SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

PART 3: Land Use and Economic Development Strategies Report

May 2014

Prepared for:
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

Prepared by:
ATKINS and its team members
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6.0 LAND USE STRATEGIES

6.1 OVERVIEW

The land use strategy for the Southwest Corridor is, put simply, to leverage future investments in transit, in strengthening local institutions, and in enhancing other public amenities to drive mixed use development in targeted locations. The core of the strategy to reverse the persistent trend of decline in population and employment by contributing to the stabilization of households and jobs in the corridor. This will provide more housing options for the diverse demographics and increase the population base to drive retail demand, enhancing employment as well. Figure 6.1 illustrates this approach to capturing the latent potential of the corridor.

Figure 6.1. Capturing Corridor Potential

The land use strategy across the length of the corridor has three components, as follows:

- Transit Oriented Development (TOD): a strategy to capitalize on the strength of several corridor land use anchors by leveraging the positive impact of premium transit service, and to extend this strategy on a smaller scale to other proposed transit stations.
  - Specific TOD concepts at seven primary station areas,
  - Generalized TOD concepts at the remaining station locations as market conditions permit,
- Neighborhood Preservation Strategies: aimed at conserving, stabilizing, or transforming neighborhoods based on their current conditions,
- Cargo Oriented Development (COD): a strategy to capitalize on industrial sites and transportation logistics and distribution sites.
These strategies need to be coordinated with recent city planning efforts that have occurred or will be occurring in the Southwest Corridor, including:

- City of Birmingham Comprehensive Plan
- City of Birmingham Neighborhood Master Plans, to be developed by RPCGB,
- City of Fairfield Master Plan
- City of Bessemer Master Plan
- Jefferson County Shades Creek Watershed Plan

### 6.2 LAND USE SUMMARY

The Southwest Corridor has a historical legacy of the earliest developments in the area, including the steel and mining industry around which the region initially grew. This development was supported by a network of rail lines, roads, and later trolley lines, as part of the region’s mobility evolution. While the legacy industries have waned in their intensity and impact on the corridor, the Southwest Corridor nevertheless remains a well-defined travel corridor with several notable activity centers and significant use of transit services provided by BJCTA. Downtown Birmingham is the focal point for bus transit in the region.

As shown in Figure 6.2, the 22-mile study corridor extends from downtown Birmingham southwest to the Tuscaloosa-Jefferson County line, and is also bounded by I-20/59 to the north and the Red Mountain ridge along the east. The principal surface street in the corridor is US 11, also known as the Bessemer Super Highway.

The project area includes portions of the City of Birmingham and Bessemer, as well as all of the cities of Fairfield, Lipscomb, Brighton and Midfield. There are also unincorporated areas of Jefferson County that comprise the balance of the study area. Each community has a unique character and history and comprises a combination of residential, industrial, and commercial uses, complemented by parks and open spaces, governmental facilities, as well as medical and educational centers. The study corridor has long-established neighborhoods on the east end of the corridor and emerging residential and commercial areas on the west.

The corridor developed around the iron and steel industry in the late 1800’s when Birmingham and Bessemer were founded. The natural resources of the area included iron ore, limestone and coal in proximity to each other and lead to the growth of its core enterprise of steel making and allied manufacturing. As the area developed, Fairfield, Lipscomb and Brighton were founded just after 1900. Midfield was incorporated decades later in 1953 during suburban growth.

The northern two-thirds of the corridor as a result of this history are mature, and have experienced decline in connection with the diminishing role of the steel industry and other industrial activity in the corridor. The southern reach of the corridor has been experiencing modest growth in suburban residential and commercial development, as well as a warehousing and distribution center, and a new Norfolk Southern Railroad regional intermodal center. The other Class 1 railroad in the corridor, the CSX Railroad has a smaller intermodal center in Bessemer.
The existing pattern of land use in the Southwest Corridor reflects two major influences: railroad lines, along which were located the industry and manufacturing that served as the job base that originally brought people to this area, and arterial highway corridors such as U.S. 11 and Old Tuscaloosa Highway, along which “strip” commercial uses grew to serve the people of the area but are now mostly obsolescent, vacant, or declining. Table 6.1 presents a summary of existing land uses in the corridor.
followed by brief descriptions. Part 1 of the study documentation provides a more detailed review of land uses in narrative and map formats.

Table 6.1. Existing Land Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>2,861</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Space</td>
<td>5,002</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Office</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial Retail / Services</td>
<td>1,845</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>2,649</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>2,024</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Low Density</td>
<td>11,740</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Medium Density</td>
<td>1,177</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential High Density</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>31,121</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
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</table>

Source: RPCGB.

The existing land uses in the study corridor are briefly profiled as follows:

**Residential**

The Southwest Corridor study area is predominantly residential, and the largest proportion of residential areas is made up of low density, single family detached housing. There are several concentrations of higher density housing in the area, generally in urban locations near Downtown Birmingham and Downtown Bessemer and in public housing developments.

**Commercial**

The largest concentrations of retail are in the historic downtown areas of Birmingham and Bessemer, in the area around Five Points West, as well as three large malls, including Western Hills Mall / Aronov Drive Retail Mile Shopping Corridor, Westlake Mall and Bessemer Flea Market, and the more recently constructed Promenade Tannehill Shopping Center, located just outside the corridor study area at I-459. Although strip commercial uses line much of U.S. 11 and other arterial highways, a large proportion is obsolescent or vacant.

**Industrial**

Although industrial uses are located along rail lines throughout the corridor, the primary concentrations of industrial uses are along the Norfolk-Southern line. From Downtown Birmingham approximately
three miles west, much of the industrial land is vacant or underutilized. At the western end of the corridor, new, primarily light industrial and distribution uses continue to expand in the Jefferson Metropolitan Park at McCalla and will grow further in the adjacent Norfolk-Southern Intermodal Facility. In the center of the study area, the CSX intermodal facility is a hub of industrial activity adjacent to downtown Bessemer.

**Institutional**

The land area occupied by institutional uses includes the campuses of UAB, Birmingham Southern College, Miles College, and Lawson State Community College – both its Birmingham and Bessemer Campuses - as well as two hospital medical campuses, Princeton Baptist and Medical West Center.

**Parks and Open Space**

Parks and open space are scattered throughout the corridor’s neighborhoods. However, there is a large concentration of open space in the mostly undeveloped and agricultural western end of the corridor. In addition, just east of the corridor is Red Mountain Park, a regional park and recreation amenity.

### 6.3 TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

The concept of transit oriented development (TOD) is focused around the notion that the presence of premium transit services which are accessed at transit stations provide a catalyst to adjacent development. This occurs by virtue of the foot traffic created by the transit station and by the expanded accessibility of that station area from the premium transit corridor itself and from the region at-large. TOD seeks to capture the real estate market potential from increase human activity and quality accessibility to a large travelshed and convert that potential into desirable, attractive urban centers with a mix of shops, services, civic spaces, employment and residences which can become neighborhood or urban centers for the surrounding area. Once critical mass is reached, these sites grow beyond self-sustaining to become hubs for further growth. Station area land use concepts for key activity centers can demonstrate how this latent potential can be built upon to drive long-term changes. This section of the report defines TOD, explains how TOD planning concepts were applied to the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service corridor, and how TOD development could be imagined around several key stations along the study corridor.

#### 6.3.1 TOD Defined

A typical definition of TOD is a form of mixed-use development, often with slightly higher density, that lies within walking distance of a transit station. The core area of a smaller TOD district is within ¼ mile or about 3-4 blocks of a transit station, with a secondary area of up to ½ mile or about 6-8 blocks from the transit station where there is supporting residential land use and other uses such as parks and schools. Such development can create a sense of place as the civic focal point for a neighborhood, and provide for many of the needs of residents and employees within a short walking distance.

While the term TOD includes the word “development”, it should be noted that TOD can take many forms, and often incorporates existing buildings and land uses around which other development can occur. The scale of TOD depends on many factors, including the type of transit service and the level of...
ridership at a given station, the nature and character of development at the station location and in the surrounding area, and real estate market conditions at that point, in the corridor and in the region. Regardless, TOD does refer to a common set of objectives that can be achieved through integrated transit planning, urban development and design, streetscape improvements, and reinvestment through a partnership of the public and private sectors – in a sense, making a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Figure 6.3 provides a capsule summary of the ingredients and benefits of TOD around transit stations.
What is Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)?

**Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)** is a pattern of land development that is integrated with a nearby transit station and pedestrian-oriented walkable access. TOD can be new construction, adapting existing construction, or some combination that creates a mix of retail, residential, employment and civic and open space uses with an appropriate amount of density for the location. The design, configuration, and mix of land uses in TOD provide a modern alternative to suburban development trends which are auto-oriented, focused on one land use type in each parcel, and which necessitate auto travel to connect between land use types. The key features of TOD development are highlighted below.

**TOD Concept:** TOD areas are distinctive in their key features which are density, diversity, and design, destination and distance:

- **Density:** Density refers to the number of floors in a building, typically with retail on Level 1, and residential on the upper levels, creating the effect of a town center.
- **Diversity:** A mix of land uses – residential, retail, office, civic – increases interaction between uses and encourages non-auto trips.
- **Design:** The design of the TOD should reflect the character of the city with interesting architecture.
- **Destination:** Easy access within walkable distance, and a sense of “place”.
- **Distance:** Within proximity to the transit services.

TOD districts must not just be adjacent to transit stations, but must capitalize on the proximity to premium transit by offering an attractive lifestyle environment that promotes walking and bicycle access to transit, which is attractive to transit users, as well as residents and businesses within the TOD, and also creates a new urban hub for residential areas next to the TOD, creating a more livable, more walkable urban environment which supports the premium transit serving the TOD. TOD projects can be initiated before the premium transit service is implemented, and contribute meaningfully to community development over the long term. Such implementation is referred to as “transit ready development”.

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**SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY**

**PART 3: Land Use and Economic Development Strategies Report**
What are the benefits of TOD?

TOD offers many benefits to its transit users and to our communities as well, both economically and environmentally. TOD can be scaled to the type of transit service provided and connected to the type of community in which it will be developed. The key benefits of TOD include the following:

- Expanded mobility choices that reduce dependence on the automobile, reduce transportation costs and free up household income for other purposes.
- Improved access to jobs and economic opportunity for low-income people and working families.
- Walkable communities that accommodate more healthy and active lifestyles.
- Increased transit ridership and fare revenue.
- Reduced household driving and thus lowered regional congestion, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Potential for added value created through increased and/or sustained property values where transit investments have occurred.
- Safer urban environments by providing “eyes on the street” and more pedestrian activity.
- TOD reduces the cost of providing infrastructure and supports further economic development.

6.3.2 Proposed Station Locations

A typical Part 2 of the corridor study presented the proposed transit station locations for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)-Arterial transit service in the Southwest Corridor, and the rationale for those station locations. At the outset of this study, it was recognized that given the economic issues confronting most of the corridor, that one of the key strategies in both defining an alignment for improved premium transit service as well as in defining approaches to addressing land use revitalization was to identify and focus on key corridor land use centers that served as commercial and/or employment anchors for the corridor. By reinforcing these hubs and leveraging their economic vitality, other initiatives would have a stronger starting point and the outcomes could be mutually beneficial. This step entailed a review of corridor land uses in terms of their size and scale, as well as recent and planned improvements or expansion. From this exercise, the following 12 sites were identified for consideration, including:
• Princeton Baptist Hospital
• Legion Field
• Birmingham Southern College
• Five Points West District (including the CrossPlex and Harris Arena)
• Miles College
• Aronov Drive Corridor
• Midfield/Health Center Area
• Brighton/Lipscomb Area
• Lawson State Community College – Birmingham Campus
• Lawson State Community College – Bessemer Campus and Medical West Center
• Downtown Bessemer
• Academy Drive Retail Corridor

These sites were considered in tandem with potential transit service alignments, which were also coordinated with the planned downtown Birmingham In-Town Partnership (ITP) BRT transit circulator. Based on this review, the following refinements were reached:

• It was determined that several activity centers could not be directly served by a single transit alignment that served the overall best interests and opportunities within the corridor. One of these sites included Birmingham Southern College which is located near the western edge of the study area; however, it will be served by one of the high quality neighborhood circulators that will interconnect with the ITP circulator. Another pair were Lawson State Community College – Birmingham Campus which is located on the far eastern side of the corridor and Miles College located off US 11 in the interior of a Fairfield neighborhood; however, both sites are served by BJCTA routes, and it is proposed that BJCTA Routes 3 and 41 be interconnected to connect these two routes and the schools to US 11 at Aronov Drive and to each other. The final site is Legion Field which could not be readily connected to a route that served other key activity centers and which was a lower priority as it is a special events venue; Legion Field is also to be served by one of the high quality neighborhood circulators that will interconnect with the ITP circulator.
• The Lawson State Community College – Bessemer Campus and the Medical West Center which are across US 11 from each other and the Academy Drive corridor were coupled together as a key activity center because of their proximity and the lower suburban density of development.

As a result of this review, the following seven station areas were identified as the principal areas for identification of station area development concepts:

• Princeton Baptist Hospital,
• Five Points West District (including the CrossPlex and Harris Arena),
• Aronov Drive Corridor,
• Midfield/Health Center Area,
• Brighton/Lipscomb Area,
• Downtown Bessemer, and
• South Bessemer: Academy Drive Retail Corridor, Lawson State Community College – Bessemer Campus, and Medical West Center.
In addition to these seven stations, there were another 17 station locations identified along the study corridor. While TOD is possible at any station location, it is not likely at many because of the character and complexion of land uses in that area, and because redevelopment or intensification might be incompatible with surrounding uses. Nevertheless, the placement of a station at a given can make practical sense because of the number of potential transit riders from the surrounding residential area, because of the presence of a school with students and employees, or because it links with another bus route or one of the major planned greenway trails.

### 6.3.3 Station Area Development Typology and Hierarchy

Figure 6.4 depicts the range of land use development typologies found within the study corridor. Some station locations may be characterized by certain of these categories such as low- or medium-density residential or retail services. There may also be more than one type of land use near a given station, but one land form such as a hospital may dominate the area.
### Development Typologies

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<th>Mixed Use</th>
<th>Retail / Services</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Hospitality</th>
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<td>Housing</td>
<td>Uses include stores and services (shopping, dry cleaning, daycares)</td>
<td>Includes major employment centers</td>
<td>Includes hotels and related services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Often isolated from residential areas</td>
<td>Dominated by offices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Uses</td>
<td>Most easily accessible by car</td>
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### Low Density Residential
- 0-3 units per acre
- Single-family housing on large lots
- Local examples include:
  - Newer developments, such as Lupine Drive, McCallie
  - Eastern Valley Road, Bessomier

### Medium Density Residential
- 3-8 units per acre
- Primarily single-family houses, with small number of duplexes and medium-sized apartment complexes
- INCIDENTAL convenience shopping
- Local examples include:
  - Park Ave, Fairfield
  - Providence, Hurricane
  - Court H, Enfield

### High Density Residential
- 8-18 units per acre
- Townhomes
- Large and small apartment complexes
- Incidental convenience shopping
- Local examples include:
  - Tawdeo Terrace, Enfield
  - Park Place, Birmingham

### Low Density Mixed Use
- Local focus
- Highly walkable
- Supports transit
- Moderately dense residential includes small lot single family, duplexes, townhouses, and apartments
- Commercial focus on local retail, services, and entertainment

### Medium Density Mixed Use
- Significant collection of commercial uses and residences
- Supports high-capacity transit
- Residential includes townhouses, row houses, and multifamily
- Includes offices and community-serving retail

### High Density Mixed Use
- Urban hub
- Highest densities of jobs and people
- Highly walkable
- Supports high-capacity transit
- Residential mostly high rise
- Includes full spectrum of employment opportunities

### Civic / Institutional
- Civic buildings
- Public parks or plazas
- Educational institutions

### Industrial
- Includes major employment centers
- Characterized by warehouses, offices, and manufacturing
- Most easily accessible by car
From a review of recurring corridor land uses, the types of development potential at various stations, and guidance from local land use plans, a set of station area typologies was defined for the corridors. The intent of these typologies is to serve as a guide for the most appropriate package of land uses in the vicinity of each of the proposed station areas, and in particular the seven principal station areas identified previously. The proposed station area typologies are summarized in Figure 6.5 which shows the palette of station area typologies defined for this corridor. Each of the typologies is then briefly described.

