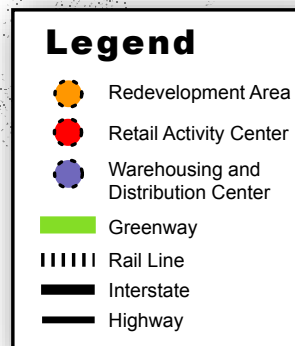
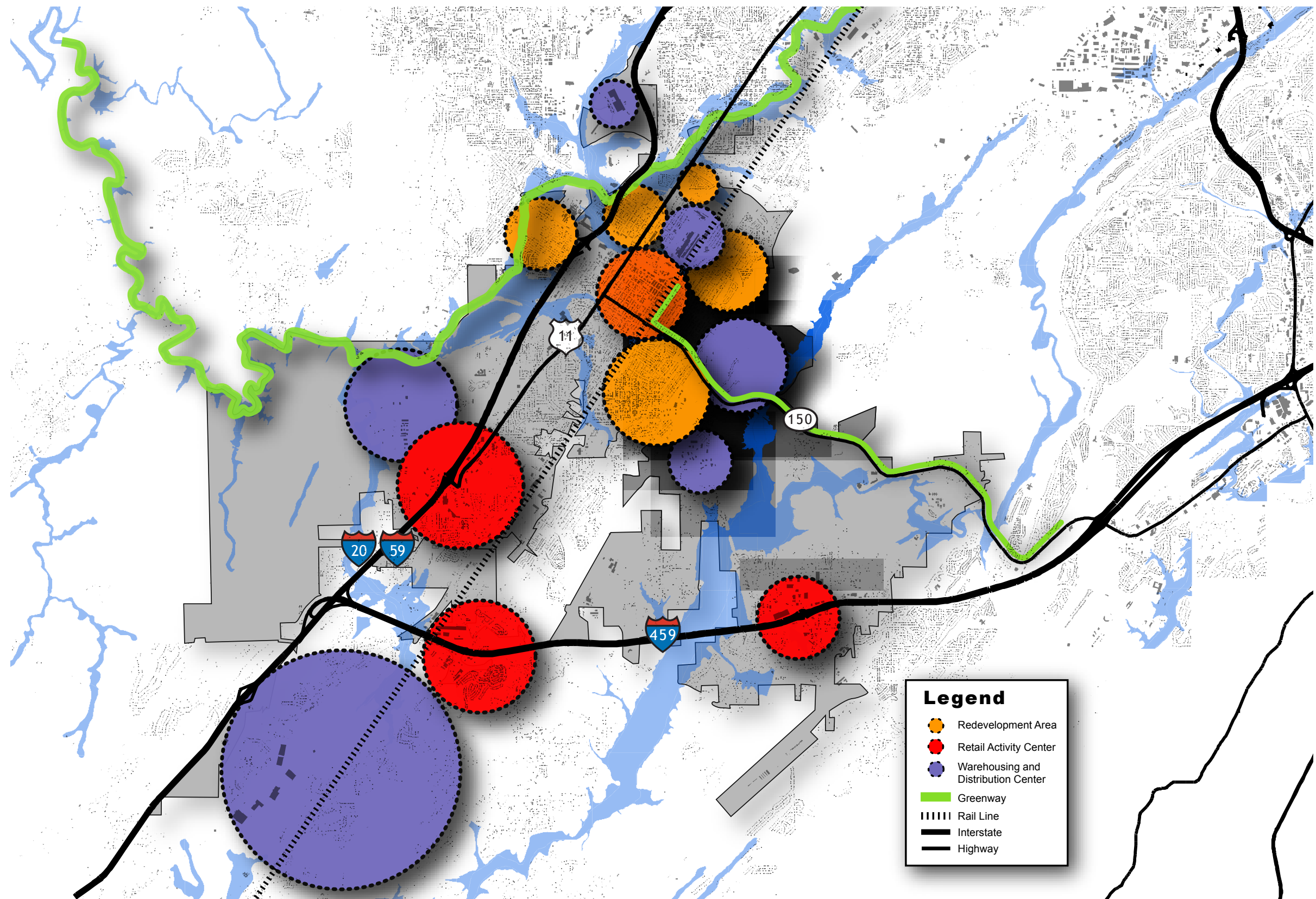
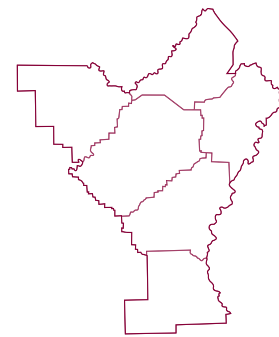




City of Bessemer Master Plan

2012





RPCGB
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM



DISCLAIMER

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

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



City of Bessemer

City Council

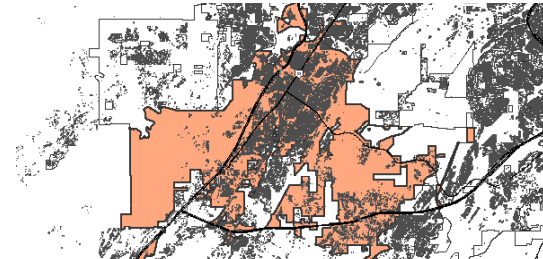
District 6: Jesse Matthews

Philip Amthor, AICP, Senior Planner

Table of Contents

8 Introduction

What is a Master Plan
The Master Plan Process
Bessemer's Recent Planning History
Assets Analysis and Vision for the Future



12 Assets Analysis & Vision

Bessemer's Location and Infrastructure
Historic Downtown Bessemer
Academy Drive and Powder Plant Road
Exit 1 (I-459)



18 Transit Improvements

Current Transit Service
Transit Needs
Additions to Current Transit Service
Bessemer Superhighway Transit Study



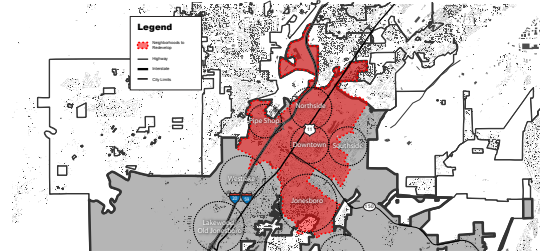
24 Neighborhood Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative characteristics



31 Neighborhood Redevelopment

Create a model process for comprehensive redevelopment, neighborhood-by-neighborhood, block-by-block



54 Downtown Redevelopment

AUDS Master Plan
Branding Strategy
Abandoned Building Registration Ordinance



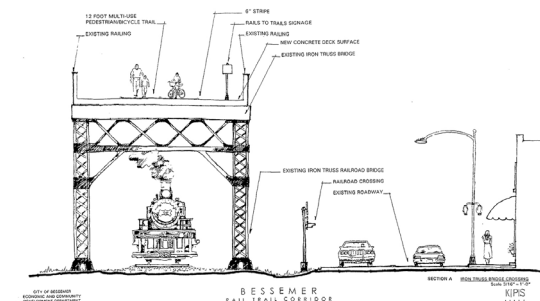
60 Manufacturing and Distribution Development

Build on Bessemer's historic and recent success in attracting warehousing and distribution businesses by continuing to find land ready and available for development.



64 Greenways

Valley Creek Greenway
Sunset Homes
Highway 150 Rail-Trail and Link to Downtown
Bessemer



List of Figures

1	1954 Zoning Ordinance	34	Tax Delinquent Property	69	Biofiltration system at Railroad Park
2	1973 Bessemer Master Plan	35	Population Loss	70	Flood Mitigation Map
3	Vacant Building in Downtown Bessemer	36	House Vacancy Rate	71	Pipe Shop after Hurricane Lee in September 2011
4	1999 Design Review Guidelines	37	Target Redevelopment Area	72	Pipe Shop after Hurricane Lee in September 2011
5	Powder Plant Road Business Park	38	Target Redevelopment Area	73	Pipe Shop after Hurricane Lee in September 2011
6	AUDS Master Plan Poster	39	McNeil Park	74	Pipe Shop after Hurricane Lee in September 2011
7	Bessemer Master Plan Map	40	Pipe Shop Proximity Map	75	Pipe Shop after Hurricane Lee in September 2011
8	Bessemer's Asset Nodes	41	Pipe Shop Community Meeting	76	Pipe Shop after Hurricane Lee in September 2011
9	Bessemer's Warehousing and Distribution Nodes	42	Pipe Shop Community Meeting	77	Implementation Toolkit
10	Historic Bessemer Public Library	43	Pipe Shop Community Meeting	78	Pipe Shop Vision Map
11	Historic Bright Star Restaurant	44	Pipe Shop Community Meeting	79	Pipe Shop Vision Map
12	Historic Downtown Bessemer Map	45	"Where Do You Live?" Map	80	Wetland Boardwalk
13	Academy Drive Asset Nodes Map	46	Pipe Shop Vision Map	81	Wetland Boardwalk
14	Powder Plant Road Business Park	47	Policing Map	82	Canoes in Valley Creek
15	UAB Medical West	48	McNeil Park	83	Potential Canoe Launch Site in Pipe Shop
16	I-459 Exit 1 Asset Map	49	McNeil Park	84	Greenspace in Valley Creek Floodplain
17	Exit 1 Subdivision	50	15th Street Intersection	85	Greenspace in Valley Creek Floodplain
18	Colonial Promenade Tannehill	51	15th Street Intersection	86	Affordable Housing in Homewood, AL
19	Colonial Promenade Tannehill	52	Pipe Shop Flood Map	87	Affordable Housing in Homewood, AL
20	Bessemer City Limits Map	53	Images of Flooding in Pipe Shop	88	Affordable Housing in Homewood, AL
21	Existing Transit Routes	54	Images of Flooding in Pipe Shop	89	Habitat for Humanity Housing
22	Transit Routes and Retail Clusters	55	Proposed Bioswale	90	Habitat for Humanity Housing
23	Proposed Transit Route Additions	56	Bioswale Diagram	91	Habitat for Humanity Housing
24	Vacant Retail Space	57	Bioswale Example	92	Target Area Overview Map
25	Abundance of Title and Pawn Shops	58	Bioswale Example	93	Historic Downtown Bessemer Map
26	Westlake Mall	59	Bioswale Example	94	AUDS Downtown Redevelopment Proposal
27	UAB Medical West	60	Implementation Toolkit	95	Gateway Example
28	Commercial and Retail Property along Bessemer Superhighway/US 11	61	International Property Maintenance Code Cover	96	Wayfinding Example
29	Example of Bus Rapid Transit Line	62	Albany, GA Vacant Building Registration Form	97	Wayfinding Example
30	Bessemer Superhighway/US 11 Alternatives Analysis Study Area	63	Binghamton, ME Vacant Building Registration Form	98	Existing Gateway at US 11 and 18th St Looking Toward Downtown
31	Neighborhood Overview Map	64	21st Ave Bioswale Corridor and Wetland Location	99	Proposed changes to Gateway at US 11/18th St
32	Photos of Bessemer's Vacant and Abandoned Property	65	Constructed Wetland Section Drawing	100	Existing, Historic Street Signs along 19th St Downtown
33	Median Housing Value	66	Biofiltration system at Railroad Park	101	Bob Sykes BBQ & Blues event in Downtown
		67	Biofiltration system at Railroad Park		
		68	Biofiltration system at Railroad Park		



List of Tables

102 Exercise Class at Railroad Park

103 Fall Film Series at Railroad Park

104 Bob Sykes BBQ & Blues event in Downtown

105 Binghamton, ME Vacant Building Registration Form

106 Vacant Building in Downtown Bessemer

107 Vacant Building in Downtown Bessemer

108 Proposed Industrial Park on McAshan Drive

109 Industrial Property Map

110 CSX Intermodal Facility

111 Truck Route to I-20/59 from CSX Intermodal Facility

112 Photos of Truck Route to I-20/59

113 Vacant Lots in Northside Neighborhood

114 Hypothetical Grouping of Vacant Lots in Northside

115 Bessemer Greenway Map

116 Neighborhood Greenway Map

117 Sunset Homes Neighborhood after Hurricane Lee in September 2011

118 Birmingham News Article about Sunset Homes flooding

119 Valley Creek Floodplain Map

120 Shades Creek Greenway

121 Valley Creek at a neighborhood community center

122 Bird's Eye View Valley Creek Greenway Map

123 Example of a Community Garden

124 Canoes in Valley Creek

125 Highway 150 Rail Trail Map

126 Rail Trail Map and Activity Nodes

127 Existing Abandoned Rail Line

128 Rendering of Proposed Rail Trail

129 Existing Abandoned Rail Line

130 Existing Abandoned Rail Line

131 Existing Abandoned Rail Line

132 Existing Abandoned Rail Line

133 Rendering of Proposed Rail Trail

Table 1: BJCTA Transit Routes

Table 2: Rain Garden Cost Estimates

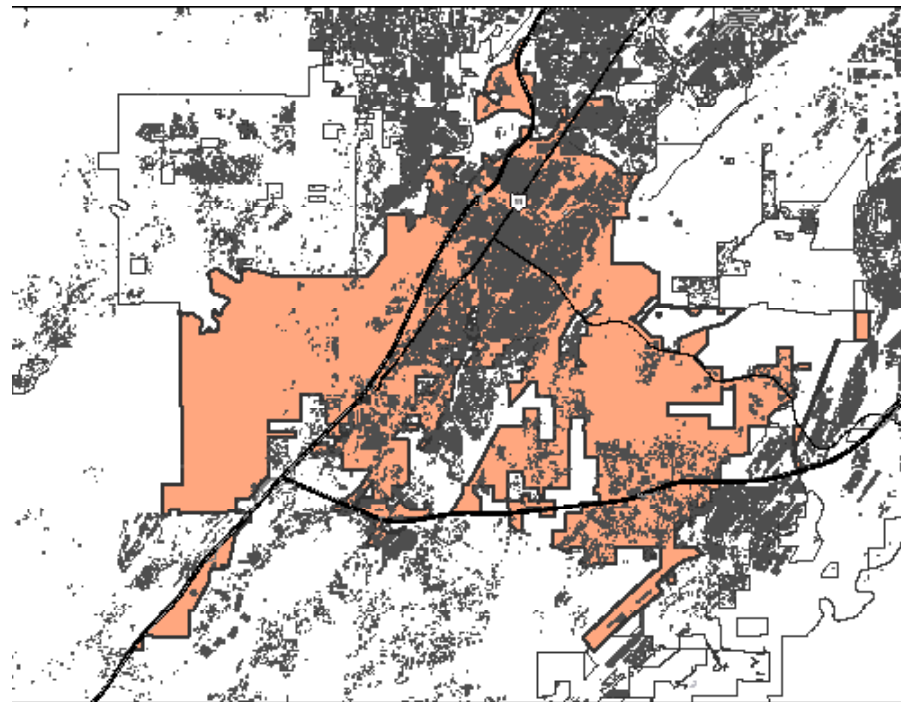
Table 3: Bioretention Cost Estimates



Introduction

What is a Master Plan?

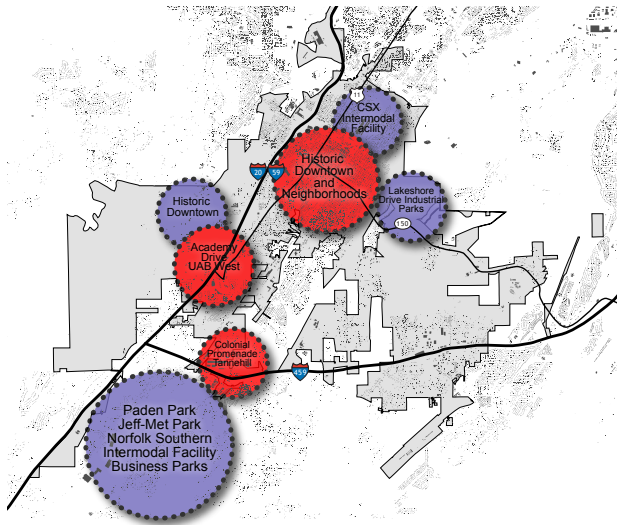
This Master Plan is an opportunity to determine the future of Bessemer. Through the Master Plan process, Bessemer will be able to understand what it has, decide what it wants and develop a guide for how to achieve its goals.



The Master Plan Process

Assets Analysis

Conducting an Assets Analysis provides an opportunity to observe Bessemer's strengths from multiple perspectives and document the findings all in one place. This provides the planning process with the most complete and comprehensive framework possible from which to understand the city's current opportunities moving forward. This involves research into both the built and natural environments, local and regional demographic and economic conditions, Bessemer's history and culture, as well as city resources and infrastructure.



Stakeholder Interviews

The findings of the assets analysis are presented to community leaders, referred to here as stakeholders, as well as to the general public. In these discussions RPCGB staff will solicit feedback in order to build another layer of analysis. Assembling this input provides RPCGB staff with valuable qualitative and quantitative information that helps to focus questions and find areas on which to concentrate further research efforts. Through these collective discussions about Bessemer's past and present, a vision for the future will emerge.



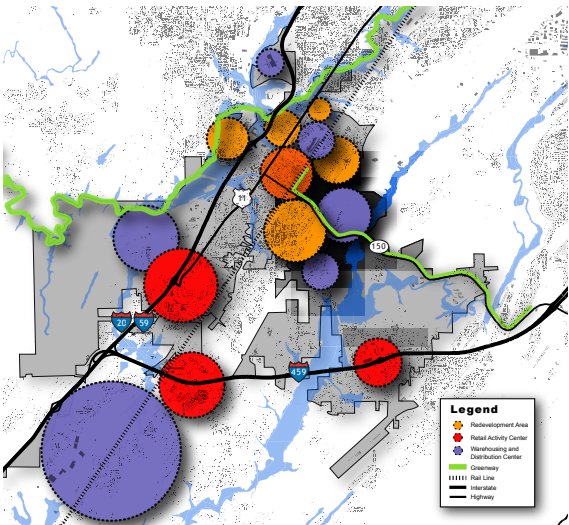
Implementation Strategies

To turn the vision into reality, strategies for both private and public efforts have to be developed to carry the plan forward. Research and ideas for implementation will be presented to key stakeholders and community groups for feedback, discussion and further refinement.



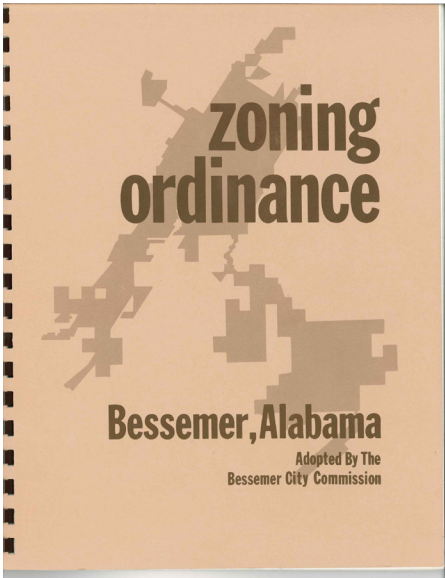
Plan Adoption

Once the Master Plan is refined and reviewed, it will be presented to the City Council for adoption. The plan will then serve to guide future capital improvement plans and inform various city activities and programs.



Bessemer's Recent Planning History

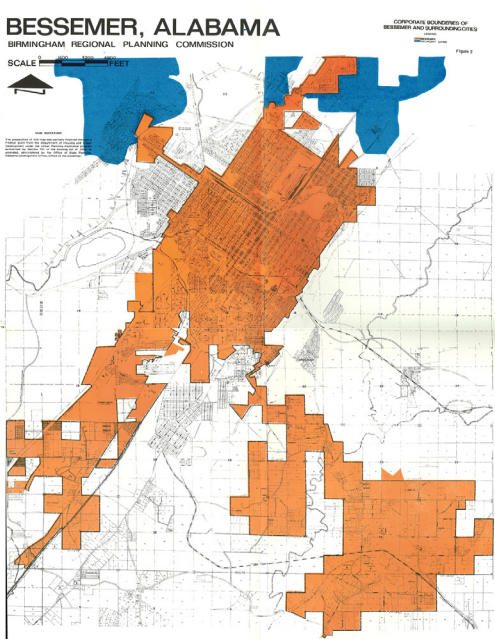
Figure 1: 1954 Zoning Ordinance



First
Comprehensive
Zoning Ordinance
adopted

1954

Figure 2: 1973 Master Plan



First Comprehensive
Plan completed in
partnership with
RPCGB

1973

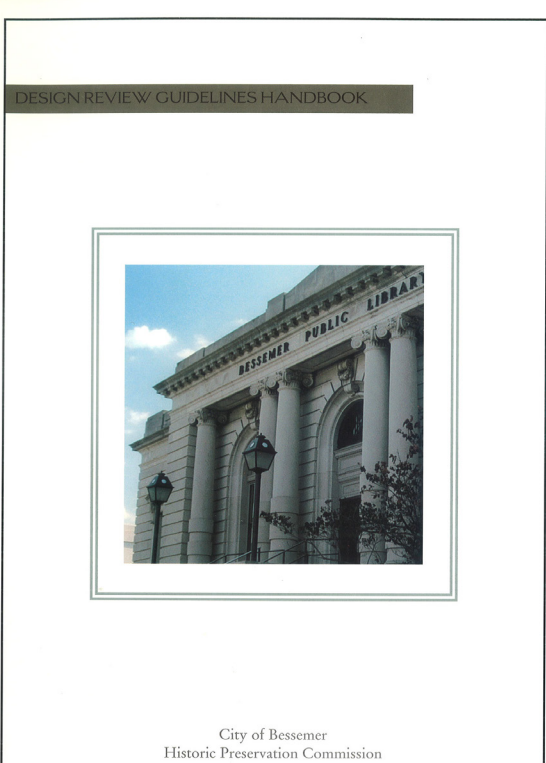
Figure 3: Vacant Building in Downtown



Urban Renewal and
Redevelopment Plan for
the Downtown Area

1998

Figure 4: 1999 Design Review Guidelines



Design
Review
Guidelines
Handbook
developed
by City of
Bessemer
Historic
Preservation
Commission

1999

Figure 5: Powder Plant Road Business Park

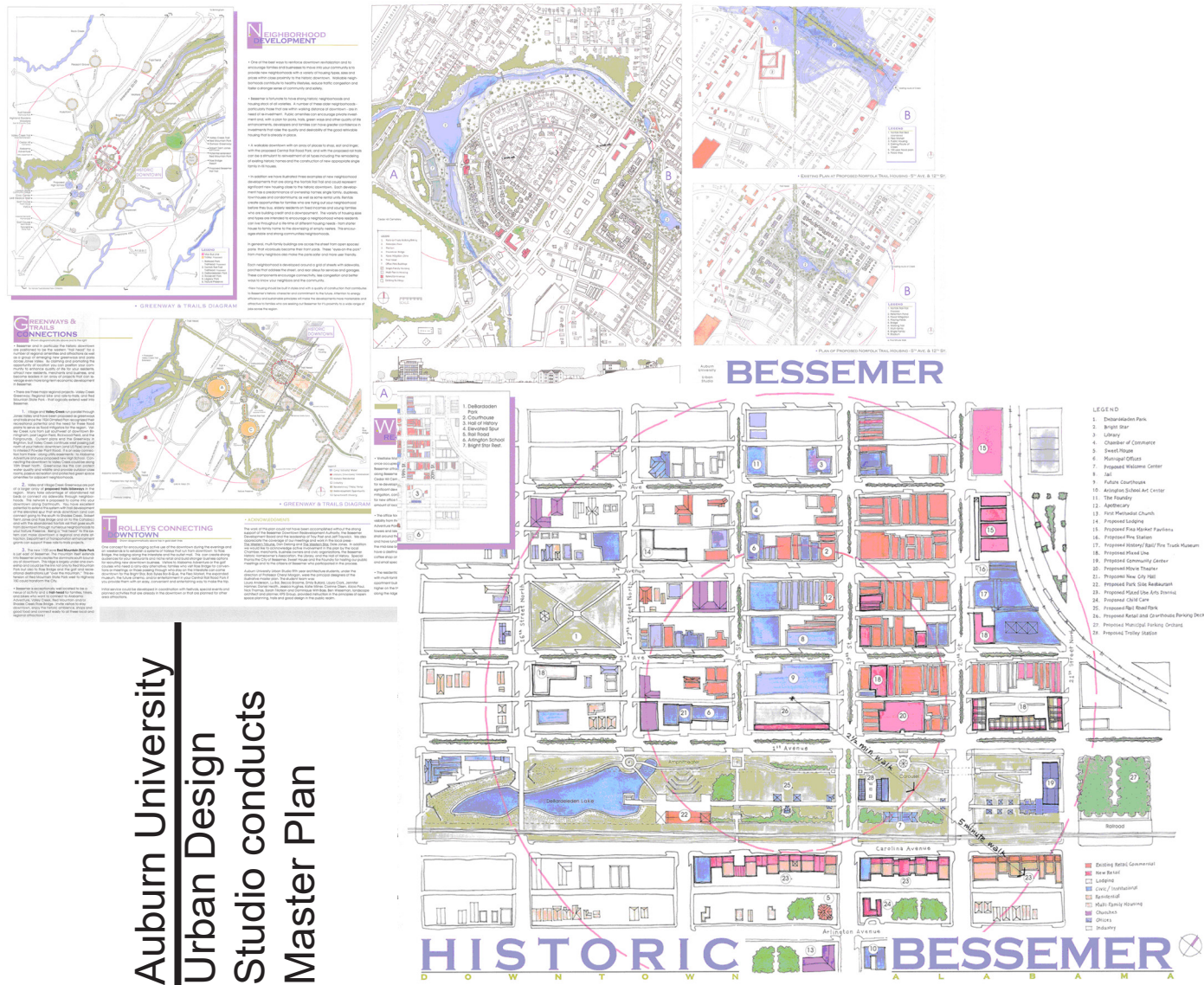


Tax-Increment-
Finance District
created for Western,
Bessemer for tourism,
retail and interstate-
oriented industrial and
distribution projects

1999



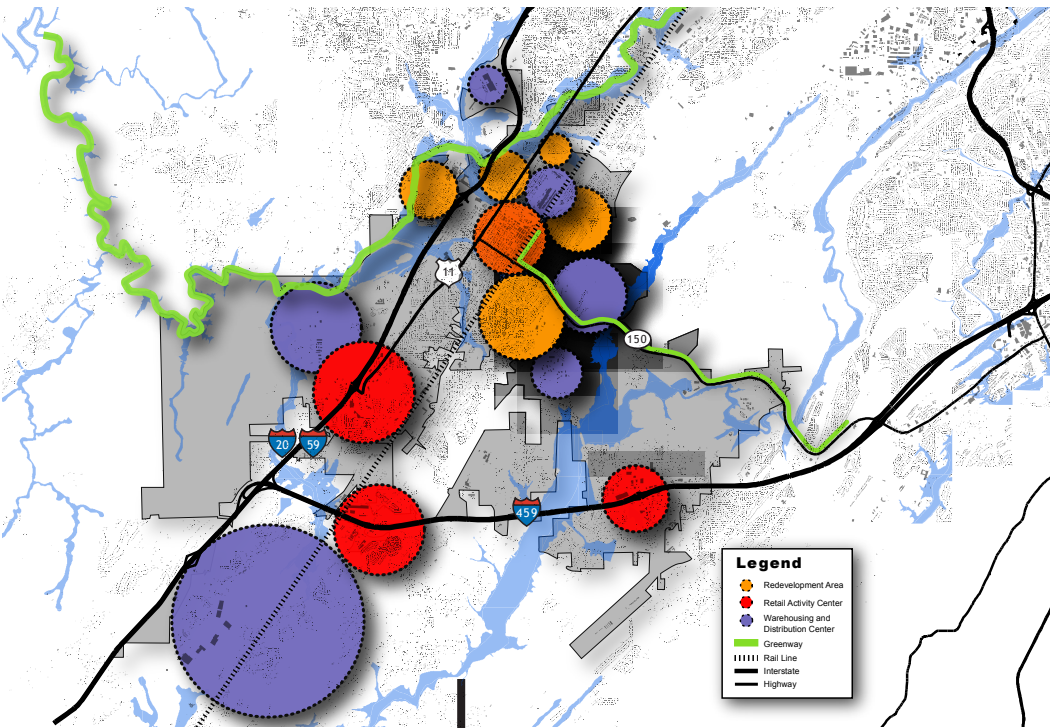
Figure 6: AUDS Master Plan Poster



Auburn University
Urban Design
Studio conducts
Master Plan

2007

Figure 7: Bessemer Master Plan Map



City of Bessemer
Master Plan
conducted with
RPCGB

2011



Assets Analysis and Vision for the Future

Bessemer, Alabama has been an important center of jobs and culture throughout its history. Since its founding in 1889, the city has served as a manufacturing and distribution hub with industrial facilities and connections to rail lines and interstates reaching across the United States. To support the industrial and commercial activity, Bessemer has been a center for shopping, dining and entertainment for many residents working and living in the city and in much of western Jefferson County. Downtown Bessemer's historic building stock has maintained importance and landed on the state registry for historic places, creating a downtown historic district housing restaurants, shops and other businesses. Bessemer is unique among other historic downtowns in the region because it is home to a satellite courthouse for Jefferson County. With both Bessemer's city government and much of Jefferson County's government housed in the downtown, Bessemer has maintained a synergy from those in legal, justice and government industries. More recently, however, development in Bessemer has been concentrated at its outskirts. Clusters of both retail and entertainment, as well as transportation and distribution businesses, have taken advantage of the interstate highways and railroads surrounding and running through Bessemer. These clusters, as well as the historic downtown and older industrial sites, are shown in Figure 8.

In presenting findings on Bessemer's traditional and more recent nodes of activity and development to stakeholders, the following were decided to be Bessemer's key assets:

- **Location and Infrastructure**
- **Historic Downtown**
- **Academy Drive and Powder Plant Road**
- **Exit 1 on I-459/Colonial Promenade Tannehill**



Figure 8: Bessemer's Asset Nodes

Bessemer's Location and Infrastructure

Figure 9 shows interstate, highway and rail lines connecting the City of Bessemer to the Birmingham region and to other parts of the Southeastern U.S. Access to both rail and interstate have made Bessemer an attractive location for many manufacturing, transportation and distribution businesses throughout its history. Some specific advantages of Bessemer's location are:

- 95,000+ vehicles per day pass within and adjacent to Bessemer along Interstate 20/59, I-459, Bessemer Superhighway (US 11) and US Highway 150.
- Bessemer is centrally located to the economic centers of Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, Hoover and the Mercedes Plant in Vance.
- Bessemer's proximity to destinations like Alabama Adventure and the Robert Trent Jones Golf Course can generate new sources of investment.
- Regional greenways, trails and parks along Valley Creek and Red Mountain are being planned and developed in close proximity to Bessemer and offer opportunities for connection.

Bessemer's location and infrastructure is especially critical in attracting warehousing, distribution and light manufacturing businesses. Bessemer has continued to attract these businesses throughout its history. Some of these are shown in Figure 9.

