

Clay A New Vision

**Comprehensive Plan for the City of Clay
February 2005**

Prepared by the Clay Planning Advisory Committee
with assistance from the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham



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Executive Summary

In June 2000, the City of Clay officially incorporated and became a city within the northeastern part of Jefferson County. Yet the community's rich history extends much further back in time than this official date. Rich historic roots belie a history as a stagecoach stop on the road between Birmingham and Gadsden, and a distinct community whose tangible connections to the past are present through long time resident families and historic sites such as Mount Calvary Baptist Church and its adjacent cemetery containing a telling sampling of the community's ties. Treasures such as Butler Mountain (highest peak within Jefferson County) and the distinction as the genesis of -not just one- but five different watersheds reflect an image of an area blessed with natural character and history.

Today Clay is experiencing a large amount of change- from a traditional smaller rural community to an ex-urban destination-and growing through annexation and new development. The quiet nature, rolling greenery and available space are attracting residents and commercial business alike to the community.

The City of Clay has taken important steps in realizing their important role in shaping the current development and activities that will shape the future of the community. The community is choosing to plan for the future, actively harnessing the growth yet striving to retain the natural character and amenities of the community. In November of 2003, The City of Clay contracted with the Regional Planning commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) to assist in the creation of an updated Comprehensive Plan. This plan reflects the input of the plan advisory committee, business, citizen and other stakeholder involvement and ideas.



Plan Vision

The plan vision establishes an essential balance for the community- preserving and building upon the Clay of yesterday while benefiting from the economic, social and physical opportunities that are associated with new influxes of growth. Through careful stewardship of current and future development, Clay strives to remain a quality community with a well-defined sense of place, providing enhanced quality of life, economic growth and preservation of its natural amenities for current and future community residents.

Opportunities and Challenges

An early part of the planning process involved a mapping of the community's perceived assets and potential obstacles to overcome. The following Opportunities and Challenges offer the combined thoughts of the advisory committee, interviews with public officials, and City stakeholders.

Opportunities

Clay's assets are various and represent significant opportunities for the current and future residents of Clay.

Undeveloped Aspect of Community- A Blank Canvas

A large part of the community remains undeveloped. There is a significant opportunity for Clay to aggressively protect its most important natural features while taking a strong stance in guiding Clay into the future community that is envisioned through this planning process.

Community Spirit and Inherent Pride- Clay is a community that takes pride in itself and is active in community events and activities. Recreation and sports, school activities are a focal part of the community, with parents and others attending and supporting local sports teams.



The schools are an important focal point of the community.

Natural features- Clay is blessed with natural character, green hills and water features.

Strong school network and community involvement- Clay-Chalkville schools as part of the Jefferson County school system are rated highly in terms of academic instruction and extracurricular activities. School facilities are modern, up to date and centrally located within the community.

Challenges: Harnessing Growth to Maintain a Quality Community

Melding different parts of Clay into a cohesive community- due to incorporation and recent annexations, Clay has grown into a community of distinct parts. A challenge is presented with how to integrate the different parts of the community while allowing each part to retain its established identity.

Growth impact on Schools- The impact of rapid growth on Clay is having an impact on the Clay-Chalkville schools. The Jefferson County School Superintendent reports that future capacity is an issue.

Sewer availability- an impediment to development is the lack of sewer availability further north than Deerfoot Parkway. Residential and commercial development is restricted, requiring septic system hook up where sewer is not available.

Protecting the natural features of Clay- Many residents cite the quiet, peaceful nature of Clay as the number one reason for living in the community. Yet this very amenity is threatened as development continues within Clay. A distinct challenge for Clay is ensuring protection of the special environmental and natural features while allowing for growth.

Transportation Network- Traffic congestion, traffic safety, and an exclusively auto-oriented development pattern are issues that are becoming more prominent as growth continues in Clay. These issues can be linked to one overlying cause- a disconnected auto-oriented transportation network with a heavy reliance on Old Springville Road.

Plan Objectives

This plan is built on feasible, action-oriented recommendations that will fulfill the primary objectives of:

- I. Manage Quality Commercial and Residential Development**
- II. Protect the Natural Character and Amenities of Clay**
- III. Enhance Clay's Sense of Community**
- IV. Promote Economic and Cultural Vitality**
- V. Implement the Plan**

The plan strategy focuses on these independent objectives, yet it is understood that no part is greater than the whole. The true strength of the plan lies in the interrelationship and cumulative impact as the objectives are implemented.

To ensure a successful transition from the planning process to real-life implementation, an understanding of current assets and resources within the community has been developed, as well as a comprehensive implementation strategy and potential techniques and strategies for short to long-term recommendations.

I. Manage Quality Commercial and Residential Development

This first plan objective arose out of the desire of the community to play an active role in what development occurs within Clay; and equally important, how the development takes place. Understanding that Clay has the authority to not simply respond but set the course for development is the first important tenet of the objective. Such management to ensure quality future commercial and residential development is paramount to the preservation of Clay's character and long-standing reputation as a quality community.

Existing Land Use

The land use element of the Plan is based on the Land-Based Classification Standards (LBCS). This system is an update of the 1965 Standard Land Use Coding manual and utilizes characteristics of the land use for land use classification. The data for existing land use was compiled from Jefferson County data and RPCGB site visits and existing GIS data.

Based on the LBCS, the existing land use for Clay includes: residential, commercial, recreational, institutional, and undeveloped land.

Clay is predominantly residential, the majority being single family homes or zoned R-1 for future single family homes. Commercial areas are located mostly along Old Springville Road- the spine of the linear community. Commercial uses are primarily local service oriented such as

large grocery stores, fast food and restaurants. Commercial development consists of free standing structures and increasingly, strip malls with different storefronts. At present there are not any industrial uses within the City.

Vision for Future Land Use

The vision for future land use as established through the planning process is the establishment of centralized focal points of the community that radiate out into progressively lower intensity usage. This pattern of development is not a new one, rather it is a return to the tried and true human settlement pattern that has existed for thousands of years. Defined centers of community will reflect the important sense of place, that Clay is a special community unlike any other. The two future centers will also create easily accessible, safe hubs of night and day activity for commercial, leisure and community activities. The future land use also provides for preservation of the still rural outlying and the environmentally sensitive parts of the community.

Implement “City of Villages” System

Clay Proposed Villages

Chalkville Town Center- Retrofit Existing Commercial Area

Intersection of Chalkville Mountain/Trussville Clay at Old Springville Road

The Chalkville commercial area is an established commercial destination and is located proximate to large retail offerings on Clay-Trussville Rd in Trussville. area features established and new retail and commercial offerings, and has recently been enhanced by a new Publix grocery store.

For the Chalkville commercial area, there is an opportunity to create a more distinct sense of place that reflects the character of Clay while providing additional connectivity, traffic safety and accessibility through walking and bicycling. The conceptual design focuses on the potential for redesign or retrofit an existing commercial node utilizing infill opportunities to increase commercial density and concentration of businesses within a given district.



Awnings, sidewalk café, on-street parking, and landscaping help to create a lively, attractive setting for a variety of activities to take place

The
of

Town Center Concept of Deerfoot Parkway at Old Springville Road

With the elements of schools, current city hall, commercial growth, adjacent sewer in place, the proposed location for the new town center already is the closest to what residents say is currently the center of Clay.

This design focuses on the intersection of Deerfoot Parkway and Old Springville Road as a primary Gateway/ Point of Entry suggesting a powerful sense of place. A traditional Main Street aesthetic is strong throughout the design, communicated by the community to be a highly desirable element. A tree lined boulevard with sidewalks and extensive landscaping along the medians and right of ways contributes to the sense of place while also providing shade and stormwater retention. In addition, the design captures one version of a Town Center Village which offers multiple frontage opportunities while diverting retail traffic from Old Springville Road, providing for a more pedestrian friendly business and shopping environment and a smoother flow of traffic.

Transportation System

A primary issue that needs to be addressed is transportation internal to Clay and connections to the region. At present Old Springville Road serves as the sole major north-south thoroughfare for local and pass through traffic. A suburban pattern of development consists of individual pods of residential development that do not connect, and don't have sidewalks. Due to the lack of transportation options (mode and route) and spread-out development pattern, Clay is experiencing increasing issues with congestion, traffic safety, and dissatisfaction with an auto-oriented environment with little pedestrian and bicycle activity.

It is important to stress that no single solution is possible to solve these issues, especially in light of continued future growth. Reshaping the transportation system is an integral focus of this plan. Understanding the strong connection between transportation and land use is an important first step. The comprehensive nature of land use recommendations provides a variety of living arrangements for Clay residents, allows for economic growth while protecting the natural environmental amenities of the area, inviting, pedestrian friendly town centers accessible via different modes of travel (vehicle, bike, foot), and increased traffic safety and access management.

Town Center Concept: Chalkville Road at Old Springville Road



Overall objectives that are critical to the successful future of Clay are:

- Increase the community's range of transportation choices;
- Enhance the accessibility of jobs and housing;
- Improve connectivity for all modes of travel;
- Reduce travel times and the number of trips on the roadway network;
- Provide housing choice and opportunity;
- Facilitate redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization as need occurs;
- Leverage public investment in transportation facilities and infrastructure.

Northern Beltline- I-459 Interchange within Clay

The northern extension of I-459 as proposed will roughly bisect the City of Clay. The future half of the loop will connect the outlying communities and is expected to serve as a catalyst for economic development in the northern portion of the metro- Birmingham area.

Direct access to the northern portion of I-459 will bring economic development opportunities and bring even more residential development to the City of Clay. This will have a large impact on the City of Clay, both from a transportation and land use perspective.

The following objectives were established for this significant location within the community:

- Provide a visually pleasing entry point into the community
- Install a green median to create a boulevard style development leading residents and visitors into the village center
- Provide signage and other means of attracting traffic to the adjacent town center
- Integrate sidewalks into the design for the area and that connect with the sidewalk and trail network
- Install landscaping and lighting that reflects the inherent character and sense of place of the community

It is recommended that Clay utilize its zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations as tools for implementing land use control over this area. Design standards are also very useful to prescribe in a visual manner the characteristics that future development must have.

Clay should work with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Jefferson County and any other involved public partners to work collaboratively on the physical design of the I-459 interchange and local road area and impact on the community.

Improve Vehicular Connectivity and Traffic Circulation

Creating further connections for all modes of transportation is a key feature of this plan. Vehicular connections prioritized for implementation within this plan include: Extension of Deerfoot Parkway north to I-459 and creation of interchange there, extension of Clay-Trussville Road to Clay- Palmerdale Road, and Old Springville Road to Clayton Road. See Future Land Use map for visual illustration of connections.

Create and Implement a Sidewalk and Trail Network Plan

To provide for safe, efficient connections and a high quality recreational opportunity for pedestrians and bicyclists, Clay should focus on the implementation of a sidewalk and trail system for the City. The pedestrian network will allow for the interconnection of trails and sidewalks as they are completed. Of primary importance is the connection of significant destination points within the community such as the schools, town center at Deerfoot Parkway, and recreational areas located at Cosby Lake, proposed nature center adjacent to the town center and future 104 acre City Park, and Senior Center and ballfields.

Once the primary network is in place, the next important step is to provide for connection among residential areas and to destination points in the community. Where possible, sidewalk connections can be implemented alongside road connections. At other points independent sidewalks and trails can be implemented on their own to enhance connectivity within the community.

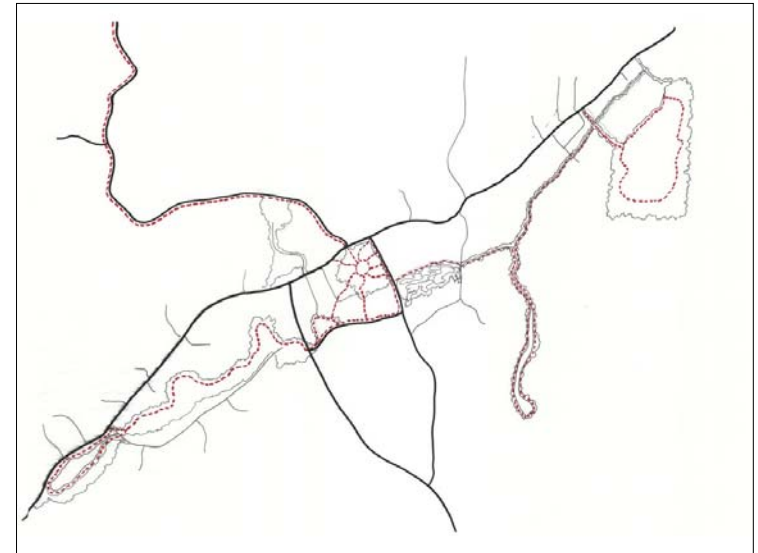


Illustration provides a conceptual view of primary network of sidewalks and trails for Clay. Major destinations such as Cosby Lake, Town Center, nature preserve and future park are connected.

II. Protect the Natural Character and Amenities of Clay

An intrinsic asset of the community is the abundance of natural beauty and character. Related throughout the planning process is the community's realization of this powerful asset, and strong desire to protect it. Noted as the starting point for five different watersheds, the area is also of high environmental significance. Protection of the watershed and water quality for Clay and the entire region, preserving Clay's identity and sense of place are all reasons understood for wanting to protect the inherent natural character and amenities of Clay. Economic

benefits are also clear. Stormwater management savings for Clay are estimated at just under \$1 million annually. There is a strong correlation with increased property values with such amenities as a viewshed, preserved open space and recreational amenities such as parks and trails.

Providing the framework for the development pattern

A core component of this plan is the promotion of center-oriented growth that provides an active “core” suitable for major day/night activities, commercial and community life; and preservation of the outlying natural areas of the community. The City must ensure that the plan vision and objectives are implemented- two primary tools being the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. Through these regulatory tools, the land use pattern can be guided on a continual basis to ensure that the plan vision is implemented.

Protect special areas-

A commonly cited reason for living in Clay is the quiet aspect of the community, feeling that one is away from the hustle and bustle of a big City, and free to live amidst the green, hilly beauty of the area. As growth continues to come to Clay, efforts must be made to protect the special areas that are environmentally significant or are particularly cherished by the community. Clay should seek to preserve open space whether the space be utilized for recreational purposes, or simply preserved in its current state.

Specific measures include:

Create an Inventory and Prioritize Special Areas to be Protected

Many of the sites may be represented through the future green infrastructure and recreational or protection. The process can be overseen by the mayor and City Council and/ or an environmental committee established for this task.

Preserve Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas in Clay was put forth and favorably responded to throughout the planning process. This recommendation refers specifically to areas that are sensitive to development or other impacts on them, and that can have a notably negative impact on the community or region. The following offer activities that were discussed or recommended through the planning process and represent the fulfillment of the Plan objectives. Further discussion and action can use these activities as a starting point and can lead to other preservation actions.



Portion of the Cahaba River in Clay

Stream buffer protection

It is commonly held that the most environmentally sensitive part of the watershed and where the most impact can be made in protecting the watershed- is at or near the upper portions of the watershed. Because Clay is at or near the beginning point for five distinct watersheds, the opportunity to protect the regional water quality is especially significant. Recognized within the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study as a location of particular significance, one specific recommendation strongly encouraged for Clay is to create and enforce stream buffers along the different waterways.

Steep slope protection

With the hilly to steep topography of the area, development often will raze or alter the land. The City of Clay can enact measures that protect such natural features, allow development while providing protection for the natural topography of the area.

Tree ordinance

Clay should pursue the creation and adoption of a tree ordinance to maintain the current tree canopy and require tree planting to enhance the community aesthetically, environmentally, and economically.

Continue to Participate in Regional Efforts

Clay should continue to work collaboratively with municipalities, Jefferson County and other public entities on regional efforts such as the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study. Recommendations of such efforts should be incorporated into Clay's current and future planning and implementation activities within the City.

Provide passive and active recreational opportunities to residents

The provision of varied recreational activities and destinations for the community was seen as a priority throughout the planning process. Clay has a extraordinary opportunity to provide outdoor recreation to residents while also preserving the cherished character and open space of the community. Specific sites prioritized are: future City park, Town Center Nature Preserve, Cosby Lake, and trail connecting major points within community.

III.

Enhance Clay's Sense of Community

Strengthen and Maintain the Integrity of Gateways for the City

Gateways play an important role in welcoming visitors and residents alike and defining the entrances to the community. Gateways should be established at major and minor entrances to Clay.

