



Blueprint: **IRONDALE**

Comprehensive Plan

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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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Chapter One

Plan Overview





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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 contains policies, goals, and recommendations to guide future decisions regarding land use, development and capital improvements. The City of Irondale will use this plan to prepare itself for future growth and change for the next 5 to 15 years.

Geographic Location

Nestled between Ruffner Mountain to the North and the banks of the Cahaba River to the South, Irondale is located approximately six miles to the east of downtown Birmingham.

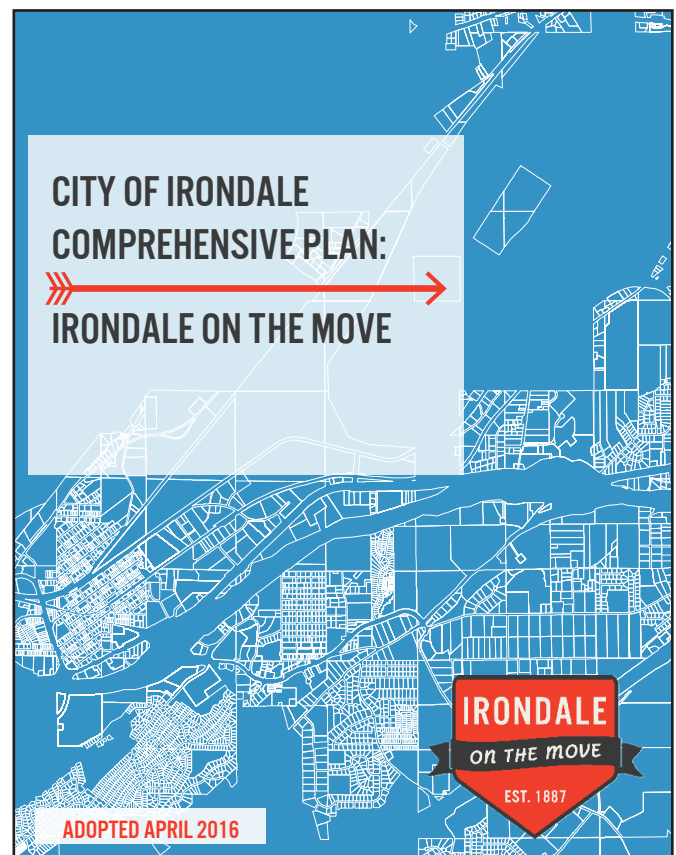
Irondale is bordered by unincorporated Jefferson County and a number of municipalities including Birmingham (west and northwest), Trussville (northeast), Leeds (east), Vestavia Hills (south) and Mountain Brook (southeast). With over 18 miles of interstate, Irondale is located along the major transportation corridors of I-20, I-59, I-459, US 78 and US 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 land-uses, and lower housing density, particularly towards the eastern limits of the city that has rapidly become more rural in character.

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.



Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to express the City's overall community vision for growth and development over the next 15 years and identifies actions that can achieve that vision. It is not a law or a zoning ordinance (thus not regulatory in nature), but rather is a policy document that is intended to serve as a guide for use by elected officials, the planning commission, developers, business owners and citizens to make decisions about future growth, development, policy, and capital improvements. The Comprehensive Plan is developed using public input, data analysis, and meetings with citizens, elected officials and other stakeholders. It is a long-term vision (typically covering 5 to 15 years) of how the citizens have expressed how they want their city to improve and grow in the future.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be used as a guide to decide where future housing and business growth should occur, to determine what types of transportation system investments are needed, to determine what changes are needed to recruit more businesses and jobs, to determine what housing needs exist, to protect environmentally sensitive areas and to determine what is needed for the safety and welfare of the citizens. The Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan is also a guide for zoning decisions, which in turn guides development permits in the City.

Legal Foundation for Planning in Alabama

Planning in the State of Alabama is not compulsory, and there is no specific requirement on the frequency of Comprehensive Plan updates. However, it is strongly recommended that the City of Irondale's Planning Commission and the City Council regularly review and update the Comprehensive Plan. This is especially true if the city is experiencing changes such as an annexation of land or a major land development decision has occurred, or the completion of another study that impacts the Plan. Frequent review and updates also will help safeguard the City from legal challenges and enable them to be

proactive in steering the City towards achieving its vision and goals, instead of being reactive to issues and challenges that arise because of the lack of adequate planning.

The Alabama Legislature provides guidance for municipalities that choose to exercise their ability to plan for their city's growth and development. The Code of Alabama, 1975, Section 11-52-8 and Section 11-52-9 directs planning commissions "to make and adopt a Comprehensive Plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of such municipality." Section 11-52-8 goes further to state "Such plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts and descriptive matter shall show the commission's recommendations for the development of said territory." The procedure for adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is established in Section 11-52-10 of the Code of Alabama.





Image Credit: National Charrette Institute at MSU

What is the difference between the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance?

The Comprehensive Plan will become the adopted policy document that will establish goals and policies for the location, type and intensities/densities of land uses desired by the citizens of the City, based on existing land uses today and desired land uses in the future. The Future Land Use Map component in the City Comprehensive Plan will become a guide for future zoning decisions, which in turn will guide new development permits that are approved in the city.

The Zoning Ordinance is a legally binding document that is adopted by the City Council, whereby land is classified according to specific uses. Where the Comprehensive Plan is a guide for future growth and development, the Zoning Ordinance is the tool utilized by the city to influence and direct development so that it reflects the intensity, density and desired form envisioned within the Comprehensive Plan.

In short, the Comprehensive Plan neither changes the Zoning Ordinance, nor the zoning on any specific property. Instead, it guides the decisions of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council as they apply the Zoning Ordinance and make decisions about changes to zoning on individual properties. Changing the Future Land Use Map category for a parcel of land requires a Future Land Use Plan amendment and changing the zoning for that parcel requires a rezoning application.

Table 1.1: Comprehensive Plan vs. Zoning Ordinance

| Comprehensive Plan (Guide) | Zoning Ordinance (Law) |
|--|--|
| Provides general policies, a policy guide. It is not legally binding. | Provides specific regulations, the law. It's legally binding. |
| Describes what should happen in the long-term – recommended land use for the next 5-15 years, not necessarily the recommended use for today. | Describes what is and what is not allowed today, based on the zoning district regulations. |
| Flexible to respond to changing conditions. | Predictable, fairly rigid, requires formal text amendments and rezoning applications. |
| Future Land Use Map categories (e.g., Low Residential, General Commercial) | Zoning Districts (e.g., R-1 Single Family District, C-1 Business District) |

Plan Organization

The Irondale Comprehensive Plan contains nine chapters and two appendices. Chapters 3-8 are organized by the following planning elements: Focus Areas, Future Land Use, Livability and Code Reform, Transportation and Mobility, Recreation and Green Systems and Economic Development. Each chapter is organized into goals and recommended actions for implementation.

Table 1.2: Plan Organization

| Plan Chapter | | Description |
|--------------|---|--|
| 1 | Plan Overview | This chapter includes the purpose of the plan, the legal foundation for planning in Alabama, a summary of how the plan is organized, and a high-level summary of the public involvement process. |
| 2 | Irondale Today | This chapter briefly highlights existing conditions and trends in Irondale. Topics presented include socioeconomic data, housing data, an inventory of existing infrastructure and community facilities, as well as existing land use and zoning data. |
| 3 | Focus Areas | New development and redevelopment concept ideas for Downtown Irondale, Grants Mill Station and the Grants Mill Road Corridor. |
| 4 | Future Land Use | This chapter presents the Future Land Use Map, which will guide the City's future zoning and land use decisions. Descriptions of the future land use categories and the future land use goals are also provided. |
| 5 | Livability and Code Reform | This chapter provides goals and actions pertaining to adopting codes and programs to improve the conditions of rental housing, encouraging better property maintenance, enhancing the physical character of the City, enhancing public services, facilities and programs throughout the City, and recommended revisions to the Zoning Ordinance. |
| 6 | Transportation and Mobility | This chapter provides goals and actions pertaining to expanding mobility options throughout the city and preserving the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation system. |
| 7 | Recreation and Green Systems | This chapter provides goals and actions pertaining to expanding and enhancing recreational opportunities for residents and restoring and sustaining water quality, natural habitats, and groundwater by incorporating best practices for environmental site design and stormwater management in development. |
| 8 | Economic Development | This chapter provides goals and actions pertaining to fostering economic development in Irondale, recruiting new businesses that will diversify and complement existing businesses, and refreshing branding and marketing efforts. |
| 9 | Implementation | This chapter includes the detailed implementation matrix for the Plan's recommended goals and actions and describes lead partners that should help with implementing each of the actions. |
| A | Appendix A: Public Involvement Summary | The appendix includes a detailed documentation of the public involvement process. Each of the outreach strategies are detailed along with participation rates, survey results and information gathered through the outreach activities. |
| B | Appendix B: Existing Conditions Document | This document is an in-depth assessment of where Irondale is today and covers a range of topics: a sociodemographic summary, existing land use, zoning and development trends, natural resources, the transportation system, and community facilities and services. |

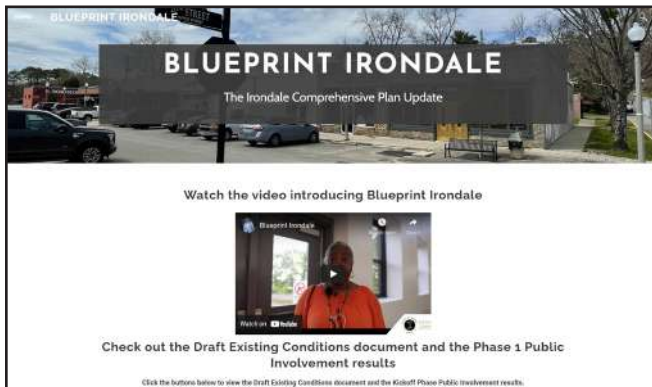
Summary of the Public Involvement Process

Effective outreach provides ample opportunity for citizens to be involved in the plan development process. It educates citizens about the purpose of the planning effort, and the important role they play in developing the plan. As a part of the development of the City of Irondale Comprehensive Plan, community stakeholders were engaged in several different ways throughout the planning process. They were encouraged to actively voice their opinions about Irondale's future.

Stakeholders were engaged and gave input through the following outreach activities:

Project Website

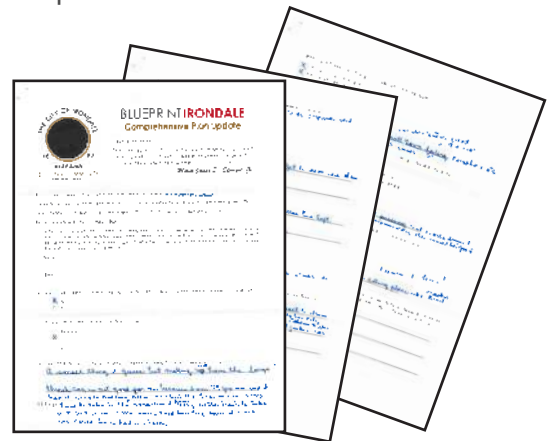
A formal website for the project was maintained by the RPCGB and updated throughout the life of the project. This website, www.BlueprintIrondale.com, served as an information gateway for the plan, and provided easy access for the public to take the survey as well as view plan documents, public input results, other related information.



Map Your Ideas - Online Mapping Tool

An online mapping tool, called a Wikimap, was available on the project website and allowed participants to "map" their issues, needs, and ideas on an interactive street map of the City. Participants were able to note locations of community assets, areas that need improvement, opportunity ideas, traffic issue areas, streets needing sidewalks or bike facilities, along with any other issue or idea they wanted to geographically pinpoint. The Wikimap was open for answers from April 5 to May 31, 2021 and received 214 comments.

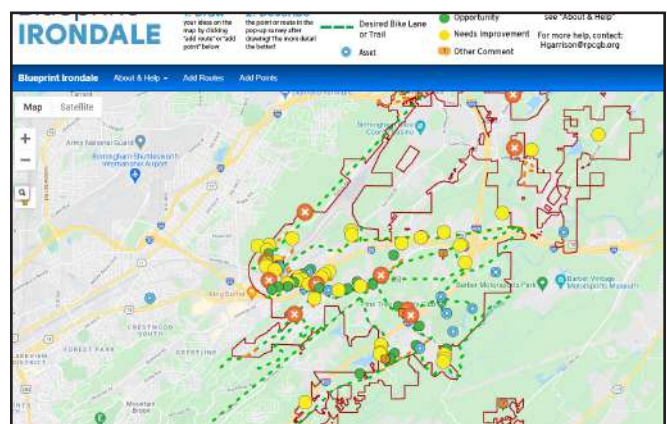
See Appendix A Public Involvement Summary to view the Wikimap results.



Visioning Survey

This 16-question multiple-choice and open-ended survey was open for answers from April 5 to May 31, 2021, and in total 1,148 responses were received. The purpose of the survey was to assess the City's perceived strengths, challenges, opportunities, development patterns, and allowed for a satisfaction rating of city services at it pertains to the maintenance of local roads, code enforcement, police protection, the City's responsiveness to formal complaints, public facilities, fire and rescue services, and parks and recreational facilities. The survey was promoted via E-blasts and hard copies were made available at Irondale City Hall, during City-led events, and at the Kickoff Open House on April 15, 2021.

See Appendix A Public Involvement Summary for the detailed results of the Visioning Survey.





Kickoff Open House

The in-person Kickoff Open House was held on April 15, 2021, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM at Shades Valley High School. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, masking and social distancing were observed in accordance with state guidelines. Open House was promoted via flyers distributed throughout the city, email e-blasts, the project website and via the City of Irondale's website and online calendar. In total there were 28 attendees at the open house.



The purpose of this Kickoff Open House was to gather feedback regarding the state of Irondale today and residents' issues and desires regarding future projects and priorities, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, quality of life, and planning and public services. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback to the planning team through the following interactive activities:

- Mapping Exercise
- Visioning Survey
- Issues & Opportunities Banners Activity



For detailed results of the Kickoff Open House activities, see Appendix A Public Involvement Summary.

Virtual Public Meeting

The purpose of this Kickoff Open House was to gather feedback regarding the state of Irondale today and residents' issues and desires regarding future projects and priorities, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, quality of life, and planning and public services. The meeting included a presentation and opportunity for input. In total there were 50 attendees at this event. This meeting was hosted virtually via Zoom and Facebook Live on April 19, 2021, at 6:00 PM.



Draft Plan Reveal Open House

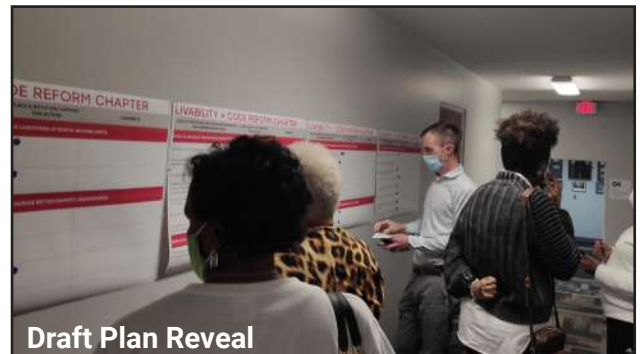
The second Open House for the Irondale Comprehensive Plan was held on October 27, 2021, at Irondale City Hall. In total, 52 people attended in person and 24 watched virtually via the City of Irondale's Facebook Live stream. The purpose of the meetings was to gather feedback regarding draft goals and actions. Staff from the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) were on hand to aid participants and to answer questions. The meeting was broken up into the following stations:

- Overview Presentation
- Prioritizing the Draft Goals and Recommended Actions

For detailed results of the Draft Plan Reveal Open House activities, see Appendix A Public Involvement Summary.



Draft Plan Reveal



Draft Plan Reveal

How to Use this Plan Document?

This Comprehensive Plan is separated into goals and actions.

Goals

The Plan's goals are created from data and comments received during the public involvement process. For each chapter in the Plan there are numerous goals that correspond with the overarching chapter theme.

GOAL #1

Encourage redevelopment in existing commercial areas.

Actions

Supporting the goals are actions – specific measures that need to be undertaken by the city and partners to implement the goals. Some actions might already be ongoing, while others are new recommended ideas for the city to undertake. All actions have an entity(ies) tasked with leading its implementation (see Implementation Chapter 8).



Action 1.1

Encourage mixed-use development.

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Chapter Two

Irondale Today





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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.



Source: Encyclopedia of Alabama

Ruffner Mountain

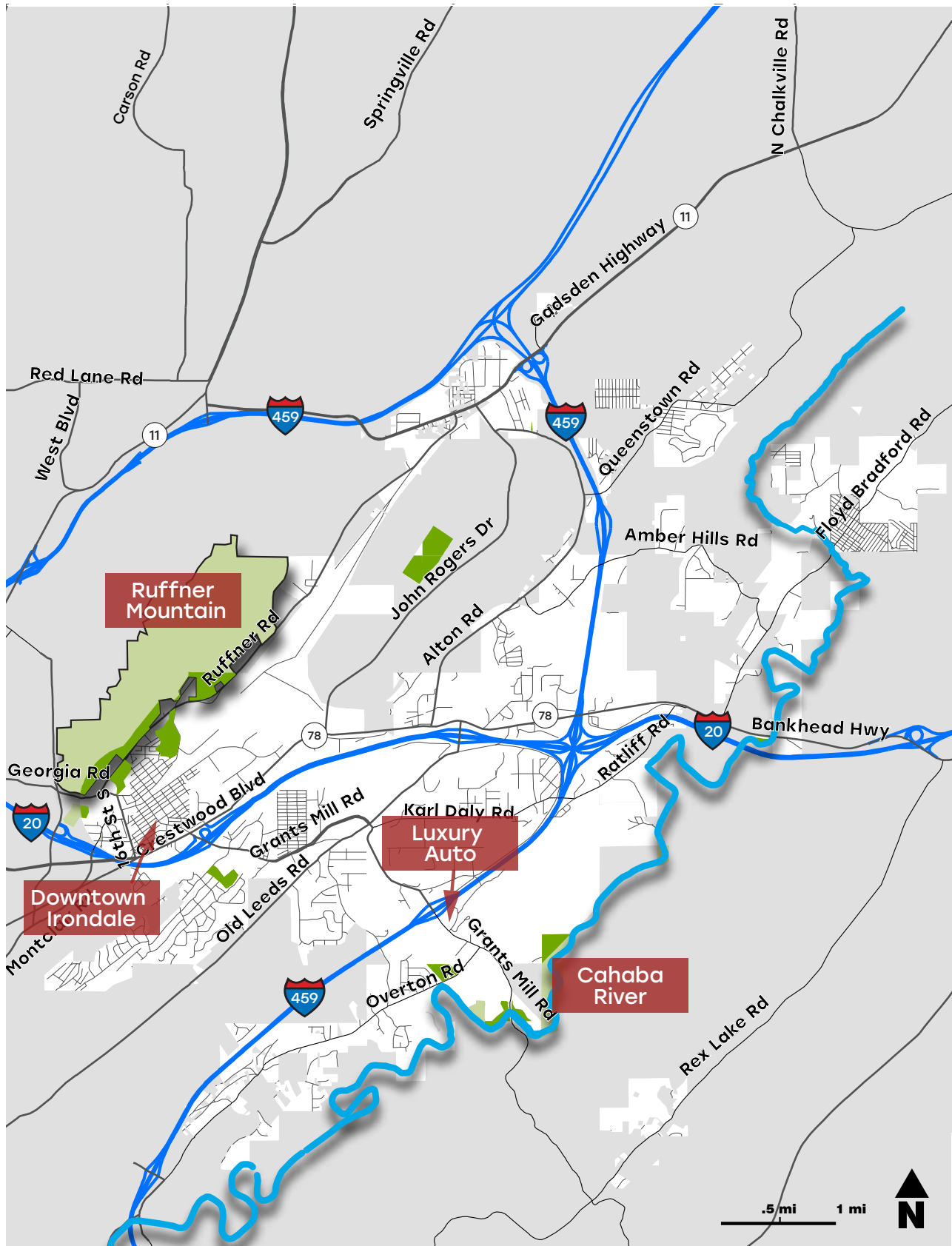
Founded in 1977, Ruffner Mountain Nature Coalition, Inc., is a 501c3 nonprofit in Jefferson County, Alabama, whose mission is to advance the understanding of ecology in a rapidly changing world. Situated near Irondale, Ruffner Mountain occupies a five-mile section of the Red Mountain ridge. For decades 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: RuffnerMountain.org

*Source: Cahaba River Society <https://cahabariversociety.org/about-the-cahaba-river/cahaba-river-biodiversity/>

Figure 2.1: Irondale Regional Assets



Demographic Profile

Irondale is poised for accelerated growth.

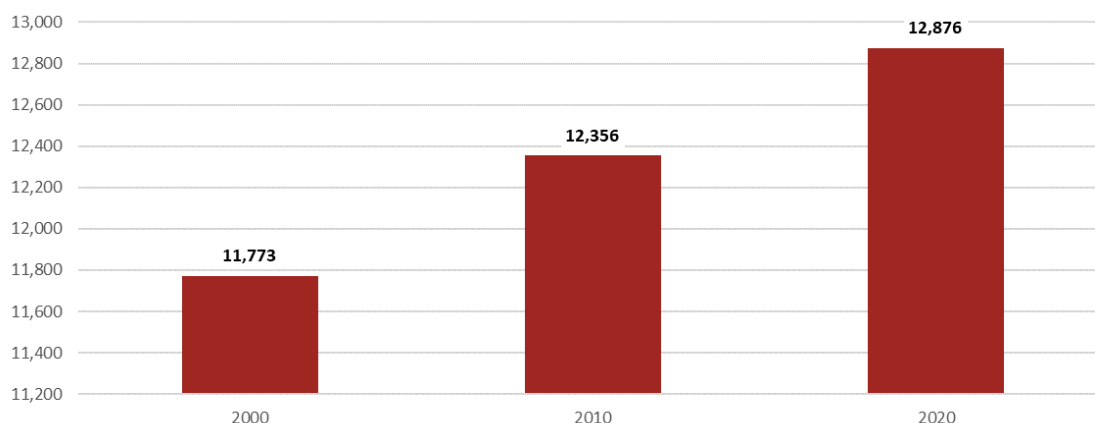
In recent years, Irondale's growth has been slow and steady but is likely to experience rapid growth thanks to upcoming planned residential developments. While Jefferson County lost population between 2000 and 2010 with a moderate recovery from 2010 to 2020, Irondale weathered the housing crisis better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

Table 2.1: Comparative Growth Rates, Irondale and Jefferson County (2000 - 2020)

| Year | Irondale Population | Percent Change | Year | Jeff 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 2.2: Irondale Population Increase (2000- 2020)

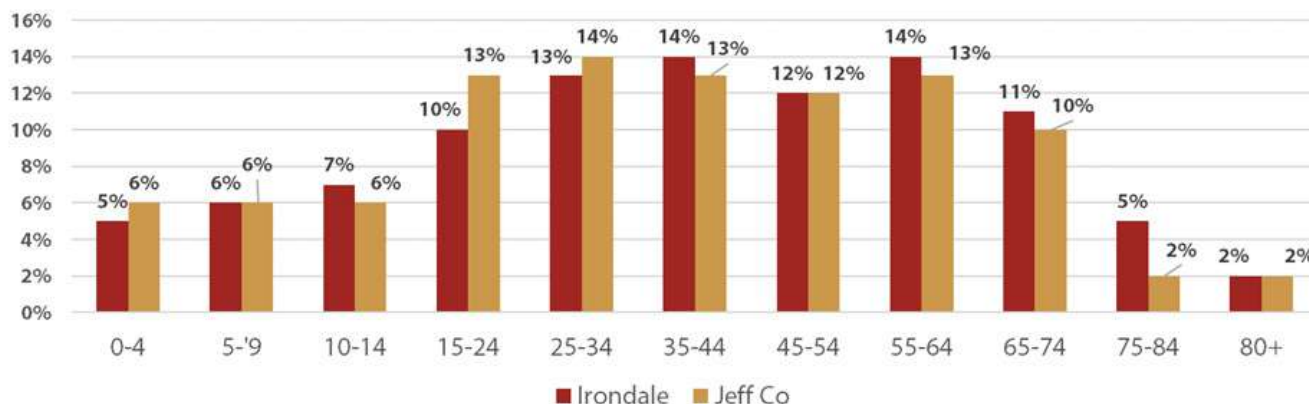


Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

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 2.3: Irondale Age Distribution (2020)



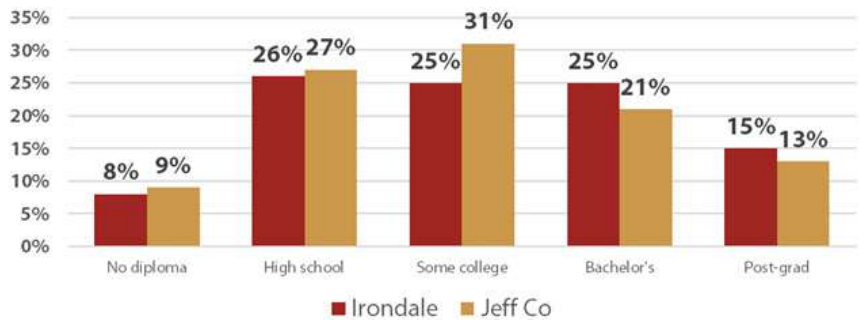
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

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 2.4: Irondale Educational Attainment (2020)



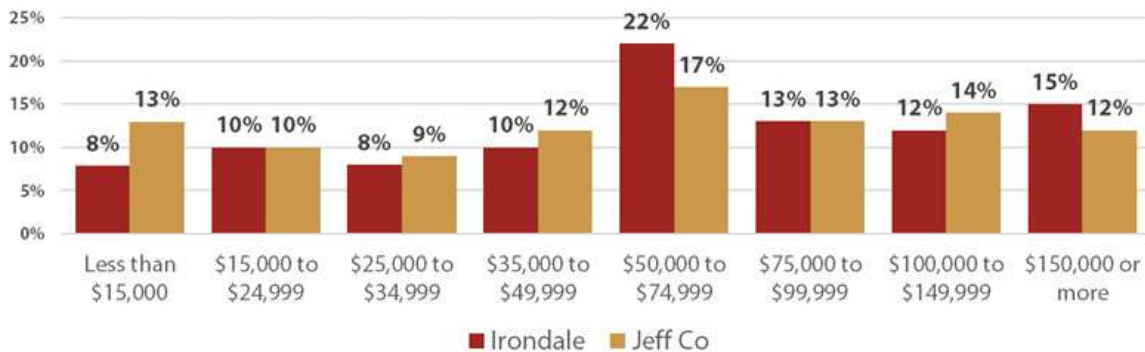
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

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 2.5: 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.

Median Household Income (2020)



\$62,183

Irondale

\$58,858

Jefferson County

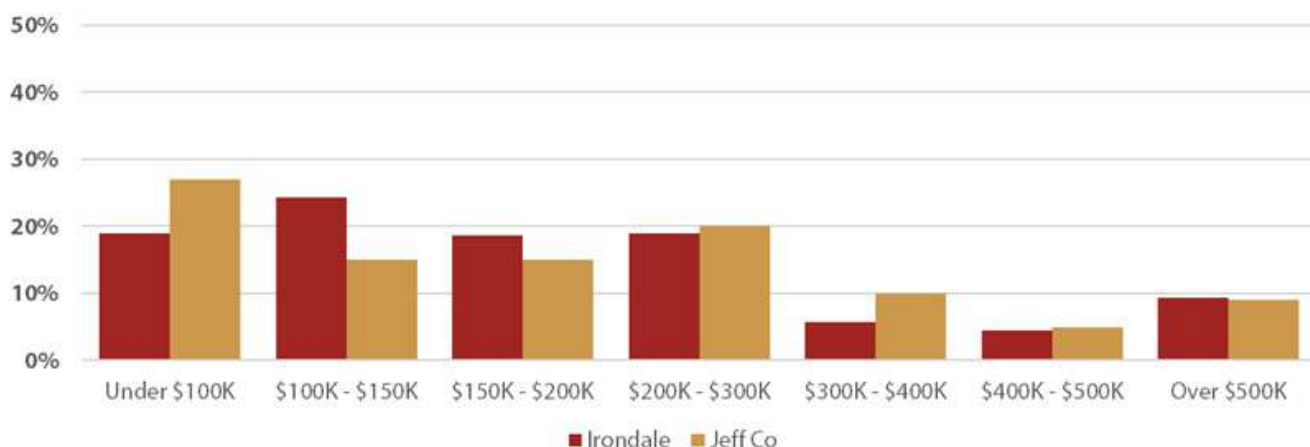
Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

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.

Figure 2.6: Housing Value Distribution (2020)

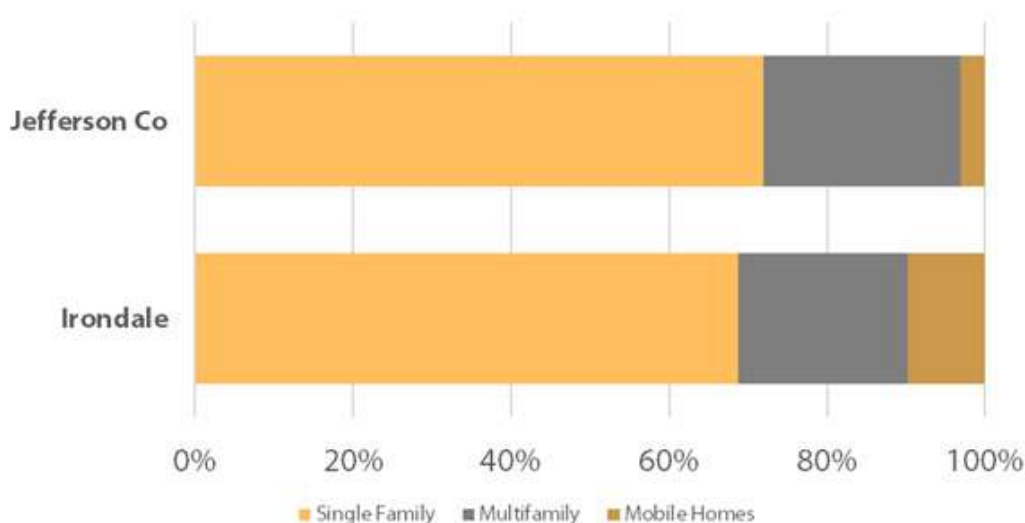


Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

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 comparison 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 2.7: Housing Type Distribution (2020)

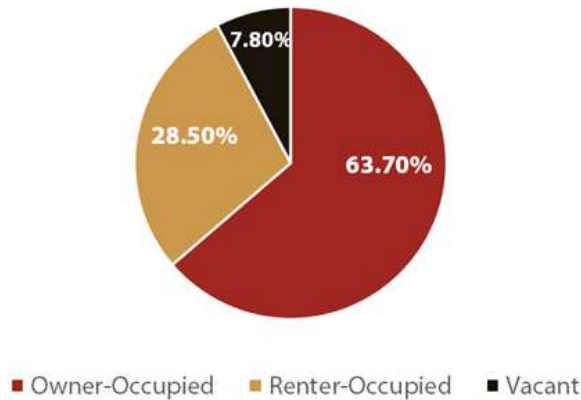


Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

Most Irondale residents are homeowners.

64% of the homes in Irondale are owner-occupied 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 2.8: Homeownership and Vacancy Rates (2020)

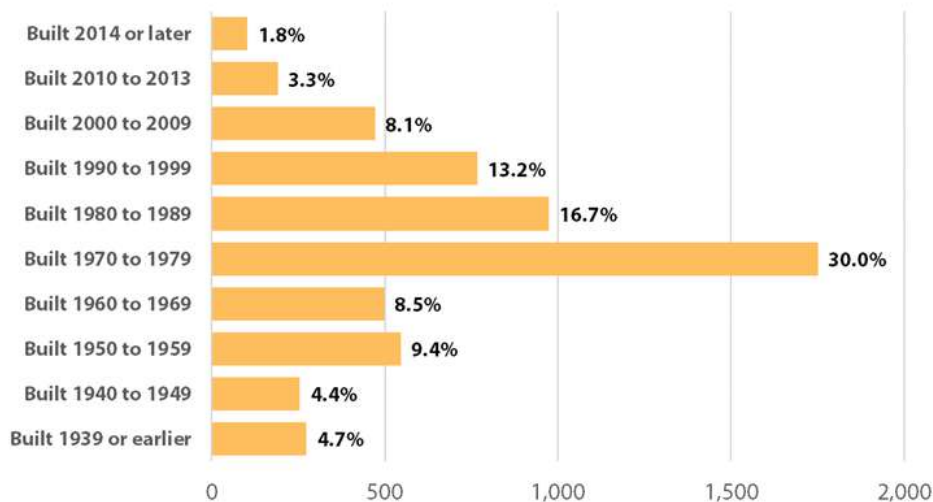


Source: U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI 2020 Forecast

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 2.9: Age of Housing Units (2020)



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



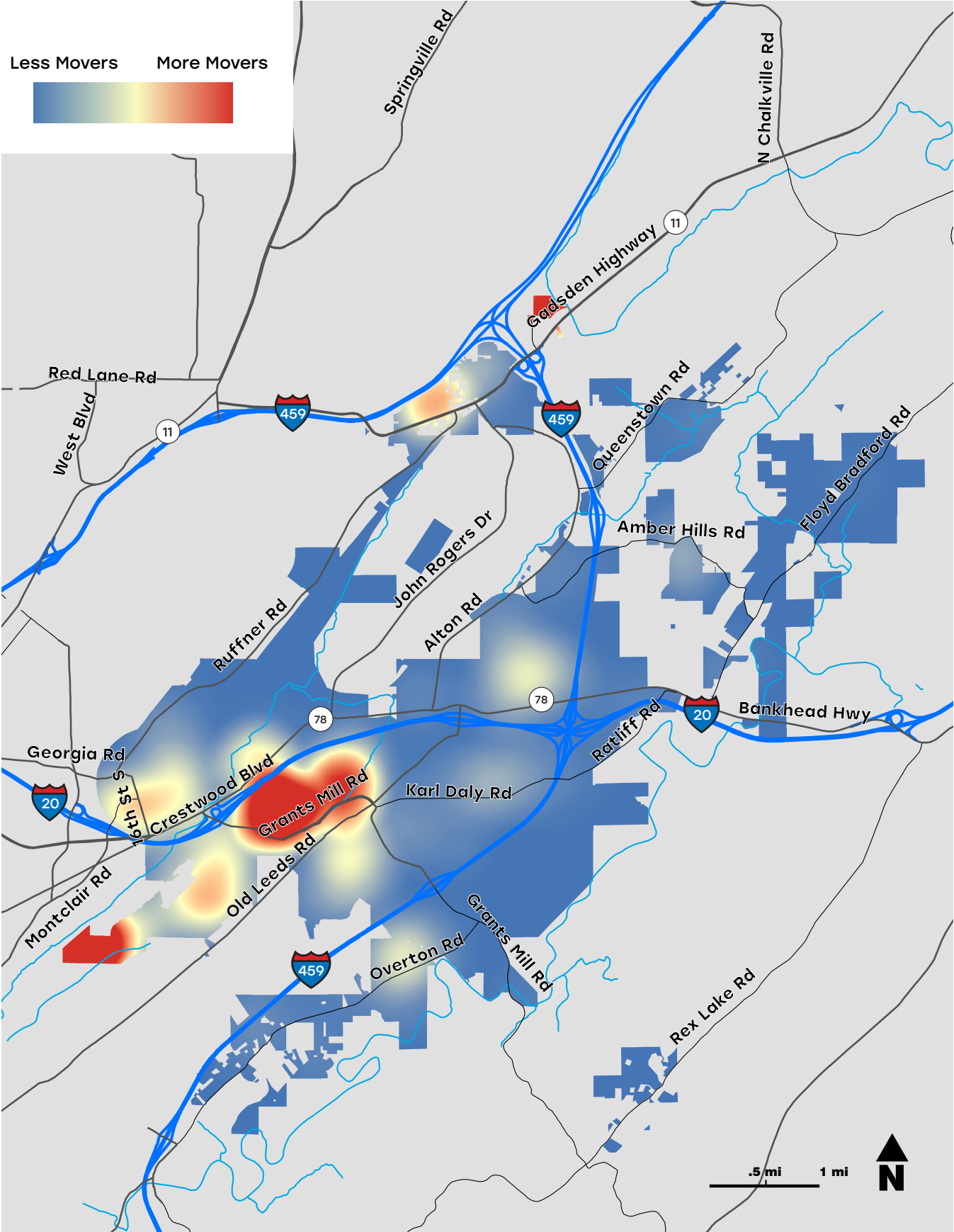
Above: Grants Mill Valley
Image Credit: Fairin Realty

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 2.10: Most Popular Moving Destinations (2020)



Source: Infogroup

Employment Profile

Irondale workers are in a wide variety of fields.

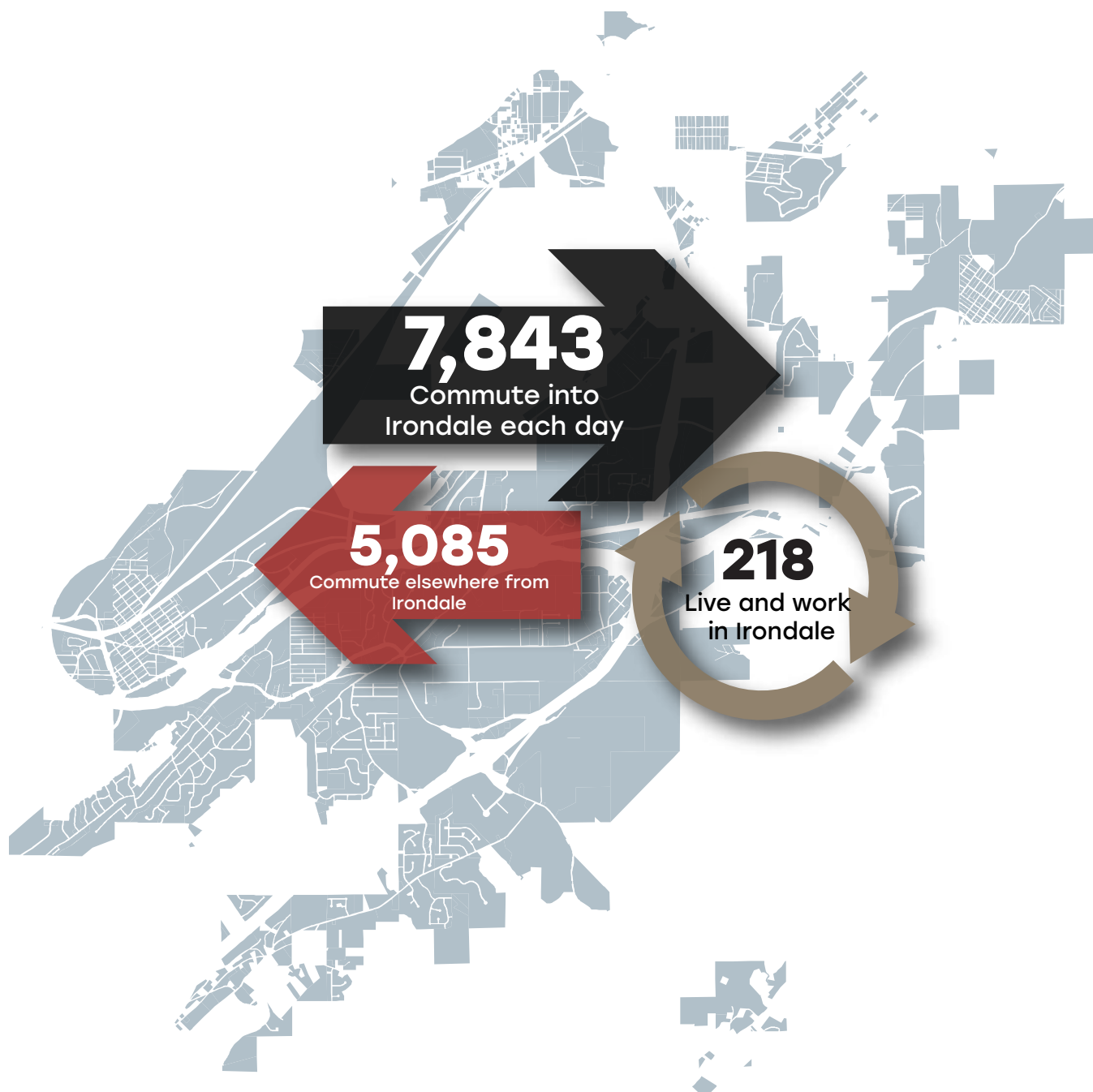
In 2019, an estimated 8,061 employees worked within the Irondale city limits. This number includes workers who also live in Irondale and workers who commute in from elsewhere. The largest employment sector was Wholesale Trade (13.8%) closely followed by Construction (12.2%). The remaining workers are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

Table 2.2: 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/>

Figure 2.11: 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/>

Traditional “grid” of walkable street blocks.



Automobile-oriented suburban development that is more curvilinear.



