



**REVIEW DRAFT:
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CITY OF TUSCALOOSA
CITYWIDE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**



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I. PREFACE

The choice the City of Tuscaloosa (Tuscaloosa or City) faces is not one of growth versus no growth. The City has made itself an oasis that continues to attract more people and private investment every year. The real choice is how to channel development in a manner that is compatible with the vision the people of Tuscaloosa have set for themselves and their community. That is the responsibility of the City's ongoing comprehensive planning process, of which the Citywide Future Land Use Plan (Future Land Use Plan or Plan) is an integral part.

Tuscaloosa, like many cities, strives to maintain a continuous planning process as a means to prepare for and guide its growth and development. However, the most recent land use plan pertaining to the City was prepared in November, 1972 by the Tuscaloosa Area Council of Local Governments. That process led to local development patterns trending toward those common to most other growing cities: random expansion of housing across the once-open countryside, a loose spread of isolated commercial development along arterials toward the edges of the City, and a lack of reinvestment in some areas sorely in need of revitalization.

Codes promulgated during this time period incorporated zoning practices that separated residents' homes from offices, shops, churches, and schools. Design standards and zoning favored the automobile over the pedestrian. Walking or cycling beyond one's street or cul-de-sac became difficult, dangerous or even impossible. The children, elderly, and the poor became dependent on those who drive. Deterioration occurred in downtown Tuscaloosa and the surrounding areas.

The Future Land Use Plan seeks to reverse the trend towards "urban sprawl" and return the City to one of traditional neighborhood centers that are compact, walkable, and mixed-use; and where safety, comfort and ecology are sustainable. The Plan provides residents, property owners, merchants, builders and developers a reasonable expectation of the City's future and a systematic basis for thinking about it. It should be noted that designation of implied uses of land indicated on any map included in this Plan should not be interpreted to propose, approve, deny nor preclude any particular action in the absence of full consideration of all City policies, principles and standards or the expressions of this document. Locations of any proposed parks, community facilities or institutions shown on maps or described in the text of this document are not meant to be precise. Rather, the symbols indicating such features should be considered as "placeholders" until more specific planning may be completed to determine detailed needs and locations for each. Actual location decisions will be made either when a public agency has determined to invest in a facility, or when a private development project triggers the need and means for its acquisition and construction, development plans have been approved, and property negotiations and construction plans have been prepared and financed, as appropriate.

Site considerations relating to the natural environment (topography, geology, soils or hydrology) will be of major importance when locating new infrastructures, centers or neighborhoods and when planning and designing their uses and density. Similarly, the provision of adequate streets as well as schools, parks and other community facilities, including water and sewer systems, should be assured before making any significant development proposals or decisions. These realities, plus attitudes toward development on the part of City officials, area residents, property owners, developers and other

governmental agencies will play a part in determining appropriate development location and design.

II. INTRODUCTION

P.E. LaMoreaux & Associates, Inc. (PELA) has completed a Future Land Use Plan of the 250 square mile Study Area (Study Area) as shown on Figure 1. The Plan was authorized by the City by Agreement (File No. A05-0649)

In 2005, Mayor Walter Maddox asked the Director of Community Planning and Development to 1) initiate the review and revision, as appropriate, of the *General Development Plan for the City of Tuscaloosa, November 1972*, and 2) propose a plan for strategic decision-making for the City, to reflect the Mayor's plan to preserve and revitalize the integrity of our existing neighborhoods, ensure development of new residential corridors and to keep our economy moving and creating new jobs.

On December 14th and 19th, 2005, a Citywide Future Land Use Steering Committee (Steering Committee) and the Technical Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee), respectively, met to initiate the process of developing a *City of Tuscaloosa Citywide Future Land Use Plan*. See Appendix A for the members of the Steering Committee. After consultation with the Mayor, the Director of Community Planning and Development Department established, in addition to the aforementioned committees, four working focus groups to assist the Steering Committee and the Advisory Committee. They are as follows: Land Use Issues, Drainage and Environment, Community Facilities, and Transportation. See Appendix B for members of the Advisory Committee and its four focus groups.

The charge by the Mayor to the Steering and Advisory Committees and the four working committees was to consider and build upon the *Tuscaloosa 2020: A Consensus Strategic Plan* (Appendix C) and to collect and evaluate available data and develop a Future Land Use Plan and Future Land Use Map for presentation at public forums across the City to allow the residents of the City to comment.

Initiated in 2003 by the Tuscaloosa Planning and Zoning Commission, the *Tuscaloosa 2020: A Consensus Strategic Project* (Consensus Strategic Project), enlisted the City Council, members of the Planning Commission, community leaders, representatives of academia, private industry, and public sector and concerned citizens in an effort to set directions for the City for the remaining years of the 21st Century.

The Consensus Strategic Project utilized thirteen committees, each of which provided a written mission statement, a list of assets and liabilities, and recommendations relevant to the land use planning process, for the following areas.

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

- Transportation

See Appendix D for a list of Consensus Strategic Project members.

The outcome of those collective efforts, the *Tuscaloosa 2020: Consensus Strategic Plan*, is the cornerstone for the Future Land Use Plan because it reflects in large part substantial outreach and participation in the visioning process by a diverse base of the City's citizenry.

In addition to the *Tuscaloosa 2020: A Consensus Strategic Plan*, the Advisory Committee and its focus groups identified and compiled an extensive list of valuable information that has been considered in the evaluative process. The full list of references can be found in the Reference section of this Plan. The most critical documents to the on-going planning process, other than the *Tuscaloosa 2020: A Consensus Strategic Plan*, are listed below and have been prepared or amended recently, or are in the process of being prepared or amended. These documents reflect, in part, the visions of area residents and city government. They are as follows:

- Tuscaloosa Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan [2007]
- Tuscaloosa 2020: A Consensus Strategic Plan
- City of Tuscaloosa River Margin Park Improvements Master Plan [2003]
- Tuscaloosa Area 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan [2004]
- Tuscaloosa Fire & Rescue Service Comprehensive Plan [2006]
- Tuscaloosa Area Transportation Improvement Plan [2006-2008]
- Tuscaloosa County Park and Recreational Authority Strategic Plan [2006-2010]
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama Specific Plan University Area Neighborhood [2005]
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama Specific Plan Forest Lake Neighborhood [2005]
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama Greater Downtown Area, pending
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama Specific Plan The West Tuscaloosa Community
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama Specific Plan Greater Alberta, [2007]
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama Specific Plan District 3 [2009]
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama Specific Plan District 6 [2009]
- Tuscaloosa, Alabama Specific Plan District 7 [2009]
- Land Use Assessment of Parcels within the Police Jurisdiction of the City of Tuscaloosa and the Watersheds of North River – Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol, and Harris Lake, [2007].
- University of Alabama Master Plan, [2007].
- City of Tuscaloosa Sanitary Sewer Policy [April 2007]
- City of Tuscaloosa Land Development Manual Technical Standards and Ordinance [May 2007]
- City of Tuscaloosa Ord. No. 7178 Billboards and Signs [2007]

These documents were prepared in response to or affected by the needs of our greater Tuscaloosa community. These aforementioned documents are valuable resource material and as such are provided in Appendix E, in an electronic format (CD).

During Springs of 2007 and 2008, Mayor Maddox conducted five separate events in area schools across the City that provided residents direct access to the Mayor, District Council Member, and Department Heads (and staff). The Office of Planning & Economic Development displayed many of this Plan's Strategic Development graphics and the Future Land Use Map. Input expressed by residents during those Community Conversations has been incorporated into this Plan.

Thus, the *Future Land Use Plan* embodies a visioning and strategic planning process centered around a clear and shared view of the kind of place in which the members of the

community want to live. It may be likened to a quilt—many pieces consistent with one another and fitting together in mutual support of other on-going initiatives that are intended to meet needs of community, as defined by our community.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

A. Major Themes

The Plan proposes that the City grow through two basic means: 1) concentration and reinvestment of resources in the existing core city, commercial centers and corridors, and neighborhoods, and 2) concentration of new neighborhoods and development outside those existing areas into centers—nodes of mixed development that provide a very modest “galaxy” of commercial and community activity surrounding the City, all in harmony with the City’s essential natural resources and expanding residential areas.

The Plan is based on the community’s own evaluation of its assets and opportunities and is organized to recognize and capture those for the good of the community at large. The Plan has five major themes:

a. Protect Tuscaloosa’s Green Infrastructure

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

b. Maintain Gateways to the City and Enhance Community Character

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

c. Build a City of Neighborhoods

Tuscaloosa will grow by replicating the best characteristics of historical Tuscaloosa in selected locations throughout and around the City. Generally, this means that Tuscaloosa will: 1) *support, maintain and enhance Downtown Tuscaloosa as the heart of the City; and 2) focus people toward low to medium density neighborhoods and high density housing in mixed use areas at strategic locations.*

Tuscaloosa envisions population growth organized into compact neighborhoods that focus upon and complement a green infrastructure—with mixed-use cores supported by a diverse population that reflect the human scale and pedestrian orientation of the community.

d. Expand Transportation and Accessibility Opportunities

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

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

f. Support Future Growth of Institutional, Industrial and Commercial Activity Centers

Tuscaloosa will grow a strong, diverse, high-quality, green, economic base that will: 1) *focus regional commerce into concentrated, highly accessible commercial activity centers away*

from Downtown Tuscaloosa and from its neighborhoods; and 2) focus industry and commercial support services into major industrial parks located in the designated areas around the City, adjacent to interstate highway interchanges, as possible and away from Downtown Tuscaloosa and from its neighborhoods.

B. Major Strategic Developments Concepts and Implementation Strategies

The Plan is a combination of vision, maps, development guidelines, and planning recommendations. The Plan provides a framework for guiding public and private decisions that will affect the growth, development and redevelopment of Tuscaloosa. The Plan is based on the community's vision for its own future—a long-term vision that may not be achievable in the lifetime of those participating in drafting the Plan, or even of the next generation. The next chapter, Chapter IV, sets forth and explains major strategic development concepts: A) Green Infrastructure; B) Gateways, Corridors and Centers; C) Neighborhoods; D) Transportation, that have been incorporated into the Plan. The following Chapter V entitled *Future Land Use* locates these carefully developed concepts within the Study Area (Figure 2). Finally Chapter VI sets forth how the Plan will be implemented.

The Plan is a *guide* to future land use—to assist public officials and private citizens alike as they consider making investments that may have long-term implications for the community. To do this, the Plan must be continuously monitored and renewed as changes occur in physical, social, political and market conditions. The Plan will be implemented through the actions of developers and other private citizens, city staff, the Planning Commission, other boards and commissions, and the City Council. Major public actions in support of Plan implementation will include adoption, revision and enforcement of various parts of the City's growth management system: development of regulations, the capital improvement programming process and its relation to the City budgeting and investment system, and decisions about the appropriateness of development proposals. Guidance provided by this monitoring and renewal process will assist the City in refining and detailing the *Citywide Future Land Use Plan* through preparation of other amendments as needed.

