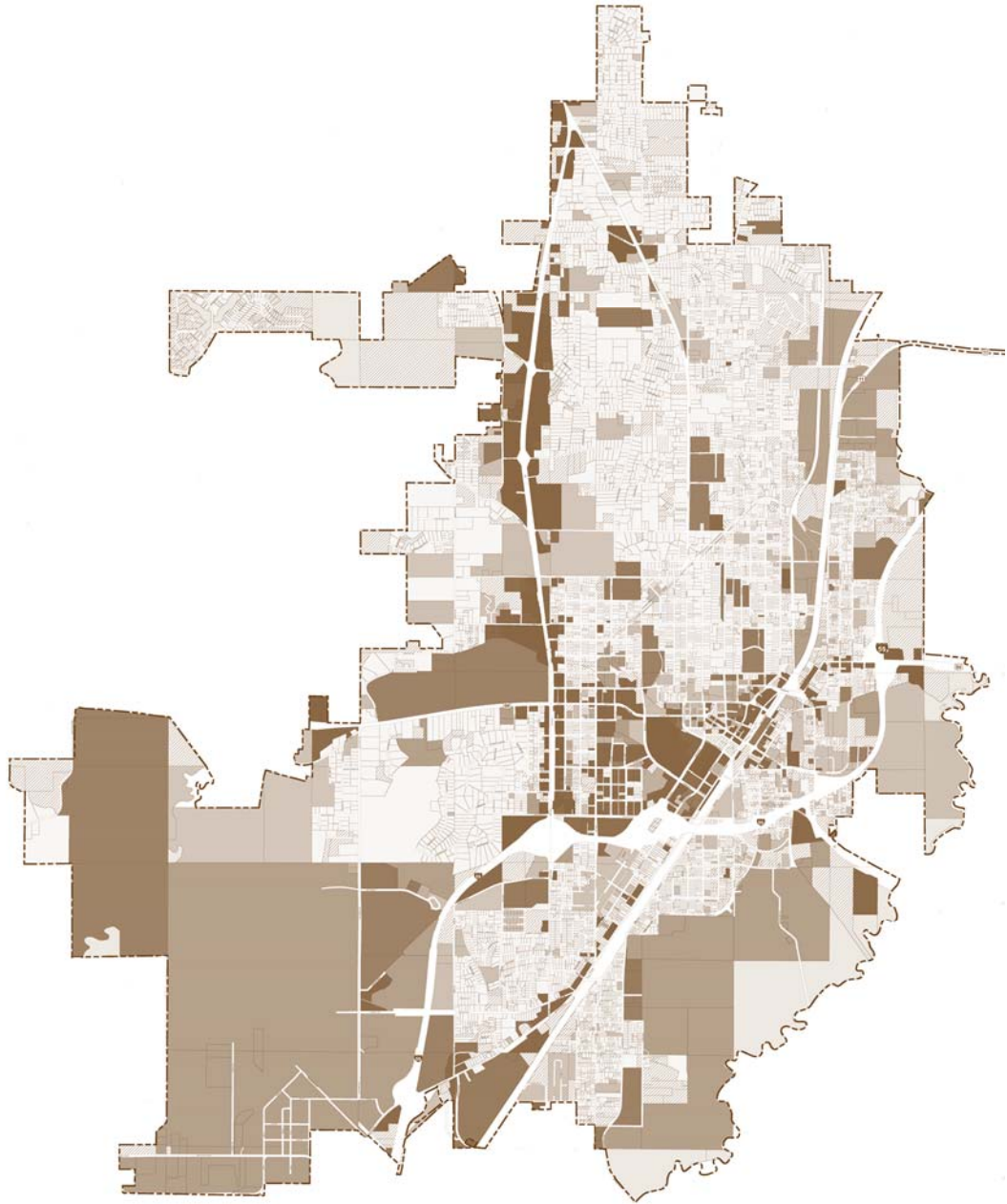


LAUREL

M I S S I S S I P P I



2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Acknowledgments

Mayor

Johnny Magee

City Council

La’Juan Jones, Ward 1

Tony Wheat, Ward 2

Tony Thaxton, Ward 3

George Carmichael, Ward 4

Manuel Jones, Ward 5

Travares Comegys, Ward 6

David Walsh, Ward 7

Steering Committee Members

Jimmie Bunch

Haile Gaddy

Bruce Gavin

Daniel Hayes

Judi Holifield

Faye Jackson

Charlotte Myrick

Elvin Ulmer

Susan Vincent

We must also acknowledge those volunteers who were part of comprehensive planning efforts in 2007. Without their efforts, the current plan would not be where it is today.

Honorable Melvin Mack

Gary Suddith

Linda Reinholtz

Willie Evans

Chad Harris

Doncella Melton

Ed Diket, Jr.

Wayne Taylor

Doyle Webb

Albert Ray

Joe L. Moffett

Sheila Cole

Gary Jones

Talmadge B. Lee

Rex Gilbert

Milton Stennett

Larry Thomas

Allyson Knotts

Prepared by:



Table of Contents

Elected Officials, Appointed Officials and Acknowledgments	3
Vision Statement.....	9
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	11
Purpose	13
Project Background.....	13
Planning Process	14
Plan Organization.....	15
How to Use this Plan.....	16
Chapter 2: Public Participation	17
Background	19
Public Meetings.....	19
Steering Committee	21
Chapter 3: Goals and Objectives.....	23
Chapter 4: Community Character	27
City of Laurel History.....	29
The Community.....	31
Regional Context.....	32
Cultural and Historical Resources	32
Summary and Recommendations.....	34
Chapter 5: Population	35
Introduction	37
Population.....	37
Other Demographics.....	38
Summary and Recommendations.....	41
Chapter 6: Natural Resources	43
Introduction	45
Climate and Topography.....	45
Hydrography.....	46
Flood Zones.....	47
Threatened and Endangered Species	48
Soils	48
Summary and Recommendations.....	50
Chapter 7: Community Facilities and Service.....	51
Introduction	53
Educational Facilities	53
Parks and Recreation	56

City Government	59
Solid Waste	60
Utilities	61
Medical and Health Related Services	62
Emergency Services	63
Water and Wastewater.....	66
Summary and Recommendations.....	67
Chapter 8: Housing	69
Introduction	71
Types of Housing.....	71
Age and Condition.....	72
Occupancy and Tenure	72
Costs and Value.....	72
New and Proposed Development.....	73
Summary and Recommendations.....	74
Chapter 9: Land Use	75
Introduction	77
Existing Land Use	77
Future Land Use	80
Summary and Recommendations.....	90
Chapter 10: Transportation	91
Introduction	93
Railways	93
Roadways	93
Public Transportation.....	97
Transportation Improvements.....	98
Summary and Recommendations.....	100
Chapter 11: Implementation Strategies	101
Appendices	

List of Maps

Map 1:	Existing Neighborhoods	31
Map 2:	Physiographic Regions	45
Map 3:	Water Bodies	46
Map 4:	Flood Zones.....	47
Map 5:	Soils	49
Map 6:	Schools	55
Map 7:	Parks and Recreational Areas	57
Map 8:	Fire Stations	65
Map 9:	Existing Land Use	79
Map 10:	Future Land Use.....	83
Map 11:	Old Town Overlay	84
Map 12:	Downtown Overlay District	85
Map 13:	Sawmill Overlay District.....	86
Map 14:	Beacon Overlay District	87
Map 15:	Medical Overlay District	88
Map 16:	Garden Overlay District	89
Map 17:	Functional Classification System.....	94
Map 18:	Average Daily Traffic.....	96
Map 19:	Transportation Improvement Projects.....	99

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Required Elements of a Comprehensive Plan	13
Figure 2:	Public Participation Meeting	19
Figure 3:	Participants Sharing Thoughts on Laurel.....	19
Figure 4:	Visioning Exercise Led by Facilitator.....	20
Figure 5:	Group Discussion	20
Figure 6:	Relationship of Goals	25
Figure 7:	City of Laurel History	29
Figure 8:	Eight-Wheel Lindsey Wagon.....	30
Figure 9:	Oak St during July 4th Parade Early 1900s	30
Figure 10:	Laurel Welcome Sign	32
Figure 11:	Confederate Statue Near Courthouse	32
Figure 12:	Geographic Profile for Laurel, MS.....	45
Figure 13:	Laurel-Jones County Library	53
Figure 14:	Laurel High School	54
Figure 15:	Laurel Parks.....	58
Figure 16:	Trust for Public Land Principles	59
Figure 17:	Laurel City Hall	59
Figure 18:	South Central Regional Medical Facility	63
Figure 19:	Laurel Fire Department (Station #1).....	64
Figure 20:	Laurel Fire Stations	65

Figure 21:	Laurel Police Department	65
Figure 22:	H.U.D. Programs.....	73
Figure 23:	Smart Growth Principles	81
Figure 24:	Conceptual Outparcel Development	86
Figure 25:	Conceptual Development at Beacon Street Exit.....	87
Figure 26:	Mixed-Use Residential Concept.....	88
Figure 27:	Compact Cottage Home Development	89

List of Tables

Table 1:	Historic Properties in Jones County	33
Table 2:	Historical Population Growth and Decline.....	37
Table 3:	Projected Population	38
Table 4:	Poverty Guides	39
Table 5:	Top 24 Employers	40
Table 6:	Threatened/Endangered Species in Jones County	48
Table 7:	City of Laurel Public Schools	54
Table 8:	Types of Housing.....	71
Table 9:	Historic Cities in Mississippi	72
Table 10:	Land Use by Category	80
Table 11:	Implementation Projects	105

Vision Statement

The guiding vision for the City of Laurel is to encourage new growth and development with sound community planning principles in order to protect the natural environment, promote economic development and improve the overall quality of life for each resident. This vision will be accomplished through sustainability initiatives that seek to balance the natural environment, the economy, and social needs with a strong emphasis on preserving City's cultural heritage.

Chapter 1



Introduction

Figure 1: Required Elements of a Comprehensive Plan

Mississippi State Statute Section 17-1-1 states the plan must contain the following elements:

- **Goals and Objectives** for the long-range development of the county or city;
- **Land Use Plan** in map or policy form;
- **Transportation Plan** depicting, in map form, the proposed functional classifications for all existing and proposed streets and highways;
- **Community Facilities Plan** which is the basis for a capital improvements program.

Source: Mississippi Statute of 1972

Purpose

As communities grow, the need for more orderly growth strategies become a common goal. As this growth occurs, the number of questions raised by decision makers continue to rise. The questions and/or issues range from project prioritization to the ultimate balancing act of encouraging growth and maintaining the overall quality of life. A way to address and answer these type questions is through the comprehensive planning process.

A comprehensive plan is a document that seeks input of local citizens in an effort to create goals and objectives for long-term growth. The elements a comprehensive plan addresses vary from location to location; however, common ones are: the environment, transportation, housing, economic development and land use. It is also a tool used by local decision makers to guide growth and development of the community. This comprehensive plan encompasses all of the elements listed above along with the minimums as set forth in the Mississippi Code of 1972, Section 17-1-1. Mississippi Code states that a plan must include goals and objectives, a land use plan in map or policy form, a transportation plan and a community facilities plan. A more detailed description of each of the elements can be found in Figure 1.

The 2035 Laurel Comprehensive Plan seeks to paint an overall picture of the existing conditions of the city, chart future growth patterns, and establish guiding principles and goals for the city based on citizen comments.

Project Background

In the fall of 2007, Neel Schaffer, Inc. was hired as consultants to complete a 20 year comprehensive plan for the City of Laurel. The goal of this project was to create a “grassroots” effort in order to gain optimal citizen participation. The timeframe for the comprehensive planning process was one calendar year and included the four elements as required by State law. Along with public participation meetings, a land use analysis was completed. This study described current uses of the land and used projections to detail the best possible future uses. A detailed description of the citizen participation process along with meeting information can be found in Chapter 2 (Public Participation). The plan was completed in draft format in 2008, but was never formally adopted by the City of Laurel.

In 2014, the city hired Neel-Schaffer, Inc. to update the Comprehensive Plan and move it through the adoption process.

Planning Process

The comprehensive planning process is comprised of several steps and will encompass both background studies and citizen participation in order to create a plan. The completion of all steps is vital to the plan’s success while the order of the process can be adjusted to fit the needs of a particular city. The following steps are the most common used by municipalities:

1. *Analyzing Conditions and Trends*

During the initial stages of the planning process, research of the existing conditions within the community is conducted which includes the following topics: housing, community facilities and services, land use and natural resources. Previous plans, studies, interviews and field studies were conducted in this stage. Interviews with city staff, elected officials and members of the business community are used to identify needs and concerns.

2. *Public Participation*

Public participation events are conducted to give citizens an opportunity to express their concerns and create a vision for the community. These events can accomplish a number of objectives depending on the needs and desires of the community for which they are held. The goal of public participation meetings and events are to determine the goals of the city as seen by its residents. Simply stated, the goals found within a comprehensive plan reflect the needs and desires of residents.

3. *Development Alternatives*

The comprehensive planning process includes the study of development alternatives and possible funding sources for improvement.

4. *Implementation Strategies*

The implementation strategy portion of the comprehensive planning process includes a capital improvements plan. This plan lists possible capital projects as identified by elected officials and city department heads. This list includes, but not is not limited to, project title, responsible department, funding source(s) and possible implementation dates.

5. *Writing the Plan*

After compiling data from selected sources and representatives, a plan is then written. The goal of writing a plan will include providing relevant facts with charts and illustrations that will convey a common message to each resident.

6. *Adoption*

Adoption of a comprehensive plan will follow a series of public meetings and review by the City Council. This adoption will come after comments from public hearings are considered for inclusion along with approval of final draft by the governing body.

7. *Implementation*

Implementation of a comprehensive plan is achieved through the passage of ordinances, private development decisions and capital improvement projects.

Once completed, this plan will provide policy guidance to elected officials and city staff related to land development decisions.

