

EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

Land Use and Development

February 28, 2019

This document represents part of the strategic analysis for the Tuscaloosa Comprehensive Plan. It covers land use topics including planning context, growth history, existing use and character, development capacity, natural resources, and historic preservation. It is based on review of past plans, recent studies, analysis of readily-available data and interviews with city staff and stakeholder focus groups.

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1. HIGHLIGHTS

GROWTH TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

- **There is room to grow in terms of land** both within existing city limits and outside of the city. There is a large amount of potentially developable land within the city limits. In terms of raw acreage, there is sufficient land to accommodate 10 years of projected population growth through infill development and new development on the city's edge without expanding the city limits.
- **There is no annexation strategy or defined priority growth areas** (set by city policy). While the amount of land annexed into Tuscaloosa over the past decade is lower than in prior decades, the city reviews and approves subdivisions in its Planning Jurisdiction outside of the city limits. Much of the land outside the city limits is not served by wastewater infrastructure and is therefore limited to very low density development. However, the city does not have a policy about priority growth areas to assess requests for annexation, proposed new subdivisions, or plans for expansion of water and wastewater infrastructure.
- **Most of the recent residential growth has been concentrated in two areas.** Since 2012, the vast majority of residential new construction has been either in the area between Downtown and the University of Alabama, or north of the Black Warrior River around Lake Tuscaloosa. As mentioned in the 5-year Affordable Housing Study, recent residential growth has focused on students and the high-end of the market. Commercial growth has focused in Downtown and along McFarland Blvd.
- **Redevelopment in other areas has been slow.** Since the 2011 tornado, there is a large amount of vacant land within the impacted areas including Alberta and Forest Lake. Redevelopment in these areas has been much slower than anticipated. Additionally, there are redevelopment opportunities in other older neighborhoods such as West Tuscaloosa and older commercial centers and corridors such as Skyland Blvd.
- **There are utility capacity concerns** in terms of wastewater in the areas that have been seeing most growth. In the University Area, there are concerns that sewer infrastructure is not able to accommodate continued development without major improvements. There are also sewer capacity concerns north of the river.
- **There are limited protections for potential environmentally sensitive land.** The city's previous plans have emphasized the importance of protecting natural resources. Continued development in the watershed of Lake Tuscaloosa (the drinking water source for the region) warrants scrutiny on the city's environmental protections and monitoring. The city has been successful at limiting stormwater runoff and sewer overflows citywide by encouraging low impact development practices. Yet, the city has few restrictions on the development of flood-prone land and steep slopes. There are also limited requirements for setting aside open space in new subdivisions or redevelopment areas.

POTENTIAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Overall

- **Integrating more housing types.** As mentioned in the 5-year Affordable Housing Study and in other past plans, there is a need to encourage housing at a broader range of price points. There are opportunities to revitalize existing housing or introduce new housing types in new subdivisions or potentially within existing neighborhoods.
- **Refining the approach to mixed use development.** Past plans have supported the idea of encouraging mixed use development — places that integrate options to live, work, and shop in a compact area or within the same building. This development type is in high demand in many communities across the country. However, beyond the Downtown area, there is very little of this development in Tuscaloosa today. The Comprehensive Plan should define the characteristics of this type of development and where it should be encouraged.
- **Ensuring fiscally beneficial development.** The city's impact fee structure or other financing mechanisms may need to be considered relative to anticipated the costs of infrastructure improvements.
- **Protect environmentally sensitive land.** The city should consider preserving flood-prone land and steep slope areas as open space, particularly in the watershed of Lake Tuscaloosa.

Opportunities in specific areas

- **Continued redevelopment in the campus area neighborhoods.** There is a need to define the preferred character and density of development that can be supported by existing infrastructure or what infrastructure improvements are needed to support desired growth. With total student growth slowing, new development is expected to draw students away from other living options in the university area or elsewhere.
- **Growth in the area surrounding Lake Tuscaloosa.** There is a need to define where growth in this area should be encouraged, what potentially developable land should be preserved, and the preferred character and other attributes of development. Growth may include Infrastructure needs and should be determined based on the development vision for this area.
- **Existing neighborhoods.** There is a need to encourage revitalization within the city's older neighborhoods including West Tuscaloosa, and those impacted by the 2011 tornado such as Alberta.
- **Corridors and gateways.** Encouraging redevelopment of the city's commercial areas and major gateways such as McFarland, Skyland, 15th, University, MLK, etc.
- **Unique redevelopment sites.** There are large sites such as the former Country Club in West Tuscaloosa, University Mall, and McFarland Mall that are potential opportunities for mixed use redevelopment.

2. CONTEXT

TUSCALOOSA AS PART OF A REGION

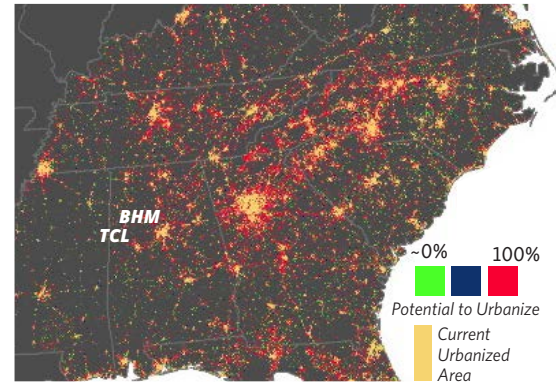
Tuscaloosa sits at the edge of a larger, dynamic mega-region centered in Atlanta, Georgia. Connected along the I-20 and I-85 corridors, this Birmingham-Atlanta-Greensville-Charlotte region has grown by millions of people and accounts for more than a trillion dollars in economic output. Pictured to the right, this development is predicted to continue deep into the 21st century.

Tuscaloosa is the center of the West Alabama region yet is only an hour's drive to the State's largest city. Tuscaloosa is the center of one of the State's 12 regional councils. The West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC), which includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa counties, coordinates region-wide projects and services, promotes cooperation among the local governments, and carries out state and federal programs on a regional basis. Tuscaloosa is well connected to the region by Interstate 20/59 and is roughly an hour's drive to Birmingham—the heart of a metro area of over 1.1 million people. This proximity to Birmingham impacts commuting patterns, economic development, and other conditions in the City.

Tuscaloosa is a growing city in a slow-growth State. Since 2000 and according to American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Tuscaloosa's population has grown from 77,906 to 96,352 in 2016; an increase of 18,446 (24% or 1.5% per year). U.S. Census 2017 single-year estimates put the city's population at 100,287. The areas within Tuscaloosa County not including the City of Tuscaloosa grew 22%, and the State as a whole grew 9% during the same timeframe. Since 2000, Tuscaloosa has been the fastest growing of Alabama's five largest cities. While the rate of growth is slowing, Tuscaloosa is still among the fastest growing areas of Alabama. Since 2010, the city has grown by approximately 6% (1% per year), while the state of Alabama has grown by 2% (0.33% per year).

The Tuscaloosa Metropolitan Area is projected to grow. The Tuscaloosa Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), comprised of Tuscaloosa, Hale, and Pickens Counties, is projected to grow by 21.4% between 2010 and 2040 compared to 11.3% growth in the state as a whole. By comparison, the only other larger MSA that is projected to grow over 20% is Huntsville (with a projected increase of 39%) as estimated by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama. Tuscaloosa County is projected to grow by 28% between 2010 and 2040 (among 10 fastest growing counties in Alabama). That projection averages to just under 1% growth per year, which is consistent with estimates released since 2010.

FIGURE 1. PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT FOOTPRINT, SOUTHEAST US, 2060



Source: PlosOne, The Southern Megalopolis

FIGURE 2. POPULATION GROWTH COMPARISONS

CITY	2000*	2016**	2000-2016 CHANGE
Tuscaloosa	77,906	96,352	24% ↑
Birmingham	242,820	212,424	-13% ↓
Huntsville	158,216	188,973	19% ↑
Mobile	198,915	193,717	-3% ↓
Montgomery	201,568	201,717	0% ↓

* U.S. Census

** U.S. Census, American Community Survey 5-year estimates. The one-year estimate for 2017 shows Tuscaloosa with a population of 100,287.

The University of Alabama (UA) is a major driver of the city's growth, but growth is expected to slow. UA has a 1,200-acre campus just east of downtown Tuscaloosa with over 38,000 students. In the early 2000s, the University of Alabama began a significant expansion initiative. From 2000 to 2016, the University grew its enrollment from 18,347 students to 37,665, an increase of 19,318. UA was considered the fastest growing flagship university in the nation during that period. In fall of 2018, the University reports its enrollment at 38,392.

The University of Alabama is not expected to grow its overall enrollment as significantly as it has in the recent past. State and national demographic shifts mean there are fewer students graduating from high school, and the rate of high school graduates choosing to attend 4-year universities is not growing, which means universities are competing for a smaller pool of students. The fact that the UA's growth is expected to slow implies that Tuscaloosa's population growth is also likely to slow.

But UA's impact is not just about overall numbers of students. The demographic and cultural characteristics have also shifted as UA has attracted more students from across the nation and abroad. New student housing developments that continue to be proposed in Tuscaloosa aim to offer features and amenities that appeal to students.

Apart from UA's growth, its football program has major impact on the city. Bryant-Denny Stadium, among the nation's top-10 largest, fills to capacity several times a year. During home game weekends, the city's population increases significantly. This has fueled demand for short-term rentals and game-day houses, which make up a large portion of the housing supply.

PLANNING AREA

The comprehensive plan's future land use element will make recommendations about growth and development both inside and outside of the City's current incorporated area. The "planning jurisdiction" shown on Figure 3 is the area beyond the City limits in the county where the City of Tuscaloosa has the ability to regulate subdivisions in accordance with State code § 11-52-30. Much of the analysis of existing physical conditions in this report will show this planning jurisdiction.

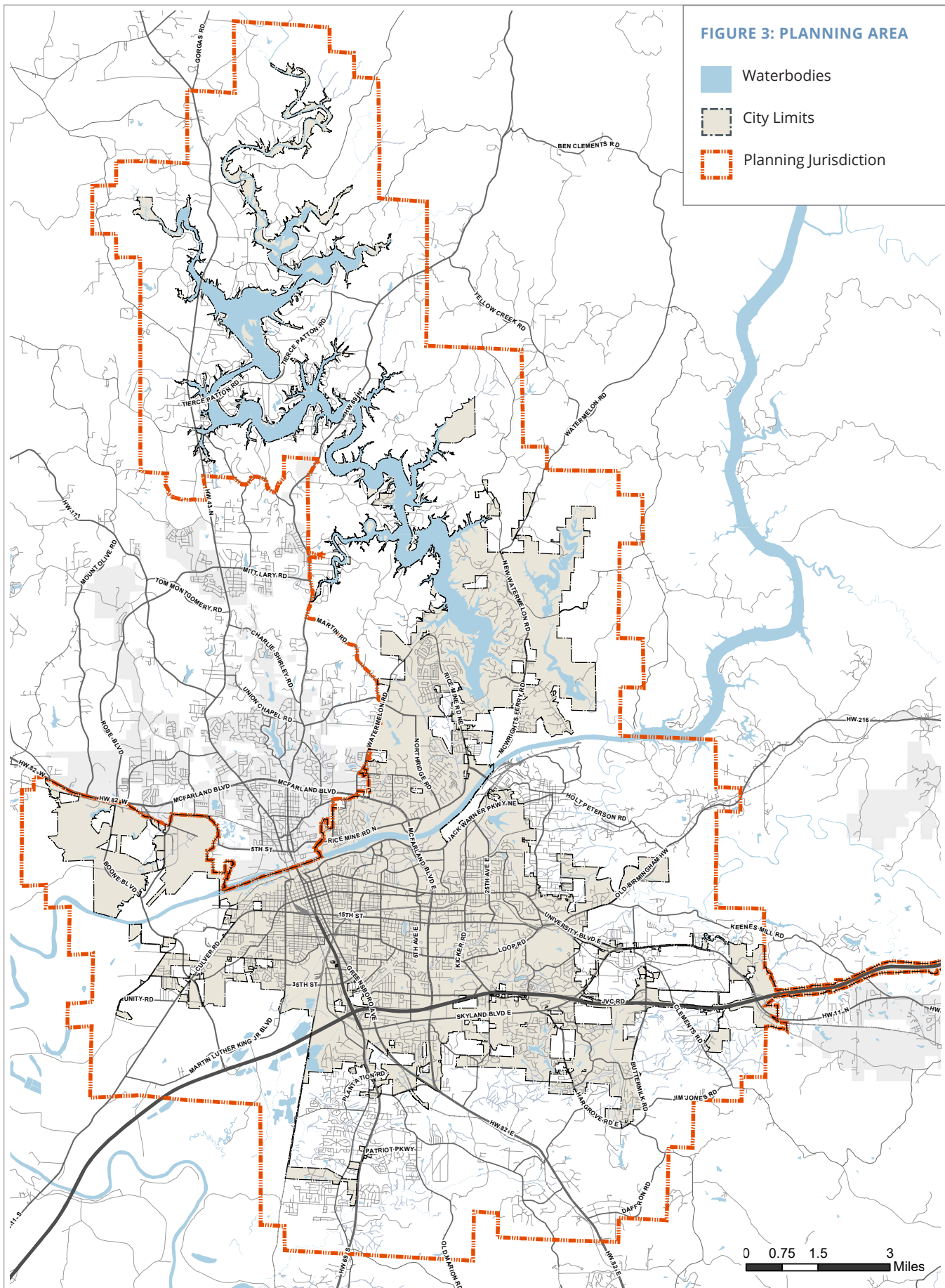
The City of Tuscaloosa's planning jurisdiction includes approximately 117,240 acres (183 square miles) of land parcels which excludes right-of-way and water bodies. Of the planning jurisdiction's acres, parcels within the city limits account for 32,400 acres (51 square miles) which excludes right-of-way and water bodies such as Lake Tuscaloosa. Including all land and water, the city limits encompass approximately 46,000 acres (72 square miles).

Since 2000, UA increased its enrollment by a somewhat larger number than the city added population. Intuitively, this implies that the University's growth was the primary factor in the city's population change over that time. This data should be looked at in "order of magnitude" terms, since exact numbers are debatable due to several factors:

- Data provided by the US Census since 2010 uses samples to create estimates, which probably undercount students that live in the city. (The population estimate could be low)
- University's enrollment numbers include some students that do not reside in Tuscaloosa's city limits. (not all students are part of Tuscaloosa's population)

Student population impacts the city's demographics including age, income, and poverty rates. Additional insight on demographics and growth projections is provided in the Five-Year Affordable Housing Study.

Tuscaloosa is a municipal corporation, formed under powers granted by the State of Alabama. The City uses its grant of the police power to adopt and enforce growth and development regulations within the City's planning jurisdiction.



GROWTH HISTORY

Tuscaloosa's population has not always changed proportionally with the city's land area. As shown on Figure 4, population growth slowed in the 1980s and 1990s, but began a significant growth period in the early 2000s. Growth of the city's land area (which includes Lake Tuscaloosa) grew at an increasing rate between the early 1960s and 1990. Since 1990, the rate of land area change has slowed significantly. Currently, a large proportion of the city's population growth is occurring in areas within the city's existing incorporated area.

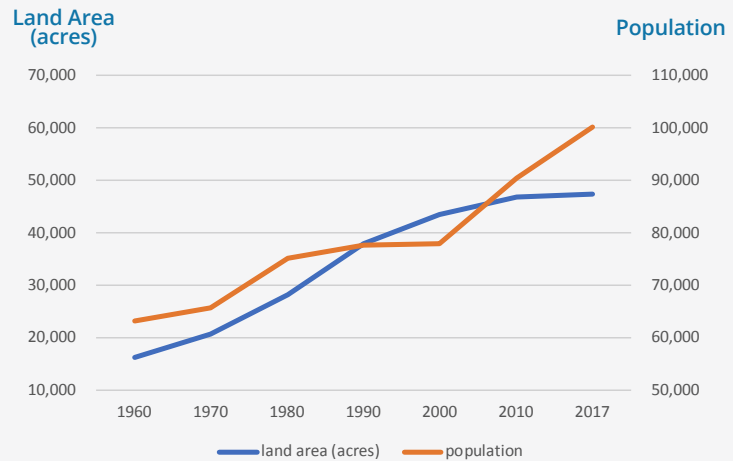
As demonstrated in the existing land use section of this report, there is a significant amount of undeveloped land and there are many opportunities for redevelopment within the city's incorporated area.

ANNEXATION HISTORY

The majority of the City of Tuscaloosa was annexed before 1991. In 1992, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International and the corridor leading to that site, east of the city, was annexed. In recent years (2005-2018), the city annexed around 7.5% of the total land in Tuscaloosa. Since 2005, the greatest amount of land annexed was in 2006 (2,081 acres). In 2006, 1,414 acres—including Lake Nicol and Harris Lake and much of the adjacent land—were annexed. Over 250 acres in the southern edge of the city and 162 acres for The Townes of North River development a large multi-phase neighborhood development were also annexed in 2006.

Figure 7 illustrates the city's annexation history.

FIGURE 4. CHANGE IN LAND AREA COMPARED TO POPULATION



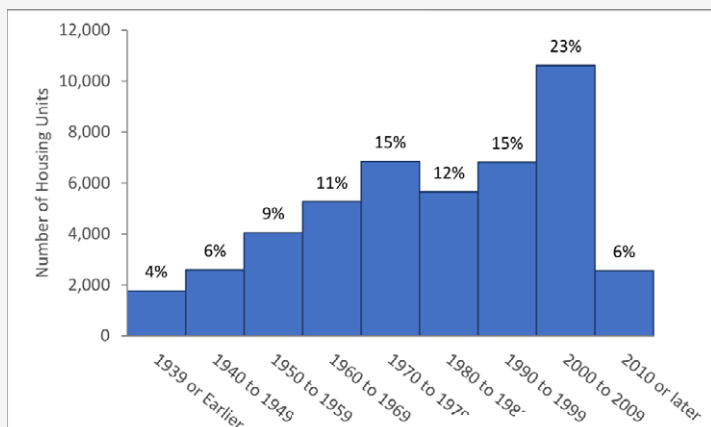
Source: US Census, American Community Survey; Tuscaloosa Urban Development GIS Database

FIGURE 5. ANNEXED LAND BY DECADE

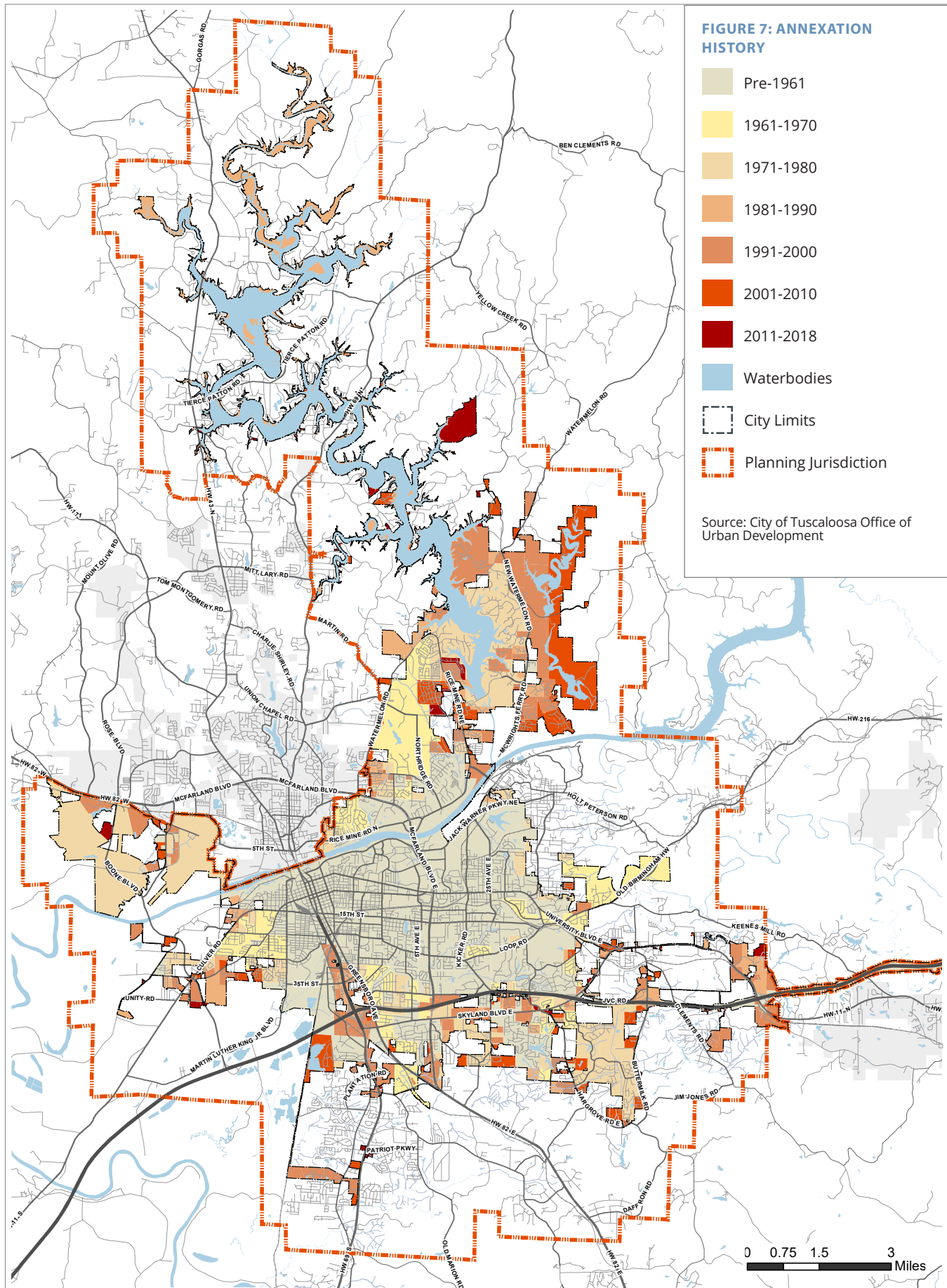
TIME PERIOD	TOTAL ACRES ADDED*	% OF TOTAL LAND AREA TODAY
Pre-1961	16,296	34.3%
1961-1970	4,356	9.2%
1971-1980	7,541	15.9%
1981-1990	9,796	20.6%
1991-2000	5,640	11.9%
2001-2010	3,264	6.9%
2011-2018	630	1.3%

Source: Tuscaloosa Urban Development GIS Database. Note these acreages include waterbodies and right-of-way so they sum to more than the city's parcels.

