

CITY OF DOTHAN

LONG RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2010 - 2030

A Sense of New Beginnings

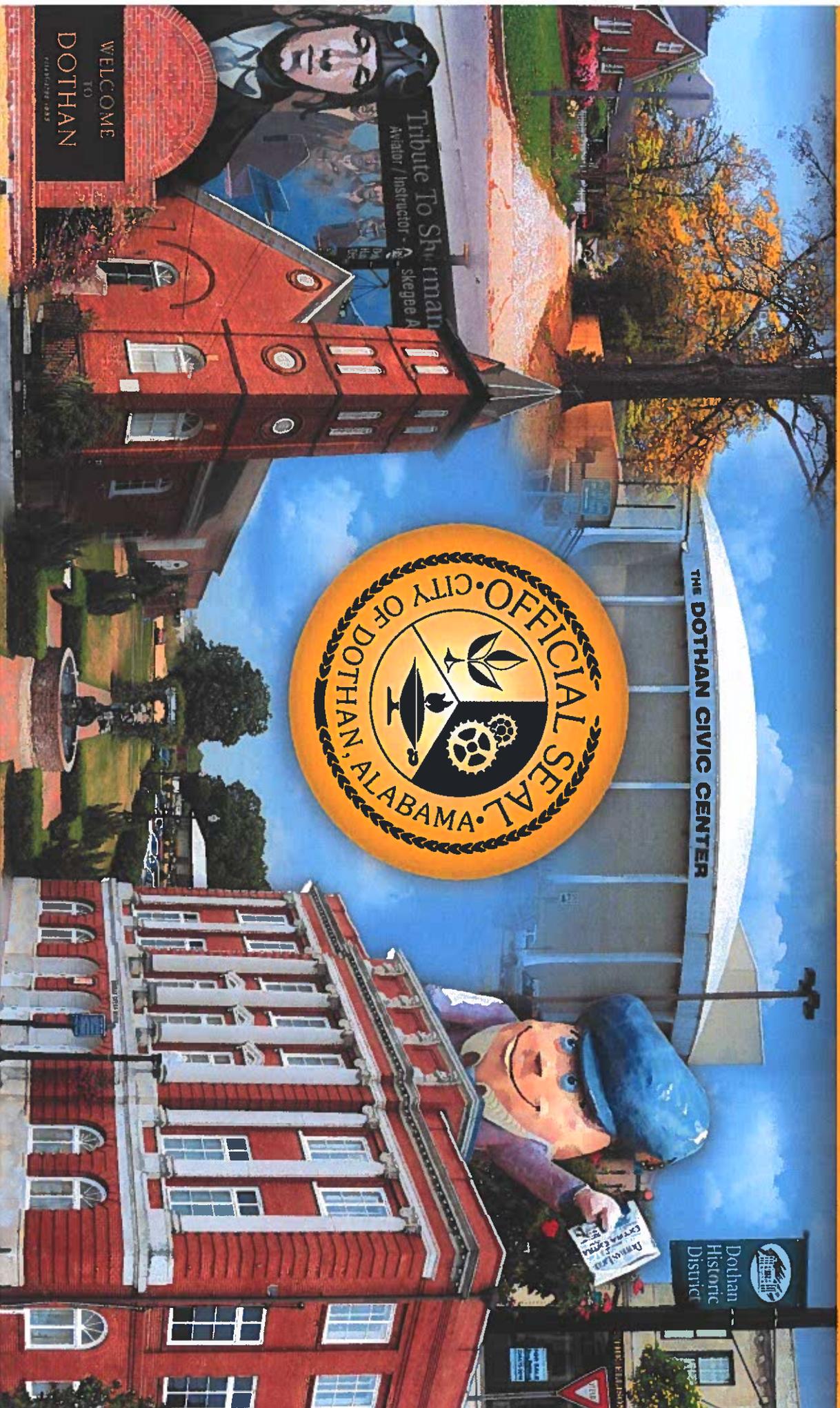


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This document produced entirely by staff of the Department of Planning and Development.

Preface

With regard to planning in Alabama, the Code of Alabama states;

“Any municipality is hereby authorized and empowered to make, adopt, amend, extend, add to, or carry out a municipal plan as provided in this article and to create by ordinance a planning commission with the powers and duties herein set forth” (Alabama Code 11-52-2). Furthermore, “it shall be the function and duty of the commission to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the commission’s judgment, bear relation to the planning of such municipality” (Alabama Code 11-52-8). Finally, “the plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development, including, among other things, adequate provision for traffic, the promotion of safety from fire and other dangers, adequate provision for light and air, the promotion of the healthful and convenient distribution of population, the promotion of good civic design and arrangement, wise and efficient expenditure of public funds, and the adequate provision of public utilities and other public requirements.”

The City of Dothan Planning Commission adopted a Land Use Plan in April, 1999 replacing the previous plan that had been prepared 20 years earlier. In the introduction to the 1999 Plan, it is noted that:

“Dothan’s current Land Use Plan was adopted in 1977. Since that time, Dothan’s population, the number of households in the City, and the amount of land within its Corporate Limits has increased dramatically. In 1983, Dothan was declared to be a Metropolitan Statistical Area by the United States Department of Commerce. In 1993, the Dothan City Charter was amended to change the City Commission from one made up of a mayor and four commissioners elected by the entire electorate to one composed of a mayor and six commissioners representing single member districts. Areas of the City which contained virtually no population in 1977 now have thousands of residents. The traffic volumes on some of Dothan’s streets have more than doubled during that period.”

The Dothan City Commission and the Dothan Planning Commission, acknowledging the need for a Land Use Plan which took into account these, and other changes, authorized the City’s Planning Staff to prepare a revised Land Use Plan to guide Dothan’s physical growth and development for the coming 20 years. Although this Land Use Plan addresses a 20 year

planning period, the City Commission, Planning Commission, and Planning Staff realize that unforeseen changes will occur during that time which will make it necessary to revise portions of the Plan. Therefore, in adopting this Land Use Plan, the City should commit itself to conduct a comprehensive review of the Plan at intervals of no more than five years. At that time, the trends and patterns on which this Plan is based, as well as the recommended policies, should be re-evaluated and revised as needed.

It has been over ten (10) years since the 1999 Plan was adopted and many of the assumptions made regarding growth and development remain valid today. This document then constitutes the comprehensive review alluded to earlier.

In late 2006, staff of the Department of Planning and Development began the task of planning an update of that earlier plan. We knew that a conventional “Comprehensive Plan” was more involved and would require more time and staff resources to accomplish the task. Therefore, we concluded that a modified land use plan, with emphasis on transportation would be the focus of this Plan, making it a Long Range Development Plan (LRDP). Additionally, pertinent goals and strategies outlined in this document will be refined and applied through a series of neighborhood plans to be developed subsequent to this Plan.

In January, 2007, staff prepared a detailed guide for the development of this Plan, a plan for planning, if you will. The following is a summary of that guide.

- Phase I – Organizational Structure
- Phase II – Information Gathering
- Phase III – Preparation of Existing Conditions and Analysis
- Phase VI – Goals and Objectives
- Phase V – Implementation Plan
- Phase VI – Final Long Range Plan Document

The center piece of Phase I – IV was the assembly of an advisory committee that consisted of:

- City Manager, Michael K. West
- Public Works Director, Jerry Corbin
- Dothan Utilities Director, Billy Mayes
- Fire Chief, Larry Williams
- Planning Commission Chairman Chuck Harris
- Planning Commission Member Albert Kirkland

Chamber of Commerce President, Matt Parker
Executive Director of the Southeast Regional Planning and Development Commission, Thomas Solomon
The Mayor and City Commissioners were ex-officio members.

The role of the advisory committee was to review the components of the Plan as produced by staff and provide feedback and guidance as appropriate.

In Phase II, we started gathering information on existing conditions in the community in preparation of the analysis section of the Plan. Simultaneously, information of community attitudes was collected in order to develop goals and create a development strategy.

One of the most important components of any long range plan is setting community goals. Community goals can be determined in a number of ways, the most accepted and popular of which is the public forum as well as surveys. It is important that the pulse and opinion of the citizens of the community is accounted for in the planning process because to be effective, the Plan must be embraced by the general population as “their plan”.

Attitudes regarding the existing condition of the community, its infrastructure, public facilities, open spaces, neighborhoods, schools, and even the government itself compose the barometer by which a government measures its performance. After all, the local government exists to serve the community as well as the population within the area of its jurisdiction, and its legislative body serves only at the will of the population. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the community be involved in the planning process from the start.

The Planning & Development Department created a survey which was mailed to all customers of Dothan Utilities and included in the March, 2007 Dothan Utilities bill. Besides being mailed, the survey was also posted on the City’s website as a “downloadable” document. The Planning and Development Department received and catalogued 1,708 survey forms, which is a 5% survey return.

We asked the public their opinions on issues that ranged from topics relevant to the City and region down to the condition of their neighborhoods. We attempted to perceive the attitude of the public with regards to the functionality of the physical systems of the City, the condition of the downtown area, and solicited their thoughts on future development projects.

The following spring, Planning Department Staff conducted a series of forums to collect additional input from the public.

The agenda for these meetings was simple: educate the audience, measure their preferences for a variety of development characteristics and collect their thoughts directly on their perceptions of what is a strength, weakness, opportunity or threat to the City of Dothan.

As an educational tool, the video, a “Community of Choices” (produced by the Dunn Foundation), was shown to illustrate how development impacts our community and how we, as a community, can influence development through planning if we better understand the connections between community appearance, design and economic development.

Following the video, staff presented a Visual Preference Survey (VPS), which is a widely used method of assessing community preferences regarding the form and appearance of buildings, landscape, and streetscape elements. The audience was asked to indicate on a score card which of two images they preferred. If they preferred neither, they were asked to make no entry. This report presents the results of the VPS and outlines the characteristics or elements that separated one image from the other. A few preliminary conclusions are offered for consideration.

Finally, staff gave the participants four colored note cards and asked them to list as many strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats they could think of on a different card when prompted by staff. In the SWOT Analysis, participants were instructed to think of strengths and weaknesses in terms of current issues and opportunities and threats as future issues.

Together, staff is hopeful that the survey and the two “visioning” exercises will point to obvious community-wide concerns that will become the basis for Plan goals, policies and objectives that can be used to implement them. Results for all three of the public participation elements are available as separate documents upon request.

The Existing Conditions analysis was completed on December 19, 2007 and presented to the advisory committee. The committee received the report and no comments were recorded from the members.

This Long Range Development Plan contains a series of eight chapters organized in a manner that can be divided into four groupings – The Community; the Plan; The Big Picture; and Key Components to our community.

The two principal chapters (Chapters 7 & 8) are topic-specific with goals and strategies. These elements are defined below as they apply to this Plan.

Vision: Visions describe preferred conditions for the future of a community regarding land use, transportation, quality of life and other related issues. They set goals for our community and provide us with an avenue through which we can achieve them.

Goals: Goals are objectives, plans and statements of purpose or intent used to navigate through the public and private decision making process and supply us with a general direction or road map to achieve our more precise strategies.

Strategies: Strategies are the list of actions or implementation plans that the City and its citizens can use to accomplish its overall vision. Strategies are tied to a specific goal and establish steps that when undertaken will implement the goal.

Chapter 1: Community Profile - The LRDP begins with our community profile establishing from where we came, who we are as a community, and who we expect to be in the future. It includes an overview of some demographics from the community, however, a more detailed presentation of those demographics are found within a precursor report to this one entitled “Dothan’s Existing Conditions -2007 Report”.

Chapter 2: Community Involvement - This document is a plan for our community and by our community. It was of the utmost importance to the City to assure that the community was not only allowed to participate, but strongly encouraged to participate. Chapter 2 provides a discussion about the public participation process that was undertaken for this LRDP.

Chapter 3: Understanding the Context of Our Future Decisions - The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the boundaries of our decision making process.

Chapter 4: Purpose of the Long Range Development Plan - This chapter provides a roadmap for steering the City’s policy and decision making over the next 20 years.

Chapter 5: LRDP Vision and Guiding Principles - Chapter 5 establishes the overall vision and guiding principles for this planning effort. The vision and guiding principles described herein were obtained through community input and planning policy that helped define our decision process and set the LRDP direction.

Chapter 6: Land Use and Community Appearance - This chapter presents a detailed view of how existing and future land uses might interact with one another. Community appearance and design were primary concerns expressed by a number of citizens providing feedback. The appearance of our downtown, neighborhoods, and residential structures within the neighborhoods was expressed.



The remaining chapters, as outlined below, address specific key components that make up our community.

Chapter 7: Transportation – Chapter 7 contains a discussion of what the existing issues are with the city transportation system and the issues that will likely impact the shape of the future transportation system in Dothan.

Chapter 8: Implementation Plan - A plan without implementation is useless. This vital part of the Plan determines how the issues conveyed to the City by its public are to be considered, studied and acted upon.

This is NOT a comprehensive plan by design, but a land use plan with a focus on transportation.

Community Profile



INTRODUCTION

Original natives of the Dothan area were tribes of the Alabama and Creek Indian Nations. During the later years of the 1700's until the early 1800's, wagons carrying pioneers and their belongings stopped at a spot known as 'Poplar Head'. It was a resting spot on a trail which the early pioneers took from as far away as Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; and Jacksonville, Florida toward the final settling locations in the west. Most of those who stopped there did so to rest their teams, repair their wagons and secure their loads. They considered the area and its sandy soil, which was beneficial to the thick pine forests of the area, but unsuitable for farming and continued on their way once rested.



Poplar Head, a site where an underground spring welled up and encircled by poplar trees, was the site where ancient Indian tribes met. It was used many times as a meeting place and campground by members of the Creek Confederacy. In the 1830's, a fort existed on the Barber Plantation, which lay 12 miles east of Poplar Head. Settlers of Poplar Head as well as surrounding towns and hamlets fled to the safety of the fort when threatened by Indians. The fort disappeared soon after the Indian wars in Alabama ended sometime during the 1840's.

By 1885, the hamlet of Poplar Head had grown into a village. Residents realized they needed to develop a form of government and create a form of law enforcement as well. On November 11, 1885 the people of Poplar Head voted to incorporate and rename the town to Dothan to avoid confusion with another town in Alabama with a post office known as 'Poplar Head'. The

name ‘Dothan’ was selected after a town mentioned in Genesis 37:17 of the Bible – “For I heard them say, let us go to Dothan.”

One of the blessings that this area of Alabama received, although it was deemed a tragedy when it occurred, was an infestation of boll weevil that devastated the cotton crop in the 1930’s. While it brought economic strife, it also taught the farmers to diversify. Recognizing the fallacy in having only one type of crop, local farmers began planting peanuts. It is said that almost 1/2 of all peanuts grown nation-wide are grown within 100 miles of Dothan. In 1938, the first Peanut Festival was held. The Festival has become an annual event during the fall of the year in which local peanut growers are honored and the area celebrates another harvest.

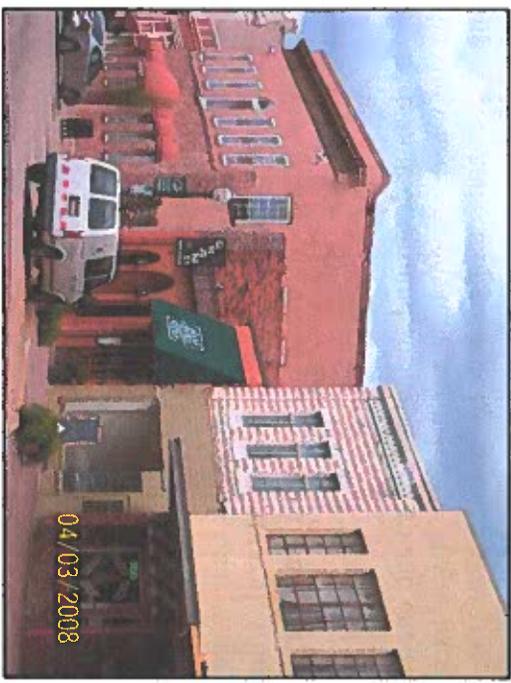
DOTHAN AS A TRADE CENTER

As the largest city for 80 miles in either direction, Dothan serves as the center of a trade area. According to “US News and World Report” in 2006, Dothan was ranked #1 as the cheapest city in which to live in the United States due to its low tax base. Property tax on land is controlled by the State Constitution and requires a state-wide positive referendum for any rate adjustment. Local sales taxes are the best avenue for Alabama municipalities to raise revenue.

Dothan is a retail trade center, industrial center, home to two regional hospitals, and an airport offering connections through Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. Dothan finds itself positioned to be the benefactor of an economic boom attributed to the construction of a new regional airport located 50 miles south in the panhandle city of Panama City, Florida, a new entertainment destination “Country Crossing”, in south Houston County, and the many spin off industries, services and residential activities that are needed to support them.

EDUCATION

The City of Dothan operates a public school district offering K-12 classes leading to either a conventional diploma or a certificate of trade education. The district operates 10 elementary, four middle, and two high schools in the system. In addition to the public school system there are several private schools offering K-12 classes as well as a County-wide school



district in Houston County, as well as Dale and Henry Counties for those children who live in the unincorporated areas of these counties.

Wallace Community College is a two-year state college that offers Associate degrees, certificates and GED classes. The 2009-2010 academic year for Wallace saw one of its largest enrollment periods since its creation with a greater enrollment projected for the 2010-2011 academic year.

Troy University-Dothan campus offers Associate, Bachelor and Master degrees during on-site day and evening classes as well as distant learning classes. The local campus is part of the Troy University world-wide college strategy which is based in Troy, Alabama. Additionally, Troy University offers area high school students who qualify the opportunity to take certain classes under a unique dual-enrollment program called "Accelerate". Held completely on-line at the student's high school and during normal school hours the program affords the student the ability to take college-level classes and, upon receiving a passing grade, earn college credit as well as the necessary high school credit to graduate for the classes taken and passed. In addition, Troy University, Dothan Campus, is part of the "One Great University" with over 40,000 students in the southeastern United States, every U. S. Air Force Base in the world, and China.

Huntingdon College, a private Methodist college based in Montgomery, Alabama offers a one-year degree completion program for adults at the Troy-Dothan campus. In addition to the state-supported colleges, there are a number of private colleges and technical schools in the area. Many opportunities for continued education are found within the area for those who seek it.

In 2000, 78.5% of the population graduated from high school or higher. Of these, 23% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

ECONOMY

The Dothan area economy includes agriculture, aerospace, distribution, entertainment, retail, medical, and advanced technology. Fort Rucker, a large U.S. Army installation currently the home of Army Aviation is located less than 20 miles from Dothan. In documentation prepared for the initiation of the Joint Land Use Study for Fort Rucker and its environs, military and civilian payroll plus contracts, PX/Commissary/Non-appropriated funds, salaries and purchases, and major construction projects totaled over \$1 Billion.

The 2000 Census records the civilian labor force as 27,402 or 61% of the population, which is slightly below national averages. The mean travel time to work was reported at almost 18 minutes. The median household income in 1999 dollars

was \$35,000, which is less than the national average of almost \$42,000. The median family income in Dothan (also in 1999 dollars) was \$45,025, which is also less than the U.S. average (\$50,046) and the per capita income was \$20,539, very near the national average of \$21,587. In addition, 12.7% of the families in Dothan are below the poverty level as compared to 9.2% nationally and 15.6% of individuals are below the poverty level compared to 12.4% nationally.

POPULATION

Population statistics show that between 1980 and 2000, Dothan grew 18.5% from 48,750 to 57,737, and Houston County grew 19% during the same period from 74,632 to 88,787. In the year 2000, 65% of the population in Houston County resided in the City of Dothan. The 2007 estimate for Dothan is 65,447, an increase of a little more than 13% since 2000. Likewise, the 2007 estimate for Houston County is 97,171, an increase of 9.4%. Slightly more than 67% of the County population resides in the City. Between 2000 and 2005, Dothan became the fourth fastest growing city within the State of Alabama trailing behind the larger metropolitan areas of Huntsville, Birmingham and Montgomery. Our growth rate is a healthy 1.85% per year which makes Dothan a prime location for an individual or family looking for city conveniences and services, but with a small town atmosphere.

Permitting statistics for Dothan is reflective of that growth. During the period of 1996 through 2006, there were 4,300 new residential lots recorded in Dothan and 4,049 new residential building permits issued for an average of 391 residential lots recorded and 368 new residential permits each year for the 11-year period. During the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2003 estimate period, 1,205 new residential lots were recorded at an average of 301 new lots each year in the four-year period; and there were 1,266 new residential construction permits issued for an average of 317 permits each year during the four-year period.

The 2000 Census reported that the population of the City is approximately 47% female and 53% male with a median age of slightly more than 37 years. Seventy-five (75%) percent of the population was between the ages of 18 and 65 and racial composition was approximately 2/3 white, 1/3 minority. The single largest minority group (30%) is African American.

Housing statistics in 2000 reveal additional information about our community. The average family size is 2.94 persons, which is less than the national average of 3.14. The average household size is 2.39, which is also less than the national average of 2.59. In 2000, there were 25,920 housing units counted with 91.4% of them occupied, which is very close to the 91% national average. Approximately 63% of the housing units in Dothan were owner occupied and 8.6% of the housing units were vacant. The median value in 2000 dollars was \$86,800, which was below the national average of \$119,600.

The growth in Dothan is not limited only to residential development. In 2007, the Dothan Pavilion, a commercial development containing major retailers such as Kohl's, Target, Ross, Best Buy, Bed, Bath and Beyond, Dick's Sporting Goods, Barnes and Noble Booksellers; Lowe's, a home improvement store; and other smaller retailers as well as several restaurants broke ground and were operating prior to the Christmas Season. Other commercial developments with hotels, restaurants, offices and other commercial venues also opened their doors in 2007.

As mentioned above, between 2000 and 2005, Dothan became the fourth fastest growing city within the State of Alabama. Several things contribute to its growth. Dothan is a retail trade center, industrial center, home to two regional hospitals, an airport offering connections through Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia to any port in the world, and is the site of Troy University, Dothan Campus, which is part of the "One Great University" with over 40,000 students in the southeastern United States, every U. S. Air Force Base in the world, and China. Another institute of higher learning found in Dothan is the highly acclaimed Wallace Community College as well.

Although our growth is significant, Dothan is still a prime location for an individual or family looking for small town living, separate from the Montgomery Metro area yet having easy access to major employment centers such as Montgomery or Tallahassee, Florida.

REGIONAL POSITION

The City of Dothan is located in the northwest portion of Houston County, approximately 90 miles from Montgomery, Alabama, the state's capitol. Dothan is also approximately 90 miles northwest of the capitol of the state of Florida, Tallahassee, and 90 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico and Panama City, Florida. The location map below shows Dothan's relative position in the region.

Dothan also offers an attractive location for retirees because of its relative low cost of living and inherent quality of life. As shown on the illustration below, Dothan lies less than 90 miles from the Gulf of Mexico. This allows residents the opportunity to spend a leisurely day on some of Florida's finest white sand beaches in Panama City, Panama City Beach or Destin. In addition, Lake



Eufaula is less than a one hour drive north of Dothan and Lake Seminole lies approximately the same distance to the southeast. Both lakes offer quality water recreational sports opportunities and are each acclaimed spots for bass fishing.

Dothan boasts four golf courses, one of which is part of the nationally-recognized Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. For those who enjoy the outdoors, Dothan's location less than 20 miles from Florida and a bit farther to Georgia offer easy access to several State of Alabama, Florida and Georgia State Parks where guests may camp, picnic, swim, hike, bike, and fish in season.

Dothan is situated less than 40 miles to the main campus of Troy University in Troy, Alabama, less than two hours from Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama, and less than a two hour drive from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. As previously mentioned, Troy University operates a campus in Dothan which offers Associate, Bachelor and Master degrees.

Community Involvement



This Plan was the product of a concerted effort on behalf of the Planning & Development Department to enlist the aid of the public. In March, 2007 a survey was mailed along with the utility bills to over 34,000 customers. The City also posted a downloadable version of the survey to its official website. Several articles were published within the local newspaper advising the Public of the mail outs as well as the availability of the form online or at the offices of Dothan Utilities.

The staff entered 1,708 survey forms that were completed and returned to the City as of the cut-off date of June 30, 2007. That figure represents a 5% return and was deemed a successful response level.

Following the compilation of the survey data, a Citizen Survey Report was presented during a public hearing to the Planning Commission and during another public hearing to the City Commission.

COMMUNITY SURVEY - WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Dothan as a Whole

- Most people are dissatisfied with the condition of the downtown area.
- Most people are satisfied with the safety afforded us by our roads.
- Response from our survey indicated that people were equally pleased and displeased with the type and amount of entertainment facilities found in Dothan.
- Most people are happy with the amount of parks and open spaces we have.
- We are generally pleased with the quality of design found in our commercial areas.
- We are pleased with the amount of connecting roads in Dothan.
- The majority of residents are pleased with the level of fire protection they receive.

- The majority of residents are also pleased with the level of police protection here.
- Most residents are pleased with the affordability of housing in Dothan.
- Most residents are pleased with the level of utility service we receive.

2. **Improving Dothan**

- Most people want more entertainment venues and attractions in the downtown area.
- Most people want the existing civic center improved, enlarged, or demolished and rebuilt as a bigger and better facility.
- Most citizens want the City to do more to protect the environment.
- Establishing a fixed, public transportation, bus route was important to Dothan citizens.
- Another item of importance to citizens is to enforce existing codes and regulations.
- Better communication from the City was another area of importance.
- Of lesser importance was improvement of lighting through additional street lights on Dothan's major roadways.
- Preservation of historic districts was not as important to citizens as other items for consideration.
- The amount of advertising signs along our roadways, in parking lots, and on buildings was not an important topic for the citizens.
- Enhancement of principal gateways into the City with landscape material, banners, or monuments was not an important issue.
- Establishment of police substations out in malls, shopping centers or neighborhoods was not something the public wanted.
- Least of all, the public did not want improvement to our existing points of interest or way-finding signage.

3. **Regional Issues**

- Most people want traffic circulation improved in and around Dothan.
- Most people want the City to create, seek out, or expand existing job opportunities locally.
- Most people want a defined bikeway/pedestrian trail system planned for and built throughout Dothan.
- Most people want the City to encourage expansion of local colleges.
- Most people want the City to sponsor more downtown activities.
- Not as important, but still desired, is the pursuit of regional transportation links by the City.
- Improvement to or construction of new public schools was not as important as other issues to the public.
- Affordable housing is not an important issue with the public.
- Few people are concerned with the access to our airport or the flight service provided them.
- The development of a major sports venue was not an issue popular to most citizens.

4. Neighborhood/Subdivision Issues

- Most people desire sidewalks installed in neighborhoods.
- Most people want police patrols increased at the neighborhood level.
- Prevention of commercial encroachment into residential neighborhoods is important.
- Most people want the City to encourage creation of neighborhood associations.
- We are generally happy with the amount of parks and recreational facilities at the neighborhood level.
- Few people feel setting aside more open space in new residential developments is important.
- The majority of residents do not want more through streets connecting their neighborhood with an adjoining one.
- The majority of residents do not want additional access points to their neighborhood.

The existing conditions of the City were developed to inventory the community's assets and serve as a baseline or barometer to measure where Dothan stood now and became the foundation for this Plan. The Existing Conditions Report was presented to the LRDP Steering Committee for review and comments. Having received input from the steering committee, the staff then presented the final draft version of the Existing Conditions Report to the Planning Commission during a public hearing. No comments were received from the public in attendance at the public hearing. The Existing Conditions Report was subsequently presented to the City Commission during a separate public hearing. Once again, there were no comments from the audience. The Planning Commission and the City Commission both accepted the Existing Conditions Report with no changes required.

The staff developed a Visual Preference Survey (VPS) along with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) response in an effort to receive additional input from the public. During the months of April, May and June, 2008 the staff held a series of public forums to further involve the public in the planning process.



The first meeting was held in the City Commission chambers. Three of the others were held at locations strategically selected so that two commission districts were visited during each for the convenience of the public. One forum was held at Carver Magnet School for Commission Districts One and Two; the next was held at Beverly Middle School for Districts Three and Four; the following one was held at Honeysuckle Middle School for Districts Five and Six, and the final forum in the series was held downtown at the Opera House. Although the forums were scheduled by districts, the advertising was clear that the public could attend any or all of the forums regardless of where it was held.

During each one of the forums the audience watched a brief video on smart growth and planning, participated in the VPS and the SWOT and then was able to ask questions of the staff, City Manager, or elected officials. The VPS involved 52 slides where the public was asked their preference on relevant issues regarding sense of place, sense of community, sense of arrival, building types and urban sprawl. Above is an example of one of the slides within the VPS.

Following the series of public forums, the City sent a letter to each of the civic organizations in the City offering to take the VPS and SWOT to one of their meetings to gather input from the members. In the interest of keeping the plan on track, the City allowed each civic organization one month to respond with a request for the presentation. After receiving letters of interest, the City then scheduled presentations with several local civic organizations with the aim of gathering more input, direction and support from the public.

The presentations to the civic organizations concluded in September, 2008. Following is a synopsis of what we heard, learned and gathered at the five (5) public forums and nine (9) civic organization presentations.

VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY - WHAT WE LEARNED

1. Sense of Place

- Most people are dissatisfied with the present method of roadside signage and would like to see more uniformity and control over advertising signs.
- Most people would like to see improvements to the downtown area.
- Most people favored the “feel” of the downtown area when it showed curbside patio dining, people places along the sidewalks, and more visual integrity to the downtown place.
- Most people prefer neighborhoods with trees and tree-lined streets.
- Most people liked the appearance of neighborhoods with sidewalks and those with a landscaped separation between the sidewalk and the curb of the street.
- Most people preferred a more ornamental look to street lighting than the standard.
- The public was in favor of street art and seemed neutral to the genre as long as it was tasteful.
- The public was in favor of alleys as the means for accessing residential garages as long as the alleys were functional and wide enough to serve a purpose. They were adamantly opposed to the alleyways that exist in the downtown area.
- The public favored sidewalks that were separate from vehicle traffic and those that were paved with pavers. They also were in favor of wider sidewalks in the downtown area which would offer spaces for benches, ornamental street lights and landscaping.

2. Sense of Community

- Most people want more attention to the design of residential subdivisions. The typical subdivision in Dothan lacks imagination. The public is becoming more educated as mortgage money tightens. The average home buyer is now shopping for the total environment rather than just the house. They are increasingly concerned with sidewalks, trails, curvilinear streets, neighborhood parks, landscaping, and entry treatments that establish a sense of arrival than they once were.
- Most people agree that landscaping has a place in retail/commercial developments and would prefer shopping at places that were “softened” by landscaping.
- Most citizens want commercial/retail parking lots that are landscaped rather than just a sea of asphalt.
- “Downtown Centers” rather than the traditional strip commercial/retail centers are preferred.
- The public was presented with a choice between dry or wet storm water detention ponds in commercial and residential developments. Overwhelmingly they chose the wet ponds over the dry. To them it established a better sense of place.

- When asked to choose between building types, the majority of the public prefer buildings constructed of brick or stone over the metal-sided or brick and metal-sided construction we typically see along Ross Clark Circle and throughout the City. To the public, brick and stone buildings solicited a more visually stimulating response.
- Preservation of historic buildings with older-styled architecture gained a more favorable response than the construction of newer-styled buildings. The sense of character of Dothan as a place, to the public, is better served by its historic buildings or new buildings constructed in the historic style rather than the newer, modern architecture found along its periphery.

3. Sense of Arrival

We were interested in the public opinion on the appearance and feel of highways, traffic, City gateways, subdivision entries, and streetscapes in this area of concentration.

- Most people preferred a softer feel to the highways which could be achieved through landscape and buffer requirements along our major roads or establishment of scenic corridors along principal gateways to the City.
- Most people would naturally prefer a better level of service on all our roadways. This is something that could be improved by more connectivity.
- Most people liked a monument sign with landscaping as their gateway to Dothan rather than a simple sign on a pole to set the sense of arrival to our City.
- Most people would prefer a more ornate and dramatic entrance to neighborhoods and subdivisions than, with a few exceptions, are currently found in the City.
- Most people would prefer a more landscaped streetscape and narrower and curvilinear residential streets.

4. Building Types and Urban Sprawl

We were interested in the public opinion regarding housing stock and what dwelling types Dothan residents felt the City needed in the future. We also questioned them about their perception of sprawl in Dothan.

- Most people felt there was less need for large, sprawling estate homes than a conservative large two-storied residence.
- The opinion was fairly even regarding the desire for more ranch-styled homes over two-storied, clustered garden homes.
- The reaction to the preference of clustered detached homes over attached town homes was also fairly even with the detached variety edging a little higher in popularity.
- Most people opted for the traditional two-three storied multi-family apartment buildings than stand alone individual structures clustered in a compact area.
- Regarding sprawl, we showed a “bird’s eye view” rendering of a subdivision with large lots and the same piece of property with more conservatively sized lots and large amounts of common open spaces. The public was split on their

preference between these two style development patterns with a slight majority favoring the latter, less sprawl-resulting scenario.

- Finally, we asked the public to compare two renderings of the same property one with a traditional neighborhood design and the other with a conservation-oriented layout with smaller lots clustered along a system of cul-de-sac streets, with a park site and large amounts of open space. (See the figure on page 2-4) Overwhelmingly, the public supported the conservation-oriented layout above the traditional one.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS - WHAT WE LEARNED

OVERVIEW

During five (5) scheduled public forums during the months of April, May and June, 2008 attendees were given the opportunity to comment on Dothan's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). There were no guidelines or parameters established that would bridle the attendees' comments. They were simply asked to list all that came to mind that they, themselves felt were pertinent to the categories presented.

For the purpose of our SWOT, the following defines the four basic categories of the survey.