Plan Organization

The comprehensive plan examines existing conditions, determines future growth patterns, articulates citizen goals and provides a common vision for which to reach a desired future. The following is a brief description of each chapter found within this document:

Chapter 1 - Introduction: provides general information about the plan and the planning process.

Chapter 2 - Citizen Participation: describes the process in which public input was gathered and provides a summary of the input.

Chapter 3 - Goals and Objectives: provides the overall guiding principles as identified by members of the steering committee using input from public meetings and general knowledge of the community.

Chapter 4 - Community Character: provides information related to the history of the city along with examining significant cultural/historical assets within the community.

Chapter 5 - Population: provides a summary of demographic variables such as housing, income, education and other factors.

Chapter 6 - Natural Resources: describes the natural environment of Laurel which includes soils, topography, water

resources and other natural resources.

Chapter 7 - Community Facilities and Services: gives an evaluation and inventory of city facilities and services.

Chapter 8 - Housing: analyzes the existing condition of housing and projects future housing needs.

Chapter 9 - Economic Development: examines the city's existing economic activity which includes wages, types of jobs and trade area.

Chapter 10 - Land Use: presents information relating to existing land use along with future projections and classifications.

Chapter 11 - Transportation: describes the transportation network that serves the City of Laurel along with information relating to future improvements.

Chapter 12 - Implementation Strategies: provides a capital improvement program along with performance measures in an effort needed to implement policies set forth in the plan.

Appendices: includes results and handouts from the public participation meetings.

How To Use This Plan

This document known as the “City of Laurel 2035 Comprehensive Plan,” is the official policy guide for future decisions in the incorporated area of the City of Laurel. It is pursuant to MS State Code of 1972, Section 17-1-1. The chapters and maps found therein should be used together and not treated as separate units. This comprehensive plan is a living document and should be used constantly to guide future development decisions. It is recommended this plan be updated often to reflect changes and to measure performance and usefulness.

Chapter 2



Public Participation

Figure 2: Public Participation Meetings

<p>Ward 1: April 7, 2008</p>
<p>Ward 2: April 15, 2008</p>
<p>Ward 3: April 10, 2008</p>
<p>Ward 4: April 14, 2008</p>
<p>Ward 5: April 17, 2008</p>
<p>Ward 6: April 21, 2008</p>
<p>Ward 7: April 24, 2008</p>

Figure 3: Participants Sharing Thoughts on Laurel



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Background

One of the most important components of a comprehensive plan is citizen input. In the absence of input from residents, plans gain no support. By capturing the concerns and visions of the citizens, a general consensus can be reached regarding the future of the community. Multiple meetings were held using the same format which allowed for optimal amounts of participation. This chapter will describe the outcome of these meetings along with the results from each.

Public Meetings

During the Spring of 2008, seven public participation meetings were held at the Laurel Train Depot to encourage citizen participation in the comprehensive planning process. These seven meetings were determined by the number of wards in the city. The goal of each meeting was to provide a forum for which each resident would be free to share his/her vision for the future of Laurel. After a brief presentation by consultants and city staff, each attendee was placed into small groups to complete a visioning exercise. A visioning exercise is a process by which citizens define the best possible future they can visualize for their community. It is used to identify a purpose, core values and unified vision for the future. A facilitator was provided for each group to ensure that all opinions were expressed freely and guide the overall process.

Visioning Exercise

The visioning exercise was used at each of the ward meetings. As previously stated, a visioning exercise is used to identify core values, their purpose and a unified vision. It also identifies current issues to which planners can use in formulating long-range goals and objectives. The visioning exercise for the City of Laurel, consisted of three questions. These questions were:

1. *What do you like best about the City of Laurel?*
2. *What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?*
3. *Finish the sentence below with your vision for the City of Laurel in 20 years. "In twenty years, the City of Laurel will be....."*

Each person was given several minutes to complete each question. After completion of the questions, each resident would give the facilitator his/her responses. The facilitator then recorded the answers on a large notepad and placed them on the wall of the building. Residents then were given ten dots to place beside the re-

response(s) they strongly agreed with. Of the three questions presented, only the first two were allowed to be voted on. Five dots were placed on the items they most strongly agreed with on question 1 (*What do you like best about the City of Laurel?*) and five dots were placed on the items they most strongly agreed with on question 2 (*What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?*). After voting, each group's response to completing the sentence in question 3 (*In twenty years, the City of Laurel will be.....*) was read aloud by the facilitator for other participants and discussed.

Visioning Results

All responses from citizens were considered by the Steering Committee as goals and objectives were written for the comprehensive plan. The steering committee took this information and comments along with other information gained to further refine them for inclusion in the plan. Recommendations made during this component will be used to guide city leaders in making future policy decisions.

All comments given by the meeting attendees were used in analyzing both the issues and opportunities of the community. The following is a list of common responses from residents of each ward relating to questions 1 and 2. All responses, broken down by wards, can be found in the Appendix.

Question 1: What do you like best about the City of Laurel?

- Small Town Atmosphere
- Amount of parks and greenspace
- The arts
- Recreational opportunities
- Cultural Facilities (Lauren Rogers Museum)
- Lack of traffic congestion
- People
- Natural beauty
- Regional location
- Churches
- School system
- Downtown potential
- Friendly people

Other favorable comments centered around the architecture of the city, the restaurants, accessibility of public officials and police presence.

Figure 4: Visioning Exercise led by Facilitator



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure 5: Group Discussion



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Question 2: What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?

- Infrastructure
- The condition of rental properties
- Litter
- School system
- Parking
- Public transportation
- Shopping opportunities

Other items residents wanted to see changed about Laurel included, but are not limited to: loud music in vehicles, officer visibility, utilizing more funds to improve the city, open government and places for Senior based activities. Individual wards varied in their responses to both things they liked and wanted to be changed in the city. For example, if one ward saw education as a strength; the other one indicated it as a weakness. This serves as an example to the varying levels of input received .

Steering Committee

A steering committee was appointed to assist Neel-Schaffer in the planning process. Members of this committee were appointed by the mayor, members of the city council, the chief administrative officer and the planning commission. Each councilperson appointed one person for their ward. There were a total of 14 members on this committee. The primary duty of the committee was to help prioritize capital improvement projects and recommend long-range goals and objectives for the Comprehensive Plan. A total of three meetings were held and one comprehensive planning workshop. The regularly scheduled meetings were held once a month and included a speaker related to a comprehensive plan element. The workshop which was held later was a two-day event which included speakers and a mobile tour. The mobile tour consisted of site visits to historical, cultural and infrastructure based resources. A draft set of goals and objectives were formulated based on regularly scheduled meetings, two-day workshop, responses from ward meetings and general knowledge of the community.

In 2014, with the re-evaluation of the 2008 comprehensive planning process, a new steering committee was formed to assist in updating the plan. This committee met monthly to evaluate different elements of the 2008 draft comprehensive plan and to determine any updates that needed to be made to the goals, objectives and recommendations.

Chapter 3



Goals and Objectives

The Goals and Objectives formulated in this chapter were written to reflect the comments of residents and steering committee members and information provided through previous studies. Within this chapter:

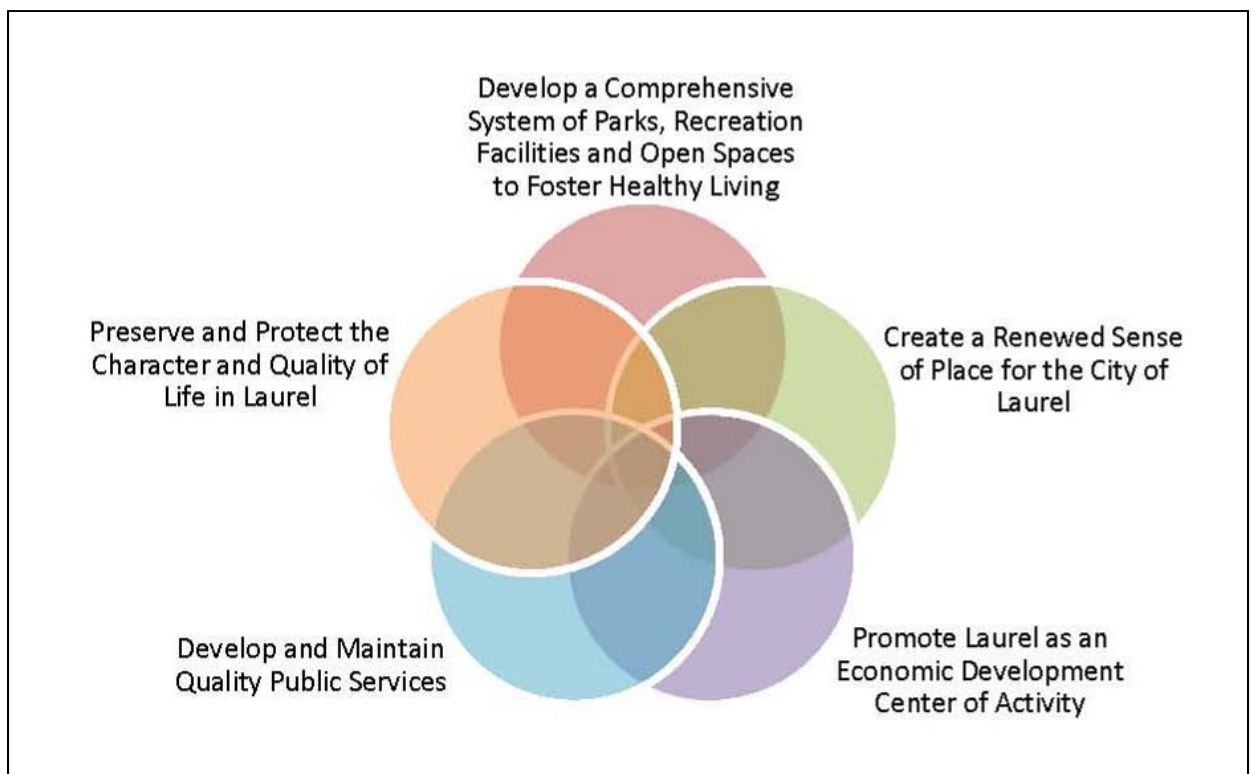
Goals are general statements concerning an aspect of the City's desired ultimate physical, social and/or economic environment. Goals set the tone for development decisions in terms of the citizens' desired quality of life.

Objectives express the kinds of action that are necessary to achieve the stated goals without assigning responsibility to any specific action.

The recommendations related to these goals and objectives are contained within chapters of this plan and will encourage specific courses of action for the community to undertake to achieve the objective.

The graphic below shows the interconnectivity between each goal outlined in this chapter.

Figure 6: Relationship of Goals



Goal 1: Develop a comprehensive system of parks, recreation facilities and open spaces to foster healthy living.

Objective 1: Provide adequate lighting at recreational facilities and along sidewalks and pathways.

Objective 2: Invest in infrastructure and amenities that make biking Laurel easier.

Objective 3: Invest in diverse recreational opportunities throughout the city for all ages and activity levels.

Goal 2: Create a renewed sense of place for the City of Laurel.

Objective 1: Celebrate the cultural heritage of the community.

Objective 2: Foster tourism that promotes the cultural, historical and recreational resources of the City of Laurel.

Objective 3: Maintain and repair downtown buildings and properties.

Objective 4: Develop landscaping that will enhance major corridors and the visual appeal of the City.

Goal 3: Preserve and protect the character and quality of life in Laurel.

Objective 1: Create and enforce ordinances that preserve the architectural and historical character of the city and protect environmental resources within the city.

Objective 2: Promote and create community gatherings, social interaction and areas that bring people together.

Objective 3: Promote quality housing for all ages and income levels.

Goal 4: Promote Laurel as an economic development center of activity.

Objective 1: Develop partnerships within the community to bolster economic development in Laurel.

Objective 2: Enhance economic development opportunities within the city.

Objective 1: Market areas of economic growth that already exist in the City of Laurel.

Goal 5: Develop and maintain quality public services.

Objective 1: Continue to improve the level of public services currently provided by the city.

Chapter 4



Community Character

**Figure 7:
City of Laurel History**

1819	- Jones Co. created from Wayne & Covington Counties.
1882	- Village of Laurel created because of timber availability and the railroad.
1884	- Laurel post office constructed under spelling of "Larrell". Later changed.
1901	- Lindsey Wheel Wagon Factory formed in Laurel. Revolutionized the timber industry.
1904	- Laurel Machine and Foundry established to fabricate metal parts for Lindsey Wagon.
1926	- Masonite Corporation founded.
1937	- End of timber industry boom.
1945	- Oil first discovered in the county.
1948	- Hilbun Poultry (Wayne Farms) founded.
1955	- Sanderson Farms, Inc. founded
1968	- Howard Industries, Inc. was formed.
2005	- Veteran's Memorial Museum opens.

City of Laurel History

The City of Laurel has a long and rich history with much debate related to its origin. The year 1882 has become the most generally accepted year. During that same time both the New Orleans and North Eastern Railroads were constructed. Two years later, the Louin sawmill and the post office were constructed. The post office, when constructed in 1884, was first called the "Larrel" Post Office. Soon after its initial naming, the post office changed to "Laurel". The debate on the origins of the name still persists today as seen in the publication, *"Jones County, Mississippi: Echoes of Our Past."* There are some that believe that the city is named after the Laurel bushes. A laurel bush is a plant species that grows in the profusion among the yellow pine. This version is the most accepted not only because of the beauty of the plant but also because it was preferred over the name Kampersville, which was proposed to honor a prominent resident. John Kamper chose not to name the settlement after himself because he felt that the name was too much for such a "primitive settlement." Others have debated that the city is named for one of the early attorneys to settle in the area whose wife name was Laura.

Prosperity Begins

The City of Laurel started with humble origins but soon found prosperity. This prosperity began with the vision of two individuals from Iowa. These individuals were George and Silas Gardiner. Their visit to Laurel began with a stop at the Kamper mill. Upon their visit, both gentlemen noticed that the town appeared to be in poor condition. The existing condition of the town did not deter the Silas' from starting the Eastman, Gardiner and Company Sawmill. This initial investment spurred the interest in other individuals. During that time, the yellow pine species was gone, so the active railroad industry during that time was negatively effected and towns became abandoned.

