

Comprehensive Plan

Town of Skyline, Alabama

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Skyline Comprehensive Plan

This report constitutes the Comprehensive Community Plan
for the Town of Skyline, Jackson County, Alabama

Adopted **Month Day**, 2020

For more information:
Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments
5075 Research Drive NW
Huntsville, Alabama 35805
256-830-0818
Website: www.tarcog.us



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Mayor of Skyline
Honorable Archie Rice

Skyline Town Council
Ralph Warren
Kim Ikard
Caleb Skipper
Kyle Shelton
John T. Cook

Skyline Town Clerk
Tiffany Bullock

TARCOG Planner
Scott Griess

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive planning determines a community's goals and aspirations for future development by assessing its history, culture, character, assets, and challenges. A comprehensive plan provides community vision and offers policy considerations on land use, utilities, housing, recreation, and transportation, among other areas. Comprehensive planning also impacts the development market of a community by providing policy guidance on how to use the available supply of developable land. The document is intended to serve as the overall philosophical and policy directive for a community's approach to land use, zoning, and other long-term community planning decisions.

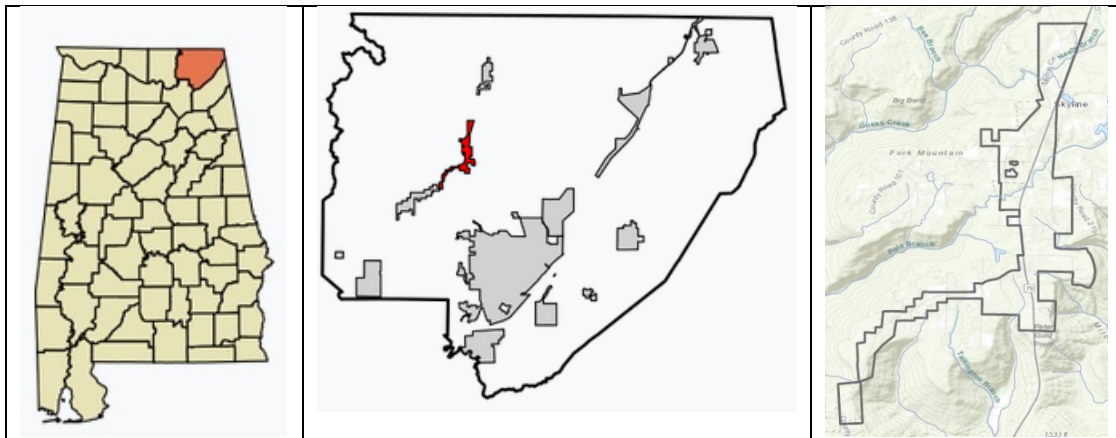


Figure 1. Jackson County, Incorporated Areas of Jackson County, and Skyline's Town Limits

The Skyline Comprehensive Plan serves as a policy guide for the future growth and development of the Town of Skyline located in Jackson County, Alabama. It assesses the Town's physical, social, and economic conditions and trends and it is based upon the unique aspects and challenges that characterize the Town of Skyline. Like many other small rural towns, Skyline faces enormous challenges. Infrastructure, economic development, demographic changes, public finance, education, and transportation are just some of the issues that must be assessed and addressed in order to sustain and support the Town of Skyline in the future. The Comprehensive Plan is the best tool to coordinate this task as it offers a realistic inventory of the opportunities, challenges, and resources available to the Town of Skyline and, ultimately, potential solutions to the most important challenges Skyline faces.

This Comprehensive Plan has been drafted through research and public engagement to serve as a policy guide – a roadmap of sorts – to help the Town of Skyline guide its growth and the commitment of vital resources in the coming decades. It provides a realistic guideline for policies that will enhance the quality of life and prosperity of the Town. The policies developed through this comprehensive planning process are intended to be implemented over the next five to twenty years. At the same time, the plan should be reevaluated approximately every five years after its adoption to ensure it remains current and relevant.

Ultimately, the Comprehensive Plan seeks to guide future development, protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Skyline, promote good civic design, and coordinate the efficient delivery of public services. To achieve its vision for the future, Skyline should use the comprehensive plan to establish policies that respond to the requirements and aspirations of its residents, to influence social, economic, and physical development.

1.2 Plan Principles, Usage, and Organization

A Comprehensive Plan is a vision of what a community wants to become and provides a framework for accomplishing that vision. It presents information on several elements that are separate but related to each other, such as the natural environment, economic development, community and neighborhood revitalization, and how land is used currently and possible options for how it could be used moving forward. These elements are intended to work together in many ways in order to provide a community with improvements to quality of life outcomes, economic prosperity, and other opportunities for success.

In the State of Alabama, a comprehensive plan is advisory in nature and does not have the force of law. A comprehensive plan usually includes a Future Land Use Plan that is intended to help achieve a town's long-range vision of growth. A Future Land Use Plan provides guidance and recommendations on the parcel level for the general type and density of new development within the existing town limits, which may be the same or may differ from current land uses.

The Skyline Comprehensive Plan is not a prediction of the future. It is a plan that has been designed for use by elected officials, town government administrative staff, residents, businesses, developers, and others interested in the future of Skyline. The intent of this plan is to make it easy to read and accessible to all. Key issues are described with data to make the purpose of policies

more apparent. Graphics, maps, photos, and charts have been used to illustrate major points and improve the legibility of the text.

As the Town's primary policy and planning document addressing the physical development of the Town, the comprehensive plan is of importance to elected government officials who must adopt it and fund its implementation, appointed officials who will use it as a guide for discretionary decision-making, as well as Town agency heads who are charged with its implementation and the update of other plans to conform with it. The Plan is also a resource for those who seek general information on how the Town may change over the next 10-15 years, as well as those who want or need to understand how the Town plans to respond to particular issues and problems that may arise.

The Skyline Comprehensive Plan is organized into seven chapters. The Introduction provides an overview of the plan and a summary of the key challenges facing Skyline. The second chapter contains the development plan and community vision which provides an assessment of the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan. This section is a snapshot summary of the critical goals and objectives of the plan and the actions needed to promote sound future planning and development. The next four chapters present profiles of the Town of Skyline that describe existing conditions, challenges, and opportunities. These chapters provide information and analysis on Skyline's history and natural resources, transportation and land use, population and economy, and public services and capital facilities. The final chapter presents information on strategic recommendations brought forth from this planning effort as well as key implementation tools.

1.3 Legal Foundation for the Plan

Sections 11-52-8 and 11-52-9 of the Code of Alabama outline the authority and purpose of a town comprehensive planning process. These paragraphs are Sections 6 and 7 of the Standard Town Planning Enabling Act published by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1928 and adopted by the State of Alabama in 1935. The language of this statute, as incorporated into the Code of Alabama, expresses general themes and allows local governments a broad degree of freedom in writing their comprehensive plans, while ensuring that the fundamentals of a strong comprehensive plan are all included.

1.4 The Planning Process

In the Spring of 2019, the Town of Skyline embarked on a mission to develop a Comprehensive Plan to guide the goals and objectives for future growth of the Town. The Town received a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) planning grant from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) to undertake a sewer feasibility study and local comprehensive planning effort simultaneously. Should sewer line be feasible to install it is advantageous to have a current comprehensive plan in place in order to consider any potential development the Town might undergo as a result of its new infrastructure.

The planning process for the Skyline Comprehensive Plan was informed by the participation of the Mayor, Town Council, and town residents through a series of public meetings, workshops, and surveys designed to elicit responses and recommendations regarding the future of Skyline. Although the Town of Skyline did not convene a formal Steering / Planning Committee, most workshops and other meetings were well attended by the Mayor, Town Council members, and a small group of committed citizens.

Planning Steps

The fundamental premise for developing a comprehensive plan for Skyline is encapsulated in a well-defined set of planning procedures. Developing a planning process requires a thorough examination of possible solutions and how those solutions will materialize into an implementation strategy for future development. To achieve this goal a seven-step agenda was defined that outlines the development of the plan. The outline of the process is summarized as follows:

Project Orientation

An initial public meeting was conducted on February 28, 2019 to provide an overview of the comprehensive planning process. During the Months of February and March 2019 a survey was distributed within the Town limits. A subsequent workshop was conducted on May 30, 2019 to assess Skyline's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis). To develop the future vision of Skyline, a visioning workshop was conducted at a meeting on June 27, 2019.

Evaluation of Current Conditions

Planning staff performed a thorough evaluation of the current conditions of the Town of Skyline on topics including: 1) a history of the community; 2) an analysis of growth and population trends; 3) a study of housing stock and residential needs; 4) an overview of the economic base, employment, and commercial and industrial development; 5) an overview of market conditions; 6) a study of community facilities and services; and 7) an understanding of municipal departments.

Development of Community Vision and Long-Range Goals

On July 25, 2019, Town leadership and citizens began the process of developing goals, objectives, and actions to be incorporated into the Town's Comprehensive Plan. This series of interviews and meetings with key stakeholders was used to align the proposed objectives of the public with the realities of current constraints and feasible opportunities in Skyline.

Draft Plan

Following the presentation and general acceptance of the plan concept and goals, objectives, and actions developed through the community visioning process, a draft plan was presented to the Town on January 30, 2020 with a request for public comments.

Final Plan

In formulating the final plan, all public comments were synthesized regarding the first draft and a final plan was prepared. The final plan was presented to the Town for acceptance and adoption on February 27, 2020.

1.5 Study Area

While the study area for the Comprehensive Plan encompasses the incorporated town limits of Skyline, the plan recognizes that the Skyline community does not necessarily end at those town limits. Other residents in the nearby vicinity provide employment and trade that is critical to the future of the Town. Where necessary, and possible, the plan also addresses those elements beyond the incorporated limits that are important for the future of Skyline. A **Town Vicinity Map** is included as **Appendix A** to this Plan and displays the Town's surrounding areas and a 25- and 50-mile radius from Skyline's boundaries.

Summary

The Skyline Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide an assessment of the existing conditions and trends in the town and to present policies to guide growth and development in the future toward a better quality of life. The plan incorporates the views of citizens and nearby residents and provides a continuous action plan for accommodating change. The Comprehensive Plan expresses the desires of Skyline residents for a prosperous future through the vision and goals, which will be brought into reality through action in coming years.

Chapter 2. Development Plan & Community Vision

2.1 Purpose of the Development Plan

The purpose of the Development Plan is to identify assets, opportunities, and challenges in Skyline and to determine how these can be leveraged, maximized, or changed to improve quality of life and economic opportunities in the Town. The Development Plan illustrates the descriptive vision for the future of Skyline and the goals that are necessary to achieve this vision. Although it is not limited to physical development, the Plan also contains a vision for future land use patterns in Skyline.

The Development Plan seeks to ask and answer the question: “*what do we want to be in the future?*” Once this is understood, the Plan presents ways to go about achieving this vision. First, the plan presents goals, which are broad statements of what things need to happen in order to successfully build the social, economic, and physical environment needed for the future. The goals are a checklist of sorts. The question “*how many of our goals does this project address?*” should be asked before deciding what specific actions to take. Finally, the Development Plan offers strategic recommendations. These are reasonable and specific actions that should be taken to implement the plan. These activities are presented because they are needed to move forward in Skyline. The details of how to ensure that the goals of the Plan are met are left unspecific to allow for flexibility and evolution in implementation – but each recommendation offers opportunities for cooperation, coordination, and volunteerism, as called for throughout the Development Plan.

2.2 How to Use the Development Plan

Focus on projects and recommendations that have the highest value to the Town of Skyline. Whether from the recommendations presented below, or from an idea newly come to the table, the projects that meet the most immediate needs and touch on the broadest range of goals are the most important to undertake. Cost is a factor, of course, so those with the lowest cost should be implemented as soon as possible, while higher cost activities should be scheduled as opportunities become available. Remember, the plan is meant to build community capacity. Low cost investments today will lead to greater returns and financial capacity in the future.

2.3 SWOT Analysis – Assets & Challenges

The citizens and leaders of Skyline were asked to describe and assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that were at the heart of Skyline’s challenges with respect to growth and development. This information was received both through in-person planning workshops and through a community survey that was disseminated to Town residents. A variety of comments were heard and received as residents provided insights into the various existing conditions that they would like to see changed or preserved and promoted. These were related to identified themes of importance to the community: economic development; public health and safety; housing; infrastructure; and recreation and community facilities. The assets and challenges listed below present a condensed version of the most pressing priorities for the Town of Skyline. The complete responses to the **Community Survey** can be found at **Appendix B** and the full findings of the **SWOT Analysis** can be found at **Appendix C**.