The *Citywide Future Land Use Plan* is intended to be a living document that will evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and to market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment with public input can the Plan fully serve Tuscaloosa, and only then can we use it wisely as a creative tool as we seek achievement of the comprehensive vision for our community.

IV. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

A. Green Infrastructure

The concept of green infrastructure, originating in the United States in the mid-1990's, emphasizes the importance of the natural environment in land use planning. Green infrastructure is the network of natural areas and open spaces, including wetlands, greenways, parks, preserves, and vegetation, that naturally manages stormwater collection and routing, reduces flooding, and improves water quality. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has broadened the concept to apply to runoff management at the local level through the natural systems, or engineered/constructed systems.

One of the central findings of the *Tuscaloosa 2020: A Census Strategic Plan* was that, our high quality of life and environment should be nurtured through well-planned growth around our valuable natural resources. This consensus was also reflected in the input from the Focus Group Members, the Steering Committee, the Advisory Committee, and discussions during the Community Conversations. The idea of a green infrastructure has been built into the land use planning process. Though it may be a new term for many, the City has for years been concerned with the quality of the environment and the ways in which natural resource may be preserved and accounted for in the land development process.

Natural resources have limits, and development decisions affect far more than the property owner. The type and intensity of development ultimately affects the surroundings. Some land uses are inherently incompatible with others, and once development decisions are made, many are practically irreversible. The first step was to identify resources, sites and areas that may be critical to the community.

The Future Land Use Plan recognizes the idea that a green infrastructure is critical to the quality of life for the City. It is an integral part of balanced community conservation and development. The first step in mapping these green infrastructure components was to identify resources, sites and areas that may be critical to the City – the environmental conditions associated with protection of watersheds, water courses, wetlands, floodplains, slopes and public and semi-public parks, open space and the sources of water supply for the City and conservation areas.

a. Watersheds and Surface Water

An abundance of surface water features including major rivers/streams, tributary streams, lakes and lowlands from the land surface setting in the Study Area. Figures 3, 4 and 5 shows how “wet” some areas within the Study Area are, with a variety and density of water bodies and flood plains. Downtown Tuscaloosa, the City's historic core, is situated on the highest land surface elevation. Surface water runs off areas of high elevations to the lower elevations. The Black Warrior River is a significant asset along which to focus part of the City's future growth as are the three important water supply lakes: Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol and Harris Lake. See Figure 4, Watersheds and Surface Water.

b. Wetlands and Floodplains

Other parts of the City, however, particularly to the southwest, have much lower elevations and abundant wetlands. Floodplains are the areas adjacent to a stream that are intermittently flooded (those shown on Figure 5 as “100-year floodplains” or those with a 1%

chance of flooding in any given year). Encroachment on floodplains reduces the flood-carrying capacity, increases the flood heights of streams and increases flood hazards. The floodway is the stream channel and adjacent portions of the floodplain that must be kept free from encroachment to allow the floodwaters to be carried without substantial increases in flood heights. The southwestern portion of the City includes large areas that are within the 100-year floodplain. See Figure 4, Wetlands and Water Bodies and Figure 5, Floodplains, 100 year.

c. Steep Slopes

Intimately related to the patterns of watersheds, surface water runoff, wetlands and floodplains is the pattern of slope of the land surface, as shown on Figure 6, Slope.

Steep slopes, *per se*, do not preclude development and they are not prevalent in Tuscaloosa. The impact of slopes upon the safety and stability of the environment and cost of development increases with steepness. Steep slopes should raise “red flags” to property owners and the City alike as they consider proposals for development in areas with significant slopes.

Steep slopes adjacent to or near lakes, rivers and other waterbodies are of particular concern, especially along the Black Warrior River as it runs through the City and along the shorelines of Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol and Harris Lake. Failure to preserve these slopes in their natural state will accelerate erosion and sedimentation of the adjacent waterbodies. Maintaining natural buffer zones along the Black Warrior River and around these lake assets, particularly Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol and Harris Lake will help to minimize the long term cumulative impacts of erosion, sedimentation and degradation of water quality and capacity of the City’s (and County) water supply sources.

d. Parks, Recreation, Conservation Areas and Protected Areas

The City has an abundance of parks, recreational (including golf courses) and other protected areas, as indicated on the accompanying Figures 7, 8a, 8b, 9a and 9b. These were listed by the authors of the *Tuscaloosa 2020: A Consensus Strategic Plan* as important assets to protect. Many of these incorporate or are adjacent to some of the City’s most important water resources. Others include significant areas of steep slopes. Much of the lands shown here are or should be protected through public or private ownership, or set aside as conservation areas or subject to conservation easements. See Figure 7, Parks and Recreational Areas, Figure 8a, Cemeteries and Places of Worship, Figure, 8b, Cemeteries and Places of Worship – Detail, Figure 9a, Archaeological Areas and Historical Sites, Figure 9b, Archaeological Areas and Historical Sites-Detail, Figure 10, City Owned Property and Figure 11, Lake Tuscaloosa Land Use Study Area.

e. Citywide Greenways

The high quality of life offered within the Tuscaloosa community continues to draw visitors and new residents to all areas of the City. A compelling factor in this fact of local life is the City’s range of opportunities for recreation and interaction within its many community parks and open spaces (Figure 2, Future Land Use Map). *Greenways* can provide opportunities for alternate forms of transportation (boating, hiking, walking (Figure 12) and cycling (Figure 13), act as wildlife corridors, development buffers, and storm water recharge areas and will ideally serve as links in the chain of the City’s system of public parks.

B. Gateways, Corridors And Centers

Significant nodes or concentrations of people, activity and development are designated in this Plan as *gateways, corridors and centers*. See Figure 2. Some of these are new, though most are existing places – and some of those are in need of reinvestment. Each should be located, planned and designed to relate to, support and affect urban form, environmental quality, adjacent residential neighborhoods and the transportation network in a positive way. Activity centers and corridors come in a variety of types and sizes, but the most successful examples of each type contain many, if not all, of the following characteristics:

- *Anchor or focus of activity*: The center or corridor contains some activity or function for which it is primarily and integrally known in the region, community or neighborhood, as appropriate.
- *Compact, densely developed core*: There is a relatively high density of development of the types essential to the character of the place, with greater density of development toward the center and less toward the edges.
- *Internal vehicular circulation*: Once having arrived by vehicle a motorist may, without undue effort or extraordinary locating abilities, visit most any other location on the same side of the major street, without having to re-enter that street in a motor vehicle.
- *Pedestrian accessibility*: The place is readily accessible by pedestrians from surrounding areas without exertion of undue effort or extraordinary traffic-dodging abilities.
- *Pedestrian oriented (overall)*: The place demonstrates through pedestrian density throughout that it was planned and designed with the overall needs of pedestrians given priority over those of motorists and automobiles.
- *Positive sense of place*: The average person has a good feeling about the overall character of the place – its overall image and its relation to the surrounding environment, feelings of safety, and sense of arrival and departure.
- *Vehicular accessibility*: The place is readily accessible by motor vehicle to any licensed driver without having extraordinary driving skills.
- *Visual coherence*: Most people sense that things fit together in the center or along the corridor – signage, landscape, the way the parking supports getting to one's destination, and the way most of the buildings seem to fit together.
- *Well-defined edge*: It is clear, from the character of the place and its development pattern, to most everyone where the center or corridor begins and ends without having to resort to walls or signs.

a. Gateways to the City

Tuscaloosa has major entries from most every direction, augmented by a beltway or ring road surrounding much of the City. These gateways are a major part of the image of the City and should be treated as scarce assets to be protected and preserved – and upgraded

to meet the standards of Tuscaloosa's citizens and property owners. A positive community identity is strengthened by good gateways, which help establish strong edges, foster a sense of pride of place and sense of arrival. This is not simply a matter of aesthetics; the City's economy is inextricably linked to its physical character, and must continually enhance its image to remain competitive. By taking appropriate care with development and reinvestment at these locations, Tuscaloosa can set itself apart and further insure its marketability and prosperity that may come from attracting visitors, residents and investors.

Each gateway to Tuscaloosa, its neighborhoods and activity centers should reflect the particular characteristics of its settings and provide a welcoming introduction. Figure 14 is a graphical example of a gateway, incorporating City signage. Development planning and design surrounding all of the City's gateways should incorporate applicable strategies to assure that Tuscaloosa offers a positive, welcoming and easily recognizable transitions from outside to inside the City:

- There should be lighting and tree plantings at major gateways to welcome travelers and enhance the gateway's commercial potential.
- There should be attractive and well-located signage, lighting and landscaping that differentiates each gateway appropriately from other parts of the corridor or area it introduces.
- The concept of "place" with strong, well-designed development that is visible from the road corridor should be reinforced.
- There should be a cohesive and coordinated land use pattern for each of the City's gateways, with a sense of enclosure enhanced through the use of build-to lines rather than setbacks.
- Commercial concentrations should be located at each gateway to capitalize on visibility and accessibility.
- Commercial development that enhances the gateway function should be promoted and maintained.

b. Image and Commercial Corridors

The City's major streets are the channels through which people learn of the City and gain access to most of its activity centers and neighborhoods – they convey a lasting impression to all who use them. To help visitors feel welcome and to find their way around easily, the City intends to systematically improve these corridors – and especially at City gateways and at major decision points along them. It is intended there be new standards set for heights and setbacks of new buildings – and for installation and/or maintenance of sidewalks, corridor street and parking lot lighting and appropriate trees on both public and private property so that the primary routes through the City will be clearly identified, both day and night.

The primary purpose of the City's arterial street system is to enable the efficient movement of vehicular traffic. Safety and accessibility to property are also important, as should be accommodations for bicycle and pedestrian travel. While retail and other uses should

address the street, the commercial corridor should be easily accessible to adjacent residential areas.

Each major roadway corridor through Tuscaloosa should reflect the particular characteristics of its settings. Development planning and design along the City's major corridors should incorporate appropriate strategies to assure the City expresses a positive image. This planning and design should also incorporate the location and design of billboards and signage. The billboard free area is shown on Figures 15 and 15a (detail). The recent ordinance, Billboards and Signs, is included in Appendix E and addresses requirements for setbacks, heights, sizes, and spacings; transportation and motorists considerations; and preservation, protection, enhancement of areas of natural or man-made value.

c. Institutional and Industrial Centers and Major Employers

These are large employment centers, dominated by office, technology, light industrial and other job-generating land uses but containing relatively few retail and service uses except those concentrated near major gateways and at other strategic locations.