The construction of the Eastman, Gardiner and Company in 1891 began the industrial revolution in Jones County, specifically the City of Laurel. The prosperity of the city was also advanced with the completion of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad and the opening of the Gulfport Harbor in 1902. During this period of advancement for Laurel, other lumber mills soon

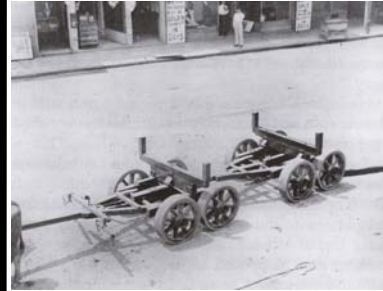
followed. These sawmills were the Gilchrist-Fordney Company (1906), Wausau-Southern Lumber Company (1911) and the Marathon Lumber Company (1926).

As the number of mills increased along, Laurel became the largest producer of yellow pines in the world. It was estimated that one million feet of lumber was being produced per day. The timber industry continued to perform well until 1937. During that year, Eastman, Gardiner and Company, the first sawmill in Laurel, closed. Upon their closing, the timber industry came to a halt within the community. There are several reasons that can be used to explain this end of era. Among the reasons are the Great Depression, depletion of the natural resource (yellow pine) and land taxes. The later of the reasons caused other companies to sell their holdings. The tax burden was very high on properties that were considered cut over. However, a large portion of the population remained due to the Masonite Corporation remaining operational along formation of manufacturing and oil related industries as shown in graphic form in Figure 9 and discussed in the next paragraph. The formation of these industries started in the late 1940s with the discovery of oil to the opening of Hilbun Poultry.

During the time of Laurel's incorporation, several wars of national scale have taken place. Those wars were the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War and the current Iraqi War Campaign. The end of each war brought different dynamic to the further development of the community. The end World War II brought about the introduction of the first gas well in Jones County. This led to oil discovery and production which brought millions to the local economy. It is estimated that over 200 oil related companies were on Laurel during this period. Other notable businesses started during the time after World War I was the Masonite Corporation (1926), Hilbun Poultry (1948) Sanderson Farms (1955), and Howard Industries (1968).

The City of Laurel has witnessed several key events in its history. A history that is filled with both successes and setbacks. As the city moves into the future; more effort has been placed on celebrating its rich history. In celebrating this history-Laurel continues to make technological strides in this new century while maintaining its diverse history. A diversity history which includes a mix of natural resources, small town charm and economic diversity.

Figure 8:
8-wheeled Lindsey Wagon



Source: Jones County, Mississippi:
Echoes From Our Past. 2006

Figure 9:
Oak Street during July 4th
Parade in early 1900s





















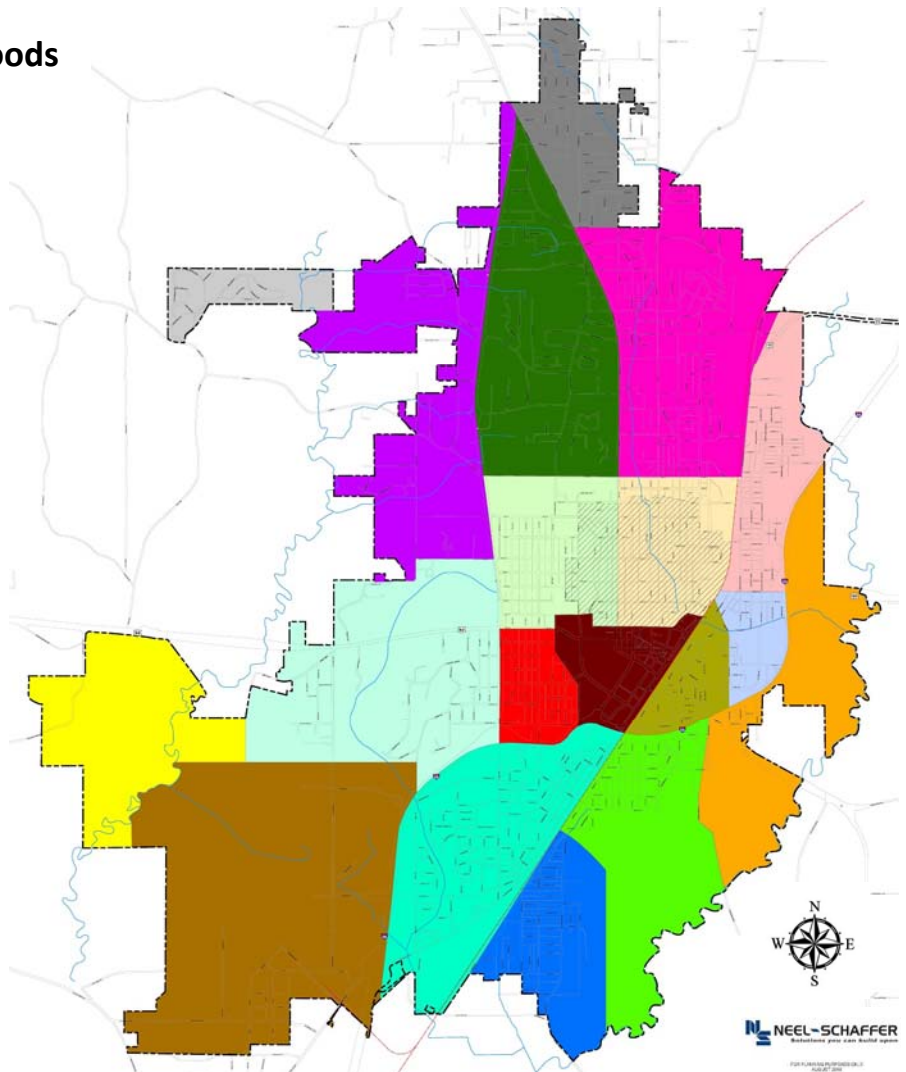
Source: Jones County, Mississippi:
Echoes From Our Past. 2006

The Community

The residents of Laurel are proud of the characteristics that make the city appealing to others. As stated in Chapter 2, the recurring theme among all residents was small town atmosphere and the people. The people of this community seek to maintain these two attributes. In doing so, the city has a total of eighteen neighborhoods with specific geographic boundaries. Map 1 depicts each neighborhood in graphic form. The aforementioned neighborhoods are not official neighborhoods, but the boundaries were identified by residents with each one having its own identity. The identity in which each one represents is what makes it unique and adds to the diverse and charming quality often found and referred to by residents. A majority of individuals within each neighborhood has a sense of shared responsibility in charting the future of the city. In looking towards the future, common issues related to mid-size cities

Map 1: Existing Neighborhoods

Legend	
	Airbase Neighborhood
	Bay Springs Rd Neighborhood
	Central Business Neighborhood
	Central Neighborhood
	College Neighborhood
	Cooks Neighborhood
	Country Club Neighborhood
	Daphne Neighborhood
	Gardiner Neighborhood
	Nora Davis Neighborhood
	Old North Laurel Neighborhood
	Pack Neighborhood
	Queensburg Neighborhood
	South Laurel Neighborhood
	South Side Neighborhood
	Sportsplex Neighborhood
	Tallahala Neighborhood
	Tri-Park Neighborhood
	West Laurel Neighborhood
	Windermere Neighborhood



such as Laurel will arise. These issues can be addressed by the governing body; but only with input and cooperation among the citizens. The governing body should make efforts to openly communicate, share responsibility and build effective partnerships with others. These are all components of what makes the neighborhood element successful in building and maintaining civic pride.

Regional Context

The City of Laurel is located in the southeastern portion of Mississippi. The city is one of four municipalities within Jones County. Laurel is also in close proximity to other major cities. Those other cities are Jackson, MS (90.2 mi.), New Orleans, LA (141 mi.), Memphis, TN (298 mi.), the Mississippi Gulf Coast (102 mi.) and Birmingham, AL (202 mi.). The City is bordered to the West by the Tallahoma Creek and to the East by the Tallahala Creek.

Cultural and Historical Resources

The City of Laurel has a long and celebrated history. This history includes the sawmill industry, wagon industry, sports, oil and transportation. All these elements are what gives each resident a true “sense of place.” Sense of place refers to an environment, structure or memory that someone experiences or was a part of that brings meaning to a location. The history of this city is still evident in the oral traditions passed down from generation to generation to buildings and museums that celebrate this proud heritage. Laurel is home to the Lauren Rogers Museum which is named for Lauren Eastman Rogers. Lauren Rogers’ family was one of founding families for the community. The museum was dedicated to him after an untimely death at the age of 21. This family was one of the very first to settle Laurel in search of timber. In honor of Lauren (the only grandson), the museum was constructed in his honor. This architectural marvel is a Georgian Revival Structure designed by the architect Rathnone Debuys. The museum is home to many items, but has an extensive art and local history section. It also has over 10,000 volumes of collection material.

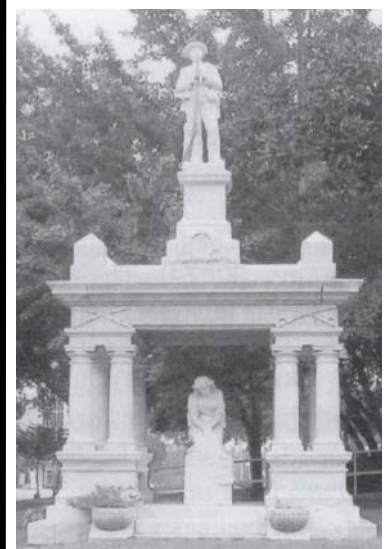
Jones County has many sites listed on the National Register of Historical Places and designated as Mississippi Landmarks. The National Register of Historic Places is the nation’s official list of cultural resources. A Mississippi Landmark designation is the highest form of recognition bestowed on properties with historical character by the state of Mississippi. The Laurel Central District, which is listed in the National Register of Historical Places, contains more than 350 homes and businesses with some or significant historical character.

Figure 10:
Laurel Welcome Sign



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure 11:
Confederate Statue near
Courthouse



Source: Jones County, Mississippi:
Echoes From Our Past. 2006

The table below provides sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, sites designated as Mississippi Landmarks and those sites with Historical Markers based on events of historical significance to the community.

Table 1: Historic Properties in Jones County

Site	Location	Construction Date	Type	Registry
Amos Deason House	Ellisville	1850	1-story Greek Revival	National Register, MS Landmark & Historical Marker
Big Creek Church	Soso	1820s		Historical Marker
Boston Park	Laurel		Park	Historical Marker
Confederate Monument	Ellisville	1912		National Register
Fishtrap Bluff Fishweir	Ellisville Vicinity			National Register
George S. Gardiner High School	Laurel Central District	1922	2-story Mediterranean	MS Landmark
G.W.O. Site	Jones County			National Register
Highway 588 Site	Ellisville		Property	Historical Marker
Jones County Courthouse	Ellisville	1907-1908	2-story	National Register, MS Landmark & Historical Marker
Jones County Courthouse	Laurel Central District	1907-1908	2-story Beaux Arts, Art Deco, Modern	MS Landmark
Jones-Jasper County Line	Jones County		Property	Historical Marker
Lamar Elementary School	Laurel	1913	2-story	MS Landmark
Laurel Central District	Laurel		Multiple Sites	National Register
Laurel City Hall	Laurel Central District	1915	2-story	MS Landmark & Historical Marker
Masonite Corporation	Laurel		Industry	Historical Marker
Newell Rogers House	Laurel Central District	1909	2-story Mediterranean	National Register
NO & NE Depot	Laurel	1913	1-story Craftsman	National Register & MS Landmark
Oak Park School	Laurel		School destroyed by fire in 1957	Historical Marker
Old Ellisville	Jones County		Property	Historical Marker
Pinehurst Hotel	Laurel Central District	1914	4-story demolished 1987	National Register & Historical Marker
Saint Paul Methodist Church			Church	Historical Marker
South MS Charity Hospital	Laurel	Chartered 1917	Hospital	Historical Marker
Stewart M. Jones Junior High School	Laurel	1926	2-story Georgian Revival	MS Landmark

Summary and Recommendations

The City of Laurel residents and visitors see the importance of celebrating, embracing and preserving the city's long and rich history. This can only be achieved by a dedicated governing body and volunteers focus on the goal of promoting the city's history to current and future generations. The following are recommendations that should be addressed to ensure the history of Laurel is promoted and celebrated:

1. Continue marking properties identified with cultural and historical significance.
2. Implement public art at various locations throughout the city that promote the cultural heritage of the community.
3. Develop and Agri-Tourism marketing plan for the region to celebrate the lumber heritage and to promote regional attractions, including Landrums, Mitchell Farms, Fulmers, and the DeSoto National Forest.
4. Expand façade grants program to Beacon Street and along 5th Street.
5. Provide incentives for property owners who rehabilitate buildings in the downtown area and disincentivize empty buildings.
6. Develop a "Plant Laurel" initiative to plant throughout the city to promote the namesake of the city.
7. Work with the Historic Preservation Committee to develop design standards that promote development and facilitate infrastructure improvements while still preserving the historic character of the city.
8. Provide incentives for businesses to locate downtown or in economically distressed areas.
9. Promote Laurel's cultural heritage and antique's market.

Chapter 5



Population

Introduction

Demographics is the study of a population based on factors such as age, race, sex, economic status, level of education, income level and employment. Demographics are often used by decision makers to anticipate and prepare for future needs. This chapter includes specific information about households, educational attainment, race, age and demographic characteristics. Information for this section was obtained from the United States Census Bureau and other demographic sources.

Population

According to the Census Bureau, the population of Laurel is estimated at 18,978 people in 2013. This marks a 2.3 percent increase from the 2010 Census total of 18,540 people. Table 2 shows the historic growth and decline of population in the City of Laurel and Jones County from the 1880 Census to the Census Bureaus' estimated population in 2013.