- *Deerfoot Parkway*- location has recently been noted with an attractive fieldstone and large sign welcoming residents and visitors alike. The design elements present at this first gateway should be repeated at other entrances to provide a sense of continuity and reflection of the community's character.
- *Old Springville Road at Torrey Pines Circle*-
- *Old Springville Road, Northern Gateway*-
- *Entrance off the Northern Beltline*- This plan strongly recommends strong local regulation and guidance of development at the future I-459 interchange.



Gateway sign on Deerfoot Parkway. Sign provides a visual entry point, elements such as the stonework can be carried to other sites within Clay to contribute to a cohesive sense of place. *Photo: Tina Tidmore/ Clay News 2004.*

Ensure a Connection to the Past

Present-day Clay has been shaped and influenced by its past. In maintaining its sense of place, it is essential that Clay maintain ties to what it once was as remembrance and a foundation for what it will become.

Historic Inventory

Assess and acknowledge historical assets within the community. Typically a site is noted as historically significant if the structure is over 50 years old and/ or has architectural importance, or if the location was a site of historical importance.

Celebrate Historical buildings and sites within the Community

There are historic designations that can be made at local, state and national level. An example of a local program already in existence is the Jefferson County Historical marker program. Listing on the National Registry of Historic Places is an option for buildings or sites of special significance.



Historic Wade House: Recently restored house reflects importance of keeping ties to Clay's past. *Photo: Tina Tidmore of Clay News 2005.*

Create Memorable Destinations

Clay can maintain ties to the past by creating memorable destinations within the community. Maintaining Clay's sense of place in this manner is also a potential source of economic development, tourism and providing amenities for residents.

Provide opportunities for interaction between the City and the community

"Town Hall" meetings

Regularly scheduled or topical public meetings provide an important forum for citizens and officials to share ideas, build collaboration and a shared sense of community. It is recommended that Clay hold such meetings to promote such public discourse and provide for public comment. One opportunity for regular meetings will be to inform and keep the public involved with the implementation of this plan.

Development of and Maintenance of a City Website

Build upon current city website to provide an interactive source of information on the City, and up to date information on initiatives, projects, and community events. The website should be up to date, easy to comprehend and visually interesting for a diverse population. Community events, services and programs should be highlighted and also promoted in a print format.

Promotional events/ activities

Community events and activities can effectively provide necessary leisure activities, promote community cohesion, and reflect the overall well-being of a community. Supporting existing events within the community as well as implementing new ones create a high quality environment and create economic development opportunities for existing and future businesses within the community.

Community Facilities

Need for Common Civic Places

A strong desire has been expressed throughout the planning process for a variety of public spaces. From recreational areas to City supported community facilities such as a library, community center or Senior Center, common public spaces can be considered the glue of providing community interaction and cohesion. Below are specific recommendations related to existing and proposed public spaces that are seen as positive enhancements to Clay's sense of community and residents' quality of life.



Current location of City Hall- reuse of historic schoolhouse building.

CITY HALL-

As the physical centerpiece and nucleus of community affairs, City Hall represents an important element of local government and Clay's civic life. At present City Hall is located in a historic old schoolhouse. Due to the building's history and central location, the plan recommends the continuance of this usage. However, should the prohibitively high cost of renovation prevent this from occurring, it is recommended that the City construct a building based on the same design as the current building, and locate the public building at the same location or within the same proposed town center.

SENIOR CENTER-

The newly constructed senior center offers a destination and programming for the senior citizens of Clay. In addition, the opportunity to provide activities for other facets of the community is also present. The City can consider the usage of the space for City sponsored or civic group meeting or activities.

LIBRARY

Clay does not currently have a library, with residents reporting that they frequent other libraries outside of Clay within the region. As Clay continues to grow and add new residents to its City, a library will offer a valuable public amenity and gathering spot for community events and activities. It is recommended that Clay seek to add this public amenity in its long term future.

Public Services

FIRE PROTECTION

Clay currently has an arrangement with the Center Point Fire & Rescue for fire protection for the City. The fee for this service is paid on a quarterly basis. At this point it has been determined that the present arrangement with Center Point is satisfactory in terms of service and cost. As Clay continues to grow, it is recommended that the City continue to assess the cost and benefits, and explore the creation of its own Fire Department should the benefits of such a move outweigh the costs.



Fire Station located on Clay Palmerdale Road offers fire protection for the entire City of Clay.

POLICE PROTECTION

Clay currently is provided police protection through the Jefferson County Sheriff's office. Expected to be finalized within 2004 will be the provision of two officers that will exclusively patrol and provide service for the City of Clay. A volunteer neighborhood watch provides support of and collaborates with this professional service.

As is the case with other outside services being provided to the still relatively new City of Clay, the current collaboration with Jefferson County Sheriff's Department appears to be satisfactory and provide necessary public safety protection at a cost effective price. As Clay continues to grow and its government function matures, the possibility of creating a City police department can be explored.

WATER SYSTEM

Clay receives its water service from both the Birmingham Water Works Board and the Trussville Utilities Board. As of 2002, the existing water mains appear to be adequate for providing service to local residences, but a more detailed study should be completed to determine the overall performance of the water system, ability to adequately serve new development, and identify specific improvements that may be needed.

SEWER SYSTEM

The southwest portion of Clay is currently served by public sanitary sewer system overseen by the Jefferson County Department of Environmental Services. Future expansion of the system is currently being proposed. The City of Clay must become an active participant to regional discussions of how and where the system should be expanded within the region.

As sewer availability is a requirement for commercial and industrial ventures of any magnitude, the location of such is especially important within the context of fulfilling the desired center oriented development pattern. Sewer availability should be in place along the linear core of the community- Old Springville Road, with appropriate trunk lines at proposed center locations and residential areas of medium to higher density. Limiting sewer availability to those areas outside of the core can also serve as an effective tool for limiting density and growth within the City.

IV. Promote Economic and Cultural Vitality

The long term economic and cultural vitality of Clay are both important factors in the future viability and well-being of the community. The Plan recommends programs and projects that support the kind of dynamic, active environment that makes Clay an enjoyable place to live and attractive businesses and entrepreneurs.

Economic Vitality

Clay is expanding, primarily through annexation and the construction of new housing. To ensure the adequate provision of goods and services for its residents and appropriate revenue for public needs, the continued economic vitality of the community is essential. The following recommendations focus on ways that can continue or lead to greater economic success of the community.

Business Retention and Expansion

Business retention is the first step in understanding the assets within the community and ensuring the probability that the company will remain in the community over the long-term. Retention as an economic development strategy has been deemed to be more important than recruitment of new business. Active retention maintains the current tax and employment levels and ensures employment opportunities for residents. The first step in business retention can involve the following components.

Chamber of Commerce

Recommended in the process was a formalized Chamber of Commerce- this recommendation was implemented with the founding of the Clay Chamber of Commerce in Fall, 2004. The chamber of commerce is expected to fulfill an important role and serve as the voice of the business community and source of facilitation and collaboration among different businesses, and actively promote the long term economic growth and well being for the community.

The following recommendations should be considered for implementation under the guidance of the Chamber of Commerce.



Signage and mapping provides orientation to visitors as well as reflects a community's sense of place.

Foster Entrepreneurial Efforts

Existing or potential start up businesses represent an often overlooked opportunity for economic growth in a community, yet successful operations can sometimes have the most overall positive impact within the local economy. Small business is estimated to provide The benefits can be great- activity generating use of office space within the community, local employment opportunities, contribution to the tax base, and spin-off economic effects in terms of buying materials and spending money locally. Efforts should be made to support potential future small businesses by understanding and attempting to fill their needs. Examples of assistance include programs that supply revolving loans, start- up capital, incubator space, and business plan preparation and mentoring.

Create a Vacant Commercial/ Industrial Inventory. Vacant commercial space should be listed and assertively promoted to local, regional or outside entities looking for space. Publicizing the inventory can be completed in a number of different ways, such as through GIS based mapping

and information sheets distributed to the business community and posted online, and utilized for aggressive recruitment efforts.

Create a Business Directory of Clay Commerce- Knowledge of Clay businesses is the first step to promoting a “Shop Clay First” marketing effort. The directory can have a physical presence in the community, especially the downtown, and serve as a map to locate local businesses. There should also be a city wide business directory that is accessible in a searchable format online and in print.

Interview Clay businesses to understand overall business community needs for present and future

The City and Chamber of Commerce are likely leaders to assertively collaborate and work to fulfill continued needs of the businesses within Clay. Such personal connection can be instrumental in planned or anticipated expansion needs, or working to ensure that business community needs are being met.

*Build collaborative partnership with existing and future businesses-*The City of Clay should work to build partnerships with the business community. Such collaboration can lead to a mutual understanding of the City’s goals and future activities, as well as business’ desires and potential contribution to Clay’s goals and future activities.

Business Attraction

The City of Clay in association with the Chamber of Commerce should work pro-actively to recruit desired commercial establishments to the City. The first step would involve prioritizing the need and desire for additional business. Effective public private partnership can work collaboratively to attract targeted business and services. “One-stop” services can be provided by a municipality to provide a seamless, collaborative relationship with a desired commercial entity to provide locational assistance, a streamlined development process, and any offered incentives.

Also popular is the issuance of incentives for a desired commercial establishment to locate within the community. For example, infrastructure improvements such as sewer hook up and/or “shovel ready” sites can provide a powerful incentive to businesses looking for a location. However, such incentives should be used sparingly and weighed with the expected magnitude of expected benefit to the community.

Regional Cooperation

Regional cooperation is necessary to complete actions that are beneficial both on a regional and local level. At present there is a great deal of growth in the northeastern portion of Jefferson County where Clay is located. Incorporation of communities, annexation, and reliance on sales tax as the principal method of community revenue have contributed to uneasy relationships among neighboring communities. However, there are many positive benefits that can be associated with regional cooperation and actions. As such, Clay should explore avenues of potential collaboration with other levels of government and public agencies where possible.

Cultural Vitality

A measure of a community's quality of life is a main determinant of where businesses choose to locate. The cultural vitality or measure of the community's offerings includes the availability of leisure activities such as theater, public events, and regular activities and meeting groups.

City Marketing Strategy and Promotion

Clay should pro-actively create a city marketing strategy that provides a "face" to the growing community and a reflection of the community's strengths. Such a marketing strategy should work with various entities including the real estate, development community, schools, businesses, City officials and civic groups. Different venues for the strategy and its message include the City of Clay website, local and regional publications, and extend to physical representation such as banners, signage, or symbolic markers of the community's sense of place.

V. Implement the Plan

This plan is built on feasible, action-oriented recommendations that will fulfill the primary objectives of:

- I. Manage Quality Commercial and Residential Development**
- II. Protect the Natural Character and Amenities of Clay**
- III. Enhance Clay's Sense of Community**
- IV. Promote Economic and Cultural Vitality**

This final objective was created with the realization of the importance of building implementation into the actual plan. This plan was designed to offer a cumulative vision for the community that is achievable along short, medium and long term actions.

The Plan recommends that Clay develop the tools to institute an ambitious strategy of straightforward and complex recommendations over a period of time. Managing the coordination and implementation of the diverse initiatives for Clay will be the most challenging aspect of the plan. Given the challenges presented, it is critical that the implementation strategy focus on implementation from existing community resources, be straightforward, effective and remain affordable.

Community Resources and Collaboration

Built upon as the foundation of this planning effort are the existing community resources. Most mentioned (but not excluding potential other sources) are:

- ◇ Civic groups such as the Lions Club

- ◇ Community Churches
- ◇ Clay-Chalkville Schools (Jefferson County System) and associated groups
- ◇ Community businesses
- ◇ Recently established Chamber of Commerce

Such resources should be involved in implementation efforts and can likely supply directly related professional skill, financial resources, grantwriting, community organizing, meeting or activity space, and volunteer efforts just to name a few potential activities. It is important for the community to keep in mind that much can be accomplished or built upon with existing resources and focusing on collaborative efforts among the different resources.

Create a City Manager Role to Oversee Implementation Efforts

The City of Clay should strongly consider the designation of a City Manager position to allocate full-time responsibilities to fulfillment of these objectives. Day to day planning expertise will also be a clear need to ensure appropriate oversight of planning, zoning, subdivision regulation, and design issues. Potential responsibilities of a manager could include:

- Monitor implementation of the Plan
- Facilitate collaborative efforts among various community resources,
- Coordinate different initiatives underway and dissemination of information and updates on plan implementation,
- Manage financial resource needs- i.e. oversee Capital Improvements Program, and grantwriting;
- Oversee development guidance and
- Provide day to day planning and zoning technical knowledge

Implement short-term plan recommendations

The transition from the planning process to implementation of objectives is extremely important. The momentum begun during the planning process, for the plan overall and different components can be lost should stakeholders not see direct implementation of the ideas and recommendations made during the planning process.

Provide an Annual “Report Card” to evaluate plan implementation

An annual public check-in provides an opportunity to celebrate progress, redefine established goals as needed, and provide interactive feedback with stakeholders and Clay residents as to what has been completed and future initiatives.

Update Plan every five years

Implementation of this plan will require ambitious efforts and hard work for the immediate and long term future. Updating the Comprehensive plan every five years serves to keep objectives and recommendations current with what is occurring within the community.

Financial Assistance and Resources

This planning process has established primary objectives and action oriented goals that can be completed on a short and long term basis to guide the successful implementation of plan recommendations. Many of the recommendations contained within will require not only utilization of existing resources and but different sources of funding. Below follow specific recommendations as to sources of internal and external funding that can assist in making the plan objectives and recommendations a reality.

Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

A Capital Improvements Program is highly recommended for the City of Clay to utilize in planning for its future infrastructure investments. ***Using a CIP to make annual expenditures for public improvements is one of the best ways to implement a comprehensive plan.*** The primary reason for creating a CIP is to encourage City officials and residents to think about the future of the city and budget capital improvements over a set period of time to provide for necessary services and facilities. Capital improvement projects are typically major investment or expenditures such as the purchase, construction, reconstruction, renovation, or replacement of a public building, facility or major equipment item.

Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy was created as a guide for fulfillment of plan objectives and their specific recommendations. The strategy organizes recommendations according to assessed factors of: Complexity, time frame, and anticipated responsible party (ies). It is not intended to be set in stone, but instead provides for a flexible guide that can adjust according to Clay's changing needs, recommendations already fulfilled and related community initiatives and goals.

Introduction

In June 2000, the City of Clay officially incorporated and became a city within the northeastern part of Jefferson County. Yet the community's rich history extends much further back in time than this official date. Rich historic roots belie a history as a stagecoach stop on the road between Birmingham and Gadsden, and a distinct community whose tangible connections to the past are present through long time resident families and historic sites such as Mount Calvary Baptist Church and its adjacent cemetery containing a telling sampling of the community's ties. Treasures such as Butler Mountain (highest peak within Jefferson County) and the distinction as the genesis of not just one but five different watersheds reflect an image of an area blessed with natural character and history.

Today Clay is experiencing a large amount of change- from a traditional smaller rural community to an ex-urban destination-and growing through annexation and new development. The quiet nature, rolling greenery and available space are attracting residents and commercial business alike to the community. Commercial growth is following the residential boom, with many new large and smaller retail, neighborhood services locating within the City. This growth is expected to continue; likely at an accelerated rate due to the construction of the northern extension of I-459 and continued interest in the fringe of the metropolitan area.

This change represents significant opportunities for the community and its current residents, yet also threatens the existence of the same qualities that people cherish about Clay. In short the threat of being 'loved to death' and becoming detached from the same special character and qualities of the community that long-time and newly established residents love about the community.

The City of Clay has taken important steps in realizing their important role in shaping the current development and activities that will shape the future of the community. The community is choosing to plan for the future, actively harnessing the growth yet striving to retain the natural character and amenities of the community. In October of 2003, The City of Clay contracted with the Regional Planning commission of Greater Birmingham to assist in the creation of an updated Comprehensive Plan. The planning process has featured guidance through an appointed advisory committee whose members reflect diverse parts of community, businesses, and other interests within Clay. An iterative process has created a dynamic dialogue in which assets and challenges to the community were ascertained, vision for the community and corresponding objectives and specific recommendations were identified and refined.

