

Tuscaloosa 2020

A Consensus Strategic Plan

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Foreword

Many people, representing all aspects of the Tuscaloosa community, came together in this planning process at the invitation of the Mayor, City Council and Planning Commission. These volunteers spent a considerable amount of time thinking, discussing, listening and recommending ways in which Tuscaloosa can manage the changes that will come as the city works its way toward the year 2020.

Strategic planning for our future is essential to improving the quality of local life. It will help to attract the kinds of growth that Tuscaloosa wants, for it is the only sure way to prove our community's commitment to its future. This kind of forward-looking planning lets local people decide for themselves the kind of community they want—its economic and community development and the public and private investment it will take to support a high quality of life. Planning like this does not dictate future decisions. Rather, it will help our elected officials consider options for the future, and to invest in the capital improvements, operations and maintenance it takes to attract the kind of private development local people want, and thus make the future more like we want it to be.

Quality of life is what Tuscaloosa's planning process is all about. The focus of the process has been on what will make Tuscaloosa better—its mission and purpose and ideas about an appropriate role for local government in everyday life.

This consensus strategic plan aims our community in the right direction. The strategic planning process that has led to this document will lead naturally to an update of the Tuscaloosa Comprehensive Plan, whose focus will be on how the city's physical resources may best be used—its patterns of growth and development and what it will take to enable and support them. We look forward to a continuation of broad support and participation as we continue to plan for the future of our community.

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Introduction

The purpose of this strategic planning process has been to reach consensus regarding the city's direction, and to consider policies, programs and projects relating to the major responsibilities and areas of influence of city government as we work our way toward the year 2020. This strategic plan is the result of a *visioning* process, a consensus of ideas of many people and their visions of the future. Producing a vision that will produce practical results requires a certain degree of organization. With this in mind, the Tuscaloosa 2020 strategic planning process was organized as a Comprehensive Plan Update Executive Committee overseeing the work of several subcommittees, each of which was charged with a specific subject area.

The Executive Committee was comprised of the Chairman of the Tuscaloosa Planning Commission and the Chairs of the subject area subcommittees. This group was responsible for the overall direction and management of the process. The Executive Committee was formed along with various subcommittees during June 2003. The kick-off meeting for the Executive Committee was held during July 2003.

In order to manage the task, each subcommittee chair was asked to direct the primary attention of the members to issues and options that were at the heart of the assigned area of responsibility. Nevertheless, the subcommittee chairs were asked to prod their members to consider some of the city's larger issues to assure some healthy crossover of ideas and vision.

- *How can we conserve and enhance the valuable aspects of the current built and natural environments while at the same time accommodating future growth?*
- *How can the city maintain its ability to attract desirable industries and businesses in the rapidly changing national and global economies?*
- *How can we ensure that our major street network remains capable of meeting future needs for the movement of people and goods?*
- *How can the transportation system incorporate facilities other than those serving the automobile, such as sidewalks and bicycleways?*
- *Can public transportation meet general transportation needs as well as those of special segments of the population?*
- *What basic services needs, such as health care and public safety, will arise as the community grows and changes?*
- *How can the city meet increasing demands placed upon its services and facilities?*
- *What role should the city play in expanding facilities and programs serving the arts?*
- *How can the city best support and strengthen the quality of life for our citizens?*
- *Given the increasing diversity of the city's population, how can we maintain a sense of togetherness and equity?*

Participants were invited, subcommittees were formed, and each was asked to hold its own organizational meetings. During the Fall of 2003 and Winter of 2004, each subcommittee scheduled meetings and worked with city staff to obtain the information and meet with the people it needed to interview to fulfill its charge.

The work of the subcommittees was rigorous, and forms a major part of this Consensus Strategic Plan. Subcommittee members researched, analyzed, and evaluated the

community in relation to their subject area, searched for issues and opportunities, and recommended goals, policies and actions for the city.

The subcommittee members, working with their support staff, were responsible for identifying and obtaining the information they needed, and for arranging meetings with representatives of relevant agencies, organizations, interest groups and members of the community. Joint meetings and exchanges of information were encouraged as a means of dealing with ideas and issues that overlapped two or more subcommittees. As a result, it was found that the work of the Land Use Subcommittee was touching on—and in some cases washing over—the agendas of other subcommittees. In other cases, some subcommittees found that others could address portions of their assignments in a more comprehensive manner. Thus, responsibilities and agendas shifted through the life of the process.

In early 2004, the subcommittees completed their work and submitted their preliminary reports, which comprised over five hundred pages. The Executive Committee reviewed the reports of the subject area subcommittees, and attempted to emphasize commonalities and reconcile differences among them. During the Summer of 2004 the staff edited these reports into a working first draft, which was reviewed by the Executive Committee during the Winter of 2004. Shortly thereafter, the Executive Committee's final draft was made available on the City of Tuscaloosa Website and at several public locations throughout the City for public comments; all of which were incorporated into this document. The Executive Committee approved the final version of the Strategic Plan in January, 2005, which was then approved by the Planning Commission as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan on March 17, 2005

(a) The Strategic Plan and Quality of Life

Every day in and around Tuscaloosa, individual investment decisions are made that affect the quality of life. Whether they are private decisions about where or what to build, or public decisions to construct or expand infrastructure to enhance new growth and development opportunities, they all affect the desirability of Tuscaloosa as a place in which to invest. That, then, is the primary subject of this plan.

What kind of place is Tuscaloosa building for itself—and how will that affect the quality of life? Is it a place that will be attractive to investors—and its residents? Like everyone, developers are looking for reasonable return on investment, in balance with a reasonable level of security. All things being equal, then, good development may best be attracted if Tuscaloosa plans for and manages its quality of life—which is highly dependent upon development patterns and the infrastructure that supports both existing development and that which the city and its residents desire.

Responsible developers want to know about a city's long-term public commitment to its own people and businesses—not just those it wants to attract. So they look for clear local goals, and a continuing record of putting time, talent, and capital into achieving those goals. When prospective investors look at a city and see evidence of good planning and effective management, they get the feeling the future is secure.

