


FORT PAYNE
FORWARD

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FORT PAYNE, ALABAMA



Planning Commission Resolution Placeholder

The Fort Payne Forward Comprehensive Plan was officially adopted by the Planning Commission on Month ##, 2024



GMC

From the Mayor

As your mayor, I am committed to making Fort Payne a great place to live, work, and play. We are working hard to improve our infrastructure, attract new businesses, and create jobs for our residents. We are also committed to providing excellent public services and ensuring that our city is safe and secure.

I am pleased to present to you the Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Fort Payne. This plan is the result of many months of hard work by our planning team and community stakeholders. It is a roadmap for the future of our city, outlining our vision for growth and development over the next several years.

The Comprehensive Master Plan is a living document that will guide our decision-making as we work to make Fort Payne an even better place to live, work, and play. It is based on extensive research and analysis of our community's needs and priorities, as well as input from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders.



The plan includes a detailed assessment of our current infrastructure, land use patterns, transportation systems, and other key factors that impact our quality of life. It also outlines specific strategies for addressing these issues and achieving our goals for the future.

I am proud to be part of a community that is committed to planning for the future and investing in our city's success. I believe that this Comprehensive Master Plan will help us build on our strengths and overcome our challenges as we work together to create a brighter future for all residents of Fort Payne.

Thank you for your support and participation in this important process. I look forward to working with you as we move forward with implementing this plan.

Sincerely,
Mayor Brian Baine

Moving forward together...
Thank you to all citizens

Citizens of Fort Payne

The city would like to thank its citizens and all that were involved in the planning process. We appreciate your time and interest in the future of Fort Payne. Below are individuals who volunteered their time serve as representatives for the city. They worked with the consultants throughout the development of the plan.

City Council

Brian Baine, Mayor

Walter Watson, Council President
Lynn Brewer, President Pro Tem
Johnny Eberhart
John M. Smith
Phillip Smith

Steering Committee

Brian Baine, Mayor

EJ Bickerstaff
Steve Black
Lynn Brewer
Jimmy Cunningham
Celestine Darnell
Sylvia Hernandez
Dave Latham
Amber McPherson

Chris Meacham
John Montgomery
Susan Mitchell
Colton Penrod
India Penrod
Randy Posey
Daryl Prater
Mary Reed
Scotty Vaughn
Walter Watson

Contents

Introduction

ii

1

Where have we been?

2

City Origins

Community Overview

Existing Conditions

2

Where are we now?

16

Community engagement

Current land uses

3

Where are we going?

34

Plan goals

Plan organization

Gateways

#1 DEKALB PLAZA INFILL

54

Spine

#2 DOWNTOWN ENTRY

74

#3 OLD HOSPITAL SITE

76

#4 DOWNTOWN PARKS

78

#5 QUARRY ADAPTIVE REUSE

80

Transitional

City-wide

4

How do we get there?

120

Action list

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

(Fort Payne 1:125,000)

Introduction

Welcome to Fort Payne Forward! This plan is the result of many months of investment by the residents and leaders of Fort Payne, and the many others who have an interest in its future growth.

A comprehensive plan is a framework that guides the city's future development. Comprehensive plans address the complex systems that make up a city. The following diagram illustrates the systems that are considered in the plan. The themes are analyzed individually, but they are also integrally tied to one another - shown by the interior connections in the diagram below. It is through these connections and points of overlap that we begin to define how a city plans for the future.

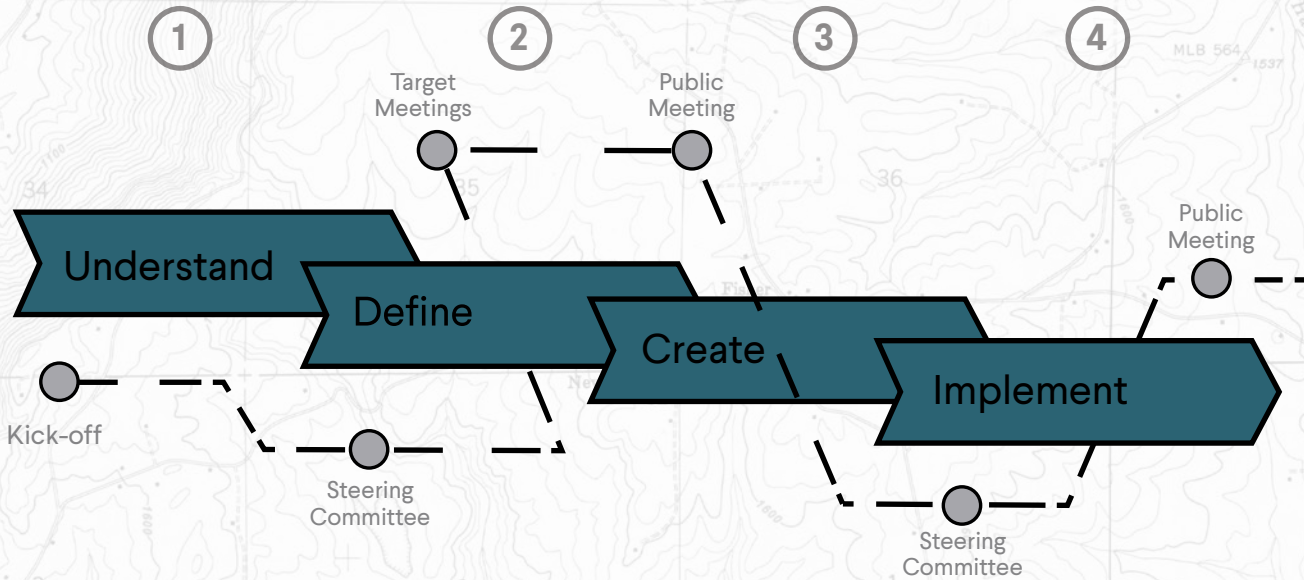
Interconnected Systems

Fort Payne Forward provides a plan for each theme and how each element is interconnected. Each of the themes should be considered in concert to provide the most beneficial outcome for the city of Fort Payne.



Plan Process

The Fort Payne Forward plan development process is defined by four phases, with public engagement occurring throughout.



Each phase is unique, however there is overlap and phases typically occur simultaneously. The dotted line in the graphic represents the public engagement component of the process. Public engagement is not confined to a specific phase. Steering committee meetings are held at regular intervals throughout the process, as well as public meetings.

Understand

This phase is about understanding the city and its people. This is achieved through strategic research, community surveys, and in-person events where residents participate in interactive exercises to share their perspectives on the city.

Define

This phase compiles all of the research and public input and begins to highlight challenges and opportunities. Often a vision statement is developed during this phase that will be used to guide the remainder of the project.

Create

Once opportunities have been identified the plan is designed and developed in coordination with the city. This phase includes public participation. It is woven throughout the process to ensure that the plan is staying true to the vision from the city.

Implement

Finally, once the plan has been created the city begins working on an implementation plan. It is essential to distill the plan to create actionable steps that can be measured.

FORT PAYNE

The comprehensive plan is divided into the four following sections:



Where have we been?

This section looks back to the origins and history of the city, and past development patterns.



Where are we now?

This section compiles the data and existing conditions of the current state of the city.



Where are we going?

This section charts a course for the future by making design recommendations and actions and ideas for the future of the city.



How do we get there?

This section is focused on the implementation and how to accomplish the goals established in the plan.



Where have
we been?



City Origins

Historical Development

Community Overview

Historic Landmarks

Existing Conditions

Current Land Uses

FORT PAYNE, ALABAMA

City Origins

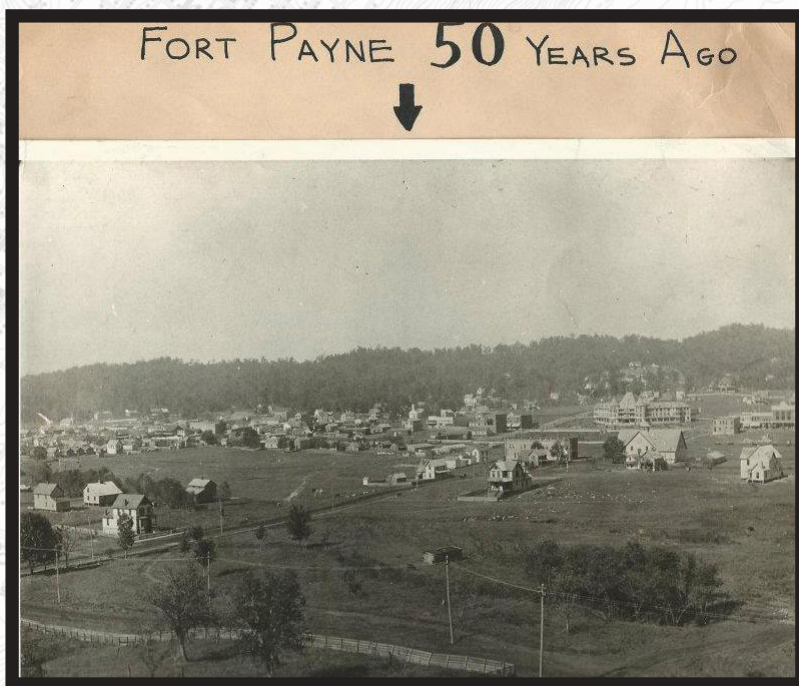
Situated in the mountainous Valley and Ridge section of Northeast Alabama, the city of Fort Payne anchors a broad region centered on Lookout Mountain that was ancestrally home to Cherokee Native Americans and later a part of the Cherokee Nation. Around the mid-1600's, Cherokee leader

William Weber (known as "Big Will") and his band of followers migrated into the area and established several settlements in the valley between Lookout Mountain and Sand Mountain. This valley became known as "Big Wills Valley" and the largest of the settlements established therein was called "Willstown", which is roughly the site of modern-day Fort Payne. For nearly 200 years afterward, the Cherokee maintained their traditional lifestyles and territorial claims to the area until the War of 1812 disrupted the status quo.

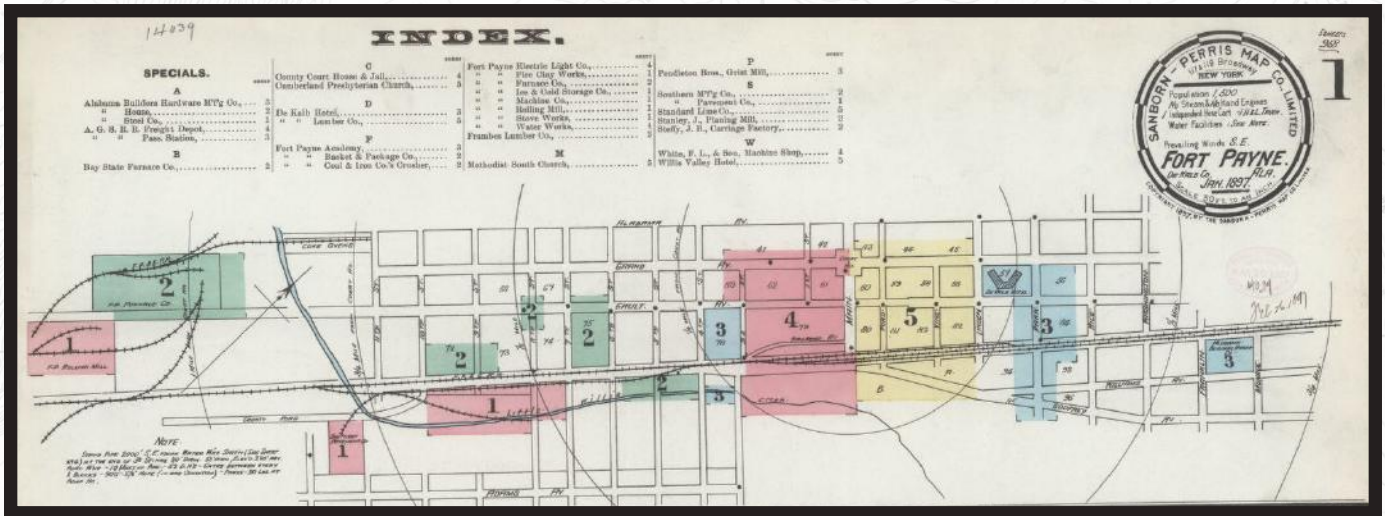


In the War of 1812, General Andrew Jackson defeated the Red Stick faction of the Creek Native Americans, who were allied with the British. The Creek were then forced to cede most of their lands to the US government in 1814. This opened up for the first time large swaths of what was then the Mississippi Territory to widespread settlement by white Americans and brought this flood of migrants in close proximity to the Cherokee lands in Northeast Alabama. This rapid increase in white settlement resulted in statehood for Mississippi in 1817 and Alabama in 1819.

By this time, many of the Cherokee in Willstown and elsewhere had begun to adopt white customs regarding education and settled lifestyles. A Cherokee by the name of Sequoyah, who had fought alongside Andrew Jackson in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, had grown convinced during the Creek War of the necessity of literacy for his people to share information and record their history. It was while living in Willstown in the early 1820's that he developed the Cherokee Syllabary, a system of reading and writing for the Cherokee language that quickly spread among his people. In just a few months the majority of the Cherokee were able to read and write, causing an increase in Cherokee education and political



cohesion that led to the creation and adoption of the Cherokee Nation's constitution in 1827. The following year, Andrew Jackson became president and in 1830 he signed the Indian Removal Act into law, requiring the relocation of Native Americans in existing U.S. states to reservations in the Oklahoma Territory. That same year, gold was discovered in Cherokee lands, greatly increasing U.S. political and military efforts to forcibly remove indigenous residents of the region.



Some Cherokee and others chose to willingly relocate in the early 1830's, although most resisted efforts to displace them. As U.S. speculation of Cherokee lands increased, some tribal leaders grew convinced that relocating to the west was the only way to survive as a nation. In 1835, Cherokee leaders signed the Treaty of New Echota, agreeing to relocate west of the Mississippi River within two years. Feeling betrayed by their leaders, most of the Cherokee still refused to willingly leave their ancestral homeland. In 1838, following the end of the two year period, the U.S. government dispatched the army to forcibly remove the remaining Cherokee who refused to move west, a brutal campaign now known as the Trail of Tears.

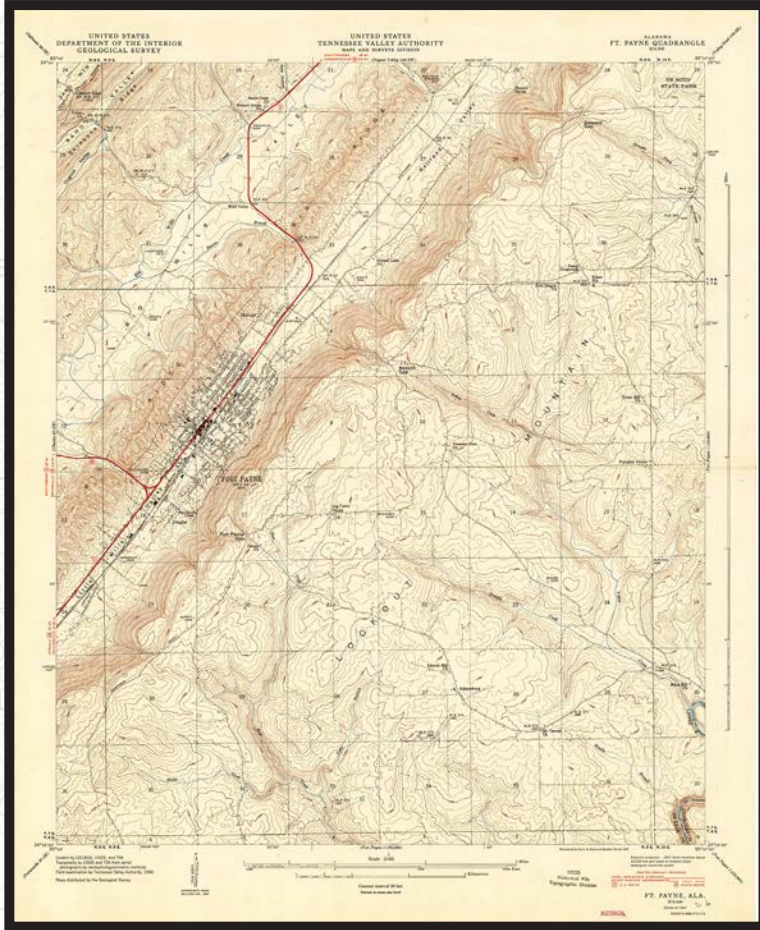
Captain John Payne of the U.S. army arrived in Willstown in early 1838 and approved the site for a Native American stockade, which was constructed and named "Fort Payne" in his honor. Throughout 1838, the Cherokee in and around Willstown were rounded up and held in an internment camp at Fort Payne until they were forced to march during a bitter winter with minimal food and supplies all the way to Oklahoma. The removal of the Cherokee from Willstown and surrounding areas opened this region of Northeast Alabama to white settlement. When this removal was complete, Fort Payne was shut down and the town remained a very small village with just a few buildings for the next 50 years.



In 1852, the Wills Valley Railroad was chartered to connect from an area near Gadsden to the Georgia state line. It was not

until several years after the Civil War that construction of this railroad was completed. By the time of its completion it was called the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad and connected Chattanooga to the mineral region of the Birmingham District through Big Wills Valley. Now with direct access

to an important regional railroad line, investors grew interested in Willstown and the little village began to slowly develop. In 1885, Willstown was still a small rural community of less than 500 people. However, coal and iron ore were discovered there that same year and the Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company was organized in 1888, purchasing 32,000 acres in the area for the creation of a large industrial city. The city was formally incorporated the following year in 1889 under the name Fort Payne in honor of the fort around which the small town had grown.



Thus began a period of speculation mania in Fort Payne that came to be known as the “Boom Years”. From 1889-1893, Fort Payne experienced a massive influx of wealthy northern investors and laborers seeking work in the city’s newly opened mines and factories. In the span of a few years, the population swelled from about 450 to several thousand. It was during this boom period that most of the city’s churches, schools,

businesses, parks, and streets were developed. However, it soon became apparent that the area’s mineral resources had been overestimated in both quality and quantity and the Fort Payne Coal and Iron Company had been operating at a loss. Coupled with a national economic panic, this brought an end to the city’s industrial prowess and boom years by 1893.

Following more than a decade of decline after the city’s boom years, Fort Payne’s first hosiery mill began operation in 1907. This touched off the development of a new industry in Fort Payne that would sustain the city’s economic growth throughout most of the 20th century. The manufacturing of socks and other hosiery items quickly proliferated throughout Fort Payne and DeKalb County. Fort Payne’s hosiery industry grew to become the largest in the world. By the 1990s, the hosiery industry in the Fort Payne area produced more than 3 million pairs of socks per week and employed roughly 5,000 people. Many hosiery manufacturers relocated overseas in the 2000s, but the hosiery industry remains an important employer in the area to this day.





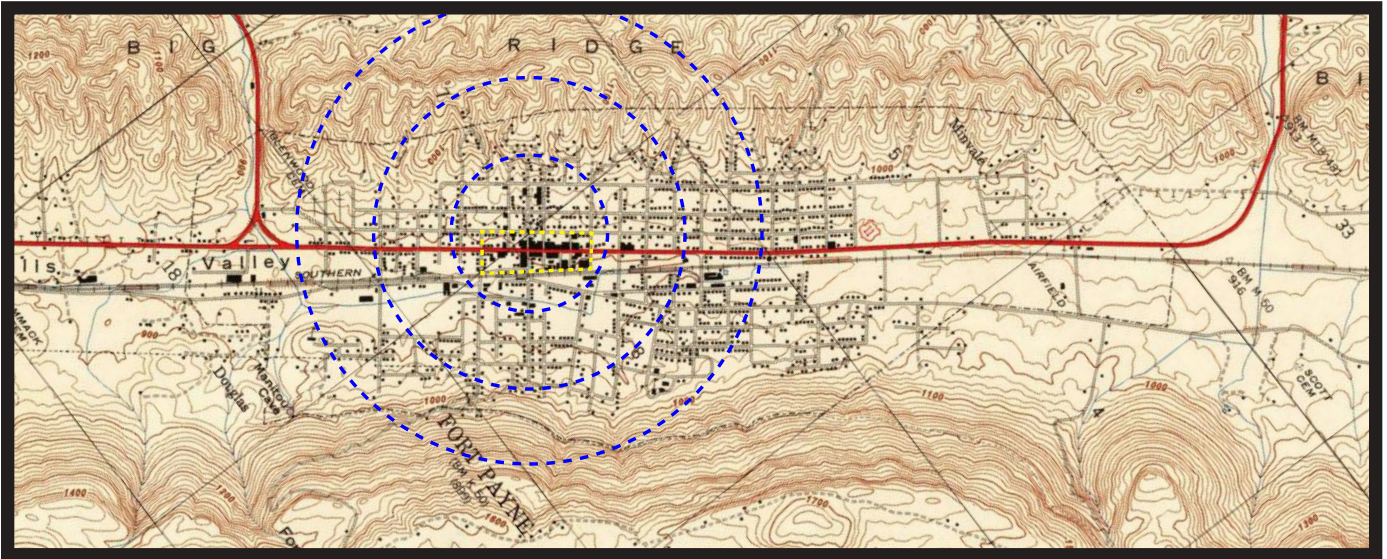
Historic DeKalb Hotel

Historical Development

Fort Payne's collective identity is tied to its historical development and its natural resources. In a city with a history of stark transitions, careful consideration should be made on the type and quality of development it allows, considering its future success and collective identity.

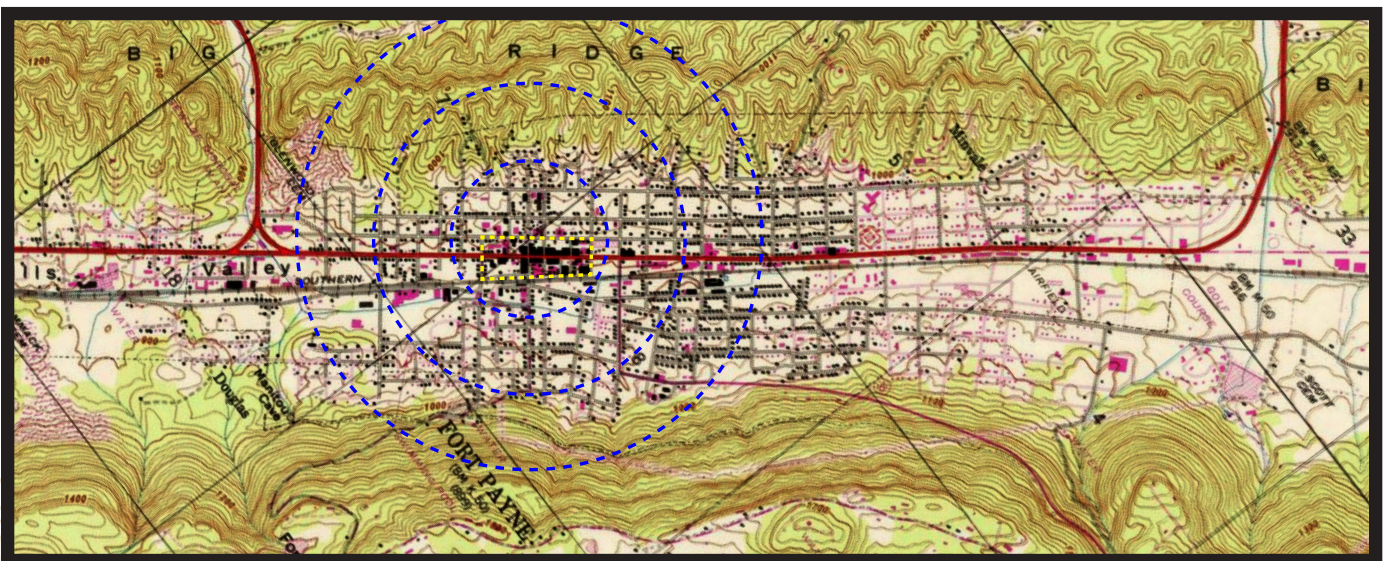
1946 Map

This map of the historical footprint of the city and surrounding valley. Highlighting the scale of the city at the time, the downtown area is outlined in yellow, and in blue are the 5,10, and 15-minute walking radius.



1983 Map

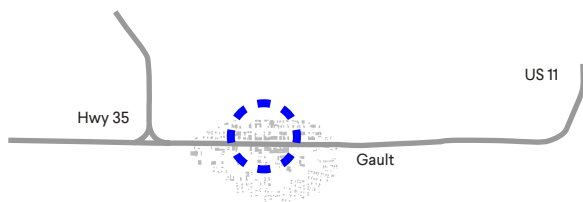
This map shows the expansion of the city's footprint in 37 years since the previous map. Highlighting the scale of the city at the time, the downtown area is outlined in yellow, and in blue are the 5,10, and 15-minute walking radius.



The maps on the previous page show the growth of the city's built environment over a 35 year timespan. Towards the end of WWII and the advent of widespread car ownership, cities began to spread out and were no longer constrained to a compact footprint. Development patterns no longer favored walkability or easy access to the city's offerings. The diagrams below illustrate this pattern.

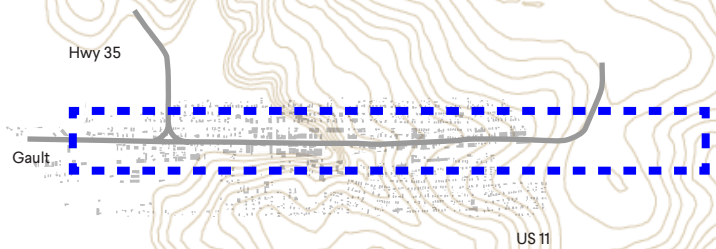
Original Downtown

This historic building footprint map diagram highlights the concentration of retail/commercial.



Highway Development Pattern

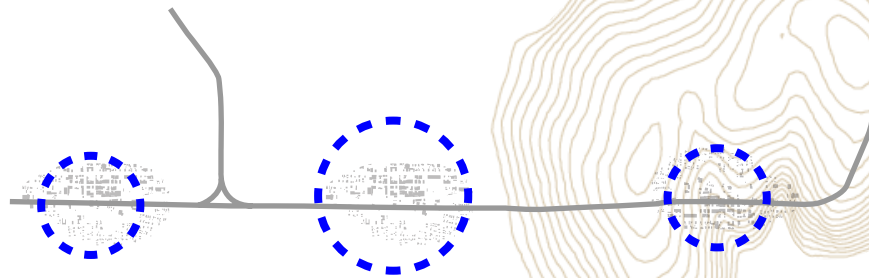
This building footprint map diagram highlights the disbursement of retail/commercial to an automobile and highway-focused development pattern.



Retail growth along the highway pushed housing further away from the main thoroughfare.

“Small Town Charm” Development Approach

This hypothetical building footprint map diagram highlights a development pattern approach that strategically concentrates development into areas that are surrounded by a decreasing pattern of density, which is similar to the historic pattern of development.



The final diagram illustrates healthier, more sustainable patterns of growth. By creating neighborhood centers basic amenity needs for the residential areas are met locally, without requiring traveling great distances. This reduces the footprint of the city and allows the underused highway corridor to be revitalized.

Community Overview

General information about Fort Payne includes its population, demographics, employment statistics, and land area.



Population

14,877

39.8

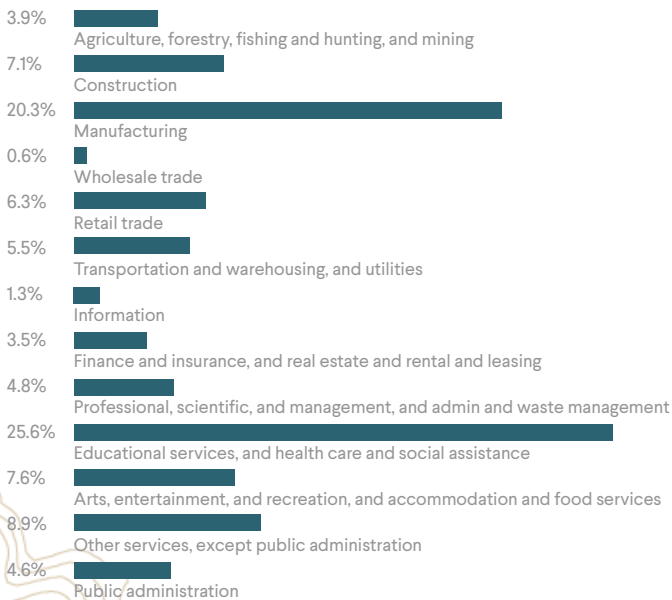
Median Age



\$44,330

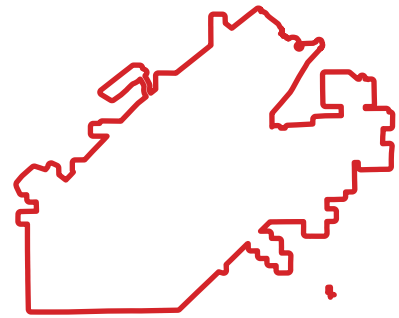
Median Household Income

Industries



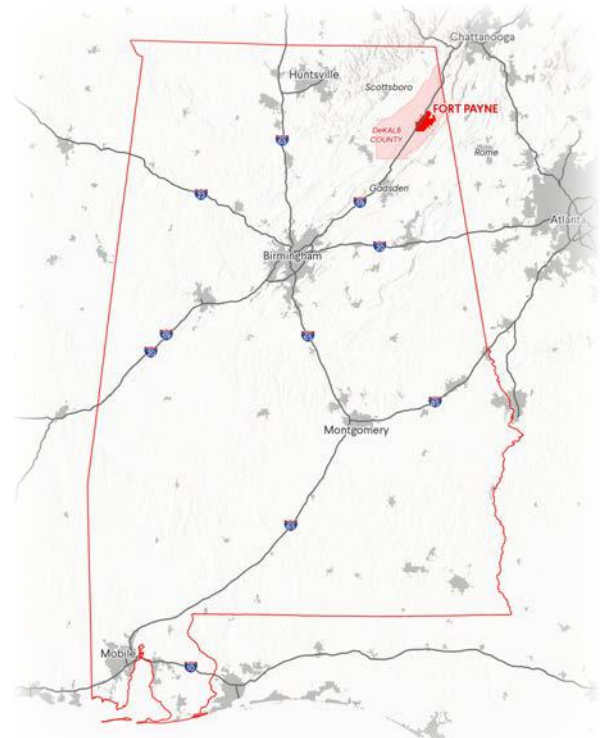
Land area

56 sq mi



Current municipal boundary

Location in the state



Historic Landmarks

Fort Payne has a rich tradition of history, natural scenic beauty and cultural significance to offer residents and visitors alike. Their historic downtown include several entertainment venues such as the DeKalb Theatre and the old Opera House.

The DeKalb Theatre is a historic theater that has been fully restored and currently serves the city as a multi-purpose event venue.

The historic Opera House was built during the city's 1889 industrial boom. It is the only opera house in the state that is still in use, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Willstown Mission Cemetery is a certified location on the National Park Service's Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. It was the site of a Cherokee mission, but local legend claims the cemetery predated the mission and is the resting place of many Cherokee that lived in the area.



DeKalb Theatre



Opera House



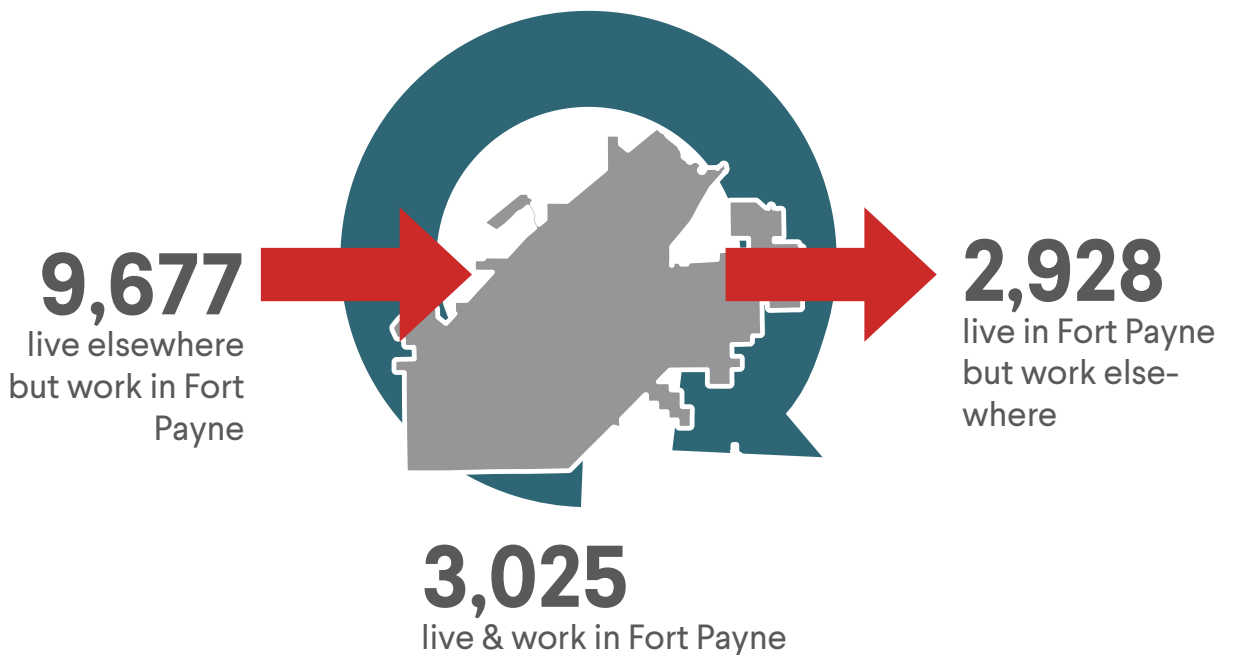
Willstown Mission Cemetery

Existing Conditions

Below are highlights from the demographic research that is done in parallel with community engagement. These numbers provide specifics of the community and reveal where opportunities may or may not exist for the city. They can often provide warning signs as well. A detailed collection of community trends and conditions can be found in the “Community Factbook,” a separate document produced as part of the plan process.

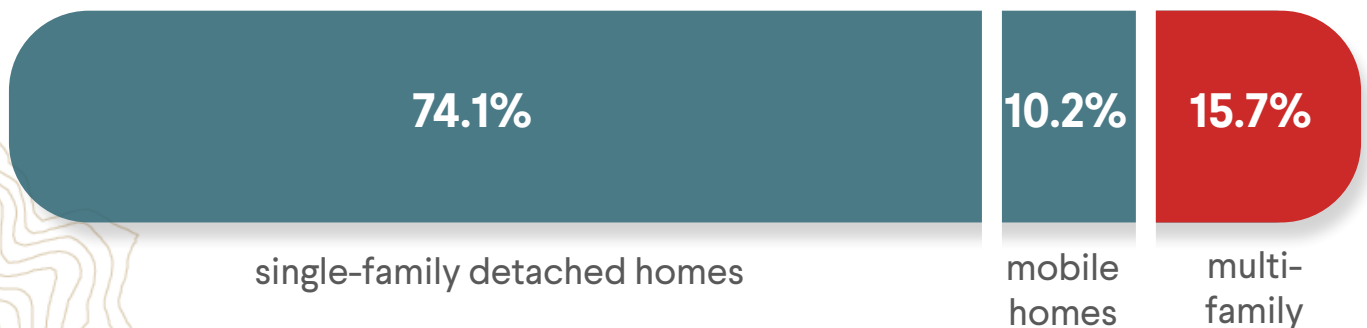
Commuting

- Decreasing share of residents working in Fort Payne.
- Fort Payne residents having to commute farther for work.
- Smaller share of local jobs held by local residents.



Housing mix

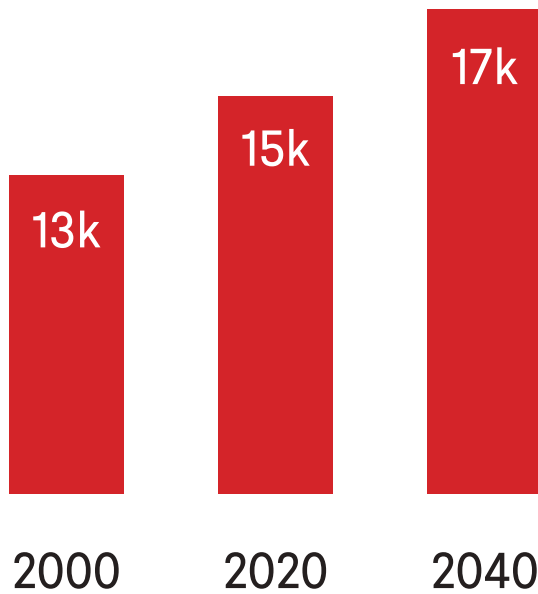
Fort Payne lacks multi-family neighborhoods of transitional density between downtown and single-family neighborhoods



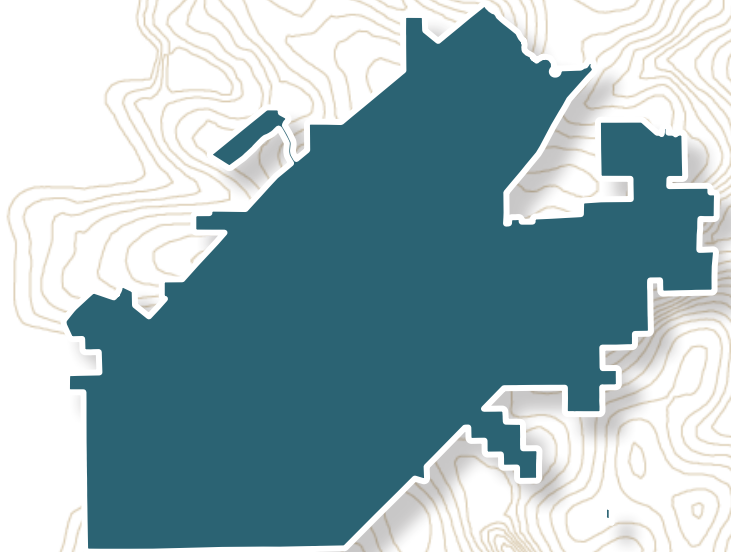
DeKalb County is projected to grow an additional 8.8% in population from 2020 to 2040

6,200+ people

*estimated projected increase



Projected population increase in the county over the next 15+ years.



17,000+
2040 population
(projected)

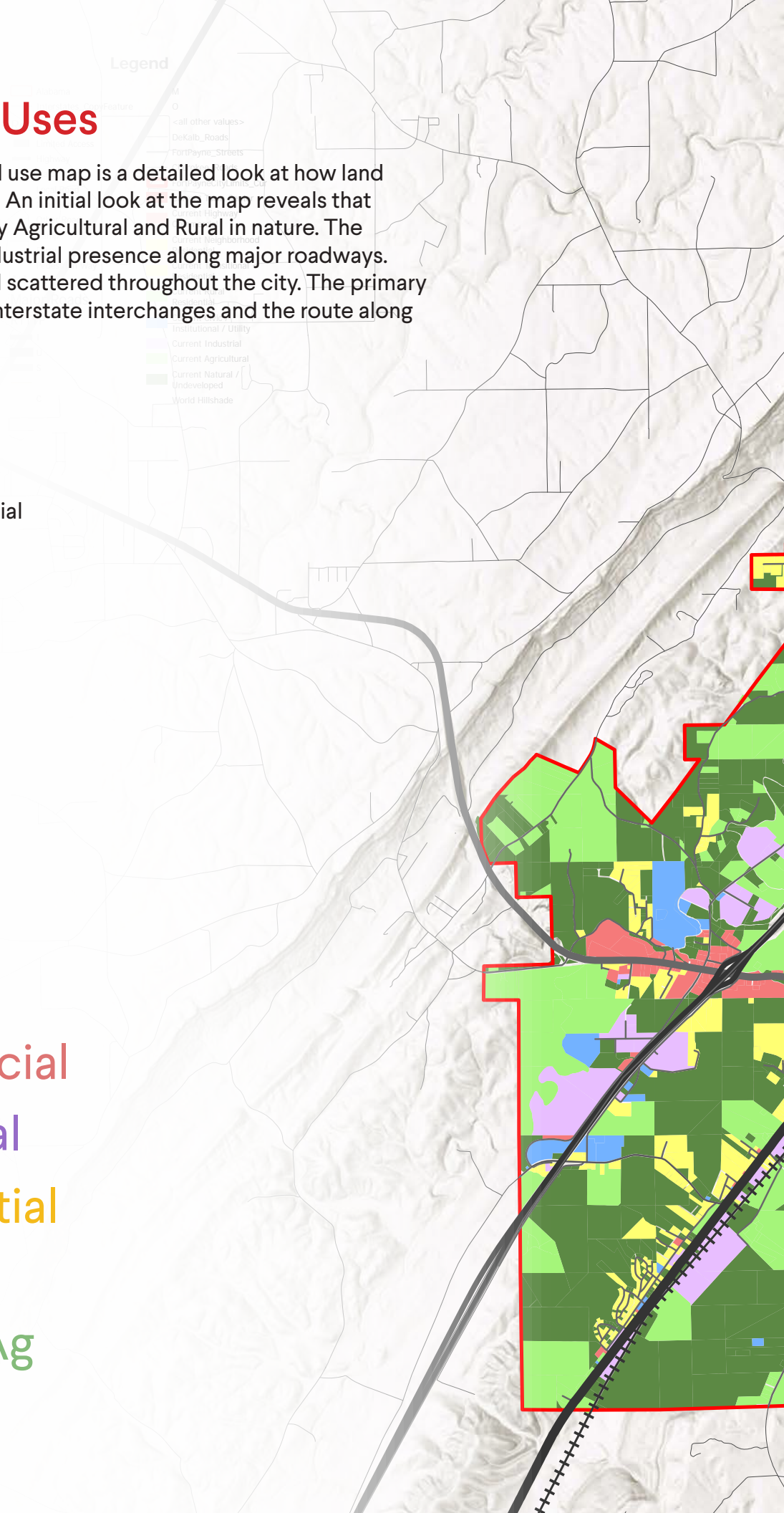
Minority population has doubled and now makes up **1/3 of population**

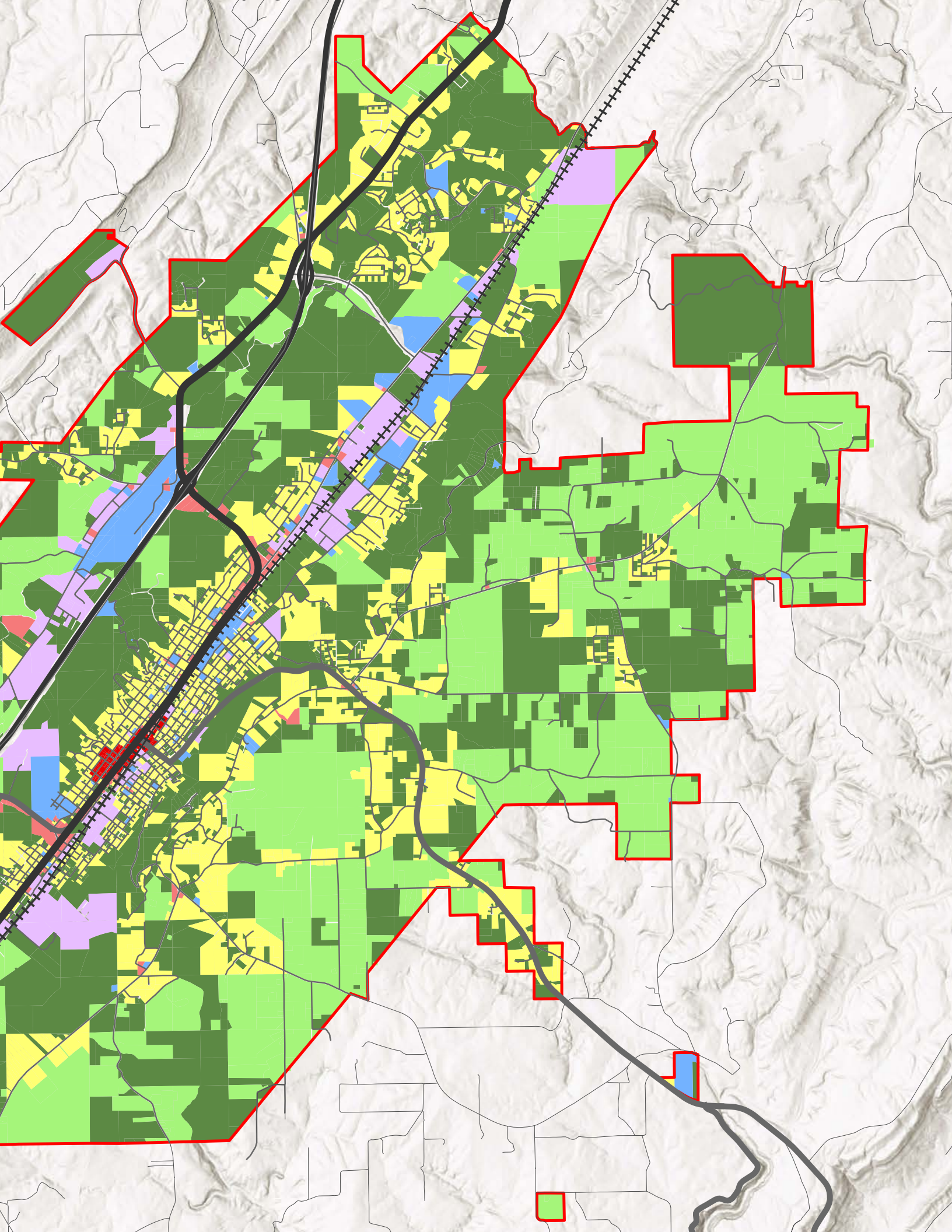
Current Land Uses

The existing or current land use map is a detailed look at how land is currently used in the city. An initial look at the map reveals that Fort Payne is predominately Agricultural and Rural in nature. The map also reveals a large Industrial presence along major roadways. Current residential is found scattered throughout the city. The primary commercial areas are the interstate interchanges and the route along Hwy 11 through downtown.

