Central City Urban Renewal and Redevelopment Plan

City Of Phenix City, Alabama

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The Project Area more particularly described and set forth in Figure 1 herein, is located within Phenix City's "central city," the urbanized area circumscribed by US 280, US 80 and the Chattahoochee River.

This Urban Renewal and Redevelopment Plan finds that blight and blighting factors exist in the Project Area and throughout the physical boundaries established by this Plan. Adoption of this Central City Urban Renewal and Redevelopment Plan (the "Plan"), amends the Downtown Phenix City Redevelopment Plan, 2001 and shall take precedence in the event of any conflict between its provisions and those of the 2001 Redevelopment Plan.

The Plan is authorized under Chapters 2 and 3 of Title 24 of the Code of Alabama (1975) as a separate, distinct and independent Urban Renewal and Redevelopment Project. The City of Phenix City has full power and authority under said legislation to carry out the Project defined herein pursuant to the Plan, upon the adoption of the Plan by the City Council of the City of Phenix City.

Background

The downtown and adjoining neighborhoods have experienced disinvestment since the 1960s, when the city began to lose population. By the time the city had rebounded from four decades of population loss, neighborhoods within the central city began to lose population in 2000. During this time, homeownership rates dropped and more and more homes became vacant. As a result, business areas serving the central city changed. Since then, the population in three key census tracts has declined by 16%, homeownership has withered to 30.4% and housing vacancy has grown to over 20%.

To stave off decline, the City has embarked on numerous efforts to spur private reinvestment: amphitheater, riverwalk, public parking deck, streetscape improvements. In addition, the City has acquired disinvested residential lots, in which houses had been demolished. In 2019, the Phenix City Housing Authority redeveloped an aging housing complex, producing the new Whitewater Village housing community in its place. These and other attempts to revitalize the downtown business district and neighborhoods, eliminate blight and improve housing conditions have had some successes but have not reached a sustainable level.

Data collected and evaluated regarding Downtown Phenix City's socioeconomic and housing conditions reinforces the need to stabilize the central city, improve housing and economic conditions, and eliminate blighting conditions. Socioeconomic and housing information for the Project Area outlined below is based on data for Census Tracts 302, 303 and 307 (Russell County, Alabama) from the US Decennial Census 2000, 2010 and 2020 and American Community Survey 2023.

The Project Area is experiencing a continued decline in population. Since 2000 the population within the Project Area census tracts declined by 16%—a loss of almost 1500 residents. In contrast, the city overall grew by 10,000 residents as new neighborhoods were constructed outside the central city. According to the 2023 American Community Survey, poverty rates within the Project Area—which range from 31.4-50.4%—are well above the percentage of the city's population living in poverty (23.8%).

The housing stock is aging and in danger from neglect and other blighting factors. Over half of occupied housing units in Project Area Census Tracts were built before 1960 and only about 11% have been built since 2000, most of which were built in a portion of Census Tract 307 outside of the Project Area. Vacant housing units have risen to 20.5%. The City has been proactive in demolishing and clearing deteriorating housing, which has blunted the full impact of housing deterioration. While this lessens their blighting effects, the remaining, untended urban land and other vacant structures, some awaiting demolition, continue to contribute to community blight.

Housing ownership in the Project Area has waned, which is further contributing to the decline in the area's stability. Originally owner-occupied single-family homes have become rental units. According to the 2000 Census, only 56.6% of housing units were renter-occupied. By 2020, almost two-thirds of occupied housing units were renter-occupied (64.5%), while renter-occupancy in the city overall was 52.9%.

There are approximately 1,240 acres of land within the Project Area. Today, 427 acres are vacant, including lots on which former buildings were demolished. Since 2000, over 500 housing units are estimated to have been lost in Census Tract 302.

As the area's population and income levels have decreased, retail activity has ebbed. The construction of the US Hwy 280 bypass further accelerated loss of businesses from the Crawford Road/13th Street corridor, which up to then was a busy, commercial district and the primary connection into Downtown Phenix City and nearby Columbus.

Project Area Boundary

The Project Area, shown in Figure 1, is located within the central city area of Phenix City. The Project Area extends roughly from 21st Street to the southern portion of US 280 and from 18th Avenue to the Chattahoochee River, generally. The boundary is more particularly described on Exhibit A, attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference.

Project Summary

The adoption of this Plan will enable the City to implement strategies to eliminate or prevent the spread of deteriorated or blighted areas identified within the community. These activities will stabilize faltering commercial and residential areas and encourage reinvestment by property owners and developers. Beyond the provision of basic infrastructure needs such as sidewalks, streets, utilities, and other public improvements, the Plan authorizes the City to support or undertake programs which may include, but are not limited to, the acquisition, assembling, or disposal of real property, the demolition or rehabilitation of existing houses and other buildings, as well as the construction of new structures (the "Project").

An important element in the success of the proposed Plan in stabilizing and renewing the identified Project Area is cooperation and coordination of efforts between the City, the Phenix City Housing Authority and other relevant organizations. As federal housing assistance and policy changes and as local financial resources decline, it has become increasingly evident that the provision of low and moderate income affordable housing will have to be a partnership effort among the public, private and non-profit sectors. To this end, the City will undertake to work with qualified community development corporations and other public and private agencies and organizations to promote new housing and commercial development opportunities within the Project Area.