Developers and investors are just like everyone else in one respect: they want compatible neighbors and a high quality of life—not the problems that may be avoided with foresight and effective planning. And so the glue that holds together all of the subcommittee reports that have grown and evolved into this strategic plan is the belief that the people of Tuscaloosa are genuinely interested in improving the quality of life in their city and its surroundings.

The following twelve chapters are based on the reports submitted by the individual subcommittees. All of those reports have been edited for mutual compatibility. Each of the 12 chapters is organized in the same manner. First the “Assets” are listed; then the “Liabilities” and lastly the “Recommendations” are enumerated as official policies and programs for the City to implement. The discussion begins with Natural Resources as the source of life and underpinning of city and regional quality of life. A series of chapters dealing with Neighborhoods follows. They deal with the places where most of the city’s population resides and thus where quality of life means the most. Included in this series are subcommittee reports on neighborhood preservation, neighborhood revitalization, housing revitalization and housing development. A section on Economic Development, which deals with employment, income and commerce—where we work and how we support ourselves—follows. Next, the plan looks at Cultural Resources dealing with enhancing quality of life at all levels- arts, history, and Community Awareness. The plan concludes with a series of chapters dealing with the community facilities and services that support both people and places in the forms of transportation, water and sewer systems, schools, public health and safety, and parks and recreation.

It should be noted that, in the give-and-take strategic planning process that the rather ambitious community-wide charge of the Land Use Subcommittee quite naturally overlapped those of all other subcommittees. As a result, their concerns, analysis, evaluation and recommendations are interwoven throughout the chapters that follow rather than presented in a separate section.

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I. Natural Resources

(a) Mission

To incorporate the protection of natural resources into all aspects of the city's planning

(b) Assets

The City of Tuscaloosa and surrounding area has numerous natural resource-related assets that enhance the livability of our city and the health of our natural environment, thereby increasing the quality of life while making it more attractive to prospective citizens and businesses.

- Air quality – Tuscaloosa currently enjoys good air quality relative to some other cities in the state and region
- Ready access to year-around outdoor recreation – The area provides a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities for its citizens in close proximity to the city, including Lake Tuscaloosa, the Black Warrior River, and other water bodies, numerous parks, woodlands and golf courses
- Abundance of water and waterfront areas – Lake Tuscaloosa, the Black Warrior River, and other water bodies provide an abundance of multiuse water and water-related resources for the area, including valuable waterfront areas, such as the Black Warrior River frontage along Jack Warner Parkway
- Diverse physical setting –diverse landforms and topography, from steep rock bluffs to rolling hills and valleys to significant low lying wetland areas, due to location at the “fall line,” where the course of the Black Warrior River left its narrow valley in the hard rocks to the north and east and meandered out into the softer sediments to the south and west
- Open green spaces – Abundant open green spaces exist in Tuscaloosa, serving multiple functions, including water resource protection, wildlife habitat, recreation, historic and cultural purposes and quality of life enhancement
- Scenic beauty, flora, landscapes, and visible nightscapes – Tuscaloosa is characterized by the scenic beauty of its rivers, its lakes, an abundance of beautiful trees and other flora, attractive landscapes and a night sky unobscured by light pollution

(c) Liabilities

The subcommittee also identified a number of liabilities and threats associated with natural resources. These include the following:

- Threats to air quality from pollutants
- Degradation of viewsapes by billboards, other signage, utilities cables and poles
- Threats to water quality due to such factors as sedimentation, polluted run-off, lack of riparian buffers and impervious surfaces
- Noise pollution
- Lack of tree protection regulations or incentives
- Litter and lack of litter enforcement and compliance

- No city-wide recycling
- Inadequate facilities for cyclists and walkers throughout the community

(d) Recommendations

(i) Preservation of watersheds, floodplains, and improvement of water quality

- Conduct an assessment and characterization of Tuscaloosa's watersheds and develop an overall watershed protection plan for the water-related natural resources in the watersheds, focusing on the protection of Lake Tuscaloosa as the city's primary natural asset
- Characterize, protect, and improve the quality of Tuscaloosa's water resources through implementation of a comprehensive watershed-based approach to planning and development
- Restore the natural environment wherever possible and protect existing assets as development and growth move forward
- Promote the Non-Point Education for Municipal Officials program and "green site design" principles
- Complete a GIS-based impervious area/land use analysis and assessment of our watersheds
- Require effective buffer strips along all perennial and intermittent streams
- Prioritize urban streams by current condition and implement an annual stream restoration/streamside BMP (best management practices) program for priority streams
- Adhere strictly to requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program and revise existing ordinances to further enhance floodplain protection
- Provide incentives to encourage the use of pervious surfaces/infiltration and other alternative design concepts in development
- Encourage the use of conservation easements in sensitive areas through tax incentives or other benefits
- Implement and sustain an ongoing water quality monitoring program to provide adequate data to assess water quality status and trends
- Acquire and maintain appropriate GIS datasets for the entire watershed

(ii) Preservation of parks, green spaces and viewscapes

- Acquire and develop neighborhood and community parks in areas of growth
- Require dedication of parklands or fees in lieu of land from large developments
- Develop parks in underserved areas of the city, including Alberta and the Skyland Boulevard and Bryant High School areas
- Build greenways connecting parks to destination points such as schools, libraries and neighborhoods
- Develop parks that incorporate the most popular recreational activities: walking, swimming, bicycling, softball/baseball and fishing

- Implement existing park master plans
- Update the Sokol Park master plan
- Identify all viewscapes (significant scenic views that are assets to the community) in the city and provide for their protection and enhancement
- Encourage use of underground utilities, concrete/decorative poles as alternatives to overhead distribution lines
- Protect existing trees by adoption of a tree ordinance and incorporation of tree and landscape plans into the city's building and development permit procedures
- Consider joint employment, by the city and PARA, of an urban forester to assure tree protection is incorporated into all city projects based on current arboreal practices, and to advise developers and the Tree Commission regarding means to protect and increase the urban forest

