

FINAL DRAFT

URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

DOWNTOWN TUSCALOOSA URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT STUDY



**City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama
May 25, 2005**

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DOWNTOWN TUSCALOOSA URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT STUDY

URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the City of Tuscaloosa, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), retained Almon Associates, Inc. and Cooper Consulting Company, Inc., to undertake a Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study. The study examines existing conditions within a sixteen-block area of Downtown Tuscaloosa referred to as the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study Area (Study Area). The Study Area is generally described as being south of University Boulevard, east of Greensboro Avenue, west of 20th Avenue, and north of Bryant Drive.

The Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study examines the blighting conditions in the above delineated portion of Downtown. Information presented in the Study demonstrates that this area possesses significant development potential but has experienced decline that has created overall deteriorating and deteriorated conditions. These conditions need to be addressed for the overall viability of Downtown Tuscaloosa.

Part I of the Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study summarizes the *Inventory and Analysis of Blighting Conditions* (Blight Report) adopted by the Tuscaloosa City Council on September 9, 2004. Information contained herein is merely a summary and not intended to supersede or alter in any manner the actual findings, conclusions or recommendations in the Blight Report. In the event of a conflict between the two, the facts, findings and conclusions of the Blight Report adopted by the City Council shall prevail.

Part II is the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan (the Plan). The Plan addresses recommendations regarding redevelopment, rehabilitation and conservation of the Study Area. As a part of the Plan's adoption process, public hearings are scheduled by the City of Tuscaloosa's Planning Commission and City Council to consider the Plan's recommendations.

URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT STATUTES

In undertaking the Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study, the City made an analysis of the Study Area to determine if it qualifies as an urban renewal/redevelopment project area under Ala. Code §24-2-1, et seq (1975) (Redevelopment Projects) and Ala. Code §24-3-1, et seq (1975) (Urban Renewal Projects). Determining whether an area is blighted is a key issue of these statutes. Blight is defined in multiple ways. Blight may be buildings or improvements that are underutilized, dilapidated, obsolete, overcrowded, faultily arranged or designed, or lacking of ventilation or light. Blight can also be deleterious land uses or obsolete layout, aging infrastructure, economically depressed areas, high vacancies or any combination of these or other factors, considered detrimental to the safety, health, morals or welfare of the community.

As indicated above, a determination of blight was made and confirmed by the City Council based on the above statutes' standards of blight, followed next by the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. The objective of an Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan is to correct blighted conditions, adverse land use patterns and depressed economic conditions through implementation of a variety of conservation, rehabilitation, acquisition, clearance and redevelopment actions designed to provide a sound economic and physical environment.

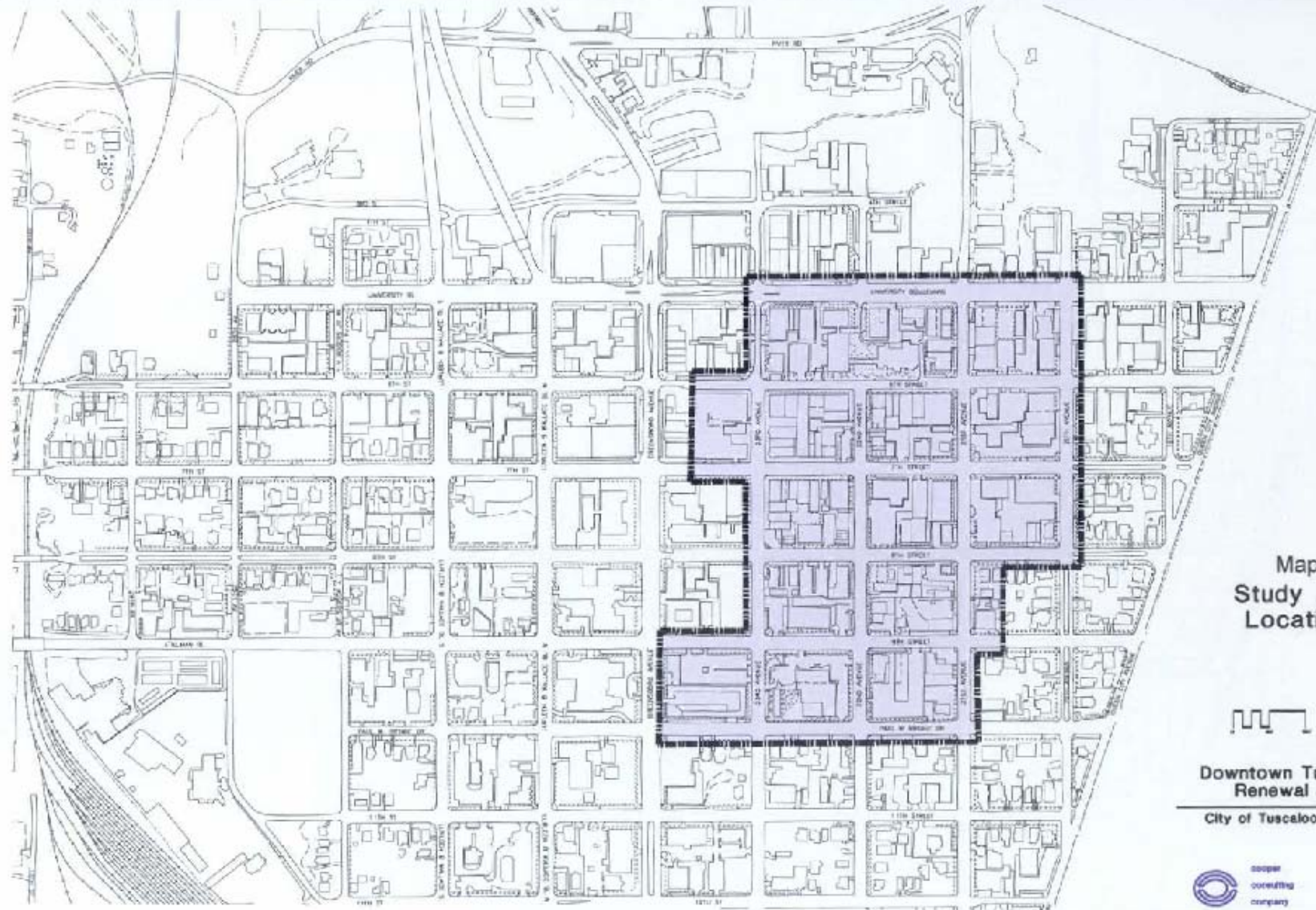
STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION

The Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study Area consists of 53.7 acres. The Study Area is generally bounded by University Boulevard on the north, 20th Avenue on the east, Bryant Drive on the south and portions of Greensboro and 23rd Avenues on the west. Map 1 – Study Area Location shows where the Study Area is located in relation to the remainder of Downtown. Map 2 – The Study Area is a detailed map that shows the block, parcel and structure numbers in the Study Area. The actual legal description of the Study Area is provided in the Appendix (Legal Description).

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are used to describe terms found within the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study:

- AHC – Alabama Historical Commission.
- Blight Report – the *Inventory and Analysis of Blighting Conditions* adopted by the Tuscaloosa City Council on September 9, 2004.
- City – City of Tuscaloosa.
- Downtown – that area of Tuscaloosa south of the Warrior River, east of Lurleen Wallace Boulevard South, north of 15th Street and west of Queen City Avenue.
- FHWA – Federal Highway Administration.
- GSA – General Service Administration.
- Outside the Proposed Federally Funded Area – that portion of the Study Area generally south of 8th Street but only including blocks 1, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and portions of Blocks 2 and 9.
- Proposed Federally-Funded Area – that portion of the Study Area generally north of 8th Street but only including blocks 3, 5, 6, 7, 10 and portions of Blocks 2 and 9.
- Study Area – also referred to as the Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study Area is that portion of Downtown Tuscaloosa generally located south of University Boulevard, east of Greensboro Avenue, west of 20th Avenue, and north of Bryant Drive (see legal description in the Appendix).
- The Study – the Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study undertaken in accordance with the Ala. Code §24-2-1, et seq (1975) (Redevelopment Projects) and Ala. Code §24-3-1, et seq (1975) (Urban Renewal Projects) to determine if the Study Area meets the statutory definitions of “blight” and what redevelopment or renewal actions are needed to be undertaken. The Study includes both the Blight Report and the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan.
- Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan – the proposed policies, actions and improvements contained in the Study for the conservation, rehabilitation, renewal and redevelopment of the Study Area.



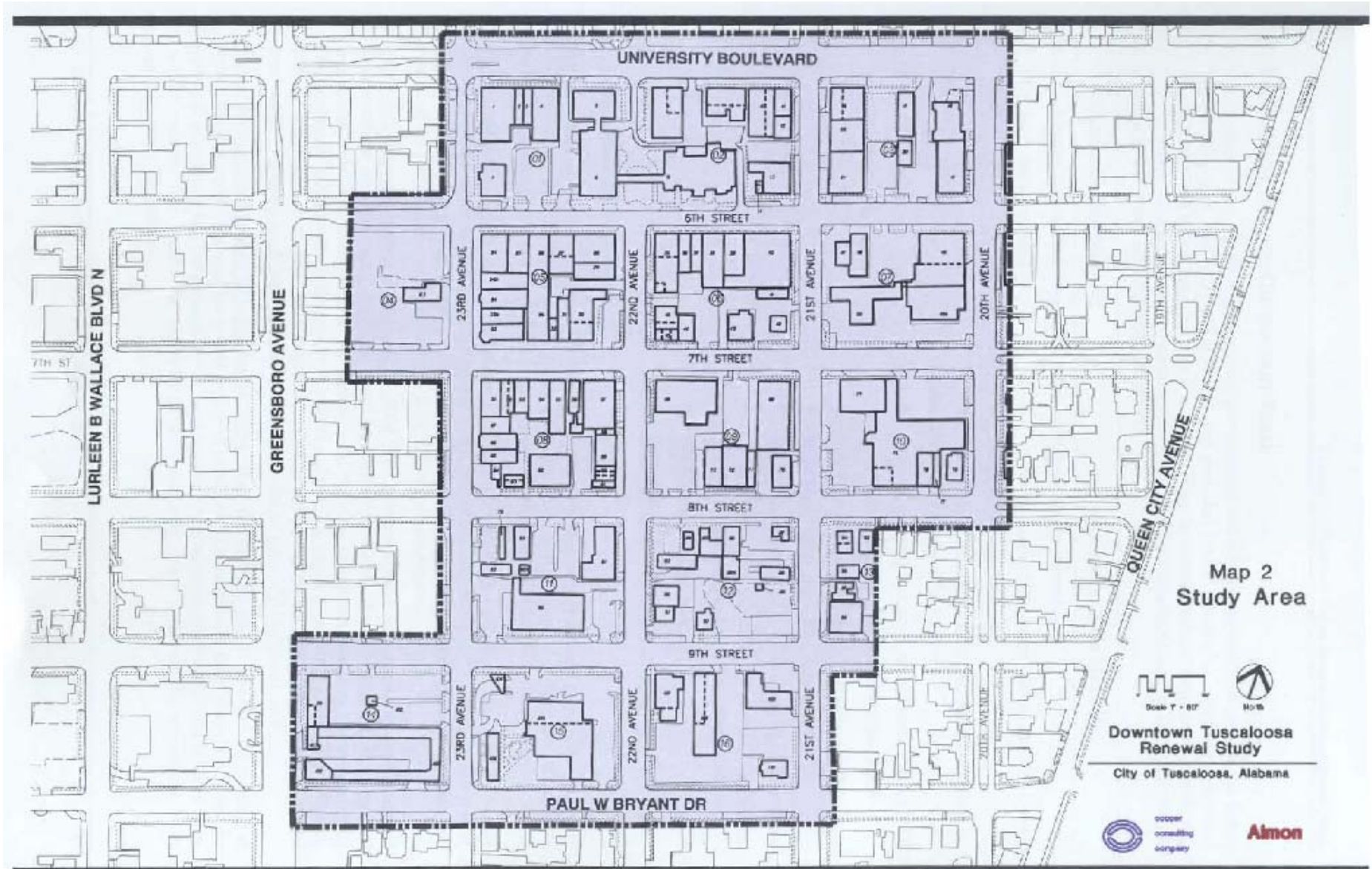
Map 1
Study Area
Location



Downtown Tuscaloosa
Renewal Study
City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama



Almon



OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE AND CONSULTANT TEAM

A multi-disciplinary team of city and consultant professionals has worked together to complete the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study. Overall direction was provided by the Oversight Committee comprised of key department heads within the City. The Consultant Team included planners, engineers, an architect, a landscape architect, economists, and environmental, historic and archeological experts. The following is a list of the respective committee and team members:

Oversight Committee Members	Consultant Team Members
Community Planning and Dev. Department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> William L. Snowden, AICP Planning Director Office of the City Attorney <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robert W. Ennis City Attorney Department of Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joseph A. Robinson, PE Director/City Engineer Finance Department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Wright Finance Director 	Engineering and Environmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almon Associates, Inc. – Jason Walker, PE; Chip Cates, PG TTL, Inc. – Laura Whitaker McGiffert and Associates LLC – R. Allen McGiffert Urban Planning & Renewal Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooper Consulting Company, Inc. – Connie Cooper, FAICP Gary M. Cooper, Consultant – Gary Cooper, AICP Dale Fritz & Associates, Inc. – Dale Fritz, ASLA Ward Scott Veron, Inc. – Rex Veron, AIA AL Val. Consultants, LLC – David and Ryan Massengale AL Real Estate Research & Ed. – Leonard Zumpano, PhD. Cultural Resources, Archeological & Historic Preservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PELA – Terry Lolley, MA, RPA FuturePast – Linda Nelson

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS

During the course of the Study, a number of Public Information Meetings were held to provide the public with information on the Study and solicit comments on the work as it progressed. The presentation slides for each of the meetings are included in the *Inventory and Analysis of Blighting Conditions Report*.

- Public Information Meeting I – December 18, 2003.** This meeting introduced the consultant team involved in the urban renewal/redevelopment work, delineated the Study Area and provided a brief history of how the project came to be, discussed the urban renewal/redevelopment statutes and reviewed the proposed scope. In attendance were 126 registered persons.
- Public Information Meeting II – March 24, 2004.** This meeting shared with attendees the findings of the consultant team regarding blighting conditions within the Study Area. It reviewed existing land use incompatibilities, deteriorating and deteriorated building conditions, building vacancies, aging and inadequate infrastructure, deteriorating streets and parking lots, deteriorating sidewalk conditions, historic resources and overall visual blight and other conditions of deterioration. In addition, a “photo tour” of the blighting conditions was presented. In attendance were 103 registered persons.
- Public Information Meeting III – August 24, 2004.** This was the final public information meeting at which the Preferred Concept Plan was shared with attendees. Those persons most directly affected by potential acquisition had the opportunity to meet with an appraiser/relocation consultant to learn more of the process that would be followed if their property were acquired. In attendance were approximately 150 persons.

PART I – DETERMINATION OF BLIGHT SUMMARY

Based on a detailed and exhaustive examination of conditions in the Study Area (See *Inventory and Analysis of Blighting Conditions* adopted by the Tuscaloosa City Council on September 9, 2004), it has been determined that the Study Area is blighted and meets the requirements for qualification as an urban renewal/urban redevelopment area under the State of Alabama's Urban Renewal and Redevelopment statutes (Alabama Code 24-2-1 et seq and 24-3-1 et seq 1975). The Study Area has physical and economic blighting characteristics that require comprehensive urban renewal/redevelopment strategies.

FINDINGS OF BLIGHT

The findings of blight that qualify the Study Area as an urban renewal/urban redevelopment area are based on a comprehensive inventory and analysis of existing conditions within the Study Area. This inventory and analysis found evidence of blight and deterioration in factors such as building conditions, site and structural maintenance, incompatible land uses, underutilization of land and buildings, sidewalk conditions and infrastructure deficiencies as summarized in Table 1. Also, identified as contributing factors to blight are fencing in poor condition, areas of debris, junk and overgrown weeds, poorly maintained and abandoned off-street parking areas, poor façade conditions and utility line clutter.

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF BLIGHTING CONDITIONS

Block Number	Poor Bldg Conditions	Poor Maintenance Building / Site	Poor Sidewalk Condition	Incompatible Land Use	Vacant Floor Space	Bldg / Land Underutilized	Utility Line Clutter	Signage Deficiencies	Unscreened Dumpsters	Parking Lot Deficiencies	Trash, junk , overgrown	Lighting Fixtures
1	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	
2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X
3	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	X	X	X		X		X					
5	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			
8	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
9			X	X	X		X		X	X		
10	X		X	X			X		X			
11	X		X	X		X	X		X			
12	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
13	X		X	X	X		X					
14	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		
15			X				X		X			
16			X	X	X		X		X			

Note: An X in the table indicates a deteriorated, deteriorating or blighted condition

Blighting conditions when viewed collectively clearly indicate that the Study Area is blighted and needs a combination of renewal/redevelopment actions to correct deteriorated and deteriorating conditions and realize its potential as an economically viable and physically sound part of Downtown Tuscaloosa. Evidence of blight and deterioration is documented throughout the *Inventory and Analysis of Blighting Condition Report* and in materials on file with the City of Tuscaloosa's Department of Community Planning and Development. Following is a summary of blight and deteriorating conditions in the Study Area:

- Deteriorating and Deteriorated Building Conditions – Of the Study Area's 115 buildings, 67 (58.3%), have deficiencies that would classify them as being in poor condition (deteriorating or deteriorated). An estimated 31.3 percent of the buildings evaluated as in poor condition have major deficiencies and 3.0 percent are totally dilapidated.
- Vacant and Underutilized Buildings – Vacancy and underutilization of buildings is a major issue within the Study Area. Of the 115 buildings in the Study Area, 25 are vacant or being underutilized for ancillary storage facilities. Another eight buildings, although predominantly occupied, have available unused space for rent. There is 122,200 square feet of vacant floor space (13.6% of total floor space) of which 66 percent is in totally vacant buildings. When combined with floor space used for incidental or temporary storage, this space represents 19.1 percent of the Study Area's total floor space. Vacant and underutilized buildings cast a negative image on the Study Area and are a contributor to blight. This is a clear indication of economic stagnation or decline within the Study Area.
- Obsolete Buildings – The interior space within many buildings is obsolete for use in today's business world without extensive interior renovations. In the opinion of the Consultant Team's registered architect an estimated 25.2 percent of the Study Area's buildings were rated as functionally obsolete because of such factors as counter heights, widths of corridors, widths of doors, stair widths, inadequate handrails, number, location and accessibility of exits, number of plumbing fixtures, fire rated separations between offices and corridors, floor-ceiling assemblies, ceiling-roof assemblies, threshold heights, signage, direction of door swings, etc.
- Poorly Maintained Structures – There are numerous instances of neglected structural maintenance throughout the Study Area, especially in the vicinity of 6th and 7th Streets and 23rd Avenue. Evidence of neglect includes rotting wood, broken windows, peeling paint, weeds on the sides and roofs of buildings, and boarded up and missing windows, among others.
- Faulty Designed Facades and Building Materials – There are buildings at scattered locations throughout the Study Area that have installed facades with inappropriate materials that destroy the architectural character the buildings. Original brick and architectural detail have been covered with plywood, vinyl and metal facades, many of which are in poor condition. Windows, both ground level and upper floors, have been covered with vinyl siding, sheets of plywood, painted or altered in other inappropriate ways.
- Vacant, Faulty Arranged and Underutilized Land and Parking Areas – In addition to the vacant and underutilized buildings, which occupy about 19.1 percent of the Study Area's floor space, 32,000 square feet of land area consist of unused parking lots. Maintenance of this land has been neglected and in many instances the parking lots have been enclosed with chain link fencing that is inappropriate within a downtown environment. The abandoned, poorly maintained parking lots combined with poorly maintained, vacant land make up 4.5 percent of the land area outside public rights-of-way.
- Deteriorating Infrastructure – Much of the infrastructure is in deteriorating condition. The storm drainage system in the Study Area may function; however it is antiquated and has been modified over the years in ways that do not promote maximum efficiency. Some of the storm drainage grate inlets are clogged with leaves and other debris that limit their intake of water. In many cases, streets in the

Study Area are built up with many layers of asphalt. Milling of streets and repaving would give the Study Area a fresher - clearer look. The pavement is aging in many areas and thus projects a poor appearance. In addition to public infrastructure improvements, a large portion of the gas and electrical systems are in need of replacement.

