



# SOUTHSIDE NEXT

Strategic Master Plan

DRAFT

Southside, AL  
February 2023

Our mission is to provide exceptional public services to residents, businesses, and guests so they may experience a safe, healthy, and thriving community.

City Mission Statement

SOUTHSIDE  
**NEXT**

Strategic Master Plan



**“The  
people of  
Southside  
make the  
community  
great.”**

SOUTHSIDE  
CITY HALL





# Acknowledgments

## Citizens of Southside

The City of Southside is grateful for the hundreds of citizens and visitors that assisted in this process by taking the time to fill out and submit surveys, and attend public meetings.

### Mayor

Dana Snyder

### City Council

Keith Clay

John Hatley

Joseph Hutchins

Don Steward

Genny Ball

### Consultant

Goodwyn Mills Cawood

### Steering Committee

Brian Winningham

Elizabeth Mozley

Chiquita Seals Steward

Jason Patty

Michele Atkins

Madison Moore

Chad Whittington

Lillie Teague

Daniel Strange

Malcolm Howard

Chad Ellis

Nickie Pylant

Donald Packer

Ed Thatcher

Bill Steinka

# Table of Contents

Letter from the Mayor .....	7
Introduction.....	8
Plan Process.....	10
Plan Vision .....	11
Plan Principles .....	12
Plan Themes .....	13
Community Engagement.....	14
Action Plan .....	17
Parks & Recreation .....	18
Transportation & Mobility.....	30
Economic Development.....	46
Land Use.....	58
Action Matrix.....	76
Appendix.....	102

# Letter from the Mayor



As Mayor of Southside, I am pleased to present this forward-thinking plan that is responsible for guiding strategic improvement in the city. We have a proud history as a farming community. Our strength, hard work, and determination have shaped our city into what it is today. We've seen Southside grow at a steady pace for the past 20 years. Our goal is to embrace this success while proactively holding on to our core community values.

The Strategic Plan is our city's way of planting the seeds for successful growth in the future. Our work is sustaining our growing business community, providing physical places for the community, honoring our history and natural assets, shaping a city where people can walk to parks and shops, and ensuring the safety of our diverse community. In this process we have collaborated to develop a strategy that creates opportunities for growth and economy, while still supporting our small-town values. The Strategic Plan is a community-inspired and community-driven plan, and is a tangible result of our collaboration. The Strategic Plan's foundation is built on input from residents and business owners that was gathered to develop our community's Southside NEXT Plan, and outlines the steps needed to get us there. During the 18-month process, we worked with over 1,000 residents, employees, business owners, community partners, and stakeholders. Thank you to everyone who participated—for the insight provided by the Steering Committee, and all the valuable feedback provided by the members of our community. The next step will be putting our Plan into action, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that Southside continues to be a great place to live, work, and visit for this generation and every generation to come. Together, we're growing great things.

Sincerely,  
Mayor Dana Snyder

# Introduction



Entry signage to the city.



Welcome to Southside NEXT, a Strategic Plan for the future of Southside. This document establishes a long-range vision for how the city should develop over the next 15 to 20 years based on the values and input of the community and outlines specific strategies to make that vision a reality. Southside NEXT covers a variety of critical topics from economic development and land use to transportation and recreation. It is structured around a core set of basic development principles that informs its recommendations and shapes the vision articulated by Southside's residents.

Over the past 20 years, the City of Southside has experienced substantial growth, increasing in population by 34% from 2000 to 2020. As the city is expected to continue on this upward growth trajectory, it is imperative to plan proactively so that future growth is well managed instead of haphazard. This will ensure that the coming changes in Southside are positive and ultimately benefit everyone in the community. That is the purpose of this plan. With the quality of life and wellbeing of all Southsiders at the forefront of this plan, Southside NEXT will be used as a decision-making framework by local authorities and policymakers to set future policy and funding priorities.



From its inception to its formal adoption, this plan is the result of a meticulous and carefully coordinated process that spanned 18 months of research, design, community feedback, and revisions. With the combined expertise of consultants, local leaders, and the general public, we have charted this path to greater prosperity and vitality for Southside. The city must now move boldly to secure this future for the Southsiders of today and those of tomorrow.

# Plan Process

Southside NEXT is a priority-based plan that focuses on implementing priorities identified by the community during the planning process. The process involves creating a work plan for the city and provides guidance to local officials in how to implement the identified priorities. The plan includes broad development goals with specific associated actions and strategies to achieve those goals. Individual plan elements are tied to municipal budgeting and are based on priorities that reflect the community's involvement and feedback throughout the process.

This type of plan is focused on more specific needs and shorter term action strategies. The plan focuses on providing a step-by-step implementation strategy developed for the unique context of the community. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to define immediate steps to deliver on a comprehensive array of needed community improvements.



## Phase 1: Research

The first phase is defined by research. This involves data collection and the analysis of the existing trends and conditions that define the context of the overall planning initiative.

## Phase 2: Engagement

The second phase is focused on engagement. One of the most important phases of the planning process, public engagement allows for input from the local community. This is achieved through several different methods. Community meetings, workshops, focus groups, and open houses are a few ways in which the public was able to participate in the process.

## Phase 3: Strategy Development

In the third phase, the plan development phase, the data and input from Phases 1 and 2 are prioritized and organized. The strategic focus areas of the plan are then developed and an implementation strategy is defined.

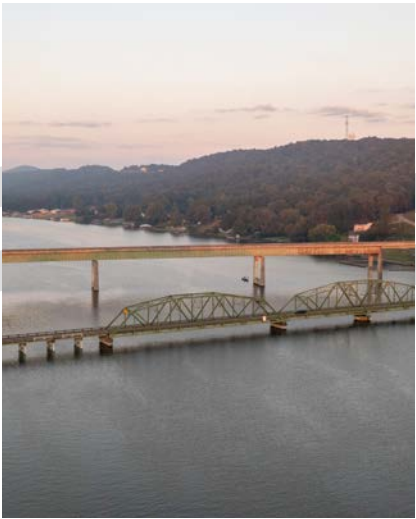
## Phase 4: Action

The final phase is characterized by a transition from planning to action. The momentum gained in the process is captured in the implementation plan so that the locality can begin working on specific projects.

# Plan Vision

The following vision was crafted with the input of Southside residents as a shared statement of values and an ideal for how the community should develop. The primary purpose of this Strategic Plan is to make this vision a reality. Each of the development goals identified in this plan is tailored toward fulfilling an aspect of this community vision.

**“We want Southside to be a better connected and river-oriented community with an active town center, a strong economy, and recreational opportunities that support the needs of all residents.”**



# Plan Principles

Sustainable development is one of the foundational principles of any planning initiative. The following principles are statements of intent that establish a framework for how sustainable development can be achieved. They set an underlying foundation for the development of this plan and serve as accountability standards for its responsible implementation.



## Livable Built Environment

Ensure that all elements of the built environment, including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure, work together to provide places for living, working, and recreation, with a high quality of life.



## Preserve Natural Assets

Ensure that the contributions of natural resources to human well-being are explicitly recognized and valued and that maintaining their health is a primary objective.



## Resilient Economy

Ensure that the community is prepared for a changing economy and is proactively pursuing a resilient local economic strategy that is focused on the needs and quality of life of the community.



## Interwoven Equity

Ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups.



## Healthy Community

Ensure that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for healthy foods, physical activity, access to recreation, health care, environmental justice, and safe neighborhoods.



## Responsible Regionalism

Ensure that all local proposals account for, connect with, and support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions and the surrounding region.

# Plan Themes

City plans are holistic in nature, taking a broad look at how a variety of topics work in concert to achieve community goals. The following plan themes delineate subject areas in which related topics and development goals are organized. Each theme serves as a major chapter in the structure of this document. The themes are divided into specific goals, which filter into actions and implementation strategies.

Alabama law requires a variety of topics in a master plan, including “the harmonious development of the municipality and its environs, health, safety, prosperity, economy, adequate provisions for traffic, population distribution, good civic design, efficient use of public funds”, etc. The statute affords broad flexibility in how these plans are written, and the required elements have been grouped as follows.



## Parks & Recreation

Parks and recreation are a vital component of a community’s success and vitality. Parks provide beauty, respite, and play, while ultimately providing a city with a well-rounded living experience. A robust parks and recreation system is increasingly considered one of the most important factors in determining a city’s desirability and overall quality of life. Parks and trails are a growing demand among younger generations in selecting the places they choose to live and work.



## Transportation & Mobility

A quality transportation system is essential to the functionality, safety, aesthetics, and general prosperity of a community. It connects people and businesses to community amenities and economic opportunity, while linking the city itself to a broader regional ecosystem. The way in which transportation systems are structured greatly impact the health, happiness, beauty, and prosperity of the community as a whole.



## Economic Development

Economic development is the sustained, concerted actions of policy makers and communities that promote the standard of living and economic health of a specific area. The economy plays a key role in the quality of life within the city. A strong economy provides economic opportunities to all citizens through the creation of jobs and business opportunities and by creating a tax base that provides for schools, police, fire protection, parks, and other community facilities, services, and amenities.



## Land Use

Land is at its core a city’s most valuable asset. Land use is more than just guidance for development patterns within the city. It also shapes many of the community’s shared values. The planned and orderly development of land reflects shared beliefs and priorities, in terms of the opportunities it creates for where people can live, work, and congregate within city limits. It establishes the planned scale and intensity of neighborhoods and impacts the overall ability of the community to adapt to future growth and development.

# Community Engagement

City plans are created for the city, by the city. To ensure that a plan for the future addresses the unique wants and needs of the community, it is imperative that its citizens are empowered to actively shape the plan's development. Community engagement occurred throughout the entirety of the Southside NEXT planning process. The people of Southside contributed in large numbers to the plan and had a significant impact in its development through a variety of methods outlined below.

## Public Survey

The most expansive method of engagement was an online community survey completed by 974 individuals. The survey gathered input from residents on every topic included in the plan and the feedback it gathered served as a primary tool in shaping the goals of the plan.

## Community Meetings

Multiple public meetings were held in the city to share updates on the plan and incorporate revisions based on public input. This included a workshop with Southside High School students to get specific input from local youth.



Meeting with students at Southside High School

## Steering Committee

A steering committee made of members from important groups in the community met with planning consultants at regular intervals during the process to advise the direction of the plan based on their extensive local expertise.



Residents reviewing plan material at the open house meeting

## Draft Review

Prior to the plan's formal adoption, a review period was put in place to allow the community and city leadership to assess and comment on the final version of the plan.

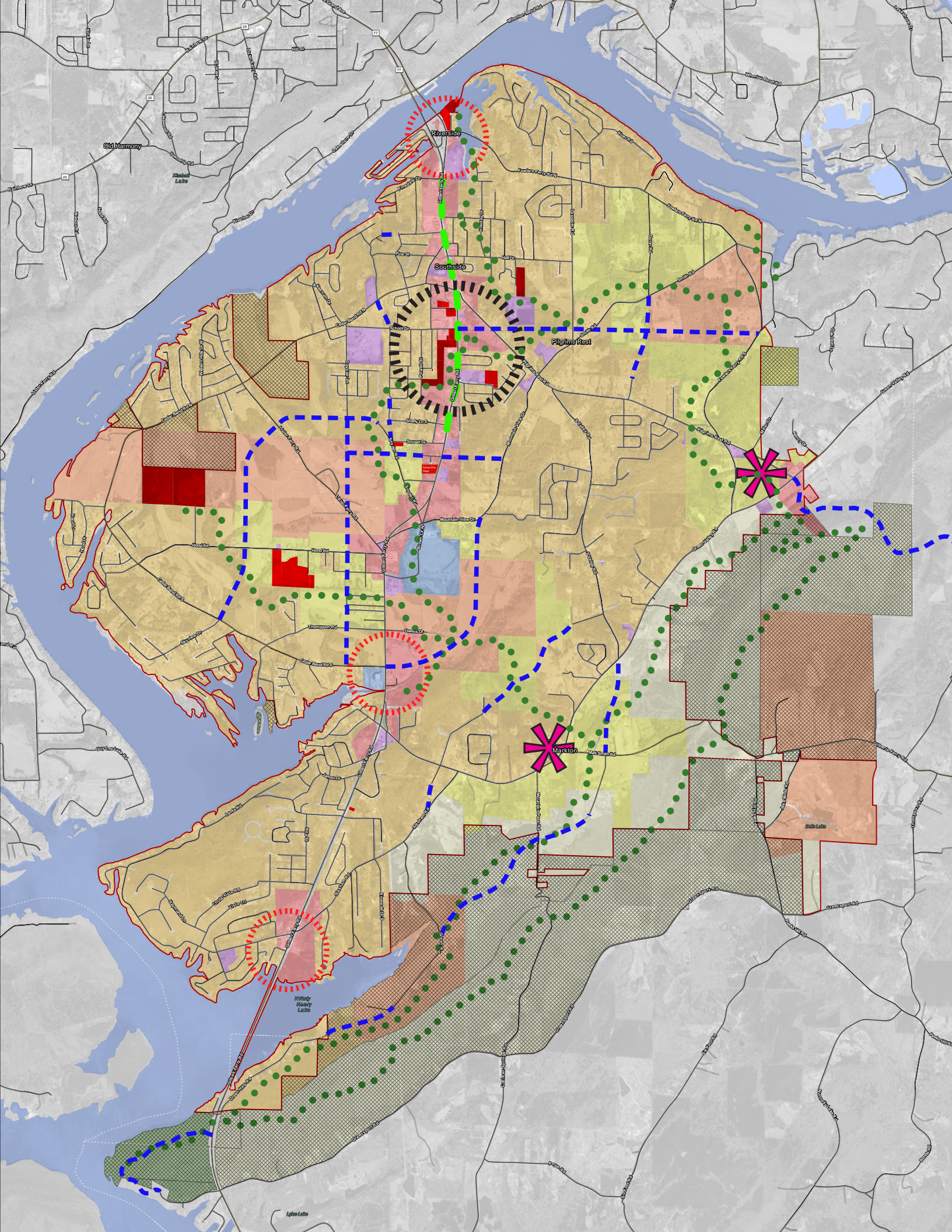
**1000+**

**Total People Involved**

**5**

**Stakeholder  
& Public  
Meetings**





# Action Plan

## **Parks & Recreation**

- Expand public access opportunities to the Coosa River
- Promote public land and trails on the city's and region's mountains and ridges
- Improve and diversify existing city park recreational programming
- Implement new park opportunities
- Develop trails to connect citizens to community amenities
- Proactively pursue park and trail grant funding
- Match the growth of the city with the growth of recreational quality and access

## **Transportation & Mobility**

- Improve connectivity and access to walking and biking throughout the city
- Implement consistent road designs based on road types throughout the city
- Strategically implement on-road trail priorities
- Standardize Road Design
- Implement safety and aesthetic improvements on Highway 77
- Advocate and implement large-scale Highway 77 improvements

## **Economic Development**

- Create the opportunity for a Town Center development in the City Hall/Community Center area
- Implement consistent city gateway and wayfinding signage
- Strategically utilize murals and other forms of public art in gateway areas and new development areas
- Proactively support agritourism as an economic development model for the city
- Continue developing community events that highlight the assets and culture of Southside
- Prioritize catalyst economic development initiatives for the city

## **Land Use**

- Ensure the city's zoning regulations match and help achieve the city's priorities

An aerial photograph of a baseball field. The field is green with a reddish-brown infield. There are several bleachers with red roofs and backstops along the right side of the field. Tall stadium lights are visible around the field. The title "Parks & Recreation" is overlaid in large white text.

# Parks & Recreation

Opportunities for parks and recreation are one of the most important factors in determining a city's success and overall quality of life. Parks and trails are a growing demand among younger generations in selecting the places they choose to live and work. Southside has a unique combination of natural landscapes that is underutilized as a public recreational asset. Expanding the city's parks system and connecting new and existing sites via trails is a promising opportunity for Southside, one which also has substantial implications for economic development through tourism.



## Big Ideas

---

- Expand public access opportunities to the Coosa River
- Promote public land and trails on the city's and region's mountains and ridges
- Improve & Diversify Programming
- Implement new park opportunities
- Develop trails to connect citizens to public amenities

## Quick Facts

---

**31.8 miles**

of shoreline along the Coosa River



**4 parks**

Southside has two parks dedicated to ball fields, one area designated for soccer fields, and a new play area at Southside landing



**47 acres**

of city park land

## Natural Resource Assets

Southside is blessed with a unique geography that naturally lends itself to a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. Situated on the Cedar Bend of the Coosa River, the city is surrounded on three sides by water and on its fourth by a prominent mountain ridge, Green Mountain. Neely Henry Lake, which bounds the city to the west, is a tremendous natural resource for the city that must continue to be highlighted.

Although many private homes with individual docks and access points line the 31.8 miles of shoreline within current city limits, the City of Southside has just one public dock, a single public boat launch, and no smaller put-ins for canoes, kayaks, etc. Green Mountain is a similarly underutilized resource. Rising 400 to 500 feet above the river and the alluvial plain on which Southside rests, the mountain's ridgeline commands stunning panoramic views of the valley below, the City of Southside, distant mountains, and the winding path of the Coosa's gleaming waters. There are nearly 7 miles of this prominent mountain ridge flanking the southeastern edge of the city, with no public trails or overlooks to enjoy its beauty.



If Southside better leveraged this unique combination of natural resources using public access points and recreational infrastructure, the city would be well positioned to become a regionally renowned destination for outdoor recreation. A thriving ecotourism economy could support many other aspects of the city's development. In order to better leverage the city's substantial waterfront as a public asset, this plan recommends the creation of at least two additional public waterfront parks.

## Waterfront Park Opportunities

A continued effort to improve the community's public access to the waterfront is the most important aspect of this parks and rec strategy. New waterfront park opportunities should be unique to their areas and fulfill specific roles in the city. Gateway waterfront parks that are enhanced by adjacent quality businesses and developments are important at both the north and south Highway 77 entrances to the city. A small passive waterfront park in the Cedar Bend Road area is also important to support the area's residential neighborhoods.

### Northern Lakefront Gateway (Southside Landing)

The northern gateway center at Southside Landing has already seen positive development with the addition of the Blackstone Bait Shack Restaurant, a public dock and boat launch, a structured play area for children, and frequent community events. Momentum at this site

should continue with adjacent park-centric development of waterfront restaurants (possibly a fine dining establishment), appropriate retail (such as an outdoors outfitter), a kayak/canoe/paddleboard rental, a flex-use space that can host food trucks and events such as farmers markets, and a boardwalk with connectivity to a future bike-pedestrian path along the repurposed historic bridge. This reimagined, appropriately sized, mixed-use development at Southside Landing will serve as the primary hub to activate the city's northern waterfront.



## +1 Public Boat Launch

### Southern Lakefront Gateway

There is additional potential for the development of another park-centric gateway on Highway 77 at the southern end of the city. This southern gateway park could include a natural park area, canoe and kayak put-in, RV camping areas, with restaurants and shops, a marina and public dock, all connected by trails to a development with shops and restaurants around the intersection of Highway 77 with Lakemont Drive and Slasham Road. Recreational activation of the waterfront at this site can be

achieved by elevating a portion of the AL 77 causeway to allow for the passage of boats and other craft between the Greens Creek inlet and the rest of Neely Henry Lake.

### Neighborhood Lakefront Access

In addition to the proposed gateways, activating the city's expansive waterfront will be achieved by the creation of a series of small-scale neighborhood-style parks with water access for public use located at strategic points between the two gateway waterfront districts. These smaller sites should be designed to be passive, suitable for neighborhoods with limited footprints that support the surrounding residences. Together with the larger scale facilities and rental opportunities at the northern and southern gateways, this series of neighborhood-scale waterfront parks would enable the creation of a paddleyway, or fishing "trail", from the northern to the southern end of the city that could easily be used by both residents and visitors. This new "Blueway Trail" could be used as an effective tool in marketing Southside as a premier outdoor destination.