Development of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

- Require inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian planning into all commercial development
- Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian routes into road widening and future bridge projects so that widening includes bicycle and pedestrian lanes
- Modify existing roads and paved shoulders to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians
- Train the Planning and TDOT staff in bicycle and pedestrian planning principles
- Develop independent bicycle and pedestrian routes in the city. This should focus on developing safe routes for recreation and commuting, including:
 - Railroad rights of way that are abandoned and or are likely to be abandoned, e.g., the old lines from UA to the Black Warrior River and from UA to Alberta, including right-of-way controlled by State Mental Health
 - Riverwalk, which presents an ideal opportunity for separate bicycle and pedestrian routes along the Black Warrior River
- Implement critical routes and crossings for bicycle and pedestrian traffic—for example:
 - Safety-related: crossovers and sidewalks on US 82
 - Hub-related routes to and from the University: Hackberry Lane and University Boulevard
 - McFarland Boulevard and 15th Street

(iii) Modification of Current Regulations

- Adopt a Development Ordinance that will include regulations for tree protection, landscaping, lighting, protection of viewscapes, and dumpster buffering
- Revise existing stormwater ordinance and enact to ensure compliance with Stormwater Phase II regulations
- Define or quantify an impervious surface area limit to trigger water quality/quantity controls requirement for all developments, regardless of acreage
- Revise the zoning ordinance to require preservation of valuable natural resources:
 - Include in the design approval package an aerial photograph and topographic map with all natural resource features noted

- Protect drainage and waterways using natural set backs from floodplains, streams, wetlands, water bodies and drainage features
- Preserve trees and buffer zones between the development and adjoining properties to facilitate natural viewsapes, reduce sound and light pollution, minimize signage and eliminate above ground utilities, cable and telephone lines
- Reduce noise and scattered light within and adjacent to residential neighborhoods
- Create bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
- Minimize impervious surfaces and facilitate on-site absorption of surface run-off and recharge of surficial aquifers to prevent sedimentation
- Preserve topographic features such as hills, streams and wetlands
- Preserve open spaces and create parks
- Create conservation easements

(iv) Other Actions

- Promote continuing education and recognition for realtors, architects, landscape design professionals, city planners, geologists, engineers and environmental scientists and developers, regarding preservation of natural resource features in the design approval process

II. Housing Development

(a) Mission

To make a comprehensive review of residential zoning ordinances in order to encourage mixed use developments and to promote environmentally friendly neighborhoods.

(b) Assets

- Robust and diversified housing market
- Abundant underdeveloped land
- Stable city government
- Healthy economic conditions

(c) Liabilities

- Outmoded residential zoning and subdivision regulations
- Special exception required to permit apartments in Central Business District
- Current residential zoning regulations inflexible
- Current residential zoning out of step with contemporary residential development
- Minimum lot sizes are too large (will not allow for smaller, affordable housing)
- No standards for higher density outside the PUD process
- Lack of mechanisms for conservation subdivisions or other creative approaches
- Subdivision regulations do not promote pedestrian-friendly developments, with a sense of community

(d) Recommendations

- Devise a new R-5 district to allow higher density housing types of three stories or less
- Allow residential uses in Central Business District without a special exception
- Upgrade subdivision regulations to allow for cluster developments, green spaces, landscaping, street widths and drainage conducive to environmentally friendly development
- Allow bay parking for residential developments with the use of pervious materials to more successfully integrate parking into a site's drainage plan
- Encourage mixed-use development with the use of a Planned Development District zoning classification
- Encourage the use of architects and land planners in site development to achieve more aesthetically pleasing signage, landscape, parking and lighting for planned residential development
- Conduct a five-year comprehensive review of the zoning ordinance and map, to be concurrent with Comprehensive Plan updates.

- Incorporate five principles into the Subdivision Regulations from the book *Creating Great Neighborhoods—Density in your Community*: 1) identify appropriate locations, 2) connect people and places, 3) mix uses, 4) find parking alternatives, and 5) create great places for people
- Strive to integrate street lighting, sidewalks, bicycle paths, landscaping and parks or functional open spaces into residential developments to create a pedestrian friendly built environment, and high quality of design through a comprehensive approach
- Consider the use of bonuses to promote good planning that will result in desirable development, e.g., more net density in exchange for more open space

III. Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization

(a) Mission

To rehabilitate blighted property and structures and encourage and promote residential and commercial growth in lower income neighborhoods

(b) Assets

- Properties in the West Area are potential assets and a resource to the city and as such deserve a closer look
- Stillman College can provide an invaluable asset in the revitalization of surrounding neighborhoods
- Tuscaloosa's robust and diversified housing market creates the appropriate conditions for development and rehabilitation stock in this area, an example being the recent annexation and development of Cherrystone and Hacienda Place PUDs on the West Side.

(c) Liabilities

- Boarded up structures
- Structures in the condemnation process
- Lots that are vacant with environmental hazards
- Eyesores and/Brownfields
- Inadequate lighting
- Open ditches or culverts that are hazards
- Lack of weed control
- Red-lining, i.e., banks will not make loans or insurance cannot be secured
- Presence of lead based paint
- Deteriorating neighborhoods and economic conditions near Stillman

(d) Recommendations

- Establish a land bank to receive vacant lots and boarded up housing units, work with the city's legal department to clear liens assessed against the property, and once title is cleared, donate the lots to a nonprofit organization or sell them to developers or individuals with a specified time to build on the property
- Develop economic development programs and projects for blighted areas.
- Identify State/Federal Initiatives that provide incentives to cities that develop housing for low- to moderate-income families
- Investigate the feasibility of the city issuing tax-exempt affordable housing bonds as a source of funding for low to moderate housing development
- Establish a housing rehabilitation fund for low-income senior citizens

- Develop a plan to eliminate environmental eyesores located in residential neighborhoods. Investigate and pursue Brownfield sites that can be remediated and reused
- Have an individual work with the community groups to develop neighborhood revitalization strategies and coordinate assistance from non-profit organizations for the targeted areas
- Encourage redevelopment of substandard housing near Stillman
- Increase home ownership through assistance to first-time buyers
- Coordinate faith-based organizations and other agencies to work together
- Develop strong neighborhood participation and association
- Increase enforcement of housing codes