- Poor Site Maintenance – There are vacant lots and service areas behind buildings with overgrown weeds and scattered trash. In several areas trash and garbage are piled up and have obviously existed for some time. Service areas behind buildings are very poorly maintained. In older parts of the Study Area where buildings are close together, there are instances of excessive litter and weeds.
- Deleterious Land Use – Uses not compatible with the Study Area's downtown location account for 37 percent of occupied commercial floor space and 38.3 percent of commercial land area. Examples include automotive repair, wholesale distribution, and utility substations that are more suitable for major highways or industrial areas. Concentrated in the northeast part of the Study Area, they are often in unattractive buildings, have excessive curb cuts, outside storage and chain link fencing.
- Substandard Sidewalks – An estimated 64 percent of the Study Area's sidewalks are not in good condition with 20.5 percent of sidewalks in poor condition. Other sidewalk conditions that contribute to blight in the Study Area include: lack of wheelchair ramps, wheelchair ramps in poor condition, intrusion of off-street parking areas into the path of sidewalks and the lack of a defined sidewalk path in areas of excessive driveway access. In many instances sidewalk conditions create safety hazards because of uneven pavement and large cracks that have been patched.
- Unpaved Alleys – Very few alleys are located in the Study Area; however, those that do exist exert a blighting influence because they are unpaved, have pot holes, weeds and standing water.
- Overhead Utility Line Clutter – Unattractive overhead utility lines exist throughout the Study Area. They create an overall cluttered appearance throughout the Study Area. Old wooden power poles with numerous utility wires are common in the Study Area.
- Poorly Maintained and Unimproved Parking Lots – There are large asphalt parking lots that are barren with no attempt to include amenities such as screening and landscaping. These lots are unattractive and the large amount of pavement results in a stark non-inviting environment. Unpaved or poorly improved parking lots with pot holes and standing water exist in several locations.
- Unscreened Dumpsters – There are 15 unscreened dumpsters located adjacent to sidewalks and/or streets at scattered locations in the Study Area. In many instances these dumpsters are partially blocking the sidewalk and are within the public rights-of-way. The lack of screening and the exposed location of the dumpsters are a blighting condition in the Study Area.
- Excessive Access Points – The Study Area has many excessively wide driveways that disrupt the clear flow of pedestrian traffic. This problem also results in the parking and/or storage of automobiles hap hazardously in the rights-of-way and on top of sidewalks.
- Deteriorating Lighting – There is a lack of street lighting consistency with seven different types of lighting many of which are old, worn street lights that are poorly attached to rusty old metal poles. This situation combined with the rusty light poles detracts from the Study Area's overall appearance.
- Business Turnover and Marginal Businesses – During the course of the Study, six businesses either ceased operations or moved from the area. Many businesses appear to be of a very marginal nature and there are a number of vacancies throughout the Study Area.
- Deteriorating Signage – Blighting conditions related to signage include detached pole signs which are inappropriate in the Study Area's downtown location; poorly maintained signage; signs with letters missing; and signs that are in substandard physical condition.

- Lack of Landscaping/Green Space – Other than in the vicinity of City Hall and the Municipal Court Building there is negligible green space and/or landscaping in the Study Area. This lack of landscaping contributes to blighting conditions and a poor perception of the Study Area.
- Deteriorating Curb and Gutter – Throughout many parts of the Study Area curb and gutter, drainage structures and asphalt pavement are old and deteriorating.

DETERMINATION OF BLIGHT

Based upon extensive investigations, inquiries, facts and conclusions contained in the *Inventory and Analysis of Blighting Conditions*, the Tuscaloosa City Council on September 9, 2004 (see Appendix, City Council Presentation Slides) determined that the Study Area is blighted, in summary due to the following factors:

- Buildings, other structures and premises, which by reason of poor condition, deterioration, dilapidation, obsolescence, lack of or poor maintenance, inappropriate facades and/or building materials, poor site maintenance, unpaved alleys, utility line clutter, incompatible land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout, faulty arrangement or underutilization, unscreened dumpsters, excessive access points, inappropriate or poorly maintained signs, poorly maintained or unimproved parking areas, lack of green space or landscaping, or any combinations of these and other factors, are unsafe or detrimental to the welfare of the citizens of the City of Tuscaloosa community; and,
- Lack of evidence of overall economic prosperity with many buildings remaining unoccupied for lengthy periods of time, few new businesses locating in the Area, residential rental properties marginally improved, retail buildings used as storage space, empty upper story floors, unused parking facilities, falling client base for service retail, low tenant occupancy and other economic indicators.

This Determination of Blight enables the City to eliminate these blighting conditions and prevent the continued occurrence of blight in the Study Area. By declaring the Study Area as blighted, the City is enabled to

- Acquire, clear and redevelop the blighted area in accordance with the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan and thus eliminate the predominance of the blighting conditions which substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the community, and constitutes an economic liability in the area;
- Effectively address the blighted conditions in the Study Area that are adverse or dangerous to the public health, safety and general welfare and impair the efficient and economic exercise of the governmental functions;
- Eliminate the blight's impairment of the economic values and tax revenues, and expenditures for public health and safety, fire and accident protection and other public services and facilities;
- Clear, replat and prepare for urban renewal or redevelopment of the blighted area and prevent or the reduce existing or future blight all of which are considered public uses and purposes for which public money may be spent and private property acquired as governmental functions of the City;
- Conserve or rehabilitate buildings and premises in such a manner that the conditions and evils of blight may be eliminated, remedied or prevented; and,
- Utilize the redevelopment activities to stimulate construction and development which is closely correlated with general economic activity and to aid the development of a better and more desirable community.

PART II – URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Tuscaloosa Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan outlines realistic proposals to effectively deal with the future of the Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study Area. The Plan is based on the analysis of existing blighting conditions, needs and potentials and a process of local government oversight and community involvement. By means of significant public and private redevelopment and rehabilitation, it is designed to revitalize the Study Area by incorporating a new Federal Building, creating a town center, and opportunities for downtown living and working. These development initiatives are complemented by improved parking, enhanced pedestrian and vehicular circulation, upgraded infrastructure and landscaped corridors. Implementation of the Urban Renewal/ Redevelopment Plan reinvigorates the Downtown by providing a vital, stable, and attractive environment that becomes a more contributing part of the City of Tuscaloosa.

The proposals in the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan are intended to eliminate blighting conditions which have created, contributed to, or perpetuated the deterioration of the Study Area (see *Part I Determination of Blight Summary*). The Plan is also intended to insure the orderly improvement of the Study Area in accordance with the City's planning objectives and in conformity to Tuscaloosa's general plan and undertaken in accordance with Ala. Code §24-2-1, et seq (1975- Redevelopment Projects) and Ala. Code §24-3-1, et seq (1975-Urban Renewal Projects).

OVERARCHING GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The Tuscaloosa Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan is undertaken within the policy framework of an Overarching Goal Statement, supported by Plan Objectives and Actions. This policy framework provides direction regarding development patterns, land use, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, utilities, open space, and aesthetic enhancements for the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan.

OVERARCHING GOAL STATEMENT

The Tuscaloosa Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan's overarching goal is to transform the Study Area into an economically viable, physically attractive, people desirable, fully developed and functional part of Downtown Tuscaloosa.

PLAN OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve the Study Area's Overarching Goal, the following set of Plan Objectives are recommended:

- Capitalize on the Study Area's strategic location between the heart of Downtown Tuscaloosa and the University of Alabama, and its proximity to the Riverwalk, public buildings, church related facilities and the adjacent historical neighborhood;
- Locate the Federal Building on a site that enables it to be an integral and accessible component of the Study Area;
- Create a "city center" by providing an Urban Park/Plaza as a major activity center and focal point for community activities;
- Restore the economic vitality of the Study Area through a mix of compatible and appropriate land uses such as residential, office, retail, services, parks and institutional uses;

- Contribute to the historical and architectural integrity of Downtown Tuscaloosa as an integral part of the Study Area's strategic initiatives;
- Provide governmental and other institutional uses that are contextually sensitive to the Study Area's overarching goal;
- Encourage uses that enhance the economic vitality of the Study Area, particularly ground level retail and consumer services;
- Encourage a level of building densities that promotes more intensive use of land and more vibrant urban street life;
- Effectively address the physical attractiveness of building facades, streets, sidewalks, lighting, signage, landscaping, parking areas, utility services, and private and public exterior spaces;
- Provide adequate and updated infrastructure that readily meets the demands of renewal and redevelopment;
- Create more walkable areas and enhance pedestrian circulation and safety; and,
- Set a high standard of design quality through special attention to architecture, landscaping, site layout, site maintenance, and appropriate land uses.

ACTION STATEMENTS

Action Statements focus on steps that assist in achieving the Tuscaloosa Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan Objectives. As the Renewal/Redevelopment process proceeds, additional Actions will be needed to fully implement the Plan. The following lists the recommended Action Statements:

- Use the full range of urban renewal/redevelopment tools (acquisition, clearance, redevelopment, rehabilitation, renovation, conservation and mitigation) to eliminate and prevent blight and to successfully implement the Plan;
- Undertake infrastructure improvements to upgrade streets, drainage, water, sewer, gas, electrical, telephone, sidewalks, curbs and to bury or relocate unsightly overhead utility service;
- Initiate mitigation actions to address loss of historically contributing buildings in the Study Area by undertaking a Downtown Tuscaloosa Main Street Program, initiating a façade restoration grant program, undertaking an architectural recording of historically significant buildings proposed for demolition, constructing a historical interpretation element as part of the Urban Park/Plaza, and adopting design standards and review in the Downtown;
- Create an Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Zoning Overlay District to assure that new construction and improvements to existing buildings are in accord with the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan;
- Develop and adopt design standards and guidelines tailored to the Study Area and the all of Downtown that address building design, walkways, open space, parking/loading areas, landscaping, lighting, and signage;
- Create a Design Review process that requires site plan review and approval for new development and exterior improvements to existing development;
- Construct pedestrian-friendly streets and walkways, by narrowing excessively wide streets, widening and visually improving sidewalks, eliminating unnecessary curb cuts and parking on sidewalks, installing landscaping and improving lighting, and providing planting areas adjacent to streets;
- Create an architectural edge along streets by requiring multi-storied buildings located at the edges of property lines, articulating facades and entryways, generously using windows, and locating parking to the side or rear of buildings;

- Create public/private partnership to encourage architectural and landscape improvements;
- Create a more urban development context by adding stories to existing buildings and replacing underutilized parking areas with new infill construction;
- Provide structured parking, shared parking and relaxed parking standards to support higher development densities;
- Control trash accumulation, outside dumpsters, poor site maintenance, and outside storage through code enforcement, new regulatory tools and more frequent trash/garbage pickup;
- Develop covenants for the disposition of land which is acquired by the City and sold to the private sector for redevelopment;
- Encourage utility providers to replace overhead utilities with underground service and screen or relocate to utility substations;
- Prepare detailed design drawings for certain components of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan such as the Urban Park/Plaza improvements, corridor roadway improvements and landscaping; and,
- Implement a regular review, update and refinement of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan to meet changing conditions and needs.

The Overarching Goal, Plan Objectives and Action Statements provide direction for future development and link to the more specific proposals presented in Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. They form a foundation on which the City adopts a useful set of land use, redevelopment, rehabilitation, and conservation policies. However, it should be remembered, that the City of Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan, as presented and discussed herein, is entirely dependent upon compliance with all applicable Federal and State requirements, the results of tests, studies and evaluations, and the availability of Federal funds.

THE URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan addresses the City's need to revitalize the Study Area by creating a multi-use area of governmental, institutional, park, residential, office and commercial uses that creates an exciting Downtown destination and a positive economic impact. The Plan's key components are a new Federal Building, an Urban Park/Plaza as a "town center, opportunities for private reinvestment in a mix of residential, office and commercial development, and street and walkway corridor improvements. Map 3 – Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan illustrates the above Plan Elements.

URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT PLAN CHARACTERISTICS

The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan includes the following characteristics:

- Federal Building as a major focal point in proximity to University Boulevard and 21st Avenue, the Urban Park/Plaza and the Tuscaloosa City Hall and Municipal Court Buildings;
- Urban Park/Plaza as a "town center" to serve as a community-wide activity focal point;
- Moderate to high density mixed use development;
- Pedestrian-friendly environment with more livable streets;
- Upscale town home development and residential lofts above retail and office uses;
- Enhanced entry corridors for University Boulevard, 21st Avenue, and Paul W. Bryant Drive;
- Convenient and well landscaped on- and off-street parking facilities, including a parking deck; and,
- Aesthetic improvements including streetscape amenities, signage, lighting, underground utilities.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The Study Area is divided into two major development areas: 1) *Inside* the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area; and 2) *Outside* the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area. The primary focus for improvements will take place inside the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area because of the availability of federal dollars for acquisition and improvements. Implementation outside the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area is primarily dependent upon funding from the private sector or future public funding possibilities. The Plan narrative, however, discusses key plan components, streetscape and pedestrian circulation and aesthetic enhancements for both development areas.

Inside the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area

The area *inside* the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area is a 6-block area that includes primarily properties proposed to be acquired with federal funds and redeveloped over a number of years. Map 4 – Inside Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area delineates this irregularly shaped area bounded by sections of University Boulevard and 6th Street on the north; by 20th Avenue on the east; by parts of 7th and 8th Streets on the south; and by 23rd Avenue on the west. It includes the Federal Building site, the Urban Park/Plaza, the town home site, and mixed use development sites for new commercial, office and residential uses.

Outside the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area

The area *outside* the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area is the remaining 10-blocks delineated on Map 5 – Outside Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area. Within this area there are no current plans for property acquisition. Redevelopment will take place primarily through private sector initiatives or yet-identified public funding sources. Key plan components in this area include institutional uses and mixed use development to provide sites for new commercial, office and residential uses.

Map 3 Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan



- Proposed Federal Building
- Proposed Building
(inside proposed federally-funded area)
- Proposed Building
(outside proposed federally-funded area)
- Existing Building
- Proposed Federally
Funded Area *

* THE CITY OF TUSCALOOSA'S URBAN RENEWAL / REDEVELOPMENT PLAN AS PRESENTED IS ENTIRELY DEPENDENT UPON COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS, THE RESULTS OF TESTS, STUDIES, AND EVALUATION, AND THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.



Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban
Renewal / Redevelopment Study
City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama



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Map 4 Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan Inside Proposed Federally Funded Project Area

- Proposed Federal Building
- Proposed Building
(inside proposed federally-funded area)
- Proposed Building
(outside proposed federally-funded area)
- Existing Building
- Proposed Federally
Funded Area *

* THE CITY OF TUSCALOOSA'S URBAN RENEWAL / REDEVELOPMENT PLAN AS PRESENTED IS ENTIRELY DEPENDENT UPON COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS, THE RESULTS OF TESTS, STUDIES, AND EVALUATION, AND THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.



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Potential redevelopment is shown on some blocks to reflect how redevelopment might take place. This includes a major parking deck with ground-level retail on Block 4, church expansion on Block 8, and mixed use development on Blocks 12 and 14. Other potential improvements include enhanced streetscape, improved pedestrian circulation, parking facilities, aesthetic enhancements and infrastructure improvements, some of which may occur with improvements planned for the Proposed Federally Funded Project Area.

LAND USE PLAN COMPONENTS

The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan envisions a mix of uses throughout the Study Area that would permit the development of a vibrant urban center with both daytime and evening activities. Specific land uses have been assigned to the Federal Building site, Urban Park/Plaza, general mixed use sites, and some residential use areas. Major development and design components of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan are discussed in the following subsections.

Federal Building Site

Inside the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area, the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan recommends acquiring all property in a two-block area adjacent to and south of University Boulevard, east of 21st Avenue and west of 20th Avenue (Blocks 3 and 7), demolishing all buildings and other structures, closing 6th street between 20th Avenue and 21st Avenue, and conveying these parcels to the United States Government. The one-block segment of 6th Street is required to be closed to provide full development potential of the Federal Building site. On this land the U.S. General Services Administration has agreed, subject to certain conditions, to construct the proposed Federal Building. This location enables the Federal Building to have a presence on University Boulevard which is the major link between the Downtown and the University. Its location on 21st Avenue provides a major link between Downtown and the Riverwalk.

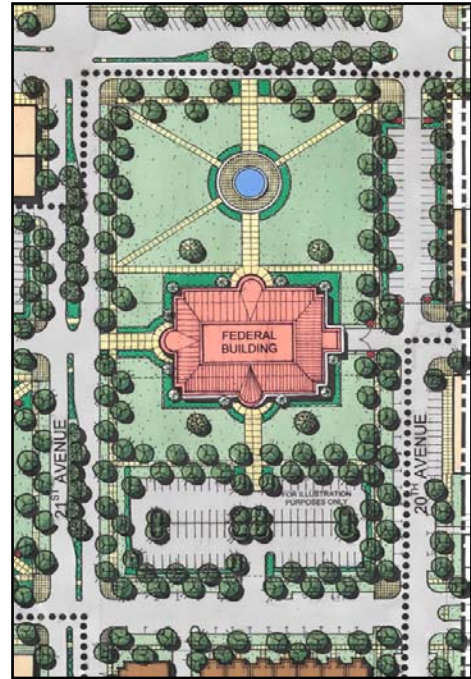
This strategic location for the Federal Building serves as a gateway into Downtown and a point of demarcation between the highly urban area and the Druid City Historic District's residential neighborhood. The site for the proposed Federal Building meets the following General Services Administration requirements:

- A 3.5 acre site providing ample setbacks for security;
- A four-six story building with 130,000 to 150,000 gross building square feet;
- Separate parking areas for secure parking and juror parking; and,
- Room for future expansion.

The conceptual illustration below shows a 130,000 square foot building footprint, walkways, open space, a fountain and parking locations (all for illustration purposes only). The architectural design team selected by the General Services Administration will be tasked with the design of the building and grounds. The schematic illustration for the Federal Building site has the following key design elements:

- The Federal Building will be a major focal point in Downtown Tuscaloosa and an integral part of the overall Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. It is of major importance that the Federal Building and public grounds are designed in a manner that is sensitive to other architectural elements of Tuscaloosa.
- The Federal Building is shown to be set back from University Boulevard to create a large open area which can be made attractive through landscaping and other amenities such as a proposed fountain with public seating areas. The set back is similar to that enjoyed by the University of Alabama's President's Mansion and many other attractive buildings found on the University of Alabama campus along University Boulevard.