### Improvements to Existing Recreation Facilities

The city currently has 4 parks totaling 47 acres. The city should strategically update and reallocate its recreation programming and consider expanding recreational services in line with population growth and trends in popular amenities. Currently, all city parks are geared toward sports or structured play, with no opportunities for passive nature-based recreation. The first, Southside Landing, is a recently improved park with a playground, public dock, boat launch, a restaurant, and a boat parking lot that is often used as community event space. The second existing park, the soccer fields on Soccer Drive, is only pro-

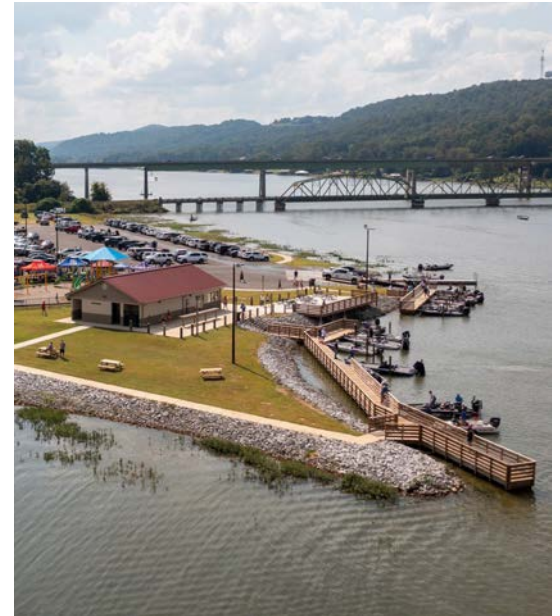


Recreational facilities at Southside City Park

grammed for soccer games. The third park, Southside City Park, is a small baseball field, a playground, and basketball courts. The fourth park, the Southside Softball Complex, includes four ball fields and a playground.

### Southside Landing

At Southside Landing, the city should continue site improvements by adding more riverwalk-type dock areas that provide respite and flow into the rest of the site and beyond. A public swimming area should be developed in the form of a sand beach or linear terraces down to the waterfront. Site beautification is needed at the park, including trees, landscaping, and shade structures to provide a stronger sense of place as the park continues to develop. Southside Landing has already established itself and the city in the region as a place that creatively celebrates its connection to the river. This is an early victory in the city’s long-term efforts. It is critical that the city supports a unique commercial development adjacent to this park to build on this asset and its recognition. The city should continue to support adjacent quality-of-life development through proactive zoning, due diligence, potential tax incentives, and marketing of this regional asset.



### Soccer Fields

The soccer field park on Soccer Drive should be reallocated as a passive park with trails, lawn space, a dog park area, pavilions, and a playground. The change of this park programming would provide a higher quality of life for this area of the city, which is currently the fastest-growing residential area of the city. The soccer programming on this site should be moved to the expanded Southside Softball Complex.



City owned land to expand Softball Complex

### Southside City Park

The primary focuses for updates at Southside City Park should include an update of the playground, the replacement of one of the basketball blacktops with pickleball courts, a resurfacing of the remaining basketball courts, an update of the underutilized lawn space, and minor entrance improvements.

### Southside Softball Complex

The Southside Softball Complex should expand its programming on adjacent city-owned land.

Opportunities for new programming at this site include soccer, trails, multi-use lawns, pavilions, expanded roads, and parking to support such additions. Zoning should be updated nearby to permit new residential development anchored by this improved park.

## New Park Facilities

### Town Center Park

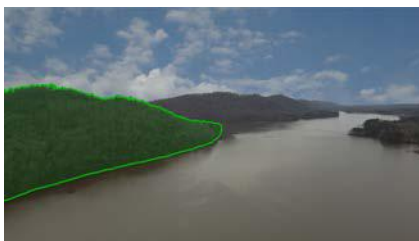
A new park is currently under development near city hall. This park is a unique opportunity for the city as it will include a stormwater retention water feature that is designed as a park and neighborhood amenity. This new park is also part of an initiative to support town center development and redevelopments in this area. The park should provide a walkable retail-focused amenity for potential surrounding development and should specifically support existing city service buildings. The park design will and should transition from neighborhood-oriented design to the south and civic and town center design to the north. Primary programming for this park should include natural and stormwater amenities, walking paths, multipurpose lawn space for event hosting, an event pavilion/stage, and active hardscaped edges. Other recreational considerations include: a splash pad, disc golf course, and pickleball courts.



Town Center Park rendering

### Green Mountain Lakefront Park

The final new park proposed in this plan would take advantage of a unique combination of the city's waterfront and mountaintop resources. Located west of AL 77 at the southern tip of Green Mountain, where the mountain meets the Coosa River, this would be a natural park of regional scale straddling both Etowah and Calhoun Counties. Establishing a park on this beautiful unspoiled portion of the mountain west of Phillips Gap would help preserve this land in perpetuity and create a recreational opportunity that could be the defining aspect of the city's parks system and bring many outdoor enthusiasts to stay and shop in the city. A state park-style recreational area on this site, possibly a regional collaboration between Etowah



Green Mountain potential park location

and Calhoun Counties, could include several amenities such as a small rustic lodge, a small treehouse village, a pavilion, a few campsites, hiking trails, a scenic overlook, a dock, a boat ramp, and a public swimming area. The City of Southside could work with large landowners on this site, specifically Alabama Power, to expand land holdings and make this transformational vision a reality.

## Trail Network

Trails and greenways are an important component of a quality city parks and recreation system. A network of trails provides a range of economic, aesthetic, environmental and

recreational benefits to citizens of a community beyond the benefits that accrue to private landowners. A trail network (including blueways) can increase residential and commercial property values, encourage the revitalization of declining areas, attract tourists, and build pride and a common identity within the community.



Conceptual Riverfront Park Plan

Trail development should begin with identifying and prioritizing important destinations in the city that people would want to walk to. Trails can be developed on existing rights of ways as buffered paths. Trails can also be developed as greenways through areas unsuitable for development, such as floodplains and sloped areas. Trails and greenways can also be incorporated into neighborhood design and be established as an easement.

The first priority for trails in Southside is the development of trails in existing city parks. Priorities for trail networks in the city are based on connecting important community destinations while supporting density in key areas of the city, such as the town center and more developed residential areas. Southside should focus first on implementing trails in rights of way through

the use of buffered paths, and in the longer term, build momentum for greenway trails as opportunities arise.

Early Priority trails include a loop that connects Southside High School, Barney Hood Stadium, City Hall, Southside Library and Community Center, Southside Elementary School, and Southside City Park to the Southside Softball Complex. This can primarily be achieved through the use of a buffered trail on Cedar Bend Road, Hood Road, and Mountain View Road, and School Drive.

**“We need more trails”**  
200+ survey responses

Other trail priorities include the advocacy of a trail easement on the slope of the undeveloped ridge adjacent to Lakemont Drive. This trail could potentially be parallel with Lakemont Drive and provide scenic natural vistas overlooking Neely Henry Lake.



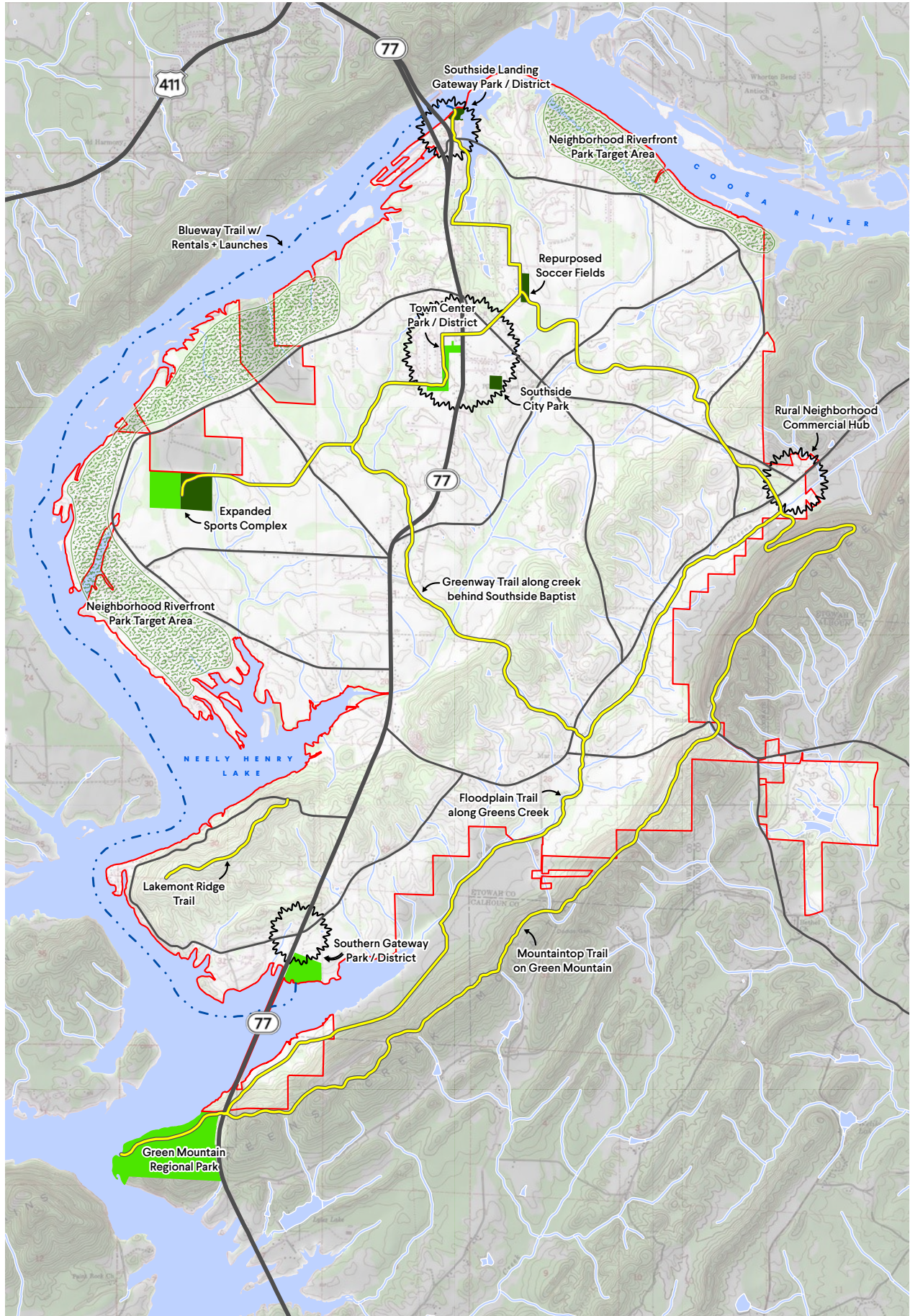
### Benefits of Trails

Trails and greenways are often seen narrowly when it comes to their benefits. People tend to focus on the recreational or environmental aspects of trails and greenways, failing to see the big picture—the total package of benefits that a trail or greenway can provide to communities, including public health, economic and transportation benefits, and even the effect on community pride and identity.

When seen as a whole, the evidence about the far-reaching benefits of trails and greenways is compelling, especially given the minimal public investment involved compared to other undertakings with the same community goals.

- 📍 Health
- 📍 Economy/Revitalization
- 📍 Transportation/Livability
- 📍 Historic Preservation/Community Identity
- 📍 Conservation/Environment

Source: [www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)



# Parks & Recreation Recommendations

---

## Expand public access opportunities to the Coosa River

### ACTIONS

- Continue to develop and expand Southside Landing to create a regional destination.
- Incentivize Canoe, Kayak, and paddleboard rentals at Southside Landing.
- Partner with Etowah County to promote and develop day recreation and possible camping on the Coosa River islands Northwest of the City.
- Acquire riverfront land in the Buck's Island area or near the city's southern gateway to develop a small park and boat put-in.
- Acquire riverfront land in the Cedar Bend Road area to develop a neighborhood-scale park and boat put-in.

## Promote public land and trails on the city's and region's mountains and ridges

### ACTIONS

- Develop a nature trail on the mountain slope above Lakemont Drive to provide a trail amenity for the city and this growing residential area.
- Create momentum to develop trails along creeks, in floodplains, and on mountain slopes in the city.
- Promote a county initiative to develop a regional park on the Green Mountain west of Highway 77 that includes regional trail connections.

## Improve and diversify existing city park recreational programming

### ACTIONS

- Expand Southside Landing to provide unique retail opportunities for the park.
- Continue to develop a cohesive riverwalk dock amenity at Southside Landing.
- Create a beach amenity at Southside Landing.
- Redevelop the Soccer Fields Park to become a passive park with trails, a lawn, a dog park, playgrounds, and pavilions.
- Update the Southside City Park to include an improved playground, updated basketball courts, pickleball courts, and a park lawn.
- Expand the Southside Softball Complex into the adjacent city-owned land to include soccer, trails, lawn space, parking, and pavilions.
- Work with ALDOT to transform the historic bridge into a pedestrian park feature of Southside Landing.

## Implement new park opportunities

### ACTIONS

- Continue to develop a new park adjacent to city hall to catalyze this area to become a town center.
- Develop or incentivize an RV park at or near the city's southern gateway.

## Develop trails to connect citizens to community amenities

### ACTIONS

- Promote trail easements with large landowners and land developers for the potential of greenways.
- Develop an on-street trail loop to connect Barney Hood Stadium, Southside High School, Southside Softball Complex, and Southside Elementary School.
- Promote the creation of a non-profit trail organization with surrounding counties and the East Alabama Planning Commission.
- Work with Gadsden, regional entities, and the Alabama Scenic River Trail to develop Blueway trail potentials and marketing in the area.
- Work with ALDOT to define the potential of buffered trails along portions of Highway 77.

## Proactively pursue park and trail grant funding

### ACTIONS

- Prioritize specific parks and recreational improvements to apply for annual ADECA grants.

## Match the growth of the city with the growth of recreational quality and access

### ACTIONS

- Create population growth milestones to match with parks and recreation service expansion.
- Include parks and recreation priorities into capital budgets as the city's tax base expands.



# Transportation & Mobility

Transportation and mobility affect the city at every scale and play a crucial role in shaping the accessibility and livability of the community. It is one of the most influential factors that impacts development patterns in the city. A well-designed transportation system moves people and goods safely, efficiently, and connects them to opportunities. Transportation systems should also improve access to primary services throughout the city while enhancing the quality of life for all residents. It is important to plan for a future transportation system that can meet the needs of a growing and changing population while also addressing key challenges. As Southside continues to grow, it is imperative to upgrade the city's road network for increased levels of traffic while also accommodating alternate modes of transit such as walking and biking.

# Big Ideas

---

- Improve connectivity and access to walking and biking throughout the city
- Implement consistent road designs based on road types throughout the city
- Strategically implement on-road trail priorities
- Standardize Road Design
- Implement safety and aesthetic improvements on Highway 77
- Advocate and implement large-scale Highway 77 improvements

# Quick Facts

---

20,000+

Average Daily Volume on Hwy 77



117 miles

of roads in current city limits



## Transportation Networks

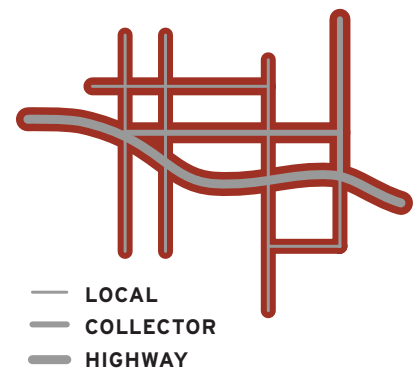
According to public input gathered throughout the planning process, repairing and upgrading roads is one of Southsiders' most urgent development priorities. The road network in Southside is largely outdated and its over reliance on individual car ownership has left it poorly equipped to safely accommodate alternative forms of mobility such as walking or biking. In future, when the city embarks on any road improvement at locations identified in the Road Design map (pg. 33), those improvements should include infrastructure for walking and biking so that the people of Southside are provided safe routes to move around the city without a car. In the community survey, 75% of respondents said Southside is lacking opportunities to walk or bike, 80% said they would not feel safe walking along the city's streets, and 90% said they would not feel safe biking along the city's streets. Improving the transportation network for cyclists and pedestrians as well as for motorists is a high priority for residents.

## Road Design Standards

Road networks are structured around a hierarchy that determines the standard to which each road is designed and constructed.

The design of individual roadways is determined by its classification within this hierarchy, and its importance in connecting key sites in the city. Roadway design standards encompass a variety of elements including width and capacity, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, landscaping, intersection styles, street lighting, slope, vehicular speed, etc. Prioritization of these improvements must be determined by municipal officials.

Network



Source: DOT: Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks

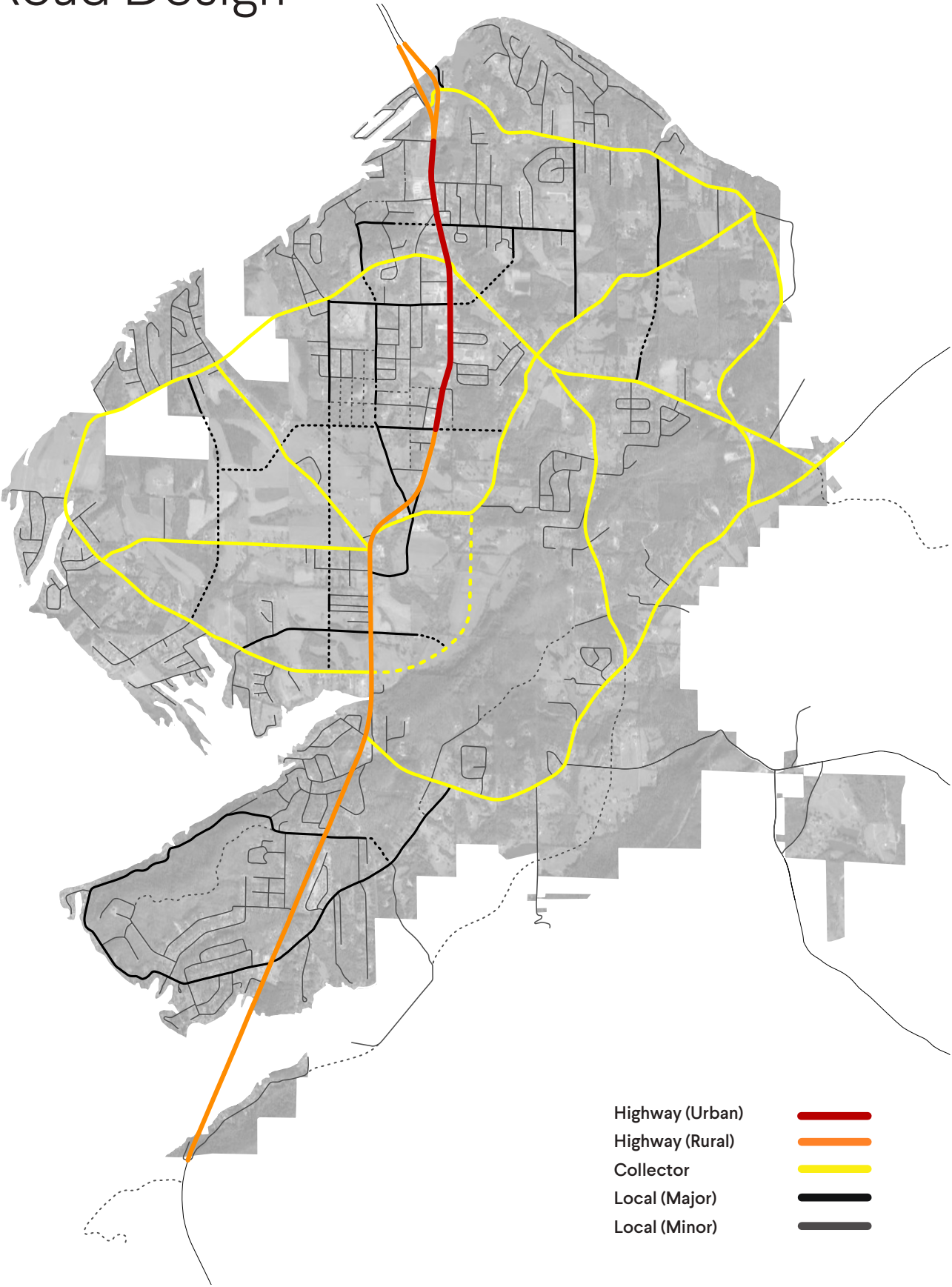
### HIGHWAY (URBAN)

Highways are major thoroughfares that carry large volumes of traffic at higher speeds. These at-grade roads have limited access to individual properties and provide regional connectivity between larger communities. In Southside, this urban subcategory of highways should be designed with two vehicular travel lanes in each direction separated by landscaped medians. Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure should be provided via a buffered side path on at least one side of the roadway.