IV. University Area Neighborhoods Preservation

(a) Mission

To recommend strategies for the neighborhoods around The University of Alabama

(b) Assets

- The University of Alabama and proximity to the university
- Capstone Retirement Village
- Expanded University of Alabama Student Recreation Center
- The Black Warrior River and the Riverwalk development
- The University Strip and adjacent new housing construction
- Good mix of land uses within a 2½ mile radius of the university
- The several historic districts
- Queen City Avenue

(c) Liabilities

- Traffic congestion on Hackberry Lane
- Speeding on 15th Street
- Inadequate parking for athletic events
- Inadequate parking for Bryant Conference Center
- Student housing incompatible with single-family neighborhoods
- Parking in front yards
- Housing and Fire Code violations
- Lack of noise ordinance
- Rental housing in blighted areas
- Campus margins perceived as high crime areas
- Sidewalk, curb and drainage problems
- Lack of sufficient on-campus housing
- Lack of architectural design review outside historic districts
- Lack of adequate street lighting
- Lack of handicap cuts to sidewalks and curbs

(d) Recommendations

(i) Housing

- Work with the neighborhoods to develop specific plans, such as the one developed by the Forest Lake neighborhood, to empower the neighborhoods and create responsibility within them for ensuring the implementation of those plans

- Encourage the university to acquire existing University Area Neighborhood housing for subsequent rental to visiting faculty and researchers
- Encourage the university to develop a low-cost financing program to enable home purchase in the University Area Neighborhoods to staff and faculty to promote investment for single-family ownership
- Consider the provision of a tranquil buffer zone of protected neighborhoods surrounding the university campus for aesthetics, the safety of its students, and of housing its staff and faculty by rezoning certain areas surrounding the university, e.g., Sherwood Drive, Caplewood Drive, University Circle, 13th Street, Audubon Place, Pinehurst, 7th Street, and Riverside Drive, to the city's lowest density zoning
- Study the feasibility of a voluntary program to enact rental housing inspection and licensing procedures that may in turn be used as a marketing program for owners of rental housing
- Encourage landlords to provide with all leases a rental unit disclosure form, listing all applicable city ordinances
- Require provision of adequate, paved parking (to the rear or side of the unit) for all housing development
- Establish a Tuscaloosa Historic District Commission with a mission to preserve the beauty and integrity of the districts, including the architecture of existing structures, use of the property, and maintenance of green spaces and trees, and with standards that will encourage upkeep and general improvement

(ii) Infrastructure/Traffic/Parking

- Consider additional north–south routes through the campus, including possible routes from Jack Warner Parkway, in particular just east of Sherwood Drive
- Consider additional east–west routes to the south of campus
- Eliminate on-street parking on Hackberry Lane in a manner that will enhance traffic flow but not encourage more intensive land use
- Improve Hargrove Road/Hackberry Lane south/west of the Forest Lake neighborhood
- Provide adequate on-campus parking for faculty, staff students and visitors
- Consider requiring city permit decals in University Area Neighborhoods to allow parking for residents only, to alleviate parking problems for students, faculty, staff and visitors to campus as well as families in the neighborhoods and citizens in the community coming to the university and the University Strip
- Study the feasibility of providing a satellite parking area for students and a parking deck downtown, both with regular trolley service into campus and the University Strip, to improve traffic flow at peak times and provide additional parking for visitors to campus on game days
- Improve traffic circulation by providing entranceway landscaping and signage along Jack Warner Parkway at the McCorvey Drive and Hackberry Lane entrances, installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of McCorvey Drive and Jack Warner Parkway, installation of a traffic signal with an extra turn lane off Jack Warner Parkway, and median improvements to prevent vehicles westbound on Jack Warner Parkway from crossing the median illegally to turn left onto Hackberry Lane

- Evaluate parking, curb and sidewalk conditions on Thomas Street, Reed Street, and Grace Street

(iii) Campus-Related

- Promote more mixed-use of properties on and adjacent to the University Strip to encourage pedestrian accessibility by creating stopping points along various routes between campus and residential areas nearby
- Establish design guidelines for the University Strip
- Study the feasibility of a pedestrian crosswalk between Hackberry Lane and McCorvey Drive over Jack Warner Parkway to the Riverwalk for purposes of safety and to encourage use of the riverfront park
- Provide walking access to the public library on Jack Warner Parkway from Queen City Avenue
- Extend the sidewalk in front of River Road Condominiums on Jack Warner Parkway to the intersection of 21st Avenue
- Study feasibility of Campus Transit System
- Update the streetscape of the University Area Neighborhoods with lighting and sidewalk improvements, including handicapped curb cuts for people with special needs and those using strollers

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V. Economic Development

(a) Mission

Evaluate economic development factors, identify areas for creative “mixed use” development or redevelopment opportunities and formulate initiatives to promote economic development and enhance a sustainable quality of life

(b) Assets

- Stable employee base, especially in health care and education
- Diversified economic base
- Increasing wage rates
- Abundant natural resources
- Transportation/infrastructure
- Diverse culture
- Good business climate
- Higher education resources
- Small town ambience with big city proximity
- Cultural assets
- Riverfront
- Black Warrior River
- Perception and reputation as progressive city
- Aggressive business development activities
- Proximity to the Birmingham metropolitan market
- Good air quality
- City school system emphasis on technology
- Easy access into city via I-20/59 and I-359
- Active downtown after 5 pm
- Daily Amtrak service
- Ability of city and county to work together on the big issues

(c) Liabilities

- University underutilized as a resource for economic development
- Incubator potential untapped
- High under-employment percentage
- High under-skilled worker percentage
- Lack of intergovernmental cooperation
- Multiple water authorities

- Underutilization of the airport
- Littered city
- Surrounded by rural counties with high unemployment rates
- Lack of attention to urban renewal on the west side of the city
- Not taking full advantage of the city's historic districts
- Lack of north – south corridor
- Lack of connection to I-20/59 east area
- Lack of county zoning for high density areas
- Underdeveloped land
- Lack of available, conveniently accessible hotel rooms of the same class
- Lack of a convention complex

(d) Recommendations

(i) Underutilization of The University of Alabama in Economic Development

In order to build on the existing cooperative relationship among several departments of the University of Alabama and the City of Tuscaloosa, it is recognized there is an opportunity for the leadership of the two entities to formalize a regular working relationship to focus on addressing a broad range of mutual concerns, designed to stimulate downtown revitalization and create a safe and growing environment. This process would focus on priority needs, such as reducing blighted housing, increasing the mix of residential and retail, recruiting white-collar businesses to the city, and working to help existing business and industry.