This plan built on information and analysis completed through other efforts- most notably the Jefferson County completed Clay Comprehensive Plan from 2000. Such integration of other efforts was completed to avoid duplication of efforts, and to assure that allotted time to the project could be focused on furthering primary concepts and urban design work.

City of Clay Plan Vision

The City of Clay is at an interesting and important juncture in its growth as a community. That change is occurring and will continue to occur is inevitable, yet the planning process has established that a carefully composed comprehensive plan will offer Clay a blueprint for the future to be all that it desires to maintain and become.

The plan vision establishes an essential balance for the community- preserving and building upon the Clay of yesterday while benefiting from the economic, social and physical opportunities that are associated with new influxes of growth. Through careful stewardship of current and future development, Clay strives to remain a high quality community with a defined sense of place, providing enhanced quality of life, economic growth and preservation of its natural amenities for current and future community residents.

Opportunities and Challenges

An early part of the planning process involved a mapping of the community's perceived assets and potential obstacles to overcome. The following Opportunities and Challenges offer the combined thoughts of the advisory committee, interviews with public officials, and City stakeholders.

Opportunities: Commitment to Community and Quality of Life

Clay's assets are various and represent significant opportunities for the current and future residents of Clay. Clay has a deep rooted history with growth tied to farming and then their location as a stagecoach stop on the route between Birmingham and Gadsden. Recently incorporated in 2000, the City has made great strides in day to day management of the City as well as showing foresight in purchasing 104 acres for the future park.

Undeveloped Aspect of Community- A Blank Canvas

Clay has been for much of its history a small town located in the northeastern rural part of Jefferson County. A large part of the community remains undeveloped. There is a significant opportunity for Clay to aggressively protect its most important natural features while taking a strong stance in guiding Clay into the future community that is envisioned through this planning process.

Community Spirit and Inherent Pride- Clay is a community that takes pride in itself and is active in community events and activities. Recreation and sports, school activities are a focal part of the community, with parents and those without children attending and supporting local sports teams.

Natural features- Clay is blessed with natural character, with green hills and water features. Its rural quality has been stated as many residents primary reason for moving out/ staying within the community. The community can also boast as being at the beginning or top of five different watersheds, thus reflecting the environmental significance and fragility of the area.

Strong school network and community involvement- Clay-Chalkville schools as part of the Jefferson County school system are rated highly in terms of academic instruction and extracurricular activities. School facilities are modern and up to date and centrally located within the community.

Challenges: Harnessing Growth to Maintain a Quality Community

Expressed throughout the planning process is the thought that much of Clay is currently a blank canvas, or as yet undeveloped. This is a significant opportunity for the community, yet also a challenge. While much of Clay is currently not developed, growth is occurring at a rapid pace. As more areas are built out, there are less opportunities and more working within what is already developed within the community. Clay must act wisely to balance the different needs of the community: harnessing growth, promoting economic development, protecting the natural character and amenities of the community, and enhancing the current quality of life enjoyed by residents of Clay.

Challenges that resonated throughout the planning process follow below:

Melding different parts of Clay into a cohesive community- due to incorporation and recent annexations, Clay has grown into a community of distinct parts. A challenge is presented with how to integrate the different parts of the community while allowing each part to retain its established identity.

Growth impact on Schools- The impact of growth on Clay is having an impact on the Clay-Chalkville schools. The Jefferson County School Superintendent reports that future capacity is an issue. Also adding to the growth could be the future influx of other County residents that could come to Clay schools once Trussville creates its own school system.

Sewer availability- an impediment to development is the lack of sewer availability further north than Deerfoot Parkway. Residential and commercial development is restricted, requiring septic system hook up where sewer is not available.

Protecting the natural features of Clay- Many residents cite the quiet, or peaceful nature of Clay as the number one reason for living in the community. Yet this very amenity is threatened as development continues within Clay. A distinct challenge for Clay is ensuring protection of the special environmental and natural features while allowing for growth.

Transportation Network- Traffic congestion, traffic safety, and an exclusively auto-oriented development pattern are issues that are becoming more prominent as growth continues in Clay. These issues all can be linked to one overlying cause- a disconnected transportation network with a heavy reliance on Old Springville Road.



Top of the watershed located within Chalkville- development has a notable detrimental impact on water quality and health of the watershed.

Plan Objectives and Strategy

The comprehensive nature of the Plan serves to look at factors that currently or will impact the community. These factors include housing, community facilities, City government and its function, schools, land use, transportation, recreational opportunities.

The planning process has been a cumulative exercise in which assets and current resources were identified, and challenges and initial goals were identified. Through this interactive public process, a true vision for the City of Clay was capable of being established. The diverse desires of the community for the future of Clay became apparent throughout the process and were shaped into overall plan objectives.

This plan is built on feasible, action-oriented recommendations that will fulfill the primary objectives of:

- I. Manage Quality Commercial and Residential Development**
- II. Protect the Natural Character and Amenities of Clay**
- III. Enhance Clay's Sense of Community**
- IV. Promote Economic and Cultural Vitality**
- V. Implement the Plan**

The plan strategy is multi-faceted focusing on these independent objectives, yet it is understood that no part is greater than the whole. The true strength of the plan lies in the interrelationship and cumulative impact as the objectives and specific recommendations are implemented.

To ensure a successful transition from the planning process to real-life implementation, a realization of current assets and resources within the community has been developed, as well as a comprehensive implementation strategy and potential techniques and strategies for short to long-term recommendations.

PLAN OBJECTIVE 1: MANAGE QUALITY COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Understanding that Clay is experiencing growth at an accelerating rate was the source of much excitement and concern throughout the planning process. What has been seen from the planning process is that the balance between economic and residential growth and protecting the environmental quality and inherent character of Clay is a delicate one. Development forms a cumulative quilt of what the community becomes, thus the optimum time for the development to be shaped is before it is physically on the ground. Clay has a one-time opportunity to shape and guide growth as it occurs. Retrofitting or adjusting existing infrastructure to fit the community's vision is not impossible, but much more difficult to implement.

This first plan objective arose out of the desire of the community to play an active role in what development occurs within Clay and equally important how the development takes place. Understanding that Clay has the authority to not simply respond but set the course for development is the first important tenet of the objective. Such management to ensure quality future commercial and residential development is paramount if Clay hopes to maintain its character and long term reputation as a quality community.

Existing Land Use

The land use element of the Plan is based on the Land-Based Classification Standards (LBCS). This system is an update of the 1965 Standard Land Use Coding manual and utilizes characteristics of the land use for land use classification. The data for existing land use was compiled from Jefferson County data and RPCGB site visits and existing GIS data.

Based on the LBCS, the existing land use for Clay includes: residential, commercial, recreational, institutional, and undeveloped land.

Clay is predominantly residential, the majority being single family homes or zoned R-1 for future single family homes. Commercial areas are located mostly along Old Springville Road- the spine of the linear community. Commercial uses are primarily local service oriented such as



Development is occurring at an accelerated pace in Clay

grocery stores, fast food and restaurants. Commercial development consists of free standing structures and increasingly, strip malls with different storefronts. At present there are no industrial uses within the City.

Residential- This land use classification is defined as single-family homes, multi-family dwellings, manufactured homes and housing for the elderly at a variety of densities. Clay is primarily a residential community with residences found along or radiating from Old Springville Road.

Commercial- This classification encompasses a wide range of uses like business, professional, scientific and technical services; retail sales and service, automobile sales or service; finance and insurance; and food and personal services. Commercial land use is located primarily along Old Springville Road at three principal nodes- intersection of Chalkville Mountain Rd., area between Deerfoot Parkway and Clay Trussville Rd., and a growing commercial node at Sweeney Hollow Road.

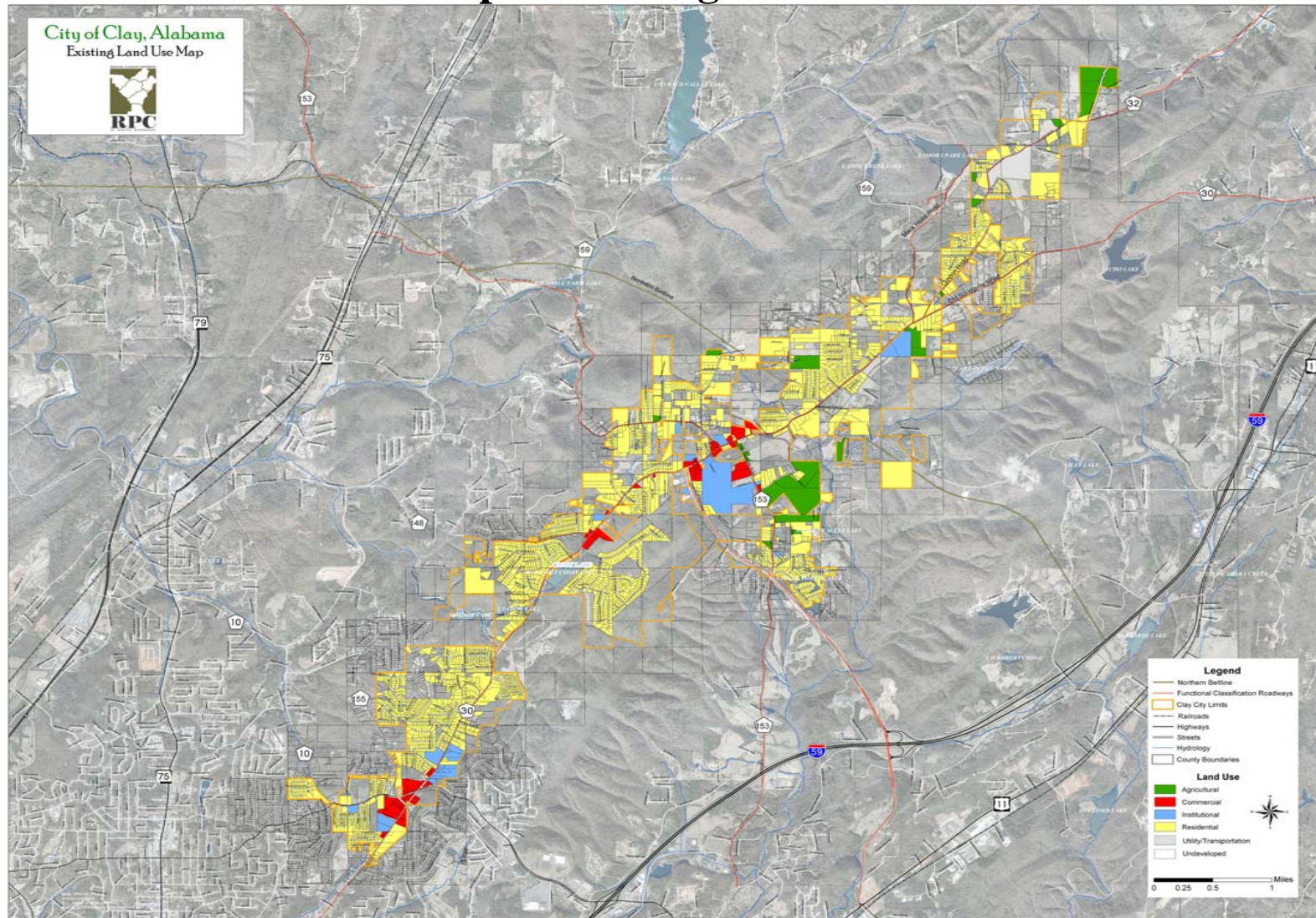
Recreational- This land use classification is defined as establishments that operate facilities or provide services for a variety of cultural, entertainment, and recreational functions such as ball fields, active and passive parks, golf courses, wildlife management areas and museums. Recreational use land within Clay is currently located at the 104-acre future City park location.

Institutional- Institutional land uses are defined as establishments used by public agencies of federal, state, and local government such as administrative buildings, fire stations, police stations and post offices, educational facilities such as public and private schools, colleges, vocational schools and libraries, civic and religious facilities and cemeteries. Institutional use within Clay is found within the future town center located between Deerfoot Parkway and Clay-Trussville Road with school facilities and City Hall, and interspersed at church and cemetery locations throughout the community.

Agricultural/ Forestry- This land use classification is defined as establishments that grow crops, raise animals, harvest timber, harvest fish and other animals from a farm, ranch, greenhouse, nursery, orchard, hatchery, or their natural habitats. Agricultural/ forestry lands are limited to an area off McFrancis Road.

Undeveloped- This land use classification is defined as land that has not previously been developed for a particular use and includes woodlands not in any use and undeveloped portions of residential subdivisions, shopping centers and industrial parks. Undeveloped land is still a substantial proportion of the total land within Clay and is primarily located in areas removed from Old Springville Road.

Map 1: Existing Land Use



Vision for Future Land Use

The vision for future land use as established through the planning process is the establishment of centralized focal points of the community that radiate out into progressively lower intensity usage. This pattern of development is not a new concept, rather it is a return to the tried and true human settlement pattern that has been used for thousands of years. Defined centers of community will reflect the important sense of place, that Clay is a special community unlike any other. The two future centers will also create easily accessible, safe hubs of night and day activity for commercial, free time and community activities. The future land use also provides for preservation of the still rural outlying and the environmentally sensitive parts of the community.

Future Land Use Guiding Principles

The following design principles have arisen through and reflect the most important fundamental elements of the plan. The principles must be present and work together within the plan, and further implementation efforts that may include zoning, design standards and other decisions impacting land use and transportation.

❖ ***Build at a human scale***

To create a true sense of place and one in which community, neighborhoods and human interaction are the most important qualities; the urban design must reflect the human perspective and scale. The community needs to be a place where residents can comfortably live, work, and play.

❖ ***Promote a harmonious balance between natural environment and development***

Strive for a sustainable balance and mitigate negative impacts on land, air, water, vegetation, and energy within the community. This includes: locating development on suitable sites, preserving the notable visual features of Clay, provision for alternate modes of traffic such as walking, biking and transit, and preserving and protecting open spaces and preserving natural vegetation where possible on sites being developed.

❖ ***Connectivity*** Understand the inherent connections between land use and transportation decisions. Provide for internal and regional connections for all modes of traffic- vehicular, pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit.

❖ ***Community Focus-*** Design for defined centers that serve as heart of community. Implement as well on neighborhood level with pocket parks, open space or other community gathering spot.

❖ ***Pedestrianism-*** Define the primary community by walking dimensions.

❖ ***Ecological Responsibility-*** Design in harmony with nature.

❖ ***Mixed Use-*** Provide for multiple and mix of uses within community.

❖ ***Design Vocabulary-*** Specify an architectural style or styles that includes façade treatment, site and building layout, walls and fences, materials and colors.

- ❖ **Variation-** Require a building pattern of varying sizes, shapes and forms.
- ❖ **Streetscapes-** Design for interconnected network of streets internal to community, with highways on the periphery.
- ❖ **Maintenance-** Facilitate short and long term maintenance and security through means such as community manuals or organizations.

* Principles shaped by Visions for a New American Dream, Anton Nelessen

The attached future land use map provides geographical reflection of the plan's established vision and goals. The future land use concept is primarily based on the same land use classifications as the existing land use map and includes residential, commercial, recreational, institutional, agricultural/forestry, and mixed use. The following provides a description of the future land use classifications.

Mixed use- The town centers are proposed to feature the most concentrated levels of activity within the community and consist of uses of medium to high density residential, commercial, retail, and open space uses. The Chalkville Town Center is an established commercial area located within the southern end of the community. The area located around Deerfoot Parkway, Old Springville Road will be the future center containing City Hall, schools, and commercial and retail uses. Dug Hollow/ Old Springville center will be a neighborhood oriented town center.

Residential- Different housing opportunities will be offered to current and future residents of Clay. More compact development is featured within town center, and prescribed areas located adjacent to the centers. As distance increases from the centers, development will consist of larger lot size, single family homes. Future growth will predominantly occur in areas radiating out east and west from Old Springville Road and within portions of the future town centers.

Commercial- Commercial development will be concentrated within the proposed town centers within the community. Confining such commercial activities to these locations will result in a greater sense of place, connectivity, and improvements to traffic safety and overall transportation system.

Recreational- Future recreational land use is proposed at the future City of Clay Park, Nature Preserve adjacent to Town Center, and Cosby Lake. The trail network will serve to link these recreational uses and also provide recreational opportunities.