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 2.12: Percent of Residential Parcels within .1 miles of a sidewalk

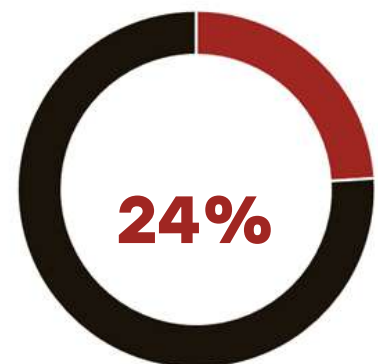
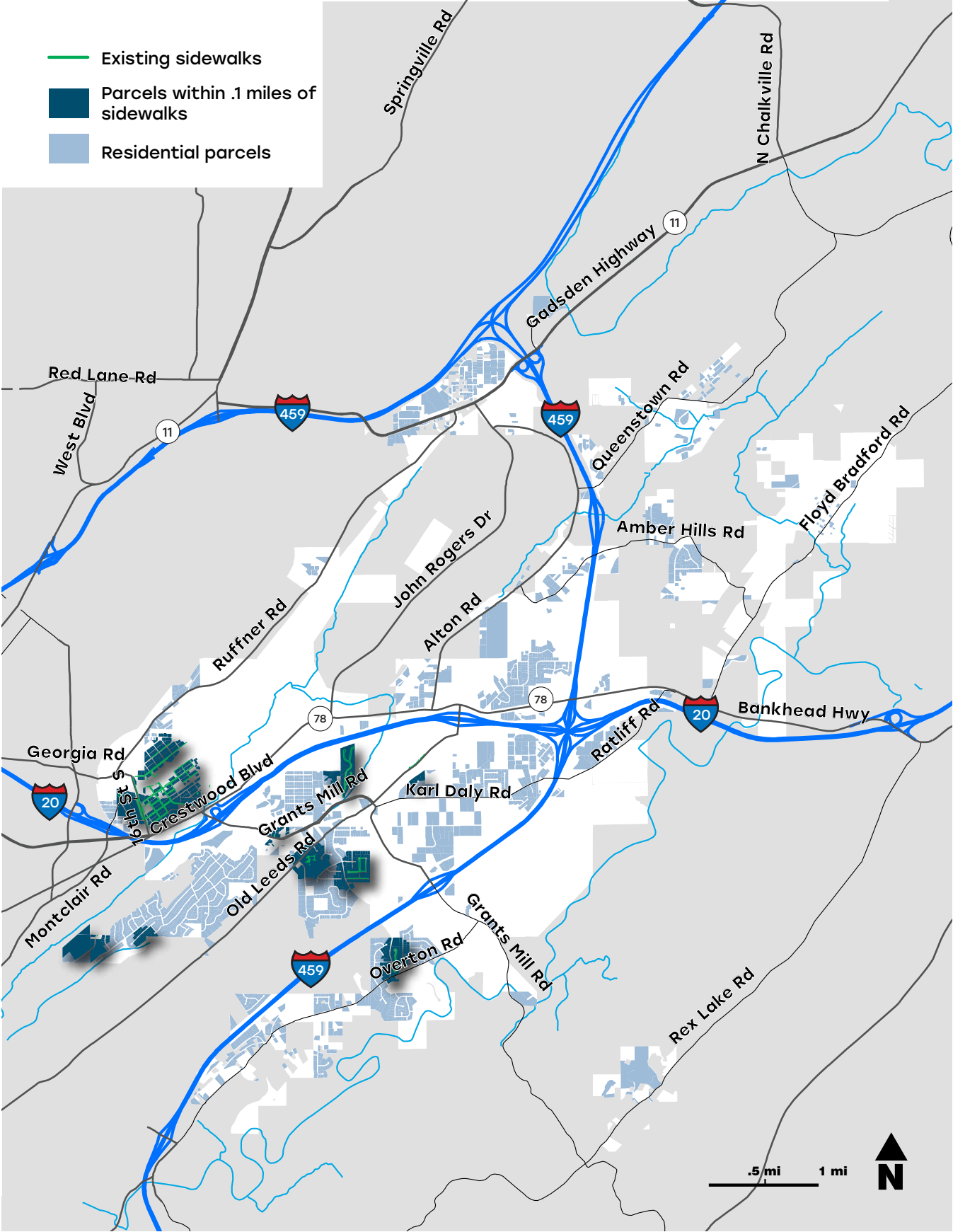


Figure 2.13: Residential Parcels Within 0.1-mile of Existing Sidewalks



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 2.14** exhibits the most popular bicycling 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 2.3: Most Popular Bicycling Routes by Unique Trips in Irondale

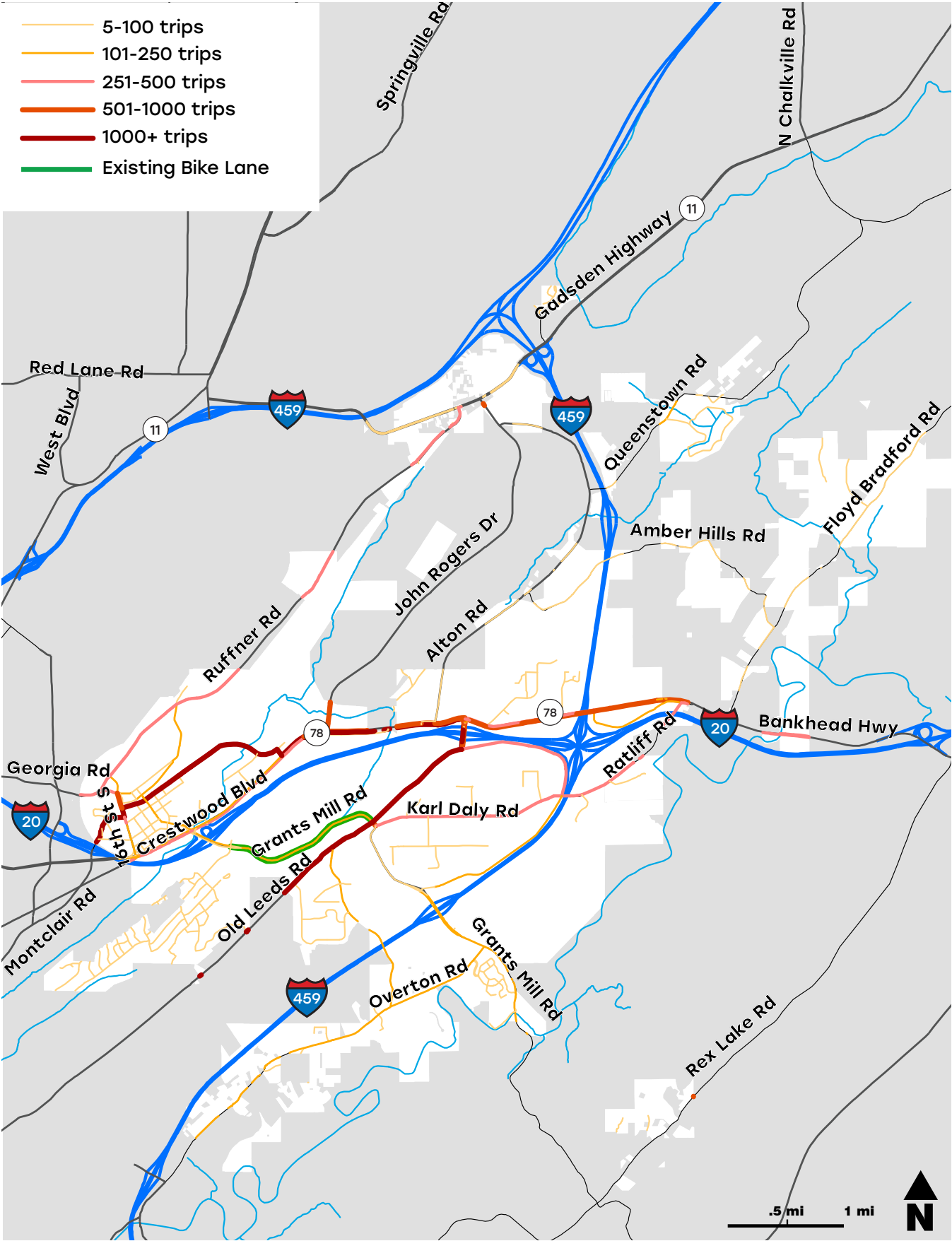
| Roadway Segment | Trips |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Old Leeds Road* | 1,955 |
| Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78* | 1,180 |
| 1st Avenue S/ Commerce Boulevard* | 1,175 |
| Karl Daly Road | 535 |
| Ratliff Road | 415 |

**Also in the top 5 roads in Jefferson County for March 1 - May 31, 2021*

Source: STRAVA

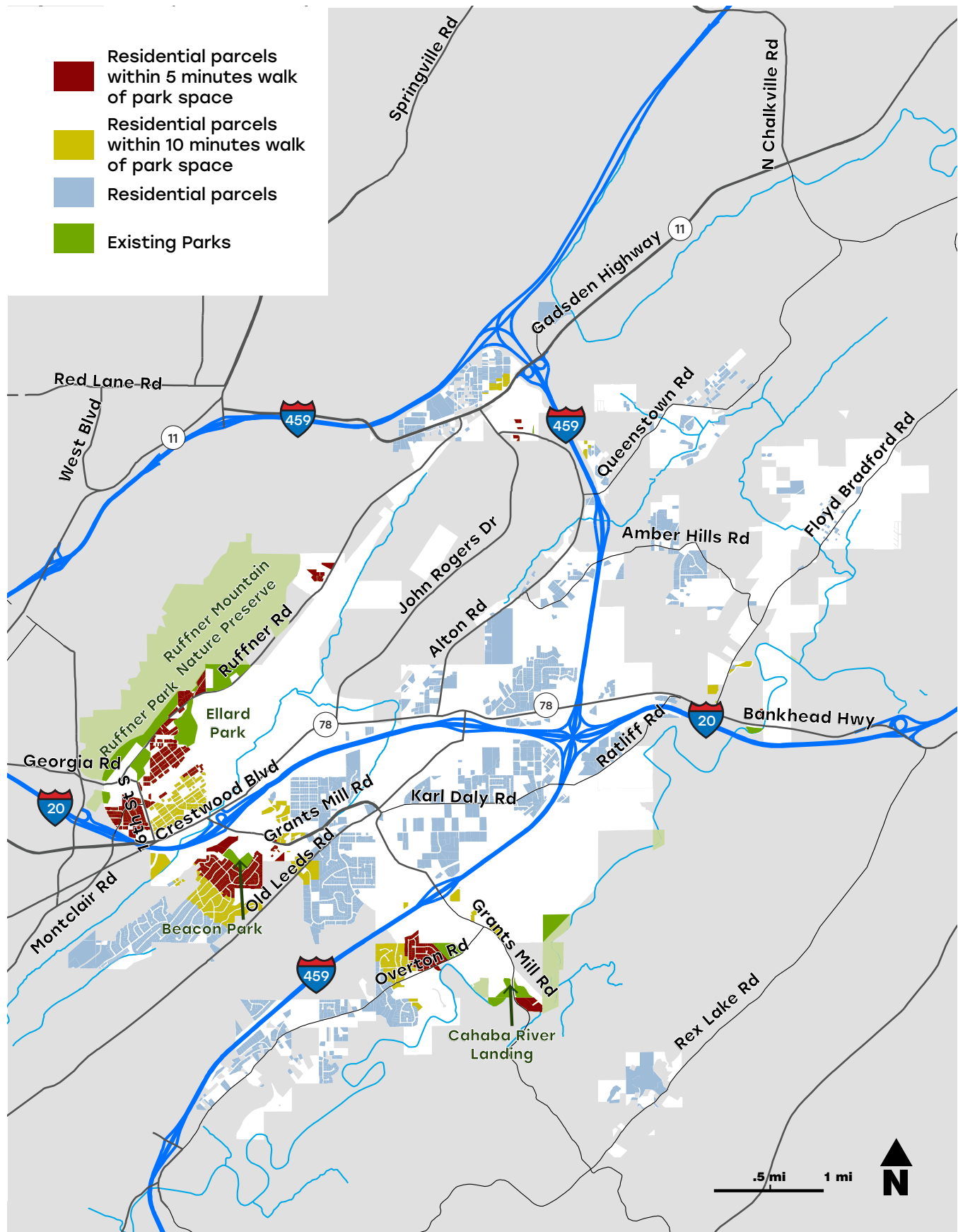


Figure 2.14: Most Popular Bicycling Routes according to STRAVA (March 1 - May 31, 2020)



Source: STRAVA

Figure 2.16: Accessibility to Parks and Open Space



Parks & Community Facilities

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

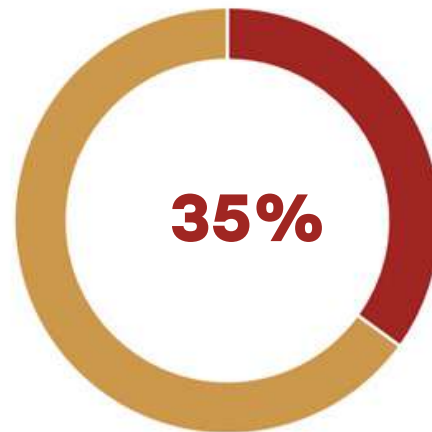
Irondale features five city parks for local residents with a variety of amenities (Ruffner Park, Beacon Park, Ellard Park, and Triangle Park). In addition, the 1,038-acre Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve is located adjacent to Ruffner Park and is a major amenity to Irondale residents. The Cahaba River 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 that 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 2.15: 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/ US 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.



General Commercial

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.

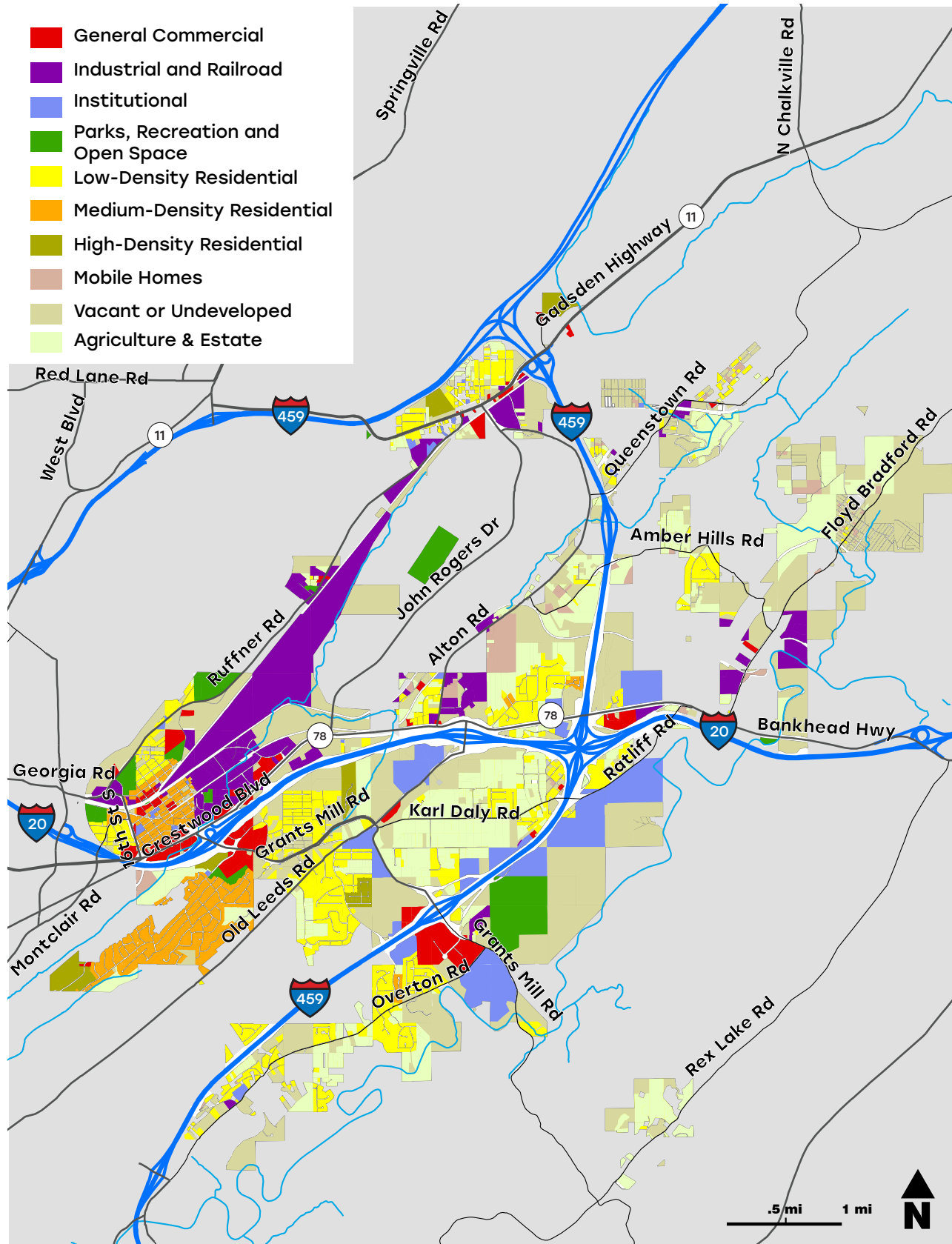


Institutional

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 2.17: Existing Land Use (2020)



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 2.4: 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% |





Image Credit: Cahaba River Keeper

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 2.18.**

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.

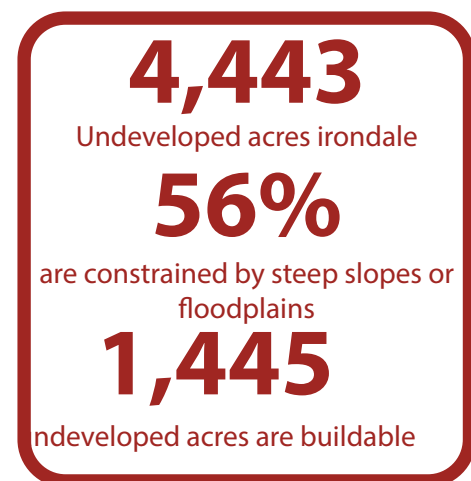
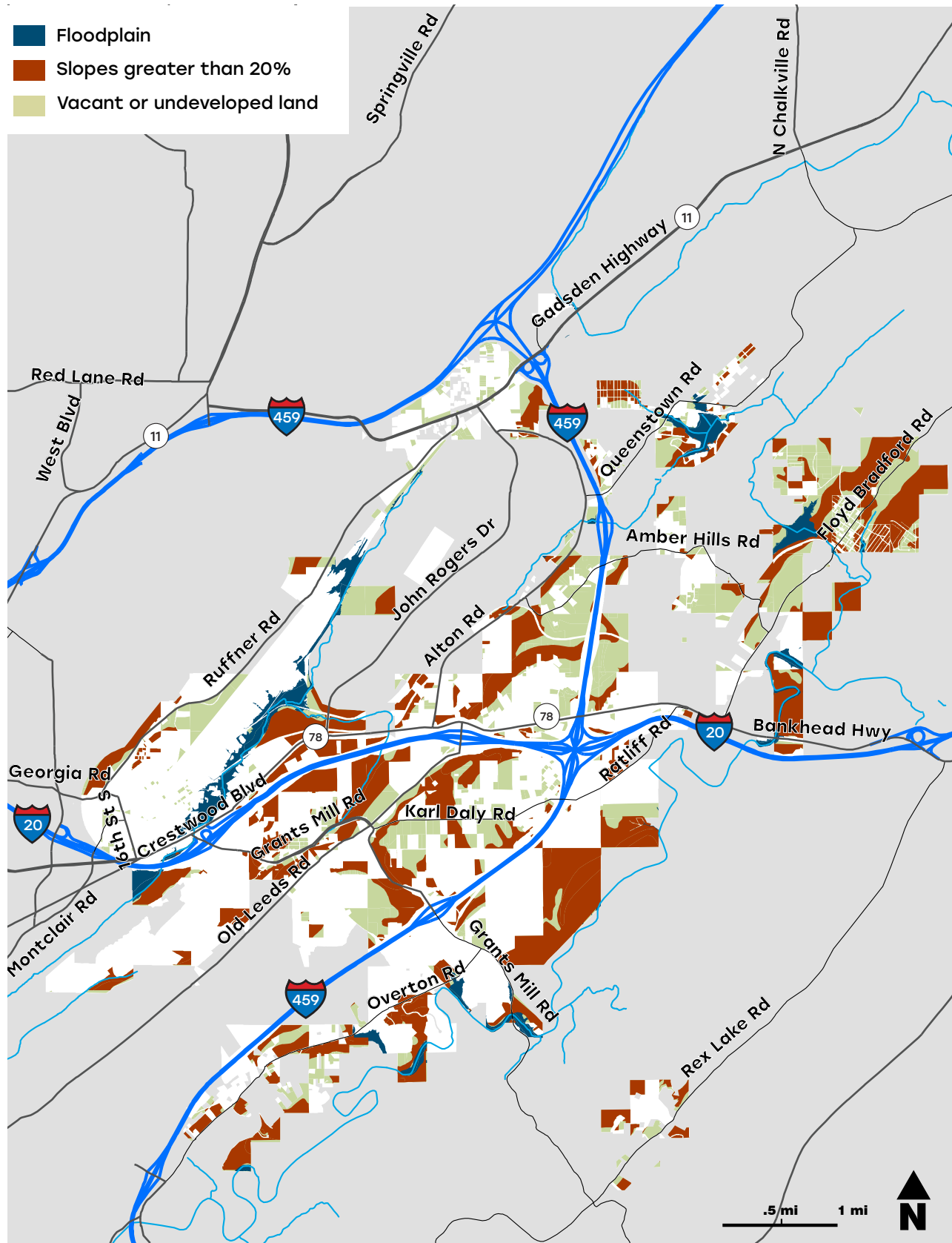


Figure 2.18: Undeveloped Land and Environmental Constraints



Source: RPCGB

Zoning

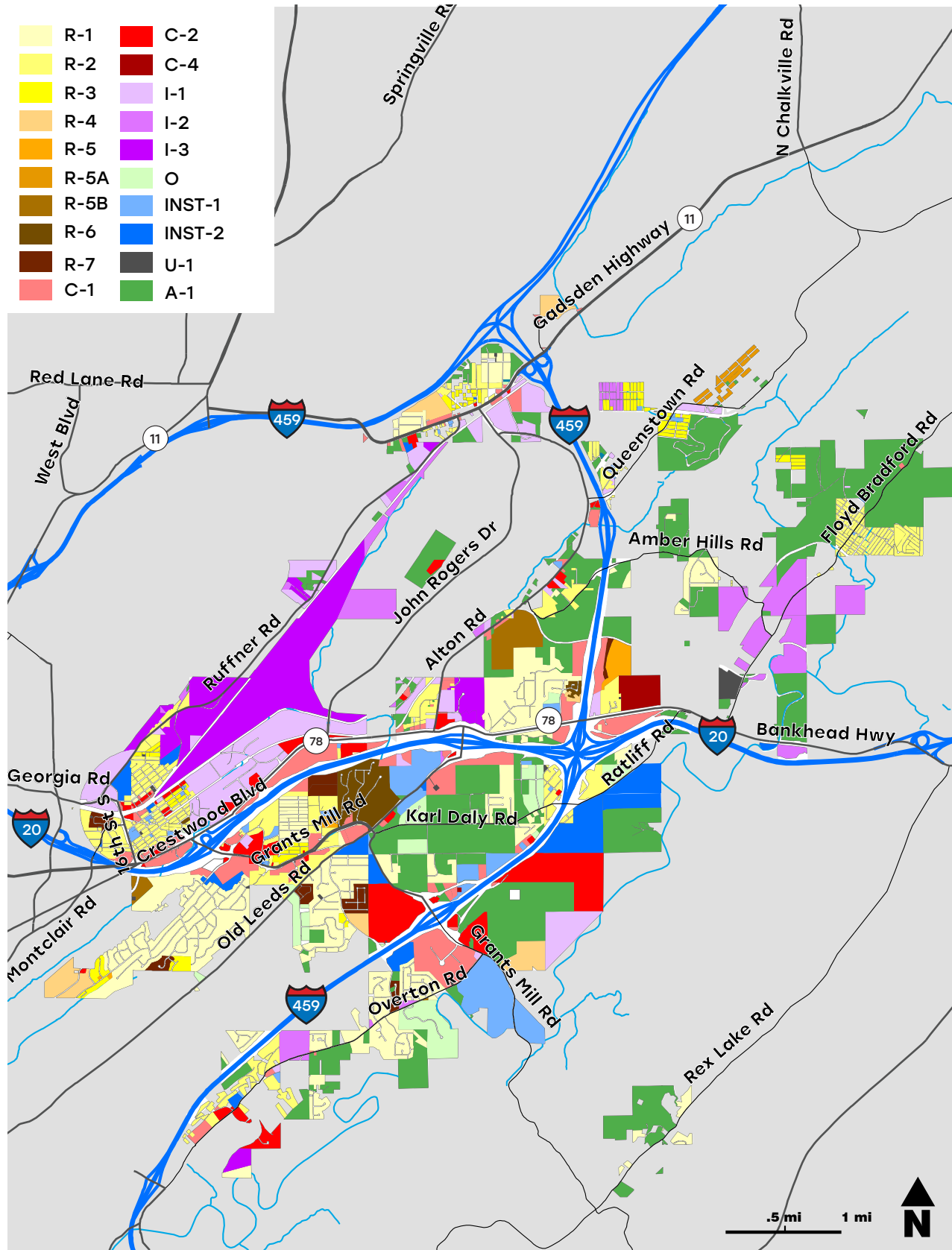
Irondale's zoning illustrates its transition from urban to rural along with its industrial heritage.

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 2.19**. **Table 2.5** details the breakdown of acreage by zoning district within the city limits.

Table 2.5: 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% |

Figure 2.19: Existing Zoning (2020)



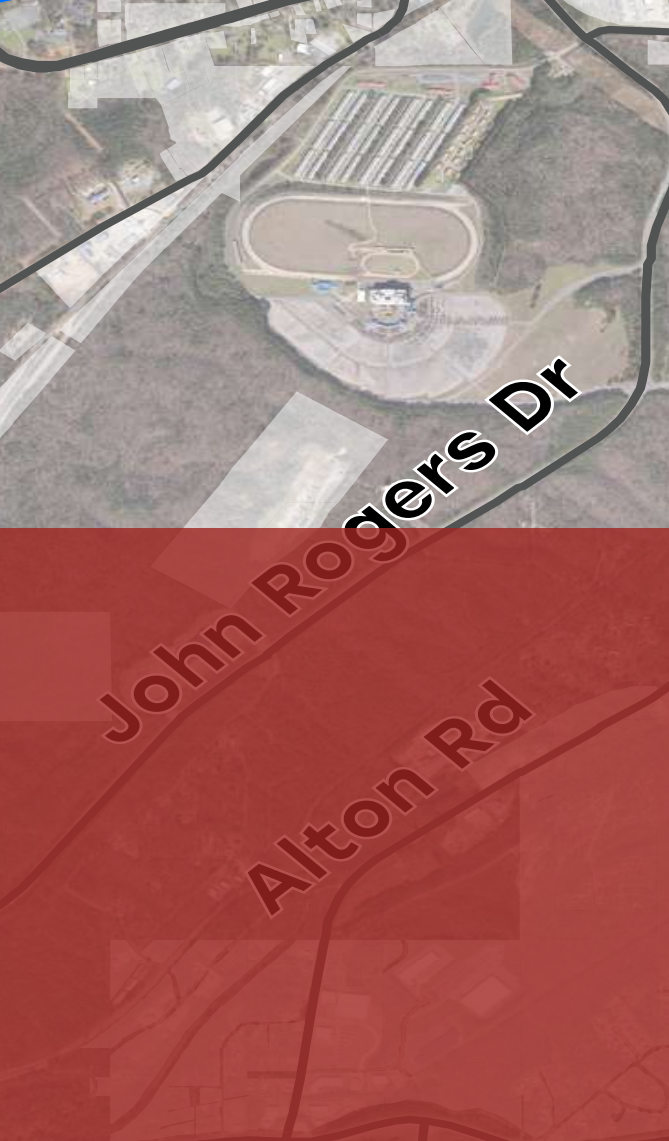
Source: Sain Associates



Chapter Three

Focus Areas





Downtown Irondale..... 46

Grants Mill Station..... 53

Grants Mill Road Corridor (Old Leeds Road to
Overton Road)..... 60

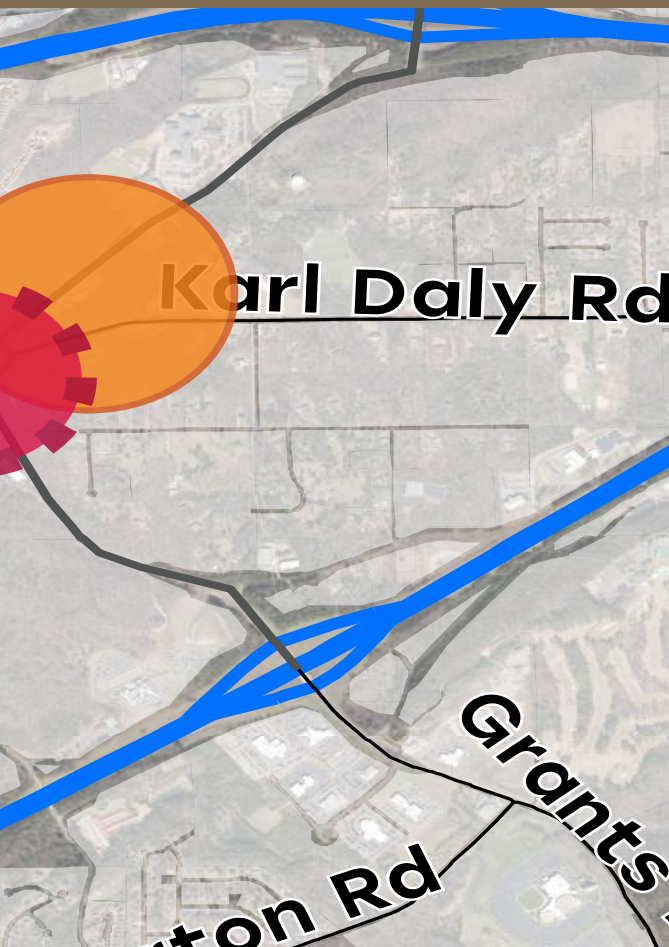
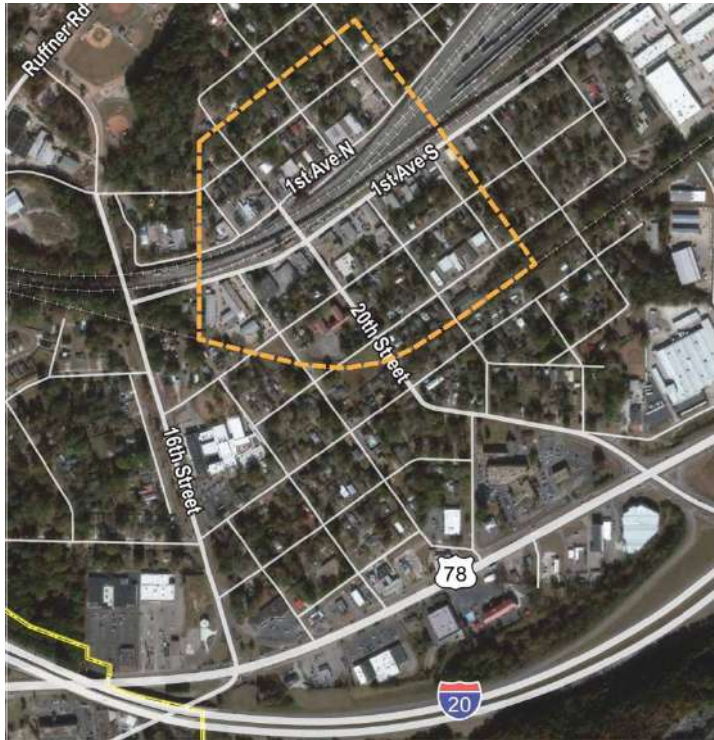


Figure 3.1: Downtown Irondale Focus Area



Downtown Irondale

Existing Conditions

Downtown Irondale is located near Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 and I-20 Exit 133, but access is limited by two railroad lines. While 20th Street offers the most direct access from the interstate, it has only an at-grade crossing at each rail line. Viaducts along 16th Street allow access to Downtown when trains are traveling through the area.

The Downtown business area is divided north-south by the heavily-used Norfolk Southern (NS) rail line. The one-block historic retail hub is located on the north side and includes the Irondale Café, widely known for its association with the novel and film *Fried Green Tomatoes*. Beyond the 1900 block of First Avenue North, most Downtown businesses are offices, warehouses, automotive, and other types of supplies and repair services. There is a small cluster of design supply businesses in the 2000 and 2100 blocks of First Avenue North. Downtown is flanked to the north and south by single-family neighborhoods featuring homes of varying ages (1950s and earlier) and conditions. There is a large concentration of industries east of Downtown. Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve is located to the north and has a trailhead on Ruffner Road only a short distance from Downtown.

There are a small number of vacant and tax-delinquent properties in and around Downtown. The highest concentration of these is in the residential area south of the NS railroad and near the Commerce Square Business Park to the east.

Downtown Irondale - Assets

- Proximity to Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 and I-20.
- Relatively flat topography.
- Interconnected street grid, walkable blocks (except at railroad).
- The historic character on 1900 block of First Avenue North.
- Historic residential areas surrounding Downtown.
- The notoriety of Irondale Café.
- The beloved Whistlestop Festival.
- The cluster of design-related businesses.
- Proximity to Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve and other city parks.
- Previous streetscape improvements on First Avenue North.
- City Hall and Library located in Downtown.
- Train-watching platform (regular local visitors).
- Industries nearby increase the daytime population.

Downtown Irondale - Issues

- Assorted vacant buildings in Downtown.
- Lack of retail, dining, and services to draw visitors regularly.
- Accessibility due to railroads, currently residents utilize neighborhood streets when trains block access to the north side.
- A moderate number of vacant and tax delinquent properties, mostly in residential areas around the Downtown core.
- Warehouse buildings and industrial buildings do not contribute to the historic character of Downtown.
- Numerous heavy commercial and industrial uses in and around Downtown (assume these originally located for railroad access but few if any use rail access today).
- Lack of park and open space other than at train viewing platform.
- The Department of Public Works building is in a prime location (other uses would be more advantageous and attractive to the district).
- Public parking on 1st and 2nd Street North occupies prime real estate that would be better suited for commercial or mixed-used development.
- Investment in surrounding residential development varies by street.
- Streets (width, sidewalks, curb/gutter, etc.) in poor condition beyond Downtown core; no street trees.
- Little connection (visually and in terms of uses) between north and south sides of tracks.
- Trains cause loud disturbances when passing through.

Downtown Irondale - Opportunities

- Move the Irondale Department of Public Works building (Irondale City Hall and the Irondale Public Library could/should stay).
- Capitalize on design-related businesses (think Pepper Place).
- Capitalize on the daytime population of nearby industries to support more Downtown eateries.
- Improve access around railroad (possible street connection from First Avenue North to 16th Street, rather than through neighborhood).
- Roundabout at 16th Street and 4th Avenue North to create attractive “Ruffner” gateway and at Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 as major city gateway (would also resolve problematic intersection with Montevallo Road).
- Bicycle lanes/sharrows on 16th Street (and/ or expansion of existing path along southern segment).
- Relocate Public Works and, over time, some heavy commercial and industrial uses strategically out of prime Downtown locations, consider conducting land swaps with available space in other industrial park areas or along Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78.
- Redevelop or improve “facades” of warehouse buildings on First North (2000 block).
- Optimize Downtown-adjacent residential development.
- Improve streetscapes along First Avenue South and North/beautification along the railroad.
- Improve viaducts along 16th Street (install similar lighting to Downtown Birmingham).
- Improve public parking (off- and on-street).
- Provide additional wayfinding and gateway signage.
- Improve Irondale Water System facility with landscaping and screening.

Figure 3.2: Downtown Irondale – Opportunities Diagram



Recommendations for Downtown Irondale

Today, Irondale's Downtown retail activity is situated mostly along the 1900 block of First Avenue North, where the longstanding Irondale Café is located. This area has been the focus of most public and private investment to maintain a vital Downtown business district. However, this part of the larger Downtown area is more difficult to access from the south because of the busy railroad lines that bisect the area.

Expanding the target retail area to include First Avenue South will create more opportunities for the types of activities Irondale residents desire for their city center, particularly dining, shopping, and entertainment. This would improve vehicular access throughout the community and pedestrian access from nearby neighborhoods—a captive market for Downtown businesses—and create a convenient connection to the concentration of daytime workers east of the Downtown area, between First Avenue South and Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78. Relocating some city functions, such as Public Works and potentially City Hall and the Police Department, from First Avenue South will provide space to plant new businesses Downtown.

The following recommendations describe and illustrate a vision for a more vibrant Downtown Irondale activated with day and nighttime businesses and supported by new residential investment and improved pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.

Overall Recommendations

- Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized and incompatible businesses to accommodate more neighborhood-compatible and residential infill opportunities Downtown. The Irondale Commercial Development Authority should play an active role in marketing available properties to potential tenants and assist in relocating industrial uses out of Downtown Irondale to more appropriate locations.
- Support adaptive reuse projects when applicable.
- Install directional signage on Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 to encourage motorists to use 16th Street as a conventional route to Downtown that is not impeded by train crossings.

Recommendations for Downtown Irondale North of the Tracks

- Encourage reinvestment along the 2000 block of First Avenue North to create a “design” district similar to Birmingham's Pepper Place; a cluster of design, home improvement, and associated businesses that can attract patrons from throughout the metro area and increase weekday and weekend visits to Downtown.
- Reorganize and improve rear parking on the 2000 block of First Avenue North to optimize capacity.
- Evaluate the cost of improving and extending First Avenue North to 16th Street to provide better access around the railroad so that Downtown traffic is not diverted through the neighborhood along 2nd Avenue North; this would also facilitate reinvestment in nonresidential properties between 16th and 19th Streets.
- Redesign the intersection of 2nd Avenue North, 16th Street, and Georgia Road as a roundabout; this will improve traffic safety and create space to incorporate gateway signage and landscaping improvements.

Recommendations for Downtown Irondale South of the Tracks

- Expand the target area for Downtown shopping, dining, and entertainment along First Avenue South (see **Figure 3.3** and **Figure 3.4**).
- Relocate Public Works and redevelop the site for walkable dining, shopping, and upper-story housing. Construct a mid-block parking structure to increase development capacity (See **Figure 3.3**).
- Redesign First Avenue South to create a pedestrian-friendly destination. Construct sidewalks, reconfigure the parking, and provide a two-way bicycle track on the south side of the street from 16th Street to the industrial park (see **Figure 3.5** and **Figure 3.6**).
- Create a Downtown park along First Avenue South to provide space for community events and festivals. Partner with community leaders to revive the Whistle Stop Festival (see **Figure 3.3**).
- Facilitate the relocation of businesses along the 2100 block of 3rd Avenue South to create more residential development opportunities and enhance then property values of existing properties (see **Figure 3.3**).

Figure 3.3: Downtown Irondale Recommendations – Illustrative Plan

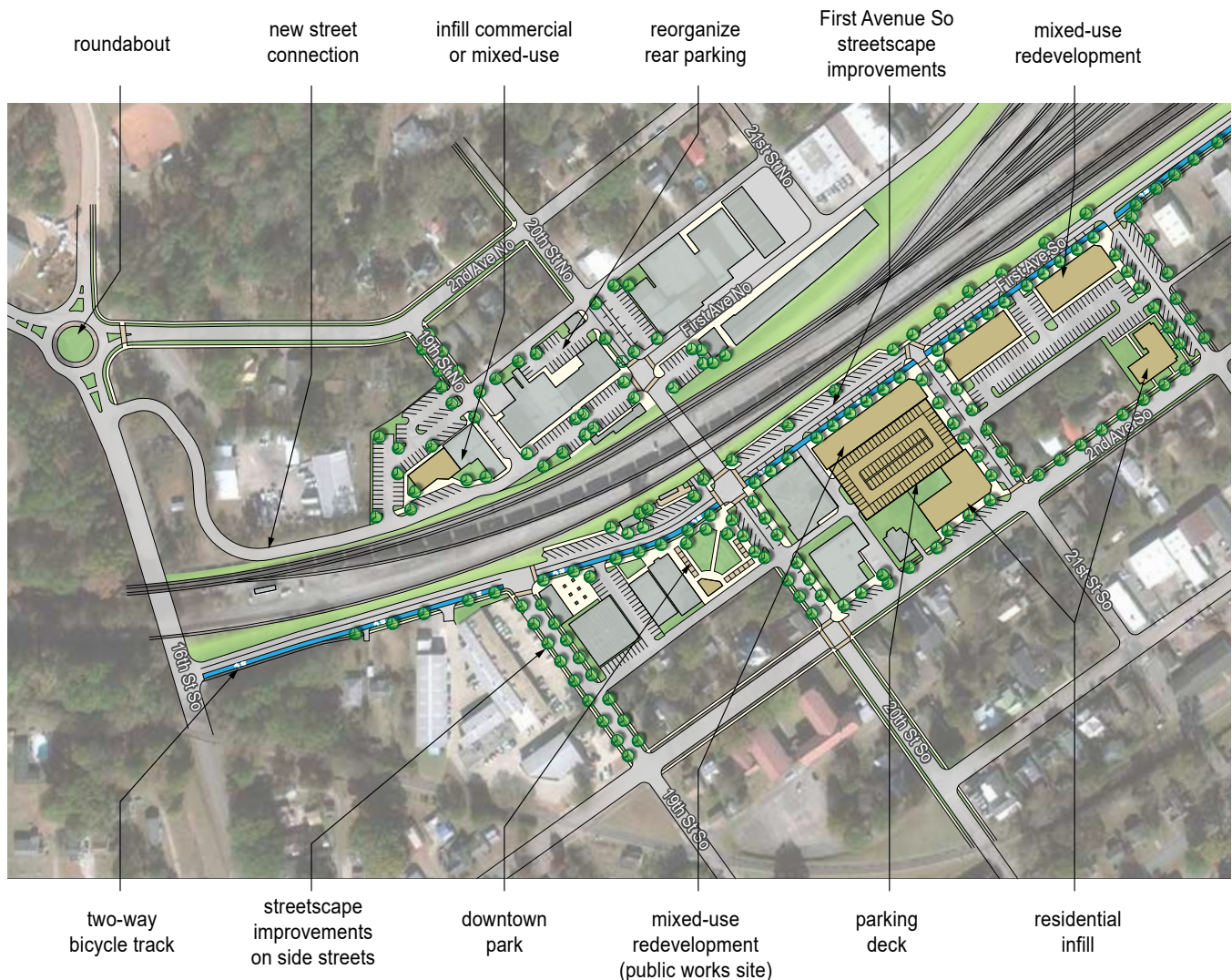


Figure 3.4: Downtown Irondale Recommendations – Birdseye Rendering



Figure 3.5: Downtown Irondale Recommendations – Potential First Avenue South Street Section

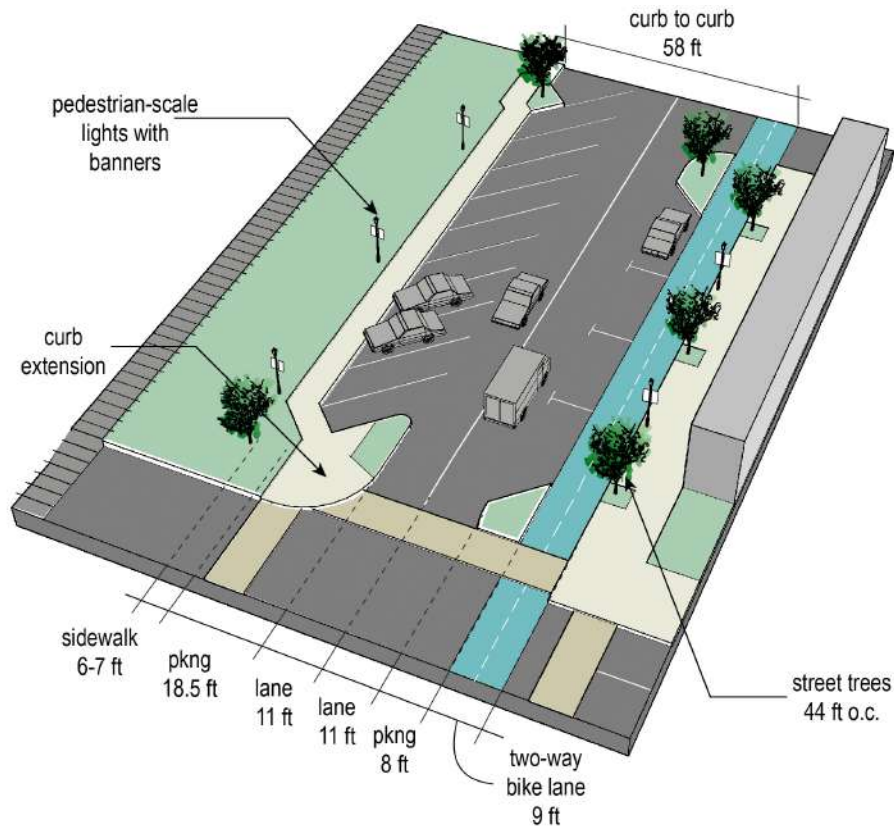


Figure 3.6: Downtown Irondale Recommendations – Potential First Avenue South Street Section of the 2100 block

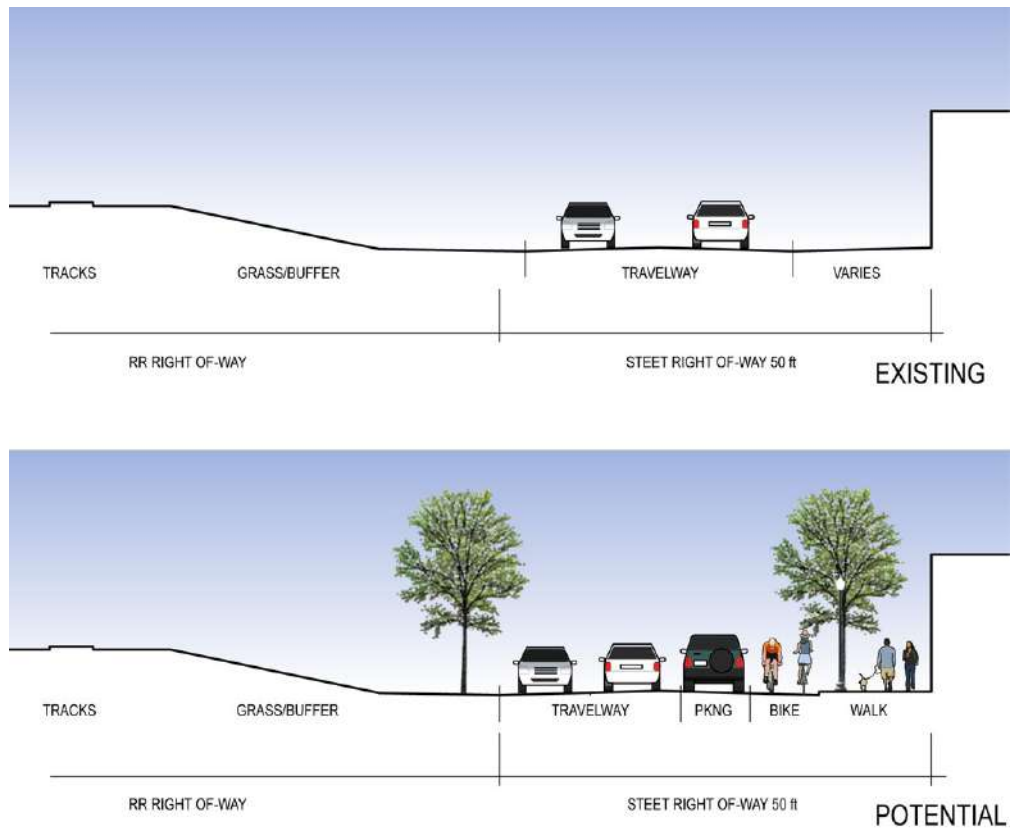


Figure 3.7: Downtown Irondale Recommendations – Potential First Avenue South Street Section of the block by City Hall

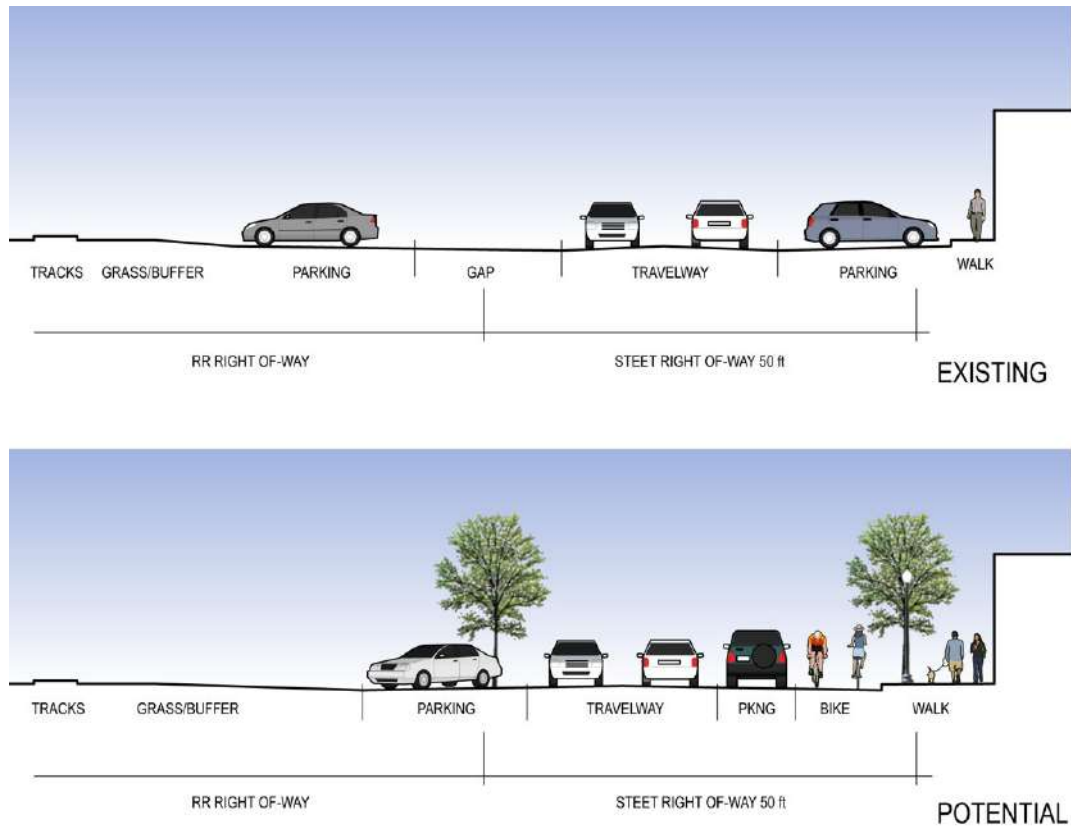


Figure 3.8: Grants Mill Station Focus Area



Grants Mill Station

Existing Conditions

Grants Mill Station, a large shopping center, is located on Grants Mill Road adjacent to I-20 Exit 133. Over time Grants Mill Road has become an increasingly important commuter route in eastern Jefferson County, providing access to I-459 and eventually to US 119 in Shelby County. Traffic counts on Grants Mill Road are estimated at almost 14,000 ADT, an increase of about 6% over the last five years. Grants Mill Road was widened to five lanes from Grants Mill Station to Old Leeds Road to accommodate traffic projections. Bicycle lanes were included though the steep terrain discourages casual cyclists.