FIGURE 6. HOUSING UNITS BY DECADE BUILT



Source: American Community Survey (2016) as reported in the Five-Year Affordable Housing Study (2018)



EARLY HISTORY

Tuscaloosa had long been known to the various Native American tribes as the southernmost part of the Black Warrior River which could be crossed under various conditions. As a result, the area became a converging spot for a network of trails that would later lead white frontiersmen there in the 19th century.

After the War of 1812, settlement increased along the fall line of the river. In honor of the legendary "Black Warrior," a Native American chief, the settlers named the place Tuscaloosa (from the Choctaw words "tushka" meaning warrior and "lusa" meaning black).

The town of Tuscaloosa was incorporated in 1819 following the Alabama becoming a territory in 1817. From 1826 to 1846, Tuscaloosa was the state capital and the University of Alabama was established in 1831. By 1845, the town's population increased to 4,250, but fell significantly after the departure of the capital to Montgomery. In the 1850s, establishment of the Bryce State Hospital for the Insane helped restore the City's prosperity, but it would later suffer again following the South's defeat in the Civil War.

By the 1890s, the construction of a system of locks and dams on the Black Warrior River by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had opened an inexpensive link to the Gulf seaport of Mobile, stimulating industries of the region. By the advent of the 20th century, the growth of the University of Alabama and a strong national economy fueled steady development in Tuscaloosa which continued unabated for 100 years (City of Tuscaloosa, 2018).

FIGURE 2: TUSCALOOSA IN 1887, ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES



PLANNING HISTORY

The City of Tuscaloosa values planning and has prepared several citywide and area planning efforts in the past. However, the city has not completed a true comprehensive plan that takes a citywide look at land use, transportation, economic development, environment, facilities, infrastructure and other interrelated topics. Framework will update, integrate, and reconcile these past plans. Recent plans that establish the city's planning context for Framework include The Tuscaloosa 2020 Consensus Strategic Plan (2007), The Citywide Future Land Use Plan (2009), Tuscaloosa Forward (2011), and the Tuscaloosa Forward Generational Plan (2012). Additionally, several recent area plans including The Greater Downtown Plan (2010) and West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory (2018) are referenced in this document. See the sidebar for a larger list of planning efforts that have been reviewed as part of this process.

Tuscaloosa 2020 Consensus Strategic Plan (2007).

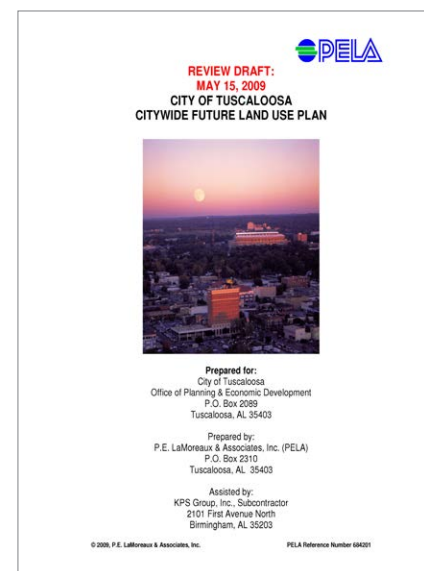
This citywide strategic planning process sought to reach consensus regarding the city's direction, and to consider policies, programs and projects relating to the major responsibilities and areas of influence of city government looking toward the year 2020. This strategic plan is the result of a visioning process and was organized as a Comprehensive Plan Update. The plan addressed conditions, opportunities and recommendations for the following topics:

- Natural Resources
- Housing Development
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- University Area Neighborhoods Preservation
- Economic Development
- Cultural and Historic Heritage
- Transportation
- Utilities and Environmental Services
- Public Safety
- Health Care
- Education
- Libraries
- Parks And Recreation

Citywide Future Land Use Plan (2009). The citywide Future Land use plan was prepared following, and as a recommendation of the 2007, Consensus Strategic Plan and updated the 1972 General Development Plan for the City of Tuscaloosa. While sometimes referred to as the city's comprehensive plan, the 2009 Future Land Use Plan primarily focuses on physical growth and development and management of the city's land resources.

RECENT PLANS AND STUDIES

- West Tuscaloosa Study (2017-2018)
- Tuscaloosa City Schools Plan (2016)
- City of Tuscaloosa Historic Districts Map (2017)
- The University of Alabama Campus Master Plan (2017)
- District 3 Specific Plan Update (2017)
- The Chamber of Commerce Survey (2017)
- Opportunity Zones Map (2018)
- Tuscaloosa Housing Authority's Facility Plan (2017)
- Tuscaloosa Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program (2016)
- Tuscaloosa Housing Authority's Annual Action Plans (2016)
- Tuscaloosa Housing Guide (ACRE) (2016)
- Downtown Parking Task Force Final Report & Recommendations (2016)
- Campus Area Water Distribution System Analysis (2017)
- City of Tuscaloosa Water Distribution System Engineering Standards (2017)
- Tuscaloosa Bikeability Assessment Map (2017)



The citywide Future Land Use Plan has five major themes:

a. Protect Tuscaloosa's Green Infrastructure. Tuscaloosa will protect, preserve, and enhance fragile ecosystems within the Study Area. It will strive to protect, preserve for future generations and use its natural and open lands for conservation areas, parks and for active and passive recreation.

b. Maintain Gateways to the City and Enhance Community Character. The City will preserve its special qualities, including its green infrastructure, historic buildings, pedestrian scale, university settings, high-quality architecture, and beautiful streets and parks. Maintaining gateways to the City and enhancing the physical qualities of the City is an overarching consideration, incorporated in all parts of the Plan.

c. Build a City of Neighborhoods. Tuscaloosa will grow by replicating the best characteristics of historical Tuscaloosa in selected locations throughout and around the City. Generally, this means that Tuscaloosa will: 1) support, maintain and enhance Downtown Tuscaloosa as the heart of the City; and 2) focus people toward low to medium density neighborhoods and high density housing in mixed use areas at strategic locations. Tuscaloosa envisions population growth organized into compact neighborhoods that focus upon and complement a green infrastructure—with mixed use cores supported by a diverse population that reflect the human scale and pedestrian orientation of the community.

d. Expand Transportation and Accessibility Opportunities.

Tuscaloosa will strive to reduce the dominance of the automobile in development decisions and reduce the impacts of vehicles on the environment through development of integrated, mixed uses of land that will improve accessibility options for pedestrians, bicyclists, boaters and transit-users. Over time, Tuscaloosa will place greater emphasis on improving multimodal transit options, and on improvements to its pedestrian, bicycle and boating facilities.

e. Protect and Reinvest in Older Neighborhoods and Commercial Corridors and Centers. Tuscaloosa will reinvest in older traditional neighborhoods, primary commercial arterial corridors, and commercial activities that are not up to the standards of the community.

f. Support Future Growth of Institutional, Industrial and Commercial Activity Centers. Tuscaloosa will grow a strong, diverse, high-quality, green, economic base that will: 1) focus regional commerce into concentrated, highly accessible commercial activity centers away from Downtown Tuscaloosa and from its neighborhoods; and 2) focus industry and commercial support services into major industrial parks located in the designated areas around the City, adjacent to interstate highway interchanges, and away from Downtown Tuscaloosa and from its neighborhoods.

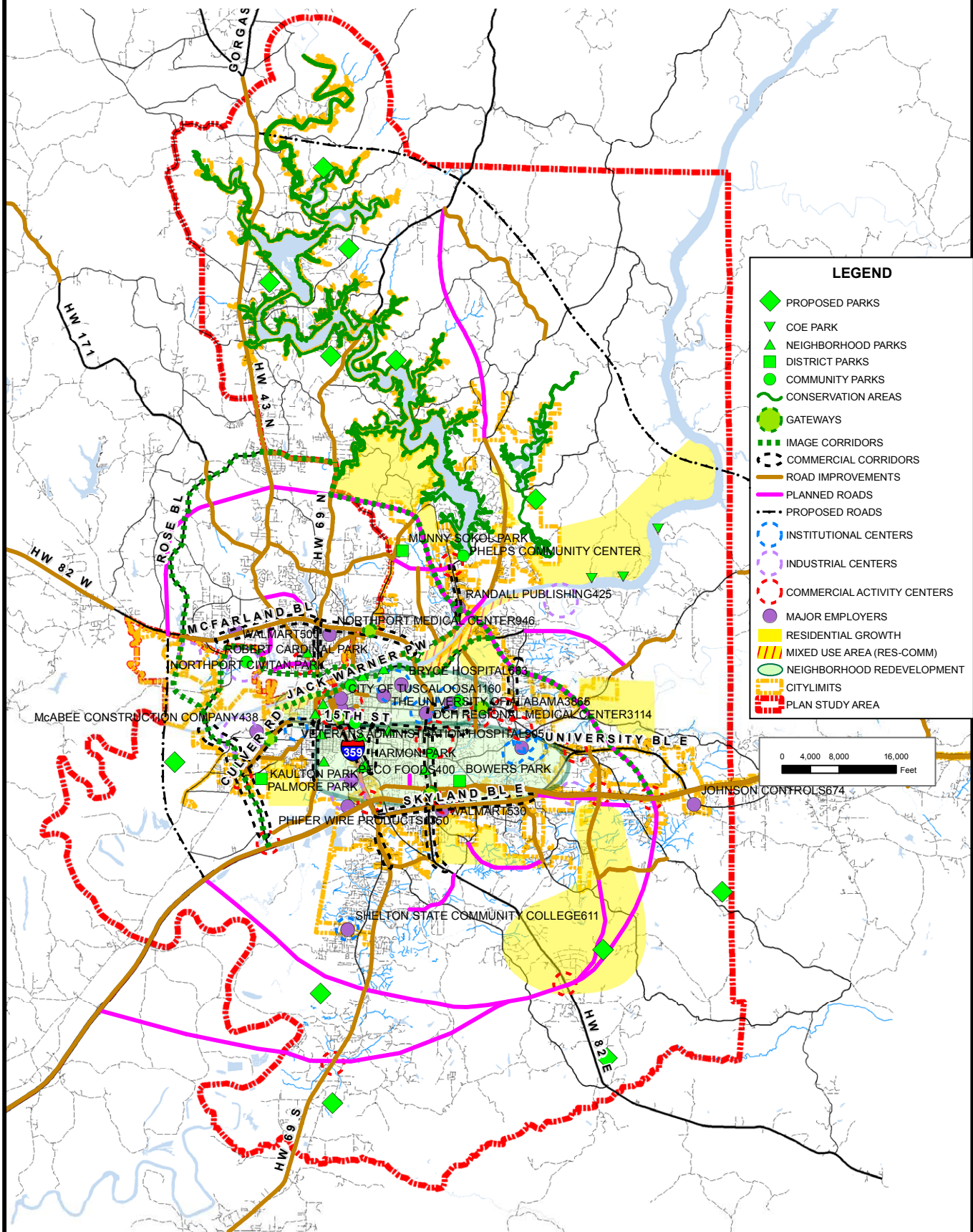
FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The 2009 Citywide Future Land Use Plan contains a highly conceptual Future Land Use Map (shown on the adjacent page). The map identifies general areas for gateways, corridors and centers, as well as areas for residential growth and neighborhood redevelopment. These concepts are defined in the plan text.

For more specific future land use maps and recommendations, the Plan refers to a series of District Specific Plans.

For the purpose of making determinations about proposed zoning changes, the city has used a combination of the 2009 Plan and relevant district plans. However, the district plans themselves vary in level of detail, planning rigor, and community support.

FIGURE 8: ADOPTED FUTURE LAND USE MAP (2009)



Tuscaloosa Forward. On April 27, 2011, a tornado left an unprecedented path of destruction through Tuscaloosa. Immediately following the tornado, the City launched a recovery plan process that led to two plans: the Tuscaloosa Forward Strategic Community Plan (August 2011) and the Tuscaloosa Forward Generational Plan (2012). The Tuscaloosa Forward Strategic Community Plan established a guide for how to rebuild and provided strategies to maximize the impact of policies, projects, and other investments to move Tuscaloosa forward after the tornado. The Tuscaloosa Generational Plan created a framework for long-term infrastructure investments in the tornado-impacted areas. Guiding principles of the plans included the following.

Land Use Principles

- Create compact, walkable village centers that are unique destinations and focal points of activity for surrounding neighborhoods;
- Create well-designed mixed use corridors that serve as attractive gateways to the community and support the city's retail and service needs;
- Preserve and revitalize established neighborhoods;
- Integrate a mix of residential densities, styles, and price ranges within neighborhoods to serve a range of ages, incomes, lifestyles, and housing preferences; and
- Support high quality design and construction that is economically viable to develop and affordable to rent, own, and maintain.

Housing Principles

- Create affordable and thriving mixed income communities;
- Construct well-designed homes that are durable, healthy, efficient, and green; and
- Locate housing to be transit accessible and connected to employment, services, and amenities.

Sustainability Principles

- Provide sustainability education for professionals, students and other residents;
- Support the design and construction of healthy, energy-efficient and durable buildings;
- Promote and support healthy lifestyles;
- Restore natural systems to benefit the community;
- Expand and enhance the City's environmental services to better manage waste and promote recycling; and
- Develop a deep and lasting approach to disaster preparedness through long-term sustainable thinking.

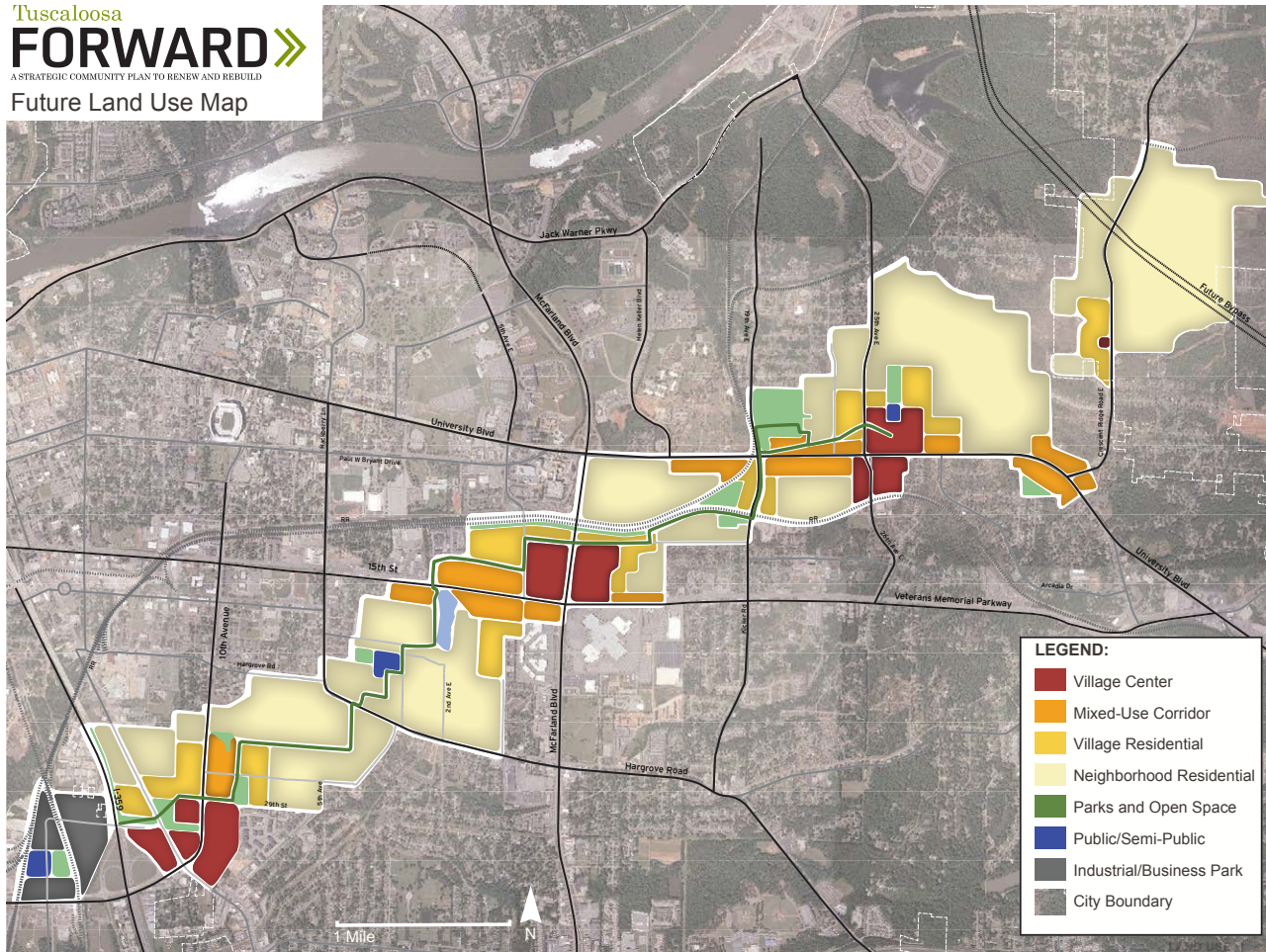
Infrastructure Principles

- Improve connectivity between and within neighborhoods;
- Provide walking, cycling, and transit infrastructure to increase transportation options and reduce traffic on congested streets;
- Enhance the appearance and functionality of major corridors as important gateways and transportation arteries for the City;
- Rebuild damaged infrastructure to address long-standing issues and future needs in a comprehensive and sustainable way; and
- Coordinate public facilities to leverage scarce resources and create mutual benefit.

The scope of the Tuscaloosa Forward Plan was to:

- *Craft a high-level vision for the impacted areas*
- *Propose residential, civic, and commercial land use concepts*
- *Identify affordable housing opportunities, programs, and resources*
- *Propose strategies for enhancing neighborhoods*
- *Show potential connections between neighborhoods*

Tuscaloosa
FORWARD»
 A STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN TO RENEW AND REBUILD
 Future Land Use Map



Tuscaloosa Forward addressed many "comprehensive plan" topics such as land use, public facilities, infrastructure, and housing for the area directly impacted by the tornado. The plan's future land use map serves as a general guide to future land use decisions and includes a mixed use concept of centers, corridors, and neighborhoods. Following the plan's completion, regulations were updated to implement the land use vision.

Critiques to implementation

Tuscaloosa Forward was the result of an ambitious four-month planning process that involved significant public engagement, and included many widely supported ideas. But in the years since the process was completed, the plan has been criticized for setting (what some observers believe to be) unrealistic expectations for recovery and redevelopment. This criticism may be less about the vision and principles, and more about the specific regulations adopted to implement the vision. Some stakeholders believe that these development regulations have made redevelopment in some areas too costly or infeasible.

WEST TUSCALOOSA STUDY

The City's most recent study was the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory (2017-2018), which consisted of a community inventory of existing land uses and zoning, vacant land and lands with development or redevelopment potential, and historic development trends in West Tuscaloosa. The study describes West Tuscaloosa as an approximately 10 square mile area, delineated by the Black Warrior River to the north, I-359 to the east, I-20/I-59 to the south, and Joe Mallisham Parkway. This study provided recommendations for transportation, infrastructure and crime, as well as strategies for capitalizing on existing and planned projects. The study also identified seven Focus Areas, ranging from residential neighborhoods, to institutional sites, to roadway corridors and provided an analysis of potential opportunities for these areas. Recommendations relevant to Framework's process are provided below.

Recommendation Highlights for Transportation, Infrastructure and Crime

- Prioritize multi-modal alternatives;
- Enhance connections for pedestrians, bicyclists and those who rely on transit and public transportation;
- Promote community policing and placing eyes on the street;
- Expand the transit service into the evenings and weekends;
- Investigate an LED lighting implementation plan;
- Capitalize on the City's MLK Expansion project, which serves as a functional gateway into West Tuscaloosa; and
- Capitalize on adjacent community assets and connect elements together, such as the downtown, the Riverwalk, UA, and Stillman College to enhance economic viability.

