



# Lee County Master Plan

October 2010



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# LEE COUNTY MASTER PLAN

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plan Summary.....	1-1
Background.....	1-1
Purpose .....	1-1
Legislative Authority .....	1-1
Regional Context .....	1-2
Planning Process.....	1-3
Public Involvement.....	1-3
Summary of Key Findings - Assets, Opportunities and Constraints.....	1-4
the Plan.....	1-6
Conservation and Development Framework.....	1-7
Vision .....	1-7
Principles.....	1-7
Character Areas.....	1-7
Framework Goals .....	1-11
Framework Objectives and Recommendations.....	1-13
Implementation of the Plan.....	1-32
Fiscal Assessment and the Conservation and Development Framework .....	1-34
Summary of the County Plan by Area.....	1-35

**COUNTY ASSESSMENT**

Introduction.....2-1  
Summary of Key Findings.....2-1  
    Intergovernmental Coordination.....2-1  
    Population and Growth.....2-1  
    Land Use.....2-1  
    Community Design.....2-2  
    Transportation.....2-2  
    Economic Development.....2-2  
    Housing.....2-2  
    Open Space, Natural and Cultural Resources.....2-2  
    Community Facilities and Services.....2-2  
    Infrastructure and Services.....2-2  
Organization and Legal Assessment.....2-3  
    Lee County Legal Authority and Planning Jurisdictions.....2-3  
    Intergovernmental Relationships.....2-3  
    Other Authorities.....2-3  
Population and Growth Analysis.....2-6  
    Southeastern Regional Outlook.....2-7  
    Lee County Historical Population Trends.....2-7  
    Projections, Models, Forecasts and Plans.....2-8  
Physical Characteristics.....2-13  
    Topography.....2-13  
    Flood Plains.....2-13  
    Wetlands.....2-13  
    Quarries.....2-13  
    Soils.....2-13  
    Vegetation.....2-13

**PLAN ELEMENTS**

Introduction.....3-1  
Land Preservation Element.....3-2  
    Land Use Assessment.....3-2  
    Land Preservation - Conservation and Development Framework.....3-9  
    Existing Community Design Assessment.....3-9  
    Community Design Concept - Models for Centers, Neighborhoods and Corridors.....3-10  
    Land Preservation and Community Design Goal.....3-10  
    Objectives and Recommendations.....3-10  
Transportation Element.....3-12  
    Transportation Concept and Purpose.....3-12  
    Transportation Goal.....3-12  
    Recommendations.....3-12  
    Conclusion.....3-17  
Economic Development Element.....3-18  
    Economic Development Defined.....3-18



Purpose .....	3-18
Approach.....	3-19
Economic Development - Highest Ranked Objectives and Strategies .....	3-20
Economic Development Goal.....	3-21
Economic Development Objectives, Policies and Strategies.....	3-21
Profile: Lee County Demographics and Economy .....	3-27
Housing and Neighborhoods Element.....	3-39
General Existing Conditions .....	3-39
Assessment of Housing Needs, Types, Cost Ranges.....	3-39
Models for Housing and Neighborhoods .....	3-39
Housing Goal.....	3-40
Objectives, Policies and Strategies.....	3-41
Open Space, Green Infrastructure, Natural and Cultural Resources Element .....	3-42
Areas of Potential Conservation, Protection, Natural or Cultural .....	3-42
Historic Resources .....	3-43
Natural and Cultural Resources .....	3-46
Open Space, Green Infrastructure, Natural and Cultural Resources Goals .....	3-46
Objectives, Policies and Strategies.....	3-46
Community Facilities and Service Element.....	3-48
Existing and Future Needs.....	3-48
Community Facilities and Services Goal.....	3-55
Objectives, Policies and Strategies.....	3-55
Infrastructure and Services Element.....	3-58
General Information.....	3-58
Infrastructure and Services.....	3-58
Existing and Future Needs.....	3-59
Infrastructure and Services Goal .....	3-66
Objectives, Policies and Strategies.....	3-66
Intergovernmental Coordination Element.....	3-67
Current County Structure .....	3-67
Other Planning Jurisdictions.....	3-68
Other planning Authorities.....	3-69
Intergovernmental Coordination Goal.....	3-70
Objectives, Policies and Strategies.....	3-70

**APPENDIX**

Appendix A: Key Terms and Concepts .....	4-2
Appendix B: Transportation related Technical Materials and Sources .....	4-3
Appendix C: Summary of Stakeholder Interviews for Economic Development.....	4-42
Appendix D: Overall Ranking of Economic Development Strategies .....	4-47
Appendix E: Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) model.....	4-50

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1.1 - Regional Context..... 1-2

Figure 1.2 - County Map and Subareas..... 1-2

Figure 1.3 - First Round of Town Hall Meetings..... 1-3

Figure 1.4 - Second Round of Town Hall Meetings..... 1-3

Figure 1.5 - Conservation and Development Framework Diagram..... 1-9

Figure 1.6 - Proposed Land Use..... 1-14

Figure 1.7 - Proposed Lee County Functional Classification..... 1-17

Figure 1.8 - Proposed Housing and Neighborhoods..... 1-22

Figure 1.9 - Proposed Conservation Areas..... 1-24

Figure 1.10 - Planning Areas and Voting Beats..... 1-35

Figure 1.11 - Planning areas and the Conservation and Development Framework..... 1-35

Figure 1.12 - Planning Area: A..... 1-36

Figure 1.13 - Planning Area: B..... 1-37

Figure 1.14 - Planning Area: C..... 1-38

Figure 1.15 - Planning Area: D..... 1-40

Figure 1.16 - Planning Area: E..... 1-41

Figure 2.1 - Planning Jurisdictions..... 2-3

Figure 2.2 - Municipalities..... 2-4

Figure 2.3 - Unincorporated Communities..... 2-4

Figure 2.4 - County Commission Districts..... 2-5

Figure 2.5 - Lee County Historical Population Trends..... 2-8

Figure 2.6 - Woods & Poole and REMI Projection Comparisons..... 2-10

Figure 3.1 - 1992 National Land Cover Dataset..... 3-4

Figure 3.2 - 2001 National Land Cover Dataset..... 3-5

Figure 3.3 - 1992-2001 Change of National Land Cover Dataset..... 3-6

Figure 3.4 - 2008 Built Land Illustration..... 3-7

Figure 3.5 - Lee County Existing Land Use..... 3-8

Figure 3.6 - Proposed Lee County Functional Classification..... 3-15

Figure 3.7 - Proposed Lee County Population Trends 1960-2008..... 3-28

Figure 3.8 - Historic Resources..... 3-42

Figure 3.9 - Natural Resources..... 3-45

Figure 3.10 - Forested Areas..... 3-45

Figure 3.11 - Hydrology..... 3-45

Figure 3.12 - Lee County School System Attendance Areas..... 3-48

Figure 3.13 - Lee County Schools..... 3-49

Figure 3.14 - Parks..... 3-51

Figure 3.15 - Fire Districts..... 3-52

Figure 3.16 - Fire Stations..... 3-53

Figure 3.17 - Hospitals..... 3-54

Figure 3.18 - Water Service Areas..... 3-59

Figure 3.19 - Sewer Service Areas..... 3-62

Figure 3.20 - County Commission Districts..... 3-68

Figure 3.21 - Planning Jurisdictions..... 3-69

Figure 4.1 - Study Area..... 4-3

Figure 4.2 - Functional Classification .....4-8

Figure 4.3 - National Highway System.....4-11

Figure 4.4 - High Accident Histories and Fatal Accidents.....4-13

Figure 4.5 - Recently Repaved and State Graded.....4-18

Figure 4.6 - Roadways with AADT Greater Than 1000.....4-26

Figure 4.7 - Traffic Analysis Zones in Lee County.....4-28

Figure 4.8 - TAZ Data for Lee County .....4-30

Figure 4.9 - County Roadways Deserving Focus Attention.....4-32

Figure 4.10 - High Accident Intersections .....4-34

Figure 4.11 - Proposed Lee County Functional Classification.....4-36

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 2.1 - Framework Character Area Definitions..... 1-8

Table 2.1 - Lee County Historical Census Data..... 2-7

Table 2.2 - Population Projection Comparisons..... 2-11

Table 2.3 - 2008 Population Estimates..... 2-11

Table 2.4 - Scenario 1 - Seventy Percent Municipal Capture Rate..... 2-12

Table 2.5 - Scenario 2 - Sixty-Five Percent Municipal Capture Rate..... 2-12

Table 3.1 - 2001 Land Cover Classification Table..... 3-3

Table 3.2 - 1992-2001 NLCD Change..... 3-3

Table 3.3 - Improvement recommendations..... 3-16

Table 3.4 - Lee County Population Trends 1960-2008..... 3-28

Table 3.5 - Population Projections for Lee County..... 3-29

Table 3.6 - Population within Defined Radius of Lee County..... 3-29

Table 3.7 - Ten Largest Industry Sector Employeers, 2008..... 3-30

Table 3.8 - Ten Largest Industry Sector Employees, 2008..... 3-30

Table 3.9 - Major Employers (Number of Employees)..... 3-31

Table 3.10 - Employment Growth Trends, 2003-2008..... 3-32

Table 3.11 - Employment Growth Projections, 2009-2019..... 3-33

Table 3.12 -Job Opening Trends by Occupational Category, 2003-2008..... 3-34

Table 3.13 - Projection: Job Opening Projections by Occupational Category, 2009-2019..... 3-35

Table 3.14 - Total County Employment: 67,983..... 3-36

Table 3.15 - Lee County and Alabama Unemployment Rates..... 3-37

Table 3.16 - Educational Attainment, Population Aged 25 or Older, 2006..... 3-37

Table 3.17 - Median Household Income (2008)..... 3-38

Table 3.18 - Historic Districts..... 3-43

Table 3.19 - Historic Structures or Places..... 3-43

Table 3.20 - Lee County School Facilities..... 3-48

Table 3.21 - Volunteer Fire Departments..... 3-52

Table 3.22 - Auburn Water Works and Sewer Board (Potable Water)..... 3-60

Table 3.23 - Beauregard Water Authority (Potable Water)..... 3-60

Table 3.24 - Beulah Utilities District (Potable Water)..... 3-60

Table 3.25 - Loachapoka Water Authority (Potable Water)..... 3-61

Table 3.26 - Opelika Utilities (Potable Water)..... 3-61

Table 3.27 - Phenix City Utilities (Potable Water)..... 3-61

Table 3.28 - Smiths Water and Sewer Authority (Potable Water)..... 3-62

Table 3.29 - Auburn Water Works and Sewer Board (Sanitary Sewer)..... 3-63

Table 3.30 - City of Opelika (Sanitary Sewer)..... 3-63

Table 3.31 - Phenix City Utilities (Sanitary Sewer)..... 3-63

Table 3.32 - Smiths Water and Sewer Authority (Sanitary Sewer)..... 3-63

Table 4.1 - Performance Measures..... 4-4

Table 4.2 - Manner of Commute for Lee County Residents..... 4-5

Table 4.3 - Location of Work for Lee County Residents..... 4-6

Table 4.4 - Location of Residence for Lee County Workers..... 4-6

Table 4.5 - Existing Capacity, Volume and Level of Service Along Key Non-Urban Roadway Corridors..... 4-10

Table 4.6 - Lee County Accidents, 2006 and 2007..... 4-12

Table 4.7 – Lee County Rural Road Accidents, 2004 to 2008.....4-14

Table 4.8 – Lee County Accident Occurrences, 2004 to 2008.....4-14

Table 4.9 – Lee County Rural Road Highway Segments with 5 or More Accidents, 2004 to 2008 .....4-15

Table 4.10 – Lee County Rural Road Intersections with 5 or More Accidents, 2004 to 2008 .....4-16

Table 4.11 – Population Segments with a Propensity for Transit Use.....4-19

Table 4.12 – Lee-Russell Public Transit Fares.....4-22

Table 4.13 – Lee County Roadways with AADT Greater than 1,000 .....4-27

Table 4.14 – Data for Lee County Traffic Analysis Zones.....4-29

Table 4.15 – Existing & Future Capacity, Volume and LOS Along Key Non-Urban Roadway Corridors.....4-31

Table 4.16 – Improvement Recommendations.....4-40

Table 4.17 – FHWA Funding Sources.....4-41



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PLAN SUMMARY

#### BACKGROUND

Lee County has been one of the fastest growing counties in Alabama for several decades. Opelika is the county seat and Auburn University has been a major influence on the county. Opelika and Auburn have a history of strong industrial and commercial centers. Added to this historical trend toward increased growth is the military base realignment at Fort Benning, Georgia and other regional trends. The recent and anticipated continued growth is occurring in a county with a rural background and history.

In light of continued growth and change, Lee County, with the cooperation and authority from the legislature, has established a Planning Commission and initiated a comprehensive planning process.

#### PURPOSE

A planning process, known as "Leave Your Mark," is intended to help citizens provide input to develop the master plan with a clear vision for the future of Lee County, addressing the needs and aspirations of all residents. The purpose of the plan is to provide a long term guide for physical development of the county. The plan is not a zoning plan, nor does it include a zoning map or other provisions. The *Master Plan* is intended to be part of an ongoing planning process which will be updated and revised as needed as the county continues to grow.

#### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The authority for undertaking the master planning process was granted under a legislative act, which also provides direction for how the plan may be implemented. Continued cooperation between the county and legislature is critical to future organizational, financial and other recommendations envisioned in the plan. The legislative

authority provided for the planning process contains specifics for the application of the plan and subsequent regulations, etc. are the subject to the agreement of such authority by political beats in the county.

**REGIONAL CONTEXT**

The Lee County Master Plan takes into account the regional context and looks at the county as a whole. Although the county includes incorporated municipalities, the planning area primarily focuses on the unincorporated areas of the county, where county government has the greatest jurisdiction.

Lee County is part of a region which influences its growth and development. Lee County is also affected by proximity to Fort Benning, the Columbus, Georgia metro area and its proximity to Montgomery and Atlanta along the Interstate -85 corridor. The county is also made up of sub-areas of the county including incorporated political jurisdictions as well as physical places – communities, neighborhoods and other places.



**FIGURE 1.1 - REGIONAL CONTEXT**

The location of Lee County with the regional context of east Alabama and west Georgia.



**FIGURE 1.2 - COUNTY MAP AND SUBAREAS**



## PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process includes an assessment of current and future conditions in the county. The plan, however, is citizen driven and has included multiple opportunities for public involvement and coordination with the Lee County Planning Commission. Upon adoption of this initial plan, the county will continue to update the plan as needed, including annual reviews and a report by the Planning Commission to the County Commission. The plan may also be updated through more detailed area plans as well as more specific functional plans, for example a county greenway plan, county facility plan, county transportation plan, etc.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Opportunities for public participation have been designed into the planning process: an initial round of Town Hall meetings, a second round of Town Hall meetings to refine goals and objectives and develop conceptual land use maps, and finally, an open house to review the draft plan. To attract citizens to participate, the County undertook an outreach effort that consisted of road signs, newspaper articles, radio advertisements, television advertisements, flyers, and a web site. This outreach was organized through a coordinating committee along with the planning commission.

The first round of Town Hall meetings were designed to seek initial ideas from county residents. The results of the meetings provided a foundation for creating and refining goals, objectives and strategies of the master plan. During the first round of Town Hall meetings that took place in March 2009, participants received an orientation to the Master Planning process and took part in a visual preference survey to offer feedback on various development conditions. Following the visual preference survey, participants broke into small groups to brainstorm ideas for the future of the county. This was accomplished through facilitated discussions and a mapping exercise to identify strong places and weak places in the county. The ideas collected from the public were entered verbatim into a database, sorted into different categories, and used to develop a draft goal statement for each element of the plan. For a more detailed explanation of this public involvement meeting, please refer to the *Town Hall Meetings Round One Summary Report* on file with the County Commission Office.

The second round of public meetings were designed to share what was learned during the first round and bring the draft goals, principles, and Conceptual Development Framework back to the public for additional input and refinement. Similar to the first round of meeting, the second round began with an orientation to the Master Planning process and review of

the previous meeting. Participants were then given a worksheet and during a facilitated presentation reviewed and commented on the goals and principles that were formed based on the first round of Town Hall meetings. Following the facilitated presentation, participants then broke into smaller groups to review and comment on the Conceptual Development Framework. The comments from both segments were collected from the public and entered verbatim into a database, sorted into different categories and used to adjust the corresponding elements of the plan. For a more

### FIGURE 1.3 - FIRST ROUND OF TOWN HALL MEETINGS

#### Monday, March 2, 2009

Beauregard High School  
Loachapoka High School

#### Tuesday March 3, 2009

Beulah High School  
Southern Union Community  
College, Opelika campus

#### Thursday, March 5, 2009

Smiths Station High School

### FIGURE 1.4 - SECOND ROUND OF TOWN HALL MEETINGS

#### Monday, June 15, 2009

Beauregard High School  
Loachapoka High School

#### Tuesday June 16, 2009

Beulah High School  
Lee County Courthouse Annex

#### Thursday, June 17, 2009

Smiths Station High School

detailed explanation of this public involvement meeting, please refer to the *Town Hall Meetings Round Two Summary Report* on file with the County Commission Office.

Following the Town Hall meetings and county analysis, the draft policies and strategies for the Master Plan were incorporated into a County-Wide Open House where the public was invited to review the information and provide additional input. The draft Master Plan was then referred to the Planning Commission for consideration of approval.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – ASSETS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS**

In addition to public involvement, the Master Plan includes an assessment of current and expected conditions and trends, which are reflected in a general county assessment as well as specific plan elements. The following summarizes important findings from these studies which provide further direction to the Master Plan.

### **Population and Growth**

Lee County has been a fast growing county for many years, anchored by Auburn University and robust industrial development. Future projections of population suggest continued growth, fueled by BRAC related to Ft. Benning and the Kia Plant located in West Point, Georgia. It is expected that the population in the county will grow by 30,000-50,000 in the next 20 years, which is comparable to the existing population of Auburn/Opelika area. This population growth is expected to be split between Auburn, Opelika and the southeast portion of the county.

Key assets and opportunities include healthy growth and economic development potential. Key constraints include increasing requirements for services, limitations on financial resources and the need for greater management of land and land preservation.

### **Land Use and Land Preservation**

Land use in Lee County ranges from urban centers and suburban neighborhood growth in Auburn and Opelika to rural farm and timber land surrounding these centers and neighborhoods. Between is a growing suburban edge with a mix of commercial and residential uses. Smiths Station in the southeastern portion of the county is characterized by smaller, rural community development and suburban neighborhoods of Columbus and Phenix City as well as Auburn and Opelika; Beulah, Beauregard, Loachapoka and other communities are characterized as residential, agricultural communities related to Opelika and Auburn.

Key assets and opportunities include compact urban centers, older close-in subdivisions and attractive rural areas. Key constraints include spreading low-density development, conflicting with the rural landscape and competing with the rural centers.

### **Community Design**

Lee County includes walkable town centers and suburban neighborhoods in Auburn and Opelika, a rural to suburban community in Smiths Station and several historic villages such as Loachapoka, Salem and other crossroads. In between these locations are idyllic rural landscapes, farms, and large, mostly open tracts of land with single houses or structures.

Key assets and opportunities include a range of strong urban centers and rural landscapes. Key constraints include potential scattered development not well designed and potential strip development versus centers along major routes.

### **Transportation**

Lee County is served by Interstate-85 as the main transportation spine along with other major aerial roads such as US Highway-80, US Highway-29, US Highway-280, and US Highway-431. These major routes carry high volumes of traffic. Increasing traffic is occurring on county roads where there is increasing development and local streets serve the urban centers and suburban neighborhoods, mostly in the incorporated communities. Public transportation and alternative modes are limited.

Key assets and opportunities include interstate access and the US Highway-280 corridor, north and south of the Auburn/Opelika area. Key constraints include increasing traffic on major corridors and county roads not designed for such traffic and limited access to public transportation.

### **Economic Development**

Economic development conditions in Lee County are influenced by Auburn University, the City of Auburn, and related developments in the western portion of the county with industrial development located near Auburn and in and around the City of Opelika. Development in the southeastern portion of the county where Smiths Station is located is greatly affected by the connection to Columbus and Phenix City as well as proximity to Opelika and Auburn.

Key assets and opportunities include successful economic development projects, including industrial and research sites in urban, suburban areas; potential for development to the southeast toward Phenix City and Columbus and to the east toward Kia. Key constraints include fragmentation of water and sewer resulting in gaps in services and the need to diversify economic development opportunities, especially in more rural parts of the county.

### **Housing and Neighborhoods**

Housing conditions within Lee County are generally good. There are pockets of older housing in limited areas and new housing throughout the county. Neighborhoods range from historical neighborhoods in Auburn and Opelika to older suburban patterns and new suburban neighborhoods near the urban centers. There are less dense and more rural/suburban neighborhoods in areas like Smiths Station, Loachapoka, etc; and other low density residential neighborhoods mixed with rural neighborhoods in much of the county. A variety of housing choices is important to current and future residents.

Key assets and opportunities include south neighborhoods and new residential development opportunities in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Key constraints include the need for revitalization and in-fill in urban areas, the threat of more scattered residential and the need for services in the rural areas.

### **Open Space, Natural and Cultural Resources**

Lee County is still rural in much of the unincorporated area with large timber tracts. To the east, Lake Harding and the Chattahoochee River offer beautiful open spaces. To the west, the Saugahatchee Creek and watershed provide important open space. Rural farmlands and landscapes are prevalent in the outer reaches of the county along with historic town centers in the core of the county and in isolated locations in more rural areas.

Key assets and opportunities include the Chattahoochee River, Saugahatchee Creek, large forest stands and other natural areas. Key constraints include water quality requirements, forest removal and natural resource extraction from quarries.

### **Community Facilities and Service**

Schools in Lee County are well placed and in generally good condition. Auburn and Opelika operate large systems to serve their communities. The county system serves the remainder of the county. Both Auburn and Opelika operate parks that

are open to all residents of Lee County. In Smiths Station, the county has partnered with the city in developing a large recreational area for citizens. In addition, the county has also purchased land in Beauregard and Beulah for future facilities to serve the citizens. There are other important services to citizens in the county including a network of excellent volunteer fire departments and the county Sheriff's Department.

Key assets and opportunities include the schools and their locations as well as improving park space within the county. Key constraints include increasing demand for services in suburban and rural areas, especially in public safety and fire protection.

#### **Infrastructure and Services**

The county is served by six water boards or authorities, four of which also provide sewer service. Most of the county is served by potable water and some locations are served by sanitary sewer. Alabama Power, Dixie Electrical Cooperative, Tallapoosa River Electrical Cooperative and Opelika Light and Power provide electrical services for Lee County. Various other telecommunications providers and natural gas companies also serve the residents of the County.

Key assets and opportunities include available water and other utilities. Key constraints include the fragmentation of water and sewer services and questions about more centralized, interconnected systems.

#### **Intergovernmental Coordination and Legislative Authority**

Much of Lee County is incorporated, consisting of the communities of Auburn, Loachapoka, Notasulga, Opelika, Phenix City, and Smiths Station. Coordination of planning efforts by the varying planning jurisdictions is critical.

Much of the county's ability to plan and implement is subject to the authority prescribed by general or special legislative acts. Cooperation between the county and the Alabama Legislature, as well as funding resources through the county's federal representatives is critical. Participation in the LRCOG, MPO and other regional organizations is also important.

### **THE PLAN**

The Master Plan for Lee County includes a Conservation and Development Framework. Vision, long-term goals, objectives and recommendations are included which support this concept. The Conservation and Development Framework is a diagram reflecting key character areas referenced continually throughout the Master Plan so as to define general land use patterns and how various elements of the plan relate to long-term development of the county.

The Conservation and Development Framework is not parcel level specific in nature, but rather, provides a general direction for land use and other plan elements. Future plan updates and more detailed plans will provide more specific locations within the framework.

Included in this Executive Summary is a recommended approach, or strategy, for plan implementation. Also included in the Executive Summary is a brief summary of the plan by area, including certain key highlights related to the areas and the conservation and development framework.

Additional background information is provided in the Community Assessment and individual plan elements; including land use and community design, transportation, economic development, housing and neighborhoods, open space, community facilities, infrastructure and services, and intergovernmental coordination.

## CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

### VISION

The vision for the Lee County Master Plan is that the plan should serve as a guide for future conservation and development in Lee County that balances important economic development with preservation of rural character, natural resources and land serves as a guide for the on-going, responsible management and improvement of the county through the consistent principles, goals and recommendations (policies and strategies) defined in the plan.

### PRINCIPLES

The following are the Land Use Principles developed during the Town Hall Meetings and planning process. These Land Use Principles are statements of intent that guide the Land Use Concept and other Plan Elements. These principles are broad and provide fundamental background for more specific goals and recommendations.

- The rural character will be strengthened with a clear distinction from suburban development character.
- Natural features – stream, lakes, woodlands, etc. – will be conserved, if not preserved.
- Undeveloped land – farms and timber – will generally be a prominent use.
- Residential development will reinforce the rural character.
- Transportation improvements will reinforce desired rural character attributes.
- Commercial development will be focused on mixed-use nodes, cluster developments, or carefully planned special corridors.
- Industrial or special use districts will be located sensitively and buffered to minimize impacts on adjacent uses, and the general character of the rural areas.

### CHARACTER AREAS

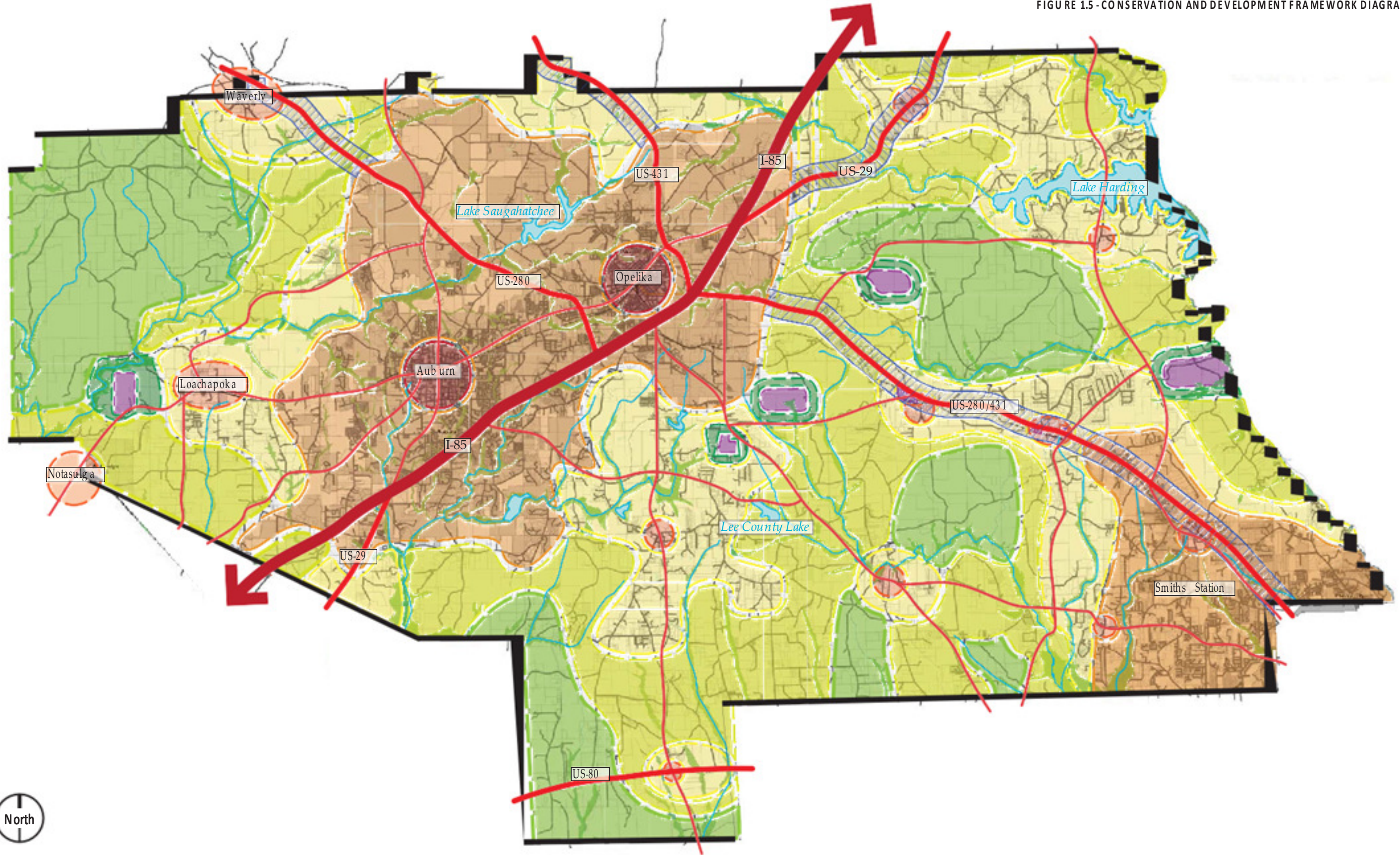
The Conservation and Development Framework in Lee County includes a concept of character areas specifically defined for the various geographical parts of the county. These character areas represent general land uses. The character areas include the following: urban core, suburban center, suburban, rural center, rural residential, general rural, rural agriculture, conservation, preservation, corridor and special district. Definitions of the character areas are include in Table 1.1.

TABLE 2.1 – FRAMEWORK CHARACTER AREA DEFINITIONS

<b>Urban Core</b>	An urbanized area which is the center of a municipality. This area is typically the most dense portion of the municipality. Composed of all typical urban services.
<b>Suburban Center</b>	A mixed-use, auto-dependent center located in a low density suburban area. Suburban Centers are typically within or in close proximity to a municipality. Typical urban services are provided within a municipality.
<b>Suburban</b>	Primarily low density residential which is dependent upon an urban area. Suburban areas are typically within or in close proximity to a municipality. Typical urban services are provided within a municipality.
<b>Rural Center</b>	Areas of clustered commercial activities and increased density within the unincorporated areas of the county. Urban services are typically limited.
<b>Rural Residential</b>	Low density residential pattern located in close proximity to rural centers or beyond the suburban areas in unincorporated portions of the county.
<b>General Rural</b>	An area composed of large tracts of land that are used for agricultural purposes along with extremely low density limited residential.
<b>Rural Agriculture</b>	Area in which the land is primarily used for agriculture or land is undeveloped for any purpose. Residential is very sparse within this area.
<b>Conservation</b>	Transitional area away from a naturally occurring, environmentally sensitive, or other special areas. Development is limited in accordance with other regulations.
<b>Preservation</b>	Areas where use should be strictly prohibited. Typically preservation surrounds noxious uses within the county such as special districts or environmentally sensitive areas.
<b>Corridor</b>	A major linear transportation route, including mixed land uses and access management. Uses could, but are not limited to businesses, residential, limited light industrial, and institutional.
<b>Special District</b>	Areas defined by uses that require special considerations, design standards, etc. Typically large developments such as industrial facilities, landfills, quarries, which can conflict with other land uses but may include planned unit developments, large scale commercial or mixed use districts that can be complementary with other land uses.



FIGURE 1.5 - CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM









## **FRAMEWORK GOALS**

The following are the long-term goals for the Lee County Master Plan, developed, in conjunction with the Lee County Planning Commission, based on comments that were gathered during the first round of Town Hall Meetings and public involvement. The goals were presented and tested during a second round of Town Hall meetings.

### **Land Preservation and Community Design**

The Lee County Commission is committed to managing changes in the use and preservation of land in such a fashion that adequate and appropriate spaces are provided for residential, institutional, commercial and industrial purposes; and to ensure that rural and natural areas critical of the county's natural environment are conserved and protected.

Further, development and redevelopment throughout the planning jurisdiction of the Lee County Commission, is intended to result in the creation of a built environment consisting of attractive and environmentally sensitive residential, commercial, industrial and mixed use areas.

Goal: Responsible growth throughout the county that is well planned and managed, incorporating appropriate standards in order to protect residential areas, preserve agricultural and natural lands, encourage the revitalization of vacant or deteriorated areas, and promote economic development and growth in the county and local economy; and community design throughout the county that emphasizes protection of historic resources, effective integration of green spaces, incorporation of appropriate signage, landscape and design elements and encouragement of attractive, walkable communities that reflect the county's small town and rural charm as well as more urban districts.

### **Transportation**

The focus of the transportation element in the Master Plan is upon the completion and maintenance of an all-weather local road network; the establishment of a major street system that links the county to the major street system serving East Alabama; and expanding facilities for alternative transportation modes, including pedestrian, cycling and public transit.

Goal: Transportation that is safe and efficient for all users, with roads that are regularly repaired and improved, with enhanced signage and lighting, and infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

### **Economic Development**

Lee County's potential for residential and non-residential development will be used to take advantage of opportunities and determine the justification or leveraging of available economic resources; coordinating any such activities with the economic development organizations of Auburn, Opelika and others.

Goal: Ensure that current and relevant information is maintained and used to make decisions, action plans are developed and implemented, information is shared with external and local audiences, and actors in the local economic development system are working together in support of workforce excellence, economic prosperity, and a superior quality of life throughout the county.

### **Housing and Neighborhoods**

The overall intent in the county Master Plan for housing is to create residential neighborhoods and communities each containing a variety of housing types; a wide range of housing costs; and with connections to all public services and to the transportation network.

Goal: Diverse housing options – including affordable choices – offering citizens a range of housing types, density and cost, in various rural to urban neighborhoods throughout the county.

### **Open Space, Green Infrastructure, Natural and Cultural Resources**

Efforts in Lee County will be aimed at creating a system of parks to accommodate recreational, athletic and sports activities; preservation of rural and agricultural areas and riparian corridors; and identifying and enhancing Lee County's historical and cultural resources.

Goal: Protection of natural resources and improved water quality; green infrastructure, parks, trails and recreational areas that enhance public access to open space; preservation and protection of cultural resources, urban and rural.

### **Community Facilities and Services**

The intent of the Master Plan is to ensure that the residents of Lee County have access to a range of public services, including protection of people and property; educational opportunities from pre-school through college; medical, emergency, fitness and recreational facilities and services.

Goal: Cooperation in construction and maintaining excellent local schools, parks, public safety, fire stations, community centers, services for seniors and youth as well as ongoing improvements in a variety of public services including health, public safety.

### **Infrastructure and Services**

The intent of Lee County, in order to support the anticipated development within the County's planning jurisdiction, will be to cooperate with other to ensure of a system for delivering potable water; adequate treatment of liquid and solid wastes; accessible electric and gas sources; and expansion of electronic communication.

Goal: Ongoing, public and private strategic improvements in infrastructure and services, in addition to transportation improvements that will ensure access to high quality water and sewer systems, and to state-of-the-art technology infrastructure such as cable and high speed internet, sanitary/solid waste, litter control and animal control.

### **Intergovernmental Coordination**

The intent of the Master Plan is to create a planning system that internally is capable of providing the Lee County Commission with mechanisms for managing change and externally coordinating Lee County's plans and projects with those of incorporated cities, and with regional, state and federal planning initiatives.

Goal: Local jurisdictions working cooperatively to plan for the future, ensure the wise use of resources, and engage community members in collaborative decision-making.

## **FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Long term goals are supported by more specific objectives and recommendations. Objectives may be considered more specific goals or important sub-categories. Recommendations may include policies, strategies or actions in furtherance of the goals and objectives

### **Land Preservation and Community Design**

#### **Land Preservation and Community Design Goal**

Responsible growth throughout the county that is well planned and managed, incorporating appropriate standards in order to protect residential areas, preserve agricultural and natural lands, encourage the revitalization of vacant or deteriorated areas, and promote economic development and growth in the county and local economy; and community design throughout the county that emphasizes protection of historic resources, effective integration of green spaces, incorporation of appropriate signage, landscape and design elements and encouragement of attractive, walkable communities that reflect the county's small town and rural charm as well as more urban districts.

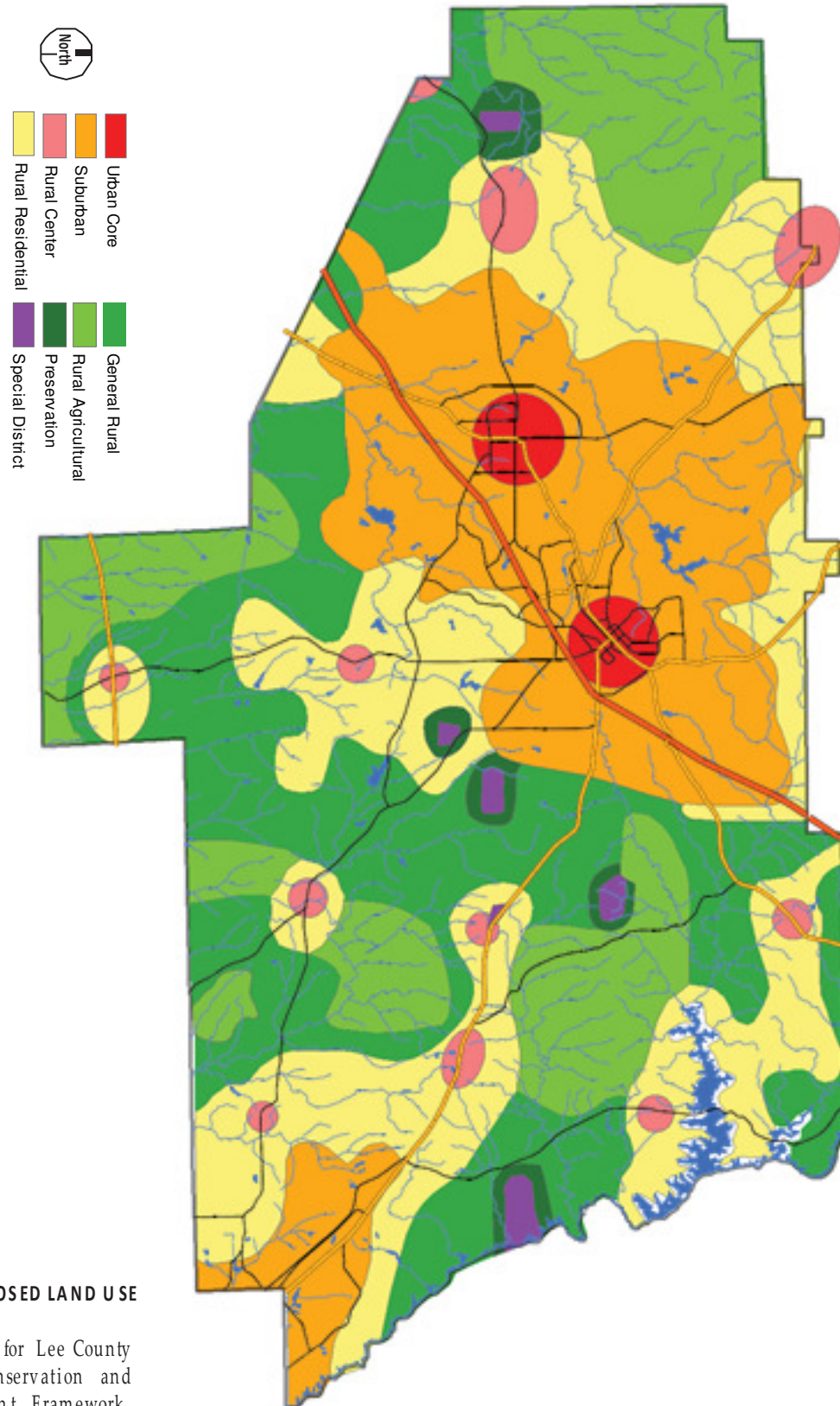
#### **Land Preservation and Community Design Objectives**

- Preservation of rural landscape and land
- Promote a variety of strong mixed use centers and neighborhoods, well designed mixed use centers and neighborhoods
- Help ensure opportunities for rural housing and "communities"
- Promote efficient and sustainable development relative to transportation and infrastructure
- Support a balance of convenient, cost effective and accessible services and facilities
- Cooperate with others to promote attractive corridors compatible with rural, suburban and urban character of the framework
- Cooperate with other governmental agencies to ensure well designed county, public and community facilities
- Support the beautification of corridors, centers and neighborhoods in all areas of the county consistent with the framework

#### **Land Preservation and Community Design Recommendations**

##### ***Ongoing***

1. Support regional scale investments in infrastructure and development consistent with the framework
2. Integrate growth, development and public financing consistent with the framework, through capital budgeting and planning
3. Update and enforce subdivision regulations for consistency with the framework, implement a policy of Planning Commission review and approval of subdivisions in county planning jurisdiction
4. Promote roadway and public beautification program including litter control, dilapidated building and signage removal
5. Incorporate an implementation strategy for integrating land preservation and community design, as well as, other plan elements into county operations, budgeting, including legislature support for planning and financing initiatives



**FIGURE 1.6 - PROPOSED LAND USE**

Proposed land use for Lee County based on the Conservation and Development Framework.

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Provide educational program for zoning within county
2. Adopt area wide, or special area plans, for various areas within the County
3. Adopt street design standards and access management guidelines as part of the subdivision regulations
4. Adopt and support development framework including centers, neighborhoods, corridors, suburban and rural character - modified transect - as land preservation policy for the county
5. Adopt special corridor overlay for rapidly developing corridors, esp. US Highway-280 and other corridors consistent with the conservation and development framework
6. Adopt design standards for county facilities and promote similar standards for other public facilities with other government agencies, including energy conservation
7. Support design standards consistent with the land preservation framework as part of any public-private project where the county is investing funds

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Adopt Special Corridor Overlay, Planned Unit Development and Mixed Use District provisions as part of zoning ordinance and/or subdivision regulations
2. Coordinate planning throughout the county with municipalities that actively plan and zone
3. Continue land use planning, updating data including an ongoing growth model
4. Adopt tree, landscape, signage and lighting standards
5. Adopt neighborhood standards for land preservation, community design and streets based on a modified transect consistent with the framework as part of subdivision regulations and/or zoning provisions in the beats having zoning
6. Incorporate design standards consistent with the framework, into street and transportation projects, especially access management and in cooperation with federal, state and local transportation departments

*Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Coordinate zoning throughout the county (including cooperation with incorporated communities) in areas where zoning is authorized
2. Establish stream and conservation buffers around quarries and other obnoxious land uses
3. Create conservation subdivisions and cluster development subdivisions as part of the subdivision regulations
4. Establish gateway and corridor tree planting program, lighting and wayfinding with county, state, federal and private assistance

*In areas where zoning has been adopted*

1. Consider zoning and possibly form based codes in those areas of the county desiring such

## **Transportation**

### **Transportation Goal**

Transportation that is safe and efficient for all users, with roads that are regularly repaired and improved, with enhanced signage and lighting, and infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

### **Transportation Objectives**

- High priority transportation corridors identified to direct infrastructure investments
- Maximum separation of through traffic and local traffic in street upgrades and widening
- Safe access to arterial roadways from collector streets
- Preservation of the rural character of Lee County by ensuring that road capacities are not unnecessarily increased in rural areas.
- Adequate access to all properties
- Rural roads should be maintained at current widths and design except for safety maintenance and improvements
- Shorter commutes to work by encouraging growth near employment centers
- New road construction and upgrades include bicycle and pedestrian safety provisions and include transit stops where appropriate

### **Transportation Recommendations**

#### ***Ongoing***

1. Continue to support a county road and bridge improvement program based on priority, paving and safety needs
2. Continue to actively participate in MPO and seek funding for improvements to major state and federal routes in the County

#### ***Short Term (0-5 years)***

1. Develop a functional classification system and hierarchy of roads specific to Lee County based on character areas defined by the Conservation and Development Framework
2. Consider a "checklist" of transportation needs for new developments and incorporate in to subdivision regulations or engineering standards
3. Develop standards for roads that are context sensitive for residential, commercial and rural areas consistent with the framework

#### ***Mid-Term (5-10 years)***

1. Consider fees for development directly related to anticipated impacts on traffic circulation, including streets, bicycle and pedestrian improvements resulting from development
2. Work with the MPO and others to expand urban and rural transit, including social service transportation support

#### ***Long-Term (10 or more years)***

1. Develop a county-wide Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation Plan
2. Establish standards for bicycle and pedestrian amenities tied to new commercial and housing developments



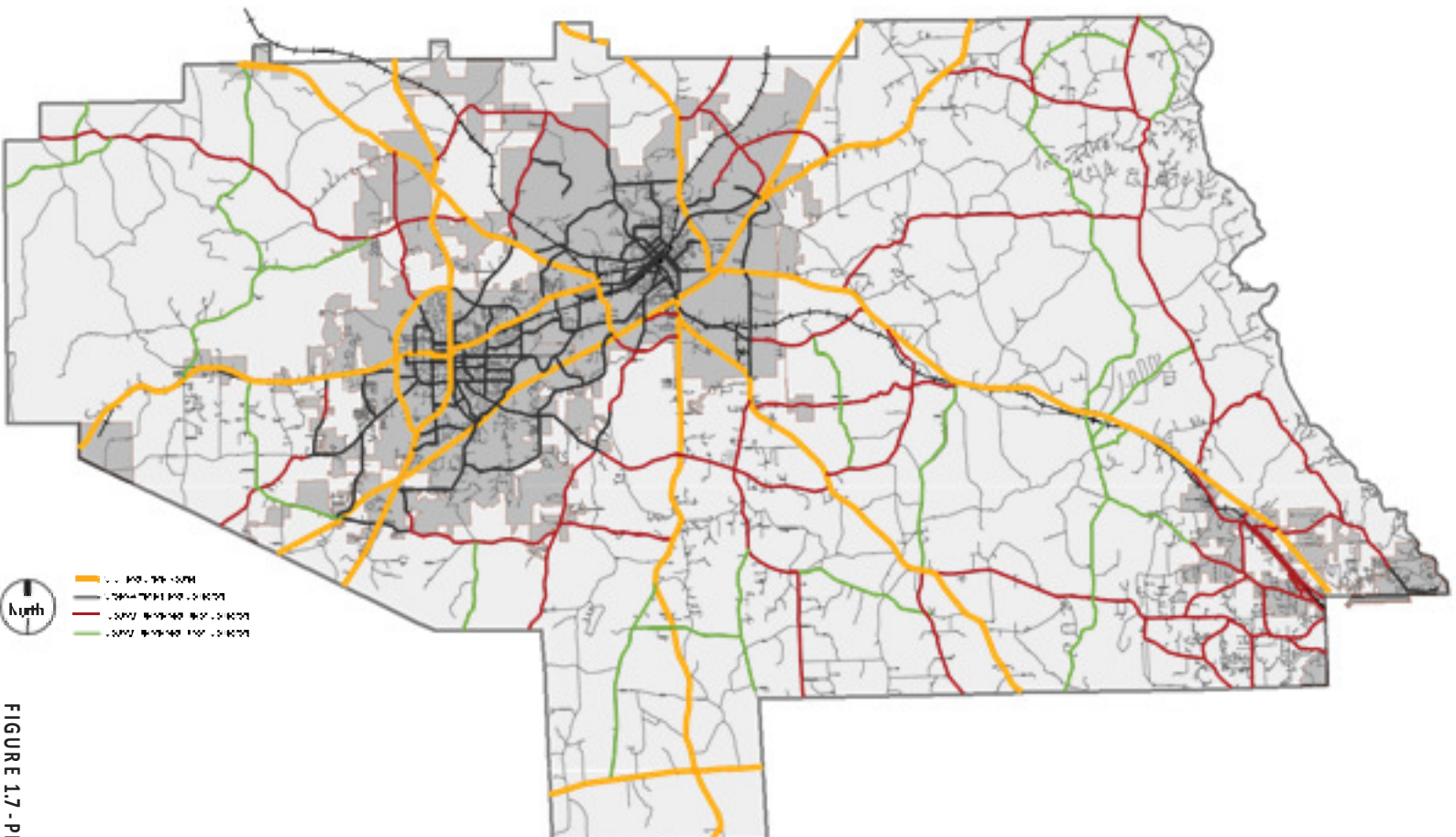


FIGURE 1.7 - PROPOSED LEE COUNTY  
FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

## **Economic Development**

### **Format Change for Economic Development Section**

Please Note: Master Plan objectives and recommendations for Economic Development are described in a format that differs from other plan elements. Economic Development objectives and recommendations reflect an encompassing and even broader multi-agency approach than other sections. Priorities and timelines will be defined with the progress of each recommendation in the Connections and Organization and Action sections, which are the cornerstone portions of this element.

### **Economic Development Goal**

Ensure that current and relevant information is maintained and used to make decisions, action plans are developed and implemented, information is shared with external and local audiences, and actors in the local economic development system are working together in support of workforce excellence, economic prosperity, and a superior quality of life throughout the county.

### **Economic Development Objectives**

#### *Planning and Organizational Objectives*

#### Connections

- Economic Development Collaboration: Facilitate engagement and cooperation among incorporated municipalities, the private sector, and other key stakeholders.

#### Organization and Action

- Structure: Create organizational structures to ensure implementation of economic and community development strategies in the Lee County Master Plan.
- Information and Decision-Making: Ensure that economic decisions are based on current and relevant information consistent with the Lee County Master Plan framework and that relevant information is communicated to appropriate audiences.

#### Sustainable Planning and Development

- Aesthetics and Sustainability: Promote aesthetic enhancements and sustainable resource development (e.g., air, land, and water).
- Economic Development Planning: Support enhancements to existing growth areas that are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan framework and with sustainable development principles.

#### *Program and Project Related Objectives*

#### Workforce Excellence

- Education and Workforce Development: Develop an educated workforce with the skills and training required to serve current and future Lee County employers.

#### Infrastructure

- Infrastructure: Finance and maintain infrastructure to support economic development, consistent with the Conservation and Development Framework.



### Economic Health and Diversification

- Existing Business: Retain, expand, and promote existing business.
- Small Business: Facilitate small business development and entrepreneurship.
- Business Recruitment: Support recruitment of appropriate new businesses to the county, especially new retail and commercial businesses.
- Tourism: Diversify the county economy by supporting tourism.

### Civic Engagement

- Community Leadership and Citizen Engagement: Enhance leadership capacity and citizen engagement throughout Lee County.

### **Economic Development Policies and Strategies**

#### *Planning and Organizational Policies and Strategies*

### Connections

1. Build connections among citizens, groups, and institutions within the county; promote alliances and partnerships to meet overall county needs.
2. Work with other economic development organizations and stakeholders to support the continued economic development of Lee County - perhaps through the creation of a Lee County Prosperity Alliance. The Alliance would be a network of stakeholders (government, business, education) that meet on a regular basis to ensure that existing county resources are fully utilized and that stakeholder groups are informed, engaged, and working together.
3. Initiate multi-jurisdictional efforts to promote economic and community development within the county.
4. Encourage public-private partnerships to address the county's economic development, education, and other needs.

### Organization and Action

1. Identify and define the roles of existing community and economic development organizations.
2. Investigate the feasibility of hiring a community developer to foster stakeholder collaboration and civic engagement, monitor implementation of community and economic development strategies in the Lee County Master Plan, promote economic and community development in areas of Lee County located outside the municipal jurisdictions of Auburn and Opelika, serve as a point of contact for economic development inquiries, and communicate local and regional economic development success stories.
3. Maintain current county data useful to business and industry
4. Develop and maintain an inventory of available retail, commercial, service, and industrial properties in Lee County; ensure that available sites and buildings are listed in the Economic Development Association of Alabama (EDPA) database.
5. Create and maintain a county economic development website that includes information of interest, including the Economic & Community Development section of the Master Plan.
6. Educate county residents by disseminating relevant information, describing plans and activities, and communicating success stories.

