

July 2010

Greater Downtown Plan

Tuscaloosa, Alabama





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Vince Dooley
Joe Duncan
Philip Maxwell

Gina Miers
Gary Philips
Robert Reynolds

OFFICE OF PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

William Snowden, Director

John McConnell, Deputy Director



LEAD CONSULTANT
Cooper Consulting Company, Inc.

ASSOCIATE CONSULTANT TEAM MEMBERS

Gary M. Cooper, Consultant

Dale Fritz & Associates, Inc.

KPS Group, Inc.

Schneider Historic Preservation, LLC

Almon Associates, Inc.

Ward Scott Veron Architects, Inc.

GREATER DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Johnnie Aycock	Jimmie Caine	Catherine Davies
A.J. deMontgris	Cindy Denney	Gloria Effinger
Carl Ferguson	Roy Ferguson	Lee Garrison
Peter Gerkin	Charlotte Gibson	Butch Grimes
George Harris	Jim Harrison	Susan Haynes
Bobby Howard	Sam Jackson	Rick Jarman
Mort Jordan	Bill Lloyd	Paula Marques
Emma Jean Melton	Mike Merritt	Mike Middleton
Ted Miller	Sama Mondeh	Carlie Patton
Mary Ann Phelps	Gary Phillips	Gene Poole
Sandra Ray	Robert Reynolds	Dorothy Richardson
Letitia Roberts	Joe Romanek	Ralph Ruggs
Steven Rumsey	Farrington Snipes	Dennis Stanard
Harrison Taylor	Jim Voltz	Rod Walker
Jimmy Warren	Mary Jane Watson	Dan Wolfe
Bob Woodman	Carole Woodman	Jim Zeanah

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Choices ... Evaluating the present

Imagination ... Considering the possibilities

Vision... Setting the course for a

Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa



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Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa

Part I – Introducing the Planning Process

Introduction

Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa provides a wealth of opportunities for commerce, governmental functions, entertainment, cultural arts and heritage, residential diversity, tourism venues, easy access to a nationally-recognized educational institution, all within proximity to the beautiful backdrop of the Black Warrior riverfront. But there is much more to be achieved and nurtured, and this is the purpose of the Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Plan.

The Plan identifies sections of the Greater Downtown that will experience new development and revitalization, and establishes an overall direction for guiding development and revitalization activities. The Plan serves as a unifying catalyst for the transformation of the Greater Downtown into a vibrant and attractive, economically viable and people-friendly urban center.

The Greater Downtown Plan provides a vision for the future and a rational framework to guide private investments and public policy decisions related to Downtown projects and improvements. It is designed to meet the visual needs of the Downtown, preserve historic resources, improve parking, address pedestrian and vehicular circulation, upgrade infrastructure, promote excellence in physical design, assure compatible land development and create a structure for management and promotional activities for a Main Street Tuscaloosa.

The Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Plan is an outgrowth of the Downtown Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Study completed by Cooper Consulting Company, Inc., in 2005. That study identified blighting conditions in a 16-block area of Downtown Tuscaloosa.

This resulted in the Tuscaloosa City Council passing a resolution declaring the area blighted, creating an urban renewal / redevelopment area in accord with state law and adopting an Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan. During the process of adopting the Urban Renewal Plan it became apparent that a comprehensive planning effort was needed to correct existing problems and guide future development in all of Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa.

Whether planned or unplanned, substantial improvements will be required to meet future development needs within the Greater Downtown. If based on a Plan, these improvements can be made more efficiently, can achieve maximum benefit and can significantly increase the Downtown's future potential.

The Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Plan sets forth realistic proposals which can be achieved to effectively guide the future of Tuscaloosa's Downtown Core.

THE PROCESS

The Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Plan has tremendous support from the Mayor and City Council, the Planning Commission, the Greater Downtown Advisory Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Office of Planning and Economic Development, the Office of the City Attorney, the Office of the City Engineer, the Finance Department, and community agencies throughout the City. Key elements of the process and the Plan include the following:

- Public information meetings and Greater Downtown Advisory Committee work sessions;
- Visioning sessions identifying Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa's strengths, opportunities and vision;
- Analysis of existing land use, zoning, occupancy, ownership, and infrastructure;
- Identification/analysis of visual assets and challenges;
- Identification of urban design elements and features;
- Existing Conditions and Analysis Report;
- Historic Resources Survey and Recommendations Report;
- Synoptic Survey (Community Walkabout);



- Land Use and Development Concept Plans;
- Downtown Overlay District;
- Main Street Tuscaloosa organizational structure;
- Draft Transect Zones (Smart Code); and,
- Final Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Plan Report.

GREATER DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

As an important component of this study, Mayor Walter Maddox appointed a Greater Downtown Advisory Committee (GDAC) comprised of more than 40 members of the community who had an interest in the future of Tuscaloosa’s Downtown and its adjoining residential neighborhoods.



The Advisory Committee includes elected and appointed officials, the Downtown business community, historic preservation interests, cultural arts groups, the African-American community, home builders and realtors, transit and educational interests, and residents. Throughout the Plan development process, the Consultant Team worked closely with the Committee during numerous committee meetings, community surveys and visioning

work sessions. The names of this terrific group of Advisory Committee members are listed on the inside cover page of the Plan document.

CONSULTANT TEAM

A multi-disciplined team of professionals worked together to complete various components of the Greater Downtown Plan. The team includes city planners, engineers, an architect, a landscape architect and a historic resources planner. The names of the Consultant Team members are listed on the inside cover page of the Plan document.

PLANNING AREA DESCRIPTION

The Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Study Area is bounded by the Black Warrior River on the north, Queen City Avenue on the east, 15th Street on the south and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard on the west. The Study Area encompasses 650 acres (370 acres excluding rights-of-way) and includes 87 city blocks (typically 330 x 265 feet) laid out over a grid street pattern. The geography of the Planning Area is illustrated in Figure 1 Greater Downtown Planning Area.

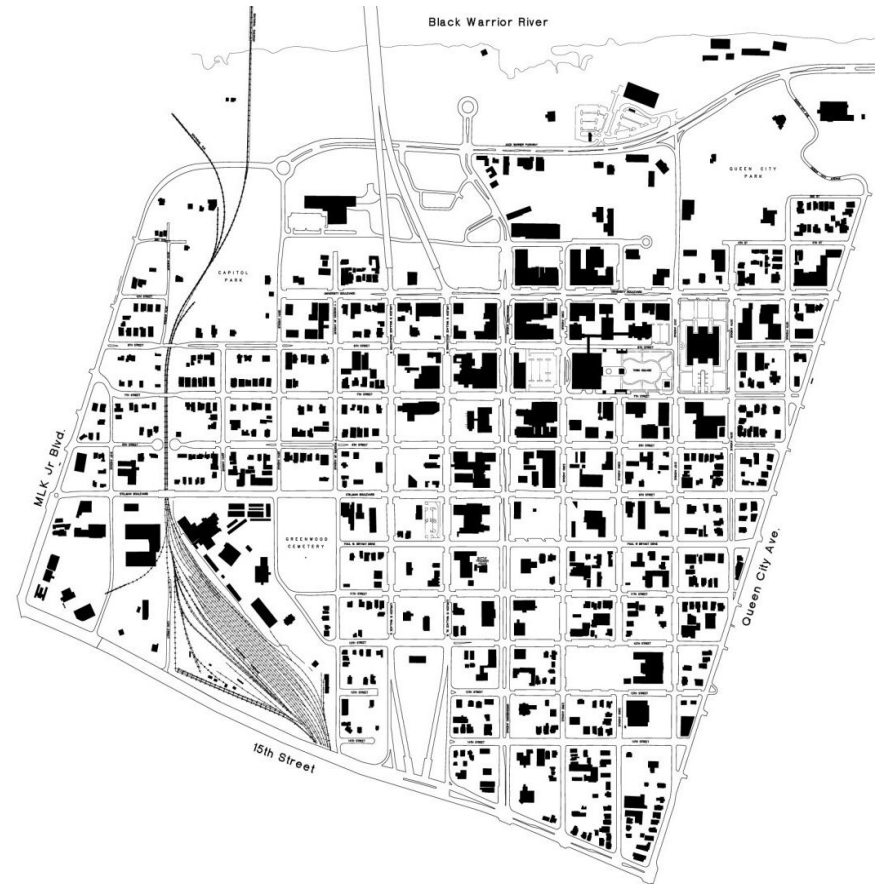


FIGURE 1 GREATER DOWNTOWN PLANNING AREA

EXISTING LAND DEVELOPMENT

The existing types of land uses and development patterns significantly influence the Plan's proposed policies, development concepts and recommended land use regulations. In view of this, a detailed inventory and analysis were made of existing land development to assist in the formulation of plan proposals. The existing land use analysis involves descriptive and statistical analysis of the various types of development found in the Greater Downtown. The location and pattern of existing land uses within the Greater Downtown are illustrated in Figure 2 Existing Development.

A detailed discussion of land uses is contained in the *Existing Conditions and Analysis Report*.

LEGEND

- SINGLE-FAMILY
- MULTI-FAMILY
- RETAIL SHOPPING & SERVICE
- RESTAURANT, LOUNGE, ENTERTAINMENT
- PROFESSIONAL SERVICE/OFFICE
- HEAVY COMMERCIAL/WAREHOUSING
- INDUSTRIAL
- GOVERNMENTAL
- CHURCH/CULTURAL
- RECREATION/OPEN SPACE
- UTILITIES
- VACANT OR UNDERUTILIZED
- OUTSIDE STORAGE
- URBAN RENEWAL AREA



FIGURE 2 EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

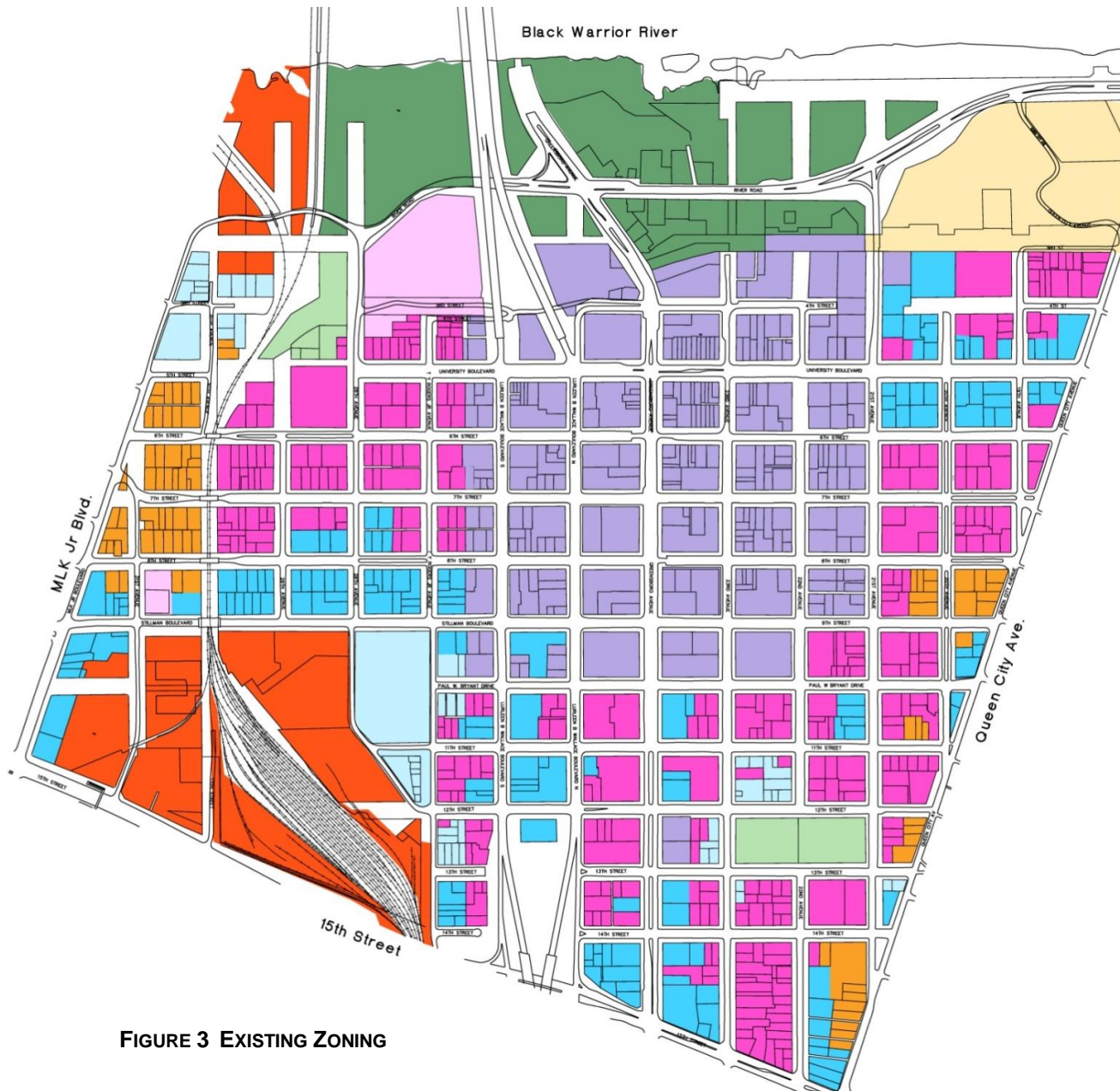


FIGURE 3 EXISTING ZONING

EXISTING ZONING

It has been over 30 years since the City of Tuscaloosa's Zoning Ordinance was adopted. Over the years various amendments have been made to the document, but overall it remains essentially the same Zoning Ordinance adopted in the 1970's.

The current Zoning Ordinance contains numerous provisions and zoning districts that are contrary to a healthy and vibrant Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa, especially within the Downtown Core.

The accompanying illustration of existing zoning districts gives an indication of the need for a wholesale rewriting of the Ordinance (Figure 3 Existing Zoning).

A detailed discussion of issues related to the Existing Zoning is contained in the *Existing Conditions and Analysis Report*.

LEGEND

- R-1: RESIDENCE
- R-3: RESIDENCE
- R-4: MODERATE DENSITY RESIDENCE
- BC: CENTRAL BUSINESS
- BGO: GENERAL BUSINESS-OFFICE
- BN: NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- I: INSTITUTIONAL
- RD: RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT
- ML: LIGHT INDUSTRY
- MG: GENERAL INDUSTRY

DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa has a diversity of development that results in areas having distinctly identifiable and unique development characteristics. These range from large open space areas along the riverfront, to the traditional downtown and downtown neighborhoods, to large industrial sections.

This variation in development patterns promoted the delineation of nine separate Downtown Neighborhoods which are illustrated in Figure 4 Greater Downtown Neighborhoods. The aerial photo in Figure 5 provides a visual indication of the differences within these neighborhoods. The nine neighborhoods are:

- Capitol Park
- Downtown Core
- Greensboro Avenue / Bryant Drive
- Lurleen Wallace Boulevard Corridor
- Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
- Queen City
- Riverfront
- South 22nd Avenue
- Stillman Boulevard

A detailed discussion of the Downtown Neighborhoods is contained in the *Existing Conditions and Analysis Report*.

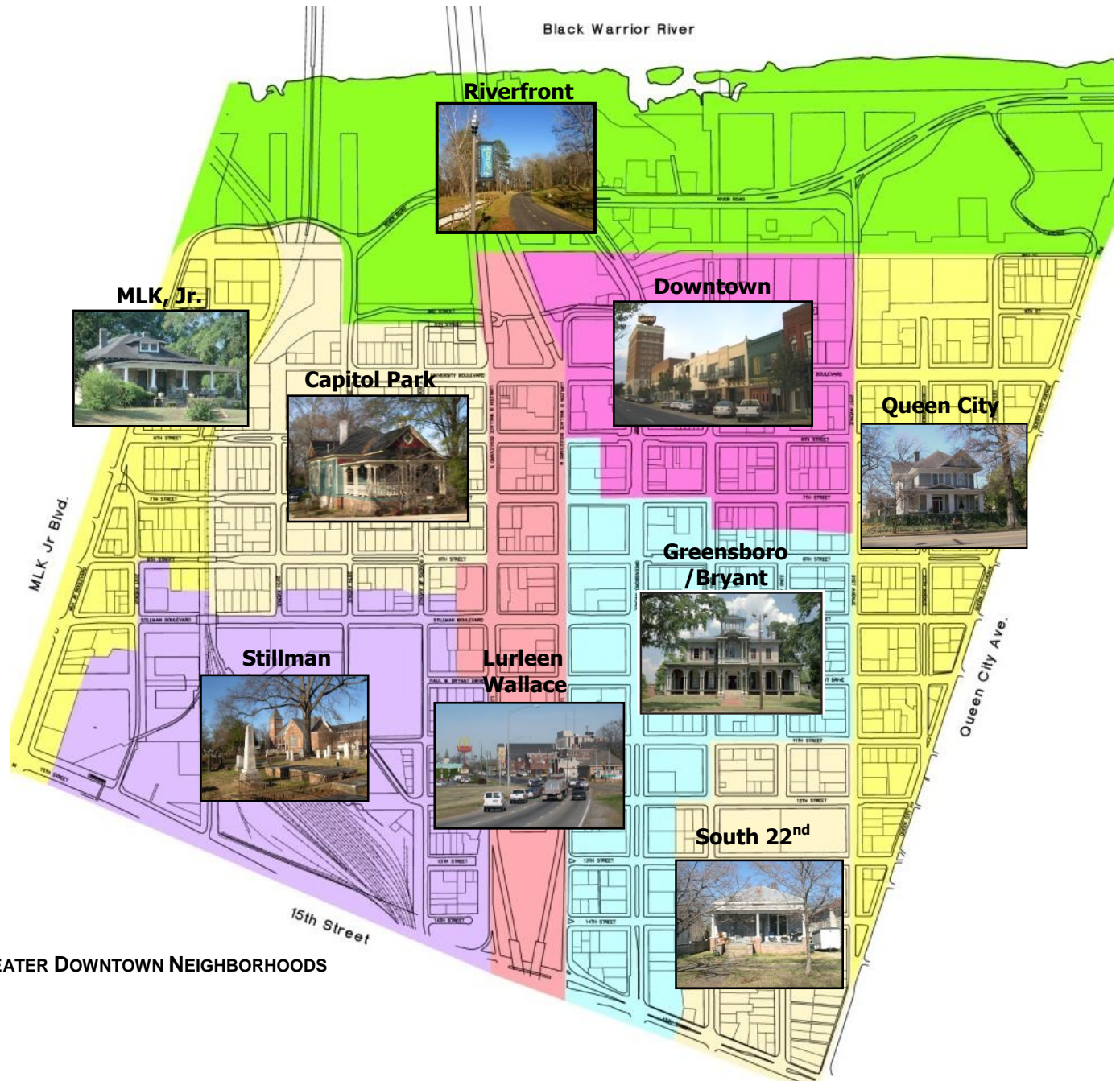


FIGURE 4 GREATER DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

**FIGURE 5 AERIAL OF THE
GREATER DOWNTOWN**



Economic Market Potential

Measuring the economic potential of the Greater Downtown is a critical element to planning its development future. During the process of developing the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan, the Alabama Real Estate Research and Education Center (AREREC) analyzed economic and population growth in Tuscaloosa and its impact on the Greater Downtown.

This is a summary of AREREC’s report, “Economic Potential of the Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan,” a full copy of which is available at the City’s Office of Planning and Economic Development. The report is based, in part, on the following assumptions:

- Increases in enrollment at the University of Alabama and employment at Mercedes should result in increases in population;
- Increases in population should result in increases in the number of housing units; and,
- Increases in population should result in increases in retail, services, and office demand.

In addition to these assumptions, Tuscaloosa is positively impacted by persons coming from neighboring counties for retail trade and services, but also negatively impacted by Tuscaloosa residents traveling to other counties to satisfy their retail needs, specifically the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Planning efforts can aid in keeping retail sales tax dollars in the City by providing local retail shopping options to attract those residents who are currently traveling outside the City to shop. With the changes that are to occur should planning proposals for the Downtown Area be implemented, new and existing businesses have an unprecedented opportunity to change the economic landscape of Tuscaloosa’s Downtown.

Note: One major event that had not occurred at the time AREREC completed this report was the economic downturn that began in 2008 and continues into 2010. This downturn in the economy has affected some major developments within the Greater Downtown, but in the long term, the projections and opportunities within the Greater Downtown should be realized.

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The primary market area for the Greater Downtown encompasses all of Tuscaloosa County with the surrounding counties of Walker, Fayette, Pickens, Greene, Hale and Bibb creating a secondary market area in terms of support for employment, shopping and recreation.

The population of Tuscaloosa County is growing steadily. As shown on the table below, in 2005, the U.S. Census estimated the County’s population at 175,259 people, a one percent increase since 2000 and a 10.5 percent increase over the 1990 decennial population. By 2015, the Census Bureau projects that Tuscaloosa County will grow by 15,000 people, climbing to 180,779.

TABLE 1 POPULATION & HOUSEHOLDS, TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

	2005	2010	2015
Population	175,259	175,547	180,779
Households	73,024	73,145	75,324
Average Household Size	2.4	2.4	2.4
Median Age	33.6	34.9	35.7

Source: U.S. Census and ESRI

Currently, two things have the potential to significantly affect Tuscaloosa’s population projections. They are: 1) The University of Alabama’s student enrollment increases over the next decade; and, 2) Plant expansions, mostly generated by industries such as Mercedes.

Household income in Tuscaloosa County in 2004 averaged \$52,710. In the next five years, average income is projected to rise to \$61,045. The largest household income segment is the household with an annual income between \$25,000 and \$75,000 (45 percent of all households in the County). Of all households, almost 20 percent have incomes exceeding \$75,000. The population sectors that may be appropriate targets for prospective Downtown residents are those younger residents with more limited incomes who desire to rent loft apartments and the more affluent older residents who like the idea of living Downtown but desire home ownership opportunities such as condominiums or townhouses.





TABLE 2 HOUSEHOLD INCOME, TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

Annual Household Income	2004		2009	
< \$15,000	21.4%	35.0%	18.7%	30.7%
\$15,000 – \$24,999	13.6%		12.0%	
\$25,000 – \$49,999	26.6%	45.1%	25.3%	43.4%
\$50,000 – \$74,999	18.5%		18.1%	
\$75,000 – \$99,999	8.8%	19.9%	10.5%	25.9%
\$100,000 – \$149,999	7.6%		10.1%	
\$150,000 +	3.5%		5.3%	
Average Household Income	\$52,710		\$61,045	

DOWNTOWN LIVING

Downtown Tuscaloosa has taken on a life of its own in recent years. Rejuvenation of many older buildings into loft apartments beginning in the 1980’s has created the impetus for changing the face of the Downtown. New residents and a heightened interest in Downtown Tuscaloosa have created an interest in providing additional retail, dining, and entertainment venues. Several new restaurants and bars have opened to provide an after-five atmosphere and people are making Downtown a destination for dining and entertainment. The City’s Historic Districts are also seeing many homes being restored to their original state.

Downtown living has options for a variety of housing types whether they are townhouses/condominiums located in the heart of Downtown, eclectic lofts in renovated buildings, or luxury apartments with all the amenities. Single-family townhouses located in Downtown would provide a new outlet for residential development, a trend being seen in center city neighborhoods all over the nation. Downtown living provides choices for residents – affordable housing for young workers and students, townhouses and lofts for executives, and everything in between. However, without a 24-hour residential population within the Downtown, the current retail and dining choices are limited. Fortunately, many residents see the vision of a vibrant, active, and healthy Downtown Tuscaloosa and are positive about Downtown’s future.



SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWNS

Much can be learned from other successful downtowns. An article in the Journal of the American Planning Association entitled “The Successful Few,”¹ studied downtowns that were successful in creating a healthy environment for retail and residential living. The article identifies 16 cities that have vibrant downtowns; seven of these have a large university that is either in or adjacent to the downtown; five others have a university located within two miles of the downtown; and two additional cities have smaller colleges in or close to the downtown. These cities are listed in Table 3 below:

TABLE 3 CITIES WITH SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWNS

Asheville, NC	Chattanooga, TN	San Luis Obispo, CA
Athens, GA	Fort Collins, CO	Santa Barbara, CA
Boise, ID	Iowa City, IA	Savannah, GA
Burlington, VT	Madison, WI	Santa Fe, NM
Charlottesville, VA	Rochester, MN	State College, PA
		Wilmington, NC

The study indicated that survey respondents frequently identified the same downtown success factors. Those factors survey respondents most frequently associated with a successful downtown included active retail mix, cultural activities, pedestrian environment, and employment opportunities (see Table 4).

¹ The Successful Few,” Pierre Filion, Heidi Hoerning, Trudi Bunting, and Gary Sands, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Summer, 2004, Vol. 70, No. 3.

TABLE 4 DOWNTOWN SUCCESS FACTORS

Factors Listed by Over 50 Percent of Survey Respondents	Factors Listed by Over 30 Percent of Survey Respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active retail mix ▪ Pedestrian environment ▪ Cultural activities ▪ Street oriented retail ▪ People on sidewalks ▪ Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-preserved neighborhoods ▪ Frequent transit ▪ Civic events ▪ Green space ▪ High density residential ▪ Tourist activities ▪ Distinctive architecture ▪ Public sector presence ▪ Historical character ▪ Education establishments

DOWNTOWN SHOPPING

In 2004, the AREREC staff completed an informal personal intercept survey in Tuscaloosa County. The team interviewed shoppers at two major shopping centers, three general merchandise stores, and five grocery stores.

The survey showed that the market for the Downtown, both in terms of retail and residential, is substantial. Nearly 30 percent of the survey respondents said they would consider living Downtown and 35 percent said that they would consider shopping Downtown. These data indicate that not only is there an existing market Downtown, there is an untapped market in the Downtown.

It is the opinion of the AREREC that Downtown Tuscaloosa provides an excellent opportunity for new business development. A number of suggested retail opportunities include a local bakery, an upscale diner, a specialty grocery/deli that offers take-away meals, other healthy eating alternatives, an outdoor sports and activities store, a regionally-recognized women’s apparel store (moderate- to high-end clothing labels), a drycleaners, a hardware store, a soda/ice cream parlor, a coffee shop/internet café, additional specialty gift shops, and possibly a music store that offers downloads.

TABLE 5 TUSCALOOSA SHOPPING SURVEY

Question	%	Response
Resident County	58%	Tuscaloosa
	17%	Hale
	11%	Bibb
	7%	Pickens
	7%	Fayette
Shop Outside County	87%	Yes
	13%	No
Consider Living in Downtown Tuscaloosa?	29%	Yes
	71%	No
Currently Shop Downtown	36%	Yes
	64%	No
If “No,” Why Do You Not Shop Downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no variety in the stores Too expensive Stores close to early Too dark Don’t like shopping Downtown Salespeople aren’t friendly Prefer the malls Don’t think about shopping Downtown Bad parking 	



POPULATION, HOUSEHOLDS AND INCOME

AREREC projects that population and household growth should be in the three percent (3%) range between 2005 and 2015. This is a conservative estimate as the County has benefited from significant in-migration from other counties along with a growing international presence over the past five years. The demand for housing grows in direct proportion to the increase in household formation.

The increase in population is expected to support a seven percent (7%) increase in total consumer expenditures over the same 10-year period, given historical resident spending patterns and expected growth in incomes.

The types of housing and business establishments that will do best in the Tuscaloosa market is heavily dependent upon the distribution of incomes in Tuscaloosa, the job mix, educational attainment levels, and ages of the people who live in the City and surrounding communities. The bulk of the Tuscaloosa population, however, is made up of middle-aged families and individuals living in single-family homes or low density apartments, and with a median age of 40. This profile is not expected to change radically over the next 10 years, explaining the relatively low population growth rate.