Recommendation Highlights specific to the Framework Comprehensive Plan and City Code Update

- Framework should reflect the shared goals of the University of Alabama, Stillman College, and Shelton State Community College. All three entities ensure Tuscaloosa's continued strength and prosperity;
- Concentrated areas of commerce, retail, and service sectors should be grouped together to promote the clustering of uses and shared infrastructure opportunities;
- Framework should answer the question of how much has been accomplished under the current 2009 Future Land Use Plan and code versus what needs to happen to ensure positive directions are realized in housing options, transportation accessibility, economic development, community resilience, and crime reduction;
- Maintaining the City's compact nature, focused around the University of Alabama, Stillman College, and Shelton State Community College should be a key goal, which should translate directly into meaningful objectives and policies that have quantifiable standards in the Land Development Code;
- Consider a reduction of front and side setbacks, which will promote homes being placed closer to the street;

- Allow a vibrant mix of uses that promote urban activity beyond the traditional 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. window when most businesses operate to capture and retain the most diverse population possible;
- Broadly reflect Tuscaloosa's comprehensive vision to maintain its historic legacy while adapting through redevelopment and reinvestment along major transportation corridors and in the traditional gridded City network;
- Throughout Tuscaloosa's existing plan and code, emphasis is placed on creating a vibrant walkable community which should remain a goal; and
- Concentrate and focus on the City's form as an all-inclusive place that is easily accessible to all persons.

CITY PLANNING ENTITIES AND THEIR ROLES

Long range plans and specific development proposals are reviewed by many city departments, boards and commissions, and others, but four entities in Tuscaloosa are primarily responsible for ensuring that proposed projects comply with city policy and regulations.

Office of Urban Development

The Office of Urban Development is the City department with responsibility to facilitate the preservation and enhancement of Tuscaloosa's built environment through long-range comprehensive planning, while providing a one-stop service for development investment in the City. The department works with the public, developers, boards and commissions, and other City departments to ensure development projects are handled in an efficient, customer-oriented manner, from the conception of the idea to the completion of the project.

Planning and Zoning Commission

The City of Tuscaloosa Planning and Zoning Commission (Planning Commission or PZC) was originally formed in 1946 to guide and accomplish a comprehensive and coordinated development of the City. Some of the Planning Commission's duties include approving new subdivisions and recommending changes to the Zoning Ordinance to the Tuscaloosa City Council. Planning Commission consists of nine members appointed by the Mayor for six-year terms.

In matters pertaining to subdivision regulations, approval of subdivisions within the City and its Planning Jurisdiction, and Planned Unit Developments located outside the City limits, the Planning Commission is the final authority. In matters pertaining to Historic Buffer zone construction, the Planning Commission is the final authority, though the decision is subject to appeal to the City Council per Sec. 24-222(b). In matters pertaining to original zonings, rezonings, Planned Unit Developments within the City, street vacations, Downtown/Riverfront Overlay District applications, and Riverfront Development District applications, the Planning Commission is a recommending body to City Council.

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Originally the "Board of Adjustment," the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) was formed in 1959 to hear and decide requests for special exceptions, authorize any variances from the Zoning Ordinance, and to hear and decide appeals where there is believed to be an error in any order, requirement, decision or determination made by the zoning officer. The ZBA consists of five residents of the city appointed by the City Council. In addition to the five regular members, two supernumerary members are appointed to serve at the call of the chairman in the absence of regular members. Their term of office is three years.

Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was formed in fall 2004. It was created to ensure that Tuscaloosa's historic resources are maintained in a manner appropriate to the city's heritage. The HPC provides primary guidance in the planning and design of projects that are sympathetic to the special character of the historic districts. The HPC consist of nine members appointed by City Council.

CITY COUNCIL
Tuscaloosa's elected leadership, City Council, is the legislative body that endorses the Comprehensive Plan, the zoning code, and other city policies and ordinances. Council is the decision-making authority on rezoning proposals and annexations.

EXISTING LAND USE, FUTURE LAND USE, AND ZONING

The comprehensive plan will update Tuscaloosa's future land use policies and will be implemented in part by the city's zoning ordinance. The proceeding section of this report considers existing land use characteristics and analysis based on readily available data.

Existing land use conveys conditions on the ground today, the future land use plan describes the city's vision and general intent for future development, and the zoning ordinance is the adopted law of a city that regulates land use and growth and development. It divides the city into different zoning districts and generally governs the purpose, location, and size of development in each district. The following table distinguishes between the role of the plan and zoning ordinance.

All properties within the City of Tuscaloosa have a zoning classification. The existing land use does not necessarily reflect current zoning. There is no zoning in unincorporated areas of the County.

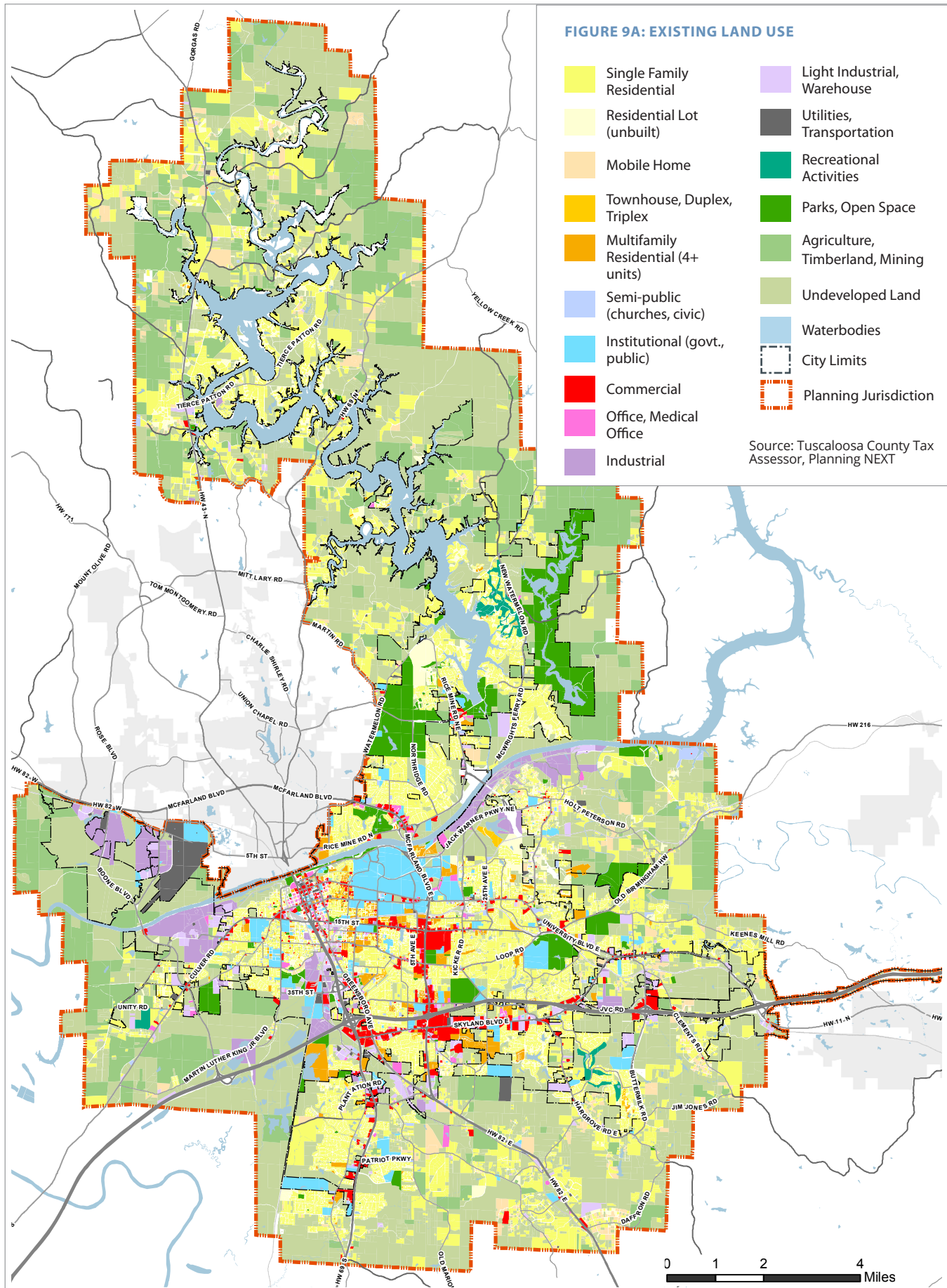
Plan (Future Land Use)	Zoning Ordinance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes intended future land use and development characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines land uses and development characteristics allowed on a piece of land today
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines land uses and development characteristics generally (a policy guide) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More specific and detailed than the plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies within the city's planning jurisdiction (beyond current city limits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies within current city limits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future Land Use map is not parcel specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zoning map is parcel specific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not legally binding, but zoning changes should be "in accordance with" plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal document: departure from zoning in place requires either a rezoning (legislative process) or a variance (a judicial process)

2. EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land use is a classification tool that assigns a use type (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.) to each parcel within the City based on its predominant use today. This is different from its zoning classification which identifies the ideal use for the parcel but might not describe the current use. The Existing land use has been mapped based on County Tax Assessor records. In some cases, data inaccuracies were corrected based on field observation. The data has been summarized into the following categories:

- **Single Family Residential.** Land used for detached single family homes at a variety of lot sizes.
- **Residential Lot (unbuilt).** Undeveloped lots (where there are no buildings) that are generally within single family residential areas. Many of these lots are in developing subdivisions and will be utilized eventually, while a small portion of this classification represents sites that are undevelopable due to access or other physical constraints.
- **Mobile Home.** Mobile homes on individual lots and clustered in "mobile home parks."
- **Townhouse, Duplex, Triplex.** Residential areas where two or more dwelling units are contained in one building or attached residential where distinct buildings share at least one wall.
- **Multifamily Residential (4+ units)** Residential uses with four or more dwelling units per building.
- **Semi-public.** Includes churches, community organizations and non-government community uses, etc.
- **Institutional (govt., public).** Public uses such as government buildings, schools, universities, etc.
- **Commercial.** Includes retail, restaurants, hotels
- **Office, Medical Office.** Includes non-retail and non-institutional employers, banks, clinics, etc.
- **Industrial.** Moderate to heavy industrial and manufacturing uses.
- **Light Industrial, Warehouse.** Includes light industrial uses, small workshops, and commercial/ industrial storage facilities.
- **Utilities, Transportation.** Significant utilities including the Tuscaloosa Regional Airport.
- **Recreational Activities.** Private or semi-public recreational areas including golf courses.
- **Parks, Open Space.** Includes public parks, protected conservation areas, cemeteries, and designated open space areas within neighborhoods.
- **Agriculture, Timberland, Mining.** Working land classified as either agricultural (farmland or pasture), timberland (for timber harvesting), or mining activities.
- **Undeveloped Land.** Land classified as undeveloped, but not a park or platted residential lot.

The existing land use has been mapped based on County Tax Assessor records. Existing Land use identifies how a property is currently being utilized. In some cases, data inaccuracies were corrected based on field observation. Incomplete data or inaccuracies were most common on parcels that are owned by a public entity and are tax exempt.



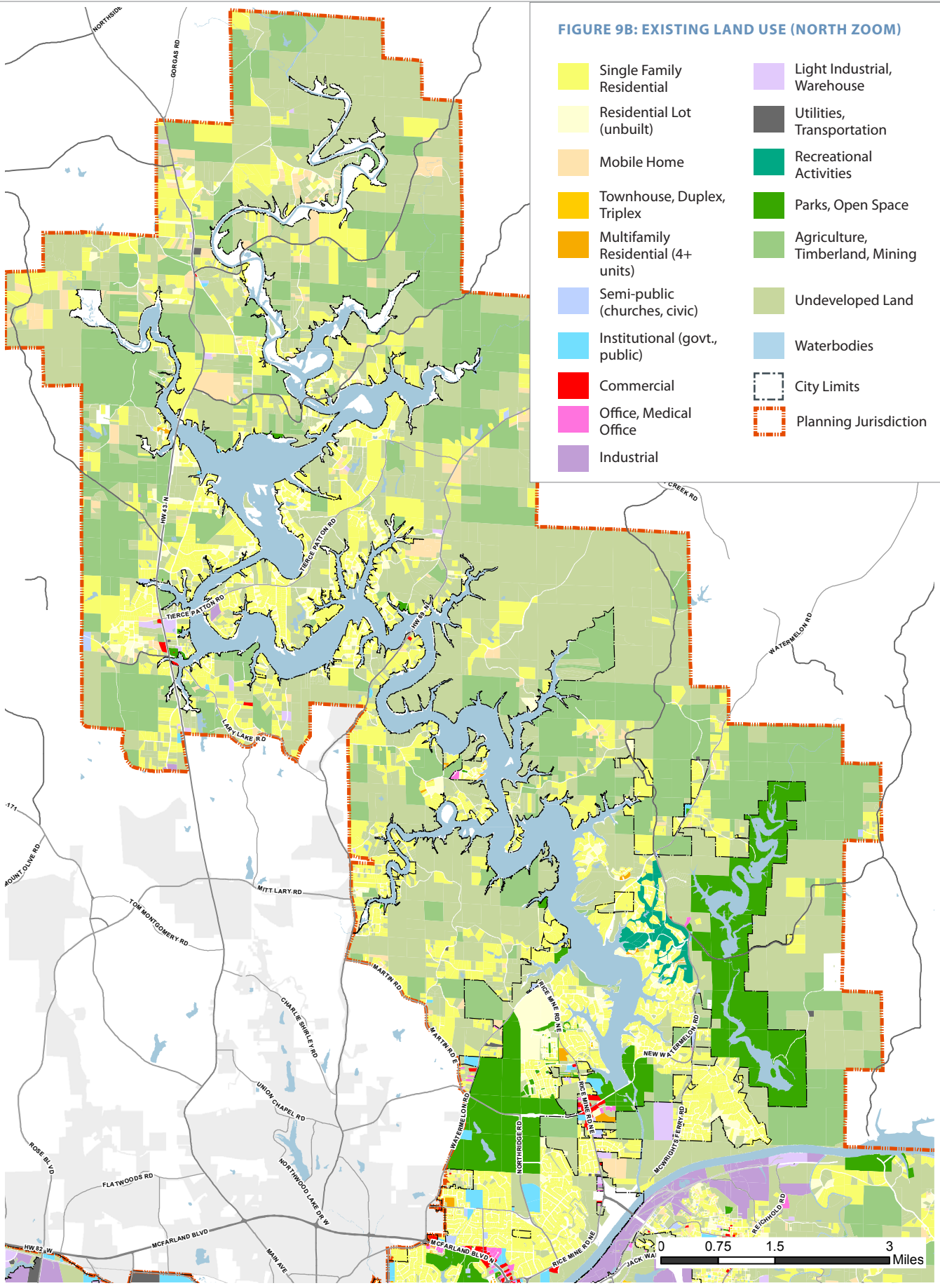
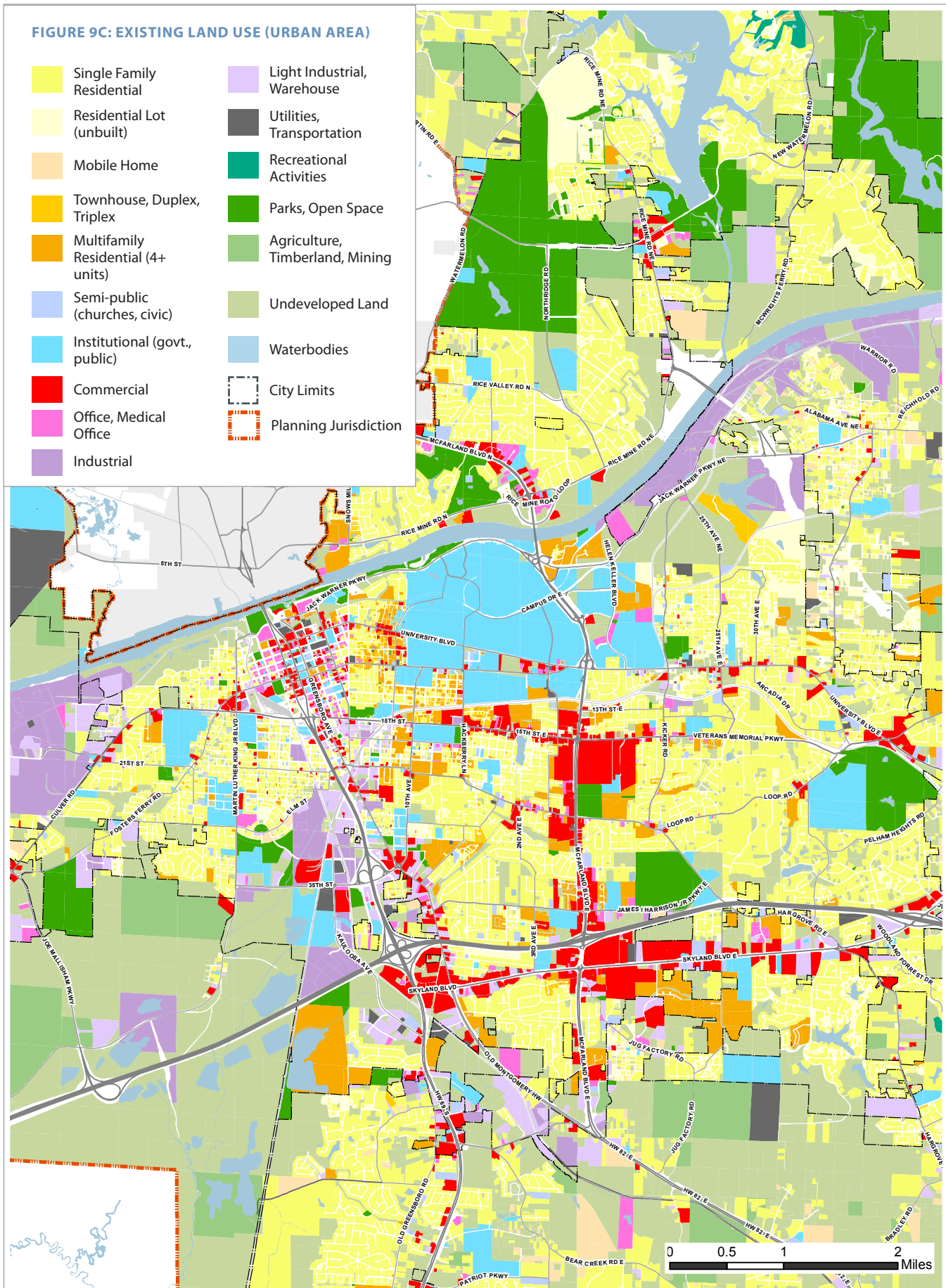
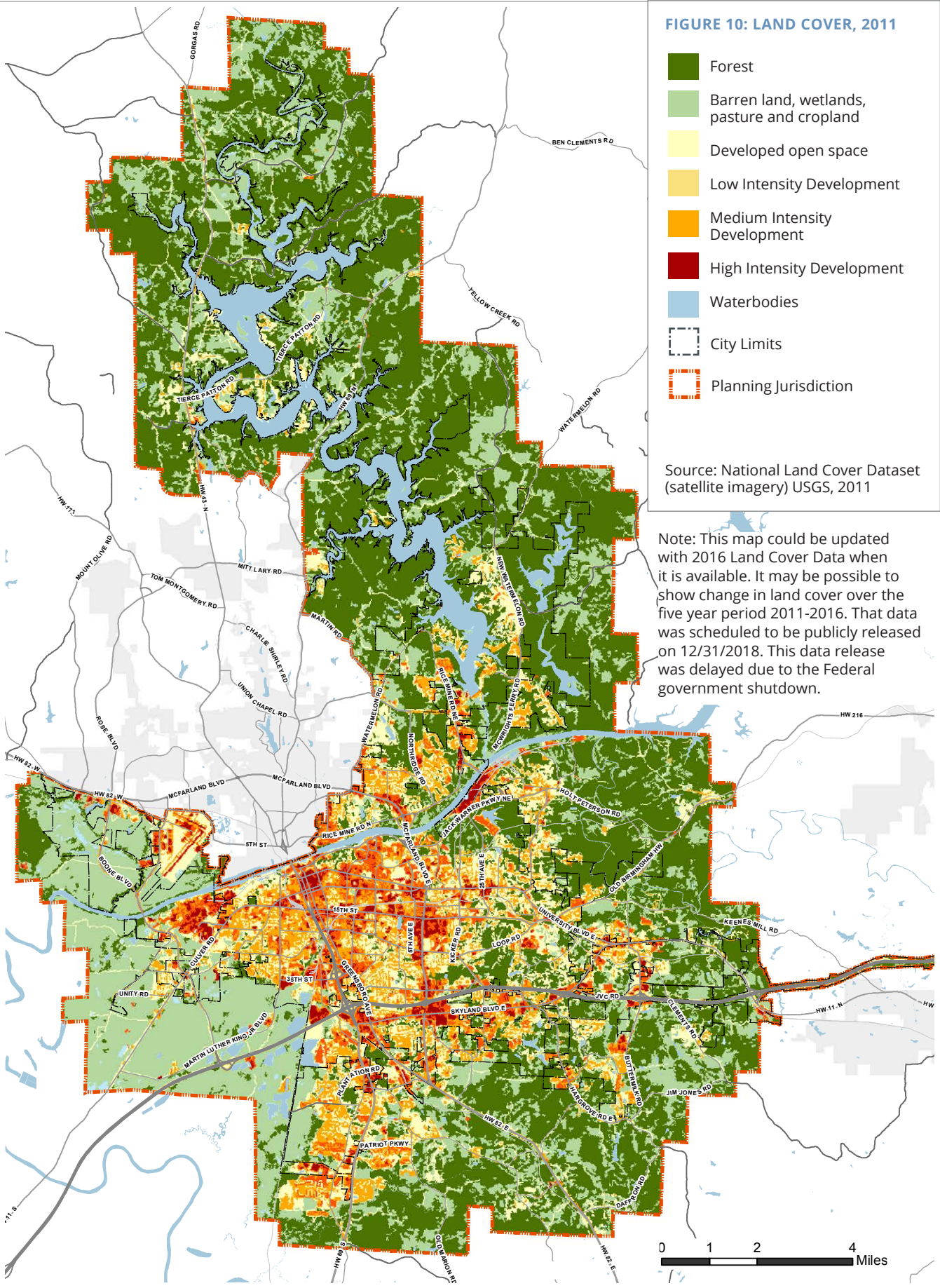


FIGURE 9C: EXISTING LAND USE (URBAN AREA)





LAND COVER

Parcel data provides detailed land use information and reveals development patterns. However, each parcel has one classification reflecting its predominant use and most parcels are not uniformly developed. Figure 10, uses satellite imagery to show the intensity of land cover throughout the planning area ranging from forest to high intensity development.

