



# Western Area Communities' Framework Plan: Final Document



# **Western Area Communities' Framework Plan**

**Final Document  
Adopted: May 6, 2015**



**UNITED**  
FOR THE GOOD OF THE CITY  
BY WAY OF WILLIAM A. BELL, JR.



**RPCGB**  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM



This project was supported by funding from the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) and the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Building Communities Program. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Birmingham MPO or the RPCGB. For more information on this program, please visit <http://www.rpcgb.org> or call (205) 251-8139.

This plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), MPO and RPCGB as a requirement of Title 23 USC 134 and subsequent modification under Public Law 109-59 (SAFETEA-LU) August 2005. The contents of the plan do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the USDOT.

# Acknowledgments

## **City of Birmingham**

William A. Bell, Sr., Mayor

Johnathan Austin, City Council

Steven W. Hoyt, City Council

Marcus Lundy, City Council

Jay Roberson, City Council

Sheila Tyson, City Council

W. Thomas Magee, Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits

H. Douglas Hale, AICP, Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits

Wesley Vaughn, Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits

Jason Hjetland, Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits

Michael Ward, Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits

Donald Wilborn, Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits

Stephanie Cruse, Department of Planning, Engineering & Permits

## **Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham**

Charles Ball, AICP, Executive Director

Scott Tillman, Director of Planning and Operations

Darrell Howard, AICP, Deputy Director of Planning

Mikhail Alert, Senior Planner

Marshall Farmer, Senior GIS Analyst

Brett Isom, GIS Manager



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# Introduction

## The Western Area Communities' Framework Plan

### Relationship to the Birmingham Comprehensive Plan.

In 2013, the City of Birmingham adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in more than 50 years. The plan called for the creation of individual Community Framework Plans so that the goals, policies, and strategies identified in the Comprehensive Plan might be accomplished in each of the City's twenty-three (23) communities and ninety-nine (99) neighborhoods.

### About the Framework Plan.

The Framework Plan builds upon the foundation laid by the Birmingham Comprehensive Plan. It serves as the City of Birmingham's official policy document, refining the vision and goals articulated within the Birmingham Comprehensive Plan and establishing guidance for each community. The Western Area Communities' Framework Plan provides a general set of planning principals relating to land use, natural and historic resources, housing, economic development, community facilities, transportation, and other related issues. This Framework Plan provides a clear vision of the kind of place the communities' residents and business have declared that they want to be in the future. This plan has a direct bearing on the communities, influencing policies that impact these communities' quality of life.

### Use of the Framework Plan.

City leaders and community members will look to this Framework Plan for direction on land use, new development, transportation, housing, parks, trails, open space, utilities, and economic development. This plan lists recommendations and steps for implementation under each strategy. Community members will lead the implementation effort by prioritizing tasks and accomplishing goals with the help of City staff and resources.

## Geographic and Historic Context



Elyton Land Company and Birmingham Water Works Board (Source: MagicCityMoments.com)



Dr. A. H. Parker served as the first principal of Industrial High School for Colored Pupils; later renamed Parker High School. (Source: National Register of Historic Places)

### Brief History of the Western Area

Early settlement history dictates that many of the area's inhabitants were farmers with a small number of slaves. Between 1820 and 1870 the City of Elyton alone had tripled in population from 300 to 1,000 residents. In 1871, the City of Birmingham formed at the crossing of two rail lines east of Elyton and became the new county seat. Elyton was annexed into the City of Birmingham and later named "West End." By the early 1900s farming fields become housing plats. According to city records, residents' occupations included engineers, salesmen, plumbers, bookkeepers, clerks, and commercial travelers.

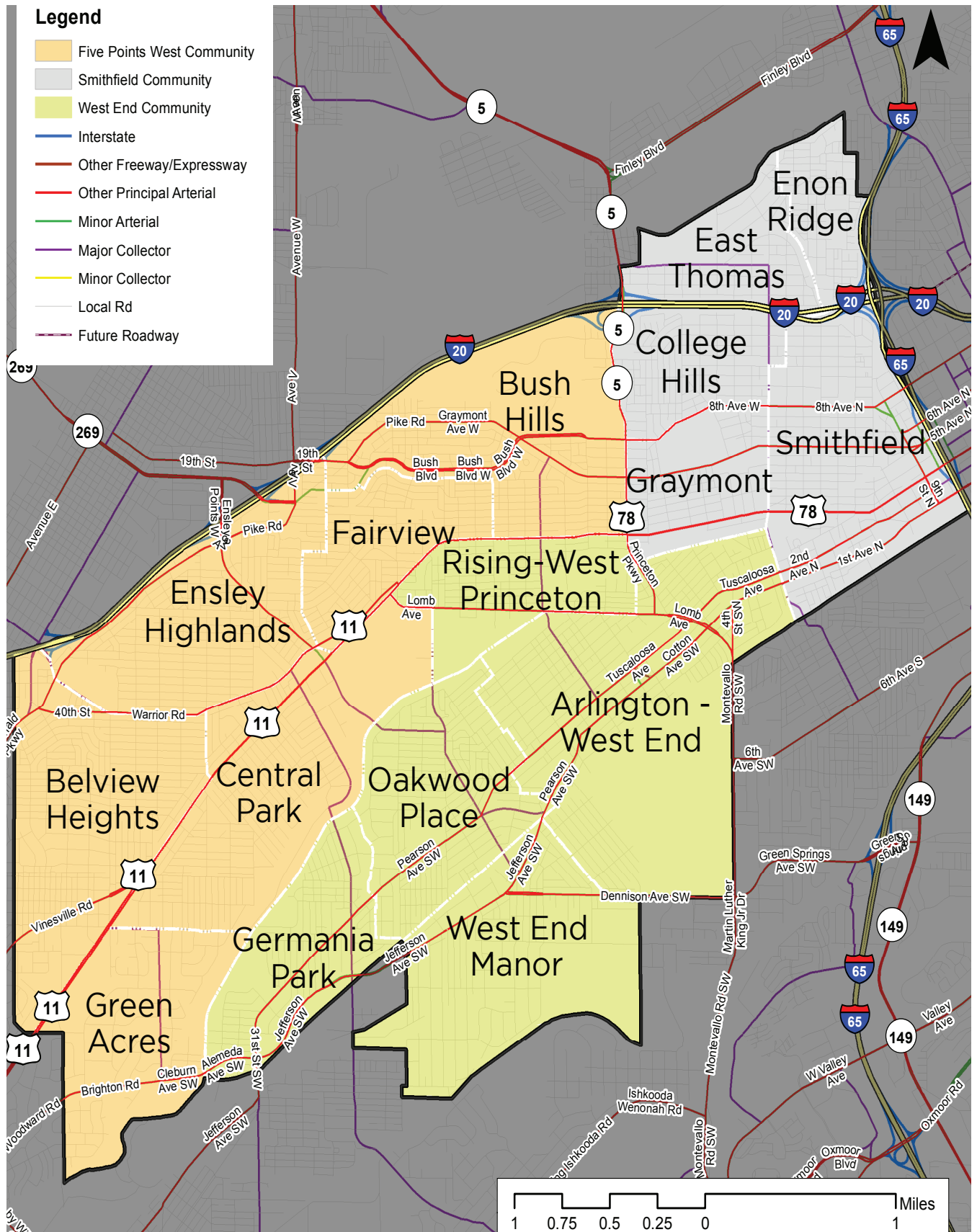
### Planning Area Communities

The Western Area Framework Plan study area consists of three communities (as shown on the following page). They are Five Points West, Smithfield, and West End. Within these three communities there are sixteen neighborhoods:

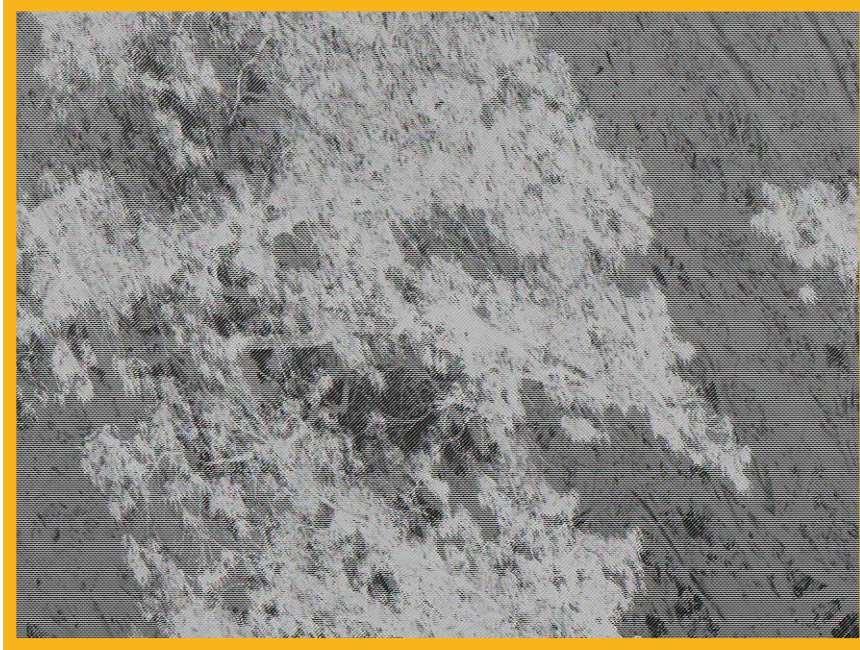
- Arlington-West End
- Belview Heights
- Bush Hills
- Central Park
- College Hills
- East Thomas
- Enon Ridge
- Ensley Highlands
- Fairview
- Germania Park
- Graymont
- Green Acres
- Oakwood Place
- Rising-West Princeton
- Smithfield
- West End Manor



Figure 1.1: Planning Study Area Map

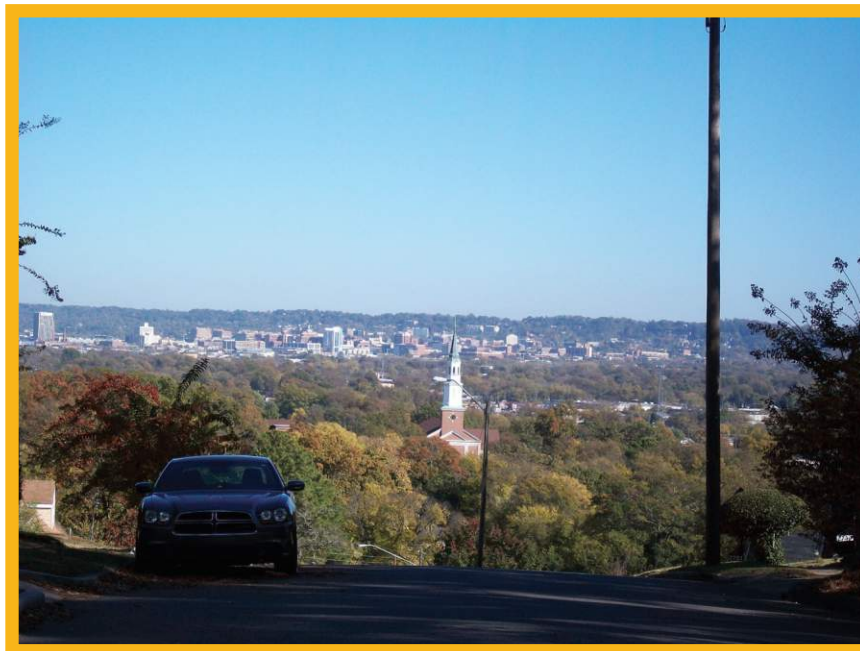


## Character Areas and Defining Narrative



*Birmingham City Skyline as seen from atop Enon Ridge in the College Hills neighborhood.*

Enon Ridge, which runs along the northern boundary of the Western Area, is a major defining feature that connects Belview Heights, Ensley Highlands, Fairview, Bush Hills, College Hills, East Thomas and Enon Ridge neighborhoods. The topography of the area allows for many households to have stunning views of the Birmingham skyline to the east and the broad Jones Valley to the south.



*Jones Valley as seen from atop Enon Ridge in the Fairview neighborhood.*

Jones Valley is the geographic area that is drained by Valley Creek and its tributaries. Many of the neighborhoods within this part of Jones Valley have the greatest population density of any area in the City.





*Valley Creek along the boundaries of Central Park and Oakwood Place neighborhoods*

Valley Creek bisects the Western Area from northeast to southwest, nearly parallel to the Enon Ridge which lies less than a mile to its north. Although the creek is currently in poor condition, current efforts are underway to improve water quality and flood mitigation.



*West End Academy, a Birmingham Public School located in the Oakwood Place neighborhood*

Several schools have either been rebuilt or renovated in the Western Area to provide a better setting for educating local. In addition, there are also several abandoned school buildings that would be seen as opportunities for reuse in the future and can stabilize surrounding communities.



*Five Points West Business District in Central Park neighborhood*

The Five Points West Business District is comprised of a collection of shopping centers, retail outparcels and small offices located along Bessemer Road, Warrior Road, and Ensley/5 Points West Avenue. This is a primary shopping destination for residents residing in the western portion of the City.



*Elyton Village, a Birmingham housing authority community located in the Graymont neighborhood*

Housing styles vary across the Western Area from single family cottages along the Enon Ridge to apartment communities in Jones Valley.



*Single family housing in Oakwood Place neighborhood*





*Historic Legion Field, located in the Graymont neighborhood*

Two of Birmingham's historic athletic facilities are located in the Western Area. Legion Field (football) and Rickwood Field (baseball) are not only assets of great historic value, they are also utilized by local colleges and other organizations such as high schools and recreation departments.



*Historic Rickwood Field, located in the Rising-West Princeton neighborhood*





*Arlington Antebellum Home (Source: encyclopediaofalabama.org)*

Built between 1845 and 1850 in the Greek Revival style, Arlington predates the founding of Birmingham in 1871. The City's only antebellum home, the mansion is fully restored and contains a fine collection of antiques and decorative arts including 19th century furniture, textiles, silver and paintings. During the Civil War, Arlington Antebellum home was spared from destruction when Union troops used the home as headquarters while they planned the burning of the University of Alabama.

The Birmingham CrossPlex is a national destination. Housing one of the fastest indoor hydraulic tracks in the world, an Olympic size swimming pool, a nine volleyball court venue, a 5,000 seat basketball arena and a platform to develop many other sports, the CrossPlex has become a world renowned competition venue.



*Birmingham CrossPlex (Source: Birminghamcrossplex.com)*

## The Plan Development Process









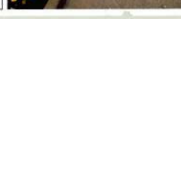
The City of Birmingham commissioned the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham's Building Communities Program to study and make recommendations for the revitalization of the Western Area. This effort is a part of the City's ongoing commitment to the improvement of neighborhood economic vitality and quality of life.

The process was developed with the support of community consensus which inspired placed-based expression of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan policies and strategies on the community level. These community-based goals have been reflected in a series of Framework Plans.

## Public Participation

Throughout the planning process, the planning team has conducted 17 public meetings to discuss current concerns of residents and potential solutions. Interactive conversations helped uncover primary concerns which inform the prioritization of redevelopment strategies. Citizens were also encouraged to utilize [www.imaginebham.com](http://www.imaginebham.com) to stay abreast of past meetings and report drafts.

In The **Western Area** I Want To See...

	Community Development	More Activities Accessible for the Youth	JOBS		Affordable Housing	Grocery + Retail Stores (Quality)				More Sidewalks	
	Shuttles for (buses) Short Distance Having Handicap	Walking Trails	Cleaner Streets + Alleys	SLUMLORDS + Drug use + Section 8 + Housing Issues + Re-entry + JOBS MANY	Police Visibility	Development of green space Beautification	New & Attractive Homes			Ordinance Enforcement	
	Better Street Lighting	Better Streets	Historic District	Programs for youth - especially young parents + CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	Job development	More things of local & regional	Plan for future Park that better meets quality use of neighborhood use		Better Transportation	Better Parks	
	More Seated restaurants			Shopping Mall	LANDMARKS Service-oriented business development	Solution for quality issues in the neighborhood - create with good layout, safety for the street			Better School Facilities @ Bush Hills School	Hotels	
	More Bicycle Trails										
					All Mixed Progress				After-School Facilities	Planted Blvd	

## Vision Statement

Input from residents and research from analyses were used to develop the vision for this framework plan. This vision reflects the community's values and aspirations for the future:

**“The communities within the Western Area Framework study area are energetic and friendly, renowned for sports facilities, historical sites, local educational institutions, and medical facilities. The local pride of residents, combined with the small town character of its neighborhoods and the big-city atmosphere of nearby Downtown Birmingham make its neighborhoods and communities unique and appealing for people of all ages. These assets define its sense of place and are the foundation of a stable economy.”**

## Community Goals

We will strive to preserve and build upon these aspects of our community while supporting compatible growth and investment that contributes to the overall sustainability of the Western Area by:

### Community Renewal

- Decreasing blight throughout the area to improve neighborhood appeal and increase value within the neighborhoods.
- Creating a healthy and safe community by promoting active lifestyles, fresh food access, and crime prevention.
- Developing diverse, quality housing options throughout the community.
- Preserving the rich heritage and the character of each neighborhood.

### Green Systems

- Improving flood mitigation techniques to protect the community.
- Ensuring parks and recreational facilities are safe and well-maintained.
- Developing an extensive green infrastructure.

### Economic Development

- Developing an educated and skilled workforce.
- Creating a prosperous business and entrepreneurial community.

### Transportation and Infrastructure

- Creating a system of comfortable, safe, and convenient modes of transportation.

### Future Land Use

- Supporting new growth by insisting on quality developments and by promoting desired land use patterns that allow for a variety of compatible uses.

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# Community Renewal



## Community Needs and Opportunities

Table 2.1: Community Renewal Needs & Opportunities

NEEDS
Blight removal
Streetlights
Police visibility in hot spots
Code enforcement
OPPORTUNITIES
Building repair assistance
Quality housing options
Community gardens, new trails, and other greenspaces
Mixed-income housing

### Community Renewal Goal 1: Decrease blight throughout the area to improve neighborhood appeal and increase neighborhood values

The prevalence of blight is one of the predominant issues impacting the Western Area Community. Overgrown and vacant lots, abandoned properties, and dilapidated structures present serious issues for residents, community stakeholders, business owners, investors, and the City. Unsound and dilapidated structures pose health and safety hazards for citizens. Abandoned structures in deteriorated and dilapidated conditions attract criminal activity and are unsafe. Blighted properties impose a burden on city services -- requiring additional maintenance, policing, and fire protection. Consequently, the diminishment in property values for blighted properties and their surroundings deprive essential city tax revenues and discourage investments for improvement. In order to beautify the Western Area, increase property values, and improve safety, the prevalence of blighted properties needs to be reduced.

#### STRATEGY A: MANAGE VACANT AND BLIGHTED PROPERTIES

##### ACTION 1: CREATE A VACANT PROPERTY REGISTRATION ORDINANCE.

A Vacant Property Registration ordinance would require land owners to register their vacant properties, which would augment the City's property condition collection and code enforcement efforts. It would also help with identifying absentee landlords.

Typically, properties that fall under these ordinances are not occupied -- properties actively being marketed for sale or rent would not be required to register. Owners would be required to register and pay a fee, renewing the registration on a regular schedule. In some cities, the fees get higher every subsequent year, as an incentive for property owners to redevelop or sell their properties. Owners would be required to keep the buildings and lots secured and in good order, and in some cases, post a sign with the name and contact information of the owner and manager of the property. Failure to do so results in significant fines. In cases where an owner cannot be found, the City would place a lien on the property. Funds from the registration fees and fines would pay for inspection and enforcement.

**ACTION 2: TARGET BLIGHTED PROPERTIES FOR DEMOLITION IN STRATEGIC AREAS.**

Dilapidated structures are eyesores in the community and can serve as refuges for criminal activities. These structures pose health and safety risks to residents and therefore need to be renovated or, in most cases, cleared. In circumstances where the structure is occupied, efforts should be made, when possible, to renovate the structure. When the dilapidated structure is unoccupied, a determination should be made after condemnation on whether to renovate or demolish the structure. The City's RISE program could develop a valuation method to determine whether demolition or renovation is feasible.

Demolition should be focused on properties for immediate and/or long-term impacts. Immediate impacts include properties that are prone to fire and attract crime. Demolishing this type of property relieves a pressing community need. Demolition for long-term impacts may include properties located in strategic areas, such as around a public park or commercial corridor.

Additionally, the City should work with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and other nonprofit and faith-based organizations to reduce demolition costs. Habitat for Humanity, for instance, conducts its own demolition, and the City would only need to provide properties that fit the organization's needs. Doing so would provide infill development. Habitat for Humanity and other organizations should first work with residents to ensure that the character of future housing matches the local context.

**ACTION 3: ACQUIRE TAX DELINQUENT PROPERTIES THROUGH THE BIRMINGHAM LAND BANK AUTHORITY.**

The Birmingham Land Bank Authority (BLBA) can acquire properties that are five or more years tax-delinquent and can produce a clear title. The intent of the land bank is not to hold property, but to produce clean titles and dispose of the property so that the property returns to a productive use. The land bank has several disposal options for properties once they have clean title, one of interest is through its Side Lot Program to adjacent property owners at a minimal cost. The BLBA maintains an up-to-date map of tax-delinquent property on its website. A map of the community's tax-delinquent properties is in the Existing Conditions document.

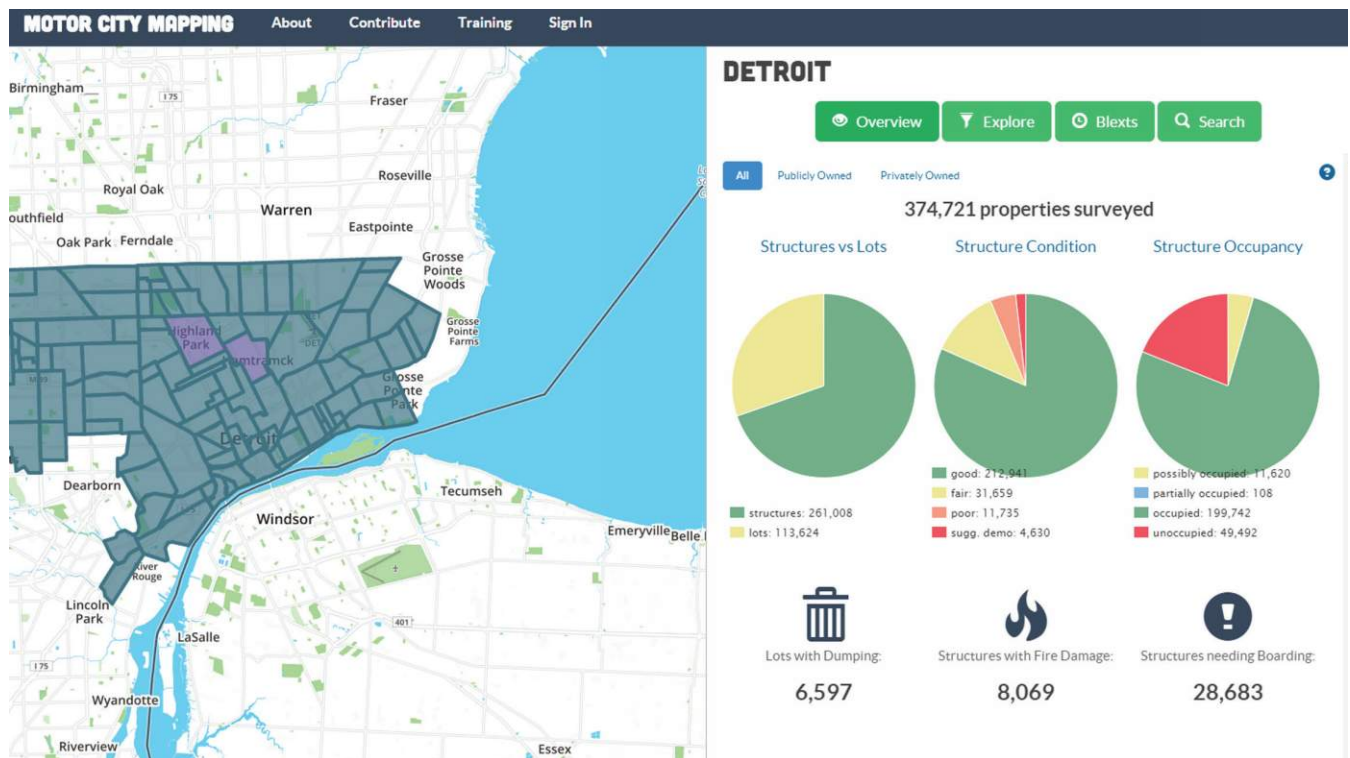
## STRATEGY B: IMPROVE CODE ENFORCEMENT

### ACTION 1: DEVELOP A PUBLIC DATABASE WITH THE CONDITION AND CODE ENFORCEMENT STATUS OF EACH PROPERTY.

The database should include property conditions data collected and should be accessible on an app or dedicated website. For the mean time, this plan's Existing Conditions document will serve as the latest property conditions survey.

A comprehensive database would provide numerous uses and benefits to residents, community organizations, investors, and stakeholders in the Western Area community:

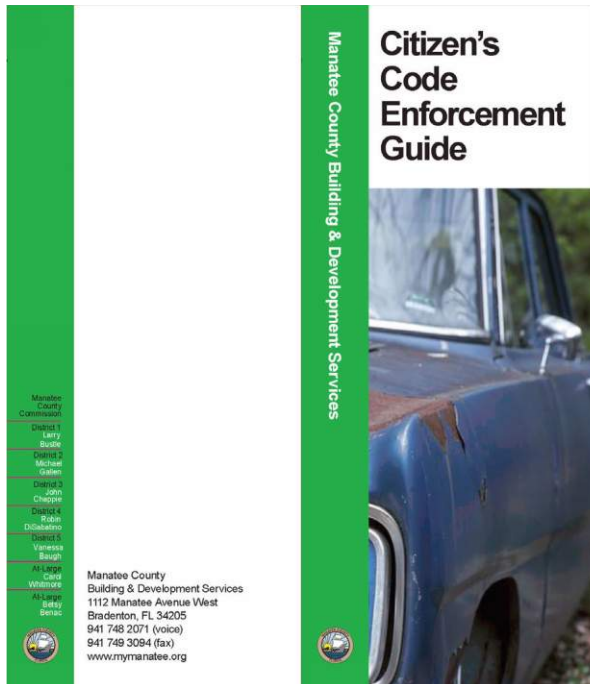
- Residents and community organizations would benefit from learning about the progress of code enforcement and of redevelopment opportunities in or near their neighborhoods.
- Housing, community, and economic development organizations would be able to better assess and allocate their housing and social assistance services in the community.
- Urban planners and economic development professionals would be able to use this information for analysis, such as finding sites that can be assembled for redevelopment to meet community needs.
- City officials and government agencies would be able to leverage this information to develop initiatives and partnerships to strengthen and better serve the Western Area.



Motor City Mapping, Detroit, MI (Source Motor City Mapping)

## **ACTION 2: CREATE A CITIZEN'S GUIDE FOR CODE ENFORCEMENT TO ENABLE THE REPORTING OF BLIGHTED PROPERTIES.**

The code enforcement guide would help increase the City's capacity to identify and track blighted properties by streamlining the public reporting and identification process. The code enforcement guide should be produced in electronic and hardcopy format. One case study to follow is the "Citizen's Code Enforcement Guide" for Manatee County, Florida.



*Citizen's Code Enforcement Guide in Manatee County, FL  
(Source: Manatee County)*

## **ACTION 3: PROMOTE THE CITY'S EXISTING CODE ENFORCEMENT SERVICES, INCLUDING 311 AND THE BIRMINGHAM MOBILE APPLICATION.**

The efficacy of these services and resources can be greatly improved if the public is aware of their existence. The City should aggressively advertise these services using all available resources at their disposal.

The official Birmingham, AL mobile app allows users to connect directly to the City of Birmingham for news, social media links, calendar of events, and information pertaining to: recreation, facilities, city departments, council members, and much more. It also allows users to communicate directly to the City regarding issues, including: abandoned vehicles, ditch maintenance, graffiti, high grass and weeds, missed yard waste, on-call bulky items, parking in yard, pothole repair, and trash/rubbish/debris on premises. Citizens are allowed to submit notes, the address of the issue, picture or video of the issue, and contact information to the City.

## STRATEGY C: BUILDING REPAIR ASSISTANCE

### **ACTION 1: IDENTIFY DETERIORATED PROPERTIES FOR RENOVATION USING THE PROPERTY CONDITIONS DATA COLLECTED FROM THE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT.**

Deteriorated properties are classified as structurally sound buildings in need of minor renovation and/or maintenance. Identifying deteriorated properties would enable stakeholders and organizations to concentrate rehabilitation efforts in areas that need it the most. Concentrating rehabilitation efforts in severely blighted areas produces more noticeable results than a scattered approach within a severely blighted area.

### **ACTION 2: ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY ENTITY TO COORDINATE AND SPEARHEAD RENOVATION EFFORTS.**

A Community Beautification Coalition (CBC) could serve as an instrument of change in the community by providing assistance to residents with blighted properties. In order to achieve this, it is recommended that the CBC partner with local faith-based organizations, Habitat for Humanity, Jefferson County's Volunteer Based Housing Rehabilitation Program (VBHHP), and other non-profits to organize volunteer efforts. Additionally, the CBC should collaborate with the Department of Community Development and Keep Birmingham Beautiful to secure funding for larger projects and for training. With the help of its partners, the CBC could:

- Create a community equipment rental/checkout system where residents can borrow various equipment, such as lawn mowers, power tools, paint brushes, etc.;
- Hold a "tool drive" where second-hand tools are donated to help build the community's equipment inventory;
- Establish an elderly and disable assistance program where residents can register to receive help with maintaining their property;
- Make improvements to public spaces through monthly or bi-monthly cleanup initiatives, including: landscape enhancements to yards, sidewalks and parks;
- Paint exterior worn-out building facades;
- Repair broken non-structural building components such as windows, doors, gates, signs, and lighting;
- Replace damaged structural building components such as roofs, columns, and beams; and
- Clear debris, mow lawn, and trim vegetation

### **ACTION 3: PARTNER WITH LOCAL CHURCHES, BANKS, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO FACILITATE RENOVATION IN THE COMMUNITY.**

Faith-based and nonprofit organizations could partner with banks that need to meet their Community Reinvestment Act obligations in forming a local Community Development Financial Institution that could offer funding outside of the regular market rate appraisal process. In addition, local organizations could collaborate with the City to create an initiative that renovates houses while teaching community members construction skills.



**ACTION 4: SUPPORT RENOVATION EFFORTS WITH GRANTS, LOANS, AND HOME IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS.**

Support renovation efforts through grants, competitive loans, and home improvement programs. The following grants, loans and home improvement programs should be advertised to increase the public's awareness:

- *Critical Repair Grant Program, City of Birmingham:*  
Provides residents who make 30% or less of area-median income (AMI) up to \$7,500 for structural and plumbing repairs and modernization of electrical and mechanical equipment. Structural work is typically limited to correcting issues related to other repairs. Following the application's acceptance, housing inspectors visit the home and review the requested work to determine the highest needs to be addressed.
- *Commercial Revitalization Program, City of Birmingham:*  
Offers facade and storefront improvement rebates of up to 20% of costs and capital improvement rebates of up to 10% of costs, following design guidelines established by the area's merchant's association.
- *Volunteer Rehabilitation Program, City of Birmingham:*  
Provides funding to volunteer programs to assist residents making 80% or less of AMI for exterior paint, roof repairs, deck repair, and handicap ramp construction.

## Community Renewal Goal 2: Create a healthy and safe community by promoting active lifestyles, fresh food access, and crime prevention

Improving community wellness in the Western Area requires access to support services, healthy food choices, parks and other recreational amenities. Furthermore, it is augmented by reducing crime and blight in the community – elements that threaten the safety of residents. In the Western Area, where access to fresh food choices are limited and both blight and crime are prevalent, efforts must be made to address these issues to improve the quality of life for residents.

### STRATEGY A: ENCOURAGE AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

#### **ACTION 1: SELL OR LEASE CITY-OWNED, VACANT PROPERTIES FOR RECREATIONAL USES.**

See *Green Systems, Chapter 3, p. 46.*

#### **ACTION 2: SUPPORT THE CONVERSION OF VACANT PROPERTIES INTO OPEN SPACE FOR PASSIVE RECREATION.**

See *Green Systems, Chapter 3, p. 46.*

#### **ACTION 3: INTEGRATE COMPLETE STREETS TO ACCOMMODATE PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS.**

See *Transportation & Infrastructure, Chapter 5, p. 89.*

## STRATEGY B: INCREASE ACCESS TO FRESH FOOD

### ACTION 1: ALLOW COMMUNITY GARDENS ON VACANT AND OTHER UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES.



*Urban Ministries West End Community Garden*

Community gardens could be used for growing vegetables, fruit trees, and/or flowers. Community gardens range in size, with some as large as several blocks or as small as a few raised beds. The land or space used for community gardens is often a shared space where neighbors grow and harvest food crops for personal or group consumption. The food crops could also be harvested and sold at local grocery stores or farmers' market as well as donated to local food kitchens.

The vacant and other underutilized properties for community gardens should include properties owned by the City of Birmingham, the Birmingham Land Bank Authority, and other public agencies.

### ACTION 2: USE THE CITY'S MOBILE MARKETS TO PROVIDE HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS TO RESIDENTS.

The Mobile Markets are part of the Healthy Birmingham Task Force. The initiative involves retrofitting former BJCTA buses into small grocery stores to provide food services in areas that lack healthy options. The buses are expected to make an estimated 15 stops per day, with each stop lasting about two hours.

### ACTION 3: ESTABLISH AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES.

Agricultural cooperatives allow community farmers to pool production and resources together. These cooperatives can range in agricultural techniques and size. They can be used to grow vegetables, fruit trees, or even small aquaculture and aquaponics systems, if the zoning permits. The produce from the agricultural cooperatives can be sold either in the community, at farmer's markets, or to restaurants and businesses. The food crops harvested can also be used for personal consumption.

## STRATEGY C: IMPROVE POLICING IN CRIME HOT SPOTS

### ACTION 1: DEDICATE ADDITIONAL POLICE TO PATROL CRIME HOTSPOTS.

There were several areas that were identified as crime hotspots in the Western Area Community Framework Plan: Existing Conditions Document (see the Crime Density Map on the following page). Efforts should be made by the Birmingham Police Department to concentrate more officers in these locations. The police department's ShotSpotter program that detects and locates gunfire can assist in the analysis of these hotspots.

### ACTION 2: ESTABLISH COMMUNITY WATCH GROUPS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL "EYES AND EARS."

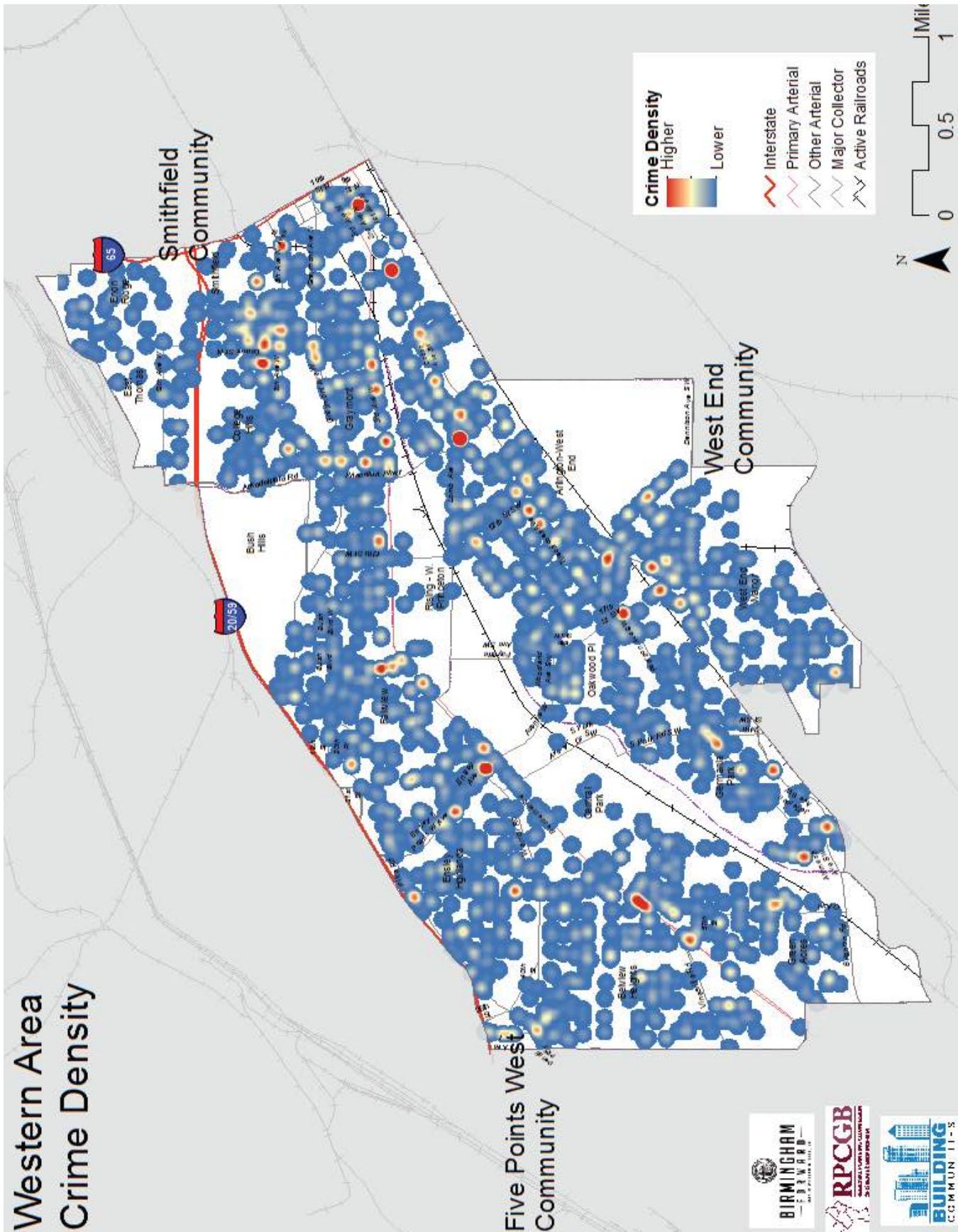
Establishing a neighborhood watch group would help to address property crimes as well as deter criminals who would attempt to conduct drug related or gang-related activities in the community. A watch group is also advantageous in that it promotes cooperation between residents of the community and the police department.

Community-based neighborhood organizations are often a ready source of active citizens who can be recruited to become involved in crime prevention. Organized groups of neighborhood residents watch out for criminal and suspicious behavior and report it to local law enforcement help prevent crime and promote cooperation among residents and police. The first step is to identify key leaders or persons most concerned about crime in the neighborhood and organize a meeting of these individuals to discuss safety. The police can be invited to a neighborhood meeting to discuss community safety, and volunteers can be solicited to serve as block watch leaders. The neighborhood may be divided by blocks and block leaders assigned to serve as points of contact. A communication network can be organized to pass along information about crime and security to residents. The police may provide training on recognizing and reporting suspicious activity and on home and neighborhood security. The watch may expand to foot or car patrols. The watch can provide a variety of safety and security information to residents.