RETAIL SALES

The analysis of retail trade patterns for the Tuscaloosa market suggests that the retail segments that should fare the best over the next decade include:

- Clothing Stores
- Jewelry Stores
- Shoes & Leather Goods Stores
- Appliance Stores
- Full-Service Restaurants
- Electronics Stores
- Furniture Stores
- Office Supplies/Stationary Stores
- Gift and Hobby Stores

For each of these expenditure categories potential demand exceeds existing in-county supply, hence the leakage of retail dollars from Tuscaloosa to neighboring counties. In 2004, the estimated aggregate demand for these retail categories exceeded actual retail sales by approximately \$60 million. This total does not include the estimated excess demand (over actual sales) for alcoholic beverage establishments (bars are considered non-retail expenditures); this would add another \$2.5 million to the total. These are the types of

businesses, with the possible exception of drinking establishments, the City should seek to attract to the Downtown.

In contrast, retail supply exceeds estimated demand in such segments as motor vehicles and parts dealers, building materials and garden supply stores, supermarkets, and fast-food type establishments. The continued viability of these types of establishments is heavily dependent upon the continued in-migration of out-of-county shoppers. As the populations of some of these more rural and suburban communities continue to grow, many of these types of retail businesses will be available in locations outside the County.

HOUSING MARKET

Demographic information tells us that single-family houses will remain the dominant form of home ownership in the overall Tuscaloosa area. Condominiums in Downtown locations will appeal to a limited number of people – buyers of investment properties catering primarily to student rentals, parents with children planning to attend the University of Alabama, singles who either work Downtown or can be attracted to the area by appropriate infrastructure improvements and amenities, and older couples near or already retired seeking to downsize. These “young and restless,” “prosperous empty nesters” and “cozy and comfortable” demographic cohorts make up 12.3 percent of the population in Tuscaloosa.

These three groups would find lofts, condominiums and townhouses located in the Downtown most attractive. For such developments to succeed, however, convenient and safe parking is a prerequisite. The broadest market appeal would price such units in the \$90,000 to \$150,000 range, in line with comparable condominium units currently in the Tuscaloosa market. Loft apartments would appeal to young singles and married couples without children, but must have adequate parking. Rents must be comparable to those charged for one and two bedroom apartments located within a 10 to 15 minute drive time from the University.

As redevelopment progresses and Downtown becomes increasingly attractive to a broader segment of affluent residents, more expensive, luxury type units could prove very viable (townhouses and condos priced from \$175,000 - \$350,000). The presence of a major supermarket on University Boulevard within a five-minute drive from Downtown is a major asset and will help



support Downtown residential dwellings. This does obviate the need for local specialty food stores such as bakeries and produce markets.

CLASS A OFFICE SPACE

There is no Class A (the most exclusively-furnished building type) office space anywhere in Tuscaloosa; it is difficult for a market as small as Tuscaloosa to support such development. Stand-alone offices, converted residential properties, or small multi-storied business centers (both rentals and commercial condominiums) catering to business service providers, public accountants, and legal professions, would prove viable in Downtown.

AMENITIES

Safe, affordable, and convenient parking is also a given for a prosperous Downtown retail market. The lack of such parking facilities was one of the most commonly-cited reasons consumers do not shop Downtown. However, the newly-constructed Intermodal Downtown Facility with its 400+ parking spaces a block off University Boulevard will make parking downtown much easier.

Also, for Downtown development to prove viable and long lasting, the Downtown must be pedestrian friendly, with compatible businesses close to each other and easily accessible. Well-lit streets and the centrally located Intermodal Facility are critical for a healthy retail market.

Green spaces are also a key ingredient for a vibrant Downtown. Park benches and a band shell where concerts, plays, and other cultural and civic events can be staged are major people attractors for a Downtown (the soon to be completed Government Plaza will provide for many of these opportunities). Cafes with outdoor seating and art galleries also add to the charm of Downtown living. Planned developments such as the amphitheater along the river will improve the economic viability of the Downtown as well as bring more tourism dollars to the Tuscaloosa.

The preservation and maintenance of historic buildings is also a key element of successful Downtown development. Some of the older, multi-floor buildings throughout the Downtown are candidates for reuse but it is important to maintain their historic façades to insure harmonious design elements. A rooftop restaurant with a view of the City and the Black Warrior River might also prove to be a Downtown attractor.

CONCLUSION

The Market Report completed by the Alabama Real Estate Research and Education Center could not specify the exact number of dwelling units, retail establishments, or office buildings that might be possible within the Greater Downtown. However, it is felt that the private-sector market place will meet the necessary demand when called upon. If the Downtown is made a desirable place to live, work, and recreate, development will follow. The essential prerequisites are developing guidelines that insure harmonious land use, a safe living and working environment, and the infrastructure amenities that attract people to Downtown.





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Part II – Creating the Vision

Envisioning a Greater Downtown

OVERALL VISION

A Vibrant, Progressive and Sustainable Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Where Citizens Live, Work and Play.

KEY ELEMENTS FOR ACHIEVING THE VISION

- Strengthening Downtown Tuscaloosa as the “city center”.
- Creating an economically viable, physically attractive, people desirable, fully developed, Greater Downtown.
- Embracing mixed uses of retail, office, and residential development with densities that promote a more vibrant urban street life.
- Preserving historic resources and restoring historic building façades and architectural integrity.
- Creating a successful Main Street Program to ensure economic vitality for the Downtown Core.
- Capitalizing on its strategic location in proximity to The University of Alabama, Stillman College, the Black Warrior River, and Downtown historic neighborhoods.
- Increasing in-town living—condominiums, townhouses, traditional single-family, live-work units, and apartments.
- Building on the cultural initiatives of the arts.
- Expanding the “walkability” and “bikability” of the Greater Downtown.
- Creating recreation linkages among the RiverWalk, Capitol Park and Annette Shelby Park.
- “Calming” of traffic within the Lurleen Wallace corridor.

- Greening the urban edges and landscapes.
- Revitalizing vacant and underutilized properties.
- Promoting standards of design excellence.
- Continuing to support major governmental initiatives - the Federal Building, Government Plaza, Amphitheater, Farmers Market, Visitor’s Center and RiverWalk.

SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Ensure that uses enhance economic vitality, particularly first floor uses.
- Enhance the physical attractiveness of building facades, streets, lighting, signage, landscaping, parking areas, and private and public spaces.
- Create an appealing, safe downtown environment with more livable streets and enhanced pedestrian ways.
- Set a high standard of design quality through special attention to architecture, landscaping, site layout, site maintenance, and appropriate land uses.
- Develop pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the Greater Downtown.
- Unify design characteristics as they are applied to infill development.
- Identify opportunities to expand public, quasi-public or private focal point improvements that support the design character of Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa.
- Develop a parking strategy, including on-street parking management.
- Capitalize on opportunities for small civic open spaces - courtyards, gardens, or pedestrian pathways.
- Promote opportunity for more evening business activity such as dining and entertainment.
- Enhance Tuscaloosa’s cultural character through support of the arts and its heritage.
- Retain older, historic buildings while providing continuity between the old and new.





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Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan is a spatial and policy plan for the Greater Downtown. It serves as the foundation for land use, development, preservation, urban design, and regulatory control policies. The Land Use Plan represents a vision for the area that is sensitive to the needs of surrounding neighborhoods while remaining respectful of existing development.

The Plan's intent is to provide for a more flexible land use policy that is responsive to desirable development opportunities. The Plan is based on the findings of the *Existing Conditions and Analysis Report*, public visioning sessions, the insight of the Greater Downtown Advisory Committee, input from other key stakeholders, and the expertise of the consultant team.

The Land Use Plan is graphically illustrated in Figure 6 Land Use Plan.

LAND USE DISTRICTS

Land Use Districts in the Greater Downtown are divided into 10 distinct development types. Each District represents the dominant type of land use or activity within the District.

It is the intent of the Land Use Plan to permit a mix of *compatible* land uses throughout the Greater Downtown while discouraging incompatible uses. Mixing land uses offers an opportunity to diversify the Downtown, thus stimulating economic activity.

The Land Use Plan gives order and rationality to the land use patterns within the Greater Downtown and ensures a vibrant urban center for Tuscaloosa.

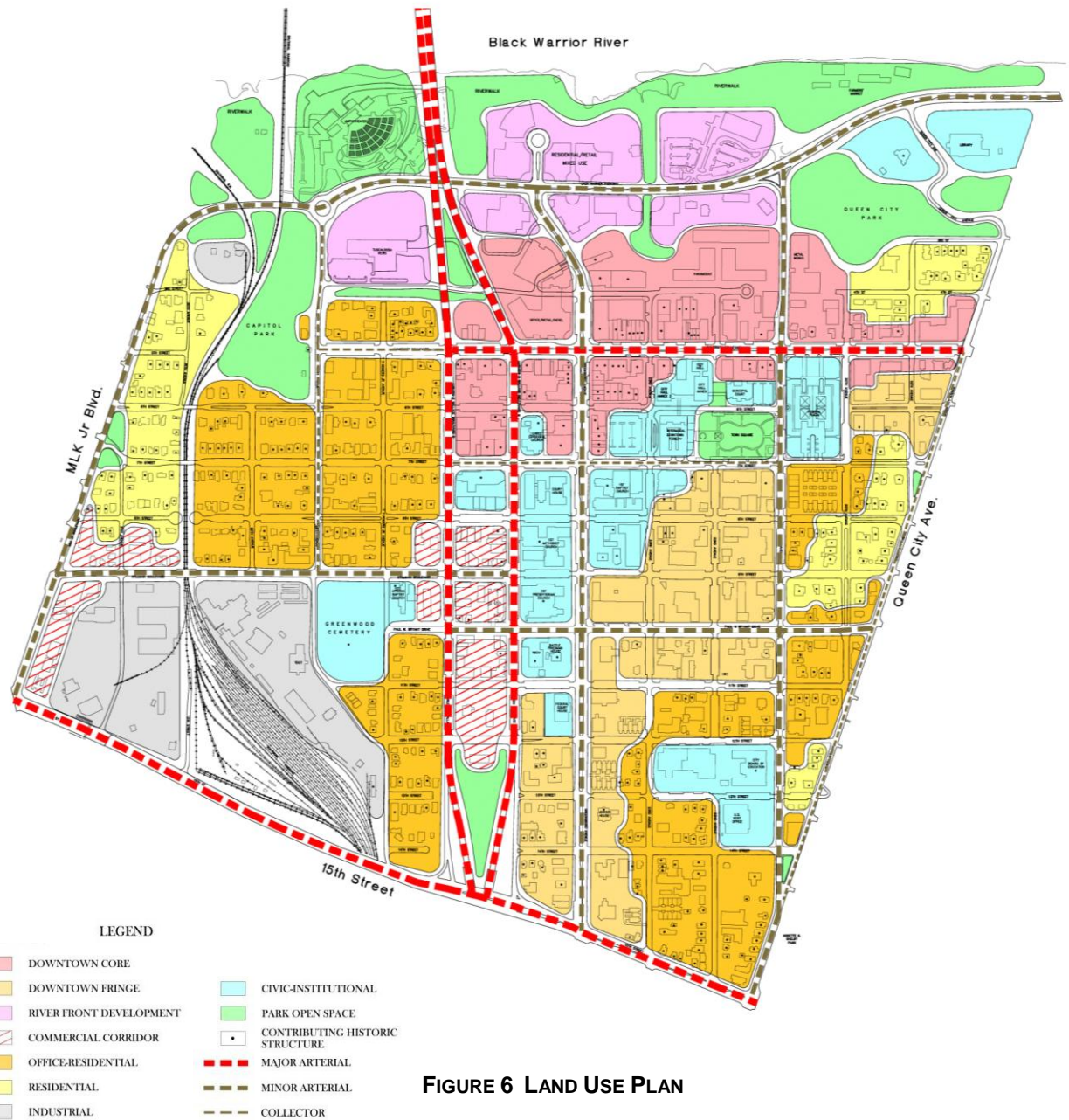


FIGURE 6 LAND USE PLAN

DOWNTOWN CORE



Tuscaloosa's Downtown Core is the heart of the Greater Downtown. Its character reflects the City's image to both residents and visitors. It is highly desirable that the Core's historical importance as a focal point of commercial and civic activity be emphasized, and strengthened by a supporting cast of residential uses and additional services. This is achieved by permitting uses that are compatible with retail and entertainment functions, and support the life of the Core on a 24-7 basis. The completion of the Urban Renewal Plan's Federal Plaza, Government Plaza and Intermodal Facility do much to strengthen the Core's viability.



The vision for the Downtown Core is an area where shops, consumer services, offices, entertainment, restaurants and residences co-exist. It has a range of uses that draw people Downtown and satisfy people who work and/or live Downtown. It is envisioned that retail shops and restaurants are located in abundance at street-level along the main arteries (University Boulevard and Greensboro) to generate pedestrian activity with professional offices and/or residential dwellings on upper floors. Ground floor space dominated by office use is discouraged since it disrupts the shopping experience.



Future development in the Downtown Core is targeted toward a carefully selected sector of owner-operated boutiques, small-scale national specialty shops and restaurants. Supporting this are financial and business services, consumer services, upper-floor offices and residential uses. To realize this vision, existing ground floor space that is not physically functional for retail use are to be renovated, along with the renovation of upper floor space for office and residential usage. Regulatory controls would be structured to allow by-right, those uses that are compatible with the vision of a Greater Downtown.



A significant recommendation is to "reclaim" as part of the Downtown Core the historic commercial area situated between the two Lurleen Wallace Boulevards north of 8th Street. This would be accomplished by expanding the Downtown Historic District and narrowing the pedestrian crossing distances with curb bump-outs.

A key element to the Downtown Core's viability is the initiation of a Main Street Program for the Downtown. If implemented, the program will create a cohesive set of operational, marketing, promotional, and physical improvements for the Downtown Core. (See Main Street section of the Plan).

RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

The Riverfront Development area lies between the Downtown Core and the RiverWalk and is bisected by Jack Warner Parkway. It is envisioned that development will be mid- to large-scale, free-standing office buildings, with a potential for large scale mixed use projects having office, and multi-family residential uses.



The Riverfront Development area will continue to develop along the model of suburban "corporate office parks" with free-standing, single-use buildings served by large surface parking areas. This area is one of the few areas within the Greater Downtown that has development sites for large infill projects. Care should be taken not to develop this area as a retail and entertainment corridor which would compete directly with potential opportunities in the Downtown Core or other activity centers within the City.



Given the Riverfront Development area's location adjacent to the Riverwalk and within view of the Black Warrior River, it is essential that future development be subjected to stringent site plan review standards to assure quality development standards are maintained. This would include landscape buffers and limiting driveway access points to protect the integrity of Jack Warner Parkway and the RiverWalk. Pedestrian and bike access to the RiverWalk from adjacent properties is also essential.



DOWNTOWN FRINGE

The Downtown Fringe is a mix of old and new land uses situated east and south of the Downtown Core. This area occupies a pivotal position serving as the entry to the Downtown via University Boulevard and Greensboro Avenue.



Abutting the Downtown Fringe is the Intermodal Downtown Facility and the soon-to-be-completed Federal Plaza Building and Government Plaza. These projects are already bringing substantial changes to this area. However, one of the more challenging aspects facing this area is the abundance of suburban-styled, auto-oriented development characterized by buildings set back from the rights-of-way and fronted by large expanses of parking lots. This has created a gradual erosion of the Downtown Fringe's historic walkable streetscape.



The Downtown Fringe contains substantial opportunities for redevelopment given the number of vacant and underutilized sites. The range of appropriate uses within the Downtown Fringe includes office and commercial, but excludes

automobile-oriented and heavy commercial. Opportunities exist for mixed use buildings, townhouses and free-standing multi-family residential, including rental and owner occupied. Multi-storied residential is appropriate but at scale that is compatible with adjacent development and accompanied by retail and service uses at street level.

A distinctive area of the Downtown Fringe is the Greensboro Avenue corridor which is flanked by the City's founding churches, the County Courthouse, the existing Federal Court Building, the Searcy, Battle-Friedman and Jemison houses and a scattering of financial and retail businesses. This is the City's most attractive avenue; continued efforts should be made to protect the landscape and broad avenue character of the area.



COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

The Land Use Plan recognizes two Commercial Corridors that remain exclusively commercial in use: the Lurleen Wallace corridor and the smaller Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard commercial area.

LURLEEN WALLACE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The Lurleen Wallace Boulevard Commercial Corridor, identified as south of 8th Street to the beginning of the I-359 access ramps, is dominated by fast food restaurants, used car lots, expansive stretches of barren asphalt parking lots and garish pole signage and billboards. This corridor is the major gateway into and out of the City of Tuscaloosa, and carries approximately 60,000 vehicles per day.



The Plan envisions these commercial uses continuing within this corridor but mitigated with substantial investment in landscaping and sign control. Given the low density lot coverage, there numerous infill opportunities within existing lots. The high traffic volumes could also justify development of one or two limited services hotels within this corridor.



Care should be taken not to expand the auto-oriented commercial uses west into the Capitol Park and Stillman Neighborhoods. Likewise, such expansion of auto-oriented uses north of 8th Street should not be encouraged due to this area being envisioned as a part of the Downtown Core District.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BOULEVARD

The Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard Commercial Corridor straddles the Greater Downtown and West Tuscaloosa planning areas. It is a concentration of businesses centered at the intersections of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Stillman Boulevard and 15th Street. This area is characterized by a combination of small neighborhood businesses to mid-sized retail chain stores to industrial uses.

Future development should be respectful of the adjacent historically significant Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood. Buffered parking areas, landscaping, and appropriate signage should be a priority as future development occurs within this commercial corridor.

OFFICE – RESIDENTIAL



The Greater Downtown contains two distinctive areas recommended to be maintained as Office – Residential, and protected from encroachment of intensive commercial uses. These are the Capitol Park and South 22nd Avenue Neighborhoods. Each of these neighborhoods contains a wealth of Tuscaloosa’s historic resources many dating back to the founding of the City.

One portion of the Office-Residential District includes the Capitol Park Neighborhood and a portion of the Stillman Boulevard Neighborhood around Greenwood Cemetery. This historically significant area has experienced substantial encroachment of incompatible uses, and building types and parking areas that are appropriate in suburban locations, not within historic neighborhoods.



The other Office-Residential District includes areas of the Queen City and 22nd Avenue Neighborhoods generally situated east of Greensboro and south of 7th and 11th Streets. This encompasses a part of the Druid City Historic District and a wealth of historical structures situated outside the historic district. It is a mix of residential, office and commercial uses. Encroachment of heavy commercial uses and insensitive building renovations within the southernmost part threaten to erode the area’s historic fabric.



These geographical areas of the Greater Downtown are envisioned as “Office-Residential to encourage uses that can be sensitively accommodated within existing historical structures or be suitable infill uses. New development should be compatible with the existing historical architecture having porches, pitched roofs and elevated foundations. Heights should be limited to no more than two and half stories and building materials should emphasize wood-like materials. Signage and location of parking improvements should be strictly regulated. Residential land uses should be limited to single-family housing, two- to four family, and town homes.



It is also recommended that the Capitol Park Neighborhood be designated as a National Register Historic District as well as a Local Historic District to better protect the historical integrity of the area and encourage more compatible infill development. The 22nd Avenue Neighborhood should be considered as a Conservation Area to encourage preservation of the historical character and compatible infill. This along with lighting, signage, additional roadway medians and streetscape enhancements will make these Office-Residential areas a showplace for not just the Greater Downtown but for all of Tuscaloosa.

RESIDENTIAL

The Land Use Plan identifies two single-family Residential Districts within the Greater Downtown. One is the Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood west of the Kansas City Southern Railroad track; the other is within the Queen City Neighborhood east of 21st Avenue.



These are attractive areas that contain historical structures and enhance the revitalization objectives of the Greater Downtown.



The Druid City Historical District (National Register and Local District) provides a high level of protection for the historic integrity of development within the Queen City Neighborhood. This Local Historic District ensures that renovations, additions and new construction are compatible

with the existing character of the historic neighborhood. Unfortunately, the historic character of the Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood is not afforded such protection, since it is not within a National Register or Local Historic District.

These Residential Districts should remain as predominantly single-family residential. Opportunities for two- or three family uses should be considered but only in appropriate locations and designed to appear as single-family residential buildings. No obviously commercial intrusions or large, multi-family uses, including the conversion of large residences to apartment units, should be permitted within these Residential Districts. However, the opportunity for in-town bed-and-breakfast establishments could be considered at certain locations, but such uses should avoid conversion of front yards in to parking areas.



INDUSTRIAL

Two areas are identified as Industrial Land Use Districts, primarily due the presence of existing industry. One area is in the southwestern part of the Greater Downtown. It has a variety of industrial operations ranging from warehousing to concrete mixing operations. The most significant industrial use is the Kansas City Southern Railway switching yard located just west of the City's Transportation Department's maintenance operations. The railroad yard covers a substantial land area and creates extensive noise during boxcar coupling operations. It is not anticipated that any of these industrial operations will cease operation within the foreseeable future. Thus, it is recommended that efforts should be made to require buffering of outside storage and industrial operations where feasible, particularly for new or expanded industrial activities.



The second Industrial District is a small area northwest of Capitol Park but accessed via Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. This area is now occupied by a chemical storage operation, which is heavy industrial in nature but is fairly well shielded by topography. If the chemical storage facility were to cease operations, a similar use or preferably open space would most likely be the only viable re-use of the property.



CIVIC – INSTITUTIONAL

A large segment of the portion of the Greater Downtown is devoted to Civic-Institutional Land Uses. These include the City of Tuscaloosa's City Hall Complex, the Municipal Court, the County Courthouse, the existing and planned Federal Buildings, the City and County Boards of Education Buildings, the Downtown Post Office, the Library, the Queen City Bathhouse, Greenwood Cemetery, the Children's Hands on Museum, the YMCA and a majority of the City's founding churches. In addition, there are a number of historic homes that serve a civic function by providing venues for special events and space for community services.

These Civic-Institutional land uses contribute greatly to the fabric of the Greater Downtown with their beautiful architecture, substantial landscaping and preservation of historic buildings. They are distinctive land uses that signal to visitors that they have arrived at the epicenter of the City of Tuscaloosa's birthplace.

The presence of Civic-Institutional uses in the heart of the Greater Downtown is critical in drawing people and activities to Downtown, which in turn encourages economic development. Churches have the potential to bring members Downtown during the evenings and on weekends, which can be beneficial to Downtown businesses, especially restaurants. Governmental facilities contribute to the economy of the Greater Downtown by generating daily visitors to the Downtown Core.

It is important to nurture the continued presence of these Civic-Institutional land uses within the Greater Downtown by making them a contributing partner when planning for the future of the Greater Downtown. It is also important that development which occurs in proximity to these important land uses be compatible in site development and building design. But likewise, it is important that as Civic-Institutional land uses expand, that they do so in a manner that supports the overall vision and design elements of the Greater Downtown.



PARK-OPEN SPACE

Park-Open Space is designated on the Land Use Plan for areas that are in open space and park use or vacant land in public ownership within proximity to these uses. The expansion of the RiverWalk, the newly completed Annette Shelby Park and the soon-to-be-completed Government Plaza provide major opportunities for outdoor enjoyment of landscaped green spaces within the Greater Downtown.

These recreation improvements will also be enhanced by the addition of the Amphitheater, a new Farmer's Market and Visitor's Center, and the Queen City Park Transportation Museum, and within the near future the renovation of the historic Capitol Park.



Development Concept Plan

The Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Vision Statement and Key Elements for Achieving the Vision (see Part II) are translated into physical form in the Development Concept Plan. The Plan incorporates many of the dynamics that create a truly vibrant Greater Downtown. It capitalizes on Tuscaloosa's position as home to Alabama's premier university, a beautiful riverfront location, the County seat and the major shopping and entertainment area for West Alabama.

The Concept Plan, with its supporting documentation, not only influences future development but serves as a guide to shaping public policy, public improvements and private development decisions. Several recent developments, as well as planned and/or ongoing private mixed-use projects, provide a new optimism for Downtown. This private development, as well as City-funded investment and future County participation, are critical components to an enhanced Downtown.

The Concept Plan illustrates key development projects, urban design improvements, needed parking facilities, landscape improvements, street modifications and gateway locations. These visual elements assist in creating a picture of what is possible within the Greater Downtown.

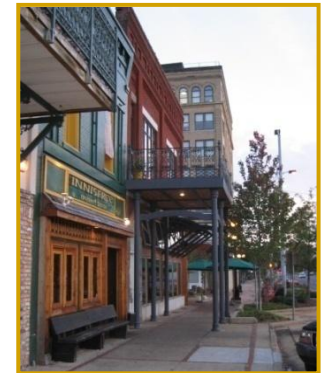
The Concept Plan illustrates special places that draw citizens to the Greater Downtown and make it a focal point for community activity within Tuscaloosa. These places include the Amphitheater, Farmer's Market and Visitor's Center, the Riverwalk, the Transportation Museum/Queen City Park and other riverfront improvements. With the completion of the Federal Plaza Building, the Government Plaza and expansion of City Hall, the equivalent of a governmental campus/town square is created for the Downtown.

The Concept Plan shows the location of potential buildings, such as office complexes, a downtown hotel, mid- and high-rise residential buildings as well as townhouses. The Plan recognizes that private sector development decisions can substantially change as demand changes; however, illustrating the potential of vacant and underutilized property captures the imagination of what is truly possible within the Greater Downtown.

ELEMENTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

The Concept Plan encompasses 650 acres (87 city blocks) of Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa and is bounded by the Black Warrior River on the north, Queen City Avenue on the east, 15th Street on the south and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard on the west. Each element of the Plan is described within separate sections of the Plan, but generally includes:

- **Greater Downtown as a Destination** – center of commerce, dining, entertainment, government, cultural activities, mixed uses and in-town living.
- **Major Public Facilities** – Federal Plaza Building, Government Plaza, Intermodal Facility, Amphitheater, Annex III-Water & Sewer Building, Farmer's Market, and Visitor's Center, and the RiverWalk.
- **Hotel/Retail/Convention Center** – a key facility to attract convention and visitor business to Tuscaloosa.
- **Vibrant Main Street** – nurturing the formation of a Tuscaloosa Main Street program.
- **In-Town Living** – above-store and free-standing condos and apartments, townhouses, and single-family infill.
- **Increased Mobility** – improved bus, trolley, bike and pedestrian opportunities.
- **Pedestrian-Friendly Streets** – curb "bump outs" at intersections within the Downtown, particularly along Lurleen Wallace Blvd., University Blvd., Greensboro Ave., and 21st Ave., that reduce pedestrian intersection crossing distances without reduction in roadway capacity.
- **Greening of Downtown** – significant landscape improvements along Lurleen Wallace Blvd., University Blvd., Greensboro Ave., 21st Ave., and Bryant Drive.
- **Infill Opportunities** – major initiatives for infilling of underutilized properties within the Downtown.
- **Historic Preservation** – protection and restoration of historic resources.
- **New Zoning Ordinance for Downtown** – replacement of the existing Zoning Ordinance with a dynamic ordinance that supports Downtown renewal and revival.



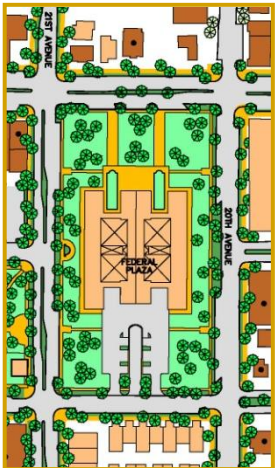
URBAN RENEWAL PLAN INITIATIVES

Implementation of individual projects recommended by the Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban Redevelopment / Renewal Plan is essential to the future of Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa.