LAND AVAILABILITY

Tuscaloosa has space to grow. There is undeveloped and potentially developable land within the city limits and beyond. Additionally, there are sites within the city that may be suitable for redevelopment.

Undeveloped Land

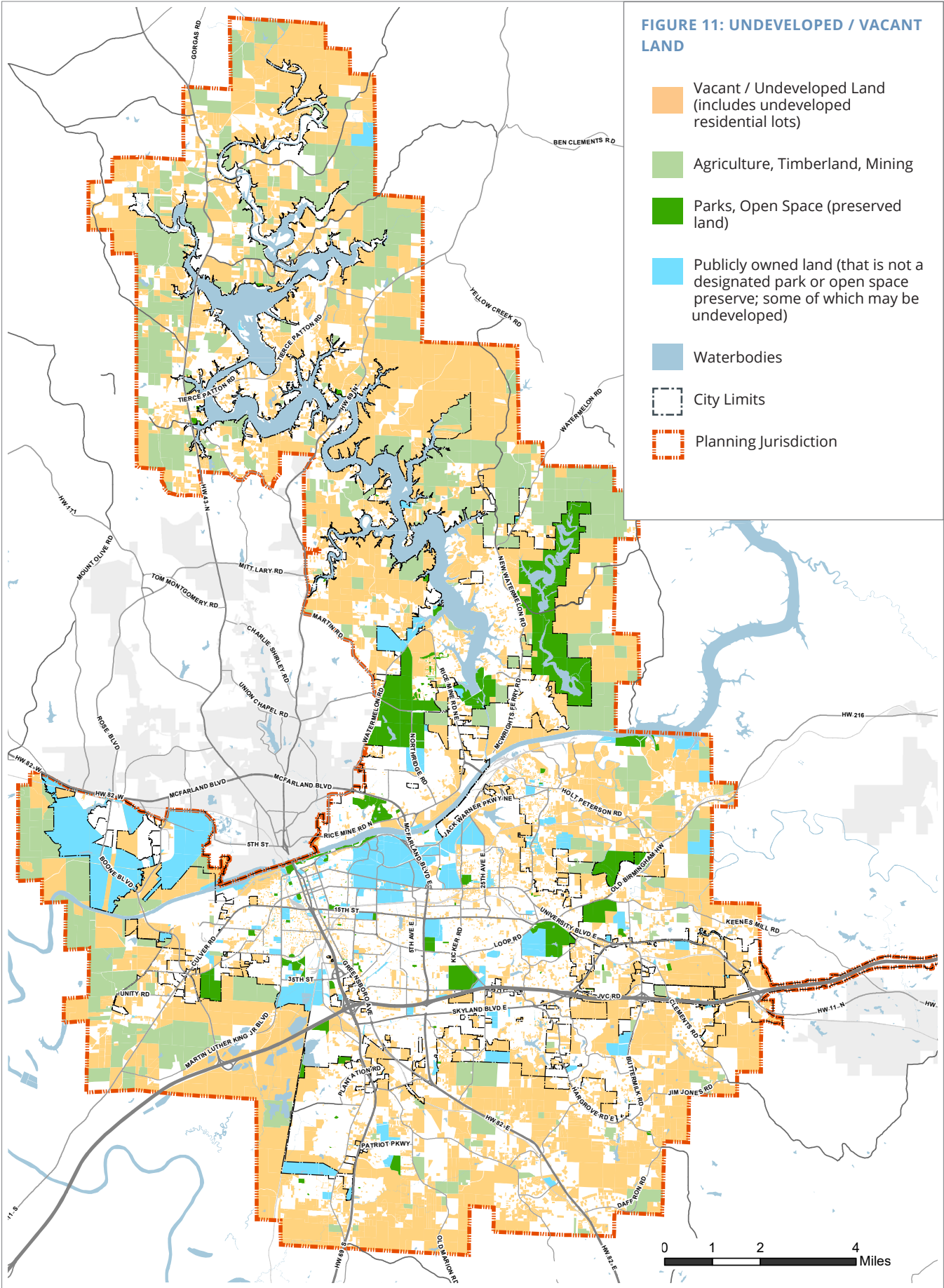
Nearly half (44%) of land within the planning jurisdiction is classified as undeveloped. Approximately 12% is classified as Agriculture. Within the City limits, 7% is classified as Agriculture. Figure 11 depicts the location of undeveloped or vacant land in the planning area. This map also shows land designated as agricultural, forestry or mining. As land values increase, some of these working lands may become attractive to development.

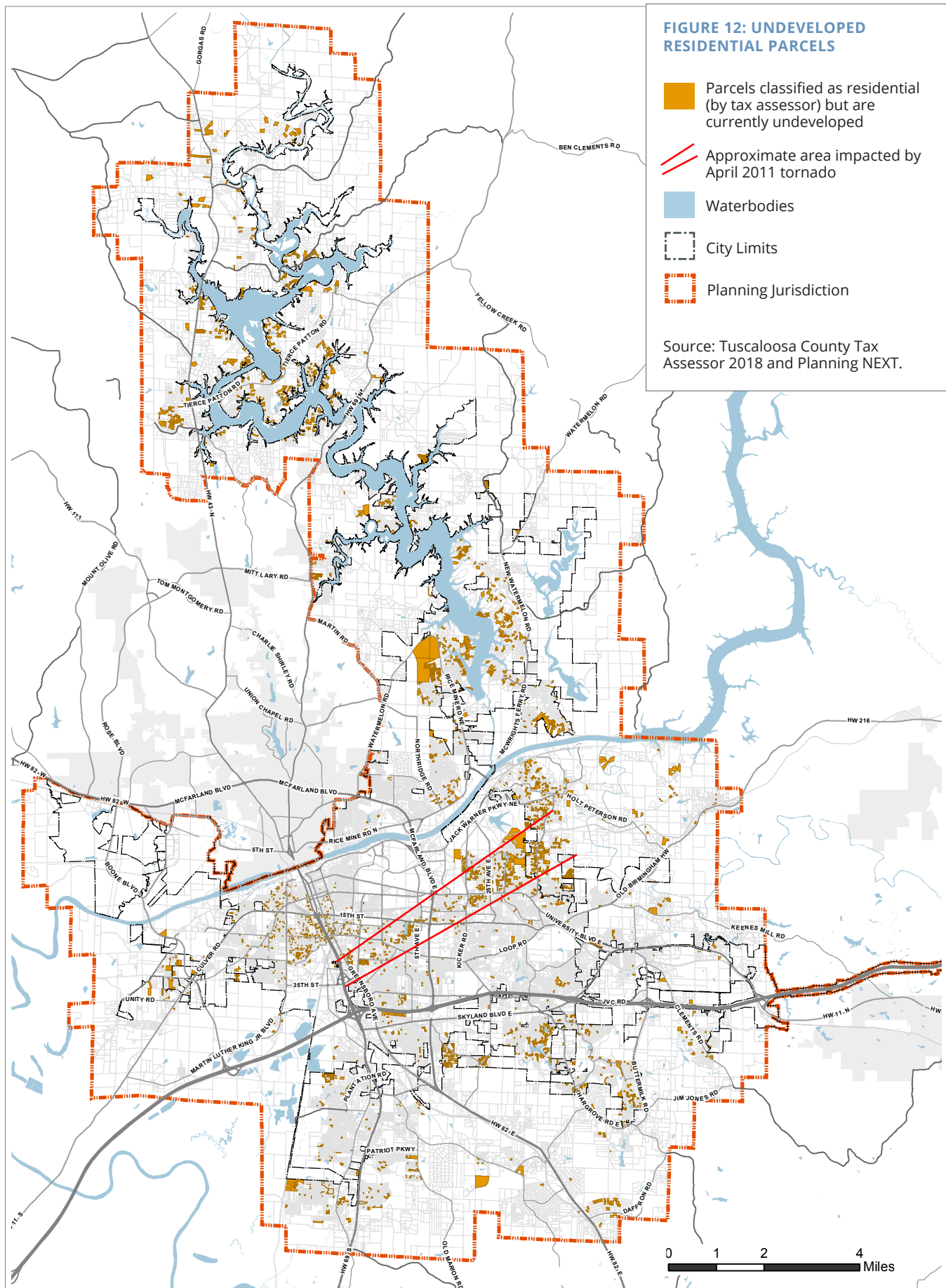
Included in the "undeveloped land" on Figure 11 are parcels that are platted as part of single family residential subdivisions but are not built upon. These vacant residential parcels include land that is currently developing, sites that are not likely to develop due to ownership or other constraints, or sites that were once developed, but are now vacant (for example due to fire or natural disaster). Figure 12 identifies the location of these 3,500 parcels (some represent multiple home sites). Figure 13 shows the parcels within the city classified by zoning. There are approximately 1,200 undeveloped residential lots zoned R-1, totaling 1,048 acres, approximately 3% of the city (not all of these are "developable").

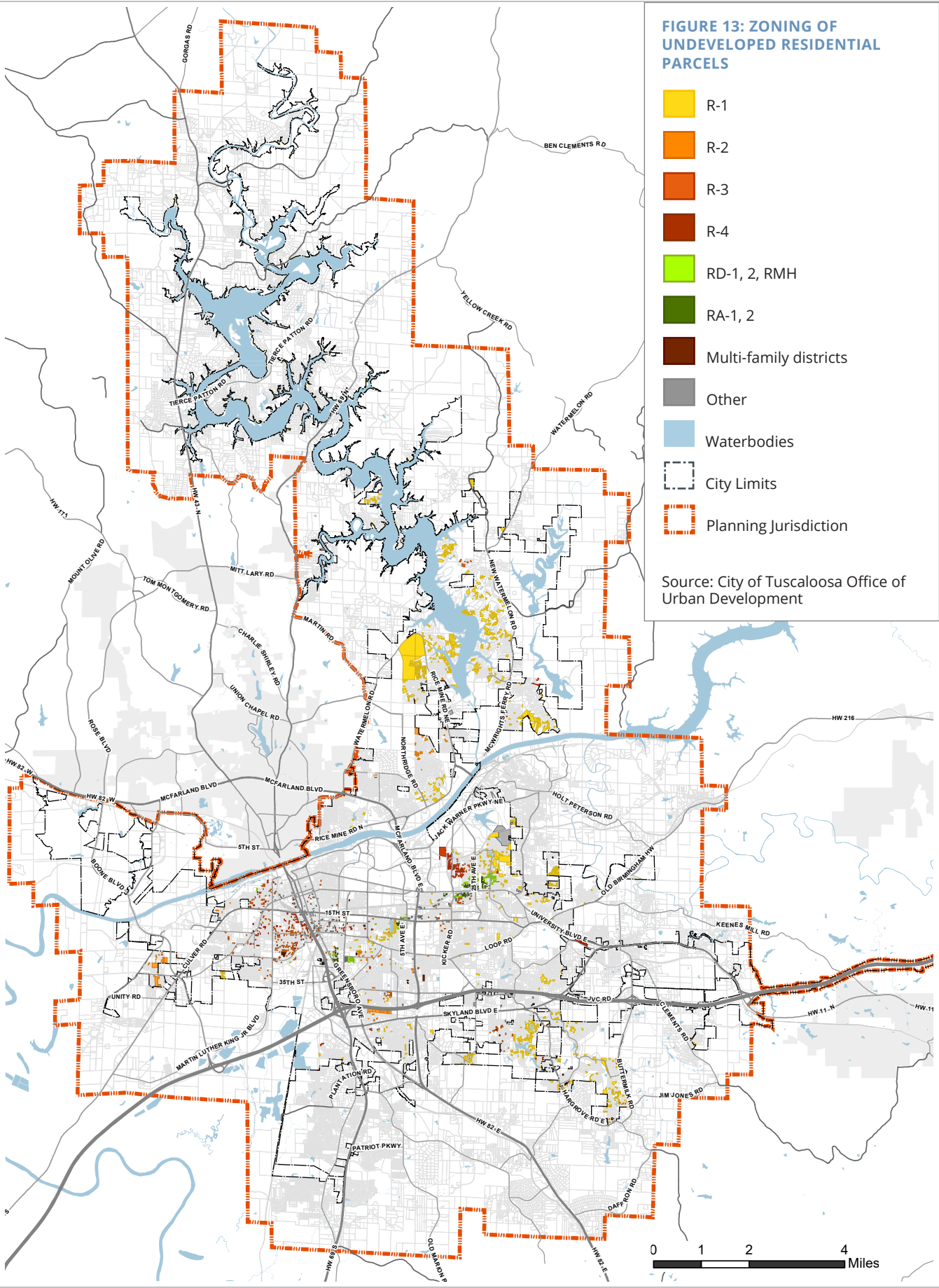
Preserved and Publicly Owned Land

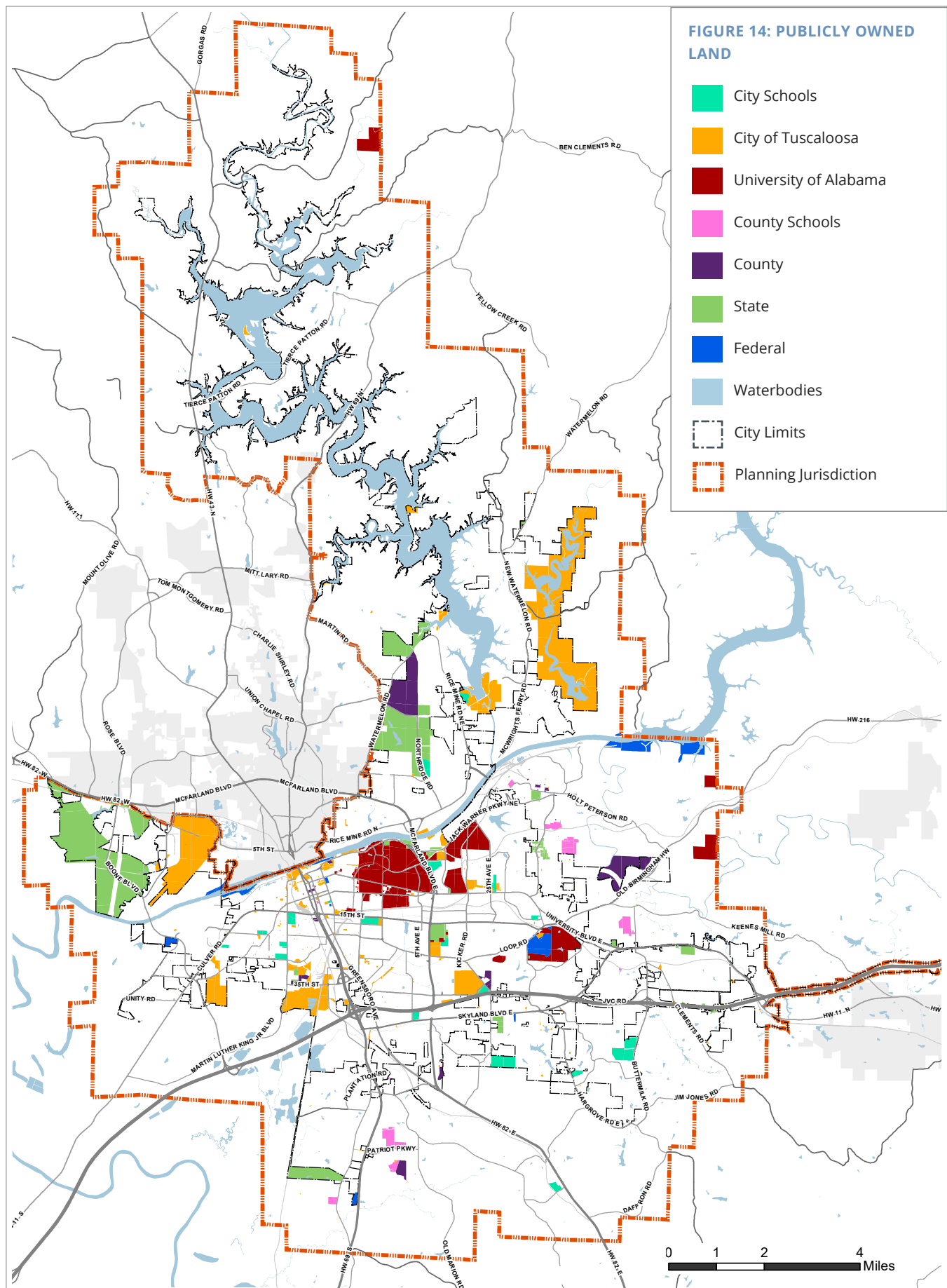
Some undeveloped land is protected from development including local, state and national parks, or other permanent open space and is not subject to development. In addition to protected open space, other publicly-owned land is also identified on Figure 11. Publicly-owned lands are usually not available for residential or other development. A breakdown of the publicly owned land is shown on Figure 14.

In the planning jurisdiction, almost 10% of the land is publicly-owned (10,576 acres). The City and State own 64% of the publicly-owned land. The City owns approximately 3,887 acres (36.7%) of the publicly-owned land, and the State owns around 2,913 acres (27.5%). Nearly 2,000 acres of City-owned land surrounds Lake Nicol and Harris Lake. The University of Alabama owns approximately 1,923 acres (1.7%) of land in the planning jurisdiction (most of which is inside the city).









Potential Environmental Constraints

Some land is not suitable for development due to environmental features such as flood hazards and steep slopes. These features do not prevent development, but may make sites more difficult or costly to develop. See the natural resources section of this report for more information on environmentally sensitive land.

Potentially Developable Land

Potential environmental constraints and the potentially developable land (currently undeveloped) that remains has been identified on Figure 15. Based on this high-level picture, there is approximately 5,000 acres of developable land within the city limits today (see the table below) and an additional 8,000 developable acres outside the city limits that are served by utilities. The majority of this developable land in the city limits is zoned for residential development, with nearly half of the area zoned R-1.

