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This plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), MPO and RPCGB as a requirement of Title 23 USC 134 and subsequent modification under Public Law 114-94 (FAST Act) December 2015. The contents of the plan do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the USDOT.

The contents of this Comprehensive Plan reflect the City of Irondale's community values. The Plan serves as a guide to interpreting citizen values into future land use decisions, capital investments and public policies. As such, this Comprehensive Plan is not legally binding upon the City of Irondale.

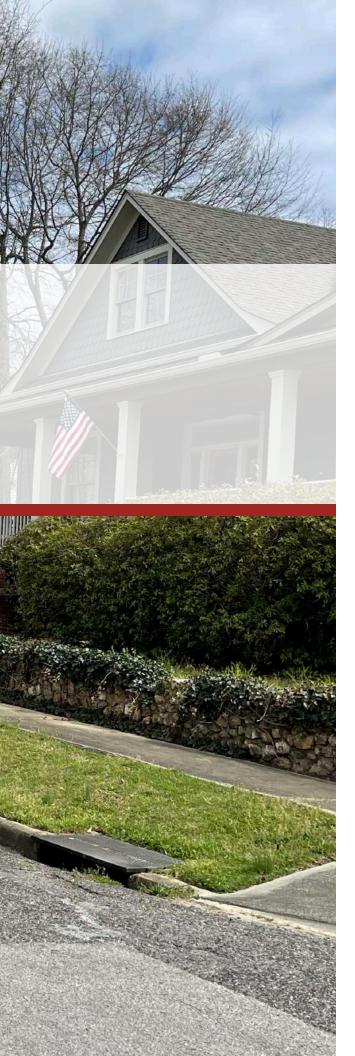


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Adopted December 16, 2021 by the Irondale Planning and Zoning Board





Introduction

The Blueprint Irondale Comprehensive Plan is a cooperative effort between the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) and the City of Irondale. Blueprint Irondale is an update to the 2016 Irondale on the Move Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is an official statement of a city's vision for its future as expressed by the community. The Plan will form policies, goals, and recommendations to guide future decisions regarding land use, development, and capital improvement. As an update to the 2016 plan, Blueprint Irondale will review actions and goals put forth in the previous plan and update or build upon them as necessary. The City of Irondale will use this plan to prepare itself for future growth and change for the next 5 to 15 years. More information regarding the Plan can be found at www.blueprintlrondale.com.

This document is the Existing Conditions Report. The purpose of the report is to present a "snapshot" of Irondale today and to highlight key trends across a range of topics and measures within Irondale. Having an understanding of the current state of the City is a key component of the planning process. This analysis coupled with the public involvement efforts of Blueprint Irondale will serve as the foundation that the Planning Team will use to craft recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan.

The information and analysis presented here are drawn from a variety of sources, including U.S. Census data, field observations, past plans and studies, geographic datasets, as well as local knowledge provided by the City of Irondale.

Irondale's Place in the Region

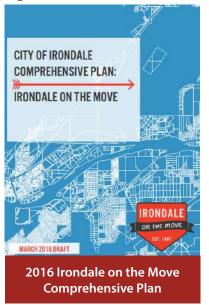
Irondale's geographic location.

Nestled in the foothills of Ruffner Mountain to the west along the banks of the Cahaba River to the south, Irondale is located approximately six miles to the east of downtown Birmingham. The Irondale city limits stretch west from Crestwood Boulevard/ U.S. 78 at I-20, east to Leeds, south to past the Cahaba River and Rex Lake Road, north to Birmingham, and northeast toward Trussville and unincorporated parts of Jefferson County.

Irondale is bordered by unincorporated Jefferson County and a number of municipalities including Birmingham (west and northwest), Trussville (northeast), Leeds (east), Vestavia Hills (south) and Mountain Brook (southeast). With over 18 miles of interstate, Irondale is located along the major transportation corridors of I-20, I-59, I-459, U.S. 78 and U.S. 11.

Irondale is one of the inner ring suburbs in the Birmingham Metropolitan Area, making it a convenient place to live with its easy access to large employers. Since its founding in the late 1800's, Irondale has grown significantly and has followed typical suburban trends favoring single-family homes, separated landuses, and lower housing density, particularly towards the eastern limits of the City that has rapidly become more rural in character.

Figure 1: Previous Plans and Studies



Why Plan Now?

In planning, it is considered a best practice to review an existing Comprehensive Plan every five years and to update the plan as needed based on community values and priorities that might have changed. Since the adoption of the 2016 Irondale Comprehensive Plan, which was branded as Irondale on the Move, the City of Irondale has experienced tremendous growth and change.

Examples of this growth and change since 2016 include: it has become the home to luxury automotive dealers including Maserati, Porsche, Mercedes-Benz, and BMW; the housing market has expanded as Tower Homes continues to build additional single-family homes; the Zamora Temple was recently purchased for \$3.5 million; a new grocery store is expected to be built at the corner of Old Leeds Road and Grants Mill Road; and large businesses, such as Motion Industries, continue to build new office and warehousing space throughout the City. With this rapid change, now is the time to update the Comprehensive Plan to best represent the needs and desires of Irondale today.



Irondale has Unique and Valuable Regional Assets.