Town Assets

- The Skyline School is ranked number 1 in test scores
- Several good churches in the community
- Medical facility/clinic and drug store
- Public safety agencies available: police, independent voluntary fire departments and storm shelters
- Post office and bank in town
- Community center and community athletic involvement: sports and parks
- Availability of land for outdoor sports, agriculture, and developable
- A “clean slate” regarding zoning.
- Numerous businesses in town: a restaurant, Dollar General store, feed and seed store, gas station, several auto-related stores and repair services
- Small, rural town with close proximity to a larger city with a broad range of retail businesses and some industrial parks

Town Challenges

- Lack of a zip code creates several issues
- Lack of a town-wide wastewater/sewer system
- Lack of a grocery store in-town = “Food Desert”
- No ambulance station for the town and others within the Cumberland Mountain population
- Need for better roads and traffic control measures
- Wireless phone service is poor
- Insufficient revenue and lack of funding (from various sources) to carryout municipal functions
- Town residents have to drive to stores in other towns/cities for basic needs

Figure 2. Primary assets and challenges as determined by the SWOT analysis.

2.4 Community Mission & Vision

During the planning process, TARCOG planning staff conducted a presentation on community visioning, followed by a visioning process workshop with good discussion from the participants regarding the current vision of the Town. By the end of the workshop, a vision for Skyline's future had not been fully crafted, and the participants requested more time. Consequently, TARCOG planning staff created a preliminary vision statement from the information gleaned from the discussion during the workshop and from other community input sessions.

During additional discussion of the Skyline vision statement, citizens reviewed the information from the preliminary vision statement and worked together to formally develop both a mission statement and vision statement for the Town of Skyline, as follows:

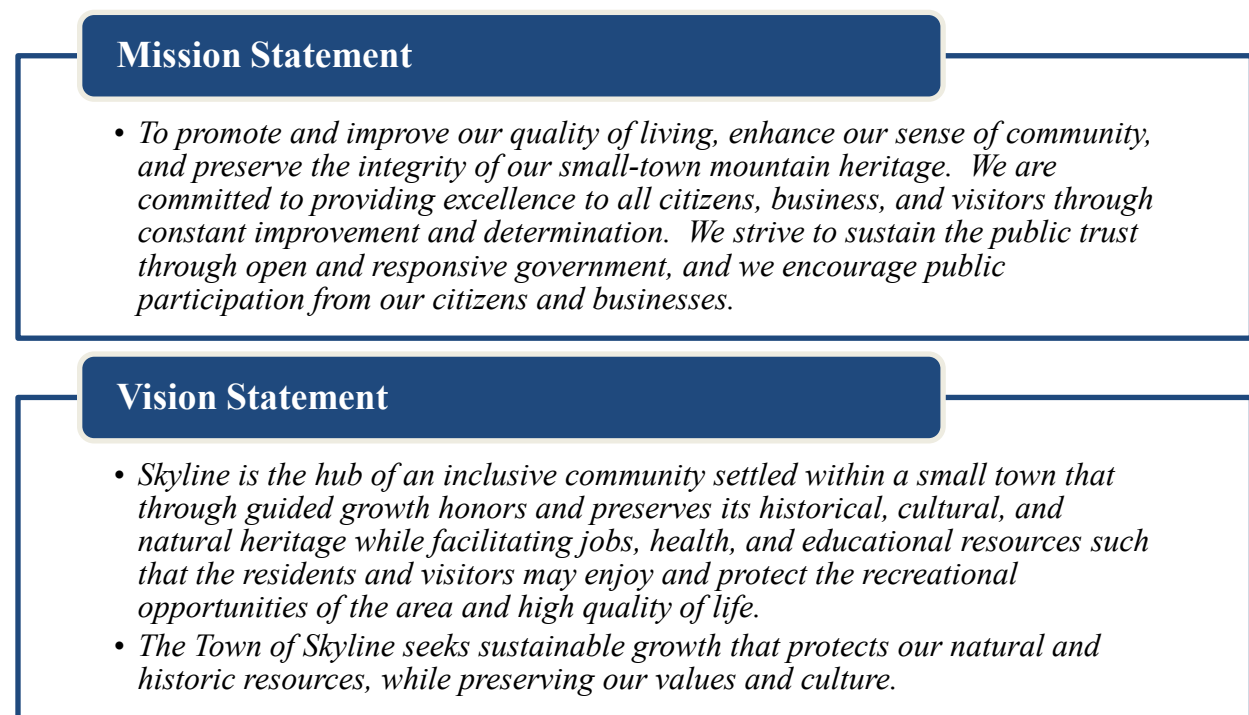


Figure 3. Town of Skyline Mission Statement & Vision Statement

The challenge for Skyline is to evaluate assets and issues within the framework of the vision for what the Town desires to be in the future and then to identify goals and strategies that can be undertaken to accomplish this task.

In each instance, actions taken by the Town should work to correct some perceived deficit or enhance a beneficial condition to bring about the vision. Priorities should be evaluated against

the mission and vision statements to determine appropriate actions now and in the future. The following goals should serve as principles, a checklist, of sorts, to further guide the selection of priorities for the future. Insofar as possible, Town decisions should embody these goals, with those actions that can simultaneously achieve multiple goals being prioritized higher than others.

2.5 Development Plan Themes

Five key themes were determined through planning workshops, public meetings, the SWOT analysis, and community survey results. These themes reinforce Skyline's mission and vision statements and serve as the Town's overall planning and development goals. They express and reinforce major concerns this Comprehensive Plan seeks to address, and issues raised by the public. The primary goals identified by the leadership and citizens of Skyline fall under the five themes as follows: economic development; housing; infrastructure; public health and safety; and recreation and community facilities.

Economic Development

- Skyline shall be financially and physically sustainable.
- Skyline shall have a zip code separate from Scottsboro.
- Skyline will have complete wastewater system.
- Skyline have natural gas service.
- Skyline shall establish a business recruitment board.
- Skyline shall re-establish a full-service grocery store.

Public Health & Safety

- Skyline shall have adequate storm/tornado shelters for Town residents.
- Skyline shall have adequate storm/tornado emergency sirens.
- Skyline shall have ready access to ambulance service.
- Skyline shall re-establish a full-service grocery store.
- Skyline shall have safe roads and highways with turning lanes and other traffic control measures.
- Skyline shall have a complete wastewater system, wherever feasible.

Housing

- Skyline will develop and adopt a long-term future land use plan.

- Skyline will establish and adopt a zoning ordinance and other building and development controls and regulations.
- Skyline will have more housing; based on a sound development plan.
- Skyline will have more housing choices, including affordable housing and multi-family housing.

Infrastructure

- Skyline will work with ALDOT to create turning lanes and other traffic control measures along Alabama Highway 79.
- Skyline will install a sewer system, if determined to be feasible.
- Skyline will install natural gas service.

Recreation & Community Facilities

- Skyline will explore options for Town Hall redevelopment, as its future is uncertain.
- Skyline shall make renovations to its community center and possibly merge the community center with town hall functions.
- Skyline will repair, modify, and maintain Cumberland Mountain Park and other recreation assets.

Summary

In reviewing these goals, some priorities fall within multiple themes. Synergy is the interaction of elements that when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual element's, contributions. Often, the goals that a town identifies work together, overlapping in synergy with the others. For example, a goal identified under infrastructure improvements such as installing a sewage system will also provide economic development outcomes to potentially bring businesses such as a grocery store in an area identified as a food desert. This action would also lead to improvements in the public health of Town residents who would be more likely to participate in community recreational activities and so on.

Chapter 3. The Town of Skyline

The history and physical geography of a location shape its growth and development in fundamental ways. They are the key features explaining how the community came to possess its physical form and development patterns and they shape the possibilities and limitations for the future. Understanding the history, culture, and values that shaped the location in addition to the opportunities and limitations of the existing physical geography is critical to developing strategies for managing change.

3.1 Historical Context

The Town of Skyline is located in central Jackson County, in the northeast corner of the State of Alabama. It is situated on Cumberland Mountain, atop the Cumberland Plateau. The community now known as the Town of Skyline began its existence in 1937 as one of 43 cooperative farming experiment projects attempted nationally under President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Federal Emergency Relief Administration and New Deal programs during the Great Depression.

In the early 1930s, the federal government purchased 13,000 acres on Cumberland Mountain in Jackson County and divided it into 40-acre plots. In 1935, federal workers began to build houses and a school on the land, and the government offered the houses and land for purchase through low-cost loans. Few families were ultimately able to pay off the loans, but food provided by the farms helped several families survive the Great Depression and resulted in a permanent community. Some of the houses have survived and are referred to as “colony” houses by current residents.



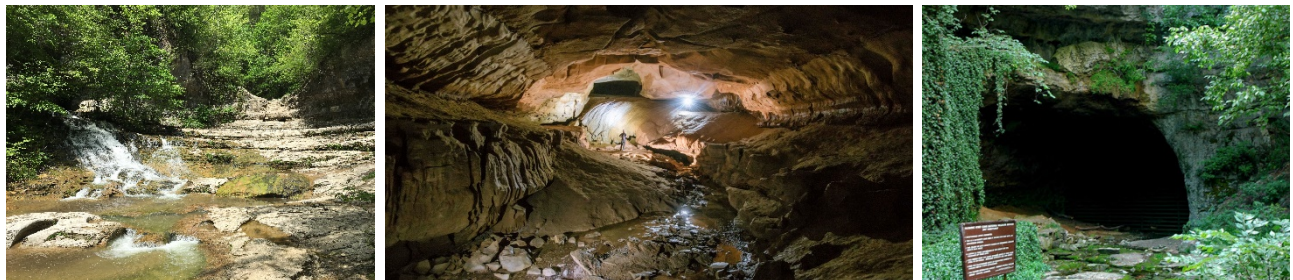
Figure 4. Life at Skyline Farms.
(Source: Skyline Farms Heritage Association)

The project was originally called Cumberland Mountain Farms, then Skyline Farms, and finally just Skyline. At its peak, Skyline Farms was a 181-farm cooperative that sat on 13,000

acres. Those who bought into the project planted mainly tomatoes and potatoes, as well as some sugarcane, as cash crops. The experiment lasted for a decade before being sold off to private buyers in 1944. The current Town of Skyline is located about one mile north of the original farming colony. Skyline became an incorporated municipality in 1985.

3.2 Location & Natural Resources

The area within the town limits of Skyline includes 3.99 square miles of land, and 0.01 square miles of water. The primary geographic coordinate point for Skyline is located at latitude 34.814 and longitude -86.1153. Historically, the Town of Skyline has been surrounded by woodlands, agricultural fields for most of its existence. Situated in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, Skyline is surrounded by a rich deciduous forest that is varied and prolific. As the Town is located in Northeast Alabama, and in the Jackson County Mountains, more specifically, Skyline is blessed with abundant natural resources and unique natural sites such as the Walls of Jericho Trailhead, Tumbling Rock Cave Preserve, Russell Cave National Monument, and Sauta Cave National Wildlife Refuge, among other areas.



*Figure 5. Walls of Jericho Trailhead, Tumbling Rock Cave, and Sauta Cave National Wildlife Refuge
(Source: Encyclopedia of Alabama)*

3.3 Geology & Topography

Geology is the underlying rock formations of a place and is essential to the formation of soils, topography and slopes, and surface and ground water. The State of Alabama is divided into five major geologic provinces: Coastal Plain, Piedmont, Valley and Range, Cumberland Plateau, and Highland Rim. Each province has different rock formations, geologic structure, physiographic, and water bearing capacity. The Town of Skyline is in the Cumberland Plateau region along the top of the Jackson County Mountains. The Town has an elevation of 1,591 feet above mean sea level (MSL).

The landforms are the result of differential erosion of the underlying Paleozoic rocks in the section, which range from Cambrian to Pennsylvanian in age (approximately 550 to 290 million years before the present). The most resistant rocks are sandstones of various ages, and these are what form the ridges. Pennsylvanian sandstones belonging to the Pottsville Formation underlie the major plateaus. The valleys cut through softer shale, limestone, and dolomite. Of these three, limestone is most easily weathered and eroded, and thus the deepest valleys are cut through this rock type.

Unlike the other upland sections in the Cumberland Plateau, the surface of the Jackson County Mountains district is highly irregular, consisting of isolated, flat-topped remnants of the former plateau cut by steep-sided valleys. Heights of individual peaks reflect whether the original sandstone layer that capped the peaks is still present as well as the degree of erosion of the underlying Mississippian shales and limestones.