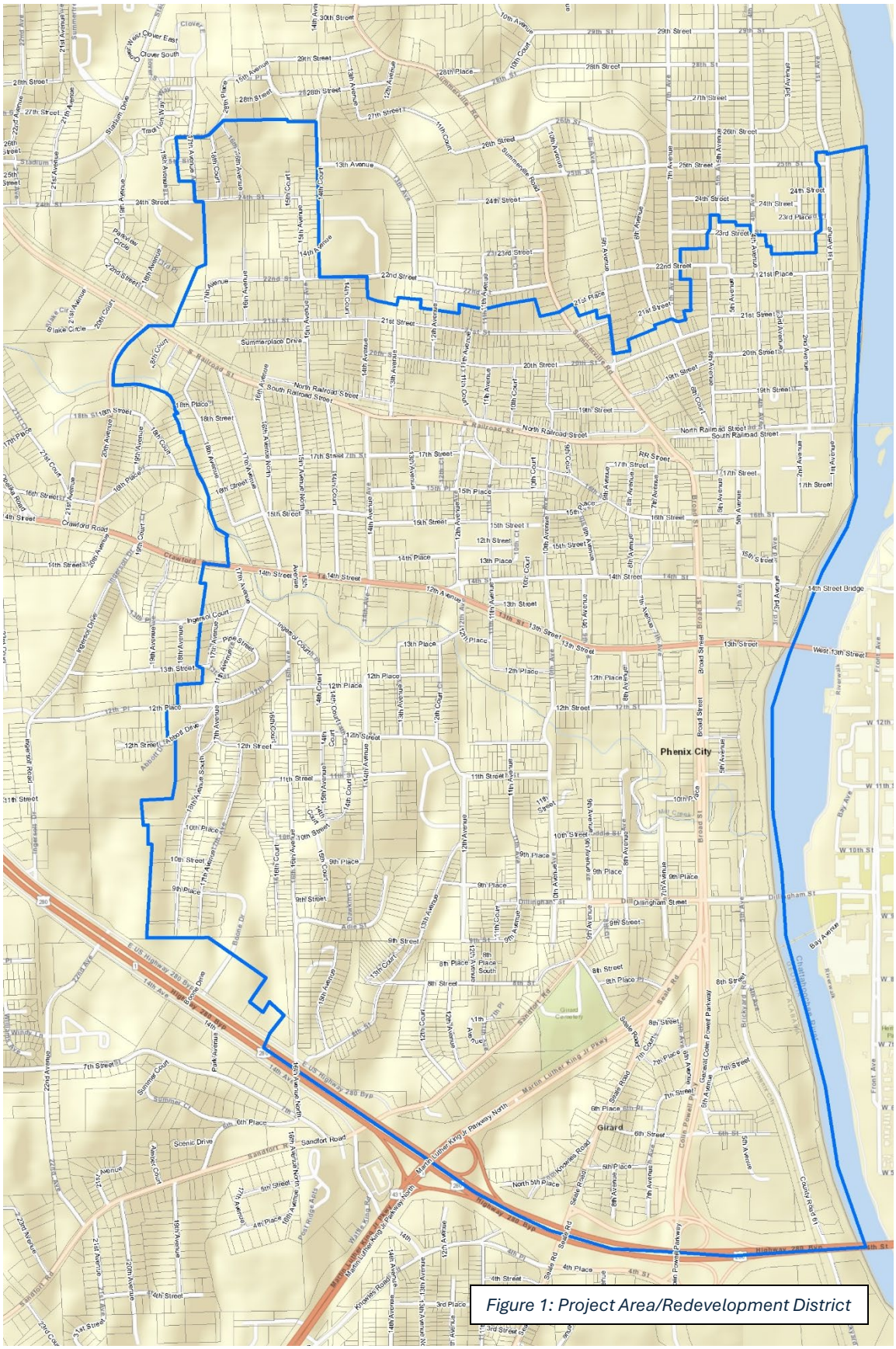


Figure 1: Project Area/Redevelopment District

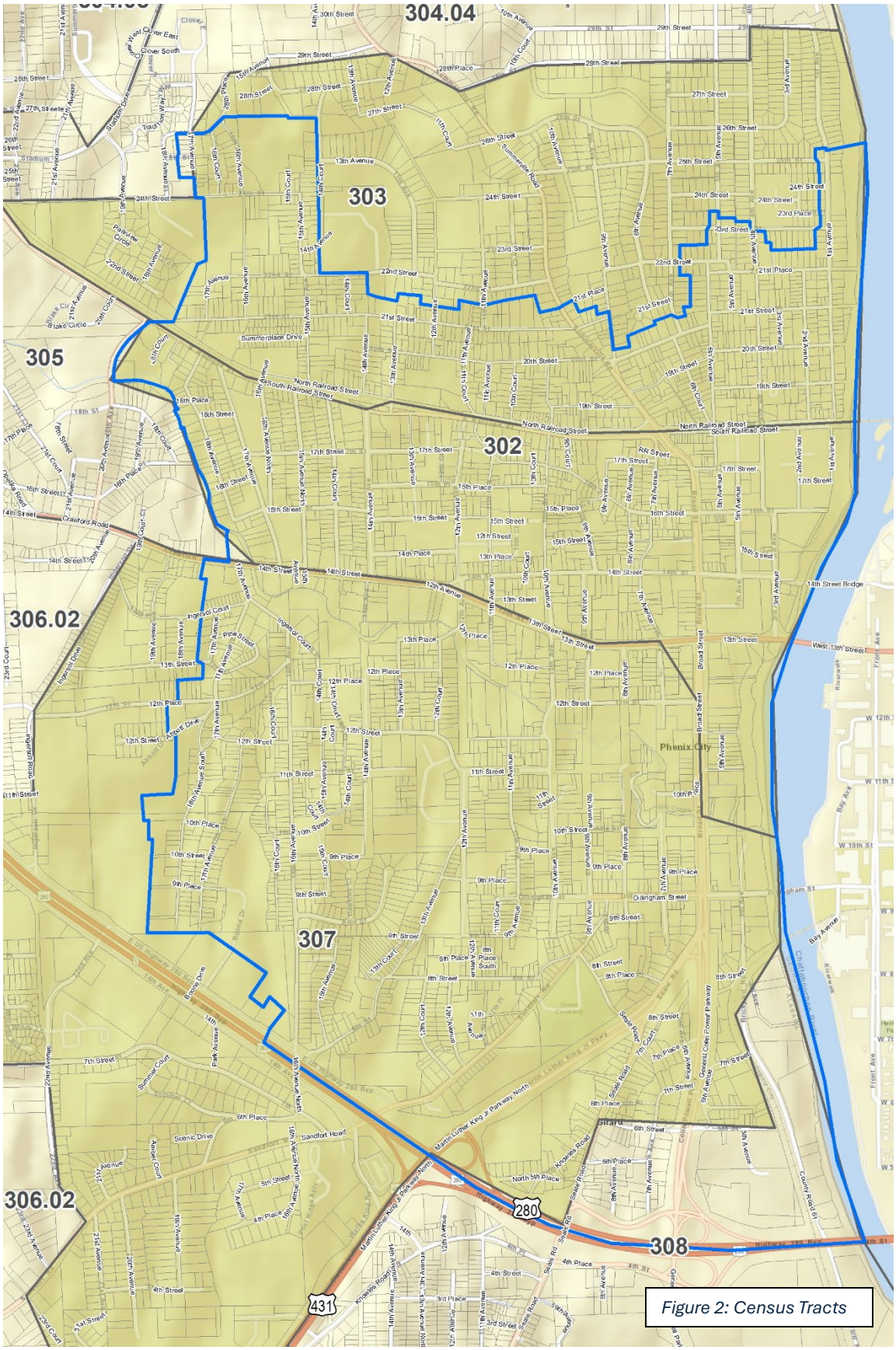


Figure 2: Census Tracts

REDEVELOPMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

The adoption and implementation of this Plan will contribute to attaining the following objectives:

- To prevent the development or spread of blighting and deteriorating conditions.
- To eliminate blighting and deteriorating conditions and blighting and deteriorating influences on improved and unimproved property.
- To eliminate under-utilization and obsolete layout or defective or unusual conditions of title.
- To stabilize and improve development conditions so that private reinvestment may occur.
- To promote sound growth of the community, in the context of preserving community identity and long range land use goals.
- To promote the development of safe, sanitary and adequate low/moderate income housing, to provide for the demonstrated housing needs of the community, and to contribute to the revitalization of the central city.
- To provide public improvements such as sidewalks, streets, utilities and lighting as deemed necessary, and to create a safe, attractive environment.
- To stimulate economic growth and development through the creation of construction jobs.
- To afford persons of modest income the opportunity of home ownership.
- To create a partnership between the public and private sector, which may form the basis of future cooperation to provide additional adequate housing for persons of modest income.

BLIGHTING CONDITIONS

The following issues are present in the Project Area and are considered under the Code of Alabama to be characteristics of blight:

- Structures, buildings, or improvements that are unfit for human habitation or occupancy because of dilapidation, deterioration, or unsanitary or unsafe conditions, vacancy or abandonment, neglect or lack of maintenance, inadequate provision for ventilation, light, air, sanitation, vermin infestation, or lack of necessary facilities and equipment.
- A concentration of properties having defective or unusual conditions of title which make the free transfer or alienation of the properties unlikely or impossible.
- Structures from which the utilities, plumbing, heating, sewerage, or other facilities have been disconnected, destroyed, removed, or rendered ineffective so that the property is unfit for its intended use.
- Excessive vacant land on which structures were previously located which, by reason of neglect or lack of maintenance, has become overgrown with noxious weeds, is a place for accumulation of trash and debris, or a haven for mosquitoes, rodents, or other vermin.
- Property which, because of physical condition, use, or occupancy, constitutes a public nuisance or attractive nuisance.
- Property with code violations affecting health or safety.
- Property that has tax delinquencies exceeding the value of the property.

Concentrations of vacant property, tax delinquent property and condemned structures (see Figures 3, 4 and 5), and properties with defective and complex chains of title have increased in the Project Area over time. Property titles in some cases include liens for sewer, demolition, weed abatement fees and penalties. Abandoned properties, both with and without structures, frequently become overgrown.

Much of the tax delinquent property is previously developed single family lots but that are now vacant and abandoned land. There are approximately 95 properties in the Project Area considered tax delinquent as of December 23, 2025, according to the State of Alabama Department of Revenue. Few tax delinquent properties are occupied. Approximately 96% of the tax delinquent properties contain no structures. Though struggling, the 13th Street commercial corridor and downtown area have relatively few tax delinquent properties. There are a number of vacant buildings but few properties along 13th and in the downtown area that are undeveloped.