I-459 and Grants Mill Road - Luxury Automotive Center

Irondale has leveraged its position within the Metro area to attract the highest density of luxury automotive dealerships in Alabama including Maserati, Porsche, Mercedes-Benz, and BMW. This has created rapid growth in the area and greatly boosted the City's tax base.

Downtown Irondale

Downtown Irondale has retained its charm and unique character over the years while featuring a mix of locally owned businesses, such as the famous Irondale Cafe, mixed in with civic buildings, such as City Hall and the Irondale Public Library, and single-family homes. As Millennials enter the home-buying stage of life, the walkable street network can be touted to attract new homeowners and growth to the City.





Cahaba River

As one of the most biodiverse rivers on Earth* and home of the iconic Cahaba lilies, the Cahaba River is both a tremendous recreational destination for the City and an asset to be protected. Cahaba Landing, located off of Grants Mill Road, is a city-maintained park and canoe launch area that provides one of the easiest access points to the river in the Birmingham area.



Founded in 1977, Ruffner Mountain Nature Coalition, Inc., is a 501c3 nonprofit in Jefferson County, Alabama, whose mission is to advance the understanding of ecology in a rapidly changing world. Situated near Irondale, Ruffner Mountain occupies a five-mile section of the Red Mountain ridge. For decades this landscape was quarried and mined, but now consists of 1,038 acres of protected habitat and 14 miles of trails welcoming over 85,000 visitors a year.



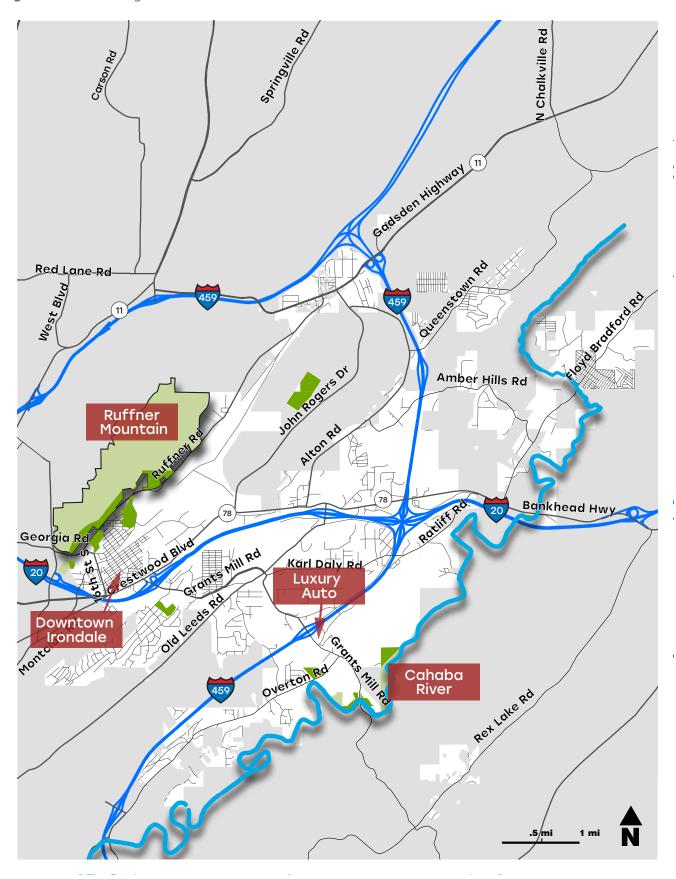
Source: Encyclopedia of Al



Source: RuffnerMountain.org

^{*}Source: Cahaba River Society https://cahabariversociety.org/about-the-cahaba-river/cahaba-river-biodiversity/

Figure 2: Irondale Regional Assets



Demographic Profile

Irondale is poised for accelerated growth.

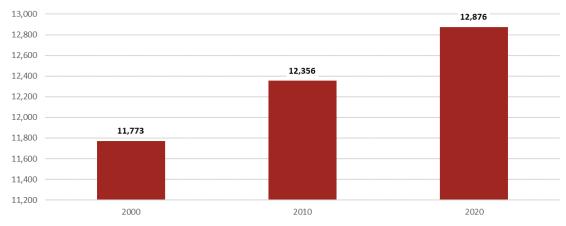
In recent years, Irondale's growth has been slow and steady but is likely to experience rapid growth thanks to upcoming planned residential developments. While Jefferson County lost population between 2000 and 2010 with a moderate recovery from 2010 to 2020, Irondale weathered the housing crisis better than the County as a whole and has continued to experience a slow yet steady population increase.

Table 1: Comparative Growth Rates, Irondale and Jefferson County (2000 - 2020)

Irondale	Population	Percent Change	Jefferson County	Population	Percent Change
2000	11,773		2000	662,018	
2010	12,356	5.0 %	2010	658,420	-0.05 %
2020	12,876	4.2 %	2020	672,308	2.10 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Figure 3: Irondale Population Increase (2000-2020)

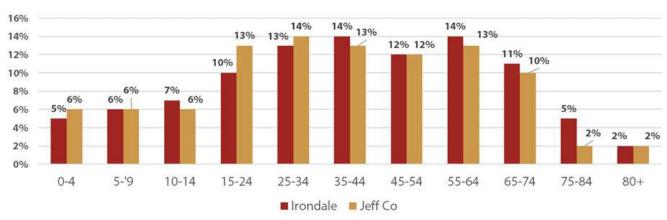


Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Irondale's population is in its prime working years.