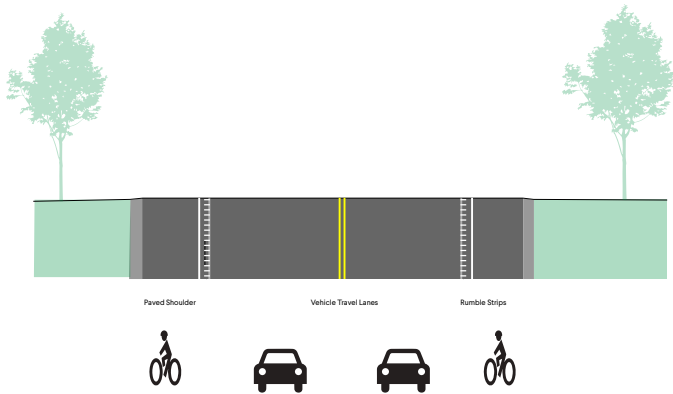
Roads in Southside:  
AL Highway 77, from split by Coosa River bridges to Sunset Dr

# Road Design



## HIGHWAY (RURAL) —

Rural highway roads are regional thoroughfares, typically highways, that carry large volumes of traffic at higher speeds. These at-grade roads have low access to individual properties and typically provide regional connectivity between larger communities. Future roads in this rural subcategory of arterial roads should be designed with two vehicular travel lanes in each direction. Cycling infrastructure should also be required via wide paved shoulders.

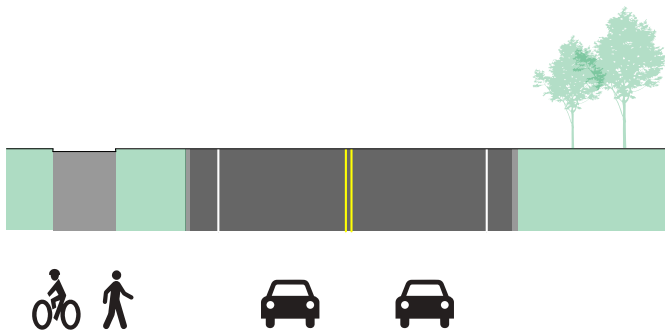


Roads in Southside:

AL Highway 77, from Sunset Dr to Prewett Dr

## COLLECTOR —

Collector roads are thoroughfares that typically provide more localized connectivity within specific communities. These roads allow moderate access to individual properties and carry intermediate levels of traffic at a generally low speed limit between arterial roads and local neighborhood streets. In Southside, collector roads should be designed with one vehicular travel lane in either direction with turn lanes as needed at major intersections. Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure should be provided via a buffered side path on at least one side of the roadway.



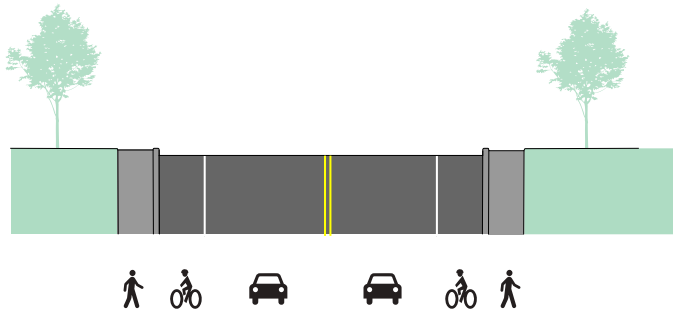
Roads in Southside:

Cedar Bend Rd, Pilgrims Rest Rd, Fowlers Ferry Rd, Green Valley Rd, Lister Ferry Rd, Hood Rd, S Valley Rd, Mountain View Dr, Smith Rd, School Dr

## LOCAL (MAJOR)

Local roads, or neighborhood streets, have the lowest speed limits, traffic levels, and capacities but the highest level of access to individual properties. These roads can support a variety of different uses such as commercial or agricultural districts, although they are

typically found in highest concentrations within residential neighborhoods. In Southside, this major category of local roads should be designed with a single travel lane in either direction. Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure should be provided via unbuffered sidewalks and bike lanes located in the roadway on at least one side of the road.



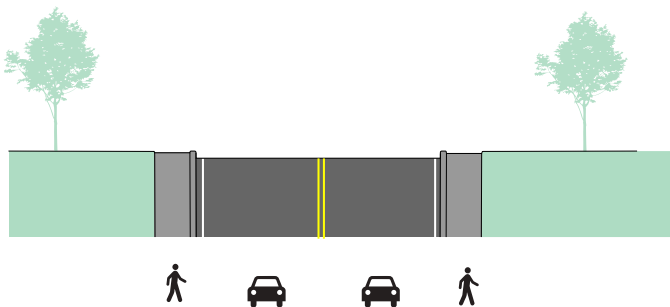
Roads in Southside:

Hall Dr, Thompson Rd, Slasham Rd, Lakemont Dr, Leota Rd, Lasseter Rd, Dunn Rd, Soccer Dr, Pine St, Beech Hollow Ln, Robertson St W, Daystar Ln, Sunset Dr, Snyder Rd, Brown Cir N, Cedar Cir, Owens Dr

## LOCAL (MINOR)

Local roads, or neighborhood streets, have the lowest speed limits, traffic levels, and capacities but the highest level of access to individual properties. These roads can support a variety of different uses such as commercial or agricultural districts, although they are

typically found in highest concentrations within residential neighborhoods. In Southside, this minor category of local roads should be designed with a single travel lane in either direction. Pedestrian infrastructure should be provided via unbuffered sidewalks located on at least one side of the roadway.



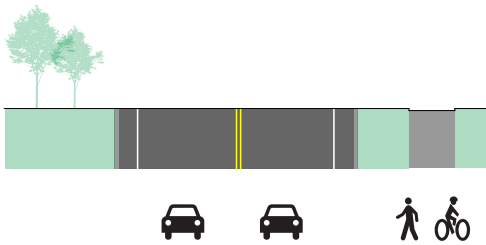
Roads in Southside:

All other roads in city limits not previously listed

## Sidewalk and Bike Priorities

### LOOP ROAD GREENWAY

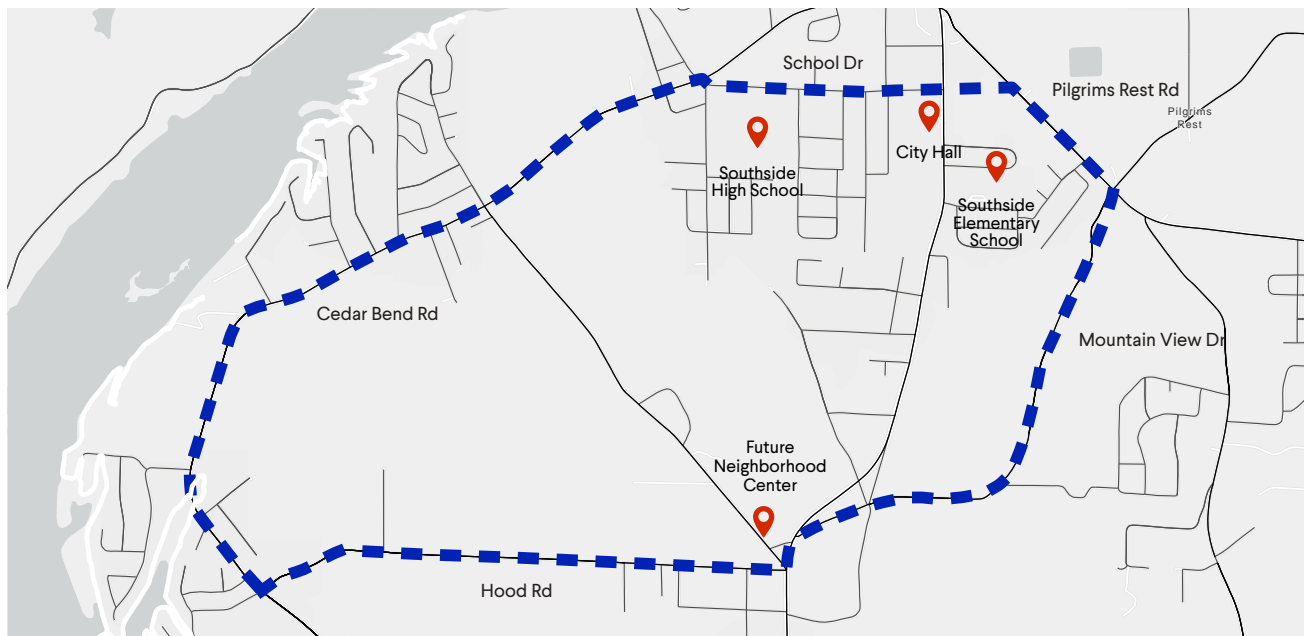
The alignment of roadway design improvements identified in the previous section outlines an ambitious plan to retrofit Southside's roads for increased traffic safety and efficiency. A critical component of those roadway design elements supported by a strong majority of residents was the inclusion of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Although the roadway design plan identifies standards for the prescribed form of all roads in the city, it does not establish a methodology for where roadway improvements, including sidewalks and bike lanes, should be prioritized. A novel concept for bike/ ped infrastructure is to prioritize the proposed roadway improvements to create a loop supporting circulation of pedestrians and cyclists between the eastern and western halves of the city. The alignment of this loop would follow School Dr, Cedar Bend Rd, Hood Rd, Mountain View Dr, and Pilgrims Rest Rd.



Section of Loop Road



Multi-use Side Path shown on Cedar Bend Road



Proposed Loop Road

This 7.5-mile loop of buffered side paths would be an early win for the city that promotes more active forms of transportation and a healthier lifestyle for the people of Southside. The route identified for this loop follows paths that are currently some of the most heavily used by cyclists and pedestrians in the city. It connects directly or very nearby to several key locations throughout Southside, including City Hall and the site of the future town center, Southside High School, the Southside Softball Complex, Southside Baptist Church, First Baptist Church of Southside, and Southside Elementary School. The route is situated near some of the most heavily populated residential areas of the city and would provide a much safer way for residents to access these key sites without a car. Early implementation of this loop would be a highly visible sign of progress and the likelihood of its popularity would help build popular demand for expanded improvements in other areas of the city.

**“Life takes place on foot.”**

### Highway 77 Improvements

First impressions are widely considered the most important. They set the tone and establish the frameworks for how we perceive places and people, influencing all future conceptions of a community. For 99% of people visiting or traveling through a city, primary highway corridors set the first impression, which, once established, is difficult to sway. Highway 77 sets that first impression for the City of Southside as a whole. It is the face of the city, however, the quality of its current development does not accurately reflect the beauty and prosperity that permeates the surrounding community.



Proposed Entry Median

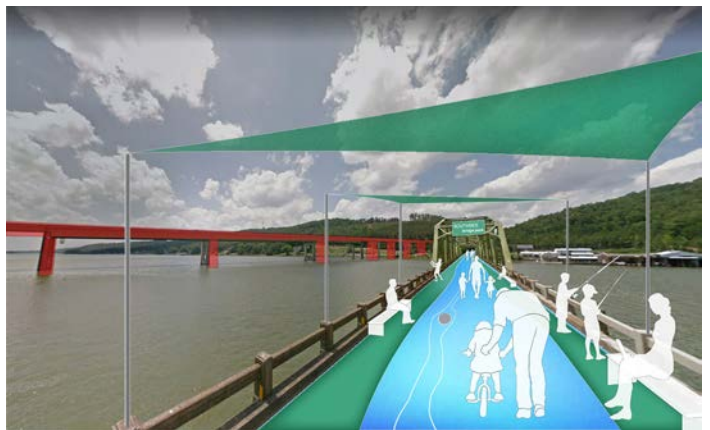
The unregulated design and sprawling sporadic nature of existing development along Highway 77 fails to establish a unique sense of place, instead creating a sense of “Anywhere, USA” that negatively impacts business recruitment efforts and overall civic pride. A number of

improvements to Southside’s Highway 77 corridor are necessary to maximize its efficiency and safety while transforming it into a lasting positive first impression of the city. Critical upgrades include a new northbound bridge between Southside and Rainbow City, general landscaping and beautification, traffic efficiency, and elevation of a portion of the causeway at the southern end of the city.

## COOSA RIVER BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS

According to a petition by Mayor Snyder, “The residents of Southside, AL, as well as many others, have waited over thirty years for a Northbound Bridge Replacement across the Coosa River”. With its official opening in 1939, the northbound bridge (alternatively known as Gilbert’s Ferry Bridge, Little Bridge, or Southside Bridge) served both directions of traffic at this crossing until the late 1970’s when the nearby bridge was constructed to serve southbound traffic. Now with just a single travel lane, the northbound bridge regularly causes significant traffic delays, increasing highway congestion and tailpipe emissions in Southside. Following decades of growth in Southside and beyond, the northbound bridge is no longer capable of supporting regional transit demands.

This plan advocates for the construction of a new, two-lane, northbound bridge adjacent to the path of the existing southbound bridge, and the conversion of the existing northbound bridge into a bike/ ped path providing regional connectivity between Southside and Rainbow City. Once repurposed for pedestrians and cyclists, the historic bridge will become a truly unique recreational amenity anchored on one side of the Coosa by Rainbow Landing and the Little Bridge Marina, and on the other side by the proposed mixed-use development at Southside Landing. This development scenario is preferred to the demolition and reconstruction of the existing bridge as it would address the northbound traffic issues while preserving an important piece of the region’s history and creating an unparalleled attraction as the only pedestrian bridge over the Coosa River.



## LANDSCAPING AND BEAUTIFICATION

Another important aspect of improving Southside’s Highway 77 corridor is elevating its visual appeal. This can be achieved primarily through strengthening site design standards in the city’s zoning ordinance to require buildings with enhanced facade designs that engage the streetscape and incorporate attractive landscape elements such as street trees. Signage regulations discussed further in the economic development section will play a significant role in the overall beautification of the highway.



Stretch of Highway 77 where planted medians are being proposed



Beginning of medians at the North end of town



Beginning of medians at the South end of town

Beyond the needed beautification initiatives on private commercial properties fronting the highway that would occur on an individual basis as these properties are developed/redeveloped, the city could make a big impact on highway beautification within the public right of way. This would occur through the construction of landscaped medians in portions of the existing center turn lane that serve dual purposes of beautification and traffic control through access management.



Existing Hwy 77 Corridor



Proposed Medians

## ENHANCED TRAFFIC EFFICIENCY

### Access Management

Access management is the careful planning of the location and spacing of driveways, intersections, median openings, and traffic signals. It involves the use of raised medians to channel left turns to safe locations and the use of dedicated turn lanes to separate turning vehicles from traveling lanes. The general intent of access management strategies is to reduce congestion and increase safety. Local streets can have many access points at frequent intervals, while access points on major roads need to be managed more carefully. Southside's Highway 77 corridor is a major road, however, its current access management conditions are unsuitable for a heavily trafficked regional highway.

Better management of access points along Highway 77 will result in better traffic flow, fewer crashes, and a better environment for business development. Access management will improve overall safety by grouping access points together so that risky turning and crossing movements occur at fewer locations. The following image highlights the extensive number of access points along the northern portion of Southside's Highway 77 corridor, each with direct unsignalized turning access onto the highway. Access points should be grouped together among clusters of businesses that receive customers via a shared service road that preferably runs behind the properties.



Overuse of direct access points (highlighted in red) along AL 77

Apart from grouping access points to serve businesses through shared service roads, the other most important aspect of Southside's access management strategy is the addition of a raised median in the current two-way left turn lane in the center of the road. Medians will have a substantial impact on driver safety in Southside. According to the Federal Highway Administration, adding

a median to a road that previously had a continuous two-way left turn lane can reduce the rate of crashes by about 37% and the rate of injuries by about 48%. Median openings will be strategically located to provide safe dedicated turning lanes that coincide with major intersections and the clustered access points leading to service roads for highway businesses.

### Major Intersections

Despite the city's rapidly growing population and high traffic volumes on Highway 77, Southside is a one stoplight town. Although there are six major intersections along Southside's Highway 77 corridor, the city has just one signalized intersection where the highway meets Cedar Bend Rd N and Pilgrims Rest Rd. As the primary crossroads of the city and the entrance to Southside's future town center, this plan strongly suggests that the city consider the long-term potential of converting this intersection to a roundabout, although this conversion is just a recommendation and not an official goal of this plan. According to the Federal Highway Administration, roundabouts result in fewer crashes, 90% fewer fatalities, and 75% fewer injuries. They also result in a 30% to 50% increase in

the rate of traffic flow through the intersection, with less congestion than waiting at a traffic signal. Additional benefits include reduced pollution, enhanced beautification through landscaping, and cost savings by eliminating the need for maintenance of traffic signals.

Other major highway intersections that are likely to need attention as the city continues to grow include where Highway 77 meets:

- Fowlers Ferry Rd, School Dr (extended across Highway 77), Hood Rd/ Lister Ferry Rd/ Mountain View Dr, Cedar Bend Rd S, Green Valley Rd, Lakemont Dr/ Slasham Rd

Signalization of each of the listed intersections should be considered moving forward based on the specific traffic demands at each site. Once School Dr is extended across the highway to support development of the future town center, a signal will be required at this intersection to provide safe pedestrian connectivity between the eastern and western halves of the town center development. Furthermore, the highway's intersection with Hood Rd/ Lister Ferry Rd/ Mountain View Dr should be considered for another potential roundabout. The compact intersection of the highway with three different collector roads and the chaotic nature of its current alignment make this site a strong candidate for a roundabout to improve the safety of the intersection.

### Widening, Potential Realignment, and Causeway Elevation

An important regional initiative with a broad potential economic impact for East Alabama is completing the widening of Highway 77 to connect I-20 in Lincoln to I-59 in Gadsden with four travel lanes. The widening has already been completed from I-59 in Gadsden to Sunset Dr in Southside (except for the choke point on the northbound bridge). This plan calls for extending the four lane section of the highway from its current terminus south to Prewett Dr at Southside's southern border in support of the broader regional initiative to extend the four

lane south to I-20. All four cities from Rainbow City to Lincoln are in favor of this project and are working to make it a reality. The widening project has the potential to include the realignment of the S-curve between Richwood Dr and Fuhrman Rd to straighten out the highway's path. Reworking this section of the roadway would present a prime opportunity to include the potential roundabout discussed above in order to increase the safety and efficiency of this five-way intersection. The highway widening over the causeway



Proposed AL 77 causeway elevation

at the city's southern border would also present a prime opportunity to elevate a portion of the highway to allow for the passage of boats and other recreational watercraft in and out of the Greens Creek inlet, ultimately supporting development of the southern gateway district described in the parks and recreation chapter.