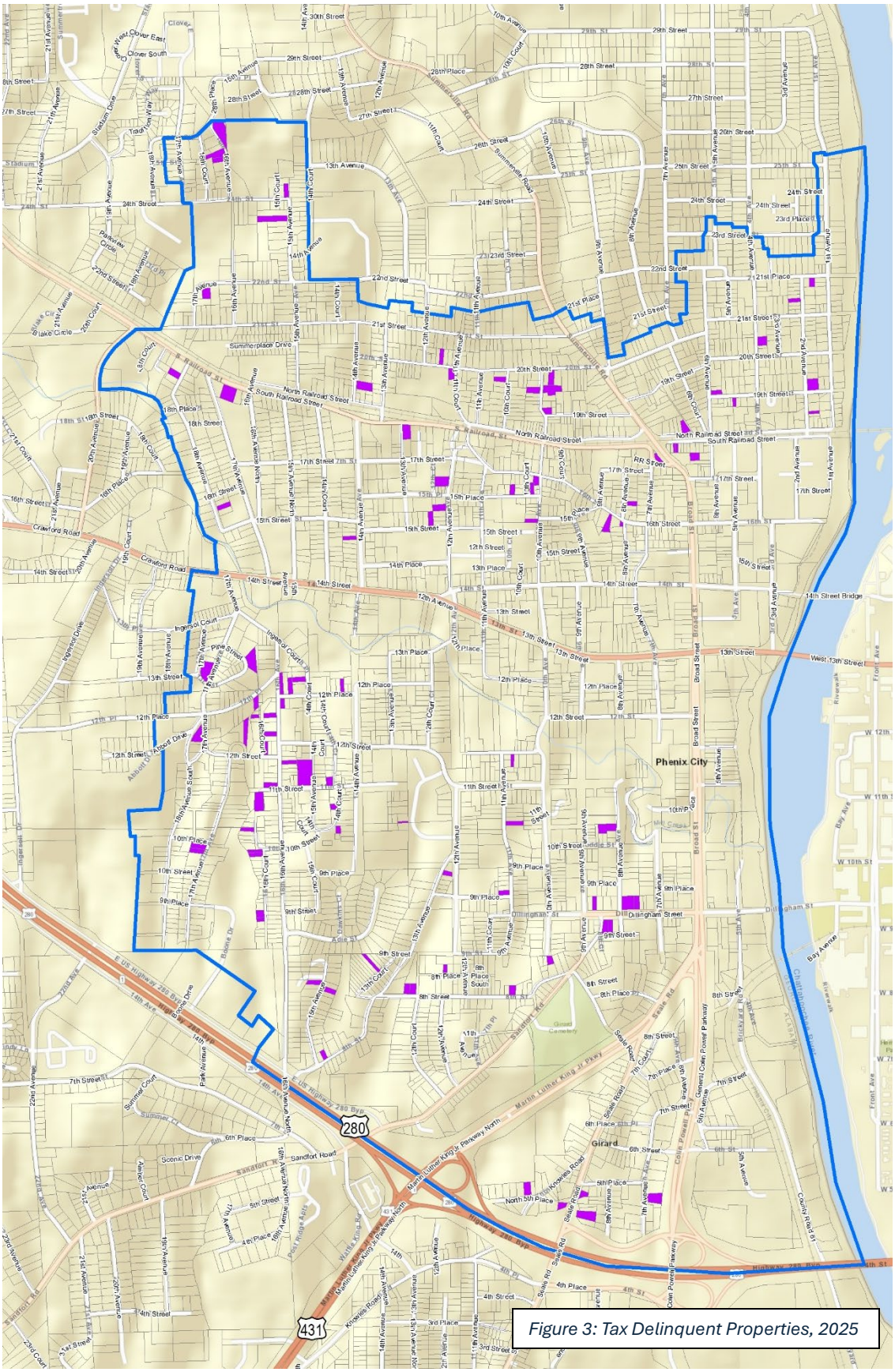


Figure 3: Tax Delinquent Properties, 2025

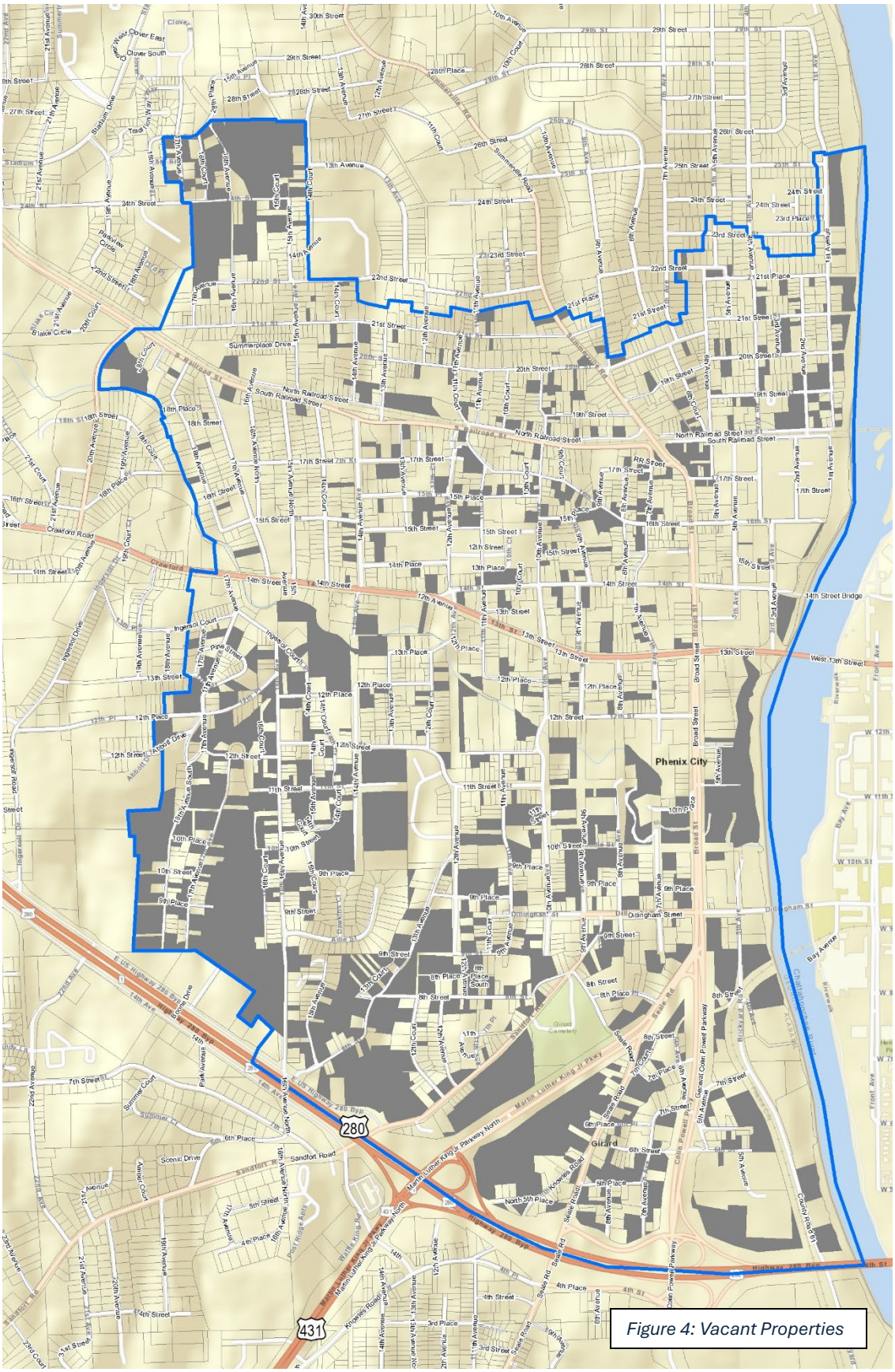


Figure 4: Vacant Properties

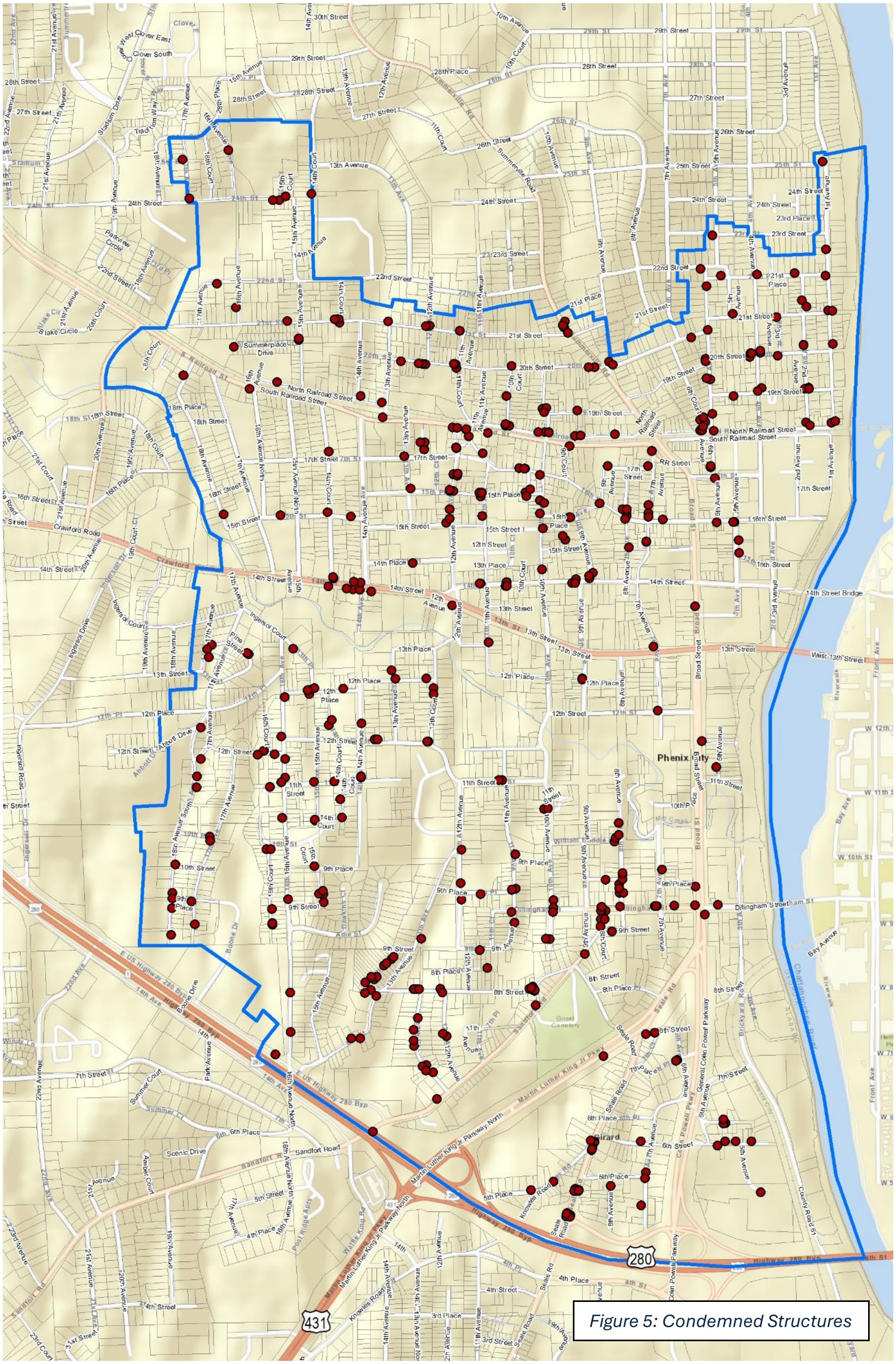


Figure 5: Condemned Structures

GOALS

Promote and maintain a vital, attractive image and business environment for Downtown

- Encourage owners of vacant and underutilized properties to infill and/or redevelop them with buildings of an appropriate use, scale, and design character.
- Provide and maintain an appropriate appearance and use of open, vacant and unimproved properties.
- Promote activities that contribute to a healthy business environment.
- Develop and support a wide variety of downtown businesses and services.
- Encourage downtown housing development through mixed-use development and dense, high-quality housing in adjacent areas.
- Provide and maintain high quality public facilities.
- Encourage the use of attractive and effective commercial displays and signs.

Promote and maintain a vital, attractive image and business environment along the 13th Street Corridor

- Re-brand the corridor, including renaming it so that it has one name from US 280 (on west end) to the river. The roadway could be named, for example, to commemorate an important historic figure or event.
- Reduce concentration of auto repair and towing services, used car sales and other outdoor businesses.
- Require new construction to follow more urban development patterns east of Holland Creek, e.g., buildings close to and fronting on sidewalk with parking to the side or rear.
- Allow high density residential in redevelopments of larger properties along the corridor east of Holland Creek.
- Redesign roadway to suit traffic patterns, support bicycle and pedestrian mobility and increase safety.

Encourage private reinvestment in neighborhoods and business areas.

- Encourage the renovation and reuse of historic buildings through financial and/or regulatory incentives.
- Plan and implement infrastructure enhancements in targeted areas, including the re-design of 13th – 14th Street, extension of streets and street construction in previously unimproved rights-of-way.
- Partner with Phenix City Housing Authority to redevelop and/or relocate aging public housing complexes within the Project Area.
- Develop a trail for use by pedestrians, and to the extent practicable—bicycles, along and/or adjacent to Holland Creek and preserve a natural buffer along the creek and trail to serve as an amenity attractive to development.
- Discontinue incompatible and deleterious land uses from within neighborhoods.