Irondale's population by age distribution roughly mirrors Jefferson County as a whole, with the largest percentage of the population being working-age adults between the ages of 25 and 54.

Figure 4: Irondale Age Distribution (2020)



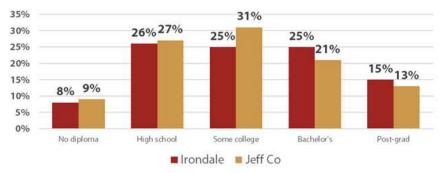
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Educational Attainment

Irondale is well supplied with an educated work-force.

Over half the population (65%) has at least some college education with 40% of residents having earned a bachelor's degree or higher. This makes Irondale have a marginally higher rate of educational attainment when compared to the County as a whole.

Figure 5: Irondale Educational Attainment (2020)



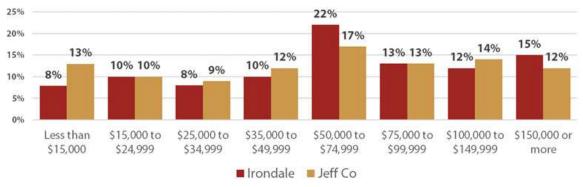
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Income Profile

Irondale has a robust middle-class.

Irondale has a higher median household income of \$62,183 than the County (\$58,858) and the State (\$50,356). In Irondale, 62% of households make over \$50,000 which is slightly higher (5%) than Jefferson County. Approximately 36% of households earn less than \$50,000, 8% less than the County. This would suggest that Irondale has a diversity of income levels with the majority of households falling into a middle-class income bracket.

Figure 6: Irondale Median Household Income (2020)

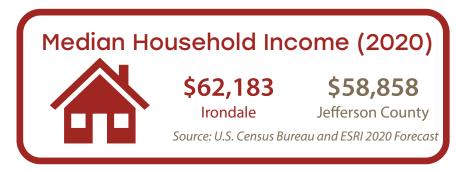


Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Irondale households earn slightly more money than others in the County.

The typical Irondale household earns \$62,183 per year, which is 9% more than the typical Jefferson County household. This represents an earnings advantage for Irondale residents, which is roughly mirrored by the per capita income.

The per capita income of Irondale residents is \$37,472, which is 13% higher than the county as a whole, indicating that Irondale families have more income to spend amongst their households.



Housing Profile

Homes in Irondale are affordable but options to upgrade are limited.

Nearly half (43%) of the owner-occupied housing stock in Irondale is valued under \$200,000, with an additional 19% being valued between \$200,000-\$300,000, making Irondale an attractive location for first-time homeowners and young-families. However, for homeowners looking to upgrade, the housing stock is somewhat limited with only 10% of the housing stock falling between \$300,000-\$500,000 (by contrast to the County as a whole where 15% of houses fall within this range). This lack of housing stock above \$300,000 may force homeowners looking to upgrade outside of Irondale. However, the median home value is still slightly higher than the County at \$168,915 vs \$156,900. This further reinforces Irondale's status as a middle-class community.

30%
20%
10%
Under \$100K \$100K \$150K \$150K \$200K \$200K \$300K \$400K \$400K \$500K Over \$500K

■ Irondale ■ Jeff Co

Figure 7: Housing Value Distribution (2020)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Single-family homes are predominant but other options exist.

Housing distribution in Irondale mirrors the County with a slightly higher percentage of single-family detached homes. In comparision to the County, Irondale has a higher share of mobile homes that account for roughly 10% of the housing stock (versus 3% in Jefferson County).

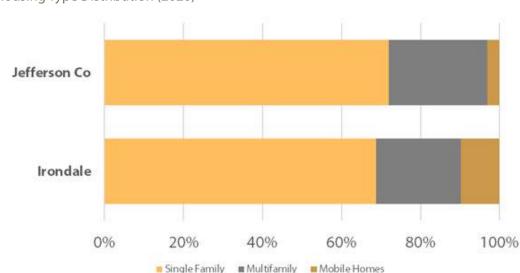


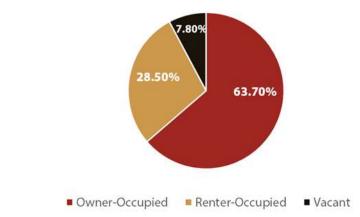
Figure 8: Housing Type Distribution (2020)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Most Irondale residents are homeowners.

64% of the homes in Irondale are owneroccupied while 29% are renter occupied. The vacancy rate is low in Irondale (8%). This is in line with many metro suburbs where single-family housing is predominant.

Figure 9: Homeownership and Vacancy Rates (2020)

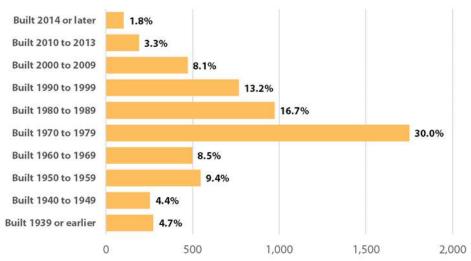


Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Irondale's housing stock is aging.