- The Federal Building is located on axis with the termination of 6th Street and at a diagonal to the proposed Urban Park/Plaza thus providing enjoyment of park views from multiple locations within the site.
- Secure parking is provided by closing 20th Avenue between University Boulevard and 6th Street. The secure parking lot will be landscaped and screened from the commercial area to the east and will provide a sally port for secure delivery of prisoners to the building. If fencing of the secure parking area is required, decorative fencing materials such as wrought iron and brick should be used with heights limited to the minimum level required to maintain secure access.
- Public parking for jurors is located 100 feet to the south of the Federal Building with a circulation pattern that allows passengers to be dropped off at a main walkway into the building. This location also provides the opportunity for future expansion of the Federal Building.
- The large public grounds are envisioned to be appropriately landscaped with decorative walkways and lighting fixtures that are integral to the Study Area and meet the required security standards.



Urban Park / Plaza

Currently, Downtown Tuscaloosa does not enjoy the advantages of a landscaped “town square.” The proposed Urban Park/Plaza would serve as a major “showpiece” for Tuscaloosa and especially the Downtown. Located immediately across from the proposed Federal Building and the existing City Hall and Municipal Court, the Urban Park/Plaza is a major component of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. The objective is to create a “town square” and urban plaza in Downtown Tuscaloosa that will become a public gathering place.

The proposed location borders and provides a linkage with existing governmental buildings, the proposed Federal Building, and commercial, office and residential uses. Specifically, the Urban Park/Plaza is located on Blocks 5 and 6, between 6th and 7th Streets, and 21st and 23rd Avenues.

Major design features of the Urban Park/Plaza Area are anticipated to include but may not be limited to:

- A “town square” for the Downtown to serve as a public gathering place;
- A formal design with walkways that connect key activity areas adjacent to the park;
- Amenities such as a fountain and public art, a performance pavilion, seating areas, and open space for large festivals and exhibits or informal lunch breaks;
- Decorative sidewalks in the plaza area and around the fountain;



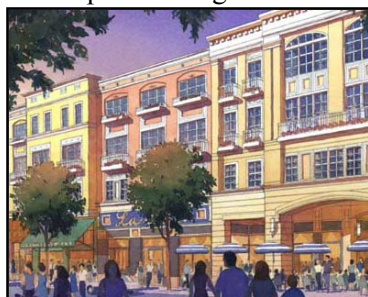
- Tree-lined perimeters with plantings throughout the park;
- A large pavilion at the western end of the park for concerts, weddings, reunions, picnics, and civic gatherings; and,
- A public plaza adjacent to proposed dining, shopping, office, and living areas.

Public and Institutional Uses

Public and institutional uses are essential to the future of Downtown Tuscaloosa. It is fortunate that the Study Area has a number of such uses. They include existing public uses such as City Hall and the Municipal Court Building as well as the proposed Federal Building and Urban Park/Plaza, all within the northern portion of the Study Area. In the southwestern portion of the Study Area, the First Baptist Church occupies and/or owns a significant portion of land area. The intent of the Plan is to utilize these public and institutional facilities to bolster development activity within the Study Area. However, it is important that these public and institutional uses not be developed as self-contained “compounds” but as integral parts of the overall Study Area. Bridges or “catwalks” connecting buildings across streets, street closures or fenced areas limit opportunities for street-level pedestrian activity to be a part of the Downtown. Buildings, parking facilities and access should be developed in a manner that contributes to the vitality of the area. Blank walls and covered over windows project an “inward-looking” rather than an “outward-looking” activity center. Thus, it is critical that as these public and institutional uses expand that they are designed in a manner that is compatible with the Plan, that they encourage street level access and use, and that they are pedestrian friendly.

Mixed Use Development (Commercial, Office & Residential Uses)

A mix of commercial, office and residential uses is very important to the vitality of Downtown Tuscaloosa. The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan endeavors to provide an opportunity for multiple uses within buildings. The Area’s traditional importance as a focal point for community activity will be emphasized and strengthened. The Plan proposes a mix of uses that are compatible with one another such as retail establishments, restaurants, financial services, professional offices, shopper services and loft apartments. These types of uses are shown inside the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area in Blocks 5 and 9 adjacent to proposed Urban Park/Plaza. The Plan shows how mixed use development can be integrated into existing development throughout the Study Area with significant redevelopment potential indicated in Blocks 8, 12 and 14 and moderate potential in Blocks 11 and 16. Multi-storied buildings (3 or more stories) are proposed for the mixed use development to achieve higher densities. To support the mixed use development’s higher densities, the Plan recommends that structured parking facilities be developed such



as that proposed on Block 4 at the corner of 6th Street and 23rd Avenue. In addition, parking standards should be modified to encourage shared parking between uses that have differing parking demands (daytime – office and retail; evening – residential and entertainment).

The Plan also recommends that many inappropriate land uses currently permitted by the Zoning Ordinance, such as auto repair facilities, wholesale distribution, outside storage, not be allowed within the Downtown. Zoning within the area should permit only those uses considered desirable within the pedestrian-oriented retail/service, government, office and urban residential area. By allowing only uses of this nature, the integrity of the Downtown is maintained as a compact, exciting, pedestrian-friendly area of Tuscaloosa which will have

the potential to re-attract residents and visitors. This is particularly important in the Proposed Federally Funded Project Area. (Images courtesy of CNU.org)

Quality mixed use development is dependent upon appropriate development plans and adherence to design standards. Site plan review and approval will be important to assure these standards are maintained and the mix of uses works effectively with adjacent land uses.



Town Home Development



New, upscale privately financed town home development is proposed for Block 10 located between 20th and 21st Avenues and 7th and 8th Streets. The proposed town home development will be immediately south of the new Federal Building and is envisioned to have a very urban architectural context. The town homes will serve as an appropriate urban density residential transition to the Druid City Historic District located immediately to the east and south.

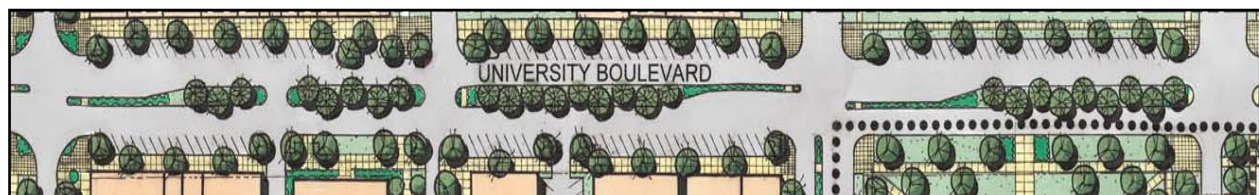


The Plan provides for quality town homes fronting onto 7th and 8th Streets, the less traveled adjacent streets, with the potential for live/work units facing the more heavily traveled 21st Avenue. Two and perhaps three story units are proposed with parking garages that open onto an interior service drive to the rear of the units. Building façade treatment will be reflective of downtown urban living, with minimal front yard space and landscaping provided between the buildings and sidewalks. The entire development would have landscaping and light fixtures that would blend with and be compatible with the Study Area.



STREETSCAPE AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

The proposed streetscape and pedestrian enhancements are designed to exemplify uniqueness and a sense of welcoming throughout all parts of the Study Area. The character might change with different types of land use or in different blocks, but the overall pattern should remain the same. However, some streets such as University Boulevard, Bryant Drive and 21st Avenue are of major importance and should be given a priority in terms of design and improvements such as more intensive landscaping, more decorative pavement, lighting, etc. The remaining secondary streets should also reflect a similar level of improvements as found along major thoroughfares.

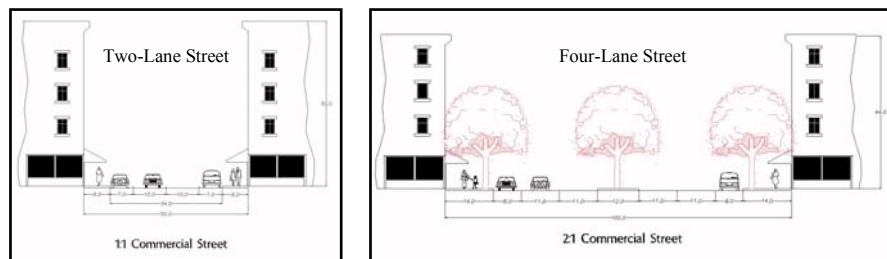


Walkable Environment

The proposed streets in the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan have been narrowed for the purpose of creating a more walkable environment for the proposed mixed use Study Area. Most street design standards are based on vehicular mobility, but if the City is to encourage a strong pedestrian friendly presence, the City must view the street as a shared environment including vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and the physically handicapped. Vehicular speeds, therefore, must be reduced to create a safe and comfortable environment for pedestrians and bicyclists ... and autos.

Peter Swift, PE, a transportation planning expert with Peter Swift Associates, was retained to examine the issue of pedestrian-friendly streets. In his work over the past decade, he has documented the significant impacts increased automobile speeds have on the severity of injury to pedestrians and the impact increased street widths have on the frequency of accidents.

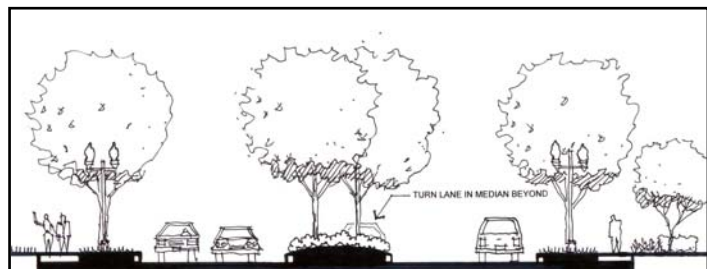
These studies document that narrower street widths decrease accident frequency, reduce vehicular speed as well as ambient road noise, and shorten pedestrian crossing times at intersections. Vehicular speeds also decrease with building enclosure. The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan proposes creating a greater sense of street enclosure by narrowing travel lanes on two-lane streets with curb bump outs at intersections, requiring multi-story construction and abutting buildings adjacent to the street rights-of-way (ideal is a 1:1 building height to street width ratio). The sense of enclosure for four-lane streets would be created by medians that reduce the impact of the overall street width (ideal is a 2:1 ratio).



Streetscape

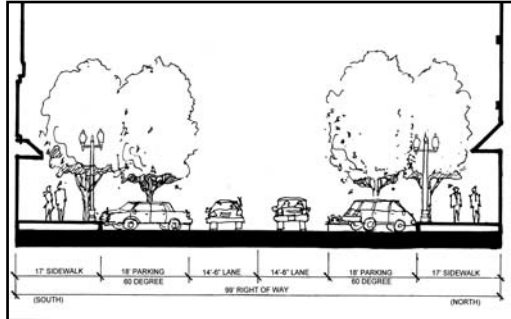
The overall appearance of the street environment is impacted by the size and scale of the right of way, building heights and placement, and the treatment of the streetscape environment. Currently the wide 99-foot rights-of-way create an unfriendly pedestrian environment primarily because of the large, unbroken expanse of pavement.

The design and implementation of streetscape improvements should be done in accordance with the overall theme of the Study Area. They must be well-coordinated with respect to traffic flow, parking, accessibility and the character of the overall Study Area. Where decorative pavement is recommended at crosswalks, a pattern that maintains a rhythm, look and feel should be used. Efforts should be made to maintain the architectural edge along streets, as well as improve the scale of streets by the use of narrower pavement widths to make them more pedestrian friendly. The Plan does this on most streets, especially along 6th and 7th Streets.

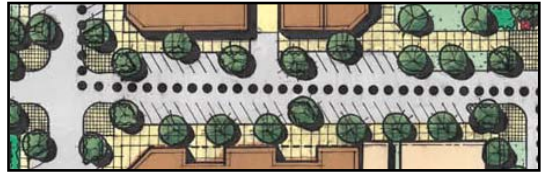


The Plan respects the grid-pattern street system that has historically existed throughout Downtown Tuscaloosa. Proposed plans for the Study Area retain the existing grid pattern but make improvements to the typical 99-foot cross-section. Only three short street segments are recommended to be closed by the Plan: 22nd Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets to permit adequate space for the proposed Urban Park/Plaza; 6th Street between 20th and 21st Avenues to accommodate the proposed Federal Building; and 20th Avenue between 6th Street and University Boulevard for development of the secured parking area for the Federal Building.

Streets widths are proposed to be narrowed on 6th and 7th Streets to create a more pedestrian friendly environment in the vicinity of the Urban Park/Plaza, governmental facilities and proposed mixed use / retail areas. North-south avenues have been narrowed except for 21st Avenue.



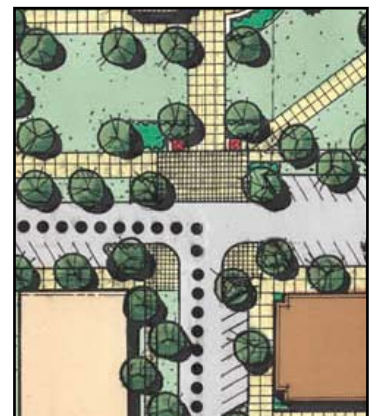
Curb “bump outs” are proposed at intersections to accommodate pedestrian traffic. This is much like what already exists at the intersection of 6th and Greensboro. To give the Urban Renewal /Redevelopment Area a fresher look and address deteriorated streets that have years of multiple asphalt overlays, the Plan recommends milling the existing streets and repaving. The proposed street reconstruction would be particularly timely given that utility replacement work is planned for much of the Study Area.



Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrian circulation is essential to create a vibrant town center atmosphere. The intent of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan is to focus on the pedestrian by undertaking sidewalk improvements that enhance circulation and the pedestrian experience. In accord with this, the Plan proposes the following improvements:

- All sidewalks that are significantly uneven, heavily cracked and filled with multiple patches should be removed and new sidewalks with quality materials installed;
- Reestablish the areas between the sidewalk and the street that are now paved over to add small grassed areas for trees and landscaping;
- Crosswalk curbing should be “bumped out” to extend curbs and reduce roadway width, thus shortening the pedestrian street crossing area;
- Decorative walkway pavement should be installed at the intersection corners and in key areas such as surrounding the Federal Building site and the Urban Park/Plaza site;
- All sidewalks should meet ADA requirements pertaining to widths, cross slope, ramp conditions, wheelchair ramps, etc.;
- A minimum of 15-foot wide sidewalks should be installed in the retail area; and,
- As sidewalks are replaced, existing utility meter boxes should be replaced.



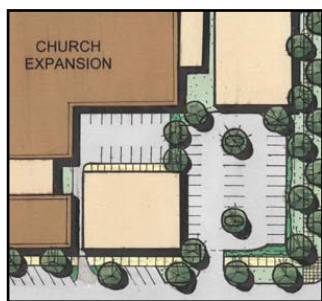
PARKING FACILITIES

The provision of adequate and convenient parking is a competitive necessity for successful development whether it is public or private. In order to achieve the desired level of development and activity throughout the Study Area, sufficient on-street and off-street parking, that is conveniently and attractively developed, is recommended. The Plan recognizes that visitors to the Downtown need the ability to quickly access on-street parking; therefore, the Plan accommodates this need by providing improved on-street facilities along most streets.

The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan provides well-dispersed parking facilities both on- and off-street. Immediately adjacent to the Proposed Federally-Funded Area, a 500+ space parking deck is

proposed on the west side of 23rd Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets. The deck would be a multi-use facility that would include ground level retail or service establishments and possibly residential units on upper floors. The deck would provide parking for nearby governmental, business and church uses; however, additional funding is required before this facility can become a reality.

Proposed parking locations are designed to serve the needs of a variety of users and at various times of day. Much needed parking is proposed immediately east of the Tuscaloosa Municipal Court Building. Parking for the Federal Building is proposed south of the building with access from 7th Street and secure parking is proposed by closing 20th Avenue north of 6th Street.



The Plan proposes that the appearance of surface parking lots, both public and private, be enhanced throughout the Study Area by the provision of landscaping, attractive paving, and appropriate lighting. When possible, surface parking lots will be located to the rear or side of the buildings screened by attractive, masonry walls or a vegetative screen of shrubs and trees. However, these should be no higher than 3-4 feet and should provide an adequate number of pedestrian pass-through points. In addition to making parking lots more attractive, screens will help to establish an architectural edge along streets where building edges are not possible.

AESTHETIC ENHANCEMENTS

Aesthetic improvements are a very important component of the total redevelopment process and are recommended for all of the Study Area. Following is a discussion of the Plan's intent regarding some of the more pertinent aesthetic enhancements.

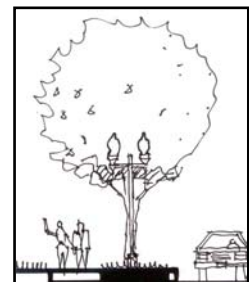
Gateway Treatments

Gateway treatments which are visually attractive and distinctive clearly define the Study Area as a unique part of Downtown Tuscaloosa. They create a sense of arrival into a special place. The development of gateways should be attractive and contribute to a sense of arrival but should not detract from immediately adjacent areas. Gateway signage should be compatible with signage proposals for the overall Downtown.

Landscape Treatments

Few existing properties or street rights-of-way in the Study Area show any evidence of landscaping improvements. The Plan recommends substantial landscape improvements to be achieved through site plantings, particularly along streets and parking areas. However, it is important that the appropriate urban landscape design context be used rather than landscaping that is more appropriate for a suburban setting.

Landscape treatment is recommended for all streets with particular emphasis on major corridors. Planting street trees is one solution to reducing the wide scale of the streets and making them more pedestrian friendly. The Plan's intent is to capture the opportunity to plant trees along streets in a grass strip or spaced grass islands, to preserve existing grass strips along streets and to improve overall scale of streets with tree and shrub plantings.



Lighting

The Plan's intent is to have uniform light fixtures and poles that bring a sense of scale to streets and continuity to the Study Area.

The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Area should have a consistent palette of attractive, Downtown-appropriate street and pedestrian level lighting to replace existing "highway" light poles and fixtures. Specialty lighting is recommended for areas such as the park fountain, around the proposed pavilion, walkways within the Urban Park/Plaza area, walkway entrances to major buildings and parking lots. Specialty floodlighting is recommended for key buildings such as the new Federal Building, City Hall, the Municipal Court Building and major commercial buildings.

Lighting should meet current lighting standards and design guidelines of the American Society of Illumination Engineers. Lighting should be reflective of the historic character of Downtown. Internally lit lights other than neon lights should be avoided.

Signage

Signage should be organized, consistent, attractive and in scale with buildings. Street signs should be unique and appropriate to the Downtown in accordance with the Plan and accompanying design guidelines and standards. All public and private signage should be in accord with the Plan's design standards. The issue of sign scale should be a part of all development review for replacement signage and new signage. All signage should conform to the requirements of the Uniform Traffic Control Manual, latest edition.

Utility Appearance

The Plan recommends that overhead utility lines be located underground or in less visible locations, where economically and otherwise feasible to do so. This is a priority recommendation for the entire Study Area to eliminate the excessive clutter that overhead utility lines currently impose on the Area. Based on information provided by Alabama Power, there are plans for replacement of electrical services in many areas of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Area; it is hoped that the issue of overhead power lines can be successfully addressed during installation of new electrical services.

