6

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,

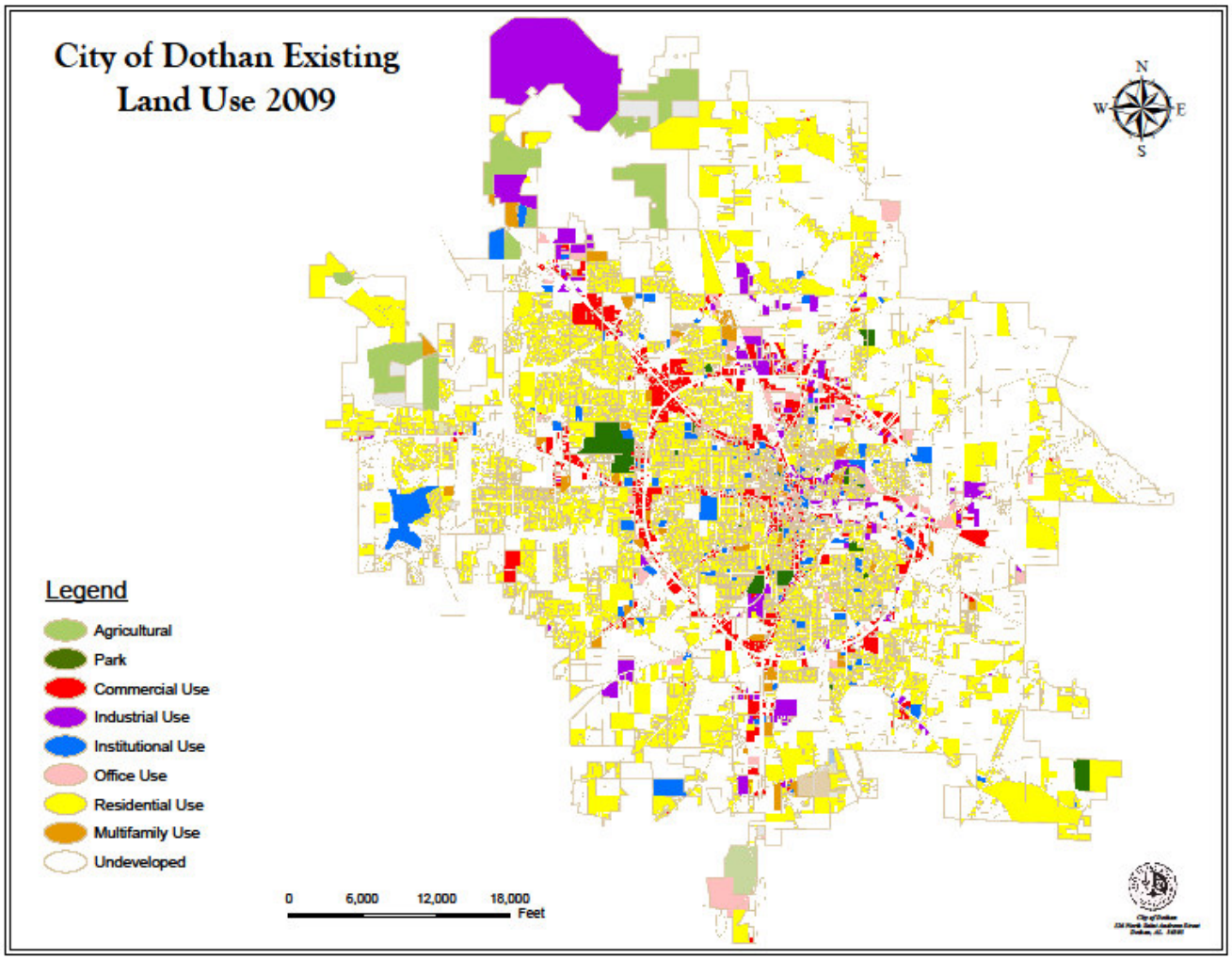
industrial, or open space helps ensure the community can maintain its economic integrity. Just as important as understanding the proportion of land devoted to a particular use, is the understanding of the relationship between the uses.

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

	Non-Residential				Residential		Open Space/Ag		Undeveloped	
Land Use #'s by Acres (2006)	Commercial	Institutional	Industrial	Office	Multifamily	Residential	Parks	Agricultural-Open Space-Develop	Undeveloped	Totals
	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%
	11.69%				28.77%		3.82%		55.72%	100.00%

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
N
W
E
S
Legend
Agricultural
Park
Commercial Use
Industrial Use
Institutional Use
Office Use
Residential Use
Multifamily Use
Undeveloped
0
6,000
12,000
18,000
Feet

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 it's 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.

