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2016

City of Tuscaloosa Update to the Specific Plan for District 3

City of Tuscaloosa

Office of Urban Development

Planning Division

12/12/2016

CITY OF TUSCALOOSA

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Introduction

April 9, 2009, the Tuscaloosa City Council adopted the Specific Plan for District 3. The plan was the result of cooperation between the City of Tuscaloosa and the residents of District 3. Specific planning to guide public and private reinvestment, revitalization, and redevelopment in and around the planning area was timely, and the participants joined forces to determine ways to improve the quality of life in the community.

Objectives for the 2009 Specific Plan included:

- Devise a physical vision for the District and surrounding area that would provide details to the various elements of the City Wide Future Land Use Plan;
- Prepare a plan to guide land use, housing, accessibility, conservation, and economic development;
- Recommend appropriate public investment to support specific plan implementation;
- Prepare District 3 for continuing implementation of the Specific Plan; and
- Provide a legal framework for implementation.

The 2016 Update to the Specific Plan for District 3 was necessitated because of increased development in the form of residential homes and commercial properties. Traffic is continuing to be a concern.

Community residents, property owners, city staff, and elected officials participated in the Advisory Committee meetings during the process, sharing ideas about community assets and issues, the major trends anticipated, and the influences those trends might have on the community.

Information and suggestions from the Advisory Committee were converted into the Policy Guide and act as the core of this Update to the Specific Plan. The plan is intended for use and guidance to create appropriate Zoning Ordinance amendments and Subdivision Regulation amendments to stabilize and protect critical portions of the District 3 community and to encourage and enable planned growth and development.

Assets

Safety

- Secluded/safe neighborhoods
- Peaceful and quiet
- Low crime rate; feels safe

Natural Assets

- Lake Tuscaloosa
- Lake Nicol and Harris Lake
- Trees
- Black Warrior River
- Sokol Park north/south
- 1000s of undeveloped acres in district
- Streams
- Topography

Commercial Development

- Available property for commercial development

Residential Development

- Well-planned neighborhoods
- Quality of residential developments
- Single-family residential developments
- Majority of housing stock is well maintained
- Housing stock is generally appreciating in value
- Reinvestment and regeneration of existing housing stock

Quality of Life

- Good neighborhood schools (private and public)
- Community spirit (good sense of community)
- Phelps Center
- Ol' Colony Golf Complex
- Proximity to medical resources (doctors, hospitals)
- Good walking areas
- Proximity to grocery and banks
- Proximity of neighborhoods to goods, services, and recreational opportunities (lakes and river, especially)
- Accessible park space
- Trail on Northridge Road (biking and walking)

Transportation

- Ease of access to University of Alabama and Downtown Tuscaloosa
- Paul Bryant Bridge
- Watermelon Road and Rice Valley Road are good connectors

Infrastructure

- Jerry Plott Water Treatment Plant
- Underground utilities in many developments
- Significant capacity in water and sewer
- City right-of-way exists that could be transformed into trails, boat launches, etc., along with other (not City-owned) rights-of-way and easements

Liabilities

Safety

- Lack of police presence
- Fire coverage nearing capacity

Natural Assets

- Loss of tree canopy due to development
- Flooding from river
- Costs of maintaining lakes

Commercial Development

- Undesirable commercial mix
- County islands surrounded by in-City parcels; unzoned parcels of land
- New development that is not compatible with neighborhoods
- Billboards
- Limited commercial growth
- Centralized commercial growth
- Different brands are defining the character of the area, also causing it to lack a sense of place
- The BN zone allows too many uses – does not reflect a true neighborhood commercial district.
- Developments along McFarland Boulevard have reached useful life
- There is not a good balance of goods and services available

Residential Development

- Incompatibility of residential developments
- Inappropriate or absence of previous planning

