

# FRAME/WORK

A dynamic guide for Tuscaloosa

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

February 17, 2021



## RESOLUTION

### RESOLUTION ADOPTING “FRAMEWORK, A DYNAMIC GUIDE FOR TUSCALOOSA,” AS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE CITY OF TUSCALOOSA

WHEREAS, the Tuscaloosa City Planning and Zoning Commission (Commission) pursuant to Alabama Code §11-52-8 has the duty to make and adopt a master / comprehensive plan for the physical development of the City, including any areas outside of its corporate limits which, in the commission’s judgment, bear relation to the planning of the City; and,

WHEREAS, the adoption of this new Comprehensive Plan, “Framework, a Dynamic Guide for Tuscaloosa,” supersedes and replaces the adoption by the Commission of any prior Master Plan, Comprehensive Plan, Neighborhood Plan or District Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the Framework process to adopt a comprehensive plan was launched in June of 2018 to define a long-term vision for Tuscaloosa and set the direction for growth and development, as Tuscaloosa’s previous land use plan was drafted in 2009 and the community experienced a global recession, the 2011 tornadoes, significant population growth, and now a global pandemic since that time; and

WHEREAS, the drafting of this new Comprehensive Plan followed a planning process that was both intuitive and informed, shaped by input from the community and quantitative research and the help of a diverse 30-member citizen steering committee appointed to help with the process and substance of the plan and headed by a consultant team led by planningNEXT; and

WHEREAS, the drafting of Framework involved numerous public meetings to formulate a draft of the Comprehensive Plan including 11 Steering Committee meetings, 5 Housing Subcommittee meetings, 4 Lakes Subcommittee meetings, a two-hour Forum on the Future in November 2018 and two three-hour Open House sessions in November 2019, along with numerous public hearings before the Commission to review the draft of the Comprehensive Plan and to provide opportunity for public comment.

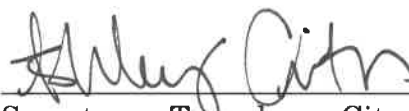
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TUSCALOOSA CITY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION that the Commission adopts a new comprehensive plan for the City of Tuscaloosa entitled “Framework, a Dynamic Guide for Tuscaloosa,” incorporated herein by reference to supersede and replace

any prior Master Plan, Comprehensive Plan, Neighborhood Plan and District plan previously adopted by the Commission.

STATE OF ALABAMA                    )  
TUSCALOOSA COUNTY                )

I, Ashley Crites, Secretary to The Tuscaloosa City Planning and Zoning Commission hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Tuscaloosa City Planning and Zoning Commission at a regular meeting of said Commission held on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of February , 2021, as the same appears and remains of record in the record book in the Office of Urban Development's Planning Division wherein are recorded the minutes of the proceedings of said Commission.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto affixed my signature and the official seal of said City of Tuscaloosa this the 18<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary, Tuscaloosa City Planning  
and Zoning Commission

A21-0239

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The city would like to thank the following individuals for their commitment and dedication in assisting with the Framework Comprehensive Plan initiative. Sharing your knowledge, thoughts and ideas rendered an invaluable service to your community. Additionally, the city would like to thank the many other community members who participated in Framework or simply expressed their support and enthusiasm for the effort.

## Special Thanks

Citizens of Tuscaloosa

## Planning Commission

Bill Wright, Chairman

Tim Harrison, Vice-Chairman

Alvin Brewer

Vince Dooley

Anne Hornsby

Philip Maxwell

Phyllis Wade Odom, Councilor

Dena Prince

Steven Rumsey

## Stakeholder Organizations

The Arts & Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa

Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama

Homebuilders Association of Tuscaloosa

Minority Business Council

Original City Association

Shelton State Community College

Stillman College

Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation Authority (PARA)

Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development Authority

Tuscaloosa Housing Authority

Tuscaloosa Neighbors Together

Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports Commission

University of Alabama

Young Tuscaloosa

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City Communications team

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Councilor Phyllis Wade Odom, District 1

Councilor Raevan Howard, District 2

Councilor Lee Busby, District 4

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# RIVER MARKET TUSCALOOSA

Answer D. \$400,000-\$499,000

Which of the top 100 cities of the following  
ranked highest for the number of  
businesses in the industry?



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Framework is a process launched in 2018 to define a long-term vision for Tuscaloosa and set the direction for the city's growth and development in the coming decades. The process included both the creation of the Framework Comprehensive Plan and a rewrite of the city's zoning and land development regulations. This Plan serves as a guide for decision makers and the community for future development and many aspects of our city's quality of life. It is both comprehensive—taking a long-term view of a broad range of topics—and strategic—serving as an action plan to move the community forward.

## WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is the broadest public policy document for the city and sets forth the long-range vision for physical development, housing, economic development, transportation, community facilities and related topics. This Plan is a tool to address community needs, prepare for change and protect what we treasure. It serves as both a business plan and guidebook for decision-makers. The Framework Comprehensive Plan also serves as a marketing tool for the city to clearly convey the community's values and priorities.

To achieve the Plan's goals, the Plan includes specific actions (policies, projects and programs) and identifies timing and responsibilities for undertaking those actions. It also contains map-based recommendations that indicate the city's intent for where and how it will use land resources and design infrastructure improvements.

The Plan serves as the foundation for the city's budgeting process, zoning ordinance, land development regulations, and other ordinances. It is implemented over time through many distinct decisions including annual budgeting, departmental work programs, rezoning, and subdivision of land.

### Chapter Organization

- What is a Comprehensive Plan?
- The Need for a New Plan
- Plan Structure
- The Planning Process



# THE NEED FOR A NEW PLAN

To be effective, a plan must be periodically updated to account for current conditions, data and new technologies. Tuscaloosa's previous land use plan was drafted in 2009. Since that time the community has experienced many changes, including a global recession, the 2011 tornados and significant population growth. Other recent plans have been focused on specific topics or geographies. The Framework Comprehensive Plan is an opportunity to consider policies over a broad range of topics for the entire city in light of current needs, opportunities, and best practices.

## CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

- **Development interest versus community needs.** Recent growth has largely served the student rental market and the high end of the housing market. Though growth at the University of Alabama may be stabilizing, there is likely to be ongoing development interest for new student housing and game-day housing, which impacts the community's character.
- **Shifting national economic and demographic context.** Global economic trends and rapidly evolving technologies are changing vital industries, such as retail and manufacturing, and reshaping how cities grow. At the same time, community needs are changing with demographics shifts indicating slower growth in family households and a larger population of seniors in coming years.
- **Community desires.** There are strong community desires for strengthening existing neighborhoods, creating more attractive development, being good stewards of natural resources, having access to unique recreational opportunities, and improving transportation choices, including transit, biking, and walking.
- **Limited housing choices and affordability.** There is a need for more housing options that are affordable and meet the lifestyle needs of moderate income households, families, young adults, empty nesters, and seniors. Meeting these housing needs takes a multifaceted approach that includes support for maintaining older housing stock, encouraging infill development of new housing types, and new neighborhood development.
- **Underutilized land and neighborhood disinvestment.** There is a need to stimulate revitalization, infill, and redevelopment in many areas that have struggled with long-term disinvestment, have not recovered from the 2011 tornado, or are underutilized.
- **Aging infrastructure increasing cost of growth.** There are infrastructure challenges with limited capacity in some areas while other areas need ongoing repair, replacement, and upgrades to aging infrastructure. The city must consider the increasing long-term cost of infrastructure in where and how it grows.
- **Funding.** State and Federal policies have tended to shift costs to cities. Tuscaloosa is fortunate to be well-managed and fiscally healthy, but the city must continue to make smart investments to maximize its resources.



## ASSETS TO BUILD UPON

- **Important institutions.** While home to the state's flagship institution, the University of Alabama, the city also has other significant educational institutions such as Stillman College and Shelton State Community College that provide valuable community services, improve the quality of the workforce, and can serve as strategic partners.
- **Experience amenities.** The city has a strong base to build experience opportunities with assets including the Black Warrior River and the River Walk, the Amphitheater, the three lakes, and growing support for arts and cultural organizations.
- **Strong neighborhoods.** There are many established traditional neighborhoods with strong organizations and sense of pride. These core neighborhoods contain desirable features such as walkable blocks and integrated community amenities, that could be models for the design of future neighborhoods.
- **Revitalizing downtown.** Like many traditional neighborhoods, downtown offers a unique physical environment that cannot be recreated. There is growing interest in downtown investment to create a more vibrant core that is better connected to the University area, surrounding neighborhoods, and the riverfront.
- **Location and scale.** The city serves as the primary urban center of the west Alabama region yet is close to the state's largest city, Birmingham. Its smaller urban scale offers an appealing alternative to larger cities.
- **Development opportunities.** There are several significant opportunity sites for redevelopment that could create places with new development types, amenities, and experiences.
- **A shift in planning.** Comprehensive planning is stated as one of the city administration's core values. Framework represents a significant effort to pursue a more coordinated and holistic approach to long-term growth planning.

## WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS PLAN?

The Framework Comprehensive Plan replaces the policy direction of past land use plans. Other previous plans and studies that contain useful context or detailed recommendations are specifically referenced within this Plan. Beyond serving as an update, this Plan is unique for Tuscaloosa in that it:

- Addresses a broad range of topics, including physical development, housing, transportation, community amenities and facilities and related topics.
- Addresses both citywide needs and those in specific areas
- Is strategic with many achievable, specific actions in addition to long-term goals
- Is implementable with a structure for monitoring progress and integrating into other city processes and ordinances

### Relation to zoning

The Framework process is also unique in that it will involve a complete rewrite of the city's zoning code following the Plan's adoption.

The zoning code is the adopted law of a city that:

- Regulates the allowed uses and building size and location in various locations;
- Defines the development review process and standards for parking, signage, building design, and resource protection; and
- Is essential to implement the Framework Comprehensive Plan.

# PLAN STRUCTURE

The Framework Comprehensive Plan is organized into six broad theme chapters, which reflect the inter-relatedness of issues. Each chapter is supported by a goal and several objectives that serve to organize the 111 specific actions detailed in the Plan. The Plan chapters and goals are:

## Growing

*Well-managed land and infrastructure that includes revitalization, strategic growth, and stewardship of the natural environment, creates an appealing community character, and promotes the city's long-term financial health.*

Objectives: 10  
Actions: 47

### Goals

Intended outcomes expressed in simple terms for the Plan's six theme chapters.

### Objectives

Subthemes within the goal that serve to organize actions.

### Actions

A project, policy, or program.

## Living

*Vibrant neighborhoods with distinct identities that offer a wide variety of attractive living options for a diverse population.*

Objectives: 5  
Actions: 17

## Connecting

*Safe and smart transportation options that serve people of all ages and abilities, with strong connectivity and attractive options for public transportation, biking, and walking.*

Objectives: 5  
Actions: 15

## Experiencing

*Superior community amenities, including a wide range of parks and recreational facilities, city services, and well-supported arts and cultural events and venues.*

Objectives: 4  
Actions: 13

## Competing

*A strong and resilient economy with diverse opportunities to find or create a job in a place that is appealing to the lifestyle needs and desires of a talented workforce and is attractive as a visitor destination.*

Objectives: 4  
Actions: 7

## Achieving

*A strong planning culture and a commitment to action with leaders who embrace continued public engagement and collaboration among other government entities, institutions, and the business community.*

Objectives: 4  
Actions: 12

# THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process was both intuitive and informed, shaped by input from the community and quantitative research. A diverse 30-member citizen steering committee was appointed to help with the process and substance of the plan. The Framework Comprehensive Plan process lasted approximately 16 months and included stakeholder and community input. Following completion of the Plan, the process will transition to updating the zoning code.

## Steering Committee

A 30-member steering committee was appointed by the city to serve as community advocates for the Framework Comprehensive Plan, to provide guidance and direction regarding the process and substance, and to serve as stewards of the Plan once it is completed. The committee officially represented citizens in the planning process and provided direction and feedback to the planning team. The committee held eleven official meetings. Additionally, two subcommittees provided more in-depth input into housing and the lakes.

## Research and Analysis

The technical analysis effort involved an analysis of existing conditions related to housing and neighborhoods, land use and development trends, water and wastewater infrastructure, transportation conditions, community facilities and services, and economic opportunities. It also involved a review of the city's existing plans and studies. Several studies underway concurrent with the Framework process were also integrated including the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory, Airport Master Plan, and Riverwalk Master Plan Update.





## Stakeholder Input

In addition to input from the general public, targeted meetings and interviews were conducted with stakeholders to better understand their needs, hopes and concerns. The stakeholder groups included neighborhood groups, elected officials, developers, the higher education institutions, students, city and county planning officials, school district and business representatives in key sectors including technology/entrepreneurial, real estate, manufacturing, logistics and health care among others.



## Forum on the Future

Framework's Forum on The Future was hosted on November 27, 2018 at the Tuscaloosa River Market. The Forum was the first community input event to help set the direction for the Comprehensive Plan. The Forum was widely promoted and open to anyone who cares about the future of Tuscaloosa. Approximately 325 people attended the event, generating thousands of comments and ideas for the future of the city. Participants and others who missed the event were also able to provide feedback after the meeting through the project website.

The Forum on the Future was designed to inform the community about the Framework Comprehensive Plan and zoning code update, introduce key conditions and trends, and provide an opportunity for individual feedback and discussion about topics important to participants. The agenda provided a combination of educational and inspirational elements, as well as individual and group activities.



## Communication and outreach

Competing interests, busy lifestyles, the long-term nature of planning, and the complexity of issues make enticing people to attend public meetings very challenging. To inform the public about Framework, the city and steering committee conducted a publicity and word-of-mouth outreach campaign that included:

- Flyers, posters and billboards
- Having a presence at community events
- Letters to the editor
- Radio interviews
- A project website
- Email
- Social media campaign





## Open House

On November 6, 2019 the draft plan was presented to the community at an open house. Approximately 430 people attended over the course of the day-long event. Attendees viewed the display boards containing the specific actions in the plan and the draft Future Land Use and Character Map. Participants gave feedback on the draft plan through three activities:

1. Indicating recommendations they felt were most important using sticker dots;
2. Sharing thoughts or ideas of concern or support using comment cards; and
3. Providing feedback on the future land use map using internet-enabled interactive tablets or a paper map. Feedback submitted with a tablet was shown in real-time on a screen in the room.

Feedback was collected through the Framework website for a month following the open house.



## Adoption Review

The Framework adoption process involved a series of Special Called meetings of Planning Commission to review the draft plan and consider community feedback. The process began in February 2020 but was paused in April after two meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the cancellation of all public hearings through May.

After pausing for the summer while the City developed and tested procedures for safe public hearings, the Framework adoption process restarted in September 2020. That process involved a new series of ten Special Called meetings designed for:

- Health and safety for the Commission members, public, and staff;
- Re-education and familiarization with the Framework process;
- Open and transparent conversations regarding the work that has been done; and
- Integration of necessary changes caused by COVID-19 on land use, housing needs, and economy.

Many of these meetings were conducted in a video conference format. All Special Called Planning Commission meetings were livestreamed on the City's social media channels and recorded. The public submitted written comments or participated in-person and virtually. Between the Special Called meetings, the City invited various community groups to set up meetings with staff to go over concerns and ask questions (including Chamber of Commerce, Tuscaloosa Neighbors Together, etc.). Proposed updates to the plan were posted on the Framework website throughout the adoption review process.



## 10.2 Establish along Highway and private

As a major entrance to the appearance of the community, an appealing gateway streetscape (landscape regulations that development through not need to involve a corridor specific in the new regulations corridor's appearance assumes that the city for non-residential into the city's regulations

## 10.3 Expand public support growth

Based on existing facilities response times for public extent of the city limits in some conditions. As Highway 69 South, the city times and service areas for services, and police. The city locations for new public safety acquire properties in preparation explore opportunities for shared Priority consideration should institutions such as Shelton

## 10.4 Pursue opportunities publicly accessible open space areas.

With the exception of Newt Hinn and private golf courses, the Highway relatively underserved by public Through its land development plan should show long-term planning of public safety and roads should be improved.

## campus activities services around Community College

The city should continue to promote Shelton Community College as a growing institution and community asset for Tuscaloosa. The city coordinate with the college's leadership to support the institution's long-term plan and help support that growth. Develop commercial services around the College to provide local services and assist of students and faculty.







# 2. GROWING

Managing a community's physical environment, both built and natural, is a critical aspect of the Framework Comprehensive Plan. This chapter provides guidance for Tuscaloosa's physical development, infrastructure improvement, and stewardship of natural resources. The future land use component in this chapter serves as the foundation for the city's zoning regulations. This element also substantially influences the Plan's other topics, particularly transportation, housing, and economic prosperity.

## GOAL

***Well-managed land and infrastructure that includes revitalization, strategic growth, and stewardship of the natural environment, creates an appealing community character, and promotes the city's long-term financial health.***

## OBJECTIVES

1. Modernize the city's development regulations
2. Encourage infill and redevelopment in strategic locations
3. Proactively invest in infrastructure to support growth (including infill, redevelopment, and outward growth)
4. Exhibit strong stewardship of natural resources
5. Improve the appearance of public and private property throughout the city (particularly gateways)
6. Manage growth in the Downtown / University Area
7. Facilitate development in West Tuscaloosa
8. Manage growth in North Tuscaloosa and the Lakes Area
9. Facilitate growth in the East Tuscaloosa Area
10. Facilitate growth in the Highway 69-South Area

## Chapter Organization

- Goal and Objectives
- Context
- Growth Principles
- Conceptual Growth Strategy
- Future Land Use and Character
- Annexation Plan
- Actions
- Concentration Areas

# CONTEXT: KEY FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Early in the Framework process, the city's physical built and natural environment was assessed through quantitative analysis, qualitative input from stakeholders, and review of numerous past plans. That assessment covered growth history, population and demographic trends, existing use and character, development capacity, natural resources, and historic preservation. The findings summarized below directly inform the recommended programs and policies in this chapter and elsewhere in the Plan.

## GROWTH TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

- Tuscaloosa is growing and expected to grow faster than most places in Alabama.** The city has increased its population by 24% since 2000, faster than the five largest cities in Alabama. Most of this past growth is attributed to growth in enrollment at the University of Alabama, which is projected to stabilize. While the city is forecast to grow, that growth will likely be slower than that which occurred over the past 20 years. Forecasts suggest that the Tuscaloosa Metropolitan Statistical Area (Tuscaloosa, Hale, and Pickens Counties) will grow by 21.4% between 2010 and 2040, the second largest growth rate in Alabama after Huntsville (39%).
- Demographics are shifting.** The city's demographics are heavily influenced by the student population, which can mask needs among the permanent resident population. For instance, nearly 19% of the non-student population (and 28% of the city's under-18 population) struggles with poverty. Other demographic challenges include projections that there will be a growing proportion of seniors and slower growth in family households. The slowest growth is forecast for the 25-34 year-old population, which is a concern, as this age group typically includes families with young children and first-time homebuyers.
- 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.
- Redevelopment in other areas has been slow.** Since the April 2011 tornados, 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 is no annexation strategy or defined priority growth areas (set by city policy).** The amount of land annexed into Tuscaloosa over the past decade is lower than in prior decades, however growth has been occurring



The Land Use and Development Existing Conditions Assessment in Appendix B provides further detail on these key findings. A demographic profile is contained in the 5-year Affordable Housing Study.

outside of the city limits, particularly in the northern areas around Lake Tuscaloosa. 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.

- **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.
- **Tuscaloosa has space to grow.** There is undeveloped and potentially developable land within the city limits and beyond. An analysis of potentially developable land showed that there are over 5,000 acres of developable land within the city limits today and an additional 8,000 developable acres outside the city limits could be served utilities today. Within this developable land are approximately 3,500 parcels that are platted as part of 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). By these numbers, there is sufficient land within the city to accommodate most of the city's projected growth over the next 10 years.

## OTHER GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- **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.

### 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.

The town of Tuscaloosa was incorporated in 1819 following 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 but fell significantly when Montgomery was declared the state capital. 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 in the region.

Tuscaloosa continued to grow both in land area and population through the decades but not always proportionally. The city saw a steady growth from the early 1900's up until the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, population growth slowed while land area continued on a similar pace to previous decades. Since the 1990s, most of the city's population growth has been occurring in areas within the existing incorporated area resulting a slowing annexation rate.

### Regional context

Tuscaloosa is located in Tuscaloosa County and is the center of the West Alabama region which includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens and Tuscaloosa counties. The city is well connected to the region by Interstate 20/59 with roughly an hour's drive to Birmingham, the largest city in the state. As part of this corridor, the city is connected to a larger mega-region centered in Atlanta, GA, the Birmingham-Atlanta-Greenville-Charlotte region.

- **Managing student housing and large-scale multi-family development.** With total student growth slowing, new student housing development in the campus area could draw students away from less desirable living options in that area or in other parts of the city. This may create vacancy challenges with some existing multi-family developments.
- **Protecting potentially environmentally sensitive land.** The city's previous plans have emphasized the importance of protecting natural resources. 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 creating open space amenities in new subdivisions or redevelopment areas.
- **Ensuring fiscally beneficial development.** The city should anticipate increasing long-term costs for infrastructure. The existing impact fee structure or other financing mechanisms may need to be considered relative to anticipated costs of infrastructure improvements, potential expansions, or maintenance needs.
- **Managing growth in the area surrounding Lake Tuscaloosa.** There is expected to be continued development interest in the area around Lake Tuscaloosa. The city has limited control over development in unincorporated areas, where there have been hundreds of new subdivisions approved in recent years. Continued development in the watershed of Lake Tuscaloosa (the drinking water source for the region) warrants scrutiny on the city's subdivision regulations, environmental protections, and monitoring.
- **Encouraging revitalization.** There is a need to encourage revitalization within the city's older neighborhoods and in commercial corridors. Additionally, there are large sites such as the former Country Club in West Tuscaloosa, University Mall, and McFarland Mall (among others) that are potential opportunities for redevelopment with a mix of uses. Successful redevelopment of any of these sites could serve as revitalization catalysts.
- **Creating places that serve community needs and strengthen quality of life.** There are opportunities to create more distinctive places to live, work, and play. These places could involve new mixed-use developments, entertainment and experience venues, parks and recreational areas, and new neighborhoods that integrate various community amenities.



# GROWTH PRINCIPLES

## OUR INTENT FOR WHERE AND HOW TO GROW

The growth principles describe the intent about “how” (general character) and “where” (conceptual location) growth and development in Tuscaloosa should occur. They reflect a variety of themes that are mutually reinforcing, including the quality, appearance, pattern, character, and organization of development, environmental quality, efficient use of infrastructure, and expanding connectivity and mobility choices for residents. The growth principles are supported by a map that depicts general locations where certain concepts apply.

As Tuscaloosa grows, it is our intent that...

### 1. Revitalization and maintenance of established neighborhoods will be a focus.

- Tuscaloosa will be a city of diverse and desirable neighborhoods.
- Established and stable neighborhoods will be protected. Future development will reflect intended character of neighborhoods.
- Neighborhoods that are struggling with disinvestment and are in disrepair will be a focus for revitalization efforts that include city investment and private investment, leading to better utilization of vacant land and improved neighborhood vitality. Such revitalization may involve reinvestment in existing housing where feasible, or redevelopment that allows the neighborhood’s character to evolve.
- Neighborhood groups should be engaged in the process of evaluating development proposals.
- Infill development and redevelopment within neighborhoods will offer opportunities to expand housing options in the city, be sensitive to the existing context or desired future character of the neighborhood, and consider community needs like access to amenities, transportation service, and the quality and quantity of open space.

### 2. New neighborhoods will be created with characteristics of traditional neighborhoods.

- New neighborhoods will be designed with characteristics of Tuscaloosa’s traditional neighborhoods including:
  - a mix of housing types,
  - walkable streets,
  - access to open space and recreational amenities,
  - connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and districts, and
  - convenient access to basic retail services (accessible via walking and/or biking or integrated in the form of neighborhood centers).

### **3. Downtown will feature a vibrant mix of businesses, residences, institutions, and entertainment with a distinctive character.**

- As “everyone’s neighborhood,” Downtown Tuscaloosa will be strengthened as a destination for living, working, and playing.
- Its unique character will reflect design excellence with a mix of preserved historic buildings and contemporary design.
- Its proximity to the river, University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State’s C.A. Fredd Campus, and historic neighborhoods will be leveraged to support opportunities for urban living, viable retail and office development, access to recreation and cultural amenities, and active urban streets.

### **4. A greater intensity of development that integrates a mix of uses (residential, commercial, office, institutional, etc.) and connects with existing developed areas will be encouraged in strategic locations.**

- A series of centers will offer commercial, employment, and mixed-use development at various scales throughout the city.
- These centers will be focused at strategic nodes or intersections in the city and provide uses, services, and experiences that are appropriate to their locations. They will be designed in a compact manner that maximizes pedestrian activity, supports transportation alternatives and minimizes surface parking needs.
- Mixed-use centers (places that integrate retail, residences, offices and civic uses horizontally on a site or vertically within buildings) will be encouraged in appropriate locations such as Downtown, the riverfront, existing walkable areas, or other locations where a critical mass and pedestrian activity can be created for mixed use development to thrive. Close attention is given to the compatibility of those uses and their surroundings.
- Centers that are not appropriate for a walkable, mixed-use setting will be designated for commercial and/or industrial uses.

### **5. Development will be supported by existing or planned infrastructure.**

- Growth will promote responsible management of transportation and utility infrastructure and community services by preferring sites that are supported by existing capacity or planned capacity improvements.
- To the extent that outward expansion of the urban area occurs, it will be done to support efficient investment in infrastructure and community services.
- The city’s capital improvement plan will be regularly updated to support future needs and growth opportunities.

### **6. Quality design will be encouraged to create an attractive and distinctive place.**

- Public areas (streets, sidewalks, parks, streetscapes, etc.) and private areas (building facades, lawns, landscaping, parking lots, driveways, etc.) are planned and designed to balance function, appearance, and affordability while allowing for creative design.
- Design quality should be responsive to context – corridors, gateways, neighborhoods – and may vary by location but will overall reinforce positive impressions of the city and promote community pride.

## **7. Places will be better connected to improve the function of the street network and create more opportunities to walk, bike, and access public transportation.**

- While Tuscaloosa's geographic characteristics and existing street network are limiting factors to creating an ideal level of connectivity, opportunities will be sought to improve the street pattern and thereby increase travel options, potentially decrease vehicle miles, reduce congestion and improve safety.
- Where feasible, the preferred network for future development and redevelopment will be a connected grid street pattern, or modified grid system.
- Well-connected streets will be designed with short blocks and include sidewalks to encourage walking.
- Bicycle and pedestrian paths and supporting amenities will be integrated into new development and areas undergoing redevelopment.

## **8. Development practices will exhibit strong stewardship of natural resources.**

- Tuscaloosa's natural environment is one of its unique assets.
- Opportunities to preserve open space and environmentally sensitive land, and create a connected greenway system will be considered.
- Development in the city will be designed to limit potentially negative impacts on sensitive environmental features such as floodplains, wetlands, and area waterways. Development should limit erosion and runoff from disturbance of steep slopes or clear-cutting.
- Within the watersheds of Tuscaloosa's lakes, the type, pattern, and intensity of development should support the protection of water quality by preserving open space and involve a higher degree of environmental scrutiny.
- Environmentally sensitive practices should not dramatically increase the cost of development.
- Development will enhance the urban tree canopy by preserving mature trees and planting new trees.

## **9. Opportunities for expanding the community's parks, open space, and public facilities will be considered as part of future development.**

- While most of Tuscaloosa's parks and recreational facilities are part of a regional system, the city will consider opportunities to enhance or contribute to expanding these amenities as development occurs.
- The city will be proactive in identifying, acquiring or setting aside desirable land for potential future parks or recreational facilities.

## **10. Development will support the city's long-term financial strength.**

- The long-term financial impact to the city from development projects will be considered with an understanding that not every project provides a benefit.
- Development should contribute to supporting the city's ability to provide services and infrastructure.





# CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

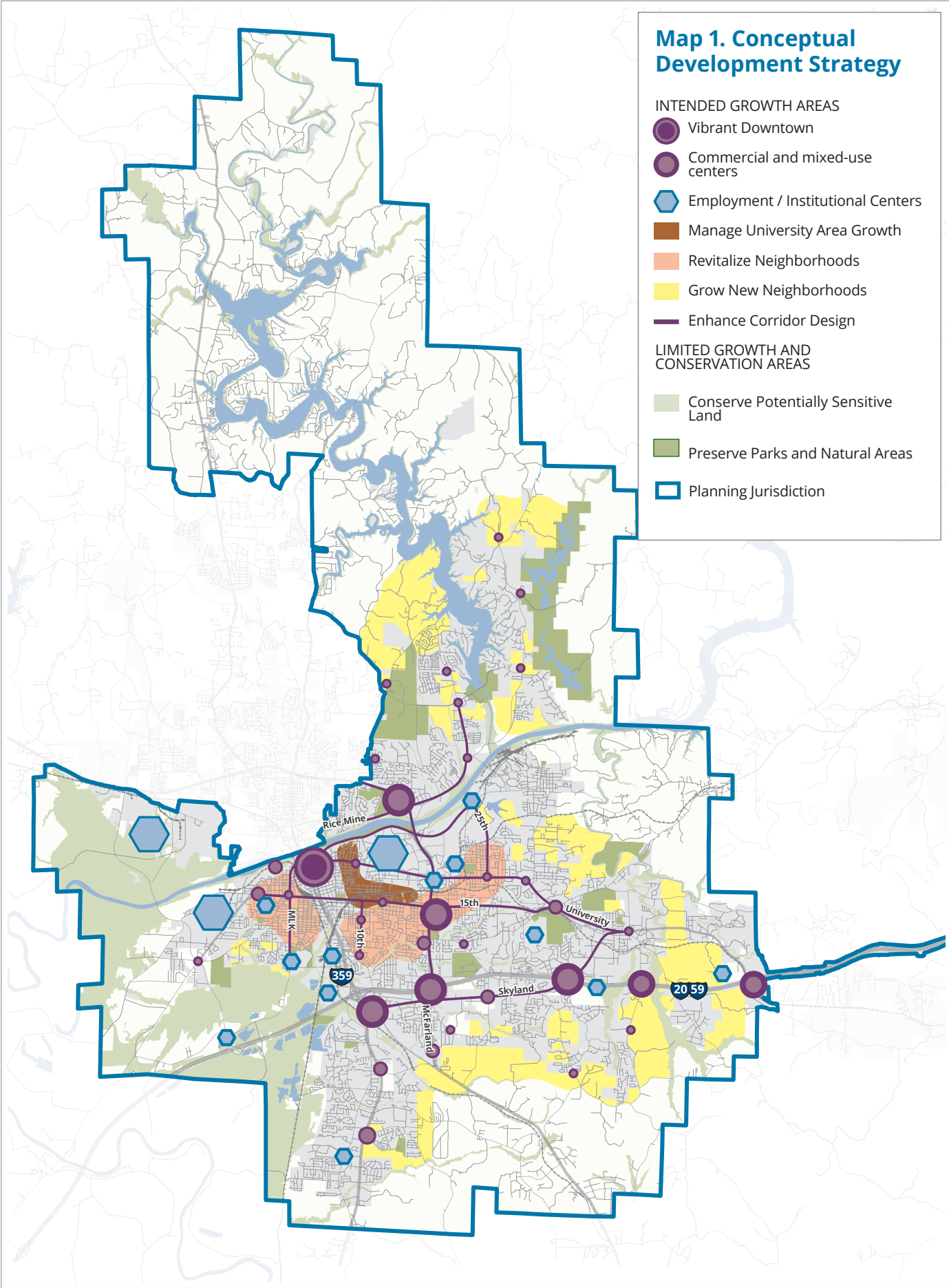
Building upon the intent described in the principles, the development strategy map depicts concepts and general locations where future development is encouraged. This diagram portrays a high level view of anticipated development concepts detailed in the Plan. The boundaries of these concept areas are intended to be general.

## INTENDED GROWTH AREAS (infill, redevelopment, expansion)

- 
**Create a more vibrant Downtown and riverfront:** Encourage infill and redevelopment within the Downtown area that supports live, work, play opportunities. Development should reinforce the area's unique historic character, and leverage proximity to the riverfront, major institutions, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- 
**Manage growth in the University Area:** Encourage infill and redevelopment in the area surrounding the University of Alabama that provides attractive living options and amenities that are supported by infrastructure and services.
- 
**Encourage integrated commercial and mixed-use centers:** Encourage infill development and redevelopment of commercial and mixed-use centers. Larger centers serve a community-wide or regional market, while smaller-scale centers provide services primarily for the convenience of surrounding neighborhoods.
- 
**Revitalize neighborhoods:** Strategic areas to encourage public and private investment in traditional neighborhoods that may be experiencing decline. Development should support better utilization of vacant land, improved neighborhood viability, and diversification of the city's housing options. Such revitalization may involve reinvestment in existing housing, where feasible, and redevelopment that allows the neighborhood's character to evolve.
- 
**Support institutional, industrial, and employment centers:** Encourage growth within areas that support or could support regionally significant concentrations of non-retail employment including institutional, office, and industrial centers.
- 
**Grow new traditional neighborhoods:** Grow new neighborhoods in undeveloped areas served by existing or planned roadways and utilities or adjacent to established neighborhoods. Future neighborhoods should have a walkable pattern (small blocks and sidewalks), be connected to adjacent neighborhoods and recreational open space, and include a mix of housing types.
- 
**Enhance major corridors and gateways:** Improve the appearance of public and private development and safety for all users along primary corridors to promote a positive impression of the city.

## LIMITED GROWTH AND CONSERVATION AREAS (maintain and protect)






- 
**Conserve open space on potentially sensitive land:** Conserve land with potentially significant environmental or development constraints. Conservation may include preservation as open space or reasonable mitigation of development impacts.
- 
**Preserve open space areas:** Maintain existing open space including parks and passive open space set aside by the city, state, private dedication, or some other authority.





# FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER

The Future Land Use and Character Map expresses in more specific terms, the city's intent for how Tuscaloosa should use its land resources in the future. For the entire city and its planning jurisdiction, this map identifies a preferred future character type. Each type describes attributes of urban form and function including the size and type of buildings and their relationship to the street, the surrounding street and block pattern, parking and access, and land uses. Each of the character types listed below is defined beginning on page 24.