Today, 73% of homes in Irondale were constructed prior to 1990, with the largest share of homes (30%) being constructed between 1970-1979. Since the building boom that occurred during the 1970's, residential development in Irondale has slowed considerably. This may be due to a number of factors, including Irondale's limiting topography and sewer network availability on vacant land. Current zoning may also contribute to the limited availability of newer homes as the majority of Irondale's vacant land is zoned for Agriculture (A-1) or Estate Lots (E-1). Land under these zoning categories may be unattractive to home builders in the region and thus new home development has gone to other surrounding suburbs.

Figure 10: Age of Housing Units (2020)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Irondale is attracting new residents.

In 2020, Irondale added roughly 850 new residents with the top moving origins being from Birmingham, Vestavia Hills, Mountain Brook, and Trussville. Of these new residents, 127 were from out-of-state origins. The City should expect this trend to continue and accelerate due to new residential development coming to the City in the next year.

In addition, Irondale presents an attractive destination for Millennials who are entering the home buying stage of life. As homeowners, Millennials place a high value on having a short commute distance and like to be close to entertainment and shopping destinations. As such, Irondale is uniquely positioned to attract these first-time homeowners. The map to the right illustrates the most popular destinations for movers in Irondale for 2020.

Figure 11: Most Popular Moving Destinations (2020) Chalkville Rd **Less Movers** More Movers ends den Highway 11 Red Lane Rd thought of the state of the sta 459 Amber Hills Rd 78 Bankhead Hwy Crestwood Blud Georgia Rd Grants Mill Rd Karl Daly Rd 20 montclair Rd Overton Rd

Source: Infogroup

Employment Profile

11

Irondale workers are in a wide variety of fields.

In 2019, an estimated 8,061 employees worked within the Irondale city limits. This number includes workers who also live in Irondale and workers who commute in from elsewhere. The largest employment sector was Wholesale Trade (13.8%) closely followed by Construction (12.2%). The remaining workers are spread out in a diverse range of fields well distributed between those requiring a college education and those that do not.

Table 2: Employment by industry in Irondale (2019)

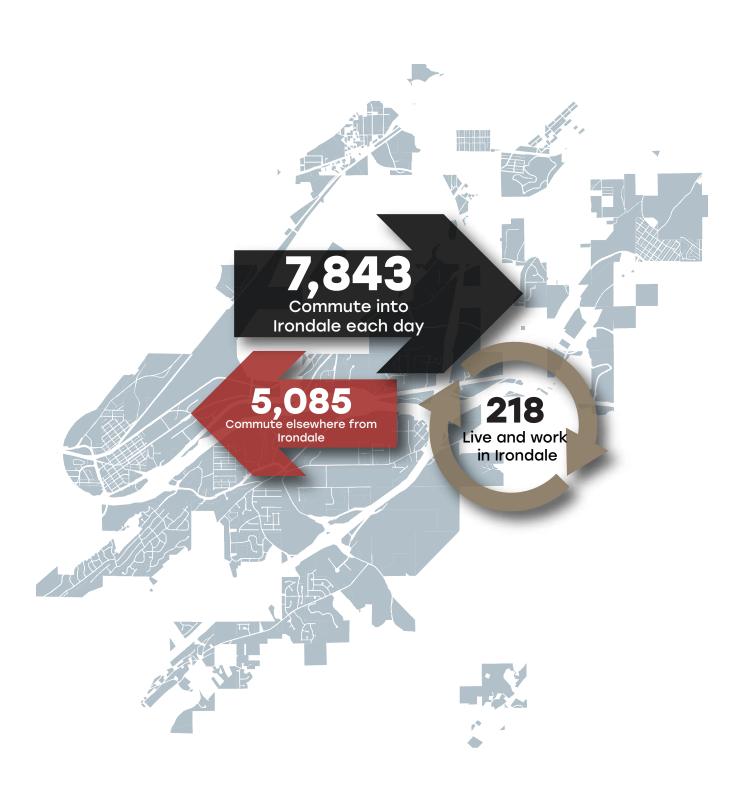
Industry	Count	Share
Accommodation and Food Services	323	4.0%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	526	6.5%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	6	0.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	72	0.9%
Construction	986	12.2%
Educational Services	456	5.7%
Finance and Insurance	427	5.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	307	3.8%
Information	563	7.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	786	9.8%
Manufacturing	419	5.2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	151	1.9%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	302	3.7%
Public Administration	201	2.5%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	180	2.2%
Retail Trade	616	7.6%
Transportation and Warehousing	630	7.8%
Utilities	0	0.0%
Wholesale Trade	1,110	13.8%
Total	8,061	100%

Source: 2019 U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/



Existing Conditions Blueprint: **IRONDALE**

Figure 12: Commuting Patterns of Workers in Irondale (2019)



Source: 2019 U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/

Transportation and Mobility

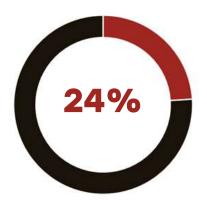
Irondale's street network is typical of older suburban communities.

Like many cities with historic downtowns, older parts of Irondale have a robust network of sidewalks near single-family homes. As Irondale has grown however, it has followed the pattern of more typical growing suburbs and sidewalk coverage is extremely limited for newer residential areas. Overall only 24% of residents have easy access to sidewalk facilities.