The figure below displays the physiographic regions of the State of Alabama, and specifically, the Cumberland Plateau region where the Town of Skyline is located. A **Topographic Map** is provided in **Appendix D** for Skyline and surrounding areas.

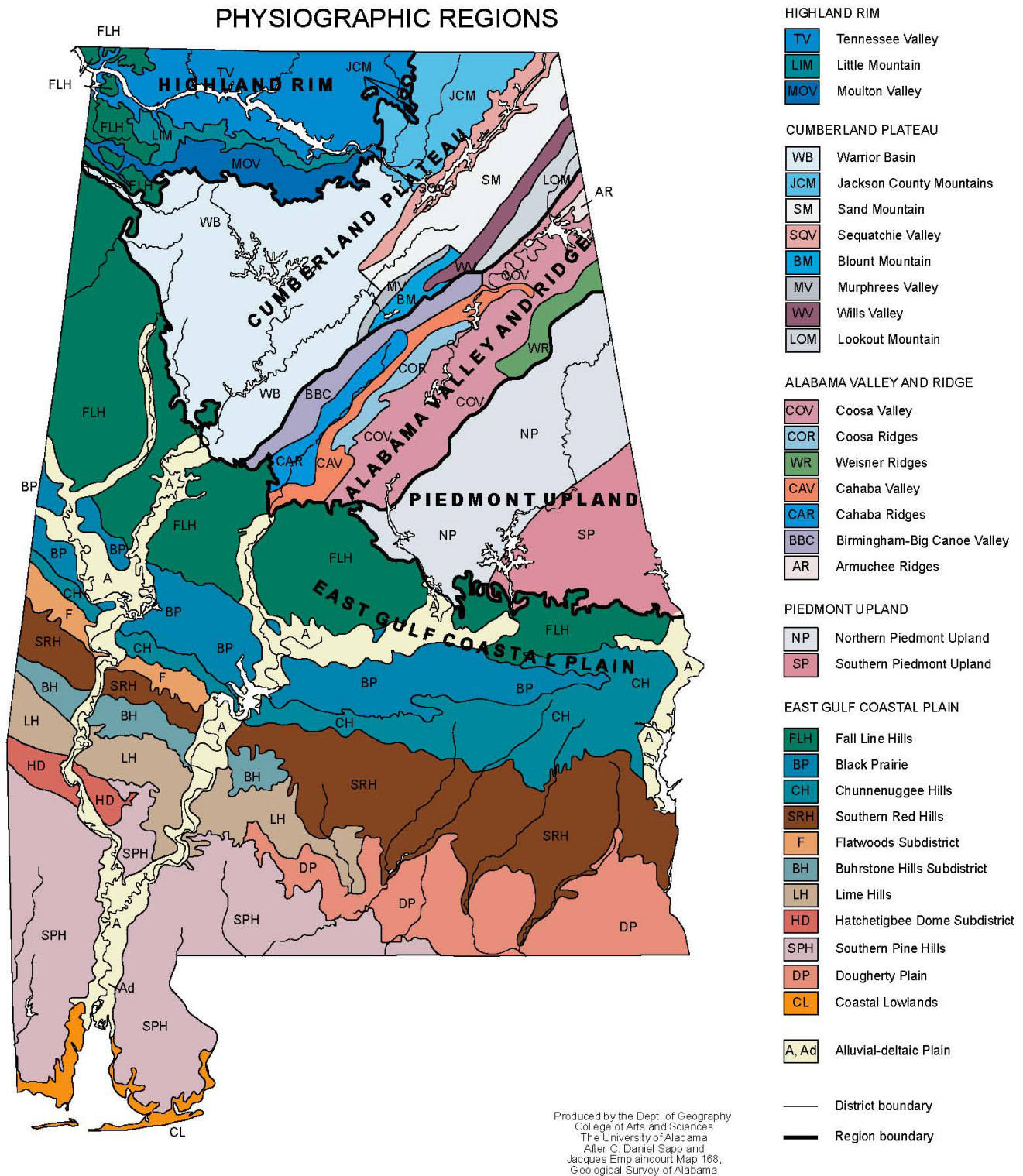


Figure 6. State of Alabama Physiographic Regions

3.4 Soils Information

Soil formation is a complicated process involving the interaction of geologic, organic, and meteorological occurrences. Soils are formed by the effects of wind, water, and volcanic activity on rock, the effects of organic activities such as plant growth, and the decomposition of organic materials. A variety of soil characteristics, such as slope, permeability, and depth affect the suitability of a particular site for development.

For planning purposes, soils play a significant role in the use of land for specific purposes and activities and should be examined before the location of most land uses, including housing, commercial operations, industries, as well as infrastructure improvements such as roads and drainage. The cost of development for housing, roads, bridges, industrial development, and all manner of community and economic development improvements are related to these characteristics. Soil examination should be an integral part of the development of preliminary plans and cost estimates for a project site, and principals of soil conservation and management should be incorporated into all stages of development.

Soils have been inventoried by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service based upon their capacity to support buildings and residences, septic tank absorption fields, sewage lagoons, local roads and streets, sanitary landfill operations, picnic grounds, campsites, intensive play areas, and paths and trails. Where severe limitations exist as a result of soil type and condition, development should be limited or managed in ways that sufficiently mitigate limitations. Areas with slight limitations should be preferred for development.

Several Soil Analysis Maps have been prepared for the Town and are included as appendices to this Plan. Due to the Town's location on the Jackson County Mountains of the Cumberland Plateau region, soil analysis displays that the Town has certain development limitations pertaining to difficult excavation. These maps and associated map unit legends display the locations and soil unit types relevant to the Town. In addition, as discussed above, limitations to building can result from a variety of factors related to soils. **Appendix E** displays analysis of several soil limitations for the Town including soil suitability for **Dwellings with No Basements, Small Commercial Buildings, and Shallow Excavations**. These resources are very useful when assessing construction feasibility for potential future development.

3.5 Farmland Classification

Prime farmland is described as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for these uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management.

In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has developed a soils classification for farmland into eight classes based on their fitness or limitation for various agricultural crops or operations, and three subclasses based upon erodibility, excess water, or climate. It's no surprise with Skyline's rich agricultural history that a majority of the land within the Town's boundaries is classified as prime farmland. A **Farmland Classification Map** for the Town of Skyline is available in **Appendix F**.

3.6 Flooding Frequency

Flooding frequency mapping provides information on the probability of a given area to flood. The USDA NRCS identifies seven levels of flooding frequency including: none, very rare, rare, occasional, frequent, very frequent, and not rated. According to the soil survey data, flooding is not a significant problem in the Skyline area.

3.7 Climate Trends

The Town of Skyline lies within the limits of the warm temperate zone and is characterized by short winters and long summers. The monthly temperature for the months of December, January, and February is on average 45.3 degrees Fahrenheit. Cold snaps are usually of brief duration, rarely lasting over three days, when the weather generally moderates considerably, the change often being accompanied by cloudy weather and much rain. While the U.S. average for rain is 38 inches of rain per year, by comparison, Skyline gets 56 inches of rain, on average, per

year. Snowfall is usually very light, and the snow soon melts. On average, there are 205 sunny days per year in Skyline.

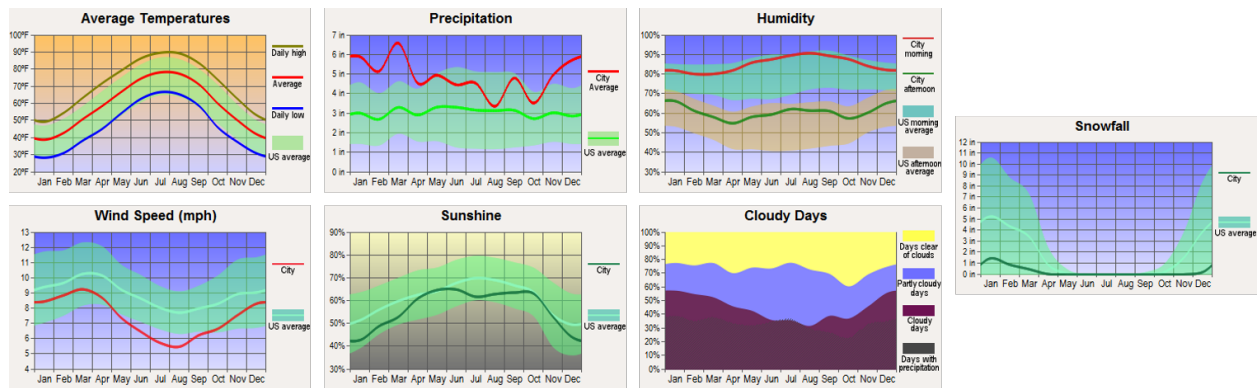


Figure 7. Skyline Climate Trends Data

3.8 Air Quality

Air quality is an essential feature of public health that is often overlooked in areas without significant air quality issues. Skyline is a community that is fortunate to have clean air. Air Quality Indices (AQI) are numbers used by government agencies to characterize the quality of the air at a given location. As the AQI increases, an increasingly large percentage of the population is likely to experience increasingly severe adverse health effects. The air quality index (AQI) for the Town of Skyline was 37. The AQI for the State of Alabama was also 37, while the National AQI was 50. The following tables demonstrate the specific AQI indices.

Table 1. Skyline Air Quality Index and Pollution Index			
Index	Skyline	Alabama	National
Air Quality Index (AQI)	37	37	50
Pollution Index	1,068,210	4,051,223	5,066,862
<i>In the event that the air quality/pollution data was unavailable for this city, estimates based upon nearby cities are used</i>			

Table 2. Skyline Air Quality Information			
Measurement	Total	Pollutant	Total
Days measured	336	Arsenic	0.001%
Days with good air quality	305	Benzene	0.020%
Days with moderate air quality	31	Carbon Tetrachloride	0.002%
Days w/ poor A.Q. for sensitive groups		Lead	0.001%
Days with unhealthy air quality		Mercury	0.000%

3.9 Water Resources

Water is a critical resource for the citizens of Skyline to protect in order to provide a healthy source of drinking water to Town residents and for future development. Unlike other communities in the vicinity of Skyline which are at lower elevations and have closer access to the Tennessee River, Skyline does not have the resources to build, operate, or maintain their own water system at this time. Skyline has a well that previously provided water to Town residents but that well has not been used as a source of drinking water for several years. Consequently, residents and businesses of Skyline are provided with potable (drinking) water from the Cumberland Mountain Water Authority. The Authority provides water to 1,800 customers with 2.5 million gallons of water per month.

Chapter 4. Land Use & Transportation

Growth and development take many shapes as land is changed from one use to another and new structures are built. Features such as transportation infrastructure and specific building types and uses are an important part of the landscape of any town. They are the visible and functional backbone of any community and their quality and character are vital to an understanding of existing opportunities and challenges. The existing transportation and land use patterns discussed below provide the current form of the Town of Skyline. They are the framework within which new development will occur, whether it takes place within the existing neighborhoods or along fringes of Town. Managing existing land use opportunities and assets in the context of future growth will be a critical part of the development strategy for the Town of Skyline.

4.1 Current Land Use

Land use defines a community's physical form and function and provides a framework for all infrastructure and development related decisions. The land use element of the Comprehensive Plan provides the critical foundation upon which all other elements are based. The purpose of land use evaluation is to assess the uses of the land and determine the efficiency of land use patterns. The goal is to establish orderly land usage consistent with zoning regulations based on natural features, availability of utilities, and other traditional land use considerations.

A land use inventory was conducted as part of the planning process and an existing land use map was created in order to identify development patterns and to understand which areas of the Town are most suited to receive new growth and development, including redevelopment of existing properties. The Town's **Existing Land Use Map** can be found at **Appendix G**. The mapping of existing land use displays a spine of commercial development (red parcels) along AL Highway 79 with a few parcels designated for industrial use (purple parcels). The majority of land within the Town's boundaries is classified as natural resource (green parcels) with sizable clusters of residential development (yellow parcels) that are interspersed throughout the natural areas both along AL Hwy 79 and County Road 17.

4.2 Residential Use

Most of the land that is not developed along the highway commercial/industrial corridor in Skyline is used for residential and/or agricultural purposes. The population density and housing

density in Skyline is considered very low and because of that it is typical to have large properties occupied by one residential dwelling, or a small cluster of homes surrounded by fields and woodlands.

