

CITY OF GILLSVILLE
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

January, 2007

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GILLSVILLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Gillsville is located in eastern Hall County and partially in Banks County. Gillsville had its beginnings in frontier days as a settlement named Stonethrow with some documentation dating its origin as early as the mid 1700's. Stonethrow then became Carters Crossing and was later named Gillsville after Major Josiah Gill, who owned the general store. Gillsville is the oldest town in Hall County and one of the early residents was instrumental in locating the County Seat in what is now Gainesville. The Town's post office was established on April 15, 1833, certainly making it one of the oldest settlements in Hall County. The Town of Gillsville was chartered in 1901. The RR Depot was established as the Town Center and rectangular boundaries were established around it.

The Gillsville Comprehensive Plan is prepared as an individual plan designed to chart the course desired by the citizens of the Gillsville community. The countywide plan's for the County's of Hall and Banks establishes the overall vision for the Counties and the Gillsville plan attempts to further define the role of the Gillsville community in representing its citizens and in achieving the overall quality of life they desire.

PLAN FACTS

- * Town is growing steadily both through new residents and annexations.
- * Current population tends toward older age distribution with trend toward mixed distribution.
- * Community focus is agricultural and bedroom community.
- * Town is predominantly single family.
- * It is estimated that Gillsville will continue to annex properties.
- * Undeveloped land is estimated to represent approximately 50% of total property.
- * Municipal water is provided through contracts with Hall and Banks Counties.
- * There is no sewer service and at this time none is planned.

The Hall County Plan designates Gillsville as an Urban Area. These areas typically serve as "stand alone" communities directed by their residents. The smaller communities are oriented to being residential areas with some activities such as Folk Pottery drawing some tourist activity. Some commercial areas are designated but the interest of the city is to selectively attract businesses that would better serve the residents of the community. The communities serve as centers for large, low-density areas. Suitable uses include minor retail and commercial uses, facilities and services related to agricultural needs, public and semi-public uses and a range of housing types.

It should be noted that the Comprehensive Plan and specifically the Short Term Work Program include a statement of strategies, a description of programs, planned capital improvements, cost estimates and funding sources and a description of land development regulations to be adopted. Thus they are not self-implementing documents. Additionally, the City Council looks to the Comprehensive Plan and associated Short Term Work Program documents to be dynamic in nature, which may be updated from time to time to reflect the current plans for the City.

Implementation requires additional formal actions by the legislative body in the form of adoption of capital improvement programs and budget, adoption of new or amendments to existing land development regulations and sufficient funding of staff and programs. It is understood that a comprehensive plan, when fully implemented, often becomes the single most important document in guiding a jurisdiction's decision-making.

COMMUNITY VISION

General

The Gillsville City Council is composed of individuals that represent varied interest, backgrounds, age groups and opinions regarding the City and the desires of its citizens. These individuals continually discuss with residents their interest, problems, concerns, needs and priorities and bring this information to discussion sessions with the Council.

The Council regularly request and receives input from its citizens in work sessions and meetings. An information gathering session was held on December 6, 2005 specifically for the purpose of soliciting additional input from the citizens of the City. This Community Vision statement is a composite of the information gathered from all referenced sources and is thought to be reflective of the interest of the majority of the citizens of the City of Gillsville.

Gillsville, both by nature and design, has traditionally been an agricultural rural type community. Homes are typically located on tracts of land ranging from a few acres to multiple acreages including farming operations. With the exception of the desire for more service and convenience type businesses the current residents of the City prefer to maintain the rural lifestyle. New residents typically echo that sentiment by stating they came to the Gillsville area because of what the City currently is in terms of a slow pace and less cumbersome place to live.

Map

The future development plans for the City, based on desires of the City Council and the input of the citizens, pretty much mirrors the current Zoning Map for the City. Aside from the areas currently designated as Commercial, Industrial and Business, it is deemed to be the preference of the citizens that the majority of the properties within the City remain Agricultural and low density Residential.