Figure 13: Percent of Residential Parcels within .1 miles of a sidewalk





Irondale is a regional cycling destination.

Thanks to its easy access from Birmingham and the rural, lower traffic roads that can be enjoyed, Irondale is one of the most popular destinations for recreational cyclists in the Birmingham Metro region. Using data from STRAVA, a ride-tracking app that is popular with recreational cyclists, the map in **Figure 15** exhibits the most popular bicyling routes amongst riders by individual trip count. In 2020 there was a big uptick in the number of bicyclist who enjoyed riding on roads in Irondale, with a total of 63% increase in unique trips on Irondale's roads from March through May of 2020.

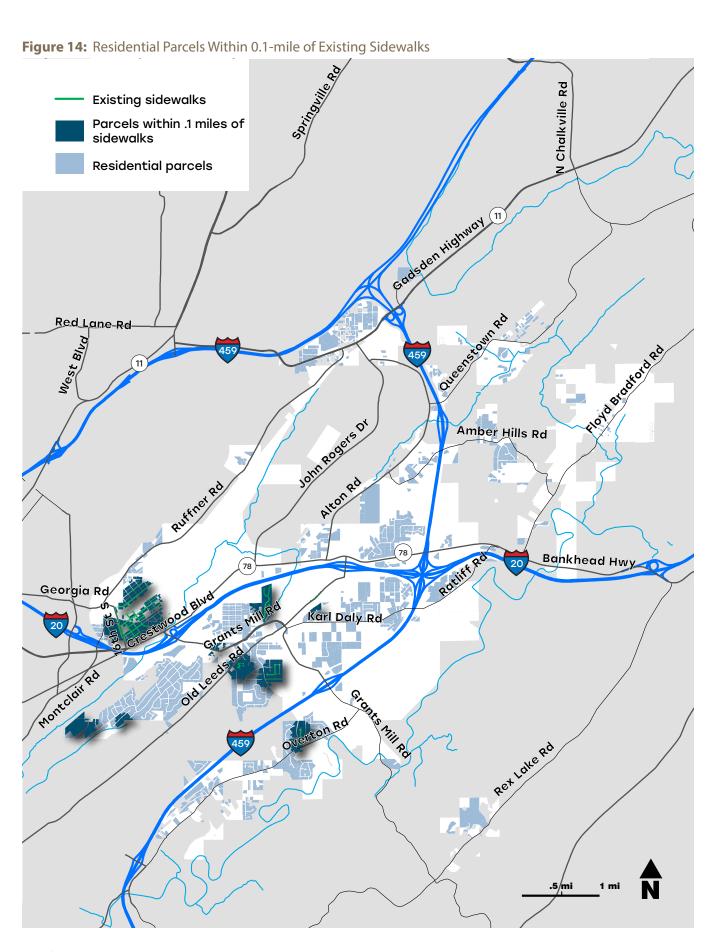
Despite this popularity, Irondale features very little bicycling infrastructure with the only dedicated bike facility being a 1.4 mile bike lane on Grants Mill Road. The table below lists the five most popular roads for bicycling in Irondale from March 1 to May 31, 2020.

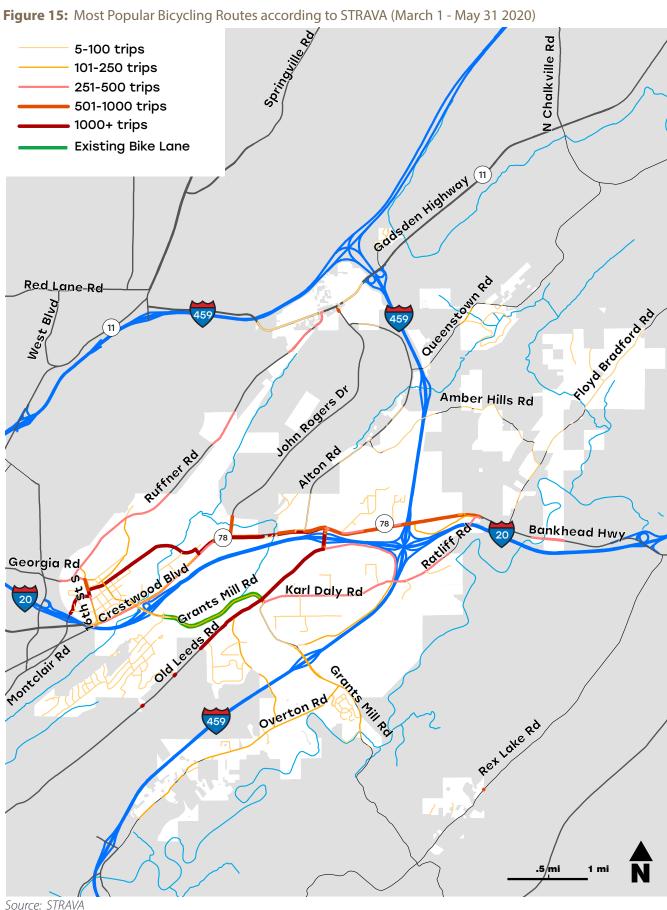
Table 3: Most Popular Biycling Routes by Unique Trips in Irondale

Roadway Segment	Trips
Old Leeds Road*	1,955
Highway 78/Crestwood Boulevard*	1,180
1st Avenue S/ Commerce Boulevard*	1,175
Karl Daly Road	535
Ratliff Road	415

^{*}Also in the top 5 roads in Jefferson County for March 1 - May 31, 2021 Source: STRAVA

13 Existing Conditions Blueprint: IRONDALE





Existing Conditions 15

Parks & Community Facilities

Irondale has both locally oriented and regionally significant parks and open space.