- Create a "side lot" program, in which owners of single-family homes may purchase adjoining vacant property acquired by the City. Side lot programs are intended to encourage maintenance of vacant land by responsible landowners to decrease blight caused by overgrown, unmaintained lots.

Protect and celebrate the Chattahoochee River

- Make strong visual connections at key locations along the river.
- Encourage mixed-use developments with housing overlooking the river.
- Develop the riverfront as a recreational amenity for Downtown residents and workers.
- Actively seek development of commercial uses that will capture value from a riverfront location.
- Develop pedestrian connections to Riverwalk.
- Create an entertainment hub along the river as a regional attraction.



Increase multi-modal mobility and access.

- Maintain and support legible traffic patterns for safe and efficient travel throughout the city.
- Plan and develop a trail system along and/or adjacent to Holland Creek that connects to the Riverwalk.
- Minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians to enhance safety and efficiency.
- Extend existing streets to strengthen the downtown street grid.
- Evaluate undeveloped rights-of-way, particularly south of 13th Street, to determine whether they should be retained for street or bike-ped use or abandoned and made available for acquisition and development.
- Redesign streets to calm traffic and enhance walkability.
- Provide adequate downtown parking facilities and loading zones for service and delivery vehicles.

STRATEGIC APPROACH TO REVITALIZATION

As the City and its public and private partners pursue individual projects to revitalize the Project Area, the following strategies are recommended to help prioritize investment. It is intended that through a strategic approach, the City can initiate revitalization efforts with judicious use of public funds to set the stage for private investment:

- Focus on an area where revitalization efforts can build on existing community assets, where some private or public investments are planned or taking place and/or where supportive public or nonprofit programs are being carried out to improve social or economic conditions.
- Focus on an area where blighting conditions can be remedied with noticeable, positive impacts but with relatively small costs, such as clean up activities or demolition of buildings that are so deteriorated that they represent a nuisance and safety hazard to the public.
- Focus on the perimeter of a relatively strong area where the vibrancy and activity of that area can be enhanced and leveraged to strengthen adjacent properties.
- Focus on an area where revitalization efforts can leverage the vibrancy and activity of two adjacent community assets or healthy business or residential areas to fill in the gap between them.