## Mixed Use Areas

-  Downtown Core
-  Downtown Edge
-  Downtown Historic Edge
-  Campus Services
-  Riverfront Development



## Commercial Areas

-  Corridor Commercial
-  Limited Commercial



## Neighborhoods and Residential Areas

-  University Residential
-  Multi-family Residential
-  Traditional Neighborhood, Core
-  Traditional Neighborhood, Edge
-  Suburban Residential
-  Lakeside Living

## Employment and Industrial Areas

-  Flex Employment Center
-  Industrial

## Institutional Areas

-  University Campus
-  Civic / Institutional

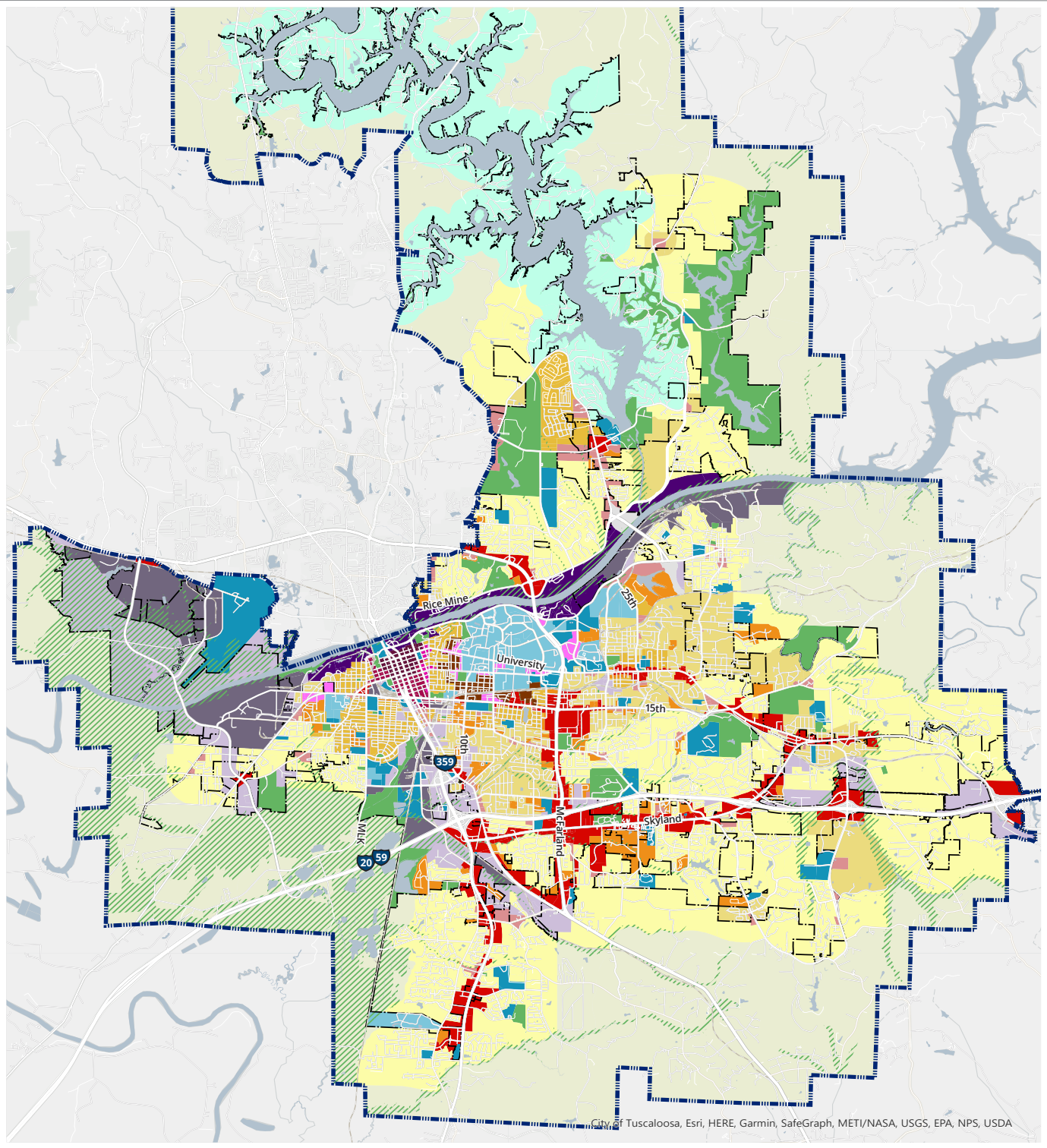
## Conservation Areas

-  Rural Edge / Conservation Development
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Environmentally Sensitive Development

*The Future Land Use and Character Map is a tool for the city to guide decisions about future land use and development over time. This component of the Plan is not a mandate for development and is not legally binding but describes the city's expectations for future development. It is implemented over time through the city's zoning regulations and various public and private development decisions. It will serve as the basis for potential future zoning updates.*

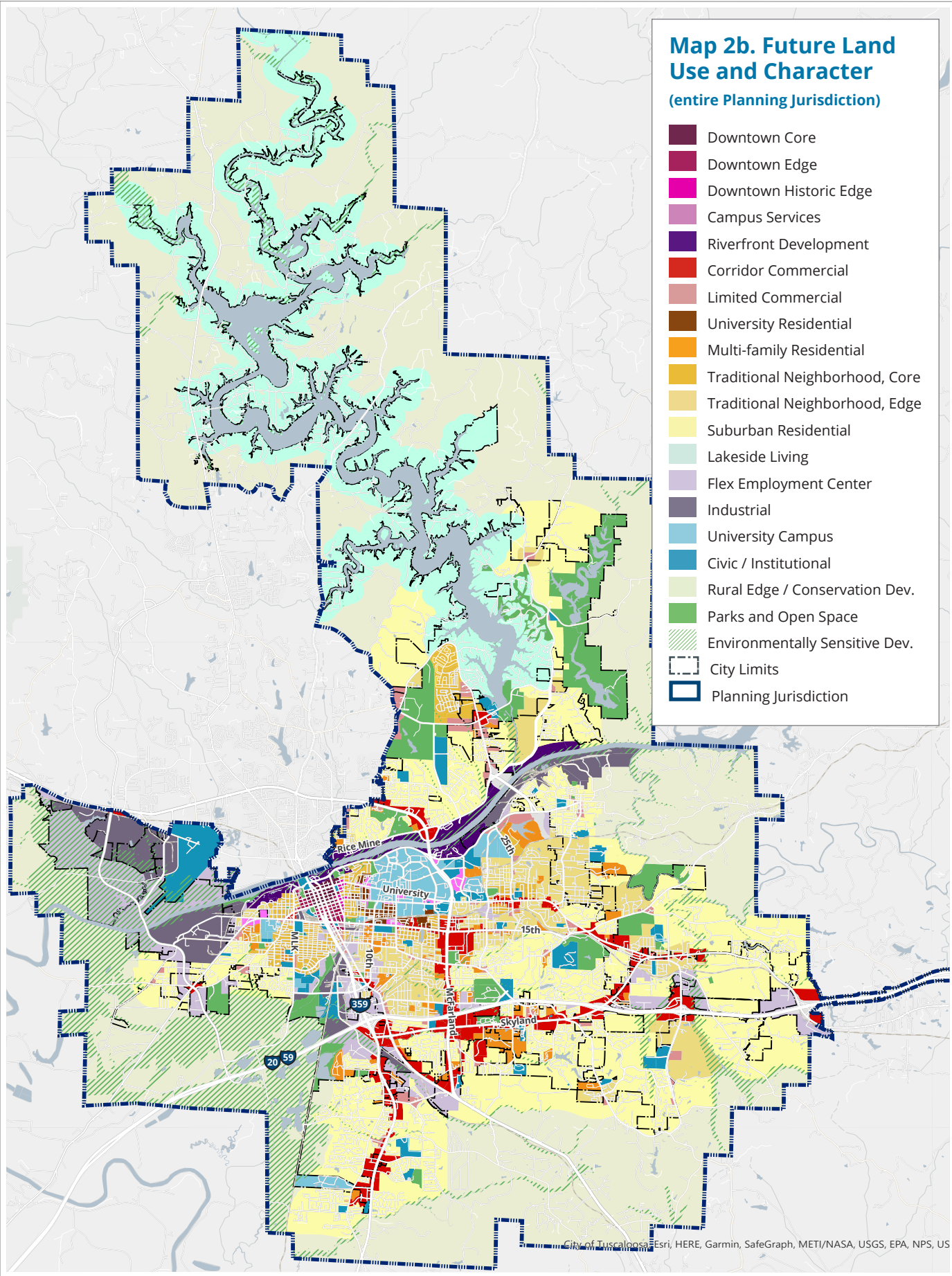
(see page 23 for more distinction between the Plan and zoning).





Map 2a. Future Land Use and Character

- |                        |                                |                                       |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Downtown Core          | University Residential         | University Campus                     |
| Downtown Edge          | Multi-family Residential       | Civic / Institutional                 |
| Downtown Historic Edge | Traditional Neighborhood, Core | Rural Edge / Conservation Development |
| Campus Services        | Traditional Neighborhood, Edge | Parks and Open Space                  |
| Riverfront Development | Suburban Residential           | Environmentally Sensitive Development |
| Corridor Commercial    | Lakeside Living                | City Limits                           |
| Limited Commercial     | Flex Employment Center         | Planning Jurisdiction                 |
|                        | Industrial                     |                                       |





## IMPLEMENTING THE LAND USE VISION THROUGH ZONING

The Future Land Use and Character Map depicts appropriate future development patterns throughout the city and its planning jurisdiction, which reinforces existing patterns in some areas and supports changes to land use or development patterns in other areas. This element of the Framework Comprehensive Plan is implemented through the city's Zoning Ordinance. Zoning is a legal tool that regulates land use, including types of structures that may be built, how they are to be built, where they are to be built, and how they may be used. Each property in the city is assigned to a zoning district. There may be more than one appropriate zoning category for a particular future land use category. For example, there is one "industrial" future land use category, but there may be two or three industrial zoning districts to account for various intensities, activities, and contexts.

The land use vision is implemented over time through many distinct public and private development decisions. For example, property owners seeking to redevelop or change the use of their property often have to seek rezoning. Rezoning decisions are evaluated with respect to how they conform to the Framework Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map. Effectively implementing this land use vision will require updating the city's Zoning Ordinance and its zoning map to reflect the desired outcomes.

The table below distinguishes between the role of the Framework Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use and Character Map and the Zoning Ordinance.

### Future land use on the city's edge

Properties outside of the city but within the Tuscaloosa planning jurisdiction (PJ) are assigned a Future Land Use Classification although those properties are not subject to city zoning. In the case where a property owner in the PJ wishes to annex into the city (which is required to obtain sewer service or attend city schools) the Future Land Use and Character Map provides guidance to determine the most appropriate zoning classification for the property.

#### Plan (Future Land Use)

- Describes intended future land use and development characteristics
- Defines land uses and development characteristics generally (a policy guide)
- Applies within the city's planning jurisdiction (beyond current city limits)
- Future Land Use and Character Map is not parcel specific
- Not legally binding, but zoning changes should be "in accordance with" the Plan

#### Zoning Ordinance

- Defines land uses and development characteristics allowed on a piece of land today
- More specific and detailed than the Plan
- Applies within current city limits
- Zoning map is parcel specific
- Legal document: departure from zoning requires either a rezoning (legislative process) or a variance (a quasi-judicial process)

DOWNTOWN CORE

The Downtown Core is the historic and civic heart of the city. Development includes both new and adaptively reused historic buildings that support a mix of employment, commercial, entertainment, civic and residential uses in single-use and vertically mixed-use buildings. Buildings frame attractive, pedestrian-scale streets.

Intent

- Promote infill development on vacant lots.
- Support multi-family and attached residential development but discourage large multi-family and student-oriented housing developments.
- Reduce/consolidate surface parking (encourage shared parking).
- Retain historic character through adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
- Improve connections and transitions to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Employ standards for quality architectural design.

Primary Uses

- Vertical mixed-use
- Office
- Commercial/Retail
- Civic/Institutional
- Hotel/Accommodation
- Small-scale multi-family residential

Secondary Uses

- Attached residential (townhomes)
- Parks and open space

Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	2-stories, minimum (generally at least 25 feet).
Building Form	Variety of types from freestanding buildings to attached buildings. Civic buildings may have varying building form and placement from surroundings.
Building Setback	0-10 feet (generally consistent within a block). Greater setbacks for civic or institutional uses are appropriate.
Streets	Gridded street pattern with short, walkable block lengths (around 300 feet).  8 to 12-foot-wide sidewalks; crosswalks; traffic calming measures, and other streetscape amenities.
Transportation	Walking, biking, transit, automobile.
Parking	Shared surface parking located behind buildings; structured parking; on-street parking. Allow space for pick-up/to-go orders.
Open Space	Plazas, pocket parks, formal parks. Public realm (space between buildings and streets) acts as open space.

Example Pattern



Example Character





## DOWNTOWN EDGE

The Downtown Edge is a transitional space between the Downtown Core and the surrounding residential areas. As part of the larger Downtown area, this designation supports a high-quality mixed-use setting with opportunities for residential, employment, commercial, and institutional development at a smaller scale than the Core.

### Intent

- Support adaptive reuse of existing buildings where feasible.
- Locate new buildings near the street on at least one side and accommodate parking to the side or rear of buildings; cluster buildings to consolidate and share surface parking.
- Improve connections between Downtown and neighborhoods.
- Improve/provide public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, landscaping, and street trees.
- Support multi-family and attached residential development but discourage large multi-family and student-oriented housing developments.
- Reduce access-points into development for pedestrian and vehicular safety.

### Primary Uses

- Vertical mixed-use with limited, small-scale multi-family residential
- Office
- Commercial
- Civic/Institutional

### Secondary Uses

- Single family residential (small lots)
- Small-scale multi-family residential (all types)
- Parks and open space

### Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	2-stories minimum (1.5-stories for residential), north of Paul Bryant Drive, 1-4 stories south of Paul Bryant.
Building Form	Free standing or attached to adjacent buildings. Variety of building styles.
Building Setback	0-30 feet (parking areas should be set back further than buildings).
Streets	Small, grid-like blocks with a streetscape designed to encourage pedestrian activity.
Transportation	Walking, biking, transit, automobile.
Parking	Shared parking areas located behind buildings. On-street parking. All space for pick-up/to-go orders.
Open Space	Formal parks, pocket parks, plazas, "green infrastructure." Public realm (space between buildings and streets) acts as open space.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



## DOWNTOWN HISTORIC EDGE

In keeping with the Historic Preservation Commission's Design Guidelines, the Downtown Historic Edge is a transitional space between the Downtown Core, Downtown Edge, and traditional historic neighborhoods. As part of the larger Downtown areas, this designation supports a high-quality mixed-use setting with opportunities for residential, employment, neighborhood-scale commercial, and institutional development at a historic scale.

### Intent

- Continue historic preservation efforts to maintain the existing neighborhood character within local historic districts.
- Adhere to the Historic Preservation Commission's Design Guidelines for any redevelopment.
- Support adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
- Encourage neighborhood-scale commercial centers.
- Improve connections between Downtown and historic neighborhoods.
- Improve and provide public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, landscaping, and street trees.

### Primary Uses

- Single-family residential
- Attached residential (townhomes, duplexes)
- Neighborhood-scale office or commercial

### Secondary Uses

- Small-scale multi-family residential
- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and open space

### Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	2.5-stories, maximum (generally consistent within a block).
Building Form	Free-standing or attached to adjacent buildings. Variety of building styles in keeping with historic districts.
Building Setback	0-20 feet (generally consistent within a block).
Streets	Blocks are small and walkable. Streets generally form a grid system within the neighborhoods; alleys are common.
Transportation	Walking, biking, transit, automobile.
Parking	On-street and private off-street, generally located behind buildings.
Open Space	Preserved passive open space, neighborhood/community parks, pocket parks, private yards, connections to school yards.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



## CAMPUS SERVICES

Campus Services includes commercial and mixed-use development between traditional neighborhoods (core) and the higher education campuses (the University of Alabama and Stillman College). These mixed-use 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 a neighborhood or campus. University Boulevard's "The Strip" is the primary existing example of this type of development.

### Intent

- Coordinate development with neighboring institutions.
- Create and reinforce walkable activity centers that are connected to surrounding development and include a mix of complementary uses.
- Provide public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, landscaping, and street trees.

### Primary Uses

- Vertical mixed-use
- Commercial/Retail
- Office
- Residential

### Secondary Uses

- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and open space

### Building Blocks

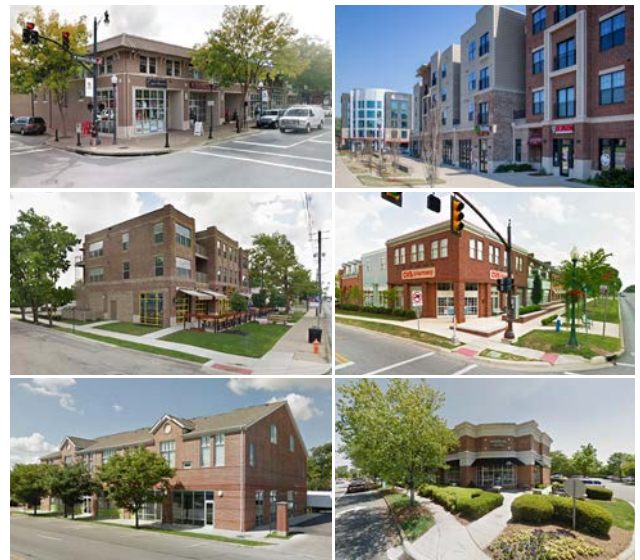
Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	1-6 stories (generally up to 75 feet)
Building Form	Set near the street with parking areas set to the side or to the building's rear
Building Setback	0-20 feet (setbacks may vary depending on character and classification of the street)
Streets	Short, walkable block lengths.
Transportation	Walking, biking, transit, automobile.
Parking	On-street, shared structures, or shared surface lots located to the side or rear of buildings. Allow space for pick-up/to-go orders.
Open Space	Formal parks and plazas may serve as a district focal point. Landscaped common areas and outdoor dining may be featured.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character





# RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

Riverfront Development is an area appropriate for a range of high-quality development along the Black Warrior River which preserves and protects the unique natural, scenic and historic resource of the riverfront. Development may include residential, commercial, office, an integrated mix of uses, as well as civic and recreational areas.

Intent

- Encourage conservation of potentially sensitive environmental features along the riverfront.
- Support integrated mixed-use developments (horizontal mixed use) and vertical mixed use buildings where the surrounding area contains, or the center is large enough to create, the critical mass and pedestrian activity needed for mixed use commercial to thrive.
- Encourage high quality architecture and materials for highly visible sites.
- Integrate public open space and recreational areas (such as the Riverwalk) into developments.
- Encourage horizontal or vertical mixing of uses in compact areas where appropriate.
- Integrate public open space features and connectivity to the trail network within development sites.

Primary Uses

- Vertical mixed-use
- Office
- Commercial
- Civic/Institutional

Secondary Uses

- Small-scale multi-family residential
- Single family residential
- Parks and open space

Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.	
Height Range	2-stories, minimum. Heights should be cognizant of protecting river views.
Building Form	Mix of large footprint buildings and smaller buildings that may be occupied by multiple tenants.
Building Setback	0-30 feet.
Streets	Small, grid-like blocks with a streetscape designed to encourage pedestrian activity.
Transportation	Walking, biking, transit, automobile.
Parking	Shared parking areas located behind buildings. On-street parking. Allow space for pick-up/to-go orders.
Open Space	Formal parks, pocket parks, plazas, "green infrastructure," public realm acts as open space.

Example Character



## CORRIDOR COMMERCIAL

Commercial development which includes a wide range of retail, offices, and services in a generally car-oriented pattern. This type of development tends to serve the larger community, is typically located along major corridors or intersections, and may include regional destinations, such as shopping malls and car dealerships.

### Intent

- Accommodate a wide range of commercial uses.
- Concentrate future commercial development at major intersections.
- Encourage new buildings to be located near the primary street on at least one side or on an internal street, with parking areas consolidated between buildings in a configuration that can be shared by multiple tenants or uses.
- Apply zoning districts that are appropriate for a site's context such as a highway corridor or a more urban corridor.
- Provide connection to surrounding pedestrian path networks and provide for safe pedestrian facilities within sites.
- Provide connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and transit service locations.

### Primary Uses

- Commercial
- Office
- Vertical mixed (office above ground floor retail)

### Secondary Uses

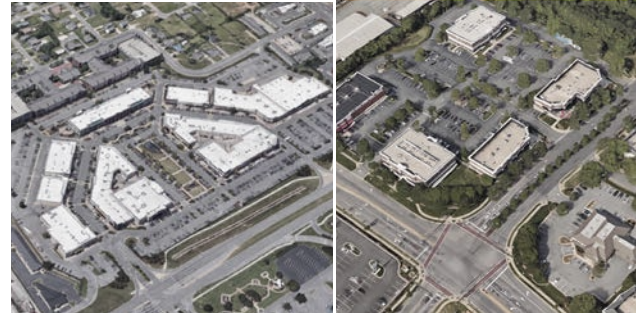
- Civic/Institutional

### Building Blocks

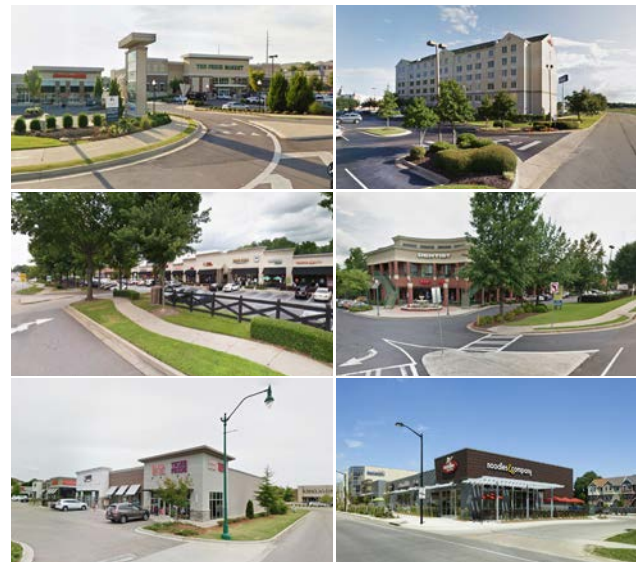
Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	1-5 stories (generally up to 60 feet).
Building Form	Predominantly single story, but commercial buildings may have 2-story appearance. Includes large footprint buildings and both attached and freestanding structures.
Building Setback	Varies.
Streets	Blocks are long and have fewer street connections than in the mixed use districts.
Transportation	Primarily automobile, but site design should consider transportation alternatives.
Parking	Surface lots.
Open Space	Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas, generally private.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



## LIMITED COMMERCIAL

Limited Commercial areas are smaller nodes of commercial development that provide goods and services to and within walking distance of surrounding neighborhoods. They generally exist near prominent intersections within a neighborhood or at its edge, and may serve as a transition between a more intense Corridor Commercial and a residential area. These centers may include mixed-use, live-work, or multi-family residential uses that are compatible in scale to nearby neighborhoods.

### Intent

- Accommodate limited commercial services by-right compared to Corridor Commercial; allow other uses (such as drive-throughs, etc.) under some conditions.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and nearby public uses (schools, parks, etc.).
- Support some residential use that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood character.
- In a walkable neighborhood context, locate new buildings near the street and accommodate parking to the side or rear of buildings and accommodate on-street parking.
- Improve/provide public realm features such as signs, sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and street trees.

### Primary Uses

- Small-scale commercial/retail/services
- Office
- Vertical mixed-use

### Secondary Uses

- Small-scale multi-family residential
- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and open space

### Building Blocks

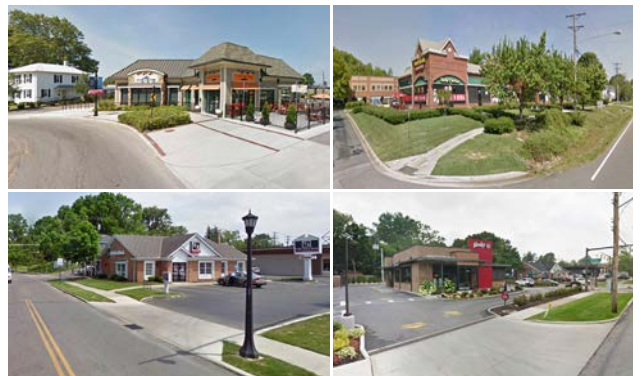
Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	1-2 stories (generally up to 35 feet).
Building Form	Predominantly single story, but may have 2-story appearance. Includes large footprint buildings and both attached and freestanding structures.
Building Setback	15-30 feet.
Streets	Small, grid-like blocks with a streetscape designed to encourage pedestrian activity.
Transportation	Walking, biking, automobile, supportive of transit opportunities.
Parking	On-street or shared surface parking located to the side or rear of buildings.
Open Space	Increased landscaping and "green infrastructure" elements per site and integrated in streetscape. Plazas, parks and trail connections as amenities.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character





## UNIVERSITY RESIDENTIAL

Predominantly residential areas surrounding the University of Alabama that have a similar street and lot pattern to the Downtown and historic neighborhoods but feature a greater mix of housing types and building sizes. Housing generally serves the student population and includes a mix of multi-unit buildings ranging from duplexes and townhomes to large apartment buildings or other student oriented developments. These areas may also contain small-scale commercial or mixed-use buildings.

### Intent

- Consider the net increase in occupants of each infill or redevelopment project and ensure that infrastructure needs are addressed.
- Consider transitions in building scale between this area and nearby historic or single-family neighborhoods.
- Regulate development character first through building and site standards (size, form, location) and consider density in terms of bedrooms and a possible density cap.
- Support higher quality design in terms of architecture, materials, and site features like lighting and landscaping.
- Seek opportunities to provide for open space within the area in the form of pocket parks or pedestrian corridors.
- Support small-scale commercial or vertical mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail and services on major corridors.

### Primary Uses

- Student Oriented Development
- Multi-family residential (range of scales)
- Small-scale commercial
- Vertical mixed-use

### Secondary Uses

- Single family residential
- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and open space

### Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	3-6 stories (varies by building type from 37' to 60' feet; heights up to 75' may be allowed with conditions). 1-3 stories for secondary uses.
Building Form	Varies.
Building Setback	Varies. Buildings tend to have modest (0-20 foot) setbacks.
Streets	Well-connected street network with small, walkable blocks that generally form a grid pattern.
Transportation	Walking, biking, transit, automobile.
Parking	On-street and private off-street (behind buildings), individual drives from street.
Open Space	Private yards and courts, pocket parks, "green infrastructure," public realm (space between buildings and streets) acts as open space.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



## MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Predominantly multi-family apartment and attached residential development in various forms. These areas should offer a range of attractive living options for a diverse population at a smaller scale than multi-family residential found in University Residential areas.

### Intent

- Support higher quality building design in terms of architecture, materials, and site features like lighting and landscaping.
- Distinguish between multi-family development types and density through distinct districts in the zoning code. More intense multi-family development should be located near commercial centers or major corridors.
- Measure residential density in terms of bedrooms per acre and a possible density cap.
- Provide vehicular and pedestrian connectivity between developments.
- Encourage residential building designs that could be adapted or used to serve a non-student market.
- Improve streetscape features such as consistent sidewalks, lighting and street trees.

### Primary Uses

- Multi-family residential
- Two-family residential
- Attached residential (townhomes)

### Secondary Uses

- Office
- Single family residential (small lot)
- Commercial (neighborhood scale)
- Civic/Institutional (neighborhood scale)

### Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	2-4 stories (generally up to 60 feet).
Building Form	Variety of multi-family housing types including apartment buildings, townhomes, etc.
Building Setback	10-30 feet (may vary by surrounding context).
Streets	A higher degree of street connectivity with short walkable blocks.
Transportation	Automobile; sidewalks within development should connect to outside sidewalk and trail network.
Parking	On-street and private off-street in shared parking lots or private driveways.
Open Space	Smaller, private pocket parks serve residents with access to larger public parks via sidewalks and bike paths.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character





## TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD, CORE

Residential areas encompassing Tuscaloosa's early historic neighborhoods and modern "neo traditional" neighborhood developments (TNDs). These areas are appropriate for a mix of compact housing ranging from small-lot single family, to townhomes and small multi-family buildings. Traditional neighborhoods have a walkable block pattern with integrated neighborhood amenities such as parks and schools. Small office, commercial, and civic uses may also exist in these areas along major thoroughfares.

### Intent

- Encourage neighborhood-scale commercial centers located at the edges of a neighborhood.
- Allow residential infill that fits-in with neighboring homes (building scale, placement, etc.).
- Support more intense residential infill and redevelopment adjacent to commercial or mixed use centers.
- Continue historic preservation efforts to maintain the existing neighborhood character within city-designated historic districts.
- Encourage integrated neighborhoods through shared open space amenities and vehicular and pedestrian connectivity, where feasible.

### Primary Uses

- Small-scale multi-family residential
- Single family residential
- Attached residential (townhomes, duplexes)

### Secondary Uses

- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and open space
- Neighborhood-scale office or commercial

### Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	1-3 stories (generally up to 35 feet).
Building Form	Variety of building types and sizes clustered and grouped but linked by a connected street network.
Building Setback	0-20 feet, generally consistent within a block.
Streets	Blocks are small and walkable. Streets generally form a grid system within the neighborhood; alleys are common.
Transportation	Walking, biking, transit, automobile.
Parking	On-street and private off-street.
Open Space	Preserved passive open space, neighborhood / community parks, pocket parks, private yards, connections to school yards.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character





# TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD, EDGE

Residential areas encompassing many of Tuscaloosa's mid-20th century neighborhoods and modern developments that are primarily single family housing on average size lots developed in a connected street network. Compared to core areas, these neighborhoods have a more uniform housing pattern with larger average lots and longer blocks, that are more car-oriented. These neighborhoods may include areas of small-lot, attached or multi-family dwellings that have a single family scale. They also may feature parks and schools within the neighborhood and may be connected to commercial areas.

**Intent**

- Provide vehicular and pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods where feasible.
- Allow residential infill that fits-in with neighboring homes (building scale, placement, etc.).
- Accommodate front-loaded or alley-loaded garages.
- Support neighborhood-scale commercial uses located at the edges of a neighborhood.
- Encourage shared open space features within the neighborhood.

**Primary Uses**

- Single family residential
- Two-family residential
- Attached residential (townhomes)

**Secondary Uses**

- Small multi-family residential (with single-family scale)
- Civic/Institutional
- Parks and open space
- Commercial

**Building Blocks**

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	1-3 stories (generally up to 35 feet).
Building Form	Variety of building types and sizes clustered and grouped but linked by a connected street network.
Building Setback	10-30 feet, generally consistent within a block.
Streets	Blocks are small and walkable. Streets form an irregular grid system within the neighborhood; may include alleys.
Transportation	Automobile access with complete sidewalk network; recreational trails.
Parking	On-street and private off-street; may include front-loaded or alley-loaded garages.
Open Space	Preserved passive open space, neighborhood parks, pocket parks, private yards.

**Example Pattern**



**Example Character**



## SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Predominantly single family housing areas generally developed in a car-focused pattern with long blocks and curvilinear streets and fewer intersections than traditional neighborhood types. These areas feature a range of lot sizes, housing size and styles, including some small-scale attached dwellings, but housing styles are highly consistent within a subdivision and tend to have limited connectivity between residential types and non-residential uses.

### Intent

- When establishing new suburban residential areas or expanding existing developments, provide pedestrian and vehicular connectivity between adjacent developments.
- Improve streetscape features such as consistent sidewalks, lighting and street trees.

### Primary Uses

- Single family residential

### Secondary Uses

- Civic/Institutional
- Attached residential with single family scale
- Parks and open space

### Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	1-3 stories (generally up to 35 feet).
Building Form	A range of housing sizes and styles with single-family scale and appearance.
Building Setback	20-30 feet (generally consistent within a block).
Streets	Longer blocks with a curvilinear pattern are common, though connectivity and the pedestrian experience is important.
Transportation	Automobile access with sidewalk network.
Parking	On-street and private off-street, individual drives from street.
Open Space	Public neighborhood parks should be located in prominent, easily-accessible locations. Schools also supplement public parks. Some residential areas include private open space such as golf courses.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



LAKESIDE LIVING

Primarily residential areas within approximately a quarter mile from the shoreline of Lake Tuscaloosa that are intended to support low intensity development and access to the lake while protecting water quality. These areas are appropriate for single family housing on large lots, relatively compact housing with enhanced protection of open space, and limited commercial services. Lakeside Living areas feature long curvilinear streets and irregularly shaped lots due to topography or other natural features. Home sites may be arranged to maximize views or access to natural areas.

Intent

- Support current minimum lot sizes of 12,000 square feet in the city and one acre outside of the city. Establish a minimum lake frontage standard.
- Limit clear cutting along the shoreline and generally encourage the preservation of wooded areas.
- Support more restrictive impervious surface limitations (built and paved areas).
- Allow compact residential types (small lot single family and attached dwellings) in a clustered pattern as an alternative development option where there is opportunity to preserve large areas of open space.
- Utilize a minimum lake frontage standard for a private dock and allow neighborhoods or multiple homesites to set-up shared docks.
- Allow appropriately scaled commercial services such as boat rentals and restaurants.

Primary Uses

- Single family residential (range of lot sizes)
- Attached residential

Secondary Uses

- Small-scale retail and services (restaurants, boat rentals etc.)
- Parks and open space

Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	1-3 stories (generally up to 35 feet).
Building Form	A range of housing sizes and styles with single-family scale. Smaller lot sizes and more compact or attached housing types such as townhomes should accompany greater open space preservation.
Building Setback	Varies.
Streets	Blocks are long and have few street connections.
Transportation	Automobile access; trail network.
Parking	On-street and private off-street, individual drives from street.
Open Space	Preserved passive open space, neighborhood parks, private yards, private or shared lake access points.

Example Pattern



Example Character





# 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 and Shelton State Community College. It consists of university buildings, campus housing, green spaces, recreation areas, and athletic facilities.

**Intent**

- Support campus development as described in the institutions' master plans and related documents.

**Primary Uses**

- Retail
- Office
- Civic/Institutional
- Vertical Mixed

**Secondary Uses**

- Multi-family residential
- Parks and Open Space

**Building Blocks**

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.	
Height Range	Varies per institutional plans.
Building Form	Key campus buildings are strategically placed on major and minor axes, creating vistas terminated by significant architectural elements.
Building Setback	Varies.
Streets	Curvilinear street pattern with long blocks on the district's edges with a walkable central area.
Transportation	UA's campus street network incorporates bicycle facilities, strong pedestrian infrastructure and a campus transit system.
Parking	Surface lots, structured parking and on-street; may be restricted.
Open Space	Formal parks, athletic fields, common areas (Quad), pocket parks.

**Example Pattern**



**Example Character**



## FLEX EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Flex Employment Centers accommodate an array of modern, low-impact industrial uses that include assembly, processing, warehousing, as well as flexible office/industrial space suitable for new technologies or research and development activities. These areas include existing light industrial operations. Most industrial uses are contained within a building or facility.

### Intent

- Provide flexible space to support a variety of low-impact but high-value industrial activities.
- Encourage the transition of existing industrial uses near residential areas to lower intensity use that are less likely to create negative neighborhood impacts.
- Provide buffering through landscaping and building placement where flex employment sites are adjacent to residential areas.
- Encourage the use of higher-quality building materials and landscaping for highly-visible sites.

### Primary Uses

- Light industrial
- Warehousing/Distribution
- Commercial/Retail
- Office

### Secondary Uses

- Parks and open space
- Civic/Institutional

### Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.

Height Range	1-6 stories (generally up to 75 feet).
Building Form	Large to very large footprint structures offering flexible space to accommodate various users.
Building Setback	Varies; should be consistent with the surrounding context.
Streets	Varies; street design should reflect the surrounding context.
Transportation	Primarily car-focused development and may include accommodation for large trucks.
Parking	Off-street surface lots.
Open Space	Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas, generally private.

### Example Pattern



### Example Character



INDUSTRIAL

This designation applies to large or 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. Mining activities and major utilities are also included in this designation.

Intent

- Support heavy industrial activities away from neighborhoods and other commercial or mixed use areas.
- Utilize natural or man-made buffers (railway, water, forest) to separate industry from other uses.
- Encourage "green infrastructure" and site design practices that reduce environmental impacts.

Primary Uses

- Heavy industrial/Manufacturing
- Warehousing/Distribution
- Extraction/Mining

Secondary Uses

- Office
- Commercial
- Passive open space

Building Blocks

Building blocks described below serve as a general guide to the intended scale and character of development. Specific standards including building height, setback, lot size, and lot coverage (among other standards) are defined in the Zoning Ordinance and may vary by zoning district.	
Height Range	Varies significantly by use.
Building Form	Sites occupy one city block or more.
Building Setback	Varies depending on industrial activity.
Streets	Blocks are long and have few street connections.
Transportation	Car focused development and may include accommodation for large trucks.
Parking	Off street surface lots.
Open Space	Passive preserved land and landscaped setback areas, generally private.

Example Pattern



Example Character





## CIVIC / INSTITUTIONAL

The Civic / Institutional 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 the Tuscaloosa National Airport.

Example



## RURAL EDGE / CONSERVATION RESIDENTIAL

Rural edge refers to development generally outside of the city limits that is not subject to city zoning and beyond the city's anticipated long-term utility service expansion area. These areas are subject to development that is served by private septic systems and includes residential and small non-residential uses on large lots (over one acre). These areas may be shaped by Tuscaloosa's subdivision standards or other regulations that apply to the city's planning jurisdiction.

### Intent

- Support low intensity development in areas without municipal sewer service.
- Conserve open space and environmentally sensitive land.

Example Pattern



Example Character



## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

The Open Space and Recreation designation includes city and county parks, areas of preserved land such as the University of Alabama Arboretum, as well as private golf courses and cemeteries which function as open space.



## ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Environmentally Sensitive Development identifies undeveloped land that may exhibit potential for flooding or have other significant development limitations due to physical or environmental conditions. In some cases, these lands also serve as buffers to separate areas that may have the potential to become conflicting land uses.

The Future Land Use and Character Map identifies these areas partially based upon data on environmental constraints that may not correspond precisely with conditions on the ground. When considering rezoning requests or other development proposals, some areas classified as Environmentally Sensitive Development may be determined not to contain anticipated development limitations, or that existing limitations can reasonably be mitigated. In such cases, the future preferred land use should be based on the underlying designations, contextual considerations, and the other relevant policies of the Framework Comprehensive Plan.



### Intent

- Conserve environmentally sensitive land.
- Buffer incompatible land uses with open space.
- Develop a connected open space network through the city for recreation.
- Open space buffers adjacent to industrial development should be maintained at a width based on the type of industry and its potential to create compatibility problems.

# GROWTH PRIORITIES AND ANNEXATION PLAN

This section of the Plan provides guidance for making decisions about expanding the city's boundaries through annexation and planning infrastructure investments to support growth. It identifies areas where infill, redevelopment and outward growth should be supported.

## GROWTH PRIORITY AREAS

The growth priority map on the next page identifies areas of the planning jurisdiction by the preferred timing of public utility service (wastewater, water, etc.). The areas are defined as:

**Priority Infill and Redevelopment Area.** Areas within the city where infill and redevelopment growth is encouraged. These areas may be served by utility infrastructure today but may require upgrades to support additional urban density.

**Primary Expansion Area (Expansion Priority One).** Land outside of the city where provision of utility service currently exists or could be provided based on infrastructure in the area today. Annexation should be encouraged in these locations to promote orderly and efficient urban development patterns.

**Secondary Expansion Area (Expansion Priority Two).** Areas that could support extension of wastewater utility service in the near or mid-term. Annexation should be supported in these areas with the understanding that access to some utilities may not be immediately available.

**Future Service/Expansion Area.** Areas where wastewater utility extension could occur in the long-term. Annexations in this area (such as along Lake Tuscaloosa) should not be expected to receive city utility service during the horizon of this Plan.