**Figure 6.5. Station Area Typologies**

- **Urban Mixed Use Center**: This station type has the types of features described in the land use development typology referred to as “mixed use” with a combination of retail, civic, employment and residential uses. For the character of the Southwest Corridor, the low density mixed use type is most representative of what could be expected to occur.
- **Special Activity Center**: This category refers to a special activity center use which tends to dominate the land uses surrounding a station. Examples in this corridor are Princeton Baptist Hospital or the CrossPlex center at Five Points West.
- **Suburban Mixed Use Center**: This typology is similar to the Urban Mixed Use Center except that there are more characteristics of a suburban setting with lower overall development densities, one or two story buildings, some setbacks, and parking supply positioned away from the street frontages.
- **Urban Neighborhood**: This typology relates to a largely residential pattern of land uses around the station, with 2-4 story residential structures and some with first floor retail on major streets, surrounded by other medium density single family or multifamily residential uses.
• **Suburban Neighborhood:** This station typology is similar to the urban neighborhood, but with lower overall densities. There may or may not be a limited amount of existing retail on major street frontages.

• **Intermodal Freight Center:** This typology relates to industrial land uses which would include rail-highway intermodal facilities, warehousing, distribution and some other manufacturing uses. This category would cover a station area in the McCalla area, which could be part of a future service extension.

The seven primary station areas were compared against these station area typologies in terms of existing and potential land uses, both at the station location and in the surrounding locale. The assigned station area typologies for the seven principal station areas are shown in Figure 6.6.

**Figure 6.6. Station Area Typologies for the Principal Station Areas**

![Map showing station area typologies](image)

The assigned station area typologies are summarized as follows:

• **Princeton Baptist Hospital:** This station area is classed as a Special Activity Center owing to the large presence of the hospital, both physically and economically. Over the long-term, a more balanced land use pattern in the area is anticipated, though further growth of this complex is anticipated and would be welcome in the area.

• **Five Points West:** This station area was flagged as both a Suburban Mixed Use area due to its gradual re-emergence as a corridor retail and service hub, but also as a Special Activity Center due to the evolution of former State Fairgrounds with the new CrossPlex, the existing Harris Arena, and other planned development on the site.
- **Aronov Drive:** This traditional suburban big-box strip retail center is classed as a Suburban Mixed Use in anticipation of the introduction of renewed smaller retail centers along US 11 and of new multistory residential products.

- **Midfield/Health Center:** This station area is designated as a Suburban Mixed Use typology. While the US 11 frontage is presently largely underutilized with some used car dealerships, there is opportunity to develop an urban village with retail, services and residences, in tandem with the planned Jefferson County health clinic.

- **Brighton/Lipscomb:** Like the preceding location, this station area is designated as a Suburban Mixed Use typology. And like the preceding location, the US 11 frontage is presently largely underutilized with several low-end businesses and vacant properties. There is similarly the opportunity develop an urban village with retail, services and residences.

- **Downtown Bessemer:** Downtown Bessemer was classified as an Urban Center typology because of its mix of retail, civic offices, nearby residential uses, and employment centers. This area consists of two station areas, the downtown transit Super Stop, and the pair of stations on the 18th St. N/19th St. N one-way pair just east of US 11. The considerable planning done to date for the future of this historic downtown further underscores the role of this district in the overall corridor plan.

- **South Bessemer:** As the South Bessemer station area comprises two stations with distinctively different land use character, this area is considered a Suburban Mixed Use and Special Activity Center station typology.

Table 6.2 provides a listing of all the planned transit stations, their typology, and their station features. Figures 6.7 to 6.11 present a series of maps showing the location of the proposed transit stations along the corridor.
Table 6.2: BRT Station Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Intersecting Street Location</th>
<th>Station Typology</th>
<th>Extant Traffic Signal</th>
<th>Distance from Preceding Station</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Station Position</th>
<th>Station Type</th>
<th>Station Configuration</th>
<th>ROW Needed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6th Ave. South</td>
<td>6th Street South</td>
<td>N/A - Western ITP Station</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>End Point</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6th Ave. South</td>
<td>6th Street South</td>
<td>Hub - Urban Mixed Use Center (Future)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1,850 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Curb</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>6th Ave. South</td>
<td>115 Street South</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Urban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2,940 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Curb</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6th Ave. South</td>
<td>Goldwire Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6th Ave. South</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Drive</td>
<td>Public Housing</td>
<td>Yes, proposed</td>
<td>2,860 Outbound</td>
<td>Midblock</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lamb Avenue</td>
<td>Tuscawilla Ave</td>
<td>Activity Center</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7,560 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Activity Center</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lamb Avenue</td>
<td>Old RR ROW/New Trail/BRT</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Urban</td>
<td>No ( erect signal at 122nd St SW)</td>
<td>4,480 Outbound</td>
<td>Offstreet</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Offstreet</td>
<td>Yes, from Trail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Five Points West</td>
<td>Transit Super Stop</td>
<td>Activity Center</td>
<td>No, proposed</td>
<td>6,060 Outbound</td>
<td>Offstreet</td>
<td>Super Stop</td>
<td>Offstreet</td>
<td>Super Stop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>Court S</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3,840 Inbound</td>
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<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Curb</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>Court D</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>No, proposed</td>
<td>2,924 Outbound</td>
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<td>US 11</td>
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<td>3,220 Outbound</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>Vann St/Redwood Circle</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>No, proposed</td>
<td>4,030 Outbound</td>
<td>Midblock</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>Avondale Drive</td>
<td>Hub - Suburban Mixed Use Center</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3,090 Outbound</td>
<td>Midblock</td>
<td>Activity Center</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>Health Clinic</td>
<td>Hub - Suburban Mixed Use Center</td>
<td>No, proposed</td>
<td>5,080 Inbound</td>
<td>Midblock</td>
<td>Activity Center</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>Brighton Ave/Alison Ave.</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>5,440 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>Harmer Street/29th Street</td>
<td>Hub - Suburban Mixed Use Center</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5,320 Outbound</td>
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<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>28th Street North</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5,100 Outbound</td>
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<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Curb</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>19th Street N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2,880 Outbound</td>
<td>Inbound</td>
<td>Inbound</td>
<td>Curb, on 19th St. N</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>US 11</td>
<td>18th Street N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4,930 Inbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Hub</td>
<td>Curb, on 18th St. N</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Downtown Reno</td>
<td>Downtown Reno Transit Super Stop</td>
<td>Activity Center</td>
<td>N/C</td>
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<td>Super Stop</td>
<td>Super Stop</td>
<td>Offstreet</td>
<td>Super Stop</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
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<td>14th Avenue N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1,920 Inbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Curb, on 4th St. N</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>14th Street N/IA 100</td>
<td>14th Avenue N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2,310 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Bus Bay, on US 11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>3,390 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Hub</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td>14th Avenue N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4,930 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Hub</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
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<td>14th Avenue N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5,320 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Hub</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>4th Street N/IA 100</td>
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<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5,100 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Curb</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>4th Street N/IA 100</td>
<td>14th Avenue N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2,880 Outbound</td>
<td>Inbound</td>
<td>Inbound</td>
<td>Curb, on 14th St. N</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>4th Street N/IA 100</td>
<td>14th Avenue N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4,930 Inbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Hub</td>
<td>Curb, on 14th St. N</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>4th Street N/IA 100</td>
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<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5,320 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Hub</td>
<td>Bus Bay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>4th Street N/IA 100</td>
<td>14th Avenue N</td>
<td>Neighborhood - Suburban</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5,100 Outbound</td>
<td>Parcicle</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Curb</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (1) Segment 1A is the outbound segment in downtown Renoer on the one-way couplet; only the outbound distance is in the total. (2) Total round trip inbound and outbound are identical.

### SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY

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Figure 6.7. Location of BRT Station Locations in the Study Corridor
Figure 6.8. Location of BRT Station Locations in the Study Corridor – East Corridor
Figure 6.9. Location of BRT Station Locations in the Study Corridor – East-Central Corridor
Figure 6.10. Location of BRT Station Locations in the Study Corridor – West-Central Corridor
Figure 6.11. Location of BRT Station Locations in the Study Corridor – West Corridor

Legend
- Transit Stop Location
- Transit Super Stop Location
- Park and Ride Location
- Proposed BRT Route
- Proposed Bessemer Express Route
- Proposed McCalla Express Route
- Proposed BJCTA Route 41 & 3 Combination
- Proposed Bessemer Shuttle
- Proposed Highway 150 Circulator
- ITP Blue
- ITP Green
- Highland Neighborhood Connector
- Glen Iris Neighborhood Connector
- Norwood Neighborhood Connector
- Avondale Neighborhood Connector
- Graymont Neighborhood Connector
- Jefferson/Shelby County Boundary
- Southwest Corridor Study Area Boundary

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6.3.4 Station Area Assessment Process

The implementation of TOD and renewed land use activity around transit stations is obviously a station area-specific process. However, it is useful to examine all stations in the corridor collectively in other dimensions for several reasons:

- To identify stations with similar circumstances that can be considered in a similar manner in terms of more detailed development strategies,
- To identify common issues and needs to assist multiple jurisdictions in sharing ideas and approaches, and
- To prioritize station area investments in part based on strengths and opportunities.

While this study focuses on the seven primary station areas for TOD planning concepts, a set of analyses was performed across all of the proposed station locations to provide a planning foundation for further followup at the other 17 stations along the corridor. Three additional typologies were developed across the proposed station locations:

- **Land Use Context typologies:** Type of land use and transit ridership around the station area.
  - Residential: Mostly residential uses currently around the station area.
  - Employment/Activity Center: Mostly employment or non-residential land use pattern.
  - Balanced: A reasonable mix of both population and employment.

- **Economic Opportunity typologies:** A rating of the relative strength in the presence of the three factors which relate to employment and job skill improvement. This relates to how transit can increase access to jobs and training, and where efforts could be focused to improve existing resources. The rating system used below is to facilitate depiction on maps printed in black-and-white.
  - Work-Supportive District: Strength of the station area in terms of commercial and industrial activity, rated as 1, 2, or 3 with 3 being strongest.
  - Middle-Skill Jobs District: Strength of the station area in terms of employment, rated as 4, 5, or 6 with 6 being strongest.
  - Skill-Building Centers: Strength of the station area in terms of skill-building and jobs training centers, rated as 7, 8, or 9 with 9 being strongest.

- **Implementation Strategy typologies:**
  - Neighborhood Infill: the most appropriate plan for station area development ranging from no changes to small-scale residential infill and possibly green space or small retail uses.
  - Intensification: the existing uses around the station are auto-oriented, or declining or obsolete, or vacant, affording the opportunity for conversion or replacement of uses to more suitable types, including multi-story buildings; and/or reinforcing and densifying existing desirable uses.
  - Transformational: the existing station area land uses are vacant, auto-oriented, or declining or obsolete, or otherwise inconsistent with the station area, and opportunities exist for dramatic redevelopment of area parcels; and/or reinforcing and densifying existing desirable uses.

The goal of station area development is to over the long-term maximize the redevelopment of the areas around the station areas, to the benefit of the surrounding neighborhoods or business districts and to the advantage of transit by creating more vibrant places around stations that generate transit trips and attract other transit-based trips from elsewhere in the corridor and the region. The pace and degree of

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success in this initiative is clearly a function of corridor real estate market dynamics, the vitality of surrounding neighborhoods, the development of new places of employment, and leveraging off the strength of existing corridor activity center anchors.

Figures 6.12, 6.13, and 6.14 which follow depict the results of these typology analyses. For the Land Use Context typology and the Implementation Strategy typology, the station area typology assignments are shown for the study corridor. For the Economic Opportunity typology, only a detailed map from the downtown end of the corridor is shown as an example, as its graphic features cannot be shown at a corridor level. All the corridor level and four detailed map coverages for all three typologies are provided in the report appendix.
For the Land Use Context typology, the station locations are almost evenly split between Employment/Activity Center, Residential and Balanced classifications. This illustrates that the corridor land use patterns vary by station and should play a factor in the station area implementation strategies.
As noted, the Economic Opportunity typology is a gauge of the extent to which existing conditions are supportive of employment and employment training opportunities around proposed station locations. This is a factor for promoting transit accessibility to commercial and industrial areas, to jobs, and to jobs.
training. It is also a guide to where strengthening of these assets may be warranted. Within the limited coverage of the corridor graphic above, it is seen that a mixed use business setting is lacking, there are minimal job training opportunities, and that employment is strongest near downtown and at Princeton Baptist Hospital.
Stations identified with sufficient potential for the Transformational typology status are the downtown ITP terminal station and the next station at 6th Ave. S and 6th St. S where development or redevelopment of the Trinity Park industrial park and the environs could occur, at Five Points West where the CrossPlex development and new transit Super Stop can trigger continued redevelopment of this emerging focal point, at the Aronov Drive station, at the Midfield/Health Center station, at the Brighton/Lipscomb station and at the Westfield Mall station in Bessemer. There are nine stations assigned with the Intensification typology and another nine classified as Neighborhood Infill.

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6.4 STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT

6.4.1 Overview

This section of the report explores the opportunities for transit oriented development (TOD) and other redevelopment prospects that can be leveraged from existing development conditions, a corridor-level assessment of real estate market opportunities, available master plans for areas of the corridor, interviews with landowners and developers, and conversations with corridor leaders and stakeholders, as well as exercises with the general public at community forum meetings. The TOD prospects are discussed for the seven primary proposed transit stations along the study corridor.

As discussed elsewhere, much of the study corridor has experienced a slow decline in population, employment, and economic fortunes, trends which are forecast to persist into the future. The purpose of this plan is to identify potential opportunities and interventions for redevelopment. TOD looks to combine land uses supporting jobs, housing, daily conveniences and retail around transit stations. TOD provides walkable, mixed use areas around transit connection that reduce auto travel needs, and that can create attractive vibrant urban spaces and activity centers. The walkability is an important element in TOD and needs to be addressed by attractive streetscaping around the transit station that makes walking appealing, rather than unsafe and unpleasant.

The development and redevelopment in this corridor could occur through several mechanisms, such as:

- New mixed-use centers near existing corridor anchors that provide a mix of retail, service, and civic uses and jobs, along with townhouse or medium density residential units.
- New buildings added to existing anchors, such as the buildout of the CrossPlex site.
- Future expansion of existing land use anchors such as Princeton Baptist Hospital and Lawson State Community College.
- New public facilities located in the corridor, such as the Jefferson County health center and the City of Birmingham Five Points West Police Substation.
- Reconfigured retail centers replacing obsolescent structures.

It should be noted that while station area redevelopment is focused around the proposed BRT station location, there is also the strategy of developing infill projects in advance of the transit service being initiated where there is market demand for the project. In these instances it is important to work with the project developers to configure the development to maximize its utility as TOD, only in this situation it can be described as “transit ready development”. This means that the project is warranted by a market analysis not dependent upon new transit service, but is developed to engage the future transit station to the best effect, and then further flourish due to the positive impact of proximity to premium transit service. The vision of prospective development and redevelopment around each of the seven primary station locations is described in the following sections of the report.
6.4.2 Princeton Baptist Medical Center Station Area

The station area development concept for the Princeton Baptist Medical Center Station Area leverages the hospital care campus as a catalyst for neighborhood reinvestment in the form of housing redevelopment, neighborhood-strengthening infill, and ancillary commercial uses. Existing station area conditions and the proposed vision for this station area are presented in Figure 6.15 at the end of the narrative.

Planning Context and Land Uses

Princeton Baptist Medical Center is surrounded by mostly single family houses. South of the campus, houses are in varying conditions, while north and east of the campus, houses are in stable condition. Multifamily housing around the medical center, including at Loveman Village to the east, is only partially occupied. Northeast of the medical center, there is scattered vacancy.