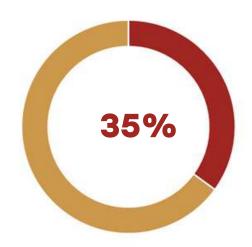
Irondale features five city parks for local residents with a variety of amenities (Ruffner Park, Beacon Park, Ellard Park, the Grants Mill Station Dog Park and Triangle Park). In addition, the 1,038-acre Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve is located adjacent to Ruffner Park and is a major amenity to Irondale residents. The Cahaba River is accessible for Irondale residents via the city-maintained canoe launch at the Cahaba River Landing off of Grants Mill Road. Irondale also boasts a public library and senior center for residents.



Some residents may have difficulty accessing existing park spaces by foot.

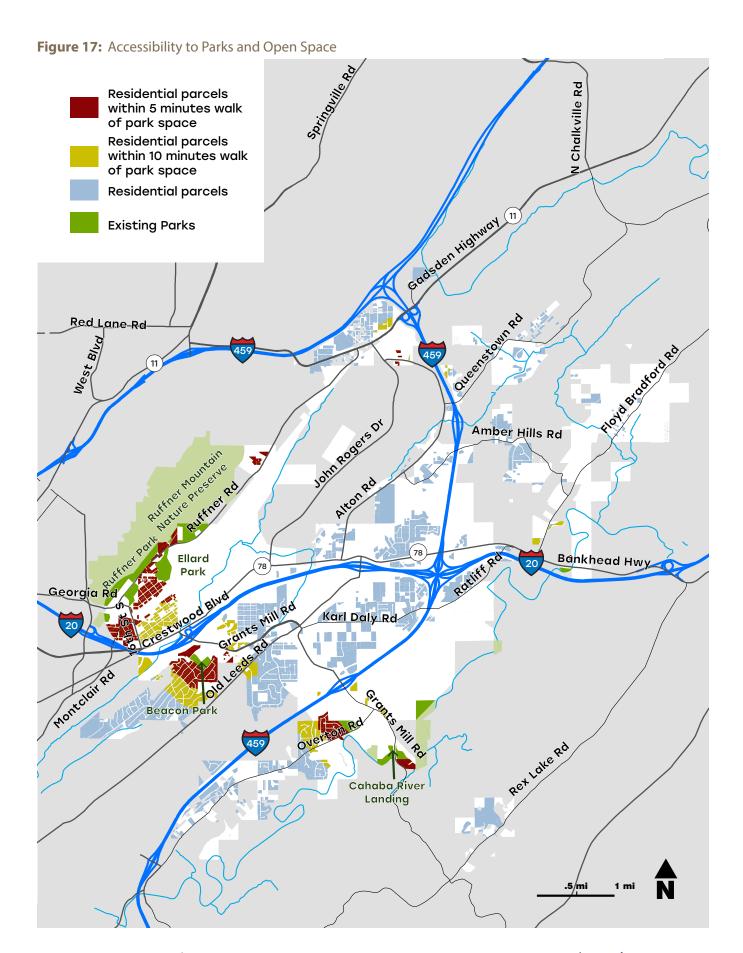
Nationwide research demonstrates tha the existence of even small park spaces within a short 10-minute walk (which equates to a half-mile) has a large impact on residents' perceived quality of life. Lack of pedestrian-accessible park facilities can limit recreational opportunities for kids and forces parents to drive more trips. Park access has also been shown to reduce obesity rates by making outdoor exercise more accessible. Only 35% of residential parcels in Irondale today are within a half-mile radius of a park.

Figure 16: Residential Parcels within a Half -mile Radius (10-minute walk) of a Park (2020)





Source: Cahaba River Society



Existing Land Use

Irondale has a diversity of land uses.

Irondale's major corridor along Crestwood Blvd/ U.S. 78 lends to typical suburban development with strip shopping centers and other independent commercial retailers. Just north of Crestwood Boulevard is Downtown Irondale which features a walkable grid of single-family homes, civic buildings, and some retail developments featuring local restaurants and stores. Some light industrial uses exist immediately east of Downtown Irondale. In it's southern and most eastern city limits, the land uses in Irondale rapidly become more rural with land that is largely undeveloped or used for low-density single-family homes.

Existing Land Use Categories

Agriculture and Estate

Estate lots and Agricultural land used for farming or timber production accounts for a significant portion of Irondale's land at 1,813 acres. It is located throughout Irondale but is most concentrated along Karl Daly Road and Amber Hills Road.



Commercial development accounts for 233 acres of Irondale's land. Commercial uses are concentrated along Crestwood Boulevard and at the Grant's Mill/I-459 interchange in the luxury automotive area.

Industrial

The industrial land use classification accounts for 965 acres of the City's total land and is defined as small scale industrial and manufacturing establishments and workers who create new products by hand. The industrial land use pattern in Irondale is located along the Norfolk Southern railway and along Crestwood Blvd/ US 78, Ruffner Road and Alton Road. The largest concentrations of industrial land are located on Alton Road. Railroad right-of- way consisting of the Norfolk Southern Rail yard is also included in this category.

