Cahaba Heights, a geographically distinct neighborhood of Vestavia Hills, AL, has exceptional location in the Birmingham region just to the north and west of the intersection of Interstate 459 and Highway 280. The commercial centers are adjacent the regional shopping destination - The Summit - and offer shoppers and diners a rich variety of local and boutique options in contrast to the Summit's national chains.

A new regional hospital - Grandview - is scheduled to open in early 2016 just to the south of Interstate 459 and Highway 280 and many physicians, medical service providers and vendors are seeking locations for professional office space in the Cahaba Heights area.

Cahaba Heights serves as a "bedroom community" for those working along the I 459 corridor or in downtown Birmingham. The residents of this area have some of the highest spending power in the region.

## History of this project

Cahaba Heights was annexed by the City of Vestavia Hills in 2002 following a referendum of the area residents and the City, with the assistance of business owners, residents and other professionals developed a Community Plan in 2008 working with planners of the Birmingham-based KPS Group. There was extensive public engagement and input in the plan's evolution. As with all living-documents, it was always the intention that as opportunities presented themselves there would be additional investigations - in keeping with the principles and concepts of the 2008 Plan - to inform and guide new/incremental growth and development in Cahaba Heights

In late 2014 the commercial and residential areas around the intersections of Pump House, Dolly Ridge and Cahaba Heights have near 100% occupancy and little potential to meet the demands of news businesses and new residents who would like to be in this very desirable area. A number of businesses are located in ad hoc ways within older formerly residential houses leaving sites with high visibility and commercial potential under-performing both in their potential to meet business and customer demand and in their potential to generate sales tax and revenues needed to provide for good things for the citizens of Cahaba Heights. Additionally, the predominately single family residential areas flanking this commercial node offer little potential for the increasing demand for a variety of living choices in a walkable commercial "village" setting: lofts, townhouses, livework, condos, etc. The opportunity to investigate mixed-use development

options as called for in the 2008 Plan seemed incredibly timely with numerous properties in-play and the anchor institution of this area - The Cahaba Heights United Methodist Church - also exploring a new facility. In this context, a town hall meeting was convened to gather

input from the community. Stakeholders graciously agreed to challenge a set of architects, planners and city staff to explore the potential allowed if the entire area could be considered "at once" rather than project-by-project. The two-day "charrette" of intensive work resulted in the concepts and recommendations described and illustrated in this document.

These goals and principles were developed in concert with the 2008 Plan and were informed by the December 2014 Cahaba Heights Public Meeting. They guided the work/investigations of the charrette.

Make a more pedestrian-friendly, walk-able "village" in the Cahaba Heights Commercial Core along Cahaba Heights Road between Dolly Ridge & Summit Boulevard. Calm traffic and discourage cut-through traffic

Explore new street/pedestrian patterns/options

Create a civic identity/use in Cahaba Heights "Village" Center - Create community-gathering spaces in the heart

- Connect Cahaba Heights Village Center to the existing adjacent residential areas

- Create safe(r) ways to walk/bike to and from the Elementary School - Identify opportunities for a network of walking/biking trails

Identify new mixed-use opportunities – particularly in walking distance of the village center. Mix should include: Sites for new distinctive (local) retail, commercial

connecting to the commercial core(s)

and professional office - Sites for new restaurants, cafes, and specialty food Sites for more residential options – townhouses, lofts, and live/work

Explore development scale and massing that provides appropriate transitions between residential zones and mixed-use corridors of development

- Explore options for flood mitigation; sustainable infrastructure

# Assets & Opportunities

 Good long-term planning starts by identifying the attributes of an area, particularly those things that make a place distinct. Development concepts that build on these assets have the most potential to maintain the characteristics and character that people love about a place while managing new growth and change so that it is compatable and contributing. Many of the assets reported here came directly from Cahaba Heights citizens who participated in the pubic meeting that set the stage for this planning work.