DEVELOPABLE LAND ACREAGE BY ZONING (WITHIN CITY LIMITS)

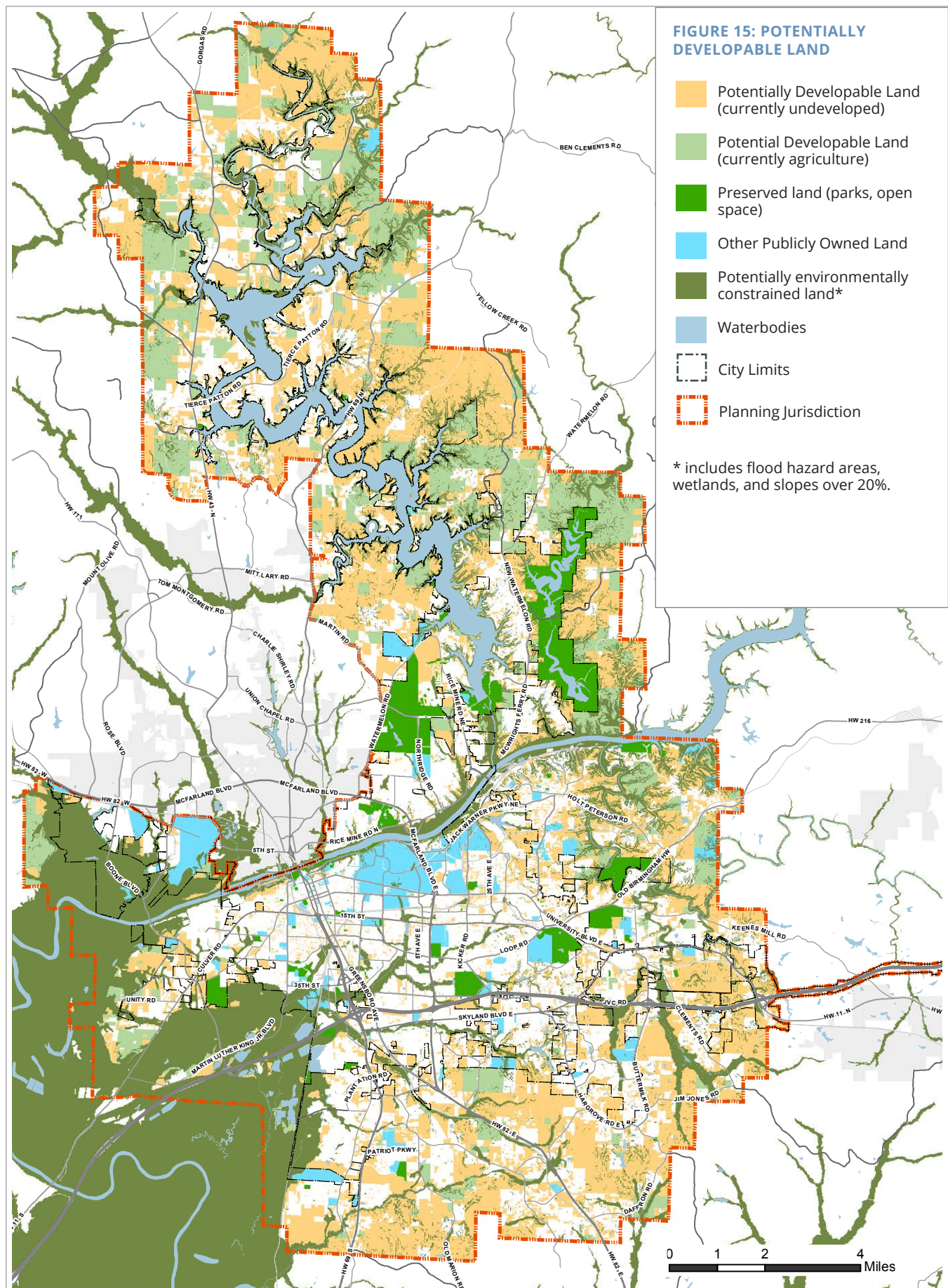
Zone	Undeveloped land excluding agriculture	Land classified as "residential lots"
R-1	2,609	735
R-2	260	72
R-3	359	60
R-4	173	57
Other Residential	172	167
Commercial	388	-
Industrial	737	-
Mixed Use (MX)	58	-
Other	313	-
TOTAL	5,067	1,091

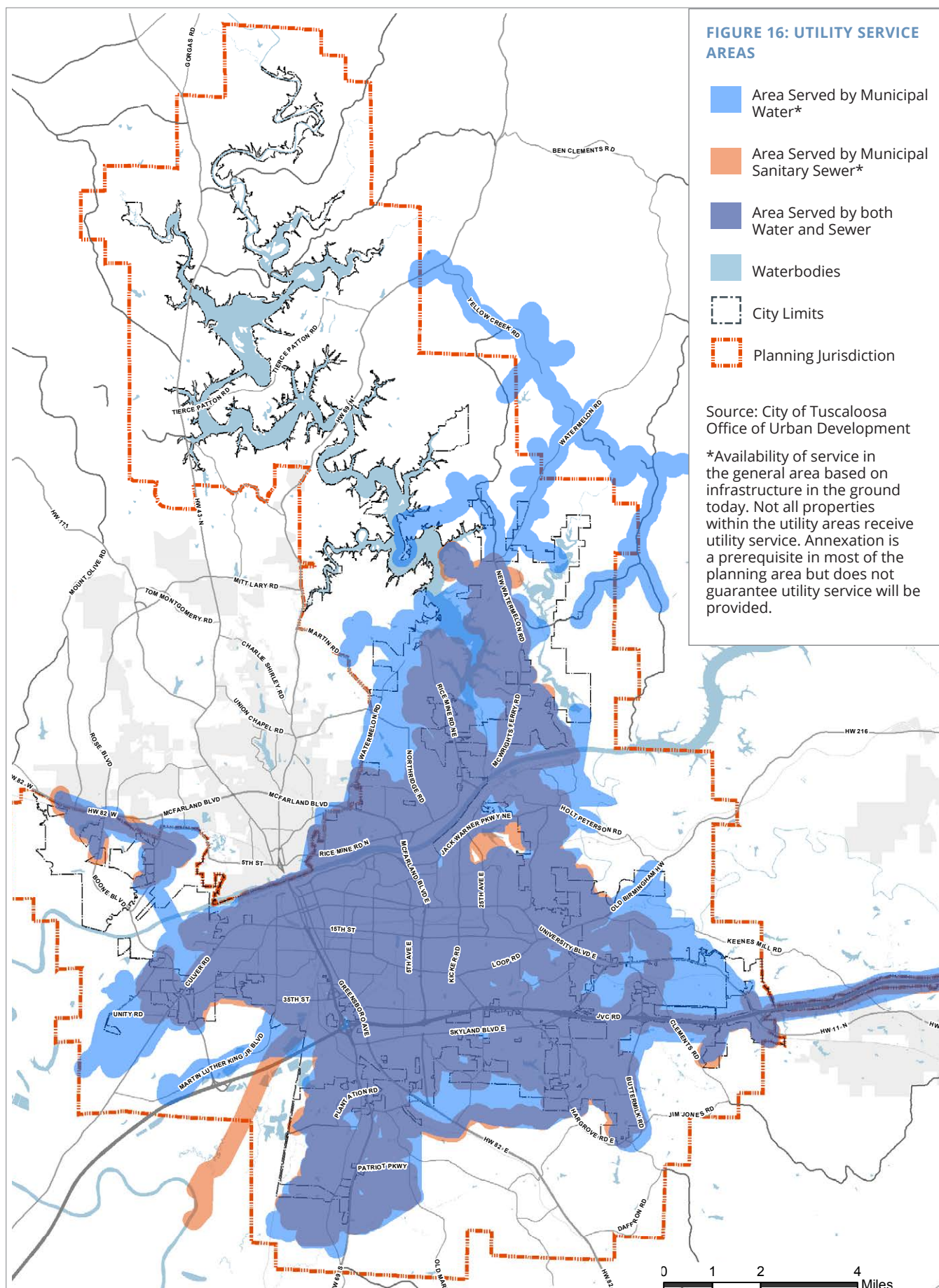
Evaluating Land Needs

Based on the projections included in the 5-year Affordable Housing Study, there is demand for between 3,000 and 4,000 new housing units in the next five years between in-migration, natural household growth, and move-ups within the city. If this trend were extended to ten years (a typical horizon for a comprehensive plan) 6,000 to 8,000 new housing units could be supported. This is consistent with a 1% annual population growth rate per year. The amount of land required to accommodate this growth depending on where and how new housing units are developed. The table below illustrates a few possibilities depending on density.

Potential Housing Demand (Units)	Acres (Low Density: 2.5 du/a)	Acres (High Density: 6 du/a)
6,000	2,400	1,000
8,000	3,200	1,333

If future residential growth occurs at a lower average density, more land would be developed. Conversely, higher density requires less land.





Utility Accessibility

In some communities, the availability of municipal water and sewer service is a driver of where and how the community grows. Availability can be determined by a local policy, by physical constraints, or both.

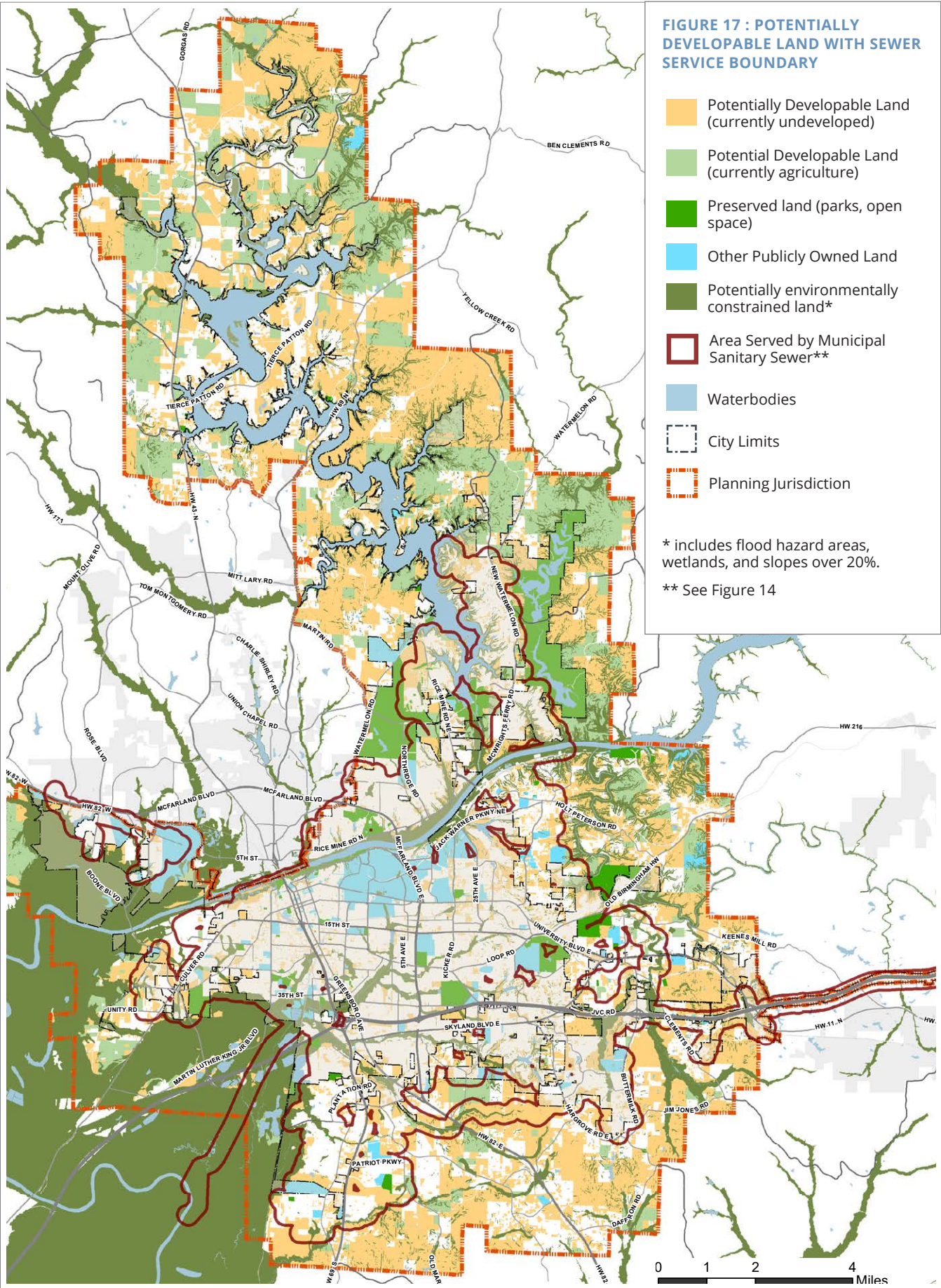
Much of the land within Tuscaloosa's City limits is served by public water and sewer infrastructure. Figure 16 indicates the City's water utility service area, which is the area that can be served by existing infrastructure (some sites within this area may not currently utilize these utilities). The area of existing sewer service is smaller and covers major developed subdivisions within the city. Beyond this area, private well and septic systems provide drinking water and manage wastewater. In terms of utility capacity, there are sanitary sewer capacity concerns for areas north of the Black Warrior River and in the Downtown area. For more information on utility service, see Water and Wastewater Systems Conditions report. Figure 17 overlays the sanitary sewer boundary onto the potentially developable land.

Annexation and Utility Provision

Tuscaloosa has a policy that requires annexation into the City in order to receive sewer service. The City currently has no annexation boundaries or defined growth areas by which to evaluate annexation requests. Any owner of a property that is contiguous to the City Limits (which includes Lake Tuscaloosa) may petition for annexation. Most petitions for annexation fill the need to "accommodate the needs and wishes of petitioners." Access to city utilities is one reason to seek annexation, but annexation does not guarantee service if infrastructure is not present nearby at the time. In areas beyond the city's existing utility service area, annexation resolutions will stipulate that the site will not receive these services until such time that utilities are extended. In areas beyond the utility service areas, such as along Lake Tuscaloosa, many request annexation for access to city schools.

The annexation procedure entails:

- The property owner files a petition with Planning Division
- Planning and Zoning Commission votes to recommend/not recommend approval
- City Council votes to annex property



WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS OCCURRING

Since 2013, most of Tuscaloosa's development has been concentrated in two general areas: Between Downtown and the University of Alabama's campus; and new subdivisions north of the Black Warrior River surrounding Lake Tuscaloosa.

Residential construction

An analysis of new construction building permit locations since 2012 (Figures 18 and 19 on the following pages) shows that residential development has been heavily concentrated in the University Area Neighborhood and north of the Black Warrior River at the High Grove and North River developments.

Commercial construction

Building permit data also shows a similar pattern for commercial construction. Downtown and the University of Alabama area has seen most of the development activity each year since 2013, but since that time other areas such as the McFarland Blvd corridor have seen some development.

New residential subdivisions

Large tracts of land are generally subdivided into smaller lots for residential development. The location of recent subdivisions shows where there is likely to be residential development in the future. Figure 20 shows the location of residential subdivisions approved since 2014 and Planned Unit Developments approved since 2003. They total approximately 5,000 acres, with approximately half (2,400 acres) within the city. Most of the subdivisions approved since 2016 are located north of the river and outside of city limits.

FIGURE 18: RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS 2012-2016

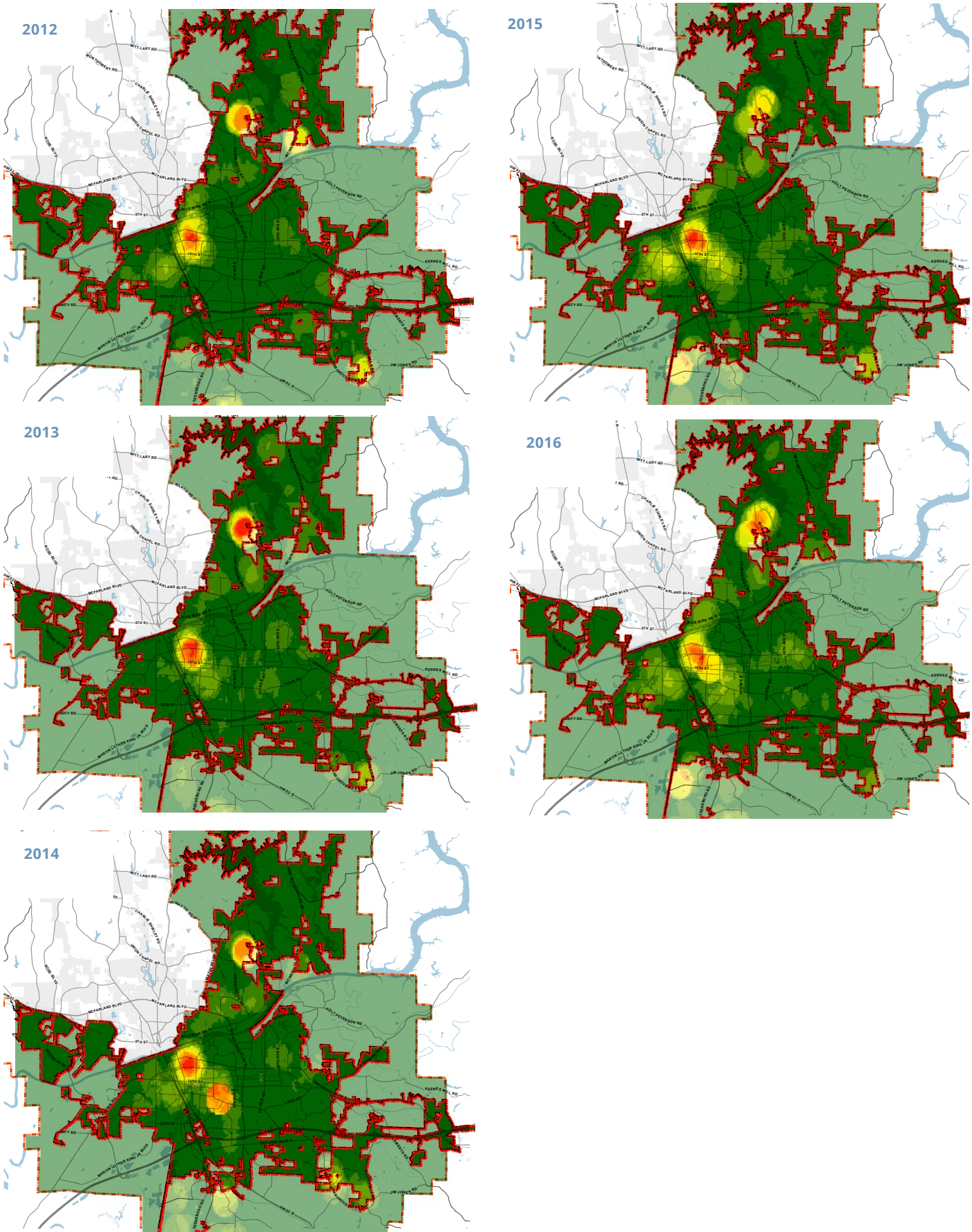
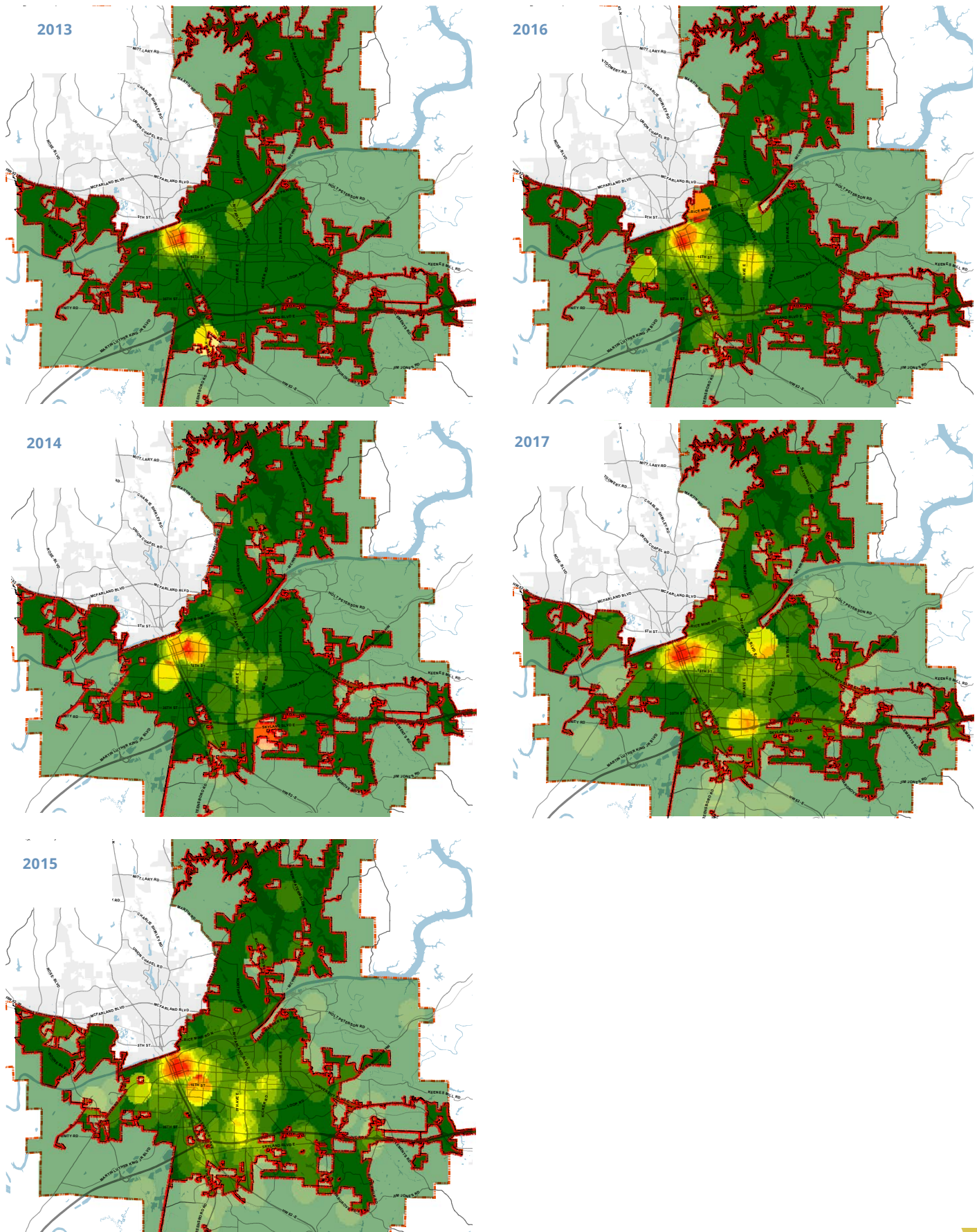
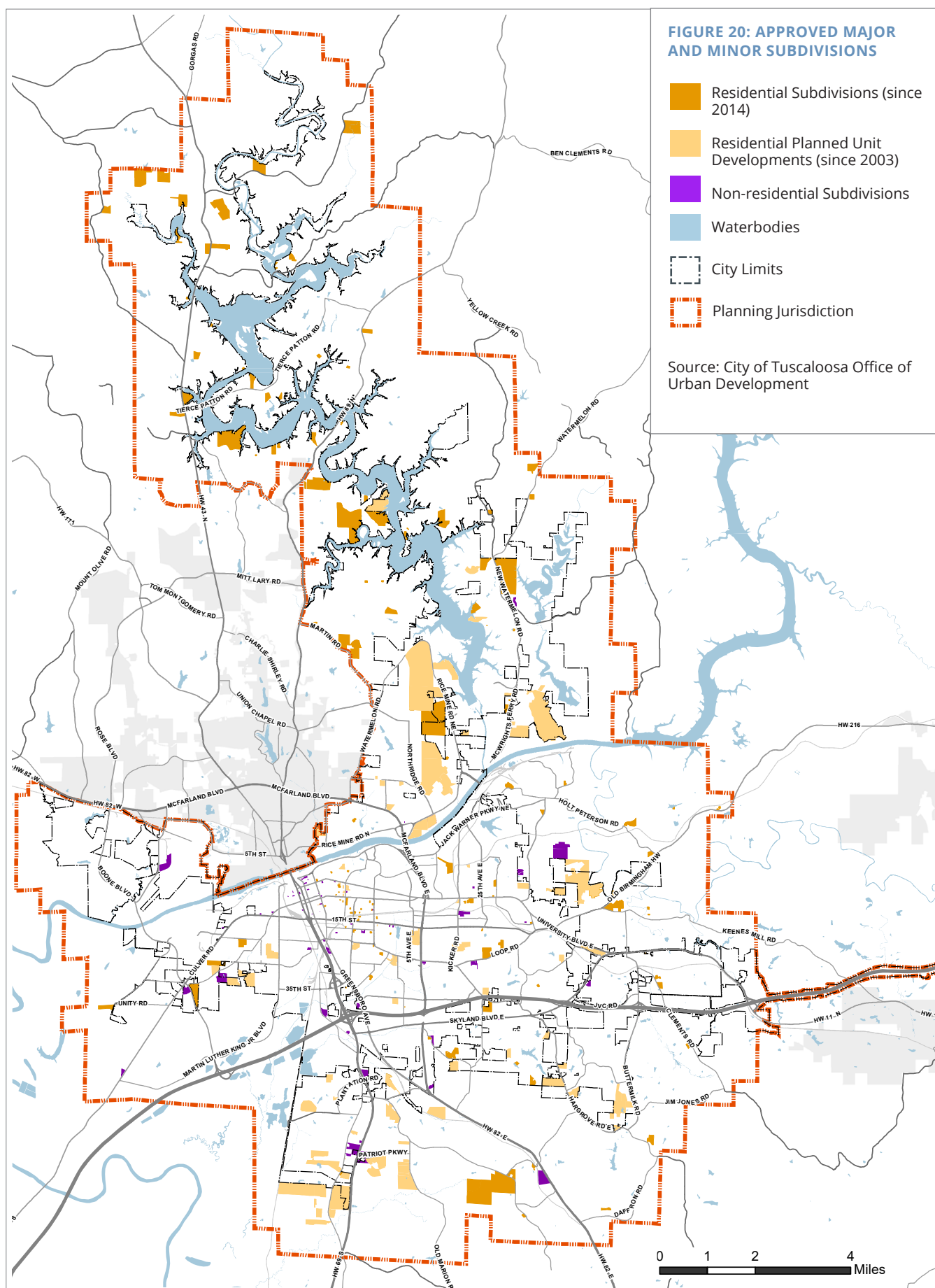


FIGURE 19: COMMERCIAL BUILDING PERMITS 2013-2017





Property Conditions

Several areas in Tuscaloosa face property upkeep challenges. Figure 21 shows locations of property maintenance code violations since 2012. These are clustered in neighborhoods such as West Tuscaloosa, Forest Lake, Southwood, and Alberta.