Specific Vision Items

(It should be noted that a major obstacle, and probably the greatest hindrance, for a small City in the provision of infrastructure, facilities and improvements is the lack of funding or financial sources. In considering all the items included in our Vision, this fact should be in the forefront of consideration.)

Maintain character of the City as a Low Density Residential and Agricultural Community – This can best be accomplished through the assemblage and passage of Ordinances designed to assure that high density developments and heavy industrial projects are not encouraged. The City Council has continuously worked on these concepts for the past few years and is in the process of further designing the appropriate ordinance requirements and language.

Provide “Quality of Life” Facilities for Citizens and Visitors – The Council is continually working to upgrade the facilities located at the Gillsville City Park, an approximate twenty acre recreation complex that includes a community building, two ball fields, a picnic pavilion and a state of the art playground recently purchased with the help of a Healthy Kids 50/50 discount grant program. Funding has been provided by the Council to replace damaged picnic tables and place a new unit along with benches near the playground. The Council has also appropriated funding and volunteered time for the planting of trees within the park. Additionally, trees and shrubs that were donated have been planted in the park with volunteer labor.

Establish Trails and Walkways – The City Council has as an objective to provide walking, jogging and biking trails so that citizens can exercise and walk about the City without getting on the more heavily traveled transportation corridors. Through the help of a grant received directly from the State Legislatures in recent years, the City has completed a sidewalk extending approximately eleven hundred feet.

Complete Restoration of Downtown Buildings – Over several years the City Council has diligently worked and dedicated funds for the purpose of restoring four downtown city buildings. Funding has come from a combination of grants, general funds and in-kind work. Additional funding is needed but all buildings are stabilized, in the dry and ready for completion.

Construct Sewage System for Downtown Buildings – Design work is almost complete and final approval is being sought from the Environmental Health Department so that bids can be solicited for a sewage system to accommodate the needs of four downtown buildings owned by the City of Gillsville.

Continue to Work with Hall County and the Department of Transportation to Accomplish the Realignment of Georgia Highway 52 to Alleviate a Safety Issue in the Downtown Area – Over several years the City Council has sought assistance from both Hall County and the DOT to realign Hwy 52 so that patrons and visitors to the City could park on the same side of the road with the stores and not be required to walk across a busy highway. Commitments have been made by both governments and it is expected that work will be underway on this project in 2007.

SHORT-TERM WORK PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The Short- Term Work Program describes specific actions that the Gillsville City Council intends to take during the next five years to address the needs and goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan. In keeping with the Georgia Minimal Planning Standards, the program lays out a logical approach to implementation. It emphasizes a five-year work program through which implementation can be put in perspective with the Comprehensive Plan and the administrative resources of the community.

The Gillsville City Council understands that it is critical in the comprehensive planning process to develop a short-term work program for implementation. Such a program provides the assurance and commitment that the necessary steps will be taken to achieve the goals of the Plan. In addition, it establishes decisively important benchmarks by which progress can be measured.

The Short-Term Work Program for Gillsville includes community stabilization, infrastructure and facility improvements, healthy community enhancements, historic preservation, safety improvements and economic development Initiatives which incorporate the Comprehensive Plan's vision statements, areas of community consensus and commitments needed to implement the Plan. It is intended to be a comprehensive description of programs, regulations and projects to be adopted, amended, continued or undertaken, as well as commitments or recommendations on funding needed to implement the Plan.

Specific components of the plan include:

MAINTAIN CHARACTER OF GILLSVILLE AS A LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY

Both short and long term planning should further establish the commitment of Gillsville area residents to stay the course with this element and confirm the desired stabilization the citizens have come to appreciate and support. The Gillsville City Council and citizens of the City take pride in the fact the City is content "living within its means" without extending itself in the never ending spiral that requires continual increases in funding needs and tax increases. Although "plans" such as this are a natural by-product of the process, it is the continuation of the undocumented foresight of previous and current City leaders and involved citizens to establish and maintain a community where people want to live, raise families and pass the same along to future generations.

