

City of Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan 2004-2025



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By the Vestavia Hills City Council

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Developed by the Vestavia Hills Long Range Planning Committee
With assistance from the Regional Planning Commission
Of Greater Birmingham

VESTAVIA HILLS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan is to provide a policy document to guide Vestavia Hills public officials and citizens in their planning efforts as they prepare the city for growth and development in the future. The community's continued growth increases the requirement for the City to have a policy document that will guide future land use, infrastructure improvements, and private sector investment. This report provides that policy guidance. It is divided into five (5) sections: Vestavia Hills Today, Vision, Goals and Objectives; Planning Influences; Development and Growth Plan; and Conclusion.

Existing Conditions

This portion of the report includes an analysis of the physiographic characteristics of the city, community services and facilities, zoning, vacant land, and unincorporated areas. The report analyzes in detail the topography, soil conditions, residential and commercial development, infrastructure, and community services and facilities. This portion of the plan provides the basis for analyzing future land use and development.

Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The vision for Vestavia Hills is to preserve and enhance a strong sense of place while at the same time enhancing current conditions: improving neighborhood safety and livability; promoting healthy economic growth; providing continual educational excellence; enhancing connectivity

between the various areas of the city; promoting responsible environmentally friendly land use; and providing increased recreational and cultural opportunities for citizens. The five specific goals that support this vision are:

- Maintain a quality residential environment
- Create an aesthetically pleasing community
- Provide quality public facilities and services
- Promote orderly growth
- Increase connectivity throughout the city

Planning Influences

Planning influences considered in analyzing the city's growth potential include demographic conditions and trends, physiographic conditions, annexation potential, current development patterns, economic development, and natural resource preservation.

Development and Growth Plan

This portion of the report provides a detailed analysis on future growth in the city with an emphasis on economic growth and connectivity. The plan is described in written form and graphically, to include a Future Growth Concept Map and a Future Land Use Map which detail the basic guidelines for the future. This data with its supporting written documentation provides the city with a guide for future decision making with respect to planning and zoning matters. Each area of the city is analyzed and recommendations are made with regard to all aspects of future land use and growth.

Conclusion

The land use development concepts and plans proposed in the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan allow the city of Vestavia Hills to continue to enhance its outstanding quality of life by detailing principles and policies that the leadership of the community can follow to ensure that land use, growth and development are managed in a way that meets the city's vision. Implementation strategies detailed in the plan to preserve and enhance quality of life and economic sustainability include: improving the Highway 31 corridor with the creation of a Commercial Revitalization Plan for the southern and central commercial districts; developing a Community Revitalization Plan for Cahaba Heights; establishing specific improvement goals for Columbiana Road, Rocky Ridge Road, Acton Road and the Cahaba River Road areas; and coordinating with Liberty Park Joint Venture to accomplish the Liberty Park Master Plan, increase connectivity, provide convenient community services, and support green development along the Cahaba River.

Specific strategies include:

- implementing the Walkways Masterplan;
- developing neighborhood parks;
- planning for a grade separated interchange at Green Valley Road and US Highway 280;
- improving the road network in Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park;
- supporting interstate access on Interstate 459 for Liberty Park;
- making city gateway design improvements;
- developing and refining zoning codes to meet the planned land use;
- supporting regional transit initiatives;
- annexing land that will improve the city;

- and maintaining a fiscally responsible budget that provides for services and growth on a responsible basis.

The land use, development, and growth initiatives enunciated in the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan, when supported by strong leadership dedicated to the needs and desires of the community, and with citizen input at all stages, provides Vestavia Hills with a policy document that will allow the city to create an even stronger sense of place which all of our citizens can enjoy and so richly deserve.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Planning for Local Governance

The Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan is both a comprehensive and strategic document. The Plan is *comprehensive* in that it balances community values and preferences with land use, economics, environment, and transportation. The Plan is *strategic* in that it provides both short-term and long-term actions that are required for the Plan to be implemented. For the vision presented in this plan to become a reality, additional steps must follow its adoption. These include:

Revision of municipal ordinances and regulations to ensure the Plan's goals and policies are properly reflected, implemented and enforced;

Development of a capital budget and program to outline long-term funding needs and commitments;

Development of area-specific plans, programs and policies to offer more detailed and site-specific strategies for selected parts of the City;

Ongoing evaluation of plans, policies and programs; and

Continuing community involvement in the planning and governing process.

This Plan must be considered a "living document". As a framework for growth over many years, it must be continually reviewed, modified, and expanded over time to reflect any changing circumstances and opportunities, which may occur with new development or other large impacts to the community.

The Comprehensive Plan

The City's Comprehensive Plan is a **guide** to growth and development for the public officials and citizens who help shape the community of Vestavia Hills. The Comprehensive Plan presents a **vision** for future land use (Land Use Concept), and is intended to prepare the City for new growth and development, and provide a consistent basis for public and private investment in the future.

The Comprehensive Plan is a **policy** document that describes Vestavia Hills' official vision of the physical form and appearance desired for the City as it continues to grow over the coming years. The Growth and Development Plan attempts to answer the question "what do we want Vestavia Hills to be like in ten or twenty years from now?" Thus, the Plan provides a long range vision for:

- The geographic arrangement of various land uses within the City, including the arrangement of commercial, office, institutional and residential land uses (at varying intensities of development).

- The desired characteristics and qualities of the community.
- Future roadways, pedestrian ways, and bicycle paths.

As a policy document, the Vestavia Hills Plan serves a different purpose than a City ordinance. Ordinances and ordinance amendments, are legally-binding procedural rules and statutes governing the municipal government and its citizens. Ordinances set forth law. A policy document, on the other hand, is not law. Rather, it is an official statement by the municipal government of its growth management vision, policies, and intentions. The future growth and land use concepts in this plan, then, are the City's official declaration of the desired character and pattern of future development in Vestavia Hills. But beyond being simply a declaration of the City's official vision for Vestavia Hills, these growth concepts are actively used to guide development in the following ways:

- **The Comprehensive Plan's Growth and Development Plan guides application of the City's zoning, annexation, subdivision, and other development regulations.**

All aspects of the City's codes and ordinances dealing with growth, development, and community appearance are administered in accordance with the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan. When a new annexation, rezoning, planned unit

development (PUD), or subdivision request is filed with the City of Vestavia Hills, city planning staff reviews and evaluates the application and prepares a formal recommendation regarding the application to the Planning and Zoning Commission and/or City Council as appropriate. This report includes an evaluation of the degree to which the proposal conforms with the intents and policies of the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan.

This forms an important connection between the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan and the pattern and character of development that occurs in Vestavia Hills in the future. Only through the proper administration of ordinances in conformance with the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan, can the community achieve the form and vision committed to by the community and the City.

- **The Comprehensive Plan steers growth in Vestavia Hills by guiding infrastructure improvements and public investment.**

The City of Vestavia Hills' departments use the Plan to guide planning for their own long-range public facilities, services and infrastructure needs. For example, the Public Works department uses the Plan to develop plans for infrastructure and other improvements within the City. The Parks and Recreation Department uses the Comprehensive Plan to anticipate where new growth will occur and where new parks will be needed. Similarly, the Police and Fire Departments use the Plan to anticipate where new growth will occur in order to determine staff

requirements and the location of new stations.

As a result of this City-wide reliance on the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan, development of long-range facilities, infrastructure, and services shall reflect the intent of the Plan. And, since development tends to follow infrastructure and public facilities expansion, new development will occur most readily around transportation improvements, new parks and community centers, and utility improvements. In this way, the Plan naturally influences the course of private development.

- **The Comprehensive Plan's Growth and Development Plan guides growth in Vestavia Hills through private sector use of the Plan in making investment decisions.**

The Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan is the City's strongest official statement of where future growth and development should occur and the character of development desired by the community. As such, considerable importance is placed on the Plan by landowners, the development community, businesses, and citizens alike. Landowners and property buyers rely on the Plan to inform them of what type of growth may occur around them. Businesses choose site locations and formulate business plans on the basis of the type, nature, and arrangement of future land uses delineated in the Plan. Subdivision developers and homebuilders select locations that will be convenient to future public facilities and

complementary future land uses, such as grocery stores. Likewise, commercial developers select sites and plan projects based on the location and type of expected residential development identified in the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan.

In this manner, the vision embodied by the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan becomes "institutionalized" in the assumptions of the community. As more parties move forward with plans based on the intentions within this plan, use of the Growth and Development Plan as a decision-making framework ensures that the community vision becomes a reality. Reliance on the Plan also helps to avoid or reduce conflicts between citizens and developers, since both parties can proceed from a common vision about future development in Vestavia Hills.

- **The Comprehensive Plan guides growth in Vestavia Hills through its recommendations for new ordinances, policies, and studies.**

In addition to providing a clear vision for future growth, the Vestavia Hills Comprehensive Plan also makes recommendations for City actions that will help to make that vision a reality, including recommendations for new ordinances and improvements to existing ordinances. The Plan also makes recommendations for specific City projects, policies and initiatives that are not covered by ordinances. Lastly, the Plan makes recommendations for follow-up studies and projects that are necessary to implement the Plan.

PLANNING PROCESS

Long Range Planning Committee

The comprehensive planning process for Vestavia Hills began with the City's appointment of a Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC), a volunteer panel of community business leaders, City representatives, and residents. The LRPC was initially created in 2000. With assistance from the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPC), the LRPC began acquiring the necessary resource information and inventorying existing development conditions to start the planning process. Through the LRPC, the City held three community workshops in 2001 to determine the needs and desires of the community's residents and businesses.

From this initial phase, the Long Range Planning Committee established a list of goals and objectives, which formed the basic framework and vision for the Comprehensive Plan. As these planning efforts continued, the Cahaba Heights community in unincorporated Jefferson County became a new addition to the City. This development signaled an important benchmark in the City's history and in its planning for its residents and businesses. Members of the LRPC were involved in the assessments performed for the City in the incorporation of the existing community, and after incorporation, representatives of Cahaba Heights were appointed to the LRPC to continue work on development of

the City's Comprehensive Plan.

In the fall of 2002, the expanded Long Range Planning Committee, with consultants from the Regional Planning Commission, began putting the Comprehensive Plan document together and formulating the policy recommendations and service, development, and transportation strategies that would fulfill the goals set out for the Plan and the needs of the community from which they arose.

Community Involvement Process

To continue on with the community involvement process initiated in the 2001 workshops, in December 2003- January 2004, the LRPC once again hosted a final round of community meetings to present the draft Plan to residents and receive their final input. Meetings were held for residents of southern Vestavia Hills and for residents of Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park. Subsequent to these meetings, the LRPC finalized the document and presented the Comprehensive Plan to the City's Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council for final adoption.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chapter I: VESTAVIA HILLS TODAY

LOCATION

Located predominantly in southern Jefferson County with a few properties in extreme northern Shelby County, Alabama, the City of Vestavia Hills lies approximately five miles south of downtown Birmingham. It covers 18.27 square miles or 11,693.17 acres. Vestavia Hills is centered between the crest of Shades Mountain and the Cahaba River to the south and southeast of Birmingham. The major, regional routes that serve Vestavia Hills are I-65 to the east and southeast, I-459 generally to the south of Vestavia Hills continuing northeasterly, and Highway 280, which bisects Vestavia Hills in a southeast and northwest direction. I-65 connects Vestavia Hills to Huntsville (north) and to Montgomery (south). Both I-65 and Highway 280 are major arteries to downtown Birmingham and to I-20/59, which connects west to Tuscaloosa, north to Chattanooga, and east to Atlanta. I-459 is the southern beltway around the metro Birmingham area, also connecting to I-20 and I-59.

Other major roadways include: Columbiana Road and Highway 31, which run north and south through Vestavia Hills; Rocky Ridge Road, connecting Highway 280 and Highway 31, generally runs north and south through Vestavia Hills; Shades Crest Road, which generally follows the northwest boundary of Vestavia Hills connecting Columbiana Road and Highway 280; and Overton Road, a continuation of Shades Crest Road extending southwest and northeast between Highway 280 and I-459. Overton Road connects sections of Vestavia Hills, but is generally within Mountain Brook.

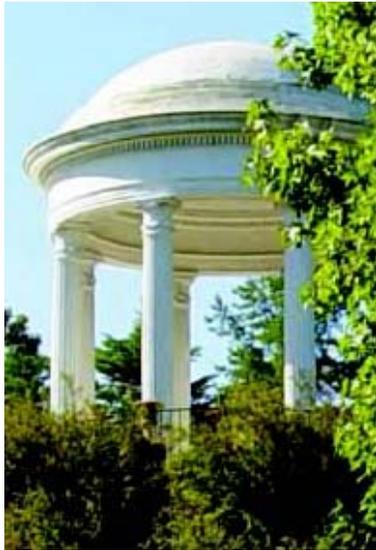
Vestavia Hills is bordered to the north by Homewood and, generally, to the north by Mountain Brook and Irondale. To the east, southeast and partially south, Vestavia Hills is bordered by unincorporated Jefferson County and Birmingham. To the south and west, Vestavia Hills is bordered by Hoover. **Figure #1: Planning Area and Location Map** shows the extents of the City in relation to these neighboring cities and the major road network serving the Vestavia Hills area.

HISTORY

(Condensed from *Vestavia Hills, Alabama: A Place Apart*, by Marvin Yoemans Whiting)

As 19th century gave way to the 20th century the heavily wooded and mountainous area of Shades Mountain remained relatively undeveloped. The Shades Mountain region was difficult to develop because of its relative inaccessibility from the Birmingham area to the north. Access from Birmingham was limited by treacherous dirt roads that snaked up the mountain and became virtually impassible during rains and inclement weather. It was not until 1916, when Edgar Jones Smyer, the President of Title Guarantee Loan and Trust Company in Birmingham, completed the 3 ½ mile stretch of road that ran from the present day Birmingham Water Works Filter Plant to the top of the mountain, that the area became accessible for development. Early settlement of the Shades Mountain region was given another boost in 1922 when a second portion of this road was completed creating the section of Shades Crest Road that runs between what is now Smyer Road and Highway 31.

Another of the early influential residents of the area was George Battey Ward, a former two-term Mayor of Birmingham who built his estate named "Vestavia Hills" atop Shades Mountain. Mr. Ward's fascination with the classical Greco-Roman era inspired his construction of replicas of the ancient Roman Temple of Vesta and Temple of Sibyl, which currently serves as a historical gateway into Vestavia Hills from the north.



Sibyl Temple atop Shades Mountain

Between 1924 and the late 1940's a number of adventurous settlers moved to the region and by 1950 the area population totaled 607 residents. From this point forward, Vestavia Hills grew at a rapid pace. In 1950, residents petitioned the Jefferson County Probate Judge to call an incorporation election to create the town whose name would reflect the influence of George Battey Ward. The incorporation election to create the Town of Vestavia Hills was held on October 24, 1950 and passed by a vote of 88 for and 8 against the proposition.

By late 1957 the population had grown by almost five times its size in 1950 to a total of 2,995 residents, and the Town of Vestavia Hills officially

became a City. From the period 1956 to 1966 commercial development sprang up along the Montgomery Highway corridor. A series of annexations to the south of the city's boundaries led to a period of continued growth and by 1970 the population of Vestavia Hills reached a total of 8,311 residents.

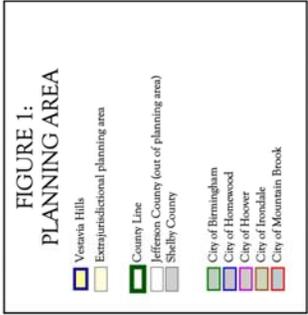
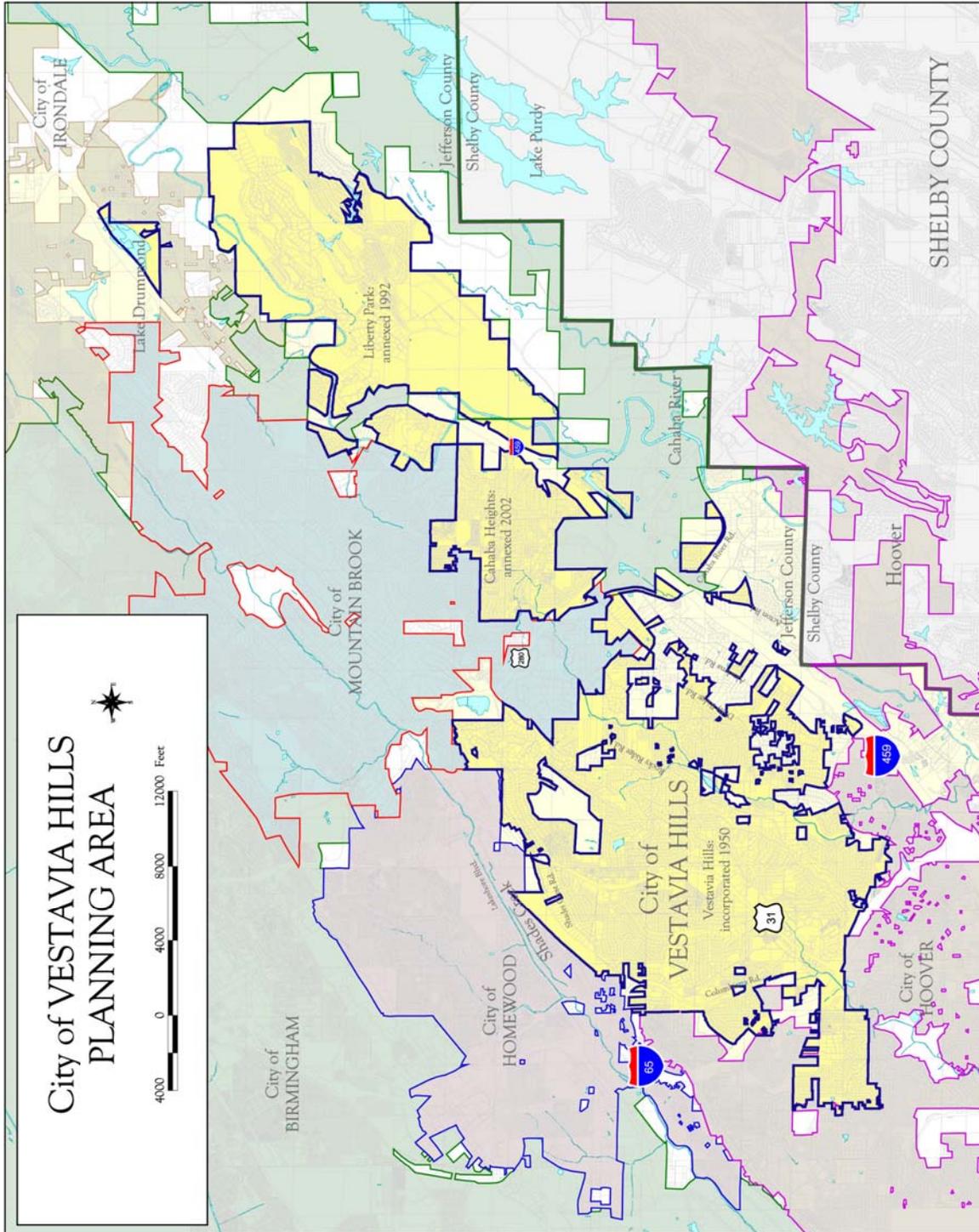
The opening of the Red Mountain Expressway in 1977 and the creation of Vestavia Hills' own school system in 1970 spurred continued growth and the population by 1980 numbered 15,729 residents. The significant annexations of the Rocky Ridge and Altadena areas in the 1980's, Liberty Park in 1992 and Cahaba Heights in 2002 expanded both the population base, now numbering 30,400 residents, and the commercial base of the City of Vestavia Hills, Alabama.



Gazebo at southern gateway
(Montgomery Highway and I-65)

PLANNING AREA

This map shows the location of the City, in southeastern Jefferson County, Alabama. Vestavia Hill is surrounded by five other communities: Birmingham, Homewood, Hoover, Irondale, and Mountain Brook. The City's planning area includes all areas within its current municipal limits as well as unincorporated areas surrounding the City



EXISTING CONDITIONS

PHYSIOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Floodplains

Floodplains are areas that are frequently inundated by rising water levels during major storm events. Flooding occurs within a floodplain whenever stormwater runoff collects or accumulates at a faster rate than the receiving river or creek is capable of transmitting the excess downstream. Development within floodplains is not recommended for two reasons. First and most importantly, the periodic inundations that occur within floodplains pose a serious threat to lives and property. Second, the addition of impervious surfaces and structures within floodplains can impede the flow or absorption of floodwaters, thereby increasing the chances or intensity of upstream flooding during major storms.

Vestavia Hills has numerous water features, three of which have been mapped from information received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Maps. These maps show floodways, special flood hazard areas, and 500-year flood events. All streams are southern flowing; and they are: Patton Creek, Little Shades Creek, and the Cahaba River. Patton Creek is located along U.S. and under U. S. Highway 31 in the southern portion Vestavia Hills. Patton Creek has had a long history of flooding and damage to developments in this area. Little Shades Creek crosses and, for the most part, parallels Rocky Ridge Road. Significant influence to development along Rocky Ridge Road has been caused by Little Shades Creek. The Cahaba River flows around the

northern portion of Liberty Park and forms a natural border along the eastern edge as it crosses Interstate 459 in two locations. These waterways and their associated floodplains are shown in **Figure #2: Floodplains Map.**

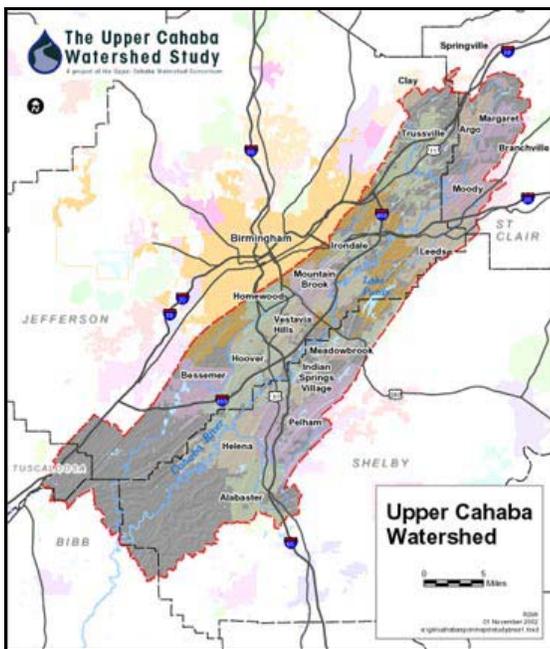


Vestavia Hills Bowl, one of several properties threatened by flooding along Patton Creek

Although floodplains limit some types of development, they also provide opportunities for natural and recreation areas important to the community. Preserving natural areas and strengthening access to them is an important planning element being addressed by the City's Trails and Sidewalks Committee.

Another important aspect of the community's hydrologic features is the condition of the Cahaba River and surrounding watershed. This watershed completely encompasses the City and major portions of adjacent municipalities. The watershed is defined by two major ridgelines in the region, Red Mountain to the northwest and Double Oak Mountain to the southeast. All natural drainage occurring between these ridgelines eventually makes its way to the Cahaba and its tributaries. The Cahaba River is also the primary source of drinking water for communities in the region south of Red Mountain. Over the past twenty years, increased development has impacted water quality in the river. This has become a critical issue in the region and has led to the creation of a

consortium of local governments to study the problem. The first phase of the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study involved on-going interaction between County and municipal governments and the public in examining the state of the river, the possible impact of continued development patterns, and future policies to protect the river. A second phase has been proposed to create a “greenprint plan” and recommended strategies and regulations to minimize future impacts to the river.

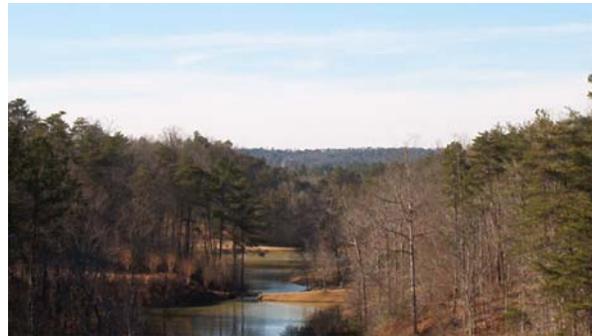


Regional Map, Upper Cahaba Watershed Study Area

Topography

The originally incorporated portion of Vestavia Hills lies between the extremes of Shades Mountain and the Cahaba River with ridges and streams intermittent within. The older portion of the city and its northern boundary was established along the crest of Shades Mountain. From the mountain crest the city developed southward along U.S. Highway 31 (also known as Montgomery Highway). Available flat site areas limited

commercial development and the majority of land was developed as a residential community even along U. S. Highway 31. The City's varied topography is shown in **Figure #3: Topography Map**. This shows not only the geographic contours in the Vestavia Hills area, but also depicts areas of "severe" slopes (15% and greater), which can be an impediment to land development.



Scenic ridges in north Vestavia Hills

A number of ridges such as Little Valley Mountain, Jones Ridge, Dolly Ridge and Rocky Ridge all run northeast to southwest. In between are two significant creeks and a river. These are Patton Creek, Little Shades Creek, and the Cahaba River. The significance of these topographic features is that there is an abundance of slopes 15% or greater, which have been developed over time. Areas of 15% or greater are usually considered undevelopable for larger projects such as retail, offices, institutional buildings, schools, etc. Therefore, smaller-scaled residential developments are in most of these steep slope areas. As a result, over 90% of the original Vestavia Hills area has developed for residential - leaving about 5% for commercial and 5% for all other development types. Whereas the vast elevation changes creates challenges, it does offer opportunities of great scenic views

Since its original incorporation, Vestavia Hills has annexed two significant land areas - Liberty Park and

Cahaba Heights. Most of Liberty Park also has steep topography, but is balanced with open flat areas designated for commercial and residential development and stormwater management. Approximately 20% of Liberty Park can accommodate non-residential uses. Cahaba Heights is generally flatter, with very few areas with slopes of 15% or greater, though steeper areas exist close to I-459.



Stormwater management pond in Liberty Park

Soils

The ability of soils to support development depends upon a combination of physical characteristics such as texture, depth, and chemical composition. Soils may represent important limitations to development according to a range of factors: shallow depth to bedrock (or the water table), excessive shrinking and swelling due to changing moisture content, periodic inundation from flooding, and erosion or instability resulting from excessively steep slopes. The degree to which different soil types pose constraints to development is assessed in County Soil Survey reports prepared by the U. S. Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In characterizing soil constraints for building site development, sanitary facilities (on-site septic

systems), road construction, and other planning and development concerns, the Conservation Service developed a rating system, which classifies soil constraints as "slight," "moderate," or "severe". These classifications are based on the relative level and cost of site engineering needed to overcome the specific development limitations of each soil type. Soils that possess severe limitations for development should not be committed to intensive land use activities. As part of this Plan's assessment of Vestavia Hills's physiographic conditions, Jefferson County soil survey maps were reviewed and soil constraints were identified and mapped. This assessment focused on two issues for the community: building site development and road construction. **Figure #4A and #4B: Soils Maps** describe these conditions and illustrate the varying levels of "developability" within the community according to the ability of soils to support such development.

Due to the Vestavia Hills area's varied and sometimes intense topography, development is often affected by steep slopes and shallow depths to bedrock. It is important to note that such areas, shown to have severe soil limitations, are not "undevelopable", but rather they are likely to incur greater costs in site preparation. Similarly, such modifications to sites may also have impacts on surrounding areas, such as stormwater run-off. Therefore, it is important that site-specific assessments should be carried out when potential developments or road projects are being considered; and that the effects of site alterations are also reviewed to determine any potential harm that may come to adjacent areas.

Figure #4A depicts soil suitability for the construction of local roads and streets; while **Figure #4B** depicts suitability for site development. In both maps,

conditions are categorized by the level of constraint they represent: slight, moderate, moderately severe, and severe. As can be seen in **Figure #4A**, soils conditions throughout the City are often "severe", much of this being due to dramatic topography and rocky composition of land. Large pockets of moderate soils can be seen along the higher elevations of the planning area: Panorama Drive, Altadena Road, and Dolly Ridge. Areas in Cahaba Heights, Tyler Road, Columbiana, and Acton exhibit similar conditions. Pockets of slight soils can be found along Highway 31, Acton Road, and also in Cahaba Heights. Much of the land along Highway 31 is considered "urban land" according to the soils analysis. Urban land is considered to have only slight constraints due to amount of development that has occurred in the area in the past. **Figure #4B** shows a very similar relationship of soils for building site development. Many of the same moderate and slight areas identified in **Figure #4A** show up again in the soil analysis for site development. The best soil conditions can be found along Highway 31, Cahaba Heights, and Acton Road.

Composite Conditions

Figure #5: Composite Conditions Map, is an overlay of the flood, topography, and soils conditions which have had an impact on the development of the Vestavia Hills area and that will continue to influence planning and development for the community. As can be seen from this map (and the three individual maps on flood, topography, and soils), the geographic characteristics of the Vestavia Hills area are varied and often intense. Vestavia Hills's mountain and valley network form those floodplain areas and soil

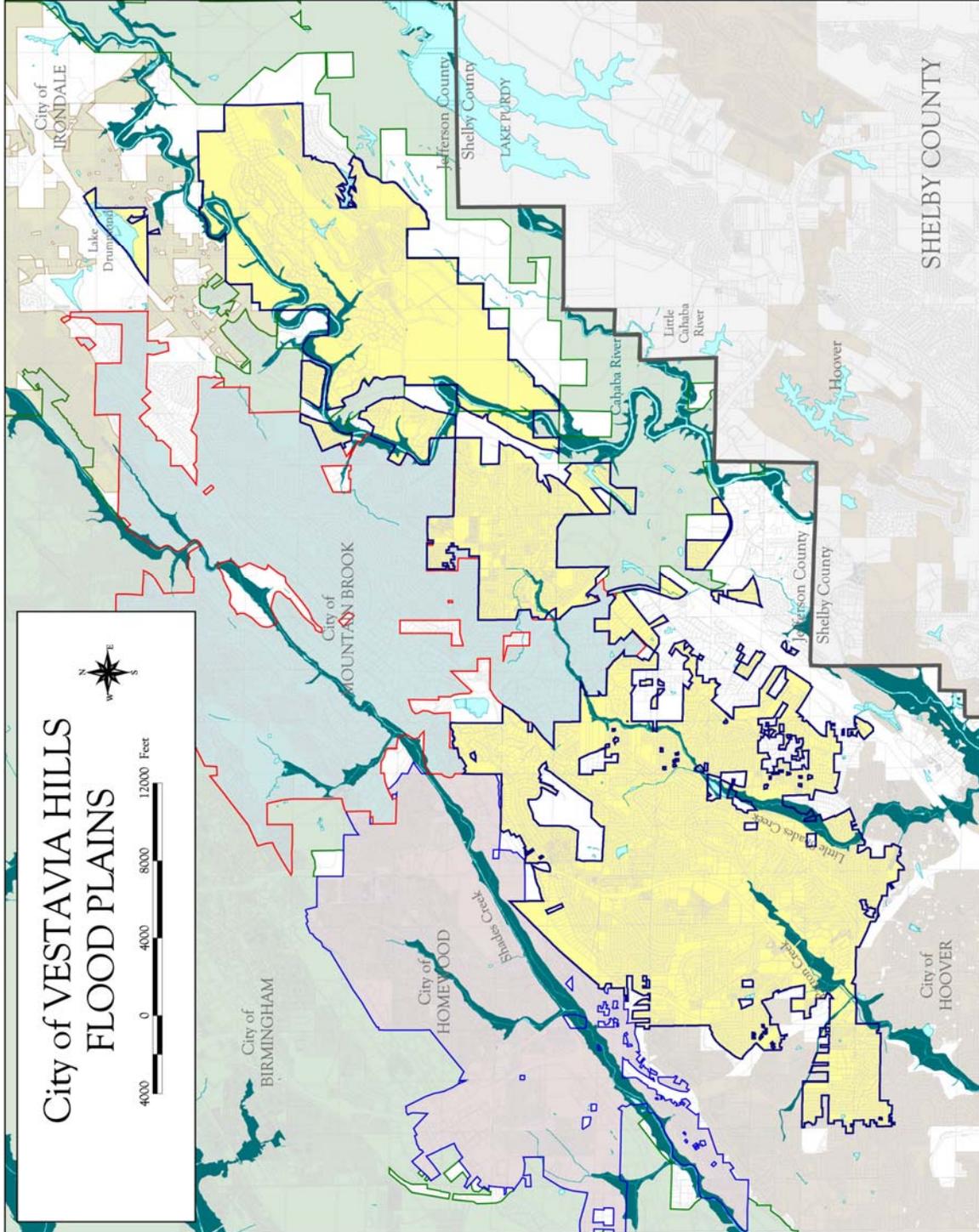
patterns already described. The **Composite Conditions Map** illustrates two major influences on planning and development - areas limited by floodplain complexes, severe slopes, and poor soils and those remaining areas with no such limitations.

These influences will be of greatest concern in the undeveloped portions of the Vestavia Hills planning area. This documentation of "developability" helps the City to determine the value and potential of vacant areas and unincorporated areas in regards to future annexations. It also gives the City a basis on which to develop planning and growth policies for those areas that are constrained by difficult natural conditions and those that are not so constrained.

FLOOD PLAINS

This map illustrates those areas within the Vestavia Hills planning area which lie in the 100 year flood plain as designated by FEMA. These areas, prone to inundation during heavy rains, follow the course of Patton Creek, Little Shades Creek, and the Cahaba River and its tributaries.

Strict development standards are often used in flood areas through a federal flood insurance program to prevent loss of life, property damage and risk liability.



**FIGURE 2:
FLOOD PLAINS**

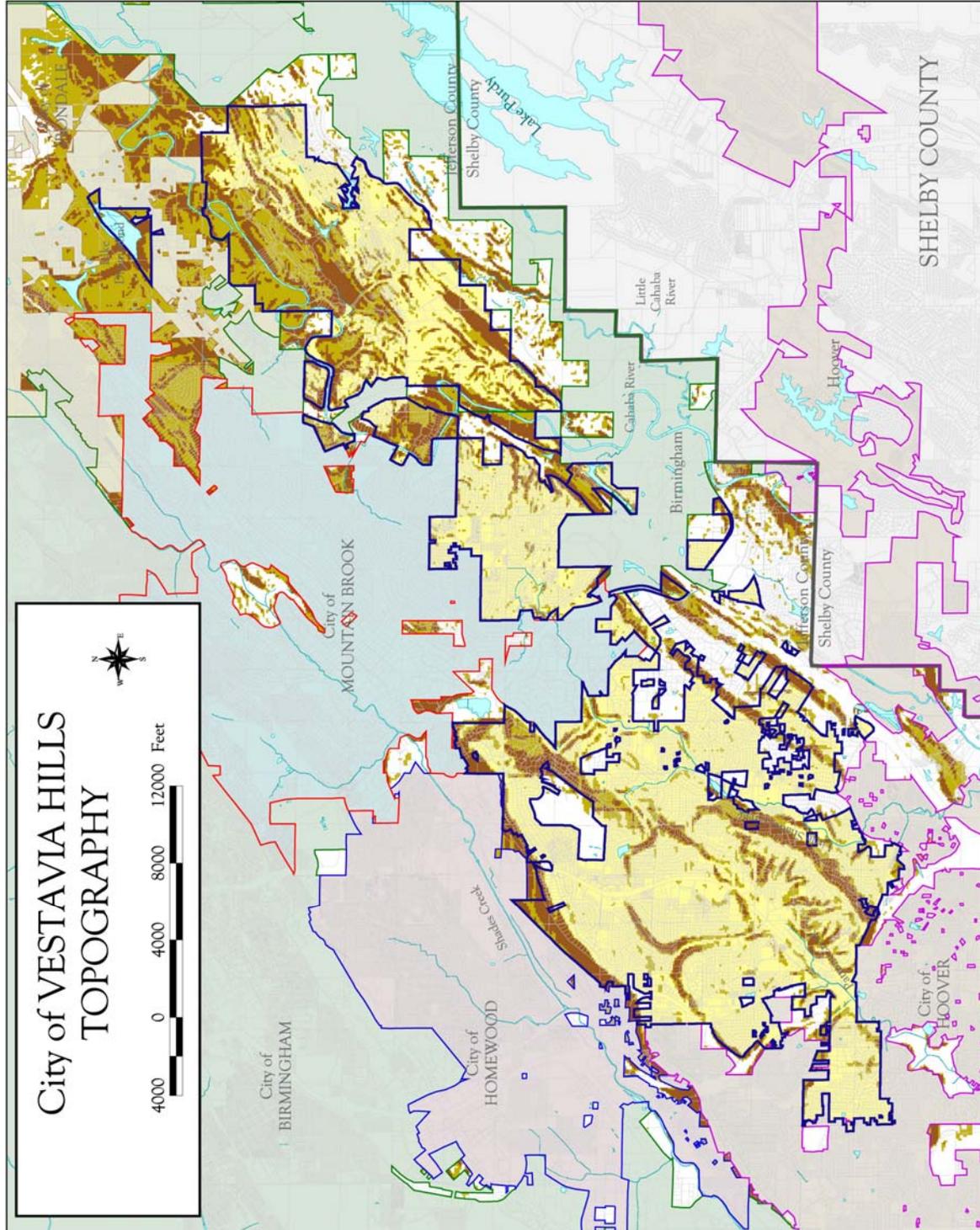
City of Vestavia Hills
 100 Year Flood Plain

TOPOGRAPHY

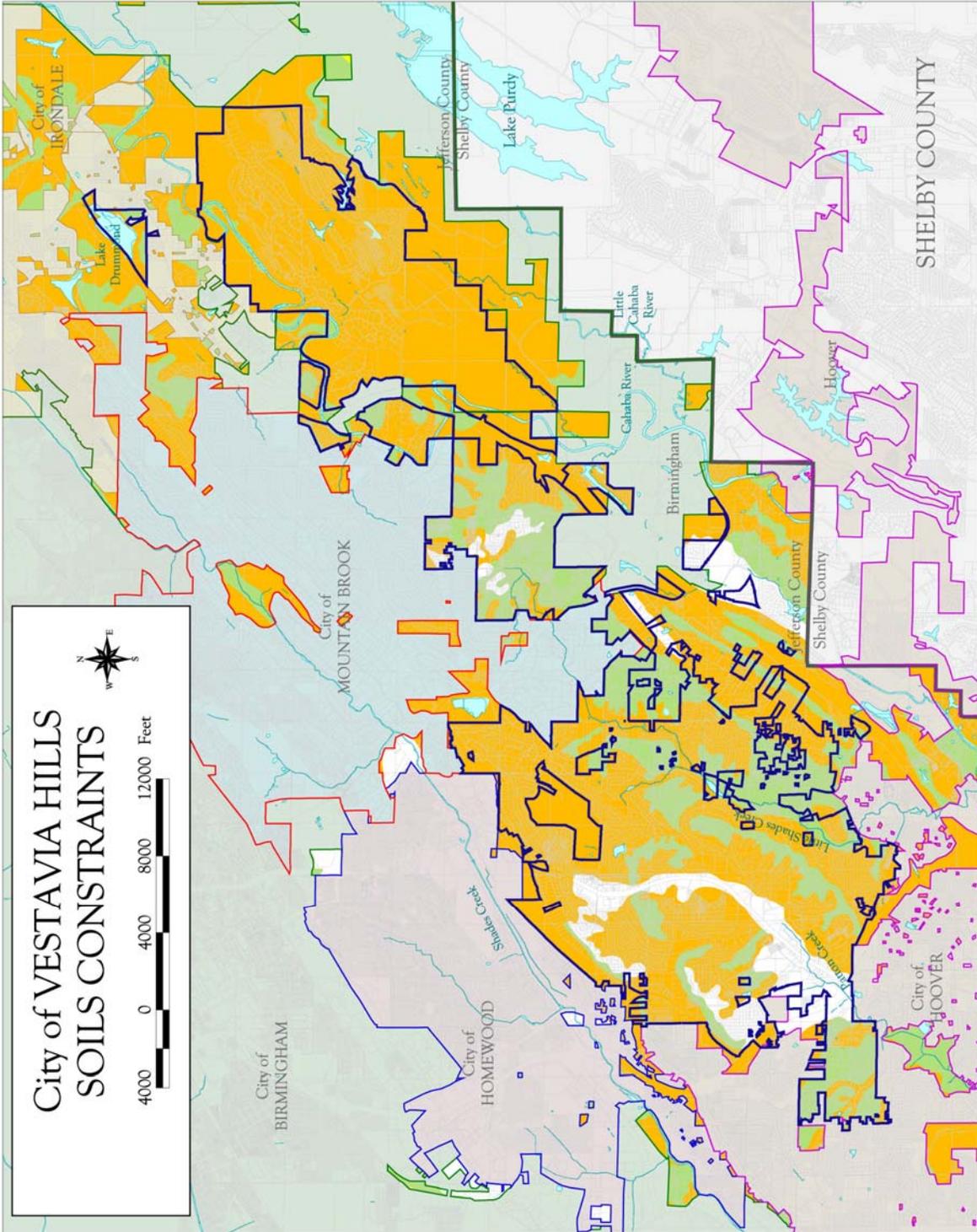
This map describes the topographic character of the Vestavia Hills planning area. Vestavia Hills' past development has been greatly influenced by the rich topography of the region. Illustrated in the map are three specific areas - those that are highly developable (with less than 15% slopes), marginally developable (15-20% slopes), and areas often too steep for development (20% or greater).

