CITY OF AUBURN
LAND USE PLAN

Adopted by the
AUBURN PLANNING COMMISSION
September 2, 2004

Adopted by the
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUBURN, ALABAMA
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CITY OF AUBURN, ALABAMA

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Rebecca O. Richardson, Director of Parks and Recreation
James C. Buston, III, Director of Information Technology

CONSULTANT
KPS Group, Inc.
Birmingham, Alabama
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PREFACE

The choice Auburn faces is not one of growth vs. no growth. The city has made itself an oasis that continues to attract more and more people and private investment every year. Unless the public investment that has created such an attraction could somehow be reversed, growth will continue. The choice is how development should be channeled in a manner that is compatible with the vision and goals Auburn has set for itself.

The concept that has grown into this Land Use Plan arose from discussions among members of Auburn’s City Council, Planning Commission, staff and others in the community during the summer and autumn of 2001. There was local concern about the physical changes to Auburn that had come along with population growth. The new patterns of development differed from those that had built the Loveliest Village of the Plains. While this condition and concern may be common to many communities, many Auburn citizens felt the balance was tipping in the wrong direction.

Auburn, like many cities, has continually planned as a means to prepare for and guide its growth and development. However, its most recent Land Use Plan had been prepared in the early 1980’s. That process had led to adoption of a new type of growth management system—organized around a blend of conventional and performance zoning. Focus on this new growth management tool shifted primary attention to regulation of current development and away from long-range Land Use Planning. During the next several years, local development patterns trended toward those common to most other growing cities: expansion of housing across the landscape, a spreading of isolated commercial development along arterials toward the edges of the city and a decided lack of reinvestment in some areas sorely in need of revitalization.

As is noted in the introduction to the city’s strategic plan, Auburn 2020,

*Imagining the future is easy. Imagining the future in a way that one’s vision has a basis in reality is more difficult. Finding ways in which that vision can be translated into reality is even harder. And finding a common vision and ways to achieve it in a city in which citizens have many varied, and often conflicting, ideas is even more difficult.*

Auburn’s comprehensive planning process provides a systematic approach to thinking about the future, setting long-range goals, and devising policies, programs, and projects to move the city toward the fulfillment of those goals.
I. INTRODUCTION

In 1980, the new mayor of Auburn initiated the Auburn 2000 Project. She enlisted City Council members, a new City Manager appointed in 1982 and concerned citizens in an effort to set directions for the city for the remaining years of the 20th Century. The outcome of those efforts, the Auburn 2000 Plan, helped the City grow and prosper and to forge a strong link between the quiet village of the past and the burgeoning community of the present.

In more recent years the city’s leaders established a strategic planning process that in 1995 led to City Council adoption of new Vision and Mission Statements (see Appendix).

The Auburn Comprehensive Plan consists of several essential elements, as outlined in the table below. Each of the elements supports the presence and content of the others. Each has been prepared or amended recently, in response to or affected by the results of the annual citizen survey and, in the case of the City of Villages Concept and the Land Use Plan, the Community Planning Workshop.

| • Auburn 2020 Strategic Plan [1998]            | • Major Thoroughfare Plan [2002] |
| • Growth Boundary Study [2000]                | • Bicycle Plan [1998]             |
| • Community Planning Workshop [2003]          | • Sewer Master Plan [2003]        |
| • City of Villages Concept [2003]             | • Water System Plan [2003]        |
| • Land Use Plan [2004]                        | • Green Space and Greenways Plan [2003] |

Thus, the Auburn Comprehensive Plan may be likened to a quilt—many pieces consistent with one another and fitting together in mutual support. For this reason, we mention the city’s recent history with planning, whose foundations are the Auburn 2020 strategic plan, which incorporates the city’s mission and vision statements. Contributions from these plans and supporting documents are excerpted from time to time in this document as demonstration of their mutual interdependence as parts of the whole.

All these documents are intended and believed to be consistent with one another as parts of a continuing rationality support by consensus of the community, whose pulse on these matters is taken on an annual basis. The most recent of the annual citizen surveys was made in 2003, while this plan was in preparation.

AUBURN 2020

City officials and citizens joined forces in 1998 in Auburn 2020: Imagining a Better Community, a visioning and strategic planning process to establish a clear and shared view of the kind of place in which the members of the community
want to live. In accord with the charge to the several committees, those producing recommendations most relevant to the Land Use Planning process were those dealing with Growth and Development and Transportation.

The Growth and Development Committee envisioned Auburn in the year 2020 as a community in which planned growth and diversified economic development provide an attractive, efficient, and productive environment and a high quality of life. The Transportation Committee envisioned that by the year 2020 Auburn will be a city in which people and goods will move easily about the urban area using bicycles, buses, both gasoline and electrically powered cars, and their feet; and where such movements will occur on streets, bikeways, and pedestrian pathways that are attractive as well as functional.

The following Auburn 2020 committee recommendations provided the most direction to the Land Use Planning process:

- **Encourage the further construction of a diverse housing stock in neighborhoods that are provided with corresponding amenities.**
- **Identify properties for large-scale recreational amenities for the current and future populations.**
- **Carefully consider the overall environmental quality and the environmental impacts of growth.**
- **Enforce development codes to ensure high quality development that is environmentally sound and aesthetically pleasing.**
- **Maintain a strong emphasis upon comprehensive planning as a framework for quality development.**
- **Develop downtown as an area that recognizes and facilitates interaction between students and other local citizens.**
- **Attract new, clean industries to complement the existing base, and encourage existing industries to grow and diversify.**
- **Acquire the land necessary to accommodate future industrial growth.**
- **Recognizing the past growth of Auburn and the growth potential of the South College Street corridor in particular, place great emphasis on development along this artery.**
- **Establish the downtown area primarily as a pedestrian-scale dining, recreation, and specialty shopping and entertainment district.**
- **Protect and improve the visual quality of the principal transportation corridors within and the gateways into the city.**
- **Plan for the retention and enhancement, and the creation of additional, public open space within the anticipated 2020 city limits.**
- **Emphasize transportation modes other than the private automobile so that demands for streets and parking facilities can be reduced. Nevertheless, those who use automotive transportation should have streets that take them where they need to travel and a place to park when they arrive.**
Integrate the system of highways, streets, bikeways and walkways with the development pattern to help promote a sense of connection and community.

Strive to reduce congestion and the possibility of accidents through street planning and design, accounting for the needs of private automobiles, public transport, bicycles and pedestrian traffic in transportation planning.

Promote foot traffic and bicycle use by providing appropriate facilities, both combined and separate.

Design and construct transportation facilities so that urban trees and vegetation are an integral part of the system.

CITY OF VILLAGES CONCEPT

The early results of the 2000 Census revealed that considerable growth had occurred at the city margins and well into the surrounding unincorporated area. Auburn’s population had grown by almost 8,400 people to a total of almost 43,000 during the 1990’s—a change of over 24%. During that time, population growth in Lee County had been almost phenomenal—an increase of almost 28,000 people, or just over 32%. Auburn’s planned investment in the quality of life added considerably to the county’s attraction as well, for even though 93% of all municipal population growth of Lee County went to Auburn during the 1990’s, the city attracted only 30% of total county population growth. In response, it was felt that Auburn should be mindful that it has multiple options. For example:

Auburn could continue more or less in its recent growth mode, adding to its developed area over time, piece by piece, as property owners and developers react or speculate. It would continue to grow by accretion, mostly along and then infilling between the state routes and county roads that focus traffic mostly upon downtown Auburn from all directions. Supporting this pattern would be the several rural water systems supporting development in the unincorporated area, and a consequence would be even more septic tanks in such environmentally sensitive areas as the Lake Ogletree watershed. Even with the best of regulations to help shape market forces, this approach would soon result in suffocation of Auburn—the inevitable result of an ever-growing area focusing virtually all its traffic and most of its daily demands upon downtown and the city’s burgeoning highway commercial strips.

Auburn could compete head-to-head with the other areas of the county that provide a semi-rural lifestyle. In doing so, it would develop its own version of such places, in an orderly fashion, in accord with plans for expansion of the city’s major thoroughfares, water and sewer systems. The city would plan for and promote development of what likely would be mostly large-lot residential subdivisions, with significant open spaces preserved, and with so-called neighborhood shopping centers located at crossroads here and there. Unfortunately, such an approach would produce a planned version of what is commonly called “sprawl” development, in which most people would continue to clog undersized rural roads and focus virtually all their daily demands upon downtown and rapidly expanding highway commercial areas.

Auburn could grow and develop in accord with an alternative approach. This could consist of a true neighborhood approach to residential development. These
neighborhoods would be planned and designed as parts of several peripheral villages. The city’s residents and others would be supported and served by a hierarchy of activity centers, or nodes of development, located throughout the city to meet different local and regional needs. Each could be developed to respond to Auburn’s unique environmental conditions and to the market. In addition to the city’s primary center in downtown, there could be located, both within the currently developed area and in the presently undeveloped surroundings, other types of centers— mixed-use village and neighborhood centers, highway-oriented centers, industrial parks and the connecting linkages between them. Planned, designed and developed in accord with an overall concept, such an alternative approach could produce a City of Villages.

Considering this last alternative led to the question, “What if Auburn were to plan, design, build and shape itself into a City of Villages?” To find out, Auburn evaluated its environmental and infrastructure resources and considered its potential to shape itself over time into such a development pattern. As it worked on the concept of a City of Villages, the city and its consultants drew upon solid land use and development planning and design principles that many communities across the nation call “Smart Growth” principles. What they mean by growing smart is to:

- Insert places into the present pattern of sprawl
- Develop traditional villages and neighborhoods
- Create more walkable connections for everyone
- Retrofit and integrate existing centers into neighborhoods
- Add parks, trails and greenways to the community at large
- Redevelop existing commercial areas and office parks into networked mixed-use centers with shopping, dining, entertainment and housing choices

As a university community, and having taken special care to consider all that implementation of its City of Villages concept might offer, Auburn decided to call its approach “Intelligent Growth,” and the Planning Commission and City Council endorsed the City of Villages Concept in early 2003.

COMMUNITY PLANNING WORKSHOP

Following publication of the City of Villages Concept on the city’s Internet site and a blitz of media attention, the city called citizens to participate in a Community Planning Workshop. On Saturday, February 15, 2003 the public joined elected and appointed officials and city staff at the Auburn Conference Center.

The approximately 200 participants were asked to share their thoughts about Auburn and its surroundings—its assets and liabilities and those things that should not be changed. Answers were recorded in the form of words and maps, and the questions continued. The topics ranged from participant visions of Auburn’s future and the various ideas the participants might have about the development patterns that would be consistent with those visions. And people shared their insights as to various opportunities for building those development
patterns within and around the city over time. The questions and participant responses are included in the Appendix.

The participants were asked to evaluate the preliminary *City of Villages* concept against the visions and opportunities they had just expressed. They also reviewed preliminary development policies and ideas about how those policies might be interpreted, as well as implications each might have for shaping development citywide in ways compatible with visions the participants had discussed earlier.

At each step in this process there were more questions for the participants, such as:

- Should any of the proposed village, neighborhood or other activity centers be tied to specific locations?
• Should any of the centers be moved significantly—or should perhaps others be added?
• If they were relocated or added to, what purposes might they serve and where?
• How should the boundaries of activity centers be determined?
• Should any of the proposed principles that would be used to guide development (or redevelopment) of any of the centers be changed, added to or clarified?
• If so, in what ways and why?
• How should the city’s various activity centers relate to adjacent residential areas?
• How might people best move about within and between the various centers?

The Community Planning Workshop led to consensus around a slightly revised City of Villages concept for Auburn, complete with a large number of suggestions for its improvement (see the Appendix for summary results of the planning workshop, including specific responses). This intensive half-day session with Auburn citizens and public officials provided considerable guidance to consultants, city officials and staff as they prepared this Land Use Plan.

2003 AUBURN CITIZEN SURVEY

The City of Auburn has for many years conducted an annual citizen survey to seek responses to current issues. As part of the 2003 survey, several questions were included dealing with attitudes toward growth and development. Of those surveyed:
• 81% believe Auburn should have a system of connected trails and open spaces designated throughout the city
• 80% choose to live in Auburn primarily because they like its quality of life
• 75% believe it is very important for development to protect natural resources
• 73% believe it is very important for development to be compatible with existing use
• 72% believe appearance is very important in locating new development
• 71% believe it is very important for adequate public facilities and services to be available prior to development
• 67% believe that growth has had a positive effect on Auburn
• 60% identify more strongly with the city as a whole rather than their own neighborhood
• A slight majority felt the city should encourage creative site planning in subdivision so that houses are closer together and a larger area of open space is preserved

This was considered a significant mandate for Land Use Planning and provided useful counsel to the Planning Commission, city staff and consultants as they prepared the Land Use Plan.
II. ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

To many people, the Land Use Plan is the most important element of the city’s Comprehensive Plan. Every other component, from community facilities to transportation, is based on how it relates to land use. Therefore, the functional organization of the city, with future land use types and their distribution, has been carefully considered. The major land use recommendations in key locations throughout Auburn are the result of analysis of environmental, physical and economic conditions, combined with the vision for Auburn and the principles for citywide development portrayed in the City of Villages concept. The Land Use Plan illustrates and provides an overall strategy for how Auburn intends to reshape itself over time. The intent is to build on Auburn’s successes, on its history and on the spirit of what has been known over the years as the Loveliest Village on the Plains. Essentially, these also are the principles of good planning. Every one of them has been applied liberally in the process of preparing the Auburn Land Use Plan.

- Mix land uses
- Create walkable communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
- Create opportunities for citizens to recreate close to where they live
- Preserve open space, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Foster a distinctive, attractive community with a strong sense of place
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

The Planning Commission has prepared the Land Use Plan as a guide for city officials when making decisions regarding land use, development, zoning and capital improvements. During the planning process, the commission identified and examined a wide range of physical issues, which they translated into policies and a systematic approach as to how to achieve them. As a result, the plan is long-range, general and focused on physical development.

