



# **Super Neighborhood Plan For the NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods**



**Prepared by the  
Long Range Planning Division,  
City of Dothan Planning & Development Department  
January, 2013**



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## **Acknowledgements and Credits**

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## **Preface:**

The City of Dothan Planning Commission adopted the Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) – *A Sense of New Beginnings* in March, 2011 replacing the previous plan that had been adopted April 1999.

While the LRDP focused on land use and transportation issues on a city-wide level, the concept was to examine and address many other issues on a neighborhood level for which is much easier to absorb and recommend improvements. Neighborhood planning provides a close-up look at issues that could be used in the LRDP Updates.

In early 2012, staff of the Department of Planning and Development's Long Range Planning Division began the task of developing a neighborhood plan for the second quadrant of study, entitled the NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods (NWUSN). The Neighborhood-level plans offer a more conventional "Comprehensive" look at the issues than did the LRDP. Additionally, pertinent goals and strategies outlined in the LRDP were refined and applied through the series of neighborhood plans to be developed subsequent to the LRDP.

Because there are so many different neighborhoods in Dothan, studying each one separately would take many years, possibly decades to accomplish. The idea of grouping multiple neighborhoods into super neighborhoods or sectors emerged as the logical method with which to proceed. But first we needed to establish a hierarchy of sectors which would represent the fundamental progression of city layers (Urban, Suburban and Ex-Urban/Rural). Those layers and neighborhoods sector designations are shown on figure P-1.

We decided to begin our studies in some of the neediest areas, those closest to the center of the city. We called this area the "Urban Area" and it includes the entire area within the Ross Clark Circle. This large mass of land involves roughly 10,000 acres. The Urban Area is one of the three basic areas inside the city limits. The other two, the "Suburban" and the "Ex-Urban/Rural" areas lie outside the Ross Clark Circle.

Dothan's Urban Area is much too large and diverse to be studied as one effort. Therefore it was decided that the Urban Area needed to be broken into smaller, more manageable sectors (quadrants); and so it was decided to split the 10,000 acres into four areas approximately equal in size. The four quadrants are bounded by major roadways and offer a clear and distinct physical separation between one another. A Map delineating these Urban Area Sectors is presented on figure P-2.