**FIGURE 3:
TOPOGRAPHY**

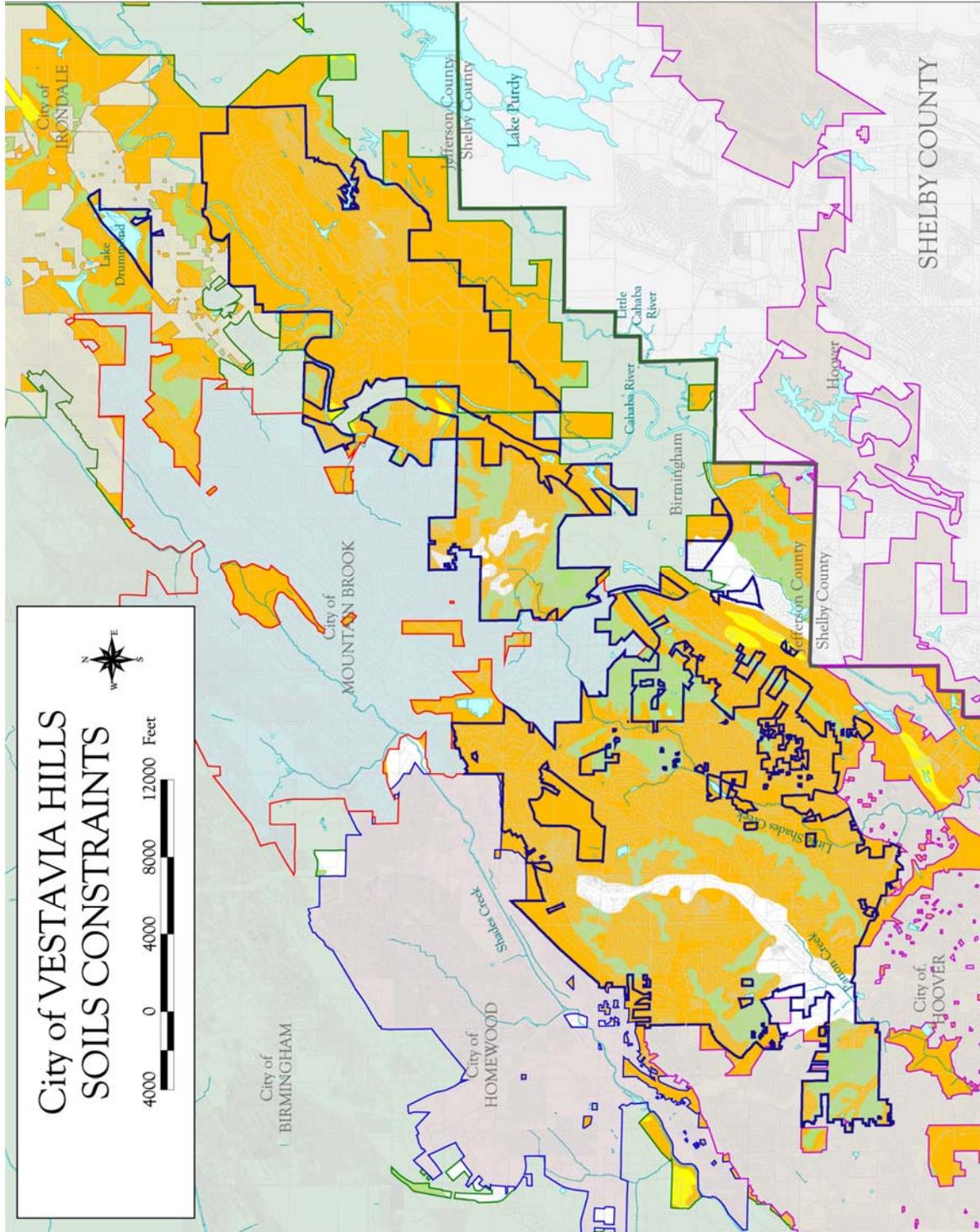
- Severe Slope Areas
- Slopes 15%-20%
- Slopes greater than 20%



SOILS CONSTRAINTS FOR LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS
 This map describes the varying level of constraints which soil characteristics impose on the potential for road construction. Much of the Vestavia Hills area is affected by difficult soils, though this has not stopped development. In many cases, soils conditions can be overcome by greater investment in engineering and land preparation. Level of constraints is determined and classified by the US Soil Conservation Service.

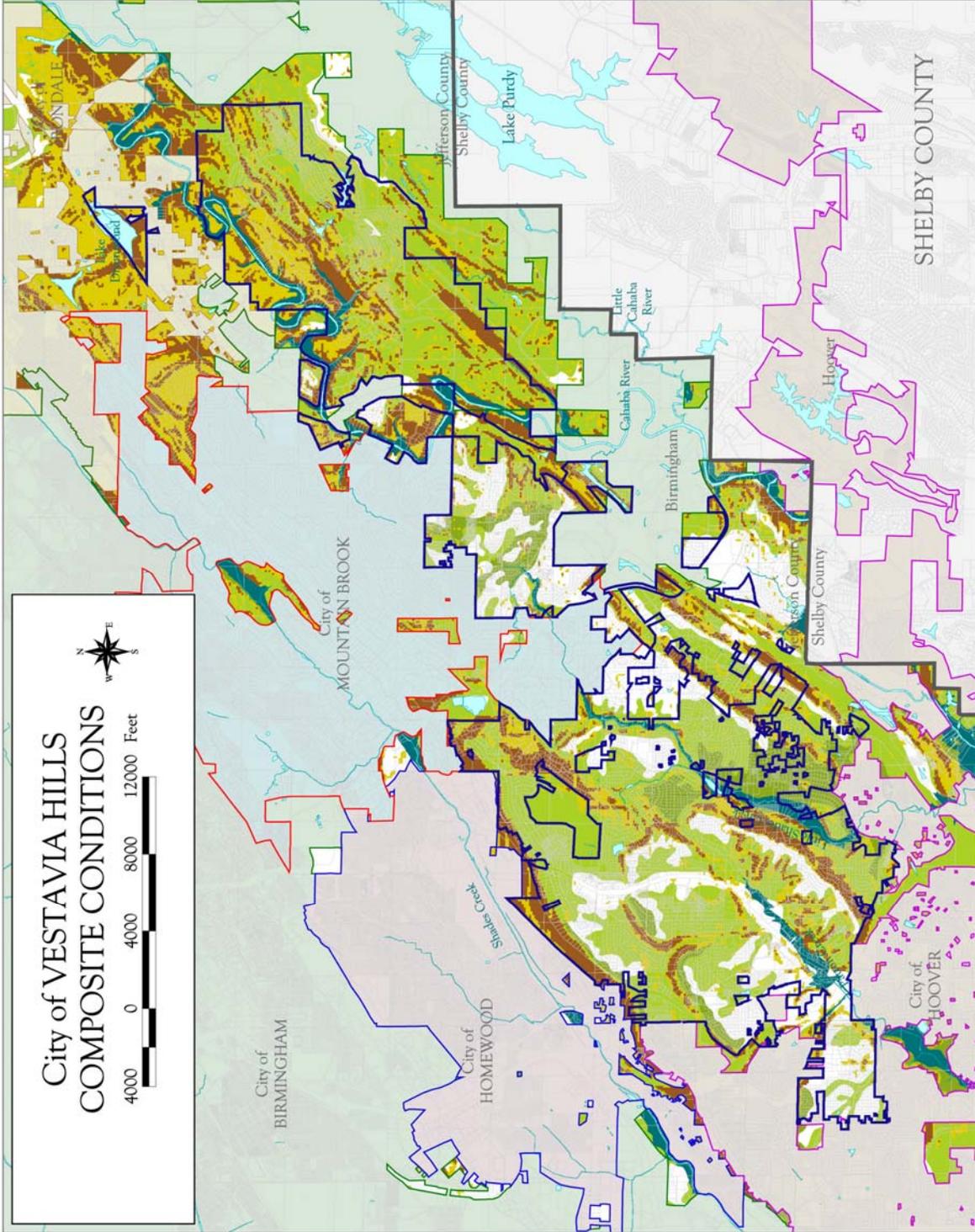


SOILS CONSTRAINTS FOR BUILDING CONSTRUCTION
 Similar to the previous soils map, this map describes the varying level of constraints which soil characteristics impose on site potential for building construction. Much of the Vestavia Hills area is affected by difficult soils, though this has not stopped development. In many cases, soils conditions can be overcome by greater investment in engineering and site preparation. Level of constraints is determined and classified by the US Soil Conservation Service.



COMPOSITE OF NATURAL CONDITIONS

This map describes the varying level and type of development constraints imposed by natural conditions - flood, topography, and soils. Much of the Vestavia Hills area is constrained by one or more natural conditions. Severe soils tend to appear where there are flood and steep slope areas; and so there is as well a certain amount of overlap in these conditions. These development issues in the past have been overcome by greater investments in engineering and site preparation. The most readily developable areas shown in this map are located along Highway 31 (where extensive development has reduced soil problems) and in areas along Caldwell Mill Road and Cahaba River Road.



**FIGURE 5:
COMPOSITE
CONDITIONS**

- 100 Year Flood Plains
- Slopes 15%-20%
- Slopes greater than 20%
- Severe soils for building construction
- Severe soils for roads and streets
- Most readily developable land

EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

The following sections describe the major aspects of the City's current level of development - land use, transportation infrastructure, utilities, police and fire services, and community facilities. The level of development and layout of residential, commercial, and other land use areas are shown in **Figure #6: Land Use Map**. This map gives a property-by-property breakdown of the uses for which land has been developed in the community. The following illustration, **Figure #7: Development Pattern Diagram**, is a more generalized view of the City's land uses, showing land use and growth patterns relative to important natural and built elements of the Vestavia Hills area. **Figure #7** also demarcates the community's various neighborhoods, commercial, recreational, and institutional centers. Through analyzing the current pattern of land use development, the City has a greater ability to understand the positive aspects of the community's historic growth and build on those in the future. Similarly, the pitfalls of past development can be seen and avoided in the future through better planning.

Overall, the City can be viewed as three communities - southern Vestavia Hills, Cahaba Heights, and Liberty Park. Within each of these major areas, there is at least one major commercial district surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Within traditional Vestavia Hills, Highway 31 is a major commercial corridor surrounded by residential areas and encompassing several of the City's facilities and recreational areas. Columbiana Road and Rocky Ridge Road are smaller commercial components of this original part of the City. Cahaba Heights has two major commercial

districts- along Cahaba Heights Road and along Crosshaven Drive. Both of these areas are also surrounded by residential development. Within Liberty Park, the Urban Center office park and nearby retail center is the commercial center. In contrast to the other portions of the City, Liberty Park's commercial center is more detached from its residential areas.

Neighborhoods

The major residential areas of Vestavia Hills are located along Highway 31, Columbiana Road, within Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights, and along Rocky Ridge and Altadena Roads. East and west of Highway 31, between Shades Crest Road and Wald Park, the neighborhoods which make up this residential area are: Biltmore Estates, Vesthaven, Vestavia Forest, and Panorama. East and west of Columbiana Road are the Mountainwoods, Gentilly Forest, and Crossgate neighborhoods. Within the Rocky Ridge and Altadena areas are: Countrywood, Tanglewood, Buckhead, and Coventry.

Highway 31

This area contains the oldest homes in Vestavia Hills, most built in the 1950's and 1960's, and their architectural style reflects the mid-century style. However, there are some estate and cottage homes that predate incorporation in 1951. Some homes in the northern part of this area still use on-site septic systems. The southern part of this area is somewhat newer and much of it served by sewer. This area is considered a starter home area; it is desirable because of the elementary school in the neighborhood, the proximity to downtown Birmingham, and the relative affordability of many of the non-golf course homes. Many of the original golf course homes have been

razed and replaced with newer homes with today's architecture. A combination of setback variances and high tech septic approaches are allowing this to happen. There is a great deal of remodeling and updating going on in these neighborhoods. There is a mix of young families, middle-agers, and a good number still of retired original homeowners. Highway 31 is the main corridor for this area.



A residential street off Highway 31

Columbiana Road

This westernmost part of the city is oriented around Columbiana Road, which makes it very accessible to Interstate 65, to Homewood, and to downtown Birmingham. Homes in this area were generally built in the 1960's and 1970's, with some new smaller subdivisions built in the 1980's and 1990's. Many of these recent subdivisions have been developed on cul-de-sac streets with no through-access.

Homes are generally larger and may be the second or third home of families, who value the larger square-footage and garages. Homes here enjoy good value appreciation. The oldest parts of this area are now being bought by younger homeowners. Remodeling has been initiated on many of these older homes by their new owners.

Liberty Park

This area is a *planned unit development* (PUD). Residential areas here are the newest in Vestavia Hills, and consist of upper-bracket gated neighborhoods, mid-bracket homes, golf course homes, garden homes, and one upscale apartment development. New homes continue to be constructed in the PUD. Access within the area is via one major artery, Liberty Parkway, which serves both the residential and commercial areas. Along the parkway, a landscaped, pedestrian corridor was developed for the recreational use of residents and for non-vehicular access to commercial areas, churches, and schools. Interstate access is convenient; but this part of the community remains somewhat cut off from the rest of the city.



Residential area in Liberty Park

Cahaba Heights

This area is newly annexed into Vestavia Hills, having been incorporated in 2002. Cahaba Heights is accessible from Highway 280 and several roads that cross the highway into Cahaba Heights: Dolly Ridge Road, Pump House Road/ Cahaba Heights Road, Green Valley Road, and Crosshaven Drive/Summit Boulevard. Residential areas are accessed off these and several other local roads. Homes range in age from early 20th century to brand new, with many built in the 1950's to 1970's. There is a wide range of architectural styles within Cahaba Heights' residential areas, and

similarly lot and building sizes also vary. Neighborhoods in Cahaba Heights tend to be of a greater overall density than most other areas in Vestavia Hills.



New high-density, single-family homes under construction in Cahaba Heights

Because Cahaba Heights developed as an unincorporated part of Jefferson County, its development took on a different character than the original incorporated areas of Vestavia Hills. There is a much more complex, and sometimes random, mix of institutional, commercial, and multi-family areas within the single-family residential fabric of the area. The close proximity of these mixed uses works to the area's advantage in that it can encourage greater pedestrian activity than compared to the layout of neighborhoods within other portions of Vestavia Hills.

Cahaba Heights is also located directly north of one of the largest retail centers in the metropolitan area - The Summit. Crosshaven Drive is a major north-south artery within the Cahaba Heights area, with both commercial and residential development accesses off this road. Crosshaven Drive becomes Summit Boulevard, the major road serving the Summit shopping area, south of the Vestavia Hills city limits.

Rocky Ridge, Dolly Ridge, and Altadena Roads

These residential corridors generally have subdivisions that dead end off these three main roads. There are a few smaller 1950's era homes, but most are larger homes built since the 1980's. There are a significant number of estate lots in these areas. Where there is developable acreage available, small 5-8 home subdivisions are being built with upper bracket homes.

These areas are convenient to the high school and to Rocky Ridge. It continues to be a very desirable area to live, with convenient access to shopping and dining within the Rocky Ridge area and further east on Highway 280.

Blue Lake and River Run Areas

In 2002, properties on Blue Lake Road and in the River Run subdivision were incorporated into the City of Vestavia Hills from unincorporated Jefferson County. The River Run subdivision is a secluded low-density neighborhood situated between I-459 and a bend in the Cahaba River. Houses and lots range in size and character. Blue Lake Road parallels I-459 just north of Highway 280. The areas incorporated into the City included a residential subdivision on the side of Blue Lake and both residential and commercial properties to the west. Those properties zoned for commercial uses under their original County zoning were rezoned to the most compatible districts in the City's zoning regulations. These properties are primarily on the ridge overlooking I-459, while the properties fronting on Blue Lake Road are zoned as residential.

Multifamily Areas

There are several 1960 era multifamily complexes in Vestavia Hills, mostly scattered along Highway 31 and in the Columbiana Road vicinity. Some have been

updated and renovated. Some units are original 1960's; residents are generally older, retired, and many are widowed. In Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights, there are a few newer, upscale apartment complexes occupied by young couples and singles.



Apartments on Columbiana Road



High-density residences on Massey Road



Cabana Condominiums on Massey Road



Colonial Grand Apartments in Liberty Park

Commercial Areas

Vestavia Hills has five distinct commercial districts that provide goods and services to the community and revenue to the City: the Highway 31 Corridor, Rocky Ridge, Columbiana Road, Liberty Park, and Cahaba Heights.



Vestavia Hills City Center on Highway 31

The Highway 31 Corridor includes a variety of retail establishments, some service agencies, and a minimum of office space. The addition of the City Center retail center, the opening of Publix and the Vestridge Commons will add to the tax base. With minor exception the retail establishments are not considered "destinations" and provide goods and services to the community along Highway 31. Parking is generally sufficient while access is limited primarily to vehicles. This area is bounded by Interstate 65 to the west and

Shades Crest Road to the east.

Rocky Ridge is a relatively small retail area that primarily serves the needs of surrounding residents. The commercial area is predominantly retail, is not a "destination", and is located in the heart of numerous residential developments. The area continues to grow, is continuously being upgraded, and has sufficient parking and easy access.



Rocky Ridge

Columbiana Road has a small retail development that fronts directly on the highway and has little depth. This commercial area is a long way from reaching its potential. There is some small office development, but the bulk of the facilities along Columbiana are retail.

Liberty Park has become a major player in the commercial office real estate arena. It's dedicated office area, the Urban Center, now has ten office buildings totaling 1,000,000 square feet. An eleventh building has been planned for The Bank, a 40,000 sf facility. The first retail development in Liberty Park is now in place and totals 25,000 sf. Future retail development is planned to provide retail and service needs to the growing Liberty Park residential areas.



Prominence Shops in Liberty Park

Cahaba Heights' commercial and retail development is focused in three areas: Cahaba Heights Road (from Dolly Ridge Road to an area one-half mile south of Summit Boulevard); Crosshaven Drive (from Cahaba Heights Road to Overton Road); and the area around Sunview Drive. These areas have numerous retail and service merchants and some small office buildings. Many retail businesses are local rather than national, and several are destination shops. In the last year there have been numerous building renovations and a small number of newly constructed facilities. Access to Cahaba Heights' commercial areas is excellent from U.S. Highway 280, Summit Boulevard, Overton Road, and Cahaba Heights Road.



Shopping area along Cahaba Heights Road.

Transportation

The City of Vestavia Hills is served by four regional arteries, a network of major local roads, and an extensive network of residential streets. This network of major arteries and local roads is shown in **Figure #8: Transportation Infrastructure Map**. Vestavia Hills's regional arteries are Interstate 65, Interstate 459, U.S. Highway 31, and U.S. Highway 280. Major local collectors are Rocky Ridge Road, Shades Crest Road, Cahaba Heights Road, Dolly Ridge Road, Altadena Road, Liberty Parkway, Overton Road, and Columbiana Road.

Interstate 65

I-65 connects the City to major destinations north and south of the metropolitan area and to Interstate 20 and Interstate 59 in downtown Birmingham, five miles north of the City's interchange to I-65 (exit 252). I-65 is a major commuter route within the metropolitan area, as well as, a major artery for commercial traffic moving north to south through the region. I-65 forms a western border to the City, though a small portion of the City's incorporated areas lies west of the interstate. During the morning rush hour, northbound lanes of I-65 are heavily congested with commuter traffic from the metro area's southern communities. The evening rush hour exhibits the reverse trend, with heavy congestion in the southbound lanes returning workers to their home communities. Traffic counts indicate greater than 110,000 cars per day travelling on I-65 around the Vestavia Hills interchange.

Interstate 459

I-459 is a loop serving many communities on the western, southern, and eastern portions of the

metro area. I-459 also provides access to Interstates 20 and 59 on the western, eastern, and northeastern ends of the community. Located mostly along the eastern edge of the City, I-459 serves a large amount of commuter traffic within the metro area. I-459 was built partly to relieve commercial traffic that otherwise travels through downtown Birmingham to make connections to the areas' interstate system. Access to I-459 from Vestavia Hills is provided by two interchanges: Exit 17 (Acton Road) and Exit 23 (Liberty Park). Over 85,000 cars per day use I-459 around the Acton Road interchange, while about 70,000 cars per day pass the Liberty Park interchange.

U.S. Highway 31

U.S. Highway 31 is the main artery along which the original portion of the City developed. Highway 31 roughly parallels I-65 and connects Vestavia Hills to Homewood and Birmingham to the north and Hoover to the south. A significant amount of the City's original commercial development occurred along this corridor and most residential areas are also accessible from this route. Similar to I-65, during rush hours, this road is heavily trafficked by commuters from the southern metro area. Between 35,000 and 42,000 cars used U.S. 31 per day in 2000. Increasing traffic and uncoordinated property access both contribute to an increasing problem in the area.



Business area at I-65 and Highway 31.

U.S. Highway 280

Highway 280, also, has become a major commuter artery in recent years due to the high level of suburban residential, retail, and office development in the southeastern portions of the metro area. Connecting Vestavia Hills to downtown Birmingham, U.S. 280 runs northwest to southeast between the original portion of Vestavia Hills and the recently annexed Cahaba Heights area. Several local roads provide access from Vestavia Hills to U.S. 280 - Rocky Ridge and Shades Crest Roads, Pump House/Cahaba Heights Road, and Caldwell Mill Road and Dolly Ridge Roads. In 2000, between 60,000 and 70,000 cars per day were counted along various segments of the highway corridor through the Vestavia Hills area.

Local Roads

As mentioned, the Vestavia Hills community has several important local collector roads. Shades Crest Road meanders through the northwestern areas of the city, from U.S. 280 to I-65 (in the Hoover area). Rocky Ridge Road, which forks with Shades Crest at Hwy. 280, runs roughly north to south through the eastern portions of the southern Vestavia Hills community passing underneath I-65 and continuing southwestward into Hoover. Columbiana Road runs south from Birmingham, through Homewood, into Vestavia Hills near the U.S. 31 interchange at I-65 in Vestavia Hills. Cahaba Heights Road connects the Cahaba Height area to U.S. 280 and traverses the community in an east-west direction, passing underneath I-459 in unincorporated Jefferson County. Dolly Ridge Road also connects Cahaba Heights to Hwy. 280 and meanders southward through mostly residential areas to Rocky Ridge Road. Altadena Road parallels Dolly Ridge to the east, beginning at

Cahaba River Road and moving in a southward direction to Old Rocky Ridge Road near the Acton Road interchange at I-459. Overton Road, which runs northeast from U.S. 280 in the Mountain Brook area, connects the Cahaba Heights community and the Liberty Park area. Overton Road intersects with Liberty Parkway at the Liberty Park interchange at I-459, continuing northeastward into Irondale. Liberty Parkway, runs southward along the western edge of the Liberty Park area and then moves eastward through the developed portion of Liberty Park, ending at Sicard Hollow Road.

Local Traffic Issues

A significant transportation issue is the lack of east-west connectors between Columbiana Road, Highway 31, Rocky Ridge, Dolly Ridge, and Altadena Roads, which all run roughly north to south. There are two main causes at the root of this. One, topographic ridges separate these roads; and two, almost all developments off these roads are laid out along cul-de-sac streets. Two existing routes provide the majority of east-west access through these areas. Shades Crest Road connects from Columbiana to Highway 31 to Rocky Ridge. And along a circuitous route, a considerable amount of local traffic finds its way from Highway 31 at Vestridge Drive to Morgan Drive in Rocky Ridge. Both these routes are two-lane roads and predominantly residential, further complicating capacity issues. As a result, traffic tends to build up on Highway 31, Rocky Ridge Road, and Shades Crest Road. These three roads are major collectors for commuting traffic headed to and from Birmingham and employment centers along Highway 280. Rocky Ridge and Shades Crest were not designed to handle these traffic volumes.

In 2001, Rocky Ridge carried between 9,600 and 12,600 cars per day while Shades Crest carried between 4,200 and 6,600. 2006 traffic projections indicate a significant increase on Shades Crest Road based on current traffic patterns. By 2006, Shades Crest Road may be carrying as many as 14,000 cars per day; while Rocky Ridge is expected to increase to just over 13,000.

A study to address issues along Rocky Ridge Road identified two major constraints to improving capacity. First, topography limits widening in several areas of Rocky Ridge Road; and second, lack of access management causes further delays in traffic. Along the three-mile stretch between Highway 280 and Morgan Drive, there are over twenty un-signalized intersections. Cars slowing to make right-hand turns or stopping to make left-hand turns to enter subdivisions create delays as well as traffic hazards. Though traffic volumes are less, similar conditions affect traffic along Dolly Ridge and Altadena.



Traffic at Rocky Ridge Road and Morgan Drive.

Widening will be an expensive process due to rocky topography and developments encroaching on the existing right-of-way. The Rocky Ridge Road study strongly recommended better access management to deal with the large number of un-signalized access

points. Another possibility is to reduce the volume of traffic along these routes by providing more route alternatives. The only way to do this is by connecting residential streets between Highway 31, Rocky Ridge, Dolly Ridge, and Altadena Roads. This is an intimidating task and will require significant cooperation from landowners. Ultimately, a well-connected network of local streets is the most effective way to reduce traffic delays and make travel more convenient throughout.

Another aspect of the traffic problems on Rocky Ridge Road is the configuration of the intersection at Highway 280. Shades Crest Road converges with Rocky Ridge, Pumphouse, and Green Valley Road north of Hwy. 280. Due to heavy traffic from Shades Crest and Rocky Ridge, traffic stacks up at the intersection causing long waits. The City and Jefferson County have begun work to realign Shades Crest Road further south of the Hwy. 280 intersection. However, the signaled, at-grade intersection with Hwy. 280 needs to be reconfigured to further address traffic issues.

Past assessments have indicated that realigning Green Valley further east along Hwy. 280 will ease traffic on 280, but since the incorporation of Cahaba Heights, this connection has become crucial to the community. School traffic from Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park rely on this route to access the high school off Rocky Ridge. It is projected that traffic counts on Green Valley will increase to over 21,000 cars per day by 2006 from only 8,000 cars per day in 2000. A near term improvement to deal with stacking problems would be to add a northbound lane on Rocky Ridge between Shades Crest Rd. and the highway. This would be inexpensive and would relieve congestion caused by excessive stacking. The ultimate solution for

easing congestion on Hwy. 280 and providing safer access between these local roads is construction of a grade-separated interchange.

A development has been proposed on an adjacent property in the City of Mountain Brook. The proposal includes re-routing Green Valley Road to create two “T” intersections where Green Valley and Rocky Ridge connect to 280. With this change, southbound school traffic on Green Valley will be forced to merge across several lanes on Hwy. 280 within 1300 feet to turn left onto Rocky Ridge during peak hours on 280. This will affect traffic similarly moving south-to-north in the afternoons. Realigning Green Valley will have modest benefits for Hwy. 280 traffic, will worsen conditions for north-south traffic, and will likely prevent a long-term solution from being realized.

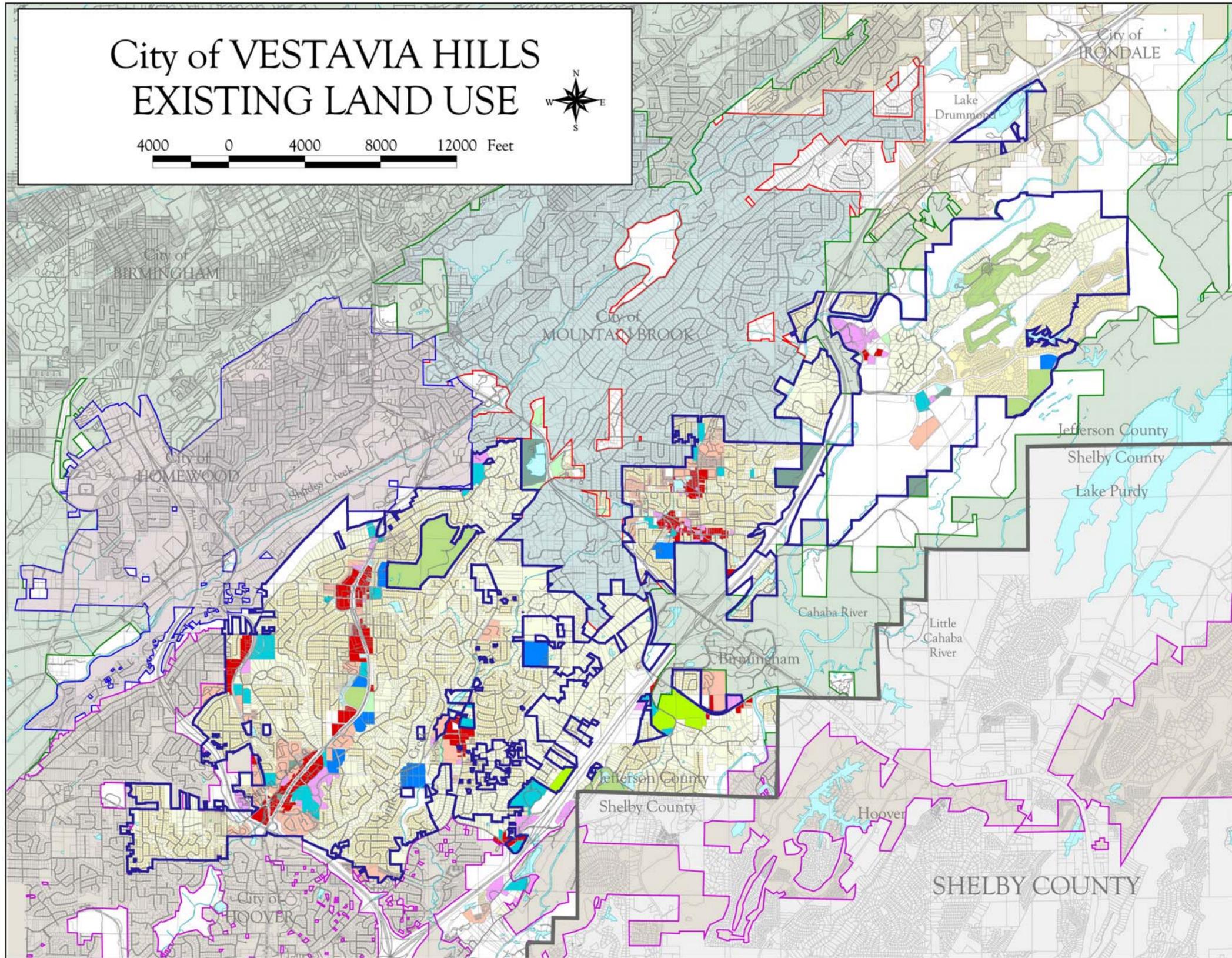
Regional Transportation Planning

Currently, the Metropolitan Planning Organization is undergoing a Transportation and Transit Alternatives Study to develop viable solutions to reduce traffic congestion within the interstate system, the region's network of highways, and other major arteries in Jefferson and Shelby Counties. Possible methods to resolve these issues include: high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, park and ride systems, improvements to existing area mass transit, creation of new transit programs, and enactment of stronger policies on planning and development in transit corridors. More information on aspects of the study affecting Vestavia Hills is included in Chapter IV.

City of VESTAVIA HILLS EXISTING LAND USE

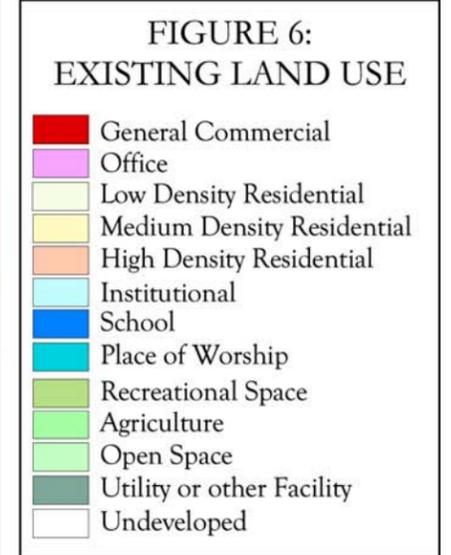


4000 0 4000 8000 12000 Feet

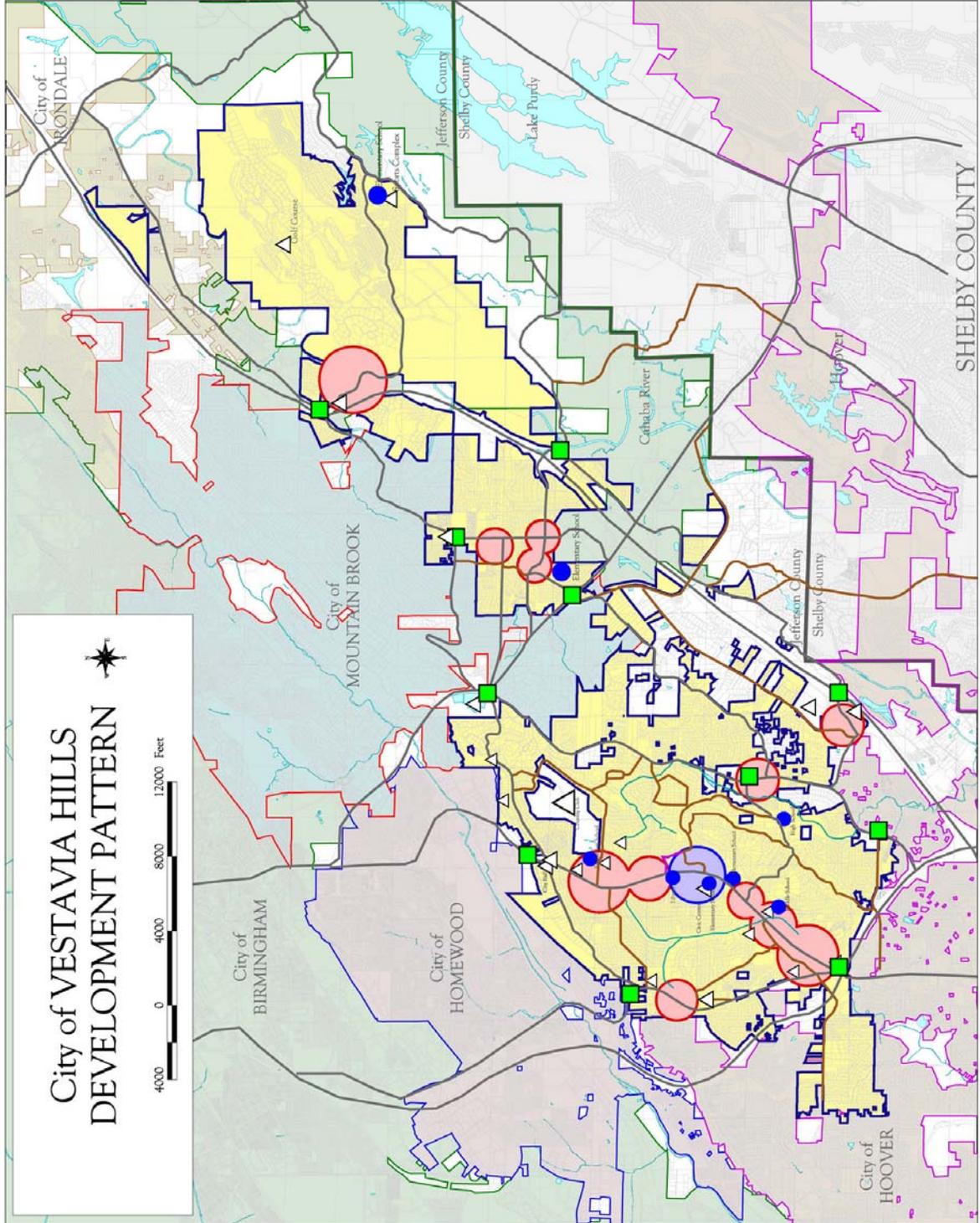


EXISTING LAND USE
This map illustrates the location, by property, of the land uses within the City and surrounding unincorporated areas. Land use is a description of the purpose for which land is developed: residential, commercial, institutional, etc.