(ii) High under-employment and under-skilled worker percentages

Strongly support region-wide workforce initiatives, critical to the continued success of economic development in Tuscaloosa. Encourage the continued integration and collaborative partnerships between and among area service providers, ensuring that existing resources are maximized for the benefit for employers, job seekers, employees, and the general public.

(iii) The Local Education System

The city is commended for its outstanding support of education within the City of Tuscaloosa through the generous funding for the new high schools and for its positive relations with both City and County School Boards. By utilizing this positive working relationship, the county and city boards should be encouraged to continually look for ways of working together, collaborating, and/or consolidating agreed upon services or areas for mutual benefit of the school systems, teachers, students and support personnel. Consider asking for periodic summaries of these efforts and results.

(iv) No Passenger Service at the Airport

The Tuscaloosa Municipal Airport is an underutilized asset. As an alternative to commercial air service, continue to support and aggressively market additional uses for the Tuscaloosa Municipal airport.

(v) Intergovernmental Cooperation

The city should take a lead role in developing regionalism, for the city benefits if the county and region are strong. Adopt an approach that decisions will be made with the philosophy that *what is good for the region is good for my city*. Involve citizens and organizations in helping the community and city develop an understanding of the meaning, strategies and implications of 'regionalism' and the impact on Tuscaloosa and West Alabama.

There are issues within the county and adjacent counties that are important to economic development and quality of life, such as water quality of Lake Tuscaloosa, workforce development, water and sewer access, educational attainment, retail growth potential from regional shoppers, high unemployment in surrounding counties and other issues not enumerated here.

- Be visible/vocal in supporting initiatives that help adjacent counties
- Find ways to work together on projects via cooperation with city and county governments and through the state and federal governments
- Support Home Rule for the county so that both the city and county have power that can increase opportunities to make decisions/laws to improve the quality of life for its citizens
- Support the expansion of the retail/commercial market to achieve a 'real' regional retail hub that is competitive and slows the leakage to other areas, such as Birmingham
- Identify ways the city can actively help develop a pro-business attitude among local governments, including enhancement of the environment for small business development at City Hall

(vi) Clean City

Increase enforcement of litter laws and support community education on environmental stewardship. Some committee members cited elementary school contests on litter (posters, etc) they believe helped instill a belief that one should never litter. The City Council could ask citizens and schools to work together to find creative ways to raise awareness/reinforce the importance of not littering. Start with young children and build a generation that has learned not to litter.

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VI. Cultural and Historic Heritage

(a) Mission

Preserve, actively promote and support the city's cultural resources and historic heritage

(b) Assets

- Children's Hands-On Museum
- University of Alabama Natural History Museum
- Bama Theater
- The University of Alabama campus
- Capitol Park
- Tuscaloosa Historic Districts
- Tuscaloosa Symphony
- Tuscaloosa Children's Theater
- Downtown Northport
- Murphy African American Museum
- Gulf States Paper Headquarters
- Jemison Mansion
- Battle-Friedman House
- Stillman House
- Queen City Pool
- Bryce Hospital, Mansion and Cemetery
- Foster Auditorium
- Mercedes Visitor Center
- Weindorf Festival and City Fest
- Downtown Tuscaloosa architecture
- Sakura Japanese Festival
- Kentuck Festival
- Paul W. Bryant Museum
- Westervelt Warner Museum of Art
- Sarah Moody Gallery
- Tuscaloosa Public Library

(c) Liabilities

- Lack of education and appreciation of downtown Tuscaloosa's historic heritage and architectural structures

- Absence of structured coordination between government, schools and business leaders
- Lack of K-12 education of students regarding cultural resources
- Absence of ordinances to protect and preserve existing cultural resources
- Inadequate coordination of arts organizations, such as the Arts Council, Theater Guild and Symphony
- Lack of targeting programs to support arts and business leadership
- Impact of University of Alabama students on historic neighborhoods
- Lack of information about the significance of the Jack Warner American art collection
- Lost cultural resources due to lack of education as well as comprehensive plan
- Inadequate facilities for Tuscaloosa Children's Theatre and Community Dancers
- Lack of sufficient facilities to preserve and display historic archives
- Inadequate downtown parking to accommodate school groups for cultural and historic activities
- Lack of downtown performing arts center
- No comprehensive arts education program in area schools
- Lack of partnership between business and arts communities.
- Absence of a museum of Tuscaloosa history

(d) Recommendations

- In coordination with the Tuscaloosa Visitors and Convention Bureau, the University of Alabama, Stillman College, Shelton State Community College and other entities, consider establishment and funding of the following:
 - *A Civil Rights Tour* to include sites and places that saw significant events during the era of Civil Rights activism
 - *A Natural History Tour* to highlight local geology, plants, animals and the river
 - *A Maritime History Tour* to emphasize Tuscaloosa's long history of shipbuilding and navigation on the Black Warrior River—to include the locks and dams, the old dry dock and the sites of wrecks in the river
 - An overall *City Tour* to provide an overview of the city and its history
 - *A University of Alabama Weekday Walking Tour* to provide campus visitors historical background on the Capstone
 - *Cemetery Tours* of Evergreen and Greenwood Cemeteries to emphasize the history of the area through the lives of early citizens, cemetery architecture and burial customs
 - *A Haunted Tuscaloosa Tour* during the Halloween season to emphasize sites such as the Drish Mansion, Woods Hall, and the ghost Corps of Cadets on the Quadrangle
 - *Church Tours* to emphasize church architecture

