

Final Study Documentation Elements

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Community Inventory

WEST TUSCALOOSA Community Inventory

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the City of Tuscaloosa, led by Mayor Walt Maddox, initiated a planning effort to create a strategy to enhance the West Tuscaloosa Community by identifying planning elements, community indicators, infrastructure deficiencies, and areas where targeted reinvestment could or would have a catalyst effect on community reinvestment.

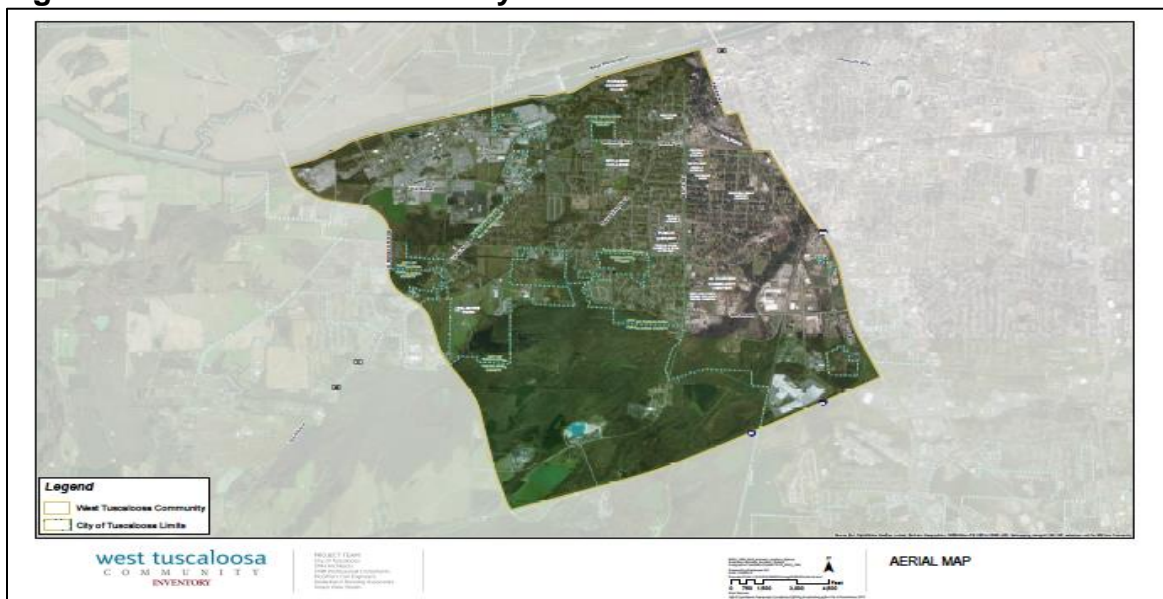
Beginning with the most fundamental inventory of existing Land Uses, Zoning patterns, and physical utility infrastructure the study was defined as a “Community Inventory.”

Throughout the Community Inventory, citizen input has continuously refined the data and analysis, helping to shape the direction citizens desire for their community.

Introduction

In 2017, Mayor Maddox and the Tuscaloosa City Council engaged a consultant team to conduct planning and engagement activities in an approximately 10 square mile area, herein referred to as the “West Tuscaloosa Study Area” or “Study Area”. The Study Area is delineated by the Black Warrior River to the north, I-359 to the east, I-20/I-59 to the south, and Joe Mallisham Parkway, as shown in Figure 1¹.

Figure 1. West Tuscaloosa Study Area



¹ For ease of use, maps are reproduced in a larger format at the end of the report.

WEST TUSCALOOSA COMMUNITY INVENTORY CONSULTANT TEAM

The Study's consultant team consisted of professional architects, land planners, urban designers, landscape architects, and civil engineers. The mix of professional disciplines was chosen to best complete the specific Community Inventory tasks and then provide practicable knowledge of both development and redevelopment strategies. Defining associated costs and timeframes to complete strategies was also a Team goal, which was achieved through working closely with City Planning and Infrastructure and Public Services staff members. Associated costs and timeframes were prepared based on current market data, interviews with property owners, and typical construction costs.

In addition to analysis of the physical geography and built environment, the Community Inventory includes a major public engagement component. Through public engagement, the Study's leaders hope to provide Tuscaloosa's citizens, community stakeholders, and education institutions with ample opportunity to participate in and contribute to the Study.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

After a thorough compilation of City, County, and State data sources, a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) Map Set was created for the physical analysis of West Tuscaloosa. As the GIS analysis progressed, the Community Inventory effort was initially focused on the fundamental planning components of Land Use and Zoning and the respective quantities of each category relative to the population served.

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While a diverse range of land use classifications and zoning categories (residential, civic, commercial, recreational, industrial, and others) exists in West Tuscaloosa, the balance between categories is heavily weighted toward residential and industrial uses with sparse non-residential quantities. This urban community indicator illustrated a lack of retail, service, and professional offerings to meet the West Tuscaloosa community's needs. Public input confirmed the disproportionate non-residential land uses.

West Tuscaloosa has many neighborhoods, ranging from historic, turn-of-the-century homes to traditional post-World War II neighborhoods, as commonly seen throughout the south and eastern United States. The West Tuscaloosa community is also home to the City's original Country Club and Golf Course, now closed, but recently acquired by a private entity that has attended and been engaged in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory process. This large site represents a major reinvestment opportunity.

The transportation network is reflective of historic gridded urban communities, with traditional neighborhood blocks, often surrounded by minor and major collector roads. There are limited arterials, which is a benefit to the preservation of neighborhoods. While sidewalks exist in portions of the community, they are often limited or incomplete. Dedicated bicycle lanes are very limited in the West Tuscaloosa Community. Despite the lack of dedicated bicycle lanes, cyclists frequently can be found in the northern neighborhoods, as these neighborhoods have connections to other facilities frequented by on-road or distance cyclists. There are no off-road bike facilities or parks in the area. The street light network is frequently traditional utility pole-mounted 'cobra-head' fixtures and not pedestrian-scale ornamental fixtures. Mostly all electrical service within West Tuscaloosa is overhead electric on wooden mast poles. Some newer neighborhoods

and multi-family areas have underground electric service. McKenzie Court is one of the few locations to have both underground electric and pedestrian-scale lighting.

The West Tuscaloosa Community is served by the City of Tuscaloosa's potable water and sanitary sewer system. Many of the service lines within the study area are the original Ductile Iron Pipe (DIP) and Vitruvius clay pipes (VCP), as is common throughout the southeast United States. Pipe sizes are generally in the 6" to 8" range, with major conveyance lines and force mains of similar size. The City's municipal services for both potable water and sanitary sewer, supply and treatment respectively, is adequate and ready to serve new customers. However, initial infrastructure review led the team to believe site-level connections and conveyance from potential new neighborhoods or potential catalyst sites would require conveyance upgrades. As seen in the Infrastructure Analysis, beginning on page 28, this presumption proved correct.

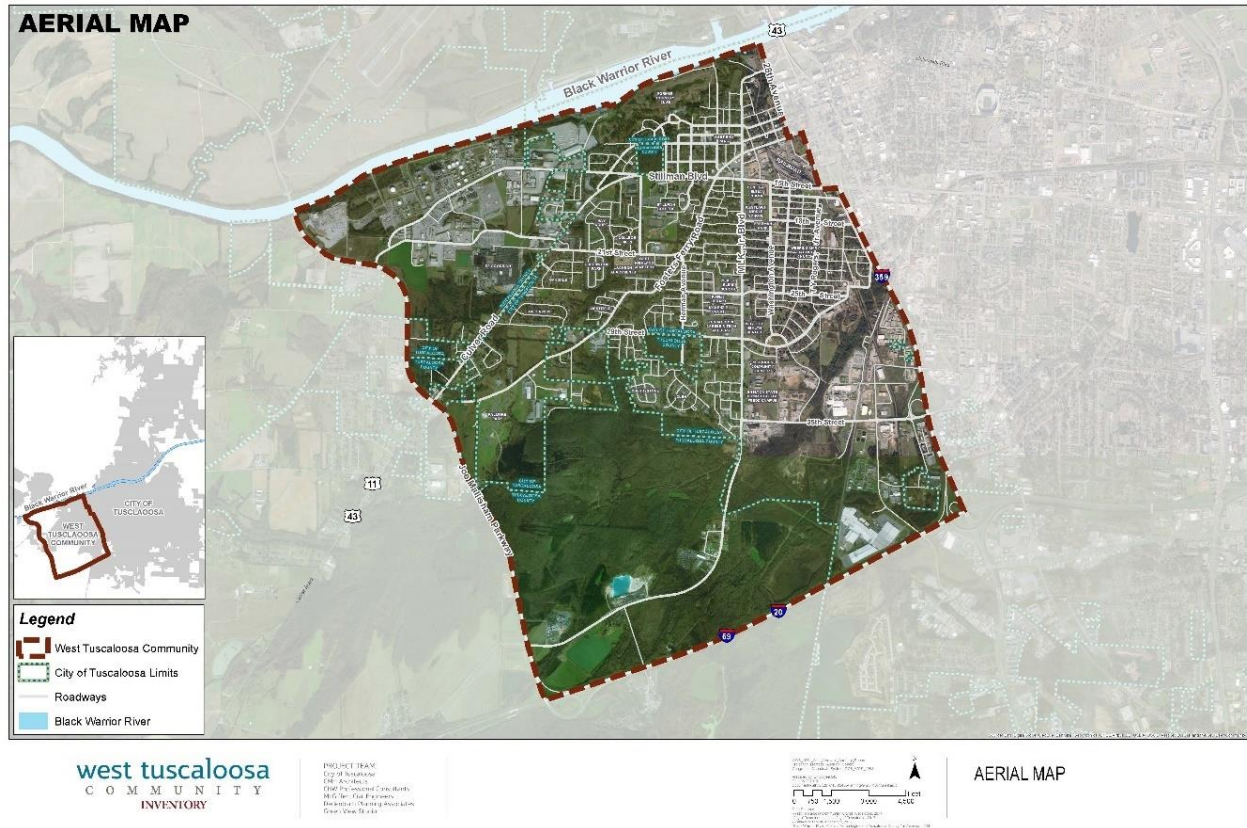
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS - Study Area Cultural Analysis Elements

The Community Inventory's Public Engagement effort constituted the basis of direct information gathering for the cultural analysis efforts, which were three-fold and continued throughout the process. The first effort was through one-on-one in-person interviews with community leaders, long-time residents, and also individuals new to Tuscaloosa yet familiar with the West Tuscaloosa area. The second effort was through four Open House format meetings (two in both February and May), and the third effort was two Community Public Meetings and Study Update presentations (March).

City Councilors assisted the Consultant Team, City staff, and the Community Inventory process by conducting initial outreach to solicit interest in the process. The Consultant Team then scheduled interviews over a two-day period. The direct outreach was extremely well received, and interviewees felt honored to be a part of the process.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS – JANUARY 29 & 30, 2018

Interviews were conducted with individuals of all ages, genders, and walks of life. Interviews followed a questionnaire format with study area inventory maps depicting the physical area and planning conditions such as land use, zoning, infrastructure, and crime data to ensure interview continuity and promote and encourage diverse perspectives starting with fundamental questions. Interview questions began with a preliminary focus on whether the participants resided in the Community Inventory Study Area, and for how long the individual resided in Tuscaloosa, or more specifically West Tuscaloosa. Each interview was conducted with an aerial map present, so participants could describe areas with specific detail. An example of the map is below.



Throughout the public engagement effort, the Consultant Team also had the opportunity to interview existing City of Tuscaloosa staff as well as former employees, some of whom had worked for the City their entire professional careers. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted with existing City of Tuscaloosa staff from multiple disciplines.

Staff from a variety of City Departments and disciplines were interviewed to obtain their expertise, input, and perspective on the West Tuscaloosa study area and the City as a whole. Staff interviews were invaluable, as they also provided added clarification, historical perspective, and an in-depth understanding of previous studies, ongoing efforts, and current social and political issues existing in the City of Tuscaloosa.

Simultaneously with the interviews, consultant team members also began the

Community Inventory's Blight Study. This effort included traveling throughout the Study

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Area, street-by-street and block-by-block. Over four hundred (400) photographs documenting both residential and non-residential properties throughout the study area were compiled. These photographs depict structures ranging in condition from the initial signs of degradation to completely abandoned buildings. Some of the abandoned buildings have been physically secured from access by being boarded. Many buildings remain accessible- open to the elements, undesirable activities, and crime.

During the one-on-one interviews, blight was defined to the public and study participant in accordance with State of Alabama statutes and guidelines and then questions regarding blight were posed by the consultant team and citizens. Participants consistently responded in favor of demolishing abandoned properties and removing potential areas where illegal, illicit, or undesirable activities could be conducted. Respondents also stated they would rather see vacant or grass lots, which could hopefully transform into new homes, businesses, or community civic spaces instead of blighted structures.

The one-on-one interviews produced incredibly positive results. Each interview started with basic questions of where the individual lives, how long they have been in Tuscaloosa, and why they call Tuscaloosa home. Each participant expressed their devout passion for the place they call home, whether it be West Tuscaloosa or elsewhere in the City. Many participants who live in West Tuscaloosa were born and raised in the community. Some individuals left the community to pursue their education or military service, then returned to the place they call home because of their civic pride.

Lastly, some have chosen West Tuscaloosa as their home based on the current values presented in the real estate marketplace. Both historic and unique urban residential properties are readily available, and there is an adequate supply for new residents. The ability to find moderately-priced properties that can appreciate in value through sweat equity exists throughout the West Tuscaloosa community. This group of new residents that has chosen West Tuscaloosa for the opportunities frequently becomes strong vocal and engaged advocates for neighborhood stabilization and reinvestment. While early in the residential influx back into West Tuscaloosa, these new residents play a key role in supporting existing businesses and are integral to the community's success.

POSTIVE DIRECTION

Each interview became more in-depth than the previous. As interviewees gained a sense of comfort and knew that their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions were being documented, greater contributions were brought forward. Knowing that their opinions were important and that others shared in their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions was key to sequentially learning more and more information as the interviews progressed.

What became keenly obvious was the sense of pride in West Tuscaloosa and an almost unified desire to affect positive change. What many individuals feel has held them back is, quite simply, an understanding with whom and how to communicate to affect positive change. Many individuals stated they routinely care for others' yards, homes, or property out of either compassion or pride in the place they call home.