- Town Center
- Highway Commercial
- Residential
- Civic / Institutional
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Natural

4% Commercial
10% Industrial
14% Residential
46% Natural
26% Rural / Ag





Where are
we now?





Community Engagement

FORT PAYNE
FORWARD

FORT PAYNE
GMC

GMC

Handwritten notes on a notepad, including the word "Meeting" and other illegible text.

Community Engagement

The beginning of the planning process is about listening. The first step is meeting with city leadership, city staff, and other stakeholders to find out as much information about the city as possible.

After these initial meetings, and data collection, a Steering Committee is assembled. This is a group of stakeholders or key members in the community that will help guide the project through to completion.

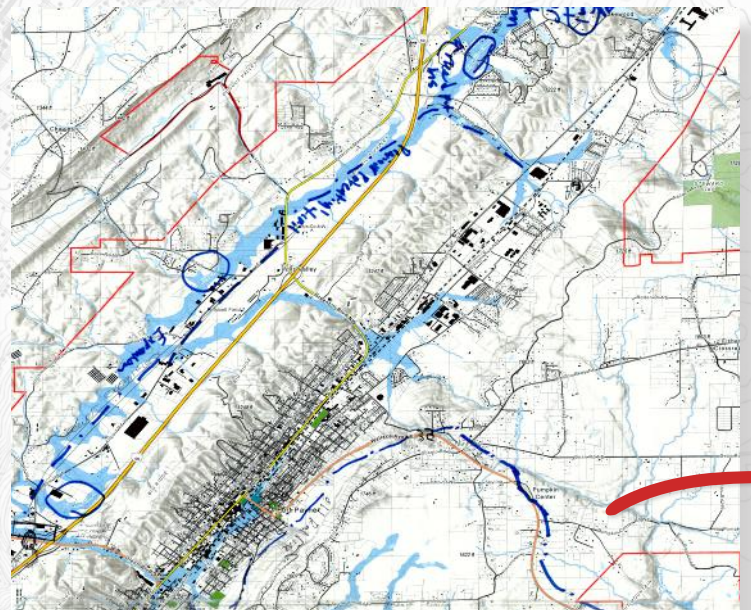
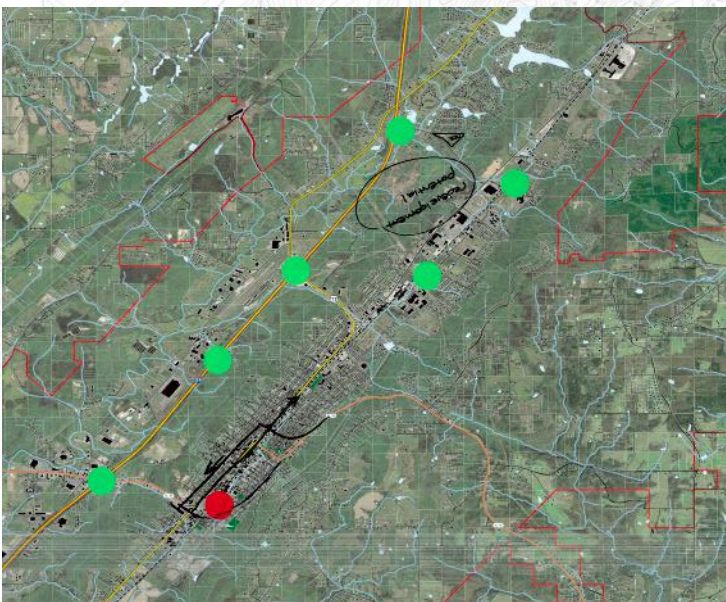
Steering Committee

Committee meetings are scheduled throughout the process. These meetings are used as opportunities for the team to hear updates and to present the most recent plan developments.

The committee also participates in exercises that help prioritize the themes of the final plan. The following maps are representative of several of the activities that committee members participate in. The top map is a location-based priority map. This exercise highlights the geographical locations around the city that could be potential priority areas for the plan. Often this is the first public data that is recorded. This information begins to reveal the early challenges and opportunities for the city that may be carried on into later phases of the plan, if they are confirmed by public input and analysis.

Steering Committee Exercises

This hypothetical building footprint map diagram highlights a development pattern approach that strategically concentrates development into areas that are surrounded by a decreasing pattern of density, which is similar to the historic pattern of development.





The committee worked through scenarios, and metrics of success in exercises like barometer of success is based on the themes they ranked. Defining what would make those directions successful for the city. How would they know they are successful in the initiative?

Steering Committee Exercises

The activity shown here is one example of a ranking and success exercise from the steering committee meetings.

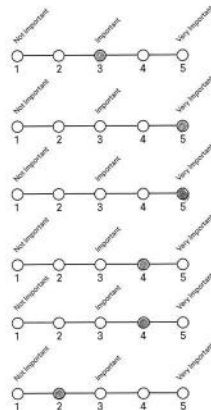


DIRECTION THEMES



The following are some early possible themes for the plan based on feedback gathered during the Steering Committee Kickoff Meeting

- Review all of these statements and rank them by importance. 1 meaning not important and 5 meaning very important
- Add any statements that are important to you, but not listed, and any thoughts or ideas you would like to share.



Encourage new housing development in Fort Payne.

Recruit new retail and restaurant businesses. *Recruit activities & entertainment for young adults*

Invest in improved pedestrian + cycling infrastructure.

Develop + implement a plan for a new railroad overpass.

Expand the City's water and sewer infrastructure.

Identify and address flooding hotspots in the city.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

List specific examples of long term successes based on the above themes (e.g. -100% ground floor occupancy downtown, new bike trail, etc.)

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS / MILESTONES

We need activities for weekend, many restaurants, also the airport more than the railroad issue.



Community Survey Results

The following infographic is a highlight of some of the data from the survey. A survey was distributed to the community asking about a wide range of topics and issues related to life in the city.

1,000 responses

85% of survey takers say the city needs improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure



48%

Agree

31%

Strongly Agree

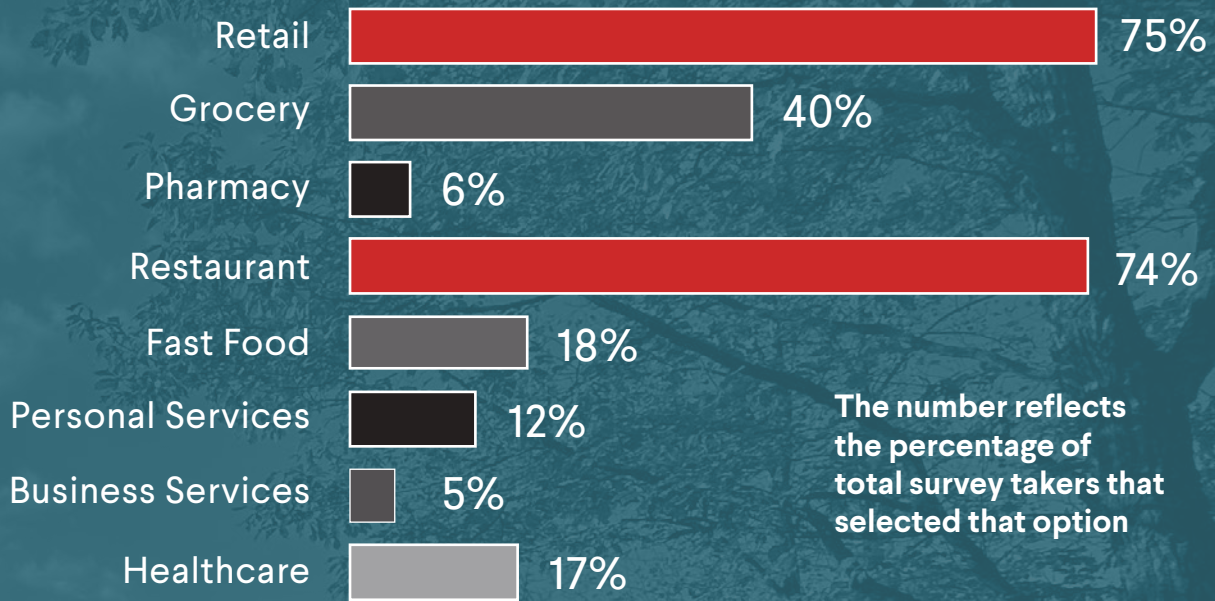
25%

Think there is a market to cater to the Tech industry

75%

of respondents want new housing to support continued population growth

What kinds of businesses would you like to see?



1. Movie theater
2. Bowling alley
3. Walking/ biking/ hiking trails
4. Skating rink/ skate park
5. Trampoline park
6. Mini-golf
7. Public sports fields/ courts
8. Arcade
9. Amphitheater/ concerts
10. Rock climbing gym

92%



Favor increased recreational options & opportunities



High demand for rentals
More lofts / apartments
Balance market-rate with affordable development
Streamline regulations

Housing

What You Said

The following are a selection of recurring themes from the community survey

Strengths

What you said when asked what are the strengths of Fort Payne we should build upon.



1,000+ submissions

More recreational opportunities

83% support multi-use trails

TOP 3 BUSINESSES
1. Retail (clothing, home goods, hardware store, etc.)
2. Restaurant (sit-down)
3. Grocery

**Movie theatre
Bowling
Trails
Skate park**

Pedestrian Friendly 

Very high demand for rental housing, more lofts/ apartments
Market-rate housing balanced with affordable housing
Historic preservation & renovation grants for historic homes & businesses

75% support new housing options 

93% want new businesses



Natural beauty

People & Community

Downtown
Small town charm

Challenges

What you said when asked what are the challenges for Fort Payne that we should work to solve or overcome.

Train Overpass
Road Conditions
Traffic

Lack of things to do (kids/teenagers)

Business recruitment/
economic diversity

Vacant buildings

Too few grocery stores

High School Student Online Survey

As part of the community engagement process we also distributed a survey to high school students. The survey was unique to the students, it was shorter and asked targeted questions on specific areas of town.

Top 3 Needs

1



Theater

2



Bowling

3



Shopping

Do you plan on living in FP when you are older?

The recurring themes in the responses are that many of the students do not plan on living in Fort Payne when they are older because of the **lack of job opportunities** and the town's **limited activities**.

Some students mentioned wanting to explore new places and travel, while others expressed a desire to live in bigger cities with more opportunities.

A few mentioned that they would consider living in Fort Payne depending on their career field or if the town developed more job opportunities and activities.

The likes and dislikes of the high school students were similar to responses from the community survey, highlighting how quality of life issues in the city effect all demographics similarly.

Likes



Community feel and friendliness of people

Natural beauty and scenery (e.g., Little River Canyon, mountains)

Opportunities (e.g., career pathways, outdoor activities)

Small town feel (e.g., calm, peaceful, not too crowded)

Downtown area (e.g., historic buildings, places to eat, walking areas)

Schools and educational opportunities

Dislikes



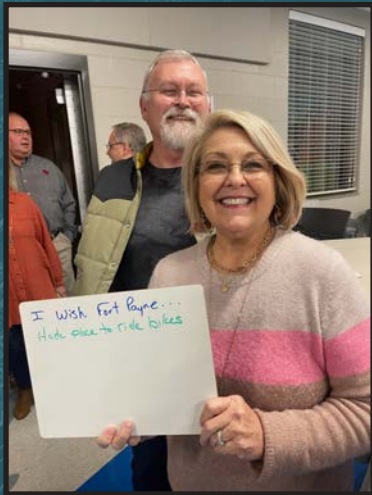
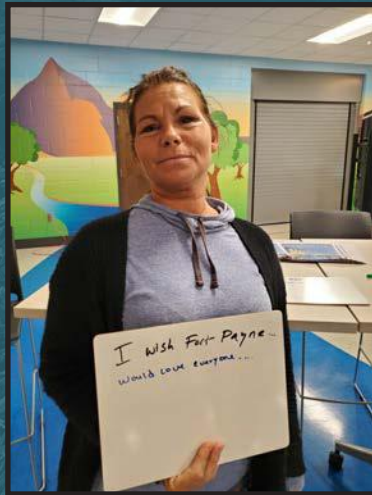
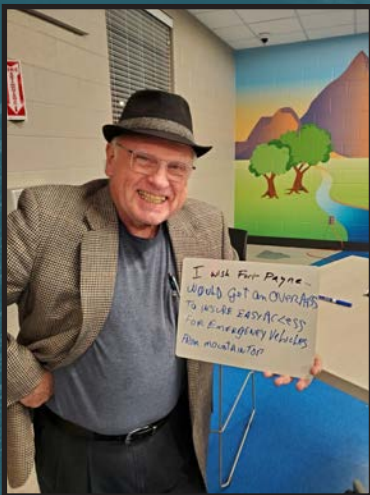
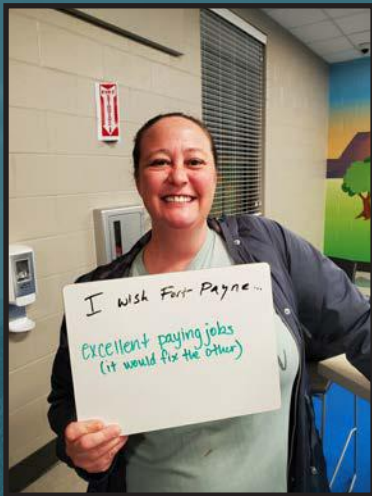
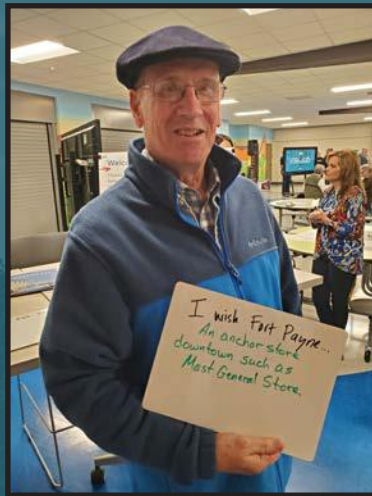
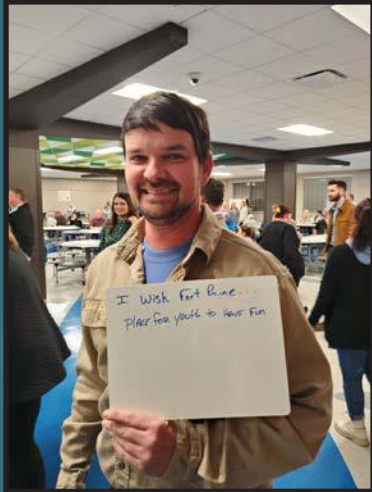
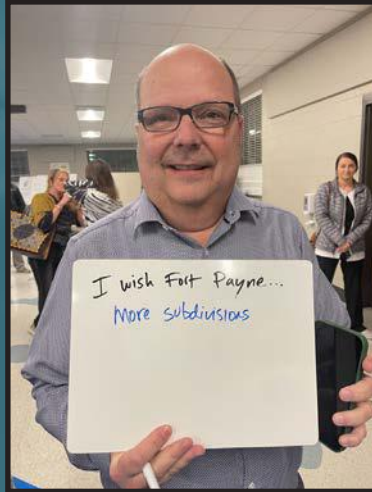
Lack of activities/entertainment

Traffic and transportation issues

Size of the town (not much to do)

Lack of diversity





Public Meeting

The first public meeting was held at the new intermediate school in the city. There was a large gathering and a lot of excitement surrounding the event, and there was a lot of positive feedback received after the event. The public got to participate in several activities throughout the evening.

Welcome Exercise



We invited attendees to the public meeting to participate in a welcome exercise that gave them an opportunity to share their dream for Fort Payne. The activity was well received and we had a substantial number of people interested in sharing their ideas. Here are a few of the wishes from the citizens:

Cooperation
Places for Youth
More housing

General Store
Better jobs
Overpass
Bike lanes

Theme Ranking Exercise

Arrange the themes in order of importance

Least Important ← → Most Important

Prioritize the Big Ideas or add specific project ideas

FORT MYERS
FORWARD

Ranking Board

The theme ranking exercise was a group activity that concluded the first public meeting in the city. The exercise invited small groups gathered around tables to rank the emerging themes.

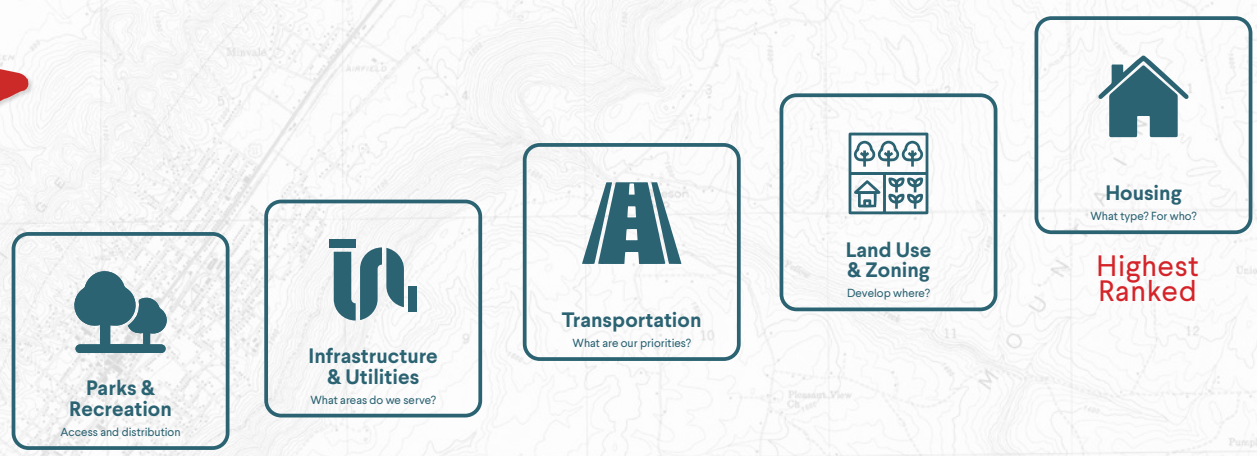
The groups were challenged to engage in conversations that would stimulate healthy debate of how to rank the themes by priority. This not only surfaced many perspectives among the attendees at the meeting, but it also resulted in consensus around each table as to how the themes should be ranked.





Theme Cards

The cards represented the planning themes that were beginning to emerge through previous meetings with the steering committee, department heads, and city administration.



Lowest Ranked

Highest Ranked

After compiling the results from the table exercises, the highest ranked priority from the public meeting attendees was Housing. Parks and Recreation ranked last on this list of priorities for the city. Fort Payne currently has a generous number of parks in its downtown and surrounding area, and because of the geography of the city, there is a lack of housing.

The results from this activity do not provide an exclusive direction for the next phases of the process, they must be balanced with the extensive input from the community survey, as well as direction from the Steering Committee and city leaders. For example, we know from the community survey there is a large number of supporters for improving the parks networking and individual park programming.

1 Housing

More diverse mix of housing



Condos
Multifamily

Rental units
Lofts

New single-family
Retirement



Affordable housing

Homeless shelters
Safe house

Mixed use
development

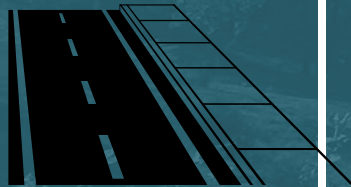
New housing (infill)
downtown

2 Land use

- Zoning - More flexibility in the code
- Signage
- Store fronts
- Sidewalks
- Parking garages close to business districts
- Need more mixed-use
- Restrictions on new industrial & big box stores
- Repurpose unused industrial buildings
- Group industrial uses
- Contain urban footprint to protect natural land
- Entertainment district (open container)
- Food truck venues
- More commercial on Gault
- Hotel development
- Rooftop restaurants
- Develop around existing parks in town

3 Transportation

Infrastructure:
improving roads
repairing sidewalks



PROVIDE
public transportation

Improving Joe's Truck Stop, better access to DeKalb Plaza shopping center, and improving the Airport Rd intersection.

Safety and Lighting

Installing LED street lights to improve visibility and safety.



Airport Area Development

4 Infrastructure & Utilities

Infrastructure

- Electricity
- Water
- Sewer
- Train overpass
- Expand sewer system to support new housing development
- Bury lines where possible
- Repair roads and bridges
- Northern substation

Community development

- More transparency and oversight on utility board appointments so there are fewer conflicts of interest
- Sidewalk conditions need improvement
- Reclaim vacated alleys for new homes
- Better internet needed

5 Parks

Maintenance of existing parks

Planned trail system

- Connection to Little River Canyon
- Rails to trails
- Highlight Trail of Tears

Lookout Mountain

- Chairlift up Lookout Mountain
- **Overlook park on Lookout Mountain**
- Citadel Overlook

Recreational Facilities

- Sports complex
- Amphitheater
- Better event venues needed
- Improved ball fields
- Dog park
- ADA/autism park
- Youth activities

Historical/Cultural

- Cherokee history museum



During the public meeting participants were also asked to list individual projects related to the theme after they ranked them, or during the ranking discussion. This compiled data is more granular and provides a greater level of detail and insight into the thought behind some of the priority rankings from the citizens.

Write-in

These were specific project ideas from each category

Economic Development

- Recruit new industry
- Retail and restaurant development
- Breweries
- Small business incentives
- Entrepreneurial center
- Better paying jobs

Infrastructure

- Sidewalks w/ landscape buffers
- Broadband access
- Improved entry signage to city
- ADA compliant sidewalks

- Luxury RV Park
- Expand police services
- Further develop exits

Community Services

- Healthy food choices
- Affordable grocery (ALDI)
- More daycares
- Improved healthcare services
- Support for educational system
- Movie theater
- Better support for low income

Collaboration and Diversity

- Improved collaboration/ shared vision in the city
- Solicit minority voices
- Collaborate with Cherokee Nation

Community Visioning Activity



Write a "vision statement" for the city.

The Purpose of a plan is to get action, but a common vision has to be set to ensure our individual actions are being oriented by our overarching mission. A simple statement that focuses and guides all the work to come out of this plan. From our first steps to our emerging future opportunities. A plan with a vision that is crafted by the community is more likely to be implemented.

Exercise: As a group write a vision statement to describe a Fort Payne you would hope to see twenty years from today.

Notes & Ideas:

Stay in focus on the plan
 And you find them in a vision statement
 Notes:
 Stay focused on the plan
 Keeping focused on the plan
 Stay in focus on the plan
 Vision of growth to be achieved and offer a wide, appropriate and economic expansion, making
 being the place to visit in history, culture and enjoy the natural and green of the city.
 Work on culture and a low budget and focus!

FORWARD

Write a "vision statement" for the city.

The Purpose of a plan is to get action, but a common vision has to be set to ensure our individual actions are being oriented by our overarching mission. A simple statement that focuses and guides all the work to come out of this plan. From our first steps to our emerging future opportunities. A plan with a vision that is crafted by the community is more likely to be implemented.

Exercise: As a group write a vision statement to describe a Fort Payne you would hope to see twenty years from today.

Notes & Ideas:

Stay in focus on the plan
 And you find them in a vision statement
 Notes:
 Stay focused on the plan
 Keeping focused on the plan
 Stay in focus on the plan
 Vision of growth to be achieved and offer a wide, appropriate and economic expansion, making
 being the place to visit in history, culture and enjoy the natural and green of the city.
 Work on culture and a low budget and focus!

FORWARD

Write a "vision statement" for the city.

The Purpose of a plan is to get action, but a common vision has to be set to ensure our individual actions are being oriented by our overarching mission. A simple statement that focuses and guides all the work to come out of this plan. From our first steps to our emerging future opportunities. A plan with a vision that is crafted by the community is more likely to be implemented.

Exercise: As a group write a vision statement to describe a Fort Payne you would hope to see twenty years from today.

Notes & Ideas:

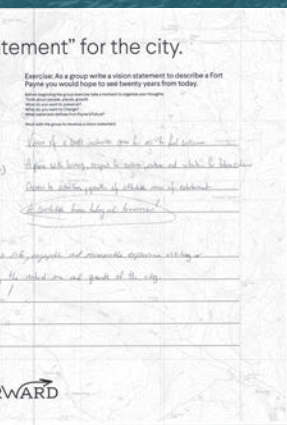
Stay in focus on the plan
 And you find them in a vision statement
 Notes:
 Stay focused on the plan
 Keeping focused on the plan
 Stay in focus on the plan
 Vision of growth to be achieved and offer a wide, appropriate and economic expansion, making
 being the place to visit in history, culture and enjoy the natural and green of the city.
 Work on culture and a low budget and focus!

FORWARD

Vision Exercise Results

Composite statements based on feedback

Our vision is to create a thriving mountain town where history, culture, and nature are preserved and celebrated, as we steward the beautiful environment and promote a safe and memorable place for residents and visitors to live and enjoy.





Where are we
going?



Plan Goals

Plan Organization

Gateways

Spine

Transitional

City-wide Strategies

Economy

Future Land Use

Plan Goals

These six priority plan goals have been developed through steering committee guidance, public engagement (online survey and public meetings, stakeholder meetings, and technical analysis). A plan goal is a high-level target outcome that all further plan details should support.

1



Improve Housing Opportunities for All

- Define target areas for future housing developments based on strategic growth practices.
- Incentives infill housing development in existing neighborhoods through a land bank authority.
- Update the City's zoning ordinance and map to assist with the community housing needs.

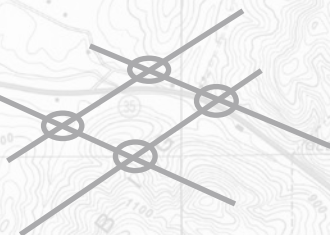
2



Nurture the history and future of downtown

- Define two catalyst projects for downtown with community input to foster and implement.
- Strategically Improve downtown cross streets to maximize pedestrians and on-street parking with detailed phasing.

3



Improve connectivity across the city

- Focus on entry opportunities to the city and their integration with downtown and surrounding areas.
- Connect residential areas to each other and to commercial and retail centers
- Make streets perpendicular to Broad that cross the railroad tracks a priority and create a list for yearly grant funding opportunities.
- Develop a community-supported train overpass strategy that includes targeted outreach and overview of project impacts.
- Define a long-term trail alignment plan for City that includes strategic early-phase actions.

4

Create a strategic economic environment for the community and the municipality

- Leverage the city's proximity to natural resources and their identity as an outdoor destination.
- Promote the history of the city and highlight the Trail of Tears destinations.
- Target higher paying employment sectors to recruit to the city.
- Target retail recruitment based on the community input from this planning effort.
- Strategic market high-impact development/redevelopment opportunity property in City.

5

Develop a robust and integrated park system

- Update existing park elements and programming to increase daily use and quality of life and reduce barriers of entry.
- Update the city zoning ordinance and map to refocus development around existing and proposed parks.
- Develop a network plan to connect existing parks and consider regional connections.

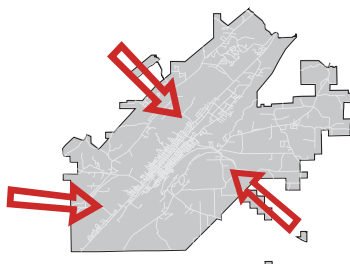
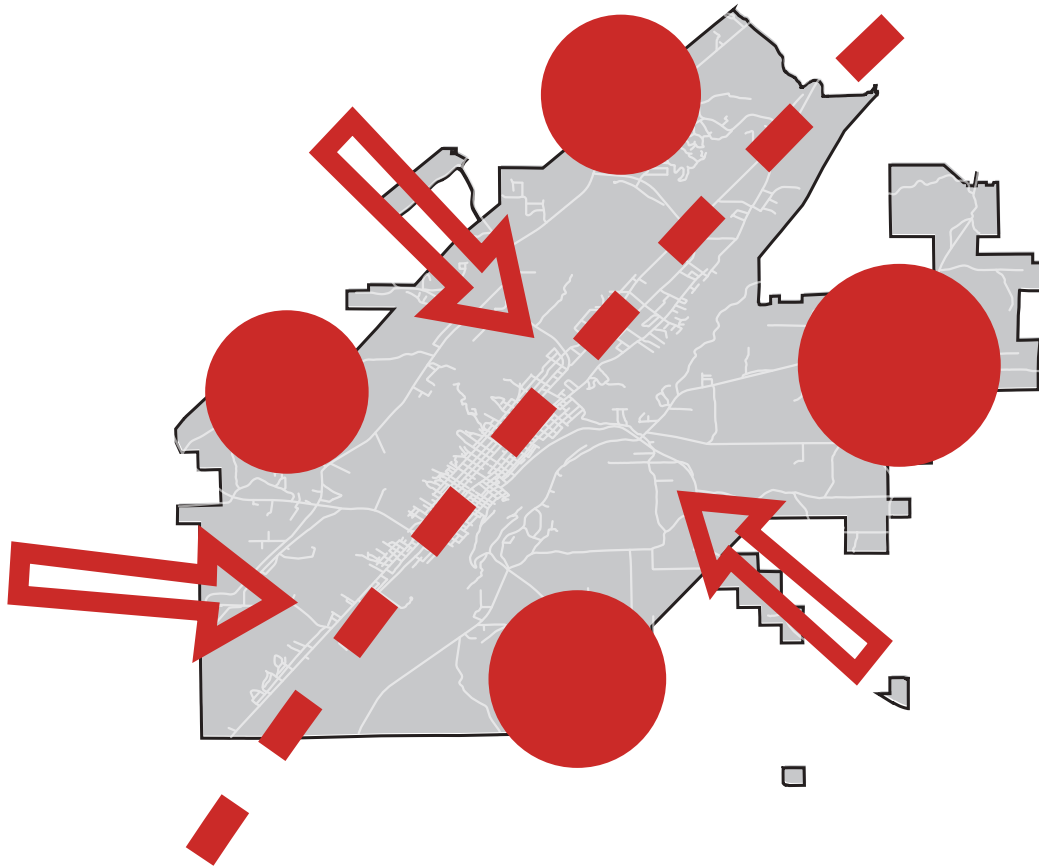
6

Update the citywide zoning to honor the history and future of the city

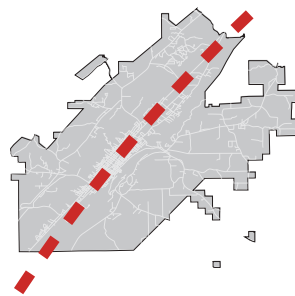
- Create a higher development standard for the city.
- Identify industrial zoning in the city and beautify existing highly visible industrial areas.
- Prioritize and recruit redevelopment of existing underutilized land.
- Increase the opportunity for mixed-use development.

Plan Organization

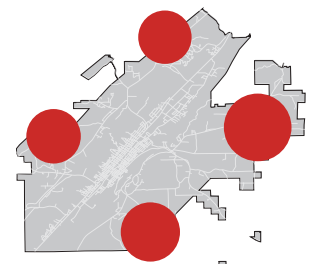
This section of the plan has been organized into four sections, these sections have been formed based on how the city is experienced and the role of each area of the city. The following diagram represents the organization of the plan. Each element of the diagram will be detailed in an individual section of the plan. An overview each elements is found on the next page.



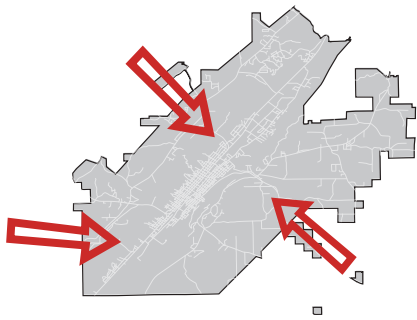
Gateways



Spine



Transitional

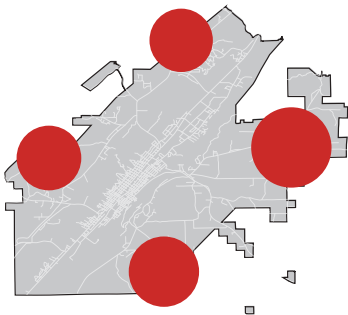
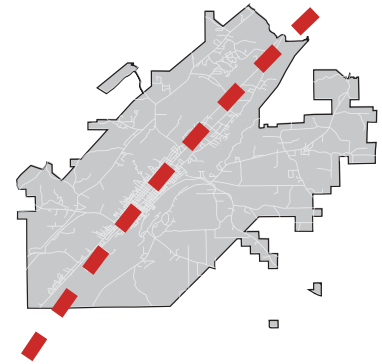


Gateways The front doors to the city

- Enhance Interstate Gateways
- Improve Gateway Corridors
- Update Development Standards
- Recommended Land Use & Zoning

Spine The heart of the city

- Enhance North & South Transition Areas
- Invest in Downtown
- Recommended Land Use & Zoning

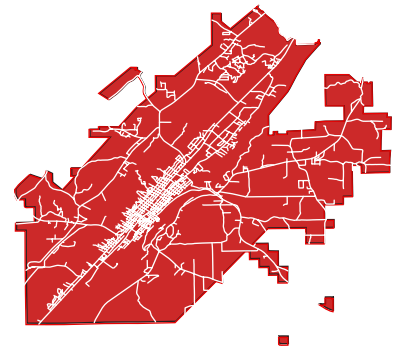


Transitional The connecting fabric of the city

- Refine Housing Development Patterns
- Be Proactive About Environmental Conservation
- Recommended Land Use & Zoning

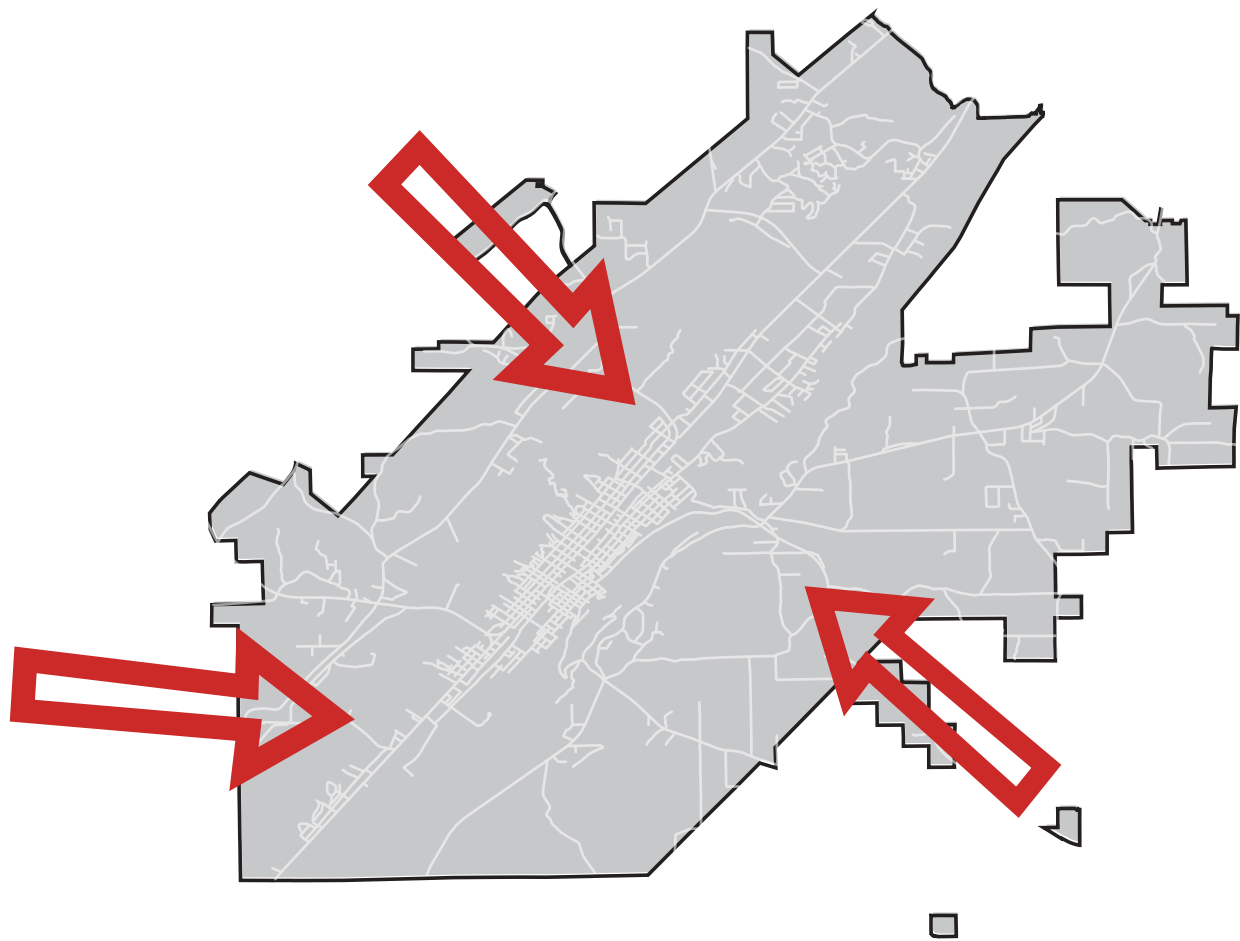
City-wide Strategies impacting the whole city

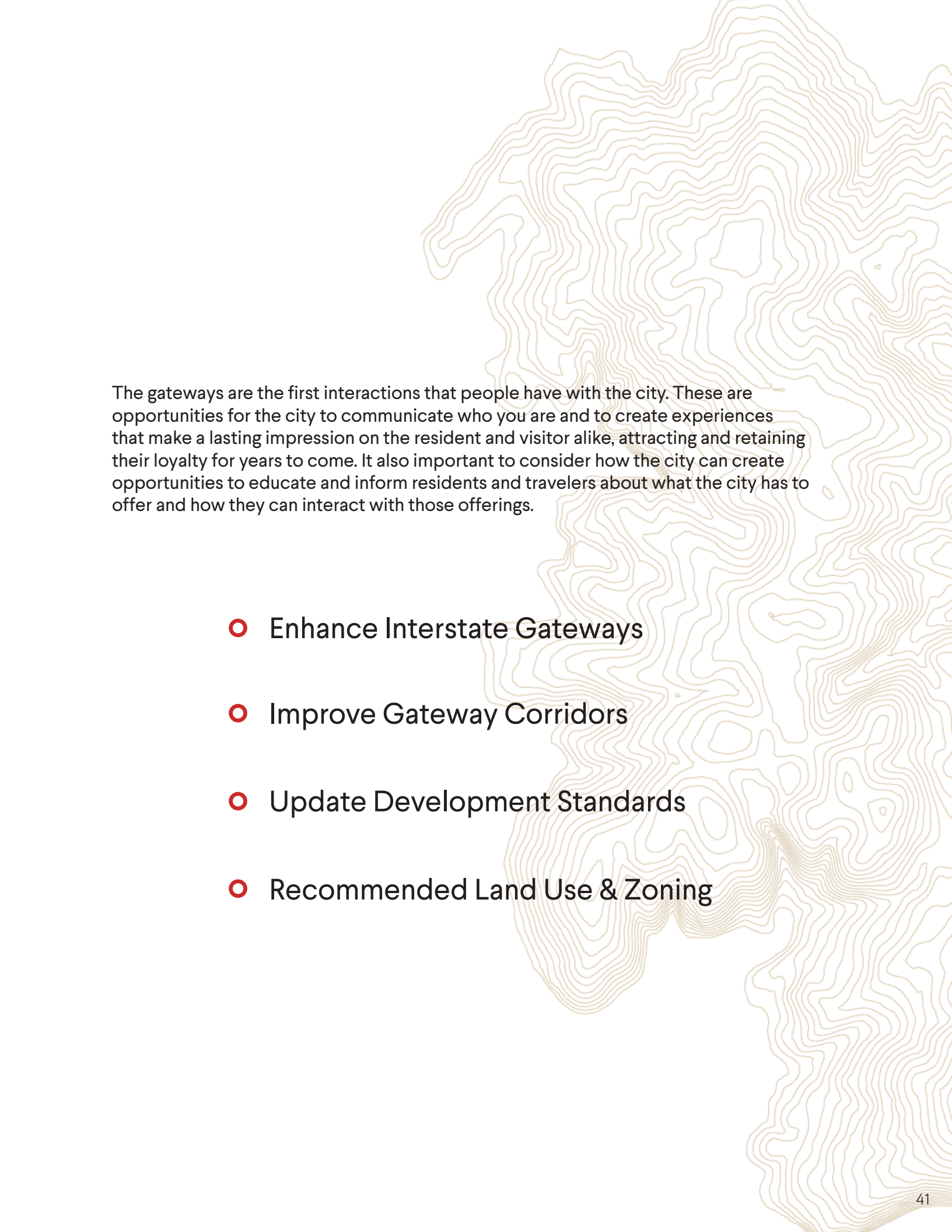
- Networks
- Economy
- Future Land Use



Gateways

The front doors to the city



A background graphic of a topographic map with brown contour lines, showing a mountainous region. The map is partially obscured by text and a list.

The gateways are the first interactions that people have with the city. These are opportunities for the city to communicate who you are and to create experiences that make a lasting impression on the resident and visitor alike, attracting and retaining their loyalty for years to come. It also important to consider how the city can create opportunities to educate and inform residents and travelers about what the city has to offer and how they can interact with those offerings.

- Enhance Interstate Gateways
- Improve Gateway Corridors
- Update Development Standards
- Recommended Land Use & Zoning

Enhance Interstate Gateways

This section of the plan has been organized into four sections, these sections have been formed based on how the city is experienced and the role of each area of the city. The following diagram represents the organization of the plan. Each element of the diagram will be detailed in an individual section of the plan. An overview each elements is found on the next page.