# Transportation & Mobility Recommendations

---

Improve connectivity and access to walking and biking throughout the city

## ACTIONS

- Update Subdivision regulations to require the construction of sidewalks and street trees.
- Update Subdivision regulations to require road connectivity between subdivision developments.
- Strategically implement multi-modal right-of-way improvements (sidewalks and bike lanes) by integrating these improvements to the city's current road improvement needs list.
- Develop a road network surrounding the Southside Softball Complex as a part of the park expansion to induce strategic residential development.
- Extend School drive across Highway 77 to connect to Pilgrims Rest Road.

Implement consistent road designs based on road types throughout the city

## ACTIONS

- Adopt right-of-way design standards using the design sections from this plan.
- Create a city transportation committee to oversee transportation issues and improvements (to meet quarterly)
- Meet with Etowah County after the adoption of this plan to discuss the coordination of potential transportation improvements.
- Apply for ALDOT grant Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program II (ATRIP-II) for implementation of the priority road design improvements.

## Strategically implement on-road trail priorities

### ACTIONS

- Begin implementing a 7.5 mile buffered sidewalk and bike lane loop to connect City Hall, Barneyhood Stadium, Southside High School, Southside Softball Complex, and Southside Elementary.
- Work with ALDOT to implement pedestrian-safe intersections along Highway 77.
- Apply for the ALDOT grant Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for implementation of the priority sidewalk/bike lane loop.
- Prioritize two locations for pedestrian improvements to cross Highway 77.
- Prepare for yearly ALDOT grant application cycles to implement on-street trails, bike lanes, and traffic safety improvements.

## Implement safety and aesthetic improvements on Highway 77

### ACTIONS

- Meet with ALDOT after the adoption of this plan
- Prioritize and implement landscape improvements at key Highway 77 Intersections (Bridge Split, Lakeview Road & Jordan Drive, Cedar Bend Road & Pilgrims Rest Road, Hood Road & Lister Ferry Road, Green Valley Road & Riverview Drive, and Lakemont Drive & Slasham Road)
- Proactively invest in potential development access roads at key undeveloped properties along Highway 77's commercial areas (Undeveloped land between Exxon Gas Station and Southside Storage)
- Implement an access management Highway 77 corridor plan with ALDOT.
- Implement landscape medians and turn lanes on Highway 77 between the Southside Bridge and Sunset Drive.


## Advocate and implement large-scale Highway 77 improvements

### ACTIONS

- Continue pursuing a RAISE grant for a new bridge and northbound Highway 77 Bridge.
- Repurpose the historic Highway 77 Bridge as a pedestrian bridge feature at Southside Landing.
- Develop a regional trail route plan to highlight the potential connections made possible by a pedestrian bridge over the Coosa River.
- Support ALDOT efforts to expand the entirety of Highway 77 in the city to a divided 4-lane median highway.



# Economic Development



Southside has a significant amount of untapped market potential. Currently, residents travel to places like Gadsden or Rainbow City to spend money on many goods and services. The promotion of new and improved business concepts in Southside would go a long way in keeping that lost economic activity located in the city and redirecting tax revenues to Southside's municipal budget. Creating a robust and thriving economic development strategy in Southside will require going beyond traditional incentive packages to create a physical, social, and regulatory environment that is attractive to premier businesses. This can be achieved through traditional economic development efforts, the development of a town center, placemaking initiatives, and community events.

# Big Ideas

---

- Create the opportunity for a Town Center development in the City Hall/Community Center area
- Implement consistent city gateway and wayfinding signage
- Strategically utilize murals and other forms of public art in gateway areas and new development areas
- Proactively support agritourism as an economic development model for the city
- Continue developing community events that highlight the assets and culture of Southside
- Prioritize catalyst economic development initiatives for the city

# Quick Facts

---

# 44% higher

Median household income compared to the rest of the state

# \$31 million

Total retail trade leakage including food and drink



## Town Center

The single most impactful thing that could be done to create an attractive physical environment for business development in Southside would be the development of a town center district. Highway-style business development along the city's Highway 77 commercial corridor will remain an important piece of the economic development puzzle. However, the creation of a town center will be far more transformative by making Southside a unique retail destination and by returning a far higher tax revenue per acre to the city than highway-style development would. This plan envisions a "downtown" for Southside located along Highway 77 between Cedar Bend Rd N and Southside Elementary School. The town center will be developed around existing assets such as Southside's City Hall and Community Center to create a truly mixed-use district that includes civic uses, local shops and boutiques, dining, recreation, offices, and residential opportunities.

With respect for the city's more rural character, buildings in the town center will be designed in an "elevated village" style of architecture and be limited to 3 stories in height. Primary



Town Center perspective rendering

building facades with large shopfront windows will be oriented away from Highway 77 and School Drive, with parking located in the rear for a pedestrian friendly environment. School Drive will be extended across Highway 77 to connect with Pilgrims Rest Road and farther on to connect with Soccer Drive. This will allow for the expansion of the town center east of Highway 77 and provide direct connectivity to the repurposed park on Soccer Drive. Standardized building setbacks will provide a cohesive visual appearance and leave sufficient room for sidewalks, landscape plantings, and on-street parking. Residential development in the town center will include garden homes and townhomes as well as loft-style apartments located above ground-floor retail.

will provide a cohesive visual appearance and leave sufficient room for sidewalks, landscape plantings, and on-street parking. Residential development in the town center will include garden homes and townhomes as well as loft-style apartments located above ground-floor retail.



Town Center development

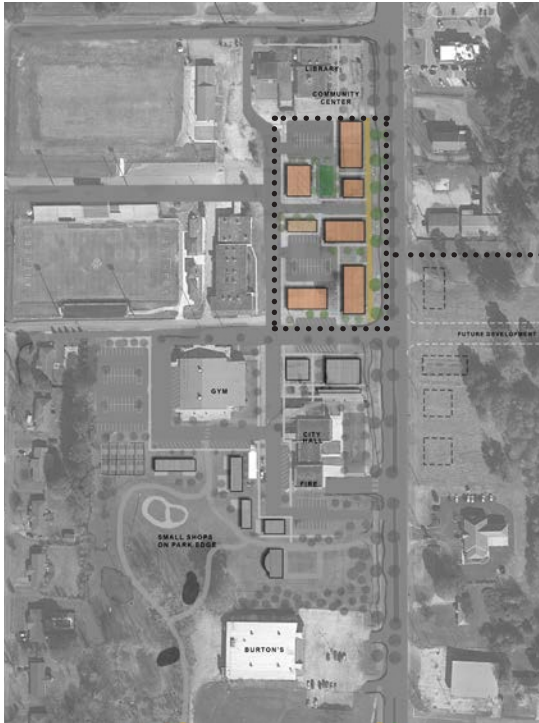
Further activating the town center will be an adjacent park space that buffers the new downtown from the neighborhood to its west. This park will include a landscaped stormwater retention pond that mitigates flooding in the area and doubles as a fishing pond. Walking trails and a 9-hole disc golf course will weave throughout the park, connecting the forested area around the pond with the great lawn that sits behind the town center. The old wrestling gym behind City Hall will be converted into a rec center that spills into

the great lawn area, which will be further activated by a splash pad, pavilions for picnics or open-air markets, and a small stage for live performances.



- Existing Building
- Proposed Building
- Proposed Housing
- Greenspace

Town Center Conceptual Plan



32,000 ft<sup>2</sup>

**PHASE 1**

**Small Commercial, Retail, & Entertainment**

Develop along Hwy 77 and begin to create a concentrated commercial, retail, and entertainment center for the town between the Community Center/Library and City Hall.



8,500 ft<sup>2</sup>

**PHASE 2**

**Small Shops & Pavilions**

Continue to increase density along Hwy 77 and around City Hall. Create a series of pavilions for event space, farmer's market, and local use. Small shops behind City Hall and the Gym are proposed to activate the edge of the park space.

**Park Space**

Natural greenspace with activity lawn, playground, and disc golf course.

## Placemaking

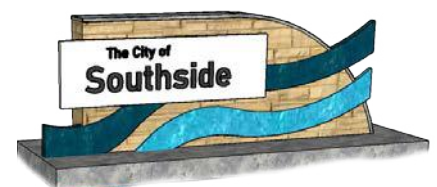
Establishing a unique sense of place is one of the most critical factors in convincing people to spend their time and money in a community. Placemaking aims to create vibrant public spaces that enhance people's connection to and enjoyment of the city by fostering a cohesive community identity and communicating it in various aspects of the city's built environment. Public art, gateway and wayfinding signage, and agritourism represent some of the most promising placemaking opportunities in Southside.

### Public Art

Public art adds enormous value to the cultural, aesthetic, and economic vitality of a community. Incorporating public art throughout the city will provide unique storytelling opportunities that promote civic pride and enhance the experience of both residents and visitors. Public art should be a prominent feature in Southside's town center as well as both gateway districts in order to reinforce the role of these mixed-use districts as cultural and intellectual nuclei for the city. Such art could take the form of temporary installations like chalk art or permanent installations like murals or sculptures. Murals are most effective when located in walkable areas near important intersections, in parks, and when they express universal themes rather than commercial interests or individual points of view. When done well, murals provide an excellent photo opportunity that helps promote the city to a wider audience. Sculptural elements are another form of public art that should be incorporated in Southside. If the northbound Highway 77 bridge over the Coosa River is set for demolition and replacement, a unique opportunity exists to salvage materials from its historic truss to be repurposed in sculptures at the town center and both gateway districts.

### Signage & Wayfinding

Gateway and wayfinding signage is another prominent way to create a cohesive visual identity and sense of place for the city. Entry signage should be the first encounter people have with the city and sets a first impression for the overall quality of the community. Gateway and wayfinding signage should consist of ground-level monument signs, preferably of masonry or metal construction, with exterior illumination. Discouraged forms of signage include: pylon signage (pole-mounted over 8-feet tall), printed sheet metal signage, plastic signage, interior-illuminated signage, and digital displays.



Town entry concept

## Agritourism

Another placemaking opportunity in Southside with great potential is the development of agricultural tourism. There are large swaths of pristine agricultural land remaining in the city that could be utilized for agritourism functions. This would preserve much of Southside's treasured rural heritage and bring additional visitors into the city while diversifying and increasing profits for local farms. Examples of popular agritourism that could be implemented in Southside include:



Local flower farm



you-harvest flower farms, apple orchards, pumpkin patches, demonstration farms, wineries, corn mazes, hay rides, petting zoos, etc.

## Community Events

Hosting smaller and larger scale community events is an important part of creating a social environment in which people and businesses will choose to locate. Regular events help showcase the city to potential residents and businesses while providing existing businesses with an increased customer base and existing residents with more outlets to socialize and develop a sense of community pride. A combination of a few larger scale seasonal events such as festivals should be interspersed with several smaller scale monthly events such as farmers markets to create a steady flow of public functions and visitors throughout the year.

The City of Southside currently offers many successful smaller scale events throughout the year, such as its summer farmers' markets, annual Christmas parade, trunk or treat, food truck rallies, dinner and a movie on the lake, Easter egg hunt, etc. Additional examples of smaller scale monthly events that could be hosted in Southside include neighborhood



Town event

block parties, eat-in-the-streets, scavenger hunts, cook-offs, etc. In addition to the many smaller scale community events offered by the city, Southside has also hosted larger scale events that draw larger crowds to the city, most notably Southside City Fest. Since City Fest was discontinued in 2019, Southside needs additional grand events with greater volumes of attendees. Due to the logistic and financial investment necessary for such larger events, they only need to be held seasonally a few times a year. Examples of larger scale events that could be hosted in Southside include concerts, carnivals, cultural food

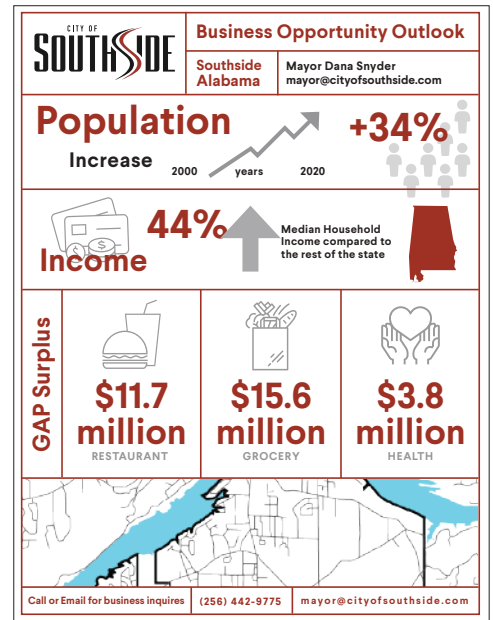
festivals, a 5k/ marathon, a regatta (boat race), a rodeo, etc. Hosting a combination of these larger events with several smaller events in between will give the city greater publicity and help market it as a business-friendly community.

## Business Outlook

Southside is in a great economic development position with the highest median household income and the highest population growth in the region, but the city does have economic development challenges.

Currently, Southside residents are leaving the city to locate and buy resources, spending over \$31 million in retail expenditures in other cities annually. If Southside could retain “just a quarter of that lost retail spending within its own city limits, it would see an annual increase in city revenue of over \$388,000 through local sales tax. This money could be reinvested in the city by increasing the quality of life and improving infrastructure which would further generate economic success in the city.

When approaching retail economic development, Southside should be confident in its potential. Business development opportunities in Southside should be focused on improving the quality of retail establishments located in the city. If Southside only focuses on filling Highway 77 with individual retail development, it will always be secondary to the retail opportunities of Rainbow city. For this reason, Southside’s primary focus should be on destination retail opportunities. These destination retail opportunities are defined by shopping and dining experiences that are unique to the region. A development that allows the opportunity to shop and dine at multiple locations within a safe and interesting walking, with family-friendly park-like elements mixed into the experience. Opportunities for this style of development in Southside would include development at Southside Landing and a town center development adjacent to city hall.



Quality retail recruitment should be a major focus of the city. Secondly, the light industry sector should continue to grow in the city, with thoughtful site planning, including vegetation buffers from residential areas. Primarily, enhanced institutional organization and utilization of established partnerships should continue to secure the positive economic outlook for Southside.

# Economic Development Recommendations

## Create the opportunity for a Town Center development in the City Hall/Community Center area

### ACTIONS

- Update the city’s zoning map to rezone the area around the City Hall/Community Center to the village center zoning district.
- Update the village center zoning district language to fit the best practice development of this area.
- Establish a development authority in the city to proactively pursue impactful developments.
- Continue to pursue the development of a park to act as a catalyst for a town center development.
- Create a detailed development opportunity plan to outline the specifics of a town center development opportunity.
- Consider acquiring the Southside wrestling building to update the building’s opportunity as a community center.
- Perform a facility conditions assessment for buildings in the future town center area to outline needed upgrades and potential long-term building changes.
- Update land uses districts around the potential town center area to allow for denser residential developments (townhomes).

## Implement city gateway and wayfinding signage

### ACTIONS

- Develop a plan to build gateway signage at the north and south Highway 77 gateways of the city.
- Develop a plan to implement matching wayfinding signage along Highway 77 for key community amenities.

## Strategically utilize murals and other forms of public art in gateway areas and new development areas

### ACTIONS

- Work with local artists, business owners, and land owners to identify existing opportunities in the city for murals.
- As development occurs in the city, ingrate public art where possible through a public art funding program.

## Proactively support agritourism as an economic development model for the city

### ACTIONS

- Market existing agritourism farmers and events.
- Participate in an agritourism workshop geared toward local farmers.
- Develop and host an agritourism-focused community event in conjunction with individual farmers in the community.

## Continue developing community events that highlight the assets and culture of Southside

### ACTIONS

- Continue to hold creative, regularly scheduled community events at the Southside Landing
- Create a community event committee to provide citizen support and leadership for events.
- Develop park amenities suitable to host larger-scale community events.
- Recommit to an annual city-wide community event like Southside City Fest.

## Prioritize catalyst economic development initiatives for the city

### ACTIONS

- Prioritize recruitment of 3 national or regional retail businesses that would fill the city's retail gap.
- Market strategic sites in the city for light industrial developments.
- Meet with Etowah County economic development entities to discuss this plan and economic development efforts.
- Update the city zoning to ensure it is supportive of the city's specific economic development opportunities.
- Support the creation of a Southside Chamber of Commerce.



# Land Use

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A paved road runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the center. To the left of the road is a large green field, and to the right is a large brown field. In the background, there are several houses and buildings, and further back, a range of blue mountains under a cloudy sky.

Land is a city's most valuable asset. The ways in which it is used have a significant impact on a city's socioeconomic systems and overall vitality. It is essential to achieve a just and efficient balance of land uses to ensure that all community needs are fulfilled. From residential districts that provide homes, to commercial districts that provide business services and jobs, to rural districts that preserve natural and open spaces, all land uses are important. Land use decisions help shape the community and ultimately serve as the basis for zoning laws that enforce community standards and values.