"small town" feel - a real sense of community! "has everything you need without getting on the highway" a place where you can live, work, shop and worship a local elementary school

 locally owned shops, vendors and service providers anchor retail shops that are regional draws: Cahaba Cycles, Murphree's and Cahaba Hardware "good food" - lots of variety of dining choices

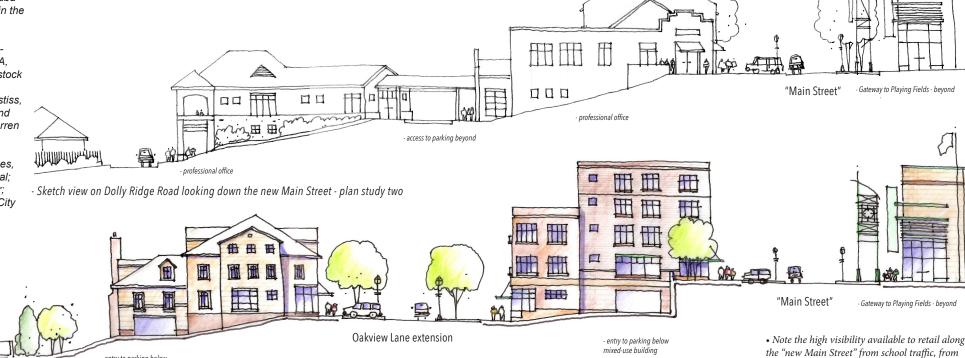
engaged local churches "great diversity of building styles" - not homogeneous looking "central location" - easy access to major connecting routes "safe" - excellent and responsive police and fire departments "responsive and accessable" elected and civic leaders

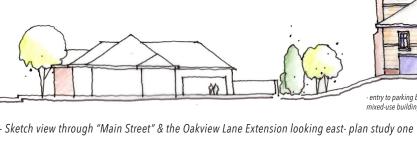
interest and demand for additional commercial space ineterst and demand for addtional residential space/options appreciating property values



 The City of Vestavia Hills would like to thank the many stakeholders who joined in this work effort with special thanks to Cahaba Heights Methodist Church for hosting our town hall meeting. We also thank the large group of interested Cahaba Heights citizens who supported this work by participating in the

· Architects and planners who contributed in this investigation - working under the leadership of Cheryl Morgan, FAIA, included: Stephen Allen and Jared Fulton, Williams Blackstock Architects; David Blackmon, Blackmon Rogers Architects; Shawn Calma, Latham Associates; Gary Justiss, Gary Justiss, Architect: Louis Neguette, Dungan Neguette Architects; and Chris Reebals, Christopher Architecture and Interiors, Darren Hamrick, Sain Associates, joined the charrette and also provided essential base material. City staff who played an integral role in the success of this project were: Jeff Downes, City Manager, Rebecca Leavings, City Clerk/Zoning Official; Chris Brady. City Engineer: Conrad Garrison. City Planner: Greg Gilchrist, Fire Marshal; Lori Beth Kearley, Assistant City Engineer, and Melissa Hipp, Assistant to Jeff Downes.





mixed-use building











- Bird's eve view

into the proposed

civic green at Cahaba

Heights Road and

the New Main Stree

looking down







idewalk cafe along a pedestrian-friendly stree ntown in Franklin, TN is the "trail-head" for wn's bike trails and greenways Ilman Hill mixed-use development in erenbe, GA earl Brewery, San Antonio Texa:

rookwood Mall's new Main Stree

parents waiting for kids, and from those partici-

pating in events at the playing fields!













Proposed new civic anchor 13. Proposed Pipe Linc

ew"Methodist church 14. New passive Park

Proposed Parking Deck 15. Proposed new end to Pipeline Rd.