Outside Uses

The Plan recommends that trash dumpsters be located outside of the right-of-way and visually screened from street or sidewalk views. The use of smaller portable trash containers stored inside an enclosed structure is also a potential option. Redevelopment should eliminate many of the largest dumpsters as they are currently used by auto repair services. Also, the proposed overlay zoning that prohibits heavy commercial uses which tend to have large dumpsters should, over time, lessen the need for these large trash receptacles.

It is recommended that outside storage of material not be permitted. Currently, there are old appliances, cars under repair, heavy equipment and industrial pipe stored outside of commercial/industrial businesses. Again, as redevelopment takes place, much of this outside storage will disappear.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Infrastructure improvements play an important role in addressing many of the deficiencies identified in the *Inventory and Analysis of Blighting Conditions Report* adopted by City Council on September 9, 2004. However, implementation of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan is totally dependent upon the availability of Federal dollars. This is particularly true for the significant amount of infrastructure improvements needed within the entire Study Area. Fortunately, within the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area, Federal dollars have already been set aside for a number of the improvements.

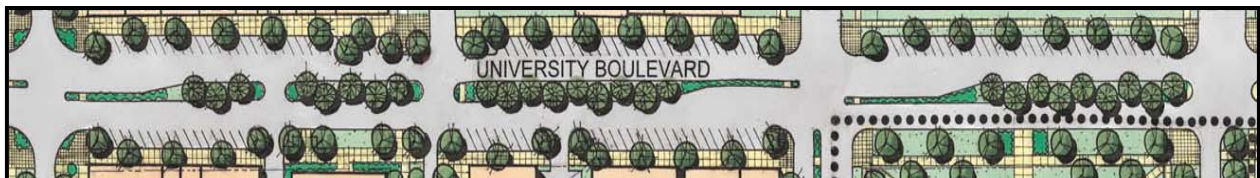
Although the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area is the first priority for expenditure of available Federal funds, the proposed infrastructure improvements discussed within this section include improvements needed within the entire Study Area. A description of the proposed improvements, reasons for improvements and project-wide quantities are provided. However, more detailed engineering will be required during the implementation phase of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan to identify the full scope and estimated costs of these improvements. Although gas, electrical, and telecommunication services are discussed within this section, the City does not plan to bear the costs of replacing these services; therefore, cost estimates for these improvements are not included. It should be noted that cost estimates for traffic control devices at cross-streets are included in the street improvement estimates for 23rd, 22nd, 21st, and 20th Avenues.

STREET AND STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

There are just over two-miles of streets within the Study Area, many of which are deteriorated, with cracked and failing pavement, and often exaggerated crowns resulting from many years of additional asphalt overlays. Since the failure in the pavement most likely extends to the pavement's base, consideration should be given to fully replacing the streets. Along with pavement replacement, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters should be replaced. Approximately 17,000 linear feet of sidewalks are cracked and deteriorated; new sidewalks would be more convenient for pedestrians and more visually appealing. Replacing the existing 18,000 feet of curb and gutter would also support efficient water drainage and would enhance the aesthetics of the Study Area. Since a substantial amount of utility replacement is proposed along many of the streets, particularly within the proposed Federal Funded Area, it would be an appropriate time to undertake major street improvements. However, given the magnitude of the street needs and the potential for funding being limited, street improvement priorities would need to be established.

University Boulevard

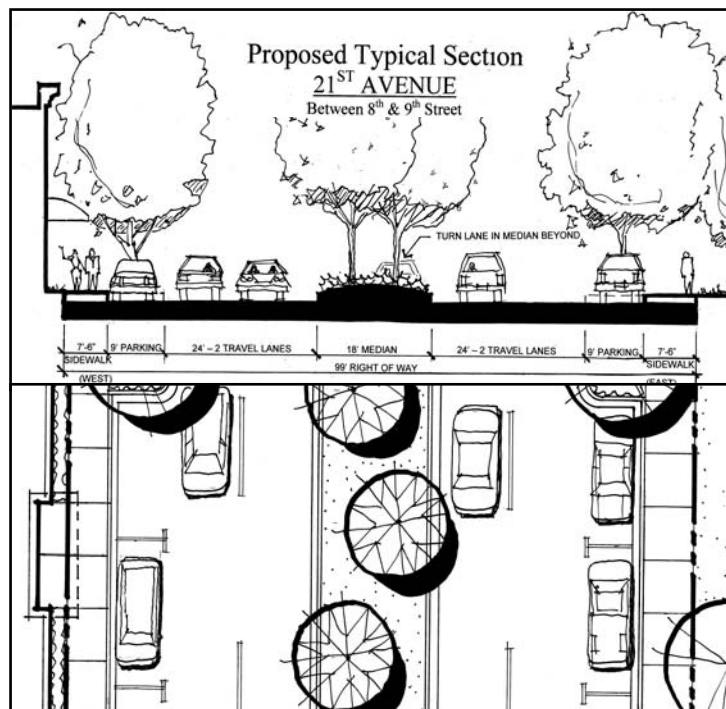
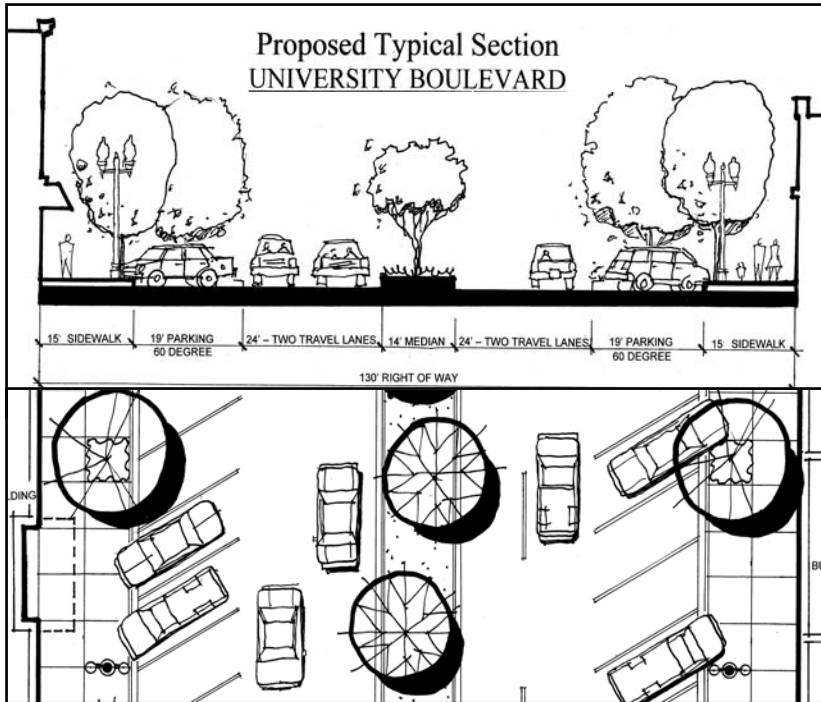
The Plan proposes that University Boulevard's existing streetscape improvements be extended east from 23rd Avenue to Queen City Avenue. This is due to the necessity to make major utility improvements to service the proposed Federal Building and other development planned for the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study Area. Improvements would include a planted median with turn lanes, sidewalks with handicap ramps, decorative crosswalk paving at intersections, angled parking on both sides (except in front of the proposed Federal Building site), and the continuation of the four-lane travel section.



The excessively wide sidewalk between 21st and 22nd Avenues would be reduced to pull the angled parking out of the travel lane. At intersections, crosswalks would cut through the median to provide enhanced protection for crossing pedestrians. Lighting and landscaping would be consistent with existing improvements west of 23rd Avenue with some consideration for plantings that are more appropriate for an urban setting.

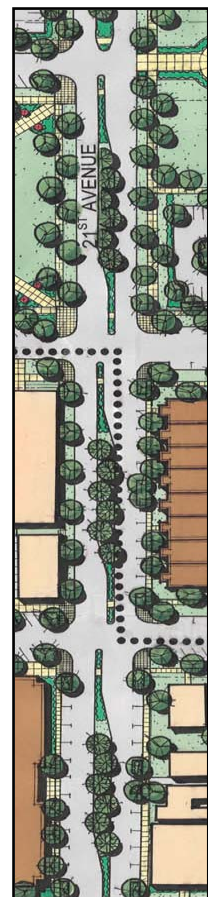
21st Avenue

The Plan proposes that 21st Avenue become a divided four lane with a planted median and turn lanes provided at intersections. Parallel parking is proposed for portions of 21st Avenue south of 7th Street to accommodate live / work town home units and adjacent retail and service development. However, parking will not be permitted along 21st Avenue north of 7th Street. This will permit wider sidewalks and sufficient space for a planting strip between the street and the sidewalk, as well as eliminate conflicts between parking and turning movements at the intersection of 21st



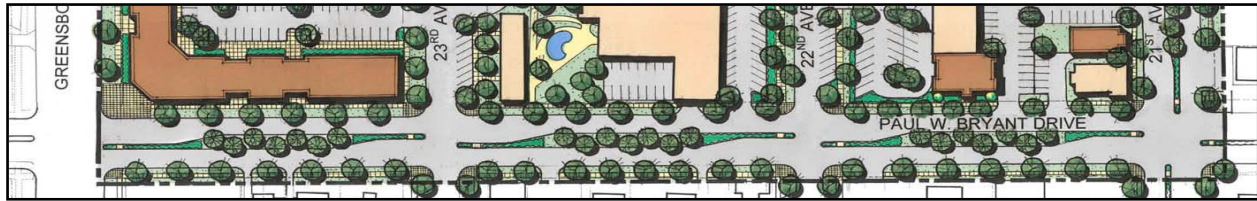
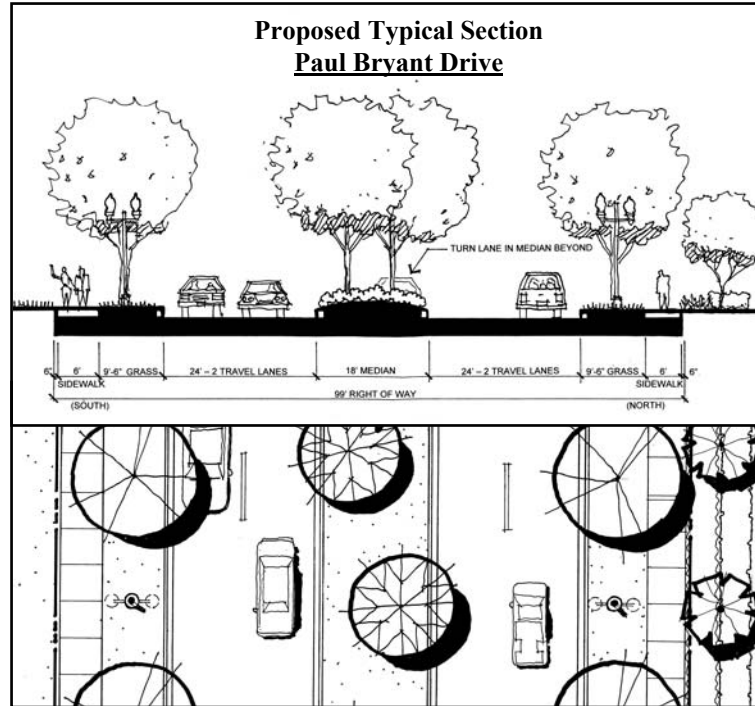
crossing 21st Avenue.

Avenue and University Boulevard. Sidewalk and curb treatments will be similar to that proposed for University Boulevard except sidewalk widths will be narrower, particularly south of 7th Street. This is due to the fact that University Boulevard has a 132-foot right-of-way, while 21st Street, as with many other Downtown streets, has only a 99-foot right-of-way. Curb lines will be bumped out at intersections to reduce the walking distances for the pedestrians



Paul Bryant Drive

The Plan proposes that Paul Bryant Drive serve as a “gateway” into the University of Alabama for visitors arriving from Highway 69 and I-359. Bryant Drive would become a four-lane divided “boulevard” with a planted median. Turn lanes would be provided with stacking lanes designed to preserve as much of the planted median as possible. Trees would be planted in the remaining right-of-way between the street and the sidewalk which would create a tree-lined canopy as the trees mature. Parking would not be permitted along Bryant Drive.



22nd and 23rd Avenues

A number of improvements are proposed for 22nd and 23rd Avenues, particularly landscaping and sidewalk improvements. Since the avenues serve more as local Downtown streets with low traffic volumes, there would be no median or dedicated turn lanes. Travel lanes would be limited to two lanes. The travel lanes would be wider than the divided streets discussed above to accommodate backing movements from the angled parking spaces, thus avoiding encroachment into the opposing traffic lane. Sidewalks would be wider north of 7th Street to handle urban retail densities and more narrow the further south toward Bryant Drive. Curb bump outs are provided at all intersections to lessen the street crossing distances for pedestrians. A tree-lined promenade is proposed on the west side of 22nd Avenue to serve as a gateway into the Urban Park/Plaza. It is proposed that 22nd Avenue be closed for the one-block area running across the park.

6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Streets

Street improvements proposed for 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Streets are similar to those proposed for 22nd and 23rd Avenues. Travel lanes would be limited to two lanes and on-street angled parking would be along both sides, particularly adjacent to the park. Generous landscaping and pedestrian walkways are recommended along all streets.



SANITARY SEWER

The majority of the sanitary sewer system located in the Study Area has been in operation since 1958 (see Map 6 – Existing Utilities). The system consists primarily of terra cotta clay pipes, which are problematic. Because clay pipe is very brittle, it is very susceptible to cracking and fatigue. Fatigue and cracking in the pipes can lead to clogging, infiltration and seepage within the system. The brick manholes used in the existing system are also very susceptible to infiltration and seepage. Because the sanitary system is generally old and consists of material that has become inefficient relative to the most-often-used materials of today, it will become increasingly more expensive to maintain. Therefore, to reduce maintenance expense and provide a more efficient system, the current sanitary sewer system's existing pipes should be replaced with more reliable pipe materials. Additionally, the existing brick manholes should be replaced with reinforced concrete manholes.

Proposed sanitary sewer improvements in the Study Area total 10,430 linear feet of pipe consisting of approximately the following quantities: 8,130 linear feet of 8-inch pipe; 400 linear feet of 10-inch pipe; 1,525 linear feet of 12-inch pipe; and 375 linear feet of 15-inch pipe; and 27 manholes. Of this total, the proposed Federally-Funded Area comprises 2,770 linear feet of 8-inch pipe, 735 linear feet of 12-inch pipe; and all of the 10-inch and 15-inch pipe, plus 10 manholes that are proposed to be replaced.

WATER DISTRIBUTION

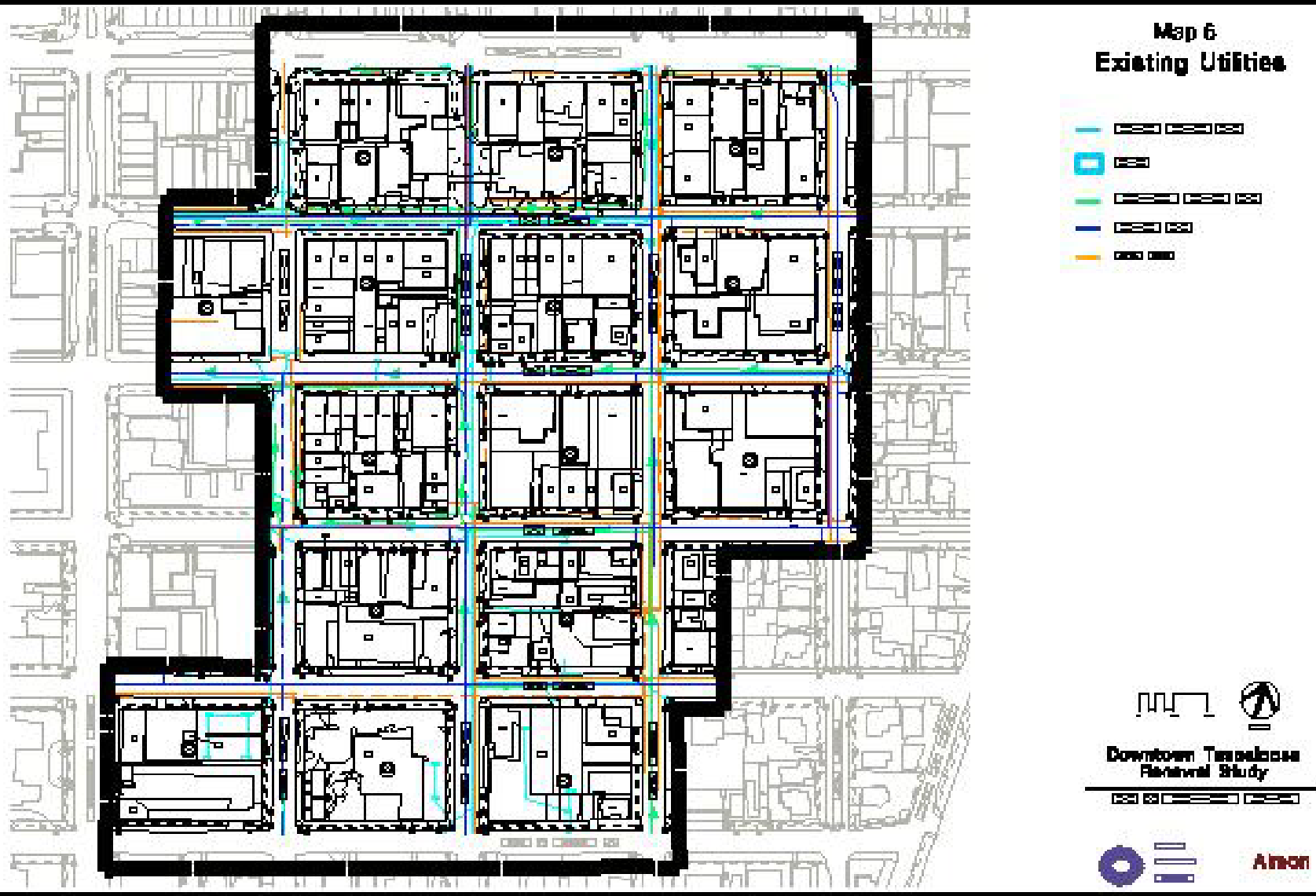
Most water mains in the Study Area are cast iron. There are, however, sections that have been recently repaired with more modern ductile iron pipe. Some sections of the original heart pine pitch-coated system serving the Downtown may still exist. According to the Tuscaloosa Fire Department, the existing system provides sufficient fire protection to all existing buildings as well as almost any new buildings that could be constructed. However, since most of the existing utilities will be impacted by street and building construction, the City would benefit from updating the current water distribution system with more modern-day materials.

It is proposed that the existing pipes in the water distribution system be replaced with ductile iron pipes. Replacing the older, possibly deteriorated, pipes with new ductile iron pipes during the implementation of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan will provide the City with the most reliable system possible and could reduce future maintenance costs.