- **Strengths:** attributes of the City that are positive existing qualities of the City.
- **Weaknesses:** attributes of the City that negatively influence the existing level of services and quality of life in Dothan.
- **Opportunities:** *future* conditions that is helpful to achieving the objective of improvement to the style of living for our citizens.
- **Threats:** *future* conditions which could do damage to the City's performance of its responsibilities.

The only restraint given was a time limit in which to write down their comments. They were allotted three minutes for each of the four categories. It was explained to them that the "Strengths" and "Weaknesses" categories should be thought of as existing or current events or conditions in Dothan; while the "Opportunities" and "Threats" categories should address future positives or concerns for Dothan.

The turn out and level of public involvement was less than hoped for, although the public participation during the forums contributed greatly to the direction of the LRDP.

Identification of SWOT's is essential because subsequent steps in the process of planning for achievement of the selected objective may be derived from the results.

Notices of the meetings were sent to all media outlets and department representatives brought the message to a local talk radio program. Overall, by holding numerous forums in various parts of the City and through the several attempts to advertise each event, 100% of the residents of Dothan were given the opportunity to participate and provide input into the process. Local civic groups were also contacted and given the opportunity to allow the Planning Department to present the entire SWOT and Visual Preference Survey (VPS) during one of their scheduled assemblies.

SWOT is an excellent tool for planners to understand the pulse of the public as far as their perception of the state of the City as well as the general direction that they would want it to take. Addressed constructively by the responding public, several fundamental directions and objectives can be identified to aid the Planning and City staff in the identification and stewarding of projects to fulfill the preferences of the public.

The public forums did not define any desired parameters or objectives so that we could hear unsolicited and unrestricted comments and concerns from the public. The result was scattered responses, comments and concerns that were difficult in assigning to a tangible planning-related topic. Those comments that did not fall into the long range planning effort, such as displeasure with the weather, topics of national or world-wide concern were grouped into a catch all topic called "Opinion". Following is a compilation of those comments and concerns, assigned to themes and topics.

The next step is in the identification of common responses to the SWOT. Staff painstakingly sifted through all responses in each of the four categories to identify commonalities among the responses. Bear in mind that these comments are not structured by the Planning Department and all responses come freely from the public on whatever matter or subject that it is they wish to address. Consequently, the task is difficult as every response must be read, organized into specific common themes and then a judgment made regarding the findings. Some responses had little to nothing to do with local planning issues, goals or objectives and are collected into a general topic called "Opinion". These can be seen in detail at the end of the report.

For the purpose of Dothan's SWOT, we have grouped all responses into one of eight themes for each of the four categories in the SWOT.

Themes are:

- Amenities**
- Economy**

Leadership
Public Facilities/Services
Community Services
Transportation-Travel
Regulatory Environment
Criticism

Following the analysis by category and theme, is the SWOT Analysis summary which presents a hierarchical list of comments and concerns as well as projects recommended to be accomplished by the City to remedy or improve upon the comments or concerns.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Following are the analyses broken into the four categories and isolated within the eight themes within each category. A pie chart follows each analysis to offer a graphic representation of the responses **TOWARD EACH THEME.**

STRENGTHS

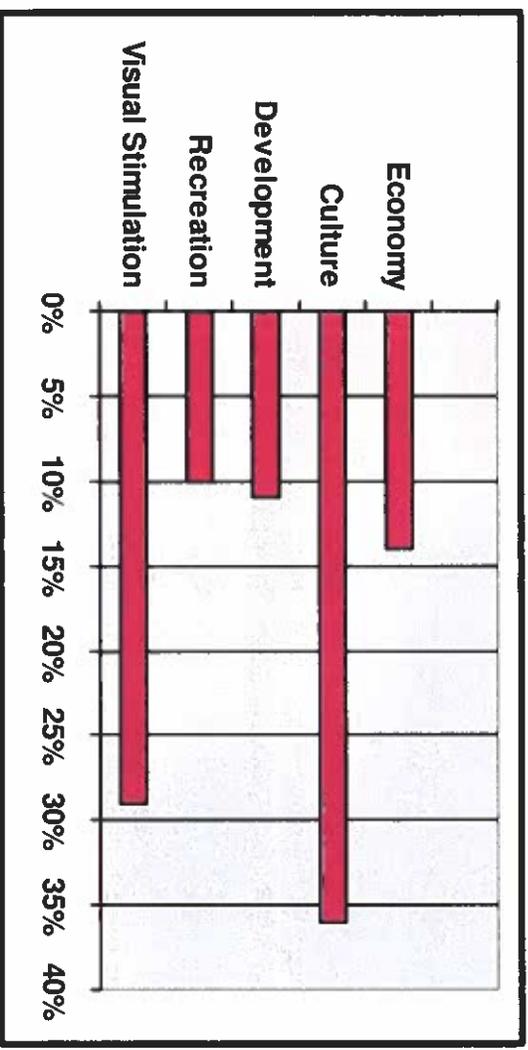
Within this category the following comments and concerns held some commonality among the public responses. Following are tables to recap the comments and concerns regarding each theme within this category. A chart follows the tables to help graphically visualize the responses with regard to relative importance.

Amenities

The number one comment regarding strengths in Dothan had to do with expression of its culture. Thirty-six (36) percent indicated that our greatest strength is in our culture and cultural activities. Twenty-nine (29) percent indicated that aesthetics or visual stimulation represented another one of our strengths.

Amenities

	Aesthetics	Recreation	Development	Culture	Economy
Percent	29%	10%	11%	36%	14%



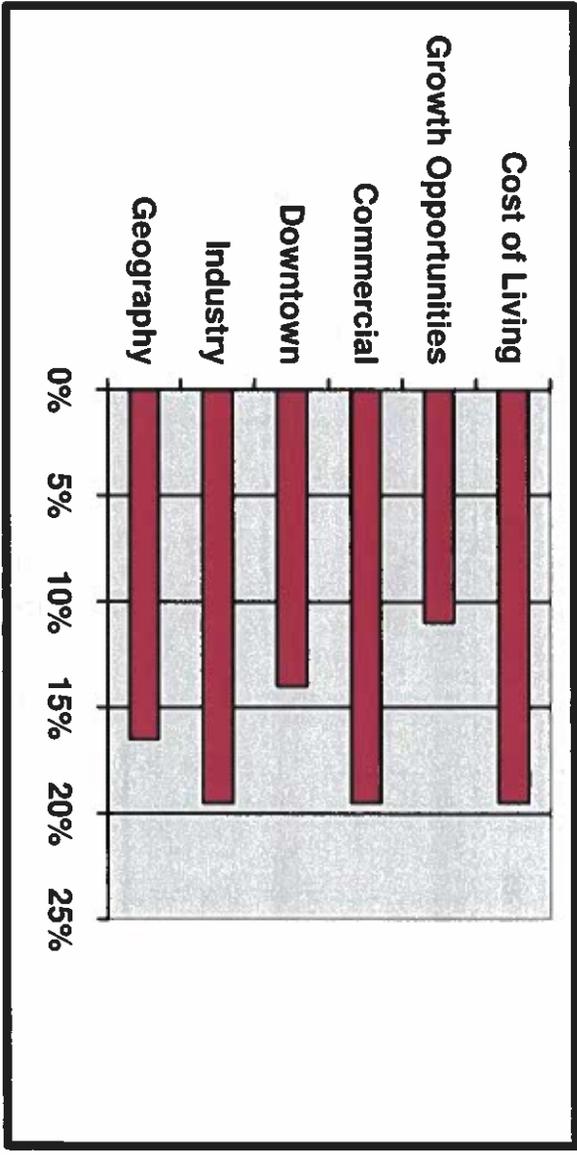


Economy

Three areas tied for first in this theme. Nineteen and one half (19.5) percent of the comments regarding Dothan's "strengths" of its economy dealt with the local commercial attractions, cost of living and industry (jobs). The fact that we are a market center in the tri-state region gained many comments. Dothan's location on the map, or its geographical location, also gained sixteen and one half (16.5) percent of the total comments regarding the strength of our local economy.

Economy

	Geography	Industry	DT	Commercial	Growth Opps.	Cost of Living
Percent	16.5%	19.5%	14%	19.5%	11%	19.5%

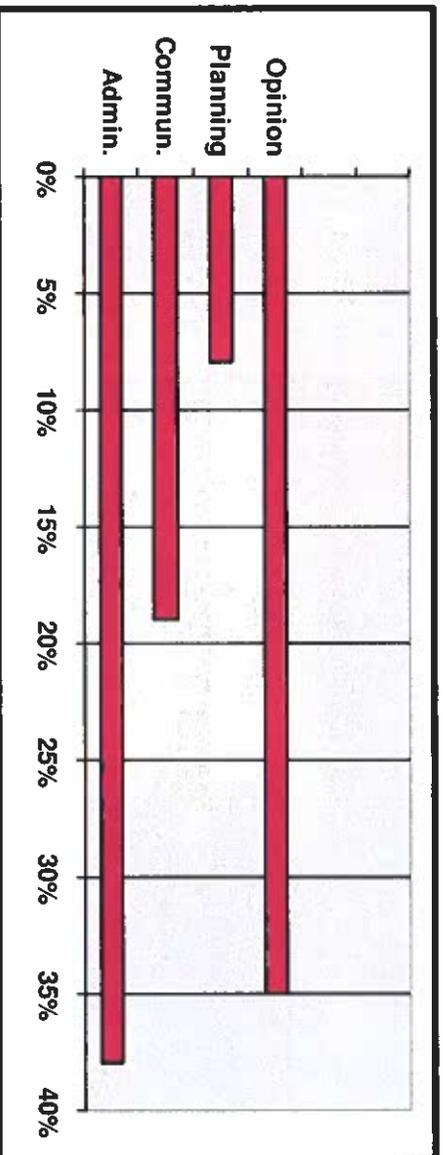


Leadership

Thirty-eight (38) percent of the comments suggest that the current administration and form of government are strengths of Dothan. A very high thirty-five (35) percent of the comments fell into the general opinion area and ranged from favorable impressions of the “dedicated City work force” to “the electronic department”.

Leadership

	Administration	Communication	Planning	Opinion
Percent	38%	19%	8%	35%

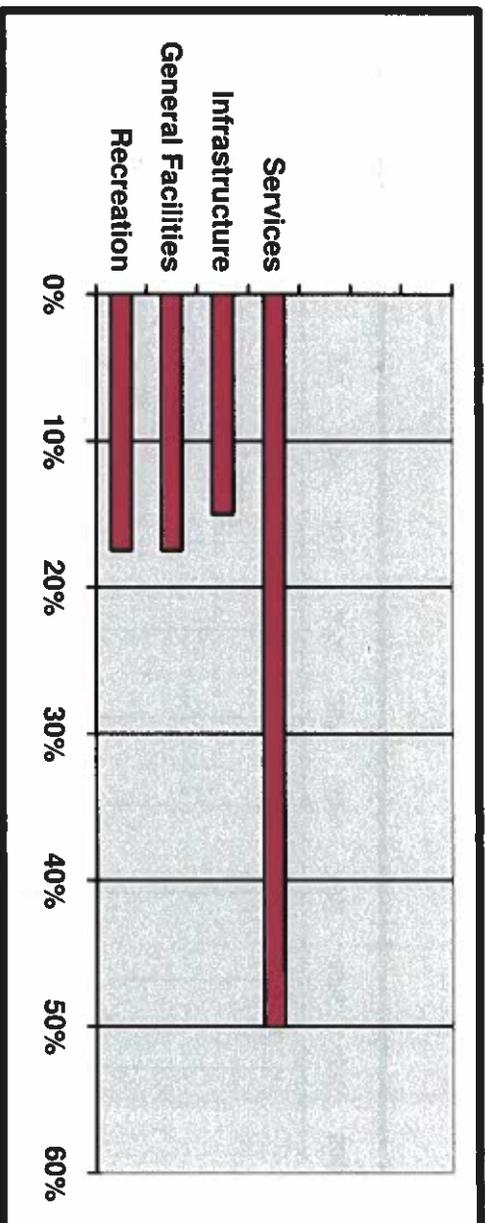


Public Facilities/Services

Fifty (50) percent of the comments mentioned services received from the City as the City's number one "strength". The other three areas of infrastructure, general facilities, and recreation scored low as far as City strengths.

Public Facilities/Services

	Recreation	General Facilities	Infrastructure	Services
Percent	17.5%	17.5%	15%	50%

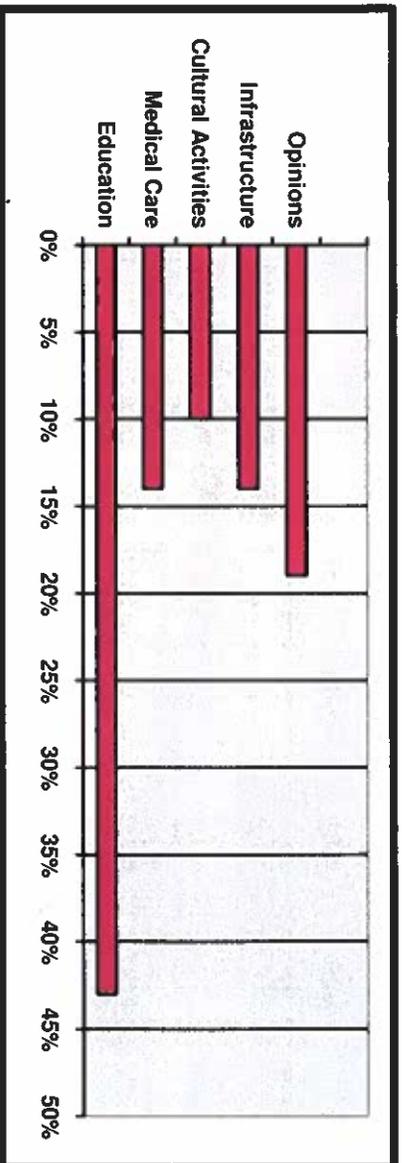


Community Services

With forty-three (43) percent of all comments in this area, Dothan's educational opportunities rank as the area's top strength. The lowest scoring area with only ten (10) percent of the comments was the local cultural activities available. Medical care in the area and local infrastructure tallied fourteen (14) percent of the comments each.

Community Services

	Education	Medical Care	Cultural Activities	Infrastructure	Opinions
Percent	43%	14%	10%	14%	19%



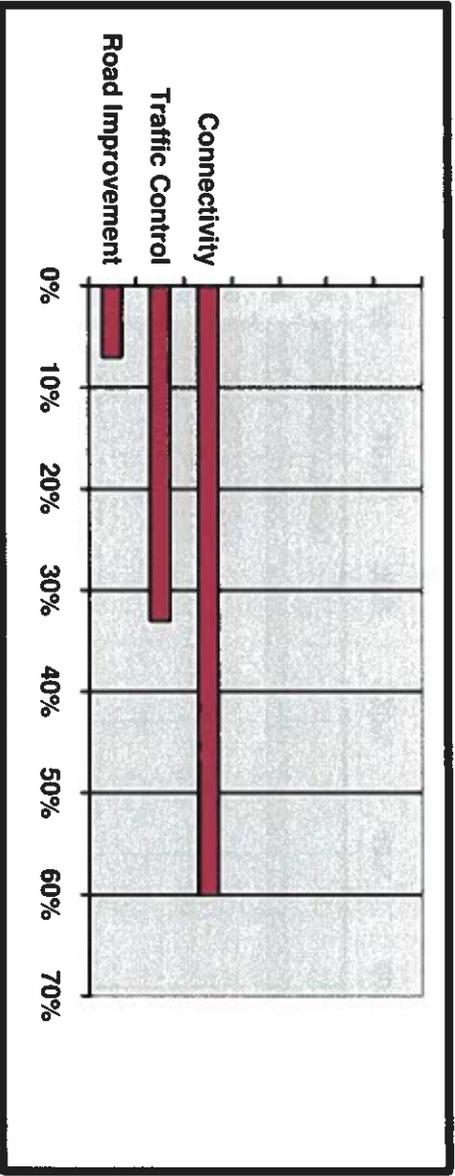


Transportation-Travel

Sixty (60) percent of the comments mentioned the ability to get around town in a timely manner with links to the region as well as road connectivity as the greatest strength in Dothan's existing transportation/travel network. Thirty-three (33) percent felt that traffic control within the City was also a strength. No mention was made of any other mode of traditional transportation, pedestrian, bike, mass transit, rail or air as having significant strength in the existing transportation framework.

Transportation/Travel

	Road Improvement	Traffic Control	Connectivity
Percent	7%	33%	60%

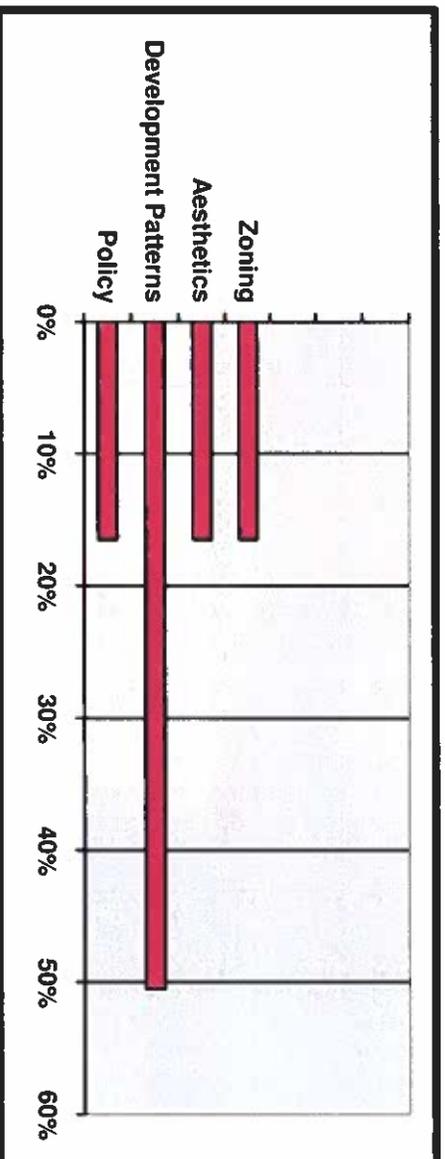


Regulatory Environment

Fifty and one half (50.5) percent of the comments suggested that current development patterns in Dothan today were a strength produced by the regulatory environment. Only sixteen and one half (16.5) percent felt that existing zoning rules, policies and aesthetics could be considered as one of the strengths of the City.

Regulatory Environment

	Policy	Development Patterns	Aesthetics	Zoning
Percent	16.5%	50.5%	16.5%	16.5%



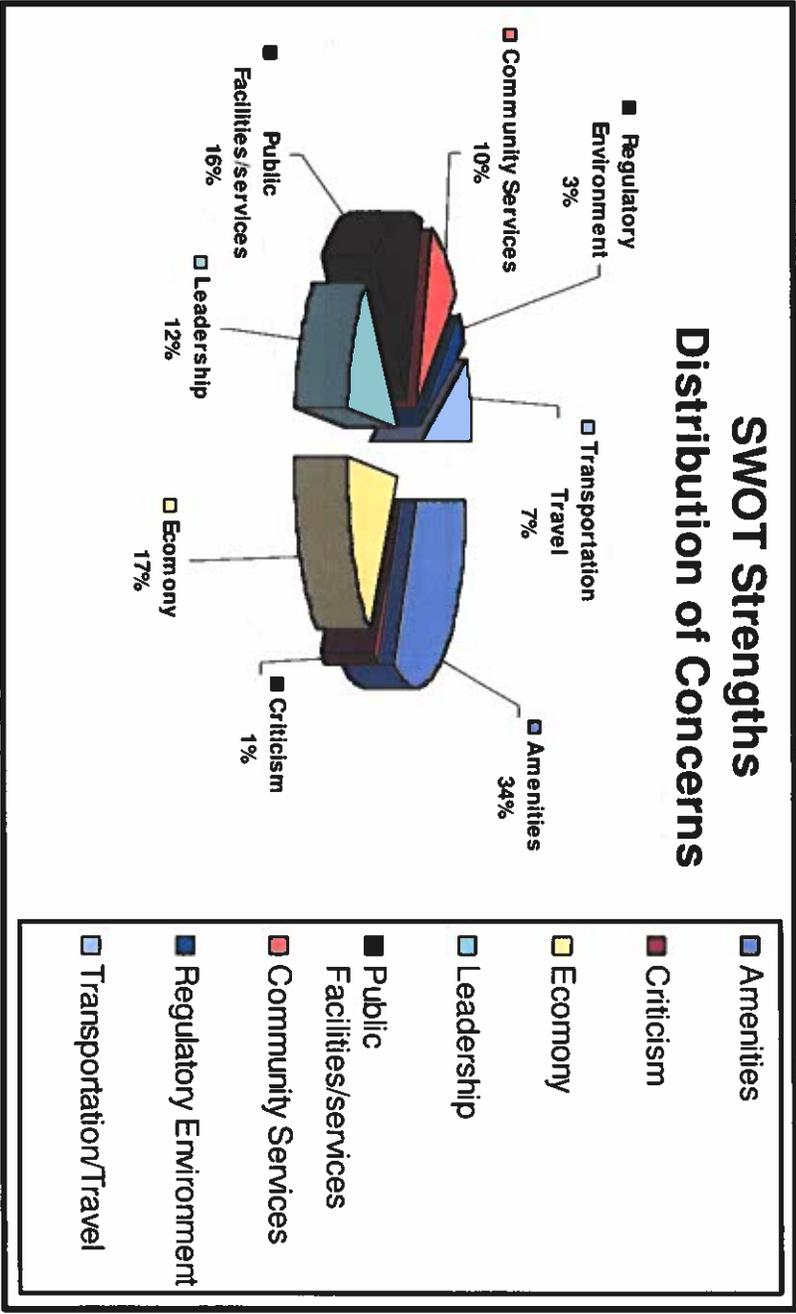
The chart found on the following page demonstrates the distribution of the public's concerns when it involves current City strengths. The largest level of confidence in the City occurs in the amenities theme. The two prominent elements in the amenities theme that the public feels are strengths lay in the cultural environment as well as visual aesthetics (murals, streetscapes, open spaces, parks, etc.). However, the aesthetics and zoning policies of the City were rated as not so strong.

Criticism

According to the data collected, there were only three comments of criticism involving an attribute of strength for the City. Two comments involved general opinions, while the third could be classified as a comment regarding communications from the City.

Distribution of Concerns

The following pie chart depicts a consolidation of responses toward the various themes and the percentage of concern received from the SWOT participants.



WEAKNESSES

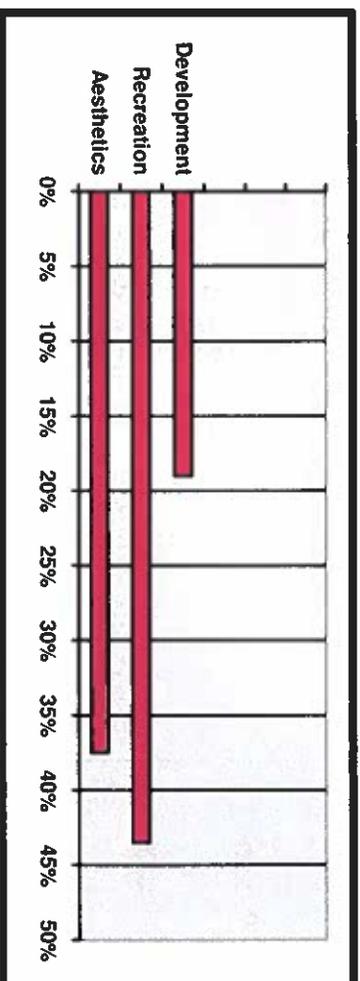
Weaknesses are areas that deserve attention in the Plan. They are perceived by the public to be areas of deficient operation or level of services delivered to the citizens. Following are tables to recap the comments and concerns regarding each theme within this category. A chart follows the tables to help graphically visualize the responses with regard to relative importance.

Amenities

The number one comment, forty three and one half (43.5) percent, within this theme revolves around the lack of open space, parks and recreational opportunities. The public's responses involve the desire for more landscaping and more street trees to improve the aesthetic quality of the City and more outside activities and parks to improve recreational opportunities. To a lesser extent, patterns of land development and an increase in the number of public spaces were also a concern.

Amenities

	Aesthetics	Recreation	Development
Percent	37.5%	43.5%	19%

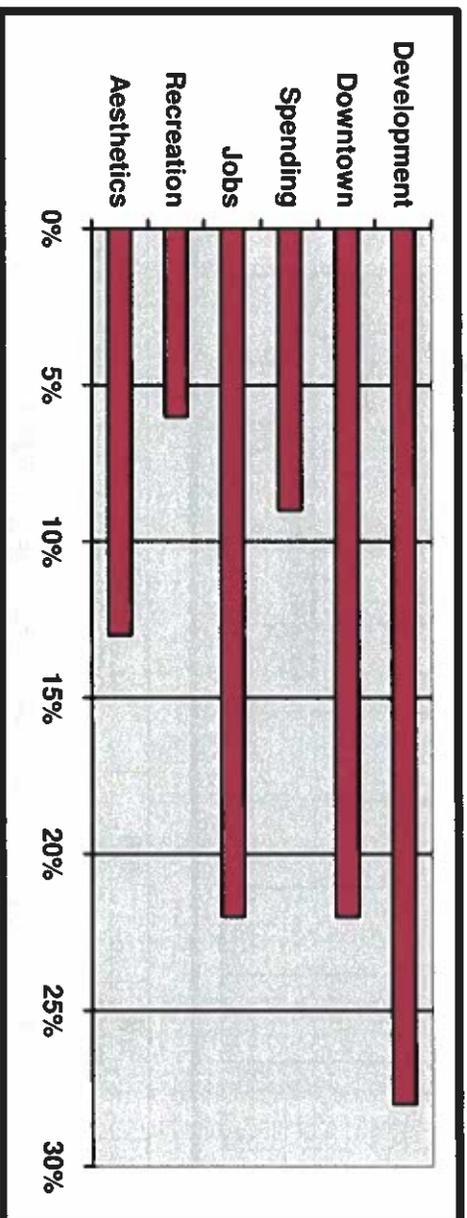


Economy

Twenty-two (22) percent of the responses felt the downtown area as well as the local job market was the most significant of the City's economic weaknesses. Thirteen (13) percent mentioned the inherent aesthetics of the City as a contributing factor to the weakness of the local economy. Nine (9) percent felt that the City overspent and finally six (6) percent of the comments or concerns identified "recreation" or rather the lack thereof as the main thrust and focus for improving the economic quality of life in Dothan's future.

Economy

	Aesthetics	Recreation	Jobs	City Spending or Revenue	Downtown	Development
Percent	13%	6%	22%	9%	22%	28%



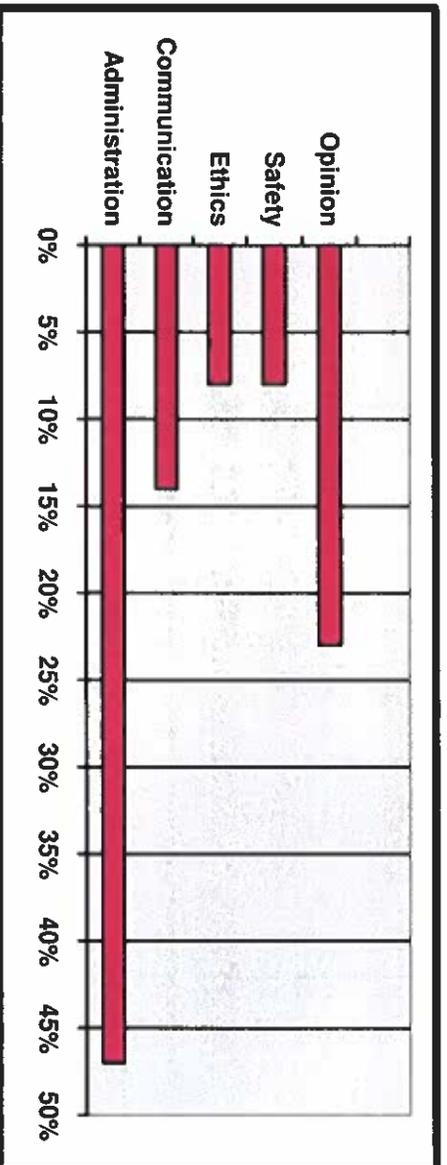
Leadership

This theme garnered a huge amount of focus and comments. Forty-seven (47) percent of the comments or concerns involved ways to improve the existing administration of the government and/or its operation.

The second largest response topic was the “opinion” topic where twenty-three (23) percent of those responding leveled general criticism toward individuals, organizations and committees. The need for better communication between the City and its public received fourteen (14) percent of the total responses received.

Leadership

	Administration	Communication	Ethics	Safety	Opinion
Percent	47%	14%	8%	8%	23%

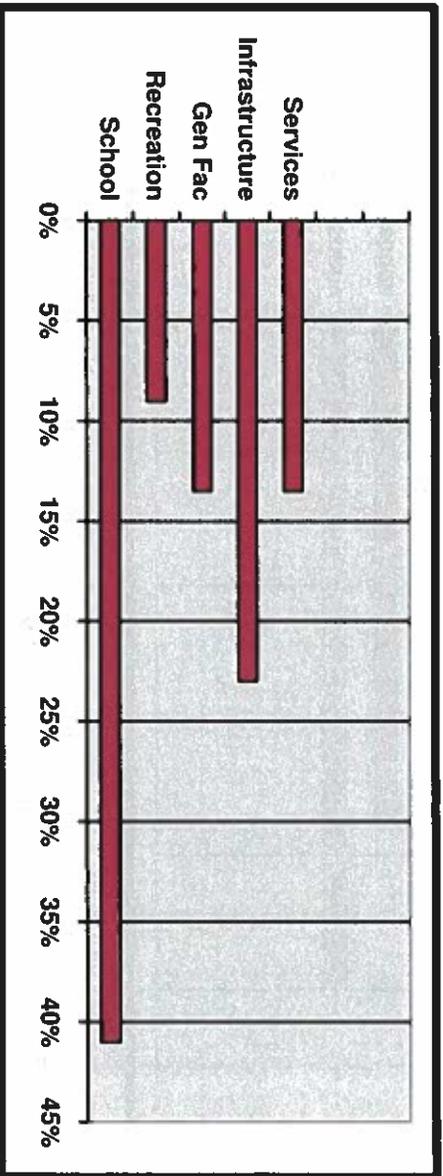


Public Facilities/Services

Forty-one (41) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned the schools or school system as in need of improvement and a current weakness of the City. Twenty-three (23) percent felt that improvements to the existing general City infrastructure were current needs and posed an existing weakness; and thirteen and one half (13.5) percent said that improvement to other facilities would help. Another thirteen and one half (13.5) percent felt that improvements to existing City services were needed.

Public Facilities/Services

	Schools	Recreation	General Facilities	Infrastructure	Services
Percent	41%	9%	13.5%	23%	13.5%



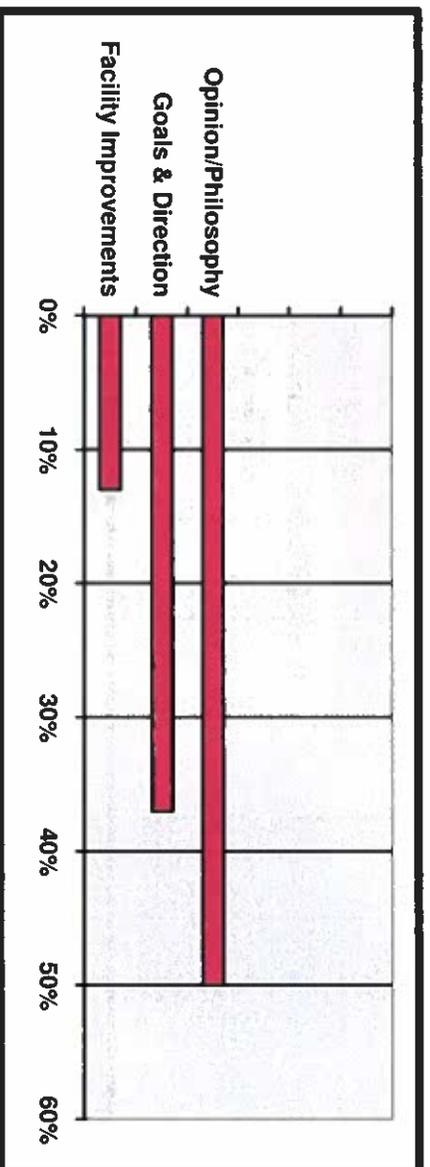
Community Services

Few comments or concerns were recorded regarding the public's perception of this theme as a weakness. Fifty (50) percent of the comments involved personal opinions that could not be grouped into planning strategies, while thirty-seven (37) percent of all comments suggested the existing goals or direction of non-profits and City services in the area were part of the City's weaknesses.

The primary concern is the perceived lack of services, programs and benefits for those in need in the community.

Community Services

Percent	Facility Improvements	Goals & Direction	Opinion/Philosophy
	13%	37%	50%



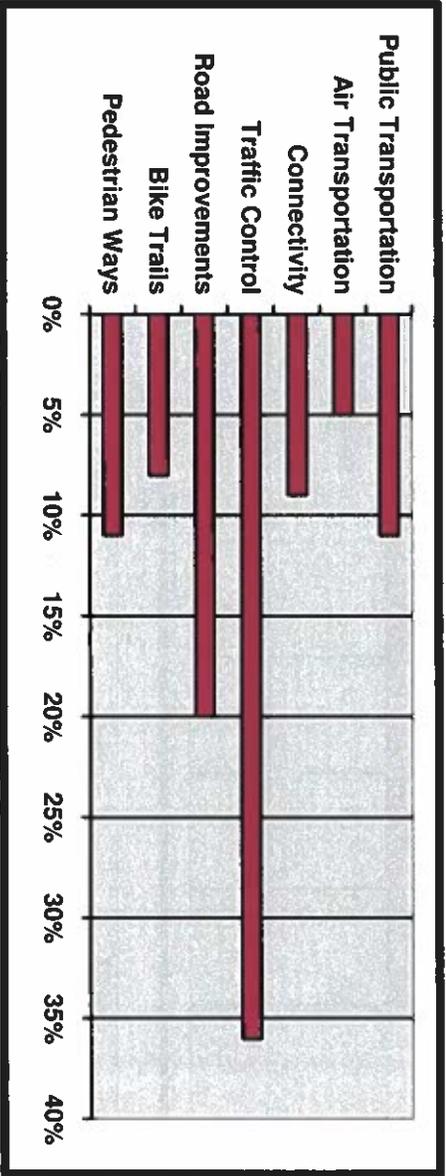


Transportation-Travel

Responses involved four modes of transportation (air, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian). Thirty-six (36) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned traffic control as a weakness in Dothan's transportation/travel network. Twenty (20) percent felt that existing roadways need improvement; and the lack of mass transit and pedestrian walkways/sidewalks tied for third in the public's perception of Dothan's weaknesses in its transportation system.