FEDERAL PLAZA BUILDING

The new Federal Plaza Building is the linchpin of Tuscaloosa's Greater Downtown Plan. This building and the resulting urban renewal of the surrounding five-block area was the decade-long vision of Senator Richard Shelby. This vision served as the catalyst for undertaking the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan, which, in turn, highlighted the need to prepare an overall plan for Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa.

The Federal Plaza Building encompasses two city blocks extending from University Boulevard to 7th Street and from 20th to 21st Avenues. The 129,000 square foot building will house the US District Court, the US Bankruptcy Court and the Social Security Administration. This significant addition to the Greater Downtown serves as a visual as well as a functional anchor to the Downtown. Although it will not be ready for occupancy until 2011, its pending presence has spurred new business investments along University Boulevard.



Hammond Beeby Rupert Ainge Architects

GOVERNMENT PLAZA

Tuscaloosa's Government Plaza is a centrally located Downtown park which will serve as a "showpiece" for the Downtown. This "urban green" in Downtown Tuscaloosa will become a major public gathering place. Located adjacent to City Hall, Municipal Court and the new Federal Plaza Building, it is a major component of the Greater Downtown Plan.



Major elements of the Government Plaza include:

- An expansive "urban green" to serve as an informal public gathering place.
- A pavilion serving as a centerpiece for special events and civic gatherings, as well as a focal point for the termination of 22nd Avenue into the park.
- Amenities such as a fountain and public art, walkways, seating areas, and open space for festivals, exhibits or informal lunch breaks.
- Commemorative plaques recounting Tuscaloosa's early history, the buildings that formerly occupied the area, and the African-American business district that once thrived along 23rd Avenue and 6th and 7th Streets.

LEGEND

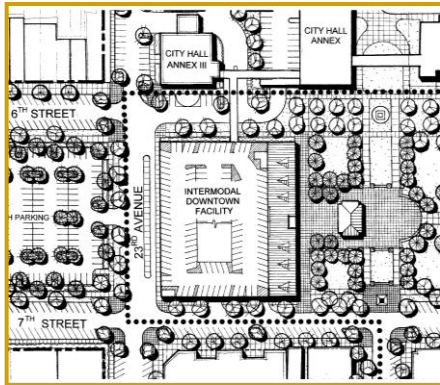
-  EXISTING BUILDING
-  HISTORIC / CONTRIBUTING BUILDING
-  POTENTIAL BUILDING
-  POTENTIAL OFFICE / RESIDENTIAL
-  POTENTIAL TOWNHOME
-  PROPOSED STREETSCAPING
-  PARK
-  OPEN SPACE
-  RIVERFRONT TRAIL
-  MAJOR GATEWAY
-  MINOR GATEWAY



FIGURE 7 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN

INTERMODAL DOWNTOWN FACILITY

The Intermodal Downtown Facility, completed in 2009, is a four-story, 187,121 square foot parking facility providing 449 parking spaces. The Facility is bounded by 6th Street on the north, 7th Street on the south, 23rd Avenue on the west and the Government Plaza on the east. It serves as a centralized bus transfer facility for the City's Transit Authority and provides parking for City staff and the general public. The facility includes 9800 square feet of commercial retail space adjacent to the Government Plaza.



Within the Intermodal Facility, there is 8100 square feet of office space and 50 dedicated parking spaces for the Tuscaloosa Parking and Transit Authority. The facility is linked to City offices by an elevated pedestrian walkway across 6th Street. Connected to the Intermodal Facility's east façade, is planned space for retail shops and restaurants. As the City's transportation demands grow, the Intermodal Facility will accommodate the purchase of train tickets, with the possibility of purchasing airline tickets should an airline carrier locate within the Tuscaloosa area.



CITY HALL ANNEX III

The City Hall Annex III was completed in late 2008. This three-story building is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of 6th Street and 23rd Avenue. It provides 28,514 square feet of office space for the City's Utilities and Revenue Departments, drive-thru utility payment windows, and is connected to other City Hall buildings and the Intermodal Facility by an enclosed elevated pedestrian bridge.



MUNICIPAL COURT PARKING AREA

A much needed 27-space parking lot adjacent to the Municipal Court Building was completed in 2008 just north of the Government Plaza.



INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

The Concept Plan identifies a number of potential infill sites for new development. The Plan's intent is to suggest locations where infill development on vacant or underutilized land might be possible. It shows "potential buildings" for the purpose of stimulating development ideas. However, the Plan acknowledges development of these sites will involve private development decisions based on market conditions and that building footprints will differ from those shown on the Concept Plan.

LARGE TRACT INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of significantly underutilized or vacant infill sites within the Greater Downtown, many of which are located between University Boulevard and the riverfront. Several developments involving mixed use high-rise buildings have been publicized for some of these sites.

Proposed uses range from buildings offering rental or condominium residential with ground floor retail to mixed retail, residential and hotel development. Potential infill sites include the following tracts of land:

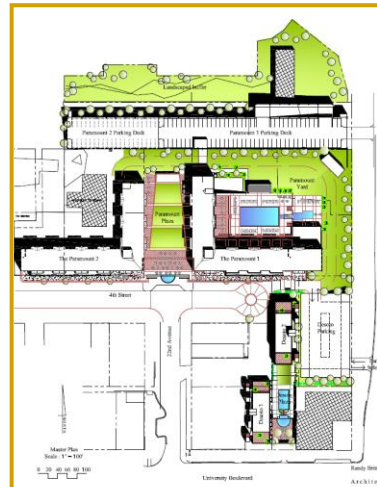
University Boulevard and Greensboro Avenue.



This site, located at the intersection of University Boulevard and Greensboro Avenue, was acquired by the City many years ago for development of a hotel convention center. Although this concept may no longer be viable, this location is an excellent site for a mixed use development that includes retail, office, residential and a possible hotel. Development of this site is critical to anchoring the Downtown and serving as a significant entryway into the Downtown Core. Continuing efforts should be made toward developing this site.

21st Avenue and 4th Street.

Multi-story mixed use developments have been proposed in the vicinity of 4th Street and 21st and 22nd Avenues in the Downtown Core Area. Possible development might consist of condominiums, a boutique hotel, and retail and consumer service space with structured parking facilities.



21st and 7th Street

New, upscale privately financed town home development is a possibility for the block located between 20th and 21st Avenues and 7th and 8th Streets. The town home development location immediately south of the new Federal Plaza Building is envisioned to have a very urban architectural context. Town homes with an urban residential density serve as an appropriate transitional use between the Downtown Core and the Druid City Historic District located immediately to the east and south of the site.



2300 Bryant Drive

This is a recently cleared property at the intersection of Bryant Drive and Greensboro Avenue that has mixed-use development potential. The demolition of a substandard apartment complex on this site was a positive action for improvement of this area. Potential development could be ground floor commercial with upper floor residential uses.

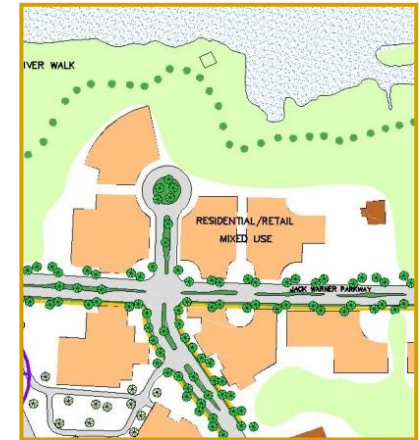


Bryant Drive Elevation



Jack Warner Parkway and Greensboro Avenue.

This is an excellent example of large tract infill opportunity. This site, once the location of a large automobile dealership, offers the potential for mixed use development with a combination of commercial, office and residential use or it could be developed exclusively as an office or multi-family development.



SMALL TRACT INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

Numerous opportunities exist for infill development on small tracts of land or within vacant or underutilized existing structures throughout the Greater Downtown. Examples of this include:

- Development of single-family infill homes on vacant lots within the Martin Luther King Jr. Corridor.
- Conversion of vacant or underutilized upper floor space for residential occupancy in the Downtown Core and immediately adjacent areas.
- Retail and service businesses on vacant ground floor space in the Downtown Core.
- Compatible small office, town home or single-family development on vacant land in the Capitol Park Area.
- Small offices or town home development on vacant lots scattered throughout sections east of Greensboro Avenue that are designated as Office-Residential on the Land Use Map.
- Commercial development on vacant land in the vicinity of Stillman Boulevard’s intersection with Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

URBAN DESIGN AND FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Excellence in urban design strongly influences the visual impact and perception the Greater Downtown has on first-time visitors as well as long-term residents. As it is often said, you only have one opportunity to make a good first impression. Appearance can significantly contribute to the image of Downtown and encourage private investment in revitalization initiatives.

The Downtown Plan focuses on urban design features such as the addition of well-designed governmental buildings, façade improvements, streetscape and intersection enhancements, gateway treatments, parking lot screening, and additional green space and park development. Equally important is the appearance of private properties. Substantial aesthetic improvements to private properties could be achieved through urban art, signage, and plantings, particularly on parking lot peripheries. Encouragement of private initiatives (perhaps through the proposed Main Street Program), in concert with proposed urban design improvements, can make a dramatic alteration in the image of the Downtown.

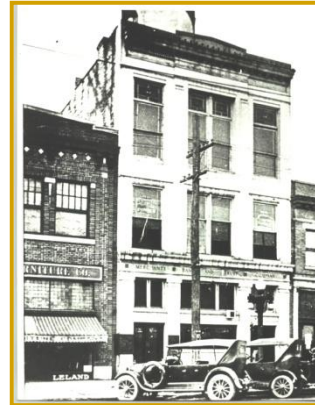


Encouragement of private initiatives (perhaps through the proposed Main Street Program), in concert with proposed urban design improvements, can make a dramatic alteration in the image of the Downtown.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Regaining the visual strength of structures in the Downtown Core is important to the total revitalization of Tuscaloosa's Downtown Area. Many facades have been maintained or painstakingly reclaimed, while others have been subjected to inappropriate remodeling of upper and lower facades or lost architectural ornamentation and detailing.

Many Downtown buildings that retain their original facades require treatment to address maintenance and repair issues. However, it is sometimes not lack of repair, but the quality of repair that is done that negatively impacts the historic character of Downtown buildings. For this reason, direction and guidance for building and/or facade improvements are needed. Elements to be considered when undertaking building or facade improvements include, but are not limited to, façade materials, façade surfaces, window configuration, duplication of historic details, upper façade design and storefront piers.



IN-TOWN LIVING

In-town living is an important part of the vision for Downtown Tuscaloosa. The Plan provides opportunities for more people to live in Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa, especially within the Downtown Core. This creates positive benefits such as:

- Customers for retail shops, service establishments and restaurants;
- Restaurant, retail and entertainment activity extending past the traditional business work hours;
- Increased security because of more pedestrian activity on Downtown streets; and,
- Development and redevelopment opportunities.

Few people currently live within the traditional commercial core of the Greater Downtown. However, Downtown has the potential to house a large population within a mix of housing types that differ from that available in other parts of the City. Potential Downtown residential uses offer a mix of locations and choices that include condominiums, urban apartment buildings, town homes, and residential lofts above businesses. These living choices provide residential opportunities that appeal to a wide range of residents including young professionals, empty nesters and elderly as well as students. As new residential developments come into the Downtown, scale and density should be a part of the siting considerations to ensure compatibility with existing developments, particularly within the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District and adjacent to the Druid City Historic District.



Excellent residential opportunities are generally available in:

- Underutilized and vacant land between University Boulevard and the riverfront for residential mixed use developments;
- Upper floor space in the Downtown Core for loft units;
- New multi-family buildings, town homes and mixed use development adjacent to the Downtown Core to the east and south;
- Town homes and single-family houses in the Capitol Park Neighborhood and the South 22nd Avenue Neighborhood; and
- Single-family housing in the Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Neighborhood and the Queen City Avenue Neighborhood.

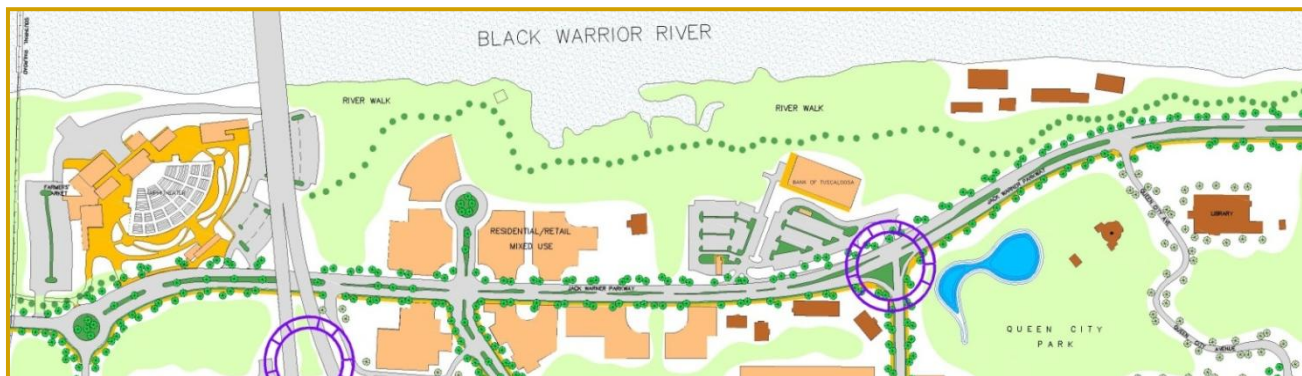
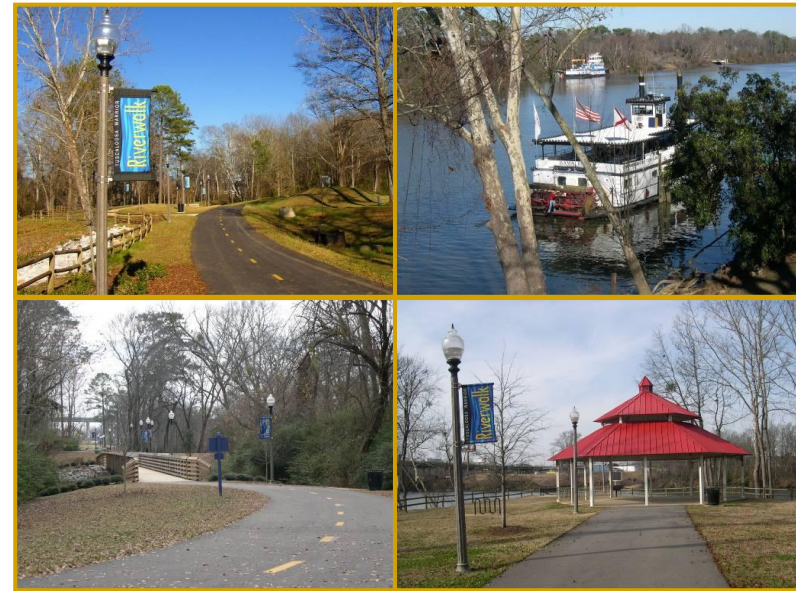


CONTINUING RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

Since 2003, the City has had an ongoing commitment to implementing the River Margin Park Improvements Master Plan. The planned RiverWalk along the south side of the Black Warrior River extends from the Oliver Lock and Dam eastward for seven miles to the Paul W. Bryant Bridge. Similar planned improvements extend on the north side of the river from the City of Northport's corporate limits eastward for six miles to the confluence of the North River with the Black Warrior River. A significant portion of the planned RiverWalk improvements have already been completed within the Greater Downtown planning area.

The continued implementation of River Margin Park Improvements Master Plan is a critical element of the Greater Downtown Plan. These improvements have the potential to make the riverfront a major focal point. In addition to the public projects, private development of the areas designated as "Riverfront Development" on the Land Use Plan should be actively encouraged. The combination of public open space and recreational proposals along with sensitively developed private initiatives will totally change the character and environment of the riverfront.

The RiverWalk is illustrated below and depicted in the photos. When completed, the improvements will provide a significant pedestrian and bicyclist linkage among the Amphitheater, the riverboat launch, the Farmer's Market and Visitor's Center, additional open spaces and the University of Alabama campus.



TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM / QUEEN CITY PARK

The historic Queen City Bathhouse is being transformed into a Transportation Museum that will be completed in 2010. The Museum illustrates modes of transportation occurring along the Black Warrior River over the last 450 years. The museum opens with a replica of a canoe that would have been used by Native Americans along the river and moves through to present-day water transportation. Exhibits include steamships, riverboats, and modern day coal barges, along with exhibits that discuss animal-drawn equipment and automobiles.

The museum's primary focus is past and present forms of transportation occurring along the Black Warrior River, with hands-on displays, replicas, and models. The Transportation Museum is located within the beautiful surroundings of Queen City Park.



FARMERS' MARKET AND VISITORS' CENTER

The new Farmer's Market and Visitor's Center is planned along the banks of the Black Warrior River on the former US Army Corps of Engineers site located at the intersection of 21st Avenue and Jack Warner Parkway. The project includes extensive renovation of existing buildings as well as new construction of additional space.

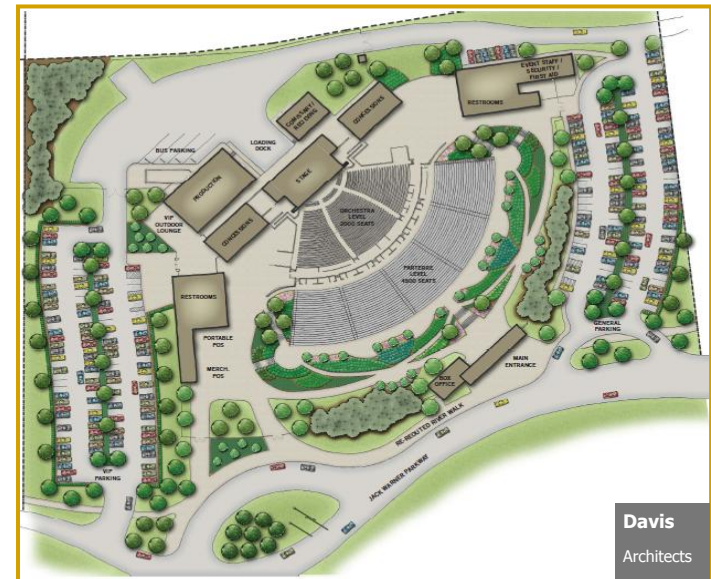


The Farmers Market will be located within 8200 square feet of renovated space which will contain a new arbor entry canopy and space for farm trucks to access display bays along the service drive. Overhead garage doors with views to the Warrior River provide a secure and conditioned space for special events such as wedding receptions, tailgating opportunities and a platform stage.

The Visitor's Center will be located within 5200 square feet of a newly constructed addition. The facility will provide an entry hall, a gift shop, marketing room and a community conference room, with offices located along the river in a linear arrangement.

AMPHITHEATER

The soon-to-be-completed Amphitheater is situated along the banks of the Black Warrior River just north of Jack Warner Parkway on land previously occupied by a ball field complex. The Amphitheater will have a covered performance stage and an estimated seating capacity to accommodate 6,500 attendees. This facility will serve as a beautiful addition to the RiverWalk and an outdoor recreation anchor to the Greater Downtown.

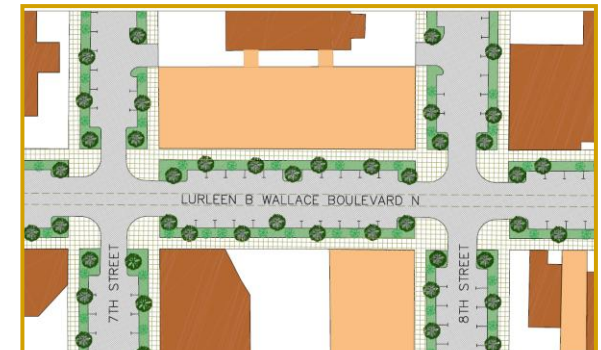


LURLEEN BOULEVARD ENHANCEMENTS

The heavily traveled, one-way streets of Lurleen Wallace Boulevard create a major east-west divide within the Greater Downtown. The fast moving, six-laned roadway is unsettling for pedestrians and greatly reduces the overall ambiance of the Downtown. In addition, the Lurleen Wallace Corridor has an aesthetically displeasing environment with its large expanse of parking lots, fast-food establishments and absence of landscaping.

The Development Concept Plan recommends the following improvements along this important corridor:

- **Roadway Enhancements:** 10-foot curb bump outs at intersections along both sides of the roadway protecting existing parallel parking areas north of 8th Street. These curb bumps shorten the pedestrian crossing area from 60 feet to 40 feet and provide additional protection for the existing parking, all without reducing the roadway's capacity or lanes.
- **Infill and Architectural Edge:** Significant infill development north of 8th Street to reclaim remnants of the Downtown Core. This includes construction of a parking deck immediately behind the County Courthouse which permits infill development to occur on previously occupied surface parking areas.
- **Landscaping:** Substantial landscaping along the Lurleen Wallace Boulevard with large deciduous shade trees to form a canopy effect, soften views and provide a better pedestrian environment.
- **Screening:** Screening of parking lots, dumpster locations and service areas with landscaping, walls, or hedges. A key element is the screening of the large expanses of parking lot area adjacent to fast-food businesses.
- **Utilities:** Replacement of overhead utilities with underground service.
- **Sidewalks:** Providing sidewalks on the west side of Lurleen Wallace Boulevard South between 7th Street and Stillman Boulevard and replacing sidewalks in substandard condition.
- **Signage:** Creating signage standards in accord with overall sign design concepts.



GATEWAYS

Creating a sense of arrival into Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa is a critical component to strengthening the Downtown area's identity. Currently, there are no formal gateways into the Downtown. In fact, the image projected by the southern entrance is one of fast-food restaurants, seas of asphalt, an array of utility poles and garish signage.

Creating visually-attractive Gateways into the heart of Tuscaloosa will clearly define Tuscaloosa's Downtown as a unique part of the City. It creates a sense of arrival into a special place and perhaps a first impression that may determine the length of stay within Downtown.

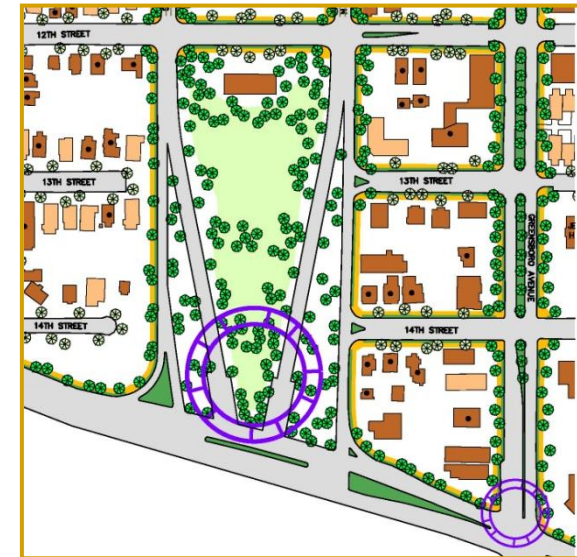
The Concept Plan proposes seven Gateways into Downtown. Major Gateways are proposed at three entrances and Minor Gateways are proposed at four entrances. Major Gateway treatments include constructed walls or columns, landscaping, lighting, special directional signage and other improvements. Minor Gateway treatments include landscaping, signage and lighting improvements.

Major Gateway treatments recommended for:

- Transition of I-359 to Lurleen Wallace Blvd. North
- Terminus of Black Warrior Bridge at University Blvd.
- Intersection of Jack Wagner Parkway with 21st Avenue.

Minor Gateway treatments recommended for:

- Intersection of Lurleen Wallace Blvd. and Bryant Drive.
- Intersection of 15th Street and Queen City Avenue.
- Intersection of 15th Street and Greensboro Avenue.
- Intersection of University Blvd. and Queen City Avenue.

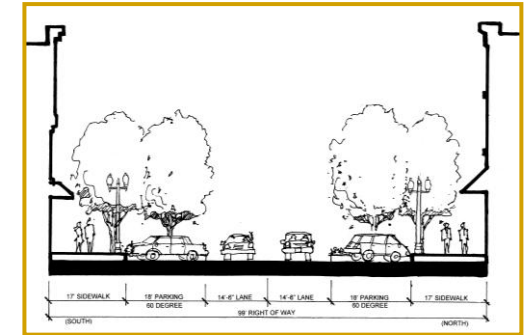
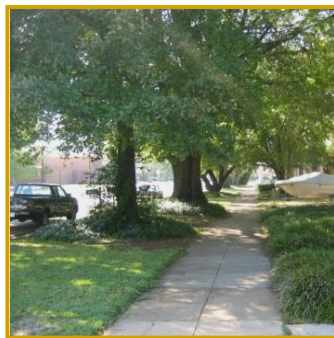


PEOPLE-FRIENDLY STREETS AND PLACES

People-Friendly streets that support activity are a major component of the Concept Plan. Streets and sidewalks that are edged with buildings and attractive urban design features are an important factor in creating a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Streetscape improvements enhance the visual character of streets in Downtown, create a more pleasant walking and driving experience and increase the likelihood of return visitors. Attractive streetscape treatments give a positive first impression to the Greater Downtown and provide a continued pleasant and welcoming experience. Streetscape improvements along Downtown streets are of major importance and should be given a high priority in development efforts.

Shown here are wonderful examples of "people-friendly" streets within the Greater Downtown.



STREETSCAPE TREATMENTS

Streetscape improvements include trees, plantings, street furniture, public art work, decorative lights, curb extensions, and attractive signage. The level of streetscape treatment is related to the type and density of development and potential pedestrian activity.

Major streetscape treatment is recommended along University Boulevard, Greensboro Avenue, Lurleen Boulevard North and South, 15th Street, and 21st Avenue. Minor streetscape treatment is proposed along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, and Stillman Boulevard. A formal maintenance program for maintaining landscaping in a healthy condition is a key element of the recommended streetscape improvements.

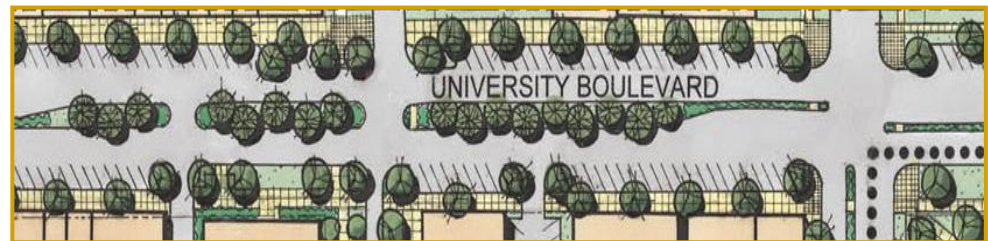
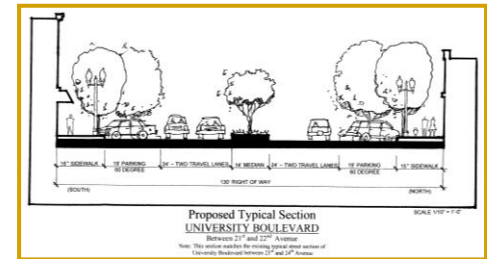
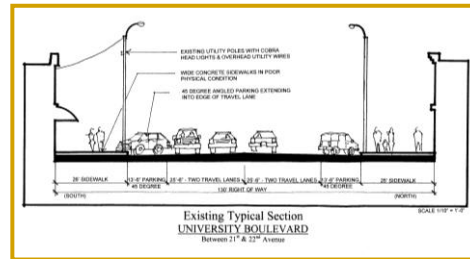


Medians

Planted medians add greatly to the ambiance of commercial and residential streets. Medians provide a level of safety for both pedestrians and automobiles. The Concept Plan proposes expansion of planted medians along University Boulevard, Greensboro Avenue, Jack Warner Parkway, and 21st Avenue. Reclamation of previously existing medians is proposed within the Capitol Park and Queen City neighborhoods. Shown below are proposed median and streetscape improvements underway for University Boulevard.