Table 2: Historical Population Growth and Decline

Census	Laurel Pop.	% Change	Jones Co. Pop.	% Change
1880	1,297	---	3,828	---
1890	2,568	98.0	8,333	117.7
1900	3,193	24.3	17,846	114.2
1910	8,465	165.1	29,885	67.5
1920	13,037	54.0	32,919	10.2
1930	18,017	38.2	41,492	21.48
1940	20,508	13.82	49,227	18.6
1950	25,038	22.1	57,235	16.3
1960	27,889	11.4	59,542	8.5
1970	24,145	-13.4	56,357	-5.3
1980	21,897	-9.3	61,912	9.9
1990	18,827	-14.0	62,031	0.2
2000	18,393	-2.3	64,958	4.7
2010	18,540	0.8	67,761	4.3
2013 Est.	18,978	2.3	68,961	1.8

As evident by the population table, the population growth in Laurel was strong through the 1960s with the largest population growths occurring during the timber boom and continuing fairly strong with the discovery of oil and foundation of a more diversified economy. After the 1960s, the City of Laurel saw four decades of declining population while the county only saw one decade of population decline in this same time period. This decline can be attributed to many factors which include population movement to rural areas, crime, natural disasters, taxes and so forth. During the 2010 Census, the City of Laurel saw its first population growth with a modest 0.8% increase from the 2000 Census or 0.08% annually from 2000 to 2010. Projections for 2013 show continued growth from 2010 at 2.3% growth rate or 0.76% annually from 2010 to 2013.

For the population projections found in Table 3, an annual growth rate had to be calculated. Between the 2000 and 2010 Census, the City of Laurel grew 0.08% annually. Between the 2010 Census and the estimates for 2013, the City of Laurel is estimated to have grown .77% annually. To be conservative, a 0.5% annual growth rate was used to estimate the population for the City of Laurel in 2030. Many factors contribute to population growth including economic development, public services and community appeal.

Other Demographics

While changes in population are important to monitor, other characteristics of a municipalities population are also of interest. The age and income level of the population of a community provide decision makers with vital keys to what type of infrastructure should be a priority, services that the city will need to look towards in the future to better accommodate their population and the ability of the population they have to pay for existing and future services.

Age, Gender and Racial Composition

The age group distribution within a community allows decision makers to determine immediate and long range goals of a community. These goals will be used to implement appropriate city services and the construction of public facilities. Among the services and facilities are educational, medical, housing and recreational.

According to the 2010 Census, approximately 28.6% of the population found in the City of Laurel is under 18 or are considered school-aged or younger. Approximately 14% of the population is considered 65 years and over, which are considered primarily retired

Table 3: Projected Population

Year	Projected Population
2010	18,540
2015	18,633
2020	18,726
2025	18,819
2030	18,914
2035	19,008
2040	19,103

and no longer working. The remainder of the population is fairly evenly spread between the Census age groups from 19 to 64 with no one age group having a significantly larger majority of the population than the other.

According to the 2010 Census, the racial composition of Laurel is 61.3% African American, 29.8% White, 7.7% Hispanic or Latino and the remainder of Asian, American Indian or of multiple races. Of the total population of Laurel, 53% are female.

With this information, one can assume that the City of Laurel has a well balanced population with probably a large number of young families and plenty of people, within working ages, to fill employment opportunities within the city.

Household Income

The household income of a community is characterized by the total amount of annual income generated by individuals in the workforce. The Median household income for residents in Laurel from 2008-2012 was \$29,152 which is lower than the State of Mississippi whose is at \$38,882. Jones County is ranked 26 out of the 82 counties in Mississippi for the highest median household income.

Poverty

The poverty level of a community determines a resident’s ability to maintain a basic level of living. The U.S. Census Bureau has a predetermined poverty line. This poverty line (level) is the minimum annual monetary sum needed to afford basic and essential such as shelter, food and clothing. This level is adjusted annually for externalities such as inflation. The current basic poverty level is determined by certain thresholds as determined by the Federal Office of Budget and Management (OMB). For an individual, the threshold is \$11,170 and for a family of four, the threshold is 23,050. According to the 2010 Census, the amount of individuals considered below the poverty level was 32.4%. This was higher in comparison to the state with a percent of 22.3% and the United States at 14.9 percent. These high numbers indicate that a substantial amount of individuals and families are having difficulty in meeting their respective basic needs. Many residents require supplements to monthly income in the form of government based assistance. This is evident in by an almost forty percent (35.5%) that receive assistance through Supplementary Security Income (SSI), public assistance income, and Food Stamp/SNAP benefits.

Table 4: Poverty Guides

Persons in family/ household	Poverty Guideline
1	\$11,170
2	\$15,130
3	\$19,090
4	\$23,050
5	\$27,010
6	\$30,970
7	\$34,930
8	\$38,890
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$3,960 for each additional person.	

Source: US Dept. of Health & Human Services

Educational Attainment

The educational attainment totals of a community reveal the level of education an individual receives and the amount of earning potential that can be achieved. The educational attainment of individuals is collected for those 25 years of age and older. The largest category among Laurel residents were those with a high school diploma or its equivalent at 26.9%. This was followed by those with some college at 22.0%. Those with a bachelor's degree or higher was 15.3%. These numbers were not far from those seen throughout the state.

Employment

The City of Laurel is home to approximately 700 business establishments. A majority of the businesses located within Jones County are retail trade, with other major contributors being health care and social assistance, professional services, accommodation and food services, and wholesale trade. Table 5 illustrates the largest industry categories found in the City of Laurel and Jones County along with the number of people employed by each business establishment. In total, these employers provide jobs for about 15,000 people.

With 6,937 people of working age (16 years and older) in the labor force, 84.3% work within Jones County. Because of the availability of jobs in the area, approximately 72% of laborers in the City of Laurel travel less than 20 minutes to work and almost all workers drive alone in their own vehicle to work.

Table 5: Top 24 Employers

Employer	Employees
Howard Industries	3,500 +
S. Central Regional Medical Center	1,876
Ellisville State School	1,445
Jones Co. Schools	1,162
Sanderson Farms	889
Wayne Farms	760
Laurel School Dist.	602
Wal-Mart	585
Jones County	510
Masonite	489
Sawmill Square Mall	450
Jones County Junior College	415
MS Industries for Individuals with Disabilities	415
Southern Hens	390
City of Laurel	286
Tanner Construction	171
Dunn Roadbuilders	141
Thermo-Kool Mid South Industries	135
West Quality Food Service	135
Morgan Brothers Millwork	128
Laurel Machine & Foundry	119
The Essmeuller Co.	116
Hoswe Implement	115
Care Center of Laurel	106
Total Employees	14,940+

Summary and Recommendations

The population of Laurel experienced moderate growth from 2000 to 2010 with a 0.8 growth rate in the ten year span. Based on estimates provided by the Census Bureau for 2013, the City of Laurel is continuing to experience growth at a faster pace of 2.3%. However, we can achieve substantial growth by attracting new industries that offer competitive salaries, improving the overall quality of life through beautification projects, as well as providing adequate services to residents. The following recommendations should be considered:

1. Provide information to residents about grants and other funding sources to finance housing improvements.
2. Partner with area educational institutes to create an entrepreneurial initiative for Laurel youth.
3. Coordinate with MDA, EDA, JCJC, and USM to offer workforce training that matches the needs of new and existing businesses and industries.
4. Promote the city as a regional employment center for health care and education.

Chapter 6



Natural Resources

Introduction

The City of Laurel has an abundance of natural resources for which to offer residents. A natural resource is defined as a natural feature, such as a water body, trees or other natural element that provides aesthetic as well as environmental qualities to a community. The prevalence of natural resources improves the quality of life in a community. It also provides a form of recreation that does not solely rely on humans to create. This section will provide detailed information on the number of natural resources along with recommendations to ensure that these resources are preserved for future generations.

Climate and Topography

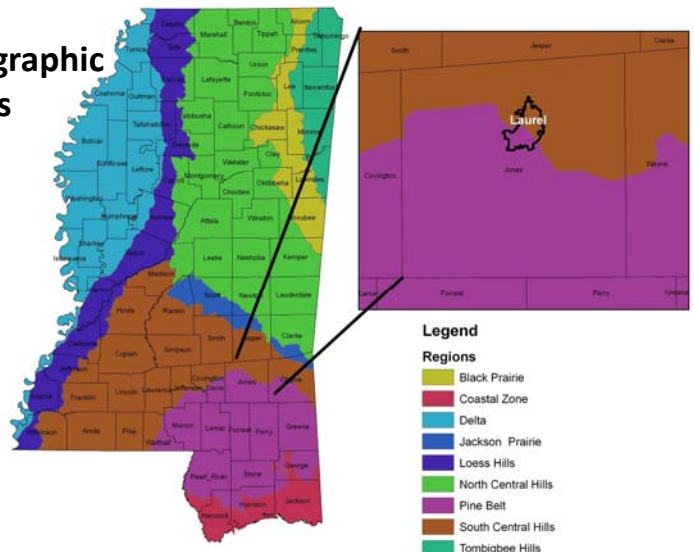
The City of Laurel's climate reflects that of the State of Mississippi. The summers are hot due to its geographic position and prevailing southerly winds from May through September. This humidity is often accompanied with extreme cases of heat. Map 2 indicates that Laurel lies within Climate Zone 9. According to the State Climatologist, the mean temperatures for Laurel range from 46.5°F in January to 81°F in July. The highest temperature ever recorded for the city was in 1951 at 105 °F. The lowest recorded temperature was 3°F in 1985.

The City of Laurel is 15.8 square miles and lies within both the Pine Belt and South Central Hills physiographic regions of Mississippi. The Pine Belt region is characterized by rolling hills and steep-sided ridges and valleys. The remaining portion of the city falls within the South Central Hills region which has the same topographical elements found within the Pine Belt region.

Figure 12: Geographic Profile for Laurel, MS

Latitude: 31.41 N
Longitude: 089.07W
Elevation: 225 feet above MSL
Square Miles: 15.8 square miles
Average Precipitation: 4.9 inches