### Sustainable Planning and Development

1. Encourage efforts to preserve and improve the county's natural beauty and aesthetics.
2. Support sustainable development initiatives that help make the county's suburban, urban and rural communities desirable places to live and work.
3. Promote development of residential, convenience retail (grocery, pharmacy, etc.) and business service (child care, banking, and repair services) uses around major transportation arteries, municipalities, and densely populated communities.
4. Encourage all public policymaking organizations to incorporate sustainable economic development into their activities and plans.
5. Support adequate setbacks, vegetative buffering, and unobtrusive signage in large-scale commercial and industrial uses to protect primary roadways.
6. Encourage conservation, recycling, and energy conservation and efficiency by residents, businesses, and governments.

### *Program and Project Related Policies and Strategies*

#### Workforce Excellence

1. Foster a cooperative relationship among the boards of education, private employers, Southern Union, Auburn University, and training providers to enhance the county workforce development system.
2. Identify the workforce needs of local businesses and industries; support the establishment of career and technical training and apprenticeship programs that satisfy these needs, develop relevant skills in younger workers, and re-train existing workers.
3. Support a superior public education system throughout the county.

#### Infrastructure

1. Establish a process for prioritizing infrastructure projects for federal, state, county, and local sources of funding; finance priority infrastructure projects through short and long-term financing plans that maximize opportunities for grants and low interest loans.
2. Enhance and promote state-of-the-art telecommunications technology to attract clean high-tech industry to the county.

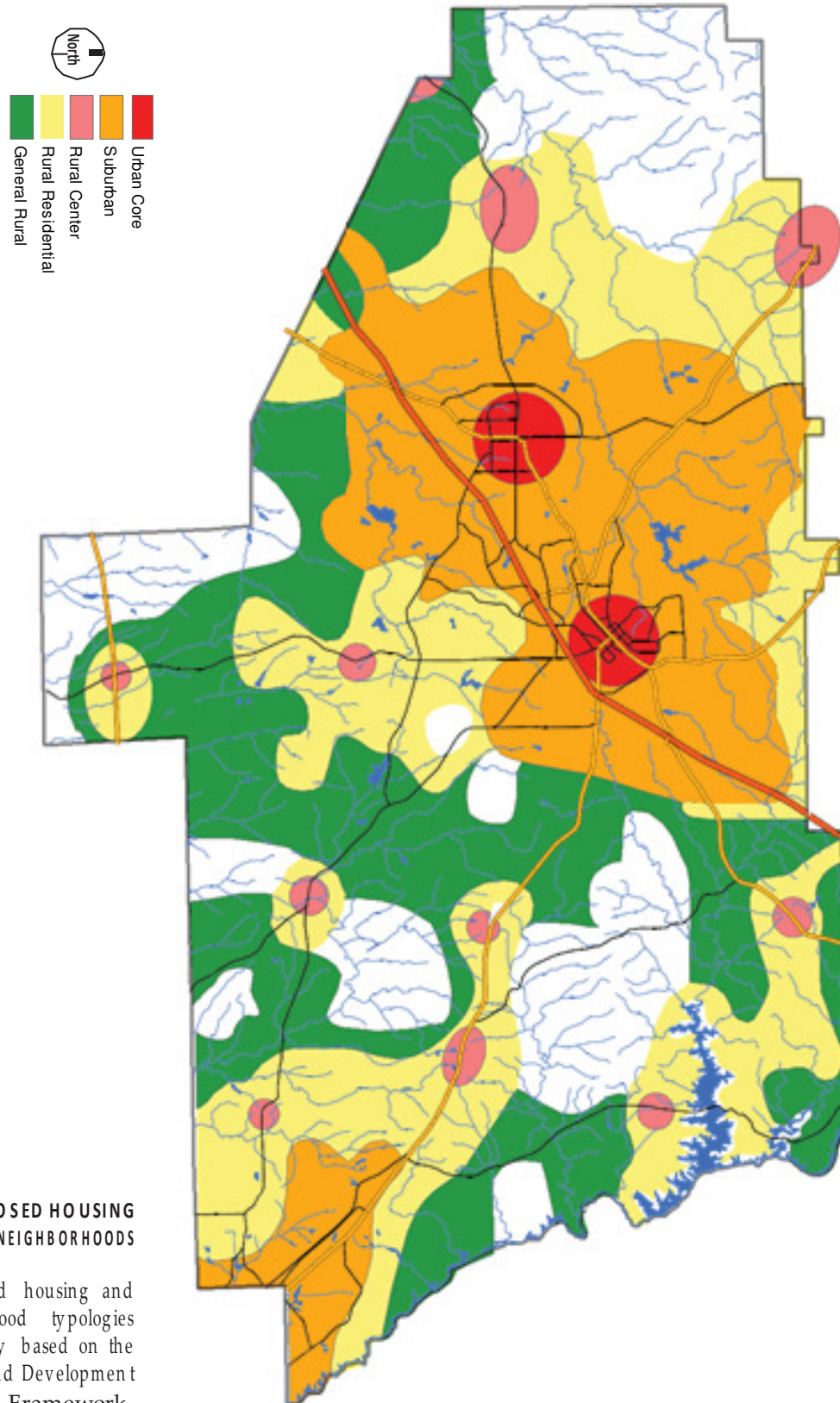
#### Economic Health and Diversity

1. Provide expansion assistance to businesses needing referrals and resource information.
2. Meet annually with Lee County's largest employers to express appreciation and to obtain information related to their current and anticipated needs; meet annually with some of the smaller business employers in Lee County that have shown steady employment growth.
3. Provide financial incentives to support the expansion of existing businesses.
4. Inform entrepreneurs of government-sponsored small business loans, grants and incubator programs.
5. Provide small and new businesses with information on how to find the necessary management and marketing skills to facilitate success; refer potential start-up businesses to sources of assistance, such as the Small Business Development Center at Auburn University.
6. Support local industries such as floriculture, truck farming and horticulture, which can take advantage of increasing suburban and urban markets.
7. Participate in the marketing of the county's existing industrial sites and parks.

8. Encourage the targeted recruitment of knowledge-based industrial sectors, especially research- and development-oriented industries, technology firms, and other industries with clean, high-value inventory and/or products (e.g., medical, pharmaceutical).
9. Participate in the recruitment of new retail and commercial businesses to the county
10. Support improved gateways into Lee County and its communities.
11. Create an inventory of potential visitor destinations and events in the county.
12. Develop a Lee County branding/identity and marketing strategy for tourism attraction.
13. Enhance local recreational, artistic, cultural, and entertainment venues and events.

#### Civic Engagement

1. Promote the development of local leadership capacity by supporting community-based leadership development programs.
2. Provide multiple opportunities for public involvement through deliberative forums, town meetings, concerts, festivals, and community improvement projects.
3. Develop strategies, and support community-based actions, to involve economically disadvantaged individuals in improving their economic futures.
4. Survey citizens periodically to help guide economic development efforts.



**FIGURE 1.8 - PROPOSED HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

The proposed housing and neighborhood typologies within Lee County based on the Conservation and Development Framework.

## Housing and Neighborhoods

### Housing and Neighborhood Goal

Diverse housing options – including affordable choices – offering citizens a range of housing types, density and cost, in various rural to urban neighborhoods throughout the county.

### Housing and Neighborhood Objectives

- Support residential construction by the private sector to ensure adequate supply of housing to meet demand
- Promote, with the private sector, a range of housing choices relative to type, cost and location in the county
- Ensure sound housing in all parts of the county
- Promote housing design and development consistent with the framework
- Support new housing and rehabilitation, consistent with land use, infrastructure policies in the Master Plan
- Minimize public costs to support needed housing development, consistent with the framework
- Support opportunities for rural housing consistent with land use and community design objectives
- Cooperate with public and private housing entities to ensure the availability of housing for families or individuals with special needs, including seniors, persons with disabilities, and financial limitations

### Housing and Neighborhood Policies and Strategies

#### *Ongoing*

1. Enforce housing and building codes throughout the county
2. Support areas of high density and mixed use residential consistent with land use policies and infrastructure plans
3. Work with public and private housing developers in support of acquiring state and federal grants, financing to support affordable housing and rehabilitation; work with USDA and private developers to provide incentives/funding for rural housing developments consistent with the framework
4. Support agencies in obtaining weatherization and other emergency housing grant funds

#### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Support an ongoing multi-jurisdiction housing forum to include public and private interests such as builders, realtors and investors
2. Support ongoing public participation programs in all communities in the county
3. Promote community development and housing corporations in providing affordable housing

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Work with housing development corporations and other organizations to increase affordable housing initiatives, counseling, etc.

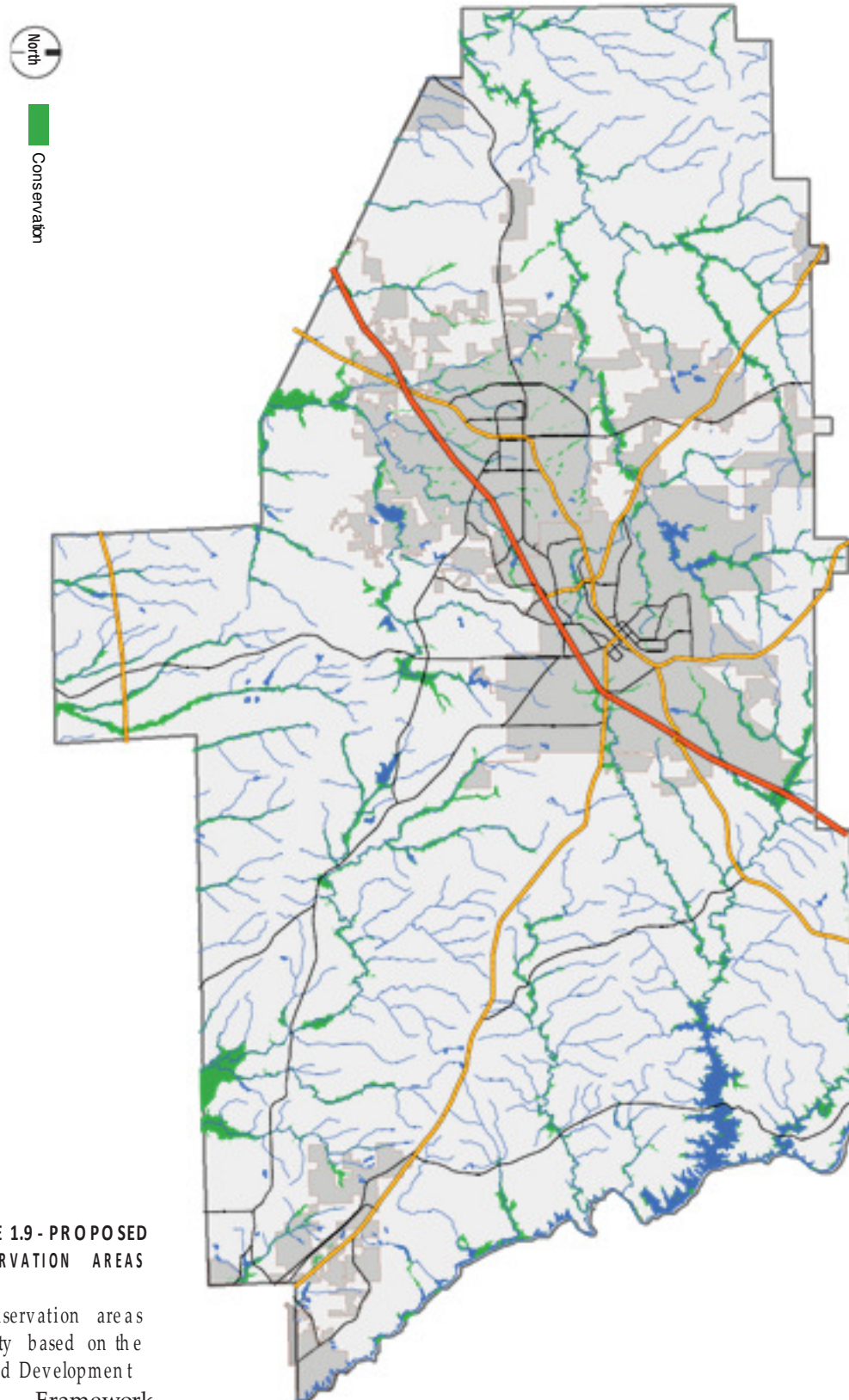
#### *Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Promote neighborhood revitalization programs, including commercial and mixed use development consistent with the framework

#### *In areas where zoning has been adopted*

1. adopt a zoning ordinance consistent with framework land preservation and housing policies; include planned unit development, mixed use ordinances and updated subdivision regulations consistent with new regulations





**FIGURE 1.9 - PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREAS**

The proposed conservation areas within Lee County based on the Conservation and Development Framework.

## Open Space, Green Infrastructure, Natural and Cultural Resources

### Natural and Cultural Resources Goal

Protection of natural resources and improved water quality; green infrastructure, parks, trails and recreational areas that enhance public access to open space; preservation and protection of cultural resources, urban and rural.

### Natural and Cultural Resources Objectives

- Cooperate with land owners and others to protect sensitive and/or important natural resources, including water supplies, lakes, rivers and flood plains
- Promote the use of greenspace opportunities as part of outdoor recreation, parks and green infrastructure and to protect water quality, forest resources, agricultural land, rural landscapes and/or on projects needing federal, state, or local assistance or approval
- Help to protect important cultural and historic resources, including urban and rural resources
- Especially support the protection of rural cultural resources and landscape, farms, rural architecture
- Conservation of water and other natural resources in infrastructure planning and construction

### Natural and Cultural Resources Policies and Strategies

#### *Ongoing*

1. Promote LEED, or other positive benefit-to-cost building energy standards in county facilities and private developments through the building code (include consideration of environmental premium – cost of construction versus operational cost saving versus payback at a reasonable return)
2. Participate in Saugahatchee and Chattahoochee clean water partnerships and discuss a to more coordinated county-wide authority with watershed stakeholders

#### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Consider a watershed management authority (Act91-602) to support coordination of efforts to protect watershed, agriculture, industry, and drinking water
2. Adopt conservation subdivision regulations and best practices for water quality as part of subdivision regulations
3. Support consistent flood plain ordinances in municipalities and enforce flood plain ordinances in unincorporated Lee County, including participation in the National Flood Insurance Program
4. Support water demand management and other public education initiatives

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Adopt buffer guidelines as part of subdivision regulations and/or zoning ordinance for conflicting land uses such as quarries
2. Adopt storm water provisions as part of subdivision regulations and promote stormwater retention best management practices
3. Work with state and federal departments of transportation and the county engineer to adopt roadway and scenic corridor standards
4. Support public health departments enforcement of on-site sewage standards
5. Expand recycling programs

*Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Give priority consideration to county public/private investments in infrastructure to promote denser development and development consistent with the framework
2. Adopt land preservation policies consistent with County Master Plan Conservation and Development Framework that will protect naturally and culturally significant locations
3. Consider long term public/private greenway/greenspace network that connects urban to rural center and neighborhoods, parks, the Chattahoochee River, Saugahatchee Creek and natural resource features

*In areas where zoning has been adopted*

1. Adopt a zoning overlays to protect preservation areas consistent with the framework for beats that approve zoning



## Community Facilities and Services

### Community Facilities and Services Goal

Cooperation in construction and maintaining excellent local schools, parks, public safety, fire stations, community centers, services for seniors and youth as well as ongoing improvements in a variety of public services including health, public safety.

### Community Facilities and Services Objectives

- Cooperate with others to ensure community facilities that address needs in unincorporated Lee County
- Promote and support community facilities that are consistent development policies as part of the Conservation and Development Framework
- Specifically support the county Board of Education efforts in ensuring adequate and well located schools to serve all parts of the County consistent with the Master Plan Conservation and Development Framework
- Specifically support the Lee County Parks and Recreation Board and others in the county to provide access to parks and recreation facilities consistent with urban, suburban and rural parts of the county as defined in the Master Plan framework
- Support excellence in public safety and fire protection facilities and services throughout the county
- Support health care facilities (hospitals and medical offices) located near mixed use centers as well as continued growth of regional hospital facilities
- Promote overall health through land preservation community design, housing, neighborhood, open space and transportation policies
- Support regional access to library services and facilities

### Community Facilities and Services Policies and Strategies

#### General

##### *Ongoing*

1. Explore increasing opportunities for consolidation of services and facilities including, but not limited to, fire protection and public safety

##### *Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Consider county-city governmental structure that includes community facilities and services

#### Education

##### *Ongoing*

1. Participate in cooperative regional school initiatives and planning
2. Regularly communicate with the Board of Education on school planning and coordination in general

##### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Recommend to the Board of Education standards and consideration of the location and building of new schools and renovations to schools, consistent the Conservation and Development Framework; request that the school board adopt school siting standards consistent with the framework recommendations for land use, community design and transportation

2. Specifically coordinate with the school board on transportation, infrastructure and other issues related to new school construction, improvements; include safe routes to school improvements to increase safety for pedestrians and others traveling to school

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Improve multi-modal access to schools through Safe Routes to Schools and improvements to roadways and sidewalks that best accommodate automobile, bus and pedestrian access to schools

**Public Safety and Emergency Management**

*Ongoing*

1. Continue to promote the coordination of Sheriff's Department with municipal police departments in incorporated communities to reduce crime
2. Continue to support utilization of a county-wide jail
3. Maintain and update roads and bridges to ensure clearance for emergency access
4. Utilize Emergency Management Agency and related local, state and federal agencies to strengthen support the training of volunteer fire departments; continue to support improved technology and communication between jurisdictions; regional training centers for public safety departments and fire departments consistent with city departments; continued adequate funding for volunteer fire services and districts, including fire stations consistent with the Conservation and Development Framework; continuously upgrade coordination between Lee County EMA and 911 in Auburn, Opelika and volunteer departments
5. Consider a countywide fund for apparatus and equipment to match district funds and federal/state grants

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Support ongoing strategic plan for county and municipal law enforcement
2. Promote the use of a countywide public safety implementation team to conduct ongoing improvements and standards in cooperation; include representatives from each jurisdiction

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Continue to work with cities to encourage provision of fire and rescue services outside their city limits through intergovernmental agreements
2. Support the location of additional fire stations, consistent with the framework, especially in serving growth areas of proposed higher density

**Parks and Recreation**

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Incorporate location and development of parks into plans for preservation of open space, consistent with the framework
2. Support multi-purpose park facilities in areas where there is a substantial population or where need is expected to grow, consistent with the framework (especially related to suburban and rural centers) – Smiths Station, Beulah, Beauregard and Loachapoka; in all cases consider location of multi-purpose recreation in coordination with school facilities, senior centers, etc.
3. Expand recreation to include special interests and related recreation – seniors and persons with disabilities
4. Support the increased development of hunting, fishing, birding and eco-tourism, including land preservation, natural resource and open space recommendations

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Support a neighborhood parks program to support smaller parks consistent with the Conservation and Development Framework for suburban centers and neighborhoods and where there are provisions for maintenance and security
2. Expand public/private greenways, bicycle and multi-purpose trails as a connection to other facilities or recreation assets

*Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Include trails and bicycle lanes along selected roadways consistent with the transportation related recommendations and the Conservation and Development Framework

**Libraries**

*Ongoing*

1. Work with others to expand web-based access to libraries and expand summer library programs

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Support regional and cooperative plans for library services serving the entire county

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Promote non-traditional library space in suburban and rural centers

**Arts and Culture**

*Ongoing*

1. Promote a county-wide arts alliance for coordination, promotion and fund raising

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Support ongoing arts and culture survey(s) to determine needs for programs/facilities etc.

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Work with arts, cultural programs to promote expansion of facilities and offerings to accommodate a documented needs assessment

**Historic Preservation**

*Ongoing*

1. Work with others to support tourism development and preservation through events, marketing and promotion

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Work with existing preservation commissions and associations to promote and support ongoing historic districts
2. Identify prioritized critical sites needing protection, relative to growth patterns in unincorporated areas

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Work with owners, preservation interests and other to consider preservation districts and site protection in all parts of the county not covered by a preservation ordinance
2. Support preservation association, organizations to increase funding and financing for preservation of threatened properties

## **Infrastructure and Services**

### **Infrastructure and Services Goal**

Ongoing, public and private strategic improvements in infrastructure and services, in addition to transportation improvements that will ensure access to high quality water and sewer systems, and to state-of-the-art technology infrastructure such as cable and high speed internet, sanitary/solid waste, litter control and animal control.

### **Infrastructure and Services Objectives**

- Coordination of all infrastructure, including, private services and utilities
- Adequate infrastructure to support economic development consistent with the Master Plan framework
- Support for cost effective and efficient infrastructure and services consistent with master plan framework including land use, transportation and economic development, to serve the needs of the unincorporated parts of the county
- Countywide access to water and sanitary sewer consistent with the framework
- Support for safe, sanitary cost-effective countywide solid waste management
- Compliance of infrastructure development with environmental policies and regulatory requirements

### **Infrastructure and Services Policies and Strategies**

#### ***Ongoing***

1. In general, invest in infrastructure that will encourage development densities consistent with land use framework
2. Promote the continued expansion of water and sewer systems by current authorities consistent with the Master Plan framework
3. Promote continued cooperation to ensure private/market based electrical, gas and telecommunications in all parts of the county consistent with master plan and land use framework

#### ***Short Term (0-5 years)***

1. Specifically support investment in the high density corridors, specifically US Highway-280 corridor, southeast towards Phenix City, consistent with the framework and design/development guidelines
2. Establish a county liaison with water and sewer authorities for regular communications and coordination, especially in support of economic development consistent with the Conservation and Development Framework

#### ***Mid-Term (5-10 years)***

1. Consider support of centralized "regional" systems and interconnections for water and sewer consistent with the framework, versus decentralized

#### ***Long-Term (10 or more years)***

1. Support the expansion or development, as needed, of the Salem Waste Disposal Center to maintain a 30 year capacity

## Intergovernmental Coordination

### Intergovernmental Coordination Goal

Local jurisdictions working cooperatively to plan for the future, ensure the wise use of resources, and engage community members in collaborative decision-making.

### Intergovernmental Coordination Objectives

- Work with others to ensure ongoing government, citizens and business coordination and communication
- Promote land preservation and development coordination between the unincorporated and incorporated parts of the county
- Promote transportation and infrastructure coordination to ensure cost effective maintenance and development
- Promote the cooperation and coordination of economic development to achieve maximum regional and local impact
- Promote services and facilities to reduce duplication of services within the county and improve efficiency in services

### Intergovernmental Coordination Policies and Strategies

#### *Ongoing*

1. Actively coordinate with and seek cooperation of Lee County delegation to the legislature, as well as federal representation, for improvements in county services, funding and development, consistent with the **Conservation and Development Framework**
2. Actively participate in Lee Russell Council of Governments, Auburn-Opelika MPO, RPO and the Columbus-Phenix City MPO, including regional transportation and economic development planning
3. Consider an elected officials roundtable as a means of sharing common concerns and opportunities, to include county, city, legislative and other interests

#### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Explore increased consolidation of services and facilities within Lee County, including all municipalities, utilities, and service authorities to reduce duplication and improve service
2. Incorporate Lee County economic development goals into Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and other regional initiatives consistent with the *Master Plan Conservation and Development Framework*
3. Create and utilize a liaison between water and sewer authorities for coordination on future needs and facilities as well as consistent with the framework

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Formalize ongoing county-wide citizen, business and government participation in ongoing plan **implementation and updates**
2. Formalize a regular forum or technical coordinating task force with all jurisdictions to coordinate long term land use and planning issues

#### *Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Consider a consolidated form of government within Lee County

#### *In areas where zoning has been adopted*

1. Coordinate zoning and subdivision regulations and approvals to ensure consistency between city and county regulations as well as individual zoning and subdivision cases

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

### Implementation Strategy and Approach

Ongoing implementation, action and updating is critical in ensuring that the plan is not the end, in itself, but is rather a tool for county management and improvement. Leadership, organization, priorities, financial feasibility, regulation and ongoing planning in support of the implementation of the plan is critical. An implementation strategy or approach should be adopted as a starting point for implementation, including, but not necessarily limited to, the following components.

### Action Items

The *Master Plan* is organized by broad goals, objectives and recommendations that may include policies and strategies for adoption and implementation of the *Lee County Master Plan*. For each of the *Lee County Master Plan* Policies and Strategies, action steps should be established in order to implement the policies or recommendations. These action items may change, over time, however it is important to identify some of these. Current plans should be continuously updated and implemented to ensure results and take advantage of momentum.

Recommendations and action items may include direct action by the County Commission or Planning Commission, however, many of the recommendations suggest cooperation, collaboration or coordination with other organizations, agencies or the private sector.

### Responsibility, Governance, organization and Cooperation

Implementation of the *Lee County Master Plan* should be considered a Public-Private initiative, with organizations, business and the county working together for the good of all citizens; all departments must continue to work together; think outside the box/do things even though they have never been done before; volunteers are needed to make projects work; public and private leadership is key. The plan is structured in such a way as to foster the establishment of implementation teams to “keep the flame” by supporting and fostering of the special topics within the plan. These implementation teams may include land preservation; streets and transportation; infrastructure; community facilities and services; education, health care; public services; neighborhoods and housing; arts and culture; natural and cultural resource preservation; economic and community development. Other implementation teams may be considered to include for example: civic participation, youth, seniors and others to work on specific projects.

### The Importance of Legislative Authority

Lee County, as are most counties in Alabama, is limited by its legislative authority, regulatory authority, funding sources, etc. For this reason, it is critical that the *Lee County Master Plan* be continuously shared with legislative representatives for support and consideration, either for potential legislation supportive of the plan and/or funding support from the state or federal level or support the county’s ability to finance projects, improvements consistent with the *Master Plan*.

### Priorities and Time Frame

With respect to timelines and priorities, recommendations include short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (5-10 years), and long-term (over 10 years) horizons based on importance and funding opportunities of the county or others, and the legal authority. It is important to note that many recommendations are interconnected and despite priorities/timelines, opportunities might present themselves to combine certain recommendations at a particular time.

### **Financing, Funding and Public/Private Investments**

It cannot be presumed that the *Lee County Master Plan* is implemented by county resources alone. In fact, many of the Plan recommendations will be implemented by others and the private sector. The county's goal is leveraging and supporting private sector resources to accomplish the desired results. Plan implementation should also be seen as a public/private investment strategy and not just the spending public of funds.

Financing and funding of county initiatives should include the use of county funds; grants; loans; other incentives and funding which can be generated through related development authorities such as a Commercial Development Authority, a Land Trust and other public-private develop organizations in addition to more common development authorities such as the utility board, school board, park board, etc.

### **Capital Improvement Planning and Budgeting**

The financial planning for the county should include a five year capital improvement program or plan which should complement the *Lee County Master Plan*. A sample Capital Improvements Plan is provided as a guide in conjunction with this plan.

### **Regulatory Tools**

Certain regulatory tools are important to the implementation of the *Lee County Master Plan*. These tools include zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, historic districts, design review districts and guidelines, others. These tools should be seen as consistent with the Master Plan and amended, as needed, to further the implementation of the Plan. Specially, zoning regulations, including special overlay districts, etc. are subject to approval by beats. In order to consider such standards, a comprehensive education program should be undertaken on the benefit, methods, etc. of such standards.

### **Ongoing and Project Planning**

More detailed district and project plans must be considered in order to implement the *Lee County Master Plan*. These district plans may include entire beats, neighborhood, or other special district plans.

Continuous review and updating of the *Lee County Master Plan* is important to responsible implementation of the Plan. Such updating should be done as needed, and, at least every five years. Annual reports should be made by the Planning Commission to the County Commission on the status of the Plan.

### **Coordination of the Plan Recommendations and Action Items**

Many recommendations in the *Lee County Master Plan* can be related to other recommendations or opportunities. The county should on an ongoing basis, identify where these opportunities for coordination of projects can be achieve plan goals. This can be done on an annual or quarterly basis, as well as, a part of project planning and budgeting of projects to take advantage of and leverage funding that are already being spent. The coordination can serve as positive added value for leveraging the use of funds for more than a single benefit. The attached implementation matrix is a guide for how this coordination should be accomplished.

## **Implementation Guide**

Concurrent with the *Master Plan* is an implementation guide which summarizes recommendations. The implementation guide provides an easy reference to the recommendations and allows for action items to be added. The guide will help identify those opportunities to coordinate activities or actions between various recommendations, projects, ect. on an annual, quarterly, month and daily basis.

## **FISCAL ASSESSMENT AND THE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Growth and development certainly have an impact on fiscal issues and organizational relationships in the county. The patterns of development, requirements for infrastructure and annexation have had a great impact and will continue to do so. As related in the goals, principles and various plan recommendations, including the economic development strategy, the framework for the future development of Lee County is that of a sustainable economy and development pattern, resulting in sound fiscal direction for the county. Although a detailed fiscal analysis of the county's revenue and expenses was not conducted, the County Master Plan recommendations are consistent with this framework concept for future fiscal development of the county.

### **Fiscal Observations**

- Population growth will be accelerated and with it will come increasing demands for services
- Much of the growth will be located in incorporated municipalities
- With population growth will come opportunities for new commercial development and the location of such development will import the direct revenue to the county
- Revenue from sales tax on commercial activity is limited in terms of the county's ability to increase sales tax rates

### **Fiscal Recommendations**

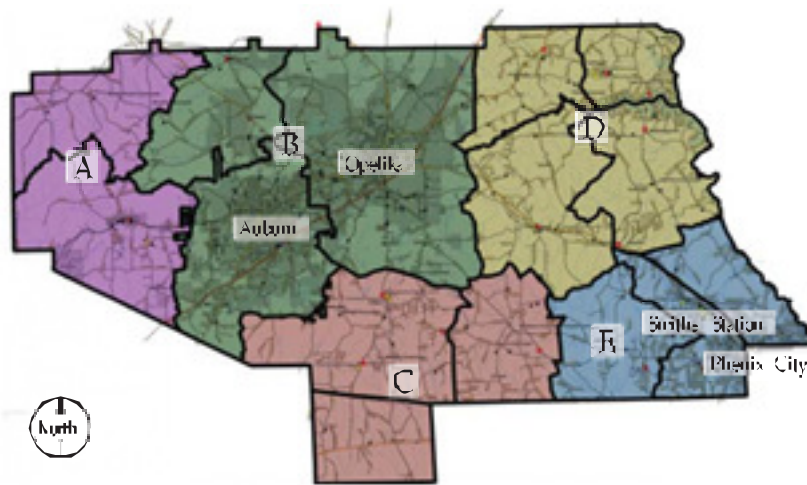
- The county should adhere to the Master Plan Conservation and Development Framework as part of a sustainable fiscal strategy
- The county should establish a cost-benefit model for considering funding requests
- The county should work with cities to formalize cost and revenue sharing agreements, including cost-beneficial annexation agreements having major impact on the county



## SUMMARY OF THE COUNTY PLAN BY AREA

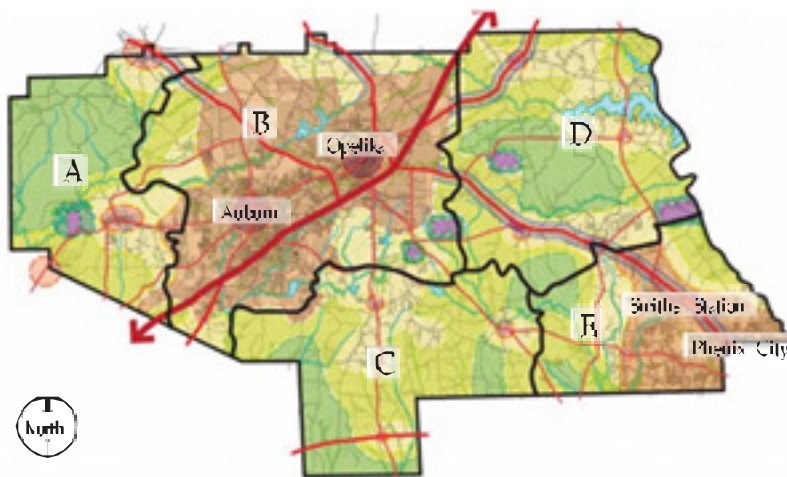
The following planning areas were determined during the development of the Lee County Master Plan. These areas were created so that each area contained similar characteristics in terms of land use, transportation and future growth along with other important issues to the particular planning area. Planning areas were drawn by combing various voting beats within the county which also provide some reference to the County Commission districts.

These planning areas currently have no legal authority within the county structure; they were developed for planning purposes and identifying key plan concepts and recommendations in various parts of the county.



**FIGURE 1.10 - PLANNING AREAS AND VOTING BEATS**

The five proposed Planning Areas within the Lee County Master Plan are defined by their color with the break down of each area by voting beat boundaries.



**FIGURE 1.11 - PLANNING AREAS AND THE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

The five proposed Planning Areas, and their relationship to the Conservation and Development Framework.

**Planning Area: A**

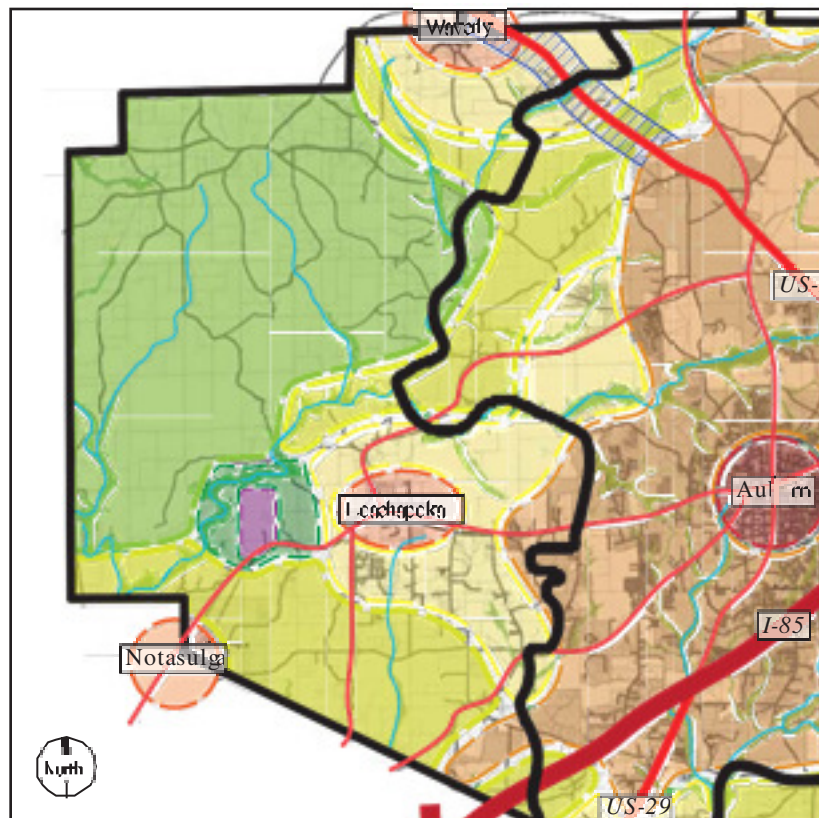
This planning area includes Loachapoka, portions of Notasulga and portions of Waverly. Both Notasulga and Waverly have areas within Lee County; the majority of their incorporated areas are in Macon and Chambers County, respectively. This area also includes portions of the western most limits of Auburn.

Typical characteristics of this planning area are large timber tracts and undeveloped land. On the east central portion of this planning area are a few suburban neighborhoods and development related to the growth of Auburn.

This planning area in relation to the Conservation and Development Framework contains a large segment of Rural Agriculture and General Rural character areas. There are also portions of Rural Residential located around Loachapoka and Waverly. All three communities in this planning area are designated as Rural Centers. A short segment of US Highway-280 crosses this planning area near Waverly as is designated as a corridor character area.

Within this planning area the only major transportation route is a small segment of US Highway-280 in the Waverly area. This segment of US Highway-280 has been designed as a Corridor character area by the Conservation and Development Framework, and as such should have careful consideration for any future transportation improvements.

Other important transportation routes in this planning area include Alabama Highway-14, Lee Road-188, and Lee Road-137.



**FIGURE 1.12 - PLANNING AREA: A**

The western portion of Lee County, includes the towns of Notasulga, Loachapoka and Waverly along with the unincorporated community of Roxana.

Loachapoka attendance area for the Lee County School system and Loachapoka High School and Loachapoka Elementary School are located within this planning area.

Underserved by fire along the west central portion of the planning area.

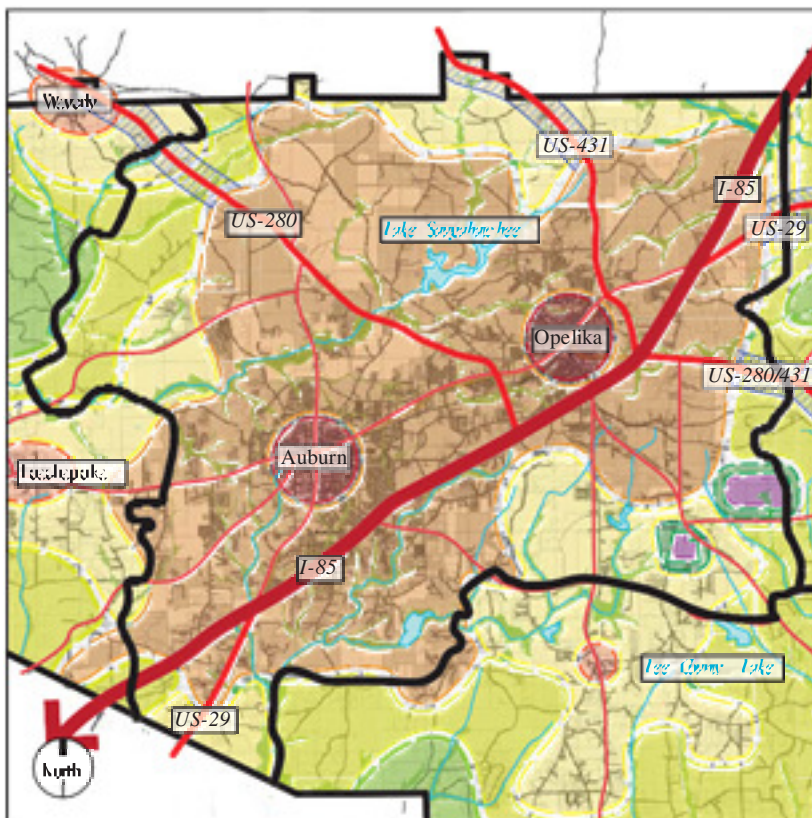
Potable water service is provided by the Loachapoka Water Authority with some portions being served by the Auburn Water Works and Sewer Board. Some segments served by Auburn Water Works have access to sanitary sewer.

**Planning Area: B**

This central planning area of Lee County was defined by Auburn and Opelika. These two municipalities have unique situations in their relationship to the Master Plan.

Typical characteristics of this planning area are suburban neighborhoods and developments in conjunction with the growth of Auburn and Opelika interspersed with sparse agricultural uses near the edges of the planning area.

This planning area in relation to the Conservation and Development Framework contains a majority of the Suburban character area with Urban Core areas in downtown Auburn and Opelika. Further out from the Suburban areas, are defined as Rural Residential and a small segment of General Rural near Waverly.



**FIGURE 1.13 - PLANNING AREA: B**

This planning area is composed of Auburn, Opelika and the unincorporated community of Gold Hill.



A majority of this planning area, as outlined earlier, is within Auburn and Opelika as well as the Auburn-Opelika Metropolitan Planning Organization, which deals with transportation related funding and decisions. Any future transportation needs in this area will need to be coordinated with the Auburn-Opelika MPO on an on-going basis.

This planning area contains small segments of the Beulah, Bearegard and Loachapoka attendance areas of the Lee County School System. A majority of this area is served by Auburn City School and Opelika City Schools.

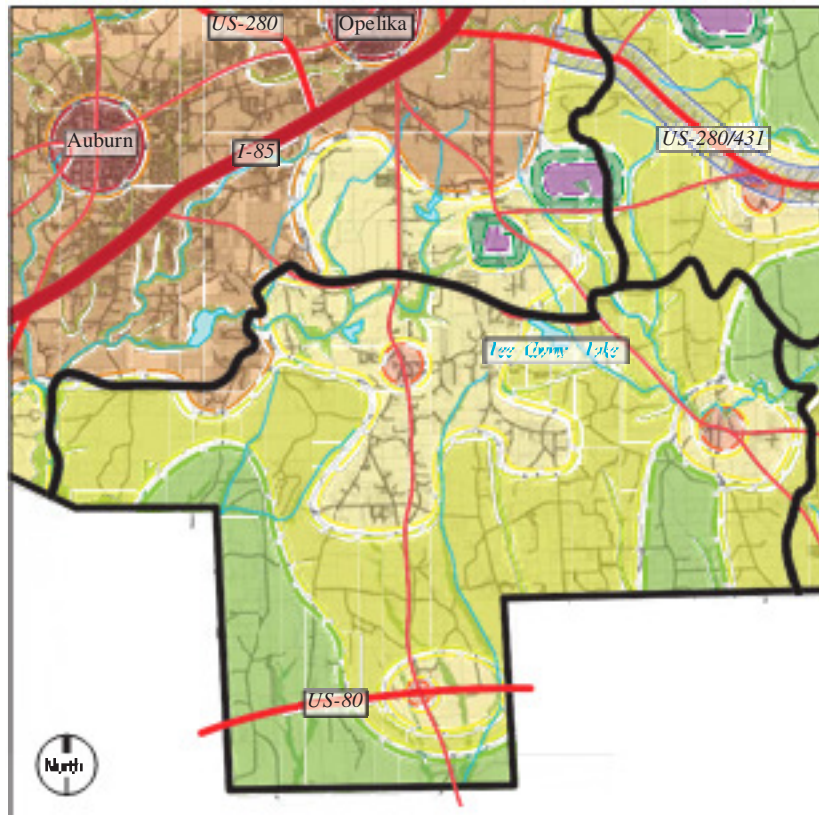
Auburn Water Works and Sewer Board and Opelika Utilities provide service for water and sewer along with small segments of the Loachapoka Water Authority, Bearegard Water Authority and the Beulah Utilities District for potable water outside of the major municipalities.

**Planning Area: C**

Planning area C is the south central segment of Lee County. This area contains the areas known as Bearegard and Marvyn, as well as southeastern portions of Auburn.

Typical characteristics of this planning area are agriculture and undeveloped land. There are a few suburban neighborhoods and development related to the growth of Auburn along the extreme northern edge.

This planning area in relation to the Conservation and Development Framework contains large portions of Rural Agriculture, General Rural and Rural Residential character areas. Three Rural Center character areas are designated within this planning area and they are Bearegard, Marvyn and Meadows Crossroads.



**FIGURE 1.14 - PLANNING AREA: C**

The south-central portion of Lee County, includes the unincorporated communities of Bearegard and Marvyn.

Within this planning area the only major transportation route is US Highway-80 along the southern portion of the county. This route is an important corridor between Russell, Lee, and Macon Counties.

Other important transportation routes include Alabama Highway-51, Alabama Highway-169 and Lee Road-146. These routes are important connections between Auburn, Opelika and the outlying agricultural and residential areas.

A majority of this planning area is with the Beauregard attendance area of the Lee County School System, with some of the eastern most portions served by the Smiths Station attendance area.

The southern most segment of this planning area, the Marvyn community, is underserved by fire protection. An additional station within the Marvyn community should be considered.

Most of this planning area has potable water served by the Beauregard Water Authority with some of the eastern segments being served by the Smiths Water and Sewer Authority.

#### **Planning Area: D**

This planning area is located in the northeastern segment of Lee County. This area contains the Beulah community as well as Lake Harding.

Typical characteristics of this planning area are timber tracts with interspersed agriculture and undeveloped land. Northern portions of the planning area contain more residential uses because of the proximity to Opelika, Interstate -85 and Lake Harding.

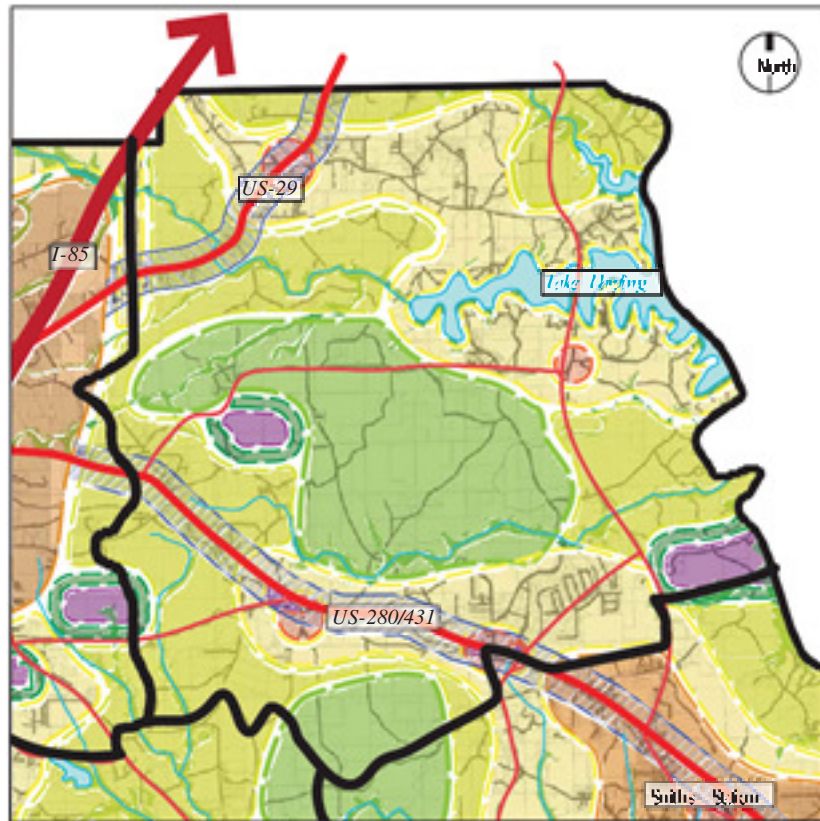
This planning area in relation to the Conservation and Development Framework contains large segments of Rural Agriculture, General Rural and Rural Residential character areas. Four Rural Center character areas are designated within this planning area and they are Beulah, Salem, Mechanicsville and a segment of the Bleeker Rural Center. This planning area also has Corridor character areas along US Highway-29 to the northern county line and US Highway-280/431.

Within this planning area are two major transportation routes, US Highway-29 which parallels Interstate-85, and US Highway-280/431 which serves as a route between Opelika and Smiths Station beyond to Phenix City. These two routes are designated as Corridor character areas within the Conservation and Development Framework and as such should have careful consideration for any future transportation improvements.

Other important transportation routes in this planning area are Lee Road-158, Lee Road-250, and Lee Road-379. These routes are important connections between Opelika, Smiths Station and the outlying agricultural and residential areas as well as connections to Lake Harding along the Chattahoochee River.

A majority of this planning area is within the Beulah attendance area of the Lee County School system with southern segments being within the Beauregard and Smiths Station attendance areas.

There is a good distribution of volunteer fire services within the planning area, however, an additional station should be considered along US Highway-280/431 near the Rural Center in Salem.



**FIGURE 1.15 - PLANNING AREA: D**

The north-eastern portion of the county that contains Lake Haring and the unincorporated communities of Salem and Beulah.

Most of this planning area has potable water provided by the Beulah Utilities District, formerly the Lee Chambers Utility District. The southern portion of the planning area has potable water service provided by the Smiths Water and Sewer Authority.

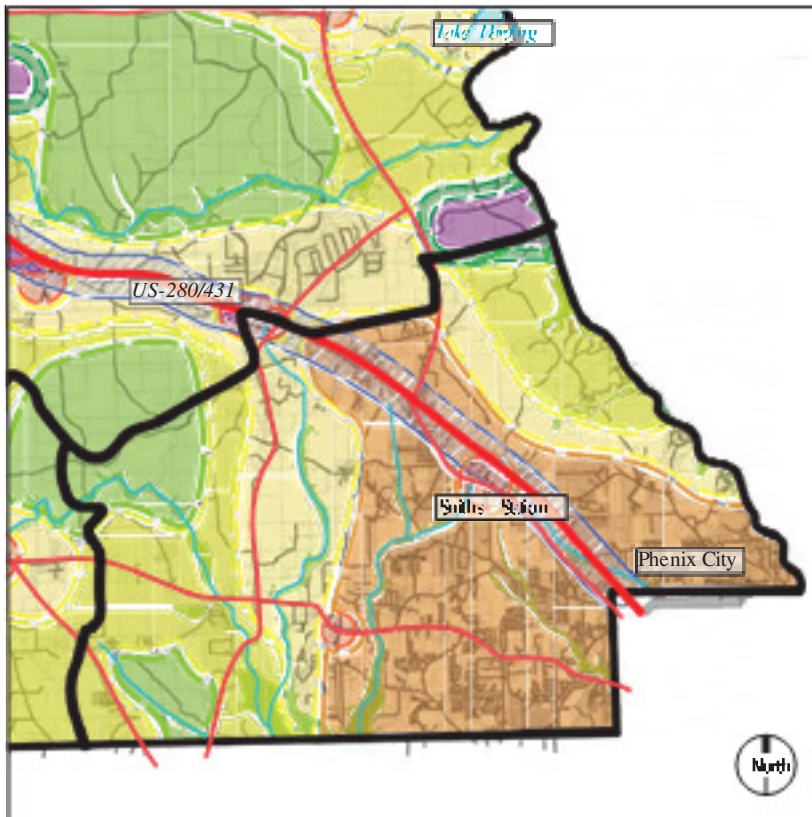
**Planning Area: E**

This planning area is located in the southeastern corner of Lee County. Within this planning area is the City of Smiths Station along with portions of Phenix City.

Typical characteristics of this planning area are the outlying timber, agriculture and undeveloped land. The presence of residential development increases near Smiths Station and Russell County.

This planning area in relation to the Conservation and Development Framework contains the General Rural and Rural Residential character areas along the other bordering planning area. The Suburban character areas are located in the central segment of this planning area in relation to Smiths Station, Phenix City and Russell County.

Within this planning area the only major transportation route is US Highway-280/431 connecting Opelika Smiths Station, and beyond to Phenix City. This route is designated as Corridor character area within the Conservation and Development Framework and as such should have careful consideration for any future transportation improvements.



**FIGURE 1.16 - PLANNING AREA: E**

The south-eastern portion of the county in proximity to Columbus and Phenix City. This planning area contains the cities of Smiths Station and Phenix City.

Other important transportation routes within this planning area Lee Road-175, Lee Road-240, and Lee Road-379. These routes are important connections between Opelika, Smiths Station, Phenix City and the outlying agricultural and residential areas.

This planning area is within the Smiths Station attendance area of the Lee County School system.

This planning area has a good distribution of volunteer fire services.

This planning area has potable water service provided by the Smits Water and Sewer Board along with Phenix City Utilities. Certain segments of those potable water service areas also provide sanitary sewer.





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## COUNTY ASSESSMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

As part of the planning process, an assessment of conditions and trends affecting the county was completed. The assessment includes an initial preliminary review with more specific analysis is included in the Plan Elements chapter or in the accompanying appendix. The assessment includes a review of the legal planning jurisdictional issues; population and growth; economic development as well as the more physical characteristics of the county. The following summarizes the assessment of key findings and provides an introduction of key findings. More specific information is included in the varying Plan Elements.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

#### INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Much of Lee is incorporated into the communities of Auburn, Notasulga, Opelika, Phenix City, and Smiths Station.