*(Source: National Crime Prevention Council)*

## QUICK FACTS

Figure 2.1: Crime Density Map





### ACTION 3: CREATE A STREETLIGHT OUTAGE FORM TO ENABLE CITIZENS TO REPORT STREETLIGHTS THAT ARE OUT.



Both residents and police identified streetlight outage as a major safety issue in Western Area. To address this issue the City should work with Alabama Power to develop a website and/or app reporting form for malfunctioned or out streetlights -- both those owned by the City of Birmingham and those owned by Alabama Power. As part of the website and/or app, a map should be integrated to improve usability.

The use of a website and the app would allow the City and Alabama Power to better track and respond to streetlights that are out.

For now, residents should call **1-800-245-2244** to report street light outage to Alabama Power.

*StreetLight Outages provides customers with a simple, interactive way to report problems with outdoor lights through a user-friendly map interface that includes visual representations of streetlight locations and repair requests (Source: IFactor)*

### ACTION 4: INCORPORATE CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED) GUIDELINES INTO THE REVIEW PROCESS FOR PUBLIC SPACES AND FACILITIES.

Research has shown that decisions preceding criminal acts are highly influenced by the perceived risk of being caught. CPTED guidelines help to deter criminal acts through natural surveillance, natural access control, territorial reinforcement and maintenance.

The CPTED guidelines (shown on the following page) should be applied especially to parks and other public spaces to improve safety. Other proposed open spaces should also incorporate the CPTED guidelines.

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a set of multidisciplinary strategies and design concepts intended to deter undesirable and criminal activities through the 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 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.



**Natural Access Control:** Natural Access Control is more than a high block wall topped with barbed wire. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design or 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, is the goal of this CPTED principle. Public areas are clearly distinguished from private ones. 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.

(Source: CPTED Security, [http://cptedsecurity.com/cpted\\_design\\_guidelines.htm](http://cptedsecurity.com/cpted_design_guidelines.htm))

## QUICK FACTS



## Community Renewal Goal 3: Develop diverse, quality housing options.

A vibrant and diverse community accommodates individuals and households of all sizes and incomes. For the Western Area to be a preeminent place to live these accommodations must be provided. The following strategies and actions have been established to help the Western Area communities support a variety of housing options for current and future residents.

### STRATEGY A: PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

#### ACTION 1: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EXISTING INCENTIVES AND PROVIDE NEW INCENTIVES WITH POLICIES THAT PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS.

Non-profits and private housing developers that could apply for state and federal tax credits:

- **Low Income Tax Credits:** Provides housing to households at or below 60% of median income. Mandates allocation of affordable and accessible units within a development and requires that these units be kept affordable for 15 years to receive 10 years of tax credit.
- **New Market Tax Credit:** Assist small developers and building owners by allowing credits to be sold (or syndicated) to investors. The program also helps larger developers by allowing them to use the credits directly. The credit aids developers and private owners with bridging the gap between cost of construction and the market's rates.

The City could adopt the following policies within its zoning ordinance:

- **Parking reduction for affordable housing units:** Developments that dedicate a certain percentage of available units dedicated to affordable housing are allowed to construct less parking spaces.
- **Inclusionary housing ordinance:** The ordinance would provide bonuses for including a certain percentage of affordable housing units within larger developments and create a program, entity, or partnership to oversee its compliance.

The creation of the following organizations could provide land and financing for affordable housing:

- **Community land trust (CLT):** A community land trust is a nonprofit that owns property and leases it to individuals, developers, and nonprofits. CLTs help reduce the cost of real estate development, home ownership, and rent in an area. Decisions of the CLT are made by its board, typically composed of neighborhood leaders, CLT property holders, and local business owners.
- **Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI):** CDFIs lend credit and financial services to underserved markets and populations. Depending on a CDFI's model and legal structure, the institution can act as a bank, a credit union, a loan provider, or a capital investor. CDFIs' boards of directors are made up of local community members.

#### ACTION 2: ESTABLISH A RENT-TO-OWN PROGRAM TO IMPROVE HOME OWNERSHIP AND AFFORDABILITY.

The Birmingham Land Bank Authority and the Birmingham housing authority could use the payment program for first time buyers and to assist credit challenged buyers in a rent-to-own format. Tenants would pay on a five (5) year lease and at the end of the five (5) year lease, the assistance and equity built through the rent-to-own lease would go towards the permanent mortgage.

## STRATEGY B: DEVELOP MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

### **ACTION 1: WORK WITH THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, PRIVATE DEVELOPERS, NON-PROFITS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO DEVELOP HOUSING ON INFILL SITES AND UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES.**

Development on these sites and properties should be concentrated in areas designated residential-medium density in this plan's Future Land Use Map (as shown in Chapter 6). Housing types such as single family detached houses, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes should be encouraged to allow for diverse family sizes, ages and income levels. Pocket cottages - cluster of six to twelve homes on a single site ranging from 768 to 998 square feet – should also be encouraged. Pocket cottages could serve as an affordable housing alternative to families and individuals, such as "Baby Boomers," looking to downsize.

Local case studies to follow include the work being done by the Bethel Ensley Action Task organization in Enon Ridge and the Woodlawn Foundation in Woodlawn.

### **ACTION 2: WORK WITH LARGE, LOCAL EMPLOYERS TO CREATE AN EMPLOYER-ASSISTED HOUSING PROGRAM IN THE WESTERN AREA.**

Employer Assisted Housing typically involves large local employers that provide financial assistance to employees to either buy or rent homes in surrounding communities. This policy helps strengthen the relationship between local communities and large businesses as well as create additional demand for housing.

## **Community Renewal Goal 4: Preserve the rich heritage and character of neighborhoods.**

## STRATEGY A: PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF NEIGHBORHOODS

### **ACTION 1: MAKE NEIGHBORHOODS CONTAINING NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS AWARE OF THE STATE AND FEDERAL BENEFITS OF REHABILITATING HISTORIC BUILDINGS.**

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. It includes properties of state and local significance as well as those of national significance because of its architecture or its association with important persons, events, or cultural developments. National Register Historic Districts within the Western Area include: JR Smith (College Hills), Center Street, Birmingham-Southern College, Smithfield, Belview Heights, and Arlington Park.

Currently there are federal tax credit, state tax credit and state tax reduction programs available to owners of income producing historical properties. Such properties include commercial, industrial, and rental residential properties. The Alabama Historical Commission in Montgomery administers both of these tax programs.

While inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places brings prestige and tax advantages, it does not offer the property or neighborhood any type of local regulatory protection.

### **ACTION 2: MAKE NEIGHBORHOODS AWARE OF THE ADDITIONAL PROTECTION AND BENEFITS OFFERED TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS.**

Local historic designation offers regulatory protection from inappropriate rehabilitation, new construction, and demolition. Plans must be submitted to the City's Design Review Committee, which is authorized to protect the district's or building's historical integrity.

#### **The process for obtaining local historic district designation:**

Requests for any district to be nominated as a historic district shall be directed to the Birmingham Historical Commission, which will recommend nomination to the Birmingham City Council. Any individual or organization may submit such requests; however, the general policy is to accept a request from the neighborhood association(s) representing the properties proposed for the district.

Once the request is made, a historical survey of the proposed district must be conducted by a professional historian or preservationist and a Historic Preservation Plan, which includes design guidelines, must be developed. If the district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places or is pending listing in the National Register, then the required survey work has already been completed. All property owners of record are notified of the designation request and are invited to attend a public hearing at which the Birmingham Historical Commission will consider the designation.

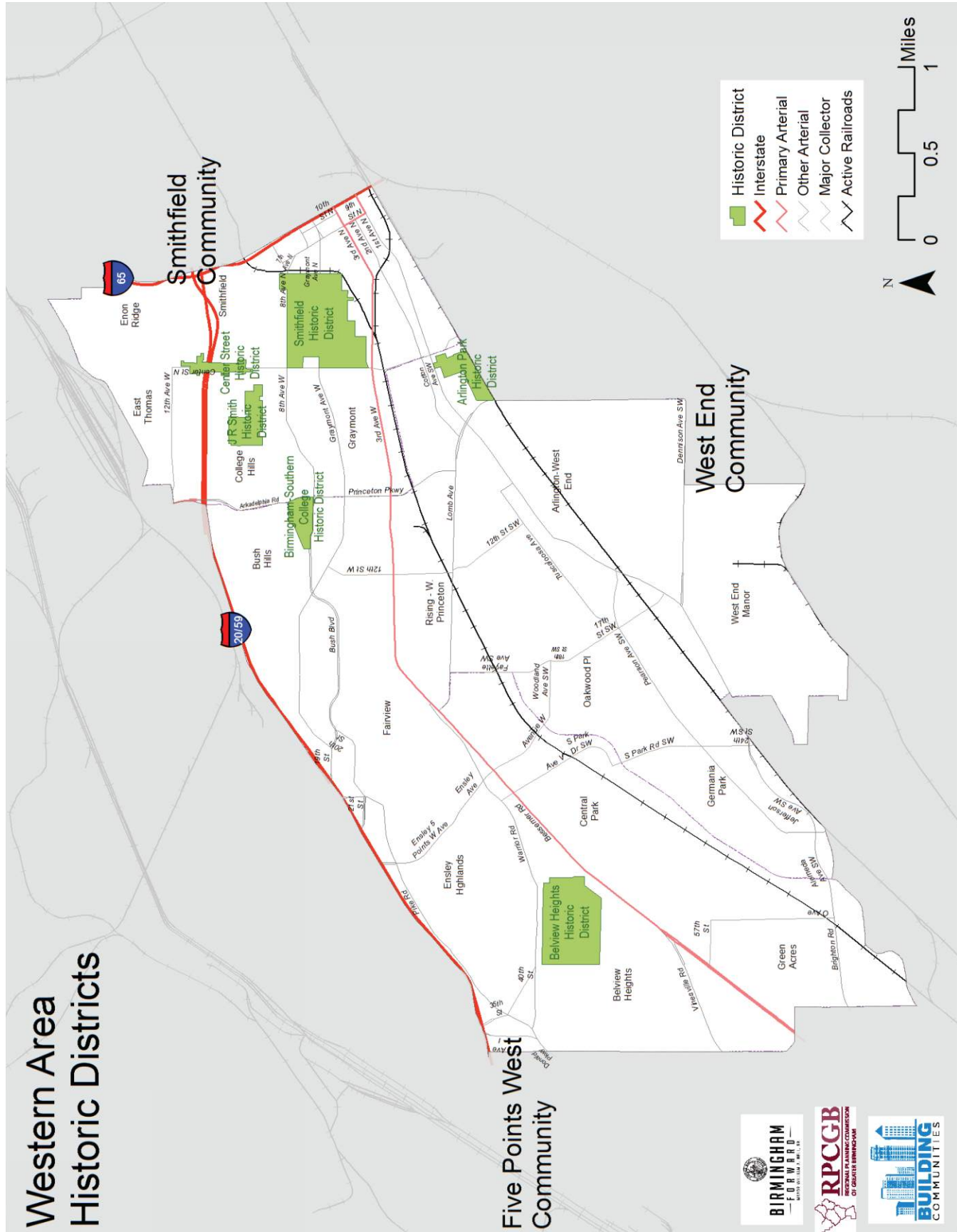
If the Commission recommends the designation, then property owners will have 14 days from the date of the hearing in which to object to the designation. If a majority of property owners within the district do not object to the designation, the Birmingham City Council will hold a public hearing to consider the designation. If the City Council votes to approve the designation, then the district boundaries shall officially be entered as an overlay on the City's Zoning Map.

### **ACTION 3: EXPAND THE DEMOLITION DELAY ORDINANCE TO INCLUDE NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS.**

A demolition review ordinance -- often called a demolition delay ordinance -- can help prevent the loss of historically and architecturally significant buildings. While such an ordinance does not entirely prevent demolition, it provides valuable time to explore alternatives. The ordinance can apply to an entire community or just to designated areas. Some municipalities impose a longer delay for resources listed on the National or Local registers.

Currently, the City of Birmingham has a demolition review ordinance for local historic districts but not for national historic districts. The City should provide an additional layer of protection to national historic districts by including them in its demolition review ordinance.

Figure 2.2: Historic Districts Map



## Recommendations for Specific Communities

### SMITHFIELD

#### Protect, Maintain, and Upgrade Housing

There are currently three Historic Districts located within the Smithfield community: JR Smith, Center Street, and Smithfield. This community is widely known for its historical significance during the Civil Rights Era and strong African-American history. The Smithfield Community relayed a strong desire to rehabilitate blighted areas. It is important to focus on renovating historic structures as much as possible. A desire to expand the existing Historic Districts further into the community was expressed, and it is suggested that the community form a Community Historical Committee to lead and manage the initiative. The following organizations could be helpful moving forward:

- **Alabama Historical Commission (AHC):** The Commission is the state agency that oversees expenditures of federal and state funds and programs in historic preservation. The Commission also owns and manages 17 major cultural sites across the state. Commission staff coordinate survey, inventory, registration, planning and protection for historic resources and provide public information and technical services.
- **Birmingham Historical Commission:** The Commission recommends historic districts and sites for local designation. Local historic districting provides that district residents establish and enforce design review and maintenance standards for their district.
- **Birmingham Historical Society:** This private, non-profit organization conducts research and provides education and support to historic preservation through its newsletters, publications, exhibits, tours, schools programs, and annual awards.
- **Black Heritage Council:** Formed in 1984 by the Alabama Historical Commission, the Black Heritage Council (BHC) is the only statewide organization that promotes the preservation and awareness of African American historic places, associated artifacts and culture. The Black Heritage Council sponsors a marker program that commemorates Alabama's African American historic sites.
- **Southeast Regional African American Preservation Alliance:** An alliance of organizations in several Southern states devoted to the preservation of African American history sites and culture.



Figure 2.3: Smithfield Blight Density Map

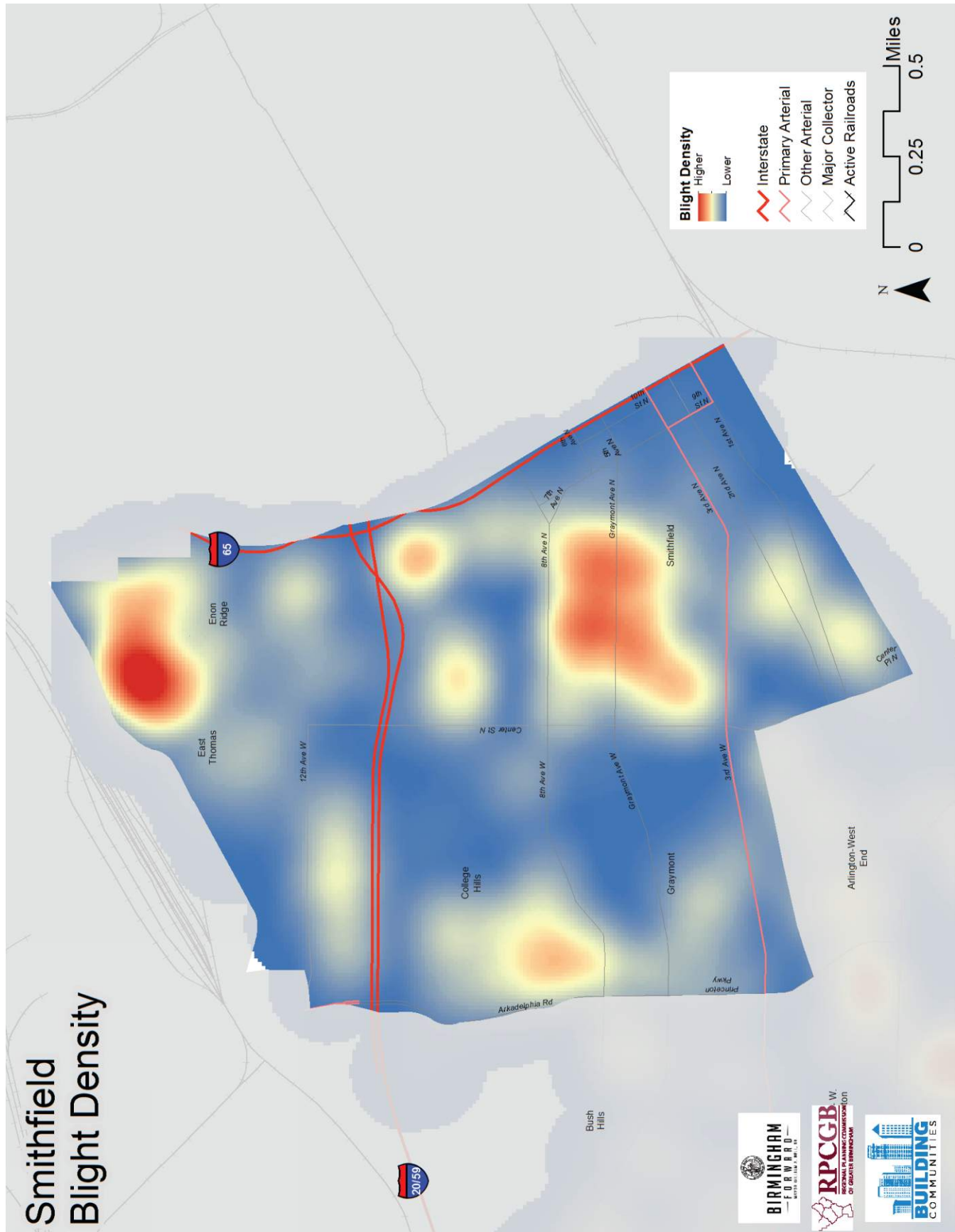


Figure 2.4: Smithfield Tax Delinquent Map

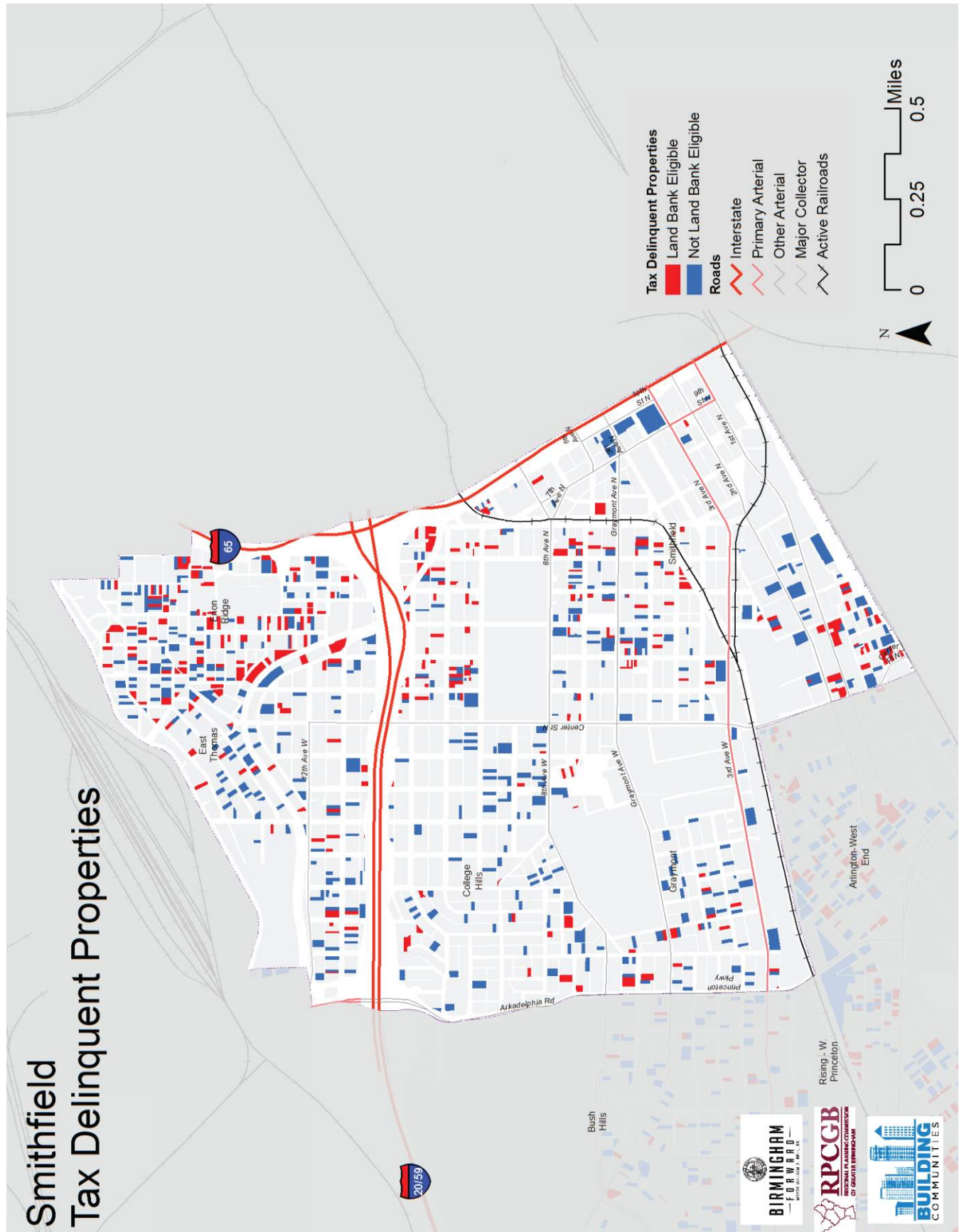
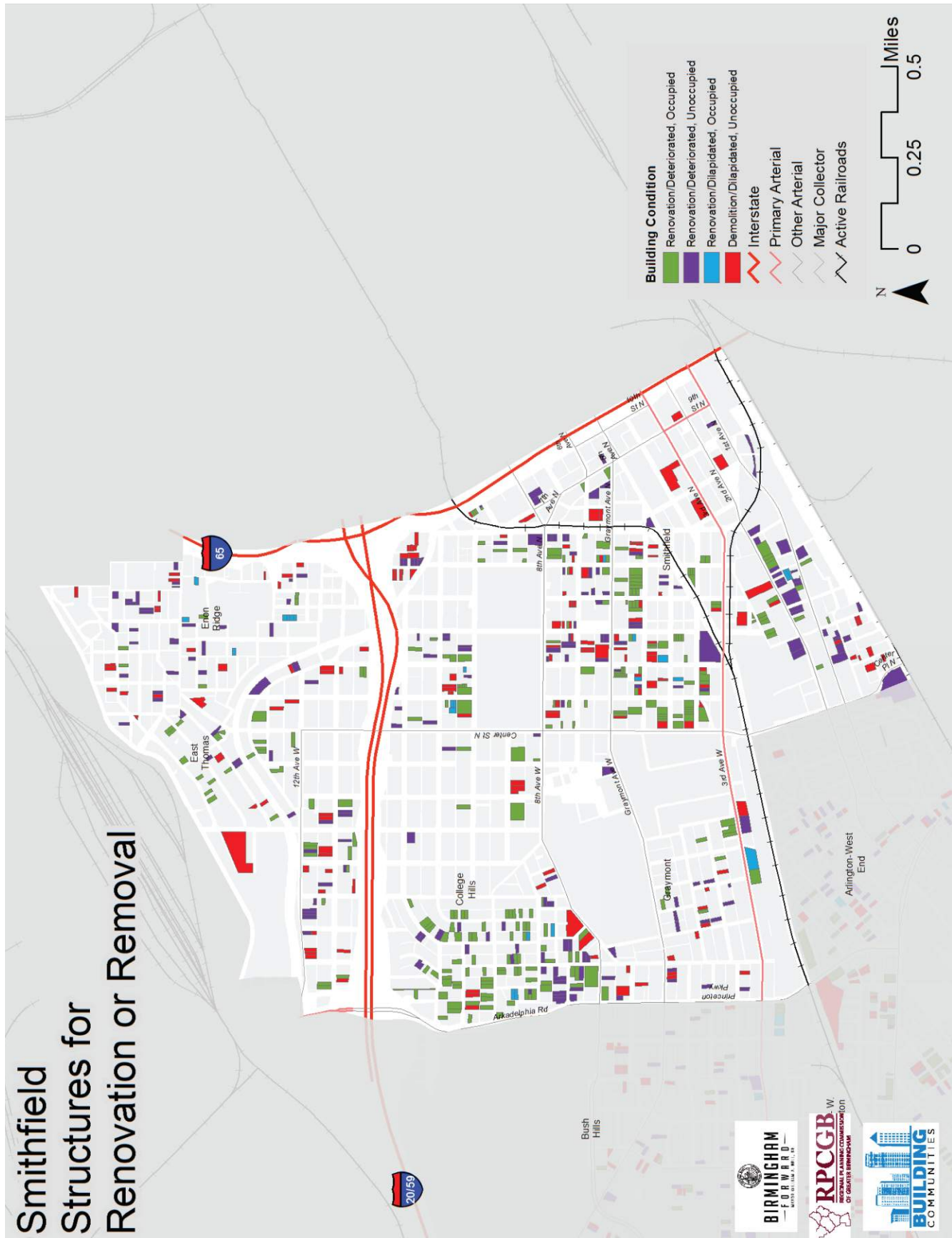




Figure 2.5: Smithfield Structures for Renovation or Removal Map



## FIVE POINTS WEST

### CrossPlex Development

A proposed Mixed-Use District is located along Bessemer Road and Ensley Avenue. This district would contain the CrossPlex, making it an ideal location for visitors and residents alike. By designating this area as a Mixed-Use District, it will allow for future development to blend a variety of land uses together in one area; this particular area would be considered a Mixed-Use High district. Potential uses in this area include: multifamily, townhouse, cottage and small-lot residential, retail and services, restaurants, offices, hotels, large entertainment facilities, and live/ work structures.

This is an ideal place for this type of development within the Five Points West community, as this location has been proposed to have the Western Area's Transit Super Stop. This will ensure that this area becomes the retail and entertainment center of this area. With civic and cultural amenities being within walking distance of each other and retail, cultural, and recreational activities, the created foot traffic will create a more vibrant and safe environment addressing many of the concerns suggested by the Five Points West community. This type of development will be a more inviting environment for residents and businesses and will be able to host festivals and other public gatherings to continuously create a positive cycle of support for local restaurants and other businesses.

Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOA) are areas that should be prioritized by the City and the RISE Program for intervention in order to remove blight, stabilize the community, and catalyze growth and revitalization. Non-profits, faith-based organizations and private developers should also focus their investments in these areas. Interventions include, but are not limited to: aggressive code enforcement, renovation/rehab to deteriorated structures; demolition of dilapidated structures; acquisition and deposition of blighted properties; and infill development. Strategic Opportunity Areas consist of areas in or proximate to:

- Concentrations of blight
- Major transportation corridors
- Community gateways
- Civic areas (schools, libraries, existing and proposed paths, trails, ect.)
- Flood plains
- Crime hotspots

## QUICK FACTS

Figure 2.6: Five Points West Blight Density Map

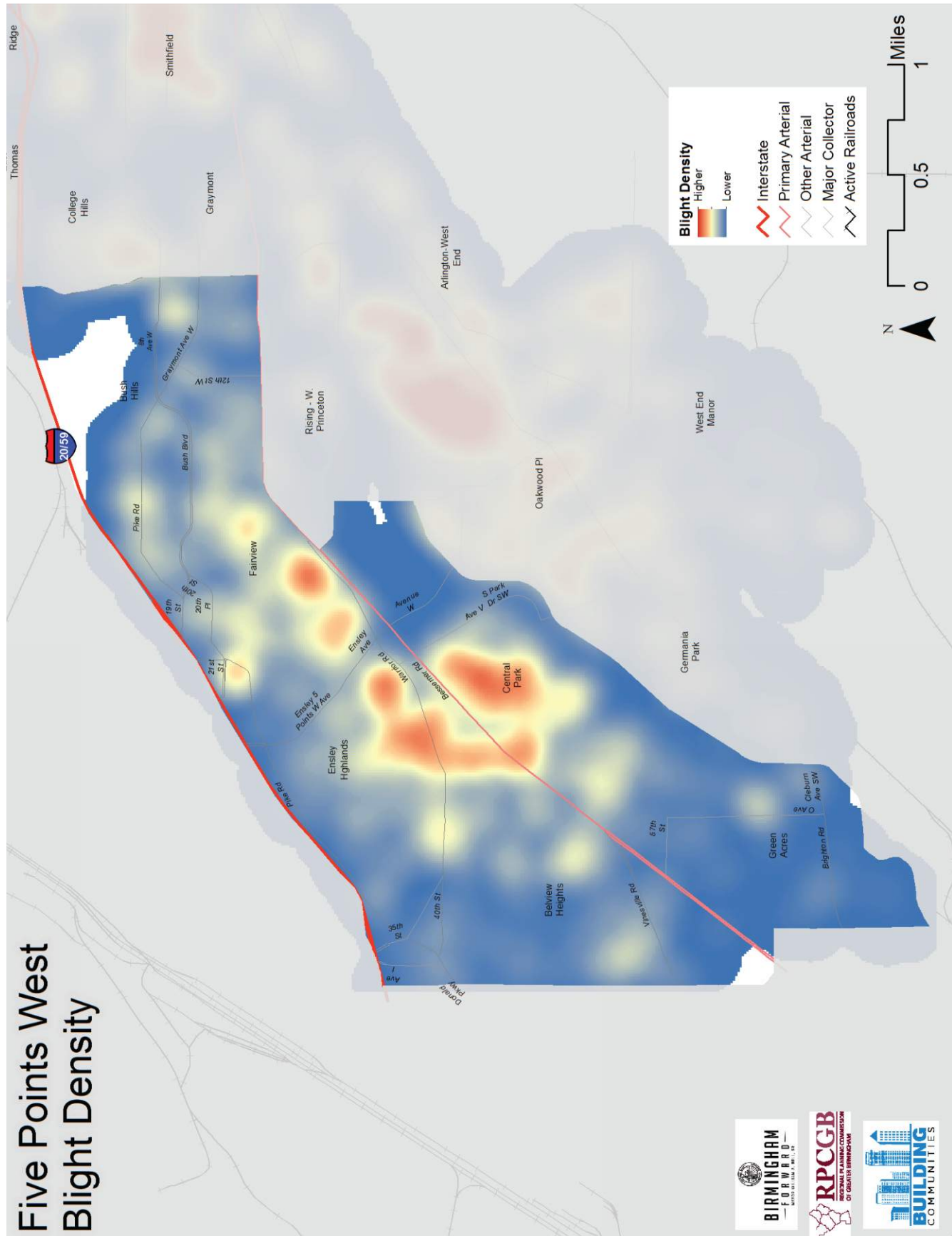




Figure 2.7: Five Points West Tax Delinquent Map

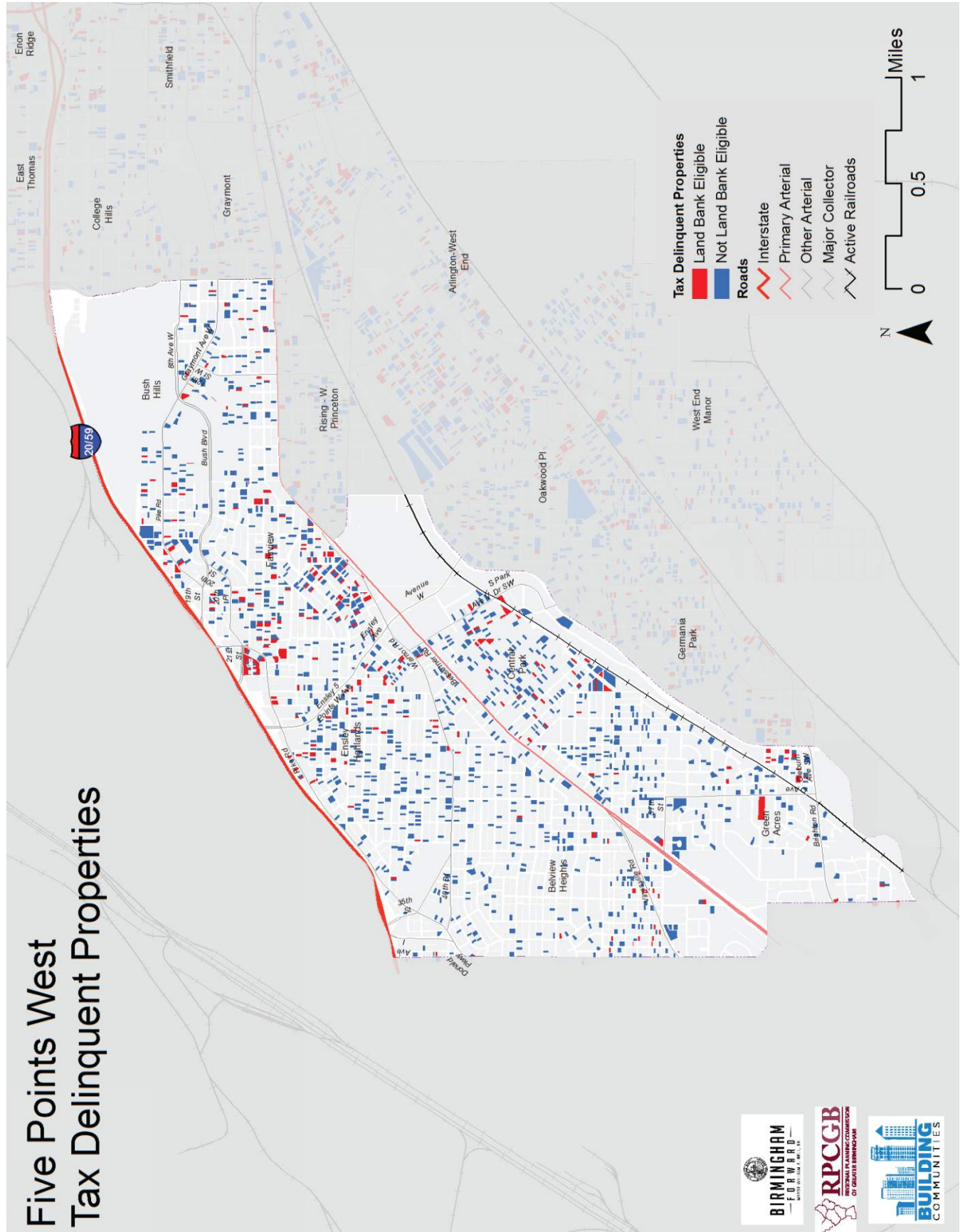
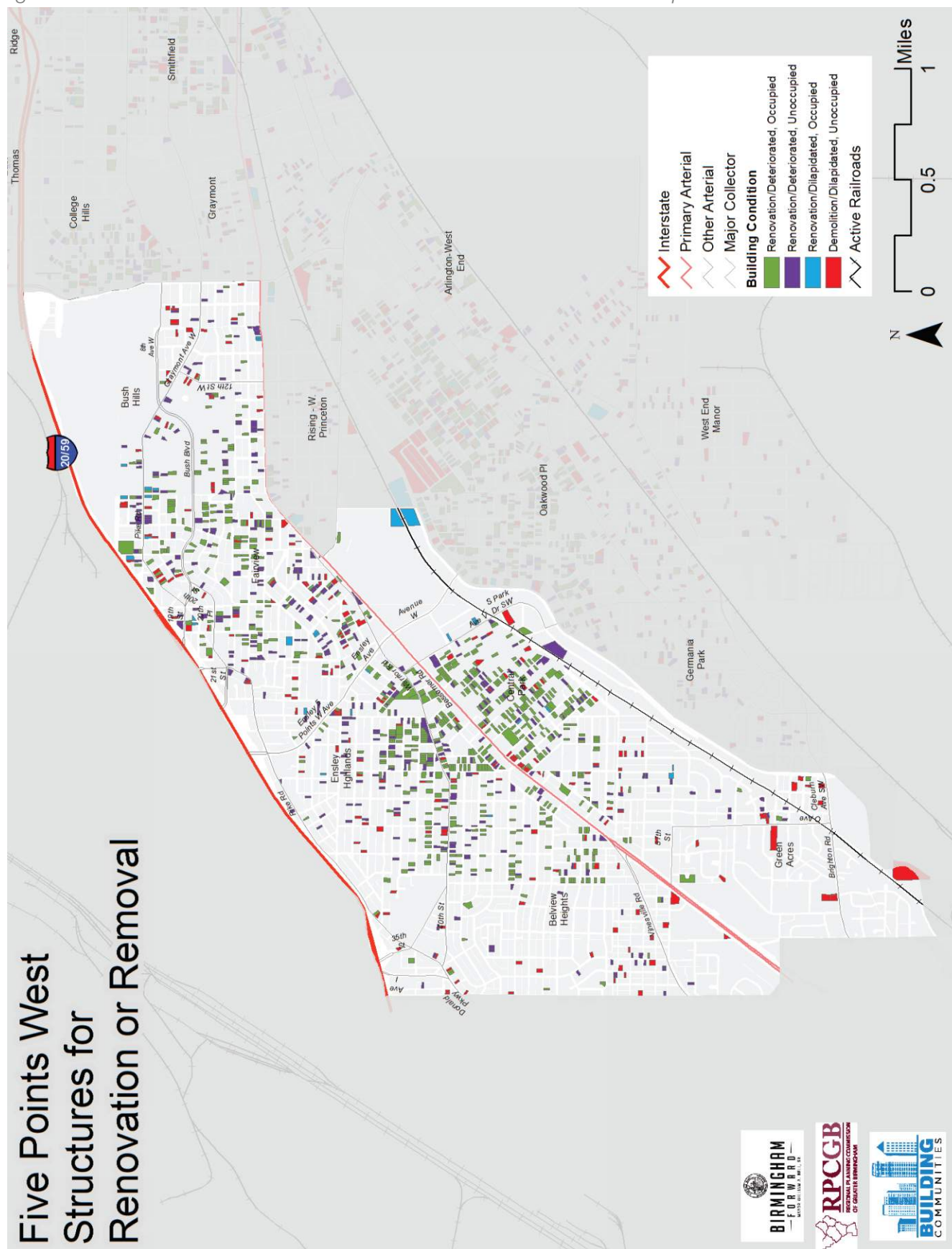




Figure 2.8: Five Points West Structures for Renovation or Removal Map



## WEST END

### Arlington-West End Development

A Mixed-Use District is proposed along Tuscaloosa Avenue and Jefferson Avenue to help revitalize the area surrounding the Princeton Baptist Medical Center. This area is currently characterized by many deteriorated and dilapidated structures that need to either be renovated or demolished. In order to reverse this trend and to hold future development to a higher standard, this area has been established as a Commercial Revitalization District by the City of Birmingham.

By allowing mixed-use development in this area it will allow for the community to be characterized by compact, walkable, residential and commercial areas with a “Main Street” feel along the avenues. This type of development will be valuable to the West End community in creating a more vibrant environment for older adults, individuals, families, workers, and businesses as it will allow for a variety of housing, retail stores, restaurants, and services to be located within walking distance of each other. It will also help to support Princeton Baptist Medical Center by offering new service and housing options to employees and guests with the creation of mutually-supporting and complementary synergies among different land uses.