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Many interview participants also stated if they understood how to purchase additional properties, or leverage assets, they would buy properties around their home just to keep up the appearance of the block on which they reside, or cul-de-sac where they live.

A key finding is that West Tuscaloosa's citizens, based on their genuine concern for the community they call home, are clearly ready for change and believe the time is now.

Armed with the information, this is a community that has many advocates who can carry a vision, with a phased approach and sequential steps, forward to success. Results don't have to happen tomorrow, as long as results are seen happening.

According to interview participants, goods and services to satisfy fundamental household needs and services for an urban residential population are lacking. With only one grocer within the ten (10) square mile study area, the only alternative for food and beverages becomes discount stores and small-scale convenience stores associated with gas stations. This deficiency is often referred to as a food desert, with few options to obtain nutritious foods/beverages, and not sustainable or supportive of reinvestment.

Professional services such as medical, dental, specialized treatment, and typical services such as accountants, attorneys, and insurance companies are either sparse or do not exist in the study area. Participants stated they could not buy clothes, school supplies, or visit a sit-down restaurant without leaving West Tuscaloosa and traveling downtown or to commercial shopping centers outside the Study Area. With many fundamental goods lacking within the study area, it points to a tremendous need to rebalance the community's offerings to serve the existing and future population.

With a predominance of residential land use, coupled with few options for goods, services, and/or professional services, there is an immediate need and opportunity upon which to capitalize. The Consulting team, working in close coordination with staff, has identified several sites in close proximity to existing populations that could become either development or redevelopment catalysts. To ensure the site's potential for success, the team researched existing conditions, projected potential needs, and identified several urban infrastructure elements and/or built environment elements requiring attention either prior to or with reinvestment efforts. Items such as adequate sidewalks, street lights, curbs, and utility lines are all necessary for successful projects.

Where sidewalks exist, they are often only on one side of the street. Additionally, many sidewalks exist in a disconnected and fragmented manner, ending short of logical destinations such as retail centers, restaurants, and civic locations. Study participants frequently voiced their desire for complete sidewalk systems linking homes to points of interest. While there have been some sidewalks constructed recently, more are needed as both documented in the City's Tuscaloosa Area Bicycle and Pedestrians Plan 2012 and reflected by citizens' comments throughout this Study's course.



COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE - February 14 - 15, 2018

The second public engagement event was conducted in an Open House format on February 14 and 15, 2018. For the Open House meetings, the Consultant Team prepared and presented a GIS Map series to inform attendees of the Community Inventory study process to-date and supply them with information gathered during the one-on-one interviews. During the course of the first two-hour session, approximately fifty (50) individuals participated, each spending an average of twenty to thirty (20-30) minutes with Consultant Team members and City staff.

OPEN HOUSE FORMAT

In addition to the GIS Map series, the Consultant Team prepared a two-page survey, with questions paralleling the January 2018 one-on-one Interview Questionnaire, so additional information could be obtained from Open House participants. Over the two-day Open House, nearly one hundred (100) individuals participated and engaged the

Consultant Team, BKI representatives, and City staff with questions and provided input on the elements they wish to see either advance or introduced in the West Tuscaloosa Community. Public input is included in the final Report as a support document.

Consistent and similar input was received during the Open House, as during the one-on-one interviews. Participants raised concerns over the lack of retail, commercial options, or professional opportunities in the West Tuscaloosa community. Discussions also included concerns over the lack of transportation options. This was the first time in the Community Inventory that definitive discussion on transportation arose.

Participants stated the lack of bus service in the evening and weekends causes residents, who frequently live on fixed incomes, to need to obtain rides from friends and relatives or resort to more costly options such as private taxis or ride sharing services. Many individuals who expressed the need for greater transportation options would walk if facilities (safer sidewalks) were present to do so. Many residents stated they would walk more frequently if there were uniform sidewalks and street lights in their neighborhoods or on the collector roads and arterials. The destinations they want to access are the Piggly Wiggly grocery store, where only dirt trails exist, or the pharmacies located in the eastern portion of the study area on Stillman Boulevard.

During the course of the Open House, representatives of Stillman College attended, introduced themselves, and engaged the Consultant Team and City staff on their desire to discuss their institution's pending Strategic Plan. A special meeting was scheduled, and Consultant Team members and City staff met with Isaac McCoy, Chief Strategist

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and Co-Founder of the Jami Group, and Lamin Drammeh, Ph.D., Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Executive Director of the Stillman Foundation.

During the meeting, Stillman College representatives discussed their Strategic Plan, slated for public release in late March 2018, and expressed Stillman College's desire to "open its campus." When asked to define "open," Stillman representatives responded their desire was two-fold: 1. creating new physical connections to the surrounding neighborhoods; and 2. becoming more connected from a community engagement perspective. Their interest is to be a catalyst for community stabilization, development, and redevelopment in the immediate context area in and around the campus proper.

To-date, Stillman College has not provided the Consultant Team nor the City of Tuscaloosa with a written Strategic Plan document. The Consultant Team continued to request the document so that it could be reviewed, and its strategies could be evaluated and recommended, as applicable, to further both the goals of the City of Tuscaloosa and Stillman College and its plan for greater physical and community connections.

A second meeting with Stillman College was conducted in late May with Dr. Cynthia Warrick, Ph.D., who attended the second set of Open House public meetings. The meeting provided key information, which is contained later in the Catalyst Site section. Stillman College represents one of the largest opportunities for reinvestment within the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory study area. Thorough and strategic partnerships between the City, Stillman College, and other private-sector interest can yield immense benefits for West Tuscaloosa and the entire City of Tuscaloosa.

MARTIN LUTHER KING BOULEVARD EXPANSION CONSULTANT PARTICIPATION

The City of Tuscaloosa's engineering consultant, Burk-Klein Peter, Inc. (BKI) also was present with information display boards on the Martin Luther King Boulevard Expansion (MLK Expansion). Since the MLK Expansion is primarily located within the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory Study Area, inclusion of the proposed project at the Open House provided participants with an opportunity to review important roadway project information and how the project is planned and designed within the study area.

RIVERWALK EXTENTION CONSULTANT PARTICIPATION

The City of Tuscaloosa's Riverwalk extension consultant, Neel-Schaffer, was also present with information display boards on the Riverwalk Master Plan Update. The plan proposes to extend the Riverwalk from east of the Study area along the Black Warrior River westerly through the Study Area to County Club Lane. Here too, inclusion of the proposed project at the Open House provided participants with an opportunity to review the City's tremendous commitment to enhancing West Tuscaloosa on many levels.

Both projects (the MLK Expansion and the Riverwalk Extension) are high priorities in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO's) Tuscaloosa Area 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan and represent major infrastructure investments in the City's efforts to grow and build a strong diverse economy, focused around mobility, quality of life, and recreation as a cultural amenity. Creation of this recreation and cultural amenity gives existing citizens additional reasons to cherish the place they call home. Travelers and guests to Tuscaloosa will have one more element, the Riverwalk, to remember in the course of their journey to Tuscaloosa. The economic multiplier from ecotourism can

represent significant revenue for a community and many industries such as the hospitality and service groups.

COMMUNITY PUBLIC MEETING AND STUDY UPDATE - March 28th, 2018

The third public engagement exercise was conducted as a Community Public Meeting and Study Update. This engagement exercise was conducted as a group presentation with an associated Question and Answer follow-up session. This event provided an opportunity to review both Community Inventory GIS maps and Preliminary Cumulative Analysis maps, provide an overview presentation, and conclude with ample time for Questions and Answers (Q&A) on the Community Inventory and initial Study findings.

DAYTIME SESSION

The Public Meeting's Presentation was received by approximately fifty (50) individuals and members of the local television and newspaper markets. Citizens and stakeholders engaged the consultant team actively. Citizens expressed gratitude over the potential for enhancements to their neighborhoods and community civic spaces.

The Q&A portion also included robust discussion about the MLK Expansion. City of Tuscaloosa Infrastructure and Public Services staff were asked several questions about the proposed roadway's cross section, design speed, hardscaping and landscaping, signalized intersection locations and pedestrian crosswalks, and how the road's design will be coordinated with other City of Tuscaloosa projects.

Statements also were made that the roadway's design must be completed as a complete street, with full multimodal facilities including bike lanes and sidewalks, otherwise the roadway project would be detrimental to all previous and planned

redevelopment and reinvestment efforts. Several citizens commented that roadway projects and associated infrastructure are some of the greatest capital investment made in communities and their effects last for decades, as they are rarely ever changed in the lifetime of the citizens.

AFTERNOON SESSION

The Public Meeting's afternoon session was conducted in a similar format as the morning session. Citizens joining the process for the first time, whether arriving on their own or with friends who had participated in the morning session, were guided through the GIS map series to provide them with the background data and analysis used to formulate preliminary Community Inventory analysis and recommendations.

Some community leaders with experience in housing and social demographics attended and spoke about the West Tuscaloosa community development study area. From their previous experience, they stated that the Community possesses significant need, from a socio-economic, demographic, and population perspective to qualify for grants and other infrastructure development programs.

Lastly, several attendees again discussed the MLK Expansion. Of these attendees, some were first-time participants and others had learned about the meeting from family and/or friends. During this session, several questions were posed to City staff regarding roadway design and the importance of creating a fully functional multi-modal corridor. The participants' focus was mainly upon preserving quality of life within the adjacent

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neighborhoods, promoting safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, and ensuring that the major infrastructure investment worked in concert with other ongoing City plans.

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE – May 17th, 2018

In a similar format to the first Open House, the City of Tuscaloosa and the Consultant Team conducted a second Community Open House on May 17, 2018. Both a morning and evening session were offered to allow participation from individuals who were able to attend a daytime meeting and those who prefer evenings, following traditional business hours. The morning session was attended by fifty to sixty (50-60) individuals, representing community citizens, stakeholders, and all forms of the local media. The evening session was attended by thirty-five to forty (35-40) too, with some attendees who were at both. Based on the robust attendance, exceeding all previous meetings, Tuscaloosa's community engagement steadily increased as the process evolved.

At the Open House, conducted in the McDonald Hughes Center's Play Unit Room, the Consultant Team prepared stations around the room's perimeter so attendees could walk through and review the project's progression from the early stages of Inventory & Analysis, Crime Data, Key Focus Areas, and Conceptual Catalyst site aerial images.

At the Catalyst site table, individuals were encouraged to write on display maps what uses they would like to see in West Tuscaloosa. This exercise provided participants with an opportunity to give their opinion of what goods or services would fill vacancies within the Study Area. Responses were not limited whatsoever, and participants listed elements ranging from grocers to restaurants, coffee shops to micro-breweries, pet shops to dog parks, and professional services to computer repair. Citizens' responses

echoed comments received during the January interview and in all previous meetings. West Tuscaloosa's citizens are in alignment on offerings that improve day-to-day life.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS – INVENTORY FINDINGS

The consultant team analyzed the existing and planned transportation network in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory Study Area. Review of the transportation network began with the community's traditional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), then review of Tuscaloosa's specific Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) Document, and finally the Tuscaloosa County Traffic Counts, which are traffic counts supplied by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). The traffic count Report was compiled by the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) and the 2016 Report was used in this analysis.

The team also reviewed the City of Tuscaloosa's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2012. This Report was also compiled by the West Alabama Regional Commission, under the guidance of the Tuscaloosa MPO and adopted on August 27, 2012. The Report shows there are two (2) major projects that are within the Study Area, the MLK Expansion and the Riverwalk Extension. There are intermediate-level projects, such as stand-alone construction of sidewalks and multi-purpose paths. There are also minor projects, such as bike lane signage. Out of the nearly twenty (20) identified sidewalk projects in the Plan, four (4) have been completed, totaling approximately 1.3 miles. Seven (7) projects remain on the City's priority list and are yet to be constructed; funding should continue to be prioritized for these projects. Additional needs are discussed later in this document, beginning in core neighborhood areas and around identified catalyst sites.

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There are about ten (10) miles of sidewalks within the study area, compared to the over one-hundred (100) miles of public roadways. This 10:1 ratio underscores the need for greater pedestrian infrastructure within West Tuscaloosa, which reconnects residential area to Points of Interest and community spaces within the City of Tuscaloosa.

The Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures contained in the 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan are:

- Goal 1.** *To increase bicycle and pedestrian safety;*
- Goal 2.** *To increase the number of bicycle and pedestrian trips;*
- Goal 3.** *To include non-motorized transportation needs in the planning and development of the community (City of Tuscaloosa, City of Northport, Tuscaloosa County);*
- Goal 4.** *To change MPO policies so that bicycle and pedestrian projects are considered in the planning of Transportation Projects;*
- Goal 5.** *To increase bicycle and pedestrian education programs and to develop further existing programs; and*
- Goal 6.** *To increase local support for bicycle and pedestrian activities.*

These Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures are aligned with community need.

Aside from the MLK Expansion and the Riverwalk Extension, which represent major investment, no other major infrastructure construction projects are planned in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory Study Area. Only routine, minor maintenance type projects are in the LRTP or TIP for the Study Area. The aforementioned Goals, when translated into completed infrastructure projects within the Study Area, will contribute to quality of life for residents, those who work in the study area, and visitors to the City of Tuscaloosa.

During the course of the Community Inventory, the consultant team drove the Study Area extensively, both during the course of the Blight Study and throughout the morning and evening peak times. The study area was also extensively driven during off-peak hours to review how residents, workers, and travelers access West Tuscaloosa.

Physical review of roadway conditions revealed that the majority of West Tuscaloosa's roadways are in good condition. Their condition is as expected for their age and usage with largely neighborhood traffic patterns. Continued routine resurfacing and striping is necessary for maintained longevity. The consultant team did not note operational or safety deficiencies within the Study Area, nor were any brought forward by staff, citizens, or stakeholders during the course of the one-on-one interviews, Community Open House sessions, or the Public Meeting and Study Update meetings. The only comments received were focused on increasing safety for non-motorized travel modes, consistent with the findings throughout the entire Community Inventory process.