The overwhelming type of housing in Skyline is the detached, single-family home which is typically described as a one-unit dwelling structure with open space on all four sides and is not attached to any other residential structure. Most of these homes are either site-built or manufactured homes.



Figure 8. An example of a residential street view in Skyline.

However, there are some travel trailers that appear to be used as dwellings in Skyline. While most site-built homes appear to be placed with ample space on their own parcel of land, it is not uncommon for multiple manufactured homes to be grouped closely together. According to Town officials there are no multi-family residences in Skyline, that is, a building or structure that is designed to house several different families in separate housing units.

4.3 Agriculture & Natural Resource Use

The Town of Skyline is greatly blessed with abundant natural resources. As was expressed in the planning workshops, living in Skyline “is like living in a garden.” However, natural resources extend beyond the typical conception of farming and forestry. Due to the location atop a mountain there are no large tracts of land that one may find row crops common to lower, flatter elevations. Instead, the area has much smaller acreages for row crops, pastures to keep grazing livestock, especially horses and some cattle, and wooded land to harvest forest products and used as areas for hunting.



Figure 9. Former co-op shed behind the rock store.

4.4 Commercial & Industrial Use

Skyline has a few commercial and small industrial locations within its boundaries which tend to be located along or near the Alabama Highway (AL Hwy) 79 corridor. Skyline has no commercial “downtown” district. Instead, there are several commercial businesses buildings – both occupied and vacant – located along the Town’s “main drag” loosely defined as the AL Hwy 79 corridor beginning just south of its intersection with County Road 17 and continuing north for approximately one mile).

Just above the southern boundary of the Town there are buildings that have the appearance of being commercial, but also look unused and/or vacant. Further north, on the West side of AL Hwy 79 is the location of the Cumberland Mountain Water Authority. Across the highway, the Skyline Mart is a filling station and quick-mart store on the right (east) side of the highway alive with commerce. However, across from the Skyline Mart on the west side of the highway there is another cluster of seemingly vacant commercial buildings. Continuing north there are the offices of the Cumberland Mountain Water Authority. Just south of Green River Road is the location of Thompson Gas, a propane gas provider and just north of the intersection of AL Hwy 79 and County Road 17 is the location of Heritage Propane, another propane gas supplier.

North of the intersection of AL Hwy 79 and Gizzard Point Road there is a cluster of light-industrial buildings with signs indicating automobile work is being done there, and/or machine shop businesses. The next few retail buildings include a thriving Dollar General store, a vacant grocery store, and a drug store. The next cluster of businesses is at the intersection of AL Hwy 79 and County Road 25. This area includes the current Town Hall, a medical clinic, two restaurants, a feed and seed store, a bank, a few automotive businesses offering tires and automotive parts. Behind this cluster of retail activity lays a pallet manufacturing plant. A short drive

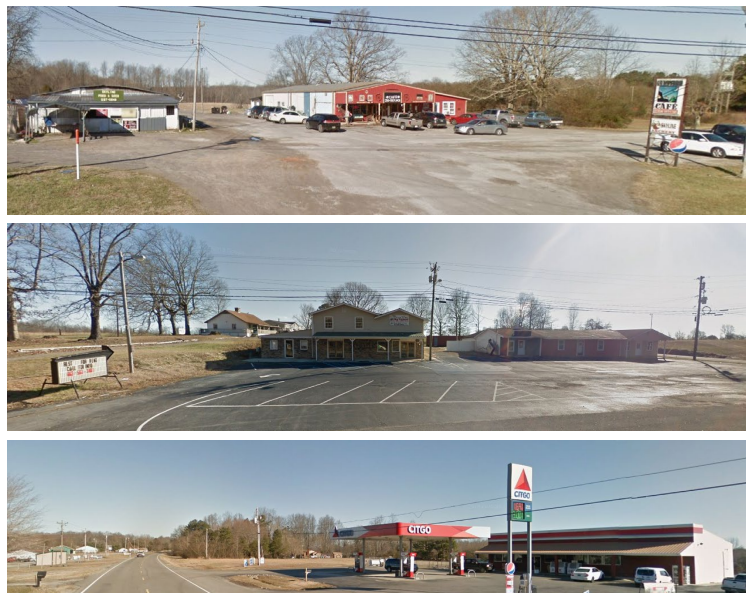


Figure 10. Examples of Skyline’s commercial land use.
(Source: Google Maps)

further up AL Hwy 79 brings us to an area where a few industrial plants appear to be locating, near the Buccaneer Rope Company factory.

There is evidence of attempts to cluster both retail and industrial activities, however, a concerted effort by Town leaders and citizens to identify and dedicate areas of the Town for future economic development opportunities is needed. As a small rural town, Skyline is also beset by several neighboring incompatible uses challenges. One example of an incompatible use is multiple salvage vehicles in the front yards of residential properties and no regulatory instruments, such as zoning and subdivision regulations to prevent or mitigate this incompatibility.

4.5 Transportation Planning

Street development is a precursor of most land development activities. Access to a parcel must be secured prior to any type of construction of buildings for human occupancy or use. Streets are designed to serve a variety of functions. In addition to providing immediate access to adjacent land, streets are intended to move people, goods, and services from place to place in a community, or carry workers to and from their place of employment.

Transportation plans are based on classifications that make distinctions between streets intended primarily to provide access to immediately adjacent land and those intended to move higher volumes of traffic at higher speeds. An obvious example of a street intended to move traffic at high speeds is an access-controlled highway such as an interstate. Less clear cut, and in rural environs, however, is the role of a collector such as County Road 17.

Table 3. Roadway Classifications					
Type of Roadway	Traffic Volumes	Length of Trip	Speed	Access to Property	Town Example
Principal Arterial	Highest	Longest	Highest	Lowest	U.S. Highway
Arterial	High	Long	High	Low	State Highway (AL Hwy 79)
Collector	Medium	Short	Low	Medium	County Road (C.R. 17)
Local Street	Lowest	Shortest	Lowest	Highest	Town Road (Gizzard Point)

4.6 Commute Time & Commuting Methods

In Skyline, the principle means of transportation is either by car, truck, or van at 97.4 percent of all means of transportation to work. The majority of those (82.7 percent) drove alone

most of the time. Carpooling provided 14.6 percent of the commuting transportation for some of the Skyline workforce and 2.0 percent of commuters use other means such as taxicab or motorcycle to commute to work. There was no indication that any Skyline residents walked or rode a bicycle to commute to work. There was no indication that any Skyline residents walked or rode a bicycle to their places of employment.

Approximately 96.2 percent of Skyline residents work in their state of residence. 68.7 percent of the Skyline workforce commute within Jackson County, while 27.5 percent of the workforce commute to places of employment outside Jackson County. According to ACS data, employees in Skyline have a longer commute time (35.9 minutes) than the normal U.S. worker (25.1 minutes).

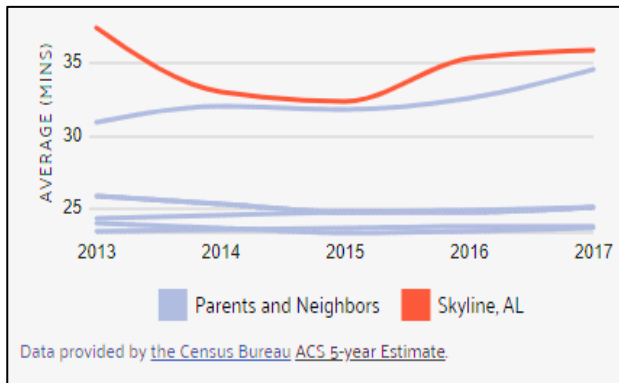


Figure 11. Skyline's Average Commute Time

Additionally, 4.57 percent of the workforce in Skyline have “super commutes” in excess of 90 minutes. Figure 11 displays Skyline’s average commute time compared to “Parents and Neighbors” (i.e. neighboring towns and cities, the State of Alabama, and the United States) and Figure 12, below, displays the most common method of travel for Skyline commuters.

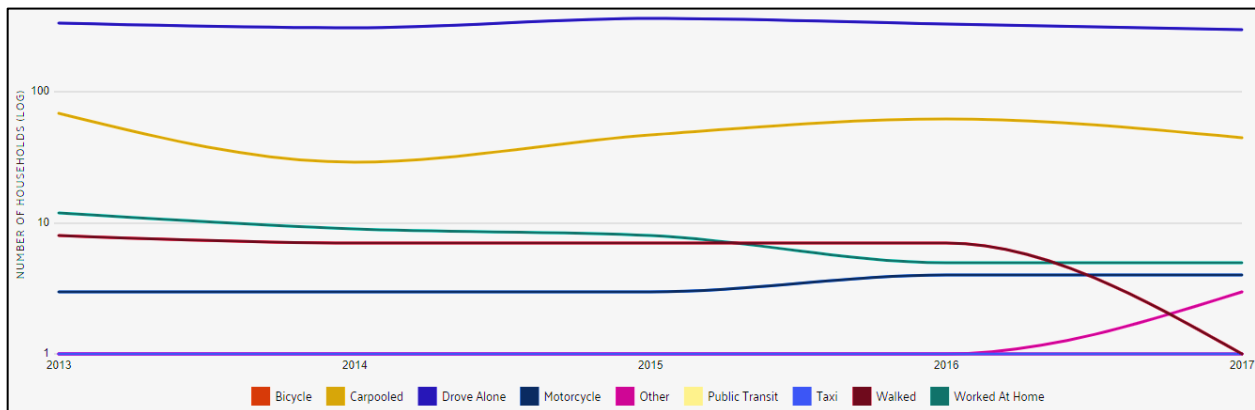


Figure 12. Skyline's Most Common Methods of Commuting
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimate)

4.7 Road Network Jurisdiction & Maintenance

Like many rural towns, the Town of Skyline’s road network includes three levels of jurisdiction, use, and, responsibility for maintenance. The highest-level of jurisdiction for Skyline’s road network pertains to Alabama Highway 79, a two-lane state highway which runs

north to south through the Town. This highway carries the largest quantity of traffic, including personal vehicles and commercial vehicles, especially heavy trucks carrying equipment, goods, and raw materials such as logs and rocks. This highway is narrow. It has little to no shoulder space for vehicles to safely pull off the passage lanes in case of an emergency or other need to do so. Highway 79 is under the jurisdiction of the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) which is responsible for its maintenance.

The next level of the Skyline road system is the county road network. According to The Jackson County Engineers office and an inventory of the roads there are twelve numbered county roads and several named county roads that crisscross the Town and provide access to the adjacent property: Gross Lane, Manning Drive, Paradise lane, Pace Drive, Sharp Lane, Sparkman Road, Wann Lane, Wilkins Drive, and Wininger. While all of these roads provide essential access to property and to other travel routes, county roads 17 and 25 stand out as the two roads that could be considered to fit the definition of either a high functioning collector or a local arterial road.



Figure 13. An example of Skyline's road network.

The third level of the road network is the local roads that are maintained by the Town, or private drives maintained by the residents who own the property. The Town of Skyline maintains the following roads: Bouldin Lane, Cemetery Road, Flat Top Circle, Gizzard Point Road, Green River Road, Hensley Lane, Holloway Drive, Houston Lane, and Morris Circle, Pritchett Drive, and Rice Lane. The following table provides additional evaluation of the condition of the Town's road network prepared by in-person surveying.