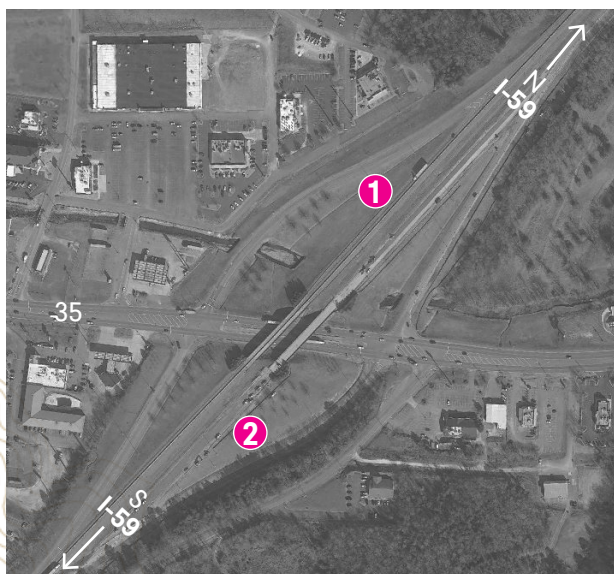
Interchange Monument Signage

Interstate monument signage is a highly impactful branding tool, that should be designed to represent the values and resources of the city, that interstate traffic doesn't see or know about. These need to be ALDOT approved and safe, but this is a high-value economic and branding tool that is needed in Fort Payne.



Sketch Interchange Monument Signage Graphic

This hypothetical building footprint map diagram highlights a development pattern approach that strategically concentrates development into areas that are surrounded by a decreasing pattern of density, which is similar to the historic pattern of development.



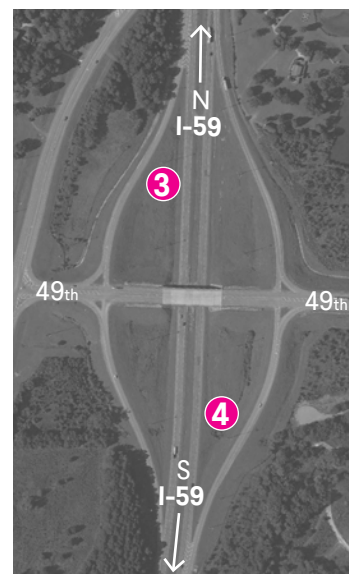
Monument Placement Priorities

◀ I-59/HWY 35 Interchange

As the most developed interchange and with arguably the greatest connection to downtown and recreational resources, this intersection should be a priority for monument signage.

I-59/49th St Interchange ▶

Although not yet developed, this interchange is the northernmost major gateway into the city coming south from Georgia and Tennessee, making this a second priority for monument signage.



Examples: Interchange Monument Signage



Hickory, NC



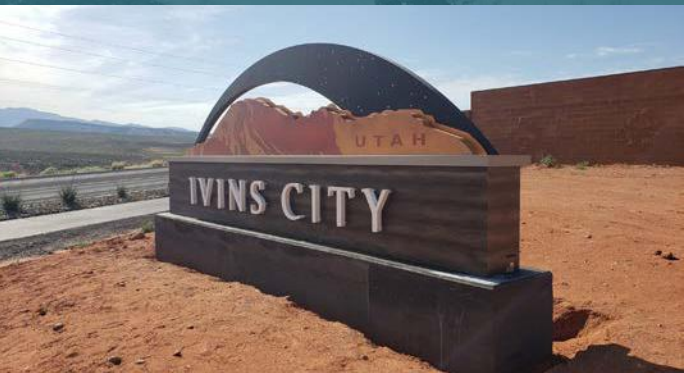
Douglas County, GA



Hickory, NC



Spartanburg, SC



Ivins City, UT



Gainesville, FL



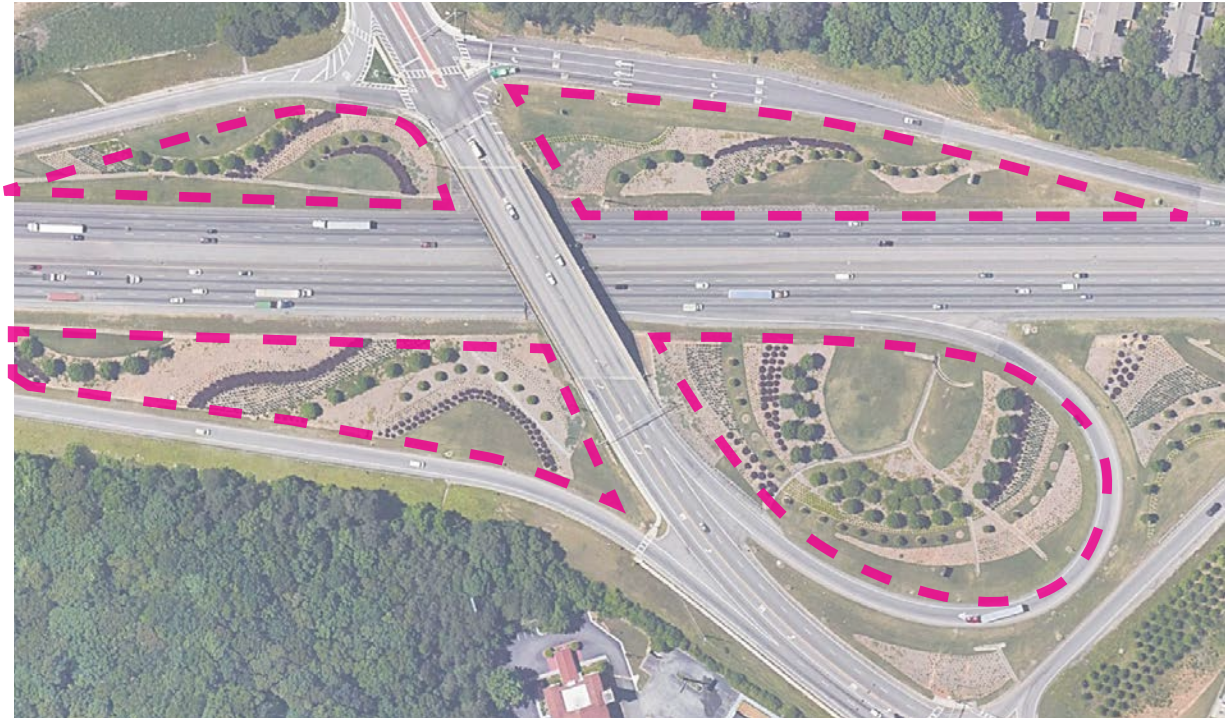
Arlington, VA



Grand Mere, QC

Interchange Landscape Improvements

Landscape improvements at Fort Payne's intersection is a high-impact gateway improvement that would make the city stand out to travelers and further entice them to stop and spend money in the city. These improvements would have to be approved by ALDOT, and maintained by the city.



Aerial Example of Interchange Landscape Improvements

This aerial image is an example of interchange landscaping improvements from South Cobb County, GA.



Interchange Landscaping examples

Interstate Bridge Enhancements



I-59/HWY 35 Bridge Enhancements Rendering

Interstate bridges are an important element of the branding strategy. Short-term overpasses need to be improved to include non-structural branding elements. Long term, the Highway 35 interstate bridge should be updated for branding aesthetics and east-west pedestrian connectivity.

Interstate Bridge Enhancement Priorities

1. Northern Interchange Gateway

This should be a none structural branding bridge addition

2. 35 Interchange

This should be a longer-term improvement priority.



I-59 Bridge Enhancements Rendering

Improve Gateway Corridors

Once people leave the interstate, they are immediately greeted with one of the three corridors at various stages of development. These gateway corridors are another opportunity to welcome visitors and define a better and stronger Fort Payne.

Corridor Wayfinding and Art

City Wayfinding is a high-impact strategy to provide helpful branding to Fort Payne. A cohesive wayfinding signage system provides a sense of community, is helpful and impressive to visitors, and promotes the city's economy. Public Art is also a creative way to improve these gateway corridors that would set the city apart, as a unique destination.



Existing HWY 35 & Gault

Interstate Bridge Enhancement Priorities

1. Market and guide people to your assets, including downtown, recreational access, and landmarks.
2. Important locations for wayfinding are just off each interchange and at where each of the three corridors intersects Gault Avenue.



City Wayfinding and Corridor Art Examples

Gateway Corridor Right-of-Way Improvements

These Corridors are major elements of the city, and these right-of-ways should reflect the values of the city, which would include an improvement of both safety and beauty. Gateway Corridors in Fort Payne include Highway 35, Highway 11, and 49th Street. These three corridors support various scales of development and daily traffic, but these right-of-ways are similar in design, with four travel lanes and one center bidirectional turn lane.

Existing Highway 35

Highway 35 has the highest average daily traffic at 21,098. Highway 35 is also the most developed of the three gateway corridors. This corridor is the most dangerous, with a lack of proper access management.



Existing Highway 11

Highway 11 has the third-highest traffic counts in the city at 11,097. The road is designed for a much higher amount of cars. This corridor has fewer access points, with some areas of exceptions where clustered access points cause dangerous conditions.

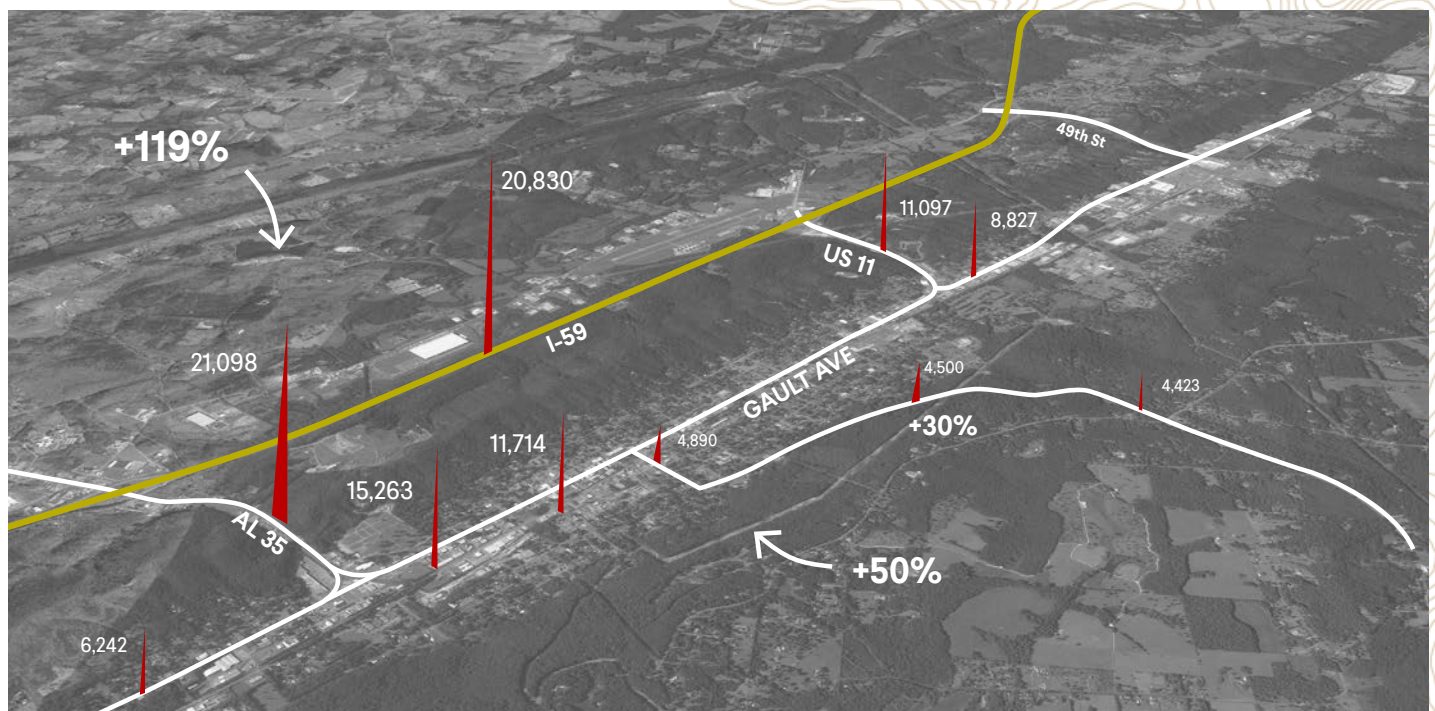


Existing 49th Street

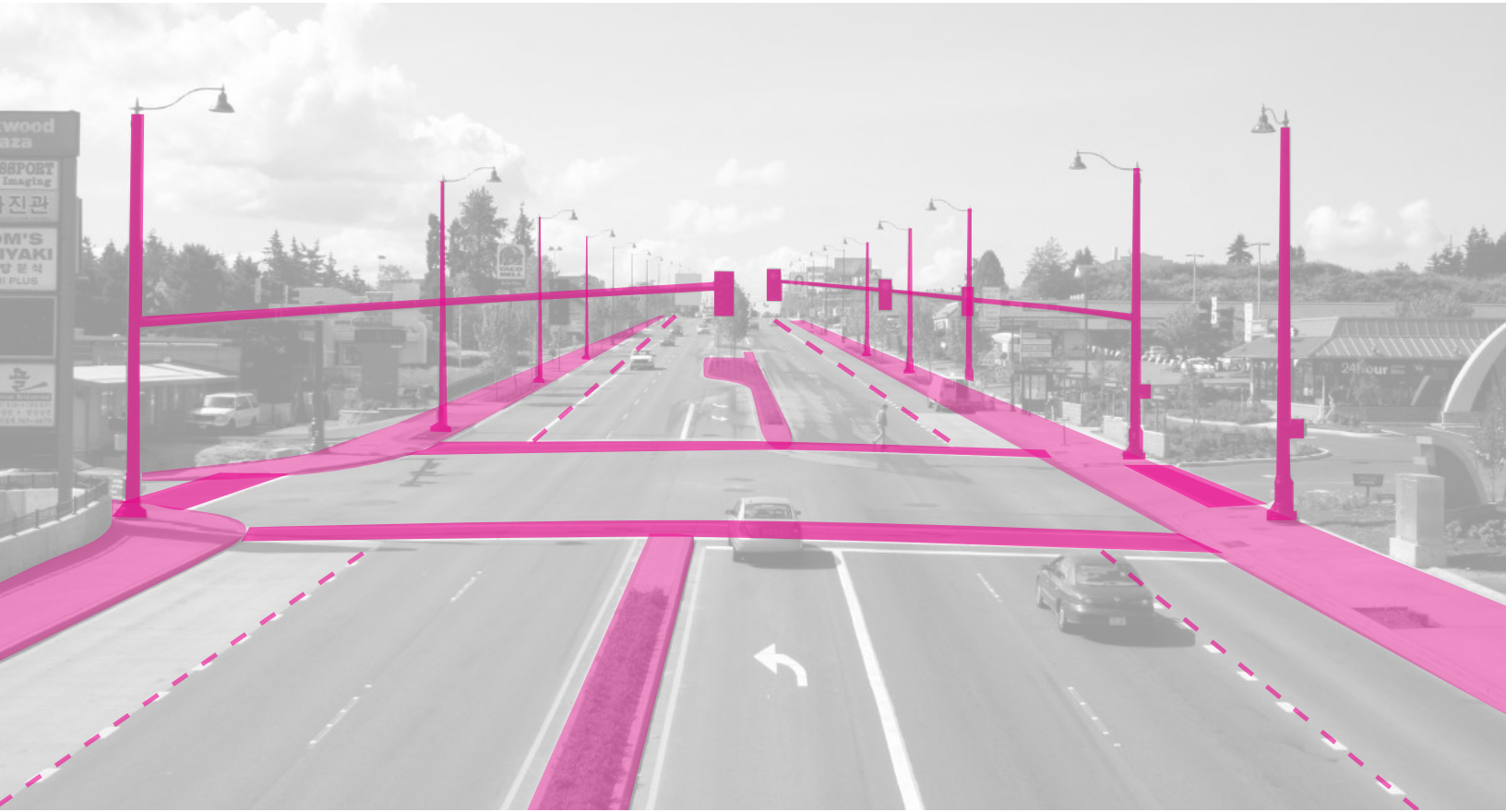
49th Street has an average daily traffic count of 5,459, which is low compared to the city's other gateway corridors. With the city's growth to the north, this corridor will be a more important corridor. Access control and safety should be considered as 49th Street is developed.



Existing Gateway Corridors



Corridor Day Traffic Volumes



Concept Graphic of an Ideal Gateway Corridor Right-of-Way

This graphic outlines the uses of center-landscaped medians, safe sidewalks, consistent lighting, and signal mast arms.

Center landscape medians are a priority for all of these corridors. Medians not only control cross-street access points to safe locations, they also reduce speeds, improve safety, and allow for landscape beautification. Trees on the outside edge of the right-of-way, is a also an important element for an attractive Fort Payne gateway corridor.

Gateway Corridor Enhancement Priorities

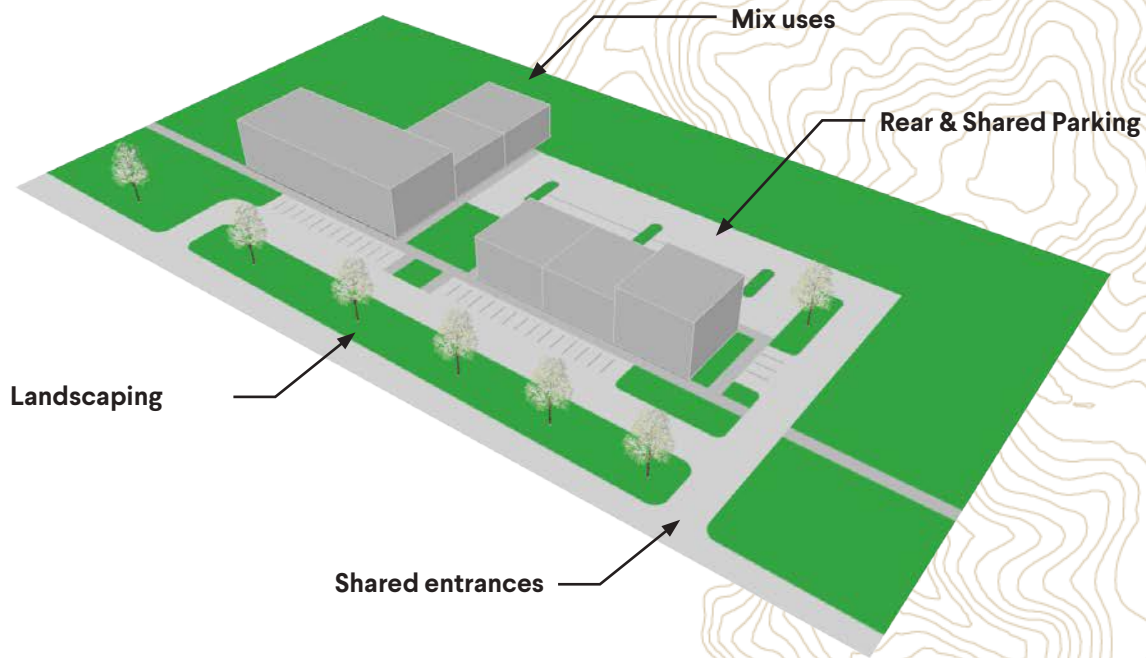
1. Work with ALDOT and grant writers to apply for funding to create an access management plan to construct landscaped center medians.
2. Create an access plan for all gateway corridors, but prioritize Highway 35 for construction.



Spanish Fort, AL Highway 98

This beautiful highway in Alabama has a daily average traffic count of 38,000.

Update Development Standards



Updated Development Standards Diagram

This graphic shows important elements needed in updating site development standards in your zoning of these gateway corridors.

One recommendation that would be transformational for the city is updating the site design standards for specific zoning districts, especially along the gateways into the city. Updating the standards would allow the city to influence how developers build along those stretches of road.

The diagram above highlights how site standards can influence many different areas of development:

Landscaping

Adding street trees along corridors and streets beautifies the landscape, but it also acts a buffer between auto and pedestrian uses, creating a safer environment for all users.

Shared Entrances

One of the major benefits of access management is reducing the amount of entrances and exits along a specific travel way. This action reduces the amount of locations where crashes can occur and alleviates congestion.

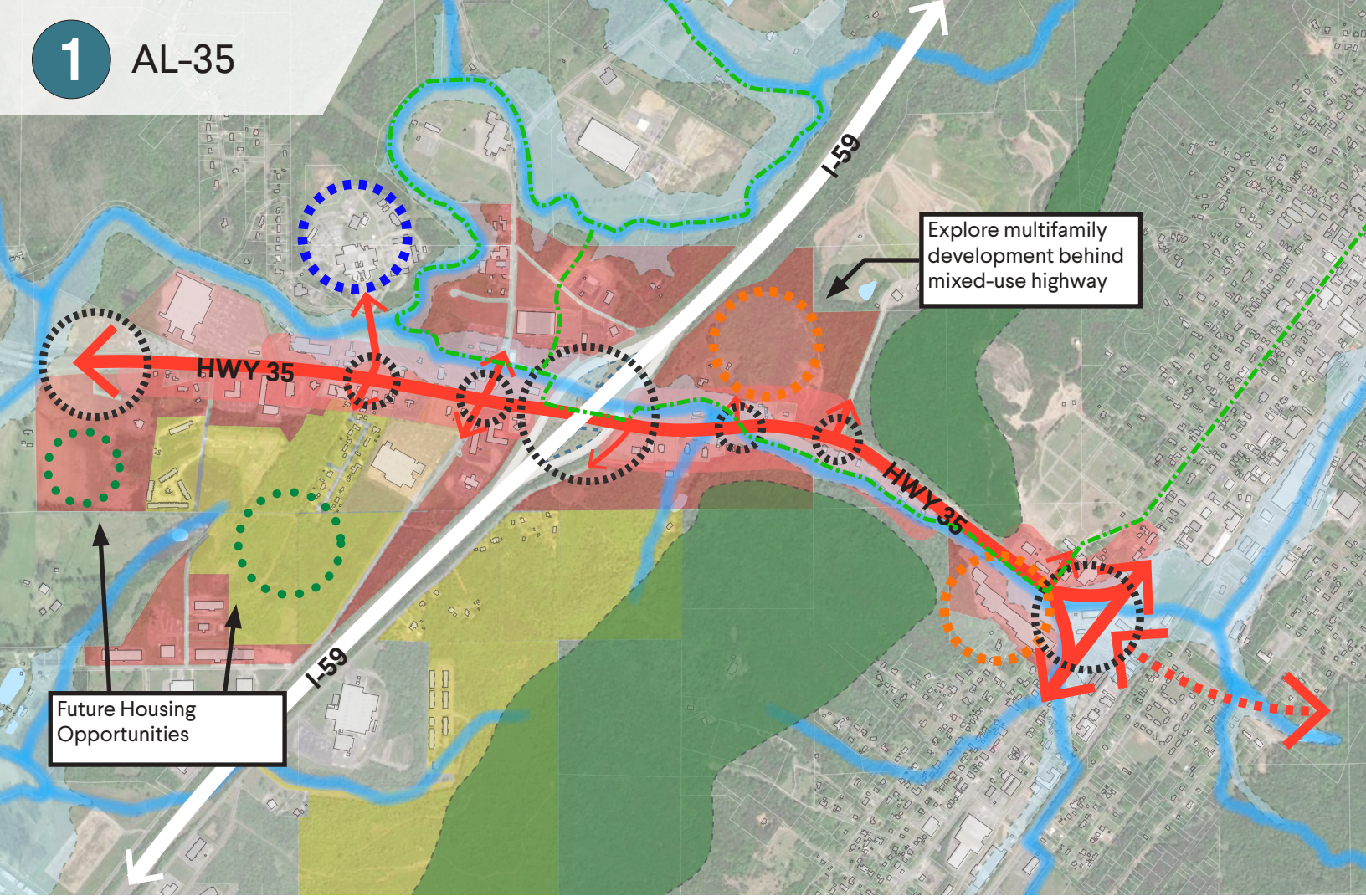
Rear and Shared Parking

Rear and Sharing parking across multiple parcels reduces having to excessive amounts of land for automobiles and allows for more cohesive site design.

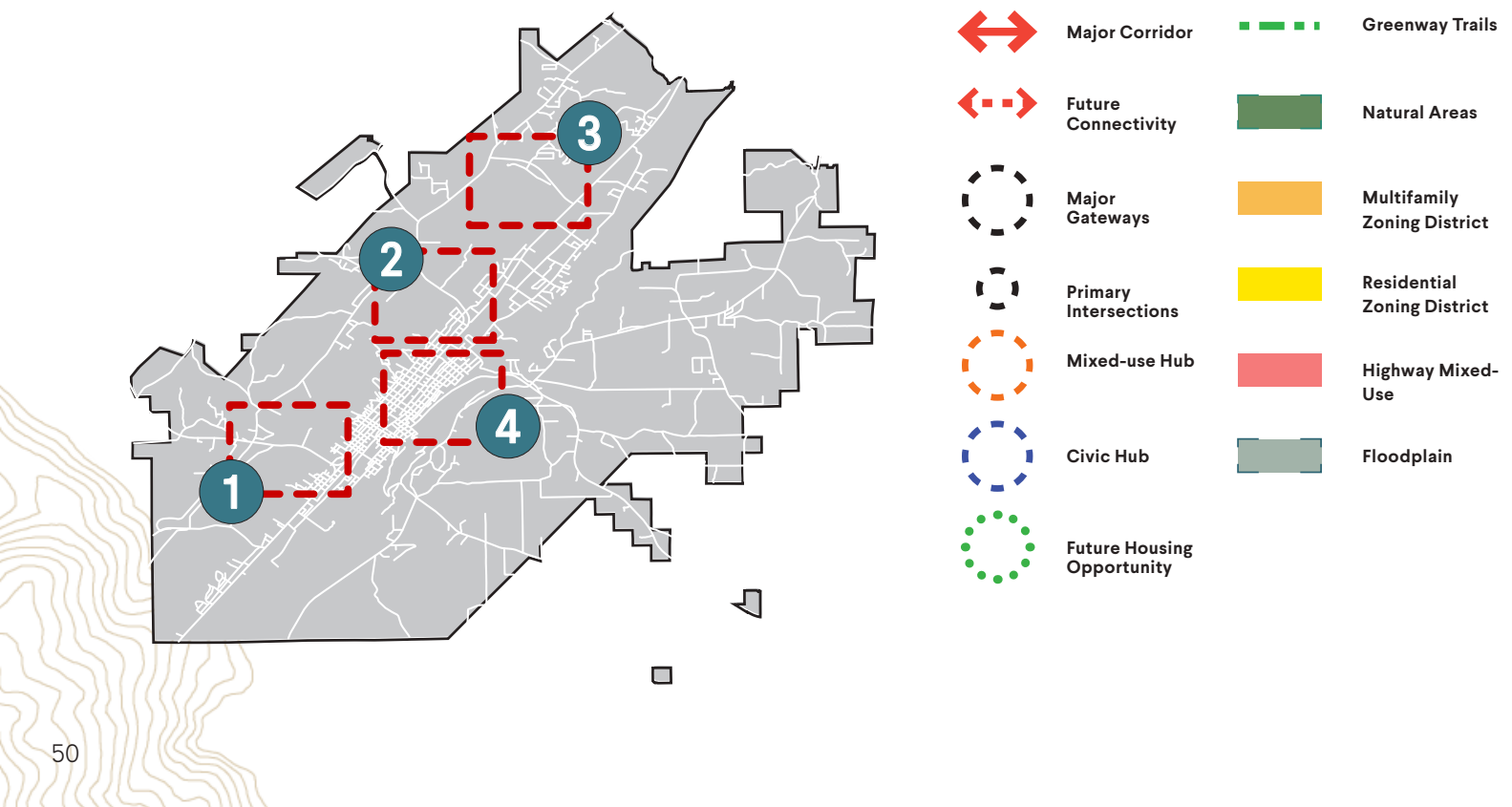
Mix Uses

Surrounding major intersections, or along highway commercial corridors, cities should allow a mix of uses to incorporate a blend of activity. The increases pedestrian activity along corridors and reduces land use.

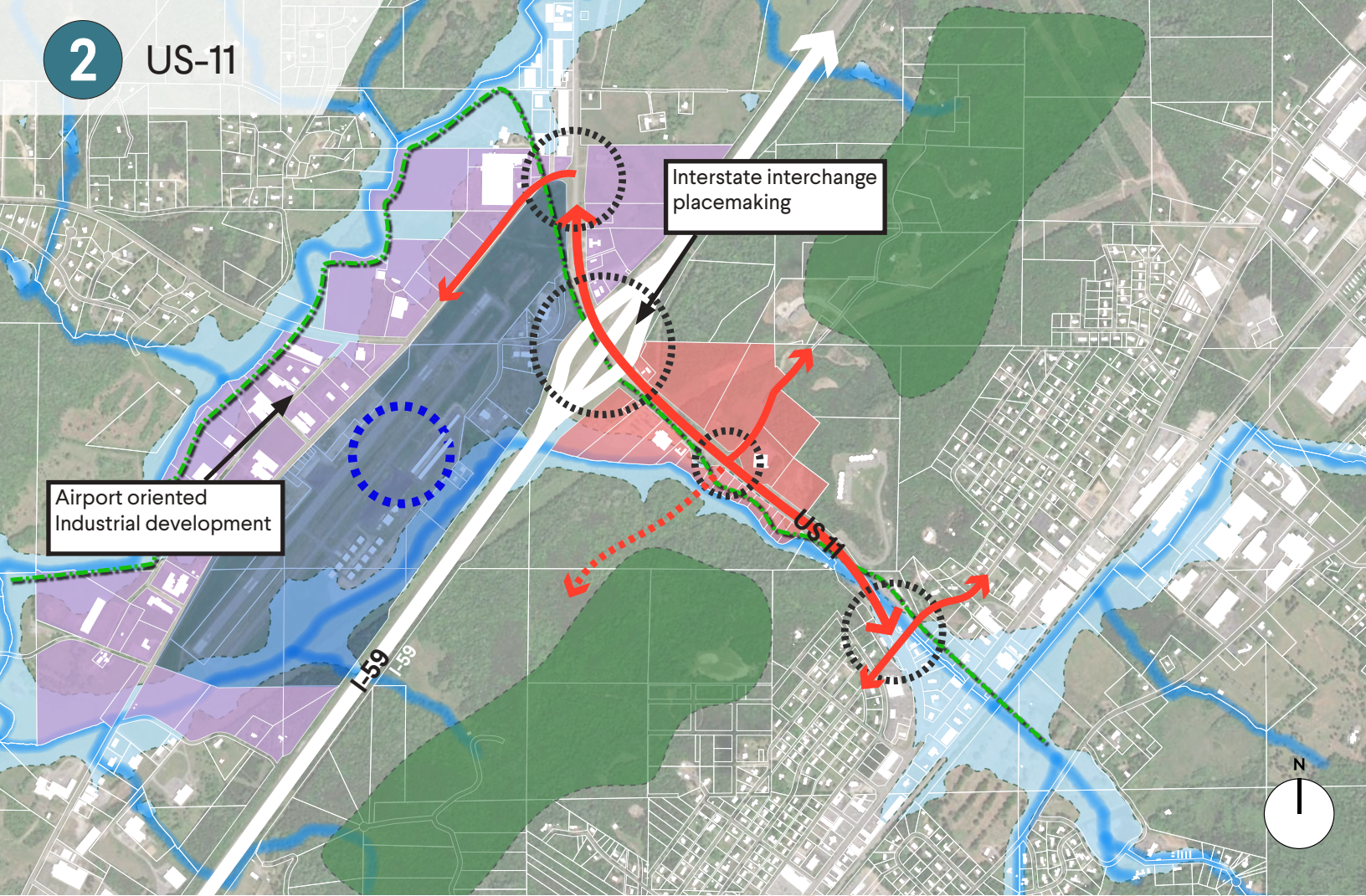
1 AL-35



Gateways Recommended Land Use & Zoning



2 US-11



Concept Graphics of focus areas

The map on the opposite page identifies focus development areas shown in the above concept graphics. The concept graphics highlight areas for the city to make improvements to land use, zoning, and connectivity to improve the future development.

Focus Area Recommendations

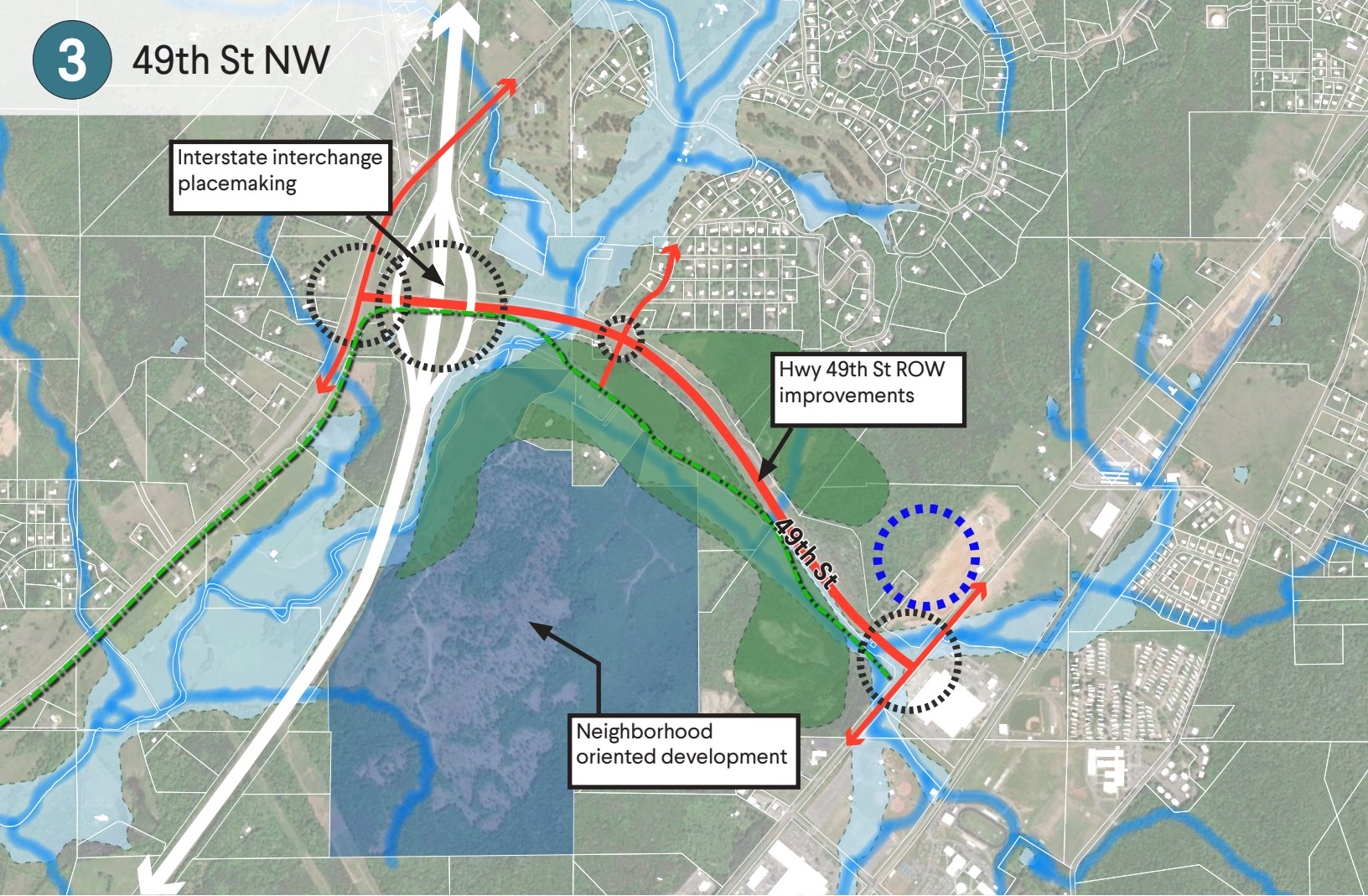
1

- Make Exit 218 a priority for future improvements
- Enhance connectivity on Hwy 35 under I-59 (mobility & trails)
- Create a Mixed-use Highway zoning district
- Look for opportunities for housing development in close proximity to commercial hubs

2

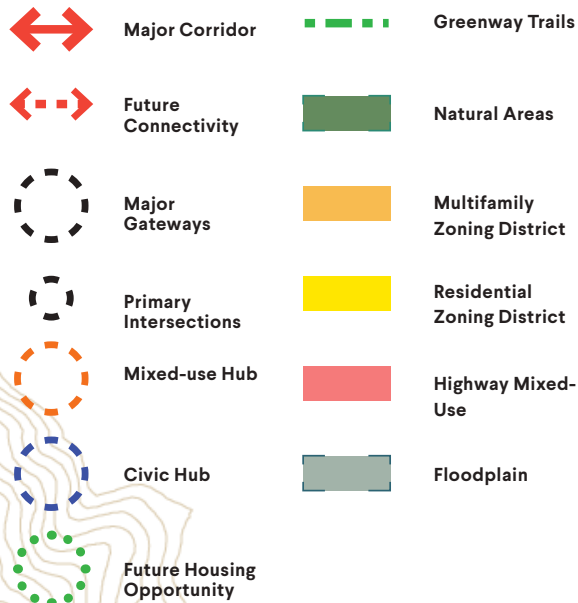
- Plan greenway loop on the airport side of I-59 that connects city
- Consider developing land along the interstate over the mountain on the eastern side of I-59
- Maximize & concentrate Industrial development around airport

3 49th St NW



Gateways Recommended Land Use & Zoning

Focus Area Recommendations



3

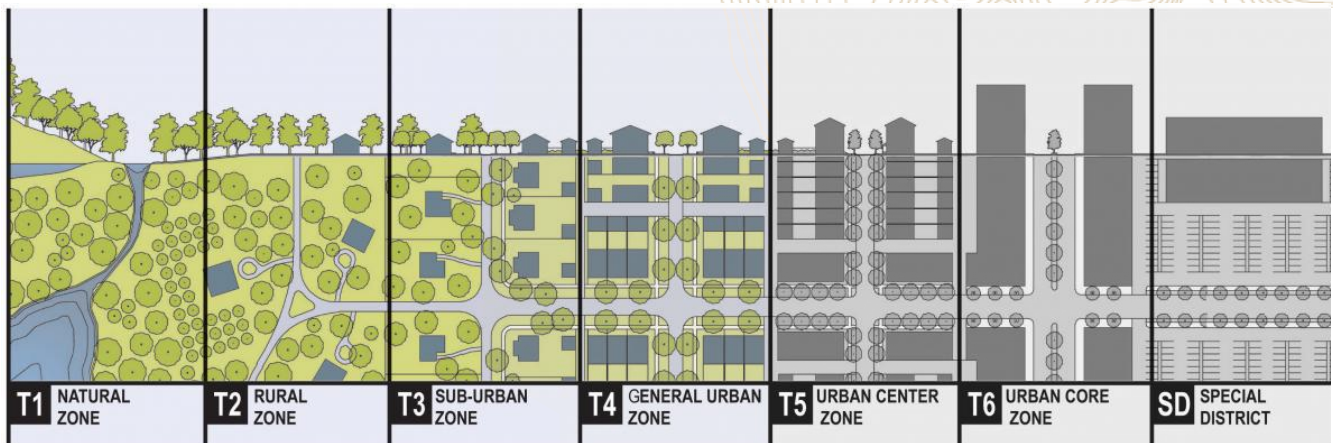
- Increase residential development around the Middle and High School
- Limit Mixed-use Highway development to primary intersections along 49th St
- Prioritize placemaking at I-59 interchange

4

- Improve entry experience along Wallace, especially at Joe's Truck Stop, with landscaping and signage
- Consider use of city owned land and complimentary art consistent with other primary gateways



The rural to urban transect is a good model when considering patterns of development. Currently much of land found along these gateway corridors is rural. The first major interchange on I-59 at AL 35 has seen the most commercial development, but as the city grows there will be more stress on the two northern gateways and the city must decide how the corridors develop. Do they remain in the T1 - T2 zones, or will this land immediately adjacent to the roadways be better suited for commercial/retail to mixed-use development? If the city adopts a transect model for these gateways the zones along the corridors would be T3 zones and would allow a mix of uses. Moving away from the corridors would enter T2 and T1 zones, reserved for more rural residential uses.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT #1

DeKalb Plaza Infill

The DeKalb Plaza Shopping Center is privately owned but is an important potential redevelopment site that sits at the highly traveled intersection of US 11 and AL 35. Its strategic location at the primary entrance to Little Wills Valley and the downtown area make it a prime candidate for out-parcel development to both enhance the dated aesthetic of this gateway and provide additional room for new businesses in the area.

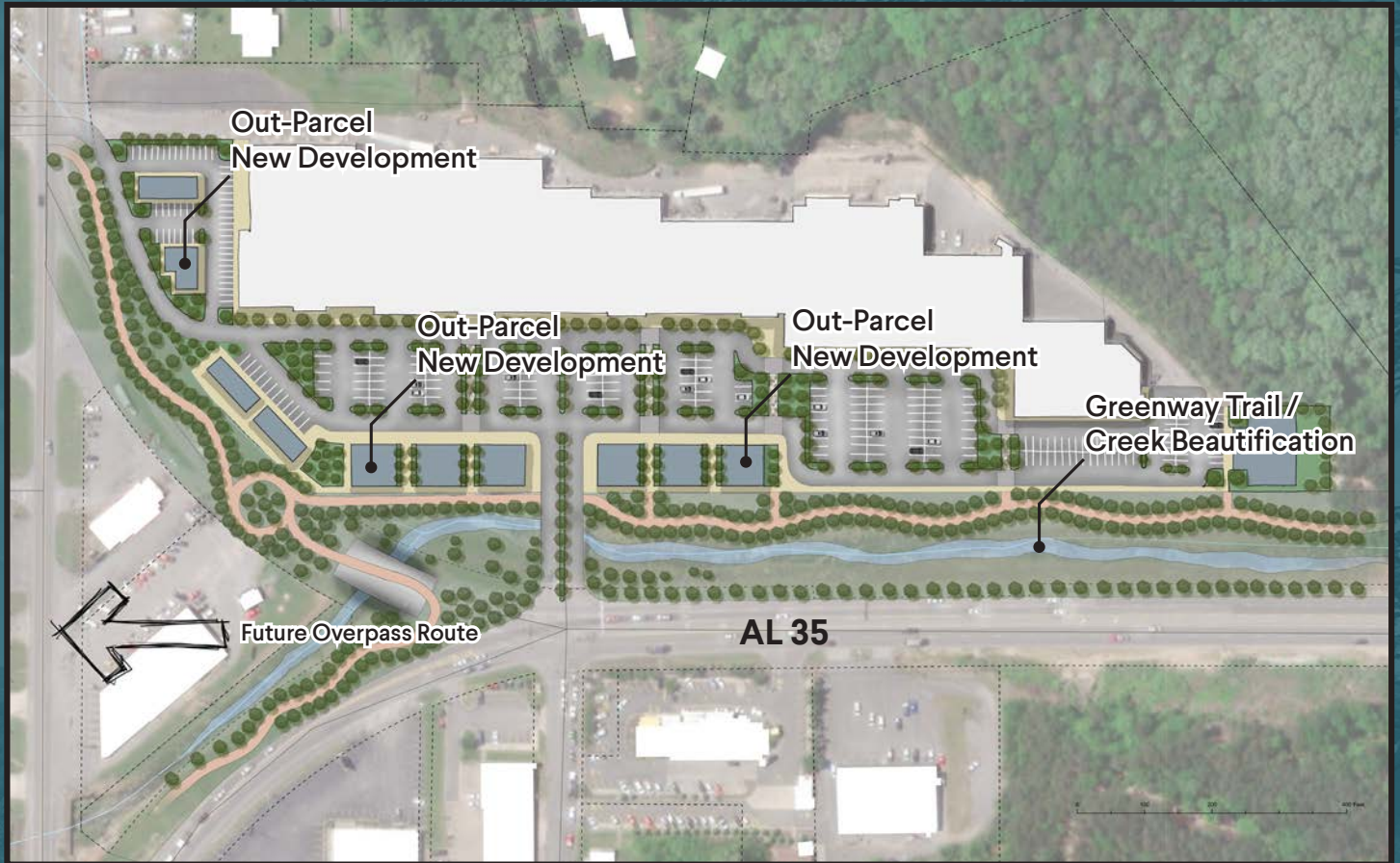
Improvements to the site should also include landscaping enhancements along Little Wills Creek with a pedestrian greenway path along the banks. Furthermore, the site plans for any new development on the site should require the building to address the creek and pedestrian path.