*An example of a mixed-use district*



*SOHO in Homewood, AL (Source: Birmingham Business Alliance )*



Figure 2.9: West End Blight Density Map

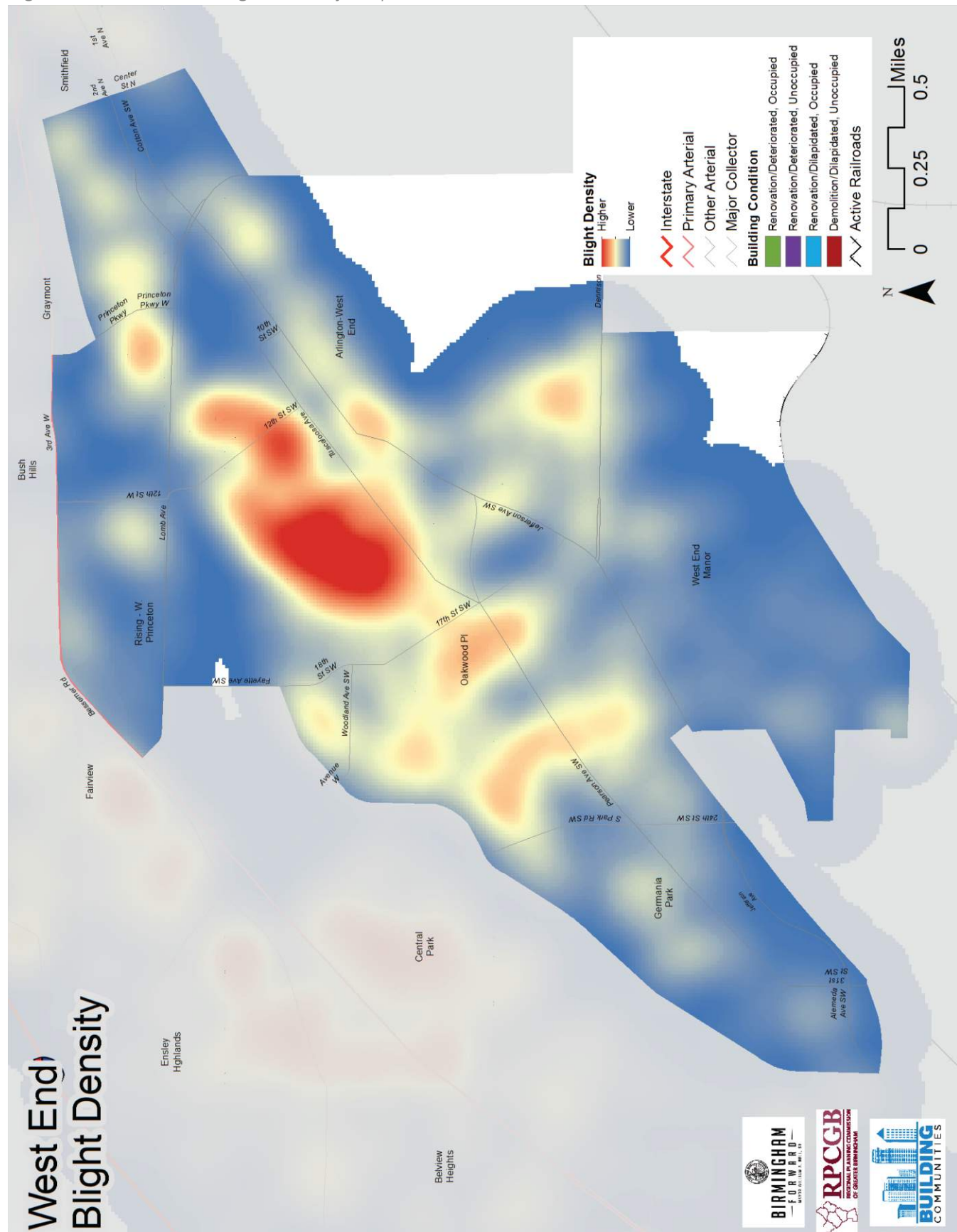


Figure 2.10: West End Tax Delinquent Map

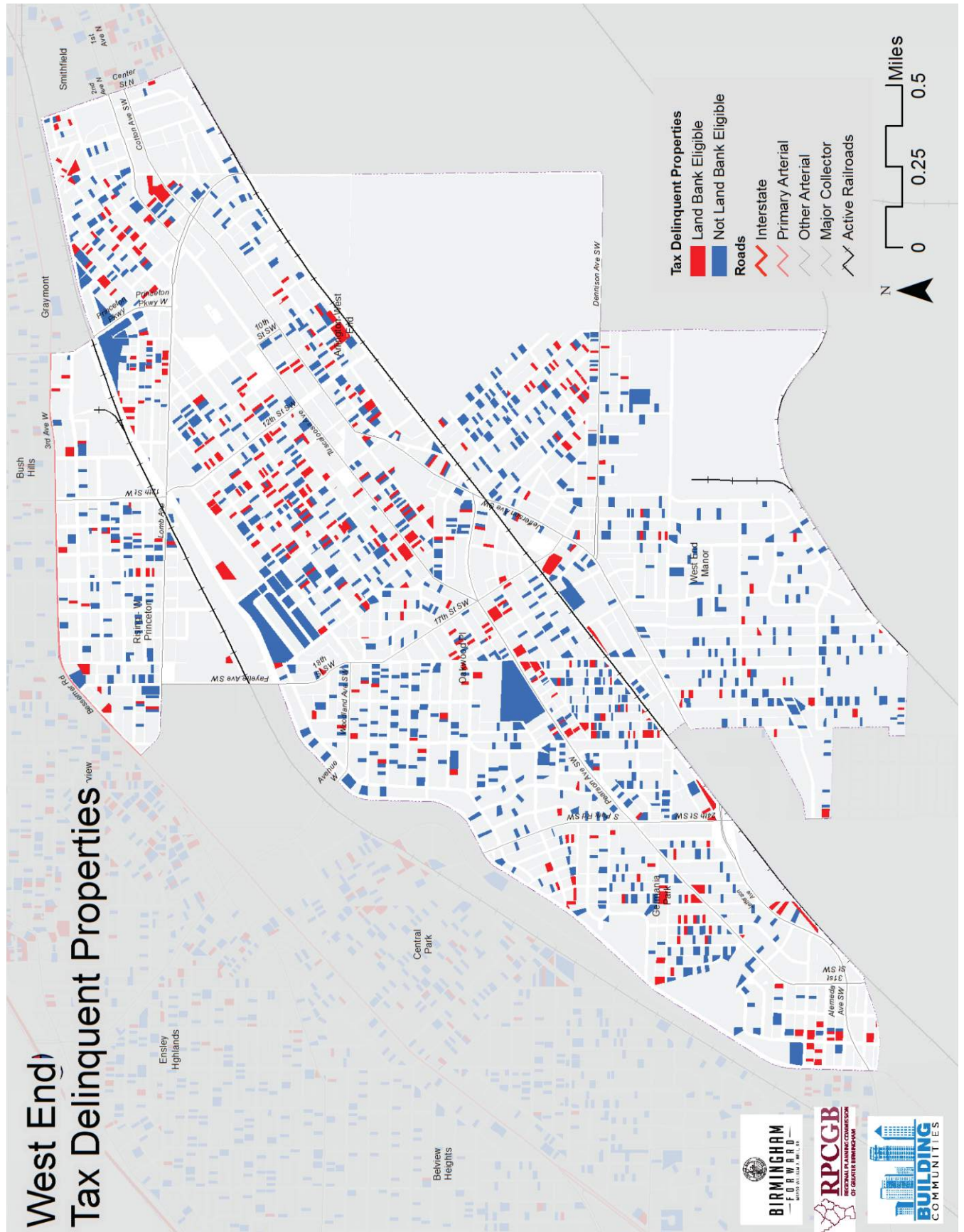




Figure 2.11: West End Structures for Removal or Renovation Map



3

# Green Systems

## Green Systems Needs and Opportunities

Table 3.1: Green Systems Needs & Opportunities

NEEDS
Stormwater Management
Well-Maintained Parks and Recreational Facilities
OPPORTUNITIES
Adopted Safety Design Principles
“Friends of Park” Organizations
Open Space in Flood-Prone Areas

### Green Systems Goal 1: Improve flood mitigation techniques to protect the community.

Perhaps the greatest value of an interconnected green space system is the financial benefit that may be gained when green infrastructure reduces the need for built infrastructure. When designed to include stream networks, wetlands, and other low-lying areas, a city’s green space system can provide numerous stormwater management benefits, including storing, carrying, and filtering storm water runoff.

#### STRATEGY A: INSTALL STORMWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

##### ACTION 1: ENHANCE THE AREA’S URBAN FOREST.

The presence of trees in a streetscape, neighborhood, and community can decrease the amount of stormwater runoff and pollutants that reach local waters. Trees reduce stormwater runoff by capturing and storing rainfall in their canopy and releasing water into the atmosphere. Tree roots and leaf litter create soil conditions that promote the infiltration of rainwater into the soil. Trees help slow down and temporarily store runoff and reduce pollutants by taking up nutrients and other pollutants from soils and water through their roots. Trees transform pollutants into less harmful substances.

The City should promote the planting of more trees within public right-of-ways and on City and private property. This not only supports stormwater management, but reduces urban heat islands, improves air quality, and improves community appearance and property values.

##### ACTION 2: CREATE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN FLOOD PRONE AREAS.

The City should work with the Freshwater Land Trust to acquire clusters of land in floodplain areas. Acquisition should continue to be coordinated to facilitate implementation of the proposed greenway system plan and expand the city’s parks and recreation system. In addition to the land trust, other nonprofit organizations and private foundations may be of assistance in land acquisitions and park or open space construction. This project will both create green space and facilitate a multimodal transportation network.

### **ACTION 3: INSTALL GREEN SYSTEMS TO REDUCE STORMWATER RUN-OFF AND FLOODING IN FLOOD-PRONE AREAS.**

The following green systems should be installed on blighted properties throughout the Western Area communities to reduce stormwater run-off and alleviate flooding:

- 1. Rain Gardens:** Shallow, vegetated basins that collect and absorb runoff from rooftops, sidewalks, and streets. Rain gardens mimic natural hydrology by infiltrating and evapotranspiring runoff. 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 underdrain. Rain gardens are versatile features that can be installed in almost any unpaved space.
- 2. Bioretention:** 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 underdrain or partially infiltrated into the soil. Bioretention systems are greater than 2,000 square feet in size and require engineering or design drawings, as well as stormwater plans and permits.
- 3. Green Parking:** This parking differs from traditional asphalt 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.



*Rain gardens (Source: Baltimore City Green pattern Book)*



*Bioretention (Source: Baltimore City Green pattern Book)*



*Green parking (Source: Baltimore City Green pattern Book)*

### **ACTION 4: CLEAN UP OBSTRUCTED SWALES THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY.**

Obstructed swales diminish stormwater runoff mitigation and become unsightly for nearby residents. Residents should report this type of problem using the City's 311 Call Center.



## Green Systems Goal 2: Ensure parks and recreational facilities are safe and well-maintained.

### STRATEGY A: COLLABORATE TO SUPPORT AND CREATE SAFE AMENITIES

#### ACTION 1: ADOPT **CPTED** PRINCIPLES FOR PARKS, GREENWAY, AND RECREATIONAL FACILITY DESIGN.

See *Community Renewal*, Chapter 2, p. 24-25.

#### ACTION 2: SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PROVIDERS BY SELLING OR LEASING CITY-OWNED, VACANT PROPERTIES FOR RECREATIONAL USES.

Churches, community garden advocates, philanthropic organizations and others have been successful locally and nationally in establishing publicly accessible, usable open spaces as alternatives to traditional, dedicated parks. These spaces are often located on vacant lots, and similar to many of the City's pocket parks, are often on leased land. By working with such organizations, the City could provide more green space without further stressing its Parks and Recreation Department's budget.

#### ACTION 3: CREATE "FRIENDS OF PARKS" GROUPS TO SUPPORT FUNDING AND MAINTENANCE OF PARKS AND OTHER RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.

Consolidate non-dedicated parks by transferring ownership to private entities, civic groups, or "Friends of" organizations. This transferring of ownership to interested parties will increase the city's capacity for long-term maintenance of the dedicated parks in the city.

For parks both big and small, neighborhood advocates, business and community leaders, and other parks supporters have established formal and informal organizations to lobby and/or support the City in improving existing facilities and in building new ones with financial resources and labor.

#### ACTION 4: CREATE COMMUNITY GARDENS AND URBAN AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES IN PASSIVE OPEN SPACE TO BETTER UTILIZE THE SPACE AND ENSURE MAINTENANCE.

See *Community Renewal*, Chapter 2, p. 21.

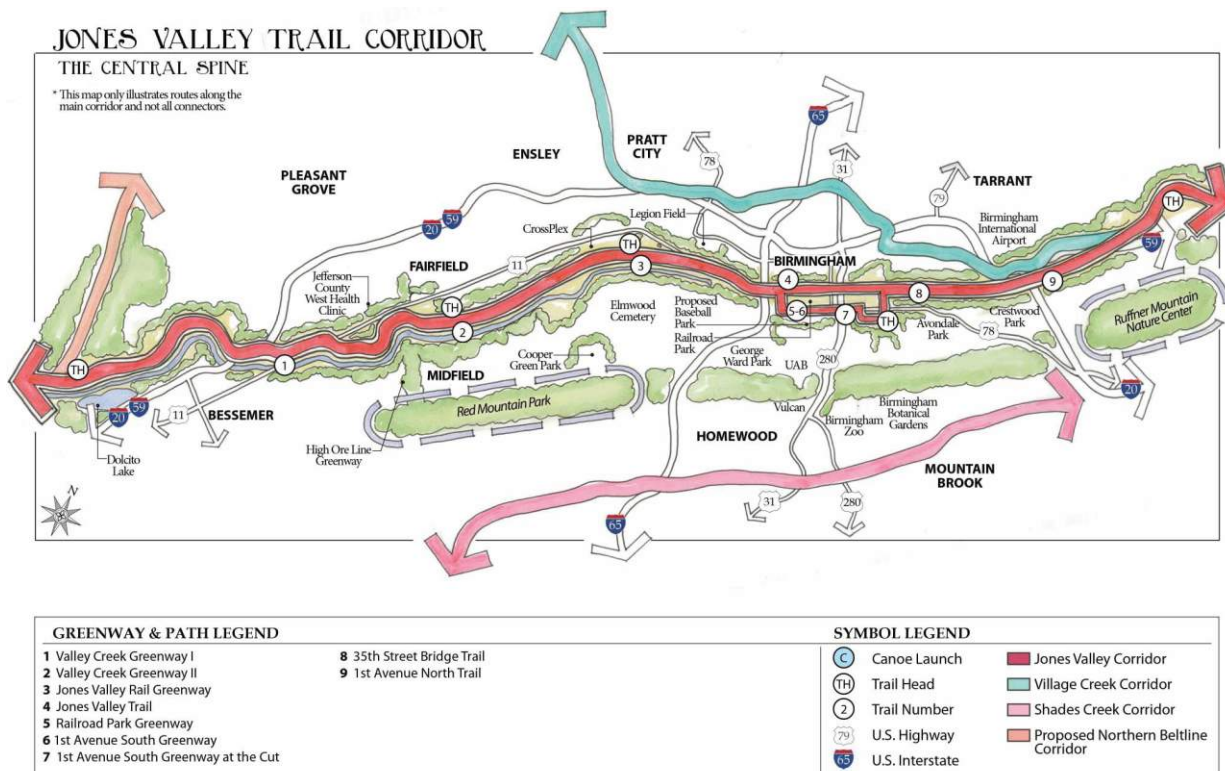
## Green Systems Goal 3: Develop an extensive green infrastructure.

Just as growing communities need to upgrade and expand their built infrastructure of roads, sewers, and utilities, they also need to upgrade and expand their green infrastructure, the interconnected system of green spaces that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions, sustains clear air and water, and provides a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife. Green infrastructure is a community's natural life support system, the ecological framework needed for environmental and economic sustainability.

### STRATEGY A: PRIORITIZE PROJECTS FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

#### ACTION 1: IMPLEMENT PRIORITY PORTIONS OF THE RED ROCK RIDGE AND VALLEY TRAIL SYSTEM.

To better connect residents to the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail network and existing and proposed green spaces, greenways and trails have been proposed. The former would serve as linear open spaces for residents and would include off-street trails. For proposed on-street trails, street improvements such as tree planting to provide shade, wider sidewalks and marked cross walk walks should be considered to improve the level of service (LOS) for residents. Chapter 5 of this document, Transportation and Infrastructure, discusses the trail system in more detail.



(Source: Freshwater Land Trust)

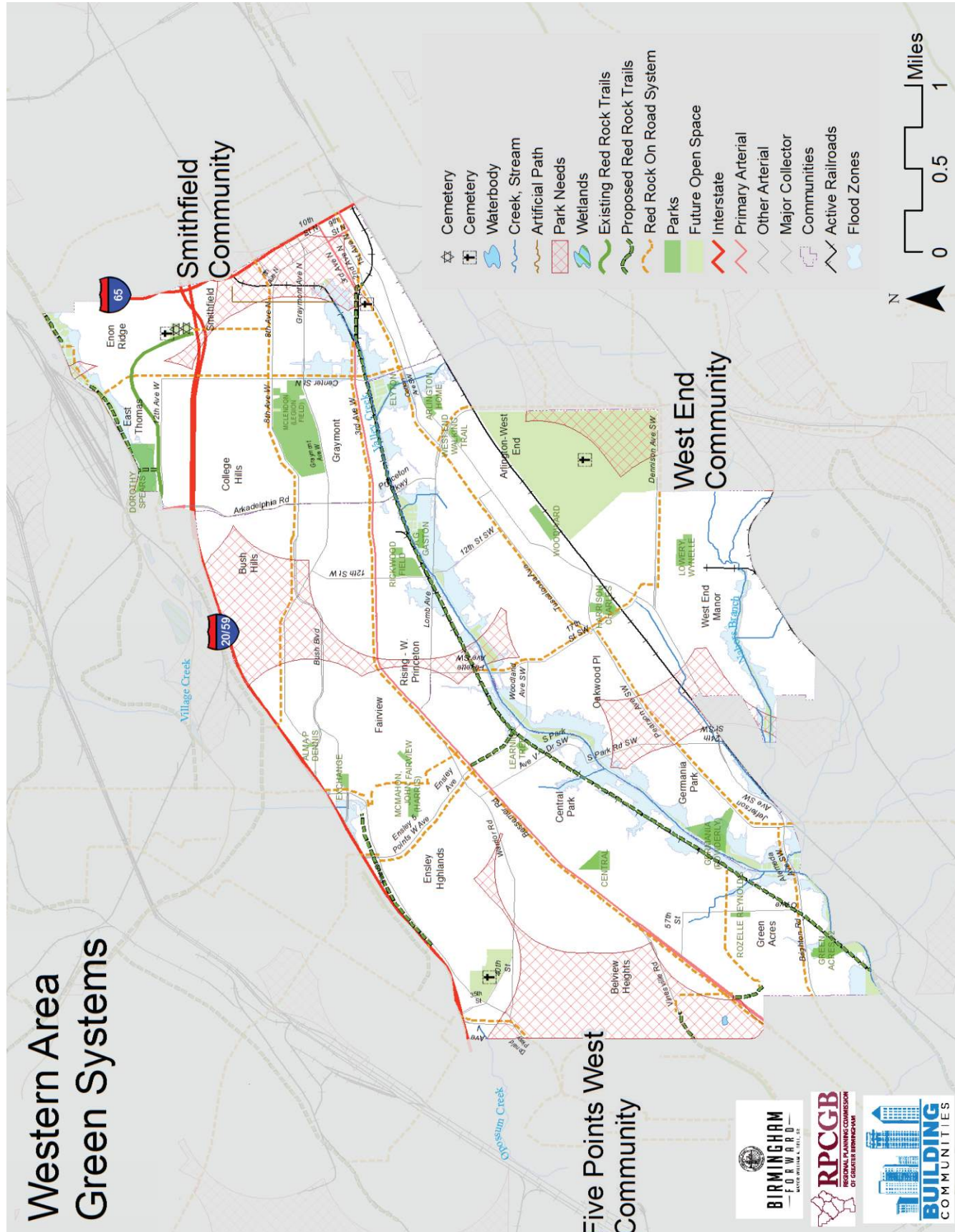
### ACTION 2: DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF GREEN STREETS.

While streets are efficient conveyors of traffic, they are also very efficient at conveying high volumes of water and the pollutants that this water picks up while on its way to streams and other water bodies. Green Streets are basic stormwater management concepts that have been shown to be successful in cities across the country. They offer practical design solutions and methodologies for managing stormwater, as well as a realistic approach for adding greenspace within an urban environment. One of the guiding principles for today's road design and planning has to be to conserve, protect and restore the environment as the first consideration. The drainage system for streets is an extension of the natural drainage system.



(Source: EnviroPAKK Environmental Services)

Figure 3.1: Western Area Green Systems Map





## Recommendations for Specific Communities

### SMITHFIELD

#### Dorothy Spears Park

The community has recommended a master plan for the plan that would include further study into redesigning and improving Dorothy Spears Park with regards to the park's entrance, expansion into adjoining properties, and connection to Duke Park and the Enon Ridge Trail. Although outside the geographical scope of this framework plan, the commercial properties adjacent to the park should be reviewed for possible future land use changes.

Additionally, the park could use better signage or an archway to make the entrance more visible. This improvement would help establish the park as quintessential part of the surrounding community and improves the perception of the quality of life within community. An archway similar to the one seen at Avondale Park could be used.



*Avondale Park Photo (Source: walkscore.com)*

Community members have expressed interest in creating a “Friends Of” organization for the park, as explained on page 46.

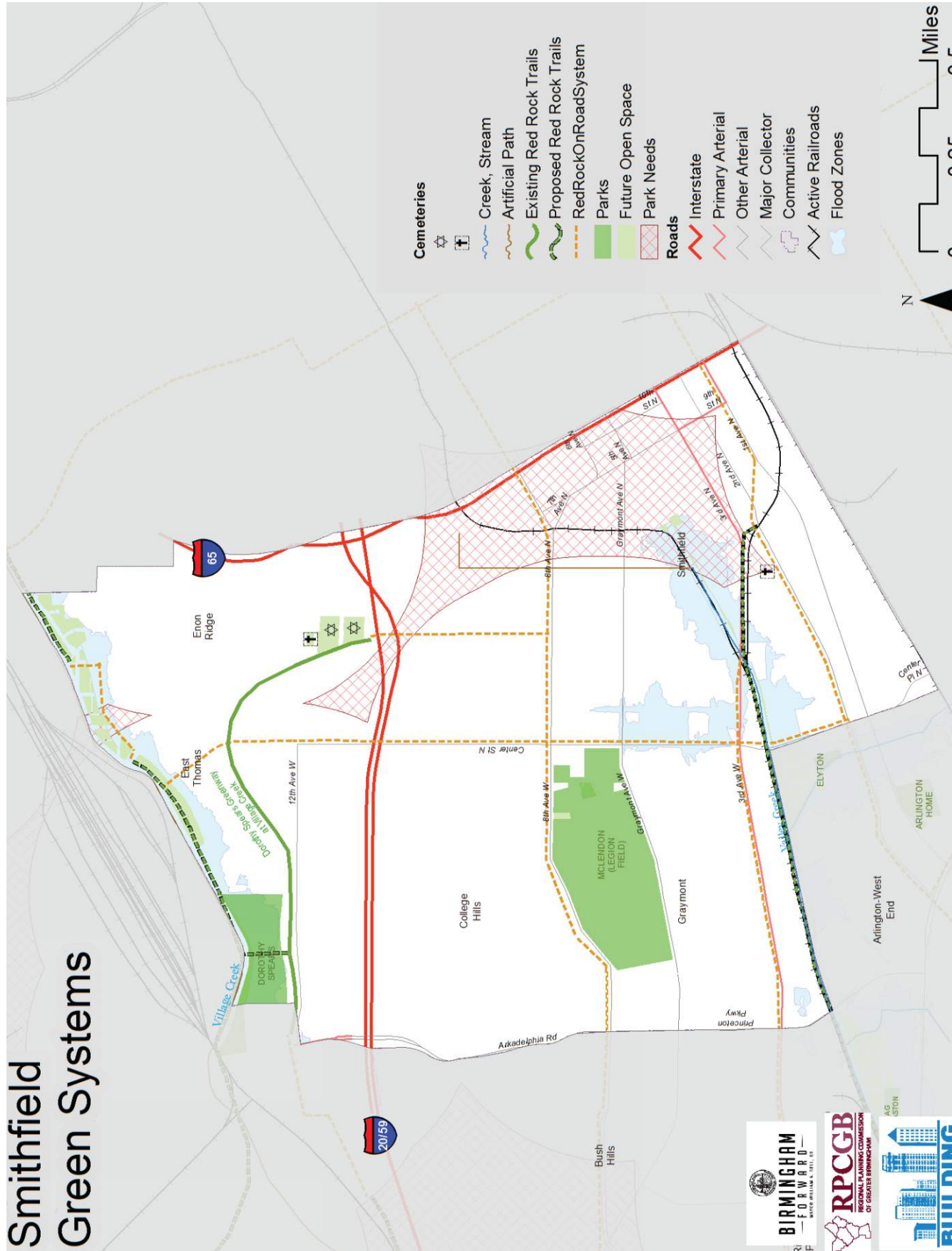
#### McClendon Park

McClendon Park was identified as an area that could be used to better address the neighborhood and serve the community in other ways than just an empty stadium when it is not being used for sporting events. Around the country, stadiums have posed this same concern, and communities are utilizing their stadiums in different ways to help address the needs of its surrounding community. Examples include hosting farmers' markets and festivals.

#### New Linear Park

Community residents expressed a desire for a linear park along the abandoned railway adjacent to 6th Street North as a means of increasing access to walking trails and greenspace. The linear park was first proposed by residents in the Smithfield Revitalization Plan in 1989. Sections of the proposed linear park are right-of-way formerly utilized by CSX Transportation or currently used by the City for 6th Street North and 10th Court North. The Framework Plan had recommended changing the Future Land Use of several vacant parcels owned by CSX from Residential-Low to Open Space. This park would help suffice the 2013 Comprehensive Plan's goal of every resident living within a ten-minute walk of a park.

Figure 3.2: Smithfield Green Systems Map



## FIVE POINTS WEST

### **Stormwater Management**

Standing water during rain storms is a consistent problem throughout the Five Points West community. Moving forward, incorporating green street concepts for all new road projects in the area should be highly considered. This will also help with stormwater management and decrease the possibility of flooding in the area.

Both Valley and Village Creek are located in the Five Points West Community. Valley Creek has the opportunity to fortify the Five Points West Community as a destination for both residents and tourists. Retention and detention systems help store the first half inch of water which reduces instances of flooding and improves the sewer system citywide.

To further mitigate the flooding problem, the community should place priority on planting trees throughout the area. Open space along the flood plain offers great opportunity to expand the community's urban forest. This will also help to filter contaminants from entering into Valley Creek and further polluting the water in the area.

Green Acres Park, a predominantly open space situated directly in the Flood Plain could also be an area of opportunity where trees and green system concepts could be expanded.

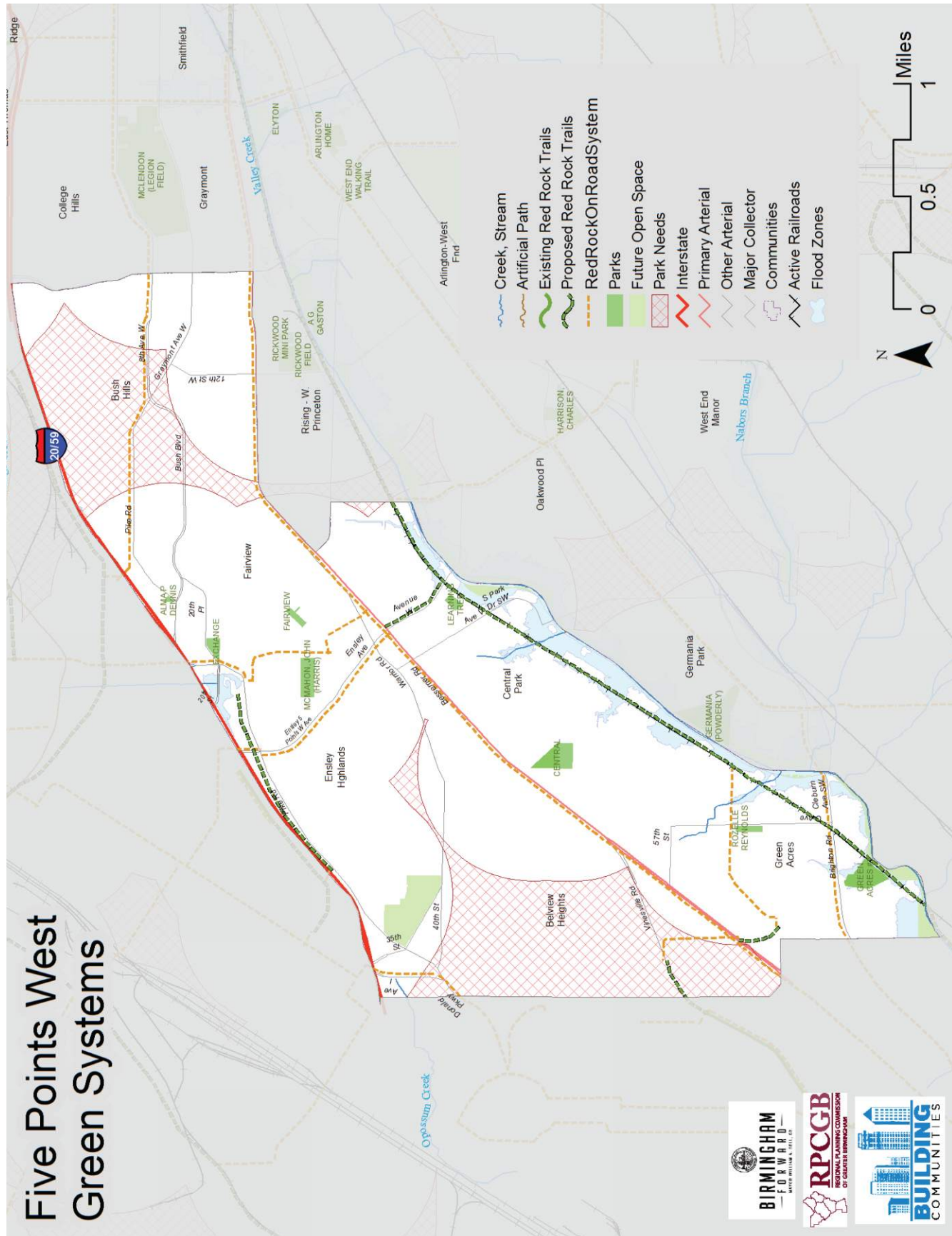
### **Future Open Space**

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan sets a goal of "Every resident is within a ten minute walk of a park, greenway or other publicly accessible, usable open space." Based on this goal, there is a considerable need in the area of the Ensley Highlands, Belview Heights, and Bush Hills neighborhoods, for a park, greenway, or other publicly accessible, usable open space. The map on the following page highlights this need by displaying in red those places that are outside of a half-mile radius of a park or open space.

It is recommended that the neighborhoods work with city departments, such as Parks and Recreation and the Land Bank Authority, to designate potential areas to create a publicly accessible open space within these areas to fulfill this need.



Figure 3.3: Five Points West Green Systems Map





## WEST END

### Larkway Gardens

This area should be prioritized when considering areas within the flood plain to acquire for designated open space. A portion of this site is designated as Open Space/Stormwater Mitigation, as seen on the map on the following page. This area was recommended for this use as it is currently in great disrepair, but part of the site is also situated within a flood plain that restricts redevelopment potential. If designated a publicly usable open space, it would service the area shaded in red in the same vicinity that is currently under served by parks and open space.



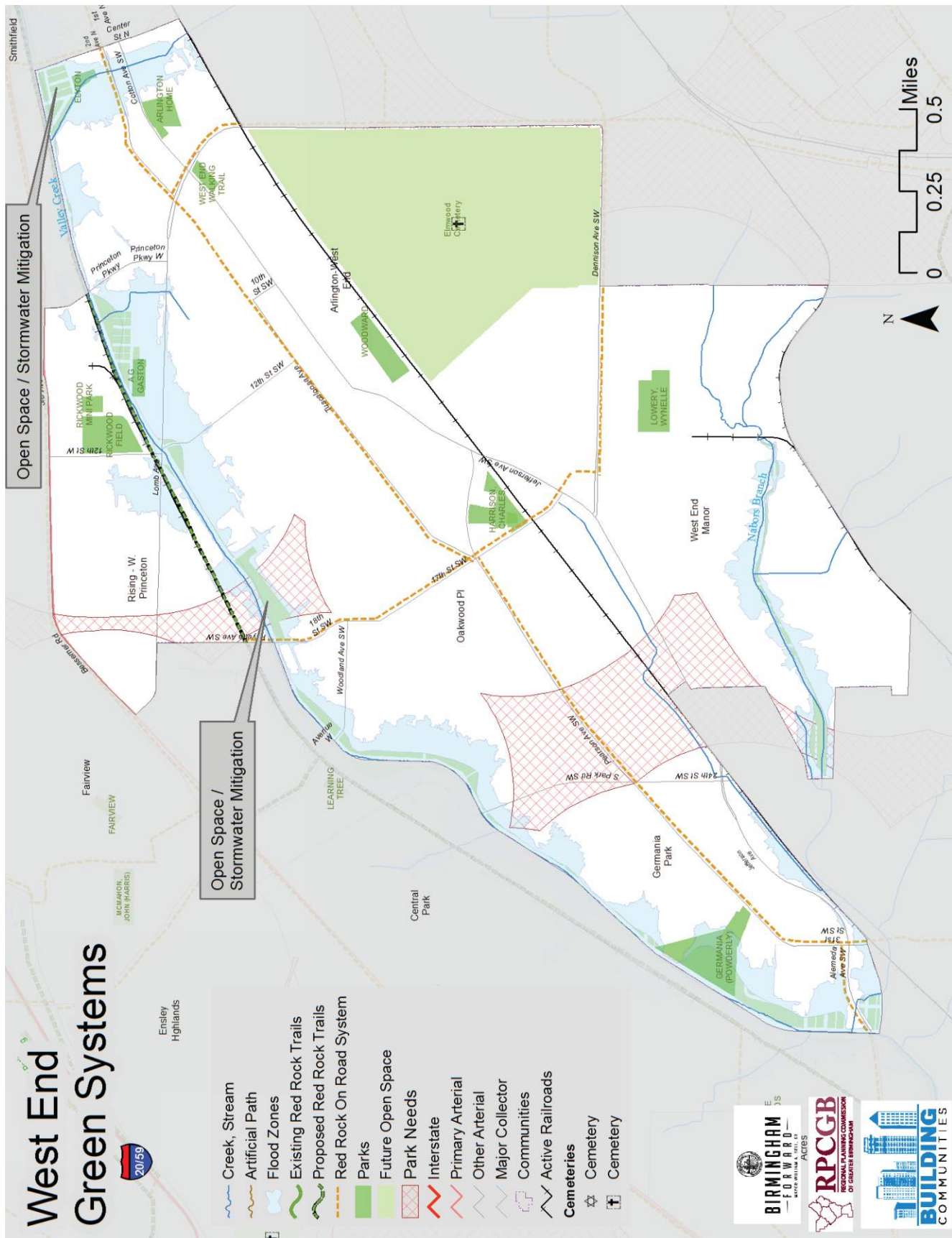
*Larkway Gardens (Source: City of Birmingham)*

### Future Open Space

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan sets the goal, “Every resident is within a ten minute walk of a park, greenway or other publicly accessible, usable open space.” Based on this goal, there is a considerable need in the area of the Oakwood Place, Germania Park, and West End Manor neighborhoods, for a usable open space. The map on the following page highlights this need by displaying in red those places that are outside of a half-mile radius of a park or open space.

It is recommended that the neighborhoods work with city departments, such as Parks and Recreation and the Birmingham Land Bank Authority, to designate potential areas to create a publicly accessible open space within these areas to fulfill this need.

Figure 3.4: West End Green Systems Map



4

# Economic Development



## Economic Development Needs and Opportunities

Table 4.1: Economic Development Needs & Opportunities

NEEDS
Job Growth
Improved Education
Casual Dining and Shopping Options
OPPORTUNITIES
Workforce Development
Mixed-Use Development
Local Business Development

### Economic Development Goal 1: Develop an educated and skilled workforce.

#### STRATEGY A: STRIVE FOR HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

#### ACTION 1: EXPAND RESOURCES TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT.

The City and community leaders should collaborate with local higher education institutions to develop pre-college enrichment programs that are designed to prepare low-income students for college. The following programs are recommended and would provide PSAT and SAT preparation courses:

- A. Upward Bound:** Offers college preparatory classes for high school students from low-income families and high school students from families in which neither parent holds a bachelor's degree. The program also assists low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs.
- B. Educational Opportunity Centers:** Gives qualified adults, who want to enter or continue a program of postsecondary education, counseling and information on college admissions. Also offer services to improve financial and economic literacy of participants.
- C. Neighborhood Academic Initiative:** Provides tutoring in various subjects such as math and science for elementary and middle school students. Bush Hills Academy, West End Academy and one of the local higher education institutions could lead in creating this program. The University of Southern California Neighborhood Academic Initiative program is an apt case study for the program.
- D. Dual Enrollment Program:** Allows high school students to take academic coursework at community colleges. Colleges partner with area high schools and local Boards of Education to facilitate the cooperative dual enrollment. Though this program would not be in the Western Area Communities, it would still benefit high school students who live in the community and attend schools that offer a dual enrollment program.

**ACTION 2: ESTABLISH A GED SATELLITE PROGRAM FOR ADULTS IN WESTERN AREA COMMUNITIES.**

The provision of a community based GED program would offer residents convenient access to basic education and literacy courses and GED preparatory classes. The City and community leaders should work with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), UAB, Lawson State Community College, Miles College, Jefferson State Community College, and Birmingham Southern to create a satellite GED program in the Western Area Communities. The Harrison Park or Central Park Recreation Centers, the headquarters of the Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity and/or the West Public Library could serve as the satellite location. Additionally, the facilities of faith-based organizations could be used. The City should work with the local faith-based leaders to determine their willingness to host the GED satellite program.

**ACTION 3: PROMOTE EXISTING EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS.**

The efficacy of existing educational resources can be greatly improved if the public is aware of their existence. That is why the City should work with local and regional providers of educational resources to aggressively advertise these services using all available resources.