The medical center has built an addition to accommodate the renovation and expansion of the hospital’s operating rooms. In addition, the medical center campus is planned to be reconfigured. This includes the closure of Tuscaloosa Ave. between 10th St. SW and Lomb Avenue to reduce pedestrian-vehicular conflicts and better integrate the campus. Traffic will be directed to a new road linking Tuscaloosa Ave. and Cotton Ave. between 10th St. SW and 9th St. SW.

In terms of the station area typology, this location was categorized as a Special Activity Center due to the dominance of the hospital as the primary feature of the station area. The TOD opportunities in this area are best leveraged around the medical center as the only significant anchor.

The results of the typology analysis, conducted for all the proposed corridor transit stations in the preceding section of this report, are as follows for this station:

- Land Use Typology: This station area was categorized as an Employment/Activity Center in view of its critical mass as a large center of employment.
- Economic Opportunity Typology: This station area was rated low in the presence of a Work-Supportive Business District and of nearby Skill Building Centers. It was rated high as a Middle-Skills Job Site.
- Implementation Strategy Typology: This station area was placed in the Intensification category as the primary opportunities here are prospects related to the presence of the hospital.

Station Area Development Concepts

Medical Center Employee Housing: Most medical center employees commute significant distances, with considerable cost and time consequences. Thus, medical and support staff are a strong potential market for affordable, close housing—the success of which could lead to restored confidence in the neighborhood and to new infill and residential redevelopment unrelated to the medical center. Adjacent hospital-owned land presents an immediate opportunity for housing marketed to medical center staff. The largely vacant land fronting on Cotton Avenue SW between 9th Street SW and Lomb Avenue could be developed with approximately 40 townhouse dwellings for sale. Alternatively, the site could be developed as low-rise (3-4 story) apartments, with up to 150 dwellings for rent or sale. In addition to
securing a developer to build this initial first phase of new dwellings, the medical center could further incentivize development by offering financial assistance to first-time home buyers among the medical center staff, complementing the convenience of a walkable commute to work. Following the success of this first phase of employee housing, a second phase could consist of an incentive program for medical center employees to purchase and renovate existing single family homes in the adjacent transitional neighborhood to the north and south of McMillan Avenue SW.

Ancillary Housing Redevelopment / Infill Opportunities:  Although not specifically related to the market represented by medical center staff, the success of housing development near the hospital will produce renewed confidence in the neighborhood, leading to the following ancillary housing opportunities.

- Redevelopment of existing, partially unoccupied public housing, including the Loveman Village public housing site as a Choice Neighborhoods-type mixed income community and the public housing site between Tuscaloosa Avenue and Cotton Avenue, 1st Street SW and 4th Street SW.
- Adaptive re-use of the abandoned and historic Elyton School property for senior housing.
- Single family infill on the approximately 26 vacant lots in the neighborhood north of Lomb Avenue and west of Princeton Parkway SW to stabilize this transitional neighborhood.

Ancillary Commercial Uses:  Although there exist several pharmacies and private medical offices related to the medical center, additional opportunities are identified, both as redevelopment and as adaptive re-use of existing structures. Ancillary commercial opportunities depicted include a hotel at the intersection of Lomb Avenue and Princeton Parkway SW, opposite the hospital’s main entrance, as well as infill medical offices in the vicinity of Lomb Avenue.

Civic Amenities:  To improve livability and character in the station area, civic amenities include a rail corridor greenway to the north of the station area and street-based trails along Tuscaloosa Avenue and portions of Lomb Avenue, as proposed for the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System.

Transformative First Steps

The development of housing for medical center staff on adjacent hospital-owned land presents the immediate transformative opportunity, which can catalyze additional change.
Figure 6.15. Princeton Baptist Medical Center Station Area

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6.4.3 Five Points West Station Area

The Five Points West Station Area leverages the Birmingham CrossPlex and Bill Harris Arena assets to develop a regional destination for sports, recreation, and personal health. Existing station area conditions and the proposed vision for this station area are presented in Figure 6.16 at the end of the narrative.

Planning Context and Land Uses

At the intersection of US 11 and Avenue W / Ensley Five Points West Avenue are limited retail establishments and pad fast food sites. Surrounding these uses are residential neighborhoods with mostly single family houses.

The CrossPlex has injected new life onto the site of the former State Fairgrounds. It is a prime example how strategic public sector investment can be leveraged into other redevelopment and renewal opportunities. Competitive events held at the facility draw people from the region and beyond, yet it is not a facility that engages the local community. The existing retail uses surrounding the site are geared more to local needs and, while not incompatible with the CrossPlex, do not cater to CrossPlex visitors.

In its recently completed Comprehensive Plan, Five Points West is designated as a Strategic Mixed Use center as an Urban Village, and as a strategic opportunity area. A retail market analysis conducted as part of the plan development identified a variety of retail categories which are underrepresented and thus marketable in the district.

In terms of the station area typology, this location was categorized as a Suburban Mixed Use Center given the diversity of existing public and private land uses and the prospects for additional development on CrossPlex grounds and redevelopment of other aging retail properties.

The results of the typology analysis, conducted for all the proposed corridor transit stations in the preceding section of this report, are as follows for this station:

- Land Use Typology: This station area was categorized as an Employment/Activity Center in view of its critical mass as a large center of employment.
- Economic Opportunity Typology: This station area was rated high in the presence of a Work-Supportive Business District and Middle-Skills Job Sites, and low for the presence of nearby Skill Building Centers.
- Implementation Strategy Typology: This station area was placed in the Transformative category as recent public and private reinvestment can serve as a springboard for significant changes in this station area.

Station Area Development Concepts

Shown on the conceptual land use diagram is an array of sports and recreation activities intended to create synergies with the CrossPlex. Configured as a sports and recreation “campus”, the site is internally organized around an internal loop road. Within the loop is a 12-acre sports park, depicted to include youth-oriented activities including baseball, soccer, and a skate park as well as ancillary revenue-
generating activities such as batting cages. Outside and to the south and east of the loop are proposed sites for non-profit recreation and fitness providers, including a Boys and Girls Club and YMCA. Such uses broaden the audience of the site to include visitors for competitive events at the Crossplex as well as local and regional residents who are interested in recreation.

The critical mass of activity generated by the CrossPlex and the array of ancillary uses will create potential markets for a variety of commercial activities, which should be arrayed outside the loop with access and visibility along US 11 and Avenue W. However, they must be designed and sited to also be walkable from all of the sports and recreation activities. These could include the following:

- A hotel, supported largely by visiting athletes and their families,
- Commercial, membership-based gyms (e.g., Gold’s Gym, Bally),
- Sports equipment retailers (e.g., Sports Authority, Dick’s Sporting Goods), and
- Health-oriented and fast food and “casual fast” restaurants.

A major beneficiary of the development of Five Points West as a regional sports and recreation destination is the existing Five Points West Shopping Center. The anticipated increase in customers, coupled with incentives, could result in needed modernization and beautification.

Further supportive of the health and walkability theme of this station area are the street-based trails proposed for the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System at Bessemer Road and Ensley Five Points West Avenue extending north. Other civic amenities just beyond the CrossPlex site include a proposed police station, a fire station and proposed fire training facility, and the Five Points West library.

Transformative First Steps

The Birmingham CrossPlex has already provided the largest transformative first step for Five Points West district. A hotel on the site would add convenience for visitors of the CrossPlex and provide a user base for existing and future development. Partial implementation of the proposed transit Super Stop within public right-of-way along with ancillary streetscaping would further signify continued turnaround of this area.
Figure 6.16. Five Points West Station Area

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6.4.4 Aronov Drive Station Area

The Aronov Drive Station Area has the potential to be a suburban mixed use center in which much of the existing, increasingly obsolescent retail uses are downsized and reconfigured and higher density residential and walkable mixed use development is introduced. Existing station area conditions and the proposed vision for this station area are presented in Figure 6.17 at the end of the narrative.

Planning Context and Land Uses

The Aronov Drive area is characterized by an oversupply of retail space, which has led to underutilized space and low-end tenants. Surrounding the retail uses, however, are reasonably stable single family residential neighborhoods.

The strategy for Aronov Drive is to “add rooftops” and associated disposable incomes to generate stronger retail demand. However, it is unlikely that enough demand will be generated to see all of the existing retail space put to use. This approach is consistent with the Fairfield Master Plan, which concluded that “rising competition from other regional retail centers along with population loss and residential disinvestment have left much of the Aronov Drive corridor vacant.”

In terms of the station area typology, this location was categorized as a Suburban Mixed Use in view of the opportunity to build on the retail presence with residential and other uses.

The results of the typology analysis, conducted for all the proposed corridor transit stations in the preceding section of this report, are as follows for this station:

- Land Use Typology: This station area was categorized as an Employment/Activity Center in view of its critical mass as a large center of employment.
- Economic Opportunity Typology: This station area was rated high in the presence of a Work-Supportive Business District and medium for nearby Skill Building Centers as a Middle-Skills Job Site.
- Implementation Strategy Typology: This station area was placed in the Transformative category as the underutilized retail centers present an opportunity to reshape the look and character of this district.

Station Area Development Concepts

Principal components of the land use and redevelopment concept for this station area are described for each of the four quadrants of the intersection of Aronov Drive / By Williams Sr. Drive and Bessemer Road on which the station area is centered.

Southern Quadrant: Approximately ¾ mile to the south and generally paralleling US 11 is Valley Creek, part of the Jones Valley Corridor, which runs the entire length of the US 11 corridor extending into downtown Birmingham and beyond. The designation and development of this corridor as a greenway is a major component of the proposed Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System and an amenity of considerable value in improving the livability and residential values within the US 11 corridor. However, prior development has made considerable encroachments into this floodplain, including the channelization and paving over many stream tributaries.
Comparable to the floodplain restoration efforts underway in the Pipe Shop district west of I-20/59 in Bessemer, the stream tributary in this quadrant is proposed for restoration. South of US 11, a portion of the stream between Brookwood Road East and Brookwood Road West exists uncovered in a park setting that extends south to Woodward Road. However, south of Woodward Road the stream has been channelized and built upon with homes lying in the floodplain. As depicted, this approximate 1000-foot length of stream corridor is proposed for daylighting and restoration as part of a greenway trail that could also function as a neighborhood pedestrian link to Midfield Elementary School and to the regional Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System.

**Western Quadrant:** Expanding the daylighting of an underground stream and extending the greenway and community park described above, the Western Quadrant shows the existing Weibel Plaza shopping plaza replaced by a senior housing development, along with new retail pad sites. This strategy is consistent with the need to downsize and redevelop obsolete patterns of retail.

**Eastern Quadrant:** As with the western quadrant, the aging Midfield Plaza and Midfield Park shopping centers are proposed for redevelopment, with reconfigured retail that is more walkable and oriented to By Williams Sr. Drive. Additionally, approximately 20 townhouse units are depicted to the rear of the site facing Vandergrift Road.

**Northern Quadrant South of Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.:** The two anchor big box uses on this site, the Walmart Supercenter and Western Hills Mall, are currently active and expected to remain viable for the foreseeable future. Therefore, only opportunities for additional, upgraded pad development sites are identified. However, the vacant big-box structures to the west should be examined for a variety of alternative uses such as business incubator sites, movie theater, indoor recreation centers, museums, training facilities, and other options. The Fairfield Master Plan addresses the big-box issue as well.

**Northern Quadrant North of Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.:** To the north of Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. is over 800,000 square feet of failed, vacant, or obsolescent commercial space. Because of competition from more modern competitive suburban shopping areas and a loss of population and associated disposable incomes, this area is not “coming back” as conventional, single-use commercial development. Depicted is its redevelopment as a mixed use component of a larger redevelopment of Mattie Jackson Gardens public housing as a higher density traditional mixed-income neighborhood.

**Transformative First Steps**

The daylighting and restoration of the stream corridor will create an amenity for existing residents and increase the value of existing housing while also serving as an amenity that can attract additional housing development. In addition, conducting a detailed retail marketing analysis as was performed for Five Points West could better reveal the target retail niches which are underrepresented and could be pursued.
Figure 6.17. Aronov Drive Station Area

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6.4.5 Midfield/Health Center Station Area

The Midfield/County Health Center station area has the potential to be a suburban medium-density and mixed use center in which much of the existing, increasingly obsolescent retail uses are downsized and reconfigured and higher density residential and walkable mixed use development is introduced. Existing station area conditions and the proposed vision for this station area are presented in Figure 6.18 at the end of the narrative.

Planning Context and Land Uses

The Midfield/Health Center station area is characterized by an underutilized and substandard commercial corridor, with no specific civic or commercial center or focal point. The planned Jefferson County health clinic on the former Coca Cola bottling site would serve as a public activity anchor just to the southwest of the station location. The proposed High Ore Line Greenway just northeast of the station site, the Jones Valley Greenway to the east of US 11, and the US 11 street-based trail are all part of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System. Surrounding the retail uses are stable single family residential neighborhoods.

There is Midfield Park located just northeast of the High Ore Line, and Midfield High School just to the east as well as two elementary schools. Miles College is about 3 miles away to the north.

In terms of the station area typology, this location was categorized as a Suburban Mixed Use Center due to the prospect of rejuvenating the vicinity as a reinvented retail, residential and civic center. The TOD opportunities in this area will likely be slower to evolve and may be more dependent upon the institution of new transit service than other sites.

The results of the typology analysis, conducted for all the proposed corridor transit stations in the preceding section of this report, are as follows for this station:

- **Land Use Typology:** This station area was categorized as Balanced as there are small levels of residential and employment activities in the area.
- **Economic Opportunity Typology:** This station area was rated low in the presence of a Work-Supportive Business District, nearby Skill Building Centers, and as a Middle-Skills Job Site.
- **Implementation Strategy Typology:** This station area was placed in the Transformative category as the relative open and underutilized character of this area coupled with the planned Jefferson County health clinic affords the opportunity to completely rework this station area over time.

Station Area Development Concepts

Principal components of the land use and redevelopment concept for this station area were identified as health care, entertainment/recreation, an auto mall, and housing. The development of this area would help create a new civic identity for Midfield.

**Health Care:** Incorporate retail and office space to support a pharmacy and out-patient clinic uses.

**Entertainment/Recreation:** Position an entertainment/recreation area next to the High Ore Line Greenway. Potential tenants of this area would include bicycle and skate sales, rental and repair shops,
a movie theatre, bowling alley and arcades center, and small restaurants, coffee shops and ice cream parlor.

**Auto Mall:** The several auto sales centers in the area could be consolidated into a single auto mall site, reducing costs to individual operators and offering the potential for higher tax revenue to the city.

**Diversified Housing:** Residential offerings could include housing choices for families, students, empty-nesters and the elderly, with pocket or cottage neighborhoods, apartments, and assisted living.

**Transformative First Steps**

The key first step is the development of the new Jefferson County health clinic, and the construction of the High Ore Greenway Trail. These two projects when in place can serve as catalysts for further redevelopment. A retail previtalization trial could serve as a test of market interest in redevelopment of this area.
Figure 6.18. Midfield/Health Center Station Area

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6.4.6  Brighton/Lipscomb Station Area

The proposed transit stations at the intersection of US 11 and Harmer St./5th St. N would serve parts of both Brighton and Lipscomb, as well as far north Bessemer. This station area has the potential for redevelopment with mixed retail and residential uses. Existing station area conditions and the proposed vision for this station area are presented in Figure 6.19 at the end of the narrative.

Planning Context and Land Uses

This station area is presently characterized by haphazard and unchecked aging development, some located within floodplains or even floodways. The commercial uses are underutilized and substandard in general, situated on lots which are too large for local re-investment and redevelopment. The nearby residential uses are isolated bedroom communities with no adjacent retail, service or recreational amenities.

In terms of the station area typology, this location was categorized as a Suburban Mixed Use Center due to the prospect of rejuvenating the vicinity as a reinvented retail, residential and civic center. The TOD opportunities in this area will likely be slower to evolve and may be more dependent upon the institution of new transit service than other sites.

The results of the typology analysis, conducted for all the proposed corridor transit stations in the preceding section of this report, are as follows for this station:

- Land Use Typology: This station area was categorized as Balanced as there are small levels of residential and employment activities in the area.
- Economic Opportunity Typology: This station area was rated low in the presence of a Work-Supportive Business District, nearby Skill Building Centers, and as a Middle-Skills Job Site.
- Implementation Strategy Typology: This station area was placed in the Transformative category as the relative blank palette presents the opportunity to dramatically change the character of this station area over time.