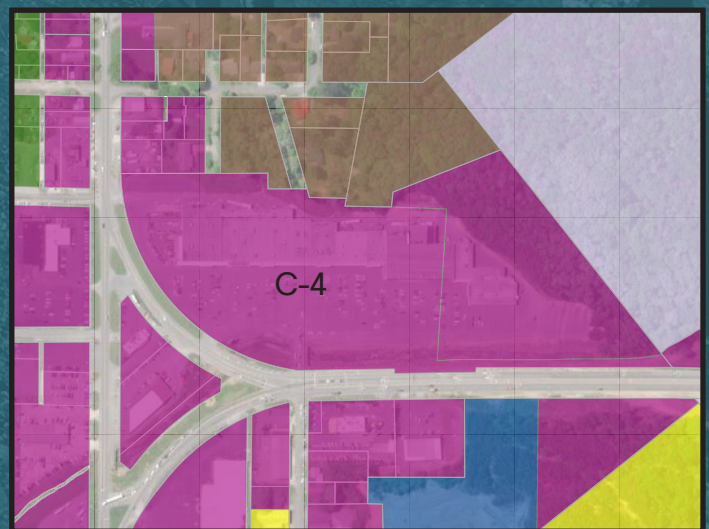
Fresh out-parcel development with a beautified creek and walking path would enhance the first impression made by this gateway site to downtown visitors

Quick Facts

10 acres



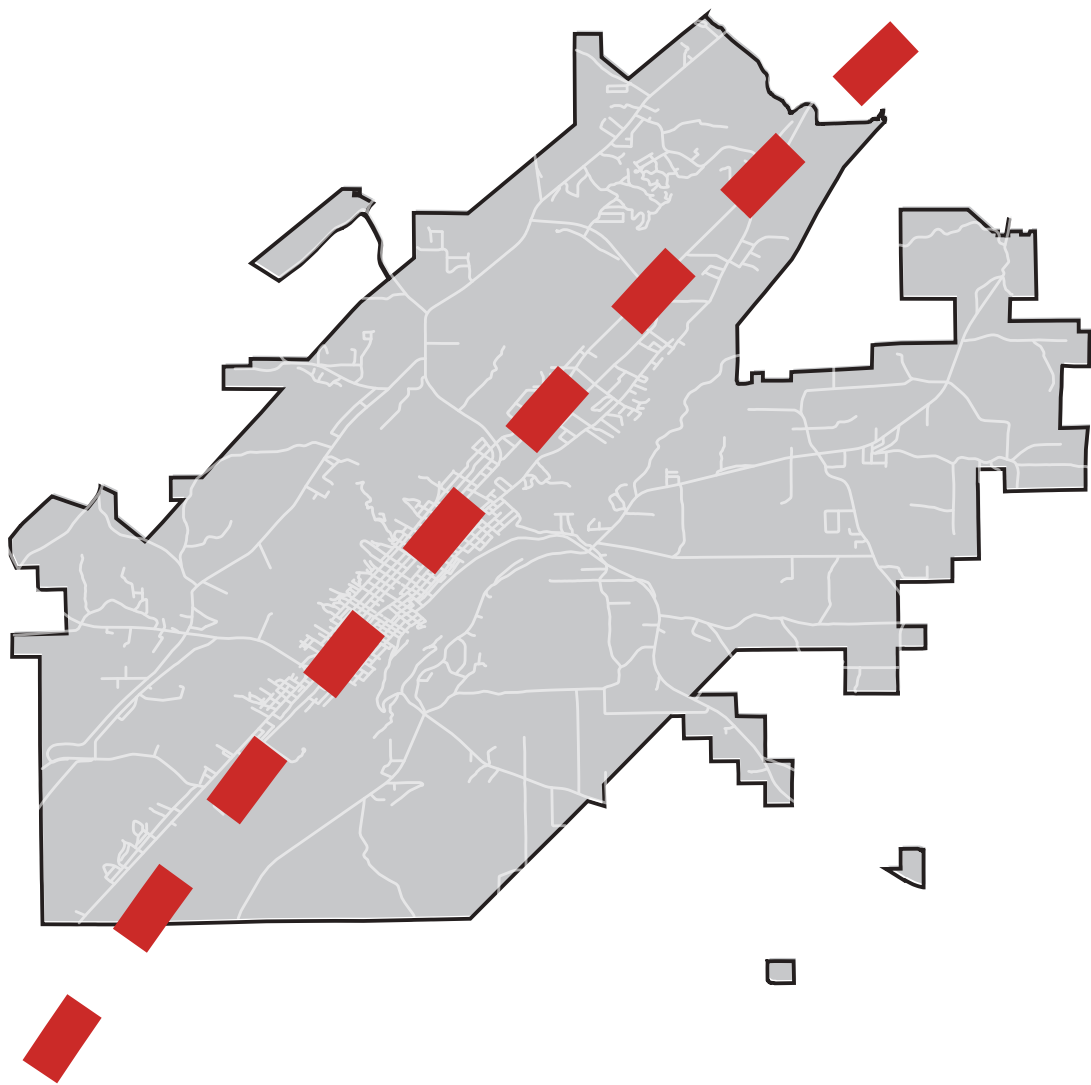
Project location

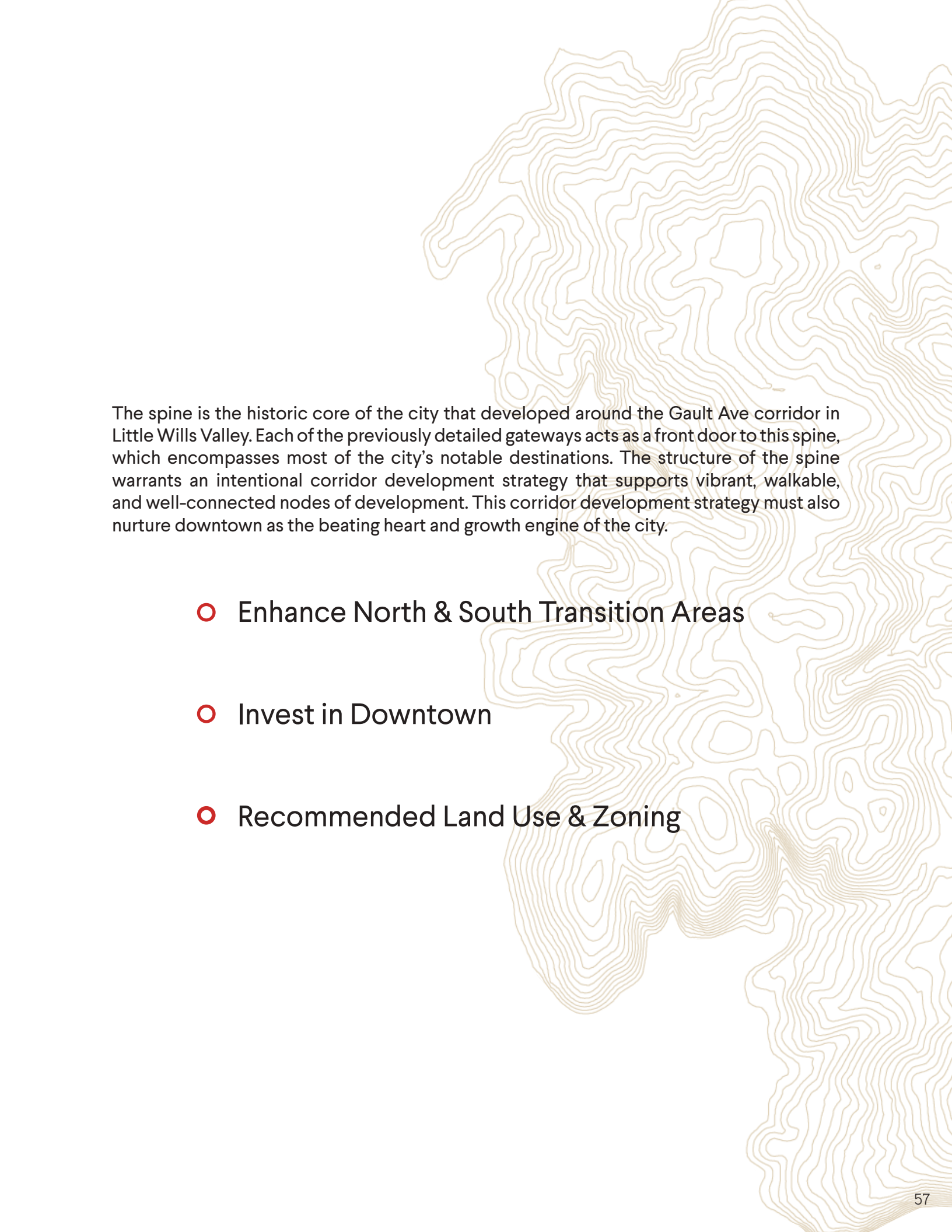


Current zoning

Spine

The heart of the city

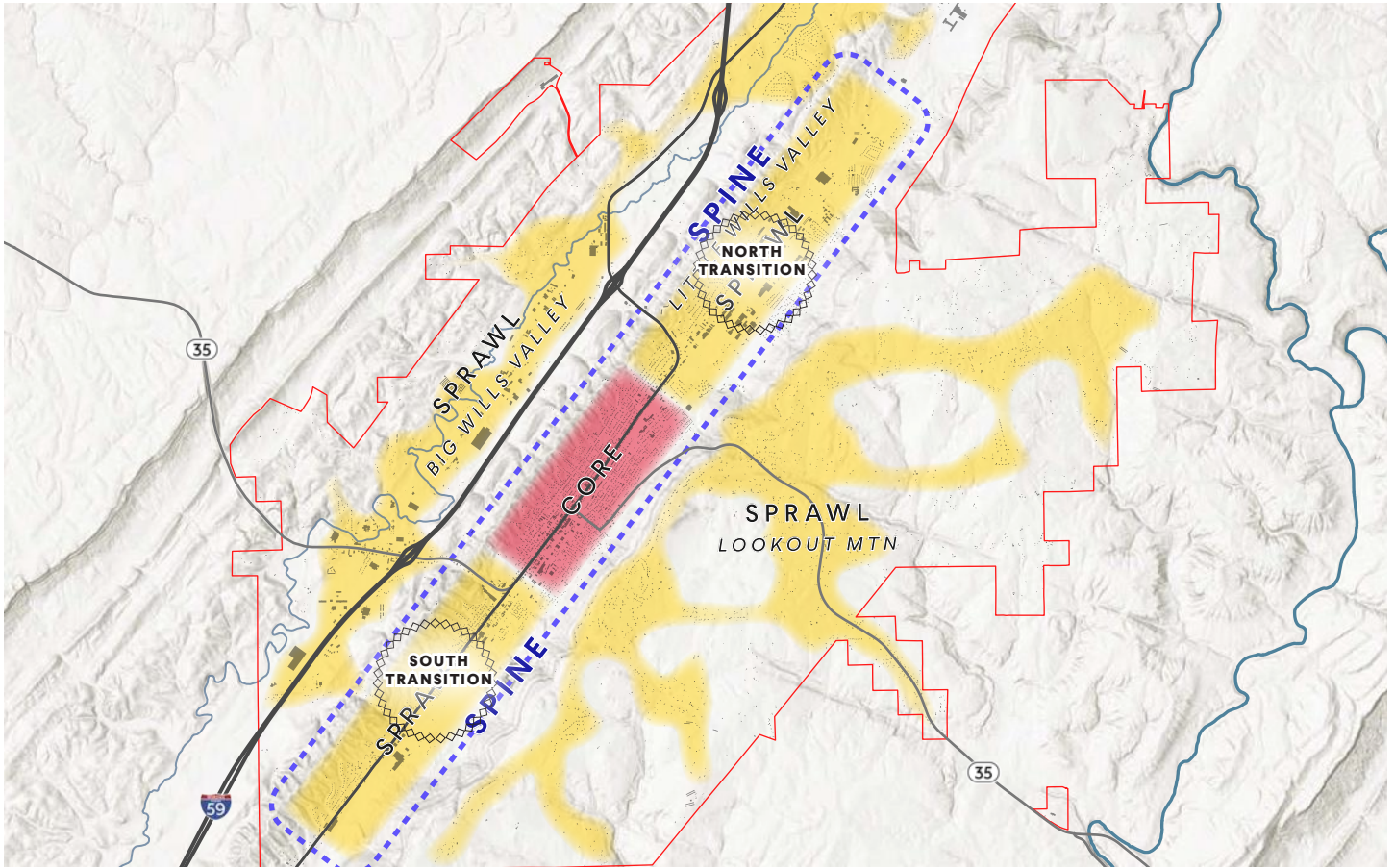


A background graphic of a topographic map with brown contour lines, showing a city's layout. The map is oriented vertically, with the city's 'spine' running north-south.

The spine is the historic core of the city that developed around the Gault Ave corridor in Little Wills Valley. Each of the previously detailed gateways acts as a front door to this spine, which encompasses most of the city's notable destinations. The structure of the spine warrants an intentional corridor development strategy that supports vibrant, walkable, and well-connected nodes of development. This corridor development strategy must also nurture downtown as the beating heart and growth engine of the city.

- Enhance North & South Transition Areas
- Invest in Downtown
- Recommended Land Use & Zoning

Enhance North + South Transition Areas



The historic development of Fort Payne’s urban area was constrained to the footprint of Little Wills Valley, which gave the city’s historic spine its distinctive linear form. Downtown and adjacent core neighborhoods were developed in a more compact walkable pattern in the late 1800s through the early 1900s. From the mid 1900s onward, development patterns became less compact and sprawled along the valley to the north and south of the core, eventually spreading beyond the spine to the adjacent Big Wills Valley and the heights of Lookout Mountain.

The spine’s north and south transitions between the compact core and its sprawling edges should be enhanced to better highlight the historic core as a distinct district.

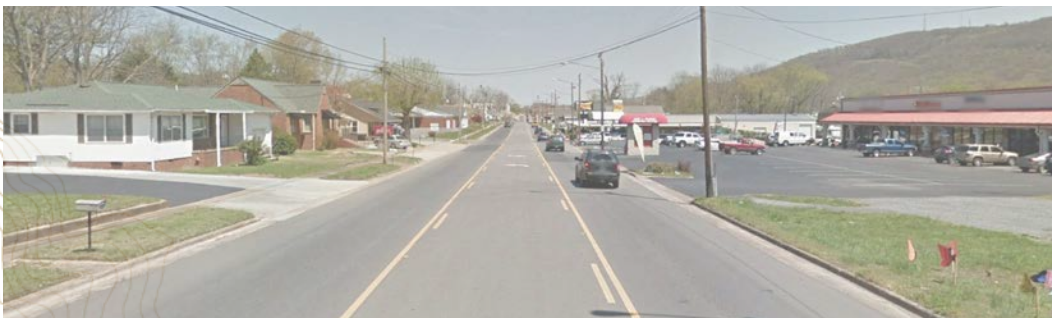
North Transition

6th St N to 18th St N
12 blocks
~1 mile

South Transition

3rd St S to Glenn Blvd
8 blocks
~3/4 mile

Streetscape Improvements

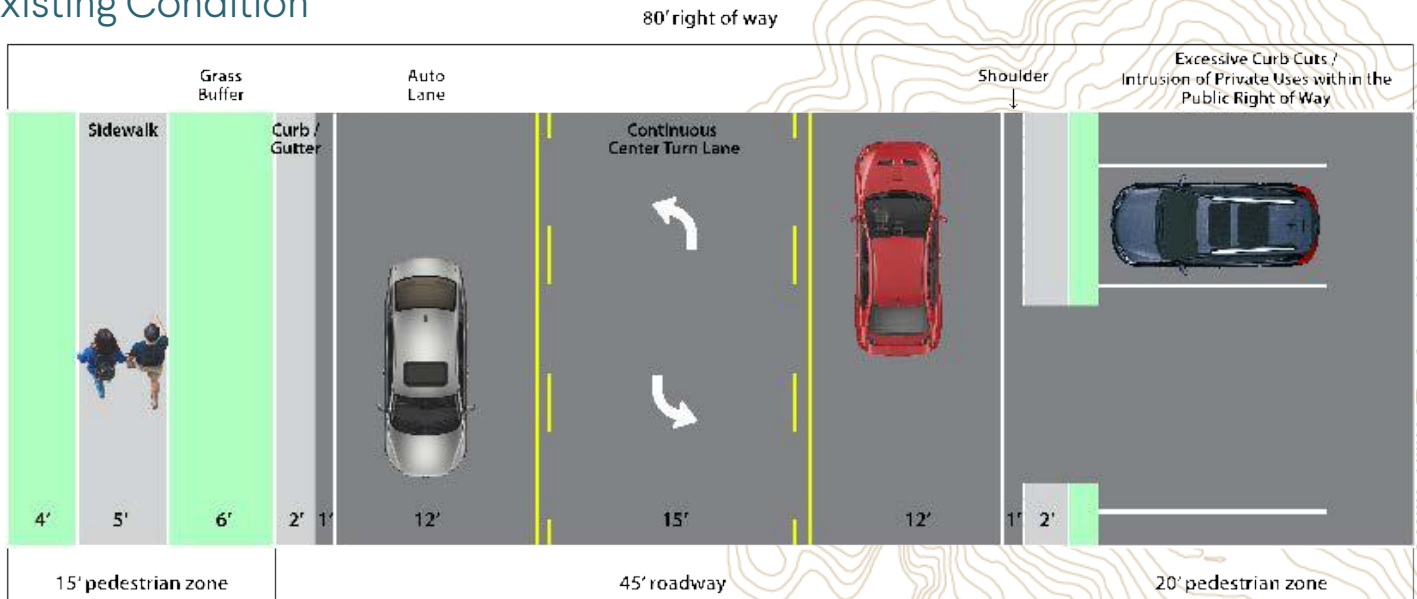


South transition, looking toward downtown, 600 block of Gault Ave

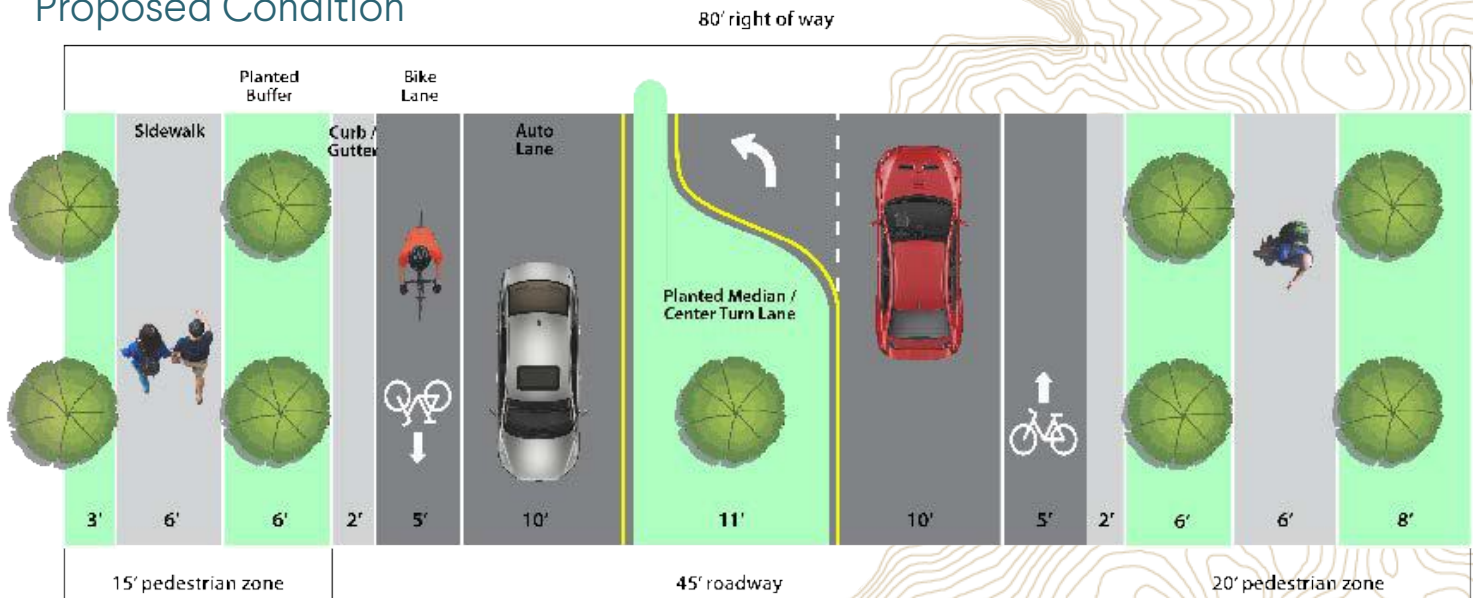
Existing Experience

- Sparse / no sidewalks
- Excessive curb cuts
- No landscaping
- Center turn lane

Existing Condition



Proposed Condition



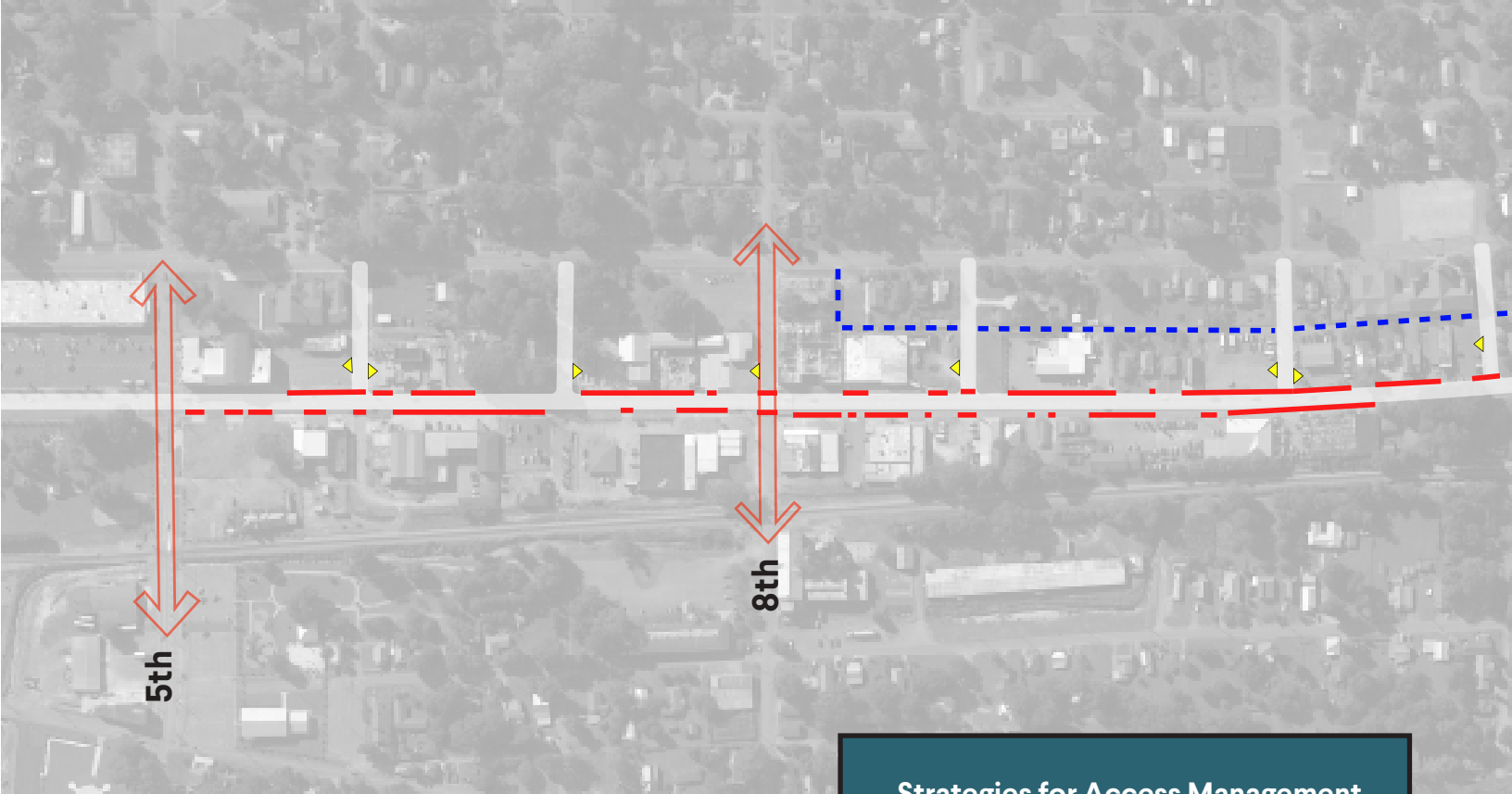
US Highway 11 / Gault Ave has an 80' wide right-of-way along its full length. The south transition has a 45' roadway from curb to curb. The north transition has a 40' from curb to curb for most of its length. 45' wide roadway sections have the potential to be retrofitted according to the above diagrams without the need for costly road widening. Sidewalks should be extended on both sides of the road throughout the transition area wherever new curbs are installed. Bike lanes should also be included in each travel direction. **The proposed street condition above should be implemented on Gault Ave from 4th St S to 10th St S and from 5th St N to 10th St N.**

North Transition

- Widen Gault Ave from 5th St to 8th St from 40' to 45' to allow for complete streetscape treatment
- Add planted medians and bike lanes from 5th St N to 10th St N
- Add sidewalks on both sides of Gault Ave from 5th St N to 12th St N

South Transition

- Add planted medians and bike lanes from 4th St S to 10th St S
- Add sidewalks on the south side of Gault Ave from 3rd St S to Glenn Blvd
- Add sidewalks on the north side of Gault Ave from 8th St S to Glenn Blvd



Access Management

The map above is an access management analysis of the north transition on Gault Ave. It demonstrates the excess length of curb cuts along this stretch of highway. Arterial highways such as Gault Ave have two main functions - mobility and access. Mobility deals with the efficient movement of traffic while access allows motorists to reach specific destinations along the highway. **An effective access management strategy balances the competing needs for mobility and access to reduce congestion and optimize safety for all roadway users.**

Strategies for Access Management

Access Spacing

Increasing distance between traffic signals and other access points

Driveway Spacing

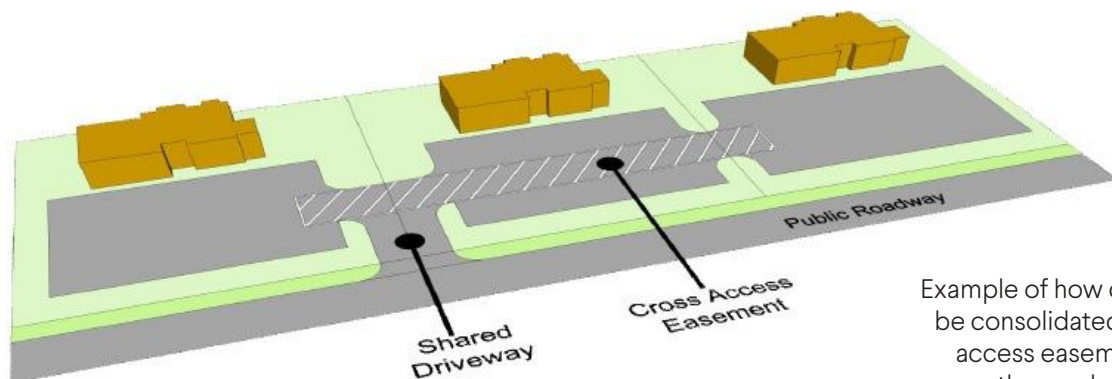
Consolidating driveways to shared access points spaced farther apart

Safe Turning Lanes

Providing dedicated left and right turn lanes to keep traffic flowing

Median Treatments

Non-traversable raised medians with left turn bays/ U-turns to regulate access



Example of how driveways can be consolidated using a cross access easement to reduce the number of curb cuts



Vehicle access



Through Roads (cross tracks)



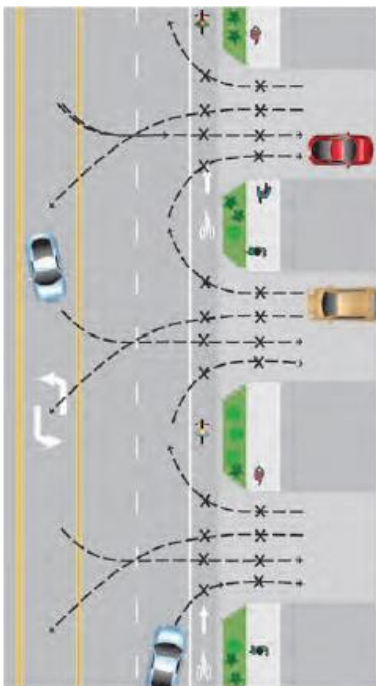
Alley Access



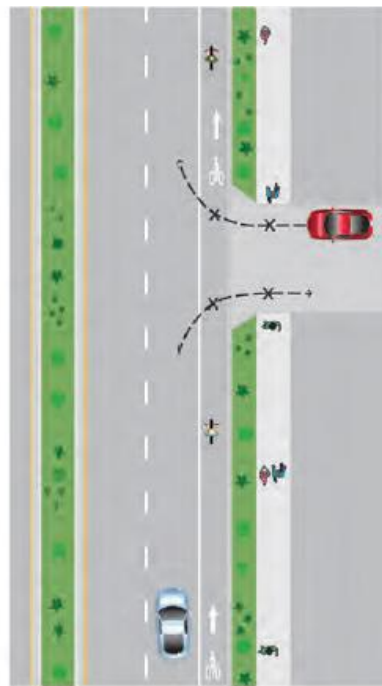
Curb Cuts



Before



After



Example of how added medians and driveway consolidation reduce potential conflict points

Too many direct access points for individual properties along the highway increases the likelihood of dangerous crashes and causes traffic congestion. **The city should pursue the following actions to better manage access in the north and south transition zones:**

South Transition

- Include left turn bays in new medians from 4th St S to 10th St S
- Consolidate commercial driveways from 3rd St S to Glenn Blvd for a max of 1 mid-block curb cut per block

North Transition

- Widen Gault Ave from 5th St to 8th St from 40' to 45' to allow for complete streetscape treatment
- Include left turn bays in new medians from 5th St N to 10th St N
- Consolidate commercial driveways from 5th St N to 18th St N for a max of 1 mid-block curb cut per block

Signage Improvements

Existing Condition



Common pylon signage typology along Gault Ave

Signage is an important factor in the built environment that has a significant impact on the perceived quality of a place. Improving signage standards along Gault Ave would be a relatively cost effective way to improve the aesthetics of the north and south transition areas. **The city should implement a signage ordinance covering downtown and the north and south transition areas.** Elements should include:

- Reduction of height maximums
- Exterior illumination requirements
- Foundation landscaping requirements
- Approved colors / materials



Example signage clutter due to lack of signage regulations - Oklahoma City, OK



Example monument signage alternative for highway commercial businesses

Proposed Signage Typologies

Lettering

Channel letters for illuminated signs, Dimensional letters for non-illuminated signs.



- Made of separate 3-D letters
- Clear and legible, even from a distance
- Prime for any business type (retail, etc.)

Monument Signs

Give distinction to your building.



- Permanent outdoor signs constructed on-site with a base in the ground
- Good for distinguishing hard to find buildings
- Prime for buildings with limited visibility due to larger setbacks (apartments, etc.)

Push - Through Acrylic

Dynamic signage to stand out from the crowd.



- Signs elements are routed through an aluminum sheet and extruded for depth
- Clear, unique signage
- Prime for any business type, often mounted on building facade

Post and Panel Signs

Economic wayfinding.



- Sign is elevated above ground level mounted on 2 to 4 posts
- More cost effective due to construction methods
- Prime for wayfinding and other types of signage

Cabinet Signs

Impactful branding.



- Signs that can be cut and contoured to any shape or style
- Best for logo signs and enhancing brand recognition
- Prime for any business type (retail, etc.)

Blade Signs

Capture the attention of pedestrian traffic.



- Signs that protrude from a building from a pole
- Positioned perpendicular to the flow of pedestrian traffic
- Prime for urban shops and boutiques

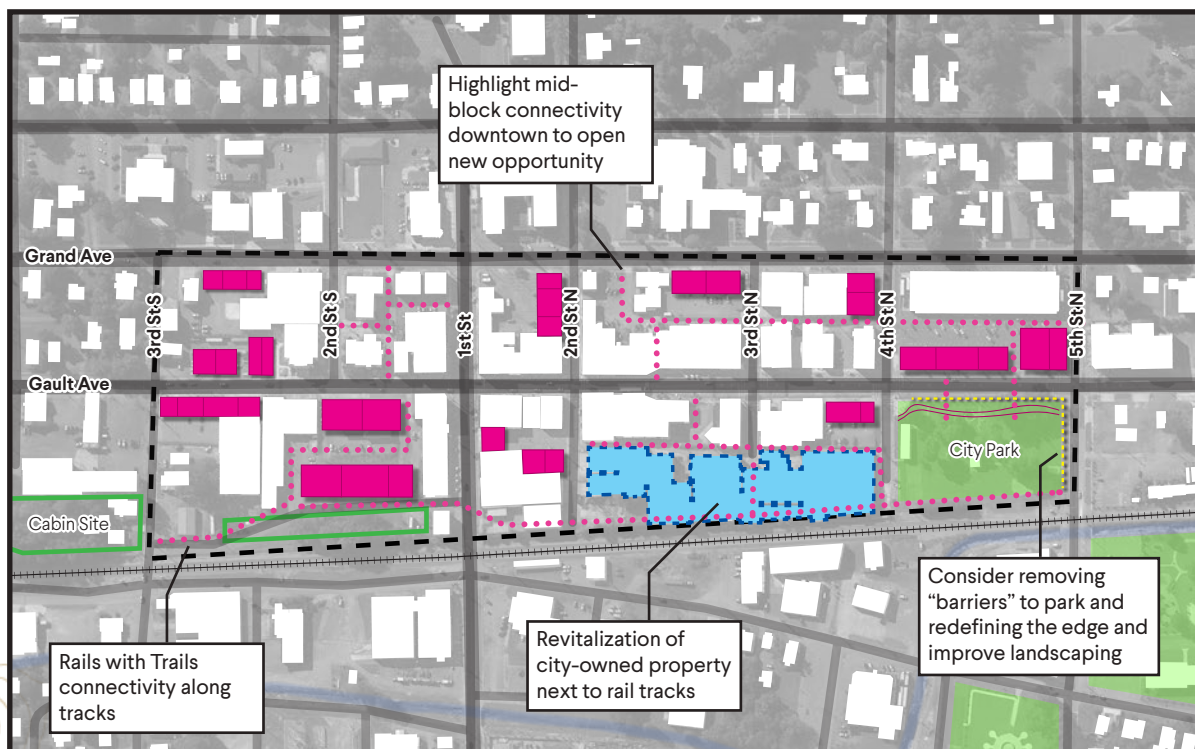
Invest in Downtown

Fort Payne’s historic downtown is one of its strongest assets and a potential engine for citywide growth and reinvestment. In order to attract private investment to the downtown, the city must first make investments in the public realm (e.g. streetscapes, parks, etc.) to catalyze development interests. **The long-term success of downtown hinges on its evolution into a more walkable, mixed-use, urban environment where people can live, work, and play.**

Downtown Urban Fabric

Fort Payne should enhance the urban nature of its downtown district by implementing the following principles in improvements to its built environment:

1. Incentivize infill development using vacant lots or surface parking lots
2. Create a seamless pedestrian experience by filling in gaps for a pedestrian friendly sense of street enclosure
3. Connect areas of interest visually and by marked paths, creating multiple connections
4. Enhance streetscapes and focus on the pedestrian environment and safety



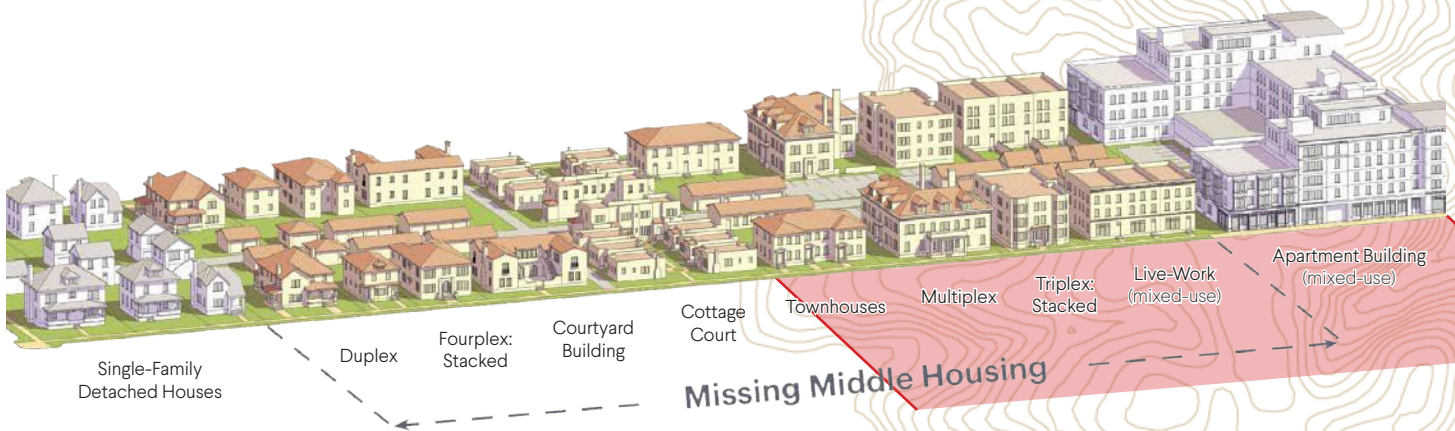
Downtown Urban Core
 Mid-block connections
 Proposed Parks
 Proposed Infill Development Sites

Housing

The most vibrant downtown districts are successful due largely to their robust and diverse mixture of uses within a walkable area. Integrating a variety of uses creates a dynamic environment where people choose to spend their time and money. Downtown Fort Payne has a broad spectrum of existing uses, from retail and offices to parks and restaurants. However, there is little to no residential presence within the downtown urban core. Options for urban living are perhaps the biggest missing piece in the downtown puzzle. **Fort Payne should embrace a variety of more dense residential development typologies in the downtown core to support economic and cultural activity while fostering a 24/7 community.**



Conceptual Live/ Work infill on Gault Ave across from City Park



The above housing density transect highlights in red the densities of housing that would be appropriate for infill development projects in the downtown urban core, shown in further detail below. For infill projects in the downtown urban core, preference should generally be given to mixed-use residential developments.