***The decision to annex land should result from an assessment that it will benefit Tuscaloosa.***

## ANNEXATION POLICY GUIDE

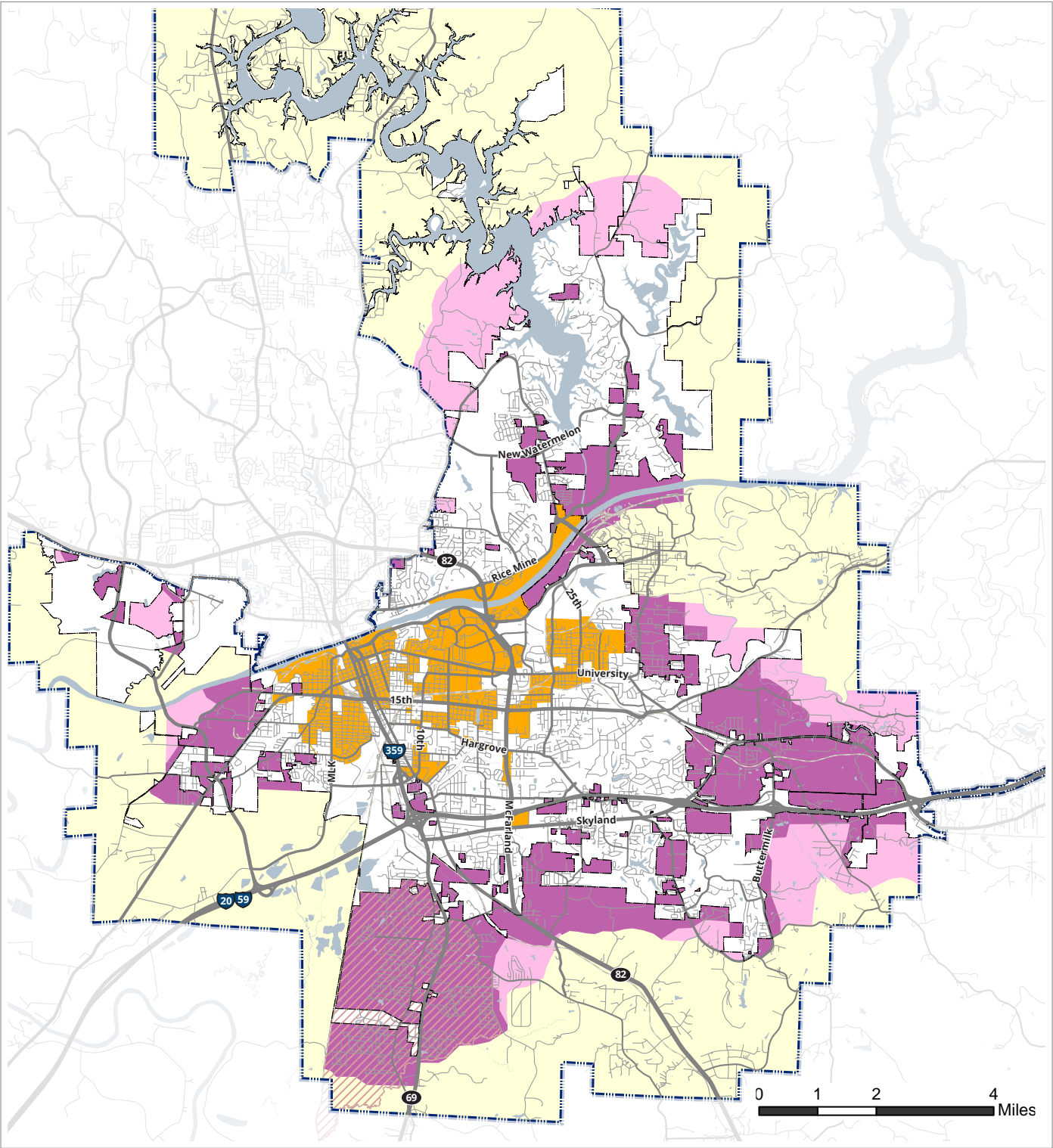
Annexation is the process by which a municipality expands its boundaries into adjacent areas not already incorporated into the municipality. The purpose of annexing land from the city's perspective is to bring urbanizing areas into a system where they can be provided with city services and where development can be regulated to ensure public health, safety, and welfare. When tied to the provision of municipal sewer service and zoning, annexation allows a municipality to exert control over how and where development occurs on its edges. Annexations bring new property taxpayers and, usually, utility ratepayers into the city. From a property owner's perspective, annexation could give their property access to city services such as utilities or schools, making it potentially more valuable for future development.

### Annexation Evaluation Criteria

The decision to annex land should result from an assessment that it will benefit Tuscaloosa. In evaluating an annexation request, the following criteria should be considered:

1. Amount of existing development
2. Potential for imminent new development
3. Potential for significant shaping of development
4. Cost to extend infrastructure
5. Cost to provide ongoing maintenance to infrastructure (roads and utilities)
6. Fiscal benefit: the potential revenue impact to the city and ability to recover costs
7. Potential to support unique transportation opportunities (roads, transit, rail, trails, etc.)
8. Adverse consequences of not annexing the area





**Map 3. Growth Priority and Utility Expansion Areas**

- Priority Infill and Redevelopment
- Primary Expansion Area
- Secondary Expansion Area
- Future Service/Expansion Area
- Utility Exemption Area\*
- City Limits
- Planning Jurisdiction

\*Area where the city has previously agreed to provide sanitary sewer service for residential development outside of the city limits. Annexation should generally be supported but is not expected in this area.

## Provision of City Utilities

All annexations should include an agreement that addresses whether and under what conditions the property annexed will be served with city water and wastewater utilities. The following assumptions should inform water and wastewater expansion:

- Generally, the cost of establishing new public utilities for development is borne by the developer.
- There should not be an assumption that all annexed land will receive utility service or will be able to access services.
- The availability and timing of utility service is dependent on many factors and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- Modeling may be conducted to assess the impacts of proposed improvements on the infrastructure system.
- There should be no future city wastewater utility extensions within unincorporated areas.

## Upgrades to City Standards

In some cases, potential annexation areas may have existing development, utility systems, and street networks. The city may require that existing infrastructure be upgraded to city standards prior to granting annexation.

## Pre-Zoning of Unincorporated Land

When a petition for annexation is submitted to the city, the petitioner must also submit an application to incorporate the property in a zoning district.

1. The method and establishment of such pre-zoning will be in accordance with the city's Zoning Ordinance, as authorized by Title 11, Chapter 52, Article 4, Section 85 of the Code of Alabama.
2. The zoning district should be in accordance with the Framework Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use and Character Map and other relevant policies. City staff may advise on appropriate zoning district or district(s) for the area.
3. The zoning classification established through the pre-zoning procedure shall become effective and enforceable at the time annexation of the property into the city becomes effective.

### How Annexation Works in Alabama

According to State of Alabama Code, to be considered for annexation, land must be adjacent to the city's existing boundary and not be within the incorporated area of another city. State law defines three annexation methods.

**1. Annexation by petition with consent of all property owners.** This is the most common method where a property owner or owners petition the city for annexation. Historically in Tuscaloosa, annexation requests have met the wants and needs of the petitioner.

**2. Annexation by election (referendum) of a majority of property owners.** When it is in the city's interest to annex an area with multiple properties and owners, a petition submitted by at least two property owners can be considered by a vote of the property owners in the proposed annexation area. A simple majority of the property owners must vote in favor of annexation.

**3. Annexation by state legislation.** This method involves a legislative action by the State and is less common. One example in Tuscaloosa is the annexation of land along I-20/59 leading to Mercedes manufacturing.

**4. Island annexation.** State Code provides cities with the ability to annex unincorporated land that is completely surrounded by the city's incorporated area (if the land is less than 15 acres and has been surrounded for at least one year). This annexation process involves a city resolution. Tuscaloosa has rarely employed this tool.

# WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEM CONSIDERATIONS

The utility systems that support our communities with potable water and handle wastewater are often taken for granted. These systems have designed capacities and each component in the system has a lifespan. While the development community often pays the cost of expansions to these systems, the city must manage downstream impacts and handle upkeep. Early in the Framework process, the city's existing water and wastewater systems were assessed to understand their impact on growth.

## INCREASING COST OF GROWTH

One of the major takeaways from the assessment relates to the city's wastewater system. The gravity sewers are aging and in need of rehabilitation, repair, and replacement in many of the city's older areas. As the system grows with new development on the city's edges, there is more infrastructure for the city to maintain. Additionally, regardless of where growth occurs, additional sewer flows to the city's one wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) will increase costs for wastewater treatment. Federal permits require treatment to specific standards and when wastewater concentrations increase from growth, the plant must use more intensive methods to reduce pollutant concentrations.

The following is a summary of utility infrastructure considerations within key geographic areas.

- **Downtown and the University Area.** Recent development in the University area has put the area's wastewater infrastructure at its functional capacity. Improvements to the wastewater conveyance system (sewers) and possibly water supply systems will be needed to support additional development. The impacts of future development proposals should be modeled as part of the project evaluation process.
- **West Tuscaloosa.** The West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory verified the city's ability to provide potable water and sewer service to existing and future users throughout the West Tuscaloosa area. Many unserved sites are near one another allowing for multiple properties to be served efficiently as development occurs. Upgrades to first-generation systems should be explored with utility expansion as some neighborhoods likely contain aging substructure.
- **North Tuscaloosa.** Additional new development north of the Black Warrior River will likely require capacity improvements to the city's wastewater system. Given the strong development interest in the area, it may not be necessary for the city to subsidize improvements that would add density and traffic to the area — particularly until road improvements are undertaken.
- **East Tuscaloosa (along I-20/59).** There is generally capacity to provide water and wastewater utilities to the areas shown on the Future Land Use and Character Map. Like all development, the city should consider the long-term cost of maintenance when expanding the system.
- **Highway 69 South corridor.** Future development in this area may require capacity improvements to wastewater system components such as lift stations.



# ACTIONS

In addition to the Future Land Use and Character Map, the following projects, policies, and programs support the goal for Growing:

***Well-managed land and infrastructure that includes revitalization, strategic growth, and stewardship of the natural environment; creates an appealing community character, and promotes the city's long-term financial health.***

## Objective 1. Modernize the city's development regulations

City codes are the primary means of implementing the Future Land Use recommendations illustrated on the Future Land Use and Character Map. An update to the city's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations should:

### GR 1.1 Create predictable, understandable, and user-friendly

- § codes.** A concern expressed by many stakeholders familiar with the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations is that they are not user-friendly. They are difficult to navigate and understand, procedurally complicated and inefficient, and in many instances unclear. A rewrite to the Ordinances should:
- Make the structure more logical and intuitive.
  - Improve the document format and incorporate graphics, illustrations, and flowcharts.
  - Make the language clearer and more precise.
  - Modernize and refine the definitions.
  - Streamline review procedures.
  - Incorporate a procedures manual.

#### Procedures Manual

The procedures manual would include application content requirements, information about application fees, schedules for application processing, and information about nuts and bolts staff review processes. The manual might also include summary or explanatory information on how to use the regulations or more effectively participate in application review processes.

### GR 1.2 Restructure and modernize the zoning districts. Zoning

- § districts and allowable uses are fundamental components of a zoning ordinance.** They establish the general development character of different geographical areas in the community, along with what uses may be developed in different locations. The current Zoning Ordinance structure includes 36 districts – 26 base districts and 10 overlay districts. Some of the current districts have similar purposes; several are antiquated; some development options and intents directed by this Plan are not allowed in the current district structure. The zoning districts should be restructured to implement the Framework Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use and Character element, incorporate best practices, and make the code more user-friendly. This restructuring may involve the consolidation of multiple similar districts into one district, addition of new districts or removal of obsolete or redundant districts. The update should consider reducing the number of overlay districts or districts with discretionary procedures and implement more "base" districts with clearly defined "by-right" standards.

### GR 1.3 Modernize the development standards.

§ The Zoning Ordinance sets many standards for development form and quality. Some standards apply universally to all development sites, other standards apply to specific uses, and some standards apply uniquely to specific areas of the city. The following types of development standards should be considered in the rewrite to the Zoning Ordinance:

- **Add mobility and connectivity standards.** Establish requirements for providing multimodal (pedestrian, vehicle, and bicycle) access and circulation where appropriate, sidewalks in new development and redevelopment areas, and connectivity between developments.
- **Modernize the off-street parking, loading, and bicycle standards.** Revise minimum parking standards, parking exemptions, parking locations, bicycle parking requirements and related regulations and include standards distinct for downtown, institutional, and mixed-use areas.
- **Refine landscaping and buffer standards.** Consolidate landscaping and buffering standards into a single section that improves development quality, strengthens planting standards, and clarifies requirements.
- **Improve form and design standards for multi-family, commercial, and mixed-use development.** Provide standards that reflect high-quality architecture through regulations pertaining to building articulation, materials, roofline, building transitions, and storage areas, among others.
- **Refine exterior lighting standards.** Provide objective, measurable standards that address elements to protect the night sky and reduce glare citywide.
- **Reduce barriers and refine standards or incentives for "green building."** Encourage sustainable design by providing policies and regulations that incentivize "green building" practices such as energy reduction, alternative energy installations, protection of trees and vegetation, and construction waste reduction.

### Development Standards

Zoning ordinances can include numerous categories and levels of development standards based around the specific needs of the community and local, county or state laws. General development standards typically apply to all property in the jurisdiction and establish the base regulations for the community. These standards include categories of regulations pertaining to:

- Landscaping
- Parking
- Lighting
- Building Materials
- Use of Property (permitted or conditional)
- Building Aesthetics
- Lot dimensions
- Building Setbacks
- Open Space
- Lot Coverage
- Property Access (vehicular and pedestrian)
- And many others

These standards can be refined based on the type of use (residential, commercial, industrial, etc) or area of the city such as historic districts or mixed-use centers. Ensuring standards are properly maintained and updated is critical to defining the character of the community.

#### What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the plan.

- Additional zoning and development code actions are mentioned within other plan topics and are identified with the symbol: §

## Objective 2. Encourage infill and redevelopment in strategic locations

**GR 2.1 Focus development energy to create catalyst areas.** The city has many areas with potential for revitalization including West Tuscaloosa, Alberta, and the Skyland Boulevard corridor to name a few. Within these areas are various redevelopment and infill development opportunities on specific sites like the former Tuscaloosa Country Club in West Tuscaloosa or McFarland Mall on Skyland Boulevard. The city should resist pressure to pursue numerous small opportunities simultaneously and instead be strategic in allocating resources like infrastructure investments, incentives, and other programs where they will have the biggest impact. By focusing resources and energy it will be easier to create catalytic development projects. Revitalization is an incremental process that often starts by creating visible examples of successful projects. Demonstrating success is particularly important when promoting new development types, regulatory tools, city programs, or funding mechanisms.

**GR 2.2 Market development opportunities within designated Opportunity Zones.** The 2017 Federal tax reform legislation created a new program for community investment called Opportunity Zones. These Opportunity Zones are census tracts classified as “low-income” but contain prime investment potential due to the presence of either a downtown, neighborhood, major institution, or regional interstate access. The initiative encourages redevelopment, blight abatement, or substantial growth within these census tracts by providing access to capital funding and tax incentives for high-impact projects. Tuscaloosa has eight designated Opportunity Zones identified by general location which includes; Downtown / Tuscaloosa Country Club, Stillman / West Tuscaloosa, Skyland Boulevard, Veterans Memorial Parkway, and Alberta. To leverage this initiative, the city should continue to work with developers to make them aware of Opportunity Zones. The city could also collaborate with an entity such as the Chamber of Commerce to design and market an investment prospectus to showcase the distinctive assets of — and investible projects in — an Opportunity Zone. The city should continue to consult with organizations like Opportunity Alabama (OPAL), which is a non-profit offering assistance to investors, partners, and communities on strategic marketing and project identification specific to Alabama’s opportunity zones.

**GR 2.3 Revise the regulations to encourage and support redevelopment.** The current zoning regulations have in some instances resulted in obstacles for redevelopment such as creating nonconformities, containing “one size fits all” standards (e.g., for parking, see GR 1.3 above), or involving a time-consuming, uncertain, and negotiated development review process that frustrates and dampens developer / investor interest. The rewritten regulations need to reverse this situation, and make redevelopment in desired locations the preferred and easier form of development. The rewritten regulations need to make sure redevelopment “fits into” either the existing context or the planned context/character for the area, and that the procedural path to the desired type of redevelopment is streamlined, making it procedurally easier to occur. The

*“The visible effects of reinvestment will have a multiplier effect”*

–2018 West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory

*Focusing development energy does not mean that some locations are ignored. Before widely applying new types of incentives, regulations, financing structures, or development, the city should pilot a limited number of locations. Such focus will benefit other areas of the city in the long-term.*



following changes should be considered in the rewritten Zoning Ordinance to better support and encourage redevelopment at desired locations:

- Streamline development review procedures in existing overlay districts;
- Include contextual compatibility standards in selected zoning districts to stimulate redevelopment by minimizing nonconformities (see LI 1.1);
- Add an administrative adjustment procedure to allow administrative approval of minor adjustments to dimensional and certain development and design standards to allow for more flexibility, especially for redevelopment sites; and
- Add alternative compliance provisions for parking and consider broadening their application to other standards.

**GR 2.4 Monitor conditions at large multi-family developments and support redevelopment potential.** The city should continue to monitor conditions of large multi-family developments outside of the University District. Many of these multi-family complexes are student-oriented and may be located in challenging areas for long-term sustainability due to surrounding land uses, distance from the UA campus, lack of nearby amenities, or access constraints. The future land use recommendations encourage future multi-family complexes near commercial areas, with direct access to major thoroughfares or public transit. Redevelopment opportunities for deteriorating or vacant sites should be supported by the city in alignment with appropriate land uses, such as office, industrial, or commercial depending on location.

### Objective 3. Proactively invest in infrastructure to support growth (including infill, redevelopment, and outward growth)

**GR 3.1 Seek low-cost solutions to infrastructure needs.** The city's investment in infrastructure will support improvements within established neighborhoods while promoting new growth opportunities. An incremental strategy should be evaluated for low-cost, high-impact improvements. Initial infrastructure improvements could include expanding transit operation service, maintaining and completing sidewalk connections with emphasis on neighborhood to commercial center connections, and upgrading streetscape facilities such as street lighting on key corridors to spur private investment. Cost analysis of implementing each improvement should be conducted and coordinated with the city's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).

Infrastructure improvements which could include utilities, transportation, or streetscapes could help facilitate revitalization within areas such as West Tuscaloosa and Alberta. (see Objective 2)

**GR 3.2 Establish more regular updates to infrastructure models.** Data and analysis are vital to making informed decisions about infrastructure needs, development proposals, and future capital improvements. As development takes place, the supporting infrastructure systems including water, wastewater, and transportation, should be routinely evaluated. The city should establish a more regular schedule for updating infrastructure models. These updates can be labor intensive, so the schedules must balance the benefit of new information with the reality of staff capacity and costs for professional services. These updates could take place as

often as quarterly or as infrequently as every three years. The frequency and updates to systems could also be dependent on the pace of development (e.g. when a specific number of new residential units are approved). While infrastructure impacts are currently evaluated on a per-project basis relative to existing conditions, when multiple large projects are in the development pipeline at the same time, it is imperative to evaluate the cumulative impact of those projects.

**GR 3.3 Maintain a plan for water and wastewater infrastructure investments to support desired growth patterns.** The city's primary source of raw water, Lake Tuscaloosa, along with the water intake, raw water transmission mains, and water treatment facilities are considered adequate to meet community needs over the Comprehensive Plan's horizon. The city's wastewater treatment facility has sufficient capacity but some wastewater system components may require upgrades to support growth. Also, routine maintenance and emergency repair and replacement projects to this infrastructure will likely be needed in the future. The city should prepare a master plan for the water system and wastewater system which would be reviewed annually and updated at least every five years. These plans should identify short-term and long-term water system improvement needs in 10-year increments up to 30 years, be developed using a current hydraulic model, quantify future demands, identify necessary improvements, and balance needs and costs.

**Water System Plan.** Should consider:

- Areas of low/high water pressures within the distribution system.
- Identification of high velocities in system mains.
- Location of small diameter galvanized steel line in the distribution system.
- Intended growth areas identified in this Plan.
- Growth within the connected water systems.
- Operational issues/constraints between the city's seven pressure zones.

**Wastewater System Plan.** Should consider:

- Areas where the flow capacity is not sufficient for dry weather conditions and wet weather infiltration and inflow.
- Location of known Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs)
- Locations where pipes and manholes need to be replaced or rehabilitated based on ongoing condition assessments, including corrosion in force mains.
- Intended growth areas identified in this Plan.
- Operational issues/constraints between the city's lift stations and the gravity sewer system.

The water and wastewater master plans should be considered as part of a formal multi-year Capital Improvements Plan that is aligned with community needs, priorities, and funding.

A water system hydraulic model should include the characteristics of all the pumping stations, water mains greater than a specified diameter, tanks, pressure reducing valves and other attributes of the water system. The model should have the capability of evaluating the entire system at once or each pressure zone separately.

A wastewater system hydraulic model should include the characteristics of all the gravity sewers, manholes, lift stations, and force mains. The model should have the capability of evaluating the entire system at once.

**GR 3.4 Evaluate the use of impact fees to support infrastructure improvements and public safety.** The city imposes impact fees on some development projects to help offset the cost of providing capital facilities (such as infrastructure improvements) to support growth. The city should periodically review its impact fee formulas and the types of development subject to these fees. The impact fees should generate reasonable revenue support growth with infrastructure improvements and public safety services, but not unreasonably hinder development potential. Impact fees should be viewed as a supplement to the city's regular capital improvement planning and should not be expected to completely cover the cost of improvements.

## Objective 4. Exhibit strong stewardship of natural resources

**GR 4.1 Establish or refine mechanisms for expanding the city's green space.** While the city has several significant and unique natural areas, access to green space is not evenly distributed through the community. Green spaces provide opportunities for recreation and alternate forms of transportation (boating, hiking, walking, and bicycling), act as wildlife habitats and corridors, serve as development buffers, and help mitigate stormwater runoff. At the neighborhood level, green space has been shown to correlate positively to property values and physical and mental health. Several policies and programs should be considered to expand green spaces:

**§ Regulatory Tools.** Green space or open space is a key component of quality development. There are various ways to accommodate open space into a development project to add value in the short-term and support success over the long-term. The existing Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations contain standards for setting aside open space as development takes place. However, these standards are located in different places in the regulations and apply to limited types of development. The update to the regulations should consider establishing a uniform and comprehensive set of open space set-aside standards that are flexible and context-sensitive — based on geographical location and development type (new residential, mixed-use, or nonresidential development). For example, open space standards in the downtown would have a lower set-aside percentage than in the other areas and would be flexible enough to allow features more prevalent in compact, mixed-use urban environments to count as open space (e.g., plazas and other public gathering spaces, fountains, use of stormwater infrastructure as site amenities, sidewalk furniture, roof-top or terrace gardens, etc.).

**Land Acquisitions.** Consider opportunities to acquire land around Lake Tuscaloosa and the Black Warrior River for conservation areas or recreational access. Specific land acquisitions should be considered when they would provide a unique and broad public benefit. As an alternative to acquiring property, land conservation could potentially be achieved through a market supported structure at minimal public expense by establishing a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program.

*Tuscaloosa should be a model of "Alabama the Beautiful"*

—participant  
Forum on the Future

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 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.



**GR 4.2 Create a tree planting incentive program.** Trees in urban areas

§ have aesthetic, economic, and environmental benefits. Some areas in the community lack adequate tree cover, either due to the 2011 tornado or inadequate planting or replacement policies. To expand the city's tree canopy, a tree planting program should be established. The program could involve a combination of steps including regulatory changes that require street trees in all new developments, incentivize the preservation of existing trees (especially large shade trees) in new development and redevelopment projects, and requiring replacement of trees that are destroyed or removed. It could also include a program where the city (or a community partner) provides trees to property owners at a reduced cost. It may also include proactive efforts by the city, such as planting trees and installing landscaping along major road corridors and gateways.

**GR 4.3 Evaluate protections for potentially sensitive land such as flood-prone areas, waterway edges, and steep slopes and strengthen where appropriate.**

§ Tuscaloosa's landscape contains areas of potentially sensitive land that if disturbed could present hazards to the broader community. For example, disturbance of flood-prone areas could make flood events more severe and increase downstream pollution. Disturbance of steep slopes could increase erosion and sedimentation in the city's drinking water reservoir. The Zoning Ordinance and other city regulations provide requirements to reduce these risks. City ordinances should discourage development in flood-hazard areas, provide reasonable erosion control measures, limit the large-scale disturbance of steep slopes, and refine clear-cutting restrictions. The city should also refine penalties for violating these protections.

**GR 4.4 Monitor pollutant and sedimentation conditions on**

**Tuscaloosa's Lakes.** The city's three lakes (Harris Lake, Lake Nicol, and Lake Tuscaloosa) serve as the region's drinking water supply, industrial raw water supply, and recreational amenities. Preservation of the three lakes is critical to the continuity of the community and growth of the region. With development trends around Lake Tuscaloosa come concerns about degradation of water quality due to erosion (turbidity and sediment from construction sites); stormwater runoff of contaminants

**OTHER STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER****A community education program around environmental stewardship.**

The city has progressively worked towards educating the community on environmental stewardship through efforts including the Stormwater Management Plan. The city could build upon these efforts and establish a community education program to raise awareness about pollution risks and the public's responsibilities, including things that people should do (or not do) to be good stewards of the environment. It could also build awareness about the city's efforts at environmental stewardship including its use of Low Impact Design, recycling programs, etc.

The City of Tuscaloosa has several education and outreach programs regarding environmental stewardship. Stormwater management seminars and brochures provide residents key points on preventing certain materials from making it into the system. The "Don't Clog with Fog" (Fats, Oils, and Grease) program is even more tailored to protecting the sanitary system from more common household wastes. Many on-going programs and physical improvements such as manhole cover labeling, provide environmental awareness and showcase the city's commitment to preserving and protecting its natural resources.

like oil, fuel, heavy metals, and nutrients (lawn fertilizer); and increase in harmful bacteria from any deficient septic tank systems. Currently, the city monitors water quality parameters at 34 locations on a monthly basis within the Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol, and Harris Lake watersheds and water quality meets or exceeds standards. To better understand water quality trends and the impacts of sedimentation, the city should build upon its existing practices and establish a long-term water quality monitoring program the such as described in the 2001 Watershed Protection Plan, utilizing recent advances in technology.

## Objective 5. Improve the appearance of public and private property throughout the city (particularly gateways)

### GR 5.1 Strengthen development regulations regarding aesthetics

**§ citywide.** The appearance of development has a significant impact on community pride and on perceptions of an area by nonresidents. The current Zoning Ordinance includes some form and design standards in certain districts but they do not include generally applicable form or design standards. Consequently, outside of the places where these requirements apply, minimum form and quality occurs only through landowner willingness or negotiation. In addition to the development standards mentioned in GR 1.3, the updated Zoning Ordinance should address:

- Minimum form, design and materials standards that would be generally applicable to multi-family, non-residential (commercial and industrial), and mixed-use development, regardless of location.
- Restricting the number of vehicles that can be parked on grass rather than driveways within residential zones.
- Maintaining development standards to protect the character of historic neighborhoods and provide appropriate transitions to buffer these neighborhoods.

#### What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the plan.

- Strengthen property maintenance enforcement practices. (LIVING 2.1)
- Create a tree planting incentive program. (GROWING 4.2)
- Focus development energy, particularly potential city gateways. (GROWING 3.1)

# CONCENTRATION AREAS

Tuscaloosa's previous land use planning included a series of district-specific plans adopted at different times that built upon the general direction of the citywide land use plan. The Framework Comprehensive Plan consolidates and reconciles these separate plans into a single future land use guide. The Concentration Areas section builds upon the Future Land Use and Character to provide greater detail on the intent and opportunities at specific locations throughout the city. This section is organized into five areas:

- Downtown / University Area
- West Tuscaloosa
- North Tuscaloosa and the Lakes
- Eastern growth area
- Highway 69 South Corridor



# Downtown / University Area

This area includes Tuscaloosa's civic and urban core, the University of Alabama main campus, student residential areas, and historic neighborhoods. It is an area where continued redevelopment is expected. The following recommendations seek to maximize that opportunity to shape a district with high quality development, while better managing the growth of student housing, and providing opportunities for other types of residential, commercial, and mixed-use development.

## Objective 6. Manage growth in the Downtown / University Area

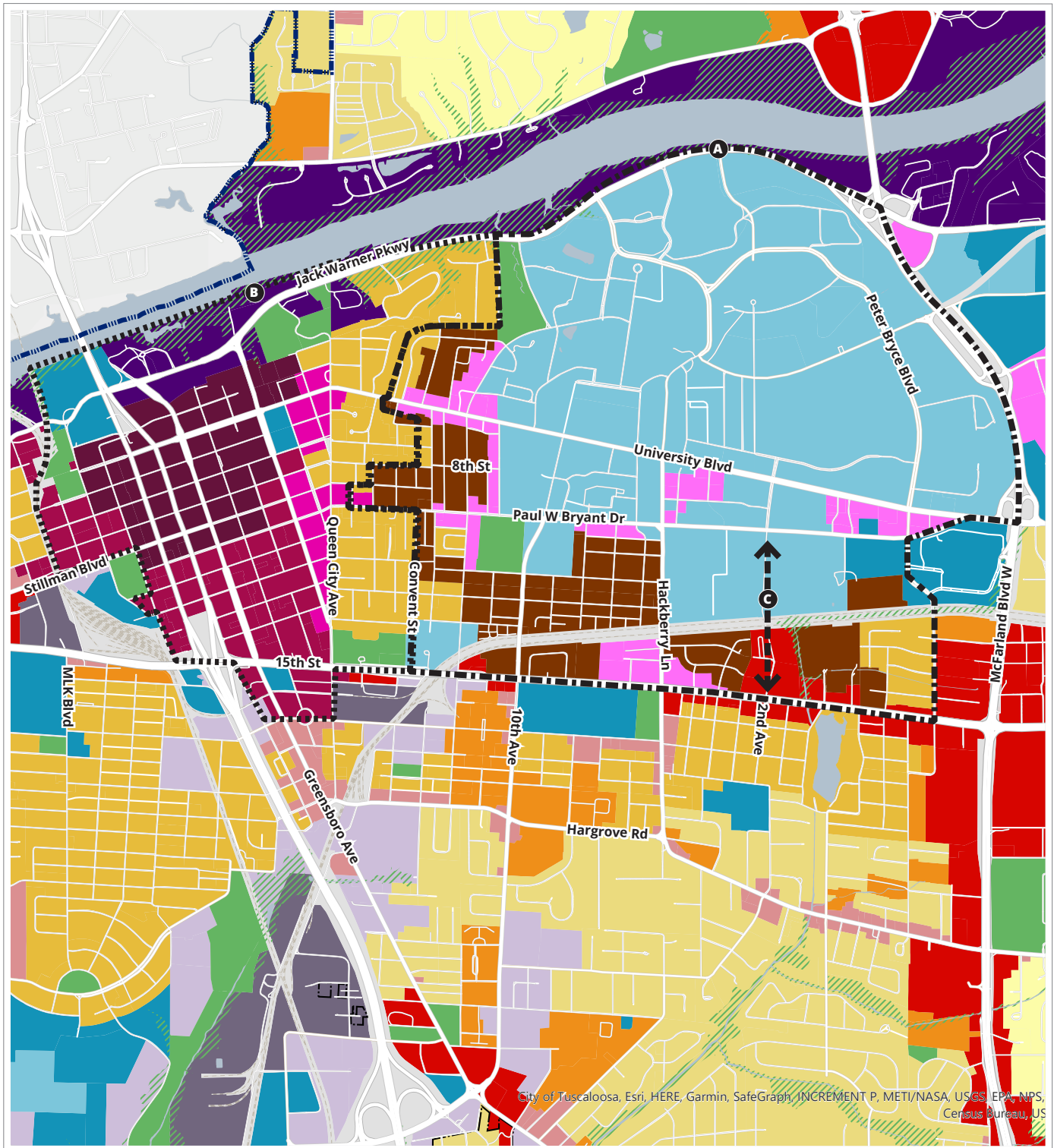
### GR 6.1. Redefine the University Area Neighborhood (UAN) and "The Box" as one concept: The University District.

Map Area:  / Future Land Use Category: Various

The University Area Neighborhood as currently defined in the Zoning Ordinance is an area generally bounded by Queen City Avenue, 15th Street, Hackberry Lane and Jack Warner Parkway. Its intent is to strengthen property values in the area, protect historic neighborhoods, and promote redevelopment that supports the unique needs adjacent to the University. "The Box" is a recommendation originally defined by the 2013 Student Rental Housing Task Force and supported by City Council, outside of which there were to be no new rezonings for student-oriented multi-family housing containing over 200 bedrooms. The intent of "The Box" was to contain large student housing developments to the University Area until such time that the Framework Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code could be amended. The boundaries of "The Box" include the University Area Neighborhood and extend east to McFarland Boulevard. There is a continuing need to treat the area near the University of Alabama's campus differently in terms of development intensity and design quality. A proposed name for this area is "The University District" and boundaries are shown on Map 4 (area A).

The Area Intent:

- Create a high quality setting for residents and visitors that is well connected to Downtown and the University.
- Protect the character of locally designated historic districts.
- Support areas for single-family, duplex and multiplex housing, and apartment buildings.
- Encourage higher quality development in terms of architecture, materials, landscaping and lighting.
- Support housing development that is designed for and marketed to students (and update the definition of a student-oriented development).
- Manage residential intensity primarily through building form standards.
- Allow neighborhood-scale commercial uses in additional areas of the district west of Bryant-Denny Stadium (could include small-scale commercial uses along corridors such as Paul Bryant Drive, 8th, and 6th Streets).



**Map 4. Downtown / University Concentration Area**

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Core          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8B4513; border: 1px solid black;"></span> University Residential         | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #696969; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Industrial  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800040; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Edge          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF8C00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Multi-family Residential       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ADD8E6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> University Campus   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF00FF; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Historic Edge | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Traditional Neighborhood, Core | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #4682B4; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Civic / Institutional                                       |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #DDA0DD; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Campus Services        | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #F0E68C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Traditional Neighborhood, Edge | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Rural Edge / Conservation Development                       |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #483D8B; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Riverfront Development | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFFF00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Suburban Residential           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #3CB371; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Parks and Open Space  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF4500; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Corridor Commercial    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #B0E0D0; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Lakeside Living                | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black; border-style: dashed;"></span> Environmentally Sensitive Development |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #D2B48C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Limited Commercial     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #9370DB; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Flex Employment Center         |   |

## **GR 6.2. Refine zoning districts and development standards that apply to the University District.**

Map Area: **A** / Future Land Use Category: Various

To clarify expectations and maintain a high standard of development in the University District, the existing UAN overlay zoning district could be replaced with unique base zoning districts that provide areas for single family residential, mixed residential, and commercial development with appropriate standards. Development standards that apply to the University District should address building form, architecture, and materials, as well as site standards like lighting, landscaping, and parking that are tailored to the area. The intent should be to continue to create a high quality and cohesive district linking Downtown and the University of Alabama campus.

## **GR 6.3 Anticipate development opportunities with the 2nd Avenue Connection project between the University and Forest Lake.**

Map Area: **C** Future Land Use Category: Various

The planned extension of 2nd Avenue from 15th Street across the railroad into the University of Alabama campus will likely create new demand for development in the area around the intersection of 2nd Avenue and 15th Street. This project will likely spur demand for redevelopment in the Forest Lake area, which contains a large amount of vacant land since the 2011 Tornado. This area offers an opportunity to introduce a walkable commercial development connected to a mix of residential types – some of which may not exist in the city today. This area could serve as an attractive residential location for University faculty or others.

The Area Intent:

- Along 15th Street, support walkable commercial or mixed-use development on the north side (Campus Services or Limited Commercial) and support a mix of Limited Commercial uses on the south side.
- Support apartment development along 2nd Avenue between 15th Street and the railroad.
- South of 15th Street, encourage a mix of small lot, attached residential, and alternative housing types such as live-work units and accessory dwelling units.
- Focus on creating opportunities for non-student living and directing student oriented development toward the University Residential areas. Some student housing is likely in the area but should be limited.

## **GR 6.4 Coordinate city investments with the University of Alabama Campus Master Plan.**

The city should coordinate with the University's capital planning to leverage resources and align improvements to better connect the campus and the University District. For example, the 2017 University Campus Master Plan identifies a future bikeway and pedestrian network through campus and the surrounding area.



## **GR 6.5 Redefine the Downtown / Riverfront District.**

Map Area: **B** Future Land Use Category: Various

The existing Downtown / Riverfront Overlay District defined in the Zoning Ordinance provides design standards and procedures to guide high quality development in the Downtown area. Based on the Future Land Use and Character Map, the area where such standards apply could be expanded to include all of the Downtown Core and Downtown Edge future land use areas and extend north to the Black Warrior River. This larger Downtown / Riverfront district is generally shown as Area B on Map 4. This area could contain three distinct base zoning districts with more measurable design standards to create certainty in the development review process. Additionally, the development process in the District could be streamlined to improve what is now a complicated, lengthy, uncertain, and sometimes overlapping process in the existing overlay district.

## **GR 6.6 Establish a Main Street Program with partners external to the city.**

Originally identified in the 2005 Downtown Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan and in the 2010 Downtown Strategic Plan, the Main Street Program uses preservation-based economic development to stimulate community revitalization. The program focuses on two key success factors: 1) a qualified Main Street Manager to handle coordination of Downtown investment efforts; and 2) the Main Street approach which integrates physical, economic, organizational and promotional activities to address deficiencies in the Downtown area. An individual, group, or organization outside of the city could enroll in the Main Street Program. Most successful Main Street Programs establish a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization to manage the program and. Evaluation of other Alabama communities should be conducted in consultation with Main Street Alabama's tiered assistance services to determine a strategy for implementing the program and potential local partnerships.