Land Values

Land values have an impact on the feasibility of development. To offset risks of investment, real estate developers seek to maximize profits. This means that development intensity and/or quality will tend to increase as land values increase. Figure 22 shows the relative land values across the Tuscaloosa area. The sites with higher land values tend to be Downtown and other commercial or mixed use areas. Other high value locations are new residential development in the extreme north and south of the city. Many of the city's older neighborhoods such as West Tuscaloosa tend to have low land values.

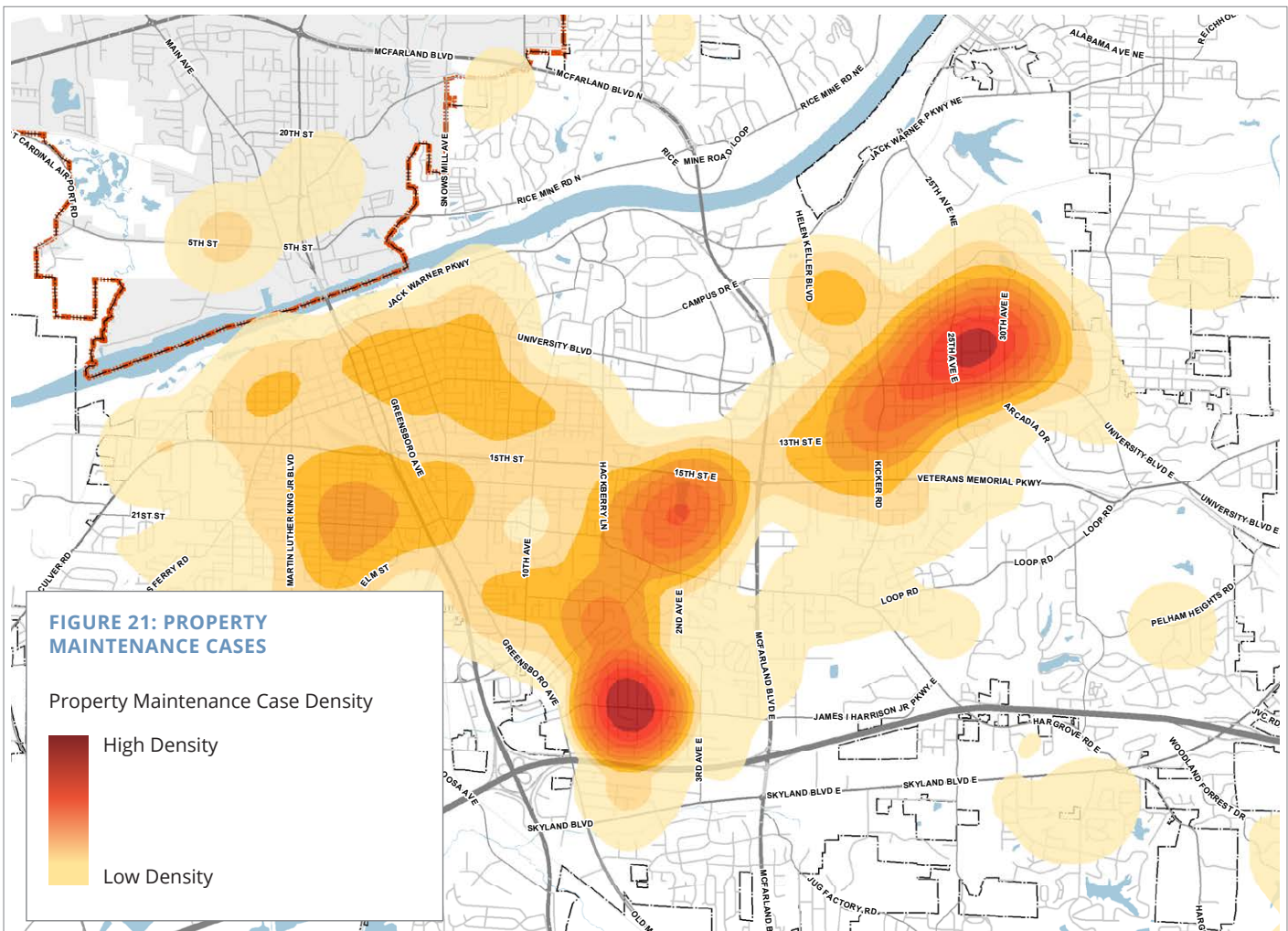


FIGURE 22: LAND VALUE PER ACRE

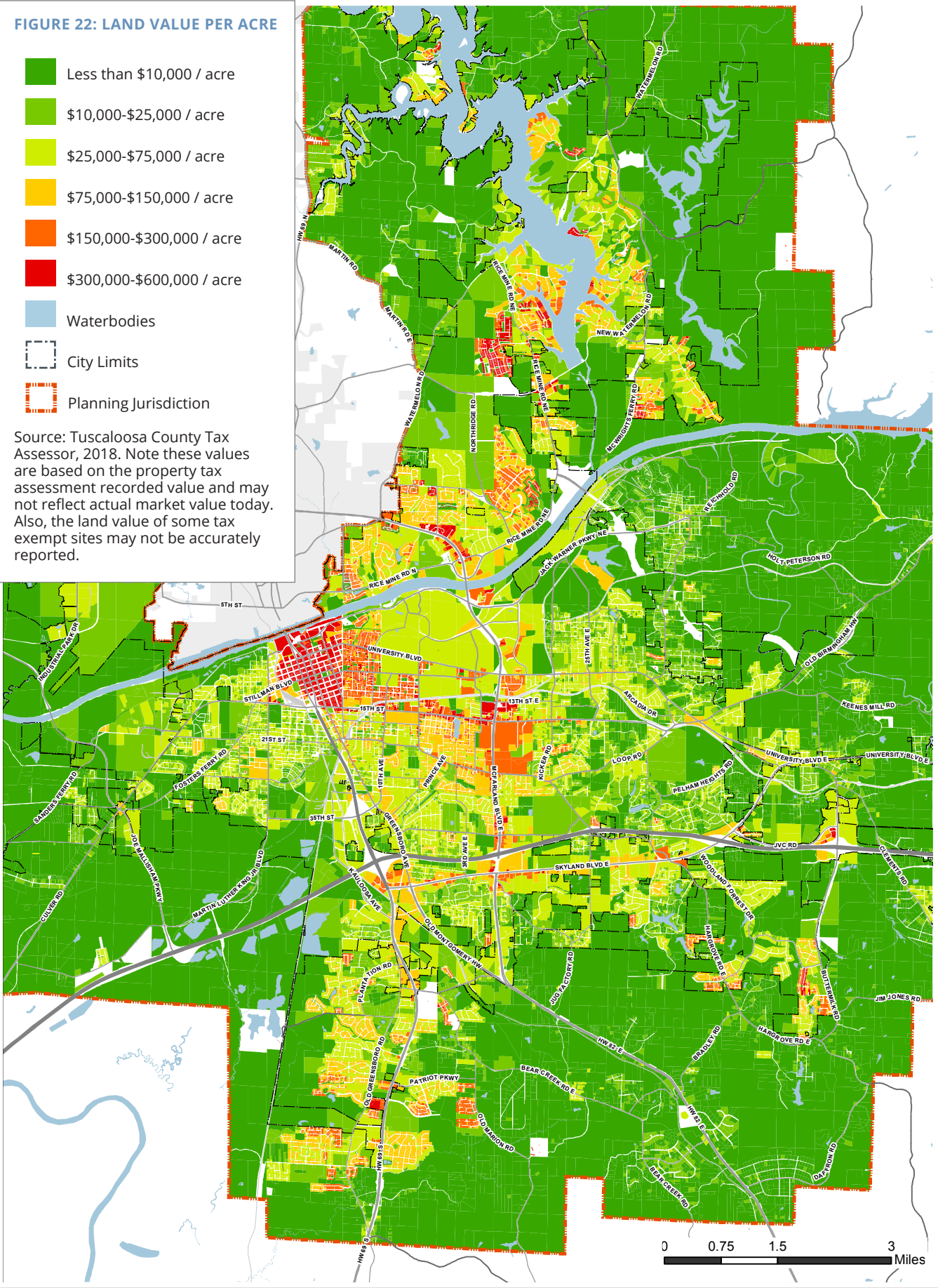
- Less than \$10,000 / acre
- \$10,000-\$25,000 / acre
- \$25,000-\$75,000 / acre
- \$75,000-\$150,000 / acre
- \$150,000-\$300,000 / acre
- \$300,000-\$600,000 / acre

Waterbodies

City Limits

Planning Jurisdiction

Source: Tuscaloosa County Tax Assessor, 2018. Note these values are based on the property tax assessment recorded value and may not reflect actual market value today. Also, the land value of some tax exempt sites may not be accurately reported.



4. EXISTING CHARACTER

Development character goes beyond standard parcel-by-parcel land use classifications and describes the look, feel, and function of a district overall. As an example, Downtown is home to various land uses, but the integration and interaction of these uses help to create the unique character of the district.

From the dense downtown to the rural periphery, in its 70.3 square miles, the City includes a variety of densities and uses. The following is an initial breakdown of the development character types in Tuscaloosa today. These types will be elaborated on through the planning process to understand the current form of development throughout the City and articulate future character types that may not be present today.

The character analysis identified 16 character types based on attributes of urban form including the height and size of buildings and lots, the relationship between the streets and buildings, block size and street connectivity, and open space; as well as the areas' predominant function based on existing land uses and zoning. The existing character types are:

Centers and Corridors

- Downtown Core
- Downtown Edge
- Campus Mixed Use
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Community Commercial
- University Campus
- Civic / Institutional Site
- Light Industrial
- Industrial

Neighborhoods

- Traditional Neighborhood
- Campus Area Residential
- Suburban Residential, low intensity
- Suburban Residential, high intensity
- Suburban Mixed Residential
- Suburban Estate Residential
- Rural Edge

DOWNTOWN CORE

The Downtown Core is the historic and civic heart of the city. A dense and walkable district, it is generally bounded by Lurleen Wallace Blvd, Paul Bryant Dr, 21st Ave and Jack Warner Pkwy.

Streets / Blocks: Gridded street pattern with short, walkable block lengths (around 300 feet)

Buildings: 2-10 stories. Most buildings are set near the street and attached to adjacent buildings, with the exception of civic buildings. Many buildings within the district are excellent examples of period commercial architecture and contribute to area's overall historic character.

Uses: Mixed, with many buildings containing multiple types of uses within them.

Open Space: Formal parks, pocket parks,

Other: Pedestrian amenities with 6 to 10-foot-wide sidewalks; crosswalks; traffic-calming measures, such as medians and bump-outs; other streetscape amenities, such as decorative lighting, pavers, pedestrian-oriented building frontages, and streetscape furnishings.



DOWNTOWN EDGE

The Downtown Edge is a transitional space between the Downtown Core and the surrounding residential areas. It extends outward from the Core to the railroad tracks on the west, 15th Street to the south, and Queen City Ave to the east.

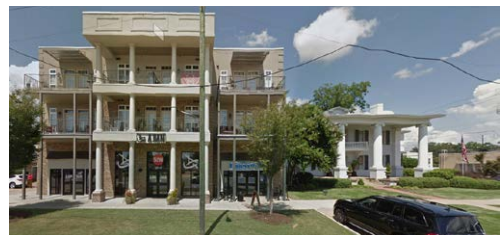
Streets / Blocks: Gridded street pattern with short, walkable block lengths (around 300 feet)

Buildings: 2-4 stories. Most buildings are free standing while some are attached to adjacent buildings. Buildings are smaller, more varied in style, and have greater setbacks than in the downtown core.

Uses: Mixed, with some buildings containing multiple types of uses within them. A number of formerly single-family homes have been converted to offices or other commercial purposes. Single and multi-family residential are included.

Open Space: Formal parks, pocket parks,

Other: Similar to the Downtown Core, pedestrian amenities with sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic-calming measures such as medians and bump-outs.



CAMPUS MIXED USE

Commercial and mixed use development between traditional neighborhoods and the university campuses (primarily the University of Alabama and the campus of Stillman College). These activity centers share characteristics with the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge but consist of smaller-scale buildings. Buildings are located near the street and arranged in a walkable pattern and include a mix of uses either within a single building or a connected site. They typically serve an area near an adjacent neighborhood or campus. University Boulevard's "The Strip" is the primary example of this type of development.

Streets / Blocks: Short, walkable block lengths

Buildings: 1-3 stories. Most buildings are set near the street with parking areas set to the side or to the building's rear.

Uses: Mixed; retail, office, institutional, and residential, with many buildings containing multiple types of uses within them.

Open Space: Formal parks and plazas may serve as a district focal point. Landscaped common areas and outdoor dining may be featured.



NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL

Commercial development that primarily serves nearby neighborhoods. These areas occur in small nodes along corridors throughout the city. Their design is typically car-oriented with buildings set back from the street behind parking areas. Many of these areas are developed within a surrounding street network of small blocks.

Streets / Blocks: Block length varies, but generally larger and with fewer street connections than in mixed use areas.

Buildings: 1-2 stories. (predominantly single story, but may have 2-story appearance). Most buildings are set back from the street behind surface parking lots. Includes large footprint buildings.

Uses: Primarily single-use buildings with retail or office uses.

Open Space: Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas, generally private.

Other: The corridors are generally not pedestrian friendly due to many vehicle access points (curb cuts) which create conflicts for pedestrians, and lack of sidewalks in some areas.



COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL

Commercial development which is generally car-oriented and developed along major corridors. Corridors are linear districts defined by development along arterial or collector roadways. Development in this area tends to serve the larger community and may include regional destinations such as shopping malls. Major Commercial Corridor districts in Tuscaloosa include the areas along Skyland Boulevard East and McFarland Boulevard.

Streets / Blocks: Blocks are long and have fewer street connections than in the mixed use districts.

Buildings: 1-2 stories (predominantly single story, but may have 2-story appearance). Most buildings are set back from the street behind surface parking lots. Includes large footprint buildings.

Uses: Primarily single-use buildings with retail or office uses.

Open Space: Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas, generally private.

Other: The corridors are generally not pedestrian friendly due to long block lengths, many vehicle access points (curb cuts) which create conflicts for pedestrians, and lack of sidewalks in some areas.



UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

This University Campus classification applies primarily to the University of Alabama campus, but also to several other academic campuses in the community including Stillman College. It consists of university buildings, campus housing, green spaces, recreation areas and athletic facilities. The University of Alabama's main campus is 1,200 acres.

Streets / Blocks: Curvilinear street pattern with long blocks on the district's edges with a walkable central area.

Buildings: 2-10 stories. Key campus buildings are strategically placed on major and minor axes, creating vistas terminated by significant architectural elements.

Uses: Mixed; retail, office, institutional, hotel and residential, with many buildings containing multiple types of uses within them.

Open Space: Formal parks, pocket parks,

Other: UA's campus street network incorporates bicycle facilities, strong pedestrian infrastructure and a campus transit system.



CIVIC / INSTITUTIONAL SITE

This designation includes school campuses, large civic uses, hospitals and city/county/state/federally owned facilities. These sites often have a development pattern that is unique to each area and may differ significantly from their surroundings. Examples of the character type include the DCH Medical Center, Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and Shelton State Community College.

Streets / Blocks: Sites typically occupy one city block or more. Building placement tends to vary from surrounding development. Buildings within a campus may be clustered in a walkable pattern and share parking areas.

Buildings: 2-10 stories. Tends to vary from surroundings

Uses: Office, institutional, civic.

Open Space: Varies



LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

Light Industrial is characterized by warehouses and light manufacturing operations and related office used to produce smaller goods. The Light Industrial characterization includes Tuscaloosa County Industrial Park, Tuscaloosa Regional Airport, as well as some areas along the river and active rail corridors. Most industrial activities in these areas are contained within buildings.

Streets / Blocks: Blocks are long and have few street connections. Primarily car-focused development and may include accommodation for large trucks.

Buildings: Predominantly single story. Most buildings are set back from the street behind surface parking lots. Buildings have a range of sizes from small to large footprint. Parking areas tend to occupy less area of the site compared to Community Commercial.

Uses: Light industrial, warehousing, distribution, retail, office. Most industrial activity is contained within the building.

Open Space: Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas, generally private.



INDUSTRIAL

This designation is used for larger, more intense industrial operations including factories and plants. Multiple large footprint buildings are supported by outdoor assembly, storage, and loading areas. The industrial character type includes the Michelin Tire Plant, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, and Nucor Steel, among others.

Streets / Blocks: Blocks are long and have few street connections. Primarily car-focused development and may include accommodation for large trucks.

Buildings: 1-4 stories. Building size and placement varies depending on the industrial activity.

Uses: Heavy industrial, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, office.

Open Space: Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas, generally private.



TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Traditional neighborhoods surround the Downtown Core and generally reflect neighborhood development patterns prior to World War II and include many of the city's historic districts.

Streets / Blocks: Well-connected street network with small, walkable blocks that generally form a grid pattern.

Buildings: 1-3 stories. Buildings tend to have modest (10-20) foot setbacks.

Uses: Predominantly single family but includes some attached dwellings scaled to single family homes. Civic uses such as churches and schools and some small-scale retail uses are integrated into the neighborhood.

Open Space: Neighborhood parks, private yards



UNIVERSITY AREA RESIDENTIAL

Residential areas surrounding the University of Alabama that have a similar street and lot pattern to traditional neighborhoods but feature a greater mix of housing. Housing typically serves the student population and includes single family detached homes, 2-5 unit residences and apartment buildings ranging in size from 3 to 6 stories.

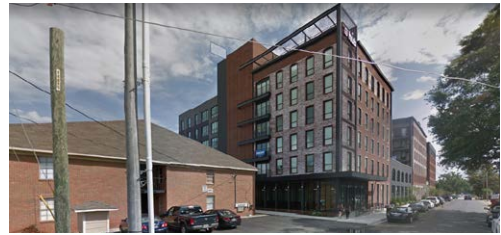
Streets / Blocks: Well-connected street network with small, walkable blocks that generally form a grid pattern.

Buildings: 1-5 stories. Buildings tend to have modest (0-20) foot setbacks.