Street Crossing or Special Crossing Treatments

Clearly identified, attractive and safe street crossings are essential for encouraging pedestrian activity in the Downtown Area. The Plan recommends special intersection enhancement treatments within the Greater Downtown. Intersection enhancement improvements include special plantings, street furniture, textured paving, and crosswalk pavement that define the difference between the auto-oriented pavement and pedestrian-oriented walkway.



LIGHTING

Lighting is a very important part of Downtown's image as a nighttime place for dining, entertainment and living. Downtown lighting involves a combination of street and decorative lighting for cars and pedestrians, parking facility lighting and storefront or building lighting. Consistency in decorative lighting ensures adequate lighting is provided, is easier to maintain, and ensures appropriate lighting character and scale. Stores fronts are encouraged to provide display window lighting for evening hours to nurture pedestrian activity and contribute to a more vibrant looking Downtown.

Lighting should meet current lighting standards and design guidelines of the American Society of Illumination Engineers and be reflective of the historic character of Downtown. Internally lit signage other than neon signage should be avoided.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Pedestrian circulation is essential to creating a vibrant Downtown atmosphere. The intent of the Greater Downtown Plan is to focus on the pedestrian by undertaking sidewalk improvements that enhance and increase pedestrian activity. The Plan proposes the following improvements:

- Replace sidewalks that are significantly uneven, heavily cracked and/or filled with multiple patches;
- Reestablish landscaping within areas between the sidewalk and street that are currently concreted over;
- Bump-out crosswalk curbing to extend curbs and reduce roadway width, thus shortening the pedestrian street crossing area;
- Install decorative walkway pavement at the intersection corners and in key areas such as surrounding the Federal Plaza Building site and the Governmental Plaza;
- Ensure sidewalks meet ADA requirements pertaining to widths, cross slope, ramp conditions, wheelchair ramps; and,
- Require 15-foot minimum wide sidewalks within the Downtown Core's retail, dining and entertainment areas.

BUFFERING AND SCREENING

Buffers or screening is recommended for locations where new development or the expansion of existing uses creates potential adverse impacts. There is a particular need for this treatment where outside storage areas, warehousing and industrial operations are adjacent to other types of uses. Revisions to the City's development standards provide an opportunity for the City to require buffering and screening, when applicable, to minimize undesirable impacts.



PARKING LOT AESTHETICS

The enhancement of existing parking lots with improved landscaping, layout, islands, buffers and lighting is a key recommendation of Greater Downtown Plan. These enhancements are a critical need throughout all parts of the Downtown.

It is recommended that parking structures and lots should be lined with habitable space along the street edge to provide a visually attractive street scene in the Downtown Core. This is also true in other parts of the Study Area; however, landscaping, fencing, masonry walls, trees, shrubs and berms are an acceptable alternative outside the Downtown Core. It is recommended that parking decks be designed with usable ground floor space that maintains a street edge and is an attractive part of Downtown. Deck facades should use attractive, quality materials.



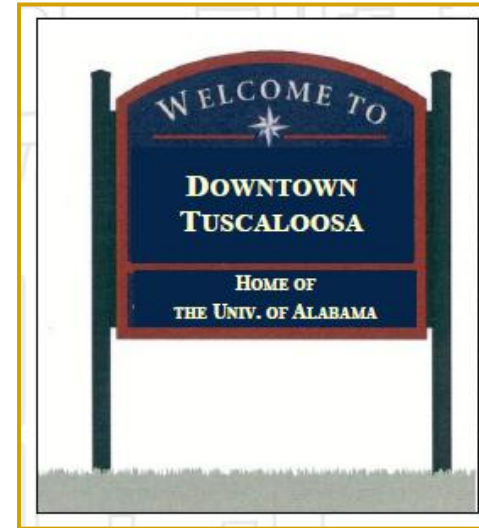
SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Signage and wayfinding are a major challenge for first-time visitors to the Greater Downtown. Often there is not given sufficient directional information on how to get to Downtown Tuscaloosa and once in the Downtown area, directional information to individual destinations ranges from little to none. The Downtown Plan recommends the adoption and installation of a wayfinding system that would include:

- A community signage system that directs people to the Downtown Core;
- A directional system for major destinations within the Downtown Area and other major destinations within the City;
- Directions to parking areas; and,
- Interpretive signage at points of interest.

Whatever design is used, consistency of colors, print style, and commonly used logos is a very important part of a wayfinding system. A lack of signage consistency is counterproductive and creates confusion. Within the Greater Downtown directional signs should include key destinations to Downtown neighborhoods.

Signage should be organized, consistent, attractive and in scale with buildings. Street signs should be unique and appropriate to the area in which they are located. All public and private signage should be in accord with a unified set of design standards. The issue of sign scale should be a part of all development review for new signage as well as for replacement signage. It is also important that all signage conforms to the requirements of the Uniform Traffic Control Manual.



CULTURAL ARTS, MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE

Tuscaloosa's cultural assets are an integral part of the City's economic vitality. Leisure and travel sources rank museums among the top family vacation destinations.

A significant commitment to the performing and visual arts, as well as the City's heritage and history, serves as a major economic engine for Tuscaloosa. Venues for the arts are magnets for private and public recruitment, particularly within a university setting and the high tech field. Moreover, college towns frequently utilize access to the arts as a quality of life component for attracting retirees, often former university graduates, back to their city.

CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS

During the course of the Greater Downtown planning initiative, many citizens and community leaders shared the vision of having a Performing and Visual Arts Center as a major "anchor tenant" in the heart of Downtown Tuscaloosa.

This would not be unlike one of the biggest cultural arts success stories found in the heart of another Southern downtown – Fayetteville, Arkansas, population 75,000 with a university enrollment of 20,000, 30 miles from the home of Wal-Mart. The founding of the highly-successful Walton Arts Center, located in downtown Fayetteville, has a public-private partnership history that could be easily replicated by the City of Tuscaloosa. With Tuscaloosa's history of community and corporate giving, coupled with its current wealth of cultural assets and activities, realizing the vision of a Performing and Visual Arts Center is a very reachable goal!

"CULTURE BUILDS" INITIATIVE

The Chamber of Commerce led "Culture Builds" initiative begun in 2007 and culminating the follow year, provides an excellent road map for incorporating the arts and culture into the economic fabric of the region. It recognizes that the infrastructure to feed this activity depends upon an educated, healthy, and skilled work force, vibrant downtowns, a wide array of artists and art programs, the recognition and celebration of cultural diversity and citizens who feel good about themselves and good about the place where they live.

The "Culture Builds Communities," initiative systemically places cultural assets within the portfolio of economic and community development efforts. This initiative defined 'Culture' as creative expressions of identity, place, and meaning, which encompasses both arts and heritage activities.

THE ARTS COUNCIL OF TUSCALOOSA

The Arts Council of Tuscaloosa County with its member organizations provides a coordinated year-round calendar of events of theatre, dance, opera, visual arts, music, crafts, festivals, films and educational programs. These and more provide Tuscaloosa with exceptional cultural opportunities.

CHILDREN'S HANDS-ON MUSEUM

Within the heart of the Greater Downtown and immediately adjacent to City Hall is the Children's Hands-On Museum (CHOM). As an integral part of the fabric of Tuscaloosa and West Alabama since 1985, CHOM plays host to over 50,000 visitors each year, most of them children. This important cultural venue and contributor to the City's economy and tourism income plays a vital role in meeting the cultural, educational and recreational needs of children and families.

BAMA THEATRE

The beautifully restored 1930's styled Bama Theatre is a performing arts center in downtown Tuscaloosa that offers a full calendar of music, dance, theater, stage productions, film and educational programs. The facility is the only "atmospheric" style theatre in the state of Alabama.

ART GALLERIES

The Greater Downtown is home to a number of art galleries and special art exhibitions that occur throughout the year. Readily familiar to downtown visitors are Harrison Galleries, Matt Jones Gallery, and the Junior League Gallery. With the advent of the ArtNight, there has been a renewed interest in art within Downtown, and as revitalization efforts continue it is anticipated that Downtown will be the location for many additional art galleries and artist-based businesses.



PUBLIC ART

Urban art has been incorporated into public spaces in many communities throughout the country. Historic statues, iron art work, artwork embedded in sidewalks and walls, decorative paintings, freestanding sculptures, and war memorials are examples of public art. The City should reserve space around public facilities and in rights-of-way for public art that provides interesting features for Downtown visitors.

Public art could be installed along sidewalks, around public buildings, within plazas and parks and at major gateways into the Downtown. Likewise, private developments should be encouraged to install public art as a part of their overall development design.

CAPITOL PARK RENOVATIONS

Tuscaloosa was the original site of Alabama's state capitol before Montgomery, from 1826 to 1846. Capitol Park contains reconstructed architectural features of the old capitol building and uses actual bricks and stonework from the original building to outline the ground floor and partial rotunda. Several massive columns have been repaired and placed on their original sites.

The Greater Downtown Plan recommends the continued improvement of Capitol Park with enhanced structural additions, landscaping, expansion of the park to the north and a pedestrian linkage connecting the park to the RiverWalk.



OTHER SPECIAL PLACES

During the Visioning Sessions and Synoptic Survey, the Greater Downtown Advisory Committee identified many places in Downtown Tuscaloosa that stand out as positive visual features or destinations. These places contribute to Downtown and should be preserved and enhanced, where necessary.



Mobility Plan

Convenient access to and within Downtown Tuscaloosa is important to the overall vitality of the Area. Mobility consists not only of auto-oriented choices, but transit, bicycle and pedestrian choices.

Detailed analysis and recommendations regarding specific transportation improvements are outside the scope of this study; however, an overall analysis of circulation patterns is provided. Fortunately, the existing street system has sufficient rights-of-way to meet the needs of future development without posing developmental obstacles or constraints.

STREET ENHANCEMENTS

STREET CLASSIFICATIONS

The Greater Downtown has three Major Arterials traversing the area, interconnected by Minor Arterials and Collector Streets. The major arterials are University Boulevard, Lurleen Wallace Boulevard, and 15th Street. These arterials average from 30,000 to 63,000 vehicle trips per day, with the one-way pairs of Lurleen Wallace Boulevard carrying the highest number of vehicles which are primarily through trips between I-59/20 and U.S. 82. The Street Classifications are graphically illustrated in the accompanying image.

Major Arterials

- University Boulevard
- Lurleen Wallace Boulevard
- 15th Street

Minor Arterials

- Jack Warner Parkway
- Greensboro Avenue
- Stillman Boulevard
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
- 21st Avenue
- Bryant Drive

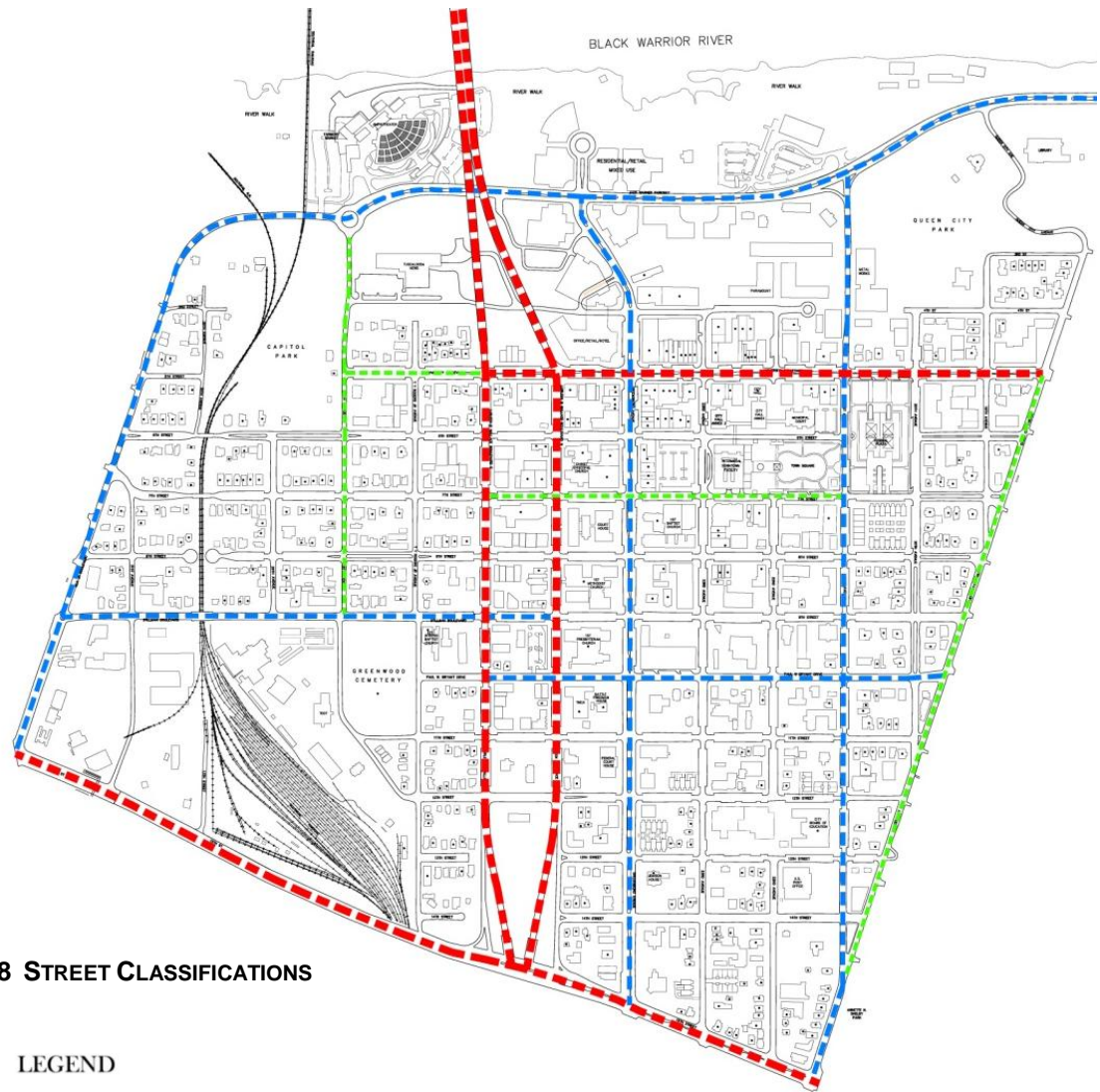


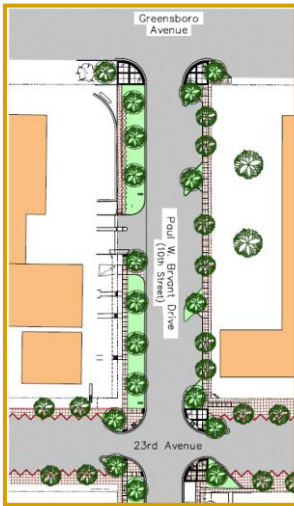
FIGURE 8 STREET CLASSIFICATIONS



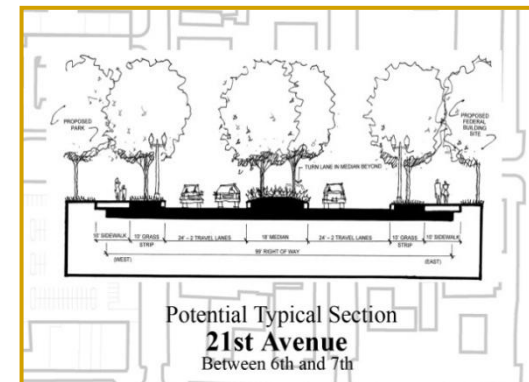
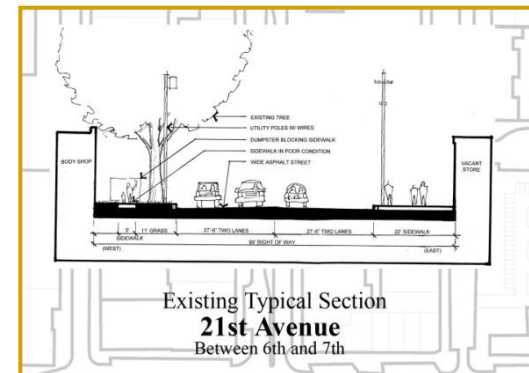
PROPOSED STREET IMPROVEMENTS

The Greater Downtown Plan incorporates the following recommended roadway improvements:

- Lurleen Wallace Boulevard:** Recommended improvements within the Lurleen Wallace Boulevard corridor north of 8th Street to University Boulevard include curb bump outs at intersections along both sides of the Lurleen Wallace Boulevard roadway and substantial landscaping.
- Paul Bryant Drive:** As part of the Downtown Plan, major roadway improvements were completed in 2008 on Bryant Drive that reduced the number of lanes from four to three resulting in substantial reductions in pavement widths (from 55 feet to 40 feet). These improvements stretch eastward from Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North to the University of Alabama campus and include significant landscaping and utility relocation improvements.
- University Boulevard:** As part of the Downtown Plan, significant improvements are taking place on University Boulevard eastward from 22nd Avenue to Queen City Avenue. These include roadway improvements, planted medians, sidewalk enhancements, landscaping, and relocation of overhead utilities to underground locations. These improvements are an extension of the Downtown streetscape enhancements completed in the 1990's.
- Jack Warner Parkway:** The Plan proposes that the three-way intersection of Jack Warner Parkway, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and 28th Avenue be reconfigured as a roundabout to improve the horizontal alignment of this intersection.
- KC Southern Railroad Trestle:** Planned widening improvements of the trestle underpass are needed as it crosses over Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard but safeguarding the historic character of the trestle.
- Four-Way Stops:** The Plan recommends installing four-way stops to lower traffic speeds through neighborhoods such as Capitol Park and Queen City and encourage greater use of minor arterials. This would be particularly beneficial along 28th Avenue.



- Traffic Signals in Downtown Core:** The Downtown Core has a number of traffic signals along low-demand secondary streets that could possibly be replaced with stop signs. However, this should not take place until street cross sections are modified to install curb bump outs.
- 21st Avenue:** Planned improvements are recommended along 21st Avenue from Bryant Drive northward to Jack Warner Parkway. This would include reconfiguration of the existing roadway to add planted medians, protected turn lanes, landscaping, parking improvement and relocation of utilities.



TRANSIT AVAILABILITY

The Tuscaloosa Transit Authority provides bus and Demand Response vans throughout the City of Tuscaloosa. The system previously provided service to the City of Northport and The University of Alabama. However, the Transit Authority no longer serves Northport, per the request of Northport. Within the campus of the University of Alabama, the Crimson Ride is now the primary bus service, but the Transit Authority continues to provide stopping points on routes running through the campus. Currently, transit service ridership averages about 16,000 per month.

The Transit Authority operates five fixed routes, four beginning at 5:00 am and ending at 6:00 pm Monday through Friday and one to Shelton State beginning at 7:00 am and ending at 2:00 pm, Monday through Thursday. The five fixed transit routes are: VA/Hargrove Road/University Mall; Holt/Crescent Ridge Road; Greensboro Avenue; McKenzie Courts/Stillman; and Shelton State. Each route has discretionary stops that accommodate the elderly and special needs riders.



The Demand Response vans provide transportation for special needs clients that are not able to ride the fixed routes. The vans operate from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

The newly constructed Intermodal Facility at 23rd Avenue and 6th Street provides a centralized point

of transit service. For increased health of the Greater Downtown, particularly the Downtown Core, expanded hours and renewal of transit link to the City of Northport are desirable.

PARKING ACCESSIBILITY

Public and pay-to-park facilities within the Downtown Core should be conveniently located to encourage people to shop, dine and be entertained within the Downtown Core.

The City's newly constructed Intermodal Facility adds 450 parking spaces to the Downtown Core. This facility provides convenient parking for city employees, visitors to city offices, visitors

to the Government Plaza, nearby churches and retail businesses. However, future building development has the potential to eliminate approximately 300 surface parking spaces currently available on church-owned and City-owned properties.

The City should continue to pursue the acquisition of key parcels for new public parking in the Downtown Area, as well as encourage joint parking use among future retail, hotel and residential developments that are likely to occur within the Greater Downtown.

PEDESTRIAN AND BIKEWAY LINKAGES

Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle linkages are important needs throughout the Greater Downtown. The Druid City Bicycle Club shares the vision of Tuscaloosa becoming a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly community within the Greater Downtown as well as Citywide.

The City's grid street pattern makes pedestrian and bicyclist access convenient throughout most of the Greater Downtown. Important linkages are the connection of the Downtown Core with the RiverWalk and Downtown with the University of Alabama. It is recommended that pedestrian and bike paths or on-road routes are provided along the following routes:

- Greensboro Avenue from 15th Street to the RiverWalk.
- 21st Avenue from Annette Shelby Park to the RiverWalk.
- University Boulevard from Capitol Park to the University of Alabama.
- Capitol Park to the planned Amphitheater and to the RiverWalk.

On-road bicycle routes should be connected with trails along the RiverWalk and designated bicycle routes should be clearly identified with proper signage. Bicycle facilities provided at popular activity centers such as the Library, Capitol Park, and access points to various riverfront recreational facilities, encourage greater bicycle usage.

Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities and amenities serve to strengthen linkages throughout the Greater Downtown, West Tuscaloosa, and the University of Alabama.





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Historic Preservation Plan

Historic preservation is increasingly being recognized as an essential component of a city's economic development strategy. Studies indicate that the rehabilitation of existing buildings stimulates a greater economic return per dollar spent than do highway construction, new construction, and the expansion of industry. Historic preservation has additional economic benefits in terms of tourism, the enhancement of property values, and the promotion of community sustainability. The importance of historic preservation to community revitalization has been demonstrated in thousands of towns all across America and the lessons they provide are relevant to Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa.

Donovan Rypkema, a nationally-recognized expert on the economic benefits of historic preservation, has stated that ...

"I cannot identify a single example of a sustained success story in downtown revitalization where historic preservation wasn't a key component of that strategy. Not one. Conversely the examples of very expensive failures in downtown revitalization have nearly all had the destruction of historic buildings as a major element."

EXISTING HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

Despite a considerable amount of modern infill development, Greater Downtown retains a wealth of historic resources. The area's historic buildings define its historic sense of place, scale, and overall character. Many of these buildings have been rehabilitated in recent years and continue to contribute to the City's economic vitality. With proper planning and incentives, the condition of many additional historic buildings can also be significantly improved.

Historic buildings in the Greater Downtown are generally found in the Downtown Core, Queen City, Capitol Park, South 22nd Avenue and along Greensboro Avenue.

A large number of these buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of either the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District or the Druid City Historic District. There are also several individually-listed properties located inside and outside these two National Register Districts.

HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Literature & Records Review

As part of the Greater Downtown Plan, Schneider Historic Preservation completed a Historic Resources Survey and Report. The work utilized historical research available through the National Register and the 2004 Historic Resources Survey completed by FuturePast for the Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal Plan. Appropriate archival sources were reviewed as were the collections of the Alabama Historical Commission, the National Register of Historic Places and Historic American Buildings Survey and Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER). The results of the research were included on individual field survey forms.

Field Inventory

An intensive historic sites inventory of 561 properties was conducted within the Greater Downtown Study Area. The 110 sites recorded in the 2004 FuturePast survey were revisited and information was updated to reflect changes that had occurred since the completion of that project. In addition, survey forms were prepared for the 44 sites located in the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District that were excluded from the 2004 study.

The Historic Resources Survey evaluated all above-ground buildings, structures, and objects that were constructed prior to 1956. For each of the 561 sites inventoried, a unique inventory number was assigned, a survey form was completed, a digital photograph was taken, and the site was shown on the Historic Resources Map. The Historic Resources Survey classified structures in the following categories:

- National Register or register eligible structure
- Contributing structure
- Non-contributing structure
- Intrusive to historic character structure





NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

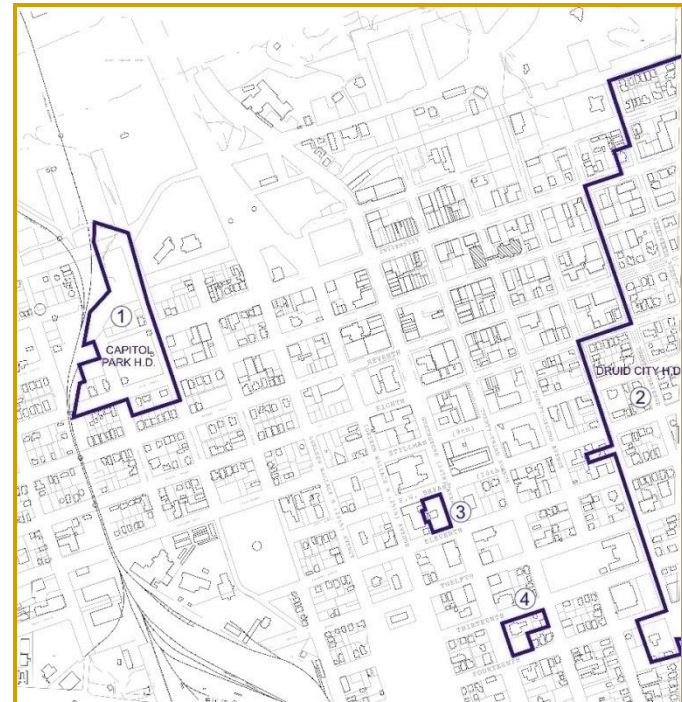
Within the Greater Downtown, there are 13 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District and the Druid City Historic District are listed on the National Register. The National Register structures are:

- Old Tuscaloosa County Jail
- Wheeler House
- Searcy House
- First African Baptist Church
- Murphy-Collins House
- Battle-Friedman House
- Jemison House
- Bama Theatre
- City National Bank
- Queen City Pool and Pool House
- Guild-Verner House
- Collier-Overby House
- Searcy House (Tusc. Co. Bd. Of Ed)



LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION

The City of Tuscaloosa, through its Historic Preservation Commission, officially designates local historic districts and has established a design review process to help insure the preservation of the character of these districts. Within each historic district, all projects that result in exterior changes to buildings or their settings are required to obtain a "certificate of appropriateness" from the Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission before a building permit may be issued. The Commission is a city board consisting of nine members nominated by the mayor and appointed by the city council.



