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Community Profile

INTRODUCTION

Original natives of the Dothan area were tribes of the Alabama and Creek Indian Nations. During the later years of the 1700's until the early 1800's, wagons carrying pioneers and their belongings stopped at a spot known as 'Poplar Head'. It was a resting spot on a trail which the early pioneers took from as far away as Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; and Jacksonville, Florida toward the final settling locations in the west. Most of those who stopped there did so to rest their teams, repair their wagons and secure their loads. They considered the area and its sandy soil, which was beneficial to the thick pine forests of the area, but unsuitable for farming and continued on their way once rested.

Poplar Head, a site where an underground spring welled up and encircled by poplar trees, was the site where ancient Indian tribes met. It was used many times as a meeting place and campground by members of the Creek Confederacy. In the 1830's, a fort existed on the Barber Plantation, which lay 12 miles east of Poplar Head. Settlers of Poplar Head as well as surrounding towns and hamlets fled to the safety of the fort when threatened by Indians. The fort disappeared soon after the Indian wars in Alabama ended sometime during the 1840's.

By 1885, the hamlet of Poplar Head had grown into a village. Residents realized they needed to develop a form of government and create a form of law enforcement as well. On November 11, 1885 the people of Poplar Head voted to incorporate and rename the town to Dothan to avoid confusion with another town in Alabama with a post office known as 'Poplar Head'. The

name 'Dothan' was selected after a town mentioned in Genesis 37:17 of the Bible – "For I heard them say, let us go to Dothan."

One of the blessings that this area of Alabama received, although it was deemed a tragedy when it occurred, was an infestation of boll weevil that devastated the cotton crop in the 1930's. While it brought economic strife, it also taught the farmers to diversify. Recognizing the fallacy in having only one type of crop, local farmers began planting peanuts. It is said that almost 1/2 of all peanuts grown nation-wide are grown within 100 miles of Dothan. In 1938, the first Peanut Festival was held. The Festival has become an annual event during the fall of the year in which local peanut growers are honored and the area celebrates another harvest.

DOTHAN AS A TRADE CENTER

As the largest city for 80 miles in either direction, Dothan serves as the center of a trade area. According to "US News and World Report" in 2006, Dothan was ranked #1 as the cheapest city in which to live in the United States due to its low tax base. Property tax on land is controlled by the State Constitution and requires a state-wide positive referendum for any rate adjustment. Local sales taxes are the best avenue for Alabama municipalities to raise revenue.

Dothan is a retail trade center, industrial center, home to two regional hospitals, and an airport offering connections through Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. Dothan finds itself positioned to be the benefactor of an economic boom attributed to the construction of a new regional airport located 50 miles south in the panhandle city of Panama City, Florida, a new entertainment destination "Country Crossing", in south Houston County, and the many spin off industries, services and residential activities that are needed to support them.

EDUCATION

The City of Dothan operates a public school district offering K-12 classes leading to either a conventional diploma or a certificate of trade education. The district operates 10 elementary, four middle, and two high schools in the system. In addition to the public school system there are several private schools offering K-12 classes as well as a County-wide school

district in Houston County, as well as Dale and Henry Counties for those children who live in the unincorporated areas of these counties.

Wallace Community College is a two-year state college that offers Associate degrees, certificates and GED classes. The 2009-2010 academic year for Wallace saw one of its largest enrollment periods since its creation with a greater enrollment projected for the 2010-2011 academic year.

Troy University-Dothan campus offers Associate, Bachelor and Master degrees during on-site day and evening classes as well as distant learning classes. The local campus is part of the Troy University world-wide college strategy which is based in Troy, Alabama. Additionally, Troy University offers area high school students who qualify the opportunity to take certain classes under a unique dual-enrollment program called "Accelerate". Held completely on-line at the student's high school and during normal school hours the program affords the student the ability to take college-level classes and, upon receiving a passing grade, earn college credit as well as the necessary high school credit to graduate for the classes taken and passed. In addition, Troy University, Dothan Campus, is part of the "One Great University" with over 40,000 students in the southeastern United States, every U. S. Air Force Base in the world, and China.