Transportation/Travel

	Pedestrian	Bike	Road Improvement	Traffic Control	Connectivity	Air	Public Transit
Percent	11%	8%	20%	36%	9%	5%	11%

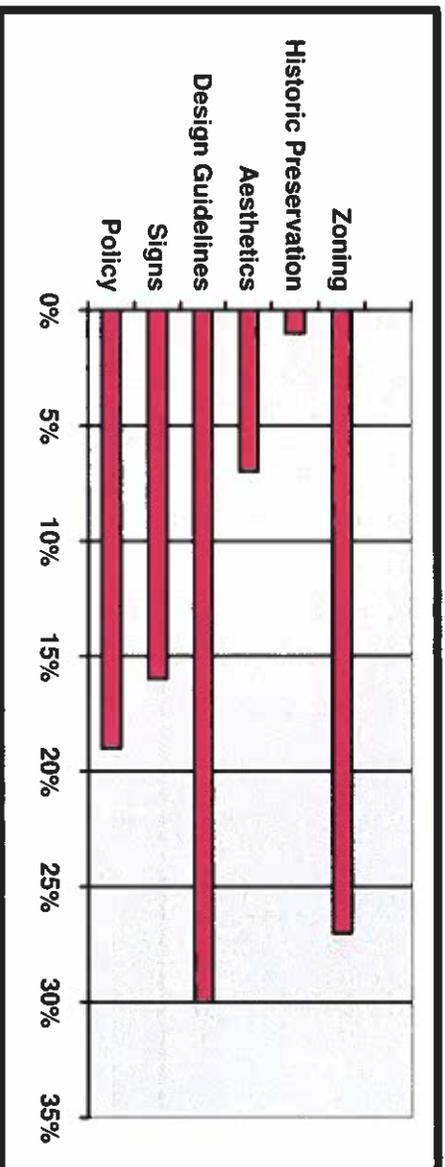


Regulatory Environment

This was the theme that received the largest number of responses concerning Dothan's weaknesses. Thirty (30) percent of the comments and concerns suggested that the lack of design guidelines for architectural, landscaping, and subdivision design was the greatest weakness in Dothan today. Twenty-seven (27) percent felt that non-enforcement of existing zoning rules as well as the current zoning ordinance was a great weakness to the City; and another nineteen (19) percent said that existing policies and activities of elected or appointed officials was a weakness to the City. One (1) percent felt that existing historic preservation measures was a weakness.

Regulatory Environment

Percent	Policy	Signs	Design Guidelines	Aesthetics	Historic Preservation	Zoning
	19%	16%	30%	7%	1%	27%

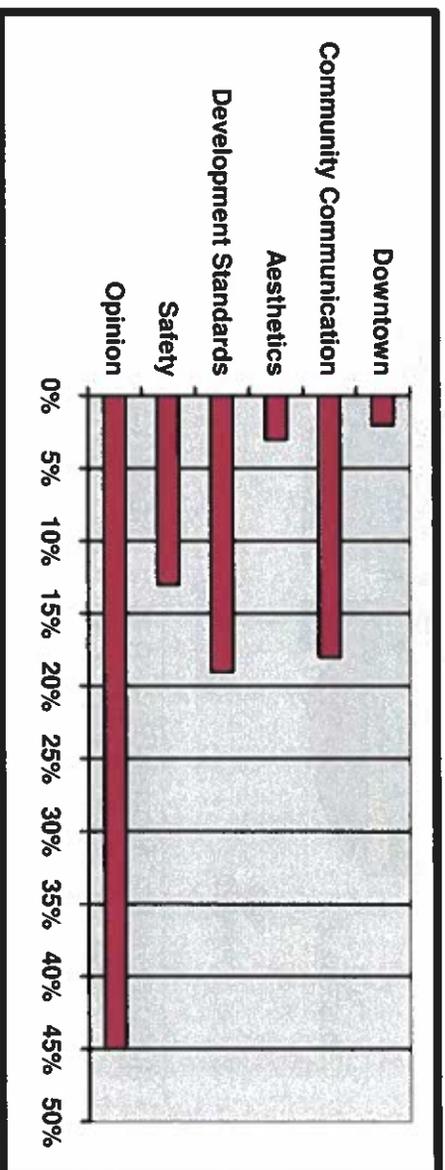


Criticism

This theme generally contains concerns expressed by the public. It received the largest number of entries (45%) of all the themes in this category. Many of the responses could be grouped as “opinions”. Opinions ranged far and wide with very few, if any, common denominators. The predominant tangible criticism is that citizens need to be better informed and educated on the daily workings of the City; and that the City is more congenial and responsive to its citizens. “Community Communication” and “Development Standards” tied for second at eighteen (18) and nineteen (19) percent respectively. The impression of public safety also had a strong showing with thirteen (13) percent of the responses addressing this concern as one of the primary “weaknesses” of the City and its governing body.

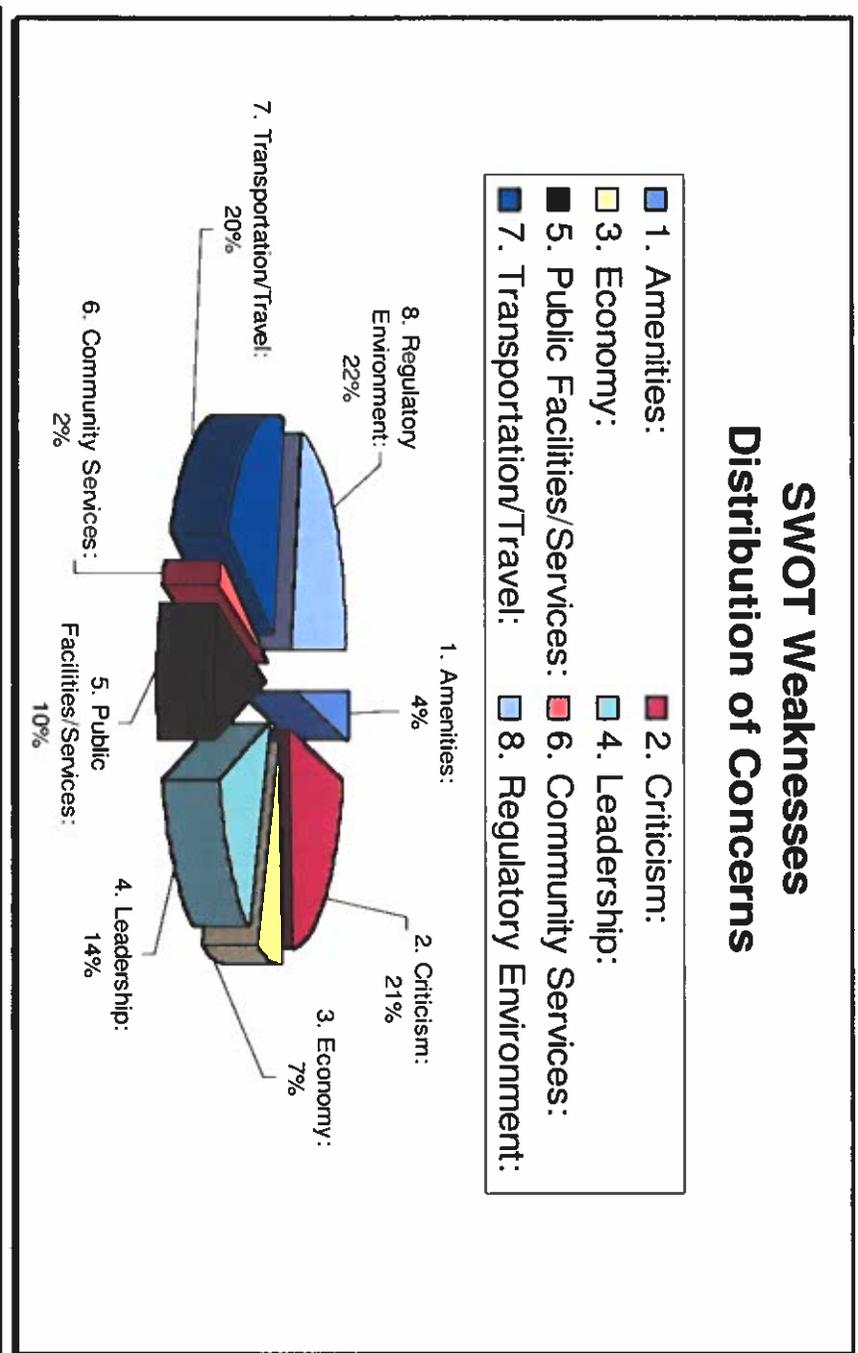
Criticism

Opinion	Safety	Development Standards	Aesthetics	Community Communication	DTown
45%	13%	19%	3%	18%	2%
Percent					



The following chart demonstrates the distribution of the public’s concerns when it involves current City weaknesses. The greatest concern lay in the area of the regulatory environment, the policies, procedures, tools, and resulting aesthetics caused by our actions. Following closely behind were general criticisms and concerns over specifics related to the City’s transportation system and its leadership and management practices.

SWOT Weaknesses Distribution of Concerns



OPPORTUNITIES

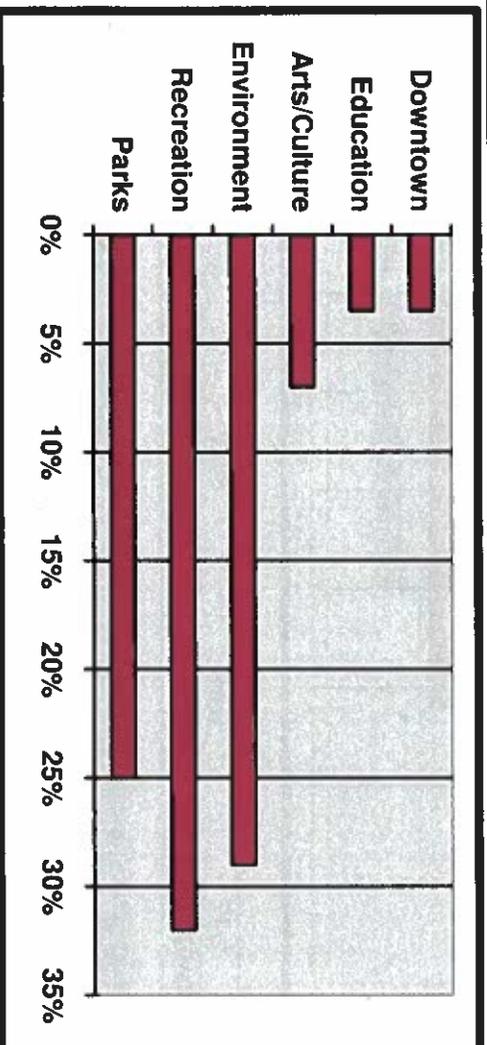
The following comments and concerns were expressed by the public. Opportunities are options that may correct or improve upon existing conditions or services. Opportunities may also refer to areas of service or the utilization of an existing asset which the City could capitalize on or enhance to better the quality of life. The following tables recap the comments and concerns regarding each theme within this category. A chart follows the tables to help graphically visualize the responses with regard to relative importance.

Amenities

A combined seventy-nine (79) percent of the comments, within this theme, revolved around local environmental assets (29%), parks (25%), and recreational opportunities (32%) as a way in which the City could improve the quality of life for its future citizens. The public's specific responses involved the desire for more landscaping, more street trees and more outside activities and parks.

Amenities

	Parks	Recreation	Environment	Arts/Culture	Education	DTown
Percent	25%	32%	29%	7%	3.5%	3.5%

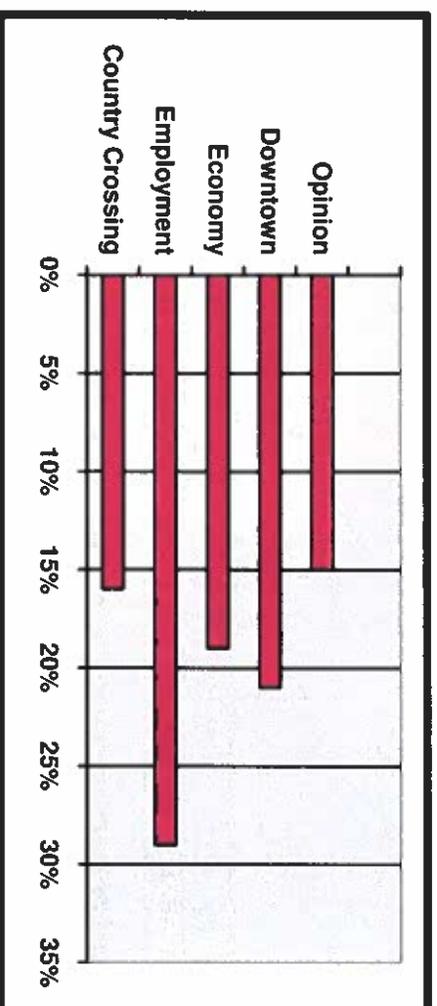


Economy

Twenty-nine (29) percent of the comments or concerns addressed the issue of “employment”, while twenty-one (21) percent focused on the issue of “downtown improvements” and finally fifteen (15) percent of the comments or concerns identified “Country Crossing” as the main thrust and focus for improving the economic quality of life in Dothan’s future.

Economy

	Country Crossing	Employment	Economy	Downtown	Opinion
Percent	16%	29%	19%	21%	15%



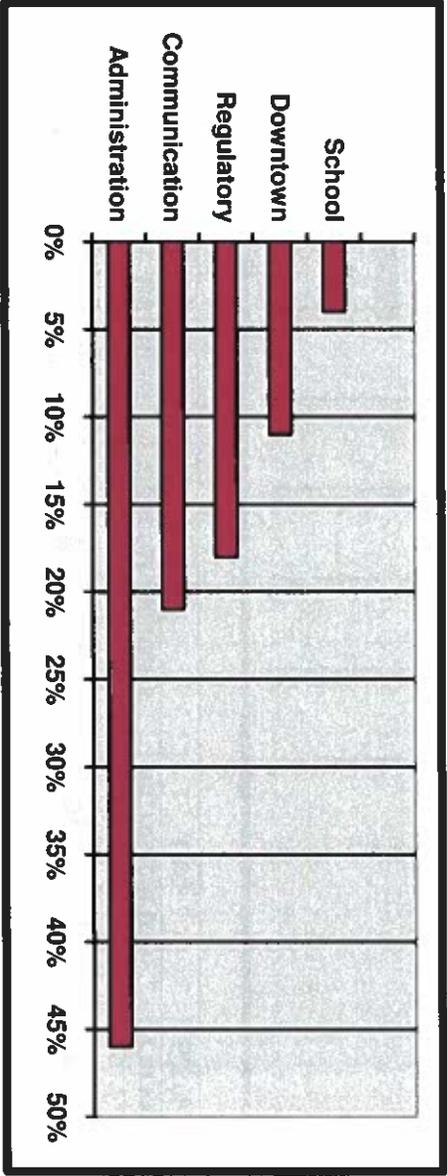


Leadership

Forty-six (46) percent of the comments or concerns involved ways to improve the existing government administration and/or its operation. The comments addressed the need for City administrators to keep the public informed and involved in civic matters. Eighteen (18) percent of the comments and concerns spoke of regulatory issues and enforcement of existing regulations and/or plans as a way to improve the City in the future. Eleven (11) percent said the downtown area and improvements to it held the key to improving Dothan's future.

Leadership

	Administration	Communication	Regulatory	Downtown	School
Percent	46%	21%	18%	11%	4%

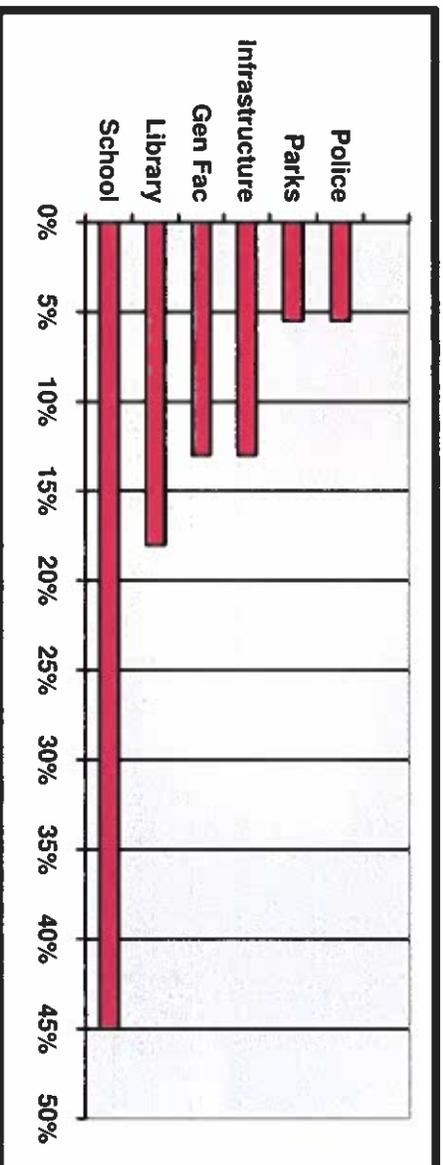


Public Facilities/Services

Forty-five (45) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned the schools or school system as in need of improvement as a way to improve the opportunities for Dothan's future. Eighteen (18) percent felt that a new library would increase the citizen's opportunities in the future; and thirteen (13) percent said that improvement to other facilities would help. Another thirteen (13) percent felt that infrastructure improvements would be the practical way to improve Dothan in this theme.

Public Facilities/Services

	Schools	Library	General Facilities	Infrastructure	Parks	Police
Percent	45%	18%	13%	13%	5.5%	5.5%

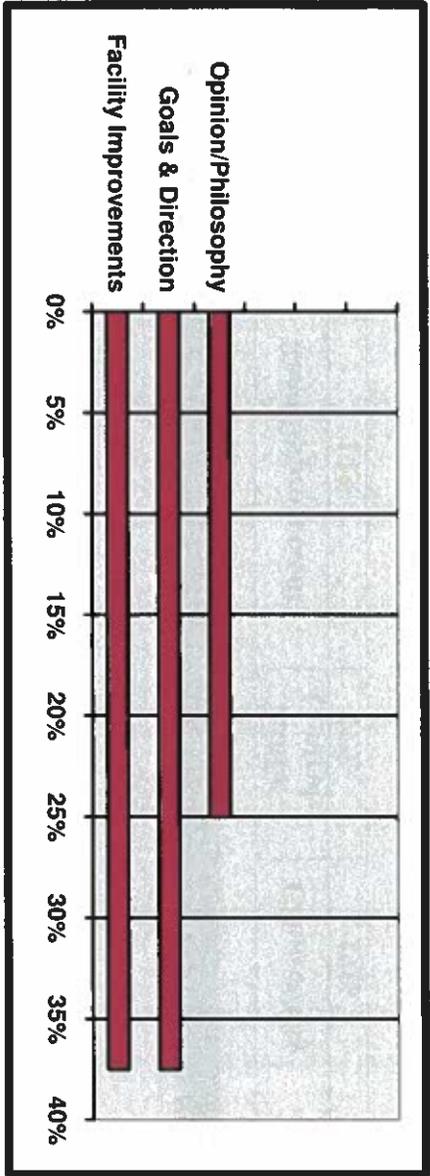


Community Services

Few comments or concerns in this theme were received and there were no clear leaders. Thirty-seven and one half (37.5) percent of the responses suggested that setting new goals and direction for the City was an opportunity; and another thirty-seven and one half (37.5) percent believed that large opportunities lay in the improvement of existing City facilities. The remaining twenty-five (25) percent were classified as general opinions or philosophies. Within this latter topic, some comments involved the support or expansion of non-profits in the area. Others mentioned giving back to the community by those who could afford to. An example of the goals and objectives would be outreach for retirees to move to Dothan. Facility improvement opportunities included the establishment of a senior center; and the need for more facilities such as the “Rotary Miracle Field”.

Community Services

	Facility Improvements	Goals & Direction	Opinion/Philosophy
Percent	37.5%	37.5%	25%

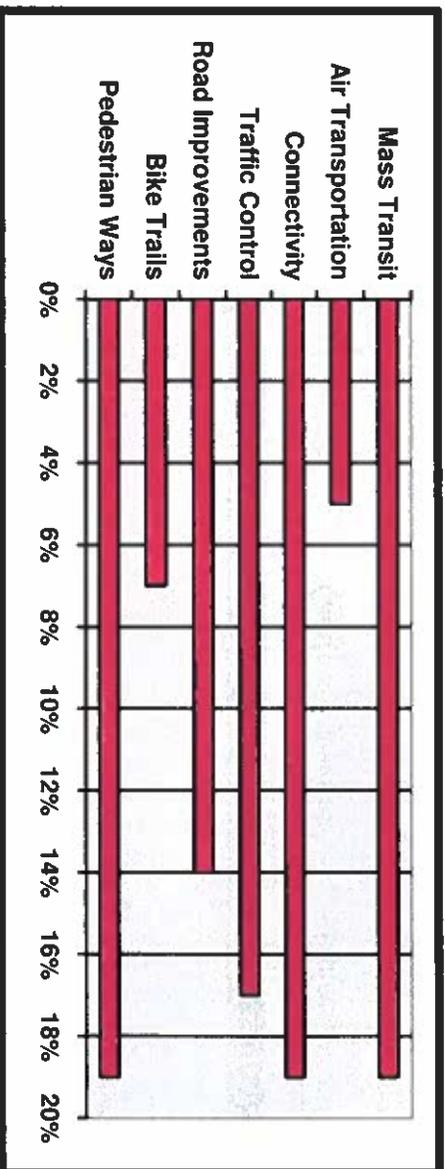


Transportation-Travel

Responses were fairly widespread and involved four modes of transportation (air, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian). Nineteen (19) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned the pedestrian transportation system, such as trails and sidewalks, as a way to improve the opportunities for Dothan's future. Nineteen (19) percent felt that more connectivity of roadways would increase the citizen's opportunities in the future; and another nineteen (19) percent said that the introduction of mass transit would help. Seventeen (17) percent felt that improvements to the traffic control system and traffic management systems would be the way to improve Dothan with regard to this theme. A mere seven (7) percent and five (5) percent addressed bikeways and air transportation respectively as opportunities.

Transportation/Travel

	Pedstrn	Bike	Road Improvement	Traffic Control	Connectivity	Air	Mass Transit
Percent	19%	7%	14%	17%	19%	5%	19%



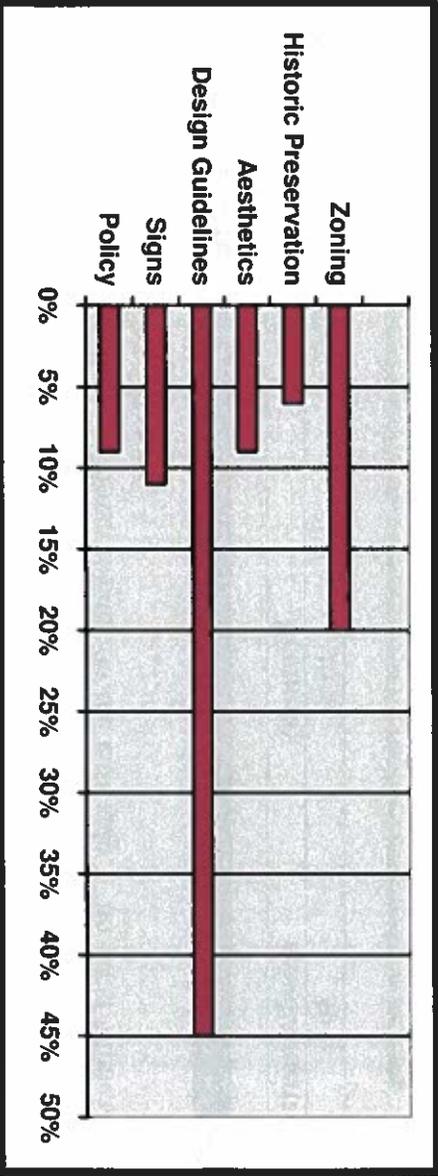


Regulatory Environment

The overwhelming majority, forty-five (45) percent of the comments and concerns suggested that development of a set of design guidelines for architectural, landscaping, and subdivision design was the most important need as a way to improve the opportunities for Dothan's future. Twenty (20) percent felt that enforcement of zoning rules or the creation of a new zoning ordinance would increase the citizen's opportunities in the future; and another combined twenty (20) percent said that improvement to the overall aesthetics (9%) or regulation of billboards and other signage (11%) would help. Only six (6) percent felt that historic preservation was an important opportunity to improve Dothan in this theme.

Regulatory Environment

	Policy	Signs	Design Guidelines	Aesthetics	Historic Preservation	Zoning
Percent	9%	11%	45%	9%	6%	20%



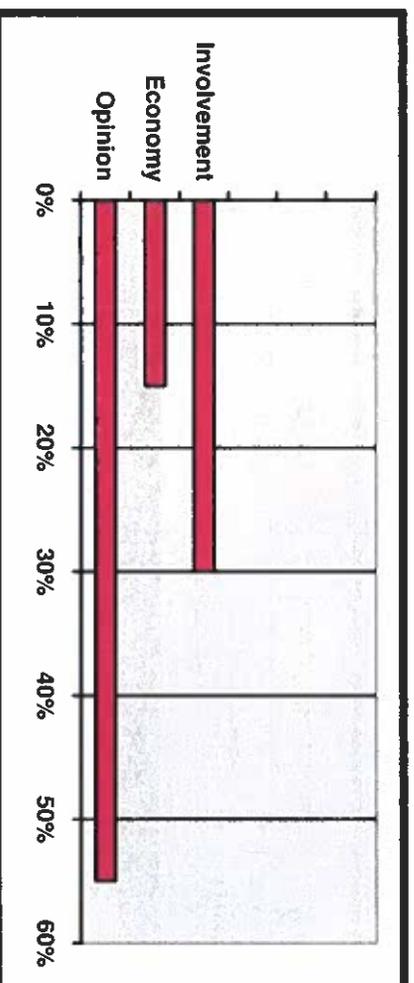
Criticism

Breaking this theme down into areas or groupings of comments or concerns was difficult indeed because the very nature of criticism is formed by opinion and personal bias.

The predominant tangible criticism is that citizens feel the need to be better informed and educated on the daily workings of the City. Thirty (30) percent of the comments and concerns listed an interest by the public in getting or keeping the public educated and informed as a way to improve the quality of life. Fifteen (15) percent of the comments could be tied to the economy, but fifty-five (55) percent of the comments were unclassifiable such as “better lighting in poor communities”, “better airline schedules”, “more post offices”, needing a “movie theater on the east side”, “no good Chinese restaurants”, and the desire to “put church activities ahead of other activities.”

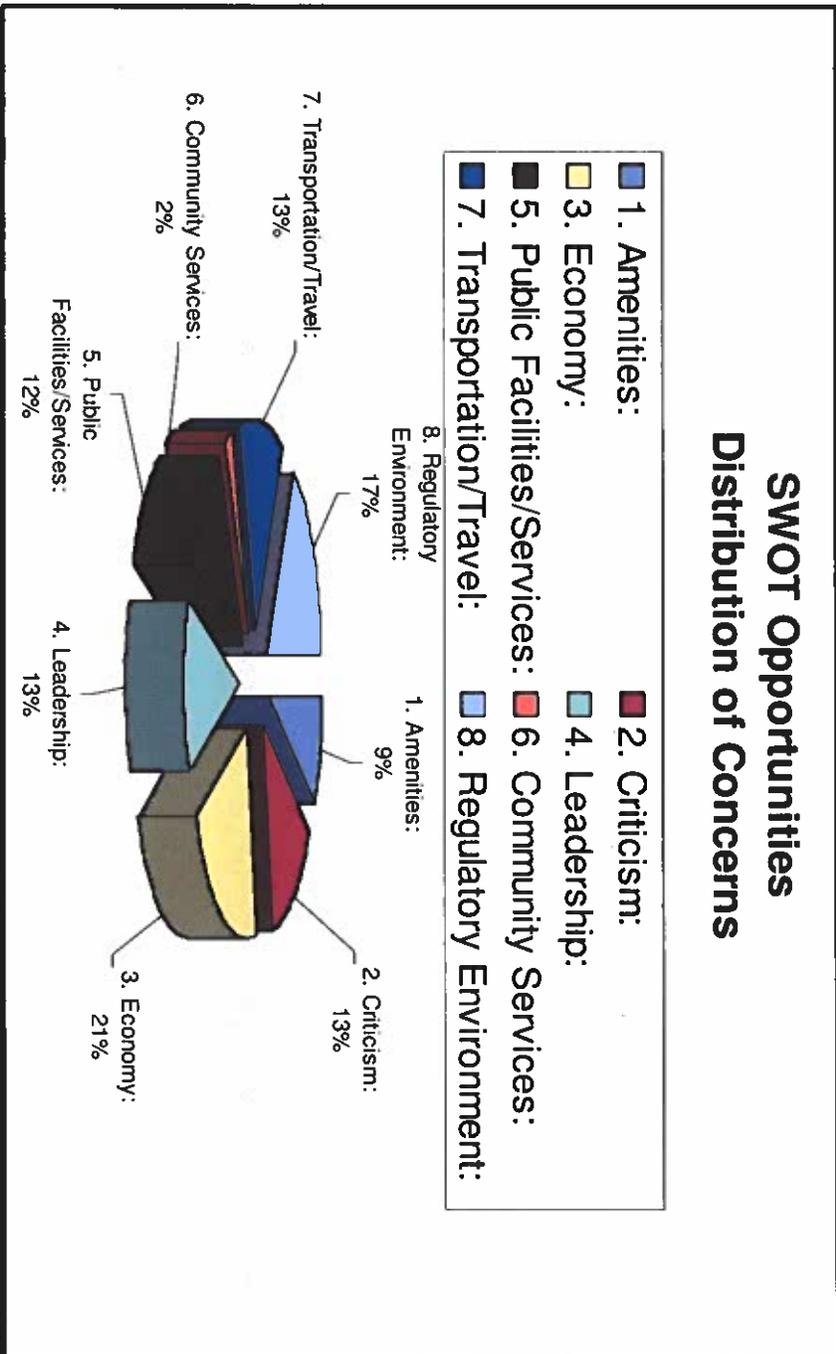
Criticism

	Opinion	Economy	Involvement
Percent	55%	15%	30%



The chart below demonstrates the distribution of the public's comments when it involves the City's future opportunities. The greatest opportunity lay in the area of economic improvements. The public felt that some of our other greatest opportunities for improvement lay in improvements to the existing regulatory environment and the transportation system.

SWOT Opportunities Distribution of Concerns



THREATS

Within this category the following comments and concerns held some commonality among the public responses. Following are tables to recap the comments and concerns regarding each theme within this category. A chart follows the tables to help graphically visualize the responses with regard to relative importance.

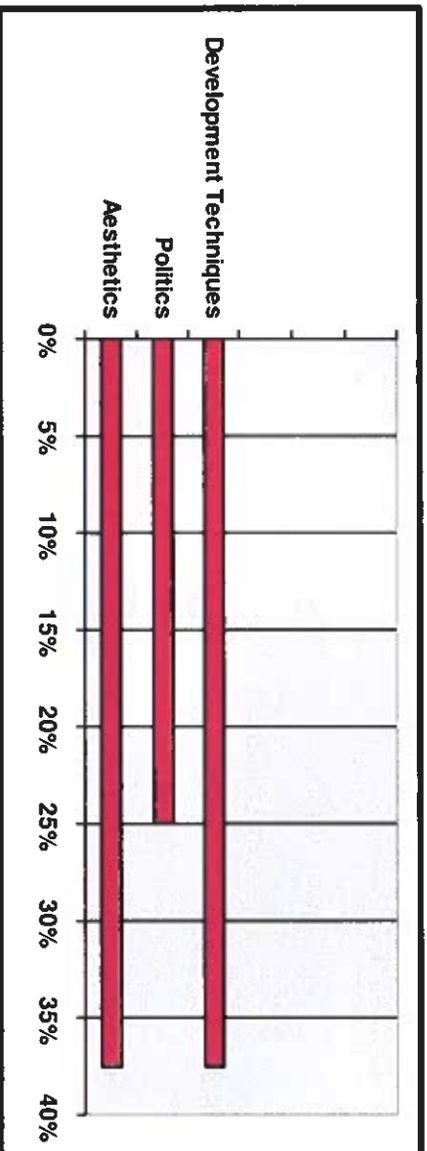
Threats are defined as areas that pose future negative impacts on the City. They are failures or flaws perceived by the public that could affect the future operation or level of services delivered to the citizens.

Amenities

The number one comment or concern, thirty-seven and one half (37.5) percent, within this theme revolves around the threat of poor aesthetics and development techniques.