- Extend the *Historic Marker Program* to include historic districts and key Downtown sites
- Work with the University of Alabama to organize a *Speakers Bureau* to provide presentations from professionals to groups as diverse as elementary school classes to civic clubs, e.g., architectural historians, architects, archaeologists, biologists, geologists, engineers, writers and artists
- Consider the establishment of a *City Public Information Office* to coordinate and disseminate information concerning the city, emphasizing cultural events
- Establish a *Tuscaloosa and University of Alabama Information Center* at the Interstate rest stop
- *Advertise* events on commercial media to augment public service announcements
- Install *Kiosks* to promote events in areas of high foot traffic such as malls and street corners
- Organize an annual *Visiting Artists Week*, in conjunction with the city and county school boards, at each area school to demonstrate the skills of various artists, including painters, sculptors, musicians, potters, writers and craftsmen
- Organize a series of *Performance Programs*, in conjunction with the city and county school boards, to include the Tuscaloosa Symphony, for area schools
- Develop a new *Performing Arts Center* in the Downtown Area as a primary local and regional cultural resource
- Organize a *Tuscaloosa Bicentennial Celebration* (the event will occur sometime during the period 2014 to 2021, depending upon the recognized date of Tuscaloosa's formation as a community)
- Create greater awareness of city's museums, historic houses, music and theater groups, and children's groups
- Create partnerships with municipal/business/arts organizations for programming and infrastructure
- Encourage the Tuscaloosa Convention and Visitors Bureau to offer tourism packages that include a series of cultural or arts events
- Include cultural organizations in community short-range and long-range planning
- Establish a history museum for the City of Tuscaloosa.
- Consider additional funding sources for the Tuscaloosa Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Consider the establishment of a City-wide Historic Preservation Plan to ensure the protection of other historic areas beyond the Downtown and University areas

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VII. Transportation

(a) Mission

To provide an optimal level of quality transportation facilities and services for current and future residents of the city

(b) Assets

- Street and highway network
- Bridges
- Black Warrior River
- Airport
- Amtrak passenger rail service
- Greyhound bus service
- Tuscaloosa County Transit Authority bus service
- ITS Cameras
- Railroads
- Transportation for people with disabilities

(c) Liabilities

- Poor condition of sidewalks
- Traffic congestion: 15th Street, SR 69 and Hackberry Lane
- Lack of commercial air service
- Inadequate traffic enforcement
- Inadequate local bus service area
- Lack of an Intermodal Center
- Inadequate taxi service
- Inadequate downtown parking
- Limited Greyhound station hours
- Inadequate transportation for people with disabilities

(d) Recommendations

- Increase traffic calming measures
- Improve existing major streets
- Improve signalization and infrastructure at selected intersections
- Increase number of lanes on AL 69
- Complete Eastern/Northern Bypass
- Improve Bear Creek Cut Off Road for immediate relief to AL 69S

- Extend Eastern/Northern Bypass south and west
- Complete Buttermilk Road improvements
- Add an interchange at Hargrove Road and I-20/59
- Increase Interstate Highway service roads
- Study downtown parking needs (e.g. decks versus surface lots)
- Increase parking enforcement and education
- Expand Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
- Aggressively pursue current airport plan – radar, air cargo, military and corporate use
- Try to connect with a second-tier commercial airline hub, e.g., Memphis or Nashville
- Continue marketing airport and making upgrades to its infrastructure
- Complete the plans for the intermodal center and build it
- Increase truck lane usage restrictions
- Change subdivision regulations to emphasize installation of sidewalks along collectors and arterials
- Continue to upgrade sidewalks to meet handicapped accessibility standards

VIII. Utilities and Environmental Services

(a) Mission

To provide an efficient level of utility infrastructure, facilities and services for existing and future development

(b) Assets

- Abundant water supply
- Planning for water and sewer systems needs and facilities
- Alabama Power Company
- Cable system
- Fire insurance (ISO) rating
- Alagasco

(c) Liabilities

- Lake Tuscaloosa security, upstream users and surrounding land use conflicts
- Unsewered areas
- Insufficient landfill capacity
- Rural water authorities
- Peak summer demand pressing city capacity
- Not enough fiber optic access available
- Need city-wide internet

(d) Recommendations

- Plan for protection of water supply (raw and drinking) – vulnerability assessment has been completed; needs outlined therein should be budgeted annually
- Preserve surface water supply lakes (Tuscaloosa, Harris and Nichol) – legislative input on land use and development around lakes as well as on upstream users of tributaries that feed these lakes
- Main water rates sufficient to provide necessary staff and capital for long-term water and sewer needs
- Assess annually departmental needs in terms of operating budget, personnel and capital needs with comparison of actual and projected revenues
- Develop strategy to address the presence of rural water authorities that encircle the city and inhibit growth-lobby for changes to federal legislation which charters rural water authorities
- Study reorganization into countywide unified water and sewer systems (Existence of multiple water and sewer authorities and facilities does not maximize investment)

- Provide for more assessment sewers and CDBG funded projects will need to be implemented in un-sewered areas
- Develop an Integrated Solid Waste Management System
- Educate developers, contractors, and engineers regarding the consequences of uncontrolled development and its impact on city infrastructure (streets, sanitary sewers, storm drainage and flood patterns)
- Adopt a long range land use plan to guide future development
- Increase fiber optics coverage throughout city and city-wide internet access – Investigate fiber optic distribution network in sewers and the installation of “dark fiber” as has been done in other cities; investigate city-wide internet network needs and provide recommendations to facilitate it

IX. Public Safety

(a) Mission

To provide the required level of public safety facilities and services for current and future residents

(b) Assets

- Fire stations
- Fire drill facility
- Logistics center
- Air crash station
- Rescue trucks
- Police Department
- Police substations: Alberta / West Side / UA
- Helicopter patrol
- PAL program
- Department of Emergency Management
- Hazardous materials team

(c) Liabilities

- Lack of central communications system for emergency workers
- No heavy rescue manpower
- Insufficient number of police substations