The Planning Commission has also prepared the Land Use Plan to help Auburn’s residents, property owners, business owners, builders and developers invest in their city with a reasonable expectation of what will happen in the future. At the same time, it should be noted that no plan of this type can be expected to specify every action, reform or new law or expenditure that may be desired or required. Rather, Auburn has aimed instead to provide a set of policies that may be used to inform and guide decisions that will help to bring about the desired future state of the city. In that way residents today may be assured that the plan will remain a
living document whose relevance will continue even as circumstances surely change.

In summary, the Auburn Land Use Plan:

- **Illustrates how the city should develop over time.**
- **Provides a guide to land use decisions and a legal basis for making and revising zoning and other regulations for the type, intensity and timing of development.**
- **Addresses the desires and needs of the residents, businesses and property owners to preserve and enhance the community.**
- **Strives to protect the property values of all citizens.**
- **Ensures that as development occurs, the most significant natural features are preserved or enhanced.**
- **Provides a pattern for land use that will provide a sustainable community with a diversified tax base to support desired facilities and services.**
- **Coordinates land use recommendations with those for infrastructure improvements.**

In response, the City Council, Planning Commission and the public should continually refer to this document in order to:

- **Visualize what can be reasonably expected to occur in Auburn—to provide some assurance and security regarding development investment decisions.**
- **Review and evaluate development proposals—to test the fit with Auburn visions and expectations.**
- **Review rezoning requests—as an essential part of determining appropriateness.**
- **Provide guidance regarding adoption of development regulations and amendments.**
- **Identify and advise regarding priorities for infrastructure investments—roads, greenways, parks, water and sewer systems, schools and other public facilities.**

**MAJOR THEMES**

The Future Land Use Map illustrates more than simply different “uses” of land. Certainly it projects an arrangement of land uses, in recognition of the ways in which land is used in 2004 and the essential character of the city’s green infrastructure. However, and more importantly, the map presents the essential functions of the city—its activity centers—where they are now and where they should located. The plan evaluates their present condition and proposed how they should be planned and designed in relation to the city’s neighborhoods—where people live and come together away from work and commerce to form community with one another.

The Auburn Land Use Plan proposes the city grow through two basic means: 1) concentration and reinvestment in the existing downtown, commercial centers and corridors, and neighborhoods, and 2) concentration of development outside those existing areas into villages and neighborhoods—nodes of mixed development that provide a very modest “galaxy” of commercial and community activity surrounding the city—in harmony with the city’s essential natural resources.
The plan is based on the community’s own evaluation of its assets and opportunities and is organized to recognize and capture those for the good of the community at large. The plan has five major themes:

I. Protect Auburn’s Green Infrastructure
Auburn will protect, preserve and enhance fragile ecosystems within developed portions of the city. It will strive to use its natural and open lands for parks and for passive and active recreation.

II. Build a City of Villages
Auburn will grow by replicating the best characteristics of the *Loveliest Village of the Plains* in selected locations around the city. Generally, this means that Auburn will:

- Support, maintain and enhance Downtown Auburn as the heart of the city for all its residents.
- Focus people and commerce toward mixed-use village and neighborhood centers at strategic locations.
- Focus regional commerce into concentrated, highly accessible activity centers apart from downtown and from its village and neighborhood centers.
- Focus industry and commercial support services into major industrial parks located in the southwest part of the city, adjacent to interstate highway interchanges.

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

III. Maintain and Enhance Community Character
Auburn will conserve its special qualities, including its green infrastructure, historic buildings, pedestrian scale, university, high-quality architecture, and beautiful streets and parks. Maintaining and enhancing the physical qualities of the city is an overarching consideration, incorporated in all parts of the plan.

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

V. Protect and Reinvest in Neighborhoods and Commercial Corridors
Auburn will reinvest in traditional neighborhoods and primary commercial arterial corridors that are not up to the standards of the community.
USING AND REFINING THE PLAN

The Land Use Plan is a combination of vision, maps, development policies, planning and design guidelines and examples. It is a framework for guiding public and private decisions that will affect the growth, development and redevelopment of Auburn. The plan is based on the community's vision for its own future—a long-term vision that may not be achievable in the lifetime of those participating in drafting the plan, or even of the next generation. The plan focuses on the physical form of the city, and applies to development of public and private properties within Auburn’s planning area.

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

The Land Use Plan is intended to be a living document that will evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and to market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment with public input can the plan fully serve Auburn, and only then can Auburn use it wisely as a creative tool as it seeks achievement of its comprehensive vision for the community.
III. CITYWIDE DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS

Auburn has determined that residential growth should be directed toward true neighborhoods that will be planned and designed as integral parts of several peripheral villages. Further, the city’s neighborhoods should be supported and served by a hierarchy of activity centers, or nodes of development, located throughout the city to meet a variety of local and regional needs. Each of these neighborhoods and activity centers could be developed to respond to Auburn’s unique environmental conditions and to the market. Planned, designed and developed in accord with an overall concept, such an alternative approach could produce a City of Villages.

The activity centers specified in this plan are magnets for activity and development that affect urban form, environmental quality and the transportation network in a positive way. The neighborhoods that surround and support the activity centers provide a balance of growth and consumption of land. Activity centers will concentrate a diversity of community activities at appropriate locations. Both neighborhoods and activity centers are proposed to be structured by the city’s green infrastructure of critical environmental resources. Development planned, sited and designed to be compatible with this infrastructure is intended to provide for creativity, efficiency, stability, image, diversity and control of development. Population concentrations that are strategically focused upon activity centers interspersed with green corridors and interconnected by transportation require less automobile travel, provide better transit opportunities, and decrease adverse environmental effects.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Auburn area enjoys natural resources that are critical to well-being, whether the particular resource affects the economy, overall quality of life or the health and safety of residents. These resources vary from place to place around the community, but they have one thing in common: once they are surrounded, diminished or depleted, the Auburn community will suffer.

Natural resources have limits, and development decisions affect far more than the property owner. The type and intensity of development ultimately affect the surroundings. Some land uses are inherently incompatible with others, and once development decisions are made, many are practically irreversible. Depending upon the approach to development, the land itself can present varying ranges of opportunities and hazards. For example, steep slopes may provide good views, but they may also be difficult to build on and, in combination with erodible soils, can be hazardous. Once floodplains are built upon, little can be done to eliminate the flooding without flooding another area. Once cut, forests may take generations to grow, but prime agricultural soils paved over are taken out of production forever. Extinct species cannot be replaced.

For these reasons, Auburn planners, public officials and citizens take seriously the quality of the natural environment. They have reviewed carefully the mutual
impacts of development and natural resources—for purposes of protection, production, health and safety, and parks and recreation. They have also considered how these natural resources opportunities together form a green infrastructure of open space and natural resource areas they can use to provide a framework or structuring system within which to organize, locate and interconnect urban development.

From the start, the idea of a green infrastructure has been built into the Land Use Planning process. Though it may be a new term for many, Auburn has for years concerned itself with the quality of the environment and the ways in which natural resources concerns may be accounted for in the land development process. This gave rise, in the early 1980s, to inclusion of some of the most detailed natural resource and environmental regulations of any municipality in Alabama. Concern for natural resources and environmental quality was a part of the charge to the Growth and Development committee of the Auburn 2020 planning process. One of the committee’s critical issues was “How can we conserve and enhance the valuable aspects of the current built and natural environment while at the same time accommodating future growth?” And one of the committee’s central findings was that, “Our high quality of life and environment should be nurtured through well-planned growth.”

In response, Auburn’s City of Villages Concept was built upon the idea that a green infrastructure is critical to the quality of life for the community as a part of planning for community conservation and development. The first step was to identify resources, sites and areas that may be critical to the community. These included environmental conditions associated with water, soils, slopes and public and semi-public parks and open space. The graphic below shows how the four major environmental patterns have been combined to produce a map of the city’s green infrastructure. From top to bottom, the maps on the left depict water resources, floodways and floodplains, steep slopes, and parks and protected resources.
City policy toward these natural resources has been codified in the Auburn Zoning Ordinance, which specifies appropriate uses and restrictions of use regarding each of the resources that make up this pattern. Continued application of the ordinance will conserve essential natural resources or sites for long-term use—or perhaps reserved for specific uses—for example, protecting certain areas or resources from inappropriate activities, or protecting people from hazards to health and safety.

The green infrastructure is not simply the land and water areas left over when all the development and building is done. Auburn’s open spaces—including what may appear to be its "undeveloped" lands—include many resources that are important to the community’s character and well-being. Many of these so-called “undeveloped” spaces might contain resources and open spaces that may be set aside for reasons of health and safety, managed production of farm and forest, parks and recreation, and protection or preservation. As noted above, these together provide a framework or structure for urban development all through the community.

**Watersheds and Surface Water**

One of the city’s most interesting patterns is that of water resources. The map shows how “wet” the city is, with its variety and sheer density of lakes, ponds and streams, but also displays another aspect of the city that few of its residents realize.

Rain falling near the city’s historic core, depending on the precise location, may run downstream to the north (and then west), southeast, or southwest. The reason is that the center of the city is one of the highest elevations along the railroad, which was aligned along a southeast/northeast trending ridge, and in that way would avoid as many stream crossings as possible due to their expense.
Floodways and Floodplains

Sitting astride a relative high point along a gentle ridge, the core of the city has few floodplains and fewer floodways. Both increase with distance from the city core. Floodplains are the areas adjacent to a stream that are intermittently flooded (those shown here are so-called “100-year floodplains” or those with a 1% chance of flooding in any given year). Encroachment on floodplains reduces the flood-carrying capacity, increases the flood heights of streams and increases flood hazards. The floodway is the stream channel and adjacent portions of the floodplain that must be kept free from encroachment to allow the 100-year flood to be carried without substantial increases in flood heights.

Slopes

Intimately related to the patterns of water resources and of floodplains and floodways is the pattern of slopes. The broad, southwest/northeast trending ridge upon which the railroad is located is clearly evident from the lack of the green slope overprint (in this case slopes of 10% and greater are shown). Similarly, the further north and south of that ridge, the more numerous are the areas of steep slope.

Steep slopes, per se, do not preclude development.
However, the impact of slope upon the safety and cost of development increases with steepness, and raise “red flags” to property owners and the city alike as they consider proposals for development.

Parks and Protected Areas

Auburn has an abundance of parks, recreation areas and other protected areas, including golf courses, existing and proposed, all indicated as a green overprint on the accompanying map. Many of these incorporate or are adjacent to some of Auburn’s most important water resources. Others include significant areas of steep slopes. All the lands shown here are protected through public ownership or conservation easements.

Green Infrastructure—A Citywide Open Space System

Auburn’s high quality of life continues to draw visitors and new residents to all areas of the city. A compelling factor in this fact of local life is the city’s range of opportunities for recreation and interaction within its many community parks and open spaces. Auburn has adopted a Green Space and Greenways Master Plan to guide acquisition and appropriate use and development of the city’s green infrastructure. Through plan implementation the city will continue to provide high quality parks and open spaces for residents and visitors. Goals for this open space system include providing or requiring usable open space within walking distance of the majority of the city’s population; providing recreational greenways and green spaces; and serving large scale recreational needs in appropriate locations. The following is an overview of the major types of public open space that are and will be a part of Auburn’s green infrastructure.

Greenways can provide opportunities for alternate forms of transportation, act as wildlife corridors, development buffers, and storm water recharge areas and are links in the chain of the city’s public park system. They should eventually include all significant streams and appropriate portions of their floodplains, in accord with the adopted Green Space and Greenway Master Plan, throughout the city’s planning jurisdiction. The use of greenways for multi-purpose trails should avoid
redundancy with sidewalks and bikeways, but should strive to interconnect public parks and open space areas.

*Regional Parks* preserve the natural character of the city while providing both active and passive recreation opportunities including hiking, camping, canoeing, etc. They are important for the protection of historical sites, significant land features, watersheds and wildlife and as outdoor recreation centers. Two of these parks are indicated on the Future Land Use Map: Chewacla Park in the south, and a proposed new regional park in the northwest portion of the city.

*Community Parks* variously serve a range of both passive and active recreation needs appropriate to their location and context, they may provide a mixture of activities and uses such as active sports fields; play areas, trails, informal practice fields, picnic areas, outdoor classrooms and gathering places such as a community center. They should be carefully integrated into the natural environment, with at least one-fourth of the land area held in a natural, tree-covered state. Park facilities and buildings should foster a positive community image, and sense of pride and should be evident in the use of local materials and respect for the local context.

*Neighborhood Parks* serve a relatively small residential area. They should provide opportunities for appropriate levels and types of both active and passive recreation. Neighborhood parks should provide a place for informal community gatherings and neighborhood events, and should include such features as shaded paths, playground structures and open space for active play.

*Squares* may occupy an entire block or share a block with significant public buildings in a Village Center, The square should provide a “stage” for formal civic functions, even as it is flexible by design to provide small gathering spaces that may be easily combined to accommodate public gatherings. Amenities may include lawns, formal design and fountains, large shade trees, broad sidewalks, benches and gazebos.

*Plazas* are the most formal of public spaces. They are typically designed to accommodate civic functions and thus consist mostly of paved surfaces. A plaza typically is bounded by buildings on all sides and provides such formal amenities as sculpture, fountains and permanent site furnishings. Plazas often serve to extend adjacent building square footage, thereby blurring the line between indoor and outdoor spaces.

*Pocket parks* provide green infill between buildings as well as structured open space in neighborhoods. They are an important part of the public realm and offer a respite to pedestrians in both paved and glassed urban environments and private front and back yards of the neighborhood.
Citywide Green Infrastructure Policies

Conserve green infrastructure and landscape form

The natural woodland and rural landscape surrounding Auburn is one of the city’s greatest assets. Located at the juncture of the Coastal Plain and the Piedmont Plateau, the city hosts rather diverse landscape features. These include wooded hillside, pastures, rural roads, farmsteads and fencerows. The surrounding landscape could be considered a portrait — a memorable image that helps attract development to villages on its periphery. Development should be planned and arranged within the landscape, allowing for scenic views. Buildings should be limited in size to nestle comfortably within tree canopies so that rooftops will not be visible once the trees mature. Streambeds, wooded stream-banks, and flood plains are linear elements within the landscape that should be conserved.