The summary of assets taken from analysis of past and current planning activities including the 2007 Plan from Auburn University's Center for Architecture and Urban Studies, planning and development studies from the Regional Planning Commission, and ongoing activities and developments of the City of Bessemer's Department of Economic and Community Development and the Bessemer Industrial Development Board.

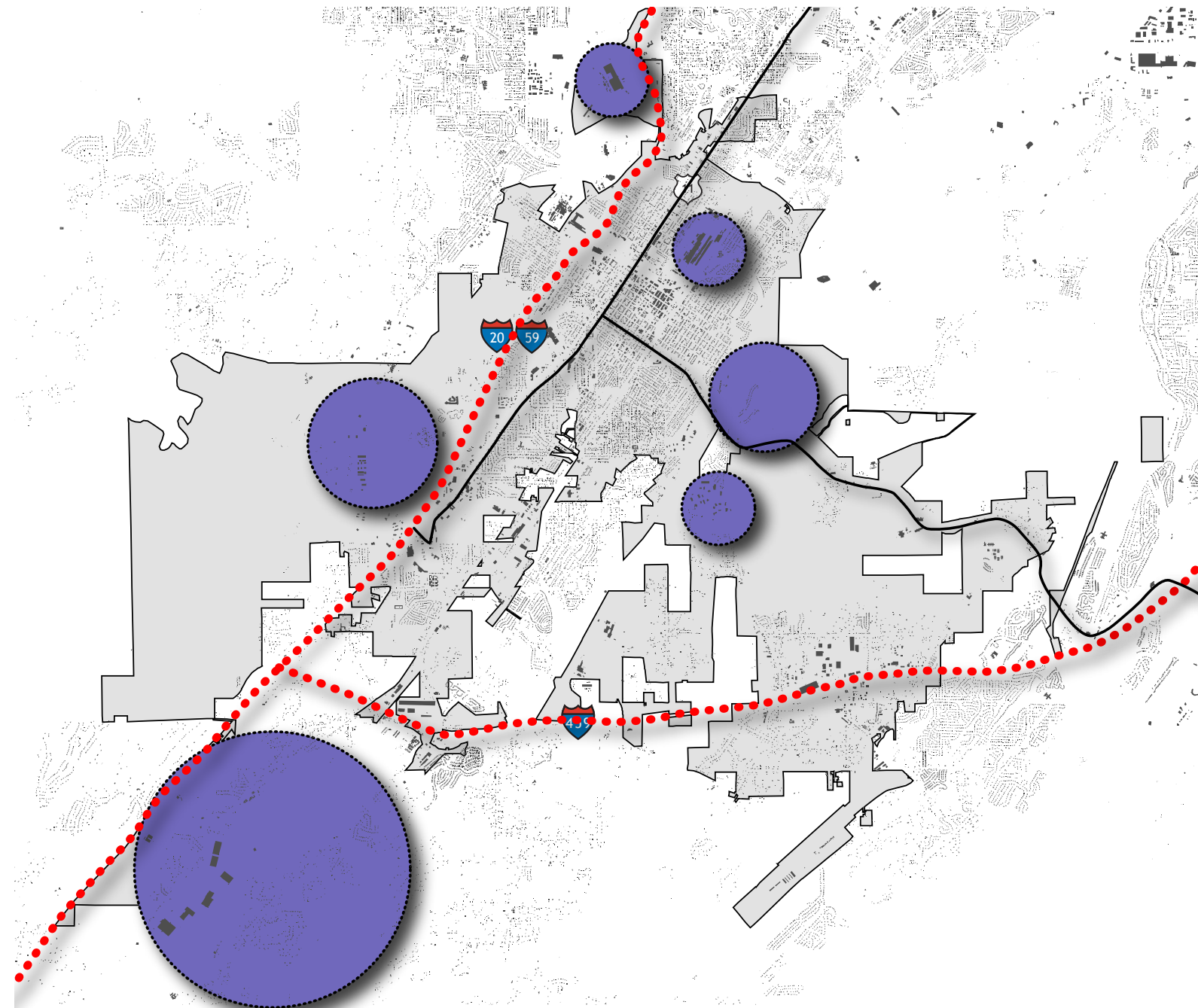


Figure 9: Bessemer's Warehousing and Distribution Nodes

Historic Downtown Bessemer

The historically designated downtown – considered the blocks between 4th Avenue North and 1st Avenue North from 18th Street to 20th Street - is the heart of the downtown business district and government center. The mix of businesses, including attorney’s offices, drugstores, furniture stores, various retail outlets and restaurants, keeps the downtown area populated and active during the day. The main public space downtown is Debardeleben Park, located just south of the historic downtown and shown in Figure 12. Debardeleben Park was recently the site of the second annual Bob Sykes Barbecue and Blues event in April of 2011.

To celebrate the city’s rich architectural history and encourage façade restorations for historically significant buildings like the Lincoln Theater and the Bessemer Bottling Company, Bessemer created a Historic Preservation Commission and an Architectural Design Review Board that has the authority to approve or deny design changes in the historic district, maintaining the character and form of the downtown for future generations.



Figure 10: Historic Bessemer Public Library



Figure 11: Historic Bright Star Restaurant in Downtown Bessemer

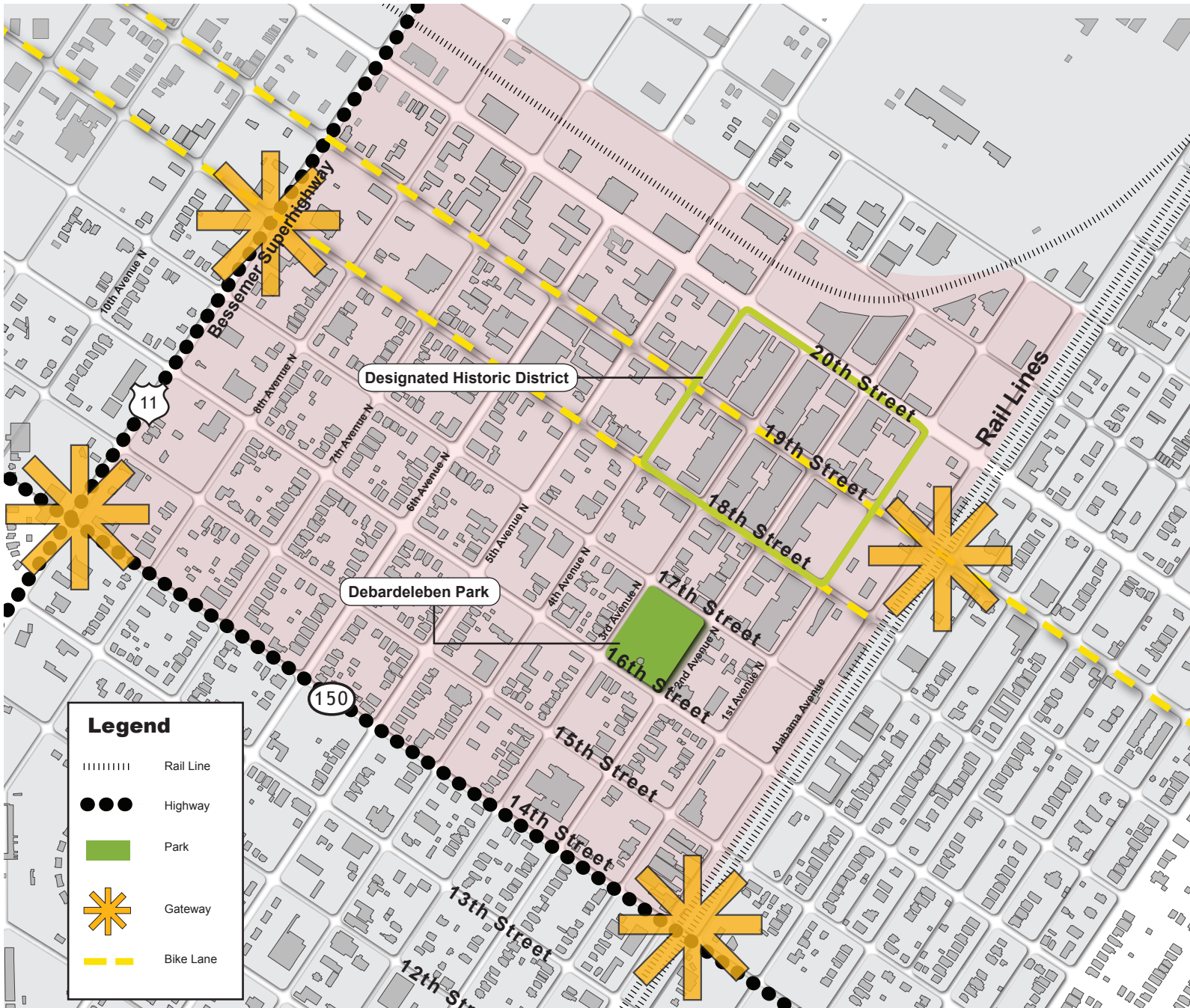


Figure 12: Historic Downtown Bessemer

Academy Drive and Powder Plant Road

The Academy Drive Exit of I-20/59 has seen significant development over the past decade. The development has been diverse, with business parks, retail developments, residential subdivisions, and increased institutional investment at UAB West, a hospital, and Lawson State Community College. Figure 13 shows the development area with following labeled:

1. Lawson State Community College
2. UAB West
3. Bessemer City High School officially opened in 2010
4. Bessemer Civic Center
5. Hotel, restaurant and retail node serving new businesses
6. Wal-Mart Supercenter
7. Powder Plant Road Business Park Node: The Industrial Park and Business Park developments near Academy Drive and the Powder Plant Road exits of I-20/59 continue to grow and develop opportunities in the area.

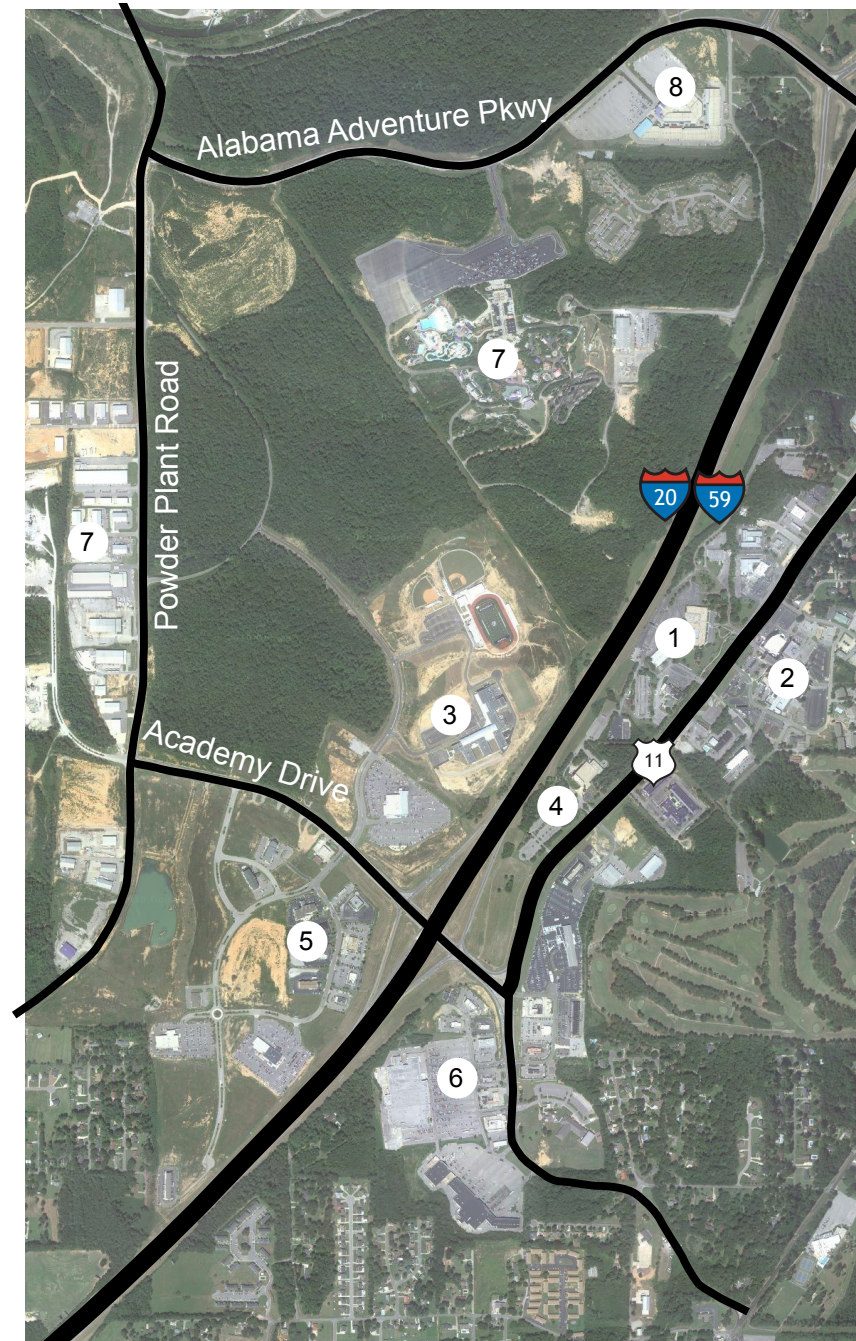


Figure 13: Academy Drive Asset Nodes



Figure 14: Powder Plant Road Business Park



Figure 15: UAB Medical West

Exit 1 - I-459

Recent residential growth bordering the City of Bessemer in Jefferson County have created retail and entertainment opportunities within the Bessemer City Limits, especially at the Academy Drive and Powder Plant Road exits of I-20/59 and the Eastern Valley Road exit of I-459 with the new Colonial Promenade (Figure 16).

1 - Colonial Promenade Tannehill is a large retail and entertainment development built in the past ten years. Anchor tenants are a major supermarket, department store, movie theater and Target.

2 - Several residential neighborhoods have been built around the new retail developments off of Exit 1 of I-459. Most of these are outside the city limits of Bessemer, but they support the retail developments, most of which are inside the City of Bessemer.

3 - McAdory High School is a Jefferson County high school that increases activity around Colonial Promenade Tannehill.

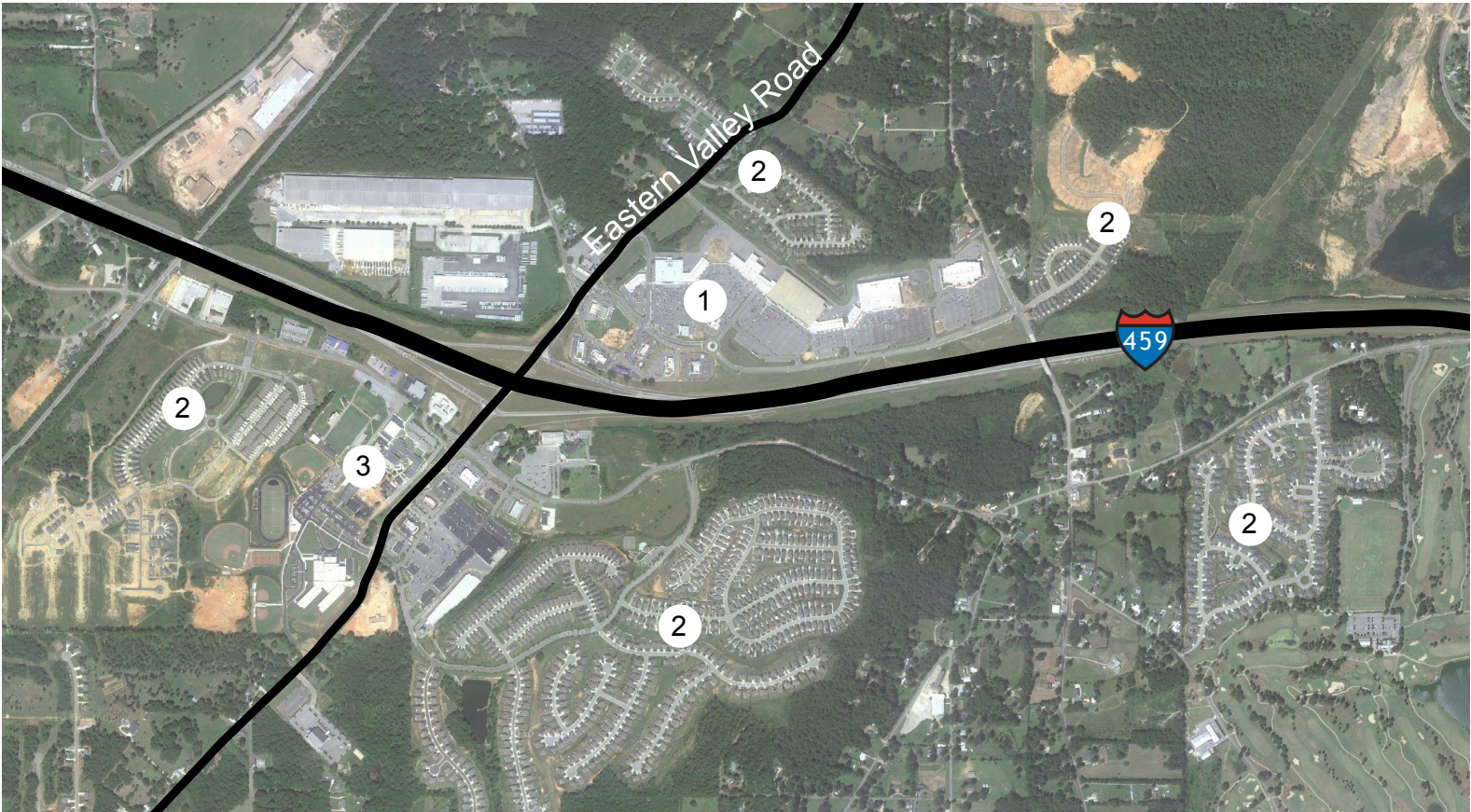


Figure 16: I-459 Exit 1 Asset Map



Figure 17: Exit 1 Subdivision



Figure 18: Colonial Promenade Tannehill



Figure 19: Colonial Promenade Tannehill

Visioning

This planning process was focused on several issues facing the City of Bessemer. Through individual and collective discussions with Bessemer's citizens, civic, non-profit and business leaders, it became clear that the city's top priorities were:

- changing the perception of Bessemer through the redevelopment of its older neighborhoods and its historic downtown,
- recruiting new businesses and new jobs
- weaving together the new growth and development on the city's periphery with the citizens and assets in its historic core.

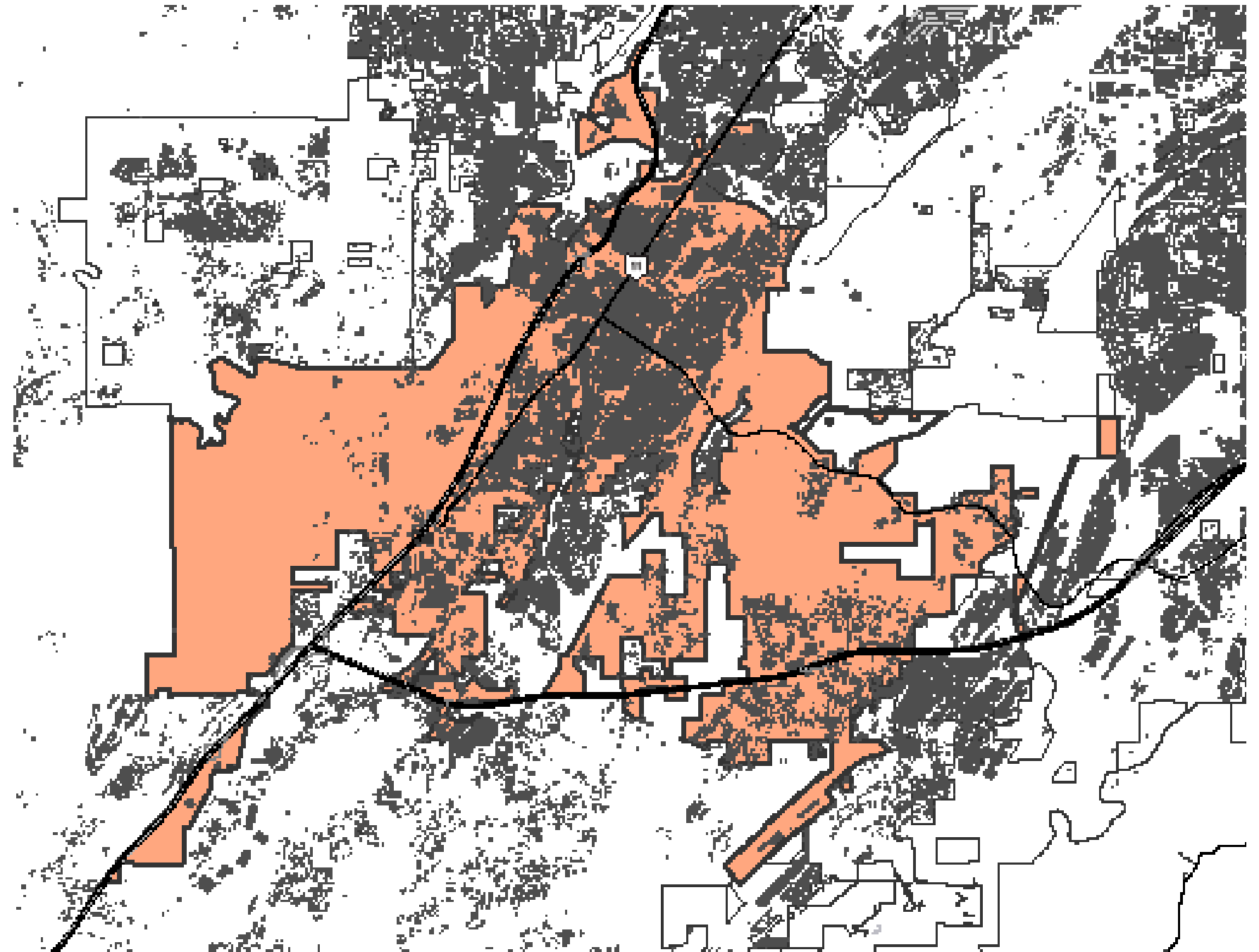


Figure 20: Bessemer City Limits

Transit Improvements

Current Transit Service

Transit is an important mode of transportation for the City of Bessemer as many of its citizens do not have vehicle access. Public transit in the Birmingham region is mostly provided by the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA). Currently, all BJCTA routes begin and end in one location, the Central Station located in Downtown Birmingham at the intersection of Morris Avenue and 18th Street. Details of the BJCTA's Bessemer service routes, Routes 1 and 45, can be seen in Table 1 and are illustrated in Figure 21.

In 2008, the BJCTA published a 10-year Transit Development Plan in which they conducted an analysis of the Birmingham Metro Area with regard to various transit services. Those areas with high population and employment densities were identified as “transit-supportive.” “This term is used to identify areas in which minimum thresholds of household or employment density are met. These areas can generally support a minimum of hourly fixed route transit service” (BJCTA TDP, 2008). When areas do not have demographic characteristics that will support conventional transit, other services such as “demand-response, route or point deviations services, park and ride services, or neighborhood circulators” are recommended (BJCTA TDP, 2008). The BJCTA lists Bessemer's downtown (Figure 21) as one of the regions that is currently “transit-supportive,” although transit service is offered in other parts of Bessemer.

BJCTA Transit Routes

BJCTA Route	Riders per Hour	Annual Operation Cost	Rank (out of 28)
1 - South Bessemer	16.2	\$1,071,258	11
45 - Bessemer	17	\$1,018,371	6

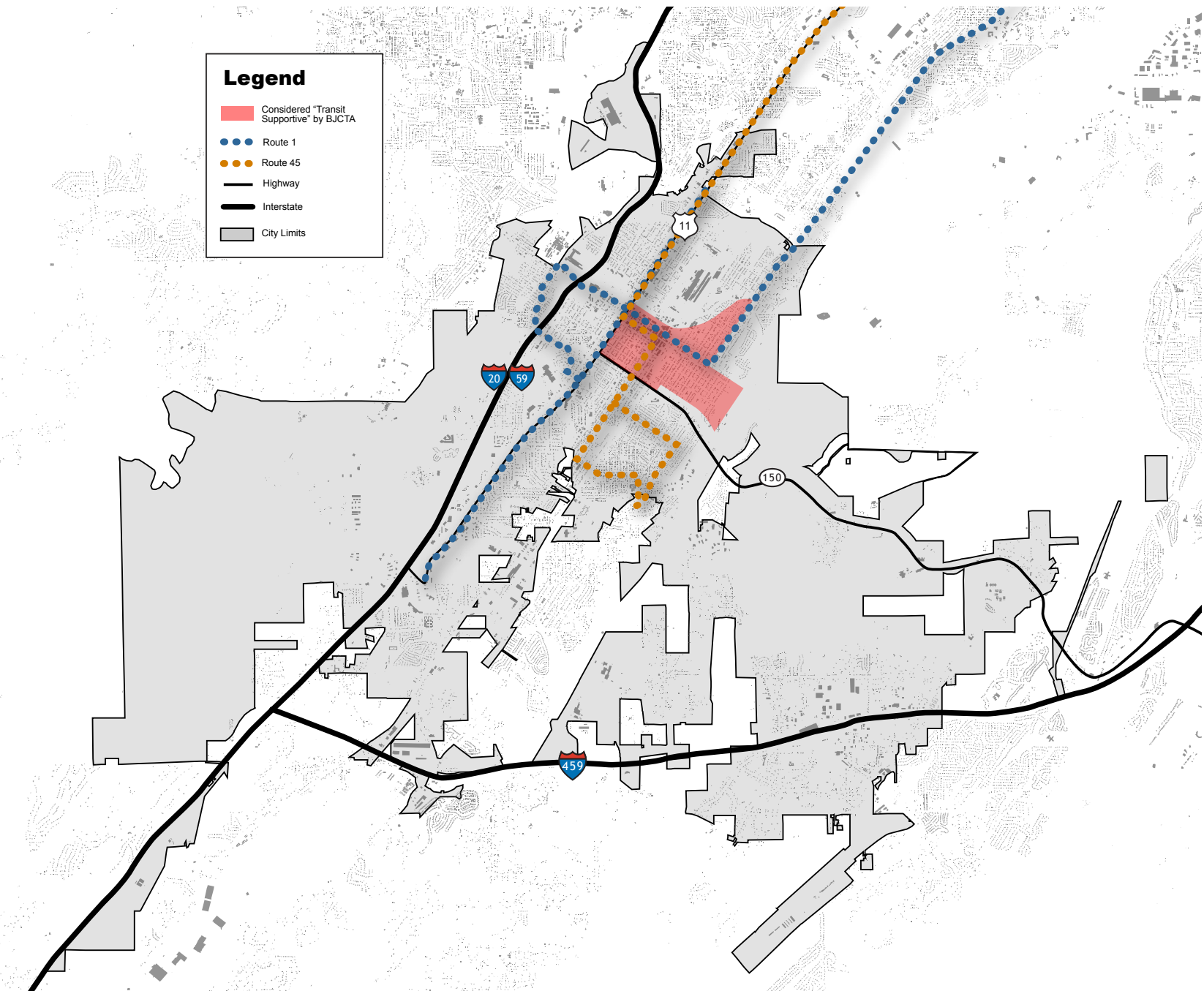


Figure 21: Existing Transit Routes



Transit Needs

A major consideration of transit planning in Bessemer is the development of much new retail and services space at its periphery. This development is automobile-oriented and served by highways and interstates and located out of walking range for residents in the city's older neighborhoods. These new retail and services centers, a source of both places to shop and places to work, are identified in Figure 22. As can be seen, the BJCTA routes do not connect Bessemer's older neighborhoods surrounding the historic core to the development around Colonial Promenade Tannehill, the business park on Powder Plant Road, Alabama Adventure Park or Watermark Place.

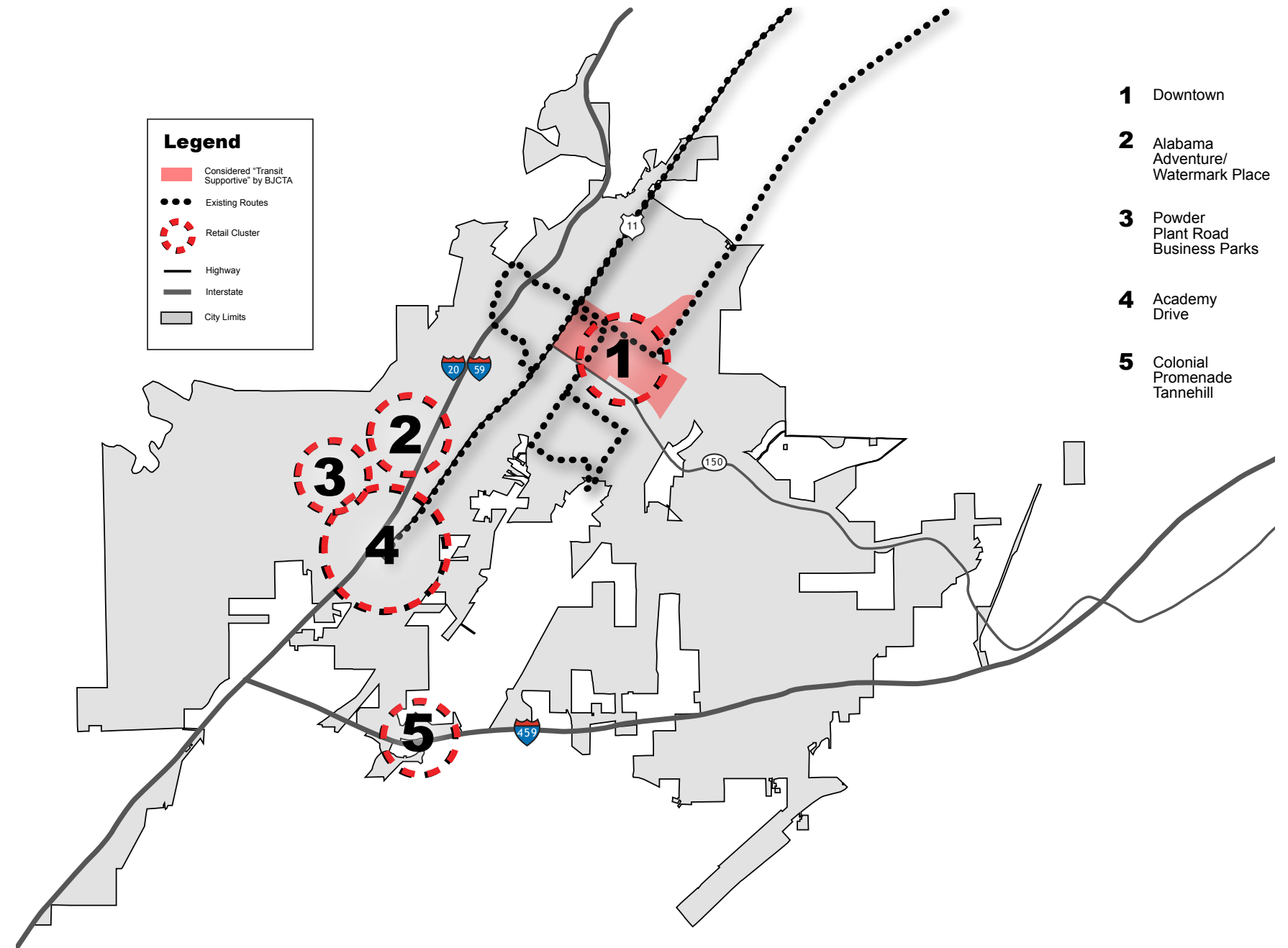


Figure 22: Transit Routes and Retail Clusters

Additions to Current Transit Service

To connect Bessemer's older neighborhoods and historic downtown to the new employment, retail and entertainment at the city's periphery, two additional transit lines or loop routes are recommended.