Residential areas are further broken down into low, medium, and high density areas. Low density areas are typified by residential lots of 1/2 acre and greater, medium density by lots of 8,000 sf to 1/2 acre, and high density by individual lots of less than 8,000 sf (including garden homes, town homes, apartments, etc.).



DEVELOPMENT PATTERN
 This map is an illustration of the way the community has developed over time, indicating important local elements such as landmark buildings and sites, community facilities, and commercial centers. Also shown are travel "paths" within the City and the major paths and gateways that connect to adjacent communities in the metropolitan area.



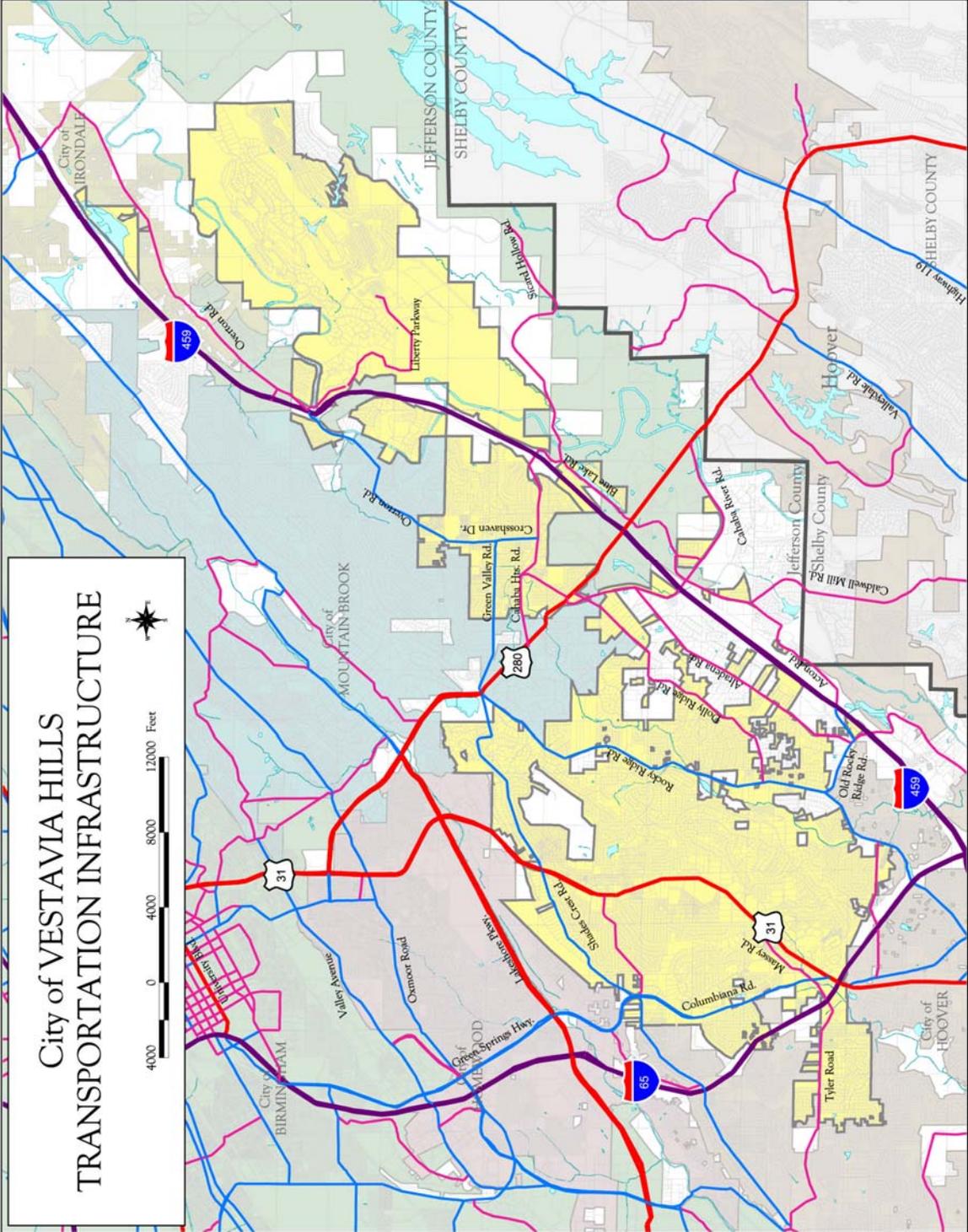
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

This map describes the major roads serving the city. Several major arteries (I-65, I-459, US 31, and US 280) provide access to other parts of the metro area and beyond; while local roads provide access throughout the community (Columbiana, Rocky Ridge, Green Valley, Shades Crest, Dolly Ridge, Acton, Cahaba Heights, Altadena, and Liberty Parkway).

**FIGURE 8:
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

Functional Classifications

- Interstate
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector Urban



**City of VESTAVIA HILLS
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Probably the most important aspect of a City's comprehensive planning efforts is the services and facilities the City provides to its residents. To plan for the future, the City must document and assess the existing level, quality, and accessibility of its various services in relation to the size of its population and the location of its residential areas. The following section identifies all of these community service elements - water and sewer, police and fire protection, parks and recreation, and educational and other community facilities. **Figure #11: Facilities and Services Map** depicts the location of all City facilities.

Water Facilities

Source Description

The water system serving Vestavia Hills is shown in **Figure #9: Water System Map**. Vestavia Hills water service is provided by the Birmingham Water Works Board (BW/WB). The BW/WB draws approximately 60% of its total supply from the Cahaba River. All of Vestavia Hills is served by this source.

The Cahaba River generally meanders in and out of the western city limits line in the Liberty Park and River Run communities and then crosses to the southeastern city limits line at Cahaba Heights. The intake on the river, the Cahaba Pumping Station, is located on the fringe of the city limits at the intersection of Cahaba Heights Rd., Blue Lake Rd. and Sicard Hollow Rd. Water is pumped from a pool, created by a dam on the river, located at the southwestern tip of Cahaba Heights and just south of Highway 280. The original facility was

constructed in the early 1900's and received a major upgrade in 1998. The restored facility now also serves as a historic museum and educational and meeting center.

Raw water is pumped from this station through mains constructed in the early 1900's. These mains extend to the southwest through Cahaba Heights and along Highway 280 to the Shades Mountain Filter Plant, where the water is treated. The treatment plant is located at the intersection of Highway 280 and Rocky Ridge Rd. bordered on the south and west by the Vestavia Hills city limits.

As a matter of historical interest, one of the wells utilized by early residents of the Vestavia Hills area is located at the Shades Mountain Filter Plant. Another is located on the north side of Morgan Drive at Little Shades Creek. Both are now abandoned.

Importance of the Cahaba River Watershed

Clearly, the City of Vestavia Hills harbors a valuable resource vital to the BW/WB in its role to provide water service to customers throughout the Birmingham region. With the exception of a small area lying northwest of Shades Mountain (South Shades Crest Rd.), all of the City lies within the Cahaba River Watershed. Approximately one-third of the city lies in the Upper Cahaba River Watershed, which is the area above the Cahaba Pumping Station.

Description of Facilities

The City is served by a network of water mains providing adequate water supply to virtually all areas within the city. Listed below are water storage tanks located within the city:

- Strozier Lake Standpipe at the end of Georgia Ave.
- East of Hwy. 31, between Shades Crest Rd. and Vestavia Hills Dr.
- Panorama Drive at Renfro Road
- Country Wood Highlands Subdivision at Shady Cove Dr. and Birchwood Ln.
- Dolly Ridge Standpipe (in City of Birmingham, but directly adjacent to Vestavia Hills)

The Berry Road Booster Pumping Station is located at the north base of Shades Mountain on Columbia Road to boost pressures up the mountain. Three "reducing" stations are located on the south side of Shades Mountain to reduce pressures for areas of lower elevation to the south. They are positioned as follows:

- Southerly intersection of Columbia Rd. and Old Columbiana Rd.
- Highway 31 at intersection of I-65
- Rocky Ridge at Tanglewood Subdivision

Sewer Facilities

Sewer Availability

The sewer system serving Vestavia Hills is shown in **Figure #10: Sewer System Map**. Sewer service is readily available to the city. Most of the City is served by the Jefferson County System's Environmental Services Department. While sewer mains may not lie adjacent to all parcels, mains are sufficiently close to make it economically feasible for most developments to connect to the system. Some residential areas are not sewered and currently utilize individual septic tank systems. The Jefferson County System has made some extensions into these areas in the last two years, particularly in Cahaba Heights. Currently, there are no wastewater treatment plants located within Vestavia Hills.

The Liberty Park development is served by a private sewer system, operated by Liberty Park Enviro Services. The system currently serves existing commercial and residential areas in Liberty Park only. The design and permitting for the system will allow it to expand significantly over time to serve new development as needed. The wastewater treatment facility itself occupies approximately six acres and is located off of Liberty Parkway, east of Vulcan Technology.

Future Expansion

The Jefferson County System had planned to construct a major trunk sewer along the Cahaba River. This effort was halted in early 2003 due to public opposition over environmental concerns with respect to the Cahaba River. This project would have provided service to the Liberty Park development, but it is unclear if the project or the portion affecting Liberty Park will resume.

Police

The Vestavia Hills Police Department headquarters is located on Highway 31 in the municipal complex housing City Hall. The Police Department, made up of 69 total employees, also maintains a station in Cahaba Heights and space in a fire station in Liberty Park. The total staff represent the following designations: administrative, patrol, investigative, training, and DARE / School Resources. Over half of the total staff are patrol officers. A further breakdown of the current total staff is included in **Table 1**. Emergency response is coordinated by an E-911 system used in conjunction with the Fire Department.

The department runs three shifts each day with 10 to 12 officers on patrol per shift. As of May 2002 following Cahaba Heights' annexation, the Vestavia Hills Police Department began serving the Cahaba Heights Fire District. The impact of this on the police force was significant, causing patrols to be extended to twelve hours while additional patrol officers were hired to fill the need.

Currently, the department's greatest needs are additional staff, on-going equipment upgrades, and space improvements and expansion. These departmental needs were identified in a departmental plan finalized in 2003. In addition to establishing a permanent substation in Liberty Park, the department is also in great need of improvements to the current main headquarters. The jail, evidence/property room, evidence lab, and department offices have insufficient space. Due to the lack of space, some equipment and vehicles are stored at the Public Works Facility. Remodeling and repairs are also called for. There is

limited opportunity to expand in the current space, which may lead to additions to the building or relocation. The department's Five/Ten-Year Plan is further described in the Facilities and Services section of Chapter IV.

Rank/Title	No.	Designation
Police Chief	1	administrative
Deputy Chief	1	administrative
Lieutenants	1	administrative
	1	patrol
	1	investigative
Sergeants	6	patrol
	4	investigative
	1	training
	1	DARE
Corporals	6	patrol
Officers	39	patrol
	4	DARE/SRO
Clerks	3	administrative

Fire Protection

The Vestavia Hills Hill's Fire Department operates five fire stations throughout the City and maintains an ISO rating of 3. ISO ratings are determined by the level of service provided by the fire department, including number of firefighters, level of training, equipment, distribution of stations, hydrants, etc. Fire services are rated from 1-9, the lower the score the better the level of fire protection. This rating system directly affects insurance rates within fire coverage areas. A strong, well-trained force with evenly distributed stations and good response time will not only provide great fire protection to residents and businesses, but also reduce insurance costs.

The Vestavia Hills Fire Department comprises 91 total employees working in three shifts. The 28-29 firefighters working each shift are assigned to five different stations across the City. The administrative portion of the department is located at the main station on Highway 31 next to City Hall and the Police Headquarters. The department's satellite stations are located on Columbiana Road, Morgan Drive, Cahaba Heights Road, and Liberty Parkway. In addition to Liberty Park and recently annexed Cahaba Heights, the Fire Department also provides fire protection services to the Vestavia Country Club, Brookwood Hospital, Woodmere Creek Apartments, Morgan Manor, and Kreekwood Apartments, all of which are located outside of the City's corporate limits. **Table 2**, on the following page, details the operational staff, training levels, and job designations at each of the five stations.

A communications department handles dispatch for both the fire and police departments and includes 12 public safety dispatchers. This division is administrated by the fire department along with an assigned coordinator from both departments.

The Fire Department's 2003 plan includes recommendations for departmental improvements over a 5+ year period. This plan is updated on an annual basis. Three major areas identified in the plan for departmental improvements are: development of a multi-jurisdictional training facility; new hydrants; and staff and equipment needs per station. Fulfilling these needs, constant upgrades to equipment and vehicles, and ongoing training for current staff are essential to maintaining the department's current ISO rating and potentially improving that rating. More information from the departmental plan is given in the Facilities and Services section of Chapter IV.

**Table 2:
Vestavia Hills Fire Department**

	Shift A		Shift B		Shift C	
	Designation / EMT Level		Designation / EMT Level		Designation / EMT Level	
	BC	3	BC	3	BC	3
Station 1 509 Montgomery Highway total staff = 26	LT	3	LT	3	LT	1
	AO	1	AO	3	AO	3
	NM	3	NM	3	NM	3
	PM	3	PM	3	PM	3
	AM	3	AM	3	AM	3
	AM	3	AM	3	AM	3
	AM	3	AM	3	AM	3
	-	3	-	0	-	0
Station 2 2925 Columbiana Road total staff = 21	LT	3	LT	3	LT	3
	AO	3	AO	3	AO	3
	NM	3	NM	3	NM	3
	AM	3	AM	3	AM	3
	AM	3	AM	3	AM	3
	AM	3	AM	3	AM	3
	AM	3	AM	3	AM	3
	-	3	-	3	-	3
Station 3 3201 Morgan Drive total staff = 13	LT	3	LT	1	LT	3
	AO	1	AO	3	AO	1
	NM	1	NM	1	NM	3
	PM	3	PM	3	PM	3
					-	3
Station 4 13041 Liberty Parkway total staff = 12	LT	3	LT	3	LT	3
	AO	2	AO	2	AO	1
	NM	1	NM	3	NM	3
	PM	3	PM	3	PM	3
Station 5 3241 Cahaba Heights Road total staff = 12	LT	3	LT	3	LT	3
	AO	3	AO	1	AO	3
	NM	3	NM	3	NM	0
	PM	0	PM	2	PM	3
Staff designations	BC = Battalion Chief		LT = Lieutenant		AO = Apparatus Operator	
	NM = Nozzleman		PM = Plugman		AM = Assigned Medic	
EMT training level	0 = none		1 = basic	2 = intermediate	3 = paramedic	

Parks and Recreation

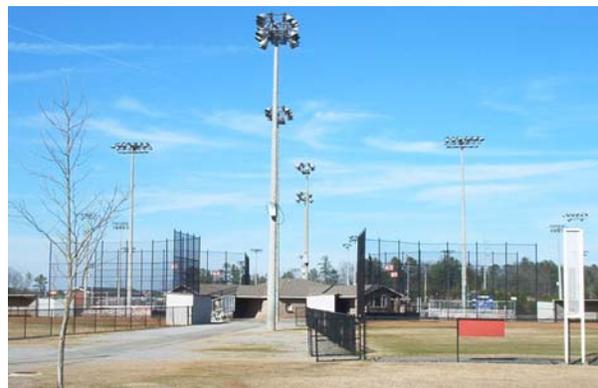
The Vestavia Hills Parks and Recreation Department maintains four public park facilities: Wald Park, Liberty Park, Byrd Park, and Shallowford Park. These parks are in various locations of town and are shown in **Figure #11: Facilities and Services Map**. In addition to these parks, the department has assumed control over the athletic complex and New Merkle House located in Cahaba Heights. Wald Park is the home location of the Department.

Wald Park consists of five baseball fields, eight tennis courts, a 50-meter swimming pool that is available year round, a skate park, two playgrounds, a picnic pavilion, a ¼ mile-walking track, the lodge, and the civic center. The civic center includes a basketball court with an indoor walking track, a weight room, and numerous spaces for classes and presentations.

Liberty Park has five adult softball fields, four youth softball fields, and five multi purpose soccer/football fields. There are three concessions stands with the adult complex having meeting space for small groups. Byrd Park consists of a walking track, horseshoe pits, disc golf targets, and a playground. Shallowford Park is a pocket park with playground equipment and a picnic table. The Cahaba Heights athletic facility has walking trails and four baseball/softball diamonds.

The office of the department is open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Staff is on duty Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m., and scheduled accordingly during the weekends, special events, and holidays.

There are 25 full time employees (a Director, Program Coordinator, and Athletic Coordinator, two Administrative Assistants, a Maintenance Superintendent, two Maintenance Crew Leaders, a Night and Weekend Maintenance Supervisor, three Soccer Administrators, two Custodians, and 11 laborers) and seven part time employees (three office assistants, one tennis pro, two laborers, and one athletic intern) in the department. The skate park is out-sourced, and there is one full time and one part time employee. During the summer an aquatic supervisor manages the pool with nine lifeguards, for a total of ten seasonal employees. Altogether, the total number of staff is 44.



Vestavia Hills Sportsplex at Liberty Park

Table 3 shows the acreage, age, location, and parking capacity for Vestavia Hills Parks and Recreation facilities. Below that, **Table 4** shows the location, grades served, age, and current student population for all school facilities administered by the Vestavia Hills Board of Education. School facilities are further described in the following section.

Table 3: Vestavia Hills Parks and Recreation Facilities				
Facility	Acreage / Size	Date of Construction	Location	Parking capacity
Wald Park	31 acres	1963	Hwy 31	450
Byrd Park	1.2 acres	1968	East School	60
Shallowford Park	¼ acre	1981	Shallowford Drive	None
Liberty Park	70 acres	1998	Liberty Park	598
Civic Center	400,000 square feet	1963	Wald Park	150
Cahaba Heights	3.5 acres	1955	Dolly Ridge Road	75
Lodge	1200 square feet	1992	Wald Park	50
New Merkle House	1200 square feet	1995	Dolly Ridge Road	20

Information provided by Vestavia Hills Parks and Recreation Department

Table 4: Vestavia Hills School Facilities				
Facility	Location	Grade Levels	Date of Construction	2003 Student Population
Elementary School East	2109 Tyson Drive	K-3	1949	614
Elementary School West	1965 Merryvale Drive	K-3	1977	512
Elementary School Central	1289 Montgomery Hwy.	4-5	unavailable	582
Cahaba Heights Elementary	4401 Dolly Ridge Road	K-6	unavailable	302
Liberty Park Elementary	17051 Liberty Parkway	PreK-6	1998	500+
Pizitz Middle School	2020 Pizitz Drive	6-8	1968	1161
Vestavia Hills High School	2235 Lime Rock Road	9-12	1972	1545

Information provided by Vestavia Hills Board of Education

Educational Facilities

There are currently seven public schools operating within Vestavia Hills: Vestavia Hills Elementary Schools East, Central, and West; Pizitz Middle School; Vestavia Hills High School; Cahaba Heights Elementary School; and Liberty Park Elementary School. All schools are administrated by the Vestavia Hills Board of Education. In the 2003-2004 school year, there were over 5,200 students enrolled in Vestavia Hills schools (approximately 2,500 in elementary, 1,161 in middle school, and 1,545 in high school). **Table 4**, above, provides primary information on the schools. Their locations are shown in **Figure #11: Facilities and Services Map**.

Vestavia Hills Elementary School East

Elementary School East was the first school in the City, opening in 1949 under the Jefferson County Board of Education. The school is located south of Shades Crest Road two blocks east of Highway 31. In 2003, the school employed 81 total staff and 614 students in grades kindergarten through third. The building has been renovated and expanded since its construction.



Elementary School East

In the mid 1990s, a new wing was added which included eight new classrooms. Currently, the school has 34 regular classrooms, five special needs classrooms, an enrichment classroom, art room, music room, library, lunchroom, gym/auditorium, computer lab, teacher's workroom, multi-purpose room, and administrative offices. School staff estimates the building is at capacity and will need more space to accommodate expected increases in students. The building will also need roof repairs in the near future.

Vestavia Hills Elementary School West

Elementary School West is located next to the Vestavia Hills Civic Center and Wald Park off Highway 31. The facility was built in 1977 and expanded in 1983 and 1992, when ten classrooms were added. The school now includes 30 classrooms, four special education rooms, a science lab, two computer labs, an art room, a library/media center, lunchroom, gymnasium/auditorium, a viewing center, and storage rooms. The school also includes an outdoor classroom area, a playground, and sports area. There were 512 students enrolled in 2003 and on staff were: 40 certified teachers, two administrators, and 25 support staff. Some cosmetic repairs are needed on the exterior of the building and grounds as well as some need of interior renovations.



Elementary School West

Vestavia Hills Elementary School Central

Central Elementary School is located east of Highway 31 across from Wald Park. The building, purchased in 1991, has received extensive repairs and expansions including the addition of three classrooms in 2002. There are 26 regular classrooms and rooms for special education, music, art, Spanish, and gifted classes. There also is a gymnasium/auditorium, conference room, media center, computer lab, multi-purpose room, and an outdoor area used as an “environmental classroom.” In 2003, there were 582 students enrolled in fourth and fifth grades with 44 teachers and other certified personnel, two administrators, and 20 support staff. Staff identified the following campus needs: larger auditorium and lunchroom, more parking, technology education enhancements, and some repairs to the gymnasium.

Cahaba Heights Elementary School

Located on Dolly Ridge Road, just north of Highway 280, the facility was administrated by the Jefferson County Board of Education prior to Cahaba Heights’ annexation in 2002. In the summer of 2003, the campus was renovated. Two buildings on campus are still in need of improvements and staff estimates that additional space will be needed to accommodate near-term increases in students. In 2003, there were 302 students enrolled in kindergarten and grades 1-6. On staff, there are 27 classroom teachers, two additional certified staff, eight support staff, and an administrator. The lunchroom and gymnasium are in need of renovations as well as some outdoor areas. The school is currently assessing needs for computer upgrades.



Cahaba Heights Elementary School

Liberty Park Elementary School

Constructed in 1998, Liberty Park Elementary School is located at the intersection of Sicard Hollow Road and Liberty Parkway, adjacent to the Vestavia Hills Sportsplex. The school consists of 31 total classrooms, gymnasium/auditorium, a media center, and outdoor facilities. The estimated capacity of the building is 575. In 2003, over 500 students were enrolled in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. The school has 29 classroom teachers, 25 special teachers and other certified staff, two administrators, and 11 support staff. Staff expects that the school will soon be at capacity and that current flex space will be used.



Liberty Park Elementary School

Pizitz Middle School

The Middle School is located on Pizitz Drive off Highway 31 in southern Vestavia Hills. The 59-classroom building was erected in 1968 and has received recent expansions including music, physical education, and art facilities. Currently the school has 68 regular classroom teachers, 10 other certified personnel, and 27 support staff. In 2003, 1161 students were enrolled in grades 6-8. According to staff, the gymnasium and lunchroom will soon need expansion and in the long-term, additional classroom space will be needed to accommodate student increases.



Pizitz Middle School

Vestavia Hills High School

Built in 1972, the High School is located between Highway 31 and Rocky Ridge. There are 90 classrooms, a bandroom, choral room, four science labs, an auditorium, library, gymnasium, dance room, and outdoor sports fields. A new gymnasium is currently under construction; and additional outdoor facilities will be provided with the completion of the planned Little Shades Creek Park. In 2003, 1545 students were enrolled in grades 9-12. School staff includes 100 teachers, four administrators, and 38 support staff. The auditorium has a capacity of approximately 1000, which does not accommodate the size of the current student population during all-school events.

Vestavia Hills Civic Center

1973 Merryvale Road

Located just off of busy Montgomery Highway, the Vestavia Hills Civic Center Complex is the definition of a “blended use” facility - housing educational activities, entertainment, sports, and civic functions. Central Elementary School and Wald Park adjoin the Civic Center complex. Much of the acreage is dedicated to outdoor athletic and recreational activities. The main building complex consists of approximately 28,000 sq. ft. of general use rooms plus a 20,000 sq. ft. gymnasium/auditorium.

While additional parking is available throughout the complex, only about 50 spaces on two levels are immediately adjacent to the portion of the complex housing the Civic Center. When the library moved to its new location in 1995, the Vestavia Hills Parks & Recreation Board assumed management of the entire building. They also administer the Wald Park Lodge (formerly known as the Senior Citizens Lodge), a rustic 4,472 square foot building located in another section of the complex. Built in 1992, that facility has approximately 30 parking spaces adjacent to the building.

Over 5,000 Vestavia Hills residents are registered as members of the Civic Center. Most of the activities in the Civic Center are fee based. Jazzercise© classes have been held in the center longer than any other activity and consistently have the largest registration. Other classes held in the facility include: art and clay classes; gymnastics; cheerleading; kung fu; yoga; international studies; dieting; support groups; computer classes; interior design; and several different dance classes.

Usable space is split into two levels. A large, open area broken by several columns occupies the upper floor along with a small meeting room, two even smaller rooms, and an activity room currently dedicated to the clay classes. A grant obtained in 2002 enabled renovations to this area. One section of the room near the main entrance is devoted to the Chamber of Commerce while the activity room and other small rooms will become the new Senior Citizen area. The existing small kitchen will also be upgraded. With about 12,000 sq. ft. of usable space, larger dance classes and town meetings can be held on this level. The lower level consists of several medium-sized activity/classrooms in the 1,400-1,800 sq. ft. range. Some rooms have been outfitted with wall-length mirrors and special flooring for dance classes. Other rooms are more suited for conventional classes and meetings. The Vestavian Room is also located on this lower level. A fully-equipped kitchen, bar, decorative stone wall, restrooms, and its own outside entrance make this 2,800 sq. ft. space a desirable rental area. Reservations are accepted six or more months in advance.

Wald Park Lodge is even more sought after for receptions, dinner, and business meetings. A fully-equipped commercial grade kitchen; large fireplace; 3,700 sq. ft. open area with wood floor and vaulted beam ceiling; two large porches; outdoor grill; loading area; small meeting room; restrooms; and ample parking all combine to make the Lodge a very popular meeting/reception site.

New Merkle House
(Cahaba Heights Senior Center)

When the Cahaba Heights Elementary School and property came into Vestavia Hills, the City also acquired The New Merkle House located on one corner of the school property. Formerly a private residence, the structure is a 30' x 80' two-story, wood frame building remodeled by Jefferson County for use as a Senior Center for both public and private meetings. The facility can be reserved by arrangement through the Parks and Recreation Department.

Primary access to the building is the school driveway. The property itself is steep resulting in the second floor having "walk-out" access to rear parking. Additional parking is located directly in front of the house on the first floor. There is no parking lot lighting for the top level, which is primarily used by senior citizens. This has limited the evening usage of the facility. There is no easy handicapped exterior access between the two levels and no interior handicapped access between the two floors. A wide interior stairway serves as both a fire exit and access between the floors. Keypad access is intended to provide secure access to the building, though problems are occurring with the keycard system at the stairwell.

The largest room, approximately 1,400 sq. ft., is located on the first floor. The lower section of the house serves as a Jefferson County voting precinct and is used for larger meetings and some social gatherings. It has a projection screen and concealed storage rooms. The second floor is a "beehive" of activity. While the rooms on the second floor are relatively small, they are very

comfortable and are used for public meetings, socials, senior luncheons, etc. The largest room is L-shaped with a fireplace at one end of the room. The room is equipped with card tables and chairs for casual conversations and recreation. A fully equipped kitchen is located on the second floor just off the main room. It is large enough for full meal preparation for small groups. There is a pass-through window into the main room for serving convenience. Several smaller rooms are now used as offices and storage space. The second floor also has a large room used as a craft area. Lighting should be improved for this purpose. There is a large, screened-in porch on the upper level at the front of the building, with tables and chairs and easy access to the kitchen. The porch is frequently used for social gatherings as well as the usual card games and conversations.

In the future, the facility will need improved access for the handicapped and senior citizens (externally and internally), better lighting in parking areas, more storage space, and some internal improvements.

Municipal Center (City Hall)

513 Montgomery Highway



Vestavia Hills Municipal Center

Built in 1956, the 29,000 sq. ft. Vestavia Hills Municipal Center is still the hub of city government. The building has been renovated five times over its 47-year lifespan. The space is home to the Mayor's Office, City Council, Administrative Departments (City Clerk/City Treasurer), Information Systems, Fire Department, Municipal Court, Police Department, Jail, Public Works, and about 20 boards, commissions, and committees. Between 50 and 100 employees are on-site at any given time. With only 60-70 available spaces, parking is problematic, especially when large gatherings occur with City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Municipal Court events.

There is a recognized need to expand the facility and little opportunity to do so in its current location. The building experiences some minor maintenance and repair problems, which may be due in part to its age and number of renovations. The City will eventually need to consider relocation of all or parts of the Municipal Center.

Vestavia Hills Public Library

112 Montgomery Highway



Vestavia Hills Public Library

Vestavia Hills' first library opened on the current Civic Center site in April of 1969. In 1995, the library moved into a building donated by HealthSouth. Located on approximately 1.8 acres, the 20,000 square foot structure was converted from a physician's office. The library holds just over 60,000 books/volumes.

The building has three stories and a mezzanine area. Two floors are used for day-to-day operations while the smaller third floor is a processing area for books and other materials. The main stacks are located on the split-level first floor that houses the main checkout and information desk, a quiet reading area, study areas, ten public computer stations, a used bookstore, listening rooms, and public restrooms. The second floor contains the children's library stacks, story area, and four public access computers. The Historical Room, housing the pictorial and narrative history of the city; Meeting Room, complete with full multi-media presentation capability; and a kitchen are also situated on the second floor. The Meeting Room and kitchen area have been recently renovated, repainted, and new carpet installed. A Meeting Room fee schedule has been implemented, with fees based on the type of group requesting use of the room. Fees go toward defraying the cost of renovations, upkeep, and maintenance. A smaller conference room is also

available on a fee basis for groups consisting of less than twelve members. Staff offices, a small meeting room, and the staff break room round out the usable second floor area.

An elevator provides primary access to the upper floors and handicapped access between the split levels of the first floor is accomplished via a special low-rise elevator. Approximately 13,000 Vestavia Hills residents are registered and check out over 126,000 items each year: books, books on tape and CD, music CDs, videos, and DVDs. Circulation statistics for fiscal year 2001 indicated that approximately 72% of all activity fit into the “Adult” category and “Youth” activity accounted for about 28%. During the week, the busiest times for the library are in the afternoons following school. Saturdays and Sundays are more uniform in usage.

The Friends of the Library Bookstore and Library Foundation handle all fund-raising for the Library. Funds raised by the Foundation will be used to carry out a facility and community needs study to help plan for the growth of library services. The Friends of the Library Bookstore generate funds that support programs administered by the children’s department, such as the Summer Reading Program.

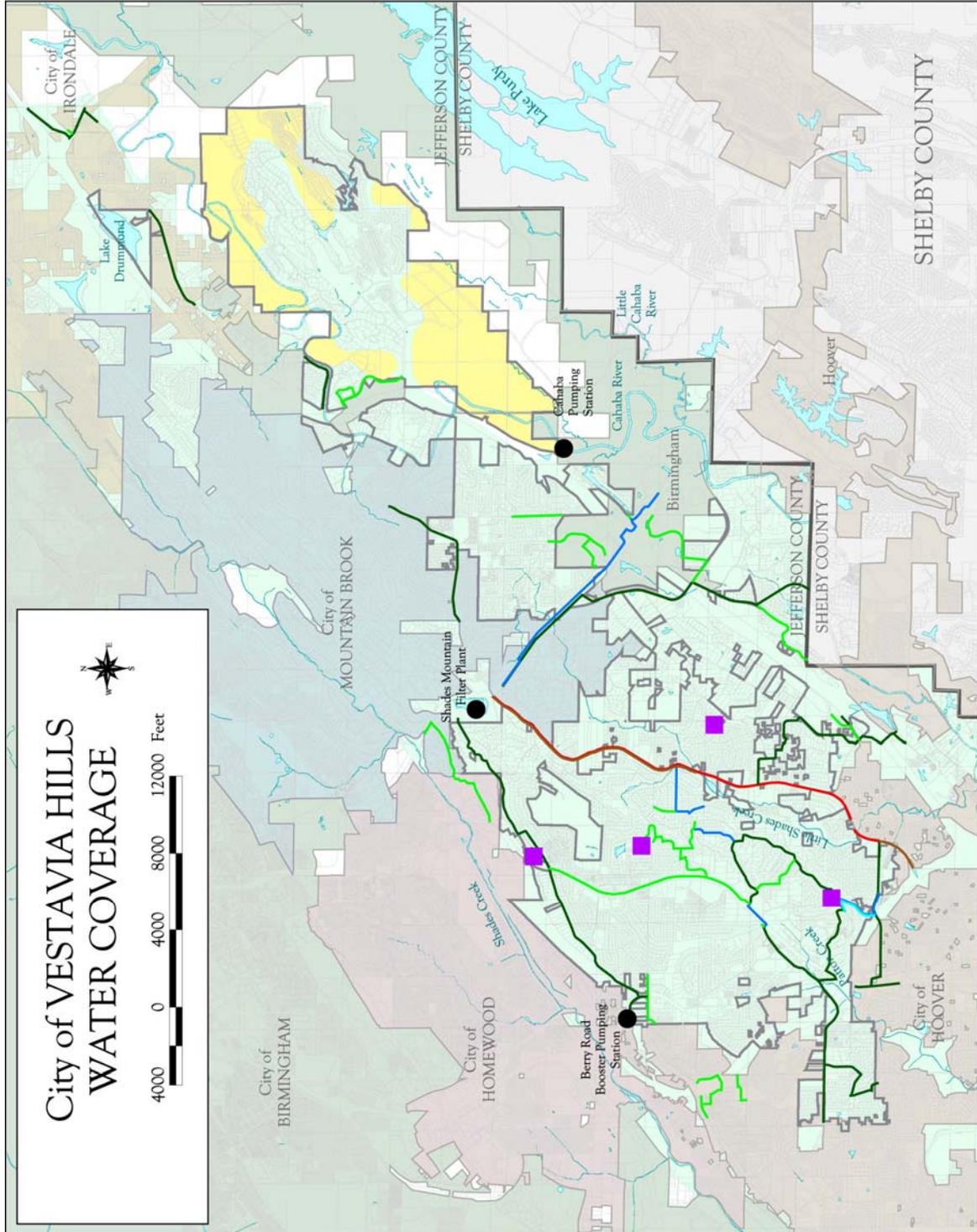
Vestavia Country Club

400 Beaumont Drive

While not an asset of the City, the Vestavia Country Club serves a valuable function for the community. Vestavia Hills has no facilities suitable for more formal gatherings and functions. Through a fee-based arrangement with the Vestavia Country Club, non-profit groups may use the facility for various gatherings, if they are “sponsored” by a member of the Country Club. City events are usually “sponsored” by the Mayor. The community has used the Country Club for functions honoring Miss Alabama, monthly Chamber of Commerce meetings, awards dinners, leadership meetings, etc. The City holds up to four functions each month at the Country Club.

WATER SYSTEM

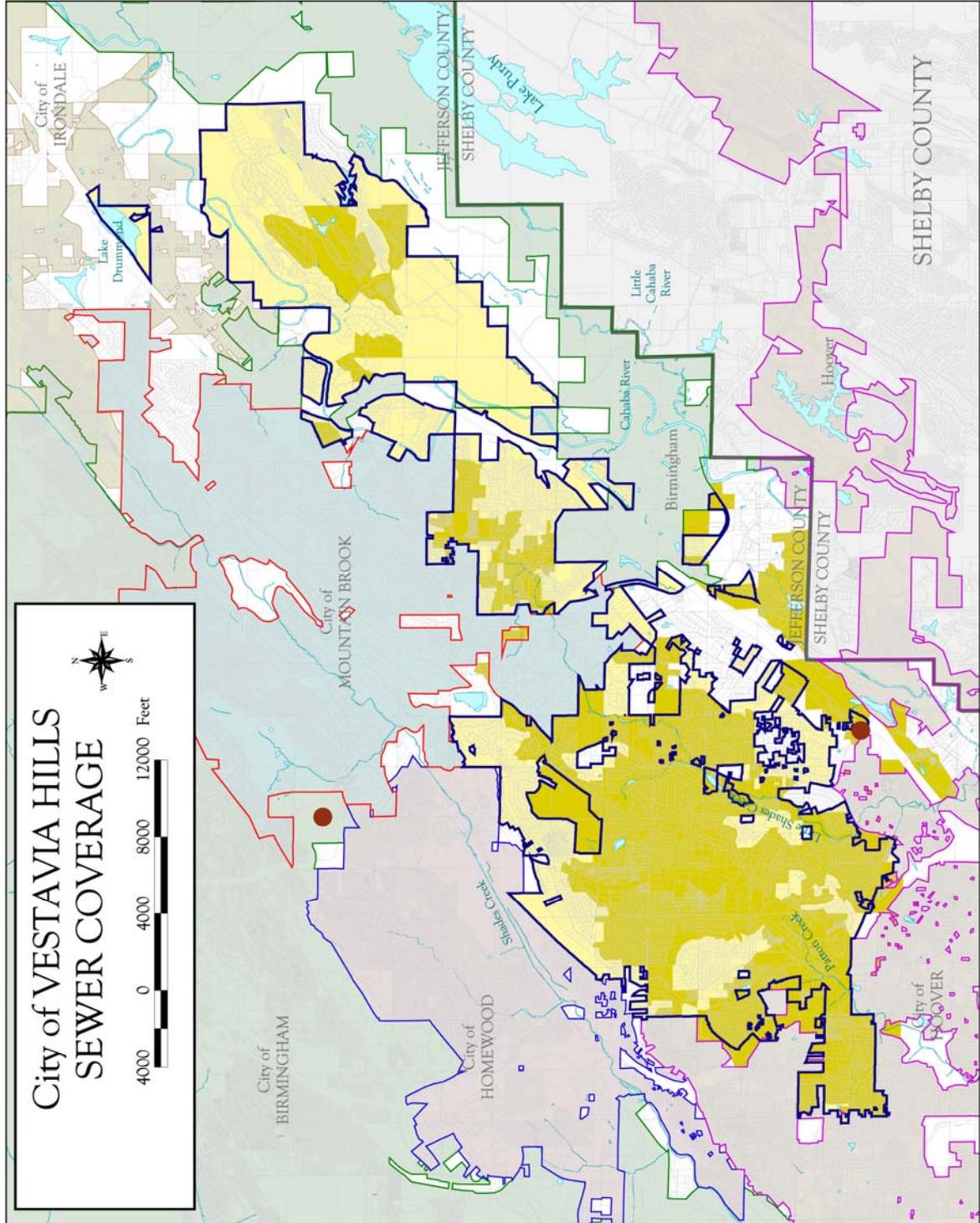
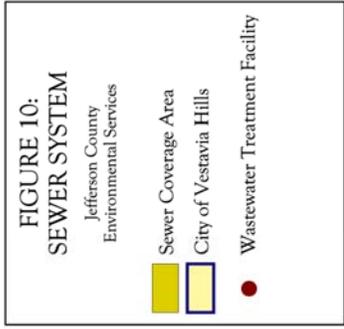
This map illustrates the areas within the City of Vestavia Hills served by the metropolitan water system operated by the Birmingham Water Works Board. As can be seen in this map, only the undeveloped portions of Liberty Park are not currently covered by the water service. However, as the area is developed, planned infrastructure expansions will provide water coverage to these areas.