Organize development around open spaces and civic uses

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

AUBURN ACTIVITY CENTERS

Auburn’s activity centers are essential to the city’s livability, cohesiveness, growth, service and mobility. They are places where goods and services are concentrated. Over time a network of streets and walks will allow for alternate means of accessing those goods and services, often in shorter trips. Healthy, vibrant activity centers are not a product of chance, but rather of thoughtful, integrated community planning and good urban design. Good centers feature vitality, and a sense of civic pride, usually with significant architecture, urban form (the way buildings are arranged to frame public space) and activities that draw a diverse crowd. Their development and improvement will result from thoughtful planning and civic-minded urban design.

In contrast, much of Auburn’s recent commercial development has been of a low-density variety, characterized by buildings with deep setbacks and oversize parking lots served by a network of arterial streets designed primarily to move vehicular traffic but that also allow direct access to most properties. Commercial, office and retail land uses typically have not been concentrated or clustered in either integrated or well-differentiated activity centers over the past few decades: rather, they tend to be dispersed out along many of the city’s arterial streets. These land uses are typically lacking in safe pedestrian accessibility—they are highly auto oriented, and feature substantial, if not excessive, amounts of surface parking—located usually between the street and the front of the building. While slightly more agglomerated commercial nodes occur at some arterial street
intersections, they seldom function as integrated activity centers featuring easy walking connections among uses. Instead, they work more like several “subcenters”, one on each developed corner, separated by multiple lanes of traffic.

Activity Center Types and Characteristics

The value of Downtown Auburn and its adjacent neighborhoods as the heart of the community is unquestioned locally. That value was clearly evident from Community Planning Workshop participants, and is reflected in the results of the Auburn 2020 planning process and every other local planning effort undertaken over the course of at least the past four decades. Built during the past century and a half as the center of a traditional small town, the downtown area provides for Auburn a model of enduring urban and community design. Sort of an expanded village done well, it remains open, public, and accessible to pedestrians and vehicles alike, highly popular and emulated.

Analysis and evaluation of the community design characteristics, functions and land uses that helped make Downtown Auburn (and all truly successful traditional small town downtowns and their surrounding neighborhoods) successful revealed several in each category. Those characteristics are listed, along with desirable land uses, for each of the activity center types, across the top of the following table. Each of the characteristics is defined in the Appendix. The land uses are general, but defined as in the Appendix and the Auburn Zoning Ordinance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTER OR CORRIDOR TYPE</th>
<th>TYPICAL EXAMPLE</th>
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<td>City Center</td>
<td>Downtown</td>
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<td>Neighborhood Center</td>
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<td>Community Commercial Center</td>
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<td>Commercial Commercial Corridor</td>
<td>South College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Gateway Center</td>
<td>South College @ I-85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial Support Center</td>
<td>Technology Park</td>
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City Center: Downtown. Auburn’s downtown area served as the parent for all the city’s other commercial activity centers. The mix of uses and prominence of Samford Park make Downtown Auburn unique and exciting. The major focus is the concentration of commercial, residential, university and other employment activities. Downtown also serves as an important community gathering space, for celebration and special community events, even though it is underdeveloped and underutilized and suffers from a lack of parking. Downtown is pedestrian oriented and include a range of housing densities and other uses in support of downtown commerce that accommodates the needs of the community and students.

The downtown area consists of a core and adjacent neighborhoods. This is a vibrant place with retail shops and restaurants supported by relatively dense residential development. The center of civic activity is in the downtown area Pedestrian oriented civic, institutional, commercial and office uses are mixed together in the core along College Street and Magnolia Avenue. Auburn University accounts for the southwest quadrant of the downtown area. Student residential uses are increasingly located in both the core of downtown and in many of its adjacent neighborhoods. The area west of College Street, between West Magnolia and West Glenn Avenues, is a dense concentration of student residences that are aging but still very livable due to the combination of mostly small houses and mature trees.

*Downtown is home to the majority of the historic structures in Auburn.* This area contains a number of older homes and structures. There is a strong community sentiment for preservation of historic structures that remain, as they provide a significant contribution to the character of the area and of the community. The Auburn Historic District is an attempt to preserve the heritage of this area and to help provide incentives to retain the historic fabric of city.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>City Center: Downtown</th>
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<tr>
<td>Typical Appropriate Uses</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Residential: Adjacent (horizontal) Integrated (vertical) Diversity of type and ownership</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Retail commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Office or service commercial</td>
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<td>• Hospitality, Restaurant Accommodation</td>
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<td>• Institutional/Civic</td>
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<td>General Development Principles</td>
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<td>• Positive sense of place</td>
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<td>• Visual coherence</td>
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<td>• Compact, densely developed core</td>
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<td>• Density decreases to edges</td>
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The university is the “fourth corner” of downtown. The presence of Auburn University is one of the central reasons behind Auburn’s thriving downtown: the “captive” customer base keeps downtown vibrant and full of pedestrian traffic. Unfortunately, it also brings with it a large amount of automobile traffic and parking demand.

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

Downtown is a mix of diverse cultures and the center for citywide activities such as parades, street parties and civic activity. Municipal offices are located in this area, including the historic Post Office – now City Hall. In addition, there is an essential concentration of community worship centers in the core.

Open space plays a significant role in the aesthetic charm and pedestrian orientation of downtown. Samford Park is an essential element of the character and vitality of the downtown core.

Parking has long been a concern in the area. Available space is attractive not only to shoppers, but also to shop employees and to students attending classes. Parking availability affects potential customer base and parking lot appearance affects the character of the area. Parking nodes carefully tucked into downtown blocks can offer a variety of parking opportunities while minimizing visual impact. However, the current abuse of traditional residential neighborhoods with front yard parking is a problem.

The community has expressed a strong desire to preserve existing structures of historic significance. This includes many structures along North and South College Street, North and South Gay Streets and Payne Street. Preservation of the most significant of these will be critical to protecting the character of the city.

The community has expressed a desire to maintain a balance between resident and student uses in downtown. The city desires the retail base of downtown to serve the whole of the community. However, there is a perception that downtown commercial and entertainment establishments primarily serve student needs.

There is a desire to preserve existing single-family residential neighborhoods and discourage conversion of neighborhoods to student housing. The residential areas surrounding downtown have felt the pressure of student conversion for many years. As University enrollment has grown, these areas have become more and more desirable for student housing.

Downtown warrants selective redevelopment and revitalization to bring it up to its potential as the heart of the city. Selective, focused redevelopment, aimed at revitalizing the vitality of the city’s core as the heart of the entire resident and student community, is under strong consideration by property owners and city leaders.
• The civic core (structures and activities) of Downtown should be maintained and enhanced.
• Toomer’s Corner and Samford Park should remain the focus for festivals, crafts and other public and commercial functions.
• The several places of worship should be encouraged to remain, but not to expand their appetites for parking space.
• Historic structures should remain, and new construction should be designed in keeping with the historic character of both the core and surrounding areas.
• Specialty shops, arts and crafts, upscale restaurants and cafes, condominiums and commercial/business enterprises should be encouraged.
• Expansion of residential uses should be encouraged above businesses along the primary downtown streets to add life at all hours of the day.
• Building heights and yard requirements should be limited in adjacent neighborhoods.
• Façade improvements to the front, side and rear of stores should be encouraged to reinforce their historic character, the pedestrian orientation of the area and improve downtown’s overall appearance.
• Public, off-street parking structures should be added to the core, while residential areas should be regulated to prevent front yard parking.
• Residential infill should be encouraged, with increased student residential density, to the west of Wright Street between Magnolia and Glenn Avenues, in a manner that preserves its small scale and mature trees.

Village Centers. These are new, dispersed, community scale centers designed to provide focus, identity and convenient goods and services for a number of surrounding neighborhoods. They should contain a diverse mix of uses, including commercial, office, entertainment, medium density residential and institutional uses. One to two story buildings with storefront windows, entries and outdoor seating areas would help to create a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Plazas and parks would provide public gathering spaces around which retail uses would concentrate in the pedestrian oriented core.

Village Center parcels and buildings should be scaled to pedestrians, concentrated enough to encourage parking once and walking to more than one destination. Off-street parking should be shared wherever possible, with on-street parking contributing to the intimate scale typical of well functioning pedestrian areas. Parking located between and behind buildings would permit people to walk more safely and comfortably among uses that front on sidewalks rather than parking lots. Seating and shade along pedestrian routes would also promote walking and informal
gathering. The successful Village Center would be a vibrant “people place” serving the surrounding neighborhoods.

Village Center
Size varies: 10-20 acres
Typical Appropriate Uses
- Residential:
  - Adjacent (horizontal)
  - Integrated (vertical)
  - Diversity of type and ownership
- Retail commercial:
  - Larger and more variety than neighborhood center
  - Serve the village trade area
  - Support but not compete with downtown
- Apparel shops, restaurants, bakeries, drugstores
- Office or service commercial
- Hospitality:
  - Restaurant
  - Institutional/Civic
- Recreational

General Development Principles
- Positive sense of place
- Visual coherence
- Compact, densely developed core
- Intensive mixed use
- Civic space(s)
- Pedestrian oriented (overall)
- Pedestrian accessibility
- Internal vehicular circulation
- Intense anchor or center of activity
- Well-defined edge

General Design Guidelines
- Stores serve entire community
- One to two stories
- Required building line
- Street trees
- Greenway connections
- Parking in the rear
- Density decreases to edges

The village is made up of surrounding neighborhoods as the building blocks that support a Village Center as well as perhaps smaller Neighborhood Centers. A Village Center should be designed around a square, plaza, green or other public open space that can serve as a focal point for community activities. On-street parking should be provided around the village green and throughout the center. The Village Center should include daily shopping, basic health, recreation and cultural facilities, schools, employment and open space. Schools, parks, libraries, public facilities and small businesses are an essential part of neighborhood life and should be planned and designed to help connect neighborhoods. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.

Concentrations of civic, institutional and commercial activity should be embedded in villages, rather than isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Buildings should be taller toward the center of the village and have architectural distinction and variety. The tallest buildings should be sited prominently to emphasize the features of the terrain with large/important buildings located on key sites to provide visual focus. The Village Center should be organized around a “main street,” with apartments and offices above the storefronts. Density should decrease away from the center and the boundary of the village should have a defined edge.

Neighborhood Centers. These are new and revitalized centers designed to meet the daily “convenience” goods and service needs of residents in perhaps two or three immediately adjacent neighborhoods. A Neighborhood Center might be anchored by a small grocery or drug store and could also include a variety of smaller scale shops, a neighborhood park and perhaps small institutional uses such as a fire station. The center would serve as a social and recreational focal point for the neighborhoods.
Access is generally by local and collector streets that provide walking and bicycling connections from the adjacent neighborhoods.

A Neighborhood Center is a smaller version of a Village Center. In general, these centers have a maximum distance from the core to the edge of ¼ mile or a five-minute walk. Typical uses should be similar to those found in a typical small grocery store-anchored shopping center, though the stores would front on a pedestrian-friendly network of streets rather than a parking lot.

- Village and Neighborhood Centers should each contain some buildings that are vertically mixed in use.
- Retail uses should be placed at street level; office and residential uses should be placed to the rear or on the upper stories.
- Each building should be designed to form part of a larger composition of the area within which it is located.
- Adjacent buildings should relate in similar scale, height and configuration.
- For human scale, larger buildings should be broken down into separate volumes, horizontally and vertically.
- Residential building entrances should be raised above the sidewalk a minimum of two feet to reinforce a privacy zone and distinguish them from commercial entrances.
- Civic and institutional uses should be designed as part of Village and Neighborhood Centers rather than as stand-alone buildings.
- All Village and Neighborhood Centers should contain public open space uses.
- Buildings should be close to the pedestrian street, with off-street parking behind and/or beside buildings.
- If the building is located at the street intersection, place the main building at the corner. Parking, loading or service should not be located at an intersection.
- To maximize the street frontage of buildings and minimize the street frontage of parking lots, buildings should be articulated so that the long side fronts the street. Parking lots should not be wider than 1/3 of the frontage of the adjacent building.
- Pedestrian circulation should be an integral part of the initial site layout. Organize the site so that the buildings frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation, and so that pedestrians may walk along building fronts rather than along or across parking lots and driveways.
- Streets should be designed with street trees in a manner appropriate to their function. Commercial streets should have trees that complement the face of the buildings and shade the sidewalk. Residential streets should provide an

### Neighborhood Center

Size varies: under 10 acres

Typical Appropriate Uses
- Residential: Adjacent (horizontal) Diversity of type and ownership
- Retail commercial: Bakery, drugstore, variety store, barbershop, restaurant, dry cleaner, hardware store
- Office or service commercial
- Hospitality: Restaurant
- Institutional/Civic
- Recreational

General Development Principles
- Positive sense of place
- Visual coherence
- Compact, densely developed core
- Civic space(s)
- Pedestrian oriented (overall)
- Pedestrian accessibility
- Internal vehicular circulation
- Intense anchor or center of activity
- Well-defined edge

General Design Guidelines
- Stores serve neighborhood
- Required building line
- Street trees
- Greenway connections
- Parking in the rear or side
- One to two stories
- Density decreases to edges
appropriate tree canopy to shade both street and sidewalk and provide a visual buffer between the street and the home.
- Landscape plans should be designed to be effective for streetscapes from initial planting through maturity. Planted medians should be encouraged on nearby multi-lane roads to provide additional tree canopy and reduce the visual height-to-width ratio of the overall streetscape.

Community Commercial Centers. These are primarily existing, single-use shopping areas. Predominantly auto-oriented at present, these centers and their surroundings should be redeveloped over time to better support pedestrian activity and to allow greater pedestrian access. Infill development should be placed at the street edge to screen parking lots and provide human scale to the streets and buildings. Typical uses would include a large grocery store, supporting retail and service commercial, office, restaurant and institutional uses. Residential uses would be adjacent and easily accessible to the center, which should present a positive image to adjacent neighborhoods.