#### POPULATION AND GROWTH

Lee County has been a fast growing county for many years, anchored by Auburn University and robust industrial development. Future projections of populations suggest continued growth, fueled by BRAC related to Ft. Benning and the Kia Plant located in West Point, Georgia.

#### LAND USE

Land use in Lee county ranges from the urban centers and suburban neighborhood growth of Auburn and Opelika to rural farm and timber land surrounding them. Smiths Station in the southeastern portion of the county is characterized

as suburban neighborhoods of Columbus and Phenix City; and Beulah and Beauregard as residential, agricultural communities related to Opelika and Auburn.

### **COMMUNITY DESIGN**

Lee County includes walkable town centers and suburban neighborhoods in Auburn and Opelika, a suburban center in Smiths Station and several historic villages such as Loachapoka and Salem. In between these locations are idyllic rural landscapes.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Lee County is served by Interstate-85 as the main transportation spine along with other major aerial roads such as US Highway-80, US Highway-29, US Highway-280, and US Highway-431.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Economic conditions in Lee County are characterized by Auburn University in the western portion of the county with more industrial development located around Opelika. The southeastern portion of the county where Smiths Station is located is driven more by their connection to Columbus and Phenix-City.

### **HOUSING**

Housing conditions within Lee County are generally good. There are pockets of older housing in limited areas and new housing throughout the county.

### **OPEN SPACE, NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

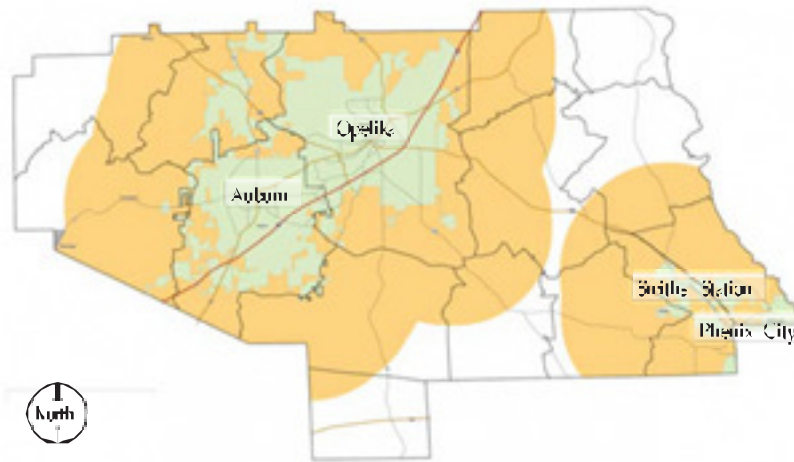
Lee County is still rural in much of the unincorporated area with large timber tracts. To the east Lake Harding and the Chattahoochee River are beautiful open spaces.

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

Schools in Lee County are well placed and in good condition. Both Auburn and Opelika operate parks that are open to all residents of Lee County; and in Smiths Station, the city and county are developing a large recreational area for citizens. The county has also purchased land in Beauregard and Beulah for future facilities to serve the citizens. Other important services to citizens in the county are a network of excellent volunteer fire departments and the county Sheriff's Department.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**

The county is served by six water boards or authorities, four of which also provide sewer service. Alabama Power, Dixie Electrical Cooperative, Tallapoosa River Electrical Cooperative and Opelika Light and Power provide electrical services for Lee County. Various other telecommunications providers and natural gas companies also serve the residents of the County.



**FIGURE 2.1 - PLANNING JURISDICTIONS**

Municipalities within Lee County shown with their five mile police jurisdictions.

## ORGANIZATION AND LEGAL ASSESSMENT

### LEE COUNTY LEGAL AUTHORITY AND PLANNING JURISDICTIONS

The incorporated jurisdictions of Auburn, Opelika, Smiths Station and Phenix City have municipal planning authority, including subdivision regulations in their police jurisdictions. Lee County has recently gained planning authority through Act 07-477. Lee County is also composed of sub-county beats which include incorporated and unincorporated jurisdictions.

### INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

There are intergovernmental relationships through the Lee-Russell Council of Governments, the Auburn-Opelika MPO, the Columbus-Phenix City MPO, regional and statewide economic development strategies, urban and rural transportation plans, regional watersheds and other regional plans impact Lee County. The county is also involved in various statewide, regional and federal relationships including ALDOT, BRAC, and others.

Intergovernmental relationships tend to form around transportation, economic development and to some extent utilities, public safety, emergency management, and other services. Intergovernmental issues are highlighted around annexation, land use, revenue and cost of other issues.

### OTHER AUTHORITIES

Lee County is served by numerous quasi-governmental authorities including water, sewer utilities boards; various county and park boards; and multiple volunteer fire departments in addition to fire departments in Auburn and Opelika.



**FIGURE 2.2 - MUNICIPALITIES**

Municipalities within Lee County Alabama.

**Municipalities**

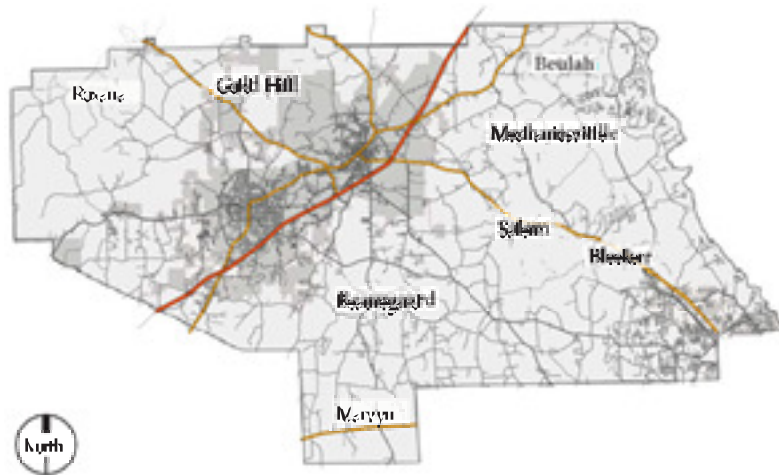
The following are municipalities within Lee County:

- Auburn
- Loachapoka
- Notasulga (partial)
- Opelika
- Phenix City (partial)
- Smiths Station
- Waverly (partial)

**Unincorporated Communities**

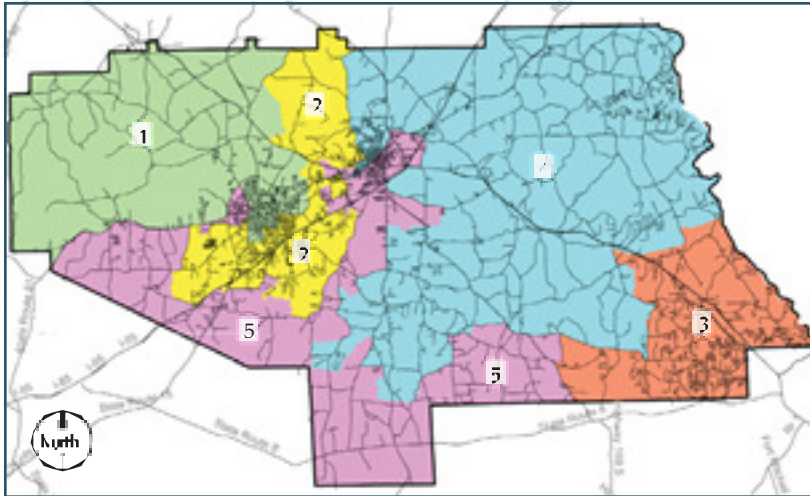
The following are unincorporated communities within Lee County:

- Beauregard
- Beulah
- Bleeker
- Gold Hill
- Lake Harding
- Marvyn
- Mechanicsville
- Roxana
- Salem



**FIGURE 2.3 - UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES**

Unincorporated Communities within Lee County Alabama.



**FIGURE 2.4 - COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICTS**

These are the five county commission districts within Lee County.

**County Commission Districts and Beats**

The county commission is organized into five districts and each district is divided into various voting beats. In total there are fifteen voting beats within Lee County.

**Other Planning Areas**

Other important planning areas include U.S. Census designations and traffic analysis zones used by Metropolitan Planning Organizations and the Alabama Department of Transportation.

## POPULATION AND GROWTH ANALYSIS

The process of creating Lee County's first master plan requires a thorough examination of historical, existing, and future population within the county. Many population estimates and projections have been developed for the county since the time of the 2000 census nine years ago. Lee County has continued to grow rapidly since that time and to best serve the planning process many data sets and studies were examined to conclude the future population of Lee County. The county continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in the state and in the top 350 fastest growing counties in the nation. The Auburn-Opelika Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which encompasses the entire county, was 37<sup>th</sup> fastest growing out of all 366 MSA's in the nation from 1990-2005. Rapid population growth and the accompanying development has major implications on land use and presents new and difficult challenges for policy makers and government officials. Lee County is no exception to this phenomenon and has taken a critical step to mitigate the impacts of future population growth and development. The citizen driven master plan will guide policy makers on future decisions regarding the direction and type of development in the unincorporated areas of the county. Local and regional planning efforts have inbuilt knowledge that is important and contextual for the Lee County master planning effort and will be examined in this section.

Studies examined in the growth analysis include

- The Columbus Valley Partnership's Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan (RGMP)
- The Lee-Russell and Columbus-Phenix City Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP)
- The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) Long Range Transportation Plan.

Population projections and forecasts:

- The U.S. Census Bureau
- The State of Alabama Data Center, The Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama (CBER)
- Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI)
- Nielsen Claritas
- Woods and Poole Economics (W&P)

As stated, Lee County has been subject to rapid growth and development for the past thirty years. The effects of this growth are being addressed at the regional, state, county and municipal level. The Lee County Master Plan set out to analyze and utilize the various studies and plans that have been commissioned and draw conclusions from the information to address Lee County's unincorporated areas. The growth of the major cities in the county and within the region has incremental impacts on land, water and other resources in Lee County. The increase in population in the unincorporated areas of Lee County affects the character and quality of life of its residents. The growth of the County has historically been within the incorporated areas, however, growth has been increasingly moving to unincorporated parts of the county. The Cities of Auburn and Opelika have absorbed much of the population growth by increasing their geographic areas through annexation. The largest city in Lee County, The City of Auburn, has doubled in size from about 29sq. miles in 1984 to 57 sq. miles in 2006 (Auburn AIGM p. 24). Through discussions and meeting with officials in the area it does not seem that the future growth of Lee County will be absorbed in the same manner. The majority of the population growth will likely remain in the Auburn-Opelika areas but the size of these two major cities geographic areas are not likely to substantially increase. This suggests the unincorporated areas of Lee County will absorb a higher percentage of the total growth than in the past. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates more than 95% of



Lee County's growth from 2000 has been in incorporated areas. According to census estimates in 2008 42,693 people live in the unincorporated areas of Lee County or about 32% of the population.

### SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL OUTLOOK

When contemplating Lee County's growth forecast over the next twenty years, it is important to correlate that growth with expected regional growth patterns. The Southeastern United States includes Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. This region is forecasted to increase population and employment more rapidly than the U.S. average over the next three decades. Employment is forecast to increase at an average annual rate of 1.20% from 2007 to 2040 and population is expected to grow 1.10% per year. The fastest growing Metropolitan Statistical Area in the Southeast is the Atlanta- Sandy Springs- Marietta GA MSA. This MSA is expected to gain 1.65 million jobs from 2007 to 2040. Atlanta is the regional center for trade and commerce in the Southeast outside of Florida. The center of Lee County is around 100 miles from Atlanta, the proximity in a regional context suggests Lee County will have a similar growth trend and see direct and indirect impacts from the growth of Atlanta in the coming decades. (Woods & Poole. 2009).

### LEE COUNTY HISTORICAL POPULATION TRENDS

Lee County had unprecedented growth during the ten year period leading to the 2000 U.S. Census. A population increase of 32% or 27,946 people from 1990-2000 is more than double the previous decade. From 1980-1990 there was an increase of 14.2% or 10,863 people. Lee County can continue to expect higher than average population growth compared to the State of Alabama which it has consistently done for the past thirty years at rate twice that of the State. The Valley Partnership Regional Growth Master Plan states that out of the ten counties in the study Lee County is one of three that has experienced positive net growth from 1980-2000. Lee County's historical population trends from 1900-2008 can be seen in Figure 2.5.

The U.S. Census Bureau's population estimate in 2008 was 133,010 an increase of 17,886 or 15.6% with an annual growth rate of 1.8%.

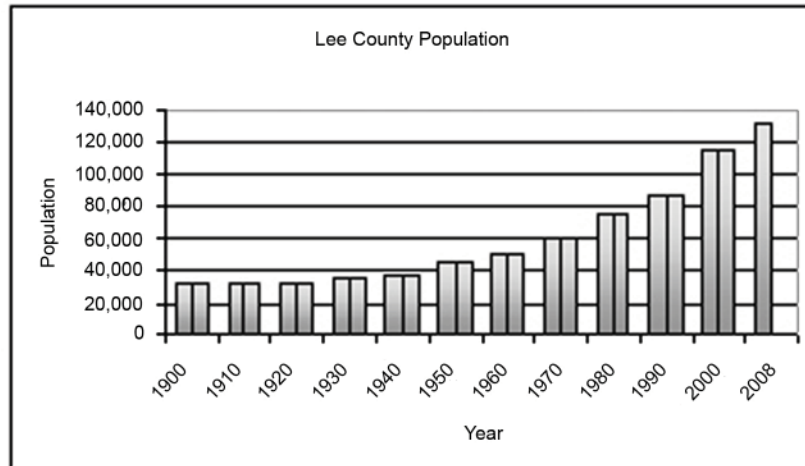
**TABLE 2.1 – LEE COUNTY HISTORICAL CENSUS DATA**

	<b>Population</b>	<b>Number Change</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
1900	31,826		
1910	32,867	1,041	3.27
1920	32,821	-46	-0.14
1930	36,063	3,242	9.88
1940	36,455	392	1.09
1950	45,073	8,618	23.64
1960	49,754	4,681	10.39
1970	61,268	11,514	23.14
1980	76,283	15,015	24.51
1990	87,146	10,863	14.24
2000	115,092	27,946	32.07
2008	133,010	17,918	15.57
Total		101,184	

Source: U.S. Census

**FIGURE 2.5 - LEE COUNTY HISTORICAL POPULATION TRENDS**

The 2008 Population is based on U.S. Census estimates.  
 Source: U.S. Census



**PROJECTIONS, MODELS, FORECASTS AND PLANS**

**The Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama**

The Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama (CBER) is a member of the Federal-State Cooperative Program for Population Estimates and Projections. The program is overseen by the U.S. Census Bureau and CBER is well respected throughout the state as a reliable source of population estimation and projection. Alabama Population Projections 2000-2035 produced by CBER is a population projection broken down by county. This dataset was used as a historical based population projection in this study. This projection does not take into account the Ft. Benning Base Realignment or the new KIA plant in nearby Georgia.

The CBER projection methodology provides a useful baseline population projection. However, in the case of Lee County a population projection based on historical trends could be noticeably optimistic. The unprecedented growth seen in the last thirty years and especially the ten year period from 1990-2000, provides a base data set with record growth rates which in turn creates a future growth rate with similar expectations. Historical projections account for births, deaths, age cohorts, in and out migration etc. but, they are not designed to include market transactions that drive economies at various scales. This makes the CBER population projection a good data set for a baseline trend of historical and future growth in Lee County.

CBER projects a 49.5% increase in population for Lee County during the period 2005 to 2030. The CBER projection shows a 61,922 person increase during this period and a total population of 187,054 about 1.6% annually. When compared with other projections CBER is on the higher end of the projection range.

**The Valley Partnership Regional Growth Management Plan**

The Regional Growth Management Plan (RGMP) is the second of two major planning efforts undertaken by the region in response to the BRAC-related growth on Fort Benning. Led by the Valley Partnership Joint Development Authority (VPJDA), the RGMP is funded in large part by grants awarded by the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), an agency of the Department of Defense (DoD) charged with helping BRAC-affected communities adjust to the impacts of mission changes at military installations. The RGMP identifies the likely impacts of growth, prompts a realistic reassessment of needs and priorities, and will contribute to realistic updated comprehensive plans for each county and for the region as a whole.

The RGMP has been examined and serves as a valuable planning tool for the region. The RGMP study area includes a total of ten counties in Georgia and Alabama. The plan includes a population growth model developed by Regional Economic Models Inc. (REMI), The Policy Insight Model, and forecasts population growth in Lee County with inputs from direct and indirect impacts of BRAC at Fort Benning and other economic factors. The REMI model is notably different than the baseline population projection by CBER. A population forecast and a population projection vary in intent and purpose. A population projection is generally described as a calculation of future population based on mathematical assumptions. Projections are meant to be more illustrative than predictive. A forecast is more likely to be predictive and try to describe a hypothetical or future scenario. For example the REMI model is attempting to predict with confidence the outcome of the Fort Benning expansion and other economic variables within the economy of Lee County from a regional outlook. It is important to remember these differences when considering the different methods of population projection and forecasts in the county.

The REMI model is an econometric model which produces a baseline population projection using the “cohort-component method”. This baseline model forecasts population and labor-force from detailed demographic information about each county. The forecast is built into the regional model by observations of historical and national trends. The REMI model calculates demographic changes by year for each age group by gender and ethnicity (RGMP p.20). The REMI model is designed to take the baseline forecast and address the impacts of a policy or event in the economy. In this scenario the REMI model addresses the expansion of Fort Benning, AFLAC expansion and the new KIA plant in Georgia on the regional economy. Lee County will experience most of its future growth in the unincorporated areas from these economic drivers. The southeastern portions of the county in and around the Smiths Station and Phenix City areas will be most affected by this growth. The population numbers forecasted by the REMI model trend well with compared population projections up to the ten year forecast. The second ten year period in the forecast is more conservative than compared sources. However, for programming community facilities the RGMP REMI model does a very good job addressing the unincorporated areas of the county which will be most dramatically affected by short and long term growth in the Columbus-Phenix-Smiths Station area. The other areas of growth confirmed by other examined studies are in the northern part of the county along I-85 in northeast Opelika and in North Auburn. The REMI model overall is more conservative than the compared projections. The REMI model population forecast is on the low end of the range of population projections examined and for planning purposes will be used as such.

The REMI model forecasts a population of 164,169 in 2028 an increase of 33,639 people which is 25.8% and an average annual growth rate of 1.3% from year 2008 to 2028. Extrapolated out by the average annual growth rate to 2030 the projection would be 168,465 people in year 2030.

### **Woods & Poole Economics Inc.**

The third data set examined to gain insight into the future population growth for Lee County was the Woods and Poole Economics Inc. 2010 Alabama State profile. The Woods & Poole forecast is also an econometric model like REMI. The Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. database contains more than 900 economic and demographic variables for every county in the United States for every year from 1970 to 2030. This comprehensive database includes detailed population data by age, sex, and race; employment and earnings by major industry; personal income by source of income; retail sales by kind of business; and data on the number of households, their size, and their income.

All of these variables are projected for each year through 2030. In total, there are over 200 million statistics in the regional database. The strength of the Woods & Poole economic and demographic projections stems from the comprehensive historical county database and the integrated nature of the projection model. The projection for each county in the United States is done simultaneously so that changes in one county will affect growth or decline in other counties.

The methods used by Woods & Poole to generate the county projections proceed in four stages. First, forecasts to 2040 of total United States personal income, earnings by industry, employment by industry, population, inflation, and other variables are made. In the 2010 Woods & Poole model the U.S. forecast included an estimate of the 2008-09 recession using preliminary employment data for 2008 and 2009 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Second, the country is divided into 179 economic areas as defined by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The economic areas are aggregates of contiguous counties that attempt to measure cohesive economic regions in the United States in the 2010 Woods & Poole model, economic areas definitions released by the BEA in May 2007 are used. For each economic area, a projection is made for employment, using an “export-base” approach; in some cases, the employment projections are adjusted to reflect the results of individual economic area models or exogenous information about the economic area economy. The employment projection for each economic area is then used to estimate earnings in each economic area. The employment and earnings projections then become the principal explanatory variables used to estimate population and number of households in each economic area. The third stage is to project population by age, sex, and race for each economic area on the basis of net migration rates projected from employment opportunities.

For stages two and three, the U.S. projection is the control total for the economic area projections. The fourth stage replicates stages two and three except that it is performed at the county level, using the EAs as the control total for the county projections (Woods & Poole. 2009).

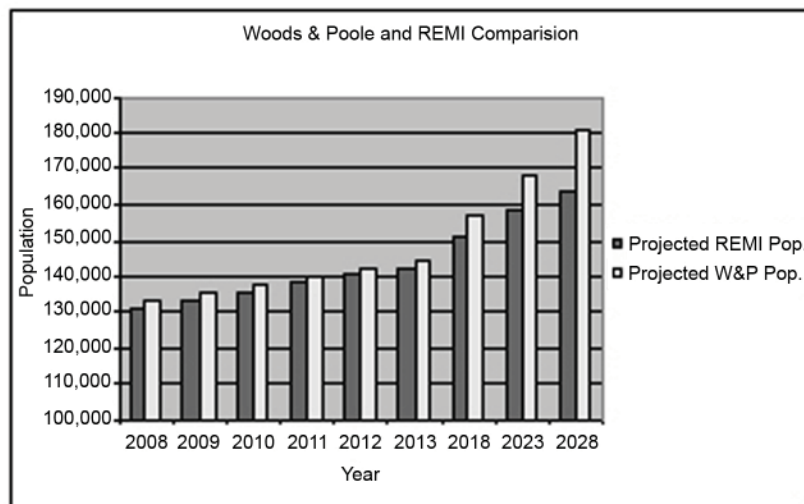
The Woods & Poole forecast expects Lee County to add 60,179 during year 2008 and 2030. This is 48% total growth and a total of 185,311 persons at an average annual growth rate around 1.58%.

**Summary**

The three studies and methodologies examined have given a range of high and low population projections for Lee County. For planning purposes both REMI and Woods & Poole forecasts will be used. A direct comparison year by year is for REMI and Woods & Poole are in the charts and tables that follow. The Woods & Poole data is the upper limit of the future projection the REMI model is the lower limit. There is a 13,812 person difference between the two forecasts.

**FIGURE 2.6 - WOODS & POOLE AND REMI PROJECTION COMPARISONS**

Comparison of population projections from Woods & Poole Inc. and REMI  
 Source: Woods & Poole, REMI



These and other studies noted in the first part of this section will be used to examine the impacts of the population growth and the distribution of this growth throughout the county.

**TABLE 2.2 – POPULATION PROJECTION COMPARISONS**

Year	Projected Population		Difference	Projected Population Change		Percent Change		Annual for 5 year	
	REMI	W&P		W&P- REMI	REMI	W&P	REMI	W&P	REMI
2008	130,530	133,010	2,480	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009	133,115	135,306	2,191	2,585	2,296	2.00	1.73	-	-
2010	135,701	137,611	1,910	2,586	2,305	1.94	1.70	-	-
2011	138,359	139,912	1,553	2,658	2,301	1.96	1.67	-	-
2012	140,572	142,230	1,658	2,213	2,318	1.60	1.66	-	-
2013	142,570	144,230	1,660	1,998	2,000	1.42	1.41	-	-
2018	151,101	156,367	5,266	8,531	12,137	5.98	8.42	1.17	1.17
2023	158,130	168,362	10,232	7,029	11,995	4.65	7.67	0.91	1.49
2028	164,169	180,461	16,292	6,039	12,099	3.82	7.19	0.75	1.40
Total	-	-	13,812	33,639	47,451	-	-	-	-

Source: REMI, Woods & Poole Inc.

### Preliminary Municipal Capture Scenario

Currently there is around 68% of Lee County's estimated population in the incorporated areas. A preliminary analysis of the expected growth by current trends using a 70%/30% and a 65%/35% municipal capture rate will illustrate a simple distribution. To show this scenario the REMI forecast and the Woods & Poole forecast will be used to show ranges of incorporated and unincorporated population growth in 2028.

**TABLE 2.3 – 2008 POPULATION ESTIMATES**

	U.S. Census	REMI	Woods & Poole, Inc
2008	133,010	130,530	133,010
2008 Incorporated Pop. (68%)	90,317	88,760	90,317
2008 Unincorporated Pop (32%)	42,693	41,769	42,693

**TABLE 2.4 – SCENARIO 1 – SEVENTY PERCENT MUNICIPAL CAPTURE RATE**

	<b>REMI</b>	<b>Woods &amp; Poole, Inc.</b>
2008 Population	130,530	133,010
Number 2028	33,639	47,451
70% 2028	23,549	33,216
30% 2028	10,091	14,235
Incorporated Pop 2028	112,309	123,533
Unincorporated Pop 2028	51,860	56,928
Total 2028	164,169	180,461

**TABLE 2.5 – SCENARIO 2 – SIXTY-FIVE PERCENT MUNICIPAL CAPTURE RATE**

	<b>REMI</b>	<b>Woods &amp; Poole, Inc.</b>
2008 Population	130,530	133,010
Number 2028	33,639	47,451
65% 2028	21,867	30,844
35% 2028	11,773	16,607
Incorporated Pop 2028	110,627	121,161
Unincorporated Pop 2028	53,542	59,300
Total 2028	164,169	180,461

These scenarios depict a rough population distribution in 2028. It has been noted that current estimate show around 95% growth in the incorporated areas. These scenarios show current numbers relating to total population forecasted. The range expected for the unincorporated areas of Lee County are an additional 10,000 to 16,600 people in 2028.

**Sources**

- The City of Auburn Planning Department. The Auburn Interactive Growth Model (AIGM). 6-20-2008.
- Woods and Poole Economics Inc (W&P). 2010 State of Alabama Profile. 2009.
- The U.S. Census Bureau. 2009
- Valley Partnership Joint Development Authority (VPJDA). The Regional Growth Management Plan (RGMP), Lee County. 2009. (<http://www.fortbenningsandthevalley.com/rgmp.php#map>) accessed 2009.



## **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **TOPOGRAPHY**

Lee County is relatively flat, with gentle rolling hills being the predominate slope. There are somewhat steeper grades near the river to the east and along US Highway-280 to the north.

### **FLOOD PLAINS**

Due to its relatively flat topography and the presence of creeks in the county, there are significant flood plains. Storm water runoff from agricultural and urban functions is an issue.

### **WETLANDS**

Wetlands are limited in the county.

### **QUARRIES**

Due to the presence of certain resource materials, there are quarries in the county for extraction purposes.

### **SOILS**

There are still considerable of the county agricultural use or areas where agriculture is the predominant use.

### **VEGETATION**

Lee County continues to have large areas in forested condition. These areas include natural forests with varieties of hardwoods as well as cultivated forests with large stands of pines and other wood product species.

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## PLAN ELEMENTS

### INTRODUCTION

Included in the Lee County Master Plan are plan elements, which provide more background and specific references to the following topics:

- Land Preservation and Community Design
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Housing
- Open Space, Green Infrastructure, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Community Facilities and Services
- Infrastructure and Services
- Intergovernmental Coordination

## **LAND PRESERVATION ELEMENT**

Planning for future land use is a key factor in the Lee County Master Plan for the future. It is important because of land use compatibility issues in a county with urban and rural characteristics. The pattern of where and how to build is critical because of how transportation, infrastructure, and environmental protection relate to the plan and other goals as well as future management of growth in Lee County.

## **LAND USE ASSESSMENT**

Land use planning begins with documenting and assessing existing land use types and density then concludes with projections for future land use based on population, economics and other factors, related to the overall goals of the county.

Lee County is located in east-central Alabama along the Alabama-Georgia border. The county encompasses 616 square miles and has 7 square miles of surface water. The northern half of the county is part of the Piedmont physiographic section whereas the county's southern portion is part of the Coastal Plain physiographic section. The county crosses 4 watersheds the Middle Chattahoochee-Lake Harding, Middle Chattahoochee-Walter F. George Reservoir, Middle Tallapoosa and the Lower Tallapoosa. The Land Use Assessment for the master plan is important to document historical land use changes and provide insight for future land use change as the population of Lee County grows.

To gain insight on historical land cover change the National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD), provided by the Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium (MRLC) was used. This data set provides a snapshot of the land cover in 1992 and 2001. The terms land cover and land use are often used interchangeably, however they are distinctly different. Land cover is comprised of the physical makeup of the earth's surface; examples include grass, trees, and impervious surfaces. Land use is recognized by how the land is utilized. For example, agricultural and residential are common land use classifications. The two NLCD data sets used illustrate the magnitude and the location of land cover change over the 9 year period. The data is classified into 21 different land use classes by the Anderson 2 classification. For the purpose of the Lee County Master Plan, the Anderson 2 classification categories were condensed to seven categories which can be seen in Table 3.1. The assessment looks at the entire county for the two periods and provides the percentage changed in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county. The MRLC has produced a 1992-2001 land cover change data set that will be used to quantify these comparisons. The current city limits GIS file provided by Lee County will be used to show the incorporated areas. This study does not account for historical city limits and the changes due to annexation.

According to the 1990 U.S. Census Lee County had a population of 87,146 people and 36,636 housing units. The county had 33,097 households with an average of 2.5 persons per household. The 1992 NLCD Figure below shows the land cover for the similar time period.

In 2000 Lee County's population had increased by 32% to 115,092. The number of housing units increased to 50,329 a 37.4% increase. The number of households increased to 45,702 and the average family size decreased to 2.43. The 2001 NLCD image below shows the land cover conditions.

TABLE 3.1 – 2001 LAND COVER CLASSIFICATION TABLE

Class	2001 Land Cover Statistics	Acres	Square Miles	Percentage
1	Open Water	6,595.08	10.30	1.67
2	Urban	39,814.53	62.21	10.11
3	Barren	2,904.10	4.54	0.74
4	Forest	228,670.46	357.30	58.05
5	Grassland/Shrub	44,153.01	68.99	11.21
6	Agricultural	63,124.47	98.63	16.02
7	Wetlands	8,680.52	13.56	2.20
Total		393,942.16	615.53	100.00

In 2001 58% of Lee County's land cover was forest. Forest and agricultural land make up about 75% of Lee County's land cover in 2001. Incorporated areas experienced the most of the urban classification growth, the urban classification makes up about 10% of Lee County's land cover.

The NLCD change product represents the amount of land cover change from 1992 to 2001.

TABLE 3.2 – 1992-2001 NLCD CHANGE

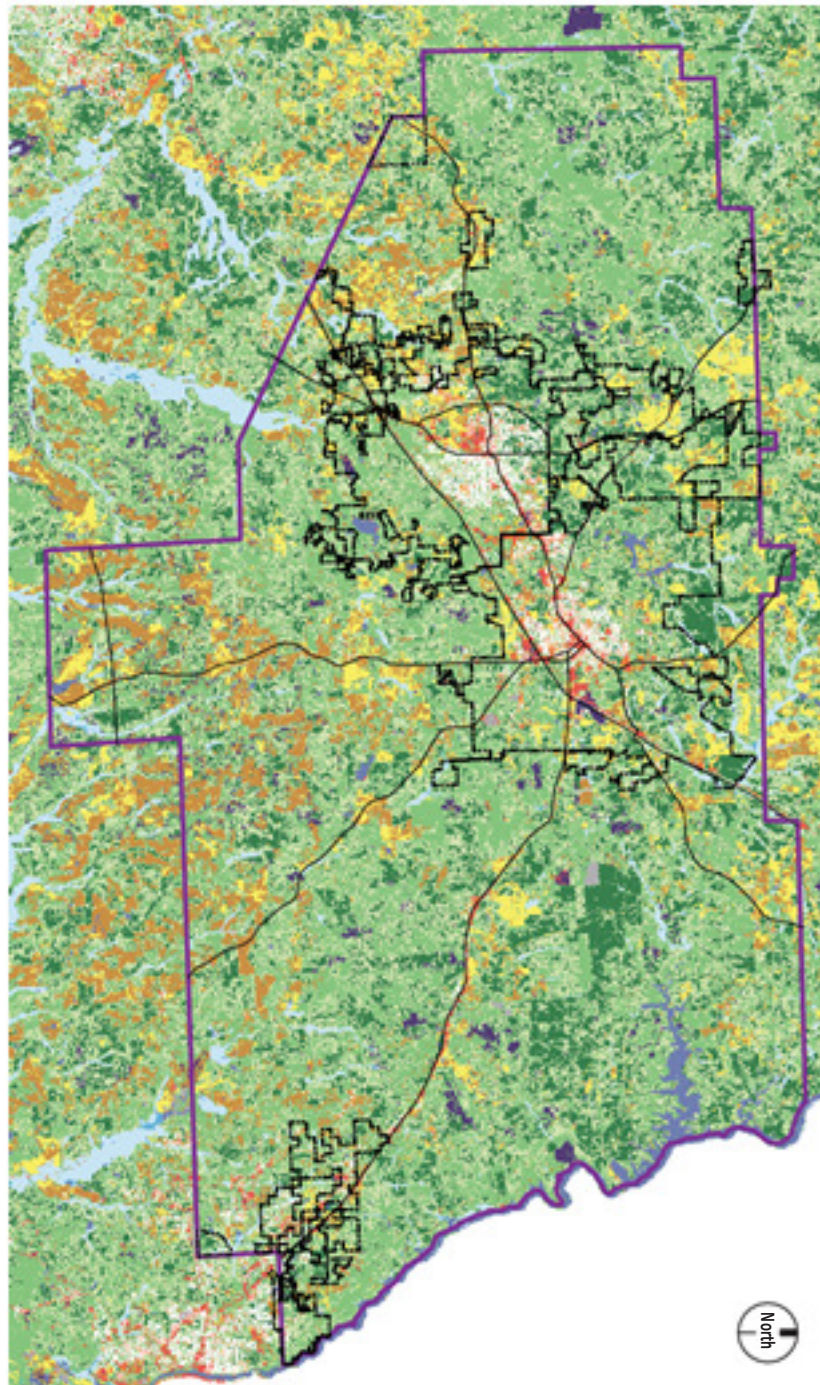
Class	1992-2001 Land Cover Change Statistics	Square Feet Added	Acres Added	Square Miles Added	Percentage
1	Open Water	20,836,869.12	478.3486942	0.747419835	1.140175
2	Urban	195,529,616.6	4,488.742347	7.013659917	10.6992
3	Barren	53,902,811.52	1,237.438281	1.933497314	2.949513
4	Forest	241,153,839.4	5,536.13038	8.650203719	13.19572
5	Grassland/Shrub	774,023,846.4	17,769.14248	27.76428512	42.35389
6	Agricultural	538,079,224.3	12,352.59927	19.30093636	29.44321
7	Wetlands	3,989,214.72	91.5797686	0.143093388	0.218286
Total		1827515422.08	41953.98122	65.55309566	100.00

The NLCD change figure shows locations where land cover has changed from 1992-2001. The classification definitions are located at the end of this section. The high change percentages of the forest, agricultural and grassland/shrub can be attributed to the active agriculture in the county; this includes evergreen forest grown for harvest. The urban class increased around 9 square miles or 10%. The gross land area converted to the urban classification can be misleading. Although, it seems 9 square mile is not a significant portion of Lee County the intensity and density of development can clearly been seen in the comparable 1992 and 2001 NLCD data sets. The figure illustrates the majority of the urban classification growth was in the incorporated areas. The areas of the County that received the greatest increases in urban land cover are in the southeast and to the south of Smiths Station. The NLCD products are good data sets to illustrate growth over the time period. However, the actual committed uses in gross land of these types of land cover are much more than the raw numbers would indicate from the NLCD data. The existing land use map will show the committed land use by parcel for the county.

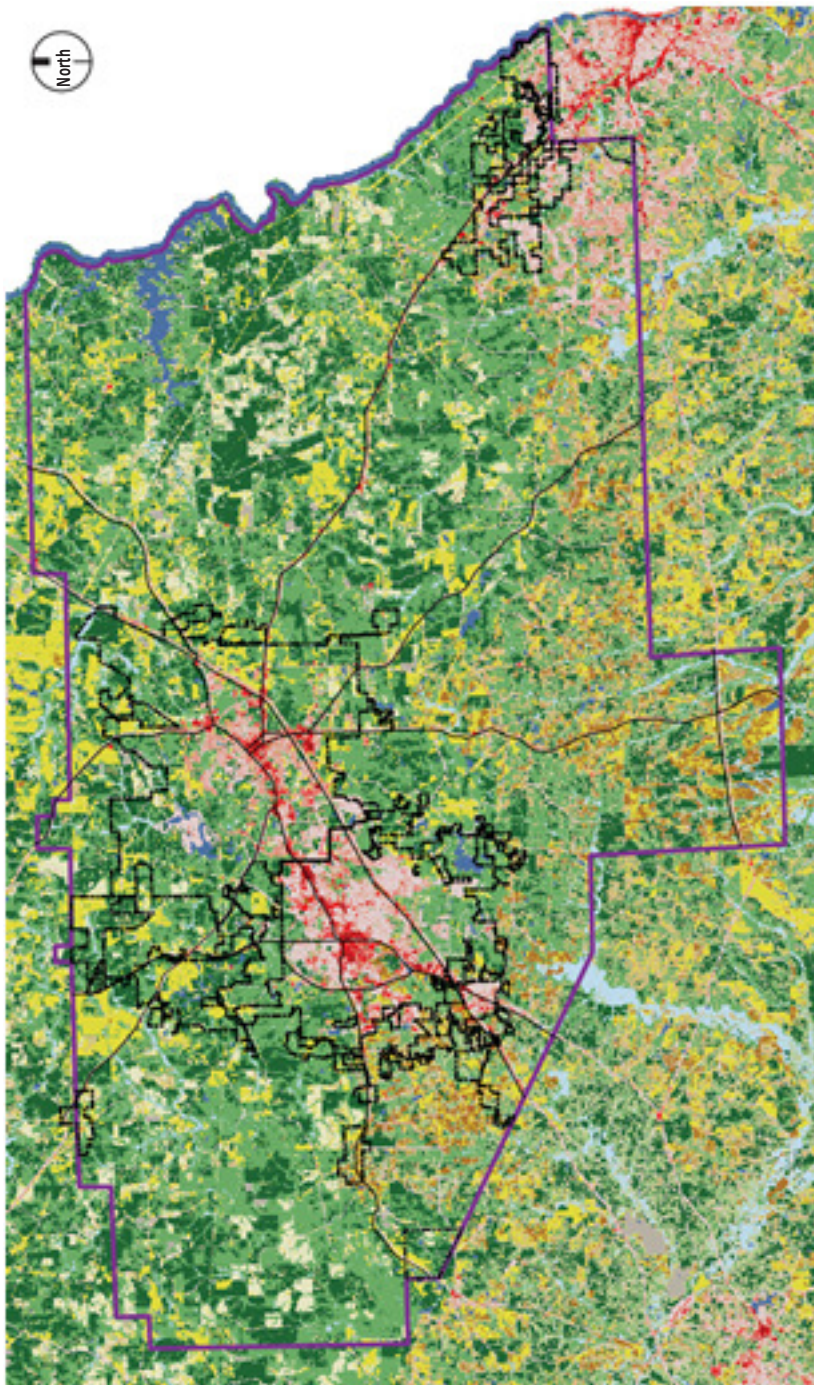
**NLCD 2001 Land Cover Classification Legend**

- 11 Open Water
- 12 Perennial Ice/Snow
- 21 Developed, Open Space
- 22 Developed, Low Intensity
- 23 Developed, Medium Intensity
- 24 Developed, High Intensity
- 31 Barren Land
- 41 Deciduous Forest
- 42 Evergreen Forest
- 43 Mixed Forest
- 52 Shrub/ Scrub
- 71 Grassland/ Herbaceous
- 81 Pasture Hay
- 82 Cultivated Crops
- 90 Woody Wetlands
- 95 Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands

**FIGURE 3.1 - 1992 NATIONAL LAND COVER DATASET**







**NLCD 2001 Land Cover Classification Legend**

- 11 Open Water
- 12 Perennial Ice/Snow
- 21 Developed, Open Space
- 22 Developed, Low Intensity
- 23 Developed, Medium Intensity
- 24 Developed, High Intensity
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- 41 Deciduous Forest
- 42 Evergreen Forest
- 43 Mixed Forest
- 52 Shrub/ Scrub
- 71 Grassland/ Herbaceous
- 81 Pasture Hay
- 82 Cultivated Crops
- 90 Woody Wetlands
- 95 Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands

**FIGURE 3.2 - 2001 NATIONAL LAND COVER DATASET**



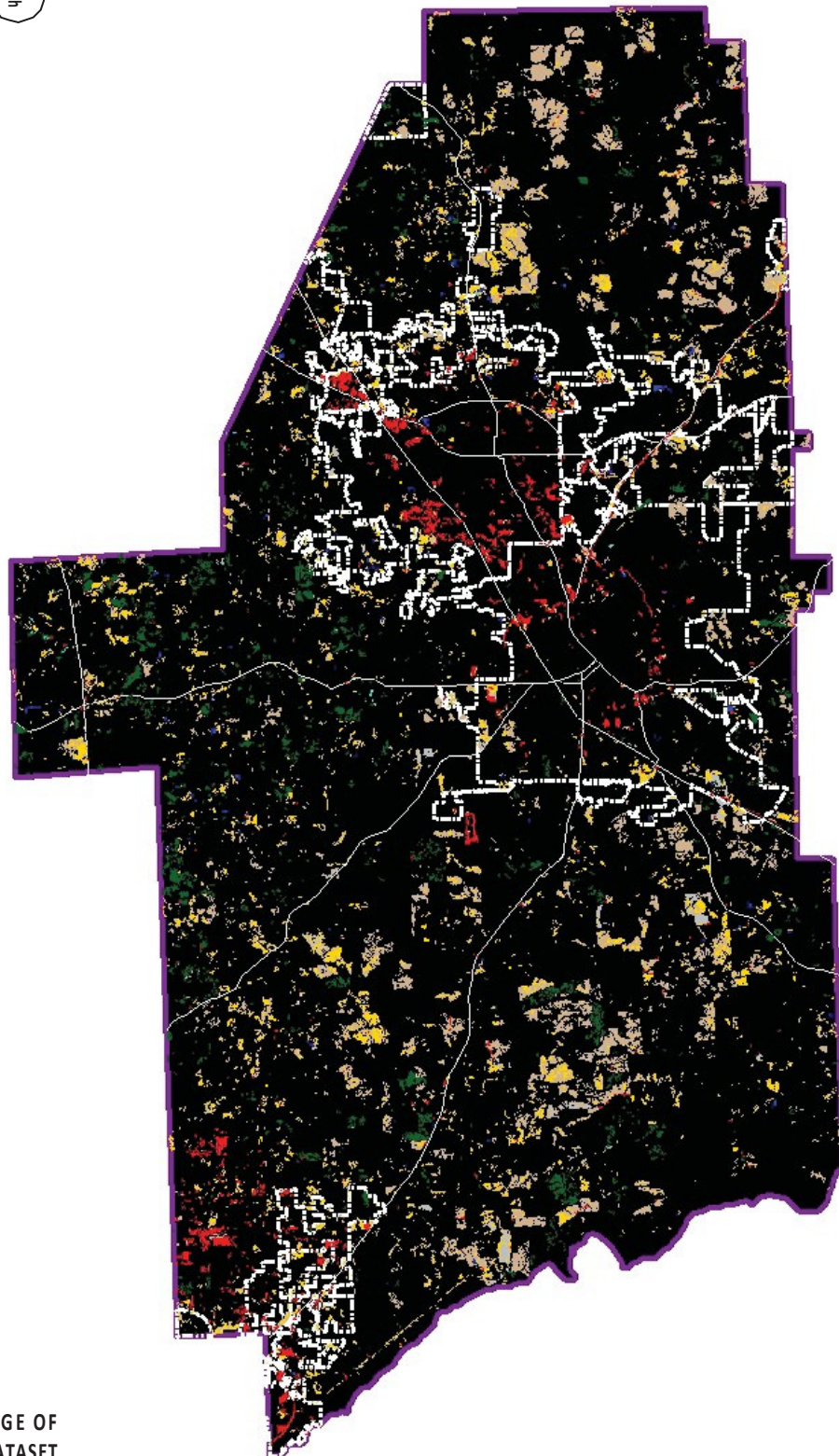
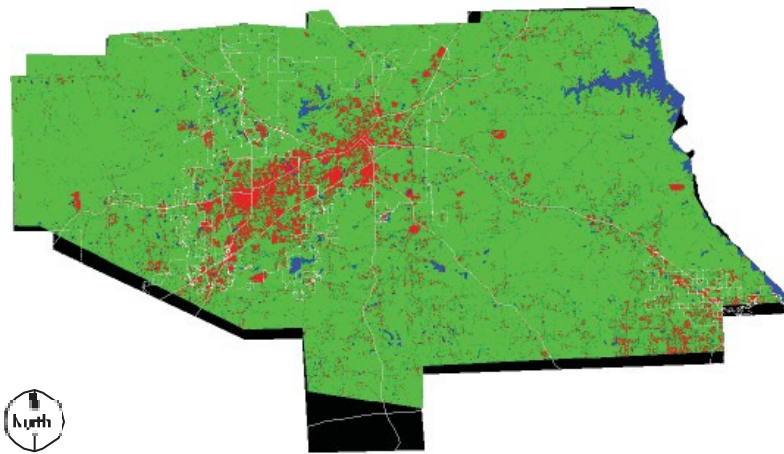


FIGURE 3.3 - 1992-2001 CHANGE OF NATIONAL LAND COVER DATASET



**FIGURE 3.4 - 2008 BUILT LAND ILLUSTRATION**

The red in the image is the built environment. Green in the image is vegetation. Black is no data

### Built Land Illustration

In conjunction with the Auburn University Department of Geography a independent remote sensing study was conducted to verify land use change in the built environment from 2000-2008. The built environment includes roads, parking lots, buildings etc. A cloud free georeferenced Landsat TM Image was used to determine the built environment for 2008. The illustration was used to confirm the suspected growth patterns in the county. As stated in the population section, Lee County's unincorporated areas will continue to absorb an increasing amount of the total County population increases in the future. What was observed was growth oriented toward the major transportation routes in the county. It has been stated through public participation in this master planning process that this is not a quality growth scenario and needs to be avoided. The built environment illustration confirms continued transportation oriented and corridor growth in 2008. The red in the image is the built environment.

### Existing Land Use

The existing land use analysis was conducted with multiple data sets, windshield surveys and verification through aerial photographs. The tax parcel data was provided through the county GIS system. The 2001 NLCD data and 2006 aerial photographs were the most recent data provided and were used for verification. Bing maps and Google earth were also consulted.

The existing land use diagram was classified in to ten categories.

### Land Use Definitions

- Residential- Residential structures as identified from tax records and aerial orthophotographs based on building footprints, building configurations and parcel configuration. This includes single and multi-family structures, mobile homes and group homes.
- Commercial- Land structures dedicated to retail trade, retail services, general office, and other similar uses.
- Industrial- Land and structures dedicated to light or heavy manufacturing, distribution, or warehousing facilities.
- Institutional- public, semi-public, civic – Areas and buildings associated with City, County, or State-owned property: including churches, schools, cemeteries, airports, public facilities and other similar uses.
- Active Agricultural- Farm structures and cropland as identified in USGS NLCD and 2006 orthophotographs. May include some pasture land if included in overall farming compound.

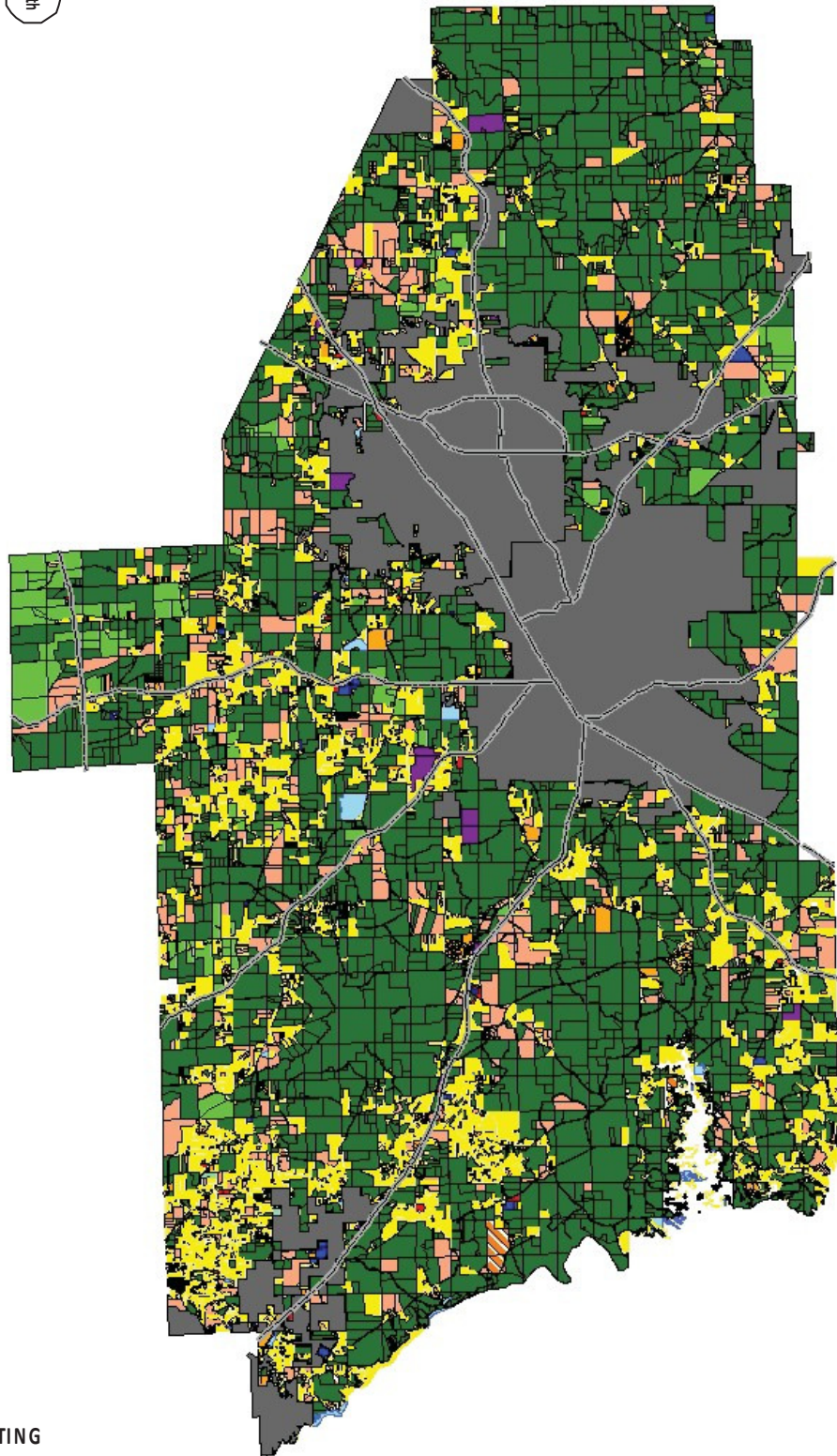


FIGURE 3.5 - LEE COUNTY EXISTING  
LAND USE



- Forest- Areas of deciduous, evergreen or mixed forest as identified on USGS NLCD and 2006 orthophotographs. The parcels were classified with the majority landcover being forest.
- Utility- Land areas and structures associated with utility facilities. This category may include power substations, treatment plants, water towers, telecommunications, etc.
- Recreation- Areas and structures dedicated to organized recreation. This category may include golf courses, ball fields etc.
- Vacant- Subdivided or improved land designated for residential, institutional or commercial development that has not yet been built upon.
- Undeveloped- Large parcels of scrub, fallow fields, or unidentifiable pastureland with no clear existing use.