# Big Idea

---

- Ensure the city's zoning regulations match and help achieve the city's priorities

## Quick Facts

---

19.1 miles<sup>2</sup>

Area of the city



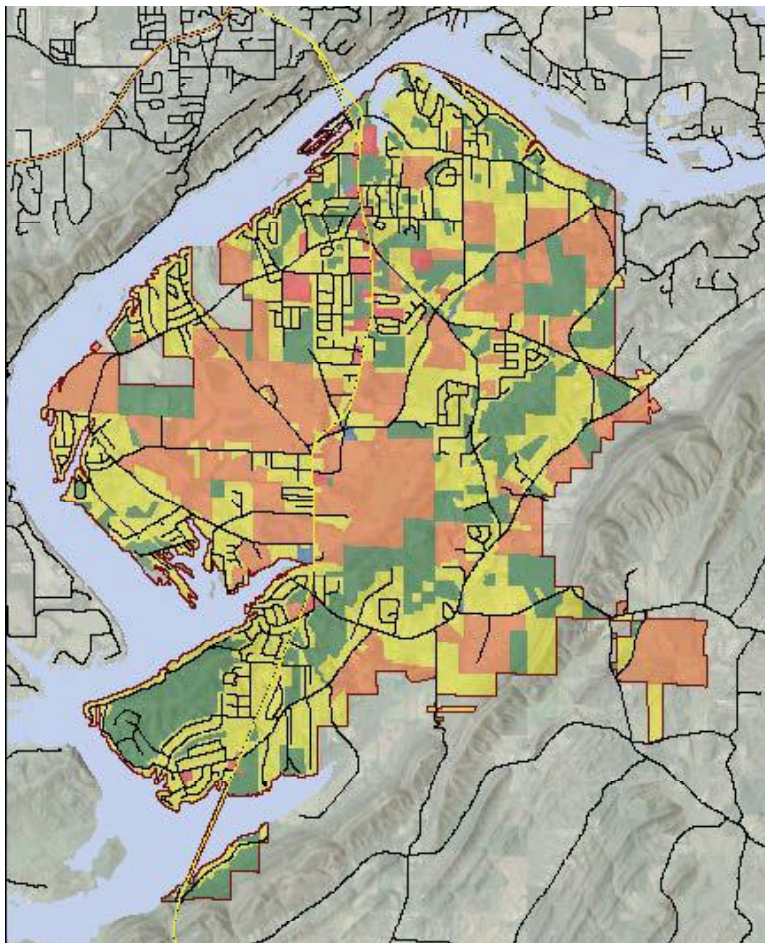
30% of city

is agricultural land



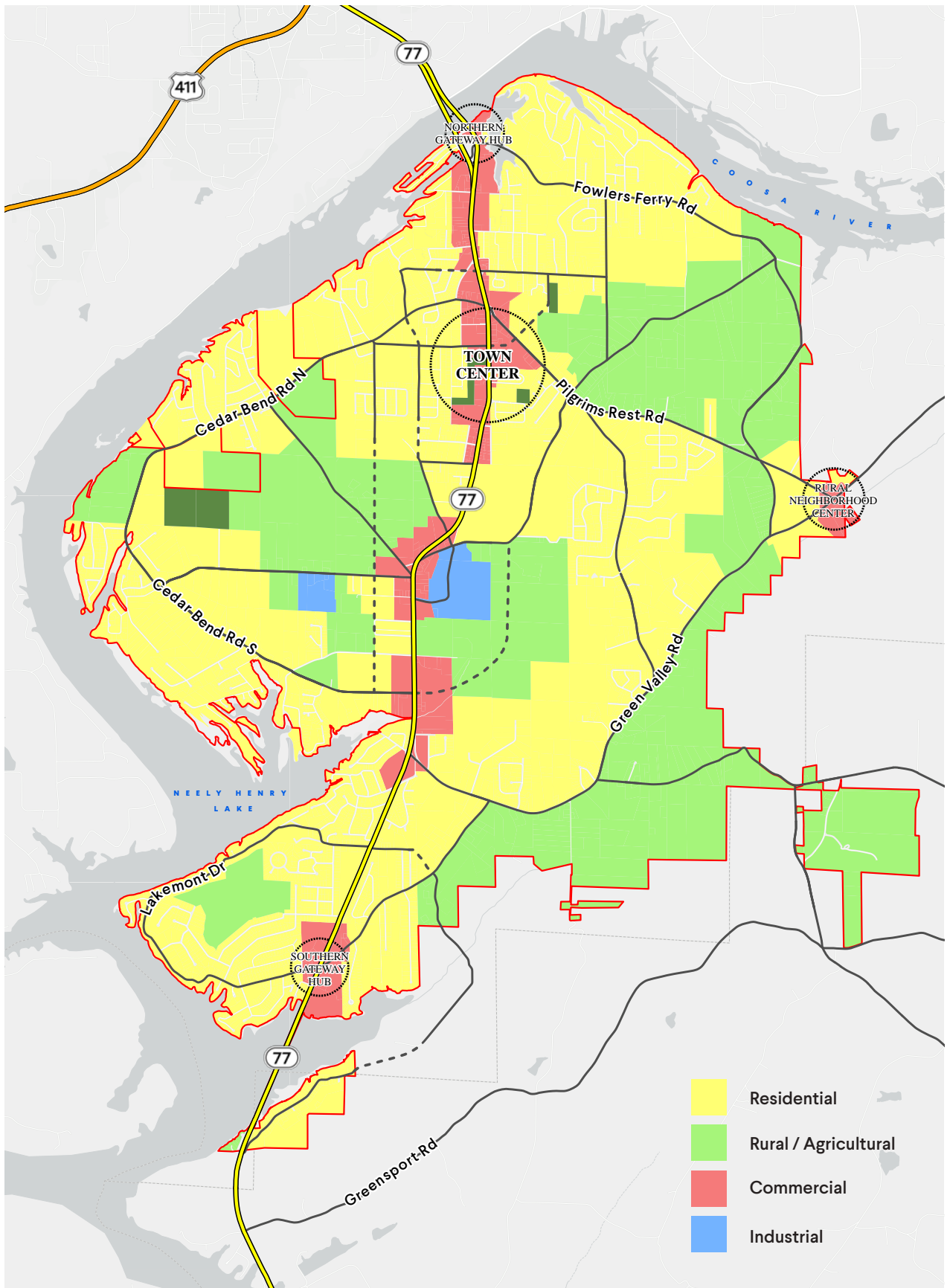
## Future Land Use Map (FLUM)

The following is a map of intended future land uses for the City of Southside. It is a visual representation of how the community would like to see the city develop over the next 15 to 20 years and serves as the primary guide to where and how various development typologies should be located in the future. The map shows a common vision for where future homes and businesses should be located, where rural areas should be protected, and where recreational opportunities should be expanded. IT IS NOT A ZONING MAP. Whereas the city's zoning map dictates which land uses, densities, and site designs are permitted on specific parcels, this Future Land Use map does NOT change the individual property rights currently permitted under Southside's existing zoning ordinance. The Future Land Use map does NOT require development or redevelopment of properties in accordance with its defined areas. Rather, this map serves as a framework to guide local policymakers in land use and development planning, including future zoning or rezoning requests by individual property owners.



Existing Land Use

This map is the result of an iterative process that involved multiple rounds of input from both local civic leaders and the general public. As such, it is a shared vision for the future that is reflective of the collective Southside community's aspirations and should be utilized by local policymakers to help make that vision a reality. The first iteration of the map originally envisioned a denser future development scenario, but after feedback from some of the community voicing concern over the intensity of development, the scenario was revised to scale back on the total area for neighborhood and commercial development and include greater reserves of rural land and lower density housing.



Future Land Use Map

# Commercial

The final version of the Future Land Use Plan envisions increased commercial development along the city's primary Highway 77 corridor, with continuous development from Southside Landing at the Coosa River down to the intersection with Sunset Drive near the Southside Water Department. Additional commercial areas along Highway 77 would include the area from Brown Cir N to Abernathy Cir N, the area from Thompson Rd to Broughton Spring Rd, and the area around Lakemont Dr and Slasham Rd. A small commercial area will also be located off Highway 77 at the intersection of Pilgrims Rest Rd and Green Valley Rd.

## Signature Commercial Districts

Included in the future commercial areas on this map are four signature commercial districts that would incorporate a combination of well-designed retail, office, and residential space. These mixed-use hubs include a higher density town center on Highway 77 around Southside City Hall, two medium density lakefront gateway hubs located at the highway entrances to the city, and one lower density rural neighborhood center on Green Valley Rd at its intersection with Pilgrims Rest Rd. Walkability and a mixture of uses will be essential features of these districts.

Example Character



Supported Uses

- Vertical mixed-use
- Office
- Commercial / retail
- Civic / institutional
- Hotel / accommodation
- Small scale multi family residential
- Townhomes, duplexes
- Parks / open space

## Corridor Commercial

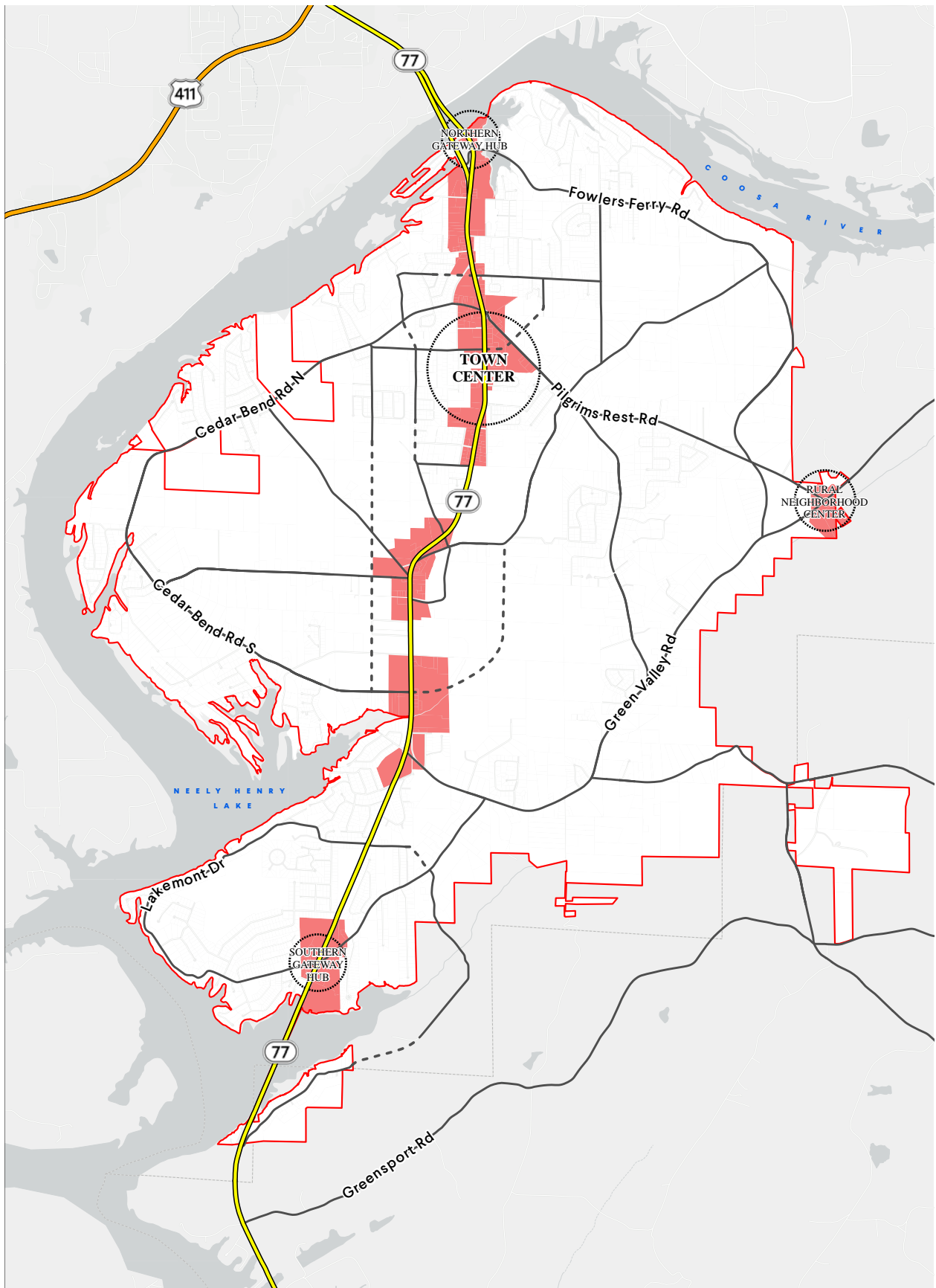
Elevated commercial corridors with enhanced facades and site design standards will be situated in strips along Highway 77 between the signature commercial districts. This highway style of commercial development will be limited to controlled areas in order to prevent runaway sprawl and traffic congestion along the city's main arterial roadway. These areas will be geared more toward motorists and have more homogeneous commercial uses. Architectural standards and density requirements will be higher than current conditions, but will not be as stringent as the signature commercial districts. Important design features include buildings that front Highway 77 with parking in the rear, sidewalks, and signage regulations.

Example Character



Supported Uses

- Commercial/ retail
- Office
- Civic/ institutional



## Neighborhood Residential

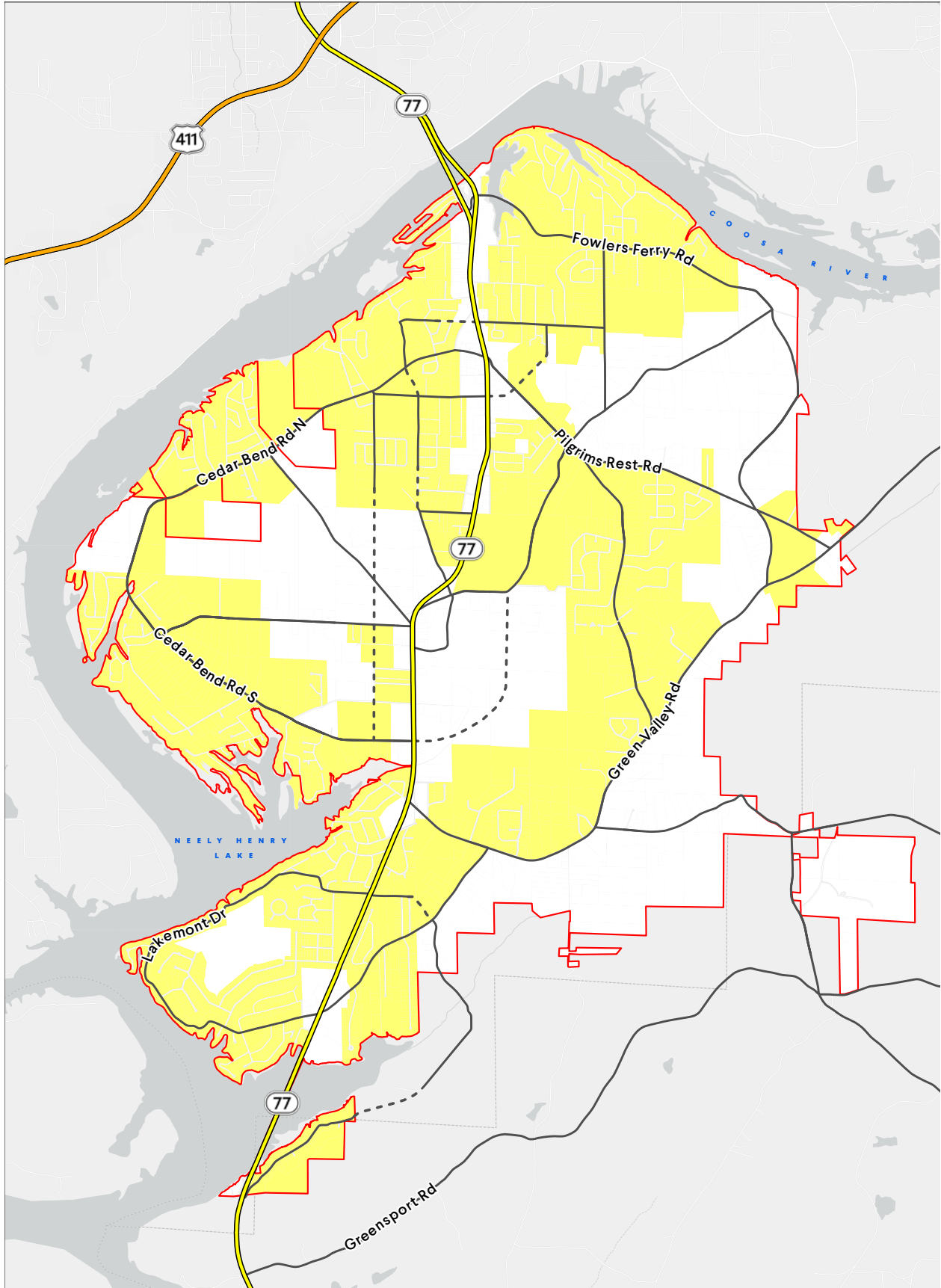
The neighborhood residential category is the area in which mid to higher density subdivision development will be contained. A significant majority of residents expressed support for continued growth in the city, so these areas are critical in providing space for future residential development to anchor that growth. Market pressures are likely to focus neighborhood residential development in areas near the riverfront and near active commercial districts, as reflected in the Future Land Use Plan. Neighborhood residential areas adjacent to the future signature commercial districts should permit higher density development patterns such as townhomes and garden homes in order to support the walkability and mixture of uses in those districts.

### Example Character



### Supported Uses

- Single family residential, detached (medium density or higher)
- Single family residential, attached (townhomes, duplexes)
- Civic / institutional
- Parks / open space



## Light Industrial

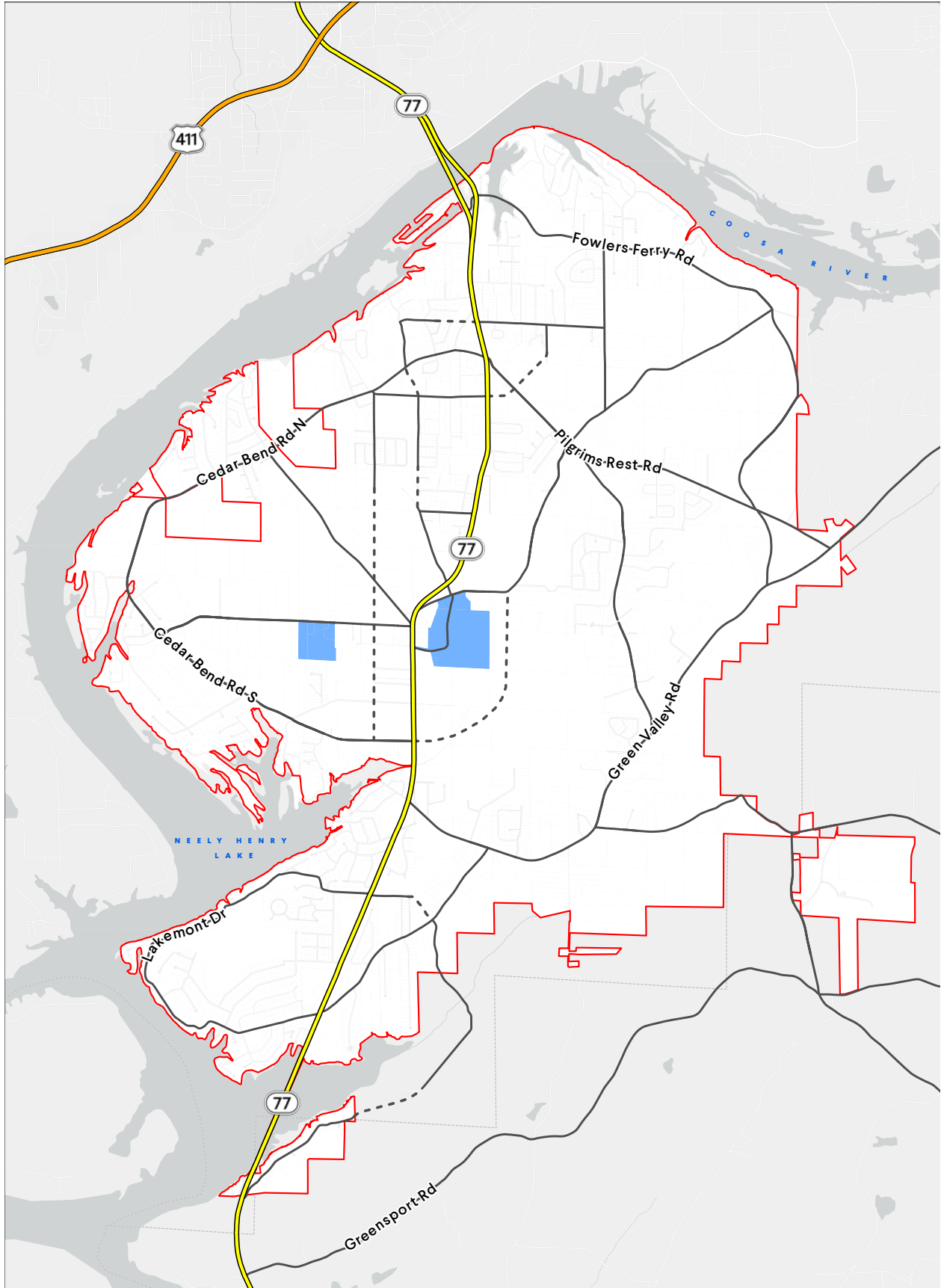
Included in the Future Land Use Plan are two areas with strong potential to develop as light industrial parks. The light industry forecasted for these areas would include smaller scale manufacturing of consumer-oriented goods in facilities designed to completely confine noxious byproducts such as noise, odor, dust, and glare in enclosed buildings. Pollution-producing heavy industry (such as rendering plants, etc.) will NOT be permitted in these areas. The light industrial districts are also intended for the development of office/warehouse uses. Including areas for light industrial development in the city is essential to support expansion of the local jobs market and Southside's overall economic development