Station Area Development Concepts

Principal components of the land use and redevelopment concept for this station area were identified as reworking of zoning and subdivision regulations, and creation of an entrepreneurial district, as follows:

Zoning and Subdivision Regulation Transformation into Form-Based Codes: This component of redevelopment would include the following actions:

- Focus redevelopment on properties away from the designated floodways,
- Allow for subdivision of lots into very small parcels to encourage redevelopment,
- Allow for all types of retail, office, and housing uses,
- Focus on regulation the form and placement of proposed development rather than on its use,
- Enforce building codes and tax liens to encourage fixing dilapidated and abandoned structure, and
• Create a consistent and attractive urban form along US 11 frontages to establish a sense of place and identity.

**Entrepreneurial District Overlay:** This component of redevelopment would include the following the following actions:

• Implement an Entrepreneurial District Overlay that would permit for functional space size, with live/work options, and affordable rental rates,
• Designate open space near the proposed bus station for outdoor civic activities, such as a farmer’s market, food trucks, art fairs, and the like,
• Encourage small businesses servicing the local community, such as small grocery stores, specialty shops, services, and convenience stores,
• Encourage small businesses catering to the entertainment and recreational activity associated with the nearby greenways,
• Provide incentives for redevelopment of dilapidated and abandoned structures,
• Coordinate this entrepreneurial district with other similar initiatives in Bessemer and downtown Birmingham, and
• Provide micro loans for new businesses.

**Transformative First Steps**

The key first step is the review of floodway and floodplain encroachments in terms of enforcement and remediation options, in the public interest. A second step would be to research property ownership, tax delinquency, and foreclosure status on target parcels to determine if there are opportunities to acquire parcels inexpensively. A retail previtalization trial could serve as a test of market interest in redevelopment of this area.
Figure 6.19. Brighton/Lipscomb Station Area
6.4.7 Downtown Bessemer Station Areas

Downtown Bessemer includes a station area just east of US 11 with the eastbound 18th St. N station and the westbound 19th St. N station. This area has the potential for both an urban mixed use center as well a civic use. In addition the proposed transit Super Stop facility on 18th St. N at 4th Ave. E is another key transit anchor which will serve several existing and planned transit routes. Just north of the railroad tracks on downtown’s northern perimeter is an additional opportunity in the form of the CSX Railroad intermodal freight center and contiguous industrial park, presenting a cargo-oriented development prospect as discussed later in this report.

Downtown Bessemer likely cannot be restored as the city’s primary hub of commercial activity due to market weakness and competition from suburban centers. However, it can again become the hub of civic activity, its close-in neighborhoods can be made more attractive and livable, and retail and service outlets expanded to support that housing. There is also an opportunity to cultivate an “arts and crafts” center and perhaps an antiques district. Strategies to reinvent and rejuvenate downtown Bessemer have been previously captured in the Bessemer Master Plan prepared by the RPCGB.

Existing station area conditions and the proposed vision for this station area are presented in Figure 6.20 at the end of the narrative.

Planning Context and Land Uses

Bessemer’s historic “main street,” 19th Street, is still the heart of activity in downtown Bessemer. However, it is lacking anchors, particularly at its intersection with Bessemer Highway, where there is a cluster of vacant and underutilized land. At the other end of 19th Street, there is also a lot of vacant and underutilized land along 3000' of 1st Avenue. Because of its proximity to the rail line and narrow property depths, this largely vacant corridor has limited value for commercial or industrial use and no potential for residential use.

North of the railroad tracks next to 20th Street are a number of auto salvage uses that do not take advantage of proximity to the nearby CSX intermodal facility.

In terms of the station area typology, this location was categorized as an Urban Center due to the role as the historic downtown and business district of Bessemer. The TOD opportunities in this area are focused around the prior downtown area planning and other related development strategies.

The results of the typology analysis, conducted for all the proposed corridor transit stations in the preceding section of this report, are as follows for this station:

- **Land Use Typology:** This station area was categorized as an Employment/Activity Center in view of its critical mass as a large center of employment.
- **Economic Opportunity Typology:** This station area was rated medium in the presence of a Work-Supportive Business District and as a Middle-Skills Job Site, and rated low in the presence of Skill Building Centers.
- **Implementation Strategy Typology:** This station area was placed in the Intensification category as the primary opportunities here are infill projects on vacant or underutilized parcels.
Station Area Development Concepts

**Bessemer Performing Arts Center:** During the study, conversations pointed to the prospect for a Bessemer Performing Arts Center which could serve as another civic anchor and act as a catalyst for adjacent private development. However, in a walkable downtown setting that leverages synergies with other new civic uses, such a facility could increase downtown activity and prospects for redevelopment. Depicted at the northwest edge of downtown at 9th Avenue and Bessemer Highway, the new center would act as a gateway to downtown and part of a new civic “anchor” to generate pedestrian activity along 19th Street. While this facility’s planning is in its infancy, the prospect is an exciting one.

**New Charter School:** On the block immediate to the east of the proposed new Bessemer Civic Center is a proposed new charter school, which together with the civic center will create a new activity hub in downtown and increase the attractiveness of neighborhoods near downtown to young families.

**Bessemer Railroad Park:** Located a short 10-minute walk away is a proposed “Bessemer Railroad Park” centered on the existing Bessemer Hall of History. Together with the transit station located between the new civic center and the railroad park, this “eastern anchor” of downtown will help create additional pedestrian activity along 19th Street. Comparable to the source of civic pride and renewed downtown activity that Birmingham’s Railroad Park has become, a Railroad Park in Downtown Bessemer will draw opportunities and help to attract greater activity to downtown. The Hall of History is already established as a location for special civic events such as Art at the Tracks, Day at the Depot, and BHS Street Dance. The creation of an adjacent, approximately 25-acre linear park can be the setting for an expanded array of weekly special events such as walk-a-thons, concerts, art and culture festivals, and farmer’s markets in addition to serving as a park amenity to improve the value and livability of nearby neighborhoods.

**New Cargo Oriented Development:** Immediately to the north of Downtown Bessemer is a large and largely underutilized industrial precinct, much of it under the control of the Bessemer Interstate Industrial Park Board, dominated by the historic Pullman Standard rail car manufacturing plant that is now a CSX Railroad intermodal terminal. Due to its excellent rail access, manageable proximity to the interstate and walking distance to the transit station, this 45-acre site is depicted as a candidate for cargo-oriented development.

Transformative First Steps

As described above, the development of a Bessemer Performing Arts Center has the potential to unlock further game-changing projects, both public and private, in downtown Bessemer. Initial development of a portion of the proposed Super Stop and surrounding streetscaping would be a positive sign of further reinvestment. Finally, the City and its industrial board should initiate further dialogue with both the CSX Railroad and NS Railroad as to the prospects for additional industrial development along their rail lines.
Figure 6.20. Downtown Bessemer Station Areas

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6.4.8 South Bessemer Station Areas

The South Bessemer / Academy Drive Station Area builds on the synergies of Medical West Center, the Bessemer Municipal Golf Course, and the expanding Lawson State Community College – Bessemer Campus. Existing station area conditions and the proposed vision for this station area are presented in Figure 6.21 at the end of the narrative.

Planning Context and Land Uses

The South Bessemer / Academy Drive area is characterized by a number of large, civic and institutional uses (Medical West Center, Bessemer Municipal Golf Course, Lawson State Community College, Bessemer Civic Center) as well as a couple of car dealerships and older motel accommodations. Walmart anchors a large retail center just to the south of the area, and just across I-20/I-59 are additional newer hotel, restaurant, auto servicing, and car dealership uses, as well as Bessemer High School.

In terms of the station area typology, this location was categorized as a Suburban Mixed Use site relative to the Academy Drive station and as a Special Activity Center due to the dominance of Medical West Center and Lawson State Community College as the primary land use features of the station area. The TOD opportunities in this area are best leveraged around the commercial uses at Academy Drive and the educational and medical center uses to the north.

The results of the typology analysis, conducted for all the proposed corridor transit stations in the preceding section of this report, are as follows for this station:

- **Land Use Typology:** This station area was categorized as a Suburban Mixed Use and Employment/Activity Center in view of its number of retail, service, educational and medical uses as centers of employment.
- **Economic Opportunity Typology:** The Lawson State Community College/Medical West Center station area was rated low in the presence of a Work-Supportive Business District, but high regarding the presence of Skill Building Centers and as a Middle-Skills Job Site. The Academy Drive station area was rated high in the presence of a Work-Supportive Business District, and medium as a Middle-Skills Job Site and for nearby Skill Building Centers due to nearby Lawson State Community College.
- **Implementation Strategy Typology:** This station area was placed in the Intensification category as the primary opportunities here are prospects related to the three major activity centers.

Station Area Development Concepts

**Lawson State Community College – Bessemer Campus Expansion:** With growing enrollment and a need to expand programs and academic buildings, Lawson State is exploring options to expand. Expansion is currently thwarted by a lack of growing room, as the campus is hemmed in by I-20/I-59, US 11, the Bessemer Civic Center to the south, and businesses to the north. However, the school recently acquired an unoccupied auto sales site to its north, and there may be other similar expansions possible. The school could also consider a vertical structure in a future building phase to overcome space limitations. A pedestrian bridge is proposed across I-20/59 to linking the campus with Bessemer High School to promote synergy between these two educational centers.
Senior Housing: With direct access to the care available at Medical West, the lifelong learning opportunities available at Lawson State, and direct access to affordable golf at the Bessemer Municipal Golf Course, the vacant land south of US 11 represents an extraordinary opportunity for senior housing in an integrated life care retirement community. Depicted in the land use diagram are an array of retirement housing types, ranging from independent living villas and apartments within walking and golf cart distance to the existing golf clubhouse to assisted living apartments and a skilled nursing facility.

Ancillary Commercial Development: The combination of several hundred senior housing units along with substantial growth of Lawson State Community College enrollment and the existing high level of activity at Medical West Center, creates a market for ancillary commercial uses. These could include a small hotel serving family visitors to the senior housing, Medical West, or Lawson State as well as one or more additional restaurants along US 11 and the internal loop road.

Park-and-Ride Lot: The proposed park-and-ride lot will serve as a multimodal travel anchor for automobile, transit, bicycle and pedestrian travelers. The park-and-ride lot would be functional in advance of the new transit service and could be developed in phases to reduce costs.

Transformative First Steps

The development of senior housing surrounding the Bessemer Municipal Golf Course is another transformative project that can happen in advance of the proposed transit project. The addition of new residents to the area can spur ancillary commercial development. The phased implementation of the park-and-ride lot with surrounding landscaping, and pedestrian and bicycle pathways would have a major impact towards the plan vision.
Figure 6.21. South Bessemer Station Areas
Figure 6.21. South Bessemer Station Areas (Continued)
6.4.9 Summary of Action Strategies

Elements of a Corridor Redevelopment Strategy

Situated as a regional gateway to downtown Birmingham, with several potential redevelopment catalysts and extensive areas of underutilized and obsolete “greyfield” properties, the Southwest Corridor is ripe for redevelopment. As described below, redevelopment activity should occur at multiple scales and locations; including station areas, distressed and transitional neighborhoods and underutilized commercial and industrial properties. However, due to continuing declines in the resident population within the corridor, as well as the continuing erosion of some of the corridor’s neighborhoods and commercial areas, market support for redevelopment is limited at best. Consequently, the redevelopment strategy must be to “induce” a market, particularly by reversing population loss with new “rooftops”, which in turn, will increase demand for commercial activity. In several key areas along the corridor, adjacent major activities attractions and employers, a “captive market” may be leveraged to support the redevelopment of residential and commercial development. Examples include the opportunity to leverage support for commercial land uses (retail, restaurants, hotel and commercial recreation) adjacent the CrossPlex and the thousands of spectators and participants at sporting events. Likewise, employees at Princeton Baptist Hospital could become a captive market for close-by workforce housing, particularly if the hospital were to provide financial incentives.

In areas of the corridor without such potential catalysts, redevelopment must be induced by logistical and financial incentives to development interests. These include land acquisition, and assembly of development sites for transfer to for-profit as well as non-profit development interests at below market rates, as well as the provision of infrastructure improvements and tax exemptions.

Key components of any long-range redevelopment strategy include the following:

- **Essential Redevelopment Actions** – what must be done to clear blight, assemble redevelopment sites and guide new development.
- **Redevelopment Implementation Entities** – what entities can manage the redevelopment process and make use of financial, legal and administrative tools.
- **Short Term Opportunities** – what can be done in the short range at minimal cost, to set the stage for long term redevelopment.

Essential Redevelopment Actions

Described below are the three essential components of the redevelopment implementation strategy. These include Strategic Code Enforcement to improve condition in occupied structures and to target dilapidated and uninhabitable structures for demolition, Land Assembly for the creation of redevelopment sites, and Regulatory Changes to accommodate the desired development types.

- **Strategic Code Enforcement:**
  
  The enforcement of building and property maintenance codes is a fundamental element of any revitalization or redevelopment initiative. The prevalence of deteriorated property conditions not only threatens the health and safety of occupants residing in deteriorated structures, but vacant
and abandoned buildings and lots which often attract illegal dumping, vagrancy and criminal activity, is a significant threat to neighborhood livability and a liability in marketing new investment. Because of the size of the corridor, a significant proportion of which has a number of distressed or transitional neighborhoods, as well as underutilized or abandoned “greyfield” commercial properties, traditional approaches to code enforcement, that of reacting to complaints, dilutes the effectiveness of enforcement in improving the prospects for redevelopment. Several specific outcomes can be expected from a strategic approach to code enforcement. Living conditions will be improved, costs to slumlords will increase causing turnover to more responsible owners, dilapidated structures will be targeted for demolition which, along with assessed liens for demolition costs and tax delinquencies will hasten the clearance of blight. This will make such properties more readily available for low cost acquisition, either for short term disposition for immediate development, or for long term land banking for future redevelopment, or for the creation of amenities such as greenways.

A strategic approach targets three types of locations within the corridor with concentrated enforcement, both to improve the safety of occupied structures and to hasten the demolition of dilapidated structures, in advance of land acquisition for redevelopment or land banking. These include:

- **Transitional Neighborhoods** - where focused investments in code enforcement, coupled with infill development, can stem and reverse trends toward disinvestment and decline and hasten the removal of dilapidated and abandoned structures.

- **Station Areas** - to remove blight and improve marketability of station area redevelopment and assist in land assembly activity.

- **Potential Greenways / Amenities** - to assist in removing blighted structures in anticipation of land assembly for the creation of greenways within floodplains.

### Land Assembly

Where strong market conditions exist, private development interests can be expected to make the necessary investments in land acquisition, clearance and assembly, along with infrastructure improvements necessary to carry out redevelopment. However, where weak market conditions exist, as in the case of the Southwest Corridor, a public or quasi-public redevelopment implementing entity must take on this task and deliver shovel-ready redevelopment sites to prospective developers.

- **Redevelopment Project Packaging**
  Redevelopment project packaging includes the acquisition and assembly of sites designated for the redevelopment on new uses within the U.S. 11 Southwest Corridor station areas. Once sites are assembled and cleared and infrastructure is upgraded, a developer solicitation and selection process is initiated with the issuance of a Developer Request for Proposals (RFP). Land is then transferred to selected developers by one or more of the redevelopment implementing entities identified below, in accordance with a development agreement. Alternatively, an existing institutional entity, such a Princeton-Baptist Hospital could act as the redevelopment implementing entity, on properties it assembles for redevelopment.
Greyfields to Greenfields
One of the important natural features within the corridor is the existence of many stream corridors such as Valley Creek and other tributaries within the Jones Valley Corridor. Historically, homes and businesses were built within these floodplains and floodways, posing significant risks to such properties. Greyfields to Greenfields is a concept where at risk properties are acquired and assembled within stream corridors and floodplains, which over time become developed as greenways and trails. The benefits include improved neighborhood connectivity and public health, in addition to enhanced property values and neighborhood livability thereby advancing neighborhood stabilization efforts. Specific opportunities are to link the on-going conservation efforts of the Freshwater Land Trust with targeted code enforcement and opportunistic acquisition of blighted, dilapidated and tax delinquent properties located within floodplains and other trails and greenways designated in the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System.