Quality of Life

- Limited public access to Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol, and Harris Lake
- Lack of tree preservation ordinance to prohibit clear-cutting
- Limited walking paths from residential areas to commercial
- No post office or private shipping service
- Limited connectivity (pedestrian and streets)
- Limited restaurant options
- Not enough pocket parks
- Public storm shelters are not available in lieu of a shortage of available basements
- Public recreation availability is lacking – public pool, public rental of recreational toys do not exist
- McFarland Boulevard corridor is cluttered

Transportation

- Lack of definite plan and schedule for Tuscaloosa East Bypass
- McWright's Ferry Road/Single access across Lake Tuscaloosa (dam)
- Lack of bike lanes/sidewalks
- Traffic on Rice Mine Road
- No public transportation

Infrastructure

- Lack of infrastructure to accommodate growth across dam
- Limited width of roads
- No multi-modal system; must drive everywhere because walking is hard

Policy Guide

All the information from inventory and analysis, plus the assets, issues, goals and objectives brought out at the committee meetings, were reviewed, considered and organized into the form of a Policy Guide for the District 3 Community. This guide provides a general overview of the ways in which the City, in cooperation with residents and the business sector, may build on the assets and visions of the community as they cooperatively engage, support and shape its future. Also agreed upon was a list of minimum standards for building materials for both commercial and residential buildings. It is the hope of the committee that the Tuscaloosa Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council will enact policy changes or create new policies to bring about the goals and objectives of District 3.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Housing

Goal: Preserve and revitalize established neighborhoods.
Objective: Require density stepping to buffer existing neighborhoods.

Goal: Construct well-designed homes of quality materials for multiple generations.
Objective: Adopt minimum material standards.

Goal: Provide a diverse housing stock for the various stages of life of the residents.
Objective: Encourage developers to build homes of differing types, sizes, and price points through the use of Planned Unit Developments.

Goal: Locate neighborhoods to be well-connected to schools, parks, and amenities.
Objective: Future neighborhoods shall fully adhere to the Tuscaloosa Subdivision Regulations by providing good connectivity between neighborhoods and by constructing sidewalks.
Objective: Require construction of bicycle lanes where close to schools or shopping areas.

Quality of Life

Goal: Promote and support healthy lifestyles.
Objective: Create small-scale community parks that are easily accessible to neighborhoods.
Objective: Preserve and enhance access to public lakes and water bodies.
Objective: Encourage and promote public recreational facilities.
Objective: Connect neighborhoods, schools, parks, and goods and services with walkable, interconnected greenways.

Goal: Preserve trees.
Objective: Draft and adopt tree preservation ordinance to discourage clear-cutting in residential areas and encourage the maintenance of existing trees in commercial areas.

Land Use and Development

Goal: Facilitate diverse neighborhood-scale retail and service opportunities in close proximities to the neighborhoods.

Objective: Create a new zoning district classification that prohibits large box stores, pawn stores, tattoo parlors, and other undesired uses.
Objective: Cluster neighborhood retail opportunities in well-defined areas and avoid linear commercial corridor development.

Goal: Reduce or eliminate unincorporated islands and gulfs.
Objective: Create annexation plan.
Objective: Require billboards to be removed from islands and gulfs as condition of annexation.

Goal: Create and enhance sense of community character.
Objective: Develop architectural and design standards, including landscaping.
Objective: Develop standards for signage based on the street classification.

Transportation, Infrastructure, and Public Facilities

Goal: Promote the creation and enhancement of multi-modal transportation opportunities, including bike and pedestrian systems.
Objective: Adopt a complete streets mandate for new roads and developments.
Objective: Adopt a bike and pedestrian plan.

Goal: Enhance local street network to reduce congestion and vehicle miles traveled.
Objective: Create local street master plan and integrate system into existing planned road projects.

Commercial District Design Standards

1. Building Materials Allowed

A. *Primary materials.* Primary material changes shall occur only at inside corners. The following materials are required for not less than seventy-five (75) percent of the building wall surface area on each façade:

(i) Brick and tile masonry;

(ii) Native stone (or synthetic equivalent);

(iii) Wood-clapboard or shingles;

(iv) Glass Curtain wall;

(v) Cementitious siding; or

(vi) Stucco (cementitious finish).