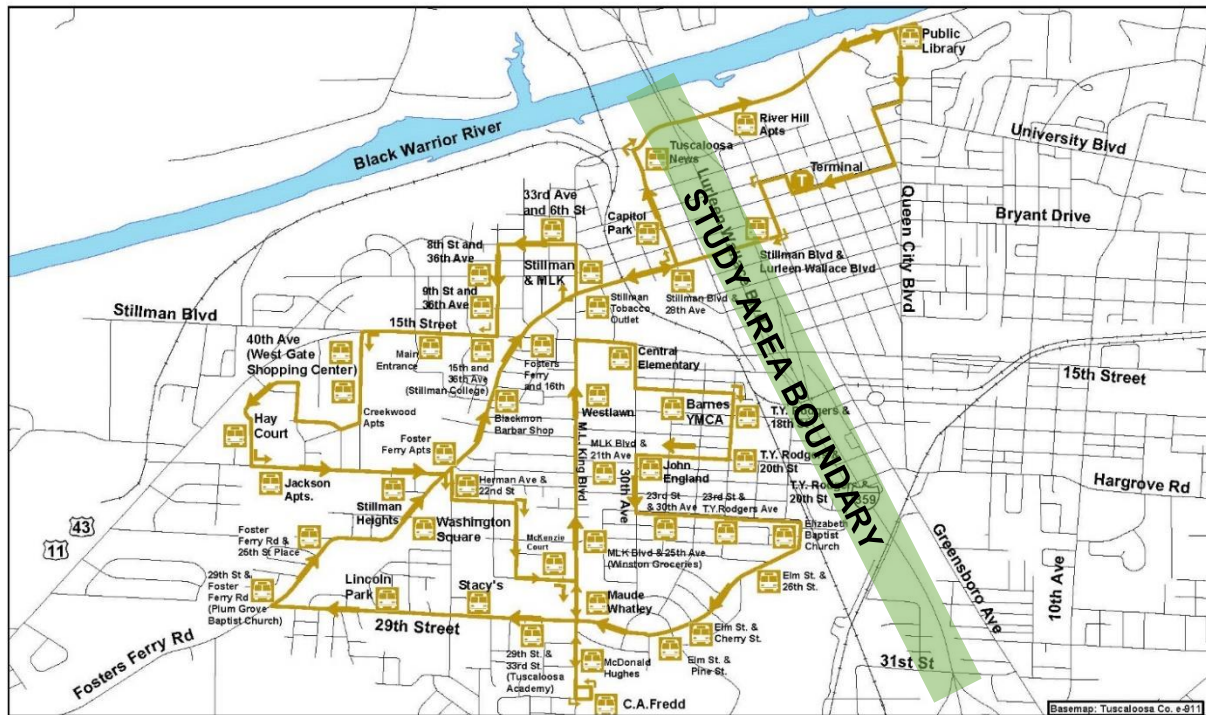
The major collector roads through the Study Area, such as Stillman Boulevard and MLK Boulevard, function well with little to no delays throughout the day. Signalization at major intersections shows efficient flow and there are no indications of Level of Service failures. The Volume to Capacity (V/C) ratio of motor vehicle trips is relatively low with adequate capacity for residents, businesses, and guests visiting the community. The City's transit system has two routes that travel within the Study Area: Stillman College/McKenzie Court and Shelton State Routes. As seen in the following maps, while the area is serviced, residents stated daytime weekday service is a limiting factor.

There are no shared parking facilities, such as park and ride lots or designated parking / ride share areas connected to the transit system. The major industrial employers within the Study area have large parking areas, which could serve the purpose of ride sharing on the City's public transportation system. Transit routes do not provide service to the major employers such as Michelin, GAF, and the other industrial uses located in the western portion of the Study Area, however.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICE

The Stillman College/McKenzie Court Route has several dozen stops within the Study Area at almost all major Points of Interest (PoI). PoIs are generally local or regional shopping destinations, churches, schools, libraries, and civic buildings. This route is almost entirely within the Study Area, extending out only in the Northeast portion to connect to downtown. The route serves commercial shopping areas, churches, schools, libraries, and civic buildings throughout the day and originates at the downtown terminal, providing access to employment, education, and social needs in the City.

Stillman College/McKenzie Court



Indicates Bus Stop Location

FIXED ROUTES
 Fixed routes run Monday through
 Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
 Note the 4:00 p.m. run is the last route that
 you can catch to transfer from one bus to
 another at the main terminal.

The major comment received numerous times during the Community Inventory’s course is the lack of transportation service after work hours and on weekends. Individuals who work full-time jobs expressed needs for shopping and personal services, which must be met after hours with more costly options such as private taxi, ride sharing services, or obtaining rides from family or friends. With expanded growth in the Study Area, a priority must be placed on extended hours of service, to include after work hours and weekends.

One solution may be the use of smaller shuttles after hours and on weekends. Another alternative may be partnering with other agencies to create ride share programs. Yet another idea may be partnering with the University of Alabama (U.A.) to create a circulating shuttle between Stillman College and U.A. to enhance both mobility options

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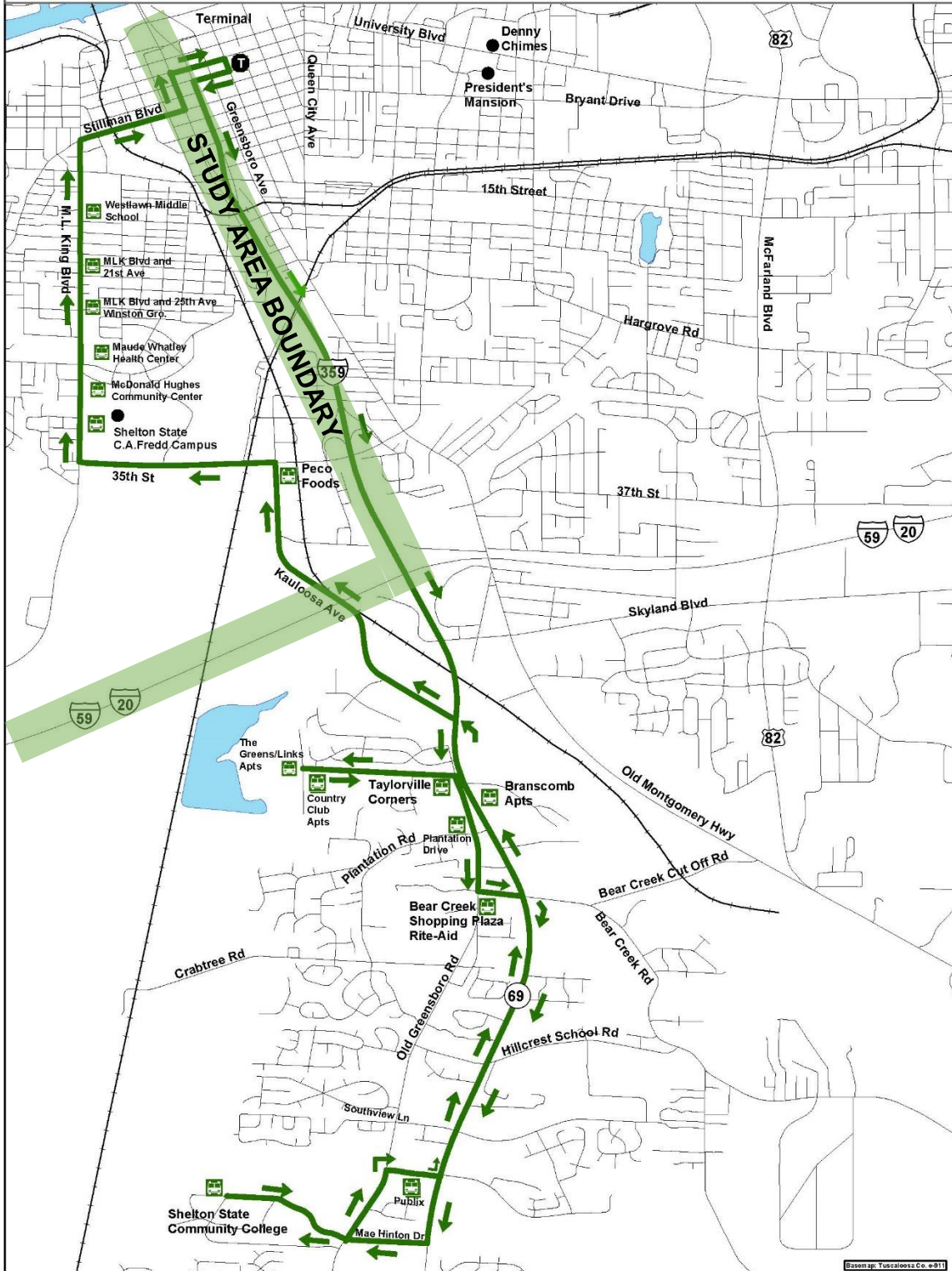
within the City and the educational connection between the two institutions of higher learning. These strategies will require review as the City of Tuscaloosa annually evaluates its transportation priorities and available funding during annual TIP preparation and adoption by the MPO.

Shelton State



Indicates Bus Stop Location

FIXED ROUTES
 Fixed routes run Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
 Note the 1:00 p.m. run is the last route that you can catch to transfer from one bus to another at the main terminal.



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The Shelton State Route has several stops within the Study Area at almost all major Points of Interest (PoI) along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The route serves primarily civic, community, schools, and residential areas throughout the day and originates at the downtown terminal, providing access to employment, education, and social needs. This route traverses several miles and travels well outside the Study Area, approximately five (5) miles to the south to Shelton State Community College. The route is a long linear connector within Tuscaloosa to Shelton State, servicing the Study Area along MLK Boulevard and 35th then traversing the larger western City area.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS - INVENTORY RECOMMENDATIONS

At the transportation network's most basic level, which is pedestrian-and bicycle-supportive infrastructure, there are several incomplete networks within the Study Area. Beginning with identified catalyst areas, in and around established community residential, commercial, and civic nodes, the City should implement a plan to restore the sidewalk system to create fully connected networks between residential neighborhoods and Points of Interest such as the non-residential commercial businesses where MLK Boulevard, Stillman Boulevard, and 15th Street converge, as shown earlier in this report.

The MLK, Stillman and 15th Street specific area, in the north-central portion of the Study Area, has perhaps the greatest immediate potential to signal reinvestment. Since the area has numerous surrounding neighborhoods, it is a functional gateway into West Tuscaloosa, and has the major transportation project of the MLK Expansion. There is a key opportunity to capitalize on the roadway expansion project as the backbone to other lateral connections from the main collector, much like a spine with feeder links. The neighborhoods both east and west of MLK Boulevard, north of 15th Street, also contain

key features such as the former Tuscaloosa Country Club on the west and the Historic Alabama Capitol site on the east.

The MLK Expansion has the ability to deliver a secondary enhancement to West Tuscaloosa. Based on the land acquisition required for the roadway, which includes several parcels on the west side of MLK in their entirety, there will be residual land on the parcels' west end. The combined residual area, which runs through the Study Area for nearly one mile, provides ample area for the creation of a multi-purpose trail or linear park paralleling MLK Boulevard. Creation of a community recreation feature, such as a linear park, can also function as a catalyst for neighborhood reinvestment and revitalization. Homes bordering the corridor have the potential for increased value and enhanced aesthetics due to proximity to a major community recreation feature. Homes that border a multi-purpose trail offer residents immediate connection to social, cultural, and community recreation centers if linked to other dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the City.

The opportunity to connect directly to downtown Tuscaloosa, which then creates the ability to access employment and other civic needs, could clearly be beneficial to the West Tuscaloosa community as a whole. Connection to downtown and its thriving business community and social offerings creates enhanced resale and restoration opportunities for residents who wish to move to Tuscaloosa's core urban area.

Capitalizing on adjacent community assets and connecting elements together, such as the downtown, the Riverwalk, UA and Stillman College are definitive mechanisms to enhance the economic viability of the City. West Tuscaloosa should not be perceived

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as an isolated entity, separate from the City, it is an important historical component and a key to Tuscaloosa's future on multiple levels, from commerce to recreation and culture.

The families that have chosen West Tuscaloosa are part of a trend nationally where people and families are returning to urban city centers. The urban infill principals discussed here and in the Open House and Community Update meetings, underscore their reasons for investment in West Tuscaloosa's historic properties. Many stated that properties can be purchased at great value in the present market. While there are some initial investors, most are homeowners who are occupying the property and using sweat equity to improve their homes and (in some cases) the surrounding neighborhood. They are also using the opportunity to encourage their friends and colleagues to similarly invest in Tuscaloosa's historic neighborhoods and receive the benefits of living near downtown, the University of Alabama, and Stillman College, which all have close proximity to the pending Riverwalk expansion. This is a trend nationally, with great potential to help in revitalization.

Those that have purchased properties for investment purposes only have stated that, while acquisition is below traditional fair market value, once the properties are renovated, the combined debt from acquisition and renovation upon re-appraisal produces an ad valorem tax value in excess of market value rental rates. Citizens stated that the disproportionate debt ratio slows investment and reinvestment.

In order to overcome this financial impediment, Tuscaloosa County and the City of Tuscaloosa may wish to either defer property appraisal on redeveloped properties for a

specific time or scale property valuation for a defined and specific short timeframe to allow rental rates to escalate commensurate with other properties. This strategy may work in established areas and blighted areas. Lastly, specific City-initiated reinvestment strategies and infrastructure investment may serve to accelerate value appreciation within defined context zones in West Tuscaloosa. The City's recent discussions in February on incentivizing reinvestment are aligned with citizen input received during the course of this Community Inventory. The strategies should have a limited timeframe and require significant contribution from recipients to ensure commitment and success.

Based on the relatively low traffic volumes and close proximity to Tuscaloosa's colleges and universities, in addition to major industrial employers, there are no roadway facility infrastructure deficiencies prohibiting redevelopment and reinvestment in West Tuscaloosa. Roadway volume to capacity shows adequate lane widths and connections between residents and employment centers.

However, creating physical infrastructure expanded and multi-modal alternatives as priority projects will entice others to follow suit and similarly reinvest in the community and may make redevelopment more financially feasible for individuals and businesses who are looking for expansion or start-up opportunities in the City of Tuscaloosa. It will also enhance connections for pedestrians, bicyclists, and those who rely on transit and public transportation.

INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS – INVENTORY FINDINGS

The consultant team analyzed the existing potable water and sanitary sewer infrastructure within the Study Area and reviewed the City's plant capacity for both providing potable water and treating effluent. While there is existing capacity within the overall system, there are documented public utility deficiencies throughout the Study Area based on both the size and age of water and wastewater piping infrastructure.

For each of the identified catalyst projects, listed later in the document, the consultant team's local engineering representative (McGiffert and Associates, Inc.) reviewed hypothetical square footage and/or dwelling unit yields on each of the sites. Working closely with City staff, the consultant team determined that while onsite systems could be engineered to accommodate projected probable development yields, connection to the existing municipal potable water supply or sanitary sewer collection system would require off-site infrastructure upgrades.

