

Haleyville, Alabama

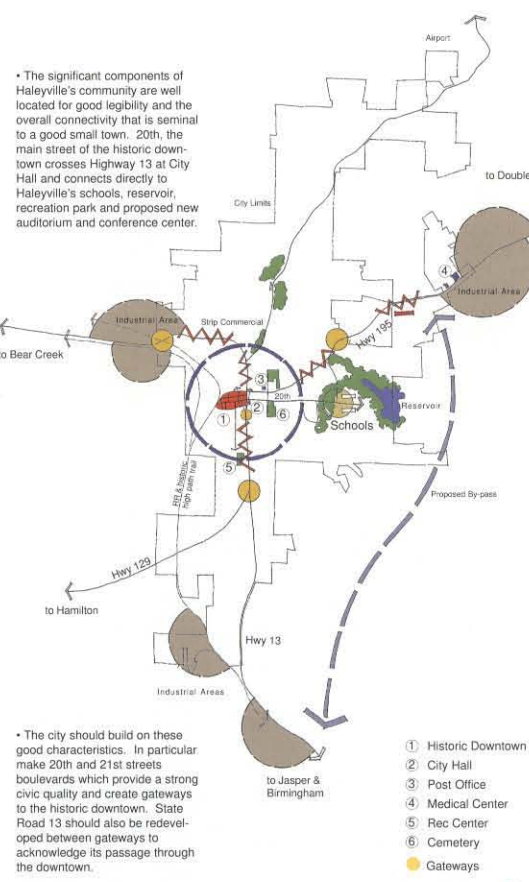
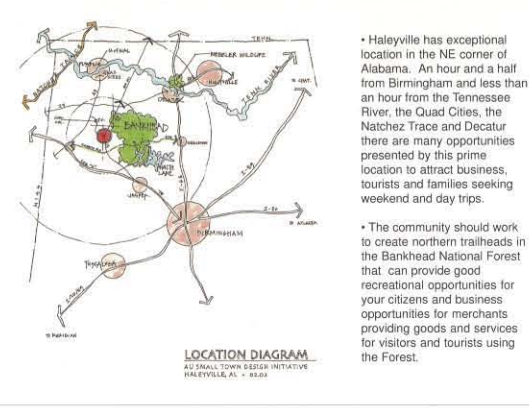
Center for Architecture & Urban Studies Auburn University

Where 911 began!



Historic Downtown Haleyville

Proposed Long Range Downtown Development Plan



Analysis Diagram

History

Haleyville is a railroad town that grew up in NW Alabama along an important Indian Trail and the Byler Road - Alabama's first state road. Completed between 1819 and 1822, the road ran from Tuscaloosa to near Muscle Shoals linking the markets of the Tennessee Valley with the head of navigation of the Black Warrior River.

Today, Haleyville is still served by the railroad which facilitates her wood products industries of furniture making and manufactured homes. Her 4000 citizens enjoy excellent recreational facilities, beautiful natural countryside and the benefits of an excellent local school system. There is good road access and the community hosts local TV and radio stations, a local newspaper, The Northwest Alabamian, and an airport. It will be the future home of a major consolidation of National Guard units in the region. Haleyville is also the birthplace of "911."

On November 24, 2001 a major tornado tore through the downtown. Remarkably no one was killed, but in the wake of the devastation, there was almost \$10 million dollars in damage to homes, businesses and churches, and 100 jobs were lost.

Masterplan Proposals

The destruction of November 2001 created significant hardships for the owners and shop keepers of the downtown. Business was disrupted, temporary locations had to be secured and cleanup and stabilization of damaged and destroyed buildings had to begin. But the tornado also touched a spirit and determination in the citizens and merchants of Haleyville that reveals an exceptional potential for rebuilding with the vision of a better downtown.

The first and most important realization was the need to remove the structures which had created a pedestrian mall in the downtown during an urban renewal effort of the early 1970's. The columns and overhead elements of these structures had made maintenance and signage difficult for years, and during the storm they made access with emergency vehicles nearly impossible. It was also clear that removal and the corresponding street reconstruction could provide an opportunity to upgrade the dysfunctional storm sewer system and other basic infrastructure.

We believe the transformation from this one change will be dramatic and well worth the patience and inconvenience the construction process will require. Once the structures are down, facades and storefronts can be restored; new signage can be put in place; and awnings can be added to create shade and presence along the main street. We recommend one way traffic west along 20th - between Quinton and 21st Way - with diagonal parking on the north side of the street. Businesses on the south side of 20th will have no parked cars obstruct views of their merchandise; businesses on the north side of the street will have adjacent parking along the street. The narrow scale of the street insures good visibility for everyone. In addition, we are recommending that the flanking streets which were closed in the pedestrian mall be opened with two way traffic and some parallel parking. This new traffic pattern will facilitate safe easy vehicular and pedestrian circulation throughout the downtown.