Local Historic Designations in the Study Area

1. Capitol Park H.D.; 2) Druid City H.D.; 3. Battle-Friedman House; 4. Jemison House

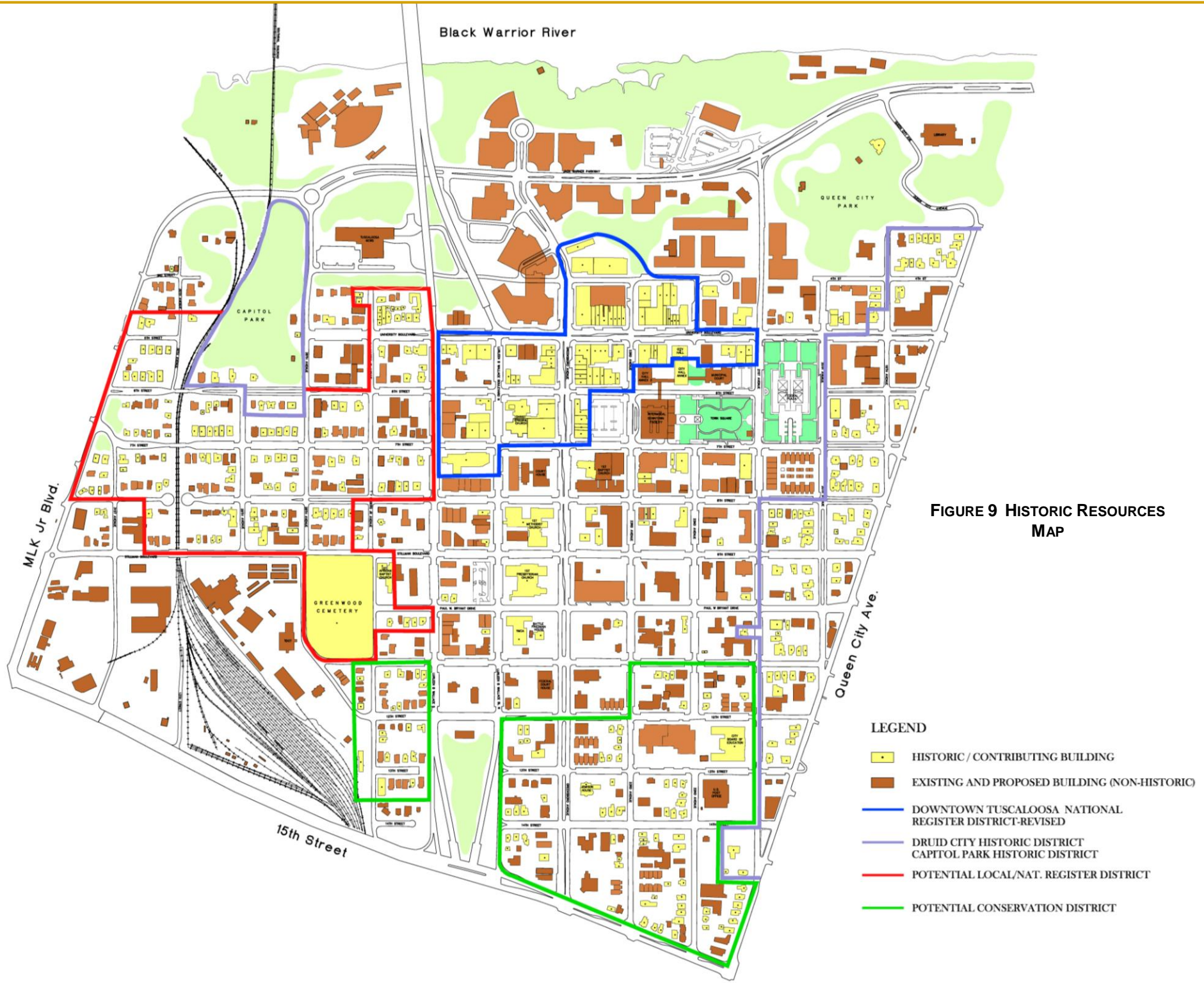


FIGURE 9 HISTORIC RESOURCES MAP

LEGEND

- HISTORIC / CONTRIBUTING BUILDING
- EXISTING AND PROPOSED BUILDING (NON-HISTORIC)
- DOWNTOWN TUSCALOOSA NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT-REVISED
- DRUID CITY HISTORIC DISTRICT
CAPITOL PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT
- POTENTIAL LOCAL/NAT. REGISTER DISTRICT
- POTENTIAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

HISTORIC RESOURCES BY NEIGHBORHOODS

RIVERFRONT

Despite the importance of the Black Warrior River to Tuscaloosa's history, only two resources were found to be eligible as historic structures. The Queen City Bathhouse in Queen City Park is individually listed in the National Register. The Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad Bridge and its associated trestles were recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey and are eligible for listing in the National Register.

Despite successive eras of redevelopment, the nature of known historical development along the riverfront suggests that there is a likelihood that significant archaeological resources remain.

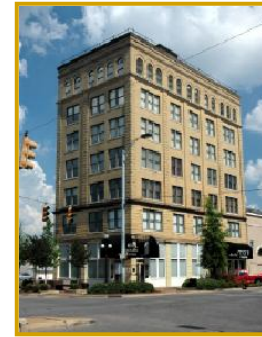


DOWNTOWN CORE

The Downtown Core is Tuscaloosa's traditional central business district and has a dense concentration of historic resources, particularly in the blocks along University Boulevard between Lurleen B. Wallace Boulevard and 21st Avenue, and along Sixth Street between Lurleen Wallace and Greensboro Avenue. These areas retain a rich and varied collection of predominantly late-19th to early-20th century buildings representing a variety of historic architectural styles. Together with the two blocks roughly bounded by 21st and 23rd Avenues and 6th and 7th Streets, these areas form the core of the Downtown Tuscaloosa National Register Historic District.

The Downtown Historic District was recognized through listing in the National Register both for its historical significance as the City's primary historic commercial area and its architectural character.

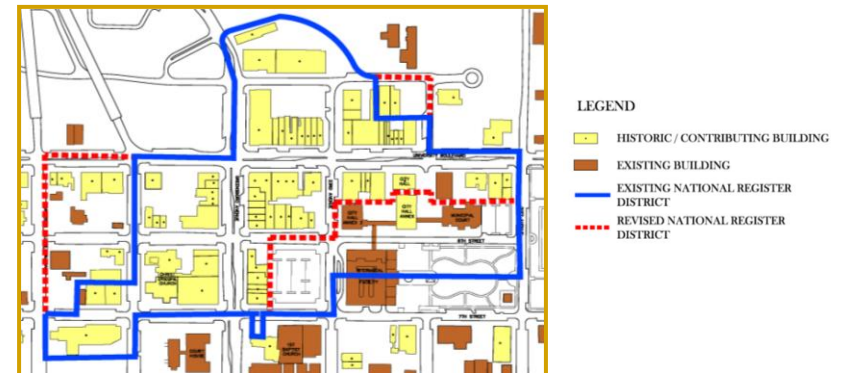
Many of the buildings within the district are excellent examples of period commercial architecture and the overall grouping of these buildings gives the Downtown Core its unique and recognizable historic character.



Alston Building (circa 1909); L & N Railroad Station (circa 1912)

Modification of Existing Downtown Historic District

The demolition of the buildings along the south side of 6th Street between 21st and 23rd Avenues has considerably altered the nature of the Downtown Historic District. Demolitions also removed a series of buildings along the southern half of the blocks that would have been eligible for an expansion of the District and isolated a block of additional buildings to the south that might also have been eligible for such an expansion. As a result, it is recommended that the Downtown Historic District's National Register nomination be updated with adjusted boundaries to remove the blocks where demolition has occurred and to expand the District to the west to include additional areas that now appear to be eligible.



Several of the demolished buildings along 7th Street were traditionally the home of African-American businesses and, together with the Diamond Theatre and other buildings which have been removed, formed the core of a small historic mid-20th century African-American business district. The surviving buildings should be documented and may remain eligible for the Alabama Register.



Examples Mid-20th Century African-American Business District

Early twentieth-century bungalow/Craftsman or gable front form dwellings are scattered throughout the city. Bungalows and gable fronts tend to be relatively simple in design and detailing with many exhibiting simple Craftsman style details such as exposed rafter ends, angle bracketed eaves, porch pillars or supports on pedestals and apron walls.



Victorian (circa 1895); Tudor cottage (circa 1920)

QUEEN CITY

The Druid City Historic District (National Register and Local Historic District) covers most of the Queen City Planning Neighborhood. This district is typified by a diverse collection of mid-19th to early 20th century residences of a variety of architectural styles and differing scales. Common housing types include bungalows, Tudor Revival cottages, Greek Revival houses, Victorian cottages, and Victorian houses. There is also a scattering of apartment houses, predominantly in the Tudor Revival style.

The majority of residential buildings in the Greater Downtown generally fall into three stylistic categories: Victorian; early twentieth century bungalow/Craftsman or gable front forms; and a mix of mid-twentieth century styles. There are also isolated examples of Greek Revival and other 19th century styles. Most of the residential resources are of frame construction.

Victorian dwellings typically built between circa 1880 and 1915, reflect national architectural trends. Stylistically, the houses are loosely based on Queen Anne patterns but generally have more of folk character with common decorative details including decorative wood shingles and/or window and vent combinations in gable ends, simple and limited sawn decorative trims, and turned or chamfered porch posts and with occasionally simple gingerbread trim.

GREENSBORO/BRYANT DRIVE

The Greensboro/Bryant Drive Neighborhood retains only scattered historic resources. The Tuscaloosa First United Methodist Church and the First Presbyterian Church visually dominate the northwest corner of the area. Other prominent landmarks in this part of the City include: the Battle-Friedman House (1835, National Register) and the Jemison House (circa 1862, National Register) on Greensboro Avenue.



First Presbyterian Church (circa 1922); First Methodist Church (circa 1818)

SOUTH 22ND AVENUE

The South 22nd Avenue Neighborhood retains a number of historic resources interspersed with historically intrusive modern development. While the concentration appears to be insufficient to recommend either local or National Register designation, the buildings represent a historical grouping that warrants recognition, preservation, and revitalization and should be considered as a historic conservation neighborhood. Some examples of the historic fabric of the area can be seen in Tuscaloosa High School (1925), Hunters Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church (1881), and a number of bungalow/Craftsman styled homes built in the 1920's and 30's.



Tuscaloosa High School (circa 1925); Craftsman Style Bungalow (circa 1925)

LURLEEN WALLACE

The area between Lurleen B. Wallace Drives North and South (the Lurleen Wallace Neighborhood) has generally lost much of its historic character, as many blocks have been developed with modern restaurants and other highway-related business.



Commercial Properties between University and 7th Street

However, the blocks between University Boulevard and 7th Street are potentially eligible as part of a proposed revision to the boundaries of the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District.

CAPITOL PARK

The Capitol Park Neighborhood includes the locally designated Capitol Park Historic District and a surrounding residential area to the south. The historic district encompasses the old Alabama Capitol site, the Old Tavern, the McGuire-Strickland House, and two other houses. Three sites that are individually listed in the National Register in this area: the Old Tuscaloosa County Jail (circa 1839), 2803 6th Street; the Wheeler House (circa 1890) 2703 7th Street; and the Searcy House (circa 1830), 2606 8th Street.

The remainder of this planning sub-area is typified by a mix of larger and smaller scaled Victorian dwellings interspersed with bungalows. Although architecturally similar to the adjacent MLK Neighborhood to the west, the historic resources in Capitol Park tend to be, on average, somewhat more architecturally sophisticated.

A potential National Register Historic District, as well as a locally designated Historic District in Capitol Park area was identified by the survey. While the potential district extends westward into the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard Neighborhood, further evaluation of the area to the west of MLK Jr. Boulevard is needed to determine whether or not one or two districts are indicated. This designation will help to ensure that the historic architectural character of the neighborhood is preserved and will help to stabilize and enhance property values.



McGuire-Strickland House (circa 1820); House (circa 1885)

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

Predominantly developed with bungalows and scattered small-scale Victorian cottages, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Neighborhood is architecturally similar to Capitol Park, although with a larger percentage of bungalows and with resources that tend to be architecturally more modest in both design and scale. The street grid of the adjacent Capitol Park area continues through the neighborhood. However the railroad cut is a major visual demarcation between the two areas. This, coupled with the noticeable change in architectural character between the two, suggests that they be treated as two distinct historic districts.

While the street pattern shifts to the west of Martin Luther King Boulevard, additional historic resource survey work in that area is recommended to determine the appropriate boundaries of any potential historic district that might include resources within the MLK, Jr. Neighborhood.

the houses are of modest historic character and worthy of repair and preservation, and consideration as a neighborhood conservation district.



Greenwood Cemetery; Murphy African-American Museum



Bungalows in MLK Jr. Neighborhood

STILLMAN

Three significant historic resources are located within the Stillman Neighborhood. The First African Baptist Church and the Murphy African-American Museum at 2501 Paul W. Bryant Drive are both individually listed in the National Register. In addition, the Greenwood Cemetery is individually eligible for that designation.

A small scattering of modest older dwellings and commercial buildings is located to the south of Eleventh Street. None of the buildings possesses a level of significance sufficient for individual listing in the National Register, nor does the grouping retain sufficient integrity to be considered as a district. However, many of

HISTORIC PRESERVATION RESOURCES



Tuscaloosa's historic resources make an important contribution to the City's character, economy and quality of life. The following highlights the entities that assist in preserving the historic character of the City.

TUSCALOOSA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The City of Tuscaloosa's Historic Preservation Commission is a nine-member city-appointed board that oversees the design review process within the City's designated local historic districts. Within each of the local historic districts, all projects that result in exterior changes to buildings or their settings are required to obtain a "certificate of appropriateness" from the Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission before a building permit may be issued.



TUSCALOOSA COUNTY PRESERVATION SOCIETY

The Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society is a private advocacy organization founded in 1966 to preserve Tuscaloosa County's historic resources. The Society works to identify and preserve historic structures and sites; maintains an endangered structures list, and promotes heritage education and tourism; and works with local governments to promote historic preservation. The Society maintains four historical landmarks: The Old Tavern, the Battle-Friedman House, the McGuire-Strickland House and the Murphy African-American Museum.



HERITAGE COMMISSION OF TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

The Heritage Commission of Tuscaloosa County advocates and promotes preservation of the area's history and heritage. The Commission is developing an electronic archive to provide information and imagery over the Internet of local history and historic resources. It also seeks to provide information on preservation-oriented solutions.



ORIGINAL CITY ASSOCIATION

The Original City Association acts as a representative organization for residents who live in the Downtown Neighborhoods of Tuscaloosa. They organize events and use email campaigns, newsletters, and attend City, County, State and other relevant

meetings to provide information about issues, concerns, and opportunities facing the Downtown Neighborhoods.

ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) is the state agency charged with safeguarding Alabama's historic buildings and sites. Created in 1966, the Commission acts as the statewide partner for federal historic preservation programs, including: the National Register of Historic Places; Certified Local Governments; the rehabilitation tax credit program; and Section 106 and other environmental reviews. In addition, the Commission holds conservation easements and operates a number of historic sites across the state.

ALABAMA TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation is a statewide advocacy group for historic preservation. The Alabama Trust is a statewide partner of the National Trust and works closely with the Alabama Historical Commission to present preservation conferences and workshops. While the National Trust represents preservation interests at the national level, the Alabama Trust's focus is on the needs of Alabama. The Alabama Trust assists local groups around the state in seeking viable alternatives to demolition and making presentations to public officials concerning the value of preservation.

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, headquartered in Washington DC, is a national advocacy group for historic preservation. Supported by individual and corporate members, the National Trust works with statewide and local partners to "advocate for public policies that benefit historic preservation by: passing legislation and implementing policies that preserve the historic and cultural fabric of our nation's communities; protecting historic and cultural resources from inappropriate legislation, regulatory rulings, or court decisions that hinder preservation; preserving community input in the policy-making process; and researching and documenting best practices and model preservation policies."

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TOOLS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES LISTING

The National Register of Historic Places is a listing administered by the U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. The National Register program has strict requirements regarding eligibility and documentation for eligibility. National Register listed properties or districts do not require property owners to obtain approval for changes to their properties unless they are using federal or state funding, licensing or assistance.

Benefits of National Register Designation:

- Recognition can enhance property values.

While National Register designation does not carry the documented economic benefits associated with local historic districts having design review controls, listing on the National Register provides a degree of exclusivity that can enhance value.

- Special Property Tax Assessment.

Alabama property tax code (Section 40-8-1) permits structures determined eligible for listing on the National Register or located in a registered historic district and certified as being of historic significance to the district to be considered as Class III designated properties assessed at 10% regardless of the use.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Alabama law allows communities to designate local historic districts and to make alteration to those resources subject to the review and approval by a municipal commission. Tuscaloosa has established the Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission for oversight of the City's locally designated historic districts.

Property values in local historic districts with design review commissions tend to rise significantly faster than their surrounding general real estate markets. A study that compared properties in Montgomery, Decatur, Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, Talladega, and Selma found that "historic designation has a positive and substantial impact on the value of properties located in a historic neighborhood."

Local historic districts can take several forms.

- Historic district with design review control.
- Conservation district with a looser set of design criteria.
- Review board where compliance by the applicant is voluntary and requires an applicant to appear before the review board to discuss the proposal with the Board.

Benefits of Local Historic District Designation:

- Local historic districts protect against incompatible development through a design review process that requires a certificate of appropriateness.
- Provides alternatives to the inappropriate alteration or demolition of historic resources.
- Stabilizes or enhances property values – economic impact studies of local historic design review have shown that properties in local historic districts appreciate faster than in neighborhoods without this protection (see Alabama Historical Commission's "Property Value Appreciation for Historic Districts in Alabama.")

FEDERAL TAX INCENTIVES.

Conservation easements.

Conservation easements are a very effective historic preservation tool. In donating an easement, a property owner transfers certain development rights in their property to a qualified charitable or governmental entity. Typically the recipient organization has review authority over exterior changes, but easements can also limit other types of development on the site. The IRS recognizes the donation as a charitable deduction against federal income tax. In most cases the easement donor can deduct the value of the easement for up to 30% of their adjusted gross income in a single year. Also, Federal estate taxes for property heirs may be reduced because of reduction in the fair market value during the donor's lifetime by the easement restrictions. The IRS restricts charitable deductions for easement contributions to properties individually listed on the National Register or certified as contributing to a National Register Historic District. The Internal Revenue Code allows charitable deductions to be taken only for easements donated in perpetuity.



20% tax credit

A federal tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic income-producing buildings in the amount of 20% of the cost of rehabilitation is available for qualifying expenditures involving National Register-listed properties or located in a registered historic district and certified as being of historic significance to the district. The building must be used for an income-producing purpose such as rental-residential, commercial, or industrial uses. The rehabilitation must also be qualified as a "certified historic rehabilitation" with all work complying with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The 20% federal tax credit for rehabilitation of historic buildings has been successfully used for more than two decades. In 2006 alone, the program generated 1,253 projects nationally representing \$4.08 billion in private investment.



PLANNING & ZONING TOOLS

In many communities, planning and zoning ordinances based on suburban models often do not adequately take into consideration the traditional development pattern of historic communities. This can cause particular problems when new construction is proposed to fill vacant lots or to replace historic resources that are lost. A number of tools can be integrated into planning and zoning ordinances to promote historic preservation.

Zoning Incentives.

Incentives can be used to offset the cost of rehabilitation, as well as be used to offset the economic disadvantage a historic property suffers when the preservation of the property restricts development potential. Incentives that have been successfully used have included density bonuses, lot coverage bonuses, additional allowable uses (bed and breakfast units, accessory dwellings or offices), and exemptions for pre-existing historic conditions.

Zoning Exceptions.

Reasonable exceptions can be granted to planning and zoning ordinance provisions that adversely impact historic properties. Some communities find it useful for their historic preservation commissions to review and make recommendations to the appropriate planning or zoning boards regarding exceptions that might be necessary to preserve a particular historic resource.

PRESERVATION EASEMENTS

A historic preservation easement is a means by which the owner of a historic building can insure its preservation while at the same time retaining possession and use of the building. The historic preservation easement is in the form of a deed, granted to a qualified recipient organization which carries with it standards for restoration and maintenance and includes provisions for enforcement of the easement. Easements can also be purchased by qualified entities or, can be placed by such entities onto historic properties they have acquired for resale.

REVOLVING FUNDS

A revolving fund program for historic preservation is established for acquiring and reselling purchased or donated historic real estate. The fund is operated by a local government agency or a not-for-profit to resell to purchasers who agree to maintain and preserve the historic properties. Conservation easements are typically placed on the properties at the time of resale to ensure preservation and maintenance. Proceeds from the sale of properties are returned to the fund to be used for subsequent purchases. A revolving fund can be used to acquire properties that might pose difficult preservation challenges. Capital for revolving funds is often raised by private donations of cash or property or through a variety of municipal funding avenues such as bond issues or special taxes.

TOURISM

Nurturing tourism through historic preservation is an important area where historic preservation enhances economic development. A study of the economic impact of historic preservation in Florida found that heritage tourism generated more revenue for the state than golf/tennis, cultural events and festivals, parks, and sporting events. Perhaps more importantly, various studies have shown that heritage-related tourists tend to stay longer and spend more money than other types of tourists. Downtown Tuscaloosa has a unique potential tourism market both due to its location along the Black Warrior River and its proximity to the University of Alabama.

MAIN STREET PROGRAM

The Main Street program is an excellent preservation tool that could benefit Tuscaloosa. The program and its benefits are discussed in the Main Street section of the Greater Downtown Plan.

HISTORIC RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS

MODIFICATIONS TO THE DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

As discussed earlier, the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District has lost a number of its contributing resources in recent years. Several buildings have been demolished as part of the redevelopment that is taking place for the new Federal Plaza, Intermodal Facility and Government Plaza. As a result, it is recommended that the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District nomination be revised.

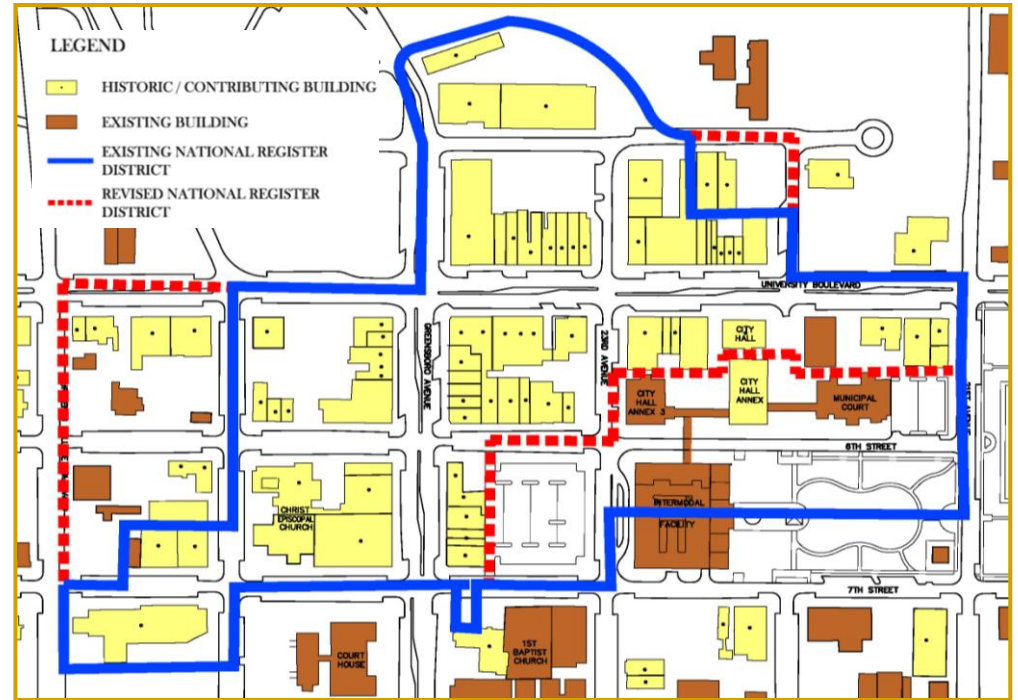
This revision would adjust the District's boundaries to delete one-half of the north and south blocks fronting 6th Street between 21st and 23rd Avenues, and the west half of the block fronting 23rd Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets. However, the boundaries should be expanded to the west of Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North, as well as property located on the southwest corner at the intersection of 4th Street and 22nd Avenue (see accompanying map). As part of these revisions, the contributing and noncontributing status of all resources within the district should be reevaluated to reflect current conditions and an expanded period of significance. Also, it is recommended that the period of significance for the District be extended to at least 1959. Further, the revised nomination should document and include any resources within the area that may have significance to local Civil Rights history.



The Downtown Historic National Register District should also be designated as a Local Historic District by the City of Tuscaloosa. This process is already in place and has proven effective in the City's residential districts. This would permit design review to be exercised by the Historic Preservation Commission within the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District.

However, specific design review guidelines should be established for the Downtown area to respond both to its commercial architectural character and the nature of Downtown redevelopment. This would be the most effective means of protecting and enhancing property values within the District.

The Downtown Historic National Register District should also be designated as a Local Historic District by the City of Tuscaloosa. This process is already in place and has proven effective in the City's residential districts. This would permit design review to be exercised by the Historic Preservation Commission within the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District.

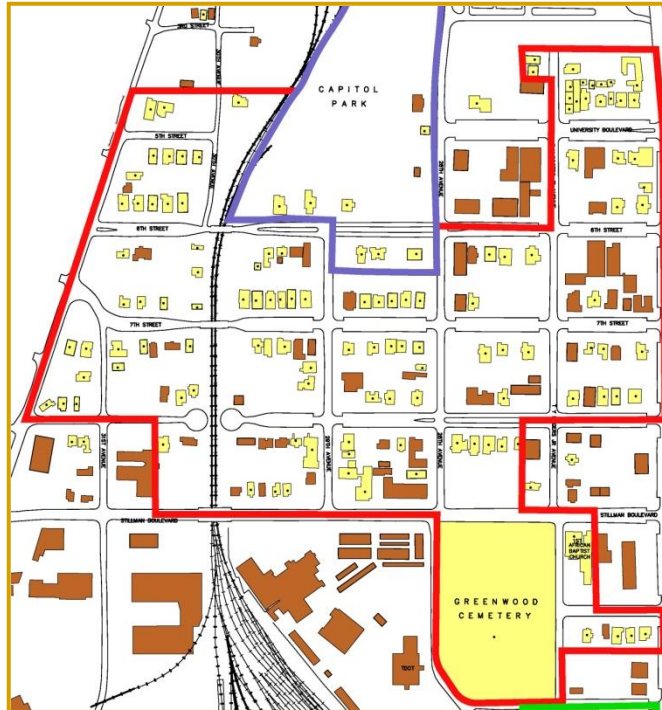


Modification to Downtown Historic District:
Dashed line indicates proposed district boundary.
Solid line indicates existing district boundary.

POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The residential area to the west of Lurleen Wallace Boulevard retains a sufficient concentration of late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century buildings to warrant historic designation and some form of design review protection. The area appears to be eligible for the National Register. Despite the conversion of many of its resources to commercial use and the construction of scattered modern buildings, the character of the area is still residential in scale and appearance with small-scale houses typically retaining integrity of setting. The area is visually divided into two subsections by the railroad cut and the character of resources in each of these sub-areas is somewhat different (see discussion below). These sub-areas generally correspond to the neighborhood planning areas identified as Capitol Park and MLK.

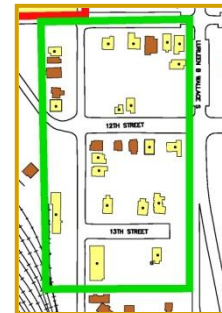
The western boundary of the MLK sub-area is shown as Martin Luther King Boulevard (the western boundary of this project area). While the street pattern in the areas to the west of Martin Luther King Boulevard is dissimilar to that of the MLK sub-area, additional historic resource survey work is recommended to determine if the boundaries of any potential historic district should extend to the west of that street.



**Potential Residential Historic District
West of Lurleen Wallace Avenue**

POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The study area retains a number of scattered individual historic resources and groupings that, while generally lacking the individual or collective distinction to warrant either local or National Register designation, are nevertheless worthy of efforts to preserve and rehabilitate them. Examples can be found in the South 22nd Avenue area, to the south of First African Baptist Church, and the surviving section of the traditional African-American business district at 7th Street and 23rd Avenue. It is recommended that the preservation and revitalization of these resources be encouraged through recognition and incentives rather than local historic designation and design review. In these areas, less restrictive planning controls dealing primarily with neighborhood character may be appropriate. Such controls should promote the retention and restoration of remaining historic resources.