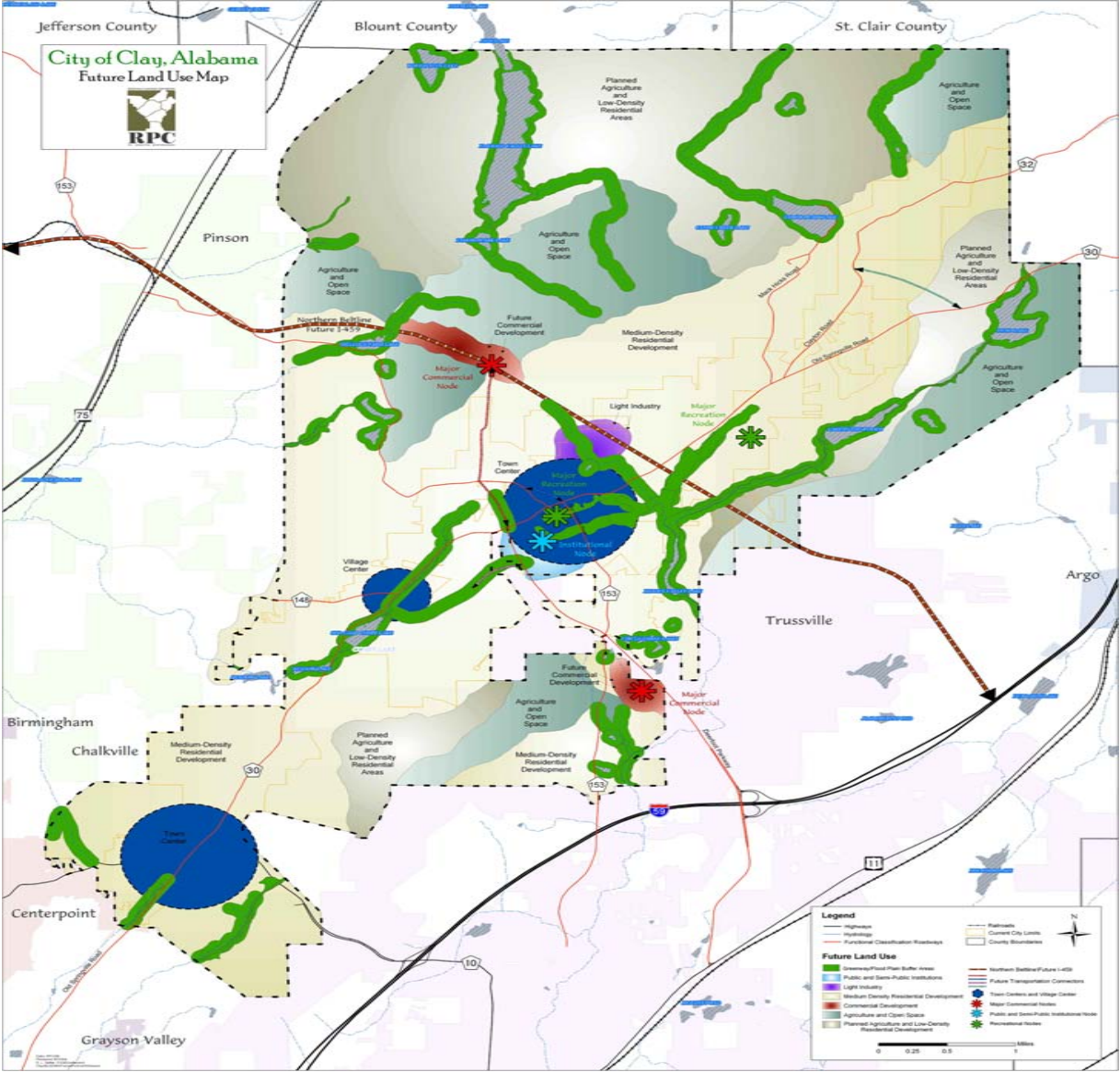
Institutional- The future institutional land uses will continue to exist where schools, churches and City Hall locations. School facility expansion is encouraged to take place adjacent to currently centralized school facilities.

Agricultural/ Forestry- Future land use will include existing areas that are in use for agricultural or forestry purposes.

Industrial- Future industrial land use is proposed at locations southeast and southwest Old Springville Road- adjacent to where the I-459 interchange will be located.

Utilities/Transportation- Future utilities/ transportation land use is not expected to experience much change in the future.

Map 2: Future Land Use



Implement “City of Villages” System



Desirable features such as awnings, sidewalk café, on-street parking, and landscaping help to create a lively, attractive setting for a variety of activities to take place

Due to its pattern of development, Clay is primarily auto-oriented with residential and commercial areas largely unconnected. Discussed within the planning process was the critical need for Clay to have a true center of the community.

A primary town center and two village centers are proposed for Clay. The town center is planned for close to the geographical midpoint of the city at Old Springville and Clay-Trussville Road, and will serve as the civic heart of the community with City Hall, school facilities, future library, and nature preserve. Two other centers will be located at Chalkville Center- existing commercial area of Old Springville and Chalkville Mountain Roads, and neighborhood center at the intersection of Old Springville and Dug Hollow Roads.

Center oriented development provides many significant benefits. A center can enhance quality of life, protect long term well being of residents and economic growth. A pedestrian friendly, walkable environment promotes safety for all modes of traffic. The town center is a place where residents and visitors can

run several errands by parking the car once- going to the library, grabbing a loaf of bread, and meeting friends for coffee or to stroll through a shop. Live/work units provide for easy accessibility to services and are especially desirable to seniors, young professionals or couples.

Connectivity to the town center via more vehicular routes, walking trails and sidewalks are an important aspect of the concept and will serve to connect major destination points within the community- schools, recreational areas, service facilities such as grocery stores and shops, and public centers such as City Hall and a potential future library. Each center is designed with a .5 mile radius to promote the success of a vibrant, pedestrian oriented environment. Transportation benefits will include a reduction in vehicle trips to reach local destinations, promoting other means of travel. Physical fitness and well-being for Clay’s residents will receive another important boost as the possibility to reach various services within the town center, schools, and recreational areas becomes a reality.



Public art contributes to a community’s sense of place and distinct character.

The City of Villages concept is also significant in what it will preserve. Strip zoning where commercial uses are concentrated along the whole length of Old Springville Road is strongly discouraged. By focusing more concentrated development within centralized locations, there is the significant opportunity to preserve the rural character and amenities of outlying areas that residents of Clay hold dear.

Town Center Development Principles

Because the physical form of the town centers within Clay is critical to the concept's success, great care must be taken for the City and other parties to oversee and firmly guide development as it takes place. The following development principles have been developed to generally provide a framework to ensure that development is adequately instituting the vision for future land use and design needs. Anton Nelessen, Visions for a New American Dream serves as the basis for this discussion and can be referred to for additional information.

Building Types: Provide buildings that are adaptable for a succession of mixed use. Buildings should be of quality construction with a minimum of two stories and fit cohesively within the entire town center.

Building Orientation: Buildings should face the main street or public open space. Pedestrian access between buildings and connecting public ways shall be provided.

Provide Public Safety features ("eyes on the street")- Buildings that incorporate windows, ornamental treatment and other aesthetic details encourage the existence of an active and safe environment. First floor uses should be oriented towards uses that promote a variety of activities such as retail, restaurants, and coffee shops. As such blank walls, long stretches of uninterrupted building are strongly discouraged.

Pedestrian Access: Provide for a safe, attractive, and connected pedestrian circulation system between uses, as well as along street frontages to provide convenient and appealing routes for walkers and to discourage multiple car stops.

Landscape Design: Install landscaping, street trees, walls, hedges and fences in a manner that is consistent with a pedestrian friendly environment. The responsible party shall ensure maintenance of all landscaping.

Parking: Manage the supply of surface parking to promote transit and pedestrian usage, efficient use of land, and direct and convenient access to buildings. Parking behind the buildings, parallel or angled parking in front of buildings is strongly encouraged. Large parking lots in front of buildings do not allow for any pedestrian environment and should not be allowed. Parking lots should be screened by landscaping or architectural features such as walls or fencing when visible from the public realm.

Desirable attributes of the proposed town and village centers are:

- Positive sense of place
- Visual coherence
- Compact core
- Intensive, integrated mix of uses
- Civic space(s)
- Internal vehicular circulation
- Pedestrian oriented and accessible
- Vehicular accessibility
- Intense anchor or center of activity
- Well-defined edges



Fairhope, AL has become a tourist mecca with a pedestrian friendly environment, mix of uses, landscaping, lighting and other amenities.

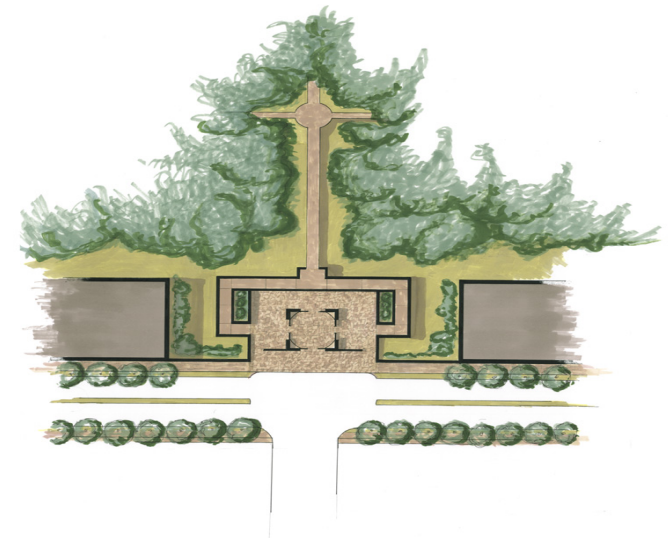
Clay Proposed Villages

The planning process created a series of conceptual design and layouts for a town and village centers. Through guidance from the plan advisory committee, feedback from public town meetings, and an analysis of each situation and scenario, the following town and village centers were determined to be the most desirable and recommended for inclusion in this Comprehensive Plan.

Clay Town Center Concept- Clay Trussville Road Town Center with Nature Preserve Park

With the elements of schools, current city hall, commercial growth, adjacent sewer in place, the proposed location for the new town center already is the closest to what residents say is currently the center of Clay. The town center will serve as the center of civic life for the community with City Hall, schools, and proposed future library. Commercial, retail, and public space will also play an important element in the composition of Clay's town center.

The following Bird's Eye View of the Town Center provides for a visualization of the concept. This design builds upon the town center with the addition of a phenomenal natural amenity, a 12 acre park, providing for multiple programmatic functions. With a location directly adjacent to the Town Center with City Hall and proposed future library, and directly connected to the schools and proposed recreational trail network, the site offers an unparalleled opportunity to provide a recreational or open space for the community. Reflecting upon the input and suggestion of the community, the park provides potential to serve as: a botanical park, a learning center, a walking trail, a bird sanctuary, a meeting facility (existing structure with modifications), a passive park, and the site provides a unique opportunity for a vista of the surroundings. The park is designed to project a strong presence with a street level entry plaza and gathering place on Old Springville Road, bordered by small shops and restaurants with opportunity for frontage on both the park and Old Springville Road. In addition, this design maintains a strong emphasis on the retail /commercial potential along Old Springville Road.



Entrance to Nature Preserve from Old Springville Rd. will create a public gathering spot.

Chalkville Center- Retrofit Existing Commercial Area

Intersection of Chalkville Mountain at Old Springville Road

The Chalkville commercial area is an established commercial destination and is located proximate to large retail offerings on Clay-Trussville Rd in Trussville. The area features established and new retail and commercial offerings, and has recently been enhanced by a new Publix grocery store. While the area is directly adjacent to residential neighborhoods, there is a lack of connectivity and the usage is overwhelmingly auto-oriented. While the development of strip malls and auto-centric uses continues, there is increasing evidence of a return to more pedestrian oriented outdoor malls- Lifestyle Centers are an example of new development that contains many elements of traditional Main Street and pedestrian scaled retail establishments.

For the Chalkville commercial area, there is an opportunity to create a more distinct sense of place that reflects the character of Clay while providing additional connectivity, traffic safety and accessibility through walking and bicycling. The conceptual design focuses on the potential for redesign or retrofit of an existing commercial node utilizing infill opportunities (shown in red, existing structures in grey) to increase commercial density and concentration of businesses within a given district. In addition to the infill, structural/ aesthetic elements incorporated to increase the sense of connectivity include sidewalks, awnings and overhangs.

A redesign of the parking lots to incorporate additional tree canopy, and improved traffic flow provides for greater pedestrian movement. The center island located upon the headwaters of Five Mile Creek, and originally a flood plain, is suggested for redevelopment to include an element of open space, providing a bold statement of reference to Clay's ecologically sensitive features and unique sense of place.

Dug Hollow Road Village Center

The intersection of Old Springville Road with Dug Hollow Road is proposed for a village center. Currently featuring a small amount of commercial activity, the future vision for this area is the creation of a center that can serve adjacent neighborhood commercial and service needs as well as those of passerbys. Having a concentration of residential, commercial and office space within the area will allow for a vibrant neighborhood center to function well and allow for accessibility to all modes of traffic, including those on foot from nearby residential areas.

Conceptual Town Center Master Plan

- A consolidation of ideas and suggestions contained in the various conceptual designs.

- **Town Center Park:** This plan suggests an organic pattern of intervention providing opportunities for various botanical / wildlife themes, walking trails, pedestrian connectivity to major centers of focus within the master plan, and linkage into the proposed green way connector. The park gateway provides a strong presence within the Town center on Old Springville Road including a grand courtyard gathering place for civic and social events.

- **Major Roadway Armaturess:** are lined with tree canopy and sidewalks suggesting connectivity while providing aesthetic enhancement to the community, and consistent with the image of tree canopy contained within the city.

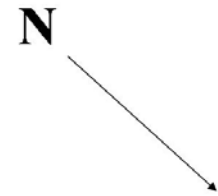
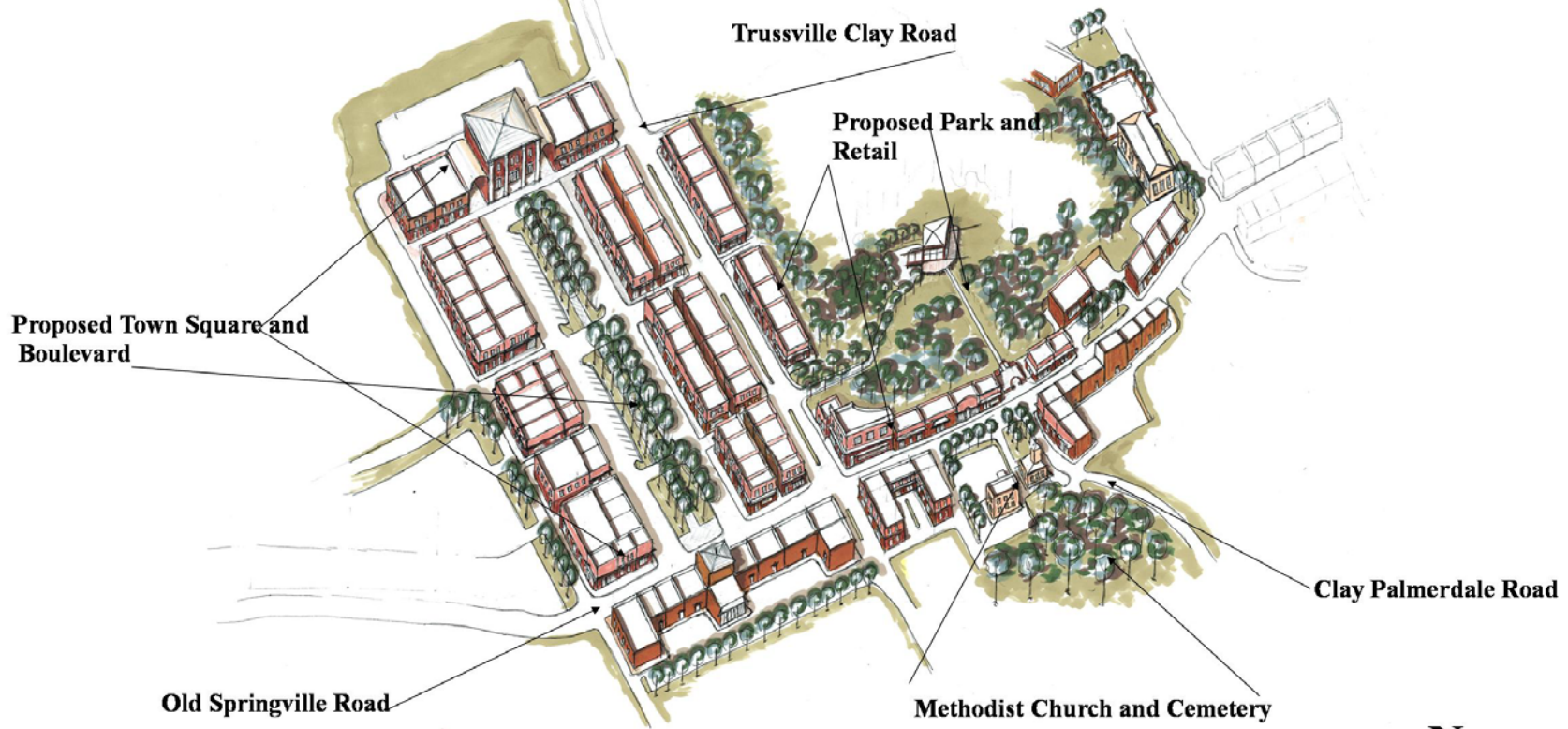


- **Town Center residential Center:** provision for a residential development in close proximity to the town center: accommodates a true “Walkable Community” with pedestrian access to schools, retail, commercial, institutional, medical, and religious centers.