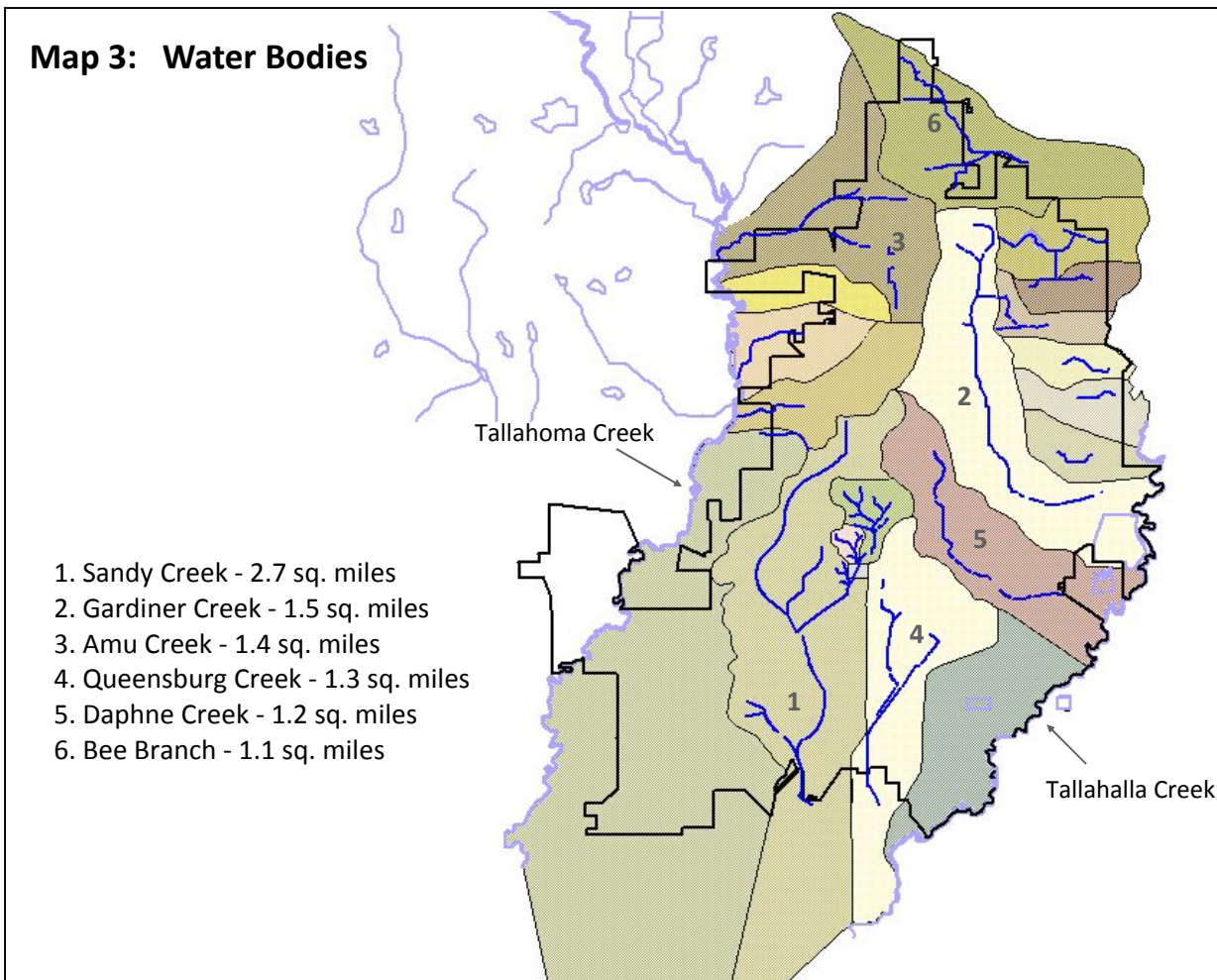
Map 2: Physiographic Regions



Hydrography

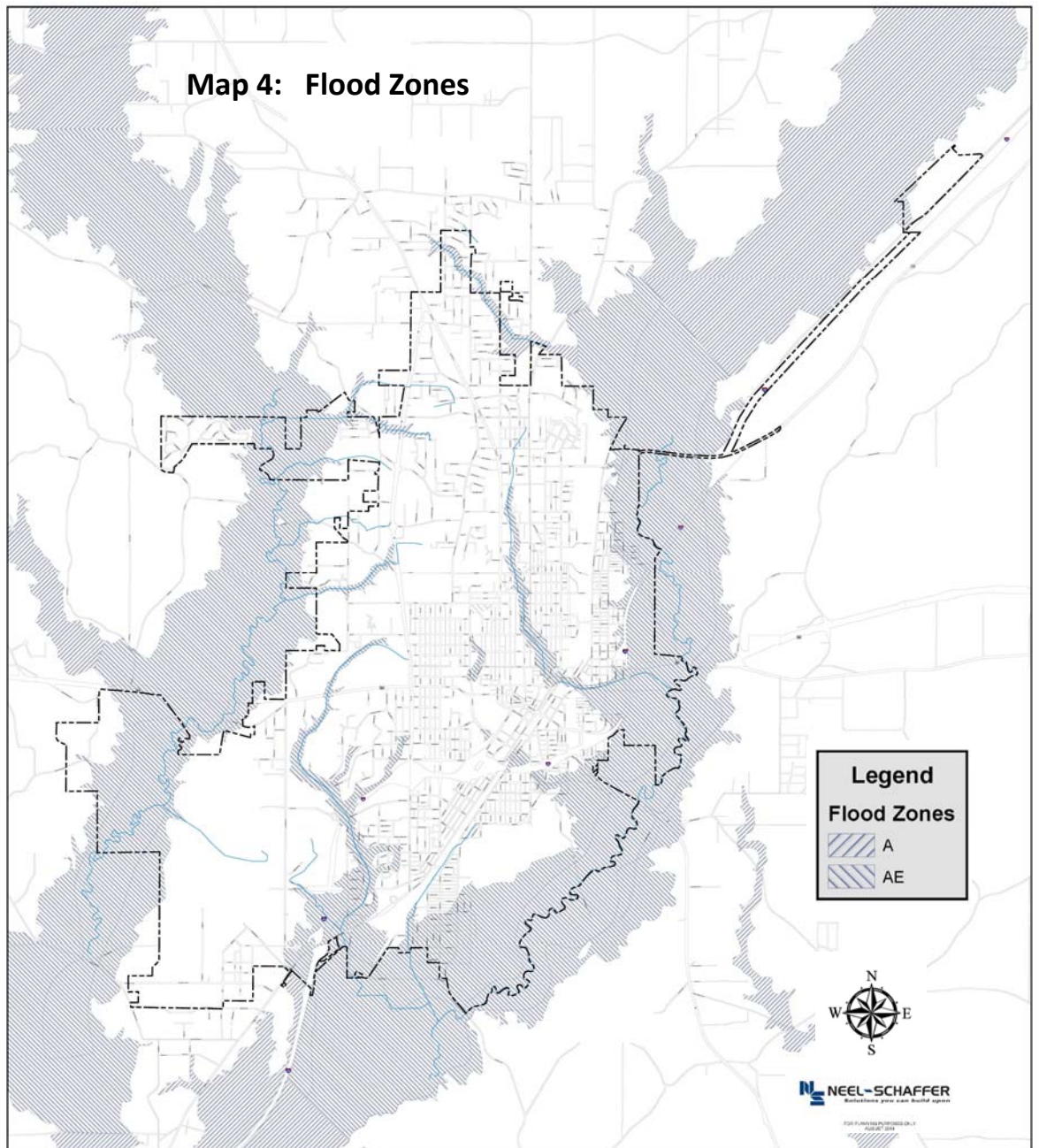
The City of Laurel is located within the Pascagoula River Basin. This basin is the second largest basin in Mississippi and drains approximately 9,600 square miles. The largest basin in Mississippi is the Yazoo River Basin which drains approximately 13,355 square miles. The Pascagoula River Basin covers most of the southeastern portion of the state and extends into the southwestern portion of Alabama.

The basin is characterized by heavily forested areas. The central portion, where Jones County is located; is known as the Pine Belt. This name is derived due to the natural occurrence and abundance of pine forests and hardwoods. The urban areas within the basin consists of the cities of Pascagoula, Meridian, Hattiesburg and Laurel. There a number of rivers and streams found within the Pascagoula River Basin. These streams and rivers comprise a total of 15,045 square miles. The City of Laurel has approximately eight water bodies/features found within its corporate limits. Map 3 depicts the water bodies/features along with the linear miles of each.



Flood Zones

Flood zones and floodways are determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A flood zone is a geographic area that has defined levels of varying risk and are depicted on a community's FIRM or flood hazard boundary map. According to Flood Zone Map, the majority of the City of Laurel lies outside the floodplain. Those areas that are primarily found within flood zones are those that run parallel to major tributaries and are subject to a 1% annual chance of flooding per year.



Flood zones are typically areas that development should be discouraged. The construction of homes or business within this area can have adverse effects during local flooding events. When flooding occurs, debris from structures can cause water levels to rise more and affect areas downstream. The use of local floodplain ordinances deter or lessens the amount of development that occurs in/near the floodplain.

State and federal regulations prohibit development in floodways and impose strict guidelines to those buildings. Local governments can contribute to the protection of flood-prone areas in communities by providing innovative alternatives to subdivision design and storm-water control. Examples of this can include low impact drainage systems and pervious parking areas.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The State of Mississippi has vast amounts of natural beauty and attracts many visitors and newcomers each year. Along with the visitors and new home construction comes changes in the environment. These changes have both an immediate and long-range effect on wildlife. Mississippi has more than 80 endangered and threatened species. Seven of these threatened and endangered species can be found in Jones County. Table 6 provides the common and scientific name for the threatened and endangered species identified in Jones County. It is the responsibility of every citizen and government official within the city and county to work to ensure these species are protected.

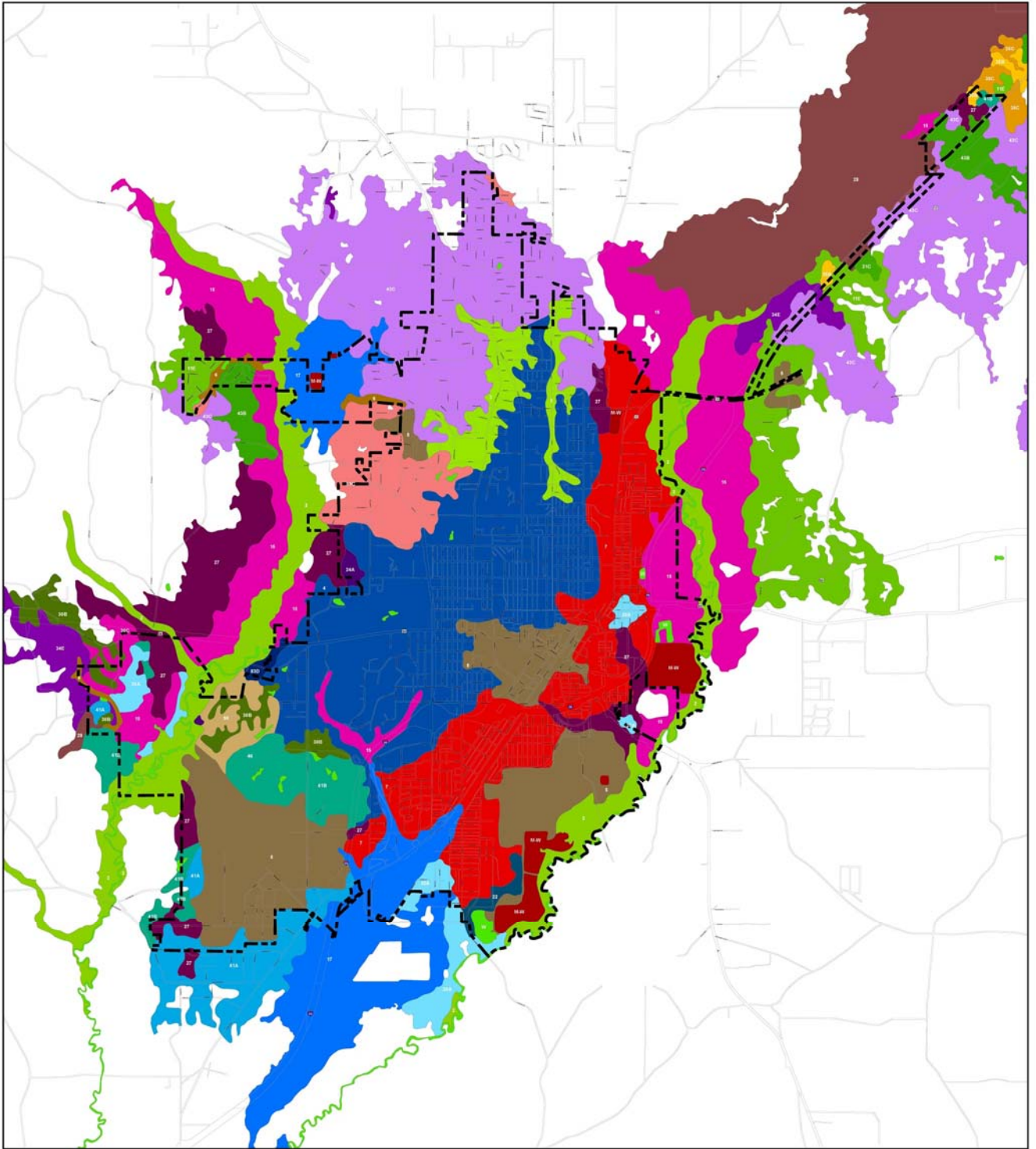
Soils


There are twenty-seven (27) soil types shown on Map 5 for the City of Laurel. The soils found within the City of Laurel range from sandy to loamy soils with silty soil located near floodplains. Soil maps and studies can be utilized during the planning process to determine the suitability and potential for each soil use in future development. prior to determine the suitability and potential for each soil use. Common examples of soil type usage is determining whether a soil is prone to erosion or whether recreational opportunities such as camp areas will be subject to flooding. Below is listing of each soil type with a brief description and some characteristics as detailed in the *Soil Survey of Jones County, Mississippi (October 1986)*. This publication should be referred to for more detailed information for each soil type.

Table 6: Threatened/ Endangered Species in Jones County


Common Name	Scientific Name
Eastern Indigo Snake	<i>Drymarchon couperi</i>
Gopher Tortoise	<i>Gopherus Polyphemus</i>
Pearl Darter	<i>Percina aurora</i>
Yellow-blotched Map Turtle	<i>Graptemys flavimaculata</i>
Black Pine Snake	<i>Pituophis melanoleucus lodingi</i>
Louisiana Quillwort	<i>Isoetes louisianensis</i>
Red-cocked Woodpecker	<i>Picoides borealis</i>

Source: *Mississippi Museum of Natural Science.*





0 1,200 2,400 4,800
Feet



FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY
AUGUST 2014

City of Laurel Comprehensive Plan

Map 5 Soils

Legend

22 - Annapolis silt loam, occasionally flooded	45 - Pittsborough complex
31C - Bernside fine sandy loam, 5 to 8 percent slopes	24A - Frontus loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes
9 - Bibb silt loam, frequently flooded	15 - Galtman fine sandy loam
20A - Carle sandy loam, occasionally flooded	30B - Rutledge fine sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes
31C - Froid fine sandy loam, 5 to 8 percent slopes	35C - Rutledge fine sandy loam, 5 to 8 percent slopes
90 - Heibel-Bernside complex, 8 to 20 percent slopes	41A - Savannah loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes
2 - Jera fine sandy loam, frequently flooded	41B - Savannah loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes
43B - Mabie fine sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes	7 - Savannah-Urban land complex
43C - Mabie fine sandy loam, 5 to 8 percent slopes	34E - Smithdale fine sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes
4 - Malbis-Urban land complex	83D - Susquehanna fine sandy loam, 5 to 12 percent slopes
80D - McLaughlin loamy sand, 2 to 5 percent slopes	27 - Tellow silt loam
35C - McLaughlin loamy sand, 5 to 8 percent slopes	26 - Tellow silt loam, frequently flooded
3 - McLaughlin-Urban land complex	17 - Tellow-Quilman association, occasionally flooded
M.W. - Miscellaneous water	8 - Urban land
	W - Water

Summary and Recommendations

The protection of natural resources is a vital component in improving and sustaining the overall quality of life in a community. This level of protection takes a coordinated effort among both citizens and decision makers. The common goal should be ensuring that all natural features are conserved and preserved in order to further enhance Laurel's natural beauty. However, the threat of development due to growth can adversely effect the natural environment in sometimes irreversible ways. This threat can lead to a decrease in the amount of trees, poor water/air quality and loss of important species. The following recommendations should be considered:

1. Invest in lighting and landscaping along the I-59 corridor from Highway 11 to Chantilly Street.
2. Develop overlay districts, where appropriate, that require design and landscaping standards that will enhance major corridors or employment centers within the city.

Chapter 7



Community Facilities

Introduction

Community facilities are those services and facilities that are provided by the governing body. They include educational facilities, recreational facilities, administrative services, utilities, and emergency services. In order for a community to be sustainable and efficient, needs within these topical areas must be addressed. The Mississippi Code of 1972 requires that the community facilities plan be used as the basis for preparing a capital improvements plan. This chapter provides an inventory of existing community facilities and determine needs based on both knowledge of the community and information from respective city departments.

Educational Facilities

Laurel-Jones County Library

The Laurel-Jones County Library is part of the Laurel-Jones County Library System. There are two public libraries located under this system with one serving the City of Laurel and the other serving Ellisville.

The Laurel-Jones County Library began in City Hall in the early 1900s. It was later moved to the Lauren Roger Museum of Art in 1923 and stayed at this location until 1979 at which point it moved to its current location. The Laurel library boasts 12 full-time employees and 2 part-time employees.