The existing land use study examined close to 30,000 parcels. The resulting land use diagram illustrates the distribution of the utilization of the land.

### **LAND PRESERVATION – CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

The land use proposed to how and where to build follows the Conservation and Development Framework described as a concept for future growth and development within the county. Commercial land uses are proposed to be concentrated into the Urban, Suburban and Rural Center character areas. Industrial land uses are proposed as parts of the various urban, suburban and rural centers. Large scale industrial land uses are proposed as Special District character areas in accordance with the Framework. Residential land uses are proposed at various densities and various locations depending on the character areas and goals as defined in the plan. These include urban residential patterns in the Urban character areas. Residential and mixed-use patterns are proposed for the Suburban character areas. The lowest density residential is proposed for the Rural Residential character areas and residential that might be associated with farms and rural agriculture.

Rural land uses are especially important to Lee County based on the feedback from public involvement and town hall meetings. These land uses include several types of rural residential land uses. At the edge of suburban development, more large lot rural residential development is proposed. Other very large properties should be considered in more traditional rural areas. The predominant land use proposed in the county are the General Rural and Rural Agriculture character area types, which suggest farms, perhaps large timber tracts, hunting land, and others. Other land uses are included in the Conservation and Preservation character areas. An important land use proposed is the area identified for mixed land uses along corridors such as US Highway -280, referred to in the Framework as Special Corridor District.

Land uses are proposed in accordance with the general pattern reflected in the Development Framework. The character areas generally reflect an approach similar to the “transect” model. More specific comparisons to the transect model are recommended in refining detailed land use recommendations, especially as part of more detailed small area or neighborhood plans.

### **EXISTING COMMUNITY DESIGN ASSESSMENT**

As reflected in various town hall meetings, it is apparent that there are strong opinions about how the residents in Lee County see development occurring in the future. Many expect a continued character of well designed suburban developments. Others see the protection of scenic and rural landscapes as preferred. Currently, the existing design character is varied, including suburban subdivisions, some small lot development types and other scenic and undisturbed forested, farm and waterfront developments.

### **COMMUNITY DESIGN CONCEPT – MODELS FOR CENTERS, NEIGHBORHOODS AND CORRIDORS**

The proposed model for community design is reflected in the Conservation and Development Framework. The concept reflects strong centers, neighborhoods and preservation of open space and rural residential design. Models for the various types of centers and neighborhoods is reflected in a transect type diagram. Another important design concept is quality transportation corridor design.

### **LAND PRESERVATION AND COMMUNITY DESIGN GOAL**

The Land Use Goal, as developed during the Town Hall Meetings, is as follows:

Responsible growth throughout the county that is well planned and managed, incorporating appropriate standards in order to protect residential areas, preserve agricultural and natural lands, encourage the revitalization of vacant or deteriorated areas, and promote economic development and growth in the county and local economy; and community design throughout the county that emphasizes protection of historic resources, effective integration of green spaces, incorporation of appropriate signage, landscape and design elements and encouragement of attractive, walkable communities that reflect the county's small town and rural charm as well as more urban districts.

### **OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

#### **Objectives**

- Preservation of rural landscape and land
- Promote a variety of strong mixed use centers and neighborhoods, well designed mixed use centers and neighborhoods
- Help ensure opportunities for rural housing and "communities"
- Promote efficient and sustainable development relative to transportation and infrastructure
- Support a balance of convenient, cost effective and accessible services and facilities
- Cooperate with others to promote attractive corridors compatible with rural, suburban and urban character of the framework
- Cooperate with other governmental agencies to ensure well designed county, public and community facilities
- Support the beautification of corridors, centers and neighborhoods in all areas of the county consistent with the framework

#### **Policies and Strategies**

##### *Ongoing*

- Support regional scale investments in infrastructure and development consistent with the framework
- Integrate growth, development and public financing consistent with the framework, through capital budgeting and planning

- Update and enforce subdivision regulations for consistency with the framework, implement a policy of Planning Commission review and approval of subdivisions in county planning jurisdiction
- Promote roadway and public beautification program including litter control, dilapidated building and signage removal
- Incorporate an implementation strategy for integrating land preservation and community design, as well as, other plan elements into county operations, budgeting, including legislature support for planning and financing initiatives

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Provide educational program for zoning within county
2. Adopt area wide, or special area plans, for various areas within the County
3. Adopt street design standards and access management guidelines as part of the subdivision regulations
4. Adopt and support development framework including centers, neighborhoods, corridors, suburban and rural character - modified transect - as land preservation policy for the county
5. Adopt special corridor overlay for rapidly developing corridors, esp. US Highway-280 and other corridors consistent with the conservation and development framework
6. Adopt design standards for county facilities and promote similar standards for other public facilities with other government agencies, including energy conservation
7. Support design standards consistent with the land preservation framework as part of any public-private project where the county is investing funds

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Adopt Special Corridor Overlay, Planned Unit Development and Mixed Use District provisions as part of zoning ordinance and/or subdivision regulations
2. Coordinate planning throughout the county with municipalities that actively plan and zone
3. Continue land use planning, updating data including an ongoing growth model
4. Adopt tree, landscape, signage and lighting standards
5. Adopt neighborhood standards for land preservation, community design and streets based on a modified transect consistent with the framework as part of subdivision regulations and/or zoning provisions in the beats having zoning
6. Incorporate design standards consistent with the framework, into street and transportation projects, especially access management and in cooperation with federal, state and local transportation departments

*Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Coordinate zoning throughout the county (including cooperation with incorporated communities) in areas where zoning is authorized
2. Establish stream and conservation buffers around quarries and other obnoxious land uses
3. Create conservation subdivisions and cluster development subdivisions as part of the subdivision regulations
4. Establish gateway and corridor tree planting program, lighting and wayfinding with county, state, federal and private assistance

*In areas where zoning has been adopted*

1. Consider zoning and possibly form based codes in those areas of the county desiring such

## TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

### TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT AND PURPOSE

The primary objective of the transportation concept is to support land use activities and the efficient movement of people and goods through a variety of travel modes. In accordance with the overall Master Plan for Lee County, the transportation element seeks to balance mobility with access, and to create pedestrian and bicycle friendly communities that improve neighborhood quality while meeting the mobility and economic development needs of the county. The focus area for transportation considerations and recommendations in the Lee County Master Plan includes the unincorporated areas of Lee County within the Lee-Russell Rural Planning Organization (RPO). Consideration was given to travel demands and resulting needs throughout the county, including locations in the urban areas that serve as feeders for travel demand and needs.

An efficient transportation system is vital to the area's livability as well as the region's economic growth. Efficiency is achieved by linking land use planning with transportation planning, resulting in adequate highway capacity to support planned or anticipated growth and accompanying travel demands. Alternative mode options, including public transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, are also important components of an integrated system. By reviewing the transportation program in the context of local land use, activity centers, anticipated development and densification, economic development, and public expectations and priorities, the County is assured that its limited funds are used in the most appropriate manner.

### TRANSPORTATION GOAL

Transportation that is safe and efficient for all users, with roads that are regularly repaired and improved, with enhanced signage and lighting, and infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Land Use/Transportation Compatibility

To ensure compatible transportation services and roadway network within the character areas as development continues, the 11 character areas identified in the Conceptual Development Framework were grouped into the following 4 predominant typologies for which appropriate transportation recommendations can be made:

- *Urban core and suburban areas* (Urban Core, Suburban, Suburban Center) – Roadway facilities will be more urban in design character, with most including curb and gutter and often with sidewalk. Major intersections will provide for pedestrians, and interconnected signal systems will facilitate traffic flow along key corridors. Additionally, these areas will be most likely to offer—and have sufficient demand to support—transit services.
- *Key corridors* (Corridor Development) – Defined as major linear transportation routes which include mixed land uses and access management, these corridor character areas exist along the major regional, state and/or federal facilities, beginning at the Auburn-Opelika urban area boundary. They currently include US 280/431 southeast of Opelika through Smiths Station, US 29 northeast of Opelika to the County line, US 431 north of Opelika to the County line, and US 280 northwest of Auburn to the County line. Access management strategies addressing access/driveway breaks, signal spacing, and turning movements are critical components for supporting increased mobility along the corridors.
- *Rural* (Rural Center, Rural Residential, General Rural, Rural Agriculture) – Major roadways in rural areas will have enough demand to warrant turn lanes and acceleration/deceleration lanes, and intersections will



require increased attention. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be oriented towards schools, parks and community facilities. In many cases, these will be better provided as part of a multi-use trail/greenway not requiring extensive work adjacent to the roadway. Public transit opportunities will most likely be focused on connecting rural centers to each other and to the urban areas. In addition, providing service between rural centers and rural residential neighborhoods should be considered when sufficient demand exists, possibly through rideshare options.

- *Conservation and special areas* (Conservation, Preservation, Special District) – Roadways expected within the conservation and special areas would be two-lane facilities designed to the standards required to service the traffic that already exists. As such, some of these roadways may require more frequent resurfacing to maintain them under the heavier loads experienced at landfill/logging sites, along with additional base, shoulder, intersection and signage needs. Improvements should be concentrated on the County maintained roads identified as “deserving attention” due to their importance for countywide connectivity. Due to the desire to conserve and preserve within these areas, the addition of new roads or lanes should be avoided, and points providing permanent access to the road minimized.

### Roadway Improvements

*Congestion* – An examination of existing AADT indicated that County roadways with a volume exceeding 4,000 vehicles per day should be the focus for potential improvements. These include County Roads 54, 97, 146, 212, 223, 236, 240, 248, and 427. Additionally, roadways in areas forecast to experience high growth are also important for further examination. These include County Roads 10, 72, 82, 137, 246, 250, 279, 298, 318, 379, and 430.

*Truck Traffic* – Truck traffic will continue to be an important consideration for traffic patterns and countywide mobility, especially with the advent of manufacturing facilities like Kia and their suppliers. Increased truck volumes are likely to be seen on I-85, US 280/431, and US 431 north of I-85 in the coming years due to the new Kia plant and associated activity along I-85 in Alabama and Georgia, as well as increased military activity in the Columbus area.

*Safety* – Given the amount of traffic they carry, it is not surprising that many of the county’s high accident intersections are located where County roads intersect the State Route system. County staff should continue coordinating with ALDOT, the MPOs and local governments to ensure the State system continues to be evaluated and assessed as a part of ongoing safety programs that fund improvements in both urban and rural areas.

*Bridges* – Efforts to replace all 112 County maintained bridges should continue over the plan horizon period. Priority should be placed on bridges receiving a sufficiency rating less than 50, as well as those found to be structurally deficient, functionally obsolete or 50 or more years of age, particularly for any such bridges located along corridors designated for focus attention due to projected high traffic volumes and growth.

*Pavement Condition and Paving* – It is anticipated that the County will continue to place resurfacing priority on the State Graded Roads. Given the increased total mileage of paved roadways in Lee County combined with additional travel demand driven by population growth, it is recommended the County re-examine its current funding allocations for resurfacing and paving. Currently the County apportions approximately the same amount of monies towards resurfacing as paving, although three times as many roadway miles require maintenance. Continuation of this imbalance could threaten the County’s ability to secure its federal funding allotment via ALDOT due to its inability to properly maintain the State Graded Roads. It is recommended the County aim first to properly maintain its current inventory of paved roadways prior to adding any further mileage by paving dirt roads. Should any future paving projects move

forward, determination of which dirt roads to include is expected to follow the general guidelines currently set forth by the County.

*Signage* – Efforts by Lee County’s Highway Department to establish a comprehensive signage inventory should continue.

### **Proposed Simplified Lee County Functional Classification**

The simplified functional classification system being proposed (see Figure 3.6) is intended to provide a more refined system for collectors in the non-urbanized area in relation to likely growth. It supports future cross-county connectivity while maintaining compatibility with the Master Plan concept as well as the ALDOT/MPO classification system currently in use. Additionally, analysis of which roadways warrant additional focus was considered in developing this system. The proposed system consists of five categories: US and State routes, urban arterials and collectors, Lee County major collectors, Lee County minor collectors, and Lee County local roads.

### **Access Management**

A very effective tool in providing a safer traveling environment, access management practices can benefit roadside properties throughout the county by promoting safety and improving roadway capacity. Access management is primarily a factor with major rural collectors and US routes in Lee County. In addition, the safety analysis of Lee County roads can assist in identifying locations where access management may be appropriate. It is recommended the County initiate development of access management guidelines and standards for use along key corridors in the unincorporated portions of the county as development continues.

### **Public Transportation**

In accordance with the desire for more public transit noted during the development phase, there should be an increased emphasis on building a multimodal transportation system for transit and non-motorized modes of travel as development occurs in projected growth areas. Transit operations in rural areas are best when they target specific markets, such as commuters. As the county continues to develop, the opportunity for carpooling, vanpooling and other travel demand management services may be appropriate. The County should continue to monitor the need for transit in coordination with LRPT and ALDOT.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian**

In coordination with its planning partners, Lee County should initiate a study to develop a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the county that coordinates with existing plans by Auburn and Opelika. The plan would outline where bicycle and pedestrian facilities can complement local activity centers and enhance circulation, focusing on potential opportunities for multi-use pathing in order to connect rural centers internally with nearby schools and community facilities, then to the nearest urban area. Development of sidewalks should be undertaken in concert with local jurisdictions, with the goal of getting in front of evolving needs and local demand. The County may also consider relooking its subdivision regulations regarding provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as its own guidelines regarding the incorporation of such facilities in roadway upgrade projects.

### **Level of Effort Costs**

Table 3.3 identifies recommended improvements to the Lee County transportation system over a 20-year planning horizon. In addition, planning level cost estimates are provided as an indication of the level of funding that would be required. Cost estimates are based on review of various unit cost assumptions/historic data (ALDOT, LRTPs, County review).

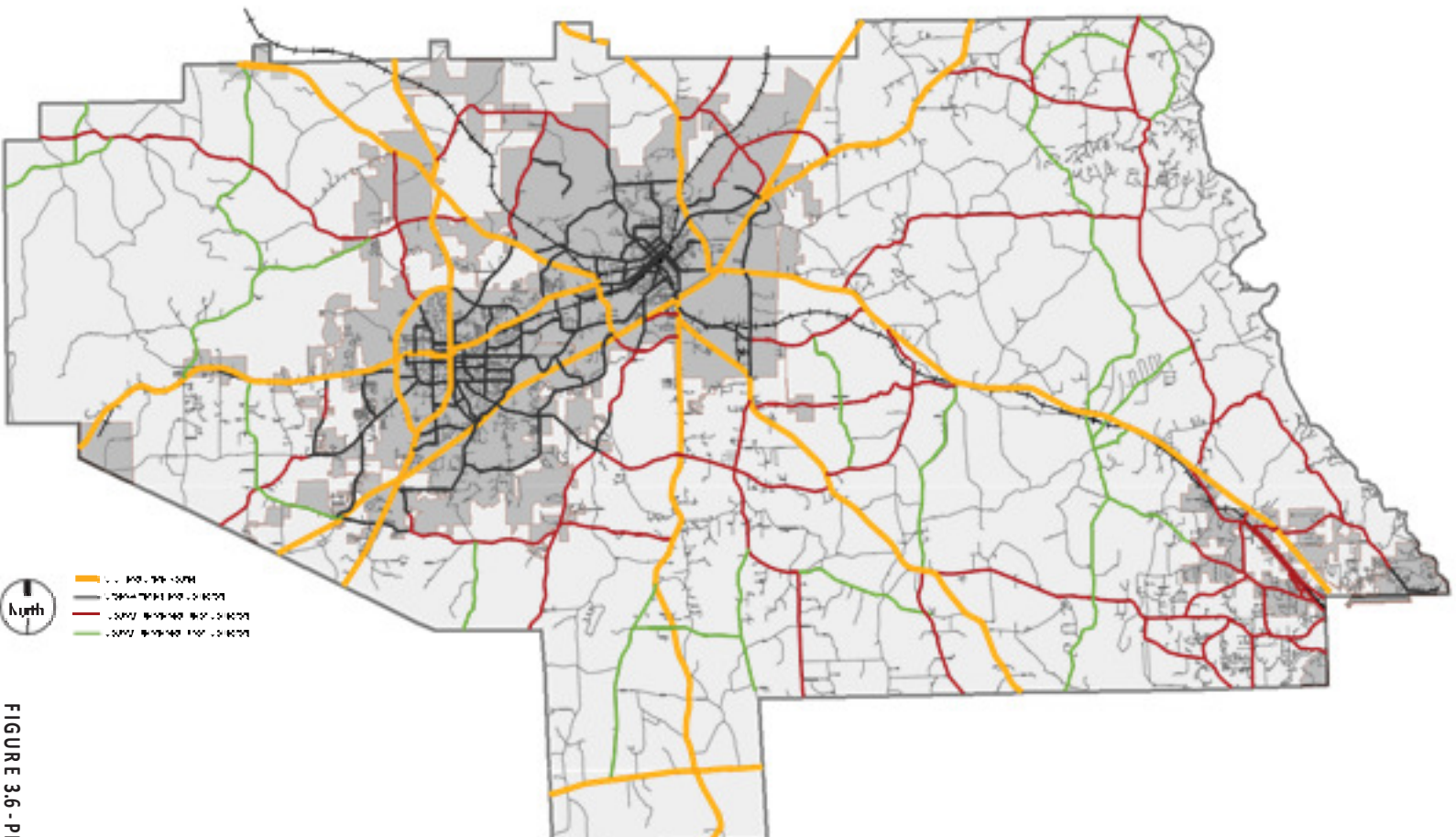


FIGURE 3.6 - PROPOSED LEE COUNTY  
FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

TABLE 3.3 - IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvement Type	Units for Improvement	Cost per Unit	Total Cost over 20-Year Planning Horizon
<b>Roadway</b>			
Major upgrade/reconstruction	55 miles <sup>1</sup>	\$510,000	\$28,050,000
Resurfacing/shoulder improvements	395 miles <sup>1</sup>	\$175,000	\$69,125,000
Paving (grade, drain, base and pave)	80 miles <sup>1</sup>	\$205,000	\$16,400,000
Intersection improvements	40 intersections	\$350,000	\$14,000,000
Bridge rehabilitation/replacement	114 bridges	*2	*2
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian</b>			
Bicycle/multi-use path connectors <sup>3</sup> (both sides)	60 miles	\$225,000	\$13,500,000
Sidewalk/pedestrian improvements (one side, with both sides in some locations) (in 11 rural centers)	22 miles	\$150,000	\$3,300,000

<sup>1</sup> Estimated needs for 20-year period address approximately 50 percent of County maintained system.

<sup>2</sup> Bridge rehabilitation/replacement improvements continued under ALDOT bridge program.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated needs would provide connectivity from each quadrant of the county to the urbanized areas, towards Smiths Station in the southeast, and north-south near the Chattahoochee River in the eastern part of the county.

**Potential Funding Strategies**

It should be stressed that sufficient levels of funding are not available to address all transportation needs. In general, revenues are down across all federal and state programs, worsening the gap statewide between available funding and needs and impacting the prospects for Lee County’s programs. As before, the County’s needs must compete with other jurisdictions for federal and state funding categories. Federal discretionary funding awards have become increasingly competitive as needs exceed available funds by such a large margin across the board. Options for addressing funding needs include:

- Develop a methodology for tracking transportation improvement costs in rural/small urban areas of the county as a means of informing the Commission, local small urban municipalities and the public about where money is being spent.
- Continue participation by County staff in MPO planning activities to ensure the County receives its full share of funding to support improvement projects in applicable areas.
- Develop a formula for determining a balanced allocation of federal funds for incorporated/unincorporated areas based on total lane miles of road. Federal funds are allocated to the State, who in turn passes it on to the County.
- Identify local projects in small urban areas which focus predominantly on municipal needs (e.g., local street traffic circulation, sidewalk and bike trail improvements) as potential candidates for local funding.

## CONCLUSION

It is recommended that future roadway improvements focus on those corridors expected to experience the greatest travel demands, locations with higher accident occurrences, and facilities near freight generators. In consideration of anticipated growth areas and the proposed development framework, the County should continue to coordinate with ALDOT and the MPOs to implement upgrades to support the specific needs of the character areas. Further examination of roadway locations with both higher accident numbers and AADT greater than 1,000 could assist in prioritizing future improvements, particularly when serving areas expected to experience more aggressive growth. As a follow-up to the Master Plan, the Planning Commission and County staff should begin development of typical sections, design standards and access guidelines for the key travel corridors in the county, making sure the proposed standards and guidelines are in accordance with the character area typologies.

Examples of improvements for consideration in the near future include intersection improvements in high accident areas, capacity improvements for high priority roads, and access management projects to improve utilization and efficiency and balance mobility with land access. Longer term projects would include widening and realignments for high priority transportation corridors, which typically require substantial time to gain necessary approvals, undertake design and allow for public comment.

Lee County may want to consider the implementation of a "checklist" of transportation needs for new development that may be provided by developers. The County should establish standards for new development that include bicycle and pedestrian amenities tied to new commercial or housing developments, particularly those located in or adjacent to urban areas. Imposing fees on development directly related to anticipated impacts is a means by which the County could proactively enlist the assistance of developers in providing traffic circulation and bicycle/pedestrian improvements resulting from development-driven growth. Counties and municipalities nationwide have exercised this option, which has in turn resulted in more integrated community projects.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Economic development is an important component of Lee County's Master Plan. The county's economic development has a direct impact not just on land use, but transportation patterns, infrastructure, housing, and the provision of community facilities and services. The ability to pay for the costs of growth and to manage growth effectively is related to the balance achieved between commercial, industrial, and residential development.

Mention "Lee County" around this state and what first comes to mind is a fast-growing county that is the home of Auburn University. The residential and commercial growth that began (and continues) in the cities of Auburn and Opelika is now expanding to other parts of the county along its major highways (i.e., Interstate-85 and US Highway-280/431). A primary goal for Lee County planners and economic developers is to prevent, mitigate, and reverse the effects of "sprawl" and to create a "community of communities."

The unincorporated areas of the county outside of Auburn and Opelika have not experienced the same growth and face a much different set of challenges. Rural communities in Lee County struggle with problems common to smaller communities throughout the South – fewer jobs, older populations, and less money for schools and public services. They are feeling the impact of structural changes in a U.S. economy that is moving away from dependence upon low-skill, low-wage manufacturing and towards a knowledge-based economy. An important goal for Lee County is to devise a strategy to respond to the special challenges faced by communities in rural (i.e., unincorporated) Lee County.

Key issues facing the county are how to best manage and pay for the costs of growth and how to invigorate rural economies. *Responding successfully to these challenges will require a merger of economic development and land use strategies.*

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEFINED

For purposes of this section, economic development is defined as "the process by which a community creates, retains, and reinvests wealth and improves the quality of life" (David Dodson, MDC, Inc.). Economic development is certainly about adding quality jobs and increasing the area's wealth, but it is more than that. Economic development is about improving the quality of life for the people who live in Lee County. *Economic development is a means to an end, not an end in itself. In fact, improving the quality of life for Lee County residents is the ultimate goal of the county's economic development program.* Implicit is the premise that neither economic growth, nor industrial development, is always desirable. The ultimate goals of economic development efforts should be county residents' improved welfare, as measured by changes in employment (higher employment/lower unemployment), higher real incomes, improved living standards, and overall environmental quality. Simple aggregate growth or industrial expansion is acceptable only when consistent with these other goals and objectives.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to describe a plan for creating a diversified Lee County economy that will provide economic stability, better-paying jobs, and a tax base sufficient to support improved public services and facilities. *The goal of the economic development plan is to create a high-wage, knowledge-based economy that maintains and improves Lee County's quality of life while enhancing community identity.*

The policies and strategies outlined in this section give priority to technology-related employment and clean industries, retention and expansion of existing employers, promotion of small businesses and entrepreneurs, and the enhancement of tourism in the county. An expansion of its employment base will allow Lee County to capture, rather than export, dollars



(and tax revenue) and reduce the number of daily commutes by county residents who now travel outside the county for work.

The county master plan provides strategies to prevent and mitigate the negative economic impacts of unplanned and uncontrolled growth. Accordingly, the economic development policies and strategies outlined in this section promote a strategy that favors compact growth centers, with new development integrated into existing and planned communities or job centers. This strategy encourages development where the infrastructure to support it already exists, and favors preservation of open space, agricultural land, and other environmentally sensitive properties (i.e., “green infrastructure”).

The plan provides strategies that address rural (unincorporated) development in Lee County. Rural communities are encouraged to join forces and work together, take steps to improve quality of life, build local leadership capacity, and diversify their development strategies.

Successful implementation of the policies and strategies presented in this document will have the following positive impacts throughout Lee County:

- Better paying jobs;
- More stable, balanced and diversified economies;
- Thriving cities, towns and communities;
- Natural resources sustained and protected for generations to come; and
- An improved quality of life and better living conditions for all county residents.

This plan views Lee County both as a collection of communities and as a regional economic unit. It does not replace local decision-making or local priorities for economic development. It does support the integration of local planning efforts into a regional perspective. As a result, all Lee County communities, agencies, and organizations involved in economic development are free, and encouraged, to draw upon the county economic development plan to help advance their missions.

Finally, this plan recognizes that there is no “one size fits all” approach to economic development. For example, a strategy that might work well in Opelika might be inappropriate for Smiths Station. The key to the overall economic development approach must be to match particular strategies with the assets of each community. This approach might include tourism, commercial and retail development, technology parks, agribusiness, retiree attraction, entrepreneurial support, or other kinds of development. Ideally, development will involve a diverse combination of strategies.

## **APPROACH**

In order to develop an economic development plan that reflects the ideas noted in the previous section, we utilized a carefully structured approach designed to capture the ideas and suggestions of the county’s key economic development leaders. Structured interviews were conducted with over 30 of Lee County’s economic development leaders, including: elected officials, economic development professionals, chamber of commerce officials, school leaders, community leaders, and county planning commission members. Interview participants were asked to identify the county’s economic development strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis), offer a broad vision for countywide economic development, and discuss the county’s major economic development policy issues and goals. The results of the structured interviews are outlined in Appendix C.



ECDI conducted a follow-up survey of interview participants and other Lee County economic development officials and leaders in April 2010. Twenty-two surveys were completed by the target group and the results provide stakeholder opinion about the relative importance of potential issues, goals, and strategies for Lee County economic development.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – HIGHEST RANKED OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

### **Workforce Excellence**

(priority # 1)

- **EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** Develop an educated workforce with the skills and training required to serve current and future Lee County employers. (Goal Priority #1)

### **Quality of Place**

(priority # 2)

- **SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:** Promote sustainable development of natural resources (e.g., air, land, and water). (Goal Priority # 2)
- **CONNECTIONS:** Facilitate cooperation among incorporated municipalities, the private sector, and other regional actors. (Goal Priority # 4)
- **COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT:** Enhance leadership capacity and citizen engagement throughout Lee County. (Goal Priority # 8)

### **Economic Diversification and Infrastructure**

(priority # 3)

- **EXISTING BUSINESS:** Retain, expand, and promote existing business. (Goal Priority # 3)
- **INFRASTRUCTURE:** Finance and maintain infrastructure to support economic development. (Goal Priority # 5)
- **SMALL BUSINESS:** Facilitate small business development and entrepreneurship. (Goal Priority # 6)
- **BUSINESS RECRUITMENT:** Support recruitment of appropriate new businesses to the county, especially new retail and commercial businesses. (Goal Priority # 7)
- **TOURISM:** Diversify the county economy by supporting tourism. (Goal Priority # 11)

### **Organization and Outreach**

(priority # 4)

- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION AND DECISION-MAKING:** Ensure that economic decisions are based on current and relevant information. (Goal Priority # 9)
- **PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Support enhancements to existing growth areas that are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Lee County master plan framework. (Goal Priority # 10)
- **ORGANIZATION:** Lee County will work with Auburn, Opelika and other economic development organizations to support the continued economic development of Lee County (perhaps through a county economic development alliance), facilitate stakeholder engagement and monitor implementation of economic development strategies in the Lee County Master Plan. (Goal Priority # 12)
- **MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION:** Promote Lee County economic development both internally and externally. Cooperate with Auburn, Opelika, and other development interests (such as the Auburn and Opelika chambers of commerce) in the county to promote Lee County. (Goal Priority # 13)

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL**

Lee County, Alabama strives to be the most innovative, inclusive, collaborative, and prosperous county in the Southeast. Anchored by Auburn University, the county features excellent schools, quality health care, diverse cultural, recreational, and employment opportunities, quality public services, a vibrant economy, and active involvement of all citizens.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

The county's economic development plan is outlined in the following strategic objectives and strategies. These objectives and strategies describe actions that Lee County may take to achieve and implement its economic development goals for the future. The strategies are supportive of and linked to the recommendations found in the interview summary section (Appendix C). Finally, the policy objectives and strategies are listed in rank order based on the results of the stakeholder survey. The results provide a measure of priority for each of the major strategic issues: 1) Workforce Excellence; 2) Quality of Place; 3) Economic Diversification; and 4) Organization, Outreach, and Decision-Making.

Under each of these four major headings, goals and strategies are also listed in priority rank order based on the stakeholder survey results. Based on the information provided through the interview process and the results of the follow-up survey, the following overall economic development policies and strategies are proposed for Lee County. (See Appendix D for a ranking of economic development strategies from the stakeholder survey).

### **Workforce Excellence**

The number one issue in economic development today is the quality of a community's workforce. Companies will not be able to expand, nor will they be interested in locating in the county if they do not feel they can find the workers they need. Strengthening the workforce development system through the business community, public school systems, Southern Union State Community College and Auburn University is the highest priority issue for Lee County economic development.

1. **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** Develop an educated workforce with the skills and training required to serve current and future Lee County employers.
  - 1.1 Provide a superior public education system throughout the county.
    - Support increased funding for county public schools.
    - Encourage improvements in the measurable performance of high school graduates.
  - 1.2 Foster a cooperative relationship among the boards of education, private employers, Southern Union, Auburn University, and training providers to enhance the county workforce development system.
  - 1.3 Identify the workforce needs of local businesses and industries; establish and support career and technical training and apprenticeship programs that satisfy these needs, develop relevant skills in younger workers, and re-train existing workers.
    - Engage the business community in hands-on learning, after-school programs, and curricula development.
  - 1.4 Support Auburn University as a catalyst for economic activity within the county and region.
  - 1.5 Encourage employers to provide and support continuing education for their employees.
  - 1.6 Support the expansion of adult education opportunities available to residents who seek high school degrees or GEDs.
  - 1.7 Develop strategies and support community-based actions to involve minorities and economically-disadvantaged individuals in improving their economic futures.

## Quality of Place

“Quality of place” and “quality of life” increasingly are important site selection criteria for employers. Businesses are attracted to, and want to stay in, communities that are good places to live, work, and conduct business. Therefore, preserving, promoting, and improving Lee County’s educational systems, civic life, natural environment, and community aesthetics must be integral components of the county’s economic development strategy. A quality place embraces the concept of “sustainability” – *meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. That is, we can grow Lee County employers, jobs and incomes without compromising our natural environment, community aesthetics, and other valued assets. “Quality of place” includes supporting urban, suburban and rural communities as desirable places to live and work. Strong “quality of place” also presumes community leadership that is diverse, engaged, and connected - and active engagement of all citizens.

*A quality place recognizes the value of local and regional cooperation.* This means that the county government works closely with incorporated municipalities, chambers of commerce, schools, civic organizations, and private sector groups to provide an integrated and coordinated economic development program. Public-private partnerships and collaborations, communication, cooperation, and planning are essential if the county is to ensure a strong economy, quality schools, and vibrant communities.

2. **SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT:** Promote sustainable development of natural resources (e.g., air, land, and water). Support sustainable development initiatives that help make the county’s suburban, urban and rural **COMMUNITIES DESIREBLE places to live and work.**
  - 2.1 Preserve the county’s natural beauty and aesthetics; encourage all public policymaking organizations to incorporate sustainable economic development into their activities and plans.
  - 2.2 Encourage conservation and recycling in the use of all natural resources.
  - 2.3 Promote energy conservation and efficiency by residents, businesses, and governments.
  - 2.4 Support historic preservation in communities throughout the county; preserve each community’s unique **sense of history and culture.**
  - 2.5 Identify and preserve open space, environmental habitats and prime agricultural land.
  - 2.6 Seek funding to support green infrastructure systems and sustainable growth practices.
  - 2.7 Encourage private-sector initiatives to enhance quality of life and public amenities.
  
3. **CONNECTIONS:** Facilitate cooperation among incorporated municipalities, the private sector, and other regional actors.
  - 3.1 Build connections among citizens, groups, and institutions within the county; promote alliances and **partnerships to meet overall county needs.**
    - Establish a communication and networking strategy to foster increased communication and coordination among all public and non-profit organizations.
  - 3.2 Initiate multi-jurisdictional efforts to promote economic and community development within the county.
    - Encourage rural communities to join forces with other jurisdictions in the county and region for economic development planning, programs, and projects.
  - 3.3 Encourage public-private partnerships to address the county’s economic development needs.

4. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT: Enhance leadership capacity and citizen engagement throughout Lee County.
  - 4.1 Promote the development of local leadership capacity by supporting community-based leadership development programs.
    - Encourage all rural Lee County communities to establish leadership programs that engage a wide variety of citizens from throughout the community.
  - 4.2 Provide multiple opportunities for public involvement through deliberative forums, town meetings, concerts, festivals, and community improvement projects.
  - 4.3 Enhance local recreational, artistic, cultural, and entertainment venues and events.
  - 4.4 Support training in economic development efforts associated with the arts, culture, recreation and entertainment for elected officials and civic leaders.
  - 4.5 Support surveys and on-going studies of the arts, cultural, recreational and entertainment venues and events.

### **Economic Diversification and Infrastructure**

No longer can economic developers rely solely on traditional recruitment activities to generate job growth. Lee County must implement programs and policies that support economic diversification through business retention and expansion, targeted recruitment, small business development, tourism, and other job creation strategies. The combination of these approaches, with adequate supporting infrastructure, helps to achieve a more robust economy with multiple avenues for job growth.

Retention and expansion of local firms should be the cornerstone of this diverse economic development strategy. Because each community's most valuable assets are the ones they already have, and existing businesses are already contributing to their home communities, economic development efforts should give priority to supporting existing enterprises as the best source of business expansion and local job growth.

5. EXISTING BUSINESS: Retain, expand, and promote existing business.
  - 5.1 Provide expansion assistance to businesses needing referrals and resource information.
  - 5.2 Meet annually with Lee County's largest employers to express appreciation and to obtain information related to their current and anticipated needs; meet annually with some of the smaller business employers in Lee County that have shown steady employment growth.
  - 5.3 Provide financial incentives to support the expansion of existing businesses.
  - 5.4 Maintain an inventory of available commercial and industrial buildings and land to assist local firms in finding space for expansion and start-ups within Lee County.
  - 5.5 Survey local businesses on a regular basis for suggestions on how county government and other organizations can better meet their needs.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE: finance and maintain infrastructure to support economic development.
  - 6.1 Ensure adequate and well-maintained school facilities.
  - 6.2 Establish a process for prioritizing infrastructure projects for federal, state, county, and local sources of funding; finance priority infrastructure projects through short and long-term financing plans that maximize opportunities for grants and low interest loans.
  - 6.3 Enhance and promote state-of-the-art telecommunications technology to attract clean high-tech industry to the county.
    - Encourage the provision of fiber optic services capable of providing low-cost video, high-speed data, e-government, e-business and Internet services to all rural areas.
    - Develop and implement an information technology plan to include GIS and fiber optics.
  - 6.4 Provide adequate water supply by securing water rights, planning for additional surface water treatment plants, developing water system interconnections, enhancing water storage capacity, and coordinating efforts to gauge future water capacity needs.
  - 6.5 Maintain existing sanitary sewer facilities; provide sanitary sewer to rural areas as feasible to eliminate problems with failing septic tanks, and develop sanitary sewer facility plans to respond to future sewage service needs.
  - 6.6 Complete an overall assessment of public-private infrastructure conditions and needs.
  - 6.7 Encourage each county municipality to develop a capital improvement plan (CIP) to prepare for future infrastructure needs (if they are not already doing so). (See Appendix E)
  - 6.8 Redevelop downtown areas to increase opportunities for retail shopping, restaurants, lodging, civic buildings, and entertainment in downtown areas; improve downtown facades and improve streetscapes; encourage municipalities to participate in existing and planned Main Street and historic district development programs.
  - 6.9 Develop a transportation plan that identifies and prioritizes transportation needs and identifies potential strategies.
  
7. SMALL BUSINESS: Facilitate small business Development and Entrepreneurship.
  - 7.1 Inform entrepreneurs of government-sponsored small business loans, grants and incubator programs.
  - 7.2 Provide small and new businesses with information on how to find the necessary management and marketing skills to facilitate success; refer potential start-up businesses to sources of assistance, such as the Small Business Development Center at Auburn University.
  - 7.3 Evaluate current regulations that pertain to cottage industries and home-based business, and recommend revisions to these regulations to encourage the creation of such businesses.
  - 7.4 Support local industries such as floriculture, truck farming and horticulture, which can take advantage of increasing suburban and urban markets.
  - 7.5 Support the development and retention of commercial and residential construction businesses in the county.

8. NEW BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL RECRUITMENT: support the recruitment of appropriate new businesses to the county; emphasize the recruitment of new retail and commercial businesses.
  - 8.1 Participate in the marketing of the county's existing industrial sites and parks.
  - 8.2 Encourage the targeted recruitment of knowledge-based industrial sectors, especially research- and development-oriented industries, technology firms, and other industries with clean, high-value inventory and/or products (e.g., medical, pharmaceutical).
  - 8.3 Take advantage of Lee County's location in relation to Hyundai (Montgomery, AL) and Kia (West Point, GA) to attract additional automotive suppliers into the county.
  - 8.4 Participate in the recruitment of new retail and commercial businesses to the county.
  - 8.5 Cooperate with and support the industrial recruitment efforts of Auburn and Opelika.
  - 8.6 Develop a county branding/identity and marketing strategy for business development in Lee County; update and prepare promotional brochures and website.
  - 8.7 Identify local industry clusters, niches and gaps for each community; Identify and promote the unique attributes of each area of the county, and share information with economic development prospects that provide a good match.
  
9. TOURISM: Diversify the county economy by supporting tourism.
  - 9.1 Support improved gateways into Lee County and its communities.
  - 9.2 Create an inventory of potential visitor destinations and events in the county.
  - 9.3 Develop a Lee County branding/identity and marketing strategy for tourism attraction.
  - 9.4 Participate in regional tourism efforts that link and promote the east Alabama region's unique attractions and activities; coordinate with local, regional, and state tourism development boards and agencies.
  - 9.5 Support the development of tourist attractions, facilities, and activities.
  - 9.6 Support the development and enhancement of the county's hospitality infrastructure, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, and entertainment facilities.
  - 9.7 Encourage efforts to develop, refurbish, or maintain scenic open space, and cultural, historic, and heritage resources.
  - 9.8 Promote county historic sites that are accessible to the public as part of the tourist economy.
  - 9.9 Promote outdoor recreation opportunities, including: fishing, hunting, biking, hiking, boating, and horseback-riding.



## Organization and Outreach

Successful economic development requires effective organization and structures to ensure that current and relevant information is maintained and used to make decisions; action plans are developed and implemented; information is shared with external and local audience and actors in the local economic development system are working together.

10. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION AND DECISION-MAKING: Ensure that economic decisions are based on current and relevant data and information and consistent with the Master Plan Framework.

10.1 Maintain current county data useful to business and industry, such as information on:

- **Demographics**
- Labor market conditions
- Tourism performance indicators
- Business and manufacturing directory
- Largest employer list
- Updated inventory of available industrial land and buildings
- Finance and incentive programs available to new or expanding businesses
- Regulatory procedures
- Workforce skills and trends

10.2 Conduct a county-wide industrial land study to provide base information about industrial properties and create an inventory of all marketable sites; maintain an inventory of commercial sites adequate to meet a diversity of needs for retail, service, and institutional development in Lee County.

10.3 Survey citizens periodically to help guide economic development efforts.

11. PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Support enhancements to existing growth areas that are consistent with the Lee County Master Plan framework.

11.1 Promote development of residential, convenience retail (grocery, pharmacy, etc.) and business service (child care, banking, and repair services) uses around major transportation arteries, municipalities, and densely populated communities.

- Target new business development in areas that are already served (or planned to be served) by utilities (e.g., water, sewer, electricity, gas) and high speed Internet service.
- Locate jobs in proximity to residents; emphasize reasonable commutes for workers.
- Promote residential development within reasonable walking distances of schools, retail, and business services.
- Encourage the redevelopment of existing community areas over leapfrog-type development.
- Locate most new public offices and buildings in municipalities or densely-populated communities.

11.2 Involve Lee County real estate and economic developers in the planning process.

11.3 Support adequate setbacks, vegetative buffering, and unobtrusive signage in large-scale commercial and industrial uses to protect primary roadways.

11.4 Promote a balanced transportation system that gives people options other than the automobile in which to travel to work, schools, recreation, and commerce.

- Create pedestrian -and bicycle-friendly communities and neighborhoods; encourage a system of bike and walking trails that connect community centers.

- As traffic and population densities warrant, create a transit system with stops around high-density, mixed-use developments.
- 11.5 Clean and redevelop polluted “Brownfield” industrial sites.
- 11.6 Discourage strip development for large-scale commercial and industrial uses.
12. OUTREACH: Lee County will work with Auburn, Opelika and other economic development organizations to support the continued economic development of Lee County (perhaps through a county economic development alliance), facilitate stakeholder engagement and monitor implementation of economic development strategies in the Lee County Master Plan.
- 12.1 Identify and define the roles of existing community and economic development organizations.
13. OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION: Promote Lee County economic development to both internal and external audiences.
- 13.1. Promote state legislation to improve the state’s business climate.
- 13.2. Communicate local and regional economic development success stories.
- 13.3. Annually update county residents on Lee County’s growth and development; educate the residents by disseminating information and describing plans and activities.
- 13.4. Develop and communicate positions on economic development policy issues important to the economic health of the county and region.
- 13.5. Represent economic development interests before governmental bodies.
- 13.6. Create and maintain a county economic development website that includes relevant information, including the Economic Development section of the Master Plan.

## PROFILE: LEE COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMY

### Population Characteristics and Trends

Lee County had an estimated total population of 133,010 in 2008, according to US Census 2008 Population Estimates. The county is designated as its own, single county Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), the Auburn-Opelika MSA, which is named for its two central cities. As of 2008, the city of Auburn had an estimated population of 56,808 and the city of Opelika had a population of 26,808. Combined, these two cities accounted for 62% of the county’s total population. Other places recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau include Smiths, Loachapoka, and portions of Phenix City, Notasulga, and Waverly. The county population outside of Auburn and Opelika was 50,114 in 2008.

Most of Lee County’s growth between 2000 and 2008 occurred in the cities of Auburn and Opelika. During this time, Auburn’s population increased by approximately 13,101 residents from 42,987 to 56,088, representing a growth rate of 30%. Opelika’s population increased by a lesser total of 3,310, from 23,498 to 26,808, a growth rate of 14%. Combined, the population of these two cities increased by 16,411, which represents 92% of the county’s total estimated growth of 17,918 (or 16%) during the 2000-2008 period.

The addition of the Kia plant just across the Chattahoochee River in West Point, Georgia, will have a significant impact on Lee County’s population. Also, the expansion of Fort Benning will impact the southeastern section of Lee County, particularly in the Smiths Station area, which is emerging as a desirable residential location for incoming military personnel. Altogether, it is estimated that Lee County’s population will grow by 33,639 persons by 2028. The county’s

2028 population is projected to be 164,169 (Source: Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan, April 2009 (BRAC Plan); based on REMI (Regional Economic Model Policy Insight) projections).

The following points are important to note concerning Lee County’s population:

- Over the last two and one-half decades, Lee County has consistently added population at rates of growth that have considerably outpaced the state’s growth rate.
- During the period from 2000 to 2008, the county’s average annual growth rate of 1.9% was about three times the state rate of 0.6%.
- Most of Lee County’s growth between 2000 and 2008 occurred in the cities of Auburn and Opelika.
- Combined, the population of Auburn and Opelika increased 16,411, which represents 92% of the county’s total estimated growth during the eight-year time period.
- During the 1990s, the county’s largest population growth, both in percentage and actual numbers, was in the 35-to-54 and 5-to-17 age groups.
- According to EMSI 4th Quarter 2009 Complete Employment estimates from ECDI, Lee County grew at an average annual rate of 2.1% between 2002 and 2007, and it is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.2% between 2008 and 2013 and an average annual rate of 1.0% between 2014 and 2019.
- Over the 1999-2008 period, the county median household income increased by 35.0% (or by \$10,818 to \$41,770; computations based on US Census 2000 data and Census 2008 Estimates). It should be noted that Lee County’s median income is skewed downward due to the presence of college student (Auburn University) households included in these estimates.

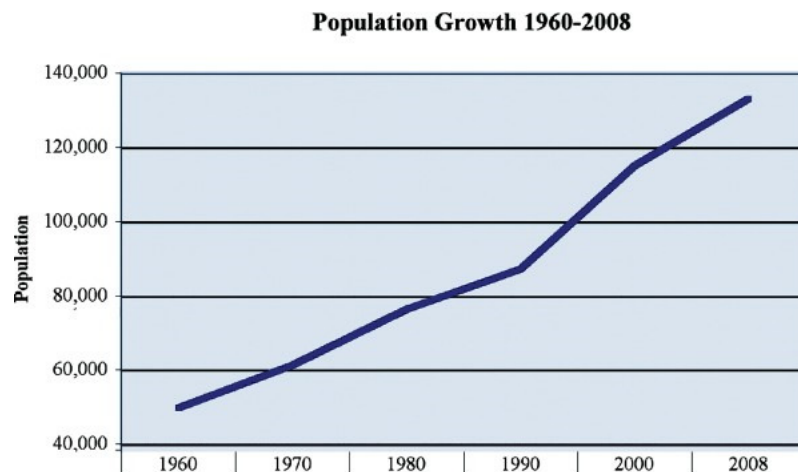
**Population Growth and Projections**

The chart below illustrates Lee County’s population growth from 1960, when the county population was a little under 50,000, to the county’s estimated 2008 population of 133,010, an increase of over 79,000 people in less than 50 years.

**TABLE 3.4 – LEE COUNTY POPULATION TRENDS 1960-2008**

1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008 (est)
49,754	61,268	76,283	87,146	115,092	133,010

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**FIGURE 3.7 - PROPOSED LEE COUNTY POPULATION TRENDS 1960-2008**

Lee County population grew 53% from 1990 to 2008. For the same period, Alabama's population grew at 15% and the U.S. county population growth rate was 22%, making Lee County one of the state's and nation's fastest growing counties (U.S. Census Bureau).

Population projections indicate that Lee County will continue to grow at a strong pace in the near future. Projections made by the Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan (April 2009) indicate the county population will reach 164,169 by 2028, an increase of 31,159 individuals for the county. This would be the equivalent of adding a city larger in size than Opelika to the county population.

**TABLE 3.5 – POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR LEE COUNTY**

	2008	2013	2018	2028
Population	133,010	142,570	151,101	164,169

*Data Source: Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan, April 2009 (BRAC Plan); based on REMI (Regional Economic Model Policy Insight) projections*

#### **Retail Trade Area by Population within Defined Radius**

Lee County is well located in terms of potential retail shoppers. The following table illustrates the population within a 15 mile, 30 mile and 45 mile radius of downtown Opelika:

**TABLE 3.6 – POPULATION WITHIN DEFINED RADIUS OF LEE COUNTY**

	Lee County	15 miles	30 miles	45 miles
2000 Census	115,092	96,131	369,082	604,268
2008 Estimate	133,010	107,659	386,490	630,778
2013 Projection	138,307	115,022	399,194	650,113

*Data Sources: US Census Bureau; Clarias Corporation, Inc., 2009 via EDPA*

#### **Overview of Lee County Employment Characteristics**

As of 2008, Lee County had total covered employment of approximately 67,983. This figure represents a net increase of over 10,280 since 1996, a 27% growth rate for the ten-year period. The county's major business sector employers (by number of establishments) and the top 10 county employment sectors (by number of employees) are summarized in the tables below:

**TABLE 3.7 – TEN LARGEST INDUSTRY SECTOR EMPLOYEES, 2008**

Rank	Industry Sector	Number of Establishments
1	Government (Includes state education employees)	548
2	Retail Trade	469
3	Construction	333
4	Accommodation and Food Services	266
5	Professional and Technical Services	245
6	Other Services, except Public Administration	232
7	Health Care and Social Assistance	221
8	Administrative and Waste Services	170
9	Finance and Insurance	160
10	Wholesale Trade	129

(Source: EMSI Complete Employment - 4th Quarter 2009)

**TABLE 3.8 – TEN LARGEST INDUSTRY SECTOR EMPLOYEES, 2008**

Rank	Industry Sector	Number of Employees
1	Government (Includes state education employees)	16,157
2	Retail Trade	7,528
3	Manufacturing	6,087
4	Accommodation and Food Services	5,937
7	Health Care and Social Assistance	4,059
5	Construction	3,841
6	Other Services, except Public Administration	3,663
8	Administrative and Waste Services	3,582
9	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3,041
10	Professional and Technical Services	2,724

(Source: EMSI Complete Employment - 4th Quarter 2009)

The top employers in Lee County by name of business or organization are:

**TABLE 3.9 – MAJOR EMPLOYERS (NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES)**

1. Auburn University	5,100
2. East Alabama Regional Medical Center	2,000
3. B.F. Goodrich Tire (closed October 2009)	1,410
4. Lee County Schools	1,146
5. Briggs & Stratton	900
6. Wal-Mart Distribution Center	900
7. Opelika School System	630
8. Auburn School System	628

Source: Auburn and Opelika Chambers of Commerce, 2009

It is important to note the impact of the closure of the B.F. Goodrich Tire plant for Lee County. This major local employer ceased operations in October 2009, leaving over 1,000 employees out of work. The city of Opelika, working in close collaboration with Auburn University, the Michelin Corporation, labor organizations and others, has formed a task force to re-use the B.F. Goodrich property. The task force is hopeful that the plant's proximity to the new Kia manufacturing facility in West Point, GA will make the property attractive to automotive suppliers.

It is also important to note that in December 2009 Manpower, Inc. projected that the Columbus, GA-AL MSA job market (which is located adjacent to Lee County) is expected to be one of the strongest job markets in the U.S. for the near term. Manpower projects that job prospects appear best for Construction, Nondurable Goods Manufacturing, Wholesale and Retail Trade, Information, Financial Activities, Professional and Business Services, Education and Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality, Other Services, and Government.

