of Dr. Jerry Guin's farm where the Frisco Railroad met as it was completed between Memphis and Birmingham. The community has a long history in the textile and housing industries. As the economies of Alabama shift, Guin is seeking to reinforce these traditional employment bases while taking advantage of the other assets that are dominated by exceptional location in NW Alabama. Guin is in a beautiful area of rolling green hills that is near the Bankhead National Forest, the Natchez Trace and the Tennessee River Valley. It is also along the new Interstate Corridor - Corridor X - that is being completed from Memphis to Birmingham. These attributes of location position the community to revitalize the downtown and build a higher quality of life for the citizens of Guin by capturing the potential of travelers, tourists and new residents.

CONCEPTS

- There are several strong concepts in this master plan proposal that take advantage of Guin's strong assets:
- One: Revitalize the downtown and reinforce it as the true heart of the community. Make it a primary destination for visitors and citizens alike. Add a new park, festival ground, farmers' market, museum/welcome center and community center.
 - Two: Build on the strengths of your existing community components including your schools, recreation park, post office and downtown. Provide good pedestrian connections between these amenities.
 - Three: Capture the opportunities of your two abandoned manufacturing sites for new educational, commercial and housing developments.
 - Four: Build new close-in housing in a variety of sizes and types to create good neighborhoods of economic diversity.
 - Five: Capture the opportunities of the new Corridor X by creating a prototypical village development at the interchange.

Guin was struck by a tornado of record force in 1974. There was less of life and much of the town center was destroyed. The spirit of the community, however, persevered and today Guin exemplifies the best of small town life with good schools, a strong recreation program and great people.

New close-in housing in a variety of sizes and types is one of the important components of long term potential in the community. The completion of Corridor X will allow people to move to the community who are seeking the small town character of Guin but work outside the city. Good housing is also an important element in attracting new businesses and industry. We are proposing the redevelopment of your public housing sites to create traditional neighborhoods with porches, sidewalks, back alleys for garages and services and a mix of row houses, duplexes and single family houses.

CONNECTIONS

Connections Diagram

The geography of Guin's hills and streams provide the opportunity to create a series of "green" connections throughout the community. These paths, trails, bike-ways and green-ways can provide an excellent way to connect recreation, neighborhood parks, neighborhood amenities and give good alternatives to cars for going from place to place - an excellent way of connecting and creating places that foster a strong sense of community.

Master Plan Proposals

The downtown is the heart of a community particularly in a small town. Guin's downtown was badly damaged in the '74 tornado, but it remains the center of the community and the intersection of several major highways. It is the most important place in your community.

With the completion of Corridor X some of the truck traffic will be routed making the downtown quieter and more pedestrian friendly. Proposed highway improvements at the 11th Avenue and Highway 278 intersection and east along old 78 (Highway 43) will provide the opportunity for putting utilities underground, adding new street and sidewalk lighting and new sidewalks. When the proposal creates an intersection that is designed for trucks, not pedestrians the overall potential for upgrades is significant and will be a major difficulty and dilemma created for merchants during reconstruction. Businesses should anticipate this disruption and begin planning for access from rear and service areas with directional signs, cleanups and safety checks.

The community should also begin work on the proposed festival ground across from the Museum/Welcome Center to provide a good new site for your Memorial Park which will also be disrupted by these highway improvements.

Good downtowns provide not only goods and services for their citizens but also recreation, entertainment and civic pride. It is important to create places where people can come together as a community. We are proposing a new Community/Senior Center, new Museum/Welcome Center, and a new park/festival ground with farmers' market, pavilions and recreational trail heads. These activities increase vitality in the downtown and provide merchants and businesses with a stronger customer base. Downtown becomes a destination.

Guin's water park is also a strong existing destination. One of our primary suggestions is that you build on the theme of water-related recreation. We think that this could create a year round draw for tourists and families seeking day trips as well as wonderful amenities for your own citizens. There are three components of our proposal.

One is the anticipated reservoir on the NW side of town. We encourage this development. The lake will create opportunities for boating, fishing and new housing - both weekend and full time. The community needs to anticipate this growth and plan for development patterns that make the reservoir as public and community oriented as possible.

Two is a development of Purgatory Creek and related tributaries throughout the community as the basis of a trail system that connects the downtown, water park, schools and neighborhoods. This system provides good passive recreation and the opportunity for interpretive sites, neighborhood parks and green-ways which face the community together. In the downtown, this development should be integrated with a new festival ground and should have good lighting, seating and interpretive signage. In other areas trails should be more natural and intended for daytime use only.