Additional municipal parking is shown along 19th and 21st. We are proposing that both of the streets have the driving lanes reduced to narrow the street and provide street parking more in keeping with a historic small downtown. This also creates opportunities for new street retail, particularly along 21st which has the advantage of high visibility from highway 13. This retail should be planned to increase the downtown capacity as there is demand. Byler Road should be landscaped and reconfigured to be a true street between 13 and 21st Way, rather than a lane in a parking lot. This also helps to create an environment of discrete parking areas rather than a "sea of parking."

We are also strongly recommending a new civic front door to create visibility of the downtown from highway 13 and to provide a civic front door to the downtown at your city hall. At the opposite end of 20th we are recommending a Museum/Welcome Center and Senior Center. Seniors can be hosts and docents for the Museum and provide authentic oral history. Both sites can be festival grounds for events that showcase the downtown and celebrate your history.

Strategies for Revitalization

- Create a non-profit foundation or community development corporation (CDC) to facilitate the revitalization, promotion and marketing of the downtown. A CDC can work in partnership with the city and local financial entities to create revolving loans, incentive programs and support for building reconstruction, improvements, signage and promotion. The city owned properties along 19th and 21st should be strategically sold, traded or developed to create financial resources for downtown revitalization.
- Promote products and businesses that represent your local resources, particularly your wood products industries. Showcase these products in a downtown retail store. Work to develop new home-grown businesses that build on local products and resources.
- Work collectively to promote the downtown; keep common and consistent business hours that take advantage of synergistic relationships; show pride in the downtown with regular cleanups, good window displays and distinguished service to customers.
- Build partnerships with other small towns and tourist attractions in your region to promote day trips and tourism opportunities.

History of the Project & Acknowledgments

• The leadership of Haleyville contacted the Auburn Center for Architecture & Urban Studies early in 2002. They believed that the devastation of the November 2001 tornado had created an opportunity for a long range look at the revitalization of the historic downtown that would do more than just clean up and rebuild, but that would also capture the real potential of their history, character and location.

• The Center, in conjunction with the University of Alabama's Center for Economic Development and Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments, facilitated a series of town hall meetings in early 2002 to solicit input from local citizens on the vision for revitalization. There was great attendance and with exceptional public support, the citizens of Haleyville endorsed the value of the historic downtown, a long range concept of revitalization and a first phase which would remove the structures along the 20th Street "mall." This set the stage for a trip to Washington, DC to seek support from Alabama Senators Shelby and Sessions, and native son, Representative Robert Aderholt.

Our work continued with a three day, on-the-ground charrette (working session) in the summer and presentations of our final work in the fall of 2002. Our team included David Pearson, landscape architect and Jeff Johnston, intern architect, both graduates of Auburn; Neel Miranda, Director, University of Alabama Center for Economic Development and Richard Holst, Associate Director, Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments.

• We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the many dedicated citizens of Haleyville who supported and advanced this work. They include the mayor and council, the industrial board, local merchants and in particular, Martha Lee, Horace Moore, Johnny Frazier, Clavin Cassidy and Caroline Aderholt.

- 1 City Hall Expansion
- 2 Redesigned Entry
- 3 Add left turn light
- 4 Two story at park edge
- 5 New Civic Park & Festival Area
- 6 New Eatery
- 7 Local Products Store
- 8 New Retail/Commercial
- 9 Library
- 10 Library Expansion & meeting room/storm shelter

• One of the keys to successful retail business is visibility - particularly from high traffic streets. The historic downtown is well located along the community's main highway, but needs stronger visual connection to insure that potential customers, particularly those from out of town, know how convenient and easy it is to use. A new civic festival park at the intersection of Highway 13 and 20th gives a strong visual front door to the historic downtown, connects city hall to the commercial downtown and provides a place for festivals and activities to attract visitors and local residents to downtown.



- 11 Church Expansion
- 12 Reduce street width & add street parking
- 13 Pedestrian walkway
- 14 Storm Shelter
- 15 Reconfigure intersection
- 16 Teal Professional Bldg
- 17 Sr Center & Welcome Center/Museum
- 18 Proposed Fire Station
- 19 Water Tower
- 20 Farmer's Market

• A Museum /Welcome Center along the railroad celebrates the city's history and encourages visitors to drive down 20th, park, visit and shop in the downtown.

• A new fire station allows expansion potential at City Hall.