Amenities

	Aesthetics	Politics	Development Technique
Percent	37.5%	25%	37.5%

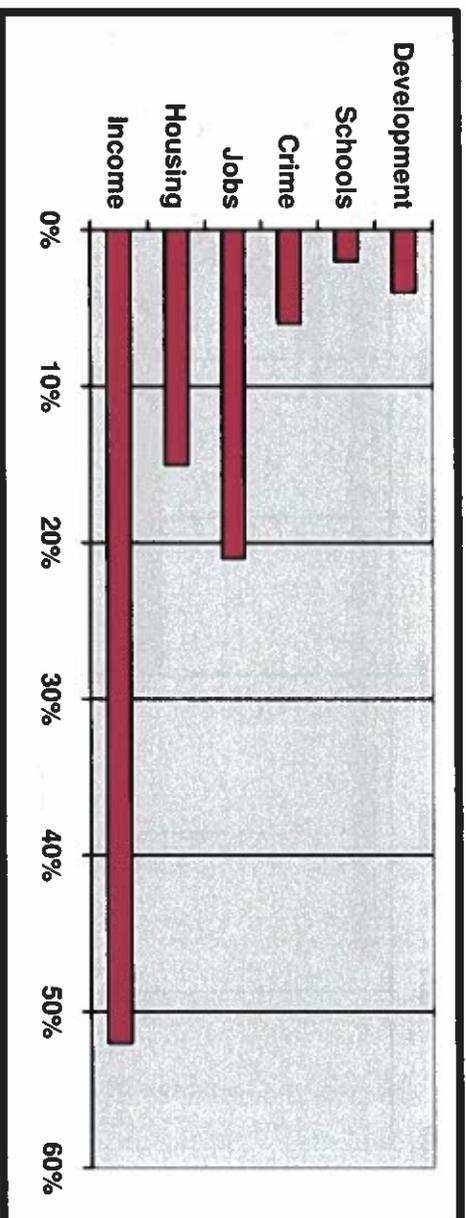


Economy

Leading the way with fifty-two (52) percent of the comments or concerns regarding future threats to Dothan is whether or not personal income will be high enough to sustain individual or family life-styles. The lack of jobs and the cost of future housing were also a major concern to the public.

Economy

	Income	Housing	Jobs	Crime	Schools	Development
Percent	52%	15%	21%	6%	2%	4%



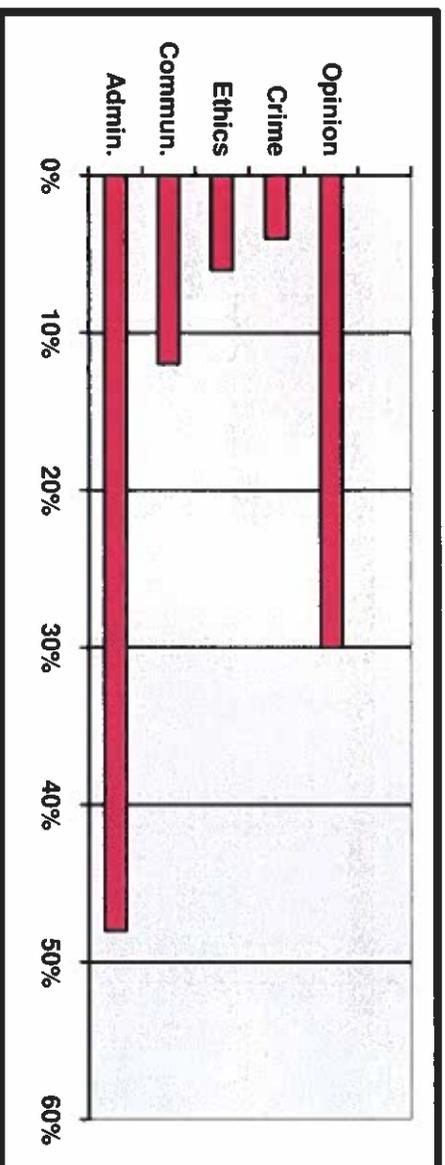
Leadership

Forty-eight (48) percent of the comments or concerns involved the existing government administration and/or its operation as the predominant perceived threat to the future of the City.

The second largest response group was the "opinion" where thirty (30) percent of those responding leveled criticism toward individuals, organizations and committees. The need for better communication between the City and its public garnered twelve (12) percent of the total responses received.

Leadership

	Administration	Communication	Ethics	Crime	Opinion
Percent	48%	12%	6%	4%	30%

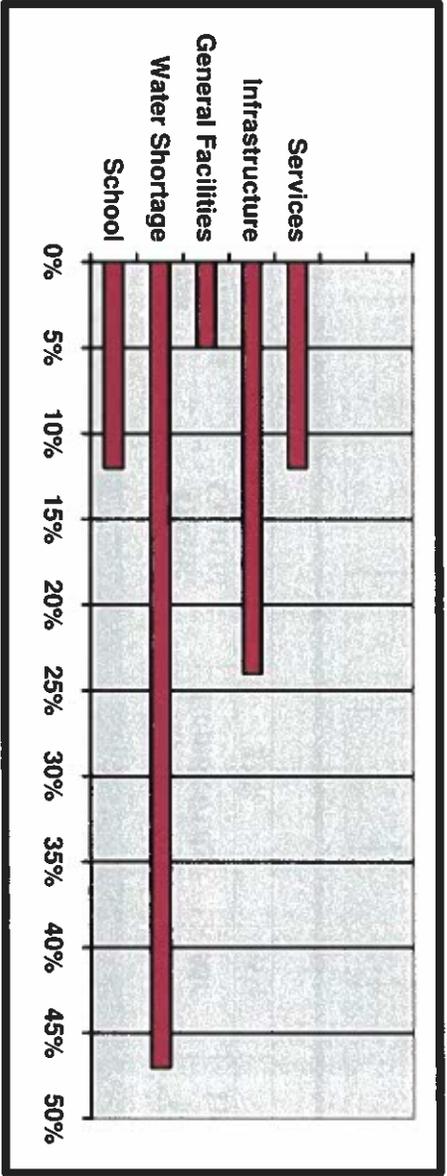


Public Facilities/Services

Forty-seven (47) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned the future water supply as the number one “threat” for Dothan’s future. Twenty-four (24) percent cited the condition of our existing infrastructure; and twelve (12) percent said that the level of services and our schools would be a threat to the City in the future.

Public Facilities/Services

	Schools	Water Shortage	General Facilities	Infrastructure	Services
Percent	12%	47%	5%	24%	12%



Community Services

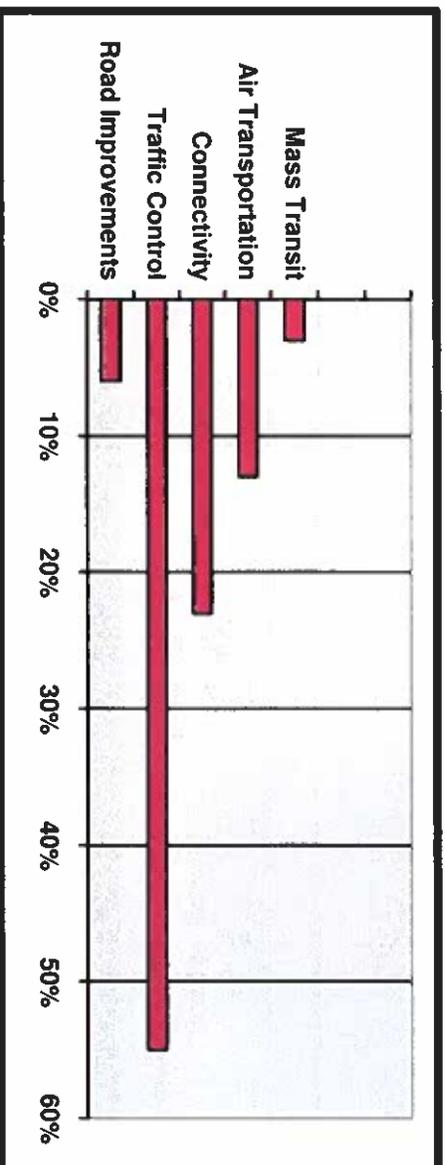
Only 1 comment was recorded regarding the public's perception of this theme as a threat to our future. That comment was "overspending (non-profit)".

Transportation-Travel

Responses involved two modes of transportation (air and vehicular). Bike trails and pedestrian movement were of no concern to the groups. Fifty-five (55) percent of the comments and concerns mentioned traffic control as the greatest threat to Dothan's future transportation system. Twenty-three (23) percent felt that the lack of connectivity between neighborhoods and the region was the second greatest threat to Dothan's future transportation system.

Transportation/Travel

	Road Improvement	Traffic Control	Connectivity	Air	Mass Transit
Percent	6%	55%	23%	13%	3%



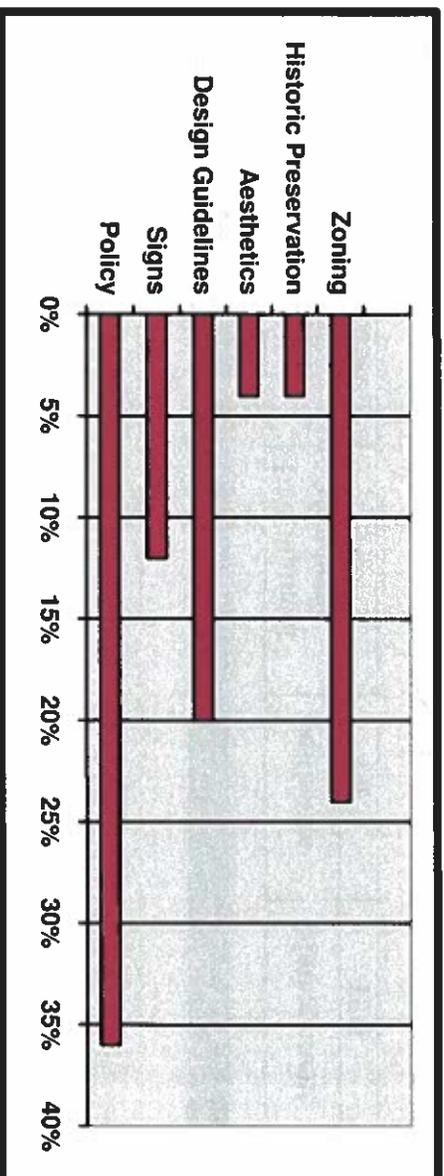


Regulatory Environment

The greatest perceived threat to Dothan's future lies in our policies and enforcement of existing codes. Thirty-six (36) percent of the responses indicated that the area of policy and enforcement would be the most significant obstacle to overcome as a threat within the regulatory environment of Dothan. Twenty-four (24) percent of the comments and concerns suggested that our existing zoning ordinance lacked the ability to carry the City forward; and twenty (20) percent saw the lack of design oriented guidelines to regulate development in the area as a future threat.

Regulatory Environment

	Policy	Signs	Design Guidelines	Aesthetics	Historic Preservation	Zoning
Percent	36%	12%	20%	4%	4%	24%

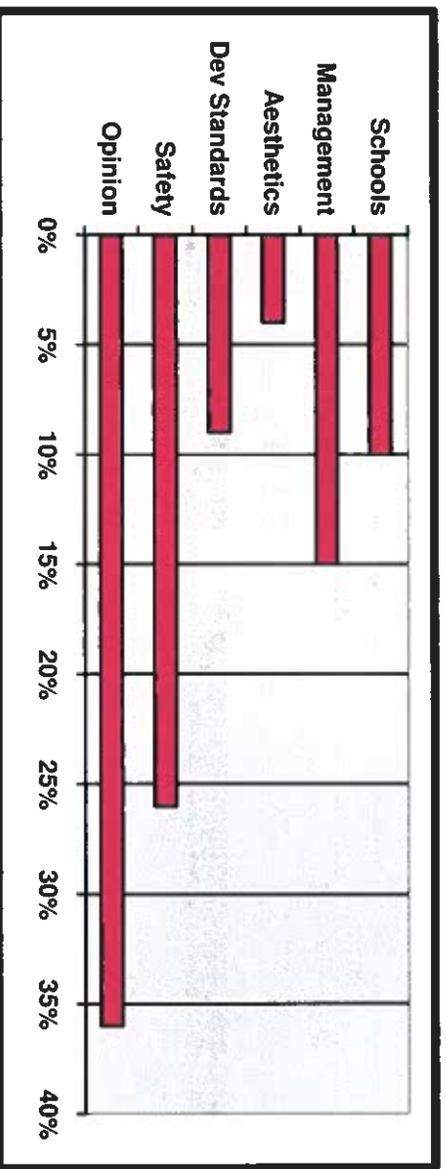


Criticism

Open opportunities for criticism are avenues for vocalizing generalized concerns and comments. This theme received the largest amount of entries than any other theme presented in this category of “Threats”. The majority of the responses are grouped as “opinions” due to the tone and nature of the comments. While it is the theme with the largest entries, the opinions ranged far and wide with very few, if any, common denominators. The predominant tangible criticism is that citizens need to be better informed and educated on the daily workings of the City; and that the City be more congenial and responsive to its citizens. Thirty-six (36) percent of the comments and concerns fell into the “opinion” grouping, with “Safety” (26%) as the second most important topic. Fifteen (15) percent viewed the current management as one of the significant threats to Dothan’s future.

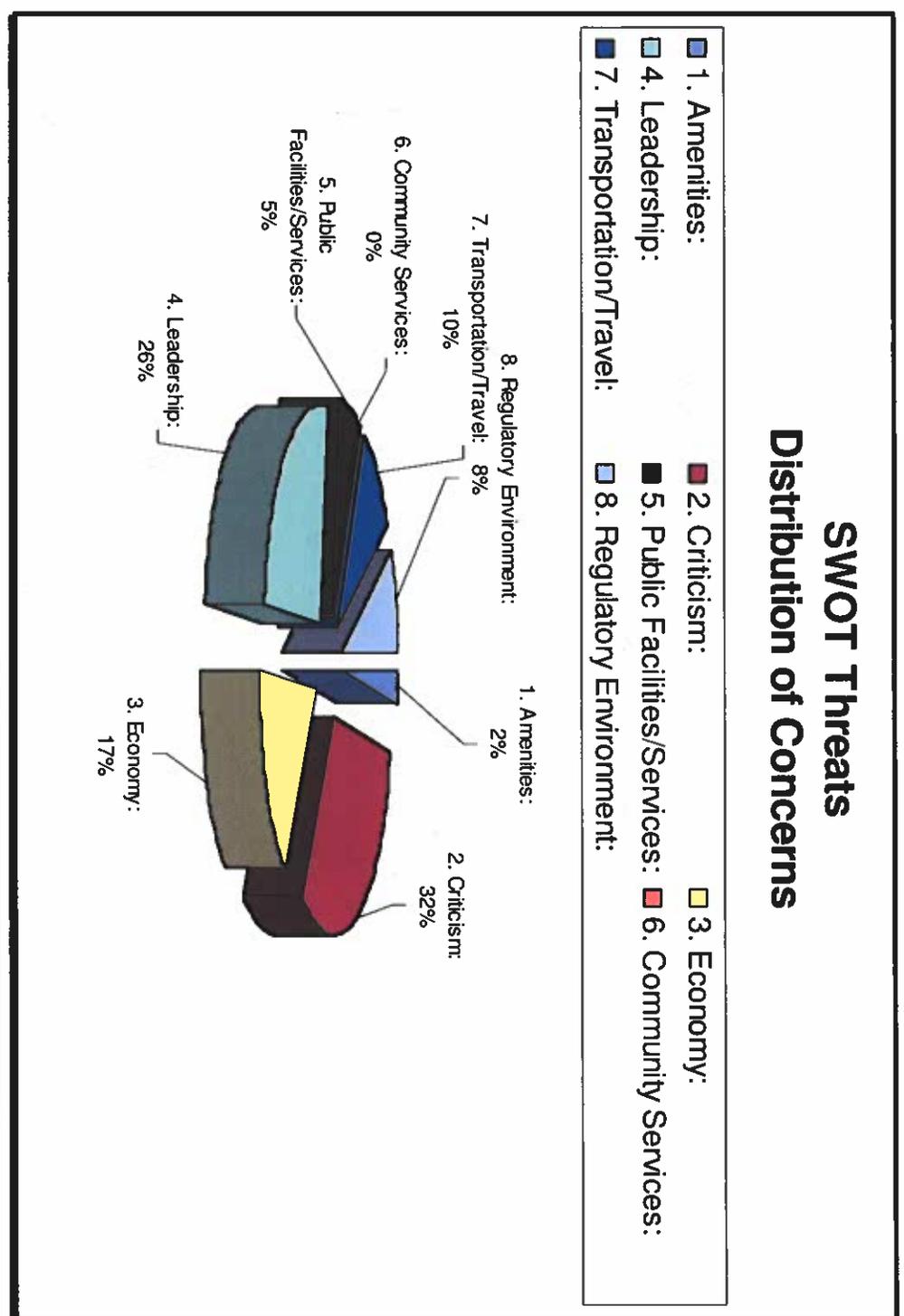
Criticism

	Opinion	Safety	Development Standards	Aesthetics	Management	Schools
Percent	36%	26%	9%	4%	15%	10%



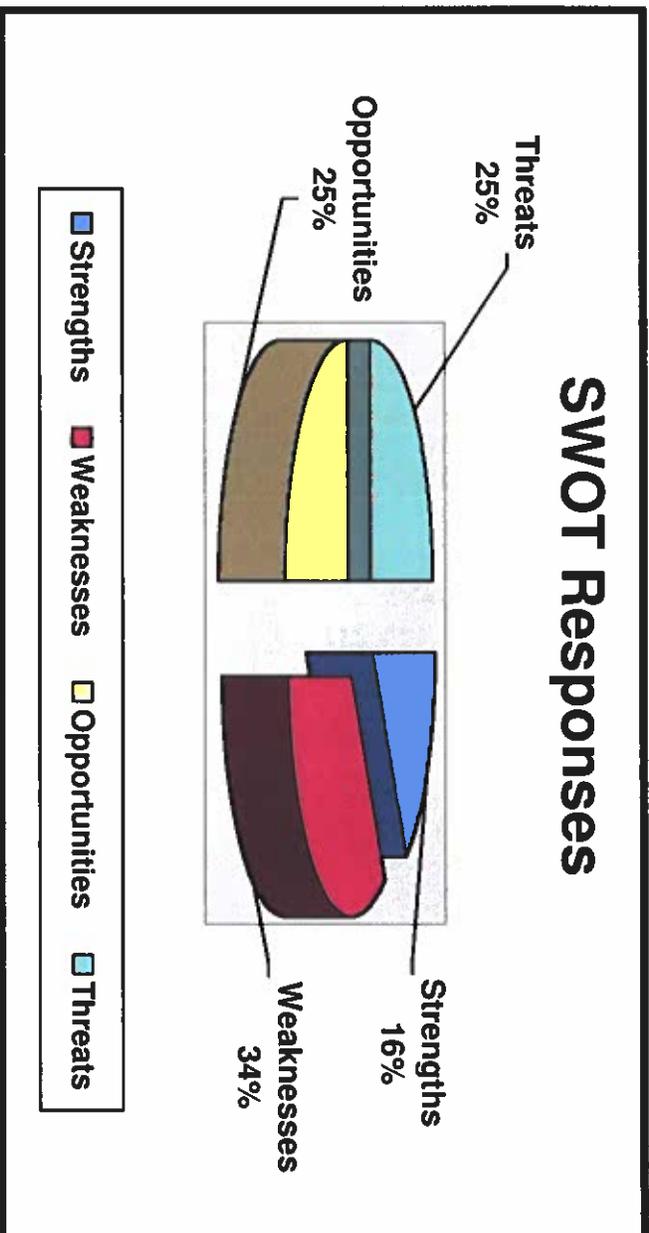
The following chart demonstrates the distribution of the public's concerns when it involves future City threats. The three greatest concerns relevant to future threats to the City and its citizen's quality of life lay in the areas of general criticism, the regulatory environment, and the economy.]

SWOT Threats Distribution of Concerns



HOW THEY RESPONDED

Following is a chart which displays the overall results of the SWOT in terms of percentages. The results show the percentage of concern regarding Dothan's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, or Threats. Bear in mind that the former two categories are indicative of "current" issues and conditions, whereas the latter two categories address the feel the public has for Dothan's future conditions.



According to the responses, more people believed that there was a higher amount of issues related to Dothan's current weaknesses than any other category. Dothan's strengths received the least amount of responses which would seem to indicate a low level of public approval with how the City is currently operating.

Dothan's future was equally split as far as the public was concerned. They felt Dothan's future held as many positive as it does negative values and qualities. The job of the City would, it seems, to be to address those issues viewed as current weaknesses and future threats by the responding public.

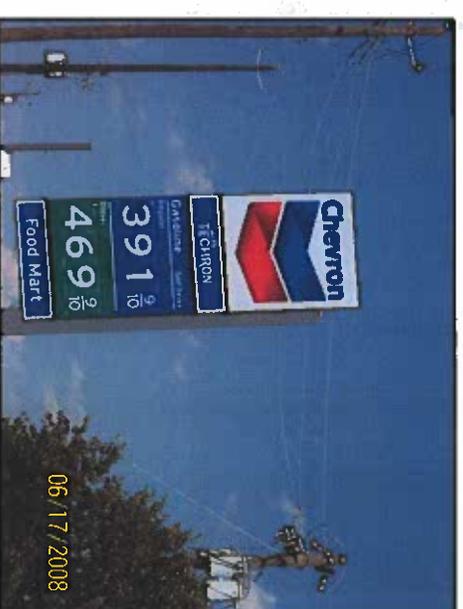
This long range planning effort will incorporate the results of the SWOT as well as the citizen survey administered earlier in the planning process along with the results of the Visual Preference Survey (VPS) accomplished simultaneously with the SWOT.

Understanding the Context of Our Future Decisions



Decisions and directions that compose this Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) were not made solely in-office. Our decisions and the recommendations contained in this document were formed by a range of influences. Those influences as outlined in the following pages were arrived at through feedback received from various public outreach efforts including a citizen survey, telephoned suggestions by the public and a series of public forums in several locations throughout the City.

In this period of American history (2007 and 2008) where we are experiencing a constantly changing national and world economy, including rising gasoline prices, the estimates and assumptions used in developing this Plan, clearly have an impact on mobility and land use patterns. For example, rising gasoline prices will undoubtedly affect where people elect to live with relation to where they work and where they shop and how they get there. Not only will the size of automobiles continue their downward scale as they have since the 1950's, but the frequency that families use them will also be scaled back to reflect the rising cost associated with their operation. That will impact how and where land is developed in the future. Some of the changes that may occur could be in the rise in popularity of more compact, walkable new developments, located nearer to where we live rather than separated from the central business districts or other work centers. The nature and scale of

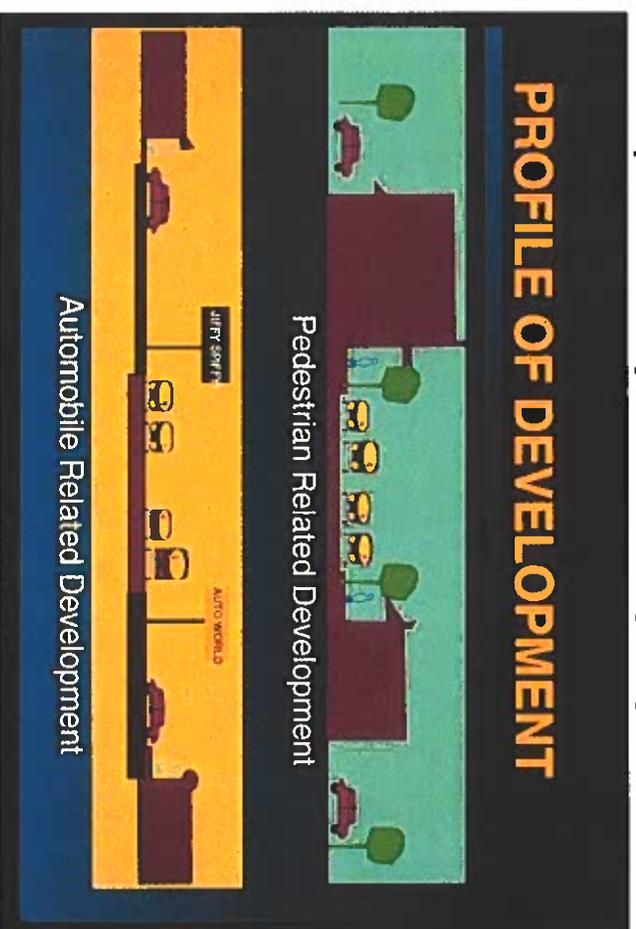


the development would correspond to the market in which it is located.

CONSOLIDATED COMPACT DEVELOPMENTS

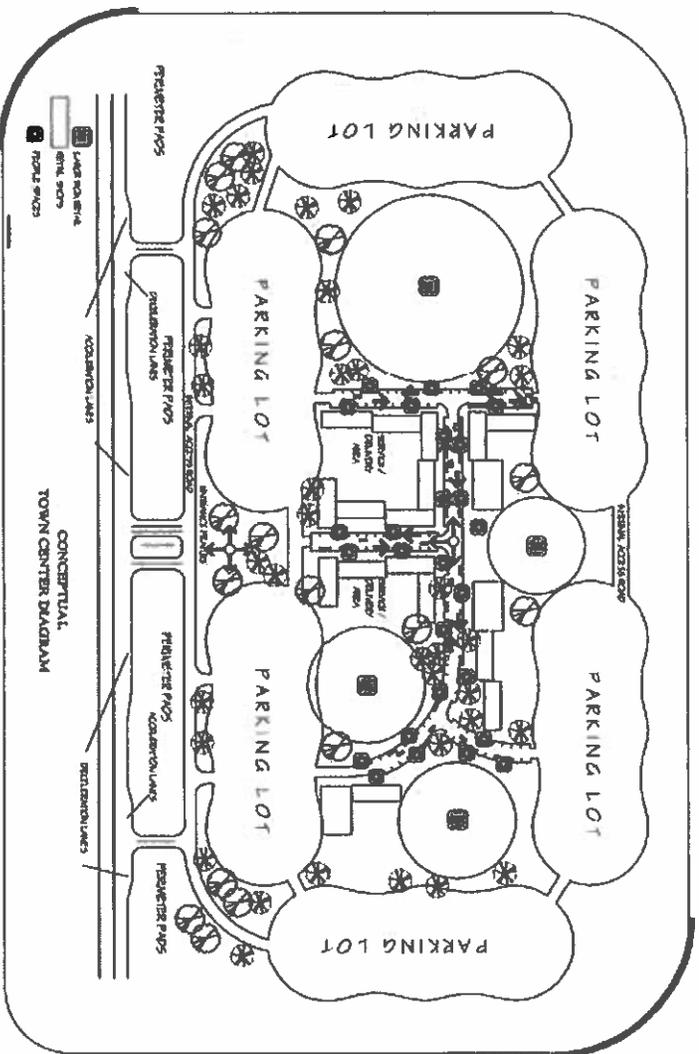
We will need to re-tool our thought process concerning the growth of our community not in terms of the “sprawling”, expansive patterns out in the suburbs laced together by a network of roads and tied to the urban core by another network of roads, but in terms of a more compact, cohesive and sustainable pattern of development. The development profile needs to be re-tooled from the old automobile-related standard to a more pedestrian-related one. Instead of a central business district over here and commercial malls over there and residential subdivisions in still another area, we need to think in terms of “Places”. “Places” that will contain work centers, residential areas, restaurants, and commercial/retail centers. The size of the “Places” will ultimately be broken down into two standards of development. Those two standards will be Community Retail Service areas and Neighborhood Retail Service areas.

Community Retail Service areas will develop as nodular points at critical intersections along our transportation mobility system. These are the larger of the two standards and will include large box retail, sit down restaurants, movie cinemas, office parks, food market centers, private recreation activities, transportation stops, and possibly satellite government offices. They will be a cohesive unit that will offer an interface of three modes of transportation (vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian). Connectivity between like and unlike land uses within these “Places” will be of paramount importance so that the residents of the residential areas may walk, bike or drive unimpeded to destinations within the Community Retail Service area “Place”. The primary trade area of “big box” retailers in Dothan is currently measured by an 80-mile radius. As the population in this area increases, that radius will shrink.



Neighborhood Retail Service areas will develop around pre-existing or residential developments popping up at some distance from the Community Retail Service areas. They may contain multi-family housing, specialty retail, small restaurants, gas station-convenience stores, garden office parks, day cares, medical offices, and other activities that would support a much smaller trade area than the larger, Community Retail Service areas. Since they are smaller, connectivity issues would only impact the one or two residential neighborhoods that they serve.

Attempts will be made by the City, by public-private investments and by some private investors to re-populate the downtown area. There will probably be some success limited to infill tracts devoted to the development of an Urban Traditional Neighborhood or an Urban Planned Unit Development. The former will be strictly residential in nature and the latter a mixture of commercial/residential. Yet, unless the government desires to get back into the business of developing residential “projects” as seen from the 1940’s through the 1970’s in many metro areas of the U. S. to house those individuals and families now living in inner city neighborhoods, redevelopment will be a hit and miss proposition. This is due mostly to the fact that nearly all of the property inside Ross Clark Circle has already been developed. More likely, the area around the Wiregrass Commons Mall will be the first area to be “re-invented” or redeveloped as a Community Retail Service area “Place” with some sort of mixed use, commercial/residential theme. **The Northside Mall** opposite the Wiregrass Commons Mall also has the same potential. If the City continues to expand westward, it may become necessary for the City to develop a satellite office containing some part of government services now available only in the downtown while the center of government and its administrative offices remain within the central business district.



What's definite is the fact that rising fuel prices has a historic effect on where people choose to live and where they choose to work and shop. This phenomenon became evident in the 1970's when there was a perceived fuel shortage which drove the price of gasoline up from 55 cents to 75 cents a gallon. Larger metropolitan areas such as Houston, Texas saw a change in where and how new residential developments occurred. No longer were large areas being developed outside the city limits strictly as a residential project. The term "master-planned community" took fashion as large, multi-thousand acre developments sprung up that not only had a residential component, but had a commercial/office/retail one as well. Many bought homes within the new master-planned developments and worked there too. As the numbers of residential units grew, so did the food markets, retailers, service industry and schools within the new development.

Here in Dothan we need to plan for connectivity between new developments that increases accessibility. New regulations should be fashioned to address future needs not only for motorized vehicles but also for bicycle and pedestrian movement. Hard-surfaced trails should be incorporated into the design of new developments that are separate from the streets to minimize the amount of vehicular/pedestrian conflicts. Trails, not simply sidewalks, should be incorporated into the residential and commercial components at the rear of residential lots or in landscaped reserves paralleling but outside of the public street right-of-way. In this manner, the development's home owners or commercial association would be responsible for the maintenance and repair of the trails with the enforcement powers of the City for them to do so rather than expect tax payers City-wide to foot the bill.

JURISDICTION AND REGULATION

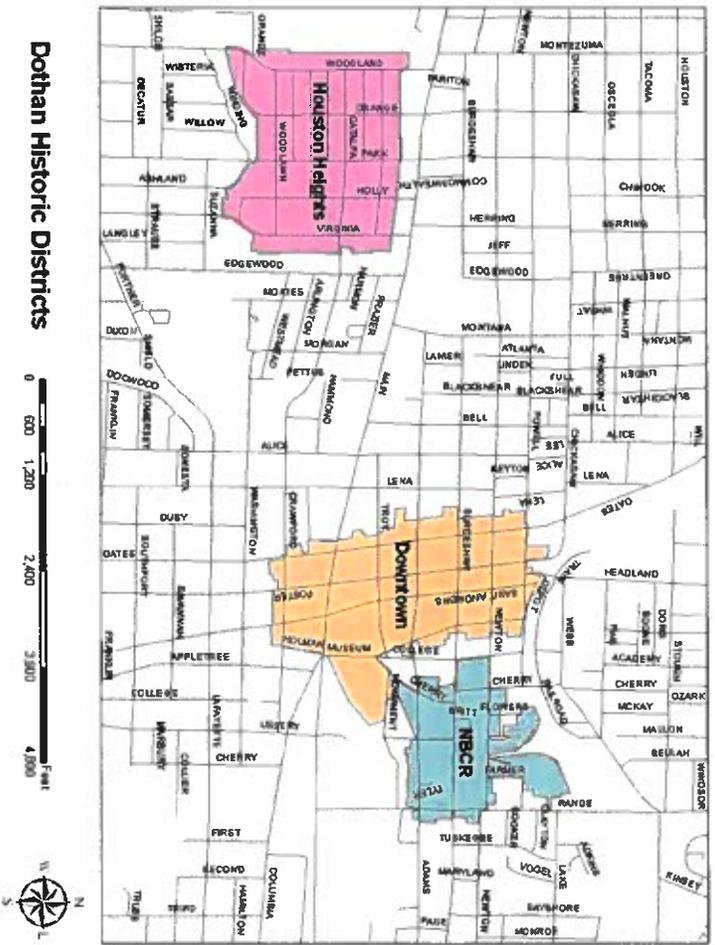
There are several regulatory factors that influence where we live and what form development will take. As a community, we should all be concerned about the quality of development that occurs. One of the tools available to us is the planning jurisdiction. The City of Dothan enjoys a five-mile planning jurisdiction (PJ) granted by State Law. The five-mile planning jurisdiction enables cities like Dothan, to protect their future interests by controlling the subdivision of land; land that will one day be annexed into the City. At the present, the City has agreed with Houston County to pull back its state-allowed five-mile planning jurisdiction to the City limits. But the City maintains the ability to review proposed developments within three miles of the City limits. In this Report, we propose that an urban growth boundary be established to replace this agreement and return this statutory authority to the City.