B. *Accent materials.* The following materials may make up twenty-five (25) percent of the building wall surface area on each façade:

(i) Pre-cast masonry (for trim and cornice elements only);

(ii) External insulation finishing system — EIFS (for trim and cornice elements only);

(iii) Gypsum reinforced fiber concrete — GFRC (for trim elements only);

(iv) Metal (for beams, lintels, trim elements and ornamentation);

(v) Split-faced block (for piers, foundation walls and chimneys only); or

(vi) Glass block.

C. *Alternate materials.* Alternate building materials may be approved by the zoning official. New materials must be considered equivalent or better than the materials listed above, and regionally-available materials are preferred.

2. Utilities and Mechanical Equipment

A. All utilities shall be installed underground, except where such utilities are not visible from a street right-of-way.

B. All mechanical equipment shall be screened from public view using screens or other appropriate structures that complement the main structure.

Residential District Design Standards

1. Building Materials Allowed

A. *Primary materials.* Primary material changes shall occur only at inside corners. The following materials are required for not less than seventy-five (75) percent of the building wall surface area on each façade:

(i) Brick and tile masonry;

(ii) Native stone (or synthetic equivalent);

(iii) Wood-clapboard or shingles;

(iv) Cementitious siding; or

(v) Stucco (cementitious finish).

B. *Accent materials.* The following materials may make up twenty-five (25) percent of the building wall surface area on each façade:

(i) Pre-cast masonry (for trim and cornice elements only);

(ii) External insulation finishing system — EIFS (for trim and cornice elements only);

(iii) Gypsum reinforced fiber concrete — GFRC (for trim elements only);

(iv) Metal (for beams, lintels, trim elements and ornamentation);

(v) Split-faced block (for piers, foundation walls and chimneys only);

(vi) Glass block;

(vii) Vinyl shakes or shingles; or

(viii) Vinyl clapboard (with a minimum thickness of 0.044 inches).

C. *Alternate materials.* Alternate building materials may be approved by the zoning official. New materials must be considered equivalent or better than the materials listed above, and regionally-available materials are preferred.