Community Commercial Centers are existing centers that provide citywide products and services. Examples include the Glenn and Dean shopping area, East University and Glenn Avenue and the South College Winn Dixie Center. These commercial areas were developed at major street intersections with large areas devoted to parking. While the centers are currently oriented to the customer traveling by auto, pedestrian activity is appropriate and should be a part of any redevelopment or infill development plans for the area. Infill development should be placed at the street edge to screen the parking lots and provide human scale for the pedestrians. Typical uses include medium to large grocery anchor stores, supporting retail and service commercial, office, restaurant and institutional uses. Residential uses should be adjacent and easily accessible to the center.

- Retail uses should be placed at street level and office uses should be placed in upper stories where appropriate.
- Each building should be designed to form part of a larger composition of the area within which it is located.
- Adjacent buildings should relate in similar scale, height and configuration.

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<tr>
<th>Community Commercial Center</th>
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<td>Typical Appropriate Uses</td>
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<td>Retail commercial</td>
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<td>Office or service commercial</td>
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<td>Hospitality:</td>
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<td>Restaurant</td>
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<td>Accommodation</td>
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<td>Residential:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjacent (horizontal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity of type and ownership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional/Civic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational</td>
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</table>

General Development Principles
- Positive sense of place
- Visual coherence
- Compact, densely developed core
- Intensive mixed use
- Civic space(s)
- Pedestrian oriented (overall)
- Pedestrian accessibility
- Internal vehicular circulation
- Intense anchor or center of activity
- Well-defined edge

General Design Guidelines
- Center of stores serving the community
- Required building line
- Parking in the rear or side
- Street trees
- Density decreases to edges
- For human scale, larger buildings should be broken down into separate volumes, horizontally and vertically.
- All Community Commercial Centers should contain a public open space.
- Building heights should not exceed two stories. Buildings should be close to the street, with off-street parking behind and/or beside buildings.
- At street intersections, place the main building at the corner. Parking, loading or service may not be located at an intersection.
- To maximize the street frontage of buildings and minimize the street frontage of parking lots, buildings should be articulated so that the long side fronts the street. Parking lots should not extend more than 1/2 of the frontage of the adjacent building.
- Pedestrian circulation should be an integral part of the initial site layout. Organize the site so that the buildings frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation, and so that pedestrians may walk along building fronts rather than along or across parking lots and driveways.
- Streets should be designed with street trees in a manner appropriate to their function. Commercial streets should have trees, which complement the face of the buildings and shade the sidewalk. Residential streets should provide for an appropriate canopy, which shades both street and sidewalk, and serves as a visual buffer between the street and the home.

Commercial Support Centers.
These are large, existing and planned centers dominated by regional retail and service uses, including “big box” retail. Redevelopment and new development, especially in the East Glenn area, should be pedestrian oriented and designed for pedestrian accessibility. Primary access should be directed to new and existing collector streets that intersect the arterial road network. Direct access to and from the arterial roadways should be strictly limited to promote a safe street network.

Commercial Support Centers provide citywide and regional services. As such, they should present a positive image to the visitor and resident alike. While these centers rely primarily on customers arriving by car, pedestrian activity
should be designed for and encouraged. Typical uses include major retail businesses, grocery and other “big box” stores and support retail and services businesses, including gas and service stations, restaurants, car dealerships.

**Commercial Support Center**

Typical Appropriate Uses
- Retail commercial:
  - Largest shopping centers and districts
  - Wide variety of goods
  - Serve regional trade area
  - Department stores, bookstores, furniture stores, toy stores, apparel shops, restaurants, theaters
  - Service commercial: Regional services Auto services and dealerships
- Hospitality: Restaurant Accommodation
- Residential: Adjacent (horizontal) Diversity of type and ownership Institutional/Civic Recreational

General Development Principles
- Positive sense of place
- Visual coherence
- Compact, densely developed core
- Intensive mixed use
- Civic space(s)
- Pedestrian oriented (overall)
- Pedestrian accessibility
- Internal vehicular circulation
- Intense anchor or center of activity
- Well-defined edge

General Design Guidelines
- Street trees
- Density decreases to edges

- All Commercial Support Centers should contain public open space uses.
- Buildings should be close to the pedestrian street, with off-street parking behind and/or beside buildings.
- Each building should be designed to form part of a larger composition of the area within which it is located.
- Adjacent buildings should relate in similar scale, height and configuration.
- For human scale, larger buildings should be broken down into separate volumes, horizontally and vertically.
- Building heights should not exceed two stories.
- Pedestrian circulation should be an integral part of the initial site layout. Organize the site so that the buildings frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation, and so that pedestrians may walk along building fronts rather than along or across parking lots and driveways.
- Parking lots should be planned and designed with primary access and circulation traffic located at the outside edge of the lot rather than the edge closest to the buildings.
- Streets should be designed with street trees in a manner appropriate to their function.
- Commercial streets should have trees, which complement the face of the buildings and shade the sidewalk.
- Planted medians are encouraged on multi-lane roads to provide additional tree canopy and reduce the visual width–to–height ratio of the overall streetscape.

- An appropriate transition should be made between the center and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

**Gateway Centers.** Gateway centers (major gateways) and Gateway Corners (minor gateways) provide services oriented to travelers. They are a visitor’s first opportunity to form an opinion about the community. A quality environment and character, positive community image and a “welcome” to Auburn should be presented through the buildings and the street network. Buildings should be organized to frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation – pedestrians should be able to walk between uses and along building fronts rather than along or across parking lots and driveways.
In addition to providing an appropriate entrance image for Auburn, the major (interchange) gateway centers should provide conveniently accessible goods and services for those arriving or passing through via Interstate Highway 85. The commercial potential of nearby residential development should also be capitalized upon through provision of opportunities for development of neighborhood and community scale commercial uses.

A significant factor that should influence development of each gateway center is the set of uses that may take best immediate advantage of the interchange itself: those serving the public traveling along the interstate. Most will agree that interstate motorists seek five basic services: gasoline, rest rooms, food, relaxation, and lodging. Two primary reasons account for the motorist stopping at some particular interchange to satisfy these needs, namely: advance notice, visibility and accessibility, and brand loyalty. To obtain the maximum utility from interchange development, it should be noted that appeal rests largely on: the ability to satisfy immediate needs, the variety of choice provided and the convenience of exiting and re-entry to the highway. As a result, most businesses try to locate close to the exit ramps and, at the same time, adjacent to complementary services.

All three Auburn interchanges should not only provide opportunities for commercial and other development, they should also each present an appropriate entrance or gateway into Auburn. Success in this regard requires a well-conceived concept of gateway, together with a highly memorable corridor environment that possesses a clear and positive design image. The issue of image quality is important to area residents, visitors and investors alike. In this regard, the design of the corridor environment on both sides of Interstate Highway 85 will be critical.

Development plans and designs for gateway centers should take care to create an appropriate sequence. In general, the uses associated with a full service interchange should be arrayed with the principle of convenience clearly in mind: activities that will require the motorist to spend more time away from driving should be located further from the interchange. Generally speaking, this means the area closest to the interchange should be allocated to auto service functions, with direct access immediately adjacent to the on-off ramps. This location provides the greatest visibility for such uses, and meets the requirement for direct access from the interchange and a short driving distance. Next would come food service uses, located close to the interchange. Potential locations for other commercial uses and for lodging would be located near the food service zone, but not necessarily with direct access (e.g. frontage) on the arterial.

Gateway Centers provide citywide and regional services. As such, they should present a positive image to the visitor and resident alike. People should be able to tell they have arrived in Auburn based on the quality of the environment and character of the buildings and not just from a “Welcome to Auburn” sign. While these centers rely primarily on customers arriving by car, pedestrian activity should be designed for and encouraged.
• Typical uses include gas and service stations, restaurants, hotels/motels and visitor welcome centers.
• All Gateway Centers should contain public open space uses.
• Each building should be designed to form part of a larger composition of the area within which it is located.
• Adjacent buildings should relate in scale, height and configuration.
• For human scale, larger buildings should be broken down into separate volumes, both horizontally and vertically.
• Pedestrian circulation should be an integral part of the initial site layout. Organize the site so that the buildings frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation.
• Planted medians are encouraged on multi-lane roads to provide additional tree canopy and reduce the visual width–to–height ratio of the overall streetscape.

Gateway Corners are very small-scale versions of Gateway Centers, with stores that provide an opportunity for people to buy gas and convenience goods, or orient themselves for continued travel. A quality environment and character, positive community image and a “welcome” to Auburn should be presented.

Commercial Corridors. The primary purpose of the city’s arterial street system is to enable the efficient movement of vehicular traffic. Safety and accessibility to property are also important, as is accommodation for bicycle and pedestrian travel. Critical to this vision is encouraging more compact mixed-use development along these corridors and in specified, adjacent activity centers.

Commercial Corridors are the existing roadway corridors that provide Citywide and regional products and services. The South College Street and Opelika Road commercial corridors were developed along major entryways to Auburn, and they were oriented to the customer traveling by auto. However, pedestrian activity is appropriate and should be encouraged. Over the last few years the city has been working aggressively to place sidewalks along these...
major corridors. A next step in this process will be finding ways to get these pedestrians from the sidewalks to the “front door” in a safe manner.

Infill development and redevelopment of these major corridors has been a long time in coming to fruition, in part due to the difficulty of many of the sites and situations, not to mention accessibility. Thus, such efforts should be managed with flexibility and a can-do attitude in mind. New development and infill development should be placed at the street edge to screen the parking lots and provide human scale for the pedestrians.

Typical uses include large grocery anchor stores, supporting retail and service commercial, office, restaurant, accommodations and institutional uses. While retail and other uses should address the street, they should not turn their backs to the adjacent residential areas: the commercial corridor should be easily accessible to adjacent residential areas.

- Each building should be designed to form part of a larger composition of the area within which it is located.
- Adjacent buildings should relate in similar scale, height and configuration.
- For human scale, larger buildings should be broken down into separate volumes, horizontally and vertically.
- Building heights should not exceed two stories.
- Buildings should be close to the pedestrian street, with off-street parking behind and/or beside buildings.
- Pedestrian circulation should be an integral part of the initial site layout. Organize the site so that the buildings frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation, and so that pedestrians may walk along building fronts rather than along or across parking lots and driveways.
- When possible, access should be limited to the major street through the use of parallel road systems and by limiting access points along the roadway.
- Streets should be designed with street trees in a manner appropriate to their function. Commercial streets should have trees which complement the face of the buildings and which shade the sidewalk. Residential streets should provide for an appropriate canopy, which shades both street and sidewalk, and serves as a visual buffer between the street and the home.
- Planted medians are encouraged on multi-lane roads to provide additional tree canopy, reduce the visual width-to-height ratio of the overall streetscape and provide for safe, convenient pedestrian refuges at crossings.

Industrial Support Centers. These are large employment centers, dominated by office, technology, light industrial and other job-generating land uses but containing relatively few retail and service uses except those concentrated at major gateways and other strategic locations.
Each of these centers should convey the image of Auburn as an accessible, desirable community in which to live, work and invest. This should be accomplished by imparting a strong sense of community for those who work or live near them. It is also important to strengthen connections between these areas and the rest of the city, including by means of bicycle and pedestrian access and circulation.

**Activity Center Development Policy**

The most enduring places are those that embrace diversity. Activity centers come in many types and sizes. A center’s scale affects how it is linked, economically and physically, with other centers in the community and city. Some should have large-scale development and high intensities of use. Others, especially those in villages and neighborhoods, should have small-scale development and low intensities of use because of the presence of green infrastructure and perhaps the rural characteristics of the area.

Standards are necessary to ensure compatibility of development and redevelopment. They should include, but not be limited to, those that address use, compatibility, edge or transition, circulation pattern and design, and open space needs. For example, activity centers should be situated in such a way to enhance efficient access for the entire community while allowing residents from adjacent neighborhoods to walk to retail and service businesses. Parking should be placed mostly behind and to the side of buildings, allowing for pedestrian-oriented streetscapes. Streets should encourage residents to walk by providing sidewalks, street trees and appropriate traffic calming techniques. Both informal and formal open spaces should provide a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities for the public and focal points for the community. Interconnected streets should provide for dispersion of automobile traffic and multiple access points for emergency and service vehicles.

**Preserve and enhance the green infrastructure**

To preserve and enhance the city’s green infrastructure, activity centers must be carefully planned and organized to fit the natural environment. They should be located in appropriate areas, sensitively sited among or strategically placed away from the most valuable or threatened natural resources. The natural environment is an important ingredient. Areas for parks, greens and other open spaces should be reserved in and near the center and connected to adjacent open space systems.

**Design the activity center appropriate to its context**

Activity centers should be designed with location in mind. The scale, mix of uses, amount and type of residential uses, location of civic buildings and type of open space should fit the surroundings. Each center should have an appropriate scale and mix of uses defined by its type and scale and the population it serves – regional, citywide, village or neighborhood.
Create discernable, compact activity centers

Activity centers should have a sense of identity and place, distinguishable from one to the next. They should be compact and densely developed, decreasing in intensity toward the center edge. Edges should be well defined so that people know where the center begins and ends without having to resort to walls or signs. The center, at any scale, should look and feel as if has been designed, or at least considered, as a whole. Continuity of setbacks, building height, scale, materials, landscaping and signage should be evident. This does not mean that every building must look the same, be built to the same setback or provide no variation in height—only that such differences should not be abrupt and overwhelming, but rather provide interest and diversity.

Create mixed use, multi-function activity centers

A mixture of cultural, entertainment, commercial and residential uses allows for a more diverse income stream and greater activity. For example, office uses could support retail operations by supplying lunch patrons. These retail uses, located within walking distance, would tend to encourage employees and residents to go out to lunch and run errands without the use of their cars. Spaces and building entrances and storefronts should be configured in a way that facilitates human interactions and activity within the public realm. Centers should contain civic spaces and buildings according to center type, scale and location. At the very least, a public green space—a village square or park—might serve this function.