### **What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the Plan.**

- Assess infrastructure needs as redevelopment occurs. (GROWING 2.1)
- Establish or refine mechanisms for expanding green space and create a tree planting program. (GROWING 4.1 and 4.2)
- Expand existing initiatives into a 'Good Neighbor' program for college students living in neighborhoods. (LIVING 1.4)
- Enhance Downtown parking. (CONNECTING 4.1)
- Enhance the University Boulevard streetscape from Greensboro Avenue to Wallace Wade Avenue. (CONNECTING 4.2)

# West Tuscaloosa

West Tuscaloosa is a large area that includes diverse neighborhoods, major industries, and unique institutions such as Stillman College, and offers proximity to Downtown and the riverfront. It is also an area that has struggled with disinvestment and blight. The following section integrates recommendations from the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory (2018) to encourage neighborhood reinvestment and maximize unique development opportunities.

## Objective 7. Facilitate development in West Tuscaloosa

### GR 7.1 Focus revitalization efforts in West Tuscaloosa neighborhoods.

Map Area: **A** Future Land Use Category: Traditional Neighborhood, Core

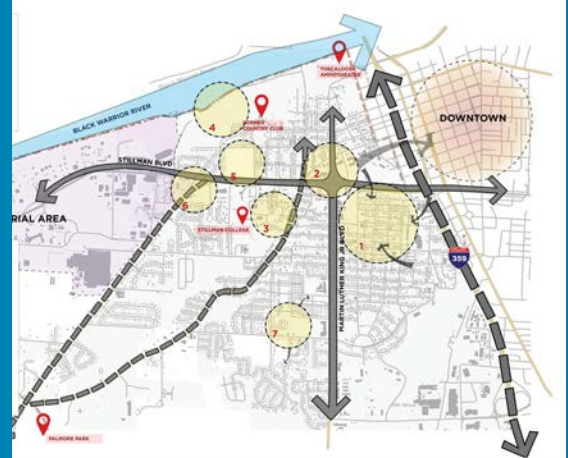
A fundamental component of the West Tuscaloosa community is the existing and well-established neighborhoods. Comprised in these neighborhoods are numerous residences, churches, educational facilities, and employment centers representative of a traditional neighborhood. These areas, particularly in locations near Downtown and the riverfront, are opportunities for new residential growth.

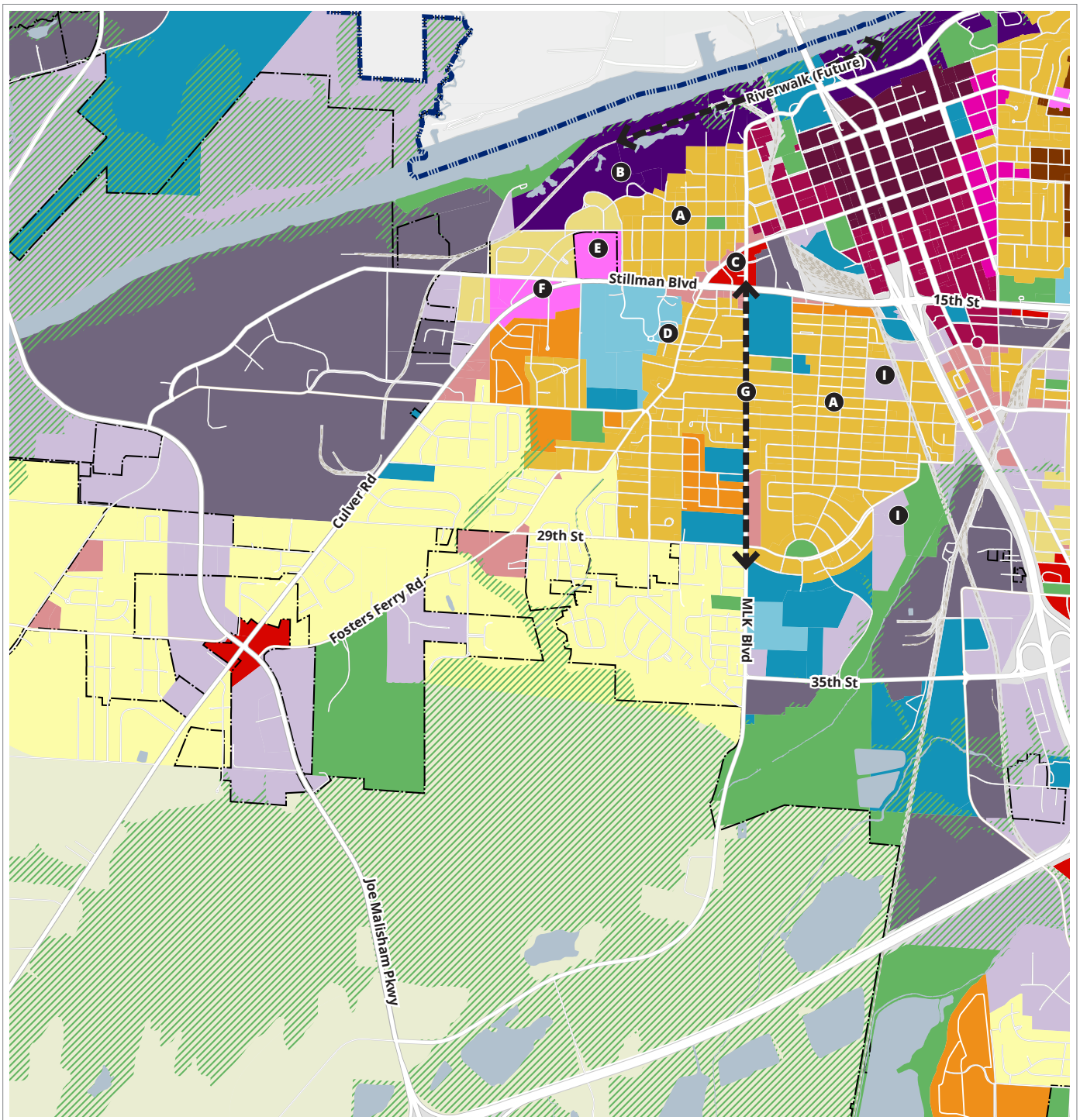
Area Intent:

- Connect the sidewalk network, particularly around schools and churches.
- Encourage infill residential development on existing vacant parcels.
- Inventory blighted properties and identify opportunities for relocation or demolition, if applicable.
- Support renovation of neglected properties where practical and demolition and clearing of vacant and severely blighted properties to limit further neighborhood deterioration.

#### West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory

In 2017, the City of Tuscaloosa initiated a planning effort to create a strategy to enhance the West Tuscaloosa Community by identifying community indicators, infrastructure deficiencies, and areas where targeted reinvestment could or would have a catalyst effect on community reinvestment. Beginning with the most fundamental inventory of existing Land Uses, Zoning patterns, and physical utility infrastructure, the study was defined as a "Community Inventory." Throughout the Community Inventory, citizen input continuously refined the data and analysis, helping to shape the direction citizens desire for their community. The graphic illustration, right, represents the physical recommendations of the inventory including interconnectivity between neighborhoods and focus areas within West Tuscaloosa.





**Map 5. West Tuscaloosa Concentration Area**

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|--|--|--|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Core          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8B4513; border: 1px solid black;"></span> University Residential         | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #654321; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Industrial   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800040; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Edge          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF8C00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Multi-family Residential       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ADD8E6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> University Campus  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF00FF; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Historic Edge | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Traditional Neighborhood, Core | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #008080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Civic / Institutional  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #DDA0DD; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Campus Services        | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #F0E68C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Traditional Neighborhood, Edge | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Rural Edge / Conservation Development  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #483D8B; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Riverfront Development | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFFF00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Suburban Residential           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #3CB371; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Parks and Open Space   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF4500; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Corridor Commercial    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #AFEEEE; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Lakeside Living                | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, #ccc 2px, #ccc 4px); border: 1px solid black;"></span> Environmentally Sensitive Development |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #D2B48C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Limited Commercial     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #D8BFD8; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Flex Employment Center         |  |



## **GR 7.2 Establish a unique riverfront development on the former golf course (former Tuscaloosa Country Club).**

Map Area: **B** Future Land Use Category: Riverfront Development

The former golf course and original Tuscaloosa Country Club property encompasses ±110-acres along the Black Warrior River. The site has the potential to accommodate a mixture of uses, including a range of employment, entertainment, commercial, and residential uses, whether in the form of owner-occupied dwellings or rental units. The site is under private-sector ownership and will likely be a phased project, based on its size and geography.

Area Intent:

- Encourage a mixture of uses with an employment emphasis that helps to diversify the city's jobs base.
- Integrate pedestrian linkages to Stillman College and Downtown via an extended Riverwalk.
- Provide appropriate transitional residential uses near existing neighborhoods.

## **GR 7.3 Locate heavy industrial uses away from neighborhoods.**

Map Area: **I** Future Land Use Category: Various

There are several major industrial sites in the West Tuscaloosa area that serve as valuable employment centers and have contributed to the city's historical growth. Many of these sites began operating long before surrounding neighborhoods developed or were established at a time when it was common for workers to live nearby. Today, however, some of these industrial uses within neighborhoods are seen as nuisances and are not appropriate for residential areas. Trends in industrial development favor very large sites and access to transportation infrastructure (waterways, rail, or highway access). For these reasons, the Future Land Use and Character Map designates some of these existing industrial sites as less intense uses such as Limited Commercial or Flex Employment. The intent is to encourage neighborhood revitalization and recognize potential redevelopment opportunities should the industrial activities as they presently exist ever materially change or be discontinued. Future appropriate, heavy industrial uses should be encouraged in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure on sites that are well separated (or buffered) from residential areas.

## **GR 7.4 Redefine the MLK Boulevard – Stillman – 15th Street Gateway.**

Map Area: **C** Future Land Use Category: Limited Commercial

Serving as the gateway to the community, this area has the potential to evolve into a vibrant commercial activity center. This redevelopment opportunity can establish a sense of place through the integration of restaurant, retail, and service businesses for residents and visitors. The site's potential redevelopment is evident, but will likely require upgrades to the water and sanitary sewer infrastructure along Stillman Boulevard and MLK Boulevard.

Area Intent:

- Promote redevelopment of existing industrial uses to restaurant, service, and retail businesses.
- Upgrade utility infrastructure along Stillman Boulevard and as part of the MLK Boulevard road improvement project.
- Encourage complementary design elements to the surrounding neighborhood, such as street lighting and hardscape elements.

**GR 7.5 Promote redevelopment with connectivity to Stillman College between the campus and Fosters Ferry Road.**

Map Area: **D** Future Land Use Category: Core Neighborhood

As Stillman College implements its strategic vision, expands academic and athletic programs, and broadens its connection on many levels within the community, the area between Stillman College and Fosters Ferry Road is a prime redevelopment location.

Area Intent:

- Seek opportunities for improving connectivity from Stillman College to the surrounding neighborhoods and nearby commercial areas (vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle).
- Investigate partnerships with Stillman College to utilize assets such as recreational facilities and cultural offerings to foster a high quality of life for adjacent residents.
- Promote high-quality mixed residential development that enhances the built environment through integrating with the existing neighborhood character surrounding Stillman College.

**GR 7.6 Facilitate infill development on the Broadus - Stewart Site - ±21-acres northwest of Stillman College.**

Map Area: **E** Future Land Use Category: Campus Services

This greenfield site is currently not within the City of Tuscaloosa but should be annexed into the city to facilitate future development. Given the site's large size and the fact that it is bounded on three sides by urban residential streets with the fourth side on Stillman Boulevard, it is a great infill development opportunity with immediate connectivity to Stillman College.

Area Intent:

- Promote accommodation of a mixture of residential and non-residential uses to create an urban activity center.
- Identify transitional density and height integrating the site to the surrounding residential neighborhoods on the northern, eastern, and western boundaries.
- Preserve natural vegetation through sensitive design of new development, utilizing the topography to create a unique sense of place.
- Create pedestrian connections through sidewalks, well-lit pathways, and additional pedestrian amenities.

## **GR 7.7 Facilitate the creation of a revitalized gateway west of Stillman College through strategic redevelopment.**

Map Area: **F** Future Land Use Category: Limited Commercial

Two currently vacant or underutilized sites along Culver Road west of Stillman College present the opportunity for new commercial or mixed-use development that could create a more positive gateway to the community.

**The Kelley Site – ±7.5-acres on Culver Road immediately west of Stillman College.** Once an automobile salvage yard, the site now serves as a unique opportunity to create a gateway entrance as envisioned in the city's 2009 Land Use Plan. The site's size and scale can deliver a mix of uses that serve the surrounding context and complement the land on the north side of Culver Road. With the proximity to Stillman College to the east, the development potential can provide a range of housing options, in conjunction with restaurant and retail services.

- While market conditions may drive development opportunities, the best use of the site would be to support a mixture of commercial and residential uses including restaurant, retail, and service businesses.
- Support a diverse range of housing options that serve workforce or affordable housing needs.
- Support development character that reflects positive redevelopment efforts in West Tuscaloosa. Careful site planning and building form can effectively set a standard for new development and redevelopment.
- Enhance pedestrian connectivity between the site, surrounding neighborhood, and Stillman College.

**Clinton / 41st Avenue Site – ±4.5-acres north of Culver.** Located along Culver Road, across from the Kelley Site, this site could easily work harmoniously with the neighboring property to form the western gateway into the area, complemented by the Stillman College campus just 800' to the east. The site's visibility could serve as a focal point when entering West Tuscaloosa from the southwest or when leaving the area from the east.

- Support neighborhood-scale commercial uses including restaurant, retail, and service businesses.
- Support development character that reflects positive redevelopment efforts in West Tuscaloosa. Careful site planning and building form can effectively set a standard for new development and redevelopment.
- Create a walkable connection across Culver Road to make the site accessible to the residents of both the northern and southern neighborhoods. Ensure that contiguous sidewalks exist from the site east to Stillman College.



## **GR 7.8 Enhance the MLK Boulevard Corridor, from 29th Street to 15th Street.**

Map Area:  Future Land Use Category: Various

As the main north-south corridor through West Tuscaloosa, Martin Luther King Boulevard serves as the front-door to much of the area. While improvements are underway for the corridor north of 15th Street, which connects to Downtown, the Amphitheater, and Riverwalk, the southern section also has opportunities to be enhanced. These improvements could involve enhanced pedestrian facilities such as paths, landscaping, and gathering areas with seating, lighting, and historical markers.

### **What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the Plan.**

- Improve pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks). (CONNECTING 2.3)
- Expand public transportation service area and frequency. (CONNECTING 3.1)
- Seek low entry-cost infrastructure projects. (GROWING 3.1)
- Establish a neighborhood identity program. (LIVING 5.3)

# North Tuscaloosa and the Lakes

The north Tuscaloosa area has seen significant new residential development in recent years, including conventional subdivisions, "neo-traditional" neighborhood developments, and large lakeside estates. Most of the area exhibits very high-quality architectural design and high housing prices. There will be ongoing pressure to develop in this area, particularly along Lake Tuscaloosa. The city's challenge is to manage this pressure and grow in areas that can be supported by infrastructure, to promote the long-term health of the city's three reservoir lakes, and to encourage new amenities such as neighborhood-scale commercial and recreational amenities.

## Objective 8. Manage growth in north Tuscaloosa and the lakes area

### GR 8.1 Grow new traditional neighborhoods.

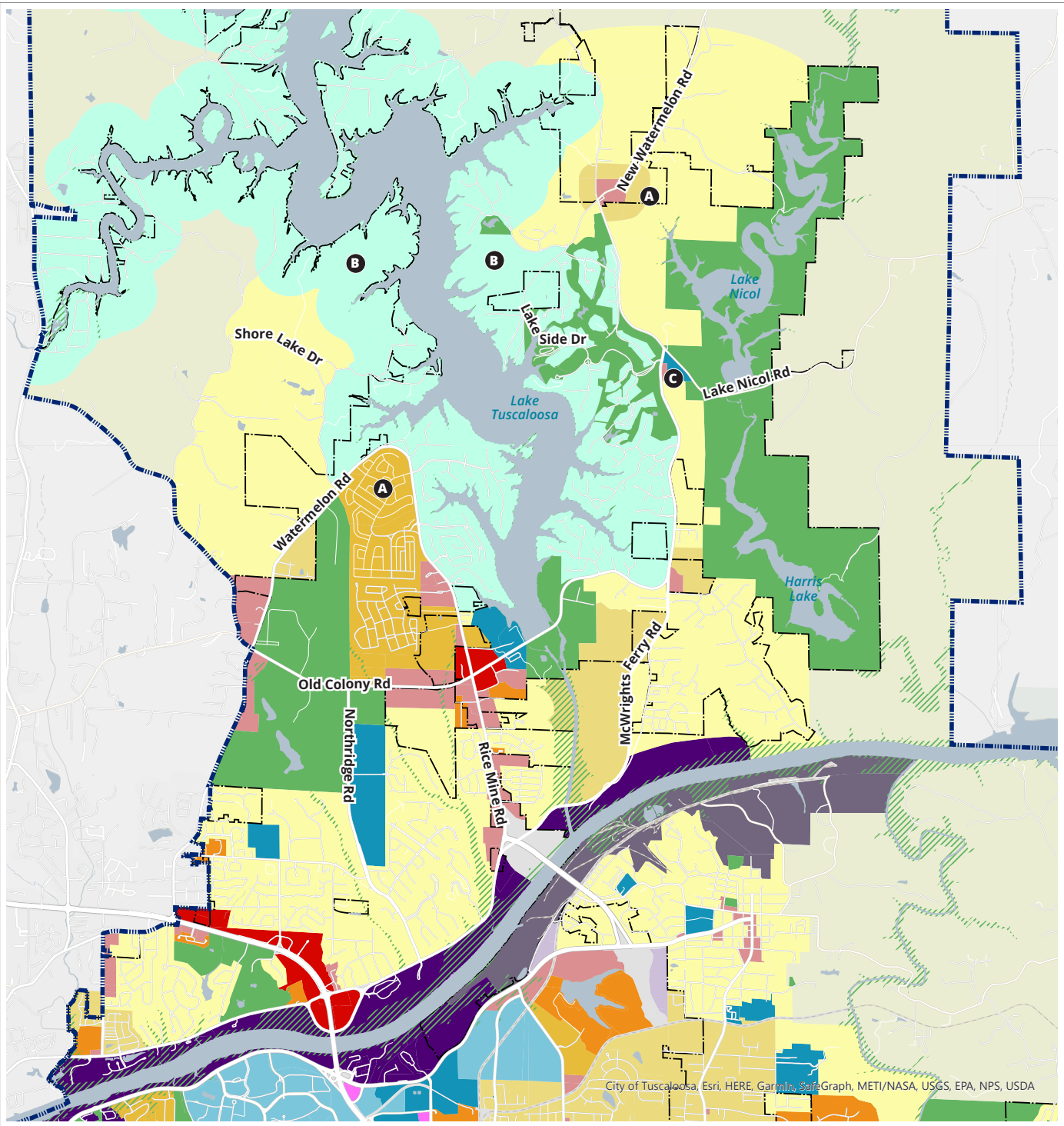
Map Area: **A** Future Land Use Category: Traditional Neighborhood Core and Edge

As described in the Five-Year Affordable Housing Study, residential demand in north Tuscaloosa is expected to remain among the strongest in the region, which should allow the city to maintain high expectations for development in the area. The city should build upon the successes of recent "neo-traditional" neighborhood projects, such as High Grove and The Townes of North River, and encourage new neighborhood development in the traditional neighborhood model. These neighborhoods integrate a range of housing choices in a walkable configuration, are connected to adjacent neighborhoods, and integrate parks, community facilities, and potentially Limited Commercial areas. Residential development in the area should exhibit high-quality architectural design.

### GR 8.2 Support low intensity development and conservation of land along Lake Tuscaloosa.

Map Area: **B** Future Land Use Category: Lakeside Living

Most of the land along Lake Tuscaloosa is privately owned. There is pressure to provide future opportunities for development while preserving open space and scenic views, limiting adverse environmental impacts, and providing more public access. The Lakeside Living future land use category is intended to support low-intensity, large-lot residential, as well as more compact residential types with greater open space dedication. Limited commercial services should also be accommodated for uses, including restaurants, boat rentals, or other services for lake visitors.



**Map 6. North Tuscaloosa and the Lakes Concentration Area**

- |                        |                                |                                       |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Downtown Core          | University Residential         | Industrial                            |
| Downtown Edge          | Multi-family Residential       | University Campus                     |
| Downtown Historic Edge | Traditional Neighborhood, Core | Civic / Institutional                 |
| Campus Services        | Traditional Neighborhood, Edge | Rural Edge / Conservation Development |
| Riverfront Development | Suburban Residential           | Parks and Open Space                  |
| Corridor Commercial    | Lakeside Living                | Environmentally Sensitive Development |
| Limited Commercial     | Flex Employment Center         | City Limits                           |
|                        |                                | Planning Jurisdiction                 |

### GR 8.3 Promote high-quality Limited Commercial development in strategic areas.

Map Area:  Future Land Use Category: Limited Commercial

Currently in north Tuscaloosa, demand for Limited Commercial services is limited. However, as the area develops, there may be a growing need for neighborhood services and small-scale commercial development in multiple locations. The Future Land Use and Character Map identifies locations appropriate for future Limited Commercial development. That development should not be expected until significant residential growth in the area creates a viable market. Commercial centers in these areas should be small-scale and primarily serve local needs (including restaurants, personal services, and retail) and utilize high quality architectural design. Opportunities for niche retail should be explored along Lake Tuscaloosa and near Lake Nicol or Harris Lake with the creation of a signature recreational amenity to serve residents and visitors (as described in the EXPERIENCING Chapter).

**GR 8.4 Improve road infrastructure to support growth.** Additional growth near Lake Tuscaloosa, particularly on the west side, will put pressure on the area's thoroughfares such as McWrights Ferry Road, Rice Mine Road, and Watermelon Road. Current improvements are underway for McWrights Ferry Road, Woolsey Finnell Bridge widening, and U.S. Hwy. 82 (McFarland Boulevard). Future improvements to other thoroughfares will need to be planned to support growth. Ideally, these improvements are undertaken concurrently with, or in advance of, new development that would impact the thoroughfare's level of service.

**GR 8.5 Update regulations for development on Lake Tuscaloosa (seawalls, docks, land disturbance, etc.).** As the region's drinking water source, development along Lake Tuscaloosa should be designed to minimize negative impacts to water quality. The city's regulations for lake frontage property should be updated to:

- Define standards for seawalls including the permitted size, location, materials, and construction practices;
- Evaluate private dock standards;
- Address vegetation removal, including land and aquatic vegetation;
- Clarify tree removal standards on city property and private property;
- Define restrictions on dredging, including the conditions when it is allowed and who is responsible;
- Evaluate penalties for violation of lakeside development regulations; and
- Continue enforcement efforts (more resources may be needed as development continues).

Seawalls can be an appropriate way to stabilize banks and minimize erosion. However, poorly designed and constructed seawalls can lead to hazards. The city currently does not have standards for seawalls so those that have been established vary significantly in quality and effectiveness. Limiting the size and location of seawalls will help to protect aquatic habitats and water quality.



## GR 8.6 Continue to lobby for extra-territorial zoning authority.

Part of the challenge with managing development along Lake Tuscaloosa is the fact that much of the adjacent land is beyond the city limits. While the city has the authority to regulate the subdivision of land in these unincorporated areas, that land is not subject to the city's zoning regulations. Tuscaloosa should continue to lobby state government to consider providing extraterritorial zoning authority to cities.

### What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the Plan.

- Expand public safety facilities to serve developing areas. (EXPERIENCING 4.2)
- Establish a signature recreational amenity surrounding Lake Nicol and Harris Lake. (EXPERIENCING 1.2)
- Expand the Riverwalk to Lake Tuscaloosa. (EXPERIENCING 1.1)

## OTHER STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

### Require lake frontage property owners to sign a land stewardship agreement before granting permits.

In an effort to raise awareness about the importance of Lake Tuscaloosa, the potential negative impacts from lakeside development, and the city's lakeside regulations, the city should consider establishing a stewardship agreement for property owners with frontage on the lake. The agreement would stipulate that in exchange for the city permitting private access or disturbing land along the lake (dock, landscaping, etc.), the property owner would abide by all lake regulations and maintain the shoreline in an environmentally conscious manner. This agreement could be used in conjunction with the permitting process for constructing a private dock with a site inspection of the property being completed prior to finalizing the agreement. While the primary purpose of the agreement would be to raise awareness, the policy could also change behavior, particularly if appropriate penalties are defined.



#### Example: City of Columbus, OH

To protect city-owned reservoirs and water quality, the City of Columbus, OH employs a land stewardship agreement program. Landowners adjacent to one of the city's three reservoirs must have a Land Stewardship Agreement with the city before being permitted to modify city property to establish and/or maintain a path, alter vegetation to create a view corridor, or build/maintain a private boat dock. The program has been in existence for two decades and was recently updated. The program has over 300 participants.

<https://www.columbus.gov/utilities/water-protection/Columbus--Watershed-Management-Program/>

# East Tuscaloosa

The city's previous land use plans anticipated significant growth progressing eastward along the I-20/59 corridor. While some growth has taken place, it has been relatively limited compared to other areas. Yet this area, both north and south of the I-20/59 corridor, continues to be a logical place to support new development on the city's edge. There is a significant amount of potentially developable land that can be efficiently served by infrastructure. Lower land values and good access to regional employment centers creates an opportunity for more workforce housing. Also, several large sites with interstate frontage offer industrial opportunities.

## Objective 9. Facilitate growth in East Tuscaloosa

### GR 9.1 Facilitate the creation of diverse housing options to serve "workforce housing" needs.

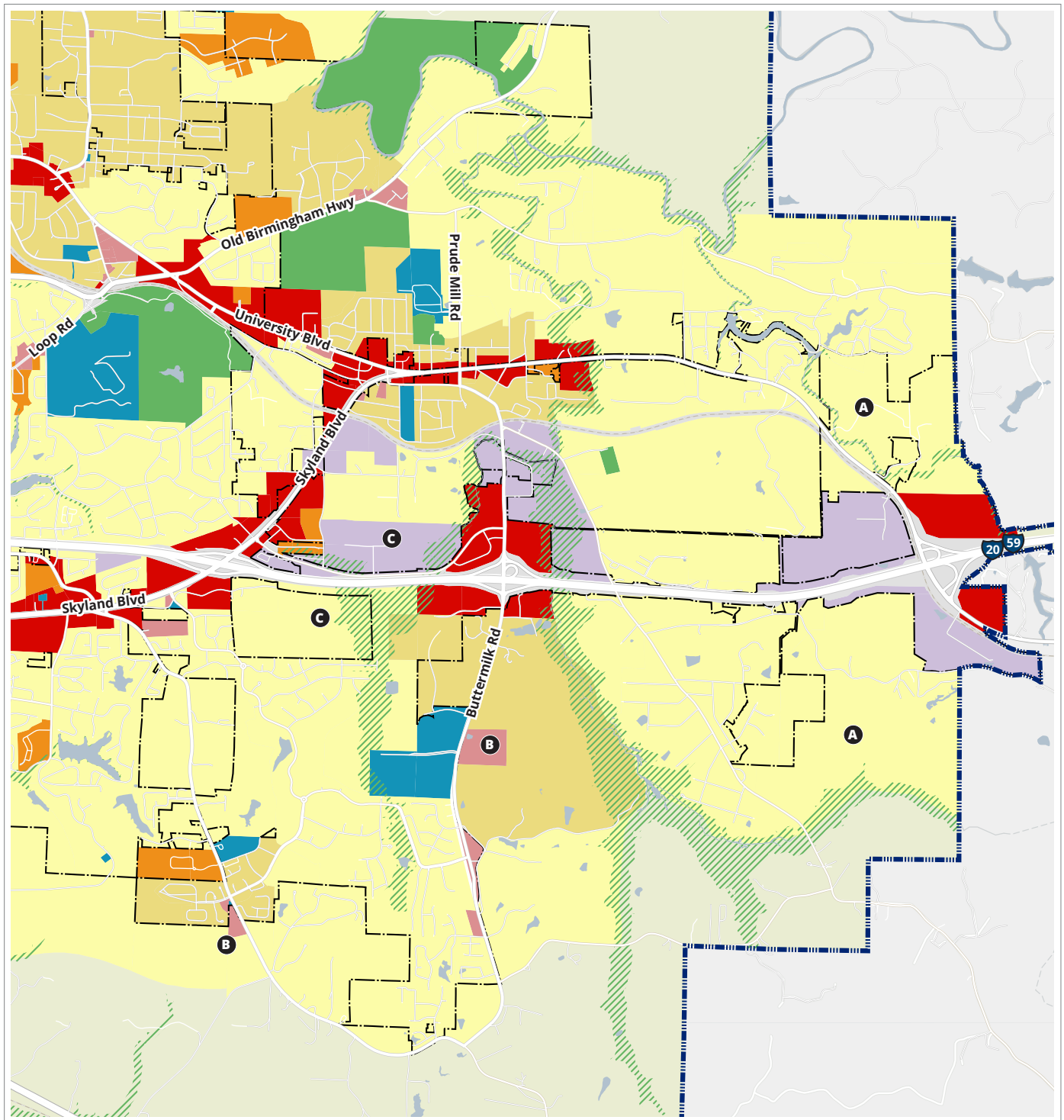
Map Area: **A** (various locations) Future Land Use Category: Various residential types

With lower land prices, existing utility service, and good access to Interstate 20/59, Tuscaloosa's eastern area is ideal for growth that could provide moderately-priced housing. Proximity to the interstate makes this area potentially attractive for households that work outside of Tuscaloosa. The city should encourage the creation of diverse housing in this area that serves young working adults, families, and seniors. Housing may include single family, small-lot single family, townhomes, triplexes and duplexes, small apartment buildings, or neighborhoods with a mix of housing types.

### GR 9.2 Encourage the creation of neighborhood-scale commercial services.

Map Area: **B** (various locations) Future Land Use Category: Limited Commercial

As additional residential development occurs, there will be a growing need for small-scale commercial development that is more neighborhood-serving than the commercial development located along Skyland Boulevard. The Future Land Use and Character Map identifies locations appropriate for future Limited Commercial south of I-20/59. That development should not be expected until significant residential growth in the area creates a viable market. These Limited Commercial areas should be developed as nodes around significant intersections rather than in a linear manner along corridors. Where feasible, neighborhoods should offer convenient pedestrian access to commercial nodes.



**Map 7. East Tuscaloosa Concentration Area**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Core          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #8B4513; border: 1px solid black;"></span> University Residential         | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #654321; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Industrial   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800040; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Edge          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF8C00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Multi-family Residential       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #4682B4; border: 1px solid black;"></span> University Campus  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF00FF; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown Historic Edge | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Traditional Neighborhood, Core | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #008080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Civic / Institutional  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #DDA0DD; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Campus Services        | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #F0E68C; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Traditional Neighborhood, Edge | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Rural Edge / Conservation Development  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #483D8B; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Riverfront Development | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFFF00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Suburban Residential           | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #3CB371; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Parks and Open Space   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FF0000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Corridor Commercial    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ADD8E6; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Lakeside Living                | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, green 2px, green 4px); border: 1px solid black;"></span> Environmentally Sensitive Development |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #C08080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Limited Commercial     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #D8BFD8; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Flex Employment Center         | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px dashed black;"></span> City Limits  |
|  |  | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 2px solid blue;"></span> Planning Jurisdiction  |

### GR 9.3 Support light industrial employment opportunities along Interstate 20/59.

Map Area:  (various locations) Future Land Use Category: Flex Employment

A substantial portion of Tuscaloosa's eastern growth area is currently undeveloped with direct access to Interstate 20/59. These sites along the interstate are ideal locations for a range of industrial and light manufacturing employers, providing the access requirements without proximity to incompatible land uses such as residential. The city should reserve large sites with interstate frontage and good access for light industrial development. Complementary uses such as commercial or office should locate proximate to these facilities near major intersections or interchanges while transitioning to any existing or potential residential development.

**GR 9.4 Redefine the community gateways through public and private improvements.** Interstate 20/59 serves as a major entrance to Tuscaloosa from the east. The appearance of the streetscape and adjacent development along major thoroughfares reflect the community's character, values, and standards and can shape the experience of both residents and visitors. The city should redefine the gateways at major corridors like University Boulevard, Buttermilk Road, and Skyland Boulevard by undertaking streetscape improvements including lighting, landscaping, and hardscaping elements. Gateways can also be created through private development that incorporates high quality architecture.

**GR 9.5 Pursue opportunities to expand publicly accessible and connected open space.** Access to public open space is an essential component of community design. Compared to other areas of the city, the eastern growth area lacks significant public parks and recreational areas. As new neighborhoods are developed, the city should collaborate with PARA and pursue opportunities to create, expand, or connect public parks that can serve neighborhoods and the larger area. Open space set-asides should be defined in the Zoning Ordinance for various types of development and should be flexible enough to support affordable housing needs.

**GR 9.6 Invest in street improvements to support development and redevelopment.** The city should invest in infrastructure improvements to address current constraints and support future development potential. Consideration should be given to specialized roadway needs of light industrial and commercial developments near and along I 20/59. Major interchanges and corridors such as Buttermilk Road, University Boulevard, and Skyland Boulevard should be monitored for traffic demand and options for addressing potential street limitations should be anticipated. The city should continue supporting any planned and/or funded improvements along the Interstate 20/59 corridor and assist in the implementation of the projects.

#### What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the Plan.

- Expand public safety facilities to serve developing areas. (EXPERIENCING 4.2)



# Highway 69 South Area

The Highway 69 South area serves as a major entrance to the city, a natural location for commercial development, home to a regionally significant institution (Shelton State Community College), and is a location for convenient and potentially more affordable housing options. A large portion of the area is developed, outside of the city limits, and is not subject to city zoning. Therefore, the city must manage development in the area primarily through strategic decisions about investments such as utility service and future annexation policies.

## Objective 10. Facilitate growth along the Highway 69 South area

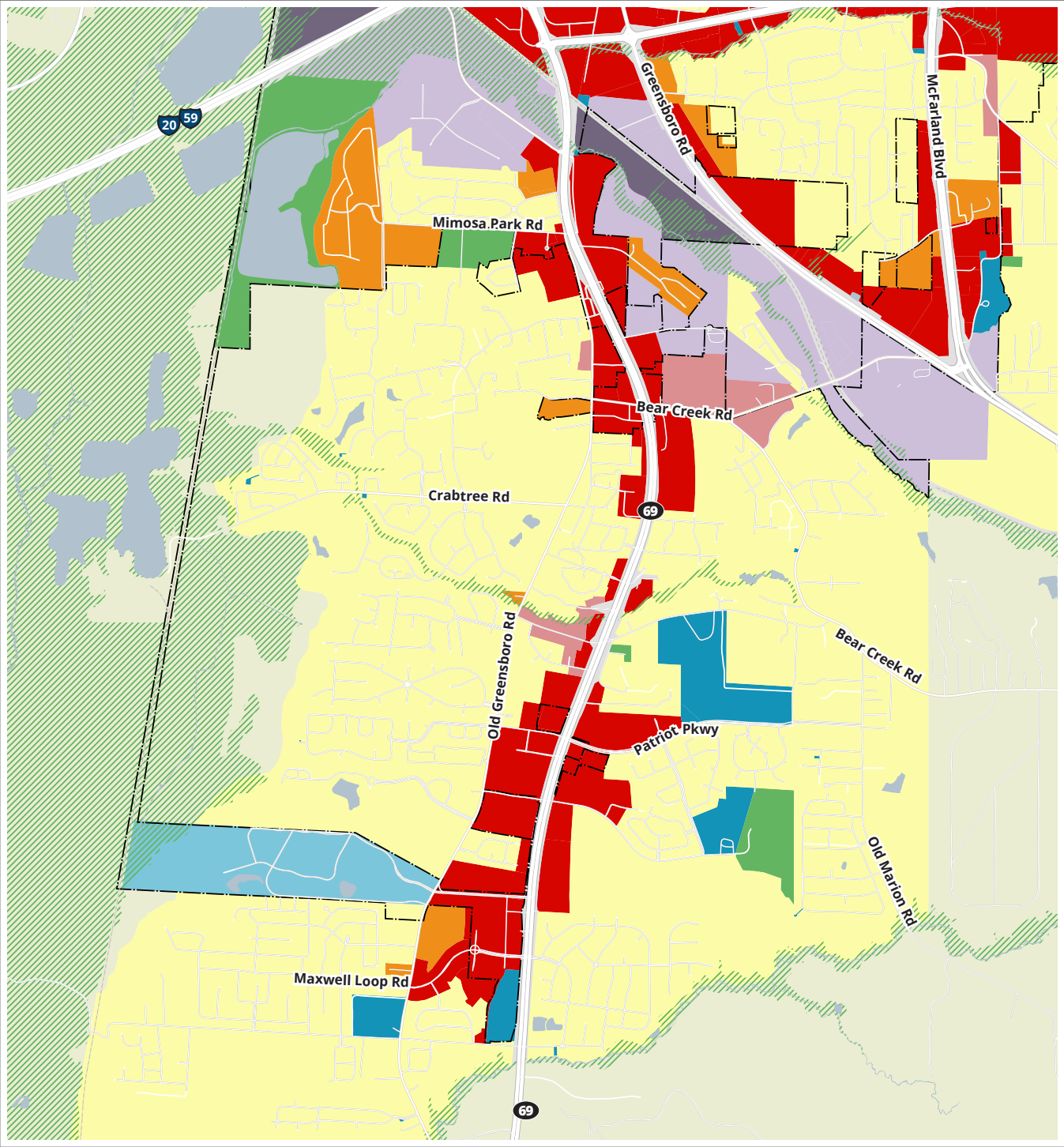
### GR 10.1 Focus residential expansion in areas served by utility

**infrastructure.** Utility infrastructure, particularly wastewater, is an essential component to development along Tuscaloosa's perimeter. To ensure the efficient use of infrastructure capacity, the city should focus new development in areas that can be served by existing infrastructure and should be strategic in expanding municipal services. In the past, the city has provided utilities to some unincorporated areas along Highway 69 South for residential development (see Utility Exemption Area on Map 8). Going forward, the city should evaluate the long-term impacts of allowing urban development without annexation. Proposals for new residential subdivisions should be analyzed against available infrastructure needs to encourage long-term financial stability of the city.