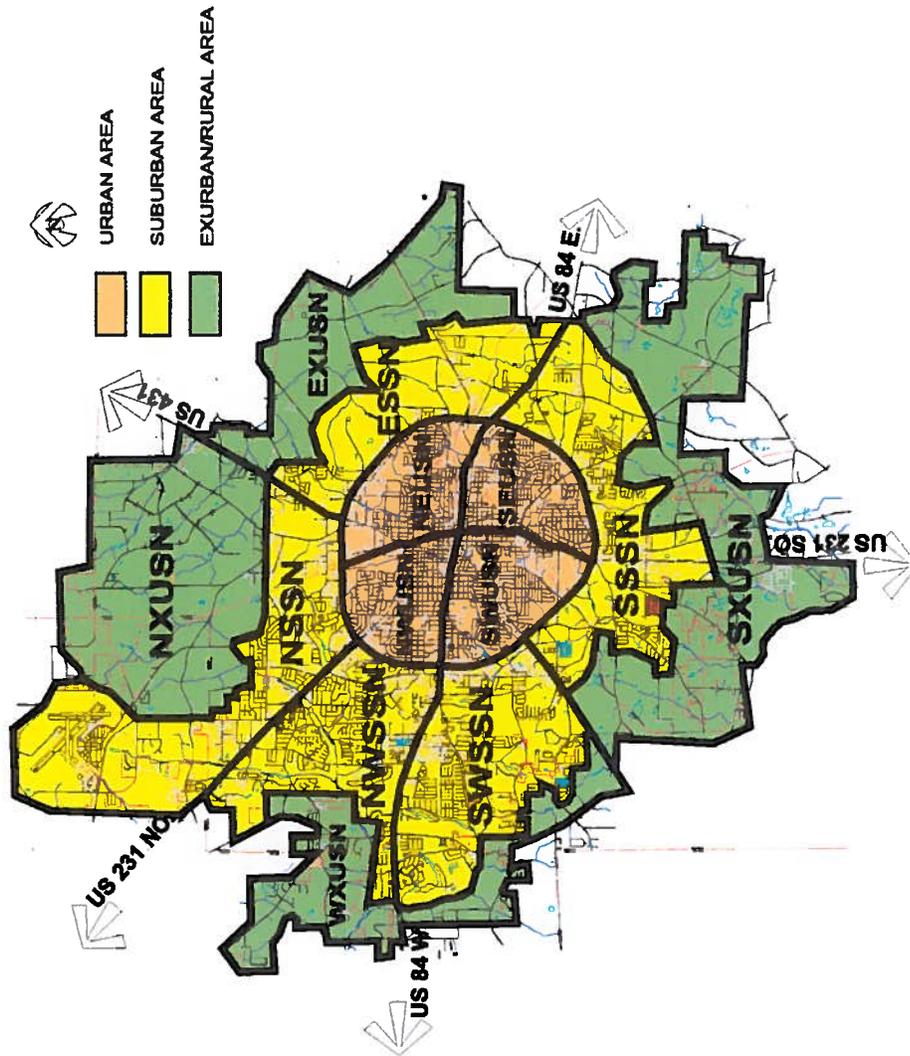


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Steering development in areas of the city are specific nodes or activity centers. There is the Southeast Alabama Medical Center on the east side and Flowers Hospital along with a professional medical park on the west side. A regional mall and one large commercial center are also found on the west side. These nodes historically influence the direction in which a city grows, and it seems to be the case in Dothan as well. These nodes of development influence can be seen on figure P-3.



# DOTHAN'S NEIGHBORHOOD SECTORS

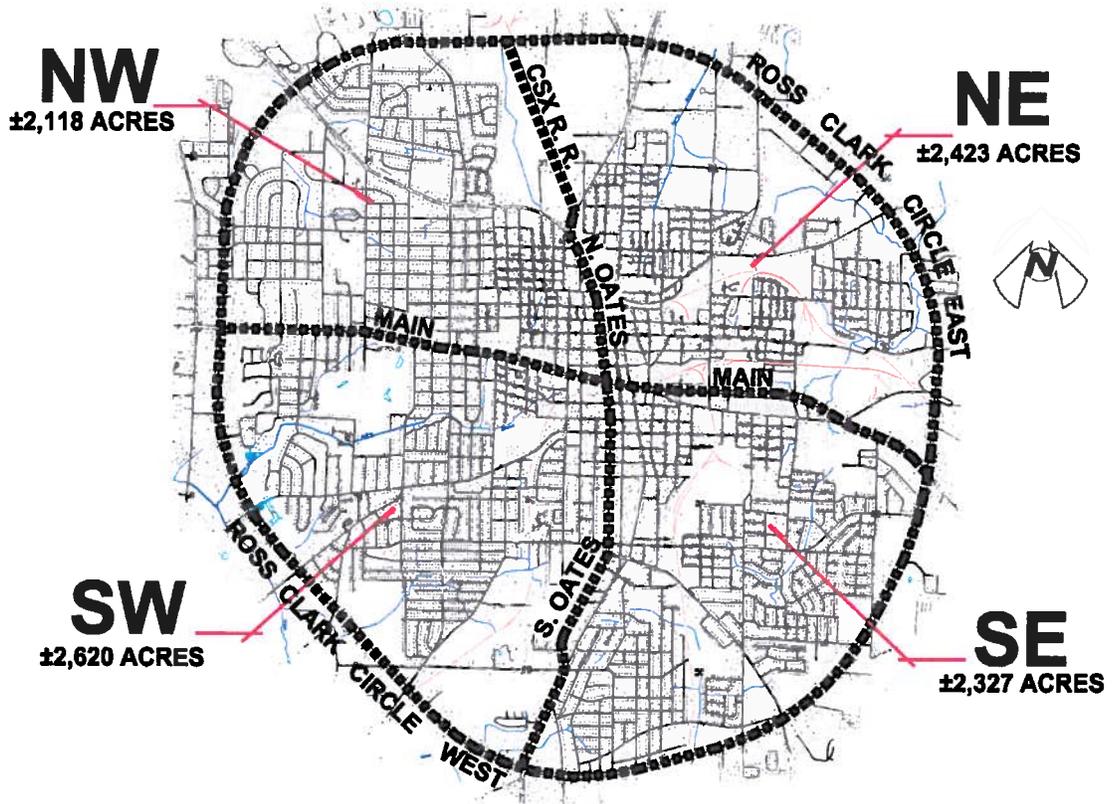


**Figure P-1**



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**DOTHAN'S URBAN SECTOR NEIGHBORHOODS**