Addition to Route 1

Shown in Figure 23, the addition should begin at the last stop of Route 1 near the intersection of Academy Drive and Bessemer Superhighway and then:

- run west on Academy Drive,
- turn north on Powder Plant Road
- turn east on Alabama Adventure Parkway, connecting back to US 11.
- will tie Route 1 into the retail, entertainment and services businesses currently without transit access.

Addition to Route 45

To connect the development around Colonial Promenade Tannehill to Route 45, Figure 23 shows a suggested loop route beginning at the last outbound stop, the intersection of 4th Avenue South and 10th Street, then:

- south on 4th Avenue to Grant Street
- east on Grant Street to Eastern Valley Road
- south on Eastern Valley Road to Colonial Promenade and then back, following the same route to tie into Route 45.

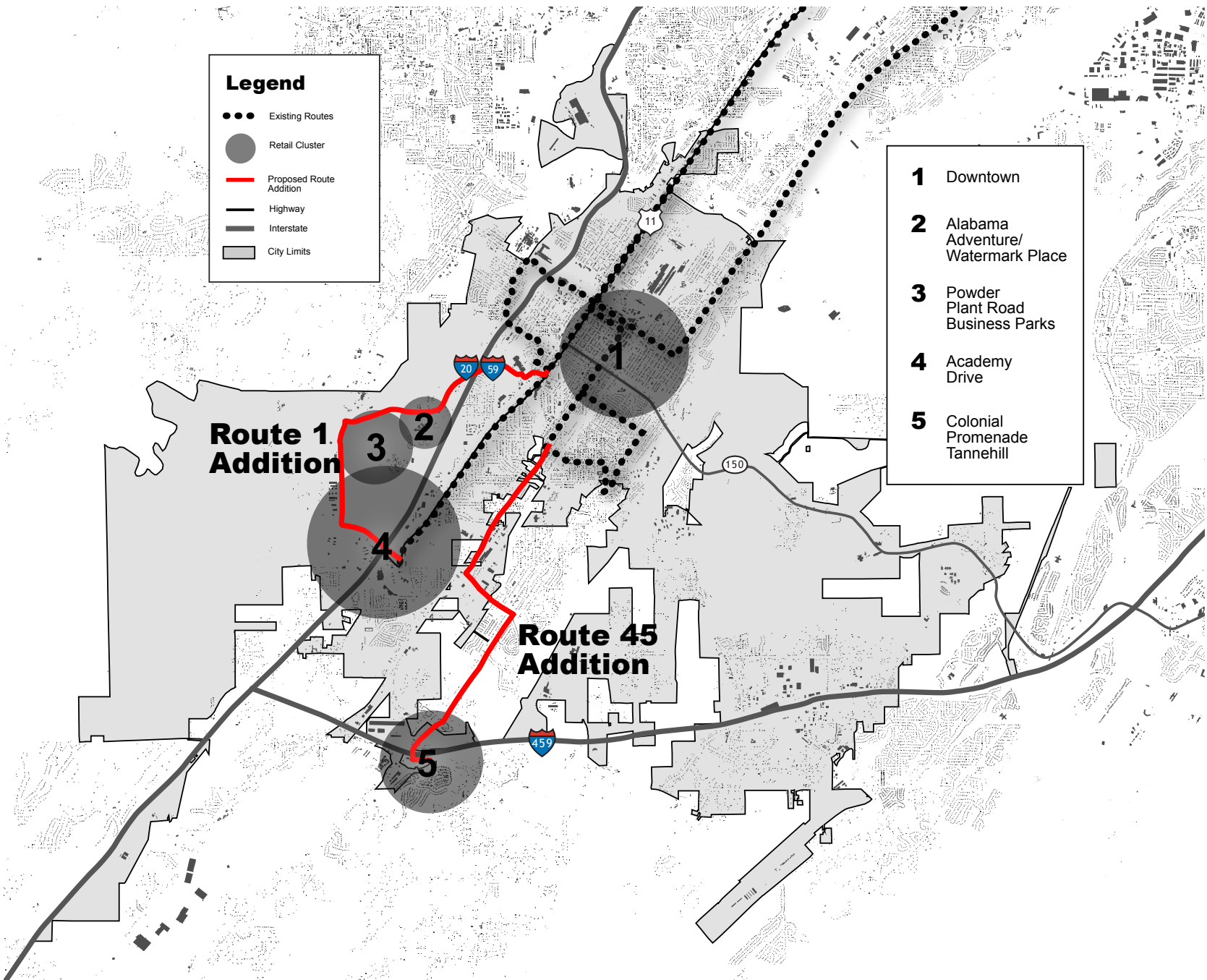


Figure 23: Proposed Transit Route Additions



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Bessemer Superhighway/US 11 Transit Study

Important for Bessemer's future are the implications of the Bessemer Superhighway/U.S. 11 study examining the possibility of more and different kinds of transit service in the corridor. The study area is shown in Figure 30 (opposite page) and considered from Downtown Birmingham in the northeast to McCalla in the southwest. Light Rail and Bus Rapid Transit, among other strategies, will be considered for the corridor.

Conditions on the Corridor within Bessemer

As US 11 runs through the City of Bessemer, both growing and thriving employment and retail areas that encourage investment, as well as vacant and under-utilized properties that encourage disinvestment, can be found. The proximity of UAB Medical West on Bessemer Superhighway to the Academy Drive exit of I-20/59 has created a strong development node at the corridor's southern end and Downtown Bessemer anchors significant activity at the northern end (within the City of Bessemer). Between the downtown and the Academy Drive intersection, however, are several older retail sites such as Westlake Mall (Figure 26, 28) that are partially or completely vacant, signaling an outflow of investment along that region of the corridor.



Figure 24: Vacant retail space



Figure 25: Abundance of title and pawn shops



Figure 26: Westlake Mall (now vacant)



Figure 27: UAB Medical West near Academy Drive

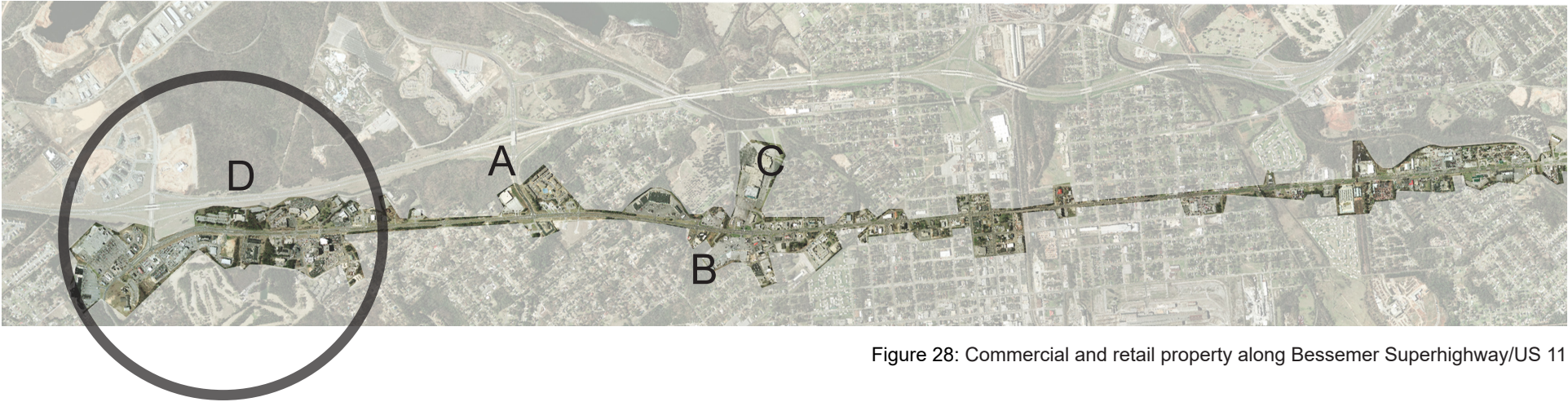


Figure 28: Commercial and retail property along Bessemer Superhighway/US 11

Transit Study Recommendations

The ongoing transit study will most likely suggest a Bus Rapid Transit service for the corridor similar to the one shown in Figure 29. This kind of transit service provides a bus-only lane allowing for faster routes and usually fewer stops than standard bus service. With fewer stops and faster routes, the station areas need to be prioritized with probably only one or two in the City of Bessemer. Given such constraints, investment in housing, municipal buildings, retail and services and park space should be concentrated at those nodes, with development momentum such as Downtown Bessemer and the UAB Medical West/Lawson State/Academy Drive area creating a more dense, effective transit environment for the significant segment of the city's population without access to vehicles.



Figure 29: Example of Bus Rapid Transit line

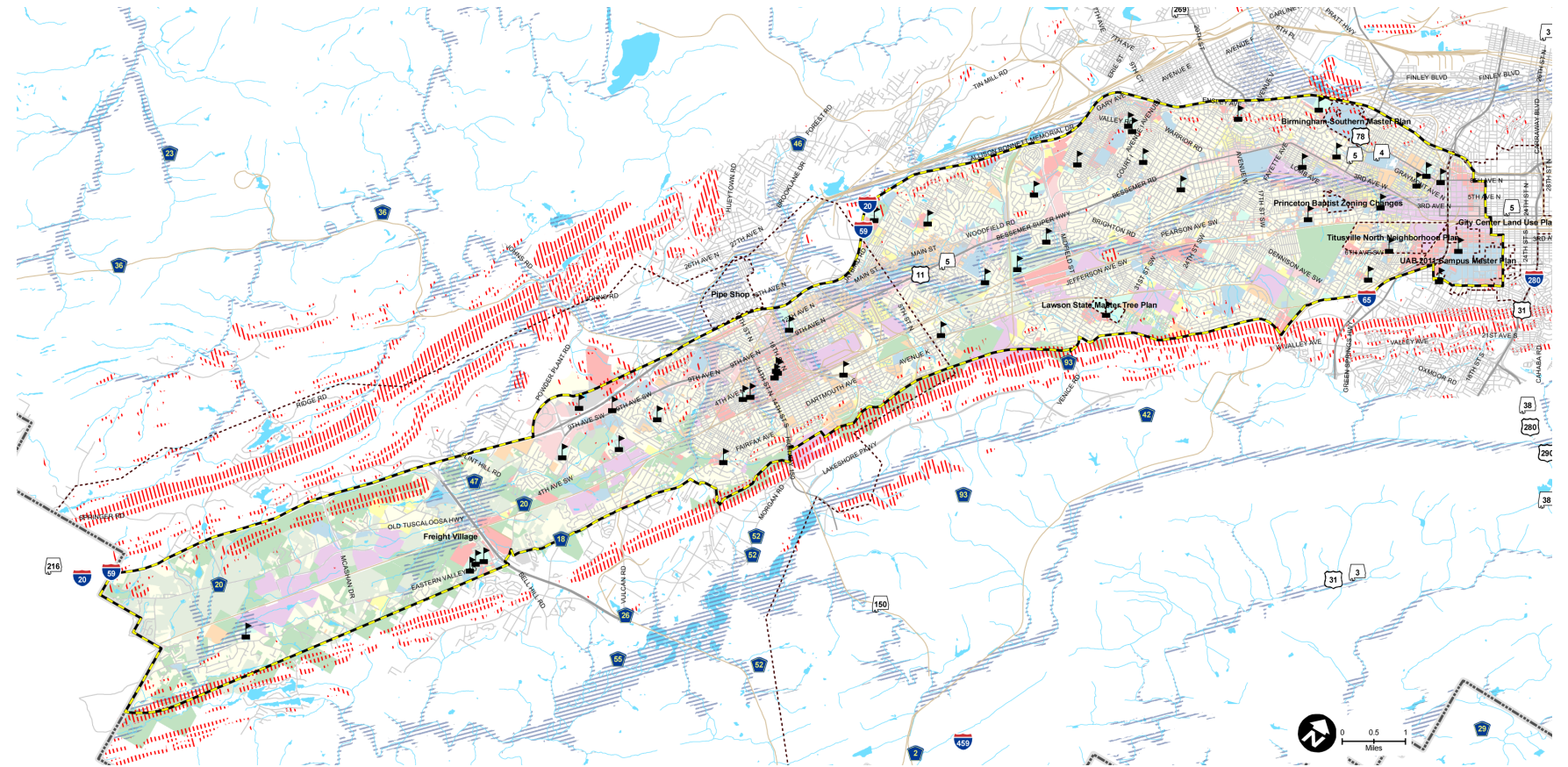


Figure 30: Bessemer Superhighway/Highway 11 Alternatives Analysis Study Area

Neighborhood Analysis

Bessemer's neighborhoods range in age from those built in the last century to those built in the last decade. The same is true of Bessemer's office, retail and industrial buildings.

From the input of Bessemer's civic, cultural and business leaders, it was clear that many of the city's older neighborhoods were distressed and experiencing disinvestment.

This section will focus on those residential areas of Bessemer in need of redevelopment. In the following pages, neighborhood health and stability of property value is analyzed through mapping the following in Bessemer's neighborhoods, shown in Figure 31:

- median housing value
- tax-delinquency
- population loss
- house vacancy rates

This analysis will point to those neighborhoods with the most disinvestment and in greatest need of redevelopment efforts.

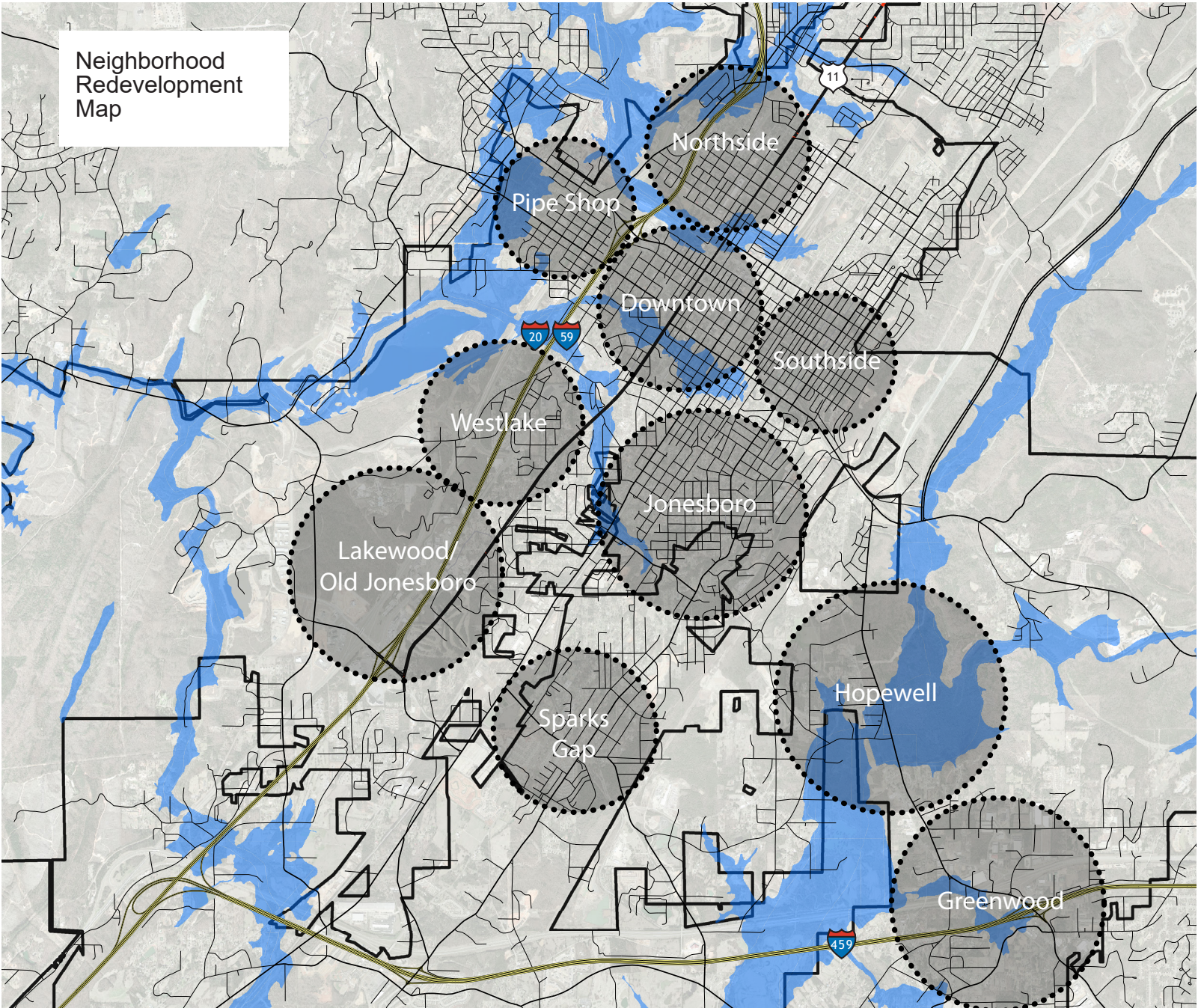


Figure 31: Neighborhood Overview Map





Figure 32: Photos of these abandoned houses and vacant lots were taken in the older neighborhoods of Bessemer where disinvestment and decline were found most intensely



Median Housing Value

The housing value analysis in Figure 33 shows median housing value by block group. The data show that the older, northernmost neighborhoods in Bessemer - Pipe Shop, Northside, Southside, Jonesboro and Downtown - have the lowest residential property value in the city. These findings will be overlayed on other data to determine which neighborhoods in Bessemer are experiencing the most disinvestment and are in greatest need of redevelopment efforts.

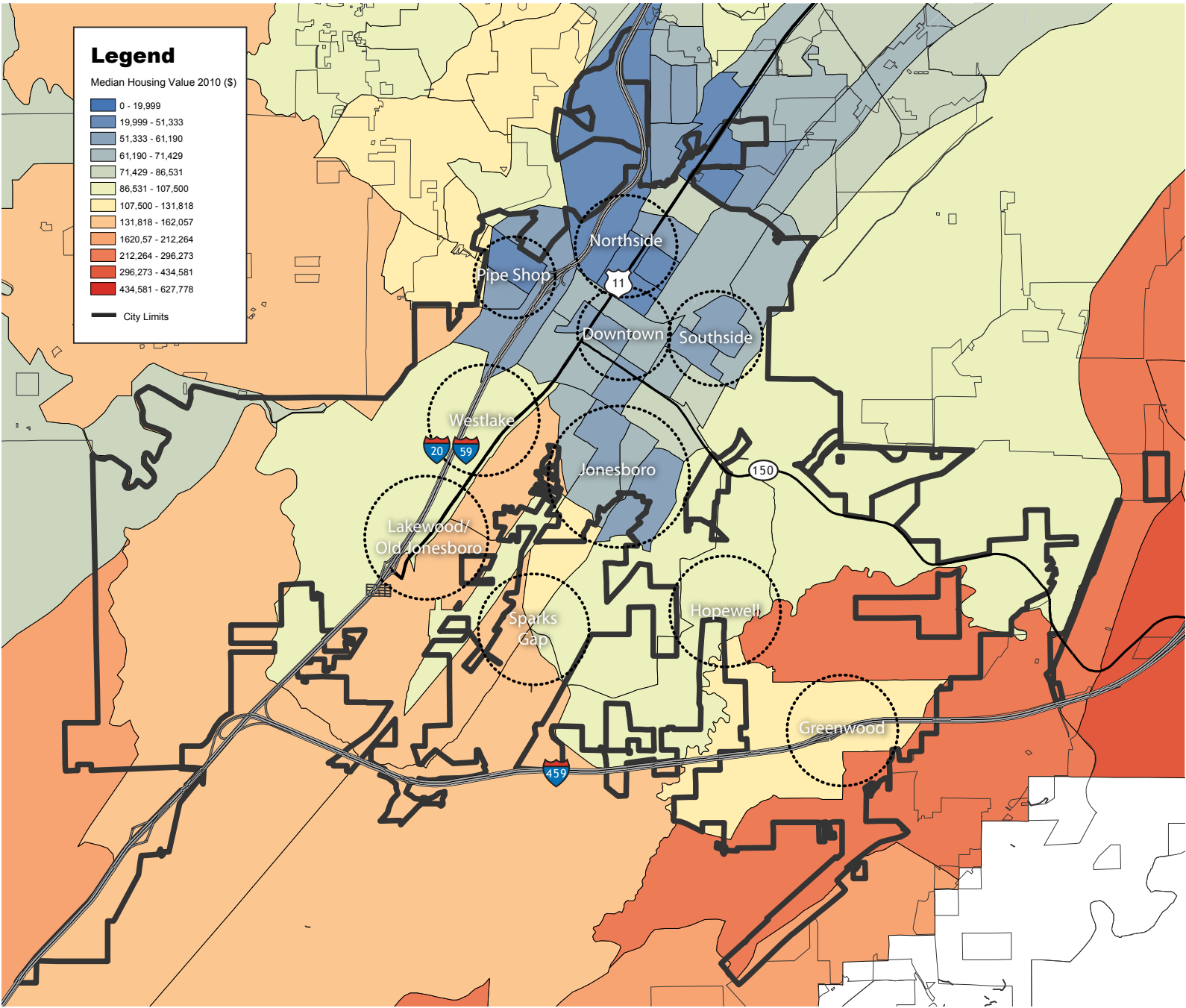


Figure 33: Median Housing Value



Tax-Delinquent, Sold-to-State Properties

Figure 34 is a mapping analysis showing in red those parcels that are tax-delinquent and “sold-to-state,” meaning they were not purchased at a county tax sale after failure to pay taxes and were transferred to the Alabama State Department of Revenue. Failure to pay property taxes is a strong indicator of disinvestment and stagnating property value, often meaning that the owners simply walked away from their property when it could not be sold easily or when it was worth so little that the owner did not perceive a significant gain in selling it.

Property also becomes tax-delinquent and sold-to-state when there is no clear owner (often ownership is split among heirs) and no one takes responsibility to pay taxes.

As in the Median Housing Value analysis, the northernmost neighborhoods in Bessemer show the greatest disinvestment, containing the most tax-delinquent, sold-to-state properties.

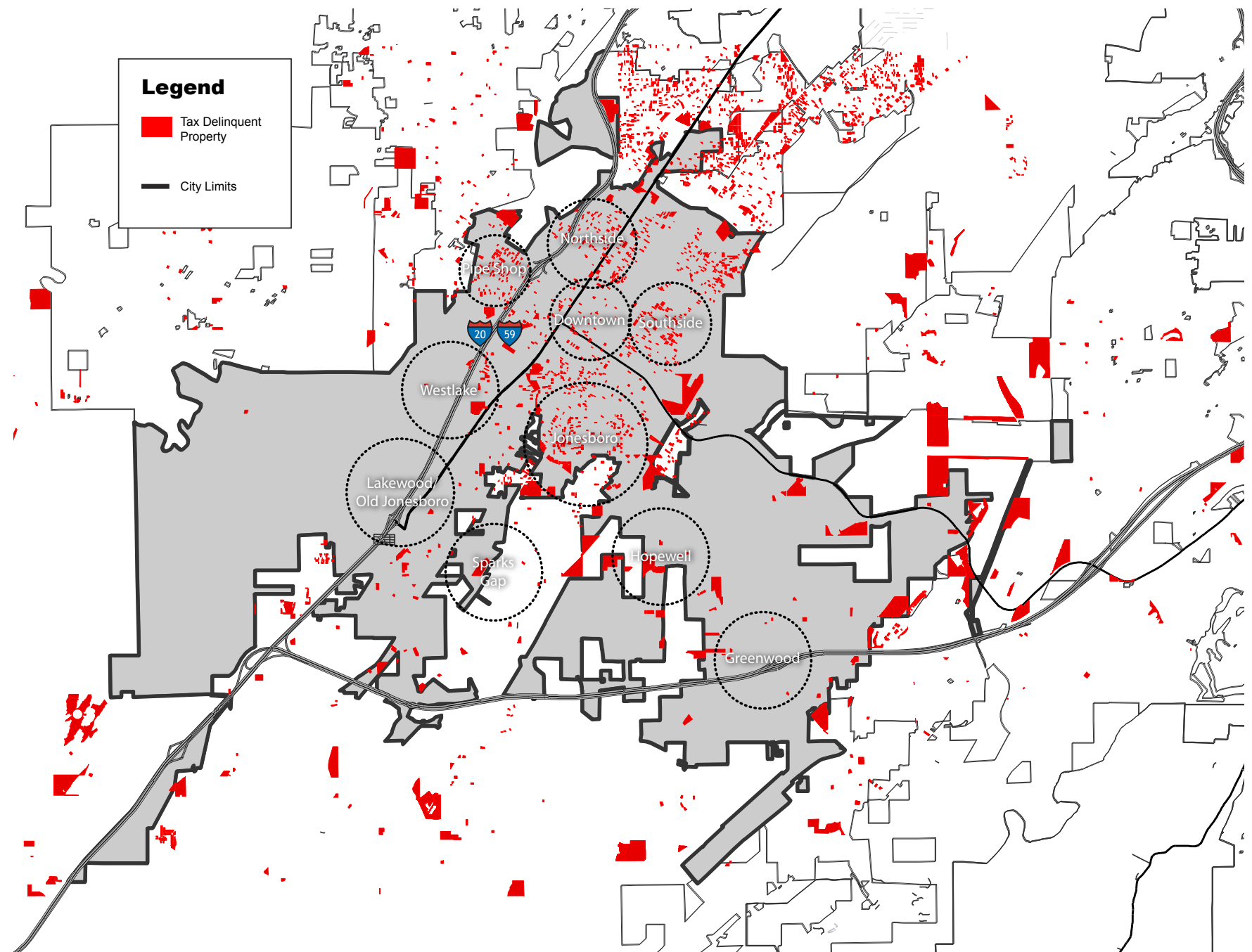


Figure 34: Tax Delinquent, Sold-to-State Property

Population Loss

Population loss can help in understanding investment or disinvestment in a neighborhood because it shows a decrease in demand for property relative to previous years. Figure 35 shows population loss by block group, with the red end of the spectrum indicating the highest loss in number of residents from 2000-2010.

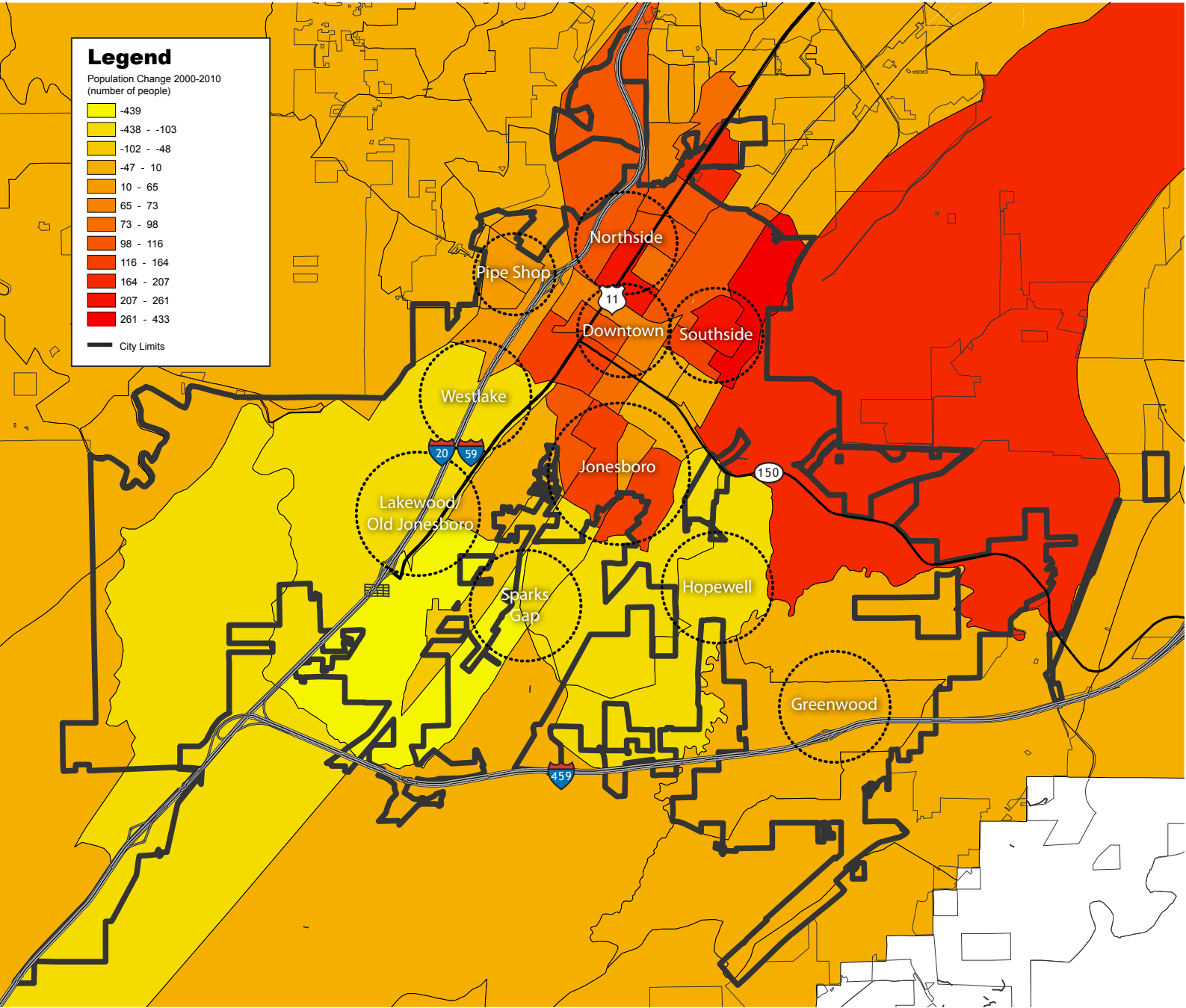


Figure 35: Population Loss



House Vacancy Rate

House vacancy rate is a similar to population loss as an indicator of disinvestment as it can illustrate which neighborhoods are in less demand than in previous years. Figure 36 shows house vacancy rate by block group.