Conceptual Live/ Work redevelopment on Gault Ave by the historic Fort Payne Cabin Site



Conceptual Mixed-Use Apartment redevelopment on Godfrey Ave at 4th St N

Enhanced Safety

SAFER STREETSCAPE DESIGN

Creating safe streets for all modes of travel is a paramount responsibility for civic leaders. Alabama has one of the highest rates in the nation of serious injury or death in pedestrian crashes, with an average of more than 10 pedestrian deaths per month in 2022. Many of these deaths occur on urban arterial roads and are preventable crashes that could be avoided through better street design. **Fort Payne should implement the following design safety solutions on Gault Ave between 3rd St S and 5th St N.**

Common Design Causes of Crash Fatalities

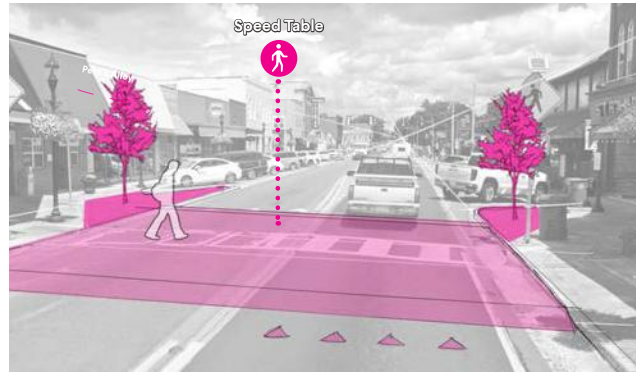
- Lack of sidewalks
- Lack of accessible crossings
- Lack of pedestrian refuge areas
- Lack of signal predictability
- Lack of cycling infrastructure
- Poor intersection design
- Poor surface conditions

Proposed Streetscape Design Safety Solutions

- Reduction of crossing distance for pedestrians
- High visibility pedestrian crosswalks/ signals
- Reduction of turn radii
- Pedestrian islands/ median refuge areas
- Traffic calming (speed tables, chicanes, etc.)
- Improved lighting
- Accessible sidewalks/ ramps



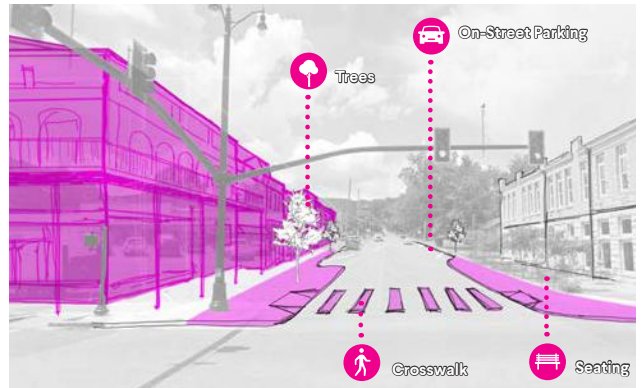
Proposed curb extensions and high-vis crosswalks on Gault Ave at 1st Ave



Proposed curb extensions and speed table on Gault Ave

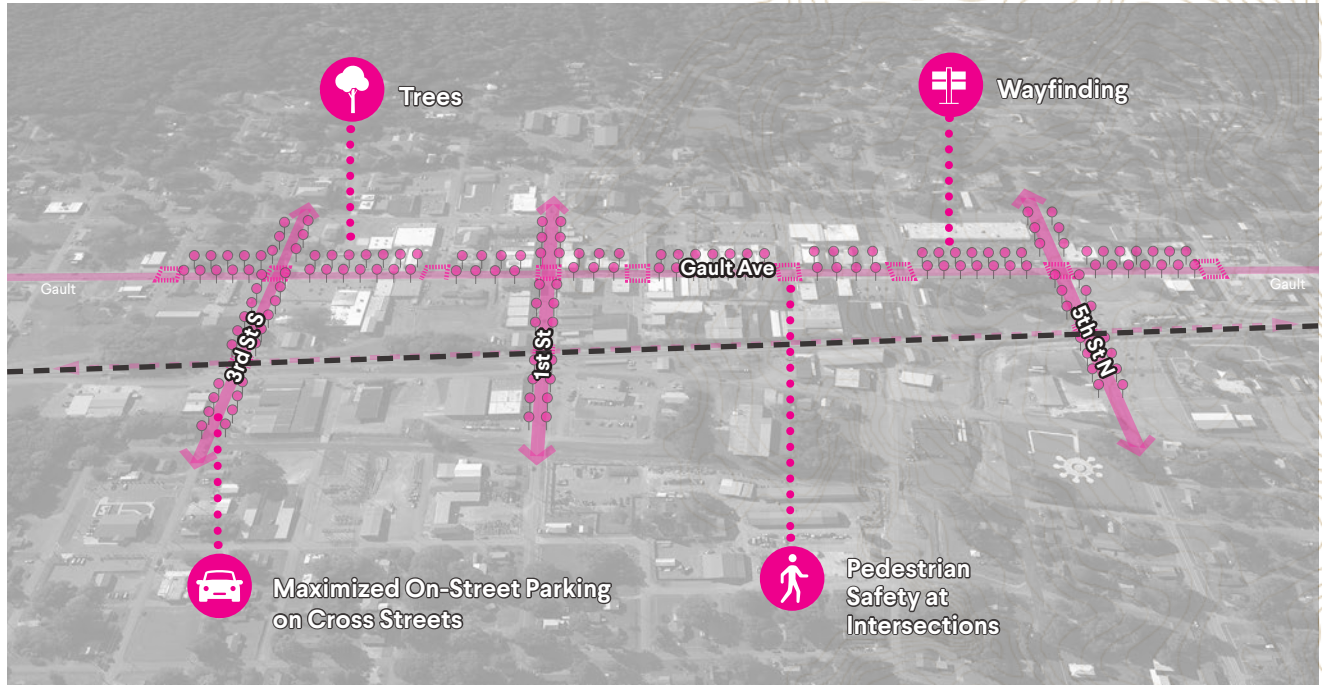


Proposed curb extensions and high-vis crosswalks on Gault Ave at 1st Ave



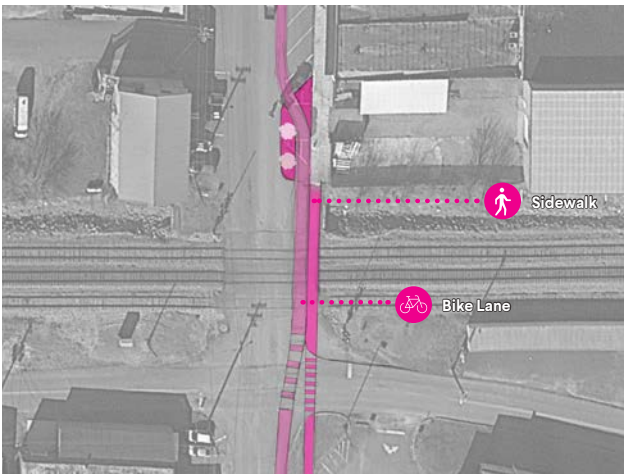
Proposed curb extensions on Gault Ave at 5th Ave N

CROSS-RAILROAD CONNECTIVITY



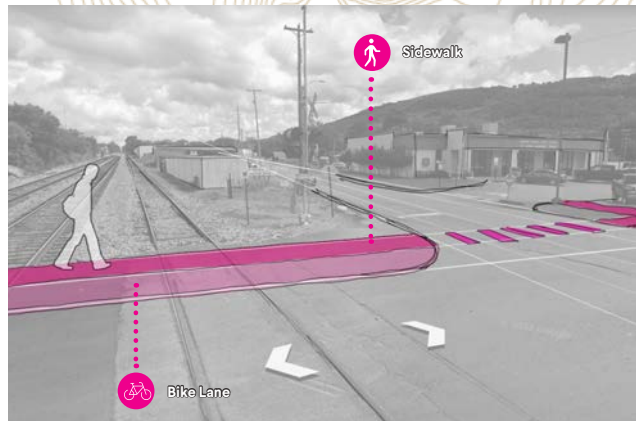
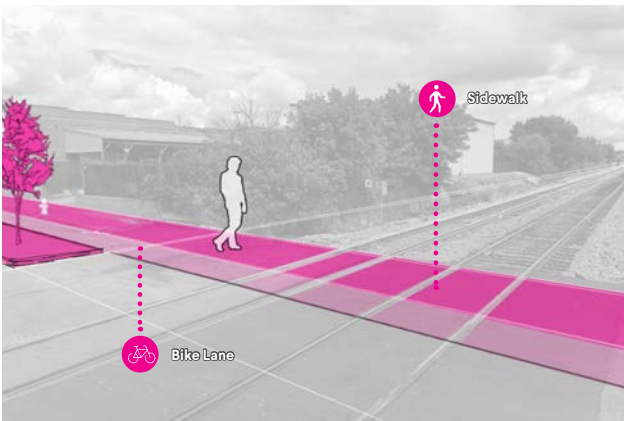
(Above) Priority downtown streetscape improvements to increase walkability and cross-track connectivity

(Below, all) Proposed train crossing improvements on 1st Ave for pedestrians and cyclists

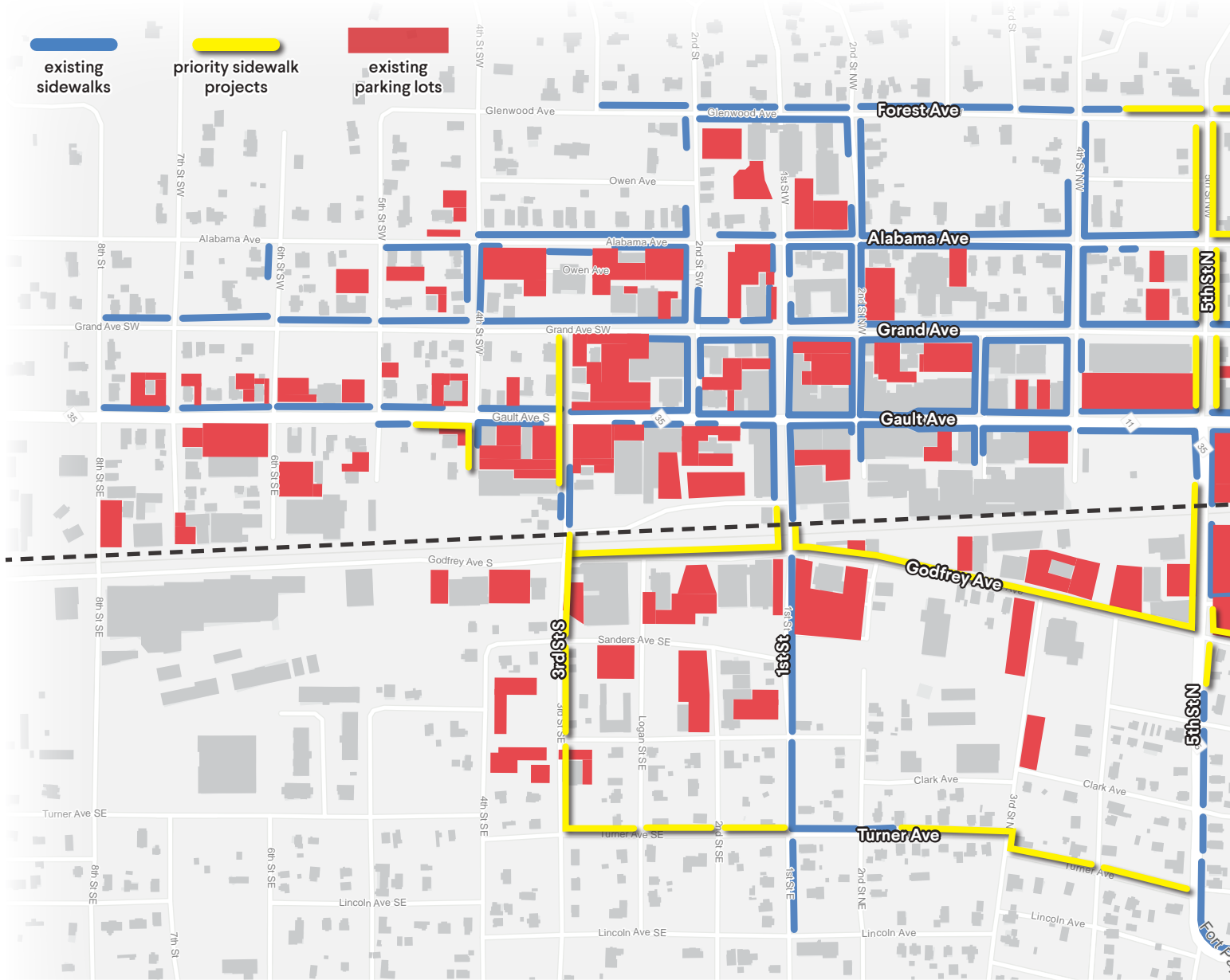


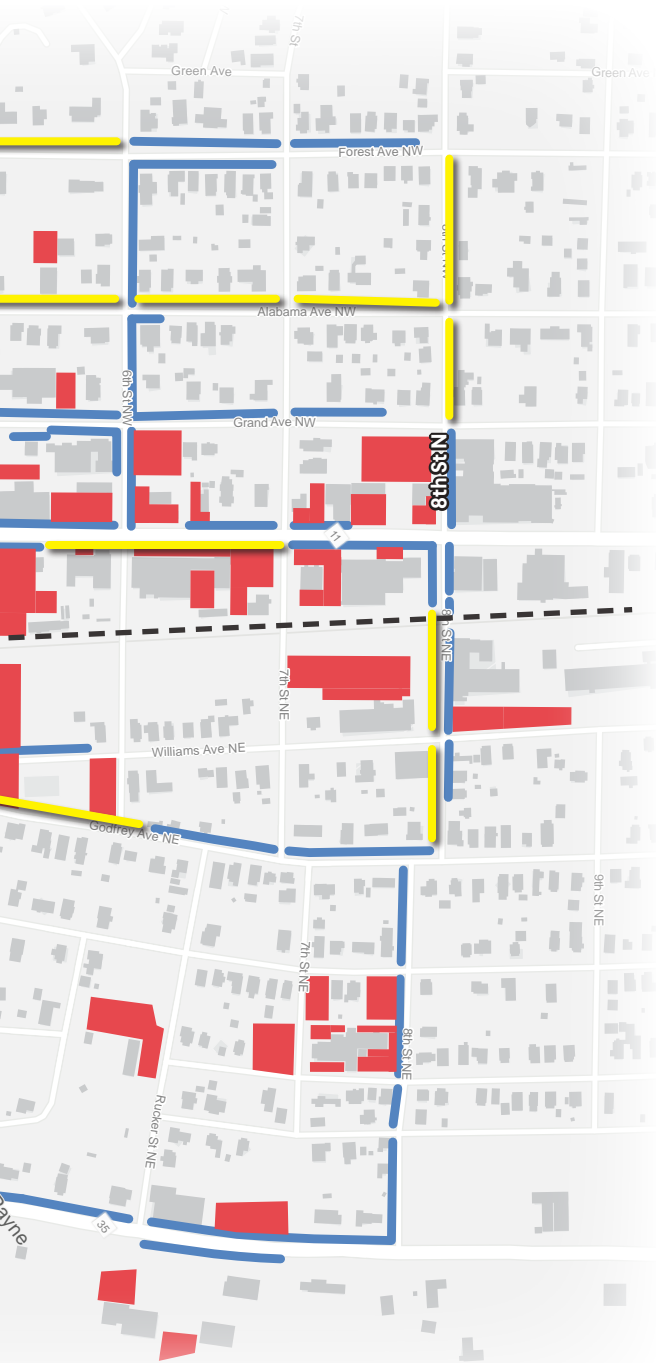
Fort Payne’s downtown urban core is split in half by the railroad. The historic commercial district is located on the northeast side of the tracks while lots of industry and several of the city’s most prominent parks are located on the southeast side of the tracks. **The city should implement safer crossing improvements on the downtown streets that cross the tracks in order to better connect the southeast side to downtown and enhance its development potential.** Bike and pedestrian railroad crossing improvements to downtown cross-track streets should be prioritized as follows:

1. 5th St N
2. 1st St
3. 3rd St S



Sidewalks and Parking Lots





(Above) Priority downtown sidewalk construction projects

(Left) Proposed sidewalk curb extensions at major downtown intersections

A complete sidewalk network in a downtown area is vital for fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment and supporting the overall vibrancy of the urban core. Sidewalks serve as the connective tissue that links businesses, cultural venues, and public spaces, encouraging foot traffic and creating a sense of community. **Currently, there are several substantial gaps in the downtown sidewalk network that need to be filled in order to create a more walkable environment both within downtown and connecting downtown to its adjacent residential neighborhoods.** The proposed sidewalk corridors identified in the plan to the left have been prioritized by segment. As the sidewalk network is filled in, some excess parking lots should be redeveloped to further activate walkability.

5th St N

1. South side of road crossing the tracks from City Park to Godfrey Ave (redesigned sidewalk on north edge)
2. Both sides of road from Gault Ave to Forest Ave

Godfrey Ave

1. West side of road from 6th St N to 1st St
2. West side of road from 1st St to 3rd St S

3rd St S

1. North side of road from Railroad Ave to Turner Ave
2. South side of road from Railroad Ave to Grand Ave

1st St

1. Both sides of road from Railroad Ave to Godfrey Ave

Turner Ave

1. West side of road from 5th St N to 2nd St N
2. West side of road from 1st St to 3rd St S

Gault Ave

1. East side of road from 5th St N to 7th St N
2. East side of road from 4th St S to 5th St S

8th St N

1. South side of road railroad tracks to Godfrey Ave
2. North side of road from Grand Ave to Forest Ave

Alabama Ave

1. West side of road from 5th St N to 8th St N

Forest Ave

1. West side of road from 4th St N to 6th St N

1 South of City

Feasibility of developing on the backside of the mountain along I-65

Quarry Site Adaptive Reuse

Area for potential neighborhood center

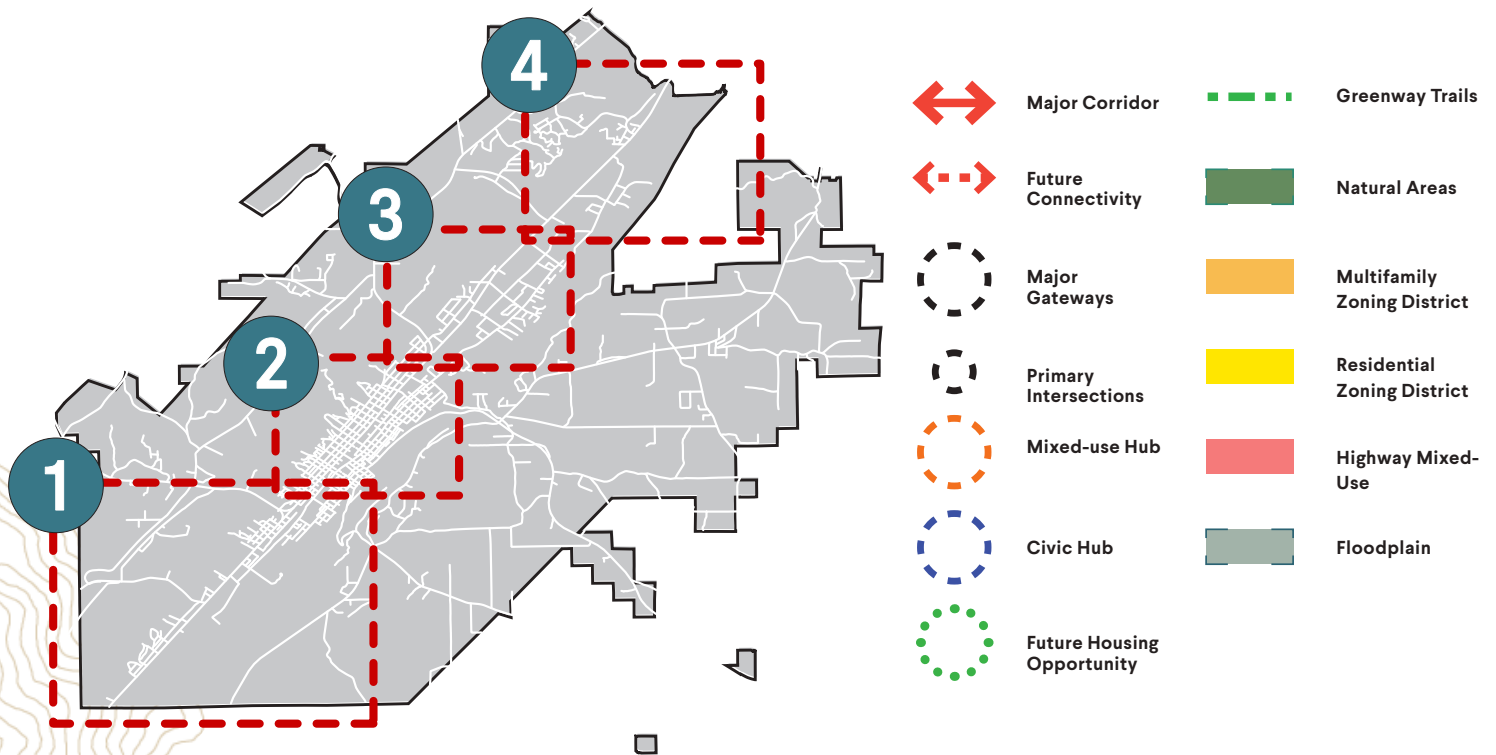
Explore opportunity to rezone and develop residential areas east of the tracks

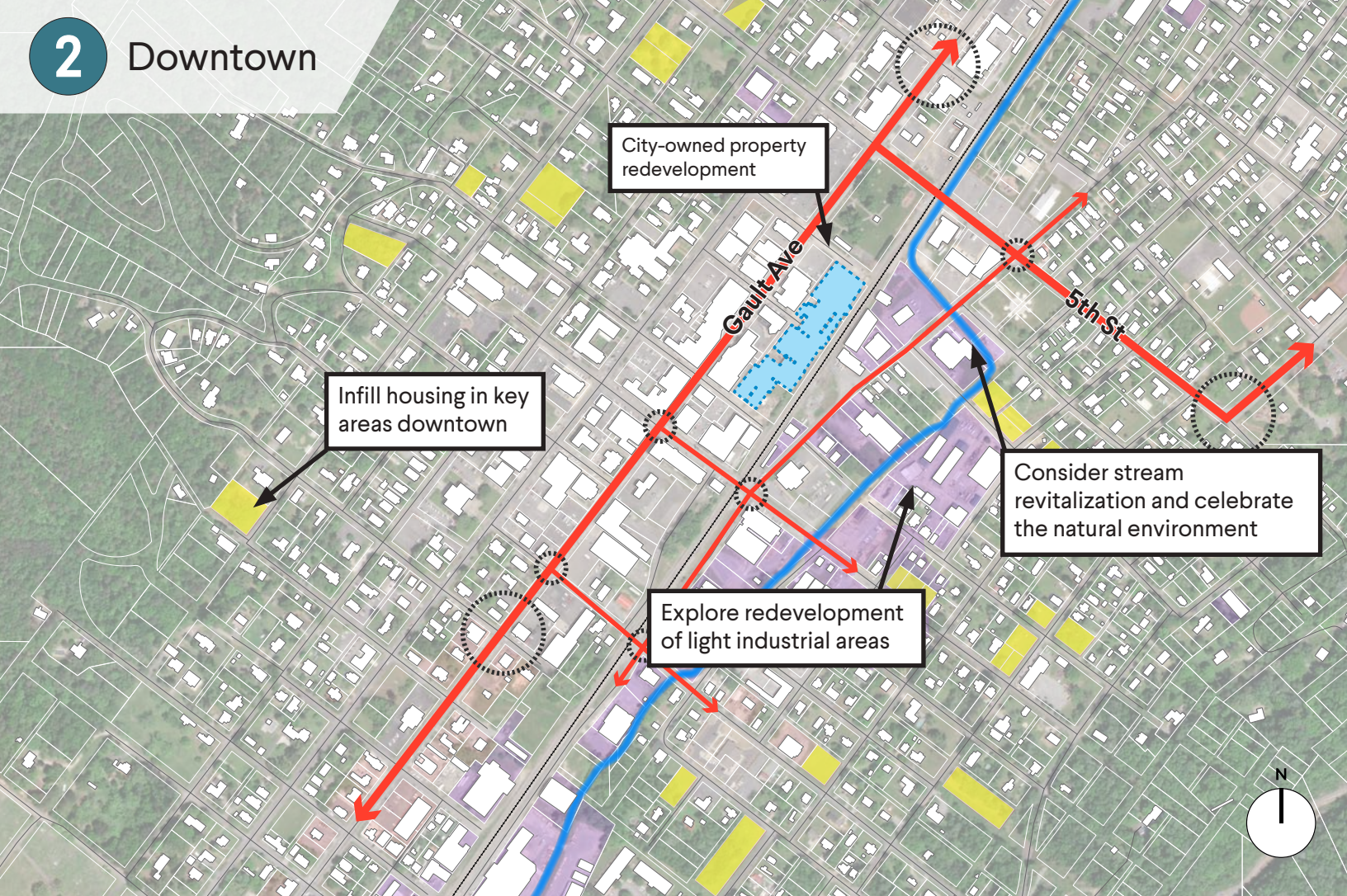
Consolidate Industrial areas along tracks

City-owned

Hwy 11

Spine Recommended Land Use & Zoning





Focus Area Recommendations

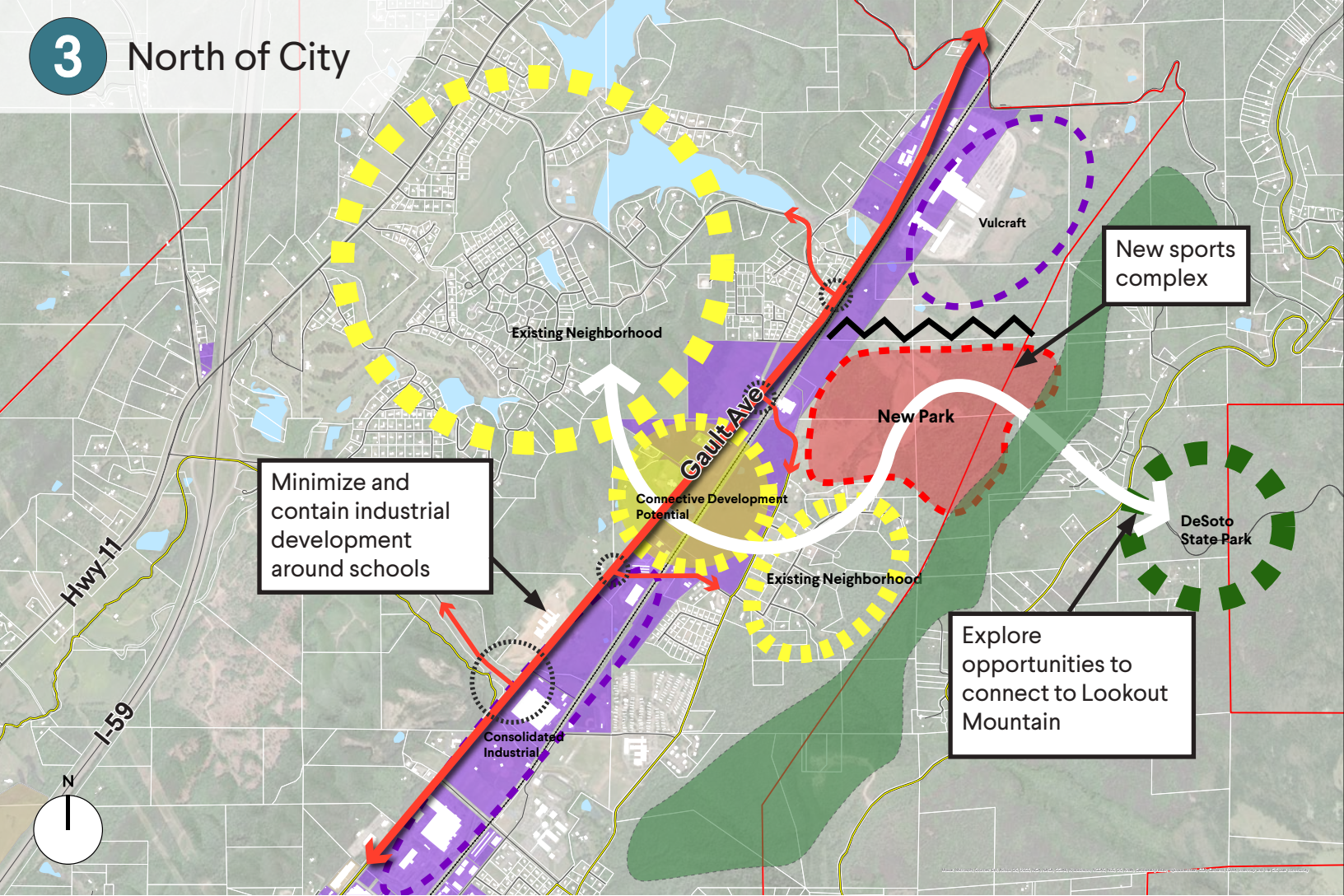
1

- Explore the willingness of landowners to develop the land east of I-65, on the west side of the mountain.
- Consider city-owned land east of Hwy 11 for housing development
- Consolidate Industrial areas along the railroad and limit future expansion

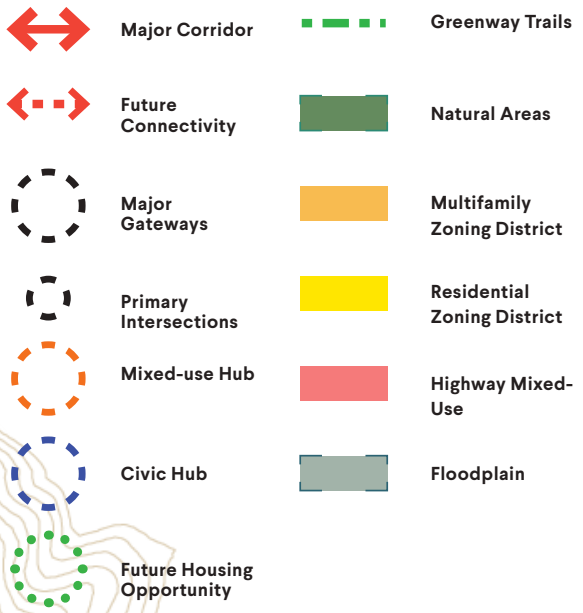
2

- Redevelopment of city-owned property between 2nd and 4th Streets. Increase homeownership options in downtown by using infill site as opportunities to increase density introducing missing middle housing typologies
- Plan long-term development of industrial areas downtown along the creek
- Use a stream revitalization project to bring nature back into downtown, and use this to catalyze the industrial property development and strengthen the downtown core.

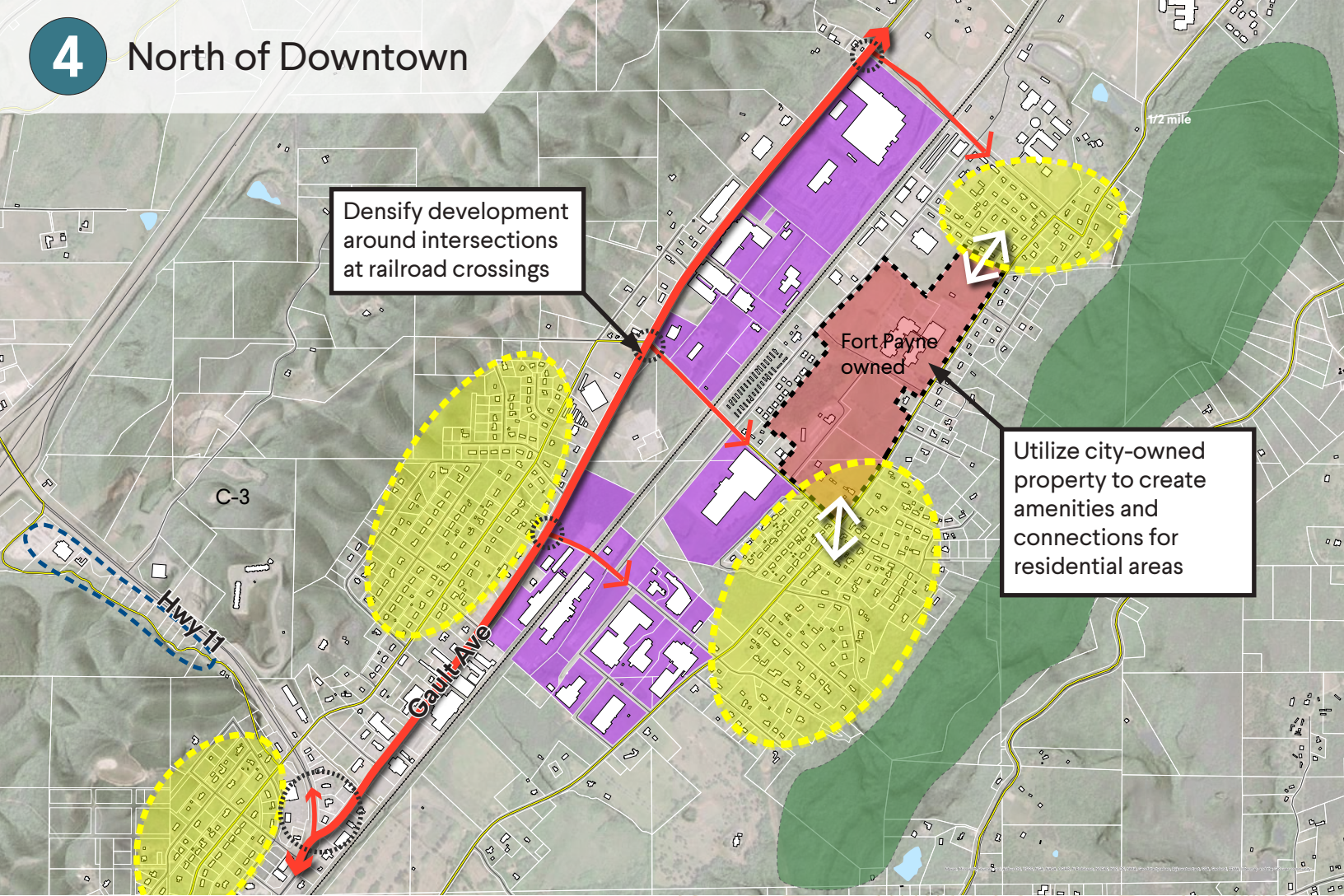
3 North of City



Spine Recommended Land Use & Zoning



4 North of Downtown



Focus Area Recommendations

3

- City-owned property to be utilized for Sports Complex
- Attempt to open up parcels along Hwy 11 for housing to connect residential areas creating compact, more walkable communities
- Explore connecting Lookout Mountain to Desoto State Park
- Minimize the future expansion of Industrial development in this part of the city and focus on neighborhoods around the schools

4

- Densify development at intersections along this transitional stretch north of downtown.
- Leverage city-owned property to create amenities and connections to existing residential areas.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT #2

Downtown Entry

This section of Gault Ave is an important segment for improvements as it defines the transition from the sprawling highway corridor into the historic downtown district. Currently the transition between these two development patterns is very stark with an almost immediate drop off in walkability just one block outside the downtown district.

Streetscape improvements should be made to soften the transition into downtown and extend walkability in the blocks immediately adjacent to downtown. This would also improve connectivity between downtown and the Historic Fort Payne Cabin Site. This section of Gault Ave should minimize the number of curb cuts to allow for sidewalks on both sides of the road, install planted medians where possible, and encourage walkable infill development with a mixture of uses.



The current design of Gault Ave in the blocks leading up to downtown does not encourage pedestrian uses and could be maximized to support urban infill development

Quick Facts

2 blocks State Road



Not only do the improvements benefit pedestrians, they also create a safer environment for automobiles, reducing speeds and creating less opportunity for crashes when entering and exiting property.

Strategies

- Traffic calming, planted medians
- Sidewalk improvements
- Infill development

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT #3

Old Hospital Site

The previous hospital site sits in the middle of residential area. Future development needs to respond to the current and traditional use of the area and fit seamlessly into the urban fabric.

While there are some small offices in the area, the overall feel of this site should remain residential in character.

One significant future development consideration being proposed is a new site plan for the housing authority property. Utilizing the land better and creating higher quality housing is a win for the city. Paired with the park just to the north, this type of upgrade could significantly increase the quality of life in this area and bring more interest in new development



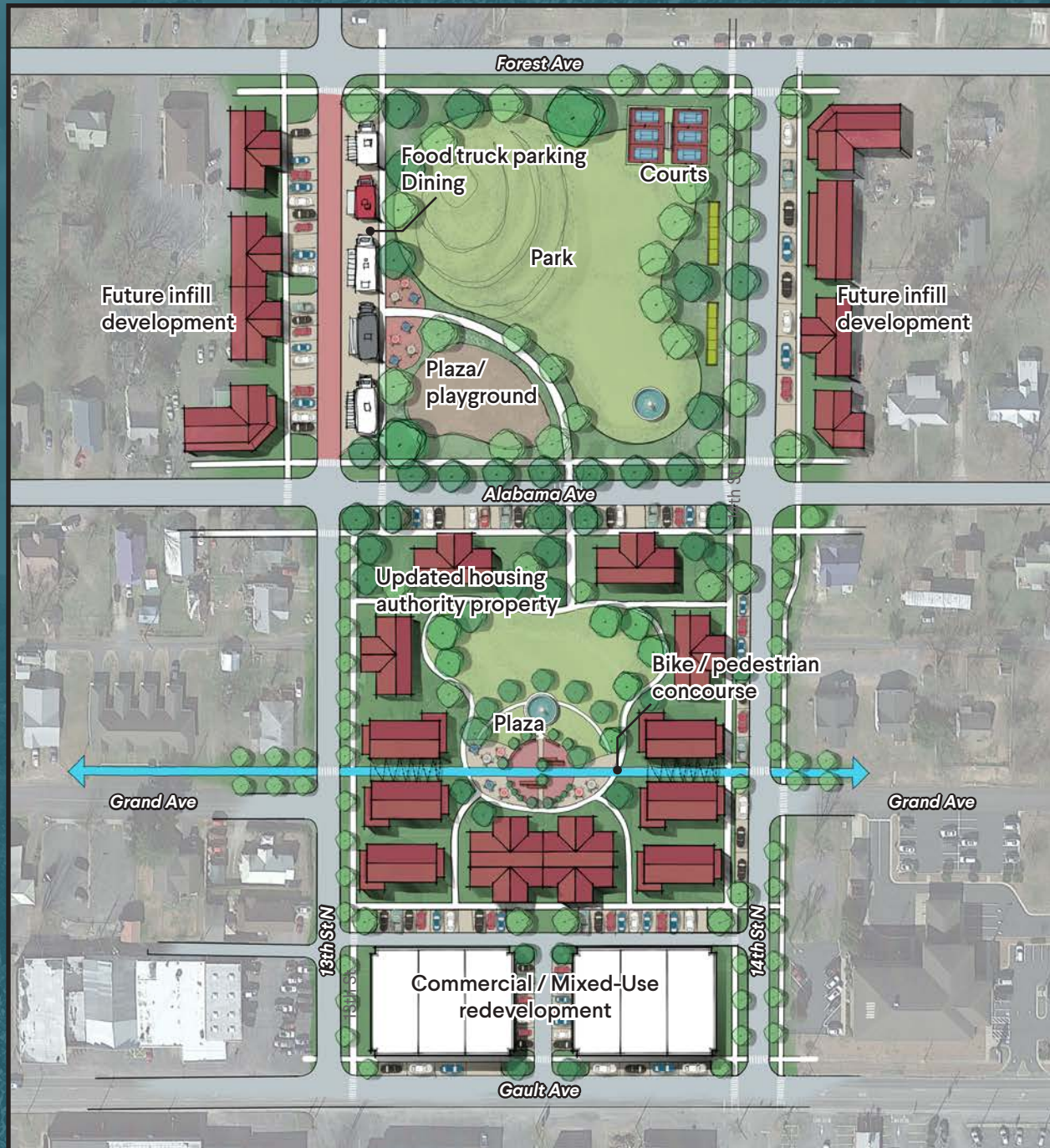
Existing Site Condition



Future Land Use

Quick Facts

4 acres



The new park plan adds space for food trucks and dining as well as much needed amenities to the neighborhood, including on-street parking, playgrounds, and several space for sports.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT #4

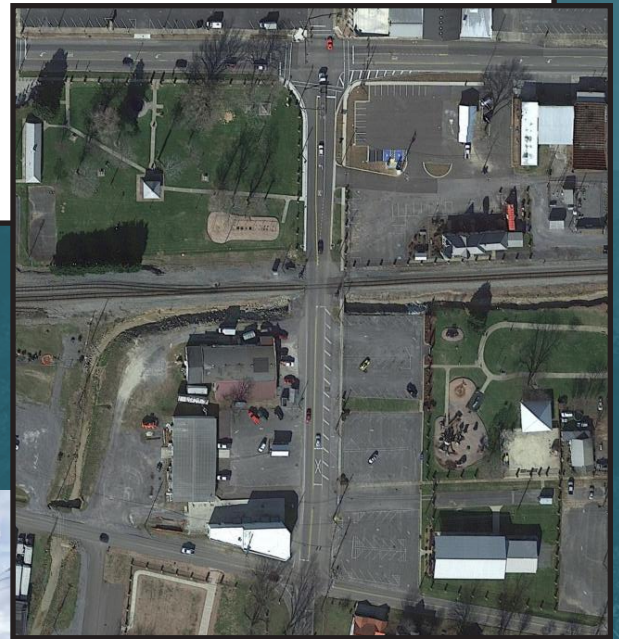
Downtown Parks

Downtown has generous amounts of greenspace, but there is currently a lack on continuity between the parks - and between the parks and downtown - making it difficult for pedestrians to access the parks safely and for visitors to navigate the area.

Enhancing the streetscape along 5th Ave would connect most of the city's urban parks with a walkable streetscape making for a safer and easier experience for park users. This would also achieve a strategic goal of providing better connections between the east and west side of the railroad in the downtown area. Streetscape enhancements should include improved sidewalks on each side of the road, crossing improvements, pedestrian lighting, and landscaping.

Parks Connected:

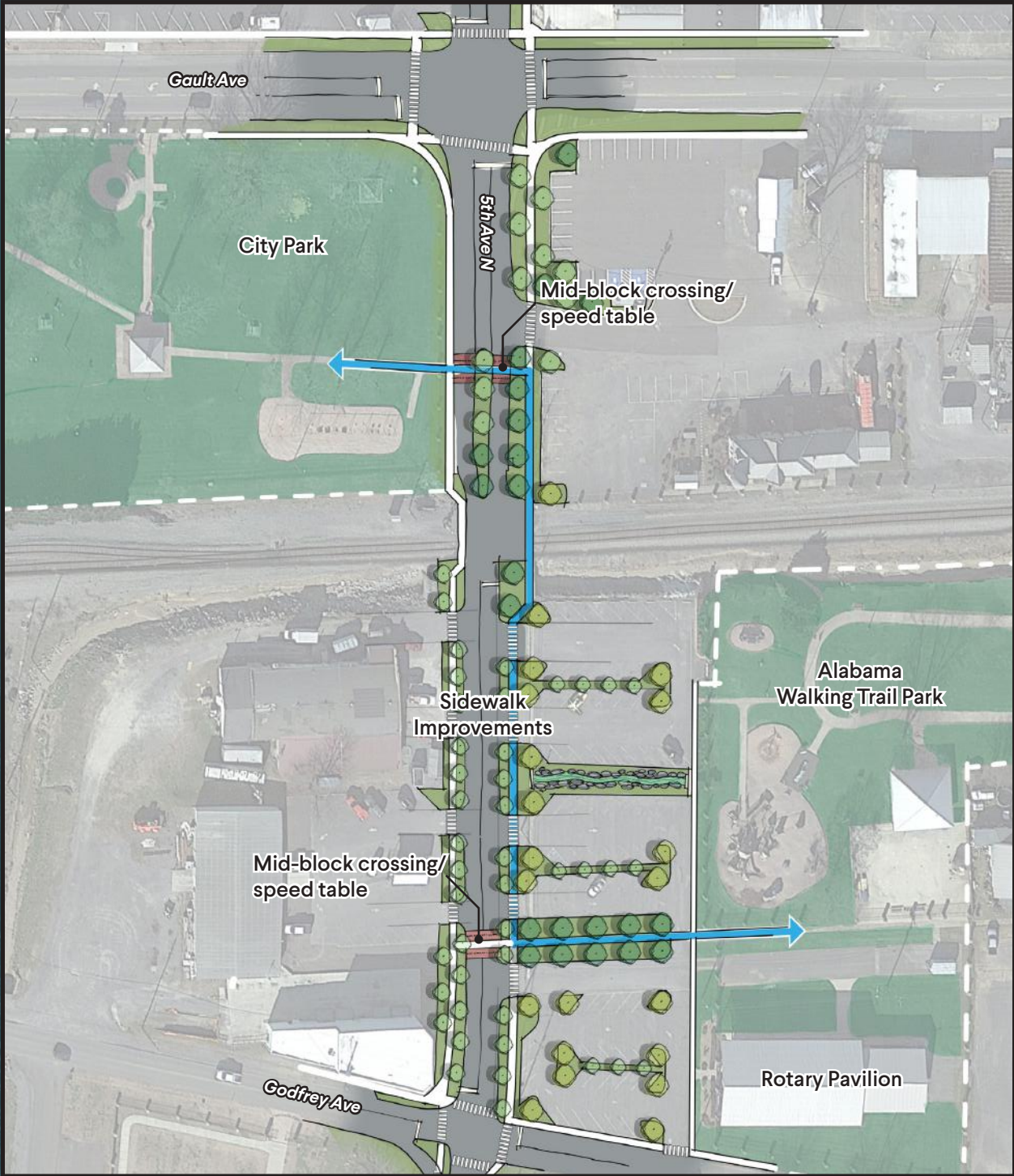
- City Park
- Alabama Walking Park
- Veterans Memorial Park
- Hawkins Spring Park



The current streetscape design on 5th St N does not facilitate walkability between the city's major parks.

Quick Facts

2 blocks



Not only do the improvements benefit pedestrians, they also create a safer environment for automobiles, reducing speeds and creating less opportunity for crashes when entering and exiting property.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT #5

Quarry Adaptive Reuse

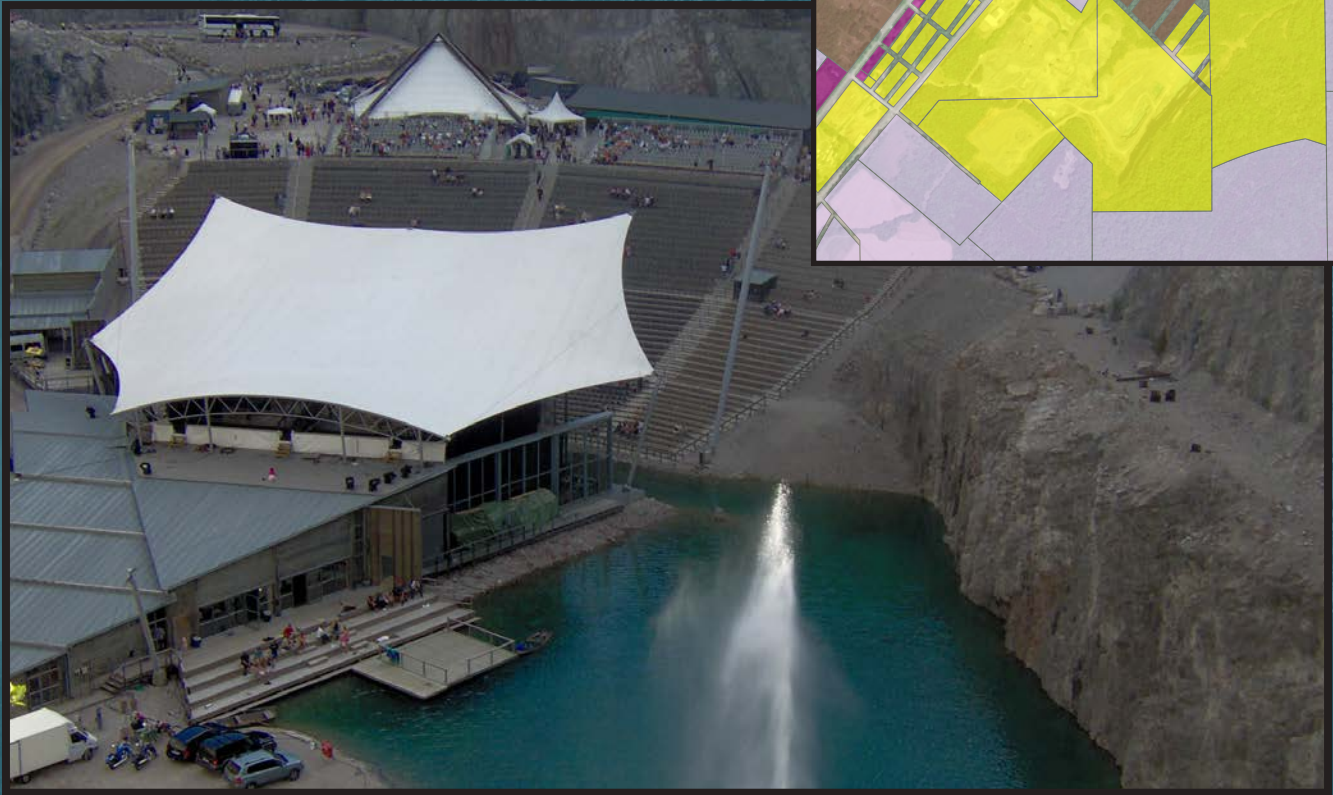
Quarries are often overlooked as having second lives, but they can be opportunities for redevelopment in the urban landscape because of their often large footprints. **Vulcan Materials' Fort Payne Quarry will eventually reach its operational lifespan, after which the city should be prepared to collaborate with Vulcan Materials on potential redevelopment opportunities for the site.** The current open pit operation at the quarry has left a highly visible scar on the landscape that climbs up the face of Lookout Mountain and can be seen for miles down the valley. In the long term, the steep section at the back of the site should be allowed to reforest. The old quarry itself could be adapted in a variety of ways. The pit could be converted into an entertainment venue or a more passive recreational space with a water feature and walking trails. The flatter part of the site between the quarry and Godfrey Ave should be considered for potential neighborhood residential development anchored by whichever recreational use goes into the quarry site.