Situated on the north face of Shades Mountain, the area features rough topography. Elevations in the focus area rise to over 200 ft above the nearby interstate. Development in the focus area has been limited by topography. As a result, the shopping center and adjacent businesses and residential developments tend to be disconnected from one another. The local street network is generally discontinuous and pedestrian mobility is minimal.

South of Grants Mill Road, the Grants Mill Station shopping center was originally developed in the early 1990s with a Wal-Mart Supercenter as its anchor. When the anchor store left in the mid-2000s, business activity at the shopping center declined. In 2013 a new owner recruited new tenants and added a zip line course, which is now closed. Presently, the center is anchored by an antique store, a home improvement store, and the City of Irondale's Water Department and the Police Substation. The City has considered moving additional city services to the shopping center, in part because of its central location within the community but also to create more stability.

Across Grants Mill Road, the Sam's Club store developed in the late 1990s, but closed in 2018 and has been repurposed as Classic Car Motoring.

Grants Mill Station is primarily surrounded by small-lot single-family residential development, however, two multifamily developments (one on Beacon Drive and another on Grants Mill Road) are also located nearby. Located behind the shopping center is Beacon Park, which the City renovated in 2015. The Irondale Senior Center is also located adjacent to the shopping center on Beacon Drive.

Grants Mill Station - Assets

- Immediate interstate access and visibility.
- Central, accessible location within the City.
- Large redevelopment site with active commercial uses with considerable amounts of parking.
- Substantial traffic counts on Grants Mill Road.
- Diverse number of active businesses including retail, dining, and offices.
- Existing residential across Beacon Drive and further west/southwest of the shopping center.
- Continued residential growth – development is currently planned or under construction on Grants Mill Road nearby.
- Nearby city facilities - Beacon Park and the Irondale Senior Center.
- Bike lanes on Grants Mill eastward from Grants Mill Station.



Grants Mill Station - Issues

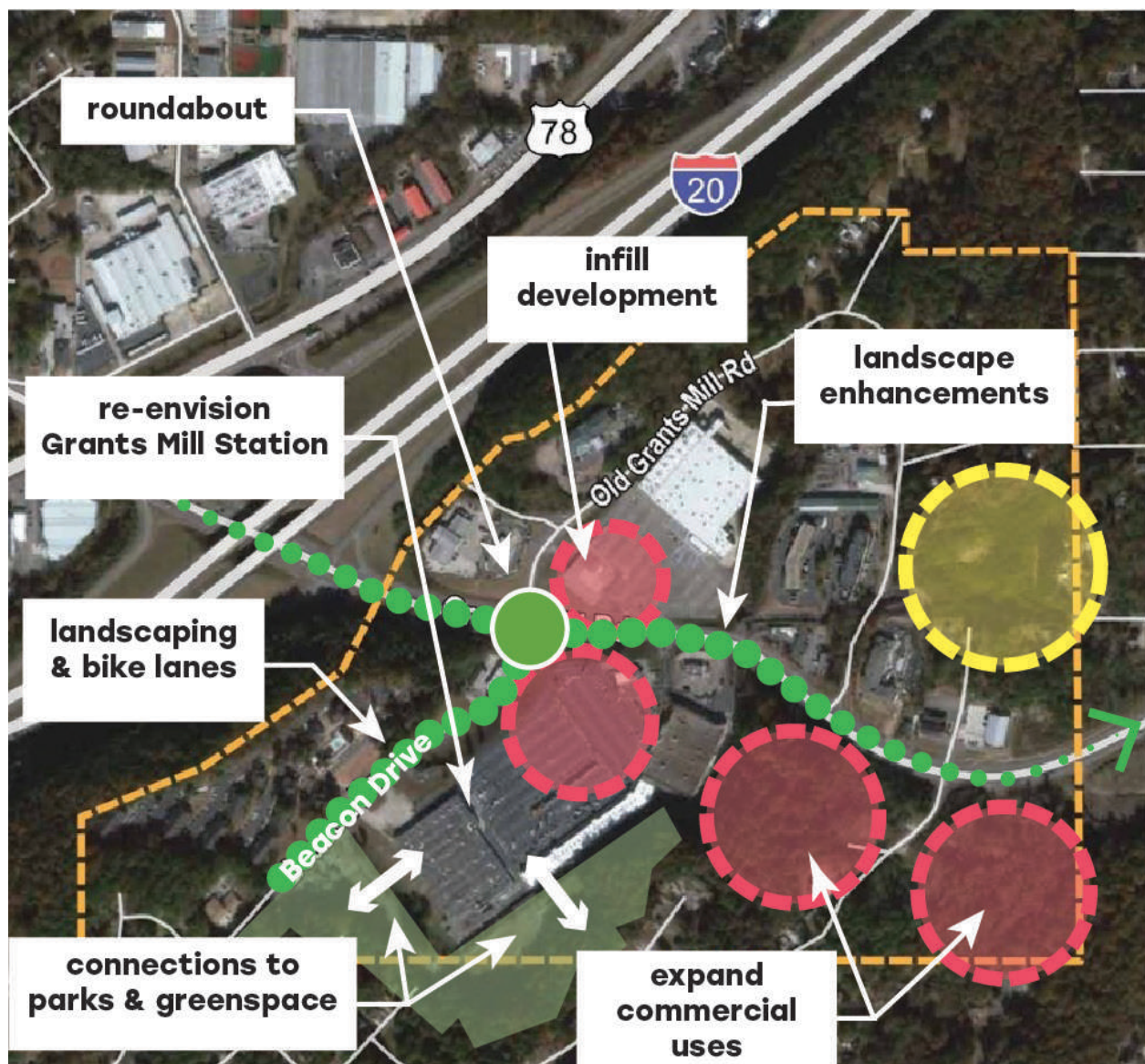
- Considerable vacancy in the shopping center and decline in the number of retail tenants in the area.
- The condition of the property continues to decline.
- Several tax delinquent properties.
- Significant changes in topography has discouraged the development of some properties.
- Beacon Park and senior center are not accessible on foot from shopping center.
- The shopping center lacks a "sense of place" or identity.
- Overall disconnectedness among individual developments – topographic challenges, no pedestrian connectivity, limited vehicular access, and lack of visual cohesiveness.



Grants Mill Station - Opportunities

- Encourage infill development at Grants Mill Station and at the Classic Car Motoring site to create a sense of place – construct sidewalks and pedestrian connections to enhance walkability.
- Relocate City Hall and the Police Station to Grants Mill Station to create a municipal complex.
- Explore the feasibility of a roundabout at the intersection of Grants Mill Road and Beacon Drive to create stronger gateway experience.
- Beautification of Grants Mill Road – provide streetscape improvements and construct a landscaped median in the center turn lane from Beacon Drive to Old Leeds Road.
- Develop additional commercial uses on vacant properties southeast of Grants Mill Station (topography limits direct accessibility with shopping center).
- Enhance the image of the shopping center site along Beacon Drive through landscape improvements.
- Create strong pedestrian and visual connections to Beacon Park from Grants Mill Station.

Figure 3.9: Grants Mill Station – Opportunities



Recommendations for Grants Mill Road by Grants Mill Station

- Install a roundabout at Beacon Drive and Grants Mill Road to create a new gateway into “east” Irondale from Interstate 20; this will eliminate the need for turn lanes and allow more space for the landscaped median and bicycle facilities (see **Figure 3.10**).
- Extend the landscaped median at Beacon Drive eastward within the existing center turn lane. Consolidate existing driveways where feasible (some could be changed to right-in/right-out) to allow the median to be more continuous. Driveway access to future developments should be carefully managed to ensure safety and traffic flow. Extend the bicycle lanes along Grants Mill Road—which currently end at the entrance to Grants Mill Station—eastward to Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78; the bicycle lanes would leave the roadway as they navigate around the proposed roundabout (see **Figure 3.10**).
- Install signage along the slope of the Grants Mill Station site adjacent to the proposed roundabout either as part of the community gateway or as a part of the village center development.

Recommendations for Grants Mill Station

- Construct retail/mixed-use buildings in the parking lot to create “main street” along existing south and west buildings; include upper-story residential units above ground floor commercial spaces (retail, restaurant, and entertainment); the number of stories will be limited based on parking availability, though the conversion of surface parking to structured parking would enable greater development capacity (see **Figure 3.10 and Figure 3.11**).
- The proposed “main street” should be designed with sidewalks (at least 15 ft wide), parallel on-street parking, and regularly spaced street trees installed in tree wells along the curb line. Bulb-outs (curb extensions) and crosswalks should be provided at intersections for pedestrian safety (see **Figure 3.12**).
- Construct a two-level parking structure(s) to the rear of the former Wal-Mart building. The upper level of the parking structure should be accessible from the park access road and lower-level of the parking structure should be accessible within the village center; this takes advantage of the slope on the back side of the development and avoids the cost of constructing additional ramps to access upper-level parking levels (see **Figure 3.10 and Figure 3.11**).
- Provide ADA accessible pedestrian access from the village center into the park; alternatively, re-grade this portion of the hill to provide a street connection between the village center and the park.
- Provide access to the proposed parking structures.
 - Option 1 - Divide the former Wal-Mart structure into two buildings by removing two of the retail bays. Creating two buildings would allow the current occupant to remain with the city functions moving into one or both of the newly divided buildings.
 - Option 2 – Construct alternate access points to the parking structures, one on the north end of the northern structure and another to the south of the southern structure. Create an open space (including seating and possibly a water feature) to connect from the new street up the slope to the park access road. This would allow pedestrian access from the neighborhoods (by way of Goldmar Drive and Paramount Drive) into the village center.
- Install a mini-roundabout at the entrance adjacent to the home improvement store (Southeastern Salvage) to provide an enhanced entrance and signage opportunity (see **Figure 3.10 and Figure 3.11**).
- Construct a new building between the Beacon Drive entrance and park access road - uses might include office, residential or city functions (see **Figure 3.10 and Figure 3.11**).
- Reduce excess stormwater produced by the redevelopment of Grants Mill Station by installing additional trees, greenspace, and by incorporating other green infrastructure solutions.

Recommendations for Beacon Drive

- Extend the bicycle lanes along Beacon Drive from Grants Mill Road to park access road; transition to sharrows (vehicular lanes marked and shared with bicycles) southwest of park access road into the neighborhood.
- Install a walking path along the south side of Beacon Drive to connect the neighborhood to the park and Grants Mill Station.

Recommendations for Beacon Park and Park Access Road

- Develop an amphitheater using the slope between the lawn and walking track for tiered seating, construct a stage within the lawn, possibly reusing one of the train cars from the Grants Mill Station parking lot as part of the stage structure (see **Figure 3.10** and **Figure 3.11**).
- Add a walking path from Goldmar Drive that connects to the path adjacent to the playground; connect this path across the park access road to the pedestrian access point into the development (a “switchback” design is shown here due to the sloping grade) (see **Figure 3.11**).

Figure 3.10: Grants Mill Station Recommendations – Illustrative Plan



Figure 3.11: Grants Mill Station Recommendations – Birdseye Rendering



Figure 3.12: Grants Mill Station Recommendations – Potential Streetscaping along Grants Mill Road

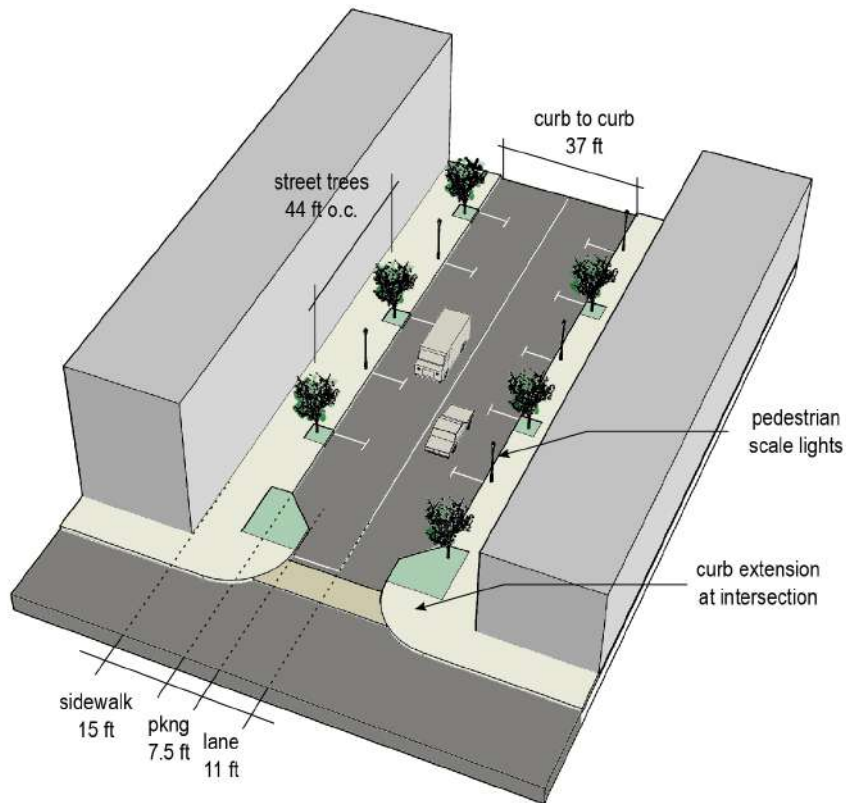


Figure 3.13: Grants Mill Station Recommendations – Potential Street Section

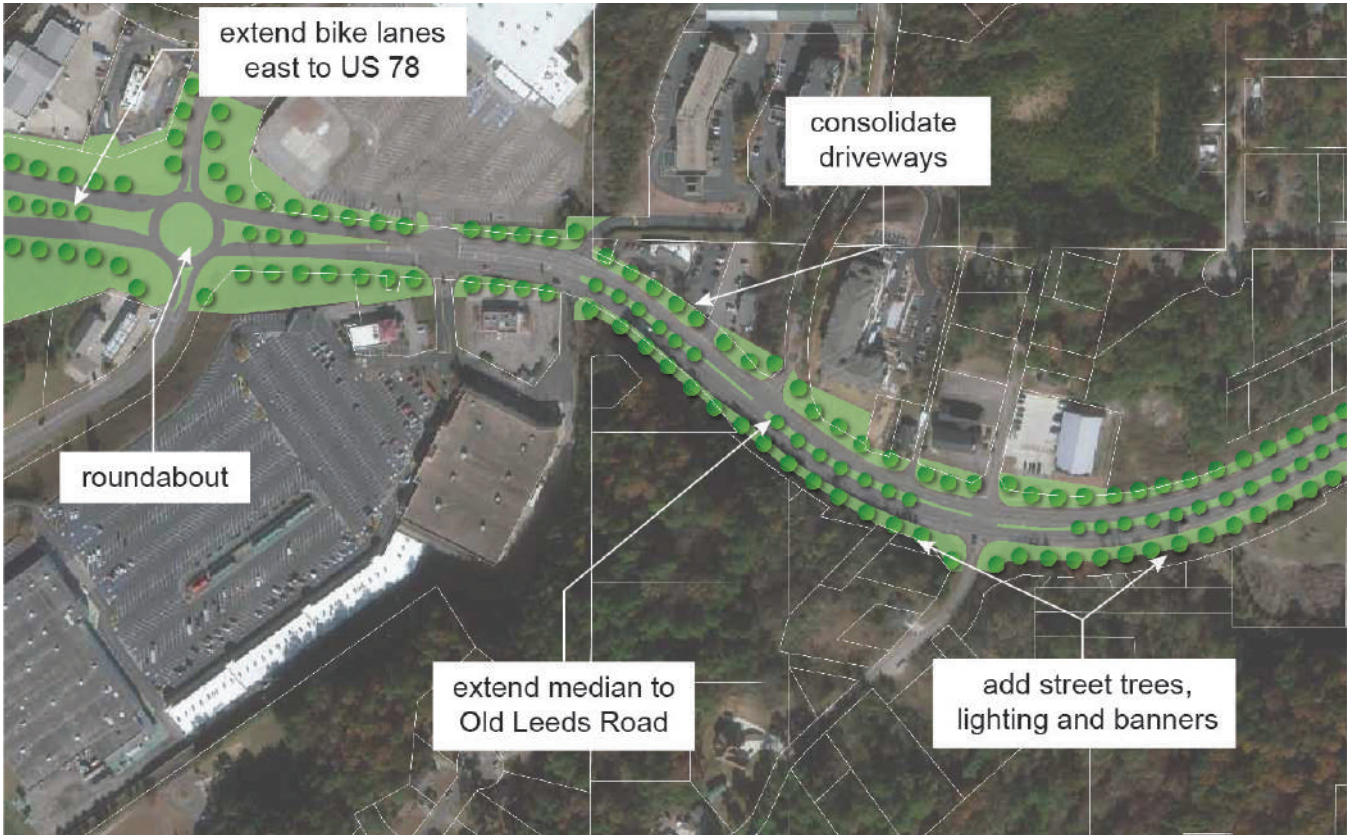
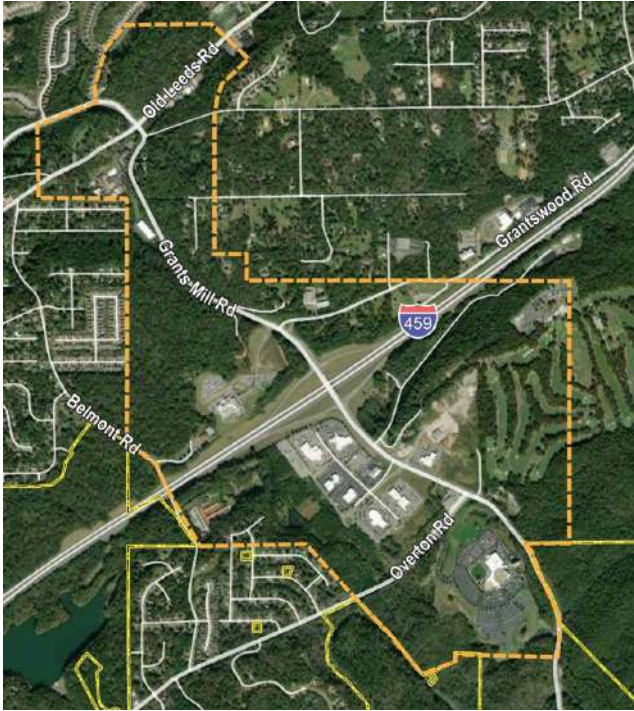


Figure 3.14: Grants Mill Road Corridor Focus Area



Grants Mill Road Corridor (Old Leeds Road to Overton Road)

Existing Conditions

The Grants Mill Road Corridor has become an important armature for the city over the last several decades. This was cemented with the development of the Grants Mill automotive dealership at I-459 in the early 2000s. The corridor offers a convenient connection to I-459 and an alternative route to congested US 280 for commuters headed to the US 119 area. However, the area's rough topography has slowed and constrained its development.

As development around the interchange continued, the road was widened from the interstate to Overton Road to accommodate increased traffic (15-20% over the last five years). However, the segment from Old Leeds Road to the interstate has yet to be expanded. The Old Leeds Road intersection is proposed to be converted to a roundabout to resolve conflicts with Karl Daly Road.

The street network is minimally interconnected with most subdivisions and nonresidential developments relying on main roads for mobility. The area is largely unwalkable due to topography, scattered development, and lack of pedestrian facilities. Both Old Leeds Road, a popular route for avid cyclists, and Overton Road are included in the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Plan.

Most development in the area is lower density single-family with some isolated commercial and institutional uses along the major roads. Shades Valley High School is located on the north end of the study area on Old Leeds Road. It is understood that a substantial retail development is being considered for the north quadrant of the Old Leeds Road and Grants Mill Road intersection. Pine Tree Country Club and Shades Valley Technical Academy are located north of Grants Mill Road. Two tracts of undeveloped land adjacent to the Cahaba River along Overton Road are owned by the city and the Freshwater Land Trust.

Grants Mill Road Corridor - Assets

- Interstate 459 access.
- Auto dealerships and related business at I-459 interchange.
- Traffic counts on Grants Mill Road.
- Grantswood Road provides access between Grants Mill Road, the I-459 interchange, and Old Leeds/I-20 interchange.
- Pine Tree Country Club and golf course.
- Proposed shopping center development between Grants Mill Road and Shades Valley High School.
- Commercial development occurring in the north quadrant of the I-459 interchange.
- Shades Valley High School, Church of the Highlands, EWTN, and other institutional uses.
- Scenic quality of Grants Mill Road between Old Leeds Road and I-459.
- Small number of tax delinquent properties.

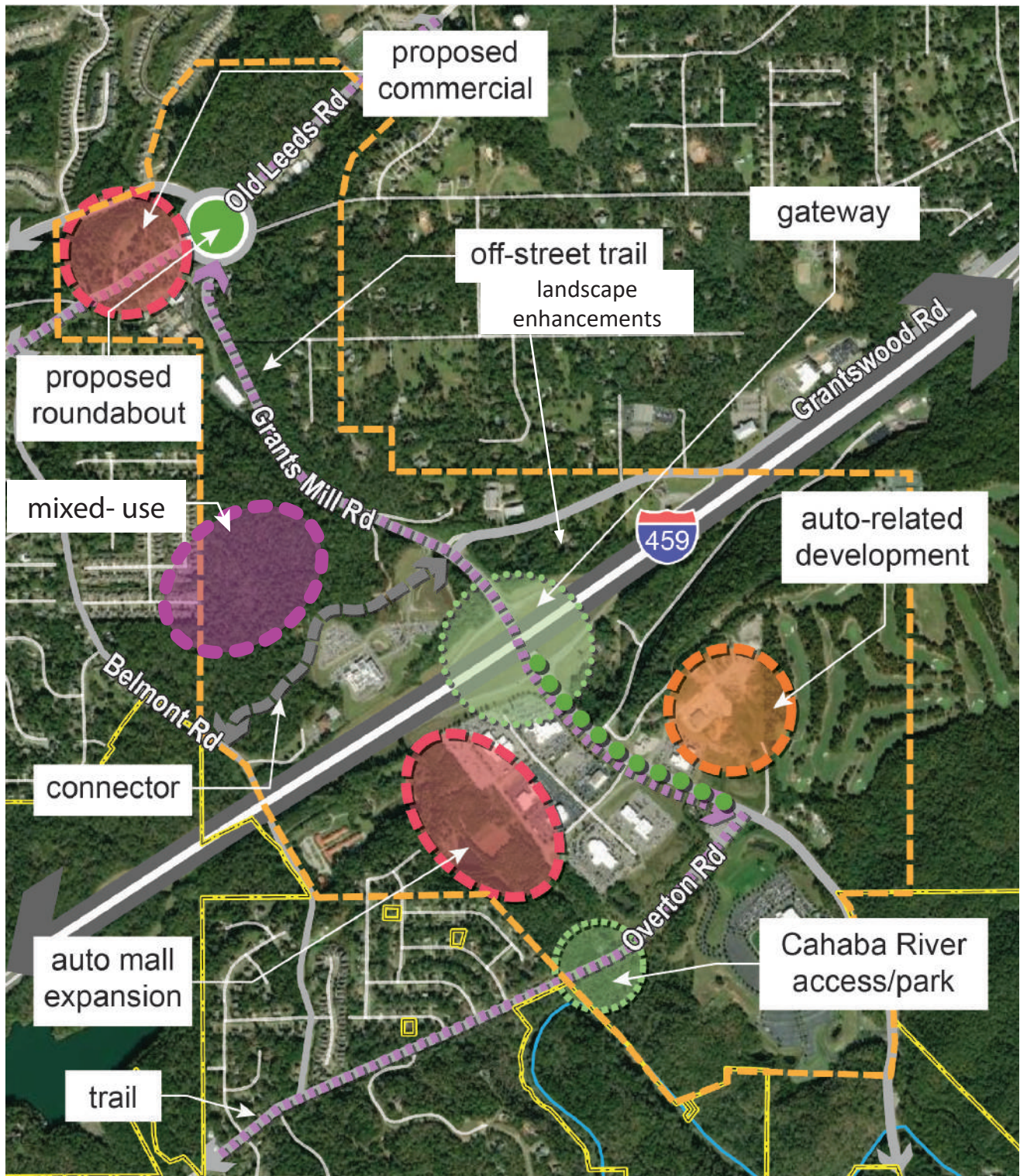
Grants Mill Road Corridor - Issues

- Topography, especially between Old Leeds Road and I-459, causes difficulty for development, as a result most development is low-density.
- Low population density south and southeast of Old Leeds Road.
- Lack of visual coherence among existing developments – no “sense of place” or identity.
- Overall disconnectedness among individual developments.
- Lack of walkability (no sidewalks, topographic challenges).

Grants Mill Road Corridor - Opportunities

- Potential residential development on property north and west of Mercedes.
- Proposed commercial development at Old Leeds Road and Grants Mill Road adjacent to Shades Valley High School.
- Mixed-use, commercial, and/or light industrial infill development along Grants Mill Road at Shady Acres, including possible redevelopment of existing uses on Horst Hill Road (same ownership).
- Continued development of auto-related or compatible commercial uses adjacent to Tom Williams Auto Mall.
- Street connection between Grants Mill Road and Belmont Road north of I-459 (could spur off of Mercedes entrance drive and tie in at entrance to Brookview Church).
- Implementation of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System (RRRVTS), bicycle facility improvements on Old Leeds Road and Overton Road.
- Bicycle trail (lanes, sharrows, or shared use path) along Grants Mill Road south of Old Leeds when widened and as practicable, connect to planned sharrows on Overton Road.
- Install landscaping, signage, and other design improvements to create a stronger gateway experience at interchange.
- Streetscape improvements and beautification along Grants Mill Road, including landscaped median to Overton Road.
- Potential for another nature preserve and canoe launch on Overton Road using City of Irondale and Fresh Water Land Trust properties.

Figure 3.15: Grants Mill Road Corridor – Opportunities



Overall Recommendations for the Grants Mill Road Corridor

Over time, Grants Mill Road has become an increasingly important feature for Irondale. With the construction of I-459, it provided additional interstate access for the community. Then, with the development of the Walmart and Sam's Club on one end and the "auto mall" on the east end at I-459, the corridor became an essential part of the City's economy. Later, the road was realigned and widened to create a more direct connection to I-459, which helped it become a more convenient commuter route. The realignment of the roadway from Grants Mill Station to Old Leeds Road ultimately helped to attract new residential development in the area. And, most recently, Publix has announced it will be part of a new shopping development along Grants Mill Road and Old Leeds Road, further cementing the importance of the corridor for Irondale.

The bulk of the corridor's future development potential is located mostly around the I-459 interchange and the existing auto-related development there. The topography of the land along the segment between Old Leeds Road and the interstate is too rough for any large or intensive development, considering both the higher construction costs and environmental impacts of grading. However, north of the interchange and the recent Mercedes Benz development, there is undeveloped property on the road's west side that may be appropriate for residential development or perhaps some nonresidential development that can be designed sensitively to the area's difficult terrain.

South of the interchange, continued development will likely be focused on the west side of the auto mall and a mix of new development and redevelopment on the east side of Grants Mill Road around Horst Hill Road. Expansion of automotive-related businesses would be the most obvious use of the remaining land adjacent to the auto mall, though offices or similar businesses might also be appropriate. Similarly, auto-related businesses, offices and commercial businesses will be suitable to available sites around Horst Hill Road. Retail and service businesses might also be appropriate, though due to the sparsity of residential development in the surrounding area, may be difficult to justify unless they are of a type to serve interstate travelers and commuters.

Recommendations for the Grants Mill Road Corridor from Old Leeds Road to I-459 (see Figure 3.15)

- Development between Belmont Road and Grants Mill Road should be designed with commercial and residential land uses clustered within the most easily developed portions of the site and steeper terrain reserved as park amenity or natural areas. This approach will help to reduce the development's impact on drainage, erosion and tree cover.
- Install bicycle lanes, where feasible, along Grants Mill Road from Old Leeds Road to I-459. Note, road widening will be constrained north of the interchange due to the topography. Moreover, accommodating bicycle lanes in this section of roadway would further increase the costs and environmental impacts, so an off-road connection should be pursued to provide a connection to Old Leeds Road for cyclists. Sharrows on this segment are not recommended due to the amount of traffic, travel speed, and the grade of the road headed north.
- A street connection constructed between Grants Mill Road (at or near the Mercedes Benz entrance) west to Belmont Road would improve access from the interchange to Belmont Road and make adjacent land more attractive for development.
- Utilize the I-459 interchange as a community gateway. Install signage to announce to visitors that they have arrived in the City of Irondale. Provide landscaping and other design improvements to create a positive arrival experience (see **Figure 3.16 and 3.17**).

Figure 3.16: Grants Mill Road Corridor Recommendations – I-459 Interchange Existing



Figure 3.17: Grants Mill Road Corridor Recommendations – Potential I-459 Interchange Improvements



Figure 3.18: Grants Mill Road Corridor Recommendations – Example of Sculpture Lights along Freeway



Recommendations for the Grants Mill Road Corridor from I-459 to Overton Road (see Figure 3.15)

- A landscaped median should be installed southward from Grants Mill Parkway to Overton Road; the center turn lane installed with the recent widening of this segment of Grants Mill Road was inappropriate given the sparse development of the area.
- Bicycle facilities should be incorporated into this segment of Grants Mill Road to connect between the routes on Overton Road and Old Leeds Road proposed in the B-ACTIVE Regional Active Transportation Plan; however, existing conditions around Grants Mill Parkway will make on-street bike lanes difficult to accommodate and so an off-road connection through the constrained areas should be studied.
- Access to future development sites on the east side of Grants Mill Road should be managed to preserve the capacity of the roadway and accommodate a landscaped median from Overton Road toward Old Leeds Road with median cuts permitted as needed to allow left turns at necessary points.
- Continued development to the rear of the auto mall should incorporate low impact development (LID) design practices to minimize impacts on water quality given the proximity to the Cahaba River.
- Construct additional access and openspace to the Cahaba River on the City's -acre property on Overton Road, extend the existing trail from the Grants Mill canoe launch in conjunction with the Freshwater Land Trust.



Chapter Four

Future Land Use



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Future Land Use

The 4 goals within this Future Land Use chapter are:

1. Encourage redevelopment in existing commercial areas.
2. Protect Environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Encourage sustainable long term development patterns.
4. Encourage a wide range of housing types.

What is the Future Land Use Map and how does it relate to Zoning?

The Future Land Use Map is a long-range tool intended to guide future zoning decisions. It is not a zoning map. Whereas zoning maps are parcel specific and establish detailed requirements for setbacks, height, use, parking and other characteristics, the land use categories on the Future Land Use Map recommend a range of potentially appropriate land uses and intensities.

Irondale's desired future land use patterns are shown on the Future Land Use Map, which is shown in **Figure 4.1** It indicates the intended distribution and intensity of land uses over the next 5-15 years and should be used as a guide to define where different types of development should be directed in the future.

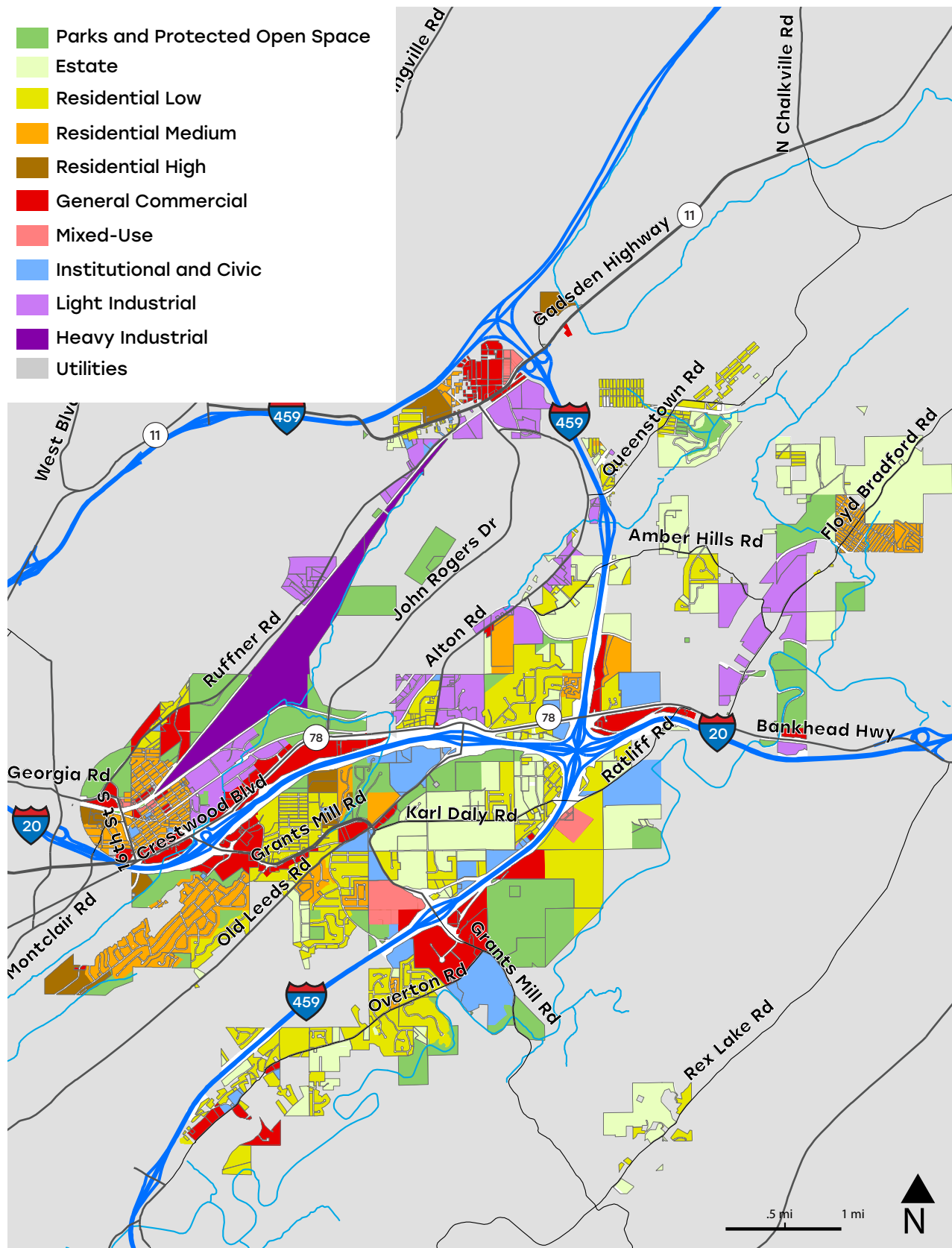
In some cases, the recommended future land use is the same as the existing land use. However, in certain locations throughout the city, the Future Land Use Map contains areas where existing uses are proposed for a change in land use, or for redevelopment. In either case, it is not the intent of this plan to place existing uses in a situation where their value or the quality of life of residents is adversely affected. Rather, the intent is to demonstrate to potential purchasers or developers the City's long-range view of how particular properties should be reconfigured and used should it become feasible to do so.

Future Land Use Map and Categories

The Future Land Use Map uses color-coded categories to express public policy on future land uses across the City. The land use designations have been drawn based on parcel lines, existing and desired development patterns, streets, environmental features, and other logical boundaries.

The Future Land Use categories on the following pages describe in detail the general character of each land use type, including primary and secondary land uses, and general characteristics. Each future land use category ties directly to an appropriate zoning district(s). Again, the land use categories indicated on the map must not be interpreted as zoning districts.

Figure 4.1: Future Land Use Map



Parks and Protected Open Space

The Parks and Protected Open Space designation applies to existing parks and sports fields, as well as areas designated for future parks and conservation areas. These areas, whether publicly, semi-publicly or privately owned, are considered important natural resources and recreational amenities. They exist not only to provide sports and recreational outlets to residents, but also to preserve precious green space as Irondale continues to develop. The City's most important natural resources and scenic locations should be reserved for greenway trails, parks or simply conservation areas. Structures that support recreational uses (e.g., gazebos, pavilions, restrooms, snack bars, etc.) are appropriate in these areas, provided the primary land use remains green space and recreation.

Primary Land Uses

Active and passive parks, sports fields, playgrounds, multi-use trails, natural open space and conservation easements

Secondary Land Uses

Restrooms, parking lots and accessory structures that support recreational spaces

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- A-1 Agriculture District
- C-4 Cemetery
- INST-1 Institutional

Design Principles:

Intensity/Density

- Very low

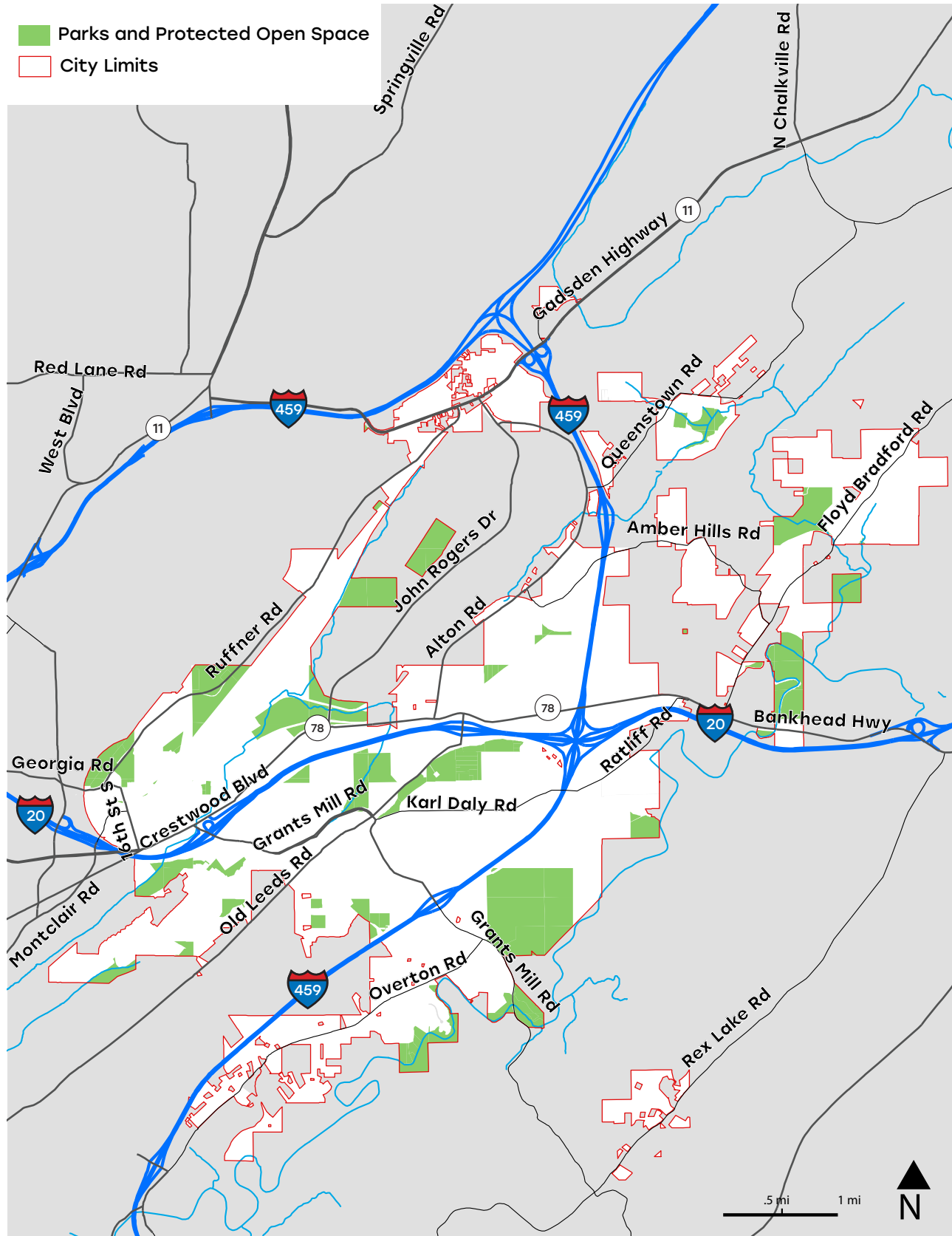
Connectivity/Transportation

- Low to moderate vehicular connectivity
- Low to high pedestrian connectivity



Ruffner Mountain (Source: [Kelly Verdeck](#))

Figure 4.2: Areas shown as Parks and Protected Open Space on the Future Land Use Map



Estate

The Estate areas are intended to accommodate very low density development, including agricultural uses (forestry, farming, etc.), and unsewered, large lot residential development. Estate land uses are intended for locations along Karl Daly Drive and in the northeast and southern portions of the city limits. Many Estate homes will not require sewer services and will instead rely on septic tank systems. If the underlying zoning permits Agricultural uses, then the Estate lot may include a primary residence and any processing or outbuilding associated with activities on the working farm.

Primary Land Uses

Single family detached homes, general farming and related functions

Secondary Land Uses

Accessory dwellings, farm related structures such as barns or stables

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- E-1 Estate
- A-1 Agriculture

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

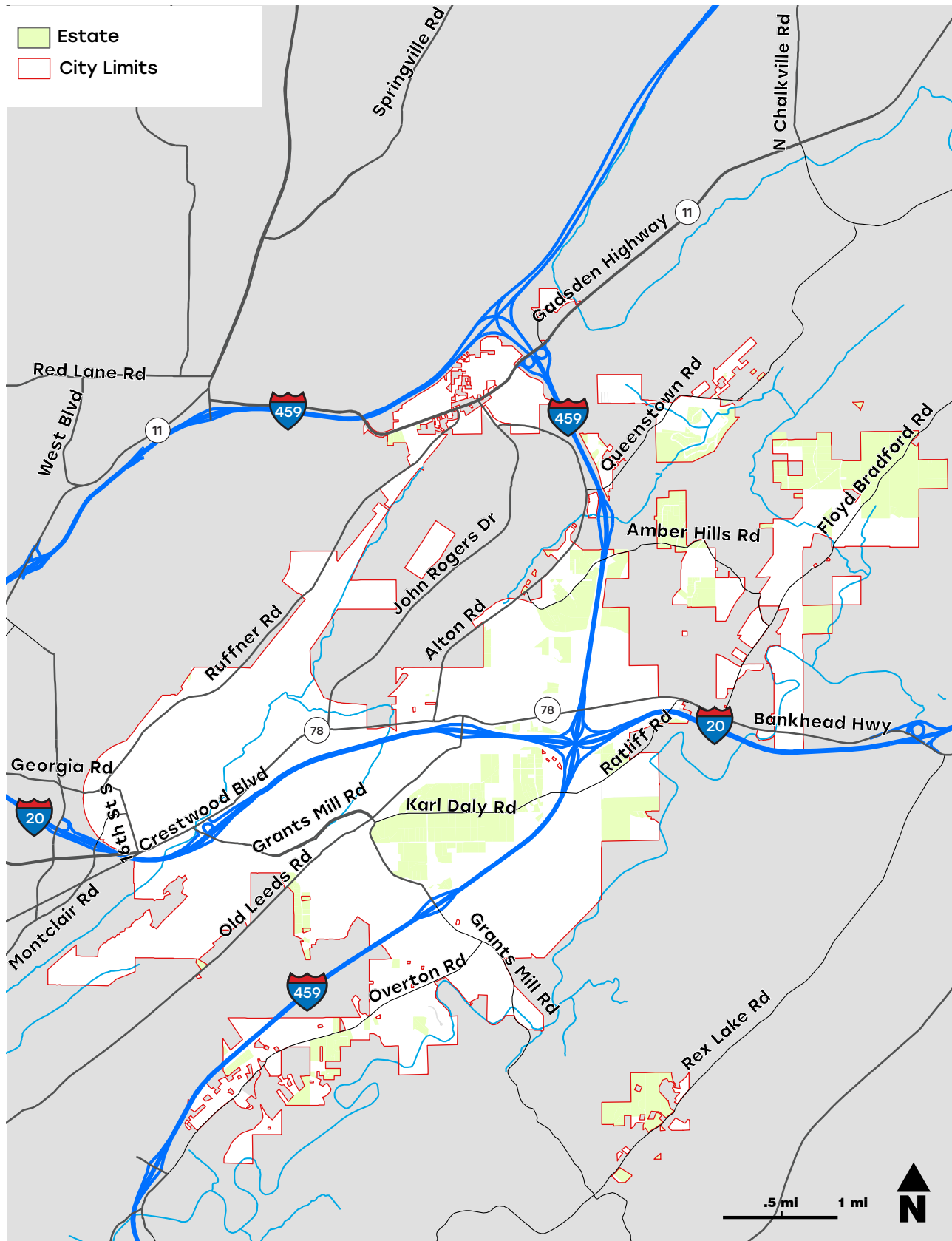
- A-1 Agriculture District - Minimum lot area of 15,000 sq feet, or a minimum of 3 acres per dwelling unit for any new lot that is recorded as a subdivision.
- E-1 Single Family Estate District - 1 acre minimum lot area.

Connectivity /Transportation

- Low vehicular connectivity
- Low pedestrian connectivity



Figure 4.3: Areas shown as Estate on the Future Land Use Map



Residential Low

The Residential Low category applies to those areas that the community wishes to remain rural and low-density in character, including farms, large-lot estates, and very low-density subdivisions. Large setbacks, spacious lots, and extensive open space characterize these areas. Very low street connectivity effectively precludes pedestrian activity. The conservation of environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep slopes, heavily wooded areas, floodplains, and wetlands, should be a primary consideration in these areas.