Each of these employment centers should convey the image of Tuscaloosa as an accessible, desirable community in which to live, work and invest. Imparting a strong sense of community to these centers especially for those who work or live near them will help to strengthen this image. It is also important to maintain physical accessibility between these areas and the rest of the City, including by means of vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian access and circulation.

Parking lots should be planned and designed with primary access and circulation traffic located toward the outside edge rather than the edge closest to the buildings.

d. Commercial Activity Centers

Commercial Activity Centers can be divided into general categories: the Central Business District (Downtown Tuscaloosa), small, primarily single-use shopping areas and large regional shopping centers.

Central Business District (Downtown Tuscaloosa)

The value of Downtown Tuscaloosa and its adjacent neighborhoods as the heart of the community is unquestioned and was clearly reflected in the results of the *Tuscaloosa 2020 Consensus Strategic Project*.

Tuscaloosa's downtown area served as the parent for all the City's other activity centers. It is unique and exciting. The major focus is the concentration along the river of commercial, governmental, entertainment, art and other employment activities. Downtown also serves as an important community gathering space, for celebration and special community events, even though it is underdeveloped and underutilized and suffers from a lack of parking.

Downtown is home to many historic structures in Tuscaloosa. Many of the cultural and historic assets identified by *2020 Consensus Strategic Project* are located in the City center. This area contains a number of older homes, theatres, churches, cemeteries and structures. There is a strong community sentiment for preservation of historic structures that remain, as they provide a significant contribution to the character of the area and of the community. It

is the intent of this Plan to preserve the heritage of this area and to help provide incentives to retain the historic fabric of the City.

The appearance of downtown is a defining feature of the area. The use of signs, benches, landscaping and trees provides a unique character and attractive appearance. Attention to these design features has helped create an inviting environment, and one in which merchants, shoppers and residents all take pride. The appearance of downtown Tuscaloosa will be accentuated by the adoption of the Greater Downtown Area Plan.

Downtown is a mix of diverse cultures and the center for citywide activities such as 5-K runs, parades, street parties, cycle races, art functions and civic activity. Municipal offices are located in this area, including the historic Post Office – now City Hall. Most of the parades pass north along Greensboro and east along University Boulevard. In addition, there is an essential concentration of community worship centers in the core of the City. See Figures 8a and 8b.

Open space plays a significant role in the aesthetic charm and pedestrian orientation of Downtown Tuscaloosa. Capitol Park and the Farmer's Market are essential elements of the character of the downtown core as is more recently the River Margin Park and its River Walk and as will be the town plaza to be built in conjunction with the new federal courthouse.

Parking has long been a concern in the area. Available space is attractive not only to shoppers, but also to shop employees and to students. Parking availability affects potential customer base and parking lot appearance affects the character of the area. Parking nodes and an attractive parking deck with retail on the first floor, tucked into downtown blocks could offer a variety of parking opportunities while minimizing visual impact. Once completed the proposed Intermodal facility with additional parking and retail space will be an enormous boost to downtown Tuscaloosa.

The community has expressed a desire to maintain a balance between residents and student uses in downtown . The City desires the retail base of downtown to serve the whole of the community.

There is a desire to preserve existing single-family residential neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown area (many of which are also of historic significance) and to discourage conversion of these neighborhoods to student housing. The residential areas surrounding downtown have felt the pressure of student conversion for many years. As University enrollment has grown, these areas have become more and more desirable for student housing. The University Area Specific Plan should help to address this situation as will strict enforcement of City codes.

Downtown warrants selective redevelopment and revitalization to bring it up to its potential as the heart of the City. Selective, focused redevelopment, and revitalization of the heart of the City and the entire surrounding resident and student community (New Town Area and Core City residential areas – Figure 2), is under strong consideration by property owners and City leaders and will be brought to fruition through approval of the Greater Downtown Area Plan. Included in that Plan may be some or all of the following recommendations:

- *The civic core (structures and activities) of Downtown should be maintained and enhanced.*
- *Capitol Park, University Boulevard and the River Margin Park should remain the focus*

- for festivals, crafts and other public and commercial functions.*
- *Places of worship should be encouraged to remain, but not to expand their appetites for parking space.*
 - *Historic structures should remain, and new construction should be designed in keeping vertically with the historic character of both the core and surrounding areas.*
 - *Specialty shops, arts and crafts, upscale restaurants and cafes, condominiums and commercial/business enterprises should be encouraged, especially when housed in historic structures.*
 - *Expansion of residential uses should be encouraged above businesses along the primary downtown streets to add life at all hours of the day.*
 - *Building heights and yard requirements should be limited in adjacent neighborhoods.*
 - *Facade improvements to the front, side and rear of stores should be encouraged to reinforce their historic character, the pedestrian orientation of the area and improve downtown's overall appearance.*
 - *Public, off-street parking structures should be added to the core, while residential areas should be regulated to prevent front yard parking.*
 - *Residential infill should be encouraged in a manner that promotes and preserves trees and landscaping and minimizes light pollution potential.*

Single-Use Shopping Areas

Single-use shopping areas are predominantly auto-oriented at present. These centers and their surroundings should also support pedestrian activity and allow for easy pedestrian and bicycle access.

These commercial areas were typically developed at street intersections or along commercial corridors near like businesses with large areas devoted to parking. While these are currently oriented to the customer traveling by auto, pedestrian accommodation is appropriate and should be a part of any redevelopment or infill development plans. Infill development should be placed at the street edge to screen the parking lots and provide human scale for pedestrians.

Typical uses would include a large grocery store, supporting retail and service commercial, office, restaurant and institutional uses. Residential uses should be nearby and easily accessible to these centers, which in turn should present a positive image to adjacent neighborhoods.

Large Shopping Centers

These are large centers, typically dominated by large chain retail stores and regional retail and service uses. They generate considerable traffic, and so primary vehicular access should be directed to local collector streets that intersect the arterial road network. Direct access to and from arterial roadways should be limited to promote a safe street network and protect street capacity.

Regional commercial centers serve both citywide regional markets, and should present a positive image to the visitor and resident alike. While these centers rely primarily on customers arriving by car, pedestrian access and activity should be designed for and encouraged.

Typical uses include major retail businesses, grocery and other large chain retail stores and

support retail and services businesses, including gas and service stations, restaurants and car dealerships. These uses should be organized into centers having a clear focal point rather than extended along the City's arterial corridors. An appropriate transition should be made between the center and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

C. Neighborhoods

Residents citywide have identified the City's traditional neighborhoods as a valued asset and a desired model of residential development. Neighborhoods, together with citywide open space and transportation systems; schools (see Figure 17, Tuscaloosa City School Districts and Schools) and the various centers, form the City. Several types of corridors interconnect neighborhoods—they include streets, greenways, lakes, rivers and streams. Among the City's neighborhoods, a range of housing types, price levels, and rental opportunities (see Figure 16, Existing Residential Rental Properties) bring together a diversity of people into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to this community.

Good neighborhoods place an emphasis on community, livability, appearance, diversity, transportation opportunities (walking, bicycling, vehicle), convenience and safety for all residents. To achieve this, the most successful neighborhoods generally exhibit characteristics that are largely missing from most conventional subdivisions as they have been developed over the past decades. Principles intended to guide planning and design for all Tuscaloosa neighborhoods follows:

Preserve and enhance the citywide open space system

Neighborhoods should be carefully planned and organized within the natural environment. Neighborhoods should be located in appropriate areas, sensitively sited in relation to or strategically placed away from the most valuable or threatened natural resources. Conservation subdivision techniques, in which a neighborhood is designed to conserve its natural systems and thereby require less capital investment for earthwork, clearing and drainage, can add to a healthy, appealing community. Such techniques may be used to maintain allowed gross densities without negatively affecting the natural environment, which should be an important ingredient of every neighborhood.

Design each neighborhood appropriate to its context

The scale and density of a neighborhood should reflect its location in the surrounding community. More dense development should be focused toward commercial centers and corridors, if nearby. Less-intense neighborhoods should be the rule away from such focus areas.

Create a focus appropriate to the needs of the neighborhood

The location, scale and type of residential uses and open space should fit the neighborhood in a manner appropriate to the surroundings. A neighborhood focal point of a type and size appropriate to the needs of residents should be included to add a sense of place to the neighborhood—for example, a park or usable community open space. The focal point should be pedestrian oriented and provide easy bicycle, vehicular and pedestrian access.

Design the neighborhood with walkable, bikable, interconnected streets

Neighborhood design should accommodate the access needs of motorists while providing a convenient and safe environment for pedestrians and biker's. Sidewalks should provide the framework for the pedestrian and bicycle system insofar as possible. The pedestrian

network can be greatly improved and walking distance and infrastructure costs substantially reduced through the use of mid-block connections and cul-de-sac linkages, as well as trails within greenways or other open space systems. Creating interconnected neighborhood streets and providing alternate routes will help to diffuse automobile traffic, thus lowering traffic volumes on many city streets.

Reserve places for public open space and civic buildings

There should be places for neighbors to venture out into the public realm without their vehicles. Places for children to play safely should be a staple item of all neighborhoods, because open spaces add to the value of the property and help to create a more livable community. Each neighborhood should have one special gathering place, such as a neighborhood green, near its center.

Design streets appropriate to the scale and character of the neighborhood

Neighborhood streets should feature driving surfaces of appropriate width, ample sidewalks, street trees and front porches. Neighborhood streets should be “calm,” an environment wherein drivers realize that driving fast or aggressively is inappropriate. Sidewalk investment is modest in comparison to long-term value. When neighborhoods include street trees, sidewalks and front porches, they become a more welcoming place for residents and visitors, and add significant value to the whole city.

Design safe streets

Design streets that are safe and *livable* Neighborhood streets should be safe and livable even at night. Traffic control features as requested by the neighborhood or required as part of development process to maintain vehicular traffic at a speed that is not hazardous to those living in the neighborhood. Lights should be designed and considerately placed in such way to provide a safe nighttime environment but not create light pollution, or glare into the homes in the neighborhoods.

Redevelopment, Revitalization, and Preservation of Older Neighborhoods

These unique areas require the use of a “can-do” attitude toward infill and redevelopment on the part of public officials and private investors alike. Some older parts of the City include “Brownfields” – former industrial or commercial sites with real or perceived environmental issues – and also “grayfields” sites that are non-conforming or a nuisance to the neighborhood. Others may simply be local neighborhoods with a number of vacancies that need a creative approach to filling with new structures or new residents. Some will need subsidies in the form of infrastructure investment or gap financing, while others may require property assembly and rehabilitation through cooperation and assistance of multiple public agencies. Hope VI (McKenzie Court and Rosedale) is an excellent example of the type of revitalization project that should be encouraged by our city fathers.