As there is no zoning within the unincorporated areas of the County, the only land development controls available to the City to ensure design integrity are the subdivision regulations. The most obvious problem with the County's proposal is that the City will eventually be asked to annex subdivisions outside its limits that may not have been built to City code. Just as important is extending building inspections and permitting into the PJ to ensure that buildings are in compliance with City regulations. Once annexed, the City would, by law, have to maintain the infrastructure and address housing construction issues that would otherwise be avoidable if the development met City code.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Dothan has three historic districts. The quality and the form of development that occurs within these districts, including the Downtown Commercial Historic District, the Houston Heights Historic District and the Newton, Burdeshaw, Cherry and Range (NBCR) District are impacted by design guidelines as well as basic land use regulations. Protecting and preserving the character of the development that is contained in these areas is a vital part of maintaining the heritage and character of the city.

Dothan utilizes a Euclidian form of zoning that was originally established in 1946. Timing and market conditions have led to many rezoning approvals over the years. It is important to remember that zoning works to establish minimum development standards. Often, these minimums do not address all the impacts that are likely to be felt when property is developed. Since zoning was initiated in Dothan, land use regulation has continued to evolve and this traditional form may not be the most appropriate given Dothan's goals for growth. Other styles may be more appropriate in a given situation and will be explored



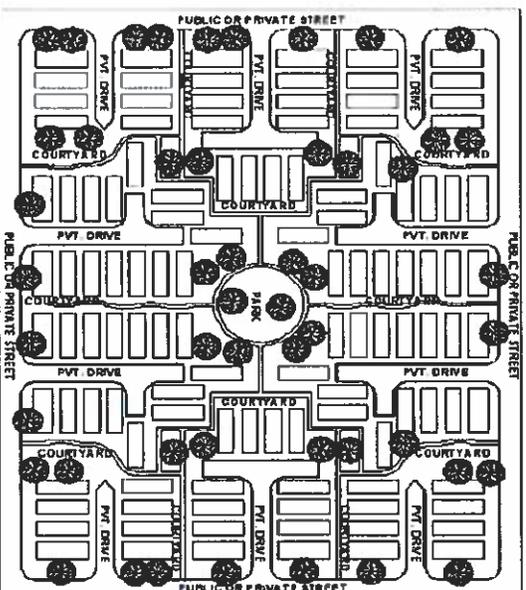
separately from this document. The LRDP will not change the form of zoning in Dothan, but will recommend that alternatives be evaluated for application in Dothan.

These districts were established to secure the integrity and character of certain areas within the original City boundaries. Contributing and non-contributing buildings have been located and inventoried and building permit requirements for reconstruction or new construction within the historic districts have been established. The Historic Preservation Commission is charged with overseeing and administering proposed changes to buildings in all three districts as authorized by Chapter 50 of the City code.

A **Downtown Overlay District (DOD)** has been established to overlay the Downtown Core Area (DCA) as well as approximately 14 additional, adjacent acres. This district has three subdistricts that either relaxes or strengthens building setbacks, structure heights, off-street parking requirements, defined view corridors, as well as other criteria for re-development and new development within its confines.

Planned Unit Developments have been created by private land developers to introduce a mix of land uses that would not be otherwise allowed. The largest single PUD in Dothan is the residential subdivision named the Woodlands in the northwest quadrant of the City. Recently, the City created two new PUD forms for application in the downtown area. The Urban Traditional Neighborhood Development District (UTND) is designed to capture unique residential only development opportunities on small infill tracts. Likewise, the Urban Planned Unit Development District (UPUD) is designed for commercial application which may include a residential component.

**EXAMPLE OF CLUSTERING IN A
URBAN TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD**
WITH "T"-TYPE, "L"-TYPE AND DEAD END PRIVATE DRIVES
AND COURTYARDS, OPEN SPACE AND PARK.



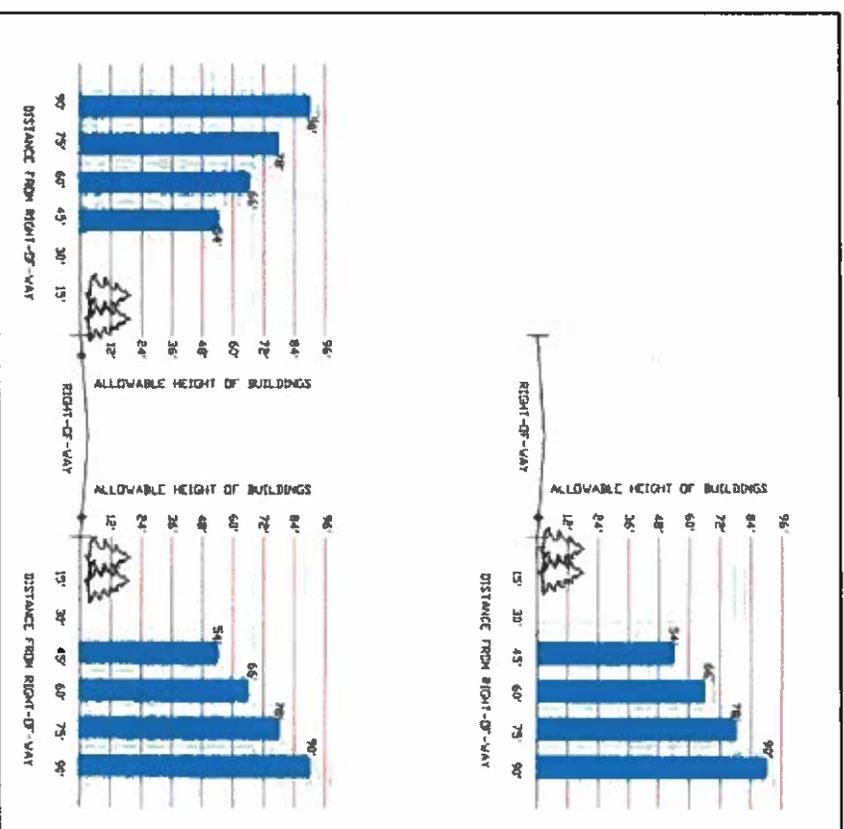
Urban Traditional Neighborhood Development (UTND) is a floating zone that may be used in the DOD as well and modifications were also made to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations as enabling measures for this new zone. Similar in content and area of restrictions to the UPUD, the UTND differs in allowable minimum acreage, size of lots allowed, and the presence of private drives; “T” and “L” type turn arounds on dead end drives; and impervious cover requirements among other design constraints. As the UPUD, the UTND encourages unconventional “outside the box” design techniques.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Scenic Corridor Overlay Districts - Certain “gateway” roads into the City have been identified and a draft ordinance has been created for an overlay district along these roadways. The overlay districts would be subject to a more stringent design criteria for development than is found in other areas of the City. A separate design guideline has been developed to address such things as spacing of project entries onto a scenic corridor, the amount of landscaping, parking lot standards, building height and setbacks in relation to the street (see illustration to the right), as well as spatial orientation of buildings to the street and to each other.

Large Regional Development Projects

Country Crossing, a music-oriented theme park is planned just to the south of the City limits of Dothan located on U.S. 231 South. Its development promises to have significant impact on not only the entertainment industry, but new service industry land uses, new housing uses, and support commercial uses. This development would constitute the creation of a major new market that would permeate the general vicinity of Country Crossing as well as along U.S. 231 South with development activity occurring both nearby and at a short distance from the entertainment center. Already, the City Planning

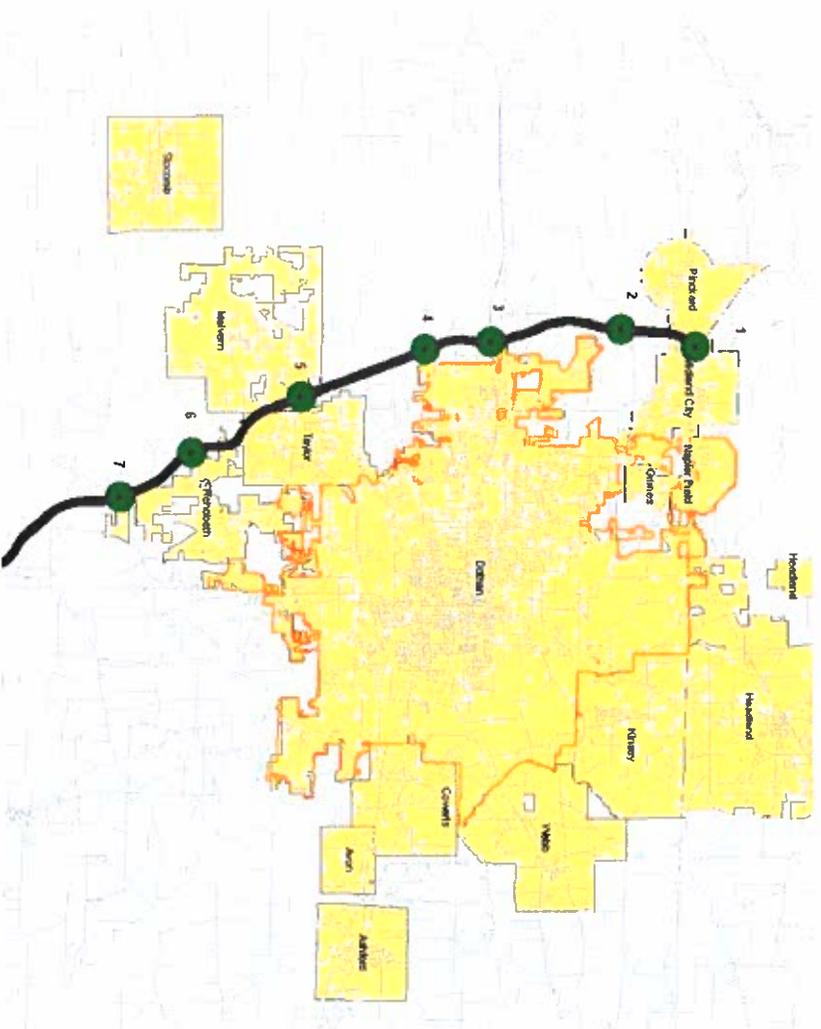


& Development Department is seeing feasibility and speculative rezonings for development projects by other developers in the general area of Country Crossing.

Impact of the I-10 Connector

Should the long awaited I-10 Connector become a reality, there will be significant new mixed use development activity associated with its construction. Since it is proposed to be a limited access roadway, it would be in the City's best interest to actively pursue annexation of the land in the area of proposed interchanges 2, 3, & 4 (shown in the map to the right). Land development strategies should be implemented that promotes concentrated activities at and nearby these nodes. Since potential development may not occur for some time, the City should look at creating a "reserve" district until firm plans can be presented.

As the area population grows, our employment, service and retail industries will continue their growth proportionally. If Dothan is not able to provide housing or an economic base for our share of the region's demand, development would occur within the unincorporated areas of Houston and Dale Counties. The City of Enterprise, 25 miles to our west is also enjoying an economic boom of sorts and growth will continue over the next decades on a regional level to fill in the gaps between Dothan and Enterprise.



Water will be the most valuable resource for the future of the area. Steps are now in place to introduce a surface water reservoir into the area, but others will be needed to take care of the burgeoning growth the Dothan area is sure to see during the life of this Plan.

Purpose of the Long Range Development

Plan



A plan is a policy framework, or a roadmap, that affects the decision making direction regarding the physical, social and economic environments of a city. The Dothan 2030 Plan contains goals and strategies for steering the City of Dothan's policy and decision making over the next 20 years. While the Plan provides a roadmap, continued vigilance to changing needs requires that the Plan be revisited and updated on a regular basis.

Dothan's Long Range Development Plan will define goals and strategies necessary for land use; community appearance and design; housing and neighborhoods; jobs and economic vitality; transportation; public services and facilities; natural resource protection; open space and recreation; history, arts and culture; and regional participation.

The Long Range Development Plan is intended to be used as a tool by for the staff to make recommendations to the Planning Commission as well as the City Commission in areas such as proposals for annexations, considerations of regulatory amendments or other changes, or policy changes. The Planning Commission and the City Commission should use this Plan as a tool in their evaluation of proposals brought before them.

THE LONG RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

What it is	What it isn't
➤ A statement of City policy	➤ A Zoning Ordinance
➤ A guide to decision making	➤ A Land Development Code
➤ A framework for more specific planning	➤ A rigid or static document
➤ A tool for education and communication	➤ A Capital Improvements Plan
➤ A view in long range perspective	➤ A City Budget template
➤ A way to improve quality of life	➤ A specific project development plan

The Plan should be made readily available to the public so that they might understand the long range goals and objectives of the City. It will also provide a basis for various City-level development regulations and ordinances as well as the foundation for proposed capital improvement or Community Development Block Grant projects.

Legal Foundation

The State of Alabama Statutes state 'any municipality is hereby authorized and empowered to make, adopt, amend, extend, add to, or carry out a municipal plan as provided in this article and to create by ordinance a planning commission with the powers and duties herein set forth.' (Title 11, Section 11-52-2). Furthermore, the Statutes state (Title 11, Section 11-52-8) 'It shall be the function and duty of the commission to make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of such municipality.'

Title 11, Section 11-52-9 defines the conduct of surveys and studies; purpose of the plan. 'In the preparation of such plans the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of present conditions and future growth of the municipality with regard to its relation to neighboring territory.' It goes on in this section to define the plan's general purpose as 'guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs...'

The procedure for its adoption is outlined within Title 11, Section 11-52-10 of the Statutes.

Logical Foundation

No one and no business would prosper without an understanding of where they are at a point in time, what their goals and objectives are, and a plan for the accomplishment of those goals and objectives. Likewise, no municipality would be able to respond to quality of life issues or matters of health and safety of its citizens without a plan identifying community goals and objectives and mapping out a way to achieve them.

Title 11, Section 11-52-9 requires that a municipality establish studies that define present conditions. Notwithstanding the statute, it would be irresponsible for a person, business or municipality to not first understand its current conditions, assets and weaknesses, opportunities and constraints as a benchmark from which to plan an improved future.

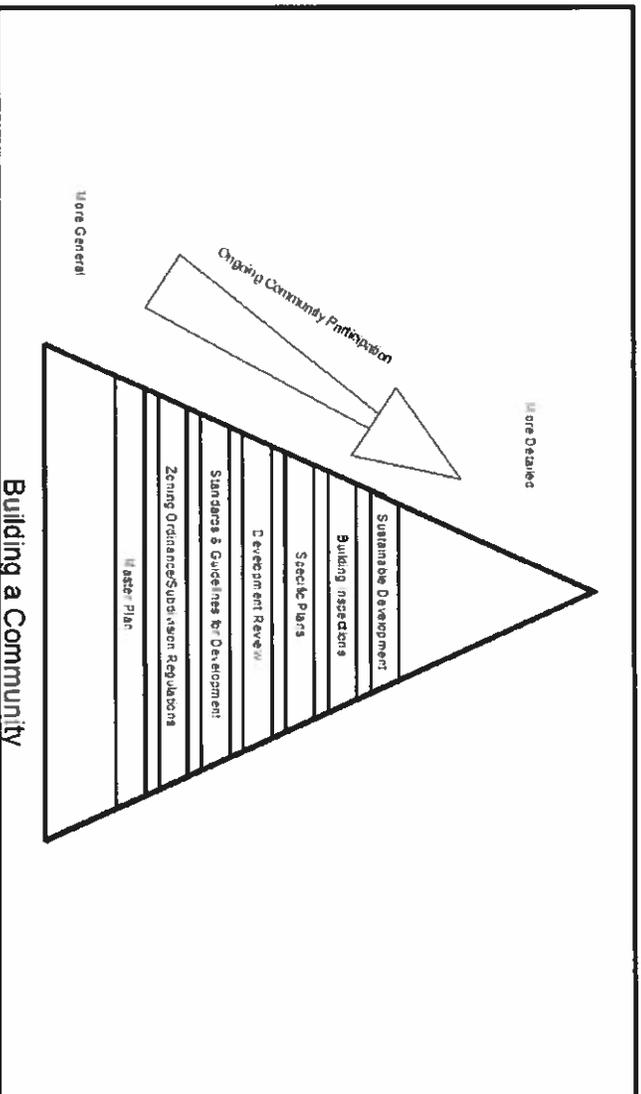
Dothan 2030 is such a plan that considers where we are, where we've been and where we want to be. Its adoption and implementation will chart a reasonable course for the development of the City as well as its environs.

The Long Range Development Plan should be used in conjunction with development regulations, construction documents and programs that together form the development process. The following illustration shows the relationship between each element in the process. At the base of the pyramid is the long range plan followed by layers of other procedures, documents and programs (public and private) that derive their existence and purpose from the overall goal of the plan; sustainable development. The arrow on the left indicates the continued community involvement throughout the planning process through public hearings as well as other forums and venues.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come. The most often quoted definition of sustainable development is "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems to support the man-made environment to the social challenges facing humanity. As early as the 1970s "sustainability" was employed to describe an economy "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems." Ecologists have pointed to The Limits to Growth, and presented the alternative of a "steady state economy" in order to address environmental concerns.



available to build it, whether they are environmental, economic or socio-political.

Land Development Process

The Long Range Development Plan establishes the foundation and framework for decisions, the Land Development Code is one of the tools that can be used to implement the goals and bring the strategies to reality. The Land Development Code is comprised of the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations which together, specify the development plan review process. These legal documents are employed to facilitate the goals and strategies identified and outlined in the Plan.

Standards and Guidelines for Development

The typical Development Code contains documents which define and regulate architectural and site design standards unique to specific areas of Dothan or specific kinds of development. Many of the documents currently used in Dothan are already in existence and will require rewriting to include new thoughts, concepts and processes to produce better development. The City should not delay beginning this process as soon as possible.

Capital Improvements Plan

The Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is typically organized in five-year increments and serves as the link between the goals and objectives of the Long Range Development Plan and the City's annual budget. Typically, the CIP is the outline or schedule of capital improvements to the City infrastructure or other assets and may include items such as:

- Major roads;
- Bridges;
- Large park projects; and
- Government buildings and/or facilities.

The CIP attempts to balance the City's needs with a modicum of fiscal responsibility and constraint.

Specific Plans

Specific plans are often produced to evaluate and recommend actions to address a single topic. They can take the form of a single document on a discrete topic (open space plan, parks and recreation plan, etc.) or can be a series of plans similarly constructed but applied to different geographies (Neighborhood Plans).

The City has a concerted history of developing and implementing these kinds of plans. Three of the most notable of these plans is the Master Plan for Parks and Recreation (2006), The Beaver Creek Drainage Basin Study (2007) and the Long Range Plan for the Dothan Water System (2001). These plans are not part of this document and are available separately.

Adoption

To be adopted, the LRDP must go through a formal public hearing process. The LRDP will be reviewed and adopted by resolution by the Planning Commission. The resolution will then be presented to the City Commission during a regularly-scheduled meeting, along with the LRDP document, for ratification by the City Commission. Certain components of the

LRDP such as a Major Arterial and Collector Plan and any other ordinances or amendments to existing ordinances developed as a result of the LRDP process must receive City Commission approval to become effective.

The natural tendency is to presume that the LRDP or any other Plan as adopted will be applied in its entirety with minimal changes throughout the course of its scheduled timeframe. Such a rigid interpretation and application would not be responsive to the natural changes in market conditions as well as any unforeseen opportunities that may arise. Making long range decisions means that issues need to be periodically readdressed to reflect new or emerging circumstances. Each succeeding Planning Commission and City Commission may choose to revisit the Plan and reconsider any previous long range policy decisions and could then elect to modify the LRDP, but a concerted effort should be made to thoroughly evaluate the Plan at least once every five years.

This LRDP is designed to be a broad and flexible document that changes in response to the community's needs, conditions and directions of change. The Long Range Development Plan was formulated and adopted with full consideration of the character of the City as well as the balance of its land uses.

Visions and Guiding Principles



Each and every one of us has some sort of vision for our lives and more specifically, what the City of Dothan should be like in the future. Stewarding the vision for Dothan on a regular basis are the members of the Planning Commission, each from varied walks of life, age, gender, and racial background. Although visions differ from one person to the next, they all share the same common thread as far as qualities and reference points. From conversations and discussions with the Planning Commission, City staff, the business community and most importantly, the public, we have formulated a vision of a City that is safe, attractive and sustainable for ourselves, our children and future generations yet unborn. We envision a City where the natural environment is protected, a place where excellent City services are available and provided where the overall quality of life is shared by all, and where citizens are true partners in their attractive place in which to conduct business.

We Envision Dothan

- *Where the natural environment is protected.*
- *Where the level of City services consistently achieves high standards of quality and availability.*
- *Where a variety of recreational opportunities are available.*
- *Where citizens are true partners in their City government.*
- *Where a high quality of life is shared by all.*
- *Where opportunities for employment and business exist.*
- *Where the appearance of our City is attractive.*
- *Where the ground transportation system has balanced mobility options, with minimal congestion, good accessibility, and connections City-wide that is integrated into the regional road network.*
- *We envision, we aspire, and we hope that our community becomes a great place in which to live, work, own a business, play, educate and rear our children now and in the future.*

City government. We aspire to create a City that is prosperous and an

Our Small Town Feel

Through our public participation process, citizens consistently mentioned the importance of our ‘small town feel’. Dothan residents were concerned that as we grow from a community of 57,737 (2000 census count), to almost 80,000 by 2030 that we risk losing this character. Dothan is already on its way to a significantly larger population in 2030 than it had in year 2000. The 2010 U. S. Census places the population of Dothan in 2007 at 65,496. That represents a 13.4% gain above the Year 2000 count which is almost double the growth rate for the decade of the 1990’s. So the concern that the citizens feel are legitimate.

Population Projections

Year	Houston County	City of Dothan	% of HstinCo	Change in Dothan	
				Number	%
2000	88,787	57,737	65%		
2007*	97,171	66,505	67%	7,710	13.4 %
2010	99,442	67,201	68%	1,754	2.7%
2015	102,518	70,178	68%	2,977	4.4%
2020	105,453	73,125	69%	2,948	4.2%
2025	108,171	75,990	70%	2,865	3.9%
2030	110,620	78,733	71%	2,743	3.6%
2035	112,716	81,290	72%	2,558	3.2%
2040	114,554	83,723	73%	2,433	3.0%
2045	116,343	86,175	74%	2,452	2.9%
2050	118,276	88,787	75%	2,612	3.0%

Note: Projections include population in adjoining counties
Source: Center for Business and Economic Research, the University of Alabama, January, 2009.
* Census Bureau Estimate

The table to the right shows population projections prepared in January, 2008 by the University of Alabama, Center for Business and Economic Research. The table shows a steady increase for both the City of Dothan and Houston County and documents our recent growth as well as providing projections for the future. These projections show that a steady acceleration in the percent increase of population in Houston County is expected to occur within the City of Dothan. The serious economic recession over the last 2 years of this decade has undoubtedly impacted our rate of growth.

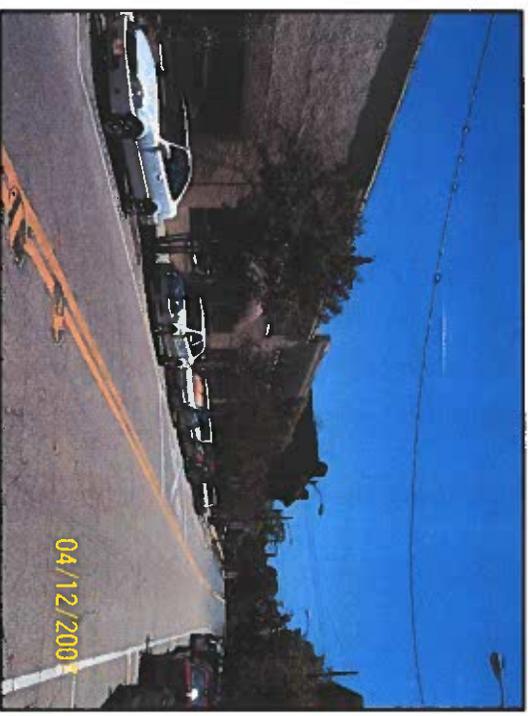
Our downtown, which once was the retail center of not only Dothan but the surrounding area, a downtown that once had a JC Penney, Woolworth, JJ Newberry, Kress, hardware stores, feed and grain stores, restaurants, and small specialty stores such as jewelers, tailors, cobblers, and the like, suffered a significant decline over the last several decades and is currently enjoying a

renaissance. Some merchants, club owners, restaurateurs, and small shop owners have found niches in the market and have found success among the old, abandoned and in some cases decaying reminders of a day long passed as stated in the “Downtown Master Plan.”

If the citizens truly desire to retain the old ‘small town feel’, this is where their vision should begin. One cannot ignore the heart of a body and concentrate solely upon its extremities. Likewise, a city cannot turn its back on its heart and birthplace to focus solely upon the integrity and development of its outer, urban and suburban areas. Plans have been prepared by outside consultants and by Dothan’s Planning & Development Department which identify ways in which a concerted revitalization effort could take place. An overlay district for downtown was created by ordinance which is intended to promote the downtown as a place for new development or redevelopment of existing buildings. The vision has already been established, but the implementation is yet to be embraced by the public. The vision for Dothan is the citizen’s.

Many characteristics combine to make Dothan what it is today. The physical setting within an area of South Alabama known as the ‘Wiregrass’, its proximity to the Chattahoochee River, the States of Georgia and Florida, and its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico all combine to make Dothan what it is today. Dothan has a clearly-defined market window, or business corridor. Dothan like many cities has a defined central business district, however, Dothan’s predominate business/retail activities are highway-dependent uses located along the U. S. 231 corridor and Ross Clark Circle. Expansion of commercial and retail activity along U. S. 231 North and South can be expected to continue throughout the next decade. Some commercial/retail expansion will also occur along U. S. Hwy 84 particularly west of Ross Clark Circle near the intersections of U. S. 84 West and Brannon Stand and in between taking the form of infill. The development potential is high on the east side of the City fueled by lower land values and better access, yet weak with utility capacity and service.

The passage of time inevitably brings changes. Dothan differs considerably from the city that it was 20 or 30 years ago. It is definitely different from the city it was during the 1940’s-1960 when JC Penney, Woolworth, JJ Newberry, and Kress department stores provided the economic hub of the City in downtown. The task we have before us is to retain the most important characteristics of our City in the face of changes that we can only manage.



No plan and certainly not this Long Range Development Plan can ever expect to have the agreement of the majority of the public. Rather it strives to create balance and blending of opinions to form a community that collectively monitors and manages change. Only then will we hope to maintain the community's unique characteristics and still accept the future. The Dothan 2030 Long Range Development Plan aims to mirror a comprehensive vision of the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of its diverse population composed of a public representative of all age groups, long-term residents or newcomers, those residing in historic districts or other established neighborhoods or those living in newly developed neighborhoods.

Guiding Principles

The principles which guided the development of this Plan for Dothan reflect the values of the community residents expressed through the Long Range Development Plan outreach process of surveys, town meetings and public hearings. The input from the public combined with sound planning practices completed the road map toward the development of this Plan. Listed in no particular order related to significance, urgency, popularity, or viability are the following touch-points that served to steer the City's planning decisions.

- As we grow, we will strive to preserve the attributes of our unique, small town character and community identity, the natural environment, and the strengths of our neighborhoods, while lessening the adverse effects of growth.
- We value open space as an integral part of our community's small town feel and will take advantage of opportunities for its preservation, acquisition, enhancement and expansion.
- We value the native landscape and topographical features naturally occurring throughout our community.
- We will endeavor to restore, promote re-investment in, maintain and enhance the historic and human orientation of our downtown as a destination and urbanized traditional neighborhood.
- We will seek opportunities to promote community events, improve the communication from the City government, and promote cultural venues and experiences.
- We will provide for the health of our community population by embracing and sponsoring active lifestyle opportunities and events.
- Architectural and land use design is fundamental to our desired identity. As our community grows, special attention will be given to promote high quality residential and commercial development that reflects aesthetic excellence with specific design criteria to regulate and encourage creative design and planning for commercial and residential developments.
- We will preserve our single-family neighborhoods, recognizing that traffic connectivity is a needed strategy in tying one neighborhood to another to assist in easing potentially stagnant traffic flows.

- The long-term economic well-being of the City is fundamental to its future. To that end, we will encourage a variety of employment opportunities and promote businesses that contribute to our community including unique, local businesses.
- We will promote multi-modal transportation systems (roadways, bikeways, walkways, and public transportation) that are safe and that emphasize local and regional connections while considering neighborhood impacts.

Smart growth

The International City/County Management Association and the American Planning Association both advocate the incorporation of Smart Growth principals as part of a planning program. ICMA notes in the executive summary of *Why Smart Growth: A Primer* that,

“in communities across the nation, there is a growing concern that current development patterns -- dominated by what some call “sprawl” -- are no longer in the long-term interest of our cities, existing suburbs, small towns, rural communities, or wilderness areas.

Though supportive of growth, communities are questioning the economic costs of abandoning infrastructure in the city, only to rebuild it further out. They are questioning the social costs of the mismatch between new employment locations in the suburbs and the available work-force in the city. They are questioning the wisdom of abandoning “brownfield”s in older communities, eating up the open space and prime agricultural lands at the suburban fringe, and polluting the air of an entire region by driving farther to get to places.

Smart growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life. It leverages new growth to improve the community. The features that distinguish smart growth in a community vary from place to place. In general, smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. New smart growth is more town-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and many other environmental amenities.

But there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution. Successful communities do tend to have one thing in common--a vision of where they want to go and of what things they value in their community--and their plans for development reflect these values.”

Smart growth values long-range, regional considerations of sustainability over a short-term focus. Its goals are to achieve a unique sense of community and place; expand the range of transportation, employment, and housing choices; equitably

distribute the costs and benefits of development; preserve and enhance natural and cultural resources; and promote public health.

On the following pages, many of the proposed goals and policies are based on the principals of smart growth. These principals are:

1. Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices;
2. Create Walkable Neighborhoods;
3. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration;
4. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place;
5. Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective;
6. Mixed Land Uses;
7. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas;
8. Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities; and
9. Take Advantage of Compact Building Design.

Smart growth values long-range, regional considerations of sustainability over a short-term focus. Its goals are to achieve a unique sense of community and place; expand the range of transportation, employment, and housing choices; equitably distribute the costs and benefits of development; preserve and enhance natural and cultural resources; and promote public health.

Within the pages of this document many examples of these smart growth principles are discussed and presented as recommended goals or solutions to existing problems.

Land Use and Community

Appearance



Dothan has evolved and grown since its founding in the early 1800's as the community of Poplar Grove and incorporation in 1885 as Dothan. Once a farm based economy, Dothan has grown to include a high tech industry, higher education learning centers, regional retail and distribution centers, and medical centers while retaining its heritage as an agricultural based community.

Dothan is a community that strives to maintain a "small town feel" as it has grown, balancing residential and commercial development with open space and parks. Today, Dothan boasts a healthy mix of land uses. The figure on page 3 identifies the distribution of land use as it was formulated in 2007 & 2008.

The LRDP Land Use Plan as a component of a Master Plan is authorized and created under the Code of Alabama, Section 11-52. It is the principal responsibility of the Planning Commission. This section of Alabama Code also empowers the implementation of the Plan with a variety of tools but principally the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. Other ordinances are also applied in Dothan to affect the built environment of the City including a Tree Preservation Ordinance, Mobile Home Ordinance and Historic Preservation Ordinance. Together, these tools are the means by which this Plan will be implemented.

Continuing to perpetuate a balance of land uses is essential for the future growth of Dothan. The way land is used is central to a healthy community. Having the correct proportions of land devoted to a specific use, whether it is commercial, residential,

industrial, or open space helps ensure the community can maintain its economic integrity. Just as important as understanding the proportion of land devoted to a particular use, is the understanding of the relationship between the uses.

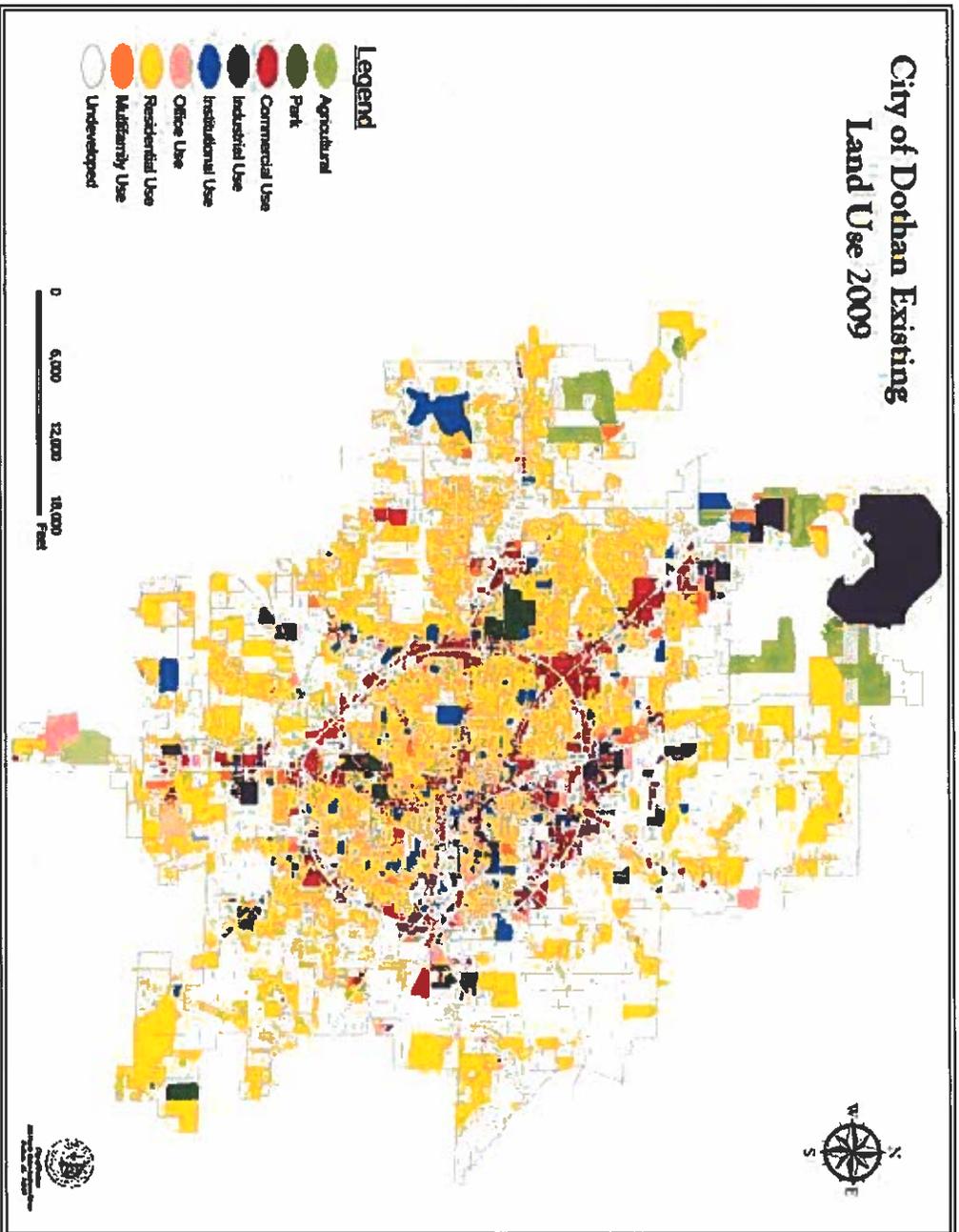
A fundamental issue that was not addressed in the existing conditions was how much land is included in each land use in the City; residential, commercial, industrial, etc. This information is recorded in the LAND USE DISTRIBUTION table below compiled in 2006 which shows that approximately 12% of the land in Dothan is devoted to a non-residential land use, almost 29% in a residential use, about 4% in open space or park use and nearly 56% is considered undeveloped. It is important to understand that these numbers are derived from tax assessment information provided by the County and is dependent on the County codes by parcel for tax purposes, not from actual field observations. As the planning program continues, these numbers will be refined using actual field observations.