- Regulatory Modifications / Corridor Overlay District

Changes to zoning and development regulations will be necessary to support the types of land uses and development described for the corridor’s station areas, as well as to improve corridor aesthetics and functionality. To achieve consistency among the various jurisdictions and the multiple zoning ordinances which currently regulate development, an overlay zoning district is recommended to supersede the underlying zoning district regulations with regard to some or all of the following regulatory standards.

- Permitted and Prohibited Land Uses
  Changes to use provisions could include greater flexibility for mixed uses and higher density residential development as well as restrictions on predatory uses such as title loans and pawnshops in a manner similar to restrictions on adult businesses.

- Design Guidelines
  Design guidelines could include corridor landscape requirements for the screening of parking as well as form-based elements appropriate in pedestrian-oriented urban settings such as downtown Bessemer.

- Modified Development Standards
  Modified development standards could include uniform sign regulations, reduced parking ratios in station areas, provisions for shared parking in mixed use districts as well as provisions for access management to limit curb cuts and connected adjacent parking areas.

- Short Term Strategies

Identified below are immediate opportunities which can be carried out by the governmental and other institutional entities within the corridor at a low cost, to “set the stage” for longer term corridor, station area and neighborhood redevelopment.
Southwest US 11 Collaborative

The formation of a Southwest Corridor Collaborative has been formed to operate as a voluntary body composed of Jefferson County and the six municipalities for the purpose of coordinating their corridor redevelopment activities, but without the time and political complexity associated with creation of a new legal entity with specific state-authorized powers. Other institutional partners should include Habitat for Humanity of Greater Birmingham, the Freshwater Land Trust and hospitals and colleges and universities located within the corridor. Such an entity can pool resources among the participating parties in conducting the following activities.

- Collaboration to obtain grants from state or federal government or private foundations.
- Become a unified political force to seek state and federal support both for redevelopment as well as transit.
- The creation of shared GIS inventories of underutilized and abandoned structures, targets for code enforcement and opportunities for creation of parks greenways and other corridor amenities that could support corridor re-investment.
- The creation of a unified set of zoning and development standards that could be implemented through the joint adoption of a corridor overlay district.

Housing Development Partnerships

An immediate opportunity is to partner with existing non-profits that are already engaged in redevelopment, housing and neighborhood re-investment and stabilization activities in the Greater Birmingham region. One such entity is Habitat for Humanity of Greater Birmingham, one of hundreds a local affiliates of this international faith-based provider of housing to the working poor. Habitat builds sound, low cost housing for pre-qualified households, providing its own construction funding from contributions, as well as construction labor utilizing volunteers and the “sweat equity” of prospective homeowners. Throughout the nation Habitat has partnered with local governments to strengthen transitional neighborhoods by building infill housing for stable families on lots acquired though local code enforcement and blight removal efforts. Vacant lots in distressed and transitional neighborhoods should be transferred to HFHBGB or other non-profit housing providers, at no cost, in return for a commitment to build new homes with a specific timeframe.

6.5 NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

6.5.1 Approach

The Southwest Corridor study has incorporated land use strategies as essential element of the overall set of strategies to reverse the fortunes of the study corridor. One key aspect of that approach is directed to strategies for neighborhood preservation – actions that can be taken based on the status and condition of the many residential neighborhoods that comprise the corridor. To inform this process, an analysis of corridor neighborhoods was undertaken to assess indicators of their stability and vitality. This section of the report summarizes the methodology and findings used to define three neighborhood typologies for corridor residential communities that generally characterize the type and level of intervention that would be desirable to ensure their stability and integrity into the future.
6.5.2 Analysis

The neighborhood analysis was conducted by examining several factors indicative of neighborhood status, including:

- Tax delinquent properties: percent of tax delinquent parcels as a share of total parcels in a census tract,
- Vacant parcels: percent of vacant parcels as a share of total parcels in a census tract,
- Renter-occupied housing: percent of renter-occupied parcels as a share of total residential parcels in a census tract,
- Parcel improvement-to-land value ratio: percent of parcels with an improvement-to-land value ratio less than 120% of the land value, and
- Neighborhood Stabilization priority census tracts: as determined by Jefferson County and the Housing and Urban Development Department, based on foreclosure rate, potential for foreclosure, income level, and prevalence of subprime lending.

Other data indicators were considered, but were not included due to the lack of data in a usable format; these were foreclosure data; crime statistical data, and educational statistics data. The indicators used were available in a Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which facilitated analysis and presentation of results in map form. The area of analysis was the Census Tract as defined by the US Bureau of Census. Census tract boundaries do not match the study area boundaries, so there were seven census tracts out of 38 total whose limits extended beyond the study area.

For the first four indicators, the extent of that variable in each census tract was calculated as a percentage of all parcels, except for renter-occupied housing which was calculated on the basis of total residential parcels. Based on the distribution of the resulting values by census tract for each indicator, the census tracts were arrayed into quartiles and assigned an ordinal score of 1 to 4, with 1 representing the highest quartile (worst condition for the indicator) and 4 representing the lowest quartile (best condition for the indicator). For the Neighborhood Stabilization indicator, scoring was 1 if flagged as a priority census tract, and 0 if not. Table 6.3 below shows the final recommended scoring framework for each indicator.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Scoring Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Rental Occupied Housing         | Percent of rental occupied housing by census tract    | 1 point - Less than 10%  
2 points - 11% to 30%  
3 points - 31% to 50%  
4 points - Over 50%     |
| Vacant Parcels                  | Percent of vacant parcels by census tract             | 1 point - Less than 1%  
2 points - 2% to 10%  
3 points - 11% to 20%  
4 points - Over 20%     |
| Improvement to Land Value Ratio | Percent of parcels with improvement to land value less than 120% by census tract | 1 point - Less than 1%  
2 points - 1% to 2%  
3 points - 3% to 4%  
4 points - Over 5%     |
| Tax Delinquent Properties       | Percent of tax delinquent parcels by census tract     | 1 point - Less than 5%  
2 points - 6% to 10%  
3 points - 11% to 20%  
4 points - Over 20%     |
| Neighborhood Stabilization      | Recommended for Neighborhood Stabilization Plan by HUD and Jefferson County | 0 points - Not recommended for plan  
1 point - Recommended for plan |

Table 6.3. Neighborhood Preservation Scoring

After applying the ordinal scoring framework for each of the five indicators, the next step was to aggregate the individual ordinal scores, such that all 38 census tracts were assigned one composite score that reflected their total score across the five indicators. The next step was to rank the tracts and group them into the three neighborhood typology categories. Three neighborhood market conditions were identified through this process and are defined as follows:

- **Neighborhood Conservation Areas** (tracts scoring in the top third of composite scores):
  Neighborhoods, or portions of neighborhoods, where the preponderance of homes and properties are sound and well maintained, with a balance of rental and owned dwellings. Such areas possess homes in general good physical condition, mostly owner-occupied, with stronger market values.

- **Neighborhood Stabilization Areas** (tracts scoring in the middle third of composite scores):
  Neighborhoods, or portions of neighborhoods, which remain largely sound and livable, but which are in a transitioning, deterioration mode with increasing proportions of homes in disrepair, abandoned or uninhabitable, a preponderance of rental properties and increasing crime. These areas are characterized by the presence of changing market dynamics, a decline in property market values, a growing share of absentee owners combined with a mix of owner-occupied and rental properties.
• **Targeted Redevelopment Areas** (tracts scoring in the top third of composite scores):
  Neighborhoods, or portions of neighborhoods, which are distressed, with predominantly blighted and/or abandoned structures, or otherwise uninhabitable or vacant with unmaintained grounds, and perhaps dumping activities. These areas are characterized by a long-term pattern of physical decline, minimal activity in the sales or transfer of properties which are predominantly held by investors extracting the remaining economic value of deteriorated properties through rentals, and relatively high vacancy rates, as properties become inhabitable and are abandoned.

In summary, the lower the score for any and all of the five indicators, the more likely a tract would be designated as a conservation area. The results of this analysis are summarized as follows.

Figure 6.22 below shows the scoring for renter-occupied housing. The tracts with the most rental housing are identified in three areas within the City of Birmingham near Five Points West and in Midfield near Aronov Drive, and there are several other tracts with moderate levels from Bessemer to downtown Birmingham. As depicted in the figure, 72% of census tracts with 30% or greater renter-occupied parcels are located in the eastern and central portions of the corridor. Four census tracts contain the largest percentage of renter-occupied parcels having a score of 4. Census tracts with the score of 1 are not predominately residential and have the fewest renter-occupied parcels located in South Bessemer and the downtown Birmingham area.

![Figure 6.22. Renter-Occupied Housing Distribution](image)

Figure 6.23 below shows the scoring for vacant parcels. The tract with the highest share of vacant parcels is in north Bessemer, with other occurrences along the US 11 corridor. There are 36 of the 38 census tracts within the study that contain less than 10% vacant parcels. Tract 013300 and 010100 contain 11% and 22% vacant parcels respectively and are located in the central portion of the study area. Large vacant lots are scattered through the study are likely prime for redevelopment but the number of scattered single family lots are more prevalent in the two tracts identified.

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Figure 6.23. Vacant Parcel Distribution

Figure 6.24 below shows the scoring for tax delinquent parcels. Approximately 40% of the census tracts contain 11% - 20% tax delinquent parcels. Tax delinquency is not concentrated in any particular portion of the study area but is prevalent in the proximity of the station areas validating that these areas are prime redevelopment opportunities. The Legion Field Station area, located has greater than 21% tax delinquent parcels.

Figure 6.24. Tax Delinquent Parcel Distribution
Figure 6.25 below shows the census tracts which are a priority for a Neighborhood Stabilization Plan are spread across the middle of the corridor. When applying for NSP funding, Jefferson County relied on HUD criteria to determine areas in most need. The criteria used included areas with the highest foreclosures and potential of foreclosures, lowest income levels, and high number of subprime loans. It was determined that these areas would most likely qualify for NSP funding and if awarded, the funding would be directed to these areas. Per Jefferson County’s analysis, 13 census tracts qualify excluding those in the City of Birmingham and Bessemer.

Figure 6.25. Neighborhood Stabilization Priority Tract Distribution

Figure 6.26 below shows the distribution of census tract scores relative to the improvement-to-land value ratios. There are high scoring tracts near central Bessemer and on the fringe of downtown Birmingham where there are aging commercial and industrial parcels. When considering areas prime for redevelopment, land value versus the cost associated with improving the property is often considered. In this case, approximately 81% of the census tracts within the study area contain parcels with improvement values less than the land value. The downtown Bessemer area has the most with 3%-4% of the parcels satisfying this criterion.
Figure 6.26. Improvement-to-Land Value Ratio Distribution

Figure 6.27 below shows the distribution of the composite census tract scores which were used to classify each as Conservation, Stabilization, and Redevelopment Area Classifications. The classifications of the red-shaped and yellow-shaded tracts at this level of analysis should be interpreted as more likely to contain target neighborhoods for priority action, and not as a determination that the neighborhoods of the entire census tract are troubled. It is seen that the red-shaped “redevelopment” tracts are concentrated in the mid- and upper-corridor areas.

Figure 6.27. Neighborhood Classifications by Census Tract
The conclusion to be made is that although this typology was developed using analysis of indicators that were readily available, these results should be considered as preliminary guidance as to the level of market stress and decline. Conditions within a specific census tract could also vary.

While new greenfield residential development continues in the southwesternmost area of the corridor displacing agricultural space, older urban neighborhoods in the established areas of the corridor are in various stages of gradual decline, from both the decrease in population and jobs, and from the physical aging of the residences with insufficient maintenance. The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland reports that the cost of distressed properties in neighborhoods is significant, with vacant homes reducing nearby property values by up to 3.6% and delinquent properties have an impact of up to 12.3%. This is not only an impact to surrounding property owners, but results in reduced tax base for the affected city.

The collective impacts of declining population and neighborhoods are so pronounced that according to Alan Mallach, a senior fellow with the Metropolitan Policy Program of the Brookings Institution, planners need to focus less on regulation and more on the economic conditions affecting development. While a growing city can adopt the best land use strategy and the economics will follow, for cities and their neighborhoods in downward transition, the strategy may better be to adopt the best economic strategy and the land uses will follow. The realities of declining demand dictate more focus on overcoming the real estate economics with a variety of tools and techniques.

City master plans recently developed for Birmingham, Fairfield, and Bessemer also devoted attention to the importance of neighborhood stability. The RPCGB prepared the Fairfield and Bessemer plans, and is now engaged with the City of Birmingham to begin developing specific neighborhood plans as a key step in the City’s commitment to implement master plan recommendations. The RPCGB also prepared the North Titusville Neighborhood Plan in 2011.

The Fairfield plan included a 5-step strategy for addressing “problem” properties displaying neglect, unsafe conditions, abandonment, fires, use as drug houses and the like. This process was planned to yield property remediation or demolition by the owner, and if that doesn’t occur, accomplish clearance to demolish the property. Once the property is under public control, the lot can be redeveloped, sold to an adjacent property owner, or converted into a neighborhood asset. In the later North Titusville Neighborhood Plan, the process of addressing underutilized properties that are abandoned, dilapidated, tax delinquent, or vacant was refined. The updated disposition strategy uses similar outcome options including green space, sale to an adjacent owner, sale for redevelopment, and land banking. This document also provides a detailed redevelopment guide table; this information is included in the appendix to this study report.

In the extreme, cities that have experienced significant population declines, such as Detroit and Youngstown, Ohio, have examined public policies that focus on “right-sizing” urban development by consolidating scattered remaining development into smaller districts. This makes economic sense due to the cost of maintaining infrastructure supporting a large area with few remaining occupied properties versus servicing a more compact area which is essentially fully developed. Moving from the expansive situation to a more compact setting, however, is difficult to accomplish due to property ownership rights and costs of transitioning to a smaller area. The debilitating trend of economic decline that has persisted for decades cannot be easily reversed and the urban form reconfigured in a short period of time, but is still worth pursuing to create a sustainable future.
6.5.3 Proposed Action Strategies

Neighborhood preservation strategies need to consider a range of factors, including that:

- Public investments into neighborhood preservation and revitalization should be targeted to have the greatest impact of the relatively scarce resources available,
- These investments are most effective when leveraged with funds and resources from other partnering government agencies, the private sector, charitable foundations and faith-based and civic social service organizations, and the public, either as private citizens or through neighborhood groups,
- In the more distressed markets, investments should be focused around remaining assets and activity hubs,
- Investment strategies need to be conceived, organized, funded and executed with public transparency to maximize support and positive effect, and
- These strategies need to consider a multi-faceted set of actions that could have a synergistic effect and provide critical mass for achieving the desired results in a targeted area.

For each of the specific neighborhood classification categories, the following recommendations for advancing neighborhood preservation are made.

1. **Neighborhood Conservation Areas:**

Tools and strategies should focus on monitoring of conditions, encouraging continued property upkeep and ownership levels, and the elimination of potential blighting influences (dilapidation, abandonment, crime) when they appear. For these areas, there should be rapid response to blighted conditions, acquiring and rehabilitating absentee-owned properties fallen into tax-delinquency, and identifying actions to reinforce neighborhood public and private anchors.

2. **Neighborhood Stabilization Areas:**

Such areas warrant active code enforcement, rapid response to any signs of blighting, and good maintenance of public infrastructure and the more visible commercial corridors and neighborhood gateways. Tools and strategies should focus on abandoned properties using infill development or sale to an adjacent property owner, development of partnerships with banks for low-cost loans or other assistance programs for businesses and homeowners, and neighborhood crime watch programs.

3. **Targeted Redevelopment Areas:**

In these situations, public investments are best directed to demolishing blighted structures and clearing and mowing abandoned properties, relocating the few remaining residents, and assembling parcels for alternative use, or marketing for redevelopment through larger-scale projects.