Polices 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.

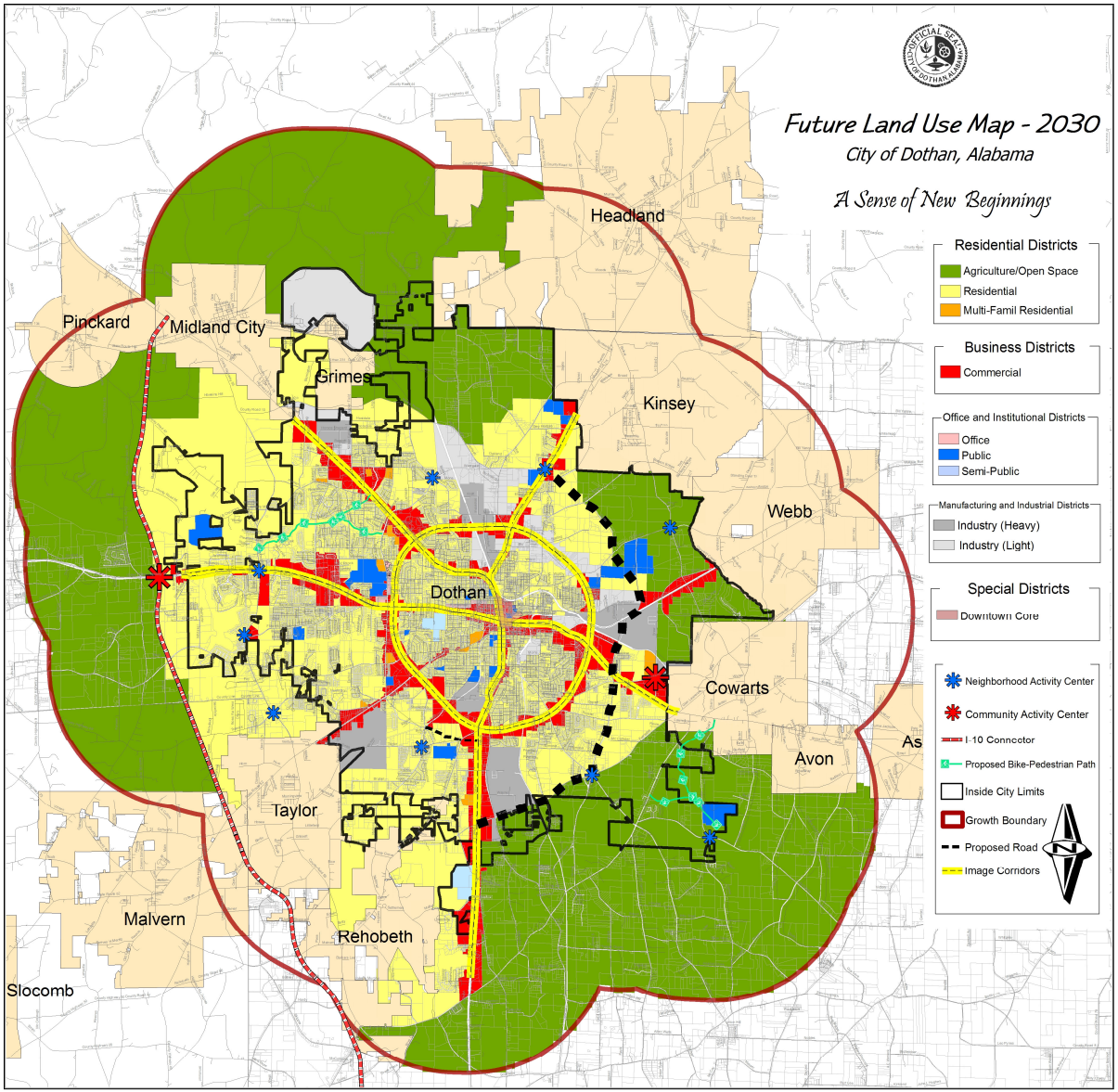
Some policies also ignore the reality of increasing development costs of "greenfields" and the sound financial opportunity that exists when the capacity of existing infrastructure and services is maximized. Policies that promote infill and redevelopment of gentrifying neighborhoods, antiquated commercial 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 un-implementable 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
Residential Districts
Agriculture/Open Space
Residential
Multi-Famil Residential
Business Districts
Commercial
Office and Institutional Districts
Office
Public
Semi-Public
Manufacturing and Industrial Districts
Industry (Heavy)
Industry (Light)
Special Districts
Downtown Core
Neighborhood Activity Center
Community Activity Center
I-10 Connector
Proposed Bike-Pedestrian Path
Inside City Limits
Growth Boundary
Proposed Road
Image Corridors
Headland
Pinckard
Midland City
Grimes
Kinsey
Webb
Dothan
Cowarts
Avon
Taylor
Malvern
Rehobeth
Slocomb

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.