These upgrades range in complexity from simple pipe upsizing to more complex lift station upgrades, as was the case with the Lift Station #21, where rain events typically reduce the station's ability to provide service. The fact that many of the City's sanitary sewer lines in the West Tuscaloosa Study Area are eight-inch (8") lines will be a problem for the immediate and long-term redevelopment of the area. Creating a comprehensive and phased plan for greater capacity along the City's infrastructure backbone will serve not only one proposed catalyst site but provide adequate capacity for the entire service area where it's located. The key findings are as follows:

“MLK-Stillman Site”

Potable water is available in a 16” water main, no upgrades are necessary.

1. Existing 16” watermains are located within Stillman Boulevard and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.
2. An interconnection “loop” is preferred from these two existing 16” watermains through this site.

Sanitary Sewer infrastructure is in place but is inadequate to support the infill site.

1. There exists a 10” main along a portion of the 15th Street frontage of this site. The 10” main changes to an 8” main at the 15th Street crossing.
2. The existing 8” portion will need to be upgraded to a 12” pipe across 15th Street. The City will confirm the diameter of this existing pipe with a video inspection.

This represents an approximate ±1.5-mile upgrade through the core of the northern Study Area. This project should have a detailed cost estimate prepared so funding may be identified through either local, State, or Federal sources. An approximate cost for upgrades are \$2-3M to provide an overall trunk-line service upgrade. Additionally, the potential for cost sharing with private-sector development entities should be considered to accelerate the upgrade. If the City would allow a pioneering agreement, which allows the creators of municipal infrastructure to receive reimbursements over time as others connection to the system, this may be a way to accelerate needed enhancements.

“Broadus-Stewart Site”

Potable water is available in a 16” water main, no upgrades are necessary.

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Sanitary Sewer infrastructure is in place but is inadequate to support medium-to large-infill redevelopment. As noted below, a single project could serve multiple sites.

1. The existing 8” sewer along U.S. Highway 11 ultimately outfalls to the City Lift Station No. 21. The “Surge Basin” project for Lift Station No. 21 (to improve capacity during rain events) is in the planning stages.
2. The capacity of the existing 8” sewer along U.S. Highway 11 will be exceeded with the development of this site and the neighboring selected sites. Either a 12” or 15” main upgrade along U.S. Highway 11 will be required from the site to Uniroyal-Goodrich Boulevard.

“Stillman – Culver - Clinton Site”

Potable water is available in a 16” water main; no upgrades are necessary.

Sanitary Sewer infrastructure is in place but is inadequate to support the infill site.

1. The existing 8” sewer in Clinton Drive connects to the existing 8” main in U.S. Highway 11 referenced in the Broadus-Stewart discussion.
2. The capacity of the existing 8” sewer along U.S. Highway 11 will be exceeded with the development of this site and the neighboring selected sites.
3. The proposed capacity upgrade referenced in the Broadus-Stewart discussion will satisfy the development needs of this site as well.

“Kelly Site”

Potable water is available in a 16” water main; no upgrades are necessary. An interconnection “loop” is preferred from the existing 16” watermain along U.S.

Highway 11 (North side) through this property to the existing 8” watermain on the East side of 41st Avenue.

Sanitary Sewer infrastructure is in place but is inadequate to support the infill site.

1. The capacity of the existing 8" sewer along U.S. Highway 11 will be exceeded with the development of this site and the neighboring selected sites.
2. The proposed capacity upgrade referenced in the Broadus-Stewart discussion will satisfy the development needs of this site as well.

CRIME ANALYSIS – INVENTORY FINDINGS

The consultant team analyzed crime in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory study area. The team obtained data for a seven-year (7) period, ranging from 2011 to 2017. The data indicates slight downward incidents from the years of 2012 and 2013. The crime data collected and supplied contained both Violent Crime and Property Crime. There is a fairly high incident frequency for both types of crime. While there is a correlation between blighted areas and crime, the pattern of blight presents challenges for local law enforcement agencies and their ability to significantly decrease the incidents and type of crime in the Study area.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines Violent Crime as:

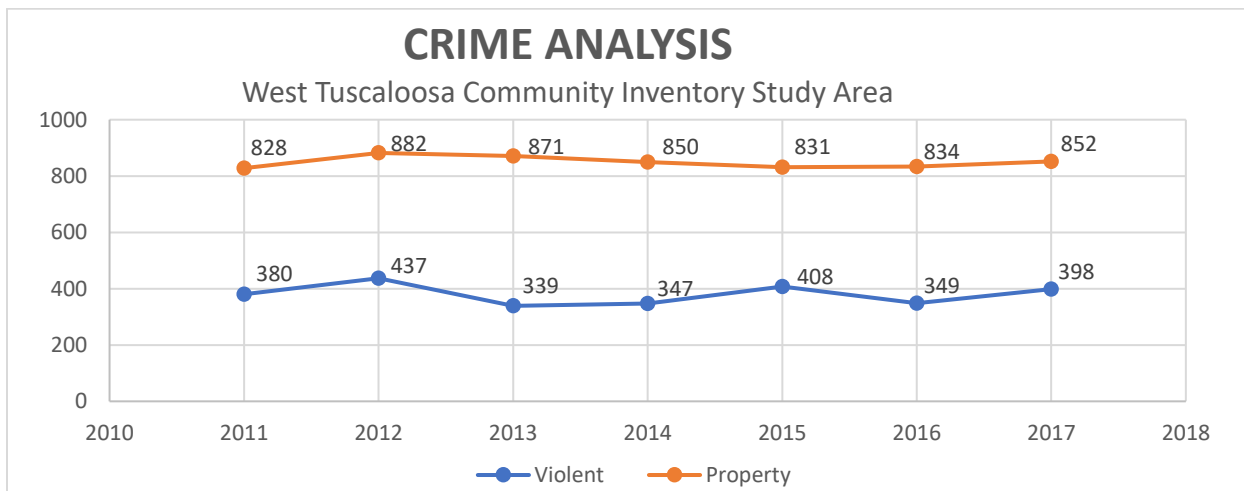
“Composed of four offenses: murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Violent crimes are defined...as those offenses which involve force or threat of force.”

The FBI defines Property Crime as

“The offenses of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. The object of the theft-type offenses is the taking of money or property, but there is no force or threat of force against the victims. The property crime category includes arson because the offense involves the destruction of property; however, arson victims may be subjected to force. Because of limited participation and varying collection procedures by local law enforcement agencies, only limited data are available for arson. Arson statistics are included in trend, clearance, and arrest tables throughout Crime in the United States, but they are not included in any estimated volume data. The arson section in this report provides more information on that offense.”

When the data is visually combined on a Study area GIS map, the entire area is virtually blanketed with both types of crime. In addition, many data points are co-located, depicting that the reported incident had both a crime against an individual and the residence or business where the incident occurred.

When the data is stratified by year, there is not a major discernable change in crime distribution. Since the pattern remains consistent across the Study area, there does not appear to be shift in any geographic direction. For example, one cannot ascertain that crime is moving from single-family neighborhoods to multifamily communities. While there are slight declines over the study period, there are not dramatic decreases. The incident frequency remains above 800 property crimes and above 300 violent crimes, annually. The good news is that there is an overall slight decline in volume and the trendline is downward for both types of crime from the peak year of 2012.



During interviews, study participants voiced their concern about slow response time for law enforcement in the West Tuscaloosa Community. Some participants stated that sometimes calls are not answered, or it takes hours and the incident has either passed or been committed. Further investigation is required to confirm the comments received.

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During the course of the community Open House in February, Capt. Melvin Green, Patrol Division - West Precinct, Tuscaloosa Police Department, was present during the entire evening session. Capt. Green stated that he had learned of the meeting and was interested in attending to learn more about the Community Inventory. Without being requested, Capt. Green manned the Crime Analysis display map and spoke one-on-one, or to small citizen groups, throughout the evening. His participation is testament to the City's commitment to its citizens and community as a whole.

Capt. Green provided information related to the geographic shift in crime incidents. He described the pattern shift for all crime types moving slightly east. However, he also stated when crime is reduced in a certain neighborhood or area, it increases in another. He stated that many crimes are crimes of opportunity, meaning perpetrators will take advantage of an open car or residential door if valuables are left in plain sight.

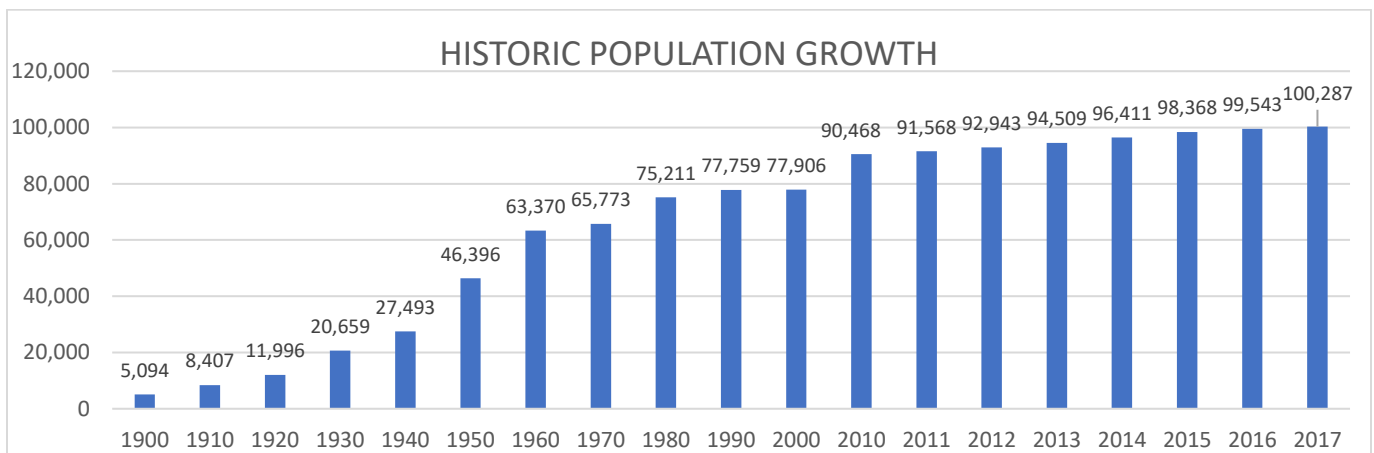
He also stated that there are definitive areas where individuals gravitate to in order to obtain illegal drugs. This is often related to youth and college-aged residents. While enforcement can address specific locations, stemming the volume of crime is paramount. Providing preventative measures, such as employing proven practices like Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) can reduce opportunity areas and the crimes associated with urban areas experiencing blight and neglect.

A key Study recommendation centers around the importance of community policing and placing eyes on the street. When residents and employees occupy the public spaces within the community, recreate on their property, and walk or bicycle upon the sidewalks and streets in the community, their presence reduces the likelihood of crime.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Like many cities that grew dramatically in the 1940s through 1970s, Tuscaloosa's transportation network focused on moving goods and services using private vehicles as the primary means of travel. While some neighborhoods have sidewalks, often times the sidewalks often exist on only on one side of the street. Many neighborhoods do not have any dedicated pedestrian facilities, bicycle lanes, or pedestrian-scaled lighting.

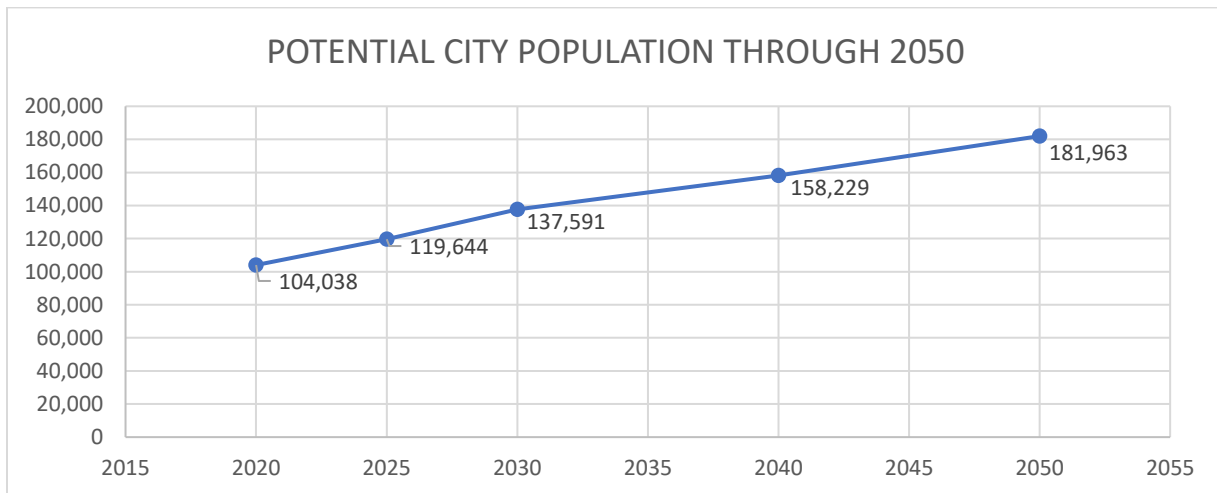
The US Census, as shown below, indicates Tuscaloosa's population has experienced major jumps in population, such as the 72.2% increase between 1920 and 1930, following the conclusion of the First World War and the United States manufacturing and industrial growth, then again with 68.76% between 1940 and 1950, following the conclusion of the Second World War and the suburban growth trend nationwide. Since that time, the population growth has been significantly moderate, with annual growth in the $\pm 2\%$ range. New data posted in May 2017 showed that Tuscaloosa's growth had reached earlier peaks between 2000 and 2010. With an upward trend that shows Tuscaloosa's continued growth, West Tuscaloosa should be home to new families, businesses, and new opportunities too. The recent rise to over 100,000 indicates continued growth.