Timeframe - The Vision for Gillsville is to continually support the City's rich heritage over time and regularly revisit the subject to assure that all decisions, actions and recommendations made by the City Council comply with the desires of the citizens.

Responsible Party – It is the primary responsibility of the City Council to assure that this objective remains the driving force in current and future planning. The secondary responsibility lies with the citizens to assure that the Council continually reflect the desires of the community.

Estimated Cost – The costs associated with meeting and maintaining this objective are primarily administrative and would be accounted for in the day to day operation of the city

through the general fund balance.

Funding Sources – General fund monies primarily come from LOST revenues shared by Hall and Banks Counties, franchise fees and miscellaneous income.

PROVIDE “QUALITY OF LIFE” FACILITIES for CITIZENS and VISITORS

The City Council has over time endeavored to provide enhancements to the City that would allow the citizens to enjoy family activities and recreate in a safe and inviting atmosphere. In the 1970's and 1980's the City received grant monies and purchased property to construct a community building, two ball fields, tennis courts, a picnic pavilion and a playground.

Timeframe - The Gillsville City Council continually provides planning, funding and volunteers time and resources to maintain, upgrade and enhance the facilities offered in the City Park. This objective is reviewed on a regular basis and specific plans for implementing same are made as needed improvements or new facilities are adopted by the Council.

Current short and long term plans call for the following:

Install Public Playground quality swing set – 2007. Cost \$850

Continue painting and upgrading Community Building – 2006-2007. Cost \$500

Construct Trail around and through Community Park – 2007-2008 (see “Trails and Walkways” section). Cost are estimated at \$33,000 - \$35,000

Refurbish Tennis Courts – 2007-2008. Cost are expected to be \$3000 - \$4000

Refurbish and paint Picnic Pavilian – 2007-2008. Cost \$250

Add additional elements to Playground – 2008-2009. Cost will be in the range of \$12,000 - \$14,000, depending on elements included

Add covered concession area and picnic tables to rear of Community Building – 2008-2009. Expected cost would be approximately \$2500

Construct Maintenance Building at City Park – 2009-2010. Cost are estimate at \$4000 - \$5000

Upgrade dugouts and ballfields – 2009-2010. Cost is expected to be \$2000

Responsible Party – It is the primary responsibility of the City Council to assure that this objective and the various components are completed. A secondary responsibility lies with the citizens to volunteer time and resources to assist the Council as needed.

Estimated Cost – The cost associated with these elements and components are included with the objectives in the Timeframe Section.

Funding Sources – It is anticipated that funding for the lesser cost items will come from the general fund with a mixture of in-kind and volunteer services and labor both by Council Members and interested citizens. Grant funding will be solicited to help with the higher cost facilities and upgrades. Additionally, a small SPLOST fund balance is available and request for park funding will be included in future SPLOST submittals.

ESTABLISH TAILS AND WALKWAYS

The City Council recognizes that the Citizens of Gillsville desire to both maintain a regular exercise program and move about the City as much as possible without having to utilize the major transportation corridors. An objective undertaken by the Council in recent years has been to connect various components of the City such as the Post Office, Convenience Store, Downtown, City Park and the Churches via a series of sidewalks, trails and walkways so that residents can easily move about the City without using motorized vehicles. The same facilities would also allow walkers, joggers and bikers to exercise with minimal exposure to busy streets and GA Hwy 52, which dissects the City.

Timeframe - The Gillsville City Council assigns great importance to this item due both to the exercise benefit as well as the provision of safe pedestrian corridors that will alleviate the need for citizens to be in close proximity to roadways as they walk and exercise.