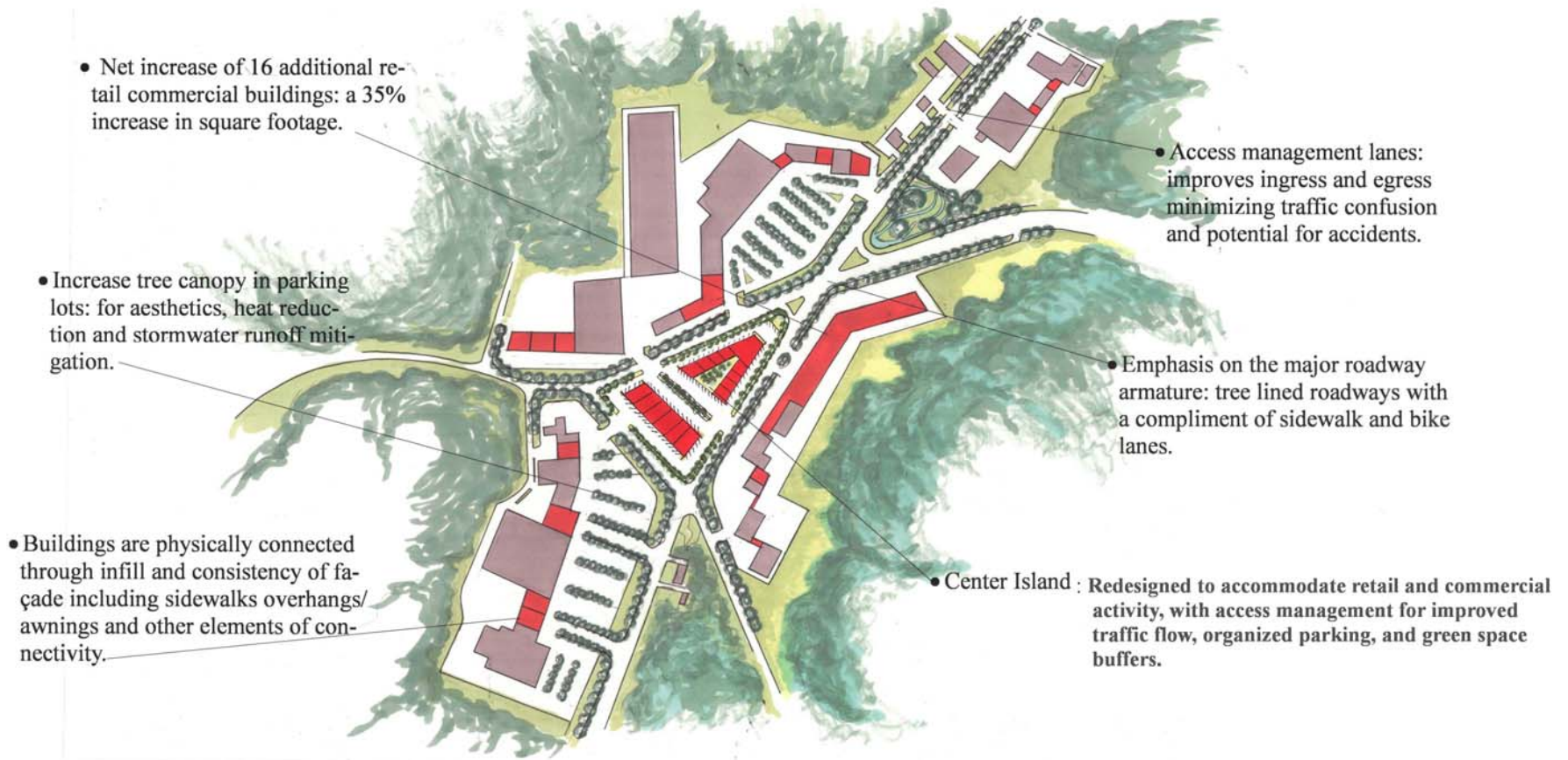
- **A constructed Wetland Park** for the purpose of stormwater remediation. The park in an existing watershed area provides a cleansing and remediation of stormwater concerns related to the addition of significant impervious surface to the landscape, while adding additional green/ recreational space to the master plan.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW - TOWN CENTER PROPOSAL-CITY OF CLAY

Town Square on Trussville Clay Road



Town Center Concept: Chalkville Road at Old Springville Road





Cluster development provides compact development, promotes friendly neighborhoods and can preserve connected open space.

northward along Old Springville Road until Deerfoot Parkway. Sewer extension planning and implementation should be executed in correlation with the future vision of land use as established by this plan.

Transportation System

A healthy, efficient transportation system provides for a multitude of uses and includes highways, sidewalks and trails, public transit, airports, railways and/or navigable waterways that provide access to employment, labor, goods and services. Thus an efficient transportation system is vital to the overall health and livability of a community from both a social and economic perspective. Such a circulatory system can be compared to a human body. If healthy, movement can

Develop compactly within center areas

To ensure real life implementation of concepts of connectivity, trail network and mixed use town center, development must be compact. Stressed is the importance of carefully regulated design standards to ensure that appropriate character and physical amenities are in place for such development. At right is an illustration of Cluster development, one concept favorably received throughout the planning process that promotes pleasant living environment, common open space, and reduces sprawl through compact development.

Factors that will be important in implementing this development pattern include land use tools subdivision regulations and zoning ordinance. It is imperative that both tools reflect and serve to implement the core principles of compact centers and preserving the outlying rural and as yet undeveloped areas.

Sewer availability will also be a primary determinant of where growth occurs. At present sewer extends



Example of disjointed, auto-oriented transportation network. Clay's development is primarily like this, putting more strain on Old Springville Rd. as the only continuous north-south route in Clay.

occur unimpeded along the arteries, capillaries within the system and connect externally on a regional level. If the system is not “well”, symptoms manifested include congestion, decreased traffic safety, and lack of opportunities for travel to occur in different ways and along diverse paths.

Clay is served by primary roads such as Old Springville Road (Route 30), Chalkville Mountain Road, Clay Trussville Road. The northern extension of the Northern Beltline (I-459) is expected to be completed within the next 10 years and will provide an interchange to Clay and have a large impact on the local and regional transportation system.

Functional Classification

Functional Classification is a process where highways and streets are grouped into classes or systems according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Functional classification can be applied in several ways including planning highway system development, determining the jurisdiction responsible for a particular system and fiscal planning. Also, functional classification is important in determining the eligibility for Federal aid funding. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) proposes changes to the locally functional classification of roads, and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approve the proposals.

Urban and rural areas have visibly different characteristics with respect to density of street and highway networks, travel patterns, and the relation of the elements to highway function. Because of this fundamental difference, separate classifications must be provided for urban and rural functional systems. What follows is an explanation of the major functional classifications with a list of the corresponding streets and highways within Clay as shown on the following map *Functional Classification and Traffic Counts*.

Interstate/ Expressway- This class is devoted entirely to traffic movement with little or no land service. Expressways or interstates are characterized by complete control of access. This classification is reserved for multi-lane, divided roads with few, if any, at grade intersections. Expressways serve over 40,000 trips per day are intended to serve long trips.

At present there are not any interstates located within Clay boundaries. I-59 is directly adjacent via Deerfoot Parkway. I-459 is a future interstate that will bisect the City and provide an interchange to the City.

Arterial- This class of street carries traffic to and from the expressway and serves those major movements of traffic within or through the urban area that are not served by expressways. Arterials interconnect the principal traffic generators within the City as well as important rural routes. Arterials handle trips between different areas of the city and should form a reasonably integrated system. Principal arterials will carry 25,000 to 40,000 vehicles per day, and minor arterials 10,000 to 25,000 per day.

The minor arterials in Clay are the portion of Old Springville Road (Rte. 30) from the southern city boundary at Torrey Pines Circle extending north to Canterbury Road, and Chalkville Mountain Road.

Collector- This class of street serves internal traffic movements within an area of the city, such as a subdivision, and connects the area with the arterial system. Collectors do not handle long trips and are not continuous for great lengths. Collectors generally serve over 1,500 cars per day.

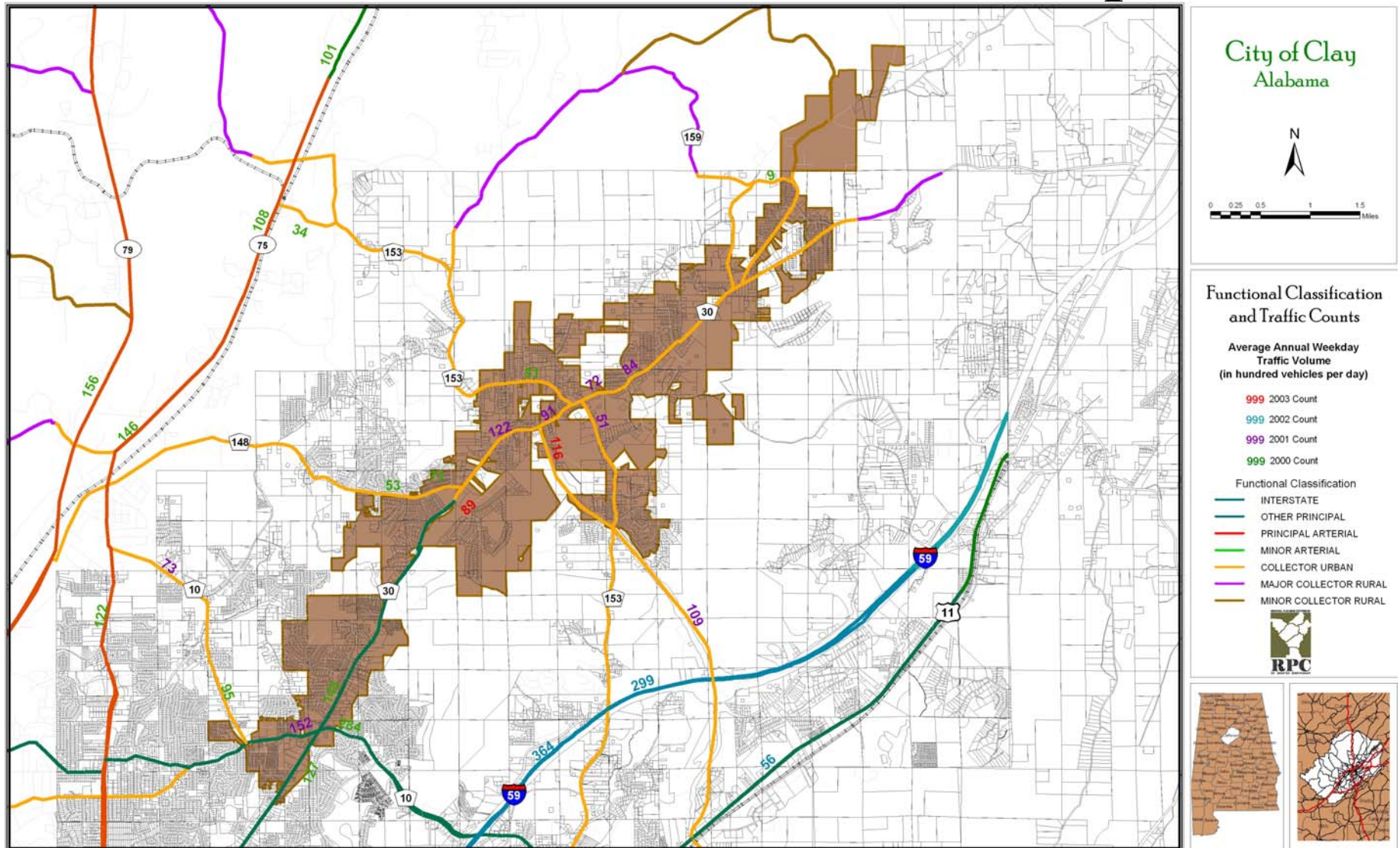
A significant proportion of Clay's network is comprised of Collector Urban- includes Old Springville Road (Rte. 30) north of Canterbury Road until the northern boundary of the city, Deerfoot Parkway, Clay-Trussville Road (Rte. 153), Clay-Palmerdale Road (Rte. 159), Clayton Road until Clayton Cove Parkway, Mac Hicks Road, and Dug Hollow Road (Rte 148).

Local- The sole function of local streets is to provide access to adjacent land. These streets contain a large percentage of the total street mileage of a city, but carry a small proportion of the vehicle miles of travel. In Clay, these local streets consist of all streets that are not classified as arterials or collectors. Local residential streets carry daily volumes of 1,000 or less in most cases.



Congestion outside Clay-Chalkville High School is an everyday occurrence.

Functional Classification map



Transportation Recommendations

The transportation network internal to Clay and connections to the region is a primary focus of this plan. At present Old Springville Road serves as the sole major north-south thoroughfare for local and pass through traffic. A suburban pattern of development consists of individual pods of residential development that do not connect, and primarily don't have sidewalks. Due to the lack of transportation options (mode and route) and spread out development pattern, Clay is experiencing increasing issues with congestion, traffic safety, and dissatisfaction with an auto-oriented environment with little pedestrian and bicycle activity.

It is important to stress that no single solution is possible to “solve” these issues, especially in light of continued future growth. Reshaping the transportation system is an integral focus of this plan. Understanding the strong connection between transportation and land use is an important first step. The comprehensive nature of land use recommendations provides a variety of living arrangements for Clay residents, allows for economic growth while protecting the natural environmental amenities of the area, inviting, pedestrian friendly town centers accessible via different modes of travel (vehicle, bike, foot), and increased traffic safety and access management.

Overall objectives that are critical to the successful future of Clay are:

- Increase the community's range of transportation choices;
- Enhance the accessibility of jobs and housing;
- Reduce travel times and the number of trips on the roadway network;
- Provide housing choice and opportunity;
- Facilitate redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization as need occurs;
- Leverage public investment in transportation facilities and infrastructure.

A multi-faceted approach is necessary to implement true change within the current context of Clay's land use and transportation system. What follows are more specific recommendations that serve to implement the above objectives.



Illustration of TOD elements: Alternate modes of transportation (transit, bike lanes) are present, compact center development, and strong urban design.

As the “city of villages” concept is adopted as the long term vision of the community and implemented on a daily basis through planning tools, the interaction of land use and transportation decisions will be critical.

Improve Vehicular Connectivity and Traffic Circulation

Creating further connections for all modes of transportation is a key feature of this plan. Vehicular connections prioritized for implementation within this plan include: Extension of Deerfoot Parkway north to I-459 and creation of interchange there, extension of Clay-Trussville Road to Clay- Palmerdale Road, and Old Springville Road to Clayton Road. See Future Land Use map for visual illustration of connections.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

The fundamental concepts of this plan: preserve natural character, center-oriented growth and creating an intact, connected transportation system requires realistic tools for implementation. Transit Oriented Development is critical to implementation of the interrelated goals of the future land use and transportation system and is strongly recommended as specified within this section.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) refers to development that is centered around and coordinated with a transit station in its use and design. Typically, TOD has the following physical characteristics: Diversity of Uses, compact development, location within walking distance of transit, a neighborhood focal point, and pedestrian orientation.