Huntingdon College, a private Methodist college based in Montgomery, Alabama offers a one-year degree completion program for adults at the Troy-Dothan campus. In addition to the state-supported colleges, there are a number of private colleges and technical schools in the area. Many opportunities for continued education are found within the area for those who seek it.

In 2000, 78.5% of the population graduated from high school or higher. Of these, 23% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

ECONOMY

The Dothan area economy includes agriculture, aerospace, distribution, entertainment, retail, medical, and advanced technology. Fort Rucker, a large U.S. Army installation currently the home of Army Aviation is located less than 20 miles from Dothan. In documentation prepared for the initiation of the Joint Land Use Study for Fort Rucker and it environs, military and civilian payroll plus contracts, PX/Commissary/Non-appropriated funds, salaries and purchases, and major construction projects totaled over $1 Billion.

The 2000 Census records the civilian labor force as 27,402 or 61% of the population, which is slightly below national averages. The mean travel time to work was reported at almost 18 minutes. The median household income in 1999 dollars

was $35,000, which is less than the national average of almost $42,000. The median family income in Dothan (also in 1999 dollars) was $45,025, which is also less that the U.S. average ($50,046) and the per capita income was $20,539, very near the national average of $21,587. In addition, 12.7% of the families in Dothan are below the poverty level as compared to 9.2% nationally and 15.6% of individuals are below the poverty level compared to 12.4% nationally.

POPULATION

Population statistics show that between 1980 and 2000, Dothan grew 18.5% from 48,750 to 57,737; and Houston County grew 19% during the same period from 74,632 to 88,787. In the year 2000, 65% of the population in Houston County resided in the City of Dothan. The 2007 estimate for Dothan is 65,447, an increase of a little more than 13% since 2000. Likewise, the 2007 estimate for Houston County is 97,171, an increase of 9.4%. Slightly more than 67% of the County population resides in the City. Between 2000 and 2005, Dothan became the fourth fastest growing city within the State of Alabama trailing behind the larger metropolitan areas of Huntsville, Birmingham and Montgomery. Our growth rate is a healthy 1.85% per year which makes Dothan a prime location for an individual or family looking for city conveniences and services, but with a small town atmosphere.

Permitting statistics for Dothan is reflective of that growth. During the period of 1996 through 2006, there were 4,300 new residential lots recorded in Dothan and 4,049 new residential building permits issued for an average of 391 residential lots recorded and 368 new residential permits each year for the 11-year period. During the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2003 estimate period, 1,205 new residential lots were recorded at an average of 301 new lots each year in the four-year period; and there were 1,266 new residential construction permits issued for an average of 317 permits each year during the four-year period.

The 2000 Census reported that the population of the City is approximately 47% female and 53% male with a median age of slightly more than 37 years. Seventy-five (75%) percent of the population was between the ages of 18 and 65 and racial composition was approximately 2/3 white, 1/3 minority. The single largest minority group (30%) is African American.

Housing statistics in 2000 reveal additional information about our community. The average family size is 2.94 persons, which is less than the national average of 3.14. The average household size is 2.39, which is also less than the national average of 2.59. In 2000, there were 25,920 housing units counted with 91.4% of them occupied, which is very close to the 91% national average. Approximately 63% of the housing units in Dothan were owner occupied and 8.6% of the housing units were vacant. The median value in 2000 dollars was $86,800, which was below the national average of $119,600.