### GR 10.2 Establish an attractive community gateway along Highway 69 through public and private improvements.

As a major entrance to Tuscaloosa from the south, the appearance of Highway 69 can influence perceptions of the community. The city should support creating an appealing gateway through investments in the streetscape (landscaping, lighting, etc) and through regulations that guide the appearance of private development through the Zoning Ordinance. This would not need to involve special design provisions for the corridor specifically. If design standards are strengthened in the new regulations for commercial development, the corridor's appearance would improve over time. This also assumes that the city continues to require annexation for non-residential development, bringing more property into the city's regulatory authority.

**GR 10.3 Expand public safety facilities to support growth.** Based on existing facilities and development in the area, response times for public safety services to the southern extent of the city limits may not meet city standards in some conditions. As development progresses along Highway 69 South, the city will need to monitor response times and service areas for fire, emergency medical services, and police. The city



**Map 8. Highway 69 South Concentration Area**

- |                        |                                |                                       |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Downtown Core          | Multi-family Residential       | Civic / Institutional                 |
| Downtown Edge          | Traditional Neighborhood, Core | Rural Edge / Conservation Development |
| Downtown Historic Edge | Traditional Neighborhood, Edge | Parks and Open Space                  |
| Campus Services        | Suburban Residential           | Environmentally Sensitive Development |
| Riverfront Development | Lakeside Living                | City Limits                           |
| Corridor Commercial    | Flex Employment Center         | Utility Exemption Area                |
| Limited Commercial     | Industrial                     | Planning Jurisdiction                 |
| University Residential | University Campus              |                                       |

should also identify potential locations for new public safety facilities and proactively acquire properties in preparation of future needs and explore opportunities for shared facilities, where practical. Priority consideration should be given to unique needs of institutions such as Shelton State Community College.

**GR 10.4 Pursue opportunities to expand publicly accessible and connected open space areas.** Access to public open space is an essential component of good community design. With the exception of Newt Hinton Park, school fields, and private golf courses, the Highway 69 south area is relatively underserved by public parks and open space areas. Through its land development codes, capital improvements, long-term planning, and other processes, the city should encourage the expansion, creation, and enhancement of public open spaces in the area. New residential neighborhoods should be required to provide dedicated open space with connections to surrounding amenities such as schools. Opportunities for expanding or improving existing parks should be identified, evaluated, and implemented by the city.

**GR 10.5 Promote campus activity and support services around Shelton State Community College.** The city should continue to promote Shelton State Community College as a growing institutional campus and community asset for Tuscaloosa. The city should coordinate with the college's leadership to understand the institution's long-term plan and how city policies can support that growth. Development of campus support commercial services should be encouraged adjacent to the college to provide local services and assist the needs of students and faculty.

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# 3. LIVING

Neighborhoods and housing are integral to a place's quality of life. Strong neighborhoods with desirable housing are vital to serve current and new residents, support economic growth, and define community character. This chapter identifies ways to strengthen Tuscaloosa's neighborhoods and provide a wider range of desirable housing.

## GOAL

***Vibrant neighborhoods with distinct identities that offer a wide variety of attractive living options for a diverse population.***

## OBJECTIVES

1. Protect existing neighborhood character and support appropriate new development
2. Stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods
3. Promote housing diversity and affordability
4. Address the needs of lower income households
5. Create neighborhoods that serve community needs

## Chapter Organization

- Goal and Objectives
- Context
- Actions

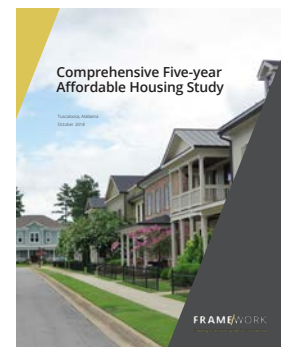
# CONTEXT: KEY FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the Framework process, the city's housing conditions were reviewed and evaluated under the Five-Year Affordable Housing Study which identified critical findings pertaining to housing trends and issues that could guide future policy decisions. The study provided foundational information related to housing and neighborhoods in Tuscaloosa — including a community profile, housing inventory, policy review, and needs assessment — to establish a database for recommending programs and policies within the Framework Comprehensive Plan. The following challenges and opportunities are detailed in that study.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Five-Year Affordable Housing Study identified several challenges that Tuscaloosa needs to consider when evaluating housing program and policy direction. These challenges and opportunities are summarized below based on the analysis of existing conditions, historical data, or forecasts for the city's housing market.

- **Tuscaloosa is a regional center for jobs.** Nearly 70% of people working in Tuscaloosa commute in from outside of the city. This suggests that the city is a regional economic hub. It also suggests that there may not be ample housing for workers wanting to live in the city.
- **Housing prices are increasing and above 2008 levels.** Recent sales trends suggest that housing values are higher than pre-recession levels and climbing, and that there is an increase in sales at the highest end of the market and a lower number of homes selling for \$175,000-\$300,000. This suggests that there is a shortage of homes available at moderate price points.
- **Non-student rental market is constrained and distorted by student housing.** The prevalence of college students in Tuscaloosa seems to have had a significant impact on the local rental market. The point-in-time rental market analysis shows that student rental housing has higher per bedroom market lease rates when compared to non-student rental housing. Vacancy rates are very low suggesting that there is a limited supply of rental housing for both students and non-student households. The higher value return of student rental housing is likely driving developers of rental properties to focus on student rental units versus traditional housing for families and households.
- **Unique housing market factors: Seasonal, Recreational, and Occasional Use Homes.** Since 2010, the American Community Survey estimates that an additional 7,898 units have been built or converted for use as student housing, game day homes, second homes (including lake-front homes), short-term rentals, or other occasional use housing. The total number of units in this category is equivalent to 19% of the city's total housing stock. It is likely that

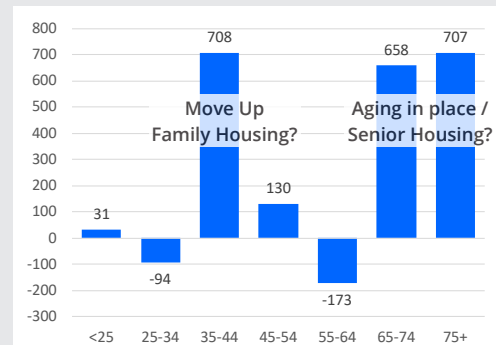




the uptick in these types of units and the profits generated from them is having an impact on the types of housing being produced in Tuscaloosa, and reducing the number of units for sale and rent to households looking for permanent housing.

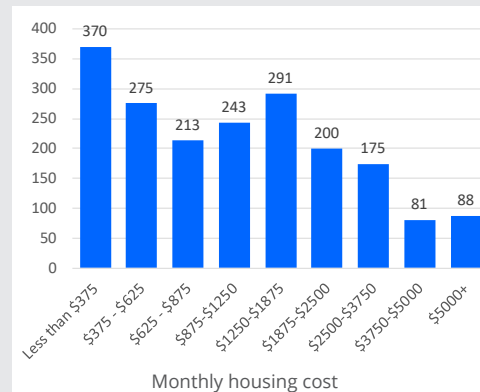
- **There is a significant need for affordable and workforce housing.** Much of the city's housing Over one third of the city's homeowners and half of the city's renters are considered cost-burdened, meaning their monthly housing costs are more than 30% of household income. The city's poverty rate is stable but is approximately 19% (excluding students). The largest age cohort suffering from poverty in Tuscaloosa is children under 18 years old (29% are below the federal poverty threshold).
- **Need to address aging housing stock and affordability.** A significant portion of the city's housing stock is over 40 years old. These homes are typically more affordable than newer homes, but many require significant updates to keep them viable. Analysis of home improvement loan applications suggest that many homeowners in Tuscaloosa are attempting to make improvements to their homes and are being denied loans (88% denial rate in 2016). There are likely opportunities to assist these homeowners to maintain the naturally occurring stock of affordable housing in the city.
- **Five-year forecast shows demand will generally meet supply in terms of overall numbers, but may not actually provide the types of housing needed.** Forecasts that compare future housing demand and supply for the next five years suggest that if current trends continue, there will likely be the equivalent number of units in the city's housing supply to meet demand. However, many trends suggest that there may be a mismatch between the units available, and the types of units that are being demanded, both in terms of price point and in terms of the type of unit. The analysis suggests there will be a need for housing units at a full range of price points.
- **Future demographic shifts may put pressure on certain housing types.** Forecasts for future age cohorts suggest that there will likely be a new demand for starter homes for first time homebuyers and housing affordability to working families, as well as senior housing or units suitable for households to age-in-place safely. These are likely housing types that will be in demand in the coming years.

Forecast household change by age (2023)



Source: ESRI Data, Five-year Affordable Housing Study

Housing price points required to meet household increase (excluding students)



Source: ESRI Data, Five-year Affordable Housing Study



# ACTIONS

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goal for Living:

***Vibrant neighborhoods with distinct identities that offer a wide variety of attractive living options for a diverse population.***

## Objective 1. Protect existing neighborhood character and support appropriate new development.

### LI 1.1 Update zoning and development standards to address neighborhood context, intended character, and nonconformities.

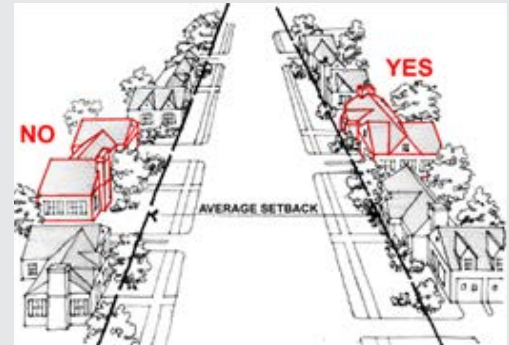


The city's Zoning Ordinance is one of the primary tools that can be used to protect and maintain neighborhood character. The update to the Zoning Ordinance should consider context sensitive standards for infill or redevelopment for certain districts to ensure that new homes built in existing neighborhoods "fit in" in terms of the scale of the new structure, building height, setbacks from the street and adjoining properties, and other physical features. Context sensitive standards should provide some flexibility for changing housing preferences (i.e., larger sized homes), but also take into account the surrounding context.

### LI 1.2 Evaluate short-term rental regulations.



Short-term rentals refer to the relatively new and growing market for home-sharing and vacation rentals. A large segment of the city's housing stock is used for seasonal or short-term use, including many properties developed and marketed exclusively as game-days rentals. Large concentrations of short-term rentals can negatively impact neighborhoods, be a drain on city services, and inflate housing prices in an area. The city has recently updated its regulations for short-term rentals, to be permitted by special exception city-wide except for the one tourist overlay district in the Downtown-Campus District. The city should annually evaluate these regulations with respect to local data, national trends, and technology. The regulations should support the use of properties for short-term rental while minimizing nuisances such as noise, trash, and parking problems.



#### Contextual compatibility standards

Contextual compatibility standards have been successfully used in modern zoning codes to address nonconformity situations. They supersede the dimensional standards in the zoning district to allow expansions and redevelopment consistent with the existing "fabric" of the area, even if that fabric does not comply with the district standards. For example, such standards might establish a rule that requires the lot area, setback, and height standards in the district be between a specific range relative to average setbacks, lot area, and height of the lots and development on the same block face, or within a certain distance (e.g., 800 feet) of the site. Under this type of rule, as long as development is consistent with the existing development context on the block (or within a certain number of feet of the development), it is considered conforming and could be developed under the regulations.

**LI 1.3 Establish a procedure for conducting pre-application neighborhood meetings for certain development applications.**



A neighborhood meeting is a tool used in some modern codes to provide a process by which a development applicant meets on a more informal basis with neighbors and landowners surrounding a proposed development to resolve potential conflicts. At the neighborhood meeting the applicant meets with and educates neighbors about a proposed project and hears neighbors' concerns. This provides a forum for applicants and neighbors to resolve conflicts and concerns about projects in a more informal setting, before an application is submitted.

**LI 1.4 Expand existing programs to develop a Good Neighbor initiative for permanent and temporary residents living in neighborhoods.**

Many college towns throughout the nation have dealt with the issue of college students living in existing residential neighborhoods and the incompatibility challenges that can occur. UA has several programs to support off-campus living and neighborhood relations. UA's Off-Campus Resources office guides students on off-campus living and the Neighborhood Partnership Committee is committed to improving communication among neighbors, business owners, students, and law enforcement officials in an effort to proactively address issues that are of mutual concern to the groups represented on the committee. The city could work with a broad cross-section of stakeholders—including permanent residents, students, city representatives (e.g. code enforcement, public safety, councilors), civic groups (e.g. Tuscaloosa Neighbors Together), the Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, historic districts, and rental property managers/owners to expand existing programs in order to develop a good neighbor program. A good neighbor program would promote the education of residents on ordinances, gain insight from residents about their neighborhood's needs and how to make progress with city offices toward achieving those needs, and promote positive living experiences through a lecture series, community discussions, neighborhood block parties, and door-to-door visits in neighborhoods—all focused on building a sense of community, sharing neighborhood norms, promoting social interaction, and proactively communicating and demonstrating what it means to be a good neighbor.



**EXAMPLE: Good Neighbor Initiative  
University Of North Carolina, Chapel Hill**

The Good Neighbor Initiative, sponsored by the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life and Community Life at UNC-Chapel Hill, was established in 2004. This initiative is an effort led by the Chapel Hill Police Department to promote positive living experiences in those neighborhoods where students and non-students live in close proximity. Over time, the scope of the initiative has grown to include multiple neighborhoods. The initiative has also partnered with EmPowerment Inc., UNC-Chapel Hill, the Downtown Partnership, the Town Planning Dept. and the Jackson Center, among others to foster efforts to create better working neighborhood relations between households. The initiative includes door-to-door visits in neighborhoods where students and non-students talk about what it means to be a good neighbor, including a discussion of local ordinances and laws that if followed correctly, will lead to peaceful cohabitation. The initiative has expanded to include over 60 volunteers for the door-to-door visits, reaching over 1,000 homes, in addition to a neighborhood block party and a humorous educational video.

More information on the Good Neighbor Initiative can be found at <https://studentaffairs.unc.edu/carolina-excellence/community-engagement/good-neighbor-initiative>

## Objective 2. Stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods

### LI 2.1 Strengthen property maintenance enforcement practices.

Property maintenance is an essential part of neighborhood stabilization and revitalization efforts. Property maintenance code enforcement should address threats to safety and livability from property maintenance issues. The city's zoning enforcement program should:

- **Focus enforcement efforts.** Prioritize enforcement and nuisance efforts on the "worst-of-the-worst" – conditions that are a threat to neighborhood safety, crime, or further disinvestment.
- **Use data and technology** to track code compliance trends and more efficiently target efforts.
- **Utilize a cooperative compliance model.** Under a cooperative compliance model, city code enforcement officers would do much more than inspect property and issue violation notices – they also provide guidance to property owners on how to properly address problems and comply with codes. The officer may also help the property owner find resources for fixing the violations by providing written materials, offering classes, or identifying sources of low-interest loans or grant funding. As a result, code enforcement officers can serve as trusted community partners, helping to improve housing and neighborhood quality, and save the city time and money on re-inspections, abatement hearings, and prosecutions.

*By-right development allows projects that meet zoning standards to be approved administratively without a public hearing. Streamlining the approval process in this way is critical to limiting rising development costs.*

## Objective 3. Promote housing diversity and affordability

### LI 3.1 Remove barriers in the zoning code to duplexes, triplexes, and other forms of 'missing middle' housing.

§ The housing needs assessment in the 2018 Five-year Affordable Housing Study suggests that there may be a housing supply issue limiting the inventory of owner-occupied housing for households entering the market. One way to address this issue is to ensure there are opportunities to build smaller format housing products that local college graduates, young members of the city's workforce, and other moderate income households could afford to purchase. An update to the Zoning Ordinance should define a wide range of housing types including duplexes, triplexes, accessory dwellings, tiny houses, and other housing solutions, allow development of these housing types "by-right" in appropriate districts, and remove other regulatory barriers that significantly increase the cost of housing development. It is not the intent to allow alternative housing types in all single-family residential zones, but they may be appropriate in some existing zoning districts such as Residential Attached, Residential Detached, and Moderate Density Residential districts.

### LI 3.2 Clarify definitions for multi-family residential types.

§ The update to the Zoning Ordinance should include definitions that distinguish between multi-family dormitory-style uses (student housing), conventional multi-family, and affordable / workforce housing.

#### FIVE HOUSING COST DRIVERS TO PAY ATTENTION TO:

When communities want to incentivize the construction of different types of housing, it is important to consider the cost drivers that can be reduced. The following five housing cost drivers are the primary targets for reducing costs that can result in greater supply of demanded units.

- Price of land
- Construction costs
- Development soft costs (regulatory and design)
- Capital and financing costs
- Expected return on investment



## OTHER STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

### Land Banking

Land banking describes the act of a public or private organization acquiring and holding land for a future intended use. The city owns numerous vacant parcels. The city could evaluate the feasibility of establishing its own land bank to strategically work toward transferring vacant properties into productive use. A land bank could market individual lots for sale and facilitate the consolidation of vacant lots for larger redevelopment initiatives. Some land banks also conduct programs such as a side-lot or adopt-a-lot (sometimes called "mow-to-own"). Mow-to-own programs can reduce the city's cost for maintaining vacant lots, potentially return formerly tax-delinquent properties to the tax rolls, and improve the appearance of neighborhoods. Mow-to-own has been adopted by several major cities as a way for property owners to take ownership of nearby vacant lots that are currently owned by the city. A property owner agrees to mow and maintain the appearance of the lot in exchange for earning credit toward the purchase of the property, up to a certain dollar amount per year. In other programs, the property is deeded to the new owner for a nominal fee with a lien that requires the owner to maintain the property.

#### **EXAMPLE: Land banking to repurpose vacant properties, Birmingham, AL**

Since its incorporation in 2013, the Birmingham Land Bank has developed a suite of complementary programs to address blighted and vacant properties. The city grants the bank authority to condemn blighted or vacant properties that have been tax-delinquent for at least five years. A map on the land bank website allows neighbors to see eligible properties.

The land bank administers three programs: the Side Lot program, the Adopt-a-Lot program, and the Catalytic Development Project program.

Through the Side Lot program, a neighbor can take care of an adjacent

vacant uncared for lot on behalf of the land bank. Through the Adopt-a-Lot program, a neighbor, another city citizen, a faith based organization, or a nonprofit organization can gain use of any vacant overgrown lot in a neighborhood. In both programs, after two years of care the neighbor can petition to take over the deed from the land bank, adding to the neighbor's lot instead of sitting in disrepair. (As a variation, in California's Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones, a similar program specifically allows community gardens to be formed in a similar way).

Through the Catalytic Development Project program more blighted properties or vacant lots may be assembled for a larger project, with preference given to opportunities

identified in the adopted plans of the city. City departments may act with the land bank. Outside organizations are recommended to first discuss plans with the Community Development and Economic Development Departments before attempting to use this program.

As of 2017 hundreds of properties had been transferred to new owners and returned to the tax rolls.

Information on the Birmingham Land Bank can be found at [www.birminghamlandbank.org](http://www.birminghamlandbank.org)

More general discussion of land banking is available from the Center for Community Progress at [www.communityprogress.net](http://www.communityprogress.net).



## Missing Middle Housing

Missing Middle Housing refers to a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types that fall between detached single-family homes and mid-rise developments. Missing Middle Housing types are compatible in scale with detached single-family homes and could provide diverse housing options to meet the needs of different lifestyle and affordability needs. The following list is some of the common missing middle housing types with a brief description of their design.



### Duplex

A small- to medium-sized structure consisting of two dwelling units, either side-by-side or stacked one on top of the other, which face the street and have separate entrances.



### Fourplex

A medium-sized structure which consists of four dwelling units, typically stacked with two on the ground floor and two above, that face a street and are accessed through a shared entrance.



### Courtyard Apartment

A medium- to large-sized structure consisting of multiple side-by-side or stacked dwelling units access from a shared courtyard or series of courtyards. Units may have separate entrances or shared entrances depending on design.



### Bungalow Court

A series of small, detached structures providing multiple units arranged around a shared court that is perpendicular to the street. The shared court replaces the private backyard as a shared amenity by all the units.



### Townhouse

A small- to medium-sized structure consisting of usually three to eight attached single-family homes placed side-by-side. Each townhome would face the street and be accessed by a private entrance.



### Multiplex

A medium-sized structure consisting of five to 10 side-by-side or stacked dwelling units, typically with a single shared or series of shared entrances.



### Live/Work Unit

A small- to medium-sized structure, attached or detached, consisting of a single dwelling unit about or behind a ground floor space for use as a service or retail business. Both the residential and commercial units are owned by the same entity.



### Carriage House

An accessory structure typically located to the rear of a lot providing a small dwelling unit or office space. The unit can be located above a garage or on the ground level.

### LI 3.3 Establish regulatory incentives for

§ **"affordable/workforce" housing.** In addition to reducing barriers to housing development, the Zoning Ordinance could offer incentives that support the pool of affordable housing or funding. Incentives could include:

- **Fee reductions or expedited review.** Projects that include a specified percentage of "affordable/workforce" priced units could be eligible for reductions in development fees or an expedited review process. Or fees could be pro-rated based on the percentage of affordable units vs. market-rate units.
- **Density bonus provision.** A density bonus is intended to increase the profitability of a project by allowing greater density in exchange for the on-site provision of affordable housing units or a payment-in-lieu. A payment-in-lieu is often the preferred approach and could be used to fund "workforce housing capital pool" (see 3.5 below) that supports workforce housing development elsewhere in the city. This type of incentive could apply to certain types of projects such as large multifamily or student housing developments. The menu of incentives should be determined in consultation with the development community.

### LI 3.4 Establish pre-approved building plans.

Introducing new housing types is often a challenge for developers and existing neighborhoods. To reduce developer risk and neighborhood uncertainty, several cities have created toolkit of pre-approved building plans. These tools contain specific house plans that are pre-approved for certain areas. The plans reduce community concern by clearly showing what new housing should look like. They also reduce developer costs by vastly simplifying the design process and streamlining the approval process. Generally, this strategy is most effective when it is tailored to a defined neighborhood or other geographic area rather than citywide.

### LI 3.5 Establish a public-private workforce housing capital pool (a public-private housing trust fund).

Evaluation of housing rehabilitation mortgage data and interviews with local developers suggest that there are challenges to securing capital to fund construction and rehabilitation of local workforce housing units. One idea to address this issue is to enter into a public-



#### Example: Chattanooga, Tennessee

My Chatt House is a resource developed for the Chattanooga community to encourage appropriate development in two of their central neighborhoods. Resources pertaining to landscaping, additions, renovations, and new construction are outlined to help homeowners and developers uphold the characteristics of these unique neighborhoods. A key component of this program is the preparation of pre-designed building plans for a variety of single-family and multi-family homes. The homes are based on common architectural styles of the neighborhoods from colonial to craftsman and include details for the minimum lot size, floor plans, gross square footage, and design elements such as porches, patios, etc. These plans streamline the process for developers and homebuilders by providing the baseline requirements for a variety of residential homes that integrate into the neighborhood context. Local manufacturers are listed with building material specifications to further encourage high-quality design that is appropriate for the pre-approved building designs. The information and graphic images reduce the risk involved in pursuing infill development as the neighborhood can visualize the final product while the builder can reduce overall costs for construction.

private partnership to develop a capital pool that can bridge funding gaps for construction and rehabilitation of workforce housing. A capital pool could be funded by a density bonus incentive, impact fees, or other methods.

## Objective 4. Address the needs of lower income households

- LI 4.1 Continue to implement collaborative affordable housing plans.** The city of Tuscaloosa and the Tuscaloosa Housing Authority have adopted a Consolidated Housing Plan and Action Plan, and an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Study as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to be eligible for Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds. Each of these plans identifies important community objectives and action items that reinforce the ideas in Framework. The city should continue pursuing these action items including:
- Increasing management efficiency of publicly assisted housing programs to reduce vacancy turn-around time.
  - Applying for additional Housing Choice vouchers to better assist the waitlist of qualifying households.
  - Increasing production of affordable housing for people with families.
  - Coordinating with Transit Authority to provide better transit service to affordable housing areas.
  - Focusing community investment in lower income neighborhoods, such as Alberta and West Tuscaloosa.
- LI 4.2 Assist with rehabilitation of older homes to maintain housing stock.** There is some evidence that owners of older homes in Tuscaloosa have encountered difficulty in obtaining financing for maintenance and improvements. The city could provide assistance to homeowners or owners of rental properties in the form of educational services to financial assistance.
- **Housing upkeep educational program.** An educational program would encourage the maintenance and upkeep of current housing stock by spreading awareness of available tools and programs (such as FHA 203K renovation loans; HUD energy efficiency tools; HUD renovation for seniors; etc.).
  - **Housing improvement financing program.** The city could establish and market a program to assist with financing home improvements. This program could take many forms including a property improvement fund or grant program, or a low interest loan through a partnership with local financial institutions.



- LI 4.3 **Provide information to support renters.** When it comes to city, State, and federal regulations, renters often don't know their rights, do not understand the process, and/or don't feel they can file a complaint about housing conditions. Renters are often unfamiliar with existing protections, occupancy regulations, and programs, and those with language barriers or disabilities may have trouble navigating the system. In addition, many residents avoid notifying their property owner of problems for fear of increased rent, retaliation, or eviction. To address these vulnerabilities, Tuscaloosa could provide informational material to inform residents of their rights, city codes, and services available to address property issues.



Source: Community Home Trust, Chapel Hill, NC

## OTHER STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

### Community Land Trust

Community land trusts (CLTs) are nonprofit organizations primarily used to ensure long-term housing affordability by owning land and leasing it to those who live in houses built on that land. This model is very effective when land values escalate faster than wages and incomes. Currently there are approximately 160 community land trusts operating in every region of the country.

Potential examples: Chapel Hill, NC; Austin, TX

### Land or Property Acquisition Program

As a form of public-private partnership, some communities have established funds for acquiring land for the purpose of affordable / workforce housing development. This program could be an aspect of a housing trust fund described above. In some programs, these funds could also be used to acquire underutilized apartment developments for affordable housing, or to assist non-profit developers or homeowners in acquiring/rehabilitating foreclosed and blighted single-family properties to expand the supply of affordable housing.



## Objective 5. Create neighborhoods that serve community needs

### LI 5.1 Create development standards for new "complete" neighborhoods.

Many of Tuscaloosa's early neighborhoods contain characteristics that should be incorporated into future neighborhoods. To create new neighborhoods with these characteristics, the city should:

- **Make neighborhoods with a well-connected street network and walkable blocks the standard pattern.** New neighborhood development should utilize a street pattern of walkable blocks with minimal use of cul-de-sacs and neighborhoods should provide connections to adjacent neighborhoods. Ensure that all neighborhood streets including local streets and collectors should be designed with sidewalks on both sides of the street. Exceptions to these standards could be accommodated for topography or other natural constraints.
- **Refine the PUD Process.** While the city's current planned unit development (PUD) district allows for flexibility in neighborhood design with multiple housing types, the PUD process is more involved than a conventional zoning district. In many respects there is legitimate criticism that it is too open-ended and has been abused; additionally, the regulations are outdated. The current PUD provisions should be modernized, refined, and restructured to limit where Planned Districts may be applied to areas where such flexibility is most appropriate; refine the density limitations; and provide detail about which development standards may be varied, and which may not (for example allow variation in open space, environmental protection, and development form standards).
- **Evaluate open space provisions in proposals for new neighborhoods.** Proposals should be examined to ensure that open space is integrated into the design of new neighborhoods and how such open space will be maintained in the future. To consistently evaluate open space provisions, the Zoning Ordinance should contain a standard for how much open space should be provided per residential unit in a large neighborhood development. Additionally, the Ordinance should have tree planting and landscaping standards that ensure that new neighborhoods are created with street trees.

*While Planned Districts are useful provisions to have in a Zoning Ordinance, they should not be the primary means of achieving "complete" neighborhoods. Base Districts and other standards should clearly and predictably lead to quality residential development.*

## Complete Neighborhoods

A complete neighborhood is an area where residents have safe and convenient access to goods and services they need on a daily or regular basis. This includes a range of housing options, grocery stores and other neighborhood-serving commercial services; quality public schools; public open spaces and recreational facilities; and access to frequent transit. In a complete neighborhood, the network of streets and sidewalks is interconnected, which makes walking and bicycling to these places safe and relatively easy for people of all ages and abilities. These types of places are especially important to seniors that want to age-in-place, and to the millennial-aged workers who have different preferences for access and connectedness to destinations from their neighborhoods.



**LI 5.2 Locate civic uses and community facilities within neighborhoods.** Future community facilities such as parks, recreational centers, schools, and libraries should be integrated into the fabric of neighborhoods. While most sites for future facilities may be found on undeveloped land at the city's edges, there may also be opportunities to establish facilities near existing neighborhoods through infill and redevelopment. The city should work with partners such as Tuscaloosa City Schools and PARA to coordinate the planning of future facilities in terms of site selection and design to address community needs and to create more complete neighborhoods.

**LI 5.3 Establish a neighborhood identity program.** The city is home to dozens of neighborhoods and groups representing those neighborhoods. However, only some of those neighborhoods are recognized by the city and have established boundaries. To help create stronger neighborhood identities and boost community pride, the city should work with partners such as Tuscaloosa Neighbors Together, and UA's Neighborhood Partnership Committee to encourage the formalization or formal identification of more neighborhood groups. A branding program focused on the city's neighborhoods, including its historic districts, could be established that provides a way for neighborhoods to define and communicate their identity and boundary through gateway signs or public art.

**LI 5.4 Track neighborhood change.** When thinking about investing in neighborhoods that are suffering from disinvestment, it is often a challenge to find the right balance between encouraging investment but not displacing the existing community. Understanding neighborhood change is the first step to determining whether strategies are needed to assist existing residents and prevent displacement. The city should collect and analyze data annually to track neighborhood change, particularly for areas with a high propensity for change such as Alberta and West Tuscaloosa. Such metrics could include property values, home sales, and building permits. Demographic characteristics could also be considered by using the US Census estimates program or data from the local school enrollment.

**What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the Plan.**

- Expanding transit system's service and frequency. (CONNECTING 3.1)
- Create tree planting incentive program. (GROWING 4.2)
- Establish open space provisions. (GROWING 4.1)





# 4. CONNECTING

Chapter 4 focuses on mobility and transportation in Tuscaloosa. At this moment, the city is uniquely positioned to leverage its amenities and standing in the region to create a more successful transportation network in the future. As Tuscaloosa looks to the future, the focus shifts to improving mobility by creating more transportation choices and improving existing systems. Framework uses the functional classifications as a foundation to acknowledge how streets operate within a community and connect transportation with broader community initiatives and land use decisions.

## GOAL

***Safe and smart transportation options that serve people of all ages and abilities, with strong connectivity and attractive options for public transportation, biking, and walking.***

## OBJECTIVES

1. Create streets that balance mobility, accessibility, land use, and desired development character
2. Encourage and support efforts to increase bicycle and pedestrian connectivity
3. Expand and improve transit services and options
4. Improve downtown mobility and parking
5. Support initiatives and efforts that improve connectivity with the region

## Chapter Organization

- Goal and Objectives
- Context: Key Findings and Opportunities
- Actions
- Street Design Guidelines
  - Functional Class
  - Street Design
  - Cross Sections and the Competition for Space

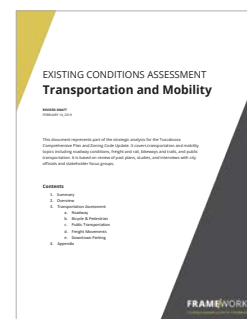


# CONTEXT: KEY FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The city's transportation and mobility network was assessed early in the process by blending the findings from more than 30 previous plans and studies with the outcomes of a series of stakeholder interviews held as part of the Framework process. The intent of the assessment was to identify transportation issues and needs—with particular focus on roadway conditions, biking and walking, public transportation, and freight movements—to establish a baseline understanding of mobility in Tuscaloosa as a precursor to recommending programs and policies as part of the Framework Comprehensive Plan.

## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Transportation and mobility infrastructure in Tuscaloosa currently serves approximately 72 square miles. City of Tuscaloosa Infrastructure and Public Services (IPS) manages the network, which includes approximately 520 miles of roadways, 223 traffic signals, 6 miles of shared-use paths, 137 miles of sidewalks, 32 bridges, 18 culverts, 6,000 street light fixtures, and 5,000 stop signs. Several other public agencies and private companies provide and maintain transportation and mobility infrastructure through, adjacent to, and parallel to the city. These agencies include the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), the University of Alabama, United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), Tuscaloosa County, City of Northport, and private railroad companies such as CSX, KCS, and Norfolk Southern.



Further detail on these conditions and opportunities is contained within the Transportation and Mobility Existing Conditions Assessment in Appendix B.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Growth and Changing Needs.** The city continues to face choices as it balances rising travel demand with an increased interest in walking, bicycling, and transit use. If leveraged appropriately, growth can be an opportunity.
- **Barriers and Obstacles.** Numerous physical barriers divide the city and complicate the delivery of a balanced multimodal transportation system. The Black Warrior River, railroads, older bridges, and limited rights-of-way are some of the barriers that face local, regional, and state decision-makers.
- **Economic Implications.** The city has a stated goal of improving intermodal facilities (waterway, interstate system, railways) to maintain and enhance economic prosperity. The varied ownership and controlling interests in these facilities provide both challenges and opportunities.
- **Transit Delivery.** Like many southern cities, operating transit in Tuscaloosa presents challenges, such as a relatively small Downtown, narrow commercial and residential corridors, and gaps in supportive density. However, the

presence of a large university in similar sized cities has proven beneficial for delivering a citywide balanced multimodal transportation system.

- **Widespread Needs.** As Downtown redevelopment continues and the economic needs in each council district persists, transportation issues such as parking, public transportation, bicycling and walking, streetscapes, and lighting become critical factors for continued economic growth and sustained quality of life.

## WHAT WE HEARD

The following major themes related to mobility and transportation came from targeted interviews, the Forum on the Future, online input, and the Framework steering committee.

- **Enhance the gateways.** Gateways and corridors into and throughout the city are critically important and should be aesthetically pleasing and open to various modes of transportation.
- **Coordinate among agencies.** Numerous corridors and various pieces of infrastructure are maintained by other agencies, which requires coordination in aesthetic improvements and maintenance to avoid potential barriers for improvements.
- **Improve the multimodal experience.** The community seeks ways to improve the safety and experience of those walking, bicycling, and taking transit. Ideas included creating bicycle and pedestrian plans that included implementable and prioritized recommendations, addressing poor roadway conditions and unsafe crossings, and educating all users on the rules of the road.
- **Consider development regulations.** Development decisions affect transportation delivery, and transportation delivery in turn affects development decisions. The city should continue to explore ways to address street design and multimodal accommodations as part of the development (and redevelopment) process.
- **Strengthen the transit system.** While challenges persist, the public and stakeholders expressed a desire for improved public transportation options, including hours of operation and geographic coverage.
- **Embrace technology.** Technology for all modes of transportation can be upgraded as part of future projects. These upgrades range from coordinating existing traffic signals to setting the stage for emerging transportation technologies.

# ACTIONS

The following transportation initiatives focus on Tuscaloosa's most critical transportation needs. These projects, policies, and programs address transportation issues, improve regional multimodal connections, and advance local mobility and accessibility toward achieving the Connecting goal:

*Safe and smart transportation options that serve people of all ages and abilities, with strong connectivity and attractive options for public transportation, biking, and walking.*

## Objective 1. Create streets that balance mobility, accessibility, land use, and desired development character

### co 1.1 Adopt a complete streets policy.

Complete streets policies require all streets to be planned and designed to consider the safety and accessibility of all users, no matter their age and ability. Complete streets are designed, constructed, and operated with consideration to both use and context. They are sized appropriately to their surroundings, and they safely accommodate all modes appropriate to their role in the broader transportation network. Pedestrians, bicyclists, cars, transit, and freight are all taken into account during design and are integrated as appropriate during design and implementation.

The City of Tuscaloosa currently does not have a complete streets policy, but other cities in Alabama have adopted such policies, including Birmingham, Mobile, and Huntsville. Adopting a policy would help guide future decisions to prioritize space for safe cycling and walking and improve crossing facilities to better accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. The City of Tuscaloosa Transportation Standards represent an important step in establishing a more comprehensive and citywide network of complete streets.