The strategies for each of the neighborhood classifications is summarized in Table 6.4 which shows the relative level of public investment in terms of infrastructure management and blight management. The chart should be adapted by a given jurisdiction to its particular resources, but what the chart illustrates that certain management activities should be focused on those areas with greater stress. Stabilization
areas tend to warrant more aggressive action against blight conditions in order to preserve the integrity of the community.

### Table 6.4. Public Service Levels by Neighborhood Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investment Category</th>
<th>Neighborhood Classification</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservation (Stable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>☮</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadways</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Facilities</td>
<td>☮</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and Sewer Utilities</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blight Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code Enforcement</td>
<td>☮</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debris and Dumping</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure Removal</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interim Structure Security</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mowing of Vacant Lots</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **High Level of Attention**
- **Moderate Level of Attention**
- **Low Level of Attention**
- **Minimal Level of Attention**

In addition to these targeted strategies, there are other generalized actions which would support the overall program for neighborhood preservation. These include:

- **Identify and collect data on stress indicators:** A more detailed analysis of the standard stress and blighting indicators as well as additional indicators such as foreclosure rates, crime statistics, school performance and parcel level surveys should be conducted. Coupled with the Rental Occupied Housing, Vacant Parcels, Improvement Inequity, Tax Delinquent Properties and Neighborhood Stabilization data used for this analysis, a more detailed study for smaller geographic areas will yield more specific definition of the extent of deterioration issues.

- **Prioritize and development of management plans for target neighborhoods:** Each corridor jurisdiction should identify priority neighborhoods for intervention. For each, a detailed assessment should be undertaken as to extent and severity of blight, tax delinquency, and related indicators to identify troubled parcels. From this data, the level and type of suitable interventions can be identified. Some communities have recently completed or are currently undergoing planning studies or prototype redevelopment initiatives.

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• **Identify staffing, financial and partner agency resources to undertake neighborhood preservation initiatives:** Scarcity of resources is always an issue, but directing available resources in a targeted manner will help to improve effectiveness. In addition to local government resources, local colleges, corridor anchor institutions, regional trade and economic development groups, and others should be approached for assistance. There are various grants available through federal agencies such as HUD and EPA that could underwrite efforts. A variety of foundations with a focus on community redevelopment could also provide support. Another strategy is partnering with area churches, civic groups, and service organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together. Habitat for Humanity is a national service organization is headquartered locally in the study corridor in Fairfield, and undertakes new home construction and home repair projects. Rebuilding Together is a group with chapters across the country including Montgomery focuses on home repairs for seniors and veterans, house rehabilitation, relying on volunteers, donations, and trade and building supply contributions. A community-based approach with public involvement, and an elected official or staff person to champion the initiative are also essential ingredients.

• **Undertake priority plans aggressively and publicize results and successes:** Pursue plan execution in a concerted committed manner, maintain the effort, report on outcomes and publicize the results and successes to through local government websites, local planning organizations and the media. A quarterly report measuring accomplishment of targets and communicating these outcomes to city residents and partnering organizations builds support and awareness, demonstrates commitment, and can encourage additional involvement and funding.
6.6 INDUSTRIAL PARCEL STRATEGIES

6.6.1 Overview

The study corridor’s legacy as the industrial heart of the South, and its subsequent history of manufacturing and allied industries, are evidence of some of its natural attributes for the manufacturing and transportation/distribution/logistics industries. The corridor’s decline in terms of large core businesses means that there are a variety of former industrial sites which are presently underutilized. The decline in population and households, especially near former industrial sites, means that there are properties that could be assembled and transformed into employment centers. This section takes a look at opportunities to reinvigorate industrial, manufacturing and transportation uses in the study corridor with the goal of repurposing vacant sites and stimulating the growth of jobs, which could lead to greater housing demand.

A form of industrial land redevelopment has been coined as “cargo oriented development” (COD) as a parallel to the concept of transit oriented development around proposed transit stations, and as discussed earlier in this report. Both these concepts rely on what is called “location efficiency”. At this point, the definition of these terms (as presented in West Cook County COD+TOD Report; The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT); Chicago, Illinois; 2012) would be helpful:

**TOD**: A mix of residential, commercial, civic and recreational spaces within a convenient walk or bicycle of quality public transit.

**COD**: Clustering of industrial and logistics businesses near multiple freight assets and skilled workers, allowing for more efficient cargo movements and worker commutes.

**Location Efficiency**: Location efficiency refers to locales where residents, workers, and visitors without cars are provided greater access to amenities, employment, education, recreation, and other opportunities. Mixed land uses, a pedestrian and bicycle friendly network, and convenient mass transit allow households to save money that would otherwise be spent on gas and other car-related expenses. Similarly, manufacturers and logistics firms can practice location efficiency by locating near rail lines, expressways, suppliers, customers, trained workers, and intermodal facilities where trucks and trains exchange cargo, thus reducing truck trips and employee commutes.

Communities that execute transit oriented development effectively integrate different types of housing, convenient shopping, and public amenities, to establish a busy and walkable neighborhood around a public transit station. Cargo oriented development builds off the economic trends that are causing more freight to be shipped long distances and funneled through strategic locations. Cargo oriented development concentrates manufacturing and distribution businesses at a location where they benefit from efficient access to multiple modes of freight transportation, the presence of complementary businesses, and an available industrial workforce. Some freight-related development is occurring in exurban greenfield sites, where the sheer availability of cheap land is a driving factor. But for end uses that involve value added processing of goods, cargo oriented sites that provide ready access to labor can be competitive. Cargo oriented development is an increasingly advantageous development option for communities that possess the prerequisite key assets.
At a minimum, there may be opportunities to recapture industrial uses in the Southwest Corridor, and at a maximum to attempt to do so in a more cargo oriented development planning framework. According to the real estate market analysis done for this study, the introduction of premium transit into the corridor in the form of BRT would not be expected to have much direct impact on the pace of industrial development or redevelopment in the study corridor. However, improved transit will play an important role in regional accessibility to existing and future jobs in the study corridor. Other industrial market and economic drivers will have more influence on decisions to position new or reposition existing industrial, manufacturing, and transportation distribution facilities into the corridor. While the Southwest Corridor has experienced economic decline over past decades, this area is still rich in transportation and industrial assets. The purpose of COD is identify these strengths and leverage future opportunities from them.

Corridor assets include these key resources:

- Two Class 1 railroads, and a third (BN RR) just west of the corridor,
- Two rail intermodal sites in the corridor,
- Nearby Interstate highway access,
- Nine auto plants within 200 miles,
- Legacy industrial operations,
- Emerging transportation distribution and warehousing district,
- Low housing costs,
- Job training centers in the corridor,
- Workforce with historic background in diverse manufacturing,
- Relatively flat lands,
- Established utility resources, and
- Three existing industrial parks and other industrially zoned land.

The presence of two rail intermodal centers is a significant asset for the southwest corridor, and synergism with industrial firms, logistics firms, and warehousing/distribution operations offers long-term opportunities, even if development progress will be slow and steady. The COD concept calls for capitalizing on the combination of multimodal nodes of freight transportation couple with centers of employment in manufacturing and logistics, offering location efficiencies to businesses.

There are recent signs of renewed interest in the corridor for industrial and distribution sites. According to the 2013 Graham Report by Graham & Co. of Birmingham for the warehousing-office/warehousing-service-industrial real estate markets, the central sector which includes the portion of the study corridor north of Aronov Drive experienced a small net positive absorption in 2012 but is considered to be in oversupply mode with 85% occupancy. For the west sector which includes the balance of the study corridor and on into Tuscaloosa County, there was also net positive absorption and a small amount of new construction, and the market assessment is balanced with 90% occupancy.

Additional industrial and distribution development would be most likely in the McCalla district, near the existing Jefferson Metropolitan Park industrial park developed by the Jefferson County Industrial and Economic Development Board, and the Norfolk Southern Birmingham Regional Intermodal Facility. Other potential sites are in north Bessemer in or near the Bessemer Interstate Industrial Park and adjacent to the CSX Central Alabama Intermodal Container Transfer Facility. There are also other
scattered sites along the CSX and NS rail lines in the corridor between Bessemer and downtown Birmingham. Both these rail lines and the Burlington Northern Railroad have other area yards and facilities just outside the study area north of I-20/59 and east of downtown Birmingham.

To investigate the potential for cargo oriented development within the study corridor, an analysis of potential sites was conducted, screening corridor parcels against a set of selection criteria to identify candidate sites for consideration. This analysis is described in the next section of the report.

6.6.2 Cargo Oriented Development Parcel Analysis

To identify candidate COD sites in the study corridor, a set of selection criteria were analyzed as a GIS database. These criteria were adapted from the CNT study identifying COD opportunities in suburban Chicago. The CNT’s analysis was conducted over a larger area resulting in many properties being identified as satisfying the screening measures. The Southwest Corridor study area is much smaller and yielded a smaller set of potential COD sites. The selection criteria consisted of the following land-related and transportation-related elements:

- **Land-Related Factors**
  - Total acreage of site: Greater than 5 acres.
  - Industrial acres: Area classified as industrial use.
  - Vacant acres: Area with no improvement value.
  - Publicly-held acres: Basically parks and open space.
  - Undervalued acres: Non-vacant land where ratio of total value to land value is less than 1.5.
  - Developable acres: Sum of vacant, publicly-held, and undervalued acreage for each site.
  - Acres per parcel and Acres per owner: Measure of fragmentation.

- **Transportation-Related Factors:**
  - Expressway exits, number and distance - number within 1.5 miles.
  - Freight railroad, number and distance to closest - within 0.5 miles.
  - Truck route, number nearby and distance to closest - within 0.5 miles, not including expressways.
  - Road congestion – Level of traffic service on roads within 2 miles of site.
  - Number of nearby transportation assets - count of the four assets listed above.

Using GIS, parcels within the Southwest Corridor were screened against the preceding criteria to identify candidate COD sites. The resulting parcels are depicted in Figure 6.28.
Figure 6.28. Potential COD Sites
6.6.3 Analysis of Candidate COD Sites

From this analysis, there were 15 initial sites identified. However, based on the nature of the criteria, some of these sites included public parks and schools, or other public facilities. Dropping out these sites left nine potential sites. Further screening eliminated two other sites due to small size, and multiple parcels in current use. The remaining seven sites included parcels with active businesses, but are listed for further analysis. These areas are:

- **Trinity Park Industrial Park:** This industrial park, operated by Jefferson County Industrial and Economic Development Board, is situated west of I-65, with access from 6th Ave. S. While marketed as an industrial site, it has been considered a few years ago for a large shopping center, and the RPCGB has developed a concept plan for a mixed use residential development. As a COD it would be situated near a proposed BRT station and just across I-65 from the western ITP Green Route station. Some concerns have been expressed as to access from I-65, but one proposed ALDOT interchange concept would develop directional frontage roads on either side of I-65 which would enhance access.
  - **Assessment:** While clearly a traditional industrial site, the outcome for this parcel will have more to do with the market value for that use versus commercial or mixed use development, given its proximity to the developing UAB campus.
  - **Recommendation:** Consider as a backup COD site if other prospects do not materialize.

- **Industrial Parcels Along the former CSX RR Corridor Between Princeton Pkwy. And Center St.** This area comprises multiple property ownerships in current industrial uses. The area is long and narrow in shape with several ownerships.
  - **Assessment:** While these parcels are industrial in use, the CSX rail in this area is essentially as spur line as a portion further southwest has been abandoned. The shape of the parcels, and the presence of existing businesses complicates conversion to a COD.
  - **Recommendation:** Consider as a backup COD site if other prospects do not materialize.

- **Industrial Parcels Along the former CSX RR Corridor Between Rickwood Field and Princeton Pkwy.** This area comprises multiple property ownerships in current industrial uses. The area is long and narrow in shape with several ownerships.
  - **Assessment:** While these parcels are industrial in use, the CSX rail in this area is essentially as spur line as a portion further southwest has been abandoned. The shape of the parcels, and the presence of existing businesses complicates conversion to a COD.
  - **Recommendation:** Consider as a backup COD site if other prospects do not materialize.

- **Industrial Parcels Along the former CSX RR Corridor Between Fayette Ave. and Lomb Ave.** This area is comprises multiple property ownerships in current industrial uses. The area is long and narrow in shape with several ownerships.
  - **Assessment:** While these parcels are industrial in use, the CSX rail in this area is essentially as spur line as a portion further southwest has been abandoned. The shape of the parcels, and the presence of existing businesses complicates conversion to a COD.
  - **Recommendation:** Consider as a backup COD site if other prospects do not materialize.
• **Birmingham Rail & Locomotive and Adjacent Vacant Lands:** Part of this area is in active industrial use and the balance between 35th St. N and 32nd St. N could be developed as an industrial park.
  o **Assessment:** The existing and potential industrial uses with rail access and the rail intermodal center coupled with reasonable highway access make this site a good candidate for COD. The adjacent residential areas could be buffered with a berm and/or landscaping.
  o **Recommendation:** Consider as a prime candidate for further COD development. Consider combined development strategy with the following site.

• **CSX Intermodal Facility and Birmingham Interstate Intermodal Park:** This area lying within 22nd St. N, 5th Ave. N, 32nd St. N, and Carolina Ave./CSX RR includes an intermodal facility and adjacent industrial park.
  o **Assessment:** The existing and potential industrial uses with rail access and the rail intermodal center coupled with reasonable highway access make this site a good candidate for COD. The adjacent residential areas could be better buffered with a berm and/or landscaping.
  o **Recommendation:** Consider as a prime candidate for further COD development. Consider combined development strategy with the preceding site.

• **Jefferson Metropolitan Park – McCalla, Norfolk Southern Birmingham Regional Intermodal Facility, and Adjacent Lands to the South:** This existing industrial park, the new intermodal rail facility, and the lands in this ½-mile wide by 4-mile long corridor extending between Old Tuscaloosa Rd. and the NS Railroad (including the new intermodal facility), Kimbrell Cutoff Rd. near the Tuscaloosa County Line, and the north limit of the Jefferson Metropolitan Park comprise a prime opportunity for evolving this sector into a COD. In fact, the RPCGB pursued a federal TIGER grant a few years to implement a “freight village” concept in this area. A freight village is similar in its elements to a COD development.
  o **Assessment:** The existing and potential industrial uses with rail access and the rail intermodal center coupled with reasonable highway access make this site a prime candidate for COD.
  o **Recommendation:** Consider as a prime candidate for further COD development.

### 6.6.4 Proposed Action Strategies

In summary, these recommendations for COD in the Southwest Corridor are proposed:

- The prime sites identified in this analysis are:
  - CSX Intermodal Facility and Birmingham Interstate Intermodal Park, Coupled with the Birmingham Rail & Locomotive and Adjacent Vacant Lands, and
  - Jefferson Metropolitan Park – McCalla, Norfolk Southern Birmingham Regional Intermodal Facility, and Adjacent Lands to the South.

- The secondary sites identified in this analysis are:
  - Industrial Parcels Along the former CSX RR Corridor,
    - Between Princeton Pkwy. And Center St.,
    - Between Fayette Ave. and Lomb Ave.,
    - Between Lomb Ave. and Fayette Ave.
  - Trinity Park

- The primary sites should be further developed and expanded as industrial sites, and evolve into COD sites should market conditions support that. The secondary sites should be further developed also as industrial sites. In addition, there may be other sites along both rail corridors that present
themselves for industrial redevelopment or new development and these opportunities should be marketed and captured as well.

- Utilize the resources and partnership for industrial development promotion on the part of the:
  - Jefferson County Industrial and Economic Development Authority,
  - Bessemer Interstate Industrial Park Board,
  - City of Birmingham Economic Development Department, and
  - Birmingham Business Alliance.

- Explore industrial development strategies with the two Class 1 railroads in the corridor. Both the CSX and NS railroads have active Industrial Development departments, and representatives in Birmingham: CSX - (http://www.csx.com/index.cfm/customers/industrial-development/contact-us/, John_C_Sanford@csx.com); NS – (http://www.nscorp.com/content/nscorp/en/industrial-development.html, mike.grim@nscorp.com).

Implementation of COD initiatives is similar to many other development projects. Figure 6.29 summarizes the key steps in the process, as defined by CNT for prototype COD projects in suburban Chicago.