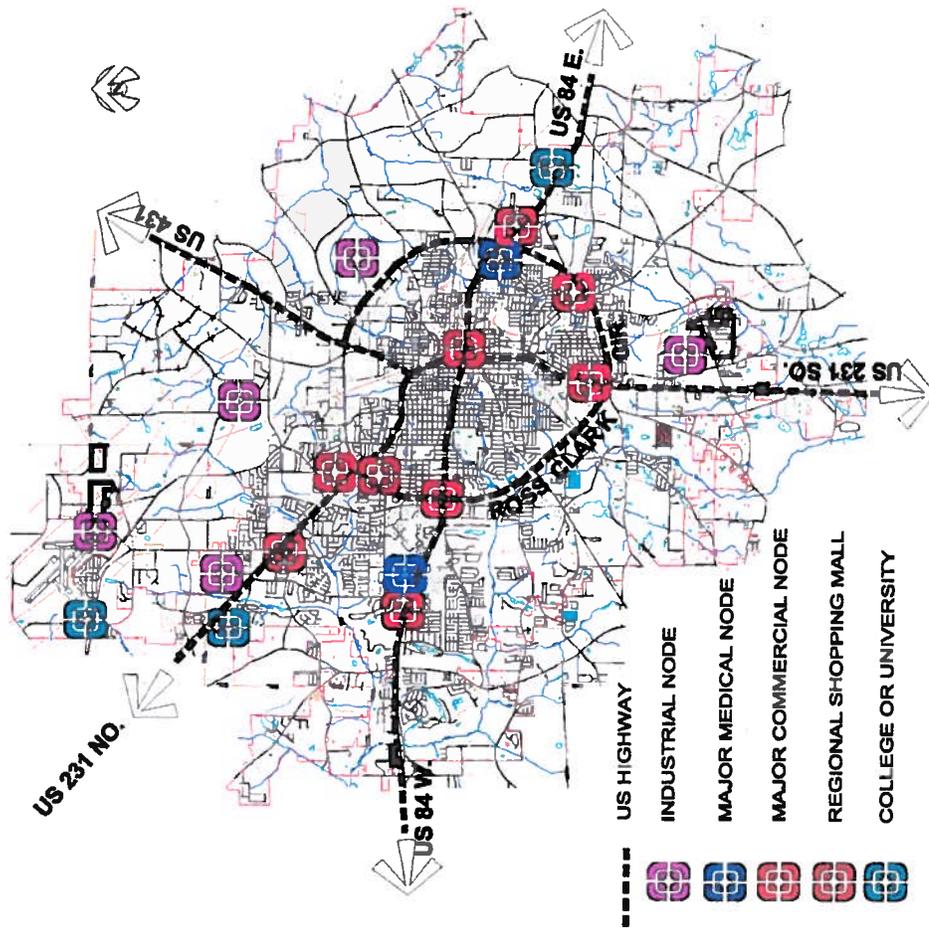


**Figure P-2**



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**MAJOR DEVELOPMENT INFLUENCES**



**Figure P-3**



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Part of the strategy for developing these neighborhood plans allow for community involvement in the planning process. One of the most important components of any neighborhood 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 or questionnaires. We did both. We prepared a questionnaire which was completed by the participants of the two community involvement meetings, broke the attendees into smaller focus groups and had them brain storm ideas and present them to us. We also fielded questions from the audience on an individual basis.

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 neighborhood population as "their plan". We feel we did just that and gave the public every opportunity to provide input in various forms. In addition to the public meetings, the telephone number for the Long Range Planning Division was accessible; the city's website provided a means to submit suggestions and letters could have been mailed to the Planning Department during the period between the initial community development meetings (July 24<sup>th</sup> and July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012).

We asked the public their opinions on issues that ranged from topics relevant 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 housing in the neighborhoods, and solicited their thoughts on future development projects.

On November 8, 2012 we met once again to present what we heard at the information gathering meetings in July; and to show our recommendations in the Plan to help achieve some of the neighborhood needs the residents expressed in July.

The documented results of the three community involvement meetings are found on the pages in Chapter 2 of this Plan.



NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods Plan  
December, 2012

# Super Neighborhood Plan For the NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods





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# Overview



## 1 Overview



## **1:1 Background:**

Neighborhood planning can take many forms, involve many months of work, and follow equally as much diversity and complexity of steps taken in development of the Long Range Development Plan which was prepared over the course of 4 years and adopted in 2011. The key is in determination of the amount and intensity of public involvement desired as well as the character of which one believes the plan should take. The depth and amount of short and long range planning goals to be examined, as well as other unforeseen politically-driven issues and concerns that may arise during the course of the plan development process are equally as important.

The Dothan 2030 Long Range Development Plan addresses the need for continued examination, study and recommendations for improvements to the city's many neighborhoods as part of the continuing planning process; and suggests beginning with the areas inside the Ross Clark Circle.

A consideration that will aid in the determination of the kind of plan prepared for a neighborhood is the perceived need of that individual neighborhood. Another consideration is the understanding of the driving force of the plan for a specific neighborhood and the final use of the plan. There may, and perhaps will be other considerations that are unique to the neighborhood itself; but the two general considerations are the "kind" and the "intended use" of the plan.

Since the NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods is composed of a large amount of acreage with several neighborhoods of varying age and condition, it along with the other 3 areas inside the Ross Clark Circle have been identified a "Super Neighborhood".

### **1:1:1 What is a Super Neighborhood?**

Super Neighborhoods consist of several smaller neighborhoods of possible differing ages, housing conditions, land uses, and demographics which are united as one by certain physical, political, socio-economic, and/or geographical boundaries.

### **1:1:2 What are the Benefits of a Super Neighborhood?**

By uniting these smaller neighborhoods into a Super Neighborhood, improvements can be focused on a broader area thereby benefitting many more citizens with city resources and money. Super Neighborhoods also encourage residents of smaller neighborhoods to interface with others in other neighborhoods in their vicinity. Super Neighborhoods remove the feeling of isolation felt by residents of small neighborhoods often separated physically from



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the remainder of the city. Super Neighborhoods give residents a larger, unified voice before city government on issues that affect them.

### **1:1:3 What is Neighborhood Planning?**

Neighborhood planning is the natural progression in city planning to compliment a city-wide comprehensive plan. In the case of Dothan a new Long Range Development Plan entitled "Dothan-2030, A Sense of New Beginnings" was adopted in 2011. The Long Range Development Plan examines the city's present and future needs at the macro level. What normally occur next are detailed analysis of a city's neighborhoods at that tighter, micro level, interaction between city staff and neighborhood residents, and an establishment of goals, objectives and plans that the residents feel would improve their neighborhood.

Neighborhood planning is an opportunity for the citizen to shape the neighborhood where they live and work. By contributing to a neighborhood plan, people take an active role in improving their community and quality of life. The neighborhood planning process engages residents, businesses, property owners, city departments, and community organizations such as neighborhood associations, as well as other community or church groups to form a partnership in the planning process.

These partnerships work together to address land use, zoning, transportation, urban design, pedestrian and bicycle safety, recreational needs as well as other pertinent issues. A plan should:

- Represent the views of all the groups that make up a Super Neighborhood
- Identify Super Neighborhood strengths and assets
- Identify individual neighborhood needs and concerns
- Establish goals for improving the Super Neighborhood
- Recommend specific action items to achieve those goals

### **1:1:4 How Will a Super Neighborhood Plan Help?**

Neighborhood planning provides an opportunity for concerned stakeholders (residents, businesses, property owners, and community organizations) to work together to address the short and long-range issues affecting their everyday lives. The plan should ultimately serve as a guide for city leaders, and developers so they know what you are willing to accept and desiring to see in your neighborhood. Development of a plan will help a neighborhood in a number of ways. An adopted plan will:

- Describe clearly what the neighborhood wants accomplished



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- Offer residents and businesses a clear picture of the kind of development that is desired by the neighborhood
- Give property owners and potential developers a guideline to what businesses are needed and the types of development that will be encouraged and supported by its residents
- Provide the City with a template for zoning and other land use decisions
- Allow the City to structure programs, services and capital improvements appropriate for the neighborhood
- Provide guidelines for the design of new development that would compliment the existing neighborhood character
- Provide insight as to what creative mixed use developments might be supported in the neighborhood
- Finally, it might adopt at the neighborhood level, for example, some strategies that could implement national or state initiatives such the *Lets Move* initiative supported by First Lady, Michelle Obama. By making healthy food more accessible through sustainable neighborhood planning we might comply with the third component of the *Lets Move* Initiative. This can be accomplished by:
  - Planning and promoting policies that support and protect community gardens in neighborhoods
  - Zoning intersections nearby neighborhood entries for mixed use commercial activities with designated sections for food market usage
  - Plan for sidewalk improvements connecting residential neighborhoods with work centers and commercial centers

## **1:2 NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods Profile:**

The neighborhood defined as NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods is a complex blend of several defined neighborhoods including Baptist Bottoms, the Garden District, and Northfield as well as much of downtown support areas just west of the downtown core area.

During the first quarter of the calendar year 2012 a windshield survey was conducted to record the condition of all principal structures in the study area. The survey rated the visible and apparent structural condition; exterior building material used, and indicated whether the structures were occupied or vacant.

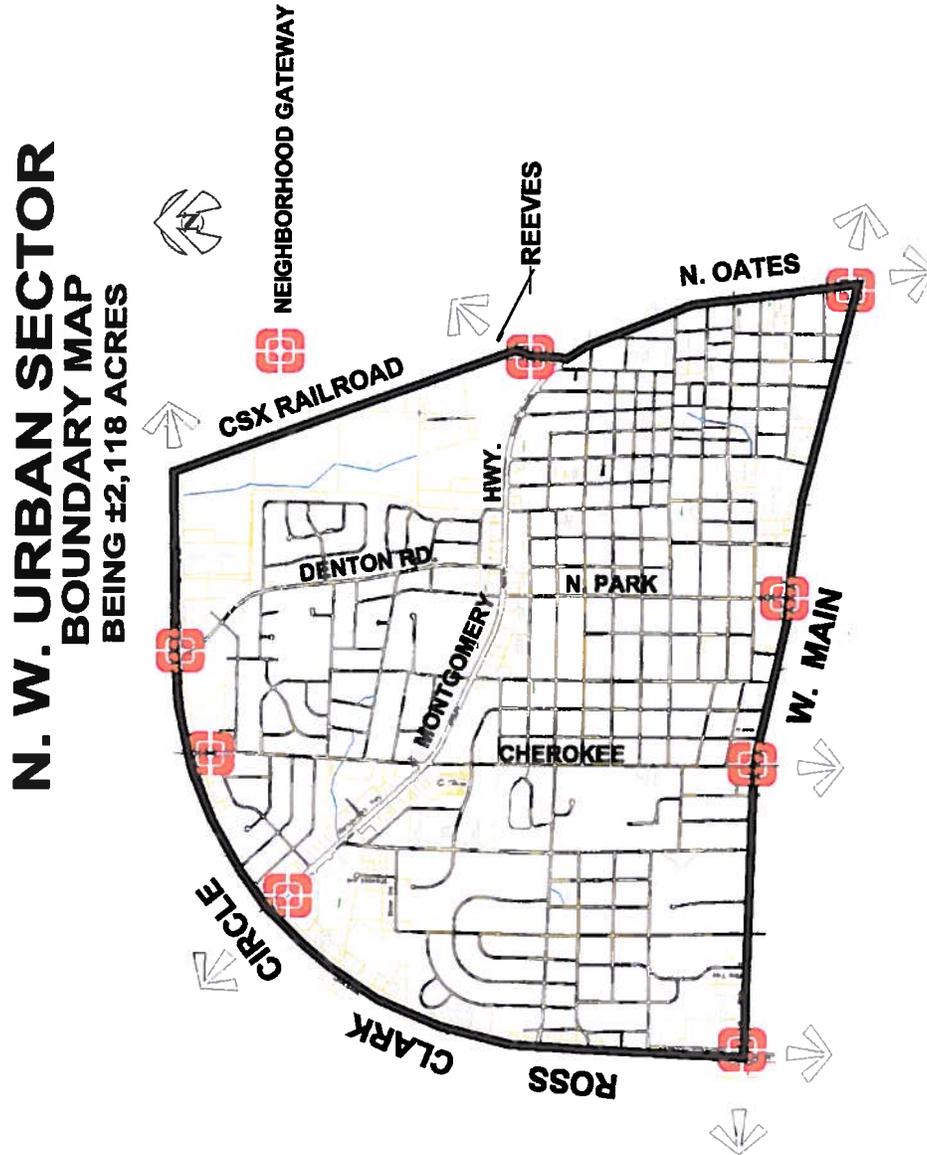
The inventory categorized each structure on a parcel by parcel basis as to what land use they represented. The inventory also mapped the location of all public sidewalks in the study area.