#### COMPLETE STREETS

Complete streets design is a process, not a specific product. For that reason, not all complete streets will look the same. Complete streets may make it easier to cross the street, walk to shops, bicycle to work, and make transit more accessible and reliable. A complete street may include: sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more. The design of a complete street depends on context.

#### Taking complete streets further: Vision Zero

Vision Zero is an international road safety initiative that aims to achieve a road system with zero fatalities or serious injuries. Vision Zero policies target travel speed, road design, and pedestrian crossing enhancements to improve safety. The Vision Zero campaign has focused on major cities and a couple of states, and only a few cities in the United States have achieved official designation (none in Alabama). The State of North Carolina is one of two states to have implemented a Vision Zero initiative. Tuscaloosa would benefit from working toward the organization's minimum criteria, which includes:

- A clear goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries
- An official and public commitment from the mayor and/or city council to that goal
- A Vision Zero plan or strategy in place
- Engagement by key city departments (including police, transportation, and public health)

Resources are available at [www.visionzeronetwork.org](http://www.visionzeronetwork.org)

**co 1.2 Integrate advanced technologies into the transportation system.** There is a need to improve the use of technology to gain information on vehicles, driver behavior, traffic patterns, etc. for roadway efficiency and future planning. This includes technology that improves intersections for multimodal crossings, as well as digital and dynamic signage that directs people to important places and makes them aware of important transportation issues. Use the Alabama Transportation Institute as a resource, as they are affiliated with research groups aligned with emerging technologies. The city should also regularly assess (perhaps annually) and update signal timing technology.

The city should revise protocols and invest in staff training to fully utilize GIS-based software (mapping) to improve the efficiency and prioritization of street maintenance, sidewalk improvements, and other infrastructure improvements.

**co 1.3 Continue ongoing work to update engineering and design standards for streets.** Tuscaloosa is currently underway with internal efforts to update the engineering standards for their streets. The city should continue this effort, and be sure to reference the recommendations from this Plan, other relevant planning efforts in the area/region, and national resources like the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO).

Additionally, the city should explore opportunities in the future for updating design standards for aesthetic regulations for how certain buildings must respond visually to the street, and additionally how landscaping within the right-of-way responds to the building. While the details of this effort would be decided by the appropriate parties at that time, the general need would be to refine development regulations that address building placement in relation to streets to ensure adequate space is provided for landscaping, pedestrian facilities, and parking, depending on the context of a street.

#### FEATURED MOBILITY INITIATIVE **Streetscape Improvement Program**

In addition to updated street design standards, a successful streetscape improvement program identifies ways to reinforce and maintain these standards through a phased improvement schedule. The program works with business organizations and local residents to identify priority projects and capitalize on development opportunities to accelerate implementation.

Elements to be included as part of the streetscape improvement plan include:

- Crosswalks
- Lighting
- Street Furniture
- Landscaping
- Signage
- Stormwater Management
- Safety Improvements

Prioritization of these different elements should be consistent with the action and policy recommendations in this document, as well as any other relevant planning documents that provide guidance on streetscape design.



## Objective 2. Encourage and support efforts to increase bicycle and pedestrian connectivity

**co 2.1 Improve opportunities for alternative modes of transportation, specifically pedestrians and bicycles.** Develop bicycle and pedestrian plans. Start with alignments/corridors that could be developed relatively quickly and provide longer route lengths. Address poor roadway conditions and pedestrian/bicycle crossings. Painted bike lanes should be used along roadways with minimal right-of-way constraints, such as near the university or Downtown. At a minimum, provide educational opportunities (in schools and/or community events) concerning motor vehicles and bicycles sharing the road and add additional signing and striping for pedestrians/bicycles to existing roadways and proposed roadway projects.

**co 2.2 Integrate bicycle and pedestrian facilities into new roadway projects.** Both routine repaving projects and major road construction/reconstruction projects should include a pedestrian and bicycle component to the project. Ensure the roadway is smooth for cycling, continue improvements and additions of ramps to sidewalks for accessibility per the existing ADA Transition Plan adopted by the city in November 2016, and consider adding bicycle signage and striped/protected bike lanes where possible and appropriate. Protected or separated bike lanes would offer the highest degree of safety for riders, but are more expensive and use more public right-of-way.

**co 2.3 Create a sidewalk repair program.** Many existing sidewalks in the city's older neighborhoods are in need of repair. A city program should be established to repair existing sidewalks and prioritize new sidewalk connections. Such a repair program could be part of the city's regular capital improvements effort or could be a matching grant program whereby the city shares the cost with adjacent property owners. Sidewalks also should be a standard and sufficient width, which could require the city's subdivision regulations to reflect a minimum of five feet width with wider sidewalks in the downtown core.

### FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

ALDOT's Transportation Alternatives Program provides matching grants and technical assistance for implementing pedestrian, bicycle mobility, and Safe Routes to Schools initiatives. Other competitive grant programs are available to help cities complete safety improvement projects, sidewalk or bike facility connections, or begin educational programs to develop a safer active transportation environment.

### OTHER STRATEGIES TO CONSIDER

#### Public education about use of bikes and other low-speed vehicles (LSVs).

Consider conducting an educational initiative to promote safe operation of bikes and other low-speed vehicles (such as motorized scooters and neighborhood electric vehicles). Create awareness of applicable city regulations for where and how these vehicles should operate and provide guidance for safety all of road users. The initiative should consider messages for cyclists, operators of LSVs, motorists, and pedestrians.

### FEATURED MOBILITY INITIATIVE

#### Sidewalk Repair/Expansion Program

Regular, ongoing maintenance can be an excellent way to expand or improve the pedestrian network. By coordinating maintenance schedules, roadway widenings or resurfacings can provide opportunities to expand the sidewalk network at little additional cost. If pedestrian provisions are already in place, roadway maintenance activities should maintain these facilities, and if needed, provide detour routing signage while efforts are underway.

Some cities choose to designate an entity (either an internal department or private external company) to identify sidewalk needs and schedule repairs. In these places, the city sets aside money to fund the program.

Other cities, including Charlotte, N.C., have created ways for the public to request new sidewalks. These tools can be used to identify gaps in the pedestrian network and prioritize sidewalk improvements to be constructed as a standalone project or, more likely, as part of an associated roadway construction or general maintenance project.

## co 2.4 Expand the city's multi-use path system.

Strategic connections to the existing Tuscaloosa greenway system can help link recreational opportunities and economic activity centers by way of low-stress bicycle and pedestrian facilities. A formal trails and greenways planning effort should be considered as an essential next step toward providing active transportation mobility and creating these crucial links. Connections may take the form of multi-use paths, on-street bicycle facilities, and sidewalk connections depending on feasibility. The design of the system should create a comprehensive network of intersecting pathways that serve short- and medium-distance trips. Other considerations for the formal bicycle and pedestrian network plan include:

- A priority is to expand City Walk and Riverwalk type projects to link city parks (Annette N. Shelby, Freeman, Monnish, Queen city, and more), the University of Alabama, Downtown Tuscaloosa, and council districts.
- The city should create and regularly update (throughout each year) an online map that identifies the type and location of existing connections throughout the city, as well as barriers to walking and biking.
- The city should work toward providing bicycle and pedestrian connections on Minor Arterials and Major/Minor Collectors as identified in the Functional Classification map.
- The city should actively seek ways to expand accessibility to schools by foot and on bike.
- The city should identify "healthy lifestyle walking routes" throughout the city. Consideration should be given to corridors in/near downtown, near the University, and elsewhere to ensure a broad and equitable distribution. Where possible, the walking routes should connect with the existing University of Alabama Campus Walking Trails, to encourage residents to walk around the downtown area both for transportation and recreation. The city should recognize the effort the University has made to create their Walking Trails map, and should promote this network to the broader community.

### FEATURED MOBILITY INITIATIVE

#### Multi-Use Paths

Multi-use paths, also known as shared-use paths or greenways, are paved trails located in or outside of street right-of-way and are intended only for non-motorized forms of transportation, including bicycling and walking. These paths are typically eight- to ten- feet. These types of facilities typically provide strong regional connections.

Planning for a multi-use path system incorporates transportation, recreation, and health elements. Often, a well-connected multi-use path system can be used as the "parkways" of active transportation, offering pedestrians and bicyclists the option of using the facilities as commuter corridors.

#### Design Guidance

- 8-12 foot width recommended, depending on level of use.
- Where high levels of bicycle traffic are anticipated, a separate 5-foot pedestrian track can be provided.
- See NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide for additional guidance on signage, furnishings, and striping.

<https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/>

### co 2.5 **Increase marketing and wayfinding efforts to support the Greenway system.**

Awareness of Tuscaloosa's existing bikeway and trail system should be improved by providing maps (electronic and print), installing wayfinding signs, conducting safety education campaigns, and improving street markings to better designate on-street connections. As a major effort, designating locations for trail hubs can provide both a tourism boost to the downtown area, as well as a practical center for local active transportation efforts. This location should offer maps and information about sights and events around town, as well as bicycle parking, and could be a potential bike share location in the future.

## Objective 3. Expand and improve transit services and options

### co 3.1 **Expand the city transit system's service area and frequency.**

West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan is a required plan developed by the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation. The plan, last updated in 2017, identifies transit gaps and prioritizes strategies. The city should continue to seek ways to expand transit service in Tuscaloosa in accordance with the coordinated plan. In addition to maintaining current service, the priority initiatives include expanding service hours (e.g., nights, weekends, and holidays), increasing the frequency of service on existing routes, and expanding services to new areas. Connecting citizens to available jobs and enhancing access to Downtown, the riverfront, and the University are important.

### co 3.2 **Coordinate the Tuscaloosa Transit Authority and Crimson Ride services.**

Utilizing and leveraging the two existing transit networks in the area will be key to establishing better connectivity and more transit options for residents and students alike. A more strategic coordination between the two services could will allow better access to the university from other parts of the city, and vice versa and more efficient use of resources.

#### FEATURED MOBILITY INITIATIVE

##### Transit Service Expansion

Expanding existing transit service should consider the objectives below:

**Improve the speed and reliability of public transportation service.** To be seen as a viable alternative, transit speeds should be competitive with car travel, and arrive at stops reliably at their designated time.

**Support commuter public transportation service.** Commuter public transportation service is another critical part of the complete public transportation system, providing convenient, reliable access to the region's major job centers from the surrounding suburban and rural communities.

**Improve the public transportation experience.** In order to attract and retain public transportation riders, it is important that the city and its public transportation providers create a transportation service that can rival the comfort and convenience of individual automobiles.

**Improve access to public transportation.** Access to public transportation is an essential component of the overall public transportation experience and vital to its success. A coordinated mobility system should provide all users with safe, convenient access to the city's transit system by walking, biking, driving, or micromobility.

## Objective 4. Improve downtown mobility and parking

**co 4.1 Formalize a downtown parking strategy to address parking needs and improve mobility.** Downtown could be improved with more parking convenient to key destinations. Improvements to parking wayfinding, new parking facility designs, and potential policy changes can address these concerns without substantially adding capacity to the already adequate parking supply. The strategy should consider a potential new parking deck, as well as upgrades to current on- and off-street parking. Consolidating parking may make land available for development. Understanding the connection between parking and mobility is key to creating a Downtown that is enhanced through multimodal connectivity and reduces the demand for parking.

The city should also consider the relationship of parking and other transportation alternatives. Improving Downtown infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation would likely reduce the demand for parking.

**co 4.2 Continue to redefine the University Boulevard Streetscape between Campus and Downtown.** As part of the 2014 Downtown/University of Alabama Connectivity Study, potential streetscape improvements for University Boulevard between Downtown and the University of Alabama campus were prepared and studied. These improvements would reconfigure the travelway and medians to create a street that emphasizes the pedestrian experience. These recommendations and improvements should be evaluated based on the street design priority section of this chapter and the city's updated Transportation Standards, then prioritized for implementation.

## Objective 5. Support initiatives and efforts that improve connectivity with the region

**co 5.1 Continue to contribute to the planning and engineering of regional road projects.** The city should continue to coordinate with regional, state, and federal entities to guide planning and leverage funding for regionally-significant road improvements. As an example, Project Trinity will enhance the infrastructure capacity of I-20/59, US Highway 11 (Skyland Boulevard) and US Highway 82 (McFarland Boulevard).

### FEATURED MOBILITY INITIATIVE

#### Downtown Parking

Any Downtown parking plan should be built around encouraging parking behavior that is consistent with the goals and vision for Downtown as described by the city and local business owners. Parking can be a tool in which to help the Downtown area thrive.

Downtown parking decisions should consider the following criteria:

- Paid parking can be one tool in a broader parking strategy to encourage a more balanced use of the parking system, especially when paid parking is considered more than a revenue mechanism. Areas of higher parking demand can be structured as incrementally more expensive than places where parking demand is lower.
- Parking decisions should be based on a data driven process for allocation of spaces and paid parking distribution. This would include an in depth supply and demand study to assess current parking conditions.
- The parking system Downtown should be dynamic to respond to changing conditions in the Downtown area. This includes price changes for days and times around popular events, such as festivals and football games. This dynamic system can more easily adapt to changing situations and can help to create a more balanced parking system during times where parking is likely to be low in supply in prime areas.



**co 5.2 Improve transit connection between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham.** Partner with existing transit providers and services, like Scuttle Shuttle and Greyhound, to provide more access for transit users to move between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham. This improved connection will allow for easier access to the Birmingham-Shuttlesworth Airport for Tuscaloosa residents, and will provide opportunities for more visitors from Birmingham to access Tuscaloosa for tourism and University events like game days.

**co 5.3 Investigate opportunities to provide and improve bicycle and pedestrian crossing across the Black Warrior River.** Currently, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along Lurleen B. Wallace Boulevard and McFarland Boulevard are fairly limited. These are the most prominent crossings over the river and into Northport and the portion of Tuscaloosa north of the river, and Tuscaloosa should partner with Northport and ALDOT to help improve the multimodal connectivity along these major roadways. ALDOT has plans to widen Woolsey Finnell Bridge on McFarland Boulevard. Projects like this would allow the city to leverage the opportunity to add better multimodal connectivity to the roadway and create connections to the Riverwalk.

### Coordination with Regional Agencies

Given Tuscaloosa's significance to the region, it is vital for the city to coordinate with regional partners and agencies to accomplish many of the actions from this plan. For instance, there are numerous corridors leading into the city maintained by other agencies. This requires coordination in aesthetic improvements and maintenance to avoid potential barriers for improvements.

# STREET DESIGN GUIDELINES

This section provides a guide for street design in Tuscaloosa by layering the roadway functional classification with land use context. This helps to create a multimodal transportation system that is consistent with and supportive of land use decisions.

## FUNCTIONAL CLASS

Functional classifications are defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and used by policy makers, planners, engineers, and citizens to designate the characteristics and purposes of the roadways in a system. In Tuscaloosa, the functional classification map is maintained by the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) in association with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and FHWA. The functional classification system categorizes streets along a general hierarchy that is used to identify each roadway's importance to the overall transportation system for planning purposes. The federal functional classification system typically categorizes roadways based on speeds, vehicular capacities, and relationship to adjacent land uses. Federal funding programs use these traditional classifications to help determine eligibility for funding. Therefore, functional classification will remain a necessary transportation planning tool and should be consistently updated.

### How streets are defined today: functional classification

The functional classification system is used by FHWA, ALDOT, and WARC to express the hierarchy of roadways at the national, regional and local scale. Oftentimes, this form of classification is referenced in local codes and policies. Tuscaloosa's code currently employs the following functional classification system:

- Interstate
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major/Minor Collector
- Local

These street functional classifications, coupled with the city's future land use character areas, lead to a street design matrix that provides a framework for decision making and guide for how to balance competition among travel modes, design, and prioritize the available right-of-way. For example, minor arterials in residential areas likely should look very different than those that run through a commercial corridor. The matrix, maps, and graphics on the following pages show which modes and design elements should be prioritized based on the surrounding land use character, street classification, and context.

## Functional Classes

### INTERSTATE

- Controlled access, exclusive to vehicular travel
- Multi-lane roadways for higher speeds and longer distance travel
- Design does not change based on surrounding land use
- Local jurisdictions typically have less control over these facilities

Local Example: I-20/59, I-359

Typical Section: 4+ travel lanes



### PRINCIPAL ARTERIALS

- Multi-lane thoroughfares that mainly serve commuting or regional travel needs
- Designed to connect regional destinations with minimal travel interruption, but should respond to the surrounding context

Examples: 15th Street, US-11 (Skyland Boulevard), US-82 (McFarland Boulevard)

Typical Section: 3-4 travel lanes



### MINOR ARTERIALS

- Multi-lane roadways that link local activity centers
- Allows for faster travel than local roads, and typically carry transit
- Offer a greater degree of connectivity than Principal Arterials

Example: University Boulevard (portions of), 10th Avenue

Typical Section: 2-4 travel lanes



### MAJOR AND MINOR COLLECTORS

- Connects neighborhood traffic to local destinations
- Often includes slower travel speeds and on-street parking, and are excellent candidates for dedicated multimodal facilities

Example: 12th Avenue, Bear Creek Road

Typical Section: 2-3 travel lanes



### LOCAL

- Local, slow-moving streets in primarily residential neighborhoods
- Other than sidewalks, dedicated multimodal facilities may not be necessary due to lower traffic volumes and slow speeds

Example: 7th Street, 24th Avenue

Typical Section: 2 travel lanes



## STREET DESIGN IN CONTEXT

As a guiding document for land use and transportation, Framework lays the groundwork for more detailed policies and programs such as the City of Tuscaloosa Transportation Standards. The Future Land Use and Character Map expresses the city's intent for how Tuscaloosa should use its land resources in the future. For the entire city and its planning jurisdiction, this map identifies future character types. These places share attributes of urban form and function, including characteristics of transportation design and mobility. The Functional Class and Land Use map on the following page references five Character Type groups. These groups are mostly the same as shown on the Future Land Use Map, with one exception. The university categories and institutional categories have been reassigned to more closely align with the likely mixed use context. It should be noted that the street design associated with an institutional use is more likely to align with the context (e.g. urban, suburban, ex-urban) in which that use is located.

### Consolidated future land use

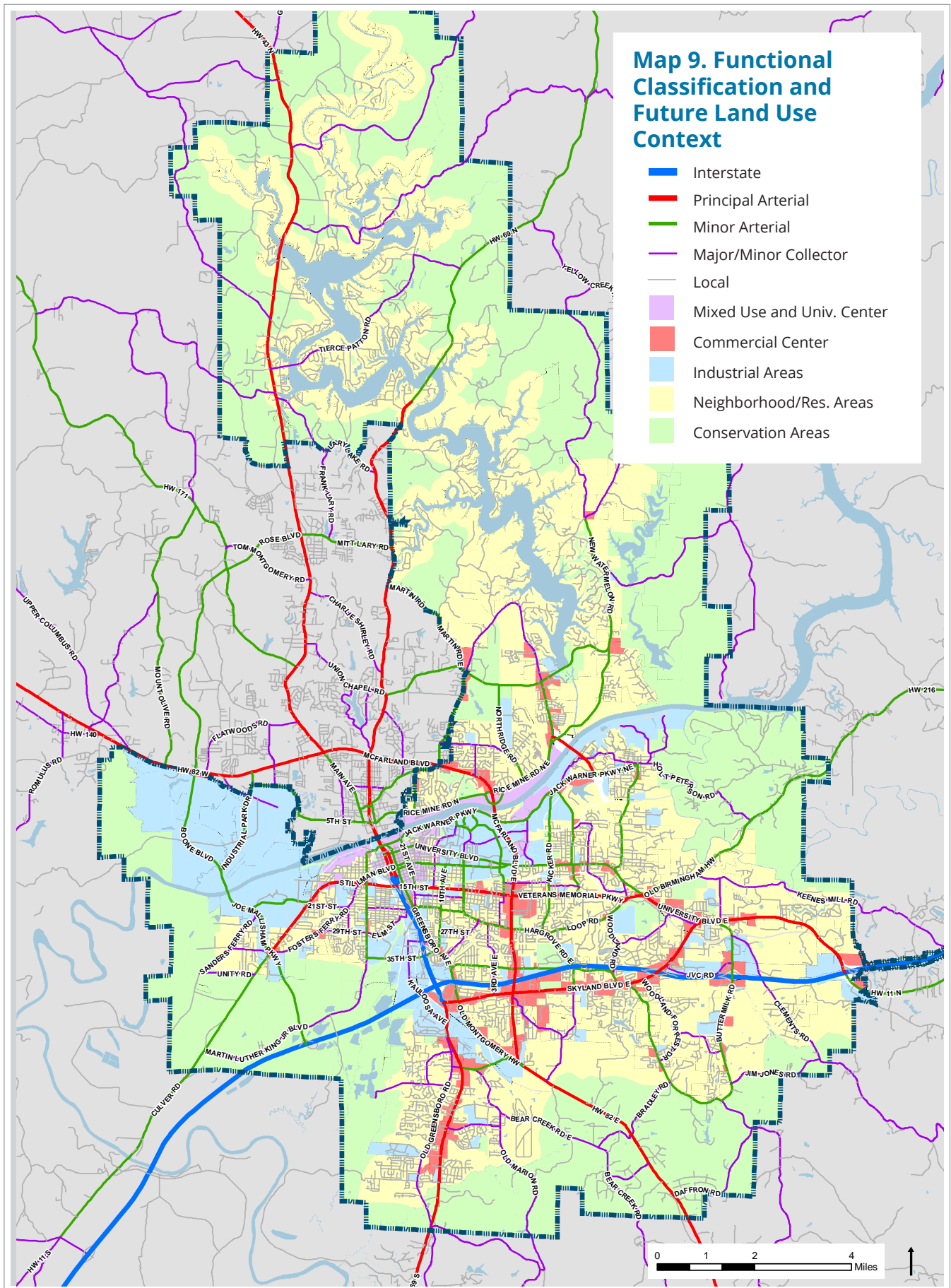
The consolidated land use character categories shown here are based on the Future Land Use and Character Map. The 19 land use character types have been consolidated into five categories (shown on the right) for simplicity and to reflect different types of uses that place different demands upon street design.

### Functional class and future land use

The map on the next page shows the functional class overlaid on the consolidated land use categories (e.g., Mixed Use and University Centers, Commercial Centers, Neighborhoods and Residential Areas, Industrial Areas, and Conservation Areas). This map is the foundation for the Street Design Priority Matrix in the following section.

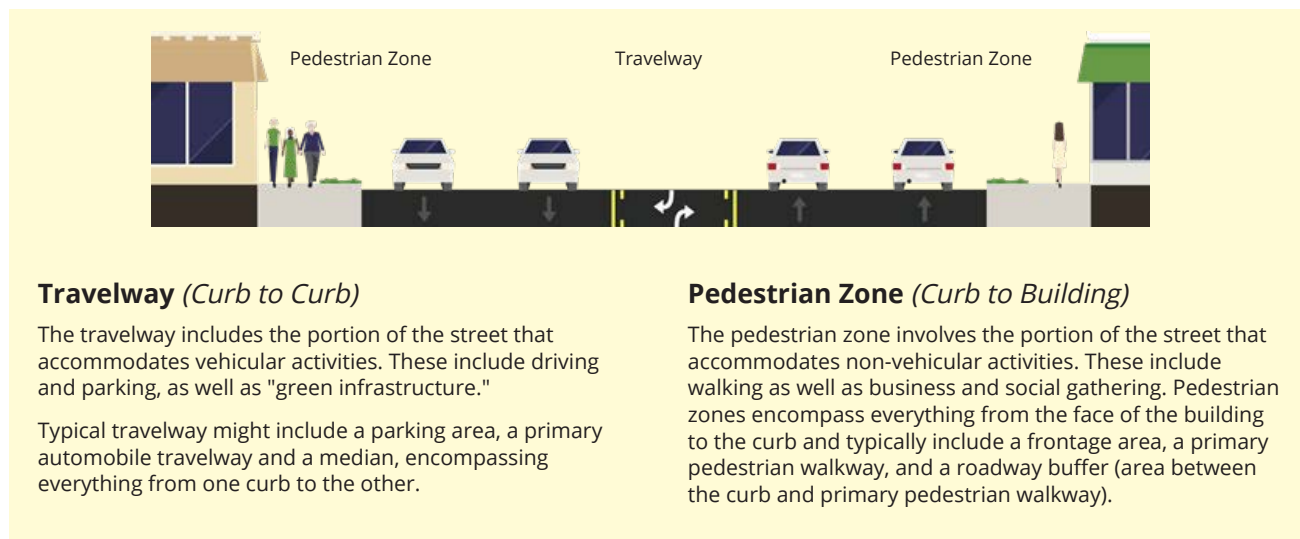
Consolidated Category	Land Use Character Type
Mixed Use and University Centers	Downtown Core
	Downtown Edge
	Campus Services
	University Campus
	Riverfront Development
Commercial Centers	Civic/Institutional
	Limited Commercial
Industrial Areas	Corridor Commercial
	Flex Employment Center
Neighborhoods and Residential Areas	General Industrial
	University Residential
	Traditional Neighborhood, Core
	Traditional Neighborhood, Edge
	Suburban Residential
Conservation Areas	Multifamily Residential
	Lakeside Living
	Rural Edge
	Parks and Open Space





## STREET DESIGN PRIORITY MATRIX

The Street Design Priority Matrix, shown on subsequent pages, establishes the priorities for trade-offs we often debate when dealing with limited right-of-way. The matrix reveals ideal design elements and key priorities (high, medium, and low) for a variety of characteristics based on the functional classification of the roadway and the land use context in which it is located. The matrix organizes these characteristics by street realm (Travelway, Pedestrian Zone, and Other). The purpose of these charts is to guide the planning and design of new roadways, and improvement of existing roadways. Items of high importance should be prioritized in the design process based upon the context in which the road is built.



For clarity, the street design matrix has been divided into four different tables based on the four main land use contexts (Mixed-Use & University Centers, Commercial Centers, Neighborhoods and Residential Areas, and Industrial Centers). Then it is further broken down into three street realm groupings (Travel Way, Pedestrian Zone, and Other). Colored boxes are placed in the table to indicate a high priority, medium priority, or low priority. The street design matrix is intended to be a general reference that helps set basic guidelines as a starting point for associated policies, such as the city of Tuscaloosa Transportation Standards.

LOW PRIORITY

MEDIUM PRIORITY

HIGH PRIORITY

## Mixed-Use & University Centers

TRAVEL WAY	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Number of Through Lanes	2 - 4 (6)	2 - 4	2 - 4	2
Width of Travel Lanes (ft)	11' - 12'	10' - 12'	10' - 12'	9' - 11'
Target Speed (mph)	35 - 45	25 - 35	25 - 35	25
Design for Larger Vehicles	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Multimodal Intersection Design	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Vehicle Throughput at Intersections	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
On-Street Parking	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH

PEDESTRIAN ZONE	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Landscaping/Street Trees	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Buffer Zone	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Street Furniture	LOW	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM
Standard Sidewalks	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
Wide Sidewalks	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Public Art	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	LOW

OTHER	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Access Management	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Medians	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Bicycle Accommodation	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Transit Accommodation	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW

## Commercial Centers

TRAVEL WAY	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Number of Through Lanes	2 - 4 (6)	2 - 4	2 - 4	2
Width of Travel Lanes (ft)	11' - 12'	10' - 12'	10' - 12'	9' - 11'
Target Speed (mph)	35	25 - 35	25 - 35	25
Design for Larger Vehicles	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Multimodal Intersection Design	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Vehicle Throughput at Intersections	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
On-Street Parking	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH

PEDESTRIAN ZONE	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Landscaping/Street Trees	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Buffer Zone	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Street Furniture	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	LOW
Standard Sidewalks	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
Wide Sidewalks	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Public Art	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	LOW

OTHER	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Access Management	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Medians	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Bicycle Accommodation	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Transit Accommodation	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	LOW



## Neighborhoods & Residential Areas

TRAVEL WAY	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Number of Through Lanes	2 - 4 (6)	2 - 4	2 - 4	2
Width of Travel Lanes (ft)	11' - 12'	10' - 12'	10' - 12'	9' - 11'
Target Speed (mph)	35-45	25 - 35	25 - 35	25
Design for Larger Vehicles	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Multimodal Intersection Design	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
Vehicle Throughput at Intersections	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
On-Street Parking	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	MEDIUM

PEDESTRIAN ZONE	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Landscaping/Street Trees	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH
Buffer Zone	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Street Furniture	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
Standard Sidewalks	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH
Wide Sidewalks	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
Public Art	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW

OTHER	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Access Management	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Medians	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Bicycle Accommodation	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	LOW
Transit Accommodation	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW

*Industrial Centers*

TRAVEL WAY	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Number of Through Lanes	2 - 4 (6)	2 - 4	2 - 4	2
Width of Travel Lanes (ft)	11' - 12'	10' - 12'	10' - 12'	10' - 12'
Target Speed (mph)	35-45	25 - 35	25 - 35	25-35
Design for Larger Vehicles	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Multimodal Intersection Design	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	LOW
Vehicle Throughput at Intersections	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
On-Street Parking	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW

PEDESTRIAN ZONE	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Landscaping/Street Trees	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
Buffer Zone	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
Street Furniture	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
Standard Sidewalks	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Wide Sidewalks	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
Public Art	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW

OTHER	Principal Arterial	Minor Arterial	Major/Minor Collector	Local
Access Management	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Medians	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW
Bicycle Accommodation	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	LOW
Transit Accommodation	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW

The Multimodal Street Design table below offers more specificity and detail for design characteristics of multimodal facilities based on the functional class and land use context. This information should act as a guide for future design decision-making related to implementation of multimodal facilities on roadways.

## MULTIMODAL STREET DESIGN TABLE

STREET DESIGN TABLE			Functional Class	Number of Lanes	Target Speed	Preferred Bike Facility	Preferred Pedestrian Facility
Mixed Use & University Centers	Principal Arterial	2-4	35-45	Multiuse Path	Multiuse Path		
	Minor Arterial	2-4	35	Protected Bike Lane	Wide Sidewalks		
	Major/Minor Collector	2-4	35				
	Local Streets	2	25	Bike Lane	Standard Sidewalks		
Commercial Centers	Principal Arterial	2-4	35	Protected Bike Lane	Wide Sidewalks		
	Minor Arterial	2-4	35	Bike Lane			
	Major/Minor Collector	2-4	35				
	Local Streets	2	25	Sharrow/ Shared Lane Marking	Standard Sidewalks		
Neighborhoods and Residential Areas	Principal Arterial	2-4	35-45	Multiuse Path	Multiuse Path		
	Minor Arterial	2-4	35	Protected Lane	Wide Sidewalks		
	Major/Minor Collector	2-4	35	Bike Lane	Standard Sidewalks		
	Local Streets	2	25	Sharrow/ Shared Lane Marking			
Industrial Areas	Principal Arterial	2-4	35-45	N/A	N/A		
	Minor Arterial	2-4	35	N/A	Standard Sidewalks		
	Major/Minor Collector	2-4	35	Bike Lane			
	Local Streets	2	25	N/A			

## CROSS SECTIONS AND THE COMPETITION FOR SPACE

Just a few decades ago, designing streets was a prescriptive process using off-the-shelf (usually auto-oriented) cross sections based on traditional functional classifications. Recently, the process has begun to evolve as cities recognize a disconnect between street design, local context, and desire for a more balanced and livable transportation system. Cities also are recognizing that standard cross sections are less likely to fit within increasingly narrow rights-of-way, particularly when an existing street is being retrofitted. More communities also are recognizing that a balanced transportation system includes some streets focused on moving cars and other streets focused on moving people on foot, on bike, and using transit. Places recognized for successful street design have turned to processes that consider the experiences of various users and make strategic decisions for those increasingly common locations where standard streets simply do not fit. The Framework Major Streets Plan includes the following representative unconstrained and constrained cross sections for each street classification. The cross sections are shown for illustrative purposes. The City of Tuscaloosa Transportation Standards should govern street design.

Unconstrained and constrained cross sections for the different functional classifications are shown. Constrained cross sections represent elements that should be prioritized as compared to the unconstrained version, should various factors prohibit the implementation of any of the elements from the unconstrained cross section.

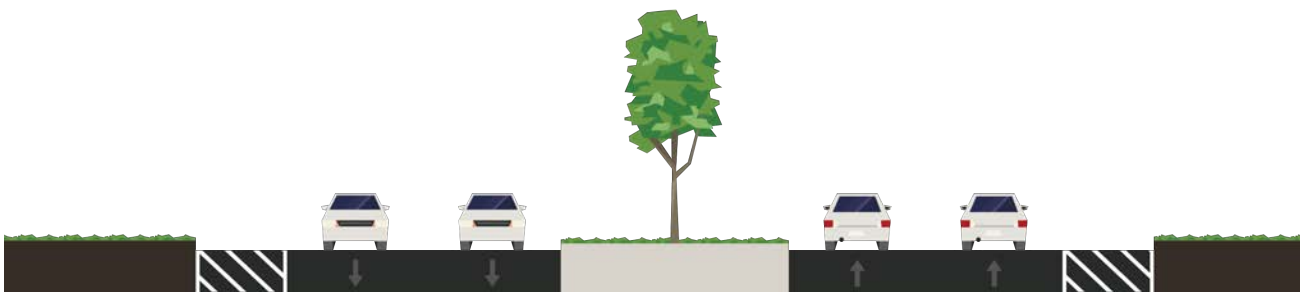
### Constrained vs. Unconstrained

A street context that is constrained means that there is limited space (right-of-way) for the street's design due to physical features or existing development. In a constrained context, street design should prioritize the design elements that are most appropriate for the type of street and context.

## INTERSTATE

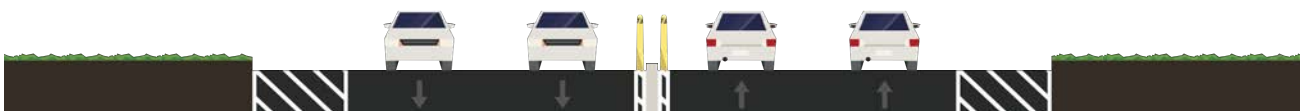
### Unconstrained

The unconstrained Interstate representative cross section would ideally have a wide landscaped median with sufficient clear zones to improve safety and aesthetics along the roadway. Wide shoulders adhere to federal design standards and improve safety for drivers along the highway.



### Constrained

The constrained Interstate representative cross section maintains federal standards for lane widths and shoulders (where possible). The landscaped median is replaced with a slimmer, often concrete, separation between directional travel lanes.





## PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL

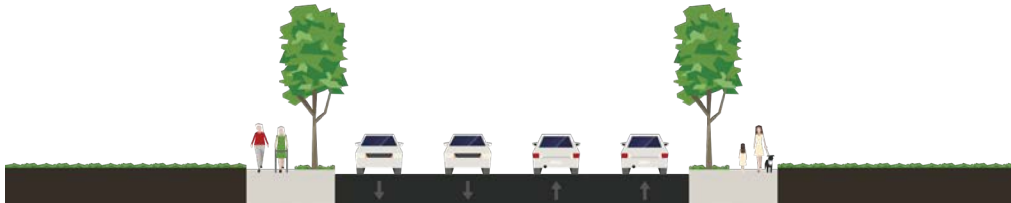
### Unconstrained

The unconstrained Principal Arterial representative cross section features four or more travel lanes with a landscaped median and a variety of multimodal amenities. Depending on context and services offered, the cross section could include space for bus travel in the roadway, transit shelters, and wide multi-use pathways for biking and walking.



### Constrained

The constrained Principal Arterial representative cross section maintains landscaped buffers and sidewalks for multimodal use, though these features could be limited to one side if necessary, provided safe and frequent crossings are provided. This constrained cross section can also feature fewer travel lanes with or without a center turn lane, depending on access management needs.



## MINOR ARTERIAL

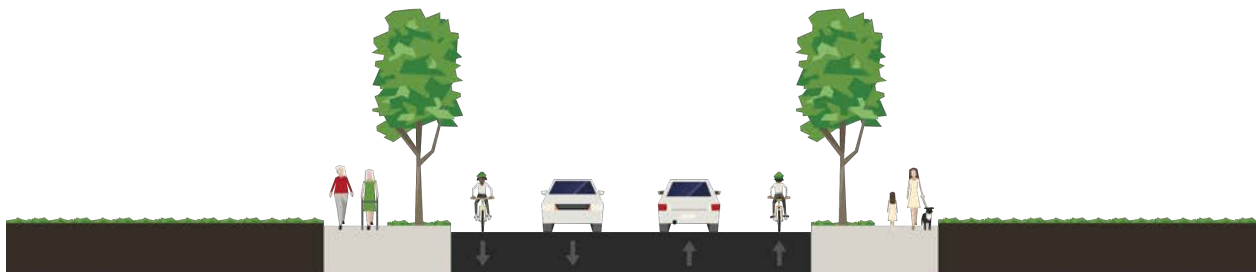
### Unconstrained

The unconstrained Minor Arterial representative cross section features a four-lane travelway with a landscaped median. On-street bike accommodations are preferred, along with wide sidewalks buffered from the street by attractive landscaping. In some locations, a buffered bike would be preferred.