SEWER SYSTEM

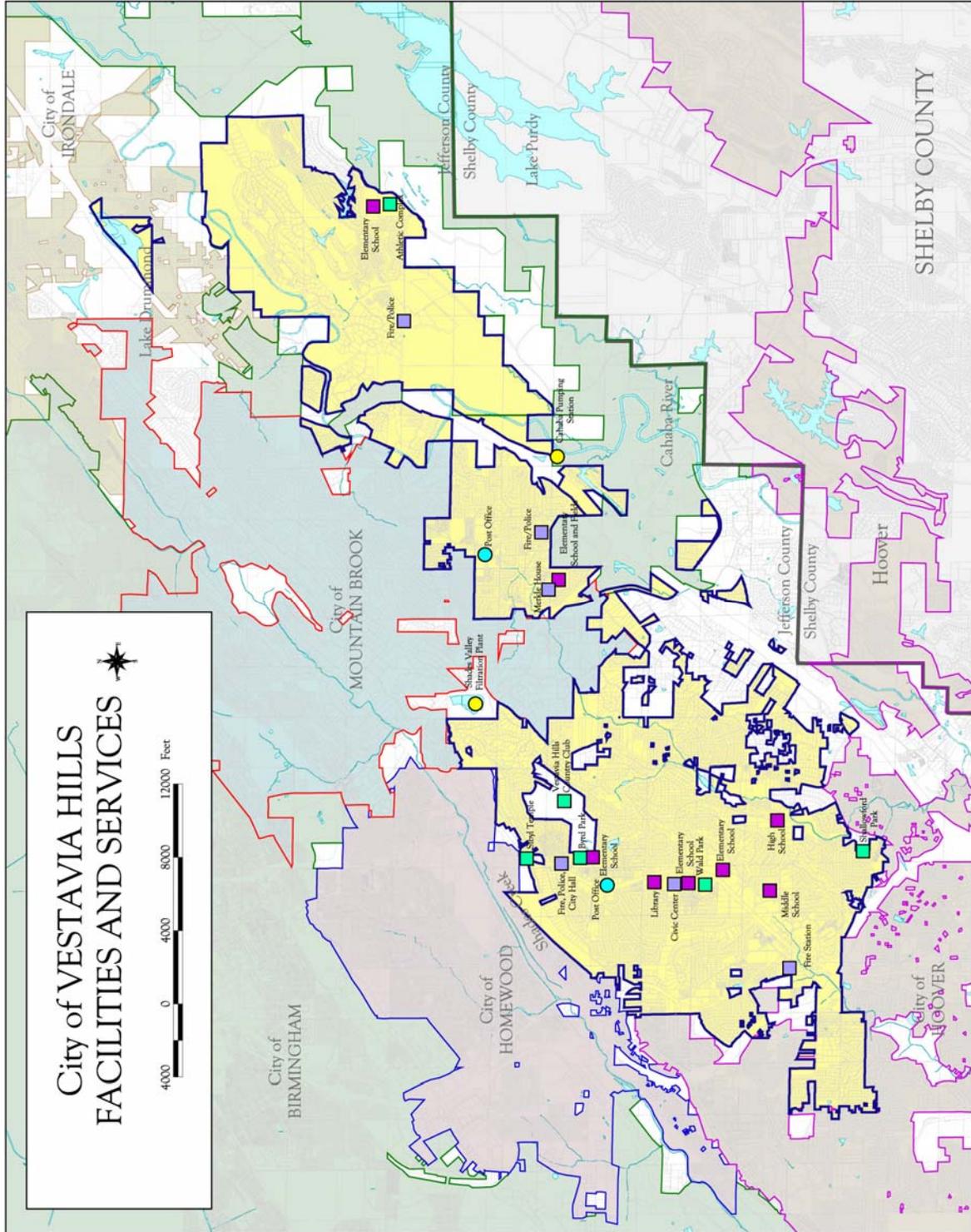
This map illustrates the areas within the City of Vestavia Hills served by the metro sewer system operated by Jefferson County Environmental Services. As the map shows, most areas in the city are within the coverage area. Not all properties and developments within the coverage area are "tied to" the sewer system. Such developments use on-site septic systems and are density-limited. The largest amount of uncovered areas occurs in Cahaba Heights; however, sewer improvements are in process (2003).

The Liberty Park area is covered by a private sewer system which is expanded as development occurs.



FACILITIES AND SERVICES

This map illustrates the layout of community facilities and services such as: schools, parks, police and fire facilities, and other sites that offer services to the community. Due to the City's historical development, many of these sites are located near the commercial and residential developments along US 31.



EXISTING ZONING

Vestavia Hills enacted its original Zoning Ordinance (Ordinance #28) in 1953. Since then, the original ordinance has been amended many times. Within the Vestavia Hills' Zoning Ordinance, there are twenty-one distinct residential, business, agricultural, office, and institutional zoning districts. Of these 21 districts, twelve are strictly devoted to residential classifications. Vestavia Hills's zoning districts are shown in **Figure #12: Zoning Map**.

Recently annexed Cahaba Heights, originally regulated by Jefferson County zoning, now is regulated according to the City's zoning ordinance. Incorporation of this area also resulted in the addition of Jefferson County residential zoning districts. Liberty Park, planned and designed prior to incorporation, is a Planned Unit Development (PUD) and on-going development is regulated according to the requirements of the PUD classification. Each of Vestavia Hills' zoning classifications is described following:

Residential Districts

E-1 is intended for single family residences on estate size lots of 2 acres or greater, the most density-restrictive residential district.

Min. lot size = 2 acres
Min. living space = 2,000 sf

E-2 is intended for single family residences on estate size lots.

Min. lot size = 1 acre
Min. living space = 2,000 sf

R-1 is intended for single family homes as large in living space as estate lots, but with smaller required lot sizes.

Min. lot size = 20,000 sf
Min. living space = 2,000 sf

R-2 is intended for single family homes on lots smaller than those permitted in R-1.

Min. lot size = 15,000 sf
Min. living space = 1,600 sf

R-3 is intended for smaller homes than those permitted in R-2, but with similar lot sizes.

Min. lot size = 15,000 sf
Min. living space = 1,400 sf

R-4 is intended for single family homes on lots smaller than those permitted in R-3.

Min. lot size = 12,000 sf
Min. living space = 1,200 sf

R-5 is intended for multi-family residences of four units or larger and other uses as allowed by the BZA.

Min. lot size (4 units) = 17,500 sf
(3,500 sf for each additional unit)
Min. living space (single family) = 1,200 sf
Min. living space (multi-family) = 1,000 sf

R-6 is intended for small single-family lots with zero side setbacks on one side yard. This essentially allows for garden homes and/or patio homes.

Min. lot size (total) = 4,000 sf
Total min. living space (1-story) = 1,000 sf
Total min. living space (2-story) = 1,100 sf

R-7 is intended for two- and three-family attached residences, or duplexes (twin homes) and triplexes (triple homes).

Min. lot size = 3,500 sf per unit
Total min. living space (1-story) = 1,000 sf
Total min. living space (2-story) = 1,100 sf

R-8 is intended for townhomes, single family homes with zero side setbacks on both side yards.

Min. lot size = 1,250 sf
Total min. living space (1-story) = 1,000 sf
Total min. living space (2-story) = 1,200 sf

R-9 is intended for the planned development of residential areas. This district allows for the development of housing types permitted in all other Residential Districts and requires buffers from other districts.

RC-1 is intended for condominiums and includes requirements for living area per unit and buildable area per lot.

Min. lot size = 20,000 sf
Min. living space (1-BR unit) = 800 sf
Min. living space (2-BR unit) = 1,250 sf
Min. living space (3-BR unit) = 1,500 sf

Agricultural District

A-1 is intended for semi-rural uses on large, unsubdivided lots.

Min. lot size = 20,000 sf
Min. living space per dwelling = 1,400 sf

Business Districts

B-1 is intended for business uses to serve the day-to-day needs of residents. Requirements are intended to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential areas.

No minimum lot size
Min. front setback = 80 feet

B-2 is intended for a greater variety of business uses than in the B-1 District, including automobile service, gasoline sales, amusement, assembly, and retail-type businesses.

No minimum lot size
Min. front setback = 50 feet

B-3 is intended for business types not included in the B-1 or B-2 Districts. These may include or are similar to trailer camps, kennels, heavy machinery operations, etc.

No minimum lot size
Front setback = 50 feet

Office Districts

O-1 is intended for the development of business and professional office buildings up to two stories.

Min. lot size = 10,000 sf
Front setback = 50 ft

O-2 is intended for the development of professional office buildings up to ten stories.

Min. lot size = 25,000 sf
Front setback = 50 ft

Planned Commercial District

PC is intended to provide the "best design and coordinated arrangement of commercial buildings". This district is used generally for the development of commercial properties of 5 acres or larger.

Institutional District

Insti-1 is intended for institutional uses including: churches, schools, charitable organizations, etc.

No minimum lot size
Min. front setback = 50 ft

Planned Unit Development District

PUD is intended for the development of large areas of land with a coordinated strategy. Such developments include a pre-planned mix of business, residential, and recreational areas.

Overall, the ordinance is in need of some updating and reorganization. The City should consider special provisions for floodplain areas to protect the Cahaba River and other natural areas from encroaching development. Other improvements may be identified through a review of the permitted uses and dimensional regulations of the existing ordinance. Some requirements, such as an 80 foot front setback on neighborhood commercial developments, can work against intentions to develop business areas compatible with neighborhoods. These and other potential improvements to the zoning ordinance are discussed further in Chapter IV.

Shown in **Table 6** is a breakdown of the City's zoning districts by acreage. This chart further breaks down the zoning districts within each of the three major areas of the City: Cahaba Heights, Liberty Park, and southern Vestavia Hills.

Current residential zoning districts total about 63% (7,315 acres) of the corporate limits. Adding the PR-1 and PR-2 residential sub-districts of Liberty Park (shown in the following table), the total percent of residential zoning is closer to 83% (9,637 acres). Commercial zoning districts (including Liberty Park sub-districts) account for 1,230 acres, or 10.5% of the land mass of the City. Remaining zoning categories include agricultural (2.9%), institutional (2.3%), and Liberty Park's mixed use sub-district (1.6%). The ratio between residential and commercial acreage in Liberty Park's currently undeveloped mixed use district will have a small impact on the above commercial/residential ratios for the entire City. **Table 5** provides a more detailed breakdown of the Liberty Park PUD currently.

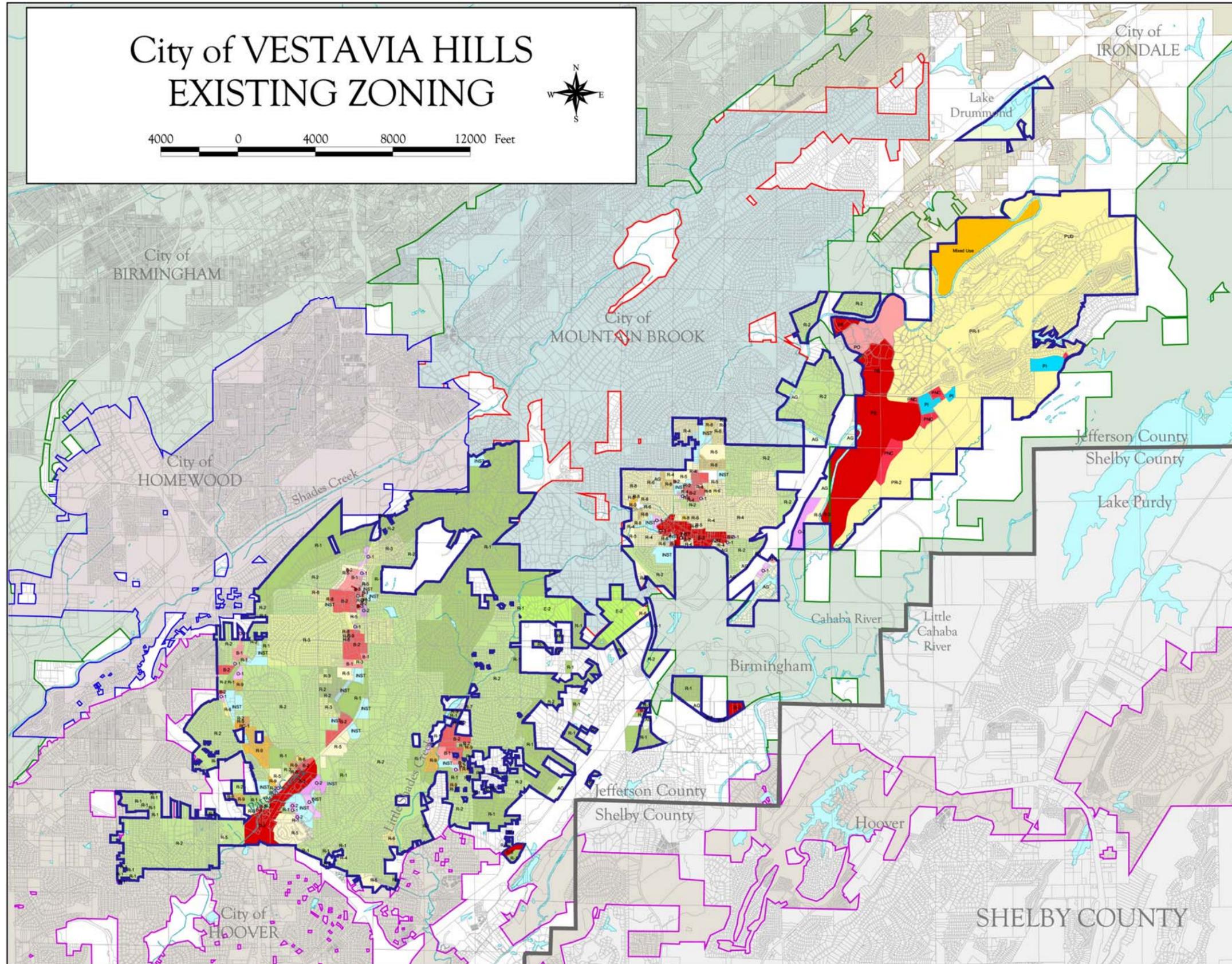
PUD Sub-districts	Acreage	Percent of Total
Mixed Use	187	5.8%
PB	469	14.6%
PB - (CU)	6	0.2%
PI	9	0.3%
PNC	58	1.8%
PO	117	3.6%
PR-1	2,177	67.8%
PR-2	145	4.5%
INST	44	1.4%
Total	3,212	100.0%

TABLE 6: Acreage of Zoning Districts by Area in City

Zoning District	Cahaba Heights Area	Liberty Park Area	Southern Vestavia Hills Area	TOTAL	Percent of Total	Percent by Category
R-1	0.0	0.0	1992.3	1,992.3	17.1%	Residential 62.9%
R-2	583.7	54.6	3,151.1	3,789.4	32.5%	
R-3	0.0	0.0	417.3	417.3	3.6%	
R-4	437.2	0.0	4.2	441.4	3.8%	
R-5	56.0	17.4	190.3	263.7	2.3%	
R-6	40.3	0.0	33.2	73.5	0.6%	
R-7	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.8	0.02%	Agricultural
R-8	44.7	0.0	9.1	53.8	.5%	2.9%
R-9	4.3	0.0	95.7	100.0	0.9%	~
RC-1	0.0	0.0	7.3	7.3	.06%	Commercial
E-1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	.0%	4.0%
E-2	0.0	0.0	174.7	174.7	1.5%	~
A-1	46.4	253.6	33.7	333.7	2.9%	Planned Unit Development 27.6%
B-1	0.0	2.3	54.7	57.0	0.5%	
B-2	35.2	0.0	156.5	191.7	1.6%	
B-3	67.2	9.8	130.9	207.9	1.8%	~
O-1	11.0	5.6	47.9	64.5	0.6%	Institutional 1.9%
O-2	0.0	35.4	24.1	59.5	0.5%	
PUD	0.0	3,215.9	0.0	3,215.9	27.6%	
Inst	70.7	0.0	149.0	219.7	1.9%	
TOTAL	1,396.7	3,594.6	6,673.8	11,665.1	100.0%	

City of VESTAVIA HILLS EXISTING ZONING

4000 0 4000 8000 12000 Feet



EXISTING ZONING

This map illustrates the existing zoning districts within the City of Vestavia Hills (February 2003). This map provides updated zoning information for Cahaba Heights which, upon annexation, was transitioned through a public process into City zoning classes.

The map also provides a breakdown of the zoning sub-districts in the Liberty Park PUD, which parallel commercial and residential districts in other parts of the community.

FIGURE 12:
EXISTING ZONING

	INST		R-1
	B-1		R-2
	B-2		R-3
	B-3		R-4
	O-1		R-5
	O-2		R-6
	AG		R-7
	E-1		R-8
	E-2		R-9
			RC-1

*Liberty Park PUD shown as subdistricts.

VACANT LAND

Vacant land, partially developed and underdeveloped properties, and areas undergoing a land use transition were identified and assessed for the Plan to better understand how growth may continue, both within the City and in adjacent unincorporated areas. These areas are shown in **Figure #13: Vacant Land Map**.

Within the southern Vestavia Hills area, most vacant and partially developed properties tend to be within residential areas. A common reason, for these properties being undeveloped or only partly developed, is steep terrain. Other identified properties, within the original portion of the City, which show some potential for new commercial development or redevelopment, were examined by the LRPC. This assessment is included in the Appendix to this Plan and covers ownership, size, topography, land potential, and other significant issues concerning their future use and development.



Vacant residential lot on Massey Road.

Within Cahaba Heights, though most land is currently developed, many vacant and underutilized properties were found to have a potential for new development or redevelopment. With the recent commercial boom of The Summit development south of Cahaba Heights, older properties along Cahaba Heights' major arteries, show a great potential for more intensive redevelopment. The largest undeveloped area in the Cahaba Heights area lies immediately east of I-459. The area is accessible only from Cahaba Heights Road/Blue Lake Road near the Cahaba Pump Station. During the preparation of this Plan, a development proposal for the site, the River Centre was introduced. This project is planned to include 120 acres comprised of nine commercial office, retail, and restaurant sites, as well as an "aquatic resource center". The River Centre mission is to be "a model for the state and Southeast region for sustainable design and development, purposefully demonstrating the economic feasibility of total project commitment to environmentally-sound principles."

The residential and corporate development of the Highway 280 corridor east of Interstate 459 has encouraged the redevelopment of older properties historically used for agriculture and low-density residential development. Several areas between Highway 280 and the Acton Road interchange of I-459 have begun a transition from lower to higher density residential, commercial, and office uses. Likewise, vacant sites in these areas show a great potential for new development.

Immediately west of the Cahaba River Road underpass at I-459, a large property lies vacant between the road and the BellSouth Headquarters. This site has potential for office development. East

of this site, along Cahaba River Road, several opportunities exist for new development. This area, between Altadena Square and the Colony Woods apartment complex, has potential for a variety of uses including office, residential, and some retail activity. Should properties become available for development, the area should be considered for a mixed-use PUD. One site in this area has, during the development of this plan, been proposed for a mix of commercial and residential uses. This project will be built between the existing single-family neighborhood south of the Colonnade and the Colony Woods apartment complex.

Other properties, south along Acton Road, are also vacant and others have begun redevelopment. Recent development has changed low-density single family lots into small office uses. This area's potential for redevelopment is limited by site depth and hilly topography on the west side of Acton, which backs up to I-459.

Around the Acton Road interchange with I-459, further south, some vacant properties exist just northwest of Hoover's Rocky Ridge Elementary School. With the current pattern of development around the interchange, these properties may have some potential for office development. Several large corporate offices and large-scale institutional uses have developed around the interchange both in Vestavia Hills and Hoover over the last two decades.

The largest amount of undeveloped land in the Vestavia Hills planning area is situated in and around the Liberty Park area. Much of this land belongs within Liberty Park's PUD Zoning District and is slated for future development according to the Liberty Park masterplan. Those undeveloped

properties on the periphery of Liberty Park are mostly within unincorporated Jefferson County and are blocked from annexation into the City of Vestavia Hills by municipal buffers of the City of Birmingham. Due to environmental constraints in this area, related to the Upper Cahaba Watershed, new development in this area must be planned and engineered carefully to avoid impacts on the water quality in the Cahaba River, the metro area's main water source.



Currently undeveloped commercial site in Liberty Park

UNINCORPORATED AREAS

The unincorporated areas surrounding Vestavia Hills lie mostly within Jefferson County. There are also unincorporated areas to the east and southeast of the city within Shelby County. These areas are shown in **Figure #14: Unincorporated Areas Map**.

For the purposes of this Plan, the development status and related conditions of surrounding unincorporated areas was assessed to provide information on land use, vacancy, development potential, and other factors. These factors give the City a greater ability to determine whether the annexation of such areas will be a worthwhile action. These conditions also illustrate the impact that development of unincorporated areas will affect planning and development within the City.

Most adjacent unincorporated land lies along the eastern edges of the City, including land between the City and Hoover, Mountain Brook, and Birmingham. With the annexations of Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park in recent years, there is a much greater area of unincorporated land adjacent to the City, especially around Interstate 459.

Status of Unincorporated Areas

The area of greatest interest exists directly south and east of traditional Vestavia Hills, along Acton Road and Cahaba River Road, an area known as the Rocky Ridge Fire District. This area has a variety of land uses currently. While much of the area is residential, there are definite pockets of commercial property within the area.

The residential portion of the unincorporated area varies greatly in home value, from lower \$100

thousands to the \$500 thousand and \$1 million range along Altadena Road. The commercial area is principally along Acton Road. A great deal of this area is already developed, but there are still opportunities for commercial and mixed-use development/redevelopment.

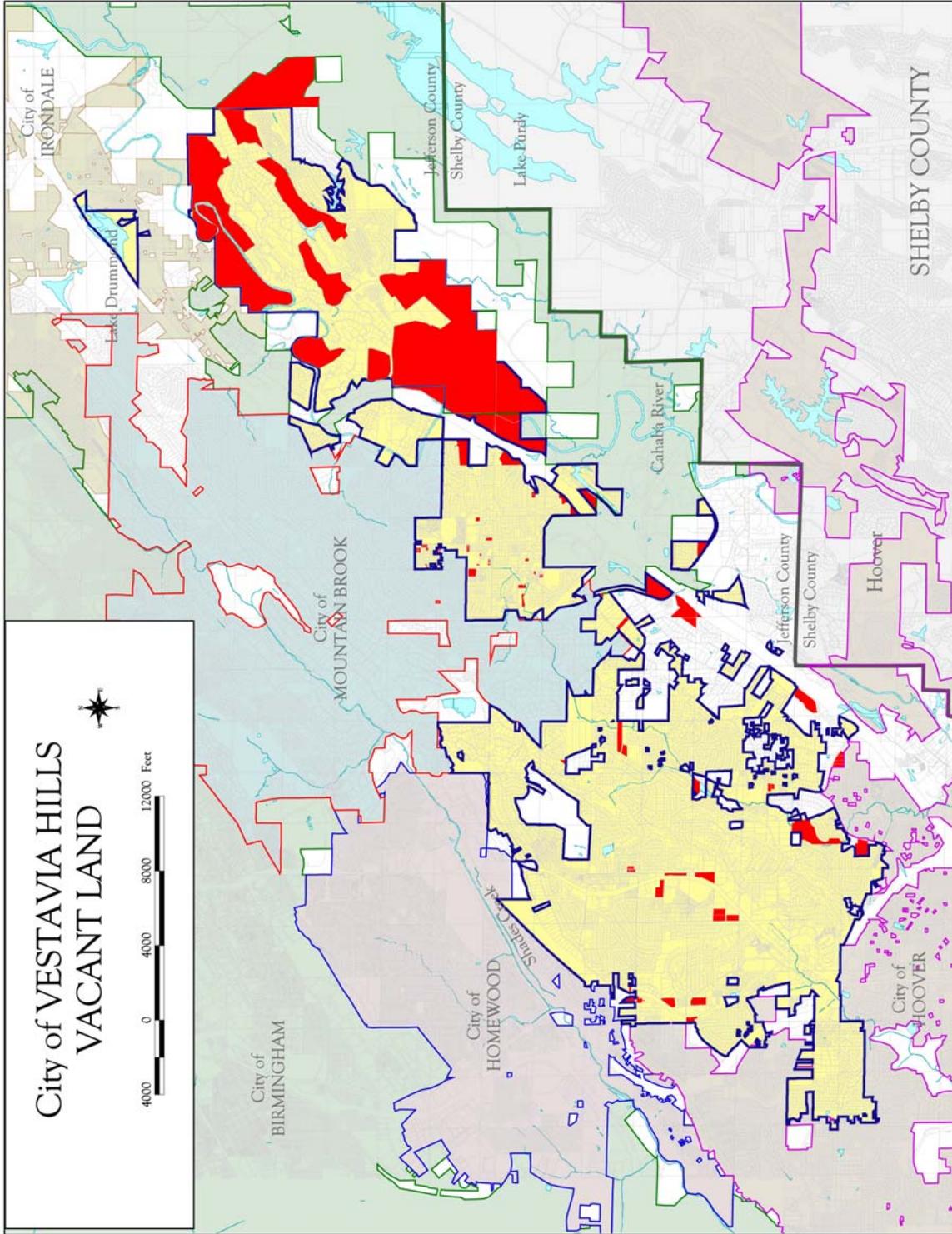
A promising area of future development/redevelopment is along Cahaba River Road, South of I-459. A large landholding, now used agriculturally, represents a great opportunity for a future mixed-use center. Other parcels on the east side of Cahaba River Road include an unused property and a residential subdivision that backs up to the Colonnade development. Because of the amount of relatively unbuilt land, there is great potential in pre-planning the area for what development may occur in the future.

There are large amounts of mostly undeveloped and unincorporated land to the east and north of Liberty Park that are not contiguous to Liberty Park, due to the location of another municipality's corporate boundary. Birmingham has "lassoed" this property, limiting potential for annexation by Vestavia Hills. While it is unlikely that the City of Birmingham will de-annex this lasso area, this possibility or annexation by state legislative action are the only routes for incorporating this area. Generally, there are no significant, unincorporated lands to the west or north of Vestavia Hills.

VACANT LAND

This map illustrates the areas within the City of Vestavia Hills planning area currently vacant or undeveloped in 2003. The greatest amount of undeveloped land lies within and around the Liberty Park area. Small pockets of undeveloped property also lie within Cahaba Heights and in mostly residential areas in the originally incorporated portions of the City. Undeveloped land also occurs along the Acron Road and Cahaba River Road areas.

Vacant land outside of Vestavia Hills' extra-jurisdictional planning area are not shown.



**FIGURE 13:
VACANT LAND**

- Vestavia Hills
- Vacant and undeveloped land

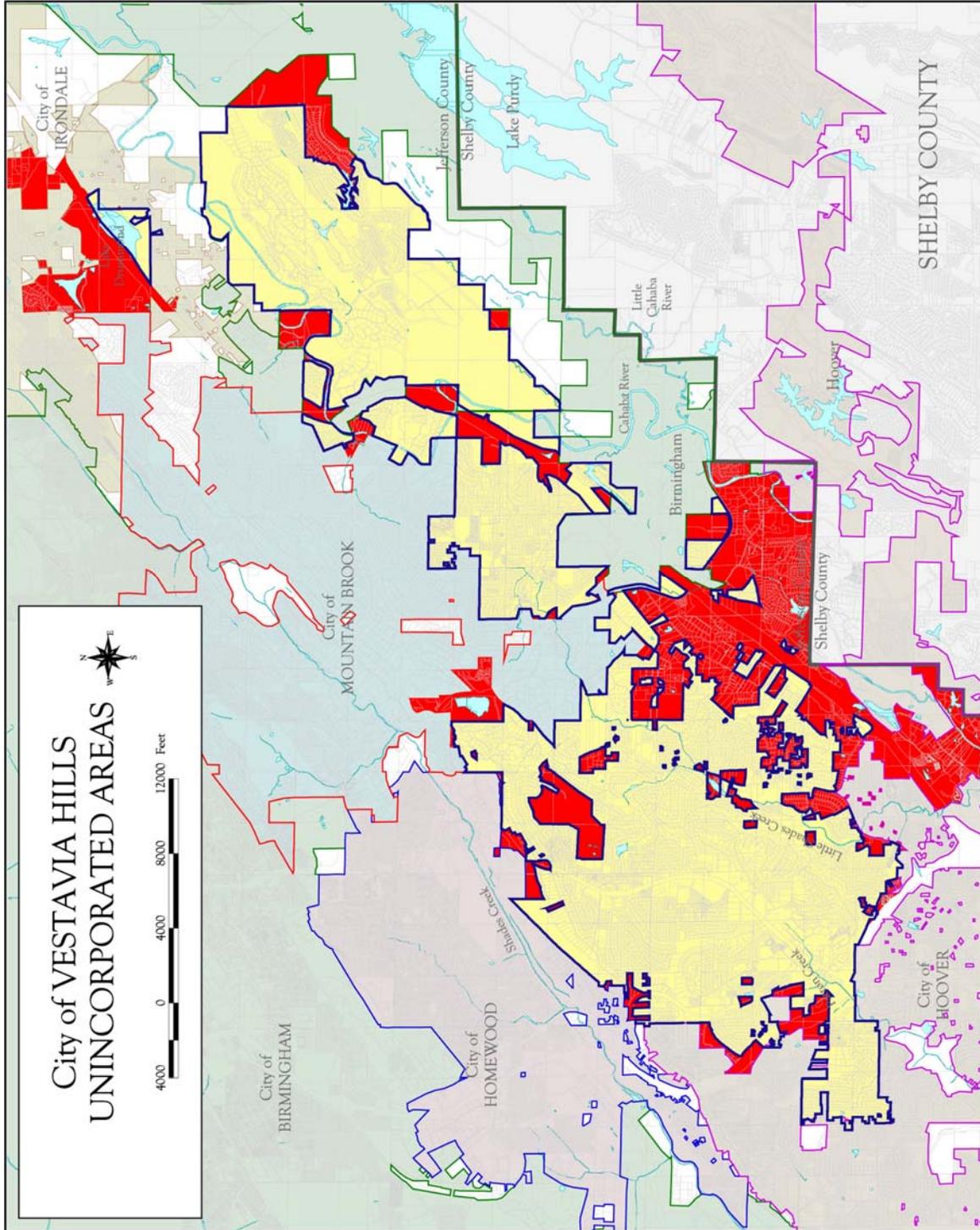
UNINCORPORATED AREAS

This map identifies both the current incorporated areas of the City of Vestavia Hills (2003) and adjacent unincorporated areas. Those areas shown in red represent land that is within the City's "extrajurisdictional" planning area. The extrajurisdictional planning area is similar to the City's police jurisdiction and can lie up to five miles outside of the city limits. This map also represents what outlying areas may legally be annexed by the City.

Several large areas surrounding Liberty Park are bounded by City of Birmingham "lasso" annexations, causing much of this area to be outside of the City of Vestavia Hills' planning area.

**FIGURE 14:
UNINCORPORATED
AREAS**

- City of Vestavia Hills
- Annexable Unincorporated Areas
- Shelby County
- Jefferson County
- City of Birmingham
- City of Homewood
- City of Hoover
- City of Irondale
- City of Mountain Brook



*Chapter II: VISION, GOALS, AND
OBJECTIVES*

VISION

The City of Vestavia Hills, Alabama is committed to preserving and enhancing the strong sense of place that derives from its unique location, surroundings, neighborhoods, business districts and schools. This Comprehensive Plan provides Vestavia Hills the framework to guide future efforts to maintain a high quality of life for its citizens through actions that:

- Preserve, protect and enhance neighborhood safety and livability;
- Provide opportunities for healthy economic growth while maintaining the quality of our neighborhoods and assuring the financial strength of our school system;
- Promote and support the continued success and excellence of Vestavia Hills Hills schools;
- Enhance the connectivity within our City boundaries;
- Promote responsible land use that is sensitive to the environment and the aesthetics of the community;
- Provide improved recreational and cultural opportunities for our residents.

GOAL ONE

Maintain a Quality Residential Environment

Objectives

- Maximize compatibility between residential, both new and existing, to surrounding existing and proposed environments
 - Minimize negative impacts on existing residential areas caused by surrounding developments through appropriate land use regulations and decisions
- Promote a sense of neighborhood by balancing and strengthening relationship between residential areas, retail areas, places of employment, recreational facilities, civic and cultural facilities, and other activities
- Ensure long-range protection for residential property values through promotion of educational system achievements and family-oriented neighborhoods
- Ensure and enhance city services, including police, fire, and public works
- Protect water quality and other environmental elements affecting neighborhoods
 - Create and implement a policy on disposal of household hazardous wastes including oils, paint, and batteries
 - Maintain and expand green areas

GOAL TWO

Create an Aesthetically Pleasing Community

Objectives

- Develop guidelines to promote quality and consistent architectural, landscape, and treescape design within the community
 - Develop and implement enforceable ordinances from architectural and landscape guidelines
 - Enhance and enforce a uniform Sign ordinance
 - Combine landscape and treescape regulations into one ordinance
 - Enforce stricter regulations on the maintenance of parking lots and landscape areas
 - Involve proper planning staff, as needs arise, in the establishment and administration of development policies, regulations, and guidelines
- Propose civic gateways that ensure a positive experience on arrival into the City
 - Make design improvements to gateway areas: Highway 31 South and North, Columbiana Road, Rocky Ridge Road, Liberty Park, and Cahaba Heights
 - Ensure quality signage at all gateways
- Recognize and preserve sites of historic, architectural, and natural value
 - Preserve creeks, open spaces, and other attributes of the "natural" environment
 - Consider walking trail on old Wald Park site
 - Create focal points within the City from landmark buildings and open spaces
 - Collaborate with county and state agencies to identify and preserve historic structures

GOAL THREE

Provide Quality Public Facilities and Services

Objectives

- Support continued development of quality education facilities and programs
 - Promote fine arts facility to enhance existing arts programs
- Provide and enhance a variety of public recreational areas sufficient to meet the needs of and be accessible to local population
 - Develop a new community center for all ages with expanded programs, recreation, education, and public meeting and activity facilities
 - Develop neighborhood parks with play areas for children
- Ensure quality emergency services including ambulance, police, and fire safety facilities
 - "Store-Front" options in new areas desired
- Ensure a high design standard for public architecture, landscaping, site planning, and management
 - Establish a distinct architectural character for City facilities
 - Set top priority on and implement design improvements to public spaces and common areas

GOAL FOUR

Promote Orderly Growth

Objectives

- Develop a plan to positively anticipate and respond effectively to changes affecting the socioeconomic and physical character of the community
 - Develop a long-range plan to support and improve land use regulation and decision-making
 - Identify areas considered desirable for annexation to make accessible only those areas that represent desirable development potential and that increase connectivity throughout City
 - Designate areas for future open spaces and pedestrian paths
 - Guide development in a cost-effective manner compatible with City vision and ability to provide services
- Encourage greater economic development within the City to serve residents and expand the City's tax base
 - Recruit desirable retail businesses into appropriate locations throughout the City
 - Determine and encourage a consistent development pattern and character for commercial areas
 - Encourage an appropriate mix of uses in commercial areas and throughout the City
 - Develop "targeted" commercial marketing campaign
 - Revitalize commercial areas to reach their highest potential: Rocky Ridge, Columbiana Road, Cahaba Heights, and Highway 31
 - Preserve existing and potential areas best suited for economic development to prevent their use for other purposes
- Determine and recruit development types that will positively contribute to socioeconomic conditions within the City
- Recruit a major corporate headquarters development within the City
- Promote local spending with programs such as "Shop Vestavia Hills"
- Develop community / business partnerships
- Create "artificial customers" - tie into residential lofts
- Develop a "city center"
 - Evaluate potential locations for future development of a city government complex
 - Redevelop the current City Hall facility for future office use
- Improve public accessibility to and information on City development regulations
- Ensure "best and highest" use of property in all zoning decisions
- Establish consistent, high-quality development guidelines to ensure growth is efficient, attractive, appropriate, comfortable, healthy, and safe
 - Develop regulations to preserve space in large development proposals for public amenities and facilities: sidewalks, parks, schools, etc.
 - Develop zoning ratios

GOAL FIVE

Increase Connectivity throughout the Community

Objectives

- Increase interconnectivity and synergy between neighborhoods and businesses areas, as well as, adjacent communities
 - Plan greenways and park spaces to serve and connect residential areas and activity centers
 - Develop and promote community events to bridge Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights with "Old Vestavia Hills"
 - Promote the construction of sidewalks and trails in public and private developments
- Develop a transportation plan to improve connectivity and accessibility for visitors and residents and enhance economic, cultural, and safety issues
 - Devise a sustainable, local transit network to connect to Regional Transit System
 - Develop a "park and ride" system with municipal parking and gathering space
 - Increase connectivity with adjacent communities
 - Improve traffic flow and connectivity between commercial and residential areas

Chapter III: PLANNING INFLUENCES

The following section highlights the major influences on Vestavia Hills' growth, both past and future. These are culled from demographic data, the documentation of the City's physiographic characteristics, existing development, community services, undeveloped land, and potential annexation areas from Chapter I. These planning influences are the basis upon which the City must plan for future growth and the provision of services to its residents.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS

An important factor to be included in the consideration of the City's future growth is the growth of its population and how that can be measured through an assessment of its past and present demographic conditions and trends. The following assessment is intended to provide the City with an idea of its potential growth in population through 2025. Such an analysis allows the City to understand not only the overall population it may be serving in that time frame but also key statistics about the composition of that population. For instance, the number of school-age children living in Vestavia Hills in 2025 is an important piece of information in planning for the expansion of and development of new school facilities.