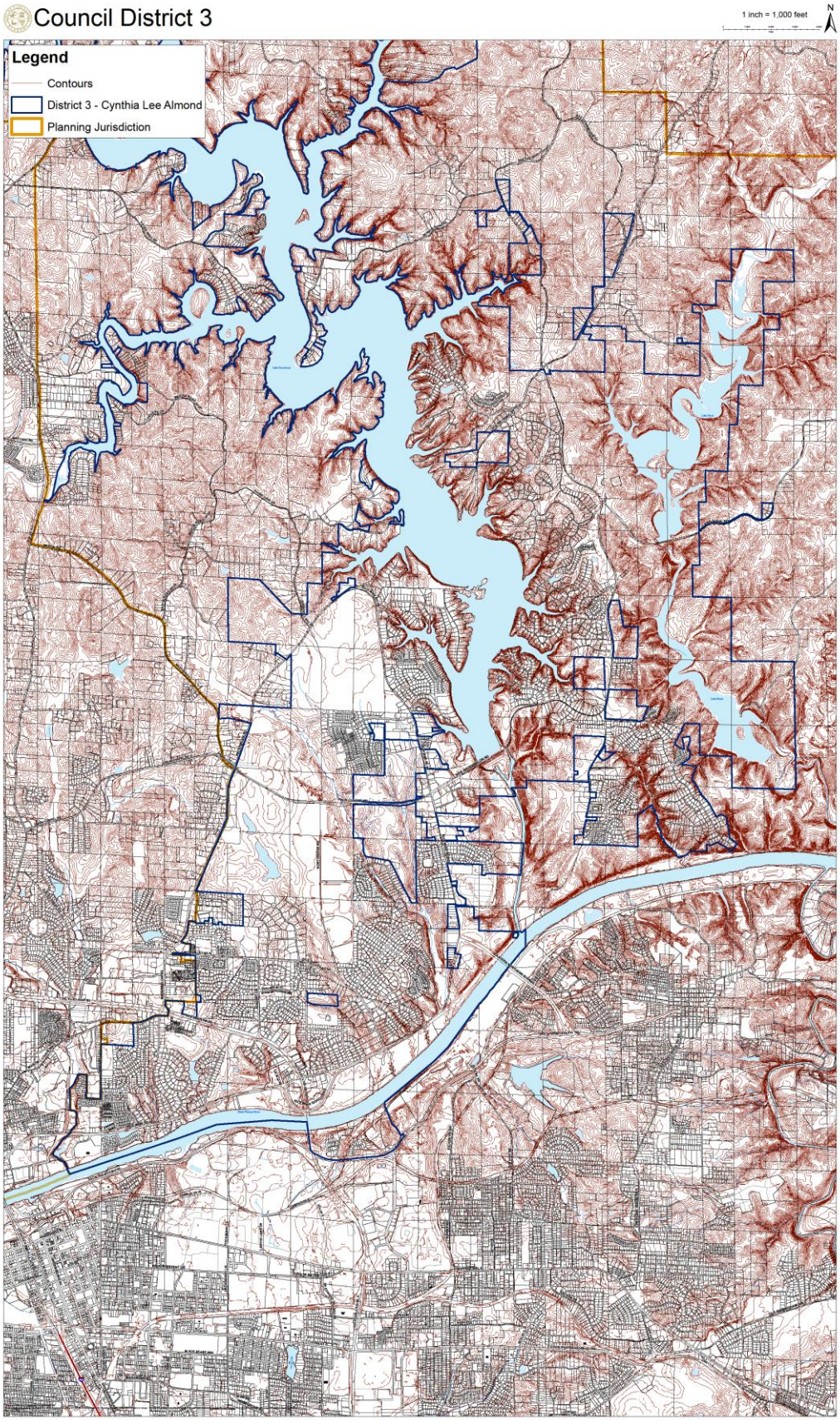
2. Utilities

A. All utilities shall be installed underground, except where such utilities are not visible from a street right-of-way.

Physical Features

The map below shows several features laid on top of a topographic map, which shows lines of equal elevation above sea level. Included are street and railroad rights-of-way and boundary lines of parcels of land. Included also are the community's water features—streams, ponds and lakes.