LAND USE PLAN

Figure 6 shows the pattern of land use investment—and disinvestment—in the Project Area today. To support the ultimate success of revitalization efforts, the land use policies herein will help achieve appropriate development patterns and avoid development decisions that have contributed to the decline of the central city's residential and business areas. The following land use goals, policies and Future Land Use Map shall apply with respect to future investment and regulatory decisions throughout the Project Area. The Future Land Use Map is adapted from the Land Use Plan component of the Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use Goals

- Create sustainable, safe and quality environments within Phenix City's central neighborhoods and business areas.
- Foster safety and crime deterrence through land use policies that reflect best urban design practices.
- Encourage reinvestment and/or redevelopment of existing multifamily housing.
- Protect single-family areas from encroachment of incompatible uses to foster owner-occupancy.
- Encourage business reinvestment and mixed-use development along 13th Street and in downtown to serve the needs of the community and provide job opportunities.
- Provide appropriate locations for quality, multifamily residential development and redevelopment to assure affordable and desirable housing choices.
- Encourage reinvestment that is of a mix, density, and design to support business development, walkability and transit access.

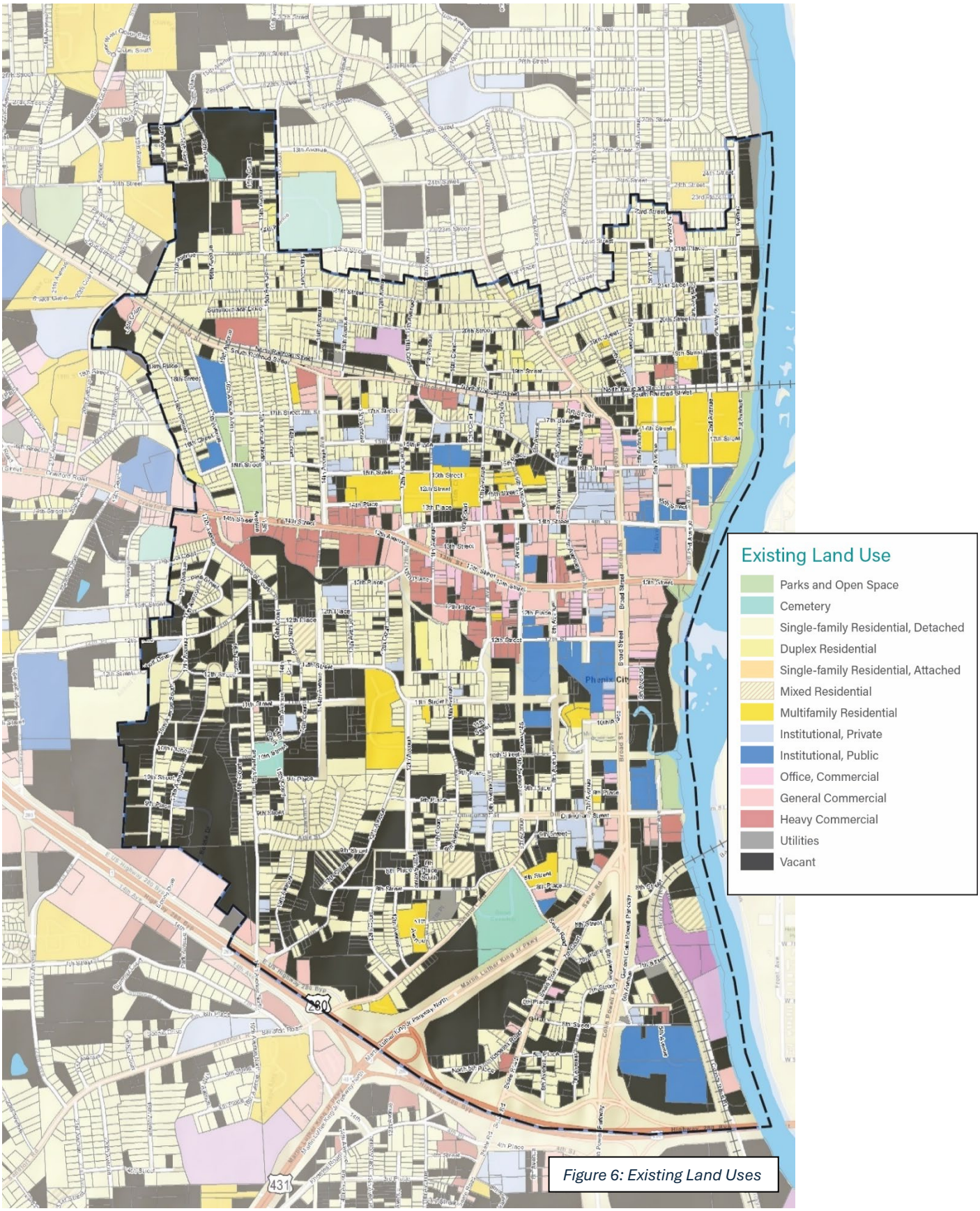


Figure 6: Existing Land Uses

Land Use Policies

Zoning and land use polices and regulations, with respect to the Project area, should:

1. Foster the revitalization of downtown Phenix City into a walkable, mixed-use core.
    - Encourage mixed uses and compact development patterns in downtown that support transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access.
    - Discourage commercial uses oriented primarily to motorists, including car washes, gas stations, and drive-through businesses.
    - Attract uses that take advantage of and bring activity to the riverfront: retail, dining, entertainment and hospitality.
    - Create civic open space in a visible, central and accessible location linked to the Riverwalk.
2. Promote reinvestment along the 13th – 14th Street corridor
    - Enable and encourage uses that bring vitality to the corridor and that meet the needs of nearby residents, workers and visitors, including businesses and housing
    - Create an environment conducive to reinvestment and redevelopment through the redesign of 13th – 14th Street
    - Encourage the discontinuation or relocation of commercial uses that suppress property values and deter development on adjacent properties: automotive services, used car sales, alternative financial services
    - Establish design standards for commercial uses that are oriented primarily to motorists, including car washes, gas stations, and drive-through businesses to integrate them successfully into a multi-modal environment.
3. Protect and enhance single-family residential areas to increase investment and home ownership.
    - Define specific areas for protection of single-family dwellings from incompatible uses.
    - Encourage the discontinuation of existing islands of commercial and industrial uses within residential areas.
    - Designate areas appropriate for multifamily and other high density residential development.
    - Locate new multifamily housing adjacent to commercial areas and major roads.
    - Encourage a variety of higher density housing types (cluster housing, single-family attached, multifamily, etc.) to accommodate housing needs for a variety of incomes.
    - Avoid placing multifamily housing facing or between detached single-family dwellings on the same block face.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The Future Land Use Map (see Figure 7) is intended to guide future zoning and development decisions, in combination with the previously described land use goals and policies and land use and design principles. The map includes the following land use categories:

Detached Single Family Housing

The Low Density and Medium Density Residential categories include single-family dwellings, schools, churches, recreation facilities and other compatible uses. Housing densities and types include:

- Low Density Residential includes densities up to four dwelling units per gross acre. Housing types include single-family detached homes.
- Medium Density Residential includes densities up to six dwelling units per gross acre. Housing types include single-family detached homes and duplexes.

Attached Single-Family and Multifamily Housing

The Medium and Medium High Density Residential categories include dwellings, schools, churches, recreation and other community facilities and other compatible uses. Housing densities and types include:

- High Density Residential includes densities above six dwellings per acre. Housing types include detached, semi-detached and attached single family homes; duplexes; and three- and four-unit buildings.
- Multifamily Residential includes densities above six dwellings per acre. Housing types include detached, semi-detached and attached single family homes; duplexes; three- and four-unit buildings and multifamily developments.

Institutional

This includes government facilities, schools, churches, hospitals, health clinics, nursing homes, private nonprofit facilities, public services, and cemeteries.

Commercial and Mixed Use

- Highway Commercial Mixed-Use includes retail, business and personal services, dining, entertainment, lodging, offices and institutional uses. Commercial uses in this category typically serve regional, commuter and citywide markets and may involve large footprint buildings.
- Mixed Use includes commercial, recreational, institutional and high density and multifamily residential uses. They serve commuter, citywide and smaller market areas. Uses may be mixed vertically or horizontally. Use flexibility is intended to expand reinvestment opportunities in already developed areas.
- Downtown Mixed Use includes commercial, recreational, entertainment, lodging, institutional and high density and multifamily residential uses. Multistory buildings are desirable. Uses may be mixed vertically or horizontally.

Institutional

This category includes government facilities, schools, places of assembly and worship, medical, and community service uses and lands. NOTE: Only existing institutional uses are shown on the Future Land Use Map. Future institutional uses are appropriate in most land use categories, depending on their scale and intensity.

Utilities

This category includes water, sewer, gas, electrical, telecommunications and other existing utility facilities. NOTE: Only existing locations are shown on the Future Land Use Map.

Parks and Open Space

This category includes land permanently reserved as open space and/or recreation including public parks and cemeteries. Floodways are also included to assure conservation of these areas and reduce development impacts on area waterways.

Flood Zones A and AE

This category identifies areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as Flood Zones A and AE, in which there is a significant risk of flooding, particularly from the 1-percent-annual-chance flood, often referred to as the "100-year flood." Special development practices are required by the City in accordance with its Stormwater Management Plan and associated standards.