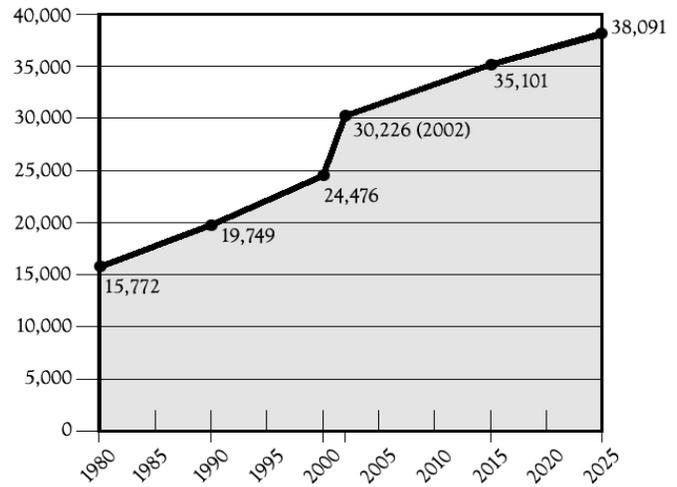
Other significant demographic trends represented in this analysis are:

- Housing Values
- Median Household Income
- Poverty Status
- Single Family and Multi-family Residence
- Owner v. Renter-Occupied Residence
- Commute Patterns

The future projections for these elements are based on demographic trends documented by the U.S. Census, local housing permit trends, and expectations for future development and annexation. NOTE: Each table includes demographics for 2002, the year in which Cahaba Heights was incorporated into the City. Due to this influx of population in 2002, change to demographics within the City was exceptional. This field is marked by an asterisk (*) in each table.

The population estimates (1980-2025) on the following page reveal that population growth in the City of Vestavia Hills will begin to taper off over the next 20 years. The 23.5% increase in population between 2000 and 2002 was a result of the annexation of Cahaba Heights, bringing in a large number of existing residents into the City all at once. By 2015, the population size of the City will increase by 16.1% from the size at the time of this plan. This is a smaller increase than the average growth experienced between 1980 and 2002. Between 2015 and 2025, the expected 10 year growth will be even less - about 8.5%.

This steady slowing of population growth will be partly attributable to Vestavia Hills meeting its maximum annexable area over this time period. Another factor involved is that the amount of land being gained in future annexations is projected to include a greater proportion of non-residential areas compared to the current City pattern. Similarly, multi-family residential development is also projected to slow over time. The projections for overall population growth for 2015 and 2025 are important to the planning for expansion of police and fire protection, recreational facilities, and other city services provided to all residents. Following the population estimates is a record of the housing permits issued by Vestavia Hills since 1996. This information was used to develop the stated population projections.



Population Change: 1980-2025

Year	Total Population	Population Change	Percent Change
1980	15,722	NA	NA
1990	19,749	4,027	25.6%
2000	24,476	4,727	23.9%
2002*	30,226	5,750	23.5%
2015	35,101	4,875	16.1%
2025	38,091	2,990	8.5%

Year	Total Permits Issued	Single Family Units	Multi-Family Units
1996	172	172	0
1997	168	168	0
1998	160	160	0
1999	474	174	300
2000	394	166	228
2001	105	105	0
2002	114	114	0

Housing Permits: 1996-2002

Table 9: Housing Unit Tenure Estimates and Projections 1980 - 2025				
Year	Total Housing Units	Occupied Housing Units	Owner- Occupied Units	Renter- Occupied Units
1980	6,149	5,950	4,376	1,574
1990	8,034	7,710	5,836	1,874
2000	10,523	9,841	7,688	2,153
2002*	13,358	12,549	9,230	3,319
2015	16,108	14,937	11,501	3,436
2025	17,708	16,348	12,751	3,597

The table, Housing Unit Tenure, lends further detail to the assumption that new multi-family development, which is typically "renter-occupied", will decrease over time while owner-occupied units (generally single family homes and condominiums) will continue to develop within the City over the next two decades. The rate of increase for owner-occupied units by 2025 is projected at 38%; while renter-occupied units are expected to increase by only 8.4%.

The table **Persons per Household** is further information to parallel the population increases and types of residential development that can be expected to house those additional residents within the City. The table represents the local trend in the number of persons residing within individual households, which over time decreases. Several factors are expected to result in this slight decrease in household size: family households with fewer children, an increase in young married couples without children, an increase in retiree-oriented residential development, and a small increase in multi-family residential development for unmarried individuals. The overall change between 2002 and

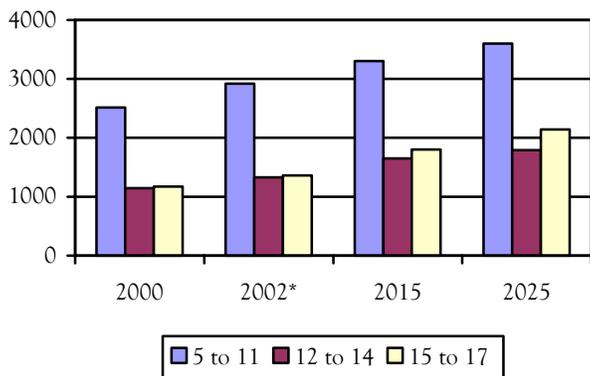
2025 seems slight, going from 2.41 to 2.33; but when multiplied out by the total number of residential units, it can mean a significant change to the overall population.

Table 10: Persons per Household Estimates and Projections 1980 - 2025	
YEAR	Persons per Household
1980	2.64
1990	2.56
2000	2.49
2002*	2.41
2015	2.35
2025	2.33

The projections of age distribution in **Table 11** and **Table 12** will be useful in planning for community services and facilities that may be geared to different age groups within the City's overall population size, such as recreational facilities and schools. Since different age groups require different types of recreational facilities, having estimates of the sizes of these various age groups will aid the City's Parks and Recreation Department in determining the amount of space needed for various types of activities to accommodate these age groups.

Table 11: Age Distribution Estimates and Projections 2000 - 2025				
Age Groups	2000	2002*	2015	2025
Under 5 Years	1,487	1,790	2,125	2,240
5 to 14	3,660	4,245	4,948	5,385
15 to 24	2,644	3,355	3,886	4,208
25 to 34	2,384	3,609	4,085	4,349
35 to 44	3,954	4,866	5,598	6,033
45 to 54	4,138	4,931	5,849	6,449
55 to 64	2,249	2,669	3,067	3,400
65 Years +	3,960	4,760	5,542	6,027
TOTAL	24,476	30,226	35,101	38,091

Table 12: School Age Population Estimates and Projections 2000 - 2025				
Age Group	2000	2002*	2015	2025
	Total	Total	Total	Total
5-11	2,515	2,917	3,302	3,598
12-14	1,145	1,328	1,646	1,787
15-17	1,173	1,360	1,800	2,142
TOTAL	4,833	5,605	6,748	7,527

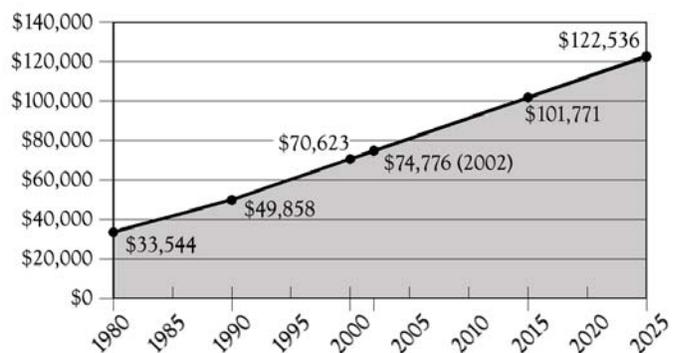


School Age Population: 2000 - 2025

The above projection, **School Age Population**, will be instrumental to the Board of Education in

planning for the development and expansion of facilities to accommodate the rise in school age population over the next two decades. The table shows the estimated increase of three school age groups - elementary, middle, and high school. Whereas today, there are approximately 3,000 children in the elementary school age bracket, by 2025 that will increase by nearly 700 (+23%). There is expected to be a 34% increase in middle school students and a 57.5% increase in high school age students. The total amount of student increase for all school age groups by 2025 is approximately 1,900 (34%).

The following projections on household incomes, poverty status, and housing value are important in describing the financial implications of future growth to the City. The first projection, **Median Household Income**, represents the median, or average income, for all households in the City, and includes single- and multiple-income households. These estimates include only a basic effect for inflation over time; since, a more accurate depiction of inflation cannot be projected.



Median Household Income: 1980-2025

Year	Median Household Income
1980	\$33,544
1990	\$49,858
2000	\$70,623
2002*	\$74,776
2015	\$101,771
2025	\$122,536

Household Income: 1980 - 2025

Projections on **Poverty Status** are important in understanding the need for affordable or subsidized housing within the community. Similar to the above income estimates, this information also relates to the spending potential of residents, which affects local tax revenues. Within Vestavia Hills, the number of residents living below poverty level is very small and is expected to show only a small increase over the next two decades.

Year	Persons below Poverty Level	Percent of Total Population	Percent Change	Poverty Threshold **
1980	456	2.90%	NA	\$8,450
1990	505	2.56%	10.7%	\$12,700
2000	777	3.17%	53.9%	\$17,050
2002*	997	3.30%	28.3%	\$18,100
2015	1,441	4.10%	44.5%	\$23,575
2025	1,799	4.72%	24.9%	\$27,925

** Poverty Threshold represents Census-derived income level for a family of four. This threshold varies by year and by income levels of community.

Table 15: Housing Value (below) is another important financial factor for planning within the City. Housing value has a direct impact on the City's property tax revenue. According to the projections below, housing value is expected to double between 2002 and 2025.

Housing Value	2000	2002*	2015	2025
Less than \$100,000	182	928	502	320
\$100,000 to \$200,000	3,228	4,499	2,350	2,250
\$200,000 to \$300,000	1,775	1,875	4,685	4,061
\$300,000 or more	1,847	1,928	3,964	6,120
Median Value	\$205,200	\$192,900	\$290,000	\$400,000

Table 16: Commute to Work represents several issues for planning within the City. The large percentage of Vestavia Hills residents who drive alone to work has an effect on the physical condition of roads over time, traffic flow on the City's major roads, the quality of life of all residents, and other concerns to the City. These estimates do not account for potential improvements being planned for the regional transit system, which will better serve the Vestavia Hills area. Similarly, these projections cannot account for future commercial development within the City that will afford greater opportunities for residents to work within Vestavia Hills. Hopefully, future local and regional transit improvements, expanded employment opportunities within the City, and related impacts on local and regional commute patterns will begin to reverse the trends represented in this forecast.

Table 16: Commute to Work Estimates and Projections 2000 - 2025				
Commute Pattern	2000	2002*	2015	2025
Drove alone	10,202	12,812	14,476	15,710
Carpool	664	858	969	1,052
Public Transportation	5	14	16	17
Walked/ Worked from Home	508	606	685	743
Workers 16 Years and Over	11,379	14,290	16,146	17,522
Mean Time to Work (minutes)	19.3	19.4	19.5	19.6

PLANNING INFLUENCES

Vestavia Hills' natural conditions have been a major factor in the way that the City has developed to date. The layout of streets, neighborhoods, and the location of commercial areas in originally-incorporated Vestavia Hills were all greatly influenced by the lay of the land. The steep slopes and valleys, floodplains, and associated soil conditions will continue to impose constraints on the location, size, and character of residential and commercial growth in the community.

With the past annexations of Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights, connectivity is a major issue in planning for the community. Connectivity is a condition that must be dealt with through strategic transportation (vehicular and pedestrian) planning, future annexations, facilities planning, and design (signage, landscaping, etc.).

Roads and transportation are related issues that have had a tremendous impact on the City's

current make-up. The layout of southern Vestavia Hills was equally affected by the design and development of Highway 31 as it was topography. Highways 31 and 280 and Interstates 459 and 65 are as much divisions within the community as they are connectors.

The land use composition of each of Vestavia Hills's three component community's is different from another. In each area, the relationship of homes to shopping areas, workplaces, churches, and schools vary according to the way that each area was planned and to the extent they were planned. As described in the Goals and Objectives section, these relationships need improving and potential solutions will be different for each area because of their differences in land use patterns.

Achieving an efficient balance to the level of community facilities within each area is also an important influence on the City's planning for its administrative activities, educational and recreational facilities, and other community services and buildings.

The need for more commercial development within the community is greatly impacted by a limited amount of vacant, developable land. Because of this, the City should encourage redevelopment of underdeveloped commercial properties. Pockets of undeveloped, underdeveloped, and transitional areas exist in scattered areas throughout the community. The largest amount of undeveloped land currently within the City surrounds the developing Liberty Park area. These undeveloped lands vary in potential due to their topography, current lack of accessibility, and location within the Upper Cahaba watershed.

Also in relation to expanding the City's tax base, the City may look into the potential annexation of adjacent unincorporated areas for existing or future commercial development. This opportunity is limited, however, by the proximity of Birmingham, Mountain Brook, Homewood, Irondale, and Hoover's municipal boundaries.

Vestavia Hills's annexation of land in Shelby County should be carefully evaluated in the near future. Though these areas are primarily residential, as Vestavia Hills grows to the southeast, ad valorem taxes and the potential to develop efficient service boundaries should be considered in evaluating potential annexations. Areas in north Shelby County would be subject to "buyouts" of the North Shelby Fire District and would still be subject to dues in the North Shelby Library District. Also, unincorporated land in north Shelby County is zoned according to "beats", areas where non-municipal zoning has been established by the County. This will require a transition in zoning for annexed lands, which should be closely coordinated with Shelby County and landowners.

GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In addressing the desires of the community as described in the Goals and Objectives section and the needs of the City to expand its tax base, the City of Vestavia Hills will need to update and adopt policies on land use development, protection of natural resources, transportation planning, facilities planning, and annexation.

The City's zoning ordinance is an important tool that is used to enforce community development policies. It should be updated to encourage a development pattern more fitting with the community's desire to be more pedestrian-scaled and accessible. Some of the requirements of the existing ordinance can work counter to this. Similarly, the City's subdivision regulations should also be reviewed against the Goals and Objectives to determine what specific regulations may stand in the way of achieving goals and what improvements can be made to support them. As an extension of this policy, the City might put emphasis on the development of new regulations and improvements to existing ones that affect the design of new buildings (public and private), landscaped areas, and signs.

As recommended by *Goal 5: Increase connectivity throughout the community*, the City should adopt a policy to better integrate the Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights communities with southeastern Vestavia Hills. Such a policy should be used to guide decisions on transportation improvements; development, expansion and location of community facilities; design improvements to gateways; placement of consistent and attractive City signage; and budgeting for such expenditures.

Protection of natural features such as Patton Creek, Little Shades Creek, the Cahaba River, and the scenic hillsides throughout the community, should be a policy concern to the City in achieving several of the objectives mentioned - to ensure an attractive, safe, and aesthetically-rich residential community. Such a policy should attempt to strike a balance between development and preservation. Through good planning and design, new development can occur without sacrificing those parts of the natural environment residents enjoy and which contribute to the value of properties.

The eminent completion of the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study (www.cahabastudy.com) should provide important information on the particular requirements needed to ensure best development practices within watershed areas. The City, as a supporter of the study, should consider incorporating elements of the completed study into local planning policies.



Potential infill/redevelopment site at Olde Towne on Highway 31.



Todd's Mall, potential redevelopment site on Highway 31, near City Center.

The City's annexation policies should be based on two important issues identified in this Plan. For the City to provide high quality services and facilities to its residents, the City's tax base must be expanded. This will eventually mean the City's expansion into unincorporated areas. Secondly, to protect natural areas, improve gateways, and to generally protect and improve the appearance of key areas throughout the community, it will again mean the annexation of properties not currently in the City.

These and other more specific policies, based on the intentions and desires of the community, form the basis of decisions made in creating the **Development and Growth Plan** in the following chapter. Chapter IV is both a narrative and illustrative depiction of the potential future of Vestavia Hills. It is intended as a guide for land use policies and decision-making, transportation improvements, service and facility planning, and the budgeting necessary to make worthwhile and cost-effective capital improvements throughout the community. The development and enforcement of appropriate, up-to-date growth, land use, and design policies are discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

Chapter IV: DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH PLAN

FUTURE LAND USE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The positive future growth of the City of Vestavia Hills relies on two major issues: connectivity and economic growth. Connectivity is an important aspect of any community; but it is a great concern to Vestavia Hills given the physical relationship of the three major community components of the City: southeastern Vestavia Hills, Cahaba Heights, and Liberty Park. As described previously, the recent annexations of Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights are physically "separated" from the original body of the City by two major transportation routes - U.S. 280 and Interstate 459. While these two routes allow for the vehicular connection of these areas, they also create a significant physical and perceptual barrier. On a smaller scale, the notable topography within Vestavia Hills also has prevented a greater east-west connectivity within southern Vestavia Hills; though many north-to-south routes exist within the area.

Since its original incorporation, Vestavia Hills has attracted residential development due to emphasis on good schools and quality services provided to its residents. Over time, the City's residential development has gone far ahead of its economic development - the major source for City revenues which supply those services. For the City to maintain and continually upgrade parks, schools, and other community services, the City must put an emphasis on recruiting more business to the community to expand its tax base. With little undeveloped land remaining in the city (with the exception of the Liberty Park planned unit development), the City

must encourage greater densities of development and redevelopment in existing business areas and also seek opportunities to annex land which is suitable for commercial development.

In the following section, Vestavia Hills Hill's plan to strengthen connectivity (pedestrian, vehicular, and perceptual) and invigorate economic development is described both in written form and graphically. **Figure #15: Future Growth Concept Map** represents a general land use projection while also describing important multi-modal transportation initiatives to bring the various neighborhoods and major areas of the community closer together. Following the Future Growth Concept Map is **Figure #16: Future Land Use Map**, which the City will use to guide decision-making on future zoning issues in combination with the Future Growth Concept. How these growth ideas are implemented, through continued planning and zoning applications, is further described in the following section.

FUTURE GROWTH CONCEPT

The Future Growth Concept Map illustrates Vestavia Hills' vision for the continued growth of the City over the next twenty years. The map describes a recommended pattern of land use development within the City's planning area and the transportation improvements needed to achieve a greater-connected community. The map depicts current institutional, commercial, and high-density residential areas as unified and better integrated centers. Reinforcing the relationship between such adjacent developments will help to make such areas more effective and more attractive as “village centers”- rather than segregated, and physically disconnected land use areas. Providing a stronger balance between auto- and pedestrian activity and providing increased passive and active recreation and green spaces within these centers will also enable more human-scale interaction throughout the community.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use Map is intended as a parcel-by-parcel “projection” of land uses. It should not be interpreted as a course on which the City will actively re-zone property, but rather as a model, in combination with the Future Growth Concept, with which the City may consider land use changes as requested by property owners. The Future Growth Concept describes the spirit of future change while the Future Land Use Map lends more detail to the concept of better-integrated land uses.

FOCUS AREAS

The planning process highlighted several focus areas for ongoing and new center-oriented, mixed-use development. Each focus area is intended to comprise a well-integrated mix of commercial, medium-to-high density residential, and institutional elements, surrounded by existing single-family neighborhoods. This is intended to establish diverse centers in key areas within the City. These focus areas, listed below, are individually described in this section and graphically depicted in **Figures #17-23**.

- U.S. Highway 31 North
- U.S. Highway 31 South
- Cahaba Heights
- Columbiana Road
- Rocky Ridge Road and Acton Road West
- Cahaba River Road and Acton Road East, and
- Liberty Park

The Future Growth Concept Map identifies projected land use areas and infrastructure improvements to guide the City and the private sector as growth and change occur in the future. In this graphic representation of the community, land areas are classified into three major categories: neighborhoods, village centers, and recreational and open spaces.

The Development and Growth Plan emphasizes the community's desire for more community-oriented activity centers, which will be achieved through revitalization of existing commercial areas and new development in long-range growth areas. These areas are to become "village" centers, with a dense, integrated mix of uses to better support all forms of mobility (vehicular, pedestrian, transit, etc.).

Existing single-family neighborhoods are to be preserved and will become better connected to village centers, schools, recreational areas, and other important community nodes, as a greater focus is put on development of walkways and trails.

Improvements to the existing road network are to be implemented to increase connectivity within the City and to adjacent communities and regional centers. Mobility and connectivity will also be improved through an increased presence of local and regional transit facilities.

Natural areas, such as the Cahaba River, will be better protected through environmentally-sensitive design, natural buffers, and decision-making policies that acknowledge the importance of the region's natural resources and open spaces.

The concepts shown in the Future Growth Concept Map are further described in the Future Land Use, Focus Area, and Transportation Improvements Maps.

LEGEND

- Neighborhood - primarily low / medium density single-family residential areas with higher densities near village centers. Other uses may include schools, places of worship, recreational areas, and open space.
- Village Center - mixed use centers with highest densities in core areas. Mix of uses should include retail and service businesses, professional offices, high density residential areas, institutions, recreation areas, and public spaces.
- Recreation and Open Space - public and private recreation facilities and preserved natural spaces. Recreation facilities may be active, passive or combined. Open spaces are areas preserved in a natural state and may include passive recreational uses.
- Trailheads
- Schools
- Proposed Interchange Improvements
- Transit-Oriented Development (1/4 mile and 1/2 mile walking radii)
- Planned Greenway
- Proposed New Roads
- Natural Waterway Buffer

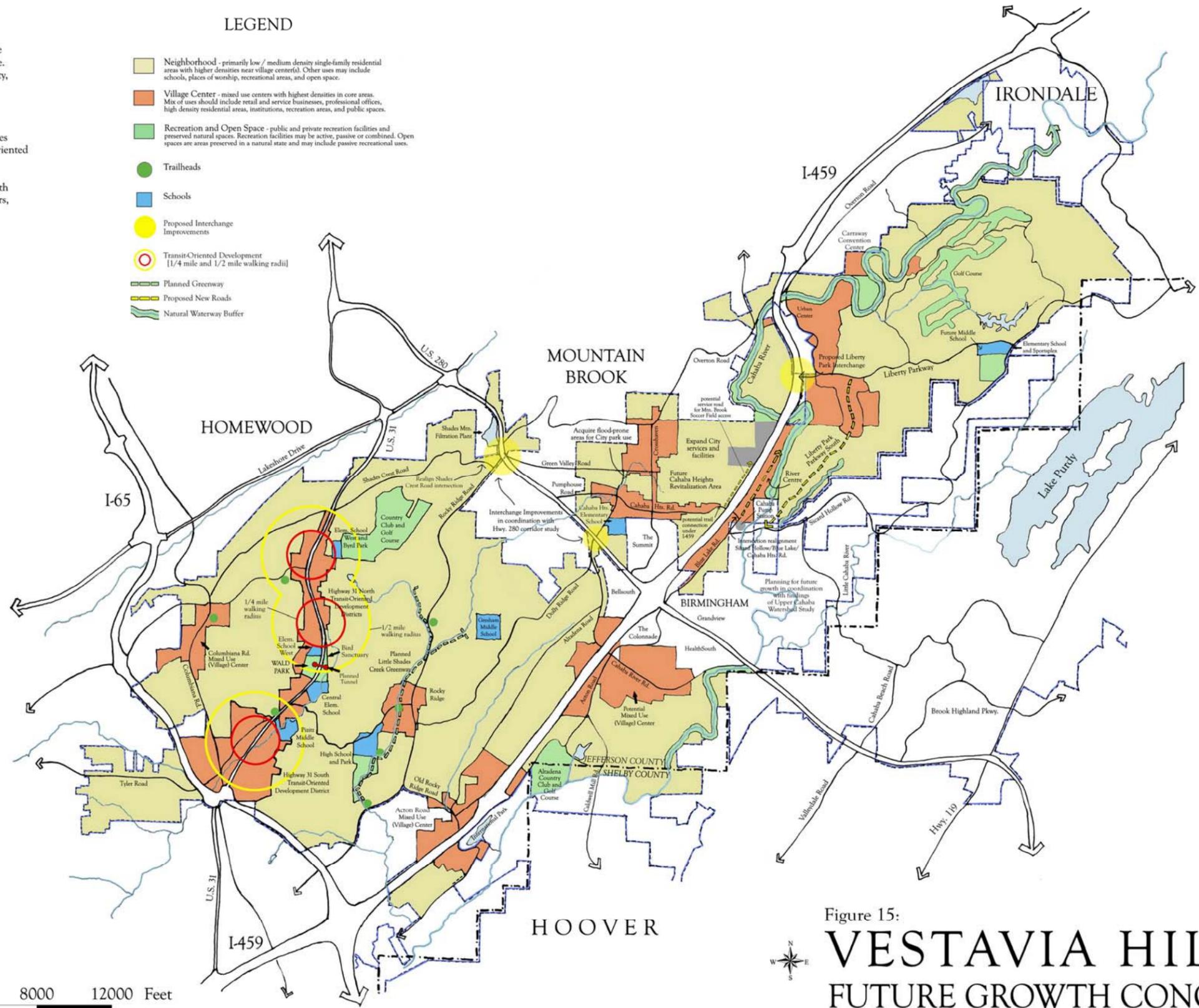
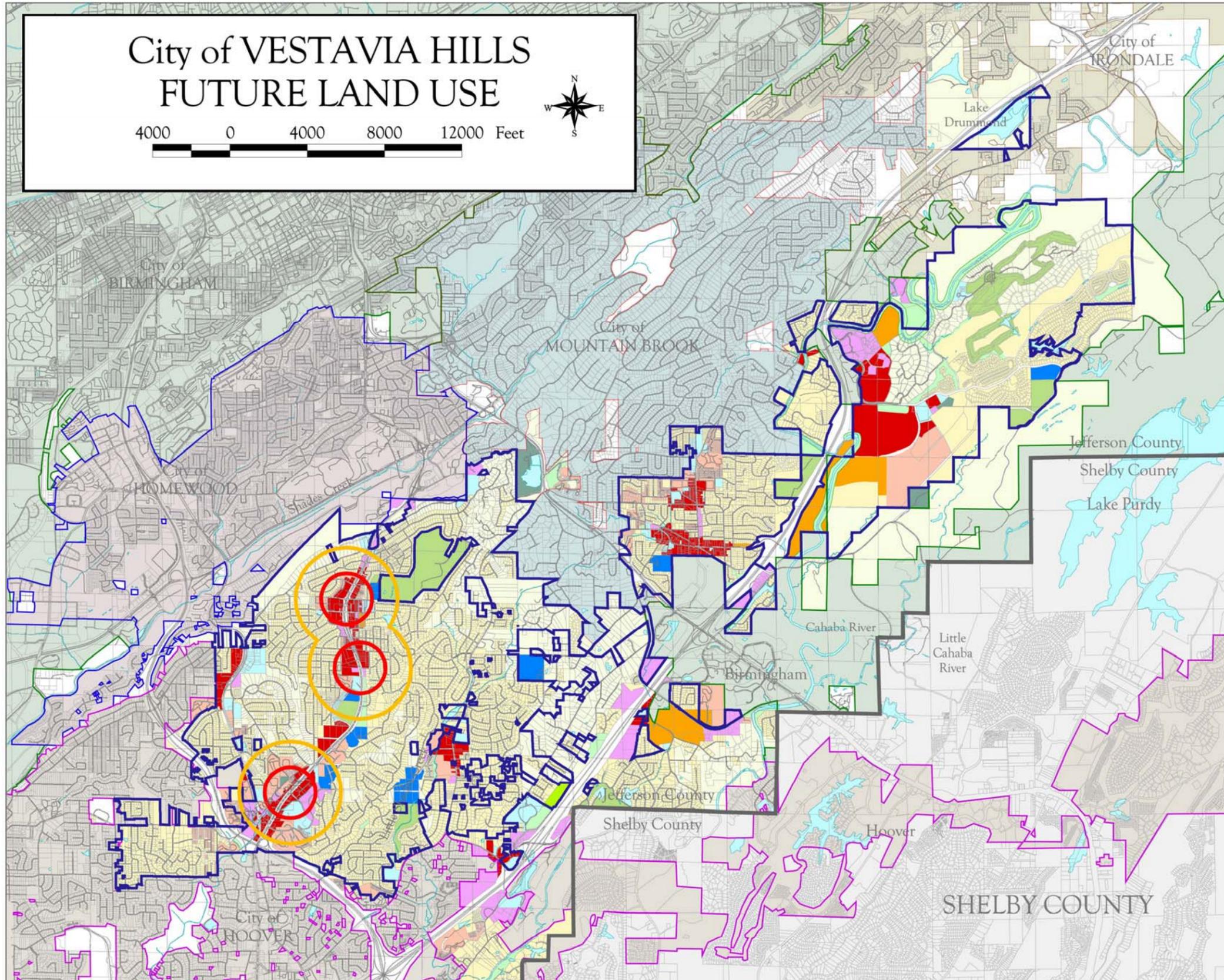


Figure 15:
VESTAVIA HILLS
FUTURE GROWTH CONCEPT



**City of VESTAVIA HILLS
FUTURE LAND USE**

4000 0 4000 8000 12000 Feet

FUTURE LAND USE
 This map illustrates the proposed land uses throughout the city and its planning area. This map is to be used, along with the Future Growth Concept Map, to guide the City and developers in making development and redevelopment decisions that will have the greatest positive impact on the community and ensure the highest and best use of all properties within the City's planning area.

As with the Existing Land Use Map, properties are described by land use types: commercial, residential, institutional, etc. and residential lots are further described by density. Open space areas are differentiated from active recreation spaces. TOD areas are identified along US 31, according to the proposed location of future regional transit stops.

**FIGURE 16:
FUTURE LAND USE**

The Future Growth Concept also includes a framework of currently planned public improvements and proposed future projects to better connect the community. The City has developed a Regional Walkway Master Plan to increase pedestrian mobility in various parts of the City. Greenway projects have also been identified in the study done by consultants Nimrod Long and Associates. These greenway projects will serve residents in the Rocky Ridge/Little Shades Creek area. Other greenway/trail areas have been identified for future development along the Cahaba River. The plan involves extensive sidewalk improvements throughout the City. The study establishes phasing priorities for recommended sidewalk improvements. The first priority is intended to improve and develop sidewalk networks in major activity areas (commercial areas, schools, recreational areas, etc.), connecting them into surrounding neighborhoods. Subsequent phases are planned to more thoroughly establish connections within and between residential areas.

U.S. HIGHWAY 31 (Montgomery Highway)

Existing Conditions

U.S. Highway 31 runs north-south through the heart of southern Vestavia Hills and is a major connector for commuting traffic south of the city and Vestavia Hills residents to the major business, government and health care areas within the City of Birmingham. Since little vacant land is available, the reuse and redevelopment of existing sites will be a critical component of an evaluation of future land use as compared to existing.

The major consideration of this plan is to maintain a quality residential environment. Except for narrow strips of property of various uses, there are established single family and multi-family neighborhoods surrounding nearly the entire length of U.S. 31 from Shades Crest Road to the I-65 interchange. With this in mind the first and primary consideration must be the establishment of effective buffer areas between neighborhoods and commercial or mixed use developments and redevelopments.

Although the entire 3.4 mile length of U. S. Highway 31 is being considered, there are three major zones that are the most prominent. Starting at the north end, these are the Central Business District, Park and Neighborhood Shopping Area at the mid-point and High Volume Traffic Zone at the south end adjacent to the U. S. 31 and Interstate 65 intersection.



City Center, in Highway 31's Central Business District



Businesses in High Volume Traffic Zone on Highway 31 near I-65

The following land use and improvements recommendations are shown in **Figures #17 - 18**.

Future Land Use Recommendations

The Central Business District consists of the ongoing renovations to Vestavia Hills City Centers and shopping center additions adjacent to City Hall. Opportunities exist for redevelopment of Todd Mall, the Post Office, apartment complexes for commercial use, and the existing City Hall for future commercial redevelopment. Additionally, there are pockets of single-family houses that over time have been disconnected from neighborhoods by changes in development; and where commercial or office re-use would pose no detriment to the quality of the existing neighborhoods. A key to the overall success is for Vestavia Hills to attract “artificial customers” that work, eat, and need services supplied in the Central Business District. Small offices can provide lower densities for parking and increase landscaping

opportunities to further buffer commercial areas from existing neighborhoods.

The Park and Neighborhood Shopping Area offers opportunities for good pedestrian access to and from surrounding neighborhoods to lower-scaled and reduced traffic volume services such as specialty shops, boutiques, apothecary, neighborhood grocery, etc. At the same time there are opportunities to enhance connections across U.S. 31 such as a proposed pedestrian tunnel for direct ties to schools, churches, and recreational facilities from the east side residential areas. The entire area, including redevelopment of U-Haul property, redevelopment of existing office structures, expansion of public lands adjacent to Central School for a permanent Bird Sanctuary, should be considered as a composite whole to the existing shopping center, park, West School and Presbyterian Church.



U-Haul, Food World, and other businesses in Park and Neighborhood area on Highway 31

The southern most portion of U.S. 31 just north of the I-65 interchange should warrant major consideration for improvement. Traffic is snarled due to the needless number of curb cuts, ineffective signage, and lack of clear direction that could be aided by landscaping and curb appeal. Photographic documentation of existing access conditions in this area are provided on page 95. This situation is not only dangerous, but also gives an unsightly

perception to the City's southernmost entry-point. Redevelopment should be led by design studies to aid in traffic flow, reduction of curb cuts, landscaping, and signage. Land use will most likely remain similar to existing with gas stations, car dealerships, dry cleaners, fast food establishments, etc. The challenge will be in the reorganization for better, safer, more appealing high traffic development.

Implementation Recommendations

Major strategies identified to lead redevelopment and improvements along the Highway 31 corridor include: development of a Commercial Revitalization Plan, designation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District or Business Improvement District (BID), establishment of a mandatory design review process, and implementation of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) zoning districts for large redevelopment projects.

Renewal / Revitalization Planning

Development of a Renewal Plan / Commercial Revitalization Plan may be done in coordination with the establishment of a TIF or BID District and a design review process. Developing and enacting such a plan allows the City to use planning tools not otherwise available under state law. This allows designation of a district and a financing program to fund public improvements within the designated area. Also, a stronger design review process is made possible only by enacting such a revitalization plan. Design guidelines may be written and enforced through a municipal board, which reviews development proposals within a specified area. Design guidelines can regulate site layout, landscaping, signage, and building design. The current design review process used by the City is

voluntary, while guidelines established within the context of a renewal or revitalization plan are compulsory.

To take advantage of renewal's enabling legislation, the City must document conditions that are "blighting" or that contribute to blight. Conditions that constitute blight, according to state law, are: areas, buildings or improvements which are detrimental to the safety, health, morals or welfare of the community, due to reasons of dilapidation; overcrowding; obsolescence; inappropriate design; faulty arrangements; poor site conditions; a lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities; excessive land coverage; deleterious land use; obsolete site layout; diversity of ownership; or unusual conditions of title and under-utilization.

Transit-oriented Development

"Transit-Oriented Development" is a development pattern intended to encourage greater diversity and density in activity areas adjacent to transit corridors and especially in the areas immediately surrounding transit stops. By creating higher densities of residential and commercial development in transit corridors, such as Highway 31, a larger user-group is developed within walking distance to stops. Having an increased diversity of businesses provides a greater number of activities available to transit users (also within walking distance of transit stops). These two concepts help to increase accessibility and convenience for transit-riders and local pedestrians, while also improving the efficiency, safety, and character of new development and redevelopment.

As part of the Regional Transportation Alternatives study, a regulatory tool was created to initiate transit-oriented development. The "Transit Overlay District" is a zoning district specifically written to create high density, high diversity development around transit corridors. The Transit Overlay District can be attractive to developers since it allows full use of the lot frontage for building area and a greater overall percentage of property usage. Most commercial zoning districts require front, rear, and side setbacks that cannot be built on, which adds to the need for landscaping and yard maintenance. The TOD concept also reduces the need to invest in construction of individual curb-cuts, driveways, and internal circulation for businesses. And by allowing multi-story, mixed-use buildings, developments are created with greater *versatility*, an important component in maximizing the useful life span of developments.

The Transit Overlay District is developed as an **optional** zoning district that can be used for projects of significant size. Transportation study consultants developed prototypes of the TOD district for each of the municipalities with proposed stops in the transit plan. These prototype districts were based on each city's most parallel district, most often a city's PUD classification. For Vestavia Hills to take advantage of this zoning tool, the Planning and Zoning Commission and Council should review the prototype developed for Vestavia Hills, making adjustments as necessary, and adopt this as a new zoning classification in the City's zoning ordinance. The TOD Design Guidelines prototype for Vestavia Hills is included in the Appendix to this document.

During the development of the regional plan, representatives from each City were invited to advise

transit consultants on the most appropriate locations of TODs within each community. These TOD areas were selected by municipal advisors based on given transit routes and the land use and density make-up of activity nodes along those routes. Within Vestavia Hills, three potential TOD areas were identified along the proposed express bus route along Highway 31 which coincide with the activity nodes described earlier: the Central Business District, the Park and Neighborhood Shopping Area, and the High Volume Traffic Zone. Use of the TOD zoning classification as a "floating zone" within these areas, allows future developers to apply for the use of the TOD when large projects are considered. This gives the developer greater potential in terms of size, density, and mix of uses within TOD areas. In the end, this can achieve greater profitability per square foot for the developer. TOD development guidelines, will not only ensure density and diversity to support convenience, walkability, and transit use, but will also ensure high-quality, context-driven community design.