LAND USE DISTRIBUTION – 2006

Land Use #s by Acres (2006)	Non-Residential			Residential			Open Space/Ag		Undeveloped		Totals
	Commercial	Industrial	Industrial	Office	Multifamily	Residential	Agricultural-Open Space-Develop	Undeveloped	Undeveloped		
	2042	1056	955	947	686	15046	489	204	31286	52711	
			1558			279		959	559	3355	
			121			95		139		355	
						336		390		726	
Total	2042	1056	2634	947	686	15756	489	1692	31845	57147	
%	3.57%	1.85%	4.61%	1.66%	1.20%	27.57%	0.86%	2.96%	55.72%	100.00%	
						28.77%			3.82%	55.72%	

How these uses are distributed can be seen on the following map. Similar to the table above, this map was created using County tax assessment codes and has not been field verified for accuracy.

City of Dothan Existing Land Use 2009



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Based on the input received from the public, several issues and values were expressed that can be related to land use. From the themes and values expressed by the community during the public forums, a development concept can be created to guide land use decisions in the future. These themes and values are the basis for the goals and policies expressed in this Plan.

- **Protect Dothan’s Environmental Infrastructure from Adverse Development Impacts**
 - Landscape forms such as tree stands and wooded areas, stream and river banks, floodplains and flood prone areas, wetlands, and topography.
 - Identify key open spaces and organize them into uses such as neighborhood or community parks, or greenways with public accessibility in mind.
- **Create a Neighborhood Centric City**
 - Recognize and support the concept that the city center is the original neighborhood and heart of the City.
 - Guide public and private investment to strategic locations appropriate for a future activity center.
 - Look for opportunities to create or expand commerce and employment activity centers at locations convenient to one or multiple neighborhoods.
- **Enhance, Preserve and Protect Cultural Attractions, Community Character and Aesthetics**
 - Create better development standards and design guidelines for application throughout the community.
 - Improve streetscapes across the community.
 - Strengthen the regulatory environment to avoid land use conflicts, maintain development patterns and community aesthetics.
- **Promote Investment in the Community**
 - Cultivate and promote growth opportunities.
 - Continue or expand programs that invest in community infrastructure and services.
 - Enhance Community Gateways.
 - Provide land for industrial uses.
- **Seek Opportunities to Create and Enhance Transportation and Accessibility Alternatives**
 - Preserve and promote connectivity between residential and commercial areas.
 - Improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities community-wide.

Given these themes, staff considered several alternative development strategies. At one end of the spectrum, a development concept strong on promoting form-based products was considered. This concept is characterized by the application of very strong design standards. While this concept has merit, it is staff intensive and would demand application of manpower time which is not available at the present time to adequately administer its multiple facets. Therefore, it would be best applied in specific and isolated cases rather than community-wide.

At the other end of the spectrum, lies a concept that is simply continuing the development trends and patterns that characterizes Dothan today. However, a “status quo” or “more of the same” approach often produces a development pattern that suffers from being too unimaginative and lacks design elements that are often perceived to be aesthetically pleasing such as building orientation, use of materials, landscaping and green spaces, and the application of conservative sign guidelines. The public feedback we received was for the most part, supportive of past development patterns but included numerous mentions of less clutter and stronger convenience with supportive and accessible community facilities and public services.

This Plan seeks to blend these two extremes by promoting greenways, neighborhood and community level activity centers and strong mixed use development incorporating residential and commercial uses. This “fine grain” development pattern is already present in Dothan and this Plan seeks to promote a development pattern that continues this concept and discourages strip development that is strictly auto-centric and utilitarian in appearance.

These themes find physical expression on the Land Use Plan Map. It is a bird’s eye view of the City. There are several notable features and concepts on the map some of which will be explained in more detail on the following pages. These include:

- Three mile Area of Review and Urban Growth Boundary
- Neighborhood Activity Centers
- Community Activity Centers
- Bike Trail Opportunities
- Areas of Residential Expansion
- Areas with Redevelopment Potential
- Integration of the Proposed I-10 Connector and Interchanges
- Greenway Opportunities

The Towns of Rehobeth and Taylor lie to the southwest and define the limits of Dothan’s UGB in that direction. Headland, Kinsey, Webb, Cowarts and Avon do the same to the north and east leaving growth opportunities for Dothan only to the west and southeast. However, it should be noted that the Dothan city limits encompasses almost 90 square miles which is larger

that any of its sister cities, the point being that there is a significant amount of undeveloped land in the city available for development.

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY APPEARANCE

Dothan has evolved and grown since it's founding in the early 1800's but has done so without consistent attention to appearance. In some places, land economics has dictated that exterior appearances be of higher quality. But in other areas, especially on gateway roads, the quality of materials used and attention to detail does not convey a positive image of the community.

Community image is a fundamental component of economic development because people are not attracted to development which is haphazard or uninviting in appearance. Community appearance was a concern expressed by many of those who took part in the public participation forums held in the spring of 2008. Elements of design and appearance should be integrated into regulatory language; either existing or part of an overlay district. Dothan should take the opportunity to enhance its sense of place and pride through the refinement, development and support of programs and policies designed to establish, monitor and regulate the quality and appearance of the built environment.

The most significant manner in which Dothan might change its evolution and stand apart from other jurisdictions would be to demand excellence in the physical appearance of the built environment. This is one of the areas of importance to Dothan's citizens. Policies addressing community appearance are included in this Plan.

GROWING SMART

When asked about the growth of Dothan during the public participation process, citizens consistently supported a 'managed/planned/controlled' scenario over an 'unlimited' or 'no' growth scenario. Tied to that was the importance of establishing the appropriate balance between housing, commerce, and open space. We also heard that the Public was concerned with what they perceived as "encroachment" of commercial uses into long-established residential areas. Limiting negative impacts on the community and directing development to appropriate locations are two areas where citizen concerns can be addressed. The LRDP embraces a controlled growth scenario by using a urban growth area and boundary that promotes reuse and redevelopment of land within a confined area thus internalizing both public and private investment opportunities and implementing strategies that reflect citizen priorities.

URBAN GROWTH AREA AND GROWTH BOUNDARY

An Urban Growth Area (UGA) represents the limits established by a municipality for land development and growth in the immediate and foreseeable future. Its purpose is to allow the City to systematically review and consider the advisability of potential annexations and development in unincorporated Houston County which may negatively impact the residents of the City by pulling limited resources away from existing needs, in effect, spreading City services and revenues even thinner. The Urban Growth Boundary is the perimeter of the UGA.

In Alabama, municipalities have been granted an area outside of their city limits for a distance of five miles beyond their city limits in which the city may monitor, review, approve, or disapprove development proposals involving the subdivision of land. The area of influence outside the corporate limits is known in Alabama as a Planning Jurisdiction (PJ) and is set by State Statute in Section 11-52-30. This law enables a community to protect itself with the ability to influence the quality of development that is constructed and that may one day be annexed.

This Plan recommends that the UGA and the PJ coincide. However, a recent agreement between the City and Houston County, as allowed by the Code of Alabama, Sections 11-24-2 and 11-24-6, resulted in Dothan reducing the area subject to subdivision review and approval by the Planning Commission to the City limits. The agreement between the City and County will prevent the City from ensuring that infrastructure development occurring outside the City limits is constructed at a quality that minimizes the expenditure of public funds to maintain or repair it should it be annexed.

In addition, the agreement will also hamper the implementation of a transportation plan in areas beyond the City's current limits. Alabama Code Section 11-52-8 provides the authority to the Planning Commission to determine the character and extent of streets within its jurisdiction including the PJ. In the interest of implementing this Plan, the City Commission should consider cancelling this agreement and restore jurisdictional control over subdivision development to the Planning Commission in the planning jurisdiction as provided for in State Law.

For the UGA to be successful, it must remain flexible to respond to changing conditions such as annexations and minor amendments. Modifications to the UGA must be reviewed by the Dothan Planning Commission, adopted by the Commission and approved by the City Commission in a Public Hearing.

ANNEXATION STRATEGY

In the past, Dothan has had an "open door" policy with regard to expanding its boundaries. Much of the development which has occurred in Dothan during the past three decades has taken place in those areas which have been annexed since the early 1970's. However, when property is annexed, there becomes an immediate obligation, perceived or actual, on the City's part to provide police, fire, and garbage collection service and to maintain any streets and storm drainage improvements within any

public rights-of-way located in the annexed areas. Over the last several years, City staff has performed a very basic financial analysis of annexations requests. Fundamentally, if the City is not serving the development with electricity, it is not in the City's financial advantage to annex the property.

Large scale annexation can place great strains on the City's existing municipal services and infrastructure. In addition, if the areas annexed are sparsely developed, the cost of providing or maintaining infrastructure and services is heavily subsidized by residents, property owners, and businesses in the more densely developed areas of the City. The City should annex additional property into its City limits only if it has been determined that the property can be served by existing or planned infrastructure or that the area to be annexed is likely to be developed at a density which will make the extension of infrastructure and the provision of municipal services economically feasible.

Occasionally, there may be other reasons for annexing property that may include elements not related to immediate economics. It may be that the property is in a geographically strategic location important to the future development of the City or is a parcel surrounded by the City which prevents uniform application of other policies. In these instances, the City must carefully consider the trade off's that will accompany the annexation.

To this end, the Plan proposes that a formal annexation strategy should be developed to provide a consistent approach to adding more territory to the City limits. At minimum, persons wanting to annex their property into the City should:

- fill a "hole" in the existing City limits;
- fulfill a strategic need of the City to provide essential services; and
- financially benefit the City at the time of annexation or in the foreseeable future.

RECOGNITION OF ALL LAND USES

More often than not, the land use planning process is perceived to be a means of segregating land uses. This is based on the assumption that the purpose of the land use planning process is to protect "single family" residential neighborhoods by separating them from non-residential land uses and from higher density residential land uses. The result is that a land development policy, particularly the Euclidean zoning ordinance, creates an artificial "hierarchy" of land uses which tends to be protective of single family neighborhoods. For the most part, this reflects the political environment and the desire to appease voters. In reality, it is the non-residential uses that provide the resources necessary for growth and economic expansion.

Policies promoting the separation of uses do not reflect modern planning practice. Granted, in some cases, they are appropriate, but it is important to understand that all uses of land are important to a community's health and vitality as are residential uses. Interfacing one land use and an adjacent land use is essential in the promotion of land use integration, cohesion and community identity. To a large extent, this plan presumes that existing adjacent land uses are compatible to the extent that they have been vetted through a public hearing process.

Some policies also ignore the reality of increasing development costs of "greenfields" and the sound financial opportunity that exists when the capacity of existing infrastructure and services is maximized. Policies that promote infill and redevelopment of gentrifying neighborhoods, antiquated commercial areas (grayfields) and reuse of industrial sites (brownfield's) must be in the toolbox of policies to promote a fiscally strong community. Other regulatory techniques such as overlay zones, strong buffer provisions and design standards can be used effectively to mix land uses that are normally incompatible.

2030 LAND USE PLAN MAP

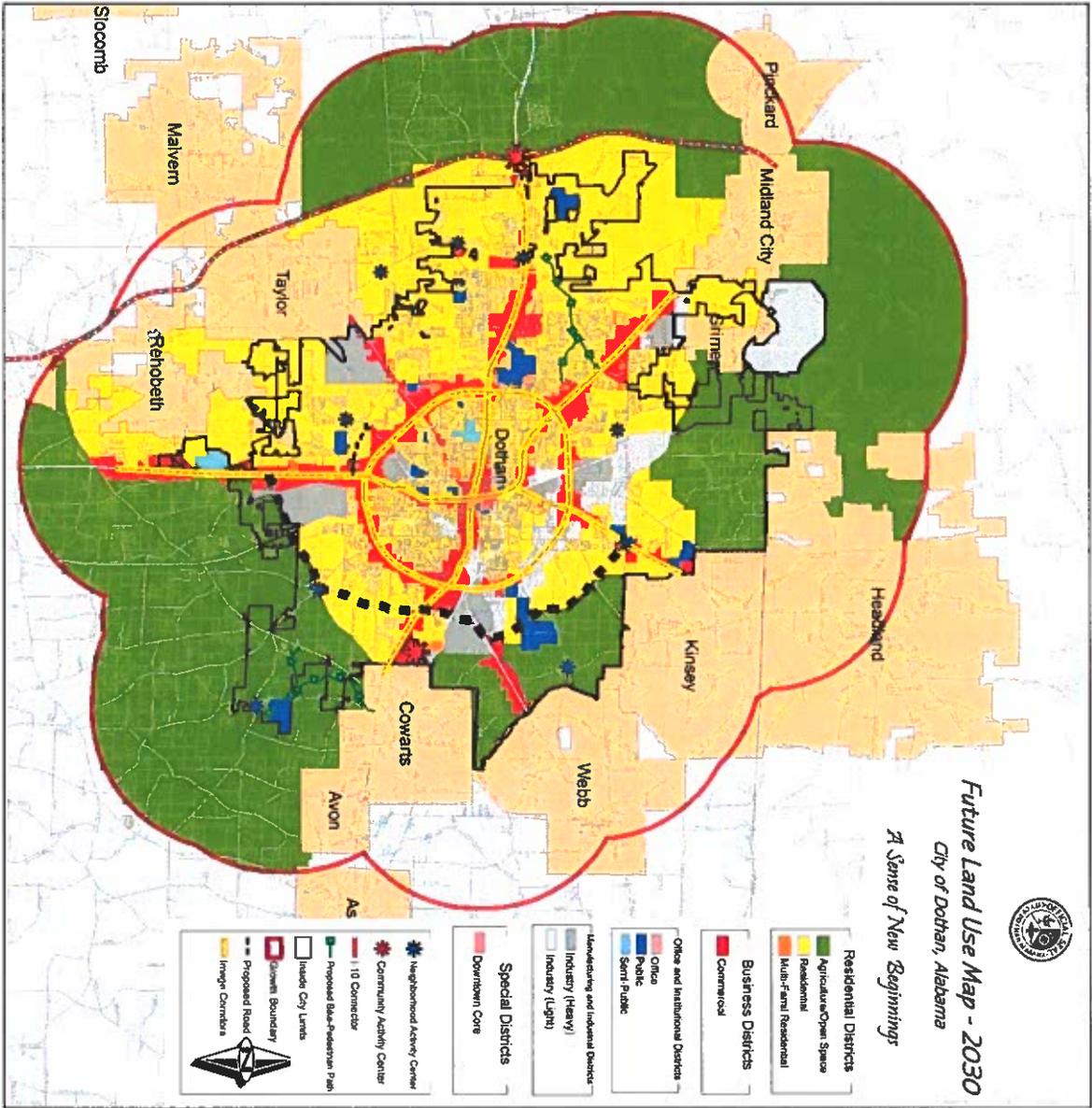
The Future Land Use Map is the central element of the LRDP, and is intended to clarify how we move forward toward a clear plan for Dothan's future. The Land Use-2030 Plan is focused primarily on the physical form and development pattern of the City and sets forth a basic framework delineating how Dothan should grow and evolve over the next 20 years.

The Future Land Use Plan Map can be helpful to individual landowners, potential developers, elected officials, Planning Commissioners, and others in making decisions about the physical development of the City. However, the Future Land Use Map should be considered to be a "blueprint" and a graphic representation that may result from the implementation of a set of policies adopted to guide land use decisions. Unforeseen events may render certain portions of the Future Land Use Map unimplementable without undermining the validity of the underlying policies.

The future land use map is located on the following page and in the map pocket attached in the printed version of this document.



Future Land Use Map - 2030
City of Dothan, Alabama
A Sense of New Beginnings



DOTHAN 2030: A Sense of New Beginnings – Land Use & Community Appearance

GENERAL LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS

Two major designations are illustrated in the Future Land Use Map; “Character Areas” and “Activity Centers”. The Character Areas are grouped into seven kinds of places that make up our City. It is important to understand that there is no fixed boundary between areas even though most are shown to have a definite geographic location. The two types of activity centers presented here are commonly developed within commercial areas or make up a node of commercial development are **Community Activity Centers and Neighborhood Activity Centers**. These activity centers may and should contain land uses that are not entirely commercial in nature. Public (government) and semi-public (churches), utility and multi-family residential developments are almost always appropriate in these settings.

1. Image Corridors (Ross Clark Circle, U.S. 231 N., U.S. 231 S., U.S. 431, and U.S. 84 corridors),
2. The Urban Core and Downtown Core,
3. Commercial/Office Areas (includes Community and Neighborhood Activity Centers),
4. Industrial Areas (light and heavy),
5. Agricultural and Open Space,
6. Public and Semi-public Areas, and
7. Residential Neighborhoods (single-family and multi-family).

Image Corridor Areas

The major transportation facilities act as gateways to the activity centers in Dothan; whether they are oriented to non-residential or residential uses. As a result, their appearance is fundamentally important to the economic well being of the City. If shabby and unkempt, the message it sends to visitors can take on a serious negative connotation. Aesthetics aside, the economy of the City is strongly tied to physical appearances. For the City, its businesses and industries, to remain competitive, Dothan must strive to put its best foot forward.

Three US highways intersect at Dothan, U.S. 231, U.S. 431 and U.S. 84. Ross Clark Circle (State Route 210) completely encircles the City and is a highly developed and heavily used facility that was originally conceived as a bypass for motorists bound for beach destinations in Florida. The road was constructed in the late 1950's and was made possible by former Alabama governor "Big Jim" Folsom. It is a divided four-lane highway and carries a significant amount of traffic having origins from within the City as well as externally. As the City has evolved, so has The Circle, as it is known locally. It is no longer a bypass and functions as a major transportation arterial, moving both goods and people in and around the City. The presence of these highways allows for higher intensity uses with a regional market orientation which may not normally be

found in a small city (less than 100,000) but accounts for the high retail sales taxes which is an important revenue source for the City.

Urban Core and Downtown Core Area

The Urban Core Area of Dothan is described as all land within the confines of Ross Clark Circle. This contains some of the oldest neighborhoods and all of the established historic districts in Dothan. Available land is minimal and on a small, compact scale. Even redevelopment in older subdivision lots is restrictive in size and has led to the practice of combining several lots into one building site. While this practice addresses the issue of not having lot sizes responsive to current market conditions, it can be a threat to the character of established residential neighborhoods. The City must be cautious in allowing the redevelopment of land out of character with established development patterns.

Development patterns in the urban core area are markedly different for those outside the Circle. Most notable is the strong degree of accessibility and connectivity that is found between residential and non-residential areas. Many streets inside the Circle form a traditional grid pattern that allows movement within the core along numerous paths as opposed to areas outside The Circle; which tend to have poor connectivity and circuitous streets. As a result of this development pattern, traffic is forced onto major arterial or collectors causing congestion at certain locations.

A city's downtown is probably the most complex and important of the city's activity centers. Historically the center of the community, it is a common characteristic of downtowns to have a fine, well-integrated mix of land uses simply because it was the center of the community and contained a wide variety of functions both public and private. However, over the years, and despite many attempts to the contrary by the City and private investors, many of the structures gradually fell into disrepair. Even though some are historically significant, years of deferred maintenance have taken their toll and they cannot be saved and returned to the tax role.

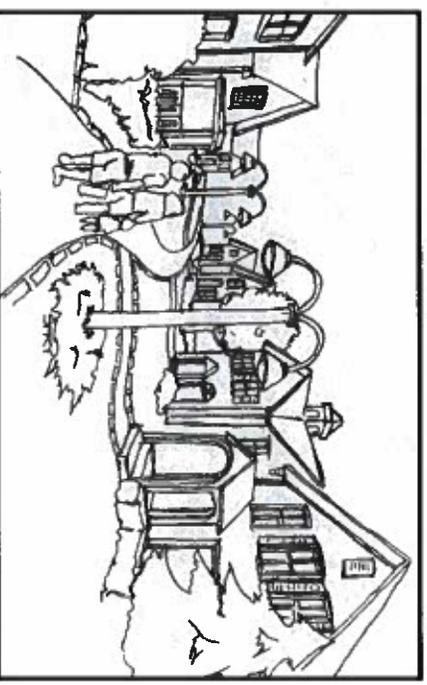
In the summer of 2006, recognizing the historical, emotional and economic importance of the downtown, the City commissioned a Master Plan for downtown. Several successful initiatives have emerged from that Plan resulting in a renaissance in the core area over the past several years. These include:

- The re-establishment of the Downtown Dothan Redevelopment Authority and the financial support of the Authority,
 - The development and adoption of an overlay district in the downtown area that addresses land use, and
- Over the years, three distinct geographic areas have been established to address downtown development and redevelopment activities:

1. The Downtown Redevelopment District,
2. The Downtown Overlay District, and
3. The jurisdiction of the Dothan Downtown Redevelopment Authority.

Each was created for various unique purposes. The Downtown Redevelopment District defines the geography in which the City offers incentives to development and redevelopment initiatives. It is not a regulatory tool.

An overlay district ordinance was created following the adoption of the Downtown Master Plan for the purpose of supporting the Master Plan from a regulatory perspective. Accompanying Design Guidelines were approved that blends many of the Commercial Design Guidelines that the Historic Preservation Commission adopted and actually codifies some of those guidelines into the ordinance. This ordinance created the Urban Planned Unit Development (UPUD) and the Urban Traditional Neighborhood Developments (UTND) districts. A representative streetscape is depicted in the illustration to the right, as an alternative means for developing creative land development projects on smaller tracts of land in the downtown area.



Major differences between the two are the overall minimum size of the development as well as the function of each. An Urban Planned Unit Development (UPUD) is a mixed-use development with a combination of commercial/retail and residential uses, perhaps within the same structure. A Traditional Neighborhood Development (UTND) may be as small as two-acres in overall size and is restricted to residential use only.

The establishment of these two new types of developments should encourage land developers to invest in the Urban Core Area since the allowable lot yield for these type developments would be much higher than in standard projects outside the Urban Core Area.

The jurisdiction of the Dothan Downtown Redevelopment Authority is much broader and encompasses a wider area than either the redevelopment or overlay districts. It is defined in the enabling legislation and contains nearly 1,200 acres and includes several near downtown residential neighborhoods.

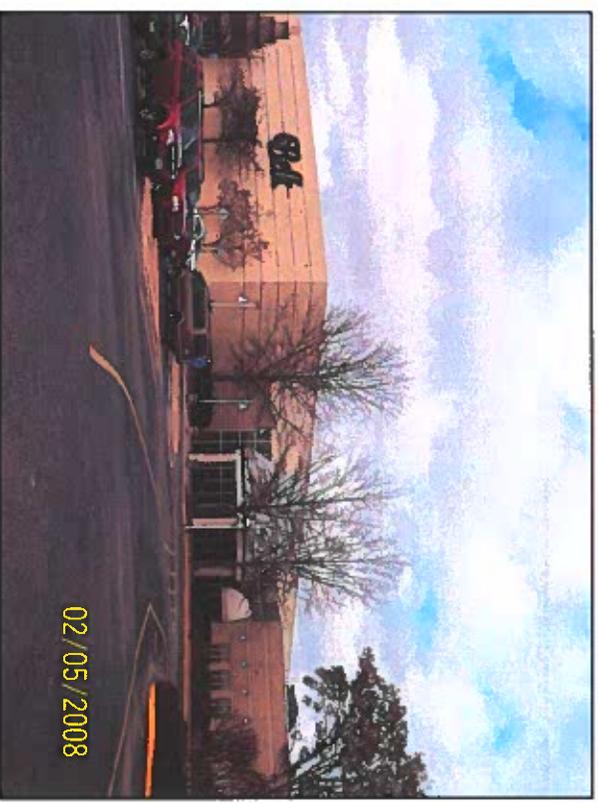
Acceptable land use patterns and development opportunities for this area should be characterized by fine-grained mix of land uses. Because of its central location and current land uses, growth in this Character Area should focus on core retail, services, offices, lodging, restaurants, and entertainment and to a lesser extent, low to high rise residential.

Commerce Areas

Commerce areas are broad in scope. They include retail, office, lodging, entertainment and personal service type uses either as an individual store or as part of a community or neighborhood mixed-use activity center. In some instances, institutional uses may share many of the same characteristics that are common with commercial uses such as hours of operation, intensity of use, traffic, parking and drainage. It is not uncommon to see institutional uses mix with conventional commercial uses for many of the same reasons.

Commercial uses are an important component of the employment base of Dothan and generate the sales taxes which make up the largest component of the City of Dothan's revenues. Currently, about 5.25% of the land in the City contains a commerce use. It is the intent of the Plan to encourage the concentration of these uses around and near major or minor nodes in the transportation system rather than in a strip along City arterials.

Given that no fee is charged for residential solid waste collection and fees for sewage collection and disposal are not sufficient to meet expenses, commercial activity is essential to Dothan's ability to provide first class services to its citizens. Dothan is known as the "Hub of the Wiregrass" because the size of its retail trade area is able to attract uses that depend on a regional trade area to be profitable. Uses such as large automobile dealerships, multiple big box retail centers and



large institutional uses such as the two hospitals that are located within the City.

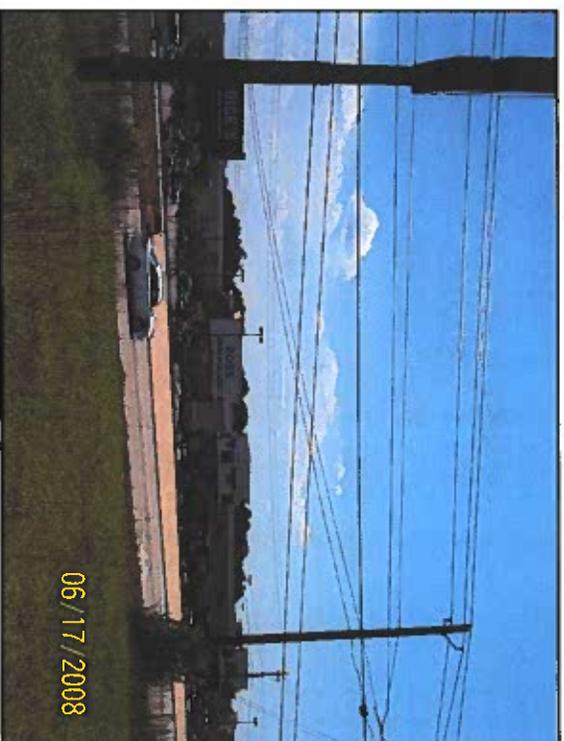
It has often been said that there are three keys to a successful commercial venture; location, location and location. Commercial land uses are highly dependent upon convenient access to the transportation system. As a result, commercial land uses choose to locate on or near major arteries and collectors sporting high traffic volumes. But, since commercial developments are by nature traffic generator's, the result is increased traffic volumes resulting in lower operating speeds, greater delays at intersections, an overall degradation in the levels of service and the functional obsolescence of the traffic facility. This is particularly the case at major intersections which basically become the weakest link in the system.

The Future Land Use Map does not distinguish between the various types of commercial and office uses but it does suggest appropriate locations for either community or neighborhood activity centers. The determination of what particular type of commercial use is appropriate at a given location is based more on its particular market requirements and physical site demands. Since, commercial land uses exist to meet the needs of the residents of the City, the primary purpose of the policies discussed in this section are intended to provide guidance for the appropriate siting and development of these commercial land uses.

Community and Neighborhood Commercial Centers are typically found within or bordering medium to high density residential districts and locations at key intersections of primary or secondary roads. If infused with strong design features, these centers can create a sense of place that can be enjoyed by the entire community. To be successful, these "Places" need to be carefully planned to avoid traffic impacts, both internally and externally through site planning and access management. Development within these centers should transition into neighboring areas both in terms of land use mix and density as well as design features such as landscaping and paving materials.

These "Places", their character and function are described in the following paragraphs.

Community Activity Centers



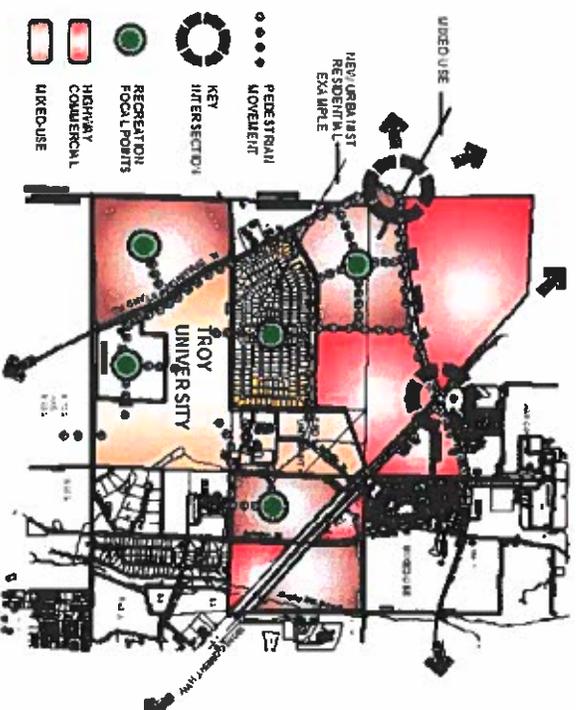
These Centers are much larger in area than their sister Neighborhood Activity Centers as they are designed to serve a much larger population because they have a larger market area. Typically, they serve multiple neighborhoods. Standard uses within Community Activity Centers include retail and business or personal services, although restaurants, offices, and movie theaters are compatible uses. Generally, the Gross Leasable Area (GLA) for the commercial/office components within typical Community Activity Centers should be in the 300,000 to 950,000 square feet range.

Standard design for the typical commercial/office Community Activity Center would find the commercial/office component in a “strip” of joined or clustered buildings along the rear property line, with out-parcels, or pads located toward the front of the Center closest to the road or highway. This provides primary vehicular access for the establishment of restaurants or other commercial buildings of lesser mass, volume and stature than the main (anchor) buildings.

Community Activity Centers should provide a landscaped buffer along the length of its frontage with the road or highway. Development of newer Community Activity Centers should be guided by design standards that focus on their relationship to adjacent land uses.

Community Activity Centers frequently are the lead in land development within a given undeveloped area, and will establish the foundation as the core for future development on surrounding properties. If the surrounding land is in common ownership with the developers of the Community Activity

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY RETAIL CENTER AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUS EXPANSION



Center, strict assurance must be given by the developer to the City that the design standards found within the Community Activity Centers shall be extended and transitioned into the development scheme of the surrounding undeveloped land. Should the surrounding land not be in common ownership with the Community Activity Center, the City must be diligent in requiring a smooth transition and integration of the design standards and materials used within the Community Activity Center into the new development scenario upon the surrounding undeveloped land.

Higher density residential uses are appropriate within Community Activity Centers especially when used as a transitional use between non-compatible commercial/office uses and lesser dense residential uses found on adjacent or neighboring land. Creative design, such as what is depicted to the right, is encouraged to establish a mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly environment where walking and/or bicycling from residential units within the Center or from surrounding neighborhoods is encouraged to obtain goods and services found in the Community Activity Center. Massing and scale of higher density residential uses shall respect the massing and scale of developments in surrounding areas where practical. The use of buffers between Community Activity Centers and surrounding neighborhoods is required.

Neighborhood Activity Centers

These Centers are much smaller in area and with less of a focus group and market area than the larger, Community Activity Centers. The main purpose and function of Neighborhood Activity Centers is to facilitate the immediate needs of the residents within the surrounding neighborhoods or subdivisions. Typical uses within a Neighborhood Activity Center are smaller versions of the same uses and services as allowed in a Community Activity Center. Typically, a Neighborhood Activity Center is anchored by a food market, restaurants, retail stores, etc. and tend to be of a convenience nature such as a sandwich shop or fast food restaurants with drive through windows, branch banks, gyms, martial arts studios, photography studios, insurance agencies, travel agencies, or coffee shops.

Generally, the total GLA for the commercial/office components within a Neighborhood Activity Center would be 50,000-300,000 square feet.

Higher density residential uses are appropriate within Neighborhood Commercial Centers especially when used as a transitional use between non-compatible commercial/office uses and lesser dense residential uses found on adjacent or neighboring land. Creative design is encouraged to establish a mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly environment where walking and/or bicycling from residential units within the Center or from surrounding neighborhoods is encouraged to obtain goods and services found in the Neighborhood Activity Center. Massing and scale of higher density residential uses shall respect the

massing and scale of development in surrounding areas where practical. The use of buffers between Neighborhood Activity Centers and surrounding neighborhoods should be required.