Employment growth trends and projections by industry sector and job openings by occupational category (covering a 15-year period) are presented in the following tables:



TABLE 3.10 – EMPLOYMENT GROWTH TRENDS, 2003-2008

Rank	Industry Sector	Job Growth
1	Government ( <i>Federal, state, local; includes state-paid AU employees</i> )	1,569 (11%)
2	Retail Trade - <i>Motor vehicle and parts dealers, furniture and home furnishings, retail electronics, building material and garden supplies, food and beverage stores, health and personal care stores, gas stations, clothing stores, sporting goods stores, general merchandise stores, other retailers</i>	1,361 (22%)
3	Construction - <i>Building construction, heavy construction, specialty trade contractors</i>	1,187 (36%)
4	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing - <i>Real estate, rental and leasing services</i>	1,092 (56%)
5	Other Services, except Public Administration - <i>Repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, membership associations, household services</i>	931 (33%)
6	Accommodation and Food Services - <i>Accommodations, food service and drinking places</i>	817 (16%)
7	Professional and Technical Services	803 (39%)
8	Transportation and Warehousing - <i>Truck transportation, transit and ground transportation, couriers and messengers</i>	769 (46%)
9	Health Care and Social Assistance - <i>Ambulatory health care services; nursing and residential care facilities; social assistance services</i>	765 (24%)
10	Administrative and Waste Services - <i>Administrative and support services; Waste management and remediation services</i>	543 (15%)
11	Finance and Insurance - <i>Credit and related activities, securities, commodities contracts, investments, insurance carriers and related activities</i>	482 (40%)
12	Wholesale Trade - <i>Durable goods wholesale trade, nondurable goods wholesale trade</i>	423 (42%)
13	Manufacturing	415 (7%)
14	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation - <i>Amusement, gambling and recreation industries</i>	279 (36%)
15	Management of Companies and Enterprises	115 (217%)
16	Educational Services - <i>Junior colleges, other schools and instruction</i>	87 (16%)
17	Information - <i>Publishing, broadcasting, telecommunications</i>	84 (13%)
18	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	65 (10%)
19	Mining	33 (69%)
20	Utilities - <i>Power generation and supply, water, sewer and other systems</i>	-20 (-10%)

(Source: EMSI Complete Employment - 4th Quarter 2009)

TABLE 3.11 – EMPLOYMENT GROWTH PROJECTIONS, 2009-2019

Rank	Industry Sector	Job Growth
1	Manufacturing	2,007 (33%)
2	Health Care and Social Assistance - <i>Ambulatory health care services; nursing and residential care facilities; social assistance services</i>	1,621 (40%)
3	Government ( <i>Federal, state, local; includes state-paid AU employees</i> )	1,164 (7%)
4	Other Services, except Public Administration - <i>Repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, membership associations, household services</i>	1,147 (31%)
5	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing - <i>Real estate, rental and leasing services</i>	1,123 (37%)
6	Retail Trade - <i>Motor vehicle and parts dealers, furniture and home furnishings, retail electronics, building material and garden supplies, food and beverage stores, health and personal care stores, gas stations, clothing stores, sporting goods stores, general merchandise stores, other retailers</i>	1,113 (15%)
7	Accommodation and Food Services - <i>Accommodations, food service and drinking places</i>	1,078 (18%)
8	Construction - <i>Building construction, heavy construction, specialty trade contractors</i>	952 (25%)
9	Administrative and Waste Services - <i>Administrative and support services; Waste management and remediation services</i>	765 (21%)
10	Professional and Technical Services	763 (28%)
11	Finance and Insurance - <i>Credit and related activities, securities, commodities contracts, investments, insurance carriers and related activities</i>	356 (21%)
12	Transportation and Warehousing - <i>Truck transportation, transit and ground transportation, couriers and messengers</i>	322 (14%)
13	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation - <i>Amusement, gambling and recreation industries</i>	305 (30%)
14	Educational Services - <i>Junior colleges, other schools and instruction</i>	174 (29%)
15	Wholesale Trade - <i>Durable goods wholesale trade, nondurable goods wholesale trade</i>	114 (9%)
16	Information - <i>Publishing, broadcasting, telecommunications</i>	89 (18%)
17	Mining	29 (35%)
18	Management of Companies and Enterprises	28 (16%)
19	Utilities - <i>Power generation and supply, water, sewer and other systems</i>	22 (12%)
20	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	12 (2%)

(Source: EMSI Complete Employment - 4th Quarter 2009)

TABLE 3.12 –JOB OPENING TRENDS BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY, 2003-2008

Rank	Industry Sector	Total Job Openings 2003-2008	Average Annual Job Openings 2003-2008	Current Median Hourly Earnings
1	Sales and Related Occupations	3,660 (48%)	732	\$10.85
2	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	1,672 (34%)	334	\$8.01
3	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	1,360 (50%)	272	\$8.37
4	Management Occupations	1,230 (40%)	246	\$22.24
5	Education, Training and Library Occupations	1,097 (25%)	219	\$25.93
6	Personal Care and Service Occupations	822 (44%)	164	\$8.75
7	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	782 (39%)	156	\$26.69
8	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	641 (47%)	128	\$16.72
9	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	370 (31%)	74	\$12.10
10	Healthcare Support Occupations	352 (37%)	70	\$9.72
11	Protective Service Occupations	296 (24%)	59	\$14.84
12	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	243 (40%)	49	\$23.79
13	Computer and Mathematical Science Occupations	225 (37%)	45	\$23.41
14	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	203 (36%)	41	\$20.08
15	Community and Social Services Occupations	114 (14%)	23	\$14.01
16	Legal Occupations	101 (51%)	20	\$14.65

(Source: EMSI Complete Employment - 4th Quarter 2009)

TABLE 3.13 – PROJECTIONS: JOB OPENING PROJECTIONS BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY, 2009-2019

Rank	Industry Sector	Total Job Openings 2003-2008	Average Annual Job Openings 2003-2008	Current Median Hourly Earnings
1	Sales and Related Occupations	4,872 (50%)	487	\$10.85
2	Food preparation and Serving Related Occupations	2,943 (52%)	294	\$8.01
3	Education, Training and Library Occupations	1,746 (35%)	175	\$25.93
4	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	1,707 (47%)	171	\$8.37
5	Management Occupations	1,606 (43%)	161	\$22.24
6	Personal Care and Service Occupations	1,234 (52%)	123	\$8.75
7	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1,124 (44%)	112	\$26.69
8	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	774 (44%)	77	\$16.72
9	Healthcare Support Occupations	543 (43%)	54	\$9.72
10	Protective Service Occupations	505 (39%)	51	\$14.84
11	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	488 (38%)	49	\$12.10
12	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	386 (54%)	39	\$23.79
13	Computer and Mathematical Science Occupations	364 (51%)	36	\$23.41
14	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	321 (48%)	32	\$20.08
15	Community and Social Services Occupations	277 (33%)	28	\$14.01
16	Legal Occupations	129 (51%)	13	\$14.65

(Source: EMSI Complete Employment - 4th Quarter 2009)

#### County Employment by Industry, 2008

The following table illustrates Lee County's employment pattern by industry for 2008. The table indicates that the top ten industry-based employment sectors are: government; retail trade; manufacturing; accommodations and food services; construction; administrative and waste services; health care and social assistance; other services, except public administration; real estate and rental and leasing; and professional and technical services.

**TABLE 3.14 – TOTAL COUNTY EMPLOYMENT: 67,983**

Rank	Industry Sector	Total Jobs 2008
1	Government (includes state-paid AU employees)	16,270
2	Retail Trade	7,554
3	Manufacturing	6,783
4	Accommodation and Food Services	5,924
5	Construction	4,517
6	Administrative and Waste Services	4,249
7	Health Care and Social Assistance	3,898
8	Other Services, except Public Administration	3,729
9	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3,043
10	Professional and Technical Services	2,878
11	Transportation and Warehousing	2,443
12	Finance and Insurance	1,697
13	Wholesale Trade	1,419
14	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,064
15	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	739
16	Information	726
17	Education Services	628
18	Utilities	174
19	Management of Companies and Enterprises	168
20	Mining	81

(Source: EMSI Complete Employment - 4th Quarter 2009)

**Recent Industry and Business Trends, 2003-2008**

Lee County added 11,800 jobs between 2003 and 2008, a 21% increase in jobs for the county. 10,231 of these jobs were private and non-profit sector positions, and 1,569 were in the public sector. The largest sectors of job growth (by total new jobs) were in: government (1,569 jobs); retail trade; (1,361 jobs); construction (1,187 jobs); and real estate, rental, and leasing (1,092 jobs). Occupational categories that saw the most growth during this time period by total new jobs included: sales-related occupations (3,660); occupations related to food preparation and service (1,672); building and grounds cleanup and maintenance occupations (1,360); management occupations (1,230); and education, training, and library occupations (1,097).

Lee County has experienced considerable positive economic activity in recent years and is projected to benefit from future growth, as highlighted below:

- Tiger Town shopping mall in Opelika (which opened in 2004) will employ approx. 3,000 at build out.
- The Celebrate Alabama (Opelika) development is projected to employ as many as 5,000 at completion.

- Auburn University/City of Auburn Research Park- Phase I(100 acres) is underway; the first tenant has been announced (Northrup Grumman/software).
- New Kia auto plant (West Point, GA)- approximately 2,500 employees; at least 8 supplier operations in area (4,300 additional workers). Lee County is ideally located in terms of additional Kia suppliers.
- Planned expansion of Ft. Benning (approx. 8,200 new military and civilian employees).
- Auburn named as one of the nation's "best places to launch a small business" by CNN/Money (October 2009).

### Lee County Unemployment

In recent years, Lee County has enjoyed a lower unemployment rate than the state as a whole and almost all other Alabama counties. However, the nation's economic recession has had a substantial impact on the county, raising the county's unemployment rate to 8.7% in April 2010.

TABLE 3.15 - LEE COUNTY AND ALABAMA UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

	Lee County	Alabama
1999	3.2	4.2
2000	3.5	4.0
2001	3.7	4.7
2002	4.2	5.3
2003	4.2	5.4
2004	4.0	5.1
2005	3.2	3.8
2006	3.0	3.5
2007	3.2	3.5
2008	4.6	5.0
April 2009	7.1	9.7
October 2009	8.9	10.8
April 2010	8.7	11.0

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

### Lee County Educational Attainment

Lee County features a higher level of educational attainment in comparison to the state of Alabama as a whole, as outlined in the table below:

TABLE 3.16 - EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, POPULATION AGED 25 OR OLDER, 2006

Area	High School Grad	Bachelors Degree
United States	84.0	27.0
Alabama	75.3	19.0
Lee County	84.4	30.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



**Lee County Income Characteristics**

Lee County is classified as a “persistent poverty county” by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. This classification is based on 20% or more of county residents being classified as “poor” in each of the last four censuses: 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000. The county’s poverty and income statistics are skewed downward due to the presence of a large college student population at Auburn University.

**TABLE 3.17 – MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2008)**

Lee County	\$41,770
Alabama	\$42,586
United States	\$52,029

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Lee County Commuting Patterns**

Commuting patterns are useful in defining economic connections between various geographic locations. The commuting patterns describe: the flow of workers between home and work, travel patterns, accessibility, and (to some extent) residential preferences. According to 2000 U.S. Census commuting pattern data, the majority (over 68%) of Lee County residents commute to work within the county. This figure highlights the county’s role as a regional employment center. As of 2000, about 8,000 workers commuted to jobs in Lee County from nearby counties, with most coming from Chambers, Tallapoosa, and Russell counties. County

## **HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS ELEMENT**

### **GENERAL EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Various reports, studies and census information was utilized to provide an overall assessment of housing conditions in Lee County. In general, housing includes a wide range of housing types. For the most part, multi-family and rental housing is located in the incorporated municipalities. Urban core area municipalities also contain most of the concentration of historic and older homes. Costs of housing and affordability in Lee County have generally reflected market conditions.

Much of the county's housing is located in suburban pattern single-family subdivisions that are generally in varying ages and conditions. There has been conservable development of single-family housing over the past thirty years in the unincorporated parts of the county, much of which has been annexed into municipalities, following in conjunction with their development. There also continues to be large areas of the county occupied by single-family homes on large acreage.

Other important housing conditions within the county have been a growing trend toward "second homes" near Lake Harding and manufactured housing, which is generally located on single lots in the more rural portions of the county.

### **ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEEDS, TYPES, COST RANGES**

Future housing needs include renovation and rehabilitation of existing housing. For the most part, those housing units needing replacement or major renovation are located in the urban cores, where there is a greater degree of older, rental housing and income levels more likely to find such housing affordable. Subsidized housing and public housing is more prevalent in the urban areas as well.

Most of the suburban subdivision development are newer or built in the past thirty years. The age and condition of these units tend to be generally less subject to dilapidated conditions and more suitable for minor renovations. Replacement of dilapidated housing with infill housing is more likely in the urban cores; however, there are isolated structures and a few older neighborhoods where conditions might lend itself to major repair or replacement.

Although no separate market analysis has been completed, housing projections completed in conjunction with the Regional Growth Management Plan were reviewed for a perspective on housing demand. In general, because housing occupancy is generally high, new housing demand resulting from new population is expected to be significant.

### **MODELS FOR HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

The nature of the unincorporated parts of Lee County reflects a wide range of housing patterns, including some well organized older and historic neighborhoods (generally small in area), middle-age suburban housing and subdivisions, newer subdivisions of larger homes at very differing densities and lot sizes.

In general, the growth and pattern of new housing has tended to be lower density and has utilized greater amounts of land per housing unit. The result of this pattern has been to develop more land compared to the actual housing density. The result of this type of housing development reflects a somewhat inconsistent pattern, ranging from well planned suburban subdivisions to home set far apart or large parcels "in the country" to a few higher density development on a somewhat scattered pattern.

The Lee County Conservation and Development Framework suggest a more coherent pattern of housing development that is based on neighborhoods of varying sizes, densities and patterns as defined by the character areas in the Master Plan. This Framework generally reflects the “transect,” which includes (1) more urban mixed-use centers and neighborhoods, (2) more suburban neighborhoods with smaller lots, a mix of housing types, (3) more rural neighborhoods that might reflect relationships to rural centers, (4) more rural housing on larger lots and country estates, and (5) very rural farm-like housing or “houses in the woods” type housing.

These neighborhoods include a mix of housing types, prices and affordability, a street and transportation pattern that ranges from a rectangular grid to a country lane. These neighborhoods also include a mix of compatible residential uses, mainly of a scale and mix of retail, appropriate to the neighborhood – either a country crossroad, suburban mixed-use center to neighborhood shopping on the street. The emphasis of these housing neighborhoods is on walkability, connectivity, good quality design, protective of the natural environment, landscaping and accessible community facilities (schools, parks, other).

## **HOUSING GOAL**

The Housing Goal, as developed during the Town Hall Meetings, is as follows:

Diverse housing options – including affordable choices – offering citizens a range of housing types, density and cost, in various rural to urban neighborhoods throughout the county.

## OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

### Objectives

- Support residential construction by the private sector to ensure adequate supply of housing to meet demand
- Promote, with the private sector, a range of housing choices relative to type, cost and location in the county
- Ensure sound housing in all parts of the county
- Promote housing design and development consistent with the framework
- Support new housing and rehabilitation, consistent with land use, infrastructure policies in the Master Plan
- Minimize public costs to support needed housing development, consistent with the framework
- Support opportunities for rural housing consistent with land use and community design objectives
- Cooperate with public and private housing entities to ensure the availability of housing for families or individuals with special needs, including seniors, persons with disabilities, and financial limitations

### Policies and Strategies

#### *Ongoing*

- Enforce housing and building codes throughout the county
- Support areas of high density and mixed use residential consistent with land use policies and infrastructure plans
- Work with public and private housing developers in support of acquiring state and federal grants, financing to support affordable housing and rehabilitation; work with USDA and private developers to provide incentives/funding for rural housing developments consistent with the framework
- Support agencies in obtaining weatherization and other emergency housing grant funds

#### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Support an ongoing multi-jurisdiction housing forum to include public and private interests such as builders, realtors and investors
2. Support ongoing public participation programs in all communities in the county
3. Promote community development and housing corporations in providing affordable housing

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Work with housing development corporations and other organizations to increase affordable housing initiatives, counseling, etc.

#### *Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Promote neighborhood revitalization programs, including commercial and mixed use development consistent with the framework

#### *In areas where zoning has been adopted*

1. adopt a zoning ordinance consistent with framework land preservation and housing policies; include planned unit development, mixed use ordinances and updated subdivision regulations consistent with new regulations

## OPEN SPACE, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

### AREAS OF POTENTIAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION, NATURAL OR CULTURAL

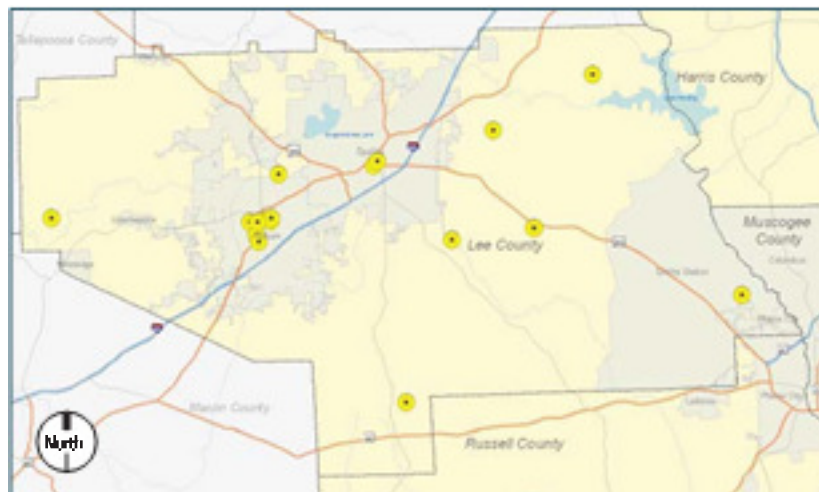
Important natural resources for conservation include waterways, creek, streams and lake; floodplains and wetland; native forest cover and vegetation; land suitable for agriculture and farming versus land more suitable for development and infrastructure construction; habitats for animal life, fishing, hunting and birding; and rural landscapes which help to define the rural character of the county. The rolling character of the county's topography does not lend itself to a high degree of issues caused by steep slopes, although, where this is an issue, such as stream banks, etc. these slopes should be respected.

Efforts to maintain and improve water quality include clean water partnerships to protect Saugahatchee Creek, Lake Harding and the Chattahoochee River as well as underground aquifers and related water sources.

A specific issue that must be addressed includes that of resource extraction. There are numerous quarries in the County which are valuable opportunities. However, the noise, dust and other water quality and environmental issues suggest that such operations should be concentrated so as not to conflict with residential development or threaten water quality or other natural systems critical to the ecosystem.

Natural vegetation is important to help maintain the ecosystem in the County. Such vegetation is critical to the maintenance of streams, lakes and quality of the water supply. Natural forested areas are a part of this vegetation and important to conservation efforts. Large tracts are utilized for timber production as part of the county's economic development. Careful harvesting and reforestation through best management practices can prevent such production from causing negatives on soil erosion and water quality, as well as damage to the visual character of the rural landscape or to the wildlife corridors that are an important part of the ecosystem.

Parks and open space are important to the natural environment from an aesthetic and recreational perspective and can contribute to the overall improvement to water quality. Protection of sensitive areas an general relief and backdrop to commercial and residential development. Large public parts are an important part of a network of parts that also



**FIGURE 3.8 - HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Historic locations within the county.

Source: RGM/P

include smaller, more urban parks, near concentration of populations and housing. Other public and private recreation areas are part of this network as well.

Not to be overlooked in Lee County are the parcels of property owned by private land owners, much of which is undeveloped and currently provides another source of “informal” open space, which in private yards, farms or vacant tracts suitable for development. This latter type of open space includes areas of the county where rural agriculture may be an important resource, given the current issues related to food production, etc. Although there has been increasingly less utilization of land for agricultural purposes, these types of land and soils suitable for agriculture purpose, both for person use or commercial production, availability of such resources is worth consideration for conservation and preservation purposes.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

Lee County has an array of historical structures and places. Of those, there are seventeen historic structures or places and six historic districts in the county that are listed on the National Register. Table 3.18 and Table 3.19 lists those places of historical significance.

**TABLE 3.18 – HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

<b>Districts</b>	<b>Location</b>
Auburn University Historic District	Auburn
Geneva Street Historic District	Opelika
Loachapoka Historic District	Loachapoka
Northside Historic District	Opelika
Old Main and Church Street Historic District	Auburn
Railroad Avenue Historic District	Opelika

*Source: National Register of Historic Places*

**TABLE 3.19 – HISTORIC STRUCTURES OR PLACES**

<b>Structures</b>	<b>Location</b>
Antioch Methodist Church	Salem
Auburn Depot	Auburn
Auburn Players Theater*	Auburn University
Auburn University Fisheries Research Units	Auburn University
Baptist Hill Cemetery	Auburn
Bean’s Mill	Opelika (vicinity)
Bedell-Triplett House	Opelika
Buchanan-Clegg House	Marvyn (vicinity)
Burton, Robert Wilton, House*	Auburn
Cullars Rotation*	Auburn
Darden, J.W., House	Opelika
Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church*	Auburn
Ensminger House	Gold Hill
Halliday-Cary-Pick House	Auburn
Houston-Dunn House	Salem
Jenkins Farmhouse *	Dupree (vicinity)



Lee County, Alabama

Kinnebrew-Middlebrooks-Newell House	Waverly (vicinity)
Lake Condy	Opelika
Lane House	Auburn
Lee County Courthouse*	Opelika
Lowther House Complex*	Smiths Station
McLain, Dr. Andrew D., Office and Drug Store*	Salem
Noble Hall*	Auburn
"Old Nancy"	Auburn University
Old Rotation*	Auburn
Pine Hill Cemetery	Auburn
"Pinetucket"	Auburn
President's Mansion, Old*	Auburn University
Ridge Grove Missionary Baptist Church	Opelika (vicinity)
Roxana United Methodist Church & Cemetery	Roxana
Salem-Shotwell Covered Bridge	Salem (vicinity)
Samford-Brown House	Opelika
Scott-Yarbrough House*	Auburn
Shivers-Rhodes House	Opelika
Spring Villa*	Opelika (vicinity)
Stroud, Eli, Cemetery	Smith's Station (vicinity)
Summers Plantation*	Opelika (vicinity)
Sunny Slope	Auburn
Thompson Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church	Opelika
U.S. Post Office*	Auburn
U.S. Post Office*	Opelika
Webster House	Auburn
Yarbrough, Franklin, Jr., Store*	Beulah (vicinity)

\* Denotes Listing on National Register

Source: National Register of Historic Places, Alabama Historical Commission



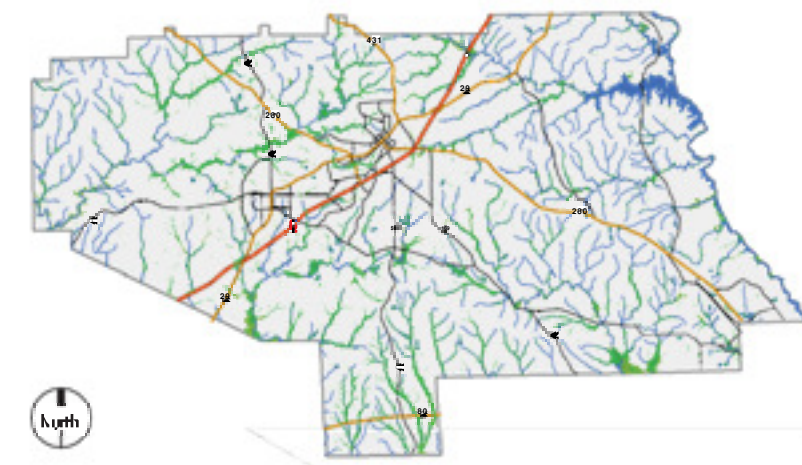
**FIGURE 3.9 - NATURAL RESOURCES**

Natural areas of special consideration within Lee County. Wetland, Forest, Prime Farmland. A final map is in production.  
Source: RGMP



**FIGURE 3.10 - FORESTED AREAS**

Location of forested areas within Lee County



**FIGURE 3.11 - HYDROLOGY**

Flood plains, wetlands and other hydrologic conditions within Lee County.

## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

### OPEN SPACE, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS

The Open Space, Natural and Cultural Resources Goal, as developed during the Town Hall Meetings, is as follows:

Protection of natural resources and improved water quality; green infrastructure, parks, trails and recreational areas that enhance public access to open space; preservation and protection of cultural resources, urban and rural.

### OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

#### Objectives

- Cooperate with land owners and others to protect sensitive and/or important natural resources, including water supplies, lakes, rivers and flood plains
- Promote the use of greenspace opportunities as part of outdoor recreation, parks and green infrastructure and to protect water quality, forest resources, agricultural land, rural landscapes and/or on projects needing federal, state, or local assistance or approval
- Help to protect important cultural and historic resources, including urban and rural resources
- Especially support the protection of rural cultural resources and landscape, farms, rural architecture
- Conservation of water and other natural resources in infrastructure planning and construction

#### Policies and Strategies

##### *Ongoing*

- Promote LEED, or other positive benefit-to-cost building energy standards in county facilities and private developments through the building code (include consideration of environmental premium – cost of construction versus operational cost saving versus payback at a reasonable return)
- Participate in Saugahatchee and Chattahoochee clean water partnerships and discuss a to more coordinated county-wide authority with watershed stakeholders

##### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Consider a watershed management authority (Act91-602) to support coordination of efforts to protect watershed, agriculture, industry, and drinking water
2. Adopt conservation subdivision regulations and best practices for water quality as part of subdivision regulations
3. Support consistent flood plain ordinances in municipalities and enforce flood plain ordinances in unincorporated Lee County, including participation in the National Flood Insurance Program
4. Support water demand management and other public education initiatives

##### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Adopt buffer guidelines as part of subdivision regulations and/or zoning ordinance for conflicting land uses such as quarries
2. Adopt storm water provisions as part of subdivision regulations and promote stormwater retention best management practices

3. Work with state and federal departments of transportation and the county engineer to adopt roadway and scenic corridor standards
4. Support public health departments enforcement of on-site sewage standards
5. Expand recycling programs

*Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Give priority consideration to county public/private investments in infrastructure to promote denser development and development consistent with the framework
2. Adopt land preservation policies consistent with County Master Plan Conservation and Development Framework that will protect naturally and culturally significant locations
3. Consider long term public/private greenway/green space network that connects urban to rural center and neighborhoods, parks, the Chattahoochee River, Saugahatchee Creek and natural resource features

*In areas where zoning has been adopted*

1. Adopt a zoning overlays to protect preservation areas consistent with the framework for beats that approve zoning

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICE ELEMENT

### EXISTING AND FUTURE NEEDS

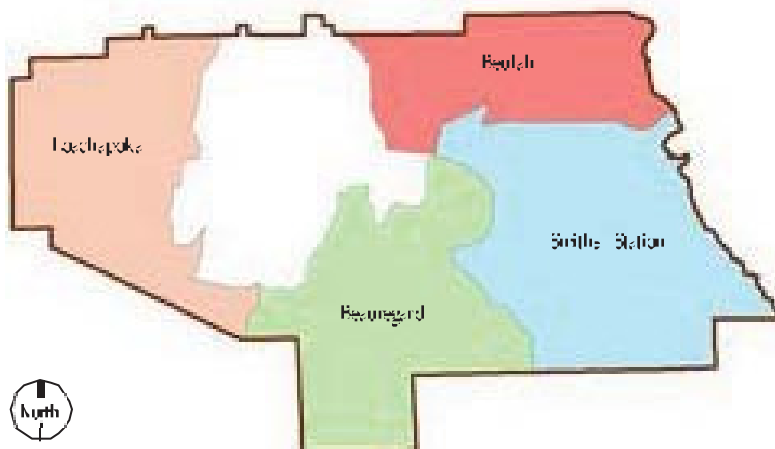
#### Schools

Within Lee County, there are four school districts: Lee County School System (the Local Education Agency), Auburn City School System, Opelika City School System and a partial section of Phenix City School System. This analysis deals primarily with the Lee County School System because of the impact this plan will have on their particular service areas.

Currently the Lee County School System has twelve school facilities spread over four areas of attendance. Those school facilities are detailed in Table 3.20. The school system is also constructing a new high school facility in Smiths Station for that particular attendance area.

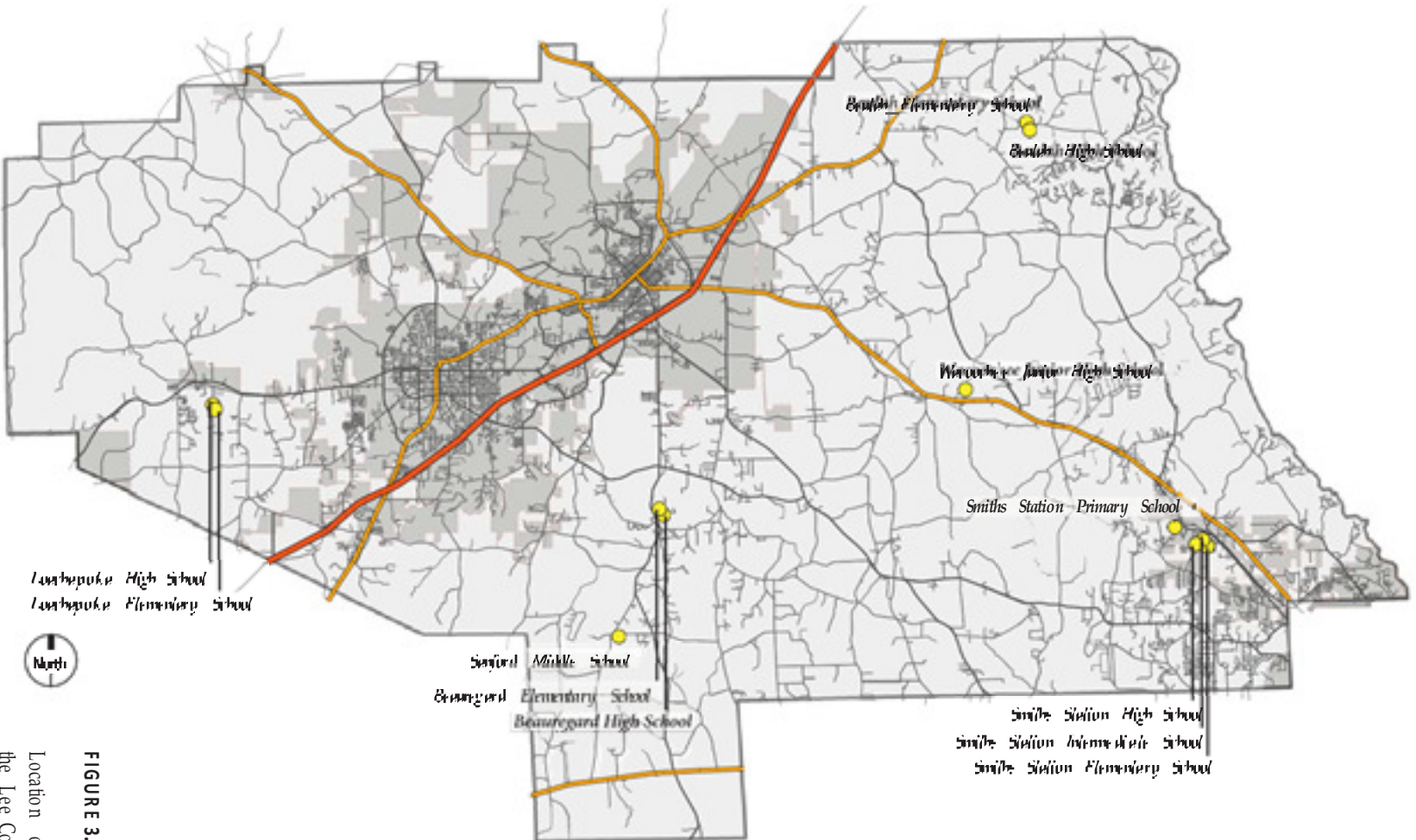
**TABLE 3.20 – LEE COUNTY SCHOOL FACILITIES**

Name	Service Area	Grades
Beauregard Elementary School	Beauregard	K-4
Beauregard High School	Beauregard	9-12
Beulah Elementary School	Beulah	K-6
Beulah High School	Beulah	7-12
Loachapoka Elementary School	Loachapoka	K-6
Loachapoka High School	Loachapoka	7-12
Sanford Middle School	Beauregard	5-8
Smiths Station Elementary School	Smiths Station	2-3
Smiths Station High School	Smiths Station	9-12
Smiths Station Intermediate School	Smiths Station	4-6
Smiths Station Primary School	Smiths Station	K-1
Wacochee Junior High School	Smiths Station	7-8



**FIGURE 3.12 - LEE COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM ATTENDANCE AREAS**

Location of schools within their respective zones of the Lee County School System.



**FIGURE 3.13 - LEE COUNTY SCHOOLS**  
Location of public schools within the Lee County School System.



### **Lee County School System Summary of Findings**

- Current system population is just under 10,000 students.
- Current system capacity is 12,778 spaces.
- A new high school is currently under construction in the Smiths Station area and a new elementary school is under consideration.
- According to the REMI model produced in the *Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan* the Lee County School System will receive an additional 1,094 new students by 2013, increasing the population to 10,794. By 2028, total student population will grow to 13,345.

### **Private Schools**

There are five private schools that have been identified in Lee County. Four of these schools are located in either Auburn or Opelika: Lee-Scott Academy, Living Way Christian Academy, The Village School, and Trinity Christian School. Glenwood School is located in southeast Lee County in the Smiths Station vicinity.

### **Universities, College and Workforce Centers**

Auburn University of course, is a major influence on development in the county, providing educational opportunities, administrative, teaching and service jobs and a unique resource to Lee County. Southern Union Community College is another major resource and major partner in providing workforce opportunities for residents of Lee County. The relatively recent development of a research park associated with Auburn serves as a special resource for Lee County in terms of employment and economic development.

### **Parks**

Auburn, Opelika and Smiths Station all have Parks and Recreation Departments that offer full services and facilities within their communities.

Two public fishing areas are located in the county, the Lee County Public Fishing Lake and Saugahatchee Lake. The Lee County Public Fishing Lake is a 130-acre public lake owned by the State of Alabama. And Saugahatchee Lake, a 600-acre lake, requires a permit from the City of Opelika to use. Both lakes allow for the use of non-motorized boats.

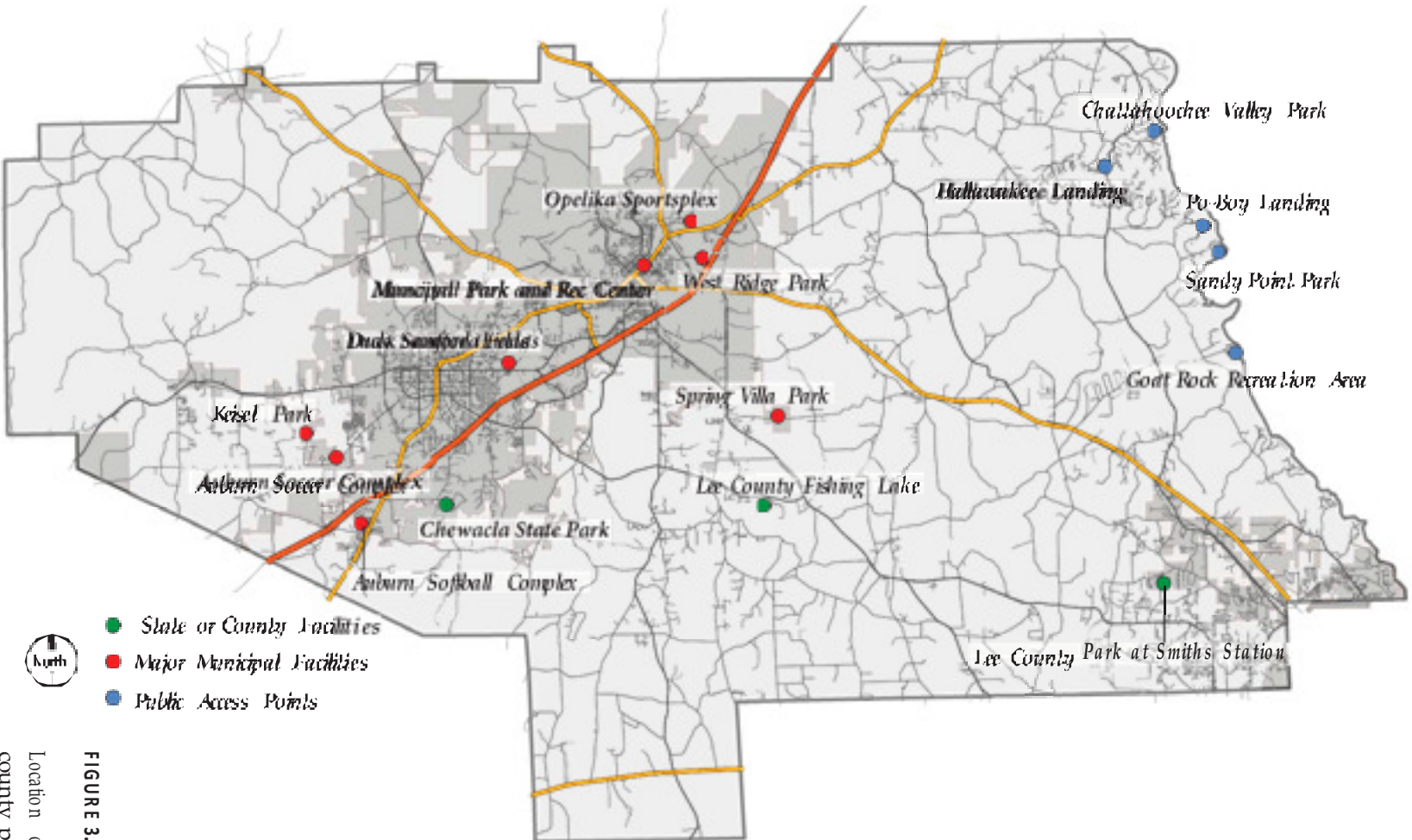
Lake Harding, the Goat Rock Reservoir, and Lake Oliver are water bodies along the Chattahoochee River that border Lee County. Lake Harding is formed by the Barletts Ferry Project (hydroelectric dam) and Lake Oliver is formed by Oliver Dam. Public access is provided to Lake Harding at Chattahoochee Valley Park, at the Halawakee Boat Access and at Po-Boy's Landing. Access is provided to the Goat Rock Reservoir just south of the Barletts Ferry Project at Sandy Point Park. Lake Oliver can be accessed from the Goat Rock Recreation Area.

### **State Park**

Lee County is home to Chewacla State Park located near Exit 57 on Interstate-85 in the Auburn city limits. The park contains several miles of trails for hiking and biking throughout the 696-acre park. There are facilities for camping at the park along with cabins. Also, there is a 26-acre lake that is for swimming, fishing and boating. Other activities at Chewacla include tennis courts, a playground and picnic areas.

### **Auburn University**

Auburn University offers two unique park experiences in Lee County in conjunction with the school. The Donald E. Davis Arboretum, located on campus, contains over 150 different species of native trees to Alabama and the southeast. The Arboretum contains series of trails facilities of visitors to enjoy.



**FIGURE 3.14 - PARKS**  
Location of national, state and county parks.

The Louise Kreher Forest Ecology Preserve, located a few miles north of campus, is a 110-acre preserve offering unique opportunities for birding and observation of other wildlife within the City of Auburn. Areas within the Preserve include wetlands, a butterfly garden, and trails.

**Fire**

Within Lee County there are two systems of fire response for the citizens. One is the volunteer system for the unincorporated portions of the county and the other is the career/paid fire departments. The cities of Auburn and Opelika both have their own fire departments, which carry ISO Class 3/9 and ISO Class 2 respectively. The Opelika Fire Department is the largest in terms of personnel and number of stations as well as having a specialized hazardous material team for the entire region.

**Volunteer Fire Departments**

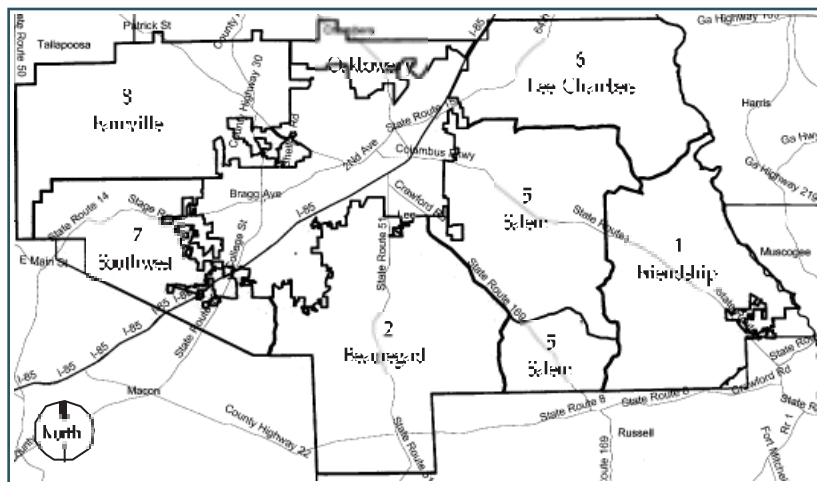
Within the unincorporated areas of Lee County, fire protection services are provided via a network of volunteer fire departments. Currently, there are seven volunteer fire departments composed of eighteen different fire stations. Table 3.21 outlines those departments and stations.

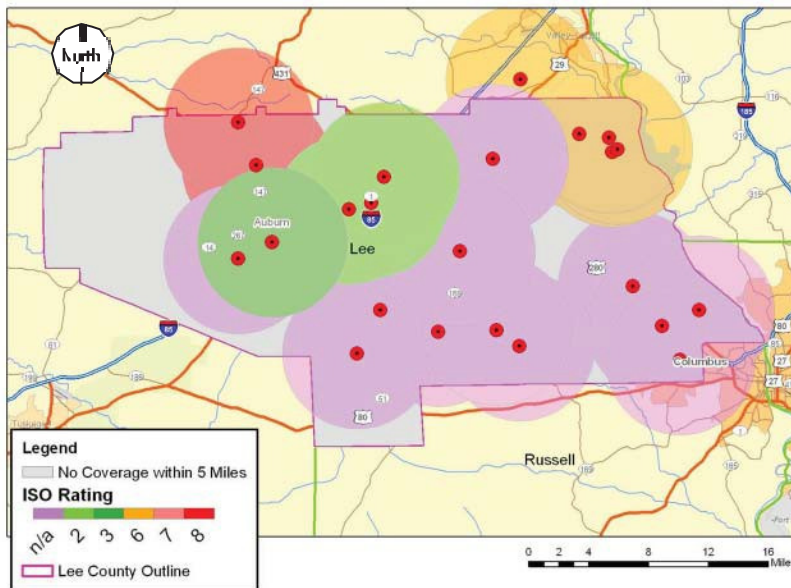
**TABLE 3.21 – VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS**

Volunteer Fire Department	Operations Area	Number of Stations
Beauregard VFD	Beauregard, Lee County	3
Farmville VFD	Farmville, Lee County	2
Friendship VFD	Smiths Station, Lee County	5
Beulah VFD	Lee County, Chamber County	4
Plainview VFD	Plainview, Lee County	1
Salem VFD	Salem, Lee County	2
Southwest Lee County Fire Protection	Lee County	1

**FIGURE 3.15 - FIRE DISTRICTS**

Volunteer fire districts in Lee County.  
 Source: Lee County EMA





**FIGURE 3.16 - FIRE STATIONS**

Fire stations in Lee County with 5-mile buffer and ISO Ratings.

Source: Lee County EMA via RGM P

### Staffing

The volunteer fire departments in Lee County are staffed by local citizens who volunteer their time to the departments. In the event of a fire or other emergency action, the volunteers return to the fire station to retrieve their apparatus and then depart to the scene. This is a difficult situation within the county because many of the volunteers do not work in close proximity to their service area, forcing many of them to travel a great distance before arriving at the scene.

### Funding

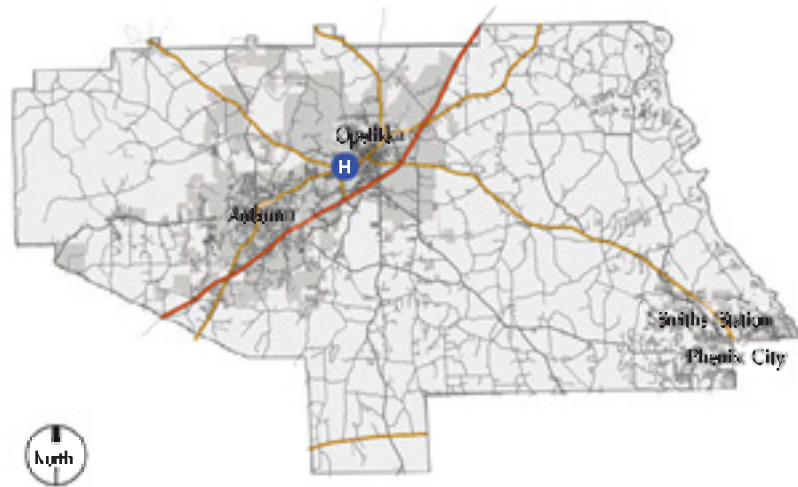
Generating funds for the volunteer fire departments is accomplished through several avenues. The primary source are the revenues generated from the beer and cigarette tax in Lee County along with a \$25 fee collected from all homes within the County. The volunteer fire departments also are funded through donations from residents and local businesses.

### Automatic Aid

The Auburn Fire Department and Opelika Fire Department jurisdictions are immediately within the municipal limits. However, some locations just beyond those limits are served by individual agreements with property owners, known as "automatic aid" agreements.

### Public Health Facilities

East Alabama Medical Center, located in Opelika, provides comprehensive primary care services to Lee County, as well as access to emergency treatment. Professional medical offices and clinics provide access to health care and should be a part of future mixed use developments that service the Lee County population.



**FIGURE 3.17 - HOSPITALS**

Location of hospitals within the county.

### **Social Services and Facilities**

County-wide social services are provided through the Department of Human Resources as well as numerous voluntary, private, non-profit and church related organizations. The United Way and Housing Authority provide related services and facilities. Public Health related services are provided through the Lee County Health Department.

Access to social services and public health services in unincorporated part of the county are ongoing issues, requiring innovative means to ensure service to all Lee County citizens needs.

### **Cultural Arts Facilities and Libraries**

Beginning with Auburn University, arts and cultural facilities and libraries are primarily provided in the incorporated municipalities of the county and are generally more accessible in the urban areas.

### **Other Special Facilities**

Facilities for senior services are available in Lee County and access to such facilities is an important aspect of community facilities, including transportation access. As the county continues to experience growth in the unincorporated areas, access to these special and community facilities are important. County governments role in supporting, providing, and/or partnering with municipalities and private development will increasingly be an issue to address, realizing that access to community facilities is critical to community and neighborhood development, however, also realizing that the county, and counties in general, are limited in the provision of these kinds of facilities and the financial resource to build, maintain and operate such facilities.

### **Military Operations**

Although not located in Lee County, the US Military installation at Fort Benning, south of Columbus, Georgia, has a substantial impact on the county. This impact is to some extent greatest in the southeastern part of Lee County (Smiths Station and the US Highway-280 corridor), however, the base and growth from BRAC will have significant impact on Lee County in terms of demand for housing, commercial development and jobs for residents of Lee County.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOAL

The Community Facilities and Services Goal, as developed during the Town Hall Meetings, is as follows:

Cooperation in construction and maintaining excellent local schools, parks, public safety, fire stations, community centers, services for seniors and youth as well as ongoing improvements in a variety of public services including health, public safety.

## OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

### Objectives

- Cooperate with others to ensure community facilities that address needs in unincorporated Lee County
- Promote and support community facilities that are consistent development policies as part of the Conservation and Development Framework
- Specifically support the county Board of Education efforts in ensuring adequate and well located schools to serve all parts of the County consistent with the Master Plan Conservation and Development Framework
- Specifically support the Lee County Parks and Recreation Board and others in the county to provide access to parks and recreation facilities consistent with urban, suburban and rural parts of the county as defined in the Master Plan framework
- Support excellence in public safety and fire protection facilities and services throughout the county
- Support health care facilities (hospitals and medical offices) located near mixed use centers as well as continued growth of regional hospital facilities
- Promote overall health through land preservation community design, housing, neighborhood, open space and transportation policies
- Support regional access to library services and facilities

### Policies and Strategies

#### General

#### *Ongoing*

1. Explore increasing opportunities for consolidation of services and facilities including, but not limited to, fire protection and public safety

#### *Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Consider county-city governmental structure that includes community facilities and services

#### Education

#### *Ongoing*

- Participate in cooperative regional school initiatives and planning
- Regularly communicate with the Board of Education on school planning and coordination in general

#### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Recommend to the Board of Education standards and consideration of the location and building of new schools and renovations to schools, consistent the Conservation and Development Framework; request that the school board adopt school siting standards consistent with the framework recommendations for land use, community design and transportation



2. Specifically coordinate with the school board on transportation, infrastructure and other issues related to new school construction, improvements; include safe routes to school improvements to increase safety for pedestrians and others traveling to school

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Improve multi-modal access to schools through Safe Routes to Schools and improvements to roadways and sidewalks that best accommodate automobile, bus and pedestrian access to schools

**Public Safety and Emergency Management**

*Ongoing*

- Continue to promote the coordination of Sheriff's Department with municipal police departments in incorporated communities to reduce crime
- Continue to support utilization of a county-wide jail
- Maintain and update roads and bridges to ensure clearance for emergency access
- Utilize Emergency Management Agency and related local, state and federal agencies to strengthen support the training of volunteer fire departments; continue to support improved technology and communication between jurisdictions; regional training centers for public safety departments and fire departments consistent with city departments; continued adequate funding for volunteer fire services and districts, including fire stations consistent with the Conservation and Development Framework; continuously upgrade coordination between Lee County EMA and 911 in Auburn, Opelika and volunteer departments
- Consider a countywide fund for apparatus and equipment to match district funds and federal/state grants

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Support ongoing strategic plan for county and municipal law enforcement
2. Promote the use of a countywide public safety implementation team to conduct ongoing improvements and standards in cooperation; include representatives from each jurisdiction

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Continue to work with cities to encourage provision of fire and rescue services outside their city limits through intergovernmental agreements
2. Support the location of additional fire stations, consistent with the framework, especially in serving growth areas of proposed higher density

**Parks and Recreation**

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Incorporate location and development of parks into plans for preservation of open space, consistent with the framework
2. Support multi-purpose park facilities in areas where there is a substantial population or where need is expected to grow, consistent with the framework (especially related to suburban and rural centers) – Smiths Station, Beulah, Beauregard and Loachapoka; in all cases consider location of multi-purpose recreation in coordination with school facilities, senior centers, etc.
3. Expand recreation to include special interests and related recreation – seniors and persons with disabilities
4. Support the increased development of hunting, fishing, birding and eco-tourism, including land preservation, natural resource and open space recommendations

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Support a neighborhood parks program to support smaller parks consistent with the Conservation and Development Framework for suburban centers and neighborhoods and where there are provisions for maintenance and security
2. Expand public/private greenways, bicycle and multi-purpose trails as a connection to other facilities or recreation assets

*Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Include trails and bicycle lanes along selected roadways consistent with the transportation related recommendations and the Conservation and Development Framework

**Libraries**

*Ongoing*

- Work with others to expand web-based access to libraries and expand summer library programs

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Support regional and cooperative plans for library services serving the entire county

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Promote non-traditional library space in suburban and rural centers

**Arts and Culture**

*Ongoing*

- Promote a county-wide arts alliance for coordination, promotion and fund raising

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Support ongoing arts and culture survey(s) to determine needs for programs/facilities etc.