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The NW Urban Sector Neighborhoods is a rather extensive area and contains approximately 2,118 acres of land bounded by the Ross Clark Circle, W. Main Street, N. Oates Street, and the CSX Railroad Right-of-way. (See figure 1-1). Key neighborhood gateways (key intersections) that offer opportunities to establish monuments or other such gateway treatments to establish a sense of arrival to the area have been identified on the area map.

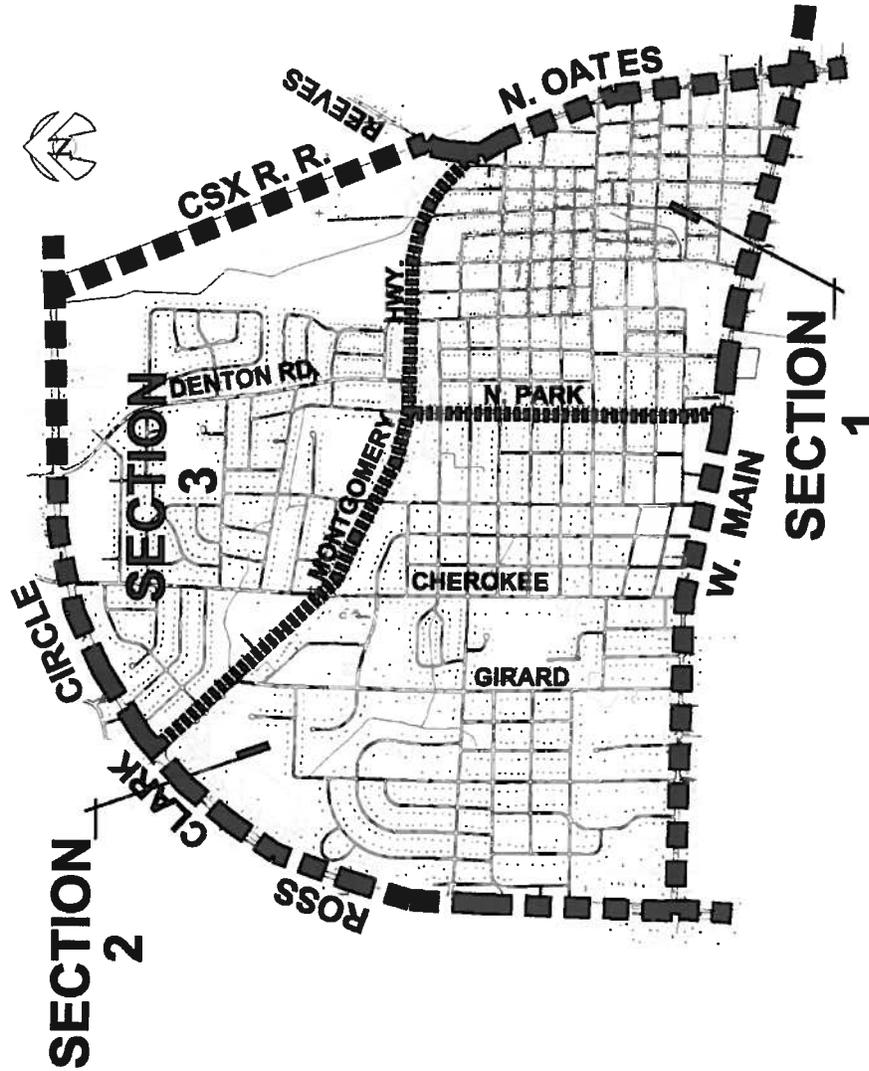
The area has been divided into three basic sections of distinct age and characteristics; each of which are examined and explained in greater detail later in this document. Each of the three sections has a separate and distinct identity and demographic baseline and each are outlined on figure 1-2.



**Figure 1-1**



# BASIC SECTIONS



**Figure 1-2**