D. Transportation

The City enjoys a comprehensive network of streets and roadways. Interstate and State highways traverse the City in the four major compass directions, and major and residential streets complete the network connections. Figure 18 illustrates the current roadway system in and around the Study Area. Within the core of the City are seen the traditional city blocks configuration of streets in the Downtown and residential areas. Near the edges of the City limits and around the outskirts of the City are seen the subdivision, limited access, configuration of the neighborhoods constructed over the last many decades, and very recent

times. The visionary roadway system, developed by the West Alabama Regional Commission, as presented in the 2030 long-range plan is shown in Figure 19. The illustration shows the existing transportation network and roadways slated for both improvement or new construction. The plans encompass roadway extensions, new eastern bypass, and access across North River with new and improvements along the east of Lake Tuscaloosa.

V. FUTURE LAND USE

The functional organization of the City's Study Area has been carefully considered throughout the planning process. The major land use recommendations and their locations contained in this Chapter result from an in depth analysis of environmental, physical and economic conditions, the utility and transportation infrastructure use combined with the citywide vision and the principles illustrated and outlined in Chapter IV entitled *Strategic Development Concept*.

The vision for patterns of future development for the Study Area has been organized in support of the strategic development concepts with appropriate recognition given to our natural resources, the need for green space, the City's street and utility infrastructure, and major existing uses of land. The Gateways, Image and Commercial Corridors, Mixed Use Areas, and the Institutional, Industrial and Commercial Activity Centers should serve as magnets for reasoned future development. These, in turn, are intended to support the City and its neighborhoods, and to positively affect environmental quality and the transportation network.

The Future Land Use Map (Figure 2) illustrates how different parts of the City should function and relate to one another—in other words, the overall physical structure of the City. The map portrays a pattern of various development areas by type, their interrelations with each other and with the City's neighborhoods. These areas and the interconnections between them are critical to preserving our natural environment and green space while integrating the City's transportation corridors, institutional and industrial facilities, commercial activity centers, neighborhoods and major infrastructure. Building on this model, Tuscaloosa intends the City, as a whole, to grow and develop as a community in which the environment is protected, public life is encouraged and quality urban design is maintained.

The following descriptions of the designations shown on the Future Land Use Map proceed generally from least to most intensive uses and functions, beginning with protected areas and parks, proceeding through various types of residential and commercial uses. Areas to be developed are to be planned and designed in accord with policy and characteristics as presented throughout this document.

A. Green Infrastructure

The City intends for public landholdings to be increased and private holdings to be developed to provide more of the following:

a. *Greenways*

Greenways will provide opportunities for alternate forms of transportation (boating, hiking, walking and bicycling), act as wildlife corridors, development buffers, and storm water recharge areas and provide links in the chain of the City and County public park systems. Ideally, they should eventually include all significant streams and appropriate portions of their floodplains and areas with steep slopes. The use of greenways for multi-use trails should avoid redundancy with sidewalks and bikeways, but should strive to interconnect public parks, green and open space areas.

b. *Conservation Areas*

Lakes Tuscaloosa and Nicol and Harris Lake

Conservation Areas are delineated to include at least the area within the 50-year floodplain of Lake Tuscaloosa and a prescribed elevation above the normal pool levels of Lake Nicol and Harris Lake. These areas are shown on the Future Land Use Map (Figure 2), by a bold green line around these three water bodies. A detailed discussion of the conservation easements to be established around these lakes may be found in *Land Use Assessment of Parcels Within the Police Jurisdiction of the City of Tuscaloosa and the Watersheds of North River-Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol, and Harris Lake* (PELA, 2007), which report is incorporated herein by reference and is considered an amendment to this Plan.

Black Warrior River Conservation Area

An elongated Conservation Area is designated along both the north and south banks of the Black Warrior River across the entire Study Area. It is intended as an extension of the City's (and Northport's) system of river parks and walks, and as a means of preserving for future generations greenspace, viewsapes and the natural vegetative buffer along the Black Warrior River as it passes through the Study Area. As stated previously, the City's green infrastructure is not and shall not be simply the land left over when all development and building is completed. Greenspace is to be logically linked to other greenspace and is to preserve for the City its streams, lakes, floodplains, steep slopes, recreational resources, and public access to them, for the community at large.

c. Community, District and Corps of Engineer Parks

Existing Parks

These parks serve a range of both passive and active recreation needs appropriate to their location and context. They may provide a mixture of activities and uses such as active sports fields; play areas, trails, informal practice fields, picnic areas, outdoor classrooms and gathering places such as a community center. They should be carefully integrated into the natural environment, ideally with a significant portion of the land area held in a natural, tree-covered state. Park facilities and buildings should foster a positive image, and sense of pride, which should be evident in the use of local materials and respect for local context. Existing Community and District Parks are shown on the Future Land Use Map and listed in Appendix F. The Map also shows the existing Corps of Engineer Parks, upstream of the City adjacent to the Black Warrior River. In addition to the Conservation Areas described above, The City recently designated the city-owned property abutting Harris Lake and Lake Nicol as a public park. Specific plans will be developed for the uses and management of those park lands.

Proposed Parks

A total of twelve proposed parks are shown on the Future Land Use Map (Figure 2). The park locations are not meant to be precise, but should be considered as "placeholders" for more specific planning. At this time any designation as community or district has not been assigned. The Proposed Parks are located north of Greater Tuscaloosa, east and west of Lake Tuscaloosa and one is proposed between or around Lake Nicol and Harris Lake. In addition, six parks are proposed along the outer bounds of the southern portion of the Study Area.

d. *Neighborhood Parks*

Neighborhood Parks provide relatively small residential areas with opportunities for appropriate levels and types of both active and passive recreation. Neighborhood parks provide a place for informal community gatherings and neighborhood events, and may include such features as shaded paths, playground structures and open space for active, unstructured play. Existing Neighborhood Parks are located on the Future Land Use Map and listed in Appendix F.

e. *Greenspace and Greenway Master Plan*

The natural woodland and rural landscape surrounding Tuscaloosa is one of the City's greatest assets. The City hosts rather diverse landscape features. Development should be planned and arranged within the landscape, allowing for scenic views. Buildings should be limited in size to nestle comfortably within tree canopies so that rooftops will not be visible once the trees mature. Streambeds, wooded stream-banks, and flood plains are linear elements within the landscape that should be conserved to preserve the long-term capacity of our usual water supply lakes and to the water quality of our lakes and streams.

The Green Space and Greenway Master Plan will conserve the green infrastructure, protect our lakes and rivers, and insure that key natural resources and a clean environment are preserved for future generations.

Once the green infrastructure has been established as the backdrop for development, the most meaningful and scenic locations should be reserved for public open space. These features and their interconnections should be identified as part of a larger open space network. Once key areas are selected, appropriate public uses should be determined—be they greenways, community parks, town squares, plazas, conservation areas, or regional parks. These elements should be linked together as an open space system and development should be organized in a manner that buildings look into these areas rather than back up to them.

B. Gateways, Corridors and Centers

a. *Gateways to the City*

Gateways provide community identity by marking the major entrances to the City. They foster a sense of pride of place and arrival. Designated Gateways to Tuscaloosa are shown on Diagram 1, and are listed below:

- *Culver Road at B.F. Goodrich (West Tuscaloosa)*
- *Skyland Boulevard and McFarland Boulevard (South Tuscaloosa)*
- *University Boulevard at Alberta Elementary School (East Tuscaloosa)*
- *McFarland Boulevard near Watermelon Road (Near Northport)*
- *Lurleen Wallace Boulevard (Northbound Lane) near 12th or 13th Street (South Tuscaloosa)*

b. *Image and Commercial Corridors*

Image Corridors

Image Corridors provide community identity and are roadways that are seen and used frequently by the community and visitors. The Plan designates Image Corridors along key existing and proposed roadways which do or shall encircle greater Tuscaloosa and Northport. See Figure 2. A significant component of the City's Image Corridor System is the proposed Tuscaloosa-Northport Black Warrior River Scenic Byway route along both the south and north banks of the Black Warrior River (along Jack Warner Parkway and Rice Mine Road, respectively) between the Paul Bryant Bridge and the Hugh Thomas Bridge. The purpose of the federal and state Scenic Byway Programs is to identify, protect, preserve, and enhance the intrinsic resources of scenic corridors through community support for resource protection balanced with existing and future land uses. The Program promotes economic development by means of tourism by highlighting local history, and cultural and natural resources. The intrinsic resources considered when identifying byways are: archaeological, recreational, historical, cultural, natural resources, and scenic characteristics. These six qualities, considered in both the Federal Scenic Byway Program and the Alabama Scenic Byway Program, can be found within the Study Area and may be the basis for future proposals to add more segments to the Tuscaloosa-Northport Black Warrior River Scenic Byway.

Commercial Corridors

A commercial corridor is a commercial arterial with a mix of business and commercial enterprises typically along both sides and adjacent to (one to two blocks) a major street or boulevard. This broad category of business uses typically includes retail, office, restaurant, hospitality and accommodations, either separately or as part of a mixed-use area.

A total of twelve Commercial Corridors are identified within the Study Area and shown on Figure 2.

Criteria were developed to evaluate and categorize Commercial Corridors within the City. The criteria used in the evaluation are listed below:

- The corridor is located within a Specific Plan area (See Figures 20 and 20a, Specific Plan Areas and Detail).
- The corridor represents an area of growth potential for the City.
- A corridor overlay may be applied easily.
- The corridor represents a redevelopment opportunity.
- The corridor encompasses or is near a Gateway to City or the University of Alabama.
- The corridor advances the Mayor's *Core Values*.

The corridors were then ranked according to the planning criteria, as follows:

Diagram 2 shows the Commercial Corridor that meets most or all criteria. It is as follows:

- 10th Avenue/Interstate 359 corridor

Diagram 3 shows the Commercial Corridors with growth potential and ease of implementation. They are as follows:

- Rice Mine Road
- Mallisham Parkway

Diagram 4 shows the Commercial Corridors that in whole, or part, are within Specific Plans. They are as follows:

- University Boulevard (Greater Alberta Plan)
- Greensboro Avenue (West Tuscaloosa Plan)
- Martin Luther King (West Tuscaloosa Plan)
- Crescent Ridge Road (Greater Alberta Plan)
- 15th Street West (West Tuscaloosa Plan)
- Veteran's Memorial Parkway (Greater Alberta Plan)

Diagram 5 shows Commercial Corridors that are near or contain a Gateway to City/University of Alabama. They are as follows:

- McFarland Boulevard
- Skyland Boulevard
- 15th Street Central

Each Commercial Corridor will be studied individually and an overlay zoning will be tailored for it. Commercial Corridors referenced within Specific Plans will rely upon the Specific Plan for guidance. Strategies for implementation of overlay zoning for Commercial Corridors are presented in Section VI (subsection A. Early Actions) of this Plan.

c. Institutional and Industrial Centers

Institutional Centers

Institutional and civic uses are a traditional land use category typically including institutional, academic, governmental and community service uses and lands. More recently, the trend toward larger places of worship and major medical centers (as opposed to older, freestanding hospitals) has expanded the traditional definition to include a highly related mix of uses.