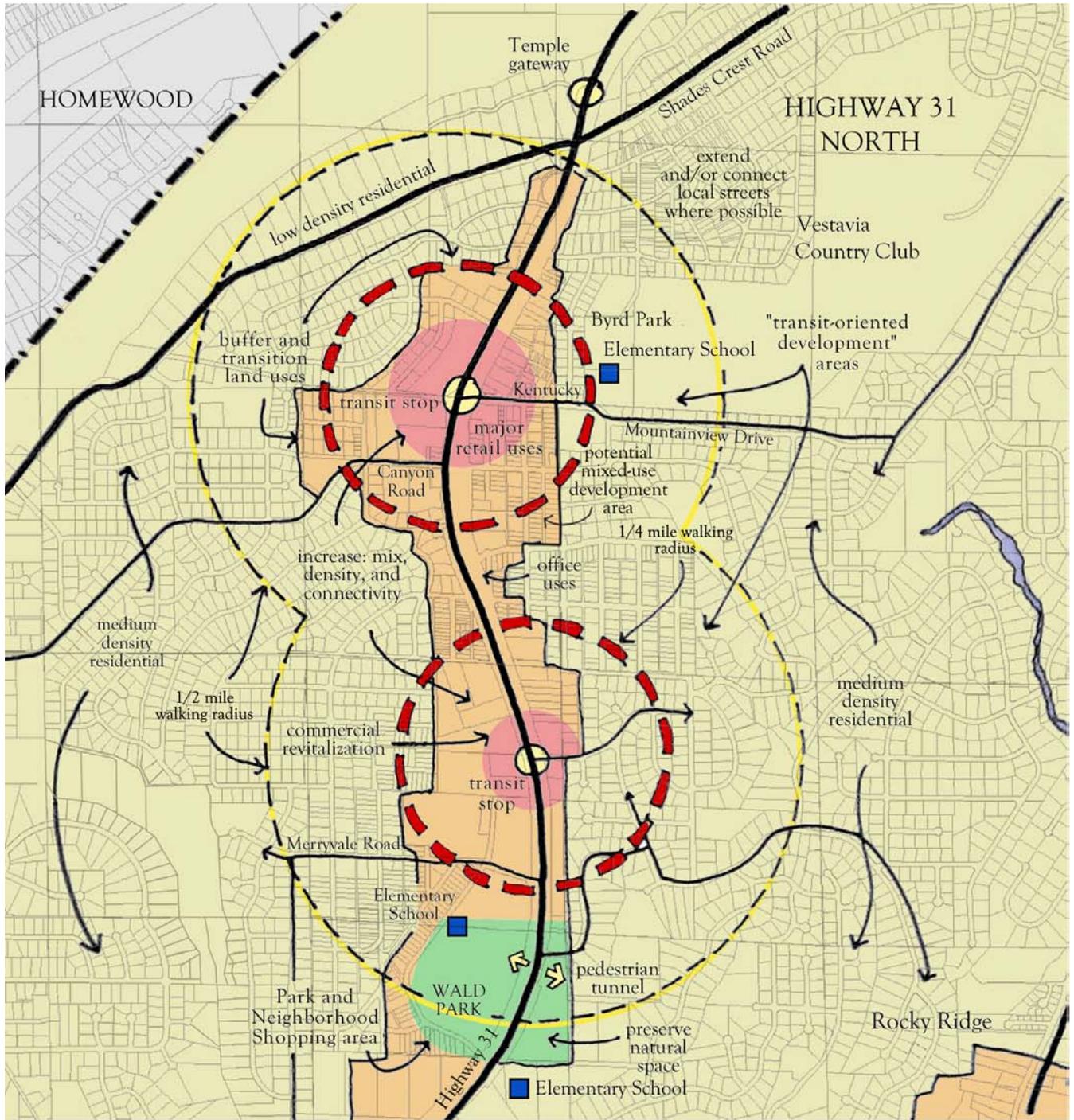


Figure 17: Highway 31 North
Land Use Analysis

- Neighborhood - primarily low / medium density single-family residential areas with higher densities near village centers). Other uses may include schools, places of worship, recreational areas, and open space.
- Village Center - mixed use centers with highest densities in core areas. Mix of uses should include retail and service businesses, professional offices, high density residential areas, institutions, recreational areas, and public spaces.
- Commercial Core - primarily high density, retail and service business areas with professional offices and multi-family residences on upper floors or on periphery. Other uses may include institutions and public space.
- Gateways and Nodes - Gateways are entryways into the community or village enhanced with consistent signage, landscaping, and other elements. Nodes are sites, such as transit stops, where public spaces, signage, and other public design elements should be considered.

- Professional Offices - primarily professional office uses. Density should vary according to surroundings. Other uses may include retail and services (supporting offices and employees), places of worship, public spaces, and open space.
- Recreation and Open Space - public and private recreation facilities and preserved natural spaces. Recreation facilities may be active, passive or combined. Open spaces are areas preserved in a natural state and may include passive recreational uses.
- Trailheads - Trailheads are public sites along a trail, where bike racks, seating, parking, and public amenities are provided for trail users.
- Schools - School facilities administrated by the Vestavia Hills School System.



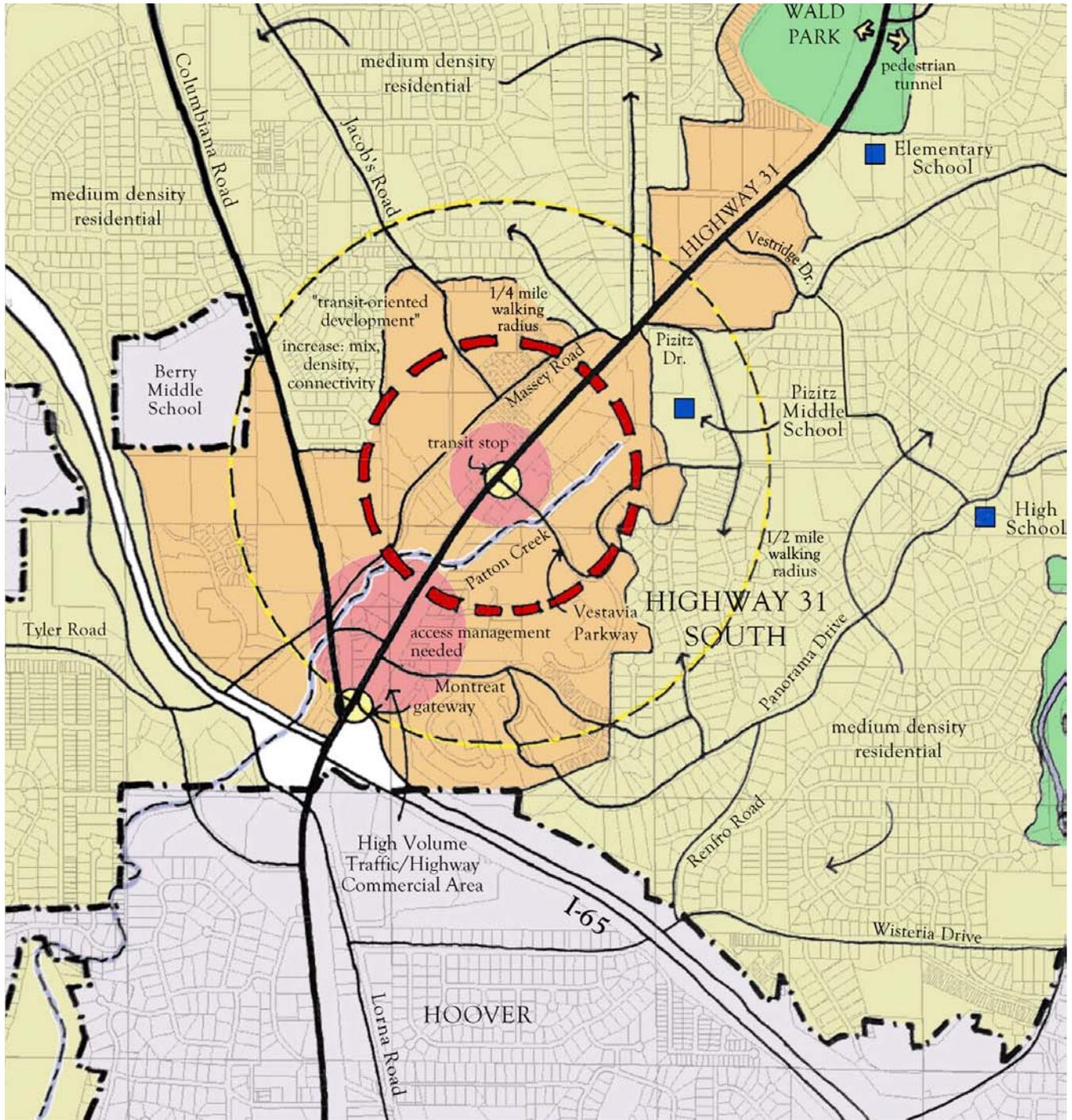


Figure 18: Highway 31 South
Land Use Analysis

- Neighborhood - primarily low / medium density single-family residential areas with higher densities near village center(s). Other uses may include schools, places of worship, recreational areas, and open space.
- Village Center - mixed use centers with highest densities in core areas. Mix of uses should include retail and service businesses, professional offices, high density residential areas, institutions, recreation areas, and public spaces.
- Commercial Core - primarily high density, retail and service business areas with professional offices and multi-family residences on upper floors or on periphery. Other uses may include institutions and public space.
- Gateways and Nodes - Gateways are entryways into the community or village enhanced with consistent signage, landscaping, and other elements. Nodes are sites, such as transit stops, where public spaces, signage, and other public design elements should be considered.

- Professional Offices - primarily professional office uses. Density should vary according to surroundings. Other uses may include retail and services (supporting offices and employees), places of worship, public spaces, and open space.
- Recreation and Open Space - public and private recreation facilities and preserved natural spaces. Recreation facilities may be active, passive or combined. Open spaces are areas preserved in a natural state and may include passive recreational uses.
- Trailheads - Trailheads are public sites along a trail, where bike racks, seating, parking, and public amenities are provided for trail users.
- Schools - School facilities administered by the Vestavia Hills School System.



HIGHWAY 31 at I-65 Gateway
PANORAMIC PHOTOS

Highway 31 West Side First Segment



Highway 31 West Side Second Segment



Highway 31 East Side First Segment



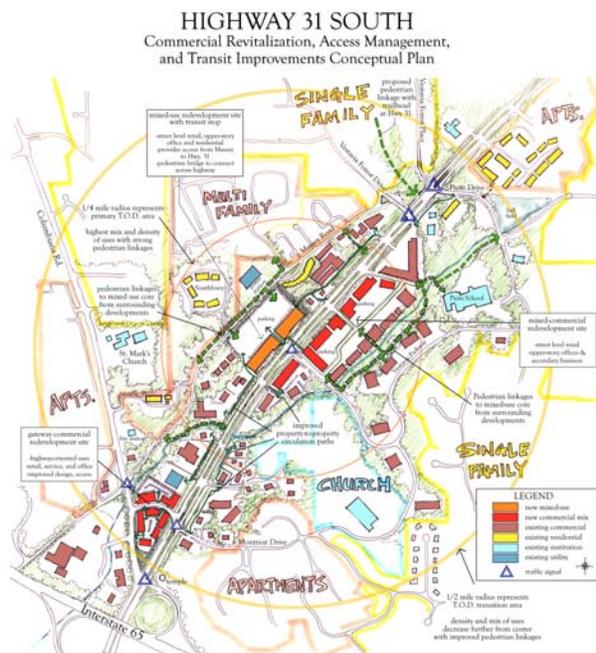
Highway 31 East Side Second Segment



Design and Development Charrette

During the development of this Plan, the VHLRPC, planning consultants, and city staff participated in a preliminary charrette, or workshop, to generate ideas on how to reduce traffic problems in the Highway 31 South area and to increase the potential for more commercial growth. Four major issues were discussed: access management for properties fronting the highway, stormwater and flooding, increasing density and land use diversity, and walkability. This brainstorming workshop identified potential solutions for addressing these issues and for testing the TOD concept in this area. A synopsis of this charrette is provided in the Appendix of the Plan.

on other areas where public improvements, redevelopment, and/or revitalization are recommended. Future charrettes should encourage the participation of residents, property and business owners to ensure that improvement and revitalization goals are appropriately identified according to the desires of the community.



Plan graphic from Highway 31 Charrette

The charrette was a valuable process that can be applied in other areas throughout the community. In the future, the City should hold such workshops

CAHABA HEIGHTS

Existing Conditions

As previously described, the Cahaba Heights area is a dense mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses, having developed as an independent community within Jefferson County. Annexed into the City in 2002, Cahaba Heights provides strengthened connectivity between southern Vestavia Hills and Liberty Park. Major connector roads within Cahaba Heights are Green Valley Road, Dolly Ridge Road, Summit Boulevard/Crosshaven Drive, and Cahaba Heights Road. Existing City facilities in Cahaba Heights include a fire station, police station, elementary school, and playing fields.

Land use development had been regulated by Jefferson County until its recent incorporation into the City. Given this, only a modest amount of focused community planning has occurred in Cahaba Heights, incorporating all aspects of the area and coordinating its ongoing development. The community, which has seen additional commercial and retail growth since its incorporation, has an abundance of locally-owned businesses, which make it a fertile area as a destination shopping area. The contrast, between goods and services offered in Cahaba Heights and that offered at the nearby Summit, is an advantage for the community.

Another important issue to Cahaba Heights is maintaining the current access through Green Valley Road to the southern portions of the City. While the future of this intersection is undetermined at the time of this publication, construction of a grade-separated interchange in the future will fully resolve traffic issues at this intersection, ease traffic on

Highway 280, and preserve this necessary connection to Cahaba Heights.



Commercial area along Cahaba Heights Road

The following land use and improvements recommendations for Cahaba Heights are shown in **Figure #19**.

Future Land Use Recommendations

Cahaba Heights has the potential to enhance its land use make-up dynamically and be a leading growth area in the City over the next five years. Though its development to date has not been locally planned and coordinated, the dense, walkable framework of the area allows for significant improvements to be made through more intense planning and investment by the City and property owners. There is potential to increase commercial density in the community without sacrificing the quality of its residential areas. In fact, Cahaba Heights offers the potential for a higher, more integrated mix of commercial and residential areas than any other location within the City. Every effort should be made by the City, landowners and business owners to develop/redevelop commercial areas in a manner that enhances the potential of Cahaba Heights as a destination shopping and business area. There are two distinct areas that should be targeted for new and/or enhanced commercial growth:

- Cahaba Heights Road from Dolly Ridge Rd. to the underpass at I-459

- Crosshaven Dr. from Cahaba Heights Rd. to Overton Rd.

In recent years traffic has increased significantly on both Cahaba Heights Road and Crosshaven Drive. Both streets are primarily commercial, accounting for a portion of the steady traffic flow. Also contributing to traffic increases are commuters avoiding heavily congested Highway 280 and shoppers headed to and from the Summit shopping center south of Cahaba Heights. Both streets should be improved to handle increases and better regulate traffic flow, including access management and traffic-calming elements.

Increased traffic on these major arteries may prove detrimental to on-going residential use of properties fronting on Crosshaven, specifically north and east of the Crosshaven/Cahaba Heights Road intersection. As interest grows at the property owner level in land use changes, the City should support such changes. To minimize the impact on adjacent neighborhoods, redevelopments should be considered within the context of an overall strategy that could blend in new uses through appropriate scale and density. Residential-scale offices with shared parking and shared access are recommended if change occurs. Shared access and shared parking would further improve compatibility with adjacent residential properties. This will minimize traffic issues and prevent street-fronting parking lots from changing the character of the street. Piecemeal rezoning will not afford the community the same opportunities to affect these changes in a significantly positive way.

An area along the eastern end of Cahaba Heights Road was identified as having some potential for

future use. Several residential properties on the north side of the road have double frontage on Cahaba Heights Road and Ridgley Drive. The portion of these lots fronting on Cahaba Heights Road have not been developed and could be used for small-scale commercial development or preserved as open space. Development would require alterations to deal with drainage. A zoning change would also be required by request of property owners to allow non-residential development of these properties. As a green space, there is an opportunity to develop a trail, which could connect to the River Centre and Blue Lake area under I-459.

Community Planning and Design Charrette

Through a community charrette focused on future revitalization, residents, property owners and business owners addressed land use and density, infrastructure improvements, community design, and environmental issues. Participants stated that revitalization efforts within Cahaba Heights should: be built upon the area's "small town" character, enhance walkability, and provide needed public improvements and a community recreation space. Community preferences also included bringing more municipal services to the area and focusing commercial growth on smaller-scale shops and offices rather than more suburban, "big-box" retail and chain stores. Public input from the charrette is included in the Appendix.

An important current issue discussed during the charrette was the concern over access to a proposed Mountain Brook Soccer Complex. The site for the complex is currently only accessible through one of Cahaba Heights' oldest and narrowest residential streets. The City intends to resolve this conflict by working with the City of Mountain Brook to develop

a service road connecting from Cahaba Heights Road northward to the site. The service road would prevent this traffic from entering neighborhoods and could be built within the right-of-way of I-459. This road would also allow access to currently land-locked properties in eastern Cahaba Heights, create the potential for access to the River Centre's planned public amenities, and allow the opportunity to terminate East Street.

Within the Cahaba Heights area, there are more than 200 acres of undeveloped land. Of this total, approximately 120 acres are in one parcel along Interstate-459 and Cahaba Heights Rd. Originally zoned multi-family residential, this property has been proposed as the site for the River Centre development, conveniently accessible to both Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights. The remaining undeveloped land in Cahaba Heights is divided up among many small (less than two acre) parcels intermingled amidst existing developed areas. The City should encourage development of these sites in a manner compatible with surrounding development. Both commercial and residential development should be planned to be well-integrated into the existing fabric of the community. Usable green spaces must be incorporated into potential developments at every opportunity. Similarly, as growth continues in the area, the need for new or expanded community facilities should be considered as demand grows.

The River Centre

Because the Cahaba River flows adjacent to this site, development must be planned appropriately to protect the Cahaba's sensitive ecosystem. The River Centre project is proposed to be a model for environmentally sound development practices in the

area. The project will include a mix of business uses and an aquatic center, interconnected by natural trails within a dedicated 150' natural buffer. The project's focus on environmental sustainability includes preservation of woodland areas adjacent to the river, a stormwater treatment system to improve water quality, and the use of "green" building and site design. In addition, the proposed aquatic center will be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified, a voluntary, consensus-based standard for high-performance, sustainable development.

Implementation Recommendations

Throughout the Cahaba Heights area, there is a great need for infrastructure enhancement: road improvements, curbs and gutters, sewer, street lighting, sidewalks, and landscaping. Traffic is growing in the area; and there is a great need to improve Crosshaven Drive and Cahaba Heights Road.

The City should consider the development of a Revitalization Plan and the implementation of a TIF or BID District for the area. Development of such a plan will require on-going public participation to identify strategies to enhance the area through both public and private investments. The City should also implement its current design review process for new development in Cahaba Heights or include such a process through revitalization planning efforts. Similarly, city inspections must focus on insuring compliance with existing City ordinances as areas are renovated or newly developed.

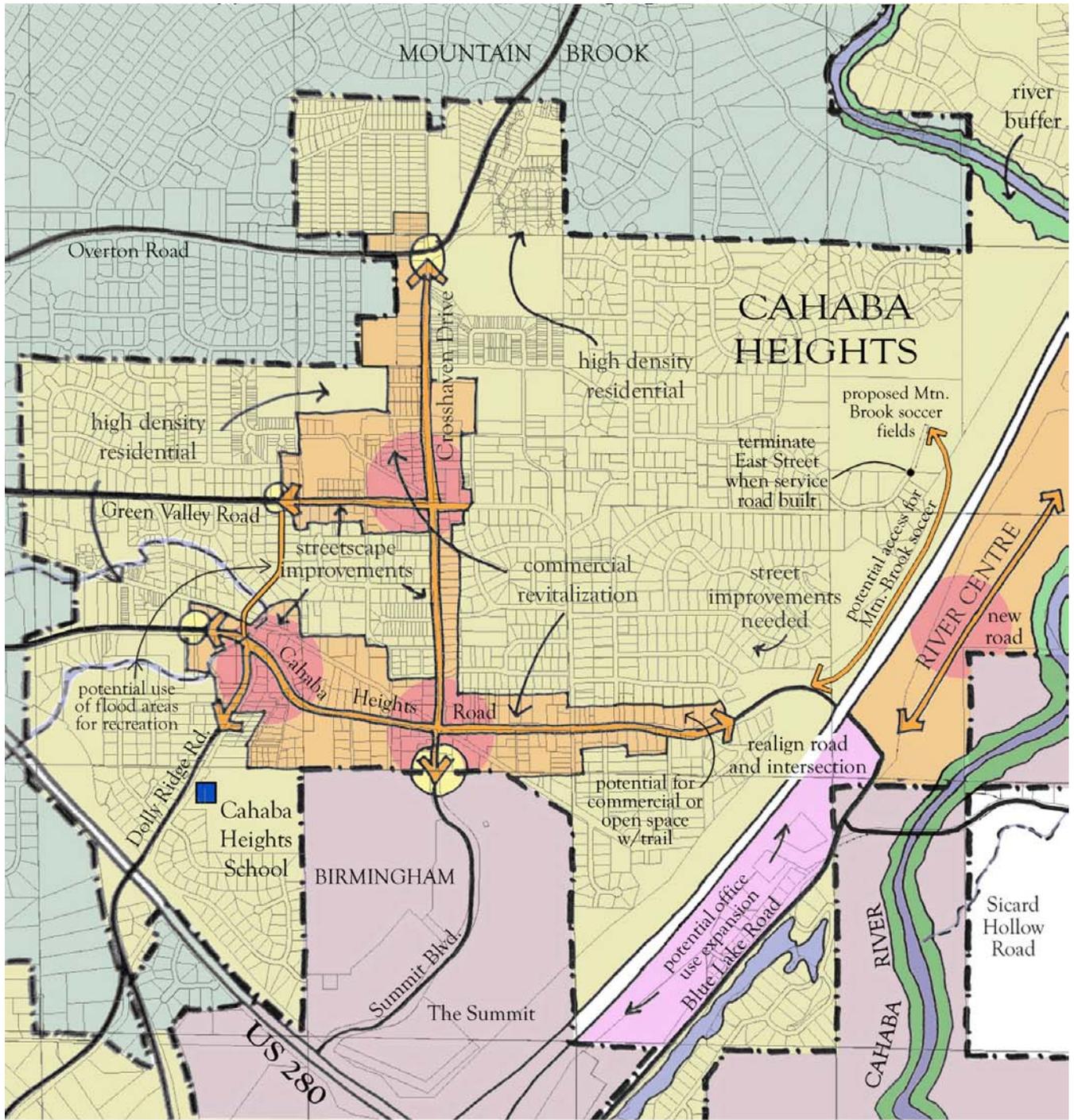


Figure 19: Cahaba Heights
Land Use Analysis

- Neighborhood - primarily low / medium density single-family residential areas with higher densities near village centers(s). Other uses may include schools, places of worship, recreational areas, and open space.
- Village Center - mixed use centers with highest densities in core areas. Mix of uses should include retail and service businesses, professional offices, high density residential areas, institutions, recreation areas, and public spaces.
- Commercial Core - primarily high density, retail and service business areas with professional offices and multi-family residences on upper floors or on periphery. Other uses may include institutions and public space.
- Gateways and Nodes - Gateways are entryways into the community or village enhanced with consistent signage, landscaping, and other elements. Nodes are sites, such as transit stops, where public spaces, signage, and other public design elements should be considered.

- Professional Offices - primarily professional office uses. Density should vary according to surroundings. Other uses may include retail and services (supporting offices and employees), places of worship, public spaces, and open space.
- Recreation and Open Space - public and private recreation facilities and preserved natural spaces. Recreation facilities may be active, passive or combined. Open spaces are areas preserved in a natural state and may include passive recreational uses.
- Trailheads - Trailheads are public sites along a trail, where bike racks, seating, parking, and public amenities are provided for trail users.
- Schools - School facilities administered by the Vestavia Hills School System.



COLUMBIANA ROAD

Existing Conditions

Columbiana Road is a five lane highway that stretches from Highway 31 at I-65 northward to the border with Homewood at the top of Shades Mountain. It was developed as a northern route from Hoover, through Homewood, into the western portion of Birmingham. However, when I-65 was completed, most of the traffic was diverted, leaving a large highway with minimal traffic.

There is currently a mixture of residences, offices and churches along Columbiana. The southern end, from Highway 31 to the Tyler Road/ Massey Road intersection, although only ¼ mile long, is heavily traveled and heavily retail. It is anchored by Royal Automotive Inc. North of the Tyler/ Massey Road intersection, Columbiana is far less traveled, with very little retail development. The central portion of the road is a combination of residences and churches, with one or two small office buildings. It is anchored by Berry Middle School in the Hoover School system. The northern section of Columbiana Road is anchored by a shopping center and office complex on the west side, and Shades Mountain Baptist Church on the east side. Traveling northward past Canyon Road and Shades Crest Road leads into the City of Homewood.

The Columbiana Road corridor, with the exception of the southernmost tip, is a lightly traveled spine with established residential and church properties along both sides. Traffic will not increase significantly in the future because it has become a local road with built-out property all along it. It has the potential to be a more attractive thoroughfare, because of the already numerous trees and limited retail development.



Columbiana Road looking north

The following land use and improvements recommendations for Columbiana Road are shown in **Figure #20**.

Future Land Use Recommendations

The vision for Columbiana Road should be one of a greenway with office development where possible and a continuation of the established residential. Light retail could work, but only for local traffic, such as a grocery store, drug store, or video store.

There is some opportunity for new development, principally in the northern portion, on the west side of Columbiana. From Shades Crest Road southward to Sports First, there is a combination of houses-turned-commercial and vacant land that could be consolidated into a twelve-acre parcel appropriate for office/light retail development. In addition, the existing shopping center is underutilized and could be used for more neighborhood retail. There are few other parcels with any future development opportunities.



Small-scale townhome/apartment development on Columbiana Road.

Berry Middle School is the "wild card" on Columbiana Road. The City of Hoover has kept the school in its long-range plan, but Vestavia Hills should look for an opportunity to buy the property if the City of Hoover should ever move the facility. The school is surrounded by Vestavia Hills and physically separated from Hoover neighborhoods. For Vestavia Hills, the property is in a good location for a public use, such as additional school or community facilities, or potential commercial redevelopment. Properties south and west of the school are developed or in process for high-density residential uses. Recently developed office buildings located along Columbiana Road are within Jefferson County. The City should consider annexing these developments, including properties on Hackberry Road, through tax abatements or other incentives.

Implementation Recommendations

Columbiana Road can strengthen its "greenway" appearance by placing landscaped medians in selected areas and stronger landscaping along the rights-of-way. This can be a continuation of Homewood's "greening" of Green Springs Highway, of which Columbiana Road is the southernmost segment ending in Vestavia Hills. A gateway can be created at the Shades Crest/ Canyon Road area announcing entrance into Vestavia Hills from Homewood. At the southern tip, a consolidation of accesses onto Columbiana, combined with

landscaping along the rights-of-way, can really beautify this heavy retail section. To implement these improvements, the City should develop a Corridor Beautification, or Streetscape Plan for Columbiana Road.

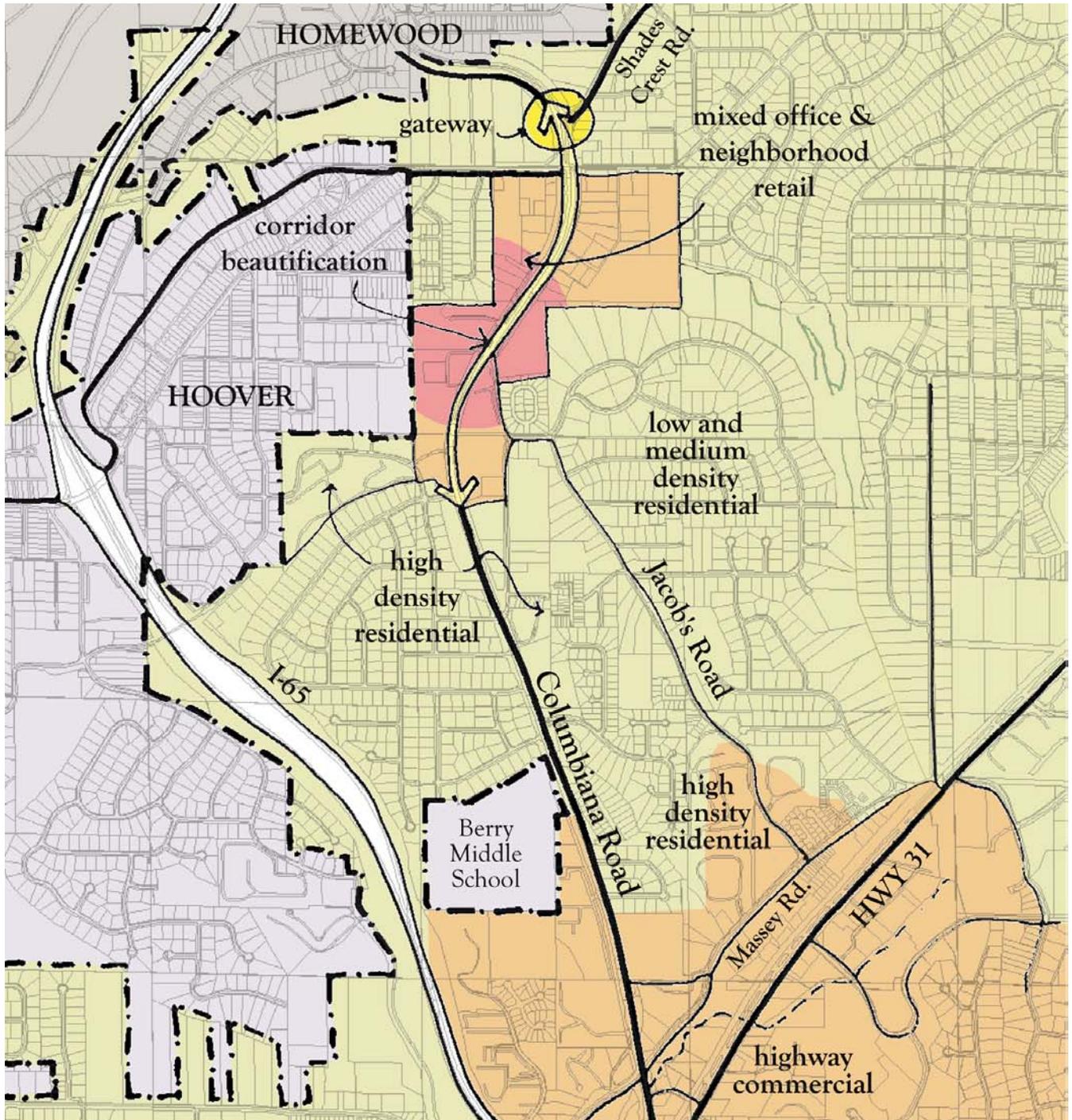


Figure 20: Columbiana Road
Land Use Analysis

- Neighborhood - primarily low / medium density single-family residential areas with higher densities near village center(s). Other uses may include schools, places of worship, recreational areas, and open space.
- Village Center - mixed use centers with highest densities in core areas. Mix of uses should include retail and service businesses, professional offices, high density residential areas, institutions, recreation areas, and public spaces.
- Commercial Core - primarily high density, retail and service business areas with professional offices and multi-family residences on upper floors or on periphery. Other uses may include institutions and public space.
- Gateways and Nodes - Gateways are entryways into the community or village enhanced with consistent signage, landscaping, and other elements. Nodes are sites, such as transit stops, where public spaces, signage, and other public design elements should be considered.

- Professional Offices - primarily professional office uses. Density should vary according to surroundings. Other uses may include retail and services (supporting offices and employees), places of worship, public spaces, and open space.
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- Trailheads - Trailheads are public sites along a trail, where bike racks, seating, parking, and public amenities are provided for trail users.
- Schools - School facilities administrated by the Vestavia Hills School System.



ROCKY RIDGE

Existing Conditions

Rocky Ridge, which lies east of Highway 31, is a good example of village-type mixed-use development within the City. The commercial center of the village, which lies around the intersection of Rocky Ridge Road and Morgan Drive, concentrates a variety of commercial and residential uses. Commercial uses include office, retail, and service businesses, located predominately along Rocky Ridge Road. A mixture of high- and medium-density residential developments surround the commercial area. Residential components include garden homes, apartments, a retirement village, and single family homes. Vestavia Hills High School lies immediately west. Currently, the City is developing a recreation area to serve the community along Little Shades Creek, tying the area into the High School and Rocky Ridge area by way of a natural trail.

The village functions as a neighborhood commercial center as well as an important commercial node within the city-at-large. The area has convenient access to U.S. 280 via Rocky Ridge Road and to I-459 via Old Rocky Ridge Road and Acton Road. Though in close proximity to Highway 31, access between the two areas is limited to an indirect route along residential streets. Traffic on Rocky Ridge is also influenced by a narrow right-of-way and the intersection configuration at Highway 280. Traffic on the road is over capacity for its current design. As described in the Transportation Improvements section, the Hwy. 280 interchange needs to be redesigned, and where possible, Rocky Ridge Road needs to be widened to three lanes.

The following land use and improvements recommendations for Rocky Ridge are shown in **Figure #21**.

Future Land Use Recommendations

In the future, the village is encouraged to continue its development as a mixed-use center. As infill of vacant properties and redevelopment occurs within the area, it is recommended that new developments be planned to support pedestrian accessibility and designed to fit within the village context. Zero-lot line commercial development and the possibility for multi-floor buildings will allow greater development potential. To ensure good contextual design and greater pedestrian connectivity, new buildings should be located closer to the street while parking areas should be located to the rear, connected with other rear parking areas to create shared access where possible. In multi-story buildings, retail should have the precedence on the street level while offices and residences may be located in upper floors. The ultimate advantage to this arrangement is contingent on greater pedestrian activity.

Implementation Recommendations

To facilitate greater pedestrian activity and accessibility, plans are currently underway to create a greenway along Little Shades Creek, providing a new connection from south of the village to points north. As part of the City's Walkways Masterplan, the greenway design will be further supported by the strengthening of sidewalk connections along Rocky Ridge Road and into surrounding neighborhoods. To strengthen the evolution of the Rocky Ridge area, the City should consider ways to reduce existing curb cuts on Rocky Ridge Road within the center and to make further improvements to walking

conditions, such as pedestrian lighting and other street amenities.

For the City to encourage more appropriate "village" design, a review and future changes to the City's current zoning ordinance are highly recommended. Such changes may take place in the form of a new zoning district for village-oriented development or revisions to existing commercial zoning regulations. Such changes should be considered within the context of, not only the Rocky Ridge area but, all potential future commercial development within the City.



Recent commercial development on Rocky Ridge Road



Office and retail center at intersection of Rocky Ridge and
Morgan Drive

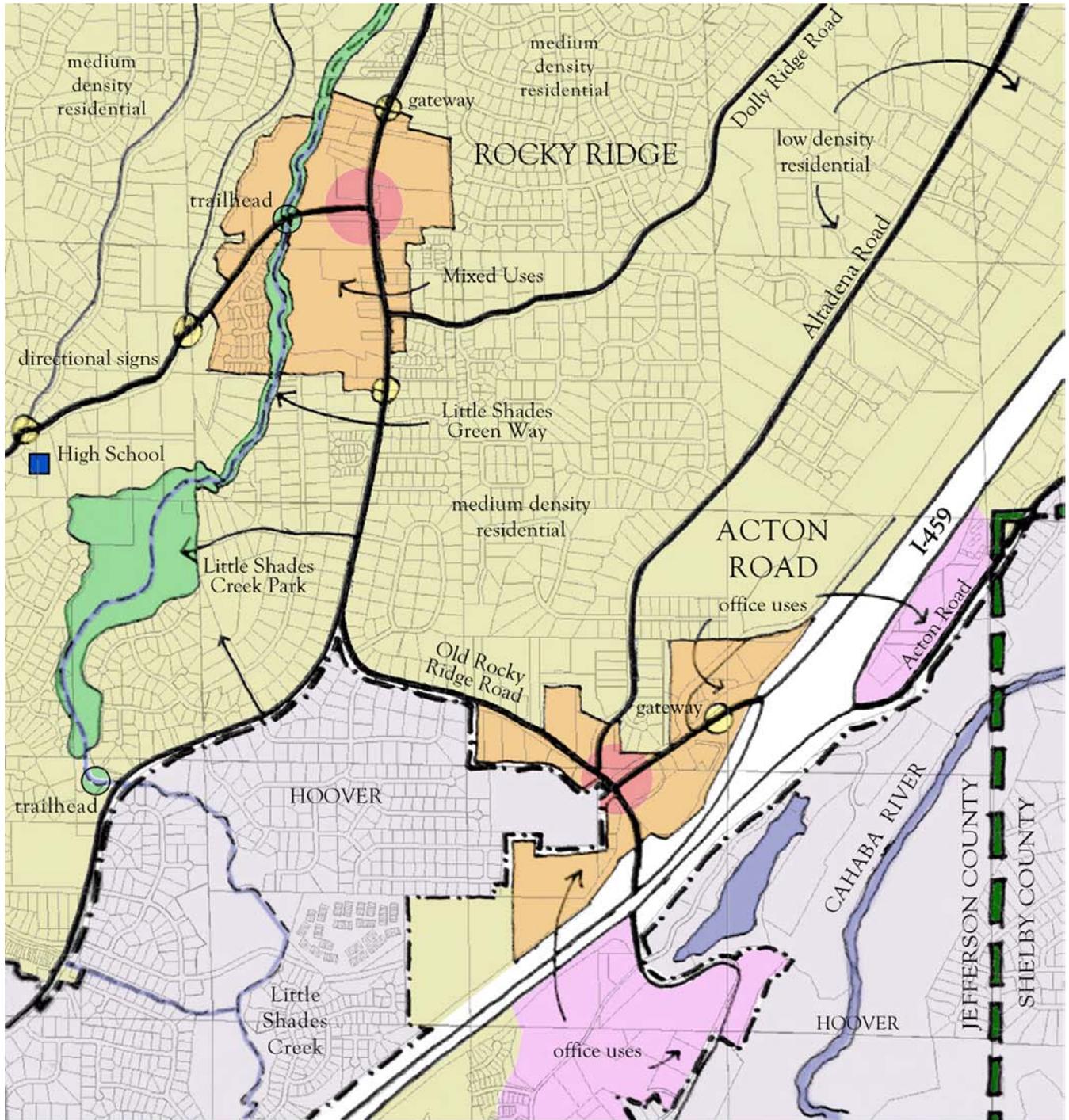


Figure 21: Rocky Ridge Road / Acton Road West
Land Use Analysis

- Neighborhood - primarily low / medium density single-family residential areas with higher densities near village center(s). Other uses may include schools, places of worship, recreational areas, and open space.
- Village Center - mixed use centers with highest densities in core areas. Mix of uses should include retail and service businesses, professional offices, high density residential areas, institutions, recreation areas, and public spaces.
- Commercial Core - primarily high density, retail and service business areas with professional offices and multi-family residences on upper floors or on periphery. Other uses may include institutions and public space.
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- Schools - School facilities administered by the Vestavia Hills School System.



ACTON ROAD

Existing Conditions

The Acton Road area is a commercial gateway into the Vestavia Hills community from I-459. Currently the main land use components to the Acton area include: highway-oriented retail and service; suburban, large office development; and several large institutions (Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Hoover's Rocky Ridge Elementary School, and Children's South Hospital). This area is surrounded predominantly by medium- and low-density residential neighborhoods. Future development in the Acton Road interchange area is limited by available land for development; the position and design of the interstate interchange; and the area's often difficult topography.

The following land use and improvements recommendations are shown in **Figure #21**.