Design each activity center to assure accessibility and safety

Activity center design should balance the needs of the vehicle and pedestrian while creating convenient and safe methods for pedestrian movement. Overall attention to the pedestrian environment of an activity center can greatly influence the number of people willing to walk or ride as an alternative to driving. Pedestrians and vehicles should be separated as much as possible, with the number and length of pedestrian crossings through parking and paved areas kept to a minimum. Walkways in the center should be designed to encourage their appropriate use. Elements such as landscaping, street trees, street furniture, and public open spaces and plazas can help create contrast with the built environment by softening the streetscape and making the walking experience more enjoyable and inviting. Building location, setbacks and orientation should enhance pedestrian comfort. Human scale should be created by building massing form, as well as the use of architectural elements such as colonnades, canopies, walkways, street level display windows, lighting and a variety of building materials. The first floor of buildings should be pedestrian scaled, to encourage pedestrian flow between the street and the building.

Provide a mix of uses within walking distance of the activity center

Within the activity center, a mix of uses is desirable. Central common areas should be provided for users to create a sense of place within the activity center. The center should be pedestrian oriented with places for recreation and leisure, and a system of walkways and trails that connect to activity centers or provide an opportunity for lunchtime exercise activities.
Require activity centers to relate appropriately to the community

Activity centers should be integrated into the fabric of the community and appropriate connections and transitions should be made to adjacent uses. Streets and service drives should be located and designed appropriate to the user. Vehicular access should be designed to allow for user connections to adjacent centers and neighborhoods, but discourage through traffic for service access and delivery. Community trails and greenways should continue through the center. The scale of the center, as well as the scale, mass and location of the structures within the center should respect and fit the surroundings.

Provide opportunities for transit

For activity centers that have large numbers of employees or students, plans should be included for present or future transit service connections in the form of locations for transit stops and stations as appropriate, and to assure walkable interconnections between the centers and pedestrian origins and destinations.

AUBURN NEIGHBORHOODS AND VILLAGES

Villages and Neighborhoods as envisioned in this Land Use Plan are different from most of the residential subdivisions that have been developed in Auburn for the past several decades. There is little guidance for either in past or current plans, zoning ordinances or subdivision regulations. For that reason, special attention and space is devoted to their planning and design.

Neighborhoods

The neighborhood is an essential element of this vision for development in Auburn. The neighborhood should be the basic tool for development, redevelopment and enhancement of the city. Several neighborhoods together form each village; several villages, together with various specialty districts and centers, form the city. Several types of corridors interconnect neighborhoods—they include streets, greenways and streams. Within and among villages and neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels bring together a diversity of people into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

Great neighborhoods place an emphasis on livability, appearance, transportation opportunities, convenience and safety for all residents. The most successful neighborhoods generally have design characteristics that are missing from most conventional subdivisions. These include: a legible center and edge to the neighborhood; an integrated network of walkable streets; buildings set close enough to the streets to spatially define the streets as public spaces; and opportunities for shopping close to home. In contrast, the typical residential subdivision of the past half-century has focused on providing hierarchical loop and dead-end street patterns that result in isolation rather than connection. Nonresidential uses, such as retail and office developments, have also been segregated or isolated from residential areas, both visually and physically. In contrast, great neighborhoods, through good design, provide differing land uses
that are well integrated into the neighborhood, allowing residents to live near and walk to a nearby activity center.

**Neighborhood Development Policy**

*Preserve and enhance the green infrastructure*

To preserve and enhance the city’s green infrastructure, neighborhoods must be carefully planned and organized within the natural environment. Neighborhoods should be located in appropriate areas, sensitively sited in or strategically placed away from the most valuable or threatened natural resources. *Conservation subdivision* techniques, in which a neighborhood is designed to conserve its natural systems and thereby require less capital investment for earthwork, clearing and drainage, results in a healthy, appealing community. These should be utilized to maintain allowed densities without negatively impacting the green infrastructure. The natural environment should be an important ingredient of every neighborhood.

*Design the neighborhood appropriate to its context*

The scale and density of neighborhoods should reflect their location in the community. More dense development should be located adjacent to the core of villages, and adjacent to all centers and corridors. Less-intense neighborhoods should be the rule away from such focus areas.

*Create a compact center that serves the daily needs of the neighborhood*

The scale and mix of uses, amount and type of residential uses, location of civic buildings and type of open space should be appropriately integrated into the neighborhood to fit the surroundings. A neighborhood center appropriate to the daily needs of residents should provide a focal point to the neighborhood. The neighborhood center should be pedestrian oriented with easy vehicular and pedestrian access from within the neighborhood. The areas around the center may contain higher density housing and a higher concentration of residents to patronize neighborhood businesses. A park or usable community open space may also serve as a neighborhood center.

*Design the neighborhood with walkable, interconnected streets*

Neighborhood design should balance the needs of the vehicle and pedestrian while creating convenient and safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. The sidewalk provides the framework for the pedestrian system in every neighborhood. At a minimum, sidewalks are provided on at least one side of local streets in all neighborhoods, but are required on both sides of collector and arterial streets. The pedestrian network can be greatly improved and walking distance and infrastructure costs substantially reduced through connections to trails and greenways or other open space systems, mid-block connections and cul-de-sac linkages. Creating interconnected neighborhood streets and providing alternate routes to every destination will encourage bicyclists and help to diffuse automobile traffic, thus lowering traffic volumes on most streets. Street networks should be planned for and implemented as a part of every development project.
Reserve places for public open space and civic buildings

There should be places for neighbors to venture out into the public realm without their vehicles. Places for children to play safely should be a staple item of all neighborhoods. Lots that surround open spaces add to the value of the property and create a more livable community. Prominent locations should be reserved for public open spaces and for civic purposes. Each neighborhood should have one special gathering place, such as a neighborhood green, near its center. Prominent locations could include building sites at the end of a long view, a prominent street corner or neighborhood square. Civic buildings should be accessible and located in areas with greater activity.

Design streets appropriate to the scale and character of the neighborhood

Neighborhood streets should feature relatively narrow driving surfaces, sidewalks, street trees and front porches. Instead of the “one size fits all” standard, street designs within a neighborhood should be determined by several factors. These might include the type of adjacent uses, the location of the street within the community, the desired carrying capacity and vehicle speed. Neighborhood streets should be “calm,” an environment where drivers realize that driving too fast or too aggressively is inappropriate. When sidewalks are included, both the young and the elderly can find comfortable connections to other neighbors, to parks, schools and shopping areas. These investments are very modest in comparison to their long-term value. When both trees and sidewalks are included in the neighborhood streetscape, the neighborhood can join with others as part of a more unified community, and the overall value increases. When neighborhoods include street trees, sidewalks and front porches, they become a more welcoming place for residents and visitors, and add significant value to the whole community.

Villages

A village is a settlement small enough to allow building a sense of community in the truest sense of the word—a group of people who support each other—but large enough to maintain a reasonable cross-section of facilities and provide a reasonable range of daily services. Importantly, a village consists of a cluster of neighborhoods, each focused toward its own neighborhood center and, with its neighbors, toward a Village Center. A village center is compact in form, rather dense toward the middle, with a town square and key community focal points. Ideally, walking determines the size of its center—perhaps a five-minute walk from one side to the other—so that the car becomes an option rather than a necessity. Density eases from the center of the village toward its edges.

To provide a sufficiently large population to maintain a range of community facilities within a walkable distance means the density of development must be higher at the center. Schools, parks, libraries, public facilities and small businesses are an essential part of village and neighborhood life and help bridge between neighborhood and village. Schools are sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them. Concentrations of civic, institutional and
commercial activity are embedded in villages, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes.

Ideally, the village center would include a mix of daily shopping, basic health, schools, recreation and cultural facilities, employment and open space. A square or community green would provide a focus for the village. Buildings are taller in the center than others in the village and have greater architectural distinction and variety. The taller buildings are sited prominently to emphasize the features of the terrain with large/important buildings located on key sites to create visual focus. The center is built like the core of a traditional small town, and includes apartments and offices above the storefronts.

The village is largely a self-sufficient portion of the city, a group of several neighborhoods surrounding a Village Center, in which provisions are made for daily retail, service, and civic and educational needs. The Village Center has a variety of uses – including a mixture of dense residential types – to meet the needs of the surrounding walkable neighborhoods. Streets are interconnected, within the village and to the major arterial rural or urban roadways adjacent to the village.

Village Development Policy

Preserve and enhance the green infrastructure

To preserve and enhance the city’s green infrastructure, community development must be carefully planned and organized within the natural environment. Community development should be sensitively sited in or strategically placed away from the most valuable or threatened natural resources. Community development should utilize the opportunities and reflect the constraints created by floodplains, slopes, soils, vegetation and other green infrastructure. Open spaces should be developed within the community, such as the community green, and should be linked to the citywide greenway system of trails and preservation areas.

Preserve historic structures and cultural patterns

The cultural, historical and archeological resources of the city should be protected and preserved, whether in the rural landscape or in downtown. Promote architectural compatibility of new development, including infill development, in designated development areas where significant historic resources exist. The city should commit to preserving city-owned cultural and historic structures and sites.

Strive for a variety of housing choices

Within each village, a variety of housing choices – types, sizes, locations – should be available. Single family residential, duplexes, townhomes and row houses, condominiums and apartments should be mixed to meet the needs of diverse residents of varied ages and incomes. These may be dispersed as needed or desired among neighborhoods that make up the village.
IV. FUTURE LAND USE PATTERNS

The Future Land Use Map illustrates how different parts of the community should function and relate to one another—in other words, the overall physical structure of the city. The map portrays a pattern of various activity centers by type, together with their interrelations with each other and with the city’s neighborhoods and villages. These activity centers and the linkages and connections between them are critical to integrating the city’s land use, transportation, community facilities and major infrastructure. Building on this structure, Auburn will continue to grow and develop as a community where public life is encouraged and quality urban design is maintained.

The future land use pattern of the city has been organized with appropriate recognition given to the city’s green infrastructure, its street and utility infrastructure and major existing uses of land. Any significant modifications of these existing patterns on the land would place significant costs on the public and private sectors. Thus, major modification of any of these conditions should be associated only with implementation of the city’s infrastructure master plans and with redevelopment activities that may be proposed for locations listed in Chapter V: Implementing the Plan.

It should be noted that designation of land uses and activity centers on the Future Land Use Map should not be interpreted to propose nor preclude development without full consideration of all policies, principles, standards or intentions expressed in this plan document and its implementing regulations. Site considerations relating to topography, geology, soils or hydrology will be of major importance when locating any particular new activity center and planning and designing its uses and density. These realities, plus attitudes toward development on the part of public officials, other agencies, area residents, property owners and developers will play a large part in determining location and design. Similarly, the presence of adequate streets as well as schools, parks and other community facilities, including water and sewer systems, should be assured before making any significant development proposals or decisions.

Most of the city’s commercial uses and existing commercial activity centers and corridors are and will continue to be associated with Downtown Auburn and with the city’s thoroughfares—most notably South College Street, Opelika Road, East Glenn Avenue and Dean Road north of East Glenn. All of these commercial activity centers, including the core of Downtown Auburn, are in need of varying degrees of revitalization, redevelopment and reworking as outlined in the Appendix: Evaluation of Auburn Activity Centers. Others as noted on the Future Land Use Map and in the Appendix are located in growth areas to the south and east that are proposed for expansion. Finally, there are several new village centers and neighborhood centers plus a number of new parks, recreation areas and civic uses proposed primarily in the west, northwest and north parts of the city.
The locations of several proposed new activity centers and many of the new parks, community facilities and institutions shown on the Future Land Use Map and described below are not meant to be precise or absolute. Rather, the symbols for each of these should be considered as “placeholders” until Specific Plans for these areas have been completed as called for in Chapter V: Implementing the Plan. Each of these so-called placeholders may be likened to a ball in a more or less enclosed court, in which the players, within defined limits, move the ball around until the game is concluded. In the case of the proposed activity centers and many of the related parks, facilities and institutions proposed for what is presently the edges of the intensively developed portions of the city, the “game” will conclude (and thus the “ball” will come to rest) only when a Specific Plan for the area is completed and property negotiations and development plans have been prepared and financed, as appropriate.
The following descriptions of the Future Land Use Map proceed generally from the least to most intensive uses and functions, beginning with parks and protected areas, proceeding through four densities of residential uses. These are followed by commercial, office and other employment uses and their activity center types, and conclude with civic and institutional uses and Auburn University. In these descriptions, land uses and functions are as defined in the Appendix. Activity centers are to be planned and designed in accord with policy and characteristics as presented in Chapter III and the Appendix.

Parks, Recreation and Protected Areas

Auburn has a number of significant parks, recreation areas and protected lands, the larger of which are located toward the perimeter of the city. In addition, there are several parks and recreation areas called for in the Green Spaces and Greenways Plan that have not yet been identified with a specific location. Most of these are to be located in the new villages and neighborhoods located around the edges of the city, and should be extended into the entire planning jurisdiction.

Residential Uses

Very low-density residential uses are planned for the Lake Ogletree Watershed—the city’s water supply—in the southeast part of the city. Development in this area is subject to special density and impervious surface ratio requirements that dictate large lots and low impervious surface ratios. Sewer will not be extended into this area.

Low-density residential uses are mostly larger single-family detached housing that currently exist and are planned for further development primarily around the perimeter of the city, taking appropriate account of the various components of the city’s green infrastructure. Most future low-density residential development is shown to the south of Interstate 85 and to the north and west sides of the city. These areas will be developed as neighborhoods to be planned and designed in accord with a Specific Plan that will link neighborhoods into villages and provide the opportunity for development of commercial activity centers in the form of new neighborhood centers and village centers.
Medium-density residential uses are mostly smaller single-family detached and duplex housing currently located mostly in and near the core of the city. Most future medium-density residential uses are planned for development in relatively close-in locations, mostly to the north, northwest and southwest of the East University Drive/Shug Jordan Parkway loop. These will be developed primarily as neighborhoods to be planned and designed in accord with a Specific Plan that will link neighborhoods into villages and provide the opportunity for development of commercial activity centers in the form of neighborhood centers and village centers. Other medium-density residential uses will be added to the southwest side of the Auburn University campus to take advantage of access to the campus, the Auburn Tech Parks and the new Interstate interchange.