Replacement of the water distribution system within the Study Area includes 11,360 linear feet of pipe consisting of approximately the following quantities: 1,725 linear feet of 4-inch pipe; 3,910 linear feet of 6-inch pipe; 2,885 linear feet of 10-inch pipe; and 2,840 linear feet of 12-inch pipe; and 13 fire hydrants. Of this total, the proposed Federally-Funded Area comprises 4,400 linear feet of pipe broken down as follows: 1,175 linear feet of 4-inch pipe; 1,450 linear feet of 6-inch pipe; 935 linear feet of 12-inch pipe; 840 linear feet of 12-inch pipe; and 4-fire hydrants. Due to construction of the Federal Building an estimated 750 linear feet of 12-inch water line will need to be removed on 20th Avenue (University Boulevard to 7th Street) and 500 linear feet of 12-inch and 60 linear feet of 6-inch will need to be removed on 6th Street (20th to 21st Avenues).

STORM SEWER

The Study Area's current storm water drainage system has been in place since 1886. Because of the age and type of construction of most of the current storm water drainage system, the potential for problems is likely. In addition, many of the curb inlets are constructed in a manner that does not meet current street standards. The same is the case for many grate inlets in several parking lots and driveway entrances.



Although the existing pipe sizes are sufficient to meet existing and future needs, the pipes themselves, because of their deteriorating condition, probably require replacement. Therefore, it is proposed that the existing drainage system be replaced where needed with new, reinforced concrete pipes. Additionally, the existing curb inlets, because they do not meet current standards, are proposed to be replaced with modern inlets that will more efficiently catch and direct water into the sewer system. It is proposed that the grate inlets be replaced with pedestrian-safe inlets that meet ADA requirements.

Based on the above it is estimated that the Study Area requires the replacement of estimated 10,080 linear feet of storm sewer, 47 junction boxes, 48 curb inlets and 18 grate inlets. Of this total number, 2,750 linear feet of storm sewer, 17 junction boxes, 18 curb inlets and 5 grate inlets all of which is located within the proposed Federally-Funded Area.

TRAFFIC CONTROL

The Study Area's traffic control system consists of traffic signals suspended from overhead wires, traffic signals suspended from overhead mast arms, and stop signs. Timers operate the signals from system controls located at the corner of 23rd Avenue and 9th Street. Since this older system is not connected to the Tuscaloosa's Department of Transportation's (TDOT) comprehensive real-time traffic control center, the signalization system frequently experiences problems.

As utilities are being replaced and upgraded, the traffic signalization system should also be upgraded. However, prior to upgrading of the system, a study should be undertaken to determine if some of the signalization is unnecessary or could be handled in other ways such as four-way stops. To improve the visual appeal of the Study Area, all traffic signals should be updated with overhead mast arms that are appropriate for a Downtown location. Additionally, signals should be connected to TDOT's traffic control center.

ELECTRICAL, GAS AND TELEPHONE

Electrical Distribution

Electricity has been supplied to Tuscaloosa's Downtown area since the 1880's. Overhead power lines distribute power throughout the area and a power substation located on 15th Street serves the system in the Study Area. The current system runs on outdated 4kW voltage (modern systems operate on 12kW voltage) and cannot be operated from underground transmission lines. As a result, Alabama Power's ability to service high-use customers within the Downtown Area is limited.

According to Alabama Power Company representatives, the area's current system is adequate for present demand. However, if any substantial growth occurs, a new substation would be required to allow the current system to be switched to a modern 12kW system. The 12kW system could then supply customers with a buried electrical system instead of unsightly overhead lines. This is consistent with Alabama Power's efforts to work cooperatively with many municipalities to relocate utility service lines to underground locations in order to improve the design, functionality and aesthetics of downtown areas. It is recommended that redevelopment activities be closely coordinated with Alabama Power to assure upgrading of electrical services takes place in conjunction with the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment activities.

Gas Distribution

Because of increased demand, the Alabama Gas Corporation gas system has experienced continuous upgrades since its initial installation in 1943. Two gas systems of differing pressures exist within the Study Area. One, a low-pressure system operating at 0.5 PSIG, consists of approximately 13,387 linear feet of pipe. The other, a medium-pressure system operating at 25 PSIG, consists of approximately 5,125 linear feet of pipe. A pressure reducing regulatory facility located in Block 12 is a delivery point into the Low Pressure System.

The gas distribution system in the Study Area is scheduled for replacement in phases over the next five years. It is recommended that redevelopment activities be closely coordinated with Alabama Gas Corporation to assure that adjustments, if needed, are made to their phasing of gas line improvements.

Telephone System

The existing telephone system within the Study Area consists of overhead lines connected to power poles and two telephone substations. One substation is operated by AT&T and is located in Structure S42, a one-story, unattractive structure on the southeast corner of Block 6. The other is operated by Bellsouth and is located in Structure S69, a three-story, nicely styled brick structure on the northeast corner of Block 9. Both utility companies have stated that the existing infrastructure is adequate to serve telephone service to any existing and potential customers within the area.

The proposed relocation of power lines underground and the elimination of power poles will require the relocation of telephone lines in an underground conduit. It is recommended that telephone lines be placed underground in trenches that will be constructed for underground power lines and other utilities. The implementation of this recommendation should be closely coordinated with other utility improvements in the Study Area. The telephone companies have worked cooperatively with other communities in rerouting and/or placing telephone lines underground at no expense to the communities.

SUMMARY OF COST

The total estimated cost for infrastructure improvements recommended within the Study Area to fully implement the Downtown Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan is approximately \$8.83 million.

These cost estimates are the engineer's preliminary opinion of construction costs. More detailed studies will be required before more accurate designs and cost estimates can be established. However, the estimates provided in this report provide a general summary of the potential requirements and costs of infrastructure improvements in the Study Area. These infrastructure improvements will provide the Study Area with updated, efficient infrastructure, stimulate investment opportunities and make the area more aesthetically pleasing. Additionally, the improvements should reduce the City's long-term infrastructure operation and maintenance costs. This estimated total infrastructure cost is divided as follows:

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

Demolition, Clearing, and Excavation	\$ 1,280,000
Base and Paving	\$ 1,930,000
Drainage and Erosion Control	\$ 1,350,000
Sewer Collection and Water Distribution	\$ 1,300,000
Miscellaneous Items	\$ 1,210,000
Engineering, Testing, and Contingency	\$ 1,760,000
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 8,830,000

DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS AND STANDARDS

It is the intent of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan that new construction and rehabilitation achieve a style, character and quality of development that will meet the goal and objectives of the Plan. There are a number of land use tools available to the City of Tuscaloosa to assure that adequate and desirable development standards are met. These tools include zoning standards, design standards and guidelines, site review requirements and possibly land use covenants when city-acquired property is sold.

In order to achieve the objectives and intent of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan, development within the Study Area should be made subject to specific development standards. As a result of substantial public investment being made in revitalizing the Study Area, these standards should be more restrictive than those applicable to other areas of the City. This will protect and promote the public and subsequent private expenditures in the area.

All proposed development controls and standards discussed here are preliminary concepts that provide the initial framework for controlling development within the Study Area. Prior to being made a part of the City Code, these controls and standards will be reviewed in detail by the Planning Department staff and the Planning Commission, with necessary modifications being made prior to adoption by the City Council. The following is a summary of the recommendations:

- Central Business District Zoning Standards: Changes should be made to the current zoning standards of the “Central Business District” (BC) to better reflect the level of development standards needed in the Downtown.
- Rezoning: Blocks within the Study Area not currently zoned “Central Business District” should be rezoned to “BC – Central Business District.”
- Zoning Overlay District: Land use and design standards should be developed for a new Zoning Overlay District covering the Study Area as well as the remainder of Downtown;
- Design Review Board: A Design Review Board should be established to review and approve/disapprove plans for all development within the Study Area and the Downtown; and,
- Covenants: Covenants should be placed on any property which is acquired and later sold for private development.

REVISIONS TO ZONING ORDINANCE

Revisions to the City of Tuscaloosa’s Zoning Ordinance are needed so that appropriate development occurs within the Study Area as well as in the remainder of the Downtown. It is recommended that the City revise its Central Business District zoning standards, adopt an Overlay District that would pertain to the Study Area and possibly the remainder of Downtown, and rezone to “Central Business District” (BC) those portions of the Study Area not currently “BC.” The purpose of the Overlay District would be to “overlay” the existing BC - Central Business District and to apply more restrictive land use and design provisions than the underlying BC zoning district.

The Overlay District should address the development concepts of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan and contain provisions tailored specifically for the Study Area. In addition to the typical zoning regulations concerning land use, parking, signs, and dimensional requirements, the Overlay District would establish additional design standards and guidelines.

Upon adoption of an Overlay District anyone obtaining a building permit would be required to comply with the standards and guidelines of the Overlay District. The intent of the Overlay District would not be to discourage development but to encourage appropriate development that would contribute to the goal and objectives of the Study Area.

Land Uses Standards

The revised land use standards recommended for the “Central Business District” zoning district are:

- Uses should be limited to retail, restaurant, appropriate entertainment and service, office, institutional, and residential uses; heavy commercial and industrial uses should be prohibited;
- Residential uses should be permitted on upper stories of commercial and offices uses, with shared parking provisions that recognize differing parking demand hours;
- Floor area ratio should be a minimum of 1.0 with building heights for new construction a minimum of three stories;
- Residential town homes should be permitted within the District but be required to have vehicular access only via the rear lot lines;
- Structured parking should be required to provide ground level commercial or office development;
- Buildings should be built at the property line or within 5 feet of the property line to maintain the alignment of facades along the sidewalk edge;
- Parking standards should be modified (reduced) to encourage increased development potential;
- Parking lots for new construction should be located to the rear of the buildings or to the side if the rear lot area is not available; and,
- Utilization of a building’s ground floor for storage, other than incidental to the office or commercial uses, should not be allowed.

Design Guidelines and Standards

Design guidelines and standards should be made a part of the Overlay District’s regulations. Design guidelines and standards go beyond land use standards by addressing more of the character of development. These guidelines and standards propose quality site planning and design; appropriate materials in new construction or renovation; a high degree of design excellence in building forms and facades, building scale, parking facilities, landscaping; lighting, signage, and other elements. Design standards and guidelines as they apply to historic structures will be submitted to the Alabama Historic Commission for review and approval.

The following is a summary of recommended design guidelines and standards. As is evident from the recommended list, some are *preferred* approaches to development (guidelines) and some should be *required* approaches (standards).

TABLE 3 RECOMMENDED DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Buildings	
	Buildings should work together to create a façade of building fronts and uses that are traditionally associated with downtown areas.
	Buildings should provide street-level, pedestrian-oriented uses on all street fronts.
	Primary building entrances should be accentuated by architectural features.
	Architectural character reflective of existing historic buildings should be included in the building design.
	Lower floors should be differentiated by design treatments.
	Building walls should be divided into increments through divisions or breaks in materials, window bays, separate entrances or entry treatments, variation in roof lines or building setbacks.

	Restoration or renovation of older buildings should attempt to return the façades to their original character; preserve original materials or details and the shapes and sizes of original window openings; and replace original elements such as transom windows.
	A minimum of 30% of the ground level façade and sides of buildings adjacent to the street should be transparent (windows and doors); a minimum of 15% of a building's rear façade facing a public right-of-way, parking area or open space should be transparent; and no more than 40% of the total façade area should be glass.
	Upper floor windows should be vertically oriented; arched tops, columns framing the windows and decorative lintels should be encouraged.
	Rehabilitation efforts should be undertaken in a manner to last for an extensive period of time; materials and detailing should maintain the character and objectives of the Study Area.
	Blank walls at the street level should be discouraged.
	Painting previously unpainted brick should not be permitted.
	The façade or sides of buildings facing a public right-of-way, parking area or open space should not use the following materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Concrete block or brick larger than 4" in height and 12" in length; ■ Aluminum, vinyl or fiberglass siding or roofing materials; ■ Concrete masonry units; ■ Materials that attempt to look like traditional materials such a fiberglass panels that are molded to look like brick; or ■ Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS), or Dryvit or wood exterior building materials.
	Buildings should use primarily earth tones with bright colors used only as minor accents and in colors that complement the primary color.
	Rear entrances should be clean, well maintained and free of outside storage.
	Awnings should project a minimum of 36" from the building and should not extend across multiple storefronts and/or multiple buildings. Long expanses of awnings should be broken into segments that reflect the door or window openings beneath them; awnings should be constructed of durable and protective material; however, plastic or fiberglass awnings should be not permitted.
	False fronts, false stories or pent eaves to the roofs of commercial buildings should be avoided.
Roofs	
	Roofs should be designed with parapets reflective of historic downtown buildings with HVAC equipment shielded from view; an alternative to the flat roofed design could be considered based upon its compatibility with adjacent buildings.
Pedestrian-Oriented Development	
	Commercial continuity along pedestrian-oriented frontages should be maintained by preventing unnecessary interruption by parking lots, blank walls or non-contributing uses.
	Drive-through uses should be avoided or designed in a manner to be pedestrian friendly.
	Sidewalks in heavily traveled pedestrian areas should have an unobstructed width of at least 10 feet.
Lighting	
	Lighting should serve to illuminate facades, entrances and signage, as well as provide an adequate level of personal safety while enhancing the aesthetic appeal of buildings; lighting fixtures on private property should be designed to direct lumens only within the boundaries of the property.
	Colored lighting schemes should be avoided.
Off-Street Parking and Loading	
	Parking facilities should be designed with careful regard to orderly arrangement, landscaping, drainage, ease of access, adequacy, and overall site design; loading facilities should be screened from public view to the extent necessary to eliminate unsightliness.

	Parking lots should use planted islands to create breaks in parking rows every 10 or 12 spaces.
	Surface parking facilities should be partially obscured from the street right-of-way by landscaping or 3-4 foot masonry walls.
	Automobiles in parking decks should be screened from public view.
Screening Utility and Mechanical Equipment Areas	
	The screening of exterior trash and storage areas, loading areas, transformers and air conditioning and heating units should use the same materials, color and/or style as the primary building in order to be compatible with the building.
	Mechanical equipment should be screened when visible from the street or from potential or existing nearby buildings.
	Utility connections and support should be located to avoid conflict with pedestrian movement in the right-of-way.
Signage	
	Signs should relate in terms of form, detailing, materials and colors.
	Signs should be architecturally compatible with the style, composition, materials, colors and details of the building and with other nearby signs.
	Signage should have the capability to be lit at night but the source of light should not be visible to pedestrians or motorists; internally illuminated, pylon and monument signage should be prohibited.
	Painted window signs, backlit or illuminated awnings should not be permitted.
	Neon signs should be permitted on the exterior of buildings (size to be individually reviewed) and in display windows provided they do not cover more than one-third of the window surface area.
	Projecting signs should not extend beyond the first floor, no greater than 12 square feet, and have a maximum width of 3 feet; no less than 10 feet of clearance should be provided between the sidewalk elevation and the lowest point of a projecting sign with the maximum distance between a sign and building face being 1 foot.
	Signs should not block or obliterate design details, windows or cornices of the building.
Streetscape	
	Streetscape should be continuous and, to the extent possible, be compatible with existing streetscape plans in adjacent areas.
	Paving materials and design, lighting fixtures, retaining walls, curbs, benches and signs should be appropriate to a Downtown location, easily maintained and indicative of their function.
	Landscape treatments should be used to enhance the pedestrian experience and complement architectural elements.
	Landscape treatment should be maintained in a safe, clean and neat condition free of rubbish and weeds.
	Plantings should be maintained in healthy growing conditions with fertilization and pruning conducted on a regular basis; dead or dying plants should be replaced as soon as possible.
	Landscape treatment for plazas, roads, paths, parking and service areas should be designed as an integral part of a coordinated landscape design appropriate to a Downtown location.

DESIGN REVIEW

Implementation of Design Review and the creation of a Design Review Committee should be integral parts of adopting an Overlay District for the Study Area and the Greater Downtown. It is recommended that a five-member Design Review Committee be appointed by the City Council. The committee should consist of persons with experience and knowledge in the fields of building construction/renovation, architecture, historical preservation, city planning, engineering, and landscape design. Within the area covered by the Overlay District, no building permit for exterior renovation/new construction or certificate of occupancy for a new use should be issued without the approval of the Design Review Committee.

Design Review Considerations

In establishing a Design Review Committee, the following should be considered:

- Involvement of the Committee in developing the land use and design standards and guidelines for the Study Area;
- Plans required to be submitted for review should include general site development, exterior facades, urban design elements, off-street parking, landscaping, streetscape and other aspects of the proposed development;
- Minimum standards for property maintenance in the area covered by the Overlay District;
- Exemptions for existing structures to conform to new standards;
- Requirement for landscape performance bonds;
- Review procedures that protect historically contributing properties from arbitrary demolition;
- Active participation in guiding future development so that it is sensitive to the scale, materials and character of the Study Area; and,
- Opportunities for the City to negotiate public benefits and avoid potential problems through reasonable modifications in project plans.

Review of Development Plans

The following issues should be taken into consideration when the Design Review Committee reviews proposed development plans:

- Conformity with the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan's overall goal and objectives;
- Design and arrangement of proposed buildings regarding mass, materials, and placement in order to provide a visually and physically integrated development;
- Treatment of all building sides that abut a street to be comparable in amenity and appearance to the treatment given to front of the building;
- Relationship to adjoining properties related to adverse impacts and suitability of uses;
- Relationship to historic districts;
- Internal and external circulation, both vehicular and pedestrian;
- Provisions for screening service areas; and,
- Arrangement of loading and parking facilities to preserve visual and audible privacy between uses.

COVENANTS FOR PROPERTY DISPOSITION

In addition to the Zoning Overlay District and Design Review, covenants should be applied to the sale of individual parcels of acquired by the City and resold for other development. Use of covenants allows the City to require specific land uses, as well as certain design and development requirements that go beyond the Zoning District standards. Placing covenants that run with the land on property which the City acquires through eminent domain and later conveys to a private property owner for development is a traditional development tool used in Urban Renewal/ Redevelopment areas.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION MITIGATION

The City of Tuscaloosa has 14 locally designated historic districts and one Downtown National Register District. The Downtown District and the locally designated Druid City Historic District are within the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study Area and are shown on Map 7 – Historic Districts. The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan includes the acquisition of parcels and demolition of structures considered to be “contributing structures” within the existing or potentially expanded area of the Downtown National Register Historic District located on Block 5 and 6. Acquisition and demolition are unavoidable as redevelopment of the land is essential to the successful revitalization of the Study Area.

Given this potential loss of historically contributing and potentially contributing structures, the Plan includes some major initiatives to mitigate and minimize this impact. Although the opportunity for meaningful mitigation is limited within the Study Area, these initiatives are recommended to extend throughout the Downtown Study Area. The boundaries of the Downtown Study Area are initially proposed to extend west to Lurleen Wallace Boulevard South, south to 15th Street, east to Queen City, and north to the Black Warrior River. The narrative that follows is a summary of tasks that are recommended to be undertaken utilizing eligible Federal funds.