Major Institutional Centers are identified on Figure 2. The centers include:

- Stillman College
- Shelton State Community College
- The University of Alabama
- DCH Regional Medical Center
- Bryce Hospital
- Partlow Development Center
- Veterans Administration Facility
- University of Alabama – Arboretum

Many of these centers are experiencing growth by expansion into or redevelopment of adjacent properties, or conversely these centers, face significant competition from outside forces for their own or adjacent properties. It is anticipated that growth of many of these Institutional Centers will continue as the City grows and others may be reconfigured.

Industrial Centers

Industrial uses are freestanding (typically larger or older) facilities. These are large employment centers, dominated by industrial, office, technology, distribution, and other job-generating land uses but containing relatively few retail and service uses except those concentrated at major gateways to the City. Industrial centers and major employers (500 and over employees) are located on Figure 2 and are identified as follows:

- Phifer Wire/PECO Food Area
- Hunt Oil/Goodrich Area
- Tuscaloosa Industrial Park
- Airport Area
- JVC Area
- Holt Area

Industrial Centers are, frequently near major transportation routes. Adjacent parcels may be underutilized, undeveloped or have the perception of being a brownfield. These underutilized, undeveloped or stylized properties represent opportunities for the private sector and the City for conversion to more productive land uses.

d. Commercial Activity Centers

A Commercial Activity Center is defined as a significant node or concentration of development and peoples' use area, and is typically located at the intersections of major streets or interstate interchanges.

The Plan identifies a total of fifteen Commercial Activity Centers, as shown on Figure 2. The centers were categorized into three types of centers, as follows:

- Future Commercial Activity Centers - significant node with limited development or no development currently.
- Expanding Commercial Activity Centers - an existing significant node that exhibits current growth and expansion currently.
- Commercial Activity Centers to be Redeveloped - an existing, well established node within which revitalization and redevelopment are currently underway or planned.

The Commercial Activity Centers are listed below, by category:

Diagram 6 shows Future Commercial Activity Centers. They are as follows:

- Interstate 59/Eastern Bypass
- Southern Bypass/Highway 82
- Southern Bypass/Highway 69
- Mallisham Parkway/Culver Road
- Mallisham Parkway/Interstate 59

Diagram 7, sets forth Expanding Commercial Activity Centers as follows:

- 15th Street/McFarland Boulevard
- Rice Mine Road/New Watermelon Road
- Skyland Boulevard/Interstate 359

- University Boulevard/Cottondale
- Interstate 59/Buttermilk Road
- Five Points

Diagram 8, sets forth Commercial Activity Centers to be Redeveloped as follows:

- Central Business District
- McFarland/Skyland Boulevards
- Alberta Business District
- Crescent Ridge Road/University Blvd.

As the Commercial Activity Centers are at major intersections or interstate interchanges, addressing each in the future will be coordinated with the Centers' respective Commercial Corridor. Implementation of the Plan relative to the growth and development of each Activity Center may require zoning changes, especially with regard to the six Expanding Commercial Activity Centers. Strategies for implementation are presented in Section VI (subsection A, Early Actions) of the Plan.

C. Neighborhoods

Residential uses come in many sizes, shapes, types and densities. The potential relative gross density—the relation of numbers of dwelling units to property devoted to those uses will be developed under more area-specific planning projects.

In general, very low-density residential uses are encouraged in areas characterized by relatively steep slopes and those adjacent to surface water resources and their associated floodplains. This development type should take careful account of the various components of the planning area's green infrastructure, and should be subject to development requirements that may dictate the use of special techniques, which may include conservation easements, buffer zones, large lots and low overall impervious surface ratios.

Low-density residential uses would include mostly larger single-family detached housing that currently exist and are planned for further development, located primarily adjacent to portions of the perimeter of the community, taking appropriate account of the various components of the planning area's green infrastructure.

Medium-density residential uses would include mostly smaller single-family detached and attached housing presently located mostly in and near the older parts of the City. Most future medium-density residential uses are intended to be located relatively near the larger commercial, institutional and employment development focus areas and in relatively close-in locations.

a. Residential Growth Areas

Five Residential growth areas are shown on the Future Land Use Map (Figure 2 and Diagrams 9, 10, and 11, below). These areas were delineated based on evaluation of recent and current growth patterns, proposed planned expansion of the City (annexation), short-term and long-term transportation project plans, and public school strategies. These include:

- The Lakes Area (three sub-areas) – north of Black Warrior River
- Jack Warner Parkway – east
- Fosters Ferry Road and Palmore Park - west
- South Central Tuscaloosa - south
- Southeast Tuscaloosa – southeast

b. *Residential Areas for Redevelopment, Revitalization, or Preservation*

Redevelopment, preservation and revitalization are processes that have authority, scope, and financial requirements to provide the stimulus to reverse the trends, address the issues, and create a new image for a neighborhood. Revitalization is one of the most effective means to “breathe new life” into communities or neighborhoods that are affected, or even plagued, by a variety of certain social, physical, environmental, and economic issues. These issues can act as barriers to new investment opportunities and result in a diminishing standard of living for residents.

Consideration has been given to existing areas and neighborhoods within the City in need of redevelopment, revitalization, or preservation. The areas are listed below and are shown on Diagram 12 as follows:

- New Town
- Core City Residential North
- Core City Residential South

New Town is that part of Tuscaloosa west of Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North and west approximately to the City Limits between the Black Warrior River and 15th Street and Stillman Boulevard. This is a significant area that covers about 35 city blocks east to west and 14 blocks, north to south.

The Core City Residential North is between the Black Warrior River and 15th Street with the western to eastern limits between Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North and the Alberta Business District. This area covers about 55 city blocks east to west and 15 blocks, north to south.

The Core City Residential South is between 15th Street and Skyland Boulevard, and with the west to east limits between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Cottondale. This area covers about 25 city blocks north to south, and from east to west about 80 blocks.

The above are existing mixed used areas that include residential uses of various densities as well as established neighborhoods. Some of the planning details for these three areas are described, in part, in one or more of the following specific district or area plans (Figures 20 and 20a) that have been approved or are currently in progress of preparation:

- Greater Downtown Area Plan
- Specific Plan University Area Neighborhoods
- Specific Plan Forest Lake Neighborhood
- West Tuscaloosa Plan
- Greater Alberta Strategic Development Concept
- Specific Plan District Three

- Specific Plan District Six
- Specific Plan District Seven

Redevelopment, revitalization or preservation within designated historic areas of the City or of certain structures or sites within the Study Area will continue to require compliance with the requirements of the Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission Guidelines and the Historic Districts presently approved within the City. The Historic Districts are as follows:

- Capitol Park
- Glendale Gardens
- Downs
- Battle Friedman
- Jemison
- Country Club Circle
- Sherwood Drive
- Caplewood
- Pinehurst
- College Park
- Audubon Place
- Seventh Street
- Eighth Street
- Druid City
- Myrtlewood
- University Circle
- Oakwood Court
- Thirteenth Street
- Dearing Place
- Buena Vista
- Hillcrest
- Guild's Wood
- Alston Building
- Alabama Book Store

D. Mixed Use

This is a development type in which various primary uses—for example, residential, office, institutional and retail—may be combined (horizontally and/or vertically) in the same building or within separate buildings on the same site or nearby sites, especially in major commercial activity centers.

This sort of mixing has in the past occurred mostly in downtowns and adjacent to college campuses. However, the more recent trend is to carefully mix together various appropriate land uses to reduce the need for motor vehicle trips and create more walkable communities. These may include community, commercial, institutional, and employment support development areas.

This land use type tends to: 1) increase the types of spaces available for both living and working; 2) encourage a mix of compatible uses; and, 3) promote buildings designed to provide a high quality pedestrian-oriented street environment.

Two areas of planned mixed use are shown on Figure 2 and Diagram 13 below, Black Warrior East/Rice Mine Road and Black Warrior West. In addition to these two mapped areas, mixed use development is traditionally permitted in the Business Neighborhood Commercial, Business Central, Business Neighborhood University Overlay, and Riverfront Development Districts. As such, development of areas of mixed use are also anticipated in the Downtown and around The University of Alabama.

Each of the areas will be addressed on a case by case basis, in particular, the appropriateness of the mix. Those areas near the Black Warrior river (Black Warrior East and West) will require appropriate design and density to enhance, protect, and preserve slopes, watersheds, floodplains and Conservation Areas and access to the same.

Strategies for implementation of the Plan regarding the mixed use areas are provided in Section VI (subsections A, Early Actions and C, Link Zoning Ordinance to Future Land Use Plan) of this Plan.

VI. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The Future Land Use Plan is to be implemented through a comprehensive strategy that combines direct public and private investment, with supporting actions of the City Council, Planning Commission and other boards and commissions.

Tuscaloosa is a municipal corporation, formed under powers granted by the State of Alabama. The City uses its grant of the police power to adopt and enforce growth and development regulations. The City uses its power to tax and to plan for and implement a budgeting system that includes capital investments for infrastructure facilities and services to help shape growth and development. The City has from time to time used the power of eminent domain (the power to force sale of private property for valid public use) sparingly to enable various infrastructure investments and redevelopment actions in support of public policy and plans. These various powers will be marshaled into several major strategies to deal with various parts of the City and its planning area.

Plan implementation will involve revision and continued administration and enforcement of the City's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, City budgeting and capital improvement programming, empowerment of community and neighborhood organizations and volunteers, and decisions regarding annexation. All of these tools must be used together to encourage desired growth and development and to revitalize areas in need of critical reinvestment.

A portion of the Plan implementation strategy must also focus on targeted capital improvements—direct modifications of the physical environment. This will require a commitment of both public and private capital for reinvestment in the quality of life. Also required will be a considerable amount of cooperation and coordination, in combination with goodwill and the not-so-simple art of persuasion.

A. Early Actions

To address the Commercial Activity Centers and Commercial Corridors, as described in the Future Land Use, Section V, of this Plan the following general guidance is provided for future implementation:

- Each Center and Corridor will be studied individually
- Overlay zoning for each Center and Corridor will be prepared
- Overlay zoning will address the following items:
 - building height criteria
 - signage requirements
 - lighting requirements
 - landscaping
 - setbacks
 - design considerations for ingress and egress
 - pedestrian safety, pedestrian pathways/walkways/sidewalks
 - building/structure design aesthetics and application of high-quality architecture
 - alternative paving surfaces
 - impervious surface ratios
 - runoff management
- Overlay zoning will be implemented as described in this Plan and the Specific Plan

- If conflict exists between this Plan and a Specific Plan, the Specific Plan will take precedence

Commercial Activity Centers, Commercial Corridors and Residential Mixed Use Areas in proximity to Conservation Areas along the Black Warrior River, Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol and Harris Lake and any other waterways will be required to design projects to minimize impacts to slopes, and to enhance, protect, and preserve the Conservation Areas and nearby waterbodies and floodplains and access to them.