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Work with arts, cultural programs to promote expansion of facilities and offerings to accommodate a documented needs assessment

**Historic Preservation**

*Ongoing*

- Work with others to support tourism development and preservation through events, marketing and promotion

*Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Work with existing preservation commissions and associations to promote and support ongoing historic districts
2. Identify prioritized critical sites needing protection, relative to growth patterns in unincorporated areas

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Work with owners, preservation interests and other to consider preservation districts and site protection in all parts of the county not covered by a preservation ordinance
2. Support preservation association, organizations to increase funding and financing for preservation of threatened properties

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES ELEMENT**

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Lee County is located in east central Alabama, south of Chambers County, north of Russell County, and east of Tallapoosa & Macon Counties. Lee County is bounded on the east by the Chattahoochee River. The River constitutes the border between Lee County two Georgia counties, Harris and Muscogee. The County includes seven incorporated cities. These cities include Opelika (seat), Auburn, Smiths Station, Loachapoka, Waverly (portions in Chambers County), Notasulga (portions in Macon County), and Phenix City (portions in Russell County).

The estimated population of Lee County in 2007 exceeds 130,000 and is part of the Columbus, GA - Auburn, AL Metropolitan Area. The County ranks as the eight most populous county in the State of Alabama. Lee County covers an area of approximately 610 square miles equating to a overall population density of approximately 210 persons per square mile. The County's most populous city is Auburn (approximately 54,000). Sixty-seven percent of the County's population resides in Auburn, Opelika, and Smiths Station. The County has experienced tremendous growth over the last two decades. In 1990, the estimated County population was just shy of 90,000.

The County is served by several major highways included Interstate 85, which is a high growth corridor between Montgomery, AL and Atlanta, GA. The County is also served by U.S. Highways 29, 280, and 431. The City served by U.S. Highway 280/431. Opelika is located approximately 60 miles east-northeast of Montgomery, AL; 110 miles southeast of Birmingham, AL; 29 miles northwest of Columbus, GA; and 100 miles north-northeast of Atlanta, GA.

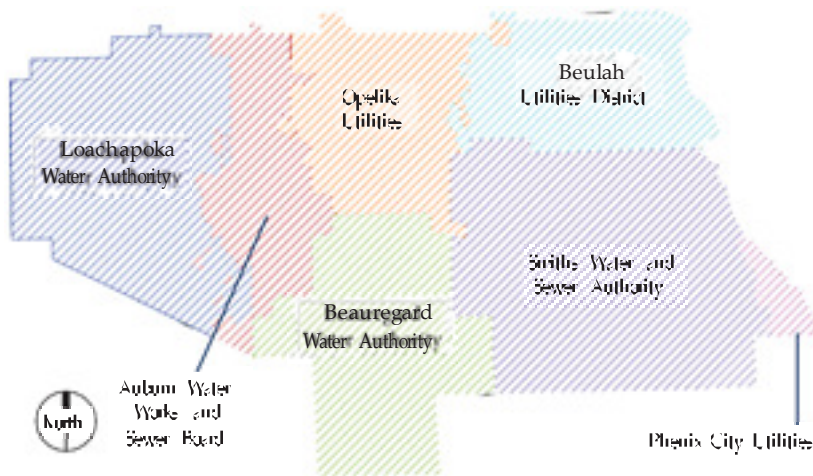
The Opelika, AL climate is characterized by warm summers with temperatures typically in the 70's and cold winters with temperatures typically in the 40's. July is the warmest month of the year with an average maximum temperature of 90 degrees Fahrenheit. January is the coldest month of the year with an average minimum temperature of 33 degrees Fahrenheit. The average annual precipitation for Lee County is approximately 56 inches per year. Historically, the wettest month of the year is March with 6.9 inches of precipitation.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES**

Infrastructure services generally include the provision of water, sewer, storm water management, communications, and solid waste management. The provision of this infrastructure and these services are provided in Lee by a combination of county, municipal and private utilities/services.

In general, the fragmentation of basic water, sewer, and storm water infrastructure is an issue, specifically in the unincorporated parts of the county. Water and sewer systems, in particular, are most often seen in competition with each other for customers and the provision of good services for residential and economic development. These systems also are dependent on waste water treatment and access to clean water supplies through surface water and wells as well as treatment plans, before discharging into streams, while maintaining environmental quality.

While these utilities and services are continuously planning, constructing and maintaining their physical improvements and services, the unincorporated areas and the county is subject to these organizations and dependent upon provisions of services, while also subject to municipal growth, expansion and annexation. Resulting in a degree of inconsistency and fragmentation in access and costs, while the basic resource - water - is available.



**FIGURE 3.18 - WATER SERVICE AREAS**

Location of water service areas for the utility boards and districts in Lee County.

## EXISTING AND FUTURE NEEDS

### Potable Water

Lee County is served with potable water by seven potable water systems. These systems include:

- Auburn Water Works and Sewer Board
- Beauregard Water Authority
- Beulah Utilities District
- Loachapoka Water Authority
- Opelika Utilities
- Phenix City Utilities
- Smiths Water and Sewer Authority

General Information for each system is provided in the following subsections.

**Auburn Water Works and Sewer Board**

**TABLE 3.22 – AUBURN WATER WORKS AND SEWER BOARD (POTABLE WATER)**

Service Area:	59 Square Miles
Number of Customers:	18,000
Estimated Population Density:	XXX
Supply:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary Supply is Lake Ogletree (Chewacla Creek)</li> <li>• Supplement Supply from Opelika Utilities</li> <li>• Supplement Supply from Loachapoka Water Authority</li> </ul>
Supply Capacity:	11.6 MGD
Treatment Capacity:	8 MGD
Storage Capacity:	7.7 MG

**Beauregard Water Authority**

**TABLE 3.23 – BEAUREGARD WATER AUTHORITY (POTABLE WATER)**

Service Area:	109 Square Miles
Number of Customers:	3,200
Estimated Population Density:	XXX
Supply:	Groundwater
Supply Capacity:	1.7 MGD
Treatment Capacity:	3 MGD
Storage Capacity:	1.75 MG

**Beulah Utilities District**

**TABLE 3.24 – BEULAH UTILITIES DISTRICT (POTABLE WATER)**

Service Area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 76 Square Miles</li> <li>• Includes approximately 147 miles of potable water lines</li> </ul>
Number of Customers:	3,200
Estimated Population Density:	105 persons per square mile
Supply:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary Supply is Opelika Utilities</li> <li>• Supplemental supply from East AL Water District</li> </ul>
Supply Capacity:	1.15 MGD (Assumed)
Treatment Capacity:	0 MGD
Storage Capacity:	1.7 MG

**Loachapoka Water Authority****TABLE 3.25 – LOACHAPOKA WATER AUTHORITY (POTABLE WATER)**

Service Area:	128 Square Miles
Number of Customers:	3,500
Estimated Population Density:	XXX
Supply:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groundwater</li> <li>• Supplement Supply from Opelika Utilities</li> </ul>
Supply Capacity:	XXX MGD
Treatment Capacity:	XXX MGD
Storage Capacity:	XX MG

**Opelika Utilities****TABLE 3.26 – OPELIKA UTILITIES (POTABLE WATER)**

Service Area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75 Square Miles</li> <li>• Includes approximately 165 miles of potable water lines</li> </ul>
Number of Customers:	10,500
Estimated Population Density:	XXX
Supply:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saugahatchee Lake (Saugahatchee Creek)</li> <li>• Lake Harding (Halawakee Creek - Chattahoochee River)</li> </ul>
Supply Capacity:	14 MGD
Treatment Capacity:	14 MGD (Saugahatchee WTP-6 MGD; Robert Betts WTP-8 MGD)
Storage Capacity:	11.75 MG

**Phenix City Utilities****TABLE 3.27 – PHENIX CITY UTILITIES (POTABLE WATER)**

Service Area:	8.61 Square Miles (Lee County)
Number of Customers:	12,500 (Lee & Russell Counties)
Estimated Population Served:	31,250
Supply:	Chattahoochee River
Supply Capacity:	18.5 MGD
Treatment Capacity:	18.5 MGD
Storage Capacity:	8.25 MG



**Smiths Water and Sewer Authority**

**TABLE 3.28 – SMITHS WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY (POTABLE WATER)**

Service Area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170 Square Miles</li> <li>• Includes approximately 225 miles of potable water lines</li> </ul>
Number of Customers:	9,100
Estimated Population Density:	133 persons per square mile
Supply:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary Supply is Lake Oliver (Chattahoochee River)</li> <li>• Supplement Supply from Opelika Utilities (X%)</li> </ul>
Supply Capacity:	4 MGD
Treatment Capacity:	4 MGD
Storage Capacity:	3.35 MG (Distribution)

**Sanitary Sewer**

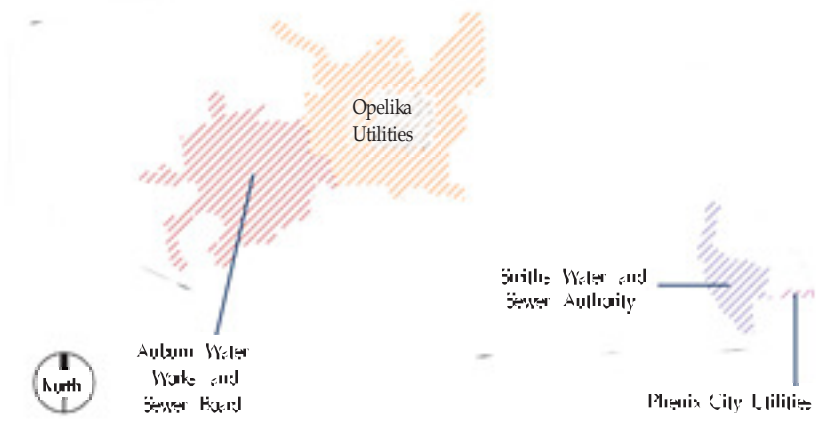
Portions of Lee County are serviced by four sanitary sewer service systems. These systems include:

- Auburn Water Works and Sewer Board
- City of Opelika
- Phenix City Utilities
- Smiths Water and Sewer Authority

General Information for each system is provided in the following subsections.

**FIGURE 3.19 - SEWER SERVICE AREAS**

Approximate location of the sewer service areas for the utilities boards and districts in Lee County.



**Auburn Water Works and Sewer Board****TABLE 3.29 – AUBURN WATER WORKS AND SEWER BOARD (SANITARY SEWER)**

Service Area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 59 Square Miles</li> <li>• Includes approximately 220 miles of sanitary sewer lines</li> </ul>
Number of Customers:	18,000
Estimated Population Density:	XXX
Treatment Capacity:	10.6 MGD (H.C. Morgan WWTP - 9 MGD; Northside WWTP - 1.6 MGD)

**City of Opelika****TABLE 3.30 – CITY OF OPELIKA (SANITARY SEWER)**

Service Area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75 Square Miles</li> <li>• Includes approximately 198 miles of sanitary sewer lines</li> </ul>
Number of Customers:	9,300
Estimated Population Density:	310 persons per square mile
Treatment Capacity:	9 MGD (Eastside WWTP-5 MGD; Westside WWTP-4 MGD)

**Phenix City Utilities****TABLE 3.31 – PHENIX CITY UTILITIES (SANITARY SEWER)**

Service Area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8.61 Square Miles (Lee County)</li> <li>• Including approximately 190 miles of sanitary sewer lines (Lee &amp; Russell County)</li> </ul>
Number of Customers:	9,600 (Lee & Russell County)
Estimated Population Density:	XXX
Treatment Capacity:	7.75 MGD

**Smiths Water and Sewer Authority****TABLE 3.32 – SMITHS WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY (SANITARY SEWER)**

Service Area:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 170 Square Miles</li> <li>• Includes approximately 9 miles of sanitary sewer lines</li> </ul>
Number of Customers:	300
Estimated Population Density:	4 persons per square miles
Treatment Capacity:	7.75 MGD (Currently Treated by Phenix City WWTP)

### **Stormwater Management**

Stormwater management in Lee County involves county and municipal infrastructure as well as private developments and state/federal agencies including ADEM and the EPA. A clean water partnership also provides ongoing education and promotion of best practices for stormwater management.

### **Solid Waste**

Solid waste disposal is provided for, primarily through the Salem Waste Disposal Center and Landfill which has a twenty year capacity. According to various studies, solid waste capacity of this landfill should be thirty years.

Solid waste collection is primarily provided for in the unincorporated areas through collection sites at various locations in the county. Continuous consideration should be given to expansion/maintenance of this collection system.

### **Natural and Propane Gas**

There are seven natural/propane gas companies with facilities in Lee County. These systems/companies include:

- Alagasco
- Dowdle Gas
- Ferrell Gas
- Southeast Alabama Gas District
- Dixie Pipeline (Transmission)
- Southern Natural Gas (Wholesale/Transmission)
- Transco (Transmission)

### **Power**

There are four power/electric service providers in Lee County. These companies include the following:

- Alabama Power Company
- Dixie Electric Cooperative
- Opelika Light and Power
- Tallapoosa River Electric Cooperative

The following power plants within Lee County are listed below along with miscellaneous and power generation information:

- Bartlett's Ferry Hydroelectric Power Plant
  - Hydroelectric Dam built on the Chattahoochee River
  - Impounds Lake Harding in northeast Lee County
  - 173 Megawatt Capacity (194.1 winter capacity)
  - Operated by Georgia Power Company (Southern Company)

- Goat Rock Hydroelectric Power Plant
  - Hydroelectric Dam built on the Chattahoochee River
  - Impounds Goat Rock Lake on the east side of Lee County
  - 38.6 Megawatt Capacity (38.74 winter capacity)
  - Operated by Georgia Power Company (Southern Company)
- Lee County Natural Gas Power Plant
  - Natural Gas Fired Power Generation
  - 100 Megawatt Capacity
  - Operated by South Eastern Electric Development Corporation
- H Allen Franklin Combined Cycle Power Plant
  - Natural Gas Fired Power Generation
  - 1307 Megawatt Capacity
  - Operated by Southern Power Company

Other nearby power generating power plants include:

- North Highlands Power Plant, Muscogee Co., GA
  - 29.6 Megawatt Capacity
  - Operated by Georgia Power Company
- Oliver Dam Hydroelectric Power Plant, Muscogee Co., GA
  - 60 Megawatt Capacity
  - Operated by Georgia Power Company

### **Communications**

Four communications companies serve Lee County. The four service providers are:

- AT&T
- Charter Communications
- Deltacom
- Knology

### **Emergency Management**

Emergency management services are provided primarily through Lee County Emergency Management Agency affiliated with AEMA and FEMA. Lee County EMA is responsible for emergency management planning and response as well as hazard mitigation planning with assistance from the Lee Russell Council of Governments. Emergency services are provided through private and non-profit agencies like the Red Cross.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES GOAL**

The Infrastructure and Services Goal, as developed during the Town Hall Meetings, is as follows:

Ongoing, public and private strategic improvements in infrastructure and services, in addition to transportation improvements that will ensure access to high quality water and sewer systems, and to state-of-the-art technology infrastructure such as cable and high speed internet, sanitary/solid waste, litter control and animal control.

## **OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

### **Objectives**

- Coordination of all infrastructure, including, private services and utilities
- Adequate infrastructure to support economic development consistent with the Master Plan framework
- Support for cost effective and efficient infrastructure and services consistent with master plan framework including land use, transportation and economic development, to serve the needs of the unincorporated parts of the county
- Countywide access to water and sanitary sewer consistent with the framework
- Support for safe, sanitary cost-effective countywide solid waste management
- Compliance of infrastructure development with environmental policies and regulatory requirements

### **Policies and Strategies**

#### *Ongoing*

- In general, invest in infrastructure that will encourage development densities consistent with land use framework
- Promote the continued expansion of water and sewer systems by current authorities consistent with the Master Plan framework
- Promote continued cooperation to ensure private/market based electrical, gas and telecommunications in all parts of the county consistent with master plan and land use framework

#### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Specifically support investment in the high density corridors, specifically US Highway-280 corridor, southeast towards Phenix City, consistent with the framework and design/development guidelines
2. Establish a county liaison with water and sewer authorities for regular communications and coordination, especially in support of economic development consistent with the Conservation and Development Framework

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Consider support of centralized "regional" systems and interconnections for water and sewer consistent with the framework, versus decentralized

#### *Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Support the expansion or development, as needed, of the Salem Waste Disposal Center to maintain a 30 year capacity

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION ELEMENT**

### **CURRENT COUNTY STRUCTURE**

In the State of Alabama, a county is the legal subdivision responsible for the principal governmental functions such as law enforcement; tax assessment; administration of decedent's estates and probate matters; maintenance of real and personal property title records; construction and maintenance of public roads and bridges; and maintenance of the county courthouse, which provides office space for various county officials and departments.

#### **Probate Judge**

The Probate Judge in Lee County is a countywide elected representative who is responsible for the administration of the Probate Court, the licensing office, and the public records office. In addition, the Probate Judge serves as the Chairman of the Lee County Commission. The Probate Judge is also the Chief Elections Official of the county, and serves along with the Sheriff and the Circuit Clerk as the official Appointing and Canvassing Board for all county, state and federal elections. Additionally, the Probate Judge serves on other quasi-governmental boards, including the Lee-Russell Council of Governments and the Auburn-Opelika Convention and Visitors Bureau.

#### **County Commission**

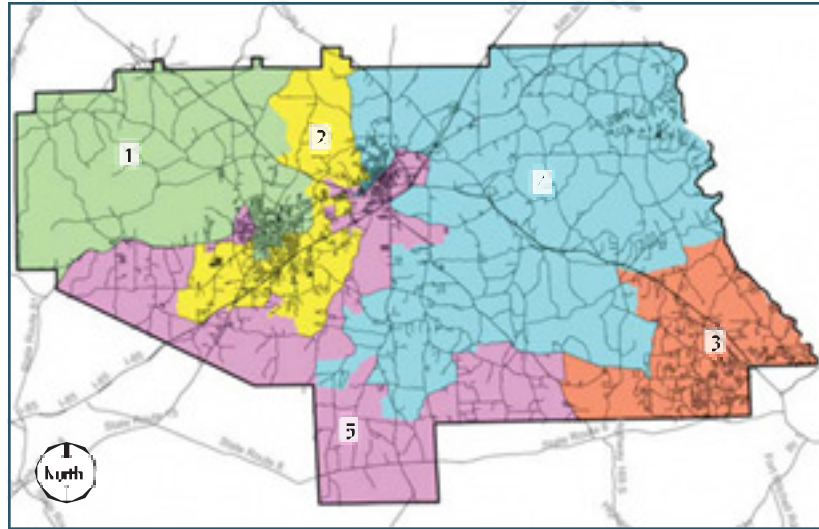
Lee County is governed by a six-member County Commission, composed of a Chairman, the Probate Judge, and five Commissioners. The five Commissioners are elected from single-member districts, as seen in Figure 3.20, for four-year terms. Each Commissioner must be a registered voter and live within the district they represent. Election cycles are set so that all commissioners are not all elected at the same time, three commissioners are elected in one election cycle, and the remaining two members are elected in the next election cycle two years later, so that the terms are staggered for continuity.

The County Commission employs a County Administrator, who serves as its chief administrative officer. It is the responsibility of the County Administrator to carry out the policies and directives of the Commission, and for the development and management of the County's annual operating budget. The Administrator serves as the budgetary agent for all county offices. The County Administrator is also responsible for the supervision and management of various department heads, and for ensuring that all agreements, leases and other contractual obligations of the Commission are properly performed. The County Administrator works with Lee County Commissioners and other elected county officials to facilitate the delivery of quality and effective services to the citizens of Lee County.

#### **Lee County Planning Commission**

The Lee County Planning Commission is appointed by the County Commission per legislation authorizing the creation of the Planning Commission, providing for approval of a comprehensive or master plan, adoption of subdivision regulations and consideration of other regulations, subject to referendum by the county beats. The authority of the Planning Commission and County Commission applies to the unincorporated territory of the county, unless a municipality chooses to come under the county planning commission. Subdivision regulations have been the primarily development regulations adopted for Lee County under its planning authority to date.





**FIGURE 3.20 - COUNTY COMMISSION DISTRICTS**

This map shows the five county commission districts within Lee County..

**Municipalities**

The following are municipalities within Lee County:

- Auburn
- Loachapoka
- Notasulga (partial)
- Opelika
- Phenix City (partial)
- Smiths Station
- Waverly (partial)

**Unincorporated Communities**

The following are unincorporated communities within Lee County:

- Beaugard
- Beulah
- Gold Hill
- Marvyn
- Roxana
- Salem

**OTHER PLANNING JURISDICTIONS**

Municipalities in Lee County have planning and zoning authority within their municipal boundaries and out to their police jurisdiction. The following municipalities carry out various planning functions, including planning, zoning and subdivision regulations:

**Auburn**

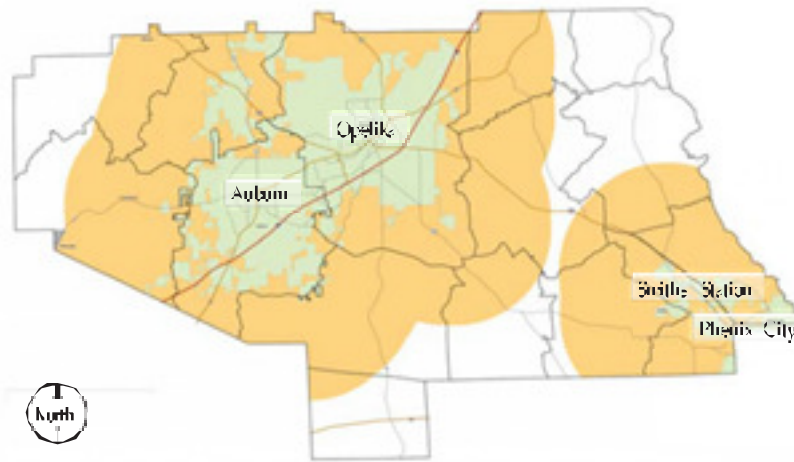
Auburn is currently updating their Comprehensive Plan and enforces zoning and subdivision regulations.

**Opelika**

Opelika is currently updating their Comprehensive Plan and enforces zoning and subdivision regulations.

**Phenix City**

Phenix City has adopted a Comprehensive Plan.



**FIGURE 3.21 - PLANNING JURISDICTIONS**

Municipalities within Lee County shown with their five mile police jurisdictions.

### **Smiths Station**

Smiths Station is currently updating their Comprehensive Community Master Plan and enforces zoning and subdivision regulations.

### **Notasulga**

Notasulga has adopted a Comprehensive Plan and enforces zoning and subdivision regulations.

### **OTHER PLANNING AUTHORITIES**

Lee County is part of the Lee-Russell Council of Governments, which provides for regional planning, intergovernmental coordination of certain planning functions, transportation and transit planning and services, grant and economic development assistance, senior services and other various planning functions.

Although there is cooperation at many levels, there is a major need for intergovernmental coordination in planning and infrastructure planning. Utility boards and authorities have an independence and dependent relationship with municipalities and the county, resulting in great fragmentation. Planning commission, while cooperative, have limited formal relationships with each other and are subject to City Council and County Commission priorities, which often inhibit coordination, although, there is a degree of coordination at the staff and informal levels.

Other special purpose districts such as the MPO have specific functional roles in intergovernmental coordination.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION GOAL**

The Intergovernmental Coordination Goal, as developed during the Town Hall Meetings, is as follows:

Local jurisdictions working cooperatively to plan for the future, ensure the wise use of resources, and engage community members in collaborative decision-making.

## **OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

### **Objectives**

- Work with others to ensure ongoing government, citizens and business coordination and communication
- Promote land preservation and development coordination between the unincorporated and incorporated parts of the county
- Promote transportation and infrastructure coordination to ensure cost effective maintenance and development
- Promote the cooperation and coordination of economic development to achieve maximum regional and local impact
- Promote services and facilities to reduce duplication of services within the county and improve efficiency in services

### **Policies and Strategies**

#### *Ongoing*

- Actively coordinate with and seek cooperation of Lee County delegation to the legislature, as well as federal representation, for improvements in county services, funding and development, consistent with the Conservation and Development Framework
- Actively participate in Lee Russell Council of Governments, Auburn-Opelika MPO, RPO and the Columbus-Phenix City MPO, including regional transportation and economic development planning
- Consider an elected officials roundtable as a means of sharing common concerns and opportunities, to include county, city, legislative and other interests

#### *Short Term (0-5 years)*

1. Explore increased consolidation of services and facilities within Lee County, including all municipalities, utilities, and service authorities to reduce duplication and improve service
2. Incorporate Lee County economic development goals into Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and other regional initiatives consistent with the *Master Plan Conservation and Development Framework*
3. Create and utilize a liaison between water and sewer authorities for coordination on future needs and facilities as well as consistent with the framework

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

1. Formalize ongoing county-wide citizen, business and government participation in ongoing plan implementation and updates
2. Formalize a regular forum or technical coordinating task force with all jurisdictions to coordinate long term land use and planning issues

*Long-Term (10 or more years)*

1. Consider a consolidated form of government within Lee County

*In areas where zoning has been adopted*

1. Coordinate zoning and subdivision regulations and approvals to ensure consistency between city and county regulations as well as individual zoning and subdivision cases

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## **APPENDIX**

Appendix A: Key Terms and Concepts. ....	4-2
Appendix B: Transportation related Technical Materials and Sources .....	4-3
Appendix C: Summary of Stakeholder Interviews for Economic Development.....	4-42
Appendix D: Overall Ranking of Economic Development Strategies .....	4-47
Appendix E: Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) model.....	4-50



## **APPENDIX A: KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS**

### **ALDOT**

Alabama Department of Transportation.

### **BRAC**

BRAC is the commonly used acronym for the formal name of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

### **Goal**

A projected statement which can be achieved through action or implementation. Goals are defined for each of the Plan Elements and are written to be the guide for development of objectives, policies, recommendations, etc.

### **LEED**

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

### **L RTP**

The purpose of an Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is to coordinate planning, programming and budgeting for transportation improvements and services within a defined metropolitan area. Lee County has two different metropolitan areas governed by the Auburn-Opelika MPO and the Columbus-Phenix City MPO.

### **Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

A metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities within an urbanized area containing a population of 50,000 or greater.

### **Municipality**

An organization either incorporated under the general laws of Alabama or by a special act of the legislature exercising corporate powers and functions.

### **Police Jurisdiction**

The area, within a five-mile buffer, outside the corporate limits of a municipality.

### **Principle**

A statement of intent that is used as a guide, or baseline, in the development of more specific goals, objectives, policies, recommendations, etc. It is meant to be an overall statement that can be applicable in several different circumstances.

### **TAZ**

A traffic analysis zone (TAZ) is a special area delineated by state and/or local transportation officials for tabulating traffic-related data.

### **Unincorporated Community**

A location or loose organization of an area that is recognized by a common name that is not part of a municipality.

## APPENDIX B: TRANSPORTATION RELATED TECHNICAL MATERIALS AND SOURCES

### Introduction and Background

#### Study Area

Lee County encompasses a total land area of approximately 609 square miles in east central Alabama near the Alabama-Georgia state line. According to the 2000 Census, Lee County's population of 115,092 ranked it 8th in Alabama; its 32 percent growth rate placed it as the state's 4th fastest growing county. Opelika, the county seat, is located approximately 60 miles northeast of Montgomery. The adjacent city of Auburn is the largest city in Lee County with a 2007 population of 54,348. Five incorporated cities—Auburn, Notasulga, Opelika, Phenix City and Smiths Station—and the towns of Loachapoka and Waverly are located completely or partially in Lee County. Lee's unincorporated communities include Beauregard, Beulah, Gold Hill (Gold Ridge), Marvyn, Roxana and Salem. Interstate 85 bisects the county, connecting it with Montgomery 60 miles to the southwest and Atlanta 100 miles to the northeast. Figure 4.1 identifies the study area.



FIGURE 4.1 - STUDY AREA

The grey areas on the map indicate the US Census designated "Large Urban" areas in Lee County. In addition, much of the central part of the county extending out from I-85 and including the cities of Auburn and Opelika is within the Auburn-Opelika Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boundary. Similarly, the Smiths Station area and US 280 corridor within the southeastern portion of Lee County are part of the Columbus-Phenix City MPO. Improvements within these boundaries are programmed in concert between the MPO, Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), and local jurisdiction.

The focus area for transportation considerations and recommendations in the Lee County Master Plan includes the unincorporated areas of Lee County, within the Lee-Russell Rural Planning Organization (RPO) (outside the green areas). Particular concern in the Master Plan was placed on connectivity, including within unincorporated areas as well as from unincorporated areas into urban areas. Improvements within these areas (outside the urban boundaries) are programmed by ALDOT in cooperation with the county. Transportation improvements specifically addressing needs within the MPO boundaries are included in the respective MPO long range transportation plans (LRTPs). However,

because travel demand is dependent on attractor destinations and associated travel paths and patterns as opposed to planning boundaries, consideration was given to travel demands and resulting needs in these areas, particularly where they serve as feeders for travel demand and needs within the study focus area.

**Transportation Goals and Performance Measures**

Transportation goals serve as a structured target for evaluating conditions and deciding on appropriate recommendations. It is important that the goals have continuity with and are complementary to other related plans; therefore, the goals from the Auburn-Opelika MPO L RTPs were reviewed. The transportation goals drafted for the *Lee County Master Plan* state:

Transportation that is safe and efficient for all users, with roads that are regularly repaired and improved, with enhanced signage and lighting, and infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

Performance measures are indicators of system operations and an important means of assessing how well the transportation system functions relative to specific goals. Measures can be quantitative or qualitative. A number of performance measures are used to evaluate the roadway system in order to identify facilities in potential need of improvement. These performance measures relate to congestion, safety and system preservation, as well as more qualitative analysis. The performance measures and associated factors are shown in Table 4.1.

**TABLE 4.1 – PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

<b>Performance Measures</b>	<b>Factors</b>
Congestion	Volume to capacity (v/c) ratio and Level of Service (LOS)
Safety	Vehicular crashes on road segments and at intersections
System Preservation	Bridge condition Pavement condition
Qualitative Deficiencies	Needs identified by stakeholder and public input

**Existing Conditions and Needs Assessment**

**Transportation Issues and Opportunities**

The following transportation issues were raised during discussions with County staff and during the initial round of public workshops:

*Issues*

- Traffic congestion and speeding
- Intersection signalization and signage
- Safety, particularly around schools
- Truck traffic
- Roadway design (narrow lane width, minimal shoulder, no passing lanes)
- Roadway lighting (for vehicles as well as pedestrians)
- Poor road surfaces and markings
- Bridges

- Minimal availability of transit
- Few sidewalks or bicycle lanes/paths

### **Opportunities**

The opportunities identified below appeared as recurring themes during the initial round of public outreach:

- Improve road surfaces
- Improve road signage
- Improve road lighting
- Provide alternative means of transportation, including transit
- Provide facilities for bicycle and pedestrian mobility
- Improve traffic issues (congestion, speed)

### **Daily Commute Patterns**

Examination of the commute patterns of county residents and employees enables a better understanding of the demands placed upon the transportation system. By identifying certain corridors as crucial to existing and future travel demand, improvement projects and necessary implementation funding can be targeted to those areas, in turn providing the greatest improvements to overall county-wide mobility. In combination with other data sources, journey to work data gathered by the US Census is used to confirm findings indicative of key destinations and transportation corridors within the county.

The following tables provide county commuting patterns according to US Census year 2000 journey to work data. Table 4.2 identifies the manner of commute for Lee County residents. Not surprisingly, the data indicates the Lee County residents overwhelmingly drive alone to work.

**TABLE 4.2 - MANNER OF COMMUTE FOR LEE COUNTY RESIDENTS**

<b>Workers Age 18 and Over</b>	51,460
<b>Drive Alone</b>	84.3%
<b>Carpool</b>	10.7%
<b>Public Transit</b>	0.5%
<b>Walk</b>	1.8%
<b>Other</b>	0.9%
<b>Work at Home</b>	1.8%

The county of employment for Lee residents is shown in Table 4.3. In 2000, a majority of the county's residents, 68.2 percent, worked within the county. The top three destinations for Lee residents commuting outside the county to work were Muscogee (GA), Russell, and Chambers counties.

TABLE 4.3 – LOCATION OF WORK FOR LEE COUNTY RESIDENTS

County of Work	2000	
	Number	Percent
Lee County, AL	35,549	68.2%
Muscogee County, GA	7,597	14.6%
Russell County, AL	2,682	5.2%
Chambers County, AL	1,536	2.9%
Troup County, GA	790	1.5%
Chattahoochee County, GA	668	1.3%
Montgomery County, AL	632	1.2%
Other	2,665	5.1%
Total	52,119	100.0%

Table 4.4 shows commuters traveling into Lee County in 2000. Over 81 percent of Lee workers reside in the county. The top four counties of origin for workers commuting into Lee County were Chambers, Macon, Tallapoosa, and Russell counties.

TABLE 4.4 – LOCATION OF RESIDENCE FOR LEE COUNTY WORKERS

County of Residence	2000	
	Number	Percent
Lee County, AL	35,549	81.4%
Chambers County, AL	1,907	4.3%
Macon County, AL	1,789	4.1%
Tallapoosa County, AL	1,339	3.1%
Russell County, AL	1,048	2.4%
Muscogee County, GA	514	1.2%
Montgomery County, AL	213	0.5%
Elmore County, AL	170	0.4%
Troup County, GA	107	0.2%
Other	1,030	2.4%
Total	43,666	100.0%

It should be noted that the commute characteristics identified previously apply to Lee County commuters as a whole. Conversations with stakeholders and County staff indicate that commutes originating in the unincorporated areas of Lee County are likely to vary in terms of destination according to labor market draw. For example, residents within the portion of the county surrounding Smiths Station are more likely to be drawn to employment opportunities within Muscogee County. Similarly, it would be expected that those residents living south and west of the City of Auburn would represent a larger share of the commuters to the greater Montgomery area.

**Roadway Assessment**

Lee County has a number of major highways, many of which radiate out from the spine formed by I-85 as it crosses the county from southwest to northeast. US 280/US 431 enters the county from Phenix City in the southeast traveling northwest to I-85, where the two routes diverge to continue north (US 431) and northwest (US 280). US 29 bisects the county along an alignment slightly skewed to the north or south of I-85, and provides the predominant travel route connecting the central parts of Auburn and Opelika. South from I-85, State Route 51 heads directly south from

Opelika into Russell County while SR 169 travels southeasterly between SR 51 and US 280/431. On the north side of I-85, SR 147 travels north from Auburn into Chambers County while SR 14 heads directly west from Auburn through Loachapoka to Notasulga. SR 267 bypasses central Auburn on the west side. Numerous Lee County Roads provide important connectivity between these major routes, particularly providing for east-west cross-county travel.

### *Roadway Characteristics*

Full understanding of transportation needs necessitates development of a thorough baseline description of the existing system to provide the standard against which future scenarios can be assessed. Lee County has a diverse roadway network for which data from local, state and federal sources was collected. Required data included descriptive information such as roadway functional classification and type and number of lanes, as well as performance data such as usage (average daily traffic), crash history and condition. Assessment of the roadway system utilized a variety of analysis tools.

### *Roadway Inventory*

A representative field inventory of roadway characteristics and conditions was conducted as part of the roadway analysis. The inventory's emphasis was placed on County and State routes that provide cross-county connectivity, as well as those that serve schools and other community facilities. In addition to evaluating roadway characteristics such as number of lanes, lane/shoulder width and general traffic operations, surrounding land use was also considered.

### *Roadway System and Mileage*

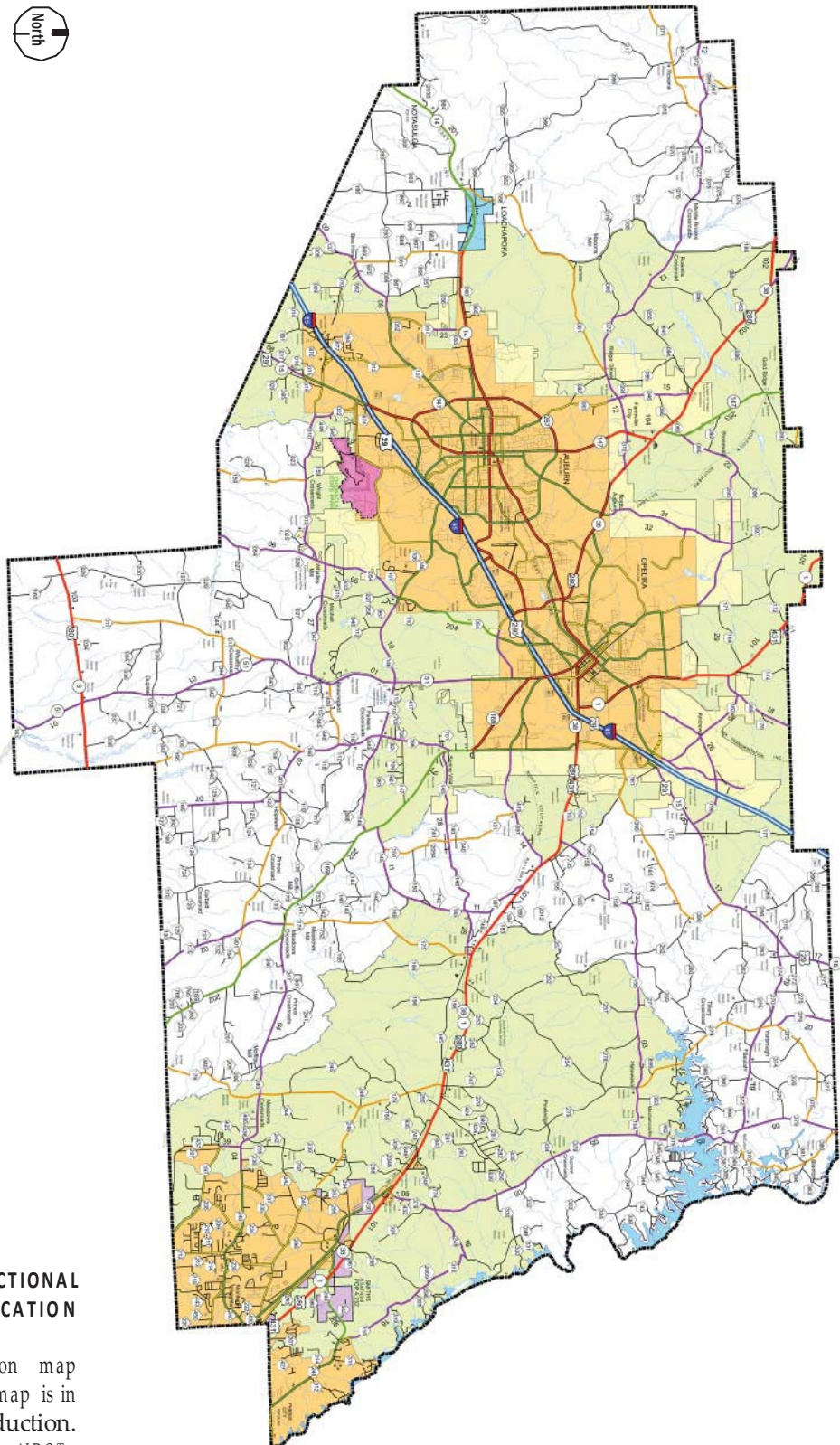
The State system in Lee County (those roadways maintained by the State) consists of a total of 138 miles and includes SR 1 (US 431), SR 8 (US 80), SR 14, SR 15 (US 29), SR 38 (US 280), SR 51, SR 147, SR 604, and I-85. Of the other estimated 1,580 miles, the County is responsible for maintaining 848 miles, with the remainder predominantly the responsibility of municipalities. As of October 2009, approximately 665 of the 848 miles of County maintained roadways were paved road and 183 miles dirt road.

### *Functional Classification*

Classifying the roadway system by how each roadway functions allows for analysis and evaluation of the roadway's effectiveness within the system. Roadways are described by the federal functional classification system, which defines a roadway based on its accessibility and mobility. For the roadway system, accessibility refers to a facility's connections to surrounding destinations, while mobility refers to the movement of through traffic with neither origins nor destinations in the immediate area. On one end of the spectrum are expressways and interstates, which provide the greatest mobility but limited accessibility. On the other end are local roads that provide the greatest accessibility but restrict rapid through movement. Functional classification indicates a facility's relative importance within the roadway network, and may assist in prioritizing projects or allocating limited funding. Lee County's roadway system according to major functional classification categories is described below and illustrated in Figure 4.2.

- *Interstates and expressways* provide the greatest mobility because they permit high-speed movement and access is generally limited to intersections with the network at defined interchanges. These roads are designed for interstate and inter-county travel. The only interstate facility in Lee, I-85 stretches 22 miles and has 7 interchanges in the county. For 2007, the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) on I-85 ranged from a low of 27,590 vehicles per day (vpd) at the northernmost point before entering Chambers County to a high of 45,980 vpd between SR 51 and Gateway Drive. The average AADT along I-85 in Lee County was 35,750 vehicles per day (VPD).
- *Arterial roadways* carry large volumes of traffic at moderate speeds and connect activity centers. They are continuous routes that form the backbone of the street network, and are primarily oriented towards community level vehicle travel, connecting town centers, corridors, main streets and neighborhoods. Arterials can be classified





**FIGURE 4.2 - FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION**

Functional Classification map for Lee County. A final map is in production.  
Source: ALDOT



as either urban or rural and further broken down into principal and minor arterials. Of the two, principal arterials provide more mobility and perform somewhat like an interstate. Minor arterials have slightly less mobility and connect principal arterials to collectors. Lee County's arterial system includes urban and rural principal and minor arterials, with the urban arterials located within MPO boundaries. Rural principal arterials include US 80, US 280 and US 431; rural minor arterials include SR 14 and SR 169. Lee County has approximately 90 miles of roadway on the State system classified as arterials. Of these roadways, US 280/431 south of I-85 carries the largest volumes, with year 2007 AADTs in excess of 20,000 vpd in the Smiths Station area.

- *Collector streets* accumulate traffic from local streets in residential and commercial areas and distribute it to the arterial system at low to moderate speeds. In addition to urban collectors, Lee County's rural collectors are divided into major and minor. SR 51 and US 29 are categorized as rural major collectors (outside the urban area), as are numerous County Roads including Lee Road 270, 379, 240, 146, 54, 72. Rural minor collectors include Lee Road 390, 279, 179, 175, 401, 166, 11 and 81. SR 51, with a length of approximately 16 miles, and approximately 9 miles of US 29 are the only roadways on the State system in Lee County classified as collectors. The year 2007 AADT along SR 51 progressively decreased from a high of 8,690 vpd on its northern end near I-85 to 1,070 vpd at the southern end just north of the Russell County line. With the exception of the portion of US 29 immediately south of I-85 on the western end of the county, which had a 2007 AADT of 11,770, AADT along US 29 averages 4,700 vpd.
- *Local streets* make up the lion's share of the roadway network. They feed the collector system, providing access to adjacent properties and carrying relatively low traffic volumes at low speeds. Local streets are often found in neighborhoods, near non-residential land uses that do not depend on a high volume of walk-in business, and rural areas.

### Number of Lanes

The majority of Lee County roadways outside MPO boundaries are two lanes. According to the Statewide Travel Demand Model, the only exceptions are I-85, US 280/431 southeast of Opelika, and US 280 northwest of Auburn.

### Capacity and Level of Service Measures

The level of system performance varies by type of transportation facility, geographic location, time of day and other characteristics. Each roadway in the network has a theoretical capacity based on its functional classification and characteristics. When roadways are operating in free-flow conditions, capacity constraints are not apparent. However, as traffic volumes increase, available capacity is restricted and roadway congestion results. Federal regulations define traffic congestion as the level at which system performance is no longer acceptable due to congestion.

Capacity needs are identified using measures such as daily volume to capacity (v/c) ratio, which is an indicator of the level of service (LOS) that can be expected on a specific roadway. A v/c ratio less than 0.75 is an acceptable LOS in a rural environment, indicating that the road can handle additional volume and remain within capacity. A v/c ratio over 0.75 indicates the additional traffic volume will result in a less than acceptable LOS. A v/c ratio greater than 1.0 indicates that the road's traffic volume exceeds its capacity. The computation and analysis of roadway v/c allows system-wide analysis of the transportation network, thereby providing an approximation of the LOS of roadways or corridors based on information such as lane geometry, observed roadway speed and traffic volumes (AADT).

V/C ratios are linked to LOS to provide an easier way to communicate roadway operations. LOS is a user-based assessment of conditions that gives roadways a letter designation representing the best operating conditions (LOS A) to the worst (LOS F). The 2001 *Highway Capacity Manual* provides the following LOS guidelines:

- LOS A, B and C indicate conditions where traffic can move relatively freely.
- LOS D signifies that vehicle speed and freedom of movement is beginning to decline slightly due to increasing volume.
- LOS E indicates conditions where traffic volumes are at or close to capacity, resulting in serious delays.
- LOS F is the point at which a breakdown in vehicular flow occurs. This condition exists when the demand for space exceeds the capacity of the roadway.

**Existing Roadway Conditions**

The focus of this transportation element is on the roadways that are primary to connectivity within and external to the county, and therefore carry larger volumes of traffic. For those segments most likely to be currently experiencing congestion, information regarding levels of service (LOS) is available in the long range transportation plans (LRTPs) for the two MPO areas. Table 4.5 provides existing (2005) capacity, volume, and level of service (v/c) data from the Statewide Travel Demand Model along several key corridors outside the urban areas.

**TABLE 4.5 - EXISTING CAPACITY, VOLUME AND LEVEL OF SERVICE ALONG KEY NON-URBAN ROADWAY CORRIDORS**

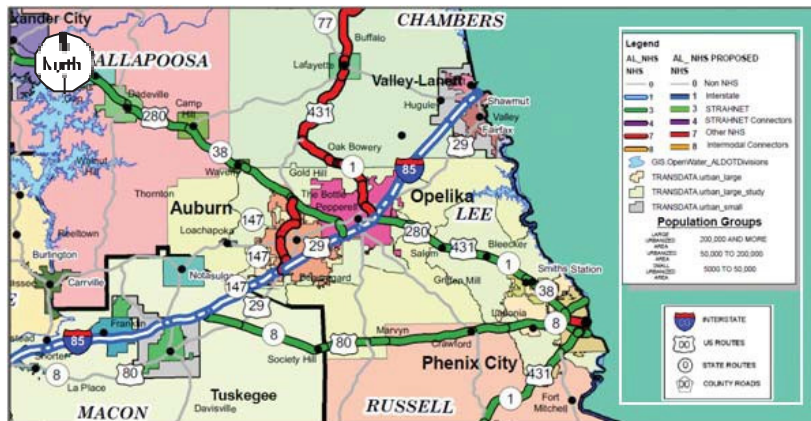
Roadway Corridor	Capacity	2005 Volume*	2005 V/C Ratio
US 431 north of Opelika	23,200	13,300	0.57
US 29 northeast of I-85	17,800	1,200	0.07
US 280/431 between MPO boundaries	36,900	40,600	1.10
SR 169 west of Smiths Station	23,200	14,700	0.63
SR 51 south of Beauregard	17,800	400	0.02
US 80	23,200	23,500	1.01
SR 14 near Loachapoka	23,200	900	0.04

\*Volumes are rounded to the nearest hundredth.

**Truck Traffic**

A region’s economic vitality depends on its ability to safely and efficiently move goods through and within its borders, and truck is the most common mode of freight transport for delivery to businesses and manufacturers. Truck traffic is an important consideration for traffic patterns and countywide mobility, and a major factor in the efficiency of the county’s transportation system. In addition to occupying the physical space of more than two passenger vehicles, these large vehicles have operational characteristics that impact the flow of traffic. Roadways must be specially designed for truck traffic, including equipping them with longer sight distances and wider turning radii. Commercial vehicles operate at slower speeds and take longer to accelerate, which can impede the flow of surrounding traffic. Heavy vehicles can disrupt the flow of traffic, create hazards for pedestrians, and cause noise pollution in downtown areas.

The National Highway System (NHS) is a network of interlinking major highways important to the nation’s economy, defense and mobility, and of particular relevance to trucking. NHS facilities in Lee County, shown in Figure 4.3, include



**FIGURE 4.3 - NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM**

Lee County excerpt.

Source: Alabama National Highway System Statewide, ALDOT, Plot Date February 23, 2009

Interstate, STRAHNET (Strategic Highway Network), and other federal and state highways. I-85 is the only Interstate facility in Lee County. Designed for the rapid mobilization and deployment of the armed forces, STRAHNET roadways connect military bases to the Interstate highway network. STRAHNET routes in Lee County consist of US 231 and US 80. Other federal and state highways in Lee County on the NHS are US 431 and SR 147 between I-85 and US 280.

In addition to traditional goods movement and delivery, Lee County experiences significant truck traffic related to quarries, timber and the land fill. Examples include quarry traffic west of Loachapoka, west of US 29 to the south of I-85, and between SR 51 and SR 169 where they diverge when traveling south from I-85, as well as along Lee Roads 158 and 183 near the Salem Landfill.

The percentage of total traffic attributed to commercial vehicles varies widely by location within the county. Not surprisingly, ALDOT count locations along I-85 record 24-hour commercial truck traffic (TADT) levels ranging between 20 and 30 percent of total traffic. Similarly, truck traffic accounts for approximately one-fourth (24 percent) of all traffic along the short segment of US 80 that crosses in the very south of the county. While some locations along the other US and State routes crossing the county experience 24-hour truck traffic of more than 10 percent, many register commercial traffic in the range of 2 to 7 percent. Increased truck volumes on I-85, US 280/431, and US 431 north of I-85 are likely to be seen in the coming years due to the new Kia plant and associated activity along I-85 in Alabama and Georgia, as well as increased military activity in the Columbus area.

### **Safety**

Accidents occurring on Alabama roads have increased with growth in population and traffic. From 1990 to 2007, Alabama's population increased by 15 percent, from 4 million to 4.6 million. During this time, vehicle travel increased even more aggressively. Compared to 1990, annual vehicle travel in the state increased by 45 percent to 61 billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 2007. By 2025, Alabama's population is expected to increase by 15 percent; VMT is expected to increase by 45 percent during the same period. Lee County mirrors the degree of population and travel growth experienced by the state. From 1990 to 2007, the US Census reports that population increased from 87,146 to 130,516, a 50 percent increase. Vehicle miles of travel in the county also increased. This growth trend is expected to continue.

Traffic accidents in the state and county are of concern. TRIP (The Road Information Program), a Washington, DC based research group, reports that on average 1,106 people were killed each year in motor vehicle accidents in Alabama from 2002 through 2006. Alabama’s traffic fatality rate was 2.0 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2006 (the latest year for which data is available). This rate is 42 percent higher than the national traffic fatality rate of 1.41 and the ninth highest in the nation. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported that in 2007 most crashes (72 percent) in Lee County occurred in urban areas, but most fatalities (68 percent) occurred in rural areas. Table 4.6 shows accident statistics for 2006 and 2007 in urban and rural parts of Lee County.