Future Land Use Recommendations

The area's greatest potential seems to be in keeping with the existing office development and highway-oriented retail in the area. To support continued office development, such as along undeveloped land on Old Rocky Ridge Road, further development of retail and service commercial may also be desirable. For instance, the area would benefit greatly from the development of eating establishments and other service businesses to provide for the area's office employees. Such service-oriented development can also serve the International Park office development east of I-459. Proximity to businesses in the Rocky Ridge area provides customers for some of this supporting development, and reinforces the need to continue commercial development in the nearby village.

Implementation Recommendations

For the City to benefit more directly from development in this area and to be able to better regulate future growth, some annexation of properties in this area are possible and desirable. This area is also a mid-point between Rocky Ridge and the commercial area around the intersection of Acton Road and Cahaba River Road. Annexations along the northeastern length of Acton Road will create a stronger relationship between these areas and allow the City to better plan for new development to support and connect them. Since this interchange area is also an important gateway into the community, any public improvements to occur in the future should involve landscaping, signage, and other public design changes to create a better sense of arrival

CAHABA RIVER ROAD

Existing Conditions

Cahaba River Road is a local road south of and roughly parallel to U.S. 280. It bypasses to the south the I-459 and U.S. 280 interchange. Currently, the road acts as an edge between the suburban, commercial development along U.S. 280 and the residential areas south of Cahaba River Road. Existing development in the area captures a wide range of activities: large-scale suburban development along U.S. 280 (BellSouth, the Colonnade shopping center and office park, Perimeter Park, etc.); small-scale retail and office development around the intersection with Acton Road; and high-, medium-, and low-density residential development surrounding the area.

Several residential lots along Acton Road have converted to office uses since the development of multi-family housing and the Altadena Square retail center in the area. A large set of partly wooded agricultural properties, now used as a horse farm, lies south along Cahaba River Road. There are also several churches near the center of the area.

The assessment of physiographic conditions in Chapter I showed this area as having a strong natural capacity for development. The majority of land along Cahaba River Road is flat, free of floodplain conditions, and has good soil conditions. This is especially true nearer to Acton Road to the west. The most important natural constraint is proximity to the Cahaba River to the east.

The following planning recommendations are shown in **Figure #22**.

Future Land Use Recommendations

Assuming that growth and change is eminent in this area, the long range potential for Cahaba River Road is to develop as a new village center to serve the surrounding single-family neighborhoods, complexes, and employment centers. With a mixture of retail, service, office, residential, and institutional uses already established in the area, future planning and development of available properties should strive for a more cohesive and interconnected activity center. For this to happen, the eventual development of existing agricultural properties and reinvestment in the single-family subdivision north of Cahaba River Road will be beneficial. Because of the proximity of shopping centers (Shops at Colonnade and The Summit), commercial development will be limited to small-scale businesses offering convenient and unique goods and services to surrounding office centers and neighborhoods.

If new development is planned and designed in a way to generate and rely on more pedestrian activity, businesses developed here will have a better chance to capture patronage from neighboring developments than the outlying retail centers on Highway 280. This would allow workers and residents to avoid car trips for lunch and other day-to-day errands. With the amount of unbuilt land in the area, there is a great opportunity to plan for a public green space to serve as a center for continued development. Though several office parks in the area include large amounts of landscaped greenspace, these areas are not intended for public use and are seldom used by employees. Development of a public greenspace within this potential village area can serve

the interests of future retail and service businesses, such as restaurants, as well as area residents who have no nearby public park.

One site along Cahaba River Road has been proposed for a new development, River Bend, that will include both commercial and residential uses. The site lies between the older single family subdivision south of the Colonnade and the more recent apartment complex, Colony Woods. The River Bend development will include 48 garden homes and over 20,000 sf of retail.

West of I-459, some land is available for development off Cahaba River Road which is best suited to office development - being adjacent to the BellSouth Headquarters and detached from any retail or service development. Directly south, recent development has leaned toward high-density single family residential development. Adjacent developable land has limited access but may also be developable for office uses provided good buffers are established between future development and existing residential properties.

In the far east of the area, where Cahaba River Road connects back into U.S. 280, the alignment of the Cahaba River and related topography limit any development here, creating an appropriate, natural edge to the potential village area. Nearest the river, density should be decreased in any new development/redevelopment and appropriate safeguards, such as natural buffers and stormwater management practices, should be applied.

Implementation Recommendations

To plan and guide development in this area, the City must consider annexation of the Rocky Ridge Fire District. And, the development of an area plan may be beneficial to the City in more directly influencing new growth here. Establishment of a PUD district, or similar zoning classification that allows mixed-uses and encourages "village-type" design, is highly recommended to facilitate and guide future investments in this area. Provided this direction is followed for the Cahaba River Road area, the development of sidewalks and related amenities will be essential components of a public improvement plan for the area.

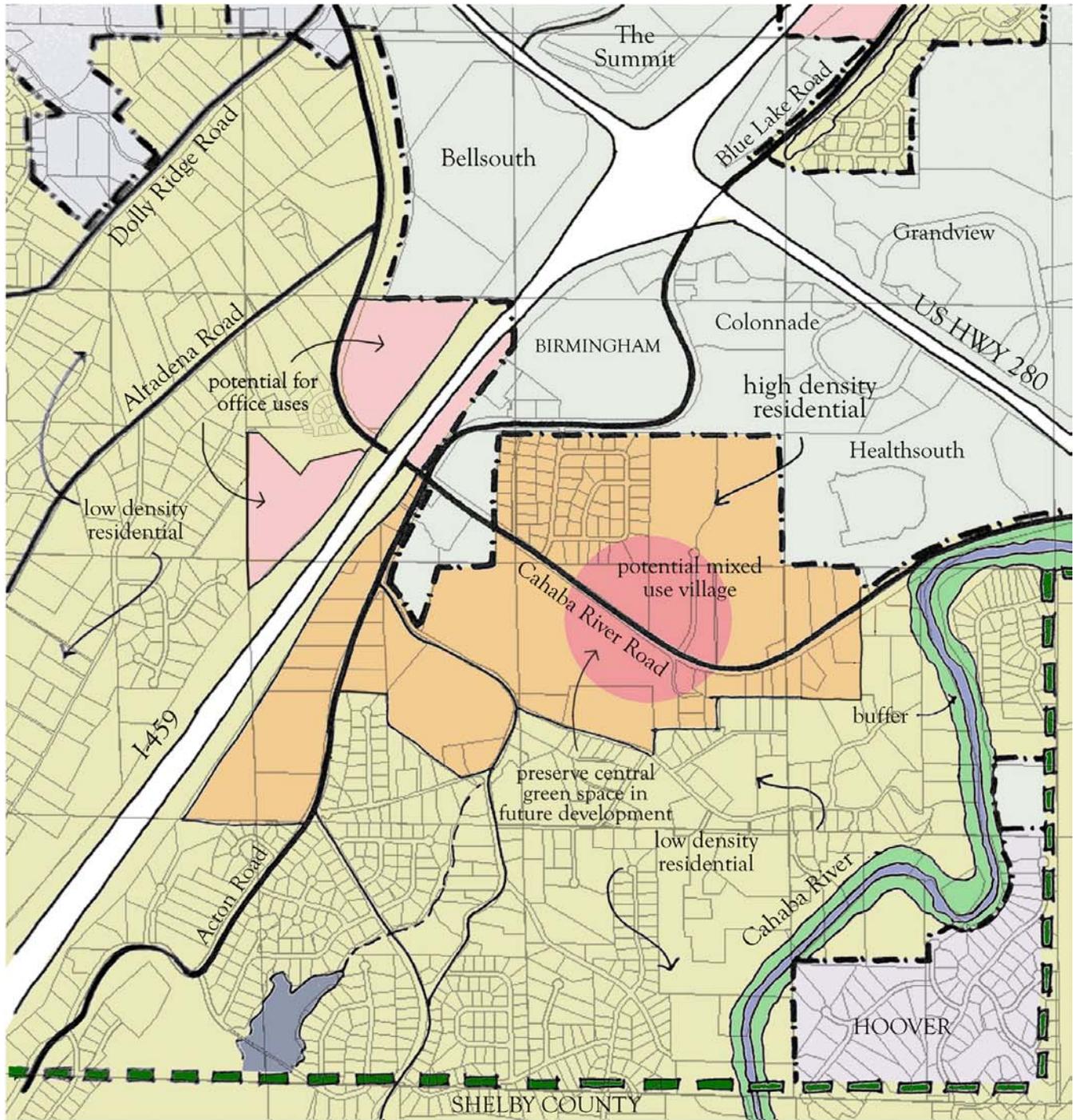


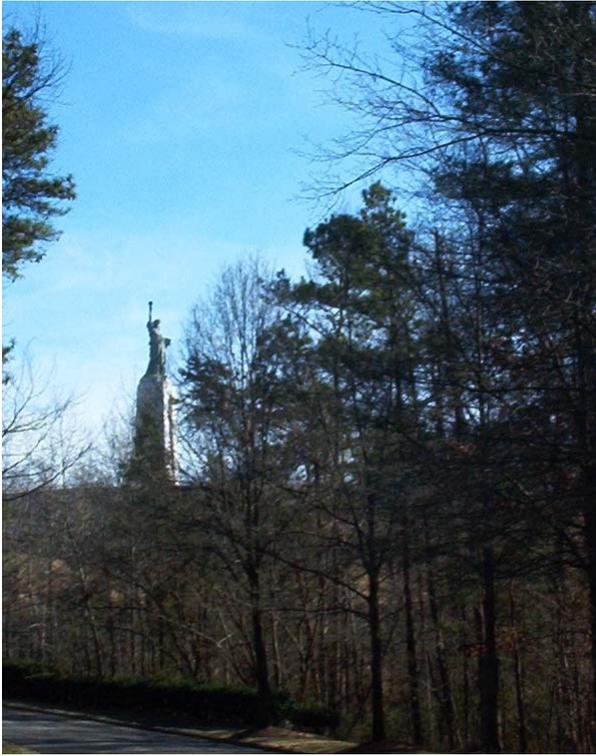
Figure 22: Cahaba River Road / Acton Road East
Land Use Analysis

- Neighborhood** - primarily low / medium density single-family residential areas with higher densities near village center(s). Other uses may include schools, places of worship, recreational areas, and open space.
- Village Center** - mixed use centers with highest densities in core areas. Mix of uses should include retail and service businesses, professional offices, high density residential areas, institutions, recreational areas, and public spaces.
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LIBERTY PARK



View of Urban Center from Liberty Parkway entrance

Existing Conditions

The Liberty Park Planned Unit Development (PUD), over the last several years, has transformed the area into an important community component within the City. Plans for Liberty Park include a significant expansion of the already built commercial and residential areas. The community is made up primarily of large lot residential areas, developed along Liberty Parkway. The initial development within Liberty Park is the Urban Center office development, which lies nearest the gateway area. Subsequent commercial development has occurred immediately south of the Urban Center, including specialty retail stores and some smaller office uses. A sports complex and elementary school are located at the eastern end of Liberty Parkway. An abundance of open space and a strong pedestrian linkage along Liberty Parkway complement the residential

neighborhoods. A progressive, planned development, Liberty Park includes a considerable amount of open land and stormwater control measures to manage run-off and minimize the effects of development on the adjacent segments of the Cahaba River. The plan for Liberty Park also includes space adjacent to the Liberty Park Elementary School for the construction of Vestavia Hills' second middle school. The conceptual master plan for the PUD area, developed by Liberty Park JOINT VENTURE, is shown in **Figure #23**.



Stonegate - Office development in Liberty Park

Future Land Use Recommendations

Future development within the Liberty Park PUD is planned to consist of an increased mix of higher density housing types and commercial development. Due to the size of the PUD area, several years of continued development are expected. During this time frame, the developers Liberty Park Joint Venture should be reviewing and refining, as appropriate, their masterplan for the PUD. Any such changes should be developed with the participation of the City and residents and business owners of Liberty Park. Through this process, the City and developers may work together to integrate concepts within the City's Comprehensive Plan into the future phases of the PUD. Important issues amongst Vestavia Hills residents that should be considered in Liberty Park's future growth are: connectivity of vehicular and pedestrian routes, integration of

community facilities and business areas in central, convenient locations to neighborhoods, and the development of smaller-scaled neighborhood parks.

Implementation Recommendations

Since incorporation of the Liberty Park Planned Unit Development, the City and the State have acknowledged the need for expanded access and has supported the efforts of the Liberty Park Joint Venture to improve these conditions. Current access to the area is limited to an interchange on I-459 located northwest of the development along Overton Road, a second entrance off Overton Road (River Run Terrace), and an entrance off Sicard Hollow Road at the easternmost side of the development.

Traffic from the interchange and River Run Terrace both converge at the main entrance to the development, while Sicard Hollow provides access at the eastern end of the Parkway. Overton Road provides the shortest access (2.0 miles) between Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park. Sicard Hollow also allows access to the Cahaba Heights area where it meets Cahaba Heights Road south of Liberty Park. However, access via Sicard Hollow is problematic. Sicard Hollow is a winding, narrow two-lane road, traversing multiple jurisdictions between Cahaba Heights Road and Liberty Parkway. The distance between Liberty Parkway and Cahaba Heights Road by way of Sicard Hollow Road is over 4.5 miles. Due to its narrow width, surface condition, length, and surrounding topography Sicard Hollow Road is viewed as a long and only marginally safe route.

With continued growth in Liberty Park, these access points, especially River Run Terrace and the existing interchange, will become congested. To prevent this, the Liberty Park Joint Venture proposed a new

interchange on I-459 as part of the initial PUD Masterplan. When originally proposed, the interchange plan was approved at the state level but rejected by the local MPO. The City acknowledges the need for the second interchange as a means to: accommodate the continued growth of the Liberty Park community, prevent congestion at the current exit, and provide improved alternatives for residential and business traffic.

The City will, in concert with Liberty Park Joint Venture, study alternative locations and designs, to minimize impacts on adjacent neighborhoods and the Cahaba River and to meet the requirements of the Department of Transportation. These represent the primary considerations in planning the interchange. ALDOT requires that an interchange be placed no closer than 1 mile to an existing exit, limiting possible locations to areas where the interchange would be close to either the River Run neighborhood or the river. To reduce environmental impacts on the river, it will be important to avoid a location that requires a bridge over the Cahaba to connect into Liberty Park. The use of 3-D computer modeling can help to examine physical and visual impacts a proposed interchange may have on its surroundings.

Improvements to the local road network should be considered as part of a larger effort to enhance access for Vestavia Hills residents. With this in mind, the developer's plans include a road to be constructed from Liberty Parkway to Sicard Hollow Road, east of Blue Lake Road. As mentioned, improvements are needed along Sicard Hollow Road to make this a safer, more convenient path. Because the road crosses municipal jurisdictions, the City will need to take a lead role in initiating needed improvements.

Blue Lake Road, which connects Sicard Hollow to Acton Road, represents another opportunity to enhance access for area residents.

Blue Lake Road needs improvements to make it a safer route for residents. Before the City's incorporation of surrounding areas, Jefferson County was responsible for maintenance and improvements on Blue Lake. Maintenance and improvements are now the responsibility of the City of Birmingham, for the segment nearest I-459, and the City of Vestavia Hills, for the segment nearest Sicard Hollow Road. The intersection of Blue Lake Road, Cahaba Heights Road, and Sicard Hollow Road is unsafe and needs to be addressed as well. Realignment of Sicard Hollow within the existing right-of-way can improve safe travel for residents.

A regional view of these network improvements shows potential for alleviating congestion on segments of Highway 280. Due to varying environmental constraints throughout this area, restrictions on access to Sicard Hollow Road and the type and density of development along it would need to be adopted by multiple jurisdictions. Without this, development could result in damage to the Upper Cahaba watershed and drinking water sources. Much of the land in this part of the metro area is owned by the Birmingham Water Works Board. Control over development and access throughout this area would be within the authority of the BWWB.

Another issue currently being considered by the City would provide better emergency access to the Liberty Park area. Liberty Park Joint Venture and the City of Vestavia Hills are coordinating the development of a shared-use helicopter landing. Currently, the project

is in the early stages of discussion between the City and developer. This addition to the area would provide one of the most efficient forms of emergency medical transport to the area, which is a considerable distance from most hospitals in the region. The City is currently looking at other possible service benefits this project might represent to the community at large.



Figure 23: LIBERTY PARK MASTER PLAN
 [Map provided by Liberty Park Joint Venture]

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The City's commitment to improving transportation within both the community and the region is evident in the outward-reaching scope of its Regional Walkway Master Plan and the City's strong support of regional transit planning. The transportation improvements identified in this section are illustrated in **Figure #25: Transportation Improvements Map**. Projects are subdivided into three basic categories: those to be initiated and performed primarily by the City; those to be proposed to the Metropolitan Planning Organization for inclusion in the MPO's Transportation Improvements Plan (TIP) and Long Range Plan; and those to be performed through private funding by landowners or developers.

These projects, upon completion, will achieve an important objective identified by residents and reinforced by the Long Range Planning Committee at the beginning stages of this planning process - to increase connectivity within and throughout the City of Vestavia Hills, for both pedestrians and motorists. Stronger connections between southern Vestavia Hills, Cahaba Heights, and Liberty Park are needed, as well as stronger street and sidewalk connections within each of these areas.

During the development of Vestavia Hills's comprehensive plan, the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Regional Planning Commission undertook a study to determine the potential for expanding and enhancing the mass transit system serving the metro area. This Transportation Alternatives Analysis, upon completion, will set an agenda for the development of new and improved transportation modes within Jefferson and Shelby

Counties. An important recommendation within this study is the development of enhanced bus services to communities on the periphery of the metro area's city center, including Vestavia Hills. Development of more walkable, mixed use centers with shared parking areas will make the switch between different modes of travel (driving, walking, biking, and transit use) more convenient, effective, and attractive. Other elements in the study that could bode well for the City are transit service improvements along Highway 280 (of benefit to the Cahaba Heights area and other nearby Vestavia Hills neighborhoods), and multi-modal improvements along I-65: expanded transit facilities, HOV lanes, and park and ride lots.

Regional Walkway Master Plan

Running concurrently with this planning process was the development of the City's Walkways Masterplan. The Master Plan was developed by consultants Nimrod Long and Associates and identifies opportunities to increase non-vehicular connectivity throughout the community. During the community visioning activities, which laid the foundation for this comprehensive plan, residents expressed a strong desire for better connectivity between neighborhoods, community facilities, and activity centers. Developing the Walkways Masterplan was an aggressive step in this direction by the City. The Plan, shown in **Figure #23**, identified multiple-phase areas for construction of sidewalks and high-impact locations for greenway developments. The greenway elements were organized along natural features, such as Little Shades Creek, and where abutting subdivisions had created (or allowed for creation of) naturally-preserved easements. To further support and enhance this level of investment in pedestrian improvements by the City, development regulations will require new developments to include sidewalks on major frontages.

With the pedestrian improvements slated in the Walkways Masterplan, development of improved transit stops along Highway 31, and related regulatory improvements (TOD) and physical improvements, Highway 31 - Vestavia Hills's current business/community center - will enhance access for residents and visitors with limited means of transportation and for those who choose to walk or use mass transit.

Local Transit Shuttle

In support of transportation improvements along Highway 31 and to make other business and community nodes within the City more accessible, a proposal to develop a local transit shuttle should be considered for implementation. Four major nodes, which should be priorities for such a shuttle route, are Cahaba Heights, Rocky Ridge, Columbiana Road and the areas along Highway 31 to be served by the planned regional transit system. As more pedestrian-friendly activity centers are developed throughout the community, use of a local shuttle will become more convenient and of great benefit to residents, business centers, and the region.

Addressing Local and Regional Traffic Issues

A major regional traffic problem, mentioned earlier in this Plan, is the intersection of Green Valley Road and Hwy. 280. Needed improvements to this intersection include realigning Shades Crest Road to a point southeast of the current intersection with Rocky Ridge Road. This will allow better control over the traffic approaching the intersection. Jefferson County, under the auspices of the MPO, has proposed a plan to relocate Shades Crest while also providing improved access to the Shades Mountain Filtration

Plant. Subsequent improvements to the highway intersection are also needed to alleviate traffic traveling east-west on 280. Because of the level of traffic accessing the highway at this point, stop times at the intersection are long. Traffic tends to build up south along Rocky Ridge waiting for the turn signal; and traffic builds up as well on Hwy. 280 when traffic from Rocky Ridge is merging onto the highway. The only way to solve both these issue and to maintain the Green Valley to Rocky Ridge connection for the community is construction of a grade-separated interchange. The City supports this initiative as both a local need and a regional need. In the near-term, while realigning Shades Crest Road, current stacking problems can be addressed by adding a lane to Rocky Ridge Road between Shades Crest Road and U.S. 280.

Another local traffic issue is the congestion on Rocky Ridge Road, a major local artery providing access to Rocky Ridge and surrounding residential areas. With a two-lane right-of-way and only a few turn lanes, the high volume of traffic, between Morgan Drive and Hwy. 280, slows or stops behind turning cars. To help mitigate this condition, Rocky Ridge should be three-laned where possible (rock outcrops limit widening in some areas) and turn lanes and access lanes created at entrances to subdivisions. Adding a lane between the re-aligned Shades Crest and Highway 280 will immediately help reduce congestion for northbound traffic on Rocky Ridge.

There is also a significant need to improve the major roads in Cahaba Heights to handle growing traffic in the area. Crosshaven Drive and Cahaba Heights Road are important streets for both residents and area shoppers. Both should be considered priorities. Improvements will also be needed along Green Valley Road when the proposed Highway 280 interchange is

built.

Transportation Projects

Improvements that will be the sole responsibility of the City should be included within the City's Capital Improvements Program. And where appropriate, potential funding sources, such as the Transportation Enhancements Grants, should be considered to aid in the implementation of these projects. Some improvements, such as the development of an interchange at Rocky Ridge Road and U.S. 280, will require regional collaboration and federal and state funding. Such projects are intended to serve both local **and** regional purposes. Local projects may be initiated by the City or by a developer as appropriate.

Projects of a regional scope will require the support of the MPO and its member governments. The City of Vestavia Hills, as a member of the MPO, supports a comprehensive study of the Highway 280 corridor to determine the most effective improvements to alleviate congestion on this major route and to provide greater access to community nodes adjacent to 280.

Historically, the City's efforts to promote the construction of a new interchange on I-459, between Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park, have not been successful in the MPO. However, the City of Vestavia Hills sees great potential in such a project, when combined with an improved road network south of the Liberty Park area. These improvements would begin to establish greater connectivity in this part of the region and allow drivers more route options. The City should continue to support the development of an interchange on I-459 and alternative designs that

would prevent intrusion into neighborhoods and the Cahaba River.

Highway 280, the primary collector in the area, is burdened with heavy traffic, intense strip development, and poor access management. Making improvements to existing roads, thus avoiding additional crossings of the Cahaba River, would provide great relief but must be tempered with limits on land development and access, given proximity to the Cahaba River and Lake Purdy. Unrestricted growth would lead to the same problems on this network as seen along Highway 280 and cause significant damage to a regional water resource.

Transportation projects, which affect the Upper Cahaba watershed, will also receive intense scrutiny by regional environmental organizations. It will be important to the eventual success of such projects to integrate the planning concepts of the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study being coordinated by the Regional Planning Commission. This would entail possible restrictions on development of adjacent land to protect existing ecosystems. And, the physical design and construction of transportation improvements should be enhanced to reduce run-off and related environmental problems, which could threaten a major source of drinking water in the metro area.

RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION
PROJECTS

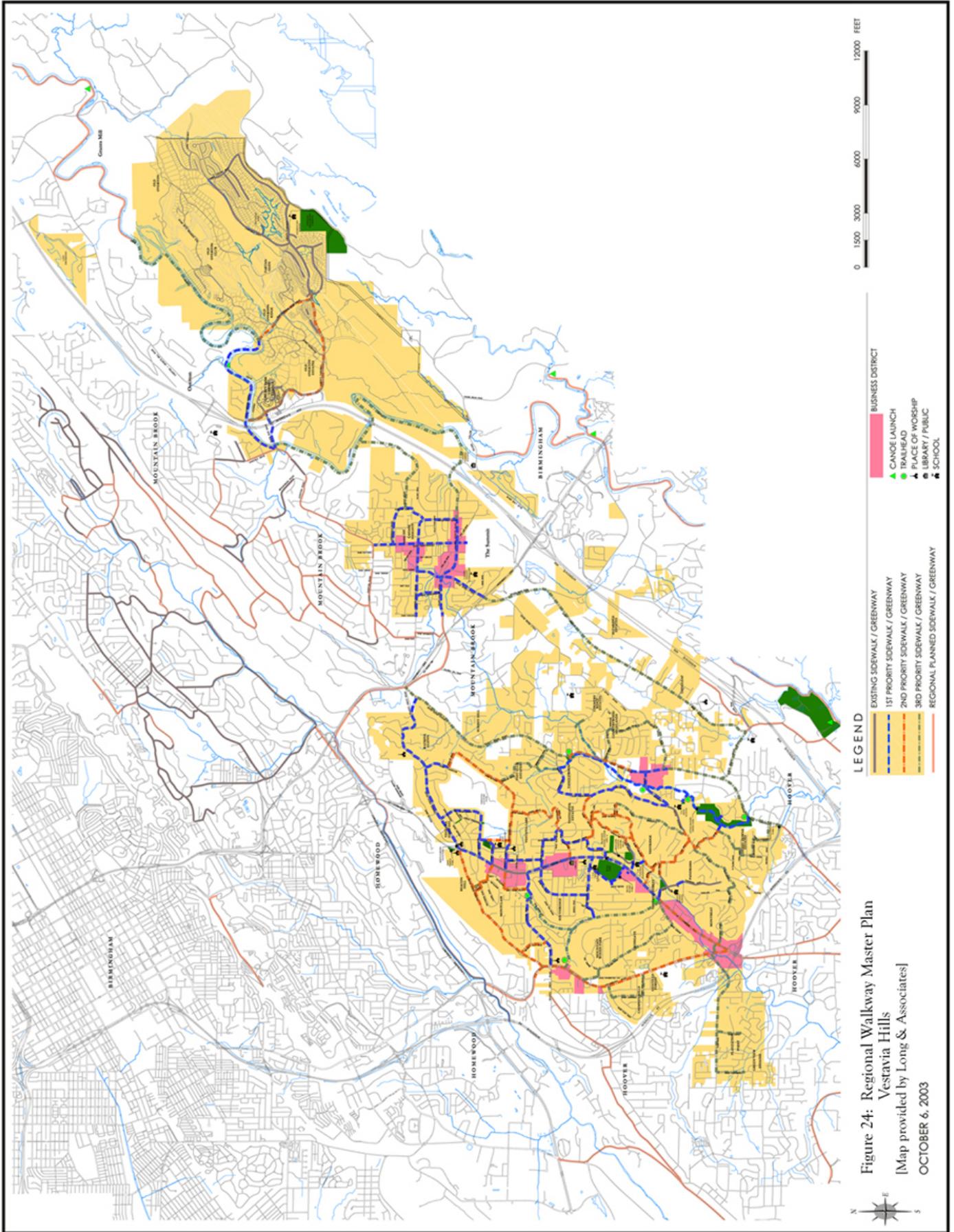
Regional Improvements

Local Improvements

1. Shades Crest Road realignment at Rocky Ridge Road (with Jefferson County) and additional northbound lane on Rocky Ridge Road
2. Implementation of future phases of Regional Walkway Master Plan
3. Development of greenways
4. Design study for Columbiana Road
5. Access Management Plan for Highway 31
6. Construction of pedestrian tunnel on Hwy. 31 to connect Central Elementary School and adjacent neighborhoods to community facilities at Wald Park
7. Extend/connect local streets where desirable
 - to create access to land-locked property
 - to improve east-west connections over time
8. Develop local Transit System Plan to connect Cahaba Heights, Highway 31, Rocky Ridge area, and Columbiana Road
9. Widen, three-lane segments of Rocky Ridge Road; install turn and access lanes
10. Improvements to Crosshaven Drive and Cahaba Heights Road to include capacity improvements, access management, traffic-calming, and streetscape elements
11. Proposal of I-459 interchange
12. Improvement of Sicard Hollow Road and existing road network, to include:
 - realignment of intersection at Cahaba Heights/Blue Lake Road within right-of-way
 - street improvements on Blue Lake Road
13. Construction of grade-separated interchange at intersection of Rocky Ridge Road, Green Valley Road, and U.S. Highway 280
14. Design and construction of new transit stops and park/ride facilities along Highway 31 (along with implementation of TOD concepts)
15. Coordinated plan for a service road along I-459 to access proposed Mountain Brook Soccer Fields and access to Vestavia Hills properties

Private Improvements

16. New road off Blue Lake Rd./Cahaba Heights Rd. to access planned River Centre (Developer)
17. Extend road from Liberty Parkway south to Sicard Hollow Road (Developer)

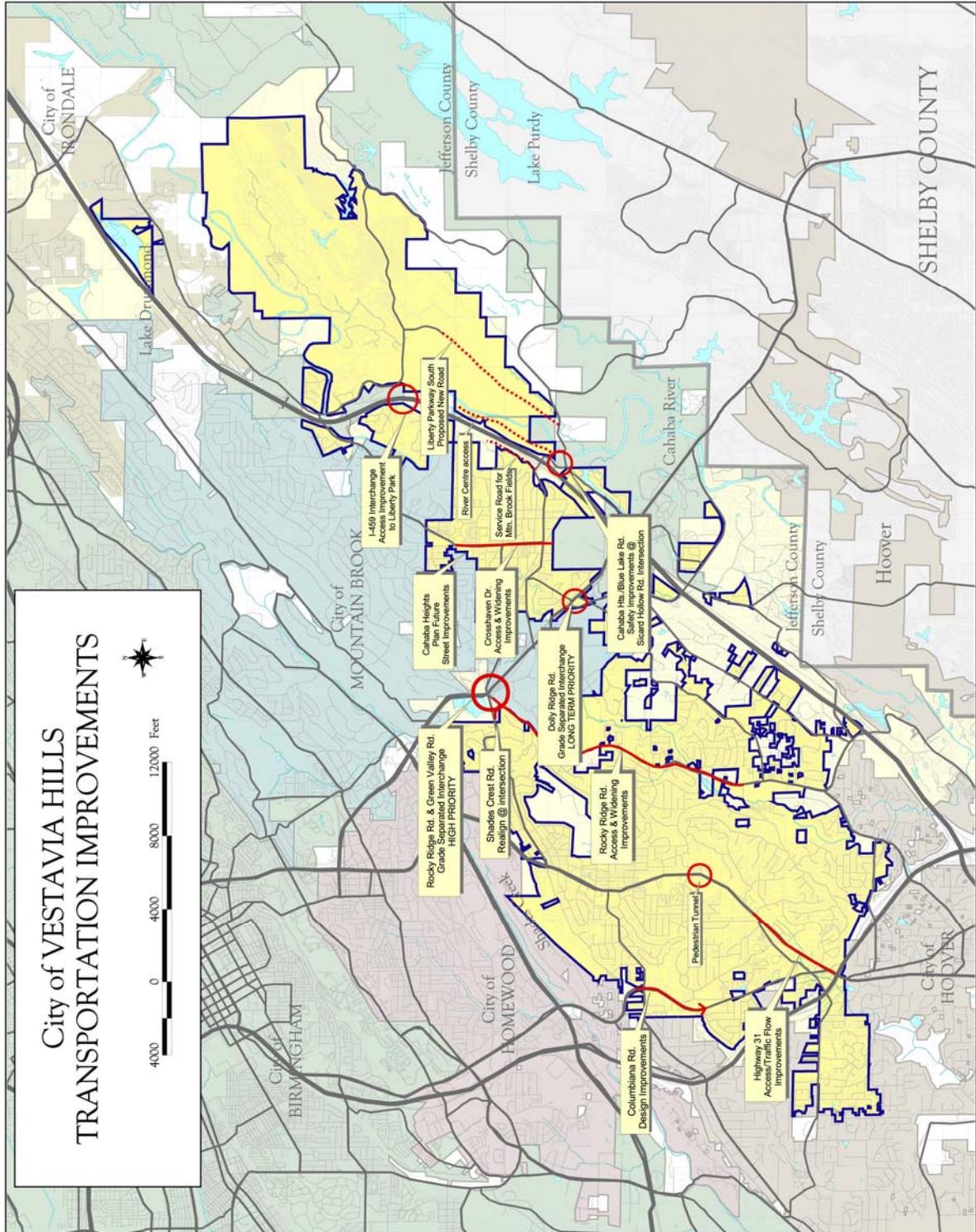


TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

This map identifies the primary transportation improvements identified in the Plan. These projects are intended to provide greater connections between the originally incorporated portion of the City, Cahaba Heights, and Liberty Park; enhance potential for economic growth; improve existing local and regional traffic conditions; and provide a framework for continued growth that addresses all transportation needs. These improvements, along with projects identified in the Walkways Master Plan, will create a citywide region and multi-modal, providing greater alternatives for residents.

**FIGURE 25:
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS**

-  Vestavia Hills
-  Extrajurisdictional planning area
-  County Line
-  Jefferson County (out of planning area)
-  Shelby County
-  City of Birmingham
-  City of Homewood
-  City of Hoover
-  City of Irondale
-  City of Mountain Brook



ANNEXATION CONSIDERATIONS

The City of Vestavia Hills should develop an Annexation Plan to study the impacts and potential for incorporation of the areas listed below, several of which are included within the Rocky Ridge Fire District of Jefferson County. Also, properties within the North Shelby and Cahaba Valley Fire Districts should be assessed in an annexation study. Portions of the North Shelby and Cahaba Valley Fire Districts lie within Jefferson County; though both districts are served by Shelby County authorities.

Rocky Ridge Fire District

- Remaining unincorporated parcels surrounding Old Rocky Ridge Road between Rocky Ridge Road and Acton Road (west of I-459)
- Unincorporated parcels along Acton Road (west of I-459)
- Unincorporated parcels along Acton Road (east of I-459)
- Unincorporated parcels along Rocky Ridge Lane and County Highway 115 (east of I-459)
- Unincorporated parcels along Cahaba River Road (east of I-459)

North Shelby Fire District

- Unincorporated areas east of Rocky Ridge Fire District adjacent to Cahaba River Road area

Cahaba Valley Fire District

- Unincorporated areas surrounding Liberty Park area and Cahaba River

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

To begin implementing the planning and development policies described in this plan, the City of Vestavia Hills must review current regulatory tools and consider the adoption of new regulations, such as the previously described Transit Overlay District (TOD).

REGULATORY TOOLS

Currently, the City's two most important regulatory tools for development are the City's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. To implement planning policies and achieve the goals and objectives outlined in Chapter II, the City should consider revising these regulations to encourage better traffic management, pedestrian accessibility, and site design within new developments and redevelopment projects. Another important enhancement to Vestavia Hills's regulatory planning efforts will be the hiring of a code enforcement official. This is a much needed addition to the City's current planning system.

Good administration and sound decision-making by the City have prevented the development of significantly, incompatible land use relationships. However, dimensional regulations within the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations have contributed to a less dense, less interconnected, and less pedestrian-scaled environment throughout the City. Regulatory recommendations, such as those that apply to zoning, are described in the following section and are shown in the **Figure #26: Recommended Zoning Map**.

Recommended Zoning Map

The recommendations depicted in **Figure #26** are based largely on the future growth and land use projections included at the beginning of this chapter. The map also reiterates the implementation of TOD Zoning and Design Guidelines along Highway 31. Other specific zoning recommendations in the map identify zoning for potential annexation areas and currently undeveloped land. The map does not identify any re-zonings for currently developed land within the City.

Zoning Enhancements

The City's Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council should review setback requirements within its non-residential districts to determine where improvements can be made to allow greater density and overall greater land potential per property. By modifying setback requirements, several benefits can be attained for developers, adjacent property owners, and the community in general:

- a greater percentage of each property can be developed;
- buildings may be designed in an attractive, consistent "village" pattern;
- the site design of developments can be more efficient and attractive;
- developments can be more pedestrian-friendly by building up to the street when appropriate;
- and the need for landscaping, to "hide" parking areas and to bridge the distance between buildings, will be greatly reduced.

Improvements to the City's zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations can be instituted to control the number and size of access points, or curb cuts, along major roads. Redundant and over-sized curb cuts have a negative effect on traffic, pedestrian safety, land efficiency, and the overall visual

character of development. During this planning process, photographic documentation of the Highway 31 corridor clearly revealed the excessiveness of curb cuts in business areas along the highway. Without effective regulations to manage access in new development areas and a commitment to work with land and business owners to improve current conditions, the City's investment in new sidewalks will not reach their full potential and an opportunity to ease traffic problems could be missed. Restrictions affecting property access are included in the City's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. These regulatory tools provide minimum requirements for property access and can be improved by providing maximum limitations on size and number of access points per property or street frontage.

The City should revise current districts or create new ones within the zoning ordinance to allow for a greater mix of uses within designated "mixed-use" or "village center" areas. The Transit Overlay District is one tool that can be used to enhance the mix of uses in areas along Highway 31, since this is a designated regional transit corridor. A district with similar intent may be developed and used in other areas of the City such as Cahaba Heights. Other potential development areas such as along Cahaba River Road should be considered for mixed use development as well.

Another potential improvement within the City's zoning ordinance is reassessing the number of unique residential classifications. The City's Planning and Zoning Commission should look at the possibility of simplifying residential classifications in the future. The number of districts has grown in the past due to trends in housing

development types, such as the proliferation of garden homes, townhouses, and other higher density single-family residential classes. The City may wish to restructure existing residential districts by density rather than building types. This would mean allowing housing types of comparable density in the same district, regardless of architectural differences.

While reviewing potential improvements to residential zoning, the City may also develop and adopt a “Conservation Subdivision” district. Several prototypes of this zoning tool have been implemented in communities throughout the nation to foster appropriate residential development patterns in areas where there is a desire for maintaining open space and protecting sensitive environmental features. A Conservation Subdivision zoning district may be crafted to work similarly to PUD zoning. This zoning type encourages developers to design density and location of housing, limited non-residential uses, and open space areas in such a way as to protect desired natural features: wetlands, bodies of water, scenic slopes, etc.

Another important concept, identified in the Growth and Development Plan, is preserving a natural buffer along the Cahaba River and other waterways. This concept may be implemented within the zoning ordinance by creating an overlay district, which would set protective setbacks and limits on density and land uses within a specified distance of the area to be protected.

Landscape Ordinance

An ordinance, drafted prior to development of this plan, was originally developed by citizen volunteers to:

- provide restrictions on clear-cutting of trees to control soil erosion and stormwater run-off and to preserve the character of existing wooded areas
- establish definitions and standards for landscaping in commercial developments to provide visual and noise buffers, and reduce air pollution.