Reinvestment and intensification requirements and incentives should be devised for each Commercial Activity Center, Commercial Corridors, and other development areas as noted on the Future Land Use Map. These might include:

- Consolidation and reduction in parking requirements for commercial and employment areas and their outparcels
- Mandatory cross-access easements and consolidation of ingress and egress among and between commercial parcels that front arterial corridors
- All buildings adjacent to a collector or arterial street shall provide a main entrance on the façade of the building nearest to and facing that street
- Building façades shall provide a visually interesting environment and avoid uniform styles
- Buildings shall be oriented toward the pedestrian by providing a direct link between the building and the pedestrian walking system, with emphasis on directing people toward the public street system
- A building's ground floor facing a local, collector, or arterial street shall contain windows, doors or display areas, etc. and shall not be designed/constructed as a solid or blank wall
- Sidewalks shall be installed along all street frontages as needed for pedestrian mobility or safety appropriate to the location
- All streets shall be designed to promote traffic movement conducive to pedestrian safety and to provide direct routes between nearby destinations
- Parking lots shall be designed to provide through pedestrian paths, clearly identifiable by changes in material or elevation, from street to building.
- Pedestrian-scale light fixtures no greater in height than twelve feet shall be provided along all areas accessible to pedestrians
- Street trees shall be planted as specified by the City
- In non-residential areas at least fifteen percent (15%) of the total site area shall be dedicated to accessible, usable, pedestrian sensitive open space. Where feasible, this standard should be fulfilled with plazas, courtyards or other similar public spaces at or adjacent to buildings
- Design appropriate interfaces between commercial developments and single family neighborhoods to consider building height, building location, landscaping, lighting, and noise
- Surface parking lots shall include green space within the parking lot, with landscaping distributed and designed in accord with the Landscape Ordinance and with an overall plan approved by the Planning Commission
- Surface parking lots containing fifty or more spaces shall be divided into smaller areas separated by landscaped areas at least ten feet wide and by a building or a group of buildings

- Parking structures shall be architecturally integrated or designed with an architectural theme similar to that of the main building(s)
- Parking structures located adjacent to collector or arterial streets shall have ground-level business uses along the street side(s)
- Neighborhoods shall be planned and organized carefully in relation to the natural environment, including but not limited to the slope and proximity to streams, lakes and floodways
- Neighborhoods shall be planned and designed in a manner appropriate to its context—to reflect their location in the surrounding community
- Dense development shall be located toward center and corridors; less-intense development shall be located away from such areas
- There shall be included in each neighborhood a legible, compact center appropriate to the needs of the residents—for example, a park or usable community open space
- The neighborhood center shall be pedestrian oriented with easy vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian access from within the neighborhood
- Neighborhoods shall be planned and designed to locate higher density housing to take advantage of neighborhood center amenities
- Neighborhoods shall be designed and built with walkable, interconnected streets
- Neighborhoods shall accommodate the access needs of motorists while providing a convenient and safe environment for pedestrians
- Sidewalks shall be installed along street frontages as needed for pedestrian mobility and safety appropriate to the location—at least one side of local streets and both sides of collector streets
- Neighborhood pedestrian accessibility shall be enhanced through use of cul-de-sac linkages, as well as trails within greenways or other open space systems
- Interconnected neighborhood streets shall be provided to assure alternate routes to every destination to diffuse automobile traffic

The City's major streets are gateways to its Commercial Activity Centers and neighborhoods, and consequently they convey a lasting image to residents, business and industry, and passersby. They should be safe, comfortable, shaded, calm, connected and interesting. This is not simply a matter of aesthetics; the City's economy is inextricably linked to its physical character. The City continually enhances its image to remain competitive. By taking appropriate care with development of these centers and corridors, Tuscaloosa can set itself apart and further insure the level of marketability and prosperity that may come from attracting even more visitors, residents and investors.

- Prepare and implement an Access Management Plan and Program for all of the City's major entrance corridors in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation.
- Promote and maintain commercial development that enhances the function of the corridor.
- Use lighting and tree plantings at major centers and along corridors to welcome travelers and enhance the commercial uses of the corridor.
- Develop attractive and well-located signage, lighting and landscaping that differentiates each gateway from other parts of the corridor it introduces.
- Direct commercial development to important intersections and discourage scattered or strip patterns of commercial development.
- Design development, where appropriate, consistent with standards and guidelines of existing (University, Downtown, and Riverfront) and proposed Overlay Districts.

B. Capital Improvements

Both the private and public sectors can begin Plan implementation immediately with small actions that have the potential to create big impacts. Choosing high profile and high visibility locations, such as gateways and decision points, for early investment can intensify the impact of even small projects, so long as each is a piece of the whole. This will require coordination as well as commitment of funding, property assembly and acquisition, private sector interest and participation, the willingness to issue bonds and secure other forms of gap financing, and cooperation from local utilities. This may also require City involvement in one or more public redevelopment actions.

It should also be noted that public investment can and should be planned and timed so that it may be linked to private investment in a way that provides incentives for private investments that might otherwise happen much later—or not at all—without some public participation. Examples are:

- Implementation of the City's recently adopted Water and Sewer Policy
- Coordination of special projects included under Reserve Fund For Future Improvement (RFFI) with Future Land Use Plan
- Active perusal of federal funding for improvement for image and commercial corridors set out in the Future Land Use Plan

C. Link Zoning Ordinance and Other Land Use Controls to Future Land Use Plan

Tuscaloosa has adopted and enforces a zoning ordinance to regulate development within districts as shown on the City's zoning map (Figure 21). This is one regulatory tool among several that will be used to help implement the vision, goals, guidelines and recommendations of the Plan:

- By directly prescribing permitted land uses (Figure 22, Current Land Use) and densities, and
- By mitigating impacts of adjacent land uses through prescribed joining and/or separation of land uses and development densities.

This Plan and its Future Land Use Map should not be confused with the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. As indicated in the table below, the Plan is a *guide* to public and private investment in land development and infrastructure. In contrast, the *zoning ordinance* is a regulatory tool used by the city to influence and direct development in ways that reflect the direction and desired form called for in the Future Land Use Plan. The table highlights these differences.

In addition, planned developments, requiring preparation and approval of overall master plans and similar modifications, in accord with the Plan, are intended to allow innovative approaches to development, in recognition of the fact that livability—and good design—cannot be legislated, but can be encouraged. Other regulations, ordinances, requirements, and guidance that will be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Subdivision Regulations
- Tuscaloosa Preservation Commission Design Guidelines
- Land Development Manual

- Structures and Activities Regulations
- Tuscaloosa “Green City”
- Environmental Services Ordinances
- Overlay Zoning
- Billboard and Sign Ordinance
- Landscape Ordinance

As a part of the Plan implementation system, Tuscaloosa intends to revise the City’s Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map (Figure 21). As a start, the ordinance should be amended to specifically link the zoning ordinance to the Plan, with the intention that all development be compatible with uses and development criteria specified in the Plan.

| Land Use Plan | Zoning Ordinance |
|---|--|
| ○ <i>Provides general policy guidance</i> | ○ <i>Provides specific regulations</i> |
| ○ <i>Describes conditions desired in the long term – not necessarily existing or recommended use(s)</i> | ○ <i>Describes what is and what is not currently allowed today</i> |
| ○ <i>Includes recommendations that involve other agencies and groups</i> | ○ <i>Deals with development issues under city control</i> |
| ○ <i>Intentionally flexible to allow responses to changing conditions</i> | ○ <i>Fairly rigid, requires formal amendment to change</i> |
| ○ <i>General land use categories</i> | ○ <i>Zoning districts</i> |
| ○ <i>General land use locations</i> | ○ <i>Parcel-specific designations</i> |

There should be guidelines in the zoning ordinance regarding the appropriate location of boundaries between districts of differing uses or significant densities. These should note the most desirable arrangement would be back-to-back, account for parcels placed side-by-side (with perhaps requirements for additional width to allow buffering; and allow designation of districts having significant differences of use, height or density in parcels across a street from one another only under special conditions).

Neighborhoods and Residential Development

To provide leverage toward the development of traditional single-family neighborhoods in Tuscaloosa, no new residential development, or any residential development that requires site plan review, should be permitted in the absence of an approved master plan. The density of such developments should be appropriate to the landscape topography. The Planning Commission should use the practices of this Plan for the subject area as an overall guide.

Green Infrastructure Area Development

The City’s Green Infrastructure is critical to the health, safety and welfare of the City and its residents. In response, the zoning ordinance subdivision regulations, and other land use control ordinances as appropriate, should be amended to require use of a conservation subdivision approach in or adjacent to any area defined as part of the City’s Green

Infrastructure. In addition, these actions should require considerations for connecting greenways, conservation areas, waterbodies and parks and adequate public access to them. A *Green Space and Greenways Master Plan* is also recommended to guide acquisition and appropriate use and development of the City's green infrastructure. Goals for this open space system include requiring usable open space within walking and biking distance of the majority of the City's population; providing recreational greenways and green spaces throughout the community; serving large scale recreational needs in appropriate locations and creating Conservation Areas to buffer important water features such as the Black Warrior River, Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol and Harris Lake.

D. Coordinate Future Land Use Plan with Other Plans and Agency Activities

The Plan is a combination of vision, maps, planning and design guidelines and examples. It is a framework for guiding public and private decisions that will affect the growth, development and redevelopment of Tuscaloosa. The Plan is based on the community's vision for its own future. The Plan focuses on the physical form of the City, and applies to development of public and private properties within the Study Area.

Implementation of the Plan must be coordinated with other significant entities to maximize the vision and local and regional reach of our planning efforts. Coordination for implementation is planned for, but not limited to, the following entities and their long range planners:

- Campus Plans for The University of Alabama, Stillman College, and Shelton State Community College
- City of Northport
- Rural water authorities
- City of Tuscaloosa School Board
- PARA Planning
- West Alabama Regional Commission
- Tuscaloosa County
- Tuscaloosa County Health Department
- 911

E. Implement Existing and Formulate New Specific Plans

This Plan will be refined and detailed from time to time through preparation and adoption of Specific Plans. Areas covered by completed or on-going specific plans are illustrated on Figures 20 and 20a. Other Specific Plans for the remainder of the City – District 3, District 6, and District 7 – have been completed and adopted recently (March 2009). This process will continue Tuscaloosa's tradition of updating and refining its plans through special area studies and plans as market or physical conditions or level of interest on the part of local citizens or the Planning Commission warrants them. Through this extension of the planning process, city officials and staff, residents, property owners and developers come together, accompanied by representatives of the city at large, as appropriate, to plan in more detail for the creative development, redevelopment or simply enhancement of such areas.