TOD represents a premium opportunity between land use and transportation planning. As it incorporates many of the components already set forth within the principles for town center design- creating a pedestrian friendly space with a mix of uses- retail, office, commercial and residential, TOD will effectively fulfill the established transportation and land use goals of the community and provide for a pleasant living environment within an integrated local and regional transportation system.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is strongly recommended to establish a successfully integrated system of land use and transportation. Recommendations for implementation include:

- ◇ Encourage and direct development that is transit supportive.
- ◇ Integrate centrally located and accessible transit stations within compact, mixed-use community growth centers.
- ◇ Employ transit-supportive density, land use diversity, and urban design as principal guiding factors for TOD centers.
- ◇ Adopt TOD ordinance and design guidelines within the city’s zoning ordinance.

- ◇ Provide regulation of TOD ordinance for new development to ensure appropriate implementation of transit oriented development elements.

Transit Availability and Utilization

At present there is low utilization of mass transit to fulfill local or regional travel needs. Within the Birmingham region this is a common situation as the present system is not deemed reliable or able to fit the travel timing and destination needs of residents. However, a long term goal and strategy for implementation needs to encompass the integral component of transit. Mass transit provides an alternative for vehicle usage, especially for those segments of the population such as senior citizens and youth that otherwise are dependent on others for transportation. As an EPA non-attainment region for air quality, mass transit is also a key strategy in reducing the impact on the environment through individual vehicle emissions. While transit will ideally provide service to all points within the city, the town centers will serve as major hubs or TOD stations.

Clay should be an active participant in regional transportation discussions and advocate regular, reliable transit connecting Clay to other destinations within the region.

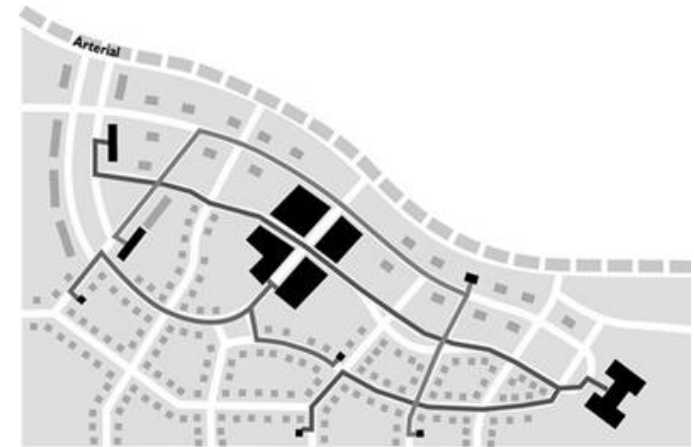
Connectivity

At present the transportation network within Clay is disjointed and auto-oriented. It is essential to provide connectivity among residential, commercial, institutional, and recreational land uses. A key response through the planning process has been to increase connectivity by providing a variety of travel routes for all modes of traffic- vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycles. Such connectivity will take place on various levels- instituting road connections where possible, instituting the green infrastructure of trails, and constructing sidewalks. Promoting connectivity can occur in two primary ways:

- Require connections among new residential, commercial and industrial development
- Seek to create connections in already built areas- road connections, sidewalks or paths.

The City of Clay can institute the desired connectivity through different methods.

- Amend subdivision regulations to require developers to provide pedestrian amenities within new developments



Creating connectivity: example of re-connecting major activity centers and bringing back a grid street network.

- Seek State and Federal grant funds for sidewalks, trails, and pedestrian connectivity. Examples of funding include Recreational Trails fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund (both administered through ADECA), and Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)
- Continue to participate with the MPO to promote and institute future projects involving connectivity, improving bike and pedestrian paths, and vehicular route improvement or extension.

Continue to Meet the Transportation System demands

As the community continues to grow, the transportation system will experience increased pressure in the form of congestion, auto emissions, and level of traffic safety. As most of Clay’s transportation network is outside its local purview, the city should work collaboratively with project sponsors including ALDOT, MPO and Jefferson County to secure future improvement and extension of the street network.

Clay should work with developers to ensure compatibility with the vision for the future land use and compliance with zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. Access management strategies should be implemented by developers to limit the impact of development on the transportation system and levels of service and safety. Developers should also be required to provide traffic impact studies in correlation with development.

Strive to Visually Enhance the Transportation Network within Clay

Visual improvements to the network include the provision of landscaping and beautification enhancements to roadways. For current and future arterials, and collector roads, Clay should encourage four-lane divided parkways with landscaped medians, and avoid five lane undivided highways.



Example of a roadway without enforced regulatory control, access management, or signage regulations.

Northern Beltline- I-459 Interchange within Clay

The northern extension of I-459 as proposed will roughly bisect the City of Clay. The future half of the loop will connect the outlying communities and is expected to serve as a catalyst for economic development in the northern portion of the metro- Birmingham area.

Direct access to the northern portion of I-459 will bring economic development opportunities and bring even more residential development to the City of Clay. This will have a large impact on the City of Clay, both from a transportation and land use perspective.

Through the planning process the need to ensure strong guidance of the Northern Beltline and its future impacts on the community was expressed as a priority for the City. The interchange will become one of the major entry points to the City of Clay, thus its appearance and characteristics will be of the utmost importance to the City.

Without strong guidance and use of regulatory controls, the interchange will likely experience strong commercial growth with an appearance like many commercial arterials- an abundance of billboards, auto-oriented uses and associated problems of congestion, quickly outdated appearance, and unsafe traffic conditions. To continue to allow the plan elements of protecting Clay's natural amenities and to successfully implement the City of Villages concept, the City will need to enforce firm regulatory control over land use and transportation decisions that will impact the area.

Recommendations

The vision for this portion of the City has been established as a major gateway and entrance to the new town center to be created less than 1 mile away from the future access ramp to I-459. The following objectives were established for this significant location within the community:

- Provide a visually pleasing entry point into the community
- Install a green median to create a boulevard style development leading residents and visitors into the village center
- Provide signage and other means of attracting traffic to the adjacent town center
- Integrate sidewalks into the design for the area and that connect with the sidewalk and trail network



Before



After

The award winning City of Saratoga Springs, NY gateway (as shown in Before and After) to their community provides an idea of how the I-459 interchange could potentially be preserved.

- Install landscaping and lighting that reflects the inherent character and sense of place of the community

It is recommended that Clay utilize its zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations as tools for implementing land use control over this area. Design standards are also very useful to prescribe in a visual manner the characteristics that future development must have.

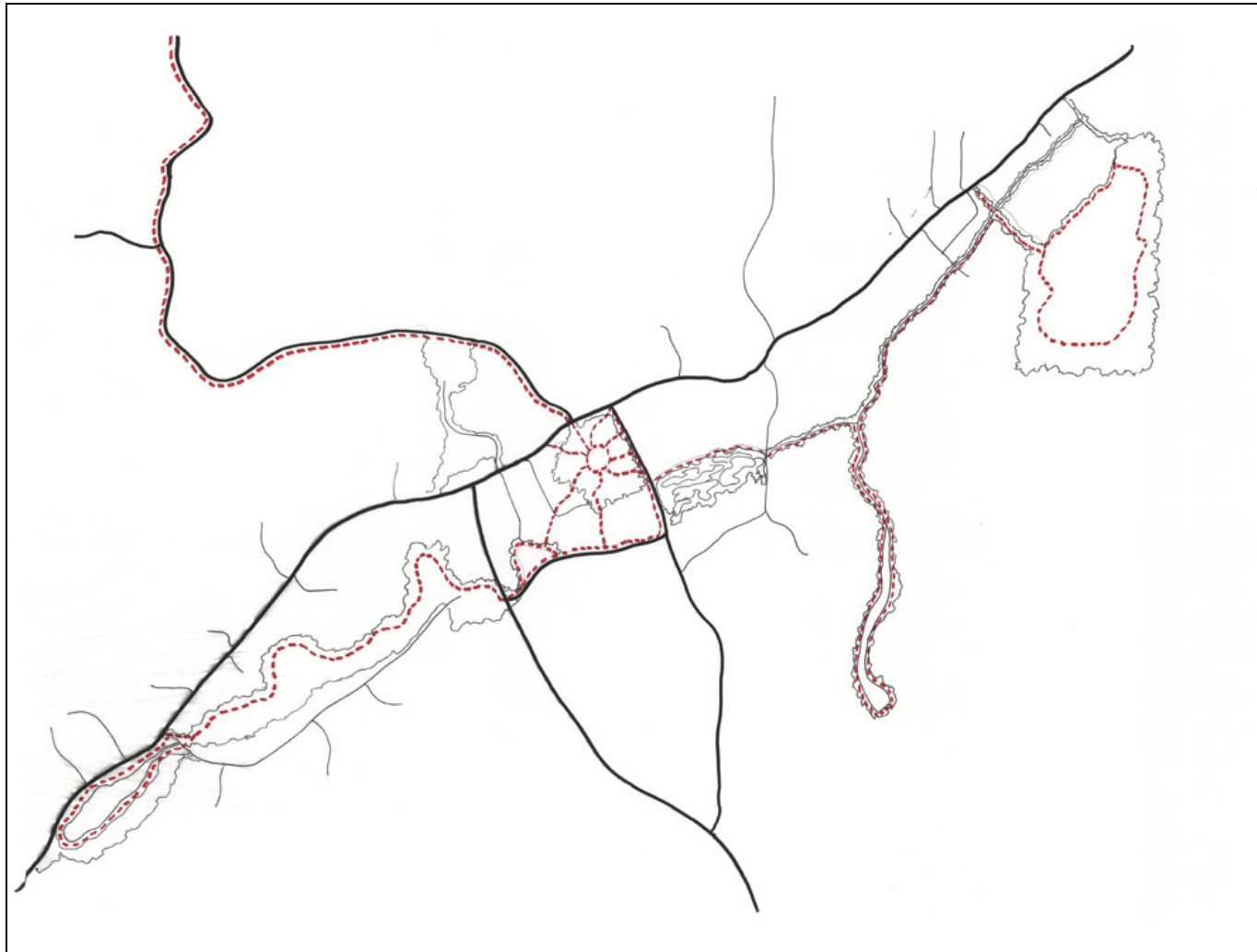
Clay should work with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Jefferson County and any other involved public partners to work collaboratively on the physical design of the I-459 interchange and local road area and impact on the community.

Create and Implement a Sidewalk and Trail Network Plan

To provide for safe, efficient connections and a high quality recreational opportunity for pedestrians and bicyclists, Clay should focus on the implementation of a sidewalk and trail system for the City. The pedestrian network will allow for the interconnection of trails and sidewalks as they are completed. Of primary importance is the connection of significant destination points within the community such as the schools, town center at Deerfoot Parkway, and recreational areas located at Cosby Lake, proposed nature center adjacent to the town center and future 104 acre City Park, and Senior Center and ballfields.

Once the primary network is in place, the next important step is to provide for connection among residential areas and to destination points in the community. Where possible, sidewalk connections can be implemented alongside road connections. At other points independent sidewalks and trails can be implemented on their own to enhance connectivity within the community.

With the northern beltline to be constructed sometime in the near future, allowing the trail connection at this intersection must be integrated with construction plans for this vicinity.



Sidewalk and Trail Network

The illustration at left features dotted red lines representing the trail and sidewalk network to be created over time. Major activity centers are connected through the network, from south to north (left to right) they are: Cosby Lake, School Complex, Deerfoot Parkway Village Center, City Hall, Senior Center, Village Center Nature Preserve, and wandering along a creek to the future City Park. These locations represent the backbone of the network, but should expand to include secondary locations of importance such as neighborhoods and development as it occurs.

PLAN OBJECTIVE 2: PROTECT THE NATURAL CHARACTER AND AMENITIES OF CLAY

An intrinsic asset of the community is the abundance of natural beauty and character. Related throughout the planning process is the community's realization of this powerful asset, and strong desire to protect it. Noted as the starting point for five different watersheds, the area is also of high environmental significance. Protection of the watershed and water quality for Clay and the entire region, preserving Clay's identity and sense of place are all reasons understood for wanting to protect the inherent natural character and amenities of Clay.

In addition, there are important economic benefits associated with preservation of Clay's natural amenities. Recreation provides essential quality of life to the community which directly translates into higher property values, and economic development. In relation to direct economic benefits of the tree canopy, the 2003 Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Area State of The Forest SWMA provides the illustrative analysis of Clay's resources.

Analysis of Tree Canopy Economic Benefits in Clay

Annual Air Pollution Savings	\$465,123.93
Annual Stormwater Savings	<u>\$520,773.41</u>
	\$985,897.34 (Annually)

These substantial savings provide close to \$1 million in savings to the community every year. The various reasons cited above provide the foundation for this plan objective to protect the natural character and amenities of Clay. Specific recommendations follow as to how to implement the objective.

Providing the framework for the development pattern

A core component of this plan is the promotion of center-oriented growth that provides an active "core" suitable for major day/night activities, commercial and community life; and preservation of the outlying natural areas of the community. The City must ensure that the plan vision and objectives are implemented- two primary tools being the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. Through these regulatory tools, the land use pattern can be guided on a continual basis to ensure that the plan vision is implemented. More specific measures that can be considered for protection are:

Regulatory control at local level

The zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations will be important tools that can implement the center-oriented development on a daily basis. Zoning for a more compact, mixed-use environment is necessary for true centers to emerge. Zoning that requires larger lot (5-10 acre) sites outside the core areas will work to ensure that these areas maintain their more bucolic character and prevent sprawl.

Protect special areas-

A commonly cited reason for living in Clay is the quiet aspect of the community, feeling that one is away from the hustle and bustle of a big City, and free to live amidst the green, hilly beauty of the area. As growth continues to come to Clay, efforts must be made to protect the special areas that are environmentally significant or are particularly cherished by the community. Clay should seek to preserve open space whether the space be utilized for recreational purposes, or simply preserved in its current state.

As communities grapple with common issues of balancing environmental preservation with development pressure, specific regulatory tools are being utilized to achieve this protection. Protection of special areas can occur through a number of different ways- often a combination of techniques is utilized within a community. See appendix for a compilation of techniques that other communities have utilized to protect their special areas.



Portion of the Cahaba River in Clay

Create an Inventory and Prioritize Special Areas to be Protected

Many of the sites may be represented through the future green infrastructure and recreational areas, but a comprehensive inventory of such sites should be mapped and prioritized for preservation or protection. The process can be overseen by the mayor and City Council and/ or an environmental committee established for this task.

Preserve Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Preservation of Environmentally Sensitive Areas in Clay was favorably responded to throughout the planning process. This recommendation refers specifically to areas that are sensitive to development or other impacts on them, and that can have a notably negative impact on the community or region. The following offer activities that were discussed or recommended through the planning process and represent the fulfillment of the Plan objectives. Further discussion and action can use these activities as a starting point and can lead to other preservation actions.

Stream buffer protection

It is commonly held that the most environmentally sensitive part of the watershed and where the most impact can be made in protecting the watershed- is at or near the upper portions of the watershed. Because Clay is at or near the beginning point for five distinct watersheds, the opportunity to protect the regional water quality is especially significant. Recognized within the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study as a location of particular significance, one specific recommendation strongly encouraged for Clay is to create and enforce stream buffers along the different waterways.

Steep slope protection

With the hilly to steep topography of the area, development often will raze or alter the land. The City of Clay can enact measures that protect such natural features, allow development while providing protection for the natural topography of the area. Such measures provide aesthetic benefits as the natural features of the community are preserved, decreased erosion and subsequent negative impact on water quality due to runoff, and stormwater savings.

Tree ordinance

Many communities are choosing to implement a tree ordinance to maintain the current tree canopy in their community or require tree planting to enhance the community aesthetically, environmentally and economically. The benefits of trees are various- reducing air pollution, providing shade and aesthetic value, and an important economic benefit in terms of savings for stormwater management. Clay should pursue the creation and adoption of a tree ordinance to ensure the benefits of its trees will continue.

Continue to Participate in Regional Efforts

Clay should continue to work collaboratively with municipalities, Jefferson County and other public entities on regional efforts such as the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study. Recommendations of such efforts should be incorporated into Clay's current and future planning and implementation activities within the City.