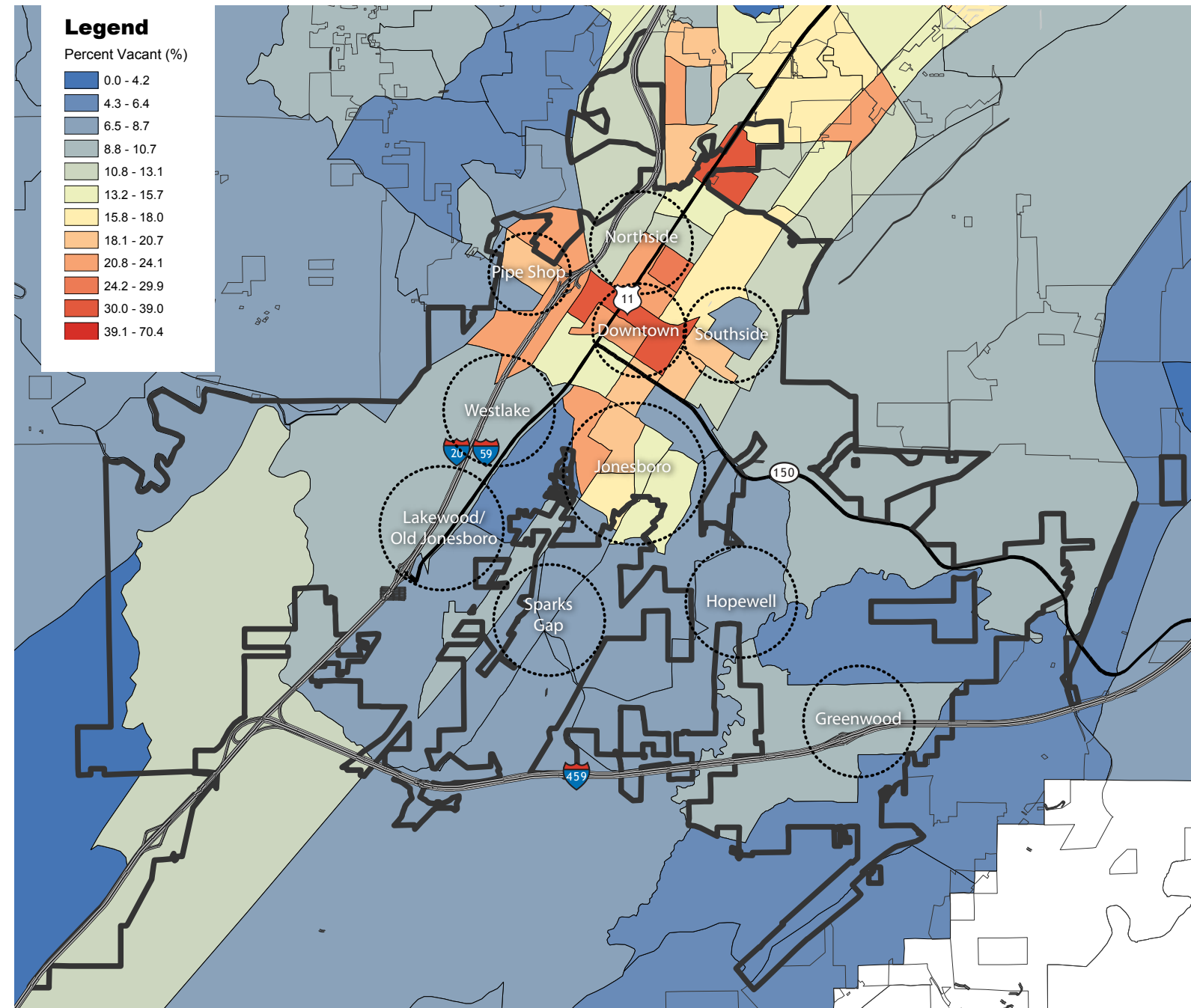


Figure 36: House Vacancy Rate

Target Area Based on Demographic and Economic Analysis

In overlaying the indicators of neighborhood investment and disinvestment - median housing value, tax-delinquency, population loss and house vacancy rate - a group of neighborhoods highlighted in Figure 37 has emerged as the area in greatest need of redevelopment efforts.

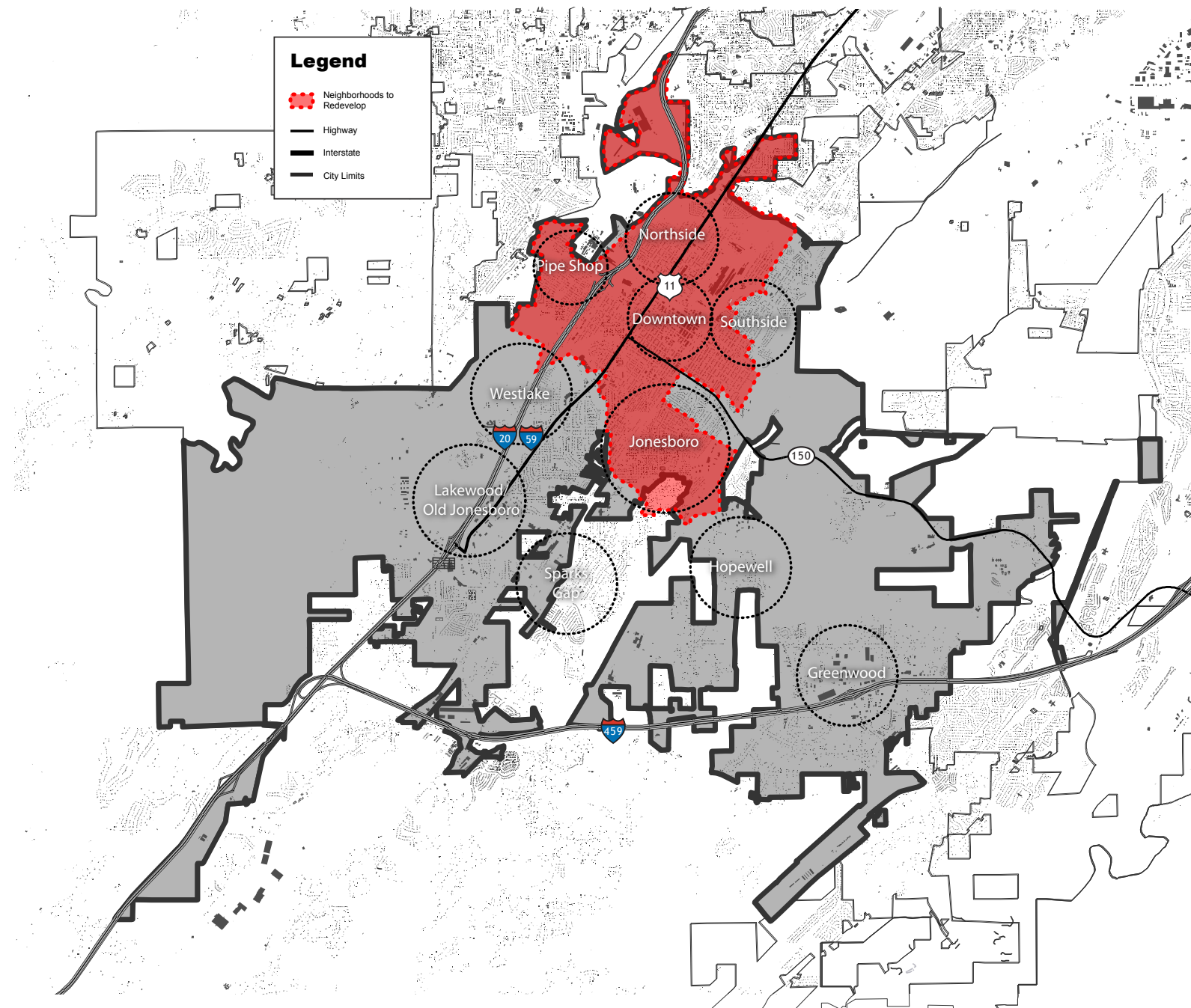


Figure 37: Target Redevelopment Area

Developing a Model for Neighborhood Redevelopment

Rather than spreading the City of Bessemer's limited resources thinly across each neighborhood in need of redevelopment, this plan suggests that it will be much more effective to concentrate redevelopment efforts and resources in smaller focus areas, creating a critical mass of successes that build on and sustain each other in the future. These focus areas should be redeveloped at the scale of neighborhoods and after one neighborhood shows an increase in investment, the comprehensive process can be repeated in other neighborhoods throughout the larger redevelopment area.

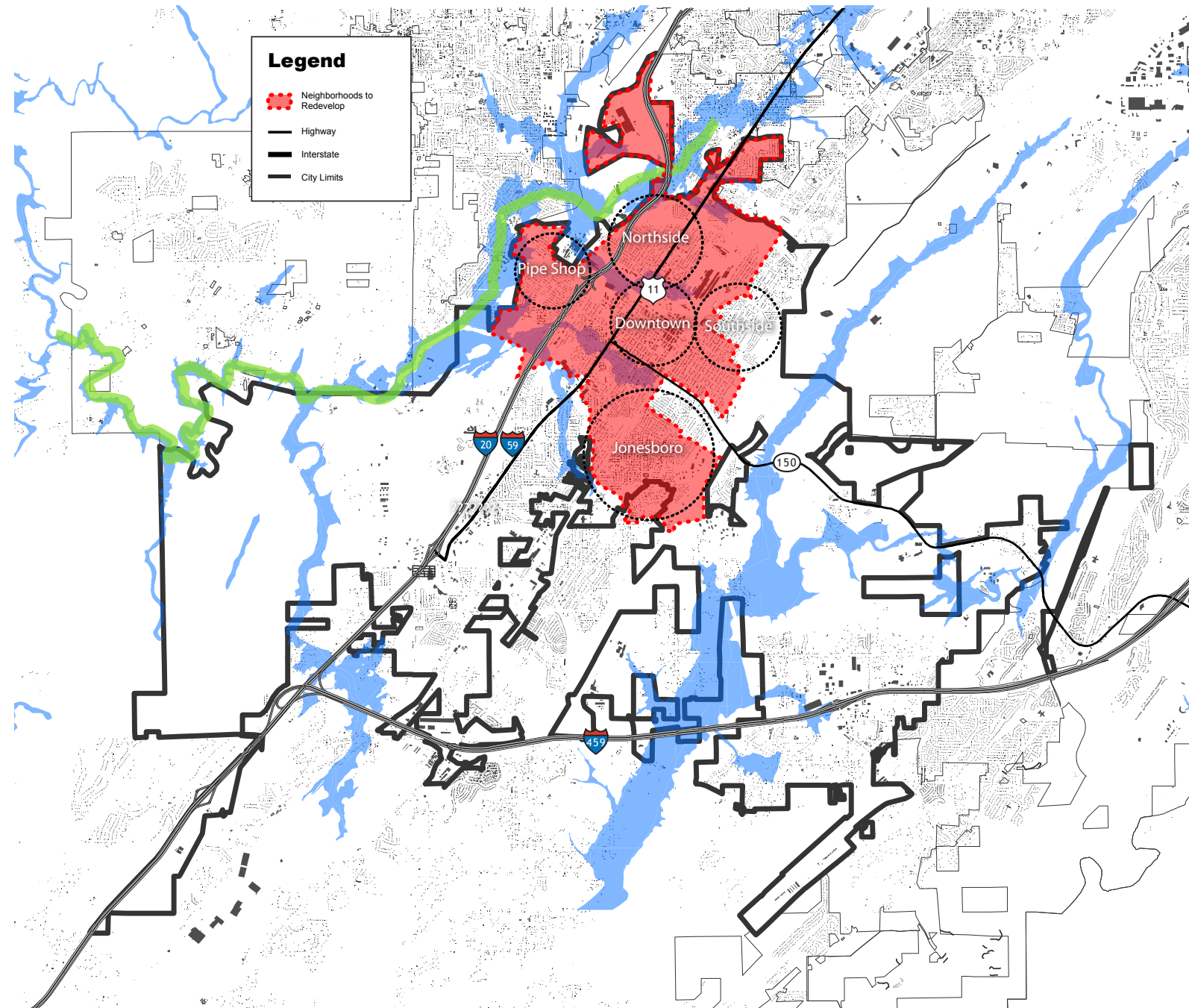


Figure 38: Target Redevelopment Area

Pipe Shop Neighborhood

The model redevelopment process can be first displayed in the Pipe Shop Neighborhood. This section describes the planning process and the short, medium and long-term steps the City of Bessemer and the Pipe Shop Neighborhood can take to address its issues and realize its goals.



Figure 39: McNeil Park

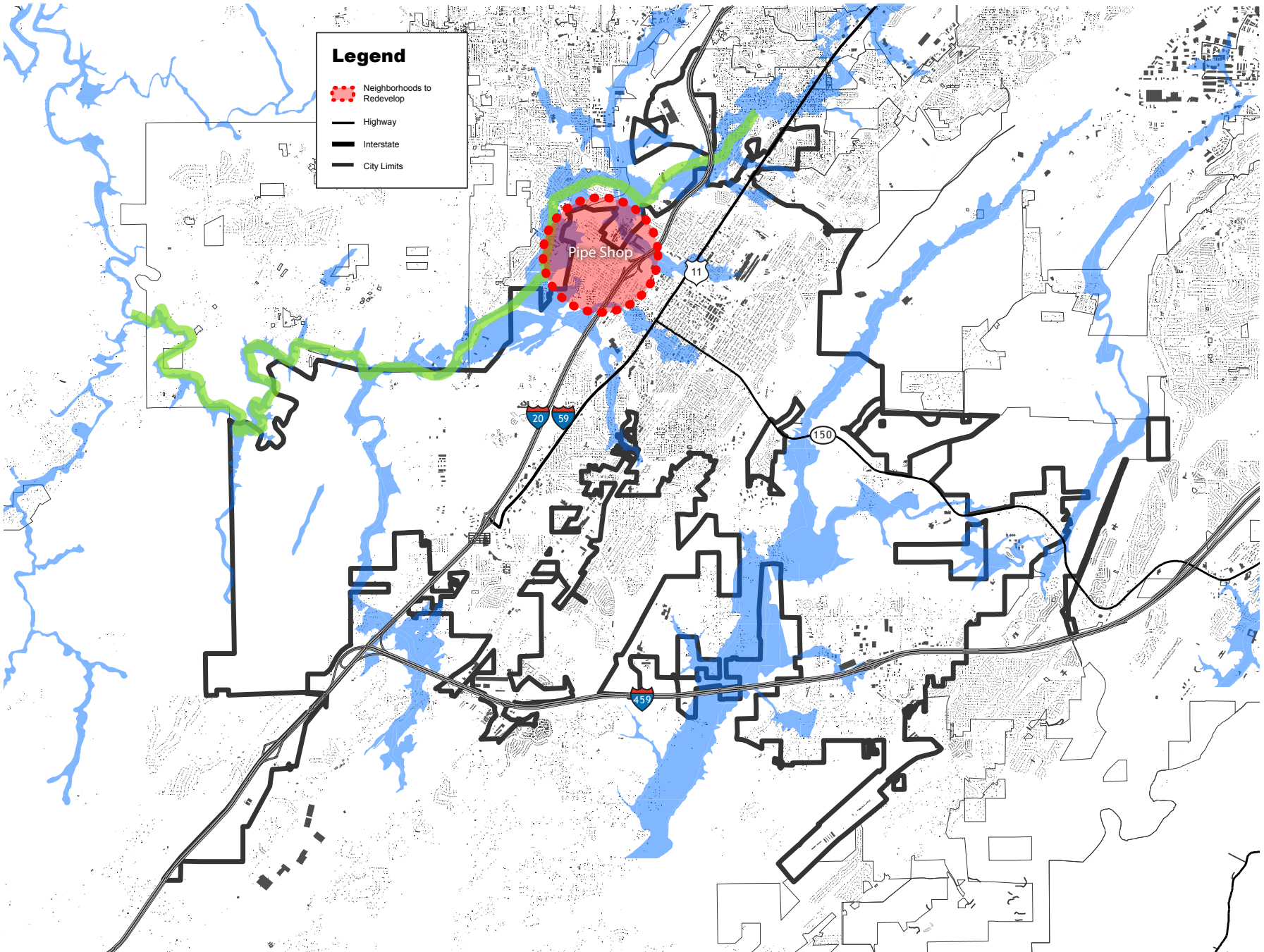


Figure 40: Pipe Shop Proximity Map

Neighborhood Meeting

The first step in creating a redevelopment process for Pipe Shop and a model for redevelopment across the other neighborhoods in the target area was a meeting with the neighborhood residents to understand their perspective.

The Pipe Shop Neighborhood met with Mayor Gulley, Councilor Matthews, Police Chief Rutledge, Fire Chief Syx, Reverend Eades from Public Works, various community leaders and RPCGB staff on February 7, 2011 at Antioch Baptist Church to discuss the future of the neighborhood. The following pages address the assets, issues, and hopes the neighborhood shared that evening and describe the plan for redevelopment.



Figure 41: Pipe Shop Community Meeting



Figure 42: Pipe Shop Community Meeting



Figure 43: Pipe Shop Community Meeting



Figure 44: Pipe Shop Community Meeting

Assets, Issues & Hopes

Figure 45 is a photograph of a map present at the neighborhood meeting. It shows streets and aerial imagery of the Pipe Shop neighborhood. The yellow dots indicate where the meeting attendees live in the neighborhood.

The meeting started with a discussion of the strengths of the neighborhood: Pipe Shop's Assets. The second agenda item was to discuss its problems and struggles: Pipe Shop's Issues. The last topic of discussion were the residents' goals for the neighborhood for next 10-20 years: Pipe Shop's Hopes.

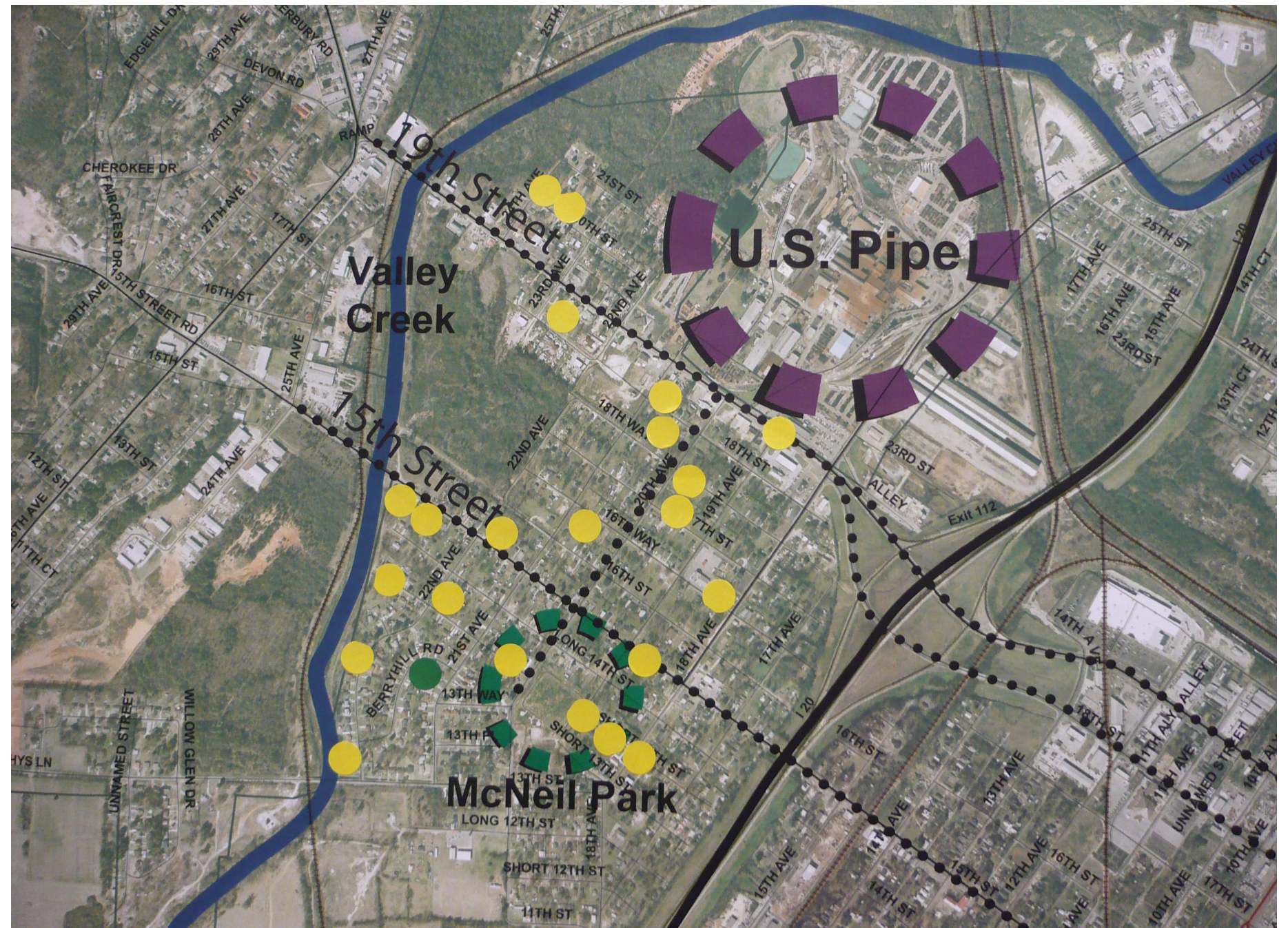


Figure 45: "Where Do You Live?" Map

Assets

- Available land
- Tax-paying residents – revenue for the city
- Excellent location
- US Pipe – places to work - people come from all over the region to work in Pipe Shop
- Lifelong residents
- Quality of life
- Churches
- Daycare
- Potential for small business
- Potential for local businesses
- Anchor location in the western corridor of the Birmingham region
- Access to interstates and highways (20/59, 459, US 11, Hwy 150)

Issues

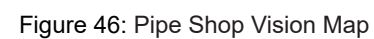
- Drug problems in neighborhood – shootings by the drug house near thrift store
- Drainage and stormwater management – standing water in streets and ditches – especially along 15th and 16th streets
- Overgrown lots
- Vacant lots
- Mosquitos in open ditches with standing water
- Speeding along 15th street
- Debris in yards detract from neighborhood appearance – car tires, etc
- Water lines and fire hydrants – are there enough?
- Smell of sewer behind West Lake Mall
- Dilapidated roads and potholes
- Raw sewage spilling out into yards
- Drivers do not obey stop signs
- Erosion and soil cracking
- Feeling a lack of police patrolling
- Need a stop sign at 21st Street
- Environmental issues with US Pipe – pollutants seem to be coming from the plant specifically at 20th Avenue/Pearl Harbor
- Cars are parked in roads and block visibility at neighborhood body shop, New Antioch Baptist Church, 18th Street by the credit union and car wash
- Flooding during heavy rain

Hopes

- Be a safe neighborhood
- Have places and activities for kids and seniors
- Be clean
- Be safe to walk around in
- Have walking trails and bicycle trails
- Have good retail and services
- Printing shop
- Clothes stores
- Benefit from the involvement of housing groups such as Habitat for Humanity
- Have pool and ball fields in the neighborhood
- Have green space and parks
- Better utilize space at McNeil Park
- Have a walking trail at 15th street and John Road
- Have a more harmonious relationship between residents and police
- Attract people to live in the neighborhood
- Have a better recycling center



This section will describe both the short and long term issues and propose strategies to address them.



Short-Term: Policing

Citizens raised several concerns at the neighborhood meeting regarding policing. The concerns ranged from the existence of drug houses and drug activity to speeding along certain streets. Mayor Gulley, Councilor Matthews, Chief Rutledge and RPCGB staff developed action items to address the citizens' concerns.

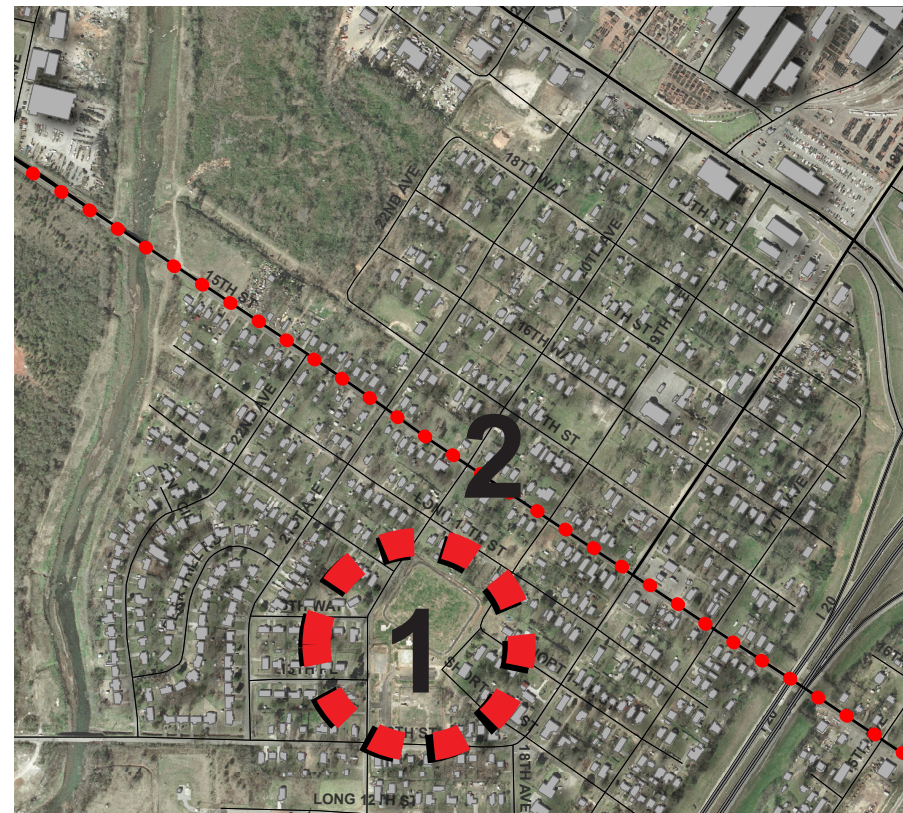


Figure 47: Policing Map

1

More frequent patrols of McNeil Park; Officers will walk the park at set times of day



Figure 48: McNeil Park



Figure 49: McNeil Park

2

Police will monitor speeding on 15th Street



Figure 50: 15th Street Intersection



Figure 51: 15th Street Intersection

3

Vice and Narcotics units will continue ongoing investigations; however, operations are covert and must remain so in the near future.

4

Police will make stronger ties with Pipe Shop by getting out and forming relationships with neighborhood residents.

Normal Rain Events

1 Pipe Shop Community Center and 21st Avenue



Figure 53: Images of Flooding in Pipe Shop

2 MacNeil Park



Figure 54: Images of Flooding in Pipe Shop

Short-Term: Flood Mitigation

Pipe Shop Community Center Bioswale and Rain Garden

Pipe Shop Community Center, located at the intersection of 21st Avenue and 16th Street North (Figure 55), is a potential place for the City of Bessemer to demonstrate a new strategy in managing stormwater. Two of the neighborhood's issues - overgrown lots and standing water - could be used to solve each other by turning the vacant lots into stormwater management systems in the form of bioswales and rain gardens. Bioswales and rain gardens are defined below. Examples and illustrations further explaining their role are shown on the opposite page.

What is a Bioswale?

A bioswale is a vegetated depression that treats stormwater runoff from nearby surfaces such as roads and rooftops. By slowing the water, the bioswale enables it to infiltrate into the ground and allows solids (dirt and pollution) to settle where it can be easily picked up for discard and kept it out of streams.

What is a Rain Garden?

A rain garden is a planted depression that allows rainwater runoff from impervious areas like roofs, driveways, walkways, and parking lots to be absorbed by providing a place to soak into the ground (as opposed to flowing into storm drains and surface waters which causes erosion, water pollution, flooding, and diminished groundwater).



Figure 55: Proposed Bioswale at Pipe Shop Community Center

Immediate Projects

Bioswales and Rain Gardens for the Community Center

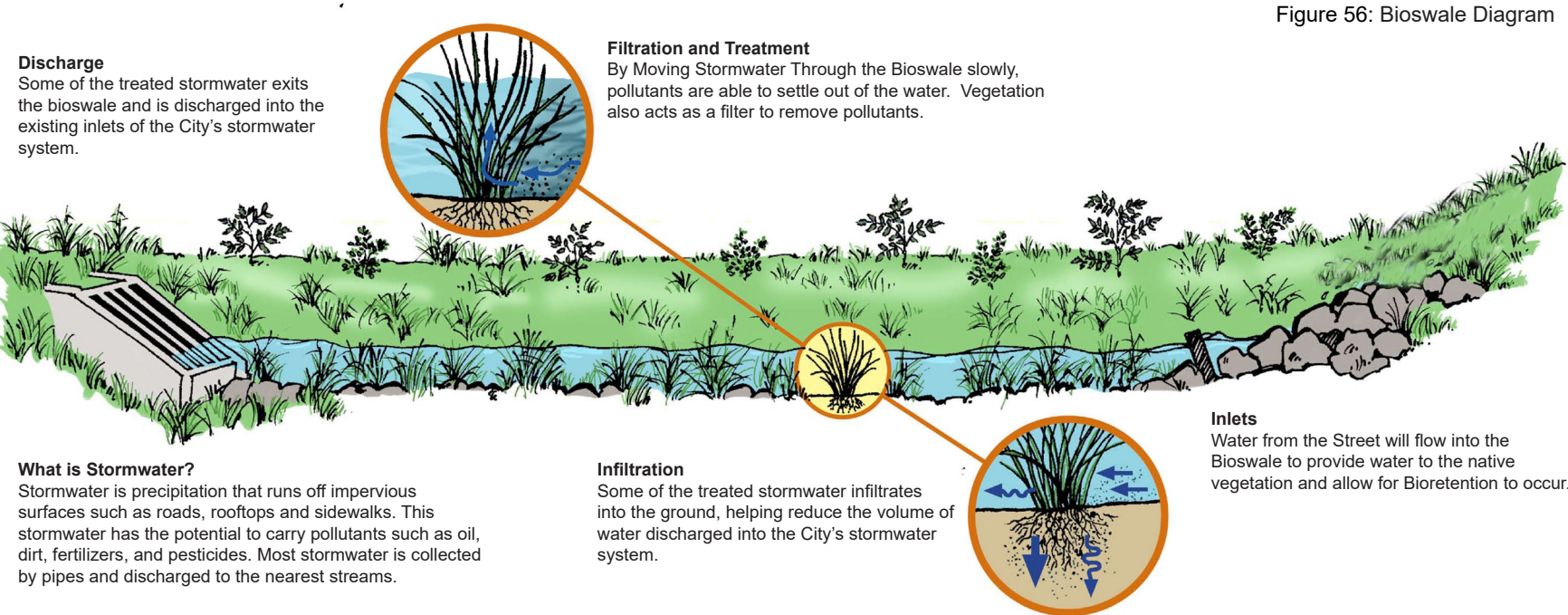


Figure 56: Bioswale Diagram



Figure 57: This arterial street utilizes a vegetated swale to accept stormwater from the street. This green street also uses sidewalks made from pervious concrete.



Figure 58: An example of a stormwater curb extension that reduced project costs by leaving the existing street curb in place.