(d) Recommendations

- Coordinate the location and operations of 911 and the Emergency Management Agencies Emergency Operation Center
- Examine the feasibility of converting Medium Rescue to Heavy Rescue through training and equipment upgrades
- Provide incentives for recruiting and retention of paramedic/firefighters
- Train Fire Dispatchers as Emergency Medical Dispatchers
- Provide additional Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue Service support staff
- Relocate fire stations to reduce response time and provide better coverage
- Assign Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue Service apparatus repairs to the Fire Department mechanic shop
- Provide police precincts in the east, west and central areas and across the River
- Provide signage, dormitory facilities and a driver training site for Police Academy

- Provide additional space at the helicopter facility
- Improve the lake patrol facility with larger dock, maintenance and office space
- Provide more visible police patrol near Shelton during school hours
- Provide a Fire Rescue unit closer to Shelton
- Shift the crime lab to a separate facility
- Study feasibility of changing to five-person fire crews for engine and ladder/service units
- Implement the City-endorsed automated traffic light cameras

X. Health Care

(a) Mission

To provide an optimal level of quality hospitals and home health care facilities and services for current and future residents

(b) Assets

- DCH Regional Medical Center
- Northport Medical Center
- HealthSouth Surgical/Diagnostic Center
- North Harbor Pavilion
- Phelps Outpatient Center
- Veterans Affairs Medical Center
- Bryce Hospital-Mary Harper Center
- Partlow Development
- Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility
- Veterans' Administration Hospital
- Hospice Centers (e.g. Hospice of West Alabama)
- Hospice Care Providers (e.g. Caring Hands Hospice, Alacare)
- Dialysis Centers (e.g. Gambro Healthcare)
- Home Health Providers (e.g. DCH, Alacare, Amedisys)
- Tuscaloosa County Public Health Department
- Urgent/Family Care Centers (e.g., First Care, Emergi-Care, MedCenter South, Skyland Medical Center)
- Private Physicians' Offices
- Ambulance Companies (e.g. NorthStar, American Medical Response, Emergistat)
- Tuscaloosa Fire/Rescue Service
- Wheelchair Van Companies (e.g. NorthStar, Superior Medicab, AMR, Lifecare)
- Maude Whatley Health Services
- Nursing Homes (e.g. Estes Facilities, Heritage, LaRocca)
- University Medical Center
- UA School of Medicine
- UA and Shelton Nursing Programs
- Russell Student Health Center
- United Blood Services and American Red Cross Blood Services
- Indian Rivers MH/MR Center

- Good Samaritan Clinic
- Rehabilitation Centers (e.g. DCH-Northport, West Alabama, Easter Seals)
- State Poison Control Center

(c) Liabilities

- Hospice capacity for indigent care
- Insufficient assisted living space
- No plans to account for an aging population
- Insufficient adult day care
- Urgent care facilities are lacking in eastern section
- Public Health clinic and annex are in separate facilities
- Number of insured patients will increase with Medicare change
- Hispanic workforce language barrier
- Changes in Medicaid will increase number of patients in home health
- Changes in Medicaid will increase patients in public health department

(d) Recommendations

- Increase the capacity for treatment of indigent and uninsured in hospice care, assisted living, public health, and nursing homes with growing population
- Plan for funding to respond to Medicare and Medicaid changes
- Plan for additional adult day care facilities
- Secure a new site for the Department of Public Health, consolidate the clinic and Annex to allow for increased patient care in response to Medicaid changes

Animal Health Care

(a) Mission

To provide an optimal level of quality animal health facilities and services

(b) Assets

- Tuscaloosa Metro Animal Shelter
- Tuscaloosa Humane Society
- T-Town Paws

(c) Liabilities

- No air-conditioning of kennels in Tuscaloosa Metro Animal Shelter
- No place to walk dogs at shelter

- Growing population of feral cats in city
- Uncontrolled breeding of dogs and cats
- No animal cruelty law, except for dogs and cats
- No 24-hour veterinary clinic in city
- No monitoring of businesses for animal care violations
- Not enough animal control officers

(d) Recommendations

- Consider a graduated licensing program, which would require pet owners to purchase licenses for pets: licenses for neutered pets would cost a nominal fee; those for fertile pets would cost more
- Address the problem of the proliferation of wild cats in neighborhoods
- Coordinate with Northport and County on training animal control officers
- Enforce existing laws on animal care in pet shops, kennels, etc.
- Study the feasibility of an education program regarding spaying and neutering
- Establish an animal adoption facility
- Create an animal education program within the schools

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XI. Education

(a) Mission

To provide the highest possible quality of educational facilities and services

(b) Assets

- City schools
- Private schools
- The University of Alabama
- Stillman College
- Shelton State Community College
- Alabama Fire College
- Alabama Police Officer Training Center

(c) Liabilities

- Movement from city to county and private schools
- Lack of sufficient Spanish language programs
- Insufficient pre-K classes to serve all eligible students

(d) Recommendations for the Board of Education

- Provide increased opportunities for parents and community to visit city schools
- Educate the media on issues before public meetings
- Market public schools to private school families and newcomers
- Increase security and monitoring in city schools
- Create collaborative teams between the community and the schools
- Establish an agency for non-English-speaking families
- Decrease the student-teacher ratio
- Keep parents informed via newsletters, telephone, etc.
- Establish a parent-volunteer program in each school
- Establish a central location for all pre-school children

XII. Libraries

(e) Mission

To provide an optimal level of quality library facilities and services for current and future residents

(f) Assets

- Tuscaloosa Public Library
- Weaver-Bolden Branch Library
- Stillman College Library
- Blind & Handicapped Library
- University of Alabama Libraries:
 - Amelia Gorgas Library
 - Bruno Business Library
 - Rodgers Science and Engineering Library
 - McLure Education Library
 - Law Library
 - Health Science Library
 - W.S. Hoole Special Collections
 - Mary H. Bryant Special Collections
 - Alabama Geological Survey Collections
 - Map Library

(g) Liabilities

- Lack of expansion room for public library
- Insufficient family programming
- Insufficient number of branch libraries for public
- Inadequate computer services for students
- Lack of adequate green space for family activities at existing libraries
- Insufficient number of bookmobiles
- Lack of partnerships with community agencies