### Constrained

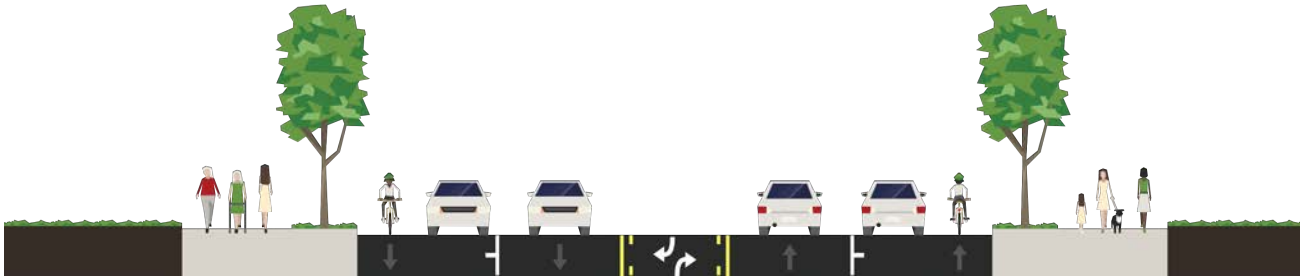
The constrained Minor Arterial representative cross section shows a drop to a two-lane road section, while maintaining on-street bike facilities. Sidewalks and landscaped buffers are maintained but can be narrowed, depending on the level of constraint.



## MAJOR/MINOR COLLECTOR

### Unconstrained

The unconstrained Major/Minor Collector representative cross section can feature two travel lanes with a center turn lane, and on-street bike facilities as appropriate. A landscaped buffer protects the sidewalk from the street. As shown below, parallel parking provides a buffer between the bicyclist and the travel lanes.



### Constrained

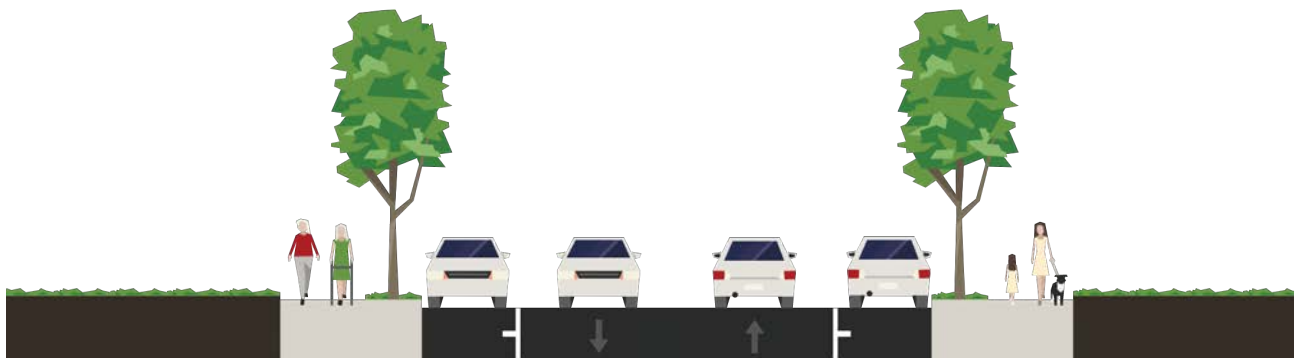
The constrained Major/Minor Collector representative cross section includes shared use lanes where bicyclists can mix with the lower speed traffic. Sidewalks should be included, though they can be narrower (and limited to one side if necessary).



## LOCAL

### Unconstrained

The unconstrained Local Street representative cross section features a two-lane roadway section with on-street parking. A slim buffer protects a standard sidewalk from the roadway.



### Constrained

The constrained Local Street representative cross section eliminates on-street parking from the roadway. Standard sidewalks are still preferred, along with buffering from the roadway, should space be available.







# 5. EXPERIENCING

The experience a place offers is essential to its prosperity. While much of the Framework Comprehensive Plan focuses on creating quality physical places, that is only part of how people experience the city. Today's successful cities offer superior quality of life through amenities to serve existing residents, support businesses, attract and retain talent, and maintain a strong local economy. This chapter addresses city services and facilities, parks and recreation amenities, and cultural and experience venues that strengthen Tuscaloosa's quality of life.

## GOAL

***Superior community amenities, including a wide range of parks and recreational facilities, city services, and well-supported arts and cultural events and venues.***

## OBJECTIVES

1. Expand and enhance the community's parks and recreational facilities
2. Strengthen cultural and experience venues in the city
3. Maintain a high standard for city services
4. Proactively address long-term needs and opportunities within city-owned facilities

## Chapter Organization

- Goal and Objectives
- Context
- Actions

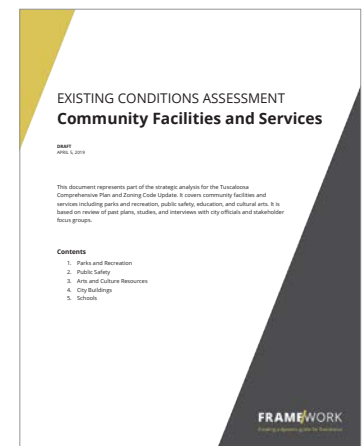
# CONTEXT: KEY FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Through the Framework process, assessments were conducted on existing conditions and potential growth constraints for services such as fire and police; amenities such as parks and recreation; and experiences including arts and culture resources along with city buildings. Those assessments developed the foundation for the recommending programs, policies and projects described in this chapter.

## PARKS AND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Tuscaloosa is unique among Alabama cities in that it does not have its own parks and recreation department. The majority of the area's parks are managed by a county-wide entity. The Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation Authority (PARA), which is funded by the City of Tuscaloosa, Northport, and the County is the only entity of its kind in the state of Alabama. From the assessment, stakeholder input, and recommendations of previous planning efforts, the following are the key opportunities for improving parks and recreation for the city:

- **Maximize potential of water resources.** Continue to market and develop parks and public access on Lake Tuscaloosa and consider designating a blueway or water trail to connect access points and islands into a unified experience.
- **Evaluate parks and recreation services and funding.** Continue to evaluate how parks and recreation operations and funding serve the community.
- **Develop and market Harris Lake, Lake Nicol, and surrounding city property as a natural park.** With minimal capital improvements, the city could highlight the natural outdoor amenities of this area with low impact trails/trailheads and non-motorized boat launches.
- **Continue to develop greenways and pedestrian/bicycle paths.** Continue to develop pedestrian and bikeway corridors in the city including the Riverwalk and City Walk to connect housing, destinations, and existing park and recreation amenities.



*Further detail on these conditions and opportunities is contained within the Community Facilities and Services Existing Conditions Assessment in Appendix B.*

## CITY BUILDINGS MONITORING

In 2018, a facility condition assessment was conducted for 36 city facilities by the City of Tuscaloosa through Infrastructure and Public Services. One of the major goals of the assessment was to calculate the facility condition index (FCI), which gives an indication of a building's overall condition. This proactive facility assessment is an important tool for both desired quality of life, capital improvements, and needed municipal service capital improvements which should review periodically to evaluate future needs.



## PUBLIC SAFETY SERVICES

Opportunities for public safety include focusing development where existing capacity exists, improving road networks, encouraging connectivity between neighborhoods, and capitalizing on collaborations.

### Fire and Rescue

Tuscaloosa Fire Rescue (TFR) employs 250 sworn and civilian personnel. It operates eleven fire stations, Fire Administration, Fire Marshall's Office, Emergency Medical Service (EMS), Communications, Logistics and Training / Safety Divisions. The department has developed numerous special programs to handle the growing needs of the community, including an EMS Bike Team to service football gamedays and a partnership with the University of Alabama. The department is working to develop a fire apparatus and facility replacement plan and to evaluate the needs of the community. Rising costs for equipment, technology, and personnel training present ongoing challenges. Growth in outlying areas where there is less street connectivity, particularly in the southern part of the city, is a challenge for maintaining adequate response times with existing facilities.

### Police

The City of Tuscaloosa Police Department (TPD) is currently made up of about 270 employees and occupies four facilities (three precincts and a central office). Most crime is concentrated in a few areas of the community and generally involves crimes of opportunity. TPD collaborates with the State, UA, County, and other law enforcement agencies to provide gameday services. Strengthening this collaboration and expanding the city's use of technology are both key to efficiently addressing policing challenges.

## ARTS AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Tuscaloosa is home to several facilities that represent significant community assets either owned or supported by the city. Enhancing and building upon these resources will offer a variety of experiences for residents and visitors alike. Opportunities identified through the Framework process include:

- **Better marketing of Tuscaloosa's cultural arts efforts and successes.** There could be better recognition of the community's existing and growing arts and cultural amenities, both among residents and potential visitors.
- **Dispersing public art into Tuscaloosa's neighborhoods.** There is an opportunity to expand public art into the city's neighborhoods as a way to establish neighborhood identities and promote neighborhood pride.
- **Event venues with greater capacity.** While the existing venues are valuable assets, their limited capacity is insufficient for large community or private events. There is an opportunity to establish new facilities or expand existing facilities to accommodate larger groups, conventions, or sporting events.



# ACTIONS

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goal for Experiencing:

*Superior community amenities, including a wide range of parks and recreational facilities, city services, and well-supported arts and cultural events and venues.*

## Objective 1. Expand and enhance the community's parks and recreational facilities

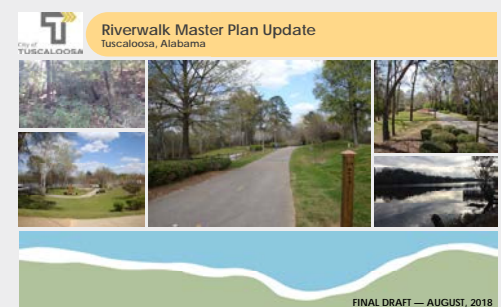
**EX 1.1 Expand the Riverwalk.** The city should continue implementing the 2018 Riverwalk Master Plan by funding phased extensions of the Riverwalk. When considering future development projects along the riverfront, the city should ensure the Riverwalk is integrated with development and public access to the river is maximized. Per the Master Plan, strategic phased expansions of the Riverwalk include:

- North of the Black Warrior River from McFarland Boulevard to Lake Tuscaloosa;
- West from the Amphitheater to the former Tuscaloosa Country Club and on into West Tuscaloosa;
- East from the Park at Manderson Landing along the south side of the Black Warrior River across McFarland Boulevard to the Riverview Boat Landing and then along Jack Warner Parkway toward Holt. This route will be coordinated with improvements to McFarland Boulevard Bridge to provide a connection across the Black Warrior River. It will also connect to the University of Alabama and surrounding neighborhoods utilizing former rail and trolley right-of-way.

Funding phases should also include improved pedestrian access across Jack Warner Parkway.

## EX 1.2 Create a signature recreational amenity surrounding Harris Lake and Lake Nicol.

The city-owned preserve land surrounding both Harris Lake and Lake Nicol offers a huge opportunity to create a unique recreational amenity. The city has initiated, via Elevate Tuscaloosa, a master plan process for this area that expands upon the existing access and trail network and creates a regional



### RIVERWALK MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The Riverwalk Master Plan Update (2018) provides an update to the 2003 Riverwalk Master Plan for the approximately 13 miles of planned trails, parks and public greenspace parallel to both the north and south sides of the Black Warrior River. Additionally, connections to adjacent land uses such as neighborhoods, businesses, industry, University of Alabama, Stillman College, parks, other trails (City Walk, Northport) and other public facilities were studied.

The Master Plan Update addresses:

- Riverwalk phases constructed to date
- Inventory & analysis of the project area
- New issues and opportunities within the project area
- New goals for future phases based on experiences and knowledge gained from construction, operation and maintenance of existing phases
- Conceptual design and supporting graphics for all phases
- Cost estimate for all phases

destination for hiking, biking, and appropriate watersports. As recommended by the Framework Lakes Subcommittee, the recreational amenity should focus on low impact park design to maintain this natural asset while improving access to each lake and featuring design solutions for pedestrian access across Lake Nicol Road to increase connectivity through the preserve.

**EX 1.3 Evaluate parks and recreation funding mechanisms.** The majority of the city's parks and recreational facilities are managed by the Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation Authority (PARA). The City of Tuscaloosa is the largest contributor in this partnership. There are currently individual parks and facilities in the city that are under-developed relative to community expectations, or are insufficiently maintained. Through Elevate Tuscaloosa, the city is considering providing additional funding to address relatively short-term needs. However, the city should evaluate PARA's role in providing fair and equitable services to the community and region over the long-term with respect to its funding partnership. That evaluation should consider funding mechanisms to support new parks and recreation facilities and ongoing maintenance, and consider alternatives to achieving the city's goal of "superior community amenities."

**EX 1.4 Evaluate and support upgrades to existing community parks, recreation centers, and community centers.** While the city and regional partners are evaluating long-term funding mechanisms, the city should consider providing additional short-term support for upgrades to existing public parks, community centers, and recreational facilities based on maintenance concerns. Improvements to existing public parks may include diversifying programming or facilities offered at individual parks, continuing to grow the active recreation programming, and incorporating enhanced passive recreation features into all updated public parks. These improvements will not only serve the residents of Tuscaloosa, but could support an increase in sports tourism to the city. The benefits of improving these facilities in the short-term are to respond to community desires, to better serve residents, and to increase revenue potential at city facilities. Grant funding opportunities for these improvements include the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) "Recreations Trails Program" and "Land and Water Conservation Fund."



The 2,000 acres of city-owned preserve land around Harris Lake and Lake Nicol offers a unique opportunity to create a signature recreational amenity.

## Objective 2. Strengthen cultural and experience venues in the city

**EX 2.1 Evaluate the need and appropriate locations for an experience venue.** The city is evaluating the need for and type of new experience venue that Tuscaloosa should pursue. The venue's design, size, and location should offer a broad community benefit and align with the needs of the region. An experience venue could provide capacity for larger meetings, such as conferences. It should be appropriately scaled relative to the available hotel rooms, needs of businesses, and likely users. A number of sites should be selected and evaluated based on factors such as venue capacity, infrastructure needs, neighboring development potential, long-term growth capabilities, and accessibility. The selected site should uphold the recommendations of the Framework Comprehensive Plan with an iconic design that symbolizes Tuscaloosa's future as an experience hub.





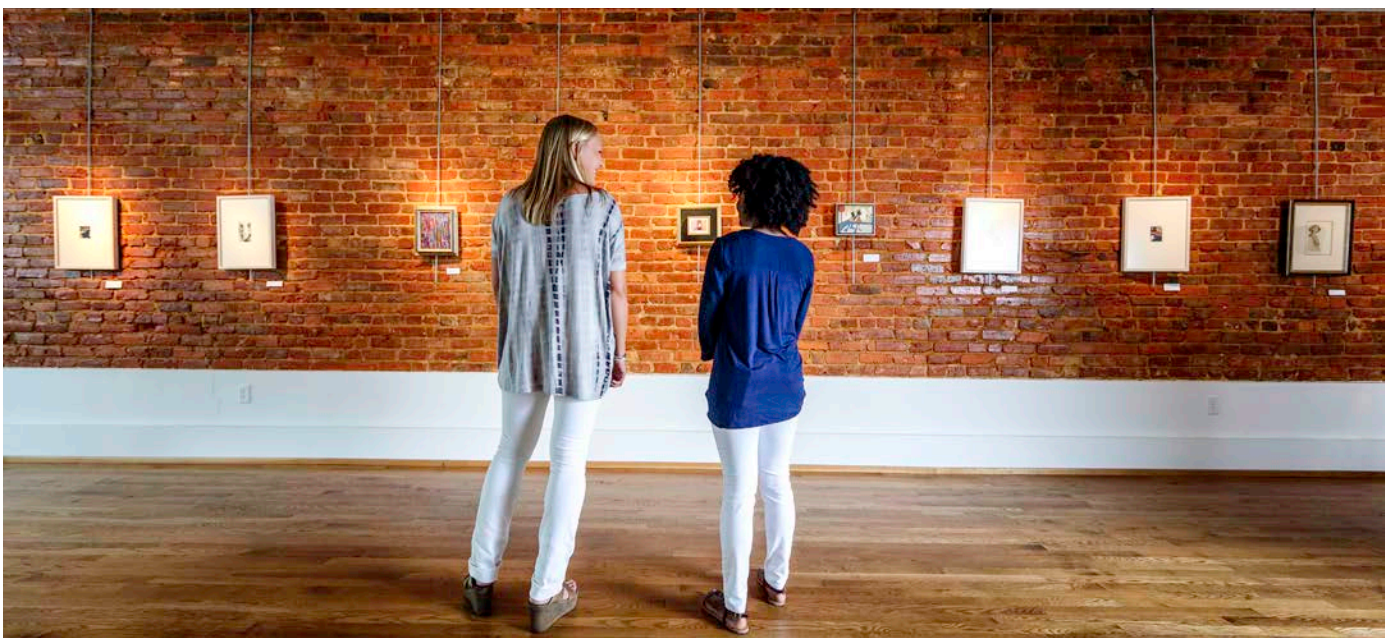
**EX 2.2 Identify a strategic vision for cultural arts.** As the city's cultural arts experiences continue to grow, a more comprehensive approach to funding is needed. The city provides support for the local arts infrastructure and owns property that is used for several prominent cultural arts assets. The city should increase its role as an organizational partner with the Arts Council to align long-term goals for arts in the city and analyze existing funding gaps and barriers. As an example, the city could identify and provide additional support for strategic improvements to the Bama Theatre to help grow the experience economy.

**EX 2.3 Continue to expand public art in the city.** The city has recently adopted a public art policy and established a public arts committee for soliciting and reviewing potential art in public spaces. Since 2018, public art installations, including murals and sculptures, have been established in several locations. The city should build on this work by promoting the installations throughout the city as a way to strengthen neighborhood pride and identity.

**EX 2.4 Evaluate opportunities to enhance the existing Civil Rights Trail.** The city should expand upon the existing Civil Rights Trail to create an informational or legacy trail that outlines Tuscaloosa's historic milestones, civic leaders, and community strengths. This initiative would serve to reinforce the tremendous amount of civic pride exhibited through the course of the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory process. These improvements could involve enhanced pedestrian facilities such as paths, landscaping, and gathering areas with seating, lighting, and historical markers.



The Bama Theatre is one of Tuscaloosa's most iconic venues that hosts hundreds of events annually. It must remain strong and vibrant for Tuscaloosa to expand its experience economy.





## Objective 3. Maintain a high standard for city services

**EX 3.1 Focus new development where adequate fire and safety services exist.** The city should coordinate infrastructure investments and major development decisions with respect to public safety services such as police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS). Relevant city departments should coordinate to evaluate fire and EMS coverage as development occurs to plan for future facilities. This coordination could involve reviews of major development or redevelopment proposals that meet certain criteria. It could also involve an annual assessment between relevant city departments of development underway relative to public safety calls and response times.

**EX 3.2 Improve road networks and encourage connectivity in future development to ensure appropriate response times.** The efficiency of the city's road network is related to public safety in the time it takes safety services to respond to calls. One way to potentially reduce long-term public safety expenditures is to make existing facilities serve a larger number of residents and businesses. Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue Services (TRFS) aims for a 6-minute response time (4-minute drive), which is a challenge under some conditions (particularly in the city's northern and southern edges). A more connected street network could offer greater options for routes and a reduction in peak traffic on major arterials. The city should update its development standards to address extensions of streets from developments to adjoining undeveloped land and cross-access requirements between adjoining commercial and office developments. Additionally, the city could implement standards that would encourage developers to dedicate additional connections between existing streets, where appropriate.

**EX 3.3 Continue to expand the city's fiber network and use of technology.** Fiber networks are the gold standard in broadband communications infrastructure. Internet connectivity through fiber systems is emerging as an important municipal service. Fast and stable internet access is needed to support the next generation of connected "smart" devices, is often a requirement for business, is a social equity issue, and can help a municipality more efficiently provide city services. Tuscaloosa is ahead of most cities in Alabama in having built over 45 miles of city-owned fiber connectivity. The city should continue to pursue expansion of its fiber network, prioritizing city facilities such as schools and libraries. The city's fiber network can also support emerging mobility technologies, such as parking location systems, transit routing, and smart signalization.

## Objective 4. Proactively address long-term needs and opportunities within city-owned facilities

### EX 4.1 Expand operational capacity at Tuscaloosa National Airport.

The Tuscaloosa National Airport is a vital economic asset for the region and currently supports business services for major industries, the University, and other private aviation. However, the airport's lack of commercial passenger service is an obstacle for economic growth, including business location and tourism. The viability of future commercial passenger service is partly dependent on federal permits and the interests of airlines, but there are steps that could increase the potential for the facility's future. The city could undertake:

- Runway improvements to support the needs of larger and modern aircraft;
- Terminal improvements to support the potential for future commercial passenger service;
- Expanding airfield capacity to accommodate the cargo needs of local industries, and
- Adding or expanding aircraft hangars to address local demand and increase utilization of the airport.

**EX 4.2 Develop specific facility improvement plans for the most vulnerable city-owned facilities, and continue to monitor all city-owned facilities.** In 2018, the city completed a facilities condition index (FCI), which assessed the current condition and future anticipated needs of 36 city-owned facilities relative to their replacement value. Based on the FCI, three facilities are currently nearing the end of their serviceable life and should be significantly updated (the Airport, Fire Station 6, and the Riverwalk Concessions). The FCI projected additional needs for these facilities over the next 10 years. The city should use the 10-year FCI to prioritize facility upgrades in future capital budgets.







# 6. COMPETING

Economic opportunity is at the core of a community's prosperity. Tuscaloosa's ability to attract and retain a talented workforce, diversify employment opportunities, and grow as a visitor destination relates to the city's physical character, housing, infrastructure, and amenities explored in the previous chapters. This chapter ties together that previous direction and highlights other ways the city can become more economically competitive.

## GOAL

***A strong and resilient economy with diverse opportunities to find or create a job in a place that is appealing to the lifestyle needs and desires of a talented workforce and is attractive as a visitor destination.***

## OBJECTIVES

1. Support new and emerging industries and businesses
2. Offer locations and spaces for a range of business types
3. Strengthen the talent pipeline
4. Develop the tourism sector with more year-round opportunities

## Chapter Organization

- Goal and Objectives
- Context
- Actions



# CONTEXT: KEY FINDINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Framework process included an assessment of the community's economic conditions and trends, and interviews with internal and external stakeholders. The findings below provide context for the city's policies as they relate to promoting economic development.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Tuscaloosa is a regional center for jobs**, as over 70% of workers live outside of the city. There are limited housing options in the city that are appropriate for the workforce.
- **The number of jobs is growing**, but concentrated in education, manufacturing, accommodation, and healthcare.
- **The University generates economic activity and talent**; but retaining graduates is a challenge.
- **There is limited entrepreneurial activity** in the community compared to Birmingham, Huntsville, and Mobile.
- **There are aspirations to diversify the economy** by developing the tech sector.
- **There are limited number of sites** for new office development or available office spaces for growing businesses.
- **The state's economic development incentive structure** is job and manufacturing centric.
- **Lifestyle factors are vital to attract and retain people and business.** These factors include entertainment / amenity (retail) options, housing choices, and employment choices.
- **The relatively small size of the local labor force** and ability to continue to absorb economic growth.

## ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

The economic development strategy for the Framework process focused recommendations around three priorities for Tuscaloosa.

### 1. Attracting and retaining young, talented workforce (25-34 year-old population)

- Finding or creating economic opportunities to support the population.
- Ensuring desirable and affordable housing is made readily available.
- Providing sufficient lifestyle opportunities and amenities for changing preferences.

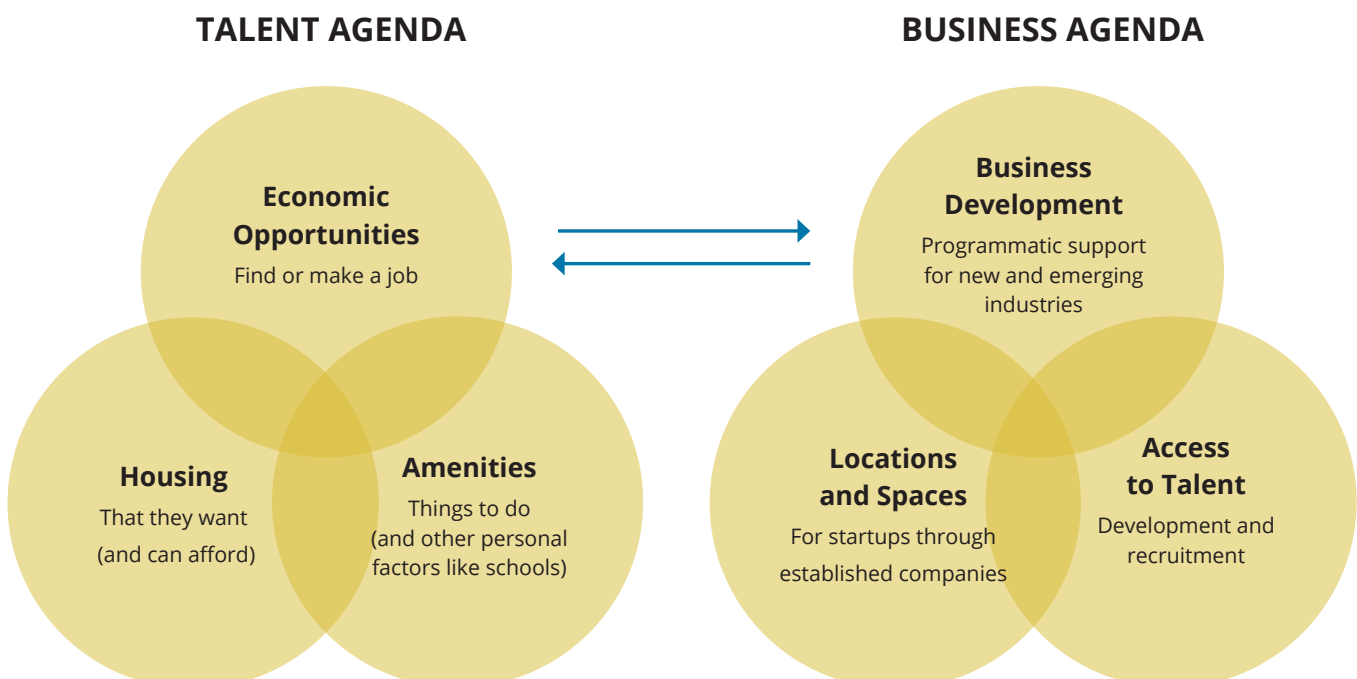
### 2. Diversifying Employment Opportunities

- Supporting business development through new and emerging industries.
- Providing locations and spaces for startups through established companies.
- Connecting access to local talent through development and recruitment.
- Providing programs to support entrepreneurs.

### 3. Developing Tourism

- Coordinating with higher educational institutions around its events and partnering for the right type of infrastructure.
- Enhancing outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Focusing on Tuscaloosa as a destination and the experience of being here.

Continued diversification of Tuscaloosa's economy and retaining more of the talent pool generated by the higher educational institutions (or attracting a younger workforce) are important to the community's future. These are interrelated and interdependent priorities. Success will involve progress in addressing each of these needs.



# ACTIONS

The following projects, policies, and programs support the goal for Competing:

*A strong and resilient economy with diverse opportunities to find or create a job in a place that is appealing to the lifestyle needs and desires of a talented workforce and is attractive as a visitor destination.*

## Objective 1. Support new and emerging industries and businesses

**CP 1.1 Participate in a collaborative economic development effort.** Since the regional Economic Development Alliance was formed, no entity has established itself as a leader of the effort. It may be in the city's interest to encourage its partners to move this effort forward. The Alliance should be a collaborative effort that builds upon the 2018 strategic plan and creates more actionable strategies that are supported and undertaken by various entities. To move this effort forward, the city could act as a convener to facilitate continued discussion among the Alliance members.

**CP 1.2 Expand programmatic support for new and emerging businesses.** To make the city "a hub for innovation and a home for a vibrant entrepreneurial sector," Tuscaloosa should build upon the EDGE program and ensure that it has all the elements of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The program's offerings would work together to bring entrepreneurs through the beginning of the "pipeline" and "graduate" them into a system designed to help them scale. As participation in the program grows, the elements and offerings should evolve. These elements include:

- Entrepreneur education and launch encouragement programs from the basic "how to start a business" to business plan competitions that are diverse (beyond technology businesses);
- Business planning assistance programs;
- "First Customer," customer connection, and networking services to help connect entrepreneurs with potential customers;
- Accelerator programs and incubators to support successful launches;

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

Beginning in the summer of 2016, discussions were held among key economic development officials and community leaders on the need for an economic development plan for Tuscaloosa and West Alabama. This effort included The Chamber, the West Alabama Regional Council, The City of Tuscaloosa and others. By 2018, an Economic Development Alliance was formed and a strategic vision was drafted. This step began to create alignment for a regional economic vision. The next step is to develop a more actionable strategy.

### Strategic Priorities from the 2018 Economic Development Alliance Plan included:

**Partnership and Structure:** "The Alliance" to coordinate and communicate economic development priorities between economic development organizations. Create a one-stop shop.

**Recruitment and Retention:** Supplement industrial recruitment with knowledge-based recruitment. Retain graduates from the area's academic institutions and recruit young professionals.

**Entrepreneurship and Innovation:** Make the area a hub for innovation and a home for a vibrant entrepreneurial sector through continued support of The Edge and additional commitment of resources and incentives.

**Community and Place:** Align economic development incentives with community initiatives. Champion community initiatives to support recruitment, retention, and growth of businesses.

**Communication and Outreach:** Create an online information portal to boost recruitment and retention efforts. Facilitate internal and external communications through the Alliance.

- Seed and angel capital resources to help create minimally viable products and offerings when applicable;
- Real estate offerings that are flexible and able to accommodate companies at different stages of development. (see CP 2.1 and 2.2); and
- Expanded communication about the services available for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

**CP 1.3 Collaborate in lobbying the State to update its economic development tools.** Based on the interviews and discussions with citizens engaged in economic development in the city, the State's tools to promote economic development may not align well with new technology businesses. Current incentives favor capital investment, yet many new industries have jobs-to-investment ratios that are higher than some traditional manufacturing businesses. For example, with automation in manufacturing, a large manufacturing facility may add relatively few jobs. It is worth discussing whether public funding should subsidize these investments relative to other industries that may bring more jobs. Given the high level of competition for technology industries and jobs, making sure recruitment tools are properly designed and aligned is critical. Tuscaloosa should work with other large Alabama cities in lobbying the State to update its tools to provide incentives for modern industries.

## Objective 2. Offer locations and spaces for a range of business types

**CP 2.1 Ensure flexible work space exists to support business startup programs.** Startup businesses and businesses scaling up operations have varied space needs, among them the ability to flex space up and down as their business conditions change. It is not uncommon for landlords in startup intensive markets to move companies across properties within their portfolios without breaking leases to accommodate their growth.

Particular thought should be given to migration options for companies that may locate to, or grow out of, The EDGE. As a first step, understand the nature of the businesses and how their products and services will impact their space needs going forward. As the center evolves and matures, creating a network of real estate options through brokers or developers can help companies manage the transition and potential facility scramble during



### The EDGE

The EDGE Entrepreneurship Center was formed in 2012 to provide opportunities for entrepreneurs to help startups and to drive business growth. The EDGE is an incubator and accelerator that focuses on growing and supporting entrepreneurs in collaborative workspaces dedicated to innovation and networking. The center allows for established entrepreneurs, people seeking to build their business, and individuals who need working space a formal place to conduct business, network, and develop their business model. The EDGE operates out of a 26,000-square-foot facility with over 20 offices and 100 workstations offering memberships on both a monthly and annual basis with potential for short-term or daily drop-in programming. Workshops, seminars and clinics are held regularly to connect entrepreneurs with fellow innovators and provide the additional assistance needed to refine their business. The center also hosts special events such as pitch competitions that bring together the West Alabama entrepreneurial community. The EDGE is supported by both the Alabama Entrepreneurship Institute and the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama encouraging local job growth and innovation development.



growth phases, as well as provide Tuscaloosa with an early warning system about business property needs.

**CP 2.2 Work with an existing entity that can easily enter into public-private-partnerships to co-develop speculative employment space.** Some businesses require purpose-built facilities to accommodate their process or technology needs. Other businesses require space that is adaptive and flexible as their needs change. With time being a competitive issue in a number of industries, particularly consumer-sensitive or tech-driven businesses, a business needing to wait for an appropriate facility or office space to be constructed from the ground up can be a disadvantage for some geographies.

Stakeholder interviews identified that one of Tuscaloosa's major limiters in recruiting larger technology companies is the lack of available office and flex space that can accommodate their needs. The development of speculative employment space can overcome this limiting factor. However, it is not risk-free. Risk management strategies include:

- Pursuit of grant dollars to reduce the amount of debt needed to finance the project;
- Attracting an anchor public and/or institutional tenant to support directly through a lease or credit arrangement for a portion of the building, and
- Developing the building to a "white box" or grey shell rather than fully finished.

### Objective 3. Strengthen the talent pipeline

#### CP 3.1 Expand workforce development programs.

The city should support programs that cultivate home-grown talent. Programs that improve upward mobility and economic opportunity for the city's youth start with education. The city should continue to work with the schools, the Chamber of Commerce, and others to create or expand workforce development programs such as:

- **Tuscaloosa Pre-K Initiative.** Since 2006, the Tuscaloosa Pre-K Initiative has become a model for the State of Alabama and has demonstrated results for Tuscaloosa's academically at-risk four-year olds. The city should consider continuing to fund expansions to the program, through Elevate Tuscaloosa or by other means, to offer Pre-K to a



#### Setting the standard for Pre-K Education

The City of Tuscaloosa strives to support educational programming for the community through one of their core beliefs, *All children academically at-risk will have the opportunity for highly effective pre-k programs.* This belief has driven investments and programs to assist academically at-risk children since the formation of the initiative in 2006. According to research from the University of Alabama, 80 percent of the academically at-risk students who participated in the Tuscaloosa Pre-K Initiative were reading on grade level by first grade.

larger number of the city's children. Through Elevate Tuscaloosa, the city funded Pre-K for an additional 54 students (3 classrooms) for the 2019-2020 school year.

- **Tuscaloosa Summer Learning Academy.** Research shows summer learning programs can be an effective strategy to close the achievement gap by stemming summer learning loss. In 2018, the Tuscaloosa City Schools' Summer Learning Academy saw participants close the achievement gap between non-participants in both reading and math. The city should consider continuing to fund expansions to the program, through Elevate Tuscaloosa or by other means, to reach more students. The Elevate Tuscaloosa initiative will allow for an additional 250 students to participate in Summer Learning Academies by 2020.
- **Trade mentorship / apprenticeship programs.** To meet growing opportunities for employment in skilled trades, mentorship programs could be established to help build appropriate skills, experience, and industry connections. Such efforts can be undertaken through non-profit organizations or Chamber divisions oriented to specific industries. An industry organization can focus its membership on workforce development, marketing, networking, and contract relationships.

### **CP 3.2 Finalize details of the dual-enrollment scholarship program.**

The city, via Elevate Tuscaloosa, has begun to establish a scholarship program to prepare the next generation for a 21st Century technology-driven economy and encourage people to live within the city. The program would offer high school seniors of Tuscaloosa City Schools with dual-enrollment scholarships at the University of Alabama, Shelton State Community College, or Stillman College in order to earn credits for a high school diploma and/or a postsecondary degree. Applicants would be required to live in the city for more than two years to qualify. An overarching goal will be to leverage the investment with the private sector and the institutions of higher education. The program would also include a community service component.

#### **What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the Plan.**

- **Take action on initiatives to make the city a more attractive place to live.** The community's quality of life factors are key in retaining locally-generated talent and attracting new talent to Tuscaloosa. The Framework Comprehensive Plan includes initiatives that make the community a more attractive place to live. These include:
  - Maximizing the riverfront – expanding the Riverwalk multi-use trail and making it a more integrated part of the community fabric. (EXPERIENCING 1.1)
  - Strengthening Downtown as a vibrant and attractive place to live, work, and play. (GROWING 6.1)
  - Expanding and enhancing parks and recreational amenities. (EXPERIENCING 1.4)
  - Providing more opportunities to walk and bike. (CONNECTING 2.1)

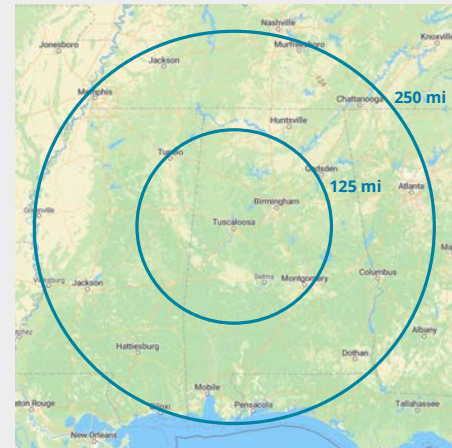
## Objective 4. Develop the tourism sector with more year-round opportunities

### CP 4.1 Develop a tourism strategy focused on the experience of visiting Tuscaloosa.

Tourism can easily be viewed as attractions, events, and amenities. However, an important element of tourism is also experiential. Positive experiences can lead to strong “word of mouth” marketing. Tuscaloosa plays many visitor roles. It is the home of the state’s flagship educational institution and the myriad of visitors the University generates. While the University is an important tourism driver, the city’s tourism strategy should look at opportunities to become more of a year-round destination. As the largest city of West Alabama, Tuscaloosa can serve as the major nearby urban destination for the region that includes eastern Mississippi. Its scale and character can offer a more comfortable “urban” experience that is harder to find in a larger city. The dimensions of experience vary but common elements include:

- Perception of safety
- Cleanliness
- Ease of wayfinding and navigation
- Vacancy, abandonment, or state of repair
- Parking accessibility
- “Instagram moments”
- Activity opportunities

The experience is how all these and other pieces come together as a whole to influence how a visitor views a community. This can include major entry corridors and gateways, activity hubs such as Downtown, and key physical features, such as the river. Elevate Tuscaloosa has several projects concerning connectivity and place that will enhance the experience. Additionally, the city and its hospitality industry partners should engage in ongoing market research to understand the city’s tourism customers and key elements of their experience to serve as the basis for continual monitoring and improvement.