The Fort Payne Quarry's strip operation can be seen climbing the face of the mountain

Quick Facts

~140 acres



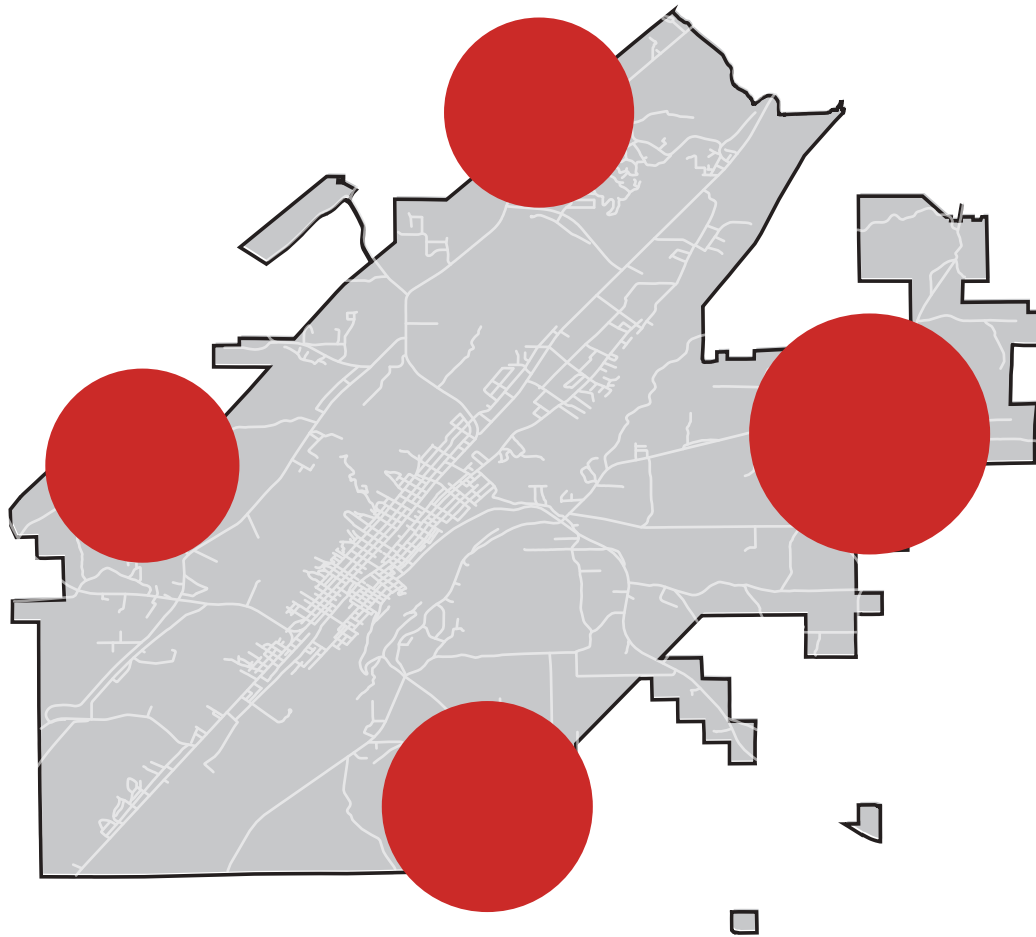
Dalhalla Amphitheater demonstrates the potential for quarries to be reimagined as unique entertainment venues. Fort Payne might consider including a venue component to a potential redevelopment plan for the quarry in addition to other elements such as housing.




Atlanta's Westside Park is a good example of how an old quarry site can be converted into an amenity that drives revitalization of distressed neighborhoods. The quarry was flooded and a park was developed surrounding the new water feature.

Transitional

The connecting fabric of the city



A background graphic of a topographic map with brown contour lines, showing a hilly or mountainous terrain. The map is partially visible on the right side of the page.

The transitional areas of the city are the connecting fabric of the city supporting activities happen outside of the city center, this primarily includes rural agricultural and industrial areas. Transitional areas also include larger lot residential.

- Refine Housing Development Patterns
- Be Proactive About Environmental Conservation
- Recommended Land Use & Zoning

Refine Housing Development Patterns

Refining housing development patterns in the transitional areas of Fort Payne’s urban fringe would balance future growth and development with the preservation of natural landscapes. Smart growth principles for these emerging suburban districts promote developments that prioritize mixed-use zoning, diverse housing types, and green infrastructure. These developments are called conservation subdivisions, or cluster developments. **Fort Payne could adopt the following policies to promote quality suburban design as the city grows:**

1. Incentive Programs

Create programs that reward developers for incorporating conservation principles. Consider tax breaks, fee reductions, density bonuses, etc.

2. Flexible Zoning Regulations

Adapt zoning regulations to accommodate conservation design principles, including smaller lot sizes and mixed uses.

3. Improved Subdivision Regulations

Strengthen standards in the city’s subdivision regulations to require elements such as mandatory open space and sidewalks in subdivision developments of a certain size.



Traditional subdivision (above) vs Conservation subdivision (below)



Important Elements of Cluster Development

Open Space

Integrate open space throughout the community with parks, green belts, trails, etc.

Density Variation

Provide various levels of density within a development to give a mix of appropriate housing types

Public Amenities

Include communal amenities such as playgrounds, lending libraries, community gardens, etc.

Holistic Infrastructure

Support walkability by including sidewalks and bike lanes in the street network’s design

Design Consistency

Develop a pattern book of architectural guidelines to ensure a cohesive and contextual aesthetic

Mixture of Uses

Incorporate an appropriate scale of commercial and civic uses to support a more livable neighborhood

Affordability Measures

Offer a variety of price points to expand access to quality affordable housing options in the suburbs

Regulatory Support

Establish zoning regulations and ordinances that support cluster development

Case Study - Mount Laurel, AL



Mount Laurel development plan, depicting communal open spaces in green



442 acres



550 units



160k sf retail

Land Use Mixture

- Commercial/ retail
- Civic buildings
- Lofts
- Townhouses
- Single family homes
- Parks/ open space

The town of Mount Laurel is a local example from Alabama of quality cluster/ conservation development. Although it is located in a transitional area of Birmingham's suburbs, this development was designed with a mixture of uses including a small commercial node supported by walkable adjacent housing, a diversity of housing types, and communal green space woven throughout the community. The widespread popularity of this community demonstrates the success that mixed-use traditional neighborhood developments can have in suburban Alabama. **Fort Payne should support development of a similar community as an anchor for quality development in its more suburban areas.**



Neighborhood scale commercial area



Mixed-use loft/ apartment housing



Single family attached - townhouses



Small lot single family homes



Traditional lot single family homes



Homes fronting pedestrian paths

Be Proactive About Environmental Conservation

Fort Payne's transitional areas lie on the fringe of the city where urban development patterns gradually dissolve into rural areas. These transitional areas often have a higher land use turnover rate since rural and low density areas are easier to develop. The proximity of the lower density transitional areas to the urban core heightens development pressures and puts their natural environment at risk of succumbing to the outward expansion of urban sprawl. **Conserving the natural environment in sensitive transitional areas requires a proactive and thoughtful preservation strategy.** The city should take the following steps to safeguard vulnerable areas from urban encroachment:

1. Ecological Assessment + Zoning

Identify sensitive habitats, biodiversity hotspots, and critical natural features. Implement zoning regulations that designate these as conservation areas, limiting development in these zones

2. Green Corridors and Buffer Zones

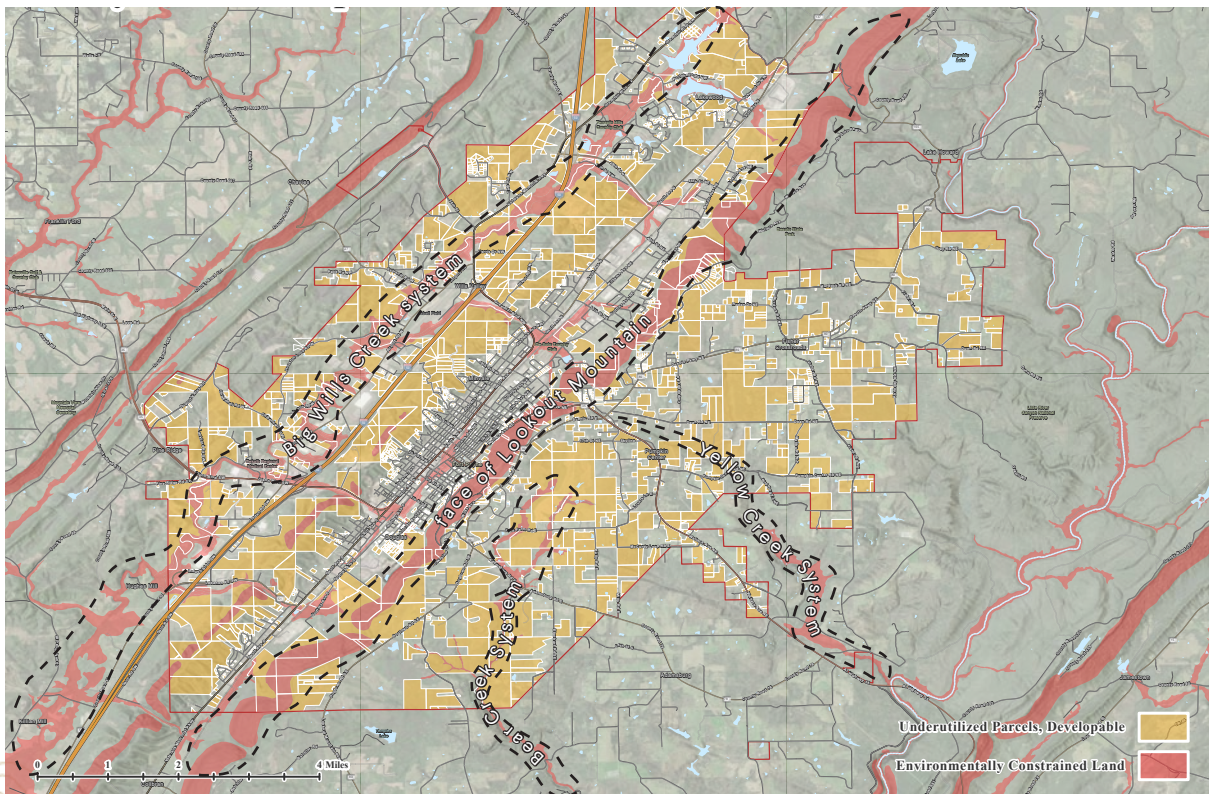
Establish green corridors and development buffer zones along bodies of water, wetlands, and other natural features to protect wildlife habitat and recreational space for residents

3. Development Density and Sustainable Design

Implement smart growth principles to focus development toward infill in the urban core. For areas outside the urban core, promote clustered development to limit sprawl and incorporate low impact design elements

4. Community Engagement + Education

Involve the community in preservation efforts by offering education and awareness programming. Engage school children through activities such as tree plantings and clean up initiatives.



The above graphic highlights in yellow the area of the city's underutilized parcels that is developable. Where large areas of developable land (yellow) abut environmentally constrained areas (red), there is an increased risk that potential development may impact vulnerable features such as streams and very steep slopes.

Sensitive Areas / Preservation Priorities



Lookout Mountain (western face)

The steep slopes of Lookout Mountain have historically protected the face of the mountain from over development. However, the face is still vulnerable to development as seen by residential construction on Wilks Dr. The city should take steps to preserve the slope's tree cover as a backdrop to the urban core.



Big Wills Creek

Big Wills Creek is the largest waterway inside the city. The biggest threat to this critical system is commercial and industrial over development near the interstate exits and along Airport Rd. The west side of the creek is largely undeveloped and could support residential uses that leverage the creek as a public asset.



Yellow Creek

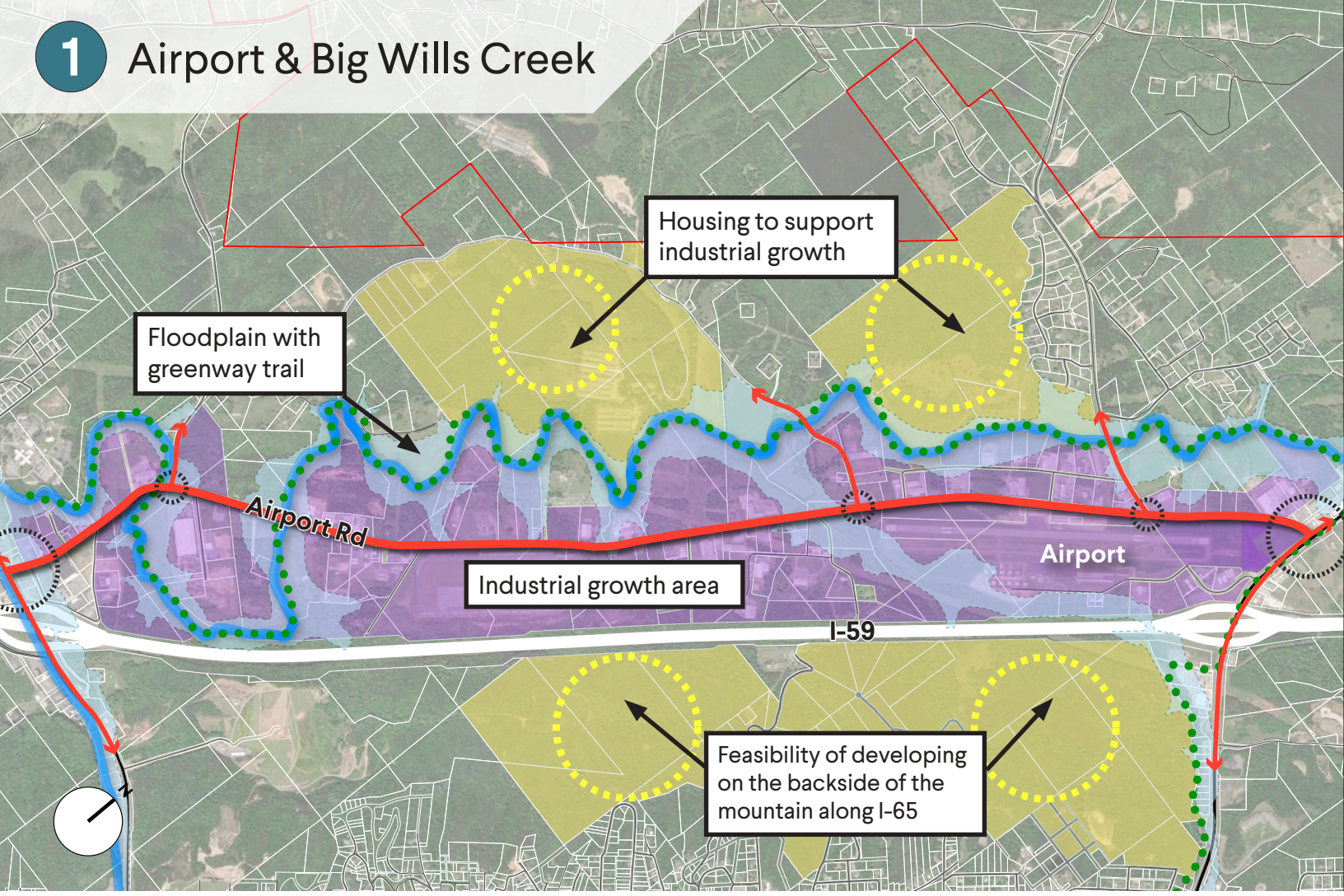
Yellow Creek is one of two major tributaries inside the city atop Lookout Mountain that feed into Little River Canyon. It is bordered primarily by rural and natural land but could be at risk from potential suburban growth in the future around the Beeson Gap neighborhood center.



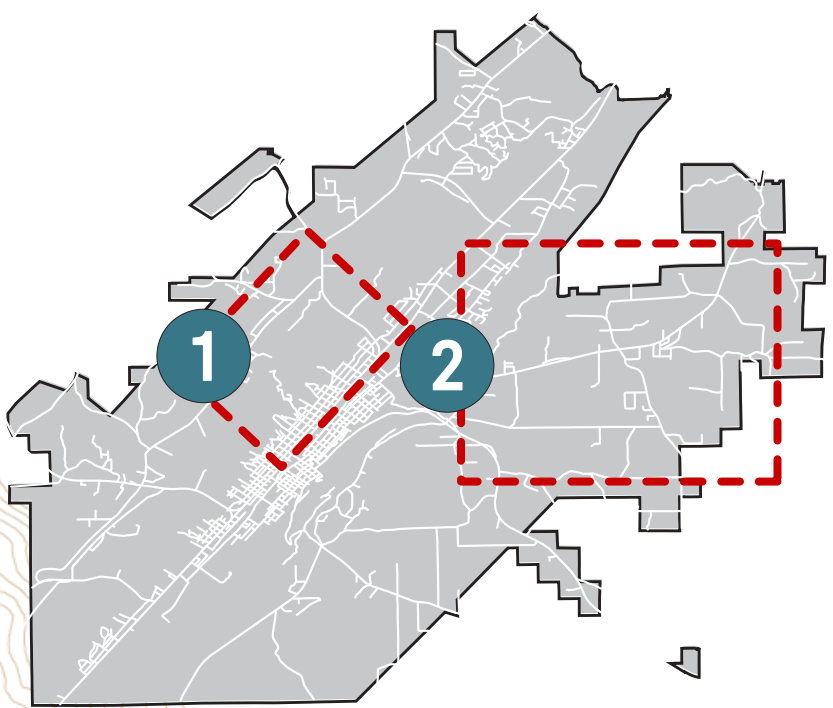
Bear Creek














Bear Creek is one of two major tributaries inside the city atop Lookout Mountain that feed into Little River Canyon. It is bordered primarily by rural and natural land but could be at risk from potential suburban growth in the future around the Five Points neighborhood center.

1 Airport & Big Wills Creek

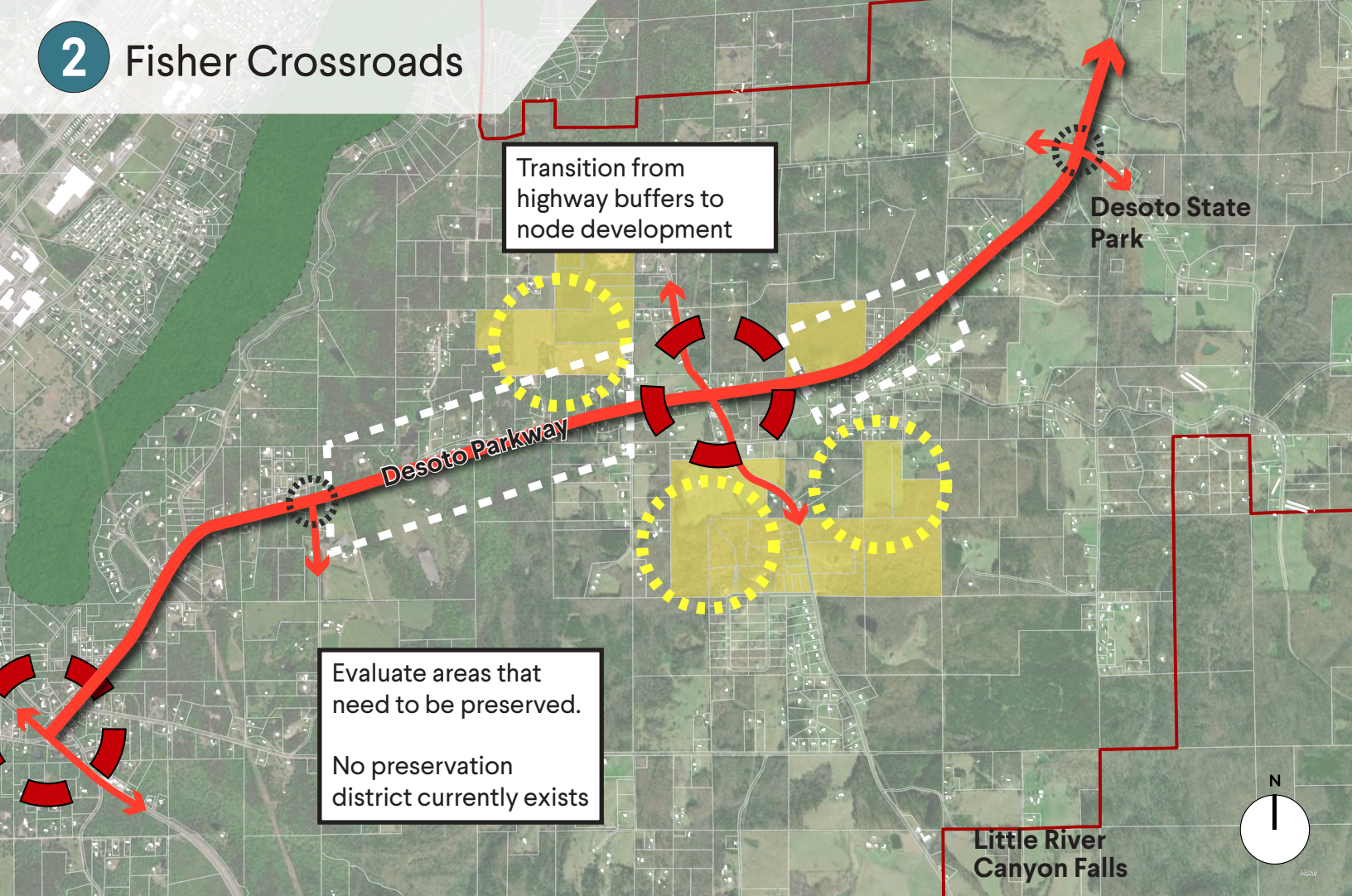


Transitional Recommended Land Use & Zoning



-  Major Corridor
-  Greenway Trails
-  Future Connectivity
-  Natural Areas
-  Major Gateways
-  Multifamily Zoning District
-  Primary Intersections
-  Residential Zoning District
-  Mixed-use Hub
-  Highway Mixed-Use
-  Civic Hub
-  Floodplain
-  Future Housing Opportunity

2 Fisher Crossroads



Focus Area Recommendations

1

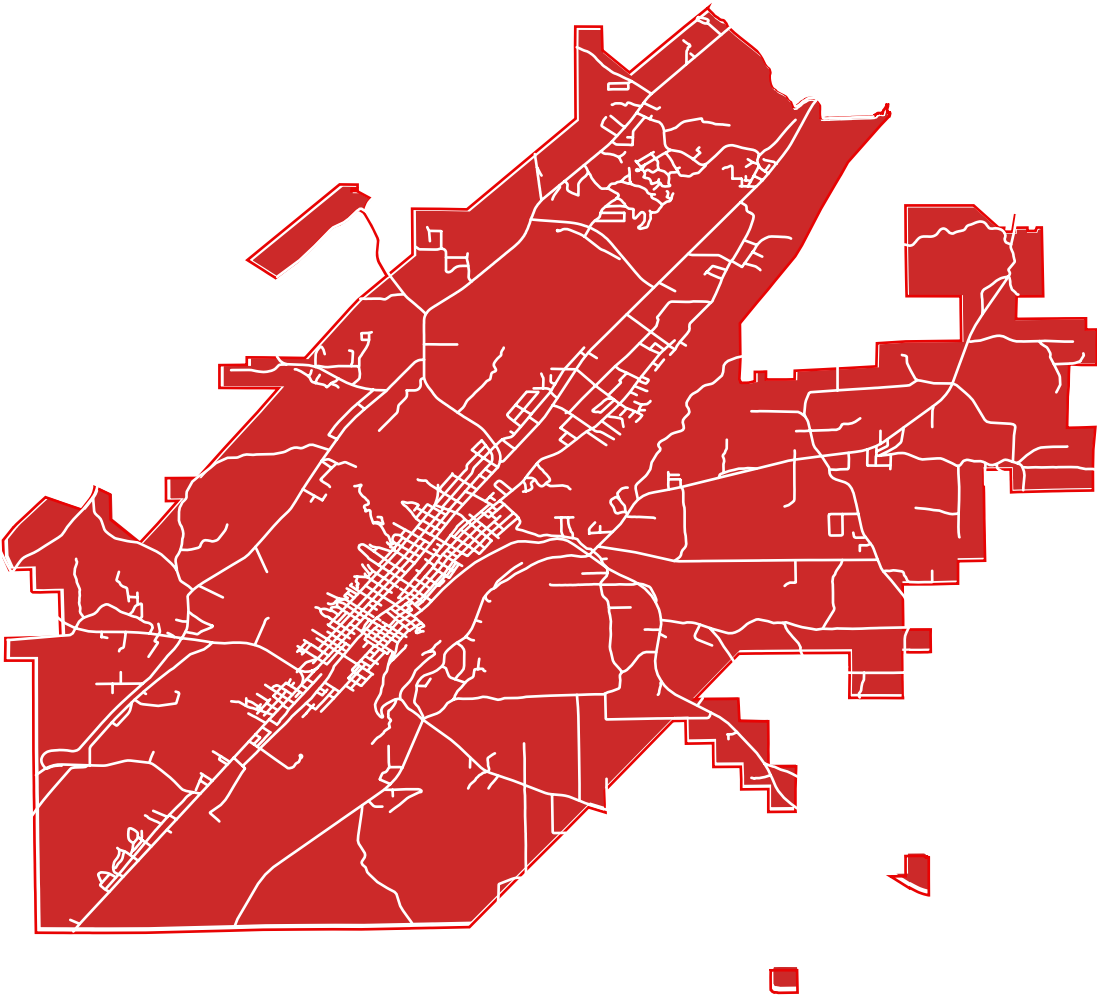
- Promote higher-paying industrial development adjacent to the airport
- Establish multi-use trails to increase connectivity between the urban core and outlying recreational assets
 - Greenway trail along Big Wills Creek from AL 35 to 49th St N
 - Greenway trail along Yellow Creek from Beeson Gap Rd to the Little River Canyon Center
 - Buffered side path trail along Desoto Parkway from Beeson Gap Rd to Desoto State Park

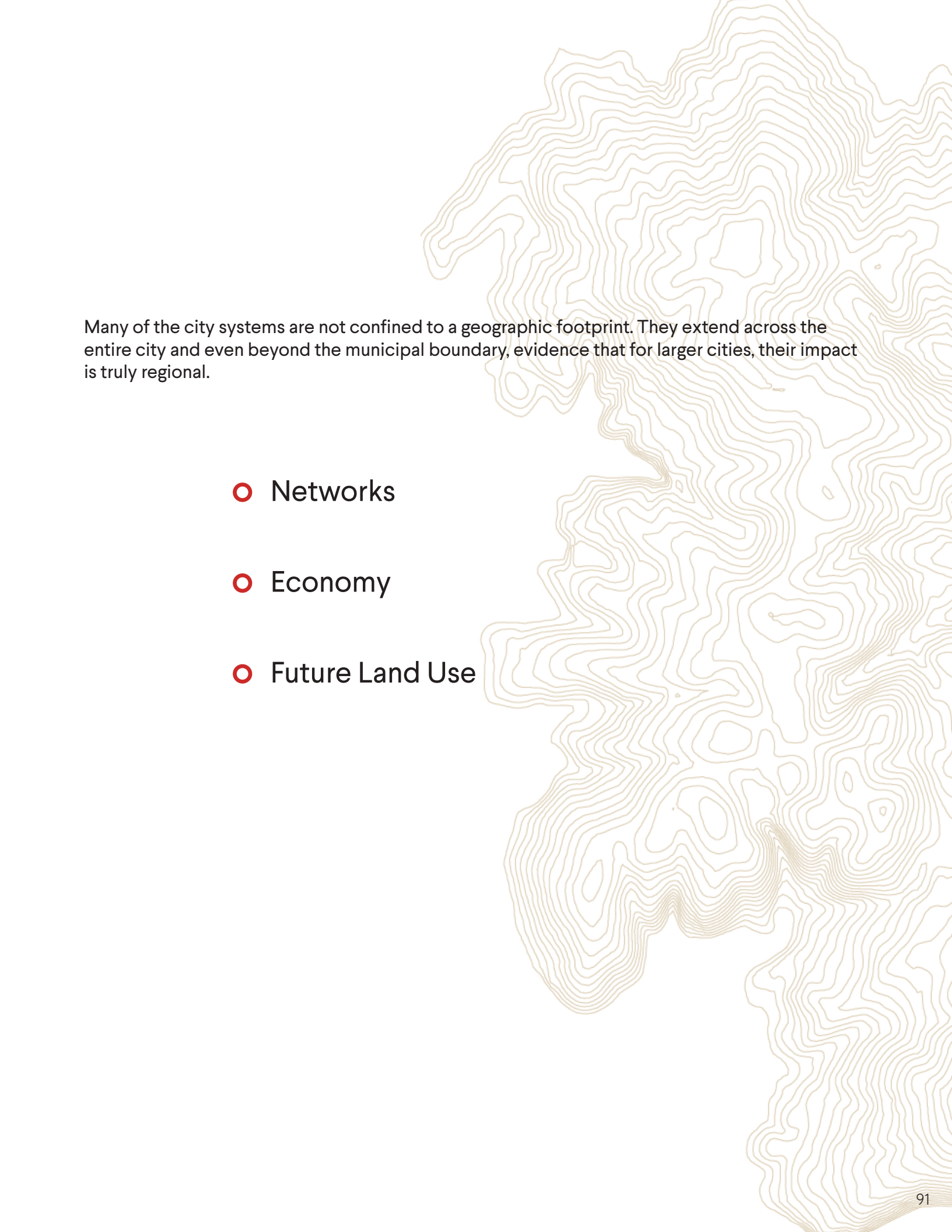
2

- Adopt a conservation / preservation ordinance and create a conservation plan to protect the natural and agricultural areas of the city
- Develop small nodes from downtown to Desoto that serve neighborhoods and create opportunities for tourism

City-wide

Strategies impacting the whole city



A background image of a topographic map with brown contour lines, showing a complex, irregular shape that resembles a city's geographic footprint. The lines are dense and intricate, with some larger, more open spaces within the overall shape.

Many of the city systems are not confined to a geographic footprint. They extend across the entire city and even beyond the municipal boundary, evidence that for larger cities, their impact is truly regional.

- Networks
- Economy
- Future Land Use

Networks

Parks & Trails

As a small historic town contiguous to the only National Park Service land in Alabama, Fort Payne is blessed with an abundance of beautiful mountainous landscapes. Its connection to the outdoors is highlighted through a variety of parks in and adjacent to the city, including Little River Canyon National Preserve, Desoto State Park, and numerous urban parks within the city core. Fort Payne also has several important sites associated with the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. Fort Payne should leverage these assets to develop a tourism economy based on outdoor recreation. **Local quality of life and economic development would benefit from a diversification of the city's park system to offer a wider array of outdoor experiences. A network of on-street trails and greenways connecting the downtown to parks and other key destinations will be an important factor in better integrating the city's built environment with the natural environment.**



The Willstown Mission Cemetery (above top) and Fort Payne Cabin Site (above bottom), the city's 2 publicly accessible Trail of Tears sites



Concept for infill development anchored by a new park at the Fort Payne Cabin site



Concept for a new park atop Lookout Mountain with a downtown overlook

Park System Expansion / Diversification Opportunities

Mountaintop Overlook

Establish a new park on top of Lookout Mountain to take advantage of the views over the city and valley

Big Wills Creek

Develop a new park on Big Wills Creek to expand the park system to Big Wills Valley and anchor potential residential growth in the area

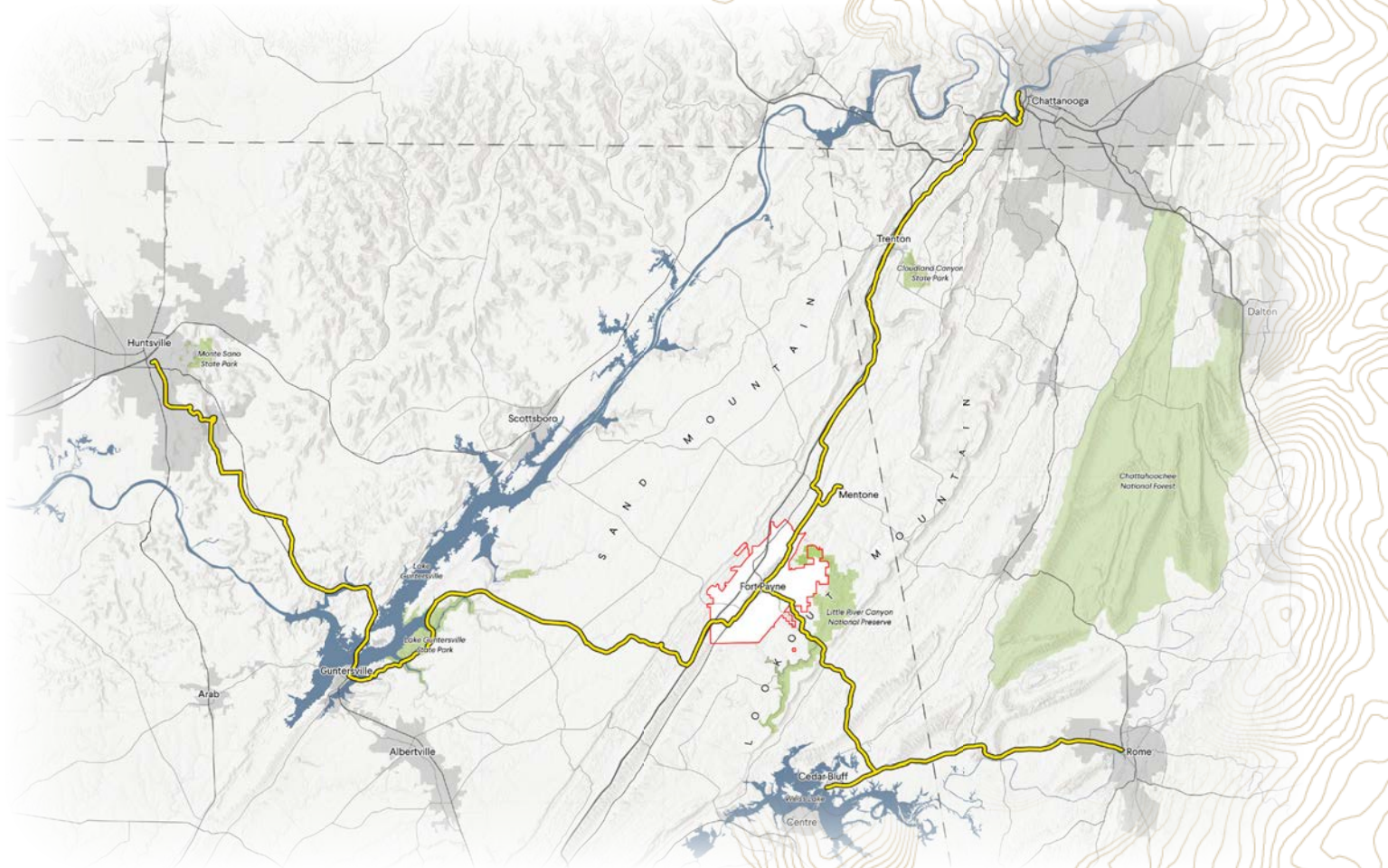
Fort Payne Cabin

Make improvements to the site to better highlight the history of the city's namesake fort and Trail of Tears site

Multi-Use Park Complex

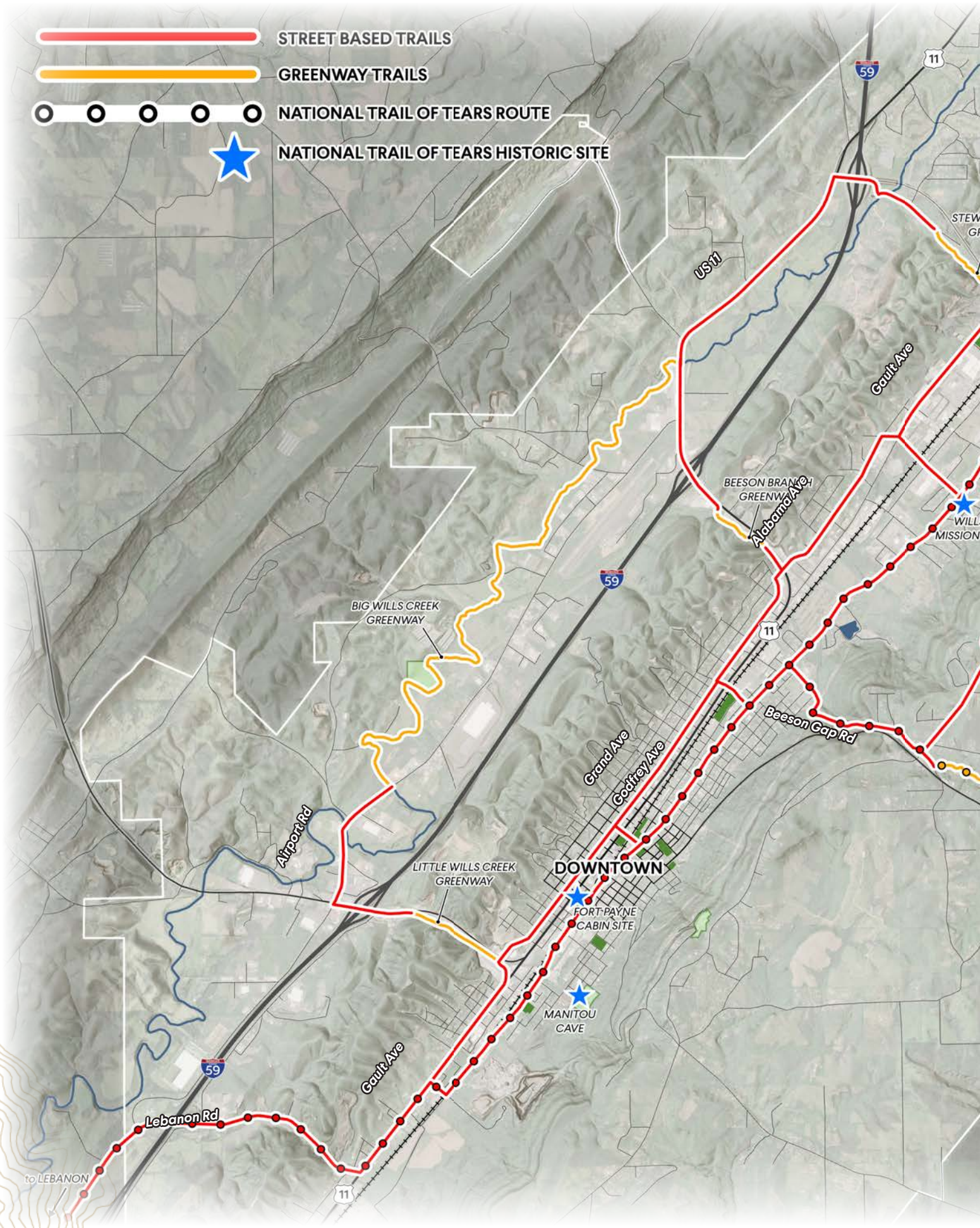
Create a multi-use park complex (ropes course, BMX, RV, amphitheater, etc.) on city-owned land in north Fort Payne with trail connections to Desoto State Park

Regional Trail Network - Trail of Tears National Historic Trail



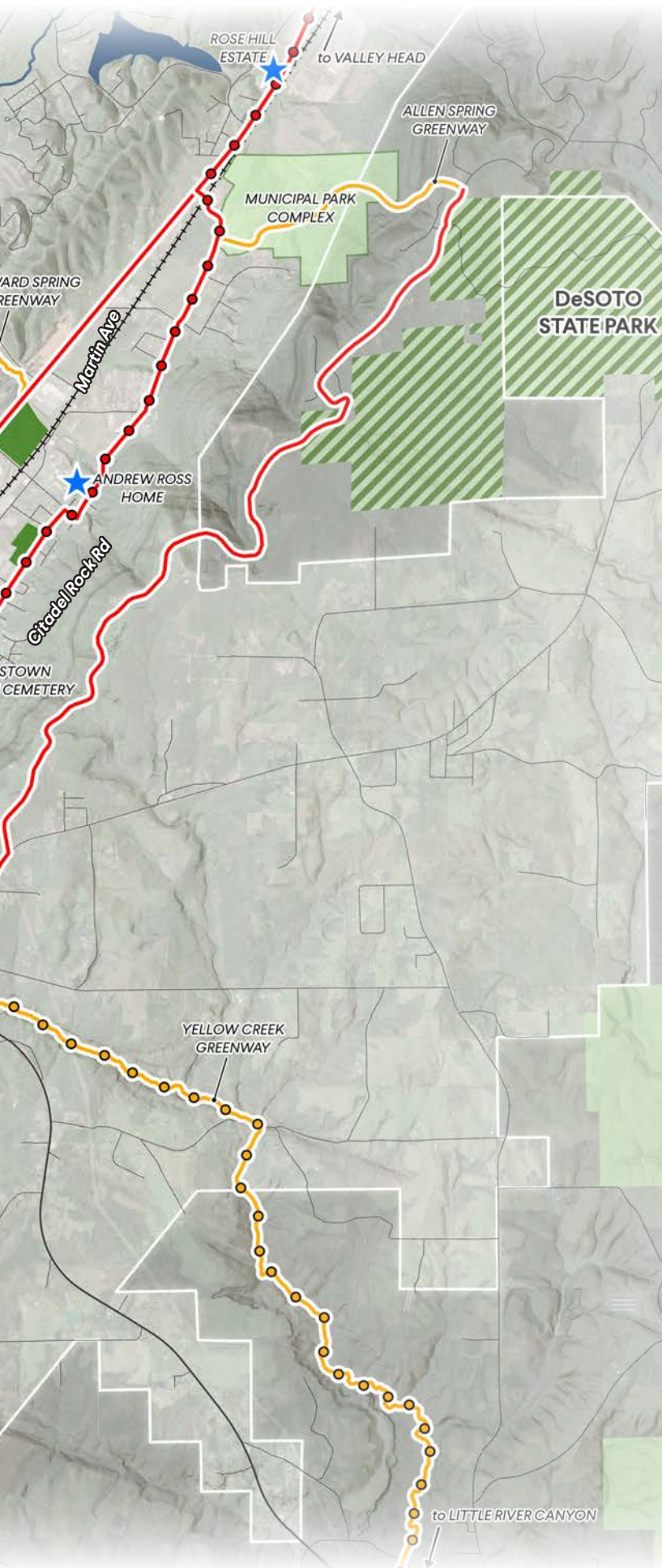
Long-distance regional trails such as the Pinhoti Trail, Chief Ladiga/ Silver Comet Trail, and Singing River Trail provide many benefits to the cities they connect. Fort Payne is situated at the hub of several segments of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, connecting it to the cities of Huntsville, AL, Chattanooga, TN, and Rome, GA. Fort Payne and DeKalb County should collaborate with regional entities to better develop this trail system with appropriate bike/ ped infrastructure and signage. An enhanced regional trail network would connect Fort Payne to other popular cities in addition to natural destinations such as Little River Canyon, Lake Gunterville, and Lake Weiss.