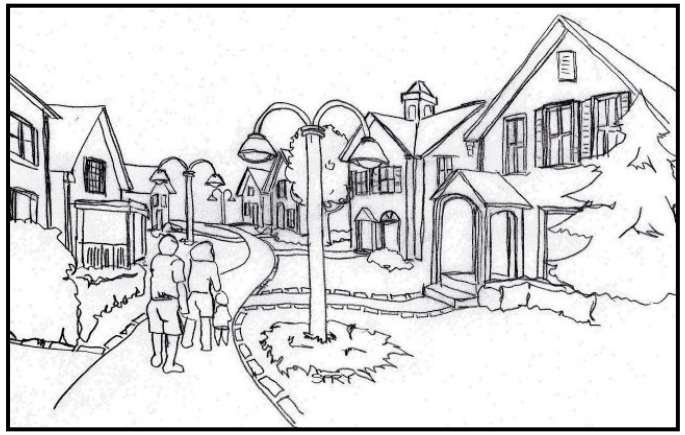
A city's downtown is probably the most complex and important of the city's activity centers. Historically the center of the community, it is a common characteristic of downtowns to have a fine, well-integrated mix of land uses simply because it was the center of the community and contained a wide variety 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 ~~a~~ 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 Development~~s~~ (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.

Commerical 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 commerical 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.

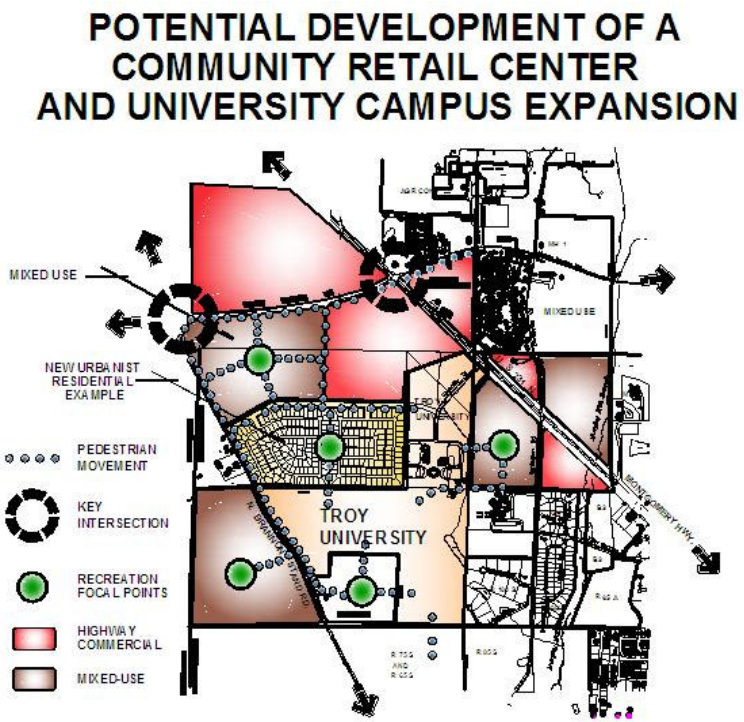
These "Places", their character and function are described in the following paragraphs.

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 the 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 Leaseable 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

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 development~~s~~ in surrounding areas where practical. The use of buffers between Community Activity Centers and surrounding neighborhoods is required.