### Example Character



### Supported Uses

- Light industry
- Warehousing / distribution
- Office



## Rural / Agricultural

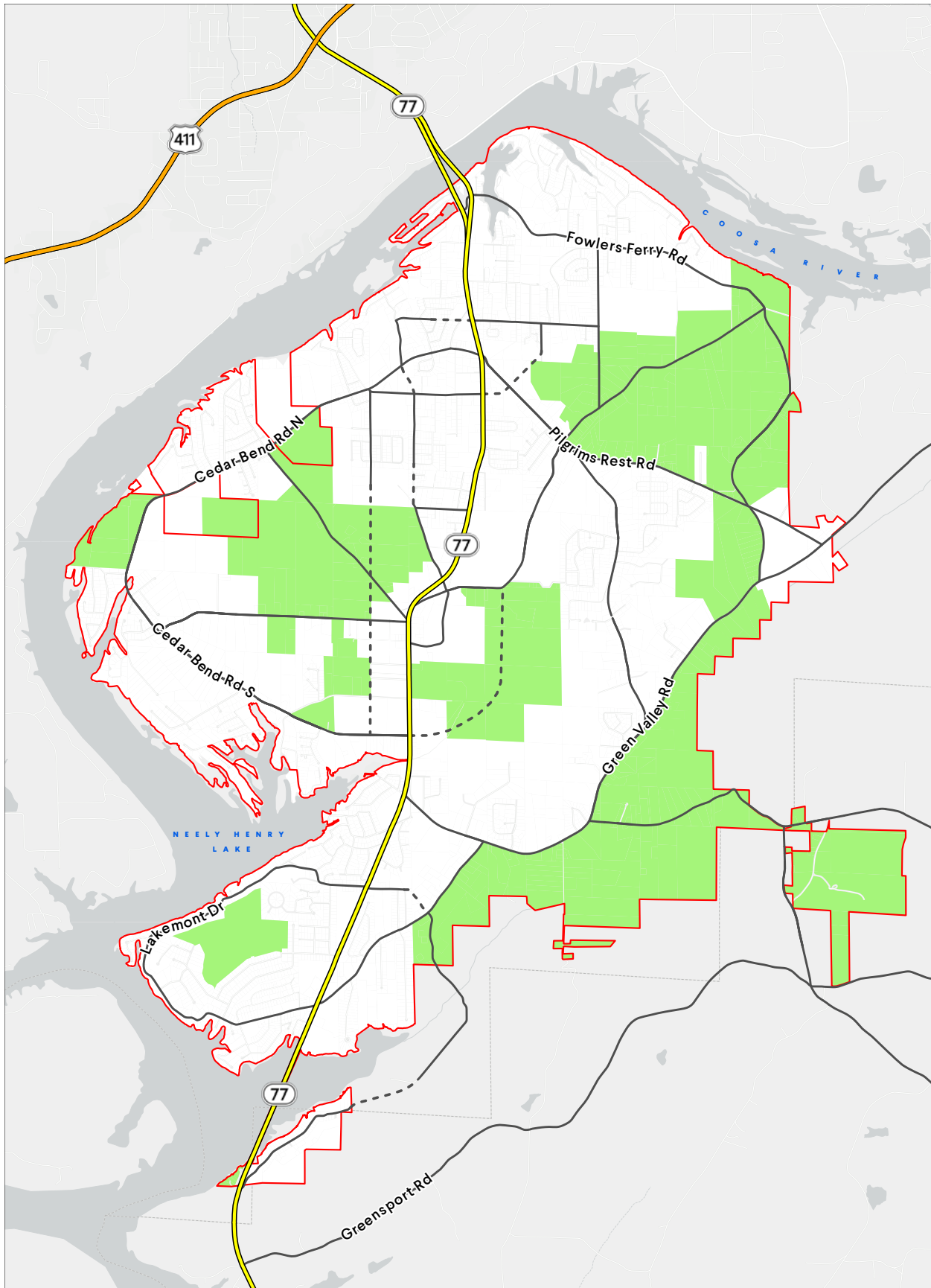
In order to balance the need for future growth and development with the preservation of Southside's agricultural heritage, the Future Land Use Plan sets aside expansive reserves of rural land throughout all areas of the city. These areas are intended for farming, low density rural housing, and the protection of undeveloped natural land and open space. Important rural areas to be protected include: riverfront farmland along Cedar Bend Rd, the Lister Ferry Rd corridor, the Smith Rd/ Fowlers Ferry Rd corridor, a portion of the ridge on Lakemont Dr, and most land south of Green Valley Rd.

### Example Character



### Supported Uses

- Single family residential, detached (low density)
- Agriculture / farming
- Passive fields / open space
- Natural / undeveloped wooded land



## Annexation

The following is a map of the area that should be considered for potential annexation into the City of Southside. Southside may not annex any territory that is already incorporated within the limits of another municipality. The City of Glencoe is the only municipality with which the City of Southside currently shares a border, although the nearby corporate limits of Gadsden, Rainbow City, and Ohatchee present natural limits to the land around Southside that could potentially be annexed into the city. This plan does not advocate for the annexation of any territory on the opposite side of the Coosa River, but does promote the potential for annexation of the holes in Southside's current city limits along Cedar Bend Road as well as territory along the stretch of Green Mountain from the city's current limits up to the northern side of Greensport Road. The potential annexation area depicted lies within Etowah and Calhoun Counties and represents the maximum area that the city should consider incorporating into its current limits. There are three methods by which such an area may be annexed into Southside, which could be achieved on a piecemeal basis by bringing individual or groups of willing property owners into the city one by one, or by holding a referendum for the entirety or parts of the proposed area which could potentially involve the annexation of a few opposed owners if a majority is in favor.

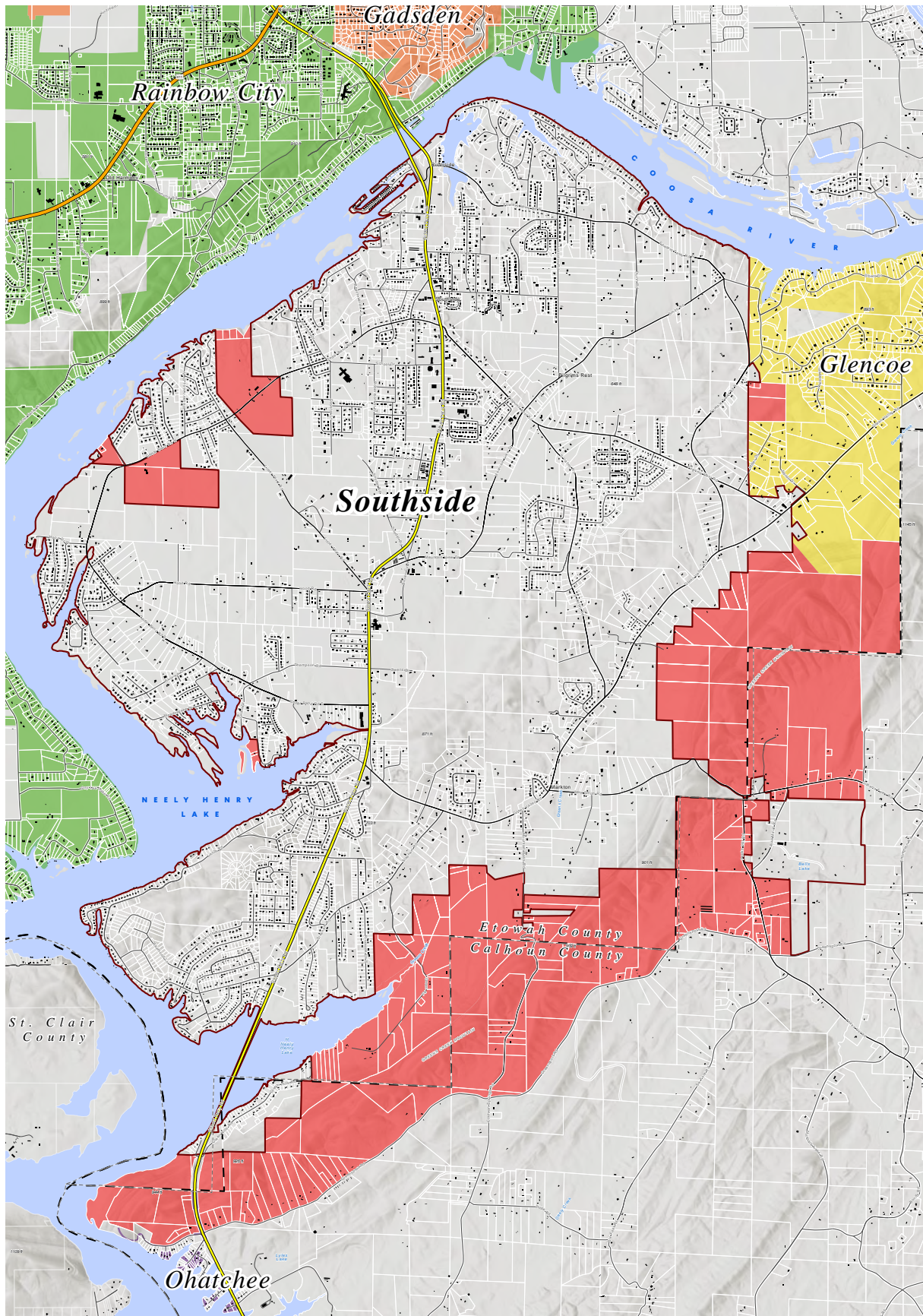
### Annexation Evaluation Criteria

The decision to annex land should result from an assessment that it will benefit Southside. In evaluating an annexation request, the following criteria should be considered:

1. Amount of existing development
2. Potential for imminent new development
3. Potential for significant shaping of development
4. Cost to extend infrastructure
5. Cost to provide ongoing maintenance to infrastructure (roads and utilities)
6. Fiscal benefit: the potential revenue impact to the city and ability to recover costs
7. Potential to support unique transportation opportunities (roads, transit, rail, trails, etc.)
8. Adverse consequences of not annexing the area

## Land Preservation

Protecting land offers numerous environmental benefits. Conserving land and open space can provide habitat for native plants and animals, and enhance ecosystem services. Clean air and water are limited resources. The tree canopy and vegetation serve as critical filters for our air. Wetlands that border our rivers, lakes and streams filter pollution before it reaches our drinking water. The conservation of natural lands and of working farms and forests can generate financial returns, both to governments and individuals, and create significant cost savings. In addition to health and food benefits, conserving land increases property values near greenbelts, saves tax dollars by encouraging more efficient development, and reduces the need for expensive water filtration facilities.



Potential annexation area shown in red

## Housing

Housing plays a vital role in the development and ongoing health of the city by shaping the character and livability for the residents. Housing also directly impacts population density, transportation, education, and the economy. Because of the diversity of urban areas, and the desire for future growth, retail and industry, it is vital that cities provide a diverse range of housing options for potential residents. Southside needs to evaluate its housing mix and determine types of housing and locations where new options can be added.



Residential subdivision in Southside

## City Services

Cities not only have the responsibility to maintain their existing infrastructure, but as the city grows in population and size they also need to expand the services they provide. This includes basic maintenance, like repaving roadways and maintaining sidewalks, but also includes expanding services to a larger footprint as the city grows. During the Fall of 2022, the City Council approved the construction of a new Fire Station one mile south of the current fire station attached to City Hall. These new and updated facilities will allow the Fire Department to better serve the city.



Future Fire Station site

## Corridor Zoning Study

During the public outreach part of the planning process it was determined from the community survey that residents support changes to improve the aesthetic quality of development along the Hwy 77 corridor. The suggested improvements range from programmatic suggestions, to design standards.



Southside Water Works offices

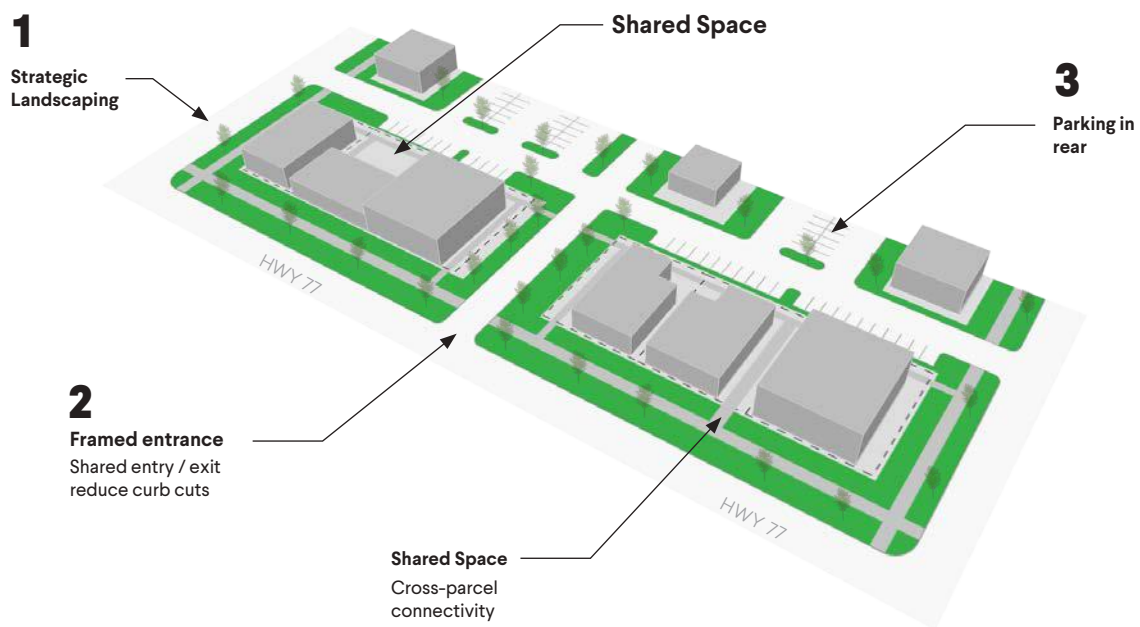
The purpose of updating the corridor standards is so that the city can implement unique design requirements to ensure the safe flow of traffic and provide for compatible development along important major roadways. The new site regulations will include specific design standards for signage, site access, parking requirements, landscaping buffers, inter-parcel connectivity, and other corridor design standards.

By improving the pedestrian infrastructure along the highway and specifically in the Village Center area the city seeks to create a safe, connected, and walkable environment that can be enjoyed by residents without having to get in their car and drive from place to place. There are significant environmental and health benefits to these type of improvements.

First, creating infrastructure that allows people to be more mobile promotes an active and healthy lifestyle. There are also obvious environmental advantages to promoting walkable communities that are not singularly dependent on cars for every form of mobility

These improvements are also more attractive to developers and new businesses looking to come to the area. Dense areas like the proposed Town Center in the Village Center district gives retailers and businesses opportunities to locate in areas with more visibility. Mixed use areas also allow the potential for housing, another incentive to developers. Living, working, and shopping in designated areas opens up many opportunities in the service industry.

The illustration below demonstrates how site specific design standards can be improved to enhance the Highway 77 corridor.



# Land Use Recommendations

---

Ensure the city's zoning regulations match and help achieve the city's priorities

## ACTIONS

- Review and update the city's zoning ordinance and map based on the plan.
- Develop land-use regulations that will protect the city's small-town charm.
- Update the city's zoning ordinance and map to allow for retail development in the city hall area.
- Update the city's zoning ordinance and map to allow for retail development at Southside Landing.
- Update the city's zoning ordinance and map to allow for denser residential adjacent to future retail development areas.
- Update the city's zoning ordinance and map to allow for denser residential adjacent to city parks.
- Update site design standards for commercial properties on Highway 77.
- Prioritize development in areas already adjacent to development that are served by city infrastructure.
- Ensure that the city zoning map matches the city's current infrastructure and service capabilities.



COMMUNITY  
CENTER

# Action Matrix





The following pages organize the plan recommendations and actions into a matrix. The matrix is a quick reference for the city and residents, and acts as a checklist for implementation. The matrix makes it easy to find specific actions related to the big ideas, the priority for the project or policy is, the time frame that it could be completed, and the local partners that could have potential involvement. The following explains the columns found in the matrix.

### **Action**

The specific action item related to the Big Idea

### **Type**

What the action is, a project to work on or a policy for the city

### **Page**

Where to locate the supporting documentation in the plan

### **Priority**

Where does this action rank among others

### **Time frame**

Immediate (1-6 months), Short-term (12-18 months), Mid-term (3-5 years), Long-term (10-15 years).

### **Cost**

Low (less than 100k), Moderate (500k) and High (over 1mil).

### **Status**

Keep notes on the statuses of each project: next, in-progress, or completed

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
<b>Expand public access opportunities to the Coosa River</b>				
Continue to develop and expand Southside Landing to create a regional destination.	Policy, Project	22	1	A regional destination
Incentivize canoe, kayak, and paddleboard rentals at Southside Landing.	Policy	21	1	An enhanced recreational opportunity at Southside Landing
Partner with Etowah County to promote and develop day recreation and possible camping on the Coosa River islands northwest of the city.	Policy, Project	21	1	A unique and marketable recreational experience
Acquire riverfront land in the Buck's Island area or near the city's southern gateway to develop a small park and boat put-in.	Policy, Project	21	2	Increased river access for residents and visitors in the south of the City
Acquire riverfront land in the Cedar Bend Road area to develop a neighborhood-scale park and boat put-in.	Policy, Project	21	2	Increased river access for neighborhoods
<b>Promote public land and trails on the city's and region's mountains and r</b>				
Develop a nature trail on the mountain slope above Lakemont Drive to provide a trail amenity for the city and this growing residential area.	Project	24	2	A natural trail amenity
Create momentum to develop trails along creeks, in floodplains, and on mountain slopes in the city.	Policy	24	2	A trail oriented community

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Develop a master plan of the city property in conjunction with a developer and ALDOT	Completed Master Plan Developer Interest	Immediate	Staff, Etowah County Economic Development, Consultant	N/A	
Market the potential for a local or regional business to operate boat rentals	A local business sets up summer operation	Immediate	Staff, Local Business	N/A	
Support a county effort to scout potential location on an island and develop a strategy	Approval is granting for brush clearing at a strategic location	Short Term	Staff, Etowah County	N/A	
Notify the community of this effort to garner support and identify potential parcels	A parcel is acquired Funding is raised	Mid Term	Staff	N/A	
Notify the community of this effort to garner support and identify potential parcels	A parcel is acquired Funding is raised	Mid Term	Staff	N/A	

## bridges

Discussion with land owner, or potential residential developer	Residential developer approval Preliminary trail design study	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Market the trail potential from this plan to the community	Landowner support for strategic trail easements	Mid Term	Staff, Community Leaders	\$0	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
Promote a county initiative to develop a regional park on Green Mountain west of Highway 77 that includes regional trail connections.	Policy, Project	23	1	A regional recreation amenity

## Improve and diversify existing city park recreational programming.

Expand Southside Landing to provide unique retail opportunities for the park.	Policy, Project	22	1	A regional destination
Continue to develop a cohesive riverwalk dock amenity at Southside Landing.	Project	22	1	A regional destination
Create a beach amenity at Southside Landing.	Project	22	1	A regional destination
Redevelop the city's soccer fields to become a passive park with trails, a lawn, a dog park, playgrounds, and pavilions.	Project	22	2	A highly used neighborhood park
Update Southside City Park to include an improved playground, updated basketball courts, pickleball courts, and a park lawn.	Project	21	2	A highly used citywide park
Expand the Southside Softball Complex into the adjacent city-owned land to include soccer, trails, lawn space, parking, and pavilions.	Project	21	1	A highly used citywide/ regional park

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Meeting with Etowah, Calhoun County, and Alabama Power	Entity support, Site Concept Plan	Mid Term	Staff, Etowah County, Calhoun County, Alabama Power	N/A	
Park Master Plan with Developer Input	Developer Interest	Immediate	Staff	N/A	
Park Master Plan with Cost Estimates	Park improvement economic development study complete, Specific project funding discussions	Short Term	Staff, Etowah County	N/A	
Park Master Plan with Cost Estimates	Approval from Corp of Engineers, Specific project funding discussions	Short Term	Staff, Etowah County	N/A	
Park Master Plan with Cost Estimates	New soccer fields at expanded softball complex	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Park Master Plan with Cost Estimates	Successful ADECA grant application	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Park Master Plan with Cost Estimates	Successful ADECA grant application	Short Term	Staff	N/A	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
Work with ALDOT to transform the historic bridge into a pedestrian park feature of Southside Landing.	Project	38	1	A regional destination