Figure 59: This green street retrofit is designed with a narrow curb extension that captures runoff from an existing crowned street.

Table 2: Rain Garden Cost Estimates

Rain Garden Per Unit Cost Estimates	
Material	Price (\$)
Site demolition/grading \$20 per cubic card (50)	1,000.00
Connections to drain adjacent buildings	1,000.00
Landscape Materials	
Topsoil \$25 per cubic yard (7)	175.00
Planting mixture \$45 per cubic yard (15)	675.00
Mulch \$40 per cubic yard (5)	200.00
Plant Materials	
12' shade tree-river birch, \$350 ea. (1)	350.00
6' flowering tree-flwg.plum \$200 ea. (2)	400.00
4' upright shrub-viburnum, thuja \$80 ea. (5)	400.00
3' spreading shrub roses, holly \$50 ea. (9)	450.00
Low mow seeding \$0.12 s.f. (1,000)	120.00
Grasses-perennials \$5 s.f. (100)	500.00
Fencing	
4' wood frame/wire \$30 l.f. (40)	1,200.00
Post treatment \$75 ea. (2)	150.00
Furnishings	
Rain barrels \$250 ea. (1)	250.00
Rain Garden Cost Total Estimate (\$1.77/s.f.)	\$6,870.00



Short-Term: Property Maintenance

Redevelopment Toolkit

To address the environmental and property maintenance issues described in this section, this plan recommends a comprehensive strategy to enforce property maintenance codes and development of an ordinance that transitions the burden of managing and maintaining vacant lots and abandoned buildings from the city to the property owners. This redevelopment toolkit describes the process the City of Bessemer can work through involving the Public Works Department, Building Inspector's Department, Police Department and City Attorney.

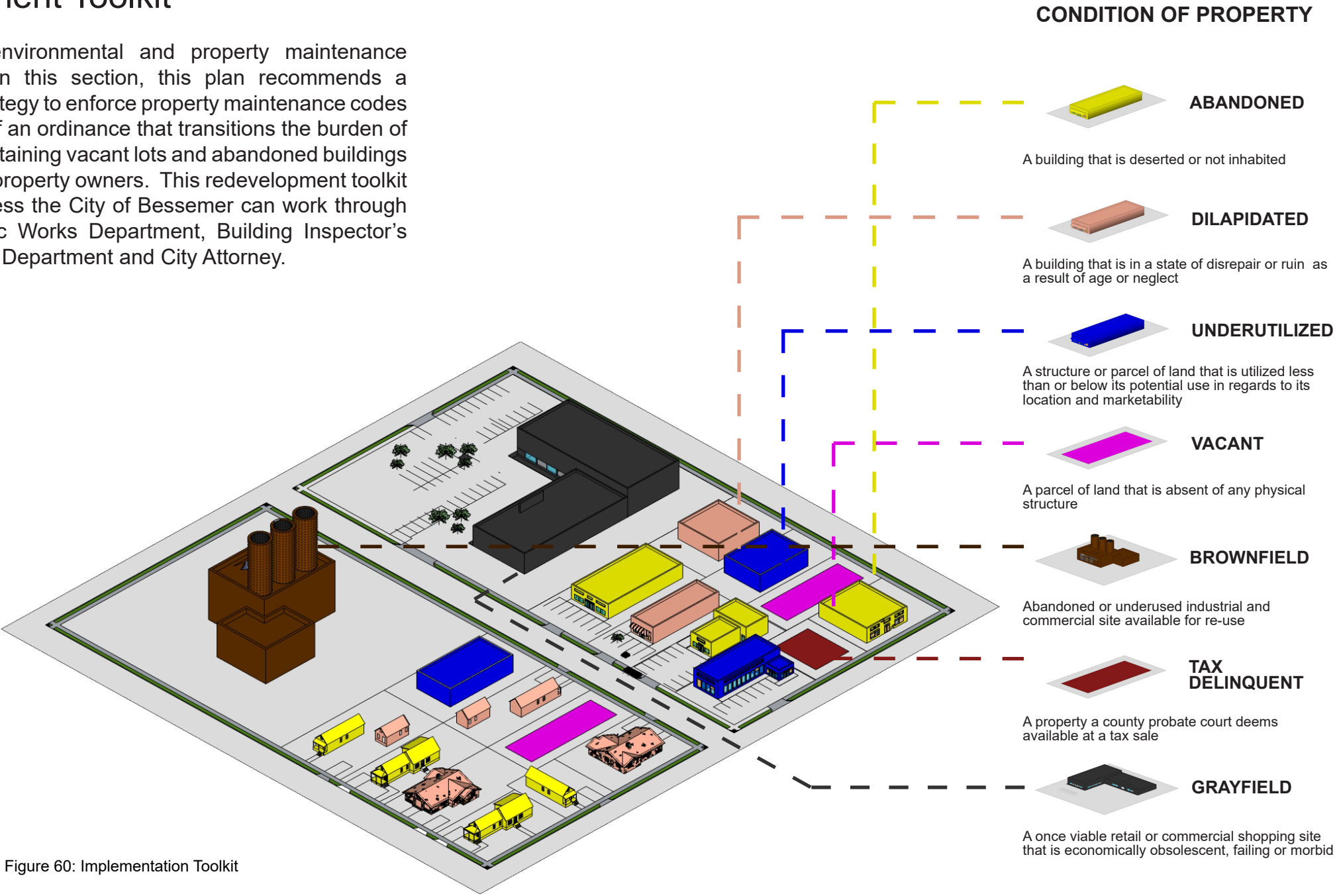


Figure 60: Implementation Toolkit



Short-Term: Property Maintenance

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Figure 61: International Property Maintenance Code (Cover)




PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

Pertains to compliance with local housing and construction code

(City has the power to put liens on properties that fail to comply)

Figure 62: Sample Form from Albany, GA

 **Vacant Building Registration Form**

Registration Date: _____ Expiration Date: _____
Common Address of Structure: _____
Parcel Tax ID# _____

Owner's Name: _____ Phone Number: _____
Address: _____
Other Responsible Party or Local Representative of the Owner: _____
Phone Number: _____ Address: _____
Lienholder Name: _____
Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Statement of Plan (plan for rehabilitation, maintenance or demolition of structure)

Length of time the owner expects the vacancy to continue: _____
Attach a plan of proposed rehabilitation or improvements to be made to the structure so as to make the structure suitable for its intended use.
All required permits must be obtained before any work may be started.

Describe what will be done to secure the structure so that it will not become open to the general public:

Please accept this application also as my written permission for representatives of the City of Albany to enter and inspect the above real property as the City of Albany may deem necessary. I understand and agree to comply with the requirements in sections 16-13.1 through 16-14.4 of the City of Albany Code of Ordinances.

Owner Signature _____ Date _____

(OFFICE USE ONLY)

Is property located in the Historic District? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, owner must apply for Certificate of Appropriateness thru Historic Preservation Committee.
Is property located in the Riverfront District? Yes ____ No ____

P & D Services, Application Complete: _____ Date _____
Code Enforcement Approval: _____ Date _____
Downtown Manager Approval: _____ Date _____


WHITE COPY: CODE ENFORCEMENT CANARY COPY: DOWNTOWN MGR PINK COPY: P&D SERVICES GOLDENROD COPY: PROP OWNER

VACANT/ABANDONED BUILDING REGISTRATION

Property Owner must provide a plan to the City of Bessemer for keeping property up to code

(City has the power to levy fines on properties that fail to comply.)

Figure 63: Sample Form from Binghamton, ME

 **Office of Code Enforcement
Vacant Building Registration Form**

Pursuant to the Code of the City of Binghamton § 265-14, Vacant Building Registry and Maintenance. Please complete & return within thirty (30) days to avoid penalties. Must be typed or legibly printed. See reverse side/below for directions and fees.

OFFICIAL USE ONLY
GIS/Tax Map #: _____
911 Address: _____
Date Received: _____
Amount Paid: _____
Registration Complete: <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
Officer Initials: _____

1. **PROPERTY INFORMATION**
Address: _____
Square footage of Building _____ Number of Stories _____
Age of Building _____ Most recent Use _____
Sprinkler System ☐ Yes ☐ No [Operational ☐ Yes ☐ No / Current Inspection ☐ Yes ☐ No]
Stand Pipe System ☐ Yes ☐ No [Operational ☐ Yes ☐ No / Current Inspection ☐ Yes ☐ No]
Fire Detection System ☐ Yes ☐ No [Operational ☐ Yes ☐ No / Current Inspection ☐ Yes ☐ No]
Elevator ☐ Yes ☐ No [Operational ☐ Yes ☐ No / Current Inspection ☐ Yes ☐ No]

2. **OWNER(S)* OF RECORD**
Primary Address: _____
Tel. No. _____ E-mail: _____

3. **CONTACT PERSON/REGISTERED PROPERTY MANAGER**
Primary Address: _____
Business Hour Tel. No. _____ Non-Business Hour Tel. No. _____
E-mail: _____

4. **LIENHOLDER(S)* OF RECORD**
Address: _____ Tel. No. _____

5. **IS THE PROPERTY LISTED FOR SALE?** ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, Real Estate Agency Name: _____
Address: _____ Tel. No. _____

6. **VACANT BUILDING PLAN.** The owner must submit a **Vacant Building Plan Form**, and such other forms that may be required therein, which complies with one of the following. Please check which applies.
a. ☐ **The building is to be demolished.**
b. ☐ **The building is to remain vacant.**
c. ☐ **The building is to be returned to appropriate occupancy or use.**

Please note: All required forms must be submitted with this registration form.

7. **SIGNATURE OF OWNER(S):**

Date: _____

Date: _____

* Attach a separate sheet for additional owners or lienholders

Office of Code Enforcement • Binghamton City Hall • 38 Hawley Street, Fourth Floor • Binghamton, NY 13901
Phone: (607) 772-7010 • Fax: (607) 772-7162 • www.cityofbinghamton.com



Medium-Term: From Projects to Systems

21st Avenue Bioswales and Pipe Shop Community Center Constructed Wetland

While a short-term project at the Community Center will help manage stormwater at the critical intersection of 21st Avenue and 16th Street and determine the viability of such projects, the medium-term need will be to create a larger system of managing stormwater through bioswales and rain gardens along 21st Avenue and several streets crossing it, specifically at 16th Street, 16th Way, 17th Street and 18th Street (Figure 64).

As 21st Avenue becomes a bioswale corridor slowing the velocity of water runoff and filtering it as it runs to Valley Creek, a constructed wetland on other parts of the Community Center's property (Figure 64) will demonstrate the viability of managing stormwater during normal rain events, as well as in heavy rain events, using a larger land area. This project will be important as a medium-term step as the City of Bessemer acquires more and more property in the floodplain in order to create a wetland throughout the entire floodplain in the Pipe Shop Neighborhood. This is further explained in the long-term environmental strategy section.



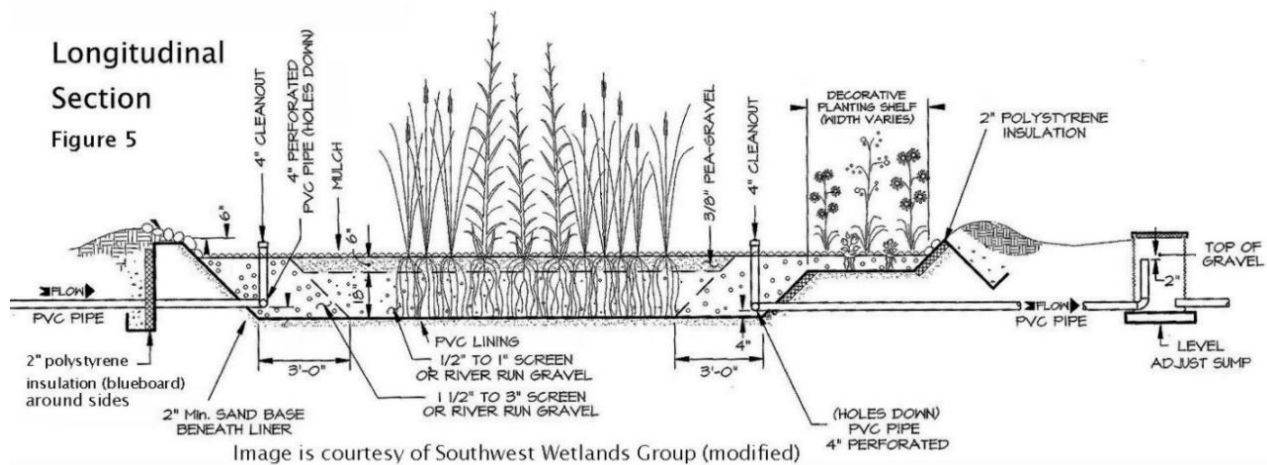
Figure 64: 21st Avenue Bioswale Corridor and Wetland Location

From Projects to Systems

Table 3: Bioretention Cost Estimates

Constructed Wetland/Bioretention Design

Figure 65: Constructed Wetland Section Drawing



8,000 SF Bioretention Per Unit Cost Estimates	
Material	Price (\$)
Site demolition/grading \$20 per cubic yard (50)	1,000.00
Walkway/Paving Materials	
Compacted crushed gravel \$1.50 s.f. (1,800)	2,700.00
Landscape Materials	
Topsoil \$25 per cubic yard (20)	500.00
Mulch \$40 per cubic yard (80)	3,200.00
Plant Materials	
Low mow seeding \$0.12 s.f. (3,700)	444.00
Grasses-perennials \$5 s.f. (2,500)	12,500.00
Bioretention Total Estimate (\$2.54/s.f.)	\$20,344

Bioretention/Filtration at Railroad Park - Downtown Birmingham



Figure 66: Biofiltration System at Railroad Park

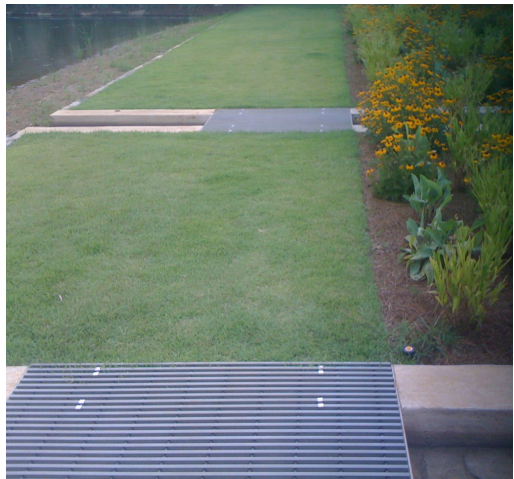


Figure 67: Biofiltration System at Railroad Park



Figure 68: Biofiltration System at Railroad Park



Figure 69: Biofiltration System at Railroad Park

Long-Term: Flood Mitigation

Significant rain events create public safety hazards in the Valley Creek Floodplain in Pipe Shop. Several homeowners, for instance, had to be rescued by boat during the flooding resulting from Hurricane Lee in September 2011. These floods also cause serious damage to property and public infrastructure. Images on the opposite page show flooding in streets and vacant lots, as well as the water line on structures indicating the height floodwaters reached in the neighborhood.

In the short term, bioswales, rain gardens, constructed wetlands and other stormwater management strategies can mitigate the effects of flooding from various rain events. However, as long as residents are living in the floodplain, heavy, 10-year rain events will inevitably be a problem for those residents. Figure 70 shows the Pipe Shop Neighborhood with the floodplain overlayed in blue. The parcels highlighted in green represent potential points to control storwater within the floodplain. These lots are either vacant with no structure or tax-delinquent and could pass into city ownership through a partnership with the State of Alabama.

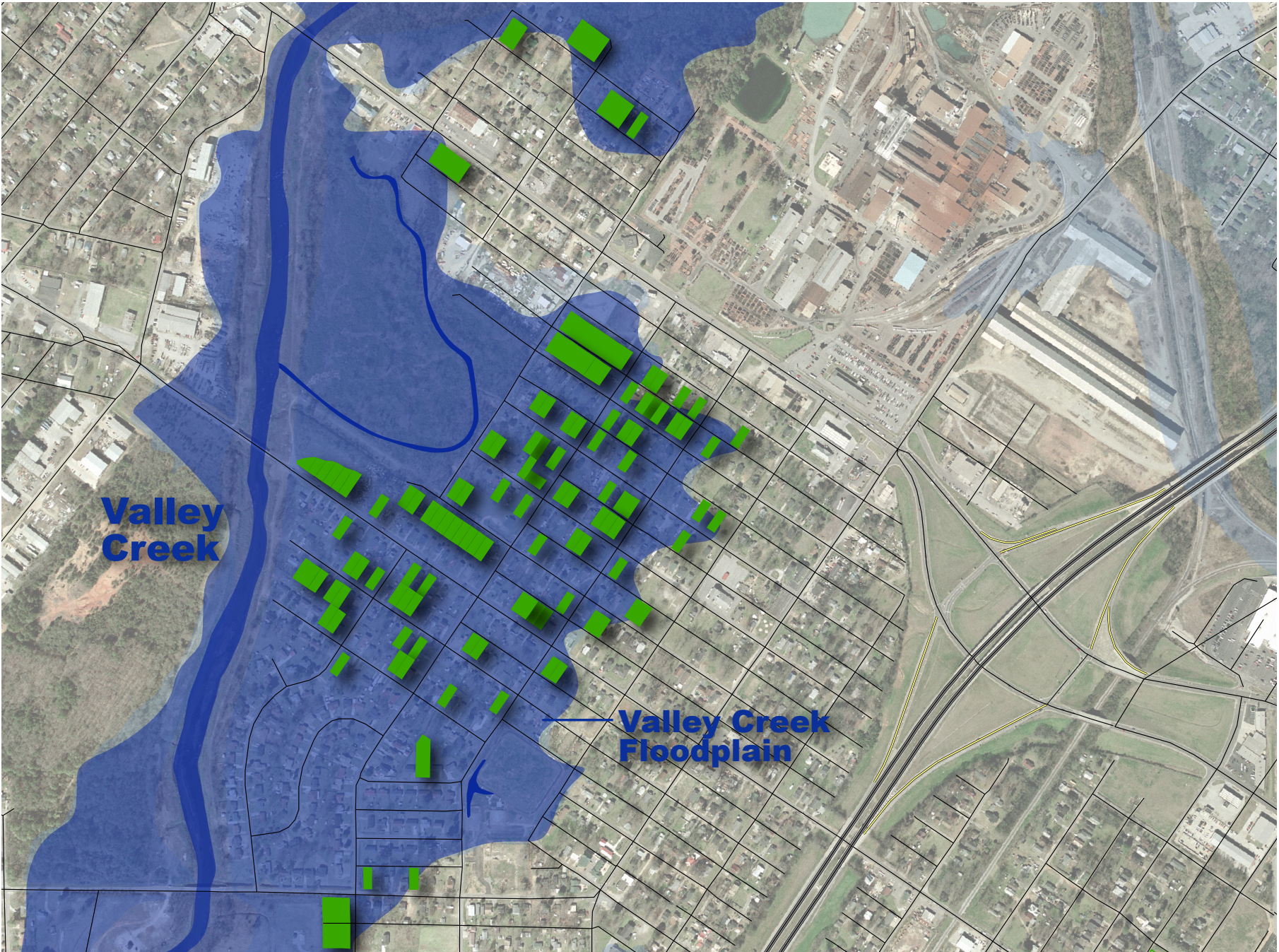


Figure 70: Flood Mitigation Map



Heavy Rain Events

Rain from Hurricane Lee in September 2011 caused significant flooding in the Pipe Shop Neighborhood within the Valley Creek Floodplain



Figure 71: Pipe Shop After Hurricane Lee in Sept. 2011



Figure 72: Pipe Shop After Hurricane Lee in Sept. 2011



Figure 73: Pipe Shop After Hurricane Lee in Sept. 2011



Figure 74: Pipe Shop After Hurricane Lee in Sept. 2011



Figure 75: Pipe Shop After Hurricane Lee in Sept. 2011



Figure 76: Pipe Shop After Hurricane Lee in Sept. 2011

Medium and Long-Term: Property Acquisition

Redevelopment Toolkit

While many of the short term issues can be addressed by enforcing property maintenance codes and developing somewhat temporary solutions to mitigate negative effects, to implement the long-term plan and goals for the Pipe Shop Neighborhood many of the problem properties will have to be purchased, donated or foreclosed upon by the city in order to be redeveloped for long-term sustainability. This toolkit describes the processes the City of Bessemer can work through to acquire the different categories of problem properties that will be found in both the Pipe Shop Neighborhood and the larger redevelopment areas throughout the city.

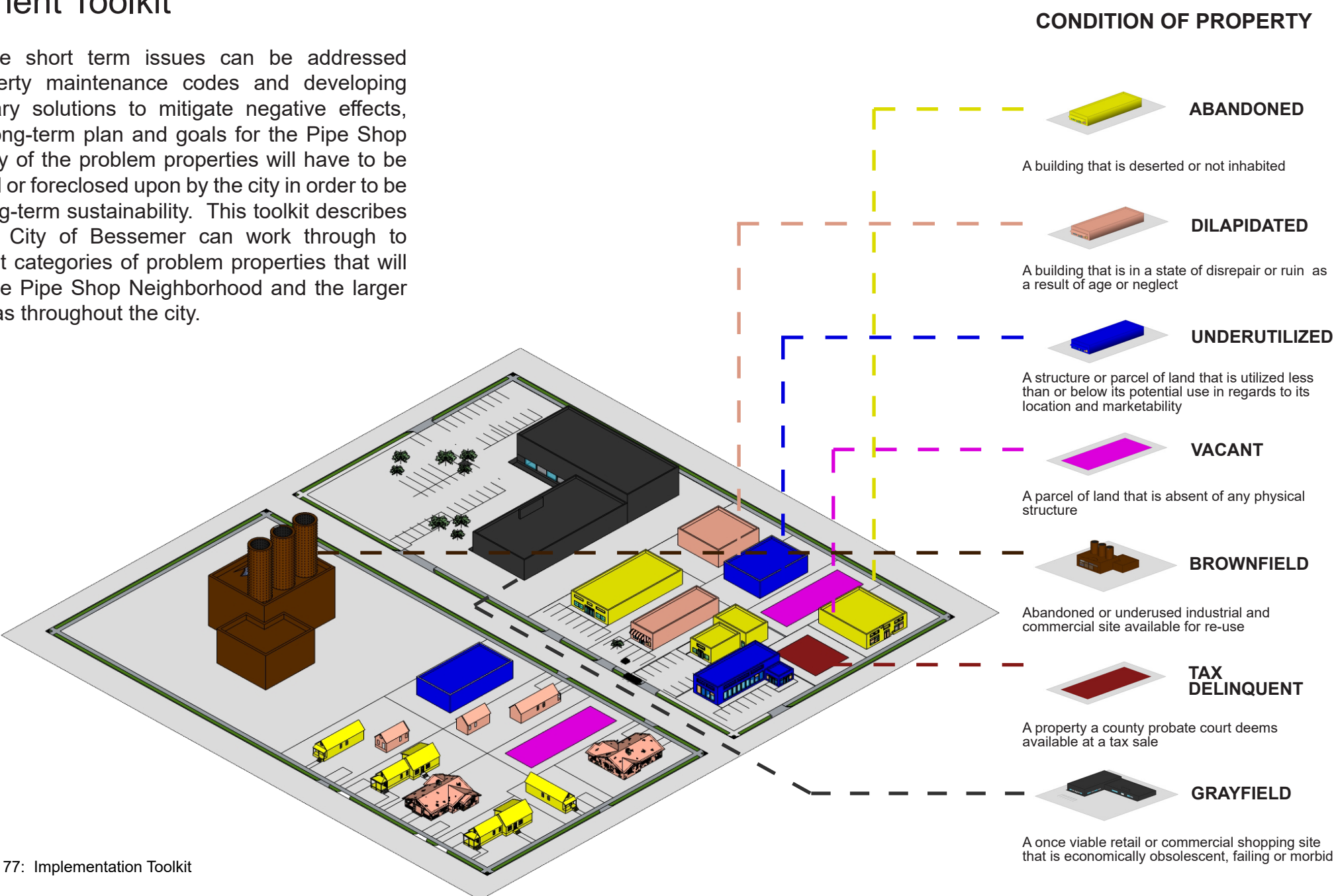


Figure 77: Implementation Toolkit

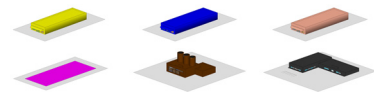


Medium and Long-Term: Property Acquisition

PROPERTY ACQUISITION

Direct Purchase or Donation

Purchase properties outright with identifiable owner and clear title or encourage owner to donate property



Purchase Tax Deed

If property has a tax lien with no identifiable owner or clear title, purchase tax deed from Dept. of Revenue and establish adverse possession for three years



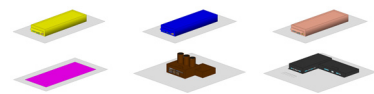
Partner with Alabama Land Bank Authority

Partner with Land Bank Authority to acquire property



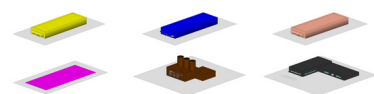
Foreclose on Liens

Foreclose on liens placed on property through violations of the Property Maintenance Code or failure to register vacant/abandoned properties with municipality



Eminent Domain

Use Eminent Domain to acquire property for public project



Property Available for Implementation of Long Term Plan

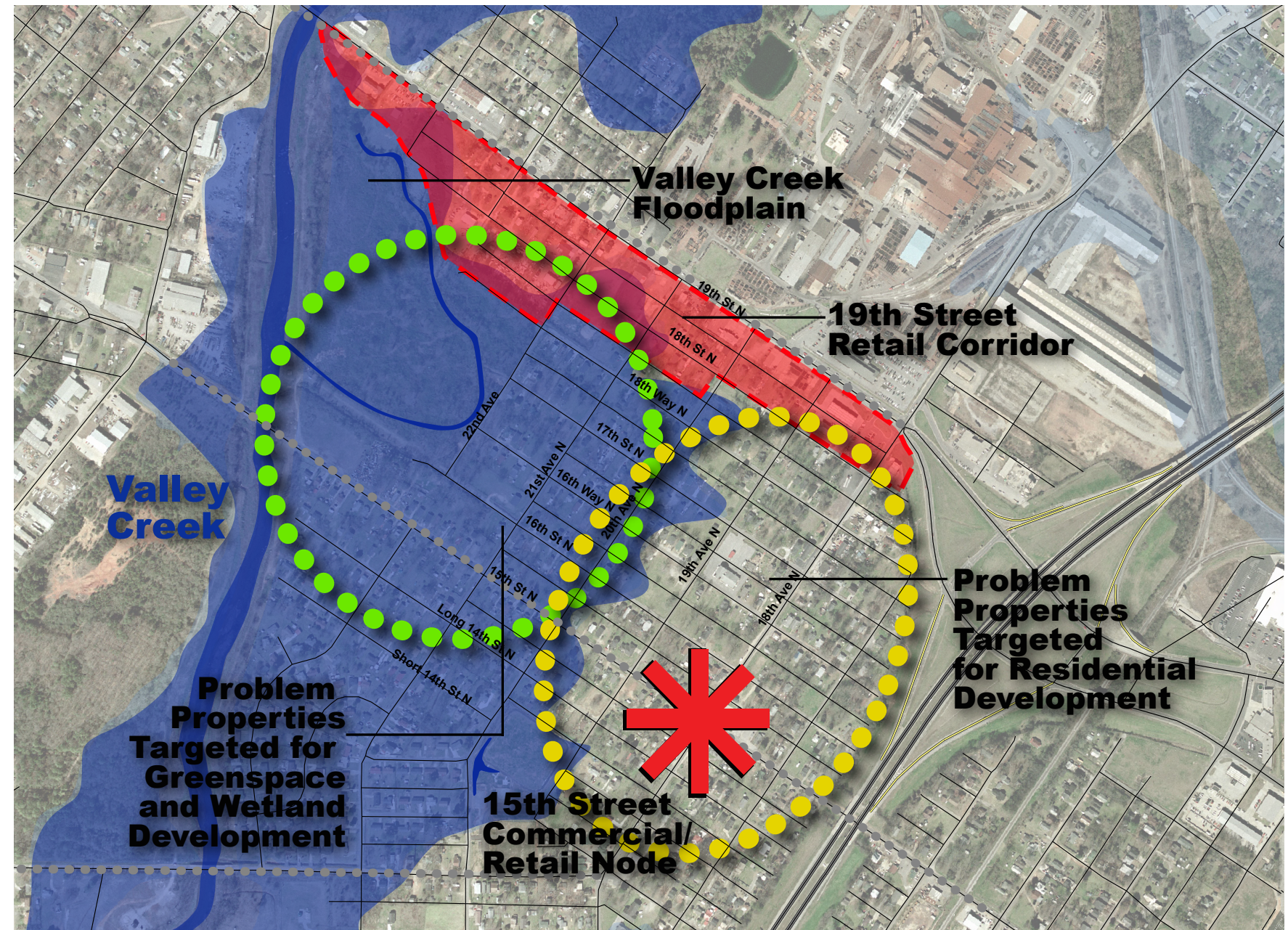


Figure 78: Pipe Shop Vision Map

Long Term: Greenways, Wetlands & Housing

Long Term Goals for Pipe Shop Neighborhood

The long-term vision for Pipe Shop is to create a safe, vibrant neighborhood with houses, shops and restaurants located outside of the Valley Creek floodplain, and wetlands and parks located inside the floodplain creating an amenity not only for the residents of Bessemer and Pipe Shop, but also for the citizens of the broader region. The recreational space located in the floodplain can become part of the Valley Creek Greenway, itself part of a regional parks, greenways and trails system that includes Railroad Park, Ruffner Mountain and Red Mountain Park.

The city should move forward with different strategies for obtaining property in the floodplain in order to convert parcels to wetlands or to sell them to FEMA in a floodplain buyout effort. The city should also move forward in obtaining vacant parcels, abandoned houses and tax-delinquent properties outside of the floodplain and provide them to citizens still living in the floodplain as opportunities to move as inexpensively as possible.

Examples of wetlands that become amenities for recreation are seen on the opposite page (Figures 80-82) and examples of quality affordable housing are shown on pages 52 (Figures 86-91).