The Laurel-Jones County Library plays an active role in the community by providing programs aimed at both youth and adults. Among the programs offered throughout the year for youth are: two weekly children programs geared towards promoting reading, two monthly teen programs and observing National Library Week (April). There is also a Summer Reading Program that is geared towards youth as well as adults. The library also offer technological benefits to its patrons. There are a total of twelve computers available for public use. Of the 12 computers available, ten are for public access computers with internet capability. The two other computers are available for genealogical research. The two genealogical research computers are located in the upstairs portion of the library and offer users up-to-date databases and other tools related to genealogical research.

There is no cost for county residents to acquire a library card. However, those that live outside of the service area are required to purchase a card at a nominal fee.

Figure 13:
Laurel-Jones County Library



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

The needs for the Laurel-Jones County Library are based on population growth. It is anticipated that growth will prompt the need for additional space. While the county and city have both witnessed growth since the last Census, the city growth was substantially smaller than that of the county. It is expected that with the creation of new jobs and more development, growth will occur within the City of Laurel. In keeping with those factors and that of the staff, the following items should be addressed: the construction or expansion of the existing facility, additional shelving for books, adequate heating and air conditioning systems, increasing the amount and types of books/media offered, and the purchase of additional computers for use by library patrons.

Public Schools

The Laurel School District consists of eight schools which are shown on Map 6. These schools offer a wide range of instruction from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade.

There are a total of 3,261 students enrolled and 271 teachers within the school district. Table 7 shows the student enrollment and staff provided by each school along with age of school and the 2013 –2014 school year accountability status.

All of the schools have a different accountability status which is determined by reports from the Department of Education. This status is determined based on a number of factors including state standardized testing. The best performing school in the district was Nora Davis Magnet School.

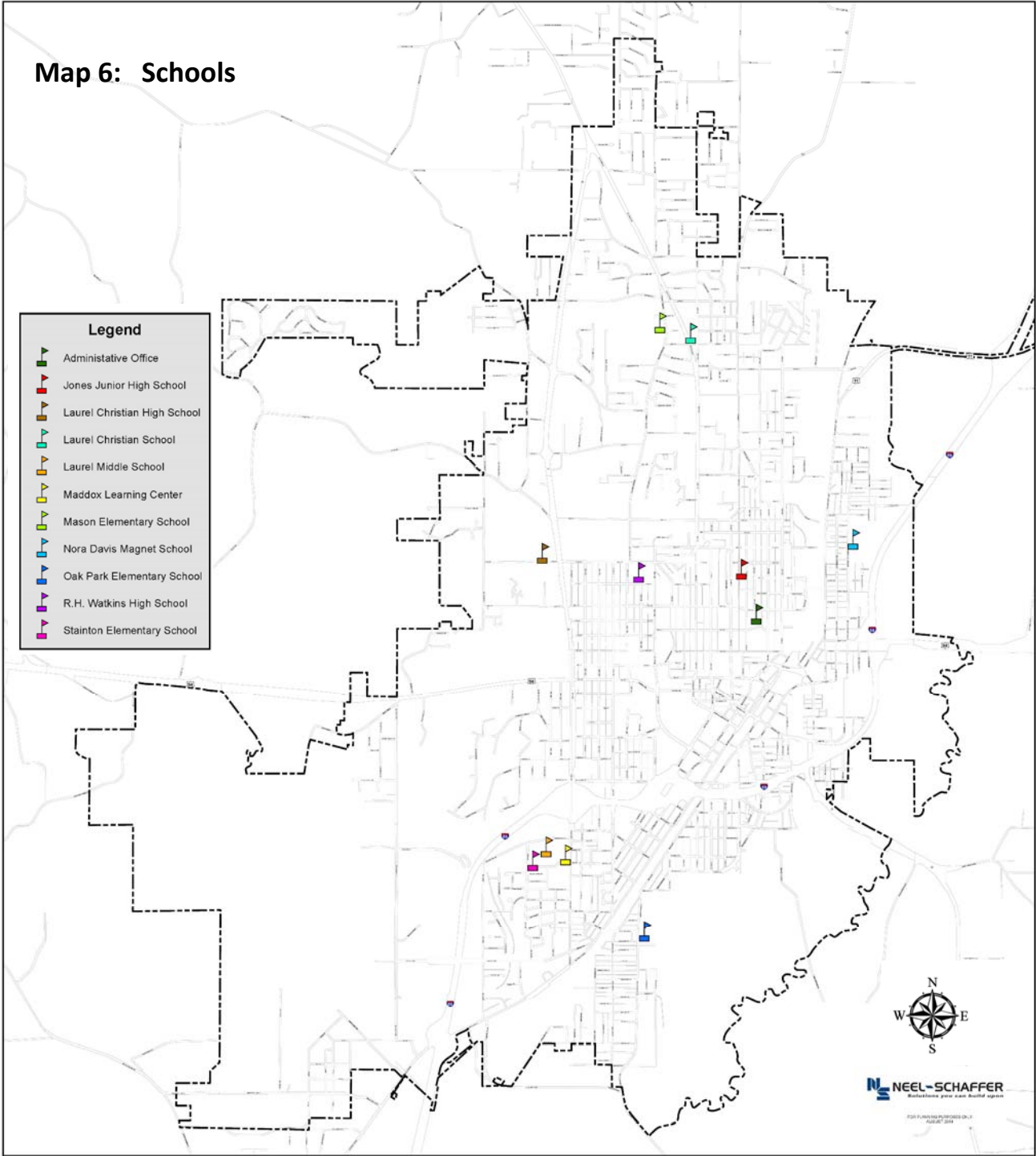
Figure 14:
Laurel High School



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Table 7: City of Laurel Public Schools

School Name	Address	Students	Teachers	Built	Grades	Status
Laurel High School	1100 W. 12th St.	604	64	1962	10th - 12th	D
LHS 9th Grade Campus	1125 N. 5th Street	224	15	1926	9th	
Laurel Middle School	1600 Grandview Drive	678	53	2009	6th - 8th	C
Nora Davis Magnet School	1305 Martin Luther King Ave.	368	34	1949	Pre K - 5th	B
Maddox Elementary School	600 S. 16th Avenue	323	26	1960	K - 5th	C
Mason Elementary School	2026 Old Bay Springs Rd.	503	38	1959	K - 5th	C
Oak Park Elementary School	1205 Queensburg Avenue	561	41	1958	Pre K - 5	D
Alternative School - Stainton Bldg	795 S. 19th Avenue	Varies	Varies	1958	N/A	N/A



The Laurel School District is always in the process of improving the quality of education and facilities at each school. The District has a 2008 Strategic Facilities Plan Update, that will guide improvements in the school system and the improve the overall quality of education offered for the City of Laurel. Education is one of the funda-

mental and critical services for residents. Academic standards along with the condition of the facilities play an important role in the city's future related to growth and development.

The Laurel School District, with its current facilities plan, has addressed some of the issues related to future development. The construction of the new middle school was one of the main priorities. However, a substantial amount of work has been done in relation to physical improvements. The district should consider the following as it relates to future growth:

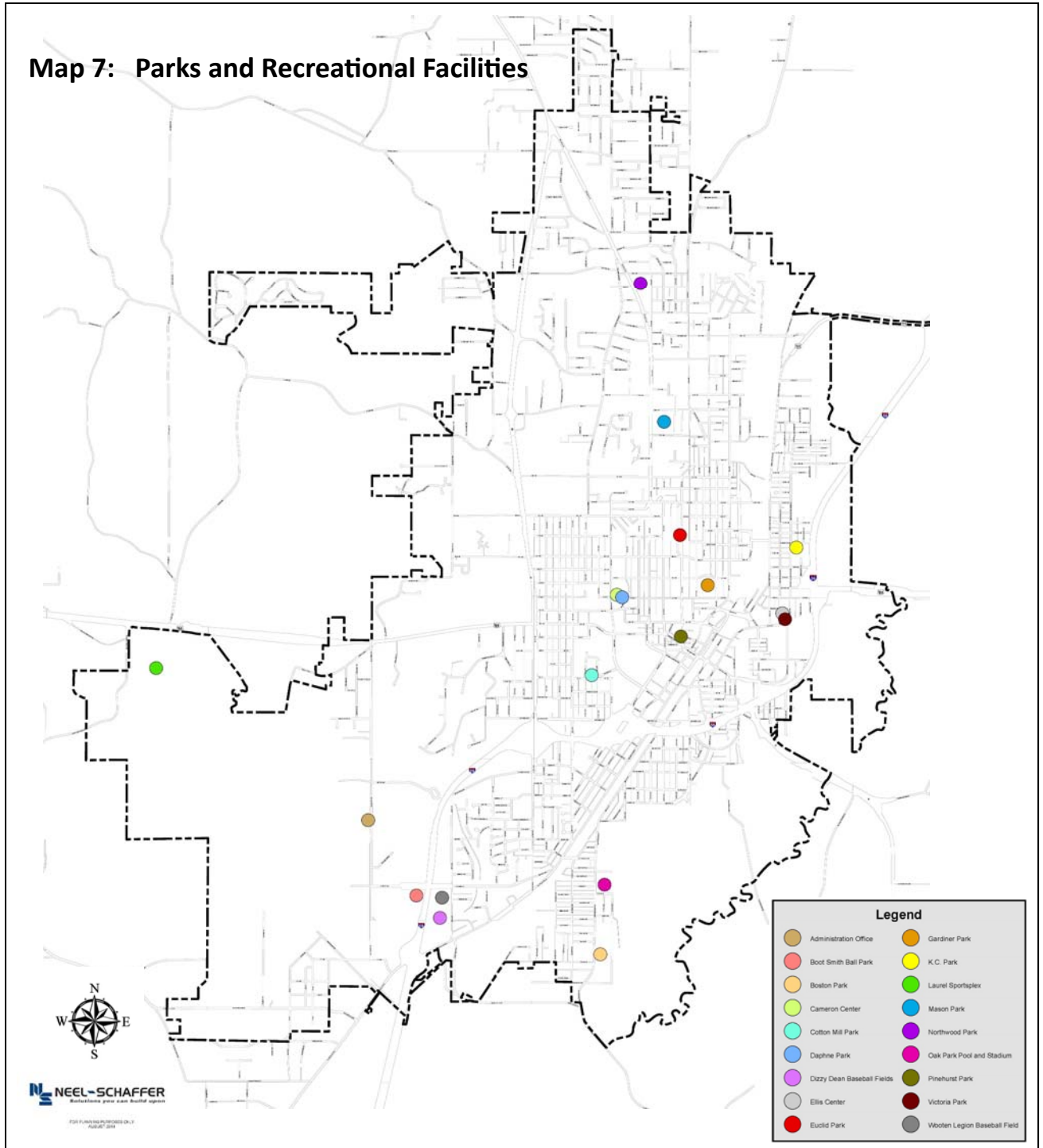
- Walkability to school.
- Continued physical improvements to existing facilities.
- Traffic calming devices in densely populated and heavily trafficked areas.
- Construction of new lower elementary schools to replace the current aging facilities.

Parks and Recreation

The City of Laurel is responsible for both recreational facilities and programs throughout the city. Programs offered by the department range from Dixie Youth World Series, soccer, softball to special events. The Parks and Recreation office is located on Hillcrest Drive and maintains a total of 18 parks shown on Map 7. The following list provides the name and description of each park maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department:

- Boston Park: This seven-acre park is located at 2321 Queensburg Avenue and is home to the semi-pro baseball team the Laurel Blackcats. Located at this facility are six picnic tables, a ballfield, two pavilions, two tennis courts, a volleyball area, and playground equipment.
- Cottonmill Park: This park is located at 1101 West 1st Street and has a picnic area and playground equipment.
- Daphne Park/Cameron Center: This park is located on the 600, 700 and 800 block of 10th Avenue and includes a gym, two racquetball courts, saunas, five tennis courts, playground equipment and picnic area. Also located within the park is a 1/3-mile lighted walking track, historical viewing area and an administrative office.
- Dixie Youth Fields at the Sportsplex: These facilities are located at 4978 Highway 84 West and include four ballfields, restrooms, concession stand and two batting cages.

- Dixie Youth Boys (13-14)/Dixie Majors (15-18) Fields: These facilities are located at 1315 West Drive and include three youth baseball fields, two softball fields, five batting cages, and a maintenance shop. Other amenities include a BBQ Pit, concession stand, and restroom areas.



- Euclid Park: This serene park is located on the 1000 block of Euclid Avenue and provides benches and a quiet setting for users to enjoy nature.
- Gardiner Park: This park, located at 701 North 4th Avenue includes a multipurpose field, benches, picnic tables and a 1/4-mile walking track.
- Girls Softball Complex: This complex is located at 2500 Airport Drive and includes two ballfields, restrooms and a batting cage.
- K.C. Park: This park is located at 115 Garden Oaks Avenue and includes an open play area, pavilion, picnic area, basketball area and playground equipment.
- Liberto Park “Little Garden”: This park is located at the corner of West 5th Street and North 7th Avenue and provides a quiet setting along with benches.
- Mason Park: This park is located at 1501 North 7th Avenue and contains an open play area, six picnic tables, and a playground area with swings. Other amenities include an open air amphitheater and a 1/4-mile lighted walking track.
- Natatorium: This 40,000 square foot facility is located at 4978 Highway 84 West and houses a 50 meter by 25 yard Olympic-sized pool. This facility also includes restrooms, locker rooms with showers, and a multipurpose room.
- Northwood Park: This two-acre park is located at 2525 Audubon Drive and provides benches for park users.
- Oak Park: This five-acre park is located at 114 Tyler Street and includes a swimming pool, softball field, football field, field house, concession areas, restrooms and a 1/4-mile lighted walking track.
- Pinehurst Park: This one-acre park is located at North 5th Avenue and includes benches, picnic area and a fountain.
- Sportsplex: This facility is located at 4978 Highway 84 West and includes six lighted soccer fields, eight tennis courts with a pro-shop and two softball fields. Also included at this facility are restrooms, concession areas and a walking track.