Industrial Areas

The Light industrial uses involve a variety of work processes such as light manufacturing, assembly machine shops, food processing, warehousing/distribution, commercial services and other uses of similar character. Additionally, large entertainment and recreational facilities may be located adjacent to light industrial uses because of the traditional large scale of the buildings within light industrial areas.

Heavy industrial uses are not as common as light industrial uses since they typically involve a broader range of manufacturing and material processing uses. They are often considered non compatible with most other uses because many of their use characteristics have associated negative impacts. Nevertheless, heavy industrial uses are vital to the economic well being of a community because they often are responsible for bringing significant resources into the community.



Planned industrial developments (industrial parks) can be an important economic development tool, especially if they are viewed as employment generators. Attracting light and heavy industrial uses is an important component of any economic development strategy. Providing pad ready sites where many of the prerequisite issues have already been addressed is a strategy the city has employed in the past and should strongly consider continuing.

Dothan occupies a strategic geographic location that offers good proximity to many markets in the Southeastern United States. Supplying goods to these markets already occurs to some degree. However, the widening of the Panama Canal brings an opportunity to the Gulf Coast community of Panama City. With the deepening of the port of Panama City, the quantity of goods that could be received at the port could be significantly increased. Moving this cargo inland for distribution to markets

in the southeast is a key opportunity for Dothan. The missing element is an intermodal facility where rail cargo can offload and be transferred via truck to other locations. This is a future opportunity for Dothan.

The area surrounding the airport offers excellent opportunities for the development of light industrial land uses compatible with air operations. Presently, there are numerous lease sites available on the airport property.

In view of recent Homeland Security Directives, private operations may not have access “through the fence” to an FAA regulated runway. The airport itself should continue efforts to expand airside facilities and strive to enhance and improve the existing passenger service into Dothan.

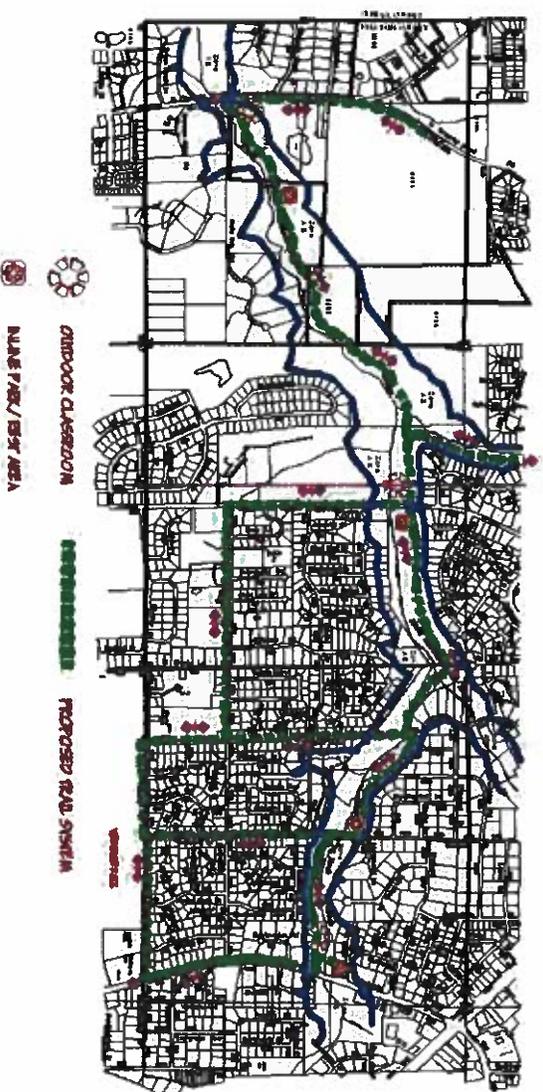
Candidates for development in and around the airport could include air cargo, aircraft maintenance, aircraft manufacturing, and other carriers that operate on an unscheduled basis with flexible routes as well as general aviation activities. As the airport expands its facilities, there will be a need for supporting land uses to support the employment base such as restaurants, convenience stores, and possibly a low-rise, noise-attenuated hotel. Access improvements, particularly directional signage from U.S. 231 are needed and gateway treatments could help attract compatible uses.

Higher density residential uses can be appropriate within industrial areas especially when used as a transitional use between non-compatible industrial or heavy commercial uses and lesser dense residential uses found on adjacent or neighboring land. Creative design is especially important in these environments to establish a mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly environment. The use of buffers between and surrounding industrial uses should be required.

Open Space, Recreation, Public, and

Semi-public Areas

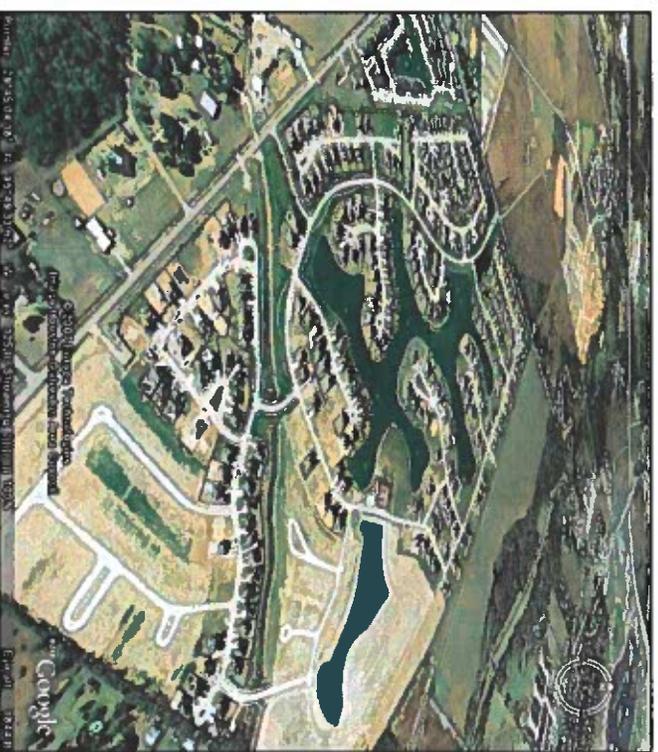
Primary open space, parks and natural areas are an important enhancement to the quality of life of the residents of



Dothan and have a distinct impact on the use of land in the city. Preservation, expansion and utilization of them can be expected to have a long term impact. Creeks, rivers and wooded areas should be preserved or developed as passive or semi-active recreation areas.

Creeks and rivers hold many potential opportunities to provide major links in our regional or City-wide transportation network. Constructing minimally intrusive trail systems along natural waterways in one component of developing pedestrian and bicycle links to other parks and community facilities as well as offering opportunities to citizens to get out and walk or jog in a relatively protected and scenic environment. Several opportunities exist to develop a pedestrian or bike trail system in Dothan and is one way to enhance the quality of the built environment. Opportunities to make improvements to some of these areas should be pursued. The concept plan on the preceding page shows a proposed trail along Rock Creek that includes some “turn-out” areas (places for rest and stretching), board-walked areas for nature viewing and areas set aside for outdoor classrooms. The City maintains and operates an extensive parks and recreation system that includes a combination of organized programs and passive elements. Dothan has a marvelous heritage of providing an outstanding array of facilities and programs. A detailed description of these facilities and programs can be found in the Dothan Parks Master Plan. But, as the population increases, demand for new and expanded programs can also be expected. In fact, the site of Dothan’s newest park, the James O. Oates Park, has been selected in the southwest quadrant of the City and is expected to accommodate a new baseball and track and field complex as well as a senior citizens activity center and passive recreation areas such as a dog park, stocked lakes, and natural areas. The build out of this park and Eastgate Park should provide sufficient opportunities for new facilities throughout the time frame contemplated by this Plan.

Besides parks and recreation facilities, public and semi-public spaces include schools, water, waste-water and electric facilities and government buildings. The Dothan Country Club and the Peanut Festival Fairgrounds is included in this category. For the most part, these elements of our community evolve slowly over time in relation to demand. Oates Park is a well publicized undeveloped public space but there are opportunities and needs



in our community that will dictate the expansion of other public facilities as well. The 2030 projected population for Dothan is about 80,000. While this is a conservative estimate based on mathematical trends, a figure closer to 90,000 should be forecasted for the city. Another school, additional fire stations, police substation and additional operations space would be necessary to accommodate even this modest growth.

Residential Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods serve as the primary building blocks of a community and target a range of mostly residential dwelling types. The health and a community is derived directly from the health and condition of the neighborhoods within. Other land uses characteristics which establish sense of community include such community assets as parks, open spaces, places of worship, and schools.

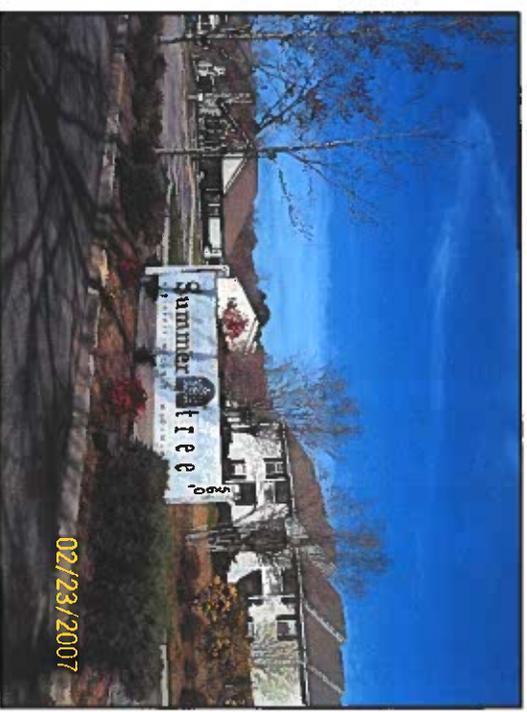
In Dothan, we have very few master-planned communities which offer the range of amenities recognized by the residents as community assets, such as landscaped features and buffers and other aesthetics or amenities. Perhaps because the competition in land development has not arrived in Dothan as in other areas of the country or perhaps because local market conditions are just beginning to offer the range of amenities found elsewhere.

Individual lot sizes, housing types and land uses may vary inside a master-planned community and land uses can be distributed and clustered to preserve natural amenities, sensitive environmental features and open space. Incentives and special allowances should be considered to encourage the development of more master-planned communities wherever and whenever possible and practical. Current development practices should include an open space dedication requirement or fee-in-lieu provision with approval.

Adequate transition between the following Districts should be taken into consideration and residential to residential landscaped buffers within the transitional areas should be established along with the requirement to buffer dissimilar land uses.

Multi-family High Density Residential Neighborhoods

This character area provides locations for apartments, condominiums or other structures providing multi-family residential opportunities.



High density developments can be located independently of other uses or within a Planned Unit Development (PUD). Generally, high density residential developments are placed adjacent to highway corridor districts as a transition to lower levels of commercial intensity and or residential density. Typically, they could be found in association with either a Community or Neighborhood Activity Center.

Density within these areas could approach 10 dwelling units (DU's) per gross acre for detached units and start at 15 DU's per gross acre for attached apartments or condominiums. Attached dwelling units are also an appropriate land use. Due to the increased density and intensity of the uses, the location of this district should be adjacent to Highway Corridor Districts AND be near a development node such as a major highway or principal roadway intersection. Higher density apartment buildings and developments may also be appropriate in the central business district. Other housing options such as group care facilities may be appropriate depending on location.

One consideration for high-rise residential developments is building height and mass. Building height is typically regulated by a 5:2 ratio from adjacent developed property meaning that for every five feet of building rise, the footprint of the building should be at least 2 feet away from the adjacent developed property line. For example, a 120-foot high building should be no closer than 48 feet from the nearest developed adjacent property line unless the setbacks defined within the Zoning Ordinance are greater.

Medium Density Residential Neighborhoods

This character area is intended to provide a location for average size lot single family homes in the 3 – 5 DU's per gross acre range. Generally, Medium Density Residential Districts are adjacent to High Density Residential or Highway Corridor Districts transitioning down to the next level of intensity and density. Development of this density are most common in planned developments because of their market price point and relative ease to layout.

This will probably be the most popular sought after designation for new developments. Other housing options such as group care facilities may be appropriate depending on location.

Low Density Residential Neighborhoods

This District is intended to provide a location for single family homes on large lots 12,000 square feet and above, or on agricultural land. Densities allowed in this District will be less than 3.6 DU's/gross area. This District characterizes most of the existing single-family development in the city should be considered a strong option for new development within Dothan's Urban Growth Area although the city should guard against suburban sprawl. It should also be recognized that as time

progresses and the surrounding environs become more and more urbanized or suburbanized, this District may be the one that receives the greatest amount of rezoning requests from citizens and/or land developers.

Conservation Neighborhoods

This District is intended to provide a location for single family homes on smaller lots than would normally be allowed in a suburban area or if proposed development is adjacent to a natural flowing waterway or other sensitive environmental area. The idea is to set aside areas designated as conservation areas to preserve natural assets, reduce the amount of storm water runoff into a creek, river or tributary, or to allow a smaller lot than the surrounding land use and zoning would normally allow. An example of a possible treatment or design of a conservation development is illustrated to the right. The size of the lots allowed and the amount of conservation areas will depend upon the location of the proposed development and will be addressed on a case by case basis. The addition of general design criteria will need to be added to the Subdivision Regulations.

EXAMPLE OF A RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SMALLER LOTS IN A LESS-DENSE ENVIRONMENT)



7

Transportation



Dothan residents that responded to our Citizen Survey conducted in early 2007, indicated that their number one concern was the amount of traffic in the City. Often vehicles contain only one person. Consequently, the number of vehicles on any of Dothan's roads at any given moment during weekday peak hour travel time is representative of the number of persons employed at various work centers in Dothan coupled with the amount of transient, through-town traffic and hundreds of high school and college students going to and from class. Car pooling is not something prevalent in Dothan because, for the most part, traffic congestion really isn't that bad except in a few areas where there really aren't any feasible alternative routes.

Part of the problem is that Dothan is not a walkable City. Walkable cities are characterized by the provision of sidewalks or pedestrian paths that provide connections between residential areas and activity centers. We should strive to incorporate other modes of transportation into our thought processes when development is being proposed. As the price for gasoline continues to be volatile, alternative modes of transportation will become more attractive to a broader range of the population. Still, there is a segment of the community that doesn't own or have access to a car.

We cannot rely upon a 'building our way out' philosophy to solve our transportation problems either. Costs are just too great. Land use and transportation plans need to incorporate multimodal opportunities for now and for the future. Undoubtedly, the automobile will remain an important way to travel. The City should embrace a "complete streets" philosophy where streets are treated as part of the public realm and every opportunity is pursued to make them more livable for everyone, not just cars. The goal is to design and operate a roadway system for all modes of transportation; bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Implementing a Complete Streets policy into the development process, can incorporate all modes of transportation into our present system as well as future improvements. It also could be the first step in lessening the amount of traffic congesting our roadways and promoting exercise and healthy lifestyles for our citizens.

COMPLETE STREETS

As our community grows, so does the most basic component of our infrastructure; streets. Streets are a significant component of the public realm, making up a majority of the total land use of our City. They contribute in a major way to the livability of our community. For many years, streets were designed and constructed primarily to move cars rather than people. The result can be seen in the sprawl of our communities, in traffic congestion and in the fact that there are few places that are safe and convenient for pedestrians, bicyclists, those dependent on a wheelchair or transit riders. Our City streets should be designed for everyone regardless of age or mode of transportation and not be mean and hostile.

Many feel that streets should be designed with the complete movement in mind, especially as our City sprawls out into the countryside leaving limited opportunity for other modes of travel. Street design should focus on being safer, more livable, and welcoming to everyone. A complete street is one that is designed and operated for all users. Instituting a complete streets policy ensures that transportation planners and engineers consistently design and operate the entire roadway with all users in mind - including bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

A recent federal survey found that seventy-five percent (75%) of walking trips take place on roads without sidewalks or shoulders, and only about five percent (5%) of bicycle trips occur on bike lanes. The survey also revealed that the percentage of accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists is disproportionately high compared to the percentage of actual trips taken. Those accidents occur on roads that lack sidewalks or crosswalks, where the lanes are too narrow to share with bicyclists, where there is little or no room for transit riders, and where the sidewalks were not designed for people with disabilities; essentially an incomplete street design.

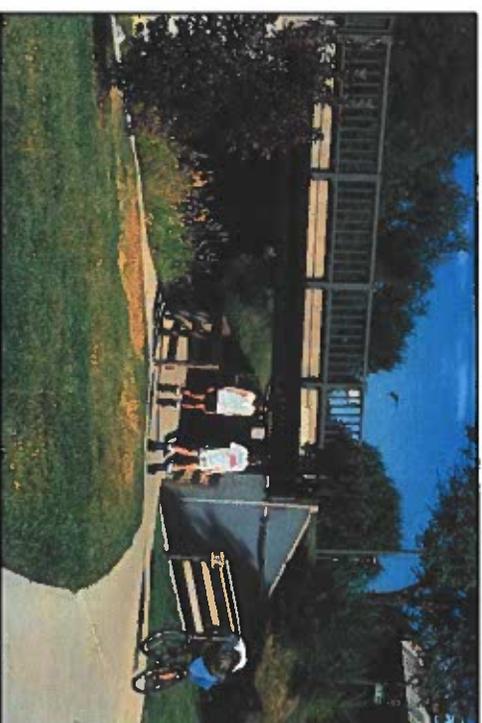
A Complete Streets policy is a change in the traditional road construction philosophy of a project-by-project consideration of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly design practices. A Complete Streets policy requires designers of all road construction and improvement projects to begin by evaluating how the right-of-way serves all who use it. Although the Federal Highway Administration has endorsed this approach since 2000, it has yet to be widely implemented.

MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

How land is used and how it is accessed are critical components of a successful development strategy. The previous chapter addressed land use concerns and policies. The focus of this chapter is the transportation system and its role in serving and supporting development patterns, its success in balancing access and mobility and its ability to move goods and services throughout the community efficiently, but not to the detriment of the community or its neighborhoods.

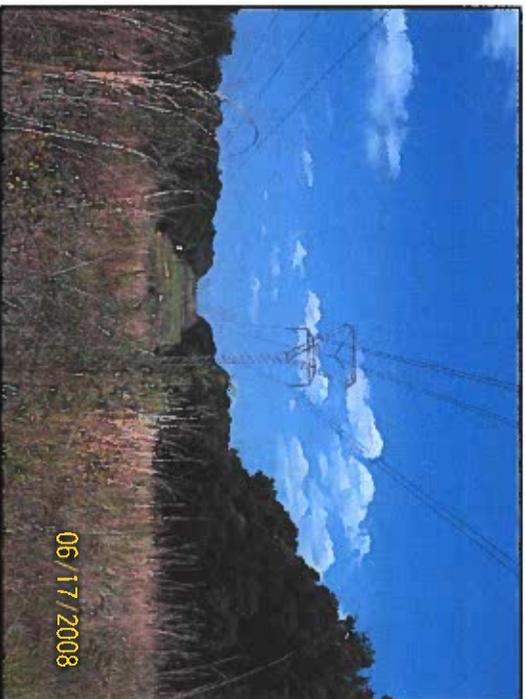
As growth continues in our City, the amount of local traffic will increase in proportion to the location and type of development. Through traffic has always been a significant issue for our City since Dothan is located at the crossroads of several major U.S. Routes; 84, 231 and 431 for passenger car and truck traffic with destinations and origins in Florida. Efforts to relieve the traffic congestion and safety concerns that accompany this pass-through traffic are the genesis of the I-10 Connector project discussed later in this chapter.

Mobility is more about providing options for movement across the network. Key to mobility is the interconnection of streets and roads and is strongly influenced by the existence of man-made and natural barriers such as Ross Clark Circle or a major stream or wetland. In recent years, market forces have also played an important role in mobility. The better the connectivity, the easier local traffic can disperse through the network rather than piling up onto one street and causing congestion. As connectivity increases, the capacity of existing streets to accommodate traffic is preserved.



Connectivity also is an important life-safety consideration. Residential and commercial subdivisions with one-way-in and one-way-out should be avoided where possible. Severe weather is not uncommon in southeast Alabama resulting in high winds and saturated ground that can easily topple trees potentially blocking access by emergency vehicles. Developments should be planned and designed to provide a primary and secondary means of access, especially when there are a significant number of housing units and residents.

Non-motorized or pedestrian-oriented mobility is often overlooked as a viable part of any transportation system. As part of the on-going, long range planning effort of the City, the development of a plan for a City-wide hike/bike trail system should be undertaken. This plan would serve as the identifier of potential corridor routes that could sustain the construction of a network of trails along abandoned or little used railroad



lines, creeks, rivers, minor arterials and collectors, and residential neighborhood streets and utility easements such as the one to the left. The illustration on page 18 in Chapter 6 shows a possible trail alignment along Beaver Creek near Westgate Parkway and running west to John D. Odom Road and possibly beyond to Brannon Stand Road. This trail could be easily linked to Westgate Park via several existing residential roads.

TRAFFIC CALMING

When residential streets and roads are used for purposes of movement, especially through movement of vehicles, the result is often a higher volume of traffic travelling at speeds unacceptable for residential areas. The City often receives complaints regarding speeding traffic or traffic cutting through residential areas and is expressed as a personal safety and property damage issue. The root of the problems lies with the failure to understand that connected roads must be designed in a manner that accommodates how they will be used.

As discussed in the previous section, connected roads are a good thing from an access and public safety perspective. However, they must be designed to minimize direct access where they will be connecting to major thoroughfares. This process starts with a carefully contemplated street layout that considers existing and future points of connection and the proposed land use of the area. Three-way stop signs and speed humps are an all too common tool used to react to speeding cut-through traffic. Local roads should have short block lengths, subtle curves and off set intersections. Street width and on street parking are also design factors which can be used to encourage slower traffic speeds.

The design of each street, from its width, length, curvature and intersection design, when combined with reduced setback distances, on-street parking, positioning of street trees and other hardscape improvements, can be effective strategies to help influence driver behavior in residential neighborhoods.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The City transportation system basically serves two functions; access to property and mobility. These functions are best described as a continuum across a network of streets. Streets that try to do both functions usually do neither very well with congestion and compromised safety of the traveling public being the result. For instance, driveways directly accessing a major arterial cause conflicts with vehicles traveling at a high rate of speed. To help minimize these conflicts and create a logical and safe transportation system that promotes better decision-making by the Planning Commission and developers, it is helpful to classify streets according to how they function in the network. Functional classification of the local street network is key to implementing a major street plan which is included as part of this Plan. A functional classification system defines the hierarchy

of movement that any particular route plays in determining how trips flow through a highway network. Streets are typically classified as a freeway, principal, major or minor arterials, major or minor collectors or local streets. Major and minor arterials are the primary surfaces which conduct traffic movement into and out of a city and are usually a single, continuous road. Collectors may be a continuous road or a series of connecting roads that allow a secondary movement of traffic through an area, or from an intersection with a major or minor arterial to another major or minor arterial. Collectors may also be the primary access into and from a neighborhood which feed the residential lots within the subdivision boundaries, but are not designed to be extended into neighboring and adjacent undeveloped or developed land.

The conflicting functions of movement and access are increased or decreased depending on the character and volume of traffic using the road. For instance, a principal arterial (Ross Clark Circle), is designed with wider lanes, stronger pavement, and an increased length in order to accommodate more and heavier cars and trucks. While at the opposite end of the spectrum, the design and construction of a cul-de-sac only needs to be sufficient to provide access to individual houses rather than to other major streets in the road network. When the functions of access and movement are “compressed”, neither function dominates causing higher crash rates, fuel consumption and excessive vehicular emissions. A good set of access management policies can minimize the effects of compressed street function, increase the efficiency of the system and preserve the public investment in street improvements.

The Minor Arterial and Collector Plan (MACPlan) is the City’s major street plan as authorized by Ala. Code 11-52-50. It illustrates the projected primary roadway network designed to serve the Dothan area over the next 20 years. It is a combination of the roads classified by the Alabama Department of Transportation in their functional road network and other non-network City streets. The Plan identifies highways, roads and streets by the character of service they provide for transportation planning purposes. Basic to this process is the recognition that individual routes do not serve travel independently in any major way. Rather, most travel involves movement through a network of roads.

Some existing roads and streets in Dothan do not have sufficient right-of-way width to accommodate anticipated traffic growth. The MACPlan identifies where these deficiencies exist and how much right-of-way is needed to accommodate the function of the road. Design standards contained in the Subdivision Regulations define the amount of right-of-way needed to accommodate the type of facility proposed. These requirements are shown in the following table.

Typical Right-of-Way Requirements by Facility

Roadway Type	Right-of-Way (ft.)	Easement (ft. each side)
Freeway/Expressway	150	NA
Arterial	100	NA
Collector	80	NA
Collector	60	10
Minor commercial and industrial streets	60	NA
Minor residential streets (including cul-de-sacs)	60	NA
Minor residential streets (including cul-de-sacs)	50	10
Marginal access streets	50	NA
Access Lane (Alley)	20	NA

The MACPlan also indicates where future roads or streets may be appropriate given the direction of growth and availability of supporting infrastructure. If adopted by ordinance, land must be set aside and dedicated to the City where adjacent to an existing right-of-way or in its entirety if contained completely within a parcel of land to be subdivided. If not adopted by ordinance, implementation of the recommendations contained in the MACPlan should be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

The MACPlan identifies where right-of-way is 'adequate', if 'additional widening needed' and 'no right-of-way exists'. In the case of an arterial having an 'adequate' designation, no additional right-of-way is necessary to accommodate planned improvements. In the case of 'additional widening needed' designation, an amount needed to accommodate the planned road is identified.

The City Commission may apply its requirements in the police jurisdiction which is equivalent to the urban growth boundary. A representation of the MACPlan is presented on the last page of this chapter.

Transportation Improvements

The following transportation improvement projects should be implemented.

1. *Murphy Mill from U.S. 231 North to John D. Odom Road; widen 2/3 lanes to 3/4 lanes.* Murphy Mill functions as a minor arterial linking U.S. 231 North to John D. Odom Road. It is currently carrying 9,635 vpd and is characterized by multiple turning movements, either directly into residential driveways or onto residential subdivision streets. Existing right-of-way

is insufficient to accommodate an expanded three lane facility with a turn lane at Brookside Drive. A raised landscape median would be impractical along this segment because of the multiple residential driveways, but provisions should be made to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian movements and street trees.

2. *Honeysuckle Road from U.S. 84 West to Former Street; widen from 2/3 lanes to 4/5 lanes and bridge upgrade and intersection improvements.* This section of Honeysuckle Road is currently carrying 15,704 vpd and serves as an alternative north-south connection paralleling Ross Clark Circle. It is used extensively by local traffic on the west side of the City and turns into Westgate Parkway north of U.S. 84. As with John D. Odom Road, there is little opportunity for further development along this segment and the improvements should include a raised landscaped median where appropriate, with provisions for bicycle and pedestrian movements and street trees.
3. *Honeysuckle Road from AL. 52 (Hartford Highway) to Taylor Road; widen 2 lanes to 3 lanes plus intersection improvements at Highway 52 and South Park.* This section of Honeysuckle Road traverses a section of the City with significant areas of vacant land zoned either Agriculture-Conservation or General Industry. A majority of the property zoned for industrial use is significantly impaired by areas prone to flooding. The location of access points to developable land along this mile long rural segment of road should be restricted to quarter mile spacing. Direct driveway access should be restricted to locations where sight distance is maximized. The intersection of Honeysuckle, South Park Avenue and Hatton Road should be realigned to provide a four leg intersection.
4. *Denton Road from Ross Clark Circle to Westgate Parkway; widen from 2/3 lanes to 4/5 lanes plus bridge upgrade and intersection improvements.* Denton Road is classified as a minor arterial and links Ross Clark Circle to Westgate Parkway. The ability of this road to accommodate project traffic is expected to fall to unacceptable levels in the near future necessitating expansion to five lanes. There is little opportunity for further development along this segment and the improvements should include a raised landscaped median to control the location of turning movements, as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities and street trees.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Dothan residents responding to a survey conducted in early 2007 indicated their desire to have a public transportation system with fixed routes. Currently, the Wiregrass Transit Authority operates a “demand response” type of transit system that offers scheduled pick up and transportation to destinations specified by the user and return trips if scheduled. This service does not have specified and established routes, nor does it pick-up other individuals from designated ‘transit stops’ along the route.

Through the MPO, a feasibility study was prepared by a consultant to determine the conditions under which a fixed route bus service could be operated in the City. Funding for the study was provided by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the City of Dothan. The study measured the potential ridership, identified areas where ridership is in demand, identified locations within the City of possible destinations for those individuals utilizing the service, identified routes and time schedules for runs,

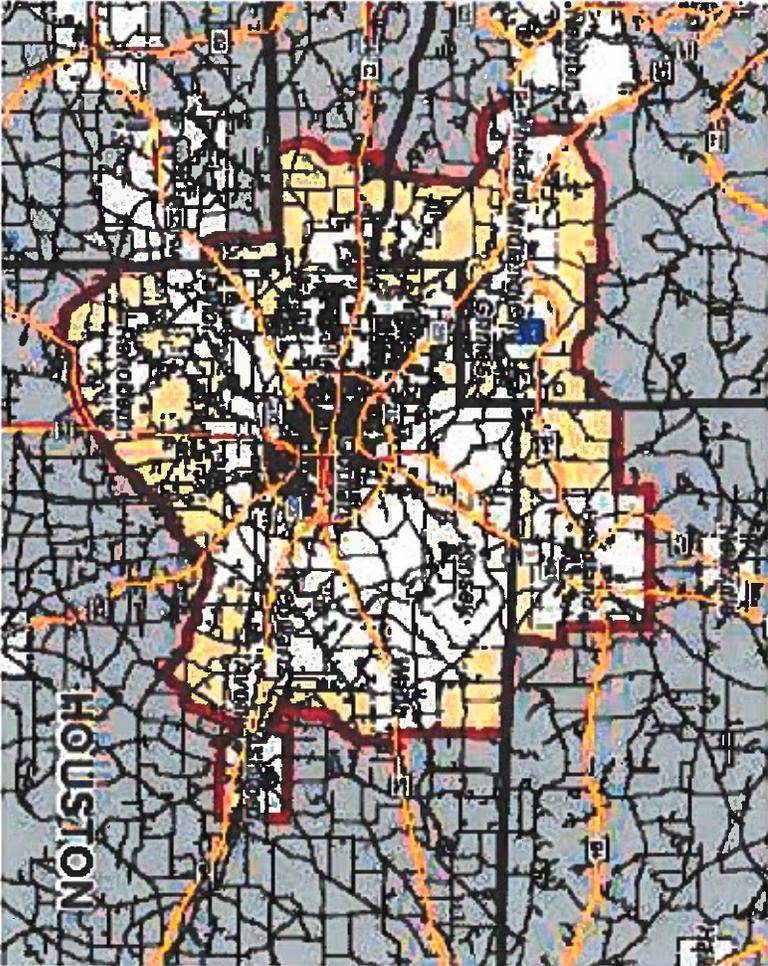
and estimated the cost of operating a transit system in Dothan. The study concluded that significant resources would be required to initiate and operate a fixed route system in the City and no decision has been made to date on implementation of the study's recommendations.

SOUTHEAST WIREGRASS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The City of Dothan is a member of the Metropolitan Planning Organization or MPO for short. The MPO is responsible for conducting a transportation planning process that is **comprehensive**, including all modes, **cooperative**, involving a broad array of stakeholders and other interested parties and **continuous**. The planning process is established in Federal Statute and is required for areas designated as “urbanized” (with a population of 50,000 or more).

The Southeast Wiregrass MPO study area depicted below includes portions of Dale, Geneva, Henry and Houston Counties, and the entire cities of Ashford, Cowarts, Dothan, Grimes, Hedland, Kinsey, Midland City, Napier Field, Pinckard, Rehobeth, Taylor and Webb. Each unit of government is represented on the MPO Policy Committee where decisions are made concerning the distribution of federal funding for road improvement projects.

The Wiregrass MPO receives a direct allocation of about \$1.2 million per year that is programmed through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that is collectively approved by member governments. The TIP is a capital funding program that allocates all federal funding to road projects in the area. Besides the “Dothan Attributable” money, all other state and federal funding that is allocated to a road improvement project is scheduled through the TIP.



The process starts with a Long Range Transportation Plan that considers all transportation modes and supports metropolitan community development and social goals. It is based on socio-economic data on population, households, employment and proposed development. The Plan and its component programs leads to the development and operation of an integrated, intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient and economic movement of people and goods (23 CFR 450.300). The Code of Federal Regulations includes specific requirements to be included in the Long Range Transportation Plan. These major elements are:

- A 20-year planning horizon;
- Includes long-range and short-range multimodal strategies that facilitates efficient movement of people and goods;
- Be updated every five years;
- Identify transportation demand over the Plan horizon;
- Includes citizen and public official involvement and participation in the Plan development process;
- Consider local comprehensive and land use plans; and
- Include a fiscally constrained financial plan.