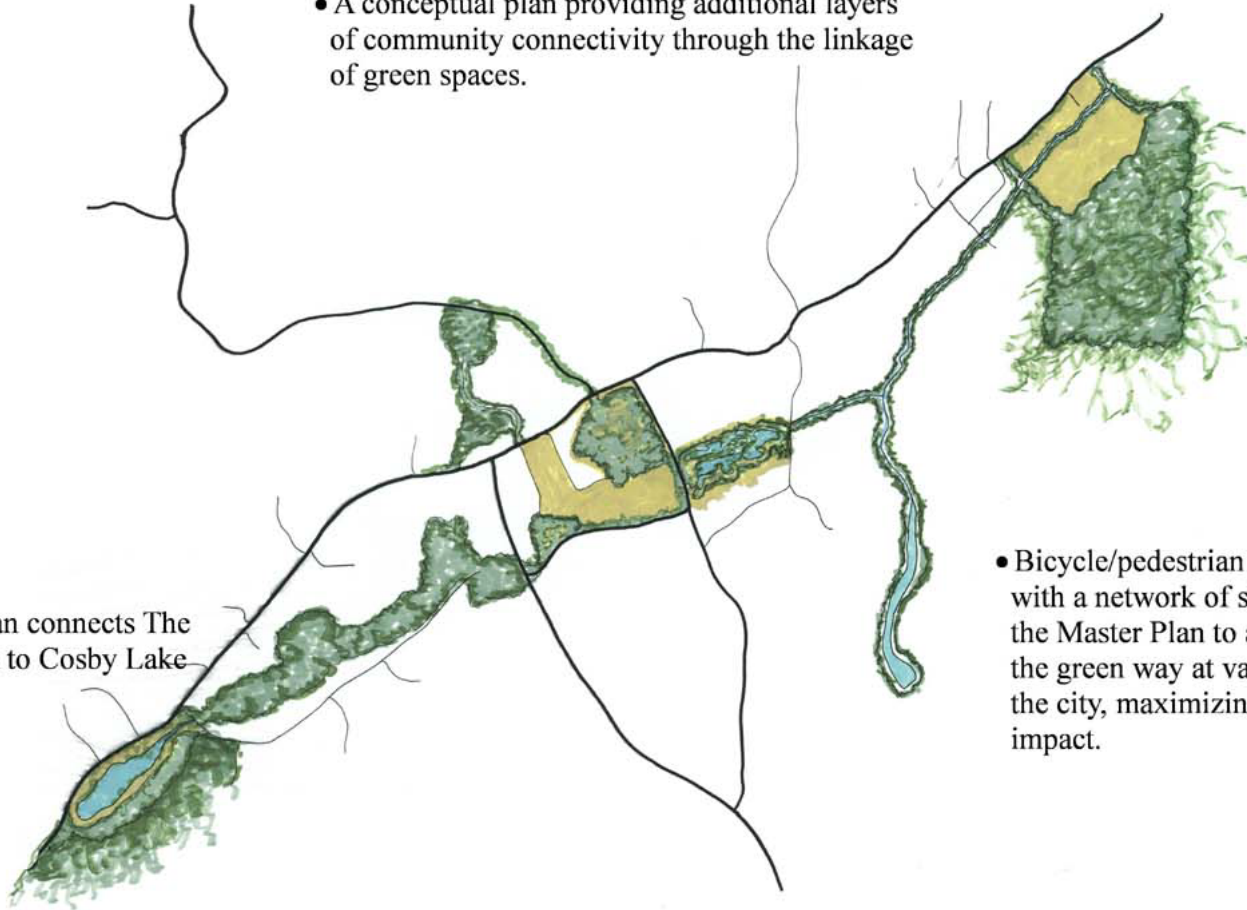
Provide Passive and Active Recreational Opportunities to Residents

The provision of varied recreational activities and destinations for the community was seen as a priority throughout the planning process. Clay has an extraordinary opportunity to provide outdoor recreation to residents while also preserving the cherished character and open space of the community. Specific sites have arisen as priorities for recreational areas:

Conceptual Greenway Plan

- A conceptual plan providing additional layers of community connectivity through the linkage of green spaces.

- The greenway plan connects The Recreational Park to Cosby Lake



- Bicycle/pedestrian trails are integrated with a network of sidewalks taken from the Master Plan to accommodate access to the green way at various intervals within the city, maximizing the “connectivity” impact.

Future City Park:

This site has been purchased by the city for the creation of a City park for current and future residents. At present the site contains the historic Old Springhouse, freestanding barn, pasture and forested land. Priority park amenities include recreational ball fields, a walking trail, and the utilization of the Old Springhouse for the public good. The Old Springhouse was seen primarily as a community asset that could be used for the public good. Potential uses include meeting space, community center, library, or interpretive museum in conjunction with the adjacent barn and pasture.

Village Center Nature Preserve:

The 12-acre site located directly adjacent to the proposed town center offers a phenomenal opportunity for the community. Walking trails, a nature center, birding, and public plaza fronting on Old Springville Road



View of Old Springville Road from proposed Town Center Nature Preserve.

Cosby Lake:

Once the location of a boy scout camp and subject of local lore, the lake has symbolic meaning for the rural roots of the community. Recognized as a natural asset worthy of preservation, the site should be preserved and made available for public use. Suggestions that can be explored for the site include a walking trail around the lake, picnic area, and paddleboats.

Pocket parks:

As new residential development takes place in the community, access to smaller scaled recreational areas needs to be ensured. Cluster development promotes the concept of homes developed in a compact manner with a common open space or pocket park to be shared.

Trail network:

The proposed citywide trail and sidewalk network will provide passive recreation for pedestrians and bicyclists; and serve to connect major activity centers of the community such as the City park, town center, schools, and Cosby Lake. The important quality of life benefit has also been shown to translate into higher property values for adjacent property owners- welcome news for current and future residents and developers in Clay.

PLAN OBJECTIVE 3: ENHANCE CLAY'S SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Strengthen and Maintain the Integrity of Gateways for the City

Gateways play an important role in welcoming visitors and residents alike and defining the entrances to the community. Gateways should be established at major and minor entrances to Clay.

As a still relatively new incorporated community, and with annexation continuing to change the boundaries, it is especially important that the design be bold and stand out, utilizing lighting and other features to create a memorable entrance to the community. Primary gateways for the community can be defined as:

Deerfoot Parkway- location has recently been noted with an attractive fieldstone and large sign welcoming residents and visitors alike. The design elements present at this first gateway should be repeated at other entrances to provide a sense of continuity and reflection of the community's character.

Old Springville Road at Torrey Pines Circle- The southern entrance into the Chalkville portion of Clay carries local and regional traffic from neighboring communities like Center Point and Birmingham.

Old Springville Road, Northern Gateway- The northern entrance to Clay carries local and regional traffic from St. Clair County and beyond.

Entrance off the Northern Beltline- This plan strongly recommends strong local regulation and guidance of development at the future I-459 interchange. Once in place, the interchange will transport a high amount of traffic into and out of Clay. The gateway treatment at this location should be visually bold, and must provide a sense of entrance to the town center located just down the road from the interchange. See Northern Beltline section under Objective I: Manage Quality Commercial and Residential Development for complete discussion.



Gateway sign constructed at entrance to City on Deerfoot Parkway. Sign provides a visual entry point, elements such as the stonework can be carried to other sites within Clay to contribute to a cohesive sense of place. Photo: Tina Tidmore/ Clay News 2004

Ensure a Connection to the Past

Present-day Clay has been shaped and influenced by its past. In maintaining its sense of place, it is essential that Clay maintain ties to what it once was as remembrance and a foundation for what it will become. As a stagecoach stop on the road between Birmingham and Gadsden and with treasures such as historically significant buildings or sites, Clay is rich in local lore and history. The following recommendations were established with the goal of allowing Clay to build upon its history while embarking into the future.

Historic Inventory

Assess and acknowledge historical assets within the community. Typically a site is noted as historically significant if the structure is over 50 years old and/ or has architectural importance, or if the location was a site of historical importance.

Celebrate Historical buildings and sites within the Community

By placing historical markers on those locations within the city that have historical significance, a message is sent to the entire community and visitors that a sense of Place is present within Clay, that there is a distinct connection between the present and the community's past. There are historic designations that can be made at local, state and national level. An example of a local program already in existence is the Jefferson County Historical marker program. Listing on the National Registry of Historic Places is an option for buildings or sites of special significance.

Create Memorable Destinations

Clay can maintain ties to the past by creating memorable destinations within the community. Maintaining Clay's sense of place in this manner is also a potential source of economic development, tourism and providing amenities for residents.



Historic Wade House: Recently restored house reflects importance of keeping ties to Clay's past. *Photo: Tina Tidmore of Clay News 2005.*



Example of a connection to a community's past- Helena has successfully preserved its sense of place and promoted tourism and economic development with its Old Helena Town Center.

Provide opportunities for interaction between the City and the community

Opportunities to receive information and news from the City and providing a chance for public participation and input were seen as valuable activities through the planning process. Such opportunities can occur in many ways, the below suggestions offer tangible ways to create a forum for such interaction.

“Town Hall” meetings

Regularly scheduled or topical public meetings provide an important forum for citizens and officials to share ideas, build collaboration and a shared sense of community. It is recommended that Clay hold such meetings to promote such public discourse and provide for public comment. One opportunity for regular meetings will be to inform and keep the public involved with the implementation of this plan.

Development of and Maintenance of a City Website

Build upon current city website to provide an interactive source of information on the City, and up to date information on initiatives, projects, and community events. The website should be up to date, easy to comprehend and visually interesting for a diverse population. Community events, services and programs should be highlighted and also promoted in a print format.

Publicize the “good stuff” occurring in the community

It’s often more difficult to focus on or hear about the positive things occurring within a community. Clay must actively seek to promote the community based on its current assets, and publicize successful implementation of plan components, community activities and events.

Promotional events/ activities

Community events and activities can effectively provide necessary leisure activities, promote community cohesion, and reflect the overall well-being of a community. Supporting existing events within the community as well as implementing new ones create a high quality environment and create economic development opportunities for existing and future businesses within the community.



Example of a civic space: a smaller plaza with clock tower.

Below are specific recommendations related to existing and proposed public spaces that are seen as positive enhancements to Clay's sense of community and residents' quality of life.

CITY HALL-

As the physical centerpiece and nucleus of community affairs, City Hall represents an important element of local government and Clay's civic life. At present City Hall is located in a historic old schoolhouse. Due to the building's history and central location, the plan recommends the continuance of this usage. However, should the prohibitively high cost of renovation prevent this from occurring, it is recommended that the City construct a building based on the same design as the current building, and locate the public building at the same location or within the same proposed town center.

SENIOR CENTER-

The newly constructed senior center offers a destination and programming for the senior citizens of Clay. In addition, the opportunity to provide activities for other facets of the community is also present. The City can consider the usage of the space for City sponsored or civic group meeting or activities.

Community Facilities

Need for Common Civic Places

A strong desire has been expressed throughout the planning process for a variety of public spaces. From recreational areas to City supported community facilities such as a library, community center or Senior Center, common public spaces can be considered the glue of providing community interaction and cohesion.



Current location of City Hall- reuse of historic schoolhouse building.

LIBRARY

Clay does not currently have a library, with residents reporting that they frequent other libraries outside of Clay within the region. As Clay continues to grow and add new residents to its City, a library will offer a valuable public amenity and gathering spot for community events and activities. It is recommended that Clay seek to add this public amenity in its long term future.

Public Services

FIRE PROTECTION

Clay currently has an arrangement with Center Point Fire & Rescue for fire protection for the City. The fee for this service is paid on a quarterly basis. At this point it has been determined that the present arrangement with Center Point is satisfactory in terms of service and cost. As Clay continues to grow, it is recommended that the City continue to assess the cost and benefits, and explore the creation of its own Fire Department should the benefits of such a move outweigh the costs.

POLICE PROTECTION

Clay currently is provided police protection through the Jefferson County Sheriff's office. Finalized within 2004 was the provision of two officers that will exclusively patrol and provide service for the City of Clay. A volunteer neighborhood watch provides support of and collaborates with this professional service.

As is the case with other outside services being provided to the still relatively new City of Clay, the current collaboration with Jefferson County Sheriff's Department appears to be satisfactory and provide necessary public safety protection at a cost effective price. As Clay continues to grow and its government function matures, the possibility of creating a City police department can be explored.

WATER SYSTEM

Clay receives its water service from both the Birmingham Water Works Board and the Trussville Utilities Board. As of 2002, the existing water mains appear to be adequate for providing service to local residences, but a more detailed study should be completed to determine the



Fire Station located on Clay Palmerdale Road offers fire protection for the entire City of Clay.

overall performance of the water system, ability to adequately serve new development, and identify specific improvements that may be needed.

SEWER SYSTEM

The southwest portion of Clay is currently served by public sanitary sewer system overseen by the Jefferson County Department of Environmental Services. Future expansion of the system is currently being proposed. The City of Clay must become an active participant to regional discussions of how and where the system should be expanded within the region.

As sewer availability is a requirement for commercial and industrial ventures of any magnitude, the location of such is especially important within the context of fulfilling the desired center oriented development pattern. Sewer availability should be in place along the linear core of the community- Old Springville Road, with appropriate trunk lines at proposed center locations and residential areas of medium to higher density. Limiting sewer availability to those areas outside of the core can also serve as an effective tool for limiting density and growth within the City.

PLAN OBJECTIVE 4: PROMOTE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VITALITY

The long term economic and cultural vitality of Clay are both important factors in the future viability and well-being of the community. The Plan recommends programs and projects that support the kind of dynamic, active environment that makes Clay an enjoyable place to live and attractive businesses and entrepreneurs.

Economic Vitality

Clay is expanding, primarily through annexation and the construction of new housing. To ensure the adequate provision of goods and services for its residents and appropriate revenue for public needs, the continued economic vitality of the community is essential. The following recommendations focus on ways that can continue or lead to greater economic success of the community.

Business Retention and Expansion

Business retention is the first step in understanding the assets within the community and ensuring the probability that the company will remain in the community over the long-term. Retention as an economic development strategy has been deemed to be more important than recruitment of new business. Active retention maintains the current tax and employment levels and ensures employment opportunities for residents. The first step in business retention can involve the following components.

Chamber of Commerce

Recommended in the process was a formalized Chamber of Commerce- this recommendation was implemented with the founding of the Clay Chamber of Commerce in Fall, 2004. The chamber of commerce is expected to fulfill an important role and serve as the voice of the business community and source of facilitation and collaboration among different businesses, and actively promote the long term economic growth and well being for the community.

The following recommendations should be considered for implementation under the guidance of the Chamber of Commerce.

Foster Entrepreneurial Efforts

Existing or potential start up businesses represent an often overlooked opportunity for economic growth in a community, yet successful operations can sometimes have the most overall positive impact within the local economy. Small business is estimated to provide The

benefits can be great- activity generating use of office space within the community, local employment opportunities, contribution to the tax base, and spin-off economic effects in terms of buying materials and spending money locally. Efforts should be made to support potential future small businesses by understanding and attempting to fill their needs. Examples of assistance include programs that supply revolving loans, start- up capital, incubator space, and business plan preparation and mentoring.

Create a Vacant Commercial/ Industrial Inventory. Vacant commercial space should be listed and assertively promoted to local, regional or outside entities looking for space. Publicizing the inventory can be completed in a number of different ways, such as through GIS based mapping and information sheets distributed to the business community and posted online, and utilized for aggressive recruitment efforts.

Create a Business Directory of Clay Commerce- Knowledge of Clay businesses is the first step to promoting a “Shop Clay First” marketing effort. The directory can have a physical presence in the community, especially the downtown, and serve as a map to locate local businesses. There should also be a city wide business directory that is accessible in a searchable format online and in print.



Signage and mapping provides orientation to visitors as well as reflects a community’s sense of place.

Interview Clay businesses to understand overall business community needs for present and future

The City and Chamber of Commerce are likely leaders to assertively collaborate and work to fulfill continued needs of the businesses within Tarrant. Such personal connection can be instrumental in planned or anticipated expansion needs, or working to ensure that business community needs are being met. Topics also mentioned in the planning process are a desire to get more workers in Tarrant to live within the community, as well as for employment needs by local businesses to be fulfilled first by available residents.