Figure 15:
Laurel Parks



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure 16:
Trust for Public Land
Principles

The Trust for Public Land indicates the following seven principles that should be followed to create an excellent park system:

1. A clear expression of purpose.
2. An on-going planning and community involvement process.
3. Sufficient assets in land, staffing and equipment to meet the system's goals.
4. Equitable park access.
5. User Satisfaction
6. Safety from crime and physical hazards.
7. Benefits for the city beyond the boundaries of the parks.

Source: *The Trust for Public Land.*
<<http://www.tpl.org>>.
Last Accessed August 2008

Figure 17:
Laurel City Hall



Source: *Neel-Schaffer, Inc.*

- Sandy Gavin Park “Friends of Children”: this five-acre park includes a tot lot, picnic tables, grills and a regulation sized basketball court.
- Victoria Park/Ellis Center: This 3.6 acre park is located on the 500 and 600 block of Munson Street and includes a swimming pool, two picnic tables, and playground equipment.

Parks and recreational facilities serve dual purposes within a community. They most noticeably provide recreational opportunities for each resident, but they also improve quality of life for the City of Laurel. As the City of Laurel moves forward with the construction of future parks and recreational facilities, every effort will be made to equally distribute parks throughout the city so that all residents have equal access to recreational opportunities.

The Parks and Recreation Department has an on-going effort to improve upon existing recreation facilities and develop new forms of recreational opportunities needed for future growth. Park and Recreation organizations, like the Trust for Public Land, provide guidelines for developing new park systems. The City should develop a long-range plan for developing future park and recreational programming efforts.

Externalities such as budgetary constraints, small number of staff members and other factors often hinder the full development of a comprehensive park system. The City of Laurel has already established an impressive park system, but need to focus on diversifying the services offered to include more passive recreational spaces and some alternative recreational services (i.e., disc golf, splash pads, etc.). The City of Laurel should invest in a park and recreation master plan which will inventory existing facilities, assess population growth, develop a plan for future parks within the system, develop a plan to provide connectivity of the park system and will develop a plan to promote the park system to not only Laurel residents but from neighboring communities.

City Government

Laurel has a council form of government. The mayor and members of the council serve four-year terms. A majority of the city's services are located at City Hall which is located near downtown. Among the services offered at this location are: the administration, council chambers, the city and council clerks' offices, community development, human resources, inspection/zoning, public relations, information technology and retirement community services.

The Public Works Department is located on Moose Drive and the water collection department is in City Hall. Other departments that provide services but are not located within City Hall are the police, fire and recreation department. These services will be discussed individually within this chapter.

Solid Waste

In 1992, the City of Laurel joined Covington, Jones, Forrest, Lamar and Perry Counties and the Cities of Hattiesburg and Petal to form the Pine Belt Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (Authority). The Authority is responsible for the management, construction and financing of the regional solid waste system. As members of the Authority, each entity is given representation on the Board of Commissioners based on the percentage of waste they contribute to the solid waste stream. The City of Laurel and Jones County have two members each, respectively. The Pine Belt Regional Solid Waste Management Authority permits a regional landfill in Perry County and three transfer stations, one of which is located within the City of Laurel. The Authority contracts with a private operator for the management of these facilities. All of the facilities are run in accordance with the standards set forth by the Mississippi Commission on Environmental Quality and have been in good standing with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) since operations began.

Since the Authority has no collection services, the City of Laurel is responsible for the collection of residential waste. Waste generated from commercial and industrial facilities is contracted out to private haulers individually and is not the responsibility of the city. Once collected, all municipal solid waste generated in the City of Laurel is required to go to the regional landfill in Perry County.

The City of Laurel has one Class II Rubbish Site. Rubbish is a non-putrescible solid waste that is not susceptible to rotting. A Class II Rubbish site has more restrictions on the type of waste for which to accept. Among the acceptable waste at these sites are: brick, mortar, concrete, stone, asphalt, etc and natural vegetation (tree limbs and leaves)

Currently, there is no public recycling program or services offered by the city. Recycling opportunities in the City of Laurel are limited to recycling services offered by private companies. These services pay customers, at market rate, for items such as copper, aluminum and paper. In 1992, the city participated in the Pine Belt Curbside Recycling Program. This was a 50% match grant from the Energy Division

of the State Economic and Community Development Department. The program was conducted in the cities of Hattiesburg, Laurel and Petal and offered recycling of clear glass, HPDE plastic, newspaper, aluminum cans, PETE plastic and steel/tin cans. Residents in each city were encouraged to participate in the study which generated an average operating cost of \$3.99 for residential curbside recycling. The program encouraged both the city of Laurel and Jones County to form a partnership and create a county-wide recycling program. It was also recommended that the Authority develop a regional composting facility. As a result of the trial recycling program, the City of Laurel did not feel that curbside recycling was an economically feasible solution for the city.

Utilities

The utility services offered within the City of Laurel are provided by private companies. These companies work with the local government to provide basic services to all residents through the use of public right-of-ways and easements. In the absence of the basic services provided, an individual's quality of life is adversely affected. The utilities offered to Laurel residents are, but not limited to: telephone, cable television, telecommunication/Internet services, electricity and gas.

Telephone and Telecommunications Services

Basic telephone service in Laurel is provided by BellSouth. This company has the highest number of users among private companies. However, other companies also provide this service at or below market rates. Those residents that live on the western portion of the county receive service from the Bay Springs Telephone Company. Along with the basic telephone services; telecommunication services are also available. Telecommunications is an ever-changing and growing market. The introduction of the cellular phone has made communicating easier than ever. Cellular service is provided to residents from large companies such as AT&T, CSpire, Verizon, and other nationally known companies. Internet service is provided by most of these companies along with local telephone companies.

These Internet based services are also available to users on the go in the form of Wi-Fi Zones. Wi-Fi zones are areas of a community where portable computers can be used to access the Internet. Many communities across the country have designated areas where users can access this portal. Currently, the City of Laurel only has a few available areas for this type of service.

Cable Television

Cable television and satellite television services are offered to all residents of Laurel. The major provider of cable services to city residents is Comcast. Residents that prefer satellite service have numerous selections from which to choose. The two main providers for satellite service are DIRECTV and Dish Network.

Electricity

Electrical services are provided to Laurel residents by private companies. There are a total of four providers that service Jones County. Of this total, only Mississippi Power provides services to each household within the corporate limits of Laurel. Those living outside the city limits, rely on Dixie EPA, South Mississippi EPA and Southern Pine EPA.

Gas

Natural Gas is provided in Laurel by private companies located in the area. The two providers for Laurel are CenterPoint Energy Resources and Wilmut Gas.

Medical and Health Related Services

South Central Regional Medical Center is the major medical provider serving both city and county residents. The medical center was founded in 1952 and is a 285 bed, public not-for-profit hospital that primarily serves Jones, Jasper, Wayne and Smith counties. The hospital has over 80 physicians who with specializations in 21 areas of medicine. The Emergency Department of the hospital is classified as a Level III Trauma Center and consists of five full-time ED physicians, 3 general surgeons and various other technical and administrative employees. The non-emergency services offered by the hospital are numerous and among them are: childbirth, occupational therapy and sports medicine. EMServ Ambulance Service along with ComfortCare Home Health and ComfortCare Hospice are also part of the facility. As the major medical provider for the city, the hospital has an active part in community based health education.

The following is a list of community education and health assessments offered to residents:

- **Diabetes Consultations:** individual consultations are offered by appointment on Monday through Fridays. There is also a diabetes support group that meets weekly.
- **Speaking of Women Luncheon:** a monthly luncheon focused on women-related health issues.

Figure 18:
South Central Regional
Medical Facility



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

- Women’s Life Conference: a day long event held the last Saturday of each April. This event includes speakers, educational sessions and other activities that address the latest in medical and consumer health information related to women.

South Central Regional Medical Center also has clinics under its division to offer an array of services to residents. These clinics are not only located within the city but in various other locations throughout Jones County. These clinics are: Ellisville Medical Park (Ellisville), Laurel Family Clinic (Laurel), Laurel Pediatric Clinic (Laurel), OBGYN Group (Laurel/Ellisville), South Central Behavioral Health Services (Laurel), Laurel Surgery Clinic (Laurel), Taylorsville Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Clinic (Taylorsville) and South Central Urology Clinic (Laurel).

Emergency Services

Fire

For residents inside the city limits, fire protection is provided by the City of Laurel Fire Department. There are a total of 67 staff members that make up the department. This total number includes those classified as part-time. A total of five stations are located throughout the city. Map 8 shows the location of each station in graphical form while Figure 20 provides a listing of each with its respective address. The current fire rating is 5. A level five fire rating is a mid-average rating as determined by the Insurance

Services Organization (ISO). The ISO is an independent organization that focuses upon risk and provides statistical information and research to those in the areas of real estate, insurance, health insurance and other allied fields. The lowest rating is a level 10, which indicates no recognized protection. However, a level 1 designation indicates the highest level of protection. The lower the number; the less premium on insurance has to be paid by consumers.

The fire department is funded by both the city and grant sources. The funding is used to for the purchasing and continuous maintenance of fire trucks, upgrading of communication devices, training, equipment and other expenses. The City of Laurel Fire Department also maintains twelve vehicles. These vehicles include a ladder truck, four front line pumpers, three back up reserves, four pickup trucks and one min. pumper. According to the Fire Department, each truck has state of the art equipment and each firemen and department utilizes communication devices to coordinate with one another and with other emergency related personnel.

The local fire department of any community is integral to protecting the lives of those in danger and aid in the prevention of dangerous situations. In order to effectively protect the lives of Laurel residents, steps should be taken to ensure that the fire department has state of the art equipment along with the necessary funding. It was determined that the following needs should be addressed:

- To actively seek additional funding from private, federal and state sources.
- The purchase of additional equipment such as oxygen tanks, hoses and radios.
- The addition of two or three pump trucks.
- The purchase of satellite phones for each station.

Police

Police service is provided by the City of Laurel Police Department. The service area for the department includes all areas located within the corporate limits. The Police Department also assists the Jones County Sheriff's Department when needed for special circumstances. The police department is located on Magnolia Drive in the Law Enforcement Complex. This complex is one of two facilities that the department utilizes. The Laurel Police Department also uses a training center that includes a firing range. This range is not open for public use.

There are a total of 51 full time and 3 part time officers. The most frequent calls to the department are classified as disturbances which include those domestic in nature. All officers within the department are required to take 24 hours of training per year. A majority of this training can be taken in Mississippi and within neighboring states. The Laurel Police Department has total of 54 cars in its fleet. Of this total amount of cars, 16 are classified as patrol cars. The average response time for the department ranges from two to three minutes. The less time it takes for an officer to respond to a scene, the better it is for those involved.

The Laurel Police Department plays a vital role in the protection of lives and property of residents. In order to effectively deal with the increase in crime and future residential development, additional officers will be needed. The addition of new officers should also be balanced with the retention of current qualified and experienced officers. In order to retain and attract officers that exhibit high mor-

Figure 19:
Laurel Fire Stations



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

Figure 21:
Laurel Fire Stations

Station #1 314 Ellisville Boulevard
Station #2 1347 Susie B Ruffin Avenue
Station #4 415 Queensburg Avenue
Station #5 1415 Parker Drive
Station #6 1318 Hillcrest Drive

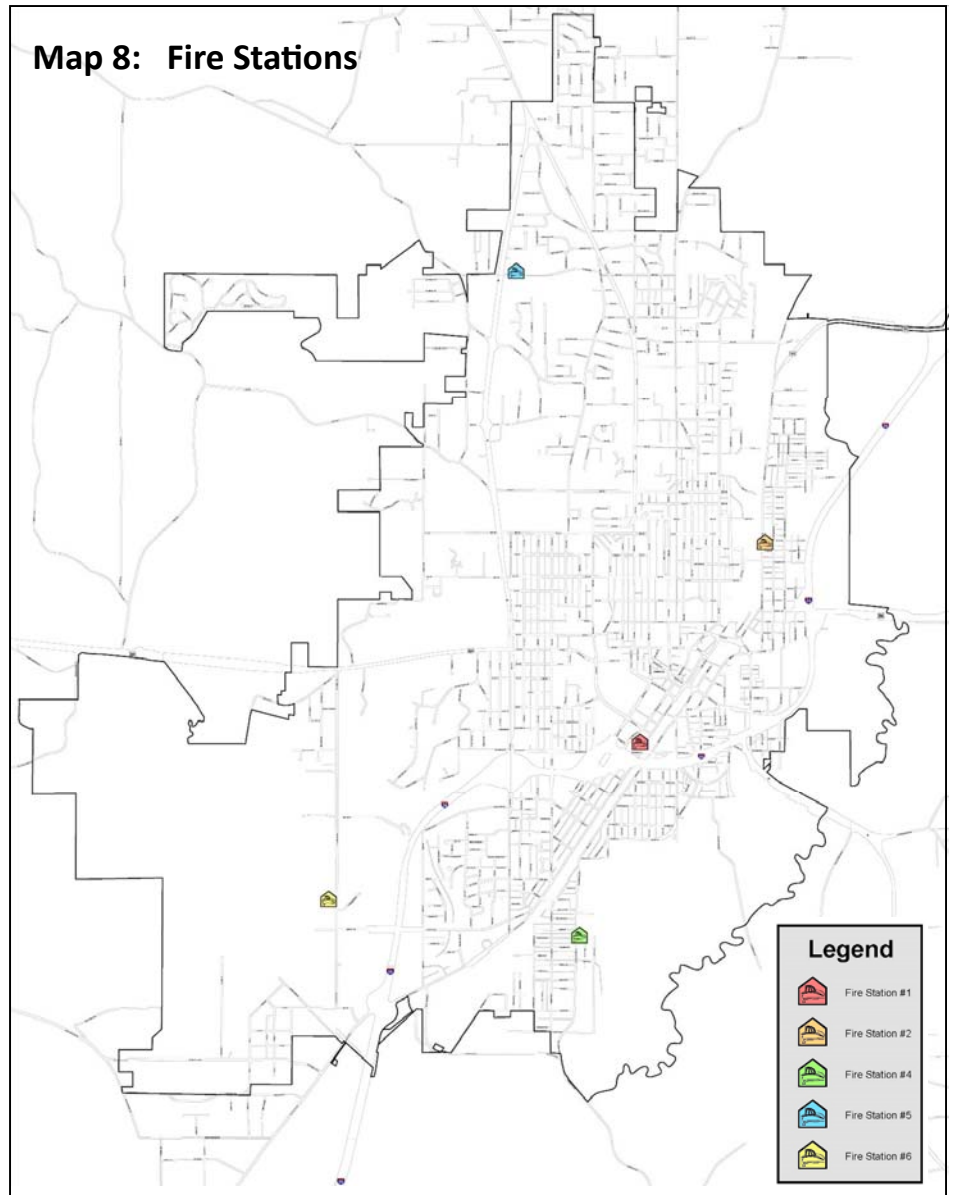


Figure 21:
Laurel Police Department



Source: Neel-Schaffer, Inc.

al and work ethic, pay rates should be comparable to other cities similar in size. The goal of the city should be not only to match the state average but offer more training opportunities and continuing education towards program such as forensics, criminal justice and other allied programs/departments. The city should also address the need for more funding towards programs such as drug prevention, identity theft, neighborhood policing, mentoring-related programs, and community events. The city currently sponsors an annual National Night-Out Against Crime event throughout the city. More funding should be earmarked towards increasing these types of events that offer interaction between officers and residents.