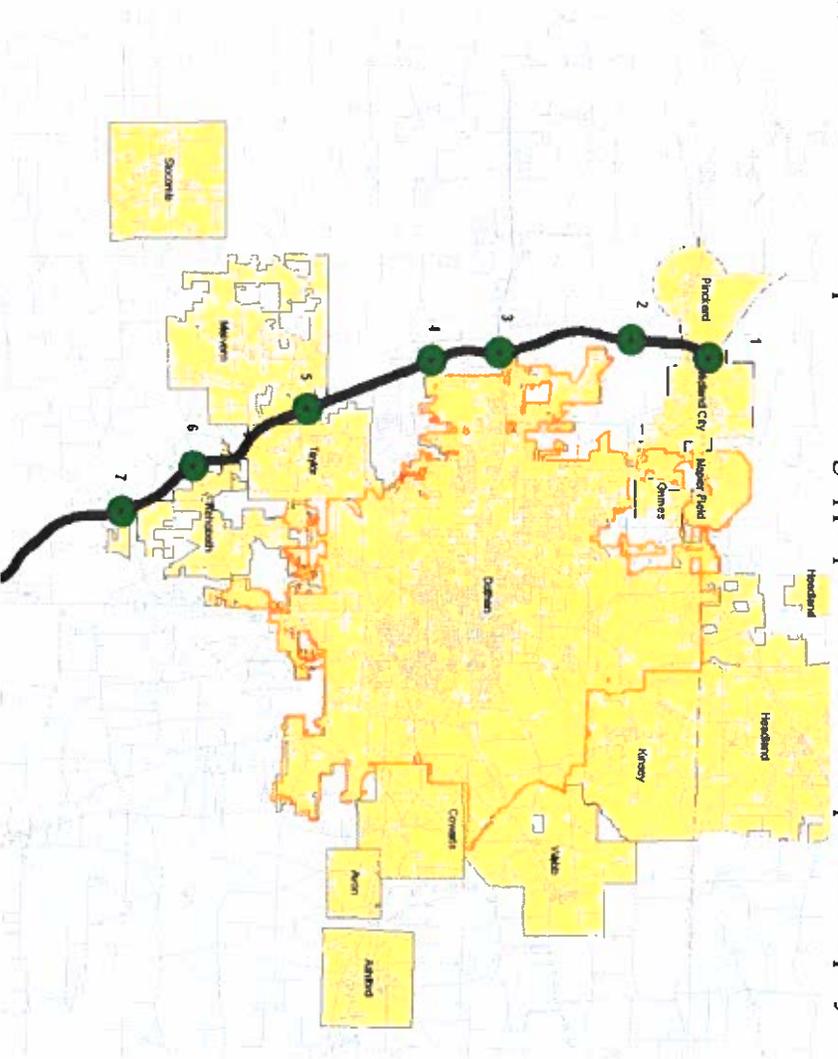
In order for a road to receive federal funding, it must be identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan as a candidate for improvement. If included, members of the MPO may advance a project and request 80% federal funding. Sponsors must be prepared to provide the 20% match in order to advance the project to design and construction. Projects moved into this phase are listed in the Transportation Improvement Program or *TIP*. The current *Transportation Improvement Program* and *Long Range Transportation Plan Update* for the Dothan MPO is posted on the Transportation Planning page of the Planning Department's website and includes more detail on Plan development as well as the projects and programs recommended.

I-10 CONNECTOR

Long discussed and long awaited, it may be that within a few years of the date of this Plan, that the 24 mile I-10 Connector (a planned limited access bypass linking U.S. 231 N. to U.S. 231 S.) may be realized. This Plan incorporates the I-10 Connector as currently proposed (shown below). The project was initiated with special funding appropriated in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Subsequent legislation has continued to provide funding for the project but only within the State of Alabama. No similar legislation has been introduced for a portion of the corridor that might extend to I-10 or beyond.

The preferred alignment (illustration to the right) advanced by the Draft Environmental Impact Statement or DEIS for the project was approved in November of 2007. It states that “in Alabama, the primary transportation problem in this corridor is the congestion on Ross Clark Circle”. Ross Clark Circle was originally constructed in the 1950’s as a traffic bypass of Dothan because several major US roadways; U.S. 231, U.S. 83, and U.S. 431 all intersected here.

However, a lack of strong land use and transportation policies caused major commercial land uses to shift out to locations around The Circle. Not only did this cause the “death” of downtown, it eventually led to increased congestion on The Circle. Now that the City has grown to a respectable size generating some congestion in its own right, this project basically is a bypass of the bypass. The danger, of course, is that it will cause major land uses to shift again to take advantage of the increased accessibility the connector promises.



The new connector, as planned, would begin at an interchange with U.S. 231 N. in the town of Pinckard. It would then head south, passing over or under Hwy 134, Bethlehem Road, as well as Murphy Mill Road, and interchange with U.S. 84 W. before continuing south over or under Fortner and County Line Roads before it interchanged with Alabama Highway 52. It then continues south not interchanging with any other road along its course until its termination at an interchange with U.S. 231 S.

Still, the project is important to the economic well-being of Dothan by enabling a stronger connection to other major population centers in the region as well as a new major airport in north Alabama and the possibility of an enlarged and deepened port in Panama City. Both facilities would bring a significant amount of truck traffic through Dothan distributing freight throughout the southeast United States.

Equally as important to relieving congestion, a limited access connector would also provide for safer travel. The DEIS reports that a crash rate comparison in the later half of the 1990's shows that crashes occur at half the rate when on a limited access facility as opposed to unrestricted access.

The construction of the I-10 Connector should alleviate some of the congestion caused by pass through traffic currently traveling south along U.S. 231, and Ross Clark Circle. However, some of that traffic will probably continue into Dothan via Ross Clark Circle due to the presence of restaurants, gas stations and hotels. Once Community Centers develop at the proposed interchanges that offer similar restaurants and lodging opportunities as found on U.S. 231 and Ross Clark Circle, travel patterns will change in response. Thus, if constructed, the Connector will have a definite impact on land use in the City by pulling development westward.

The Connector will also contribute to Dothan's sprawl, although, in this case it might not have negative connotations. Presently, much of Dothan's congestion is caused by commuter traffic being funneled into only a few east-west transportation arteries crossing The Circle. Adding additional roads west to east is impractical if not impossible but the addition of a major north/south connection between these east/west arteries is expected to impact the distribution of traffic with destinations within the City. In addition, the eventual development of new employment centers and Community and Neighborhood Centers on what today is the extreme western periphery of the Dothan area will also cause a redistribution of traffic flow during peak and off peak hours.

An alternative alignment has been proposed that basically mirrors the preferred alignment but continues on past the Alabama-Florida border and connects directly to I-10 near Chipley. This alignment is the focus of a comprehensive revenue study

commissioned by the Alabama Department of Transportation. This study does not rely on information available from other sources but relies on primary data collected in the field expressly for the purpose of determining what the potential bonding capacity would be if the facility was constructed as a toll road. At this point in the process, funding for the facility does not appear to be feasible given the data included in the study.

IMAGE CORRIDORS

Our major streets and roads serve to funnel traffic by and to the major activity centers in a city. As a result, they are often the first impression that a visitor has of a community. In Dothan's case, we are blessed with several major traffic corridors into the City, U.S. 231, U.S. 84, U.S. 431 and Ross Clark Circle. Because these are highways of the United States, the City's influence over their design, construction and operation are limited. However, the City has full and complete control over the appearance of the land uses accessing these highways and to a large degree, how they are allowed to be accessed from a proposed development.

The image these corridors convey to residents and visitors alike is of fundamental importance to the economic viability of the businesses along the corridor and to the community as a whole. Thus, these gateway corridors should be a valued and protected community asset and enhanced where possible; either as the result of private development or from a public initiative. Each gateway corridor should convey a welcoming introduction and reflect the best that the community has to offer. Careful planning and design of proposed developments should be the preferred strategy employed to assure that a positive image of the community is reflected.

Implementation



The key to success of any plan is the implementation component. This vital part of the plan determines whether critical issues conveyed to the city by its public as important elements to improve the condition and quality of life found in the city are to be considered, studied and acted upon.

Dothan's public let their preferences OF PLANS, PROJECTS AND STUDIES be known during the Delphi Technique patterned citizen survey, several public forums, Planning Commission meetings, City Commission meetings, as well as through letters, and telephone calls to the City. The following is a list of the top preferences identified by the public. Throughout this plan, we have set the stage for planning in Dothan. The preferences on issues raised by the public and those of concern to City leadership were discussed in detail in the previous chapters. In this chapter, the planning implications of each preference are briefly discussed followed by a series of recommendations to implement this Plan. In our review of the concerns expressed during the planning process, there were several items important to staff that are included in the recommendations outlined in this chapter.

LIST OF CONCERNS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

1. Transportation improvements within the City.
2. Sidewalks, pedestrian ways and bike trails.
3. Communication improvements between the City and the public.
4. Improvements to downtown.
5. More downtown entertainment venues.
6. More open space and parks in which to recreate.
7. Prevent commercial encroachment.
8. Protect the environment.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS WITHIN THE CITY

Traffic congestion was the number one concern of the citizens during the preparation of this LRDP. The ability to get around the City in a timely manner, to exit ones subdivision, and to link to other regional highways and routes were expressed to the City staff as becoming more and more difficult. Certain measures to address problems associated with traffic movement on three of our principal arteries are presently ongoing or are close to commencement by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT).

Improvements and widening to Ross Clark Circle, the City's beltway, is in the planning stages. ALDOT intends to implement access management controls on the segment of The Circle from U.S. 231 North to U.S. 231 South. Part of the project will involve repurposing existing lanes and closing many of the existing median openings along The Circle. Closure of the median openings will promote the function of moving traffic over accessing adjacent properties. The elimination of the many medians will also reduce accidents. Funding for this multi-phase project will be provided by the Federal Highway Administration and the Alabama Department of Transportation.

Improvements and widening to a portion of US 231 North from Ross Clark Circle to north of John D. Odom Road is currently under construction. Widening this segment of the highway and repurposing existing paved areas to create an additional lane each way will improve the traffic flow along this stretch of the busiest roadway in Dothan. Funding for the over \$13 million project is provided by the Federal Highway Administration and the Alabama Department of Transportation.

The State is actively looking toward the construction of a **limited access facility** around the west side of town; the I-10 Connector. The State has studied the feasibility of constructing this facility as a toll road but no decision has been made. Ultimately, the road would run from Montgomery, AL. to Panama City, FL. Regardless of whether it is publically or privately financed, a portion of the proposed road lies within the Dothan jurisdiction on the west side of the City. Construction would take much of the through traffic off U.S. 231 North, Ross Clark Circle, and U.S. 231 South providing relief to City residents traveling those roads. Currently, a draft environmental assessment for this project has been completed, but further studies are being conducted. Consultants have been selected to develop design drawings but have not been released to begin work.



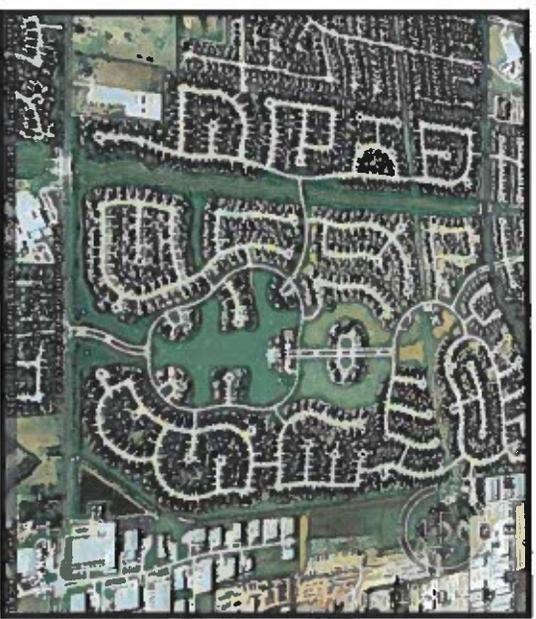
As authorized by Title 11, Chapter 52, Article 3, a Minor Arterial and Collector Plan (MACPlan) will be designed and implemented as an extension of this Plan. It will be used to determine what segments of roadways may need additional lane widening based upon the future land use projections developed by this LRDP and where future roads may be needed. Although land use patterns can be difficult to predict, best guesses can be made based upon known patterns, proposed developments and market trends. The MACPlan must be updated as conditions change.

Maneuvering through the urban area inside Ross Clark Circle has never been an issue. That's due to the amount of connectivity between streets and the gridded network of public streets. However, this is not the case in the suburban environments outside Ross Clark Circle where there is a noticeable lack of connection between major streets and between subdivisions. Since connectivity is one of the ingredients necessary to ensure steady and even flow of traffic, measures to improve connectivity should be expanded and new developments should be reviewed carefully to identify opportunities to enhance street connections.

The City of Dothan participated in the development of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan conducted by the Southeast Alabama Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Recommendations:

- 1a. Continue to monitor active transportation improvements projects and steward the development of the I-10 Connector.
- 1b. Investigate possible sources of funding at State and Federal levels for transportation related improvement projects.
- 1c. Create and adopt the MACPlan by ordinance. Maintain, update and re-adopt the MACPlan as appropriate.
- 1d. Promote street connectivity to adjacent undeveloped property.
- 1e. Encourage car pooling and develop a study to locate possible sites for development of park and ride facilities.
- 1f. Remain actively involved with the local MPO, ALDOT and the federal government to identify other transportation programs which might benefit the City and the region.
- 1g. Develop land use patterns compatible with and supports a variety of transportation opportunities.
- 1h. Focus on the design of internal traffic circulation that moves traffic within the development site efficiently.



- ii. Encourage neighborhood street design that facilitates safety, ensures connectivity, deters through traffic and supports viable and sustainable communities.
- Ij. Implement access management standards in the Subdivision Regulations and development plan review.
- Ik. Establish limits on the number of dwellings that can be accessed from any one location. Allow additional development with a secondary access.
- Il. Use landscaping and street trees to define the edges of development and provide visual clues to motorists that the travel environment has changed.
- Im. Develop and adopt a complete streets policy.

SIDEWALKS, PEDESTRIAN WAYS AND BIKE TRAILS

A recent revision to the Dothan subdivision regulations establishes a clear formula for developers of land to determine when and where sidewalks are required in new subdivisions. Section 90-141 addresses in detail the instances when, the location of, and the dimensions for new sidewalks within new residential neighborhoods. The City has recently contracted with a consulting firm to develop a bicycle/pedestrian plan for the City.

The opportunity that is overlooked in many cases involves providing a link between commercial development and adjacent residential areas that would support pedestrian and bicycle trips. Such a link would extend the opportunity for surrounding neighborhood residents to walk or ride to and from the development and their homes rather than having to get into their automobiles for the short drive to the center. Pedestrian links between residential communities, work centers and shopping or entertainment centers is an important component of the multi-modal transportation system of a city.

Recommendations:

- 2a. Enforce sidewalks requirements established in the subdivision regulations. Revise as appropriate.
- 2b. Participate fully in the development of the Bike/Ped Plan for the City and implement as funding becomes available.
- 2c. Encourage pedestrian and bicycle links between shopping and entertainment destinations in the development plan approval process.
- 2d. Use incentives such as reduced street width or development density to encourage sidewalk design and construction in excess of minimums required.
- 2e. Promote design and construction of streets and walkways to be safe and pedestrian friendly and incorporate in-line public spaces throughout the network.

- 2f. Develop streetscape plans and overlay districts for highly visible major roadways in the City that address issues such as safety, trees and landscaping, lighting, pedestrian amenities, sidewalks, crosswalks and medians to enhance the walkability of our City.

COMMUNICATION IMPROVEMENTS BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE PUBLIC

Whether actual or imagined, the public has perceived a lack of communication between the government and its citizens. During the LRDP planning process many opportunities were given the public to participate. The citizen survey resulted in only 5% response and the five public forums held at various locations in the City had very low turnouts even though the time, place and date for each were broadcast through the radio and television media, published on the City's website and within the local newspaper. The forums were held in the evenings, two weeks apart of each other and in each of the City Commission districts as well as two locations in the downtown area. Yet, we continue to hear from some citizens that they were never made aware of the survey or the public forums.

The City Manager holds monthly press meetings wherein he delivers a prepared statement and fields questions from the local media.

The City Commission, Planning Commission, Personnel Board and other committees, commissions and boards hold meetings regularly, all of which are advertised and open to the public.

The City Manager has created a voluntary participation program entitled "Dothan 101" which is held semi-annually over a four week period during the evening. The intent of "Dothan 101" is to inform the public on the day-to-day operation of the City on a department by department basis. The "classes" are kept small so that each citizen can get a close look at how the City operates and can ask questions of the staff during their presentation.

The City Commission meetings are televised on the public access cable channel as a tape-delayed broadcast as are the commission meetings of the County and council meetings for some of the surrounding municipalities.

Recommendations:

- 3a. Continue the regular press conferences.
- 3b. Continue with the Dothan 101 program and have the presentations broadcast on the public access channel as a tape-delayed program.

- 3c. Investigate opportunities to broadcast the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning and Adjustment, and the Historic Preservation Board meetings as tape delayed programming on the public access cable channel.
- 3d. In addition to the tape delayed programming, investigate the practicality to broadcast each meeting “real time” on the official City website.
- 3e. When entering into the “neighborhood planning” phase of individual neighborhoods within Dothan, it is recommended that a steering committee of citizens who live within the neighborhood being studied be formed to aid in the analysis and development of the plan for their neighborhood. In doing this, the citizens will achieve a sense of community and camaraderie as the process unfolds and culminates.
- 3f. Investigate implementing an annual citizen survey.

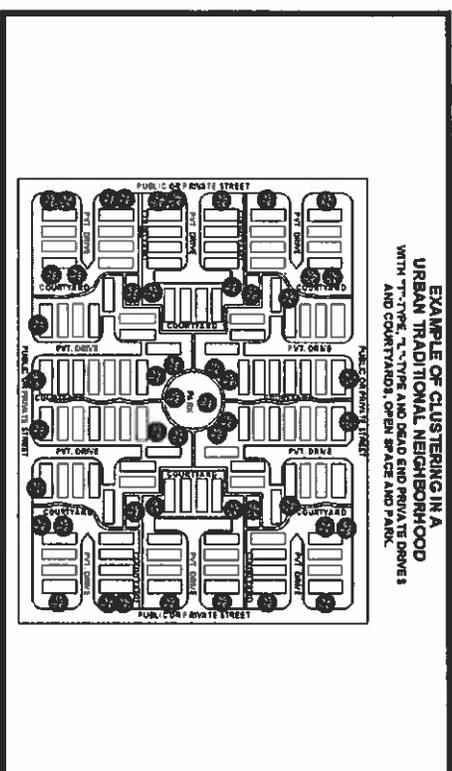
IMPROVEMENTS TO DOWNTOWN

The renovation of the downtown area was one of the most popular comments from our survey and met favorable response from the citizens during our public forums. The downtown as it presently exists does not reflect the vitality of the City where much of the commercial and residential activities have been concentrated along Ross Clark Circle or in the suburban environs beyond The Circle.

Some comments included the investigation of public/private partnerships by the City for downtown renewal; or the active pursuit of private development companies which specialize in the redevelopment of downtown areas.

DDRA During late 2006 the Downtown Dothan Redevelopment Authority (DDRA) was resurrected to address redevelopment issues. Much of the concentration of their efforts has remained within a small two-city block area of the downtown, but plans are to expand their redevelopment efforts outward as the inner downtown area is completed.

Downtown Overlay District (DOD) In late 2007 and early 2008 the Planning Department created an ordinance and accompanying set of design guidelines for an area of the downtown over which a new overlay district was formed. The new ordinance identified specific districts within the downtown area and allowable land uses within each depending upon the planned character for each. The ordinance also created two new “floating” zones that would encourage out-of-the-box,



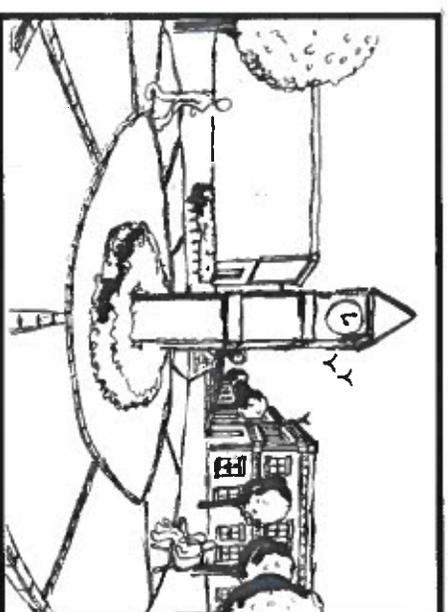
creative design when it came to new development downtown. The new zones are the Urban Planned Unit Development (UPUD) and the Urban Traditional Neighborhood Development (UTND). The zones can be applied to as small as a two-acre tract, allowing the development of infill parcels in the downtown. The UPUD can contain mixed uses, while the UTND is restricted exclusively to residential use. Such creative ordinances and design guidelines promote development of quality land use projects.

RSA-Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) invests retirement funds in land development ventures throughout the State. They are the managers and owners of several championship golf courses in key areas of Alabama known as part of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. Dothan is one of those cities fortunate enough to have one of those courses. The Highlands Golf Course in the Highlands development on the west side of the City is owned and operated by the RSA. However, golf-course developments are usually accompanied by a luxury hotel and convention center such as the one in the illustration.

A Master Plan for downtown was prepared and adopted in 2007. Among other things, it was suggested that the construction of a “town square” would go a long way in the revitalization of the downtown. Similarly, improvements to the existing library and/or some other attraction such as an aquarium, amphitheater, or a natural history museum with planetarium could also be possibilities to attract visitors to the downtown area. These attractions could be publically, privately, or jointly financed and operated and advertised to beach travelers as a temporary diversion.

Recommendations:

- 4a. Continue working to implement the Downtown Plan.
- 4b. Continue funding the DDRA.
- 4c. Actively seek out private land development companies who specialize in downtown redevelopment projects on a large scale for private ventures or public/private partnerships.
- 4d. Continue seeking RSA investment into downtown.
- 4e. Improve the infrastructure system within the downtown to include upgrading the water transmission system to a size that could handle increased development density and intensity in the downtown area.
- 4f. Develop a streetscape plans at a pedestrian scale for other areas of downtown to emphasize a pedestrian friendly environment.



- 4g.** The use of alleys or private drives as outlined within the design guidelines for UTND's and TND's should be considered in high density areas to reduce the need for driveways and garages to face along public streets. They also would offer a location for off-street parking away from the through streets in mixed-use developments.

DOWNTOWN ENTERTAINMENT VENUES

The renovation of the downtown area could pave the way for additional venues held in the downtown. The public suggested that the City sponsor more of these sorts of venues. However, there were many comments from the public that events or venues are learned about only after watching coverage on a local television station of the event once it's occurred rather than before the occurrence, which would have allowed them the time to make plans to attend. Currently, the volunteer acting troupe known as SEACT periodically develops, sponsors, and produces live plays held at various locations in the downtown. The Dothan Opera House is the location for several plays and musicals throughout the course of the year. The civic center arena is used for many large private productions, civic functions, social functions, and other activities.

The Museum of Arts has the capacity to hold public and private functions, seminars, and meetings and sponsors various civic events at the site throughout the year. The National Peanut Festival completes its annual recognition of the importance of the peanut industry with a parade through the downtown. Various other groups sponsor seasonal art and craft fairs on the streets of the downtown. The City sponsors several seasonal events on the downtown streets as well.

Within our citizen survey we asked the public whether they would be interested in a major sporting venue in Dothan. It was one of 11 "Regional Issues" posed to the public. The response rated a major sporting venue as 10th out of the 11 in ranking of importance to them.

Recommendations:

- 5a.** Continue City-sponsored events in the downtown and establish new ones such as Mardis Gras parades, balls, etc.
- 5b.** Relocate activities to downtown venues such as the "Smokin' in the Wiregrass" bar-b-que cook off held in the spring.
- 5c.** Investigate opportunities for development of "attraction" type uses in the downtown such as an aquarium, a movie theater, or other such activities that would attract visitors to spend time in the downtown.
- 5d.** Advertise any and all events and venues held downtown vigorously **BEFORE** the event has occurred.

MORE OPEN SPACE AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

The planning and construction of Gussie McMillon Park east of the central business district signaled a long-needed investment in the neighborhood by the City. The park was erected on land that was once occupied by East Highlands Elementary School. The school had fallen into decay. A series of public meetings were held at a nearby City-owned community center to introduce the citizens to plans which had been prepared to turn the vacant land into a public park. Construction of the park was funded by CDBG funds, City labor, and volunteer time and effort by local citizens to build a play ground. Similar opportunities exist around Dothan that would fulfill a recreation need for neighborhood oriented activities.

As compared to neighborhood parks that are basically passive park settings, there are several community parks where organized activities are conducted. Responding to a need, a new 87.5 acre community park site was acquired in the southwest area of Dothan. After several studies, this site proved to be suitable to meet future expansion needs.



Recommendations:

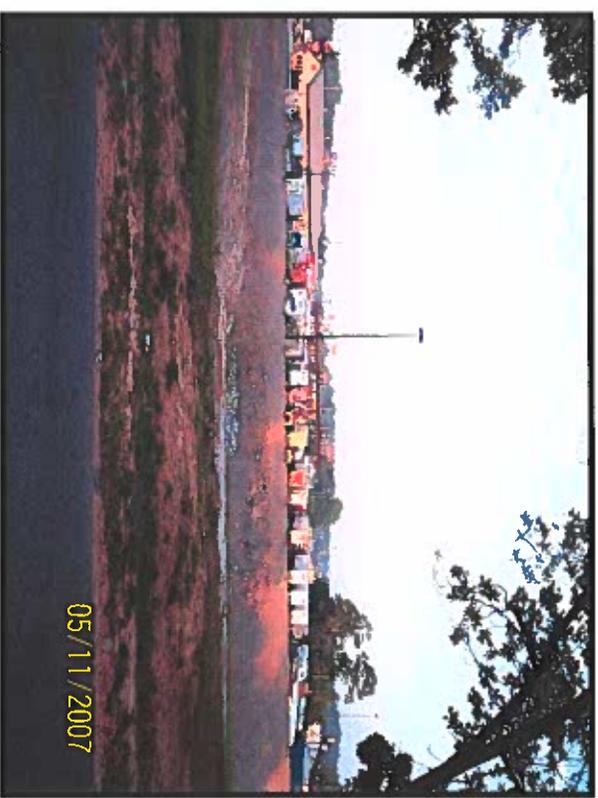
- 6a. Acquire land appropriate for neighborhood park opportunities including in the downtown area.
- 6b. Consider an amendment to the subdivision regulations which would require land to be set aside for the use of the future residents of the new community.
- 6c. Increase the amount of open space with an emphasis on creating a greenway network and hike/bike trails.
- 6d. Encourage land uses that promote an environment where residents can work, live, and play within their neighborhoods.

PREVENT COMMERCIAL ENCROACHMENT

Several instances have occurred recently that has caused some concern that commercial activities are encroaching into residential areas. The planning and construction of the Flying J Truck Stop at the intersection of U.S. 231 South and Ross Clark Circle prompted an outpouring of public concern. The picture on the right explains the use and intensity of the truck stop and its proximity to neighboring single family residences.

The problem in this case was that the current zoning on the property was consistent with its use. But, the zoning ordinance did not elaborate on the size and kind of buffering required, only that a distance of separation was needed. Under the existing zoning ordinance, the City had no choice but to approve the proposed development plan.

In 2007, the Dothan Pavilion was approved and constructed along U.S. 231 North between Murphy Mill Road and Napier Field Road. The large shopping and entertainment center was approved even though it abutted an existing and established single family residential area. In this case, a wide vegetative buffer consisting of mature pines and hardwoods between the incompatible land uses was required as a condition of zoning approval.



In both cases, the lack of well developed and evenly applied buffer standards that could be applied at development plan review caused inconsistent treatment of buffers. As the City revises the zoning code, special attention should be given to how incompatible uses are buffered from one another. In addition to revised buffer standards, the City might consider the application of additional development requirements for properties laying along the image corridors of the City. Properties in an image corridor could be held to a higher standard, thus accentuating community appearance. The Dothan Zoning Ordinance is currently undergoing a major rewrite and if Dothan has learned from passed mistakes, the definition of where, how large, and what composition buffers between incompatible land uses will take should be addressed and included in the new ordinance.

Much of the concern from citizens arises when previously developed single family residential uses along a major arterial or highway is rezoned to something other than what it was originally designated when the neighborhood was first approved. Such changes are usually the result of repeated land use successions causing increased land values. Land economics would push the property with increased land values towards a commercial use where rent is higher. This land use cycle is a common cause of encroaching commercialization.

In some cases, property was rezoned without evidence of a firm development plan. While rezoning shouldn't be subject to a development plan, the developer should be able to give the Planning Commission some idea that the property is not being rezoned for purely speculative reasons.

Recommendations:

- 7a. Educate the public to understand the forces behind land economics and the inevitable transition before they purchase a home that backs onto an undeveloped tract of land fronting a busy road.
- 7b. Include as part of rezoning staff reports a review of adjacent properties that may be developed with an incompatible use.
- 7c. Avoid rezoning approvals where there is no clear understanding of what will be developed on that tract.
- 7d. Create a "municipal reserve" overlay qualifier that requires greater rear yard setbacks on reserve tracts that about proposed or existing single family residential lots.
- 7e. Revise the landscape buffer criteria with regard to landscaping requirements that recognizes the varying intensities of use.
- 7f. Review height restrictions for non-residential uses that reflect the distance from adjacent residential uses.
- 7g. Ensure adequate opportunities for new commercial development in appropriate locations in the City.
- 7h. A variety of regulatory techniques should be developed to promote effective compatibility between adjacent land uses.
- 7i. Refine landscape requirements so large parking areas include buffering and planting that soften or mitigate intrusive views.
- 7j. Encourage large commercial uses to locate at major nodes in the transport system.

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Development that uses conservation oriented and eco-friendly practices are becoming increasingly popular in the marketplace. Dothan is blessed with an abundance of open spaces, creeks, rivers, ponds, lakes and other natural areas. The eco-system is biologically diverse and should be respected. Riparian areas, wetlands, prime woodlands, prime pasture land, continuously flowing creeks and rivers, waterways, and gently rolling topography are all characteristic of land in the Dothan area.

Conservation development design standards should be established within the subdivision regulations and as an option in a planned unit development. These standards would be designed to preserve unique features on a site (green infrastructure) by allowing smaller lots (density bonus) in exchange for preserving them. Lots would be clustered along public or private streets leaving a significant portion of the development in conserved open space. This minimizes impermeable surfaces that increase runoff and impact waterways, wetlands, or impact natural vistas. At the same time, the amount of infrastructure required for access would be decreased. The goal is to retain the lot yield that could otherwise be expected but cluster it on the site.

The quality of the air we breathe is often taken for granted in this part of the country, but experience has shown that Dothan will one day be faced with dealing with noncompliance with air pollution standards. As a small urbanized area, Dothan could be faced with having to address ground level ozone and small particulate matter in the air. The sources for these pollutants include a variety of sources ranging from industry to gas combustion engines to the pine forests that surround us. Compliance with State and Federal standards will be mandatory and they will impact economic development practices and the funding of transportation improvements. Dothan leadership should recognize this probable impact on our community. Mitigating measures could include mass transit, car pooling, efforts to increase the use of bicycles and pedestrians facilities, and efforts to address public behavior and attitudes.



To sustain future growth, Dothan needs to develop a source of surface water. Any in depth analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this Plan. But one thing that should be addressed is the impact on land use that may result. Should a reservoir be pursued, it is vitally important that the land around it is protected from development that might adversely impact water quality.

Recommendations:

- 8a. Map the location of elements of green infrastructure, protected and endangered species and known cultural resources.
- 8b. Identify, preserve and protect green infrastructure and habitat in the development review process.
- 8c. Add conservation development standards to the subdivision regulations to minimize disruption of green infrastructure.
- 8d. Integrate the constructed environment and the natural environment to protect the native landscape and topographical features inherent in our community.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in support of Urban Growth Area, Boundary and Annexation Goals

- 9a. Dothan will give primary consideration for annexing land which has a fiscally positive impact.
- 9b. Property lying outside the Urban Growth Boundary as designated in this Plan should not be annexed.
- 9c. The capacity of existing infrastructure and redevelopment of older areas should be promoted to maximize existing taxpayer investments.
- 9d. Consider initiating a flood hazard ordinance and building inspections program in the three-mile police jurisdiction area to establish a level of protection for its current and future residents.
- 9e. Ensure that growth occurs in a manner that balances the pace of development with the City's ability to provide critical services such as police and fire protection, utilities, and trash removal as well as capital improvements such as parks, transportation and open space.
- 9f. Recognize that all land uses are necessary to provide for the balanced and orderly growth and development of the City.

Recommendations in support of Community Appearance Goals and Strategies

- 9g. Housing of all types and form must be constructed of the highest quality materials and designed to create safe and attractive neighborhoods. Attention must be paid to building massing and form with emphasis on variation to prevent repetition of similar homes or building complexes.
- 9h. Improve design standards for multi-family housing that will address issues such as architectural design and integrity, building design and massing, spatial relationships, and safety, while creating sustainability and durability.
- 9i. Improve design standards for various levels of single-family structures that address the specific issues elaborated above.
- 9j. Develop standards for development quality in the built environment to prevent premature obsolescence.
- 9k. Enhance and accentuate primary gateways to the City by constructing landscaped medians or points of arrival.
- 9l. Non-residential uses along image corridors should be clearly recognizable and relate directly to the corridor it fronts.
- 9m. Use street trees, landscaping and lighting to enhance the appearance of the use or building from the image corridor.
- 9n. Significant areas of parking in the front should be minimized and placed to the rear of the development.
- 9o. Where possible, adjacent buildings should relate in size, height and appearance to each other.
- 9p. Developments should integrate pedestrian and bicycle paths and lanes in image corridors.
- 9q. Frontage or backage roads should be incorporated into development design in image corridors.
- 9r. Maintain transitions to residential areas in image corridors; strive to define edges in development patterns.
- 9s. Sign types and sizes should be appropriate to their context, i.e. height and size should be a function of intensity of use and traffic speed to avoid visual clutter in image corridors.
- 9t. Land uses along image corridors should be coordinated against a set of design standards.
- 9u. Strip or leapfrog development along image corridors should be minimized to create a recognizable transition between the “city” and the “country”.