Specific objectives and plans include:

Sidewalks – With the assistance of funding from the State Legislature an approximate 1160 foot section of sidewalk extending from the downtown area along GA Hwy 52 to the intersection of GA Hwy 323 has been completed at a cost of approximately \$10,000. Plans call for the continuation of this sidewalk for an additional 1100 feet in a southerly direction to Midway Methodist Church – 2007-2008. Cost is estimated to be \$12,000.

Trails/Walkways – Plans call for the construction of an approximate 4600 foot natural surface trail along County Line Road that would connect the northerly section of previously referenced sidewalk to City Park. – 2007-2008. Costs are estimated at \$35,000 - \$50,000.

City Park Trail - An additional 2700 foot section of asphalt surface trail is planned inside City Park that would provide connectivity to the various recreational elements within the park as well as join the County Line Road trail, which extends to the downtown area. Costs are estimated to be \$33,000 - \$35000.

Responsible Party – The Gillsville City Council is responsible for planning the sidewalk and trail improvements but will contract or solicit professional assistance with the design plans. Interested citizens have also committed to assist both with labor and resources.

Estimated Cost – The expected cost associated with completing these improvements are included in the Timeframe section above.

Funding Sources – Funding will come from the general fund, SPLOST revenues and grant monies. The City was awarded a TEA Grant that will assist with certain elements of these improvements. Additionally, a Trail Grant application has been requested to assist

with the City Park Trail.

COMPLETE RESTORATION OF DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS

At the request of many citizens and in the interest of preserving key historical elements of the small downtown, the Gillsville City Council purchased four historic buildings that were in danger of total dilapidation. Through the assistance of a Historical Preservation Grant, a CDB Grant and leveraging general fund monies the City was able to stabilize and complete the essential structural restoration. Through volunteer efforts and in kind work a portion of the finish work are completed and other elements of the project are underway. It is the objective of the City Council to complete the restoration of all four buildings and lease three, while keeping one for use by the City as a City Hall, a small Community Library and a Heritage Center. The completion of this project will not only assure that the downtown area will remain viable and in the character with the historical heritage but will also provide the City with a revenue stream to continue improvements and expand the effort to adjacent areas.

Timeframe - The Gillsville City Council, along with long time citizens of the City, feel a strong commitment to complete this project and plans to exert every possible effort to complete the needed renovations within the times frames outlined below (It should be noted that other elements of the short term work plan such as the sewer system and sidewalks are also essential for successful completion of this project:

Buildings – Three buildings are essentially complete with the exception of painting and trim work. It is expected that the remainder of this work along with the completion of the fourth building will be completed within twelve to eighteen months – 2007-2008. Cost are estimated at \$30,000 - \$40,000.

Public Restrooms – Plans call for the construction of a community type commercial restroom to service the three leased buildings – 2007-2008. Costs are estimated at \$20,000 - \$25,000.

Streetscape – Plans call for the refurbishment of the storefronts, porch areas and existing sidewalks to further enhance the historical connectivity and significance of the structures serving as Service Stations to the transportation of both citizens, products and services. Costs are estimated to be \$20,000 - \$30,000.

Responsible Party – The Gillsville City Council is responsible for this item along with interested citizens who volunteer time and resources. It is expected that a contract will be let in early 2007 to assist with the design and engineering components.

Estimated Cost – The expected cost associated with completing these improvements are included in the Timeframe section above.

Funding Sources – Funding will come from the general fund, SPLOST revenues and grant monies. The City was awarded a TEA Grant that will assist with the streetscape elements of these improvements and a portion of the sidewalk.

CONSTRUCT SEWAGE SYSTEM FOR DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS

The purchase and renovation of four downtown buildings has necessitated the construction of a fairly substantial private sewage system. The City Council has negotiated with a nearby property owner for the lease of adequate property to install a system to meet State requirements and additional area for a duplicate system in the event the primary system fails. The Council has also contracted with an Engineering firm, who have completed the survey work and design of the system and final State approval should be received early in 2007.