- Establish relationships with Habitat for Humanity, Bessemer Housing Authority and other housing non-profits
- Establish forum for private-sector developers and homebuilders to build on cleaned-up and redeveloped sites within the neighborhood

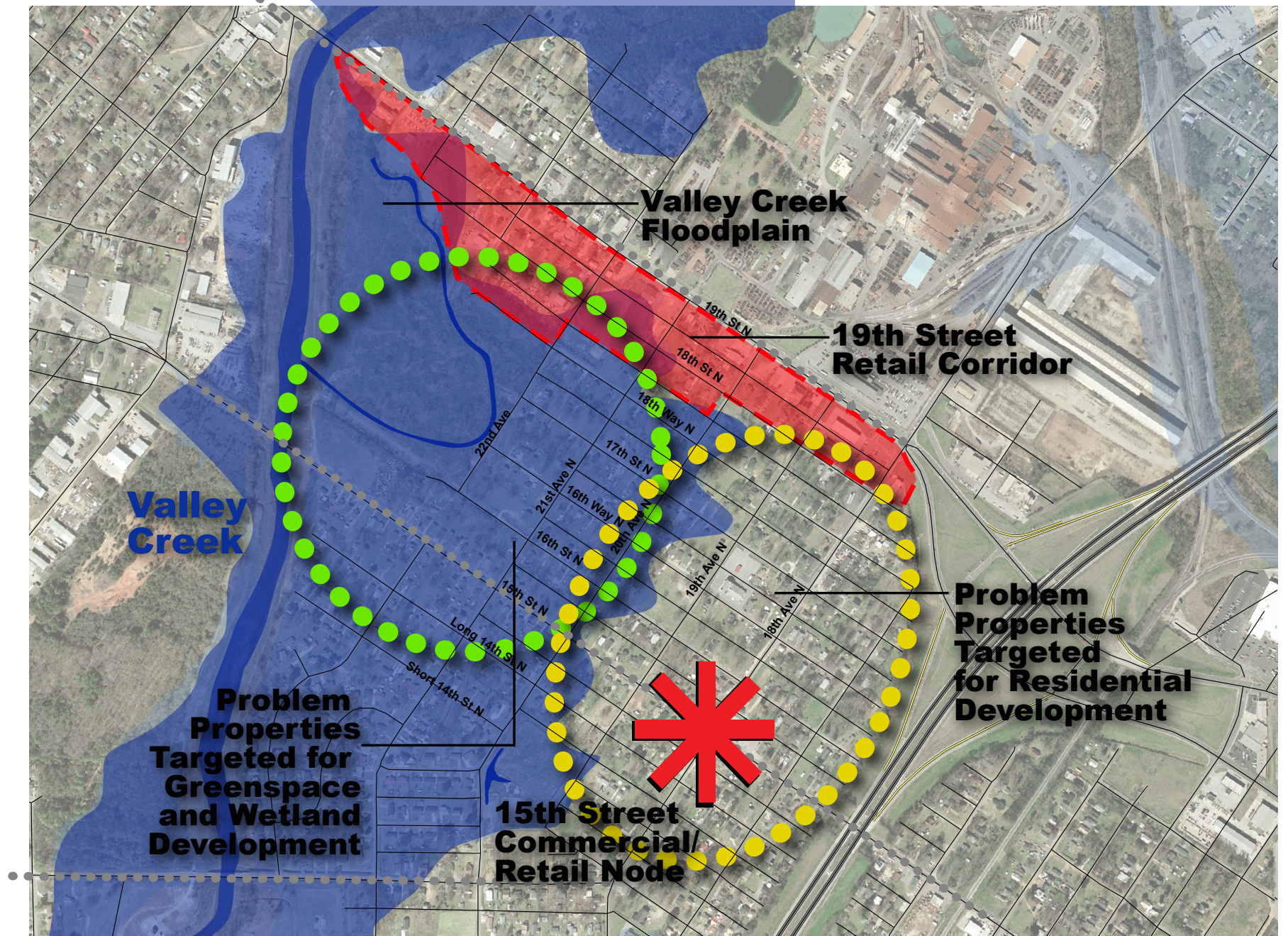


Figure 79: Pipe Shop Vision Map

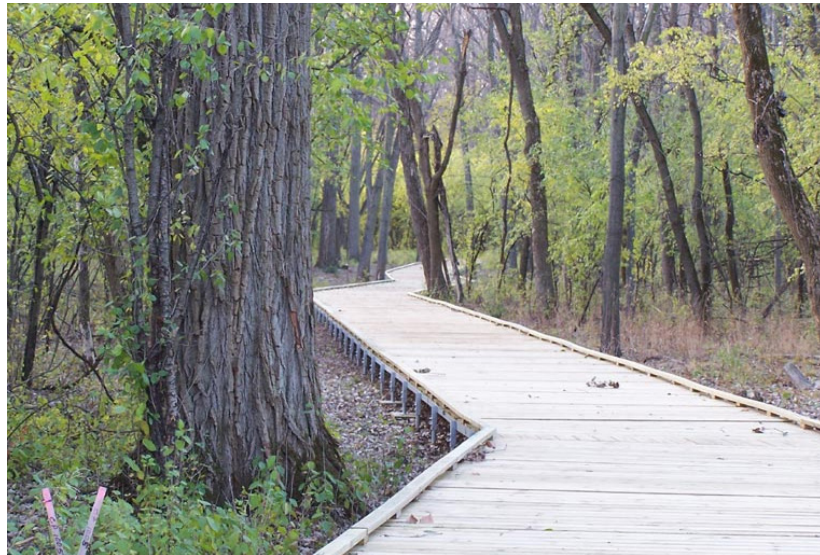


Figure 80: Boardwalk through wetland on school campus in Fayetteville, AL



Figure 81: Boardwalk through wetland - Chattahoochee Nature Trail



Figure 82: Canoes on Village Creek (www.freshwaterlandtrust.org)



Figure 83: Potential Canoe takeout/launch site in Pipe Shop on 14th Steet



Figure 84: Greenspace on the banks of Valley Creek



Figure 85: Valley Creek at the southwestern edge of the Pipe Shop Neighborhood

Long-Term: Residential Development



Figure 86: Affordable Housing in Homewood, AL

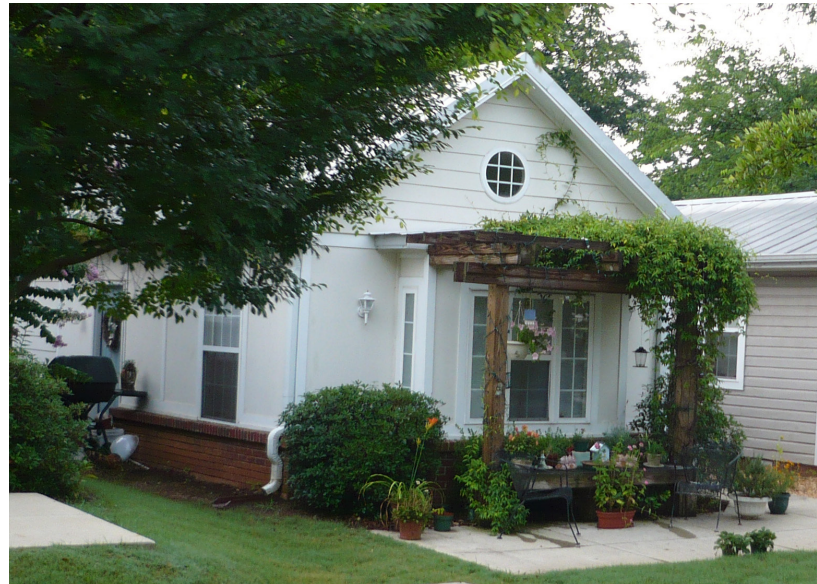


Figure 87: Affordable Housing in Homewood, AL



Figure 88: Affordable Housing in Homewood, AL



Figure 89: Habitat for Humanity



Figure 90: Habitat for Humanity



Figure 91: Habitat for Humanity

Neighborhood Redevelopment - Next Steps

While the redevelopment process established for Pipe Shop has short, medium and long-term strategies and stages of implementation, it can be duplicated as a model to be used for the rest of Bessemer's neighborhoods in need of redevelopment. The other neighborhoods in the redevelopment target area are shown in Figure 53. The next section provides more in-depth legal and operational descriptions of the property acquisition strategies listed previously in this section.

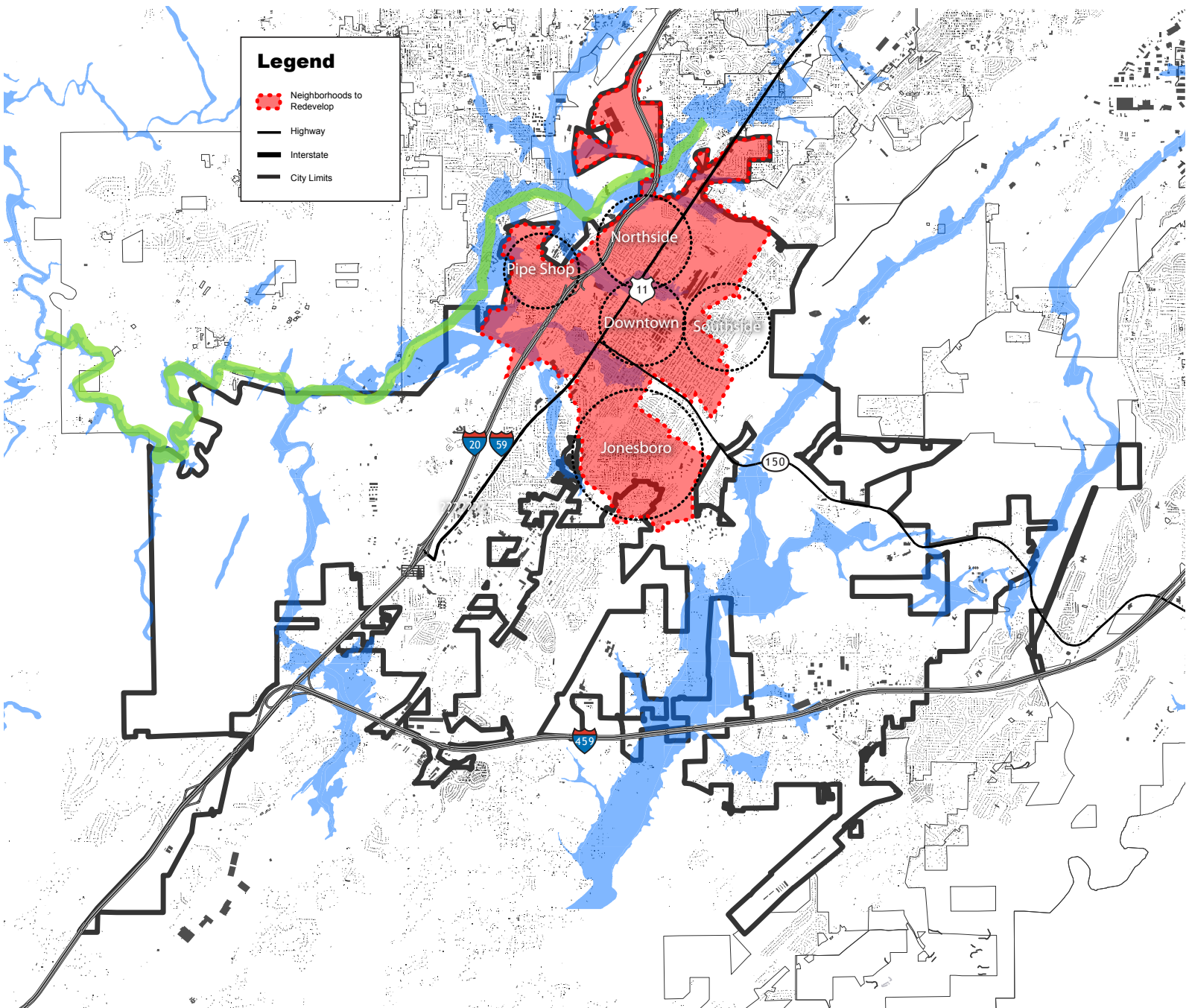


Figure 92: Target Area Overview Map



Downtown Redevelopment

Downtown Bessemer is an active downtown with many valuable, historic buildings and businesses. Like many historic downtowns across the country, however, Bessemer's has suffered disinvestment over the past several decades. While there have been revitalization efforts over recent years, this Master Plan offers an opportunity to find a long-term strategy to stimulate sustainable reinvestment for the future. Through interviews with city leaders and downtown businesses, stakeholders agreed that to move forward, the downtown needs to re-brand itself, changing the perception of downtown into a regionally-known center for all kinds of activity. This will require the efforts to improve the streetscape, create gateways into downtown, recruit events and help make existing space available for new businesses through marketing and promotion. The formation of a Downtown Merchants Group, with a clear strategy and direction, is critical to making this happen. In addition to a rebranding effort, this planning process also recommends strategies to eliminate blight and manage the downtown's stock of vacant buildings. The rest of this section will cover details of the following strategies for Downtown Bessemer:

- Build on vision established in Auburn University Urban Design Studio (AUDS) Master Plan
- Re-form the Downtown Merchants Group
- Develop a branding strategy
- Systematically eliminate blight through code enforcement and adoption of a vacant building registration ordinance
- Create bike lanes on 18th and 19th Streets in order to connect surrounding neighborhoods to downtown



Figure 93: Historic Downtown Bessemer

AUDS Master Plan

Auburn University's Urban Design Studio (AUDS), a branch of the architecture school located in Birmingham, conducted a Master Plan for the City of Bessemer in the fall of 2007. The plan covered a wide variety of planning issues throughout the City of Bessemer. Although many of the AUDS plan elements have informed this planning effort, the AUDS plan conducted the deepest analysis for the historic downtown. Some of the recommendations can be seen in Figure 94 and are listed below:

- Create a downtown Central Park
- Create an Entertainment District
- Relocate the Flea Market to the Historic Downtown
- Create an arts district
- Make downtown more pedestrian friendly
- Make a business friendly downtown a high priority
- Live, work and play downtown

More details on the AUDS Master Plan can be found by contacting RPCGB staff at www.rpcgb.org.

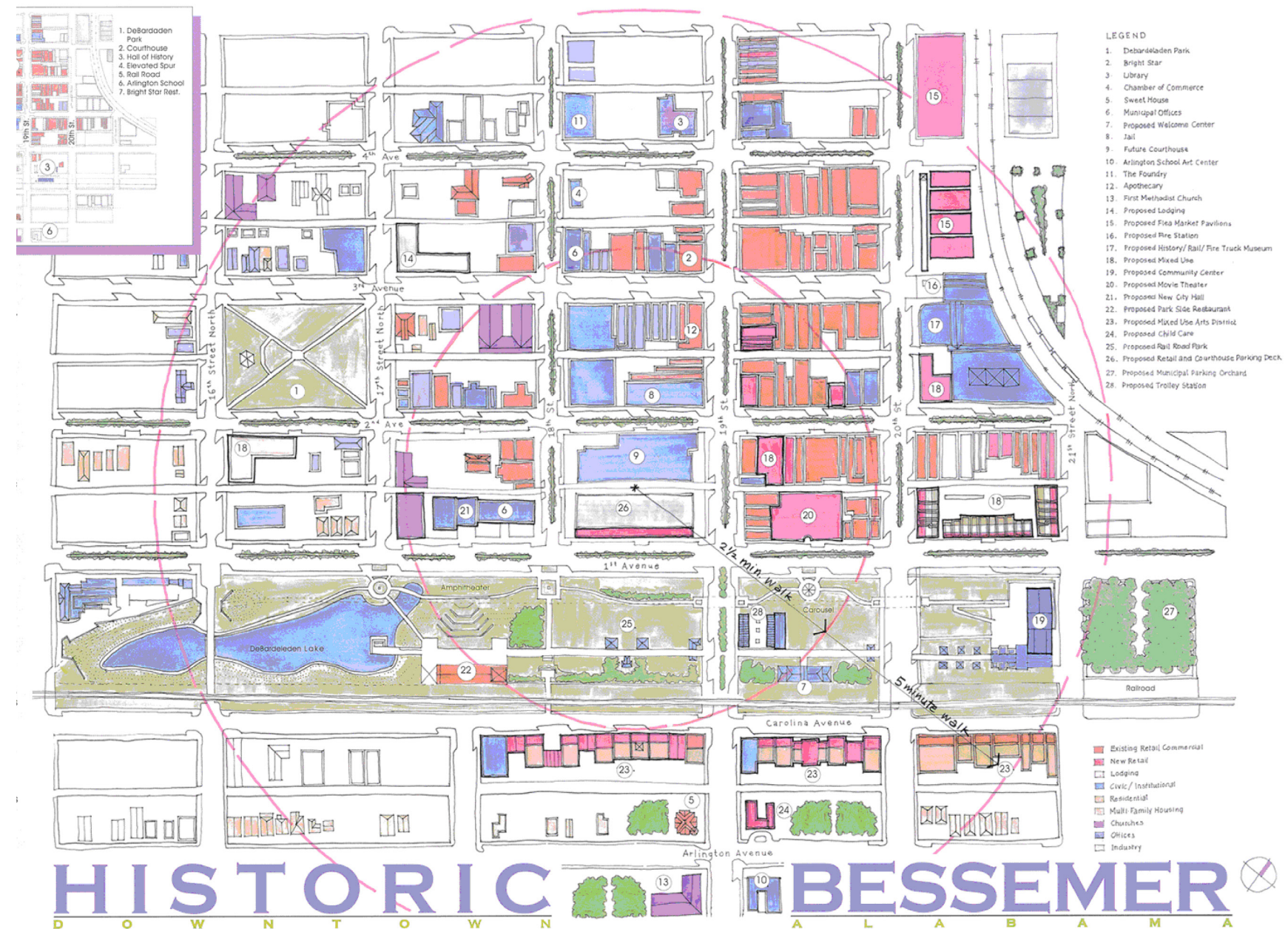


Figure 94: Downtown Redevelopment Proposal (Auburn University Urban Studio, 2007)

Branding Strategy

Branding is about perception. The perception of Downtown Bessemer in the minds of both the city’s citizens and those of the broader region needs to be updated, refreshed and reinvigorated. Bessemer has always had an important role in the Birmingham region, both economically and culturally. This identity needs to be built upon and communicated inside the city and throughout the region. The following are elements of a re-branding strategy that the City of Bessemer and its downtown merchants group can incorporate into its agenda for the future:

- Gateways & Signage - logo and positioning
- Communication - telling a story
- Events Schedule - programming the space in time

Gateways and Wayfinding

Gateways are important elements in a successful downtown. They act as signage seen from main thoroughfares such as interstates and highways, they begin to orient visitors to a downtown’s wayfinding system, and they present a unified branding and marketing effort.

Downtown Bessemer currently lacks significant gateways drawing visitors off I-20/59, Bessemer Superhighway (US 11) and Highway 150 into downtown. Figures 95, 96 and 97 show examples of wayfinding and signage proposed for Decatur, Alabama (images produced in a branding project by McWhorter Communications for the City of Decatur). Figure 95 shows a gateway to the city itself, located at the city limits. Figure 96 shows signage marking gateways to the city’s downtown and acting as a wayfinding system for pedestrians.



Figure 95: Gateway Example in Decatur, AL (Courtesy McWhorter Communications, Inc.)



Figure 96: Wayfinding Example in Decatur, AL (Courtesy McWhorter Communications, Inc.)

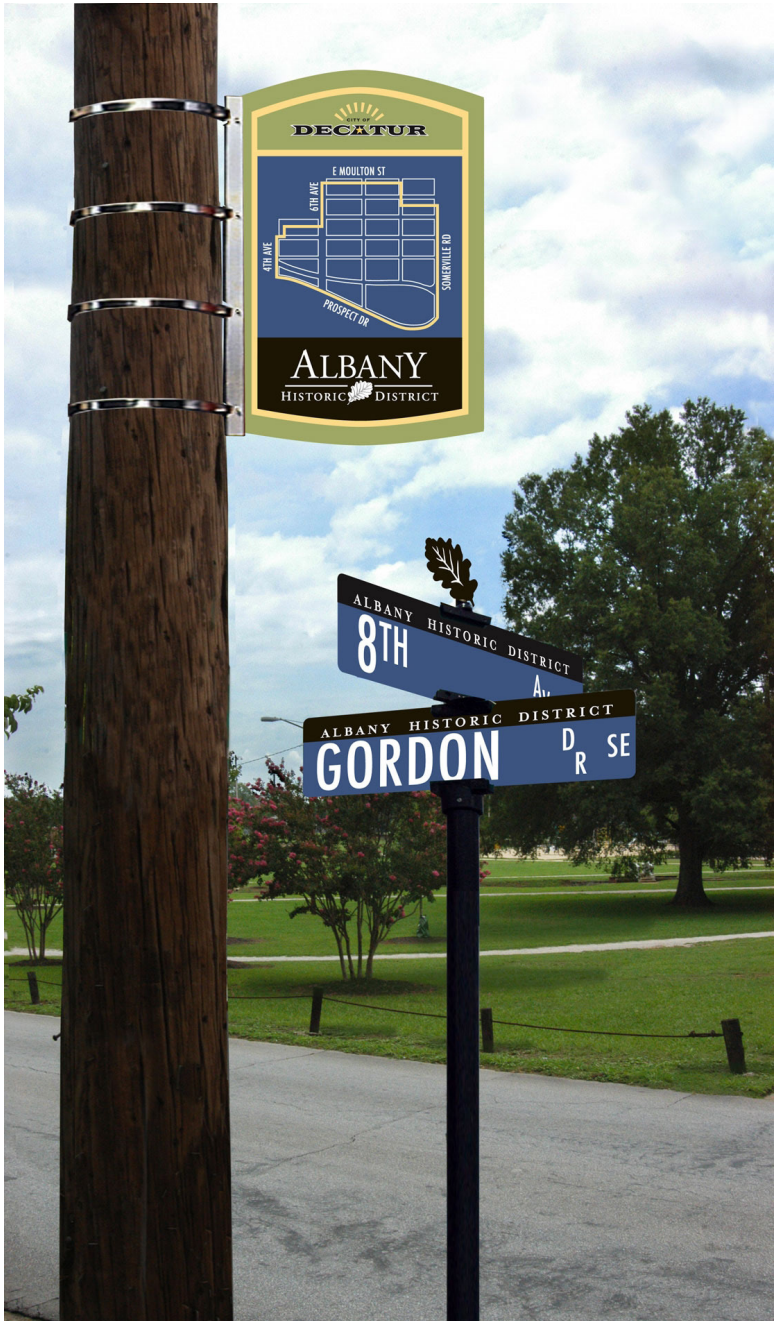


Figure 97: Wayfinding and Street Sign Example in Decatur, AL (Courtesy McWhorter Communications, Inc.)



Bessemer's downtown has many of the same elements, and can be used in much of the same way as in Downtown Decatur. Figure 100 shows historic street signs along 19th Street. These signs could be replicated all over the downtown, which would add to its sense of place and become part of the brand image and aesthetic for Bessemer. Figures 98 and 99 are a “before” and “after” rendering of a current gateway into downtown: the intersection of Bessemer Superhighway (US 11) and 18th Street facing east towards downtown.



Figure 98: Existing Gateway at US 11 and 18th Street Looking Toward Downtown



Figure 99: Downtown Gateway - US 11 and 18th Street (proposed redevelopment)



Figure 100: Existing Historic Street Signs along 19th Street in Downtown

Branding Strategy - Events and Promotion

To attract people the same way as entertainment, shopping and dining centers like Colonial Promenade Tannehill, Patton Creek, the Galleria Mall or The Summit, downtown’s individual businesses need to act collectively to market downtown as a singular, unique destination with all of the activities and services offered at the larger centers. Events schedules, seasonal events, social media, etc. can bring people to downtown, keeping it active and economically vibrant.

- Yearly events such as the Bob Sykes BBQ & Blues event in Debardeleben Park (Figures 101 and 104).
- Seasonal and holiday events like fall festivals, Veterans Day parades, spring concerts
- Weekly events and event series such as an outdoor film series, weekly farmer’s markets, happy hours, concert series, excersize and work-out series.



Figure 101: Bob Sykes BBQ & Blues Event in Downtown Bessemer (Courtesy Birmingham News)



Figure 102: Exercise Class at Railroad Park (Courtesy Birmingham News)



Figure 103: Fall Film Series at Railroad Park (Courtesy Birmingham News)




Figure 104: Bob Sykes BBQ & Blues Event in Downtown Bessemer (Courtesy Birmingham News)



Abandoned Building Registration Ordinance

A Vacant Building Registration Ordinance is a mitigation tool the city can use to address the multitude of vacant lots and buildings in Downtown Bessemer (Figures 106 and 107). These buildings and lots, like many properties in Bessemer’s older neighborhoods and commercial districts, should be subject to examination under the Vacant Building Registration Ordinance. This ordinance exists to mitigate various costs to the City of Bessemer that come with having a significant number vacant and abandoned properties.

By requiring the owners of vacant and abandoned properties to register with the City of Bessemer, the burden of managing both the property inventory and the properties themselves is transferred from the city to the owners. The registration fee would also cover the cost of inspecting each property to make sure it is up to code.



Office of Code Enforcement

Vacant Building Registration Form

Pursuant to the Code of the City of Binghamton § 265-14, Vacant Building Registry and Maintenance. Please complete & return within thirty (30) days to avoid penalties. Must be typed or legibly printed. See reverse side/below for directions and fees.

1. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Address _____

Square footage of Building _____ Number of Stories _____

Age of Building _____ Most recent Use _____

Sprinkler System ☐ Yes ☐ No [Operational ☐ Yes ☐ No / Current Inspection ☐ Yes ☐ No]

Stand Pipe System ☐ Yes ☐ No [Operational ☐ Yes ☐ No / Current Inspection ☐ Yes ☐ No]

Fire Detection System ☐ Yes ☐ No [Operational ☐ Yes ☐ No / Current Inspection ☐ Yes ☐ No]

Elevator ☐ Yes ☐ No [Operational ☐ Yes ☐ No / Current Inspection ☐ Yes ☐ No]

2. OWNER(S)* OF RECORD

Primary Address _____

Tel. No. _____ E-mail: _____

3. CONTACT PERSON/REGISTERED PROPERTY MANAGER

Primary Address _____

Business Hour Tel. No. _____ Non-Business Hour Tel. No. _____

E-mail _____

4. LIENHOLDER(S)* OF RECORD

Address _____ Tel. No. _____

5. IS THE PROPERTY LISTED FOR SALE? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, Real Estate Agency Name _____

Address _____ Tel. No. _____

6. VACANT BUILDING PLAN. The owner must submit a **Vacant Building Plan Form**, and such other forms that may be required therein, which complies with one of the following. Please check which applies.

a. ☐ **The building is to be demolished.**

b. ☐ **The building is to remain vacant.**

c. ☐ **The building is to be returned to appropriate occupancy or use.**

Please note: All required forms must be submitted with this registration form.

7. SIGNATURE OF OWNER(S):

_____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

** Attach a separate sheet for additional owners or lienholders*

Office of Code Enforcement • Binghamton City Hall • 38 Hawley Street, Fourth Floor • Binghamton, NY 13901
Phone: (607) 772-7010 • Fax: (607) 772-7162 • www.cityofbinghamton.com


Figure 105: Vacant Building Registration Sample Form

<http://www.cityofbinghamton.com/%5Clibrary%5Cpages%5Cdept-building-construction%5CVacant%20Building%20Registration%20Form.pdf>

Figure 106: Vacant Building in Downtown Bessemer

Figure 107: Vacant Building in Downtown Bessemer

City of Bessemer Master Plan | Page 59



Manufacturing and Distribution

The city's ability to attract new industrial development has been successful over the past few years. Bessemer's history as an industrial city helps, because it already has large parcels zoned for industry and connected to rail and interstate networks.

Bessemer's stakeholders agreed that the city should continue to support the existing businesses as well as the recruitment efforts of the Industrial Development Board and the Economic Development office at City Hall.



Figure 108: Proposed Industrial Park on McAshan Drive

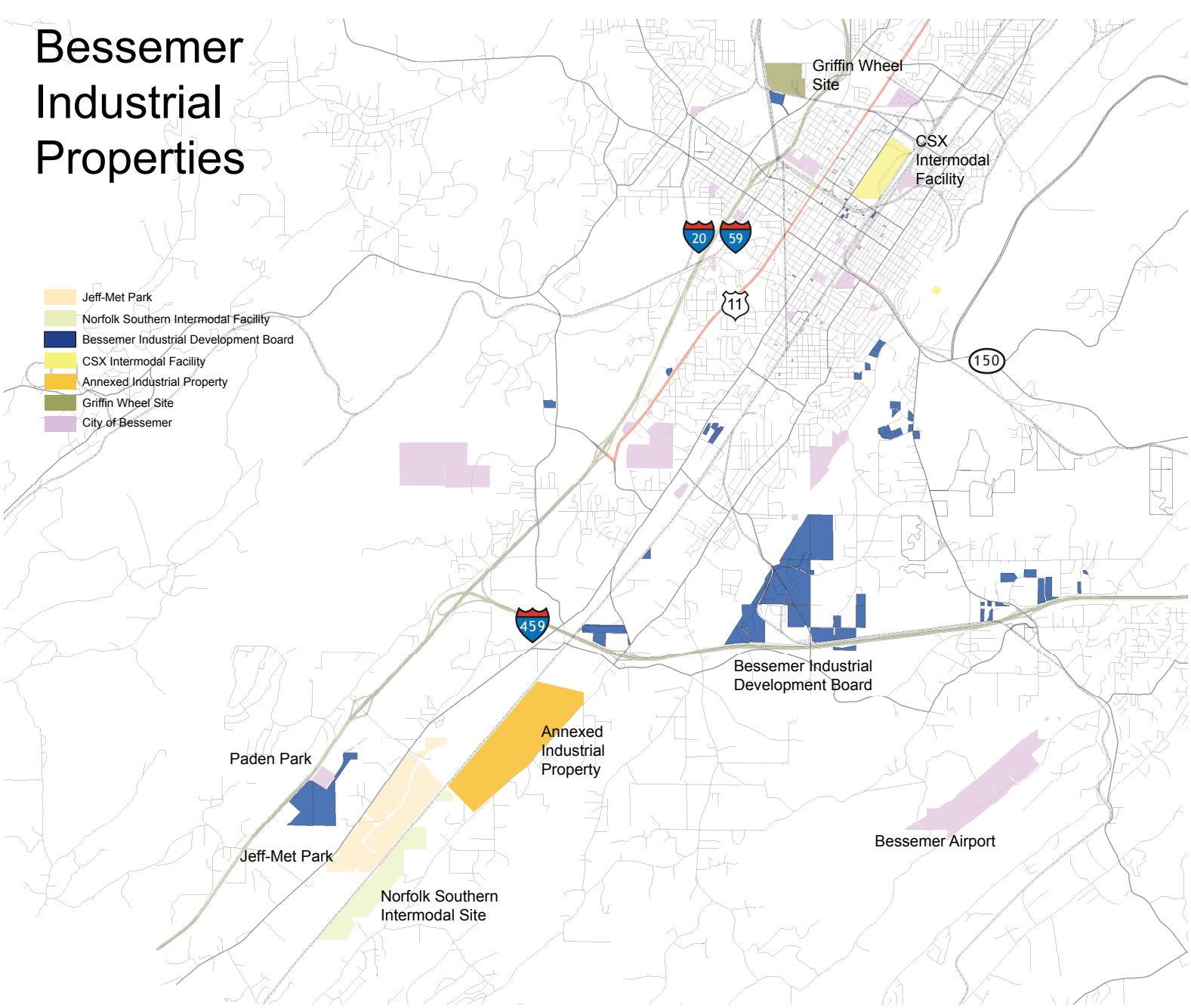


Figure 109: Existing Industrial Parks in the City of Bessemer



There was concern among several stakeholders that the CSX intermodal facility shown in Figures 110 and 111 did not have adequate truck access routes to and from the interstate. The route shown in red in Figure 111 shows a route many trucks currently travel that seems to be the best option for the city.