(h) Recommendations for the Library Board

- Expand services and facilities currently provided by the Tuscaloosa Public Library
- Study the feasibility of establishing branch libraries in municipal agencies
- Add community outreach programming for students and families
- Create park or green space at libraries for family activities
- Create library partnerships with social service agencies
- Consider extending City-wide bus service to branches
- Identify and secure additional revenue resources

XIII. Parks and Recreation

(a) Mission

To ensure provision of superior park and recreation facilities and services for all residents of the city

(b) Assets

- Community centers
- Regional and neighborhoods parks
- Black Warrior River
- Lakes
- Tuscaloosa Riverwalk
- Health clubs: PARA / schools / private
- Golf courses: PARA / public / private
- Schools / university spectator events
- FOCUS on Senior Citizens Center
- Arboretum

(c) Liabilities

- Insufficient teen facilities and activities
- Lack of passive parks
- Inadequate variety of senior centers
- Lack of tree preservation policies
- Lack of security/safety concerns
- Transportation to/from parks and recreation sites
- Programs/services available to all segments of the community
- Lack of indoor pools

(d) Recommendations for the Parks and Recreation Authority

- Urge service providers and community organizations to eliminate duplication and identify untapped funding sources
- Involve faith-based organizations to provide teen facilities and activities
- Evaluate teen needs/opportunities community-wide
- Redevelop Stafford Elementary site park as a passive park
- Identify/secure funding for passive park land purchase and development
- Explore joint ventures with community recreation based organizations
- Identify and secure additional tax or revenue sources for recreational activities

- Inventory and evaluate the adequacy of existing services and programs based on needs and projected population growth
- Devise a comprehensive horticultural plan and program
- Invest in lighting, maintenance and design to promote and ensure safety in the park system
- Augment personnel/funding to patrol park areas
- Extend citywide bus service to major park areas

Conclusion

However well thought out, discussed and exciting the city's strategic plan may be, the often-quoted line from former President Dwight Eisenhower should be recalled at this moment: *plans are nothing—planning is everything*. By this, the former president was underscoring the most basic truth about plans and planning—that the process of getting people together to think about the issues and create a collective vision is the most important thing.

Those who have participated in the planning process are now far more prepared to shepherd the city, through both public and private investment of time and capital, toward a common vision of the future. This planning process has provided an opportunity to think systematically about the future, to set long-range goals, and to devise policies, programs, and projects that will move the city toward fulfillment of its vision.

Executive Committee Members

Jimmy Warren
Chairperson of Planning Commission

Walter Maddox (City Council)
Tuscaloosa City Board of Education

John Sheffield
Chairperson of Board of Adjustment

Joe Romanek
Board of Adjustment / Planning Commission

Dan Gibson
Board of Adjustment

Don Kelly
Director PARA

Joe Robinson
Director TDOT

Dr. Cordell Wynn
Chairman Tuscaloosa Housing Authority

Rick Herbert
Director Tuscaloosa Housing Authority

Angela Fulmer
President Challenge 21

Johnnie Aycock
President Chamber of Commerce

Mason Bonner
Stillman College

Lew Drummond
Shelton State

Shelly Jones
Chairperson Tuscaloosa City Board of Education

Douglas Behm
University of Alabama Office of Land Management

Mike Ellis
Heritage Commission

Jimbo Woodson
City of Tuscaloosa
Legal Department

Bob Lake
West Alabama Regional Commission

Appendix: the Participants

Land Use

Bennet Bearden	Gene Smith	Leroy McAbee	William Snowden
Doug Behm	Jimmy Warren	Lew Drummond	Jim Green
Farrington Snipes	Joe Robinson	Paul Boschung	Vanessa Llera
Flora Gay	Joe Romanek	Walter Maddox	David Weaver

Natural Resources

Doug Behm	David Norris	Hobson Bryan	Lisa Algieri
Bennet Bearden	Wayne Ford	Jerry Moss	Bob Lake
Chad Christian	Doug Phillips	Karen Bryan	Jim Green
Dan Gibson	Evelyn Young	Mark Beeler	Kent McCray
David Griffin	Harold Stowell	Nick Tew	Jim Oden

University Area Neighborhoods Preservation

Jeff Neighbors	Virginia Powell	Jim Green	Evelyn Young
Christine Dietsch	Robert Reynolds	Godfrey Jones	
Steve Kennedy	William Snowden	Vanessa Llera	

Housing Development

John Sheffield	Sonny Richardson	Todd Vick	Vanessa Llera
Dr. Glen Griffin	Janet O'Neil	Jim Green	William Snowden

Housing Revitalization

Louis Barnett, Jr	Leonard Brown	Dwight Junkin	Janet O'Neal
William Snowden	Willa Goodson	Lynn Morris	Evelyn Young
Hannah Brown	Jim Green	Eartha Long	

Economic Development

Angela Fulmer	Jim Flemming	Richard Crawford	Walter Maddox
Dara Longgrear	Joe Robinson	Robert Ratliff	Gene Poole
Dr. Carl Ferguson	John Sheffield	Susan Miller	William Snowden
Gene Smith	Johnnie Aycock	Terry Waters	

Community Facilities and Infrastructure [Education, Libraries, Health Care, Public Safety, Transportation, Utilities, Environmental Services, Parks and Recreation

Anda Allen	Jimmy Junkin	Steve Shelton	Frances Tucker
Helen Ball	Don Kelly	John Snead	Jeanette Vandermeer
Shane Daugherty	Teresa Lewis	Maurice Sledge	George White
Jim Fitts	Alan Martin	Nels Strickland	Mark Whittle
David Griffin	Joe Robinson	Michael Talerico	Evelyn Young
Shelley Jones	John Rozier	Dale Taylor	

Cultural Resources

Mike Ellis	Scott Bridges	Jim Green	David Norris
William Snowden	Jim Ezell	Marvin McKinley	Pam Penick
Bruce Bizzoco	Gene Ford	Regina Noland	Evelyn Young