Institutional

Uses such as municipal facilities, churches, schools, and retirement homes account for 557 acres of land in Irondale. This includes four Jefferson County public schools, the Eternal World Network Television Company (EWTN), and Kirkwood by the River Retirement Community among others.









Figure 18: Existing Land Use Chalkville Rd **General Commercial** Industrial and Railroad Institutional Parks, Recreation and Open Space Low-Density Residential Endsden Highway 11 Medium-Density Residential **High-Density Residential Mobile Homes** Vacant or Undeveloped Agriculture & Estate oue ericionicad Red Lane Rd tho y day a day and a day Amber Hills Rd Ba<mark>nk</mark>head Hwy Georgia Rd rants Mill Rd Karl Daly Rd 20 Overton Re Rex Loke Rd

Source: Jefferson County GIS and RPCGB

Low-Density Residential

Approximately 1,164 acres of the total land area in the City is characterized as low-density single family residential developments. These low-density residential uses are generally concentrated off of Old Leeds Road, Grants Mill Road, Overton Road, and Ratliff Road. The average density is approximately .5 dwelling units/acre.

Medium-Density Residential

Approximately 426 acres of the total land area in the city is characterized as medium-density single-family residential development, with an average density of approximately 4.83 dwelling units/acre.

High-Density Residential

Land used for high-density residential development comprises 166 acres of the City's land area. Apartment and condominium buildings and complexes include the Enclave at Mountain Brook off Sharpsburg Drive, Heritage Place Apartment Homes off Crestwood Boulevard / US 78 and Heritage Place Drive, and Colonial Village Apartments off Edwards Lake Road, among others.

Mobile Homes

Mobile homes are another form of single-family housing found in Irondale, totaling approximately 166 acres of land. Most mobile home housing is located in the Eastwood Mobile Home Village (71 acres), off James Albert Drive and in the Irondale Mobile Home Park off Trailer Lane.

Vacant or Undeveloped

Currently, vacant and otherwise undeveloped land accounts for the largest portion of the City's total land area, at 4,381 acres. The largest concentrations of vacant land are on the east side of the City, especially along Floyd Bradford Road. There are also large undeveloped tracts along the interstate corridors, especially to the north of the I-459/ I-20 interchange.









Table 4: Existing Land Use (2020)

Existing Land Use Category	Parcels	Acres	% of Parcels	% of Acres
Vacant or Undeveloped	1,277	3,228	20.10%	35.20%
Agriculture and Estate	655	1,813	10.30%	19.80%
Low-Density Residential	2,061	1,164	32.40%	12.70%
Industrial	190	965	3.00%	10.50%
Institutional	75	557	1.20%	6.10%
Medium Density Residential	1,540	426	24.20%	4.70%
Parks and Protected Open Space	24	351	0.40%	3.80%
General Commercial	181	233	2.80%	2.50%
High-Density Residential	224	166	3.50%	1.80%
Mobile Homes	98	166	1.50%	1.80%
Right-of-way or Utility	34	90	0.50%	1.00%
Total	6,359	9,159	100.00%	100.00%

Irondale has room to grow, but not all available land is buildable.

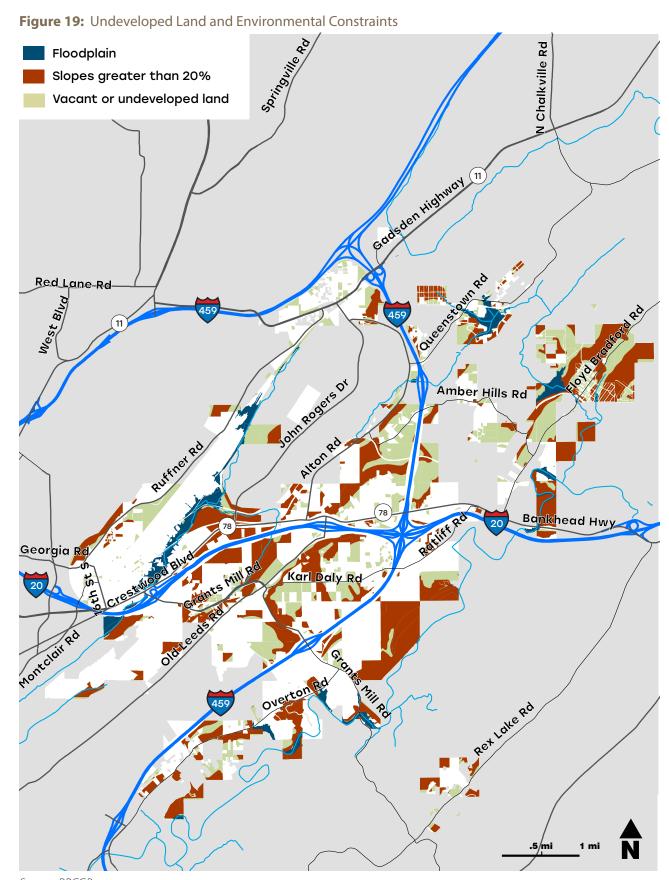
Nearly half (47.8%) of Irondale's land today is undeveloped - meaning that no structure has been built upon it and it may consist of forest or pastureland that could be purchased by a developer and subdivided for development, be it residential, commercial, industrial, etc. However, much of Irondale's undeveloped land is environmentally constrained for new development. In fact, over half (56%) of the undeveloped land lies within a 100-year floodplain or wetland, or is constrained by slopes with steep slopes above 20%. See **Figure 19.**

Irondale's rugged topography does not mean it is without value. Floodplain areas surrounding wetlands are being utilized in cities throughout the country as recreational parks and open space. Landscapes with steep slopes are also ideal for outdoor pursuits such as hiking and mountain biking that can then become economic boons to the community by bringing in tourists and other regional residents seeking recreational opportunities.