To date, the ordinance has not been officially adopted by the City. The City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission and landowners should review the draft ordinance, making improvements where desired. The ordinance may incorporate elements of the currently used design review process, making those guidelines enforceable. Including landscape provisions, will enhance the current draft ordinance and enable it to respond more comprehensively to issues of buffering. To appropriately adopt and enforce such an ordinance, the City should consider hiring a full- or part-time consultant with experience in urban forestry.

Revitalization Planning and Design Guidelines

Currently the City uses non-compulsory design guidelines for landscaping and site design within new developments. Because the City currently has no legal power to enforce such standards, the City uses these standards as guidelines in a review process for new development proposals. The City has had success using these standards, and developers have worked with the City in this process. State planning legislation enables the use of compulsory design requirements in two ways - within locally designated, historic preservation districts and designated

renewal/revitalization districts. No legislation is available to make these design standards enforceable throughout the City.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter IV, there is an area within Vestavia Hills prime for designation as a renewal/revitalization area - specifically Cahaba Heights. A revitalization plan for Cahaba Heights will aid the City in planning and funding infrastructure improvements, and coordinating those improvements with public and private design enhancements. In this instance, the City may draft an ordinance to define the revitalization district and develop a plan to address all aspects of revitalization. Given the impact this process will have on landowners and existing businesses, public involvement must be included throughout the effort. The City held a public planning and design workshop to initiate discussions with the community on revitalization in January 2004. The City should follow-up on this first step and continue working with residents and business owners to develop a Revitalization Plan.

Once the City has initiated community involvement and begun the planning process, both a plan and ordinance must be developed and adopted by the City, as mentioned above. Within the plan, "blighting conditions" must be documented. The plan should include some combination of policies, regulations, and public improvements to reduce blight and foster revitalization. In this instance, State law allows for a compulsory design review process as a revitalization tool in renewal areas. The design review process is instigated by an ordinance designating a review board and the guidelines to be implemented. A design review board issues Certificates of Appropriateness, which are necessary

for the City to issue building permits for development projects.

TOD Design Guidelines

Another possibility for implementing design guidelines is the use of the TOD zoning classification. This is intended for use along existing or planned transit routes such as along Highway 31. Since the process for using the TOD zoning classification allows a developer to "opt-in" to a TOD zoning, a development proposal must meet design requirements to benefit from the mixed-use, increased density, parking, and other incentives available through application of the TOD. These model guidelines are included in the Appendix to this document.

The City may also use TOD concepts in developing a new "village center" or "mixed-use" district within the zoning ordinance. In this way, any location where it is deemed appropriate by this Plan to include mixed uses, increased density, and pedestrian-accessibility, may be designated as a floating zone for applying the village center/mixed-use concepts. The requirements and incentives of such a district can closely parallel those of the TOD while not being limited to areas currently planned for transit improvements. A further benefit of this concept, is improving areas, such as Cahaba Heights and Rocky Ridge, in ways that will better support a potential City transit service.

Planned Unit Developments

A final method, which the City already currently uses, is the Planned Unit Development zoning classification. The City's PUD requires submittal of a masterplan describing the land uses, densities, arrangements, phasing, etc. before granting use of

the PUD zoning classification along with building criteria that can require developments to adhere to City-developed design guidelines. The PUD classification gives the City and developer an opportunity to jointly conceive the land uses, density, and character of large development areas.

Sign Code Ordinance

The City should review current outdoor advertising regulations to determine how they are affecting the development of the community. As illustrated in the community's goals and objectives, residents desire a safer and more attractive environment. Good sign regulations can help improve the visual quality of both developed and undeveloped areas throughout the community and improve safety. Sign clutter is not a unique issue to Vestavia Hills and can be a detriment to the appearance of the community and a distraction to drivers. Much of the existing outdoor advertising in Vestavia Hills's commercial areas is focused on the driver rather than the pedestrian, requiring larger signs sometimes off-premises. As the City works toward developing a more walkable, center-oriented environment, amendments to City sign regulations should reflect changes in the desires of the community and within the built environment.

Cahaba River Policies

Recognizing the importance of preserving the natural characteristics of the Cahaba River and protecting it as the primary source of drinking water for the community, the City should review the policy and regulatory elements of the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study upon its completion. These elements may be incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan and development codes through future amendments and ordinance additions. Nine overarching guidelines were

developed by the study's Citizen's Advisory Committee to steward future planning within the sensitive watershed area. These principles create a policy framework to guide municipalities toward improved cooperation to deal with the complex issues of development and preservation around the Cahaba River:

- Restore and protect water quality to ensure a clean, healthy, affordable water supply of drinking water for current and future generations,
- Improve aquatic habitats for the restoration and protection of biodiversity,
- Identify, protect or restore sustainable forests and natural open space that are crucial to watershed health and minimize their fragmentation,
- Make streams and lakes safe for fishing, swimming, and other recreational and educational uses and provide ample, river-sensitive public access,
- Restore and protect natural water flow and flood plains to minimize flooding damage and maintain sufficient flow for wildlife and human use,
- Develop land use plan incorporating watershed protection principles and encourage jurisdictional implementation,
- Revitalize and infill existing developed areas, minimize development in undeveloped areas, and minimize impervious surfaces in all areas,
- Foster partnerships among private entities and federal, state, and local governments to balance watershed preservation and economic health of the region,
- Consider watershed planning in the context of regional economic health, transportation, drinking water, and open space/forest preservation.

For the communities in the watershed to reap the greatest benefit from the recommendations and

strategies outlined in the soon-to-be-completed watershed study, regional cooperation, on-going public participation in development of regulations and multi-jurisdictional implementation of those regulations is paramount. In this respect, the City of Vestavia Hills will continue to work with neighboring municipal and county governments, landowners, and developers in protecting and stewarding the Cahaba River for its residents.

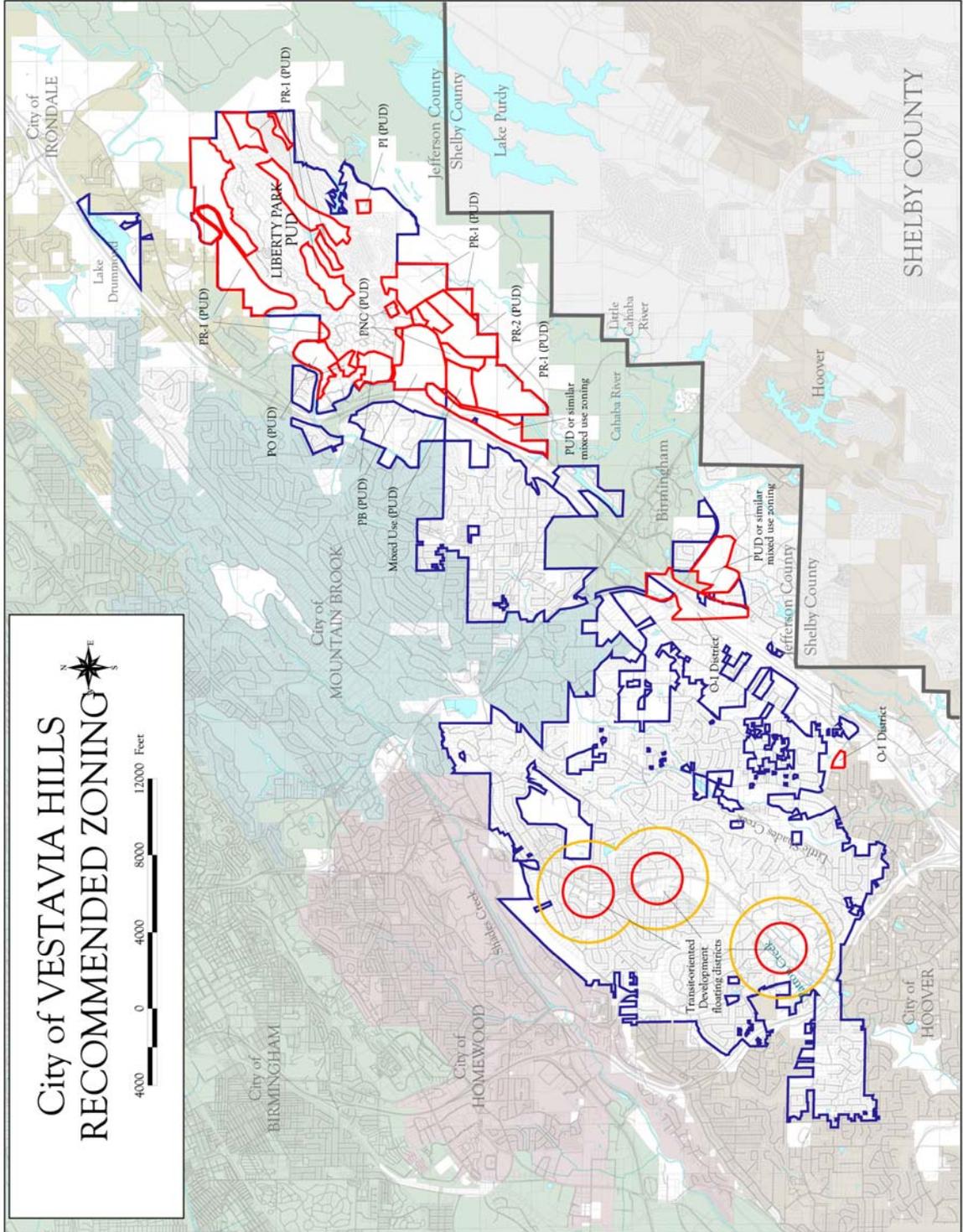
RECOMMENDED ZONING

This map highlights the zoning types recommended for future growth, focusing on potential annexations and large undeveloped areas. The zoning types recommended correspond with the projections in the Future Growth Concept and Future Land Use Maps.

Also, three nodes identified along Hwy. 31 are proposed for the implementation of Transit Overlay Districts (TODs) in existing developed areas within the City, to provide for higher-density, mixed commercial and residential uses.

**FIGURE 26:
RECOMMENDED ZONING**

- Transit-Oriented Development Floating Districts (1/4 and 1/2 mile walking radii)
- Recommended Zoning for future development / growth areas
- City of Vestavia Hills
- City of Birmingham
- City of Homewood
- City of Hoover
- City of Irondale
- City of Mountain Brook
- Shelby County
- County Line



COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

FACILITIES AND SERVICE PLANNING

Police Department

In 2003, the police department completed a departmental plan to identify manpower, equipment, and technology and space needs. Manpower needs are based on expected population growth and a suggested ratio of 2.92 officers per 1,000 residents. The department's Five/Ten-Year Plan also includes the following recommendations:

- computer / technology updates
- vehicle rotation policy
- Liberty Park substation
- expansion/remodeling of headquarters
- emergency lights/siren replacement
- holding cell at Cahaba Heights substation
- equipment upgrades/replacement, and
- creation of a Crisis Response Team.

The department's plan to expand its staff to meet population growth includes the addition of 16 officers in 2004, 10 in 2005, two in 2006 and 2007, and an additional officer each year for the remaining years covered by the plan. By 2015, this would bring the total number of sworn officers up to 103, from 65 in 2003. Technology upgrades (software, computers, and related equipment), fleet upgrades and rotation, additional personnel and training are constants, meaning these improvements will always be necessary for the police force to provide adequate protection to the growing community. With good planning and budget commitments for these recurring expenditures, the force can be kept up-to-date and well-staffed.

A significant problem that must be addressed quickly is the need for more space. The department has substantially outgrown the current headquarters at City Hall and has only temporary spaces in Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights. Both the City Administration and Police Department lack adequate room in the current municipal building on Highway 31. Given that both departments need more space, planning for each must be considered together. If the City's administrative offices move to a new location, this allows for the Police Department to expand into the rest of the current building, or vice versa. But if it is the City's intent to eventually develop a new municipal complex, will it be worthwhile to make temporary modifications to the current building? Given this question, it will be important to the planning and budgeting process for the City to determine if and when a new municipal complex can be built, and whether or not the Police Department will co-locate with City Hall again. Making a commitment on this issue will aid both the City and Police Department in determining what improvements must be made now to existing police headquarters and what improvements will be provided with the construction of a new municipal center.

Creation of more permanent spaces for police services in Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park should be planned and implemented soon. As described in the Police Department's plan, development of "storefront" police substations in these areas is highly recommended. This allows the City to buy or lease a vacant storefront within an existing commercial building to create a substation. This provides affordable options to the department, reduces vacancy, and increases safety in commercial areas. This same concept can be used in other parts of the

community, such as Rocky Ridge. As the community grows, this should be considered a convenient way to provide a well-distributed, consistent, and recognizable police force throughout the City.

Fire Department

The current plan for the Fire Department includes the following initiatives: increase staff, establish a purchase and replacement schedules for vehicles and equipment, establish a multi-jurisdictional training facility, continue training, and make improvements to the communications department.

Staff increases proposed in the departmental plan include the hiring of 14 employees in 2004 and 9 in 2005. These hirings would create an EMS Administrative position and a second Fire Inspector position. The remaining increases are earmarked to add staff to stations #1, #2, and #4. Vehicle and equipment schedules would help to reduce maintenance costs, improve resale value, and establish a consistent policy on replacement of aging trucks, pumper apparatus, cars, medical transport units, etc. EMT, haz-mit, firefighter, and emergency response training costs are also provided in the plan requiring between \$5,000 and \$8,000 per year.

The departmental plan also recommends construction and operation of a training facility through a partnership with area fire departments - Mountain Brook and Irondale. A training facility will further improve the department's rating and reduce area fire insurance costs. Since such a facility would not be used around the clock, it will be easy to coordinate usage between the partnering fire departments. With three fire departments sharing the cost of the one facility, this significantly reduces

the cost to each. The recommended budget for this builds up \$100,000 over a 3-year period and then allocates approximately \$5,000 per subsequent year for operational costs.

Plans for the communications department, which coordinates the City's emergency response for both the fire and police departments, identify space and equipment needs. A new dispatch area is suggested to be designed to be "storm-proof" and with enough room for additional staff. This recommendation also stresses the need for a back-up dispatch location in the event of an evacuation of the main dispatch area. In addition, the departmental plan also calls for new phone and radio equipment for the department.

Water and Sewer Service

Vestavia Hills' water service is provided by the Birmingham Water Works Board, a multi-jurisdictional utility serving many municipalities in the metro area. Likewise, the City's sewer service is provided by Jefferson County Environmental Services, which also serves multiple jurisdictions. Liberty Park, however, does manage a private sewer system within the Liberty Park PUD. All areas throughout the City are adequately served by the BWWB's water system. Though the sewer coverage is not as extensive, all areas are within close proximity to existing sewer lines. Those residential areas not connected to the sewer system utilize on-site septic systems and are of a low enough density to allow this.

To allow for further growth and the possibility of redevelopment in some of the City's commercial areas, improvements to the sewer system may become necessary in the future. Areas in Cahaba Heights and along Highway 31 should be carefully considered for sewer improvements. Though nearly all commercial developments in these areas are connected to the sewer system, the surrounding residential areas are not as often sewered. With the expectation of continued commercial development and "village" oriented redevelopment, there will likely be pressure to intensify uses on land surrounding current commercial areas. Whether future development is commercial, residential, or a mix of uses; it can be safely assumed that densities will increase. This will require sewer connections since individual septic systems will not support such increased densities.

The potential for future annexations and new development along Cahaba River Road will also require sewer system access. Much of the Cahaba River Road area is unsewered but has great potential for new development. A number of individual developments are connected, but the development of a sewer line along Cahaba River Road would be the most convenient way to ensure sewer access to any future developments.

The City should monitor water and sewer service throughout the community to ensure residential and commercial needs are resolved in a timely and well-coordinated manner. As problems inevitably arise due to the age or capacity of system lines, the City should report such issues to the respective service provider and collaboratively plan for improvements and repairs.

Parks and Recreation

With the development of the sports complex at Liberty Park, on-going improvements to existing parks, acquisition of the Cahaba Heights sports complex, and the planned development of Little Shades Creek Park; the City has been consistently increasing recreational amenities and opportunities within the community. In the recent past, there has been a strong emphasis on the development of sports-related recreational facilities. This is true in Vestavia Hills as well as many municipalities throughout the nation. These facilities provide a good mix of recreational activities, especially geared to the youth of the community. Now, Liberty Park, Cahaba Heights, and southeastern Vestavia Hills are each served by a sports and recreation facility managed by the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Provided in this section are improvements recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Department on these facilities.

The needs of the department vary depending on the area of town. The age of some of the facilities is a determining factor where replacement or renovations are concerned. At Wald Park, the tennis courts need resurfacing and light poles need replacing. The press box at Exchange Field needs to be renovated. With the addition of the bubble over the Wald Park pool for the winter months, and the locker room renovation; the pumps, filters, and area that houses them need to be updated.

At Liberty Park, the maintenance building needs running water, and the youth softball fields need protective netting around the concession area. New equipment is needed to maintain the athletic fields at Liberty Park.

With the addition of the Cahaba Heights population and athletic complex, an additional program coordinator and athletic coordinator are needed to serve the public. Additional personnel are needed in the area of maintenance as well. The sports complex is also in need of proposed upgrades. Byrd Park is in the process of being upgraded. The development of land around the Little Shades Creek will allow for multi-purpose recreational uses. A new indoor facility that would have multipurpose court space, exercise space, and meeting space is a short-term need with a long-term cost associated, but the benefit of a new facility would be tremendous.

As can be seen from the Goals and Objectives developed in community meetings, residents have a growing interest in more neighborhood-oriented planning. Given this focus, the City and its Parks and Recreation Department should consider the development of neighborhood parks, similar to that of Shallowford Park. These amenities are much smaller in scale and serve a more focused area than the larger sports-centered complexes. The City should develop a Neighborhood Park Plan to identify possible sites within or adjacent to existing neighborhoods.

In locating potential park properties, safe and convenient pedestrian-access should be an important consideration. This can be coordinated with future phases of the Walkways Masterplan to get the largest impact out of both endeavors. Amenities in these parks should be passive in nature to allow for a variety of uses and activities. Physical improvements can be very modest in scope and should include some combination of the following elements: lighting, seating, picnic areas, garbage receptacles, and some landscaping.

An opportunity the City has to increase parks and recreational space may also provide another benefit to residents. Many residential areas throughout Jefferson County were originally developed in areas now designated as floodplains. Developments in these low-lying areas have been damaged in the past by flooding. Currently, Jefferson County is implementing a program to buy residences built in floodplains. With coordination between the City of Vestavia Hills and the County, this program may help to move residents out of these flood-prone areas and reuse them for recreational purposes. Depending on the severity of the flood hazard at particular locations, flood retention improvements may be necessary to allow for the safe use of these sites even for park spaces. Such improvements must be carefully considered as re-grading and other changes to topography could result in shifting the floodplain to previously “dry” areas or cause expansion of existing flood areas downstream.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Planning for the community's educational facilities is led by the Vestavia Hills Board of Education. The City, through this plan, shall provide all needed support to the Board of Education and residents in preserving and building on the high-quality educational system serving the community's children. The Vestavia Hills Board of Education has developed a strategic plan to govern future educational investments and improvements. Following is their mission statement:

The mission of the Vestavia Hills Schools System, the community's greatest asset, is to provide all students the opportunity to become life long learners and productive contributors to society through an educational system characterized by a safe and nurturing environment; richly diverse nationally recognized curricular and co-curricular studies; quality, innovative instruction; appropriate stewardship; strong parental and community support; and a commitment to excellence in developing individual potential and performance to its highest level.

The Strategic Plan also identifies priorities and a timeline for their 2003-2007 five-year plan. These elements are based on the school system's overall strategies to:

- create and maintain a safe, clean, and orderly environment within state-of-the-art facilities that meet the needs of our students;
- provide all students with an appropriate, quality, challenging curriculum that includes innovative and proven instructional strategies;
- provide a broad and rich co-curriculum that

meets the physical, emotional, and social needs of all students;

- develop a comprehensive long-range financial plan to support the objectives of our system;
- actively recruit and retain highly motivated, innovative, quality personnel;
- promote positive, open effective communication among all stakeholders that fosters a quality partnership; and
- obtain and integrate state-of-the-art technology to optimize student learning and aid in administrative services.

The Vestavia Hills Board of Education and school staffs identified the following needs to improve service levels and accommodate growth in city schools:

Vestavia Hills Elementary School East

- 4-6 additional classrooms
- interior and exterior renovations

Vestavia Hills Elementary School Central

- larger auditorium and lunchroom
- additional parking
- exterior and interior renovations
- sewer line improvement

Vestavia Hills Elementary School West

- exterior and interior renovations

Cahaba Heights Elementary School

- new gymnasium
- interior and exterior renovations
- additional classroom space
- technology upgrades

Liberty Park Elementary School

- additional classroom space will be needed in coming years

Pizitz Middle School

- interior and exterior renovations
- new HVAC
- future expansion for classroom space, lunchroom, and gym/auditorium

Vestavia Hills High School

- 13 new classrooms and additional practice fields
- interior renovations
- additional stadium seating and track
- additional parking

School Facility Growth

In general, consistent growth throughout the City calls for expansion of several current school facilities. The City School System has made the commitment to build an additional middle school. Demographic projections and other information are included within this plan to support the efforts of the Board of Education in planning a new middle school. Land adjacent to the Liberty Park Elementary School has been retained by the Liberty Park Joint Venture for the future development of this facility.

With the high school close to capacity currently, long-term pressures from continued population growth will require the community to make important decisions about how the school system accommodates future demand. Currently there are over 1,500 high-school age children within the City. According to population projections that number may increase to 2,100 in the next twenty years. Given current growth limitations, it may be assumed that the City's high school student population will peak within the next twenty years. Education is one of the most important aspects of government service

to the community, and this is especially true in Vestavia Hills. The City should support the Board of Education in future efforts to resolve capacity concerns by examining how other communities have handled these issues and through a constant, open dialogue with residents.

Civic Center

As a result of the already scheduled renovation of the main floor area, a new craft area needs to be designed with adequate ventilation. The existing clay area has been using a simple “box” fan to ventilate potentially toxic fumes as well as the excessive heat from the kiln. While the Vestavia Hills Room continues to be a desirable rental property for the Civic Center, the restrooms for that area are in poor condition. Proposed increased usage will require additional staff to maintain existing standards. The administrative office areas are inadequate and need to be upgraded to a more professional level including a centralized, staffed reception area. A more formal space is needed where large groups (300 or more) can hold dinners and meetings.

The current structure is not “user friendly”. Many of the areas are difficult to access for the handicapped. The Civic Center administration would also like to develop a more “teen friendly” area with low-impact recreation, a TV room, and a snack area. Exercise equipment within the Civic Center also needs to be upgraded.

New Merkle House

The New Merkle House in Cahaba Heights now serves as an important community center for senior citizens, providing space for a variety of community functions. Current needs for the Merkle House, as identified earlier in this document, include better exterior lighting, improved handicap accessibility on the exterior and interior, more storage space, and some interior improvements.

Municipal Center

Located on the northern end of Highway 31, the existing Municipal Center houses both the city hall and police department. The administration estimates that it needs at least 40,000 sq. ft. to adequately house existing and proposed services. The annexation of Cahaba Heights mandates growth, but there is no room for expansion in the current location. Vestavia Hills must address the need for a new City Hall complex in the very near future. One immediate need that can be addressed with some renovation to the existing structure is the shortage of storage space. The City has identified about 5,000 sq. ft. of space that can be converted for mandated records storage. Future relocation of the City Hall would allow consideration of a more centralized location as well as planning for expansion and coordination with other civic facilities.

Vestavia Hills Public Library

The Vestavia Hills Public Library building, also located on Highway 31, is quickly becoming insufficient to hold the City's library facilities. The building was retrofitted to house the library, and due to the unique structural requirements to bear the weight load of books, only a portion of the existing building is capable of bearing stacks. As a result, those areas are cramped and poorly illuminated. A significant number of books are in storage because there is inadequate stacking space. The Library's computer infrastructure is not designed to accommodate expanded internet access. New cables must be installed to provide connections for new computer stations.

Improved facilities are needed to meet the demands of an ever-growing population base in Vestavia Hills. The existing facility does have some possibility to stay in the present location and still grow. The undeveloped property adjacent to the Library offers potential for expansion. Additions to the library are also possible to its rear. In its current site, though, accessibility is problematic. The library is accessed only from a driveway off of Highway 31. If kept in this location, improvements should be considered to provide additional vehicular and pedestrian entrances from the side or rear of the site, making access more convenient to surrounding neighborhoods.

Other long-term issues, such as the potential to open branch locations in Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park, may be addressed through a long-term facilities plan. Future plans for library services are to be initiated with the hiring of a professional library consultant to assess current facilities and needs and hold open forums with the public. Performing this study is a next step for the Library Board, using funds raised by the Library Foundation. It is the Library Board's current intent to upgrade the current library as a central facility, while planning for the possibility of branch locations. The upcoming study is expected to provide an effective strategy for attaining community goals for library services. This study should also identify where additional staff may be needed to better serve the size of the community and meet state and national standards.

Near-term recommendations would be to upgrade computer services, make drop off locations available in Liberty Park and Cahaba Heights, and enhance the library's collection to more adequately reflect the changing demographics of the community. Hopes

for the development of a computer-training center within the library are contingent on additional space to accommodate such a service.

Future Expansion of Municipal Facilities

When asked about plans for the next several years, officials from the Municipal Center, the Library, and Civic Center were in agreement on several points. All indicated a need for additional space, more staff, equipment upgrades, and more parking. An important issue raised was the location of community facilities. Commercial activity, so vital to the very existence of the City, has all of the civic buildings "boxed in" - little room for expansion, inadequate meeting space, insufficient parking, and difficult accessibility. An important long-range concept that should be considered in planning future facilities is the benefit of co-locating several facilities into one central location.

In summary, while the Civic Center, Municipal Center, and Library may have been adequate thirty years ago, they no longer meet the needs of today's Vestavia Hills. Renovations, while possible, are only a short-term solution and may postpone the inevitable. The City needs to consider alternative solutions that can answer residents' cry for "more" - more services, more accessibility, more parking, and more cooperation. The City should begin examining the possibility of building a central civic facility so that more of Vestavia Hills' residents would have the opportunity to interact and participate in the life of the city.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

This Comprehensive Plan has identified numerous capital public improvement projects that must be incorporated into the overall plan. These public improvements are critical to the growth and welfare of the city. When combined with projected private investment in the city, these projects will provide infrastructure and public facilities that will enhance livability and growth, provide jobs, strengthen the city's tax base and provide an environment that is conducive to planned development.

Capital improvements relate to the City's spending on infrastructure and facilities. Improvements associated with new equipment and personnel growth are not addressed here. Each City department develops its own five (5) and ten (10) year capital program, which is updated annually and included in each fiscal year budget. Also, projects that are controlled and funded by the Board of Education are not included in this list. Information on school facility renovation and construction projects would be included in future planning documents of the Board of Education.

In addition to the city's General Fund there are numerous State and Federal sources that can provide funding for infrastructure and facility capital improvements. These include Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant funds, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Transportation Enhancement Funds, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program (CMAQ), Surface Transportation Program, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and Vestavia Hills City General Obligation and/or Revenue Bonds.

Potential projects were presented in public forums during the review of this document. Residents were asked to complete a survey form to aid the City in establishing priorities for these projects. The results of the priorities survey were tabulated and are included in the Appendix to this document as a reference for the City and its residents. The survey had a strong response from residents who attended Plan review meetings. Though this accounts for a small percent of the population, these results were important to completing this process. Respondents placed highest importance on Neighborhood Parks, improvements in Cahaba Heights, a future Green Valley/Rocky Ridge Road interchange, and continued pedestrian improvements. The City, as it implements this Plan, should continue to engage residents in establishing priorities for these projects to best represent the desires of the community.

The improvements identified in this plan are listed in table form. These tables list the improvements by the areas in the community to which they relate: Highway 31, Columbiana Road, Rocky Ridge, and Cahaba Heights. Several of the projects included in this section include a plan, design or study phase. This represents the work necessary to adequately plan, budget, and assess the feasibility on individual projects. As the City moves forward with project planning, projects and the data that is collected during project studies should be incorporated into the City's Capital Improvements Program.

Table 17A: CITYWIDE Improvements		
Project Description	Cost	Priority
Walkways Masterplan - implementation of future phases		
Civic Center - renovation or potential relocation		
Local Transit System - feasibility study/business plan Local Transit System - operational and capital costs	\$60,000	
Library - expansion or potential relocation		
Gateway Beautification- Highway 31, Columbiana, Acton Road, Cahaba Heights, Rocky Ridge Road		
Neighborhood Parks - Plan (Citywide) Neighborhood Parks - construction (Citywide)		

Table 17B: HIGHWAY 31 Improvements		
Project Description	Cost	Priority
Pedestrian Tunnel - Construction		
Revitalization Plan -develop BID	\$30,000-50,000	
Streetscape / Access Management Plan - plan and engineering Streetscape / Access Management - construction		
Patton Creek Stormwater Retention System - plan and engineering Patton Creek Stormwater Retention System - construction		

Table 17C: CAHABA HEIGHTS Improvements		
Project Description	Cost	Priority
Revitalization Plan - develop BID	\$30,000 - 50,000	
Infrastructure Improvements - plan and engineering Infrastructure Improvements - construction		
Urban Interchange at Green Valley and Hwy 280 - feasibility study	\$200,000 -250,000	

Table 17D: COLUMBIANA ROAD Improvements		
Project Description	Cost	Priority
Beautification Plan - plan and engineering Beautification Plan - construction		

Table 17E: ROCKY RIDGE Improvements		
Project Description	Cost	Priority
Little Shades Creek Greenway - construction		
Little Shades Creek Park - construction		
Signage Improvements (between Hwy 31 and Rocky Ridge) - design and installation		

NOTE: The tables on this page are preliminary in nature only. Costs, priorities, timeframes, and funding sources are to be assigned in an on-going process as goals and work extents are defined on a project-specific basis. Costs, as available during production of this document, have been included where appropriate.

Chapter V: CONCLUSION

The following section summarizes the goals and recommendations for the future growth of the community and lists the policies and actions the City shall initiate toward the fulfillment of the vision described in this plan.

GOALS

- Maintain a quality residential environment
- Create an aesthetically pleasing community
- Provide quality public facilities and services
- Promote orderly growth
- Increase connectivity throughout the community

The intents of these goals are further defined by the objectives listed with them in Chapter II. These goals and objectives are the framework upon which city growth policies are to be based. All decisions by the City government and its planning system shall support the achievement of these goals throughout the tenure of this plan. Below are recommended policies that are evolved from these community goals and their objectives. These policies shall be endorsed by the adoption of this plan.

LAND USE POLICIES

- Existing residential areas shall be preserved and their revitalization encouraged as necessary
- New residential areas shall be safe, well-designed, attractive, and compatible with their surroundings, both natural and man-made
- Commercial areas shall be convenient to residential areas while avoiding inappropriate encroachment
- Encroachment of incompatible uses shall be avoided
- Desirable transitions in land use shall be

accomplished through incremental changes in density and activity, scale and design, and through natural and man-made buffers as appropriate

- Commercial areas shall be attractive and well-maintained
- Parks and a recreational areas shall be developed in locations convenient to neighborhoods throughout the community
- Dense, mixed-use development shall be encouraged along future transit nodes
- Public and semi-public institutional uses shall be encouraged in appropriate locations throughout the city to conveniently serve residents

TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

- Additions to the city's street network shall increase connectivity between neighborhoods, commercial areas, schools, parks, and institutions
- Sidewalks, greenways, and bicycle paths shall be developed to provide safe, convenient access from neighborhoods to commercial areas, schools, parks, and institutions
- Connections between southern Vestavia Hills, Cahaba Heights, and Liberty Park shall be improved
- Regional and local transit initiatives shall be supported to provide alternate modes of travel for residents and workers
- Commercial areas shall be safely walkable
- Land use and transportation planning shall be strongly integrated in future developments

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

- Green spaces shall be preserved in future residential developments
- Scenic, natural features, including forested ridges, vistas, and waterways shall be maintained through preservation and limitations on development as appropriate
- The water quality of the Cahaba River shall be protected through best-development practices and limitations on development as appropriate

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES POLICIES

- Educational and parks and recreation facilities shall be provided equally throughout the community
- A variety of cultural, educational, and recreational amenities shall be provided to residents
- Expansion of community services will be planned regularly to keep pace with the growth of the city
- Community facilities shall be attractive, well-maintained, and shall be upgraded regularly to meet the needs of residents
- New community facilities shall be developed as necessary and shall be convenient to neighborhoods
- Annexations and new development shall be considered against the capacity of City services
- Information on City services, facilities, policies, and ordinances shall be made accessible to residents

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Many of these policies will be directly implemented through specific planning processes and public improvements described in the Future Growth and Development Plan. These actions are summarized below according to the areas to which they relate:

HIGHWAY 31 The main commercial corridor of southern Vestavia Hills, consisting of three unique commercial districts, shall be improved through:

- A Commercial Revitalization Plan, for the southern and central commercial districts leading to or involving:
 - creation of a Business Improvement District (BID)
 - Access Management Plan for the commercial areas near I-65
 - implementation of design guidelines and mandatory design review
- Future phases of the Walkways Masterplan
- Gateway improvements at I-65
- Adoption of a Transit-Overlay District in Zoning Ordinance:
 - to increase and diversify development around transit nodes
 - as a "floating" zone, with incentives for developers to opt-in
- Develop stormwater detention system along Patton Creek to mitigate flooding issues and allow for future development

CAHABA HEIGHTS The City's recently annexed village shall be improved through:

- A Community Revitalization Plan to include:
 - creation of a Business Improvement District (BID) focused on three commercial nodes
 - implementation of design review process and guidelines similar to TOD
 - phasing of infrastructure improvements throughout the area
- Future phases of the Walkways Masterplan
- Transportation improvements in and around Cahaba Heights that will increase city-wide connectivity
- Support of appropriate, "green" development adjacent to the Cahaba River

COLUMBIANA ROAD Increased, sustainable commercial development shall be encouraged through:

- A Corridor Beautification Plan to include:
 - reduction of redundant travel lanes to allow landscaped median
 - access management improvements
 - pedestrian improvements connected into Walkways Masterplan projects
- Commercial zoning focused on office uses and neighborhood retail and services

ROCKY RIDGE ROAD The City's original mixed use village shall be improved through:

- Zoning that encourages:
 - zero-lot line commercial development that allows greatest land efficiency
 - a mix and density of uses appropriate to the village concept - small offices, neighborhood retail and services, upper-story residential, etc.
- Increased directional signage leading to and from the village
- Future phases of the Walkways Masterplan
- Development of Little Shades Creek Park
- Street improvements to include widening, three-laning, and access management policies that encourage:
 - shared entrances and shared parking areas,
 - safe, continuous sidewalks, and
 - smooth traffic flow along Rocky Ridge Road

ACTON ROAD Consisting of incorporated and unincorporated areas, the area shall be improved through:

- Incorporation of potential commercial areas
- Zoning that encourages appropriate uses and comfortable transitions into adjacent residential neighborhoods
- City gateway improvements at I-459

CAHABA RIVER ROAD This area, experiencing growth pressure, is partially unincorporated. With great potential for village development, it shall be improved through:

- Incorporation of developable properties
- Land use planning and zoning that encourages coordinated village-type development, from Acton Road eastward, with:
 - office, retail, and services
 - public open space
 - and walkability
- Revitalization or redevelopment of subdivision south of Colonnade
- Zoning for a mix of office and residential uses as appropriate, west of I-459

LIBERTY PARK The City's extensive PUD area is planned and developed by Liberty Park JOINT VENTURE, which the City shall collaborate with, on improvements to:

- Increase transportation access to the area
- Provide convenient community services and facilities to residents
- Support appropriate, "green" development adjacent to the Cahaba River

COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIES

The City shall encourage progressive, quality commercial areas and neighborhoods; on-going community revitalization; preservation of valued natural areas; and increased connectivity throughout the community with an emphasis on vehicular, pedestrian, and transit access. Citywide, comprehensive strategies shall reinforce area-specific plans and improvements through:

- Implementation of the Regional Walkways Masterplan and continued expansion over time
- Development of neighborhood parks in coordination with the Regional Walkways Masterplan
- Planning and support of a grade-separated interchange at Green Valley Rd. and Hwy. 280
- Improvements to and extensions of the existing road network connecting Cahaba Heights and Liberty Park
- Support of improved interstate access to Liberty Park
- Design improvements to City gateways
- Progressive improvements to land use and development codes and guidelines
- Development of a local transit shuttle connecting southern Vestavia Hills, Cahaba Heights, other community nodes as desirable
- Support of regional transit initiatives
- Annexation of unincorporated areas that offer the potential for quality development and that can be well-integrated in the community
- Maintaining a sound, fiscal budget that allows for the continual upgrade of community services and facilities

CONCLUSION

Through the implementation of the concepts, policies, and actions described in this plan, the City of Vestavia Hills will strive toward the accomplishment of the community's vision and goals. Periodic reviews of the Plan should document change within the City and evaluate the effectiveness of policies, strategies, and concepts within the Comprehensive Plan against the changes occurring within the City. Similarly, the development of area-specific plans by the City shall amend this document and become a part of it, ensuring its continued use. Development codes shall also keep pace with the evolution of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed and updated once every five years to keep the document vital and up-to-date. It will be essential to keep information on existing conditions and projected land use current, by incorporating new information on annexations, developments, redevelopments, and community facilities. Keeping plan information current will help the City to assess the policies and strategies within the Plan and their effectiveness. As changes are needed within the Plan, they may be incorporated through adoption of resolutions by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council. Changes to the Comprehensive Plan shall always be conducted in a process open to residents and property owners. Periodic review and incorporation of new information, policies, and planning strategies will also enable the City to assess its progress in the implementation of the Plan.

As the City moves forward with the recommended planning efforts described within this Plan, the development of area-specific plans for commercial and/or residential revitalization, access management,

and infrastructure improvements shall also be incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan through amendment resolutions by the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council. Strong public participation is both essential and beneficial to the development of area-specific plans, to ensure City efforts are responding appropriately to the expectations of the community.

Changes to and enforcement of development codes shall likewise be evaluated on an on-going basis. Development codes - zoning (land use, parking, and sign regulations), subdivision regulations, and design guidelines - are tools for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. As the Plan evolves over time, the tools may also need to change. Amending regulations shall be open to the public and shall be incorporated through appropriate ordinances by the City.

With strong leadership, dedicated to the needs and desires of the community, and sound, progressive growth principles, the City of Vestavia Hills shall set a high standard for community development, natural preservation, and local governance. As it has been in the past, so it will be in the future - the City of Vestavia Hills shall be a comfortable and attractive place to live, learn, work, and play.