ARCHITECTURAL RECORDATION OF BUILDINGS

To memorialize and document the former existence of the historically listed and potentially eligible structures which are to be demolished on parcels in Blocks 5 and 6, large format photographs and scaled streetscape drawings of the buildings will be done prior to demolition. The work will be undertaken in accordance with the Historic America Building Survey standards. The recordation will include straight-on drawings of the fronts of the structures with the photographs focusing on the details that would not otherwise be obvious in a drawing. There will be photographs of each individual structure depicting unusual exterior details and interior spaces that retain their integrity. The photographs and drawings will be placed, along with historical research and narratives, on permanent file in the Tuscaloosa County Public Library.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION ELEMENT

The history of the Study Area and the Downtown encompasses more than the historical era of the current Downtown buildings. In recognition of this fact, the City will develop and construct a “public interpretation” of the Downtown history in the Urban Park/Plaza area of the Plan. This will take the form of either a “ground plane” or other representation proposed by the City and approved by Alabama Historic Commission. The public interpretation will reflect not only the role of the current structures or structures being demolished but also the significance of Downtown Tuscaloosa throughout the extent of the City’s and Alabama’s history. To the extent possible, this will include information on all phases of Downtown Tuscaloosa’s history, from Native American settlement to the modern period, including the contribution of African-American businesses. A map will also be included in the historical interpretation element.

ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT

As previously discussed, the City proposes to adopt and implement a Zoning Overlay District within and adjacent to the Study Area and the Downtown Study Area as defined above. The Overlay District will provide additional protection to historically contributing structures. To the extent of eligibility, the City will seek to have historic structures within the Overlay District designated on the National Register of Historic Places.



Map 7
Existing
Historic Districts
Downtown
Tuscaloosa Area

- Downtown Tuscaloosa Historic District
- Druid City Historic District



INTERPRETATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

Some of the structures planned for demolition on Blocks 5 and 6 were part of the historic African-American business district. Therefore, the history of African-American business activities in the Downtown Area will be recorded. The City will meet with members of the Murphy-Collins African-American Museum and historical advisory representatives for input into the history of the Downtown Area from an African-American business perspective.

PARTICIPATION IN MAIN STREET PROGRAM

As a part of historical preservation mitigation, the City proposes to participate, on a Downtown-wide basis, in the Alabama Historical Commission's Main Street Program. Utilizing eligible Federal Funds, the City will engage consulting services for a maximum of two years to undertake a study to define the elements to be included in the Program and to implement the program. In order to maximize public support for this program, the City will involve respective Downtown interests in the process. These interested parties will include but not be limited to the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Unlimited Association, the City of Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission and individuals and businesses in the Downtown area.

Alabama's Main Street Program is modeled on the program originally developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1986 to promote downtown revitalization and historic preservation in small communities. The nationwide success of this program is attributed to emphasis placed on two key concepts: 1) employment of a qualified Main Street Manager or staff person to be responsible for coordinating and arranging all of the Downtown area revitalization efforts; and, 2) utilization of the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization which integrates the physical, economic, organizational and promotional activities required to address downtown area deficiencies and problems in a comprehensive manner.

The Main Street approach is based upon a comprehensive strategy of work called the *Main Street Four Point Approach*. The broad components of this four point approach are described briefly below:

- Design. The design aspect of the Main Street approach focuses on enhancing physical appearance by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging supportive new construction, developing sensitive design management and long-term planning. This is accomplished by emphasizing appropriate, high-quality design in the physical components of the Downtown such as buildings, window displays, landscaping, streetscapes, and parking, pedestrian and automobile facilities. The development of adequate, well located parking facilities and of adequate, effective automobile and pedestrian circulation patterns and facilities is also critical. An attractive, visually well-organized place is more likely to generate downtown activity than is a run-down, poorly maintained area.
- The overall visual appearance presented by the Downtown involves the appearance of many individual components. The process of insuring that each of these components is receiving adequate attention and that the overall appearance is cohesive requires a great deal of coordination and oversight. Like the other aspects of the Main Street approach, physical revitalization will also not be effective unless merchants and local officials work together to develop a "look" or image for their Downtown that is appealing and gives the strong message that Downtown is a comfortable and visually satisfying place to be.
- Organization. The Main Street organization component is to build consensus and cooperation among the many groups and individuals in downtown planning, revitalization and redevelopment. Organization is effected by the cooperative efforts of a community's public and private sectors including the local government(s), institutions, downtown merchants and property owners and historical societies. The Main Street approach also stresses the importance of organizing downtown merchants into a cohesive group. Organization is accomplished through the hiring of a Main Street Manager, a paid full time staff person responsible for coordinating initiatives and special events in the

Downtown. Local commitment to fund and hire such a staff person on a full-time basis is traditionally a pre-requisite for admission into the Main Street Program.

- Promotion. Promotion involves the marketing of a downtown's unique features and strengths to residents, shoppers, tourists, potential investors and new businesses. Promotional activities cover a broad range of actions from special events to cooperative advertising where all of the merchants advertise together as a single unit. These activities serve several purposes. Promotional events could draw prospective shoppers into the Downtown, and strengthen its ties to the local community by providing a framework for community oriented events. Advertising activities could inform prospective shoppers of shopping opportunities existing in the Downtown Area, and create a sense of excitement about these opportunities. The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan's proposed Urban Park / Plaza Area could be tremendous assets to promotional activities.
- Economic Restructuring. This aspect focuses on the diversification and strengthening of the economic base of the Downtown. This is accomplished by attracting new businesses, institutions, and facilities to the Downtown while retaining the desirable existing uses.

The National Main Street Center emphasizes that the above Four Point Approach only succeeds when combined with a philosophy that includes the following eight principles:

- Comprehensive. Downtown cannot be revitalized through a single project; it requires an ongoing series of initiatives to build community support and create lasting progress.
- Incremental. Small project can demonstrate that something is happening and build momentum in the Downtown area.
- Self-Help. The National Main Street Center can provide direction and technical assistance but only local leadership can create long-term success through community involvement and commitment.
- Public / Private Partnership. A Main Street program need the support, expertise and effective partnership of both the public and private sectors.
- Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets. A key National Main Street goal is to help communities recognize and use local assets, especially unique assets. These assets can provide a solid foundation for a successful Main Street initiative.
- Quality. Quality must be the main goal of downtown planning, revitalization and redevelopment whether involving physical design or promotional activities.
- Change. A change in community attitudes and habits is essential to downtown revitalization. A carefully planned Main Street program will help shift public perceptions and attitudes about Downtown.
- Action-oriented. Small, but dramatic improvements early in the downtown revitalization process will create an atmosphere that action is occurring and frequent, visible changes will reinforce the perception of positive changes.

The Main Street Program's approach to revitalization has a proven track record in many communities throughout Alabama and the country. These communities should serve as models for local officials in developing a local program. Utilization of the Main Street approach to renewal and redevelopment of the Study Area and all of Downtown will assure long-term success.

FAÇADE REHABILITATION AND/OR RESTORATION PROGRAM

The façades of many older buildings are not contributing to the historic character of the Downtown because of the inappropriate remodeling of lower and upper stories. Encouraging the proper rehabilitation of these buildings is a necessary ingredient to meet desired renewal objectives. Additionally, many of the remaining buildings with original facades require treatment to address maintenance and repair issues. It is

not always the lack of repair, but the kind of repair that is done that impacts the character and features of buildings. Elements to be considered when undertaking building or façade improvements include, but are not limited to, the following: façade materials, façade surfaces, window configuration, upper façade design, storefront piers and duplication of historic detail.

Also, there are many opportunities for older buildings to be adaptively reused in an architecturally tasteful manner and to improve the facades, signage and window treatments of well constructed buildings. This could include renovation of deteriorating buildings, improving building storefronts, installing new windows in boarded up buildings, improving storefront displays, and removing and replacing inappropriate materials such as vinyl siding that cover many of the buildings.

With the assistance of recognized historical experts, the City proposes to initiate a Façade and Building Rehabilitation and/or Restoration Program for buildings in the Downtown Area. The Federal Highway Administration will approve the scope of work and the Alabama Historical Commission will review and comment upon the proposed program. The proposed Design Review Committee will oversee the administration of the proposed program.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS

After acquisition and demolition of structures utilizing eligible Federal funds on Blocks 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 within the Study Area, the City will conduct archeological evaluations and investigations as directed by the archaeologists in the field. All archaeological investigations will be conducted by someone who meets the Secretary of Interior's Standards for work in archaeology. In addition, the City will provide heavy equipment for the contracted archaeologists to remove over burden. Sufficient time will be scheduled for contracted archaeologists to investigate, appraise and, if necessary, to fully excavate archaeological deposits that are eligible for the National Register. If significant archaeological resources are located during archaeological investigations, mitigation of adverse effects to those resources will be addressed separately.

REVIEW OF MITIGATION ELEMENTS

The City will seek and obtain comments in regard to all of the above mitigation elements from representatives of the Tuscaloosa County Heritage Commission, City of Tuscaloosa Historic Preservation Commission, Tuscaloosa County Preservation Society, City of Tuscaloosa Planning Commission, The Original City Association and the Murphy-Collins African-American Museum. These comments will be forwarded to the Alabama Historical Commission.

ECONOMIC MARKET POTENTIAL

The Alabama Real Estate Research and Education Center (AREREC) was commissioned to examine economic and population growth in Tuscaloosa and its impact on the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. The purpose was to determine to what degree Tuscaloosa has the ability to sustain economic revitalization in the Downtown. The following is a summary of AREREC's report, "Economic Potential of the Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan." The following are the report's assumptions:

- Increases in enrollment at the University and employment at Mercedes should result in increases in population;
- Increases in population should result in increases in the number of housing units; and,
- Increases in population should result in increases in retail, services, and office demand.

In addition to these assumptions, Tuscaloosa is also impacted by persons coming from neighboring counties for retail trade and services, as well as Tuscaloosa residents traveling to other counties to satisfy their retail needs, specifically the Birmingham-Hoover MSA.

Redevelopment efforts can aid in keeping retail sales tax dollars in the County by providing local retail shopping options to attract those County residents who are currently traveling outside the County to shop. With the changes that are certain to occur should the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan be fully implemented, new and existing businesses have an unprecedented opportunity to change the economic landscape of Tuscaloosa's Downtown.

MARKET AREA AND TRENDS

Population and Demographics

The primary market area for the Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Study Area encompasses all of Tuscaloosa County. The surrounding counties of Walker, Fayette, Pickens, Greene, Hale and Bibb create a secondary market area in terms of support for employment, shopping and recreation.

The population of Tuscaloosa County is growing steadily and without major downward fluctuations. As shown on the table below, in 2005, the U.S. Census estimated the County's population at 175,259 people, a one percent increase since 2000 and a 10.5 percent increase over the 1990 decennial population. By 2015, the Census Bureau projects that Tuscaloosa County will grow by 5,000 people, climbing to 180,779.

TABLE 4 POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS, TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

	2005	2010	2015
Population	175,259	175,547	180,779
Households	73,024	73,145	75,324
Average Household Size	2.4	2.4	2.4
Median Age	33.6	34.9	35.7
Source: U.S. Census and ESRI			

Currently, two things have the potential to significantly affect Tuscaloosa's population projections. They are: 1) The University of Alabama's proposed student enrollment increases of 8,000 over the next ten years; and, 2) Plant expansions totaling 2,000 jobs, mostly generated by the Mercedes plant.

Household income in Tuscaloosa County in 2004 averaged \$52,710 (see table). In the next five years, average income is projected to rise to \$61,045. The largest household income segment is the household with an annual income between \$25,000 and \$75,000 (45.1% of all households in the County). Of all households, almost twenty percent (20%) have incomes exceeding \$75,000. The population segments the Downtown revitalization initiative may wish to target for current and perspective residents in the Downtown are those younger residents with more limited incomes who desire to rent loft apartments and the more affluent older residents who like the idea of living Downtown but desire home ownership opportunities such as condominiums or town homes.

TABLE 5 HOUSEHOLD INCOMES, TUSCALOOSA COUNTY

Annual Household Income	2004		2009	
< \$15,000	21.4%	35.0%	18.7%	30.7%
\$15,000 – \$24,999	13.6%		12.0%	
\$25,000 – \$49,999	26.6%	45.1%	25.3%	43.4%
\$50,000 – \$74,999	18.5%		18.1%	
\$75,000 – \$99,999	8.8%	19.9%	10.5%	25.9%
\$100,000 – \$149,999	7.6%		10.1%	
\$150,000 +	3.5%		5.3%	
Average Household Income	\$52,710		\$61,045	

Downtown Living

Downtown Tuscaloosa has taken on a life of its own in recent years. Rejuvenation of many older buildings into loft apartments beginning in the 1980's has created the impetus for changing the face of Tuscaloosa. New residents Downtown and a heightened interest in Downtown Tuscaloosa, have created an interest in providing additional retail, dining, and entertainment venues. Several new restaurants and bars have opened to provide an after-five atmosphere and people are making Downtown a destination for dining and entertainment. The City's Historic Districts are also experiencing many homes being restored to their original state.

Downtown living has options for a variety of housing types whether they are town homes/condominiums located in the heart of Downtown, eclectic lofts in renovated buildings, or luxury apartments with all the amenities. Single-family town homes located in Downtown would provide a new outlet for residential development. This trend is being seen in center city neighborhoods all over the nation. Downtown living provides choices for residents – affordable housing for young workers and students, town homes and lofts for executives, and everything in between. However, without a 24-hour residential population within the Downtown, the current retail and dining choices are limited. Fortunately, many residents see the vision of a vibrant, active, and healthy Downtown Tuscaloosa and are positive about Downtown's future.

Discussions with a few Tuscaloosa homebuilders regarding residential development Downtown found that there was little interest in building Downtown; however, the Planning Department reports many recent inquiries regarding the availability of land for town homes and condominiums in and around the Downtown, including the Riverwalk. In fact, several of these projects are in the preliminary design stage.

Successful Downtowns

Much can be learned from other successful downtowns. A recent article in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* entitled “The Successful Few,”¹ studied downtowns that were successful in creating a healthy environment for retail and residential living. The article identified 16 cities that had vibrant downtowns; seven of these had a large university that was either in or adjacent to the downtown; five others had a university located within two miles of the downtown; and two additional cities had smaller colleges in or close to the downtown. These cities are listed below:

TABLE 6 CITIES WITH SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWNS

■ Asheville, NC	■ Charlottesville, VA	■ Madison, WI	■ Savannah, GA
■ Athens, GA	■ Chattanooga, TN	■ Rochester, MN	■ Santa Fe, NM
■ Boise, ID	■ Fort Collins, CO	■ San Luis Obispo, CA	■ State College, PA
■ Burlington, VT	■ Iowa City, IA	■ Santa Barbara, CA	■ Wilmington, NC

The article found survey respondents frequently identified the same downtown success factors. The table below lists those factors survey respondents most frequently associated with a successful downtown.

TABLE 7 DOWNTOWN SUCCESS FACTORS

Over 50 Percent of Survey Respondents Listed these Downtown Success Factors	Over 30 Percent of Survey Respondents Listed these Downtown Success Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Active retail scheme ■ Pedestrian environment ■ Cultural activities ■ Street oriented retail ■ People on sidewalks ■ Employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Well-preserved neighborhoods ■ Frequent transit ■ Civic events ■ Green space ■ High density residential ■ Tourist activities ■ Distinctive architecture ■ Public sector presence ■ Historical character ■ Education establishments

¹The Successful Few,” Pierre Filion, Heidi Hoerning, Trudi Bunting, and Gary Sands, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Summer, 2004, Vol. 70, No. 3.

DOWNTOWN SHOPPING

An informal personal intercept survey was done by the Alabama Real Estate Research and Education Center during the months of July and August 2004. Shoppers at the two major malls, three general merchandise stores, and five grocery stores were interviewed. The survey responses of the 147 survey participants are shown below:

TABLE 8 TUSCALOOSA SHOPPING SURVEY

Question	%	Response
Resident County	58%	Tuscaloosa
	17%	Hale
	11%	Bibb
	7%	Pickens
	7%	Fayette
Shop Outside County of Residence	87%	Yes
	13%	No
Consider Living in Downtown Tuscaloosa?	29%	Yes
	71%	No
Currently Shop Downtown	36%	Yes
	64%	No
If "No," Why Do You Not Shop Downtown		Little or no variety in the stores
		Too expensive
		Stores close to early
		Too dark
		Don't like shopping downtown
		Salespeople aren't friendly
		Prefer the malls
		Don't think about shopping downtown
		Bad parking

As the table above shows, the market for the Downtown in both in terms of retail and residential is substantial. Nearly 30% said they would consider living Downtown and 35% said that they would consider shopping Downtown. These data indicate that not only is there an existing market Downtown, there is an untapped market in the Downtown.

It is the opinion of the Alabama Real Estate Research and Education Center that Downtown Tuscaloosa provides an excellent opportunity for new business development. A number of suggested retail opportunities might include a local bakery, an upscale diner, a specialty grocery/deli that offers take-away meals, other healthy eating alternatives, an outdoor sports and activities store, a regionally recognized women's apparel store (moderate- to high-end clothing labels), a drycleaner, a hardware store, a soda/ice cream parlor, a coffee shop/internet café, additional specialty gift shops, and possibly a music store that offers downloads.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Population, Households and Income

Population and household growth should be in the three percent (3%) range between 2005 and 2015, which is probably a conservative estimate as the County has benefited from significant in-migration from other counties along with a growing international presence over the past five years. The demand for housing grows in direct proportion to the increase in household formation.

The increase in population is expected to support a seven percent (7%) increase in total consumer expenditures over the same 10-year period, given historical resident spending patterns and expected growth in incomes.

The types of housing and business establishments that will do best in the Tuscaloosa market is heavily dependent upon the distribution of incomes in Tuscaloosa, the job mix, educational attainment levels, and ages of the people who live in the City and surrounding communities. The bulk of the Tuscaloosa population, however, is made up of middle-aged families and individuals living in single-family homes or low density apartments, and with a median age of 40. This profile is not expected to change radically over the next 10 years, explaining the relatively low population growth rate.

Retail Sales

The analysis of retail trade patterns for the Tuscaloosa market suggest that the retail segments that should fare the best over the next 10 years include

- Clothing Stores
- Jewelry Stores
- Shoes and Leather Good Stores
- Appliance Stores
- Full-Service Restaurants
- Electronics Stores
- Furniture Stores
- Office Supplies/Stationary Stores
- Gift and Hobby Stores

For each of these expenditure categories potential demand exceeds existing in-county supply, hence the leakage of retail dollars from Tuscaloosa to neighboring counties. In 2004 estimated aggregate demand for these retail categories exceeded actual retail sales by approximately \$60 million. This total does not include the estimated excess demand (over actual sales) for alcoholic beverage establishments (bars are considered non-retail expenditures); this would add another \$2.5 million to the total. These are the types of businesses, with the possible exception of drinking establishments, the City should seek to attract to the Downtown.

In contrast, retail supply exceeds estimated demand in such segments as motor vehicles and parts dealers, building materials and garden supply stores, supermarkets, and fast-food type establishments. The continued viability of these types of establishments is heavily dependent upon the continued in-migration of out-of-county shoppers. As the populations of some of these more rural and suburban communities continue to grow, many of these types of retail businesses will be available in locations outside the County.

Housing Market

Demographic information tells us that single-family houses will remain the dominant form of home ownership. Condominiums in Downtown locations will appeal to a limited number of people – buyers of investment properties catering primarily to student rentals, parents with children planning to attend the University of Alabama, singles who either work Downtown or can be attracted to the area by appropriate infrastructure improvements and amenities, and older couples near or already retired seeking to downsize.

These “young and restless,” “prosperous empty nesters” and “cozy and comfortable” demographic cohorts make up 12.3 percent of the population in Tuscaloosa.