Primary Land Uses

Single family detached homes, general farming and related functions

Secondary Land Uses

Accessory dwellings, farm related structures such as barns or stables

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- R-1 Single Family
- R-2 Single Family

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

- 10,000 square feet minimum lot size in the R-1 Single Family District
- 8,500 square feet minimum lot size in the R-2 Single Family District

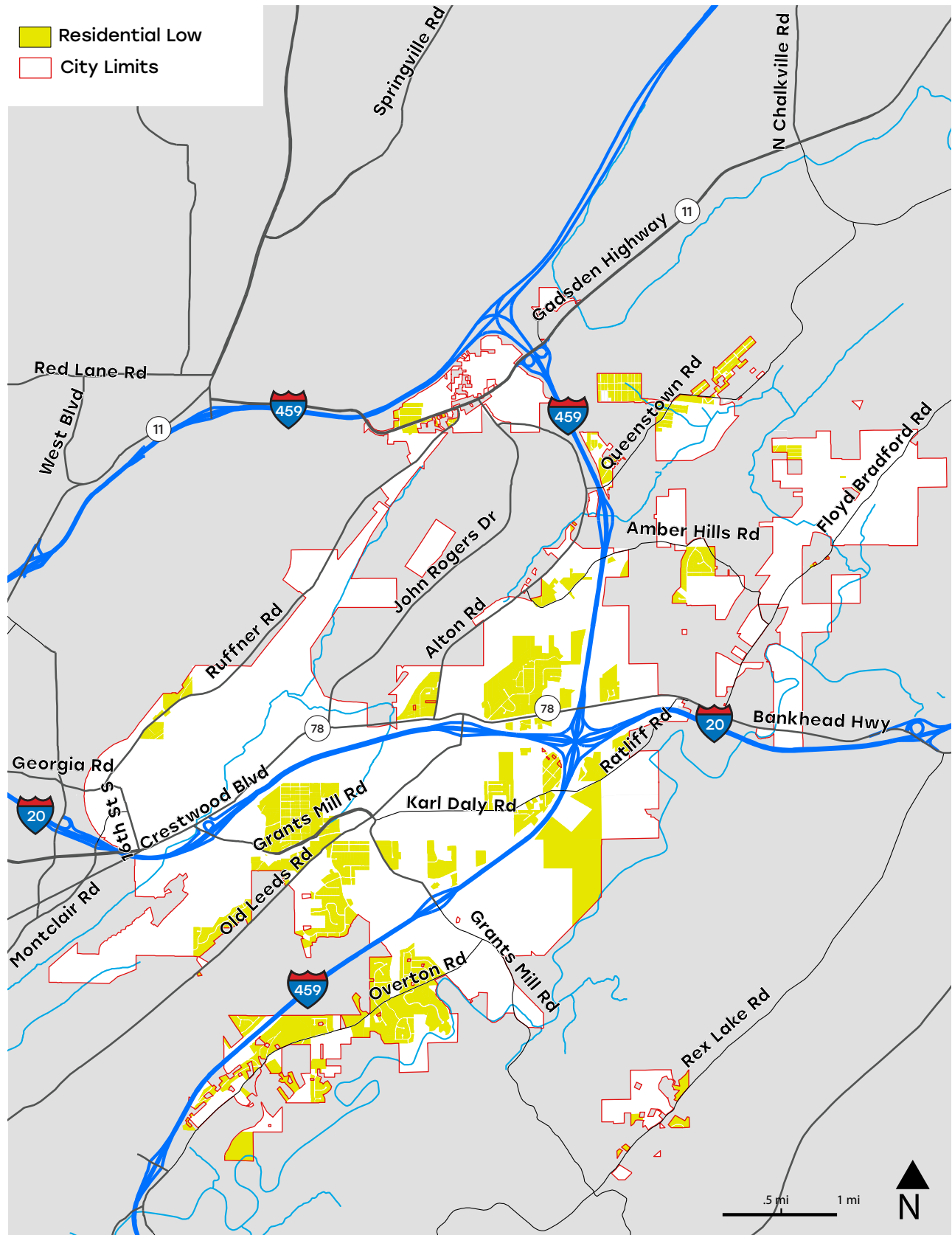
Connectivity /Transportation

- Low to moderate vehicular connectivity
- Low to moderate pedestrian connectivity



Image Credits: Greater Birmingham MLS

Figure 4.4: Areas shown as Residential Low on the Future Land Use Map



Residential Medium

The Residential Medium category applies to areas that offer slightly higher densities and smaller lots than their Residential Low counterparts. Single family detached homes, moderate setbacks and lot sizes, wide streets, cul-de-sacs, and limited connectivity characterize these areas. Homes near Downtown Irondale predominantly fall into this category. While existing subdivisions may not provide adequate connectivity, future development in these areas should provide for connections to adjacent neighborhoods. In the future, new development should be planned with a mix of uses, blending development with schools, parks, recreation, retail, and services linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking.

Primary Land Uses

Single family detached homes and mobile homes

Secondary Land Uses

Duplexes, accessory dwellings, small-footprint retail and office, schools, places of assembly and parks

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- R-2 Single Family
- R-3 Two Family (Duplex)
- R-5 Town House
- R-5-A Mobile Home Subdivision
- R-5-B Mobile Home Park
- R-6 PUD District
- R-7 Garden Home
- HD-1 Historic District

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

- 8,500 square feet minimum lot size in the R-2 Single Family District
- 7,000 square feet minimum lot size in the R-3 Two Family (Duplex) District
- 3,750 square feet minimum lot size with a minimum of 4,360 square feet of land including common area for each town house in the development in R-5 Town House District

- 4,360 square feet minimum lot size in the R-7 Garden Home District
- 7,500 square feet minimum lot size in the R-5A Mobile Home Subdivision District
- 2,400 square feet minimum lot size in the R-5B Mobile Home Park District

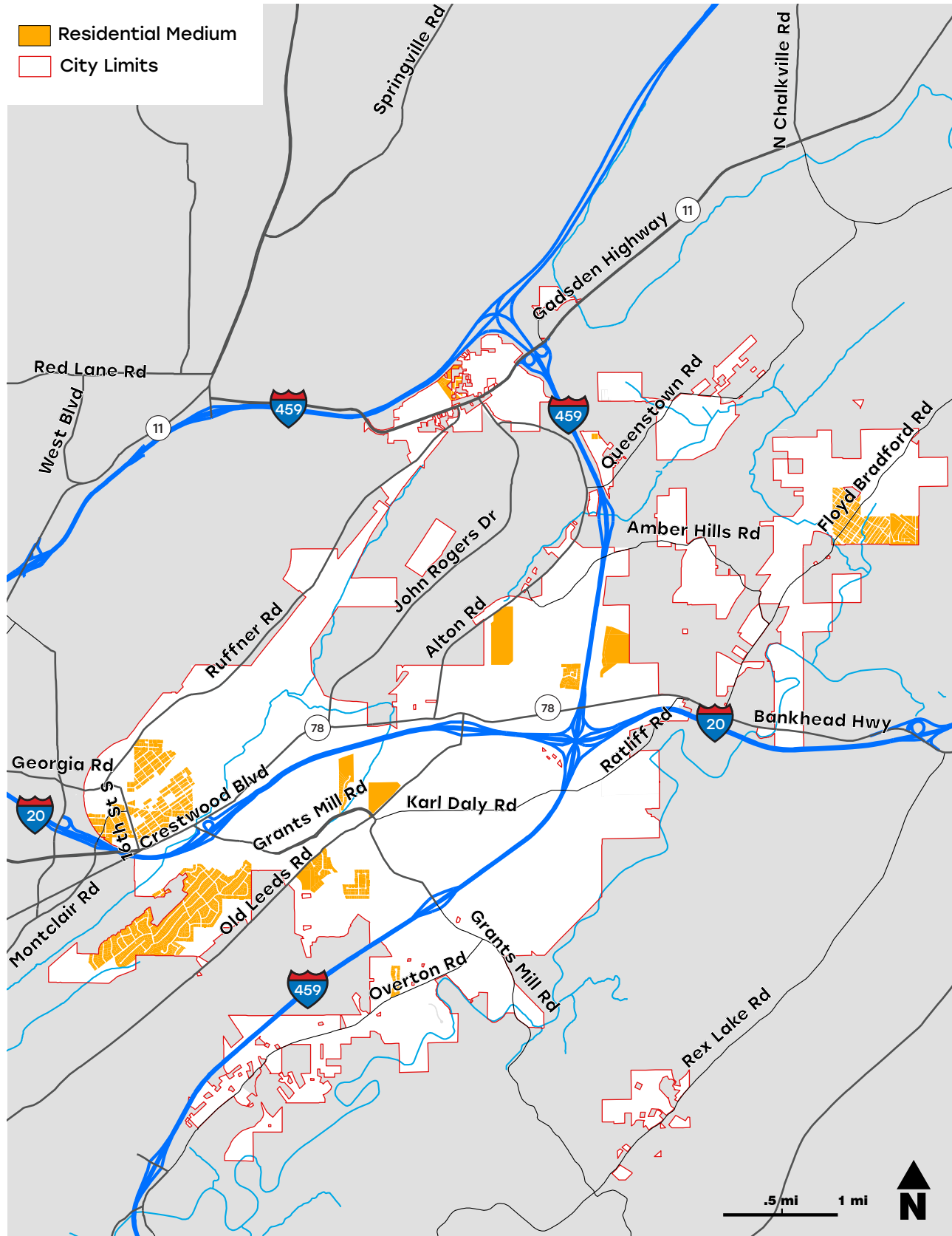
Connectivity / Transportation

- Low to moderate vehicular connectivity
- Low to high pedestrian connectivity, sidewalks should be strongly encouraged in all future developments



Image Credits: Greater Birmingham MLS

Figure 4.5: Areas shown as Residential Medium on the Future Land Use Map



Residential High

The Residential High category is intended to create the opportunity for neighborhoods to offer a variety of lot sizes, housing unit types, and ownership options. The category includes duplexes, quadplexes, condominiums, apartment communities, and senior living facilities. Residential High areas provide a logical transition between commercial activity centers and the medium and low-density residential uses beyond. Buildings should face an internal circulation network of roads with landscaping or open space along the edges of the developments to act as a buffer. Residential High developments should support cost effective housing, facilitate infill development, encourage multiple forms of transportation, such as walking and biking, and promote efficient use of existing infrastructure.

Primary Land Uses

Multi-family dwellings, duplexes and quadplexes

Secondary Land Uses

Assisted or independent senior living facilities, schools, places of assembly, public buildings and parks

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- R-3 Two Family (Duplex)
- R-4 Multiple Family
- RCD Residential Condominium
- R-5 Town House
- R-6 PUD District

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

- 7,000 square feet minimum lot size in the R-3 Two Family (Duplex) District
- Minimum of 9 units per acre (no less than 800 square feet per unit) in the R-4 Multiple Family District
- Minimum lot size of 5 acres (for 20 units per acre) and 10 acres (for 40 units per acre) in the RCD Residential Condominium District
- 3,750 square feet minimum lot size with a minimum of 4,360 square feet of land

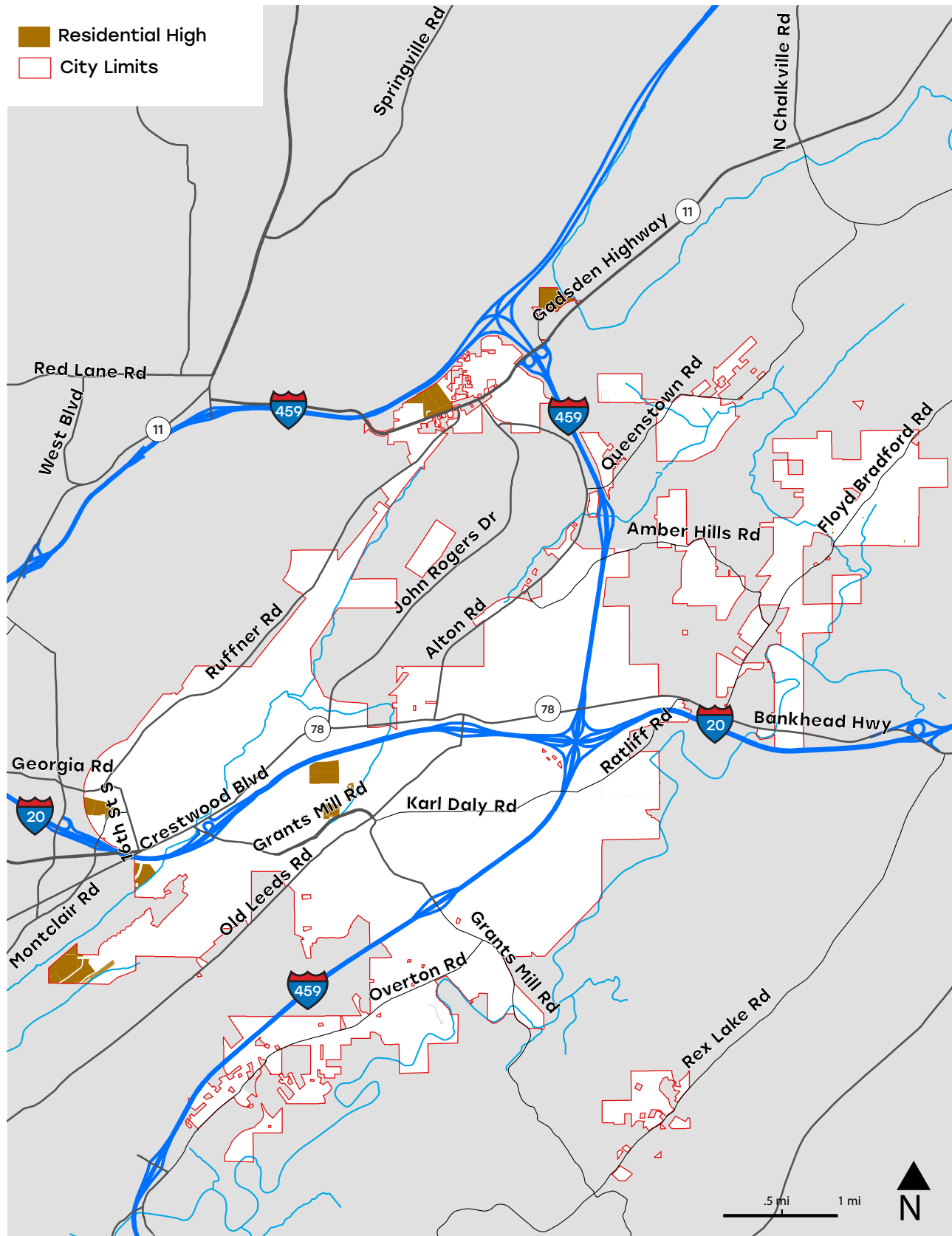
including common area for each town house in the development in the R-5 Town House District

Connectivity / Transportation

- Moderate to high vehicular connectivity
- Moderate to high pedestrian connectivity, sidewalk connections to adjacent developments should be encouraged



Figure 4.6: Areas shown as Residential High on the Future Land Use Map



General Commercial

The General Commercial category applies to areas along major thoroughfares that serve the day-to-day commercial needs of surrounding neighborhoods, or that serve as regional commercial areas, drawing from a service area of five miles or more, depending on the actual use. The category includes general retail and service uses, such as those in the food, hospitality, medical, and automotive service industries, as well as institutional and office spaces. These uses generate high volumes of vehicle trips, so highway access should be carefully managed so as not to impede traffic operations or preclude pedestrian circulation. In the future, existing commercial lands may need to be retrofitted to be more aesthetically appealing and, therefore, more marketable to prospective tenants by building new commercial structures to front the street, taking a portion of the parking lot and creating a shopping square. Moreover, facades can be updated to reflect improvements with new architectural elements and awnings. Pedestrian amenities should be provided.

Primary Land Uses

Commercial / service, general retail, shopping centers, restaurants, grocery stores, and professional offices

Secondary Land Uses

Schools, places of assembly, parks and accessory structures

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- O Office
- C-1 Business
- C-2 Commercial
- HD-1 Historic District
- C-PB Commercial Preferred Business
- PCD Planned Commercial District

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

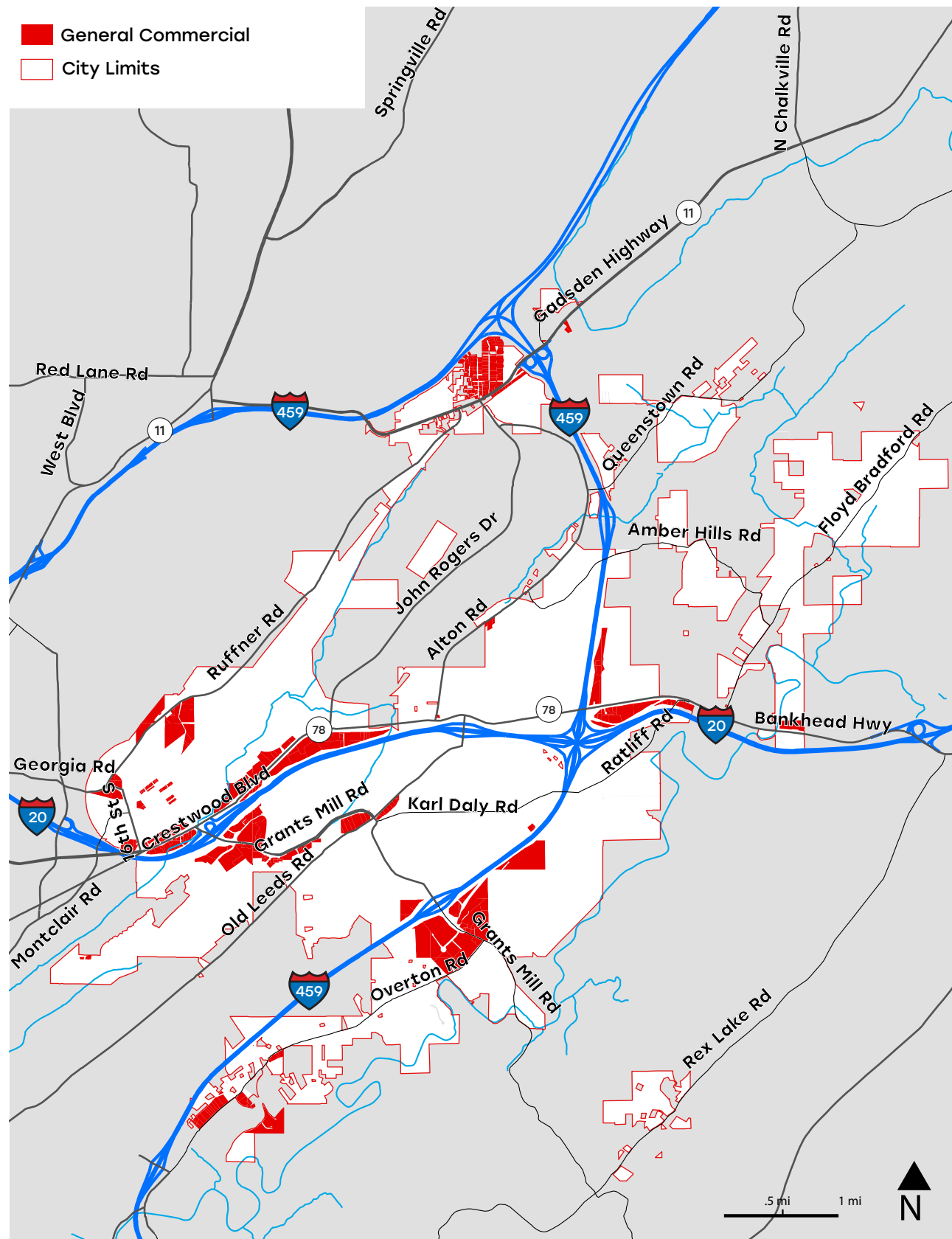
- Moderate to high

Connectivity / Transportation

- High vehicular connectivity
- Low to moderate pedestrian activity, sidewalk connections to adjacent developments should be encouraged



Figure 4.7: Areas shown as General Commercial on the Future Land Use Map



Mixed-Use

The Mixed-Use category is intended for development that is compact, diverse, walkable, and that enhances character and form through appropriate design. It allows for a mix of compatible uses that are either mixed horizontally within a site or vertically within individual buildings. It prioritizes the form of development rather than the uses. This makes it possible to create special destinations with a “sense of place” and appeal. The rehabilitation and re-use of existing historic and/or older buildings and structures in Downtown Irondale is encouraged to allow upper-story dwellings in mixed-use buildings. Mixed-use development should include public amenities such as a pedestrian plazas, sidewalks, and landscaping that help to create a walkable and cohesive development.

Primary Land Uses

Mixed-use buildings, live-work/upper story dwellings, multi-family dwellings, commercial/retail, offices, restaurants, public buildings

Secondary Land Uses

Duplexes, townhouses, single family dwellings (detached and semi-detached) hotels/lodging, schools, places of assembly, cultural uses, light industrial uses and parks

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- See **Action 1.2** in Chapter 5 Livability and Code Reform for recommendations regarding adopting a new Mixed-Use Zoning Category
- R-6 PUD District
- HD-1 Historic District
- PCD Planned Commercial District

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

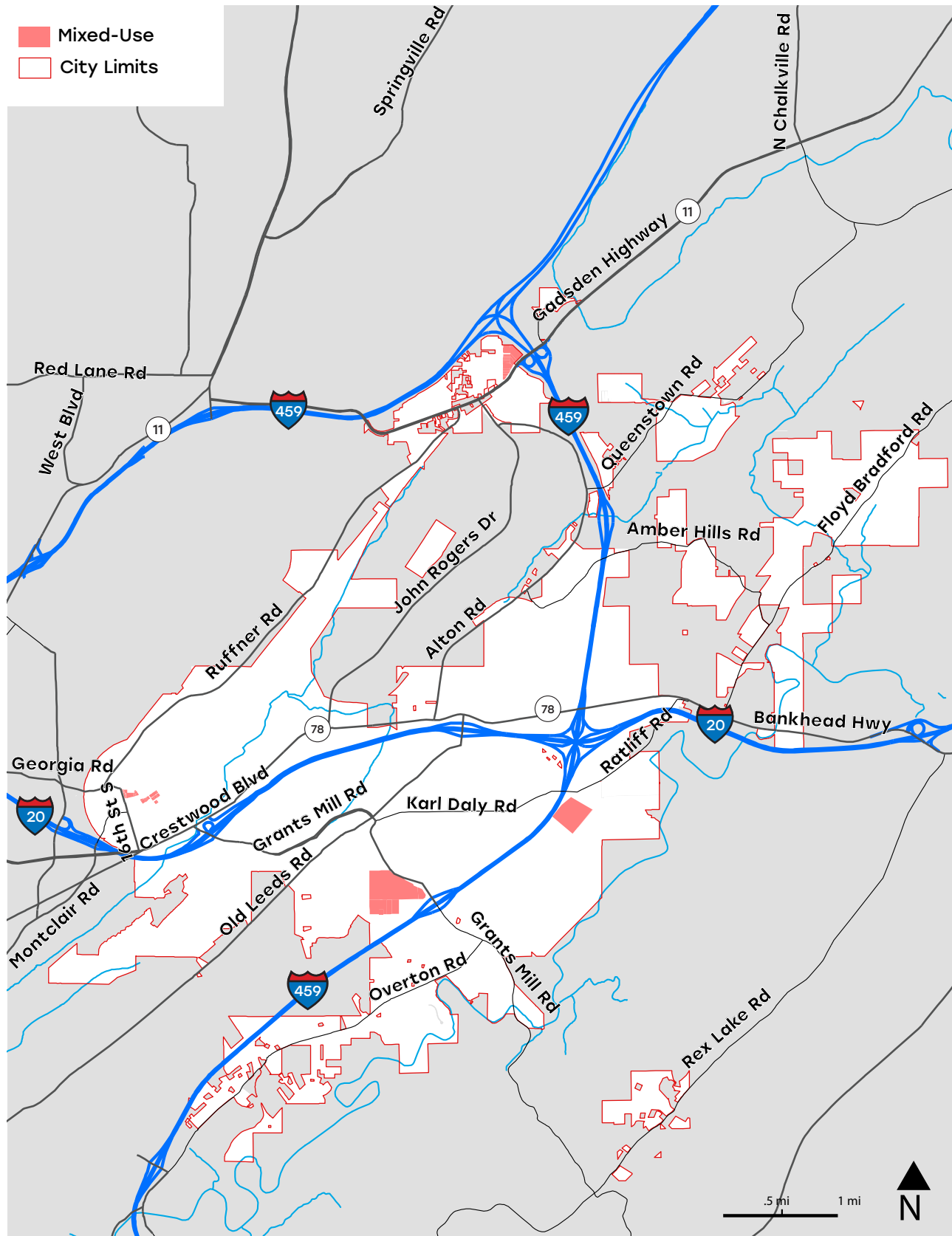
- High

Connectivity / Transportation

- High vehicular connectivity
- High pedestrian connectivity



Figure 4.8: Areas shown as Mixed-Use on the Future Land Use Map



Institutional and Civic

The Institutional and Civic category applies to both public and privately owned or operated institutional and civic uses and lands. The category applies to existing and future public, civic, educational, religious, utility uses, as well as hospitals and cemeteries. These areas exist to provide necessary community services to residents and business alike. New institutional and civic uses should be in high visibility places where access is suitable and adjacent land uses are compatible.

Primary Land Uses

Schools, civic and public facilities, places of assembly, hospitals and non-profit facilities

Secondary Land Uses

Cemeteries, parks, and public utilities

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- INST-1 Institutional
- INST-2 Institutional
- INST-3 Institutional
- C-4 Cemetery
- HD-1 Historic District

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

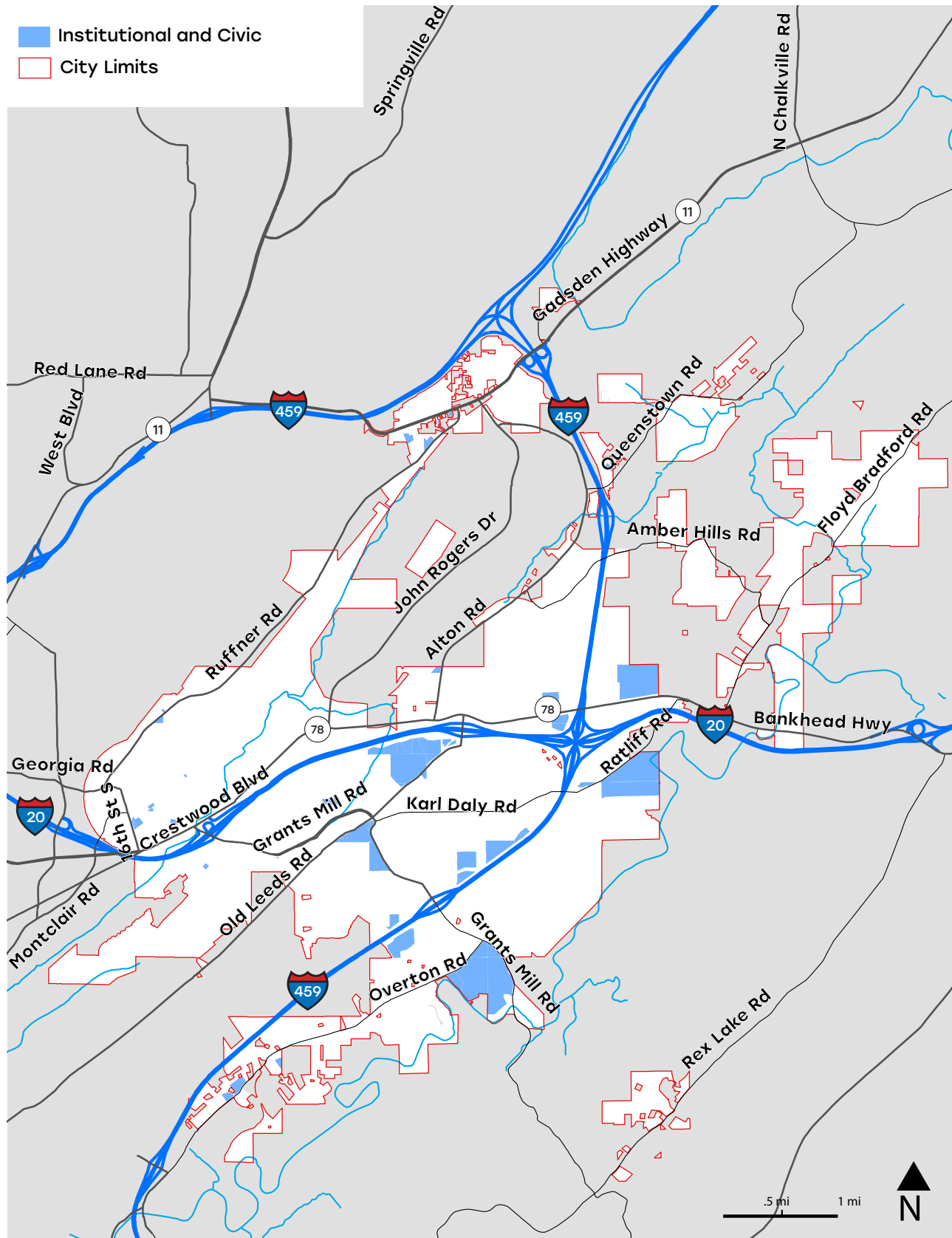
- Moderate to High

Connectivity/ Transportation

- High vehicular connectivity
- Moderate pedestrian connectivity



Figure 4.9: Areas shown as Institutional and Civic on the Future Land Use Map



Light Industrial

The Light Industrial category is intended for lower intensity industrial uses such as manufacturing, assembling and fabricating processes. The category includes the elements of wholesale and storage of products in a manner and character that does not create significant negative impacts to the environment or surrounding area. The category also encourages employment centers with a low degree of environmental impact. New light industrial uses should be developed or, where possible, retrofitted as a part of a planned industrial park having adequate water, sewer, stormwater, and transportation and telecommunication infrastructure for all component uses at build-out.

Primary Land Uses

Light manufacturing, assembling, fabricating general industrial uses, logistics operations, industrial parks, warehousing, wholesaling, distribution, research laboratories, and other limited impact activities

Secondary Land Uses

Supporting commercial, office and institutional uses

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- I-1 Industrial
- I-3 Planned Industrial
- C-2 Commercial

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

- 20,000 square feet minimum lot size in the I-1 Industrial District
- 20,000 square feet minimum lot size in the I-3 Planned Industrial District
- 10,000 square feet minimum lot size in the C-2 Commercial District

Connectivity/ Transportation

- Medium vehicular connectivity, High volume of truck traffic
- Low pedestrian connectivity



Figure 4.10: Areas shown as Light Industrial on the Future Land Use Map

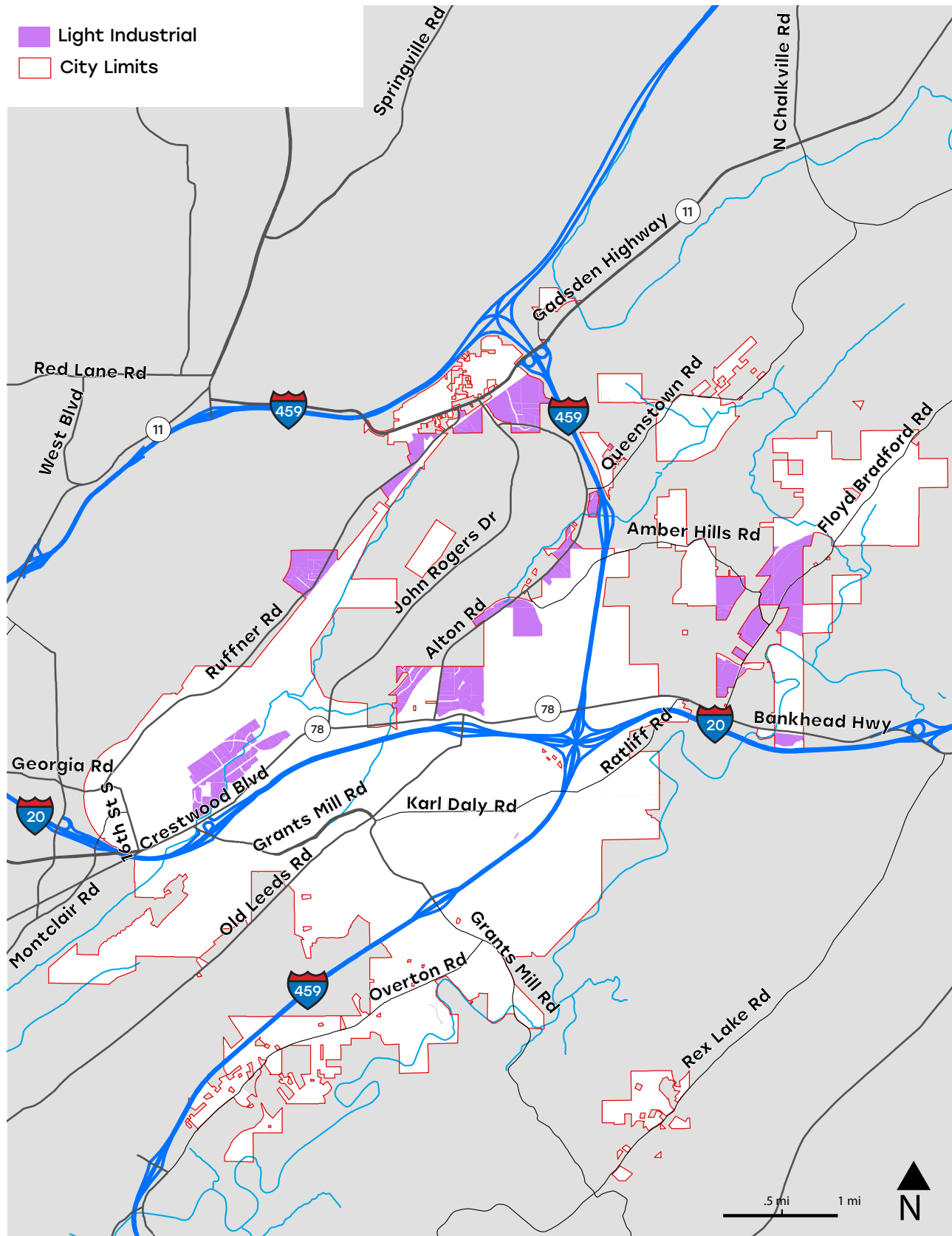




Image Credits: [Bradley Bates](#)

Heavy Industrial

The Heavy Industrial classification is intended for sites that provide a range of industrial uses and activities such as railroad yards, manufacturing, warehousing, industrial processing, resource and energy production, heavy equipment sales and service, and general service and distribution that can generate substantial impacts on the surrounding area. Noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characters are not contained on site. The Norris Railway and Railyard is the predominant Heavy Industrial area in Irondale. Eventually, areas surrounding the Norris Railyard may necessitate environmental remediation if another land use is to be established. Having heavy industrial land usage in this one area will help contain any potential of brownfield intoxication in a single location.

Primary Land Uses

Heavy manufacturing, railyards, general and heavy industrial uses, warehousing, wholesaling, and distribution

Secondary Land Uses

Light industrial, supporting commercial, and office uses

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- I-2 Primary Industrial

Design Principles

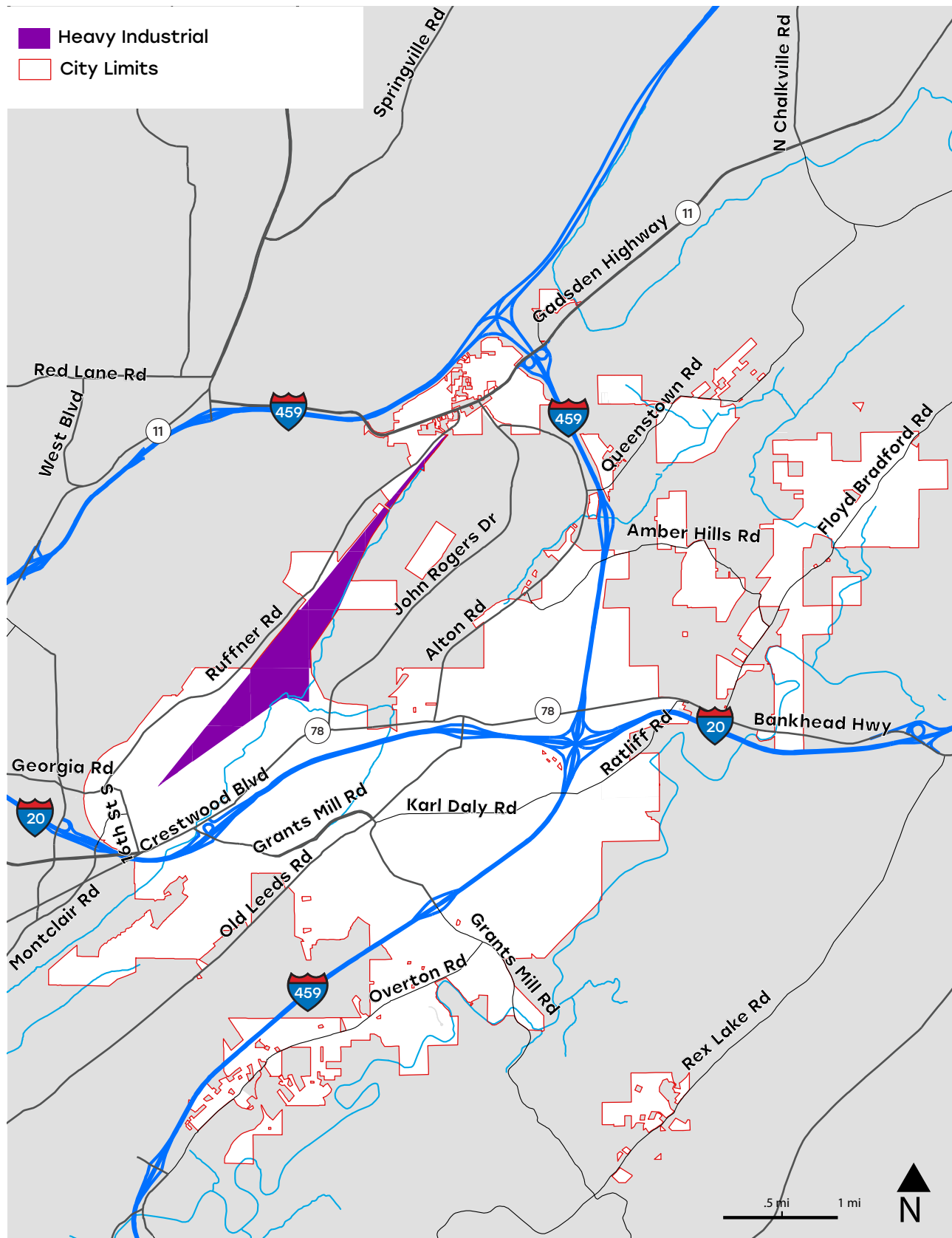
Intensity/Density

- 20,000 square feet minimum lot size in the I-2 Primary Industrial District

Connectivity

- Low vehicular connectivity, high volume of truck traffic
- Low pedestrian connectivity

Figure 4.11: Areas shown as Heavy Industrial on the Future Land Use Map



Utilities

The Utilities land use classification refers to land that is used for the following purposes: public utilities such as water towers, wells, power substations, traditional and renewable power generation (excluding coal) sites, water and wastewater facilities, pumping and lift stations, radio and television stations, towers or communication sites.

Primary Land Uses

Public utilities such as sewage pumping or lift stations, power substations, gas peak shaving stations, and water pumping stations, etc.

Secondary Land Uses

Radio and television stations and towers, communication sites

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- U-1 Utilities

Design Principles

Intensity/Density

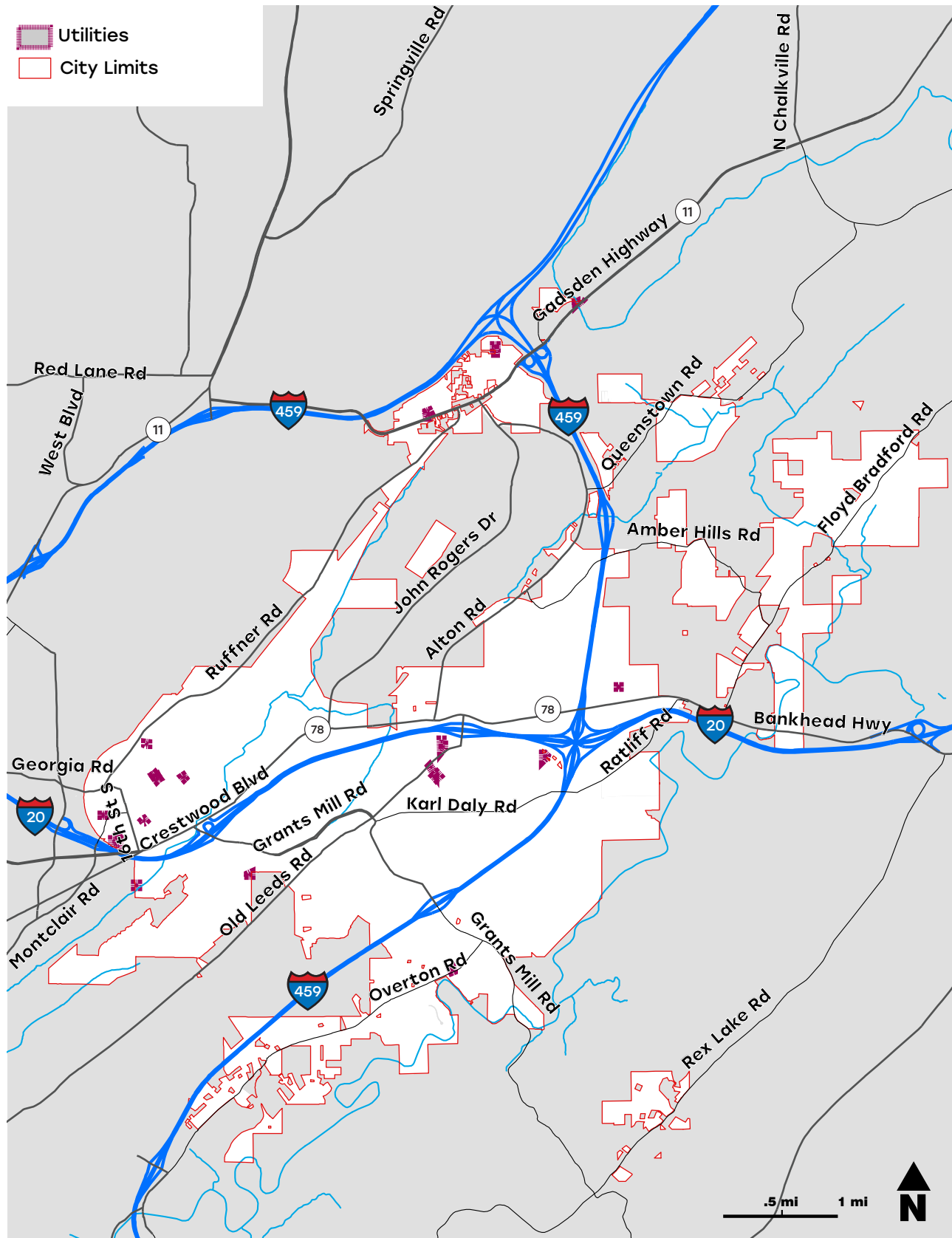
- No minimum lot size

Connectivity

- Low vehicular connectivity, high volume of truck traffic
- Low pedestrian connectivity



Figure 4.12: Areas shown as Utilities on the Future Land Use Map



**Please note, to aid the reader, parcels labeled as "Utility" in the map right have been changed to grey with a red outline. For the overall Future Land Use Map they remain grey.*

Evaluating Zoning Proposals for Consistency with the Future Land Use Map and Comprehensive Plan

Zoning and the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map is the community's visual guide to future planning. It expresses the community's long-term vision for how and where the City will grow over the next 15 years to accommodate expected population and job growth. It is intended to be used as a guide for zoning decisions by the Planning Commission and City Council. While they are not bound to adhere to the Future Land Use Map, the Commission and Council should evaluate future zoning proposals for consistency with the Map as strictly as possible, because the Future Land Use Map represents the community's vision for development.

The Map is drawn from the policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan in conjunction with analysis of existing land use conditions. It shows the future land use and level of development intensity appropriate for each area of the City. While it will influence future zoning decisions, existing land uses will not be affected, nor will the right of property owners to use their land for the purpose as currently zoned. The designation of an area to a specific category on the Future Land Use Map does not mean that a particular zoning classification is recommended. Rather, a range of zoning districts are appropriate for each Future Land Use category, as seen in **Table 4.1**. The Planning Commission should evaluate whether a zoning proposal for a particular property would match those appropriate for its Future Land Use category.

Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan

The categories employed in the Future Land Use Map should not be interpreted to support or preclude developments without consideration of the policies and intent of the Comprehensive Plan. Site considerations relating to topography, soils, conservation resources, or hydrology are also important in establishing the specific use and intensity of a particular parcel. Similarly, the presence or absence of adequate streets, schools, parks, and other community facilities should be considered before a development is approved that would otherwise be in conformance with the Future Land Use Map. Determination of the consistency of a proposed use or zone with the Comprehensive Plan should include consideration of the following questions:

- Is the proposal consistent with the themes and policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan?
- Is the form and function of the proposed development appropriate for its category designated on the Future Land Use Map?
- Will community facilities, parks, pedestrian connections, and other infrastructure be available at the appropriate levels to serve the development as proposed?

Relationship Between Zoning and the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map expresses the community's vision for how they want to see Irondale develop over time. It is a guidance document, not a set of regulations. It does not replace the City's zoning and development regulations. The Future Land Use Map and the descriptions of each Future Land Use category are intended guide decisions on zoning cases and discretionary permits by the Planning and Zoning Board and City Council. The Zoning Board and Council should refer to the Future Land Use Map whenever they evaluate a proposed rezoning or land use question. If the proposal is consistent with the Future Land Use Map, then they should approve it; if it is not, then they should evaluate other alternatives. The Future Land Use Map is not a static document, however; it can and should be periodically updated to reflect changes in real conditions and community preferences.

Table 4.1 can be used to evaluate the consistency of zoning proposals with the Future Land Use Map. If a particular zoning district is appropriate within a Future Land Use category, then it will be shaded in red. If it is an inappropriate zoning district for that category, then it is left blank.

Table 4.1: Appropriate Zoning Districts for types of uses in each Future Land Use Category

| Related Zoning District | Future Land Use Category | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|---------|
| | Parks & Protected Open Space | Estate | Residential Low | Residential Medium | Residential High | General Commercial | Mixed-use | Institutional & Civic | Light Industrial | Heavy Industrial | Utility |
| A-1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E-1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-4 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| RCD | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-5 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-5-A | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-5-B | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-6 PUD | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R-7 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| O | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Inst-1 (schools,churches) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Inst-2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Inst-3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| C-1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| C-2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| C-4 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I-1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I-2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I-3 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| HD-1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| C-PB | | | | | | | | | | | |
| PCD | | | | | | | | | | | |
| U-1 | | | | | | | | | | | |

Future Land Use Goals

Irondale is an established and historic City that is experiencing a new period of growth, largely driven by new developments and investments in previously undeveloped parts of the City. While this growth offers several benefits for Irondale, it must be managed because it will come with increasing interest from developers looking to capitalize on Irondale's momentum. The Future Land Use chapter and accompanying map aims to provide the City of Irondale with a plan to ensure that future development and growth occurs in a rational and thought-out way that results in growth that benefits everyone in Irondale and minimizes the negative effects of development such as increased traffic, urban sprawl, and loss of natural open space.