Uses: Mix of housing including single family, 2-5 unit residences and 4+ unit apartment buildings, tend to serve the student population. Civic uses such as churches and schools and some small-scale retail uses are integrated into the neighborhood

Open Space: Very limited. Private yards and courts

Other: Rear and side yards may be paved to accommodate off-street parking



SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL, LOW INTENSITY

Predominantly single family housing areas generally developed in a car-focused pattern. May feature a mix of lot sizes, housing size and styles, including some small-scale attached dwellings, but housing styles are typically segregated and grouped within a subdivision

Streets / Blocks: Streets tend to be curvilinear with long blocks and fewer street connections. Primarily car-focused development. Many neighborhoods do not have sidewalks.

Buildings: 1-2 stories. Setbacks range from 15-25 feet and are consistent within a development.

Uses: Primarily single family residential. Housing types and styles tend to be segregated within a development. Other land uses tend to be physically separated from residential areas.

Open Space: Passive preserved land and private yards.



SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL, HIGH INTENSITY

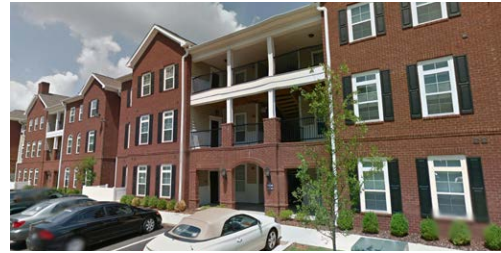
Predominantly multi-family apartment and attached residential development in a car-focused pattern. Blocks are longer and are less walkable with intermittent sidewalks and less access to nearby amenities. Developments tend to be large and of a single type and be disconnected from other residential and non-residential development.

Streets / Blocks: Streets are often curvilinear, with long blocks, fewer connections (not a walkable setting)

Buildings: 1-4 stories. Developments tend to have multiple similar buildings and are typically separated from other residential and non-residential uses.

Uses: Primarily residential apartments with 4+ units per building.

Open Space: Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas; private common areas.



SUBURBAN MIXED RESIDENTIAL

Sometimes referred to as "neo-traditional" neighborhoods, these are newer developments that incorporate many qualities of traditional neighborhoods including an integrated mix of housing and a walkable block pattern. Due to their location at the city's edge, they tend to have limited connectivity to other neighborhoods. Housing includes single family detached, attached types, and multifamily.

Streets / Blocks: Blocks are small and walkable. Streets form an irregular grid system within the neighborhood.

Buildings: 1-3 stories. Setbacks are typically similar to traditional neighborhoods (10-20 feet).

Uses: A mix of residential types; Recreational, civic sites such as schools, and small-scale commercial services may be integrated into the neighborhood.

Open Space: Preserved passive open space, neighborhood parks, pocket parks, private yards.



SUBURBAN ESTATE RESIDENTIAL

Single family homes generally set far back from the roadway on large lots (over one acre).

Streets / Blocks: Blocks are long and have few street connections.

Buildings: 1-2 stories. Set back far from the street.

Uses: Single family residential

Open Space: Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas; private yards.



RURAL EDGE

Rural edge refers to development generally outside of the city limits that includes residential and small non-residential uses on large lots (over one acre). Development in these areas is generally served by private well and septic systems.

Streets / Blocks: Blocks are long and have few street connections.

Buildings: 1-2 stories. Set back far from the street.

Uses: Single family residential, mobile homes, civic uses, small agricultural buildings

Open Space: Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas; private yards.

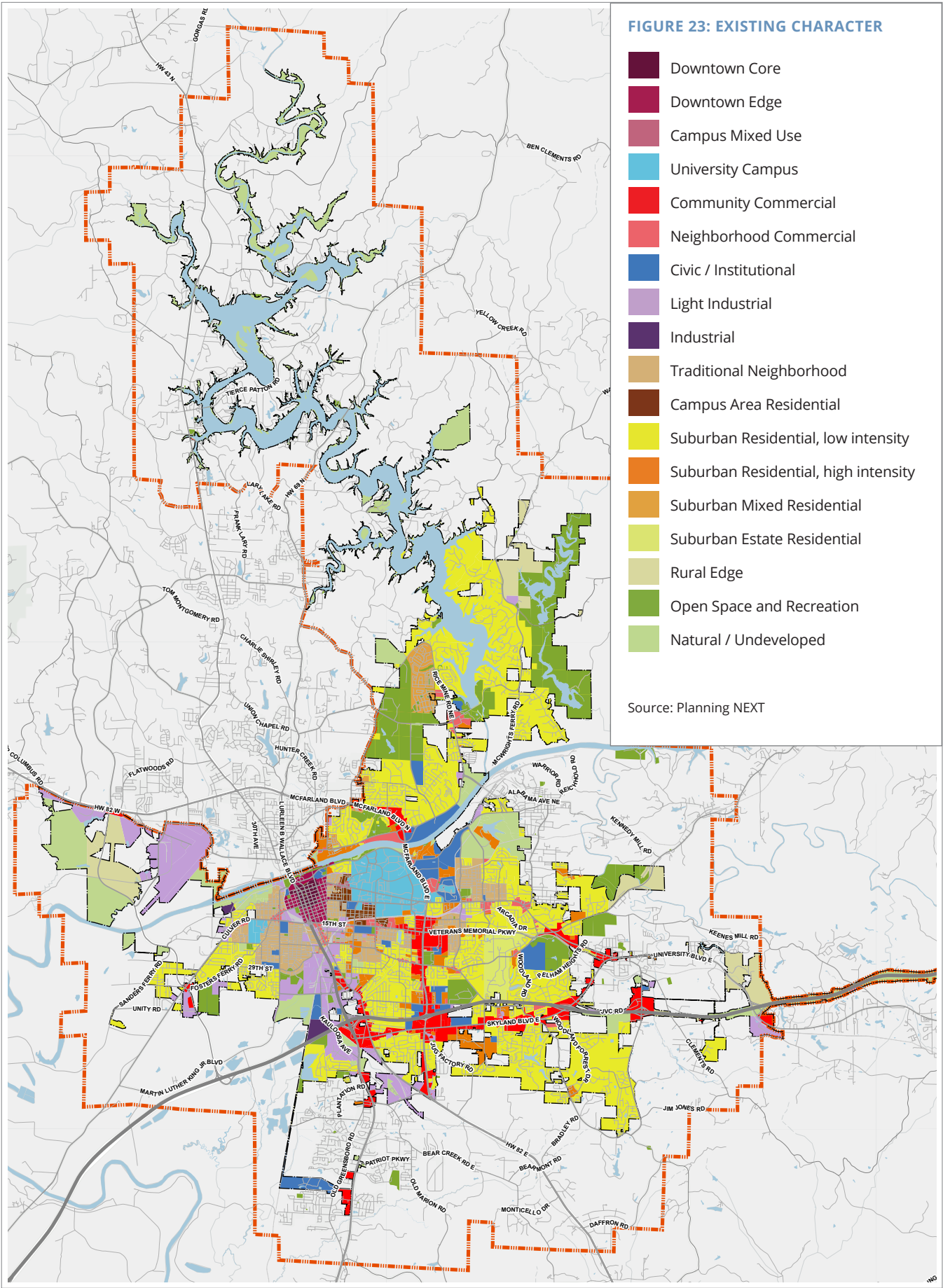


OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

The Open Space and Recreation designation includes city and county parks and large areas of preserved land such as the University of Alabama arboretum.

UNDEVELOPED

Undeveloped refers to areas that may include agricultural land, floodplain or forested land.



5. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Tuscaloosa has an abundance of natural resources in its surface water with three lakes (Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol, and Harris Lake) and the Black Warrior River that runs through the heart of the City. The features of Tuscaloosa's natural environment affect development patterns, land availability, and contribute to public health. Identifying these features and understanding their impact on the community's existing environment and future land use decision begins with their mapping. This section focuses on three critical environmental features: watersheds, wetlands and flood-prone areas, and slopes.

Watersheds

A watershed is an area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall to a common outlet such as the outflow of a reservoir, mouth of a bay, or any point along a stream channel. The watershed consists of surface water—lakes, streams, reservoirs, and wetlands—and all the underlying ground water (USGS, 2016). Regionally, Tuscaloosa is a focal point in the Black Warrior River Basin, and it sits between the Upper and Lower Black Warrior Sub Basins. Figure 24 depicts the watersheds of Lake Tuscaloosa (North River) and Lake Nicol and Harris Lake (Yellow Creek). Surface and ground water within these areas eventually flows into the lakes before draining into the Black Warrior River. Land use conditions in the North River and Yellow Creek watersheds have a direct impact on the water quality of the lakes. Figure 25 depicts the all of the subwatersheds throughout the planning area.

Water quality

With current development trends changing land use around the lakes come concerns about degradation of water quality due to erosion (turbidity and sediment from construction sites); wash-off of nutrients (lawn fertilizer); and increase in E. coli bacteria from any deficient septic tank systems.

The City monitors 26 water quality parameters at 34 locations on a monthly basis within the Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol, and Harris Lake watersheds. Currently the water quality meets or exceeds standards. The 2001 Watershed Protection Plan recommended that a long-term water quality monitoring program be established, but it has not been implemented.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management performed water quality monitoring on Lake Tuscaloosa during the following years: 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2011 and 2012. Based on the 2012 results compared with previous sampling events, the water quality remains very good, and there does not appear to be a trend that would suggest a degradation of water quality. The State of Alabama Department of Public Health has Lake Tuscaloosa and Binion Creek (a tributary to Lake Tuscaloosa) on the advisory list for fish consumption due to mercury.

Mercury contamination generally enters waterways from the air. In the United States, the largest contributor to mercury pollution is from fossil-fuel burning power plants.

THE LAKES

The City of Tuscaloosa owns and operates Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol, and Harris Lake for the purpose of drinking water and industrial raw water supply. Protection of these valuable natural resources is critical to the public health and welfare of the community and continued economic growth of the region.

Lake Tuscaloosa was completed in 1970 and is the primary source of drinking water for the Tuscaloosa metropolitan area. The lake was created by damming the North River and is 5,885 acres in size. Forty billion gallons of water provides the area with a valuable recreation, industrial and human needs resource. Lake Tuscaloosa is renowned in the area for its year-round fishing and boating culture (City of Tuscaloosa, 2018).

Lake Nicol was completed in 1956 and now serves as a backup for Lake Tuscaloosa. It is 384 acres in size and holds approximately 3.3 billion gallons of water. In addition to canoeing and swimming, Lake Nicol boasts a well-maintained park (City of Tuscaloosa, 2018). Harris Lake was completed in 1929 and serves the Tuscaloosa area as a source for industrial water use and hydroelectric power generation. The lake is 220 acres in size and holds approximately 1 billion gallons of water.

While the city owns the three lakes, its jurisdiction over the land surrounding these lakes varies. The land immediately surrounding lakes Nicol and Harris is within Tuscaloosa's city limits and is subject to city zoning regulations. Surrounding Lake Tuscaloosa, the city owns all land within the 50-year floodplain of the lake, which is defined approximately as the 230-foot elevation line. This line of city property is also known as the Acquisition Line. However, much of the land adjacent to Lake Tuscaloosa beyond the 230-foot elevation line is outside of city limits in unincorporated portions of Tuscaloosa County.

LAKE TUSCALOOSA



Source: Tour West Alabama

LAKE NICOL



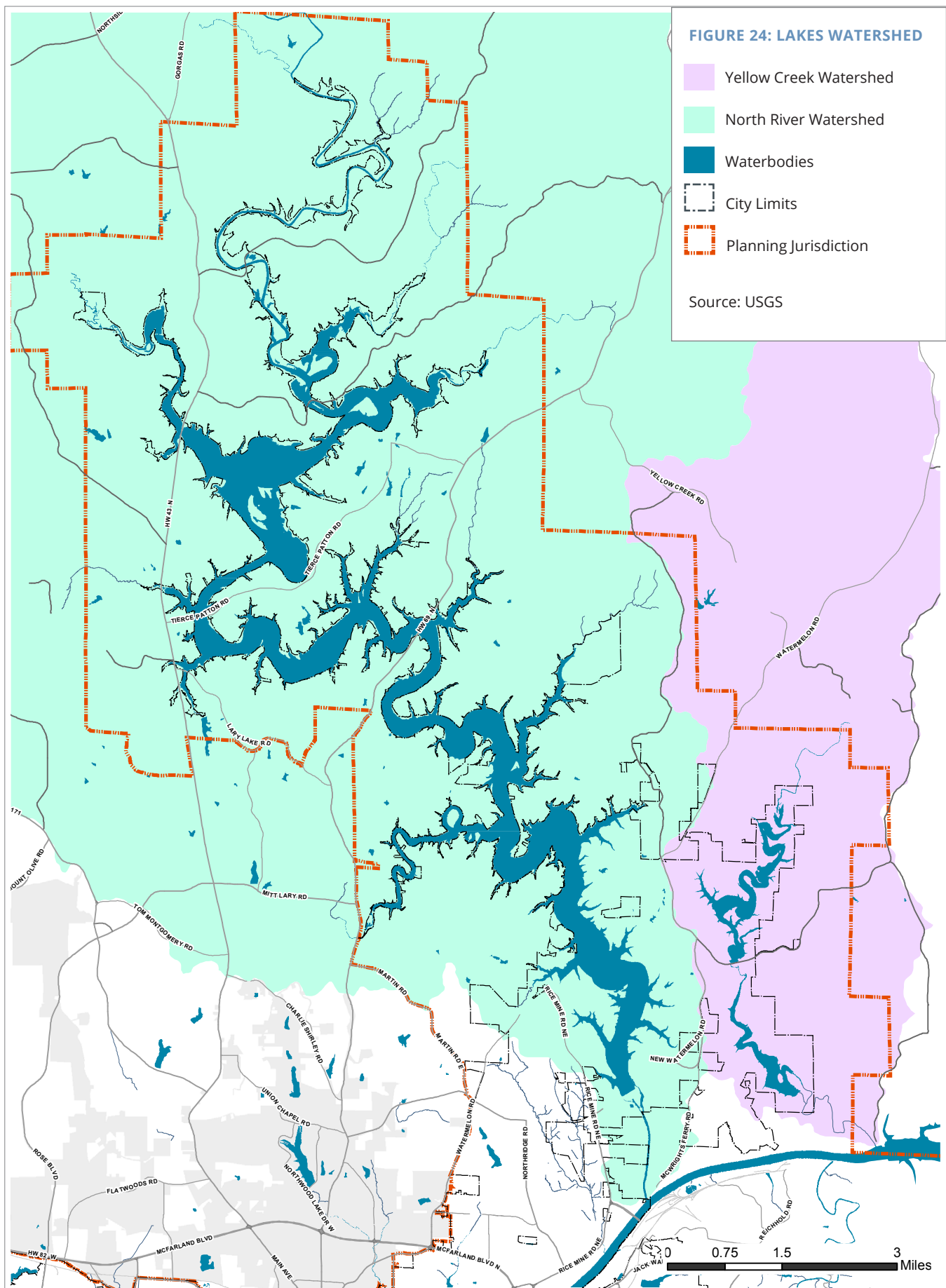
Source: Alabama Birding Trails

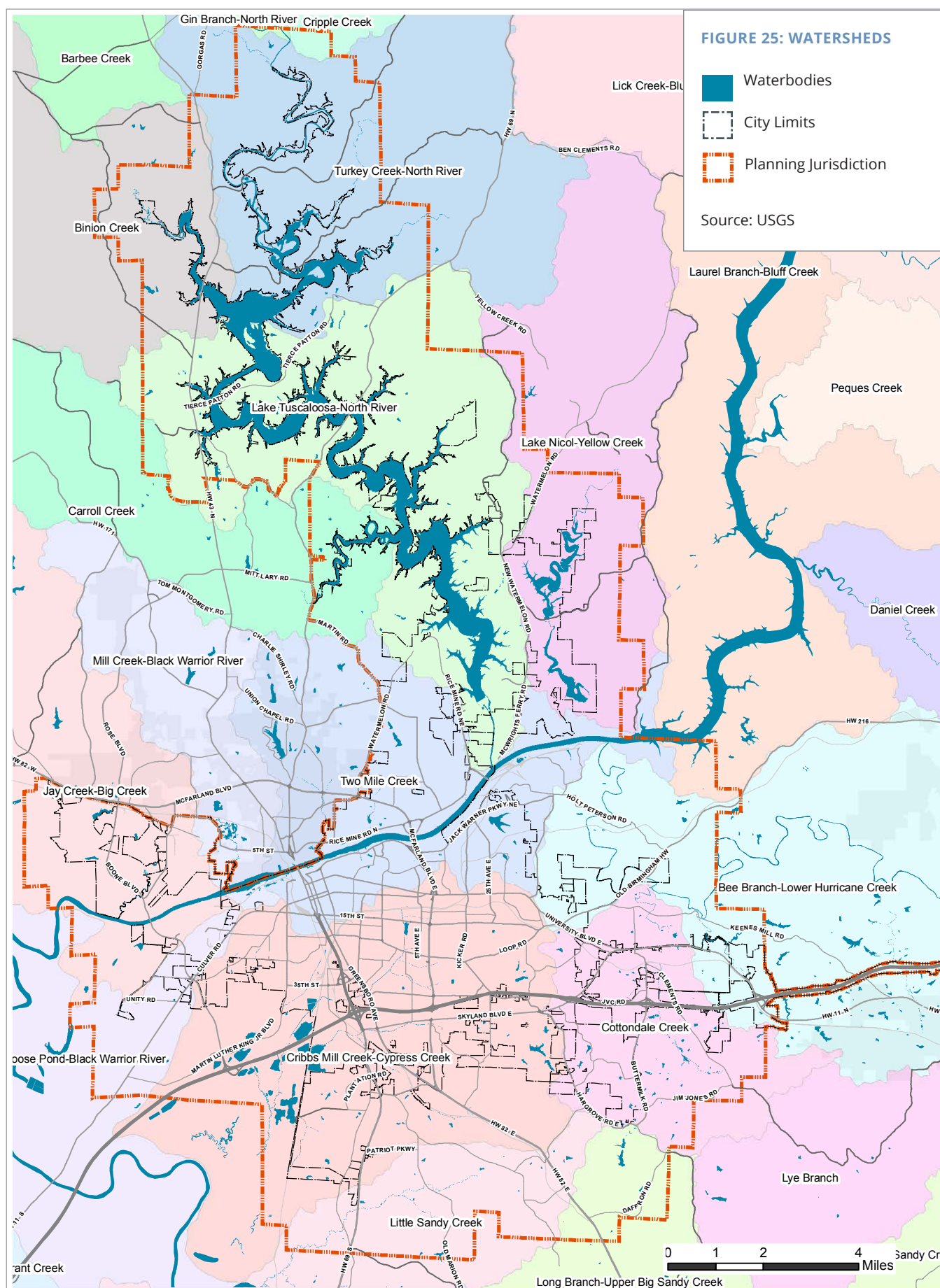
HARRIS LAKE



Source: Tour West Alabama

There is approximately 1,900 acres of protected land owned by the City of Tuscaloosa adjacent to and surrounding Lake Nicol and Harris Lake.





Flood hazards and wetlands

Wetlands and flood areas are a significant feature of the planning jurisdiction. The southwest portion of the planning area are Tuscaloosa's lowest elevations and are home to large sections of wetlands surrounded by flood-prone areas. This large area of flood-prone land has created opportunities for undisturbed natural environments surrounded by agriculture. Figure 26 depicts areas with a 1% annual chance of flooding (sometimes referred to as the 100-year or base flood) as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Development is not prohibited within flood hazard areas but is often more costly due to increased engineering permit requirements. Buildings constructed in these areas are required to have their ground floor at least two (2) feet above the base flood elevation within the city and one foot elsewhere in the county.

Slopes

The topography of the planning area is fairly gentle with the exception of some moderately steep areas along the edges of the lakes. Figure 27 indicates areas with potentially steep slopes. These slopes are typically wooded and offer scenic qualities that make attractive residential development sites. These areas are also important for the health of the watersheds. Disturbing steep slopes can have negative environmental impacts including water pollution from increased erosion and surface water runoff, increased risk of downstream flooding, and loss of habitat. Development on steep slopes is also more costly for developers, property owners and public entities due to additional building and site engineering required, greater installation and maintenance of infrastructure (roads, utilities), water treatment from pollution and sedimentation, and potential increase in public safety costs.

Many local governments regulate development on steep slopes through zoning and subdivision ordinances. The City of Northport's 2012 zoning ordinance restricts development on slopes of 30% or greater, while some communities impose restrictions on slopes in excess of 10% or 15%. The City of Tuscaloosa does not currently have specific steep slope restrictions, but the subdivision regulations state that "Every effort should be made to avoid the disturbance of steep wooded ravines." The city does encourage "low impact development" practices as part of its Stormwater Management Plan (see sidebar).

Stormwater and Pollution

During heavy rain events, the rain drops flow together (creating stormwater flow) and pick up pesticides, fertilizer, oil and grease, pet waste, gravel and sediment, litter and other dissolved chemicals as it flows across grass and/or pavement. If flow is slowed, the water is absorbed into soil and can filter and replenish groundwater. In a heavy rain event, or when stormwater flow is high and not absorbed, the excess water flows into a storm drain and a network of pipes that lead to a ditch, stream, river, or lake. *All storm drains lead to local bodies of water.*

To protect local and natural resources, the City of Tuscaloosa, construction companies, industries, and others, use stormwater controls, known as best management practices (BMPs). These BMPs filter out pollutants and/or prevent pollution by controlling it at its source.