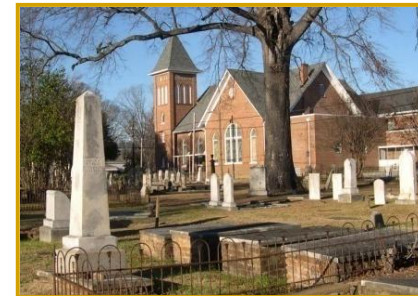


Potential Residential Conservation Districts

**POTENTIAL INDIVIDUALLY-LISTED NATIONAL REGISTER
ELIGIBLE RESOURCES**

Additional historical research and evaluation is recommended for the following resources that may be potentially National Register eligible:

- **Hunters Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church**, 1105 22nd Avenue
- **Tuscaloosa First United Methodist Church**, 800 Greensboro Avenue
- **First Presbyterian Church**, 900 Greensboro Avenue
- **Greenwood Cemetery**, 9th Street & SW corner of 27th Avenue
- **St. John the Baptist Catholic Church**, 815 Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North





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Main Street Program

A key element of the Greater Downtown Plan is the recommendation that a new organization—Main Street Tuscaloosa—be formed to serve as a catalyst and major player in delivering a revitalized Downtown Tuscaloosa. This recommendation is the outgrowth of 10-member subcommittee of the Greater Downtown Advisory Committee. However, the use of the term “Main Street” is will not be officially sanctioned until Tuscaloosa becomes a part of the State of Alabama’s “Main Street” Program.

Main Street Tuscaloosa will be structured after the National Trust Main Street Center’s model for successful downtowns – the Four Point Approach: Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring. These are the essential elements for a system of public and private support for delivering the vision of a revitalized Main Street Tuscaloosa.

The National Trust Main Street Center is a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In the 1970s, the National Trust developed its pioneering Main Street approach to commercial district revitalization, an innovative methodology that combines historic preservation with economic development to restore prosperity and vitality to Downtown and neighborhood business districts.

Today, the Center advocates a comprehensive approach that communities can use to revitalize their traditional commercial areas through historic preservation and grassroots-based economic development. It has created a network of more than 40 statewide and over 1200 citywide and countywide Main Street programs active nationally. (Source: National Main Street Center)



THE DOWNTOWN CORE

It is envisioned that Main Street Tuscaloosa would cover that portion of the Greater Downtown study area referred to as Tuscaloosa’s “Downtown Core” --- the traditional central business district. In general, its boundaries would be: L & N Railroad abandoned right-of-way on the north; Queen City Avenue on the east; 7th Street on the south; and, Lurleen B. Wallace Boulevard South on the west.

FIGURE 10 MAIN STREET TUSCALOOSA BOUNDARY MAP - DRAFT



The Downtown Core was once the center of commerce for Tuscaloosa, but today, its retail dominance has been lost to outlying shopping centers and accessible shopping within the Birmingham metropolitan region. However, the Downtown Core retains importance as a center of governmental activity and professional offices. Also, it has attracted a concentration of restaurants and lounges that are drawing people back into the Downtown. In addition, the recent conversion of upper floor space over business establishments to loft apartments is a positive step in providing more Downtown activity.

The accompanying tables provide a statistical analysis of land use by floor space within the Downtown Core.

TABLE 6 FLOOR SPACE - DOWNTOWN CORE

Type of Use	Square Feet	Occupied Space	Total Space
Residential	21,925	2.4%	2.0%
Loft Apartments	17,089	1.9%	1.6%
Multi-Family Units	4,836	0.5%	0.4%
Commercial	433,953	47.1%	39.7%
Retail Uses	200,688	21.8%	18.4%
Consumer Services	112,957	12.3%	10.3%
Restaurant, Lounge, Entertainment	120,308	13.1%	11.0%
Professional Service / Office	237,607	25.8%	21.7%
Heavy Commercial / Warehsg.	19,505	2.1%	1.8%
Public / Semi-Public	208,157	22.6%	19.1%
Governmental	161,709	17.6%	14.8%
Church / Cultural	43,318	4.7%	4.0%
Recreation	3,130	0.3%	0.3%
TOTAL OCCUPIED FLOOR SPACE	921,147	100%	84.3%
Vacant/Storage Space	171,463		15.7%
TOTAL FLOOR SPACE	1,092,610		100%

RETAIL SHOPPING AND CONSUMER SERVICES

Currently, there are 44 retail stores and 30 separate consumer service uses in the Downtown Core. From the accompanying table, it is evident that if you are interested in art, antiques, or used clothing, or want to eat or drink, then the Downtown Core has something to offer. But, there are much fewer choices for comparison shopping for new clothing and specialty apparel. A strength, however, is that businesses in the Downtown Core are mostly independently-owned with very few national chains. This is a positive in that it can make a visit to Downtown Tuscaloosa a unique shopping, dining and entertainment experience.



TABLE 7 RETAIL, CONSUMER & RESTAURANT SERVICES - DOWNTOWN CORE

Retail Shopping	
Antique Stores (2)	Furniture Stores (4)
Art Galleries (4)	Gift or Craft Shops (7)
Auto Parts	Interior Stores (2)
Beverage Stores (2)	Lady Apparel Shops (6)
Bicycle Shop	Jewelry Stores (2)
Book Store	Men's Apparel Shops (2)
Children Apparel	Office Supplies (2)
Consignment Shops (4)	Optical Store
Florist Shop	Tobacco Shop
Consumer Services	
Banks (2)	Mortgage Company
Blueprinting Services	Photography Studios (3)
Credit Union	Printing Services (3)
Hair Salons (6)	Spa / Tanning Salon (2)
Investment Consulting	Tax Service
Loan Companies (3)	Title Companies (3)
Conference / Meeting Facilities (2)	Yoga Parlor
Restaurants, Eateries & Lounges	
American Restaurants – General (8)	Sandwich Shops (3)
Italian Restaurants (2)	Coffee Shop
Mexican Restaurant	Lounge/Food (14)
Pizza Restaurant (2)	

RESTAURANT & LOUNGES

There are 31 restaurant and lounge uses in the Downtown Core. The most intense concentrations are along 4th Street and along Greensboro Avenue. It is apparent that restaurants and lounges account for most of the new business development in the Downtown Core. Restaurants are a strong asset to the Downtown but the promotion of more lounges should not be encouraged.



PROFESSIONAL SERVICE / OFFICE

There are 89 separate professional/office uses in the Downtown Core. Professional service and office is a desirable use in the Downtown Core but it should occupy upper floor space to reserve street level space for retail shops, consumer services and restaurants. A negative aspect of office use is the requirement of a significant amount of off-street parking; consequently, large areas of the Downtown are devoted to surface parking which is not conducive to a pedestrian-friendly environment. The following is a breakdown of the types of office uses in the Downtown Core:

TABLE 8 OFFICE USES - DOWNTOWN CORE

Accounting (2)	General (10)	Medical Related (4)
Advertising / Media (2)	Insurance (3)	Meeting Space (2)
Appraiser	Financial Office (4)	Private Investigator
Civic (10)	Law Office (37)	Real Estate (5)
Consulting (4)	Media (2)	Utility
Engineering		

OTHER USES

Vacant or Underutilized Buildings – Due to the low demand for commercial uses within the Downtown Core, a large amount of square footage is either vacant or used for storage. Currently, almost 16 percent of the total floor space is vacant or underutilized. Upper floor space, particularly buildings of three stories or less, have typically been neglected and have become functionally obsolete.

Off-Street Parking – Slightly over 17 percent of the Downtown Core’s acreage is devoted to surface parking lots. These lots translate to over six acres of pavement with half or more of the land area in four separate blocks paved for parking. With few exceptions, the parking lots are not aesthetically pleasing and landscaping is absent from most parking areas.

Undeveloped Land – Within the Downtown Core, 8 acres (19 percent of Core’s total acreage) are undeveloped. This vacant acreage is located north of 4th Street near 22nd Avenue and northwest of the intersection of University Boulevard and Greensboro Avenue.

THE CHALLENGE

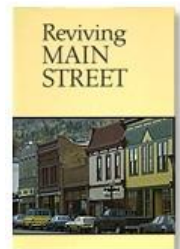
The Greater Downtown Plan’s Economic Market Potential section identified factors associated with successful downtowns (including those of several cities hosting large universities). These include an active mix of street-oriented retail, cultural activities, and a pleasant pedestrian environment with people on the sidewalks, as well as employment opportunities. This is precisely what is missing from Downtown Tuscaloosa, and should be the primary impetus for organizing and operating Main Street Tuscaloosa.

Main Street Tuscaloosa should be formed to organize, promote, design and support restructuring of Downtown’s economic base. After all, currently most visitors to Tuscaloosa spend very little time in Downtown, and most City residents and Downtown workers spend very little money here --- all for the simple reason that there is little to do – or buy here.

Reinvigorating the economy of Main Street Tuscaloosa will depend upon a strong organization able to effectively promote Downtown and the enhancement of a well-designed and maintained physical environment. Local people, using the proven techniques of the Main Street Four Point Approach, tailored specifically toward Downtown Tuscaloosa, are the right ones to form Main Street Tuscaloosa and take charge of this important assignment.

Main Street Tuscaloosa should be the not-for-profit organization through which the private and public sectors should come together to carry out the Greater Downtown Plan as it affects Tuscaloosa’s historic Downtown. Any other approach will likely not be comprehensive and thus leave out someone – or something – important. The overwhelming majority of the successful downtown revitalization programs across America started as grass-roots operations: local people who were tired of waiting for someone else to take the lead in getting Downtown to reassume its rightful role as the heart of the community.

Organizing to support Downtown economic revitalization in Tuscaloosa will not be easy. Even with good physical resources, a strong overall revitalization plan and tens of thousands of visitors from all over the country every year – not counting all those cheering Bama fans streaming in every autumn, it will take a real Downtown champion, backed up by a solid organization of committed volunteers, to make it happen. This is the role for Main Street Tuscaloosa.



THE SUPPORT

To jump-start Main Street Tuscaloosa, a small group of interested individuals must become convinced to organize, define the problems of Tuscaloosa's historic Downtown in their own terms, develop goals and objectives for an economic revitalization strategy, and forge appropriate relationships among bankers, government, merchants, civic groups, and citizens.

Unanimous support is not necessary – neither is consensus – in order to get Main Street Tuscaloosa started. The critical decision is to start the process. A lot of people strongly support getting Downtown Tuscaloosa revitalized as the heart of the community. They will be in favor of Main Street once they find out what it is and how it works.

But do not wait around. Instead, go with that segment of the Downtown community who understands immediately that this is the best thing that has ever happened to Downtown Tuscaloosa, and that the heart of the community is too important to spend time trying to build full consensus behind either the Greater Downtown Plan or the right organization to spearhead plan implementation.

Main Street Tuscaloosa will do what the private sector and the City – each on its own – cannot. Its role will be to assist both the public and private sectors as they work from their own strengths to implement the Greater Downtown Plan.

Some people – probably with other agendas – may dislike the idea of a grass-roots organization to support Downtown's economic and physical revitalization. This is not uncommon: as with many other grass-roots ventures, no matter how good your ideas, there will still be about 20% of the population absolutely convinced that nothing good is going to come of these efforts. No amount of facts or examples from the hundreds of successful programs around the South (and certainly not from the North, Midwest or even further away) will be enough to convince those people.

Some will worry about the cost of investing in revitalization, when the real cost is from doing little or nothing. Keep in mind that, when it comes to organizing and staffing and supporting a successful Main Street revitalization program, most resources are going to be local (and that is actually appropriate). There are

very few grants of any significant size to support the kind of work required to transform Downtown Tuscaloosa's economy.

In any case, this task is too important to wait for someone else to pay for it (and perhaps take control by attaching strings to relatively small amounts of money). Main Street Tuscaloosa should be a non-profit member organization of volunteers, even though it will need paid staff. Once the idea catches on, this new organization may receive financial support, staff assistance, cooperation or other help from the City of Tuscaloosa and its Office of Planning and Economic Development, the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, the Greater Tuscaloosa Visitor and Convention Bureau, and through the West Alabama Regional Commission. Regardless of the financial support, Main Street Tuscaloosa should be a freestanding, membership organization of volunteers.

THE FOUR POINT APPROACH

STEP 1 – ORGANIZATION

Main Street Tuscaloosa should be formed and recognized officially by the City Council as the official downtown organization. Upon organization, Main Street Tuscaloosa should adopt the Greater Downtown Plan as its overall purpose, and establish a separate, formal, broad-based support group.

For maximum leverage, Main Street Tuscaloosa should be a freestanding, not-for-profit organization of volunteers who are committed only to supporting a comprehensive economic and physical development strategy for Downtown Tuscaloosa. Every other organization in the City has other agendas. This one should consist of volunteers who are single-minded in their belief that Downtown Tuscaloosa is the heart of the community, and who are willing to give of their time and talents toward its physical, social, economic and political health.

The new organization should be broad-based, and include merchants, property owners, citizens-at-large, and public officials. It will have four interrelated strategies or approaches toward revitalizing Downtown Tuscaloosa. The Main Street Tuscaloosa office should be located in a storefront – for visibility and to upgrade a vacant storefront that needs work.

Four Point Approach

Organization: Working toward goal of downtown economic revitalization and assembling human and financial resources for implementation

Promotion: Marketing Main Street Tuscaloosa's unique characteristics to residents, investors, business owners, and visitors

Design: Enhancing Main Street through rehabilitating historic buildings, new construction sensitively designed, pedestrian-friendly streets, attractive window displays, convenient parking areas, and attractive signage and landscaping

Economic Restructuring: Strengthen existing economic assets while expanding and diversifying the economic base by converting unused or underused space into economically productive property.

Source: National Trust Main Street Center

The experience of hundreds of Main Street programs across the country indicates that, for success, Main Street Tuscaloosa should be a non-profit, tax-exempt member organization to:

- Establish a single, clear focus that is unhindered by past history.
- Develop a consistent program that is unhampered by local politics.
- Be a visible symbol of revitalization for Downtown Tuscaloosa.
- Represent a broad-based, independent mission to bring a fresh spirit of change.

The startup of most any new organization leads to questions. For example, what should be its characteristics and responsibilities, and how should it be organized and governed? What role, if any, should staff play, and to whom should staff be directly responsible?

Given the size and complexity of the Downtown and the nature of the task at hand, the responsibility for Main Street Tuscaloosa should be vested in a Board of Directors of perhaps 10-15 members, supported by a larger Board of Advisors.

Program Manager/Director

Main Street Tuscaloosa will also need a program manager who will report to the Board of Directors and take day-to-direction from the board president. Small programs may be successful with a part-time program manager, but Tuscaloosa is a large city with a large downtown and requires a full-time program manager.

The program manager is the central coordinator of the organization's activities who oversees daily operations, provides hands-on involvement critical to success, and serves as liaison for all committees. Most important is the manager's role as the full-time advocate for Downtown and as the primary source for information, resources, and revitalization activities.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors should oversee the organization's comprehensive program. The volunteers who make up the four key committees – Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring – should support to the board. This will give Main Street Tuscaloosa the stability it needs for success.

Precise structure of the board, including the roles of various committees, should best be determined during the organizational process. Big factors in these decisions should at least include local priorities, the roles of existing organizations, and available human and financial resources.

The Board of Directors should be a strong, working group, capable of developing and implementing policy toward economic revitalization supported by vigorous promotional activities and continuing improvements in the quality of the Downtown's physical environment. Success will depend in large part on the ability of the board to identify and mobilize resources, build volunteer support, develop new leadership, and maintain a clear focus on Downtown's needs and opportunities.

Always striving for success, members of the board should collectively bring three essentials to Main Street Tuscaloosa: work, wisdom and wealth. Workers will be actively involved in project planning and implementation. Those with knowledge and experience are needed in one or more of the four major areas of downtown concern. And some on the board should bring access to money – that may help to finance the program and its projects.

Responsibilities of the Board of Directors include building consensus about, stimulating restructuring the economic base of Downtown, focusing action where it is most needed, and maximizing volunteer participation. The board must always be the non-for-profit advocate of comprehensive downtown revitalization – to help bring profit to local business and to coordinate government efforts regarding improvements to the public realm.

Board of Advisors

Complementing the Board of Directors is the Board of Advisors. This advisory body should provide expert advice and counsel, insights from local and outside experience, and policy support to the Board of Directors. Its members should include community leaders, people with specialized knowledge, expertise and experience useful to the organization, and representatives of allied community organizations. Tuscaloosa is especially gifted with people blessed with these kinds of talents, and has engaged many of them for such service in its other successful undertakings.



Program Manager's Responsibilities

- Carry out policies of the Board
- Provide unified management
- Promote more efficient use of structures
- Support and recruit downtown businesses
- Promote year-round businesses and community activities
- Conduct market studies, needs assessments and structural inventories
- Foster public-private partnerships
- Encourage local business investment
- Coordinate interest and goals of community leaders, civic organizations and financial institutions
- Promote Main Street Tuscaloosa
- Support the reinvigoration of the Alabama Main Street Program

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Merchants

- Greater opportunity for business growth
- Expanded customer base

Property Owners

- Stable or higher rents
- Increased occupancy rates
- Improved marketability of property

Residents

- More local shopping and places to go
- Preservation of community history
- More employment opportunities

Local Government

- Stronger tax base
- Protection of property values

Chamber of Commerce

- Potential new member businesses
- Healthier overall business climate
- Potential partnerships on joint projects

Financial Institutions

- Expanded business customer base
- Fulfilling Community Reinvestment Act

Schools

- Use of Downtown as school "classroom"
- Potential employment opportunities

Businesses Outside Downtown

- Increased visitor traffic to City
- Overall healthier economy

Industry

- Improved quality of life
- Improved recruiting and retention

Source: National Trust Main Street Center

The Board of Advisors may meet infrequently as a group, but its members should be actively involved and available on-call as needed by the Board of Directors and the program manager. They understand that their positions in the organization may be less active than those of the Board of Directors; nevertheless, their roles will be invaluable to success.

Key Committees

It is recommended that Main Street Tuscaloosa establish the following three key committees:

- **Downtown Promotion Committee:** responsible for organizing and conducting image promotion, joint merchandising promotion (including coordinated opening hours) and special events;
- **Downtown Design Committee:** responsible for actions and activities that will boost the overall mental image of downtown, with subcommittees to focus on: storefronts, signs and merchandise display; streetscape and landscape; access, traffic, parking and loading; and downtown maintenance; and,
- **Downtown Economic Restructuring Committee:** responsible for supporting and coordinating the diversification and success of business development activities among merchants, property owners, economic development offices and realtors.

Membership

Main Street Tuscaloosa’s membership is important to successful economic revitalization of the Downtown, for it is the members who provide stability to the effort. Members must be attracted from across the community, and not simply from Downtown. Support from both the public and private sectors is critical to success – both must supply volunteers to help carry out projects and programs. Membership in this group should include merchants, property owners, professionals, attorneys, bankers, city and county officials, and representatives from the city’s various organizations. These should be organized into committees based on the delivery concepts of the plan.

Many organizations are competing for the same people, and Main Street Tuscaloosa will need those willing to use their imaginations to represent the organization in a credible way. Tuscaloosa is blessed with active, capable individuals and potentially allied organizations – consider this overview of some of the many sources of potential membership:

Merchants: These business owners are the backbone of the downtown economic base and they have strong interest in the success of revitalization. They are often most interested in – and are most valuable contributors to – promotional activities, but their participation in other programs can also be beneficial.

Property Owners: Both public and private property owners literally own the heart of the Downtown, and have a direct interest in the success of its revitalization. But local property owners must be active participants in the process. Absentee owners, though they may not participate directly, should always be kept informed about Main Street program activities and, as the program helps to shape Downtown economic growth, continue to be invited to take part.

Citizens: These are the consumers of goods and services and stand to benefit by being able to more easily obtain them locally. Many residents who may not belong to an existing organization may be interested in taking part in Downtown revitalization efforts and in helping make Downtown a more vibrant place.

Local Government: The City of Tuscaloosa, as well possibly the County, play a major role in economic revitalization by bringing technical skills, leadership and financial resources to the revitalization effort. The City has already expended substantial funds in the construction of major facilities within the Downtown. Because the City and the County are major players in directing and enabling economic growth, they must be active participants in the process of revitalizing the Downtown’s economic base.

Chamber of Commerce: The Chamber is an important player because of its overall interest in commercial development and the economic health of the community at large. The Chamber can help spread the word among its existing membership about the ongoing activities of Main Street Tuscaloosa and support its efforts to help businesses expand, recruit new businesses and share important informational resources. But the Chamber has responsibilities outside the City of Tuscaloosa; therefore it is limited in the extent to which it can focus attention to the Downtown.

Financial Institutions: Banks within the Greater Downtown benefit from business loans and from helping to attract new businesses to Tuscaloosa. They support revitalization by helping package loans, taking part in interest buy-downs and other financial incentive programs, and seeking innovative ways to stimulate economic development within the Downtown. They also have the responsibility to satisfy the requirements of the Community Reinvestment Act.

Schools: One of the best ways of reaching parents about the success of Main Street Tuscaloosa is through activities targeted toward school children. Special school events related to the Downtown revitalization initiatives encourage students and their parents to become positive contributors to the Downtown's quality of life. By providing students opportunities to use their skills outside the classroom, they can help accomplish Downtown projects.

Historic Preservation Organizations: The National Main Street Program is rooted in the preservation and revitalization of historic main streets within cities and towns throughout the U.S. Nurturing opportunities for participation of historic preservation organizations within Tuscaloosa to contribute their expertise in local history, preservation techniques and related efforts add much to the revitalization and maintenance of the Downtown's many historic resources.

West Alabama Regional Commission: This regional planning agency can provide valuable market data and technical information about Downtown's market area, and can identify resources and establish relationships with regional, state and national economic development agencies.

Media Outlets: There are numerous opportunities for various Tuscaloosa media outlets to be major supporters of Main Street Tuscaloosa's revitalization initiatives. Revitalization means new jobs, new investment and more money in the community – all activities that are very newsworthy – and often are good sources for advertising opportunities.

It should be clear from the outset that Main Street Tuscaloosa cannot and should not take the place of the Downtown Redevelopment Authority. That group has an official role under state law, including the ability to offer specific tax incentives for downtown redevelopment projects, to issue bonds, and undertake specific projects on private property or in a structure that has historically been a retail/commercial site. Likewise, Main Street Tuscaloosa does not take the place of the Tuscaloosa Historic

Preservation Commission or the Chamber of Commerce, or of the Downtown Merchants Organization. It must be a separate and distinct organization whose sole purpose is continuing economic revitalization of Downtown Tuscaloosa.

STEP 2 – PROMOTION

Self-promotion is critical for Main Street Tuscaloosa. It has taken years for Downtown to get into its present condition, and that image is stuck in the minds of virtually everyone in the trade area. Changing that image requires a coordinated effort on several fronts. But note that there must be real change to promote, which is why Main Street Tuscaloosa must work simultaneously on restructuring the economy.

The Promotions Committee responsibilities includes building new perceptions of a revitalized Downtown to encourage consumers and investors to live, work, shop, play and invest. Marketing the unique characteristics of Downtown Tuscaloosa as it is now – and throughout the revitalization process – forges such an image through advertising, retail promotional activity, special events, and marketing campaigns. Each of these helps to improve consumer and investor confidence.

People must be familiar with the businesses that are located Downtown in order to consider patronizing Downtown businesses. To accomplish this, the Main Street Tuscaloosa Promotion Committee should organize and carry out a comprehensive promotional campaign. An annual promotional event calendar should be set for Downtown – and updated monthly – to include three kinds of promotional activities:

- Image promotion,
- Joint merchandising promotion, and
- Special events promotion.

Each promotional activity has an important role to play in building the image of Downtown as an alternative to where people have been spending their time and money. Main Street Tuscaloosa should run at least six different promotion events spread out throughout the year, so people do not tire of them.



Image promotion

Image promotion should focus on increasing consumer awareness of Main Street Tuscaloosa as an attractive, identifiable place for shopping and services. This is a continuing effort to project the improving image of Main Street Tuscaloosa to people all over the trade area, and to keep them up to date on improvements and as events and sales are scheduled. A useful tool will be a directory Main Street Tuscaloosa stores and services – updated often. Articles in local and regional newspapers can help, and so will word-of-mouth.



Joint merchandising promotion

Joint merchandising means getting merchants together to advertise and promote Main Street Tuscaloosa as a shopping and multi-purpose destination. To be sure, every business should engage in its own promotion, for the unique nature of each one of them is very important to potential customers and clients. However, by engaging in some joint advertising, in the same way that shopping centers require of their tenants, Main Street Tuscaloosa businesses and services can have far greater impact.



Special events

Special Events provide a way to get people in the habit of visiting Main Street Tuscaloosa, which should strive to become the preferred venue for carefully selected events. This may include open house retail promotions during tree lighting and festival of lights before Christmas. Main Street the year, including the holiday parade, plus a Tuscaloosa could also host an open-house retail event during the summer (when shops typically are otherwise seldom crowded). Main Street Tuscaloosa should also become known for a major revenue-producing event, such as a Market Festival operated as a major revenue-producing event (perhaps coordinated with events at the new Farmers Market and Riverfront Amphitheater). And be certain to capitalize on Alabama football weekends as a way to show off Downtown retail opportunities and diverse dining and entertainment venues. The enjoyment of participating in special events can carry over into new shopping, dining and entertainment habits. The indirect results can be an increase in business over the long run. And, speaking of running, the Annual Mayor's Cup 5K Grand Prix Run and Walk is already a springtime Downtown event and should remain so, starting and finishing at City Hall, of course.



F. Ducote - Vancouver

STEP 3 – DESIGN

Main Street Tuscaloosa can better capitalize on its physical assets by getting them into top shape. An inviting atmosphere, created through attractive and well-maintained window displays, lighted parking areas, good-looking storefronts, coordinated street furniture, visible signs, clear sidewalks, pedestrian-scale street lights, and appropriate landscaping, convey a positive message about Downtown and what it has to offer.

The Design Committee promotes excellence in comprehensive Downtown design. Excellence in design is more than just the appearance of buildings and the Downtown landscape streetscape. Design affects every part of the public's mental image of Downtown and themselves. For example, the way merchandise is displayed in the stores, how traffic flows through the Downtown, and even where to park. Comfortable surroundings and a pleasing atmosphere are the result of good design of all that makes up downtown.

Within the Downtown, inappropriate street tree species often hide storefronts and retail signage. Oversize shrubs give the perception of places to hide at night, and make it difficult to remove trapped litter. Then there are the ubiquitous dumpsters on or at the edge of Downtown sidewalks.

Well maintained buildings, streets and parking lots, sidewalks, merchandise displays and signs, put together thoughtfully in accord with the Greater Downtown Plan and a palette of materials and colors, can positively affect the way people feel about the place. In addition, more people than ever consider shopping as recreation or entertainment in itself, and evening hours have the most potential to capitalize on this attitude. Main Street Tuscaloosa capitalizes on its role as a nighttime place, dressed up in a manner that encourages evening shopping, strolling and browsing. Excellence in design can help; the Promotions Committee can assist.

STEP 4 – ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Main Street Tuscaloosa can strengthen itself and the City at large by expanding and diversifying its economic base. The key to greater economic success is to sharpen the competitiveness of existing business owners and help recruit compatible new businesses and other economic activities to Main Street Tuscaloosa. Together, these produce a Main Street able to respond to consumer needs and spur conversion of vacant property and underused commercial space into economic productivity.

The Economic Restructuring Committee actively assists Main Street merchants and property owners and their agents consider new and more appropriate economic functions and uses, how to improve the effectiveness of existing uses and their interrelationships, and ways to enhance current merchandising efforts. The committee devises an effective approach to competing with other markets by building upon the natural attractions and advantages of the Downtown Core.