-  STREET BASED TRAILS
-  GREENWAY TRAILS
-  NATIONAL TRAIL OF TEARS ROUTE
-  NATIONAL TRAIL OF TEARS HISTORIC SITE



Local Trail Network

In addition to developing longer-distance regional trail connections along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, Fort Payne should also work to create an internal system of trails within the city to better connect important areas such as downtown, schools, parks, and residential neighborhoods. This trail master plan for the City of Fort Payne lays out a network that services the east and west side of the railroad in Little Wills Valley as well as the rest of the city in Big Wills Valley and on Lookout Mountain. On-road segments would be comprised of a buffered side-path or a combination of sidewalks and bike lanes. Greenway segments could include a variety of surfaces such as dirt, gravel, or pavement. Local trail segments aligned with the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail should be prioritized for grant funding efforts as they connect the most important destinations and would link the downtown core directly to Little River Canyon.



Grand Ave - the Western Spine



Grand Ave is an important segment in the trail system as it serves the city's urban area northwest of the railroad tracks. This corridor will provide the closest and most direct trail connection through the historic downtown district. It will also connect to important redevelopment sites such as the old hospital and the DeKalb Plaza Shopping Center.

Godfrey Ave - the Eastern Spine



Godfrey Ave is an important priority trail segment as it serves the city's urban area southeast of the railroad tracks. It is also the alignment of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail and should include branded wayfinding and signage identifying it as such. The above image shows potential trail improvements on Godfrey Ave by the Desoto Golf Club.

Beeson Gap Rd - the Lookout Mountain / Little River Canyon Connector



Beeson Gap Rd is a critical piece of the proposed trail system as it will be the primary connector between the city's urban core and Lookout Mountain. Its lower volume and speed of traffic compared to AL-35 make it the preferred corridor for ascending and descending Lookout Mountain. Substantial barriers should be provided along this road to buffer trail users from downhill traffic.

Citadel Rock Rd - the Desoto State Park Connector



Citadel Rock Rd is a winding scenic road along the brow of Lookout Mountain. Its lower volume and speed of traffic compared to Desoto Parkway make it the preferred corridor to connect the trail system from Beeson Gap to Desoto State Park. There are several panoramic overlooks above the city as seen above that would enhance the user experience of the trail system.

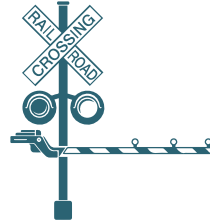
Railroad Overpass / AL-35 Realignment

OVERPASS

Fort Payne has 21 rail crossings in city limits, none of which are grade separated. This creates several significant safety issues for the city as trains on this Norfolk Southern line frequently barrel through the city at a high rate of speed or are stopped on the tracks, preventing the flow of civilian and emergency traffic at key access points throughout town. Addressing local traffic issues caused by the railway was also one of the most important community priorities identified during the public input process. **Fort Payne should collaborate with Norfolk Southern and state transportation authorities to develop a plan for a highway flyover across the tracks in conjunction with a realignment of AL-35. The design of the overpass should also include bike lanes and sidewalks.** Construction of a grade separated rail crossing would reduce overall congestion, enhance the safety of motorists, and remove potential blockages to emergency responders.



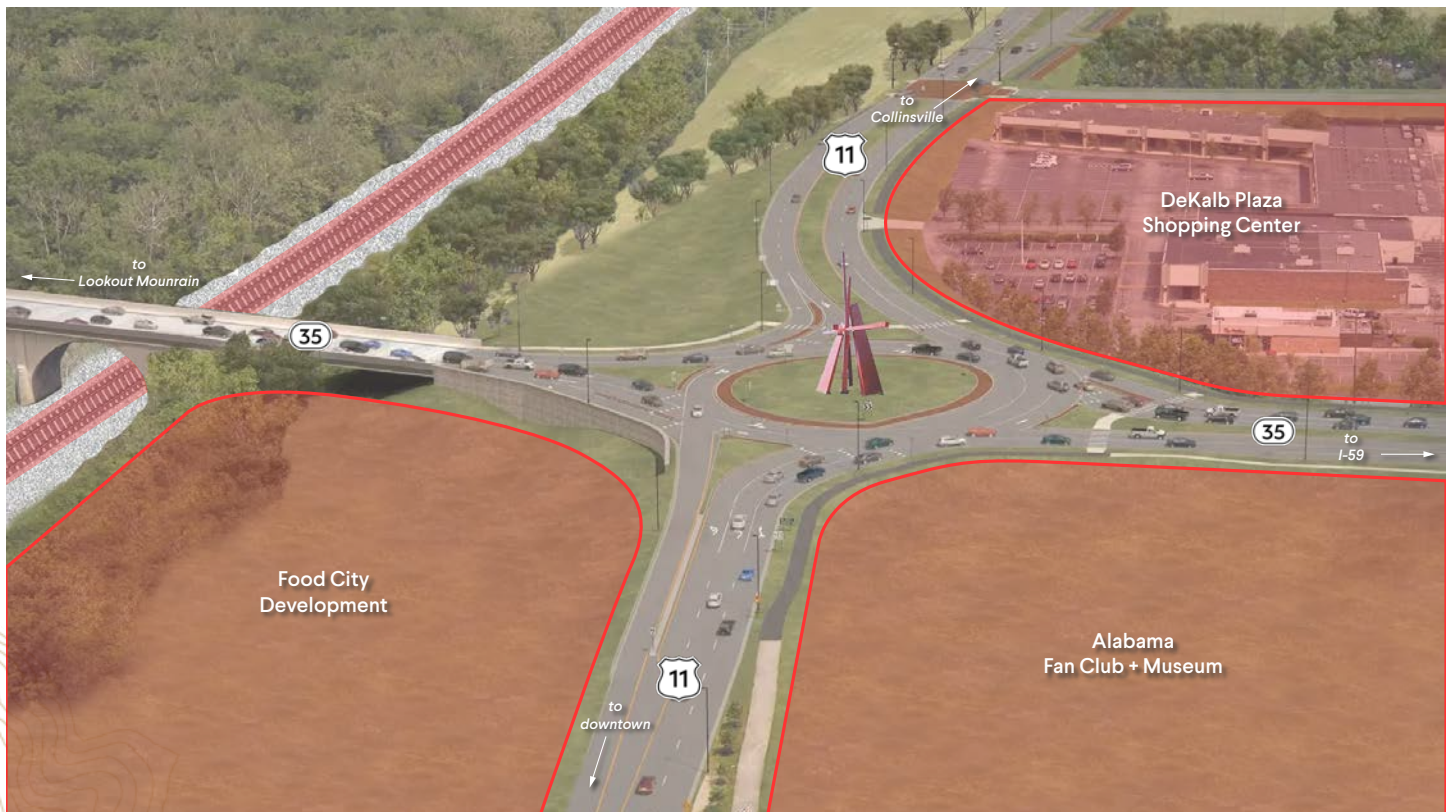
7+
trains per day



9
crossings in the urban core



10,000+
cross-track vehicular trips per day



Conceptual highway flyover across the Norfolk Southern rail line and roundabout at the new intersection of AL-35 and US-11 (Gault Ave)

REALIGNMENT

Alabama State Route 35 is the city's primary east-west highway thoroughfare. It connects the city's urban core to Lookout Mountain/ Cedar Bluff to the east and Rainsville/ Scottsboro to the west. On average, AL-35 carries about 5,000 cars per day up and down Lookout Mountain as well as 20,000-25,000 cars per day between Fort Payne and Rainsville. This highway route is one of the most dangerous in the city due to a hard right turn onto 5th St at the foot of Lookout Mountain. This point is colloquially known as "Joe's Truck Stop" as large freight trucks speeding down the steep incline of the mountain frequently crash into adjacent residential properties. **Fort Payne should collaborate with ALDOT to implement safety improvements at this deadly intersection, including a potential truck arrestor bed and/ or a realignment of the highway to straighten and extend Wallace Ave, eliminating the sharp curve at the base of the mountain.**

There are 2 main likely alternative routes for any potential realignment of AL-35. The impact of each following alternate route has been mapped on the following pages.

ALTERNATE A: **TURNER AVE**

Potential property impacts:

- Single-family residential lots
- Spring Grove Apartments
- Spring Grove Park
- DeKalb Wholesale
- Builders Supply Company



Dangerous concrete barrier for stopping runaway trucks

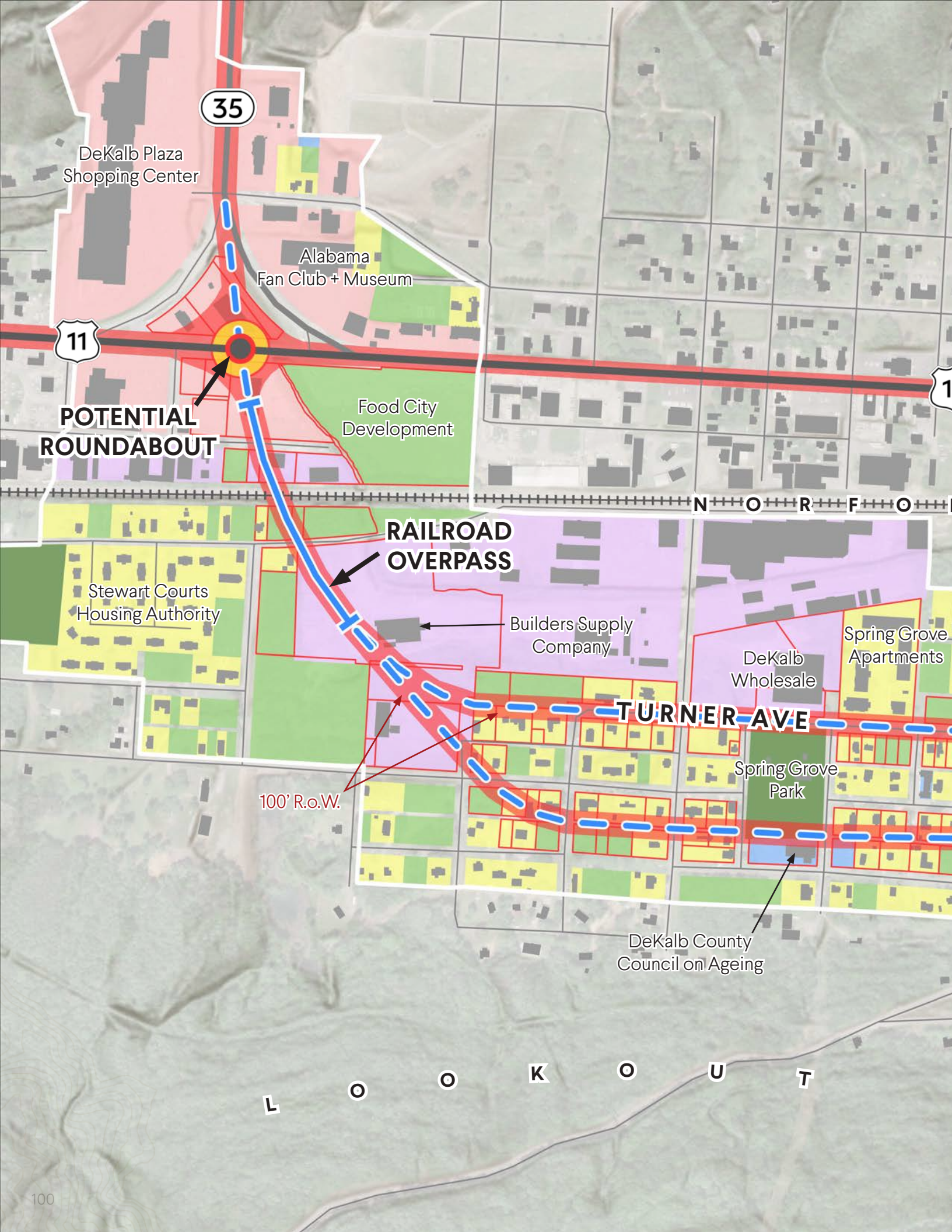


Overturned 18-wheeler crashed into a residential property

ALTERNATE B: **LINCOLN AVE**

Potential property impacts:

- Single-family residential lots
- Fort Payne Head Start Preschool
- DeKalb County Council on Ageing
- Spring Grove Park
- Builders Supply Company



35

11

POTENTIAL ROUNDABOUT

DeKalb Plaza Shopping Center

Alabama Fan Club + Museum

Food City Development

RAILROAD OVERPASS

Stewart Courts Housing Authority

Builders Supply Company

DeKalb Wholesale

Spring Grove Apartments

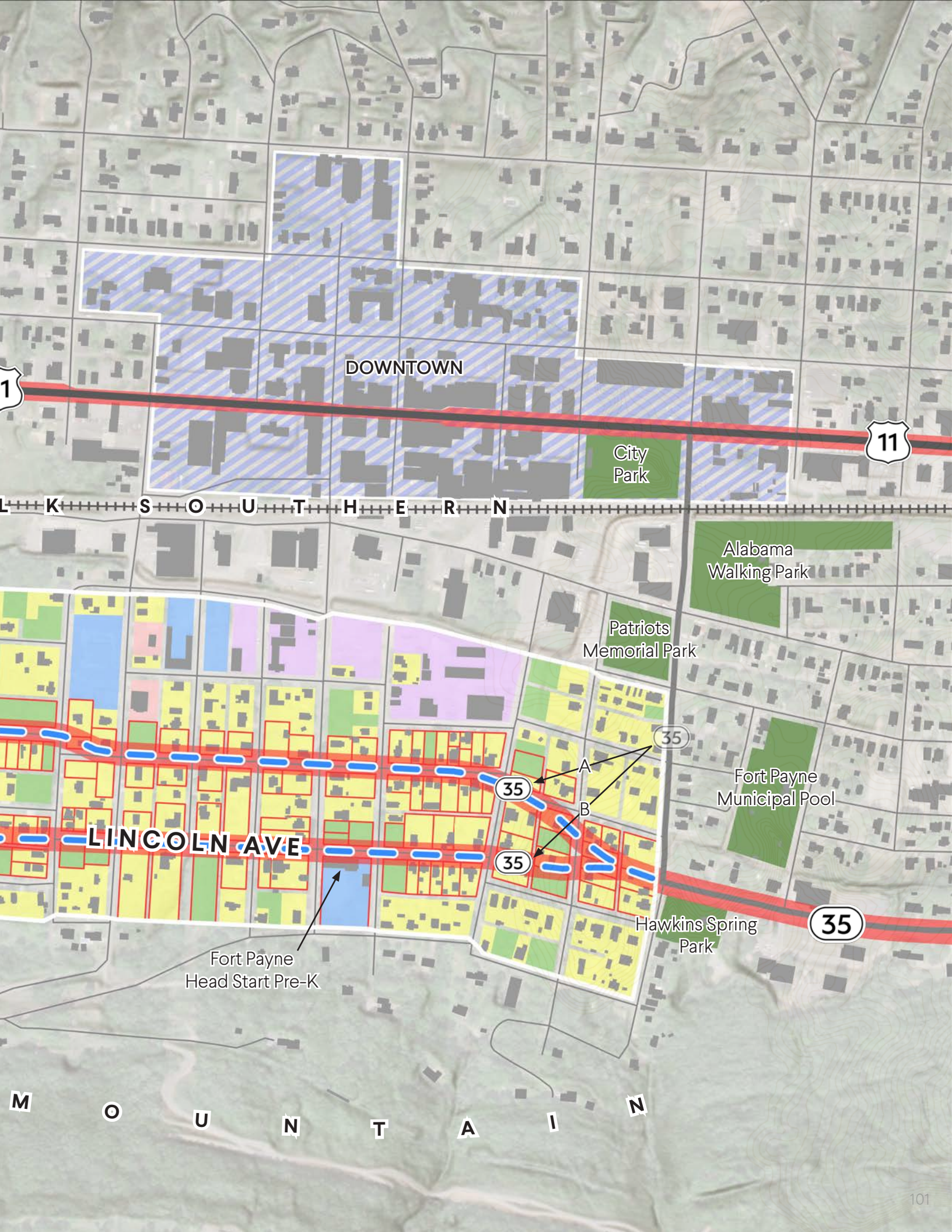
TURNER AVE

Spring Grove Park

DeKalb County Council on Ageing

100' R.o.W.

N O R T H
L O O K O U T



DOWNTOWN

11

S O U T H E R N

Alabama Walking Park

Patriots Memorial Park

Fort Payne Municipal Pool

35

35

35

35

Hawkins Spring Park

Fort Payne Head Start Pre-K

LINCOLN AVE

M O U N T A I N

Economy

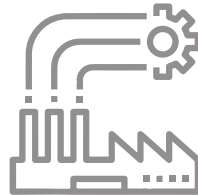
Fort Payne's growth and development has historically relied almost entirely on the strength of its industrial and manufacturing economy. Although this sector has sustained the city at various times in its history, a lack of economic diversification has left Fort Payne vulnerable to pronounced economic downturns, most recently during the 2008 financial crisis. **In order to sustain a stable and healthy local economy, the city must continue to support its manufacturing industries while also growing new areas of the economy to diversify and supplement its industrial base.** The two main potential expansion sectors for the local economy are the growing Tourism and Health Care industries.



\$163,000,000

in 2022 tourist spending in DeKalb County
(up 100% since 2013)

Industrial Strategy



Current industry pay in Fort Payne is among the lowest in the state for a city its size. In order to attract higher paying manufacturing jobs to the city, Fort Payne must leverage its location and quality of life while further developing anchor assets (e.g. airport) to support industrial operations. The city should consolidate industrial development around the airport and reassess industry off the Gault Ave corridor that could be better utilized for mixed use developments. Aviation related businesses should be the primary industry sector to target for industrial recruitment efforts, but the city must develop attractive housing options and enhance quality of life through recreation in order for higher-paying industrial recruitment to be successful.

Industry Actions

- Use incentives, land swaps, etc. to steer new industrial developments toward the Airport Rd corridor
- Leverage continued development of the airport area to support aviation related industries
- Target higher paying manufacturing jobs, especially aviation, for industrial recruitment

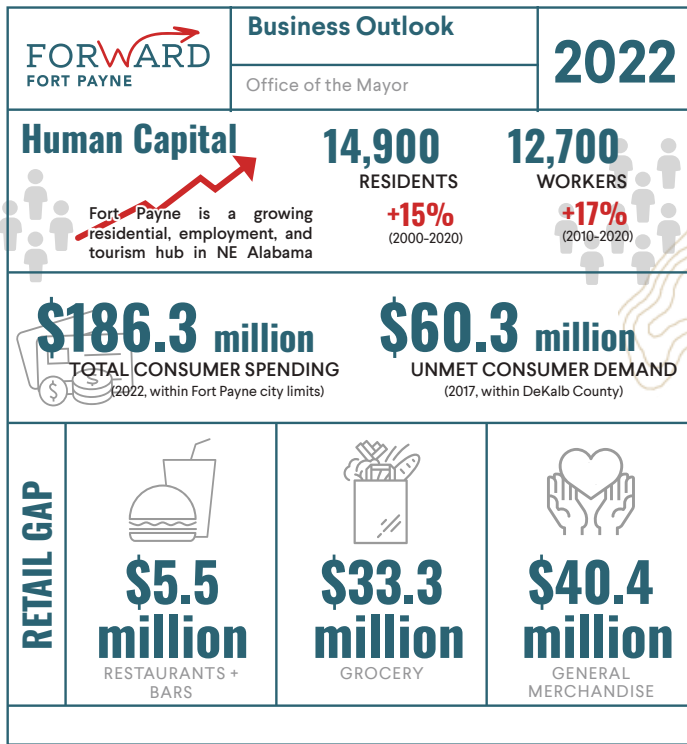
Tourism Strategy



One of the most significant potential drivers of economic growth in Fort Payne is the development of an ecotourism/ outdoor recreation economy. The proximity of the city's historic downtown to Little River Canyon and Desoto State Park as well as its significance with the Trail of Tears are strong factors that support potential growth in the local tourism economy. Highlighting and connecting these assets via an integrated network of on and off-road trails would make the city a true destination for outdoor enthusiasts. Beyond developing a trail network in the city, Fort Payne must also support the tourism economy by improving the variety and quality of lodging opportunities available in town, such as a boutique hotel development on the site of the former DeKalb Hotel. Current tourism numbers could easily recruit a Class B Marriott or Hilton flag to this location. The city should also promote development of a downtown brewery and other entertainment businesses.

Tourism Actions

- Target retail recruitment efforts based on market analysis and community input
- Proactively market potentially high-impact properties for development/ redevelopment
- Utilize city-owned land downtown for a mixed-use entertainment development
- Develop a regional park/ event space on city-owned land by Vulcraft to support event tourism



Retail

Retail recruitment is one of the community's highest priorities based on input received during public outreach. Whether attracting established national brands or nurturing local entrepreneurs, strategic retail recruitment elevates the shopping experience, stimulates job creation, and bolsters the local economy. In 2017 alone, over \$120 million of consumer demand was unmet, meaning potential customers for local businesses were spending their money elsewhere. **Fort Payne has the potential to capture tens of millions of dollars a year in additional spending in the local economy. The city should strategically target businesses to fill this spending gap based on the public input and market research detailed below.**

\$60,300,000

in 2017 unmet consumer demand in DeKalb County

Top Business Recruitment Priorities

based on community input



GROCERY



BOWLING



CINEMA

Top Retail Gap Targets

based on market research

additional spending potential

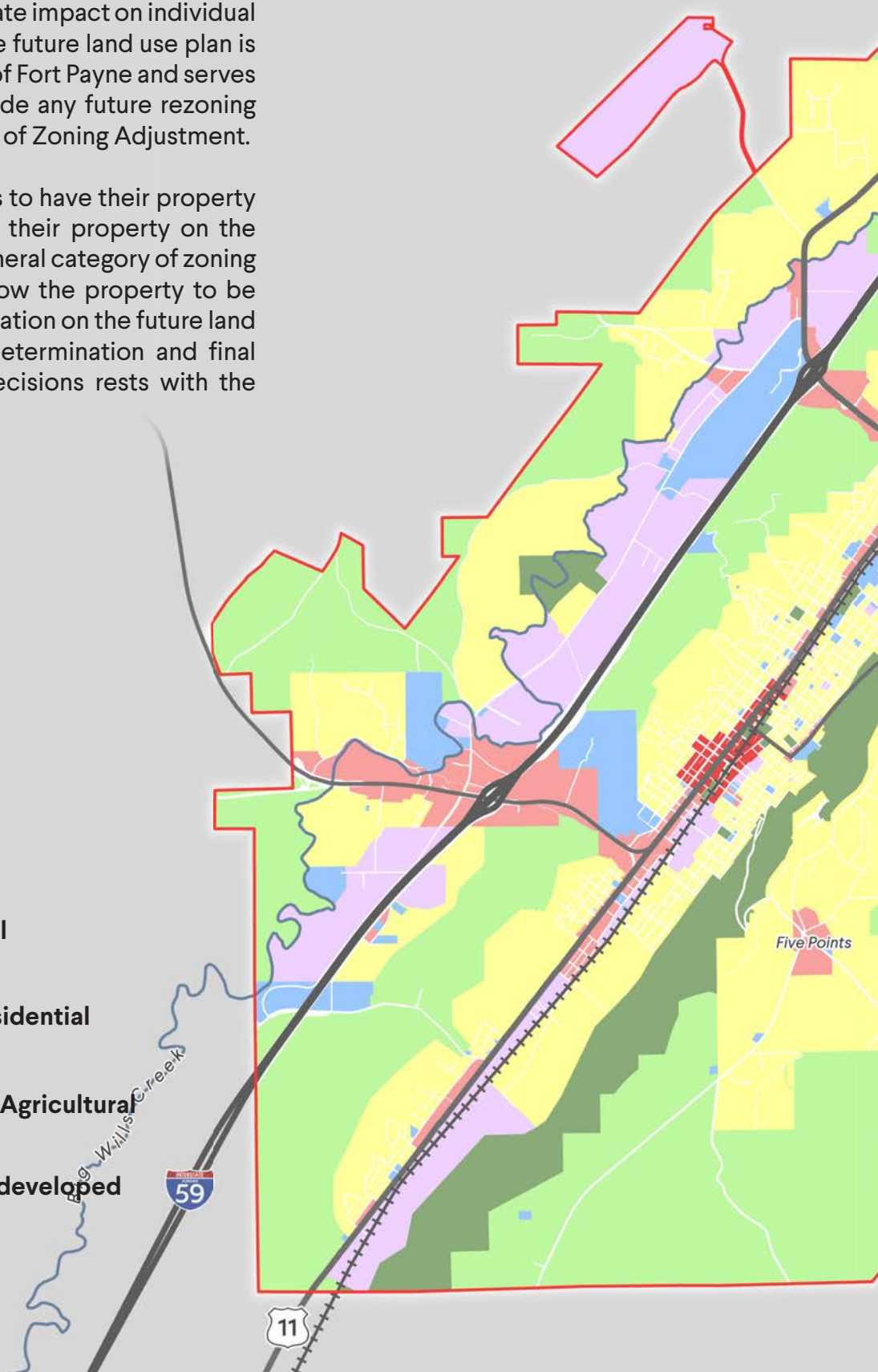
Car Dealership	\$49,982,103
Grocery Store	\$33,337,611
Department Store	\$29,357,134
Special Motor Vehicle Dealer	\$14,858,625
General Retail Store	\$13,607,233
General Merchandise Store	\$11,026,465
Clothing Store	\$5,905,630
Furniture Store	\$5,049,179
Restaurant	\$4,281,655
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Store	\$3,227,829
Gas Station	\$3,161,724
Electronics & Appliance Store	\$3,056,948
Direct Selling Establishment	\$2,868,097
Specialty Food Store	\$2,808,143
Book & Music Store	\$2,441,966

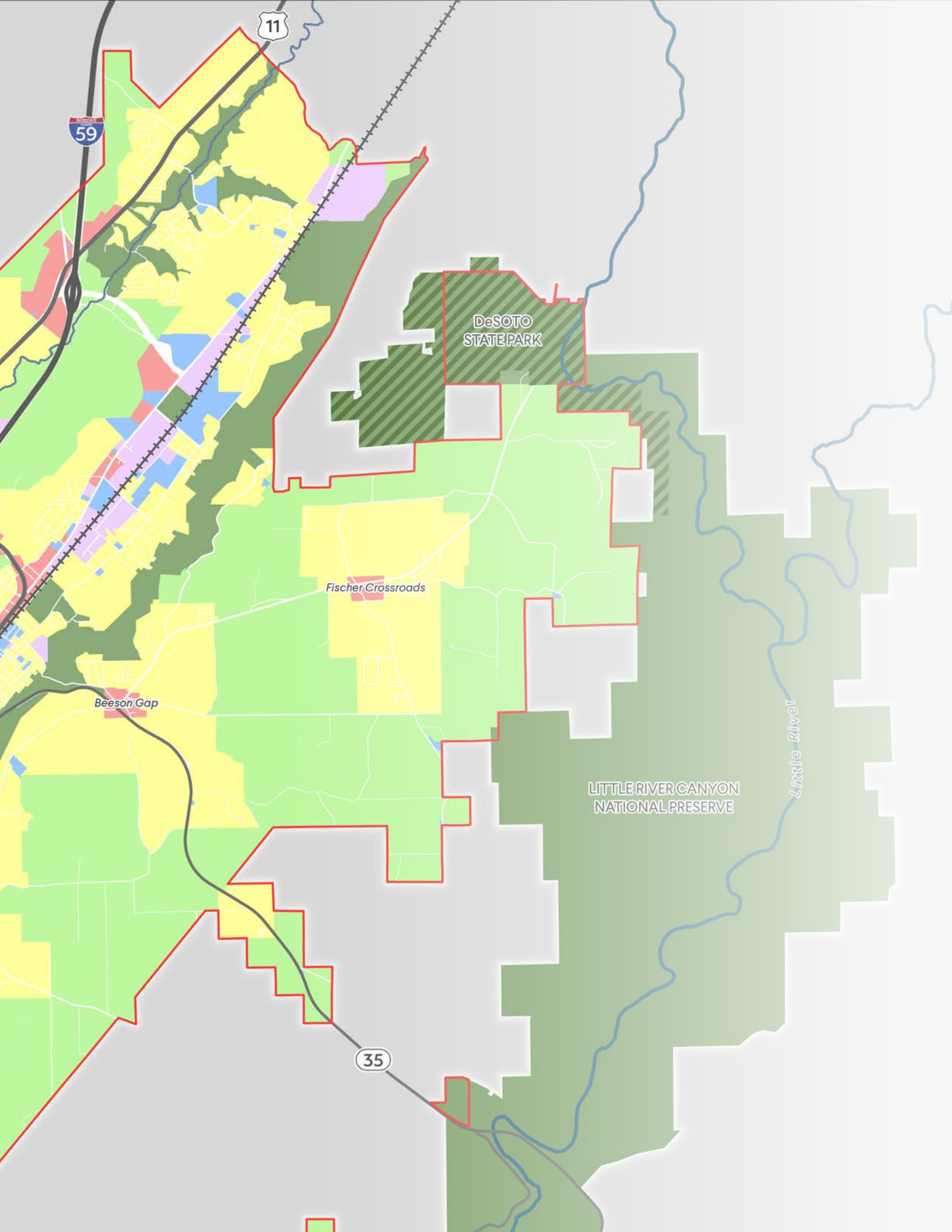
Future Land Use

The future land use plan is a visual guide for where future development patterns in the city should be located. Future land use is not the same as zoning and has no immediate impact on individual property rights. However, the future land use plan is an official policy of the City of Fort Payne and serves as a recommendation to guide any future rezoning decisions by the city's Board of Zoning Adjustment.

Rainsville If a property owner petitions to have their property rezoned, the designation of their property on the future land use plan is the general category of zoning to which the city should allow the property to be rezoned. A property's designation on the future land use plan is not a binding determination and final authority for all rezoning decisions rests with the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

-  **Town Center**
-  **Commercial**
-  **Industrial**
-  **Civic / Institutional**
-  **Neighborhood Residential**
-  **Rural Residential / Agricultural**
-  **Park / Natural / Undeveloped**





11

59

DeSOTO
STATE PARK

Fischer Crossroads

Beeson Gap

LITTLE RIVER CANYON
NATIONAL PRESERVE

Little River

35

Town Center

The town center plays a central role in a city, serving as a multifunctional hub that brings people together for various activities. It serves as a focal point for commerce, cultural events, and community gatherings, fostering a sense of cohesion among residents. Beyond its practical functions, a vibrant town center contributes to the city's identity and character, often becoming a symbol of local pride. Additionally, the economic activity generated by businesses in the town center enhances the overall vitality and sustainability of the city.

Rainsville



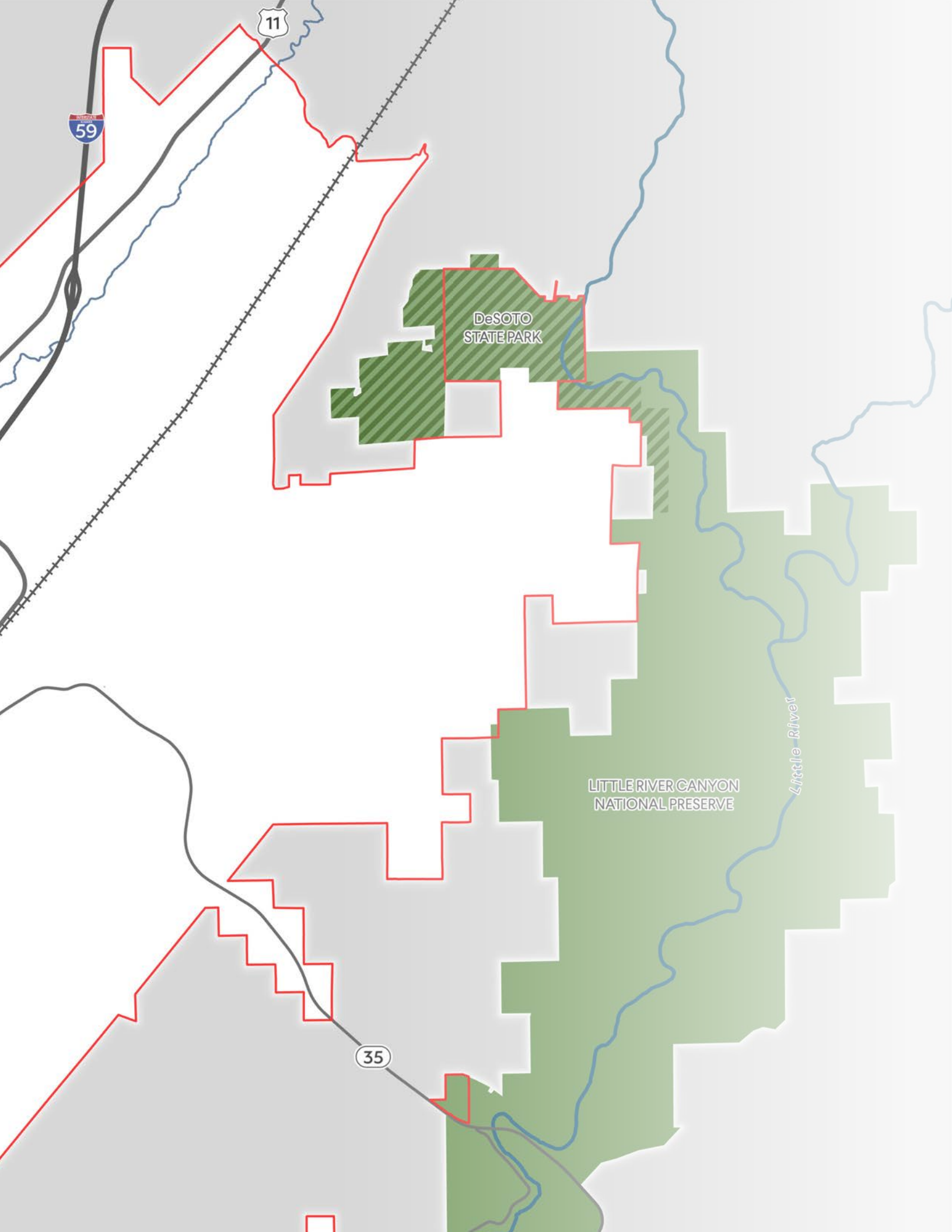
Downtown Fort Payne

Primary Land Uses

- Retail
- Sit-down restaurants
- Office
- Entertainment
- Higher-density residential (townhomes, etc.)
- Civic/ Institutional buildings (courthouse, etc.)
- Parks

Billings-Wills-Creek





11

59

DeSOTO
STATE PARK

LITTLE RIVER CANYON
NATIONAL PRESERVE

Little River

35

Commercial

General commercial areas are lower density districts outside the town center with a mixture of uses that predominantly serve a consumer and service oriented function. General commercial areas are commonly highway commercial corridors characterized by sprawl and automobile dependence. This plan includes three small neighborhood center commercial crossroads on Lookout Mountain at Five Points, Beeson Gap, and Fischer Crossroads. These commercial nodes should be more clustered and walkable in design.

Rainsville



AL-35 highway commercial corridor at Exit 218

Primary Land Uses

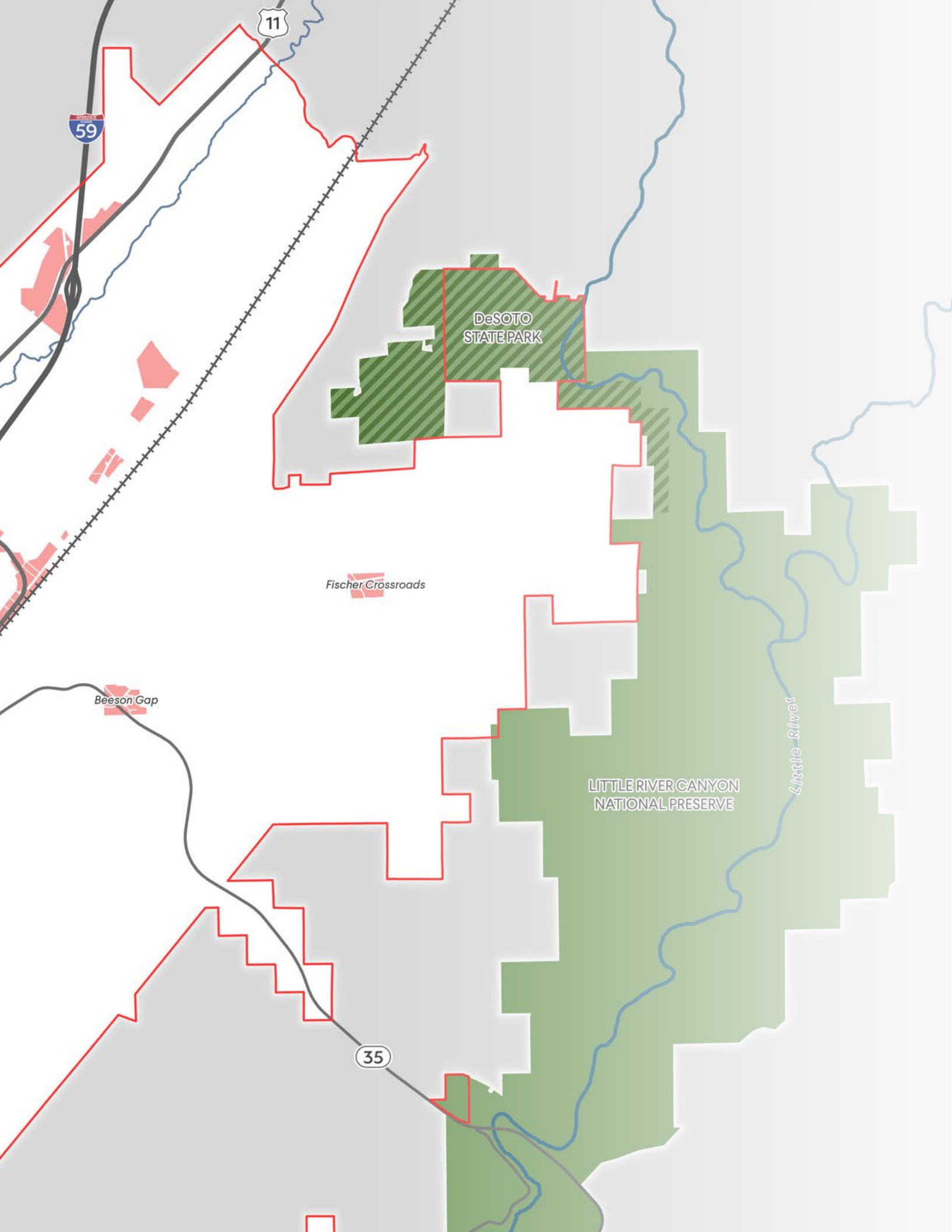
- Neighborhood retail
- Big-box retail / grocery
- Sit-down and fast-food restaurants
- Office
- Civic/ Institutional buildings
- Services
- Entertainment

Big Wills Creek



Five Points





11

59

DeSOTO
STATE PARK

Fischer Crossroads

Beeson Gap

LITTLE RIVER CANYON
NATIONAL PRESERVE

Little River

35

Industrial

Industrial land uses in a city play a pivotal role in supporting economic development and job creation. These areas typically house manufacturing, logistics, and distribution facilities, contributing to the city's industrial base. Industrial zones are essential for fostering innovation and technological advancements, as they often host research and development activities. Fort Payne should generally attempt to limit further "industrial sprawl" in Little Wills Valley and instead refocus industrial development around the airport and interstate in Big Wills Valley.

Rainsville



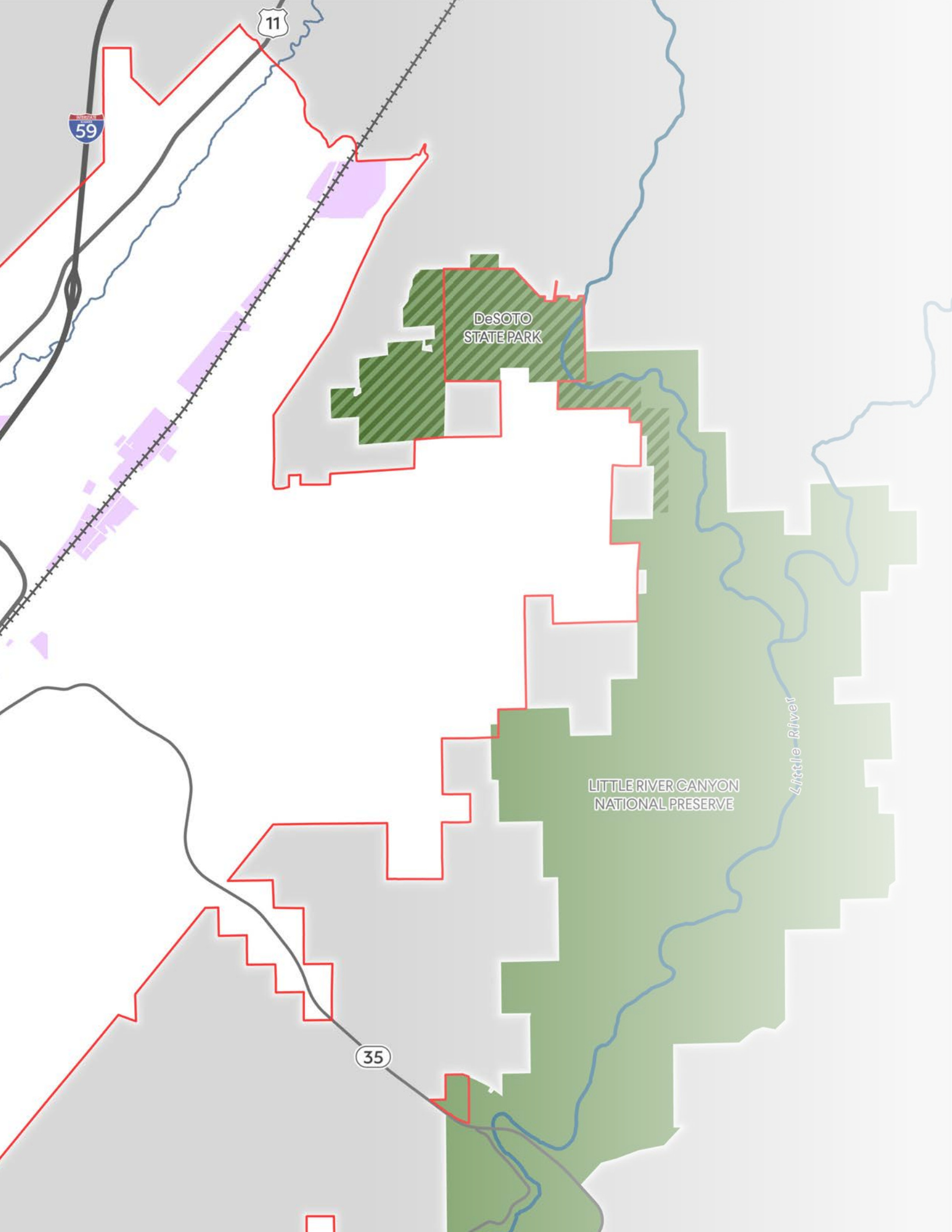
Industrial developments on Airport Rd

Primary Land Uses

- Light industry / manufacturing
- Warehousing / storage
- Wholesale
- Office

Big Wills Creek





11

59

DeSOTO
STATE PARK

LITTLE RIVER CANYON
NATIONAL PRESERVE

Little River

35

Civic / Institutional

Civic and institutional uses form the backbone of the city's public infrastructure, from government facilities such as city hall and the airport to schools and churches. These sites are hubs for civic engagement, governance, and the provision of essential services. Educational institutions contribute to the intellectual and cultural vibrancy of the city, while government buildings house administrative functions critical to public well-being. The strategic allocation of civic and institutional land uses enhances the overall quality of life, fostering a sense of community and supporting the city's long-term development goals.