These three groups would find lofts, condominiums and town homes located in the Downtown most attractive. For such developments to succeed, however, convenient and safe parking is a prerequisite – condominiums should have underground parking while town homes should have attached ground-level garages. The *broadest* market appeal would price such units in the \$90,000 to \$150,000 range, in line with comparable condominium units currently in the Tuscaloosa market. Loft apartments would appeal to young singles and married couples without children, but must have adequate parking. Rents must be comparable to those charged for one and two bedroom apartments located within a 10 to 15 minute drive time to the University and Downtown locations.

As redevelopment progresses and Downtown becomes increasingly attractive to a broader segment of affluent residents, more expensive, luxury type units could prove very viable. The presence of the Publix supermarket on University Boulevard within a five-minute drive from Downtown is a major asset and will help support Downtown residential dwellings. This does obviate the need for local specialty food stores such as bakeries and produce markets.

Class A Office Space

There is no Class A (the most exclusively-furnished building type) office space anywhere in Tuscaloosa; it is difficult for a market as small as Tuscaloosa to support such development. Stand-alone offices, converted residential properties, or small multi-storied business centers (both rentals and commercial condominiums) catering to business service providers, public accountants, and legal professions would prove viable in Downtown.

Amenities

Safe, affordable, and convenient parking is also a given for a prosperous Downtown retail market. The lack of such parking facilities was one of the most commonly-cited reasons consumers do not shop Downtown. Also, for such redevelopment to prove viable and long lasting, the Downtown must be pedestrian friendly, with complementary businesses close to each other and easily accessible. Well-lit streets and a municipal parking garage centrally located are critical for a healthy retail market.

Green spaces are also critical ingredients for a revitalized Downtown. Park benches and a band shell where concerts, plays, and other cultural and civic events can be staged would be major attractors for the area. Cafes with outdoor seating and art galleries would add to the charm of downtown living. Planned developments along the river will also improve the economic viability of the Downtown as well as bring more tourism dollars to the community.

Preserving and maintaining historic buildings have been cited as a feature for successful downtown development. Some of the older, multi-floor buildings throughout the Downtown could be candidates for reuse; façades could be maintained insuring harmonious design elements. A rooftop restaurant with a view of the city and river might also prove to be a downtown attractor.

Summary

Attempting to specify the exact number of dwelling units, retail establishments, and office buildings is impossible. The private-sector market place will meet the necessary demand when called upon. If the Downtown is made a desirable place to live, work, and recreate, development will follow. The essential prerequisites are developing guidelines that insure harmonious land use, a safe living and working environment, and the infrastructure amenities that attract people to Downtown.

ACQUISITION AND RELOCATION PROGRAMS

The implementation of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan will require the acquisition of property and the relocation of persons, businesses and nonprofit organizations in the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area. However, in the future, depending on available funding, there may be the potential for the City to utilize acquisition and relocation programs for additional redevelopment activities outside the Proposed Federally-Funded Area. This section describes the City of Tuscaloosa's programs for undertaking these activities. Pertinent information on all properties within the Study Area is provided in the Appendix (See "Study Area Block and Parcel Information").

APPROACH AND STANDARDS

Approach

The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan is being conducted in accordance with the State of Alabama's Urban Renewal and Redevelopment statutes (Alabama Code 24-2-1 et seq and 24-3-1 et seq 1975), and involves the acquisition of properties and relocation of businesses and residents to implement the Plan. The City endeavors on a continuing basis to keep all persons and businesses affected by the proposed acquisition and relocation plans informed of the process and procedures. The City's acquisition and relocation programs will generally be conducted in a manner to:

- Treat similarly situated owners of real property to be acquired for implementation of the Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Project fairly and consistently, encourage and expedite acquisition by agreements with such owners, endeavor to minimize litigation, and promote public confidence in the City of Tuscaloosa's acquisition program for the Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Project;
- Treat similarly situated persons displaced as a direct result of the Downtown Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Project fairly, consistently and equitably so that such persons will not suffer disproportionate injuries as a result this Project; and,
- Implement applicable provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations governing real property acquisitions and relocation (49 CFR Part 24) in a manner that furthers the public interest.

Federal and State Standards

The City's property acquisition and resident and business relocation is undertaken in conformance with all applicable Federal and State statutes, codes, and regulations. In accordance with the Plan's Acquisition and Relocation Programs, the following documents/materials will be and are hereby incorporated by reference:

- City of Tuscaloosa's Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan and its Acquisition and Relocation Program;
- Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended. (42 U.S.C. 4601 et seq.).
- Code of Federal Regulations governing Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition of Federal and Federally Assisted Programs (49 CFR Part 24)
- Applicable Alabama state code for condemnation authority, including inter alia, § 11-47-170 et seq., §11-80-1, §11-80-2, §18-1A-1 et seq., §24-2-3 (1975).
- Alabama Department of Transportation manuals and brochure, which are in accordance with Federal Highway Administration Standards:
 - Appraisal Manual

- Relocation Assistance Manual
- Property Management Manual
- Negotiations Manual
- Relocation Assistance Program in Alabama Brochure
- US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's brochures
 - Acquiring Real Property for Federal and Federal-Aid Programs and Projects Brochure
 - Your Rights and Benefits as a Displaced Person Brochure

Should there be a direct conflict between the various elements of the program documents, or the provisions hereof, to the extent that the same cannot be reconciled to be read in para materia, then precedence shall be given the same in the above order. Where more than one document relates to the same matter, if both can be given reasonable effect, both are to be retained.

Notification

Each notice the City is required to provide to a property owner or occupant, except for the notice described in Section 24.102(b), will be in writing and personally served or sent by certified or registered first class mail. Persons who are unable to read and understand the notice will be provided with appropriate translation and counseling. Each notice will indicate the name and telephone number of a person who may be contacted for answers to questions or other needed help. Brochures will also be provided further explaining the process and their rights.

ACQUISITION PROGRAM

Property Scheduled for Acquisition

Currently, priority areas for property acquisition are confined to the part of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan designated as the Proposed Federally-Funded Project Area. Map 8 – Land Acquisition Priority Areas identifies the specific parcels scheduled for potential acquisition. Implementation of the Plan requires the acquisition of an estimated 44 parcels of real estate, 38 of which contain structures.

The following acquisition sequence is provided as a broad guideline for the implementation of the various components of the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan. Specific time frames have not been proposed as flexibility in implementing property acquisition is needed due to the number of variables associated with the redevelopment proposals. The timeframe for acquisition of parcels may vary because of compliance with all applicable Federal and State requirements, the results of tests, studies and evaluations, the willingness of owners to convey, necessity for litigation, obtaining clear title and/ or the availability of Federal funds. In addition, acquisition priorities should be reviewed continuously in light of changes in the availability of Federal funding or development opportunities that may arise as the project progresses.

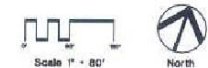
First Priority

- Acquisition of Blocks 3 and 7 for construction of the proposed Federal Building and required parking.
- Relocation of existing tenants and owners, clearance and clean-up of any environmental problems.
- Closure and vacation of 6th Street between 20th Avenue and 21st Avenue; closure and vacation of 20th Avenue between University Boulevard and 6th Street.
- Infrastructure, landscaping and lighting improvements to University Boulevard from 23rd Avenue to Queen City Avenue, 21st Avenue from University south to possibly Paul Bryant Drive, and portions of 20th Avenue and 7th Street abutting the proposed Federal Building site.

Map 8
Land Acquisition
Priority Areas

- First Priority
- Second Priority - A
Second Priority - B
- Third Priority
- Fourth Priority

The acquisition sequence shown on this map is provided as a broad guideline for the implementation of the various components of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. The timeframe for acquisition of parcels may vary because of compliance with all applicable Federal and State requirements, the results of tests, studies and evaluations, the willingness of owners to convey, necessity for litigation, obtaining clear title and/or the availability of Federal funds. Acquisition priorities will be reviewed continuously in light of changes in the availability of Federal funding or development opportunities that may arise as the project progresses.



Downtown Tuscaloosa
Renewal Study

City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama



Almon

Second Priority – A

- Acquisition of two parcels in Block 2 for construction of municipal court parking and acquisition of all or a portion of Block 10 for development of proposed Town Homes.
- Relocation of existing tenants and owners, clearance and clean-up of any environmental problems.

Second Priority – B

- Acquisition of any remaining portions of Block 10 for the proposed Town Homes, and acquisition of Block 6 and the east one-half of Block 5 for construction of the proposed Urban Park/Plaza.
- Relocation of existing tenants and owners, clearance and clean-up of any environmental problems.
- Closure of 22nd Avenue between 6th Street and 7th Street.
- Design and implementation of the proposed Urban Park/Plaza, the proposed municipal court parking facility, and finalization of plans for private-sector development of the Town Home site.
- Infrastructure, landscaping and lighting improvements to 6th and 7th Streets between 21st Avenue and 23rd Avenue, improvements to portions of 20th Avenue and 8th Street abutting the proposed Town Homes.

Third Priority

- Acquisition of the remaining portions of Block 5 for development of proposed retail, office, and residential land uses.
- Relocation of existing tenants and owners, clearance and clean-up of any environmental problems.
- Finalization of plans for private-sector development of retail, office, and residential land uses.
- Infrastructure, landscaping and lighting improvements to portions of 23rd Avenue between 6th Street and 7th Street (may be undertaken as part of Urban Park/Plaza street improvements).

Fourth Priority

- Acquisition of portions of Block 9 for development of proposed retail, office, and residential land uses.
- Relocation of existing tenants and owners, clearance and clean-up of any environmental problems.
- Infrastructure, landscaping and lighting improvements to abutting segments of 22nd Avenue and 8th Street.

Future Priorities

- Infrastructure, landscaping and lighting improvements to Paul Bryant Drive.
- Remaining infrastructure, landscaping and lighting improvements to 22nd and 23rd Avenues, and 8th Street and 9th Street.
- Individual spot clearance, infill development and rehabilitation.

Appraisals and Acquisition

As soon as feasible, owners will be notified of the City's interest in acquiring the real property and the basic protections involved, including the City's obligations to secure an appraisal. Before the initiation of negotiations for property acquisition, the real property to be acquired will be appraised and a review appraisal conducted (except on donated property given a written release for appraisal). The City will follow applicable federal and state laws and regulations in setting the standards for appraisers and appraisals. In addition, all appraisers will be required to be "MAI" designated appraisers.

The owner, or the owner's designated representative, will be given an opportunity to accompany the appraiser during the appraiser's inspection of the property. Before the initiation of negotiation, the City will establish an amount which it believes is just compensation for the real property. The amount shall not be less than the approved appraisal for the fair market value of the property, taking into account the value of allowable damages or benefits to any remaining property. Also, prior to negotiations, a qualified reviewing appraiser will examine all appraisals to assure that they meet applicable appraisal requirements and, if necessary, will seek corrections or revisions to the appraisal before submission to the property owner.

Upon establishment of an amount the City believes is just compensation for the real property, the City will make a written offer to the property owner to acquire the property for the full amount believed to be just compensation. Along with the initial written purchase offer, the property owner will be given a written statement of the basis for the offer of just compensation. The City will make reasonable efforts to contact the owner or the owner's representative to discuss its offer to purchase the property, including the basis for the offer of just compensation, and explain its acquisition policies and procedures, including its payment of incidental expenses.

The City will not advance the time of condemnation unjustifiably or defer condemnation or the deposit of funds with the court with the intent or purpose of coercing or inducing an agreement on the price to be paid for the property. If an agreement with the owner cannot be reached, the City's acquisition plan includes utilizing the eminent domain powers as provided by the Code of Alabama, Title 18, Eminent Domain.

RELOCATION PROGRAM

Residential, Business and Non-Profit Displacement

The proposed acquisition needed to implement the Federally funded portion of the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan will displace 35 business operations or storage, 2 non-profit organizations, one governmental facility and 25 rental dwelling units.

Currently the business displacement consists of 14 owner-occupied and 20 renter-occupied business establishments, plus a business that operates out of adjacent connected buildings, one of which it owns and one that it rents; 1 owner-occupied and 1 renter-occupied non-profit organization; and a renter occupied governmental facility. The type of businesses to be displaced include: 5 automobile repair related operations; 7 retail stores; 6 wholesale or storage operations; 3 administrative offices; 2 furniture stores; a barber shop; a travel agency; a finance office; a blueprint operation; a restaurant; a lounge; a shoe repair shop; a florist; a decorator's office; an auto parts store; a law office; and a utility switching station.

The non-profit organizations include an administrative office/teaching center and an administrative office/used goods store. The governmental facility is a downtown branch post office.

All persons in residential units are in rental apartment located in two separate buildings. The majority of these units are located within the 4-story Alta Building (Structure No. 35 in Block 6), that has 22 apartment units, all of which are occupied. Structure 76 in Block 10 is a converted single-family house. It has 3 apartments, all of which are occupied. There are no owner-occupied residential dwelling units scheduled for acquisition.

Written Description of Relocation Program

As soon as feasible, each family, business, non-profit organization, or individual to be relocated as a result of this project will be furnished with a general written description of the City's relocation program which does at least the following:

- Informs the person that he or she may be displaced by the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Project and generally describes the relocation payment for which the person may be eligible, the basic conditions of eligibility and the procedures for obtaining the payment;
- Informs the person that he or she will be given reasonable relocation advisory services including referrals to replacement properties, help in filing payment claims, and other necessary assistance to help the person to successfully relocate;
- Informs the person that he or she will not be required to move without at least 90 days advance written notice (see also 49 CFR §24.203c) and informs any person to be displaced from a dwelling that he or she cannot be required to move permanently unless at least one comparable replacement dwelling has been made available;
- Informs the person that any person who is an alien not lawfully present in the United States is ineligible for relocation advisory services and relocation payments, unless such ineligibility would result in exceptional and extremely unusual hardship to a qualifying spouse, parent or child as defined in §24.208(i); and,
- Describes the person's right to appeal the City's determination as to a person's application for assistance for which a person may be eligible.

The City's relocation program will be designed to help displaced persons, businesses and non-profit organizations find a new place to live or in which to conduct business. The City will determine the needs of displaced families, individuals, business concerns and non-profit organizations for relocation advisory services without regard to race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The City will offer to those who will be relocated, within sufficient time prior to relocation, comparable replacement housing or a suitable replacement location that meets the decent, safe and sanitary standards of state and local laws.

The City will fully inform persons to be displaced of fair housing rights and options in selecting replacement housing in areas of their choice and the assistance that will be available from the City to assure that fair housing rights are protected in accordance with Title VI and VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968, respectively, and in accordance with 49 CFR Part 24. To the extent possible, the City will assist in preventing discriminatory practices in the purchase and rental of residential units on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

ACQUISITION AND RELOCATION ADMINISTRATION

The City's Department of Community Planning and Development will be responsible for overall administration of the acquisition and relocation activities within the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Project Area. The City will be assisted by an Acquisition/Relocation consultant, appraisers and other acquisition/relocation expertise. The Acquisition / Relocation office will be located within the City's Department of Planning and Community Development, which is located within the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Project Area on the third floor of the City Hall Annex, 2201 University Boulevard. Staff will be available by appointment to answer questions related to the acquisition and relocation program.

Records, Reports and Confidentiality

Records: The City will maintain adequate records of its acquisition and displacement activities in sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance with 49 CFR Part 24 and any other Federal and State standards. Records will be retained for at least three years after each owner of a property and each person displaced from the property receives the final payment to which he or she is entitled under Part 24 – Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition for Federal and Federally Assisted Programs.

Confidentiality of records: Records maintained by the City are confidential regarding their use as public information, unless applicable law provides otherwise.

Reports: The City will submit a report of its real property acquisition and displacement activities if required by the Federal agency funding the project. A report will not be submitted any more frequently than every three years unless the Federal funding agency shows good cause. The report will be prepared and submitted in a format required by 49 CFR Part 24, Appendix B.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT AND LAND DISPOSITION PROGRAMS

This section of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan provides a program for the management of property between acquisition and the time of property disposition. It also addresses the disposition of land by lease or to public or private parties for redevelopment in accordance with provisions of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan and necessary contractual agreements with the City.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Proposed property acquisition creates the potential for managing property between the date of acquisition and the date of disposition or demolition. Management activities will include advice and counsel to tenants and owners, and procedures for rental and/or maintenance of buildings and land between the time of acquisition and final disposition.

The City's intent is to demolish structures as soon as possible after acquisition and relocation. The Tuscaloosa Police Department will be alerted of vacant properties and the City will request that the Study Area be patrolled frequently to keep vandalism under control. To assist in keeping accidents and vandalism to a minimum "No Trespassing" signs will be placed on each parcel as needed.

Property management activity will generally include the following:

- Assistance, advice and counsel to tenants in the effected areas until all relocations are completed;
- Administration of fair and equitable rental programs for tenants remaining in the structures prior to scheduled demolition;
- Provision of utility and trash services for acquired buildings that remain occupied;
- Maintenance of occupied structures in a safe and healthy condition and securing vacant buildings from vandalism, fire and unauthorized occupancy; and,
- Maintenance of land in a safe condition, removing trash and debris, controlling weeds, grass and other growth.

LAND DISPOSITION PROGRAM

The first phase of the Downtown Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan is development of the Federal Office Building site. Pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States General Services Administration, (GSA) and subject to the adoption of this Plan, the City will acquire Blocks 3 and 7 in the Study Area (inside Federally-Funded Project Area). The City will then transfer to GSA by general warranty deed the two blocks and closed street area as an unconditional gift to the United States government. The GSA will cause to be designed and constructed upon the blocks a Federal Office building.

Another phase of the Plan is development of the Urban Park/Plaza situated immediately west of 21st Avenue and includes all of Block 6 and the eastern half of Block 5 (all between 6th and 7th Streets). Based on the continued availability of Federal funds, parcels on these blocks will be acquired and building demolition will occur. The Urban Park/Plaza site will be owned and developed by the City as a major park or "town center." In addition, two parcels on the east side of Block 2 are proposed to be acquired for construction of additional parking for the Municipal Court Building.

Others phases of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan include opportunities for public acquisition and demolition of property and redevelopment by private concerns within Blocks 5, 9 and 10. Any disposition of non-public land within the Study Area will be on the basis of affording maximum redevelopment opportunity, consistent with the needs of the City of Tuscaloosa as a whole and the objectives of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. Land will be disposed of, by lease or sale, to public or private parties for redevelopment in accordance with provisions of the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan and contractual agreements with the City. A Request for Proposal format may be utilized to optimize the redevelopment opportunity of the property in question. The City may elect to authorize its Downtown Redevelopment Authority to administer and or manage various aspects of the disposition process.

Land acquired by the City of Tuscaloosa and designated for private development by the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan will be disposed of subject to a Disposition Agreement between the City and the Developer or Developers. The City, through a process of Requests for Proposals sent to pre-qualified parties, plans to select a developer for available sites. Upon the selection of a developer(s), the City will initiate preliminary Development Agreement negotiations. These preliminary negotiations should delineate the dual responsibilities of the developer as well as the City. These parallel activities should be defined in a preliminary Disposition Agreement which becomes a binding Development Disposition Agreement when all parties complete their respective legal, financial, management, and planning activities. The provisions of the Final Development Disposition Agreement should include, but not necessarily be limited, to the following:

For the Developer/Developers:

- A plan and schedule for the design and construction of the proposed development.
- Agreement not to defer the start of construction longer than a specified date.
- Basis and payment schedule for lease or purchase payments.
- Proposed management activities.
- Estimated cost of proposed improvements.
- Evidence of financing, including sources.
- Agreement that the land will be built upon and improved in conformity with the objectives and provisions of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan, including all design guidelines and covenants.
- Disclosure information including financial statements and references.
- Agreement that the purchase of the land is for the purpose of development and not for speculation.
- A description of the development team.
- A list of grants, financing, etc., requested of the City, if any.
- Default provisions.