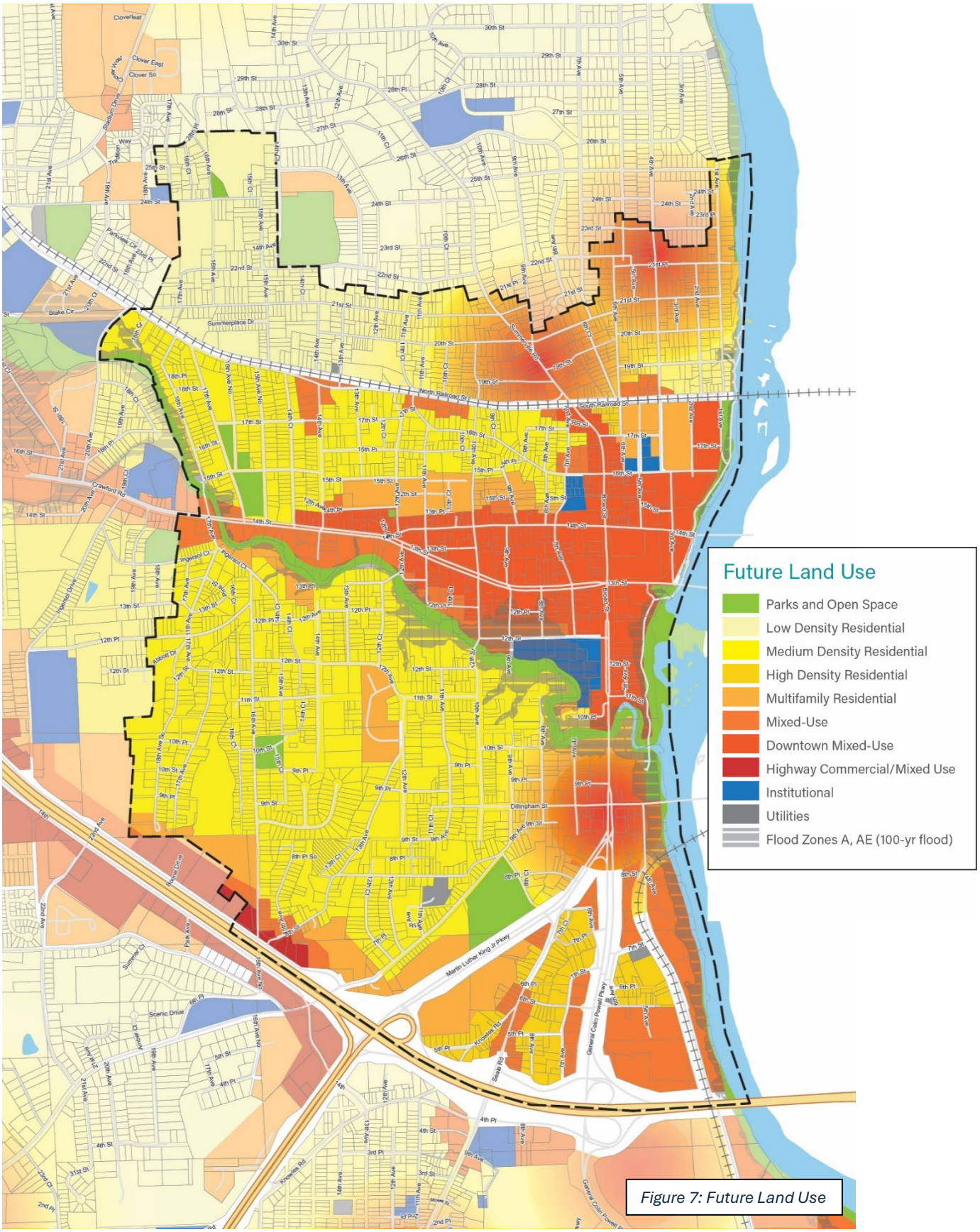


Figure 7: Future Land Use

REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLICLY ACQUIRED LAND

Redevelopment Agreement

In special cases, where the acquisition of a specific parcel(s) by the City may be necessary to facilitate land assembly for redevelopment in furtherance of this Plan, the City shall enter into a Redevelopment Agreement with a redeveloper(s) which shall provide:

- All property in the Project Area, defined as the Downtown Urban Renewal and Redevelopment District designated by the City Council and as shown in Figure 1, acquired by the City and conveyed to the Redeveloper shall be utilized for the uses and purposes identified in this Plan;
- The Redeveloper will begin building improvements required or permitted by the Plan within the period of time determined by the City;
- The Redeveloper will comply with such other conditions as are deemed necessary, proper or convenient by the City to carry out the purposes of Chapters 2 and 3, Title 24, Code of Alabama, 1975, and this Plan; and
- The instruments of conveyance shall incorporate as covenants and conditions running with the land such obligations of the Redeveloper as the City deems necessary, proper or convenient to effectuate the provisions of the Plan. Such covenants and restrictions shall be for the sole use and benefit of the City.

City Review of Plans within District

As may be specified in any future Redevelopment Agreement pursuant to this Plan, the City specifically reserves the right to review and approve the Redeveloper's plans and specifications for redevelopment or rehabilitation with respect to their conformance with the provisions of this Plan and harmonious development of the Project Area. Such review and approval shall be concerned with, but not necessarily limited to, site planning, lighting, signs, parking, loading, landscaping, and building plans, elevations, construction details and environmental impacts.

Additional Provisions

The Redeveloper shall not enter into, execute, or be a party to any covenant, agreement, lease, deed, assignment, conveyance, or any other written instrument, which restricts the sale, lease, use or occupancy of the Project Area, or any part thereof, or any improvements placed thereon, upon the basis of national origin, race, religion, sex or color. The Redeveloper shall comply with all federal, state and local laws, in effect from time to time, prohibiting discrimination or segregation, and will not discriminate, by reason of national origin, race, religion, sex or color in the sale, lease or use of occupancy of the Project Area.

All land not covered by structures or paved parking, loading or service areas shall be provided with landscape treatment, which shall include paved areas for pedestrian circulation, decorative surface treatments and planting such as trees, shrubs, ground cover, grass and flowers. The amount of landscape treatment shall be determined by the nature of the development and shall serve to improve the utility of the site, provide shade, support stormwater management and provide visual harmony as well as adequate buffers along boundaries with non-compatible uses. All landscaping shall be maintained in good condition by the property owner. All regulations and limitations of the Zoning Ordinance shall apply to the Project Area.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT

Authority and Redevelopment

In implementation of this Plan, the City is authorized to purchase or acquire property within the Project Area by the exercise of eminent domain as it deems necessary, convenient and proper to carry out the purposes of the Project and in accordance with the policies described below. In addition, the City may enter into a contract with such Redevelopers as it deems necessary, convenient and proper to develop all or any part of the Project Area in accordance with the requirements set out herein.

The City is further authorized to take any and all other actions as are necessary and proper thereto, including but not limited to demolition and land preparation for redevelopment, subdivision and resubdivision of property, disposition of property, rehabilitation of existing buildings, construction of new buildings, and entering into such agreements and contracts and executing such documents and instruments as are incident and proper thereto.

Public Improvements

In implementation of this Plan, the City may provide such public improvements, including landscaping, along certain streets within the Project Area as it deems necessary and appropriate. Said landscape and street improvements shall be complementary to, and harmonious with, existing development.

Any lights, landscaping, sidewalks, benches, signs and other public improvements furnished in the Project Area shall be in accordance with standards approved by the City.

Acquisition

The purpose of this Plan is to facilitate and encourage the private redevelopment of the identified Project Area to eliminate vacant properties, reduce blighting conditions, and increase quality, affordable housing opportunities. It is anticipated that the majority, if not all, of the properties within the Project Area will be redeveloped through private efforts. Due to the size of the Project Area, it is likely that such redevelopment would occur over a period of time and in several phases. As each phase of redevelopment occurs, specific provisions shall be taken, where appropriate, to provide adequate buffers to protect adjoining property owners and to minimize disruption to existing residents or businesses.

It may be necessary for the City to acquire certain properties within the Project Area at a future date; however, no specific properties are identified for public acquisition or demolition at this time. Should such action be determined necessary as a result of a further refinement of this Plan, it would be limited to strategic areas exhibiting special problems and upon the submission of an appropriate amendment to this Plan.

Relocation

Any acquisition, demolition or construction proposed in the furtherance of this Plan shall be undertaken as necessary to minimize the disruption to existing businesses, institutions and residents.

The City may provide or may require the Redeveloper to provide such assistance as it deems necessary, proper and convenient to implement this Plan.

Zoning

Changes to existing zoning classifications are recommended within the Project Area, in accordance with the Land Use Plan herein, and are proposed for consideration upon adoption of this Plan. Such modifications shall be considered and adopted in accordance with established procedures including notice to affected property owners and the right of such property owners to be heard. Such modifications shall reinforce the provisions of this Plan.

It shall be the policy of the City regarding zoning, subdivision and other regulatory actions within the Project Area to retain site plan review to assure safe and efficient access as well as the construction of buffers, as deemed appropriate, to preserve the privacy of residents, screening them from any potential negative impacts such as noise, glare, odors and fumes, which may be associated with the redevelopment of the area.

Historic Preservation

In accordance with the objectives of this Plan, the review and approval of plans for rehabilitation or demolition will include consideration for the preservation of historic structures and districts which have been or may be designated by the City, the State of Alabama, or the US Department of the Interior.