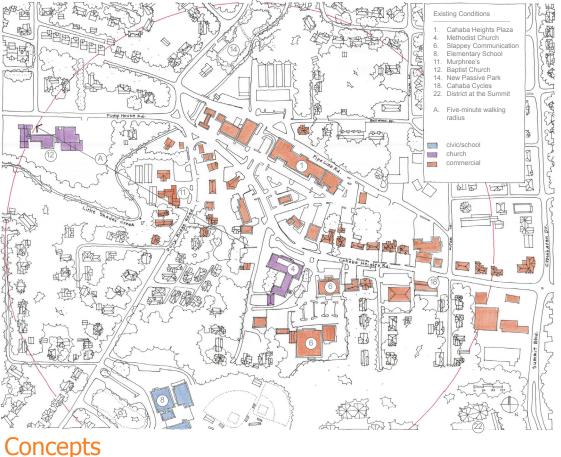
Proposed new Main St. 17. Proposed new Elementary School 18 Canaba Cycles

existing commercial proposed mixed-ux

proposed retail == proposed Pipe Line 15

illustrative plan study one

proposed mixed-use



· The concepts examined below, and diagrammed to the left, have a direct correlation to the goals and principles that guided this work . As with these goals and principles they are intended to guide decision making and development in Cahaba Heights "Village." There are multiple ways these concepts might play themselves out in development. The concept diagram, the two illustrative plans to the right and illustrations below are intended not to dictate those options but rather to help in visualizing the possibilities. They are intended to inspire

Make a more pedestrian-friendly, walk-able "village" in the Cahaba Heights Commercial Core along Cahaba Heights Road between Dolly Ridge & Summit Blvd.

a sense of the potential this study has revealed.

- Explore new street/pedestrian patterns/options Walk-able village centers are increasingly listed as a high priority for creating high quality of life and the potential to attract and retain businesses, professional services, distinctive retail and citizens who are making a commitment to the community. From young families to empty nesters and retirees, those places that bring us together as community are more and more associated with time spent out of a car in environments that are pedestrian-friendly and that encourage lingering with friends and neighbors. Walkable communities and village centers also give families options to use their cars

- Calm traffic and discourage cut-through traffic

less and provide true alternatives for walking to take care of day-to-day business. Cahaba Heights was developed in a time when the car corridor and expansive off-street parking were the priority. This makes for convenience but does not encourage a sense of safety for pedestrians - particuarly in trying to cross busy through-fares. These same car oriented through-fares have also encouraged "short cuts" through Cahaba Heights that have further eroded

As proposed in the 2008 Plan this investigation studied calming traffic along Cahaba Heights with a reduction in curb cuts; the addition of on-street parking with adjacent sidewalks: and the creation of additional signalized crossings at key pedestrian intersections. The addition of street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting and plantings will also slow traffic and make for a better pedestrian environment.

This study also proposes the addition of a new 'Main Street" linking Dolly Ridge at the Elementary School and Pipe Line Road. This street would be lesigned with pedestrians as the priority and have the raditional characteristics of a "village" street with narrow raffic lanes, street parking, well lit sidewalks and shops that come to the sidewalk. Buildings along the street are mixed-use with street level retail and professional offices and/or residential above. This new street would provide a true alternative for safe and easy access between the school, new mixed-use and the existing commercial core. The illustrations to the right show two ways this street might be developed. Note: the entire Village is within a 5-minute walking

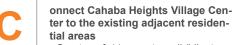
Create a civic identity/use in the Cahaba Heights "Village" Center - Create community-gathering areas in the village

Civic uses - community centers, meeting halls. ibraries - create as sense of civic identity for a village and provide a central place for citizens to come togeth-. A community or civic use is strengthened by the addition of an adjoining civic outdoor space that can amplify the type and variety of ways citizens can use, enjoy and spend time in their village center. Civic facilities also can become destinations that are good for near-by businesses by encouraging citizens to spend more time in the retail core. A good civic facility provides space for meetings; celebrations - birthday parties, family reunions, weddings; educational activities; and community