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Statistically, the City of Tuscaloosa and the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory Study area have the following population characteristics per the U.S. Census:

- Total Population of the City of Tuscaloosa: **100,287**
- Total Population of West Tuscaloosa Study Area: **12,110 (± 12% of the City)**
- Average Number of Persons per Household: **2.56 persons**
- Average Number of Persons per Household in Study Area: **2.58 persons**
- Total Number of Occupied Housing Units* in the City of Tuscaloosa: **33,933**
- Total Number of Occupied Housing Units* in Study Area: **4,369 (± 13%)**
- Total Number of Vacant Housing Units* in City of Tuscaloosa: **12,236**
- Total Number of Vacant Housing Units* in Study Area: **503 (± 4%)**



If the City of Tuscaloosa continues to grow at a rate of approximately 10% per decade, the City's population could nearly double within the next 30 years. Based on the Study area comprising approximately 13% of the City, if the ratio remains constant a valid question to consider is if the West Tuscaloosa community has the potential for twice as many individuals and where they would live. Furthermore, the addition of over 12,000 persons within the Study Area would create a need for over 4,600 dwelling units.

At an average density of three dwelling units per acre (3du/ac), about 1,500 acres of land would be required if development continued as single-story detached units. The most sustainable development pattern, which reduces overall costs and demands on physical infrastructure is the introduction of low- and mid-rise dwellings within the Study Area. Moderate density land uses also support mass transit and retain a compact city form. The introduction of residential over retail or service uses can play a viable part of urban infill and provide support for new service uses, such as live-work units for professionals, health-care practitioners, and artisans alike. A mixture of uses, such as contained in tradition urban vertical development recommended.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

CAPITALIZE ON EXISTING AND PLANNED PROJECTS

During the course of the community engagement, the consultant team learned of two Private-sector land acquisitions within the Study area. The first is the former Tuscaloosa Country Club and the second is described as the Broadus-Stewart Site. These sites, being over 110 acres and 21 acres, respectively, can be major catalysts for West Tuscaloosa. The City should work diligently with the property owners to coordinate their entry into the West Tuscaloosa community in a well-planned manner, with emphasis placed on connection to the existing neighborhoods and amenities in West Tuscaloosa. Further discussion on these projects is contained below.



While the Tuscaloosa Area 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan contains only a few projects in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory Study Area, they represent major

capital investment in the City in the tens of millions of dollars. Building on the strength of these projects and using the momentum they bring is essential to their success and positive impact on the City. The projects are contained in Figure 12 of the Tuscaloosa Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Stillman College (±84-acres) is one of the largest singularly-owned properties in the Study Area. Located within the Study Area's central core, its future potential can create significant positive change and reinvestment in West Tuscaloosa. Nationally, the focus on Historic Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), which number just over 100 in the United States, is on their potential to become urban reinvestment catalysts. The United States Economic Development Administration (US EDA), in February 2018, published "Success Story: HBCU'S work to create wealth, builds healthy and sustainable communities." The Brookings Institute, in November 2017 published in *The Avenue*, "Black colleges can revive American Cities," which was produced by the Hechinger Report. Their data keenly examines the national trends of both individuals and businesses seeking to settle in urban environments, many of which contain HBCUs. The effect of both re-urbanization and re-investment in HBCUs produces a multiplier effect that benefits the host community. They conclude in their publication:

"HBCUs are thought of as a historical good, a social benefit for the black community. But maybe we should think of them as today's economic assets that, if developed, will reap benefits for us all."

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), in 2007, published "Three Case Studies in Experiences in Community Development – Volume 1

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– Cross Site Report.” This key report identifies five (5) key findings, in summary, which are listed below:

1. **Commitment** – *The HBCU needs to be committed to community development for the long term. Revitalizing these communities is a long-term proposition, and it may take upwards of 10 to 20 years to see real, significant change;*
2. **Strategic Plan** – *The HBCU should lay out a road map that identifies what community development means to them and what are their goals and objectives;*
3. **Community Involvement** – *The HBCU must identify how the local community will be involved in its community development efforts;*
4. **Partnerships** – *The HBCU needs to recognize that community development is a complicated process that likely requires time and investment beyond the resources available to the HBCU; and*
5. **Organizational Capacity** – *The HBCU should understand that whether it creates a separate entity to carry out its community development activities or does it internal to the HBCU, the accomplishments of its community development program will only be as good as the quality of the staff conducting the activities.*

These key findings are congruent with the fundamental tenets of land use planning and community redevelopment strategies and can work in tandem with the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory to create a solid foundation for sustained success.

SEEK LOW ENTRY-COST INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

The City of Tuscaloosa, in a continuous and coordinated manner, should adopt a capital infrastructure program for the West Tuscaloosa study area. The main focus areas are based on both the technical empirical analysis and direct input from Tuscaloosa's citizens, stakeholders, and staff. The visible effects of reinvestment will have a multiplier effect on West Tuscaloosa's success as a defined group of neighborhoods and as a connected community within the City of Tuscaloosa as a whole. Re-establishment of key urban elements is the critical first step in sending a signal that West Tuscaloosa is ready for reinvestment.

Throughout the course of the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory, hundreds of individuals participated by providing input on the items that they believe will improve their Quality of Life. Quality of Life characteristics begin with the basic elements to support healthy enjoyment of the community, their neighborhood, and in the most basic form, their home. Items such as sidewalks, street lights, and public spaces are needed throughout the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory study area. Transit service should be considered for expansion into the evening and also considered for weekend service, at least on Saturdays to provide mobility option for residents and guests in the City of Tuscaloosa.

SIDEWALKS

The importance of sidewalks is fundamental to neighborhood mobility, stability, and security. If the connection from West Tuscaloosa's citizens' homes can be both restored and enhanced, simply by connecting homes with destinations such as places

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to shop, dine, and receive personal or professional services, quality of life will be improved. It is important to note; sidewalk facilities must be well lit to provide safe passage for both aging populations and to promote a safe walking environment.

Sidewalks not only restore connectivity between residents and destinations such as work, shopping, and recreation, they serve to place citizens in the community, in public spaces, which provides a deterrent to crime. When people return to their front porches, neighborhood sidewalks and streets, and urban activity centers, their physical presence and activities drive crime and undesirable behavior away from the city's public spaces.

Sidewalks promote citizens' presence in their neighborhoods and the community as a whole. Restoring and enhancing the West Tuscaloosa community's homes and public spaces and connection to the Downtown core, through pedestrian, bicycle and enhanced transit service, will further strengthen the civic bond and serve to create safe spaces and increased awareness of West Tuscaloosa's opportunity and potential.

Sidewalks operate on the principle of "Eyes on the Street." The presence of neighbors and visitors reduces the likelihood of criminals or others committing illegal activities or actions and increases the perception of safety and security in public spaces.

Throughout all of the community engagement activities- the one-on-one interviews, the Open House, and the Public Meeting / Study Update- participants consistently advocated for stronger connections to important destinations. Despite the vocalized lack of destinations, definitive commitment towards infrastructure reestablishment is necessary to demonstrate the City's commitment to the West Tuscaloosa community. While there is the ever-present question of what should come first, businesses or

infrastructure, the City should take the lead in tactical reinvestment at strategic locations.

Determining the strategic locations became evident during the Community Inventory, both through meeting participants and key stakeholders. Some of the key factors in determining the best locations for municipal reinvestment are availability to existing roads, utilities, adjacent populations to serve, and, in the case of commercial properties, a congregate population to support new uses. Fortunately, West Tuscaloosa's population is ready for enhanced offerings and there are available vacant parcels of land to satisfy these needs and deliver appropriately-scaled non-residential offerings.

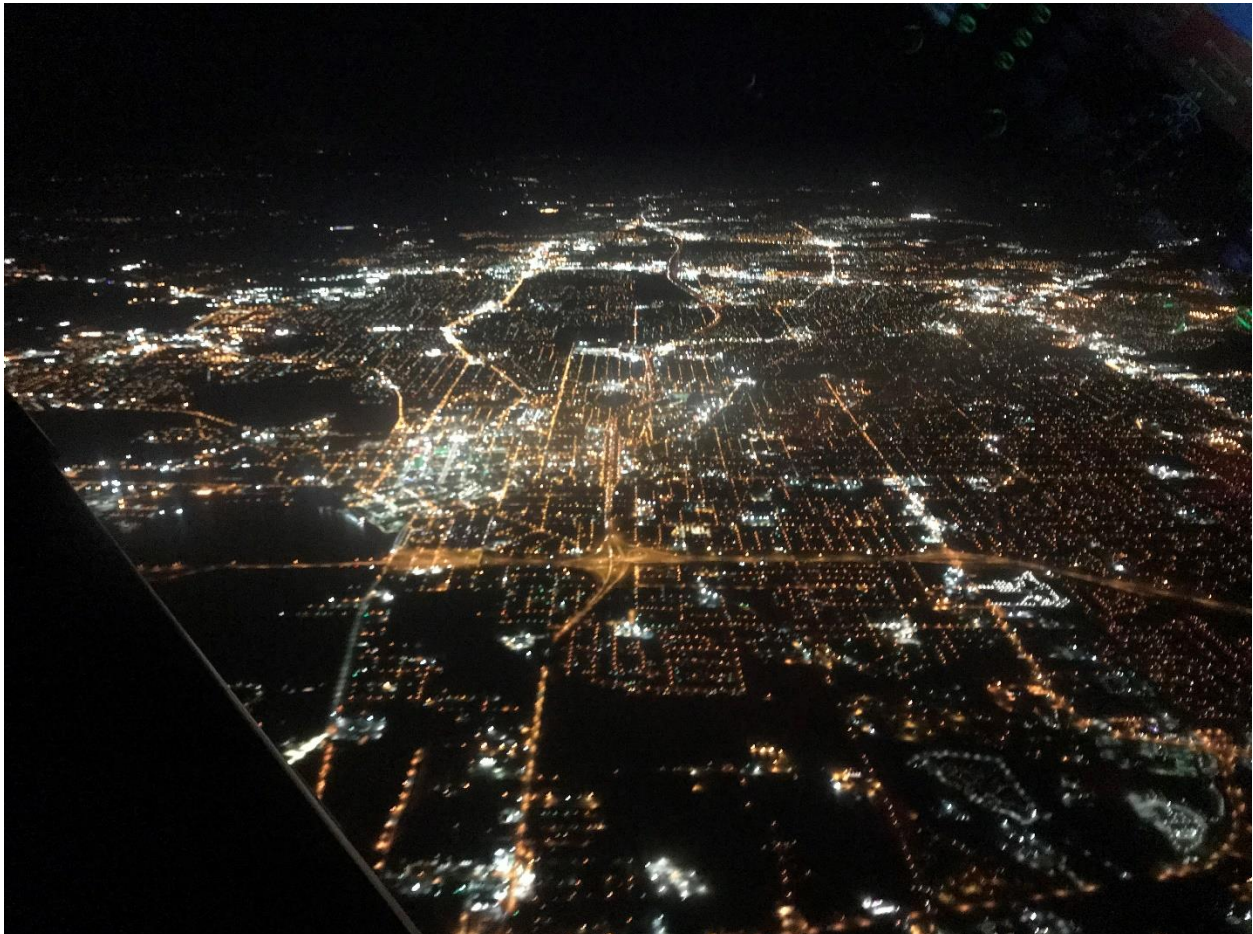
STREET LIGHTING

While some areas within Tuscaloosa have switched to Light Emitting Diode (LED) type light fixtures for both street lights and pedestrian-scale lights, none has been observed in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory Study Area. LED lighting has many advantages such as lower operational costs, longer life cycle when compared to sodium vapor or mercury halide, and truer color representation providing a myriad of benefits.

Truer color representation has benefits for both citizens as they navigate through their neighborhoods and public places as well as law enforcement officials. The ability to see curbs, sidewalk deviations, and plant material more clearly translates to greater confidence when walking or exercising outdoors. Providing law enforcement with more uniform lighting conditions can increase safety and provide greater ability to patrol the community and recognize imminent threats.

The City should investigate an LED implementation plan, initially along key collector roadways and in all new residential and commercial projects within the Study Area. In addition, the City should work with the utility company to create a phasing plan to replace aging fixtures and bulbs along major travel ways and transit routes.

The aerial image below illustrates the dramatic difference between areas illuminated by LED lighting compared to sodium vapor lights. The City should consider partnering programs to accelerate the introduction of and conversion to LED lighting throughout the core downtown, major roadway corridors, civic locations, and neighborhoods.



As seen from above, the areas with LED lighting are brightly lit, compared to the more yellow/orange areas that form pockets or nodes of darker contrast along certain roadways and neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Throughout the Community Inventory's course, the consultant team's Civil Engineer, McGiffert & Associates, Inc., has researched the City's ability to provide both potable water and sanitary sewer service. While there are areas within residential neighborhoods that may have aging first-generation piping, the City's ability to serve existing and future users, from a supply-side, is robust and available.

Individual, site-specific recommendations are contained in the following sections with each Catalyst Site Recommendation. Based on the close proximity of some sites, along 15th Street / Stillman Boulevard, addressing one site accommodates all sites along the corridor. In this case study, the single-largest privately-owned site, the former Golf Course, is being considered for development and there may be opportunities for potential cost sharing or a pioneering agreement with the private-sector developer.

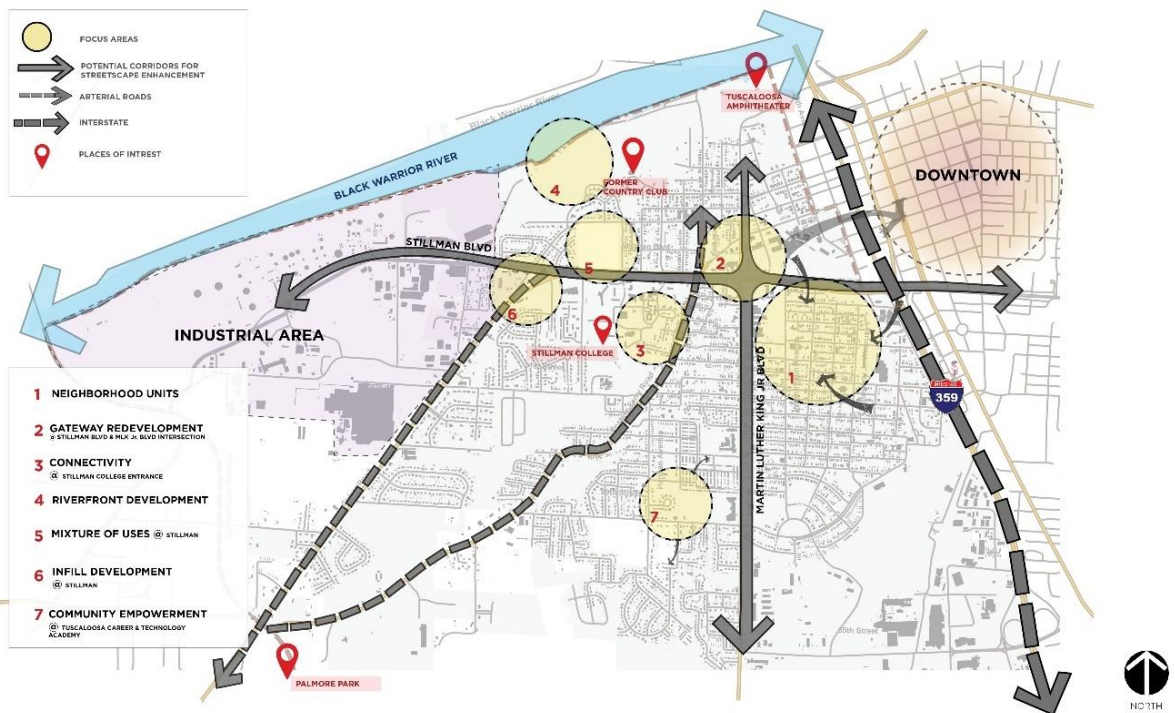
In addition, the Stillman Boulevard context area has the ability to become a signature project for both the West Tuscaloosa Community and the City as a whole. Stillman Boulevard also has the potential to become a key linkage between the College and the historic residential neighborhoods to the north, the Amphitheater, and downtown.