Rainsville

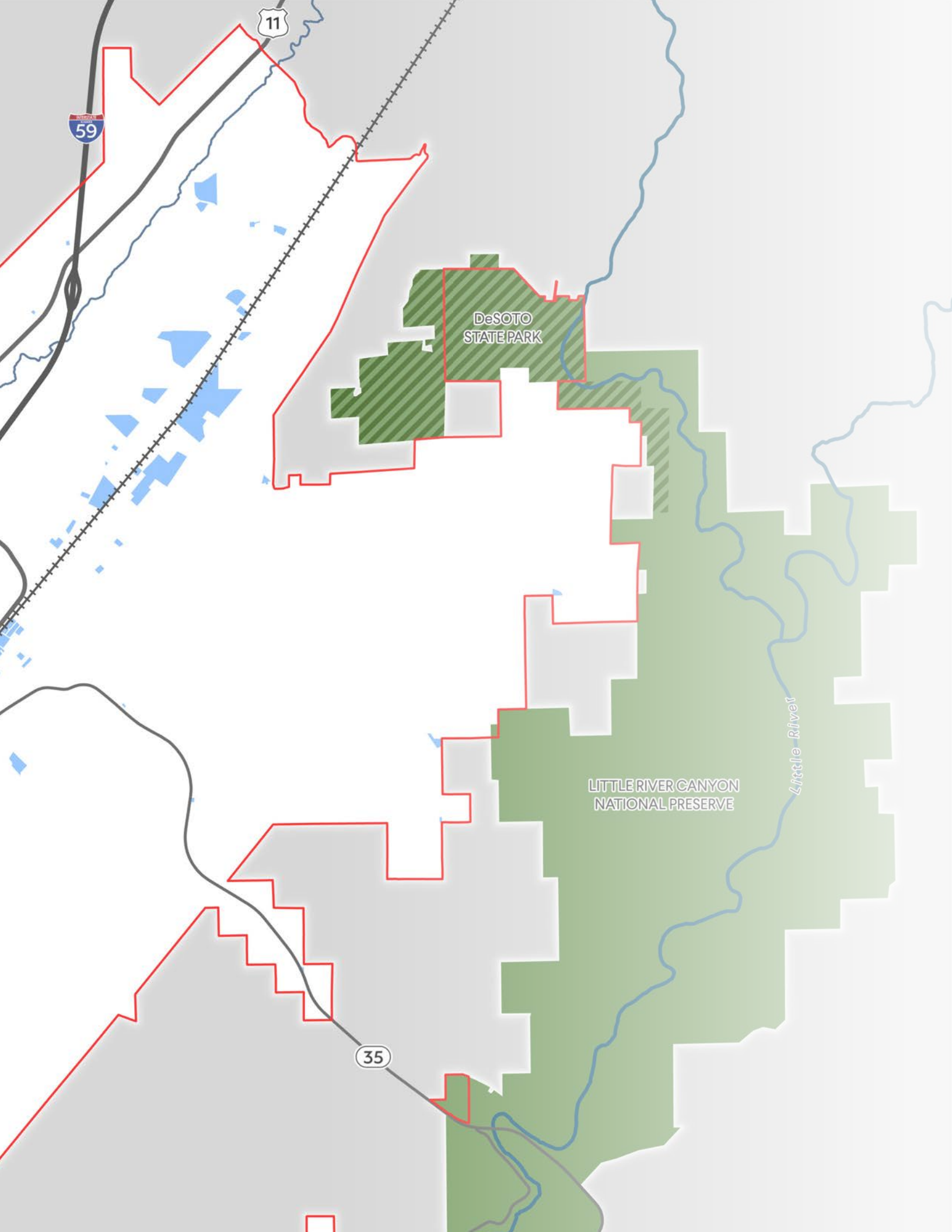


Fort Payne's historic City Hall on Gault Ave

Primary Land Uses

- Government facilities
- Hospitals
- Schools
- Churches
- Rec centers
- Cemeteries





11

59

DeSOTO
STATE PARK

LITTLE RIVER CANYON
NATIONAL PRESERVE

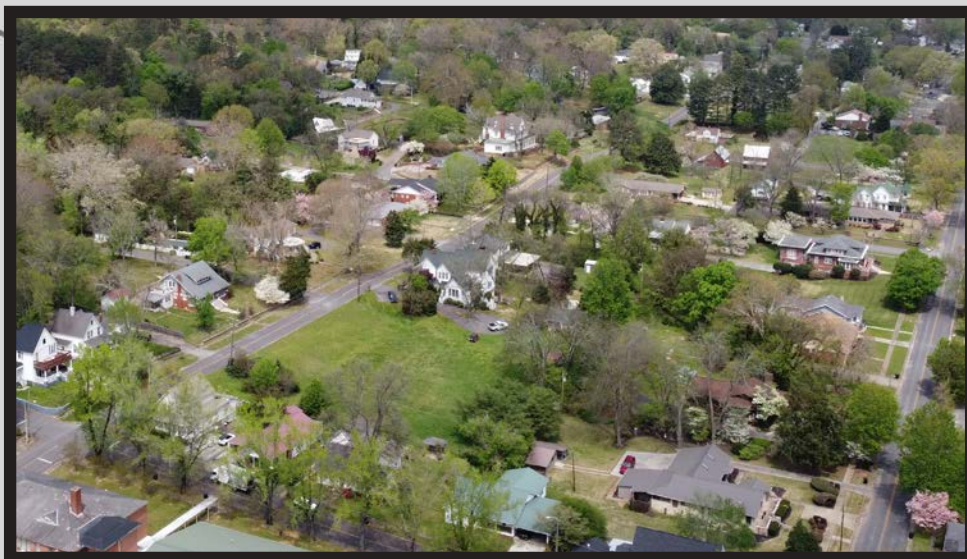
Little River

35

Neighborhood Residential

The city's residential neighborhoods are a fundamental element of its overall health, providing housing and fostering community life. These areas can accommodate various housing types and lifestyles. Beyond providing shelter, residential neighborhoods contribute to the city's social fabric, influencing its character and creating spaces for interpersonal connections and shared experiences among residents. Future residential development could include various types of infill housing throughout the central spine as well as new neighborhood developments along Big Wills Creek and on Lookout Mountain.

Rainsville

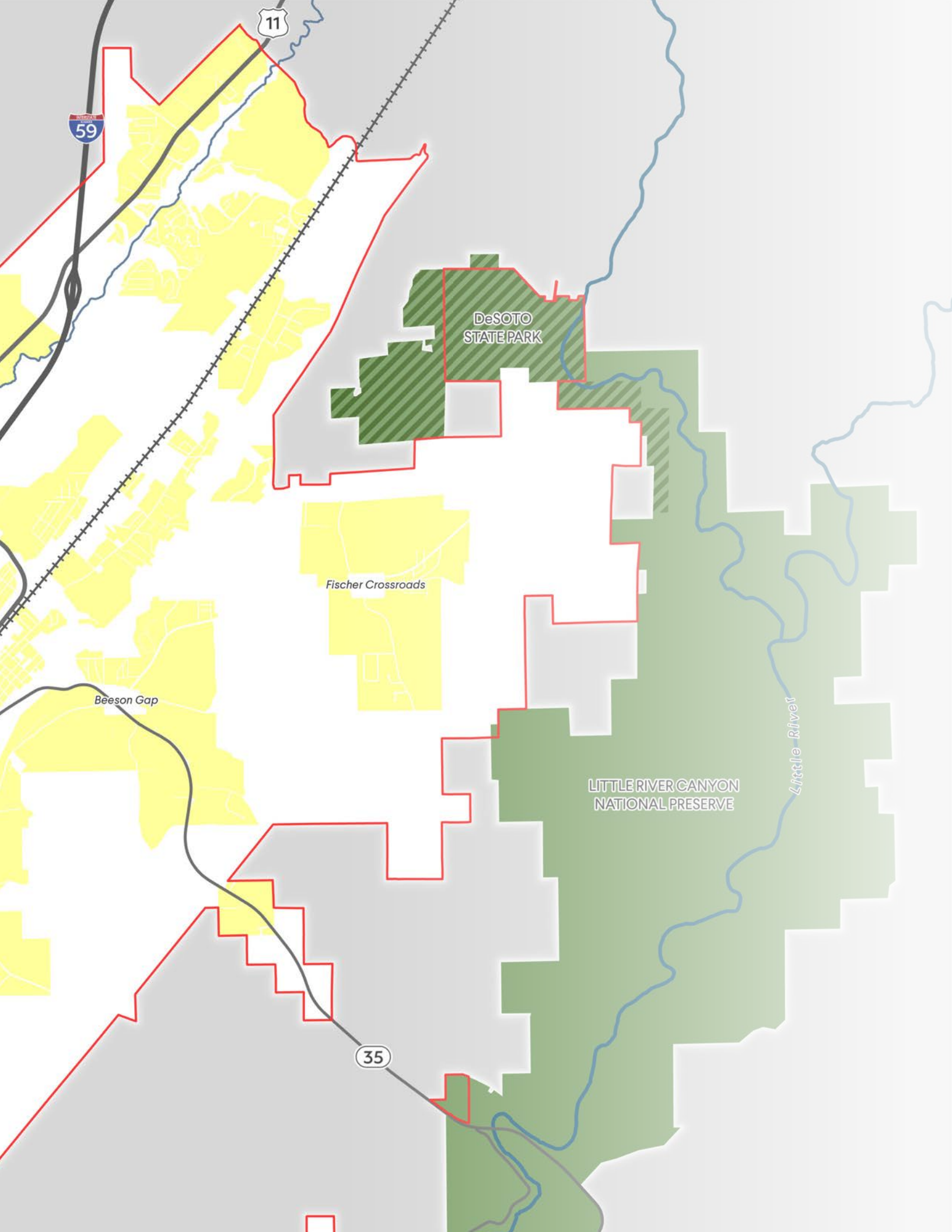


Historic neighborhood residential area north of Gault Ave

Primary Land Uses

- Single-family detached homes
- Garden homes
- Duplex/ triplex
- Townhomes
- Apartments
- Parks





11

59

DeSOTO
STATE PARK

Fischer Crossroads

Beeson Gap

LITTLE RIVER CANYON
NATIONAL PRESERVE

Little River

35

Rural Residential / Agricultural

Fort Payne's ample supply of rural land plays an important role in preserving its small town charm and should be strategically protected from sprawling development. This rural land adds scenic value to the city in addition to supporting local agriculture. By embracing and protecting the city's rural areas, Fort Payne can safeguard its unique character, ensuring that its small town charm and tranquility remain an integral part of the community's identity.

Rainsville



Agricultural land on Big Wills Creek

Primary Land Uses

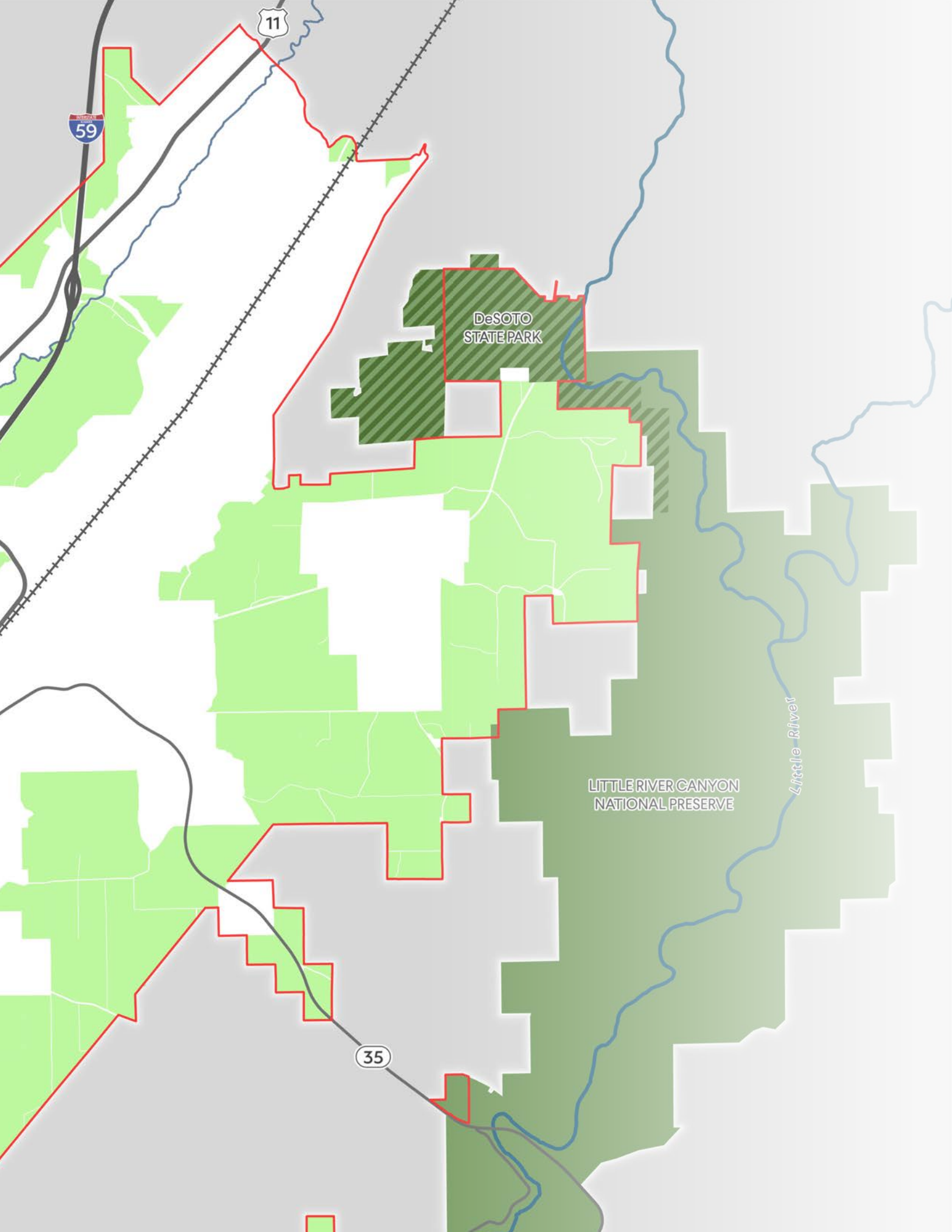
- Lower density housing on larger lots
- Farms
- Passive fields
- Forested/ undeveloped land

Big Wills Creek

59

11





11

59

DeSOTO
STATE PARK

LITTLE RIVER CANYON
NATIONAL PRESERVE

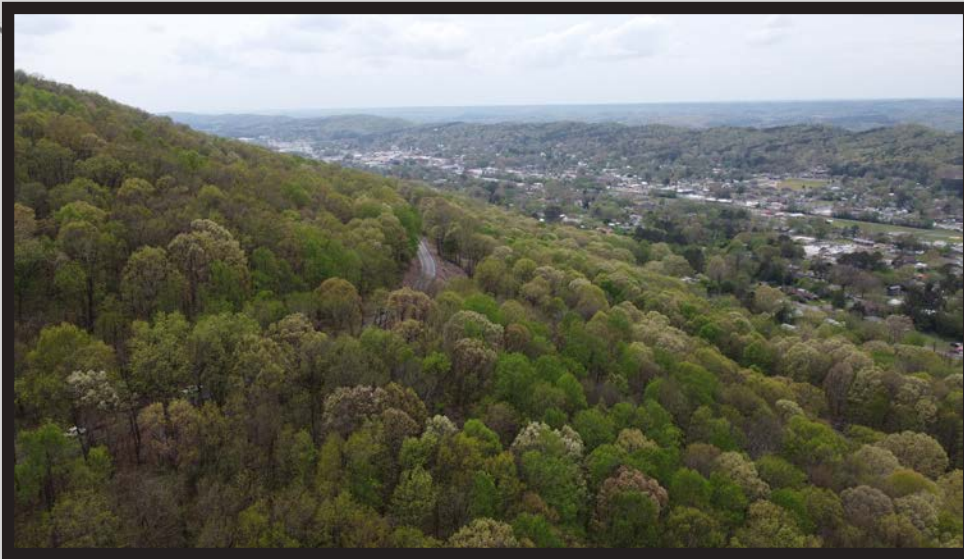
Little River

35

Park / Natural / Undeveloped

Parks and natural land form the backbone of a city's green infrastructure, providing essential environmental benefits and enhancing urban resilience. These areas act as natural filters, improving air and water quality and mitigating the urban heat island effect. In addition to fostering biodiversity, parks serve as recreational spaces, promoting physical and mental well-being for residents. Areas of the city that should be protected from development include vulnerable floodplains and the face of Lookout Mountain.

Rainsville

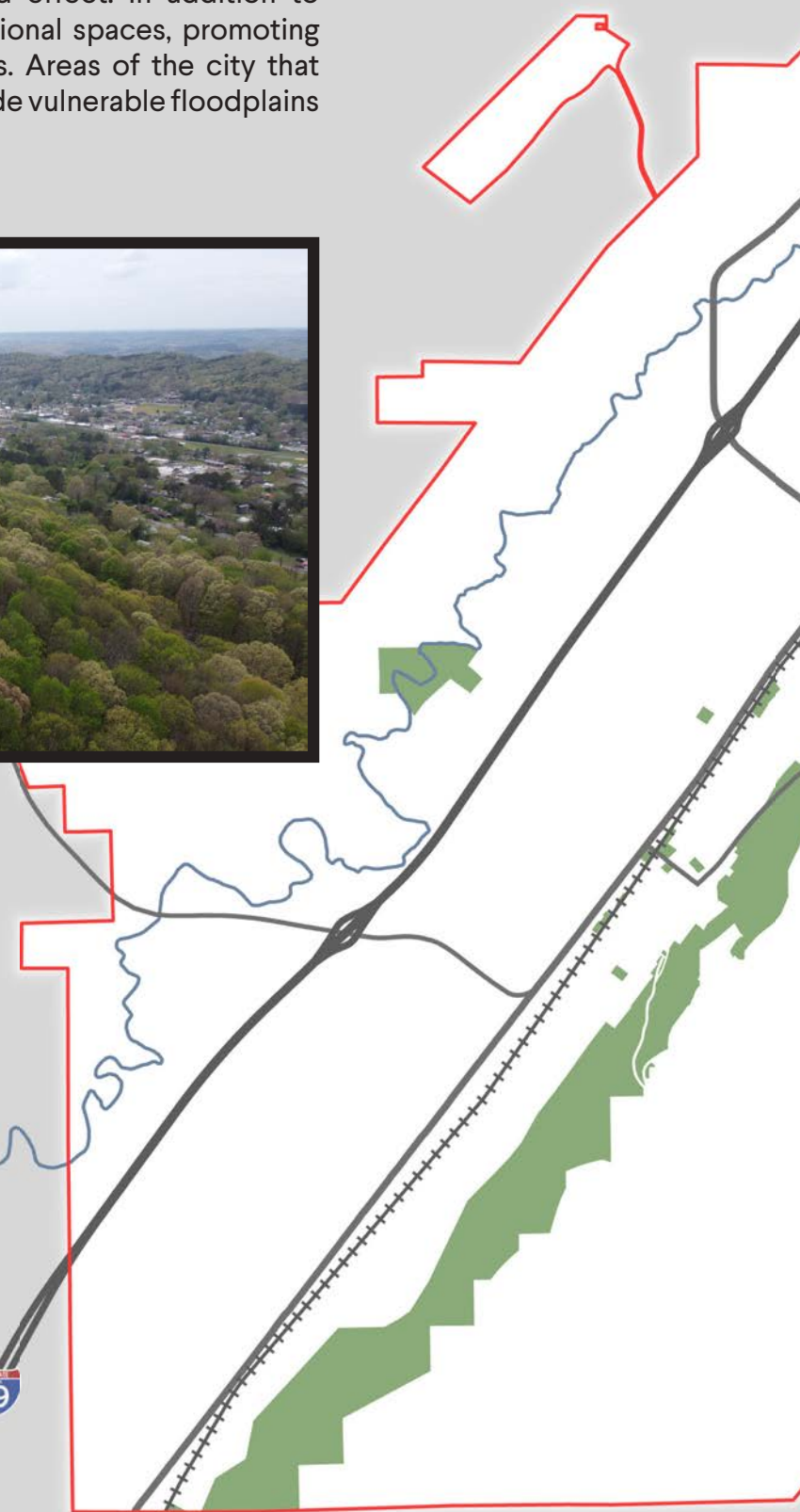


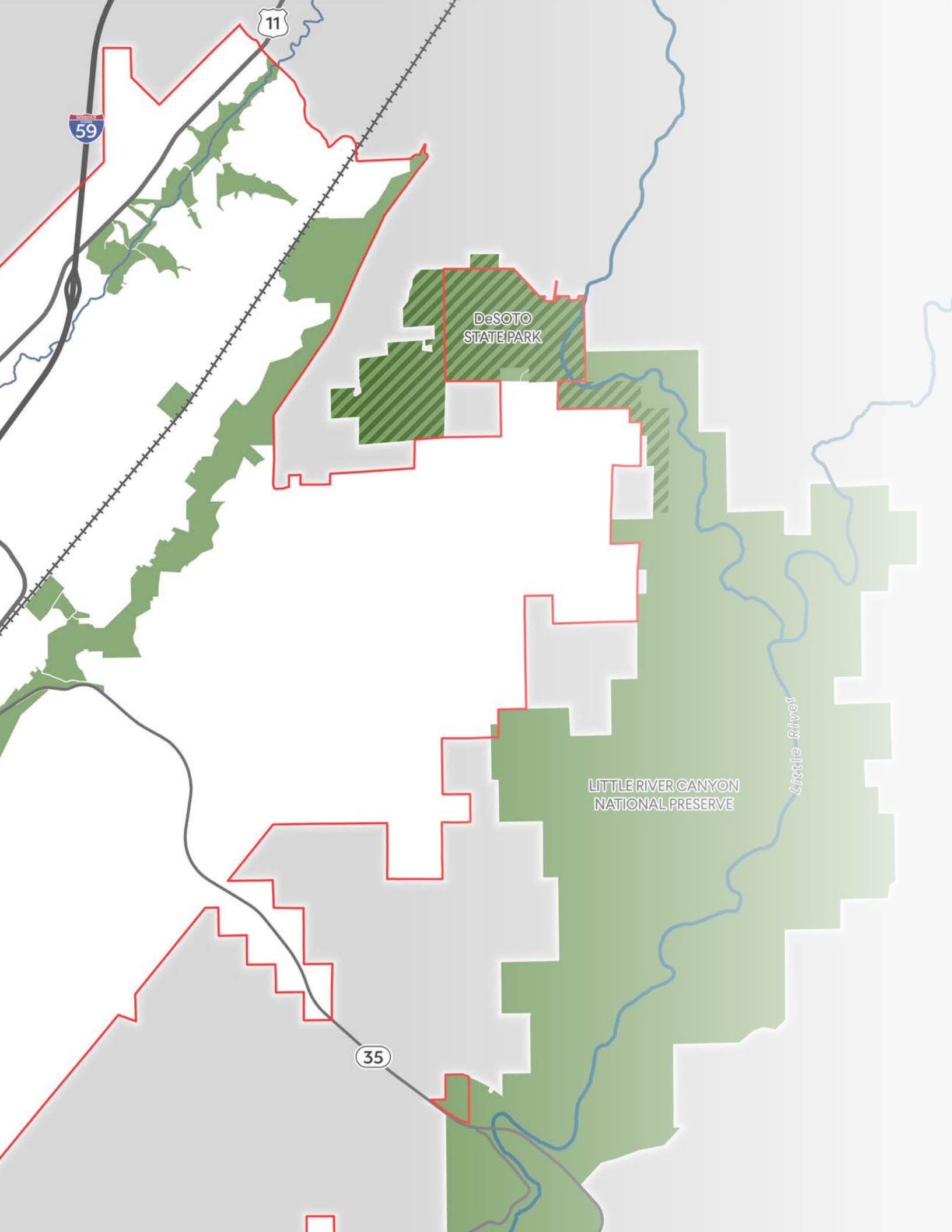
Undeveloped land on the slopes of Lookout Mountain

Primary Land Uses

- Forested / undeveloped land
- Passive / natural public parks
- Active recreational parks (sports fields, etc.)
- Trails / greenways

Big Wills Creek





11

59

DeSOTO
STATE PARK

LITTLE RIVER CANYON
NATIONAL PRESERVE

Little River

35



How do we get
there?



Implementation Action List

The goal of the action plan is to provide the city a concise list of projects, actions, and policies to help implement the plan. The list reflects the organization of the plan.

In order for the city to effectively take action on the plan recommendations, they should regularly review this list as budgets, capital, planning, and special projects are discussed.

Throughout the plan, priority projects have been highlighted for each section. These larger scale projects are projects that could be catalytic for their location in the city. They may not be the first initiative the city needs to focus on, but they could potentially have the greatest impact.

Implementation Action List

Gateways

Enhance Interstate Gateways

Interchange Monument Signage

I-59/hwy35 interchange

I-59/49th st interchange

Interchange Landscape Improvements

Exit 222 on I-59

Exit 224 on I-59

Interstate Bridge Enhancements

Branded overpass signage at Exit 222 on I-59

Northern Interchange Gateway

35 Interchange

Improve Gateway Corridors

Wayfinding and Art

Market and guide people to your assets, including downtown, recreational access, and landmarks.

Important locations for wayfinding are just off each interchange and at where each of the three corridors intersects Gault Avenue.

Partner with a local/ regional artist to design landmark sculptural installations for the primary gateways into Little Wills Valley

- On AL-35 between I-59 and US 11

- On AL-35 on the downhill approach coming into the central part of the city

- On US 11 between I-59 and Gault Ave

- On 49th St NW between I-59 and Gault Ave

Corridor Right-of-way Improvements

Work with ALDOT to develop an improvement plan for AL-35 from Gault Ave to Burt Hill Dr SW with landscaped medians, sidewalks, access management, roundabout, etc.

Identify and implement a route for an AL-35 bypass to circumvent safety issues at “Joe’s Truck Stop”

Work with ALDOT and grant writers to apply for funding to create an access management plan to construct landscaped center medians.

Create an access plan for all gateway corridors, but prioritize Highway 35 for construction.

Update Site Design and Development Standards

Create an overlay zoning district for gateway corridors with enhanced site design standards

Improve requirements for landscaping, access management, parking to the side and rear of the building, and sidewalk connections

Allow for a broader mixture of uses

Gateways Recommended Land Use & Zoning

- Make Exit 218 a priority for future improvements
- Enhance connectivity on Hwy 35 under I-59 (mobility & trails)
- Create a Mixed-use Highway zoning district
- Look for opportunities for housing development in close proximity to commercial hubs
- Establish greenway trails along creeks to connect between Little Wills Valley and Big Wills Valley
 - Along Little Wills Creek that parallels AL-35 from the DeKalb Plaza Shopping Center to the Walmart Supercenter
 - Along the Beeson Branch of Big Wills Creek that parallels US 11 from Alabama Ave to Big Wills Creek
 - Along Steward Spring that parallels 49th St N from Gault Ave to Big Wills Creek
- Consider developing land along the interstate over the mountain on the eastern side of I-59
- Maximize & concentrate Industrial development around airport
- Increase residential development around the Middle and High School
- Limit Mixed-use Highway development to primary intersections along 49th St
- Prioritize placemaking at I-59 interchange
- Improve entry experience along Wallace, especially at Joe's Truck Stop, with landscaping and signage
- Consider use of city owned land and complimentary art consistent with other primary gateways

Project Highlights

- **Support redevelopment of the DeKalb Plaza Shopping Center**
 - Beautification/ landscape restoration of Little Wills Creek along frontage
 - Outparcel development
 - Greenway trails

Spine

Enhance North + South Transition Areas

Improve highway approaches to downtown

Landscaping, street trees

Sidewalks

Access management

Implement a new sign ordinance for downtown

Lower heights, monument signage, landscaping/ lighting requirements, etc.

Invest in Downtown

Promote commercial and residential infill/ redevelopment opportunities in the historic downtown area

Park Plaza Shopping Center redevelopment

Partner with DeKalb County to offer a facade improvement grant for the downtown area

Design and construct a railroad overpass that connects the AL 35 bypass to Glenn Blvd

Strengthen streetscape connectivity between the east and west sides of the railroad

3rd St SE

1st St

5th St NE

Improve the Gault Ave streetscape through downtown

Street trees/ landscaping, cross walks, speed tables, bump outs, street furniture

Increase walkability through sidewalk connectivity between downtown and surrounding residential districts

Improve pedestrian safety in downtown through streetscape improvements

Develop a plan for Downtown city-owned property redevelopment

Spine Recommended Land Use & Zoning

- Explore potential redevelopment of strategically located industrial areas for new housing
- Increase rental housing options in the city
 - Identify the best sites for multifamily developments and recruit developers
- Explore the potential to develop the land east of I-65, on the west side of the mountain.
- Consider city-owned land east of Hwy 11 for housing development
- Consolidate Industrial areas along the railroad and limit future expansion
- Increase homeownership options in downtown by using infill site as opportunities to increase density introducing missing middle housing typologies
- Plan long-term development of industrial areas downtown along the creek
- Use a stream revitalization project to bring nature back into downtown, and use this to catalyze the industrial property development and strengthen the downtown core.
- Attempt to open up parcels along Hwy 11 for housing to connect residential areas creating compact, more walkable communities
- Explore connecting Lookout Mountain to Desoto State Park
- Minimize the future expansion of Industrial development in this part of the city and focus on neighborhoods around the schools
- Densify development at intersections along this transitional stretch north of downtown
- Leverage city-owned property to create amenities and connections to existing residential areas
- Redevelopment of city-owned property between 2nd and 4th St
- City-owned property off of N Gault to be utilized for Sports Complex

Project Highlights

- **Entry into Downtown**
- **Redevelop the old DeKalb General Hospital site and adjacent Manitou Courts housing authority development**
- **Connect the Downtown Parks to create a safer more cohesive experience**
- **Plan adaptive reuse for future decommissioning of quarry site**

Transitional

Refine Housing Development Patterns

Promote development of neighborhood commercial nodes on Lookout Mountain

Five Points

Beeson Gap

Fisher Crossroads

Consider implementing the following housing policies:

Incentive programs for developers

Flexible zoning regulations

Improved subdivision regulations

Support the development of diverse housing choice throughout the city

Infill in downtown and historic neighborhoods

Utilize land around the northern gateway and city schools to develop housing

Target more Multifamily development

Promote the development of context appropriate housing, such as cottage style developments common in mountain resort towns that attract tourism

Be Proactive About Environmental Conservation

Ecological Assessment and Zoning

Green Corridors and Buffer Zones

Development Density and Sustainable Design

Community Engagement and Education

Transitional Recommended Land Use & Zoning

- Promote higher-paying industrial development adjacent to the airport
- Build a road between I-65 and Big Ridge to open the back side of the ridge to residential development
 - Dewyer Ave to Hixon Rd
 - Hixon Rd to Big Wills Dr
- Establish multi-use trails to increase connectivity between the urban core and outlying recreational assets
 - Greenway trail along Big Wills Creek from AL 35 to 49th St N
 - Greenway trail along Yellow Creek from Beeson Gap Rd to the Little River Canyon Center
 - Buffered side path trail along Desoto Parkway from Beeson Gap Rd to Desoto State Park
- Adopt a conservation / preservation ordinance and create a conservation plan to protect the natural and agricultural areas of the city
- Develop small nodes from downtown to Desoto that serve neighborhoods and create opportunities for tourism

City-Wide

Networks

Park System Expansion / Diversification Opportunities

Develop new parks in strategic areas of the city

On Big Wills Creek

Overlook park atop Lookout Mountain

On city-owned property at 63rd St NW

Fort Payne Quarry

Regional Trail Network - Trail of Tears National Historic Trail

Establish an on-street network of trails connecting and highlighting Native American sites throughout the city

Fort Payne Cabin

Andrew Ross House

Willstown Mission Cemetery

Local Trail Network

Grand Ave - the Western Spine

Beeson Gap Rd - the Lookout Mountain / Little River Canyon Connector

Godfrey Ave - the Eastern Spine

Citadel Rock Rd - the Desoto State Park Connector

Railroad Overpass / AL-35 Realignment

Economy

Industry Actions

- Use incentives, land swaps, etc. to steer new industrial developments toward the Airport Rd corridor
- Leverage continued development of the airport area to support aviation related industries
- Target higher paying manufacturing jobs, especially aviation, for industrial recruitment

Tourism Actions

- Target retail recruitment efforts based on market analysis and community input
- Proactively market potentially high-impact properties for development/ redevelopment
- Utilize city-owned land downtown for a mixed-use entertainment development
- Develop a regional park/ event space on city-owned land by Vulcraft to support event tourism

City Administration

Hire a City Planner or Community Development Coordinator

Prioritize ownership of the plan and strategic implementation.



PLAN GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX



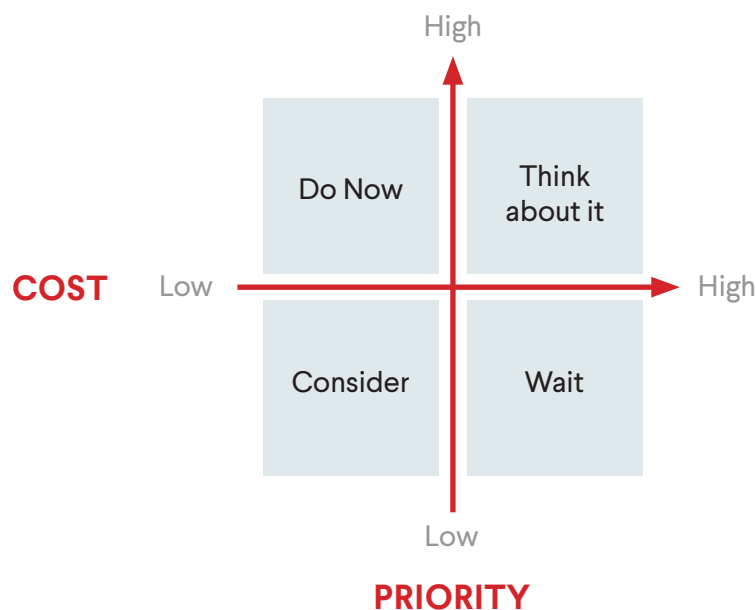
Plan Goals

When deciding what action items to begin implementing consider consulting the plan goals to help determine which actions to pursue. Ask “What goal does the action fulfill?”

Improve Housing Opportunities for All	Create a strategic economic environment for the community and the municipality
Nurture the history and future of downtown	Develop a robust and integrated park system
Improve connectivity across the city	Update the citywide zoning to honor the history and future of the city

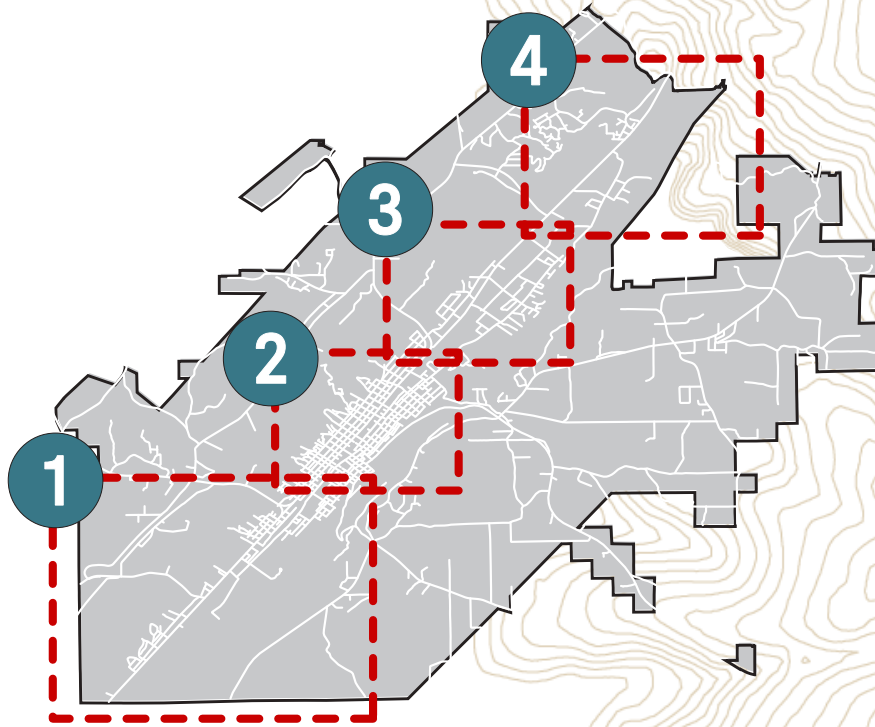
If actions accomplish multiple goals that may indicate that those actions should be a priority for the city.

In addition, the following matrix can be used to help the city decide which actions to pursue based on cost and priority.



Implementation Matrix

The following pages outline an implementation matrix that was calculated based on the cost / priority matrix. This matrix organizes the actions by section, and includes a timeline designation that categorizes the project by the length of time it would take to implement. This is one additional metric that can aid the city in determining which projects to prioritize.



The action items list and implementation matrix include recommendations from all sections of the plan. The above detailed area maps primarily highlight land use and zoning recommendations for specific locations. They primarily relate to future development of land, but also include considerations as the city pursues a zoning update in the future.



Gateways

Enhance Interstate Gateways	TIMELINE	COST	PRIORITY
Monument Signage Prioritize Exit 218	SHORT-TERM	\$	HIGH
Landscaping Improvements	IMMEDIATE	\$\$	HIGH
Bridge Enhancements	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$	LOW
Improve Gateway Corridors			
Wayfinding and Art	IMMEDIATE	\$	HIGH
Corridor Right-of-way Improvements	MID-TERM	\$\$	MEDIUM
Update Site Design and Development Standards			
Gateway overlay zoning district	SHORT-TERM	\$	MEDIUM
Mixed-use Highway zoning district	SHORT-TERM	\$	MEDIUM

Land Use & Zoning Recommendations

- Enhance connectivity on Hwy 35 under I-59 (mobility & trails)
- Create a Mixed-use Highway zoning district
- Look for opportunities for housing development in close proximity to commercial hubs
- Establish greenway trails along creeks to connect between Little Wills Valley and Big Wills Valley
- Consider developing land along the interstate over the mountain on the eastern side of I-59
- Maximize & concentrate Industrial development around airport
- Increase residential development around the Middle and High School
- Limit Mixed-use Highway development to primary intersections along 49th St
- Prioritize placemaking at I-59 interchanges
- Improve entry experience along Wallace, especially at Joe’s Truck Stop, with landscaping and signage
- Consider use of city owned land and complimentary art consistent with other primary gateways



Spine

	TIMELINE	COST	PRIORITY
Enhance North + South Transition Areas			
Improve highway approaches to downtown	SHORT-TERM	\$\$	MEDIUM
Implement a new sign ordinance for downtown	IMMEDIATE	\$	HIGH
Invest in Downtown			
Promote commercial and residential infill/redevelopment opportunities in the historic downtown area	LONG-TERM	\$	HIGH
Partner with DeKalb County to offer a facade improvement grant for the downtown area	SHORT-TERM	\$	MEDIUM
Design and construct a railroad overpass that connects the AL 35 bypass to Glenn Blvd	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$\$	LOW
Strengthen streetscape connectivity between the east and west sides of the railroad	MID-TERM	\$\$	MEDIUM
Improve the Gault Ave streetscape through downtown	MID-TERM	\$\$	HIGH
Increase walkability through sidewalk connectivity between downtown and surrounding residential districts	MID-TERM	\$\$	MEDIUM
Improve pedestrian safety in downtown through streetscape improvements	SHORT-TERM	\$\$	HIGH
Develop a plan for Downtown city-owned property redevelopment	IMMEDIATE	\$	HIGH

Land Use & Zoning Recommendations

- Explore potential redevelopment of strategically located industrial areas for new housing
- Increase rental housing options in the city
- Explore the potential to develop the land east of I-65, on the west side of the mountain.
- Consider city-owned land east of Hwy 11 for housing development
- Consolidate Industrial areas along the railroad and limit future expansion
- Increase homeownership options in downtown by using infill site as opportunities to increase density introducing missing middle housing typologies
- Plan long-term development of industrial areas downtown along the creek
- Downtown stream revitalization project to help catalyze the redevelopment of industrial property and strengthen the downtown core.
- Attempt to open up parcels along Hwy 11 for housing to connect residential areas creating compact, more walkable communities
- Explore opportunities to connect Lookout Mountain to Desoto State Park
- Minimize the future expansion of Industrial development and focus on neighborhoods around the schools
- Densify development at intersections along the transitional areas north of downtown
- Utilize city-owned property to create community amenities and to connect existing residential areas
- Redevelopment of city-owned property between 2nd and 4th St
- City-owned property off of N Gault to be utilized for Sports Complex

Transitional

Refine Housing Development Patterns	TIMELINE	COST	PRIORITY
Promote development of neighborhood commercial nodes on Lookout Mountain	LONG-TERM	\$\$	MEDIUM
Implement recommended housing policies	SHORT-TERM	\$	HIGH
Support the development of diverse housing choices throughout the city	IMMEDIATE	\$	HIGH
Be Proactive About Environmental Conservation			
Ecological Assessment and Zoning	LONG-TERM	\$\$	LOW
Green Corridors and Buffer Zones	MID-TERM	\$	MEDIUM
Development Density and Sustainable Design	MID-TERM	\$\$	MEDIUM
Community Engagement and Education	IMMEDIATE	\$	MEDIUM

Land Use & Zoning Recommendations

- Promote higher-paying industrial development adjacent to the airport
- Build a road between I-65 and Big Ridge to open the back side of the ridge to residential development
 - Dewyer Ave to Hixon Rd
 - Hixon Rd to Big Wills Dr
- Establish multi-use trails to increase connectivity between the urban core and outlying recreational assets
 - Greenway trail along Big Wills Creek from AL 35 to 49th St N
 - Greenway trail along Yellow Creek from Beeson Gap Rd to the Little River Canyon Center
 - Buffered side path trail along Desoto Parkway from Beeson Gap Rd to Desoto State Park
- Adopt a conservation / preservation ordinance and create a conservation plan to protect the natural and agricultural areas of the city
- Develop small commercial nodes from downtown to Desoto that serve neighborhoods and create opportunities for tourism

City-wide

Networks

	TIMELINE	COST	PRIORITY
Park System Expansion / Diversification Opportunities	MID-TERM	\$\$\$	MEDIUM
Regional Trail Network - Trail of Tears National Historic Trail	SHORT-TERM	\$\$	MEDIUM
Local Trail Network	MID-TERM	\$\$	HIGH
Railroad Overpass / AL-35 Realignment	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$\$	MEDIUM

Economy

Industry

Encourage new industrial development around the Airport Rd corridor	SHORT-TERM	\$	MEDIUM
Support aviation related industries	SHORT-TERM	\$	MEDIUM
Target higher paying manufacturing jobs	SHORT-TERM	\$	MEDIUM

Tourism

Target retail recruitment efforts based on market analysis and community input	SHORT-TERM	\$	MEDIUM
Proactively market potentially high-impact properties for development/ redevelopment	SHORT-TERM	\$	MEDIUM
Utilize city-owned land downtown for a mixed-use entertainment development	SHORT-TERM	\$\$\$	HIGH
Develop a regional park/ event space on city-owned land by Vulcraft to support event tourism	IMMEDIATE	\$\$\$	HIGH

City Administration

Hire a City Planner or Community Development Coordinator	IMMEDIATE	\$\$	HIGH
---	-----------	------	------

FORT PAYNE
FORWARD