High-density residential uses are mostly apartments, townhouses, manufactured housing and dormitories, both on- and off-campus. They are presently located largely in and around the campus and core of the city, adjacent to the Shug Jordan Parkway/East University Drive loop and to the southwest near Wire Road. Over time, this pattern is planned to remain much the same, with intensification on the university campus and more apartments to the south, adjacent to South College Street.

Commercial and Office Uses

As noted earlier, most of the city’s commercial uses and existing commercial activity centers and corridors are and will continue to be associated with Downtown Auburn and with the city’s thoroughfares—most notably South College Street, Opelika Road, East Glenn Avenue and Dean Road north of East Glenn. Office uses are mostly very close to the retail and service commercial uses, concentrated most heavily on the university campus (adjacent to Downtown), and adjacent to East University Drive to the north and south of Opelika Road (close to the city’s primary commercial service activity center).

Most of the existing and planned commercial uses are and will be concentrated in activity centers and corridors as explained in Chapter III, Citywide Development Components. The changes to the existing pattern will result from three types of investment. The first of these will be from a continuing period that combines additions to and intensification of existing centers through revitalization and redevelopment as noted in Chapter V, Implementing the Plan. Secondly, there is planned further major commercial investment at the city’s two existing (and planned third) Interstate Highway 85 interchanges in the form of gateway and commercial support centers. Finally, the longer term will bring new residential growth channeled into neighborhoods and then villages, and the development of neighborhood and village centers located around what is presently the city’s perimeter.

Industrial and Extractive Uses

Industrial functions are presently located primarily to the west and southwest of the city’s developed edges. The only extractive activity is the quarry located
south of the city between Chewacla State Park and Sand Hill Road. The city’s industrial base is planned to increase primarily through infilling and additions to its industrial and technological parks. The industrial park located west of Shug Jordan Parkway and south of the railroad is planned for incremental infilling. The city’s “Tech Parks” to the southwest continue to draw industrial and technological employers to the city to take advantage of university connections and Auburn’s high quality of life. As the existing facilities continue to fill, additional sections are planned for development around the new Interstate Highway 85 interchange at Beehive Road.

Auburn University

The Auburn University Campus Master Plan fits well with the concepts of the Land Use Plan and the patterns portrayed on the Future Land Use Map.

As shown on the university’s plan (Magnolia Avenue is almost to the top and College Street is to the far right), the densities are higher than most in the adjacent city, but the pattern is very similar. For example, most intense employment and student activity functions are appropriately bundled together and form the southwest quadrant of the Downtown core. On-campus student housing is spread in a decreasingly dense form close to the campus core—mostly to the south and planned to increase significantly to the west. The largest parking concentrations are located to the west of the core, and the least intensive uses in combination with various open space uses, including connections to the planned city Green Spaces and Greenways system, are to remain toward the west and southwest edges of campus.
Public and Institutional Uses

The existing institutional and civic uses are presently and will remain mostly clustered toward the center of the city’s planning area. Additional facilities are proposed in association with new village and neighborhood centers and as a part of revitalization or redevelopment of existing commercial activity centers and corridors.

CONCLUSION

The Future Land Use Map is important, to be sure, but it should always be clear that design can make a significant difference—the details of how a place is put together help determine how well it works. Time-tested principles of place making, used wisely to meet today’s standards as presented in Chapter III, Citywide Development Components, are part of the vision. These should govern how buildings, streets, and natural areas can add up to more than the sum of their parts, while making public investment go farther as Auburn conserves its environment for future generations. As a result, the map is but one part of the Land Use Plan, which must be considered in its entirety, including the means that may be employed in its implementation over time.
V. IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

The Auburn Land Use Plan presents a long-range view of city development carried out in accord with the city’s vision, mission and overall goals and policies as spelled out in the Auburn 2020 strategic plan, together with the ideas, visions and suggestions from the Community Planning Workshop. The Future Land Use Map indicates the physical manifestation of these ideals as outlined in the principals set forth in Chapter III, Citywide Development Components, and serves as a framework for fitting together everything that relates to growth and development.

The plan will be implemented through actions of the City Council, Planning Commission and other boards and commissions. Plan recommendations will be carried out through revision and continued administration and enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, through budgeting and capital improvement programming, through empowerment of more community and neighborhood volunteers, and through public and private decisions regarding development and annexation. The following is an outline of the major parts of the Land Use Plan implementation system.

- Specific Plans
- Zoning Ordinance
- Master Development Plans
- Redevelopment
- Annexation
- Biennial Budgeting for Infrastructure
- Major Thoroughfares
- Water System
- Sewer System
- Parks and Recreation System

With rigorous community support, public investment and effort to focus development upon designated activity centers, Auburn’s physical vision for itself, as presented in the several elements of the city’s Comprehensive Plan, can be achieved over time. This will require new development—planned, design and executed in new ways in accord with this plan. It will also require systematic public and private reinvestment in retrofitting many parts of the city as they exist today, not least of which are many of its existing activity centers and corridors.

Auburn has used its grant of the police power to adopt and enforce a comprehensive set of growth and development regulations. The city has used its power to tax to plan for and implement a biennial budgeting system that includes capital investments in facilities and services that it uses to shape growth and development. Auburn has used the power of eminent domain (the power to force sale of private property for valid public use) sparingly to enable certain infrastructure investments and redevelopment actions in support of public policy and plans. All of these tools will be used together to shape Auburn in accord with the city’s Comprehensive Plan.

Keeping the Land Use Plan up to date is also an important task. The plan will be refined and detailed from time to time through preparation and adoption of Specific Plans. This will continue Auburn’s tradition of updating and refining the
Land Use Plan through special area studies and plans as market or physical conditions or level of interest on the part of local citizens or the Planning Commission warrants them. Through this extension of the planning process, city officials and staff, residents, property owners and developers may come together, accompanied by representatives of the county, state agencies and Auburn University, as appropriate, to plan in more detail for the creative development, redevelopment or simply enhancement of such areas.

Land Use Plan amendment and refinement are essential to consideration of planning for, designing, enabling and appropriately regulating the orderly development of all activity centers. It will also be necessary for proper consideration of potential redevelopment areas in accord with Alabama law. Upgrading of various neighborhoods and activity centers, short of redevelopment, would also be appropriate subjects for the Specific Plan process.

**GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION**

The Land Use Plan should not be confused with the city’s Zoning Ordinance. As its title indicates, a Land Use Plan is a *plan*—a *guide* to public and private investment in land use and infrastructure. In contrast, a *zoning ordinance* is just that—a regulatory tool used by the city to influence and direct development of the community in ways that reflect the direction and desired form called for in the Land Use Plan. The city’s zoning ordinance is one tool among several used to implement the vision, goals, policies and recommendations of the plan. The following table highlights the differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use Plan</th>
<th>Zoning Ordinance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides general policies—a guide.</td>
<td>Provides specific regulations—the law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes what should happen in the long-term—not necessarily the use(s) recommended or existing use today.</td>
<td>Describes what is and what is not allowed today, based on existing conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes recommendations that involve other agencies and groups.</td>
<td>Deals only with development-related issues under City control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible to respond to changing conditions.</td>
<td>Predictable, fairly rigid, requires formal amendment to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Land Use Categories (e.g., residential, commercial)</td>
<td>Zoning Districts (e.g., LDD, CDD, PDD, NC, UC, US, HD, R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Land Use Locations</td>
<td>Parcel-specific zoning designations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base document, declaration of policy</td>
<td>Implementation of goals/policies/plans</td>
</tr>
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The city’s zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, design review process, sign regulations, landscape regulations, and anti-neglect regulations, among others, are based on the police power. These address such critical elements of development as land use, site planning, buildings, landscape, aesthetics, and signage. Each of these regulations is framed to account for valid public purposes of the municipality and the appropriate enabling authority in each case. They also respect the principles of due process of law, non-discrimination in their application, profitable use of land, freedom of speech, and balancing individual costs vs. public benefits.
Auburn is fortunate to have what might be termed a “hybrid” zoning ordinance—a blend of prescriptive and performance forms of regulation that is ideally suited to regulation of retrofitting existing activity centers and planning and designing new ones. A *prescriptive* zoning ordinance regulates development, in patterns shown on the zoning map:

- *By directly prescribing permitted land uses and densities, and*
- *By mitigating impacts of adjacent land uses through prescribed separation of uses and densities.*

Within this prescriptive approach, planned developments, requiring approval of overall master plans and similar modifications, are intended to allow innovation by relaxing the strict application of such prescriptions, in recognition of the fact that livability—and good design—cannot be legislated. A *performance* zoning ordinance regulates development in accord with a physical vision of the city as shown in a Land Use Plan in districts designated on a zoning map, through two primary means:

- *By using the future land use element of the city’s plan as the guide to the location of primary uses, densities and other characteristics of the city’s vision, and*
- *By allowing land uses and development densities, within prescribed limits, in accord with market forces, and mitigating impacts of different uses and densities through the use of buffers.*

In contrast to both these “pure” zoning types, Auburn’s *hybrid* zoning ordinance has two purposes, and blends the methods of each type to accomplish its purposes:

- *To protect selected existing developed areas of the city in some approximation of their current condition by allowing only future development that is compatible and enriching to what is already present, and*
- *To allow development of uses and densities, within prescribed limits, in accord with market forces, in virtually all other areas of the city, mitigating impacts of different uses and densities through the use of buffers.*

**Zoning Ordinance Recommendations**

The Auburn Zoning Ordinance should be amended to link the zoning ordinance to the Land Use Plan in general, and to specify that all development in “DD” districts must be compatible with uses specified in the Land Use Plan. Consideration of any rezoning to enable development, redevelopment or expansion of the activity centers indicated in the Land Use Plan should first require preparation and Planning Commission adoption of a Specific Plan for the entire area in question. Consideration by the City Council for rezoning of the subject property should then require Planning Commission review and adoption of a Master Development Plan modeled after and compatible with the adopted Specific Plan that includes the area to be rezoned. Preparation of a Specific Plan could be set in motion by direction of the Planning Commission on its own volition, at the request of the City Council, or in response to petition by area residents, property owners and/or developers.
The Specific Plan would support and detail the Land Use Plan and the several other elements of the Auburn Comprehensive Plan. It would be used to guide planning and design of development within its area of interest and could also be used as a prerequisite for consideration of any development within Auburn’s “DD” zoning districts.

The Specific Plan detailing and refinement process emerges naturally from the need to keep the plan current and to regulate orderly revitalization of existing activity centers and development of new villages and the all-important center of each. The process will lead to ways in which the Auburn Zoning Ordinance might be amended to better guide and enable development. As an example there is a model Village Center District in the Appendix, a sample of how the Auburn Zoning Ordinance might be amended to regulate development of one of the activity center. The sample should be adapted as appropriate for use in all of the following:

- Neighborhood Center
- Community Commercial Center
- Commercial Support Center
- Industrial Support Center
- Major Gateway Center
- Minor Gateway Center
- Commercial Corridor
- Redevelopment Area

New Village Centers and Neighborhood Centers

To provide leverage toward timely completion and application of Specific Plans to new Village and Neighborhood Centers as they are defined in the Land Use Plan, no new commercial development or medium- or high-density residential development should be permitted within any of the “DD” districts in the absence of an adopted Specific Plan for the subject area. Further, no commercial development should be permitted within any of the “DD” districts in the absence of an adopted Specific Plan for the subject area and completion and adoption of a Master Development Plan for a Village Center District or Neighborhood Center District as defined in the Zoning Ordinance.

Existing Activity Centers

To provide leverage toward timely completion and application of Specific Plans to existing activity centers as defined in this Land Use Plan, approval of any proposed change in land use therein should require completion and approval of a Master Development Plan as defined in the Zoning Ordinance. During the review and approval process for such development plan, the Planning Commission should, using the policies of the Land Use Plan and any applicable Specific Plans for the subject area as an overall guide, employ the following checklist during the development review process for all activity center development requiring a master development plan or site plan approval.

- All buildings adjacent to a collector or arterial street shall provide a main entrance on the façade of the building nearest to and facing that street.
• Building façades shall provide a visually interesting environment and avoid uniform styles.
• Buildings shall be oriented toward the pedestrian by providing a direct link between the building and the pedestrian walking system, with emphasis on directing people toward the public street system.
• A building’s ground floor facing a collector or arterial street shall contain a minimum of fifty (50) percent unobscured windows, doors or display areas.
• Sidewalks shall be installed along all street frontages as needed for pedestrian mobility or safety appropriate to the location.
• All streets shall be designed to promote traffic movement conducive to pedestrian safety and to provide direct routes between nearby destinations as called for in the Land Use Plan.
• Parking lots shall be designed to provide through pedestrian paths, clearly identifiable by changes in material or elevation, from street to building.
• Pedestrian-scale light fixtures no greater in height than twelve (12) feet shall be provided along all areas accessible to pedestrians.
• Street trees shall be planted as specified by the city.
• In non-residential areas at least ten percent (10%) of the total site area shall be dedicated to accessible, usable, pedestrian sensitive open space. Where feasible, this standard should be fulfilled with plazas, courtyards or other similar public spaces at or adjacent to buildings.
• Surface parking lots shall include at least five percent (5%) of the total surface area devoted to landscaping distributed and designed in accord with an overall plan approved by the Planning Commission.
• Surface parking lots containing fifty (50) or more spaces shall be divided into smaller areas separated by landscaped areas at least ten (10) feet wide and by a building or a group of buildings.
• Parking structures shall be architecturally integrated or designed with an architectural theme similar to that of the main building(s).
• Parking structures located adjacent to collector or arterial streets shall have ground-level business uses along the street side(s).

Residential Development

To provide leverage toward timely completion and application of Specific Plans to all “DD” districts, no new medium- or high-density residential development, or any development requiring site plan review, should be permitted within any of the “DD” districts in the absence of an adopted Specific Plan for the subject area. Further such development should require completion and adoption of a master development plan as defined in the Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Commission should, using the policies of the Land Use Plan and applicable Specific Plan for the subject area as an overall guide, employ the following checklist during the development review process for all residential development requiring a master development plan or site plan approval.