Consideration of any rezoning to enable development, redevelopment or expansion of the

commercial activity centers and corridors indicated in the Plan should be in accordance with this Plan and/or the Specific Plan applicable to that area of the City.

Consideration for any rezoning should require Planning Commission and City Council review of the Future Land Use Plan and compatibility with applicable Specific Plans.

Specific Plans are detailed components of the Tuscaloosa Comprehensive Plan. For example, the need for a Street Tree Plan and Program could be filled by a Specific Plan. Geographic sub-areas of the City may continue to be subject to specific planning to provide needed guidance to development or reinvestment.

F. Connecting Land Use, Access and Mobility

Tuscaloosa's streets serve two essential purposes: access to adjacent property and mobility between destinations. The existing roadway system is shown on Figure 18. The "Visionary Roadway System," from the 2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan is shown on Figure 19. The challenge is to provide a street network that serves and supports planned development patterns, balances access and mobility, moves vehicles efficiently and lends a sense of community to neighborhoods.

Local traffic, both traffic and vehicle trips, is expected to increase significantly during the planning period in response to development and redevelopment consistent with the Future Land Use Plan. It is a critical component that can add to or distract from the vision set forth in this Plan.

a. *Citywide Mobility*

Mobility is in part a function of providing options for movement through the city, and that requires interconnection of most streets. Gaps in the existing local street network require individuals to increase the length of their trip and drive through congested areas as they move even short distances through the community.

An appropriately interconnected street network is one in which every street segment connects to at least two other street segments. Thus, cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets should be used only in areas where environmental constraints impede connections to other streets. Moreover, internal vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle connections should be required within both existing and new development areas and between adjacent land uses.

Developers should plan for and effectively address the need for internal connections (roads, pathways, open space, etc.) between adjacent land uses, including residential subdivisions and commercial developments, to provide both primary and secondary means of emergency access.

Mobility planning and design should incorporate the following strategies for planning, designing, constructing and retrofitting streets citywide:

- Maintain an aesthetically pleasing street network that helps frame and define the City while meeting the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.
- Improve the image of the City's major vehicular corridors by taking charge of them all, regardless of the state of or pressure for development.

- Landscape the edges and medians of major corridors to frame development and create a more positive image for the entire city by adding color, shade and visual interest.
- Consolidate existing driveways along arterials and collectors and require access for new development be made from side streets.
- Discourage non-residential traffic from travel on primarily residential streets.
- Treat residential streets as both public ways and neighborhood amenities.
- Seek landscaped medians and appropriate access management along key arterials and collectors for purposes of roadway safety and capacity.
- Require street system connections between new and existing developments to promote an interconnected roadway system throughout the community and discourage the use of cul-de-sacs.
- Require streets be planted with street trees appropriate to their function.
- Update the City's 1992 Major Street Plan that allows direct connections to local destinations without diverting extra traffic onto the arterial system, to include guidelines for new subdivisions and a program to retrofit the existing system as needed.

b. Citywide Accessibility

An essential way to maintain safe and reliable access and street capacity is to manage access to side streets and driveways to and from the parcels that line arterials and major collectors. Approached properly, an access management program can enhance property values while safeguarding past and future public infrastructure investments. Accessibility and access management planning and design should incorporate the following strategies for retrofitting and constructing arterial and major collector streets:

- Prepare and implement an Access Management Plan and Program for all of the City's major corridors in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation.
- Separate conflict points – distance between major intersections and driveways should be regulated. Joint use driveways should be required within the area of influence of intersections for all redevelopment along minor and major arterials.
- Restrict turning movements at unsignalized driveways and intersections – the use of full directional unsignalized streets and driveways should be limited. Full movement intersections should serve multiple developments through joint use driveways or cross access easements.
- Continue to refine design standards – design standards that address access spacing, the length of turn lanes and tapers and driveway dimensions should be developed for application throughout the city on arterials and major collectors.
- Traffic signal spacing – signals should only be installed when appropriate studies indicate their spacing and interconnection can be accomplished without significant impacts on corridor capacity.
- Turn lanes – left and right turn lanes should be required for all public streets and major access points to commercial activity centers.
- Shared driveways/inter-parcel access – joint use driveways should be required to reduce the proliferation of driveways and to preserve the capacity of the corridor.
- Pedestrian/bicycle planning – specific needs of pedestrian and bicyclist movements should be addressed. Traffic signals should be designed and timed to accommodate pedestrians in areas of significant activity.

c. Accommodations for Bicycles and Pedestrians

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (WARC, 2007) for the Tuscaloosa area addresses current bicycle and pedestrian facilities; future vision goals, objectives, and performance measures; project strategies for construction, education, promotion, and policy projects, and implementation of these projects. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (and predecessor plans) was initiated to address federal regulations related to inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian activities in the metropolitan transportation planning process. The vision as stated, within the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, is for the Tuscaloosa area to become a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community. The community will feature linked, safe, appropriate, and aesthetically pleasing facilities, educational programs highlighting the laws of motorized and non-motorized travel, and coordination of such activities with planning and public safety officials. It is anticipated that the City will work closely with PARA and WARC to facilitate the vision embodied in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and to integrate it into the City's greenspace.

The Plan specifically designates Image Corridors and Scenic Byways along key existing and proposed roadways that encircle greater Tuscaloosa and Northport.

G. Formulate and Adopt Water and Sewer Plans

The City of Tuscaloosa, on a daily basis provides water to the City's expanding customer base and thirteen area water systems (see Figure 23). Those water systems include the City of Northport and the rural water authorities listed below:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Roupies Valley | GreenPond |
| Coker | Carrolls Creek |
| Citizens | Coaling |
| Peterson | Fosters-Ralph |
| Mitchell | Englewood-Hulls |
| Sand Springs | Buhl-Elrod-Holman |

As shown on Figure 23, the rural water authorities nearly surround the distribution area of the City.

The source of water for all these rural water authorities is the City's water supply reservoir. The City owns property around the entire shorelines of Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol and Harris Lake. Conservation Areas have been delineated around Lake Tuscaloosa, consistent with the City owned Property. A Conservation Area has also been applied for Lake Nicol and Harris Lake. This green infrastructure around the lakes is adopted by reference as an amendment to the Plan, to the specifics within Land Use Assessment of Parcels within the Police Jurisdiction of the City of Tuscaloosa and the Watersheds of North River – Lake Tuscaloosa, Lake Nicol, and Harris Lake (PELA, 2007). The Assessments are specific recommendations for implementation of City policies, ordinances, monitoring and enforcement, and additional studies should be considered and implemented to insure protection and preservation of the water supply and enjoyment of the reservoirs for generations to come. In addition, with the recent dedication of the City property abutting Lake Nicol and Harris Lake as a *public park*, the specific future uses of this property should be carefully assessed.

The existing sanitary sewer system is shown on Figures 24. The City had, until changes were made to the Sanitary Sewer Policy in April 2007 (Ordinance No. 7047), allowed access to its sanitary sewer system by users (direct water customers) outside the corporate limits by

making a one time, tapping fee payment. Developers built commercial and residential projects outside the City limits and annexed only “after completion thereby grandfathering the use of the property without regard to the City’s Land Use and Zoning Laws.” The results were that the City’s sanitary sewer capacity was being consumed by users outside the corporate limits, which did not contribute to the City’s tax base and some land was annexed into the City that did not conform to its land use and zoning laws.

After October 8, 2007 the new City policy requires that “access to City Sanitary Sewers by any Potential Establishment, Subdivision or Planned Unit Development and any structure therein or any other structure, facility or development of whatever nature, use or occupancy shall be permitted only if the same is a direct water customer of the City and is located within the corporate limits of the City of Tuscaloosa” (Ordinance No. 7047 in Appendix E). This significant change in policy will help to manage future growth of the City in a manner consistent with the vision of this Plan.

H. Adopt Annexation Element to the Comprehensive Plan

Tuscaloosa is well positioned to accommodate new residential growth accompanied by the commerce it may generate. Generally speaking, more households bring more dollars to be spent in the community. However, residential growth by itself comes at a cost to the City’s services and facilities.

Residential land uses by themselves are usually a drain on municipal finances, for it typically costs more to provide services to a household than the owners pay in *ad valorem* taxes. In contrast, owners of commercial, industrial, farm, forest and open lands within municipalities typically pay more in local tax revenues than it costs local government to provide services to their properties. Nevertheless, the critical tax for Alabama municipalities is retail sales tax, which shoulders the majority of municipal finances. Therefore, new residential growth should be balanced with commercial and industrial growth and preservation of farm and open space areas in accord with this plan.

The Future Land Use Map (Figure 2) notes portions of the planning area within which planned growth will be given high priority during the planning period. As the City considers annexation of new areas, the ability to protect the City and its fiscal basis, its people and resources, as well as assure the ability to provide services, present and future, will be prime considerations. Annexation decisions should take into account at least the following questions and criteria, in addition to all elements of the city’s Comprehensive Plan, when considering the appropriateness of any particular annexation.

- Efficiency of providing services—will the annexation result in demand on public facilities and services that may exceed the capacity of such facilities and services, or will annexation cause or eliminate awkward and irregular boundaries that cause difficulty or inefficiencies in supplying utilities and services?
- Fiscal soundness—will annexation of the property significantly add to the revenue base of the city? Comprehensive annexations that “pay their way” by including commercial areas whose taxation may help to cover the cost of necessary support services should have priority.
- Image compatibility/enhancement—is the property to be annexed consistent with Tuscaloosa standards, character and image, or might annexation allow for the elimination of existing or potential land uses and improvements considered a blighting or

deteriorating influence, or perhaps prevent untimely or inappropriate development of property?

The City should formulate an Annexation Plan as a component to the Future Land Use Plan. The annex plan should analyze all areas abutting the city limits for a minimum of three miles. The Annexation Plan should delineate these areas into four sections: north, east, south, and west. Each area should then be evaluated for growth potential, and a cost benefit analysis should be done to determine priority for future annexations.

I. Needs for Information Management

Establish a technical review committee to develop a protocol for maintenance of databases, including procedures for uniformity and standardization of data and management safeguards to ensure that the data entered are easily transferable from the databases into the GIS network. The technical review committee should at a minimum include the representatives of the City IT, Water and Sewer, and Office of Planning & Economic Development, the Transportation Department, the Tuscaloosa County Health Board, the Office of the City Attorney, City Office of GIS, a County E911 representative and the Lake Manager.

J. Update Future Land Use Plan

The Plan is intended to be a living document that will evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and to market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment with public input can the Plan fully serve Tuscaloosa, and only then can we use it wisely as a creative tool as we seek achievement of the comprehensive vision for our community.