If Stillman College's main entry drive is connected as a complete street with 36th Avenue to the north, it has the potential to connect all the way to the former Tuscaloosa Country Club and ultimately the Riverwalk Extension. The social, cultural, recreational, and historical potential of this connection should be capitalized upon in partnership with the College and private development interest. Its positive effect on the residential

community to the north is tremendous and presents many opportunities for both Stillman College and the City of Tuscaloosa.

CATALYST SITE (FOCUS AREAS) RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the Community Inventory and Blight Study, the consultant team and City staff continuously refined analysis to identify specific areas, whether they contain similar uses, serve as community gateways, or provide connections between Points of Interest within the Study Area. The Study identified seven (7) Focus Areas, that range from residential neighborhoods, to institutional sites, to roadway corridors, as shown below:

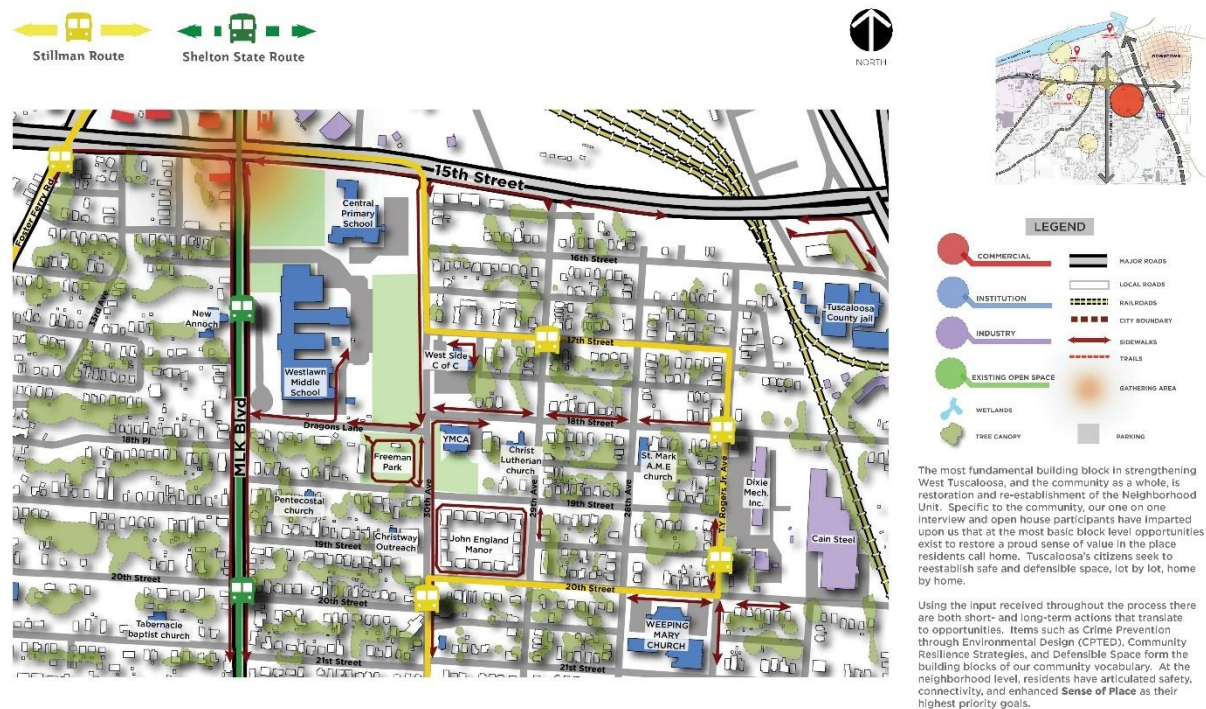


The following sections discuss each of the areas in greater detail, with some of the areas conceptualized as catalyst sites. The conceptual spatial planning effort was also used to determine what infrastructure capacities are required to support desired redevelopment and then analyze the magnitude of projects to support reinvestment.

All Focus Area maps are included, as 11"x17" Z-Fold documents, in Appendix A.

1. Neighborhood Unit – Stabilization and Community Connection

The most fundamental building block throughout the West Tuscaloosa community is the neighborhood unit. The vignette below depicts the area bounded by 15th Street on the north and 21st Street on the south. This eastern portion of the Study Area contains numerous residences, churches, educational facilities, employment, and is served by both transit routes within the overall study area. With the exception of 15th Street and MLK Boulevard, the only pedestrian facilities are those around the schools, John England Manor, and portions of the block where Weeping Mary Church is located.



Key measures to stabilize the area involve addition of sidewalks in a connected manner, extending from the existing schools and civic functions, to core residential areas. The inclusion of pedestrian-scaled lighting, also extending from existing points of interest into the core neighborhood, should be prioritized over the coming years. A priority

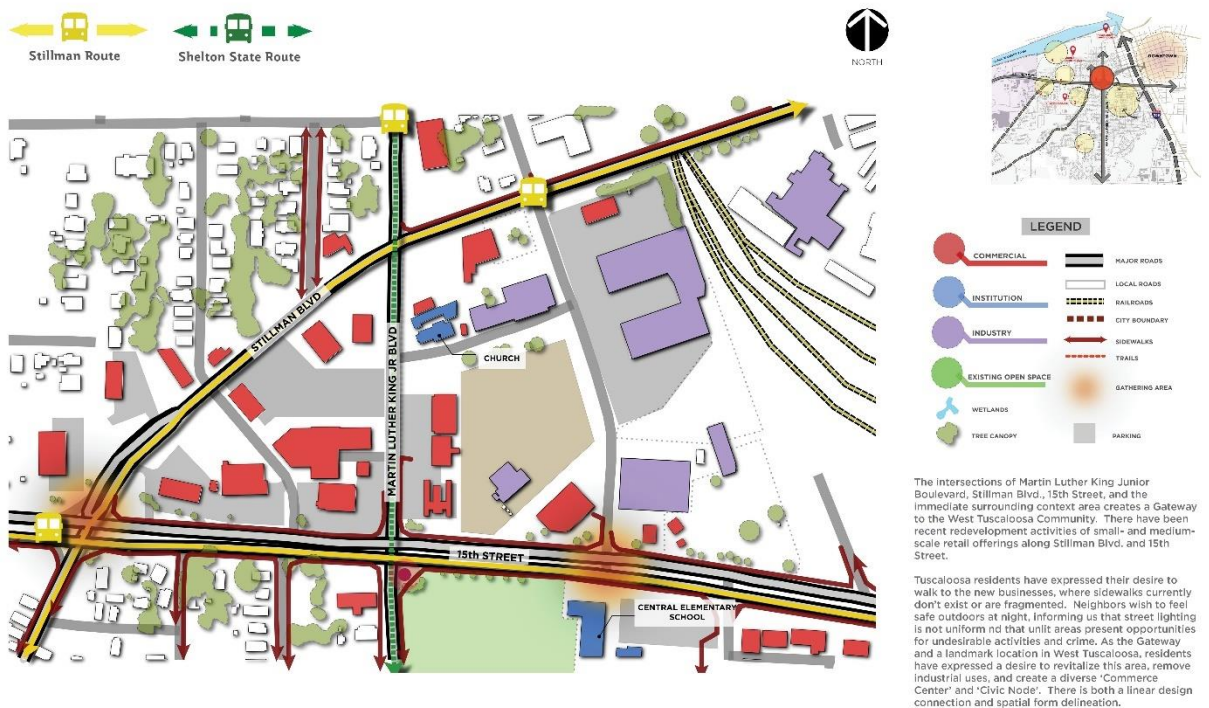
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program of inventorying blighted properties for demolition or relocation is recommended. There are numerous single parcels that are empty in the area. Discussion of creating a Habitat for Humanity pilot project neighborhood was introduced at the May Open House by Ellen Potts, Executive Director. The consultant team is continuing to investigate this opportunity and a spatial query of potentially compatible sites is underway. Creating a model neighborhood unit, designed with full connection to the context area, complete sidewalks and parking areas, shared common community space, front porches and seating areas may be the first step in promoting new or renewed interest in housing opportunities in the immediate area.

During continued conversation with Habitat for Humanity the consultant team confirmed the opportunity for a pilot project in the West Tuscaloosa Study area. Careful attention to its location, with a group of homes forming a neighborhood unit, should be considered.

2. MLK Boulevard – Stillman – 15th Street Gateway

When entering the West Tuscaloosa community, there's a need to establish a sense of place, or define the arrival into the community. Several individuals have voiced concerns that the entry experience into West Tuscaloosa does not convey a sense of place, or one matching the Community. The location is currently operating below its highest and best potential. Industrial uses tend not to promote urban reinvestment on adjacent lots by much needed retail and service businesses. By example, restaurants that promote outdoor dining and casual environment are generally not compatible with businesses that generate noise, dust, light, vibration, and heavy truck traffic.



GMIH CHW McCiffert Dedenbach GreenView
PLANNING INC. STUDIO

2_GATEWAY REDEVELOPMENT @ INTERSECTION OF STILLMAN BLVD & MLK JR. BLVD

This convergence of the major collector roadways in West Tuscaloosa could evolve into a vibrant activity center, drawing residents from multiple neighborhoods and providing services to those traveling throughout the City. The intersecting roadways create a 'five-points' feature that provides natural focus on the potential gateway. The streets

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emanating from potential gateway provide a natural connection to the surrounding neighborhoods. There is ample area for restaurants, service businesses, and new retail shopping opportunities. The site's potential is evident, from many urban perspectives. A bird's eye view, as shown below, illustrates the areas where transformational projects could occur with the eastern gateway to the West Tuscaloosa Study Area.



Site Size	Potential Scale/Uses	Utility Requirement	Ownership	Timeframe
± 31 ac	65,000 sq. ft. gross leasable area (GLA)	Water = 6,500 gpd	Multiple owners, primarily private parties	Phase 1 20xx
	<i>Retail potential, consistent w/ demand</i>	Sewer = 6,500 gpd		Phase 2 20xx
	<i>Service potential, consistent w/ demand</i>	Electric – available		Phase 3 20xx
	Not ideal for mixed use containing residential development, based on surrounding supply	Telco/Internet = Fiber?		Phase 4 20xx
		Natural Gas - available		Phase 5 20xx

As outlined previously, redevelopment of this site is currently limited, based on the need for water and sewer supply and collection line upgrades. The Stillman Boulevard utility upgrades discussed earlier readies this site for reinvestment. In addition, during the construction of the MLK Expansion, opportunities should be taken to update or upgrade any and all utilities within this area, alleviating the need to disturb the newly constructed road or cause future disruption to local businesses and the neighborhood.

Given the relatively close proximity of the key focus area sites, redevelopment on the site should have consistent and complimentary design elements, such as street lighting, signage, and hardscape elements. These items should be considered during site plan review by both City staff when conducting the review and by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council during preliminary and final reviews, respectively.

3. Stillman College – Context Neighborhood Connectivity

As Stillman College implements its strategic vision, expands academic and athletic programs, and broadens its connection on many levels within the community, the area between Stillman College and Fosters Ferry Road is a prime redevelopment location. There are larger parcels south of 19th Street that, based on their proximity to Stillman College, have the potential to develop into new neighborhoods, connected to Stillman.

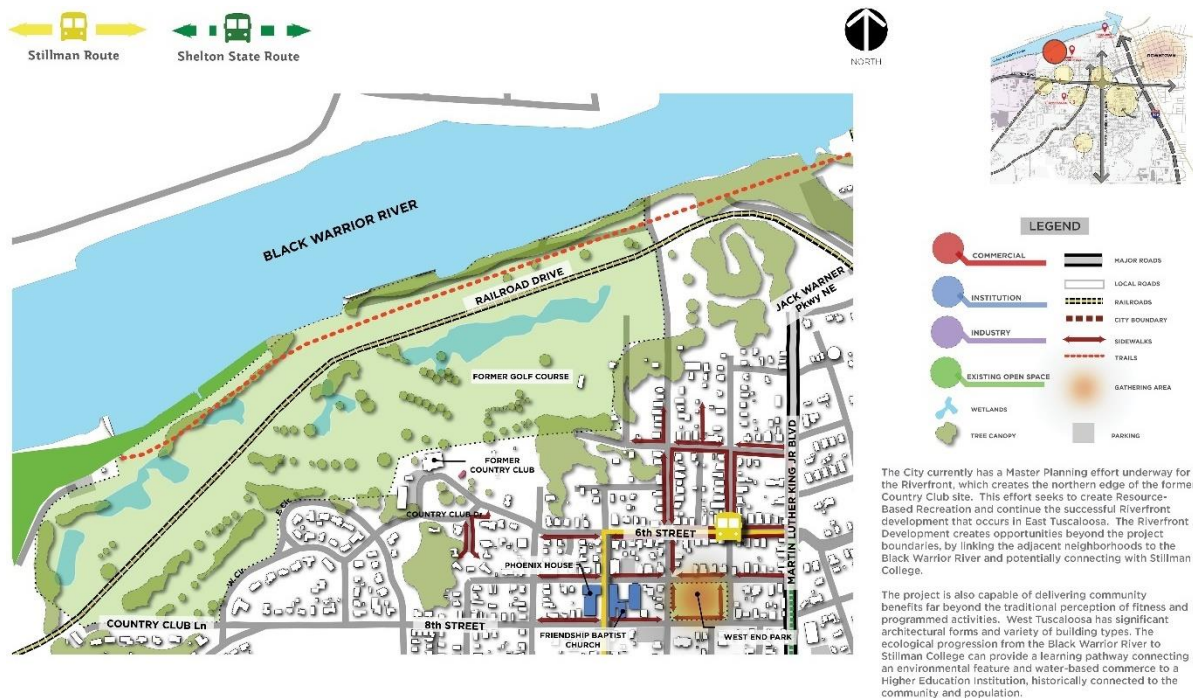


Located within walking distance of the Stillman campus and its many athletic facilities, connecting this area to the campus in a convenient and secure manner opens the potential for both existing and future faculty, staff, and students to live within walking distance of Tuscaloosa's only HBCU and all it offers. The ability to live close to one's job, utilize recreation facilities to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and receive the benefits of Stillman College's cultural offerings creates several key quality of life characteristics.