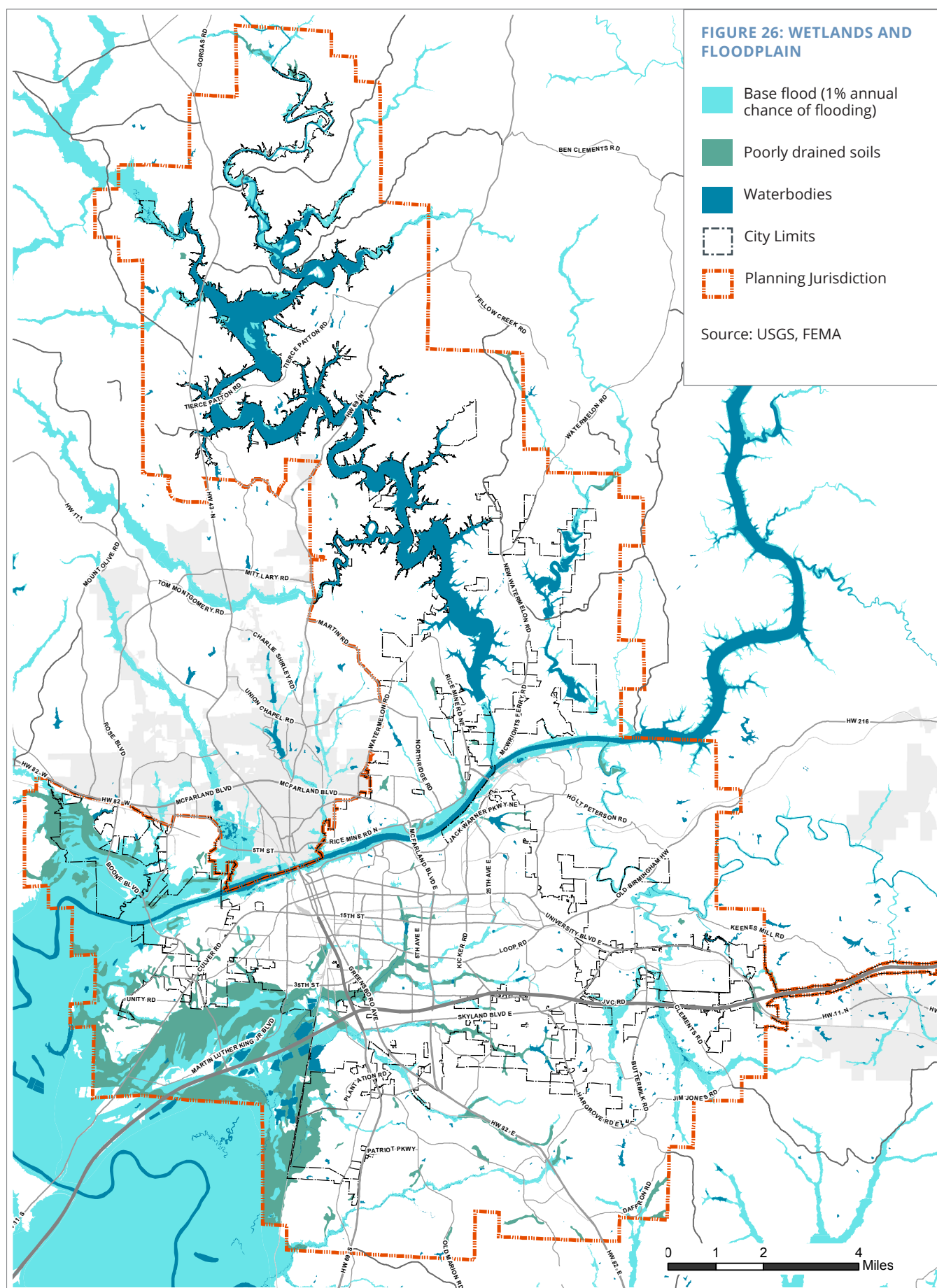
To comply with the Federal Clean Water Act, the City of Tuscaloosa implements a stormwater management plan (SWMP) to reduce discharge of pollutants into local waterways. This program consists of:

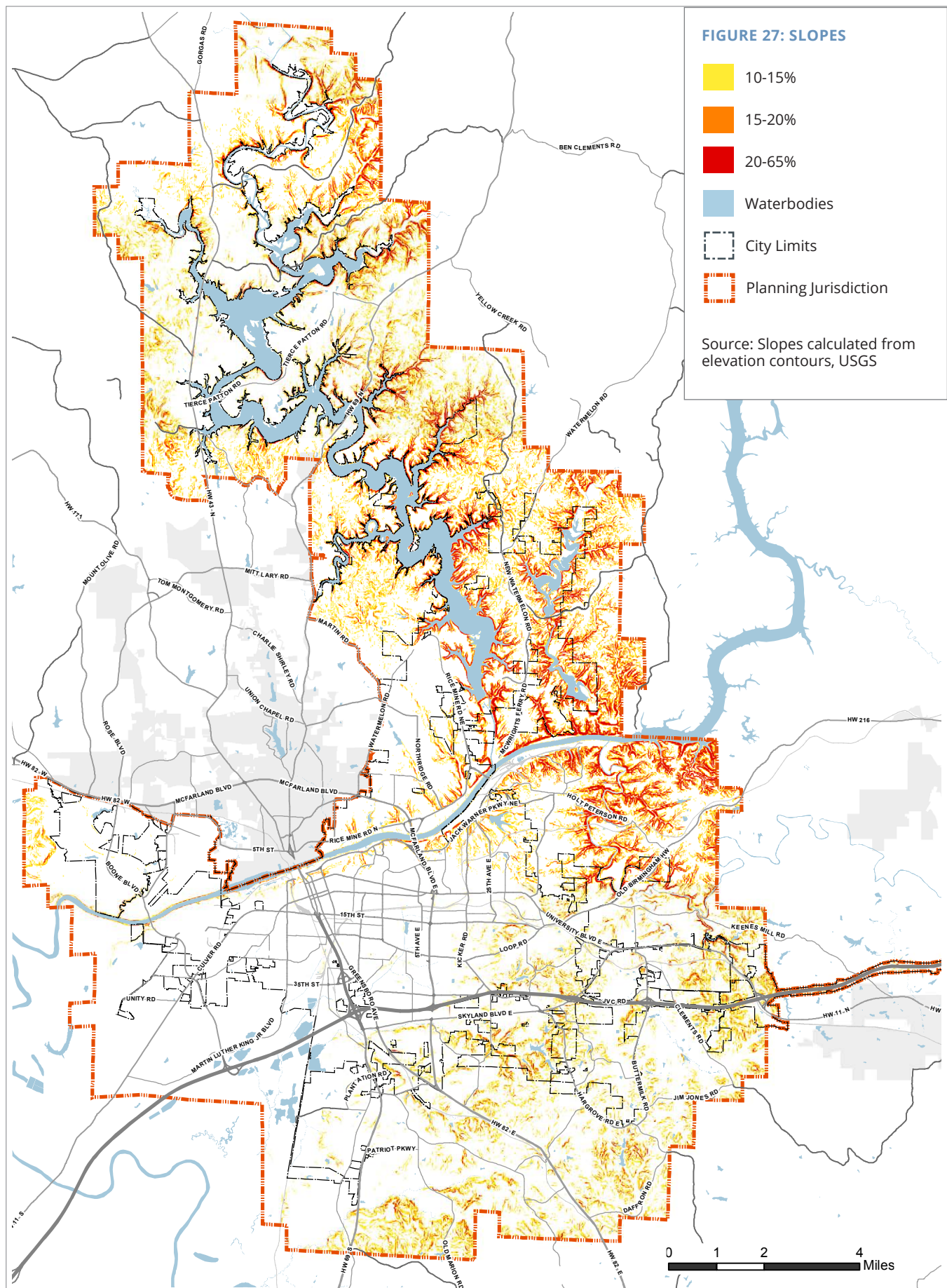
- Promoting Low Impact Development / green infrastructure
- Educating the public about stormwater pollution
- Identifying illicit discharges through mapping and inspections
- Inspecting construction sites to ensure compliance with erosion control methods
- Continually evaluating the City's SWMP with annual reports

Low Impact Development

Low impact development (LID) is a design approach for managing stormwater runoff. It emphasizes conservation and the use of on-site natural features to protect water quality. The City has been recognized as a leader in the state for LID implementation. The City of Tuscaloosa has permitted over 200 LID sites since April 27, 2011.

www.tuscaloosa.com/stormwater/





Other natural hazards

The resiliency of the Tuscaloosa community is undeniable after the days following the April 27th, 2011, tornado, but natural hazards are a growing threat to Tuscaloosa's resources and infrastructure. According to the U.S. Tornado and Weather Extremes database of 1950-2010, Tuscaloosa is 14% more likely to experience a tornado than the state as a whole. To ensure that the City is prepared for these events, Tuscaloosa worked with the County to develop the Tuscaloosa County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2014. Most notably is Tuscaloosa's propensity to flooding, which is a growing concern for Tuscaloosa currently, as it continues to develop.

EXISTING POLICIES

Within the city's acquisition line of Lake Tuscaloosa

The city requires that a permit from the city be obtained by all property owners wishing to clear any property (of trees larger than 3 inches in diameter) or install any structure (such as a dock, pier, etc) within the city's Acquisition Line (230' elevation contour) of Lake Tuscaloosa.

Minor subdivisions

Minor subdivisions are not permitted on lakefront lots on Lake Tuscaloosa. A minor subdivision is defined a subdivision of land into not more than three lots; or a reduction of the number of lots in an existing subdivision in the corporate limits; or the subdivision of land into not more than six (6) lots or a reduction of the number of lots in an existing subdivision in the planning jurisdiction. A minor subdivision shall not require any public improvements, the dedication of public way, or the expenditure of any funds, and the plan for the minor subdivision shall not conflict with the master plan, official zoning map, any zoning ordinance, or any other subdivision regulations.

Erosion Control

Within the city limits, an individual or a developer who owns or controls more than 10 acres of land within one subwatershed and who is subdividing all or part of such acreage must ensure that the existing streambed and streambank will suffer no appreciable increase in erosion as a result of the proposed development, or will take certain engineering measures to prevent erosion of the streambed.

Open space or community use set-asides

Many communities require that new developments or major subdivisions set-aside lands for the preservation of open space, community facilities and to protect environmental

Open Space set-asides.

Open space set-asides are private lands on a development site that are set aside in perpetuity for the purpose of preserving environmentally sensitive lands, buffer areas, tree canopy, recreational lands (passive and active), meeting or gathering places, and the like. These lands can be maintained in perpetuity through a variety of tools—including, but not limited to, easements, covenants, dedication (donation of the land to a public agency for public use), conveyance of the lands to a third party beneficiary etc.

quality. The following is a summary related policies currently in place.

- Permanent open space set asides are required within the city's Multifamily Residence zoning districts and Planned Unit Development districts based on number of dwelling units in a project. There is no overall open space set-aside requirement for other zoning districts or subdivisions generally.
- In areas within the planning jurisdiction, but outside of the city limits, developments of clustered houses, duplexes, and townhouses intended for individual homeowners will require sufficient permanent open space, at the discretion of the Planning Commission.
- Where the comprehensive plan indicates that an area for a new subdivision should include part or all of a site for a school, park, open space preserve, or community facility, the developer shall be requested to dedicate or attempt to sell such site to the appropriate public agency. To any extent which may be sanctioned by the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Commission may allow lot size reductions in a subdivision in exchange for dedications of such sites.
- The Floodplain Management Plan, which the city reviews annually, recommends that the city enact regulations to 1) require the implementation of low impact development techniques to minimize the need for more traditional stormwater management controls; and 2) provide incentives to set aside flood plains as permanent open space in new developments (consider provisions for clustering and conservation subdivisions).

Previous Plans & Studies related to the natural environment

Previous plans, including 2009 Future Land Use Plan, the 2007 Strategic Plan, and the 2001 Watershed Protection Plan, include the following general recommendations:

- Continue to assess and protect Tuscaloosa's water resources and natural areas.
- Improve Tuscaloosa's water quality through planning and development approaches.
- Promote environmentally friendly urban design principles.
- Update urban stream priority areas on a yearly basis.
- Encourage conservation easements through tax incentives.
- Develop green infrastructure infill strategies.
- Require green infrastructure in new development.
- Develop Greenway connectivity to community destinations.
- Continue to improve stormwater management regulations.

6. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The rich history of the City of Tuscaloosa is reflected by its historic downtown, residential districts, and its many individual sites and structures. To help protect these assets, the City proactively participates in historic preservation efforts.

ORGANIZATIONS

Like many cities with historic assets, the City of Tuscaloosa has created local historic preservation districts that are supported by historic preservation design guidelines under the direction of the Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission and City staff. The City also works with the Alabama Historical Commission to coordinate its many national registered historic designations, and the Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society operates and maintains four of the City's historical landmarks.

Historic Preservation Commission

The City of Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) was formed in 2004. It was created to ensure that Tuscaloosa's historic resources are maintained in a manner appropriate to the City's heritage. The HPC provides primary guidance in the planning and design of projects that are sympathetic to the special character of the historic districts. The HPC's jurisdiction and the city's historic preservation regulations are described on the following page.

Alabama Historical Commission

The Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) was created in 1966. AHC is the agency designated to carry out the State's responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and operates under the provisions of the Code of Alabama 1975. Their mission is to preserve and promote state-owned historic sites as public attractions; and, statewide programs to assist people, groups, towns and cities with local preservation activities.

Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society

Since 1966, the Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society (TCPS) has been preserving and promoting Tuscaloosa County's historic resources. A non-profit organization, the Society's mission is to develop an awareness and appreciation of the historical and cultural heritage of our community. The Society operates and maintains four historical landmarks: The Old Tavern, the Battle-Friedman House, the McGuire-Strickland House, and the Murphy African American Museum.

THE OLD TAVERN



Source: Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society

MURPHY AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM



Source: Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society

PROTECTIONS

Chapter 20 of the City Code

Portions of Chapter 20 of Tuscaloosa's City Code pertain to the Historic Preservation Commission and the City's historic districts. Chapter 20 established the nine-member Historic Preservation Commission to streamline its laws and rules related to historic development. According to Chapter 20, the Commission is intended to provide a uniform procedure for the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects, landscape features and works of art having a special historical, cultural or aesthetic interest or value. Chapter 20 also declares the City's historic districts and properties that are subject to the Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines (Table 6).

Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines

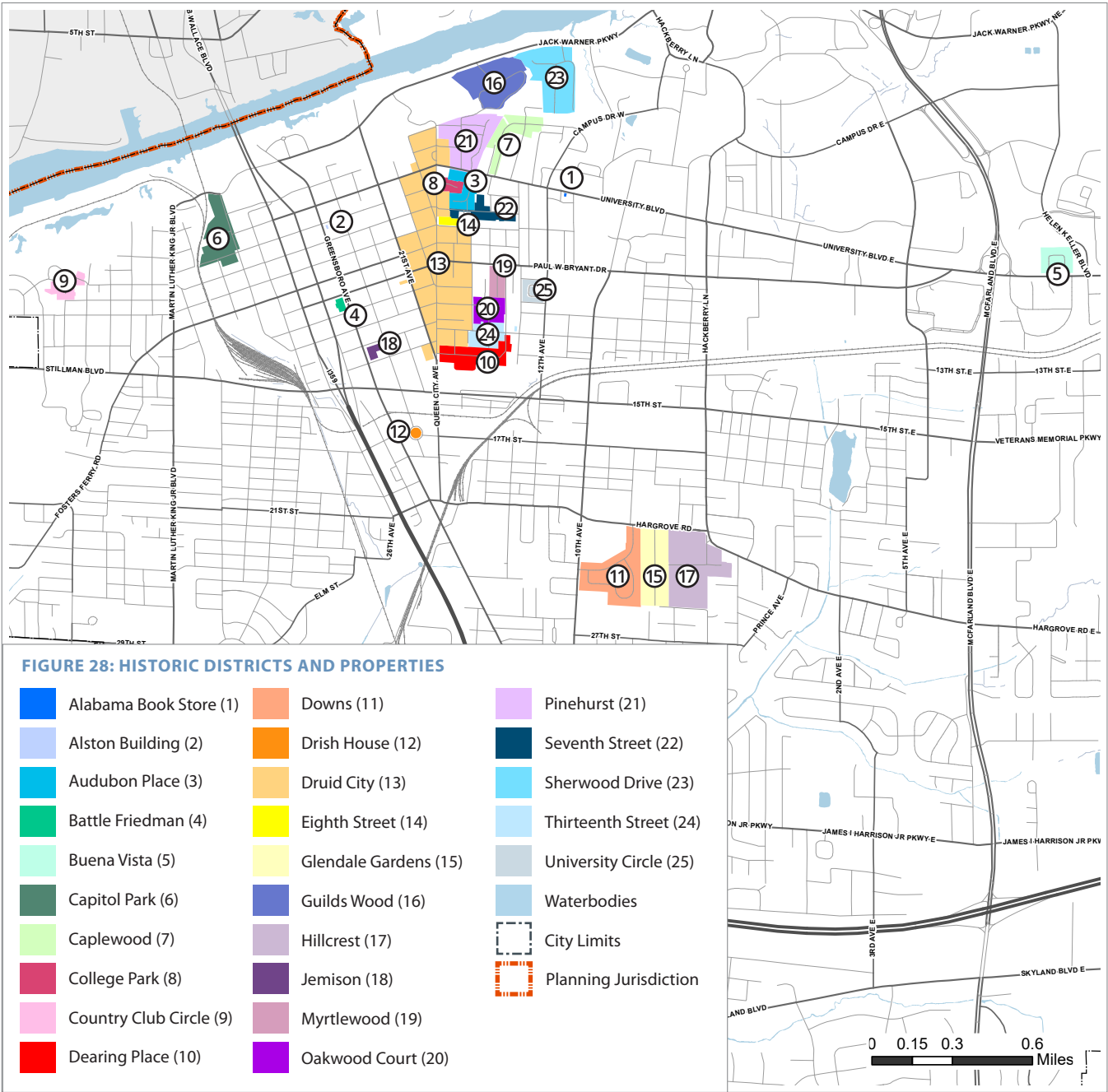
The City has 25 Historic Districts and properties that are subject to the Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines which provide fundamental design guidelines relative to rehabilitation and alteration, specific work activity, architectural materials and features, and site features and lot improvements.

The Historic Preservation Commission Design Guidelines describe strategies to protect the historic character of exterior structures and sites within historic districts. These strategies include a zoning overlay and the requirement of a Certificate of Appropriateness (from either the City or the Historic Preservation Commission) before a building permit is issued. Depending on the scale and complexity of the proposed change, an expedited process is available. All demolitions must also receive a Certificate of Appropriateness, and property maintenance is continually enforced to impede dilapidation and blight in historic districts.

RESTORED DRISH HOUSE



Source: Tuscaloosa News



ASSETS

The City of Tuscaloosa has many historic assets that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A few of these places are local districts that are also nationally registered, but the majority are individual buildings and sites that are all around the City.

These historically significant places range from prominent institutions, downtown theaters, residential homes and churches, to an education building with steps that acted as a backdrop of a national struggle and a significant event in the continued pursuit for equality. The City of Tuscaloosa boasts one of the largest lists of National Registered Historic Places in Alabama.

National Historic Landmark. Of Tuscaloosa's many historic assets, one is a National Historic Landmark. National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Today, just over 2,500 historic places bear this national distinction (National Park Service, 2018).

Foster Auditorium was designated in 2005 as a National Historic Landmark. More than any other event, Foster Auditorium is known as the site of the "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door" incident. On June 11, 1963, Governor George C. Wallace, making good on a campaign pledge to not allow integration of the university, stood in the doorway of the building on the day of registration. The incident is seen as one of the seminal events in the Civil Rights Movement in America. Foster Auditorium is still a multi-purpose facility at the University of Alabama where the Crimson Tide women's basketball and volleyball programs are held.

FOSTER AUDITORIUM



Source: Visit Tuscaloosa

SITES AND DISTRICTS IN TUSCALOOSA LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

- Alabama Insane Hospital (Bryce Hospital)
- Audubon Place Historic District
- Bama Theatre-City Hall
- Battle-Friedman House
- Caplewood Drive Historic District
- Carson Place (Mayfield-Sutley)
- City National Bank (First Alabama Bank)
- Collier-Overby Home
- Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District
- Druid City Historic District
- First African Baptist Church
- Fitch House
- Foster Auditorium, The University of Alabama
- Gorgas-Manly Historic District
- Guild-Verner House
- Jemison School (Drish House)
- Jemison, Robert, Servants' House
- Jemison-Vandegraaff House
- Kennedy-Foster House
- Murphy-Collins House
- Old Observatory
- Old Tuscaloosa County Jail (V.F.W. Club)
- Pinehurst Historic District
- President's Mansion
- Quayle, Margaret, Lustron House
- Queen City Pool and Pool House
- Searcy House (Board of Education)
- Searcy House
- Tuscaloosa Veterans Administration Hospital Historic District
- Wheeler House

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of our country's historic buildings, districts, sites, structures, and objects worthy of preservation. It was established as part of the National Historical Preservation Act of 1966 and is overseen by the National Park Service.

National Register of Historic Places is primarily an honorary designation but may make properties eligible for special Federal programs. Local designation in the city's ordinance is the only way to provide legal protection for historic properties.