It was agreed that the city could improve the route in the right-of-way along 28th Street and eventually build a bridge over the rail line that crosses Brighton Road as it approaches exit 113 of Interstate 20/59.



Figure 110: CSX Intermodal Facility



Figure 111: Truck Route from CSX to Exit 113 of I-20/59



Figure 112: Truck Route from CSX to Exit 113 of I-20/59

Vacant Lots in Northside Neighborhood

The parcels highlighted in red in Figure 113 are vacant lots, meaning there is no structure on the parcel. To illustrate the scale of unimproved land in Bessemer, Figure 114 (opposite page) shows the same number of parcels (and number of acres) grouped together in red adjacent to the CSX Intermodal Facility. The unimproved parcels total about 14 blocks, a significant quantity of land that, if the parcels could be put together, could become available for warehousing and distribution development within the City of Bessemer. The resulting jobs would be located within the historic core of Bessemer, which already contains infrastructure and is within walking distance of many of Bessemer's residents who are without vehicle access.

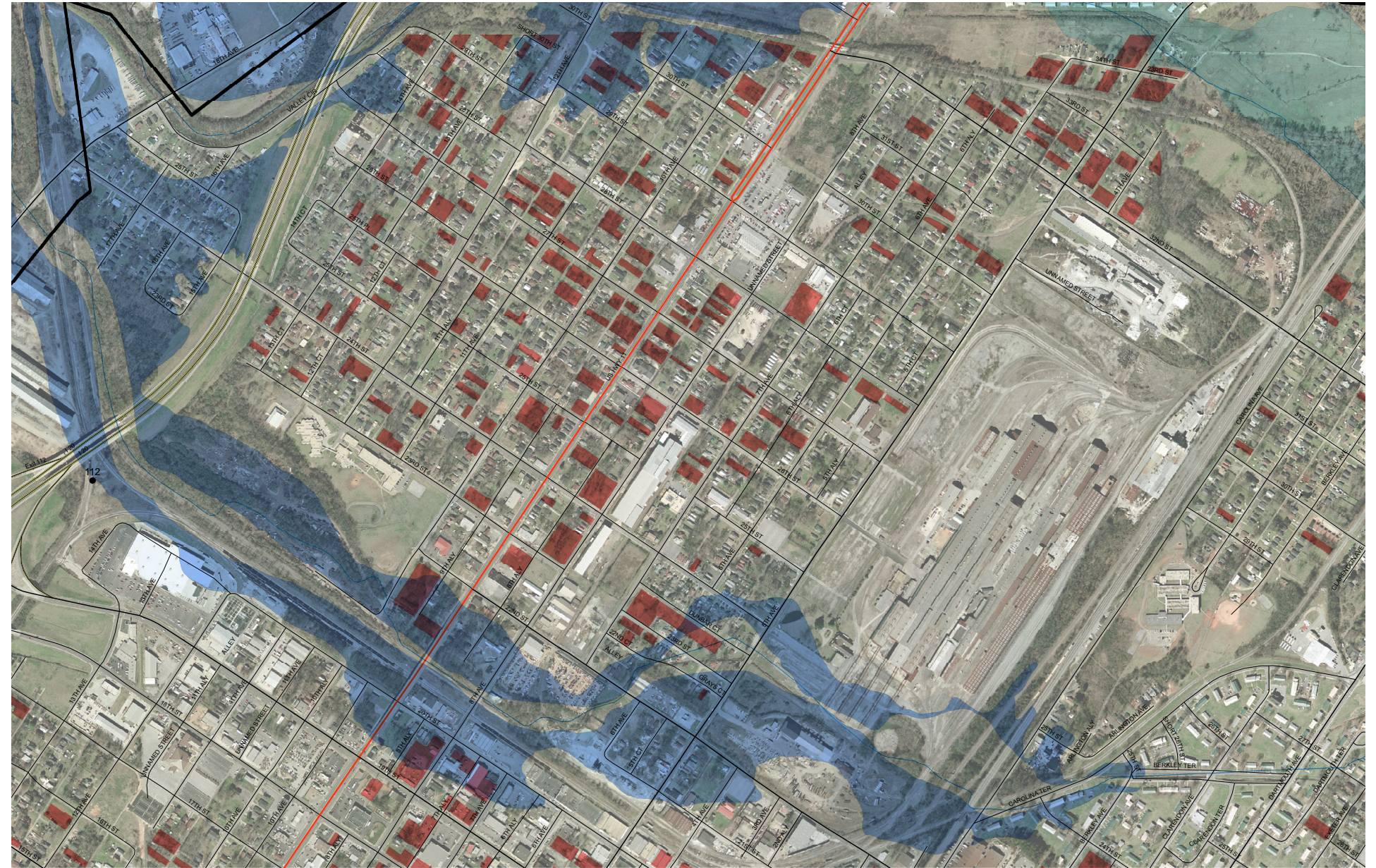


Figure 113: Hypothetical grouping of vacant lots in the Northside Neighborhood

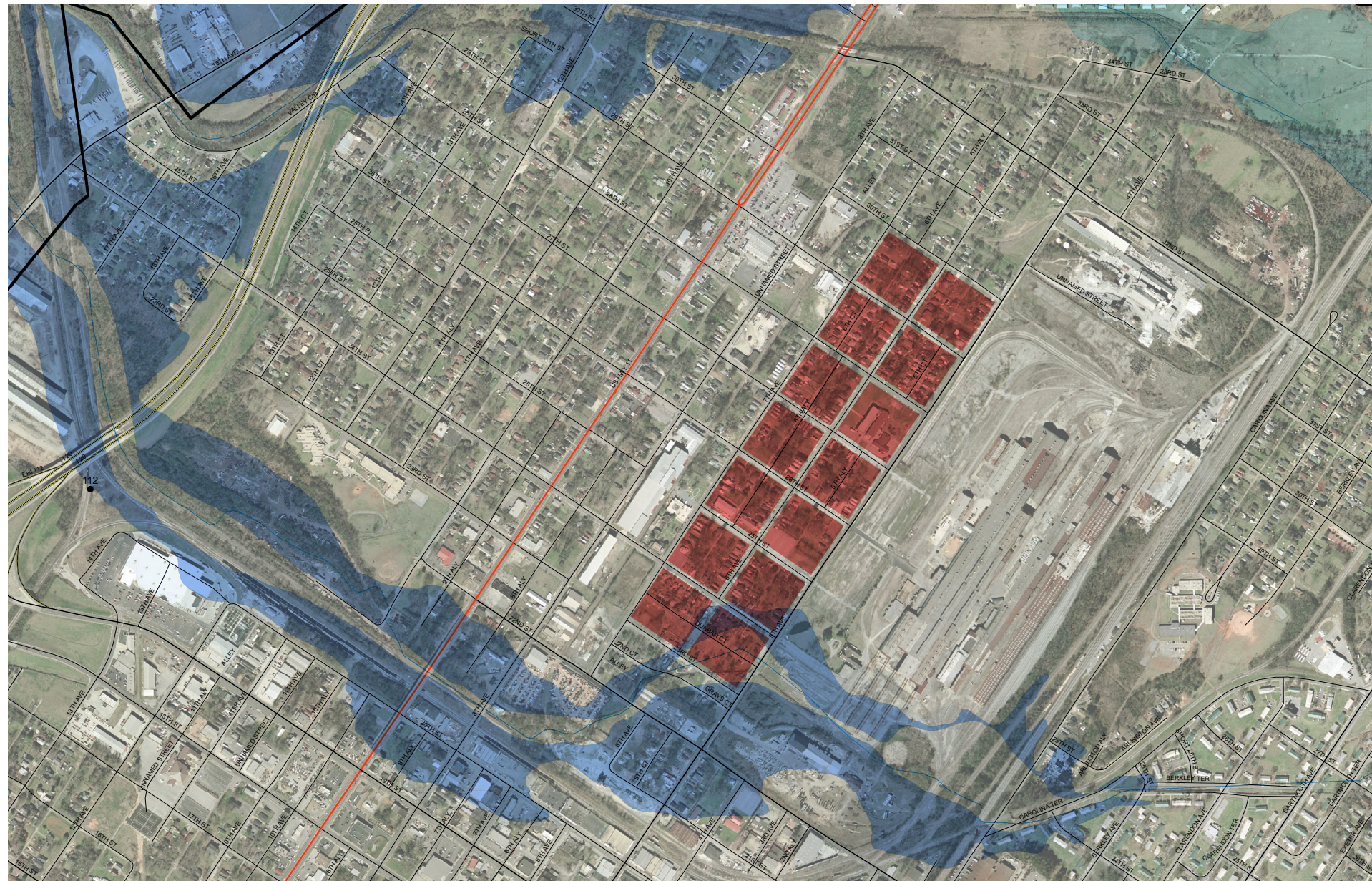


Figure 114: Consolidated Vacant Lots in the Northside Neighborhood

Greenways and Trails

This Master Plan proposed two greenways to be incorporated into the City of Bessemer's development over the next 5-10 years (Figure 115). Both greenway proposals, the rail-trail along Highway 150 and the Valley Creek Greenway, have been discussed by both public and private groups before the start of this planning process. Besides the fact that both greenway proposals would be valuable assets to the city, both projects also have the potential to strengthen other elements of this plan. The rail-trail leading into downtown helps in downtown redevelopment by providing a new amenity. The Valley Creek Greenway, as mentioned in the neighborhood redevelopment section, is part of a plan to make the Pipe Shop, Northside, and Sunset Homes communities healthier, less hazardous during floods and with fewer vacant lots blighting the neighborhood.

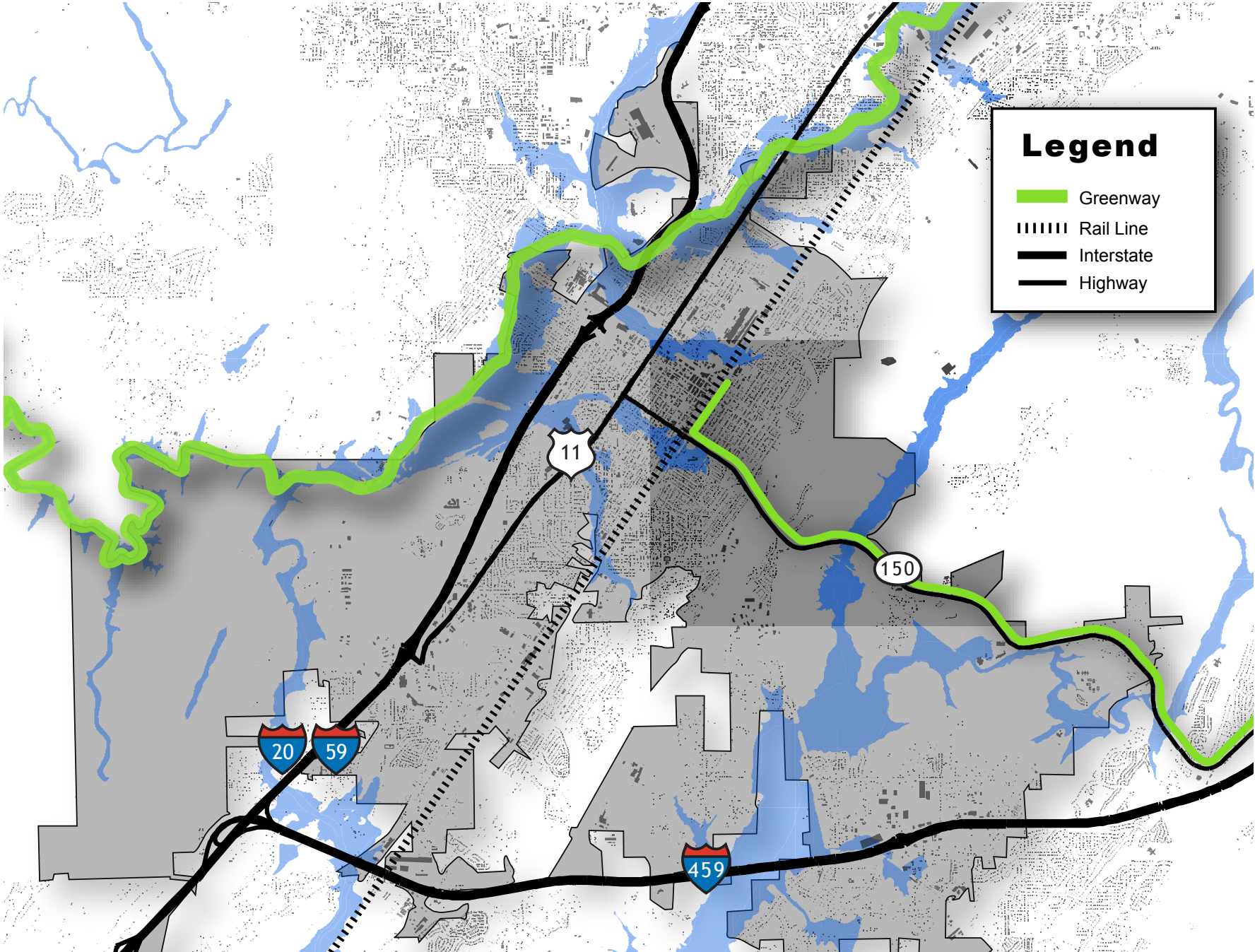


Figure 115: Bessemer Greenway Map



The Valley Creek Greenway

The Valley Creek Greenway runs along three Bessemer neighborhoods: Pipe Shop, Northside, and the Sunset Homes community developed by the Bessemer Housing Authority (Figure 116). All three neighborhoods are located in the Valley Creek floodplain and experience significant flooding problems during even normal rain events. As an element in addressing both neighborhood redevelopment needs as well as the flooding issue itself, the establishment of a greenway along Valley Creek has the potential to become a significant part of the broader neighborhood redevelopment process. The incorporation of the Valley Creek Greenway into the Pipe Shop redevelopment process was mentioned in the Neighborhood Analysis section previously. This plan recommends a similar process for the Northside neighborhood located in the floodplain, as well as for the residents of Sunset Homes, through a partnership with the Bessemer Housing Authority.



Figure 116: Valley Creek Greenway Map

Sunset Homes

The Valley Creek Greenway runs along three Bessemer neighborhoods: Pipe Shop, Northside, and the Sunset Homes community developed by the Bessemer Housing Authority. All three neighborhoods are located in the Valley Creek floodplain (Figure 119) and experience significant flooding problems during even normal rain events. Recently, during Hurricane Lee in September 2011, all three neighborhoods experienced significant problems. The Bessemer Housing Authority has decided that several homes in the neighborhood will be raised so that they will not experience the same problems in similar storms. The Birmingham News article summarizing the event is shown in Figures 118.



Figure 117: Sunset Homes Flood After Hurricane Lee (Courtesy Birmingham News)

Bessemer may raze flooded areas

Housing officials urge work to curb creek water damage

By Anita Debro
adebro@bhamnews.com

Some portions of the public housing community in Bessemer that saw severe flooding last week in the wake of Tropical Storm Lee will have to be vacated and could

face demolition, housing officials say.

About 30 of the 126 units in the Sunset Homes public housing community suffered serious flood damage and will require either extensive renovations or demolition, Bessemer Housing Authority Director Al Patrick said Wednesday. If the units can be saved, residents likely will have to move out while they are rebuilt, Patrick said.

"My initial feeling is that buildings along 11th and 12th avenues should be vacated,"

he said.

The floodwaters rose from nearby Valley Creek in the wake of Tropical Storm Lee on Sept. 5. Residents of some of the apartments had to wade through waist-deep water to escape. Many said they lost clothing, furniture and other personal items.

Patrick said the Housing Authority, along with the U.S. Department of Housing and

See FLOOD, Page 6B

FLOOD:

From Page 1B

Urban Development, needs to determine how to keep the units from suffering the same flooding fate during another storm. "This is the fourth time that that community has been flooded," he said. "We need to correct the problem and make sure it does not happen again."

William Tubbs has lived in Sunset Homes for 25 years. He said Wednesday he has seen several floods but the Sept. 5 storm was the first time water entered his apartment. Tubbs' furniture and clothing were damaged, along with walls and floors. Now Tubbs is faced with having to relocate. He said he has adult children with whom he can live, but



The Birmingham News/Hal Yeager

Residents removed furniture last week after heavy rains from Tropical Storm Lee flooded the Sunset Homes apartments in Bessemer. About 30 of the 126 units suffered serious damage.

he would rather remain in his home.

Housing Authority employees were on site Wednesday assisting residents who must relocate,

Patrick said. The authority is looking to move those people into remaining public housing units in Bessemer, but most will have to move to other areas, he said.

On Wednesday, two landlords with rental property in Bessemer pledged to offer housing for some of the residents, Patrick said.

Lester Milligan, a Bessemer resident who is helping collect donations for residents with flood damage, said he is concerned that residents who were displaced have not received enough assistance. They still need financial help for relocation and clothing, he said. "They just haven't gotten the attention they need."

The Bessemer Housing Authority Resident Advisory Board is accepting monetary donations at the Housing Authority's main office at 1515 Fairfax Ave., Bessemer, AL 35020. For more information, call Anita Lewis at 497-5620.

Figure 118: Birmingham News Article About Sunset Homes Flood After Hurricane Lee (Courtesy Birmingham News)





Figure 119: Valley Creek Floodplain Map

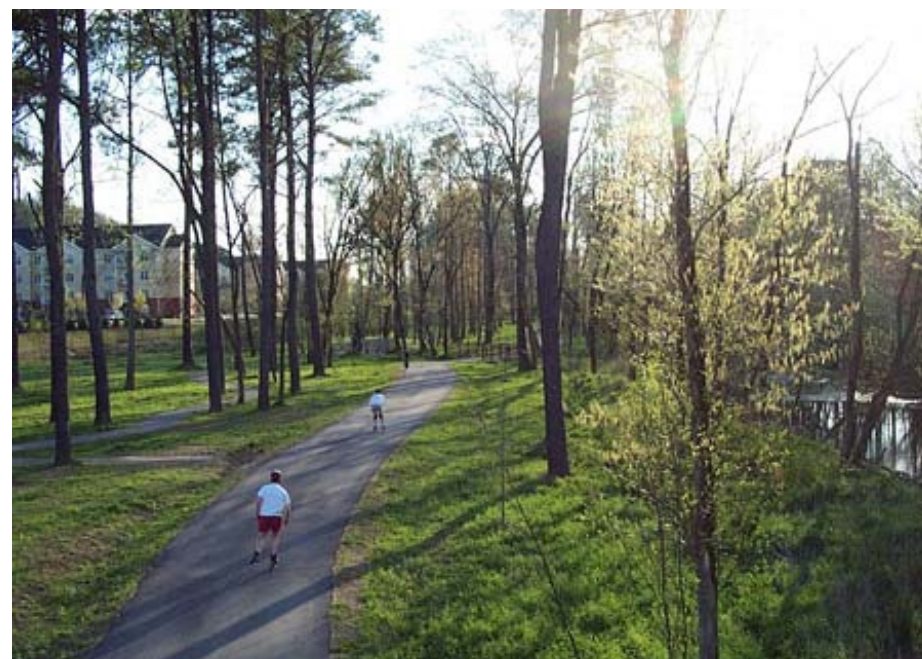


Figure 120: Shades Creek Greenway Map (Courtesy Macknally Land Design)



Figure 121: Valley Creek Near a Northside Neighborhood Community Center

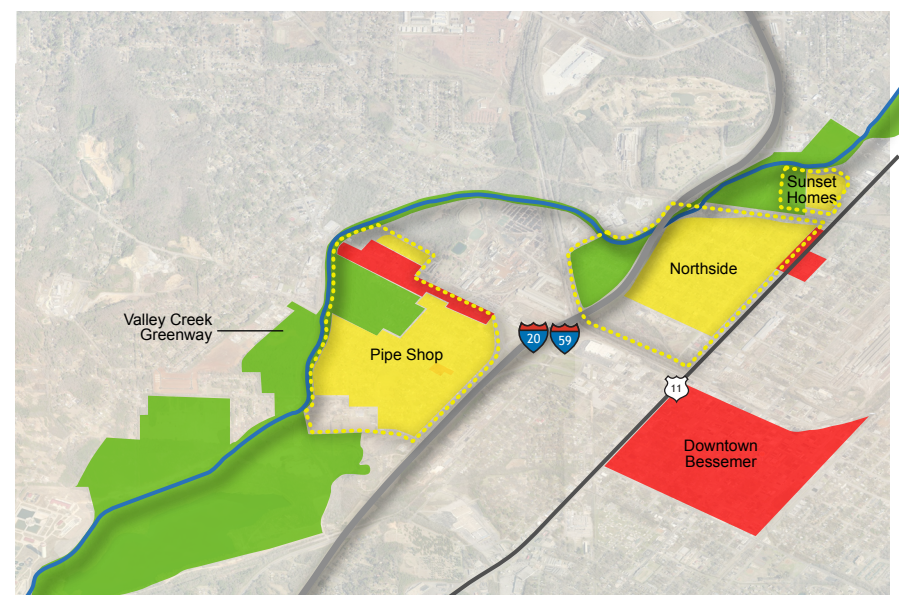


Figure 122: Bird's Eye Valley Creek Greenway Map



Figure 123: Example of a Community Garden



Figure 124: Canoes in Valley Creek

Highway 150 Rail-Trail and Link to Downtown Bessemer

From Highway 150 in Hoover to Downtown Bessemer an abandoned rail line has been planned for a rail-to-trail that could become a tremendous asset for the City of Bessemer. As the trail runs toward downtown Bessemer, it becomes elevated and turns north, running parallel to Alabama Avenue (Figures 125 - 133). This unique, elevated rail-trail has the potential to link Bessemer to Hoover and create an amenity revitalizing the city's downtown.

Figure 125: Highway 150 Rail Trail Diagram (KPS Group)

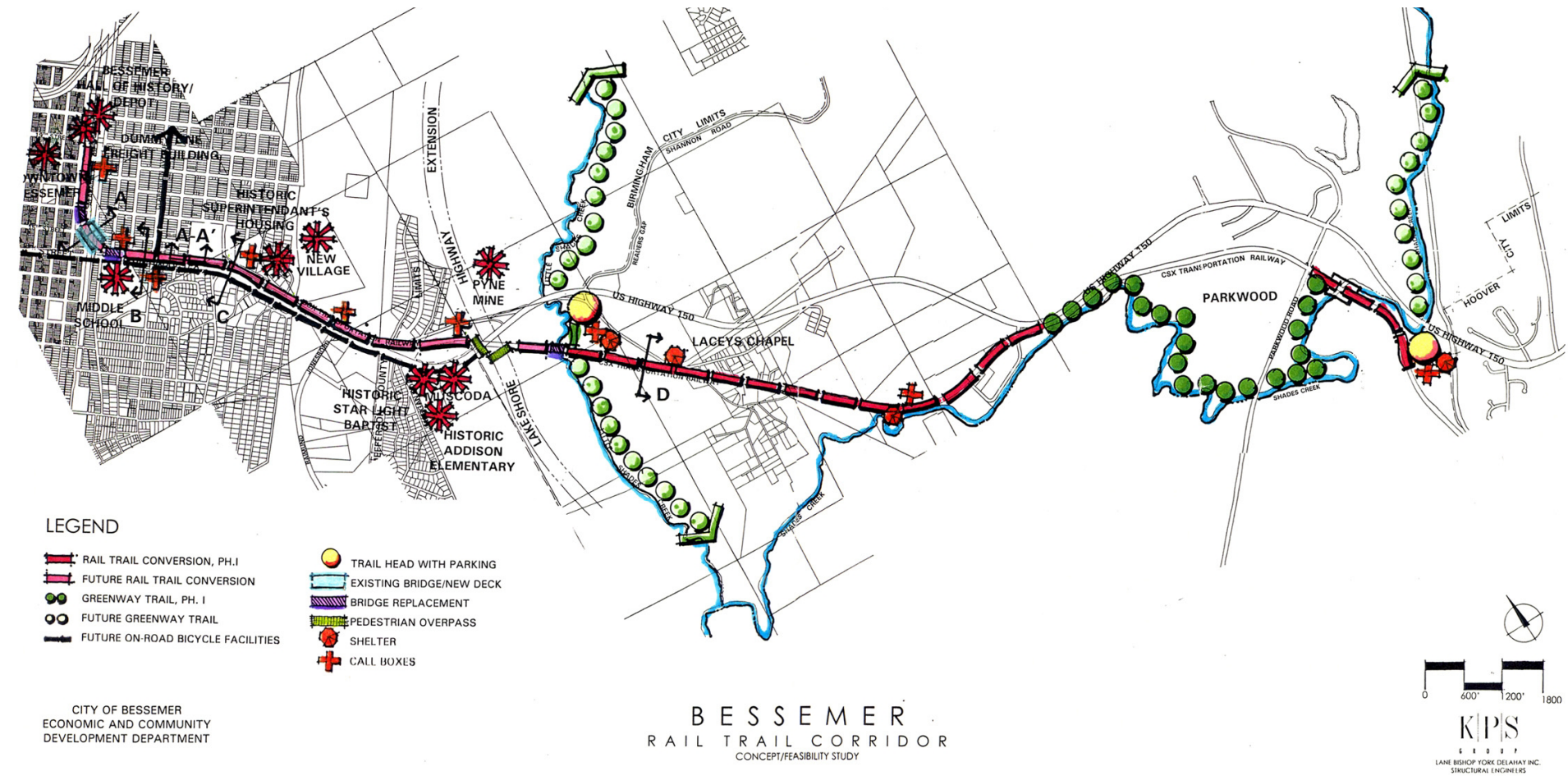


Figure 26 shows the intersection of Highway 150 and Lakeshore Drive. This intersection has undeveloped land that has great potential to add jobs, sales and property tax revenue to the City of Bessemer. The proximity of the rail-trail to this intersection makes the planning and design of the trail critical to the success of these development opportunities. The trail needs to be built in a way that not only allows for future development, but also increases the quality of that development, creating a valuable retail and neighborhood activity node anchoring the southeast end of the rail trail.

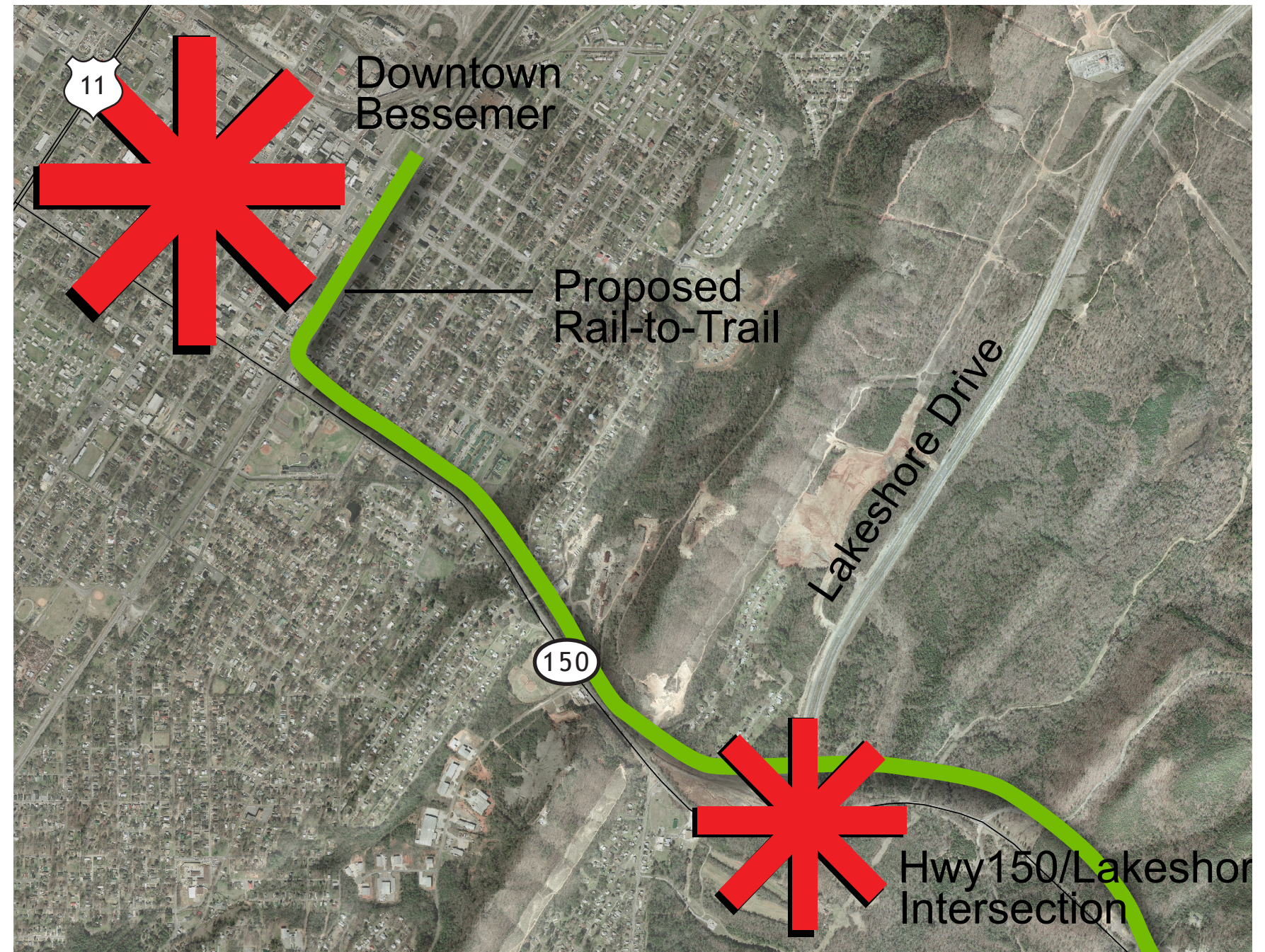


Figure 126: Highway 150 Rail Trail Activity Nodes



Figure 127: Abandoned Rail Line (Existing)