**STRATEGY B: CREATE A SKILLED WORKFORCE****ACTION 1: PARTNER WITH LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL GROUPS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES.**

The City and community leaders should work with the following groups to develop the skills of the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities' workforce:

- A. The Housing Authority of the Birmingham District (HABD):** Two employment and training programs are provided for residents of Elyton Village and Smithfield Court. The HABD Summer Youth Program provides opportunities for residents of ages between 14 and 18 years with employment during the summer. HABD's Section 3 Program and Community Center links residents' career skills and job interests with career opportunities while providing a venue for workforce development, health and wellness, education, and related services. The HABD should work with City to explore expanding the aforementioned programs to area residents who do not live in Smithfield Court or Elyton Village.
- B. The Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT):** Offers workforce training and recruitment at no cost to trainees and employers tailored towards industries in robotics, construction and woodworking, aviation, forest products and sustainable biomaterials, chemicals, telecommunications, and maritime products. The AIDT has two facilities in Birmingham – the Alabama Workforce Training Center and the Alabama Center for Advanced Woodworking Technology – that provides training and certifications for employees in manufacturing and construction. An additional AIDT center located within the Western Area Framework Plan boundaries would equip residents with skills to work in industrial sectors, such as in machining, production, assembly, welding, automation, robotics, and 3D printing.

- C. Alabama Workforce Development Council (AWDC):** Provides a wide range of career-technical courses and short-term training for job specific certifications. These courses are typically administered at Jefferson State College and Lawson State Community College.
- D. The Dannon Project:** This organization offers supportive assistance including short-term training and certifications, job prep and youth job placement. The City, community and faith-based leaders should work with the Dannon Project to create a satellite certification and job training program in the Western Area.
- E. ADECA's One-Stop Centers:** Job development, occupational and educational training, vocational rehabilitation, veterans' services and unemployment insurance information are offered. Employers work with local centers to locate employees with specific skills, and the goal is to consolidate the delivery of services at a single location.

## Economic Development Goal 2: Create a prosperous business and entrepreneurial community.

### STRATEGY A: DEVELOPMENT BUSINESSES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

#### ACTION 1: STRENGTHEN FIVE POINTS WEST MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION (FPWMA) TO HELP IMPROVE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

The key to a vibrant and self-sustaining business district is the support and active participation from a merchant's association. By leveraging the participation of businesses, property owners, and residents, an active merchant's association is able to raise funds, provide capacity building and training, and assign responsibility for marketing, maintenance, and security. The City and REV Birmingham should work with the businesses of the Five Points West Community to establish a Five Points West Merchants Association.

#### ACTION 2: PROVIDE START-UP HELP, TRAINING, TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

Local businesses and entrepreneurs rely on economic and community development organizations that provide expertise, assistance, and guidance for investment and development opportunities. Below are organizations that the City and Five Points West Merchants Association should collaborate with to provide assistance to entrepreneurs and local business:

- A. REV Birmingham (REV):** Provides business recruitment and retention services, capacity building for merchant's associations, and encourages public and private investments in the neighborhood commercial centers of Birmingham. This organization could help attract businesses and entrepreneurs to Tuscaloosa / Lomb Avenues (West End Community), 8th Avenue North / Graymont Avenue (Smithfield Community), and 3rd Avenue West / Bessemer Road (Five Points West Community) – revitalizing these previously established Commercial Revitalization Districts. Additionally, REV assists commercial neighborhood areas through promotion, design, and economic restructuring. This could also help with any revitalization efforts for Tuscaloosa Avenue and other commercial areas in the Western Area.
- B. Birmingham Business Alliance (BBA):** Serves the Birmingham region to advocate for economic development and business prosperity through expertise, training, marketing, networking, and guidance for businesses in the region.

- C. Central Alabama Women’s Business Center:** Provides women with the tools, knowledge and resources needed to start and grow their businesses.
- D. Birmingham Business Resource Center (BBRC):** Offers management and technical assistance, training, lending and advocacy programs that will assist entrepreneurs interested in increasing their capacity, their access capital and their customer base.
- E. Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB):** Offers revolving loans for expanding and new businesses and for businesses housed at existing incubators in Birmingham and Bessemer.
- F. Birmingham Land Bank Authority:** Assembles tax-delinquent and abandoned properties and redistributes to individuals and entities interested in maintaining and redeveloping for new uses. The land bank provides a great opportunity for economic development organizations, industrial businesses, and developers to acquire these tax-delinquent and abandoned properties and redevelop them to fit their needs.
- G. ADECA’s Office of Minority Business Enterprise Program:** Promotes development of minority businesses and offers access to training, networking, and contracting opportunities.
- H. SCORE Association:** A resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration’s, the nonprofit is made up of reitred executives and business owners that help educate entrepreneurs.

## STRATEGY B: ENHANCE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS TO EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY THE WESTERN AREA ECONOMY

### ACTION 1: CONDUCT A MORE DETAILED REAL ESTATE MARKET ANALYSIS FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMUNITY.

A preliminary market study has been conducted, as part of this planning process, and is presented in the appended Existing Conditions Document. The study analyzes the supply and demand of the local market to determine the spending potential and retail sales of existing business groups. In addition to this study, a more detailed and focused real estate market analysis is needed to determine the market rate and appraised values for commercial properties under lease or sale, the vacancy rate, the absorption rate, and the overall stock of commercial land and spaces.

From this analysis, informed decisions can be made to identify the market rents and sale prices needed to support investment in commercial development, business attraction, and expansion. A detailed real estate market analysis will determine with greater confidence the best sites suited for specific businesses and the types of businesses that can best serve the needs of the community.

### ACTION 2: MAKE PROPERTY CONDITIONS AND MARKET DATA READILY AVAILABLE TO EXISTING AND POTENTIAL BUSINESSES.

There are numerous underutilized or vacant lots and buildings in the Western Area. The City of Birmingham should consider creating and maintaining an online database of available retail spaces including size, zoning, lease rates, price, utilities, condition, etc. This information would benefit residents and businesses when combined with the similar residential database discussed in the Community Renewal Chapter on p. 16.



### **ACTION 3: RECRUIT BUSINESSES BASED ON THE MARKET ANALYSIS.**

A number of retail and business opportunities were identified in this market analysis through an assessment of spending potential and consumer spending patterns. While the Western Area communities possess several opportunities for retail infill, wholesalers and restaurants, niche market and entrepreneurial opportunities exist as well. Focus should be on a mix of locally owned and operated vendors.

### **ACTION 4: ESTABLISH A QUASI-PUBLIC RETAIL LEASING AND MANAGEMENT ENTITY TO RECRUIT BUSINESSES LOCALLY AND LEASE OUT EMPTY COMMERCIAL SPACES.**

This entity should develop a leasing strategy that is flexible and tailored to the community's position in the greater retail environment. Responsibilities such as actively recruiting tenants and directing them to appropriate property owners so that leasing deals could be conducted privately should also fall within the purview of this entity. The City could work with the Five Points West Merchants Association to build its capacity so that it could serve as a quasi-public retail leasing and management agency, or possibly a resident that is licensed broker.

### **ACTION 5: CREATE AN INCENTIVE PACKAGE FOR DEVELOPMENT ON UNATTRACTIVE, VACANT PROPERTIES.**

For properties that have become community eyesores and are too distressed to attract private investment, an incentive package that includes city and state financial support would ensure redevelopment on a site that would otherwise remain unimproved. The incentive package could include abatements or waivers of licenses, fees, and taxes to reduce operating costs low enough to attract private investment. The City and the state would first have to develop the site-specific criteria to determine eligibility for the package.

## **STRATEGY C: ENCOURAGE AND RETAIN BUSINESSES**

### **ACTION 1: ASSIST LOCAL BUSINESSES, DEVELOPERS, AND OTHER ENTREPRENEURS WITH GAP FINANCING AND REDEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.**

The City should work with businesses, developers and other entrepreneurs to secure or create the following programs, grants, and other funding resources:

- A. Commercial Revitalization District Program, City of Birmingham:** Offers facade and storefront improvement rebates of up to 20% of costs and capital improvement rebates of up to 10% of costs, following design guidelines established by the area's Merchant's Association.
- B. U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 Program:** Assists small businesses with the acquisition, construction, expansion, and renovation of land and buildings through long-term, fixed asset financing.
- C. Small Business Administration Microloan Program:** Provides small, short term loans to small businesses that can be used towards working capital and purchases such as inventory, furniture or equipment. Loans are available for up to \$50,000, but the average microloan is about \$13,000.

- D. Economic Development Agency Revolving Loan Fund Program:** Provides businesses within the City of Birmingham with direct loans for acquisition of land, buildings, and equipment.
- E. HUD's Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program:** Allows communities to issue funds guaranteed by CDBG funds towards large-scale economic revitalization projects in neighborhoods that lack private investment.
- F. New Market Tax Credits:** Assists small developers and building owners by allowing credits to be sold (or syndicated) to investors who can use them. Also helps larger developers by allowing them to use the credits directly. Loan aids developers and private owners with bridging the gap between cost of construction and the lease rates available to support the construction.
- G. Community Development Financing Institution (CDFI):** A CDFI could focus on micro-financing to small businesses, developers, and residents with loans up to \$250,000.

## **ACTION 2: INCREASE THE AWARENESS OF THE COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION DISTRICTS IN THE WESTERN AREA.**

The original goals and intents of the Commercial Revitalization Program were to prevent blight and encourage economic growth through: 1) Building the capacity of businesses to help themselves; 2) Improve the public right-of-ways; and 3) Improve the conditions of buildings in the district.

To form a Commercial Revitalization District, the City required a commitment by private business owners to maintain or improve the condition of their buildings.

When businesses band together to form a district, they were required to:

1. Develop district design guidelines which outline expectations for rehabilitation of property.
2. Host voluntary visits from building and zoning inspectors to advise them on necessary improvement and repairs to meet City guidelines and zoning regulations.
3. Present exterior improvements/rehabilitation plans for their property to the Design Review Committee for approval. Property improvements that met the district design review guidelines were eligible for rebates.

Within the Western Area Framework Plan study area, there are five Commercial Revitalization Districts currently in operation: Tuscaloosa Avenue (Arlington-West End), Lomb Avenue (Arlington-West End, Rising-West Princeton), 8th Avenue North (Smithfield), Downtown West (Smithfield) and Five Points West (Central Park, Fairview, Ensley Highlands). With the exception of the portion of the Downtown West Commercial Revitalization District located west of Interstate 65, all of the existing districts will have their land use changed to the Mixed-Use category in the City's Future Land Use Map (shown and discussed in Chapter 6). The City should aggressively promote the benefits this program to businesses.

### **ACTION 3: INCREASE THE AWARENESS OF THE URBAN ENTERPRISE ZONE PROGRAM.**

The Birmingham Urban Enterprise Zone is one of the 27 local enterprise zones established by the State of Alabama in 1987. State law limits eligible zone users to manufacturing, transportation and distribution. Zone businesses may be eligible for tax credits against, or exemptions from, their Alabama corporate income, franchise or other taxes. Within the Western Area Framework Plan study area, the Urban Enterprise Zone is located on industrially or commercially-zoned parcels in portions of the Rising-West Princeton, Graymont, Smithfield and East Thomas neighborhoods. The principal land use of these parcels within the zone have been for heavy and light manufacturing. In order to participate in the program, a company must meet at least one of the following goals:

1. Expand its labor force,
2. Make significant capital investment,
3. Prevent employment loss,
4. Be located within the geographical boundaries of the Zone.
5. Be engaged in manufacturing, transportation or distribution and have a Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Code of 20-42 or 44-49 and,
6. Not cease operation elsewhere in Alabama due to investment or employment in the Zone.

The benefits of the Alabama Enterprise Zone Act of 1986 are presented in two sections of the Alabama Law.

**Section 5 Benefits: Tax Credits.** The following benefits are limited to \$2,500 per new additional employee:

- Businesses making capital investments that result in at least five new jobs may take a tax credit of 10 percent of the first \$10,000 of investment, 5 percent of the next \$90,000, and 2 percent of the remaining. These benefits may be carried forward up to three years.
- If at least 30 percent of new permanent employees were formerly unemployed for at least 90 days, employers can receive tax credits of 80 percent of their first year's State Income or Franchise tax liability and lesser amounts in the remaining four years.
- Employers can receive up to \$1,000 credit for costs of training each new, permanent employee.

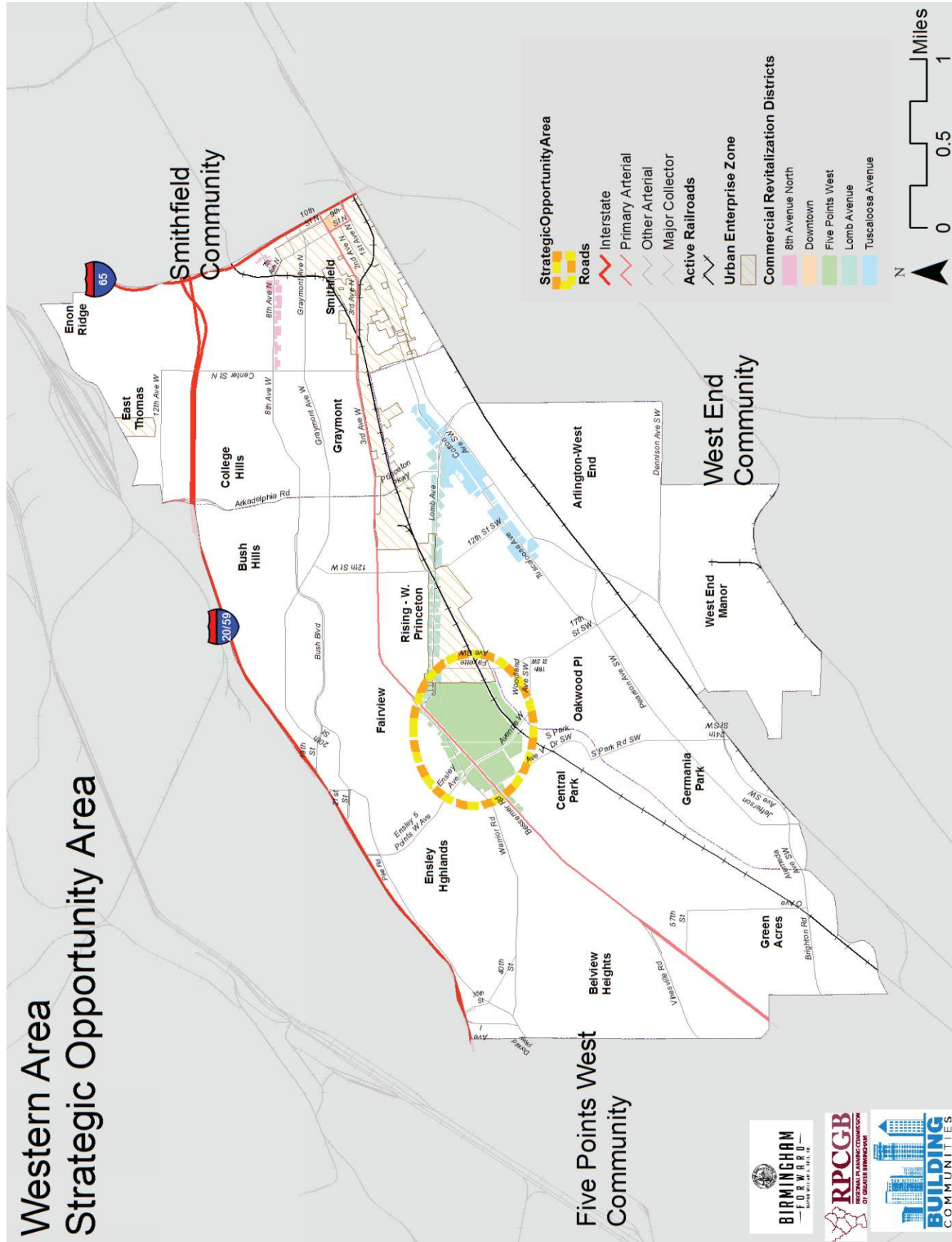
**Section 11 Benefits: Tax Exemptions.** These benefits may exceed \$2,500 per new employee. However, to receive them, employers must certify that new employees meet specific criteria. The company must then enter a contract with the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) to receive additional tax exemptions.

If at least 35% of the firm's new, permanent employees reside in Birmingham and are receiving public assistance at the time of hire, are considered unemployable, or are lacking in basic skills; employers may receive the following:

- Exemption from Alabama state sales and use taxes on materials used in the construction or improvement of Zone facilities.
- Exemptions, for up to five years from individual or corporate income tax and/or from corporate franchise tax.

The Mayor's Office of Economic Development offers assistance to potential businesses on all aspects of the endorsement process.

Figure 4.1: Strategic Opportunity Area Map





## STRATEGY D: CREATE A VARIETY OF COMMERCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### ACTION 1: ESTABLISH MIXED-USE DISTRICTS FOR THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN.

The 2013 Birmingham Comprehensive Plan proposed that many areas in the City would be designated as “mixed-use” as a means of attracting new forms of development that would encourage social interaction and make better utilization of parcels to create more environmentally sustainable communities. Mixed-use centers, ranging from vibrant downtown environments to active urban villages, include residential, retail, and office uses. The mixture can be vertical, with uses on different floors of a building, and horizontal, with different uses in adjacency.

Mixed-use centers are pedestrian-friendly and provide concentrated population and activity centers that can support enhanced transit. Buildings should be oriented to the street, with active ground floor uses that provide easy pedestrian access. Parking should be located in the rear of the parcel or to the side where lots are shallow, or in parking structures. Uses that require large amounts of trucking are not suitable for mixed-use areas. Churches, schools and public uses are included in mixed-use areas.

One method of managing the form and content of the proposed mixed-use districts is through the establishment of form-based zoning, which is being planned for certain mixed-use districts in the future. Form-based zoning focuses more on building form than on land uses. These codes are an alternative to conventional zoning’s separation of land uses, which made it impossible to build mixed-use neighborhoods and districts and neglected the public realm.

Form-based codes are detailed and prescriptive about certain aspects of design and use many visuals to give a positive vision of what is desired, rather than focusing on what should be excluded. They require a design-focused community process in advance of writing the zoning. In existing communities, these kinds of codes have generally been applied in specific districts, such as a commercial corridor, rather than city-wide.

Within the Western Area Framework Plan Study Area there are several parcels that have been designated in the Future Land Use Map as Mixed-Use Low Density. This land use category allows for the development of compact, walkable, residential and commercial areas, often with a “Main Street” spine that historically served as a town center with two to three story buildings. The land uses can be mixed horizontally (side-by-side), or vertically (one above the other) and include multi-family, townhouse, cottage and small-lot single family residential, neighborhood supporting retail and services, offices, hotels and live/work structures. These “Main Street” areas would typically be characterized by ground floor uses including small markets, convenience retail and services, restaurants and cafes, and existing or potential residential uses on upper floors. These districts are located in the communities of Five Points West (Belview Heights and Bush Hills), Smithfield (Smithfield, Graymont and College Hills), and West End (Germania Park, Oakwood Place, West End Manor and Arlington-West End).

The Mixed-Use Medium Density land use category is similar to those listed in Mixed-Use Low-Density but allows for building heights up to five stories. This higher level of density is targeted for the neighborhoods of Ensley Highlands (adjacent to Five Points West Business District), Fairview (adjacent to Birmingham Crossplex), and Arlington-West End (adjacent to Princeton Baptist Medical Center).

## Smithfield – Legion Field Redevelopment / Mixed-Use District

Constructed in 1926, Legion Field is a historic athletic stadium that has served as the host facility for the Magic City Classic, the Iron Bowl, the 1996 Olympic Soccer games, and the home field for the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Although it is projected to be used in the future during the 2021 World Games, the facility remains unused the majority of the year. Located in the Smithfield Community, the neighborhoods adjoining facility (College Hills, Graymont, Smithfield) contain numerous vacant lots and commercial buildings with little economic activity. Eight Avenue North between Center Street and Interstate 65 is a pre-existing Commercial Revitalization District; however, the majority of the retail activity is focused in closer proximity to the Interstate.

In 2013, the Comprehensive Plan established a Mixed-Use Low District for parcels surrounding Legion Field along Graymont Avenue, Eight Avenue North, Center Street and Arkadelphia Road / Princeton Parkway. The type of development allowed by this use in the area surrounding Legion Field would support its presence as a tourist destination before, during, and after the 2021 World Games.

## Five Points West – Birmingham Crossplex Strategic Opportunity Area

The Mixed-Use High Density category, which would be the highest level of potential development to be permitted within the study area, allows for the development of medium to high density office, residential, retail and entertainment areas, typically mid-rise to high-rise, including mixed-use lifestyle center character. The intensity of the development would vary by area and the districts should be transit-accessible or transit-ready locations. Potential uses include multi-family, loft, townhouse, cottage and small-lot residential, retail and services, offices, hotels, large entertainment facilities, and live/work structures with ground floor uses encouraged on desired pedestrian-intensive streets. The establishment of a Mixed-Use High Density district is associated with the designation of a Strategic Opportunity Area (SOA), a location within the City that is the recipient of targeted investment that will create a positive influence in the redevelopment of the surrounding community.

Within the 2013 Birmingham Comprehensive Plan, the Birmingham Crossplex was designated as the center of one such Strategic Opportunity Area (as shown in the map on p. 65). Surrounded by the neighborhoods of Fairview, Ensley Highlands, Central Park, Oakwood Place, and Rising-West Princeton, this area has received significant public investment in recent years: the CrossPlex, a new police station, and a library. Once in operation, the new police station will offer the opportunity to intensify community-based policing. BJCTA and MPO planning has targeted Five Points for a bus super stop transfer hub and in the long term, a major bus rapid transit stop. The stops are likely to be close to the intersection of US-11 and Ensley Avenue. Within a short distance sits one of the city's most important employment centers, Princeton Baptist Hospital. The City owns the Fairgrounds site, which gives it the opportunity to use land costs as an incentive for desired development. Segments of the Red Rock Trail System are nearby.

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan recommended investing in making Five Points West a major mixed-use urban village with pedestrian-friendly urban design, streetscape and circulation improvements, and new housing on the Fairgrounds site. The success of new development would require a highly coordinated and organized program of physical and transportation improvements, optimal housing and landscape design, creative financing, and targeted social service and workforce development programs in the surrounding single-family neighborhoods. Improvements to the streetscape and surrounding areas would need to be made in advance or simultaneously with any housing development.

A well-designed mixed-income and mixed-use development at this location would increase household density and give the Five Points West Business District as well as the adjoining neighborhoods a boost.

Prospective residents could be recruited among hospital employees as well as others who could potentially benefit from better bus service. Because the housing would be on the Fairgrounds land, it might be perceived as safer than a development elsewhere in the area. A study of the options and market possibilities that looks at all the details of a coordinated development program for Five Points West would be important as exploration of this approach was proceeding.

### **West End – Princeton Baptist / Arlington-West End Mixed Use District**

Within the Arlington-West End neighborhood of the West End Community is the Princeton Baptist Medical Center, a campus comprised of several medical office buildings, senior rehabilitation centers and paved parking lots. Lomb Avenue and Tuscaloosa Avenue, which serve as boundaries to the medical campus, are currently part of established Commercial Revitalization Districts in the City of Birmingham. In 2013, the Comprehensive Plan changed the Future Land Use for most of the commercial parcels not associated with the hospital to Mixed-Use Medium Density.

However, the Western Area Framework Plan has proposed the expansion of this Mixed-Use Medium Density district east along Tuscaloosa Avenue towards Center Street. The expansion of this district follows the pre-existing Tuscaloosa Avenue Commercial Revitalization District and can be utilized as a means of attracting new development that can serve the Princeton Baptist Medical Center.

In 2013, the Comprehensive Plan recommended the creation of a Mixed-Use Low Density District in the center of the Arlington-West End neighborhood along Tuscaloosa Avenue and Jefferson Avenue stretching from the Princeton Baptist Medical Center west towards the intersection of these two streets in the commercial district of the Oakwood Place neighborhood. As a result of surveys and data collected in the Western Area Framework Plan, it has been proposed that this Mixed-Use Low Density District be expanded to include all parcels between Tuscaloosa and Jefferson Avenues. The expansion of this district would support the pre-existing Tuscaloosa Avenue Commercial Revitalization District which remains in the middle of the expanded mixed-use district.

**ACTION 2: FOCUS DEVELOPMENTS AT CATALYST SITES.**

In 2014, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham compiled data and created a Market Assessment that was used to evaluate retail market opportunities for the Western Area (included in this plan's appendix). This assessment was intended to provide insight as to the ability of the area to support specified commercial development. Next, field surveys of all structures and lots in the Western Area were collected to determine their occupancy and current condition (stable / deteriorated / vacant). Finally, parcel information from Jefferson County and the City of Birmingham that determined zoning, tax delinquency, and land use were examined to determine patterns of blight as well as opportunities for redevelopment. The combination of these separate factors will assist in the identification of Catalyst Sites.

A Catalyst Site can be one or a combination of the following factors:

- A large vacant commercial building or site along a prominent street
- A vacant institutional building
- A collection of vacant lots; some or most of which are tax delinquent
- A vacant industrial structure that can either be returned to industrial use or repurposed if the proposed future land use no longer supports industrial
- A collection of vacant commercial structures located outside of an existing Commercial Revitalization District

## QUICK FACTS

### 1. 3rd Avenue West between 3rd Street West and 7th Street West

The following groups of properties located along 3rd Avenue West between 3rd Street West and 7th Street West primarily consist of underutilized land, vacant commercial, and range in individual size from about 7,600 square feet (0.2 acres) to 47,550 square feet (1.1 acres). Several have been identified as tax delinquent. Many of these properties are adjacent, providing opportunity for consolidation and larger building footprints. Aggregated property locations may yield a site or sites between 3 and 8 acres in size. While these properties are within the Valley Creek flood plain, retention and mitigation efforts downstream may alleviate much of the risk. Suggested redevelopment and business types include:

- A mixed use development with retail, office, and residential components. A mixed use development will generate activity, encourage additional retail investment, and put the properties into productive use.
- Locally owned/ operated businesses suited to this area market may include restaurants, health and beauty establishments, laundry and dry cleaning services, audio/ electronics, family medical businesses, senior care services, financial services, and clothing boutiques.



## **2. 3rd Avenue West between 9th Street West and 11th Street West**

The next grouping of properties is located along 3rd Avenue West between 9th Street West and 11th Street West. The individual properties range in size from 5,194 square feet (0.1 acres) to 70,721 square feet (1.6 acres). Most of the properties are vacant or dilapidated commercial, though some are vacant lots. One property is existing multi-family in declining condition. Six of the properties are identified as tax delinquent. Collectively, these properties represent nearly 11 acres of redevelopment potential. Situated along a busy transportation corridor and surrounded by a significant residential population, these properties are ideal for retail redevelopment. Considerations include:

- Multi-tenant retail with a grocery supermarket and pharmacy as specified anchor tenants. An appropriate grocery venue would serve as a commercial anchor for a retail development while providing an additional option to area residents for more convenient access to healthy foods. Many of this area's grocery establishments are small and provide a limited selection of fresh produce and meat to residents. While the area market analysis shows no significant demand for additional grocery stores, there is no convenient local supermarket to serve the needs of many residents in and around Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West.
- A mixed use development with retail, office, and residential components as well as entertainment and other compatible uses. The location is ideal for taking advantage of its location along a primary retail strip and existing residential concentrations. The proximity to Rickwood Field also adds to the location's appeal.

## **3. 1531 3rd Avenue West**

The site located at 1531 3rd Avenue West is ideally situated along the retail corridor and has high visibility. The property is approximately 20,575 square feet (0.47 acres) with an existing vacant structure approximately 2,300 square feet. With ample parking available and multiple access points, it is well suited as a small restaurant location or retail establishment.

## **4. Intersection of Eufaula Avenue and US Highway 11**

The following group of properties located at and near the intersection of Eufaula Avenue and US Highway 11 (Bessemer Road) consists of underutilized land and vacant commercial, and range in individual size from about 7,600 square feet (0.2 acres) to 19,663 square feet (0.5 acres). One has been identified as tax delinquent. Some of these properties are adjacent, providing opportunity for consolidation and slightly larger building footprints. Aggregated property locations may yield a site or sites between 0.4 and 0.6 acres in size. Suggested business types include:

- Crating, packing, and shipping services
- Building materials & supplies
- Gasoline service station
- Sporting goods, hobby, book, or music
- Audio equipment, music, televisions, and video gaming systems

## **5. 1945 Bessemer Road**

The site located at 1945 Bessemer Road is ideally situated along the retail corridor and has high visibility. Formerly a video store, this blighted property is approximately 29,200 square feet (0.67 acres) and possesses multiple access points. It is well suited for a small retail establishment. Possible businesses include:

- Hardware
- Furniture & home furnishings
- Cleaning & maintenance services
- Family medical services
- Art & framing

## **6. The Birmingham CrossPlex**

The Birmingham CrossPlex facility offers a range of development opportunities including retail, office, hotel, and recreational activities. The property is prominently situated along US Highway 11 (Bessemer Road) and Avenue W in the Five Points West Community. This property contains approximately 45 acres of developable land and is adjacent to the highest concentrations of existing retail activity in the Western Area. The continuation and expanded use of the CrossPlex for competitive sports will create a catalyst for development.

## **7. Midway Plaza located at 1201 Bessemer Road**

This vacant shopping center (Midway Plaza located at 1201 Bessemer Road is approximately 494,000 square feet (11 acres) and has ideal visibility along the corridor with an estimated average annual weekday traffic count in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day. This location, adjacent to the YMCA and across from the Fairview Health and Rehabilitation Center, possesses great potential as an area entertainment destination. By branding the location and recruiting family-based entertainment establishments, this location can serve a community need. Possible business types include:

- Indoor amusement
- Outdoor amusement
- Outdoor entertainment
- Restaurants and educational center



*Midway Plaza (Source: City of Birmingham)*

### **8. 2400 Ensley Avenue (Former Auto Dealership)**

This site and surrounding properties located off the I-20/59 exit 120 along Ensley Five Points West Avenue is approximately 427,200 square feet (9.8 acres). The location well situated off the interstate with excellent visibility. The site consists of a former car dealership property, a car rental business, seven residential properties, and a vacant lot. Two of the residential properties are identified as tax delinquent. The size of the site and its location offers itself as an ideal redevelopment opportunity. Possible uses include:

- A hotel and restaurant location serving travelers and visitors to the nearby CrossPlex facility
- A multi-tenant retail center, service station, and restaurant
- A mixed use development with office and retail

### **9. 2012 22nd Street (Townhouse Park)**

The Townhouse Park residential area located off Avenue T and 21st Street near I-20/59 exit 121 consists of approximately 30 residential units and measures about 147,500 square feet (3.4 acres). Nearly half the properties are identified as tax delinquent and many are in substandard condition. This site is located across Avenue T from an auto dealership. As a commercial location, business considerations should include:

- Motorcycle dealership
- Mixed use neighborhood retail and services

### **10. Tuscaloosa Avenue & 11th Street SW**

These properties located near Princeton Baptist Medical Center on Tuscaloosa Avenue consist of three parcels. These properties are all vacant commercial locations and one is identified as tax delinquent. With the proximity to the hospital and adjacent commercial activity, these locations are well suited for reuse. Commercial uses that cater to serving both the surrounding residential needs as well as the surrounding health care employment center should be considered. Potential uses include:

- Laundry & dry cleaning
- Child day care & after school care services
- Home healthcare services
- Specialty food store
- Art shop
- Antique stores

### **11. 300 10th Street North (Former hotel site)**

This property, now a vacant lot, is approximately 108,000 square feet (2.5 acres) and is located within concentrations of light industrial and warehousing activities. The site is adjacent to immediate interstate access and is has direct links into the City Center. The location makes redevelopment of this property ideal for commercial uses.

### 12. 225 Center Street

This vacant light industrial property sites between the Jefferson County Family Court property and the former Elyton School location. The property is approximately 3.7 acres in size and represents redevelopment potential by itself or in conjunction with the Elyton property. The location is most appropriate as light industrial or warehousing, but could also be redeveloped as a multi-tenant retail location serving the neighborhood and the activities associated with the family court. The location could also be used for family health services with offices for general practitioners, dental care, and senior care.

### 13. 100 Tuscaloosa Avenue SW (Former Elyton School Property)

This former elementary school, considered historically significant, long served as a community focal point. The location is ideal for redevelopment and can once again serve as a contributing asset to the community. The property is city owned and is approximately 210,000 square feet (4.8 acres) in size. Consideration of redevelopment in conjunction with the property at 225 Center Street as well as the continued conversion of the properties north of the school site adjacent to Valley Creek as public open space and storm water retention will add activity and aesthetics to the redevelopment efforts. Possible uses include:

- Senior Living Facility – A senior care facility will make long term use of the property while providing housing and nursing care services to the community’s growing senior population. It may be possible to utilize and add to the existing structure, preserving the visual character and community sentiment for the building. Additionally, a senior care facility would provide employment opportunities to local residents. The added residential activity could serve as a catalyst for ancillary businesses and service providers as well. The use of government housing assistance funds and public-private partnerships to further assess the viability of a senior care facility should be considered.
- Mixed Use Development – A small scale mixed use facility will provide a variety of commercial options to the community that may include office space, retail, entertainment, and other compatible uses. This location is ideal for taking advantage of the walkable, compact nature of the surrounding residential areas. A mixed use development will generate activity, encourage additional retail investment, and put the property into productive use.

### 14. 100 4th Terrace West (Former Woodrow Wilson Elementary School)

This vacant institutional property is approximately 3.7 acres in size. The site is located among residential properties and is not on a heavily traveled roadway. In order to maintain compatibility with the surrounding land use, low intensity reuse is recommended. Potential uses include:

- Senior Living Facility - With consideration given to the area's growing senior population as well as the proximity to Princeton Baptist Medical Center, a senior living facility would generate limited traffic while also providing employment opportunities within the community.
- Job Training - A job training center would be beneficial to community residents who are interested in career advancement or pursuing a trade. It would provide an employment catalyst for the community and increase workforce participation. Partnerships with local colleges, financial institutions, and the business community will help to support these efforts.
- Mixed Use Development - A small scale mixed use facility will provide a variety of commercial options to the community that may include office space, retail, and other compatible uses.



### **15. 1430 14th Street SW**

These former industrial properties total 13 acres. Reuse of the site(s) as a warehousing and distribution facility would be consistent with the property's existing land use and zoning.

### **16. 1401 16th Way SW (Former Jackson Elementary School)**

This former elementary school property is approximately 4.6 acres in size. The site is located primarily among residential properties and is not on a heavily traveled roadway. In order to maintain compatibility with the surrounding land use, low intensity reuse is recommended. The adjoining Lowery Park enhances the appeal of the location. Potential uses include:

- Senior Living Facility - With consideration given to the area's growing senior population as well as the proximity to Princeton Baptist Medical Center, a senior living facility would generate limited added traffic while also providing employment opportunities within the community.
- Mixed Use Development - A small scale mixed use facility will provide a variety of commercial options to the community that may include office space, retail, and other compatible uses. A small number of apartment units or condominiums would be appropriate for the area as well.



*Former Jackson Elementary School (Source: City of Birmingham)*

### **17. Third Street West Industrial Area (1220, 1600 and 1516 3rd Street West)**

This catalyst site is comprised of three parcels, two of which (1516 and 1600 3rd Street West) are currently for sale and vacant. These parcels are adjacent to a rail yard and are located within the boundaries of the Birmingham Urban Enterprise Zone. State law limits eligible zone users to manufacturing, transportation and distribution. Businesses in this zone may be eligible for tax credits against, or exemptions from, their Alabama Corporate Income, Franchise or other taxes. With the site's easy access to rail as well as federal highways (US 78 and Interstate 20/59), this can be utilized as a location for distribution companies and generate employment within the region.



*Third Street West Industrial Area (Source: City of Birmingham)*

**18. 100 12th Street SW Industrial Site**

This catalyst site in the Arlington-West End neighborhood is comprised of an 110,000 square foot warehouse on an 10 acres parcel that is sited within the Valley Creek floodplain. The parcel, designated in the City's future land use as light industrial, could be acquired for use as open space and flood mitigation for the Valley Creek watershed and remove an underutilized property from the community.

**19. Larkway Gardens (1390, 1410, 1501, 1601, 1652, 1658 and 1660 Monroe Avenue, 110 and 120 Madison Avenue and 1500 and 1520 Woodland Avenue)**

This catalyst site in the Oakwood Place neighborhood is comprised of the former Larkway Gardens apartments, a 20 acre site of abandoned multi-family buildings in dilapidated condition. The Western Area Framework Plan recommends that the northern portion of the site within the Valley Creek flood plain be reserved as Open Space for use in flood mitigation in the City's Future Land Use Plan and the remainder of the site to remain as Residential-Medium. The Framework Plan also proposes that Larkway Gardens be demolished and redeveloped as a site for housing.

**20. 1525 Cotton Avenue (Blessed Sacrament Academy)**

This catalyst site was the former location for the Blessed Sacrament Academy, a Catholic school which was built in association with the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church on Pearson Avenue in the Arlington-West End neighborhood. Previously utilized by the Greater Emmanuel Temple Holiness Church, this historic building could be utilized either as a private / charter school or be repurposed as a Senior Living facility.

**21. Oakwood Place Commercial District (Intersection of Tuscaloosa Avenue, Pearson Avenue and 17th Street SW)**

This catalyst site is comprised of three vacant retail buildings and several vacant lots within one block of the Piggly Wiggly grocery store. The grocery store serves as a viable retail anchor to the West End community and could potentially help support complementary retail businesses such as restaurants, dry cleaning, day child care, offices and boutique clothing stores. Utilizing assistance from the Office of Economic Development, this intersection could be revived and provide opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship for the community.

**22. 3000 Pike Road apartment renovation**

This catalyst site is comprised of three vacant apartment buildings located on Pike Road in the Bush Hills neighborhood. The renovation of these structures would create an opportunity to provide affordable housing for seniors and other residents for the community.