The following three (3) locations have the capability to work in a connected manner, based on their proximity to both Stillman College and West Tuscaloosa's major heavy industrial and manufacturing employment center to the west. The three locations' ability to function in a coordinated manner, focusing on interconnectivity to the surrounding context area and working in a complimentary manner give Key Focus 4, 5, and 6, the ability to evolve simultaneously. Delivering the highest quality-built environment possible to produce development that exists for multiple generations is essential for these sites.

4. Riverfront Development – Former Golf Course

The former golf course and original Tuscaloosa Country Club property represents the single-largest privately-held property within the Study Area. Extending nearly the entire width of the Study Area, along the Black Warrior River, the ±110-acre property has the potential to accommodate a mixture of uses, ranging from single-family detached homes to townhomes and multi-family development, whether in the form of owner-occupied dwellings or rental units. The site also has the potential to accommodate commercial uses along the riverfront, in addition to a complete recreation program.

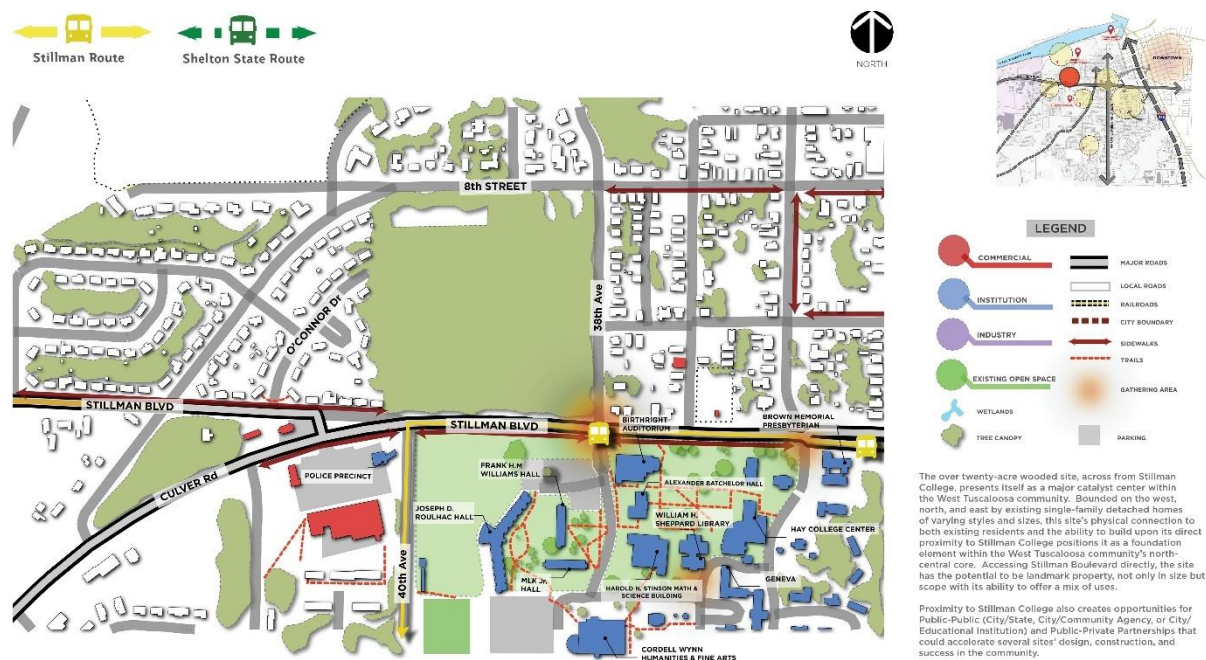


4. RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

The site is under Private-Sector ownership and will be a phased project, based on its size and geography. Based on the site’s private ownership, the consultant team met with the owner, but did not produce conceptual spatial plans or concepts. Discussions focused on the site’s overall potential, short- and long-term goals, and design concepts under review from national and international cities with riverfront geography. Any development program should include multiple connection types to the context area.

5. Broadus – Stewart Site – ±21-acres northwest of Stillman College

This greenfield site is currently within the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory Study area but not within the City of Tuscaloosa. The site is in the County and should be annexed into the City, followed by a complimentary chosen Land Use classification and Zoning designation. Given the site’s large size and the fact it is bounded on all three sides by urban residential streets with the fourth side on Stillman Boulevard, it is a great infill development opportunity with immediate connectivity to Stillman College.



The site is under Private-Sector ownership and has the potential to be a phased project, based on its size and geography. The project’s relatively square shape promotes its ability to accommodate a mixture of uses, serving Stillman Boulevard, while having a transitional density to mesh with the surrounding neighborhood on the west, north, and eastern boundaries. Based on the site’s private ownership, the consultant team met with the owner, but did not produce conceptual spatial plans or concepts, only a

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theoretic impact analysis for potable water and sanitary sewer necessary for a similar-sized site.

Site Size	Potential Scale/Uses	Utility Requirement	Ownership	Timeframe
± 21 ac	<i>Up to 150,000 sq. ft. (GLA), market based</i>	Water = 155k gpd if fully developed	Single owner, private sector acquisition	Phase 1 20xx
	<i>Retail potential, consistent w/ demand</i>	Sewer = 155k gpd if fully developed		Phase 2 20xx
	<i>Service potential, consistent w/ demand</i>	Electric – available		Phase 3 20xx
	Not ideal for mixed use containing residential development, based on surrounding supply	Telco/Internet = Fiber?		Phase 4 20xx
		Natural Gas - available		Phase 5 20xx

This site was recently acquired by a private development group, with hopes of advancing the site to its highest and best use. With over twenty (20) acres of land, completely surrounded by existing neighborhood roads and Stillman Boulevard along the property’s southern boundary, the site is prime infill development property. The site’s direct proximity to Stillman College opens the potential for a wide mix of uses.

The site’s scale is adequate to create an urban activity center, with proper urban design elements and architectural forms. Both residential and non-residential uses could exist in a cohesive and compatible manner on the site. In addition, the site can be designed to exist harmoniously with the surrounding single-family detached homes bordering its western, northern, and eastern property lines.

The site’s nearly complete tree cover also presents the desirable opportunity to design the site in a manner sensitive to neighbors and the surrounding single-family homes, with respect for the natural vegetation and topography. Retention of existing tree

canopy and other select vegetation creates a sense of place more quickly than greenfield sites that are landscaped only after construction is completed. Retention of existing vegetation, to the maximum extent practicable, also has a positive effect on energy consumption by providing shade for residential units and creating more comfortable urban gathering spaces for commercial uses.

With Stillman College being located across the street, the potential for daily trips to be satisfied by walking or bicycling is high. The physical connections, in the forms of sidewalks, well-lit pathways, and full pedestrian amenities and crossings on Stillman Boulevard will lend to the site's accelerated success within the West Tuscaloosa area. New businesses bring forth new employment opportunities for existing residents living within the community and students living in the West Tuscaloosa area.

6. Infill Development – Kelly Site – ±7.5-acres south of Culver

The property, a former automobile salvage yard, has the size and scale to deliver a mix of uses that can serve the context population and function in concert with the available land on the north side of Culver Road, just west of the only grocer in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory study area. The site, if properly designed, has the ability to create a gateway entry, as also envisioned in the 2009 Citywide Plan, into West Tuscaloosa and its neighborhoods from the south and Stillman College, with its active campus for residents, visitors, and guests entering the City from the west. This prior goal should remain a top priority.



The Consultant Team analyzed the site's carrying capacity and created a conceptual massing plan, focused on a mix of uses. The ±7.5-acres could be home to upwards of 45,000 square feet of development on the ground level. If a mixture of non-residential retail and service uses was proposed, a second and/or third story could accommodate residential dwellings in a complimentary manner. Establishing a mixture of uses often

equates to building an immediate customer base or residential user group. The built-in residents bring with them a need for restaurants and other services.

Given the almost adjacent connection to Stillman College, located approximately 1/8 of a mile (675' property edge to property edge) away, the potential to house new Tuscaloosa residents - ranging from students, staff, and faculty- is well within reason. Presenting a variety of owner-occupied “townhome” attached housing or multi-story studio-type units would likely succeed if linked to Stillman College’s planned future growth. In addition, the land between the site and Stillman College would have increased opportunity to provide restaurants, retail offerings, and service businesses.



The above bird’s eye view illustrates where compact infill development may be focused to immediately serve the West Tuscaloosa community and the City as a whole. The location is within walking distance to numerous neighborhoods and Stillman College.

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Site Size	Potential Scale/Uses	Utility Requirement	Ownership	Timeframe
± 7.5 ac	<i>Up to 45,000 sq. ft. (GLA), market based</i>	Water = 20k gpd if fully developed	Single owner for north property, southern site has two owners, both in private sector	Phase 1 20xx
	<i>Retail potential, consistent w/ demand</i>	Sewer = 20k gpd if fully developed		Phase 2 20xx
	<i>Service potential, consistent w/ demand</i>	Electric – available		Phase 3 20xx
	May contain a mixture of uses with residential above commercial, based on need	Telco/Internet = Fiber?		Phase 4 20xx
		Natural Gas - available		Phase 5 20xx

Portions of this area are owned by B&W Foods, Inc., which owns and operates the existing Piggly Wiggly grocer. B&W Foods also owns the shopping center and leases space to the inline tenants, including Family Dollar; Metro PCS, and a Beauty Store. Our interview with B&W Foods representatives provided key insight on lease rates, based on their fully occupied shopping center. The lease rates shared with the Consultant Team and City staff indicate that it is not financially practicable to build new tenant buildings without an extremely long Return on Investment (RoI) schedule (upwards of thirty (30) years). Lease structures also are very difficult and obtaining tenants under traditional triple net structures is not likely because the square footage rent costs are far below construction costs.

Infill Development – Clinton / 41st Avenue Site – ±4.5-acres north of Culver.

The Consultant Team identified a small-scale site that could also be a catalyst along the primary western entry into West Tuscaloosa. Located along Culver Road, immediately across from the former auto salvage yard, the site could easily work harmoniously with the neighboring property to form the Western Gateway into the residential context area, complimented by the Stillman College campus just 800' to the east.

Located on the northern side of Culver Road as it curves, the site's visibility is a focal point, or vista, when entering West Tuscaloosa from the southwest or when leaving the study area from the east. As a focal point, or vista, careful attention to design detail is important and can highly exemplify reinvestment and redevelopment efforts in West Tuscaloosa. Careful site planning and building form can effectively set a new standard for new development and redevelopment, as it organically occurs.

Architectural details that reflect Tuscaloosa's past, present, and future can enhance the quality of the built environment on both a visual and tactile level. Creating a walkable connection across Culver Road can make the site accessible to the residents of both the northern and southern neighborhoods. Ensuring that contiguous sidewalks exist from the site east to Stillman College will create the opportunity for both future residents and commerce to occur in a neighborhood-scaled urban environment.

Surrounding the site with sidewalks and unified street lights will further connect existing neighbors with new offerings located on the property. If restaurants or a mix of uses is established, the site's small scale can comfortably mesh with existing established neighborhoods to the West and North.

From a catalyst perspective, consistent pedestrian sidewalks and pedestrian-scale lighting should be constructed to emanate from the site westerly and northerly into the existing neighborhoods. Connecting the context neighborhoods' residents to the site will

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increase the likelihood of both economic success for the site and acceleration of the site’s return on investment.

In a similar manner, as previously discussed, bringing residents from the adjacent neighborhoods will create the effect of eyes on the street, and has the potential to make the area a less viable target for crimes of opportunity and illicit behavior. Creation of small-scale, neighborhood-serving, non-residential uses also creates an appropriately-scaled and noticeable economic lift for the surrounding area.

With the creation of gainful employment, both youth and adult jobs are created within walking distance of residential areas. This effect reduces reliance on the automobile as the sole means of travel. Additionally, because the employee is not required to rely on public or private transportation, he or she has more time to dedicate to other things of importance in his or her life, whether they are students or have completed their academic career and are employed full time.

Site Size	Potential Scale/Uses	Utility Requirement	Ownership	Timeframe
± 4.5 ac	<i>Up to 40,000 sq. ft. (GLA), market based</i>	Water = 10k gpd if fully developed	Single owner for north property, Clinton Family	Phase 1 20xx
	<i>Retail potential, consistent w/ demand</i>	Sewer = 10k gpd if fully developed		Phase 2 20xx
	<i>Service potential, consistent w/ demand</i>	Electric – available		
	Not ideal for large-scale mixture of uses. A single or small corner restaurant may be viable.	Telco/Internet = Fiber? Natural Gas - available		

7. Tuscaloosa Career & Technical Academy (TCTA) – Community Empowerment

The Tuscaloosa Career & Technical Academy Site (TCTA) site is located upon a Tuscaloosa City School Board property that is ±19-acres in size, with the TCTA occupying the eastern ±9.36 acres. TCTA provides a variety of career and technical training, readying individuals for careers and placement in the workforce. Tuscaloosa School Board staff proudly stated that everyone who graduates from their program receives employment, and, TCTA's graduates are trained in well-paying professions.



The Consultant Team received citizen input throughout the study about the athletic facilities located west of TCTA. The site's western area is not an integral component of TCTA's mission and programs and contains a full-size football field within a collegiate-sized quarter-mile (1/4) track. There is also a ±3,200 sq. ft. former fieldhouse building that houses restrooms and other equipment. Adjacent to the site, on the western boundary, is a cul-de-sac neighborhood with single-family detached homes where

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three (3) homes sharing a common property boundary, but no formal connection to the TCTA property. To the north is McKenzie Court, a modern multifamily community, with one of its internal streets forming a dead-end against the School Board's northern property line.