## Implement new park opportunities

Continue to develop a new park adjacent to City Hall to catalyze this area to become a town center.	Project	23	1	A new park that supports new adjacent retail development
Develop or incentivize an RV park at or near the city's southern gateway.	Policy, Project	21	1	New RV park in city

## Develop trails to connect citizens to community amenities

Promote trail easements with large landowners and land developers for the potential of greenways.	Policy	24	2	A trail oriented community
Develop an on-street trail loop to connect Barney Hood Stadium, Southside High School, Southside Softball Complex, and Southside Elementary School.	Policy, Project	36	2	On street trail connecting community assets
Promote the creation of a non-profit trail organization with surrounding counties and the East Alabama Planning Commission.	Policy	24	2	A trail oriented community
Work with Gadsden, regional entities, and the Alabama Scenic River Trail to develop blueway trail potentials and marketing in the area.	Policy	24	2	A successful regional blueway attraction

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Park Master Plan with Cost Estimates	Successful RAISE Grant	Mid Term	Staff, Etowah County	N/A	
Retail developer recruitment with park plan	Park and adjacent retail construction begins	Immediate	Staff, Etowah County Economic Development, Consultant	N/A	
Market sale of property to potential RV park developer	Sale of property	Immediate	Staff	N/A	
Trail connection discussions with subdivision developers	First neighborhood trail planned	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Prioritize first section for improvement for ALDOT grant application	Successful ALDOT Grant	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
A city or county trail organization is formed	Trail organization develops a natural trail with volunteers	Short Term	Staff, Etowah and Calhoun County	\$0	
Meet with entities to discuss plan for future river access points	Marketing material for Lake Henry Neeley/Coosa River Blueway	Short Term	Staff, Etowah and Calhoun County	\$0	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
Work with ALDOT to define the potential of buffered trails along portions of Highway 77.	Policy	24, 32	3	A important trail connecting and redefinition of HWY 77

## Proactively pursue park and trail grant funding

Prioritize specific parks and recreational improvements to apply for annual ADECA grants.	Policy		1	Improved parks and recreation in the city
---	--------	--	---	---

## Match the growth of the city with the growth of recreational quality and

Create population growth milestones to match with parks and recreation service expansion.	Policy		2	Improved parks and recreation in the city
Include parks and recreation priorities into capital budgets as the city's tax base expands.	Policy		1	Improved parks and recreation in the city

## Improve connectivity and access to walking and biking throughout the c

Update subdivision regulations to require the construction of sidewalks and street trees.	Policy	35	1	A better connected community
Update subdivision regulations to require road connectivity between subdivision developments.	Policy		1	A better connected community

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
ALDOT Meeting	ALDOT approval and section priority confirmed	Long Term	Staff, Etowah County	\$0	
access					
Begin this years ADECA park grant application	Successful ADECA grant application	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Parks and Recreation master plan					
Parks and Recreation master plan	Specific growth matrix	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Integrate one park project into next years capital budget	Council approves funding for next park project	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
city					
Draft updated subdivision regulations reviewed by Planning Commission	First two Neighborhoods from different developments connected	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Draft updated subdivision regulations reviewed by Planning Commission	First neighborhood with sidewalks is built in south-side	Immediate	Staff	\$0	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
Strategically implement multi-modal right-of-way improvements (sidewalks and bike lanes) by integrating these improvements with the city's current road improvement needs list.	Policy, Project		1	Access walking and biking, Improved access to exercise, Higher land values,
Develop a road network surrounding the Southside Softball Complex as a part of the park expansion to induce strategic residential development.	Project	33	2	A strengthened connection adjacent to amenities
Extend School drive across Highway 77 to connect to Pilgrims Rest Road.	Project	33	2	Improved connectivity and development potential

## Implement consistent road designs based on road types throughout the

Adopt right-of-way design standards using the design sections from this plan.	Policy	32-35	1	Improved road network
Create a city transportation committee to oversee transportation issues and improvements (to meet quarterly)	Policy		1	Committed group improving the cities transportation through thoughtful discussion of improvements
Meet with Etowah County after the adoption of this plan to discuss the coordination of potential transportation improvements.	Policy		1	Coordinated effort to improve transportation
Apply for ALDOT grant Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program II (ATRIP-II) for implementation of the priority road design improvements.	Policy, Project		1	Specific road improvement

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Prioritize first section for improvement for ALDOT grant application	Sidewalk connection between first two community amenities	Short Term	Staff, ALDOT	N/A	
Park master plan with road alignment and cost estimates	Residential development facing a new city park	Mid Term	Staff, ADE-CA	N/A	
Coordination with property owners and potential developers	New townhomes and retail developed along new road	Mid Term	Staff	N/A	

## city

Adoption of ROW sections and Map	New design integrated into road improvement projects	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Outline role and duty of committee, request committee member participation from the community	Committee proposes first ALDOT grant priority to the city council.	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
First meeting with to discuss opportunities	Coordinated ALDOT Grant application	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Prioritize first project for grant funding	Successful ATRIP-II grant	Short Term	Staff	N/A	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
--------	------	-------------	----------	------------------

## Strategically implement on-road trail priorities

Begin implementing a 7.5 mile buffered sidewalk and bike lane loop to connect City Hall, Barneyhood Stadium, Southside High School, Southside Softball Complex, and Southside Elementary.	Policy, Project	36	1	Walking and biking connection between community amenities
Work with ALDOT to implement pedestrian-safe intersections along Highway 77.	Policy		1	ALDOT support for community wide multi modal connections
Apply for the ALDOT grant Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for implementation of the priority sidewalk/bike lane loop.	Policy, Project		1	Implementation of first on street trail in Southside
Prioritize two locations for pedestrian improvements to cross Highway 77.	Policy, Project		1	Improved walking and biking connections and safety
Prepare for yearly ALDOT grant application cycles to implement on-street trails, bike lanes, and traffic safety improvements.	Policy		1	Continued funding effort to create walking and biking opportunities

## Implement safety and aesthetic improvements on Highway 77

Meet with ALDOT after the adoption of this plan	Policy		1	Improved coordination and support implementation
Prioritize and implement landscape improvements at key Highway 77 Intersections (Bridge Split, Lakeview Road & Jordan Drive, Cedar Bend Road & Pilgrims Rest Road, Hood Road & Lister Ferry Road, Green Valley Road & Riverview Drive, and Lakemont Drive & Slasham Road)	Policy, Project		1	Improved HWY 77 Landscaping

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Prioritize first section for on street trail project	First section of trail built	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
First meeting with ALDOT to discuss opportunities	ALDOT support to improve HWY 77 intersection improvement	Short Term	Staff	\$0	
Completed ALDOT TAP application	ALDOT TAP grant selected	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
A design for first intersection priority	A safe pedestrian crossing of HWY 77	Mid Term	Staff	N/A	
Capital budget allocation for ALDOT grant match	2nd consecutive year of ALDOT grant application	Mid Term	Staff	N/A	
Meeting with ALDOT	Prioritized list of ALDOT supported projects	Immediate	Staff, Etowah County, ALDOT	\$0	
Landscaping plan for first priority intersection	ALDOT and property owner support for landscape improvements	Short Term	Staff, property owners	N/A	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
Proactively invest in potential development access roads at key undeveloped properties along Highway 77's commercial areas (Undeveloped land between Exxon Gas Station and Southside Storage)	Policy, Project		2	Improvement development opportunity on HWY 77
Implement an access management Highway 77 corridor plan with ALDOT.	Policy	40	1	Improved safety and development on HWY 77
Implement landscape medians and turn lanes on Highway 77 between the Southside Bridge and Sunset Drive.	Policy, Project	39	1	Improved aesthetic and development on HWY 78

## Advocate and Implement large-scale Highway 77 improvements

Continue pursuing a RAISE grant for a new northbound Highway 77 Bridge.	Policy, Project		1	Regional transportation and destination improvement
Repurpose the historic Highway 77 Bridge as a pedestrian bridge feature at Southside Landing.	Policy, Project		1	Regional park destination
Develop a regional trail route plan to highlight the potential connections made possible by a pedestrian bridge over the Coosa River.	Policy	25, 38	1	Regional trail connection
Support ALDOT efforts to expand the entirety of Highway 77 in the city to a divided 4-lane median highway.	Policy		2	Improved regional transportation

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Meeting with priority property owner to discuss opportunity	Marketing of enhanced development opportunity	Short Term	Staff, property owners	N/A	
First meeting with ALDOT to discuss opportunities	Fist section of median constructed on HWY 77	Mid Term	Staff, Etowah County	N/A	
First meeting with ALDOT to discuss opportunities	Fist section of median constructed on HWY 78	Mid Term	Staff, Etowah County	N/A	
Completed RAISE grant	Grant approval	Immediate	Staff, Etowah County, ALDOT	N/A	
Southside landing master plan	Development opportunity outlined as part of bridge reallocation	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Trail connection map	Trail map used to support bridge reallocation	Short Term	Staff, Etowah County	N/A	
City and multi-county letter of support	Regional ALDOT study	Mid Term	Staff, Multi-County	\$0	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
<b>Create the opportunity for a Town Center development in the City Hall/C</b>				
Update the city's zoning map to rezone the area around the City Hall/Community Center to the Village Center zoning district.	Policy	62	1	Town center retail designation
Update the Village Center zoning district language to fit the best practice development of this area.	Policy		1	Town center retail designation
Establish a development authority in the city to proactively pursue impactful developments.	Policy		1	Improved development potential in the city
Continue to pursue the development of a park to act as a catalyst for a town center development.	Policy, Project	23	1	Town center retail designation
Create a detailed development opportunity plan to outline the specifics of a town center development opportunity.	Policy	48-49	1	Town center retail designation
Consider acquiring the Southside wrestling building to update the building's opportunity as a community center.	Policy, Project		2	Community health amenity
Perform a facility conditions assessment for buildings in the future town center area to outline needed upgrades and potential long-term building changes.	Policy		2	Better understanding of city building's needs and opportunities
Update land uses districts around the potential town center area to allow for denser residential developments (townhomes).	Policy		1	Residential area that supports town center development

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
<b>Community Center area.</b>					
Define specific properties for phase 1 development	City council approval of rezonings	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Review village center language to draft potential updates	City council approves new zoning language	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Implementation discussion with city attorney and peer city	Development authority authorized by city council	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Graphic rendering of park with retail adjacent	Park construction funding leveraged with retail development commitment	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Create a RFQ for a small area design master plan	Meeting with Developer to discuss potential tenants	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Discussion with school system and architect	Heath programming expands into new adjacent park	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Create a RFQ for FCA of city buildings	Buildings life span and short term needs are outlined	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Define specific properties for updated residential zoning	City council approval of rezonings	Short Term	Staff	\$0	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
<b>Implement city gateway and wayfinding signage</b>				
Develop a plan to build gateway signage at the north and south Highway 77 gateways of the city.	Project	51	1	A new community brand at city entrances
Develop a plan to implement matching wayfinding signage along Highway 77 for key community amenities.	Project	51	1	City amenities highlighted on HWY 77
<b>Strategically utilize murals and other forms of public art in gateway areas</b>				
Work with local artists, business owners, and land owners to identify existing opportunities in the city for murals.	Policy, Project	51	1	Beautification and increase city pride
As development occurs in the city integrate public art where possible through a public art funding program.	Policy	51	1	Beautification and increase city pride
<b>Proactively support agritourism as an economic development model for</b>				
Market existing agritourism farmers and events.	Policy	52	1	Improved city marketing
Host a agritourism workshop geared toward local farmers.	Policy	52	1	Expanded community tourism and farming culture

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Create RFQ for signage design and construction	City gateway signage built on HWY 77	Immediate	Staff	N/A	
Create RFQ for signage design and construction	Signage built at key locations along HWY 77	Immediate	Staff	N/A	

## and new development areas

First site for a mural in the city is decided	A list of potential murals is developed with a local artist	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Mural discussion at next staff/developer site plan meeting	First mural at new business	Short Term	Staff	\$0	

## the city.

Press release highlighting agritourism farmers in Southside	Increased events and visitors to the city	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Identify potential speakers and existing farm owners	Existing farmer adds agritourism element to his current operations	Short Term	Staff	\$0	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
Develop and host an agritourism-focused community event in conjunction with individual farmers in the community.	Policy	52	1	Expanded community tourism and farming culture

**Continue developing community events that highlight the assets and culture of the city.**

Continue to hold creative, regularly scheduled community events at the Southside Landing	Policy	52	1	Community pride and creative community branding
Create a community event committee to provide citizen support and leadership for events.	Policy		1	Citizen support for community events
Develop park amenities suitable to host larger-scale community events.	Policy, Project		2	Multi use event grounds
Recommit to an annual city-wide community event like Southside City Fest.	Policy		2	Community pride and creative community branding

**Prioritize catalyst economic development initiatives for the city.**

Prioritize recruitment of 3 national or regional retail businesses that would fill the city's retail gap.	Policy		1	Proactive business recruitment
Market strategic sites in the city for light industrial developments.	Policy	53	1	Expanded economy in the city

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Identify location, farmers to highlight, and activities	Agrotourism event date set	Short Term	Staff	N/A	

## Future of Southside

Continued event scheduling	Six different events scheduled in 2023	Immediate	Staff	N/A	
City council approval for committee	First meeting of committee	Immediate	Staff, Citizens	\$0	
Park master plan that includes event lawn	ADECA grant application	Immediate	Staff	N/A	
Set location and date for 2023 city fest	Vendors list completed for event	Short Term	Staff	N/A	

## Future of Southside

Pairing of 3 target retail developments to potential sites	First development confirmed based on GAP analysis	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Target light industrial sites marketed for ideal development	First target site ground breaking	Immediate	Staff	N/A	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
Meet with Etowah County economic development entities to discuss this plan and economic development efforts.	Policy		1	Partnership for specific economic development actions
Update the city zoning to ensure it is supportive of the city's specific economic development opportunities.	Policy		1	Zoning updated to support city vision
Support the creation of a Southside Chamber of Commerce.	Policy		1	Southside specific business organization

## Ensure the city's zoning regulations match and help achieve the city's pri

Review and update the city's zoning ordinance and map based on the plan.	Policy	61	1	Zoning updated to support city vision
Develop land-use regulations that will protect the city's small-town charm.	Policy		1	Improved commercial development on HWY 77
Update the city's zoning ordinance and map to allow for retail development in the city hall area.	Policy		1	Zoning regulations that supports city vision
Update the city's zoning ordinance and map to allow for retail development at Southside Landing.	Policy		1	Zoning regulations that supports city vision

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Meeting set with Etowah County	A list of coordinated actions is developed	Immediate	Staff	\$0	
Create RFQ to update city wide zoning	Community meeting specific to zoning updates	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
City council and local business support of Chamber of Commerce	First Southside Chamber Meeting	Short Term	Staff	N/A	

## orities

Create RFQ to update city wide zoning	Community meeting specific to zoning updates	Short Term	Staff	N/A	
Adopt updated corridor zoning regulations	First developed approved with update landscaping and site standards	Short Term	Staff	\$0	
Update zoning district map	Development opportunity marketing with supportive zoning	Short Term	Staff	\$0	
Update zoning district map	Development opportunity marketing with supportive zoning	Short Term	Staff	\$0	

Action	Type	Page Number	Priority	Expected Outcome
Update the city's zoning ordinance and map to allow for denser residential development adjacent to future retail development areas.	Policy		1	Zoning regulations that supports city vision
Update the city's zoning ordinance and map to allow for denser residential development adjacent to city parks.	Policy		1	Zoning regulations that supports city vision
Update site design standards for commercial properties on Highway 77.	Policy		1	Improved commercial development on HWY 77
Prioritize development in areas already adjacent to development that are served by city infrastructure.	Policy		1	Updated growth priorities in the city
Ensure that the city zoning map matches the city's current infrastructure and service capabilities.	Policy		1	Consolidated growth strategy

Next Steps	Process Indicators	Time frame	Partners	Cost	Status
Update zoning district map	Residential development opportunity marketing with supportive zoning	Short Term	Staff	\$0	
Update zoning district map	Residential development opportunity marketing with supportive zoning	Short Term	Staff	\$0	
Adopt updated corridor zoning regulations	First developed approved with update landscaping and site standards	Short Term	Staff	\$0	
Adjust infrastructure extension policies	Empty lots in the commercial areas of HWY 77 developed	Short Term	Staff	\$0	
Update zoning district map	Land preservation through infill development	Short Term	Staff	\$0	

# Appendix



# Existing Conditions

---

## Maps

---



# Existing Conditions

## People

Southside is the fastest growing city in the region. Despite a stagnant population in Etowah County, Southside demonstrated consistent population growth over the past two decades. The non-white population of Southside is quickly growing as the elder share of the population also increases.

Growing Population...

**+ 34%**

City Population

Between 2000 and 2020, the population of Southside grew by 2,390.

Aging Population...

**45.2**

Median Age

Between 2000 and 2020, the median age in Southside increased by 7.1 years.

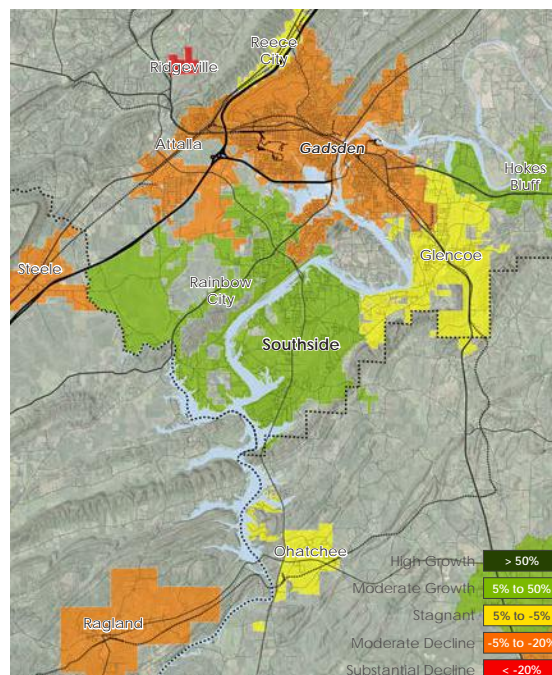
Diversifying Population...

**+ 395%**

Non White Residents

From 2000 to 2020, the non white population grew by 722 people.