#### Regional Connectivity

Tuscaloosa is well connected to major cities in Alabama and neighboring states. This city is within a two-hour drive of approximately 3.5 million people including the cities of Birmingham (pop 212,717) and Montgomery (pop 201,207).

Tuscaloosa is within a half-day's drive from Mobile and the Gulf Coast, Atlanta, Chattanooga, Memphis, Nashville, and most of Mississippi. There are approximately 20 million people within 250 miles of Tuscaloosa.

**What else? Relevant recommendations elsewhere in the Plan.**

• **Take action on initiatives to improve the visitor experience.**

Like the previously mentioned quality of life initiatives, the Framework Comprehensive Plan contains actions that would strengthen tourism infrastructure by expanding the experiences available in Tuscaloosa.

These include:

- Maximizing the riverfront – expanding the Riverwalk multi-use trail and making it a more integrated part of the community fabric. (EXPERIENCING 1.1)
- Strengthening Downtown as a safe, attractive, and vibrant location that offers minimal obstacles for visitors (such as parking). (GROWING 6.1 and CONNECTING 4.1)
- Expanding the transit system, particularly in the Downtown area. (CONNECTING 3.1)
- Expanding and enhancing parks and recreational facilities. (EXPERIENCING 1.4)
- Creating an experience venue. (EXPERIENCING 2.1)
- Enhancing cultural arts events, amenities and venues. (EXPERIENCING 2.2)
- Evaluate opportunities to enhance the existing Civil Rights Trail (EXPERIENCING 2.4)
- Expanding operational capacity at the Tuscaloosa National Airport. (EXPERIENCING 4.1)







# 7. ACHIEVING

The Framework Comprehensive Plan is a long term policy guide and action agenda. Implementation of this Plan will involve a host of city departments, boards and commissions, non-profits, businesses, and citizens. This chapter includes guidance on managing and using the Plan, and a summary of its actions that assigns anticipated timing and responsibilities to each. While much care has been given to the Plan's actions, the city should be opportunistic in pursuing other actions that would support its vision and goals.

## GOAL

***A strong planning culture and a commitment to action with leaders who embrace continued public engagement and collaboration among other government entities, institutions, and the business community.***

## OBJECTIVES

1. Promote awareness and understanding of the Plan and its recommendations
2. Monitor and share implementation progress
3. Require concurrence with the Framework Comprehensive Plan
4. Provide resources for implementing the Plan

## Chapter Organization

- Goal and Objectives
- How to Use the Plan
- Implementation Actions
- Summary of Actions

# HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The Framework Comprehensive Plan is intended to be used on a daily basis as public and private decisions are made concerning development, redevelopment, capital improvements, economic incentives and other matters affecting Tuscaloosa. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should align with the goals and actions of the Plan.

## Annual Work Programs and Budgets

Individual departments, administrators, boards and commissions should be cognizant of the recommendations of the Plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets.

## Development Approvals

Administrative and legislative approvals of development proposals, including rezoning and subdivision plats, should be a central means of implementing the Plan. Decisions by the Planning Commission and City Council should reference relevant Comprehensive Plan recommendations and policies. The zoning code and subdivision regulations should be updated in response to regulatory strategies presented in the Plan.

## Capital Improvement Plan

The City should prepare a formal capital improvement plan (CIP) that is consistent with the plan's recommendations.

## Economic Incentives

All economic incentive programs should be reviewed to ensure consistency with the recommendations of the Plan.

## Private Development Decisions

Property owners and developers should consider the goals and strategies of the Plan in their land planning and investment decisions. Public decision-makers will be using the Plan as a guide in their development deliberations such as zoning matters and infrastructure requests. Property owners and developers should be cognizant of and compliment the plan's recommendations.

## Consistent Interpretation

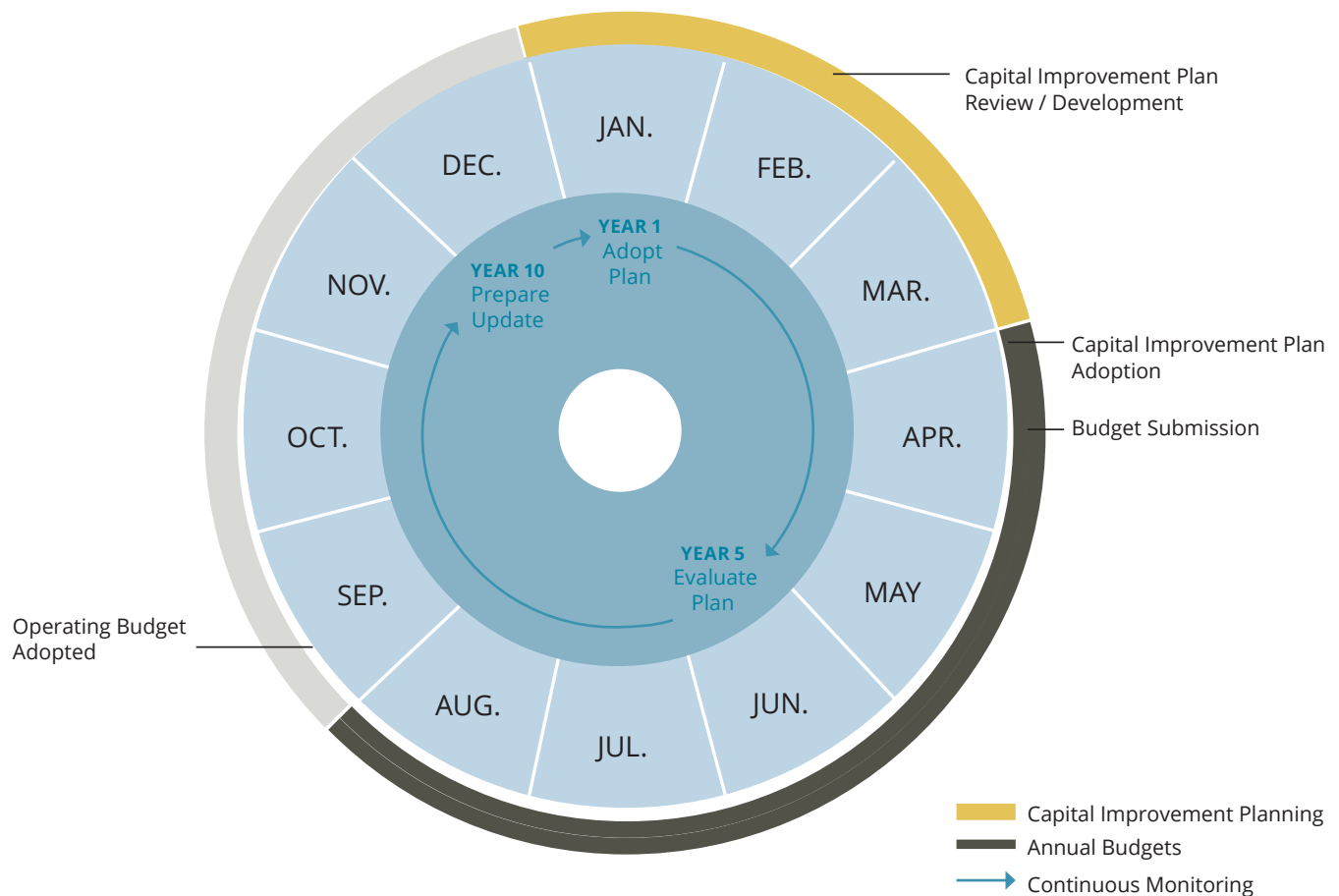
City Council should collaborate with the Planning Commission to ensure clear and consistent interpretation of major items in the Plan.

## Collaborating

Many actions in the Framework Comprehensive Plan will require the coordinated efforts of individuals and organizations representing the public, private, and civic sectors of the community. An active citizenry will help to ensure actions are included and pursued as part of the public agenda.

# PROPOSED PLAN MANAGEMENT CYCLE

The Plan should be integrated into annual city processes, regularly tracked for progress, assessed for effectiveness, and updated periodically. The diagram below illustrates how the Plan could be integrated into the city's existing annual processes.



## Monitoring

The Plan should be monitored on a regular basis for implementation effectiveness and relevancy. It should be referenced annually in the development of departmental work programs, budgets and capital improvements planning. A formal review of Plan's accomplishments and relevancy should occur within five-year intervals.

## Updating

A major update of the Plan should be scheduled by Council following a formal recommendation from the Planning Commission. The update should be considered at least every ten years. In the interim, key milestones may be reached which necessitate an update sooner than a ten-year cycle. Such milestones should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

There may be circumstances that warrant formal amendment of the Plan. Amendments to the Plan should be made only with careful consideration and compelling justification.



# IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Outlined below are actions to support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

## Objective 1. Promote awareness and understanding of the Plan and its recommendations

- Ac 1.1 Engage non-governmental partners to assist with implementation.** Identify and engage various civic organizations, neighborhood groups, institutions, and businesses to assist with implementing key strategies in the Plan.
- Ac 1.2 Provide copies of the Plan throughout the community and online.** Upon adoption, the Plan should be made available at multiple locations such as the library, community centers and on the City's website.
- Ac 1.3 Provide ongoing staff training and professional development opportunities.** The Framework Comprehensive Plan references many innovative development concepts, programs, and policies. City staff should be supported in obtaining training to more effectively undertake the plan's recommendations. Staff, commission members, and elected officials should conduct visits to other communities to observe examples first-hand.
- Ac 1.4 Develop a formal training program for commission and board members.** Training should focus on land use law, meeting procedures, organizational dynamics and how to use the Plan.

## Objective 2. Require concurrence with the Framework Comprehensive Plan

- Ac 2.1 Update regulations and establish new regulatory tools.** Development regulations including zoning, subdivision regulations, building codes, and related ordinances will be updated to reflect the Plan's recommendations. The second phase of the Framework process will update the city's zoning and land development codes. Additionally, some Plan recommendations will require updates to other city ordinances.
- Ac 2.2 Require concurrence in rezoning and other major development approvals.** Major rezonings and development approvals will concur with applicable policies of this Plan. Actions by city boards, commissions and staff will document concurrence in all decisions.
- Ac 2.3 Require staff reports to reference the Comprehensive Plan.** All staff reports related to development applications, code amendments, rezonings, policy recommendations, annual work programs and budgets will reference relevant Plan recommendations.

## Objective 3. Provide resources for implementing the Plan

### AC 3.1 Establish and regularly update a multi-year Capital

**Improvement Plan (CIP).** A multi-year Capital Improvements Plan should be adopted and maintained. The CIP is a fundamental management document that outlines projected capital needs, priorities, funding estimates and sources, and time-frames for completion. Typical projects included in the CIP are related to (but not limited to) streets, traffic management, pedestrian and bike paths, parks, recreation, City facilities, drainage, etc. A CIP will typically include clearly defined project categories. The CIP may be established for a period of three to ten years and is typically updated annually.

- **Evaluation/Prioritization Criteria.** The CIP would contain projects to be undertaken over many years and is typically funded on an annual basis. Criteria should be established for evaluating projects to be included in the CIP and when they should be funded. Criteria could include:
  - Infrastructure need — The current condition of the infrastructure, improvement cost versus the cost of inaction.
  - Project viability — The degree of understanding about the project, existing planning, or potential risk involved.
  - Community benefit — Benefits to the greater city, both direct and indirect (how many benefit and how).
  - Strategic Alignment — Consistency with the Framework Comprehensive Plan.

### AC 3.2 Prepare annual departmental work programs with awareness of the Framework Comprehensive Plan.

Departmental work programs and associated budget requests should demonstrate consistency with the Framework Comprehensive Plan.

### AC 3.3 Identify and secure funds for prioritized initiatives.

Funding sources could include grants, tax measures, bonds, private investments, public-private partnerships, etc.

## Objective 4. Monitor and share implementation progress

### AC 4.1 Prepare an implementation evaluation.

On a regular basis, the city should review the Framework Comprehensive Plan's accomplishments and effectiveness. This review should assess the plan's actions listed in this chapter each (completed, underway, ongoing, no longer relevant). A simple summary report could be prepared and shared with Planning Commission that highlights progress and identifies potential Plan updates.

### AC 4.2 Anticipate updates to the Plan at regular intervals.

As part of its budgeting process, The city should anticipate the need for undertaking formal updates to the Framework Comprehensive Plan. Major updates should be anticipated every ten years. Minor updates may be considered at 5-year intervals based on an evaluation of current conditions and implementation progress.


# SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

The following table summarizes the Plan's actions. The table is organized by chapter and objective. It indicates for each action, the type of action, its status and whether it aligns with the city's standard of excellence and specific Core Beliefs. All of the plan's actions relate to Core Belief 3 and all will require collaborative efforts of city departments, reflecting Core Belief 6.

Our standard of excellence: to be the most innovative and effectively managed city in the United States.

## Core Beliefs





- 1 Western Tuscaloosa and other parts of our City who have not benefited from the economic prosperity of Tuscaloosa will again thrive both residentially and commercially.
- 2 The City of Tuscaloosa will be a customer friendly environment and our work will be open, efficient and effective.
- 3 Comprehensive Planning and infrastructure investments will be essential to preserving our neighborhoods, promoting economic development and ensuring a high quality of life.
- 4 All Citizens will be safe in all areas of our City. If trouble arises, whether crime, fire or an act of nature, our response will be swift and effective.
- 5 All children academically at-risk will have the opportunity for highly effective pre-k programs.
- 6 The ability to serve our Citizens is a shared responsibility among all departments and employees, which requires that we consistently provide the highest level of performance, dedication and integrity.




 Denotes actions associated with Elevate Tuscaloosa, a community-driven process for strategically investing in education, cultural arts, tourism, parks, recreation, and connectivity.

## Action Categories

- R Regulations** (Actions that could be implemented through the Framework zoning code rewrite or other update to city ordinances)
- C Capital Project** (Physical improvements to city facilities and infrastructure)
- P Program** (Programs or initiatives that may require some ongoing city support or participation)
- O Policy** (Direction used on an ongoing basis to guide city decisions)

## Action Status

-  Ongoing (currently occurring on a repeating basis)
-  Future, then ongoing (yet to be initiated, but would become ongoing)
-  Initiated (begun, but not yet complete)
-  Future (to be initiated)

ACTION	SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
<b>GROWING</b>					
<b>Objective 1. Modernize the city's development regulations</b>					
GR 1.1 Create predictable, understandable and user-friendly codes.	✓	1 2 3 6		R	
GR 1.2 Restructure and modernize the zoning districts.	✓	1 2 3 6		R	
GR 1.3 Modernize the development standards.	✓	1 2 3 6		R	

ACTION	SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
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## Objective 2. Encourage infill and redevelopment in strategic locations.

GR 2.1	Focus development energy to create catalyst areas.	✓	1 3 6		O	☰
GR 2.2	Market development opportunities within designated Opportunity Zones.	✓	1 2 3 6		P	↻
GR 2.3	Revise the regulations to encourage and support redevelopment.	✓	1 2 3 6		R	☰
GR 2.4	Monitor conditions at large multifamily developments and support redevelopment potential.		3 4 6		P	⋯

## Objective 3. Proactively invest in infrastructure to support growth.

GR 3.1	Seek low-cost solutions to infrastructure needs.	✓	1 3 6		O	↻
GR 3.2	Establish more regular updates to infrastructure models.	✓	3 4 6		P	⋯
GR 3.3	Maintain a plan for water and wastewater infrastructure investments to support desired growth patterns.	✓	3 6		P	⋯
GR 3.4	Evaluate the use of impact fees to support infrastructure improvements and public safety.	✓	3 4 6		P	↻

## Objective 4. Exhibit strong stewardship of natural resources.

GR 4.1	Establish or refine mechanisms for expanding the city's greenspace.		3 6		R	⋯
GR 4.2	Create a tree planting incentive program.		1 3 6		P	☰
GR 4.3	Evaluate protections for potentially sensitive land such as flood-prone areas, waterway edges, and steep slopes and strengthen where appropriate.		3 6		R	↻
GR 4.4	Monitor pollutant and sedimentation conditions on Tuscaloosa's Lakes.		3 4 6		P	↻



ACTION	SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
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## Objective 5. Improve the appearance of public and private property throughout the city.

GR 5.1	Strengthen development regulations regarding aesthetics citywide.		1 3 4 6	R	☰
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## Objective 6. Manage growth in the Downtown / University Area.

GR 6.1	Redefine the University Area Neighborhood (UAN) and "The Box" into one concept: The University District.	✓	3 6	R	☰
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GR 6.2	Refine zoning districts and development standards that apply to the University District.	✓	3 4 6	R	☰
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GR 6.3	Anticipate development opportunities with the 2nd Avenue Connection project between the University and Forest Lake.		3 6	O	☰
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GR 6.4	Coordinate city investments with the University of Alabama Campus Master Plan.		3 6	O	↻
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GR 6.5	Redefine the Downtown / Riverfront District.		3 6	R	☰
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GR 6.6	Establish a Main Street Program with partners external to the city.		3 6	P	☰
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## Objective 7. Facilitate development in West Tuscaloosa.

GR 7.1	Focus revitalization efforts in West Tuscaloosa neighborhoods.	✓	1 3 4 6	O	☰
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GR 7.2	Establish a unique riverfront development on the former Tuscaloosa Country Club site.	✓	1 3 6	P	☰
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GR 7.3	Locate heavy industrial uses away from neighborhoods.		1 3 6	O	☰
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GR 7.4	Redefine the MLK Boulevard – Stillman – 15th Street Gateway.		1 3 6	O	☰
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GR 7.5	Promote redevelopment between Stillman College and Fosters Ferry Road.		1 3 6	O	☰
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GR 7.6	Facilitate infill development on the Broadus – Stewart Site.		1 3 6	O	☰
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ACTION	SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
GR 7.7 Facilitate the creation of a revitalized gateway west of Stillman College.		1		O	☰
GR 7.8 Enhance the MLK Boulevard Corridor, from 29th Street to 15th Street.		1		C	☰

## Objective 8. Manage growth in north Tuscaloosa and the lakes area.

GR 8.1 Grow new traditional neighborhoods.		3 6		O	☰
GR 8.2 Support low intensity development and conservation of land along Lake Tuscaloosa.		3 6		O	☰
GR 8.3 Promote high-quality neighborhood commercial development in strategic areas.		3 6		O	☰
GR 8.4 Improve road infrastructure to support growth.	✓	3 4 6		C	☰
GR 8.5 Update regulations for development on Lake Tuscaloosa (sea walls, docks, land disturbance, etc.).		3 4 6		R	☰
GR 8.6 Continue to lobby for extra-territorial zoning authority.	✓	3 6		O	↻

## Objective 9. Facilitate growth in East Tuscaloosa.

GR 9.1 Facilitate the creation of diverse housing options to serve "workforce housing" needs.		1 3 6		O	☰
GR 9.2 Encourage the creation of neighborhood commercial services.		1 3 6		O	☰
GR 9.3 Support light industrial employment opportunities along Interstate-20/59.		1 3 6		O	☰
GR 9.4 Redefine the community gateways through public and private improvements.		1 3 6		C	☰
GR 9.5 Pursue opportunities to expand publicly accessible and connected open space.		1 3 6		O	☰
GR 9.6 Invest in street improvements to support development and redevelopment.	✓	1 3 4 6		C	☰

ACTION	SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
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## Objective 10. Facilitate growth along the Highway 69 South area.

GR 10.1	Focus residential expansion in areas served by utility infrastructure.	✓	1 3 6	O	⋈
GR 10.2	Establish an attractive gateway along Highway 69 through public and private improvements.		1 3 6	C	≡
GR 10.3	Expand public safety facilities to support growth.	✓	1 3 4 6	C	⋈
GR 10.4	Pursue opportunities to expand publicly accessible and connected open space areas.		1 3 6	O	≡
GR 10.5	Promote campus activity and support services around Shelton State Community College.		1 3 6	O	≡

## LIVING

### Objective 1. Protect existing neighborhood character and support appropriate new development.

LV 1.1	Update zoning and development standards to address neighborhood context, intended character, and nonconformities.	✓	2 3 6	R	≡
LV 1.2	Evaluate short-term rental regulations.		2 3 6	R	↻
LV 1.3	Establish a procedure for conducting pre-application neighborhood meetings for certain development applications.		2 3 6	R	↻
LV 1.4	Expand existing programs into a 'Good Neighbor' initiative for college students living in neighborhoods.	✓	2 3 6	P	⋈

### Objective 2. Stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods.

LV 2.1	Strengthen property maintenance enforcement practices.		1 2 3 4 6	P	↻
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### Objective 3. Promote housing diversity and affordability.

LV 3.1	Remove barriers in the zoning code to duplexes, triplexes, and other forms of 'missing middle' housing.	✓	1 2 3 6	R	≡
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ACTION	SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
LV 3.2 Clarify definitions for multi-family residential types.	✓	2 3 6		R	☰
LV 3.3 Establish regulatory incentives for "affordable/workforce" housing.	✓	2 3 6		R	☰
LV 3.4 Establish pre-approved building plans.	✓	2 6		P	☰
LV 3.5 Establish a public-private workforce housing capital pool (a public-private housing trust fund).	✓	1 2 3 6		P	☰

#### Objective 4. Address the needs of lower income households.

LV 4.1 Continue to implement collaborative affordable housing plans.	✓	1 3 6		O	☰
LV 4.2 Assist with rehabilitation of older homes to maintain housing stock.		1 2 3 6		P	☰
LV 4.3 Provide information to support renters.		1 2 3 4 6		P	⦿

#### Objective 5. Create neighborhoods that serve community needs.

LV 5.1 Create development standards for new "complete" neighborhoods.		1 3 6		R	☰
LV 5.2 Locate civic uses and community facilities within neighborhoods.		1 3 6		O	⦿
LV 5.3 Establish a neighborhood identity program.		1 6		P	☰
LV 5.4 Track neighborhood change.		1 3 6		P	☰

## CONNECTING

#### Objective 1. Create Streets that balance mobility, accessibility, land use, and desired development.

CO 1.1 Adopt a complete streets policy.	✓	3 4 6		O	↻
CO 1.2 Integrate advanced technologies into the transportation system.	✓	3 4 6		O	☰
CO 1.3 Continue ongoing work to update engineering and design standards for streets		3 4 6		P	↻











ACTION		SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
<b>Objective 2. Encourage and support efforts to increase bicycle and pedestrian connectivity.</b>						
CO 2.1	Improve opportunities for alternative modes of transportation, specifically pedestrians and bicycles.	✓	3 4 6		O	☰
CO 2.2	Integrate bicycle and pedestrian facilities into new roadway projects.	✓	3 4 6		O	↻
CO 2.3	Create a sidewalk repair program.		3 4 6		C	⋯
CO 2.4	Expand the city's multi-use path system.		3 6		C	☰
CO 2.5	Increase marketing and wayfinding efforts to support the Greenway system.		3 6		P	⋯
<b>Objective 3. Expand and improve transit services and options.</b>						
CO 3.1	Expand the city transit system's service area and frequency.	✓	1 2 3 4 6	📍	P	☰
CO 3.2	Better integrate Tuscaloosa Transit Authority and Crimson Ride services.	✓	2 3 4 6	📍	O	☰
<b>Objective 4. Improve Downtown mobility and parking.</b>						
CO 4.1	Formalize a Downtown Parking Strategy to Address parking needs and improve mobility.		3 6		P	☰
CO 4.2	Continue to redefine the University Boulevard Streetscape between Campus and Downtown.		3 4 6	📍	C	☰
<b>Objective 5. Support initiatives and efforts that improve connectivity with the region.</b>						
CO 5.1	Continue to contribute to the planning and engineering of regional road projects.		3 6		O	☰
CO 5.2	Improve transit connection between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham.		3 6		O	☰
CO 5.3	Investigate opportunities to provide and improve bicycle and pedestrian crossing across the Black Warrior River.		3 4 6		P	☰







ACTION	SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
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## EXPERIENCING




### Objective 1. Expand and enhance the community's parks and recreational facilities.

EX 1.1	Expand the Riverwalk.		1 3 6		C	
EX 1.2	Create a signature recreational amenity surrounding Harris Lake and Lake Nicol.		3 6		C	
EX 1.3	Evaluate parks and recreation funding mechanisms.	✓	2 3 6		P	
EX 1.4	Evaluate and support upgrades to existing community parks, recreation centers, and community centers.	✓	1 2 3 4 6		C	

### Objective 2. Strengthen cultural and experience venues in the city.

EX 2.1	Evaluate the need and appropriate locations for an experience venue.		3 6		C	
EX 2.2	Identify a strategic vision for cultural arts.	✓	3 6		P	
EX 2.3	Continue to expand public art in the city.		1 3 6		O	
EX 2.4	Evaluate opportunities to enhance the existing Civil Rights trail.		3 6		P	

### Objective 3. Maintain a high standard for city services.

EX 3.1	Focus new development where adequate fire and safety services exist.	✓	3 4 6		O	
EX 3.2	Improve road networks and encourage connectivity in future development to ensure appropriate response times.	✓	3 4 6		O	
EX 3.3	Continue to expand the city's fiber network and use of technology	✓	3 4 6		C	

### Objective 4. Proactively address long-term needs and opportunities within city-owned facilities.

EX 4.1	Expand operational capacity at Tuscaloosa National Airport.	✓	2 3 4 6		C	
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ACTION	SoE	CORE BELIEF	ELEVATE	CATEGORY	STATUS
EX 4.2 Develop specific facility improvement plans for the most vulnerable city owned facilities, and continue to monitor all city-owned facilities.		2 3 4 6		P	☰
<b>COMPETING</b>					
<b>Objective 1. Support new and emerging industries and businesses.</b>					
CP 1.1 Participate in a collaborative economic development effort.		2 3 6		P	☰
CP 1.2 Expand programmatic support for new and emerging businesses.		1 2 3 6		P	⋮
CP 1.3 Collaborate in lobbying the State to update its economic development tools.		3 6		O	☰
<b>Objective 2. Offer locations and spaces for a range of business types.</b>					
CP 2.1 Ensure flexible work space exists to support business startup programs.		2 3 6		O	☰
CP 2.2 Work with an existing entity that can easily enter into public private-partnerships to co-develop speculative employment space.		2 3 6		P	☰
<b>Objective 3. Strengthen the talent pipeline.</b>					
CP 3.1 Expand workforce development programs.		3 5 6		P	↻
CP 3.2 Finalize details of the dual-enrollment scholarship program.	✓	3 6	📍	P	↻
<b>Objective 4. Develop the tourism sector with more year-round opportunities.</b>					
CP 4.1 Develop a tourism strategy focused on the experience of visiting Tuscaloosa.	✓	2 3 6	📍	P	☰

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Outlined below are definitions to technical terms or phrases used throughout the plan.

**Attached residential development:** A housing unit or group of housing units that share one or more common walls with other housing units. This general term could apply to various housing types such as duplexes or townhomes.

**Blight:** Unsightly or rundown conditions pertaining to structures and site conditions of property. Areas characterized by blight are often designated for redevelopment.

**Building Form:** The configuration or shape of a building influenced by its massing, height, proportion, and scale relative to the surrounding context.

**Building Setback:** A required separation between a lot line and/or right-of-way line and a building or structure. The building setback varies by zoning district and may include a minimum, and in some cases, a maximum distance.

**Capital improvements:** Any building or infrastructure project that will be owned by a governmental unit and purchased or built with direct appropriations from the governmental unit, or with bonds backed by its full faith and credit, or in whole or in part, with federal or other public funds, or in any combination thereof. A project may include construction, installation, project management or supervision, project planning, engineering, or design, and the purchase of land or interests in land. (APD)

**Catalyst areas:** Distinct locations intended to spur investment in surrounding areas through focused change or action. These locations are typically redevelopment opportunities that will lead to additional growth if developed in strategic locations. A city may focus action (such as capital improvements, incentives, or partnerships) in these locations to jump start redevelopment.

**Clear-cutting:** Removal of an entire stand of trees or vegetation (APD)

**Compact residential types:** Housing forms that may include single-family detached homes on smaller-than-typical suburban lots or attached residential development. These types may share common areas including but not limited to yard space and parking areas. See also “Missing Middle Housing.”

**Complete streets:** Streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. The specific attributes of a “complete street” (such as lanes, lane widths, pedestrian and bike accommodations) may vary by the street’s intended purpose or surrounding context.



**Corridor:** A street or roadway identified as a principal link or gateway within the community. (APD)

**Critical mass:** The combination of development density and diversity of land uses including but not limited to residential, commercial, and office to establish a self-sufficient center of activity that supports market demand.

**Curvilinear, Street:** Local streets that deviate from straight alignment and change direction without sharp corners or bend. (APD)

**Density bonus:** The granting of the allowance of additional density in a development in exchange for the provision by the developer of other desirable amenities from a public perspective (e.g., public open spaces, art, landscaping, etc.) (APD)

**Disinvestment:** The withdrawal or removal of an investment.

**Duplex:** A building designed as a residence for two (2) families (Sec. 24-5)

**Experience venue:** A facility that offers the ability to host a variety of activities and events in a central location.

**Extraterritorial zoning/extraterritorial zoning authority:** Authority granted to exercise zoning power outside municipal boundaries.

**Fiber network:** The comprehensive system of connected fiber optic communication lines throughout the city.

**Floodplain:** An area of low-lying ground adjacent to a river, stream, creek, or other waterway that is subject to flooding and is identified on the flood insurance rate map (FIRM) by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

**Gateway(s):** A point along a roadway at which a motorist or pedestrian gains a sense of having entered the city or a particular part of the city. This impression can be imparted through such things as signs, monuments, landscaping, a change in development character, or natural features (APD)

**Green building:** Structures that incorporate the principles of sustainable design – design in which the impact of a building on the environment will be minimal over the lifetime of that building. Green buildings incorporate principles of energy and resource efficiency, practical applications of waste reduction and pollution prevention, good indoor air quality and natural light to promote occupant health and productivity, and transportation efficiency in design and construction. (APD)

**Green infrastructure:** a network of green space, low impact development, and nature conservation that connects to form an overall system that, through infiltration, evapotranspiration, and reuse, improves water quality and controls rainfall runoff rates on the site where it is generated (Sec. 21-151)

**Greenway system:** A network of connected or linked linear parks, alternative transportation routes, or open space conservation areas that provide passive recreational opportunities, pedestrian and/or bicycle paths, and/or the conservation of open spaces or natural areas.

**Impact fees/service fee:** A fee levied on the developer or builder of a project by the government as compensation for otherwise unmitigated impacts the project will produce (APD)

**Impervious surface limitations:** Maximum percentage requirements for site coverage for hardscape, non-pervious surfaces including but not limited to driveways, sidewalks, patios, buildings, or other similar ground coverage.

**Incentives:** An economic or regulatory method that has a tendency to incite determination or action from an individual, group, or organization.

**Infill development:** “The process of developing vacant or under-used parcels within existing urban areas that are already largely developed” .

**Lift station:** A utility pumping station that moves wastewater from a lower elevation to a high elevation as part of the wastewater management network.

**Missing middle:** Coined by Daniel Parolek and described in detail at [www.missingmiddlehousing.com](http://www.missingmiddlehousing.com), “missing middle” describes “a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living.” These housing types, such as duplexes and townhomes, are generally more affordable than single-family homes and less densely populated than large, multi-unit apartment buildings.

**Mixed-use/mixed-use development:** The development of a tract of land or building or structure with two or more different uses such as but not limited to residential, office, retail, civic, or entertainment, in a compact urban form. (APD)

**Mixed-use, horizontal:** A group of buildings containing two or more different, but complimentary, land uses which are designed in an integrated and walkable configuration and may share site features such as public areas, open space, or parking. The buildings within a horizontal mixed-use area may be single use, or may have more than one use within them, and may be single story or multi-story. This term may also describe a building containing more than one compatible land uses that are separated by a shared, common wall or series of walls.

**Mixed-use, vertical:** A building or group of buildings containing two or more different land uses which are separated by a floor or series of floors that divides unique land uses on separate portions of a multistory building. This does not include single story buildings.

**Multimodal:** Allowing for the use or operation of different modes of transportation including but not limited to walking, biking, personal vehicle, and public transit.

**Neighborhood-scale:** Building design characteristics, massing, and size that complement the adjacent residential community and integrates into the surrounding context.

**Neo-traditional:** An approach to land use planning and urban design that promotes the building of neighborhoods with a mix of uses and housing types, architectural variety, a central public gathering place, interconnecting streets and alleys, and yards. The basic goal is integration of the activities of potential residents with work, shopping, recreation, and transit within walking distance (APD)

**Nonconformities:** Lots, structures, uses of land and structures, or characteristics of use which were lawful before a Zoning Ordinance was enacted or amended, but would otherwise be prohibited, regulated, or restricted under the current terms of the ordinance.

**Off-Street Parking:** Parking on private property that is reserved for use by individual business and/or property owners and is not located within public right-of-way.

**On-Street Parking:** Public parking provided adjacent to a public street or alley intended for use by the community and regulated by local government entities.

**Open space:** A parcel of land and/or water reserved for the use and enjoyment of residents, tenants, and their guests. Roofed structures may be included within open space if they are intended for the recreational or other leisure use of residents. Open space shall not include public or private street right-of-way nor any part of a building lot which is intended for the private and exclusive use of individual owners. (Sec. 24-5)

**Pocket parks:** A small park integrated into a developed area that is accessible to the general public.

**Public realm:** All parts or areas of the built environment where people have free access. This includes right-of-way, parks, civic gathering spaces, or other similar areas. It does not include private open spaces, private property, private driveways, or sidewalks and bicycle paths on private property.

**Qualitative input:** Feedback provided by a resident, stakeholder, or elected official such as comments, thoughts, ideas, or reactions.

**Quantitative analysis:** A technique using mathematical and statistical modeling, measurement, and/or research to understand behavior.

**Quantitative research:** A process for collecting and analyzing numerical data to identify trends or conditions.

**Redevelopment:** Development that occurs by improving existing structures or by building where previous structures have been demolished.

**Revitalization:** Reestablishing the economic and social vitality of areas through infill, legislation, tax incentives, commercial development, etc. (APD)

**Right-of-way:** A general term denoting public ownership or interest in land, usually in a strip which has been acquired for or devoted to the use of a street or alley. (Sec. 21-212)

**Shared surface lots:** A parking area shared by adjacent property owners that is established through an agreement to reduce the number of parking spaces each property owner is required to provide on their individual property.

**Stakeholder:** One who is involved in or affected by a course of action.

**Stormwater:** Rain runoff, snow melt runoff, and surface runoff and drainage (Sec. 21-151)

**Streetscape:** An area that may either abut or be contained within a public or private street right-of-way that may contain sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping or trees, and similar features. (APD)

**Student-oriented housing development:** A building, not owned or operated by a college or university, which contains bedrooms for students attending a college or university. This building is a multifamily structure consisting of bedrooms with private bathrooms, individually rented, and arranged around a common area with a kitchen shared by tenants renting the bedrooms, or along a hall, which provides access to a common kitchen space shall be considered a student-oriented housing development. The listed defining characteristics are not exhaustive, nor does absence of one or more of the defining characteristics preclude a finding that the development is a student-oriented housing development. Other determining factors include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Interior layout of development.
  - (2) Location of development and proximity to a college or university.
  - (3) Company portfolio.
  - (4) Marketing and branding of development.
  - (5) Amenities provided in development (fitness facilities, study rooms, pools, assembly rooms, club houses, etc.).
  - (6) Provided furnishings in unit
- (Sec. 24-5)

**Townhome:** A row of three (3) or more dwellings flush against each other at the sides or attached at the sides by party walls, on individual lots, each unit of which is designed as a separate permanent residence for one family. (Sec. 24-223)

**Transitional density/transitional height:** A neighborhood, block, or building that provides a change from one state of a higher density or taller condition to another of a smaller or shorter, connecting the two or more conditions in a gradual pattern.



**Triplex:** A building designed as a single structure, attached vertically and/or horizontally, containing three (3) separate living and housekeeping units, each of which is designed to be occupied as a separate permanent residence for one family, each of which has direct access to the outside or to a common corridor. (Sec. 24-223)

**Tuscaloosa Planning Jurisdiction:** The defined geographic area outside of current city limits where Tuscaloosa has the authority to regulate subdivisions. The comprehensive plan's future land use element will make recommendations for this area.

**Urban living:** The experience of residing in a dense, walkable area of a city with access to features typically available in more developed districts such as a city center or downtown.

**Wastewater:** Sanitary sewage consisting of liquids and solids constituting normal domestic sewage capable of being treated by the treatment facility which is contributed or discharged into the system (Sec. 16-40)

**Wetland:** Those areas inundated and saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions, including marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar areas. (APD)

**Workforce housing:** Housing affordable to households earning between 60 and 120 percent of area median income (AMI). (Urban Land Institute)

APD: A Planner's Dictionary, American Planning Association