McKenzie Court has two (2) parking lots that are immediately adjacent to the School Board property, with no connections for motorized vehicles, pedestrians, or bicyclists. The ten-acre site's only connection to the public is a singular driveway accessing the property's southwestern corner, leading to twenty (20) parking spaces. The field has a few pole-mounted floodlights along the internal property line, which are focused to the west, toward the adjacent single-family neighborhood.

Several participants in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory, from both adjacent neighborhoods, have expressed their desire to use the track for exercise and general recreation. Individuals focused on improving their health, and that of their families, have requested creating a potential partnership with TCTA to achieve this goal.

Just as in other neighborhoods where eyes on the street will improve the social connection between neighbors and reduce crime through the presence of law-abiding citizens in public places, so too will the presence of individuals exercising on publicly owned property. A significant effort should be made to create an intergovernmental agreement between the City and School Board for the joint use of such facilities within West Tuscaloosa and the entire City proper.

While the track and its football field-sized internal sports area are key focal features upon the property, adequate land remains for the creation of other community features. In a discussion with Mike Daria, Ph.D., Superintendent for the Tuscaloosa City Schools, the idea of joint use agreement was broached. Discussions also were held on TCTA's academic and training programs. TCTA not only provides its students with accredited education and training, it assists in job and career placement.

An idea that warrants additional research and development is the creation of potential starter spaces or incubator space upon the School Board's southeastern boundary, which is shared with TCTA's main facilities. The idea was brought forward with the hopes of creating opportunities for activities such as career mentorship. For example, someone graduating from TCTA with certifications in engine repair, web design, or similar programs might be able to set up an incubator-scaled business with focus on growing into a larger company and expanding into the larger business community.

The establishment of a business incubator within the close proximity of TCTA and hundreds of adjacent single-family and multifamily homes would provide a unique advantage and accelerated likelihood of the start-up business succeeding and growing into a standalone company. In addition, the start-ups could offer needed technical services and goods to the surrounding neighborhoods. This supports the popular "buy local" movement that is quickly growing throughout the country.

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The birds eye view below shows the site's immediate proximity to McKenzie Court to the north, single-family neighborhoods to the west and south, and TCTA to the immediate east. The site's visibility can reinforce its ability to stem reported crime.



The benefits of exploring this proposed community connection are numerous:

- Health and Exercise, promoting a healthier West Tuscaloosa community;
- Community Connection, through shared social recreation spaces;
- Mentorship, encouraging neighboring adults to work with new graduates;
- Recruiting, providing a 'proving grounds' for graduates to demonstrate skills;
- Entrepreneur Opportunities, cultivating graduates' ability to start and own their first businesses;
- Starter space, providing low, or reduced cost offices, reducing marketplace entry hurdles and doing so within a collective of like-minded peers; and
- Multiplier Effect, bridging generations of West Tuscaloosa's diverse community to reinforce the connection between the many generations of residents within the West

Tuscaloosa Community Inventory study area and the City, as a whole.

This site has the potential to both create and strengthen linkages between the Community, the City of Tuscaloosa, and the School Board. Through both Public-sector partnerships and Public-Private Partnerships, the site has the potential to deliver tremendous community assets based not only on location, but what occurs in and around the property, through the diversity of residential populations surrounding the site.

The Consultant Team and City staff met with Tuscaloosa School Board facilities staff members to discuss the potential for both recreational and mentoring, or a civic catalyst site, occurring on the property. School Board staff were amenable to both ideas and pointed out a similar concept located in Alberta that may serve as a model for the site. The Gateway, which is Alberta's Innovation + Discovery Center, could be replicated upon the TCTA's western property. Inclusion of a facility similar to The Gateway, within the West Tuscaloosa Study area, could provide countless benefits for generations.

The ability to provide a mentoring space, where students could obtain access to WiFi for homework and research, receive tutoring from TCTA students in relevant academic and life pursuits, and create connections between generations of residents is very valuable. In addition, during the course of discussion with School Board staff, they stated that the area west of the fieldhouse and north of Stacy's Food Market is known for illegal drug sales and other crimes. Creating a positive community facility, central to numerous neighborhoods and schools, can have a positive effect on removing crime and violence.

ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

MLK Boulevard, from 29th Street to 15th Street – Corridor Enhancements

Study participants expressed their desire to see MLK Boulevard enhanced in an effort to become a central focal Boulevard. Beginning in the southern section, near the City limits, MLK Boulevard has the potential to become an experiential, multimodal corridor. The one-mile section, with only one signalized intersection at 25th Street and existing sidewalks the entire length, has a variety of land uses along its course. In many ways, the variety of land uses is essential to its strength for communicating Tuscaloosa's rich and vibrant history.

Tuscaloosa's history, direction, and future success all contribute to a community narrative that must be reflected in its neighborhoods, community centers, and throughout the City. The Community Inventory's participants each contribute to that story and helped define the course of the Study and these recommendations.

Beginning at either end, an informational or legacy trail that outlines Tuscaloosa's historic milestones, civic leaders, and community strengths could serve to build and reinforce the tremendous amount of civic pride exhibited through the course of the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory. Introduction of hardscape and softscape features such as landscaping and gathering areas, will create Points of Interest along the Boulevard, enhancing the entire community's experience.

The size and scale of enhancements, if properly coordinated, can produce the desired effect of creating a Legacy Trail, a traffic-calmed driving environment, and an attractive walking or bicycling experience. Lighting along the corridor is keenly important to the

Boulevard's ultimate success. The Boulevard must function 24-hours a day and seven days week as an enhanced element in Tuscaloosa's transportation network. The choice in lighting should be based on the immediate effect in creating a unified experience from end to end and to creating a "visual beacon" that will attract West Tuscaloosa's population from their neighborhoods that are along the Boulevard out of the public realm.

In many ways, MLK Boulevard serves not only as a central transportation spine providing connectivity to points north and south, it serves as an "community investment spine" linking thousands of citizens together. MLK can evolve into a more vibrant connected corridor, ultimately connecting to the soon to be enhanced MLK expansion project north of 15th Street. The corridor then provides an enhanced civic and cultural linkage to Tuscaloosa's amphitheater, Riverwalk, and other key community cultural, educational, and employment centers throughout the entire City of Tuscaloosa.

While the roadway is an arterial connection north-south through the core study area, it functions more as a collector. It serves to connect the neighborhoods on both the east and west side to 35th Street, the southern major collector providing access to I-359, which connects to I-20/59 on the South and crosses the Black Warrior River on the north. This connects West Tuscaloosa to Northport and then further on to the regional airport. On the north end, MLK serves as the collector to access 15th Street, which provides a direct connection to the historic downtown.

Pine Street – Elm Street Civic Space – ±7.5-acres south of Culver.

Located in the southeast core of the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory Study Area, and home to a small-scale playground, this area is the confluence of Chestnut Street, Cedar Street, Poplar Street, Elm Street, and Old Kaulton Road. The semi-circular convergence of the roadways serves as a natural backbone to a highly viable community recreation and gathering space.

As is often the case, communities with historic gridded neighborhoods have what urban planners deem “the bones of good design.” What is really meant, is the fundamental elements such as roads, sidewalks, or the built environment is already present in the form of bridges, buildings, or defined parks.

One key finding in the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory is the opportunity to strengthen the connecting “bones” of transportation infrastructure in the southeast portion of the West Tuscaloosa Community Inventory. This can yield a net positive result in less time than if starting with no infrastructure or greenfield development. Since the area already has basic recreation equipment for children and youth, the area’s ability to serve the larger population can be enhanced by adding a few key features that will broaden the area’s ability to serve residents from of all ages.

It was noted that very few of West Tuscaloosa’s public parks or civic spaces contain basic utilities such as electricity, drinking water, or restrooms. While the latter requires regularly scheduled maintenance and community policing, electricity and water provide residents with the ability to charge a phone, use temporary lights for a birthday or family

party, or have amplified music during a scheduled event. Inclusion of this basic utility should be considered in all public parks and civil spaces.

The City could be responsible for the provision of temporary electricity and water through permanent kiosks, on a scheduled and metered basis. Use of the public spaces could be coordinated through the Tuscaloosa County Park and Recreation Authority. Families, social organizations, and civic groups are the likely user groups.

Here again, the value of having positive social events, experiences, and interaction in public spaces will remove loitering, crime, and illicit activity from the community.

Another key element is connection to synonymous lighting, such as that proposed along MLK Boulevard.

Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code Recommendations

The Consultant Team reviewed the City of Tuscaloosa's area plans, 2009 Future Land Use Plan, and existing Land Development Code (Code of Ordinances) to determine if the future desired by the residents within the West Tuscaloosa Study Area could be achieved through the existing code structure. The Team's overall findings are based on comparison to other southeast communities that have similar demographics, physical environments, and comparable economic opportunities for its citizens. In addition, the Consultant Team reviewed the City's rezoning process and attended multiple Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) and City Council meetings to assess the procedures. Both the PZC and Council meetings are conducted in the utmost of professionalism and open public forums.

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In addition, the inclusion of the University of Alabama, Stillman College, and Shelton State Community College all ensure Tuscaloosa's continued strength and prosperity and must be key considerations as the City moves forward with Framework – its Comprehensive Plan update. Framework should reflect each entity's shared goals. Nationwide, college towns are examining the transition to university cities, noting the key interrelationship between economic diversity and long-term economic sustainability. As more and more academic institutions harness the economic incentives of research and development, many focus that opportunity into each community's industry groups and commerce sectors. Nationwide, communities and their academic institutions are evaluating their plans and codes in an effort to allow diverse uses, enhanced design standards, and a mixture of uses within sites.

These essential Town & Gown relationships are not merely focused on allowing new technologies, life sciences, or advanced manufacturing processes. Comprehensive Plans and Land Development Codes also seek to create cities where both the millennial population and our community's aging population can exist, proximate to all necessary commercial / retail offerings and service sectors that provide essential healthcare and administrative functions, such as accountants, lawyers, and other professional services citizens need on a regular basis.

Access to proximate commercial / retail offerings and service sectors does not support the creation of "strip centers" and spotty commercial development. The Community Inventory recommends concentrated areas of commerce, retail, and service sectors grouped together to promote the concentration of uses and shared infrastructure opportunities. This approach also creates a more efficient development pattern from a

transportation perspective and creates a more compact development pattern. This approach also creates logical spacing between businesses, rather than repeated discount stores, beverage stores, and forms that are not seen as community assets.

The City's 2009 Future Land Use Plan contains major themes that speak to traditional planning elements such as: green infrastructure; gateways, neighborhoods, transportation and accessibility options, reinvestment, and supporting future activity centers. All of these themes remain valid and reflect the desires of Tuscaloosa's current population. However, a key question to answer is how much has been accomplished under the current plan and code versus what needs to happen to ensure positive directions are realized in housing options, transportation accessibility, economic development, community resilience, and crime reduction.

Fortunately for the City, Tuscaloosa's physical geography and urban grid with the Black Warrior River as a key central feature, developing a compact urban form should not be a challenge. Maintaining the City's compact nature, focused around the University of Alabama, Stillman College, and Shelton State Community College should be a key goal of Framework, which should translate directly into meaningful objectives and policies that have quantifiable standards in the Land Development Code.

By example, the City's current residential development standards are somewhat limited and prescribe individual lot and building setbacks more commonly seen in suburban development patterns. One recommendation that should be considered is a reduction of front and side setbacks, which will promote homes being placed closer to the street.

This recommendation has a two-fold effect in the core City areas; not only does it encourage greater visibility of the public realm, it de-emphasizes automobile domination of front yards in favor of rear alleys or side-loaded garages. These enhancements to the public realm also serve to increase eyes on the street, which reduces crime. The basis of this theory was reflected in the 2009 Future Land Use Plan, worded as follows:

“Public, off-street parking structures should be added to the core, while residential areas should be regulated to prevent front yard parking” (p.14 of the 2009 plan).

Allowing a vibrant mix of uses that promote urban activity beyond the traditional 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. window when most businesses operate, is key to capturing and retaining the most diverse population possible. All segments of a city’s population can benefit from more diverse urban offerings across a wider timeframe. Framework needs to broadly reflect Tuscaloosa’s comprehensive vision to maintain its historic legacy while adapting through redevelopment and reinvestment along major transportation corridors and in the traditional gridded City network. In addition, the City should, during the course of Framework, examine and determine if less desirable uses should be required to obtain Special Use Permits and/or Special Exceptions. During the course of the Community Inventory, while some were proposed for sites within the Study Area, the Community, PZC, and Council denied the uses in favor of more community supportive uses and businesses.

Throughout Tuscaloosa’s existing plan and code, emphasis is placed on creating a vibrant walkable community; those goals remain at the forefront of the minds of this Study’s participants. Tuscaloosa’s future is rooted in the values that established it as a

great City. Continued concentration and focus on the City's form as an all-inclusive place that is easily accessible to all persons remains a key to success on all levels.

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APPENDIX A - COMMUNITY INVENTORY MAPS

1. Aerial
2. Current Land Use
3. Zoning Atlas
4. Environmental
5. Transportation (Infrastructure)
6. Transportation (Transit Routes)

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APPENDIX B - KEY FOCUS AREA MAPS – CATALYST SITES

1. Neighborhood Unit – Stabilization and Community Connection
 2. MLK Boulevard – Stillman – 15th Street Gateway
 3. Stillman College – Context Neighborhood Connectivity
 4. Riverfront Development – Former Golf Course
5. Broadus – Stewart Site – ±21-acres northwest of Stillman College
6. Infill Development – Kelly Site – ±7.5-acres south of Culver
7. Tuscaloosa Career & Technical Academy (TCTA) – Community Empowerment

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APPENDIX C - CRIME MAPS

1. Property and Violent Crime (Reported 2011)
2. Property and Violent Crime (Reported 2012)
3. Property and Violent Crime (Reported 2013)
4. Property and Violent Crime (Reported 2014)
5. Property and Violent Crime (Reported 2015)
6. Property and Violent Crime (Reported 2016)
7. Property and Violent Crime (Reported 2017)
8. Property and Violent Crime (Reported 2011 through 2017)

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APPENDIX D - SUBDIVISION MAPS

1. Residential Subdivisions – North Area Central
2. Residential Subdivisions – Central Core Area (N)
3. Residential Subdivisions – Central Core Area (SE)

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