The Future Land Use Map and its accompanying actions aim to balance the desires of current residents while meeting the needs of future residents by concentrating development where it already exists as well as along emerging commercial corridors. It also aims to protect and preserve Irondale's natural beauty and resources by limiting development in the most environmentally sensitive areas.

The 4 goals within this Future Land Use chapter are:

1. Encourage redevelopment in existing commercial areas.
2. Protect Environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Encourage sustainable long term development patterns.
4. Encourage a wide range of housing types.

GOAL #1

Encourage redevelopment in existing commercial areas.



Action 1.1

Encourage mixed-use development.

Mixed-use development is a type of development that is characterized to be compact, diverse and walkable and that enhances character and form through appropriate design. It allows for a mix of compatible uses that are either mixed horizontally within a site or vertically within individual buildings. It prioritizes the form of development rather than the uses. This makes it possible to create special destinations with a "sense of place" and appeal. Mixed-use development in Irondale would allow residents and visitors to do more than one thing at a given location. These uses support each other and keep users from having to make multiple automobile-based trips.

While a mixed-use zoning district would need to be adopted and incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance as a first step to permit mixed-use development (see Action 1.2 right), a key concept of this Comprehensive Plan is to encourage mixed-use development that is compact, diverse, walkable, and that enhances character and form through appropriate design.

Mixed-use development also:

- Encourages the development of mixed-use centers and/or buildings that combine restaurants, offices, housing, live-work spaces, civic buildings, cultural buildings and other complementary uses arranged in an environment that is convenient for customers, employees, residents and tourists;
- Promotes new infill residential and non-residential development;
- Promotes site design that accommodates and enhances pedestrian activity along the street, that is not dominated by parking and that reduces conflicts between pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles;

- Provides unique places for people to live, work, shop, play and learn; and
- Encourages appropriate transitions between higher-intensity uses and adjacent lower-density residential districts.

Mixed-use development is encouraged in Downtown Irondale and at Grants Mill Station. In Downtown Irondale, the rehabilitation and re-use of existing historic and/or older buildings and structures is encouraged. New mixed-use development should include public amenities such as a pedestrian plazas, sidewalks, and landscaping that help to create a walkable and cohesive development.



Action 1.2

Adopt a Mixed-Use zoning district that allows for a variety of uses and development types.

A successful Downtown or mixed-use center depends on a diverse mix of compatible uses organized around a walkable grid and vibrant public spaces. While Irondale has an existing Downtown with a handful of successful businesses, it has also struggled with high vacancy rates and an unsuccessful mix of retail tenants. Today it lacks the critical density of thriving business to support a truly active and lively downtown with a variety of experiences and attractions. Creating a mixed-use zoning district would allow for a greater mix of development types and thus allow for Downtown Irondale to grow and evolve over time. Currently, no existing zoning district offers the flexibility needed to enable Downtown Irondale to grow incrementally, organically, and with the density necessary to make it a true center for the community. While the PCD Planned Commercial District references a range of uses and configurations, this district only permits commercial uses and not residential uses. For this reason, it is recommended the City create a mixed-use zoning district that can permit the desired range of land uses and design

standards for Downtown Irondale.

A mixed-use zoning district would permit a diverse mix of civic, residential, and commercial uses, including retail, restaurants, and offices, mixed both vertically and horizontally. It does not require shopfronts with housing or offices above; it simply permits this and other flexible arrangements of uses that can shift to adapt to evolving community preferences. It can also include design standards that promote walkable development, such as small block sizes, buildings that face the street, and parking lots behind buildings. By focusing regulations on the form and feel of development and allowing more flexibility in choice of land uses, a mixed-use district will help Downtown Irondale, and other areas in the future, grow and thrive.

Example Mixed-Use Zoning District regulations can be provided upon request by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.



Action 1.3

Encourage and incentivize infill developments and redevelopments.

Infill development fills in the gaps in existing developed areas, often using vacant land, underutilized sites such as parking lots, and the reconstruction of existing buildings. Infill development often utilizes existing infrastructure and can reduce the need to expand expensive types of infrastructure such as sewer and water lines, roads, and public services. The term “redevelopment” describes converting an existing built property into another use. Within Irondale, sites along Crestwood Boulevard, Grants Mill Station, and certain properties in near Downtown Irondale are candidates for infill development or redevelopment. The following strategies and incentives should be utilized by the City of Irondale:

- Develop and maintain an inventory of vacant and buildable land. Such available properties might include those identified as tax delinquent.

- Provide property tax exemptions, credits, or abatements to developers conducting infill development and making developers aware of State programs that offer these incentives.
- Leverage available federal funding programs for redevelopment such as CDBG, New Market tax credits, HUD loan programs, EDA programs, and other funding sources to provide additional resources for a variety of projects.
- Waive certain development or permit fees.
- Streamline the approval/permitting process.
- Make amendments to adopted building and fire codes if they are making the redevelopment of properties become more challenging and costly to bring “up-to-code.”



Action 1.4

Revitalize Grants Mill Station.

See specific focus area recommendations in **Chapter 3 Focus Areas.**



Action 1.5

Make Downtown Irondale a more attractive destination for residents and visitors.

See specific focus area recommendations in **Chapter 3 Focus Areas.**



Action 1.6

Revitalize properties along the Crestwood Boulevard / US 78 corridor.

Today, the Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 corridor is a transition area from Irondale to Birmingham and features a mix of typical strip-commercial land uses, many of which are vacant, underutilized, or in need of aesthetic updates. Many properties along this corridor would benefit from greater public investment such as landscaping in the median, lighting, gateways and wayfinding signage.

The 2016 Irondale Comprehensive Plan made detailed recommendations for the corridor in Appendix D: Design Recommendations for Downtown Irondale and US 78; Chapter 3: Recommendations to Transform US 78/ Crestwood Boulevard into a Vibrant Corridor; and Chapter 4: US 78/ Crestwood Boulevard Design Standards and Guidelines. Unfortunately, since the adoption of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, little has changed along corridor. Therefore, the 2016 Comprehensive Plan’s actions and design recommendations should still be considered for the corridor.

Highlights of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan’s suggestions for the corridor are:

- Establish a unified signage ordinance along the US 78/Crestwood Boulevard corridor
- Develop a streetscape Master Plan for the US 78/Crestwood Boulevard corridor
- Incentivize, recruit, and attract additional businesses to the corridor
- Adopt design standards and guidelines along the corridor

The above recommendations are not an exhaustive list. To read the Focus Area recommendations in Appendix D of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan please visit: <https://www.irondaleonthemove.com/>

GOAL #2

Protect environmentally sensitive areas.



Action 2.1

Promote the use of conservation easements to preserve environmentally sensitive land.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits use of the land to protect its conservation values. This allows the property owner to continue to own and use the land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs. When a property owner donates a conservation easement to a land trust, they give up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, some owners might give up the right to build additional structures, while retaining the right to grow crops. Because the conservation easement is tied to the land, future owners will also be bound by the easement's terms. The land trust is responsible for making sure the easement's terms are followed. Conservation easements offer great flexibility.

An easement on property containing rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development, for example, while an easement on a farm might allow continued farming and the building of additional agricultural structures. An easement may apply to just a portion of the property and need not require public access. Recreational uses such as hiking trails might also be developed in a conservation easement as they allow the land to be preserved with little to no impact.

A landowner sometimes sells a conservation easement, but usually easements are donated. If the donation benefits the public by permanently

protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation. The amount of the donation is the difference between the land's value with the easement and its value without the easement, but it is important to note that placing an easement on a property may or may not result in property tax savings



Action 2.2

Reduce development intensity via a step-down approach near the Cahaba River.

One question in the public survey associated with this plan asked, "What areas of Irondale should be protected from future development?" The number one response was "Natural Areas and the Cahaba watershed." Protecting the Cahaba River is not only a top desire of the public, but also in line with planning best practices, which recognize that protecting our greatest natural assets is more important than ever.

According to the Smart Growth principle of urban planning, development should naturally "step down" or decrease in intensity as it radiates outward from an "Urban Core" area to higher intensity residential, lower intensity residential, and finally rural and then natural zones. This is based on the pattern human development has naturally taken for thousands of years, but the advent of the personal automobile has enabled development to sprawl well outside the established boundaries of the city. The transect concept is particularly relevant when discussing land use planning near important natural resources and habitats, as it helps explain how land use intensity should diminish near sensitive natural areas which can be severely impacted by higher intensity development.

The scale and density of high intensity land uses pose a great threat to sensitive areas like the Cahaba River. If allowed near the river, these intense uses could create excess stormwater runoff, increase pollutants, and reduce natural

habitat. In turn, this would reduce water quality, inhibit recreational activity, and pose serious dangers to the Cahaba River ecosystem and downstream areas. To protect and preserve the Cahaba River, this Plan recommends that uses near the river be restricted to low-density residential and conservation uses.



Action 2.3

Modify the Zoning Ordinance to include conservation subdivision regulations.

Conservation subdivisions (also known as cluster subdivisions) are an alternative way of building traditional single-family subdivisions that “cluster” development on a site to preserve land as common open space for residents. Such developments can work in spaces that are more environmentally restrained by steep slopes or floodplains and preserve those areas for open space and recreation. These types of subdivisions have numerous additional benefits, both financial and environmental including:

- Higher home values
- Preservation of rural community character
- Reduced infrastructure costs per home
- Greater access to open space for residents
- Improved stormwater management
- Wildlife conservation

Irondale currently has no guidelines and standards for the creation and use of conservation subdivisions. Therefore, it is recommended that the City modify the Zoning Ordinance to include Conservation Subdivision regulations.

Example language for Conservation Subdivision regulations can be provided upon request by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.

To further encourage developers to build conservation subdivisions rather than conventional subdivisions, the City should consider including the following developer incentives for conservation subdivisions:

- Expedited permitting and review process
- Density bonuses
- Flexibility in lot size and siting requirements
- Waivers of application, permit, or capital recovery fees

GOAL #3

Encourage sustainable long-term development patterns.



Action 3.1

Continue to grow as a city of residential areas supported by activity centers.

Clustered development, with a high density of retail and dining options, civic uses, and other activities close to residential areas, tends to be more successful than stand-alone centers that are far removed from other residents. These areas can be identified as “activity centers,” i.e., compact areas that draw in residents from the surrounding neighborhoods for a wide variety of reasons. The intent is that each activity center be located and designed to support the adjacent neighborhoods, utilize the existing transportation network, and promote the efficient provision of infrastructure and services.

Irondale has two areas which can already be identified as activity centers, Downtown Irondale supported by the surrounding neighborhood and Grants Mill Station, which is supported by

the adjacent Holiday Gardens neighborhood. In addition, the intersection of Grants Mill Road and Old Leeds Road is an emerging activity center with new homes and a grocery store alongside supporting retail slated for construction in the near future.

The following land use policies should be encouraged:

- Maintain and enhance Downtown Irondale as a main activity center for the City. Encourage upper-story residential dwellings in existing buildings where possible and encourage new infill development to draw more residents and visitors Downtown.
- Attract infill development to Grants Mill Station featuring new buildings and destinations for nearby residents (See more in Focus Areas: Grants Mill Station on pg XX)
- Add pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to Grants Mill Station from residential areas off Beacon Drive.
- Concentrate commercial development around major intersections and discourage commercial-strip development from expanding further east on Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 (where possible).
- Encourage the development of mixed-use and high density residential development around activity centers with the availability of interconnected streets. Residential density should decrease away from activity centers.
- Locate compact neighborhood centers in locations convenient to existing and emerging neighborhoods (such as within a five-minute walking radius of residential areas). Neighborhood centers may include a variety of land use functions limited to a size compatible with the surrounding neighborhood(s). They may be as simple as a neighborhood-scale commercial uses that provide for the day-to-day needs of nearby residents). This type of proximity increases the potential for walking and bicycling and will put more homes near commercial areas, parks and schools.



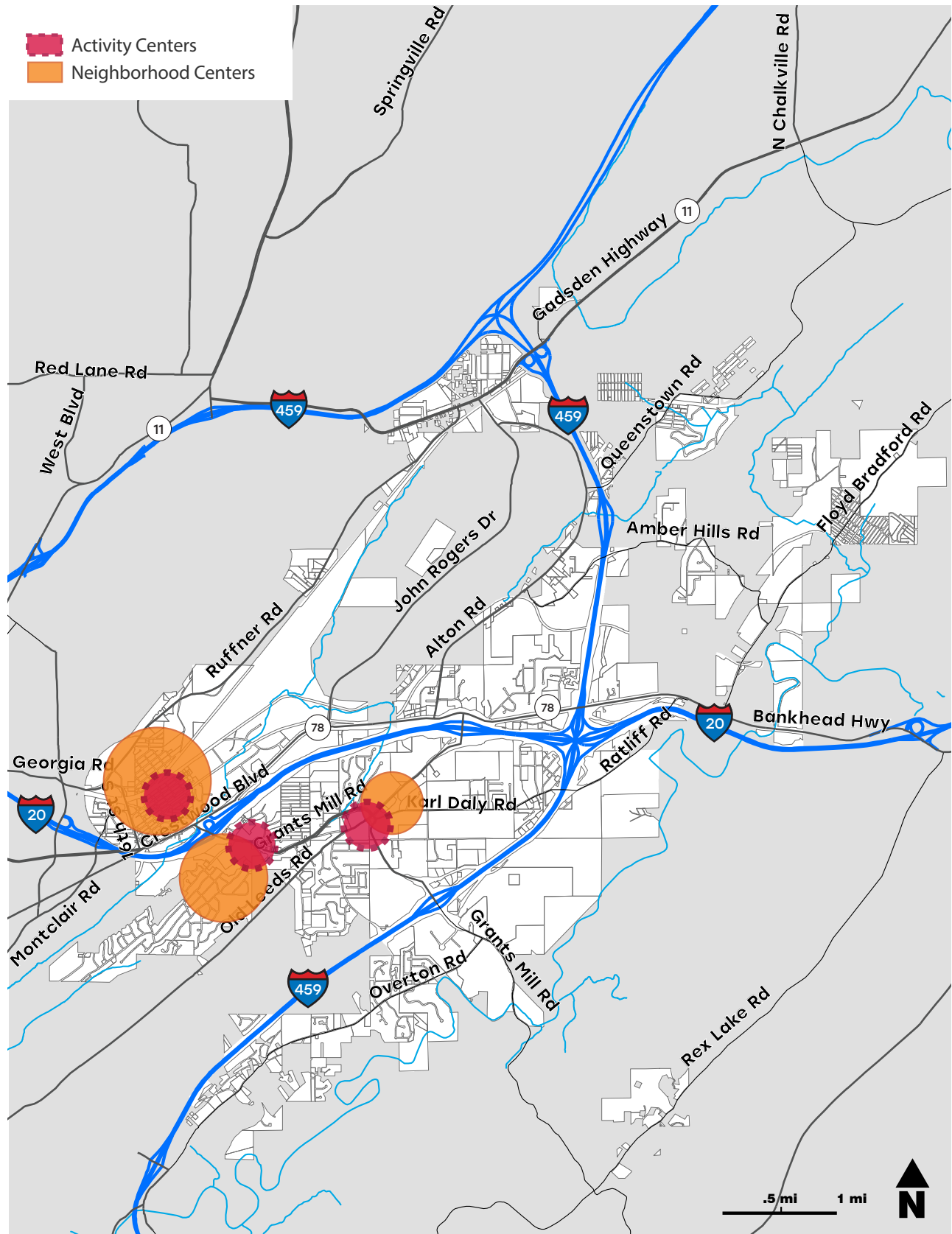
Action 3.2

Ensure future developments improve pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular connectivity.

Poor connectivity between destinations can make routine trips a headache and make walking and bicycling inconvenient and dangerous, forcing Irondale drivers to get in the car for even short trips. New development proposals should provide a high degree of pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular access within the development itself and between adjoining neighborhoods. Excessive cul-de-sacs and long blocks should be discouraged, while sidewalks, intersections, and street stubs that enable connections to future adjacent developments should be promoted.



Figure 4.13: Activity Centers in Irondale



GOAL #4

Encourage a wide range of housing types.



Action 4.1

Encourage the development of new housing to achieve a mix of housing types at a range of price points.

The City's housing market should continue to provide opportunities for the wide variety of people who call Irondale home. A healthy community accommodates a variety of people, backgrounds, and lifestyles, including first responders, managers, janitors, teachers, seniors or retirees, young professionals, families of all sizes, and people with disabilities. As the City continues to grow and change, the community's housing needs will also evolve. This will require the allocation of land for a diversity of housing choices. Some housing types, including cottages-sizes single family homes and townhomes, are increasing in popularity and were specifically mentioned as desirable during the public involvement process associated with this Plan.

Housing diversity offers the following benefits:

- **Improves economic development:** Diverse housing options at a variety of price points are critical to the local economy, as they improve the ability of businesses to recruit and retain employees that match their required skill sets.
- **Provides long-term economic stability:** Research has shown that communities with more variety in housing types have lower foreclosure rates in the long run (Chakroborty & McMillan, 2018. Journal of Planning Education and Research). Like a diversified investment portfolio, a community needs a broad range of housing choices to weather unpredictable economic

cycles. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0739456X18810787>

- **Allows for aging in place:** Aging in place is an increasingly popular choice for seniors. Having a variety of housing choices that address a broad spectrum of income levels, physical abilities and lifestyle choices will allow Irondale seniors to remain in their homes and keep contributing to their community.
- **Helps sustain families:** Diverse housing options support the health and well-being of children and families. When housing needs are appropriately met, children are more likely to be healthy and perform well in school, and parents are more likely to participate in the workforce.

If current trends hold, the number of total housing units in Irondale are expected to rise from 5,700 in 2021 to 5,800 by 2026*. To ensure Irondale remains a vibrant, productive and stable community for years to come the City should encourage the development of multiple housing types.

**Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010 Summary File
Esri forecasts for 2021 and 2026*

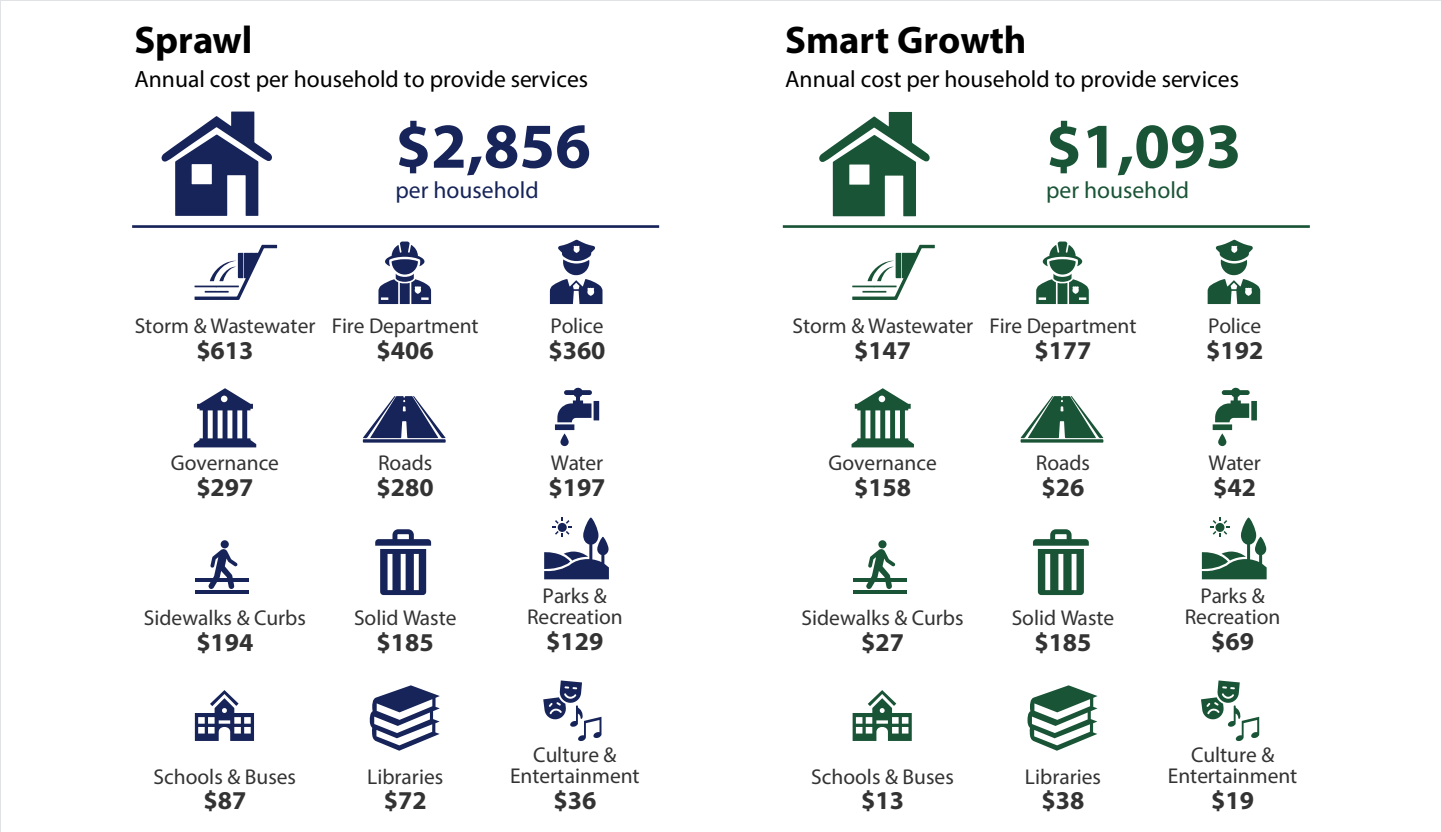


Counting the Cost – Suburban Sprawl vs. Smart Growth

All Irondale residents are familiar with suburban sprawl – low density, automobile dependent, disconnected subdivisions that spread endlessly outward, consuming land and resources. It is the dominant form of suburban development, including most of Irondale, because it is typically the cheapest form to build. It is not, however, the cheapest form to sustain. Sprawling, disconnected subdivisions create artificially high traffic congestion by forcing all motorists onto the same few roads, increasing travel times and fuel consumption per resident. More importantly, however sprawl costs a lot of money to extend and provide City services. It costs more money to repair a street or a water pipe that connects four homes spread over eight acres than four homes spread over one acre. Police and fire protection must travel greater distances to reach the same amount of people, exacerbating safety issues. Buses must travel farther and longer to reach the same amount of students. Over time, the cost of maintaining these far-flung services can push even the most responsible public entities into insolvency.

Smart growth, by contrast, describes development that encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, and development within existing neighborhoods rather than in undeveloped areas. Smart growth takes advantage of compact design to create walkable, enduring neighborhoods that preserve open space and rural land. It creates distinctive, attractive neighborhoods with a strong sense of place that accommodate residents of all ages and backgrounds. It is also cheaper than conventional development – smart growth reduces annual public services per household by almost 10%. The keys to smart growth include directing development towards the community core where they can utilize existing community infrastructure, and using compact design that encourages walking and lowers municipal service costs per household. Smart growth helps the City satisfy development demand without excessive long-term infrastructure obligations. Irondale is here for the long haul; it should invest in development patterns that it can afford to maintain for a long time.

Figure 4.14: Comparison of Selected Costs to Service Sprawl vs. Smart Growth



Source: Adapted from Halifax Regional Municipality

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An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood with rows of houses and trees. A semi-transparent red overlay covers the bottom two-thirds of the image, where the chapter title is placed. A thin orange horizontal line is positioned above the title.

Chapter Five

Livability & Code Reform

Image Credit: Fairin Realty LLC





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Livability & Code Reform

This chapter includes recommended changes to the Zoning Code and additional policies intended to enhance livability for all residents. In particular, recommendations focus on supporting the quality and appeal of rental homes, encouraging increased code enforcement and property maintenance, enhancing the City's physical character, and enhancing municipal services, facilities, and programs. In addition, this chapter outlines several planning best practices that the City should implement to modernize and update regulations and ordinances.

This Livability and Code Reform chapter addresses the following 8 goals and recommendations:

1. Adopt codes and programs to improve the conditions of rental housing units.
2. Enhance code enforcement efforts and encourage better property maintenance.
3. Enhance the physical character and appearance of the City.
4. Enhance public services, facilities and programs throughout the City.
5. Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to enhance urban form.
6. Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions for parking and access standards.
7. Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to permitted uses.
8. Other recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions.

GOAL #1

Adopt codes and programs to improve the conditions of rental housing units.



Action 1.1

Modify the R-3 Two-Family (Duplex), R-4 Multiple Family, RCD Residential Condominium, and R-5 Town House zoning districts to include additional regulations to ensure the health, safety, welfare, and aesthetic improvements of duplexes, town houses, apartments, and multiple family dwellings.

It is recommended that the City modify the zoning district regulations to ensure that new residential construction meets certain aesthetic and safety-related performance requirements. Adopting such types of additional regulations will ensure that future residential construction will be aesthetically appealing and safe and

will prevent undesired bland and uniform “tract home” development.

The following types of regulations can help improve the safety and aesthetic appearance of detached single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, and multifamily dwellings:

- Home size. Consider increasing the minimum livable floor area to increase the size and value of homes in Irondale and ensure all new homes have enough space to be comfortably habitable. The minimum should be set to still allow smaller and more affordable homes.
- Durable building requirement. Ensure that new homes are made of quality durable materials. Durable materials include brick, stucco, heavy timber, wood, slate, metal, and tile roofing. Vinyl and cementitious siding are only recommended in limited quantities as accent materials.
- Façade enhancements. Require that each dwelling unit provide a public entrance from the street – a covered porch, covered stoop, or balcony over the main entrance provides shade and protection from the elements and ensures the residence addresses the street.

- Landscaping and driveway standards. Expand the landscape and buffer requirements and regulate the location of garages and driveways.

These types of additional regulations may be added as text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance in the various residential districts. It may be desirable to require different dwelling unit sizes and façade enhancements for certain types of residences, e.g., different requirements for detached single-family homes than for multiple family buildings.

Sample language can be provided by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham upon request.



Action 1.2

Create a Rental Property licensing inspection system and establish a Good Landlord Program.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, absentee landlords and associated code violations were mentioned as an issue. Poorly maintained rental properties can contain illicit uses and safety hazards and negatively impact the neighborhood. A municipal licensing and inspection system would provide flexibility and the authority to require higher standards.

Such a program would require residential landlords to be licensed and follow minimum standards. These standards would include proper maintenance, addressing public safety concerns, and other general compliances – all recommended in Allan Mallach’s 2015 “Raising the Bar” report (p. 17). A rental property license would include an annual fee proportionate to the cost of services. To incentivize participation in the Good Landlord Program, rental property owners who complete the program’s qualifications could have their annual fees reduced or waived. Revenue from licenses would go towards the cost of servicing apartments including code enforcement, mowing by the

Department of Public Works, and Irondale Police Department responses to 911 calls. Landlord licensing fees in other cities typically range from \$50 to \$115 a year.

The Good Landlord Program would require that landlords follow standards such as these required by Salt Lake City:

- A written lease for every dwelling unit will be required.
- All current, adult tenants living in a residence will be listed on the lease.
- The landlord or manager will serve notice of eviction within 5 days of receiving substantial evidence that a tenant or guest was involved in criminal or nuisance activity on the premises.
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is practiced on the premises.
- The landlord will maintain the rental dwelling in a fit and habitable condition, as required by State code and relevant building, fire, and land use codes.



GOAL #2

Enhance code enforcement efforts and encourage better property maintenance.



Action 2.1

Ensure the enforcement of local regulations including the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Stormwater Ordinances to protect public and private property, and to ensure the public safety and welfare of residents, citizens, and visitors.



Action 2.2

Continue to support the use of technology to improve code enforcement.

The City of Irondale should consider implementing the recommendations below to streamline the plan review and inspection process and improve code enforcement:

- Maintain high levels customer service by continuing to make permit applications, inspection information, fee schedules, and other relevant information available online and as fillable forms where possible.
- Replace paper systems with electronic plan review software to enable stakeholders to digitally review documents. Electronic plan review programs aggregate all reviewers' comments and allow all stakeholders, such as other City departments, to track their project's status easily. Common electronic plan review software includes: Avolve's ProjectDox, EnerGov, or CRW System's TRAKit.
- Invest in tablets for code enforcement officers to use during inspections. Tablets allow inspectors to fill out checklists on-site and notify stakeholders of the results and can save time by using an automated scheduling program for inspections.

Using technology can streamline the regulatory process, and can save the City time and money. In addition to reducing the administrative burden on staff, increased technology adoption could allow code enforcement officers to provide more thorough inspections and plan reviews, thus improving code compliance rates. Any financial savings could be redirected to train staff.



Action 2.3

Adopt the 2021 International Property Maintenance Code that would allow the City to levy fines for code violations.

The City of Irondale should consider adopting the 2021 International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), in whole or in parts, to ensure that residential and commercial properties are safe and upheld to modern standards. The IPMC outlines property maintenance regulations including weeds and debris, vegetation maintenance, junk vehicles, water pollution, public decency, driver sight obstructions, dilapidated properties and more.

Adopting the IPMC would raise the minimum standard of what is acceptable for building and living conditions and would provide a better opportunity to address issues at an earlier stage before they compound. The code provides an enforcement mechanism that applies to existing residential and commercial properties and enables the City to impose fines on the owner rather than impose liens upon the dilapidated property, which gives Irondale another tool to reduce blight.

For more information visit: <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IPMC2021P1>





Action 2.4

Create a citizen's guide for code enforcement that enables residents to report code violations and blighted properties.

A code enforcement guide could educate residents about their responsibility to follow local ordinances while also increasing the City's capacity to identify and track blighted properties by streamlining the public reporting process. Through the code enforcement guide, residents would be able to report various issues related to property maintenance and other health and safety violations.

To improve the accessibility and efficiency of the guide and reporting process, the City should create and market a hard copy of the guide, an online version, and a mobile app. The mobile app would allow residents to take photos of the issues they want to report, tag them with Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping integration, add notes to the report, and submit it to the appropriate municipal department. This would provide code enforcement officers with real time data, enabling them to better track violations in the community and provide prompt feedback to residents concerning the status of their reports.

Two models to reference are the "Citizen's Code Enforcement Guide" from Manatee County, Florida and "Access Cupertino" from the City of Cupertino, California. Common code violations in the City of Irondale include:

- Weeds and debris
- Inoperable vehicles in driveways
- Parking in front yards



Action 2.5

Create a vacant property registration ordinance.

To manage vacant properties and to maintain up-to-date information on them, the City should consider adopting an ordinance to require registration of these vacant properties. Registered information would be compiled in a database including pertinent information such as parcel sizes, building footprint sizes, tax status, zoning designations, utility information, property condition, sales and lease rates, etc. This database would ensure the City has access to all relevant information about vacant property.

GOAL #3

Enhance the physical character and appearance of the City.



Action 3.1

Develop a city-wide signage replacement program.

A signage replacement program is an orderly method for the City to replace all municipal signage over a period of time. Signage replacement might be done for several reasons including to replace signage in poor condition, to incorporate a new city-wide branding campaign, or to meet higher reflectivity standards. Costs for the signage replacement program include signage design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance and will have to be included in the annual municipal budget. The program should also account for how many signs can be replaced each year and which criteria, such as poor condition and strategic locations, will be used to determine signage replacement priority.

Image Credit Left: Manatee County



Action 3.2

Clearly define gateways into Irondale through urban design and beautification enhancements.

Gateways delineate the boundaries between Irondale and surrounding areas. Current gateways include Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 to the east and west and Grants Mill Road to the south. Successful gateways provide a definitive sense of place and announce that someone has arrived in the City. By giving a sense of place and arrival, investing in urban design and beautification enhancements at gateways can be a strategic investment that pays dividends. Examples of enhancements to construct at gateways include: Wayfinding refers to signage, landmarks, and other design elements that help residents and visitors navigate throughout the City and know their location with respect to civic, cultural, and recreational attractions. A wayfinding system consists of many moving parts. To structure how all these elements work, it is important to look at the individual elements as a series of layers that a visitor encounters when experiencing a city.

- Gateway signage, such as a landmark or monument sign.
- Streetscape improvements, such as a landscaped median and street trees.

Whenever possible, gateway improvements and signage should include design elements repeated elsewhere in the City, such as in a city-wide branding or wayfinding system. Design consistency helps visually reinforce that these gateways belong to Irondale and serve to announce the transition into the city.



Action 3.3

Develop a city-wide wayfinding signage system.

Wayfinding refers to signage, landmarks, and other design elements that help residents and visitors navigate throughout the City and know

their location with respect to civic, cultural, and recreational attractions. A wayfinding system consists of many moving parts. To structure how all these elements work, it is important to look at the individual elements as a series of layers that a visitor encounters when experiencing a city. The wayfinding experience can be broken down into five basic principles: know where you are, know where you are going, know the best way to get there, recognize your destination upon arrival, and find your way back. Wayfinding elements include direct tools, such as signage, banners and maps, and indirect tools, which serve as visual clues and consist of things like landmark features, light fixtures, street furnishings, public artwork, and landscape design.

It is recommended that the City of Irondale work with a consultant that specializes in establishing wayfinding systems to create a Wayfinding Master Plan. The Master Plan should be responsible for determining the following:

- Best locations for placement of signage. Consider vehicular travel speed and cone of vision.
- Financing of a wayfinding system generally includes four major areas: planning, design, fabrication and installation, and ongoing management.
- Consider best practices and new technologies, such as breakaway posts for any signage installed within city right-of-way. A typical breakaway post assembly consists of a sign support post, an anchoring post, and a breakaway component. The breakaway post is designed to lessen the impact to a vehicle if struck and thereby minimize injury to occupants and damage to vehicles.
- Identify phasing breaks so that the wayfinding elements can be implemented over several years. Initial phases should guide people to Downtown Irondale with later phases installed outward toward area highways and entry points as funding becomes available.

- Identify ways to incorporate wayfinding into new initiatives, such as pedestrian and cycling improvement projects, facility and park development projects, redevelopment, and community plans.
- Ensure that wayfinding signs are included in the City's annual maintenance budget so that signs can be replaced before their condition deteriorates or they become outdated.



Action 3.4

Establish an Irondale Beautification Coalition to spearhead and conduct “Keep Irondale Beautiful” cleanup efforts and to identify a list of catalytic sites for cleanup.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents expressed a strong desire for aesthetic improvements throughout the City, including reducing litter and debris and cleaning up strategically important sites. The City is encouraged to capitalize on this strong desire from residents by establishing an Irondale Beautification Coalition, which should include concerned residents and empower them to take the lead in beautification efforts.

The Irondale Beautification Coalition would be responsible for several initiatives, including cleanup efforts and organizing cleanup days. These cleanup days should be well-promoted and held at regular intervals, such as bi-monthly. The Coalition could also be responsible for identifying catalytic sites for cleanup. Catalytic sites are those with the potential to have an outsized impact and drive change in the area, and by identifying these sites the Irondale Beautification Coalition could catalyze local beautification efforts.



Action 3.5

Improve streetscaping along the Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 Corridor.

As one of the principal entryways into the City, one of its main thoroughfares, and one of its major commercial corridors, the aesthetics of Crestwood Boulevard / US 78 has a large role in peoples' experiences of Irondale. During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents frequently expressed disappointment with Crestwood Boulevard's appearance and concern that it fosters a negative expression of their city.

Attractive and inviting streetscapes that provide a safe built environment for pedestrians can also help spur local economic activity. In addition, a variety of materials can be used help differentiate pedestrian zones and call attention to driveway openings, crosswalks and other areas of vehicle conflict.

The City of Irondale is encouraged to implement the following items to make the Crestwood Boulevard / US 78 corridor more attractive:

- Install gateway and wayfinding signage throughout the corridor.
- Install more public trash cans at regular intervals.
- Improve pedestrian facilities, including ADA sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Improved street lighting on both the roadway and pedestrian scales (i.e decorative / ornamental lamp posts)
- Install new street furniture.
- Undertake a branding initiative and install branded banners on streetlighting throughout.



Action 3.6

Establish a Facade Improvement Program.

Facade improvement programs are incentive programs created to encourage property owners and businesses to improve the exterior appearance of their buildings and storefronts through financial incentives such as a matching grant or loan, a tax incentive, design assistance, or a combination. They can be focused on commercial or residential development in either historic or non-historic districts. Programs focused on commercial properties are usually staffed by a municipality's planning, community development, or economic development office, a Main Street organization, a business improvement district, or other government-affiliated entities.

Funding for facade improvement districts usually comes from a variety of sources including annual tax levies, federal and state grants for community and economic development, housing, and downtown revitalization, and municipal reserves. To maintain the program, application fees and interest generated by the façade improvement loans are used to help keep the funding available.

Components of façade improvement programs include:

- Statement of purpose that explains why the program was established.
- A well-defined target area shown on a map, with the streets well defined in the ordinance language.
- Eligibility requirements stating eligibility requirements.
- A description of eligible and ineligible proposed projects – which may include anything related to improvement of the building exterior or projects visible from the street.
- Stabilization and weatherization – roof repairs, securing windows and doors.

- Facade painting, repair, reconstruction, or replacement of historic features.
- Installing awnings or canopies, signage, and exterior lighting.
- Window and door repair or replacement.
- Constructing rear building treatments.
- Providing alley enhancements.

To determine award criteria, planning commissions often rely on the Secretary of Interior's standards for rehabilitation, which apply if the target area or property has been listed in the National and State Register of Historic Places.

To demonstrate the value of façade improvement and other enhancements while the City works to get this program up and running, it is recommended to simultaneously encourage property owners rehabilitating historic buildings to apply for Alabama Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. With these credits, up to 25% of the cost of a building renovation (if meeting Secretary of the Interior's Standards) may be written off of the owners' income tax responsibility that year. Also, owners of contributing historic buildings may apply for a permanent property tax reduction through the county tax assessor. These savings may then be redirected to improving the property. This is also an incentive for owners of noncontributing buildings to renovate them, as needed, to become "contributing" and receive the associated property tax reduction.



GOAL #4

Enhance public services, facilities and programs throughout the City.



Action 4.1

Explore the feasibility of constructing a recreation center for Irondale residents.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents identified the desire for an indoor recreation facility as a top priority. When exploring the feasibility, locations should be considered carefully to ensure widespread access via safe bicycle and pedestrian connections, such as bicycle lanes and sidewalks. These connections should connect as many residents as possible to the new recreation center. Staffing should also be evaluated and considered – for example, qualified volunteers may oversee some amenities such as tennis courts, whereas the swimming pool would require certified lifeguards.

Residents specifically expressed interest in having additional sports facilities, such as pickleball and basketball. These amenities would fill the gaps in the City's existing inventory of recreation offerings and would improve residents' quality of life. When coupled with an indoor space, the proposed recreation center would be usable year-round by residents of all ages. Morning programming could be geared toward senior citizens, who may benefit most from a gathering space or light recreation such as water aerobics. After school programming could cater to students.



Action 4.2

Build a community storm shelter for Irondale residents.

Throughout the public involvement process associated with this Plan, the need for a community storm shelter became clear. To meet the needs of the community, it is recommended that the City explore the feasibility of constructing a community storm shelter for residents to use during tornados and other severe weather events.

As an example, the City of Tuscaloosa recently constructed the McDonald Hughes Community Center and Safe Room. The community center offers recreational amenities and gathering spaces. While the storm shelter operates as a short-term weather event facility only when a tornado watch or warning is issued for Tuscaloosa County, during which times it is staffed by law enforcement personnel. The safe room was built to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 361 standards and can withstand 250 MPH wind speeds.



Image Credit: Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation



GOAL #5

Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to enhance urban form.



Action 5.1

Revise building height regulations in the C-1 Business and R-4 Multiple Family Districts to allow for buildings up to four (4) stories, or 48 feet.



Action 5.2

Revise the C-1 Business, R-4 Multiple Family, R-5 Town House, and RCD Residential Condominium Districts to amend front setback regulations to specify front setback ranges instead of only minimums.

A minimum setback, like those currently in Irondale's ordinance, often prevents buildings from relating to the sidewalk and street activity. Setback ranges, including a minimum and a maximum, are one tool to ensure interaction between sidewalks and ground floor uses. Buildings should be close to sidewalks to provide a relatively consistent street enclosure – this is especially important for commercial and mixed-use buildings. In walkable urban contexts, maximum front setbacks are often 12 feet (not applying to forecourts or terraces). However, a field review should be used to set locally appropriate maximums sensitive to the local context. Even in non-pedestrian areas, maximum front yard setbacks ensure that buildings have at least minimal relations with street activity.



Action 5.3

Adopt an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance.

An adaptive reuse ordinance makes the reuse of vacant buildings easier by minimizing certain zoning and code regulations for reuse projects. Currently, reuse projects are required to meet the same regulations as new developments. The City should consider adopting an adaptive reuse ordinance in areas with concentrations of historic and underused buildings, such as along Crestwood Boulevard / US 78 or Downtown Irondale.

The ordinance works by reducing specific zoning requirements for reuse projects, such as parking, setback and density requirements. The City should work with architects, engineers, and developers to find out which requirements are the most difficult obstacles when considering the redevelopment of sites. If successful, the ordinance could increase the number of rehabilitations and reduce the number of demolitions of older buildings.



Above: Ruby Slipper Cafe and Headquarters (Source: Studio BKA)



Action 5.4

Adopt a Mixed-Use Zoning District.

The City of Irondale would benefit from a true mixed-use district, which could allow for a lively mix of uses in distinct areas of the City including Downtown Irondale and focus areas. Mixed-use developments do not occur overnight – they are gradually built out by multiple developers as the community evolves. Because this development occurs under the guidance of municipal codes, the City should therefore carefully consider what to include in the mixed-use zoning district. General speaking, mixed-use districts are flexible in the location of uses and have higher standards for site design and walkability.

A mixed-use zoning district permits a diverse mix of civic, residential, and commercial uses, including retail, restaurants, and offices, both in vertical and horizontal dimensions. The district does not require a specific configuration of uses, such as shopfronts with housing or offices above. It simply permits this and other flexible arrangements of uses that can shift to adapt to evolving community preferences. Possible uses generally include medium and higher density single family and multifamily homes; neighborhood and general commercial; offices; institutional uses such as schools and places of worship; and parks and open space.

The mixed-use zoning district should include regulation on the form and feel of development. Many sets of design standards promote walkable development, including small block size, buildings that face the street, and parking lots behind buildings. Other standards, such as landscaping standards, may seem to be purely aesthetic but are invaluable in adding life and character to the district. All of these standards enhance the experience for residents and visitors, and these standards coupled with flexibility in choice of uses will help mixed-use areas thrive.

Some example regulations include:

- **Uses:** Permit a variety of moderate-intensity commercial, institutional, and residential uses.
- **Buffering:** There is often no need for buffers between uses in mixed-use districts, because permitted uses have been determined to be compatible.
- **Density:** Allow moderate density. If density is too low, walkability will be difficult to achieve.
- **Walkability:** Require sidewalks and write dimensional regulations so that buildings are reasonably close to the street.
- **Building façades:** Provide a list of acceptable, aesthetically appealing durable building materials. Include regulations about glazing and building orientation to create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.
- **Landscaping:** Require the use of street trees and landscaping to soften hard edges and encourage the use of native drought-resistant species.
- **Parking:** Require that off-street parking be to the side or rear of buildings and require joint access to parking areas where possible.

Full example Mixed-Use Zoning District regulations can be provided upon request by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.





Action 5.5

Encourage the use of PUD developments (in the R-6 District) to promote flexibility, creativity, and a mix of uses.

If a mixed-use zoning district has not been adopted yet into the Zoning Ordinance, then the City should encourage the use of the R-6 PUD zoning district as an option and promote its use by developers. This district allows for a range of uses, including single-family and multifamily housing, institutional uses, professional offices, and compatible commercial uses, to be built in one development. These developments are often sought after by residents and business owners, and developers often appreciate the land use flexibility offered by planned unit developments (PUDs). By encouraging additional PUDs, the City can benefit from new residential and mixed-use developments offering more appealing homes and businesses.

GOAL #6

Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions for parking and access standards.



Action 6.1

Revise the C-1 Business, R-4 Multiple Family, R-5 Town House, and RCD Residential Condominium Districts to establish parking location criteria for new developments.

Vast amounts of visible parking lots occupy valuable real estate and make travel less pleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. To prevent these negative effects in new commercial and multifamily areas, parking location criteria should be established in these districts. Parking should be allowed only behind or beside the building, with a limited amount of parking

between the building and the front street, such as only one or two rows of parking stalls with a two-way drive aisle. Relegating parking to the rear or side of buildings preserves the relationship between buildings and the sidewalk and results in more aesthetically pleasing, human-scaled commercial areas.



Action 6.2

Allow on-street parking to count toward minimum parking requirements in all commercial districts.

In areas where on-street parking exists, parking spaces along each building's frontage should count toward satisfying that use's parking requirements. Complying with off-street parking requirements can often be burdensome for developers, especially in infill situation, effectively limiting infill development which could otherwise benefit Irondale. Easing this burden would also make adaptive reuse easier, because such a change in use would not always necessitate providing more off-street parking spaces.

GOAL #7

Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to permitted uses.



Action 7.1

Add a summary table of permitted uses across all zoning categories.

Currently, the existing Irondale Zoning Ordinance provides a separate list of permitted uses under each individual zoning district. It is recommended that an overall summary table, or matrix, of permitted uses be added, possibly under Article 6 Use Regulations. The table should contain a listing of uses that may

be permitted in one or more of the various zoning districts established by the Zoning Ordinance. Uses should be listed in alphabetical order under functional categories. This would provide more information at a glance and would benefit anyone reading the ordinance, including applicants, city staff, and elected officials.



Action 7.2

Revise the zoning use categories to align with the larger use categories within the International Building Code.

Currently, the zoning use categories in the Irondale Zoning Ordinance do not align with the use categories in the International Building Code, which has been adopted by the City. Both the Zoning Ordinance and International Building Code regulate use, but the two sets of categories were written separately and have not been reconciled. This requires applicants to reconcile differences between the two codes. Both code types were developed independently, with building codes being heavily based upon use to determine standards of safety. Zoning uses were defined with a focus on differences in explicit uses that affect issues such as parking demand, traffic generation, and noise.

It is recommended that the use categories in the Zoning Ordinance be revised to match the larger set of International Building Code uses, with conditions or restrictions as necessary to control environmental impact. The result is a tighter coordination between zoning and building regulation, and a much simpler process for applicants.



Action 7.3

Revise the C-1 Business, R-4 Multiple Family, and R-5 Town House Districts to simplify density restrictions.