Timeframe - The Gillsville City Council is aggressively pursuing this project for reasons stated in a companion project described previously. It is expected that final State approval will be received by 3/2007 and that solicitation of bids will be received immediately thereafter.

Responsible Party – The Gillsville City Council is responsible for this item and will enlist the assistance of the Design and Engineering Company to assure that a workable and durable system is constructed.

Estimated Cost – The expected cost associated with Costs are estimated to be \$50,000 - \$55,000.

Funding Sources – Funding will likely come from the general fund. However, the City Council is exploring the possibility of obtaining grant monies due to the magnitude of the construction cost.

CONTINUE TO WORK WITH HALL COUNTY AND THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO ACCOMPLISH THE REALIGNMENT OF GEORGIA HIGHWAY 52 TO ALLEVIATE A SAFETY ISSUE IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA

It has been a concern of the City Council for many years that most visitors and patrons of the downtown area are required to park on the opposite side of a busy state highway and walk across to the downtown area. Through years of negotiating and coordinating with both GaDOT and Hall County Government a project has now been approved. Design plans have been completed and a funding agreement reached.

Timeframe - The Gillsville City Council has aggressively pursued this project and it is expected that the bid opening will take place in January of 2007. Construction should begin in the spring or early summer with completion of the basic construction to be completed by fall of 2007. Additional work including streetscape and parking lot work are addressed in other sections of this work plan.

Responsible Party – The Gillsville City Council is responsible for overall coordination of this project and Hall County Government will function in the role of Project Manager.

Estimated Cost – The cost associated with the project are estimated to be \$325,000.

Funding Sources – Funding for this project is being provided through a joint agreement between GaDOT and Hall County Government. The City of Gillsville will fund construction cost of additional elements through the General Fund and matching grant monies.



Mayor
Wm. Larry Poole
City Clerk
Paula Whiting

TOWN OF GILLSVILLE
POST OFFICE BOX 25
GILLSVILLE, GEORGIA 30543

City Council
Richard Ferguson
Rudess Hooper
Tim House
Keith Segars
Roy Turpin

June 6, 2007

Ms.Carolynn Segers, AICP
Regional Planner
Georgia Mountains RDC
P.O. Box 1720
Gainesville, GA 30503

Re: Gillsville Comprehensive Plan Adoption

Dear Carolynn:

The Gillsville City Council approved the enclosed Resolution officially adopting our Comprehensive Plan and Short Term Work Program, as approved by GMRDC and the State Department of Community affairs. We respectfully submit this document for your records and use in finalizing the process.

Please direct any questions or comments to me via email at lpoole@hallcounty.org or call me on 770-531-6800.

Sincerely,

Larry Poole
Mayor – City of Gillsville


**A RESOLUTION
TO ADOPT
THE CITY OF GILLSVILLE
2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

WHEREAS, the City of Gillsville has prepared a comprehensive plan update, and said plan has been approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as having met the minimum planning standards of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Council of the City of Gillsville recognize the value of having a coordinated overview of the problems, needs and opportunities growth and change will create. The Mayor and Council further recognize that the Comprehensive Plan is not a final and absolute answer to all of the many matters of policies, programs, and facilities contained therein. Constant community change, further identification of needs, more detailed planning, limitations of resources, and other changing conditions undoubtedly will require periodic review of the Plan's objectives. Therefore, it is essential that the plan be systematically re-evaluated and updated at regular intervals to reflect major changes that have a bearing on the city's development objectives;


Now, therefore, BE IT RESOLVED, and IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council, that the 2007 Gillsville Comprehensive Plan and Short Term Work Program is hereby adopted, along with accompanying maps, policies, goals, objectives, strategies and programs, as a general guide for the future growth, change and development in the City of Gillsville, Georgia.

Adopted this 5TH day of June, 2007.



W. Larry Poole, Mayor

Attest:



Paula Whiting, City Clerk

(Seal)