Regional City Growth Rates, 2000-2020



City	Growth Rate
Jacksonville	71.2%
Boaz	36.4%
<b>Southside</b>	<b>34.0%</b>
Weaver	27.5%
Sardis City	26.1%
Rainbow City	20.9%
Alexandria	9.2%
Walnut Grove	8.9%
Hokes Bluff	7.2%
Glencoe	4.3%
Ashville	3.8%
Reece City	- 3.0%
Altoona	- 3.7%
Ohatchee	- 4.8%
Saks	- 6.9%
Steele	- 9.2%
Attalla	- 11.6%
Ragland	- 11.7%
Gadsden	- 12.9%
Ridgeville	- 47.5%

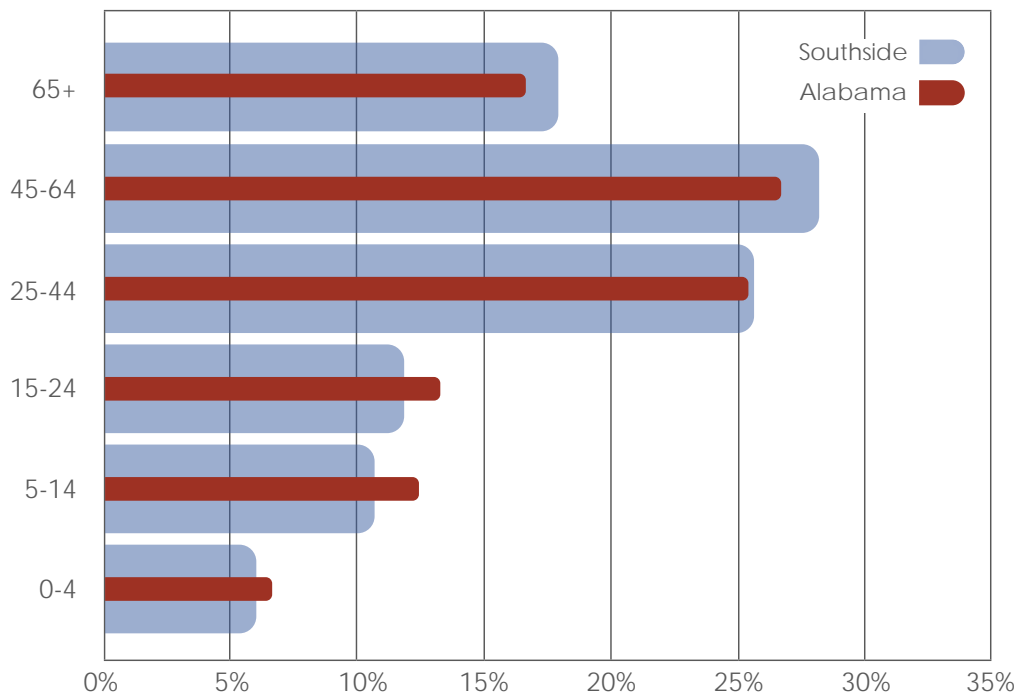
Source: U.S. Decennial Censuses, 2000 & 2020

### Household Types in Southside, 2000-2019

	2000	2019	Percent Change	
Total Households	2,653	3,284	23.8%	↑
Family	2,171	2,314	6.6%	↑
w/ Children < 18	1,008	889	-11.8%	↓
Single-Parent	140	227	62.1%	↑
non-Family	482	970	101.2%	↑
1 person	431	757	75.6%	↑
2 person	1,029	1,382	34.3%	↑
3 person	554	519	-6.3%	↓
4 person	446	437	-2.0%	↓
5+ person	193	189	-2.1%	↓

Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2000 & American Communities Survey (5-year est. 2015-2019)

### Age Groups, City & State in 2019



Source: American Communities Survey (5-year estimates, 2015-2019)

# Prosperity

The economy of Southside has expanded modestly over the past two decades. Among workers who live in Southside, manufacturing and health care are the primary employers. Among workers employed in Southside, food service and educational services are the primary employers.

Increasing Poverty...

**+ 4.7% pts.**

Poverty Rate

While poverty in 2019 was low at 7.9%, it increased since 2010 when it was 3.2%.

Higher Incomes...

**\$73,594**

Median Household Income

The city's median household income in 2019 was \$22,427 higher than Alabama's.

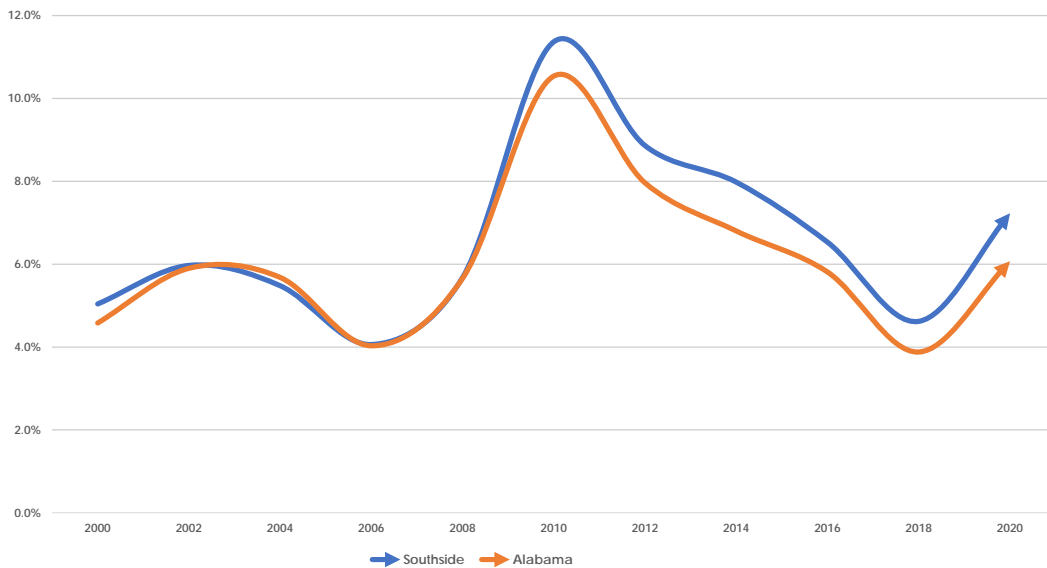
Unemployment Higher than State...

**7.2%**

Unemployment Rate

Southside's average unemployment in 2020 was slightly higher than the state's 6.1% rate.

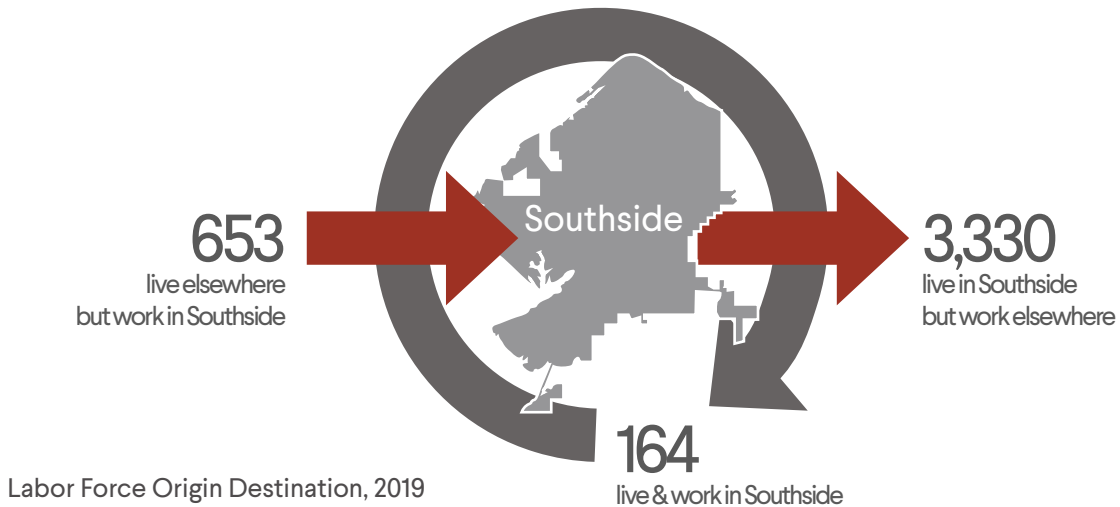
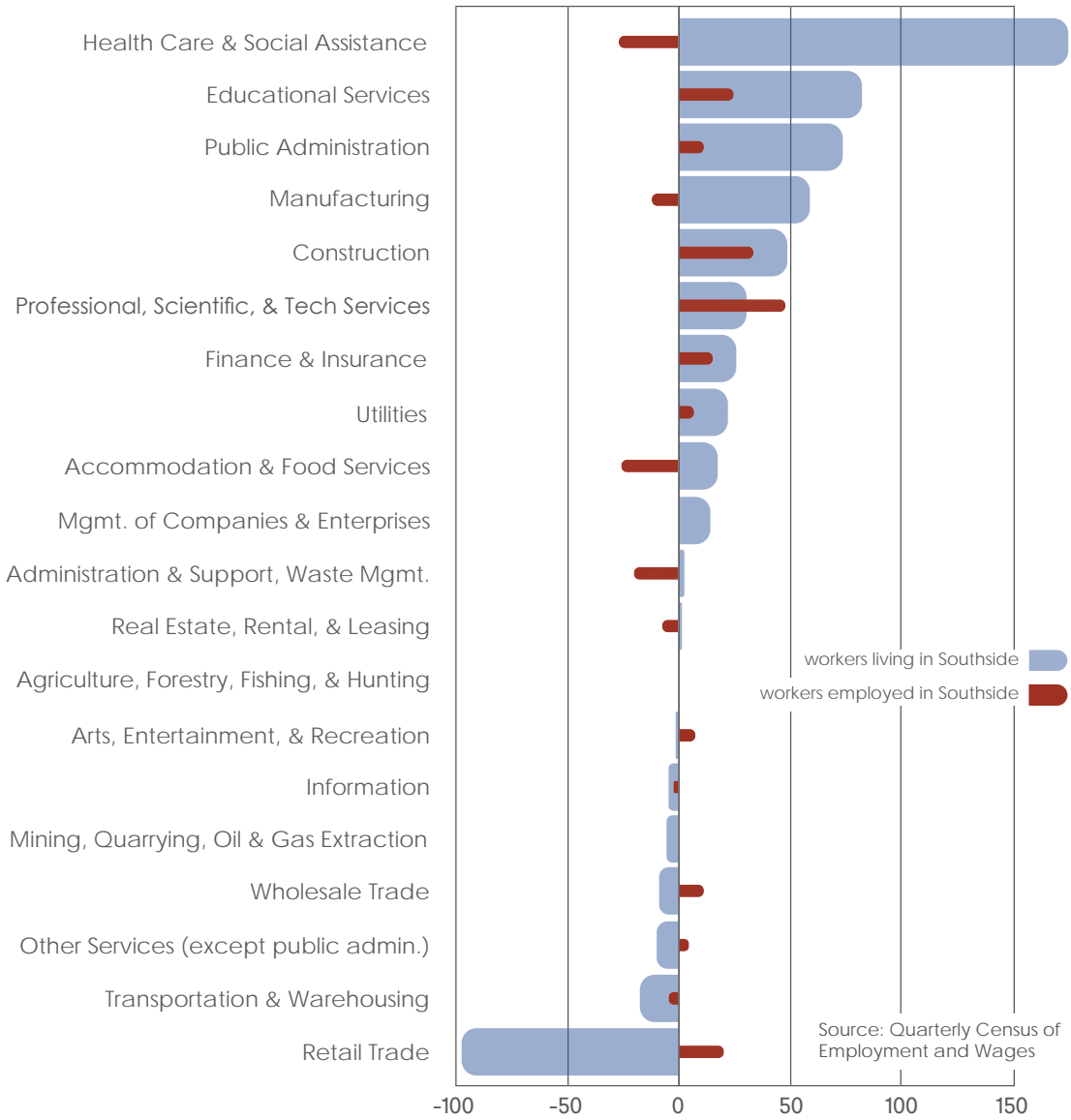
Figure 2.2 - Annual Unemployment Average, 2000-2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, On the Map, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2019

## Change in Employment by Industry Sector, 2000-2019



# Place

Located in northeast Alabama, Southside (filled in red, below) is set in the foothills of southern Appalachia. It is a small city of 19.1 mi<sup>2</sup> in southern Etowah County (shaded in red, below) between Dunaway Mountain and Green Mountain. It is situated along the southern bank of the Coosa River on Neely Henry Lake. The city is a suburban bedroom community in the Gadsden urban area (outlined in red, below), about a 15 minute drive south of downtown. The scenic terrestrial and aquatic landscapes surrounding the city present a strategic opportunity for the city to develop a diversified economy based on outdoor recreation.

Little Housing Diversity...

**0.7%**

Multi-Family Housing Units

Less than 1% of Southside’s housing stock is multi-family. 86.7% is single-family.

Increasing Vacancy...

**10.5%**

Housing Vacancy Rate

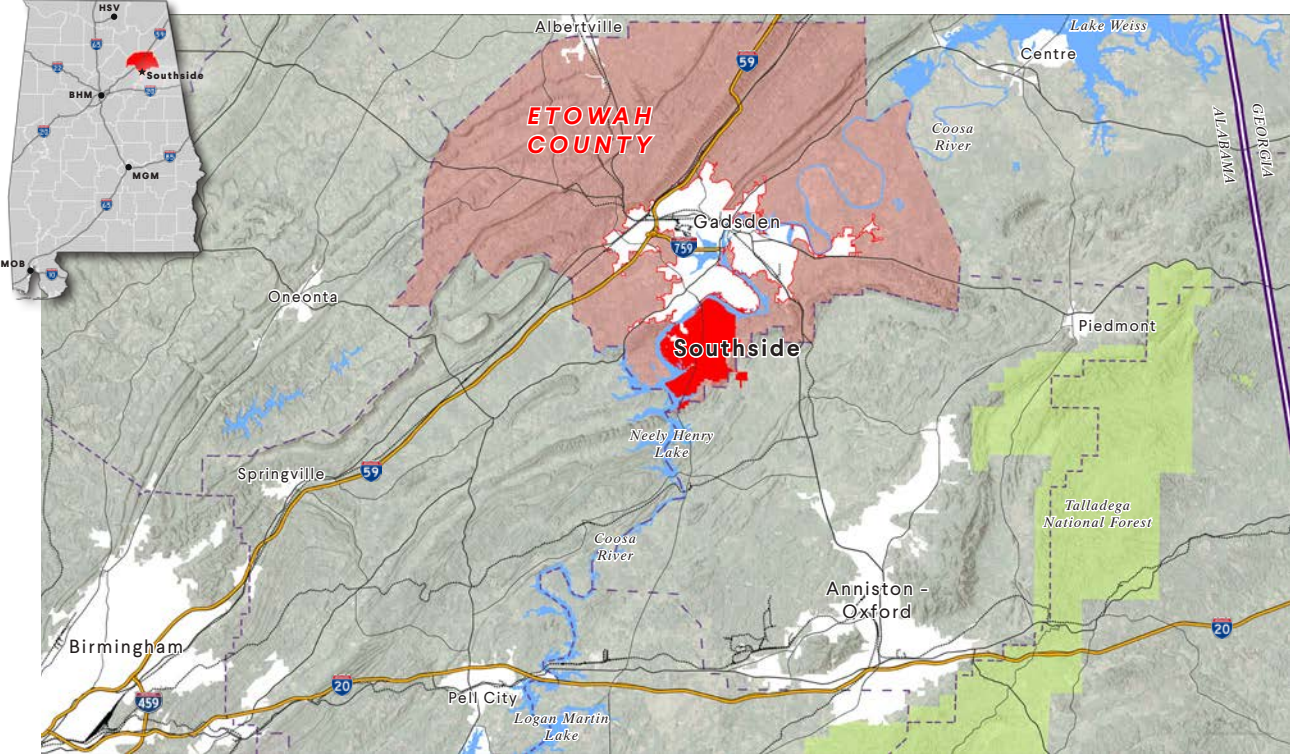
Between 2000 and 2020, housing vacancy increased from 4.7% to 10.5%.

Few Local Employment Options...

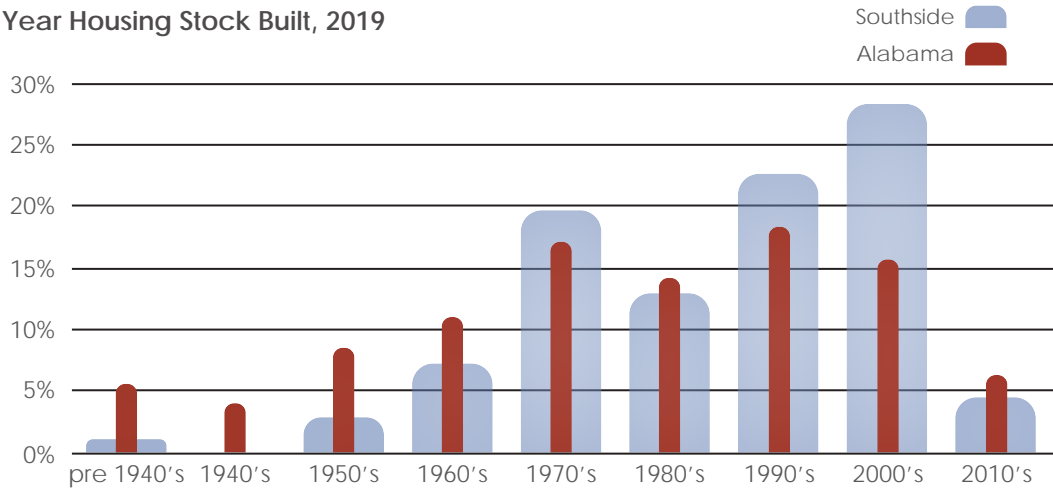
**4.7%**

Local Workers

Less than 5% of employed Southside residents work in the city of Southside.

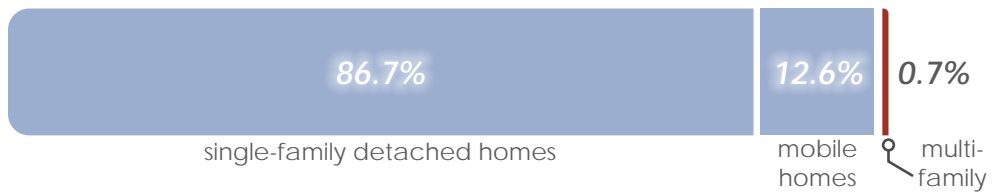


### Year Housing Stock Built, 2019

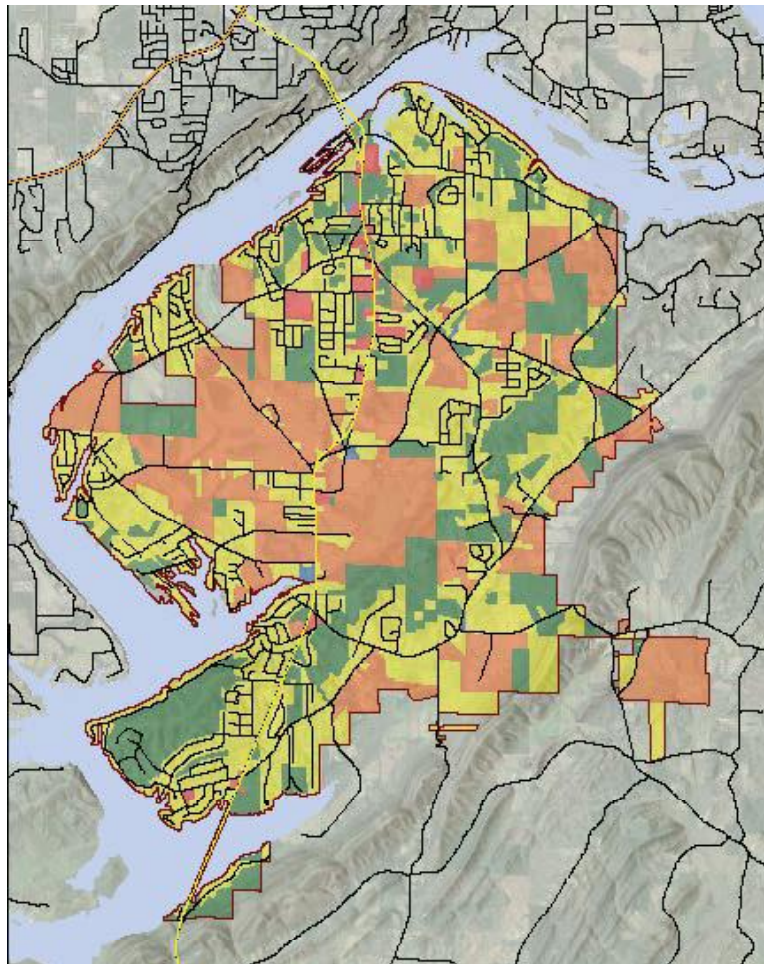


Source: American Communities Survey (5-year est. 2015-2019)

### Type of Housing in Southside, 2019



Source: American Communities Survey (5-year est. 2015-2019)



CITY OF  
**SOUTH***S***IDE**