Currently, the Zoning Ordinance regulates density through a variety of dimensional requirements, including minimum lot size,

minimum floor area, setbacks, and minimum lot coverage. These different standards can be cumbersome for city staff, elected officials, and developers to interpret—and they can sometimes be contradictory. The density restrictions in these zoning districts should be audited to ensure that they result in the desired urban form, and then they should be revised as needed.



Action 7.4

Permit residential uses on ground floors in the C-1 Business District.

Zoning codes often require ground floor commercial uses in mixed-use and urban districts. While Downtown Irondale should be primarily commercial at the ground floor, which would be in line with its historical uses, requiring ground floor commercial uses can limit economic development and adaptive reuse. For a given building, an excessive amount of commercial space may be required that the market cannot support. This leaves some commercial space to sit vacant, draining finances, urban vibrancy, and hindering walkability.

Permitting ground floor residential uses will also give small developers an opportunity to develop mixed-use buildings that fully meet ADA requirements. Many mixed-use areas consist of a mix of uses horizontally along a street instead of vertically, because vertical mixed use can be difficult to achieve in some markets. In markets where vertical mixed-use is common, it should not be required. The local market should determine the configuration of use, and residential uses along a main street can still add vibrancy.





Action 7.5

Permit upper-story residential uses in the C-1 Business and C-2 Commercial Districts.

Upper-story residential uses have been common uses above commercial uses for decades, and their recent rise in popularity marks a return to how cities have historically functioned. Upper-story residential uses can take a variety of forms, including live-work units or apartments or condominiums rented or sold on the market. All of these units provide residential space downtown and in commercial zones. These residential uses are often highly desirable and add life and vibrancy. Because residents can often access their workplaces and shopping destinations on foot or by bicycle, upper story residential uses offer the potential to reduce congestion as well. It is recommended that upper story residential uses be permitted for all uses in the C-1 Business District and for compatible uses in the C-2 Commercial District.



Action 7.6

Consider permitting home occupations in all residential zoning districts.

Home-based businesses expand the local economy by providing additional opportunities to open a business without buying or leasing formal space. Permitting home-based businesses also contributes to home affordability and may help defray the costs of childcare if one or both parents work at home. Some level of home occupation should be permitted in all residential zoning districts. To implement this recommended action, the following steps should be considered:



Action 7.7

Provide a definition for live-work units and permit live-work units in all zoning districts except low-density residential single-family and industrial districts.

A live-work unit, which includes commercial space and residential space for the business or property owner, should be permitted in all zoning districts except low-density residential single-family and industrial districts. Live-works units are typically small office or service uses, which create negligible traffic and parking demands. While some single-family residential areas may resist their inclusion, they have a very low impact on a neighborhood and a positive impact on the City as a whole.





Action 7.8

Add definitions for brewery, micro-brewery, and brew pub and revise the permitted uses in the C-1 Business and C-2 Commercial Districts to permit them accordingly.

The following Alabama state code definitions should be added to the Zoning Ordinance:

Brewery: “Any building used for the production of beer that manufactures more than 40,000 barrels per year, with a barrel containing 31 U.S. liquid gallons. A brewery, actively and continuously engaged in the manufacture of alcoholic beverages on the manufacturer’s licensed premises, may conduct tastings or samplings on the licensed premises, and for that purpose give away or sell alcoholic beverages manufactured there for consumption on only the premises where manufactured.”

- A “Brewery” should only be permitted in the I-1 Industrial, I-2 Primary Industrial, and I-3 Planned Industrial zoning districts since it would allow for the largest footprint for production.

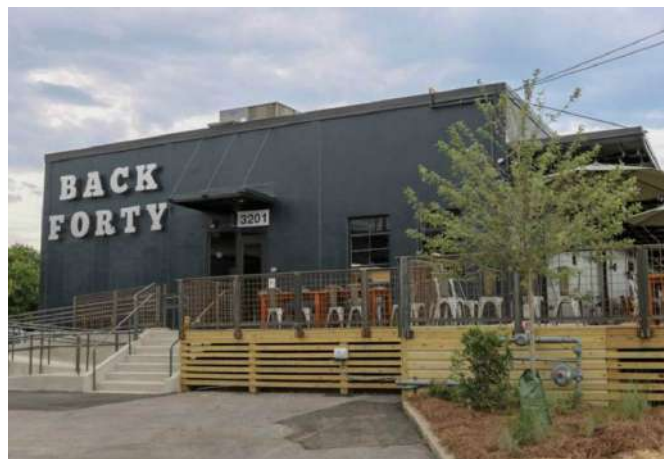
Brewery, Micro: “Any building used for the production of beer that manufactures less than 40,000 barrels per year, with a barrel containing 31 U.S. liquid gallons. A micro-brewery, actively and continuously engaged in the manufacture of alcoholic beverages on the manufacturer’s licensed premises, may conduct tastings or samplings on the licensed premises, and for that purpose give away or sell alcoholic beverages manufactured there for consumption on only the premises where manufactured.”

- A “Brewery, Micro” could be allowed with conditions in the C-1 Business, the C-2 Commercial, and in the I-1 Industrial Districts.

Brew Pub: “An establishment, meeting the qualifications of a brew pub under the State alcoholic beverage control laws in Title 28,

Chapter 4A of the Code of Alabama 1975, as amended, where beer is actively and continuously manufactured or brewed, in a quantity not to exceed 10,000 barrels in any one year, for consumption on the premises or for sale to any designated wholesaler licensee for resale to retail licensees; and which contains a restaurant or otherwise provides food for consumption on the premises.”

- A “Brew-Pub” could be allowed with conditions in the C-1 Business District, the C-2 Commercial District, the HD-1 Historic District and in the R-6 PUD Planned Unit Development District. In addition, if the City adopts a Mixed-Use District in the future (see action X.X), then Brew-Pubs would be an appropriate permitted use. These would have a much smaller footprint, and per the Alabama state code, would need to contain a restaurant on the premises.



GOAL #8

Other recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions.



Action 8.1

Provide a list of current development application fees.

Application review and permitting fees should be clear, easily accessible, and simplified wherever possible. The current fee schedule is established by the City in the Municipal Code, §4-8: Fee schedules. This fee schedule should be publicly accessible and made available online on the City's website. Where possible, fees should be flat and common fees should be combined. These best practices make fees very easy to calculate and increase predictability for applicants and developers. Fees should also be adjusted to reflect the policies of the community. For example, if redevelopment and infill is prioritized along Crestwood Boulevard, then fees in that corridor should be lowered to incentivize preferred development.



Action 8.2

Establish and publish a step-by-step application process guide for development and redevelopment.

Development and redevelopment can often be hindered by opaque municipal permitting requirements and approval processes. Even experienced developers may find unfamiliar regulations difficult to interpret if they have not worked in Irondale before. To alleviate these issues and incentivize development and redevelopment, the City is encouraged to create and a step-by-step guide or checklist to help applicants and entrepreneurs navigate the process. This guide should be updated regularly, posted online, and distributed through relevant networks such as the Chamber of Commerce. The guide should include a comprehensive checklist for each type of development or redevelopment covering each step the developer must take throughout the entire process. Wherever possible, this process guide should link to fillable forms, many of which are already available on the City's website. This process guide could be packaged with additional helpful documents, such as a fact sheet describing municipal, state, and federal development incentives, and promoted as a development assistance toolkit. When completed, the process guide should be published on the City's website, promoted on social media, and disseminated through interest groups such as the Irondale Chamber of Commerce.





Action 8.3

Modify the Sign Regulations to ensure content neutrality.

In the 2015 case of *Reed v. Town of Gilbert*, Arizona, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that sign regulations must be content-neutral. The sign regulations in §5:22 of the Irondale Zoning Ordinance are mostly, but not entirely, content-neutral. Some content-based categorical sign descriptions in the current sign regulations include occupational signs, flags or insignias, and political signs. A general rule of thumb is that if a person needs to read a sign to know how to regulate it, then it is content based. If a sign can be regulated through descriptions such as type, number, size, style, and location, then the regulations are likely content-neutral. For example, 'political yard sign' is a content-based description because it references the sign's message while 'temporary lawn sign' is content-neutral because it only refers to sign type, location, and duration.

In order to comply with *Reed v. the Town of Gilbert* ruling, the sign regulations should be modified to regulate by type, number, size and style of sign, and all references to categorical sign descriptions should be removed. Examples of regulating by type of sign include freestanding signs (i.e. monument and pole signs) and attached signs (i.e. roof signs, wall signs, canopy and awning signs, marquee signs and window signs). Additional regulations for temporary signs, such as maximum number of signs per parcel, are required since it is no longer possible to regulate by type of sign.





Chapter Six

Transportation & Mobility





Enhance the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation system. 124

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Make infrastructure maintenance investments a priority. 139



Transportation & Mobility

Transportation is an essential component of how residents and visitors perceive a city. Do they feel safe? Are there multiple options for getting to and from destinations? Are the roadways well maintained and aesthetically pleasing? Is traffic a major issue? This chapter aims to answer those questions and provides goals and recommended actions to develop a safe, healthy, equitable, and efficient transportation system throughout Irondale that provides for everyone in Irondale, whether a worker, visitor, or resident.

The 3 goals found within this Transportation chapter are:

1. Enhanced the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation network.
2. Build a multi-modal transportation network with a wide range of choices.
3. Make infrastructure maintenance investment a priority.

GOAL #1

Enhance the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation system.



Action 1.1

Develop a traffic calming policy to reduce speeding in neighborhoods utilizing appropriate traffic calming measures.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, Irondale citizens expressed concern about the speed of traffic in their neighborhoods. The following streets were noted:

- 16th Street North
- 16th Street South
- Janet Lane
- Monticello Road
- 20th Street South
- 19th Street South
- 2nd Avenue South
- 4th Avenue South

It is recommended that the City establish a formal traffic calming policy. Traffic calming refers to the use of primarily physical measures to make streets safer by causing motorists to slow down. Measures can include roundabouts, median islands, speed tables, chicanes, and other design features that force drivers to drive more cautiously (see the Traffic Calming callout box on **page 125** for more information).

Every street is different, and appropriate traffic calming measures will differ accordingly. In addition, the City should consider adopting a formal traffic calming policy that enables citizens to petition for a traffic calming study in an orderly manner and assists the City in the selection of appropriate interventions. Such a policy could include:

- Petition process by which residents or neighborhood associations request a study for traffic calming treatment installation or removal.
- Cost-sharing procedures between the City and the impacted neighborhood.
- Safety and operational warrant criteria.
- Treatment alternatives.

Traffic Calming

Motorists often drive as fast as the road they are on will allow. Inappropriately high speeds not only lead to more frequent and severe crashes for the motorists, they also endanger pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. City officials can utilize traffic calming to improve safety by reducing vehicle speeds. Traffic calming refers to a combination of primarily physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use. Restricting the speed and volume of traffic to acceptable levels helps reduce accidents, collisions, noise, vibration, pollution and crime.

Traffic calming measures include both intrusive and non-intrusive strategies. Intrusive strategies involve an alteration to the physical environment that constrain driver behavior, such as horizontal shifts (chicanes and median islands), vertical deflections (speed tables, speed bumps and raised intersections) and turn restrictions, which reduce cut-through traffic. Non-intrusive strategies involve administrative or operational improvements, such as traffic cameras, radar speed display signs and pavement re-stripping.

Slowing traffic saves lives. Each 1-mph reduction in vehicle speed reduces collisions and fatalities by over 5%. A motorist traveling at 40 mph who sees a pedestrian 100 feet ahead will not be able to stop in time, colliding with the pedestrian at 38 mph. At this speed, the pedestrian is highly likely to suffer a serious injury or die. By contrast, a motorist traveling at 25 mph would have enough time to stop before collision.

Each traffic calming measure is better suited to some street types than others. The City should work with traffic engineers to evaluate its streets where residents have expressed safety concerns, and determine whether and what traffic calming measures are warranted.

Table 6.1: Cost Ranges of Selected Traffic Calming Measures

| Measure | Average Speed Reduction | Cost Range |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Speed Table | 7 - 9 mph | \$5,000 - \$15,000 |
| Speed Bump | 5 - 8 mph | \$2,000 |
| Chicane | 3 - 9 mph | \$10,000 - \$16,000 for a set of three |
| Raised Median Island | 4 mph | \$6,000 - \$9,000 |
| Pedestrian Refuge Island | 4 mph | \$10,000 - \$30,000 |
| Choker | 1 - 4 mph | \$5,000 - \$20,000 |





Action 1.2

Provide safe accessible crosswalks at targeted intersections and mid-block crossings.

Pedestrians are at their most vulnerable when crossing a street. A vehicle moving at only 30 mph has a 50% chance of killing or seriously injuring a pedestrian in the event of a collision. However, over 80% of all pedestrian fatalities occur away from intersections. This is typically because pedestrians choose to cross streets at locations directly along their path, rather than going out of their way to crosswalks.

It is recommended that the City of Irondale invest in highly visible, convenient, and accessible crosswalks at targeted intersections to encourage pedestrians to cross streets where motorists expect them to do so. Traffic engineers have an ever-increasing toolbox of pedestrian safety measures including changes in signal phasing to give pedestrians a head start over traffic, the installation of count-down pedestrian heads, the installation of pedestrian-activated lighted crosswalks to warn motorists that pedestrians are crossing, innovative advance warnings, warning beacons, and pedestrian median refuge islands break up long crossing distances. In addition, crosswalks offer the City an opportunity to proactively accommodate its residents with disabilities, including the blind and those with mobility challenges.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, the following intersections were identified as needing safe crosswalks:

- Crestwood Boulevard at Grants Mill Road
- Crestwood Boulevard at 18th Street South/Eastwood Plaza Shopping Center
- Ruffner Road to Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve Irondale Trailhead from Ruffner Park

- Grants Mill Road at Old Leeds Road
- Grants Mill Road at Beacon Drive/Old Grants Mill Road
- 16th Street South at Monticello Road / 4th Avenue South



Crosswalk at 20th Street and 1st Avenue North



Crosswalk Treatment (Image Credit: Richard Layman)



Crosswalk Treatment (Image Credit: Smithsonian Magazine)



Action 1.3

Continue to explore the feasibility of a train “Quiet Zone” at the 20th Street at-grade intersection.

As part of the 2014 US 11 East Corridor Study conducted by WRA for the City of Birmingham and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, a quiet zone analysis was conducted for several rail crossings in both Birmingham and Irondale. The full study can be found in Appendix 2 of the full US 11 East Corridor Study. <https://www.rpcgb.org/us1178-east-corridor-study>

Train noise can be a serious problem that affects residents' quality of life. The rail crossing at 20th Street between 1st Avenue N and 1st Avenue S is a highly active line that currently requires trains to blow their horns repeatedly, often at all hours of the night. At the time of the 2014 report the line exceeded 60 trains per day and is projected to double in the next 35 years. Regular train crossings and noise was frequently mentioned as an issue during the public involvement associated with this Plan.

As part of the report the 20th Street at-grade railroad crossing between 1st Ave North and 1st Ave South in Irondale was studied and several

solutions were presented to allow for train horn quiet zones that would reduce the disturbance to the neighborhood that is a frequent occurrence today.

The list below details the proposed modifications to 20th Street and the railroad crossing that would allow for a quiet zone to take effect in Irondale.

Install four quadrant gates: four quadrant gates have two arms on each side of the crossing to completely block all road lanes on both sides of the tracks. This prevents traffic from going around the closed gates. To prevent a slow-moving vehicle from becoming trapped in the center area between gates, vehicle presence detectors are often used to keep the far side gates open until the track crossing is clear of vehicles. Four quadrant gates are far more expensive than other options

- Consider making 20th Street a one-way with median barriers that limit pedestrian mobility over the tracks

To fully establish a quiet zone coordination may be necessary with the City of Birmingham to prevent trains from sounding their horns further west on the rail line. This study also includes a feasibility analysis and cost estimates.

Image Credit: Hal Yeager





Action 1.4

Adopt access management standards to preserve traffic flow and reduce accidents along major thoroughfares.

All properties require access to a road through a driveway. Each driveway, however, creates a potential conflict point where vehicle paths cross, merge, or weave. High concentrations of driveways along a road lead to high numbers of conflict points, which cause safety hazards and slow down traffic unnecessarily. Managing access – i.e., reducing the frequency of conflict points along a stretch of road – not only improves safety for motorists and pedestrians, but also improves the capacity of the road by preserving steady traffic flow.

It is recommended that the City of Irondale develop and adopt a set of driveway spacing standards or local access management standards for Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 corridor within its city limits and on the Grants Mill Road corridor as development continues. Example language is provided in the callout box on **page 129**. While large portions of Crestwood Boulevard/US 78 are already developed, these standards could take effect as redevelopment occurs or on the currently undeveloped portions of the highway.

“Access management” is a term for the systematic control of the location, spacing, design, and operation of driveways, median openings, and street connections to a roadway in order to minimize conflicts and friction caused by multiple closely spaced driveways and intersections. Access management standards for driveways usually cover some or all of the following factors: maximum number of driveways permitted in any lot frontage, maximum width of driveway pavement and curb cuts, minimum distances of driveways from intersections, property lines, other driveways, fire hydrants, utility poles, street trees, specifications for curb returns (that portion of the curb that connects the driveway approach to the street curb), maximum and minimum slopes of driveways, and the type and quality of materials used in driveway and curb construction.

A local set of access management standards should be stricter than those found in the 2014 Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) Access Design and Management Manual, which already applies to Crestwood Boulevard /US 78 corridor because is a US highway. The City should strongly encourage ALDOT to adhere to their own adopted standards on Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78, and not grant unwarranted variances.



Access Management

By consolidating the number of intersections along a road, access management dramatically reduces the number of potential crash locations, all the while improving traffic flow and aesthetics. In this example, consolidating driveways and adding a median reduced 30 conflict points to only 3 — a 90% reduction.

Example Language for Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 Access Management Standards

- A. Access Management.
 - 1. Limit the number of conflict points by limiting left turning movements and cross highway through movements.
 - 2. Separate conflict areas by adequate spacing between driveway and street intersections.
 - 3. Reduce interference with through traffic by providing turning lanes, designing driveways with large turning radii and restricting turning movements in an out of driveways.
 - 4. Provide sufficient spacing for at-grade signalized intersections.
 - 5. Provide adequate on-site and intra-site circulation and parking areas in order to minimize the number of driveways to the highway (e.g., utilize joint-driveways wherever possible – see below).
- B. Access Limitations.
 - 1. All parcels which adjoin private property shall either share access with adjoining properties or have access to a frontage road.
 - 2. The number and location of access points to Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 shall be determined as part of the site plan review process.
 - 3. Access. Access to Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 may be prohibited from any tract having access to a street intersecting Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 or any tract with frontage on Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 which has access through an existing joint-use access easement or driveway. Otherwise, access to Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 shall be limited to one driveway unless otherwise permitted.
 - 4. Driveway Location. Maximum practical spacing between driveways shall be required. Unless otherwise approved by the city engineer, no driveway accessing Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 shall be located:
 - i. Closer than three hundred (300) feet from the nearest adjacent driveway, unless no other access is available to a parcel of land
 - ii. Where the sight distance is less than ten (10) times the posted speed limit.
- C. Landscape Medians. US 78 medians shall be landscaped.

GOAL #2

Build a multi-modal transportation network with a wide range of choices.



Action 2.1

Expand sidewalk coverage in residential areas and build links from residential areas to activity centers, schools, recreational facilities, employment centers, and other major public facilities.

Safe pedestrian connections are a critical component of an equitable transportation system, and improved walkability and pedestrian safety were consistent themes throughout the public involvement process associated with this Plan. The lack of pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks, crosswalks and pedestrian crossing signals, has created a safety hazard for those people attempting to walk to businesses, community facilities, or job destinations.

Areas in need of pedestrian infrastructure within the Irondale city limits are shown in **Figure 6.1**. This includes areas within Downtown Irondale, as well as segments along frequently traveled roadway corridors lacking pedestrian facilities. Funding of sidewalks could be included in streetscape and gateway improvement projects, particularly along Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 and Grants Mill Road.

It is recommended that sidewalks are needed along the following road segments:

- 20th Street – From the end of the existing sidewalks to Grants Mill Road
- Grants Mill Road – From Grants Mill Station to Old Leeds Road
- Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 from Irondale city limits to Golden Rule Bar-B-Q

- 1st Ave North – From the end of the existing sidewalk to Ruffner Road
- Ruffner Road (on the southside of the road) from 16th Street North to 1st Avenue North
- Old Leeds Road – From Belmont Road to Shades Valley High School
- Beacon Drive – From Irondale city limits to Grants Mill Road
- Grants Mill Road – From I-459 to Overton Road
- Overton Road – From Brookmont Drive to Grants Mill Road



Grants Mill Road at Old Leeds Road

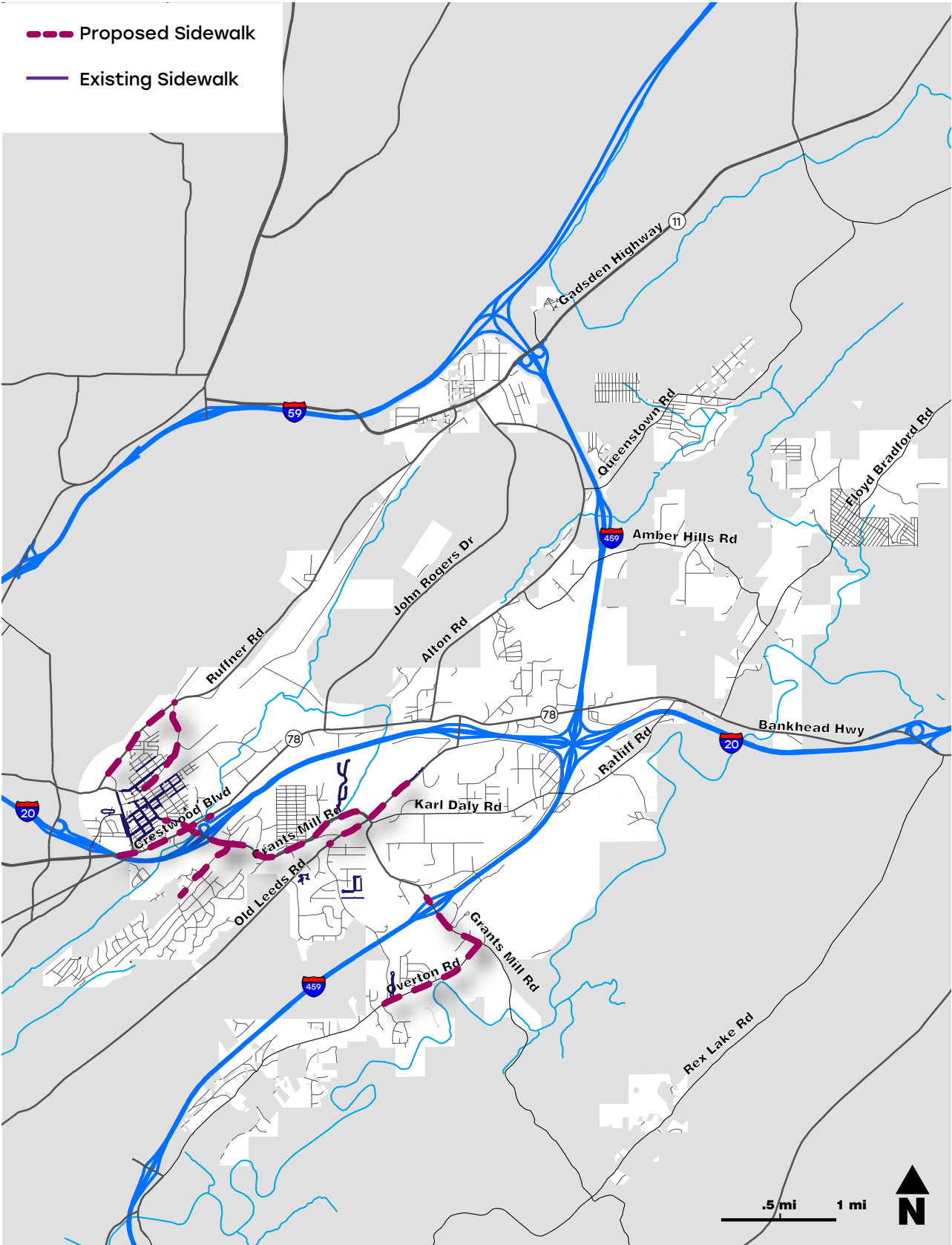


Crestwood Boulevard / US 78



Ruffner Road at 1st Avenue N

Figure 6.1: Proposed Sidewalk Segments in Irondale





Action 2.2

Construct context-sensitive bicycle infrastructure along strategic corridors.

Irondale is well established as a popular destination for recreational cyclist in the Birmingham-Metro Region, and thanks to its proximity to job centers in Birmingham is well suited as a place of residence for bicycle commuters. As shown on **page 13** of the Existing Conditions Report in **Appendix B**, Irondale features several roadways that are among the most popular in the metro region for bicyclist. When asked what the community's highest priority transportation investment should be in the Blueprint Irondale Survey, 35% of respondents chose "Bike lanes and greenway trails." Bike lanes were also frequently requested in open-ended comments and in the Issues and Opportunities Banners.

As such, this Plan recommends a two-fold approach to the implementation of new bicycle infrastructure:

1. Construct context-sensitive bicycle infrastructure on proposed roadway segments from the 2019 B-Active Regional Active Transportation Plan.
2. Construct context-sensitive bicycle infrastructure along other roadways as desired by the public to connect residents to activity centers.

The 2019 B-Active Plan is the Active Transportation Plan for the Greater Birmingham region that was developed by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB). The purpose of the plan is to establish a clear vision for building and expanding a multimodal transportation network in Jefferson and Shelby counties, and in parts of Blount and St. Clair Counties, with a specific focus on creating a safer, more connected, and equitable active transportation system for the region. Because the B-Active Plan is regional in scope, additional roadway segments outside of the B-Active plan area are suggested to create a

complete active transportation network within Irondale.

The recommended roadway segments with potential treatments for bicycle are listed in **Table 6.2** and shown in **Figure 6.2**. As funding and rights-of-way become available, the City should utilize this table to help determine implementation priority for constructing new bicycle infrastructure and facilities on selected roadway segments. See the callout boxes on **page 137** to learn more and how context-sensitive design for bicycle facilities can be determined.



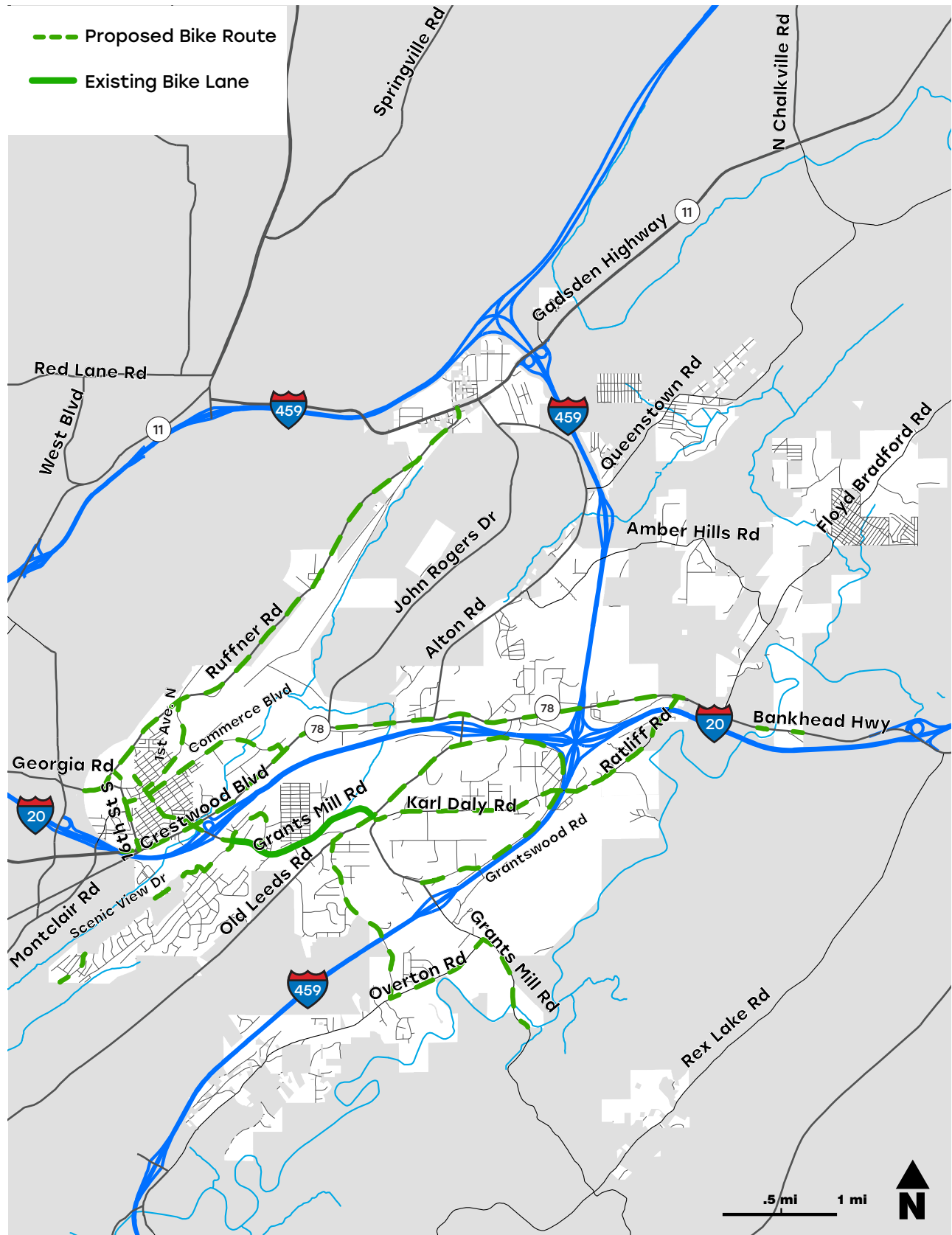
Source: Freshwater Land Trust

Table 6.2: Recommended Roadway Segments for Bicycle Infrastructure

| Segment | B-Active Plan | Requested by Public | Appropriate Treatments |
|--|---------------|---------------------|--|
| Georgia Road | Yes | Yes | Bike Lanes, Buffered Bike Lanes |
| Ruffner Road | Yes | Yes | Signage, Sharrows, or Separated Shared-Use Path |
| Beacon Drive | Yes | Yes | Bike Lanes, Buffered Bike Lanes |
| Scenic View Drive | Yes | | Bike Lanes, Signage or Sharrows |
| Sharpsburg Drive | Yes | | Bike Lanes, Signage or Sharrows |
| 1st Avenue South/ Commerce Blvd | No | Yes | Bike Lanes, Buffered Bike Lanes, Signage or Sharrows |
| 1st Avenue North | Yes | Yes | Bikes Lanes, Buffered Bike Lanes, Bike Boulevard (Neighborhood Street) |
| Grants Mill Road/ Co Road 143 South of I-459 | Yes | Yes | Signage or Sharrows |
| Overton Road | Yes | Yes | Signage or Sharrows |
| Belmont Road | Yes | Yes | Signage or Sharrows |
| Old Leeds Road | Yes | Yes | Signage or Sharrows |
| 20th Street N/S | Yes | Yes | Bikes Lanes, Buffered Bike Lanes, Bike Boulevard (Neighborhood Street) |
| 5th Avenue South/ US 78 – Crestwood Boulevard | Yes | Yes | Separated Bike Lane |
| 16th Street N/S | No | Yes | Bike Lane or Buffered Bike Lane |
| Grantswood Road | No | Yes | Signage or Sharrows |
| Karl Daly Road | No | Yes | Signage or Sharrows |
| Old Grants Mill Road | No | Yes | Bike Lane / Pedestrian and bike connector trail |

Source: B-Active Plan

Figure 6.2: Proposed bicycling segments in Irondale





Action 2.3

Create a connection via Old Grants Mill Road to Old Leeds Road to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connectivity.

With new development anticipated for the intersection of Grants Mill Road at Old Leeds Road, the City should consider adding a pedestrian and bicycle connection to Old Leeds Road via Old Grants Mill Road. Currently, Old Grants Mill Road terminates a short distance from Old Leeds Road. If a bike and pedestrian connection were created, it would allow for residents along Old Grants Mill Road to walk to the future grocery store development. This connection would also allow bicyclists coming from Grants Mill Road to bypass the Grants Mill Road and Old Leeds Road intersection to access Old Leeds Road, one of the most popular bicycling routes in the metro region. The City should work with current property owners to determine the feasibility of such a connection.



Action 2.4

Work with the Freshwater Land Trust to create future connections to Ruffner Mountain.

Freshwater Land Trust (FWLT) is a local non-profit agency whose mission is to conserve, connect, and care for the land and water in Central Alabama. One avenue which the FWLT uses to achieve that mission is the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian trails as proposed in the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail Master Plan. The Freshwater Land Trust has identified making a bicycle and pedestrian connection to Ruffner Mountain a major priority in the years to come and has recently begun a new priority action plan to determine how best to make these connections a reality. Once the action plan is completed, the City of Irondale should work with the Freshwater Land Trust to construct bicycle and pedestrian connections to Ruffner Mountain.



Action 2.5

Consider the feasibility of an On-Demand Transit Program to provide new transportation options for Irondale.

On-Demand Transit is a service that passengers can schedule day-of to pick them up and it arrives at the curb, instead of predetermined bus stops. Unlike conventional fixed-route transit services, on-demand transit typically uses conventional passenger vans and fares are often between \$1 and \$5. While having many similarities to services like Uber or Lyft, On-Demand Transit may ask riders to walk a short distance to be picked up and riders will share the van with other riders at the same time. On-Demand Transit would have distinct advantages for a city like Irondale due to its ability to offer easier pick-up for lower-density areas and its smaller relative population.

The City of Birmingham has recently launched a pilot program for On-Demand transit with a flat fee of \$1.50. The program serves riders Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The program offers accessible vehicles for riders with disabilities. The City of Irondale should consider the feasibility of On-Demand Transit via a similar pilot program to the City of Birmingham.



Ruffner Mountain Trail Head in Irondale, AL



Action 2.6

Adopt a Complete Streets Ordinance.

Complete Streets provide safe access and circulation for all people, including motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. A Complete Streets Ordinance would require the City to accommodate all modes of transportation in the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of public streets. Complete Streets balances the needs of different modes and supports local land uses, economies, cultures and natural environments.

Complete Streets design elements may include, but are not limited to, sidewalks, signage, paved shoulders, bicycle accommodations, crosswalks and other pavement markings for pedestrians, pedestrian control signalization, and traffic calming measures.

The ordinance should specify the nature of roadwork that would trigger the required accommodations. For example, the ordinance could apply to new road construction, reconstruction, retrofits, upgrades, resurfacing and rehabilitation, any large-scale non-

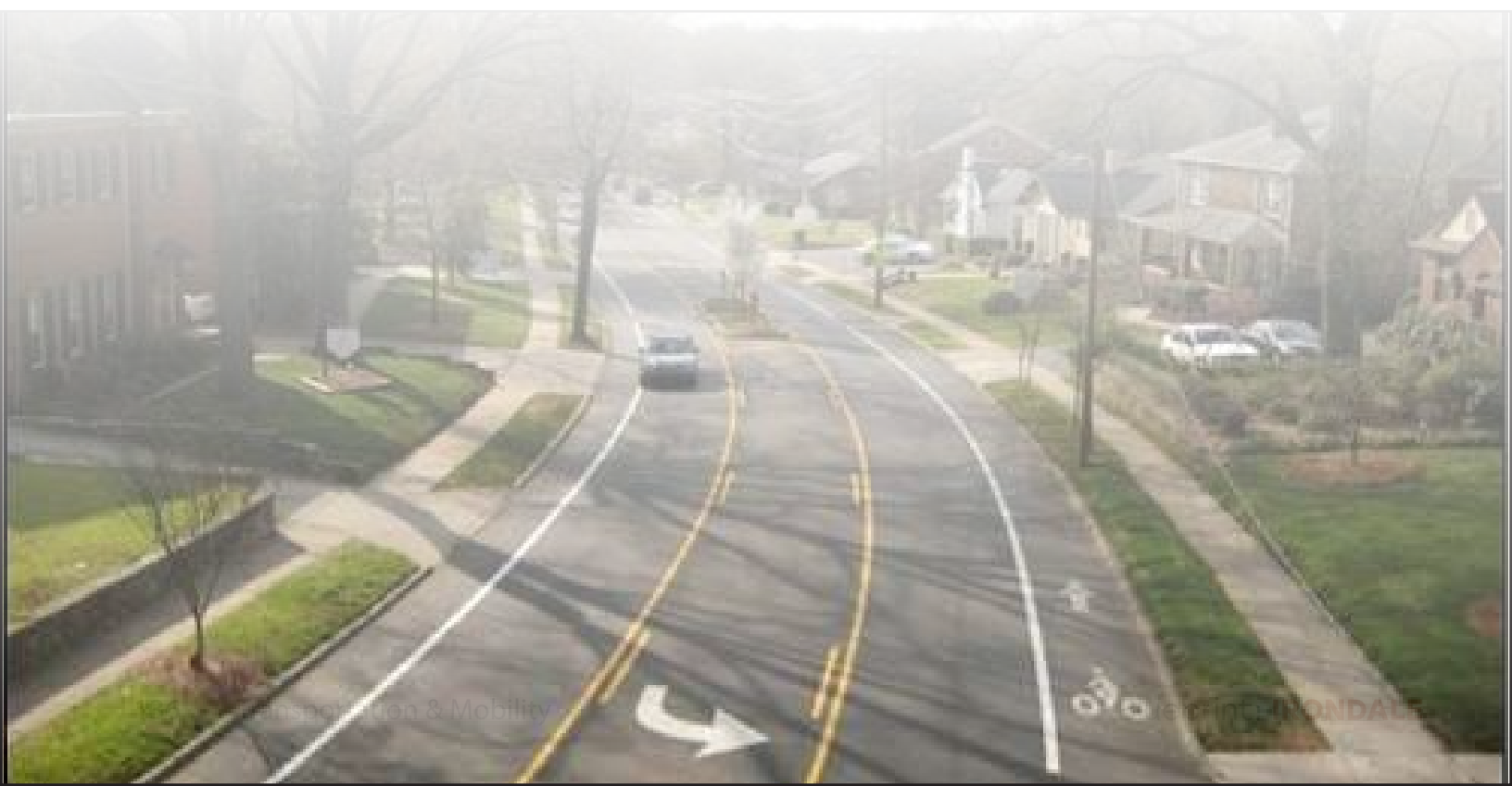
emergency utility work, but not to routine road maintenance. Complete Streets should be prioritized on roads that coincide with the high priority need for sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure as identified in **Actions 2.1** and **2.2** under this Goal.



Action 2.7

Provide additional bike racks throughout the City at civic buildings and in other popular destinations.

While the construction of bicycle infrastructure is a critical component of providing meaningful transportation choices, it must be supported by secure bicycle parking amenities at destinations to encourage ridership. The presence of bike racks is one way to advertise that Irondale is welcoming to bicyclists. It is recommended that the City work with property owners and CommuteSmart to install additional bike racks throughout the city in strategic locations, such as on city-owned properties, in Downtown Irondale, at Grants Mill Station, at city parks, and in new developments occurring along Old Leeds Road.



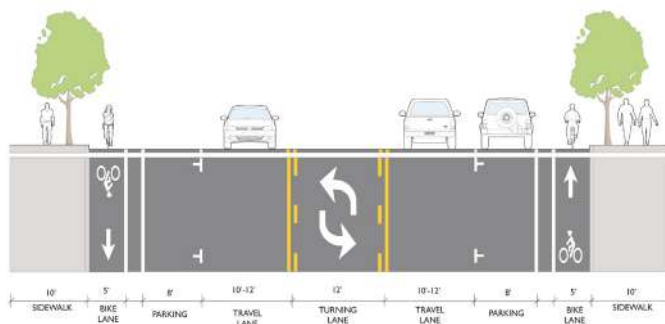
Design by Land Use Context

The ideal bike facility in a busy downtown area may not be the ideal solution for a suburban neighborhood. A one size-fits all approach rarely makes sense when designing for unique areas. Different land-use and development patterns present different challenges for active transportation users, so it is important to find the right facility type for a given road.

The B-Active Plan takes a semi-prescriptive approach to facility recommendations recognizing that facility selection and design for a given road depends on many factors such as existing right-of-way, lane widths, budgetary constraints, etc. The B-Active Plan acknowledges that specific facility selection and design should be left to the judgment of the local design staff or engineering consultant at the time of implementation.

As such, the B-Active plan provides a menu of options based on the land use context a given segment falls within. These land use contexts are divided into Urban Core, Urban, Suburban, Rural and Rural Town. In Irondale, the Urban, Suburban, and Rural land use context apply. Additionally, Appendix D of the B-Active Plan provides detailed cost estimates in.

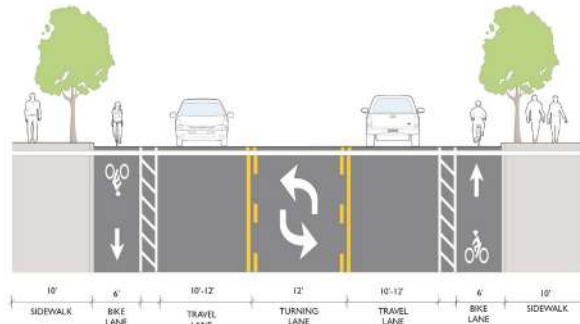
Suburban Land Use Context



Parking Protected Bike Lanes

One of 12 facilities appropriate for **Urban core** land use contexts. Visit the B-Active Plan to explore other possible facilities.

Urban Land Use Context



Buffered Bike Lanes

One of 14 facilities appropriate for **Urban** land use contexts. Visit the *B-Active Plan* to explore other possible facilities.

Visit the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham website at www.b-activeplan.com to download the B-Active Plan and to learn more.



Action 2.8

Dedicate funding annually to implement the City's ADA transition Plan.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into federal law in 1990, was created with the purpose of prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity to those with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, and transportation. All public entities that have non-ADA-compliant facilities employing 50 or more people are required by ADA law to develop a transition plan.

The current ADA standards are detailed in two separate documents: the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design (ADAAG) and the 2011 Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG).

The City's ADA Transition Plan, prepared by Sain Associates in 2016, focused on ADA compliance for existing pedestrian facilities on City right-of-way and the elimination of barriers for the disabled. The types of pedestrian facilities that were found included: sidewalks, curb ramps, crosswalks, and on-street parking.

The cost estimates included in the ADA Transition Plan are a broad level assessment for construction costs only – they do not include costs that may vary such as for right-of-way acquisition, engineering design, or potential impacts to utilities. According to the Plan, the high category barriers will be the first priority.

Based on the plan and the City's commitment to devote \$330,000 per year to the removal of barriers it is anticipated that it will take 10 years from the 2016-2017 fiscal year to eliminate all identified barriers.

The ADA Transition Plan should be updated as necessary, and a progress report should be given to the City Council every two years.

CommuteSmart

Did you know you can get paid to commute to work? If you get to work by any means other than driving by yourself, you can!

People like options. When it comes to getting to work, having options that reward you is even better! The demand for attractive commuting alternatives to driving alone continues to grow significantly. CommuteSmart is a federally-funded initiative of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham that formed in 1999 to promote alternative commuting options for the Birmingham area.

CommuteSmart partners with organizations throughout the Birmingham region to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by encouraging workers to use alternative commuting options. These options include walking, biking, carpooling, vanpooling, riding the bus and even working from home. The program is designed to work with commuters and employers to make changing commute to work habits less intimidating. It offers incentives and services to help ease your transition from driving alone to a cleaner commute. By signing up with CommuteSmart, you could earn \$1 per day (up to \$70) in the first 90 days for getting to and from work (or class) in any way other than driving alone. After that, participants can earn a \$25 gift card for continuing to take alternative commutes at least 20 times each quarter afterwards.

Through CommuteSmart, you can reduce traffic, improve air quality, and strengthen our community. Visit www.commutesmart.org to learn more.

GOAL #3

Make infrastructure maintenance investments a priority.



Action 3.1

Annually update a Local Transportation Plan to receive Rebuild Alabama Act funds.

In 2019 the State Legislature approved the Rebuild Alabama Act that increased fuel taxes by 6 cents per gallon in 2019, 8 cents in 2020 and 10 cents in 2022. After 2023, increases will be determined every other year based on how much the cost of construction changes. Every municipality in Alabama receives a portion of the proceeds of the new state gas tax, and the portion varies according to the population and the mileage of roads within the municipality. Irondale's share was approximately \$57,702 in Fiscal Year 2020 and \$76,936 in Fiscal Year 2021 and is expected to increase to \$96,170 in Fiscal Year 2022.

To receive the funds, each municipality must provide a "local transportation plan" that identifies the projects for which the municipality will spend its allocated funding. The City of Irondale should therefore ensure that it annually updates and adopts a Local Transportation Plan.



Action 3.2

Dedicate an annual budget line item to implement the City's 2017 Pavement Management Plan.

The City of Irondale contracted with Sain Associates, Inc. in 2017 to develop a pavement maintenance plan. The two primary components of the project were to evaluate the current pavement conditions and then develop a set of recommendations for maintaining the city's paved surfaces.

During the study, approximately 115 miles of roadway were evaluated. Each sample was reviewed to log distress types, quantities, and overall condition. The estimated area of paved roads in Irondale is 1,564,000 square yards. If the pavement is not maintained, the cost to rebuild this area would be approximately \$74.3 million. Therefore, it would behoove the city to consider the pavement an asset the same way a city owned building, vehicle, or piece of equipment is considered an asset. Proper maintenance of an asset will prolong its useable life and be a good use of tax dollars.

This plan recommends that the City implement the recommendations of the pavement management plan and allocate funding on an annual bases to prevent more expensive resurfacing in the long run.



Action 3.3

Where feasible, incorporate green infrastructure in all transportation infrastructure projects, especially when a new roadway is constructed, or an existing roadway is redesigned or reconfigured

For example, permeable pavers or porous pavement can be used in parking areas or bio-filtration can be used as a traffic calming measure. To learn more about green infrastructure, see **Chapter 7: Parks and Green Systems**.

Whose Road is it Anyway?

Properly maintained roads are essential to residents, businesses, schools and emergency service providers. Numerous government agencies construct, maintain and repair roads in Irondale.