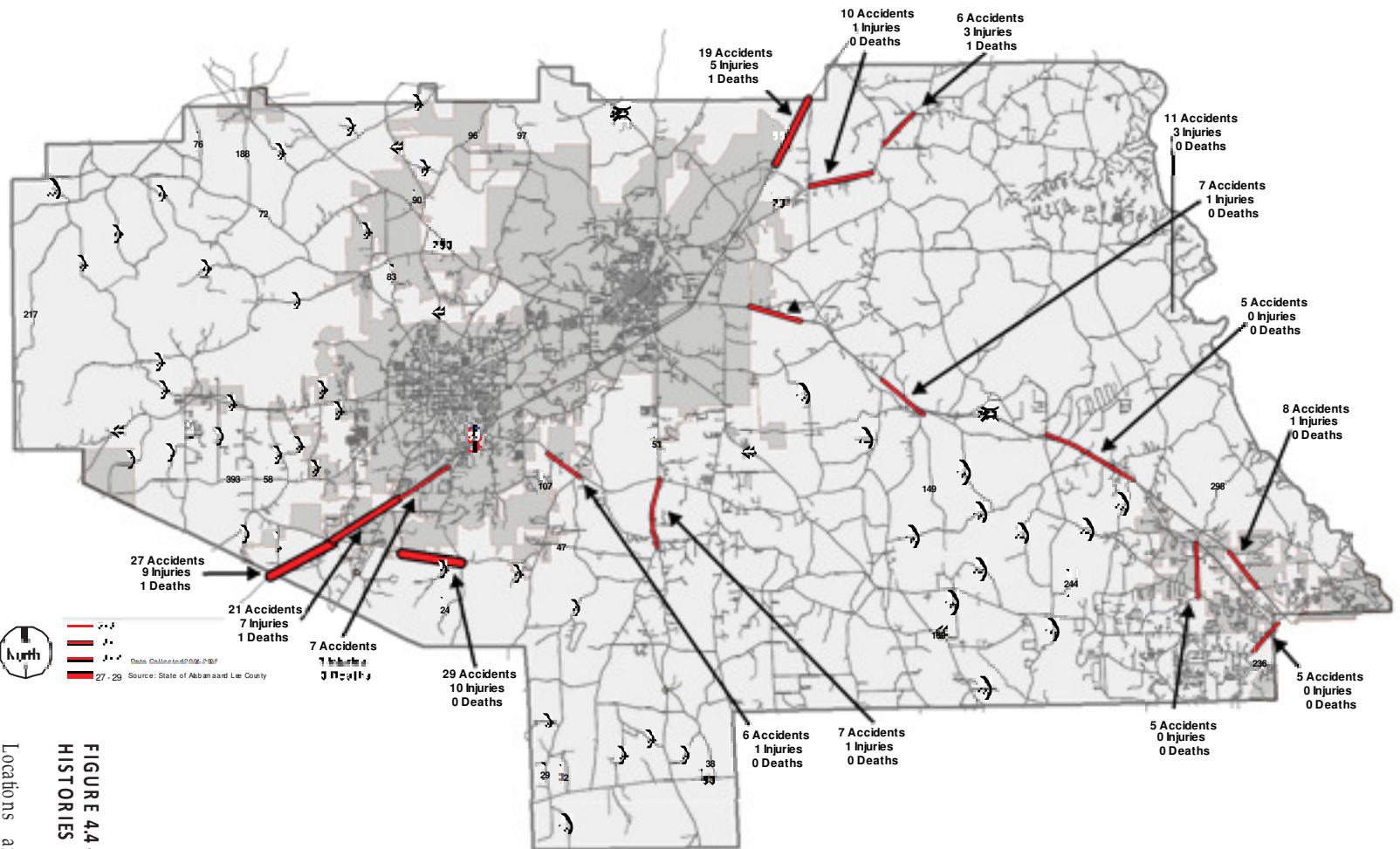
**TABLE 4.6 – LEE COUNTY ACCIDENTS, 2006 AND 2007**

Lee County	2006			2007		
	Total Crashes	Total Injuries	Total Fatalities	Total Crashes	Total Injuries	Total Fatalities
Incorporated Areas	2,940	687	17	2,964	680	8
Rural Areas	850	369	6	944	336	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,790</b>	<b>1,056</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>3,908</b>	<b>1,016</b>	<b>21</b>

The 2007 data shows that the majority of accidents (75 percent) occurred in the incorporated areas of Lee County while approximately 62 percent of the fatalities occurred in rural parts. The 2006 data is similar, with 77 percent of the accidents occurring in the incorporated areas but only 26 percent of the fatalities.

The State of Alabama and Lee County maintain records of road operations including accidents. Roads with ten or more accidents, intersections with five or more accidents, and highway segments with five or more accidents were studied. The data included annual accident occurrences from 2004 to 2008. Figure 4.4 identifies the locations with high accident histories and fatal accidents.

Table 4.7 details the number of accidents, injuries and fatalities on rural roads in Lee County from 2004 through 2008. In total, there were 2,886 accidents in rural parts of county between 2004 and 2008, with approximately 42 percent occurring on County roads. County roads also experienced 37 percent of the injuries and 27 percent of the fatalities for that period. In considering this information, it is important to keep in mind that a majority of vehicle miles traveled are on State roads, with County roads typically functioning as collectors that connect to State roads.



**FIGURE 4.4 - HIGH ACCIDENT HISTORIES AND FATAL ACCIDENTS**

Locations are based on data from 2004 through 2008.

**TABLE 4.7 – LEE COUNTY RURAL ROAD ACCIDENTS, 2004 TO 2008**

Lee County Rural Roads	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
<i>Accidents Total</i>	639	520	534	624	569	2,886
State Roads	385	282	343	365	307	1,682
County Roads	254	238	191	259	262	1,204
<i>Injuries Total</i>	182	144	152	161	123	762
State Roads	117	95	101	98	69	480
County Roads	65	49	51	63	54	282
<i>Fatalities Total</i>	11	7	4	7	11	40
State Roads	9	6	1	5	8	29
County Roads	2	1	3	2	3	11

Source: Alabama Department of Transportation

Table 4.8 identifies the roads that had the most occurrences of crashes over the five-year period from 2004 to 2008.

**TABLE 4.8 – LEE COUNTY ACCIDENT OCCURRENCES, 2004 TO 2008**

Number of Accidents	State Roads		County Roads	
	200 or more	US 280 (SR 38)	I-85	None
100 to 199	SR 147 US 29 (SR 15)	SR 169 SR 51	CR 240 CR 246	CR 379
40 to 99	SR 14	US 80 (SR 8)	CR 10 CR 54 CR 71 CR 137 CR 146 CR 166	CR 179 CR 248 CR 270 CR 298 CR 430
Less than 40	None		CR 158 CR 188 CR 197	CR 208 CR 212

Source: Alabama Department of Transportation

There were 16 highway segments that experienced five or more accidents between 2004 and 2008, as identified in Table 4.9. A majority of these segments are located at intersections of County and State roads. Many of the segments are on roads identified in previous accident history tables.



TABLE 4.9 - LEE COUNTY RURAL ROAD HIGHWAY SEGMENTS WITH 5 OR MORE ACCIDENTS, 2004 TO 2008

Highway Segment	Accidents	Injuries	Fatalities
CR 10 between CR 22 and CR 23 south of Auburn	29	10	0
I-85 from CR 10 to the Macon County Line	27	9	1
I-85 from CR 674 to CR 10 South of Auburn	21	7	1
I-85 between the Chambers County line and CR 164	19	5	1
US 280 between CR 152 and CR 153 east of the Opelika City Line	11	3	0
US 29 between CR 390 and CR 177	10	1	0
US 280 between CR 980 and 456	8	1	0
SR 51 between CR 146 and CR 431	7	1	0
SR 38 from CR 737 and CR 158	7	1	0
I-85 from CR 674 to the Auburn City Line	7	1	0
CR 146 between CR 106 and CR 54	6	1	0
SR 15 between CR 270 and CR 830	6	3	1
US 280 between CR 252 and CR 253 east of the Opelika City Line	5	0	0
I-85 from CR 674 and the Macon County Line	5	2	0
CR 298 from CR 430 and CR 296	5	0	0
CR 240 between CR 221 and CR 222 south of Smiths Station	5	0	0

Source: Alabama Department of Transportation

Intersection accidents are included in the analysis to determine current conditions of roads in the non-urbanized portions of Lee County. There were 13 intersections with five or more accidents between 2004 and 2008, which range in number from 5 to 50 crashes. Table 4.10 provides additional detail.



**TABLE 4.10 – LEE COUNTY RURAL ROAD INTERSECTIONS WITH 5 OR MORE ACCIDENTS, 2004 TO 2008**

<b>Intersection</b>	<b>Accidents</b>	<b>Injuries</b>	<b>Fatalities</b>
CR 72 and SR 147	50	11	2
CR 379 and SR 38	48	20	2
SR 147 and SR 280	52	19	0
CR 248 and SR 38	25	9	0
SR 38 and CR 430	13	4	0
US 431 and CR 250	9	2	0
SR 8 and SR 51	8	6	0
SR 38 and CR 298	7	4	0
US 431 and CR 179	6	1	0
CR 10 and CR 137	5	1	0
CR 240 and CR 481	5	1	0
CR 22 and CR 470	5	2	0

*Source: Alabama Department of Transportation*

Lee County has programmed HRRR (High Risk Rural Roads) projects through 2010. These projects will provide safety enhancements including guardrail for bridges, striping and signage for roads and intersections. The projects are expected to improve safety for rural roads, although more will be necessary to address existing needs.

**System Infrastructure Conditions**

**Bridge Condition**

Federal regulations require that bridges be maintained in safe condition before federal transportation funds can be used for other transportation projects. Maintaining the bridge network is important because of the delays created by diversions when bridges are posted or closed. Not only is the movement of goods and people diverted and delayed, but emergency vehicle response time can be increased greatly due to bridge restrictions.

All state and locally owned public bridges are inspected at least every two years as part of ALDOT’s safety inspection program. The bridge sufficiency rating is a score, ranging from 0 to 100, that assesses a bridge’s structural adequacy and safety, serviceability and functional obsolescence, and essentiality for public use. Generally, structural deficiency refers to the inadequacy of the bridge structure, while functional obsolescence is related to the bridge’s insufficient geometric capability to carry traffic, including inadequate deck geometry, underclearance or approach roadway alignment. A functionally obsolete bridge is defined as too narrow to serve the existing volume of traffic, regardless of structural integrity. Each bridge must also be rated for its safe load capacity. If the maximum legal load exceeds the operating load, the bridge must be immediately strengthened, closed or posted.

ALDOT maintains and regularly updates the bridge inventory, with sufficiency ratings updated in accordance with FHWA’s National Bridge Inventory (NBI) Coding Guide. The inventory includes 209 bridges in Lee County, of which 112 are maintained by the county and the remainder by the state, municipalities, and a state park. The median sufficiency rating of all 209 bridges was 70.8, with an average sufficiency rating of 68.6. A total of 37 bridges (18 percent) received a sufficiency rating less than 50, potentially signifying a need for near-term replacement. Of the 209 bridges, 26 (12 percent) were found to be structurally deficient and 52 (25 percent) functionally obsolete.

Lee County has historically obligated \$625,000 in annual revenue to fund bridge improvements. Those funds include their historical Federal Aid allotment of \$500,000 plus \$125,000 of local matching funds (20%).

As of May 2005, 83 bridges (73 percent) were 25 or more years old, including 15 bridges (13 percent) aged 55 or older. Generally speaking, after a bridge reaches the age of 50 years, some form of rehabilitation or replacement is anticipated.

#### **Pavement Condition**

Resurfacing needs are addressed by the Lee County Highway Department for all County maintained roads, while the State is responsible for resurfacing on federal and state routes. In addition, the County has continued to shoulder the full burden for maintaining roadways within Smiths Station following its incorporation in 2001.

A portion of County maintained roads are "State Graded Roads." As a condition for the prior use of federal funds to improve these facilities, the County is obliged to maintain the State Graded Roads at a satisfactory level. To that end, ALDOT staff grade these roadways in the spring of every year, inventorying the condition of the surface, shoulders, paint/stripping, signage and potholes. Should a State Graded Road receive a failing grade (below 70) for three years in a row, ALDOT has the option to withhold the County's federal funding allotment until the roadway has been returned to an acceptable condition. This federal funding equals approximately \$500,000 annually, which the County uses towards its Federal Aid Bridge Replacement Program.

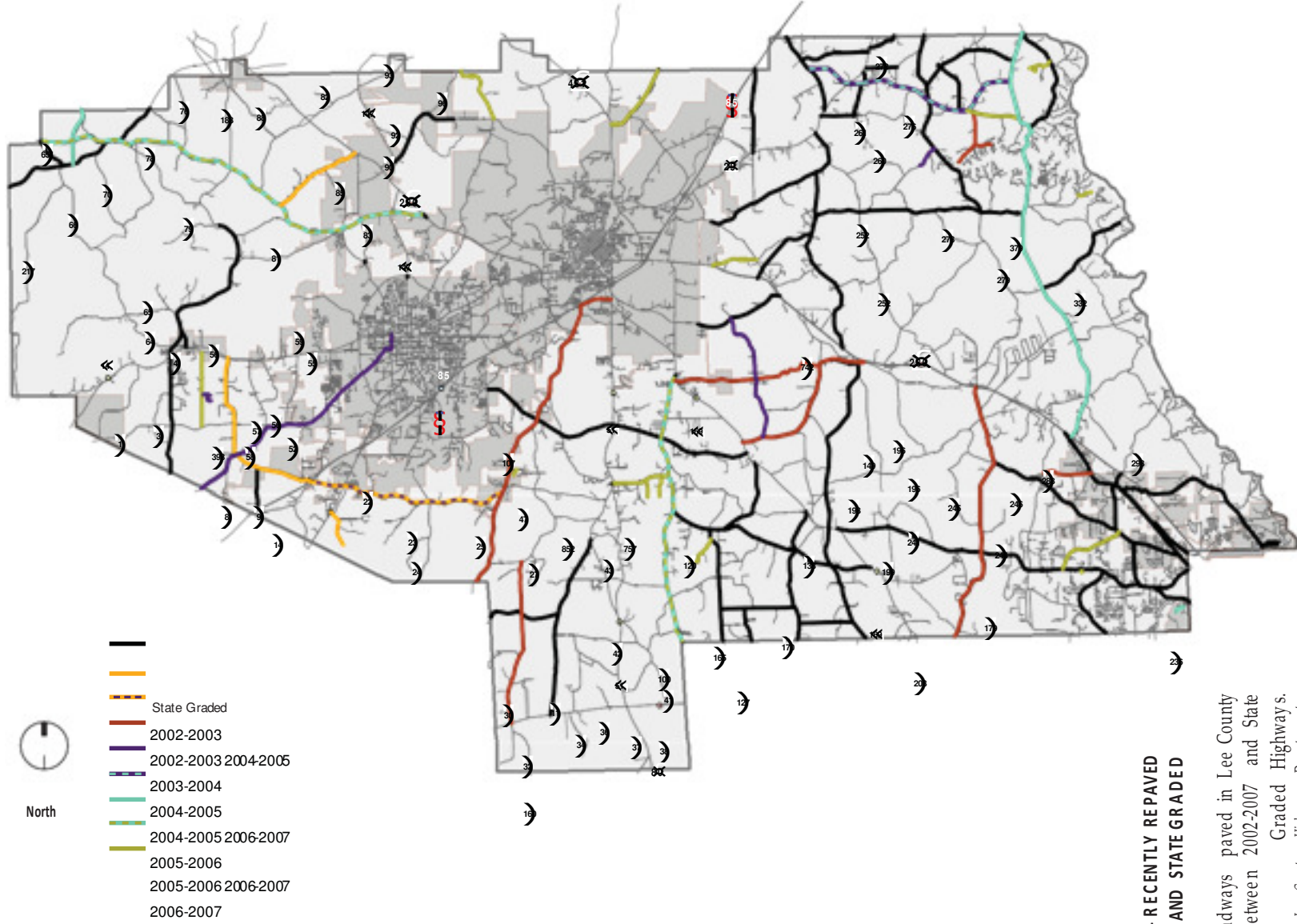
Lee County currently has 260 miles of State Graded Roads, which also constitute the majority of through routes in the county. Due to the significant impact such a funding withholding would have on the County's road and bridge programs, the State Graded Roads receive priority in resurfacing decisions and constitute the majority of resurfacing funding each year. Any roadways which grade low enough to potentially jeopardize funding become the first concern addressed each year, so that to date the County has not lost funding due to lack of improvement on any State Graded Roads. Although sufficient need exists to allocate all resurfacing monies to the State Graded Roads, other County roads do receive funding when their degree of deterioration warrants. Figure 4.5 shows the State Graded Roads and roadways recently (2002-2007) resurfaced by the County.

#### **Unimproved Roadways**

The more rural portions of Lee County have a number of unimproved (dirt) roadways. As of October 2009, Lee County had 183 total miles of dirt road. Commission District 4 had the greatest length of remaining dirt roads with over 95 miles in total, while District 2 had the least with less than 6 miles in total. The County's Road Paving Priority Program aims to pave 40 miles of road every 4 years (program cycle). The 40 miles of paving is allocated by Commission District based on the percentage of dirt road miles within the district as compared to the county total.

#### **Signage**

Lee County is in the process of beginning a signage inventory. The Highway Department currently has the ability to track work order requests to install/replace signage through the County's work order management system. All signage requests—including those for stop signs, school bus stop ahead signs, speed limit and speed zone signs—are received via this work order system. Notification that a stop sign is down or damaged receives priority and action is taken immediately. Requests for new installation of stop signs are reviewed and determined to be warranted by the County Engineer. Reduced speed limits and/or speed zones requests are directed to that district's Commissioner, who may elect to bring it before the Board of Commissioners. Should the Board move to reduce the speed, the appropriate process is followed to ensure its legality and enforceability prior to installation of signage by the Highway Department.



**FIGURE 4.5 - RECENTLY REPAVED AND STATE GRADED**

Roadways repaved in Lee County between 2002-2007 and State Graded Highways.  
Source: Lee County Highway Department

All traffic signal requests require a traffic study, conducted by the County Engineer or outside consultant services as appropriate, prior to approval and installation.

### Public Transportation

Public transit represents an important component of Lee County's transportation resources. The rural transit system, which provides services to all areas of the county using vans, has coordinated operations with urban transit services in Auburn and Opelika, maximizing transferability and connectivity for transit users. Services are provided by LRPT (Lee-Russell Public Transit) as part of a coordinated urban and rural transit operations managed by the Lee Russell County Council of Governments (LRCOG).

### Population Segments with a Propensity for Transit Use

Transit offers access to jobs, medical services, retail, business and other primary destinations. Lee County's transit users share much in common with transit users elsewhere in the state. Many have limited access to personal transportation and are elderly, poor or disabled. Census 2000 figures for Lee County, shown in Table 4.11, indicate a significant number of these individuals, who are the primary market for public transit services, residing in the county.

**TABLE 4.11 – POPULATION SEGMENTS WITH A PROPENSITY FOR TRANSIT USE**

Category	Lee County	Alabama
Total Population	115,092	4,599,030
Adults Aged 65 and Over	8.1%	13.3%
Individuals with Disabilities	16.5%	11.3%
Persons In Poverty	21.8%	16.6%
Households Without Vehicles	6.8%	7.3%

*Note: Individuals may be in more than one category.*

*Source: Census 2000*

### Adults Aged 65 and Over

Transportation and mobility are problematic for senior citizens, especially those who live in small urban and rural areas where public transportation options are limited. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), 20 percent of Americans over the age of 65 do not drive. In 2006, the US Census Bureau estimated there were 10,746 individuals over the age of 65 in Lee County. If 20 percent of these individuals do not drive, that means 2,149 senior citizens in the county are in need of transportation assistance.

Projections from the Alabama State Data Center show the elderly population of Lee County growing to 18,400 by 2020. With Auburn and Opelika increasingly seen as desirable retirement locations, it seems certain that transportation services in the county will have difficulty meeting the additional demands for senior citizen transportation in the future.

### Individuals with Disabilities

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual. For transportation planning purposes, the mere existence of a disability is not as important as the individual's capability to perform life activities, especially those outside the home. The 2000 US Census included several questions about disabilities; however, the category "outside the home disabilities" is generally considered to be the best

indicator of individuals with disabilities who are actually in need of public transportation or paratransit services. The 2000 Census found 6,476 persons in Lee County with "outside of the home disabilities."

Another data source that provides information on disabled populations is the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The SIPP survey addresses limitations in functional activities, activities of daily living, and instrumental activities of daily living. SIPP provides an estimated count of the ADA eligible population. In 2000, the SIPP estimated this population to be 5,703 in Lee County.

#### **Persons and Families in Poverty**

Persons who live below the poverty line experience difficulties maintaining reliable transportation. In Lee County, 16.1 percent of the population lives in poverty.

In May, 2008, the Alabama Department of Human Resources reported that 297 families in the county were receiving financial assistance, 4,416 households received food stamps, and 1,538 Lee County children were receiving or waiting for child care subsidies. Additionally, 156 individuals in the county were qualified to participate in the JOBS program, whose clients receive support to train for, attain, and maintain employment. Support services provided to JOBS clients include transportation to and from work and training classes.

#### **Households Without Vehicles**

The number of vehicles available to a housing unit is an indicator of the need for transportation services. In 2000, 3,104 households in Lee County reported having no car. While this is a relatively low percentage of the households in the county, the higher concentration of these households is located in the southwestern rural area of the county, with less accessibility to health and social services, educational facilities, shopping centers, restaurants and pharmacies.

#### **Labor Force**

According to the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, there were 63,619 employed citizens in Lee County in June 2008, and the unemployment rate was 4.7 percent. Major employers in Lee County include Auburn University, Benteler Automotive, Briggs and Stratton, East Alabama Medical Center, Jo-Ann Stores, Mando America Corporation, Masterbrand Cabinets, and Walmart Distribution Center.

Auburn University allows staff and faculty to use the Tiger Transit system to and from work. There are no other work transportation programs in Lee County at this time. The average commute time in Lee County was 20.6 minutes.

#### **Fuel Prices**

Fuel prices in the Lee County area reached an average high of \$3.97 for a gallon of regular gasoline in July 2008. Nationwide, citizens are spending 4 percent of their after tax income on gasoline, the highest percentage since 1983. High fuel prices have a disproportional affect on households with lower incomes and fixed incomes. Households in rural areas also suffer more from higher gas prices since they must travel further to access services, employment, medical care, and supplies.

In many parts of the country, public transit ridership has increased as gas prices have risen. In Lee County demand-response ridership increased by 19 percent during the summer of 2008.

### *Common Destinations and Origins*

The most popular destinations in Lee County include shopping areas (Walmart, Winn Dixie, Kroger, Colonial Mall, Tiger Town, Midway Plaza), medical facilities (East Alabama Medical Center, Medical Arts Complex, Health Department, Mental Health), local government services (city halls, county courthouse, post offices, libraries), social services (DHR) and higher education institutions (Auburn University, Southern Union Community College). Paratransit riders are most frequently taken to and from work and to doctor's appointments. Work locations vary from rider to rider.

### *Availability of Transportation Services in 2008*

The following highlights transportation services available in Lee County for social services and open to the public.

- Achievement Center of East Alabama is a private non-profit for individuals with mental and physical challenges, which serves five counties in east central Alabama. The Achievement Center has 4 vans in use and 3 older vehicles in reserve to provide transportation to their clients. The Achievement Center operates Monday-Thursday from 8:00 to 4:00. Vans begin picking up clients at 6:00 in the morning to bring them to their facility in Opelika. Clients are then transported home between 4:00 and 6:30 in the evening. The Achievement Center also provides transportation to appointments and shopping during the day. There is no fee for service.
- East Alabama Medical Center operates 5 retirement and assisted living facilities in Auburn. There are 3 vans available to residents in the retirement and assisted living communities, with transportation available from 8:00 to 5:00. Medical trips have priority, although transportation for shopping and recreation is also available. Monthly fees for residents include services such as transportation.
- East Alabama Mental Health is a public not-for-profit organization based in Auburn that serves four counties including Lee and Russell. The organization has a fleet of 72 vehicles, 30 of which are assigned to residential group homes throughout the service area and serve only the residents at the group home. Other vehicles are reserved for central office staff to provide services to individuals living with their families. The remaining vehicles are used to transport clients to and from the mental health facility for non residential substance abuse and day programs. The behaviors of the clientele require additional staff on each trip. East Alabama Mental Health also contracts with public transit and Johnson Express to provide transportation for their clients.
- East Alabama Services for the Elderly (EASE) provides transportation for their clients, who are older adults, low-income Medicaid recipients, or 18 years or older with disabilities and are isolated at home. EASE picks up clients at their homes and transports them to their day treatment facility. One 15 passenger van operates 3 routes in Lee County. The agency can also transport clients from the day treatment facility to medical appointments or shopping. There is no fare for services, but the agency is limited in the number of clients that can be served. The agency clients who need wheelchair accessible vehicles utilize Lee-Russell Public Transit (LRPT).
- House of Restoration Homeless Shelter is a faith-based program located in Russell County. The mission of the House of Restoration is to assist homeless individuals in achieving a healthy, independent, self-reliant life. The shelter transports clients to work, job training, medical and social service appointments, and shopping. House of Restoration has 3 vehicles: one van, one sedan, and a pickup truck. Transportation is available 7 days a week, usually between the hours of 6:00 am and 7:00 pm. There is no fee to clients for this service.
- Johnson Express is a private not-for-profit organization that provides transportation to individuals with medical appointments. Currently, Medicaid and East Alabama Medical Center have agreements with Johnson Express to provide transportation for their clients. Six vehicles provide door to door service. There is a fare for clients who are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.



- Lee-Russell Public Transit (LRPT), operated by Lee-Russell Council of Governments, serves Lee and parts of Russell counties with public transportation services. Currently, LRPT operates 23 buses. Traditional fixed routes operating within the cities of Auburn and Opelika were phased out in 2008 in favor of providing additional demand response curb-to-curb service. The new service is called Dial-A-Ride.
  - The Auburn Opelika Connection Dial-A Ride service is available Monday-Friday from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. This service is available within a 5-mile radius of the Auburn and Opelika City Halls.
  - The Lee Metro Connection Dial-A-Ride service is available in most of western Lee County on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; the eastern portions of Lee County within a 10 mile radius from the Opelika city limits have access to Lee Metro transportation services on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Lee Metro Connection service operates from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.
  - Fares for LRPT are based on distance traveled. Fare cards provide a 25 percent discount for passengers who purchase them, and there are also discounts for senior citizens. LRPT also receives funding to provide Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) services in Lee County. There is no charge to JARC clients for transportation.
  - LRPT fares for service are listed in Table 4.12.

**TABLE 4.12 – LEE-RUSSELL PUBLIC TRANSIT FARES**

<b>Service</b>	<b>0-5 Miles</b>	<b>5-10 Miles</b>	<b>10-15 Miles</b>	<b>15-20 Miles</b>	<b>20+ Miles</b>
Demand Response	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$6.00

- Tiger Transit, operated by Auburn University, serves the students, faculty and staff of the university with 48 buses traveling fixed routes throughout Auburn and the eastern part of the county and on campus; 12 routes are external and 7 routes internal. The service operates from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. Night transit provides limited service on campus and one-way service to off campus destinations until 10:00 pm. Students are assessed for Tiger Transit each semester as a part of their tuition payment. There are no “fares” in addition to the tuition assessment.

**Taxi Services**

- Freedom Cab, based in Phenix City, serves Russell and Lee counties, as well as the Columbus, Georgia area. A private, for-profit company, it operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Tiger Taxi is based in Auburn and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Their fleet consists entirely of 7 passenger vans. Flat rates to destinations such as Birmingham and Atlanta are available. There are also fares based on mileage and the number of passengers.
- I-85 Express provides van shuttle service 5 times each day to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport from the Auburn-Opelika area. A flat rate is charged for the trip.

The importance of public transit for Lee County will continue to become more evident with the growth of population. The transit system’s regional operations provide an opportunity for maximizing access and facilitating travel to work and business related destinations. LRCOG has made a concerted effort to organize and improve the efficiency of the



many different social service and public operations. This will continue to be an important objective for Lee County's transit program.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian**

Most of the existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Lee County are located in the cities of Auburn and Opelika. Both municipalities have made efforts over recent years to review, discuss and implement bicycle and pedestrian facilities within their jurisdictions, resulting in an inventory of approximately 85 miles of existing facilities in these two cities. In conjunction with the local jurisdictions, the MPOs are responsible for bicycle and pedestrian planning within their boundaries. To date, the unincorporated areas have not experienced sufficient demand to warrant extensive facilities; however, increased attention will be required as growth occurs. The lack of adequate pedestrian facilities—sidewalks, crosswalks and refuge areas—within many activity centers, including near schools, countywide is a current concern that needs to be addressed.

An increasingly popular method of adding bicycle and pedestrian facilities involves the conversion of old railway lines to multiuse trails. There are no ongoing projects or plans for Rails-to-Trails conversions in the Lee-Russell COG area, although this avenue should be investigated should future opportunities arise.

### **Rail**

There are no passenger rail services in Lee County; however, two Class I rail lines do crisscross the county. The CSX Transportation (CSXT) line runs between Montgomery and Atlanta. It enters the county from the north between I-85 and US 431, continuing southwesterly through downtown Opelika and Auburn before leaving the county at Notasulga, along an alignment paralleling SR 14. CSX provides service to the International Paper plant. The Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) line is a secondary main line connecting Birmingham and Columbus. The line enters the northwest portion of the county near Waverly and SR 147, heads southeasterly through Opelika, and continues on an alignment parallel to US 280/431 southeast through Smiths Station and into the Columbus-Phenix City area. NS services Opelika and the Michelin tire factory. The two lines connect in Opelika. There are no intermodal operations in Lee County.

According to year 2006 rail freight traffic density statistics for Alabama, the annual line density for the NS line through Lee County ranged from 1.5 Millions of Gross Tons (MGT), while the CSX line ranged from 21-30 MGT. The major outbound commodity is scrap iron and the major inbound commodities are lube oil and rubber products.

### **Aviation**

Lee County's one airport, Auburn-Opelika Robert G. Pitts Airport (AUO), is a public use, general aviation airport owned and maintained by Auburn University. Located northwest of I-85 off SR 14/Glenn Road/Frederick Road between the cities of Auburn and Opelika, the airport contains two runways (5,265 feet and 4,002 feet) and has 47 based aircraft. No commercial service is offered in or out of Auburn. The airport operates 24 hours a day every day and provides air taxi service. The existing airport has 15 small T hangers, 3 large T hangers, 2 corporate hangers and a terminal. The airport currently experiences approximately 47,800 aircraft operations annually, and operations have been increasing.

### **Transportation Concept**

The primary objective of the transportation concept of the Lee County Master Plan is not merely the movement of motor vehicles, but to support land use activities and the efficient movement of people and goods through a variety of travel modes. In accordance with the overall Master Plan for Lee County, the transportation element seeks to balance

mobility with access and to create pedestrian and bicycle friendly communities that improve neighborhood quality while meeting the mobility and economic development needs of the county.

An efficient transportation system is vital to the area's livability as well as the region's economic growth. This efficiency is achieved through the linking of land use planning with transportation planning, resulting in adequate highway capacity to support planned or anticipated growth and accompanying travel demands. Public transit is an important part of a complete transportation concept. Because public transit is most effective in areas with high density development and population concentrations, it is not appropriate for most areas of unincorporated Lee County. However, there are some transit improvements that could enhance the efficiency of the County's transportation network and facilitate energy efficient access to current and developing employment centers.

The following principles guide continued development of the Lee County transportation system:

- Shorten commutes to work by encouraging growth near employment centers.
- Promote safe access to arterial roadways from collector streets.
- Provide adequate access to all properties.
- Maximize separation of through traffic and local traffic in street upgrades and widening.
- Identify high priority transportation corridors to direct infrastructure investments.
- Require new road construction and upgrades to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety and include transit stops where appropriate.
- Preserve the rural character of Lee County by ensuring that road capacities are not increased in rural areas. Rural roads should be maintained in current condition except for safety improvements.

Transportation and land use are inextricably linked. Existing roadways encourage development, with additional roads then built to meet the needs of anticipated and programmed future development. Certain land uses require particular types of transportation infrastructure to satisfy the nature and intensity of anticipated travel. Because of this close association, it is vital to coordinate the planning of both land use and transportation to ensure that limited funds are used in the most appropriate manner.

The transportation element of the Lee County Master Plan considers the factors that impact travel demand to ensure development of a multimodal transportation plan that is in harmony with land use plans and which provides recommendations to support long term county goals of improving mobility and access. The transportation program is reviewed in the context of local land use, activity centers, anticipated development and densification, and economic development, as well as public expectations and priorities. The role of initiatives that support existing and anticipated development while preserving local neighborhoods and quality of life is also an important component. Because they all influence the planning environment, a careful understanding of these factors is essential to create a plan that reflects and meets community needs for an integrated transportation system.

Based on recent developments, the highest growth areas in the county will be in the Auburn-Opelika urbanized area. Non-urbanized parts of Lee County expected to experience growth are likely to be the southeast corner near Smiths Station, as well as eastward from I-85 towards Lake Harding. The expansion of Fort Benning resulting from the 2005 Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC) recommendations drive growth from the Columbus-Phenix City area further into Smiths Station, while the opening of the new Kia plant and associated industries in neighboring West Point/Troup County, Georgia, is influencing growth along I-85. This growth and its implications for transportation will be

considered when identifying and prioritizing projects due to the importance of having appropriate transportation infrastructure in place to support the projected growth.

Extensive engagement with all Lee County residents was sought to ensure the concept for future development correlates to the visions and expectations of the county's residents. This plan—the Conceptual Development Framework—provides guidance and recommendations on the areas subject to the greatest growth potential in Lee County. The transportation plan supports this vision by focusing its recommendations so as to provide a balance between mobility and land accessibility from now into the future.

The Conceptual Development Framework includes 11 different character area categories, which characterize the kinds of development anticipated in the future. To ensure compatible transportation services and roadway network within the character areas as development continues, the 11 character areas can be grouped into 4 predominant typologies for which appropriate transportation recommendations can be made. These four groups and associated character areas include:

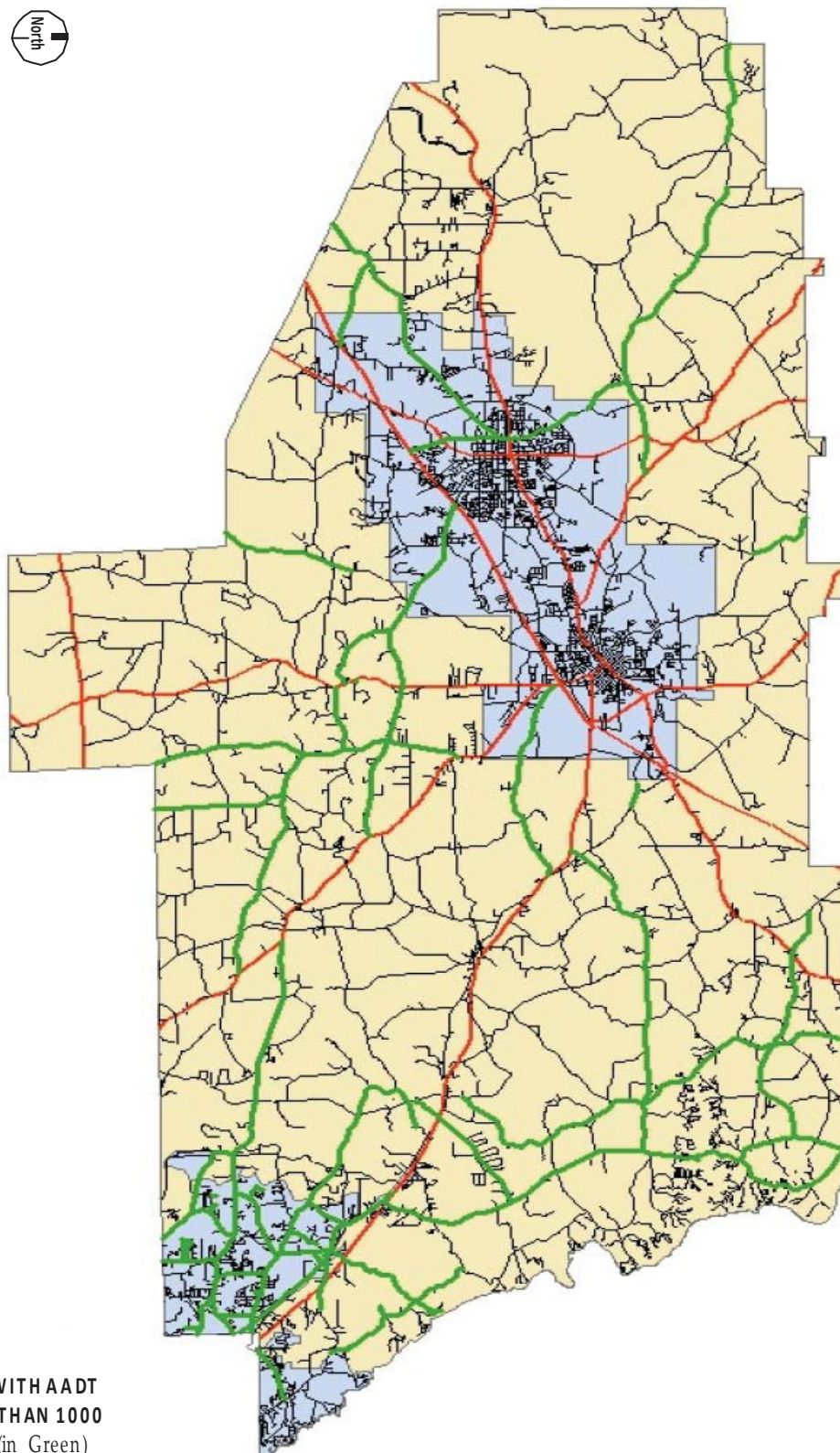
- Urban core and suburban areas – Urban Core, Suburban, Suburban Center
- Key corridors – Corridor Development
- Rural – Rural Center, Rural Residential, General Rural, Rural Agriculture
- Conservation and special areas – Conservation, Preservation, Special District

Transportation facilities within the urban core and suburban areas will be more urban in design character. Most roadways will include curb and gutter, often with sidewalk facilities. Major intersections will provide for pedestrians, and interconnected signal systems will facilitate traffic flow along key corridors. Additionally, these areas will be most likely to offer—and have sufficient demand to support—transit services.

Key corridors included as Corridor Development character areas are defined as major linear transportation routes which include mixed land uses and access management. Beginning at the Auburn-Opelika urban area boundary, these corridor character areas exist along the major regional, state and/or federal facilities. They currently include US 280/431 southeast of Opelika through Smiths Station, US 29 northeast of Opelika to the County line, US 431 north of Opelika to the County line, and US 280 northwest of Auburn to the County line. Access management strategies addressing access/driveway breaks, signal spacing, and turning movements are critical components for supporting increased mobility along the corridors.

Major roadways in the rural areas will have enough demand to warrant turn lanes and acceleration/deceleration lanes. Intersections within the rural centers also will require increased attention. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be oriented towards schools, parks and community facilities. In many cases, these will be better provided as part of a multi-use trail/greenway not requiring extensive work adjacent to the two-lane roadways without curb and gutter. Public transit opportunities will most likely be focused on connecting rural centers to each other and to the urban areas. In addition, providing service between rural centers and rural residential neighborhoods should be considered when sufficient demand exists, possibly through rideshare options.

Roadways expected within the conservation and special areas would be two-lane facilities, which should be designed to the standards required to service the traffic that already exists. As such, some of these roadways may require more frequent resurfacing to maintain them under the heavier loads experienced at landfill/logging sites, along with additional base, shoulder, intersection and signage needs. Improvements should be concentrated on the County



**FIGURE 4.6 - ROADWAYS WITH AADT  
GREATER THAN 1000**  
(in Green)  
*Source: ALDOT*

maintained roads identified as “deserving attention” due to their importance for countywide connectivity. Due to the desire to conserve and preserve within these areas, the addition of new roads or lanes should be avoided, and points providing permanent access to the road minimized.

## Future Needs Assessment

### Roadway

The analysis of major Lee County transportation facilities began with the collection of Lee County roadway data obtained from the Census Department/TIGER. Using the Census Feature Class Codes (CFCC Coding), the federal and state roadways were identified to assist in indicating the Lee County roadways. The urbanized areas coverage provided by ALDOT was included to identify the location of the Auburn-Opelika and Columbus-Phenix City MPOs. Additionally, Lee County provided data identifying the AADT traffic count for County maintained roads. Discussion with Lee County engineers indicated no graphic file exists to indicate the exact location of the traffic count; therefore, an assumption was made that the traffic count extended for the entire stretch of the roadway. Examining the data for daily traffic volumes, the following County roadways were identified as having an AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) of greater than 1,000 vehicles, as shown in Table 4.13.

**TABLE 4.13 – LEE COUNTY ROADWAYS WITH AADT GREATER THAN 1,000**

CR 10	CR 158	CR 223	CR 270	CR 380	CR 450
CR 54	CR 165	CR 230	CR 279	CR 390	CR 502
CR 72	CR 166	CR 235	CR 295	CR 391	CR 520
CR 82	CR 197	CR 236	CR 297	CR 400	CR 728
CR 97	CR 208	CR 240	CR 298	CR 401	CR 850
CR 112	CR 212	CR 246	CR 309	CR 427	CR 926
CR 137	CR 211	CR 248	CR 318	CR 430	CR 959
CR 146	CR 222	CR 250	CR 379	CR 431	

Using ArcGIS, the Lee County roadways with an AADT greater than 1,000 were identified graphically, as shown in green in Figure 4.6.

To examine the potential for traffic volume growth, the traffic analysis zones (TAZs) from the statewide travel demand model were used to identify areas in Lee County that were poised for growth. Traffic analysis zones (TAZ) are a means by which subareas of a larger geographic region are broken down in order to analyze traffic related data. A TAZ usually consists of one or more census blocks, block groups, or census tracts. The TAZs in Lee County are shown in Figure 4.7.

The data associated for each TAZ includes the 2005 population and total employment as well as predicted/forecasted 2035 population and total employment. Figure 4.8 provides a comparison of current (2005) and forecasted future (2035) population and total employment levels throughout the county by traffic analysis zone. It should be noted that more intensely developed areas (represented by increased population density and associated development) typically contain more numerous TAZs representing smaller geographic areas, whereas TAZ boundaries for less developed, rural areas usually contain a much larger geographic area. Analyzing current 2005 and future 2035 employment and population estimates assists in identifying travel patterns and future demands.



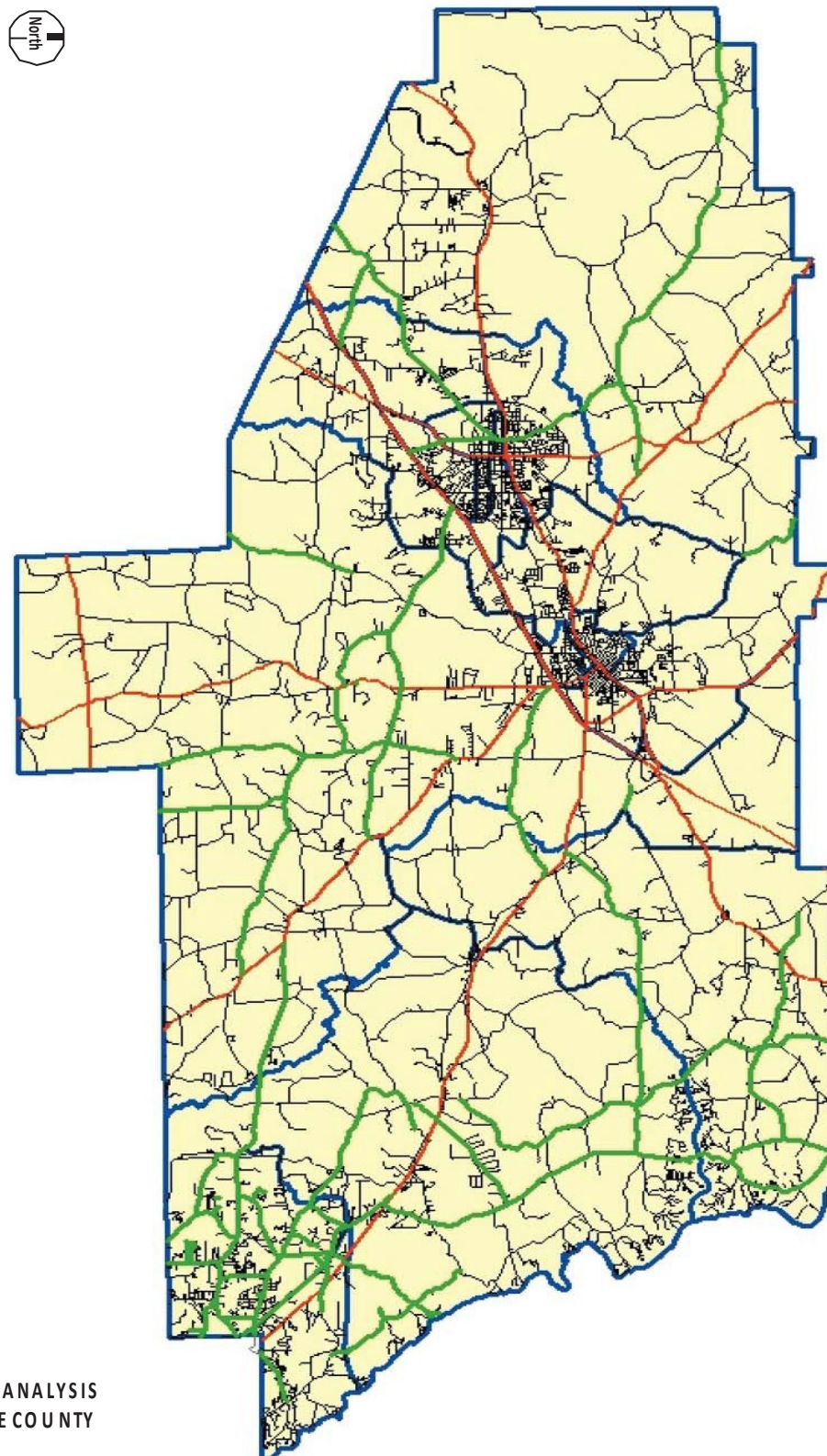


FIGURE 4.7 - TRAFFIC ANALYSIS ZONES IN LEE COUNTY

Source: ALDOT

The socio-economic data for the TAZs in Lee County was analyzed to determine which areas were poised for the greatest growth. Socio-economic data for the Lee County TAZs is included in Table 4.14.

**TABLE 4.14 – DATA FOR LEE COUNTY TRAFFIC ANALYSIS ZONES**

TAZ	2005 POP	2035 POP	2005 EMP	2035 EMP	Population Growth	Percent Population Growth	Employment Growth	Percent Employment Growth
545	12894	17022	4235	6171	4128	32	1936	46
546	1931	2807	550	813	876	45	263	48
547	12441	16664	436	642	4223	34	206	47
548	3548	6142	1181	1790	2594	73	609	52
549	4494	6527	115	356	2033	45	241	210
550	2715	3136	8664	13476	421	16	4812	56
551	10329	11928	136	443	1599	15	307	226
552	1926	2802	155	195	876	45	40	26
553	9852	17465	3343	5124	7613	77	1781	53
554	6002	12473	1458	2121	6471	108	663	45
555	7258	16374	8525	15017	9116	126	6492	76
556	2231	4337	1096	1598	2106	94	502	46
557	5634	7727	6106	8943	2093	37	2837	46
558	4116	5801	1734	2524	1685	41	790	46
559	4796	6761	2725	3993	1965	41	1268	47
560	6246	9068	4586	6745	2822	45	2159	47
561	6081	10089	796	1312	4008	66	516	65
562	7434	14184	887	1462	6750	91	575	65
563	16369	27158	608	1002	10789	66	394	65
564	5043	8367	182	300	3324	66	118	65
565	10289	17071	1215	2003	6782	66	788	65

An examination of existing AADT indicated that County roadways with a volume exceeding 4,000 vehicles per day should be the focus for potential improvements. These include County Roads 54, 97, 146, 212, 223, 236, 240, 248, and 427. Additionally, roadways located in areas forecast to experience high growth are also considered important roadways for further examination. These include County Roads 10, 72, 82, 137, 246, 250, 279, 298, 318, 379, and 430. Figure 4.9 identifies the County roadways deserving focus attention because they are key to supporting current transportation activity and addressing future growth demands. Together the highlighted roadway segments total 97.5 centerline miles.



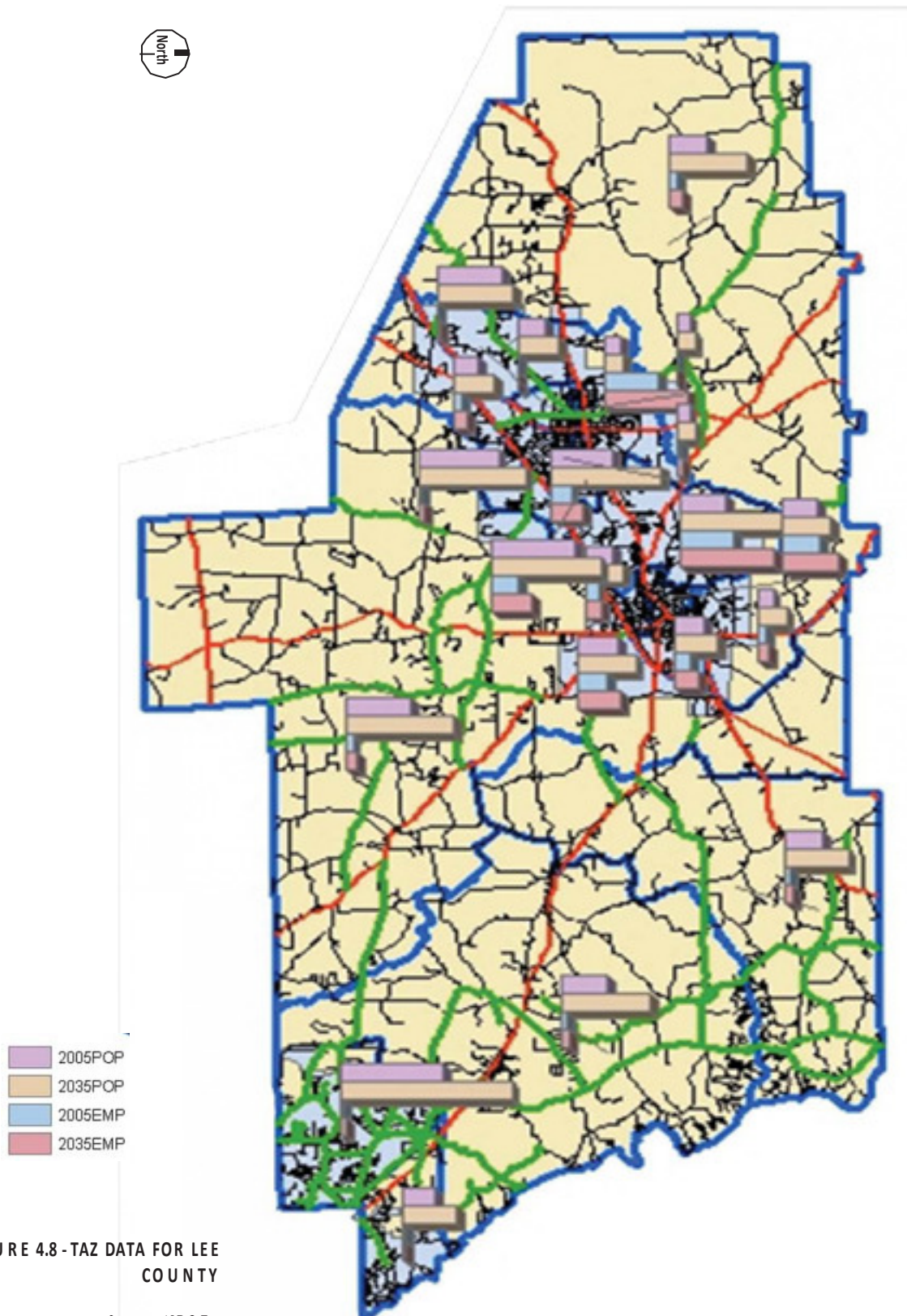


FIGURE 4.8 - TAZ DATA FOR LEE COUNTY

Source: ALDOT

Table 4.15 provides a comparison of existing (2005) and future (2035) capacity, volume, and level of service (v/c) data from the Statewide Travel Demand Model along several key corridors outside the urban areas.