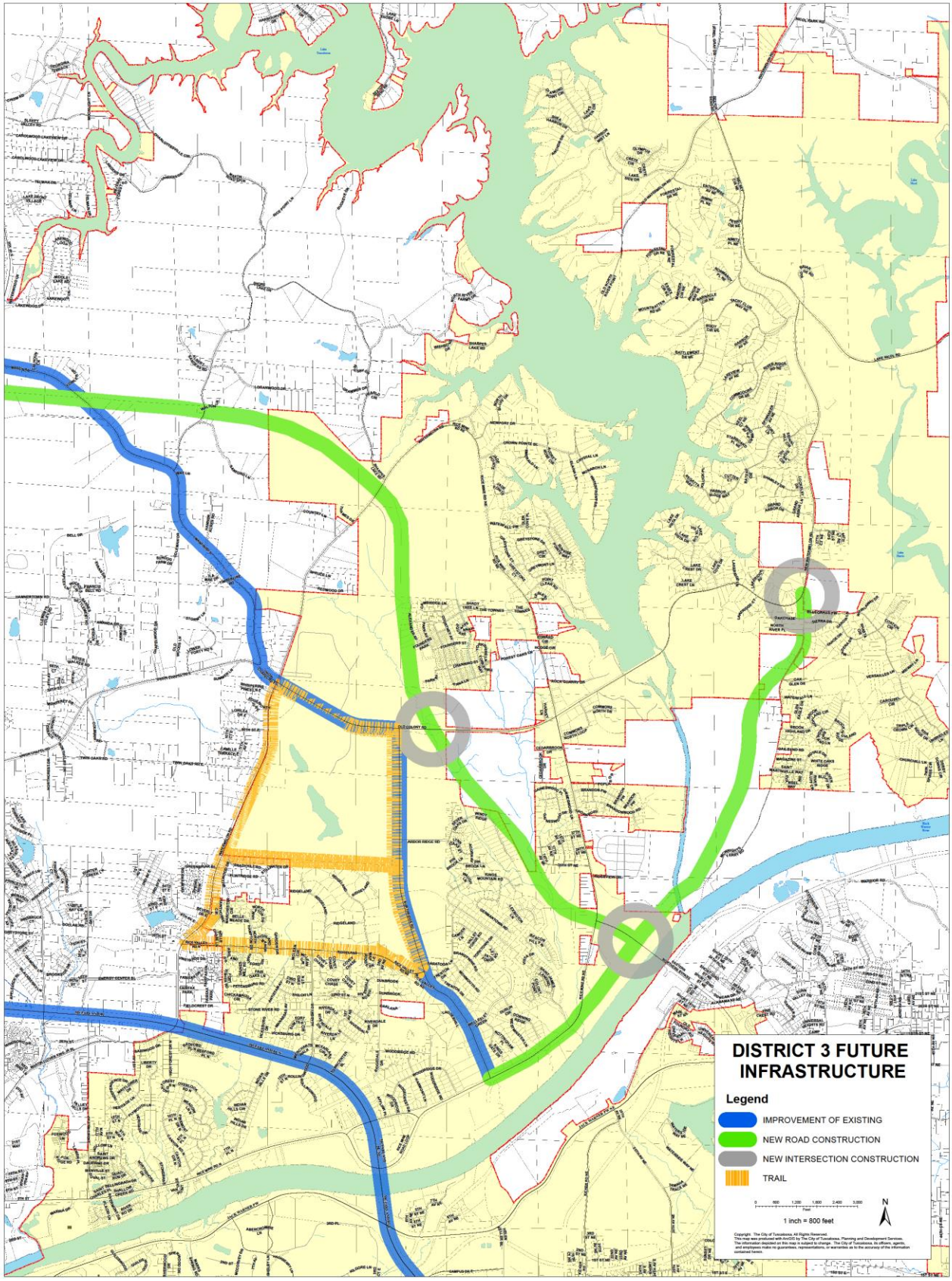
The density of each of the man-made features varies considerably across the District 3 Community, in part because of the history of the place, and who owned—or now owns—the land, and when it was developed. Major institutions such as schools, industrial properties and shopping centers are easy to locate by their large size and the considerable open space around them. The patterns of smaller commercial properties and buildings along the larger streets are apparent, as are those of the various types of housing, especially the single-family, detached forms. Also apparent are the large amounts of open property—largely undeveloped, but including some open space areas in major institutions. All these patterns on the land are considered in this plan for the District 3 Community.


Council District 3
1 inch = 1,000 feet
N
Legend
Contours
District 3 - Cynthia Lee Almond
Planning Jurisdiction