Table 4. Skyline Road Network Condition Survey

Road / Street Name / No.	Length	Material	Drainage	Condition	Comments
Baugh	0.1 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Poor	Off of CR 1143
Bouldin Ln.	0.1 Mi.	Asphalt & Gravel	Ditches	Good to Poor	
Cemetery Rd.	0.3 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Fair	.
Earnhart Dr.	0.1 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good	Near C.M. Park
Flat Top Cir.	0.2 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good	
Gizzard Point Rd.	1.2 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good	Road to park
Green River Rd.	0.1 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Poor	Course gravel
Gross Ln.	0.4 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Fair	County Rd.
GTE Loop	0.1 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good	
Hensley Ln.	0.1 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good to Fair	No Outlet
Holloway Dr.	0.1 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Fair to Poor	No sign: found
Holt Dr.	0.1 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Poor	
Hope Dr.	0.1 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Good	Beside trail
Houston Ln.	0.1 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Fair	
Manning Dr.	0.4 Mi.	Asphalt & Gravel	Ditches	Poor to Good	County Rd.
Morris Circle	1.7 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Fair	Not made well
Pace	1.1 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Fair to Good	County Rd.
Paradise Ln.	0.2 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Fair to Good	One lane
Pritchett Dr.	0.4 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Fair to Good	One lane
Rice Ln.	0.1 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good	
Sharp Ln.	0.1 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Poor	One lane
Sleepy Ln.	0.3 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Fair to Good	
Steadman	0.1 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Poor	No Outlet
Wann Ln.	0.1 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Fair	Serves 3 houses
Wilkins Dr.	0.8 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Fair to Good	County Rd.
CR 8	0.1 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good	
CR 17	4.1 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good	County Rd.
CR 25	1.8 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good	County Rd.
CR 107	0.5 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Fair to Good	
CR 143	1.2 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good to Fair	East side of town
CR 222	0.4 Mi.	Asphalt & Gravel	Ditches	Good to Poor	SW tip of town
CR 754	0.2 Mi.	Gravel	Ditches	Fair	County Rd.
AL Hwy 79	5.2 Mi.	Asphalt	Ditches	Good to Excel.	State Highway
Approx. Miles	21.3 Miles				

In discussions with Town and County road officials the planning team investigated the maintenance schedule for the roads in Skyline and discovered that there is no set schedule. Instead, neither the Town nor the County follow a maintenance schedule and, instead, make road repairs on an as-needed basis. During community input sessions several maintenance and safety concerns

were raised. Discussion of the changing nature of the roads and traffic volumes and discussions with County and/or ALDOT officials should be held to determine the need, if any, at this time. Periodic reviews are also recommended, especially as the population and traffic in Skyline increases.

During the community input sessions questions were also asked about transportation for seniors with limited mobility that may need assistance in traveling to doctor appointments, or to retail establishments, such as a grocery store out of town. The Jackson County Council on Aging has a rural public transportation system within Jackson County that is available to the elderly population of Skyline.

Chapter 5. Population & Economy

What is known today as the Town of Skyline began in 1934 as a cooperative farming experiment called “Cumberland Farms” under the management of President Franklin Roosevelt’s Federal Emergency Relief Administration. This was one of 43 such projects attempted nationally in depressed areas. It was soon renamed “Skyline Farms” to avoid confusion with another project in neighboring Tennessee. The experiment lasted for a decade before being sold off to private buyers in 1944.

During the approximately four decades of time between the dissolution of the Skyline Farms project in 1944, and becoming an incorporated municipality in 1985, Skyline was one of many small rural communities within Jackson County. Consequently, the historical population figures for the area that became the Town of Skyline could not be obtained from the U.S Census Bureau and the census data since the Town’s incorporation is available but not extensive.

It should also be noted that during the time in which this Comprehensive Plan is being created, the Census Bureau is preparing for the next decennial census in the year 2020. The results thereof may significantly vary from the currently available data. Even so, this plan endeavors to look at available previous and current information to form a view of where the Town stands and extrapolate the trends and potentialities of the future.

5.1 Population & Demographics

As of the 2010 Census, there were 851 people, 332 households, and 253 families residing in the Town of Skyline. The population density was 213.2 people per square mile. There were 357 housing units at an average density of 92.3 per square mile. From the 2000 to 2010 census, the Town saw a 0.9 percent increase in population. Recent American Community Survey (ACS) population estimates display 950 residents in the Town. If these estimates are accurate, that would result in a population increase from the 2010 Census of 11.6 percent.

Table 5. Town of Skyline Historical Population			
	Population	Absolute Change	% Change
1990 Census	740	--	--
2000 Census	843	103	+ 13.9%
2010 Census	851	8	+ 0.9%
2018 ACS Estimate	950	99	+ 11.6%

Table 6. Town, County, & State Comparison of Population Change (2000 – 2018)						
	<i>Skyline</i>		<i>Jackson County</i>		<i>Alabama</i>	
	Population	% Change	Population	% Change	Population	% Change
1990 Census	740	--	47,796	--	4,040,587	--
2000 Census	843	+ 13.9%	53,926	+ 12.8%	4,447,100	+ 10.1%
2010 Census	851	+ 0.9%	53,227	- 1.3%	4,785,298	+ 7.5%
2018 ACS Est.	950	+ 11.6%	51,909	- 2.5%	4,903,185	+ 2.6%

Based on the Census Bureau’s 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates the racial makeup of Skyline, 920 individuals identify as only one race, while 30 identify as two or more races. Skyline is predominantly (87.3%) white. American Indian and Alaska Native account for 35 individuals with most identifying as Cherokee tribal group. 56 individuals identify as “some other race.” Of the 30 individuals with two or more races, 12 identify as white and African American and 18 identify as white and American Indian and Alaska Native. 122 individuals (12.8% of total population) make up the Town’s Hispanic or Latino population which is made up predominantly of individuals with Mexican heritage.

Table 7. Total Skyline Population by Race (2017 ACS)		
Total Population	950	<i>% of total population</i>
One race	920	96.8%
Two or more races	30	3.2%
One Race	920	96.8%
White	829	87.3%
Black or African American	0	0.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	35	3.7%
Cherokee tribal grouping	33	3.5%
Some other race	56	5.9%
Two or More Races	30	3.2%
White and Black or African American	12	1.3%
White and American Indian and Alaska Native	18	1.9%

Of the Town’s 332 households accounted for in the 2010 Census, 253 (76.2%) were households of families and 86 (25.9%) of total Skyline households have children under 18 years of age. 204 (61.4%) households were married couples living together, 32 (9.6%) had a female head of household with no husband present, and 79 (23.8%) were nonfamily households with 72 of those nonfamily households accounting for an individual living alone, 32 of those individuals were age 65 and over.

5.2 Gender & Age Distribution

Based upon the most recent Census estimates the median age in Skyline is 39.7 years and the Town has a slightly higher percentage of males to females with a gender ratio of approximately 103 males to every 100 females.

Table 8. Age Distribution (2010 Census)						
Selected Age Category (Years)	Total	Percent	Male	Percent Male	Female	Percent Female
5 to 14	139	14.6%	92	19.1%	47	10.0%
15 to 17	68	7.2%	40	8.3%	28	6.0%
Under 18	247	26.0%	144	29.9%	103	22.0%
18 to 24	70	7.4%	25	5.2%	45	9.6%
15 to 44	359	37.8%	171	35.5%	188	40.2%
16 years & over	762	80.2%	369	76.6	393	84.0%
18 years & over	703	74.0%	338	70.1%	365	78.0%
21 years & over	663	69.8%	326	67.6%	337	72.0%
60 years & over	207	21.8%	92	19.1%	115	23.7%
65 & over	177	18.6%	79	17.2%	98	10.3%

Within the population of school-aged children between 5 and 17 years there were 132 males to 75 females. The under age 18 population percentages of the Town show 29.9 percent male and 22.0 percent female. Moving into the population that would make up the largest part of the labor force, from 18 years and up, we see that males 338 account for 70.1 percent of the population ages 18 and over compared to 337 females, at 78.0 percent. Looking at the population typically considered to be moving out of the labor force, from age 65 and over, there are 79 males making up 17.2 percent of the Town's population compared to 98 females who make up 10.3 percent.

5.3 Educational Attainment

The graph below displays a summary of population by percentage of Skyline residents age 25 and above, grouped according to their educational attainment as estimated in the 2018 American Community Survey. Figure 14 displays that the predominant educational attainment level for Skyline residents is high school graduate, with 43 percent of the Town's population aged 25 and

over having completed their education after graduating from high school. 21 percent of the population attended some college but did not complete a degree and 20 percent did not complete high school (10 percent did not complete past ninth grade and 10 percent completed some amount of high school but did not receive their diploma). Nine percent of residents age 25 and over received an associate degree, three percent received a bachelor's degree, and four percent have a graduate or professional degree.

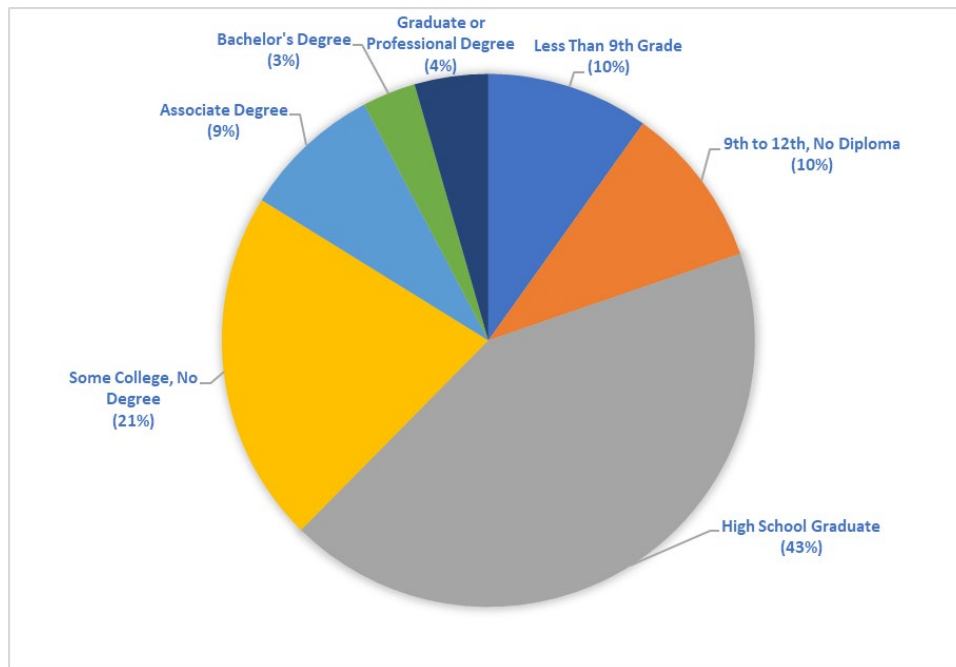


Figure 14. Educational Attainment of Residents Over 25
(Source U.S. Census Bureau, ACS Estimates)

5.4 Housing Characteristics

According to ACS 5-Year Estimates, the Town of Skyline has a total housing stock of 440 units. 363 (82.5%) of those units are considered to be occupied with 77 (7.5%) considered vacant. In 2017, 73.8% of the housing units in Skyline were occupied by their owner. This percentage declined from the previous year's rate of 76.3%. This percentage of owner-occupation is higher than the national average of 63.9%.

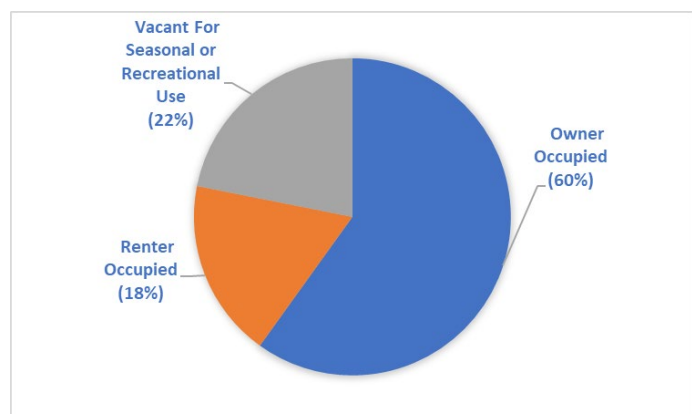


Figure 15. Owner / Renter Housing Occupation

Skyline's housing stock consists of primarily one-unit, detached homes with 258 single-family dwellings accounting for 64.8% of the total housing stock. Mobile homes make of the second-largest subset of dwellings with 146 units accounting for 33.2% of the Town's housing stock. There are seven one-unit attached homes in the Town (1.6% of housing stock) which are likely townhouse or duplexes.

Most of Skyline's housing stock was built in the 1970s and 1980s with additional residential growth continuing in the 1990s. According to 2017 ACS estimates, no new homes have been built within the Town limits since 2014 and 29 units were built prior to 1940.

The median property value in Skyline was \$64,500 in 2017, which is 0.281 times smaller than the national average of \$229,700. Between 2016 and 2017 the median property value increased from \$74,200 to \$64,500, a 13.1% decrease. The homeownership rate in Skyline is 73.8%, which is higher than the national average of 63.9%. The following chart displays owner-occupied housing units distributed between a series of property value buckets compared to the national averages for each bucket. In Skyline, the largest share of households has a property value in the \$40k - \$50k range.