Figure 4.2: Smithfield Catalytic Sites Map

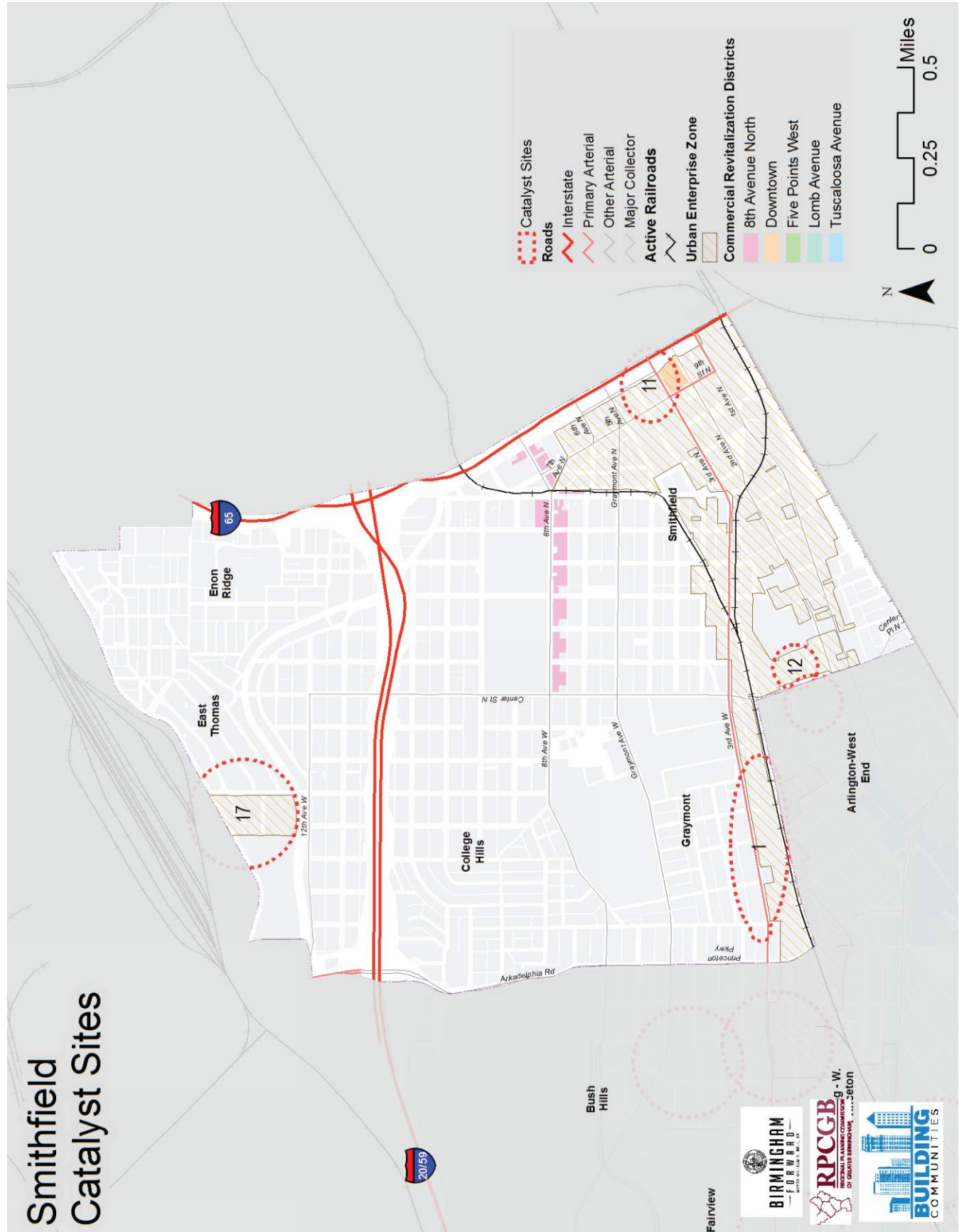


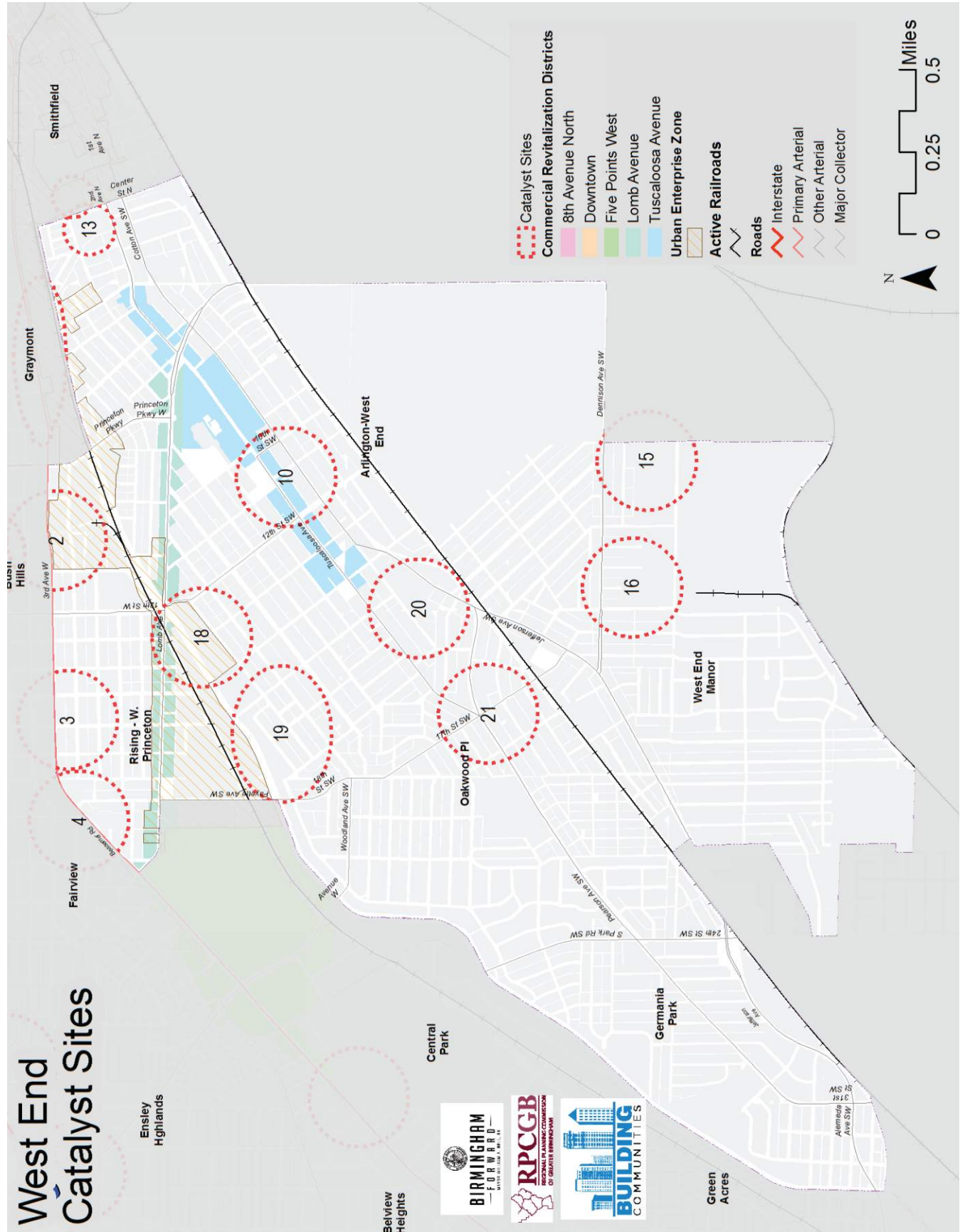


Figure 4.3: Five Points West Catalytic Sites Map





Figure 4.4: West End Catalytic Sites Map





5

# Transportation & Infrastructure



## Transportation & Infrastructure

Transportation in its various forms plays a critical role in shaping the form and the livability of the Western Area communities, affecting access to education and opportunity, goods and services, worship and recreation. Circulation patterns and behaviors also affect the quality of residential streets and the safety and walkability of the area's major streets. The conception and execution of quality transportation connections has always been a precursor to growth and economic success. However, a lack of investment in the City's transportation infrastructure and services has resulted in a City of Birmingham that cannot support the community's desired changes.

The Birmingham Comprehensive Plan identified several goals for the City's transportation system, as well as policy considerations for decision-makers. These include:

Table 5.1: Transportation Goals

GOALS	POLICIES
Birmingham's transportation systems help to build the city's 21st-century economy and a livable urban center of the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support strategic initiatives using private and public funds to maintain and enhance the city's street and transit systems to support city livability.</li> <li>Ensure that street improvements and development projects are designed to accommodate all users including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders except when deviations are justified.</li> <li>Support Complete Streets policies and practices.</li> <li>Support the development of a multi-modal transportation plan that creates complete networks and offers high quality travel options for every budget into and within the city.</li> </ul>
Bicycling and walking in the City of Birmingham are comfortable, safe, and convenient modes of transportation and recreation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support investments and programs that provide safe, functional, attractive pedestrian environments and walkable districts along transit arterials.</li> <li>Support the development of a complete bicycle network of on-street and off-street bicycle routes and trails.</li> <li>Support implementation of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System, including the on-street pedestrian segments.</li> </ul>
Transit in Birmingham is fast, reliable, well-connected, and inviting for daily as well as occasional use by residents and visitors alike.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support coordination and policies among major employers, the City, BJCTA, ALDOT, and the MPO for better transit service and efficient routing within the city and county.</li> <li>Support coordination among the MPO, the City, and the region to improve access to private, state, and federal funding for safe and high-quality transit.</li> <li>Support compact development at potential transit stops to support high-quality transit.</li> </ul>
Streets and sidewalks are accessible and maintained in good repair.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support a system of public criteria for street and sidewalk maintenance priorities.</li> <li>Support establishment of a pavement management system, ideally as part of an overall asset management system.</li> </ul>
Birmingham has state-of-the-art inter-city passenger travel and freight transportation systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support expeditious completion of air terminal and cargo projects and the Intermodal Facility.</li> <li>Advocate for passenger rail and enhanced passenger air service.</li> <li>Evaluate options to expand Birmingham, based on market conditions and feasibility.</li> </ul>

## Community Concerns Related to Transportation

Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West residents, public agencies, private interests, non-profits, and other stakeholders provided numerous comments and input on transportation related topics during the planning process. All comments and input were analyzed to develop the following community-based concerns and priorities.

NEEDS
Safer Streets
Bus Shelters
Truck Routes
OPPORTUNITIES
Transit Super Stop
Complete Streets
High Capacity Transit Service

### Expand Transportation Choices and Options

The overarching transportation theme revolved around expanding and increasing personal mobility choices. Community residents and stakeholders emphasized the desire to have greater access to convenient and safe walking, bicycling, and public transit opportunities. Many of the residents in the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities grew up walking, biking, and using the public transit system. They noted that these choices are no longer viable travel options. For lower income residents, the combination of jobs and services leaving the community, as well as poor public transportation serves to increase the economic and social isolation that these communities experience.

The ability to walk to nearby locations also needs to be improved. While much of the Western Area has sidewalks, there are noticeable gaps between facilities that impact the continuity of pedestrian travel. The sidewalks are in various states of good repair, and most are narrow and do not meet minimum Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for accessibility.

### Improve Public Transportation

A specific element of expanding travel choices is broad support for investing both near-term and long-term in public transportation services. The Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority is seeking to remake its fixed route bus services and has proposed several options to make these services more efficient, reliable, and ultimately more attractive.

Many Western Area residents and stakeholders spoke about the potential for improving public transit services. City of Birmingham elected leaders and officials, business owners, investors, and residents alike are all excited about the prospect of a transit transfer station located on or near the Birmingham Crossplex campus in the Five Points West neighborhood. The prospect of new transit services, especially bus rapid transit or light rail transit, provide more frequent and reliable service to opportunities.

### Create Safe Walking and Bicycling Environments

As with public transportation, Western Area residents strongly supported expanded walking and biking for both utilitarian and recreational uses. Active transportation is growing in prominence within the City of Birmingham, and neighborhoods and/or communities that have embraced non-motorized travel are highly valued. Whether its children walking to school, residents walking to the shops in the Five Points West, Arlington West End, or Central Park neighborhood retail centers, residents need a safe place to travel. Opportunities exist to accommodate residents looking to commute to work by bike, and tourists looking to walk between the historic Rickwood Field and Legion Field, and athletes and their families competing at the Birmingham Crossplex.

When these non-motorized travel facilities are not in place, residents and visitors alike, lack opportunities to experience the city's culture and history at the pedestrian level. This is especially true for travelers with disabilities as ADA accessibility was identified as an issue. Narrow sidewalks, curb ramps, along with a lack of marked and signed crosswalks with pedestrian signals, particularly at busy intersections, all are impediments to non-motorized travel Western Area residents advocated for walkable streets. In areas where the pedestrian infrastructure exists, they advocated for maintaining and improving these facilities. Residents and stakeholders recognized that safe, convenient, and attractive non-motorized travel environments are also key to having to successful transit, as most transit passengers are really pedestrians on buses.

### Support Green Infrastructure

Many of the neighborhoods in the Five Points West and West End Community have issues with flooding along Valley Creek. As such, a number of roadways experience flooding. Flooding impacts area roadways when there are heavy rains, impeding both motorized and pedestrian travel, and affecting property usability. Residents expressed an interest in how the transportation system might help minimize or mitigate the impacts of stormwater.

### Minimize and Mitigate Freight Impacts on the Community

Western Area residents expressed frustration with the movement of freight through their community, primarily by trucks. While there is a desire to have the community's streets become more multimodal in nature, the current conditions within the community as it relates to freight movement, especially along the major thoroughways, is not conducive to safe travel for pedestrians and cyclists.

Residents in the Five Points West and West End communities expressed concern about the number, size, and speed of trucks traveling through their neighborhoods. They also expressed concern about the payloads of these trucks as quite a bit of the freight traffic are tanker vehicles hauling flammable fuels. The routes of these trucks carries them deep into the neighborhoods as they look to access fuel tank farms located in the Woodland Park and Mason City neighborhoods. The travel direction of these trucks have them entering the entering the study area from I-20/59 at Avenue and Avenue W, and traversing the Ensley Highlands, Central Park, Oakwood Place, Arlington-West End, and West End Manor neighborhoods.

Truck traffic also impacts the Arkadelphia Road interchange at I-20/59 at the border of the Bush Hills neighborhood in the Smithfield Community.

## Make Infrastructure Maintenance Investments a Priority

Like most places in the city, Western Area residents expressed concern over transportation infrastructure maintenance. Residents requested that the framework plan development process include a “fix it first” approach that prioritized the maintenance and repair of existing streets within residential neighborhoods and developed commercial areas.

A number of streets and sidewalks across the Western Area exhibited signs of neglect and deterioration. Pavement edges were observed to be crumbling and/or deteriorated, and stormwater drainage and conveyance infrastructure is in need of maintenance.

## Transportation and Infrastructure Goal 1: Create a system of comfortable, safe, and convenient modes of transportation options.

Transportation planning provides a unique opportunity to create—both directly and indirectly— spaces that encourage all kinds of exchanges between people. The transportation projects that emerge from these planning efforts are catalysts for creating great places. Well-designed streets and transit facilities encourage economic activity, non-vehicular travel and human-scale development. Planning urban streets for people and places rather than simply focusing on mobility, throughput and traffic helps to improve street safety and mobility. Additionally, planning streets for people and places encourages communities to rethink how to connect people with the goods, services and destinations they need and desire.

Despite the many transportation deficiencies that plague the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities, residents recognized the potential for improved mobility through the power of place-making. Residents’ desires for expanded travel choices, improved transportation facilities, and enhanced services reflects their vision for a renewed sense of place. The recommended modifications to the transportation system reflect addresses how the travel network might meet the community’s mobility needs and contribute to (re)development of the Western Area as a vibrant place.

### STRATEGY A: BUILD A MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

The City of Birmingham’s residents stated a desire to provide more options to residents and business about the way the people and goods could travel to, from, through and within the city. Residents echoed this sentiment and discussed their desire for the Western Area’s neighborhoods to have more travel choices.

### ACTION 1: BUILD-OUT THE RED ROCK RIDGE AND VALLEY TRAIL SYSTEM

The Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System (Red Rock) is a transformative, long-term plan for greenways, bikeways, and complete streets (as shown in Figures 3.1-3.3 on pages 50-54). Centered on Jefferson County, Red Rock is intended to be the basis of a regional plan non-motorized travel for the Birmingham metropolitan area. When completed, it will knit together communities across Jefferson County. A significant portion of the plan is within the City of Birmingham, and provides guidance for the development of a non-motorized travel network. The City of Birmingham has adopted the Red Rock plan as its non-motorized transportation plan. As the city moves forward with developing a comprehensive transportation plan, Red Rock will be incorporated, and adjusted where necessary.



A key part of the framework planning process is consideration for how the Red Rock plan might be implemented within individual plan areas which are comprised of communities and neighborhoods. The Western Area communities are primarily served by the Jones Valley Trail System. The Jones Valley Corridor is considered the spine of the regional network with connectivity to most of the other corridors. The Jones Valley Corridor largely follows Valley Creek, along which most of the corridor is located, from Bessemer in the west to East Lake Park near Ruffner Mountain in the east. Red Mountain and Ruffner Mountain border the valley to the south and Sand Ridge lies to the north. The Corridor provides connectivity to over 30 schools.

Major destinations and activity centers within the Western Area communities that are located along the route include:

- Birmingham Southern College
- Birmingham Crossplex
- G. Gaston Boys and Girls Club
- Five Points West commercial district
- The historic Rickwood Field
- Princeton Baptist Medical Center

Parts of the Village Creek Corridor also serve the Western Area's communities. The Village Creek Corridor was originally described in the 1921 Olmsted Master Plan for the Birmingham Parks and Recreation Board. The Olmsted Plan designated Village Creek's floodplain as green space. The Olmsted Plan was largely ignored, and unfortunately this area was heavily developed with residential and commercial industry. This resulted in regular flooding and had impacts to health, safety, and property. In recent years the Corps of Engineers has purchased property along the creek to mitigate flooding and create greenway buffers. The Corps of Engineers' efforts have had the effect of returning much of the developed area to its natural condition, and as a result, helping the City of Birmingham to realize the original Olmsted design intent. It also has set the stage for future greenways, paths and meaningful connectivity.

Ideally, both the Jones Valley and Village Creek trail corridors, as major routes, would be composed of all shared use trails in a dedicated easement. However, due to the urban nature of the corridor, it is difficult to identify rights-of-way or easements that allow a greenway to be constructed for the entire route. As a result, the corridor likely will be comprised of greenways (off-road) and paths (street-based facilities) providing the needed connectivity. Many of these connections (both existing and planned) are described herein:

- **Jones Valley Rail Greenway**

The Jones Valley Rail Greenway is a proposed rail to trail greenway serving the West End and Five Points West communities along an old rail bed starting at Harman Industrial Boulevard on the north side of Valley Creek, and running to 1st Avenue North to 7th Street North. This greenway passes the AG Gaston Boys and Girls Club, the Birmingham Crossplex, Rickwood Field, and is a few blocks from Princeton Medical Center campus. The trail also provides access to Legion Field and Arlington Historical House in the City of Birmingham.

- **Jones Valley Trail**

The Jones Valley Trail is a proposed street based path runs from Jones Valley Rail Greenway at 1st Avenue N. and 7th Street N. along 1st north to 14th St and the heading south to 1st Avenue South at Railroad Park.

- **57th Street West Connector**

A proposed street based path from the MLK Jr. Greenway extension (31) along 57th street turning south and along Monte Sano Rd. to US highway-11.

- **Pineview Trail**

A proposed shared use green way extension of the MLK Jr. Greenway extension along 57th street turning south and along Monte Sano Rd. to US highway – 11.

- **Pineview Road Trail**

A Proposed street based path along Pineview Road that connects the Western Area YMCA with the Jones Valley Rail Greenway.

- **Greensprings Avenue Trail**

A proposed street based path begins at the intersection of 7th Avenue South and 14th Street South. The trail travels south along 14th Street South, turns east on 17th Avenue South, and south on 12th Street South. The trail connects to Greensprings Avenue South, and crosses Interstate-65. The trail passes Elmwood Cemetery, and connects to Harrison Park.

- **Martin Luther King Jr. Trail**

Beginning in the West End Community and terminating in the Titusville Community, the Martin Luther King Jr. trail is a proposed street-based path travels along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive from Tuscaloosa Avenue to Dennison Avenue SW at Red Mountain Park's eastern entrance.

- **Red Mountain Park Connector**

A proposed street-based path begins at the west entrance of Red Mountain Park, along the High Ore Line Greenway, at the intersection with Wenonah Road SW. The trail travels northeast along Wenonah Road SW, and then turns left onto Wilson Road SW passing Lawson State Community College. The road then changes names to 31st Street SW and then Pearson Avenue SW. At the Pearson Avenue SW Intersection with 17th Street SW, the trail then follows Tuscaloosa Avenue until the trail connects the Jones Valley Rail Greenway at Valley Creek.

- **Woodward Road Trail**

A proposed street-based path begins at near Midfield Elementary School at Woodward Road and US Highway 11 and travels east along Woodward Road to 31st Street.

- **US Highway 11 Trail**

This proposed street based path follows US Highway -11 from Alabama Adventure Highway in Bessemer to its intersection with the Jones Valley Rail Greenway Trail at 3rd Avenue North and 2nd Street North.

- **Dorothy Spears Greenway at Village Creek**

This proposed shared-use greenway connecting along the old Enon Ridge Rail bed to 3rd Street West.

- **1st Street West Path at Village Creek**

This proposed street-based path with sidewalks and sharrows starts at the Enon Ridge Rail Line on the southern end of 1st Street West and heads north to Village Creek.

- **West Enon Ridge Greenway at Village Creek**

This proposed shared-use greenway trail starts at 1st Street North and follows the creek, passing the ENon Ridge Trail, connecting with the Thomas Neighborhood Greenway and Wade Nature Preserve.

- **Enon Ridge Trail**

This proposed street-based path, with sidewalks and sharrows, starts on 16th Ave North and travels to 2nd Street North connecting with West Enon Ridge Greenway.

- **East Enon Ridge Greenway at Village Creek**

This proposed shared-use greenway trail starts at the west end of 17th Avenue East at 3rd Street and follows the creek until the east end of 17th Avenue and 5th Street. The land is part of flood buyout property by the City.

- **North Village Creek Greenway**

The shared-use greenway trail follows Village Creek from 5th Street North to 27th Street North, traveling under the bridge at I-65. Plans for the area prepared by the Auburn University Urban Studio feature a skate park under the viaduct and ball fields adjacent.

- **Thomas Neighborhood Greenway and Wade Nature Preserve**

A proposed shared-use greenway, the Thomas Neighborhood Greenway and Wade Nature Preserved begins at the intersection of Avenue W and Republic Boulevard and travels in the right-of-way of Republic Boulevard to Village Creek. The trail turns north and travels through Wade Sand and Gravel property to 1st Street in Thomas, then turns south and parallels New York Avenue back to Village Creek. The greenway begins to follow Village Creek to the east, crossing underneath Arkadelphia Road and railroad bridges connecting to Duke Park and East Thomas Park.

- **Graymont Avenue Trail**

This proposed street-based path begins at the Wade Greenway at Anniston Avenue and 16th Street and travels south down Anniston Avenue, then turns east towards Graymont Avenue. The trail travels past Legion Field, and underneath Interstate-65 to 14th Street South.

- **Center Street Trail**

This proposed street –based path travels along Center Street connecting the Village Creek Greenway to the Valley Creek Greenway.

- **3rd Street North Trail**

This proposed street-based path travels along 3rd Street North from 11th Avenue North to Graymont Avenue.

- **Harris Park Trail**

This proposed street-based path begins at the intersection of Highway-11 and Avenue X. The trail travels north along Avenue X, turning west onto 29th Street Ensley, then north on Avenue W, passing Harris Park. The trail turns west on 25th Street, then north on Avenue U, then east onto Pike Road, crossing under Interstate – 20/59. The trail turns west onto 19th Street, then north onto Avenue U, connecting with Tuxedo park.

- **Five Points West Trail**

This proposed street-based path begins at Fair Park, and travels north along Ensley Five Points West Avenue, and over Interstate -20/59. The trail turns west onto 21st Street South. A pedestrian opening in the fence at Tuxedo Terrace is needed to connect the trail from Five Points West Avenue to 21st Street South. The trail travels along 21st Street, requiring a pedestrian crossing signal at Avenue I. the trail connects with the Avenue F trail at Avenue H.

- **Existing Pedestrian Bridge over I-59**

The existing pedestrian bridge crosses Interstate – 20/59 from Ensley Park to Pike Road.

- **Ensley Greenway**

This proposed shared – use greenway begins at the south side of the pedestrian bridge, and travels east following Pike Road, connecting with the Highlands Park Trail, near 23rd Street.

- **Fair Park Greenway**

This proposed shared-use greenway follows the western side of Fair Park along Avenue W from US Highway 11 to the Valley Creek Greenway.

It should be noted that the framework plan's recommendations may provide suggested modifications to the trails' configuration. This is especially true of the street-based trails as recommendations for the streets serving the community take into consideration the Western Area Framework Plan has made recommendations about street types to include ideal street design characteristics.

## STRATEGY B: IMPROVE URBAN FORM.

The layout of streets and their ultimate design affect urban form just as much as the land uses adjacent to the street affect the streets' character. Much of the Western Area's street network has already been laid out and constructed, and as a result the urban form of the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities are already set. There are opportunities, however, to make substantive changes to these communities' streets character by modifying the streets themselves and making changes to their development envelope.

Conventional roadway design processes prioritize vehicular mobility and access using roadway functional classification, design speed, traffic volume, and vehicular level of service as the determinants for design criteria—an approach with limited sensitivity to the surrounding context. Roadways governed by functional classification and conventional design standards result in a predetermined configuration that ensures thoroughfare are designed consistently, regardless of its context. While this may prove to be useful from a transportation engineering perspective, it all too often is a source of conflict in urban communities. From an urban design perspective, taking a one size fits all approach to designing streets is not sufficient.

Many of the neighborhoods located in the Western Area communities were designed as walkable places and have elements of Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND). These walkable places find their inspiration in town centers and neighborhoods that were built before automobile-dictated transportation and land use patterns. Throughout the development of the Western Area Framework Plan, conscious efforts were made to maintain the urban form of the Smithfield, West End, and Western Area communities by identifying improvements and opportunities to enhance these communities' form with good urban design.

## ACTION 1: DEVELOP COMPLETE STREETS.

The Birmingham Comprehensive Plan recommended that the Framework Plans' transportation elements take a closer look at opportunities to implement Complete Streets. Complete Streets are designed to broaden the focus of the thoroughfare beyond that of accommodating the automobile, and instead focus on enabling safe access for all types of street users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. They also have been documented to improve safety for pedestrians and motorists alike, they encourage more walking and bicycling, ease congestion through mode sharing, and improve air quality.

The City of Birmingham has an adopted complete streets policy. The city also has adopted the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System plan which includes both a complete streets policy and recommendations for establishing modal priorities for the city's streets.



One strategy for accomplishing the development of complete streets is for the City of Birmingham to utilize the model Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) framework established by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) as published in *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*, RP 036. This report is an ITE recommended practice and has been endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares recommends the use of context zones. Context zones are a tool to classify the built environment. Each context zone is part of a continuum of environments that range from natural to highly urbanized, and are used to categorize urban development according to density and intensity, as well as the form of development adjacent to a roadway. Context zones also are used to help characterize the basic determinants of a walkable community's street design. Finally, context zones can be used to help define street typologies. Street typologies will be discussed later in this chapter, along with a recommended toolkit for informing the selection of street design elements.

### **An Abridged Guide to Designing Complete Streets as Applied in the Framework Planning Process**

Street designs must prioritize users based on the context of the street type, and aim to equitably share limited right-of-way space. Each street type will balance the needs of users, giving priority based on the context, land use, existing built environment, and constraints of each site. Like most developed U.S. cities, roadway right-of-way is constrained. As such, it is difficult to design the ideal "complete street" as trade-offs between the accommodations for travel modes must be made. Regardless of tradeoffs, all streets must consider the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, and should always strive to promote healthy and active transportation. Depending upon the street type, the degree of accommodations for walking and bicycling will vary.

The Western Area Community Framework Plan echoes the Birmingham Comprehensive Plan's recommendation for the City of Birmingham to develop a comprehensive transportation plan, and while not specific to the communities of the Western Area, the development of this citywide plan will provide guidance for design of streets that are important to travel and the quality of life within the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities.

#### **Step 1. Understanding Context Zones**

Good street design begins with an understanding of the street context. Different streets have different conditions, and merit different design considerations.

Context zones are part of a continuum of environments, ranging from natural to highly urbanized. They are used to categorize urban development according to density and intensity, as well as the form of development adjacent to a roadway. Traditional roadway design methodologies do not sufficiently describe the development context at a level of detail that relates the context to the transportation system or to street (thoroughfare) design.

Effective design of streets to reflect context sensitivity requires that designers know the intensity of urban development and the desired travel modes that best serve the users of the facility. In most cases, users are the residents and businesses of adjacent neighborhoods. Context zones describe the physical form and character of a place. This includes the mass or intensity of development within a neighborhood or along a thoroughfare.

Context zones are typically applied at the neighborhood or community level, but for the purposes of thoroughfare design, context zones are interpreted on a block-by-block basis to respond to specific physical and activity characteristics. Context zones also are a basic determinant of a walkable community's street design criteria. For the purposes of this document, they will be used to assist with defining street typologies within the Western Area communities.

### Defining Context Zones for Western Area Communities

Context is defined by multiple parameters. This includes land use, density and design features. Table 5.1 presents the full range of context zones. However, only four (C-3 through C-6) have applicability to the design of urban roadways. Of these four context zones, only two have applicability to the Western Area communities. They are:

- C4 – General Urban
- C5 – Urban Center

The majority of the neighborhoods located in the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities have urban design/urban form characteristics similar to the General Urban (C4) context zones. The Five Points West area within the Five Points West community might best be characterized as an Urban Center (C5). This variation in urban design character within the City of Birmingham's corporate limits is not uncommon. From a street design perspective, this variation speaks to the diversity of the city's travel needs and design of transportation facilities. It should be noted that as this framework plan identifies a set of recommended street types for application within the Western Area communities that the street types do not necessarily have to be continuous along the entire length of a street. A single street may change typology as the surrounding land uses or functions of the road changes. Additionally, different street types serve different functions; every street is unique and each street type plays an important role in the surrounding neighborhood.

Table 5.2: Context Zones

Context Zone	Distinguishing Characteristics	General Character
<b>C1 – Natural</b>	Natural Landscapes	
<b>C2 – Rural</b>	Agricultural with scattered development	Agricultural activity and natural feature
<b>C3 – Suburban</b>	Primarily single family residential with walkable development pattern and pedestrian facilities, dominant landscape character. Includes scattered commercial uses that support the residential uses, and connected in walkable fashion.	Detached buildings with landscaped yards, normally adjacent to C-4 zone. Commercial uses may consist of neighborhood or community shopping centers, service or office uses with side or rear parking.
<b>C4 – General Urban</b>	Mix of housing types including attached units, with a range of commercial and civic activity at the neighborhood and community scale.	Predominantly detached buildings, balance between landscape and buildings, presence of pedestrians
<b>C5 – Urban Center</b>	Attached housing types such as townhouses and apartments mixed with retail, workplace and civic activities at the community or subregional scale.	Predominantly attached buildings, landscaping within the public right of way, substantial pedestrian activity.
<b>C6- Urban Core</b>	Highest-intensity areas in subregion or region, with high-density residential and workplace uses, entertainment, civic and cultural uses.	Attached buildings forming sense of enclosure and continuous street wall landscaping within the public right of way, highest pedestrian and transit activity
<b>Districts</b>	To be designated and described locally, districts are areas that are single-use or multi-use with low-density development pattern and vehicle mobility priority thoroughfares. These may be large facilities such as airports, business parks and industrial areas.	

Source: *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach, an ITE Recommended Practice, 2010*

### Step 2. Understanding Street Types and Functions

Streets comprise more than 80% of public space in cities, but they often fail to provide their surrounding communities with a space where people can safely walk, bicycle, drive, take transit, and socialize. The design of streets, particularly in an urban environment, is critical to achieving desired urban forms and addressing livability. None-the-less, urban street design situations are complex, and the recommendations made within this framework plan are just that, recommendations. Specific solutions should be tailored to individual situations and contexts, and the decisions about these solutions need to be thoroughly documented.

In the absence of a local street design manual or citywide transportation plan, the Western Area Framework Plan relies heavily on the guidance of *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*, an *ITE Recommended Practice* and the *Urban Street Design Guide*, published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) respectively. The ITE Recommended Practice uses both functional classification and thoroughfare (street) type to classify streets, and also to inform decisions related to both the physical design and operations of the street. Functional classification defines a roadway's function and role in the network, in addition to governing the selection of certain design controls. Thoroughfare (street) type governs the selection of the roadway's design criteria and, along with the surrounding context, is used to determine the physical configuration of the thoroughfare. Design criteria and physical configuration address which elements are included in the design and selection of dimensions.

The use of street types within the Western Area Community Framework Plan is an attempt to reflect the community's local context in order to identify potential designs for:

- Streetside (sidewalks, planting strips);
- Traveled way (lanes, medians, on-street parking, bicycle lanes); and
- Intersections.

The Western Area Framework Plan, while addressing development across a wide spectrum of geographies, focuses its transportation element on urban streets as one of the Birmingham Comprehensive Plan's and indeed the community residents' desires is to support existing and create new walkable neighborhoods. For the purposes of this plan, street recommended will focus on three different types:

- Boulevards, avenues, and streets.

Table 5.3 provides a description of each. Table 5.4 illustrates how the different street types line up with roadway functional classification.

### About Roadway Functional Classification

Roadway functional classification systems use a hierarchy to group classes of streets based on the relative emphasis of vehicle mobility versus property access. The system is used to design roads that support different speeds, volumes, and types of traffic. On one end of the spectrum are arterial roadways, which facilitate higher vehicle speeds and longer trips, and accommodate the greatest number of trips for all modes of travel. At the other end of the spectrum are local streets, which provide easy access to individual residences at slower speeds. In between arterial and local streets are collectors, streets characterized by a balance between access and mobility.

The functional classification system is the basis for most local, state, and national roadway design guides and manuals. The functional classifications are based on operational characteristics predominantly for the mobility and capacity of motor vehicles, and are used to recommend values for elements such as lane widths, speeds, geometry, and intersection design.

## QUICK FACTS

Table 5.3: Street Type Descriptions

Thoroughfare/Street Type	Characteristics
<b>Boulevards</b>	Walkable, low-speed (35 mph or less) divided arterial thoroughfare in urban environments designed to carry both through and local traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists. Boulevards may be long corridors, typically four lanes but sometimes wider, serve longer trips and provide pedestrian access to land. Boulevards may be high-ridership transit corridors. Boulevards are primary goods movement and emergency response routes and use vehicular and pedestrian access management techniques. Curb parking is encouraged on boulevards.
<b>Avenues</b>	Walkable, low-to-medium speed (25 to 35 mph) urban arterial or collector thoroughfare, generally shorter in length than boulevards, serving access to abutting land. Avenues serve as primary pedestrian and bicycle routes and may serve local transit routes. Avenues do not exceed 4 lanes, and access to land is a primary function. Goods movement is typically limited to local routes and deliveries. Some avenues feature a raised landscaped median. Avenues may serve commercial or mixed-use sectors and usually provide curb parking.
<b>Streets</b>	Walkable, low speed (25 mph) thoroughfare in urban areas primarily serving abutting property. A street is designed to (1) connect residential neighborhoods with each other, (2) connect neighborhoods with commercial and other districts and (3) connect local streets to arterials. Streets may serve as the main street of commercial or mixed-use sectors and emphasize curb parking. Goods movement is restricted to local deliveries only.

Source: *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach an ITE Recommended Practice*.

Table 5.4: A Comparison of Functional Classification and Street Typology

Roadway Functional Classification	Thoroughfare/Street Type		
	Boulevard (Blvd.)	Avenue (Ave.)	Street (St.)
Major Arterial	X	X	X
Minor Arterial	X	X	X
Collector		X	X
Local			X

Source: *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach an ITE Recommended Practice.*

Table 5.5: Operating and Design Characteristics by Street Type

Street Type	Travel Lanes	Approx. ROW Width	Target Operating Speed	Median	Driveway Access	On-Street Parking	Pedestrian Facilities	Bicycle Facilities	Freight Mvmt. Character
Blvd.	2 – 4	50 – 68 ft	30 – 35 mph	Yes	Limited	Optional	Sidewalk	Bike Lane or Parallel Route	Regional Truck Route
Ave.	2 – 4	56 – 76 ft	25 – 30 mph	Optional	Yes	Yes	Sidewalk	Bike Lane or Shared	Local Truck Route
St.	2	48 ft	25 mph	No	Yes	Yes	Sidewalk	Shared	Local Deliveries

Source: *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach an ITE Recommended Practice*

### Step 3. Establishing a Mode Priority for Streets

The Birmingham Comprehensive Plan recommended that the Framework Plans' transportation elements take a closer look at opportunities to identify and improve connectivity between neighborhoods, mobility within communities, and access to services and opportunities external to the City of Birmingham. The comprehensive plan specifically called for improving access and mobility in commercial and employment activity centers. It also called for coordinating and prioritizing travel along the transportation system by travel mode. Mode priority classifies streets according to whether they are particularly suitable for transportation other than cars. The classification is based upon land use, urban design, the need for certain streets to contribute to the complete user network and a range of other factors that influence mode choice.

Mode priority can be achieved by taking a Layered Network approach. Layered networks designate modal emphasis by street to create a complete streets network. Layered networks recognize that while all traveler types need to be accommodated within a community, no single street can accommodate all transportation users at all times. The layered network concept envisions streets as systems, each street type designed to create a high quality experience for its intended users. This approach for establishing mode priority has several advantages, including, but not limited to:

- Helping to mitigate the challenge of accommodating all users on every roadway
- Creating flexibility and options with multiple travel routes, accommodating different travel modes on different streets
- Allowing network layout and roadway design for ideal bicycle or transit networks
- It works very well with established Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS) methodologies



This methodology also will help to identify deficiencies in a community's travel network, and highlight areas where changes are needed in order to develop the desired complete streets network. Additional roadway connectivity and redundancy to create the multi-modal network may be required. Likewise, if land uses do not support the design of layered networks, establishing modal priority may be less effective and provide support to critics of the complete streets approach. In short, as the City of Birmingham applies its complete streets policy and contemplates how a mode prioritized network occurs, a strong commitment to planning and as well as a commitment to rethink the transportation network is required in order to enjoy success.

### About Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS)

Level of Service (LOS) is used to measure the effectiveness of streets and roadways in meeting the needs of travelers based on various modeling techniques. Traditionally, LOS in urban areas focused particularly on the capacity of intersections, specifically on the amount of delay caused to motorists.

The 2010 Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) provides methods for measuring multimodal level of service (MMLOS), and enables road designers to balance the interrelated needs of all modes of transportation.

Quality of service (as expressed in terms of letter grade levels of service) is an indicator of the traveling public's perceived degree of satisfaction with the traveling experience provided by the urban street under prevailing demand and operation conditions. MMLOS includes:

- Pedestrian LOS: includes the traditional measure of delay and sidewalk capacity (based on volumes and sidewalk width), but now also includes a pedestrian quality of service model. The model uses traffic volumes, speeds, and the quality of the buffer between the sidewalk and roadway to determine how comfortable and safe a typical pedestrian feels when walking adjacent to and crossing the road.
- Transit LOS: determined for "urban street facilities" and "urban street segments." Factors include the frequency of service, travel time speeds, crowding, reliability, amenities at stop, and pedestrian LOS.
- Bicycle LOS: includes two models that measure capacity—one for roadways and one for shared use paths. A third model provides a measure of bicyclists' feeling of comfort along a roadway, given various traffic factors including travel volumes, speeds, lane widths, presence of a shoulder or bicycle lane, presence of occupied on-street parking, etc.
- Motor vehicle LOS: the HCM continues to provide a motor vehicle LOS model that measures capacity (or delay) at intersections.

MMLOS is a particularly useful tool for intersection design. The 2010 HCM introduces new modeling techniques that cover a broader range of factors that are important to non-motorized users, such as perceived comfort and safety in the roadway environment. MMLOS does not take into account how many people will actually use the facility or how expensive it is to the agency and the general public to provide the facility. It does not consider environmental concerns or collision rates.