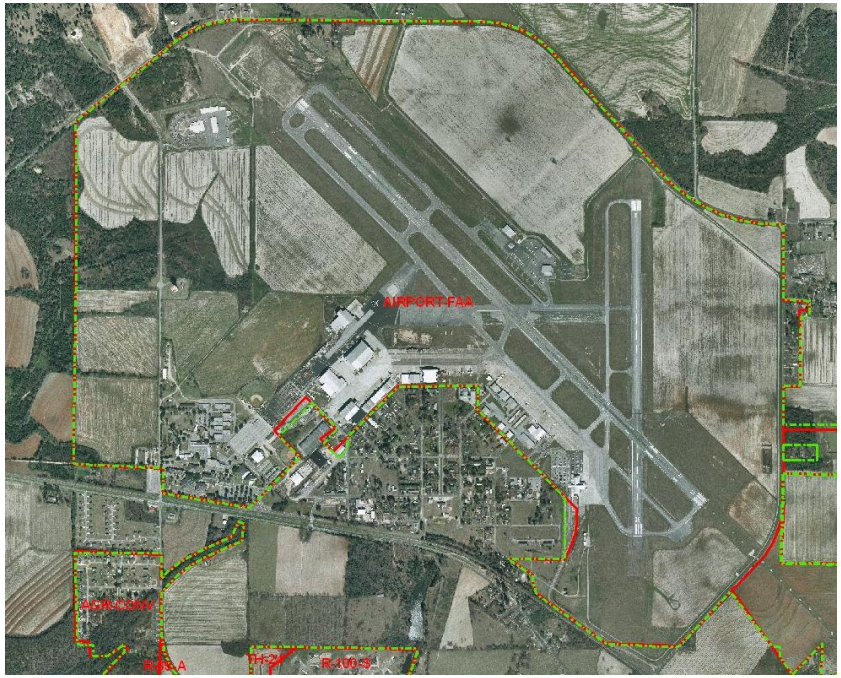
Neighborhood Activity Centers

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.

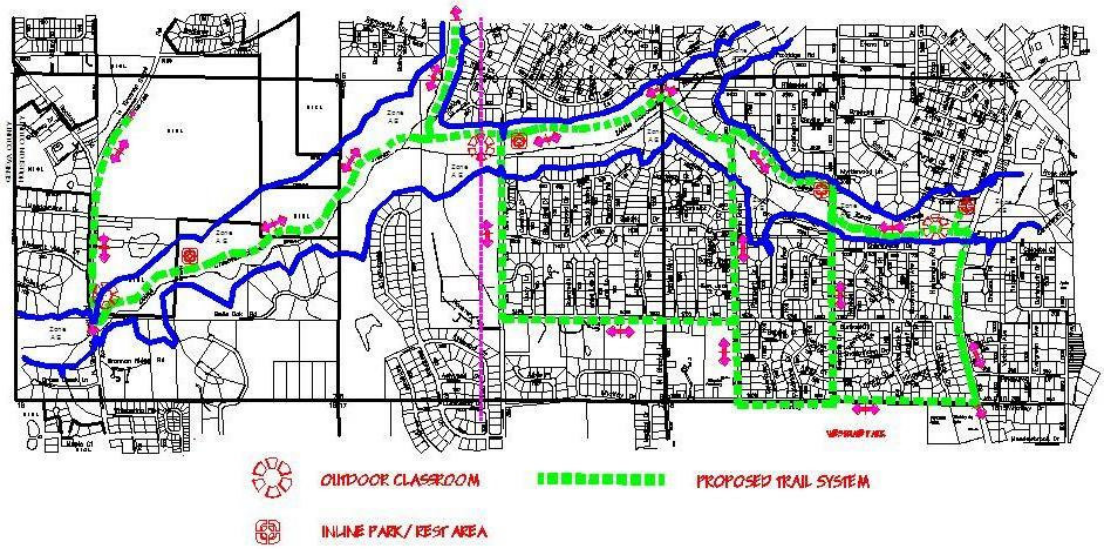
Dothan occupies a strategic geographic location that offers good proximity to many markets in the Southeastern United States. Supplying goods to these markets already occurs to some degree. However, the widening of the Panama Canal brings an opportunity to the Gulf Coast community of Panama City. With 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 it's 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 if their market price point and relative ease to layout.

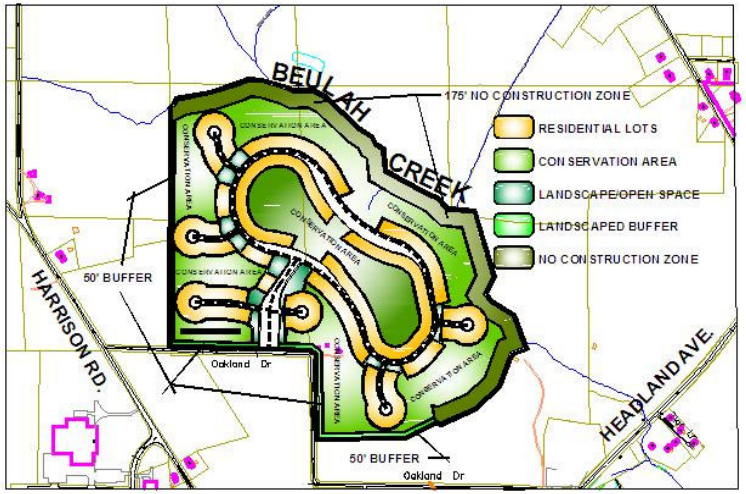
This will probably be the most popular sought after designation for new developments. Other housing options such as group care facilities may be appropriate depending on location.

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)