Table 9. Age of Housing Stock		
Total Housing Units	440	--
Built 2014 or later	0	0.0%
Built 2010 to 2013	2	0.5%
Built 2000 to 2009	32	7.3%
Built 1990 to 1999	74	16.8%
Built 1980 to 1989	84	19.1%
Built 1970 to 1979	92	20.9%
Built 1960 to 1969	59	13.4%
Built 1950 to 1959	34	7.7%
Built 1940 to 1949	34	7.7%
Built 1939 or earlier	29	6.6%

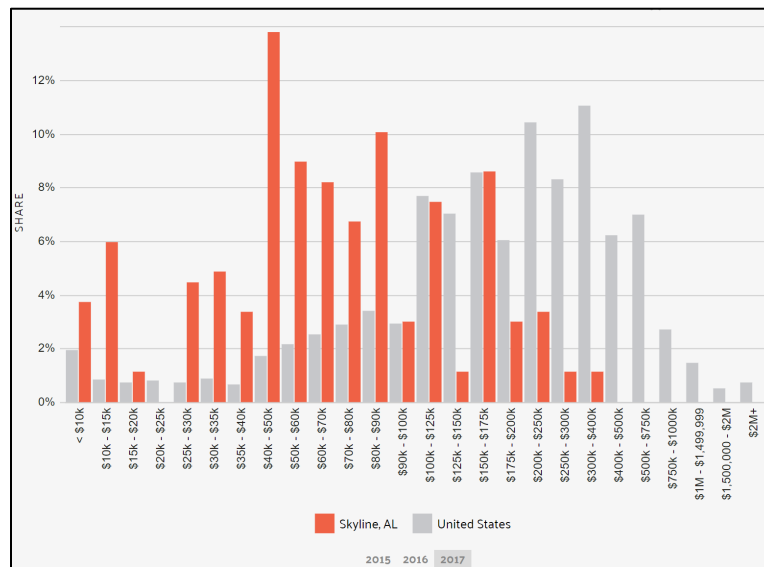


Figure 16. Skyline property values compared to national averages.
(Source U.S. Census Bureau, ACS Estimates)

5.5 Labor Force & Employment

Of the Town's population age 16 and over (762 residents), 402 are in the labor force as of the 2017 ACS estimates. Of those 402, 395 are in the civilian labor force and seven individuals are in the armed forces. Of the 395 residents in the civilian labor force, 348 (88.1%) were employed and 47 (11.9%) were unemployed according to 2017 estimates.

From 2016 to 2017, employment in Skyline declined at a rate of -13.6%, from 403 employees to 348 employees. The most common employment sectors for those who live in Skyline are manufacturing, health care & social assistance and retail trade.

The graph below depicts the breakdown of Skyline's labor force occupations as determined by the 2017 ACS. The occupation that accounts for the most employment within Skyline's labor force is "production, transportation, and material moving" at 27 percent, closely followed by "management, professional and related" at 23 percent. Sales and office employment accounts for 20 percent of the Town's labor force while 18 percent work in the service industry and 11 percent work in construction.

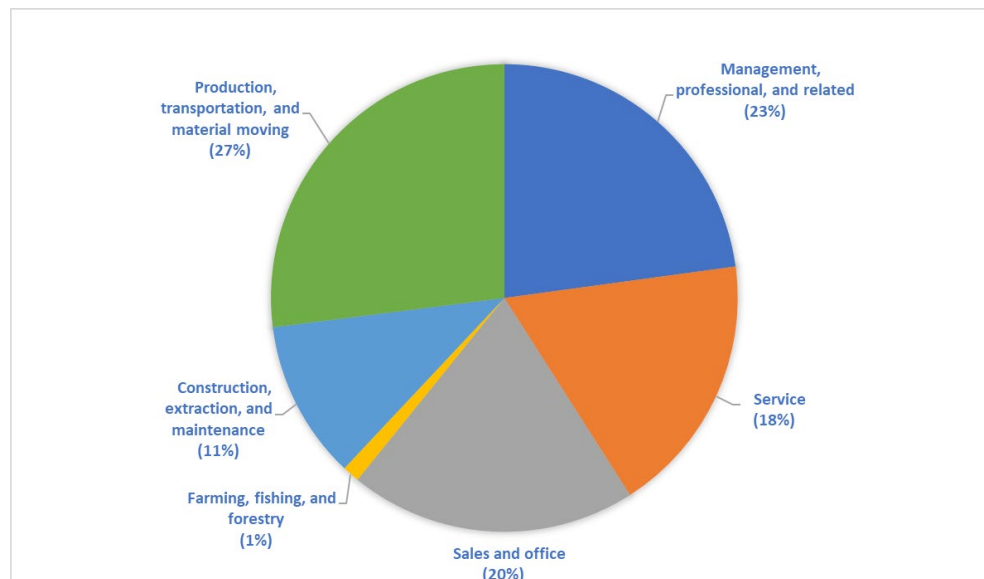


Figure 17. Skyline Labor Force Occupations

5.6 Household Income

Households in Skyline have a median annual income of \$35,313, which is less than the median annual income of \$61,937 across the entire United States. This is in comparison to Skyline's median household income of \$38,553 in 2016, which represents a decline of 8.5 percent for the Town's annual growth statistics. The graph below compares Skyline's median household

income to neighboring municipalities, Jackson County, the State of Alabama, and the United States as a whole.

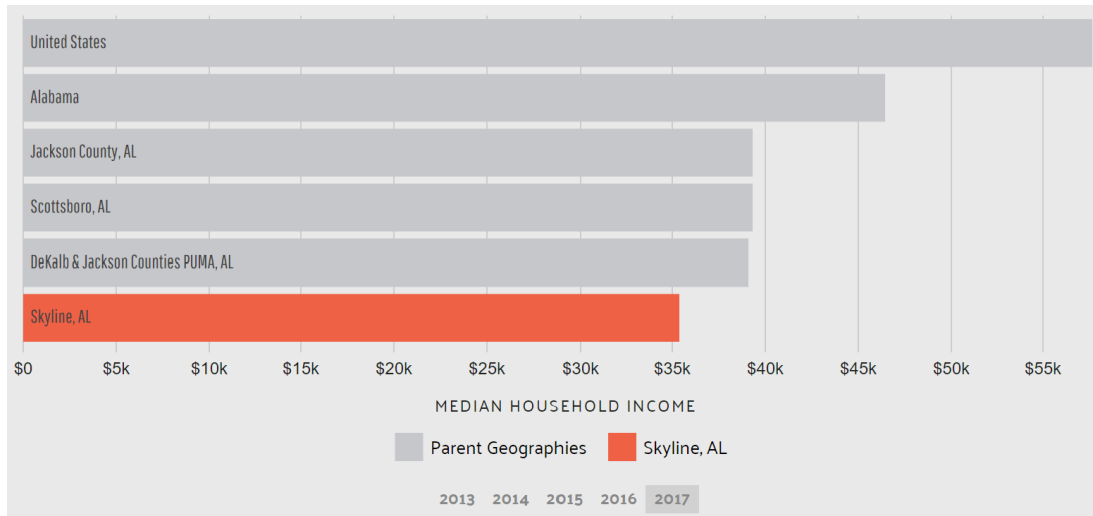


Figure 18. Median Household Income Comparison

26.4% of the population for whom poverty status is determined in Skyline (251 out of 950 people) live below the poverty line, a number that is higher than the national average of 13.1%. The largest demographic living in poverty are males age 6-11, followed by females age 35-44 and then females under the age of 5. The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who classifies as impoverished. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold then that family, and every individual in it, is considered to be living in poverty.

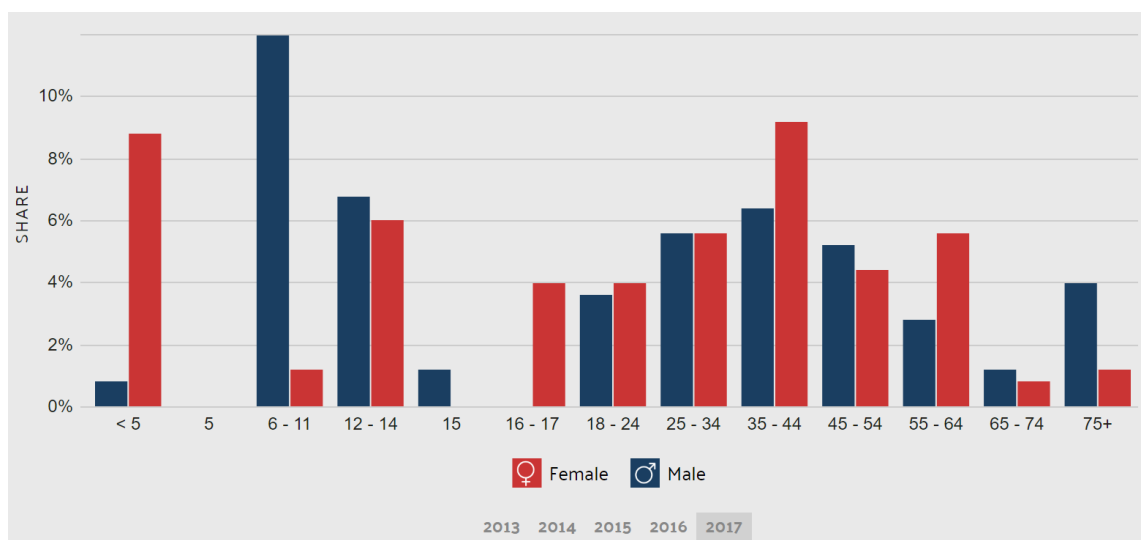


Figure 19. Poverty by Age & Gender

5.7 Commercial-Retail Gap/Surplus Analysis

In assessing the current economic market conditions for the Town of Skyline, a retail opportunity gap or surplus analysis was conducted to compare supply and demand to determine potential sources of revenue growth. An opportunity gap — also known as a leakage — appears when household expenditure levels for a specific geography are higher than the corresponding retail sales estimates. This difference signifies that resident households are meeting the available supply and supplementing their additional demand potential by going outside of their own geography. This is often the cause of a low revenue stream for the community. The opposite is true in the event of an opportunity surplus. That is, when the levels of household expenditures are lower than the retail sales estimates. In this case, local retailers are attracting residents of other areas into their stores, which could be an advantage to the town's revenue. This commercial/retail analysis has been done for a one-mile and a ten-mile radius of the Town of Skyline. The **Commercial-Retail Gap/Surplus Analysis** was conducted by the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development and can be found at **Appendix H**.

5.8 Leakages and Surpluses

The tables provided in Appendix H show the breakdown of the existing *and potential* retail sectors and subsectors in the Town of Skyline that have surpluses based on the supply of goods exceeding the demand. For the Town – and within one mile – the demand for retail trade in these subsectors satisfied only 34.5 percent of the potential to meet the demand for goods and services, leaving 65.5 percent of the demand unserved. Clearly there are many existing opportunities in various subsectors of the retail market within the Town of Skyline, as well as several miles surrounding the Town. Skyline, like many small rural places loses a substantial amount of potential retail sales revenue to neighboring municipalities from residents of and visitors to the area.

Chapter 6. Public Services & Capital Facilities

Basic public services and infrastructure shape the growth and development patterns of communities. Without services such as police and fire protection, basic sanitary sewer and healthy drinking water, and good roads, bridges, and schools, communities do not have the basic elements that are needed for a good quality of life. Without these elements communities either do not develop or they decline. One of the key challenges for Skyline and other small, rural towns is to find ways to improve and coordinate these services with increasingly restrained financial capability. In order to do this, Skyline must evaluate what services are essential and how to maintain and improve on the highest priorities. Realistically, no community can meet every demand, but through careful assessment and prioritization, Skyline can identify the most effective and beneficial improvements and undertake a plan of action to achieve these goals.

6.1 Land Use, Public Services, Capital Facilities, & Public Finance

There is a complex interrelationship between land use, public services, capital facilities and public finance. As land development occurs, greater public services such as police, schools, fire, and libraries are required by property owners. As capital facilities such as roads and water and sewer lines are expanded, more opportunities for land development are created.

Although a developer may be asked to share a portion of the development costs of public infrastructure, both public services and capital facilities require commitments of public finances to sustain. In this way the functions of local governments support local businesses and residences and simultaneously set the stage for future development.