*Build collaborative partnership with existing and future businesses-*The City of Clay should work to build partnerships with the business community. Such collaboration can lead to a mutual understanding of the City’s goals and future activities, as well as business’ desires and potential contribution to Clay’s goals and future activities.

Business Attraction

The City of Clay in association with the Chamber of Commerce should work pro-actively to recruit desired commercial establishments to the City. “One stop” services can be provided by a municipality to provide a seamless, collaborative relationship with a desired commercial entity to provide locational assistance, a streamlined development process, and any offered incentives.

Also popular is the issuance of incentives for a desired commercial establishment to locate within the community. For example, infrastructure improvements such as sewer hook up and/or “shovel ready” sites can provide a powerful incentive to businesses looking for a location. However, such incentives should be used sparingly and weighed with the expected magnitude of expected benefit to the community.

Regional Cooperation

At present there is a great deal of growth in the northeastern portion of Jefferson County where Clay is located. Incorporation of communities, annexation, and reliance on sales tax as the principal method of community revenue have contributed to uneasy relationships among neighboring communities. However, there are many positive benefits that can be associated with regional cooperation and actions. As such, Clay should explore avenues of potential collaboration with other levels of government and public agencies where possible.

Cultural Vitality

A measure of a community’s quality of life is a main determinant of where businesses choose to locate. The cultural vitality or measure of the community’s offerings includes the availability of leisure activities such as theater, public events, and regular activities and meeting groups.

City Marketing Strategy and Promotion

Clay should pro-actively create a city marketing strategy that provides a “face” to the growing community and a reflection of the community’s strengths. Such a marketing strategy should work with various entities including the real estate, development community, schools, businesses, City officials and civic groups. The marketing strategy should extend to multiple and diverse exposures and feature a central logo reflecting the community and its progress. Different venues for the strategy and its message include the City of Clay website, local and regional publications, and extend to physical representation such as banners, signage, or symbolic markers of the community’s sense of place.

PLAN OBJECTIVE 5: IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

This plan is built on feasible, action-oriented recommendations that will fulfill the primary objectives of:

- I. Manage Quality Commercial and Residential Development**
- II. Protect the Natural Character and Amenities of Clay**
- III. Enhance Clay's Sense of Community**
- IV. Promote Economic and Cultural Vitality**

This final objective was created with the realization of the importance of building implementation into the actual plan. This plan was designed to offer a cumulative vision for the community that is achievable along short, medium and long term actions.

The Plan recommends that Clay develop the tools to institute an ambitious strategy of straightforward and complex recommendations over a period of time. Managing the coordination and implementation of the diverse initiatives for Clay will be the most challenging aspect of the plan. Given the challenges presented, it is critical that the implementation strategy focus on implementation from existing community resources, be straightforward, effective and remain affordable.

Managing Implementation

The management strategy discussed below establishes a foundation of consistent and dependable partnerships and independent efforts that will allow for effective implementation of community initiatives. Leadership will ultimately come from the Mayor and the City Council, however the current day to day resources. Below follow recommendations that are deemed essential for bridging the transition between the planning process and implementation of specified objectives and recommendations.

Create a City Manager Role to Oversee Implementation Efforts

Because successful implementation of plan objectives is directly related to strong stewardship and follow through of established recommendations, the City of Clay should strongly consider the designation of a City Manager position to allocate full time responsibilities to fulfillment of these objectives. Day to day planning expertise will also be a clear need to ensure appropriate oversight of planning, zoning, subdivision regulation, and design issues. Potential responsibilities of a manager could include:

- Monitor implementation of the Plan
- Facilitate collaborative efforts among various community resources,
- Coordinate different initiatives underway and dissemination of information and updates on plan implementation,

- Manage financial resource needs- i.e. overseeing Capital Improvements Program, and grantwriting;
- Oversee development guidance and day to day planning and zoning needs.

Community Resources and Collaboration

Built upon as the foundation of this planning effort are the existing community resources. Most mentioned (but not excluding potential other sources) are:

- ◇ Civic groups such as the Lions Club
- ◇ Community Churches
- ◇ Clay-Chalkville Schools (Jefferson County System) and associated groups
- ◇ Community businesses
- ◇ Recently established Chamber of Commerce

Such resources should be involved in implementation efforts and can likely supply directly related professional skill, financial resources, grantwriting, community organizing, meeting or activity space, and volunteer efforts just to name a few potential activities. It is important for the community to keep in mind that much can be accomplished or built upon with existing resources and focusing on collaborative efforts among the different resources.

Implement short-term plan recommendations

The transition from the planning process to implementation of objectives is extremely important. The momentum begun during the planning process, for the plan overall and different components can be lost should stakeholders not see direct implementation of the ideas and recommendations made during the planning process. In many ways the success of the plan can be decided in the short term directly after the process is completed.

Provide an Annual “Report Card” to evaluate plan implementation

An annual public check-in provides benefits such as keeping the public aware and involved as to implementation of the plan recommendations. The check-in also provides an opportunity to celebrate progress, redefine established goals as needed, and provide interactive feedback with stakeholders and Clay residents as to what has been completed and future initiatives.

Update Plan every five years

Implementation of this plan will require ambitious efforts and hard work for the immediate and long term future. Updating the Comprehensive plan every five years serves to keep objectives and recommendations current with what is occurring within the community.

Financial Assistance and Resources

This planning process has established primary objectives and action oriented goals that can be completed on a short and long term basis to guide the successful implementation of plan recommendations. Many of the recommendations contained within will require not only utilization of existing resources and but different sources of funding. Below follow specific recommendations as to sources of internal and external funding that can assist in making the plan objectives and recommendations a reality.

Capital Improvements Program

Given the magnitude of the established objectives and the anticipated public investment, good capital planning is essential. The first step for implementation begins within the community and focuses on improvements that can be funded by itself. A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) can provide the tools to make planning a reality by integrating physical and financial planning. ***Using a CIP to make annual expenditures for public improvements is one of the best ways to implement a comprehensive plan.*** The primary reason for creating a CIP is to encourage City officials and residents to think about the future of the city and budget capital improvements over a set period of time to provide for necessary services and facilities.

A CIP is a program that provides the what, how, when and where of the funds a city plans to invest in public services over a six year period. A capital budget process is concerned with the selection of capital projects, timing of expenditures, and impact on total government finances. Capital projects are scheduled for a six-year timeframe according to priorities and available annual revenue. The program is updated annually in terms of completion and/or change in identified projects, newly identified needs, and any changes in available revenue.

Capital improvement projects are typically major investment or expenditures such as the purchase, construction, reconstruction, renovation, or replacement of a public building, facility or major equipment item. The CIP gives highest priority to projects that in the long run will save the City money, especially in terms of energy efficiency, or that are necessary to protect public health and safety. Many of the improvements recommended for Clay are also designed to enhance the quality of life for residents, and provide an impetus to leverage a small public investment to promote a proportionally larger private investment in the community.

Projects to expand, replace, or upgrade facilities must be based on established service standards and new projects should not be financed at the expense of neglecting existing infrastructure or services and needs they may have. Capital improvements do not include maintenance of

existing facilities, property and buildings. The City must continue to invest in maintenance, making it a high priority, in order to make the best use of existing resources and prevent unnecessary capital costs caused by neglect.

Outside Sources of Funding- Public

While much can be accomplished through the designation of City and community assets' financial and technical abilities, outside sources of assistance can greatly enhance the successful implementation of community improvement initiatives. Various sources of funding are available from public sources that can contribute funding or other resources for fulfillment of plan recommendations.

Outside Sources of Funding- Private

Private foundations are another important source of funding, and/or technical assistance. While government entities can sometimes apply for grants, often the project applicant must be a non-profit with IRS 501(c) 3 status. Each organization typically has an established mission and/or targeted audience or objective, and will select projects to assist based on relevance to these objectives and qualifications of the project. Leveraging existing funds to attract new funding is important to keep in mind throughout the process. Oftentimes sources of funding will require a local match. Money allocated to be spent by the local community can frequently be utilized to attract new funding opportunities.

Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy was created as a guide for fulfillment of plan objectives and their specific recommendations. The strategy organizes recommendations according to assessed factors of: Complexity, time frame, and anticipated responsible party (ies). It is not intended to be set in stone, but instead provides for a flexible guide that can adjust according to Clay's changing needs, recommendations already fulfilled and related community initiatives and goals.

CLAY A NEW VISION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

	Time Frame (Years)	Responsible Party (ies)
ESSENTIAL (1-3 years)		
<i>Straightforward</i>		
Regulate Adherence to planning principles and objectives	1-indefinite	P&Z, Council
Create Design Standards	1	P&Z, Council
Regulate control over Northern Beltline gateway into Clay	1-indefinite	P&Z, Council
Preserve environmentally sensitive areas	1-indefinite	P&Z, Council
Create/ preserve recreational areas	1-indefinite	P&Z, Council
Protect watershed	1-indefinite	P&Z, Council, Related non-profit or community groups
Create gateways to community	1-5	Council, Chamber, Lions
Town Hall community meetings	1	Council, Mayor

<i>Complex</i>	City website	1	Council
	Business retention	1-indefinite	Chamber, Council
	Provide plan updates	1-5	P&Z, Council
	Grantwriting	1-5	Mayor
	Implement City of Villages Concept	5-10	Council, P&Z, Chamber
	Institute connectivity for street network	1-15	Council, P&Z
	Create and implement sidewalk and trail network plan	2-indefinite	Council
	Institute trail network connecting recreational areas	1-indefinite	Council, Mayor
	Beautification	2-indefinite	Chamber, Council
	Business recruitment	1-10	Chamber, City
	Oversight, facilitation of plan implementation	1-5	P&Z, Council
	Institute Capital Improvements Program	1-8	Council, Mayor
	<hr/>		
IMPORTANT (1-5 years)			
<i>Straightforward</i>	Create civic spaces (such as library)	1-10	Council
	Business Directory	1	Chamber
	Foster Entrepreneurial Efforts	1-10	Chamber, City
	<i>Complex</i>		
City marketing strategy and promotion	2-5	City, Chamber	

Foster Regional Cooperation and Relationships

1-indefinite City

SECONDARY IMPORTANCE (within 10 years)

Straightforward

Develop Historic Preservation Plan 5-10 Historic Committee

Complex

Promote Transit Oriented Development 5-20 Council, Mayor

Encourage mass transit service connecting Clay to greater region 5-20 Mayor, Regional entities like RPC

Implementation Techniques for Identified Community Initiatives

The following synopsis of techniques and strategies is included for informational purposes. The techniques included have been utilized by communities or show relevance to the initiatives recommended through this planning process. This summary of available techniques is by no means exhaustive yet provides a number of avenues for consideration by Clay as they implement the objectives and specific recommendations of the Plan.

Next Step or Implementation Techniques for Community Initiatives

Land Acquisition

Technique	Purpose	Benefits	Drawbacks
Fee Simple Purchase	Acquire property for public use- i.e. parks.	Public control over property. Can stop development of property.	Expensive. Public support for purchase may be difficult to obtain.
Advance Acquisition (land banking)	Gov't purchases land before it is ready to be developed. Can resell with restrictions- i.e. specify type/ layout of dev.	Better control over timing and type of dev. Can promote more comprehensive, planned development. Discourages land speculation and leapfrog dev.	Uncertain how long gov't will hold land. Can be expensive, politically controversial.

Purchase of Development Rights (conservation Easement)	Provide strong and long term protection for farmland, forest and open space areas. Involves compensation for land owner in exchange for legally binding agreement to not further develop the property.	Can be more effective, permanent than zoning. Voluntary, property remains in private hands.	Potentially expensive. Can create islands of unconnected protected land
Transfer of Development Rights	Send development potential from resource lands to designated growth areas.	Developers foot the bill. Growth better concentrated. Can be an effective growth management tool and implementation of Comp. plan vision and goals.	Difficult to agree on sending and receiving areas. Public TDR bank may be needed. Requires careful planning and trained staff.
Developer Exactions and dedications	Require developers to provide public amenities like parks, streets, even school space in return for development approval.	Place more of the cost of development on the developer.	Opposition from developer. Requires more planning commission/ staff review. Raises cost of development.
Private land trusts (501 (c) 3 org.	Trusts aim to protect natural areas, faqrm and forestlands. Sometimes are involved in limited developments	Can collaborate with public agencies. Can work with private landowners that are suspicious of government.	May lack financial resources. Can create islands of unconnected protected land.
Impact fees	One time payment from developer to cover costs of providing public services- i.e. police, fire, schools- for development.	Place more of cost of new dev. on developer.	Raises cost of development. Must be definite connection for fees going to provision of services.

Financing

Technique

Capital Improvement Program

Purpose

Integrates physical with financial planning. A capital budget process is concerned with the selection of capital projects, timing of expenditures, and impact on total government finances.

Benefits

Prioritization and allocation of funds over 6 yr. period. Encourages public officials to think about improvements to occur within context of anticipated revenue.

Drawbacks

Program can change. Political changes can also influence/ eliminate strategic implementation over period of years.

Tax Increment Financing	Assist in preparation of (re) development activities. Usually pays for large scale land assembly or infrastructure development- i.e. road improvements, sewer system, parking structures, streetscapes. City "freezes" assessed value of certain properties or designated area.	Over specified period of time, property owners make annual payments equal to frozen tax level and higher tax level resulting from improvements. Incremental taxes pooled to pay for improvements in targeted area.	
Alabama Improvement District	Under the Alabama Improvement Act, counties and municipalities are authorized to form improvement districts which are public corporations authorized to issue bonds backed by assessment of real estate within the district.	Public or utility property such as roads, bridges, sidewalks, or lakes may be developed in this manner. Useful in connection with development of residential, mixed use and industrial subdivision.	
Municipal Bonds	Long term debt instruments issued by municipality on behalf of targeted recipient or project. Different bonds include: Revenue, Industrial Development, 501 (c) 3 bonds.	Important source of low-cost capital for economic development- interest earnings typically exempt from Federal and State taxes.	Rates can vary. Currently low rates.
Public-Private Sponsorship	Collaborative efforts between public agency (ies) and private entities. Varied objectives and implementation possible.	Much success seen for small to larger scale implementation- ex. Business community sponsorship of new park to be constructed.	Tangling of public and private actions- perception that private money can dilute "common good" goal of public organizations. Can present conflicting perspectives and goals.
Business Improvement District	Special assessment district in which property owners within a defined geographic area agree to pay tax levies dedicated to special services funding in area. Typically levy is calculated using a predetermined tax rate, multiplied by assessed value or street frontage of property.	Separate, focused effort on defined geographic area. Services usually include professional staff and management, security, sanitation, and promotional events.	Must be approved by majority of property owners in district, mission and implementation of objectives can suffer from conflicting owner viewpoints, no real clout for regulatory control- must partner with municipality effectively to implement change.

Specified Purpose Taxation	Taxation passed with defined purpose- eg. .05% of generated sales tax to go towards implementation of recreational areas and trails.	Defined source of local funding- mechanism already in place.	Can be politically difficult to pass. Must ensure money raised actually used for what it was intended.
Tax Abatement	Forgives completely or a portion of a project's tax bill. Many tax abatement incentives targeted toward specific types of business (ie manufacturing) or particular geographic area.	Can help to substantially improve a property's cash flow and therefore debt capacity.	Abatements can be overused by competing municipalities- cost of lost revenue must be weighed within context of expected benefits.
Revolving Loan Funds	Pools of debt capital (can be drawn from multiple sources) targeted to specific types of development activity, businesses, geographic areas, or borrowers. Examples of use: storefront façade improvement, microenterprise loans, venture capital, commercial rehabilitation.	Source of funding for various initiatives, money utilized, loan repayments used to replenish supply of capital for new loans.	Getting an established pot of money can be difficult. Loans must be repaid at acceptable return to ensure long term success of program.
Historic Tax Credits	Ten percent federal credit issued against the cost of rehabilitating buildings placed into service before 1936. 20 percent credit issued against cost of reha to certified historic structures listed or eligible for listing on Federal Register of Historic Places. Structures (for 20 percent credit) must be rehabbed in accordance with US Dept. of Interior standards.	Significant potential source of funding for commercial revitalization.	Public agency doesn't directly benefit from tax credit, must sell to intermediary market etc.