For the City of Tuscaloosa:

- Timetable for approving final redevelopment plans.
- Evidence of land control and date of delivery.
- Zoning controls and design standards for development.
- Plan approval process.
- Schedule for construction of proposed public improvements.
- Any deposits required.
- Default provisions.

- Description of any potential grants that will be sought by any of the governmental agencies involved in the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan along with any restrictions that the grants may impose on the development and/or operation of the project.

Contractual Agreements

The City, in disposing of the land in the Study Area will, in its contractual agreement and deeds or other instruments, include such terms and conditions to insure redevelopment of the Study Area in accordance with the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. Such conditions will be contained in contractual agreements, deeds, covenants or other instruments. In all instances, the improvements to be constructed in the Study Area will be constructed in accordance with applicable local codes and ordinances and the requirements of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan.

Such contractual agreements, deeds, covenants or other instruments will obligate the purchaser or lessee of land in the Study Area and their successors in interest, to at least:

- To devote the parcels owned by them or leased to them to and only to the uses specified in the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan;
- Diligently pursue the construction of improvements agreed upon in the disposition contractual agreement in accordance with the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan and to begin and complete such improvements within a reasonable time period as determined in the contractual agreement;
- Make no change in such improvements after completion of construction that is not in conformity with the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan, and maintain improvements;
- Not assign contract rights or to resell or otherwise transfer the land (or interests therein) prior to the completion of improvements without the approval of the City; and,
- The City may also consider reversionary or first option clauses should it determine the same would be beneficial.

It is intended by this Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan that the City of Tuscaloosa be a beneficiary of all covenants and obligations and that it shall be entitled to represent the interests and to act on behalf of the City, and community in enforcing such and any other covenants and obligations accordance with the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. It is also intended that the City be authorized, through the disposition contract, to retain such rights and remedies as it finds necessary or desirable in order to protect its interests. At the same time, for the reasonable protection of the purchasers and owners of any land in the Study Area, and to prevent undue clouds upon title. It is intended that the City require, upon proper completion of the improvements, certification that the covenants with respect to the construction of improvements have been complied with and concur that their existence is terminated. However, covenants related to the ongoing use of the facility, design standards, maintenance and other such matters should be covenants that run with the land.

TYPES OF URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

In order to fully implement the Tuscaloosa Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan redevelopment, major rehabilitation and conservation/minor rehabilitation initiatives must be undertaken. Following is a description of the various components that comprise the actions needed in each category of renewal treatment.

REDEVELOPMENT

Redevelopment is the type of renewal action recommended for the “Proposed Federally-Funded Area.” Redevelopment requires complete acquisition, and in most cases, demolition of structures to fully implement the Plan. Redevelopment activities include part or all of the following activities:

- Acquisition, relocation and clearance;
- Re-platting of parcels;
- Major infrastructure improvements;
- Street redesign and some street closures;
- Development of parking structures and redesign of surface street parking areas;
- Construction of public facilities such as the urban park/plaza;
- Landscape and streetscape improvements to provide aesthetic and visual enhancements;
- Application of zoning regulations and design standards;
- Creation of covenants for land transferring in ownership; and,
- Putting in place an administrative operation to oversee the implementation of the Plan.

MAJOR REHABILITATION, REUSE AND INFILL

Rehabilitation is a less intensive renewal initiative. It is geared to improving existing buildings to make them greater contributors to the revitalization of the area, as well as proposals that include infill development. However, in some cases rehabilitation of existing structures is not possible. Rehabilitation activities are proposed to take place primarily within the area designated as “Outside the Proposed Federally-Funded Area.”

The City-supported rehabilitation, reuse and infill initiatives that may be undertaken outside the Proposed Federally-Funded Area by the private sector may include:

- Investigating with property owners how the exteriors and interiors may be improved;
- Creating a façade rehabilitation program, particularly for historically contributing structures;
- Identifying potential in-fill sites for new development;
- Undertaking minor to moderate infrastructure, landscape and streetscape improvements;
- Applying revised zoning regulations and design standards; and,
- Utilizing the services of an administrative operation to oversee the implementation of the Plan.

The rehabilitation of the area “Outside the Proposed Federally Funded Area” is a component for meeting the total revitalization needs of the Study Area. This is particularly challenging since most initiatives must be privately funded.

CONSERVATION / MINOR REHABILITATION

Conservation, combined with minor rehabilitation actions, is recommended for buildings in which some actions are necessary in order to enhance a building's potential. In these areas, actions should strive to preserve existing appropriate uses and correct potentially blighting conditions. Buildings suitable for conservation and minor rehabilitation are primarily located along University Boulevard. Conservation and minor rehabilitation, undertaken primarily with private and/or non-profit funding supported by City planning and enforcement services, may include:

- Continuing preventive maintenance and upkeep;
- Undertaking minor structural and façade rehabilitation;
- Enforcing property maintenance codes;
- Addressing minor infrastructure improvements;
- Providing landscape and streetscape improvements as aesthetic and visual enhancements;
- Applying revised zoning regulations and design standards; and,
- Utilizing the services of an administrative operation to oversee the implementation of the Plan.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan will be primarily implemented by funds provided through the Federal Highway Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. At the time of this Plan, the City has no definitive financial plans, budgetary designations or reserve fund commitments to utilize local or municipal funds to implement the Plan. However, due to the large number of improvements required and the financial resources available, local officials, in order to implement all aspects of this Plan, should they vote to do so, will need to pursue a wide variety of financial sources.

Potential sources of financing may include various local revenues, if available and not committed to other uses, as well as outside funds (i.e., grants). The source of funds needs to be appropriately matched with each activity in order to determine the most feasible and efficient method of financing. In this manner, local officials can identify the most beneficial funding source for each activity and thereby enable the City to maximize the utilization of available revenues.

PRIMARY FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES

Federal Highway Administration

The City of Tuscaloosa has been awarded a substantial amount of funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for implementation of the Urban Renewal Plan. To date, funds have been used for planning, preliminary engineering and development of the environmental document. Additional funds will be used for acquisition of property and structures, relocation expenses, demolition, consulting, testing, utility relocation, construction of infrastructure and implementation of other aspects of the Plan.

As required by the grant pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental document is being prepared prior to acquisition of any property necessary for implementation of the Urban Renewal Plan. This document includes the process of exchanging information with appropriate Federal, State and local agencies, as well as the public, and the actual preparation of the document and environmental studies. The document will include the study of such issues as: land use impacts, social impacts, relocation impacts, threatened and endangered species, historic and archaeological preservation, hazardous waste sites, etc. Upon clearance by FHWA, the environmental assessment will be made available for public inspection.

HUD Economic Development Initiative – Special Project (EDI)

Activities that may be eligible for United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Economic Development Initiative (EDI) funds include water facilities, sewer facilities, road improvements, sidewalks, drainage facilities, recreation facilities, commercial revitalization activities, demolition, property or structure acquisition, administrative/legal expenses, architecture and engineering, and project planning. The City of Tuscaloosa has received significant funding in the form of EDI grants on January 23, 2004. This funding application for use in implementation of the Urban Renewal Plan has been submitted and received by HUD. Upon completion and submittal of the environmental review by HUD, the City will be authorized to use these grant funds. In addition to this grant, the City has been notified of receipt of another HUD EDI grant for implementing the Plan. This grant application has not yet been received by the City, but was signed into law as part of the fiscal year 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

HUD Community Development Block Grant

Activities that may be eligible for United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Block Grant Programs (CDBG) funds include water facilities, sewer facilities, road improvements, sidewalks, drainage facilities, recreational facilities, commercial revitalization activities, building demolition, property acquisition and project planning. Tuscaloosa is an entitlement city and receives approximately \$1,050,000 annually. However, whether or not and to what extent such funds will be received each year and in what amount is indeterminate. In addition, CDBG funds support a variety of other continuing programs and projects in the City and therefore may not be available for expenditure on the Plan.

OTHER FEDERAL AND STATE SOURCES

Financial assistance which may be available through other Federal and State sources can provide a portion of supplemental funds required to implement the improvements recommended in the Downtown Study Area. These additional funding sources may be particularly useful in the area “Outside the Federally-Funded Area.”

Transportation Enhancement Fund

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) superseded the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and offers the possibility of funding for eligible planning proposals. Activities eligible for TEA-21 funding include sidewalks, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, landscaping and beautification, historic preservation and property acquisition for eligible activities. This program is administered by the Alabama Department of Transportation and requires a 20 percent local match. Recipient communities must also pay for engineering and consulting fees with local monies. Tuscaloosa has successfully applied for several Transportation Equity grants and should continue to apply for TEA-21 funding to help construct eligible improvements.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (L&WCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) consists of Federal monies, which are provided through the National Park Service and administered by Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs. This program is the primary source of funding for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The L&WCF program can be used to construct new park sites and recreation facilities and to upgrade existing park facilities. Grants are awarded on a 50-50 matching basis with a maximum grant limit of \$50,000. This funding source can assist with implementing recreation proposals and should be considered by the City.

Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Financial Assistance Program

The Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) offers grants to local governments for a variety of activities related to urban forestry and community tree programs. These funds are made available by the USDA Forest Service under the National Urban and Community Forestry Program. Eligible activities include: master street tree planting plans; tree inventories and analyses; tree inventory computer equipment and software; comprehensive urban and community forestry master plans; land use planning coordination; tree ordinance development and analysis; hiring of a City forester/arborist; tree commission development; and technical support. Grant funds cannot be used for tree planting projects. Available grants are limited to \$10,000 per project, must be matched by the grant recipient and cannot exceed 50 percent of the total project costs. Funding is awarded on a competitive basis.

Alabama Cultural Resources Preservation Trust Fund

The Alabama Cultural Resources Preservation Trust Fund program is administered by the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC). Both State and Federal monies provide funding for this program. The Federal funds are provided through the National Park Service and are generally available only to local governments designated by the AHC as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Tuscaloosa has satisfied the requirements necessary to achieve this designation.

Tuscaloosa is eligible to receive grants for projects through the portion of this program that is funded by the State. These funds are provided by the interest generated from the Alabama Cultural Resources Preservation Trust Fund managed by the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

Activities which can be funded through this program include: historic resource surveys for both existing structures and archaeological resources; preparation of nominations for the National Register of Historic Places; public awareness or education activities; development of architectural plans, specifications, feasibility studies and historic structure reports; rehabilitation of historic structures; and community planning activities, which include projects such as resource management plans, historic streetscape facade improvement proposals, or commercial building design guidelines.

These grants require a 50/50 match. Grant limit amounts vary from \$5,000 to \$20,000, depending on the project activity proposed. Depending upon the availability of matching funds, the City could use this program to help fund numerous projects in the Downtown Area including the development of National Register nominations for the eligible structures and districts, preparation of a historic streetscape facade plan, and a feasibility study for renovation of the historic buildings.

Alabama State Council of the Arts Design Arts Program

The Alabama State Council of the Arts Design Arts Program provides State support for projects which will have an impact concerning quality of life and public awareness of the important role of design in everyday life. Design Arts projects which could assist in the revitalization of Downtown Tuscaloosa include: design for the redevelopment of existing facilities, including restoration of historic buildings; establishment of public parks and other public outdoor spaces; public furniture and other fixtures as works of art and function; and making facilities accessible to the disabled and elderly. Funding amounts for this program range from a minimum of \$1,000 to a maximum of 50% of the total cost of a project and/or services. All grants must be matched at least dollar-for-dollar in cash or a combination of cash and in-kind services.

National Preservation Loan Fund

The National Preservation Loan Fund (NPLF) offers below market rate loans, lines of credit, loan guarantees or interest subsidies to establish or expand preservation revolving loan funds, or to acquire, purchase an option to acquire, or rehabilitate specific properties including commercial sites. Public agencies and incorporated non-profit organizations can seek up to \$200,000 for a ten-year term to

establish a revolving loan fund or up to a \$150,000 for a specific project for a five-year loan. All loans are made on a 50-50 matching basis. This program is a good source of funds for the creation of a revolving loan fund.

LOCAL FUNDING

Many of the recommended activities and improvements will require some type of local financial assistance to implement. In order for these monies to be utilized there would have to be a surplus of funds sufficient to be appropriated for this purpose in any given fiscal year as with any other municipal project or program. However, local funds are subject to certain restrictions and limitations concerning expenditure that may restrict their availability in certain aspects of the Plan.

Local funding sources which could conceivably be utilized to finance the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan recommendations include the General Fund, gasoline taxes, general obligation bonds and property assessments. These are discussed below in more detail.

General Fund

General Fund revenues are derived from a variety of tax sources (e.g., sales tax, lodging tax, business licenses) and provide the basis for funding most public improvements and activities. The General Fund is a source of financing for small to medium scale infrastructure projects which can be included in the annual city budget. The General Fund could be used primarily to supplement or match other sources of financing (i.e., grants) and/or to fund activities or improvements (i.e., sidewalks) which cannot be financed through other revenue sources.

Gasoline Taxes

The Alabama Gas Tax is levied on the sale of gasoline. A portion of the tax is returned to City for highway improvements and associated stormwater drainage facilities. (ALA. CODE §40-17-30 *et seq.* and §40-17-73). Additional Excise Tax is levied on gas and restricted to resurfacing, restoration and rehabilitation of roads, bridges, and streets within the municipality (ALA. CODE §40-17-220 *et seq.*). Funds available through the Public Highway & Traffic Fund are distributed to the City and are restricted to use for the construction, improvement, and maintenance of public highways or public streets, including administrative expenses (ALA. CODE §40-12-270).

General Obligation Bonds

General Obligation Bonds are a frequently used method of financing for large-scale municipal capital improvements. Bonds can be issued for up to 30 years and can be used to finance any of the proposed public infrastructure improvements. In incurring long-term or bond financing, local officials should consider terms for repayment of the debt. There are several drawbacks to this type of bond financing for these types of improvements. One is that the interest on the bond can significantly increase the initial cost of the project. Another is that it may not be prudent to issue such debt on maintenance improvements that do not generate a source of revenue to retire the debt. Furthermore, the Alabama Constitution of 1901 at Section 225 modified by Amendment 268, limits the amount of general obligation bonds a municipality can issue to that equal to twenty percent of the assessed valuation of the property within the municipality..

Tax Increment Financing

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a financing and development mechanism that permits an increase in property taxes generated by new development and improvements to pay for the cost of redevelopment activities and infrastructure improvements within a designated area. It should be noted that TIFs have had limited success and use in Alabama. To qualify for as a TIF District under the Alabama Statutes, an area must be blighted or economically distressed. The Downtown Tuscaloosa Study Area should qualify for

TIF designation and such designation could potentially be expanded into adjacent parts of the Downtown Area.

Upon creation of a TIF district, taxing entities continue to receive the level of taxes at the time of the TIF designation; however, increases in property taxes over and above the predevelopment tax base resulting from increasing values in a TIF designated area go toward paying off bonds or securing bonds to finance redevelopment activities. Generally, the TIF District borrows money by issuing bonds and the tax increase is used to pay off the bonds. Once the bonds or debt is paid, the incremental tax increase becomes available to all of the taxing bodies. In theory, the TIF district would finance its redevelopment, which in turn would eventually generate increased tax revenue for the community.

Alabama law requires that a proposed TIF district be blighted or economically distressed. Following is a general outline of procedures the City would need to undertake in order to create a TIF:

- Hold a public hearing on the proposed TIF district, its boundaries and its benefit to the City;
- Prepare and submit a written submission to each governing body of each deferred tax recipient to include a description of the proposed TIF boundaries, the tentative plans for development or redevelopment and an estimate of the general impact of the proposed project plan on property values and tax revenues;
- Adopt a resolution which: describes the boundaries of the TIF; creates the TIF district as of a given date and fixes the period of its duration, which may not exceed 30 years; assigns a name to the TIF district; contains findings that not less than 50 percent of the district is blighted and that the aggregate value of equalized taxable property does not exceed 10 percent of the City's taxable property; and prepare and adopt a plan for the TIF district;
- Certification by the City before approving the TIF project plan that the TIF district has not been subject to growth and development through private investment and it is not reasonable to expect development without adoption of the plan; that a feasible method for relocation and compensation exists; that the plan conforms to the City Comprehensive Plan; and that the plan will afford maximum opportunity for rehabilitation or redevelopment of the TIF district by private enterprise; and,
- A copy of the TIF district project plan is mailed to the governing body of each deferred tax recipient before approval of the project plan.

It should be recognized that the potential of TIF District is greatly diminished in Alabama because low property taxes make it difficult to generate significant increased revenue. Because of this situation, it requires a large private development for a TIF District to provide meaningful funding.

Water and Sewer Revenues

A significant portion of the improvements are upgrades to the public water and sewer system facilities that are owned and maintained by the City of Tuscaloosa. If necessary, water and sewer system improvements can be financed through the existing financial resources of the Water and Sewer funds of the City. Where insufficient reserves exist, rate increases or bonds may be used to provide the required funds.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF PLAN

Public Hearing and City Council Adoption of Plan

After appropriate advertisement, the City of Tuscaloosa's Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan. Based upon a favorable hearing, the Planning Commission will recommend to the City Council that the Council adopt the Plan. The City Council will advertise and hold a public hearing on the Plan; upon a favorable hearing, the City Council will adopt the Plan.

Provisions for Amending Plan

The Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan may be modified, changed or amended at any time by the City of Tuscaloosa following appropriate public hearings.

NEXT STEPS

The development of a plan of action for accomplishing the recommendations of the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan is essential to successful implementation. Some of the more important actions that are needed following the adoption of the Plan by the City Council are:

- Officially designate the city official responsible for administration, management and coordination of the Urban Renewal/Redevelopment Plan;
- Begin appraisal, acquisition and relocation activities;
- Begin detailed engineering design of infrastructure improvements;
- Undertake a Downtown Study to provide the planning foundation for mitigating impacts to historic resources;
- Create a Downtown Tuscaloosa Main Street Program;
- Revise the Zoning Ordinance to include amendments to the Central Business District standards and adding a Zoning Overlay District;
- Establish a Design Review Board and define its roles and responsibilities;
- Investigate the option of establishing a Tax Increment Financing District for the Study Area and other portions of the Downtown;
- Create an initiative to respond to economic opportunities related to the overall renewal of the Study Area including potential development opportunities, new retailers, rehabilitation of existing structures or spot clearance and redevelopment of properties; and,
- Schedule and implement a regular review and update of the Urban Renewal / Redevelopment Plan.

APPENDICES – ONLY AVAILABLE IN PRINTED COPY OF PLAN

APPENDIX 1 – LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF URBAN RENEWAL/REDEVELOPMENT STUDY AREA

APPENDIX 2 – DETERMINATION OF BLIGHT, CITY COUNCIL SLIDE PRESENTATION, SEPTEMBER 9, 2004

APPENDIX 3 – STUDY AREA BLOCK AND PARCEL INFORMATION, 2004