Providing alternative ways for people to walk through the community contributes to the sense of neighborhood, health and wellness, and can reduce traffic congestion in the downtown. Compactness is an important contributor to people's sense of being able to walk from place to place. The map above shows that almost everything in Guin is within a 5 to 10 minute walk!

Three is the development of the existing water park site. This includes the proposal of a new lake in the wetlands between the railroad and the park across Highway 142. This lake could provide for fishing, paddle boats and walking trails. It also becomes a beautiful enhancement to your western gateway. We are also suggesting some limited retail at the apex of the water park site. This high visibility corner can provide for neighborhood retail and services as well as for sales to visitors to the park.

The two abandoned manufacturing sites in Guin provide excellent opportunities for new development. The Munsingwear site, with its proximity to your high school, is an obvious site for the development of a technical school. Your history of record breaking tornadoes would imply a potential to create a premier weather field school. A day care near by is an important additional component.

The Guin Manufacturing site in the heart of the downtown is very well positioned for re-development as a mixed-use project to include retail, commercial, professional offices and downtown housing. This mix of uses can add greatly to the vitality of downtown. It is an excellent candidate for brown field grant funding.



Proposed Master Plan for Greater Downtown

OPPORTUNITY

The overall Master Plan clearly illustrates the compact character of Guin. This characteristic is central to the very idea of "small town." It is important to reinforce this attribute with careful decision making that always encourages new businesses to first choose a location in the heart of downtown rather than "along the highway." You must also actively grow and/or recruit those businesses that are uniquely appropriate for your downtown. These include businesses providing basic services for your citizens, but must also include niche market businesses that appeal to visitors.

seeking out unique destinations and experiences. We believe Purgatory Creek and your railroad history - including some of the more "notorious" and colorful characters of the early settlements - can be developed to build your distinctiveness and create a unique way to promote Guin.

low-interest float loans and design services to facilitate restorations and good new construction - including some of the more "notorious" and colorful characters of the early settlements - can be developed to build your distinctiveness and create a unique way to promote Guin.

Create a Community Development Corporation to facilitate and promote realization of these proposals.

Vacant sites in the downtown should be landscaped and exhibit pride-of-place in anticipation of future businesses and retail. Trees planted in these areas can be replanted to encourage good design. You should also develop an incentives programs.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Village Center | 8 Firestation |
| 2 Office | 9 Neighborhood Park |
| 3 Industrial | 10 Neighborhood Retail |
| 4 Row houses | 11 Church |
| 5 Single Family Houses | 12 Taxi/Traffic Stop |
| 6 Elementary School | |
| 7 Recreation/Playing Fields | |



Proposed Greenleaf Park Plan

Village scheme for Corridor X interchange

Industry and residences - a true "village." A place with new citizens of Guin who will invest in all aspects of the community in all aspects of the community.

The "village center" should include things needed by those passing through: gas, food - even fast food, and services but in buildings that come to a sidewalk along a street with street parking - not a strip. The franchise food services should be in storefronts, with sidewalk cafes across from the park where children can play, dogs can exercise and travelers can find a respite: a place to remember, recommend to friends - a place to come back to.

The city should secure or limit services to any additional sites at this interchange in order to control the possibility of adjacent strip development that would distract from the unique and distinctive character of the proposed village.

The industrial and office buildings in the proposal should also be along tree lined streets with street parking for visitors. Employee parking and loading are to the rear.

The new residential community can provide for families who need easy access to regional jobs and who are seeking out good and diverse traditional neighborhoods in a small town like Guin.

Purgatory Creek



- Proposed landscaping at the post office - gateway to Farmers' Market & Festival Ground beyond
- U S Post Office
- proposed new buildings - recruit new retail/commercial
- existing buildings - restore facades - new signs & awnings
- Pedestrian connection to municipal parking
- Proposed new rounded-corner building at 11th and 278

Highway 43 - 11th Ave. looking South



- Proposed new rounded-corner building at 11th and 278
- existing buildings - restore facades - new signs & awnings
- Pedestrian connection to municipal parking
- existing buildings - restore facades - new signs & awnings
- New Memorial Park & Festival Ground across from the Welcome Center/Museum

Highway 278 between Railroad & 11th Ave. looking East



- Proposed new "depot" - city museum/welcome center/ chamber of commerce
- Proposed new downtown buildings
- Existing building recruit new gallery for local artists
- Proposed new downtown buildings
- Existing buildings
- Existing building w/new plasters and awnings

Highway 278 between Railroad & 11th Ave. looking West

SUSTAINABILITY