• Neighborhoods shall be located sensitively in or strategically placed away from the most valuable or threatened natural resources
• Neighborhoods shall be planned and organized carefully in relation to the natural environment
• The citywide open space system shall serve as part of the neighborhood edge
• Neighborhoods shall be designed to conserve natural systems and thereby require less capital investment for earthwork, clearing and drainage
• The neighborhood shall be planned and designed in a manner appropriate to its context—to reflect its location in the community
• Dense development shall be located toward activity centers and corridors; less-intense development shall be located away from such areas
• There shall be included in each neighborhood a legible, compact center appropriate to the needs of the residents—for example, a park or usable community open space
• The neighborhood center shall be pedestrian oriented with easy vehicular and pedestrian access from within the neighborhood
• Neighborhoods shall be planned and designed to locate higher density housing to take advantage of neighborhood center amenities
• The neighborhood shall be designed and built with walkable, interconnected streets
• Neighborhoods shall accommodate the access needs of motorists while providing a convenient and safe environment for pedestrians
• Sidewalks shall be installed along all street frontages as needed for pedestrian mobility and safety appropriate to the location—at least one side of local streets and both sides of collector streets
• Blocks longer than 500 feet shall provide pedestrian cut-through paths
• Pedestrian-scale light fixtures no greater in height than twelve feet shall be provided along all areas accessible to pedestrians
• Street trees shall be planted as specified by the city.
• At least 15% of the total residential development shall be dedicated to accessible, usable, pedestrian-sensitive open space that includes appropriate focal points
• Neighborhood pedestrian accessibility shall be enhanced through use of cul-de-sac linkages, as well as trails within greenways or other open space systems
• Interconnected neighborhood streets shall be provided to assure alternate routes to every destination to diffuse automobile traffic
• Outdoor places shall be provided so that children to play safely away from their own homes
• Neighborhood street environments shall feature relatively narrow driving surfaces, ample sidewalks, street trees and front porches
• Neighborhood streets shall be planned and designed to provide a “calm” environment where drivers realize that driving fast or aggressively is inappropriate
• Buildings shall be sited close enough to streets to spatially define them as public spaces

REDEVELOPMENT

Auburn recognizes the need for redevelopment and enhancement of existing commercial and residential areas of the city. The following map indicates a number of these areas, each of which appears to contain symptoms of blight. In addition to physical blight, Alabama law allows for consideration of fiscal blight in determining the need for redevelopment. Fiscal blight describes land use and development conditions below their potential in a given area of the community. This lowers property values and commercial return, and thus lowers the fiscal
potential for the city to support city facilities and services. Portions of Downtown Auburn and its immediate surroundings exhibit characteristics of physical and fiscal blight and thus may be appropriate for redevelopment in accord with state law and city plans.

Specific locations indicated on the map to the left include portions of the following corridors and areas of the city:
- Beehive Road corridor
- Bragg Avenue corridor
- Glenn / Dean area
- Lakeview area
- North Gay Street Area
- North Ross Street area
- Opelika Road corridor
- South College Street corridor
- South Gay Street corridor
- West Glenn Avenue corridor
- Wire Road corridor
- Toomer Street to Donahue Drive / Magnolia to Glenn Avenues area
- West of Donahue Street / North of Martin Luther King Drive
- Trailer parks, including: Heritage, Starr, Holiday/Auburn Estates, Gentry

COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

As noted in the Introduction to this document, the Auburn Comprehensive Plan consists of a number of elements directly related to the use and development of land—and therefore the potential for Land Use Plan implementation. Auburn has several plans and programs underway that directly or indirectly will have significant influence over the patterns of movement and property accessibility in and around the city. Similarly, plans for major utility investment (most importantly, sewer and water systems) affect development marketability of land for higher density uses. All these plans are interdependent and mutually consistent.

Transportation corridors are channels along which people and goods move from place to place. These corridors include not only the streets in which motor vehicles may travel, but also the sidewalks, trails and greenways that should accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. As a public space, the street is one of the most important design elements the city can control. Often, the character of the street is even more important than the buildings in forming the image of the city, an activity center or a particular neighborhood.

Potable water service is generally available inside and commonly available outside the Auburn city limits. Service capacity and fire flows, respectively, are limiting factors to development in many of the unincorporated, outlying areas.
Water system plan implementation priorities and timing could significantly change the marketability of lands on the city’s perimeter. Thus, location and timing of improvements and extensions to both systems are of paramount concern for Land Use Plan implementation.

Sanitary sewer service generally is available or planned for most areas inside the Auburn city limits. Presence of sanitary sewer is a limiting factor for most any type of intensive development. Thus, sanitary sewer system plan implementation priorities and timing could significantly change the marketability of undeveloped lands inside the city.

The following are recommendations to those agencies charged with planning and design of mobility, accessibility and water, sewer and park facilities citywide, with an eye toward assuring mutual compatibility of all elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mobility and Access

The system of highways, streets, bicycles paths and walkways should be integrated with the development pattern to help promote a sense of connection and community while at the same time stressing the need to maintain roadway safety and capacity. Streets, in combination with the green infrastructure, are the backbone of community design. Together, they define the character of Auburn and its surroundings.

Auburn’s streets serve two essential purposes: access to property and mobility between destinations. Streets that attempt to serve both functions at the same time usually do neither as well as they should. The challenge is to provide a system that balances access and mobility, moves vehicles efficiently and restores a sense of community to neighborhoods. Auburn’s streets should move vehicles safely and efficiently, but they should also provide a pleasing experience for people in the vehicles as well as pedestrians and other users. The streets are gateways to communities and neighborhoods and convey a lasting image to residents, business and industry, and passersby. They should also be safe, comfortable, shaded, calm, connected and interesting. This is not simply a matter of aesthetics; the city’s economy is linked to its physical character, and must continually improve its image to remain competitive. An effective citywide streetscape plan should indicate how all aspects of the street environment are to work together.

Bicycles can play an increasing role in reducing auto dependence and improving the livability of the city, in addition to recreational uses. While bicycling may not be an option every day, properly designed and maintained bicycle facilities, coupled with a well-developed education program, can provide a reasonable reduction in the use of cars, enhancing the quality of life for Auburn residents. Auburn has recognized this fact for years and its bicycle planning and programs have been very effective. More bicycle plan implementation will be most supportive of Land Use Plan implementation.
Areas around elementary and middle schools have become increasingly congested with traffic from parents transporting children to and from school. Schools should be connected with adjacent neighborhoods by a network of sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and foot trails to provide safe and convenient access for school children. Schools and parent teacher organizations should be encouraged to actively plan for and work toward such improvements.

**Mobility**

Mobility is in part a function of options, and that requires interconnection of most city streets. The city’s Major Thoroughfare Plan identifies gaps in the existing local street network that often require individuals to increase the length of their trip and drive through congested areas as they move even short distances through the community. However, it does not provide a complete network and does not include any priorities. The next plan update should do so and consider at the same time the following mobility strategies.

An appropriately interconnected street network is one in which every street connects to at least two other streets. Thus, cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets should be used only in areas where environmental constraints impede connections to other streets, and internal vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle connections should be required within both existing and new development areas and between adjacent land uses. Developers should be required to plan for and effectively address the need for internal connections (roads, pathways, open space, etc.) between adjacent land uses, including residential subdivisions and commercial developments, to provide both primary and secondary means of emergency access. Mobility planning and design should incorporate the following strategies for retrofitting and constructing streets citywide:

- **Maintain an aesthetically pleasing street network that helps frame and define the community while meeting the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.**
- **Improve the image of the city’s major vehicular corridors by taking charge of development along them all.**
- **Landscape the edges and medians of major corridors to create a more positive image for the entire city by adding color, shade and visual interest.**
- **Consolidate existing driveways and require access for new development from side streets.**
- **Discourage non-residential traffic from travel on primarily residential streets.**
- **Treat residential streets as both public ways and neighborhood amenities.**
• Seek landscaped medians and appropriate access management along East University Drive, Shug Jordan Parkway, Wire Road, East Glenn Avenue, Opelika Road and North and South College Streets.

• Prepare a citywide street network plan that allows direct connections to local destinations without diverting extra traffic onto the arterial and highway system, to include policies for new subdivisions and a program to retrofit the existing system as needed.

• Require street system connections between new and existing developments to promote an interconnected roadway system throughout the community and discourage over-use of cul-de-sacs.

• Require planting of selected streets with street trees appropriate to their function.

Accessibility

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

• Separate conflict points – distance between major intersections and driveways should be regulated. As a general rule, driveways should not be located within the area of influence of intersections.

• Restrict turning movements at unsignalized driveways and intersections – the use of full directional unsignalized streets and driveways should be limited. Full movement intersections should serve multiple developments through joint use driveways or cross access easements.

• Establish design standards – design standards that address access spacing, the length of turn lanes and tapers and driveway dimensions should be developed for application throughout the city on arterials and major collectors.

• Traffic signal spacing – signals should only be installed when appropriate studies indicate their spacing and interconnection can be accomplished without significant impacts on corridor capacity.

• Turn lanes – left and right turn lanes should be required for all public streets and major access points to adjacent land uses.

• Shared driveways/inter-parcel access – joint use driveways should be required to reduce the proliferation of driveways and to preserve the capacity of the corridor.

• Pedestrian/bicycle planning – specific needs of pedestrian and bicyclist movements should be addressed. Traffic signals should be designed and timed to accommodate pedestrians in areas of significant activity.
Water System

The Water System Master Plan will provide a major loop water distribution system around the future perimeter of the city. This will allow construction of a network of interconnected interior mains, as needed to support growth over time. Storage capacity is in place—five elevated tanks along and just south of the city’s primary east-west ridge, and two elevated tanks on high ground to the north of Saugahatchee Creek to serve the northern edge of the city. The system priorities for expansion are consistent with the intent of the Land Use Plan.

Sewer System

The Sewer System Master Plan is organized around two treatment facilities—one each, north and south. The trunk sewer system serving the existing, intensely developed parts of the city is in place. Two major projects are underway: the S-5 trunk to better serve the industrial park and what will become the new southwest village, and the “Bottle Outfall” that will serve development west of Asheton Park. All other “tributary” trunks will be installed as growth demands.
Green Spaces and Greenways System

The Auburn Greenspace and Greenways Plan and the Land Use Plan are in mutual agreement throughout. A key component of the plan is appropriate location and availability of parks and open spaces throughout the community and in prominent locations in all villages and neighborhoods.

The plan recommends acquisition and development of a large-scale park facility, similar in nature to Chewacla State Park, in Northwest Auburn. There is included in the plan a network of linear parks/greenways through the city, which should be expanded throughout the city’s planning jurisdiction. Linear parks connect residential neighborhoods to schools, the library, recreation centers, pools, athletic fields and other park facilities. Greenways are an integral part of the park system and are especially important in linking residents to neighborhood parks. They provide safe access to parks, increase available open space and enhance the visual character of neighborhood service areas. The linear parks or greenways should include pervious paved walking and bicycle facilities and natural footpaths, floodplain lands along creek corridors and major utility easements, which may provide practical alternatives for land that might otherwise go unused. Additional land, outside the floodplain, should be considered for acquisition at strategic locations along creek corridors, where possible, to enhance the usability of linear parks for recreation purposes.

ANNEXATION

Auburn is well positioned to accommodate new residential growth accompanied by the commerce it generates. Generally speaking, more households bring more dollars to be spent in the community. However, residential growth by itself comes at a cost to the city’s services and facilities. Residential land uses are a drain on municipal finances, for it costs more to provide services to a household than it typically pays in ad valorem taxes. In contrast, owners of farm, forest and open lands pay more in local tax revenues than it costs local government to provide services to their properties. However, the critical tax for Alabama municipalities is sales tax, which shoulders the majority of municipal finances. Therefore, new residential growth should be balanced with commercial and industrial growth and preservation of farm and open space areas until such time as those areas may be added to the municipality in accord with the city’s Land Use Plan.
Annexation Criteria

As the city considers annexation of new areas, the ability to protect the city and its fiscal basis, its people and resources, as well as assure the ability to provide services, present and future, will be prime considerations. Annexation decisions, especially areas outside the outer loop, should take into account at least the following criteria, in addition to all elements of the Comprehensive Plan, when considering the appropriateness of annexation.

- **Efficiency of providing services**—will the annexation result in demand on public facilities and services that may exceed the capacity of such facilities and services, or will annexation cause or eliminate awkward and irregular boundaries that cause difficulty or inefficiencies in supplying utilities and services?
- **Economy—fiscal soundness**—will annexation of the property significantly add to the revenue base of the city? Comprehensive annexations that “pay their way” by covering the cost of necessary support services should have first priority.
- **Image compatibility/enhancement**—is the property to be annexed consistent with Auburn standards, character and image, or might annexation allow for the elimination of existing or potential land uses and improvements considered a blighting or deteriorating influence, or perhaps prevent the untimely or inappropriate development of property?

THE PLAN AND THE BIENNIAL BUDGET

City budget preparation and adoption is a responsibility mandated by state law, whereas Land Use Planning is viewed as more of an optional and occasional activity. As a result, the Land Use Plan typically becomes quickly dated, and the connections between the plan and budget—both critically important functions of local government—tend to weaken over time. A Land Use Plan update component added to the budgeting process can remedy this situation, and encourage everyone to get more fully involved in determining ways to help the city reach its potential. If Land Use Planning and budget processes are fully integrated with one another, it is more likely that city employees and private developers alike will make development decisions in accord with the desires of elected officials, the Planning Commission, city department heads, and citizens at large.