*Source: Multimodal Level-of-Service Analysis for Urban Streets: NCHRP Project 3-70. National Cooperative Research Program. Transportation Research Board of the National Academies. 2009.*

## QUICK FACTS

#### Step 4. Design the Street

The Western Area Framework Plan recommends a number of different street types for application within the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities. These recommended street types are intended to offer additional guidance for designing appropriate streetscape environments that are complementary to the traditional roadway functional classification system. They are not intended to replace official roadway functional classifications. Specifically, the street types contained herein are intended to serve as models, informing the selection of street design elements, and providing options for communities when they need to make informed choices during the visioning process for proposed area transportation and/or roadway projects.

The recommended street types contained herein are defined by both land use and transportation characteristics. They offer a balance between functional classification, adjacent land uses, and the competing needs of all transportation modes. Each street type prioritizes users and various design elements based on the context and character of the neighborhood and street. Within the Western Area's communities' constrained rights-of-way, trade-offs must be balanced and equitable, and should always encourage the healthy and active transportation options of bicycling and walking.

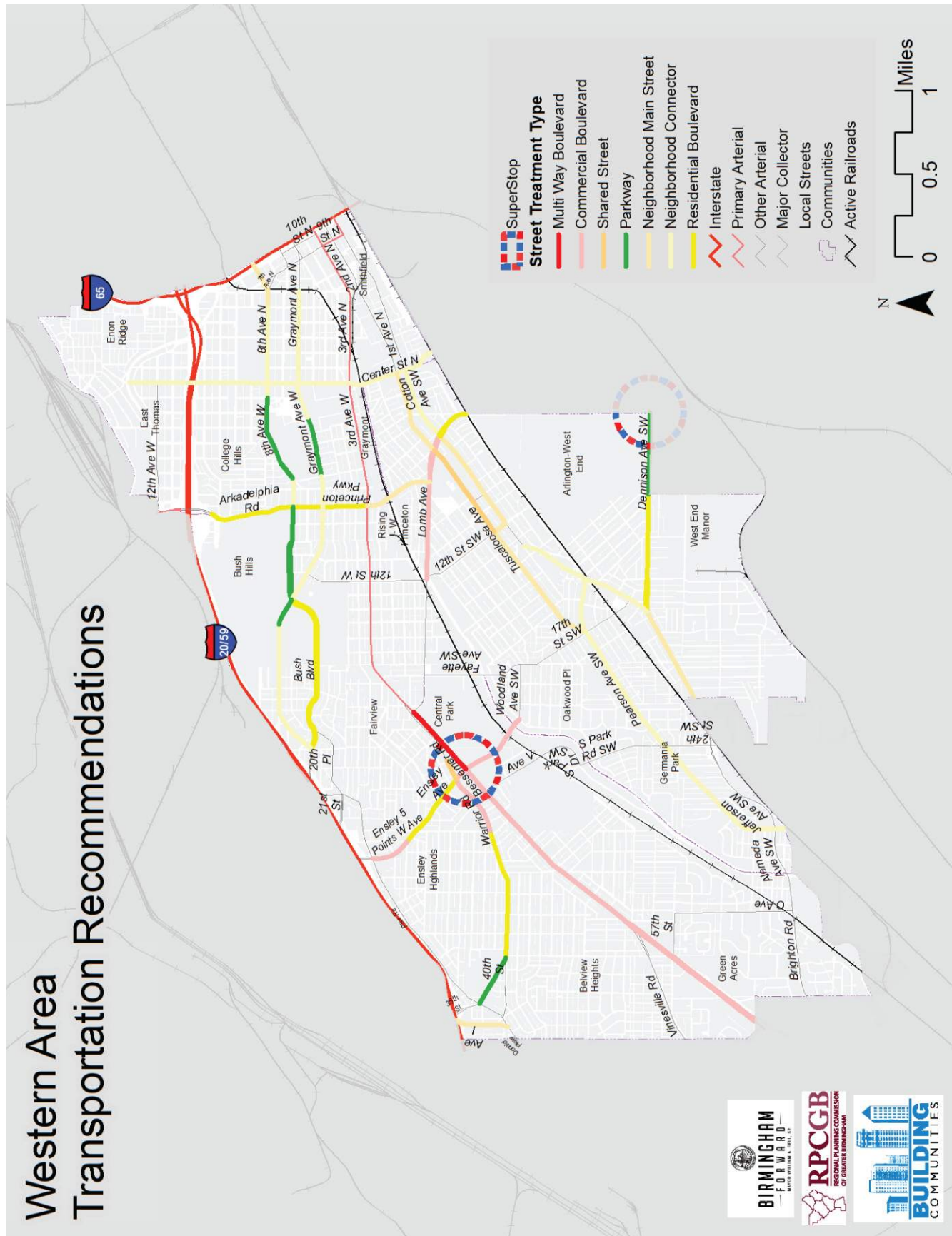
#### Note:

1. Renderings of the different street typologies that are included within the framework plan are intended to highlight general design concepts, and in some cases, exemplify specific ideas. They are not intended to be prescriptive in any way. The City of Birmingham still needs to develop and incorporate a local street design manual as part of a larger citywide transportation plan.
2. The Birmingham Comprehensive Plan recommends that the city develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan that would address issues with street design.

Table 5.6: Street Types Used in this Plan

Thoroughfare/Street Type	
<b>Commercial</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood Main Street</li> <li>• Commercial Shared Street</li> </ul>	<b>Industrial/Mixed-Use</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industrial Street</li> </ul>
<b>Residential</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential Boulevard</li> <li>• Neighborhood Connector</li> <li>• Neighborhood Residential</li> <li>• Neighborhood Shared Street</li> </ul>	<b>Special</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-way Boulevard</li> <li>• Parkway</li> </ul>

Figure 5.2: Street Types Map



### Multi-way Boulevard

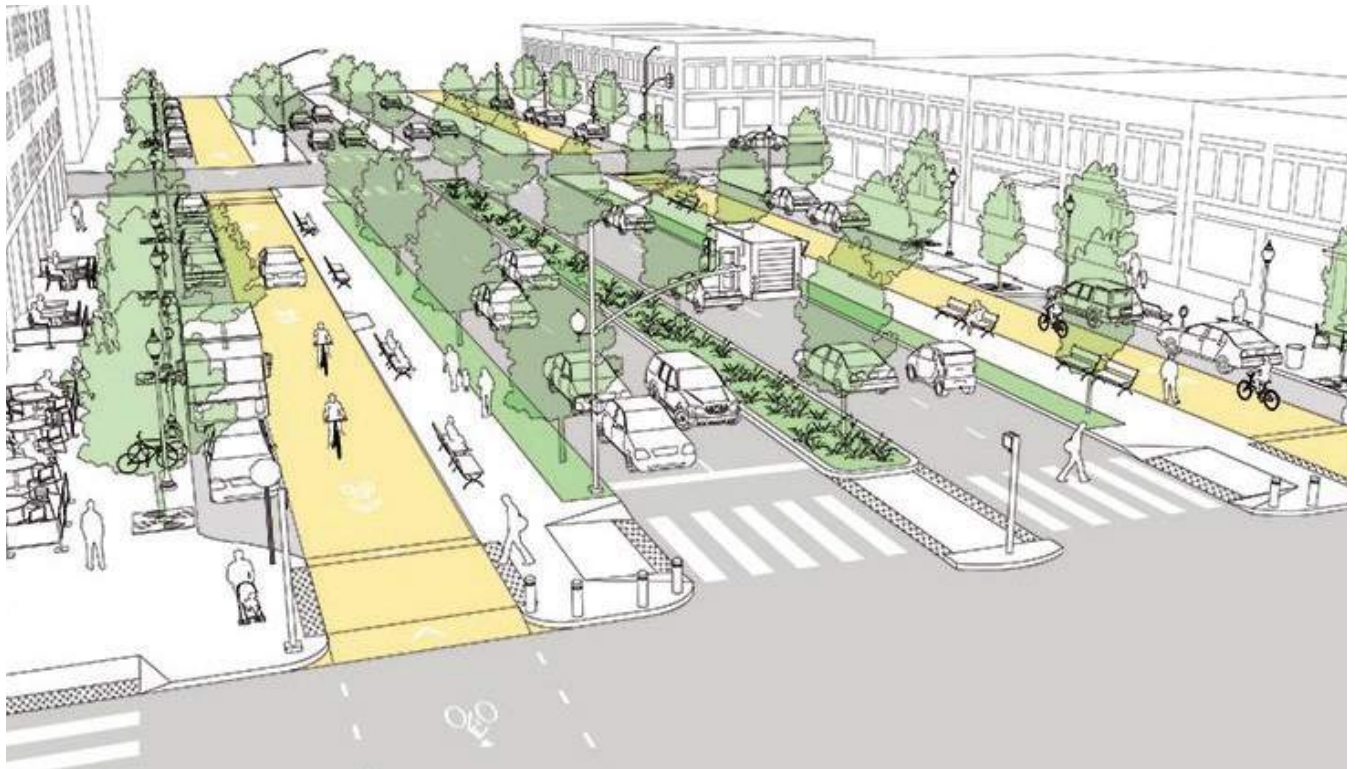
<b>Context Zone:</b>	C5 – Urban Center
<b>Functional Class:</b>	Arterial
<b>Street Type:</b>	Boulevard
<b>Mode Priority:</b>	Bicycle, Pedestrians, Transit, Auto
<b>ROW needed:</b>	50 - 68 feet
<b>Applicability:</b>	U.S. 11/Bessemer Road - Lomb Avenue to Ensley 5 Points West Avenue
<b>Design</b>	High levels of pedestrian activity
<b>Considerations:</b>	Desire for generous pedestrian environment and public realm High volume and speed of through traffic Important transit functions Access needs for local businesses

### Overview

Multi-way Boulevards separate very large streets into parallel urban realms, buffering the commercial or residential street edge from the high speed thoroughway by means of multi-way operations and frontage roads. Many boulevards were built at the turn of the 20th century, but fell into disrepair. Many were redesigned to highway standards over the course of the century.

The multi-way boulevard is good tool for establishing urban form. This design might be accomplished by applying updated boulevard design standards to overbuilt urban arterials.

Figure 5.3: Multi-way Boulevard



Source: NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide 2012



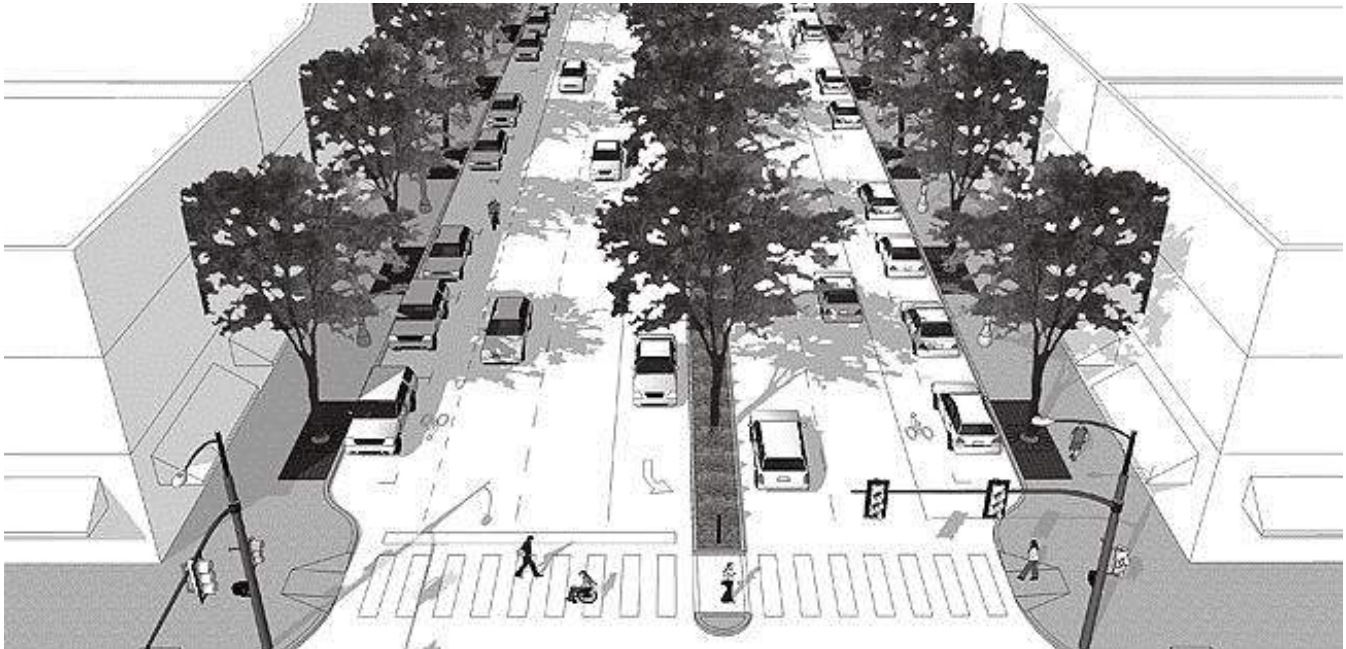
## Commercial Boulevard

<b>Context Zone:</b>	C5 – Urban Center
<b>Functional Class:</b>	Arterial
<b>Street Type:</b>	Boulevard
<b>Mode Priority:</b>	Bicycle, Pedestrians, Transit, Auto
<b>ROW needed:</b>	50 - 68 feet
<b>Applicability:</b>	U.S. 11/Bessemer Road – Avenue O to Avenue X Ensley Five Points West Avenue – Warrior Road to U.S 11/Bessemer Road Warrior Road – Ensley 5 Points West Avenue to Avenue S Lomb Avenue – U.S 11/Bessemer Road to Cotton Avenue SW Avenue W. – U.S. 11/Bessemer Road to Woodland Avenue Southwest Ensley Five Points West Avenue – I-20/59 to Court R
<b>Design Considerations:</b>	High levels of pedestrian activity Desire for generous pedestrian environment and public realm High volume and speed of through traffic Important transit functions Access needs for local businesses

### Overview

Commercial Boulevards move significant volumes of people and accommodate a variety of travel modes. The commercial land uses located along the street attract travelers to shop, eat, and play in regional destinations. Vehicular traffic on these streets tends to be relatively fast and continuous and transit service is often frequent. These streets should have a comfortable pedestrian realm with significant pedestrian amenities and public spaces. Urban boulevards may be long corridors, typically four lanes. They may utilize vehicular and pedestrian access management techniques.

Figure 5.4: Commercial Boulevard



Source: *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: ITE Recommended Practice 2010*



### Residential Boulevard

<b>Context Zone:</b>	C4 – General Urban, C5 – Urban Center
<b>Functional Class:</b>	Arterial
<b>Street Type:</b>	Boulevard
<b>Mode Priority:</b>	Bicycle, Pedestrians, Transit, Auto
<b>ROW needed:</b>	50 - 68 feet
<b>Applicability:</b>	Arkadelphia Road – 10th Avenue West to U.S. 11/3rd Avenue West Lomb Avenue – Cotton Avenue SW to Norfolk Southern Rail Underpass Ensley Five Points West Avenue – Court R to Warrior Road Bush Boulevard West – Graymont Avenue to Pike Road Warrior Road – 40th Street Ensley to Avenue S Dennison Avenue Southwest – Jefferson Avenue Southwest to 14th Street Southwest
<b>Design Considerations:</b>	High levels of pedestrian activity Desire for generous pedestrian environment and public realm High volume and speed of through traffic Important transit functions Access needs for local businesses

### Overview

Residential Boulevards are typically larger walkable, low-speed (35 mph or less) thoroughfares with medians, and are designed to carry both through and local traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists. They serve a mix of regional and local traffic and serve as routes for goods movement, emergency response, and local or high frequency transit routes. Urban boulevards may be long corridors, typically four lanes. They also may utilize vehicular and pedestrian access management techniques.

Figure 5.5: Residential Boulevard



Source: NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide 2012

## Neighborhood Main Street

<b>Context Zone:</b>	C4 – General Urban, C5 – Urban Center
<b>Functional Class:</b>	Arterial, Collector
<b>Street Type:</b>	Avenue
<b>Mode Priority:</b>	Bicycle, Pedestrians, Transit
<b>ROW needed:</b>	48 feet
<b>Applicability:</b>	Princeton Parkway – U.S. 11/Bessemer Road to Lomb Avenue Donald Parkway/Avenue I – I-20./59 to Pike 8th Avenue North – I-65 to 5th Street North Tuscaloosa Avenue – 17th Street SW to 11th Street SW/Cotton Avenue SW Cotton Avenue SW – 11th Street SW/Tuscaloosa Avenue to Lomb Avenue Jefferson Avenue SW – Lincoln Avenue to Dennison Avenue SW

### Overview

Neighborhood main streets are a nexus of neighborhood life, with high pedestrian volumes, frequent parking turnover, key transit routes, and bicyclists all vying for limited space. Neighborhood Main Streets are typically located in the heart of a residential neighborhood. They are characterized by dense single-floor commercial and retail uses. They are often concentrated in an area only a few blocks long. Neighborhood Main Streets are the nucleus of neighborhood economies, providing residents with daily essentials, locally-owned businesses, and services ranging from banking to dry cleaning.

Neighborhood Main Streets are a meeting ground for residents. They should be designed to support gathering and community events such as farmers' markets and festivals. In addition they are characterized by public facilities such as libraries, as well as community and health centers.

REV Birmingham operates the City of Birmingham's Main Streets program. Main Street is a community-based, public-private partnership designed to revitalize and strengthen local business districts through strong organizational development, community participation, resident and merchant education, and sustainable development.

Figure 5.6: Neighborhood Main Street



Source: NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide 2012

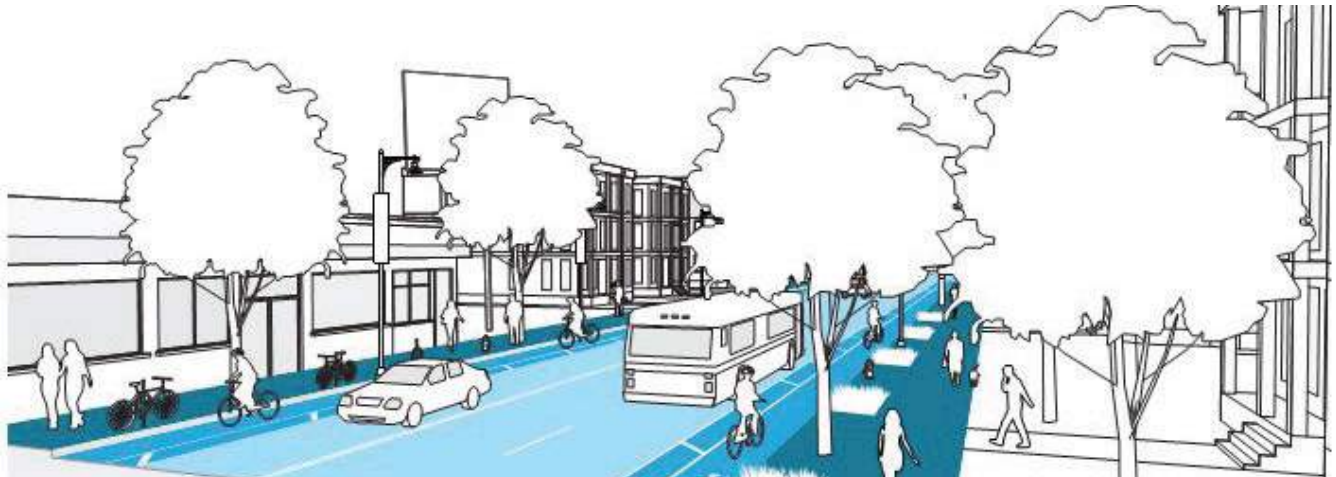
### Neighborhood Connector

<b>Context Zone:</b>	C4 – General Urban
<b>Functional Class:</b>	Arterial, Collector
<b>Street Type:</b>	Avenue
<b>Mode Priority:</b>	Bicycle, Pedestrian, Transit
<b>ROW needed:</b>	56 - 76 feet
<b>Applicability:</b>	Center Street – Bankhead Highway West to 1st Avenue South (Titusville) 8th Avenue W/Rev. Abraham Woods Jr. Boulevard – 1st Street North to 5th Street North 8th Avenue West – Arkadelphia Road to 7th Avenue West Graymont Avenue West – Jasper Road West to 5th Street North Graymont Avenue West – Arkadelphia Road to 6th Street SW Graymont Avenue W/Pike Road – Arkadelphia Road to Bush Boulevard West Cotton Avenue SW – Lomb Avenue to Center Street Pearson Avenue SW – Alameda Avenue SW to Jefferson Avenue SW Jefferson Avenue SW – Dennison Avenue SW to Cotton Avenue SW Jefferson Avenue SW – Lincoln Avenue SW to Pearson Avenue SW

### Overview

Neighborhood Connector Streets are through streets that traverse several neighborhoods and form the backbone of a multimodal street network. They provide continuous walking and bicycling routes and accommodate bus routes. While they are essential to the flow of people between neighborhoods, the needs of people passing through must be balanced with the needs of those who live and work along the street. In Birmingham, Neighborhood Connector Streets are typically two or three-lane streets. However, they may be up to four travel lanes in width. Land uses, speeds, and right-of-way widths can vary, and the street typology may change throughout the duration of the street. Design considerations include encouraging efficient movements of vehicle and transit traffic, continuous and comfortable bicycle facilities, wide sidewalks with sufficient buffers to motor vehicle traffic, and safe pedestrian crossings at intersections. Street lighting, tree plantings, street furniture, and other urban design elements should create a unifying identity for the entire street.

Figure 5.7: Neighborhood Connector



Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013



## Neighborhood Residential

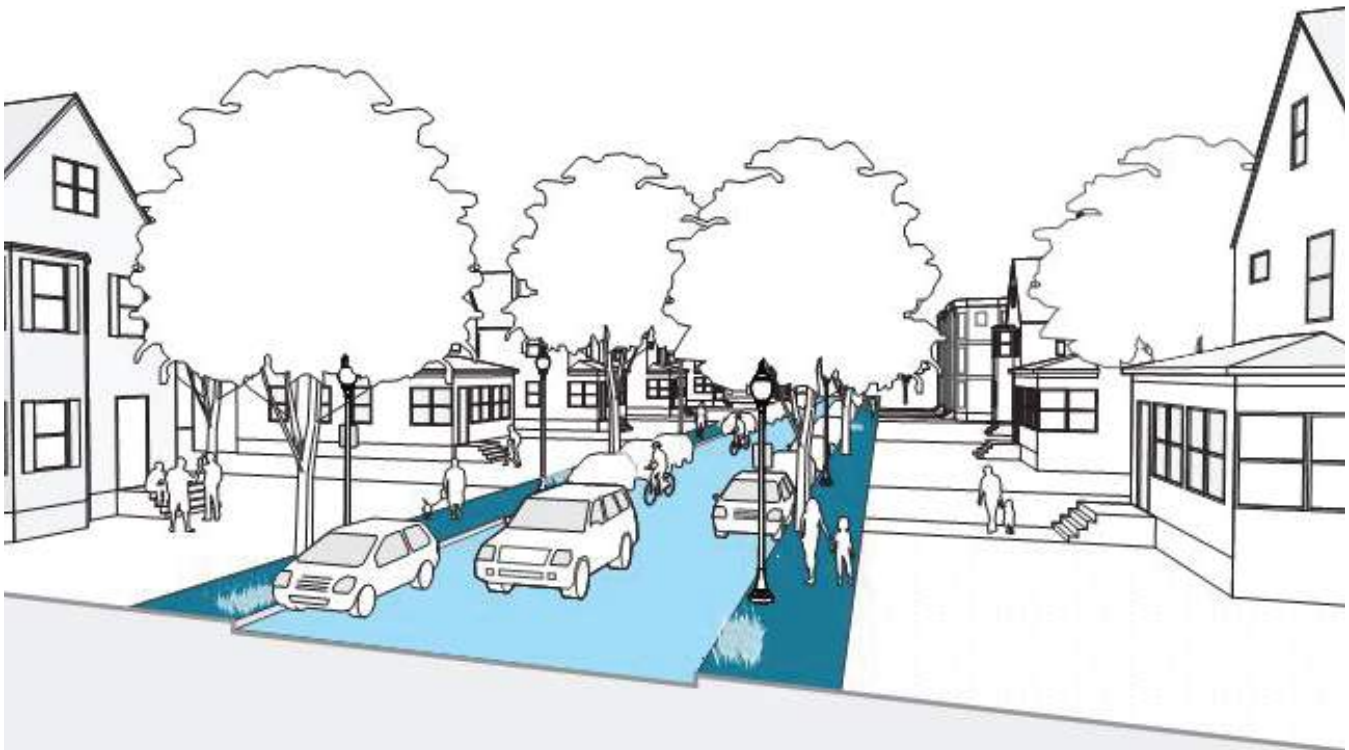
<b>Context Zone:</b>	C4 – General Urban
<b>Functional Class:</b>	Collector, Local
<b>Street Type:</b>	Street
<b>Mode Priority:</b>	Bicycle, Pedestrian
<b>ROW needed:</b>	48 feet
<b>Applicability:</b>	All local streets serving residential neighborhoods

### Overview

Neighborhood Residential Streets provide access to Birmingham’s residential neighborhoods serving both single family and multifamily homes. These streets are used primarily for local trips and are characterized by lower vehicle and should provide safe and inviting places to walk with direct access to local stores and schools. They are often underutilized as spaces for play and leisure. They often have on-street residential permit parking. The primary role of Neighborhood Residential Streets is to contribute to a high quality of life for residents of the city. Typically they are not more than two travel lanes (one in each direction) and are not intended for through-traffic

The design of Residential Streets focuses on encouraging slow speeds. The emphasis is on pedestrian safety, space for children to play, ample street trees, and well defined walking and bicycling paths to nearby parks, bus stops, community centers, and libraries.

Figure 5.8: Neighborhood Residential



Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013

### Shared Street

<b>Context Zone:</b>	C4 – General Urban
<b>Functional Class:</b>	Local
<b>Street Type:</b>	Street
<b>Mode Priority:</b>	Bicycle, Pedestrians
<b>ROW needed:</b>	48 feet
<b>Applicability:</b>	Warrior Road – Ensley Five Points West Avenue to Avenue X Tuscaloosa Avenue – 11th Street SW to Lomb Avenue

### Overview

A Shared Street is a street with a single grade or surface that is shared by people using all modes of travel at slow speeds. Curbs are removed, and the sidewalk is blended with the roadway. Speeds are slow enough to allow for pedestrians to intermingle with bicycles, motor vehicles, and even transit. Shared Streets are applicable to residential streets and commercial alleyways. Neighborways i.e. Bike Boulevards are also a type of shared street.

Overall, the primary design consideration for Shared Streets is maintaining slow vehicular speeds (no more than 15 mph) in order to minimize the potential for conflicts with pedestrians. Entrances to Shared Streets are usually raised and often narrowed to one lane in order to force drivers to slow before entering. Chicanes can be used to help regulate vehicular speeds along the length of the street, and can be formed using trees, benches, plantings, play areas, and parking areas that are laid out in an alternating pattern to deflect and slow traffic.

**Commercial Shared Streets** - Commercial shared streets maintain access for vehicles operating at low speeds and are designed to permit easy loading and unloading for trucks at designated hours. They are designed to implicitly slow traffic speeds using pedestrian volumes, design, and other cues to slow or divert traffic.

Textured or pervious pavements that are flush with the curb reinforce the pedestrian-priority operation of the street and delineate a non-linear path of travel. Street furniture, including bollards, benches, planters, street lights, sculptures, trees, and bicycle parking, may be sited to provide definition for a shared space, subtly delineating the traveled way from the pedestrian-exclusive area. Note: Commercial shared streets restrict transit access. For pedestrian streets that provide direct transit access,

**Residential Shared Streets** - Low-volume residential streets, especially in older cities, often have narrow or crumbling sidewalks. Many of these streets operate de facto as shared spaces, in which children play and people walk, sharing the roadway with drivers.

Depending on the residential street's volume and role in the traffic network, these streets have the potential to be redesigned and enhanced as shared streets. Shared streets can meet the desires of adjacent residents and function foremost as a public space for recreation, socializing, and leisure.



Figure 5.9: Commercial Shared Street



Source: NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide 2012

Figure 5.10: Residential Shared Street



Source: NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide 2012

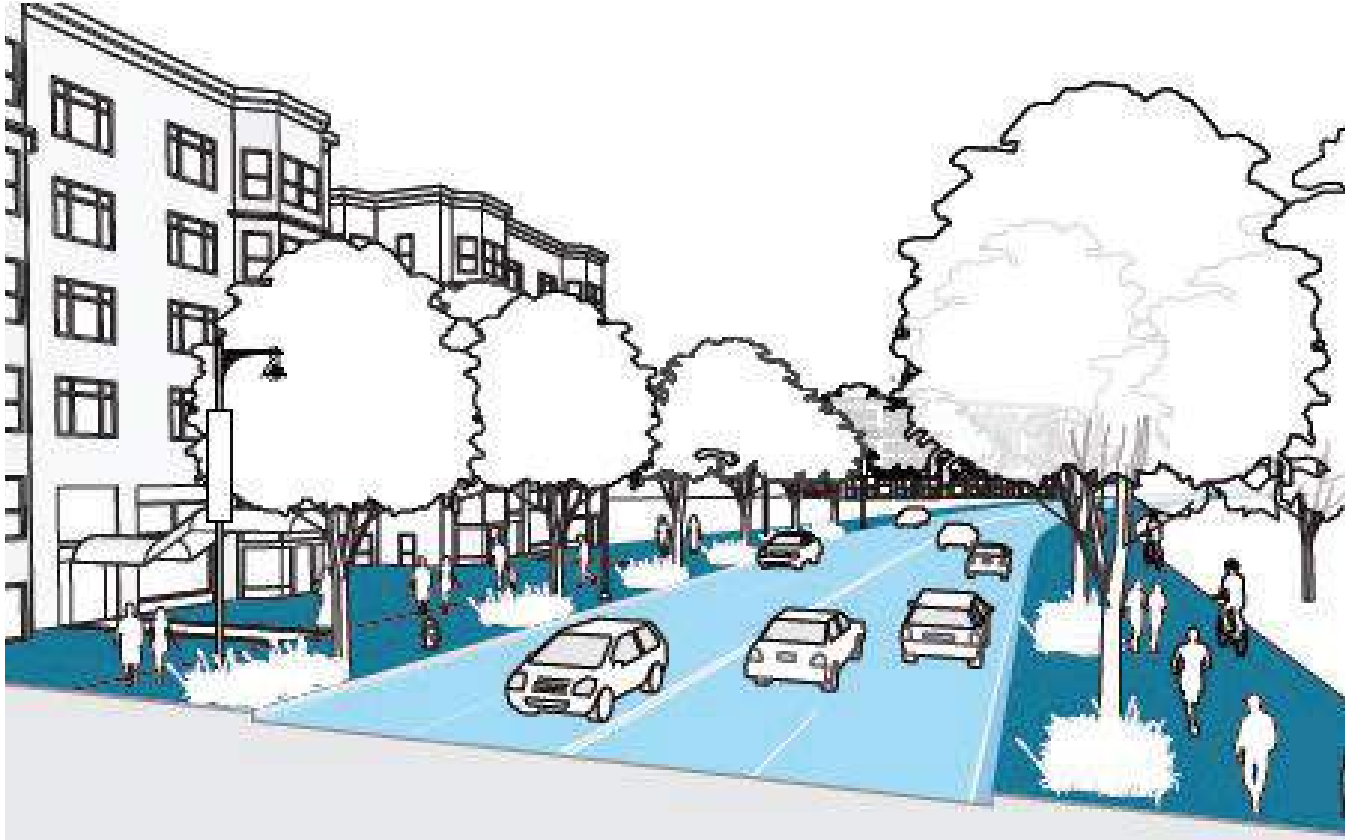
### Parkway

<b>Context Zone:</b>	C3 – Suburban, C4 – General Urban
<b>Functional Class:</b>	
<b>Street Type:</b>	Parkway
<b>Mode Priority:</b>	Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit
<b>ROW needed:</b>	50 - 68 feet
<b>Applicability:</b>	8th Avenue West – 1st Street West to 6th Street West 8th Avenue West – Graymont Avenue West to Arkadelphia Road Graymont Avenue West – Jasper Road West to 6th Street West 8th Avenue West/Bush Boulevard – Arkadelphia Road to Pike Road

### Overview

Parkways are typically four lane higher-speed roads, characterized by long, uninterrupted stretches running parallel to an open space system. Parkway have fewer intersections, which is convenient for motor vehicles. However, the combination of higher speeds and longer distances between signalized crossings can make Parkways difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross. It is extremely important to provide safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle accommodations at intersections along Parkways. Parkways do not provide transit accommodations or on-street parking.

Figure 5.11: Parkway



Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013

## ACTION 2: IMPROVE INTERSECTIONS TO ENHANCE THEIR MULTIMODAL LEVEL OF SERVICE.

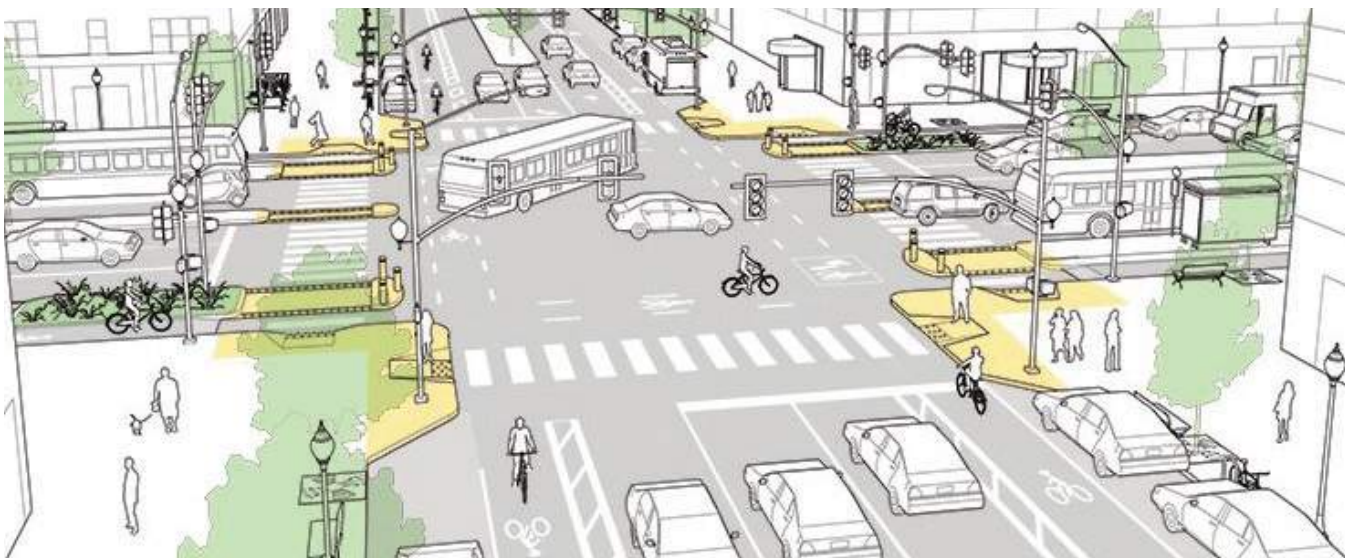
Multimodal intersections operate with pedestrians, bicycles, cars, buses and trucks. The diverse uses of intersections involve a high level of activity and shared space. Intersections have the unique characteristic of accommodating the almost-constant occurrence of conflicts between all modes, and most collisions on thoroughfares take place at intersections. This characteristic is the basis for most intersection design standards, particularly for safety.

Redesigning major intersections requires designers to critically evaluate the tools and trade-offs available to make an intersection work better for everyone. Different design elements of the roadway environment impact the basic needs of travelers. Unfortunately, several elements that improve conditions for one mode can have the effect of reducing the quality of service for other modes.

Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS), also termed “quality of service,” provides a set of tools that can be used to measure how well intersections perform for various modes. In the context of intersections, Figures 5.13 - 5.16 illustrate the elements that matter most to each mode, as well as a discussion of the tradeoffs faced with trying to balance the needs of safety, convenience, and minimal delay for all users.

The intersection of two major streets can act as both a barrier to travelers and a node for economic opportunity. Likewise, intersections of major and minor streets also can be both a barrier and a node where the minor streets lack similar levels of definition, safety, and clarity as major intersections. Bicyclists and pedestrians, though legally permitted to cross at these locations, are implicitly discouraged from doing so through design. Vehicles often fail to yield at these locations and have few design cues to suggest they should.