TABLE 4.15 - EXISTING & FUTURE CAPACITY, VOLUME AND LOS ALONG KEY NON-URBAN ROADWAY CORRIDORS

Roadway Corridor	Capacity	2005 Volume	2005 V/C Ratio	2035 Volume	2035 V/C Ratio
US 431 north of Opelika	23,200	13,300	0.57	31,600	1.36
US 29 northeast of I-85	17,800	1,200	0.07	6,900	0.39
US 280/431 between MPO boundaries	36,900	40,600	1.10	54,000	1.46
SR 169 west of Smiths Station	23,200	14,700	0.63	26,800	1.16
SR 51 south of Beaufort	17,800	400	0.02	4,500	0.25
US 80	23,200	23,500	1.01	29,000	1.25
SR 14 near Loachapoka	23,200	900	0.04	9,900	0.43

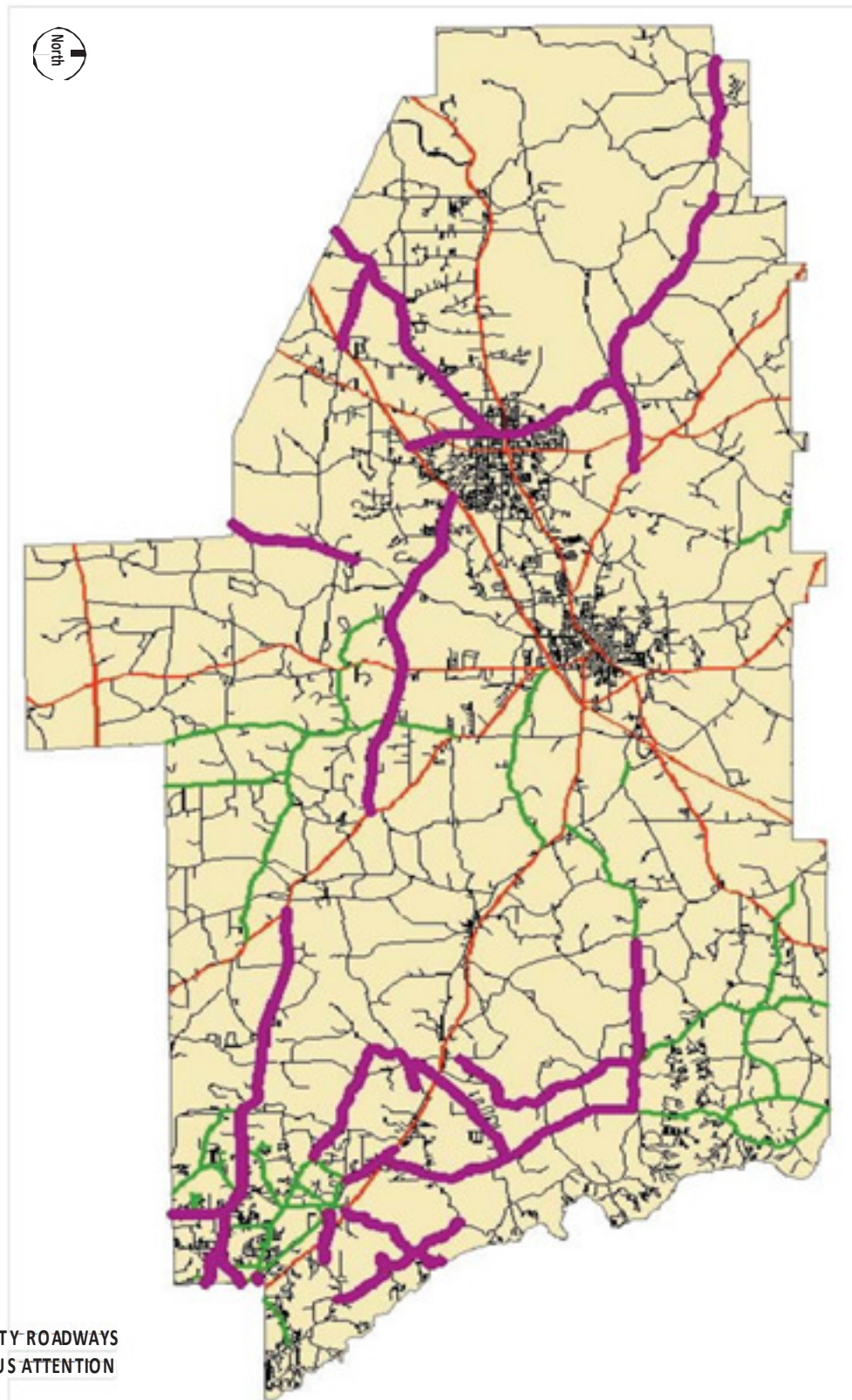
\*Volumes are rounded to the nearest hundredth.

### Truck Traffic

Increased truck volumes are likely to be seen on I-85, US 280/431, and US 431 north of I-85 in the coming years due to the new Kia plant and associated activity along I-85 in Alabama and Georgia, as well as increased military activity in the Columbus area. Improvements along federal and state highways are programmed through ALDOT, in coordination with County staff.

Truck traffic will continue to be an important consideration for traffic patterns and countywide mobility, especially with the advent of manufacturing facilities like Kia and their suppliers. In addition to occupying the physical space of more than two passenger vehicles, these large vehicles have operational characteristics that impact the flow of traffic. Roadways must be specially designed for truck traffic, including equipping them with longer sight distances and wider turning radii. Commercial vehicles operate at slower speeds and take longer to accelerate, which can impede the flow of surrounding traffic. Heavy vehicles can disrupt the flow of traffic, create hazards for pedestrians, and cause noise pollution in downtown areas. The following items should be considered in mitigating freight transport issues:

- Truck restrictions near residential and school areas (peak hour bans, route diversions and noise controls)
- Incident management (automated detection and area surveillance/communications)
- "Runaway" lanes at hazardous grade areas with high accident rates
- Road design and construction to provide improved acceleration/deceleration lanes, capacity increases and/or safety improvements
- Information management (ITS systems, advisory radio, traffic information)
- Inspection and enforcement (truck scales and automated surveillance)
- Traffic engineering (lane design restrictions, wider lanes, variable message signs and speed restrictions)



**FIGURE 4.9 - COUNTY ROADWAYS  
DESERVING FOCUS ATTENTION**

Source: ALDOT



### **Safety**

Figure 4.10 also indicates high accident intersections in the rural portions of Lee County. Given the amount of traffic they carry, it is not surprising that many of these locations are where County roads intersect the State Route system. County staff should continue coordinating with ALDOT, the MPOs and local governments to ensure the State system continues to be evaluated and assessed as a part of ongoing safety programs that fund improvements in both urban and rural areas.

### **Public Transportation**

Public input during the development phase of the comprehensive plan noted the desire for increased public transit. There should be an increased emphasis on building a multimodal transportation system for transit and non-motorized modes of travel as development occurs in projected growth areas. Transit operations in rural areas are best when they target specific markets, such as commuters. As the county continues to develop, the opportunity for carpooling, vanpooling and other travel demand management services may be appropriate. The County should continue to monitor the need for transit in coordination with LRPT and ALDOT.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian**

Although Lee County has no existing or planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities, existing and planned facilities within the Auburn-Opelika MPO area may provide opportunities for the development of an interconnecting network of bicycle and pedestrian trails in Lee County. In addition, future development in the unincorporated portions of the county may facilitate the development of such facilities near schools and within neighborhood centers.

The design and development of transportation facilities with the following design considerations will improve conditions for bicycling and walking in the following ways:

- Bicycle facilities should be considered in the long term. For example, the construction of a bridge is likely to remain in place for 50 years, and should be built to handle a bike way in anticipation of future development at either end of the bridge even if it is not currently the case;
- Roadway plans should address the need by bicyclists and pedestrians to cross transportation corridors as well as travel along them. Therefore, intersections and interchanges shall be designed to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians; and,
- Bikeways shall be designed to the best possible standards and guidelines, such as, AASHTO's *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*.

In order to encourage communities to make walking and bicycling to school a safe and routine activity, the FHWA has created the "Safe Routes to Schools" (SRTS) program. The program makes funding available for a wide variety of projects, from building safer street crossings to establishing programs that encourage children and their parents to walk or bicycle to school. It is a cross-purpose program that reduces fuel consumption, promotes exercise, improves air quality, improves childhood health, increases security and promotes interest in bicycling. The program is divided into five components:

1. *Engineering* - Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.

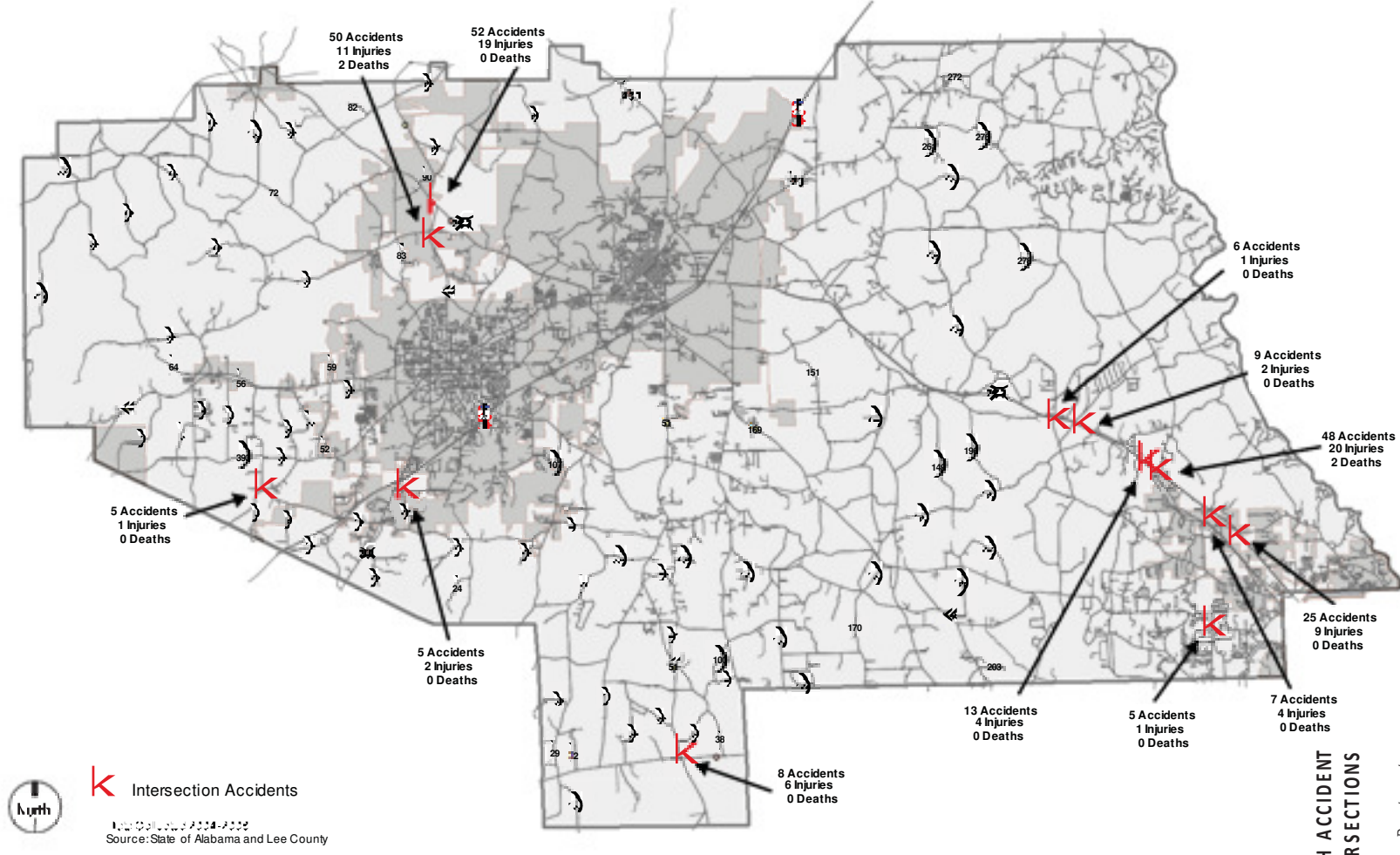


FIGURE 4.10 - HIGH ACCIDENT INTERSECTIONS

Source: Lee County Highway Department

2. *Education* – Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
3. *Enforcement* – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools, and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.
4. *Encouragement* – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.
5. *Evaluation* – Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the implementation of the program features.

The following objectives should be considered for the development of bikeways and pedestrian paths in Lee County:

- Establish a percentage increase goal (say 10 percent) for trips taken by bicycling and walking for all transportation purposes, and reduce the number of bicycle accidents by 10 percent.
- Increase and improve the number of connections for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Make local streets “bicycle friendly” in order to allow people to bicycle safely and conveniently within 5 miles of their home.

#### **Rail**

As previously mentioned, two Class I commercial railroads operate in Lee County – CSX and Norfolk Southern – and connect in Opelika. Although local traffic is decreasing, the ALDOT Rail Plan predicts an increase in rail freight in Lee County as a result of the Kia plant. The County should continue its communication and coordination with relevant state agencies to ensure appropriate support for and access to railroads and those businesses in Lee County which depend on them.

#### **Aviation**

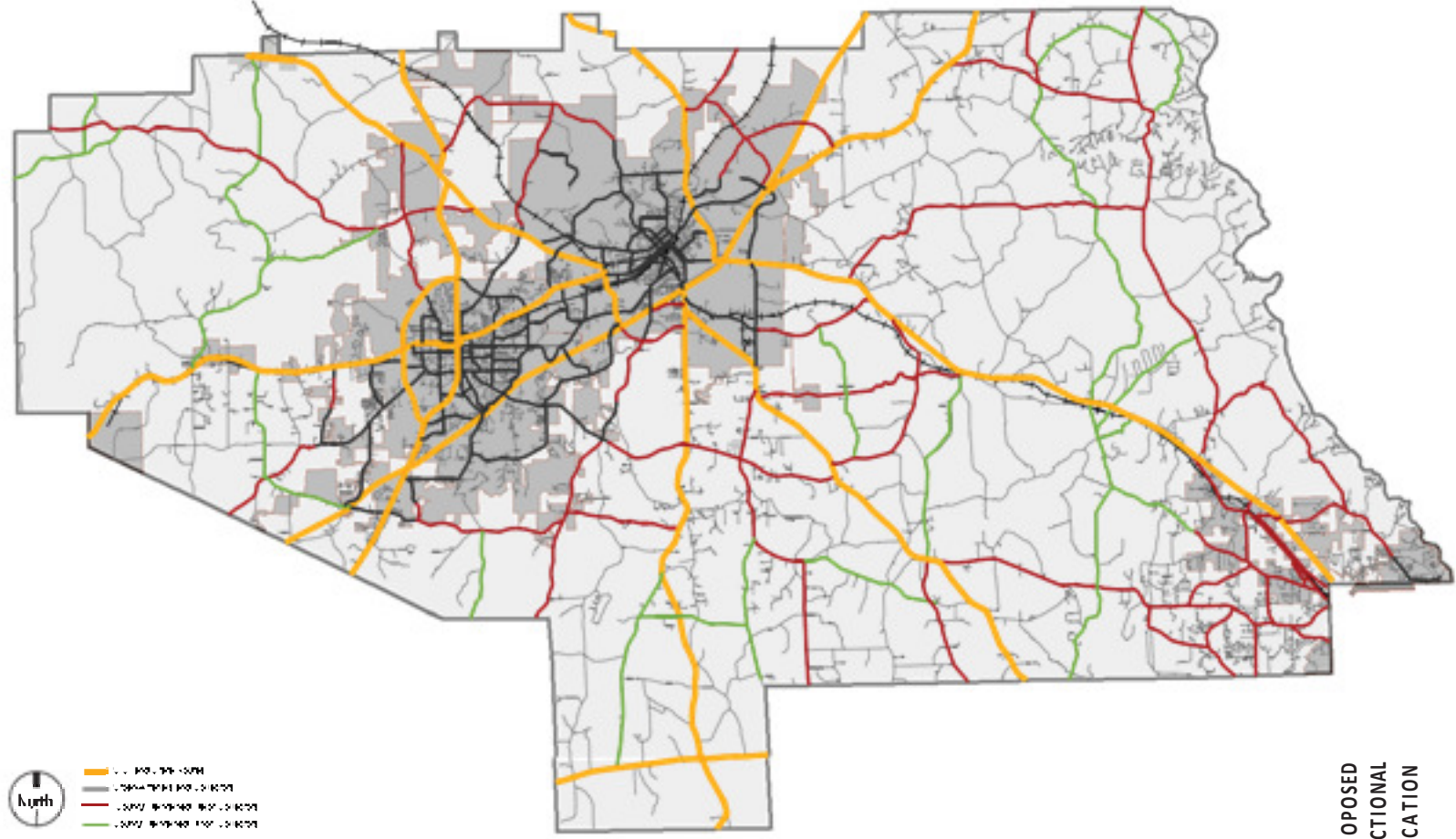
The Auburn-Opelika Airport is developing future utilization forecasts and identifying required improvements, including runway extensions, new hanger locations and pavement upgrades. Near-term planned improvements include a new 15,000 square foot terminal, navigation upgrades, aircraft storage and new taxiways. Funding for aviation facilities comes from the State of Alabama revenue from the sale of aircraft and aviation fuel tax.

### **Improvement Recommendations, Phasing and Potential Funding**

The pace of development in Lee County is expected to continue through the Plan’s 2035 horizon year. With growth comes increased demand on the transportation network, requiring the coordinated attention of the State, Lee County and its municipalities. Each governmental unit has its focus and responsibilities for specific aspects of the network appropriate to its mission.

- The State system is geared to commercial traffic supporting the economy, as well as providing connectivity to and through Lee County. Therefore, the Interstate System and the State road system are key components of the network and service the larger share of traffic volumes.
- The County system provides connectivity for rural, small urban and unincorporated areas of the County. The County road network facilitates access to destinations countywide, including schools, commercial, business and other primary attractors.
- The municipalities have responsibility for local City streets and circulation of traffic within their downtown areas.





**FIGURE 4.11 - PROPOSED  
LEE COUNTY FUNCTIONAL  
CLASSIFICATION**

A final map is in production.

### **Recommendations**

The Master Plan identifies character areas to support current and future development. Transportation needs differ by character area, depending on the unique needs of the anticipated demands generated by each type of use. This differentiation requires that functional classification of roads in the different character areas reflect the anticipated demands. Roads in areas where there is heavy industrial activity need to be able to meet the demands of the trucks and heavy equipment that will be generated. In contrast, residential areas require more context sensitive development reflecting the circulator needs of local suburban demands.

Lee County may want to consider the implementation of a “checklist” of transportation needs for new development that may be provided by developers. Bike trails and sidewalks are important assets for communities. As such, the County should establish standards for new development that include bicycle and pedestrian amenities tied to new commercial or housing developments, particularly those located in or adjacent to urban areas. Imposing fees on development directly related to anticipated impacts is a means by which the County could proactively enlist the assistance of developers in providing traffic circulation and bicycle/pedestrian improvements resulting from development-driven growth. Counties and municipalities nationwide have exercised this option, which has in turn resulted in more integrated community projects.

#### *Roadway Capacity and Safety*

In accordance with the analysis findings, it is recommended that future roadway improvements focus on those corridors expected to experience the greatest travel demands, locations with higher accident occurrences, and facilities near freight generators. In consideration of anticipated growth areas and proposed development framework, the County should continue to coordinate with ALDOT and the MPOs to implement upgrades to support the specific needs of the character areas. Further examination of roadway locations with both higher accident numbers and AADT greater than 1,000 could assist in prioritizing future improvements, particularly when serving areas expected to experience more aggressive growth. As a follow-up to the Master Plan, the Planning Commission and County staff should begin development of typical sections, design standards and access guidelines for the key travel corridors in the county, making sure the proposed standards and guidelines are in accordance with the character area typologies.

Examples of improvements for consideration in the near future include intersection improvements in high accident areas, capacity improvements for high priority roads, and access management projects to improve utilization and efficiency and balance mobility with land access. Longer term projects would include widening and realignments for high priority transportation corridors, which typically require substantial time to gain necessary approvals, undertake design and allow for public comment.

#### *Functional Classification*

As a part of the transportation analysis, ALDOT’s functional classification system was examined to determine a simplified system applicable to Lee County. The proposed Lee County functional classification system, shown in Figure 4.11, supports future cross-county connectivity while maintaining compatibility with the Master Plan concept. In addition to differentiating roadways in accordance with primary maintenance responsibilities, the system provides a guide for longer term mobility needs based on anticipated traffic demands. The proposed system consists of five categories:

- US and State routes
- Urban arterials and collectors
- County maintained major collectors
- County maintained minor collectors
- County maintained local roads

The proposed functional classification system is compatible with the ALDOT/MPO classification system currently in use. It is intended to provide a slightly more refined system for collectors in the non-urbanized area in relation to the likely growth as described in previous section. Additionally, analysis of which roadways are likely to experience traffic volumes of 4000 or more vehicles per day was considered in developing this system.

### ***Access Management***

Access management can be a very effective tool in providing a safer traveling environment. County roads that have been identified as locations for crash occurrences should be considered for access management improvements. Access management practices can benefit roadside properties throughout the county by promoting safety and improving roadway capacity. The following strategies can be used to retrofit existing roads or for incorporation into plans for new roadways:

- *Separate conflict points*, including preventing general driveways within an intersection's area of influence.
- *Appropriately space traffic signals* by only installing signals in locations where studies indicate their spacing and interconnection will not impact corridor capacity.
- *Restrict turning movements at unsignalized driveways and intersections* by limiting full directional unsignalized intersections. Turning movements should use joint access driveways or cross access easements, frontage or service roads should be used when possible, and access to public thoroughfares should be limited to public street intersections.
- *Develop design standards* that address access spacing, length of turn lanes and tapers, and driveway dimensions to be used throughout major corridors.
- *Provide right and left turn lanes* for all public streets and major access points to land uses.
- *Provide shared/joint use driveways* to reduce the number of driveways and preserve the capacity and mobility of the corridor.
- *Accommodate pedestrian and bicycle needs* when designing/phasing traffic signals in areas of significant bicycle and pedestrian activity.

Access management is primarily a factor with major rural collectors and US routes in Lee County. In addition, the safety analysis of Lee County roads can assist in identifying locations where access management may be appropriate. It is recommended the County initiate development of access management guidelines and standards for use along roadways classified as County maintained major collectors and above in the unincorporated portions of the county as development continues.

### ***System Infrastructure Needs***

#### **Bridges**

Efforts to replace all 112 bridges maintained by the County should continue. Priority should be placed on bridges receiving a sufficiency rating less than 50, as well as those found to be structurally deficient, functionally obsolete, or 50 or more years of age. Particular importance should be placed on any such bridges located along corridors designated for focus attention due to projected high traffic volumes and growth (refer to Figure 4.9).

The County recently approved a 20-year bond issue to address bridge maintenance in Lee County. The program is anticipated to raise \$7-8 million over 5-7 years for replacement of 14-16 bridges (approximately 2 per year). Additional

details regarding which bridges will be included in the program and the exact nature of the improvement are still being determined by the County.

#### **Pavement Condition and Paving**

It is anticipated that the County will continue to place resurfacing priority on the State Graded Roads. Similarly, determination of which dirt roads to include in any future paving projects is expected to follow the general guidelines set forth in the County's existing Road Paving Priority Program.

Given the increased total mileage of paved roadways in Lee County combined with additional travel demand driven by population growth, it is recommended the County re-examine its current funding allocations for resurfacing and paving. Currently the County apportions approximately the same amount of monies towards resurfacing as paving, although three times as many roadway miles require maintenance as paving. Continuation of this imbalance could threaten the County's ability to secure its federal funding allotment via ALDOT due to its inability to properly maintain the State Graded Roads. As funding falls short of needs, roadway conditions continue to degrade, resulting in increased costs and time to return the roadway to satisfactory condition. Proper roadway maintenance provides the County with significant savings when compared to the major reconstruction needs required by roadways that are not properly maintained. In consideration of these factors, it is recommended the County aim first to properly maintain its current inventory of paved roadways prior to adding any further mileage by paving dirt roads.

#### **Signage**

Efforts by Lee County's Highway Department to establish a comprehensive signage inventory should continue.

#### ***Bicycle and Pedestrian***

It is recommended the County initiate a study to develop a bicycle and pedestrian plan in concert with the growth concept and character areas identified through this study process. Plan development should be coordinated with the County's planning partners from the engineering, parks/recreation and other relevant departments, as well as with representatives from the municipalities and MPOs.

A primary plan goal would be development of a bicycle and pedestrian network that coordinates with plans already in place in Auburn and Opelika. The plan would outline where bicycle and pedestrian facilities can complement local activity centers and enhance circulation. The plan should focus on potential opportunities for multi-use pathing, within the public right-of-way or separate, in order to connect rural centers internally with nearby schools and community facilities. Connections to existing and planned facilities within the urban areas should then be considered. Development of sidewalks should be undertaken in concert with local jurisdictions, with the goal to be getting as much in the front end as development occurs. The County may also consider relooking its subdivision regulations regarding provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as its own guidelines regarding the incorporation of such facilities in roadway upgrade projects.

#### ***Level of Effort Costs***

Table 4.16 identifies recommended improvements to the Lee County transportation system over a 20-year planning horizon. In addition, planning level cost estimates are provided as an indication of the level of funding that would be required. Cost estimates are based on review of various unit cost assumptions/historic data (ALDOT, LRTPs, County review).

TABLE 4.16 – IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvement Type	Units for Improvement	Cost per Unit	Total Cost over 20 Year Planning Horizon
<b>Roadway</b>			
Major upgrade/reconstruction	55 miles <sup>1</sup>	\$510,000	\$28,050,000
Resurfacing/shoulder improvements	395 miles <sup>1</sup>	\$175,000	\$69,125,000
Paving (grade, drain, base and pave)	80 miles <sup>1</sup>	\$205,000	\$16,400,000
Intersection improvements	40 intersections	\$350,000	\$14,000,000
Bridge rehabilitation/replacement	114 bridges	*2	*2
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian</b>			
Bicycle/multi-use path connectors (both sides) <sup>3</sup>	60 miles	\$225,000	\$13,500,000
Sidewalk/pedestrian improvements (one side) (in 11 rural centers)	22 miles	\$150,000	\$3,300,000

<sup>1</sup>Estimated needs for 20-year period address approximately 50 percent of County maintained system.

<sup>2</sup>Bridge rehabilitation/replacement improvements continued under ALDOT bridge program.

<sup>3</sup>Estimated needs would provide connectivity from each quadrant of the county to the urbanized areas, towards Smiths Station in the southeast, and north-south near the Chattahoochee River in the eastern part of the county.

**Potential Funding Strategies**

Lee County currently has maintenance responsibility for the County and some small urban roadway networks. Available funding from federal, state and local sources is largely dedicated to specific transportation activities, such as paving state system roads and maintaining bridges. Unfortunately, current levels of funding are not sufficient to handle existing needs, delaying needed improvements and increasing the backlog of transportation projects. Options for further consideration by the County Commission include:

- Develop a methodology for tracking transportation improvement costs in rural/small urban areas of the county as a means of informing the Commission, local small urban municipalities and the public about where money is being spent.
- Continue participation by County staff in MPO planning activities to ensure the County receives its full share of funding to support improvement projects in applicable areas.
- Develop a formula for determining a balanced allocation of federal funds for incorporated/unincorporated areas based on total lane miles of road. Federal funds are allocated to the State, who in turn passes it on to the County.
- Identify local projects in small urban areas which focus predominantly on municipal needs (such as local street traffic circulation, sidewalk and bike trail improvements) for local funding.

For the past 50 years, surface transportation projects have been funded by the Highway Trust Fund. The primary source of revenue for the fund is fuel taxes (currently 18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline); mass transit receives 2.86 cents per gallon, with the remainder going to surface transportation projects. Although the current transportation act, SAFETEA-LU, expired on September 30, 2009, it is reasonable to assume the funding programs will remain essentially the same in the foreseeable future. Table 4.17 identifies some of the possible SAFETEA-LU sources—discretionary and flexible—used by state and local governments as potential sources of project funding, which might be applicable for Lee County.

TABLE 4.17 – FHWA FUNDING SOURCES

<b>Program</b>	<b>Federal Share</b>	<b>Project Type</b>
Interstate Maintenance	90%	Bridge, Highway
National Highway System	80%	Bridge, Highway, Transit
Surface Transportation	80%	All, including Bikeways and Pedestrian Paths
Transportation Enhancements	80%	Bicycle/Pedestrian, Bridge, Highway
Highway Bridge Replacement	80%	Bridges
Highway Safety	90%	Highways & Intersections
CMAQ	80%	Bicycle/Pedestrian, Highway, Transit
High Priority Projects	80%	All, including Bicycle/Pedestrian
National Scenic Byways	80%	All, except Transit
Rail/Highway Crossings	90%	Highways
Recreational Trails	80%	Bicycle/Pedestrian
Safe Routes to School	100%	Bicycle/Pedestrian, Highways, Planning & Other
Intelligent Transportation Systems	50-100%	All, except Bicycle/Pedestrian

It should be stressed that previous levels of funding are not available due to today's economic circumstances. In general, revenues are down across all federal and state programs, worsening the gap between available funding and needs. The federal transportation bill expired over one year ago and has not been reauthorized, meaning federal funds are not forthcoming. In addition, funding is further reduced due to federal rescissions. As before, the County's needs must compete with other jurisdictions for all federal and state funding categories. However, winning such funding has become increasingly competitive as needs exceed available funds by such a large margin across the board.



## APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Broad Vision

#### What do you like?

- Two cities (Auburn and Opelika) that do a great job in economic development area; provide leadership in this area for the entire county. They work together (most of the time) for good of the entire county and themselves.
- Auburn/Opelika do great job with economic development. Both are very active/aggressive regarding economic development and feature strong economic development departments/staff.
- Lee County: Auburn University; people.
- Smiths Station community: Good group of people; good mix of professional and nonprofessional workers; good mix of small businesses; friendly place to live and work.
- Smiths Station: Good mix of people.
- Smiths Station: People; small business-based economy.
- County: Overall strength of three public school systems.
- County: Auburn University; regional medical center; good leadership at county commission.
- County: Overall, county is like a hot rod car sitting on blocks; need one overall effort for economic development marketing and promotion; get everyone involved with a focused, coordinated effort. County has all the elements to be extremely successful in economic development: Interstate highway, major research university, educated workforce, strong K-12 education system, good to excellent health care facilities, etc.

#### What needs changing?

- At times, competition between the two cities can be harmful; need more cooperation/partnering among all entities involved in economic development- Auburn, Opelika, Smiths Station, Loachapoka, chambers of commerce, AU, Southern Union, etc., especially in marketing and promotion.
- Southeastern area of county (Smiths Station area) needs more commercial development that would provide tax revenues to support growth- compliment residential development.
- County: Need to establish some type of common economic development organization that can pull together all the entities involved in economic development to perform together.
- Smiths Station: Needs sewer system improvements to meet current and anticipated needs (residential and commercial); plans for system are developed- need financial assistance to construct.
- Smiths Station: Needs sewer system improvements to support future residential and commercial growth (have plans; need financial assistance to construct).

#### What should the county economy look like in 10 years?

- Tourism should play a much larger role in overall economy - need to promote tourism assets and attract more visitors to the county; would be great to land one major industry for the county- could be auto related, but does not have to be. County could form strong economic development partnerships with neighboring counties, particularly Chambers and Russell counties.
- Current situation should continue, but should continue efforts to create a more diversified economy.
- County and Smiths Station: Full employment for both.
- Smiths Station: Remain a friendly small town, but add more commercial (small family type businesses); add community amenities like YMCA and additional recreational facilities (parks, playgrounds).

- Smiths Station: Appropriate sewer system would be in place; U.S. Highway 280/431 would be a commercial business corridor in the Smiths Station area (important to have sewer service along this highway to support commercial growth); additional residential development for the community (served by appropriate sewer system); community water system would have additional treatment capacity to meet growth.

**What should the county economy not look like in 10 years?**

- Need to avoid demographic trends that can significantly alter the make up of county communities (negative factors associated with increased levels of poverty/low-income residents).
- Avoid recruiting large (3,000+ jobs) manufacturing plants; focus on second and third tier supplier type businesses and seek to make economy more diverse. No large economic development projects for rural portions of county- maintain rural character of this area.
- Smiths Station: No large/major type industries for the community; retain small town character and small business economy.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)**

**What are the greatest strengths or assets of the county (your community)?**

- Auburn University, pool of readily available/always replenishing young workers (AU and Southern Union), stable county economy anchored by AU, East Alabama Regional Medical Center, three strong public school systems (Auburn, Opelika and Lee County).
- Geographic location of the county; major university is located within the county; strong educational system - K thru 16.
- Opelika and Auburn economies.
- Auburn University and regional medical center.
- Automobile industry suppliers; strong overall economy; local spending.
- Smiths Station: Small town character; friendly people; good place to live and raise your family; local schools are heart of the community.
- Smiths Station: Current economy is reasonably strong; could be much stronger with proper infrastructure improvements (sewer and water treatment).

**What are the most serious weaknesses? What are the greatest obstacles or threats facing the county?**

- For county government, lack of tax revenues (no shared sales tax revenues).
- For county government- lack of financial resources compared to counties of comparable size in Alabama; need tools, resources (money, people) to maintain current quality of life in the county.
- County government has trouble making economic development decisions.
- Smiths Station: Need to expand sanitary sewer service to cover larger portion of the community.
- Potential slow down or collapse of auto-related industries in the area.
- Smiths Station: Lack of adequate sanitary sewer service to serve current and future needs; community water system needs to add treatment capacity.
- Smiths Station: Need appropriate sewer service for the community (not just incorporated area, but surrounding densely populated areas).

## Issues and Goals

### What are the most important industries, businesses or institutions in Lee County (your community)?

- Auburn University, regional medical center, overall medical/health care institutions and businesses in the county.
- Auburn University, regional medical center, K-16 education system, automobile industry supplier businesses.
- Auburn University; Briggs and Stratton (Auburn); Auburn Technology Park; retail centers (Tiger Town/Opelika).
- Auburn University; regional medical center; automobile suppliers.
- Automobile supplier industries; regional medical center; Tiger Town (Opelika); Auburn University.
- Auburn University, regional medical center, auto industry suppliers, high tech businesses such as Gambro (Opelika; kidney dialysis filters).

### What are the most important economic development issues facing Lee County (your community) today?

- Need more focus/effort on adding additional white collar/professional jobs in the county.
- Rock quarry; needed but needs to be carefully evaluated.

### What should be the top economic development priorities for Lee County?

- Continue to support/sustain the economic development efforts of Auburn and Opelika and encourage their working together (Lee County perspective).
- Need to build a stronger tax (revenue) base in densely populated areas of county (primarily in southeast corner of the county).
- Provide sewer service for Smiths Station and other areas within the county that need such infrastructure.
- Health care: must have exceptional health care system to attract and keep a quality workforce.

### What are the key workforce development issues facing Lee County?

- Continue to support post-secondary education programs and projects in the county; encourage cooperation and partnering among all workforce development players; always involve business and industry in the effort; need a training consortium involving all organizations in the workforce effort.
- Immediate issue: Need to focus on retraining workforce from Uniroyal plant in Opelika (will close in October 2009).
- County has strong group of young, well-educated workers (from K-12 systems and post secondary schools); overall good work ethic for workforce. Need to do a better job of keeping best and brightest graduates in Lee County.
- Strengthen workforce development efforts of Southern Union State Community College.
- Immediate issue: Retraining/assisting displaced workers at Uniroyal tire plant in Opelika (set to close in October 2009).
- County: Need more well-trained skilled technical workers, especially skilled maintenance workers, machine repair workers, tool and die workers, and related jobs.

### What is the most effective industrial recruitment strategy for Lee County?

- Need a coordinated, overall strategy for the county that builds off the strategies of Auburn and Opelika.
- For rural Lee County: Work to maintain rural areas as rural; development in these areas should be appropriate to rural settings; encourage "green" type development.

- Auburn and Opelika economic development strategies are working/successful; need to continue to support their efforts and urge cooperation and coordination.
- Support Auburn and Opelika industrial recruiting efforts; focus workforce training on projected employment opportunities for the area.
- Encourage/support Auburn and Opelika recruiting efforts.
- Promote a united, coordinated effort involving all ED organizations and individuals.

**What role should the county's institutions of higher education play in economic development (Southern Union State Community College and Auburn University)?**

- SUSCC: focus on worker training and workforce development; stay ahead of business and industry needs.
- Auburn University: Provide ED research; link AU knowledge and resources (overall resources) to economic development issues and needs.
- Southern Union: Focus on workforce development and worker training/retraining.
- Auburn University: Emphasize technology park (AU Research Park).
- Southern Union: Workforce training.

**What are the most important community development needs for Lee County (your community)?**

- Maintaining and improving quality health care for all county residents.
- Need to provide community centers in populated areas (recreation, senior citizen and youth activities, other community uses).
- Maintain and improve quality of public education throughout the county.
- Expand healthcare opportunities and services.
- Provide more outdoor recreation opportunities: outdoor trails (walking, biking, hiking); playgrounds, parks, ball fields.
- Preserve/protect critical natural areas, prime agricultural land, important animal and plant habitats and water resource areas (above and below ground).
- Maintain rural character, rural qualities for existing rural communities in the county.
- Preserve and protect the historic resources (buildings, sites, districts) of the county.
- Promote clean, garbage-free communities.

**What should be done to encourage the development of small businesses in Lee County (your community)?**

- Build on the good name/reputation of the county and its communities- a great place to open and operate a small business (build on success).

**What is the most appropriate economic development strategy for rural (unincorporated) communities in Lee County?**

- Preserve rural character; pay attention to agricultural uses (especially any prime agricultural land); some small business development where appropriate: although mostly incorporated, Smiths Station area should be focus of infrastructure improvements (particularly sewer) to support new commercial/business growth.
- Emphasize the preservation/conservation of rural character in these areas.
- Make sure rural areas are kept clean- litter is a problem.
- U.S. Highway 280/431 in Smiths Station area is problem spot for litter.
- Focus on basic infrastructure needs first: water, sewer, roads, etc. Promote development appropriate to a rural environment.

## Connections

**How would you describe the level of coordination/collaboration among key stakeholders (government, business, education) in Lee County (your community)?**

- Smiths Station: Some issues with Phenix City, but relationship is improving with new council members.
- Could have stronger/better cooperation among county and municipal elected leaders; in past years elected leaders met on regular basis to discuss issues, concerns; not happening on regular basis today (changes in elected leadership).

**How involved are the citizens in the civic life of Lee County (your community)?**

- Almost no involvement; only come out when personally affected by an issue or problem.

## Top Recommendations from Interviews

- Keep master plan realistic: make sure the goals are clear and attainable.
- Grow the tax (revenue) base in densely populated unincorporated areas (southeastern portion of county especially); need to develop infrastructure to support commercial development in these areas (especially sewer service in southeastern corner/Smiths Station area).
- Continue to support economic development efforts of Auburn and Opelika and continue to seek balanced economic development approach (Auburn and Opelika strategies should compliment efforts/goals of other jurisdictions in the county).
- Maintain and preserve the rural character of unincorporated Lee County; preserve/conserv e county assets and features that contribute to this character.
- Provide appropriate sewer service for the Smiths Station community and other densely populated areas of the county that need such service.
- Need a task force for economic development that would involve all organizations and individuals connected to economic development; use common resources; do joint marketing for entire county; use partnership approach whenever possible.
- Smiths Station: Number one priority is to improve the sanitary sewer system for the municipality and populated areas adjacent to the city.

**APPENDIX D: OVERALL RANKING OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

1. Provide a superior public education system throughout the county. [Goal #1. Strategy #1]
2. Ensure adequate and well-maintained school facilities. [6.1]
3. Foster a cooperative relationship among the boards of education, private employers, Southern Union, Auburn University, and training providers to enhance the workforce development system. [1.2]
4. Identify the workforce needs of local businesses and industries; establish and support vocational training and apprenticeship programs that satisfy these needs, develop relevant skills in younger workers, and re-train existing workers. [1.3]
5. Support Auburn University as a catalyst for economic activity within the county and region. [1.4]
6. Enhance and promote state-of-the-art telecommunications technology to attract clean high-tech industry to the county. [6.3]
7. Establish a process for prioritizing infrastructure projects for federal, state, county, and local sources of funding; finance priority infrastructure projects through short and long-term financing plans that maximize opportunities for grants and low interest loans. [6.2]
8. Provide adequate water supply by securing water rights, planning for additional surface water treatment plants, developing water system interconnections, enhancing water storage capacity, and coordinating efforts to gauge future water capacity needs. [6.4]
9. Build connections among citizens, groups, and institutions within the county; promote alliances and partnerships to meet overall county needs. [3.1]
10. Support improved gateways into Lee County and its communities. [9.1]
11. Inform entrepreneurs of government-sponsored small business loans, grants and incubator programs. [7.1]
12. Maintain existing sanitary sewer facilities; provide sanitary sewer to rural areas as feasible to eliminate problems with failing septic tanks, and develop sanitary sewer facility plans to respond to future sewage service needs. [6.5]
13. Complete an overall assessment of public/private infrastructure conditions and needs. [6.6]
14. Provide expansion assistance to businesses needing referrals and resource information. [5.1]
15. Create an inventory of potential visitor destinations, including events, in the county. [9.2]
16. Develop a Lee County branding/identity and marketing strategy for tourism attraction. [9.3]
17. Encourage each county municipality to develop a capital improvement plan (CIP) to prepare for future infrastructure needs (if they are not already doing so). [6.7]
18. Meet annually with Lee County's largest employers to express appreciation and to obtain information related to their future needs; meet annually with some of the smaller business employers in Lee County that have shown steady employment growth. [5.2]
19. Redevelop downtown areas to increase opportunities for retail shopping, restaurants, lodging, civic buildings, and entertainment in downtown areas; improve downtown facades and improve streetscapes; encourage municipalities to participate in existing and planned Main Street and historic district development programs. [6.8]
20. Provide financial incentives to support the expansion of existing businesses. [5.3]
21. Promote state legislation to improve the state's business climate. [13.1]
22. Preserve the county's natural beauty and aesthetics: encourage all public policymaking organizations to incorporate sustainable economic development into their activities and plans. [2.1]
23. Initiate multi-jurisdictional efforts to promote economic and community development within the county. [3.2]
24. Encourage employers to provide and support continuing education for their employees. [1.5]



25. Promote development of residential, convenience retail (grocery, pharmacy, etc.) and business service uses (child care, banking, and repair services) around major transportation arteries, municipalities, and densely populated communities. [11.1]
26. Support the expansion of adult education opportunities available to residents who seek high school degrees or GEDs. [1.6]
27. Encourage public-private partnerships to address the county's economic development needs. [3.3]
28. Provide small and new businesses with information on how to find the necessary management and marketing skills to facilitate success; refer potential start-up businesses to sources of assistance, such as the Small Business Development Center at Auburn University. [7.2]
29. Actively market the county's existing industrial sites or parks. [8.1]
30. Involve Lee County real estate and economic developers in the planning process. [11.2]
31. Encourage the recruitment of knowledge-based industrial sectors, especially research and development oriented industries, technology firms, and other industries with clean, high-value inventory and/or products (e.g., medical, pharmaceutical). [8.2]
32. Maintain current county data useful to business and industry. [10.1]
33. Take advantage of Lee County's location in relation to Hyundai (Montgomery, AL) and Kia (West Point, GA) to attract additional automotive suppliers into the county. [8.3]
34. Communicate local and regional economic development success stories. [13.2]
35. Develop a transportation plan that identifies and prioritizes transportation needs and identifies potential strategies. [6.9]
36. Encourage conservation and recycling in the use of all natural resources. [2.2]
37. Cooperate with and support the industrial recruitment efforts of Auburn and Opelika. [8.4]
38. Participate in regional tourism efforts that link and promote the east Alabama region's unique attractions and activities; coordinate with local, regional, and state tourism development boards and agencies. [9.4]
39. Develop strategies and support community-based actions to involve minorities and economically disadvantaged individuals in improving their economic futures. [1.7]
40. Annually update county residents on Lee County's growth and development; educate the residents by disseminating information and describing plans and activities. [13.3]
41. Enhance local recreational, artistic, cultural, and entertainment venues and events. [4.3]
42. Support economic development training and development activities for elected officials and civic leaders. [4.4]
43. Support adequate setbacks, vegetative buffering, and unobtrusive signage in large-scale commercial and industrial uses to protect primary roadways. [11.3]
44. Support the development of tourist attractions, facilities, and activities. [9.5]
45. Promote the development of local leadership capacity by supporting community-based leadership development programs. [4.1]
46. Develop a county branding/identity and marketing strategy for business development in Lee County; update and prepare promotional brochures and website. [8.5]
47. Develop and communicate positions on economic development policy issues important to the economic health of the county and region. [13.4]
48. Conduct a county-wide industrial land study to provide base information about industrial properties and create an inventory of all marketable sites; maintain an inventory of commercial sites adequate to meet a diversity of needs for retail, service, and institutional development in Lee County. [10.2]
49. Represent economic development interests before governmental bodies. [13.5]

50. Support the development and enhancement of the county's hospitality infrastructure, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, and entertainment facilities. [9.6]
51. Identify local industry clusters, niches and gaps for each community; Identify and promote the unique attributes of each area of the county and share information with economic development prospects that provide a good match. [8.6]
52. Survey citizens periodically to help guide economic development efforts. [10.3]
53. Encourage efforts to develop, refurbish, or maintain scenic open space, cultural, historic, and heritage resources. [9.7]
54. Promote county historic sites that are accessible to the public as part of the tourist economy. [9.8]
55. Maintain an inventory of available commercial and industrial buildings and land to assist local firms in finding space for expansion and start-ups within Lee County. [5.4]
56. Promote a balanced transportation system that gives people options other than the automobile in which to travel to work, schools, recreation, and commerce. [11.4]
57. Survey local businesses on a regular basis for suggestions on how county government and other organizations can better meet their needs. [5.5]
58. Support local industries such as floriculture, truck farming and horticulture, which can take advantage of increasing suburban and urban markets. [7.4]
59. Evaluate current regulations that pertain to cottage industries and home-based business and recommend revisions to these regulations to encourage the creation of such businesses. [7.3]
60. Promote outdoor recreation opportunities, including fishing, hunting, biking, hiking, boating, and horseback-riding. [9.9]
61. Promote energy conservation and efficiency by residents, businesses, and governments. [2.3]
62. Provide multiple opportunities for public involvement through deliberative forums, town meetings, concerts, festivals, and community improvement projects. [4.2]
63. Create and maintain a county economic development website that includes information of interest, including the Economic Development section of the Master Plan. [13.6]
64. Clean and redevelop polluted "Brownfield" industrial sites. [11.5]
65. Support historic preservation in communities throughout the county; preserve each community's unique sense of history and culture. [2.4]
66. Identify and preserve open space, environmental habitats and prime agricultural land. [2.5]
67. Seek funding to support green infrastructure systems and sustainable growth practices. [2.6]
68. Identify and define the roles of existing community and economic development organizations. [12.2]
69. Encourage private-sector initiatives to enhance quality of life and public amenities. [2.7]
70. Investigate the feasibility of hiring a professional developer to promote community and economic development for the areas of Lee County located outside the municipal jurisdictions of Auburn and Opelika. [12.1]
71. Discourage strip development for large-scale commercial and industrial uses. [11.6]

**APPENDIX E: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN (CIP) MODEL**

**Goal:** To ensure that public facilities and services are provided, on a fair-share cost basis, in a manner that maximizes the use of existing facilities and promotes orderly growth and economic demands.

Objective 1:

To use the Capital Improvements Plan as a guide to schedule construction and identify funding sources for the projects.

Policy 1.1

Proposed capital improvements projects shall be ranked and evaluated according to appropriate policies adopted in elements of a county and/or community plan. The following criteria will also be considered:

- 1) whether the proposed project will eliminate a public hazard;
- 2) whether the proposed project will eliminate capacity deficits;
- 3) local budget impacts;
- 4) vocational needs based on projected growth patterns;
- 5) accommodation of new development or redevelopment;
- 6) financial feasibility;
- 7) plans of state agencies or water management districts to provide facilities

Policy 1.2

To integrate its planning and budgeting process by \_\_\_\_\_ such that expenditures, which are budgeted for capital improvements, recognize policies related to public facilities and services set forth in a county and/or community plan.

Objective 2:

To coordinate land use decisions with the schedule of capital improvements in a manner that maintains the adopted level of service standards and meets existing and future facility needs, as identified in future land-use plans.

Policy 2.1

Land-use and transportation planning will use the following level of standards in reviewing the impacts of new development and redevelopment.

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Level of Service</b>
Sanitary Sewer	
Potable Water	
Solid Waste	
Principal Arterials	
Minor Arterials/all others	
Recreational/Open Space	
Drainage	

Policy 2.2

Development plans and permits will be evaluated for expansion when required public facilities and services are operating at the established level of services, or will be available concurrent with the impacts of the development. Such facilities and services may be provided in phases if development correspondingly occurs in phases; however, required service levels must be maintained at all times during the development process.

Objective 3:

In order to maintain adopted level of service standards, future development shall be subject to the assessment of a proportionate cost of facility improvements necessitated by the impacts of the development.

Policy 3.1

Where appropriate, land development review will require land dedication, payment-in-lieu of fees, or other measures to obtain ownership or legal use of property needed for utilities, roadways and other facilities **needed to serve new development.**

Policy 3.2

Where necessary and appropriate, consider all available means to assign new development a pro rate share of public facility costs, which it generates, such as user fees, special assessments, or capital expenditures for **infrastructure.**

Policy 3.3

Continue to apply for and secure grants or private funds when available to finance new capital **improvements.**

Objective 4:

To ensure the provision of needed public facilities within Lee County based on adopted levels of service set forth in a county master plan. Public facilities needs will be determined on the basis of previously issued development plans as well as the county's ongoing process for planning, budgeting, and other management practices.

Policy 4.1

Existing and future public and private capital facilities shall operate at the recommended level of service **established in this plan.**

Policy 4.2

General obligation bonds shall not exceed \_\_\_\_\_ of annually budgeted revenues.

Policy 4.3

A five-year capital improvements program and annual capital budget will be adopted and updated as part of the county's annual budget process. This will be reviewed by a select committee developed by the County Commission, County Administrator, County Planning Commission, and finance staff.