This investigation images a civic anchor on a visual axis from the "crest" of Cahaba Heights Road. This location is currently under-utilized as storage and could provide a village focal point with its adjoining "civc" green. Adjacent parking - shared with the Methodist Church - supports high attendance activities without a loss of retail/commercial parking capacity. While this is a location that is literally in the heart of the Village, the concept of a community civic space is the critical conept here. Alternate sites might be adjacent to the new park at the end of Pipe Line Road; or at the north end of the proposed new pedestrian-friendly "Main Street." The Methodist Church is - and has always been

- a strong institutional anchor for this part of Cahaba Heights. Their current investigation of redevelopment on their site has made many aspects of this study possible. They want their development to be a contributor to the potential of Cahaba Heights to really explore alternatives. Adjustments to their site are critical to either of the explorations of a new Main Street. The program of activities they image in their new facility - meeting/ worship, education, service and residential - is very Main Street friendly and is completely reinforcing of a mixed-use village center.

The new park that is being developed along Dolly Ridge north of Cahaba Heights and Pump House will provide a great place for community to gather in passive recreation. This study recommends that the park be enlarged to extend to the intersection. Additionally there is a recommendation that Pipe Line Road be discontinued as a vehicular route through this area of the park - allowing only pedestrian and bicyclist on this stretch. The extension of this park can provide a much stronger and more welcoming green gateway into Cahaba Heights Village.



- Create safe(r) ways to walk/bike to and from the Elementary School Identify opportunities for a network of walking/ biking trails connecting to the commercial core(s) of Cahaba Heights

Connectivity is central to strong communities Providing safe and easy ways to move around the community - particularly on foot or bicycle - fosters a healthier community with more opportunities to get to know your neighbors.

One of the most exciting outcomes of this study was the realization that Pipe Line Road and its right-of-way could connect so much of Cahaba Heights. The development of a biking/walking greenway along this right-of-way could provide an alternative route between many neighborhoods and the Cahaba Heights Village and Commercial Center. Additionally, the west end of a Pipe Line Trail would connect with Whole Foods on Highway 280 and the east end could connect to The Summit near the Cinemas. Cahaba Cycles, a regional ralproposed Trail. The new passive park along Dolly Ridge is an obvious trailhead, but effectively, the Village itself becomes Pipe Line Trail's interactive

The connection of the Pipe Line Trail to the new "Main Street" provides a safe and convenient way of moving from many of the neighborhoods to the Elementary School. For the north-south connect tor streets illustrated on the concept diagram the need and means for traffic calming and also traffic control at the key intersections (marked by gold circles in the diagram) is needed and would require study and a comprehensive design. Note: the Summit is within the 10 minute walking radius on the concept diagram; Whole Foods within the 20 minute walking radius. For most families a

dentify new mixed-use opportunities - particularly in walking distance of the village center. Mix should

20 minute walk is a ten minute bike ride.

- Sites for new distinctive (local) retail. commercial and professional office Sites for new restaurants, cafes, specialty food - Sites for more residential options – townhouses, lofts, and live/work

The concept of mixed-use amplifies the ability of areas of your community to thrive throughout the day and on nights and weekends. A mix of uses maximizes the potential to leverage the investment of infrastructure and services provided by tax-payer dollars and a place that has more people activity at all times is safer and friendlier. Mixed-use was a strongly endorsed concept in the 2008 Plan and was central to the exploration of this study with a goal of harvesting the potential of under-utilized

his proposal found two types of mixed-use zones.

The first of these zones is largely residential with some supporting com mercial and professional office. This zone is near the Elementary School along the new Main Street. The second is largely commercial and professional office with some residential. This zone is along the new Main Street, at Cahaba Heights Road and Main and on Pipe Line Road.

In each of these zones there is an expectation of an integrated development pattern that is urban not suburban. That is, internal streets with street parking, side walks, buildings that come to the sidewalk and supportive parking off-street behind build ing structures and/or in decks. Business owners, employees and residents parking off-street while "paying-customers" are parking along the street in time-limited parking. These parking scenarios are supported by a concept of shared parking and parking ratios that account for street parking.