Currently, there are a number of things missing from the retail and service business mix of Tuscaloosa's Downtown Core. As an example, there is no wine shop, grocery or specialty food store, or pharmacy, and only one apparel store (the Shirt Shop). There are limited personal services businesses and there is no place to buy hardware, electronics or computers. Gaps like these are likely the main reasons there are very few people on the Downtown streets at most times of most days, except for patrons of late night entertainment venues.

To illustrate the magnitude of the Downtown's lack of retail and service uses, mentally check each item in the accompanying box for the type of establishment you are certain is located in Downtown Tuscaloosa. It is evident from this exercise that a number of shopping and service opportunities are absent.

Typical Downtown Retail and Services			
<input type="checkbox"/> Accountant	<input type="checkbox"/> Party shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Garden center	<input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy
<input type="checkbox"/> Ad agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Cable TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic design	<input type="checkbox"/> Photography
<input type="checkbox"/> Alterations	<input type="checkbox"/> Catering	<input type="checkbox"/> Grocery – specialty	<input type="checkbox"/> Printing/office supplies
<input type="checkbox"/> Antiques	<input type="checkbox"/> Chamber of commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Hair and nail salon	<input type="checkbox"/> Property management
<input type="checkbox"/> Appliances	<input type="checkbox"/> Consignments	<input type="checkbox"/> Hardware	<input type="checkbox"/> Real estate
<input type="checkbox"/> Architect	<input type="checkbox"/> Contractor	<input type="checkbox"/> Home furnishings	<input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant
<input type="checkbox"/> Art studio/frame shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Copying/printing	<input type="checkbox"/> Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/> Rental center
<input type="checkbox"/> Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Drug store	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior design	<input type="checkbox"/> Silkscreen/T-shirt shop
<input type="checkbox"/> Children's clothing	<input type="checkbox"/> Dry cleaner	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet provider	<input type="checkbox"/> Staffing services
<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronics	<input type="checkbox"/> Investments	<input type="checkbox"/> Title company
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Computers	<input type="checkbox"/> Jewelry	<input type="checkbox"/> Toy shop
<input type="checkbox"/> Bakery	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineer	<input type="checkbox"/> Ladies clothing	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel agent
<input type="checkbox"/> Bank	<input type="checkbox"/> Fabrics and interiors	<input type="checkbox"/> Men and boys clothing	<input type="checkbox"/> Tux shop
<input type="checkbox"/> Bar	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Utility companies
<input type="checkbox"/> Barber	<input type="checkbox"/> Florist	<input type="checkbox"/> Office furniture	<input type="checkbox"/> Web development
<input type="checkbox"/> Beer and wine	<input type="checkbox"/> Gas station	<input type="checkbox"/> Office supply	<input type="checkbox"/> Wedding planner
<input type="checkbox"/> Bike shop	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifts	<input type="checkbox"/> Paint Store	<input type="checkbox"/> Women's apparel
<input type="checkbox"/> Bookseller	<input type="checkbox"/> Gallery/studio	<input type="checkbox"/> Pet supplies	

In contrast, there are several cases of "too many or too much." For example, Downtown is home to a large number of bars with two recently being located in proximity to the Druid City Historic District, creating, at times, late night traffic and noise along residential streets. In addition, there are many consignment shops and numerous vacant storefronts and an excessive amount of vacant upstairs space, especially for a highly successful college town. There are several law offices located in the heart of Downtown – in areas that are much more appropriate for storefront retail and other walk-in trade opportunities. Adding to the lack of economic vitality are the many closed window fronts and blank walls that project a negative impression and lower interest in future retail investment.

Fortunately, there are numerous opportunities to be seized. For example, Mercedes and the University of Alabama have recruited people from urban areas far outside this region. These people are a special target market accustomed to and often seeking an urban experience, and respond accordingly if one emerges. For example, there is an opportunity to build upon the three significant Downtown food-and-drink business clusters that are close to one another. At present they are loosely interconnected and could be capitalized upon as a business anchor, especially since at least four or five of them feature live music a few nights a week. Related to this, the historic L&N Station nearby could be strongly publicized as a major venue for catering and special events. Added to this, could be the return of Brown's Corner to serve as the food-and-drink interconnection of all three Downtown food-and-drink clusters:

- Greensboro Avenue between University Boulevard and 5th Street
- University Boulevard between 22nd and Greensboro Avenues
- Temerson Square area along 4th Street between Greensboro and 21st Avenues

In addition to dining and entertainment opportunities, the Downtown Core has a number of large vacant or underutilized historic buildings or parcels of land that would work nicely for a boutique hotel or additional loft apartments or condominiums, with opportunities for adaptive use of the roof terraces as well. And think about capitalizing on the "adjacencies" or synergies of very different businesses that logically draw one another's customers, e.g., the bakery and bike shop in Temerson Square.



A vital part of the Main Street Tuscaloosa's Economic Restructuring Committee's role would be to coordinate business operating hours, particularly early evening hours when many people may prefer to come Downtown for shopping and dining. The committee should assist Main Street merchants, service businesses and restaurants to reach agreement on compatible, mutually supportive hours. A logical and consistent pattern for various business concentrations would be highly desirable, so that consumers would not have to check the clock or calendar before visiting certain stores and service businesses, and so those seeking food, drink and entertainment Downtown could use shopping as part of their evening out.



In all of this, the Economic Restructuring Committee should have a strong business development, promotion and marketing program, dedicated to the success of Main Street Tuscaloosa, to help property owners and economic developers find appropriate businesses for Downtown, and vice-versa. Good working relations should be established with local real estate professionals, so they contact Main Street Tuscaloosa when seeking Downtown tenants, while recruiters will contact real estate professionals when seeking a good location for a prospective Downtown business investment.



EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS

The National Trust Main Street Center's experience in helping communities bring their commercial corridors back to life has shown time and time again that the Main Street Four-Point Approach succeeds. That success is guided by the following eight principles, which set the Main Street methodology apart from other redevelopment strategies. For a Main Street program to be successful, it must whole-heartedly embrace the following time-tested Eight Principles. The success of the National Trust Main Street Center's Four-Point Approach is guided by the following eight principles:



- **Comprehensive:** No single focus — lavish public improvements, name-brand business recruitment, or endless promotional events — can revitalize Main Street. For successful, sustainable, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach, including activity in each of Main Street's Four Points, is *essential*.
- **Incremental:** Baby steps come before walking. Successful revitalization programs begin with basic, simple activities that

demonstrate that "new things are happening " in the commercial district. As public confidence in the Main Street district grows and participants' understanding of the revitalization process becomes more sophisticated, Main Street is able to tackle increasingly complex problems and more ambitious projects. This incremental change leads to much longer-lasting and dramatic positive change in the Main Street area.

- **Self-help:** No one else will save your Main Street. Local leaders must have the will and desire to mobilize local resources and talent. That means convincing residents and business owners of the rewards they'll reap by investing time and money in Main Street — the heart of their community. Only local leadership can produce long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.
- **Partnerships:** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the district and must work together to achieve common goals of Main Street's revitalization. Each sector has a role to play and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations in order to forge an effective partnership.
- **Identifying and capitalizing on existing assets:** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities like distinctive buildings and human scale that give people a sense of belonging. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
- **Quality:** Emphasize quality in every aspect of the revitalization program. This applies to all elements of the process — from storefront designs to promotional campaigns to educational programs. Shoestring budgets and "cut and paste" efforts reinforce a negative image of the commercial district. Instead, concentrate on quality projects over quantity.
- **Change:** Skeptics turn into believers and attitudes on Main Street will turn around. At first, almost no one believes Main Street can really turn around. Changes in attitude and practice are slow but definite — public support for change will build as the Main Street program grows and consistently meets its goals. Change also means engaging in better business practices, altering ways of thinking, and improving the physical appearance of the commercial district. A carefully planned Main

Street program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.

- **Implementation:** To succeed, Main Street Tuscaloosa must show visible results that can only come from completing projects. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort is under way and succeeding. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger ones as the revitalization effort matures, and that constant revitalization activity creates confidence in the Main Street program and ever-greater levels of participation.

Source: National Main Street Center

DELIVERING MAIN STREET TUSCALOOSA

Delivering Main Street Tuscaloosa's overall vision for revitalization of Downtown requires that everyone work together to solve existing problems, while avoiding creating new ones. This will require assurances that everything happening within the City is supportive of Downtown as heart of the City and Main Street Tuscaloosa's role as helping to deliver that vision. But neither the public sector nor the private sector can do this alone – it will require coordinating the efforts of both sectors in a creative manner. This is the role of Main Street Tuscaloosa.

Everything the City of Tuscaloosa has available should be put to work in support of Downtown revitalization – every power and every effort. This requires careful consideration of the implications of every investment made within the City, and how it potentially impacts the health of Downtown. Simply because symptoms of decline have appeared within the Downtown, does not necessarily mean all causes of those problems are located within Downtown. A prime responsibility of Main Street Tuscaloosa will be to stand watch over actions that are occurring throughout the City and their potential to either positively or negatively affect the economic health of Downtown.

The most likely community connection that will support, encourage and enhance Main Street Tuscaloosa's revitalization efforts is the City's annual budgeting process. Local tax dollars should help carry-out plans for revitalization. City government should put its regulatory and administrative tools to work. These include the zoning ordinance, building code, historic preservation regulations, and property maintenance codes. Administrative actions could be as simple as coordinating parking time limits in accord with

guidelines that may be organized by Main Street Tuscaloosa. Another example might be regulating dumpster locations and coordinating commercial trash collection times.

Revitalizing Downtown Tuscaloosa will be a continuing effort over a number of years. Change will not occur overnight, regardless of how sincerely everyone may wish it so. Main Street Tuscaloosa will help to strengthen, revitalize and optimize all aspects of life in the City over the long term through its efforts to enrich the heart of the City. To do this, Main Street Tuscaloosa must be a living organization; one that is able to grow and change as conditions change with the times; and, one that is able to be adjusted as needed over time to meet successes and setbacks. Main Street Tuscaloosa must be a team effort, built on connections among government, the private sector, and non-profit organizations.

Main Street Tuscaloosa will get more people interested and committed to delivery of a revitalized Downtown Core. Downtown will evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and changes in market and physical conditions. Through continuing evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and regeneration, and using it fully and creatively, Main Street Tuscaloosa can be the catalyst for delivery of much of the Greater Downtown Plan.

Main Street Program Must Have:

- Broad-based community support
- Strong Board of Directors
- Knowledgeable Board of Advisors
- Clear sense of mission
- Defined goals and objectives
- Dependable funding
- Full-time program manager
- Committee for each program area
- Clear work program & assignments
- Volunteers committed to success
- Strong public-private partnerships
- Physical presence in heart of Main Street



MAIN STREET TUSCALOOSA “TO DO” CHECKLIST



ORGANIZATIONAL STEPS

- ✓ Identify an initial group of supporters for Main Street Tuscaloosa
- ✓ Hold Main Street informational forums to build grassroots support
- ✓ Incorporate Main Street Tuscaloosa as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
- ✓ Confirm Main Street Tuscaloosa’s primary and secondary boundaries
- ✓ Prepare a strategic plan for Main Street Tuscaloosa
- ✓ Prepare organizational bylaws
- ✓ Establish annual goals and first-year work program with measurable objectives
- ✓ Gather benchmark information for reporting annual progress
- ✓ Adopt a budget based on public and private funding
- ✓ Seek City budget allocations for operations, maintenance and capital improvements
- ✓ Adopt the Greater Downtown Plan to support Main Street Tuscaloosa’s implementation strategies
- ✓ Devise a written job description and hire a program director/manager
- ✓ Establish a Downtown Promotion Committee
- ✓ Establish a Downtown Design Committee
- ✓ Establish a Downtown Business Restructuring Committee
- ✓ Formulate annual objectives for each committee
- ✓ Join the National Main Street Network
- ✓ Join the Alabama Main Street Program Network
- ✓ Encourage the City to become a Certified Local Government

WORK PROGRAM

- ✓ Provide Four-Point Approach training to Main Street Tuscaloosa members
- ✓ Develop a Main Street Tuscaloosa marketing and promotions campaign

- ✓ Develop a joint advertising program for Downtown businesses
- ✓ Organize a Main Street Tuscaloosa fundraising program
- ✓ Working with the City’s Office of Planning and Economic Development, the Chamber of Commerce, the Tuscaloosa Development Authority and others, create a plan for retaining and recruiting Downtown businesses
- ✓ Support City efforts to increase residential infill
- ✓ Sponsor regular and seasonal Downtown weekday/weeknight events
- ✓ Sponsor special events Downtown
- ✓ Seek to coordinate Downtown business hours
- ✓ Support local historic district designation for the Downtown National Register District
- ✓ Seek expanded City funding for historic building façade rehabilitation
- ✓ Support historic district and non-historic district design standards and guidelines
- ✓ Upgrade the Downtown section of the sign ordinance
- ✓ Prepare a Downtown gateway and wayfinding signage plan (particularly location of public parking)
- ✓ Prepare streetscape improvements plan and maintenance program
- ✓ Prepare and implement a Downtown parking management plan
- ✓ Promote landscape improvements for private parking lots
- ✓ Seek the removal of dumpsters from street/sidewalk view
- ✓ Coordinate garbage collection times and locations
- ✓ Promote City creation of a Downtown loading zone system
- ✓ Promote improvements to pedestrian access between Downtown and the Riverwalk
- ✓ Promote and support development of civic open space and parks Downtown
- ✓ Promote Downtown public art



CASE STUDY – MAIN STREET COLUMBUS (MS)

Columbus, Mississippi has a highly successful Main Street initiative. The following is a summary of the Main Street Columbus program.

COLUMBUS’S MAIN STREET BEGINNINGS:

Main Street Columbus had its beginnings as part of a statewide Main Street initiative begun in Mississippi in 1985. Columbus hosted a National Main Street Center Resource Team. This led to the State setting up the Mississippi Downtown Development Association in 1986, which was later renamed the Mississippi Main Street Association. Since its formation, the State’s Main Street Association has helped over 125 towns work to develop Main Street programs.

This initiative kicked off Main Street Columbus which was originally a city-sponsored program, supported jointly by the Merchants Association and Downtown Columbus Unlimited. In 1992, the Main Street Program successfully merged the Merchants Association and Downtown Columbus Unlimited to become Main Street Columbus, Inc., a free-standing not-for-profit corporation.

STAFFING & OFFICE LOCATION:

Main Street Columbus has one full-time Main Street Manager and one part-time person. The salary for the manager is in the mid thirties. Additional assistance is provided through volunteers and student interns from Mississippi University for Women.

Columbus Main Street has its office in a storefront location within the heart of Downtown Columbus. It purchased the 3000 square foot building in 2002 for approximately \$60,000; and, in 2008, it made its final note payment.

BUDGET & FUNDING SOURCES:

In 2008, the Main Street Columbus budget projected revenue of \$100,000. These revenues are from five sources: City of Columbus (\$20,000); Lowndes County (\$20,000); Market Street Festival (\$30,000); Convention & Visitors Bureau (\$15,000 - funding support for Market Street Festival); and Member Dues (\$15,000). In addition, there are event-specific activities that raise their own operating funds.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

There are three membership categories: Shopping, Dining and Service. The first two are self-explanatory with the “service” category including law offices, insurance agencies, financial institutions and traditional service-oriented businesses such as dry cleaners, repair shops, service stations, printers, etc.

MEMBERSHIP AND DUES:

Main Street Columbus has approximately 150 member businesses. This includes traditional downtown retail businesses, legal and financial services, but also includes churches, media outlets and individuals interested in the health of Downtown Columbus. Annually, approximately \$15,000 is collected from member dues. Business and professional dues are based on the number of employees: Businesses with 1-5 employees \$150; 6-10 employees \$200; and 11 or more employees \$250. There are “sponsor” type memberships that include “Friends” \$40; Clubs/Organizations \$75; Property Owners \$150; Corporate \$500 (includes a number of legal offices and financial institutions); and Patron \$1000.

GOVERNANCE:

A 22-member Board of Directors oversees Main Street Columbus activities and decision-making. The Board is comprised of four appointed individuals (City, County, Chamber, and an individual from the City’s Federally Funded Programs) and 18 elected individuals.

The Board is divided into three categories of board members: shopping, dining and service members with each category having equal representation. Board terms are for three years and are limited to two consecutive terms. Individuals are nominated by the Board to run for available positions within the three-member categories (shopping, dining and service); each member business gets one vote for each available position. The Board is responsible for hiring and firing staff, approving the budget and concurring with the programmatic direction established by the Main Street manager.

COMMITTEES:

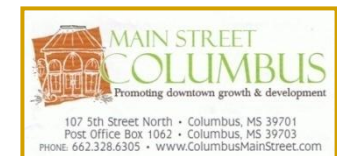
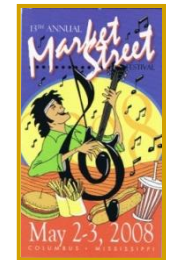
Columbus Main Street has seven committees that are responsible for various facets of Main Street activities. These committees are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design Committee ▪ Promotions Committee ▪ Economic Restructuring Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Membership Committee ▪ Festival Committee ▪ Merchants Committee ▪ Governmental
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPACT AND PROGRAMS:

It is estimated that there has been over \$1,000,000 in private investment within the heart of Downtown. This is primarily renovation of existing buildings and new construction. Over the life of Main Street Columbus, it is estimated that there has been \$30,000,000 of private investment and \$6,000,000 in public reinvestment.

Main Street Columbus has had substantial success with assisting new development within the downtown, the passage of Historic Preservation Standards, a Tree Ordinance and the overall reinvigoration of the Downtown.





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Part III – Delivering the Vision

Delivering the vision of a Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa is accomplished through a multiplicity of targeted strategies. The preceding parts of the Greater Downtown Plan contained key elements of the Vision for the Greater Downtown, which were:

- Land Use Plan;
- Development Concept Plan;
- Mobility Plan;
- Historic Preservation Plan; and
- Main Street Program.

This part of the Greater Downtown Plan provides a set of implementation strategies, which are:

- Regulatory Controls;
- Property Maintenance Controls;
- Plan Prioritizing; and,
- Funding Sources.

Regulatory Controls

Governmental-based regulatory controls can be highly effective tools in assuring that development takes place in accord with the vision for the Greater Downtown. Three very important regulatory controls the City can utilize are discussed in this section. They are:

1. Downtown Overlay District
2. SmartCode; and
3. Property Maintenance Code.

ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT

In 2007, as a pre-emptive implementation strategy for the Greater Downtown Plan, the City of Tuscaloosa adopted the Downtown/Riverfront Overlay District. This early action was necessary to protect the major investments being made within the Downtown's Urban Renewal Area and along the Riverfront.

Originally, the boundaries of the Overlay District were the Black Warrior River to the north; Queen City Avenue to the east; Bryant Drive to the south; Lurleen Wallace Blvd. South to the west; northward to 6th Street; westward to the centerline of 29th Avenue; and northward to the Black Warrior River. In 2008, the boundaries of the Overlay District were extended southward to 15th Street.

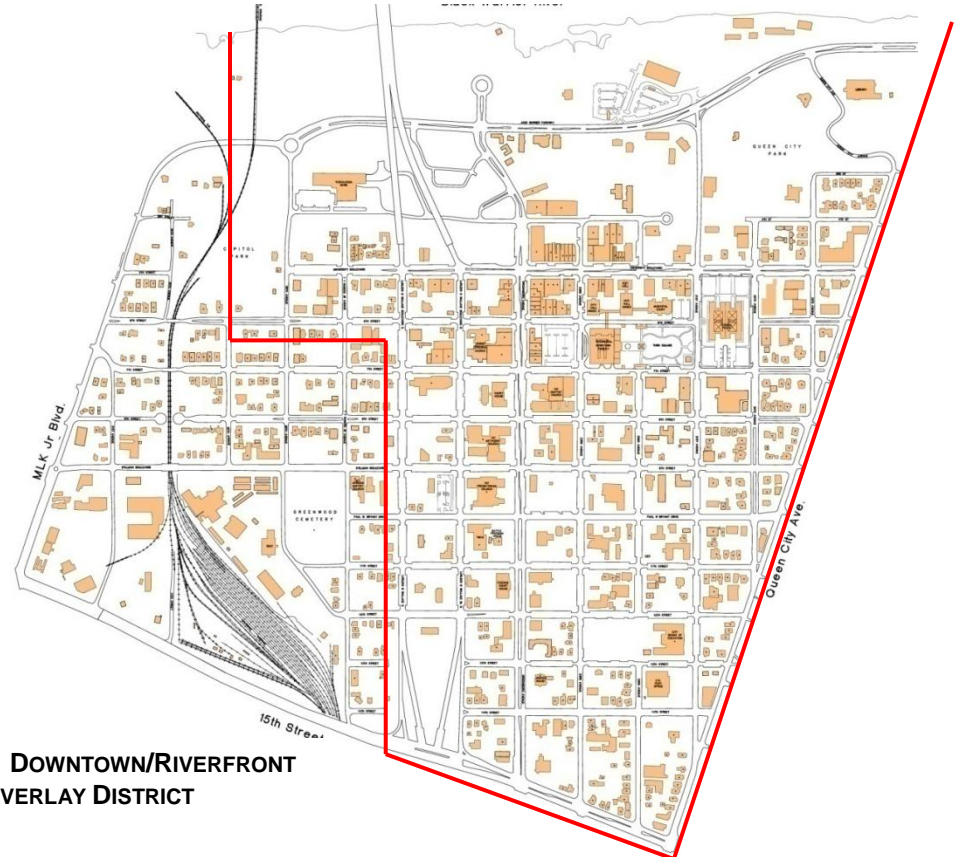


FIGURE 11 DOWNTOWN/RIVERFRONT
OVERLAY DISTRICT

DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The Overlay District's standards provide additional protection of the visual and functional character of the Greater Downtown and Riverfront, the retention of which impacts public and private investments and economic vitality. These standards insure compatible development takes place within the Downtown and Riverfront.

The Overlay District's standards and guidelines address site planning and design, appropriate materials, design excellence in building forms and facades, building scale, landscaping, parking, lighting, and signage. These standards and guidelines supplement the current set of zoning standards that regulate development within the Greater Downtown.

The Overlay District's development standards include:

- Floor area ratios of at least 1.0.
- A minimum of two stories required for new construction.
- Buildings located within 10 feet of the front property line.
- Ground floor commercial uses for buildings exceeding three stories.
- Limiting the use of certain building materials not consistent with traditional building facades.
- Prohibition of outside storage.
- Prohibition of internally lit signage, pylons or awnings.
- Street-level facades that include window transparency and outside gathering places or landscaping
- Minimum sidewalk widths of 15 feet within the Downtown Core.
- Building lighting fixtures designed to direct lumens toward the inward boundaries of the property.
- Neon lighting used only as an architectural accent.
- Parking lots located to the rear of buildings or to side if the rear lot area is not useable.
- Trash dumpsters and mechanical equipment screened with appropriate materials when visible from the street.

In addition to standards, the Overlay District includes a set of recommended, but voluntary guidelines. In the future it is hoped that many of the guidelines transition to required standards.

The Overlay District's development guidelines include:

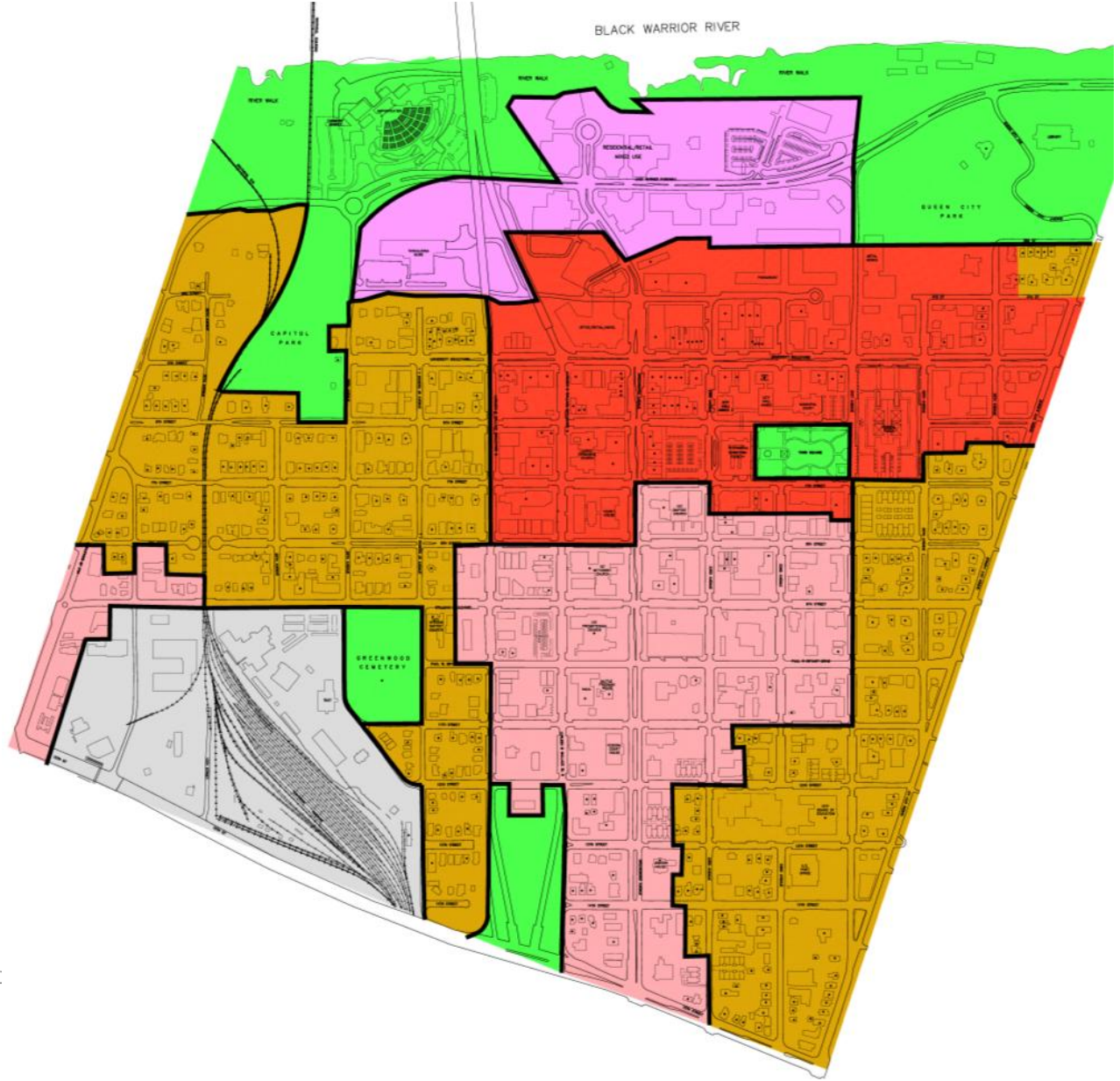
- Design building facades to form a cohesive building line traditionally associated with downtown areas.
- Make a reasonable effort to return contributing historic buildings to their original character.
- Consider designing new or renovated buildings within the Downtown Core with architectural character reflective of existing historic buildings.
- Accentuate primary building entrances with architectural features such as arches or recesses.
- Avoid use of blank walls at the street level.
- Differentiate lower floors by use of design treatments.
- Avoid false fronts, false stories or pent eaves to the roofs of commercial buildings.
- Maintain commercial continuity along pedestrian-oriented frontages by preventing unnecessary interruption by parking lots entrances.
- Design driveways to limit the expanse of driveway area crossing pedestrian walkways.
- Shield HVAC equipment from public view.
- Provide lighting that illuminates building facades.
- Devote 40% of structured parking facilities' ground-level area to commercial/office uses.
- Screen surface parking facilities by use of landscaping or masonry walls.
- Provide planted islands in surface parking facilities.
- Provide landscape treatments for roads, paths, parking and service areas as an integral part of a coordinated landscape design.