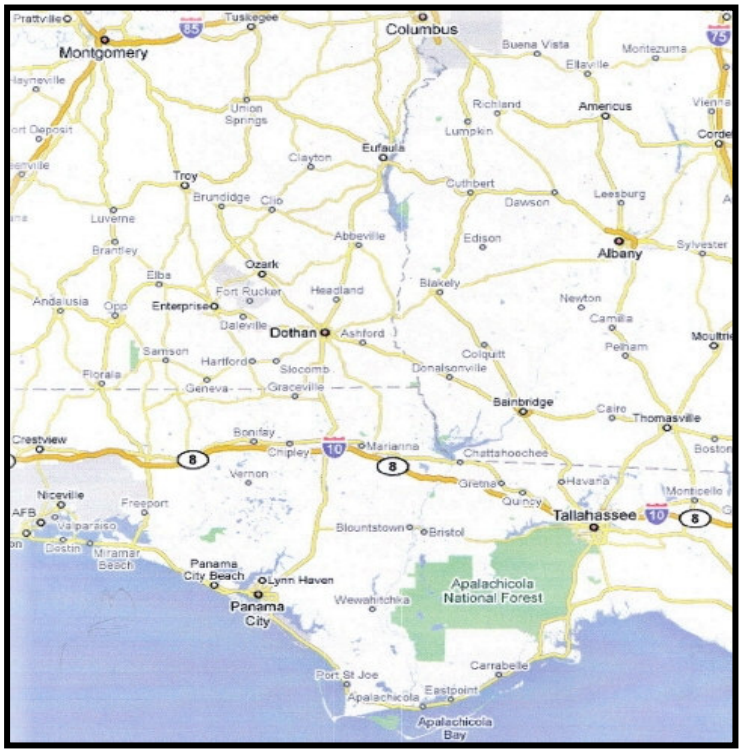
The growth in Dothan is not limited only to residential development. In 2007, the Dothan Pavilion, a commercial development containing major retailers such as Kohl's; Target; Ross; Best Buy; Bed, Bath and Beyond; Dick's Sporting Goods; Barnes and Noble Booksellers; Lowe's, a home improvement store; and other smaller retailers as well as several restaurants broke ground and were operating prior to the Christmas Season. Other commercial developments with hotels, restaurants, offices and other commercial venues also opened their doors in 2007.

As mentioned above, between 2000 and 2005, Dothan became the fourth fastest growing city within the State of Alabama. Several things contribute to its growth. Dothan is a retail trade center, industrial center, home to two regional hospitals, an airport offering connections through Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia to any port in the world, and is the site of Troy University, Dothan Campus, which is part of the "One Great University" with over 40,000 students in the southeastern United States, every U. S. Air Force Base in the world, and China. Another institute of higher learning found in Dothan is the highly acclaimed Wallace Community College as well.

Although our growth is significant, Dothan is still a prime location for an individual or family looking for small town living, separate from the Montgomery Metro area yet having easy access to major employment centers such as Montgomery or Tallahassee, Florida.

REGIONAL POSITION

The City of Dothan is located in the northwest portion of Houston County, approximately 90 miles from Montgomery, Alabama, the state's capitol. Dothan is also approximately 90 miles northwest of the capitol of the state of Florida, Tallahassee, and 90 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico and Panama City, Florida. The location map below shows Dothan's relative position in the region.



Dothan also offers an attractive location for retirees because of its relative low cost of living and inherent quality of life. As shown on the illustration below, Dothan lies less than 90 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. This allows residents the opportunity to spend a leisurely day on some of Florida's finest white sand beaches in Panama City, Panama City Beach or Destin. In addition, Lake

Eufaula is less than a one hour drive north of Dothan and Lake Seminole lies approximately the same distance to the southeast. Both lakes offer quality water recreational sports opportunities and are each acclaimed spots for bass fishing.

Dothan boasts four golf courses, one of which is part of the nationally-recognized Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. For those who enjoy the outdoors, Dothan's location less than 20 miles from Florida and a bit farther to Georgia offer easy access to several State of Alabama, Florida and Georgia State Parks where guests may camp, picnic, swim, hike, bike, and fish in season.

Dothan is situated less than 40 miles to the main campus of Troy University in Troy, Alabama, less than two hours from Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama, and less than a two hour drive from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. As previously mentioned, Troy University operates a campus in Dothan which offers Associate, Bachelor and Master degrees.