Conceptualizing of each of these zones from a recruiting and promotional strategy would imply that destination businesses and professional offices have the lowest street visibility while businesses dependent on drop-in and impulse buying be in

the highest visibility locations with the most pedestrian traffic. Drive-throughs should be discouraged because they do not multiply the potential of one business to benefit their adjacent businesses' potential to thrive. Additionally, this study identified two

zones that offer potential for alternate housing options within the five-minute walking radius of the Village center. One is to the east and behind Cahaba Cycles. It is an excellent site for townhouses, makers' spaces and live/work could be the trailhead to a nature and hiking trail up through the Summit's residential apartments. This trail also lets this large number of residents walk down the hill to spend time and money in the Village.

The second site is north of Pipe Line - a site more suited for medium density residential coops and lofts. Alternatively, it would be an interesting site for a cottage concept. It's appeal would be the proximity to the Village Center and the proposed Pipe Line Trail. There is also a mixed-use zone that

was identified along Pipe Line that has been characterized as "Bohemian" in character and appeal. It could support a mix of coffee houses, music venues, live/work space and makers spaces. It could be the incubation space for businesses that are trying out their fit with the community and could easily host food-trucks ralleys and other Pipe Line Trail festivals and

- Explore development scale and massing that provides appropriate transitions between residential zones and mixed-use corridors of development

The geography of Cahaba Heights is an asset in developing higher density projects that do not loom over their one and two story neighbors. All developments should be assessed in context with their neighbors - both in regard to scale and use to confirm that there is attention to transitions of scale rather than abrupt abutments. New development should not degrade existing appropriate uses.

This plan recommends special attention to a zone along Dolly Ridge where heavy traffic makes it increasingly a poor place to live. This area is becoming better suited to professional office that transitions into the commercial zone of the Village. New guidelines should be developed to insure development that is sensitive to adjacent residential.

- Explore options for flood mitigation; sustainable infrastructure

An extension of the passive park along Dolly Ridge and proposed new development on the southwest corner of Dolly Ridge and Pump House provides some opportunity to redevelop this entire intersection and use creek side retention and permeable paving to help mitigate flooding.

new Main Street. In One, Main Street is the upper street and parallels the lower street: Oakview Lane. There is a new intersection of Oakview Lane with Cahaba Heights Road, and Oakview Lane extends west to Dolly Ridge Road. In Two, Oakview Lane is eliminated with Main Street becoming the focal pedestrian-friendly village street connecting Dolly Ridge Road/the Elementary School with Cahaba Heights Road and the proposed Pipe Line Trail. Both versions of Main Street are relatively level between the School/Playing Fields and the "new" Cahaba Heights Methodist Church. This allows for easy walking and the potential for a variety of cafes, coffee shops and stores to "spill-out" onto the wide, well-lit, and shaded sidewalks.

• These illustrative plans - one and two - are intended to help visualize the opportunities identified during the charrette and to show that there are a variety of

ways the goals and principles of this investigation might be realized. The primary differences between these two schemes are in the alignment of the proposed

The purpose of a plan is to get to action. The following are immediate strategies for moving from plan to action.

 Adont this Plan as an Amendment to 2008 Cahaba Heights Community Plan Engage with the existing

property owners and pursuant developers in the Project Area o encourage integration of the Plan principles with immediate opportunities

to ensure development that is consistent with the Revised Plan - Access Management - Consider Form Based Code or other Smart Code Alternatives

 Begin immediate engineering studies for Pipe Line Bicycle & Pedestrian Trail; Main Street/ Dakview Lane realignment, and other traffic engineering/storm

Consider various funding alternatives for proposed infrastructure and civic improvements - a Tax Incremental Financing District (TIF) Business Improvement Districts (BID)

 Continue Public Engagement as Project opportunities evolve





- street level retain with professional office and/or residential above

Sketch view, looking north, of potential mixed-use along the new Main Street across from the Elemenatary School



Sketch view, looking west, of potential mixed-use along the new Main Street across from Slappey Communications

five-level parking deck provides almost 400 parking places for the new Village Cen