Future Infrastructure

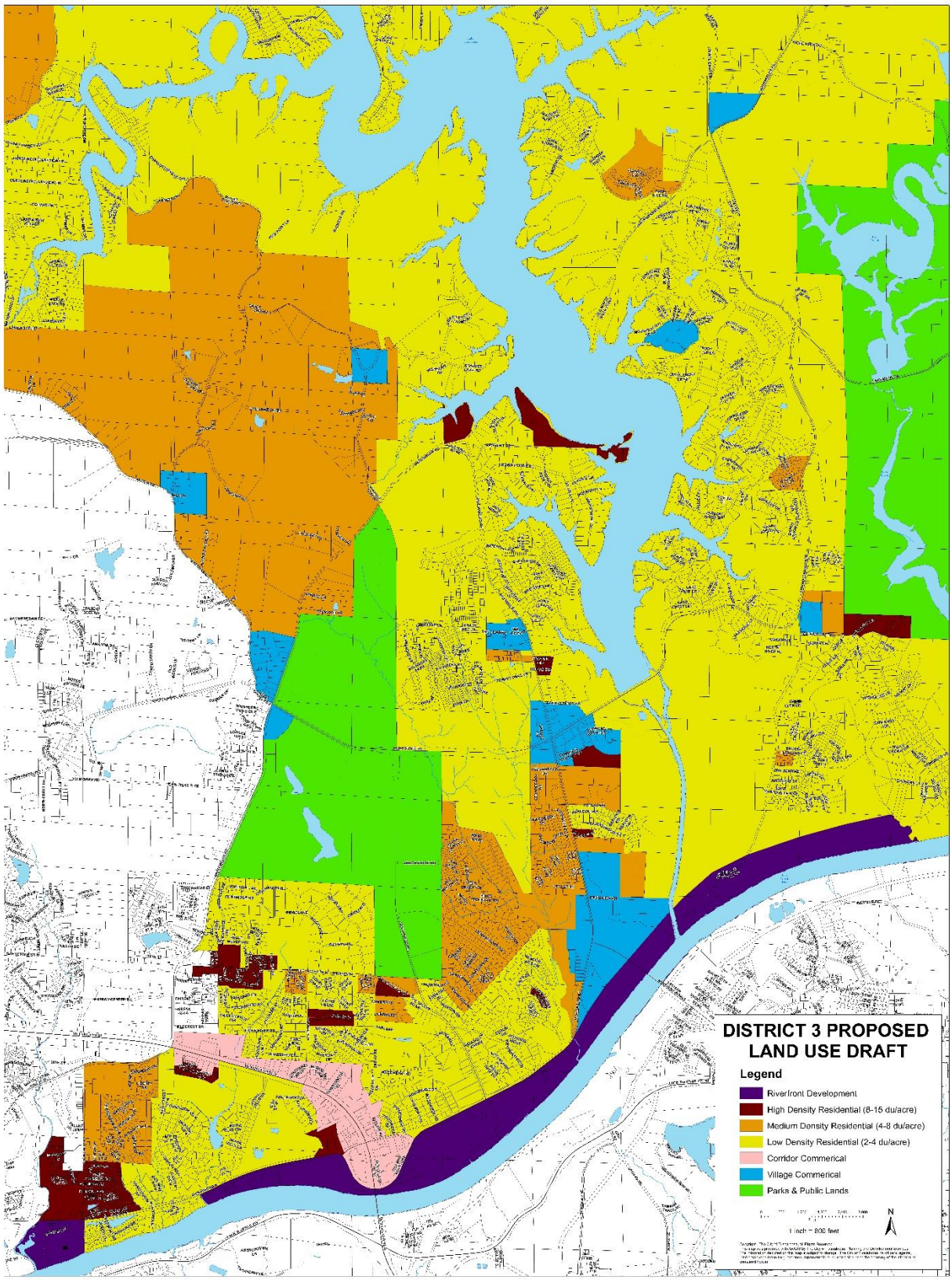
The District 3 Advisory Committee met with officials from the Office of the City Engineer, Alabama Department of Transportation, West Alabama Regional Commission, and The Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation Authority to determine where future infrastructure improvements were needed or desired.

The map below shows the locations of proposed modifications to existing roadways and intersections as well as new road and trail proposals. The locations as shown on the map are approximate.


DISTRICT 3 FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE
Legend
IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING
NEW ROAD CONSTRUCTION
NEW INTERSECTION CONSTRUCTION
TRAIL
0 600 1,200 1,800 2,400 3,000
Feet
1 inch = 800 feet
N

Proposed Land Use

The proposed land use map takes into account the major growth patterns both residential and commercial throughout District 3. Planned roads, intersections and road improvements are also considered. It is intended to guide the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the City Council when they make decisions concerning Land Use.


DISTRICT 3 PROPOSED
LAND USE DRAFT
Legend
Riverfront Development
High Density Residential (8-15 du/acre)
Medium Density Residential (4-8 du/acre)
Low Density Residential (2-4 du/acre)
Corridor Commerical
Village Commerical
Parks & Public Lands
1 inch = 800 feet
N