SMARTCODE – PROPOSED

The Greater Downtown Plan is exploring the use of the SmartCode as replacement for the existing, much dated Zoning Ordinance. The SmartCode is based on the new urbanism principle that the neighborhood is the basic unit of urban form. The SmartCode provides design criteria for streets, blocks, buildings and open space. One of the major strengths of the SmartCode is that it folds many of the zoning, subdivision, and urban design standards into one compact document.

The SmartCode is considered a “form-based code” because it strongly addresses the physical form of buildings and development. Conventional zoning codes are based primarily on use and density. The City is currently in the process of drafting a SmartCode ordinance for the Greater Downtown.

The Transect Map shown in Figure 12 Draft Transect Map is provided only for illustrative purposes.



LEGEND

- T-5 DOWNTOWN CORE
- T-5 DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT
- T-4.5 URBAN EDGE
- T-4 URBAN OFFICE-RESIDENTIAL
- SPECIAL DISTRICT: INDUSTRIAL
- SPECIAL DISTRICT: PARKS-OPEN SPACE-C
- CONTRIBUTING HISTORIC STRUCTURE

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

The Tuscaloosa's Inspection Department, in addition to being responsible for the inspection of new building construction and existing building renovations, also has primary responsibility for enforcement of property maintenance codes and the condemnation of dilapidated properties throughout the City. Since before the 1990's, the Inspection Department has been involved in condemning dilapidated properties. Most often, these properties were identified through neighborhood complaints or during other inspection duties. Although this process was effective, it did not prove to rid the City of blighted properties in a timely and proactive manner.

In 2005, the City adopted the 2003 International Building Code, which included the Property Maintenance Code. This gave the Inspection Department specific guidelines for judging the maintenance of land and structures. The Inspection Department now has the tools to proactively add properties into the property maintenance program or classify them as dilapidated and begin condemnations proceedings with effective results.

In 2006, the Inspection Department added inspector positions specifically for property maintenance and condemnations, giving the Department full time property maintenance inspectors. The duties of these inspectors is to respond to occupant complaints both residential and business, regarding inadequate living conditions or frustrations with landlords not making necessary repairs in a timely manner. The Department also began block-by-block sweeps of neighborhoods to proactively identify poorly maintained and dilapidated structures and conduct follow up inspections. These sweeps take several days to complete and each property is granted a limited time for repairs. Follow up inspections are performed after the time limit has expired for each property.

In 2007, the Inspection Department began a new system for property maintenance procedures. Since the advent of these new procedures, the Department has added 278 Property Maintenance cases and 107 Condemnations cases to its system. Of the 278 Maintenance cases, repairs have been completed on 185 structures, 13 structures have been demolished, and the 80 remaining properties are undergoing repairs. Of the 107 structures in Condemnations, 73 have been condemned and demolished and the remaining 34 properties are set for condemnation hearings before the City Council or have been released.

Property Maintenance Code is designed to address substandard property maintenance and to rid the City of dilapidated and/or abandoned property. This is an ongoing task that involves the City of Tuscaloosa, property owners, tenants and concerned citizens.

Complementing the Inspection Department's Property Maintenance Code, is the Police Department's Code Enforcement Division. This Division is comprised of a Captain, eight Sworn Officers and one Civilian Officer. Their general responsibilities are to enforce the codes and ordinances of the City as well as State laws. Examples of some of the most common City codes enforced are Littering, Trash and Litter Accumulation, Abandoned and Non-Operative Vehicles and Overgrown Vegetation. The Police Department has one police officer assigned to the Inspection Department to work in conjunction with a City Building Inspector enforcing Property Maintenance Codes, Building Codes, Drug/Public Nuisance Violations and the Mayor's Hope Initiative.

The Code Enforcement Division receives many of the Code violation complaints through the 311 Call Center, as well as by proactively working with other City Departments such as Revenue, Planning and Zoning, Inspections, and Transportation. The Code Enforcement Division also assists the Tuscaloosa County Health Department as well as the Alabama Alcohol Beverage Control Board in enforcing alcohol and tobacco Offenses. The Division is a referral point for other Police Divisions concerning other codes and ordinances.

The following is a summary of selected exterior standards contained within the Property Maintenance Code of Chapter 6, Article IV, of the Housing Code which is part of the City of Tuscaloosa's Building Code:

EXTERIOR PREMISES

- Sanitation – premises maintained in a clean, safe and sanitary condition, and free from accumulation of trash or garbage.
- Walkways, stairs and driveways – walkways, stairs, driveways and parking spaces kept in good repair and free from hazardous conditions.
- Motor vehicles – no inoperative, disassembled or unlicensed motor vehicles kept on premises.
- Defacement of property – responsibility of owner to restore defaced exterior surfaces of any structure.

-
- Weeds – premises maintained free from weeds or excessive plant growth, particularly shrubs and trees blocking windows.

EXTERIOR STRUCTURE

- General exterior – structure maintained in good repair and is structurally sound.
- Wood, siding and masonry – exterior wood surfaces protected by paint/stain kept in good condition.
- Premises identification – address numbers placed in a position to be plainly visible from the street.
- Structural members and foundations – foundations maintained free from deterioration and cracks.
- Roof and drainage – roof, flashing and drains sound, tight and free of defects that admit rain.
- Stairways, decks, porches and balconies – exterior stairway, deck, porch and balcony maintained in good repair, with proper anchorage.

- Handrails and guards – handrails and guards maintained in good condition and firmly fastened.
- Exterior doors – solid exterior doors and hardware maintained in good condition, provided with security peephole, weather tight, with operable deadbolts.
- Windows – windows kept in sound, operable condition, weather tight and capable of being secured.
- Screens – window supplied with approved tightly fitting screens.

PARTNERSHIP

The continued implementation of the Property Maintenance Code within the Greater Downtown, whether it is mandatory or voluntary, greatly enhances the public and private investments within the area. Working with property owners, the City might consider designating the Greater Downtown as a property maintenance “enhancement area” in which all of the the City’s Housing Code would be applied.



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Plan Prioritization

City of Tuscaloosa and its citizenry are committed to revitalizing the Greater Downtown and implementing the proposed Greater Tuscaloosa Plan. However, due to the scope and complexity of the Plan's recommendations, all proposed activities cannot be carried out immediately or within a brief time period. Therefore, decisions must be made for prioritizing the list of needed improvements and deciding over what period of time they can be accomplished. This systematic approach takes into account need, scope and required financing. The successful implementation of the Greater Downtown Plan requires a coordinated effort among property owners, business owners, developers, the Chamber of Commerce, Tuscaloosa County and departments and boards within the City of Tuscaloosa.

The planning proposals within the Plan should be used as a guide and there will be, and should be, flexibility in their implementation. Individual projects and their priority may be modified to take advantage of funding opportunities and private development initiatives.

OVERARCHING INITIATIVES:

Envisioning a Vibrant, Progressive and Sustainable Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Where Citizens Live, Work and Play.

- Strive to achieve the Key Elements and Specific Implementation Strategies set forth in Part II – Creating the Vision of the Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa Plan.
- Promote people-friendly streets and sidewalks edged with buildings and attractive urban design features.
- Promote a mix of compatible land uses that diversify Downtown and stimulate economic activity while discouraging incompatible land uses.
- Encourage a Downtown where shops, consumer services, offices, entertainment, restaurants and residences co-exist.
- Encourage shops and restaurants at street level and offices and residential dwellings on upper floors.

- Encourage residential development in the Downtown Area that appeal to a wide range of residents.
- Nurture the continued presence of civic uses, particularly the possibility of creating a Performing and Visual Arts Center within the heart of Downtown.
- Promote the development of both large and small tract infill opportunities.
- Constantly seek opportunities to install urban art as a part of public and private developments.
- Pursue the acquisition of key parcels for new public parking in the Downtown, as well as encourage shared parking among future uses.
- Identify development opportunities for the strategically located but vacant corner lot at the intersection of University Boulevard and Greensboro Avenue.
- Constantly seek opportunities to replace overhead utilities with underground service.

SHORT RANGE INITIATIVES

- Adopt the Greater Downtown Plan as a blue print for future development and design of the Downtown.
- Seek sources of funding for undertaking Downtown Plan recommendations.
- Adopt a Smart Code for the Greater Downtown.
- Begin the organizational process for creating a Main Street Program for Tuscaloosa's Downtown Core.
- Seek ways to support efforts to create a Performing and Visual Arts Center and nurture additional cultural activities within the Greater Downtown.
- Continue development of the multipurpose cultural arts center within the Spiller Building.
- Complete construction of the Amphitheater, Government Plaza, Transportation Museum/Queen City Park and the RiverWalk III improvements.

- Complete construction of street, landscape, lighting, sidewalk and related improvements in proximity to the Federal Plaza, Government Plaza and Intermodal Facility.
- Complete design and begin construction of the Farmer's Market and Visitor's Center.
- Begin a detailed assessment of the recommendations contained within the Historic Preservation Report.
- Investigate options for improving mobility and extended public transit service operating days and hours.
- Initiate a program for marketing commercial retail space adjacent to the Intermodal Downtown Facility.
- Prepare and implement a detailed gateway and wayfinding plan.
- Develop a realistic plan for the location and aesthetic treatment of dumpsters in the Greater Downtown.
- Develop and implement a workable program for financial assistance for building façade improvements.

MID RANGE INITIATIVES

- Draft and adopt a new Zoning Ordinance for Tuscaloosa.
- Continue to implement the Main Street Program.
- Continue to support cultural resource initiatives.
- Continue to implement the gateway plan.
- Continue to address public transit mobility issues.
- Design and construct intersection improvements needed at MLK Jr. Boulevard, 28th Avenue and Jack Warner Parkway including the railroad trestle overpass.
- Prepare design drawings and specifications for Lurleen Wallace Corridor Streetscape Improvements and recommended curb-bump outs north of 8th Street.
- Replace non-essential traffic signals along low-demand secondary streets with four-way stop signs.
- Provide pedestrian and bike paths along Greensboro and 21st Avenues to the Riverwalk; from Capitol Park to the

Amphitheater and Riverwalk; and along University Boulevard from Capitol Park to the University of Alabama.

- Implement a Property Maintenance Code through a partnership between the City and property owners.
- Implement recommendations contained within the Historic Preservation Report:
 - Revise the Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District nomination and reevaluate all contributing and noncontributing resources with the district including documentation of any resources that may have significant local Civil Rights history.
 - Seek designation of the Downtown Historic National Register District as a Local Historic District by the City.
 - Create a residential historic district for the Capitol Park and Martin Luther King Jr. Corridor areas.
 - Complete additional historical research and evaluation of resources identified in the Plan as potentially National Register eligible.

LONG RANGE INITIATIVES

- Continue to seek funding and a location for a Performing Arts and Cultural Museum within the Greater Downtown.
- Continue to implement the Main Street Program.
- Continue to address issues related to preservation of historic resources.
- Construct Lurleen Wallace Corridor Streetscape Improvements.
- Construct additional medians where identified as part of the Greater Downtown Plan.
- Design drawings and specifications for all streetscape recommendations not undertaken as a short- or mid-range initiative and begin construction of improvements.
- Continue to implement and maintain all elements contained within the Greater Downtown Plan.

Funding Sources

Money is the key ingredient for carrying out most planning recommendations. Assistance available through grants can provide a substantial portion of the funds required to implement the improvements recommended for Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa. Indeed, the effective utilization of grant funds will likely be the difference in determining the feasibility of undertaking individual components of the Plan and the overall, long-term success of the Downtown.

Grants alone, however, will not be sufficient to resolve the needs in the Downtown Area and must be accompanied by a substantial commitment of local resources. A balanced combination of financing from the various funding sources identified above will help assure the success of Tuscaloosa's Downtown without placing an undue burden on the local budget and disrupting the quality of services provided to other portions of the city.

Downtown Tuscaloosa is equally important to Tuscaloosa County and the overall region as it is to the City of Tuscaloosa. It is the seat of county government and its viability as a center of activity is important to the welfare of the City, the County and Region. The County owns a significant amount of property in the Downtown Area and the Tuscaloosa County Courthouse is the major focal point on Greensboro Avenue and Lurleen Wallace Boulevard North. The county is eligible to apply for certain grant funds, which would in effect, increase the total amount of funds available for Downtown Tuscaloosa.

Following is a discussion of some funding programs that the City of Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County and possible local non-profit organizations should consider.

FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDING SOURCES

Federal and State grant programs can, if wisely used, assist in the implementation of planning proposals as well as being a source of financial assistance. There are a significant number of State and Federal financial assistance programs currently available to aid municipalities with funding for large projects that cannot be undertaken entirely with local funds. The future of Federal grant funds are constantly in a state of flux and certainly are now given the current cost cutting, balanced budget environment; however,

current stimulus programs may offset cost and budget concerns. Regardless funding is, as always, uncertain. The city is likely to obtain only limited amounts of grant assistance through existing programs and needs to carefully plan grant applications and match grant programs to specific needs and improvements.

Discussed below are Federal and state programs that might provide assistance to the revitalization of the Greater Downtown.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

Tuscaloosa is an entitlement city under the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. The CDBG program must benefit low and moderate-income residents, prevent or eliminate blight, preserve historic places or meet critical needs that could not otherwise be financed. At least 70 percent of activities must benefit lower-income persons.

Since 1975 this program has provided Tuscaloosa with an average annual appropriation of \$1.44 million dollars; however, only \$915 thousand was approved the past fiscal year. Some of the projects that have been funded include: the McDonald Hughes Community Center; renovations to the Barnes Branch YMCA; development of several small neighborhood parks; the Alberta Streetscape Project; and University Boulevard Streetscape Project.

In 2006, the City initiated a Façade Improvement Loan Program funded by CDBG funds. The program was structured to provide loans of up to \$15,000 per building at an interest rate of 3 percent for eligible improvements. Downtown property owners were eligible for financial assistance since they were one of the program's "specified improvement" areas. The program is currently not active.

Other improvement activities within the Greater Downtown that may be eligible for CDBG funds include water, sewer and drainage facilities; street and sidewalk improvements; commercial and neighborhood revitalization activities; housing rehabilitation for low and moderate-income persons; property acquisition, building demolition and relocation assistance; removal of architectural barriers and handicap accessibility improvements; historical preservation, code enforcement; economic development programs and project planning. CDBG funds support a variety of continuing programs and projects throughout the City and, therefore, may not be available or may be limited to assist with Downtown Plan proposals.

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT FUND

The Transportation Enhancement Act offers the possibility of enhancing the surface transportation experience in Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa through funding of eligible projects that include sidewalks, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, landscaping and beautification, historic preservation and property acquisition. This program is administered by the Alabama Department of Transportation and requires a 20 percent local match with funds passing through the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, which must approve proposed projects. The City would be required to pay for engineering and consulting fees with local monies. Tuscaloosa has successfully applied for several Transportation Enhancement grants and should continue to apply for funding to help construct eligible improvements in the Greater Downtown Area. The Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Improvement Plan lists the following projects within Greater Downtown Tuscaloosa: Transportation Museum at the Queen City Bathhouse and the Riverwalk Phase III.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (L&WCF)

Tuscaloosa is eligible to apply for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants which are provided through the National Park Service and administered by Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). Grants are awarded on a 50-50 matching basis with a maximum limit of \$50,000. This program is a primary source of funding for the acquisition and development of urban land for outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The LWCF program can be used to acquire and construct new park sites and recreation facilities, to upgrade existing recreation facilities and to acquire and improve passive recreation areas such as open space or trail facilities. Although limited, this funding source can assist with implementing park, open space and recreation proposals and should be considered by the City. Possible areas of assistance related to Greater Downtown Plan proposals include Capitol Park improvements and open space, trail and park improvements in the Riverfront Area.

URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY (U&CF) PROGRAM

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) offers grants to local governments for a variety of activities related to urban forestry and community tree programs. These funds are made available by the USDA Forest Service under the National Urban and Community

Forestry Program. The AFC will fund projects that help communities professionally manage their forest. Priority will be given to project proposals that result in one or more of the following four program benchmarks.

- Community Forest Management Plans - A detailed document or set of documents, developed from professionally-based resource assessments or inventories, which outlines future management goals and objectives for the community's trees and forests. The plan must be active (i.e., in use by the community and updated as needed to incorporate new information).
- Community Forest Professional Staffing - Individual(s) document or set of documents, developed from professionally-based resource assessments or inventories, which outlines future management goals and objectives for the community's trees and forests. The plan must be active (i.e., in use by the community and updated as needed to incorporate new certification).
- Community Tree Ordinances and Policies - Statute or regulation that directs citizens and local governments in the planting, protection and maintenance of community trees and forests.
- Local Community Tree Advocacy or Advisory Organizations - Active groups (i.e. tree boards, tree commissions, non-profit organizations) that are formalized or chartered within a given community to advocate the planting, protection, and maintenance of community trees and forest.

Eligible activities include: master street tree planting plans; tree inventories and analyses; tree inventory computer equipment and software; comprehensive urban and community forestry master plans; land use planning coordination; tree ordinance development and analysis; hiring of a city forester/arborist; tree commission development; and technical support. Grant funds cannot be used for tree planting projects. Grant funds available are limited to \$10,000 per project, must be matched by the grant recipient and cannot exceed 50 percent of the total project costs. Funding is awarded on a competitive basis.

NATIONAL TRUST LOAN FUND

The National Trust Loan Fund (NTLF) has more than 35 years of experience in supporting preservation-based community development projects across the country. As a certified Community Development Financial Institution, it has a mission of providing financial and technical resources to organizations that use historic preservation to support the revitalization of underserved and distressed communities. NTLF specializes in predevelopment, acquisition, mini-permanent, bridge and rehabilitation loans for residential, commercial and public use projects. Eligible borrowers include not-for-profit organizations, revitalization organizations or real estate developers working in certified Main Street communities, local, state or regional governments, and for profit developers of older and/or historic buildings.

NATIONAL TRUST COMMUNITY INVESTMENT CORPORATION

The National Trust Community Investment Corporation (NTCIC), makes equity investments in the rehabilitation of historic properties eligible for the 20 percent federal historic rehabilitation tax credit, and where available, state historic tax credits and the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC). NTCIC invests in projects that have at least \$6.0 million in total development costs and that generate at least \$1.5 million in historic tax credit equity. Smaller deals will be referred to the Small Deal Fund for equity investment consideration. Tax-exempt nonprofit organizations and public-sector developers may be eligible for an NTCIC equity investment by creating a limited liability partnership. NTCIC has a special interest in those projects with a high community benefit.

NTCIC pays a referral fee to National Trust Advisors, Regional Offices, Statewide and Local Partners and Main Street programs who refer deals that ultimately result in an equity investment by NTCIC.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUND

The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) provides grants to states, tribes, and local governments to use for activities like education, preparation of National Register nominations and development of comprehensive preservation plans. The HPF receives annual appropriations from Congress, and this federal money is matched by state dollars. The fund is administered in a partnership between the National Park Service and the states through state historic preservation offices.

FEDERAL REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT

Federal law provides a federal income tax credit equal to 20% of the cost of rehabilitating a historic building for commercial use. To qualify for the credit, the property must be a certified historic structure—that is, on the National Register of Historic Places or contributing to a registered historic district (non-historic buildings built before 1936 qualify for a 10% tax credit.) A substantial rehabilitation is necessary, and the work must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Applications for the credit are available through the Alabama Historical Commission and the final decisions are made by the National Park Service.

SAVE AMERICA'S TREASURES

Established by Executive Order in 1998, Save America's Treasures (SAT) is a public-private partnership that includes the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the federal cultural agencies. The program celebrates America's great historic and cultural legacy by identifying and raising resources to preserve historically significant sites and collections. Each year, Save America's Treasures federal challenge grants are awarded to eligible historic resources for approved preservation activities. It is too late to participate in the 2009 grant round but consideration should be given to participation in future years.

Grants are available for preservation and/or conservation work on nationally significant intellectual and cultural artifacts and historic structures and sites. Intellectual and cultural artifacts include artifacts, collections, documents, sculpture, and works of art. Historic structures and sites include historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects. Grants are awarded to local government entities, and non-profit organizations through a competitive process and require a dollar-for-dollar, non-Federal match. The minimum grant request for historic collections projects is \$25,000 Federal share; the minimum grant request for historic property projects is \$125,000 Federal share. The maximum grant request for all projects is \$700,000 Federal share.

LOCAL FUNDING

Most all of the Downtown Plans recommended public activities and improvements will require some type of local financial assistance to implement. In order for these monies to be utilized there would have to be a surplus of funds sufficient to be appropriated for this purpose in any given fiscal year as with any other public project or program. However, local funds are subject to certain restrictions and limitations concerning expenditure that may restrict their availability for certain Downtown proposals.

Local funding sources which can be utilized to finance public aspects of the Downtown Plan recommendations include the General Fund, gasoline taxes, general obligation bonds and property assessments. These are discussed below in more detail.

GENERAL FUND

General Fund revenues are derived from a variety of tax sources (e.g., sales tax, lodging tax, business licenses) and provide the basis for funding most public improvements and activities. The General Fund is a source of financing for small to medium scale infrastructure projects which can be included in the annual city budget. The General Fund should be used primarily to supplement or match other sources of financing (i.e., grants) and/or to fund activities or improvements (i.e., sidewalks) which cannot be financed through other revenue sources.

GASOLINE TAXES

The sales tax on gasoline is a primary funding source for street improvements and associated stormwater drainage facilities (i.e., curbs and gutters). The amount of funds available can be anticipated from previous gas tax revenues and street improvements can be planned and budgeted based upon projections of future revenues.

A portion of the Alabama Gas Tax, which is levied on the sale of gasoline, is returned to the City for street improvements and associated stormwater drainage facilities. Additional Excise Tax is levied on gas and restricted to resurfacing, restoration and rehabilitation of roads, bridges and streets within a municipality. Funds available through the Public Highway and Traffic Fund are distributed to the City and restricted to use for the construction,

improvement and maintenance of public highways or streets, including administrative expenses.

GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS

General Obligation Bonds are a frequently used method of financing for large-scale capital improvements. Bonds can be issued for up to 30 years and can be used to finance proposed public infrastructure improvements. In incurring long-term or bond financing, local officials should consider terms for repayment of the debt. There are several drawbacks to this type of bond for the type of improvements needed in the Downtown Area. One is that the interest on the bond can significantly increase the initial cost of the project. Another is that it may not be prudent to issue such debt on improvements that do not generate a source of revenue to retire the debt. Furthermore, the Alabama Constitution of 1901 at Section 225 modified by Amendment 268, limits the amount of general obligation bonds a municipality can issue to that equal to twenty percent of the assessed valuation of property within the municipality.

WATER AND SEWER REVENUES

A significant portion of the improvements are upgrades to the public water and sewer system facilities that are owned and maintained by the Tuscaloosa. If necessary, water and sewer system improvements can be financed through the existing financial resources of the Water and Sewer Board. Where insufficient reserves exist, rate increases or bonds may be used to provide the required funds. Water and sewer revenue bonds would not impact the City's bonding capacity.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a financing and development tool that permits an increase in real property taxes generated by new development and improvements to pay for the cost of redevelopment activities and infrastructure improvements within a designated area. It should be noted that TIFs have had limited success and use in Alabama. To qualify as a TIF District under the Alabama statutes, an area must be blighted or economically distressed. The Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Area would qualify for TIF designation and such designation could potentially be expanded into adjacent parts of the Downtown Area, especially to the north of University Boulevard toward the Black Warrior River.

Upon creation of a TIF district, taxing entities continue to receive the level of taxes at the time of the TIF designation; however, increases in property taxes are abated for a specified number of years and used to finance redevelopment activities. Generally, the City borrows money by issuing bonds and the tax increase is used to pay off the bonds. Once the bonds or debt is paid, the incremental tax increase becomes available to all of the taxing bodies. In theory, the TIF district would finance its redevelopment, which in turn would eventually generate increased tax revenue for the community.

Alabama law requires that a proposed TIF district be blighted or economically distressed. Following is a general outline of procedures the City would need to undertake in order to create a TIF:

- Hold a public hearing on the proposed TIF district, its boundaries and its benefit to the City.
- Prepare and submit a written submission to each governing body of each deferred tax recipient to include a description of the proposed TIF boundaries, the tentative development plans and an estimate of the general impact on property values and tax revenues.
- Adopt a resolution which: describes the TIF boundaries; creates the TIF district and fixes the period of its duration (not to exceed 30 years); assigns TIF District name; contains findings that not less than 50 % of district is blighted and that the aggregate value of taxable property does not exceed 10 % of the City's taxable property; and adopts a plan for the TIF district.
- City certifies that the TIF district has not been subject to growth and development through private investment and it is not reasonable to expect development without adoption of the plan; that a feasible method for relocation and compensation exists; that the plan conforms to the City Comprehensive Plan (if one exist); and that the plan will afford maximum opportunity for rehabilitation or redevelopment of the TIF district by private enterprise.
- A copy of the TIF district project plan shall be mailed to the governing body of each deferred tax recipient before approval of the project plan.

It should be recognized that the potential of a TIF District is greatly diminished in Alabama because low property taxes make it difficult to generate significant increased revenue. Because of this

situation, it requires a large private development for TIF to provide meaningful funding. However, between the Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal Area and the planned River Margin Park Improvements enough increased revenue might be generated to at least provide some financial help with implementation of the two projects.

Summary: The “To-Do” List

The Greater Downtown Plan provides a vision for the future and a rational framework to guide private investments and public policy decisions related to Downtown projects and improvements.

The Greater Downtown Plan embodies a wealth of ideas to build on the strengths of Tuscaloosa’s heart. The Downtown provides tremendous opportunities for commerce, entertainment, cultural arts, historic heritage, residential diversity, tourism, all in close proximity to a nationally-recognized educational institution, and right on the banks of the Black Warrior River. But there is much to be achieved and nurtured.

In closing, it is important to enumerate those items that **MUST** be at the top of the Greater Downtown’s “To-Do” List ... if we are to achieve the vision of creating a place where we can **LIVE – WORK – PLAY!** The List includes ...

- Adopt SmartCode for Greater Downtown.
- Create a Main Street Program for Tuscaloosa’s Downtown Core.
- Construct landscaped-pedestrian friendly curb bump-outs north of 8th Street on the Lurleen Wallace Boulevard’s north and south routes.
- Preserve Tuscaloosa’s Historic Heritage.
 - Encourage historically-sensitive development
 - Designate Capitol Park as a Local Historic District
- Increase in-town living opportunities.
- Enhance availability of transit.
 - Expand operating hours and weekend service.
 - Increase partnership opportunities with Crimson Ride.
- Develop a Performing and Visual Arts Center within the heart of the Downtown Core.
- Enhance the Pedestrian and Biking Experience.
 - Make the streets more pedestrian friendly
 - Increase on-road bike route designations
- Continue streetscape improvements.
- Create Gateways/Wayfinding System for Greater Downtown.





Supporting Documents

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS REPORT

STATISTICAL ANALYSES OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

**ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE TUSCALOOSA
URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT PLAN**

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REPORT

MAIN STREET PROGRAM REPORT

VISIONING SESSIONS SUMMARY

DOWNTOWN WALKABOUT – SYNOPTIC SURVEY

**PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS – POWERPOINT
PRESENTATIONS**