21

4,443
Undeveloped acres irondale
56%
are constrained by steep slopes or floodplains
1,445
undeveloped acres are buildable





Source: RPCGB

Zoning

23

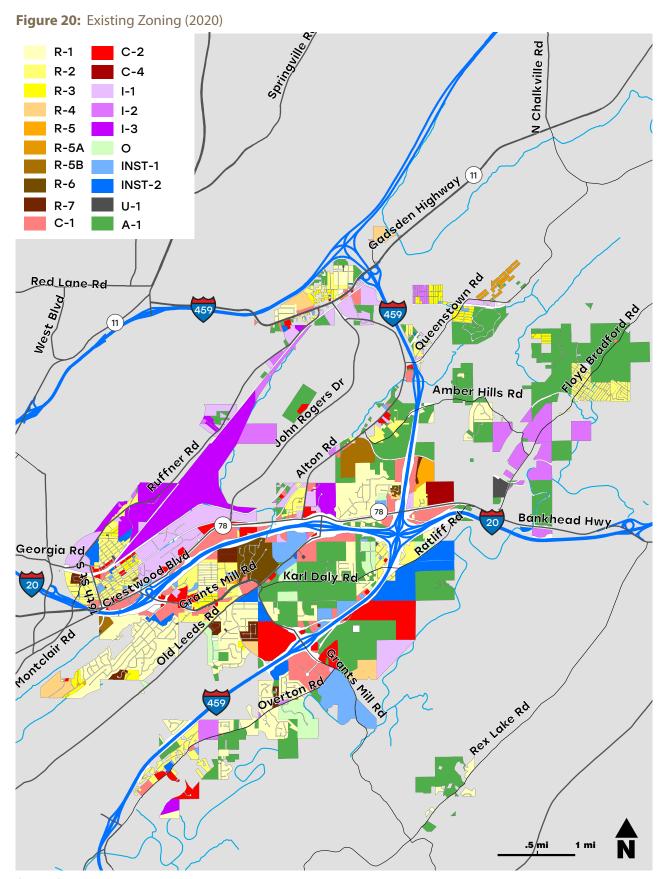
Irondale's zoning illustrates its transition from urban to rural along with it's industrial heritage.

The current zoning in Irondale is dominated by the agricultural and residential categories. Medium and high density residential zoned land predominately exist around Downtown Irondale and along the Grants Mill Road and Old Leeds Road corridors. Commercial and industrial zoned properties are largely concentrated around the interstate corridors and interchanges, with agriculturally zoned areas increasing towards the eastern and southern city limits near the Cahaba River and outlying areas. Approximately 2,460 acres of the land in Irondale is zoned A-1 Agricultural - this is a reduction of 66 acres since 2016, and the majority of those 66 acres having been rezoned to residential categories. The largest residential zoning district is the R-1 Single Family Residential Zone, which requires a minimum lot area of 10,000 square feet and covers approximately 1,316 acres of land. The existing zoning map of Irondale is shown in Figure 20. Table 4 details the breakdown of acreage by zoning district within the city limits.

Table 5: Existing Zoning (2020)

Zoning Category	Acres	% of Acres
Agricultural [A-1]	2460	26.9%
Single Family Estate [E-1], [E-MF]	238	2.6%
Single Family Residential [R-1]	1316	14.4%
Single Family Residential [R-2]	702	7.7%
Two-Family (Duplex) Residential [R-3]	146	1.6%
Multiple Family Residential [R-4]	176	1.9%
Residential Condominium [R-5]	49	0.5%
Townhouse Residential [R-5A]	32	0.4%
Townhouse Residential [R-5B]	106	1.2%
Residential Cluster (Planned Unit Development) [R-6]	139	1.5%
Garden Home [R-7]	103	1.1%
Business [C-1]	562	6.1%
Commercial [C-2]	478	5.2%
Cemetery [C-4]	63	0.7%
Industrial [I-1]	688	7.5%
Primary Industrial [I-2]	480	5.2%
Planned Industrial District [I-3]	708	7.7%
Office [O]	5	0.1%
Institutional [INST-1]	346	3.8%
Institutional [INST-2]	228	2.5%
Utility [U-1],[I-5A]	33	0.4%
Mixed-Use [PCD]	1	0.0%
Mixed-Use [C-PB]	2	0.0%
Mixed-Use Downtown [MXUR]	7	0.1%
Right-of-way / Not Classified	90	1.0%
Total	9,159	100%

Existing Conditions Blueprint: **IRONDALE**



Source: Sain Associates

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