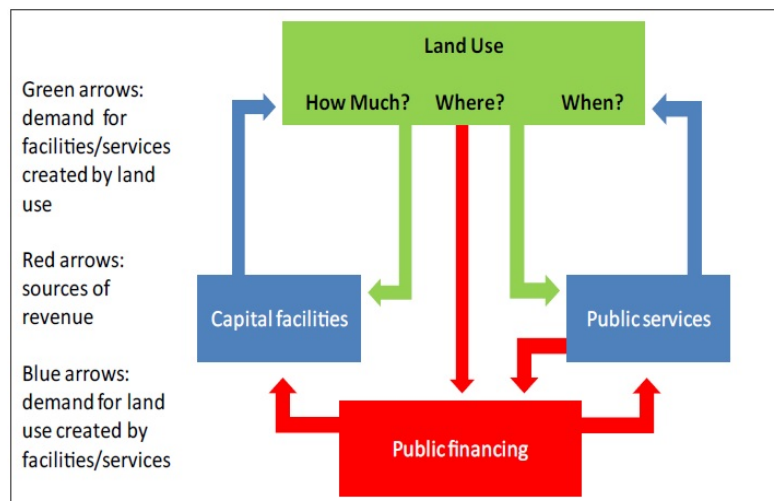


Figure 20. The relationship of land use, capital facilities, public services, and public financing.

The sections that follows inventories the public services and facilities that are provided by Skyline. A **Community Facilities Map** depicting the locations of all of Skyline's non-infrastructure (utilities) community facilities is included as **Appendix I** to this Plan.

6.2 Water Facilities

The Town of Skyline receives its water from Cumberland Mountain Water and Fire Protection Authority. The Authority is not a utility operated by the Town of Skyline, but a wholly separate entity. The Authority has one well, but it is not in operation. Consequently, the Authority buys its water from the Scottsboro Waterworks, Sewer, and Gas Board which uses treated water from the Tennessee River and Lake Guntersville Reservoir, storing the water in five elevated tanks, and then sells the water to customers on Cumberland Mountain.

The Authority serves approximately 1,800 customers in the Town of Skyline, both residential and commercial. Water rates are the same for residential and commercial customers at \$20.00 for the first 2000 gallons, plus \$7.00 per 1000 gallons over 2000, plus taxes. The Authority has a staff of three including a manager, maintenance, and clerk/secretary. The Authority's staff has from two to twenty-five years of experience and has attained Grade 2 Operators' certification. Cumberland Mountain Water Authority is currently operating at 65 percent of maximum water system delivery capacity. At this time, the Authority does not anticipate needing additional capacity for residents or commercial uses in the near future.

In 2011, the Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments (TARCOG) assisted the Cumberland Mountain Water Authority in developing a GIS based mapping system for the area they serve and they assumed custody of the Map data and printed maps that were provided at that time. All inquiries about their water system should be directed to the Cumberland Mountain Water Authority.

Currently, the Authority has the following equipment: back-hoe, trencher, dump truck, five water tanks ranging in capacity from 300,000 to 500,000 gallons, approximately 310 miles of water piping: (280 miles PVC, and 30 miles of Ductile iron), and all in good condition. There are no emergency connections to other adjoining water systems (beside Scottsboro). There are no current ADEM consent orders or violations.

6.3 Wastewater Facilities

The Town of Skyline does not have a town-wide sanitary sewage system. The predominant method for collecting and processing sewage and wastewater is through using septic systems. In order to meet the needs of a grocery store that operated for some time, a small “engineered” septic system was installed close to its location. However, that grocery store has subsequently closed, but not due to the septic system.

Concurrent to the development of this Comprehensive Plan, a Sewer Feasibility Study was also being conducted for Skyline, for both the current needs of the Town, and to accommodate additional capacity to also allow for future commercial, industrial, and residential use opportunities that the Town anticipates. Unfortunately, the outcome of the study determined it was not feasible at this time due to the geological (underlying rock) and economical (too expensive to build for the return) challenges. For more information refer to the Engineering Report for Skyline Sewer Feasibility Study prepared by LADD Environmental Consultants, Inc.

6.4 Natural Gas

The Town of Skyline currently does not have access to natural gas as a utility for home or commercial uses. Alternatively, there are two propane gas companies located in Skyline that can provide gas for the heating and cooking needs of the residents and businesses. Most residents rely on either electric or personal propane tanks to heat their homes.

6.5 Community Facilities

The Town of Skyline owns, operates, and maintains the following facilities:

Skyline Town Hall

The Town Hall is located along Alabama Highway 79 near the intersection of 79 and County Road 25. This facility serves as the Mayor and Town Clerk’s office, the Police Department headquarters, the Town’s courtroom and council chamber, and the U.S. Post Office Branch. The building a chamber/courtroom is also rented out for various community functions.



Figure 21. Skyline Town Hall

Skyline Community Center

The Skyline Community Center is located at the intersection of Alabama Highway 79 and County Road 17. This facility serves as the Senior Center, Food Pantry, and a space for community organizations and groups to meet and provide various programming. The building's meeting spaces are also rented out for private functions.



Figure 22. Skyline Community Center

Cumberland Mountain Park

Cumberland Mountain Park is located on Gizzard Point Road and provides opportunity for a variety of recreational activities and uses including baseball, softball, tennis, basketball, walking/hiking, and picnicking. The facilities maintained by the Town at Cumberland Mountain Park include two pavilions, restrooms and concession facilities, two baseball/softball fields, a combined basketball and tennis court, and parking lot.



Figure 23. Cumberland Mountain Park

Walking/Running Path

This facility is located near the intersection of Alabama Highway 79 and County Road 25. Currently, it is a curving paved path surrounded with grass, but has room and opportunity to become a very pleasant exercise destination. There are discussions of a playground area to be built within or alongside the path.

Skyline Cemetery

The Town Cemetery is located along the east side of Alabama Highway 79, north of Knight Road and south of County Road 107. The cemetery is maintained by the Town through occasional landscape preservation and mowing, picking up debris, and road repairs.

Town Roads

There are several locally owned roads, most of which are one-lane gravel or asphalt drives, that are maintained by the Town. The quality of local roads ranges from good to poor, depending on their location and the number of residents utilizing the road and frequency of use. Repairs are contracted out by the Town as Skyline does not have a road crew or the equipment to conduct road maintenance themselves.

6.6 Public Services

The Town of Skyline provides the following public services for Town residents:

Parks and Recreation

The Skyline Park Board is the Town entity responsible for all needs concerning park property including maintenance and repairs of Cumberland Mountain Park grounds, buildings, and equipment. The Board is also responsible for scheduling the athletic activities, games, and other park and recreation events. Currently, the Park Board is led by Clint Shelton and Maggie Warren.

Regular park maintenance and repairs are a challenge for the Board to keep up with. Currently there is a need for park repairs and additional modernization in the amount of \$80,000. The Board is also responsible for the pedestrian walking track which the Town would like to improve and renovate to include a playground.

Police Department

The Skyline Police Department is comprised of one Chief of Police with over 22 years of experience and multiple certifications. The Police Department in total consists of 1.5 full-time officers and covers the Town limits which are also Skyline's police jurisdiction. The Department has indicated a need of another full-time officer. There is also need for

Table 10.	
Skyline Crime Reports (2014 – 2015)	
Thefts	24
Burglary	6
Harassment	9
Domestic Violence	8
Criminal Mischief	5
Criminal Trespass	4
Arrests for DUI	10
Public Intoxication	2
Pistol Without a Permit	2
Illegal Possession of Alcohol	4
Fleeing to Elude	3
Controlled Substance	10
Warrants	51

funding to support better training classes and processing needs including a better digital camera system and fingerprinting kit. The Police Department has two vehicles: (1) a 2010 Chevrolet Caprice in good condition but out of warranty, and (2) a 2010 Chevrolet Tahoe, still in excellent condition and still within warranty.

Fire Department

The Town of Skyline does not have a Town-owned and operated fire department. Instead, the Town is served with firefighting services by the Skyline Volunteer Fire Department (SVFD), an independent organization. While the SVFD is independent from the Town government, Skyline provides funds to support the SVFD. The SVFD is served by Fire Chief Tommy Cook and Assistant Fire Chief Jeremy Bullock.

Emergency Services

The Town of Skyline does not operate an Ambulance or Emergency Medical Technician service. Residents and Town leadership agree that some form of ambulance or emergency service should be present on Cumberland Mountain to serve the population of Skyline and of the other communities that exist there.

Solid Waste/Garbage Removal

Garbage collection is provided by the Jackson County Department of Sanitation. The Town does not play a role in solid waste or garbage removal and has no capacity to do so.

Chapter 7. Plan Implementation

7.1 Strategic Recommendations

The following strategic recommendations are offered as ideas for programs and activities that should be initiated in order to begin implementing the Skyline's Comprehensive Plan. This list is by no means exhaustive and should be re-evaluated and modified periodically to ensure its effectiveness.

Goal 1: Land Use

Objective 1: Create, Adopt, and Enforce Development Codes.

Municipalities have a variety of tools at their disposal for guiding orderly future growth and development. They include zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, building codes, as well as ordinances and procedures dealing with eradication of junk and debris on private property, the repair/renovation or removal of derelict structures, and other community appearance and safety standards. Although each of these entails a certain cost to both the town and the developer, the result is a higher quality of development that retains its value for longer and provides a higher return on public and private investments over time.

Ideas for Implementation:

Orderly and aesthetically pleasing growth can be facilitated through local ordinances. Skyline should develop zoning ordinances for the Town that ensures that the regulations promote its desired type of development. As a starting point, a Euclidean zoning ordinance system is a defined process of dividing a town into areas in which specific uses of land are permitted. Land uses are divided into residential, commercial, and industrial areas, referred to as zoning districts. It is a predictable model for dividing land use patterns, and often used as an initial type of zoning system for towns just beginning to adopt land use control laws.

However, the Euclidean, zoning ordinance system has limitations, especially in communities that wish to leverage particularly unique or historical appearances. In such cases, form-based development codes may be preferable. Form-based code is a way to regulate

development that controls building form first and building use second, with the purpose of achieving a particular type of “place” or built environment based on a community vision.

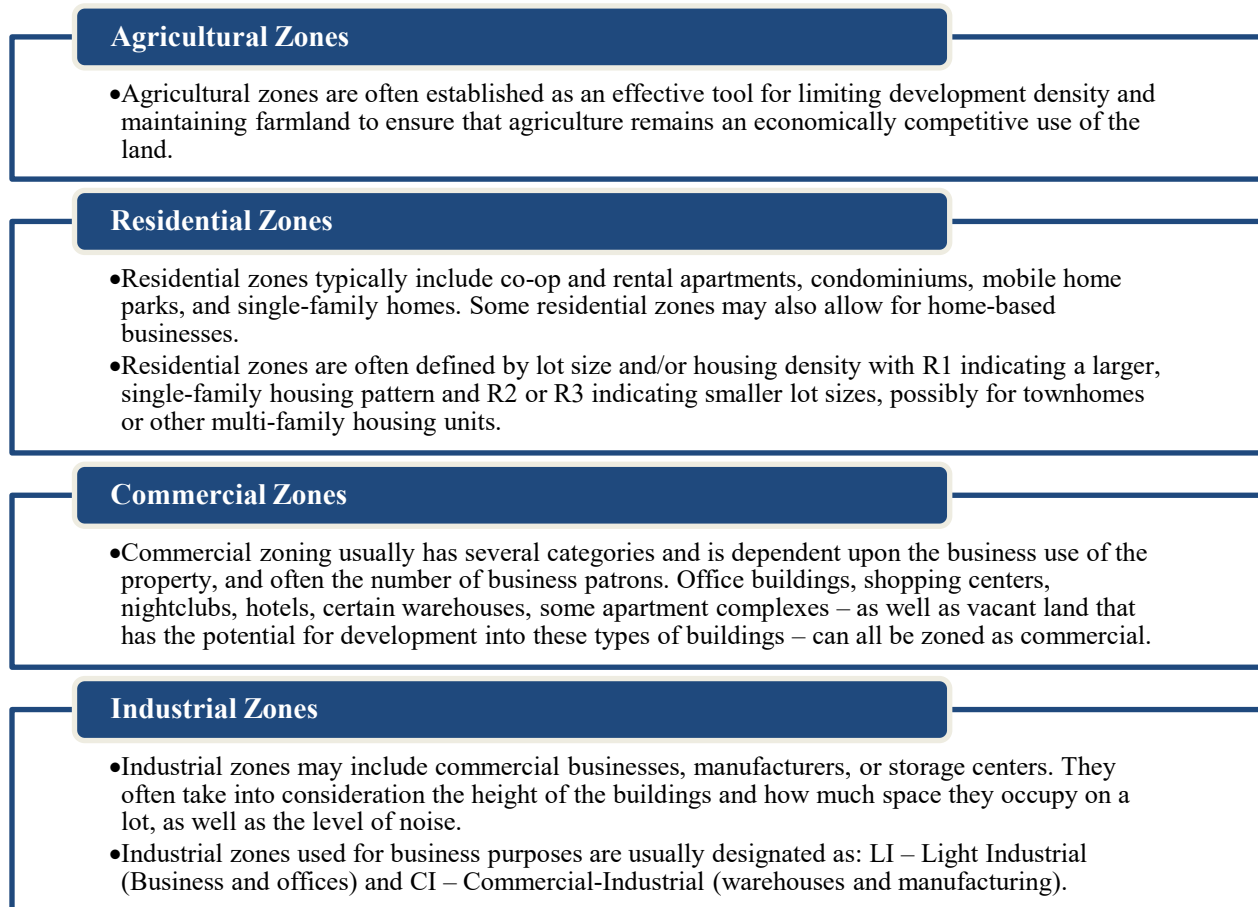


Figure 24. Zoning Ordinance Definitions

Skyline should develop and adopt various regulations pertaining to the subdivision of land and development thereof, landscaping, junk debris, and weeds among others that will improve the visual appearance of the Town. A Planning Commission should also be established to assist with reviewing new developments and ensuring orderly growth and public services.