Figure 5.12: Major Street Intersection with Major Street



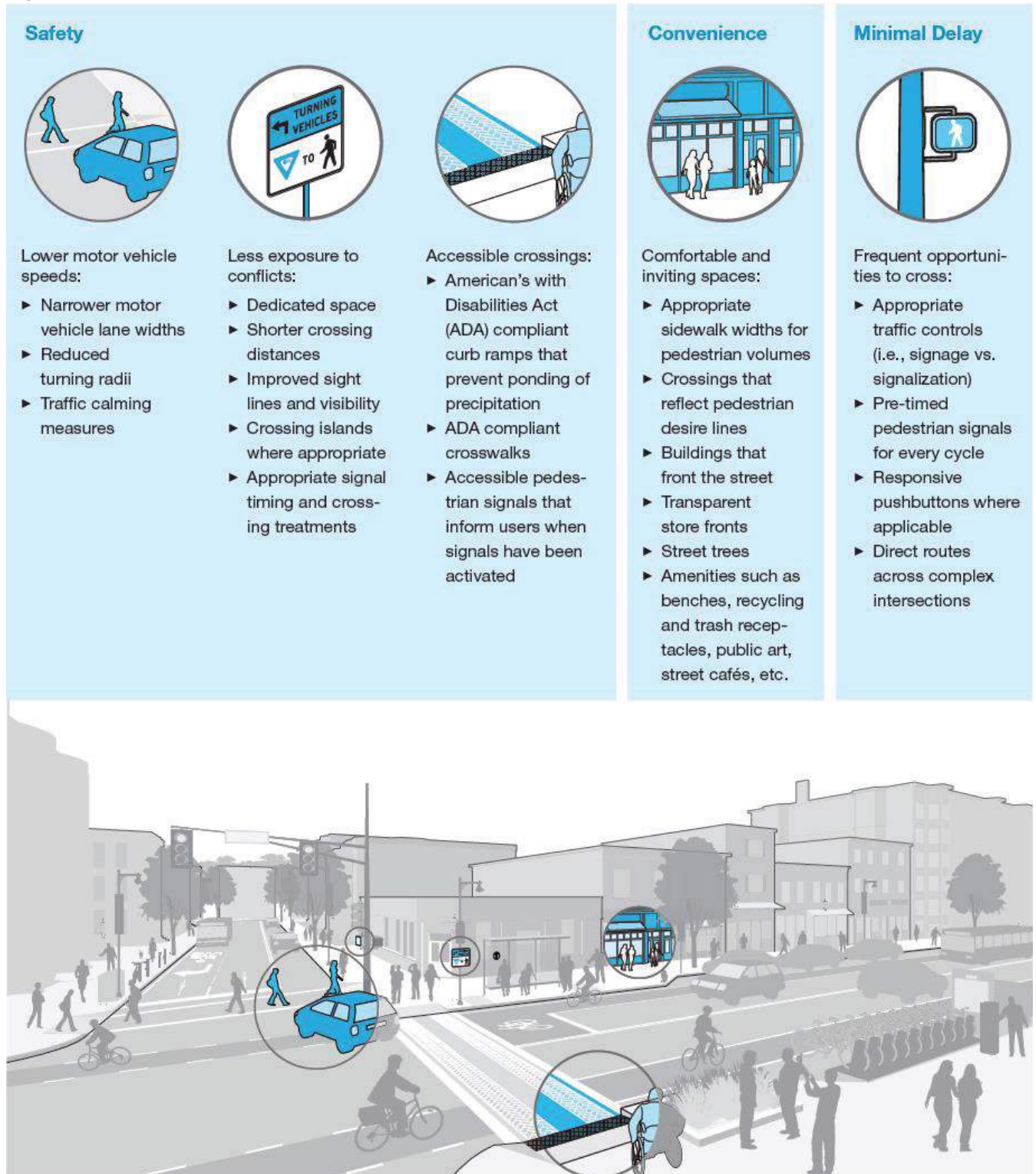
Source: NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide 2012



## Pedestrian Experience

The primary needs of pedestrians at intersections include:

Figure 5.13

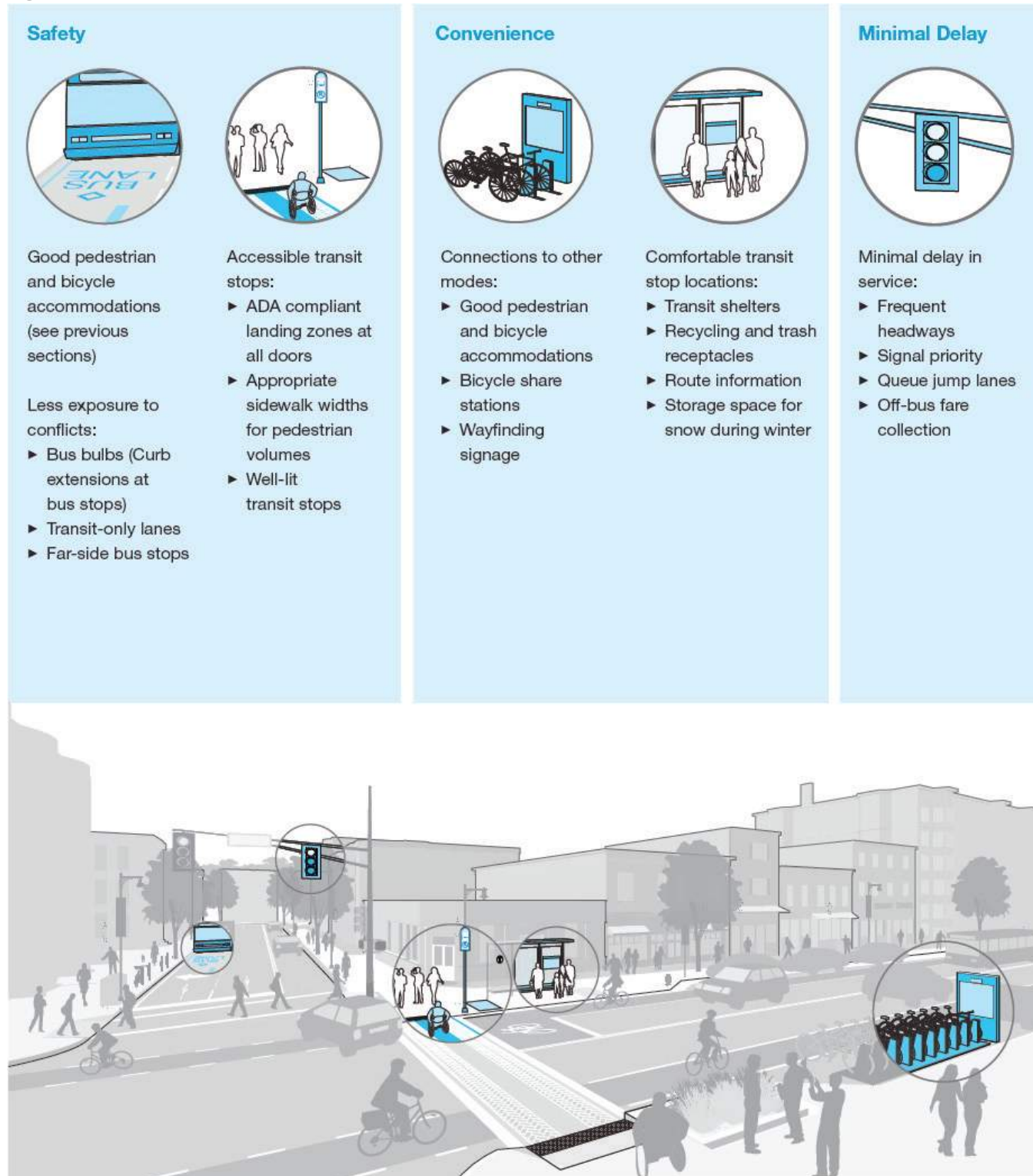


Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013

## Transit User Experience

The primary needs of transit users at intersections include:

Figure 5.14



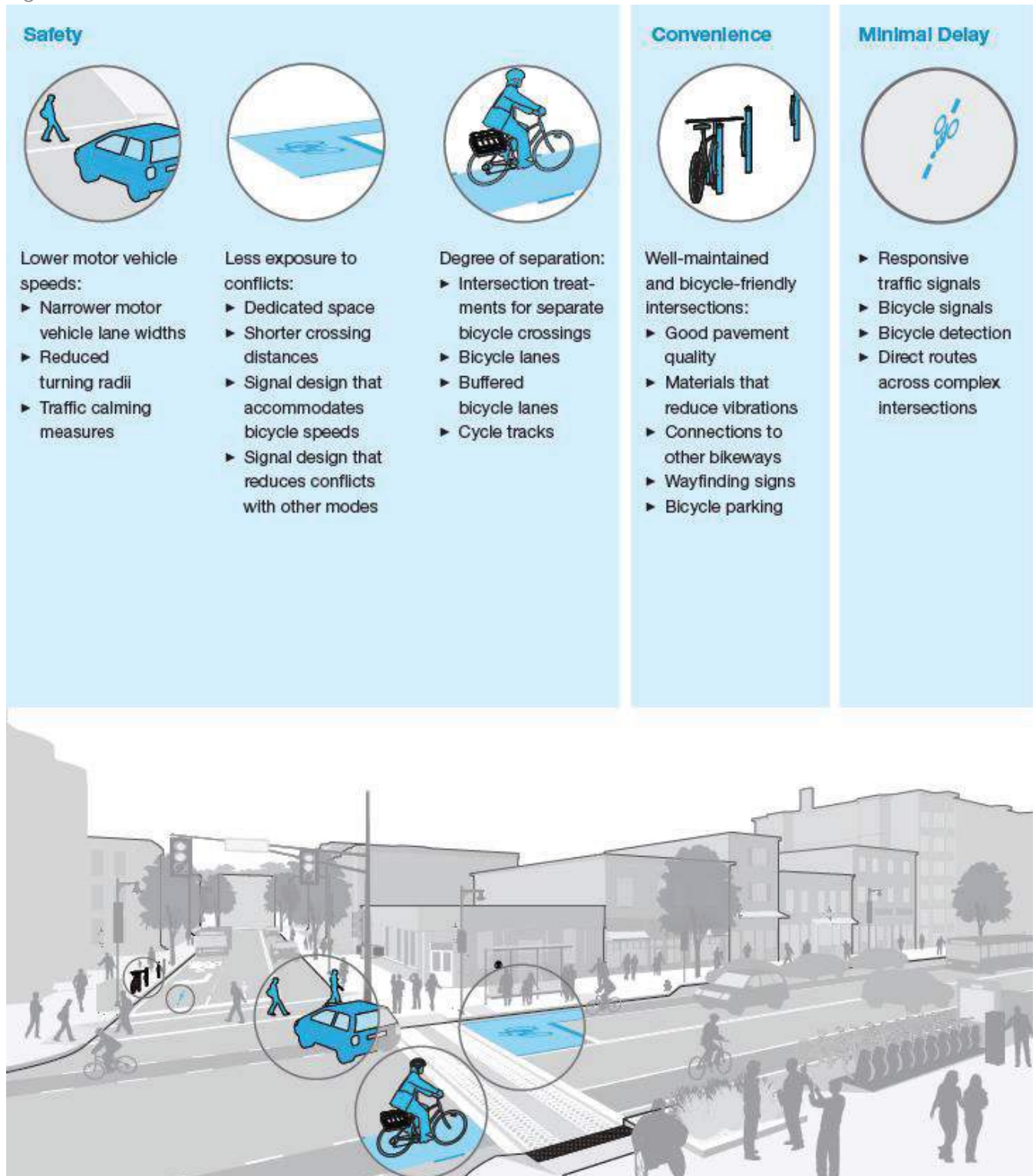
Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013



## Bicycle Experience

The primary needs of pedestrians at intersections include:

Figure 5.15

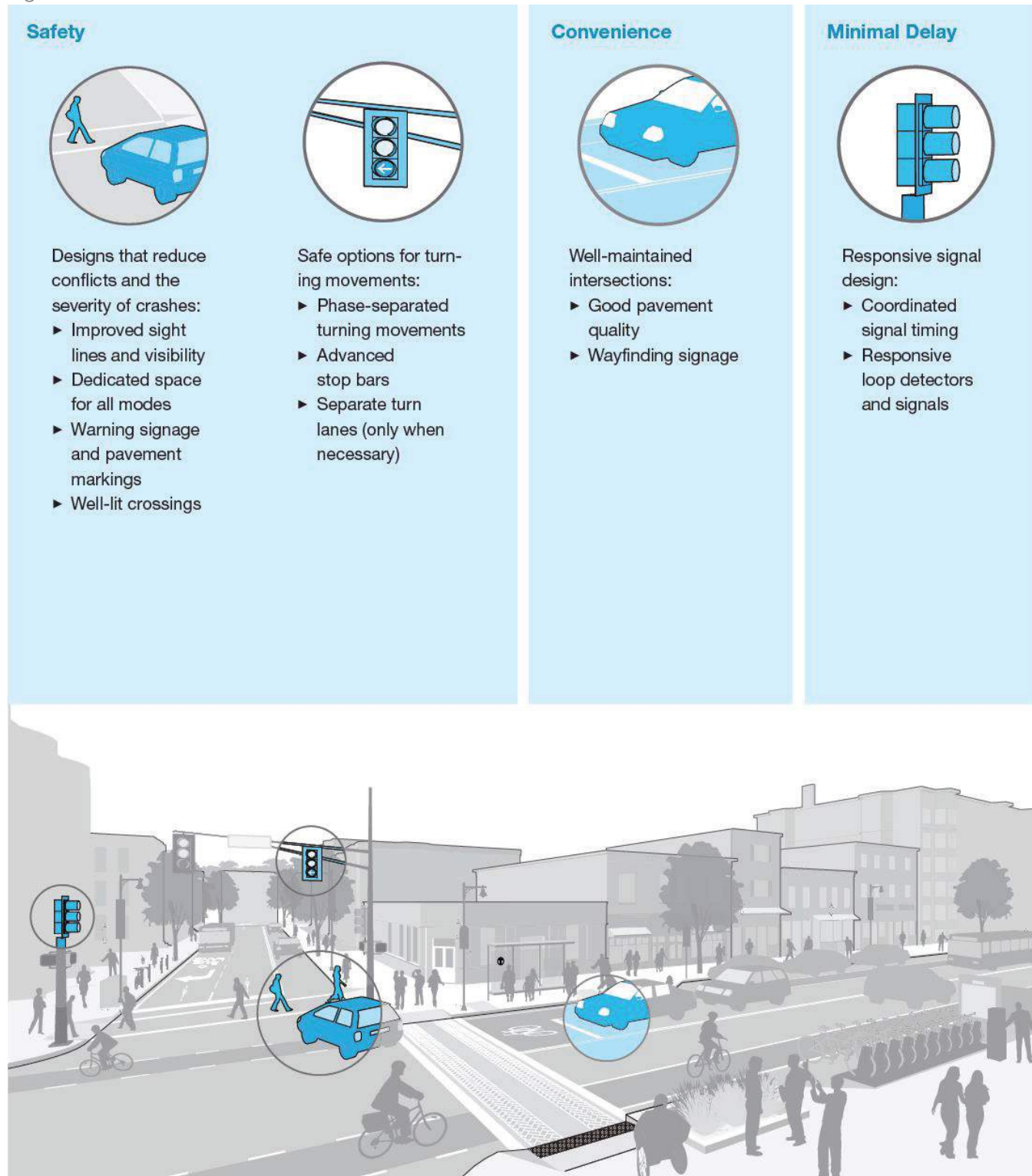


Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013

## Motorist Experience

The primary needs of motorists at intersections include:

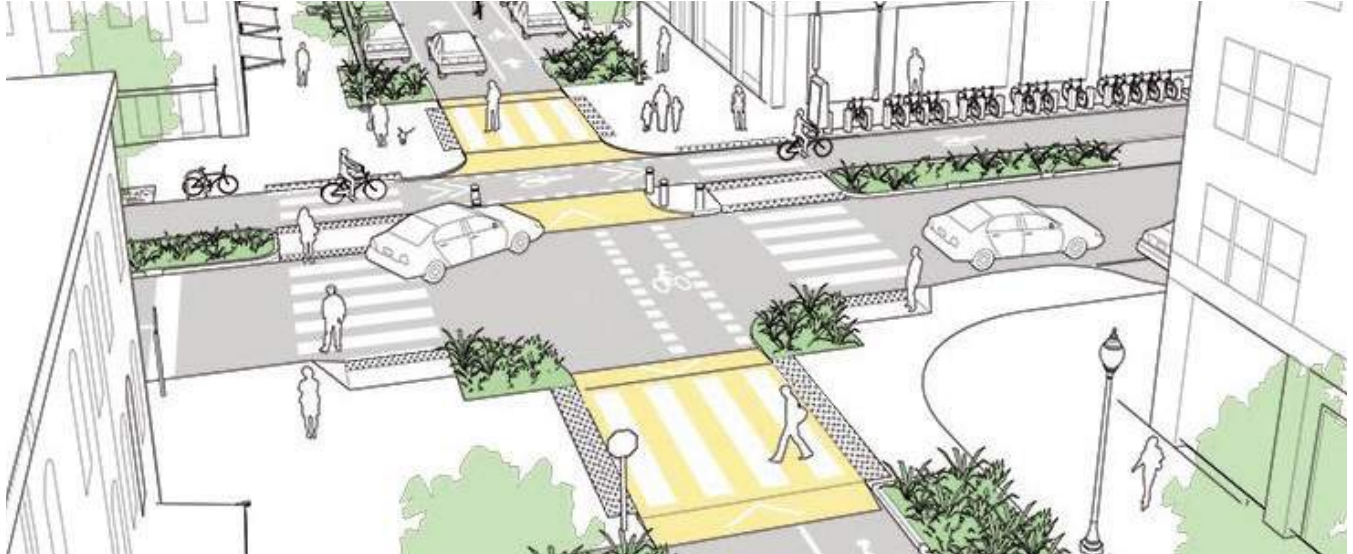
Figure 5.16



Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013

Where major streets meet minor streets, it is imperative to define the transition in street type and context using “gateway” treatments. Gateway treatments might include curb extensions, raised crossings, and tight curb radii. Design elements should be used so that people turning from the major to the minor street become aware they are entering a slow speed environment.

Figure 5.17: Intersection of Major and Minor Streets



Source: NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide 2012

Intersection design should emphasize slow speeds and manage conflicts through appropriate traffic control and improved visibility. It is important that intersections on streets located in major and neighborhood scale activity centers (business/commercial districts, retail centers, etc.), as well as residential areas, emphasize pedestrian convenience as these types of streets encourage frequent crossing. Addressing these issues, particularly in the Five Points West area near the Birmingham Crossplex, is of utmost importance as there is a good deal of existing pedestrian traffic, and even more pedestrian and cyclist traffic expected in the future.

Good intersection design also encourages compactness. A compact intersection is one with short crossing distances, and uses curb extensions where possible. Curb-return radii should be minimized and based on selected design and control vehicles. In addition, crosswalks need to be allowed on all approaches of the intersection. In highly developed urban areas, midblock crossings are usually not necessary due to short block lengths. However, they may be considered where blocks are unusually long and there is a demonstrated demand to cross.

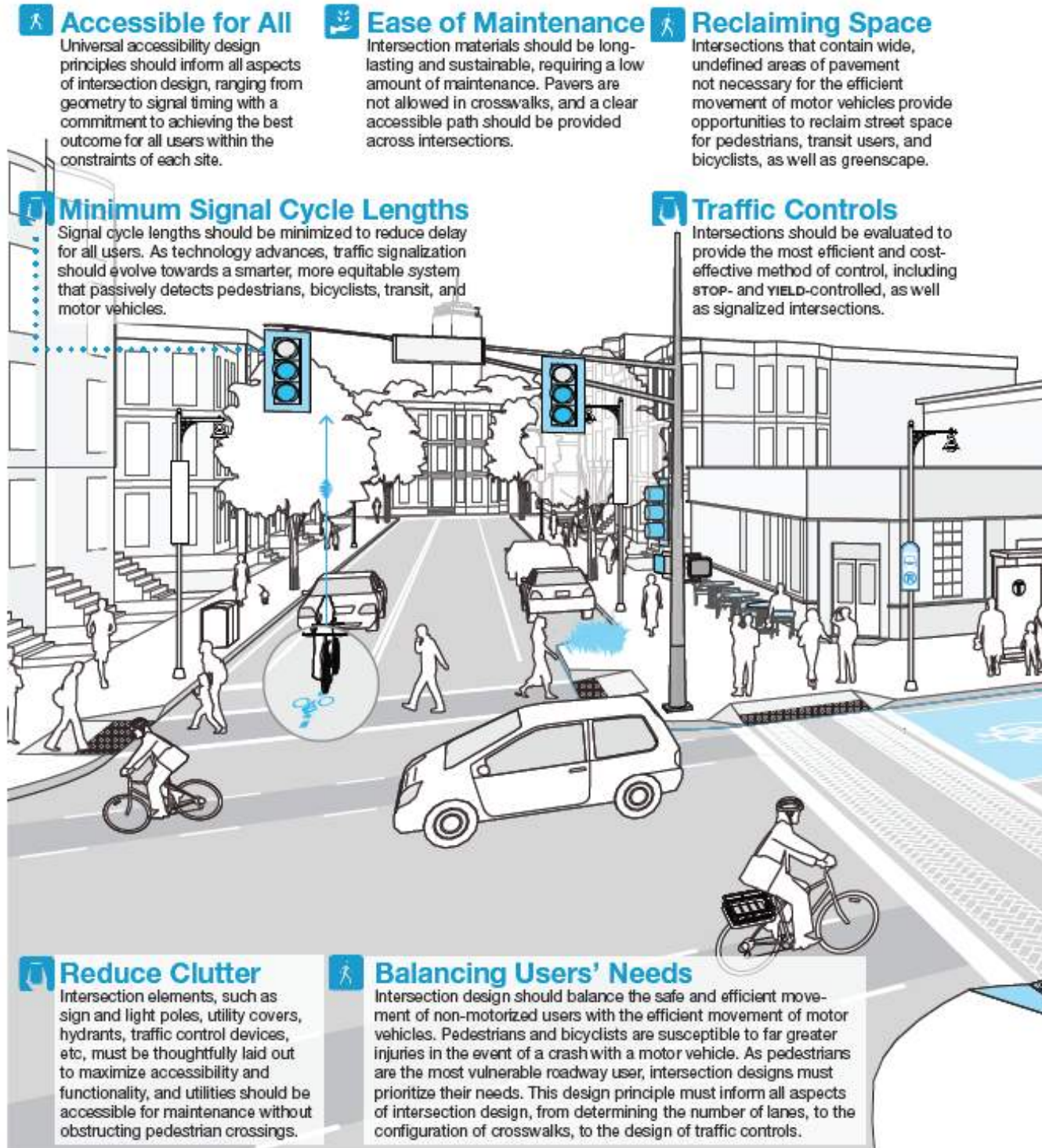
It should be noted, that intersection design extends well beyond the immediate intersection and encompasses the approaches, medians, streetside and driveways, and adjacent land uses. Figure 5.18 and 5.19 illustrate some of the major considerations that should be taken into account when designing high traffic urban intersections.

**Disclaimer:** While many of the Western Area’s residents highlighted their concern for pedestrian safety, care should be taken when placing these at uncontrolled intersections within residential areas. Common engineering practice is to exclude marked crosswalks from intersections without traffic control approaching the crossing. This is due to a number of factors including avoiding a false sense of security provided by crosswalks when traffic is uncontrolled, encouraging pedestrian caution when legally crossing at intersections without crosswalks, as well as raising liability and maintenance concerns.



## Intersection Design Principles

Figure 5.18

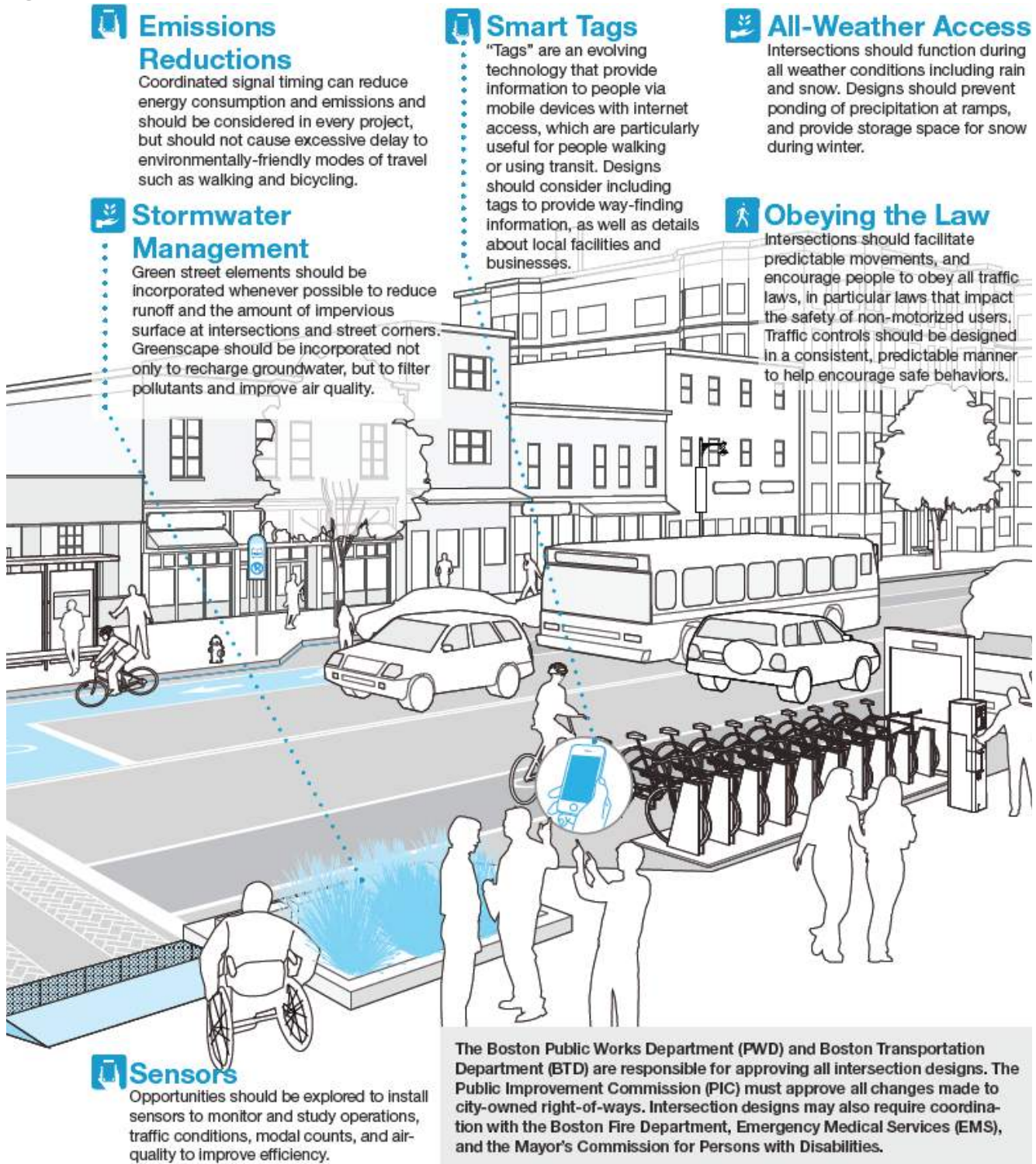


Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013



## Intersection Design Principles

Figure 5.19



Source: Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines 2013

## STRATEGY C: PLAN FOR TRANSIT.

### ACTION 1: PLAN FOR BUS-RAPID TRANSIT AS A HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT SERVICE.

In 2011, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham initiated the Southwest Corridor Transit Study. The study, which undertaken as part of a larger regional system plan, evaluated transportation in the Jones Valley corridor following U.S. Highway 11/Bessemer Road from the City of Birmingham's downtown to the Jefferson/Tuscaloosa County line. The corridor is bounded by I-20/59 to the north and Red Mountain to the south.

The intent of the Southwest Corridor Transit Study was to evaluate the feasibility of premium transit improvements, and to provide recommendations about the type of transit services warranted. The study identified the most appropriate alignment and configuration, as well as transit station locations. In addition to addressing transportation planning, the study also examined the opportunities for transit to catalyze land redevelopment, especially at key transit station locations. In doing so, the proposed transit services might leverage transit to support community renewal and spur economic development.

The resulting transit service that was recommended as part of the study is Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). BRT is a high-quality transit system with fast, comfortable, and cost-effective service. A BRT works well because of the provision of dedicated lanes, with busways and iconic stations, off-board fare collection, and fast and frequent operations.

BRT, more than any other mode, provides many of the same benefits that a light rail system would, but at a fraction of the cost. Because BRT contains features similar to a light rail or metro system, it is much more reliable, convenient and faster than regular bus services. With the right features, BRT is able to avoid the causes of delay that typically slow regular bus services, such as being stuck in traffic and queuing to pay on board.

The preferred alignment for the proposed Southwest BRT corridor generally follows U.S. 11/Bessemer Road, Lomb Avenue, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and 6th Avenue South. A recommended transit with trail alignment following the Jones Valley Rail Greenway between Avenue W and Lomb Avenue is also recommended to provide a dedicated guideway between the Western Area's two major activity centers. The BRT alignment was chosen on the basis of serving the greatest number of potential riders and the ability to connect key activity centers while simultaneously supporting concepts for future land uses and redevelopment plans.

The proposed Southwest BRT will link the Western Area communities with the Titusville Community and downtown Birmingham. It will link with the proposed In-town Transit Partnership (ITP) project along 6th Avenue South. The new BRT system will be bolstered by connections to local bus service that serve the communities surrounding the primary transit corridor. Figure XX. highlights the Southwest Corridor BRT alignment as it travels through the West End and Five Points West.

### ACTION 2: PLAN FOR TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT.

There is an opportunity to develop parts of neighborhoods located along the proposed Southwest BRT corridor as transit neighborhoods following transit-oriented development guidelines. Transit oriented development (TOD) is a type of community development that includes a mixture of housing, office, retail and other amenities integrated into a walkable neighborhood and located within a half-mile of quality public transportation. TOD seeks to capture the real estate market potential from increase human activity and quality accessibility to a large travelshed and convert that potential into desirable, attractive urban centers with a mix of shops, services, civic spaces, employment and residences. Historically, once critical mass in the development is reached, TODs grow to become hubs of sub-regional and even regional growth in terms of jobs and housing.

TOD can take many forms. TOD may include new development. It also may incorporate existing buildings and land uses around which other development might occur. The scale of TOD is dependent upon many factors. This includes:

- The primary type of transit technology around which the TOD is constructed
- The level of ridership at a given station
- The nature and character of development at the station location and in the surrounding areas, and
- The real estate market conditions

Regardless, TOD does refer to a common set of objectives that can be achieved through integrated planning and reinvestment through a partnership of the public and private sectors. In a sense, this approach helps to make a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

**TOD Characteristics in the Western Area** – The Western Area’s communities, Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West, have “good bones.” These communities have a strong urban form complete with gridded streets, dense development, and pedestrian scale buildings, help to make the neighborhood walkable, and makes it an ideal place to develop into a public transportation node. This is especially true for the neighborhood’s immediately adjacent to and surrounding the Five Points West business district near the intersection of Bessemer Road and Avenue W.

There are several different TOD characteristics. TOD is characterized by the development context adjacent to and surrounding transit station. They may be characterized by density (low, medium, or high density), land uses (residential, retail, institutional, etc.), location (urban, suburban), or development character (employment center, convention center, etc.). A combination of these also might be used to establish TOD typologies.

The Southwest Corridor Transit Study identified six different station typologies, of which three are used within the Western Area Framework Plan study area. They are:

- **Special Activity Center (SC)** - The Special Activity Center (SC) TOD typology refers to a special activity center use which tends to dominate the land uses surrounding a station. Examples in the Western Area Framework Plan study area include Princeton Baptist Medical Center and the Birmingham Crossplex.
- **Urban Neighborhood (UN)** - The Urban Neighborhood (UN) TOD typology relates to a largely residential pattern of land uses around the transit station. These are typified by two to four (2-4)

story residential structures. Some of these structures, especially the ones located on major streets, contain first floor retail and/or offices. The higher density housing is also surrounded by other medium density single family or multifamily residential uses.

- **Suburban Mixed Use Center (SMC)** - The Suburban Mixed Use Center (SMC) TOD typology is similar in characteristic as the Urban Neighborhood TOD, except that there are more characteristics of a suburban setting with lower overall development densities. The SMC TOD is typified by one to two (1-2) story residential structures, buildings with substantial setbacks, and a parking supply that is positioned away from the street frontages i.e. parking on the side or rear.

Figure 5.21 on page 121 illustrates the location of proposed Southwest Corridor BRT stations and their associated TOD typologies, as identified by the Southwest Corridor Transit Study that have application within the Western Area. Table 5.7 provides a listing of all the recommended transit stations, their typology, and their features.

Table 5.7: Southwest BRT Stations and TOD Typology

No.	Travel Lanes	Target Operating Speed	Median	Driveway Access
1.	Princeton Medical Center	Lomb Avenue	Tuscaloosa Avenue	SMC
2.	Jones Valley Trail	Lomb Avenue	Jones Valley Trail Head	UN
3.	Five Points West/ Crossplex	TBD	TBD	SMC
4.	Central Park	U.S. 11/Bessemer Road	Court S	UN
5.	Bellview Heights	U.S. 11/Bessemer Road	Court O	UN
6.	Green Acres	U.S. 11/Bessemer Road	57th Street Ensley	UN

### ACTION 3: ENHANCE PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE DELIVERY.

Public transit services are an important form of transportation for many Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West residents. At present, there are nine existing Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA) MAX bus routes that either serve or pass through the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities. They are:

- Route 1 – South Bessemer
- Rout 1X – South Bessemer Express
- Route 3 – Jefferson -Wenonah
- Route 5 – Ensley – Wylam – West Ensley
- Route 6 – Pratt Ensley
- Route 38 – Graymont
- Route 41 – Fairfield
- Route 45 - Bessemer
- Route 95 – West End Shuttle



All of these routes have origins and destinations in downtown Birmingham, at the BJCTA's Central Station. However, previous transit planning work conducted as part of the Southwest Corridor Transit Alternatives Analysis, along with input received as part of the framework plan's public meeting process, largely discussed the need to streamline transit services and to improve service delivery.

A common complaint among study area residents, who also are transit riders, is that transit services are infrequent, and as such inconvenient as a source of transportation to and from employment, services, and opportunities. Residents noted that all buses had to go into downtown Birmingham, complicating simple intra-community trips and adding significant time that travelers indicated that they could devote to other activities.

The Western Area Framework Plan recommends that transit services for the Western Area be streamlined in order to improve service delivery and efficiency. This includes:

- **Streamline Local Bus Transit Service Delivery** - The Western Area Framework Plan recommends that the transit services in Smithfield, West End and the Five Points West communities be streamlined to improve service delivery and efficiency. The Southwest Corridor Transit Study, a transit alternatives analysis for the U.S. 11/Bessemer Road corridor conducted by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB), recommended that BJCTA Route 3 Jefferson-Wenonah and Route 41 Fairfield be "linked" in order to provide cross-town connection, enabling travelers to access neighborhoods north and south of the U.S. 11/Bessemer Road area without having to first travel into downtown Birmingham. Ideally, this "linked" route would operate out of the proposed Five Points West "super stop" -- a transit transfer center located at or near the Birmingham Crossplex. This streamlined route also would provide to the proposed Southwest BRT corridor.

Another key recommendation of the Southwest Corridor Transit Study is for BJCTA to consider strategies to interconnect its bus routes with other transportation modes. This would include bus routes connecting to bus routes, but also improving interfaces with the existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian networks.

- **Improve Community Shuttle Services** - The West End Shuttle (Route 95) can be significantly improved. Eliminating a number of turns within the Five Points West Community and linking the shuttle to activity center via the proposed super stops in both the Five Points West and the Heritage Town Center (Titusville) will also help to streamline service delivery.

Other variations of how Route 95 might be operated include:

**Flex Route Service** - Flex routes offer commuters a reservation-free ride during morning and evening commutes, picking up and dropping off riders at scheduled stops and times along the route. Specific stops within the Western Area's communities would be designated for this service.

**Subscription Service** – Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities' residents will be able to purchase subscriptions to the service. This type of service would support individuals who need to make recurring trips at the same time and location, and is ideal for older individuals who make recurring medical or social service trips, but who do not qualify for BJCTA's VIP paratransit services. It is also ideal for late night travelers, specifically those individuals who are going to or coming home from work. As envisioned in this recommendation, once subscribed, riders will be picked up and dropped off on their schedule until they cancel the subscription.

#### **ACTION 4: CONSTRUCT A TRANSIT SUPER STOP IN FIVE POINTS WEST.**

The Five Points West Super Stop is proposed to be an intermodal transit transfer center located at or in very close proximity to the Birmingham Crossplex facility. Identified as a Special Activity Center in the Southwest Corridor Transit Study, the Five Points West Super Stop also has characteristics of a suburban mixed use center. Some features of a super stop include:

- On-street location for multiple bus routes
- Bus pull-off to permit dwell time outside of travel lane
- Safe and easy transfer between buses especially for ADA customers
- Shelters based upon passenger demand
- Transit information (real time and graphics)

BJCTA Routes 5 (Ensley – Wylam – West Ensley), 6 (Pratt Ensley), 38 (Graymont), and 95 (West End Shuttle) also might be streamlined in order that they might operate out of the proposed Five Points West super stop. Having the identified bus routes operate out of the proposed super stop would enable the BJCTA to increase the frequency of service, potentially reducing headways to 30-minute service during the day, and eventually to 20-minute service in peak hours. Such improvements will enhance overall transit ridership as much of the Western Area is transit-reliant. These improvements also will help to enhance ridership on the proposed Southwest BRT service and the existing express routes as the identified local bus routes all will serve as feeder lines to the BRT service. Finally, the identified local bus routes will improve community residents' access to key destinations and the Red Rock trail system.

#### **ACTION 5: IMPROVE LOCAL TRANSIT STOPS AND AMENITIES.**

The Western Area Framework Plan calls for improvements to the public transit services. As part of this effort, bus stops and shelters are recommended to be improved, upgraded to reflect the modern city that Birmingham is striving to become. Improvements to bus stops and shelters will help to change the character of the community. Visually appealing bus stops will offer transit riders a safe and physically comfortable wait experience. Transit stops also should include a higher level of design to provide additional comfort and amenities to encourage ridership. Additionally, transit technology provisions and other passenger amenities/enhancements i.e. Next Bus™, bike racks, security cameras, etc. should be incorporated into the improved transit stops in order to accommodate future transit services.



*Bus Shelter (Source: Brasco.com)*

## Western Area Communities' Framework Plan



## STRATEGY D: FISCALLY AND PHYSICALLY INVEST IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.

### ACTION 1: DEVELOP A CAPITAL MAINTENANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM.

The construction and maintenance of key physical infrastructure is a core function of municipal government. Infrastructure and capital assets allow for the delivery of public services and the movement of goods across the city, both essential components in fostering the city's long-term economic growth. Like most U.S. cities, fiscal challenges are ever present. These fiscal challenges have, at times, resulted in Birmingham deferring investment in new and existing infrastructure.

The Western Area Framework Plan recommends that the City of Birmingham develop a multi-year capital maintenance and infrastructure program that will prioritize infrastructure projects, identify potential funding sources, and provide a discussion of both the costs to maintain city assets, as well as the costs/impacts of deferred maintenance.

Infrastructure investment priorities specific to the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities should strive to promote equity, strengthen the economy, and promote public health and safety. As such, infrastructure proposed for funding in the city's infrastructure plan be consistent with these planning priorities:

- Promote infill development and equity by rehabilitating, maintaining, and improving existing infrastructure
- Reuse previously developed and underutilized land, particularly in underserved areas
- Encourage efficient development patterns by ensuring that new infrastructure be located in an area appropriately planned for growth, served by adequate transportation and services minimizes ongoing costs to taxpayers.

Developing a capital maintenance and infrastructure program also will help the city to allocate dollars from its General Fund and leverage state and federal transportation dollars as well as private investment.

### ACTION 2: IMPLEMENT AN ALLEYWAY CLEANUP PROGRAM.

The City of Birmingham has an abundance of alleyways. This is especially true in the Smithfield, West End, and Five Points West communities. Like most cities, alleyways are looked upon with disdain, fear, and loathing as they are perceived to be havens for dumping unwanted items and crime. Alleyways, however, can become assets for the transportation system, helping to shape urban form and improve urban design, as well as facilitating safe and convenient travel. Alleyways can also help to manage stormwater.

The Western Area Framework Plan recommends that the City of Birmingham implement an Alleyway Cleanup Program. This proposed program will incorporate green streets concepts, helping to strengthen the City's green infrastructure. Alleyways often run parallel to the larger street network, making them ideal low-speed, low-volume links for cyclists. They also may be operated as pedestrian-only environments or as shared streets, a street with a single grade or surface that is shared by people using all modes of travel at slow speeds. From a traveler safety perspective, alleyways provide direct property access and eliminate the need for driveways along main roads eliminating conflicts with people who are walking and biking.