U.S. Highways

US 78 bisects Irondale running east-west through the central portion of the city limits. Small portions of US 11 are also in the northeast portion of the City. The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) has authority over "US" routes. Visit the ALDOT website at <https://www.dot.state.al.us/reportaconcern.html> to report a concern along these routes.

State Highways

There are no State Highways located within Irondale.



County Roads

This 5-sided blue and gold type of sign identifies county roads and highways in Irondale, including County Road 96 (Floyd Bradford Road), County Road 94 (Queenstown Road), County Road 62 (Overton Road), County Road 143 (Grants Mill Road – south of Old Leeds Road), County Road 130 (Edwards Lake Road), County Highway 98 (Amber Hills Road) and County Highway 74 (Karl Daly Road). The Roads and Transportation Division of Jefferson County is responsible for planning, designing, constructing and maintaining Jefferson County roadways. Visit the department's website at <https://www.jccal.org/Default.asp?ID=699&pg=Roads+and+Transportation> to learn more or report a concern.

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Chapter Seven

Recreation & Green Systems

Image Credit: Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve



Establish Irondale as a regional destination for Adventure and Ecotourism. 144

Maintain, enhance and expand the parks and recreation system. 146

Protect and preserve Irondale’s natural resources through policy and development regulations which achieve goals for environmental sustainability, natural resource protection, and enhancing public access to nature. 152

Recreation & Green Systems

Irondale is uniquely blessed with regionally significant outdoor assets including the Cahaba River, which passes through the city, and the Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve on its northern border. In addition to these destination attractions, Irondale also has a robust park system for residents. This chapter makes recommendations to help improve and maintain Irondale's existing park system, to expand recreational opportunities for area residents, and to protect Irondale's natural resources for future generations. The chapter also highlights best practices in the management of construction sediment and run off, as well as stormwater management.

The 3 goals found within this Recreation and Green Systems chapter are:

1. Establish Irondale as a regional destination for Adventure and Ecotourism.
2. Maintain, enhance and expand the parks and recreation system.
3. Ensure that development regulations achieve goals for environmental sustainability, natural resource protection and enhancing public access to nature.

GOAL #1

Establish Irondale as a regional destination for Adventure and Ecotourism.



Action 1.1

Acquire land that is unsuitable for development due to topography or other environmental constraints for outdoor recreation space such as hiking or mountain biking trails.

Just because land is unsuitable for development does not mean it is without value to the City's residents and economy. Topographically rugged and steep terrain, while unsuitable for traditional development, offers unique opportunities for outdoor recreation and can have a major positive impact for residents and the local economy.

Based on the Existing Conditions Report in **Appendix B**, 56% of Irondale's undeveloped land is constrained by steep slopes (i.e., slopes that are over 20% grade on average). Developing on such land as this can cause major environmental hazards such as excessive flooding and run-off and can also be financially prohibitive. Therefore, constructing hiking and

mountain biking trails can be an excellent use of these areas and can provide a recreational outlet for Irondale residents, a destination for tourists, and contribute to the preservation of green space for generations to come.

Potential candidate sites include the Moon River Cahaba River access area and adjacent parcels to Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve. To learn more about the benefits of hiking and mountain biking trails see the callout box on **page 145**.



Action 1.2

Market Irondale as an outdoor recreation destination through branding efforts and online campaigns.

See **Economic Development Goal Action 4.2**.



Ecotourism

Tourism is the world's largest industry, with nature tourism as the largest growing segment. Ecotourism is a new travel ethic that has arisen as a response to tourists not wanting to impact the natural world. Ecotourism is sustainable-it differs from nature tourism in that it focuses on principals of conservation, education, traveler responsibility and active community participation.

Ecotourism focuses on the following characteristics:

- Conscientious, low-impact visitor behavior
- Sensitivity towards, and appreciation of, local cultures and biodiversity
- Support for local conservation efforts
- Sustainable benefits to local communities
- Local participation in decision-making
- Educational components for both the traveler and local communities

Ecotourism can provide viable economic development strategies for Irondale, and can provide much needed revenues for the protection of the Cahaba River, trail expansions, and other natural areas. Ecotourism can increase the level of education and activism among travelers, and can position Irondale as the leader in sustainable development. The differences between mass tourism and ecotourism are shown in the table below.

Examples of Ecotourism include:

- Bicycle touring/ mountain biking
- Horseback trail riding
- Hiking
- Freshwater river rafting, canoeing, and kayaking
- Camping
- Cultural activities
- Observing wildlife and nature
- Visiting historical places and landmarks

Table 7.1: Characteristics of Mass Tourism and Ecotourism

| Characteristics of Mass Tourism | Characteristics of Ecotourism |
|--|--|
| Large groups of visitors | Small groups of visitors |
| Urban | Rural |
| Touristic general marketing activities | Eco-marketing activities |
| Impact on natural environment | Little impact on the natural environment |
| Management based on macroeconomic principles | Management based on local economic principles |
| Anonymous relationship between visitors and locals | Personalized relationships between visitors and locals |
| General development goals | Local development objectives |
| Behavior-oriented leisure activities/ entertainment, opponents to education and training actions | Loyalty in the process of training and education for appropriate conduct for the natural environment |

Source: M. R Dorobantu, P Nistoreanu, 2012 *Rural Tourism And Ecotourism- The Main Priorities in Sustainable Development Orientations of Rural Local Communities in Romania*.

GOAL #2

Maintain, enhance and expand the parks and recreation system.



Action 2.1

Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The need for planning new parks, investing in existing parks, constructing a recreation center, and enhancing the parks and recreation experience in Irondale was frequently mentioned during the public involvement process associated with this Plan. As such, it is recommended that the City develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to outline the greatest needs and opportunities for the existing park system. The purpose of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to provide a comprehensive vision for the overall park system, as well as overall guidance for phased improvements and expanded programmatic needs in individual parks.

A Parks and Recreation Master Plan could help the City prioritize needed improvements and expansions to existing parks and would help the City identify areas for new parks. It would provide a framework for orderly and consistent planning, acquisition, development and administration of the City's parks and recreational resources, programs and facilities.



Action 2.2

Explore the feasibility and funding needs of providing a recreational center and athletic complex.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, Irondale residents expressed a desire for a municipal recreation center or athletic complex for indoor sports and events. A recreation center could be combined with a community center to better serve a broad swath of the community. Additionally, the community center or recreation center could provide a location for emergency facilities such as a community storm shelter.





Action 2.3

Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) at all Irondale Parks.

Research has shown that decisions preceding criminal acts are highly influenced by the perceived risk of being caught. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a set of multidisciplinary strategies and design concepts intended to deter undesirable and criminal activities through the careful design of the built environment. Design strategies can be used in conjunction with mechanical and organizational strategies, such as use of security cameras and the presence of legitimate users, security guards or police. The primary strategies of CPTED are:

Natural Surveillance:

"See and be seen" is the overall goal when it comes to CPTED and natural surveillance. A person is less likely to commit a crime if they think someone will see them do it. Lighting and landscape play an important role in CPTED.

Access Control:

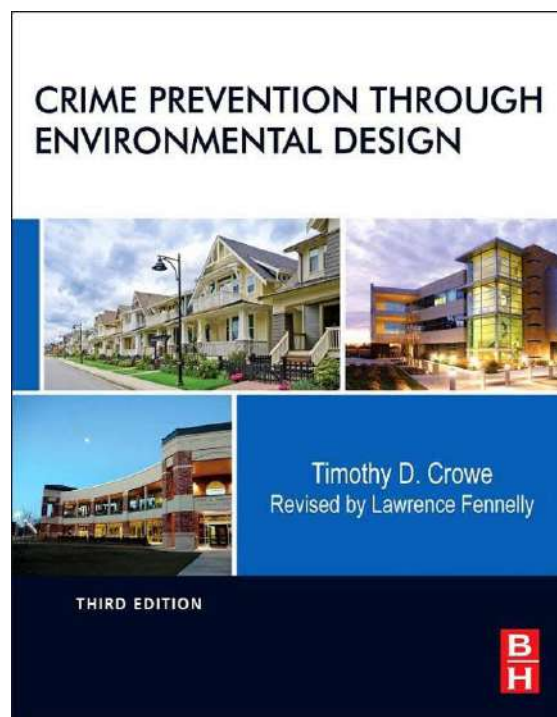
Natural access control is more than a high block wall topped with barbed wire. CPTED utilizes the use of walkways, fences, lighting, signage and landscape to clearly guide people and vehicles to and from the proper entrances. The goal with this CPTED principle is not necessarily to keep intruders out, but to direct the flow of people while decreasing the opportunity for crime.

Territorial Reinforcement:

Creating or extending a "sphere of influence" by utilizing physical designs such as pavement treatments, landscaping and signage that enable users of an area to develop a sense of proprietorship over it. Public areas are clearly distinguished from private ones. Using this CPTED principle, potential trespassers perceive this control and are thereby discouraged.

Maintenance:

CPTED and the "Broken Window Theory" suggests that one "broken window" or nuisance, if allowed to exist, will lead to others and ultimately to the decline of an entire neighborhood. Neglected and poorly maintained properties are breeding grounds for criminal activity.





Action 2.4

Modernize playground equipment at city parks to include inclusive playground equipment.

It is recommended that the City explore ways to modernize playground equipment at Ruffner Park and Beacon Park to include inclusive playground equipment. Inclusive playgrounds are designed so that children with a wide range of physical and cognitive abilities can play together, and it focuses on overall inclusion and fairness for kids with different needs and abilities.

An inclusive playground goes beyond wheelchair-accessible playground equipment and takes away barriers to all exclusions, both physical social, and provides a sensory rich experience for all. While not every piece of equipment may be appropriate for each child, the playground as a whole should offer different opportunities for safe and engaging play. This creates a playground experience where kids can develop new physical and social skills as they safely challenge themselves through play.



Action 2.5

Establish new parks for residents who are currently underserved by existing park access.

Convenient access to parks is an important part of quality of life. In fact, it has been shown* that individuals who live close to green space have better health outcomes over the course of a lifetime than those who do not. At present there are five parks (Ruffner Park, Ellard Park, Beacon Park, Cahaba Landing, and Triangle Park) within the Irondale city limits with the Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve just north of the city limits, across from Ruffner Park.

As illustrated in the Existing Conditions Report in **Appendix B**, only 35% of residents are within a half-mile or 10-minute walk of park space, with the majority of these residents living on the northwestern side of Irondale. As such, future park development should be prioritized in underserved areas (see Figure 7.1) such as those east of Grants Mill Road.

Source: U.S. National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5876990/>



Action 2.6

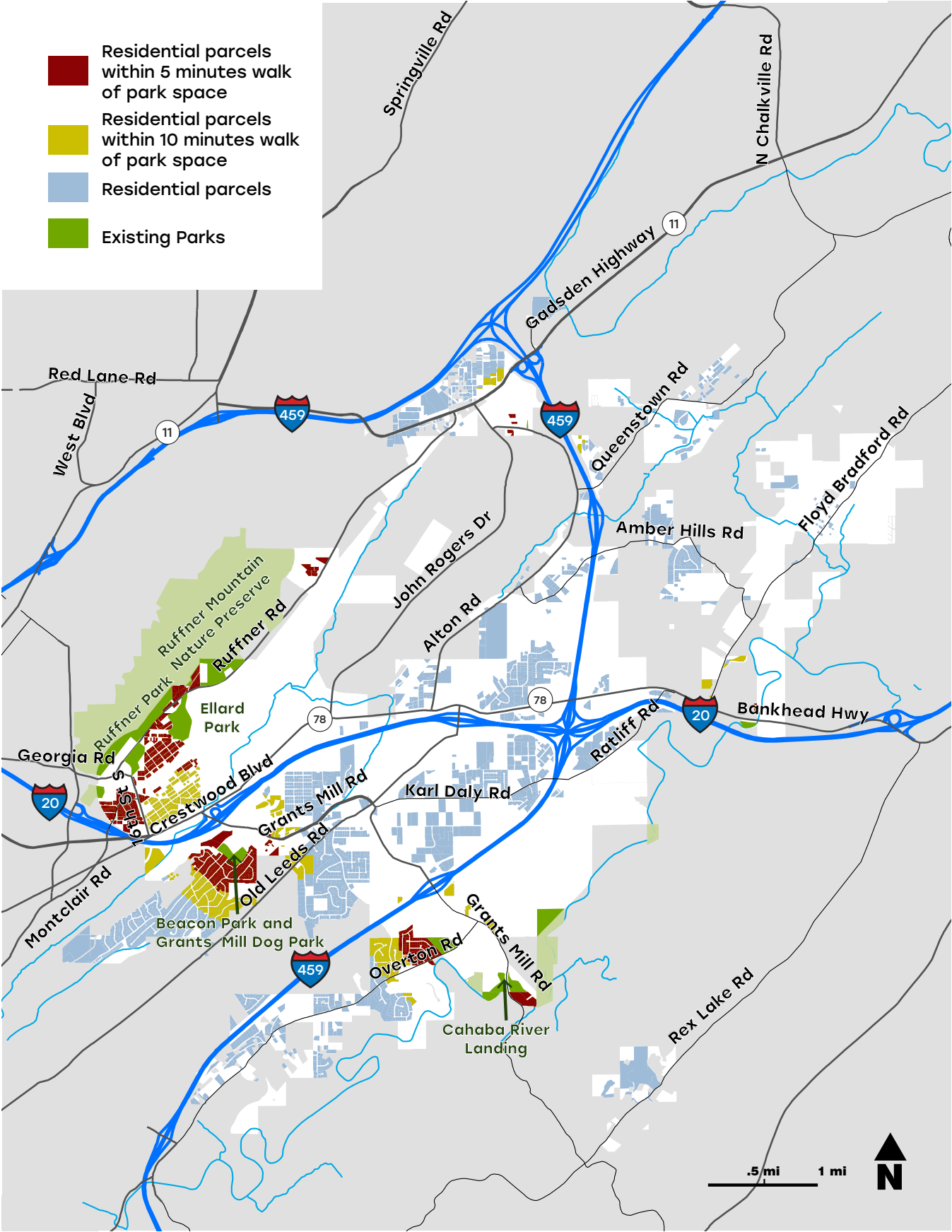
Make improvements needed at Ruffner Park.

Located at Ruffner Road at 16th Street North, across from Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve, Ruffner Park consists of 20.3 acres featuring six lighted baseball/softball fields, a concession stand, public restrooms, picnic areas and a playground. The Irondale Youth Association provides softball and baseball programs for young girls and boys at the park.

According to public input associated with this Plan, the following improvements are desired at Ruffner Park:

- Enhance the general aesthetics through improved landscaping, signage, and regular maintenance.
- Construct a walking trail in the park
- Add additional parking.
- Provide updated playground equipment.
- Renovate the concession stand.
- Provide amenities such as benches and garbage receptacles.
- Install additional lighting for safety (see the CPTED design principles described in Action 2.3 on page 147).
- Improve the conditions of the existing baseball/softball fields.

Figure 7.1: Existing Access to Parks in Irondale





Action 2.7

Make improvements needed at Beacon Park.

Beacon Park is a small park located behind Grants Mill Station at 5309 Beacon Drive. Currently the park features a playground, two picnic pavilions, a barbecue pit, walking track, and public restrooms.

According to public input associated with this Plan, the following improvements are desired at Beacon Park:

- Renovate and improve the bathrooms.
- Provide updated playground equipment.
- Install additional lighting for safety (see the CPTED design principles described in **Action 2.3** on page 147).



Action 2.8

Make improvements needed at Cahaba River Landing.

Located off Grants Mill Road at the Cahaba River, the Cahaba River Landing provides access to the Cahaba River for Irondale residents and the surrounding communities. To preserve the natural feel of the landing, amenities should be minimal. However, some updates could help keep the river cleaner and more attractive for visitors. One recommendation is to provide additional garbage receptacles and ensure they are emptied regularly.



Action 2.9

Make improvements needed at Ellard Park.

Located on Ruffner Court, just north of Downtown Irondale, Ellard Park is a quiet 9.5-acre park that features a picnic area and small playground. Ellard Park is not lighted and currently closes at sunset.

According to public input associated with this Plan, the following improvements are desired at Ellard Park:

- Located on Ruffner Court, just north of Downtown Irondale, Ellard Park is a quiet 9.5-acre park that features a picnic area and small playground. Ellard Park is not lighted and currently closes at sunset.
- According to public input associated with this Plan, the following improvements are desired at Ellard Park:
- Construct a walking trail in the park.
- Consider constructing a community amphitheater or small venue.
- Provide updated playground equipment.
- Install overhead and ground based lighting to improve safety (see the CPTED design principles described in **Action 2.3** on page 147).





Action 2.10

Consider establishing a dog park for Irondale residents.

During the public involvement process of this Plan, a dog park was one of the most frequently cited desires out of all public amenities. Dog parks are increasingly popular for dog owners throughout the country. As such, the City should consider establishing a public dog park within an existing city park or in another suitable location.

The City of Alabaster has a successful dog park called Beneful Dream Dog Park that can be used as a case study when considering its placement, establishment, and operation. Some components of a successful dog park include:

- Fenced leash-free areas that separate small (35 lbs. and below) and large dogs for safety
- Pet waste stations
- Covered sitting areas with picnic tables
- Water drinking stations for owners and pets



Source: 280 Living



Action 2.11

Consider establishing a Skate Park and Bicycle Skills area at a new or existing park.

The Visioning Survey associated with this Plan also revealed a desire for a public skate park/ and/or bicycle skills park where people can safely and legally skate, scooter, and ride BMX bikes. The City should explore the feasibility of constructing a stand-alone skills or look into ways to incorporate one into an existing park. The City could also explore the opportunity of partnering with the Tony Hawk Foundation and other local organizations to develop a space for these citizens.



Action 2.12

Make needed improvements and consider expanding the Irondale Senior Activity Center.

Located at 5313 Beacon Drive in Grants Mill Station, the Irondale Senior Activity Center offers numerous programs for seniors 55+ with spaces for parties, meetings, and other events. An expansion of the Senior Activity Center could be considered as part of the revitalization of Grants Mill Station. Some improvements could include:

- Expanded day trip options
- Expanded program options
- Indoor walking track
- Yoga and other exercise classes



Source: Bella Vista, AR

GOAL #3

Protect and preserve Irondale's natural resources through policy and development regulations which achieve goals for environmental sustainability, natural resource protection, and enhancing public access to nature.



Action 3.2

Encourage the use of Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development Best Management Practices (BMPs) on all new developments and redevelopment projects larger than one acre during construction and post-construction to control soil erosion and minimize pollutant runoff and instream erosion of waterways downstream.

As areas are developed, the amount of paved surface increases leading to an increase in stormwater volume and pollutants, which can harm ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams. To mitigate the stormwater impacts of new development and redevelopment projects, the City should encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that treat and store runoff and allow it to infiltrate on-site before it affects water bodies downstream.

Innovative site designs and other Green Infrastructure (GI) practices that reduce paved (impervious) surfaces and increase infiltration are recommended to reduce flows and improve water quality. In addition, many of these BMPs provide greenspace for users of new development and improve a site's aesthetics. For more information on BMPs and to see examples, see the callout box on pages **156-159**.

It is recommended that the City revise regulations to require and/or provide incentives for BMPs. The City could take actions such as:

- Establish uniform procedures for reviewing site plans.
- Improve staff training and staff expertise for construction and post-construction stormwater management, including in the topics of GI and Low Impact Development (LID).
- Develop strategies to implement a combination of structural and non-structural BMPs.
- Improve the ordinance to regulate and control post-construction runoff
- Create a program to ensure adequate long-term operation and maintenance of BMPs.



Action 3.1

Pursue opportunities for the acquisition, conservation and restoration of open space along year-round streams and rivers and actively protect these resources through land use management, steep slope development regulations, conservation subdivisions, and cluster development.

Irondale is blessed with ample natural open space, rolling hills, and several year round streams and creeks within the city limits. Where possible, this land should be protected through various means by the City and preserved to protect vital natural resources, water quality, recreational space, and wildlife habitat.

A number of options the City should consider to protect critical habitat and streams include:

- Offer incentives for conservation subdivisions (See Future Land Use Action 2.3)
- Encourage private landowners and developers to partner with Freshwater Land Trust to conserve sensitive land through conservation easements and land donations.
- Consider adopting a steep slopes ordinance to protect scenic vistas and reduce stormwater runoff and erosion

- Establish incentives for developments that use GI and LID BMPs.
- Improve resources for enforcement of stormwater and zoning regulations.
- Tax Credits for implementation of BMPs
- Expedited permitting processes for developers using BMPs
- Waiving of permit fees for developers using BMPs



Action 3.3

Modify the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to require the use of Low Impact Development (LID) or green infrastructure (GI) techniques for new developments and redevelopment projects larger than one acre to mimic natural hydrology where feasible and minimize impacts of stormwater runoff on the Cahaba River and Shades Creek and their tributaries.

Low Impact Development (LID) is an approach to site planning, design, and development that seeks to avoid, minimize, and manage impacts to water resources by stewarding and reintroducing natural hydrologic processes into developed watersheds.

For more information on LID practices, see the callout box on **pages 156 to 159**. For areas appropriate for green infrastructure, along with potential infrastructure improvements, see **Figure 7.2**.



Action 3.4

Adopt a Riparian Buffer Ordinance to manage development within a certain distance from the Cahaba River and other major streams to protect buffer setbacks, floodplains, and water quality/habitat.

Streams flowing to the Cahaba River are an important asset to Irondale and should be protected as such. New development presents a high risk to water quality, habitat, and overall stream health due to the increase in pollutants and stormwater that are by-

products of new development.

As such, the City should take protective measures to mitigate these negative side effects. To protect the City's streams, the City of Irondale should consider adopting a riparian buffer ordinance to require a minimum riparian buffer of 25 feet for new development.

Riparian buffers are permanently vegetated transition zones that connect upland areas to streams. Vegetation helps to slow runoff velocity, creates diffuse flow, and reduces non-point source (NPS) pollution before it enters streams. In addition to filtering pollutants, riparian buffers help to stabilize stream banks and provide food and shelter to wildlife. Furthermore, the City could utilize the riparian buffer to create additional greenspaces, such as educational classrooms, pocket parks and future trail expansions.

Note: Riparian buffers are also known as filter strips, streamside vegetation, riparian zones and buffer strips.



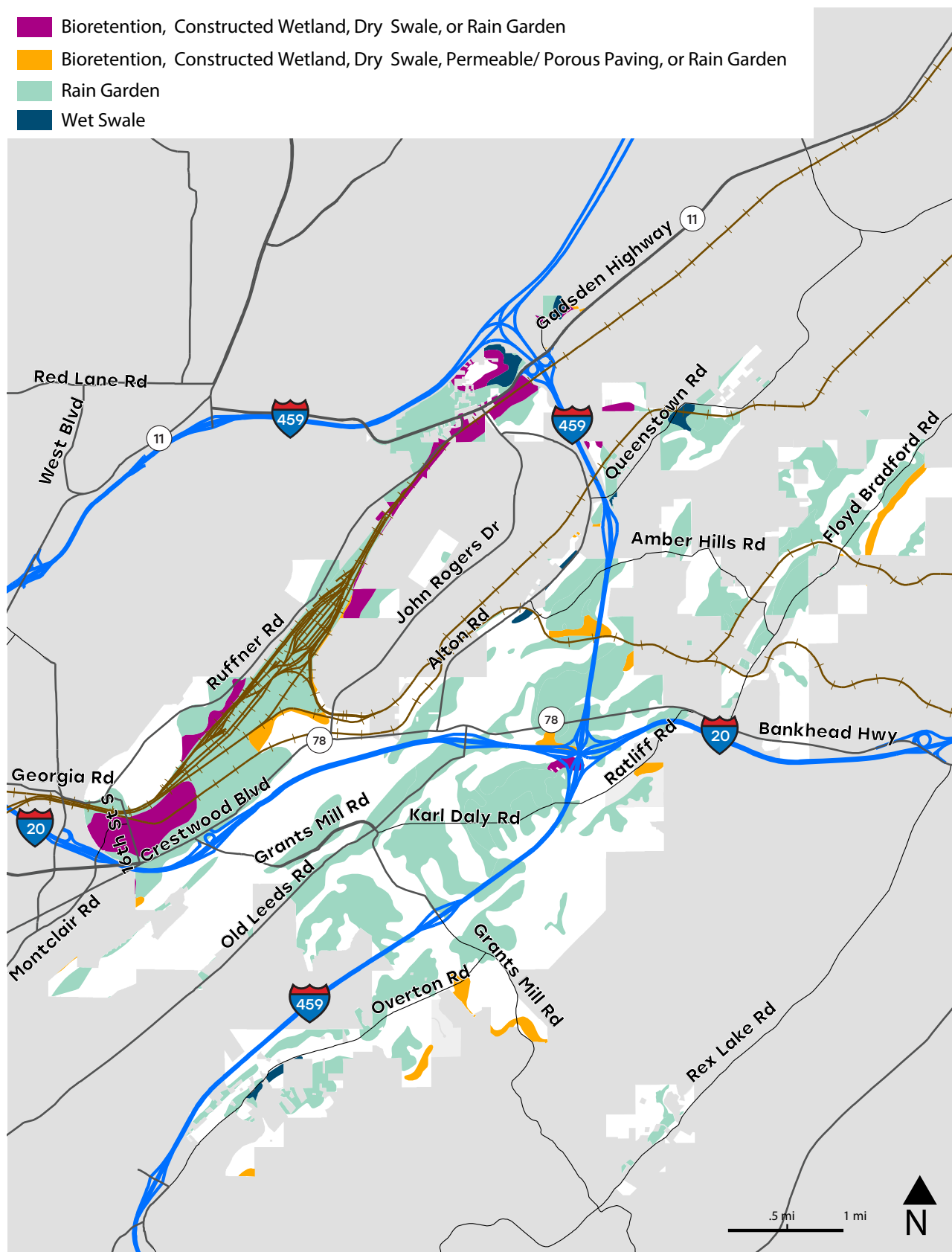
Action 3.5

Collaborate with Jefferson County to create a Stormwater Master Plan for the Grants Mill Corridor.

Stormwater master plans help community leaders, planners, and engineers work with developers and private landowners. Stormwater drainage is unaffected by administrative, or paper boundaries and a stormwater master plan help all parties understand the natural conditions, constraints, and opportunities to manage stormwater in a safe, compliant, and sustainable manner. Like most master plans, this report should provide the City of Irondale with a starting point for ensuring the public safety and welfare of its citizens, businesses, and visitors. The plan should:

- Quantify stormwater runoff and quantity
- Identify potential flood hazards and problem areas along the Cahaba River and Grants Mill Road
- Identify and prioritize capital improvement projects to reduce flood frequency and flood risk
- Recommended improvement to enhance

Figure 7.2: Areas appropriate for Green Infrastructure



water quality and meet other sustainable objectives

- Provide a guide for increasing stormwater resilience within the City of Irondale



Action 3.6

Construct projects recommended in the Shades Creek Watershed Plan.



Action 3.7

Implement a city-wide green infrastructure pilot program.

Implementing a comprehensive city-wide green infrastructure policy can be a daunting and challenging process. Regulatory constraints, the need for technical guidance, and inadequate political support are just some of the many barriers that local governments may confront. Piolet or demonstration programs can be an effective way to test green infrastructure strategies without initially making long-term or expensive commitment. Pilot programs are small-scale programs that can demonstrate the cost and performance of a given green infrastructure practice in a given place, which can result in increased confidence and support of further green infrastructure measures. Pilot projects can be installed on city-owned land through capital improvement projects. Grant programs can also be established to provide funding to private parties to test approaches on private land. Common green infrastructure piolet programs/ projects include green streets/ alleys, rain gardens, and pocket parks. For more information about implementing a green infrastructure piolet program visit <https://www.georgetownclimate.org/adaptation/toolkits/green-infrastructure-toolkit/getting-started-pilot-projects.html>.

One potential project includes creating a park at the Simply Ten site along Crestwood Boulevard. Owned by the Irondale Redevelopment Authority, the Simply Ten site presents an opportunity to piolet a city-wide green infrastructure program.



Action 3.8

Address severe erosion issues at the Simply Ten site by constructing a park that utilizes appropriate green infrastructure.

This recommend park project is located at 2500 Crestwood Boulevard and is approximately 5.11 acres in size. At present the site is owned by the Irondale Commercial Development Authority and is visible from Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78. Shades Creek runs directly alongside the site and presents an opportunity, once restored, for residents and visitors to interact with nature in an otherwise urban environment. This proposed pocket park is intended to:

- Connect historic Irondale to Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78.
- Provide an intimate and relaxing space for the community to gather.
- Be a sponge to absorb excess stormwater to prevent flash flooding from Shade Creek.
- Restore the creek bed of Shades Creek.

Next Steps:

- Explore the feasibility and environmental impacts of locating a pocket park on the site.
- The City of Irondale should work with Simply Six to acquire the site.
- Secure the community's commitment. Survey residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to determine the best use of the pocket park. Should it be an active or passive park? What activities should occur at the park?
- Parks are successful when they have community buy-in, are surrounded by active uses like retail or office, are comfortable spaces with a good image, are perceived to be safe, and create sociable places.
- Secure long-term and short-term funding.
- Plan and design the pocket park with the help of a landscape architect.
- Construct the pocket park and establish a maintenance plan.

Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are used to mitigate the effects of development and redevelopment (pollutants to waters, stormwater runoff, stream erosion, etc.). In developed areas, impervious surfaces, like pavement and roofs, prevent water from naturally soaking into the ground. Instead, water runs rapidly into storm drainage systems and natural streams causing flooding, stream bank erosion, sediment, habitat destruction, sewer overflows, infrastructure damage, and contaminated streams, rivers, and other water bodies. Impervious surfaces also reduce recharge of groundwater, which, during drought, reduces the base flow discharge into rivers and streams that maintains water levels. BMPs help to mitigate this effect by incorporating systems that allow infiltration, evapotranspiration, and re-use of stormwater to maintain natural hydrology. Careful management of BMPs that infiltrate surface runoff to groundwater should be considered to protect the City's drinking water source because they could inject pollutants. All of the BMP practices listed below are referenced from the City of Baltimore's Green Pattern Book.

Rain Gardens:

Rain gardens are shallow, vegetated basins that collect and absorb runoff from rooftops, sidewalks and streets. The rain gardens are used as a Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater management solution that promotes evapotranspiration, which is the effort of evaporation and transpiration to remove water from the soil and vegetation. These gardens are typically smaller and simpler than a bioretention system – they are less than 2,000 square feet in size and do not include an under-drain. Rain gardens are versatile features that can be installed in almost any unpaved space.

Bioretention:

The bioretention process utilizes a bed of sand, soil, and plants to filter contaminants and pollutants from stormwater runoff. Although water may briefly pond during heavy rain events, bioretention areas are designed to be dry most of the time. The filtered stormwater is either returned to a storm drain through an under-drain or partially infiltrated into the soil. Like rain gardens, bioretention areas may also be vegetated.

Green Parking:

Green parking differs from traditional asphalt parking lots by incorporating permeable paving materials, tree planting, and rain gardens that capture stormwater runoff and shade surfaces, thus improving water quality and cooling the parking areas. Green parking would provide residents, faith-based organizations, and

businesses in the community additional parking that cannot otherwise be accommodated on the street or one's property.

Planter Boxes:

Urban rain gardens with vertical walls and open or closed bottoms that collect and absorb runoff from sidewalks, parking lots, and streets. Planter boxes are ideal for space-limited sites in dense urban areas and as a streetscape element

Bioswales:

Vegetated, mulched, or xeriscaped channels that provide treatment and retention as they move stormwater from one place to another. Vegetated swales slow, infiltrate, and filter stormwater flows. As linear features, vegetated swales are particularly suitable along streets and parking lots.

Permeable Pavements:

Paved surfaces that infiltrate, treat, and/or store rainwater where it falls. Permeable pavements are constructed from pervious concrete, porous asphalt, permeable interlocking pavers, and several other materials.

Planter Boxes



Permeable Pavement



Dry Swale



Constructed Wetland



Bioretention



Rain Garden



Low Impact Development

When used in the context of stormwater management, Low Impact Development (LID) is defined as an approach to land development (both new development and redevelopment) that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible, ideally using natural hydrologic processes such as infiltration, interception, and evapotranspiration. Stormwater LID practices employ principles like preserving and recreating natural landscape features and minimizing effective imperviousness to create functional and appealing site drainage that treats stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product.

Reduction of adverse stormwater impacts using stormwater LID practices should be the first consideration of the site designer for every land development, including redevelopments. Operationally, economically, and aesthetically, LID practices can offer significant benefits over treating and controlling stormwater onsite or downstream. Therefore, feasible opportunities for using these methods should be explored and exhausted before considering the use of the Green Infrastructure Practices (GIPs) or Total Suspended Solids (TSS) Removal Best Management Practices (BMPs). Land developments can be designed to reduce, and sometimes even eliminate, stormwater impacts when careful efforts are made to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious cover, and better integrate stormwater management techniques. By implementing a combination of these nonstructural approaches, it is possible to reduce the amount of stormwater, and therefore pollutants, that are generated from a development after construction.

This overall reduction in stormwater can yield multiple benefits, such as minimizing costs for infrastructure construction and long-term post-construction maintenance.

In general, stormwater LID practices are based on the following general goals:

- Early communication and coordination between the City and the development's multi-disciplinary design team
- Prioritization of infill and redevelopment to capitalize on use of vacant properties and existing infrastructure
- Management of stormwater (quantity and quality) as close to the point of origin as possible resulting in minimized collection and conveyance
- Prevention of negative impacts that can result from post-development stormwater, so that mitigation is unnecessary
- Utilization of simple, nonstructural methods for

stormwater management that are lower cost and lower maintenance than structural control

- Creation of a multifunctional landscape that can manage stormwater and address or benefit other development needs
- Reliance on hydrology as a framework for land development design

Stormwater LID practices include several site design techniques such as preserving natural features and resources, effectively laying out the site elements to reduce impact, reducing the number of impervious surfaces, and utilizing natural features on the site for stormwater management. The aim of using LID practices is to reduce the environmental impact "footprint" of the site while retaining and enhancing the owner/developer's purpose and vision for the site. Many of the LID practices and concepts can reduce the cost of infrastructure while maintaining or even increasing the value of the property.

The reduction in stormwater and pollutants using LID practices can reduce the required peak discharges and volumes that must be conveyed and controlled on a site and, therefore, the size and cost of necessary drainage infrastructure and GIPs. In some cases, the use of LID practices may eliminate the need for structural controls entirely. Hence, LID practices can be viewed as both a water quantity and water quality management tool.

Common LID practices include:

- Early coordination, collaboration, and communication
- Work with multi-disciplinary design team (civil engineers, landscape architect, ecologist, etc.)
- Participate in stormwater pre-concept process
- Conservation of natural features and resources
- Tree and stream buffer protection and restoration (incentive available)
- Soil restoration (incentive available)
- "Build with the Land" Design Techniques
- Implement retrofits (incentive available)
- Reduce Impervious Surface (incentive available)
- Redevelopment and Infill (incentive available)
- Greenspace Enhancements
- Complete Streets
- Greenway Connections
- Pocket Parks



Did You Know? In 2009, Bass Pro Shop was awarded a Watershed Conservation Development Award from the Cahaba River Society!



Case Study: Bass Pro Shop

In 2007 Goodwyn Mills and Cawood completed the Bass Pro Shop and destination retail center and nature park, located in Leeds, Alabama. This project focused on protecting the sensitive habitat surrounding Buck Creek through sensitive site development strategies, including seven bioswales in the parking lot and aggressive best management practices (BMPs) used during construction to protect the Cahaba River (which provides the City of Birmingham and Jefferson County with drinking water). In addition to the retail center, a nature park was constructed and placed under a permanent conservation easement to provide recreational opportunities such as walking trails, pavilions, a beaver pond, and a lake with boat ramp which is used for fishing seminars and other educational classes. Educational signage was also placed throughout the property to identify important ecologically significant plant species, waterbodies, riparian buffers, and the surrounding watershed.

Source: Photos property of Goodwyn Mills and Cawood



Chapter Eight

Economic Development



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Economic Development

Irondale residents experience an excellent quality of life with easy access to desired amenities and a proximity to Birmingham and Interstate-20 that can be leveraged for economic growth in the future. Irondale has also positioned itself as a hub for luxury automotive sales creating a unique opportunity within the State of Alabama.

This chapter outlines goals and recommended actions for how the City can continue to foster a business-friendly environment for existing businesses, support businesses that may be struggling post COVID-19, and also recruit new employers in targeted industries to the City. It identifies approaches for encouraging the efficient use of infrastructure as new businesses are recruited and strategies for retaining existing and future businesses as well as the empowerment of the City's human talent.

The 4 goals found within this Economic Development chapter are:

1. Foster economic development in Irondale.
2. Recruit new businesses that will diversify and complement existing businesses.
3. Continue to support Irondale's workforce, small businesses, and start-ups.
4. Refresh branding and marketing efforts to promote Irondale's unique assets.

GOAL #1

Foster economic development in Irondale.



Action 1.1

Promote creative, flexible adaptive reuse of obsolete industrial and commercial buildings by new businesses.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, almost three quarters (73%) of residents surveyed noted "tired retail developments with high vacancy in commercial centers" as one of the most pressing challenges facing Irondale. These high-vacancy commercial structures and under-utilized industrial spaces may be seen as liabilities, but they do not have to be demolished. They can become assets through adaptive reuse, which will require creativity and flexibility.

Much of this space could be considered "cool space," which is office space in buildings that are

historic or architecturally distinct, often located in desirable areas. Due to their authenticity and uniqueness tenants are willing to pay a premium to occupy these distinctive spaces that reflect their company's culture.

Large commercial and industrial spaces can be transformed from cavernous voids into smaller spaces for individual businesses with demising walls, which can be used to create suited for individual commercial tenants. New demising walls along with commensurate entryways and hallways can be added within a vacant building to create micro-retail spaces, suites for separate businesses, and other compatible commercial uses. This presents a dual benefit – buildings can be saved and stabilized, and vibrancy is returned to commercial and former industrial areas.

The City could use various tools to accomplish this, including:

- Creating a loan or grant program for demising walls.
- Waiving certain development or permit fees.
- Streamlining the approval/ permitting process.
- Making amendments to adopted building



Case Study: The Source - Denver, CO

The Source Hotel + Market Hall complex is a prime example of creative, flexible adaptive reuse of an obsolete industrial facility. The building housing the Market Hall was built in the 1880s by the Colorado Ironworks as an iron foundry and boiler factory. Over the years, it has served many light and heavy industrial uses, including production, and warehousing as well as government surplus storage. Beginning in 2010, it sat vacant until being purchased for redevelopment in 2013.

With 45,000 square feet across two connected spaces, this cavernous area was too large for a single consumer-facing commercial use. The Source's redeveloper and architect decided on a market hall commercial concept. This concept has grown in popularity recently, with examples being opened in many cities across the country. The Source is an example of adaptive reuse, but it goes further by modifying a single large space to accommodate multiple small-scale businesses.

Today, the Source Market Hall is home to 25 vendors whose businesses range from a restaurant and a pizzeria to retail apparel, a barber, and a microbrewery. Individually these businesses would not have been able to occupy such a large space, but with creative and flexible design, collectively they are able to return life to an obsolete foundry. Visitors benefit from a shopping experience that not every commercial development offers, and each vendor benefits from additional foot traffic encouraged by other businesses under the same roof.

Sources: https://www.confluence-denver.com/features/adaptive_reuse_101415.aspx
<https://denverarchitecture.org/recap-from-foundry-to-market-hall-adaptive-reuse-at-the-source/>
<https://rinoartdistrict.org/post/the-source>

and fire codes if these codes are making the redevelopment of properties become more challenging and costly to bring “up-to-code”.

- Adopting an adaptive reuse ordinance (see **Action 5.3 in the Livability & Code Reform**)



Action 1.2

Plan pop-up events and festivals in Downtown Irondale.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, Irondale residents frequently mentioned how they were affected by the loss of the Whistlestop Festival and how central the festival was to the Irondale’s identity. The Whistlestop Festival, other festivals and pop-up events are examples of cultural programming, which are essential to quality of life of residents.

Festivals and pop-up events can be developed in cooperation with a variety of community partners, including the Irondale Chamber of Commerce. Such activities can also be a boom to local businesses, as they generate interests among shoppers while giving entrepreneurs the chance to test the waters or reach new customers. For example, organizing a “shop local” campaign to promote and highlight local businesses would provide visibility during times of the year when shoppers may gravitate towards larger retailers (i.e. winter holidays or back-to-school). Events like these could be integrated into the citywide marketing campaign on a seasonal basis. These events have gained popularity as an economic development tool, partially because businesses find it easier to attract talent to vibrant and livable cities.



Action 1.3

Adopt an adaptive reuse ordinance.

See **Action 5.3 in Chapter 5 Livability & Code Reform**.





Action 1.4

Establish an Irondale Main Street organization and then consider applying to become a designated Main Street community.

Main Street Alabama, created in 2010, is the statewide coordinator of the Main Street program and works with the 29 Main Street designated communities in Alabama. Their Four-Point Approach, which includes organization, promotion, design, and economic vitality, has helped Main Street organizations throughout the state catalyze change in their communities. Irondale, with its wealth of downtown historic resources, could be a strong candidate for Main Street designation.

One criterion for eligibility is an existing organization or the commitment to establish an organization responsible for the Main Street Program, so the City will have to help establish a Main Street organization. For Irondale, establishing such a Main Street organization will not be too onerous, and the benefits will be valuable - the organization would build capacity within the city and could become a valuable community partner. Eventual application and membership would be a boon to the city and its residents, as Main Street Alabama offers workshops, training and other resources for local Main Street organizations.



Action 1.5

Continue to market and promote Irondale as an automotive hub in Alabama.

See **Chapter 3 Focus Areas: Grants Mill Corridor.**

GOAL #2

Recruit new businesses that will diversify and complement existing businesses..



Action 2.1

Incentivize, recruit, and attract more commercial and retail development throughout the City of Irondale.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents frequently expressed their desire for additional commercial and retail options throughout the City, with 77% of survey takers noting the “limited variety of shopping, entertainment, and dining options” as a top challenge to the City, 82% desiring additional full service “sit-down” dining options, and 84% stating they frequently leave Irondale for shopping.

According to market research*, the following business types show potential for expansion and recruitment throughout Irondale:

- Home furnishings stores
- Grocery stores
- Specialty food store
- Clothing stores
- Food services and drinking places

Some of these business types could be well-suited for inclusion as part of the revitalization strategies for Downtown Irondale Grants Mill Station. See **Chapter 3 Focus Areas.**



Action 2.2

Create and maintain an online database of available retail, office, and industrial spaces including size, zoning, lease rates, price, utilities, condition, etc.

There are many vacant or underutilized retail, office, and industrial buildings in the City of Irondale that could be well-suited to new or existing businesses. Often, one of the largest obstacles to starting or expanding a business is

space. By maintaining a database of available business space, the City can help foster economic development and business growth and expansion. It is recommended that the City maintain an online database of commercial, office and industrial properties and spaces available for sale or lease.

The database should include information such as square footage, existing zoning, lease rates and sale price, available utilities, condition, and any other pertinent information. Where possible, photos and floorplans would be helpful for prospective businesses. Depending on the City's capacity, consider the feasibility of partnering with a group such as the Irondale Commercial Development Authority for creation and maintenance of the database. The City and partners should promote the database locally, including to such groups as the Irondale Chamber of Commerce, and to businesses considering locating to Irondale. The Jefferson County Economic & Industrial Development Authority, whose website is <https://jeffmet.com/home>, has experience operating a similar database and may be a valuable partner.



The Hub, a coworking space in Birmingham, AL (Source: The Hub)



The Orchard House, a coworking space in Birmingham, AL (Source: Eleanor Stenner)

GOAL #3

Continue to support Irondale's workforce, small businesses, and start-ups.



Action 3.1

Explore the feasibility of creating a “startup incubator” or shared co-working space for new businesses.

New business formation is a sign of a strong local economy, but finding space is often the largest obstacle to starting a business, and failure to do so can prevent a business from ever getting off the ground. However, the City has the tools to step in and work to make space available. There are at least two types of spaces the City could provide: a startup incubator and shared co-working spaces.

A startup incubator provides space and other support for one or more new small businesses. Additional support is designed to help the business successfully launch and typically includes some combination of assistance securing funding, mentorship and training, shared and affordable office space, marketing assistance, and industry-specific support. Co-working space, on the other hand, is less comprehensive but no less essential. A regional example of a startup incubator is Innovation Depot, Inc. located in Downtown Birmingham. Today, there are only 14 business incubators in Alabama (<http://asbdc.org/start-ups/incubators-in-alabama/>) and creating one in Irondale would help the City position itself as a destination within the region and state.

Co-working spaces provide some combination of private or group offices and meeting spaces at affordable rates. Essential utilities and business functions, such as Wi-Fi, printing, and a business mailing address are typically included. Because co-working spaces provide less business support than an incubator, they are better suited to businesses who have already secured their

own financing, have a marketing plan, and are generally closer to self-sufficiency. MAKEbhm, located in Birmingham, offers co-working space and additional support more tailored as a 'maker space.'

Establishing a startup incubator, providing co-working space, or both would help existing new small business thrive, and would also have the potential to attract entrepreneurs to Irondale. Business incubators often receive some public funding (<http://asbdc.org/start-ups/incubators-in-alabama/>). The City is encouraged to work with community partners such as the Irondale Chamber of Commerce and Irondale Commercial Development Authority to determine the feasibility of establishing either or both entities and to determine next steps.



Action 3.2

Market and promote Irondale as a hub for modern light-industrial businesses.

Irondale offers proximity to Birmingham, easy access to rail and interstate networks, available light-industrial properties, and a skilled employment base, all of which are attractive to new and expanding businesses. The City is encouraged to market these assets throughout the broader region and state while also strategically promoting itself to particular industries with the potential to be successful in Irondale. Commissioning an economic opportunities analysis (EOA) would provide a solid foundation for successful business recruitment by providing an understanding of what the city specializes in relative to the region, as well as current and emerging clusters that the city should leverage. An EOA can reveal opportunities for growth within an existing cluster, such as a forward or backward linkage that is under-represented in the region.

For example, according to market research, the "Nonstore Retailer" industry group shows the potential for growth within Irondale. This industry group includes Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses, Vending Machine

Operators, and Direct Selling Establishments. Many businesses within these industries would operate warehouses and would be well-suited alongside other light industrial businesses.