The potential of brownfield sites in Bessemer and Birmingham industrial parcels may complicate the process, but there are established federal programs aimed at assisting communities committed to redevelopment opportunities.

The assets possessed by this corridor in terms of rail and highway transportation facilities, regional intermodal cargo facilities, industrial land, and utility capacity are strengths which can be leveraged. The attraction of new industrial and transportation firms leads to jobs, and that leads to the potential for residency in the corridor, further enhancing the corridor economy.

There are a variety of potential financial and programmatic support sources which can help to develop the components of a COD implementation plan. These are depicted in Figure 6.30. Additional COD references are provided in the study appendix.
Figure 6.30. Funding Sources for COD Investments

**SOURCES OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INVESTMENT**

- **FEDERAL**
  - Department of Treasury: New Market Tax Credits, Community Development Financial Institutions
  - Department of Labor: Workforce Development
  - Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration: Infrastructure Grants, Economic Development Grants, Foreign Trade Zones

- **STATE**
  - Department of Natural Resources: Green Space Preservation, Water Resource Management
  - Housing Development Authority: Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Multifamily Bond Program
  - State Treasurer: Low-Interest Loans
  - Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity: Predevelopment Grants, Enterprise Zones, Workforce Development Incentives, Tax Abatements, and Low-Interest Loans

- **MUNICIPAL**
  - General Obligation Bonds
  - Tax Increment Financing
  - Business Improvement Districts

- **REGIONAL, COUNTY & COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**
  - Transportation and Land Use Planning
  - HOME Funds

- **PRIVATE INVESTMENT**
  - Institutional Investors and Trusts
  - Brokers
  - Developers
  - End Users

Making communities “investment grade” necessitates a robust pipeline of development opportunities and the requisite financing to cover various phases and activities. Finding financing for in-fill redevelopment projects is complicated by the number of agencies and the funding cycles and unique application requirements of each.

**Source:** Case Study: Chicago’s South Suburbs – Smart Growth in Older Communities, Center for Neighborhood Technology, Chicago, IL; 2011.
7  ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

7.1  Overview


No single definition incorporates all of the different strands of economic development. Typically economic development can be described in terms of objectives. These are most commonly described as the creation of jobs and wealth, and the improvement of quality of life. Economic development can also be described as a process that influences growth and restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well-being of a community. In the broadest sense, economic development encompasses three major areas:

- Policies that government undertakes to meet broad economic objectives including inflation control, high employment, and sustainable growth.
- Policies and programs to provide services including building highways, managing parks, and providing medical access to the disadvantaged.
- Policies and programs explicitly directed at improving the business climate through specific efforts, business finance, marketing, neighborhood development, business retention and expansion, technology transfer, real estate development and others.

The main goal of economic development is improving the economic well-being of a community through efforts that entail job creation, job retention, tax base enhancements and quality of life. As there is no single definition for economic development, there is no single strategy, policy, or program for achieving successful economic development. Communities differ in their geographic and political strengths and weaknesses. Each community, therefore, will have a unique set of challenges for economic development.

An important component of the revitalization and reimagining of the Southwest Corridor is the identification and execution of a variety of strategies that are interconnected with other established economic development efforts, that leverage off the strengths and assets of the corridor, and that work to address the “asset gaps” that have evolved over the last few decades. There are ongoing economic development programs on the part of the State of Alabama, the greater Birmingham region, Jefferson County, the City of Birmingham, and the City of Bessemer. There are other public, quasi-public, civic and citizen organizations, faith-based groups and churches, and others working to improve the community from the neighborhood level and beyond. It is vital to work together in a coordinated manner to draw upon the collective resources, assets and learned experiences of each.

Most of the Southwest Corridor has endured a slow decline in those characteristics that gave it its robust popularity for family housing, and steady core-industry jobs, which supported busy retail centers and a variety of public facilities and institutions. Today’s national and regional economies are ones of modest growth in jobs which have tended to be lower-paying and lower skill in nature. Other issues affecting economic recovery in the corridor include:

- Changing demographics (aging of baby boomers, smaller household sizes, more single adults),
- A smaller manufacturing labor force, with wages trending lower,
• Decline in the middle class, and its purchasing power,
• Increase in households at or under the poverty level,
• Aging housing stock requiring more maintenance and conversion from owner-occupied to absentee-owned rental properties with little repair,
• Diminished levels of consumer buying,
• Obsolescence and vacancy of structures, both residential and commercial,
• Continuing outlook of shrinkage in population and employment, and
• Declining municipal revenues from conventional real estate and sales tax sources.

Despite these issues, the corridor has a variety of residual and latent strengths on which it can capitalize. Some of these include:

Land Uses
• Presence of several vital corridor activity center anchors with civic and commercial land uses,
• Large areas of housing stock and neighborhoods in good condition at competitive values,
• Continued presence albeit on a smaller scale of some of the corridor’s core industry companies,
• Continued presence of second-tier companies that support the core industries in the corridor and region,
• Three active publicly-managed industrial park sites, and
• Many underutilized retail and industrial properties available for low cost and repositioning into new uses.

Geography
• Emerging warehousing/distribution district in the McCalla area at the south end of the study corridor,
• Lower cost transportation/residential affordability index compared to more costly and distant suburban locations,
• Historical linkage with the downtown Birmingham core and its anchors including government, hospitals and UAB,
• Regional proximity to “New South” automobile production plants, and
• Proximity to the Atlanta metropole.

Transportation
• Long-established and capable supply chain infrastructure,
• Several long-haul trucking companies situated in the corridor and others in the region,
• Two major Class 1 railroads (CSX, NS) serving the most of the corridor, and a third across I-20/59, as well short line rail service,
• Two railroad intermodal yards in the corridor,
• Relatively light traffic congestion on surface streets,
• Very good highway access with nearby I-20/59 and I-459, and proximity to the southern end of the proposed Northern Beltline highway.

Other Factors
• Cost-competitive labor force, with regional and corridor skill-training sites,
• Good utility capacity presently underutilized, and
• Relatively low cost of living for the region.

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7.2 CORRIDOR MARKET CONDITIONS AND OUTLOOK

This section of the report begins with an overview of the corridor market conditions and a trend line outlook for the future, followed by an examination of potential economic development strategies. It is recognized that there are other key strategies in this study to enhance transportation mobility through improved transit service and to capture renewed land use conditions through transit oriented development at transit stations, through neighborhood preservation initiatives, and through industrial redevelopment such as cargo oriented development. These all need to be elements of a coordinated, corridor-wide effort to inject new life into the corridor’s urban soul, and to pursue a somewhat different definition of the Southwest Corridor that builds on its past and re-invents its future.

7.2.1 Overview of Market Assessment

In light of the current and near-term market conditions in the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), retail, office, and industrial markets continue to seek equilibrium in terms of supportable demand and values. The near-term will likely be a period of correction of overbuilt local conditions relative to historically high unemployment levels, mid- and long-term growth in population and employment along with major investment initiatives in transit, downtown community venues, and the corresponding private investment. These forces could ultimately stabilize the corridor real estate market and provide favorable conditions for new development.

The Southwest Corridor study area has historically experienced negative to slow growth in population and employment. This stagnation which has persisted over the corridor between downtown Birmingham and Academy Drive has supported only limited incremental additions to building inventory with expanding patterns of obsolescence and property abandonment. Long-range forecasts by the RPCGB show a continuation of gradual decline of population and employment most of the corridor, with modest growth occurring in the portion of the corridor south of Academy Drive into the McCalla area.

The following market assessment of the corridor is based on primary research conducted by the project team in the field, analysis of public agency and third party private vendor data, and interviews conducted key stakeholders in the study area. The market assessment provides a basic platform that supports discussion of potential opportunities along the corridor.

7.2.2 Market Area

The market area considered in the analysis is commensurate with the Southwest Corridor study area. The study area is approximately twenty-two miles long, two to three miles wide and contained entirely within the bounds of Jefferson County. The corridor, and market area, includes six different incorporated jurisdictions, including the cities of Birmingham, Fairfield, Midfield, Lipscomb, Brighton, and Bessemer. The boundaries of the Southwest Corridor are generally described as downtown Birmingham to the northeast, I-20/59 to the northwest, Tuscaloosa County to the southwest, and Red Mountain and Eastern Valley Road to the southeast.

The Southwest Corridor generally competes with activities occurring along the I-65, US 31, and US 280 corridors south of Downtown within the MSA. The Southwest Corridor does not compete well for retail and office space as developers find areas within the south-central and southeastern sections of the MSA (e.g., Hoover, Riverchase, US 31, US 280, Shelby County) to be more attractive. According to recent
market data, the study area’s greatest growth potential is in the industrial sector. The market area appears to be oversupplied with distribution facilities, but recent developments of major distribution centers near the McCalla area – in addition to the completion and start of operations at Norfolk Southern’s intermodal facility – indicate significant potential for increased economic activity within some parts of the market area.

7.2.3 Assessment of Existing Market Conditions

Retail, Restaurants and Services Space

This analysis focuses on population growth and primary residents of the corridor to generate demand for new commercial outlets within the study area and considers the changing dynamics of household composition and income levels.

The consultant team employed proprietary modeling techniques to calculate potential demand for retail and restaurant space in the market area in terms of square feet (SF). The gravity model used addresses retail choices and spatial concentrations of retail spending for current and future years.

The demand models were calibrated based on the most recent economic census data available for the Birmingham-Hoover MSA. The models estimate the amount and nature of demand for retail and restaurant space supportable within a given trade area based upon the number of households and the average household’s effective buying income at a given point in time. The services model employs a methodology for estimating service space demand by incorporating population growth, employment and the number of establishments for different service facility types, all within a specific physical construct. The following retail, restaurant and service categories are considered and analyzed:

- Department stores & general merchandise
- Discount stores
- Furniture & home furnishings
- Appliances & electronics
- Building materials & hardware
- Apparel & accessories
- Miscellaneous retail stores
- Food stores & supermarkets
- Beer, wine & liquor
- Drug stores & pharmacies
- Convenience stores & gasoline
- Beer, wine & liquor
- Drug stores & pharmacies
- Convenience stores & gasoline
- Cosmetic, health & beauty
- Full service restaurants
- Limited service restaurants
- Specialty food service
- Drinking places
- Personal services

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- Social services
- Banking and real estate

Based upon data provided by the RPCGB, the consultant team was able to estimate square footage in the corridor for existing retail, restaurant and service establishments. According to the database provided, the study area includes approximately 5.5 million SF of retail, restaurant and service space. In addition to viable businesses, the data includes all vacant, outdated, and otherwise unusable space within the study area.

Applying the proprietary models previously mentioned, the overall potential market demand is generated by the household income within the study area. Shopping patterns of residents dictate that not all of this demand is currently “captured” by the establishments within the study area. Significant amounts of these expenditures may flow to competitive shopping and business centers elsewhere. Table 7.1 summarizes the current supportable demand identified through the consultant team’s modeling and analysis. The table presents the total supportable demand in square footage for existing population and households within the study area. These figures could be considered conservative since the analysis does not reflect transient business from customers traveling through the area, but living outside the study area.

**Table 7.1. Total Supportable Demand from Study Area Households (2010)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Demand (SF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retail</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Store</td>
<td>144,000 - 194,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience Goods</td>
<td>378,000 - 512,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopper Goods</td>
<td>1,647,000 - 2,229,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>2,169,000 - 2,935,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restaurants</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Service Restaurants</td>
<td>65,000 - 89,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Service Restaurants</td>
<td>94,000 - 128,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Food &amp; Drinking Places</td>
<td>25,000 - 33,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Places</td>
<td>3,000 - 5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>187,000 - 255,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,320,000 - 1,786,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3,676,000 - 4,976,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Retail Trade; Dollars & Cents of Shopping Centers; Sales & Marketing Management, Survey of Buying Power; Claritas 2010; RERC Strategic Advisors.

To estimate the amount of demand that could be captured within the study area, the demand analysis employs a fair share allocation method to distribute demand among existing geographic concentrations of retail and restaurant space in the study area. For example, households within the study area will
purchase goods outside of the corridor in other locations such as downtown Birmingham or along I-65, US 31, and US 280. Thus, an adjustment to the total supportable demand is required to reflect the amount of demand that could be captured in the study area. Table 7.2 illustrates the estimated gross demand captured within the study area based on the current and future supportable demand.

Table 7.2. Total Demand Captured from Households Within the Study Area (2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Demand Captured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retail</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Store</td>
<td>130,000 - 176,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience Goods</td>
<td>310,000 - 420,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopper Goods</td>
<td>424,000 - 574,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>864,000 - 1,170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restaurants</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Service Restaurants</td>
<td>37,000 - 49,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Service Restaurants</td>
<td>77,000 - 104,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Food &amp; Drinking Places</td>
<td>9,000 - 13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Places</td>
<td>3,000 - 3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>126,000 - 169,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>542,000 - 734,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,532,000 - 2,073,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Retail Trade; Dollars & Cents of Shopping Centers; Sales & Marketing Management, Survey of Buying Power; Claritas 2010; RERC Strategic Advisors.

To determine the net additional demand for retail and restaurant space within the study area, the existing inventory provided by the RPCGB was compared to the gross SF demand captured within the study area as shown in Table 7.2. Accounting for a 15% vacancy, there is a significant surplus of retail, restaurant and services space within the corridor study area. While the surplus is substantial, it does not suggest growth cannot or should not occur within the study area. Due to physical or functional obsolescence, the study area has a significant amount of aging and/or vacant commercial space that should either be removed from the market or repositioned to an alternative activity.

The analysis also considers incremental, or increased, demand. The term incremental demand is defined as the amount of additional commercial space supportable by the estimated growth in the number of market area households and their effective buying income. The impact of projected incremental growth resulting from improved transit service and its synergism with adjacent land uses is discussed after the following specific market outlooks.
Office and Industrial Space

The analysis outlined herein focuses on study corridor non-agricultural employment growth generating demand for new office and industrial space allocated to the study area, and considers changing dynamics of individual sector-based employment trends by each two-digit NAICS employment sector. Demand for both office and industrial product is driven largely by growth in employment categories that actually utilize such space for business operations, such as finance and insurance and management of companies for office space and warehousing, manufacturing, and some transportation-related enterprises for industrial space. The following North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) industry sectors were considered and analyzed:

- Accommodation and food services
- Administration & support, waste management and remediation
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation
- Construction
- Educational services
- Finance and insurance
- Health care and social assistance
- Information
- Management of companies and enterprises
- Manufacturing
- Other services (excluding public administration)
- Professional, scientific, and technical services
- Public administration
- Real estate and rental and leasing
- Retail trade
- Transportation and warehousing
- Utilities
- Wholesale trade

The project team employed proprietary modeling techniques to calculate potential demand for office and industrial space in the market area. The models were calibrated based on the most recent Woods and Poole employment data and projections for the MSA. A fair share allocation method was utilized to allocate new demand from the MSA to the study corridor. The analysis considers both existing and incremental demand, similar to the retail and restaurant demand analysis methodology.

Office Space

In order to determine current market conditions for office space within the metro area, the consultant team has reviewed trends in relationships between office-using employment and occupied office space determined through local surveys and third-party data sources. The consultant team also reviewed an inventory database provided by the RPCGB of office building square footage to estimate the demand existing within the study area.

There are approximately 49.1 million SF of office space in the Birmingham market area as defined by CoStar and approximately 4.6 million SF of office space in the corridor study area (per data supplied by...
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As such, current levels of corridor inventory and high vacancy rates reported by local surveys and third party brokerage reports for submarkets covering portions of the study area indicate that the local office market is effectively overbuilt by as much as 5-10%. This surplus product would need to be removed from consideration as competitive in the active market or absorbed into the occupied inventory before development of any new speculative buildings would be perceived feasible.

While the surplus is substantial and new allocated demand is effectively absent, it does not mean no office development can or should occur within the study area. Certainly, this speaks to the complexity of attempting to measure and understand demand throughout such an extensive corridor that includes multiple, distinct submarkets with dynamic forces all their own. As discussed in previous sections, the study area contains a significant amount of space that should either be removed from market consideration or repositioned to an alternative activity. Strategic redevelopment initiatives in the study area could also present opportunities for realignment of office properties or even the addition of new office space around certain targeted locations in the corridor. Further, limited demand for new office space could potentially exist in the form of replacement demand of older space within specific employment sectors in the corridor, such as hospital and medical office building space, traditional office space for public sector uses, incubator or start-up space in the area proximate downtown Birmingham, or educational use at UAB.