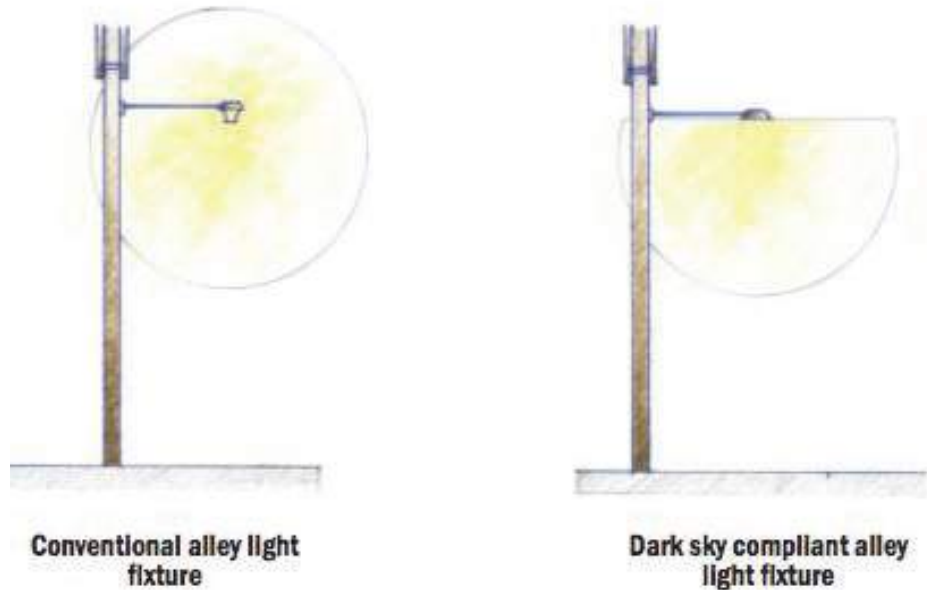


While alleys can serve as low-speed connections for bicyclists, careful attention must be paid to visibility at all intersection crossings. Enhanced intersection crossing treatments should be considered where bicyclists may have limited visibility. Additionally, in order to maintain a safe environment, alleys should have adequate lighting.

Pedestrian-scale light fixtures that focus their illumination toward the ground and minimize light pollution are recommended. Public safety is of paramount consideration for all new and existing alleys. Good lighting is an essential prerequisite to a feeling of public safety in alleys.

The proposed Alleyway Cleanup Program also is compatible with the City of Birmingham's RISE Initiative. While the framework plan recommends that alleyways be maintained for transportation purposes, it might not be feasible or desired to do so. The Alleyway Cleanup Program

would empower adjacent property owners to take steps to partially or fully close the alleyway for greening projects, creating linear pocket parks and connecting neighbors.



*Location: Chicago, IL, Credit: The Chicago Green Alley Handbook, Illustration by Hitchcock Design Group (Source: Urban Street Design Guide. National Association of City Transportation Officials).*

### **ACTION 3: ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES.**

Competing spending priorities and the need to maintain the Birmingham's long-term fiscal stability means the General Fund cannot afford to shoulder the costs of all potential infrastructure investments. Instead, the city must focus its limited infrastructure dollars on core priorities and responsibilities.

In order to advance many of the framework plan's transportation initiatives, the city has offered to partner with residents, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector on the development and implementation of some key projects. Initiatives such as the green streets and clean alleyway recommendations contained herein might be advanced as a partnership between the City of Birmingham's Public Works Department's horticulturalist, the Stormwater Management Department, and neighborhood associations and garden clubs. Initiatives for main street development might be spearheaded by the local merchants association. Likewise, implementation of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley trail system might be advanced by a non-profit organization such as the Freshwater Land Trust.



6

# Future Land Use



# Future Land Use

## INTRODUCTION

One of the primary tasks of the Western Area Framework Plan was the thorough examination of the current land use within the region and the determination of the most likely and/or best potential future land use for designated parcels in the West End, Smithfield and Five Points West communities. In the majority of the properties in the Western Area Framework Plan Study Area, the proposed Future Land Use will not change. For example, parcels that are currently Single Family Residential will remain unchanged.

In 2015, the City of Birmingham will undergo an update of its zoning ordinance and will include Mixed Use, which is a new land use and zoning category that will allow for the regulated development of a mixture of retail, office and residential uses that can either be vertical (ground floor retail with mid-floor office and top-floor housing) or horizontal (housing next to restaurants next to offices within the same block). The following text describes the Future Land Use categories that will be applied to the communities within the Western Area.

## RESIDENTIAL USES

### **Residential Low Density (Single-Family)**

This land use category is exclusively single-family homes. In addition, schools, churches, and neighborhood-serving public uses are allowed. The predominant residential land use in the Western Area Framework Plan is the single-family dwelling. Additional multifamily development in areas with this land use category is not recommended.

### **Residential Medium Density (Two-Family, Townhouse, Small Multifamily)**

This land use category allows for a mix of single- and two-family, townhouse, and small apartment buildings (6 or fewer units). In addition, schools, churches, and neighborhood-serving public uses are allowed.

Residential Medium land use in the Western Area Framework Plan is concentrated to existing HABD communities (Elyton Homes / Smithfield) and sections of the Smithfield neighborhood, isolated pockets in the Belview Heights, Bush Hills, Oakwood Place, Rising-West Princeton and Arlington-West End neighborhoods. The vast majority of these developments are duplexes, townhomes and two-story apartment communities. Larger apartment communities of three stories or higher are not recommended.

## COMMERCIAL USES

### **Neighborhood Commercial**

This category is reserved for areas for neighborhood retail and services that meet the day-to-day needs of residents and workers of surrounding neighborhoods with a range of uses such as smaller grocery stores, banks, restaurants and services such as small professional and health offices, barber/beauty shops, dry cleaners, and small-to medium-scale offices. Areas are accessible both by automobile with sufficient parking, but also designed to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle access. In addition, schools, churches, and neighborhood-serving public uses are allowed.

### **General Commercial**

This category is reserved for commercial areas serving a citywide or regional trade area, including shopping and entertainment centers that offer a range of retail and service establishments including large supermarkets, department stores, movie theaters, big box stores, and supporting retail and professional services. Office uses on upper floors also allowed, with ground floor retail encouraged. Other allowed uses include office buildings, leisure and entertainment uses. These areas should be accessible by auto,

but should be designed to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, provide interior circulation between properties, and appropriate landscaping to counter heat island and stormwater impacts. Higher density residential uses such as apartments are allowed in this category. In addition, schools, churches, and neighborhood-serving public uses are allowed.

## INDUSTRIAL USES

### Light Industrial

This land use category is reserved for light industrial and office uses, small warehouse and distribution, urban agriculture, and other supporting uses such as minor retail and services related to the industrial uses. Light industrial districts can be located potentially in “business park” settings, and is typically located near major transportation routes including Interstates, State Highways, railroad ROWs, and airport facilities.

### Heavy Industrial

This land use category is reserved for heavy manufacturing, large warehousing and distribution facilities, uses that require significant truck traffic and/or rail connections and supporting uses included (minor retail, services, offices connected to the industrial use or serving an industrial park). Certain public uses, such as landfills, that have an industrial character and impact, shall be located in heavy industrial districts. There are no residential uses allowed in these districts.

## MIXED USE AREAS

Mixed-use areas range from vibrant downtown environments to active urban villages, include residential, retail, and office uses. The mixture can be vertical, with uses on different floors of a building, and horizontal, with different uses in adjacency. Mixed-use areas are pedestrian-friendly and provide concentrated population and activity centers that can support enhanced transit. Buildings should be oriented to the street, with active ground floor uses that provide easy pedestrian access. Parking should be located in the rear of the parcel or to the side where lots are shallow, or in parking structures. Uses that require large amounts of trucking are not suitable for mixed-use areas. Churches, schools and public uses are included in mixed-use areas.

### Mixed-Use Low Density

This land use category allows for the development of compact, walkable, residential and commercial areas, often with a “Main Street” spine that historically served as a town center with two to three story buildings. The land uses can be mixed horizontally (side-by-side), or vertically (one above the other) and include multi-family, townhouse, cottage and small-lot single family residential, neighborhood supporting retail and services, offices, hotels and live/work structures. These “Main Street” areas would typically be characterized by ground floor uses including small markets, convenience retail and services, restaurants and cafes, and existing or potential residential uses on upper floors.

### Mixed-Use Medium Density

This land use category is similar to those listed in Mixed-Use Low-Density but with provision for up to five-story buildings.

### Mixed-Use High-Density

This land use category allows for the development of medium to high density office, residential, retail and entertainment areas, typically mid-rise to high-rise, including mixed-use lifestyle center character. The intensity of the development would vary by area and the districts should be transit-accessible or transit-ready locations. Potential uses include multi-family, loft, townhouse, cottage and small-lot residential, retail and services, offices, hotels, large entertainment facilities, and live/work structures with ground floor uses encouraged on desired pedestrian-intensive streets.

### OTHER USES

#### Institutional

This land use category is reserved for hospitals, colleges, nonprofit research facilities and universities. Public and private primary and secondary schools and churches are not included in this category. These land uses, whether public or private, are designated as separate land uses because of their campus-like character, which requires special attention to edges and relationships with adjacent areas. Within the Western Area Framework Plan, institutional uses have been reserved for the campus of Birmingham Southern College and the campus of Princeton Baptist Medical Center.

#### Parks and Recreation

This category is reserved for parks and playgrounds, recreational fields and facilities managed for public access and recreation, including Legion Field, Rickwood Stadium and the parks that are currently in existence within the Western Area. The exact location of future public open space will depend on the implementation of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail Plan and the Framework Plans. The Strategic Policy Map provides a diagram of the potential major greenway network in areas identified by the Red Rock Trail Plan.

#### Open Space

This category is reserved for land owned for conservation purposes, lands owned by the Freshwater Land Trust, FEMA-designated floodways, cemeteries and properties associated with the protection of the water supply.

### Future Land Use Goal: Support new, quality development that promotes land use patterns with a variety of compatible uses

In the 2013 Birmingham Comprehensive Plan, it was recommended that the current land use designations should be examined and revised if necessary in order to determine the type of development that was best suited for that community. Several areas in the City would be designated in the Future Land Use Plan as “mixed-use” as a means of attracting new forms of development that would encourage social interaction and make better utilization of parcels to create more environmentally sustainable communities. Other areas would be best suited for designated as open space as a means of flood mitigation and preservation of natural undisturbed areas. In many cases, the future land use for communities within Birmingham would remain unchanged. As a result from the data, field surveys and comments from residents, the Western Area Framework Plan has proposed the following expansions and additions to the Future Land Use Map as a means of promoting desirable land use that complements the existing communities and provide opportunities for new growth.

#### STRATEGY A: EXPAND EXISTING MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

#### ACTION 1: EXPAND LEGION FIELD MIXED-USE LOW DISTRICT EAST ALONG 8TH AVENUE NORTH IN THE SMITHFIELD COMMUNITY.

Currently identified as Residential-Low, Residential Medium and General Commercial in the 2013 Future Land Use Map of the Birmingham Comprehensive Plan, the proposed expansion of the Mixed Use-Low land use district eastward from Legion Field to Interstate 65 along 8th Avenue North is based on maximizing the presence of the Eight Avenue North Commercial Revitalization District. Changing the current land use for these vacant lots and underutilized commercial lots will allow for the development of retail

and residential properties to encourage denser development around a major City asset.

**ACTION 2: EXPAND PRINCETON BAPTIST MEDICAL CENTER MIXED-USE MEDIUM DISTRICT EAST ALONG COTTON AND TUSCALOOSA AVENUES IN THE WEST END COMMUNITY.**

Designated as General Commercial and Residential-Low in the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, this assemblage of parcels has a mixture of residential, office and retail uses along Lomb and Tuscaloosa Avenues within proximity to Princeton Baptist Medical Center. Both Lomb and Cotton Avenue have been established as Commercial Revitalization Districts. Changing the future land use to Mixed Use-Medium takes advantage of the presence of the economic activity generated by the hospital to create a regional center of housing and commerce.

**ACTION 3: EXPAND OAKWOOD PLACE / ARLINGTON-WEST END MIXED-USE LOW DISTRICT FROM TUSCALOOSA AVENUE EAST TOWARDS PEARSON AND COTTON AVENUES IN THE WEST END COMMUNITY.**

Currently identified as Residential-Medium and General Commercial, the parcels identified in this section are comprised of a mixture of vacant lots, deteriorated homes and apartments, isolated businesses, churches and small retail strips containing older multi-story buildings. Changing this section of the West End Community to the Mixed Use-Low category would allow for the orderly development of neighborhood retail and the restoration of housing within an established Commercial Revitalization District.

**STRATEGY B: DESIGNATE OPEN SPACE IN WEST END**

**ACTION 1: DESIGNATE A PORTION OF THE LARKWAY GARDENS CATALYST SITE AS AN OPEN SPACE DISTRICT.**

Currently identified as Residential-Medium on the 2013 Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan, the parcels identified in this section comprise Larkway Gardens, an abandoned and deteriorated multi-family development which is partially located in the Valley Creek flood plain. After the targeted demolition of this development, changing the northern parcels that lie within the Valley Creek flood plain to the Open Space category would allow for the creation of a greenspace that could be utilized for flood mitigation as well as community gardens that would enhance the Oakwood Place neighborhood. The remaining parcels of Larkway Gardens, currently designated as Residential-Medium in the Future Land Use Plan, would be suitable for redevelopment as a mixed-income housing community.

**STRATEGY C: DESIGNATE GENERAL COMMERCIAL AND OPEN SPACE LAND USE IN SMITHFIELD**

**ACTION 1: DESIGNATE THE ADAMS INN CATALYST SITE AS GENERAL COMMERCIAL.**

The former site of the Adams Inn which was demolished in 2013, the property was designated as Light Industrial in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. As a result of data generated by the Western Area Framework Plan, the site is better suited as retail destination due to its proximity to the Interstate 65 interchange and its location within the Downtown West Commercial Revitalization District. Changing the current land use to the General Commercial will allow for commercial development of retail in a highly visible location.



### **ACTION 2: DESIGNATE VACANT PARCELS ASSOCIATED WITH CSX RAIL CORRIDOR AS AN OPEN SPACE DISTRICT.**

Currently identified as Residential-Low on the 2013 Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan, the parcels identified in this section are comprised of heavily wooded parcels currently owned by CSX Transportation in the eastern section of the Smithfield neighborhood. The acquisition of these properties, and the utilization of the abandoned CSX Transportation right-of-way that lies adjacent to 6th Street North and 10th Court North would allow for the development of a linear park for the Smithfield community. Changing the Future Land Use for these parcels which are not currently CSX or City right-of-way from Residential-Low to Open Space would facilitate the creation of additional greenspace and enhance the utilization of the Dorothy Spears Greenway.

#### **SMITHFIELD COMMUNITY**

In the 2013 Birmingham Comprehensive Plan, the Mixed-Use Low land use category was designated for properties surrounding Legion Field and along Arkadelphia Road adjacent to Birmingham Southern College. This expansion coincides with the existing 8th Avenue North Commercial Revitalization District. The bulk of the Single Family Residential land use area will remain the same, as well as the Industrial districts along the southern boundary of Smithfield and the General Commercial areas along 3rd Avenue West and adjacent to Interstate 65.

#### **WEST END COMMUNITY**

In the 2013 Birmingham Comprehensive Plan, Mixed Use-Low and -Medium Districts were established within the Arlington-West End neighborhood along Cotton Avenue / Tuscoloosa Avenue / Jefferson Avenue / Lomb Avenue corridors, in parcels surrounding Princeton Baptist Medical Center and retail district. This expansion coincides with existing Commercial Revitalization Districts. The bulk of the Single Family Residential land use area will remain the same, as well as the Industrial districts bounded by 3rd Avenue West and Valley Creek and the General Commercial areas along 3rd Avenue West and Jefferson Avenue.

#### **FIVE POINTS WEST COMMUNITY**

In the 2013 Birmingham Comprehensive Plan, Mixed Use-Low and -Medium districts encompassing the Crossplex / Bill Harris Arena, the Five Points West Business District and the Ensley Five Points West Avenue corridor between Interstate 20/59 to Bessemer Superhighway were established. This expansion coincides with existing Lomb Avenue and Five Points West Commercial Revitalization Districts. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan introduced the Mixed Use-Low District in northwest corner of Ensley Highlands adjacent to the City of Fairfield and Interstate 20/59. The bulk of the Single Family Residential land use area will remain the same, as well as the Industrial districts bounded by Lomb Avenue and Valley Creek and the General Commercial areas along 3rd Avenue West and Bessemer Superhighway. The Western Area Framework Plan does not propose any alterations in the Future Land Use Plan for the Five Points West Community.

Figure 6.1: Smithfield Future Land Use Map

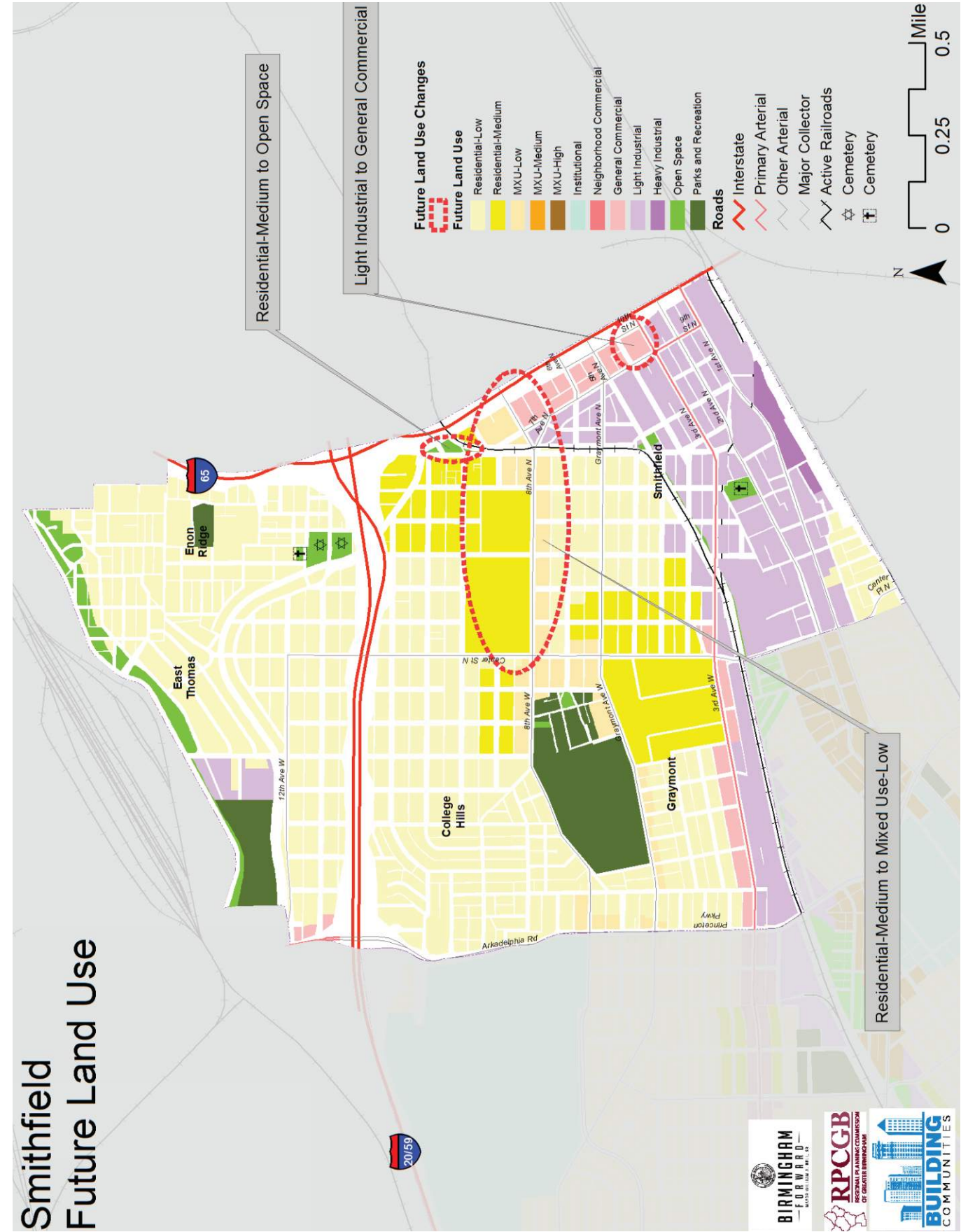


Figure 6.2: Five Points West Future Land Use Map

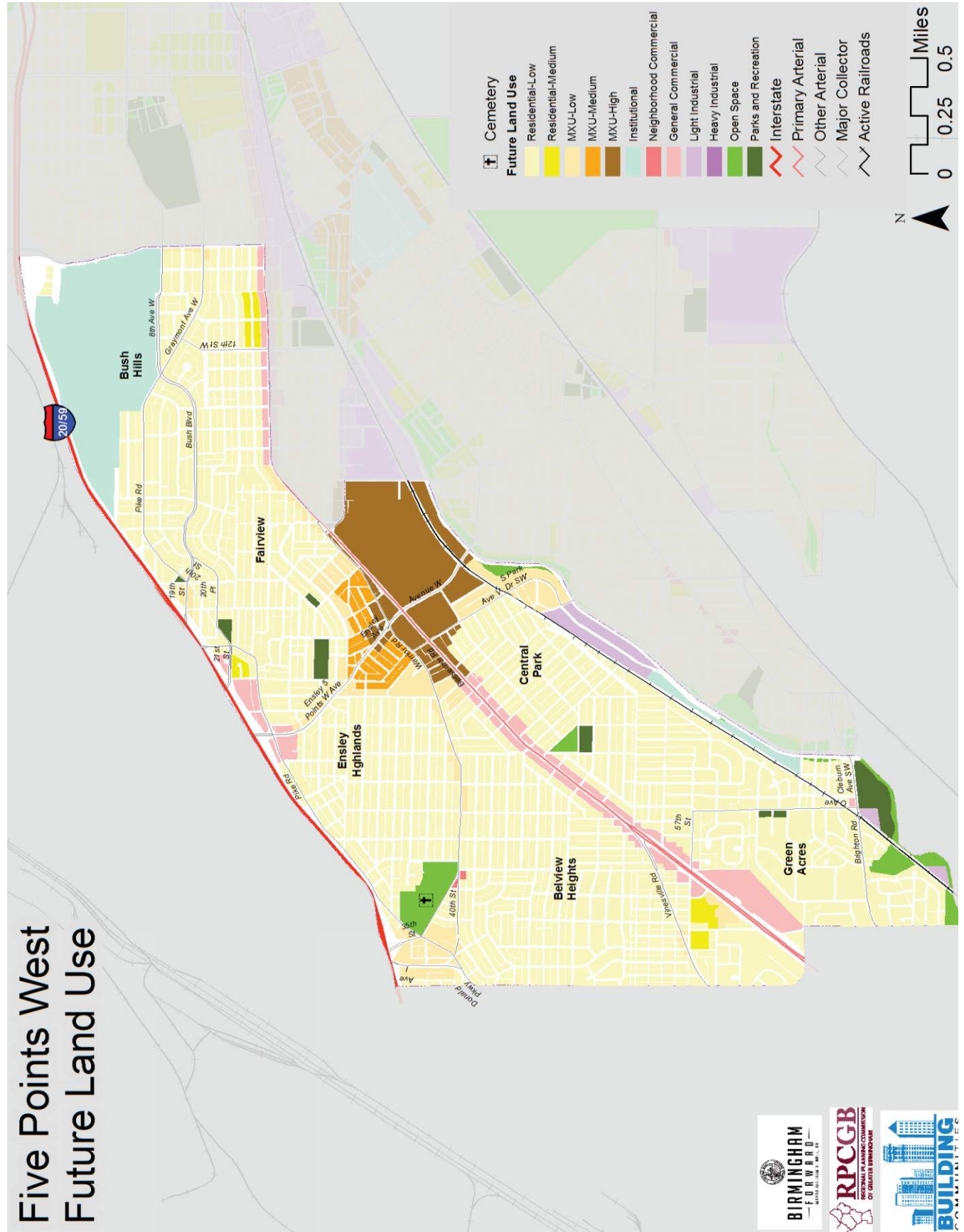
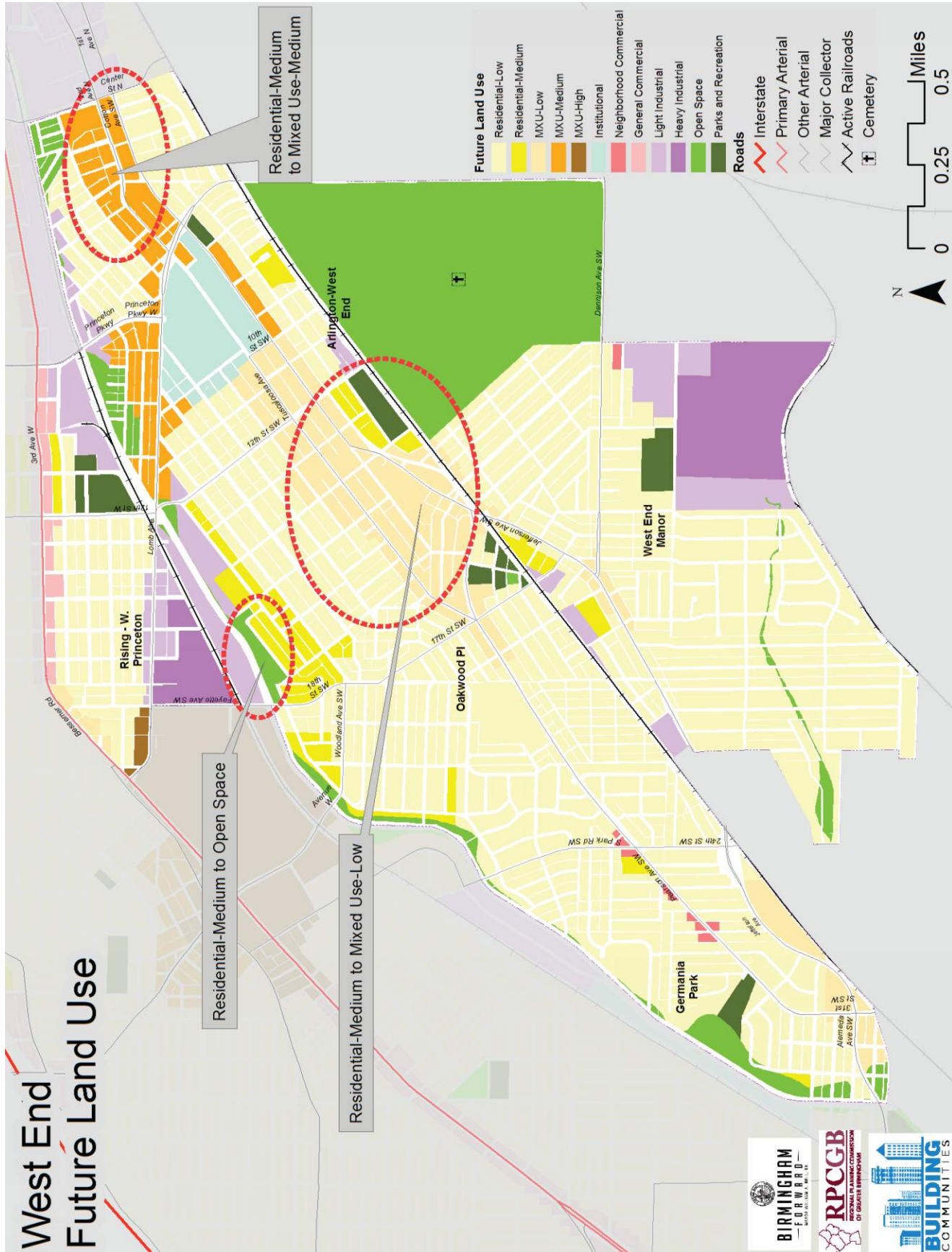




Figure 6.3: West End Future Land Use Map





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# Implementation

## Implementation

Following this plan's adoption, the implementation phase of this plan will begin. The City of Birmingham's Department of Planning, Engineering, and Permits will organize a group of stakeholders that will be responsible for carrying the plan forward. Stakeholders will include residents, neighborhood leaders, business owners, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based organizations. The department will provide the group with support.

The Implementation Table below lists the recommended action items, the relevant page number, an approximate timeframe for the action's completion, and potential partnerships that could help implement the actions. The recommended action items are grouped by goal and strategy.

ACTION		P. #	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS
<b>Community Renewal Goal 1: Decrease Blight</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Manage vacant and blighted properties.</b>				
1.	Create a vacant property registration ordinance.	14	In Progress	Dept. of Community Development
2.	Target blighted properties for demolition.	15	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Dept. of Community Development
3.	Acquire tax delinquent properties	15	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Community Development, Birmingham Land Bank Authority
<b>Strategy B. Improve code enforcement.</b>				
1.	Develop a publicly accessible database with the property condition and code enforcement statuses of each property.	16	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Dept. of Information Management Services
2.	Create a citizen's guide for code enforcement that enables citizens to report blighted properties.	17	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Dept. of Community Development
3.	Promote the online database, code enforcement guide for citizens, and the City's existing 311 information hotline to increase public awareness.	17	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Dept. of Community Development, Dept. of Information Management Services, Mayor's Office of Citizen's Assistance
<b>Strategy C. Building repair assistance.</b>				
1.	Identify deteriorated properties for renovation using the property conditions data collected from the community assessment.	18	In Progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Dept. of Community Development
2.	Establish a community entity to coordinate and spearhead renovation efforts.	18	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Habitat for Humanity, local faith-based organizations, non-profits
3.	Partner with local churches to organize renovation in the community.	18	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	local faith-based organizations, non-profits
4.	Support renovation efforts with grants, loans, and home improvement programs.	19	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Dept. of Community Development
<b>Community Renewal Goal 2: Create a Healthy and Safe Community</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Promote amenities and policies that encourage an active lifestyle.</b>				
1.	Sell or lease city-owned, vacant properties for recreational uses.	20	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Birmingham Land Bank Authority, Dept. of Parks & Recreation

ACTION		P. #	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS
2.	Convert vacant properties into open space for passive recreation.	20	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Dept. of Parks and Recreation
<b>Strategy B. Increase access to fresh food.</b>				
1.	Allow community gardens on vacant and other underutilized properties.	21	Short-term (1-5yrs)	City of Birmingham, non-profits, faith-based organizations
2.	Use the City's Mobile Markets to provide healthy food options to residents.	21	In Progress	Dept. of Community Development
3.	Establish agricultural cooperatives.	21	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Magic City Agriculture Project, Jones Valley Teaching Farm
<b>Strategy C. Improve policing in crime hot spots.</b>				
1.	Dedicate additional police patrol to areas in and around crime hotspots.	22	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Birmingham Police Department, Housing Authority of Birmingham District
2.	Establish community watch groups to provide additional "eyes and ears" and to promote cooperation with police.	22	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Neighborhood associations, faith-based organizations
3.	Create a streetlight outage form to enable citizens to report streetlights that are out.	24	In Progress	Dept. of Public Works, Dept. of Traffic Engineering, Alabama Power
4.	Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines into the Design Review process for public spaces and facilities.	24	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits
<b>Community Renewal Goal 3: Have quality housing</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Provide affordable housing.</b>				
1.	Take advantage of existing incentives and provide new incentives with policies that promote affordable housing options.	26	Short-term (1-5 yrs)	Dept. of Community Development, Magic City Agriculture Project, affordable housing developers, Alabama Housing Trust Fund
2.	Establish a rent-to-own program to help people afford owning a home and increase home ownership in the neighborhood.	26	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Community Development, Housing Authority of Birmingham District
<b>Strategy B. Mixed-income housing.</b>				
1.	Develop housing on infill sites or underutilized properties.	27	Long-term (10+ yrs)	Housing Authority of Birmingham District, private developers, non-profits
2.	Work with the local employers to create an employer-assisted housing program	27	Short-term (1-5yrs)	City of Birmingham, UAB, Princeton Baptist Medical Center, other local employers
<b>Community Renewal Goal 4: Preserve Neighborhood Character</b>				
<b>Strategy A: Preserve the Character of Neighborhoods.</b>				
1.	Make neighborhoods containing National Historic Districts aware of the benefits of rehabilitating historic buildings.	27	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Urban Design, Alabama Historical Commission, Birmingham Historical Commission, Black Heritage Council, Southeast Regional African American Preservation Alliance



ACTION		P. #	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS
2.	Make neighborhoods aware of the additional protection and benefits offered to local historic districts.	28	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits Urban Design
3.	Expand the demolition delay ordinance to include national historic districts.	28	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits Urban Design
<b>Green Systems Goal 1: Better mitigate flooding</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Stormwater management.</b>				
1.	Enhance the area's urban forest.	44	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Freshwater Land Trust, nonprofits and foundations
2.	Create open space and recreational opportunities in flood prone areas.	44	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Dept. of Community Development, Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits Stormwater Division
3.	Install green systems to reduce stormwater run-off and flooding in flood prone areas.	45	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits Stormwater Division, Dept. of Public Works
4.	Clean up obstructed swales throughout the community.	45	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Public Works
<b>Green Systems Goal 2: Ensure parks &amp; rec. facilities are safe, well-maintained</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Parks and Open Space maintenance.</b>				
2.	Support alternative open space and recreation providers by selling or leasing city-owned, vacant properties for recreational uses.	46	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Birmingham Land Bank Authority, Dept. of Parks & Recreation
3.	Create "Friends of Parks" groups to support funding and maintenance of parks and other recreational amenities.	46	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Residents, local businesses, local organizations, Dept. of Parks and Recreation
<b>Green Systems Goal 3: Develop a green infrastructure</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Prioritize projects for green infrastructure.</b>				
1.	Implement priority portions of the Red Rock Ridge-and-Valley Trail System.	47	Long-term (10+ yrs)	Dept. of Public Works; Freshwater Land Trust
2.	Develop a system of green streets.	48	Medium-term (5-10yrs)	Dept. of Traffic Engineering, Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits Stormwater Division
<b>Economic Development Goal 1: Develop an educated and skilled workforce</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Educational Attainment</b>				
1.	Expand resources to improve educational attainment.	58	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Birmingham Board of Education, Higher education institutions
2.	Establish a GED satellite program for adults in Western Area Communities.	59	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Birmingham Board of Education, Higher education institutions
3.	Promote existing educational resources to increase public awareness.	59	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Birmingham Board of Education, Higher education institutions
<b>Strategy B. Workforce Development.</b>				
1.	Partner with local, regional and national groups to improve access to workforce development resources.	59	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Alabama Industrial Development Training, Housing Authority of Birmingham District, Alabama Workforce Development Council, The Dannon Project, Magic City Agriculture Project

ACTION		P. #	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS
<b>Economic Development Goal 2: Our Prosperous Community</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Business development and entrepreneurship.</b>				
1.	Strengthen Five Points West Merchants Association (FPWMA) to help improve business development.	60	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development, REV Birmingham, local businesses
2.	Provide start-up help, training, technical and financial assistance to encourage entrepreneurship and business development.	60	Short-term (1-5yrs)	REV Birmingham, Birmingham Business Alliance, Central Women's Business Center, Birmingham Business Resource Center, Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, ADECA's Office of Minority Business Enterprise Program
<b>Strategy B. Enhance recruitment efforts to expand and diversify the Western Area economy.</b>				
1.	Conduct a more detailed real estate market analysis for commercial development in the community.	61	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development
2.	Make data readily available to existing and potential businesses.	61	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development
3.	Recruit businesses based on the market analysis	62	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development
4.	Establish a quasi-public retail leasing and management agency/professional to recruit businesses locally and lease out empty commercial spaces.	62	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development
5.	Create an incentive package for development on unattractive, vacant properties.	62	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Alabama Dept. of Commerce
<b>Strategy C. Business assistance.</b>				
1.	Assist local businesses, developers and other entrepreneurs with gap financing and redevelopment efforts.	62	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development, local businesses and private developers, local community development financing institution
2.	Increase the awareness of the Commercial Revitalization Districts in the Western Area.	63	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Jefferson County Economic and Industrial Development Authority, private developers, REV Birmingham
3.	Increase the awareness of the Urban Enterprise Zone Program.	64	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development
<b>Strategy D. Variety of Commercial and Employment Opportunities.</b>				
1.	Establish mixed-use districts for future land use plan.	66	In progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Birmingham Planning Commission
2.	Concentrate commercial and employment developments at catalyst sites.	69	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Department of Community Development
<b>TRANSPORTATION &amp; INFRASTRUCTURE</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Build a multimodal transportation network</b>				
1.	Build out the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System	85	Long-term (10+ yrs)	Freshwater Land Trust, Dept. of Public Works

ACTION		P. #	TIMEFRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS
<b>Strategy B. Improve urban form</b>				
1.	Develop complete streets	89	Long-term (10+ yrs)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Dept. of Traffic Engineering Alabama Dept. of Transportation, Dept. of Public Works
2	Improve intersections to enhance their multimodal level of service	107	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Dept. of Public Works, Alabama Dept. of Transportation, Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits
<b>Strategy C. Plan for Transit</b>				
1.	Plan for bus rapid transit	115	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority, Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
2.	Plan for transit-oriented development	116	Medium-term (6-10yrs)	Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority, Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits
3.	Enhance public transit service delivery	117	Short-term (1-5yrs)	Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority, Regional Planning Commission
4.	Construct a transit superstop in Five Points West	119	Medium-term (6-10 years)	Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority
5.	Improve local transit stops and amenities.	119	Short-term (1-5 years)	Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority
<b>Strategy D. Fiscally and Physically Invest in the Transportation System</b>				
1.	Develop a capital maintenance and infrastructure program.	121	Medium-term (6-10 years)	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits
2.	Implement an alleyway cleanup program.	121	Short-term (1-5 years)	Dept. of Public Works
3.	Establish partnerships to advance transportation initiatives.	122	Medium-term (6-10 years)	Dept. of Community Development, Dept. of Public Works, Dept. of Traffic Engineering, Regional Planning Commission
<b>Future Land Use Goal 1: Support new, quality development that promotes desired land use patterns with a variety of compatible uses</b>				
<b>Strategy A. Expand mixed-use districts</b>				
1.	Expand Legion Field Mixed-Use Low District	128	In Progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Birmingham Planning Commission
2.	Expand Princeton Baptist Medical Center Mixed-Use Medium District	129	In Progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Birmingham Planning Commission
3.	Expand Oakwood Place / Arlington-West End Mixed-Use Low District	129	In Progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Birmingham Planning Commission
<b>Strategy B. Designate open space in West End</b>				
1.	Designate a portion of the Larkway Gardens catalyst site as an Open Space District.	129	In Progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Birmingham Planning Commission
<b>Strategy C. Designate general commercial and open space land use in Smithfield</b>				
1.	Designate the Adams Inn catalyst site as general commercial.	129	In Progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Birmingham Planning Commission
2.	Designate vacant parcels associated with CSX rail corridor as an Open Space District.	130	In Progress	Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits, Birmingham Planning Commission

# Public Agency Directory

Dept. of Planning, Engineering, & Permits	205-254-2336
Dept. of Public Works	205-254-6316
Dept. of Community Development	205-254-2309
Dept. of Traffic Engineering	205-254-2450
Dept. of Parks & Recreation	205-254-2391
Mayor's Office of Economic Development	205-254-7741
Housing Authority of Birmingham District	205-324-0641
Alabama Dept. of Transportation	334-353-6554
Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority	205-521-0161
Regional Planning Commission	205-251-8139