Targeting specific business clusters is mutually beneficial for the city and businesses - businesses benefit from a shared labor pool and from nearby forward and backward linkages while the city benefits by differentiating itself from others as a home to a specific light industrial cluster. However, the City should balance this by pursuing diversification and promoting itself more broadly as a light industrial hub, as multiple clusters offer some insurance against unforeseen market circumstances.

GOAL #4

Refresh branding and marketing efforts to promote Irondale's unique assets.



Action 4.1

Modernize and promote a consistent branding strategy with updated logos, themes, concepts and graphics.

Municipal branding is more than a logo—it includes consistent messaging, colors, themes, and concepts guided by sound strategy developed to appeal to future businesses, residents, and visitors. A branding campaign can be a powerful tool for the City to position itself and advertise to attractive businesses. City officials are encouraged to work with branding and marketing professionals to create and test a branding strategy, with stakeholders such as a possible Main Street Irondale group involved as appropriate. Potential strategies include focusing on Irondale's emerging automotive hub as well as ecotourism (See Goal 1, Green Systems on Page opportunities. Visually, the branding campaign could take cues from Irondale's rail

and industrial heritage, as with Irondale's new logo, or could reference natural assets such as Ruffner Mountain and the Cahaba River.

After development, it is recommended that the City should launch a promotional campaign to showcase the new branding, including:

- Updating the City's website and social media accounts with new logos, themes, and graphics.
- Utilizing new branding on all events and promotions associated with the City of Irondale.
- Updating gateway signage to showcase new logos to ensure visitors know they have "arrived."



Action 4.2

Market Irondale as an outdoor recreation destination through branding efforts and online campaigns.

Irondale has a unique advantage amongst other cities within the Birmingham Metro thanks to the presence of two regionally significant outdoor recreation spaces in Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve (around 100,000 annual visitors)* and the Cahaba River. Access to such outdoor amenities can be a major deciding factor for residents of all ages but particularly millennials and Gen Z who may be shopping for their first home. Along with considering the establishment of new trails and outdoor recreation space, Irondale should brand itself as a desirable location for outdoor enthusiasts to live or visit.

The small city of Bentonville, Arkansas has capitalized on its trails and other urban green space through unique branding and marketing. Bike Bentonville has been so successful that the city has been called "Disneyland for Mountain Bikers," and this tourism attracts avid mountain bikers travel from across the country. The Bike Bentonville website is an extension of the city's larger tourism effort and has direct links to local amenities. This savvy promotion ensures that these urban green spaces provide economic benefits, as tourists spend money on hotels, food, retail, and other sectors.



City Branding and Marketing Campaign



Image Credits: City of Bentonville

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Chapter Nine

Implementation





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Implementation Overview

This Irondale Comprehensive Plan sets forth a bold vision for the future of the City of Irondale and includes a set of action steps to achieve the goals. The Plan focuses on a mix of policies and program initiatives, and it identifies criteria for decision-making and the kinds of projects that are preferred, given the goals of this Plan. This Plan will require a significant commitment of time, energy, and financial resources to implement and is intended to be implemented incrementally over time, one step at a time.

The adoption of this Irondale Comprehensive Plan is the first step in the implementation process. It is the product of considerable efforts on the part of the City of Irondale and many other community leaders and concerned citizens. Working with a range of potential implementation partners, the Mayor, City Council, and staff within the various municipal departments should be the lead facilitators to implement the Plan. This Plan should be revisited and updated over the coming years to ensure that its goals and recommend actions still meet the desires of the community, and to ensure that there is adequate political support for these ongoing planning efforts. Continued community discussion and cooperation will be necessary.

It is important to note that the contents of this Comprehensive Plan are designed to serve as a guide for growth and development, in both the public and private sectors, and as such are not binding upon the City of Irondale when making specific land use decisions and public investments. This Comprehensive Plan is not a law or a zoning ordinance and is instead intended to serve as a policy guide for community decision-making regarding land use, development, growth management and capital improvements decisions.

Implementation Matrix Table

To guide the implementation of this Plan, the following implementation table has been created. The table highlights the list of recommended action items, their relevant page numbers in the Plan, a suggested time frame for completion of each item, as well as potential partners who can be charged with leading the implementation efforts.

The suggested time frames for implementation may vary based on economic influences, potential funding sources and other factors, but they are defined as:

- **Short-term:** tasks that could be initiated and/or implemented within 1-5 years of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan,
- **Long-term:** tasks that are on a 6 year or greater time frame after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.
- **On-going:** tasks that may be implemented in a series of incremental steps involving numerous partners, or tasks that are ongoing, continuous efforts.

Implementation Partners

Since the Comprehensive Plan is intended to be implemented over several years, during which administrations, departments, boards, and commissions may change, it is important to identify which partners should take the lead and be in a supporting role for a particular action task. It is important to note that the goals and recommended actions outlined in the matrices are for consideration only, and do not constitute an obligation on any City department, board, or organization's part to lead, support or participate in any given activity. The implementation matrices simply identify the recommended actions and potential partners in furthering the plan's goals and actions.

Table 9.1: Implementation Matrix

| Chapter 4 — Future Land Use | | | | | |
|---|--|------|----------|------------|---|
| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
| Goal #1: Encourage redevelopment in existing commercial areas. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Encourage mixed-use development. | 94 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Commercial Development Authority |
| 1.2 | Adopt a Mixed-Use zoning district that allows for a variety of uses and development types. | 95 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 1.3 | Encourage and incentivize infill development and redevelopment. | 95 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Commercial Development Authority |
| 1.4 | Revitalize and/or Redevelop Grants Mill Station. | 96 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Commercial Development Authority |
| 1.5 | Make Downtown Irondale a more attractive destination for residents and visitors. | 96 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Commercial Development Authority, Downtown Redevelopment Authority |
| 1.6 | Revitalize properties along the Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 corridor. | 96 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Commercial Development Authority |
| Goal #2: Protect environmentally sensitive areas. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Promote the use of conservation easements to preserve environmentally sensitive land. | 97 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 2.2 | Reduce development intensity via a step-down approach near the Cahaba River. | 97 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Inspections Department |
| 2.3 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance to include conservation subdivision regulations. | 98 | High | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |

| Chapter 4 — Future Land Use | | | | | |
|---|--|------|----------|------------|---|
| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
| Goal #3: Encourage sustainable long-term development patterns. | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Continue to grow as a city of residential areas supported by activity centers. | 98 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Commercial Development Authority |
| 3.2 | Ensure future developments improve pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular connectivity. | 99 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Inspections Department |
| Goal #4: Encourage a wide range of housing types. | | | | | |
| 4.1 | Encourage the development of new housing to achieve a mix of housing types at a range of price points. | 101 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |

Chapter 5 — Livability & Code Reform

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|--|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #1: Adopt codes and programs to improve the conditions of rental housing units. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Modify the R-3 Two-Family (Duplex), R-4 Multiple Family, RCD Residential Condominium, and R-5 Town House zoning districts to include additional regulations to ensure the health, safety, welfare, and aesthetic improvements of duplexes, town houses, apartments, and multiple family dwellings. | 106 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 1.2 | Create a Rental Property licensing inspection system and establish a Good Landlord Program. | 107 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Inspections Department |
| Goal #2: Enhance code enforcement efforts and encourage better property maintenance. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Ensure the enforcement of local regulations including the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Stormwater Ordinances to protect public and private property, and to ensure the public safety and welfare of residents, citizens, and visitors. | 108 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Inspections Department |
| 2.2 | Continue to support the use of technology to improve code enforcement. | 108 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Inspections Department |
| 2.3 | Adopt the 2021 International Property Maintenance Code that would allow the City to levy fines for code violations. | 108 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council |
| 2.4 | Create a citizen's guide for code enforcement that enables residents to report code violations and blighted properties. | 109 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, Housing Code Abatement Board, Inspections Department |
| 2.5 | Create a vacant property registration ordinance. | 109 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Inspections Department |

Chapter 5 — Livability & Code Reform

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|--|------|----------|------------|--|
| Goal #3: Enhance the physical character and appearance of the City. | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Develop a city-wide signage replacement program. | 109 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Public Works Department |
| 3.2 | Clearly define gateways into Irondale through urban design and beautification enhancements. | 110 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Public Works Department |
| 3.3 | Develop a city-wide wayfinding signage system. | 110 | Low | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Public Works Department |
| 3.4 | Establish an Irondale Beautification Coalition to spearhead and conduct “Keep Irondale Beautiful” cleanup efforts and to identify a list of catalytic sites for cleanup. | 111 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Community Leaders, Faith-Based Organizations, Housing Code Abatement Board, Residents |
| 3.5 | Improve streetscaping along the Crestwood Boulevard/ US 78 Corridor. | 111 | High | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Developers, Local Business Owners, Public Works Department |
| 3.6 | Establish a Façade Improvement Program. | 112 | Low | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Inspection Department |
| Goal #4: Enhance public services, facilities and programs throughout the City. | | | | | |
| 4.1 | Explore the feasibility of constructing a recreation center for Irondale residents. | 113 | Medium | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Irondale Senior Activity Center, Irondale Youth Athletic Association, Planning and Zoning Commission, Parks and Recreation Department |
| 4.2 | Build a community storm shelter for Irondale residents. | 113 | High | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Inspections Department, Public Works Department |

Chapter 5 — Livability & Code Reform

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|--|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #5: Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to enhance urban form. | | | | | |
| 5.1 | Revise building height regulations in the C-1 Business and R-4 Multiple Family Districts to allow for buildings up to four (4) stories, or 48 feet. | 114 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 5.2 | Revise the C-1 Business, R-4 Multiple Family, R-5 Town House, and RCD Residential Condominium Districts to amend front setback regulations to specify front setback ranges instead of only minimums. | 114 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 5.3 | Adopt an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance. | 114 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Commercial Redevelopment Board |
| 5.4 | Adopt a Mixed-Use Zoning District. | 115 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 5.5 | Encourage the use of PUD developments (in the R-6 District) to promote flexibility, creativity, and a mix of uses. | 116 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Inspections Department |
| Goal #6: Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions for parking and access standards. | | | | | |
| 6.1 | Revise the C-1 Business, R-4 Multiple Family, R-5 Town House, and RCD Residential Condominium Districts to establish parking location criteria for new developments. | 116 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 6.2 | Allow on-street parking to count toward minimum parking requirements in all commercial districts. | 116 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |

Chapter 5 — Livability & Code Reform

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #7: Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to permitted uses. | | | | | |
| 7.1 | Add a summary table of permitted uses across all zoning categories. | 116 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 7.2 | Revise the zoning use categories to align with the larger use categories within the International Building Code. | 117 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 7.3 | Revise the C-1 Business, R-4 Multiple Family, and R-5 Town House Districts to simplify density restrictions. | 117 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 7.4 | Permit residential uses on ground floors in the C-1 Business District. | 117 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 7.5 | Permit upper-story residential uses in the C-1 Business and C-2 Commercial Districts. | 118 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 7.6 | Consider permitting home occupations in all residential zoning districts. | 118 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 7.7 | Provide a definition for live-work units and permit live-work units in all zoning districts except low-density residential single-family and industrial districts. | 118 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 7.8 | Add definitions for brewery, micro-brewery, and brew pub and revise the permitted uses in the C-1 Business and C-2 Commercial Districts to permit them accordingly. | 119 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |

Chapter 5 — Livability & Code Reform

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #8: Other recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions. | | | | | |
| 8.1 | Provide a list of current development application fees. | 120 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Inspections Department |
| 8.2 | Establish and publish a step-by-step application process guide for development and redevelopment. | 120 | Medium | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Inspections Department, Commercial Redevelopment Authority, Industrial Development Board |
| 8.3 | Modify the Sign Regulations to ensure content neutrality. | 121 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Attorney, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |

Chapter 6 — Transportation & Mobility

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|--|------|----------|------------|--|
| Goal #1: Enhance the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation system. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Develop a traffic calming policy to reduce speeding in neighborhoods utilizing appropriate traffic calming measures. | 124 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Engineer, Public Works Department |
| 1.2 | Provide safe accessible crosswalks at targeted intersections and mid-block crossings. | 126 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Engineer, Public Works Department |
| 1.3 | Continue to explore the feasibility of a train “Quiet Zone” at the 20th Street at-grade intersection. | 127 | Low | On-going | City Council, Downtown Redevelopment Authority, Federal Railroad Administration, Norfolk Southern, Residents |
| 1.4 | Adopt access management standards to preserve traffic flow and reduce accidents along major thoroughfares. | 128 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, City Engineer |
| Goal #2: Build a multi-modal transportation network with a wide range of choices. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Expand sidewalk coverage in residential areas and build links from residential areas to activity centers, schools, recreational facilities, employment centers, and other major public facilities. | 130 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, City Engineer, Public Works Department, |
| 2.2 | Construct context-sensitive bicycle infrastructure along strategic corridors. | 132 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Engineer, Public Works Department |
| 2.3 | Create a connection via Old Grants Mill Road to Old Leeds Road to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. | 135 | Low | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Public Works Department |

Chapter 6 — Transportation & Mobility

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|--|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #2: Build a multi-modal transportation network with a wide range of choices. | | | | | |
| 2.4 | Work with the Freshwater Land Trust to create future connections to Ruffner Mountain. | 135 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Public Works Department, Freshwater Land Trust, Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve |
| 2.5 | Consider the feasibility of an On-Demand Transit Program to provide new transportation options for Irondale. | 135 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, BJCTA |
| 2.6 | Adopt a Complete Streets Ordinance. | 136 | High | Short-term | City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 2.7 | Provide additional bike racks throughout the City at civic buildings and in other popular destinations. | 136 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Public Works Department, Parks and Recreation Department |
| 2.8 | Dedicate funding annually to implement the City's ADA transition Plan. | 138 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, City Engineer, Public Works Department |
| Goal #3: Make infrastructure maintenance investments a priority. | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Annually update a Local Transportation Plan to receive Rebuild Alabama Act funds. | 139 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, City Engineer |
| 3.2 | Dedicate an annual budget line item to implement the City's 2017 Pavement Management Plan. | 139 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council |
| 3.3 | Where feasible, incorporate green infrastructure in all transportation infrastructure projects, especially when a new roadway is constructed, or an existing roadway is redesigned or reconfigured | 139 | High | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, City Engineer |

| Chapter 7 —Recreation & Green Systems | | | | | |
|--|---|------|----------|------------|--|
| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
| Goal #1: Establish Irondale as a regional destination for Adventure and Ecotourism. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Acquire land that is unsuitable for development due to topography or other environmental constraints for outdoor recreation space such as hiking or mountain biking trails. | 144 | High | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Freshwater Land Trust, Parks and Recreation Department |
| 1.2 | Market Irondale as an outdoor recreation destination through branding efforts and online campaigns. | 144 | Medium | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce, Freshwater Land Trust |
| Goal #2: Maintain, enhance and expand the parks and recreation system. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. | 146 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Parks and Recreation Department, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 2.2 | Explore the feasibility and funding needs of providing a recreational center and athletic complex. | 146 | Medium | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Irondale Senior Activity Center, Irondale Youth Athletic Association, Planning and Zoning Commission, Parks and Recreation Department |
| 2.3 | Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) at all Irondale Parks. | 147 | Medium | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 2.4 | Modernize playground equipment at city parks to include inclusive playground equipment. | 148 | High | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration |
| 2.5 | Establish new parks for residents who are currently underserved by existing park access. | 148 | Medium | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration, City Council |
| 2.6 | Make improvements needed at Ruffner Park. | 148 | High | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration |
| 2.7 | Make improvements needed at Beacon Park. | 150 | High | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration |
| 2.8 | Make improvements needed at Cahaba River Landing. | 150 | High | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration |

Chapter 7 —Recreation & Green Systems

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|---|------|----------|------------|--|
| 2.9 | Make improvements needed at Ellard Park. | 150 | Medium | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration |
| 2.10 | Consider establishing a dog park for Irondale residents. | 151 | Medium | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration |
| 2.11 | Explore the feasibility of constructing a skate park and bicycle skills area at a new or existing park. | 151 | Medium | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration |
| 2.12 | Make needed improvements and consider expanding the Irondale Senior Activity Center. | 151 | Medium | Short-term | Parks and Recreation Department, City Administration |
| Goal #3: Protect and preserve Irondale’s natural resources through policy and development regulations which achieve goals for environmental sustainability, natural resource protection and enhancing public access to nature. | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Pursue opportunities for the acquisition, conservation and restoration of open space along year-round streams and rivers and actively protect these resources through land use management, steep slope development regulations, conservation subdivisions, and cluster development. | 152 | High | Short-term | City Administration, Cahaba River Society, Freshwater Land Trust, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 3.2 | Encourage the use of Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development Best Management Practices (BMPs) on all new developments and redevelopment projects larger than one acre during construction and post-construction to control soil erosion and minimize pollutant runoff and instream erosion of waterways downstream. | 152 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Engineer, Developers |

Chapter 7 —Recreation & Green Systems

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|-----|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| 3.3 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to require the use of Low Impact Development (LID) or green infrastructure (GI) techniques for new developments and redevelopment projects larger than one acre to mimic natural hydrology where feasible and minimize impacts of stormwater runoff on the Cahaba River and Shades Creek and their tributaries. | 153 | High | Short-term | City Administration, Cahaba River Society, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 3.4 | Adopt a Riparian Buffer Ordinance to manage development within a certain distance from the Cahaba River and other major streams to protect buffer setbacks, floodplains, and water quality/habitat. | 153 | High | Short-term | City Administration, Cahaba River Society, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 3.5 | Collaborate with Jefferson County to create a Stormwater Master Plan for the Grants Mill Corridor. | 153 | High | Short-term | City Administration, City Engineer, Jefferson County, Cahaba River Society |
| 3.6 | Construct projects recommended in the Shades Creek Watershed Plan. | 155 | Medium | Long-term | City Administration, City Engineer, Jefferson County, Cahaba River Society, Friends of Shades Creek |
| 3.7 | Implement a city-wide green infrastructure pilot program. | 155 | Medium | Long-term | City Administration, City Engineer, Jefferson County, Cahaba River Society, Developers |
| 3.8 | Address severe erosion issues at the Simply Ten site by constructing a park that utilizes appropriate green infrastructure. | 155 | Medium | Long-term | City Administration, City Engineer, City Council, Jefferson County, Irondale Commercial Development Authority, Cahaba River Society, Developers |

Chapter 8 — Economic Development

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|--|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #1: Foster economic development in Irondale. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Promote creative, flexible adaptive reuse of obsolete industrial and commercial buildings by new businesses. | 162 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Commercial Development Authority, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Authority |
| 1.2 | Plan pop-up events and festivals in Downtown Irondale. | 164 | Low | On-going | City Administration, Downtown Redevelopment Authority, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce, Irondale Arts Council |
| 1.3 | Adopt an adaptive reuse ordinance. | 164 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission |
| 1.4 | Establish an Irondale Main Street organization and then consider applying to become a designated Main Street community. | 163 | Low | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Downtown Redevelopment Authority, Residents |
| 1.5 | Continue to market and promote Irondale as an automotive hub in Alabama. | 165 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Commercial Development Authority, Industrial Development Authority, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce, Birmingham Business Alliance |
| Goal #2: Recruit new businesses that will diversify and complement existing businesses. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Incentivize, recruit, and attract more commercial and retail development throughout the City of Irondale. | 165 | High | On-going | City Administration, Commercial Development Authority, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce |
| 2.2 | Create and maintain an online database of available retail, office, and industrial spaces including size, zoning, lease rates, price, utilities, condition, etc. | 165 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, Commercial Development Authority, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Authority |

| Chapter 8 — Economic Development | | | | | |
|---|--|------|----------|------------|---|
| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
| Goal #3: Continue to support Irondale’s workforce, small businesses, and start-ups. | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Explore the feasibility of creating a “startup incubator” or shared co-working space for new businesses. | 166 | Low | Long-term | City Administration, City Council, Commercial Redevelopment Authority, Industrial Redevelopment Authority, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce, Birmingham Business Alliance, Central Alabama Women’s Business Center, RPCGB, ADECA’s Office of Minority Business Enterprise Program, EDPA |
| 3.2 | Market and promote Irondale as a hub for modern light-industrial businesses. | 167 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, City Council, Industrial Development Authority |
| Goal #4: Refresh branding and marketing efforts to promote Irondale’s unique assets. | | | | | |
| 4.1 | Modernize and promote a consistent branding strategy with updated logos, themes, concepts and graphics. | 167 | Low | Short-term | City Administration, City Council, Commercial Development Authority, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Board |
| 4.2 | Market Irondale as an outdoor recreation destination through branding efforts and online campaigns. | 168 | Medium | On-going | City Administration, Parks and Recreation Department, Greater Irondale Chamber of Commerce, Freshwater Land Trust |

Grants and Other Funding Sources by Topic

This section is meant to jump-start a discussion of potential funding sources that will assist with implementation of this Comprehensive Plan update and move the City of Irondale closer to implementing its blueprint for the future.

Livability & Code Reform

Tourism Department Community Grant
Started in 2020, this grant program provides assistance to municipal and nonprofit Alabama organizations promoting travel and vacation business to Alabama. Possible uses include brochures, tourism promotion, advertising, websites, and apps. Funding is up to \$2,500 or \$5,000 depending on the events. Grants are on a per-event reimbursement basis.

For more information, go to <https://tourism.alabama.gov/forms/matching-grants/>.

Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund

The Broadband Accessibility Fund provides grants for service providers to supply high-speed Internet services in unincorporated areas or communities with 25,000 people or fewer. Grant funding varies, but generally covers a maximum of 20% of the project cost.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/broadband/>.

Arts in Education (AIE) Grants

The Alabama State Council on the Arts funds two Arts in Education (AIE) grants. The AIE Curriculum-Based Project Grant provides support for specific projects that advance the goal of the arts as an essential component of PreK-12 education. Funds may be spent on in-school classes, workshops, consultants, guest artists, exhibits, and/or artist residencies. The AIE Enhancement Grant provides support to schools and organizations engaging in arts exposure and arts enrichment activities. Funds may be spent on performances, field trips, or professional development workshops. Funding for both grants varies, and applications are due throughout the

school year depending on the semester for which funds are requested. Qualifying schools and arts organizations may apply. Both programs require matching funds.

For more information, go to <https://arts.alabama.gov/programs/AIE/education.aspx>.

Arts and Cultural Facilities Grants

The Alabama Council on the Arts funds three grants in this category: Planning, Design, and Construction. All three provide support for arts organizations to provide arts programming. The Planning Grant may be used for feasibility studies, needs assessment, and other preliminary work. The Designing Grant may be used for designing a specific arts-supporting facility. The Construction Grant may be used for a new facility, renovation, or other significant capital expenditure. Qualifying school and arts organizations may apply, although schools receiving state appropriations are not eligible for Construction Grants. Funding varies.

For more information, go to <https://arts.alabama.gov/PDF/Grants/GuidelinesPublication.pdf>.

Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham Remy Fund

This foundation's Remy Grant program covers the Greater Birmingham area, defined as Shelby, Jefferson, St. Clair, Blount, and Walker counties. Current grant programs focus on five strategic priorities: Equity and Inclusion, Economic Opportunity for All, Overcoming Persistent Poverty, Regional Cooperation, and Thriving Communities. Remy Fund Grants promote the human and dignified treatment of cats, dogs, and horses through rescue programs, animal-assisted therapy, spay/neuter programs, and education and advocacy. Registered public charities in eligible counties may apply, and funding is typically between \$2,000 and \$10,000. The grant cycle will continue as funds are available.

For more information, go to <https://www.cfbham.org/remy-fund/>.

Alabama Power Foundation Grants

The Alabama Power Foundation offers several small grant programs focused on livability and public services.

- **Foundation:** designed to meet many needs, and projects must focus on at least one of five areas: Educational Advancement, Civic and Community Development, Arts and Cultural Enrichment, Health and Human Services and Environmental Stewardship. Projects must address undeserved segments of the population. Grants are on a quarterly basis. Local units of government and eligible nonprofits may apply, and funding varies.
- **Elevate:** empowers nonprofits by funding community-centered projects, helping them expand their impact and address some of the community's most pressing needs. Eligible nonprofits may apply, and funding is up to \$10,000.
- **Classroom:** seeks to close the gap between classroom funding and classroom needs by offering the opportunity to enhance the classroom environment. Schools with demonstrated financial need and partner nonprofits may apply. Funds may be spent on classroom materials, COVID relief supplies, technology support, and mental health needs for students and teachers, and are typically up to \$1,000.
- **Gateway:** intended to unlock the economic and cultural value within our communities by helping our towns invite new visitors, new industries, and new neighbors to their little part of our great state. Local units of government may apply. Funds may be spent on signage to enhance community aesthetics, maintain civic pride, and assist with event promotion and economic impact, and grants are typically up to \$2,500.
- **ABC Trust:** is nonprofits offering health and human services programs to low-income citizens, especially as part of ongoing Covid-19 relief efforts. It also includes programs that improve network services from parent organizations

programs that assist children and youth. Eligible nonprofits may apply, and funding is up to \$500.

For more information, go to <https://powerofgood.com/grants/>.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

This program provides coupons to low-income seniors who may purchase fresh, locally grown produce at participating farmers markets. Applicants must reapply each year, and funding varies by household size.

For more information, go to <http://fma.alabama.gov/seniornutrition/>.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

This program is run by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and administered in Alabama by ADECA. CDBG offers several grants to non-entitlement communities (those not receiving funds from HUD) that meet applicable thresholds. All projects must meet one of the three national objectives: benefits at least 51% LMI persons, aid in prevention or clearance of slum and blight, or meet an urgent need.

- **Competitive Fund:** Irondale qualifies as a Large City category, with a population over 3,000. Funds may be spent on water and sewer extensions and rehabilitation, housing rehabilitation, neighborhood and downtown revitalization, and street and draining improvements. Applicants are scored based on several competitive factors including community need, cost efficiency, appropriateness and impact. Applications deadlines are announced during the annual workshop in the first quarter of the year. Funding for Large Cities is up to \$450,000.
- **Community Enhancement Fund:** for projects that address quality of life issues. Funds may be spent on fire protection, senior citizens centers, community centers, boys and girls clubs, and recreational facilities. Applications

deadlines are announced during the annual workshop in the first quarter of the year. Funding is up to \$250,000.

- **Planning Fund:** allows communities to develop community-wide comprehensive plans and downtown revitalization plans. Applications deadlines are announced during the annual workshop in the first quarter of the year. Funds may be spent on comprehensive plans, downtown revitalization plans, and similar plans. Funding varies.
- **Economic Development Fund:** this infrastructure fund supports the creation or retention of jobs. Applicants for ED assistance should have a commitment from the business to create or retain 15 or more jobs. The business should fall within the SIC codes 20-39 or provide a significant economic benefit, and projects must not include intrastate relocation. This program is available on a continuous basis, and funds may be spent on water, sewer, and road improvements rail spurs, and docks. Funding is up to \$200,000, with a minimum 20% local match.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/cdbg/>.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program

HOME is the largest federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. HOME provides grants to fund a wide range of activities to create and increase access to affordable housing. Funds may be spent on building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership, and providing direct rental assistance to low-income people States, counties, local units of government, and coalitions with nonprofits may apply. Funding is formula-based and requires a 25% local match.

For more information, go to <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/home/>.

Emergency Solutions Grant Program

This grant provides funding used to upgrade existing homeless facilities and domestic abuse shelters, to help meet the operating costs of such facilities, to provide essential services (such as health and mental health services) to both sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, to help prevent homelessness, to rapidly re-house homeless persons and to assist in the costs of administering the Homeless Management Information System. Local units of government and nonprofits may apply, and funding is up to \$300,000.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/esg/>.

Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit

This program provides tax credits for substantial preservation activities for historic, federally-listed income-producing structures. Owners of qualifying federally-listed buildings may apply, and funding is in the form of a tax credit up to 20% of project cost.

For more information, go to <https://ahc.alabama.gov/federaltaxcredits.aspx>.

Alabama Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

This program provides tax credits for substantial preservation activities for qualifying historic buildings, including private homes and commercial structures. Private homeowners and owners of commercial properties may apply, if property is federally listed (or eligible for listing) and at least 60 years old. Funding is in the form of a tax credit up to 25% of project cost.

For more information, go to <https://ahc.alabama.gov/alabamarehabtaxcredits.aspx>.

Daniel Foundation of Alabama Grants

The Daniel Foundation of Alabama currently funds four grants that focus on the priority areas of arts, culture, and community assets; community needs; education and youth; and health. Registered 501(c)(3) nonprofits may apply, and funding varies by grant type and proposal.

For more information, go to <http://danielfoundationofalabama.com/arts-culture-community-assets/?grant-category=arts-culture-community-assets>.

Home Depot Foundation: Community Impact Grants

The Foundation offers grants to use the power of volunteers to improve the community, with focuses on veteran service organizations and housing rehabilitation for vulnerable/underserved populations. Eligible 501(c)(3) nonprofits and tax-exempt public services agencies may apply. Funds may be used for the purchase of tools, materials, and services for housing repair for vulnerable/underserved populations and for veteran service organizations. Funds are in the form of up to \$5,000 in Home Depot gift cards.

For more information, go to <https://corporate.homedepot.com/foundation/communityimpactgrants>.

Transportation & Mobility

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives. The total amount of Federal participating funding for a particular project (or project phase if part of a large multi-phased project) application is limited to \$800,000; (\$640,000 Federal and \$160,000 local match). The total project estimated costs may exceed the \$800,000 limit, but any amounts in excess of the limit will be the responsibility of the sponsor and should be shown as such.

For more information, go to <https://www.rpcgb.org/transportation-alternatives-program-tap>.

Transportation Project Feasibility Studies (APPLE)

Transportation Project Feasibility Studies also known as “Advanced Planning, Programming and Logical Engineering (APPLE)” is a program designed to educate local governments about the project development process, assist them in their decision making process, and provide resources to help develop and advance transportation projects. This program is intended to provide information to decision makers about whether or not a project is technically and financially feasible by aiding local government in clearly defining transportation problems, articulating a project’s purpose and need, and clearly defining a project’s scope. It also assists local governments to better understand the potential environmental challenges, benefits, and burdens.

For more information, go to <https://www.rpcgb.org/transportation-project-feasibility-studies-apple>.

Recreation & Green Systems

Land and Water Conservation Fund

This program provides assistance may be used for the acquisition of land and water interests for park purposes, the development of new outdoor recreation facilities, and in certain instances, the renovation of existing public outdoor recreational facilities. Any unit of government may apply. Funding varies and generally provides a 50% match to project sponsors on a cost-reimbursable basis.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/lwcf/>.

ADECA Recreational Trails Program

This program provides grant assistance for the acquisition and/or development/improvement of recreational trails and trail related resources. State and Federal agencies and local units of government may apply. Funds may be spent on eligible trail types which include but are not limited to walking, jogging, cycling, skating, mountain biking, hiking, backpacking, off-highway vehicle, and equestrian trails. Funding varies and requires a 20% local match.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/trails/>.

Alabama Power Foundation Grants

The Alabama Power Foundation offers several small grant programs focused on green systems.

- **Good Roots:** help to maintain an excellent quality of life and encourages active community involvement through the planting of additional trees throughout the community. Local units of government, schools, universities, and eligible nonprofits may apply, and funding is up to \$1,000.
- **Power to Play:** offers funding for athletics and the arts for middle and high schools to increase participation in these extracurricular programs, add new programs, and enhance or upgrade equipment. Middle and high schools with demonstrated need may apply, and funding varies.

- **Students to Stewards:** provides dynamic stewardship initiatives to schools through conservation education and outdoor classrooms to teach students the importance of preserving Alabama's natural resources. Schools with demonstrated financial need may apply, and funding is up to \$7,500.

For more information, go to <https://powerofgood.com/grants/>.

CAWACO Resource Conservation and Development Council

CAWACO offers two grants: Education and Challenge. Through 2023, their funding priorities are workforce development, access to local food, access to outdoor recreation, community planning and design, first responder support, and improvement of local habitats. Qualified public entities or 501(c)(3) nonprofits in Jefferson, Shelby, Blount, and Walker counties may apply. For both grants, the grant cycle is between March 1 and July 1 each year, and the average funded project ranges from \$5,000 — \$10,000.

- **Education:** funding for job/trade skills training, scholarships, field trips, books, or materials.
- **Challenge:** funding for materials, infrastructure, or educational/safety equipment.

For more information, go to <https://cawaco.org/the-cawaco-grant-program/>.

Economic Development

Partnerships for Opportunities and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER)

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) administers the Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative. This program targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production. Counties, cities, local units of

government, special purpose units, and colleges and universities within coal-impacted communities may apply. Funds may be spent on workforce training and refocusing, supporting small manufacturing companies, strengthening substance abuse response, and broadband deployment projects. Funding varies by grant type: up to \$50,000 for planning grants and between \$400,000 and \$1,500,000 for implementation grants.

For more information, go to <https://www.arc.gov/arcs-power-initiative/>.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The Alabama Department of Commerce administers a set of grants funded by the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This variety of grants provides resources, services, and leadership tools for the public workforce system to help individuals find good jobs and stay employed, and improves employer prospects for success in the global marketplace. Grants focus on incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, and adult, youth, and dislocated worker funding. Funding varies.

For more information, go to <https://wioa-alabama.org/wioa-grant-administration/>.

Financial Incentives and Programs

Housing Tax Credits and Programs

New Market Tax Credits

This program is funded through the U.S. Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund. Developers and property owners may sell, trade, or package these tax credits to investors who use them to fund community development in blighted areas. Tax credits assist developers by making redevelopment of blighted areas economically viable. Certified Community Development Entities (CDEs) certified by the U.S. Department of the Treasury may apply. Funds may be used for funding development or redevelopment of blighted areas. Funds are in the form of tax credits, which may be traded or sold.

For more information, go to <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/programs/new-markets-tax-credit>.

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

LIHTC provides tax credits for developers who construct affordable housing. To receive the full 10 years of tax credits, a certain percentage of rental units within a development must be reserved for households earning no more than 60% of area median income (AMI), generally for a period of 30 years, after which units may be rented at market rate. Housing developers and CDFIs may apply. Funds are federal income tax credits for up to 10 years.

For more information, go to <https://www.ahfa.com/multifamily/multifamily-programs/home-housing-credits>.

Step-Up Mortgage Program

This program is designed for low to moderate-income home buyers who can afford a mortgage but need assistance with a down payment, closing costs, and other up-front expenses. Low to moderate-income households may apply, and funding is on a rolling application basis. Funds vary by household size and income. Households of any size earning \$130,600 or less are eligible for down payment assistance in the form of a 10-year second mortgage.

For more information, go to <https://www.ahfa.com/homebuyers/programs-available/step-up>.

Alabama Housing Trust Fund

The Alabama Housing Trust Fund provides funds for affordable multifamily housing for people earning below 60% of area median income, with a preference for extremely low income (ELI) populations and homeless or at-risk veterans. Developers and CDFIs may apply, and funding is formula-based.

For more information, go to <https://www.ahfa.com/multifamily/multifamily-programs/housing-trust-fund>.

Business Tax Credits and Programs

U.S. Small Business Association (SBA) 504 Loan
The SBA 504 Loan Program provides healthy, expanding businesses with long-term, below-market, fixed-rate financing for the acquisition of land and building, machinery and equipment, and construction and renovation. For-profit businesses may apply, unless the business is speculative developer, insurance company, gambling-related business, or a private club that restricts access. Funds

may be used for acquisition of land and building, machinery and equipment, and construction and renovation. Funding is in the form of long-term, fixed rate financing of up to \$5,000,000 for fixed major assets.

For more information, go to <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/504-loans>.

Sabre Finance Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and Micro Loans

Sabre Finance is a nonprofit approved to offer SBA products under SBA's Lender/Microloan Program. They administer a revolving loan fund (RLF) and micro loan program. Eligible businesses in Jefferson County may apply. Sabre Finance administers micro loans offering financing for up to 6 years with a \$50,000 maximum. Programs also offer financing for building and real estate, machinery and equipment, and working capital.

For more information, go to <https://sabrefinance.org/services>.

Full Employment Act of 2011

Small businesses with 50 or fewer employees may receive a one-time income tax credit equal to \$1,000 per new job paying over \$10 per hour. The credit is available in the tax year during which the employee has completed 12 months of consecutive employment. The employer must have a net increase in the total number of full time employees in Alabama on the last date of each tax year during which employees are hired for which the employer claims a credit, over the number employed in Alabama as of the last day of the tax year immediately preceding the first employment year. The increase must equal or exceed the number of newly hired employees for which a credit is sought by one employee for each newly hired employee for whom a credit is being sought for the current year, plus one employee for all employees for whom credits were claimed in prior years. Small businesses with 50 or fewer employees may apply, and funds are up to \$1,000 per qualifying job.

For more information, go to <https://revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/about/income-tax-incentives/>.

Veterans Employment Act

The Veterans Employment Act (formerly the Heroes for Hire Tax Credit) offers two tax credit programs. The two tax credits may not be combined.

- **Employer Credit:** This credit provides a tax credit to qualifying businesses for each unemployed or combat veteran hired for a full-time position paying at least \$14 per hour, the majority of the duties of which are at a business location within Alabama. It is available to qualified employers as an additional credit against the Alabama income tax liability in the amount of \$2,000 for hiring full time recently deployed and now discharged unemployed veterans. The new hire must be 1) a resident of Alabama at the time of entry into military service or mobilized to active, federal military service while a member of the Alabama National Guard or other reserve unit located in Alabama; 2) received an honorable or general discharge from active, federal military service within the two-year period preceding the date of hire; and 3) has certification by the Department of Labor at the time of hire by either collecting or being eligible to collect unemployment benefits or having exhausted their unemployment benefits. Funding is up to \$1,000 per qualifying job. This credit may not be claimed if the credit is claimed under the Veterans Employer Act – Business Start-up Expense Credit.
- **Business Start-Up Expense Credit:** This credit allows a \$2,000 nonrefundable credit against the income tax liability associated with one start-up business in which the recently deployed unemployed veteran holds at least 50% ownership interest. It is only applicable to businesses started after April 2, 2012, located within Alabama with a net profit of at least \$3,000 in the year in which the credit is taken. Funding is up to \$2,000 per qualifying job. This credit may not be claimed if the credit is claimed under the Veterans Employer Act – Employer Credit. This program expires December 31, 2023.

For more information, go to <https://revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/about/income-tax-incentives/>.

Basic Skills Education Credit

An employer may qualify to receive an income tax credit of 20% of the actual cost of an employer-sponsored educational program that enhances basic skills of employees up to and including the twelfth grade functional level. This includes programs that teach English as a second language. Funding is up to 20% of the cost of qualifying education.

For more information, go to <https://revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/about/income-tax-incentives/>.

Disabled Access Tax Credit

The IRS offers two programs for businesses who incur expenses as a result of employing people with disabilities. The two may be used together.

- **Disabled Access Credit:** provides a non-refundable credit for small businesses that incur expenditures for the purpose of providing access to persons with disabilities. An eligible small business is one that earned \$1 million or less or had no more than 30 full time employees in the previous year; they may take the credit each and every year they incur access expenditures. Funding varies depending on costs incurred. Businesses may use this tax credit and the Barrier Removal Tax Credit together in the same tax year, if the expenses meet the requirements of both sections.
- **Barrier Removal Tax Deduction:** encourages businesses of any size to remove architectural and transportation barriers to the mobility of persons with disabilities and the elderly. Businesses may claim a deduction of up to \$15,000 a year for qualified expenses for items that normally must be capitalized. Businesses claim the deduction by listing it as a separate expense on their income tax return. Businesses may use this tax credit and the Disabled Tax Credit together in the same tax year, if the expenses meet the requirements of both sections.
- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit:**

incentivizes employers to hire from these target groups. The maximum tax credit ranges from \$1,200 to \$9,600, depending on the employee hired and the length of employment. The credit is available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. This includes people with disabilities and veterans.

For more information, go to <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/tax-benefits-for-businesses-who-have-employees-with-disabilities>.

New Market Tax Credit

This program is funded through the U.S. Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund. Developers and property owners may sell, trade, or package these tax credits to investors who use them to fund community development in blighted areas. Tax credits assist developers by making redevelopment of blighted areas economically viable. Any CDFI certified by the U.S. Department of the treasury apply. Funds may be used for funding development or redevelopment of blighted areas. Funds are in the form of tax credits, which may be traded or sold.

For more information, go to <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/programs/new-markets-tax-credit>.

Tax Abatement Programs

In an abatement program, property taxes can be reduced or eliminated for a number of years, followed by gradual increases in taxes until a certain period in time. Such abatement programs are locally mandated. Sales and Use Tax Abatement guidelines are found in Code of Alabama 40-23-et al. Qualifying industries may abate all state and the local non-educational portion of construction related transaction (sales and use) taxes associated with constructing and equipping a project for up to 20 years. Data processing centers are eligible for tax abatement for up to 30 years. (Mortgage and recording taxes can also be abated, but only when title is conveying into or out of a public authority, county government, or city government.) The local granting authority must grant the abatement for

the qualifying project before the abatement can be used. Alabama offers three types of abatements: Chapter 9B for new and expanding projects; Chapter 9G for renovation, modification, and replacement of equipment projects; and Chapter 9C for brownfield development projects. Funding varies by type of abatement.

For more information, go to <https://revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/major-tax-incentives/tax-abatements/>.

Local Funding Sources

Local governments in the Birmingham area utilize locally generated revenues such as sales taxes, property taxes, franchise fees, business taxes, etc. to assist them in funding for local transportation improvements. These funds typically go directly into the local government general fund and transportation improvements are funded from this overall pot of money. Revenues generated are utilized mostly for local roadway resurfacing projects, and to a lesser degree to provide match to federal funds for intersection and signal improvements road widening, and routine maintenance. Below are some examples of potential local funding sources:

Municipal Bonds

General obligation bonds and revenue bonds both use debt to build infrastructure and make other necessary capital improvements, which is standard practice and an integral part of municipal fiscal sustainability. This is particularly the case when the assets will be used by both current and future residents and businesses. Those paying for the improvements will enjoy and benefit from the capital improvements.

- **General obligation bonds:** backed solely by the credit and taxing power of the issuing jurisdiction rather than the revenue from a given project and are paid back from general tax revenues and require voter approval.
- **Revenue bonds:** supported by the revenue from a specific project, such as utility rates or user fees, and are paid back from these specific revenue sources.

Sales Taxes

Irondale's sales tax is 4%, which, when added to the state sales tax of 4% and Jefferson County's 2%, totals 10% sales tax experienced by the consumer. When spending by residents, workers, and visitors generates revenue, a small increase in sales tax can result in a significant amount of new revenue for specific projects or improvements.

Public Private Partnerships (P3)

A public private partnership (P3) is a financing package that combines public and private debt, equity, and public funding. The private sector provides an infusion of cash, while the public sector agrees to repay the private investment with interest. P3s are contractual agreements between a public agency and a private entity, which allows greater private sector participation in the delivery and operation of transportation projects and facilities. P3s involve a sharing of responsibilities, risks, and rewards between public sector owners and a private sector partner(s), but the public partner retains full ownership of the facility. This is a procurement strategy that allows for the transfer and/or sharing of risks associated with project delivery. P3s have been successfully used in many areas such as utilities, water/wastewater, healthcare, and transportation.

Capital Recovery Fees

Capital recovery fees are levied on developers as a condition of real estate construction. Such fees (also called impact fees or development fees) may be levied on commercial, industrial, or residential development; they may be assessed on a per-unit or per-square foot basis. Unlike taxes, capital recovery fees must be shown to have a link with the purposes on which they are being spent. They must therefore only be used to mitigate the impacts of particular developments (for example, if a commercial development will cause more traffic at a particular intersection, the impact fees can be used to improve the intersection).

Alabama Financing & Investment Tools

Industrial Revenue Bonds

In Alabama, Industrial Revenue Bonds may be used as long-term financing of up to 100% of a large commercial project. The following types of projects eligible for this bond are: acquisition of land, buildings, site preparation and improvement, construction of buildings, acquisition and installation of furnishings, fixtures and equipment, and capitalized soft costs (e.g., architectural and engineering, interest incurred during construction, cost associated with bond issuance, etc.) Typically, tax-exempt IRBs have interest rates ranging from 70% to 85% of prime and are limited to \$10 million per single issuance and \$40 million total maximum per company, while taxable IRBs have an interest rate equal to conventional loans and have no limit. Terms for both are normally 10 to 20 years.

Alabama Special Improvement Districts

The Code of Alabama allows a number of special districts that may be useful in financing the development within a municipality or county. They rely on existing forms of taxation and the value generated is in some cases dependent upon the bonding authority of the government entity involved in the process. Typical eligible costs include roads, water, sewer, storm sewers, drainage, curb and gutter, docks, harbors, flood control, dams, berms, sidewalks, parks, schools, athletic facilities, fire and police protection facilities, mass transit facilities, air transport, business and industrial recruitment, hospitals and medical facilities, and planning activities are also permissible within some districts.

Capital Improvement Cooperative District (CICD)

A Capital Improvement Cooperative District (CICD) is formed through a combination of public entities, all of whom retain their individual authorities. This allows a local government to form a smaller board to manage details such as projects, incentives, and fees within the district. It is intended to encourage and facilitate cooperative efforts by public entities to provide projects for their own use and for the use and benefit of their citizens and users. CICDs may raise funds by issuing revenue bonds or general obligation bonds. CICDs are authorized by Code of Alabama §11.99B.

Alabama Improvement District (AID)

An Alabama Improvement District (AID) is formed by property owners in a designated geographic area who then make property improvements, issue bonds, and secure these bonds through liens on the property. Developments may be residential, commercial, or industrial, although private roads generally will not qualify for tax exempt financing. The municipality assesses the lots to pay principal and interest on the bonds, and assessments are payable over the term of bonds. An AID has the authority to raise funds by issuing revenue bonds. AIDs are authorized by Code of Alabama §11.99A.

Tax Incremental Financing District (TIF)

A Tax Incremental Financing District (TIF) is a public financing method where redevelopment, infrastructure, and other improvements within the TIF district are financed through incremental tax revenues generated by property taxes. Property rates do not change, but as property values within the district rise, the extra revenue is reinvested for improvements within the district. TIFs require upfront spending by the municipality, which may be financed through bonds or other sources. TIFs are designed to end after a certain number of years, by which time the desired improvements have been completed. TIFs are authorized by Code of Alabama §11.99.

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