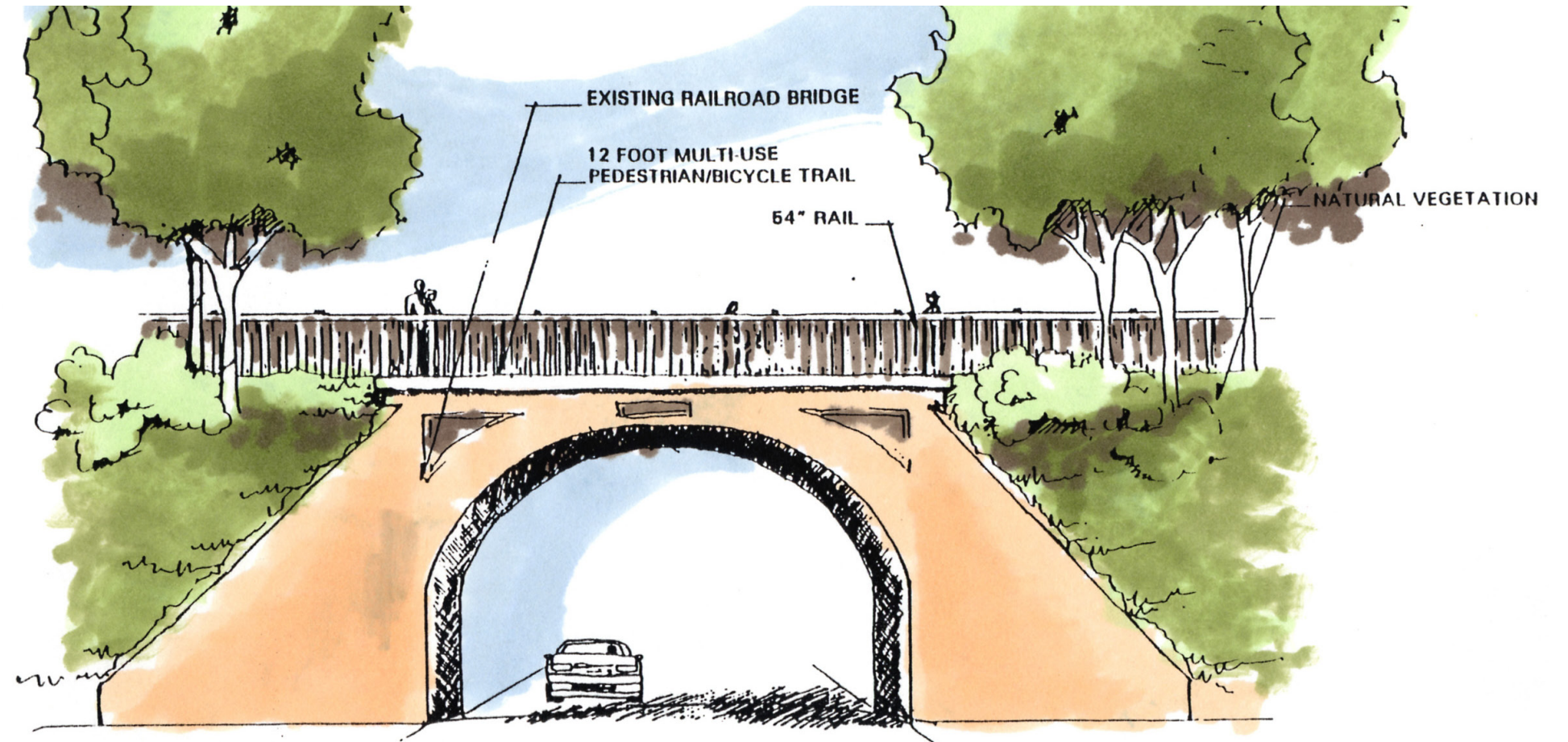


Figure 128: Rendering of Proposed Rail Trail (Courtesy of KPS Group)



Figure 129: Abandoned Rail Line (Existing)



Figure 130: Abandoned Rail Line (Existing)



Figure 131: Abandoned Rail Line (Existing)



Figure 132: Abandoned Rail Line (Existing)

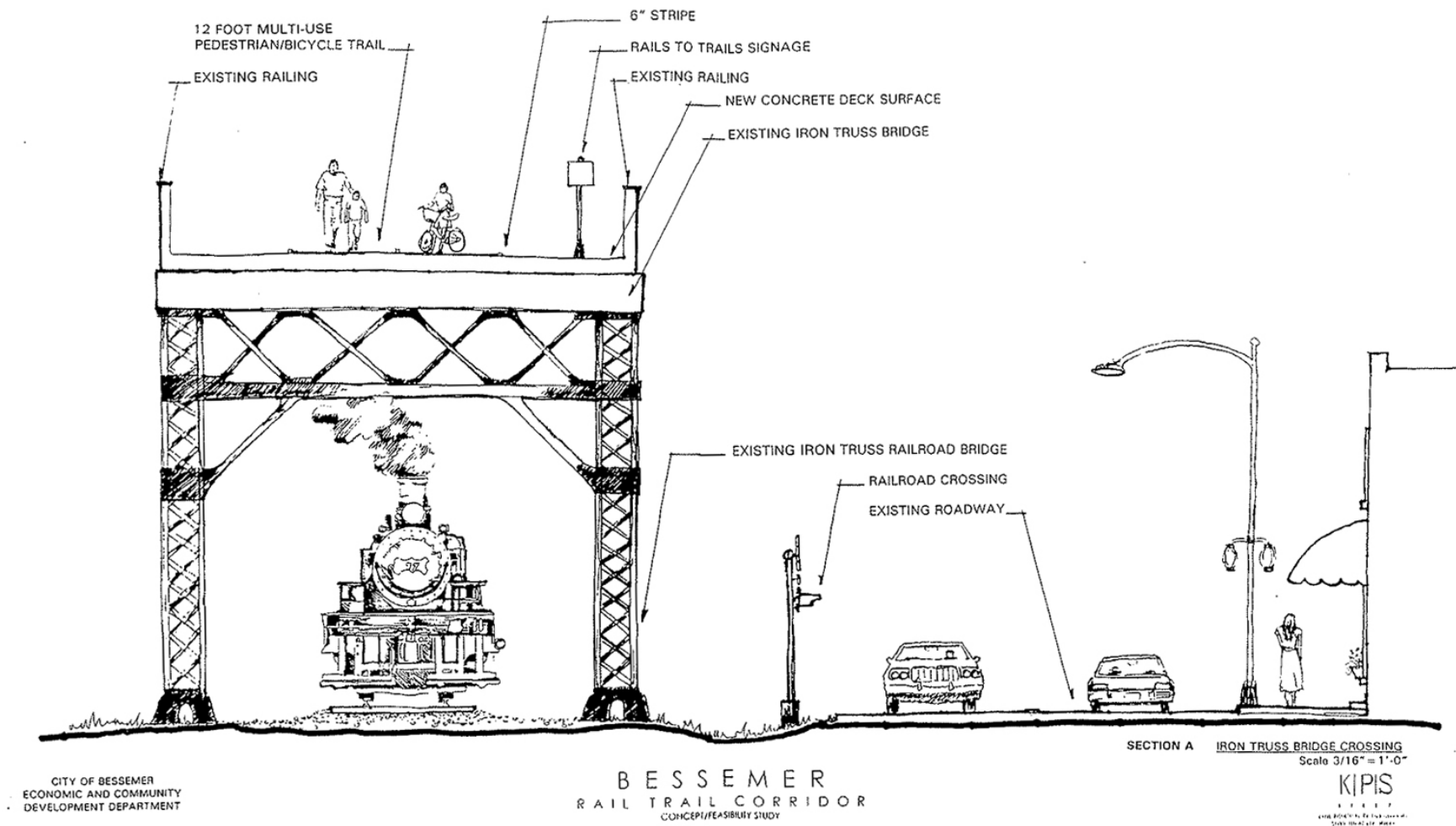
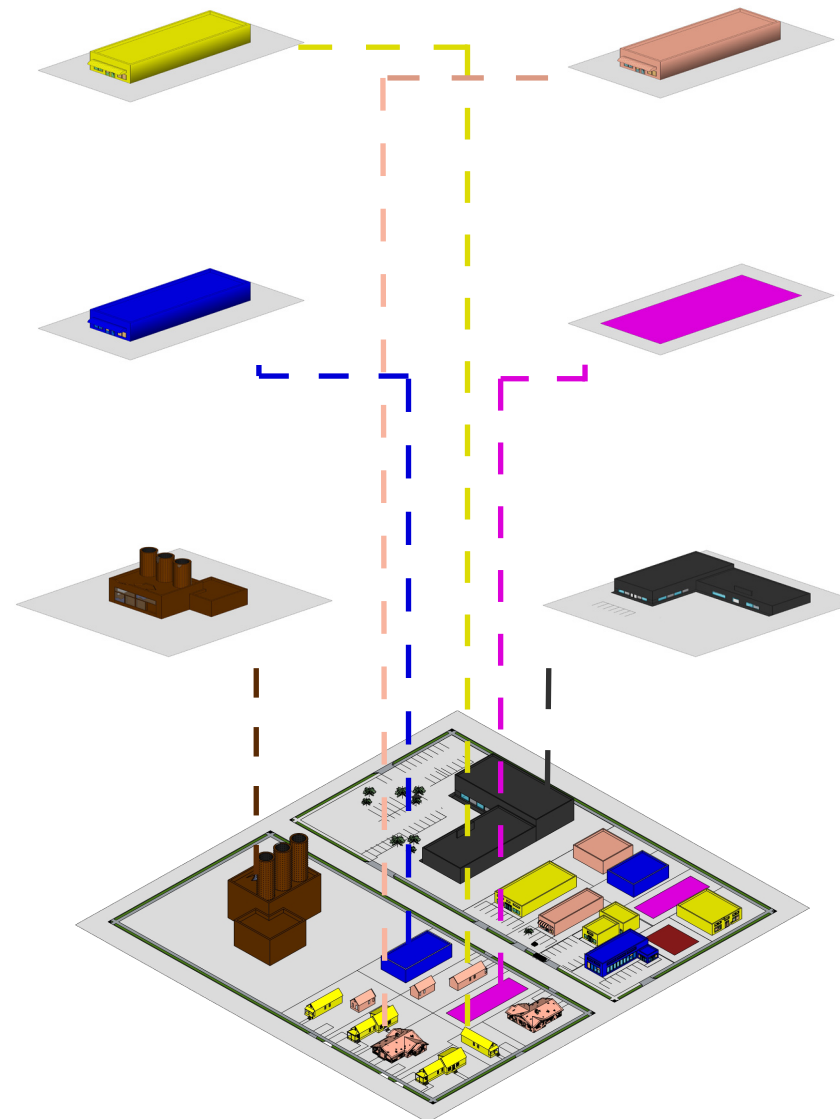


Figure 133: Rendering of Proposed Rail Trail (Courtesy of KPS Group)



DIRECT PURCHASE or DONATION

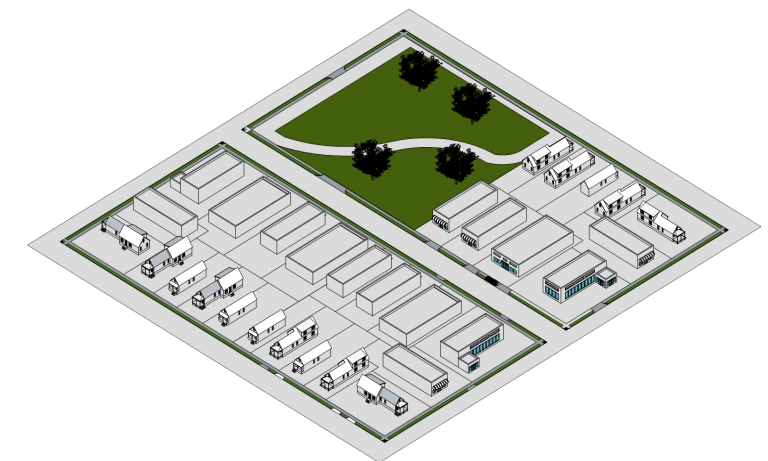
1. Identify Properties that Qualify for “Direct Purchase or Donation” in Target Area (Properties that have Identifiable Owners with a Clear Title)



2. Follow Process to Acquisition

1. Inspect property
2. Follow letter to owner with offer to purchase or accept donation of property
3. Acquire property with Clear Title

3. Create a Plan for Redevelopment after Attaining Quiet Title

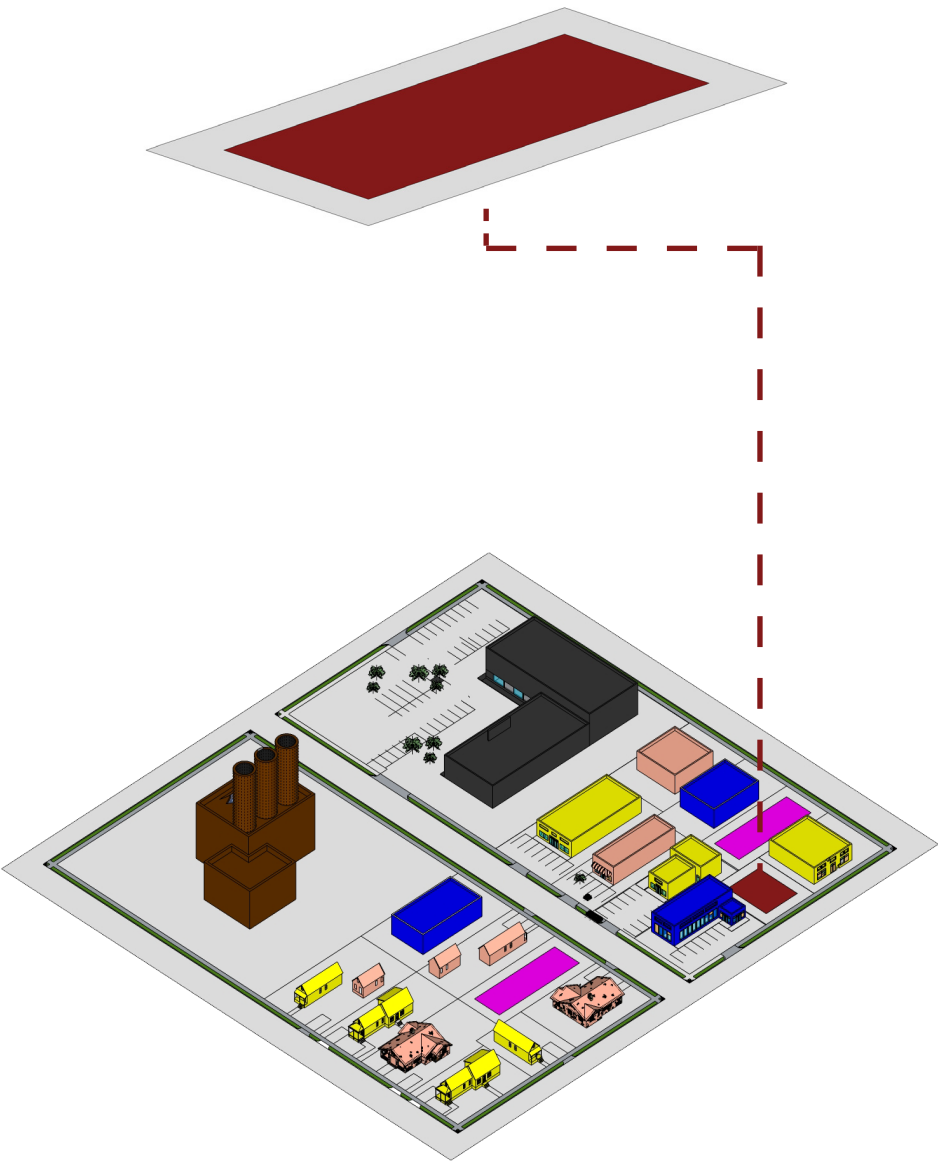


REDEVELOPMENT PLAN



PURCHASE TAX DEED

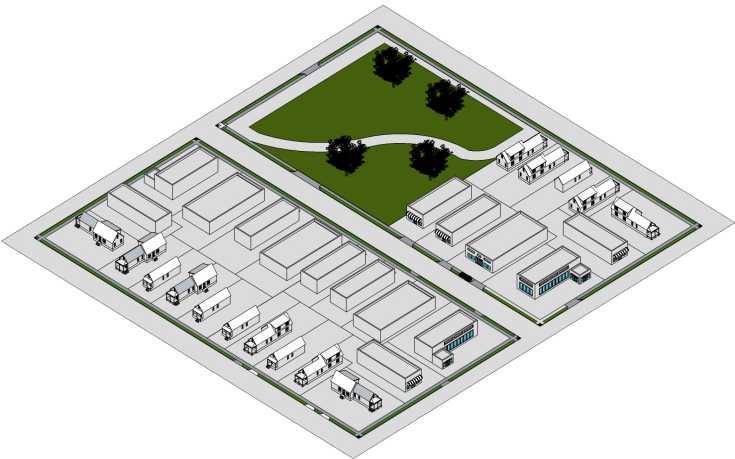
1. Identify Properties that qualify for the “Purchase of Tax Deed”



2. Follow Process to Acquisition

- 1. A tax sale is complete by the Alabama Revenue Department, and property is “sold to state;” no private investor purchased the tax lien
- 2. Three (3) years pass, and still no private investor has purchased the tax lien
- 3. The Revenue Department can transfer the tax lien to a municipality or a non-profit; so the municipality “purchases” the tax lien. §40-10-132
- 4. Judicial tax foreclosure of the tax payer’s redemption rights is done through the circuit court of the county the property is in. Constitutionally sufficient notice and due process is crucial to fully foreclosing the tax payer’s (interest holder’s) redemption rights
- 5. Three (3) years must pass with the municipality in actual possession of the property. §40-10-82
- 6. After three (3) years of actual possession, the municipality can bring a Quiet Title action in circuit court.

3. Create a Plan for Redevelopment after Attaining Quiet Title

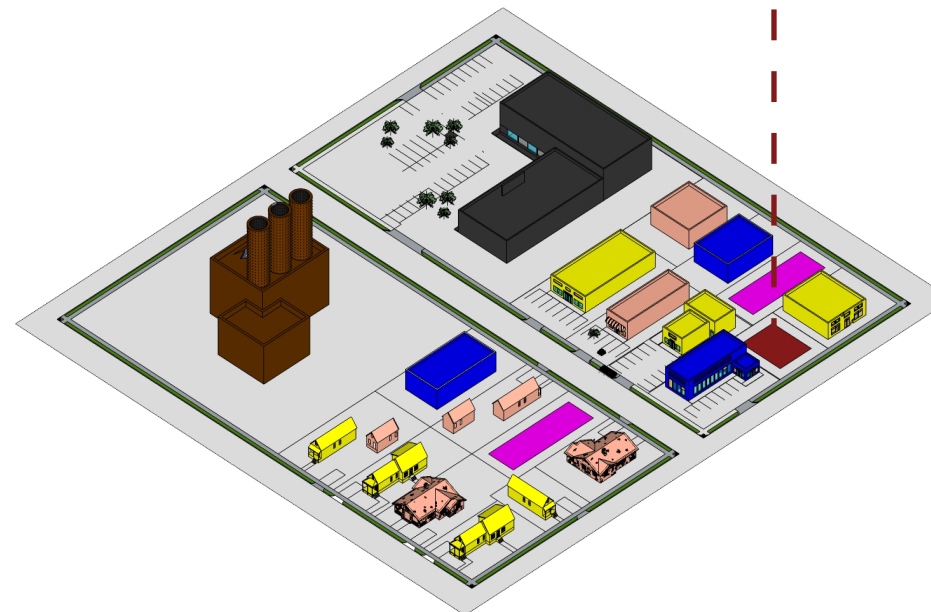
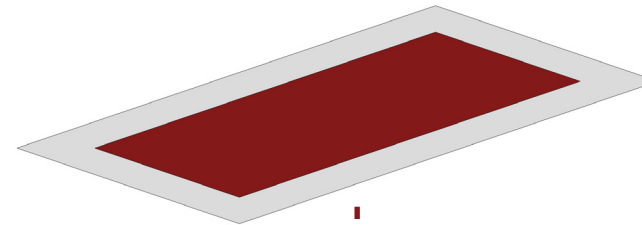


REDEVELOPMENT PLAN



PARTNERSHIP WITH LAND BANK AUTHORITY

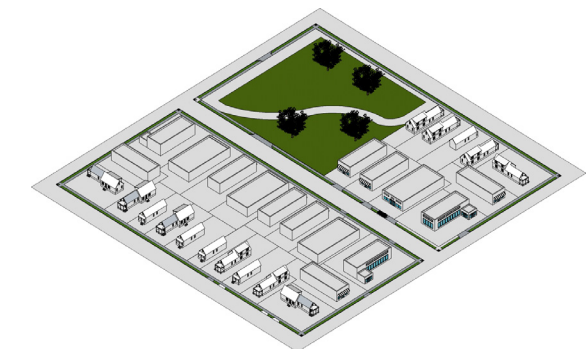
1. Identify Properties that Qualify for Partnership with Land Bank Authority



2. Follow Process to Acquisition Through Partnership with a Land Bank

1. Property has been tax delinquent for five (5) years since its first tax sale or property is vacant or abandoned and housing code violations have been cited
2. "Last Deed of Record" research done to categorize properties into ease of Quiet Title.
 - If owner is found that has Fee Simple Absolute interest in the property without encumbrances, Land Bank should offer to purchase or receive donation to avoid litigation
3. Certificate of Purchase are prepared for all properties by way of the Revenue Department for tax delinquent properties.
4. Addresses of all interest holders and parcel IDs are handed over to the circuit court. One or more petitions for quiet title and/or condemnation are filed with the clerk of probate court and the court date is set. Notice and due process follows. §24-9-8.
5. Volunteer attorneys are utilized to represent interest holders, including the municipality, and the court action takes place
6. Circuit court renders judgement, and deeds are prepared for the properties for the benefit of the municipality.
7. Land Bank can now sell properties with Clear Title to redevelopers in a target area to be rebuilt/renovated; or sell to non-profits seeking properties outside the target area for renovation or construction.

3. Create a Plan for Redevelopment after Attaining Quiet Title

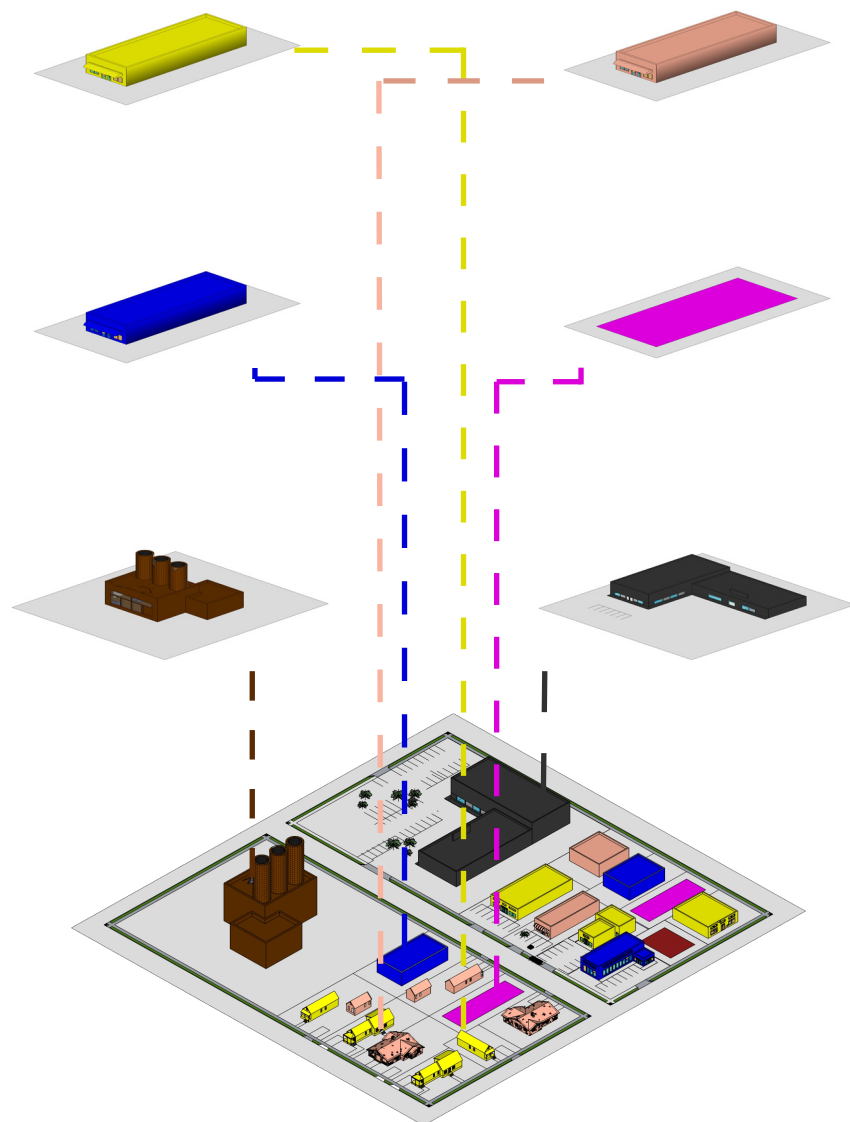


REDEVELOPMENT PLAN



EMINENT DOMAIN

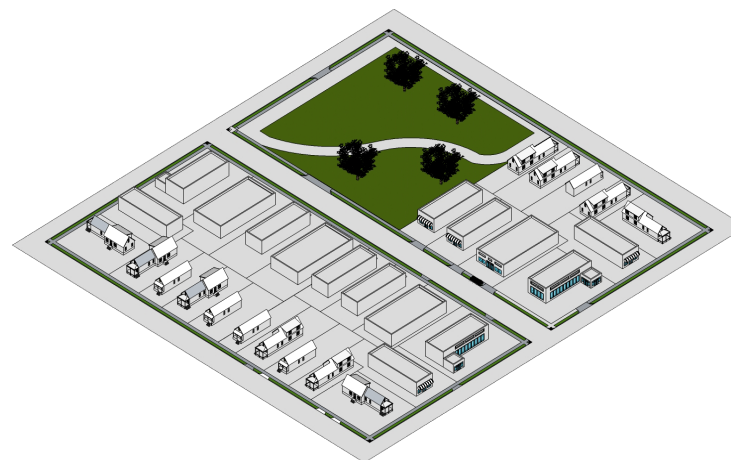
1. Identify Properties that Qualify for “Eminent Domain” in Target Area (Properties that are “Health, Safety, and General Welfare” risk)



2. Follow Process to Acquisition

1. Order title research for identified properties
2. Appraise identified properties
3. File complaint to acquire properties through Eminent Domain
4. Circuit court processes and orders condemnation
5. Clear title given to the city to sell for redevelopment

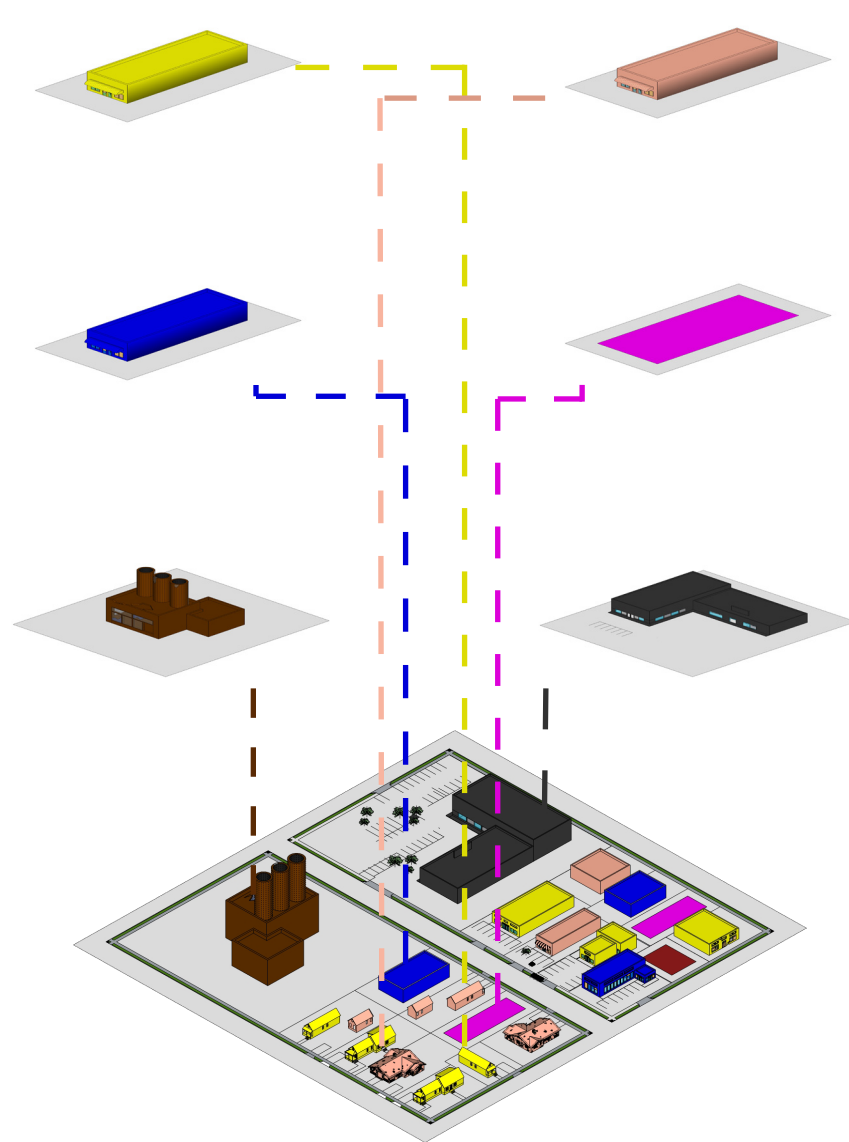
3. Create a Plan for Redevelopment after Attaining Quiet Title



REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

FORECLOSE ON LIEN

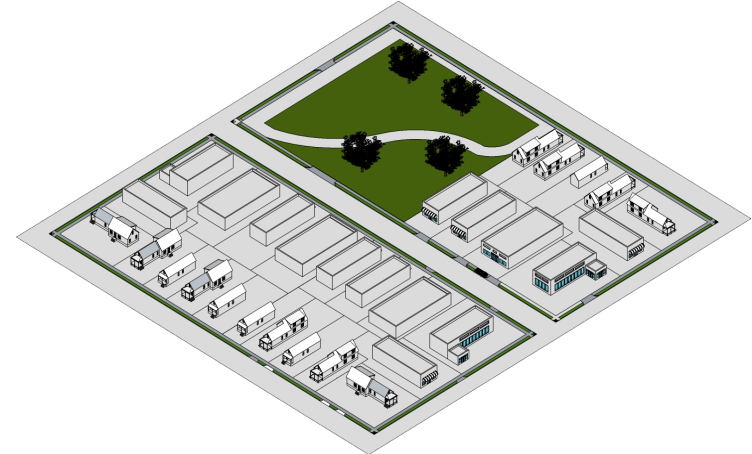
1. Identify Properties that Qualify for “Foreclosure on Lien” in Target Area (Properties with Demolition and/or Neglect Liens)



2. Follow Process to Acquisition

1. City's housing inspector, or appropriate housing official, cites that the property is not in compliance with Property Maintenance Code or Vacant/ Abandoned Building Registration code. Inspector writes formal complaint and post a “Danger Do Not Enter” sign at each entrance to the building).
2. Property deemed a public nuisance.
3. City has power to place a “demolition by neglect” lien on property after property assessments has been done.
4. Property ownership researched through title company, obtaining names of parties interested in property
5. Notice is sent out by formal mail informer owner of liens
6. Lien foreclosed upon.

3. Create a Plan for Redevelopment after Attaining Quiet Title



REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