The Land Use Plan serves as a long-range framework for fitting together everything that relates to citywide growth and development. An integrated plan and budget process should account for all means through which Auburn proposes to take action toward Land Use Plan review, amendment and implementation. Plan implementation effectively involves everything city government does, thus all actions and expenditures must be organized and carefully coordinated. Specific responsibilities for carrying out city plans must be assigned to individuals, city departments, appointed boards and outside agencies. For that reason, an integrated Land Use Planning and city budgeting process will help the city manager’s office and City Council determine budget priorities, look toward periodic review and amendment of development regulations, and coordinate activities around the primary task of achieving city goals.
To coordinate citywide development policies and their implementation, each city department, each city board and commission (and non-city boards, commissions, agencies and other groups that may be seeking funding assistance from the city) should review and evaluate the Land Use Plan and include an evaluation and recommendations in budget reporting to the city manager. That report should include the following information and recommendations (as the instructions may apply in each case):

- **Current overall responsibilities of the department, agency, board or commission as provided by law and as perceived by the chairman, department head or executive.**
- **Current specific responsibilities for carrying out city policies and programs.**
- **All tasks perceived to be essential for achieving the city’s goals during the budget period that either are or should be the responsibility of the respondent.**
- **Suggested changes in city programs – to include but not be limited to regulations, capital investments, operation and maintenance, and intracity and intergovernmental coordination – the respondent perceives to be in the best interests of overall city plan implementation.**
- **Suggested changes in city policies toward growth and development as those are outlined in the Land Use Plan.**
- **Suggested changes in the respondent’s responsibility or authority that would better enable implementation of any or all parts of the Land Use Plan.**
- **A copy of the department or agency’s current budget, an audit or other appropriate financial statement, and proposed budget for the budget period.**
- **A preliminary budget proposal, including the personnel and capital equipment that will be needed by the respondent to deal with the above, and the portion of those costs it is requested the city bear.**

Such changes may be made simply to the Auburn budgetary system and reflected in the Biennial Budget Calendar as a way to keep plan implementation and updating on track with the budget.

The city manager’s office, upon receipt of all plan evaluations and recommendations, should review the combined results with department heads and others as appropriate, and forward the results, along with an early draft of the proposed budget for the next budget period, to the Planning Commission, whose members should review it regarding implications for amendments to the Land Use Plan. The Planning Commission should consider the implications of the report and budget as regards the Land Use Plan, and report to the city manager’s office the implication of budget priorities and their implications for Land Use Plan revisions, ordinance amendments and the need for intra-departmental and inter-governmental coordination. In this way, the Land Use Plan may be updated on a regular basis and coordinated with city infrastructure investment priorities.
VI. CONCLUSION

This is a long-range plan, and new neighborhoods and villages and activity centers will not be developed overnight. Nor will the “liabilities” identified in the Community Planning Workshop be resolved immediately. The plan does not provide “quick fix” solutions, nor is it simply an economic development platform. Rather, this element of the Auburn Comprehensive Plan joins with others in an effort to strengthen, revitalize and optimize all aspects of life in the community over the long term. The plan is intended to be a living document, to grow and change as local conditions change. It will, therefore, be necessary to amend the plan on a regular basis. Only through continuing to use, evaluate and amend the plan can Auburn reach toward the vision sought by all the dedicated people who contributed to the development of this plan.

This plan reinforces and adds a sense of physicality to the vision set forth for Auburn by the City Council and offers tangible guidance toward achieving that vision. Implicit in that vision is to further the city’s primary public purpose under Alabama law, which is “…to protect and promote the public health, safety and welfare…” of its citizens. This plan by itself cannot accomplish this.

Plan implementation will take time and goodwill. It will require looking outside the boundaries of the council chamber and mayor’s office and into the community and beyond. The city must strive to get more people interested and involved in implementing the community vision. The city must gather other agencies, public and private, on the same team. The city must take direct action on some of the recommendations of this plan by spending its own money. Further, the city must shape the action of others with not just more regulation, but effective regulation. The city must be willing to provide others with incentives to take the lead in development activities that would further the plan’s policies. And finally, the city must assure that it uses every power it has under the law in concert with every public investment it makes to support plan implementation.

As noted earlier, the Land Use Plan is intended to evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and to market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment can the plan fully serve Auburn, and only then can Auburn use it wisely as a creative tool as it seeks achievement of its comprehensive vision for the community.
APPENDIX:
AUBURN ACTIVITY CENTERS

As noted in the Land Use Plan document, investigation as to the community design characteristics and land uses that helped make Downtown Auburn (and all truly successful traditional small town downtowns and their surrounding neighborhoods) successful revealed several in each category. The following table is a representation of how these ideal activity center characteristics (defined below) should be applied to the planning and design of Auburn activity centers. The desired land uses in the table are meant as generic—comparable to the definitions found in the next Appendix of in the Auburn Zoning Ordinance, adapted to the specific context of each activity center.

The activity center design characteristics in the table above are defined as follows:

- **Positive sense of place.** The average person has a good feeling about the overall character of the place—the overall image of the place and its relation to the surrounding environment, feelings of safety, sense of arrival and departure.

- **Visual coherence.** The average person senses that things fit together in the place—signage to landscaping, the way the parking works in support of getting to one’s destination, the way most of the buildings seem to fit together.

- **Compact, densely developed core.** There is a relatively high density of development of the types essential to the character of the place, with greater density of development toward the middle and less toward the edges.

- **Intensive, integrated mixed uses.** There is a full range of uses appropriate for the type of place, and they are mixed vertically and horizontally rather than separated from one another into single-use areas.

- **Contains civic space(s).** Civic spaces are those that may be used for general, organized and informal meetings of persons, including unscheduled public activities and public events.

- **Internal vehicular circulation.** After arrival by vehicle at a center or corridor, a motorist may easily visit most any other location, on the same side of the major street, without having to re-enter that street.

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<th>CENTER OR CORRIDOR TYPE</th>
<th>Positive sense of place</th>
<th>Visual coherence</th>
<th>Compact, densely developed core</th>
<th>Intensive, integrated mixed uses</th>
<th>Contains civic space(s)</th>
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TYPICAL EXAMPLE

- Downtown
- Southwest Auburn
- Yarbrough
- Glendeen
- Village Mall Area
- South College
- Cox Road
- South College @ L85
- Technology Park

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• **Vehicular accessibility.** The place is readily accessible by motor vehicle to any licensed driver.

• **Pedestrian oriented overall.** The place demonstrates through pedestrian density throughout that it was planned and designed with the overall needs of pedestrian given priority over those of motorists and automobiles.

• **Pedestrian accessibility.** The place is readily accessible by pedestrians from surrounding areas without exertion of undue effort.

• **Intense anchor or center of activity.** The place contains some activity or function for which it is primarily and integrally known in the region, community or neighborhood, as appropriate.

• **Well-defined edges.** It is clear to most everyone where the place begins and ends without having to resort to walls or signs

These highly desirable characteristics and land uses have been reviewed for their general application to village and neighborhood centers. For comparison purposes they are organized into the following table. As the issue of retrofitting existing activity centers arises around the city, the following evaluations may be used to check what may be missing (and thus what might be needed as part of a retrofitting or refurbishment project) in each case to make the listed activity centers fully a part of the *City of Villages* as envisioned in the Land use Plan.
APPENDIX:
LAND USE TERMS

The following categories correspond generally to those on the Future Land Use Map.

**Civic Square/Green.** Public spaces, typically surrounded by canopy street trees, located in activity centers, primarily in Village Centers and Neighborhood Centers. A civic green is a primarily unpaved, formally configured, small public lawn or park. A civic square is generally paved.

**Commercial Corridor.** An existing linear community-scale activity center providing products and services primarily to community and regional residents.

**Commercial Support Center.** A new or existing regional-scale, primarily single-use activity center dominated by regional retail and service uses, including “big box” stores. They offer a different variety and scale of goods and services than do Village and Neighborhood Centers and Downtown—such as department stores, bookstores, furniture stores, toy stores, apparel shops, theaters, auto services and dealerships, hotels and motels, lumberyards, appliance stores, and restaurants, including fast service types. In some locations, mixed use projects may be appropriate.

**Community Commercial Center.** An existing community-scale, primarily single-use activity center typically thought of as a shopping center. They offer a different variety and scale of goods and services than do Village and Neighborhood Centers and Downtown—such as department stores, bookstores, furniture stores, toy stores, apparel shops, restaurants, motels, lumberyards, appliance stores, and restaurants, including fast service types. In some locations, mixed use projects may be appropriate.

**Compact, densely developed core.** A relatively high density of development of the types essential to the character of the activity center, with greater density of development toward the center and less toward the edges.

**Downtown.** The heart of the community, whose primary street intersection is Magnolia Avenue and College Street, and consists primarily of mixed-use development that includes pedestrian oriented commercial and service businesses, a wedge of Auburn University, residences, places of worship and civic and institutional uses.

**Gateway Center.** A new or existing regional-scale activity center providing products and services oriented primarily to visitors and through travelers, including facilities for use by temporary overnight occupants on a transient basis, such as hotels and motels, with associated meeting facilities and similar uses. Restaurants and other eating facilities, small retail shops, personal services.

**Gateway Corner Commercial Center.** A new or existing community-scale activity center providing “convenience” products and services to visitors, through travelers and local residents.

**Green Infrastructure.** Open space and natural resource areas comprised primarily of but not restricted to surface water, floodplains, steep slopes and erodible soils that together are used to provide a framework or structuring system within which to organize, locate and interconnect urban development.
**Greenways.** An integral part of the city’s green infrastructure. Links in the chain of the city park and open space system that include wildlife corridors, development buffers, and storm water recharge areas. They should eventually include all significant streams and appropriate portions of their floodplains, in accord with the adopted *Greenspace and Greenways Master Plan*.

**Industrial Support Center.** A new or existing large employment activity center, dominated by office, technology, light industrial and other job-generating land uses but containing relatively few retail and service uses except those concentrated at major gateways and other designated locations. Commercial storage facilities are not compatible with Technology Parks but may be appropriate in other industrial areas.

**Institutional-civic.** A traditional land use category typically including institutional, academic, governmental and community service uses and lands, and park, recreation and open space uses.

**Intense anchor or center of activity.** Some significant land use, activity or function for which an activity center is primarily and integrally known in the region, community or neighborhood, as appropriate.

**Internal vehicular circulation.** Once having arrived by vehicle at most any location within the activity center or corridor, a motorist may, without undue effort or extraordinary wayfinding abilities, visit most any other location, on the same side of the street, without having to re-enter that street.

**Mixed Use.** A development type in which various primary uses—e.g., office, retail and residential—may be combined (horizontally and vertically) in the same building or within separate buildings on the same site or nearby sites to increase opportunities for living and working in close proximity and support a pedestrian-oriented street environment.

**Neighborhood Center.** A new or existing neighborhood-scale activity center designed to meet the daily “convenience” goods and service needs of residents in two or three immediately adjacent neighborhoods. Typical uses include small convenience grocery, bakeries, drugstore, barbershop and salon, restaurant (non-fast food), dry cleaner and hardware store. Residential uses are desired above retail areas.

**Office/University Auxiliary:** Academic, research and institutional lands that are a part of Auburn University, including farm and agricultural lands away from the main campus.

**Office:** Professional office parks, primarily medical offices.

**Other Institutional/ Civic:** Governmental, community service, religious uses and associated lands.

**Park, Regional.** Large public land holding that preserves the natural character of the city while providing both active and passive recreation opportunities including hiking, camping, and canoeing. May be important for protection of historical sites, significant land features, watersheds and wildlife and as outdoor recreation centers.

**Park, Community.** Medium-size public land serving a range of both passive and active recreation needs for all residents of the community. According to location and context, may provide a mixture of activities and uses such as active sports fields; play areas, trails, informal practice fields, picnic areas, outdoor classrooms and gathering places such as a community center.
Park, Neighborhood. Small public parcel of land serving a relatively small residential area. According to location and need, should provide opportunities for appropriate levels and types of both active and passive recreation, and may include a place for informal community gatherings and neighborhood events, shaded paths, playground structures and open space for active play.

Square. Public open space that may occupy an entire block or share a block with significant public buildings in a Village Center or Downtown and provides a “stage” for formal civic functions, even as it is flexible by design to provide small gathering spaces that may be easily combined to accommodate public gatherings. Amenities may include lawns, formal design and fountains, large shade trees, broad sidewalks, benches and gazebos.

Plaza. The most formal type of public space—located in Downtown and Village Centers—typically planned and designed to accommodate civic functions and thus consist mostly of paved surfaces.

Park, Pocket. Green recreational space in urban spaces between buildings as well as structured open space in neighborhoods—an important part of the public realm that typically serves immediately adjacent buildings and residential areas.

Pedestrian accessible. The activity center is readily accessible by pedestrians from surrounding areas without undue effort or traffic-dodging abilities.

Pedestrian oriented (overall). A development planned and designed with the overall needs of pedestrian given priority over those of motorists and automobiles.

Positive Sense of Place. Provides to a typical person a good feeling about the overall character of the activity center—the overall image of the center and its relation to the surrounding environment, coupled with feelings of safety, and positive sense of arrival and departure.

Residential. Residential uses, based on existing and desired conditions, are noted on the Future Land Use Map as high, medium and low. High Density is 10 to 16 dwelling units per acre; Medium Density is 5 to 10 units per acre; and Low Density is 0 to 5 units per acre.

Vehicular accessible. The activity center is readily accessible by motor vehicle to any licensed driver without having to evidence extraordinary driving skills.

Village. A grouping of several neighborhoods, together small enough to allow building a sense of community—a group of people who support each other—yet large enough to maintain a cross-section of facilities and provide a reasonable range of daily services.

Village Center. A community scale activity center designed to provide focus, identity and convenient goods and services for a number of surrounding neighborhoods that comprise a Village. Typical uses include apparel shops, banks and professional offices, grocery, bakeries, drugstores, barbershop and salon, restaurant (non-fast food), dry cleaner and hardware store. Residential and office uses are desired and encouraged above retail areas.

Visual Coherence. The parts of the activity center present themselves in a way that a typical person would find they fit together well in the place—signage and landscaping, the
way the parking works in support of getting to one’s destination, the way most buildings seem to fit together.

**Well-defined edge.** It is clear to most people where the activity center begins and ends without having to resort overly to walls or signs.