Goal 2: Economic Development

Objective 2: Foster Economic Development Activities.

The retail environment in Skyline offers several opportunities for improving the quality and quantity of goods and services available and sold locally. Skyline residents generate a steady demand for many products that are not available in the local market area. It is important that the residents of Skyline understand the benefits of purchasing goods and services in the local market

area and they need to be made aware that they must support local businesses in order to have effective public services and greater variety in the local marketplace.

Ideas for Implementation:

An organization, such as a retail recruitment or business development committee, should be established to develop an economic development and marketing plan for the community. This organization will be beneficial to both educate the town and area residents to the importance of buying locally, and also to attract a mixture of commercial retail, service businesses, and industrial enterprises, which will create job opportunities, increase local revenues, and provide more convenient shopping outlets.

This organization will also develop marketing materials based on local assets, and other regional attractions. It will be their job to develop and distribute materials such as full color brochures and maps of the area at visitor kiosks, at the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, and the tourism office. Other materials would be generated to market the town for economic and retail development to local merchants, successful regional establishments, and outside vendors such as national chains in order to discuss market opportunities in Skyline as a location for future expansions. The **Skyline Commercial-Retail Market Gap Analysis** included as **Appendix H** provides information to assist with these efforts.

Economic Development Strategies:

The following strategies have been identified as important components of community economic development. Many of these strategies were developed and discussed by the Town participants during the comprehensive planning process. Both the University of Alabama's Center for Economic Development and Auburn University's Economic Development Institute offer expertise in these areas and can be contacted for assistance.

Planning for Economic Development.

- The community has an up-to-date, Comprehensive Economic Development Plan (either separately or as part of the strategic plan). The plan addresses business retention, expansion and recruitment; commercial, retail and small business development; as well as tourism and retiree attraction.
- The plan identifies and prioritizes the areas of development that best fit local needs and wants.

- The economic development plan includes an analysis of the local economy—identifying strengths, potential opportunities, and the types of businesses that best fit the community.
- The plan is fully supported by community leaders involved with economic development.

Infrastructure Improvements.

- Local infrastructure (electricity, natural gas, water and sewer, rail, etc.) is adequate to support the selected business targets.
- The community is connected to the global economy through high-speed internet.
- The community has a quality site that is suitable for desired business targets, free of easements and/or encumbrances, and available at a fair market price.

Economic Development Organization Development.

- The community (or county) has an economic development or industrial development authority/board/individual responsible for business recruitment.
- A single point of contact is identified and designated for all economic development activities.
- The organization has a structured and trained prospect sales team.
- The staff (or officers) of the development organization regularly participates in state professional association activities.

Information and Marketing.

- The economic development organization maintains current, relevant information about the community and can produce quality promotional information easily.
- Available properties are monitored, maintained, and listed in the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA) database, and updated regularly.
- The organization/individual effectively markets the community to appropriate businesses targets and maintains regular contact with state officials and other economic development professionals.
- The community/county hosts a website on the Internet with information appropriate to its targets.

Supporting and Strengthening Existing Businesses.

The community has a formal and ongoing business retention and expansion program that includes:

- Regular visits to business owners and managers,
- A process for addressing problems identified by industry leaders,
- An annual industrial and commercial recognition event,
- A survey of labor wages and fringe benefits, and
- Workforce education and training programs.

Commercial/Retail Business Development and Tourism.

- The community/county has an active Chamber of Commerce or Business Alliance with at least a paid part-time executive.
- The community maintains a comprehensive inventory of retail, commercial, and service properties, including spaces that formerly housed retail or commercial entities and those with that potential.
- The historic commercial core is maintained and provides an area for community and tourism events.
- Consider developing a local farmers market with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). The CSA supports and promotes a “Buy Locally Grown Food” campaign.

Goal 3: Infrastructure Improvements

Objective 3: Increase, expand, and upgrade sewage availability throughout Town.

Given the nature of the geology and soils in the Town of Skyline, extensive septic systems do not provide adequate, long-term wastewater treatment for residences and businesses within the town limits. Upgrading and expanding the existing and /or new wastewater treatment is an essential need for the future residential and commercial growth of the Town of Skyline. The existing individual septic systems *may* provide adequate septic sewage service to most of the residential properties, however, the commercial capacity in the Town is inadequate. Future growth in any residential or business additions will require upgrades in the sewage system within Skyline.

Ideas for Implementation:

In conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan, a Sewer Feasibility Study for the Town of Skyline was completed by LADD Engineering Associates, Inc. The Town should thoroughly review the assessments made in that study and determine whether to move forward with proposed implementation of sewer lines in certain areas of the Town if feasible.

7.2 Plan Implementation

The Skyline Comprehensive Plan will be implemented with the assistance and support of local government, civic, and business organizations working together to achieve the vision set forth in the plan. The vision, developed through careful analysis of existing conditions and with the input and involvement of the Skyline public, can be strategically implemented but its success depends largely on the willingness of local leaders in both public and private roles to accept the recommendations of the Plan and cooperate toward its implementation. To this end, the Comprehensive Plan has been adopted by the Town of Skyline as an official guide to future development.

The Plan will be used to promote the Town's vision to a variety of people including land developers, civic organizations, and business. It will also be used to coordinate activities and actions taken in Skyline by these groups. Only through such coordination can implementation become a reality and the benefits of the community's goals and vision begin to accrue to citizens and visitors. The following sections summarize the roles and responsibilities of these various groups and outlines a strategy for accomplishing many of the goals established in the plan.

7.3 Roles & Responsibilities

A variety of agencies and organizations are responsible for coordinating the implementation of key objectives and priorities identified in the Comprehensive Plan. The Skyline Town Council will retain primary responsibility for reviewing and recommending actions concerning development within the Town. In addition, commercial, residential, and industrial developers; local, state, and county government; and other community organizations, groups, and committed citizens will play decisive roles in Skyline's development. Collectively, the choices and investments that are made will shape the community. Finally, ongoing education and outreach is necessary to educate the public and members of the local government, including elected officials, administrative staff and appointed officials, as to the role of these entities in the development process.

Skyline Town Council

The Town Council plays a central role in the process of community development through its zoning authority, oversight of other municipal ordinances, and control of public budgeting. The

Council may determine land uses through zoning, may direct building construction through building codes, and may direct public investment toward the priorities established in the plan, including control over the acceptance of streets and other public utilities. The use of these tools should be guided by the values embodied in the Comprehensive Plan above other considerations.

Implementation Tools: Legislative Authority (Zoning Ordinance, Municipal Ordinances, Building and Housing Codes, Capital Improvements Budget, General Police Powers), Public Interaction

Office of the Mayor

The Mayor of Skyline is the Town's chief executive, responsible for maintaining the consistent operation of Town departments. Additionally, the Mayor also serves as the Town's representative to the public, various organizations and individuals, and other local, state and federal government entities. In each of these roles, the Mayor plays a key role in the implementation of the plan by representing the plan recommendations, and the community values embodied by these, in day-to-day Town operations, legislative initiatives, and interactions with others.

Implementation Tools: Executive Authority, Public Interaction

Town Staff and Administrators

These individuals are at the heart of plan implementation by overseeing the day-to-day tasks of running the Town's services. Their decisions regarding the proper course of action sustain Town operations, which are essential to the quality of life of citizens. Their interactions with members of the public provide an opportunity to educate the community regarding the elements of the plan and an opportunity for ongoing public feedback concerning the Town's expressed goals and objectives.

Implementation Tools: Enforcement Authority, Frequent Public Interaction, Strong Advisory Role

Zoning Board of Adjustments

The Zoning Board of Adjustment plays a limited but very important role in the development process by its powers of dispute resolution, approval of conditional uses, and ability

to grant variances under narrowly defined circumstances. Understanding the authority of the Zoning Board of Adjustments involves understanding the source and limitations of ZBA authority. Ongoing education and outreach is necessary to educate the public and the members of the Board, as well as other officials, as to these features of the ZBA.

Implementation Tools: Dispute Resolution, Approval of Conditional Uses, Variances

Planning Commission

Although Skyline has not established a Planning Commission, this should be strongly considered in the future. The Commission can play an integral role in the development process through its oversight of land development. The Commission has sole responsibility for enforcing subdivision regulations, which require development to proceed in accordance with standards and conditions and requirements conducive to orderly, efficient growth. The Commission also plays an important advisory role, which should not be overlooked. Although not empowered with extensive regulatory authority outside of subdivision, the Commission's advisory role is a powerful tool for coordinating interests and communicating community values. Within the community, no other entity is as strongly charged with representing the community vision and the recommendations and requirements of the Plan to the public.

Implementation Tools: Ability to Plan, Subdivision Regulations, Project Development & Grant Writing, Recommendation to Town Council, Strong Advisory Role

Civic Organizations and Community Institutions

These organizations include local volunteer and community groups, as well as local institutions such as libraries, churches, and volunteer fire departments. Much of the spirit of community service of the community is invested in these groups, which to a great degree embody the soul of the Town of Skyline. It is vital that these groups and organizations be connected to the process of community development and that the shared community values that they represent are preserved in the physical, social and economic environment of the town.

Implementation Tools: Constituency/ Membership, Public Visibility, Public Service and Volunteer Activities, Madison County Leadership Program.

Business Development Organization(s)

Local business organizations are critical planning entities that are central to the economic landscape of the community. These groups represent those that have the primary responsibility for expanding access to commercial goods and services in the local area. They can organize and coordinate resources for leadership training and education and their input should be critical to local government's community development programs.

Implementation Tools: Strong Advisory Role, Constituency/Membership, High Public Profile, External Presence and Representation

Local Industrial Development Authority

A local Economic Development Authority/County Chamber of Commerce is another group that benefits from an understanding of the values embodied in the Comprehensive Plan because of its dedication to improving the economic opportunities of the region. The Town of Skyline shares these valuable economic development goals.

Implementation Tools: High Public Profile, External Presence and Representation, Economic Development Finance

7.4 Implementation Timeline

The Skyline Comprehensive Plan contains goals that should be advanced by each of the development decisions the Town of Skyline makes in coming years. Once the Plan is formally adopted, the Town should determine which of the stated goals and priorities require immediate attention and which will require a longer-term approach. Doing so will enable the Town to develop an implementation timeline that best suits the needs of Skyline. As new development takes place or progress is made on certain priorities, other actions and objectives may shift making the implementation of this Plan a fluid process.

To provide the Town with pre-determined deadlines would be doing Skyline a disservice as most of the identified priorities are large scale, long term, economic development and future growth-focused goals. This Plan should be used as a foundational resource to refer to as Town boundary change, new development takes place, and other investments occur. In the immediate term, the Town should consider establishing a formal Planning Commission to build off this planning process and evaluate the need to develop and adopt formal zoning codes.

Skyline Comprehensive Plan Appendices

Appendix A. Skyline Vicinity Map

Appendix B. Community Survey Results

Appendix C. SWOT Analysis Findings

Appendix D. Topographic Map

Appendix E. Soil Analysis Maps

Appendix F. Farmland Classification Map

Appendix G. Existing Land Use Map

Appendix H. Commercial-Retail Gap/Surplus Analysis

Appendix I. Community Facilities Map

Appendix J. Grant and Loan Guide