The Plan should be updated every five years in consideration of the following:

- Completion of implementation of specific items within this Plan
- Changes within Alabama law
- Changes within City ordinances
- Addition of approved components to the Tuscaloosa Comprehensive Plan
- Changes in market conditions or level of interest on the part of local citizens

VII. CONCLUSION

There is a clear consensus within the community that the City should be a green community in which planned growth and diversified economic development provide an attractive, efficient, and productive environment and a high quality of life in a city in which people and goods will move easily about the urban area using their feet, bicycles, boats, buses and cars powered conventionally as well as alternatively fueled, and where such movements will occur on streets, river and lakes, along bikeways, and pedestrian pathways that are attractive as well as functional.

Participants provided the following guidance for future land use planning process in Tuscaloosa:

- *Promote foot traffic, bicycle use and use of the river and lakes by providing appropriate facilities, both combined and separate.*
- *Design and construct transportation facilities so that urban trees and vegetation are an integral part of the system.*
- *Plan for the retention and enhancement, and the creation of additional, public open space within the anticipated 2020 City limits.*
- *Carefully consider the overall natural resources, environmental quality and the environmental impacts of growth before approving development projects.*
- *Integrate the system of highways, streets, bikeways and walkways with the development pattern to help promote a sense of connection and community.*
- *Identify properties for large-scale recreational amenities for the current and future populations.*
- *Maintain a strong emphasis upon comprehensive planning as a framework for quality development.*
- *Enforce development codes to ensure high quality development that is environmentally sound and aesthetically pleasing.*
- *Develop downtown as an area that recognizes and facilitates interaction between students and visitors.*
- *Establish the downtown primarily as a pedestrian-scale dining, recreation, governmental, specialty shopping and entertainment district.*
- *Encourage the further construction of a diverse housing stock in neighborhoods that are provided with corresponding amenities.*
- *Promote strong planning with and in support of The University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College and area school systems, public and private.*
- *Attract new, clean industries to complement the existing base, and encourage existing industries to grow and diversify.*

- *Acquire the land necessary to accommodate future industrial growth.*
- *Protect and improve the visual quality of the principal transportation corridors within and the gateways to the City.*
- *Encourage the growth and expansion of the health care sector, private and public, including DCH Regional Medical Center, The Veteran's Administration, Partlow State School and Bryce Hospital.*
- *Strive in transportation planning to reduce congestion and the possibility of accidents through street planning and design, accounting for the needs of private automobiles, public transport, bicycles and pedestrian traffic.*
- *Emphasize transportation modes other than the private automobiles so that demands for streets and parking facilities can be reduced. Nevertheless, those who use automotive transportation should have streets that take them where they need to travel and a place to park when they arrive.*
- *Revise the City's annexation policies to ensure the long term health and welfare of its citizens.*

This Plan:

- Ensures that as development occurs, the City's most significant natural features and resources will be conserved and enhanced.
- Suggests and illustrate patterns for land use and development that strive for a sustainable community with a diversified tax base.
- Coordinates land use and development recommendations with those for public infrastructure investments.
- Provides a general guide that may lead to making and revising regulations regarding type, intensity and timing of development.

The Tuscaloosa City Council, Planning Commission and City staff intend to use this document as a basis for continuing to update City planning process to:

- Engage citizens, property owners and investors in a continuing conversation as to the most appropriate form and direction for development and conservation of the City's resources.
- Illustrate reasonable preservation, conservation, and development expectations, and provide some assurance and security regarding development investment decisions.
- Identify and advise regarding priorities for infrastructure improvements – conservation areas, roads, greenways, parks, schools and other public facilities.
- Review and evaluate public and private proposals for development and investment – to test their fit with Tuscaloosa's vision and expectations.

This Plan provides guidance to assist public officials and private citizens as they consider investments that may have long-term implications for the community. The contents of this Plan should be continuously discussed, evaluated, monitored and renewed as changes occur in physical, social, political and market conditions.

This is a long-range plan, and change occurs in a more or less continuous manner. Gateways to the City, greenways, image and commercial corridors, institutional and commercial activity centers, neighborhoods, schools, parks, bicycle and pedestrian routes and transportation infrastructures are not developed overnight. Hence, the Plan does not propose or provide “quick fix” solutions, nor should this plan be viewed simply as an economic development platform. Rather, this Citywide Future Land Use Plan is intended to strengthen, revitalize and optimize all aspects of life in Tuscaloosa over the long term. As such, this Plan must remain a living document, able to grow and change as local conditions change. To do so, it must be updated and amended on a regular basis, as described.

Plan implementation will take time and goodwill. Tuscaloosa must strive to get even more people interested and involved in setting and implementing the vision for Tuscaloosa. City government must continue to bring other agencies, public and private, onto the same team. The City and its citizens must continue to prioritize and take direct action on various recommendations of this Plan by committing to tax themselves and to spend those local tax dollars in support of Plan implementation.

City officials must help shape the action of others with not just more regulation, but more *effective* regulation. The City must be willing to provide selected incentives to encourage others to take the lead in development activities that would further implementation of the Plan’s practices. And finally, citizens and especially community leaders should support City officials who strive to use every power they have under the law in concert with every public investment they make to support Plan implementation.

This Citywide Future Land Use Plan, as a constituent part of the Tuscaloosa Comprehensive Plan, is intended to evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and to market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment can the plan fully serve the city and its planning area. Only then can the people of Tuscaloosa use it fully and creatively as they seek achievement of a comprehensive vision for themselves and their neighborhoods and communities.

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FIGURES

DIAGRAMS

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

CITYWIDE FUTURE LAND USE STEERING COMMITTEE

Honorable Walter Maddox, Mayor
Glenda D. Gamble, Associate City Attorney
Harrison Taylor, Councilman District Two
Bob Lundell, Councilman District Six
Lee Garrison, Councilman District Four
Cynthia Almond, Councilwoman District Three
Gina Johnson, Director of Auxiliary and Support Services, University of Alabama
Maurice Sledge, Director Water Department
Jimmy Junkin, Wastewater Manager
Travis Leslie, Lakes Division Manager
Robert W. Ennis, IV, Esq., City Attorney
Ms. Angela Fulmer
Jimmy Warren, President Planning Commission
Don Kelly
Randy Dixon
Joseph A. Robinson, City Engineer
Sam Burnett
Chad Christian, P.E.
David Norris, Senior Transportation Planner of West Alabama Regional Commission
William L. Snowden, AICP

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

CITYWIDE FUTURE LAND USE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND FOCUS GROUPS

Technical Advisory Committee Members

| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Evelyn Young | David Norris |
| Harold Skelton | Sam Burnett |
| Godfrey Jones | Chad Christian |
| Leonard Brown | Jimmy Junkin |
| J. Scott Stephens | David Griffin |
| John McConnell | Debbie Sanford |
| Randy Dixon | Dan Wolfe |

Land Use Issues Focus Group

Evelyn Young, Tuscaloosa Community Planning & Development
Harold Skelton, Tuscaloosa Community Planning & Development
Godfrey Jones, Tuscaloosa Community Planning & Development
Leonard Brown, Tuscaloosa Community Planning & Development
John McConnell, Tuscaloosa Community Planning & Development
Doug Behm, University of Alabama
Dan Wolfe, University of Alabama

Drainage & Environment Focus Group

Chad Christian, P.E., TDOT
Sam Burnett, TDOT
Harold Skelton, Tuscaloosa Community Planning & Development

Community Facilities Focus Group

Marvin Tant, Deputy Chief of Police Department
Mitt Tubbs, Assistant Chief of Police Department
Jeff Johnson, Executive Director of Facilities, City of Tuscaloosa Schools
J. Scott Stephens, Planner
Jimmy Junkin, Wastewater Manager
John Snead, Water Distribution Manager
Joe Robinson, City Engineer
David Norris, Senior Transportation Planner of the West Alabama Regional Commission
William Herz, City of Tuscaloosa Recycling Consultant

Transportation Focus Group

David Griffin, P.E., TDOT
Debbie Sanford
David Norris, West Alabama Planning
Joe Robinson, TDOT
William Herz, City of Tuscaloosa Recycling Consultant
John McConnell, Tuscaloosa Community Planning & Development

CONSULTANTS

P.E. LaMoreaux & Associates, Inc. (Prime)
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

KPS Group, Inc., Subcontractor
Birmingham, Alabama

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APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

TUSCALOOSA 2020 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Leonard Brown | Dara Longgear |
| Hobson Bryan | Walter Maddox |
| Karen Bryan | Alan Martin |
| Chad Christian | Kent McCray |
| Richard Crawford | Marvin McKinley |
| Shane Daugherty | Susan Miller |
| Christine Dietsch | Lynn Morris |
| Mike Ellis | Jerry Moss |
| Jim Ezell | Jeff Neighbors |
| Carl Ferguson | Regina Noland |
| Jim Fitts | David Norris |
| Lisa Algieri | Jim Oden |
| Anda Allen | Janet O'Neal |
| Johnnie Aycock | Pam Penick |
| Helen Ball | Doug Phillips |
| Louis Barnett, Jr. | Gene Poole |
| Doug Behm | Virginia Powell |
| Bennett Bearden | Robert Ratliff |
| Mark Beeler | Robert Reynolds |
| Bruce Bizzoco | Sonny Richardson |
| Scott Bridges | Joseph Robinson |
| Hannah Brown | John Rozier |
| Jim Fleming | John Sheffield |
| Gene Ford | Steve Shelton |
| Wayne Ford | Maurice Sledge |
| Angela Fulmer | Gene Smith |
| Dan Gibson | John Snead |
| Willa Goodson | William Snowden |
| Jim Green | Harold Stowell |
| Glen Griffin | Nels Strickland |
| David Griffin, PE | Michael Talerico |
| Godfrey Jones | Dale Taylor |
| Shelley Jones | Nick Tew |
| Dwight Junkin | Frances Tucker |
| Jimmy Junkin | Jeanette Vandermeer |
| Don Kelly | Todd Vick |
| Steve Kennedy | Jimmy Warren |
| Bob Lake | Terry Waters |
| Teresa Lewis | George White |
| Vanessa Llera | Mark Whittle |
| Eartha Long | |

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F

Neighborhood Parks

- A.L. Freeman Park
- Capital Park
- Evans Roshell Park
- Harmon Park
- Kaulton Park
- McKinney Park
- Monnish Park
- Northport Civitan
- Northport Community
- River Road Park East
- River Road Park West
- Rosedale Park
- Springbrook Park
- Stafford Elm Park
- Westend Park

Community Parks

- Brookwood Town Park
- Coaling Community Center
- Fosters Sports Complex
- Jaycee Park
- Newt Hinton Park
- Phelps Community Center
- Queen City Park
- Robert Cardinal Park
- Snow Hinton Park
- Vance Town Park

District Parks

- Sokol Park
- Palmore Park
- Bowers Park