Industrial Space

In order to determine current market conditions for industrial space within the metropolitan area, the consultant team reviewed trends in relationships between industrial-using employment and occupied industrial space determined through local surveys and third-party data sources. The consultant team also reviewed an inventory database of industrial building square footage provided by the RPCGB to estimate the amount of net demand existing within the metro area and the study area.

There are approximately 120 million SF of industrial space in the Birmingham market area as defined by CoStar and an estimated 11 million SF in the study corridor (according to data provided by the RPCGB). As such, the consultant team estimated that approximately 9.2% of industrial space located within the Birmingham market area lies within the boundaries of the study corridor. Traditionally, this corridor has been strongly associated with industrial and manufacturing operations given its excellent rail and interstate highway access – an association that has been further reinforced by recent industrial development in McCalla, Bessemer, and elsewhere in the corridor. Though a significant portion of heavy
industrial operations occur just outside of the bounds of the study area at the US Steel, US Pipe, and Vulcan sites, industrial parks and businesses exist throughout the corridor, especially along rail lines.

However, much of the industrial space in the corridor north of I-459 is out-dated product, limited in scale, and functionally obsolete when considering the requirements of today’s industrial user. In the current market, given existing levels of inventory, declining employment, and lagging occupancy, the industrial market within the corridor is now effectively overbuilt by as much as 10% - 15%, especially multi-tenant properties. This oversaturation of industrial product within the existing study area market is further substantiated by local surveys and third-party brokerage reports which indicate high vacancy rates for industrial buildings within the corresponding submarket covering the corridor area. This surplus product would need to be removed from consideration as competitive in the active market or absorbed into the occupied inventory before the development of new speculative buildings would be perceived as feasible. It is important to note that a significant portion of the existing vacant industrial space is functionally obsolete, does not actually represent suitable space for new industrial operations or warehousing in the corridor, and is no longer competitive within the metropolitan market.

7.3 POTENTIAL IMPACT OF TRANSIT ON DEVELOPMENT

This study examined various alternatives for transit improvements within the Southwest Corridor. A key goal is to provide a land use platform stimulated by transit investment that is capable of attracting new private and public investments, and which may also allow reorganization of neighborhoods to take advantage of better public transportation service.

As part of the analysis of the merits and limitations of transit alternative, the potential impact on the study area was also evaluated. Generally, the more extensive and convenient the transit system, the more likely it will alter traditional land use patterns and development potential at or near the planned station areas. Regardless of the alternative, demand for increased commercial activity would not be generated entirely by “new” residential growth. Some demand could be that which has traditionally leaked to other parts of the region and some could be generated by simply removing old, functionally obsolete space and replacing it with viable businesses located at key economic centers.

The BRT transit project incorporates frequent bus service between Bessemer and downtown Birmingham, dedicated bus lanes in key areas, more elaborate bus stations with multiple bays, and realigned tributary routes feeding the stations, among other features. Certainly, the vehicles themselves would exceed the technology and comfort standards described for existing transit service. Frequency and reliability would be enhanced, and some additional transit routes might be established between important employment centers, shopping destinations, and social services.

Generally, the real estate market response to this package of transit improvements is expected to be positive, with some new housing development, moderately increased retail response around transit stations, new mixed-use projects, and limited reorganization of commercial neighborhoods in response to better access to workforce, shoppers, and other commercial centers. It is also crucial in this scenario that the enhanced services focus on serving key employment centers to support neighborhood stabilization and even gentrification. It is possible that negative population, household and employment trends could be at least muted, stabilized, or even reversed in subareas. While population and household growth attributable from implementing BRT may be limited, its impact on retail and service
demand could be more significant. Under optimal conditions with broader economic recovery, it could contribute to the reversal of the decades of declining population, effectively generating increased consumer spending and demand for retail goods and services. Retail and service activities would be located at strategic nodes of activity surrounding major BRT stations, contradictory to the current sprawl, auto-oriented pattern of commercial development.

New office development would continue to be very limited, but opportunities could be created around BRT station areas, particularly closer to the downtown Birmingham district. Outdated facilities and undesirable office locations – away from BRT stations – would still need to be repositioned or removed from the marketplace. Without transit investments as proposed, the study area’s capture of the MSA’s demand for office space is expected to decline over the next twenty years. Potential growth would be limited even with BRT service, but the study area could be capable of not only maintaining its current capture of the MSA’s office demand, but also capturing office development which may have previously located in other areas such as Hoover or Shelby County. The new demand generated by BRT would be in locations that are within reasonable walking distances (approximately 0.25 mile) from the stations, and would be positioned to capture demand from new residents living near the core station areas.

The implementation of BRT along with policies and initiatives encouraging redevelopment around station areas could increase demand for retail and services by 250,000 to 325,000 SF, and office space by 200,000 to 275,000 SF over the next 25 years. Limited medium density multi-family and townhouse products may also be supportable by more intense, pedestrian friendly development patterns around key stations.

Transit, however, is expected to have relatively little direct impact on the pace of industrial development, which will likely increase around McCalla and the proposed Norfolk Southern intermodal facility. New housing options could be favorable for enhancing industrial and other new business demand. However, improved transit will play an important role in regional accessibility to existing and future jobs in the study corridor.

7.4 POTENTIAL REINVESTMENT STRATEGIES

According to a recent article on economic development (“Look What’s Developing”, American City and County Magazine, April 2014, pp. 14-20), there are eight key steps integral to successful economic development:

1. Understand the local business community and markets, and support the business community,
2. Emphasize economic development in local and regional community planning,
3. Foster political support of economic development,
4. Endorse area workforce and educational development,
5. Track and address community infrastructure needs,
6. Promote coordinated regional economic development,
7. Support and cultivate local entrepreneurship, and
8. Work to be business-friendly, both in processing new development and preserving existing businesses.

The author further emphasizes the need to develop a strategic plan based on a thoughtful analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; then take a regional approach in execution erasing
boundaries within the region; and be proactive in working with the existing business base as well as prospects being pursued to locate in the region. These building blocks have been effectively addressed by the Birmingham Business Alliance, the regional economic development clearinghouse, in its 2010 document Blueprint Birmingham: A Growth Strategy for the Seven County Region, and its supporting documents, Competitive Realities and Target Sector Analysis. The stated vision of the plan is: “The Birmingham Region will provide abundant economic opportunities, excellence in education, and an unparalleled quality of life for all citizens.”

The Target Sector Analysis examined the region’s legacy and core business sectors, identifying tailored approaches to preserving, reinforcing, and growing those, which are: Metal and Steel Manufacturing, Finance and Insurance, Healthcare Services, and Trade and Distribution. In addition, three emerging opportunities were identified where competitive advantages are developing or where investment could create trigger activity. These areas are Biological and Medical Technology; Arts, Entertainment, and Tourism; and Diverse Manufacturing. Each of these was assessed in terms of national trends; the sector composition in terms of occupations, businesses, and geographic advantages; and investment areas. Strategies for core and emerging sectors are all included in the main Blueprint Birmingham document, grouped into priority strategies, including: Public and Private Leadership, Workforce Development, Economic Prosperity, and Community and Regional Stewardship. There are a large number of actions and initiatives identified in the plan. These were reviewed and those plan objectives with the most specific relevance to the Southwest Corridor are summarized as follows:

**Public and Private Leadership**

- **Objective 2:** Organize the Birmingham region’s business community to serve as a powerful, proactive, and definitive voice for a unified, progressive, regional vision.
  - **Action 2.1:** Convey a call to action for governments in the region to partner for effective change.

  **Southwest Corridor Strategy Action:** The proposed Corridor Coalition mirrors this regional call to action and should couple with Blueprint committees and processes to leverage that commitment.

**Workforce Development**

- **Objective 2:** Organize the Birmingham region’s business community to serve as a powerful, proactive, and definitive voice for a unified, progressive, regional vision.
  - **Action 2.1:** Convey a call to action for governments in the region to partner for effective change.

  **Southwest Corridor Strategy Action:** The proposed Corridor Coalition mirrors this regional call to action and should couple with Blueprint committees and processes to leverage that commitment.

- **Objective 6:** Address barriers to accessing training and employment destinations.
  - **Action 6.1:** Ensure regional constituents have access to adequate transportation options.

  **Southwest Corridor Strategy Action:** The specific reference in the plan is to leverage RPCGB efforts to coordinate transit route planning based on employment and training needs. That is purpose of the Southwest Corridor study in connection to transit, so this point needs to stay at the forefront.

**Economic Prosperity**

- **Objective 7:** Maximize the economic impact of UAB and the Birmingham region’s full complement of innovators and research-focused entities.
Action 7.3: Develop entrepreneurial districts in the region supported by the growth of research centers and facilities.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Consider opportunities to collaborate with UAB to foster formation of an entrepreneurial district in the Southwest Corridor, possible associated with the hospitals or colleges.

Action 7.4: Maximize the output and benefit of research capacity with target sector applications
- Healthcare Services; Biological and Medical Technology: Utilize and expand new, up-and-coming biological and medical technology programs at UAB, and explore potential approaches to facilitating collaboration with other local institutions.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Seek opportunities for Southwest Corridor medical centers to partner with UAB.

- Trade and Distribution: Investigate potential synergies between the Birmingham region’s Healthcare Services and Biological and Medical Technology sectors and the region’s Trade and Distribution Sector.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Continue to promote the logistics resources of the Southwest Corridor in regional conversations about the development of the region’s other core business sectors.

- Diverse Manufacturing: Pursue opportunities to leverage the Birmingham region’s traditional production economy into employment growth in “green” manufacturing.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Include coordination with BBA on “green” manufacturing prospects for location into sites or facilities in the Southwest Corridor as part of Southwest Corridor industrial redevelopment marketing.

Objective 8: Effectively leverage existing businesses for the growth of the Birmingham region’s economy.

Action 8.1: Work with minority-owned businesses (MOB’s) and other large employers to identify MOBs within their supply chain or that are frequent contractors that could benefit from co-location near existing businesses in the region. Pursue targeted recruitment of identified firms.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Coordinate with BBA to identify opportunities for synergy between local businesses and support marketing efforts.

Objective 9: Provide the support and coordination necessary to enable small businesses to launch and succeed in the Birmingham region.

Action 9.1: Augment and better coordinate regional small business and entrepreneurial assistance.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Support and participate in efforts to improve small business support services and develop a seed-capital fund.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR STUDY
PART 3: Land Use and Economic Development Strategies Report
Objective 10: Market the Birmingham region to external audiences through a holistic, targeted, and multi-channel campaign.

Action 10.5: Continue to aggressively promote the Birmingham region as a tourism destination.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Confirm that sports tourism is included in the regional marketing and highlights resources in the Southwest Corridor, especially the CrossPlex. Promote development of city-owned lands around Legion Field to a baseball/soccer/tennis center for competitions. Develop an inventory of the Southwest Corridor tourism assets for inclusion in promotional materials, including Red Mountain Park, Tannehill State Park and its Iron and Steel Museum, historic downtown Bessemer, Rickwood Field, the CrossPlex, the Arlington Antebellum Home and Gardens, and others.

Community and Regional Stewardship

Objective 12: Provide competitive infrastructure capacity in the Birmingham region.

Action 12.1: Promote the development of priority regional road transportation and transit system projects.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Fully support Blueprint action items for development of downtown and corridor transit improvement plans led by the GBRPC and MPO.

Objective 13: Improve the Birmingham region’s “quality of place” amenities.

Action 13.2: Implement proposed efforts to promote and expand the Birmingham region’s recreational opportunities.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Fully support the action items calling for full development of Red Mountain Park and for implementation of MPO bicycle/pedestrian projects as well as the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System.

Objective 15: Effectively remediate the Birmingham region’s environmental quality and protection issues.

Action 15.2: Encourage adaptive re-use and redevelopment of contaminated regional properties by establishing a Brownfield and Greyfield Redevelopment Authority in the Birmingham region.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Support BBA goals to create the authority, develop a loan fund, coordinate with other agencies for expertise and support, and market such sites for redevelopment.

Objective 16: Work to make the Birmingham region’s residents and businesses strong advocates for its existing businesses and future prospects.

Action 16.1: Design and implement an internal marketing campaign to elevate and improve community pride and perceptions.

Southwest Corridor Strategy Action: Participate in this BBA initiative so that the resources and assets of the Southwest Corridor communities are fully represented and incorporated into the campaign.
The Blueprint Birmingham initiatives are being pursued and tracked, a semi-monthly e-newsletter provides progress updates, and an annual Blueprint Summit charts milestones.

A key economic development resource is the Economic Development Department of the RPCGB which develops an annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region, and manages a variety of initiatives on an ongoing basis to support and grow the regional economy. The EDD provides a variety of services to support economic development, including:

- Community planning studies,
- Mapping and data sharing,
- Brownfields Task Force management,
- Grant application assistance,
- Revolving loan fund and microlending program administration, and
- Workforce development program support.

The EDD works with local governments within the region for financial assistance from state and federal agencies to fund various types of projects including planning, emergency response, energy, brownfields, business incubators, industrial parks, parks and recreation, and water and sewer utilities. In its 2013 annual strategy report under the tagline Think Prosperity, as part of the Think Forward long-range planning effort to guide the greater Birmingham region in transportation, community and economic development planning. That document presents a set of strategies for the EDD which are summarized as follows:

**Empowerment and Implementation**

- **Community Education**
  - Link member governments with the knowledge and resources necessary to plan and implement growth.
  - Promote community and economic development opportunities and projects through technology media.

- **Leadership Development**
  - Educate elected officials and local leaders on planning principles, processes, and tools.
  - Engage the young professional population in order to develop and educate the region’s next generation of leaders.
  - Educate elected officials and local leaders on financial mechanisms and opportunities that can be used for the implementation of plans.

- **Funding**
  - Increase outreach and education of local governments on available funding sources through face-to-face networking.
  - Create an online resource guide to grant funding for local government investment projects.
Coordination and Cooperation
  o Promote the partnering of member governments on like-interested projects in order to maximize the use of resources.
  o Work to create opportunities for connection of local government to private and nonprofit partners through organizations like the Birmingham Business Alliance and the United Way of Central Alabama.

Infrastructure Development and Service Improvements

• Fixing What We Already Have
  o Fill resource gaps for jobseekers through improved marketing and communication.
  o Promote infill development prioritizing the development of greyfields and brownfields through education of the advantages of such development.
  o Identify and assess those potential greyfield and brownfield properties that could be better utilized.
  o Assist local governments in the planning and implementation of infrastructure improvement projects.

• Making What Works, Work Better
  o Use the existing Brownfields Task Force as an outreach mechanism to educate on and incentivize the use of potential greyfield and brownfield properties.
  o Assist local governments in the planning and implementation of infrastructure improvement projects.

• Rethinking Service Delivery
  o Strengthen small business and the entrepreneurial community through the revolving loan fund.
  o Connect small business and entrepreneurs to local government through chambers of commerce and business associations; work with the Birmingham Business Alliance to further the establishment of the Birmingham Regional Enterprise Council.
  o Work with local business retention programs and utilize the revolving loan fund to fill financial needs.

• Investing Strategically
  o Promote growth and investment based on existing corridors and infill strategies for congestion mitigation and air quality improvement.
  o Maximize resources by combining projects and creating partnerships.
  o Invest in the holistic growth of a community.

Improving Access to Opportunities

• Transportation Choices
  o These strategies are being formulated as the Think Travel element of the Think Forward 2040 planning process.

• Cultivating Competitive Economic Assets
  o Increase quality of life through the attraction and investment in a diverse array of businesses.
Increase livability through the planning and implementation of walkable, sustainable, and convenient communities.

Develop a qualified workforce for business and industry needs through partnerships.

Through its ongoing programs as applied to these strategies, it is clear that the EDD of the RPBGB is a valuable resource for implementation of economic development initiatives affecting the Southwest Corridor.