Water/Wastewater

Water and wastewater service is provided to residents by United Water, one of the nation's largest water services companies, through a fifteen-year contract. As part of this agreement, United Water will manage and operate the city's five water treatment plants and two wastewater treatment facilities. The contract calls for wastewater collection, meter reading, water treatment and collection services.

The City of Laurel uses 16 wells to extract groundwater. United Water will manage and operate the water purification process. This process consists of five treatment plants and will use either groundwater or elevated tanks. The city's elevated tanks distribute 8.5 million gallons of water each day to Laurel residents. The company will also operate and maintain the wastewater treatment plants at both Massey and Smyly. The method of treatment at each facility will consist of using an oxidation ditch and an ultraviolet disinfection treatment process. The system treats approximately 6.8 million gallons of wastewater per typical day.

As development increases, both commercial and residential, the prevalence of adequate infrastructure becomes a critical issue. More funding should be placed on providing studies that take into account future growth trends and economic development promotion. An industry's attraction to a community is often based on infrastructure which leads to more jobs and industries which, in turn, improves the local economy. Refer to the *Implementation Strategies* section for further details related to proposed infrastructure improvements. These improvements are geared towards identifying problems with the system and improving the overall quality of life for each resident.

Summary and Recommendations

The City has established various departments as well as elected officials to oversee the delivery of community-related services for residents. Currently, the delivery and quality of services are adequate to meet the needs of individuals. However, as the population increases, the demand for these services will increase as will the need for additional funding. The City of Laurel should make every effort to obtain this additional funding through its existing fund structure or through state and/or federal funding sources. In addition to seeking additional funds, effort should also be placed on prioritizing what is needed by each department. To address the issue of capital improvement prioritization, the city requires each department head to submit a five-year strategic plan. This plan address the current as well as future needs of their respective department. This gives the Council a glimpse into what is presently working and what is lacking in each department. However, further studies and implementation strategies are needed to adequately provide for the needs of each individual citizen. The following recommendations are based on input gathered at public meetings and information gathered from other sources. These are:

Education:

1. Renovate the Laurel-Jones County Library to include new technology and additional meeting space.
2. Support the efforts of the Laurel School District to make improvements to educational infrastructure through a bond or other funding mechanism.

Parks and Recreation:

3. Provide pedestrian lighting along all sidewalks and pathways constructed within the city.
4. Provide adequate lighting at new and existing recreational facilities to ensure the safety of the user and to allow for longer hours of functionality.
5. Facilitate the funding and construction of the Rails-to-Trails Program along the abandoned street car rail line to provide a multi-use path for all citizens.
6. Invest in bike lanes throughout the City at strategic locations to encourage biking throughout town.
7. Develop a bike rack campaign where businesses and citizens can purchase bike racks consistent with the character of Laurel to be used throughout the city.
8. Develop a regional master plan that will provide direction for growth of recreational opportunities throughout the city and will develop a local and regional marketing plan.
9. Utilize the Recreational Master Plan to incorporate a variety of alternative recreational activities in existing parks, including volleyball, disc golf and archery.
10. Locate splash pads in parks in areas of the city without direct access to swimming pools.

11. Secure funding to construct a fenced in dog park with necessary amenities, including an obstacle course, benches, etc.
12. Develop a Recreational Tourism marketing plan to promote the City Laurel as a destination for more nationally-sponsored sporting events.
13. Establish a permanent location for the Farmer's Market that will include a structure future community events.
14. Develop and construct neighborhood playgrounds in Wards 1 and 4.
15. Construct a softball complex at the Sportsplex.
16. Establish greenways to protect natural areas of the community.

Solid Waste:

17. The implementation of a city-wide recycling program to mitigate the amount of trash taken to landfills and to improve the environment.
18. Seek innovative ways to adequately offset the cost of waste collection services due to the increase of fuel costs and worker rates.
19. Develop standards for dumpsters in Downtown Laurel to define appropriate locations and screening.

Utilities:

20. Enforce or amend the zoning ordinance to guide cellular tower placement in areas that will not adversely affect neighborhoods.
21. Request Mississippi Power to number light poles to allow the City of Laurel to more efficiently respond to areas that need lights.

Water/Wastewater:

22. Build redundancy into the water storage by designing and constructing a new water tank in South Laurel.
23. Build redundancy into the water supply by designing and constructing a new water supply well.
24. Continue mapping current infrastructure in GIS to maintain an accurate database of existing infrastructure.
25. Develop and adhere to Operation and Maintenance (O&M) procedures for all public services to ensure maximum life of motorized equipment.
26. Increase communication with the Jones County Economic Development Agency to ensure anticipated development has adequate water and sewer services.
27. Guide development to areas with existing adequate water and sewer service.
28. Work closely with United Water to prepare a comprehensive water and wastewater improvement plan.

Chapter 8



Housing

Introduction

The quality, location, availability, and affordability of housing in the City of Laurel are factors which affect quality of life for all residents and support local/regional economic development efforts. The construction of housing is typically a function of private developers; however, the City regulates this industry through ordinances and other related forms of public policy. The goals of these regulations are to ensure the safety of residents and promote the overall quality of life. The purpose of this section is to assess the condition, affordability and availability of Laurel's housing stock and project future housing needs and trends. This information can be used to prioritize where public facilities, infrastructure and transportation networks are needed.

Types of Housing Units

Table 8 lists the number of housing units by type within the City of Laurel and compares them to the State of Mississippi. Based on this data, the City of Laurel is primarily composed of single-family housing units with small multi-family units being the next largest type of housing unit. These two housing types make up more than 90% of the housing structures in the city. Single-family housing units also lead the State of Mississippi, but is followed by mobile homes as the second highest percentage housing unit.

Table 8: Types of Housing

Housing Type	Laurel, Mississippi Housing Type (%)	Mississippi Housing Type (%)
Single Family (detached or attached)	76.6	71.0
Duplex	2.9	2.3
Multi-Family (3-9 units)	13.8	7.5
Multi-Family (10-19 units)	1.4	2.1
Multi-Family (20+ units)	0.9	1.8
Mobile Home	4.5	15.3
Boats, RV, van, etc.	0.0	0.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age and Condition

According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, 41.8 percent of the housing units built within the City of Laurel were constructed prior to 1960. This is much higher than the state, which is only 17.1 percent. More than forty-eight (48.6) percent of Laurel's housing stock was constructed between 1960 to 1999 and only 9.5 percent was constructed 2000 to 2012. As compared to the State of Mississippi, approximately 67 percent of homes were built between 1960 and 1999. Based on the information from the Census Bureau, it is apparent that the City of Laurel has a large number of historic homes. The City of Laurel should take pride in the efforts that have already led to the preservation of a number of historic structures within the city and ensure that these same efforts are put towards the preservation of any other homes not already identified.

The city should also evaluate the marketability of the city's historic structures just as many other cities within Mississippi are already taking advantage of this market. Table 9 shows the number of houses and percentage of historic houses within cities throughout the state that already have a tourism market for historic homes and structures.

Occupancy and Tenure

Home ownership is a common goal of citizens from around the country. This dream is not often realized due to various reasons. The main reason often being financial in nature. This is one of several reasons why a mixture of both rental and owner occupied housing in a community is important. According to U.S. Census data, of the 6,844 occupied housing units in the City of Laurel almost 57 percent are owner-occupied and 43 percent are renter-occupied. According to this same data, an estimated 1,220 units are classified as vacant.

Costs and Value

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Laurel in 2012 was \$78,700. This median value is less than the state median of \$100,200. In Laurel, more than 75 percent of the current housing has a value of \$150,000 or less with approximately 63% valuing less than \$100,000. This again shows the value of homes with Laurel as less than the State since less than 68 percent of homes throughout the state are valued at less than \$150,000. Low home values in Laurel could reflect an older home stock, substandard conditions or high-crime areas. A comprehensive housing analysis could be used

Table 9: Historic Cities in Mississippi

Community	Homes Built Prior to 1960	
	Number	Percent
Laurel	3,378	41.8
Greenwood	2,236	37.2
Natchez	2,746	34.9
Greenville	4,643	31.8
Vicksburg	3,256	29.5
Columbus	3,217	28.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 22:
HUD Programs

HOME Program

Increases supply of homes to individuals by providing grants to participating jurisdictions

SHOP

Funds for non-profit groups that are used for sweat-equity projects for low-income individuals

Home Ownership Zone (HOZ)

Communities can reclaim vacant, abandoned properties to promote economic revitalization by creating entire neighborhoods.

Source: Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD)

to further study the housing market in Laurel.

The 2012 Census data reports that of the 1,998 housing units with a mortgage, 63.6 percent pay less than 30 percent of their household income on their mortgage. The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines affordable housing as a household that pays no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. This number further reiterates that affordable homes are located within the city. Of the more than 36 percent of residents that pay more than 30 percent of their household income on a mortgage, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides programs to assist economically challenged individuals. Figure 22 provides some information on the more popular programs.

New and Proposed Developments

Because of the current economy, the City of Laurel does not have a lot of proposed housing developments underway. In this lull, the City of Laurel should look at the housing profiles below and should ensure that there is adequate housing in each area to accommodate the current population but also plan for the future growth and direction of the city.

- *Entry-Level buyers:* those in the age group of 18-24 years old. This age group makes up approximately 8.2 percent of the city's population.
- *First-time homeowners:* those in their late 20's and mid 30's. This age group makes up approximately 13.9 percent of the city's population.
- *Empty nesters:* those in the age group of 55-60. This age group makes up 6.9 percent of the city's population.
- *Elderly households:* this age group consists of those over the age of 60 and up to 85 years and older. This population makes up approximately 17.4 percent of the city's population.

By ensuring that the current and future needs of residents are met within these housing profiles, the city will become a see a more diverse group of home owners who share a love and interest for the city.

Summary and Recommendations

The current housing stock for the city is primarily single-family residential. This type of housing is found in various locations throughout the city except along the major transportation corridors. While multi-family is found in many parts of the city; the most highly concentrated areas are found near the Brown Circle, Victoria St. and Beacon St. areas. With the uncertainty of future development, growth within the City of Laurel will be more dependent on improvements in quality of life. This growth will not happen instantly, but over time. The following recommendations will help guide future growth within the city so that when development begins, it will be in the best interest of the City of Laurel and its residents and it will spur additional growth.

1. Provided incentives for developers to construct housing for residents desiring smaller homes with common green spaces such as cottages, villas and cluster homes.
2. Provide incentives for developers to expand multi-use developments in Downtown Laurel to provide housing within walking distance to major employment centers.
3. Require new multi-family housing developments, within the city, to include adequate amounts of green space and sidewalks.
4. Encourage infill development, through tax incentives, grants or other programs, and ensure that development is consistent with existing neighborhoods.
5. Promote the concept of neighborhood associations which meet monthly and provide residents with a neighborhood resource officer.
6. Conduct a detailed study of housing within the city. This study should specifically look at manufactured and patio/garden homes and their applicability and need within the city. The study should also provide market projections for future housing needs.
7. Update ordinances to address the long-term needs of the community, which include the implementation of new zoning districts and standards that promote a variety of housing options including mixed use and compact developments.
8. Continue to preserve areas of historical or cultural significance through ordinances.
9. Require new developments to include Traditional Neighborhood Design elements such as street trees, lighting and landscaped entrances.
10. Work with state and federal resources to incentivize homeownership and develop quality housing.

Chapter 9



Land Use

Introduction

The City of Laurel has continued to maintain its industrious and manufacturing character all while remaining competitive in regional markets. With the resurgence of downtown, Laurel is a diverse community for business as well as a place to call home. The purpose of this section is to identify and characterize existing land use elements and identify areas for future growth and conservation. A component of this section is to look at the land use as it relates to the transportation system. This chapter provides long term recommendations to guide future development decisions in order to allow growth and protect those qualities that make a Laurel a unique, charming city.

Existing Land Use
















As stated earlier the City of Laurel has a long history in the areas of industry and manufacturing. This is evident in the large tracts of land devoted to these uses. These tracts can be found in the southwestern portion of the city, southeastern portion and on the eastern portion near Highway 11. The city has a typical central business district which includes the downtown, a large shopping center and offices. The commercial uses lie mostly along the major corridors of Highway 15, the central business district and in certain locations in mostly residential areas. Those business that lie within residential neighborhoods are predominantly small scale. A substantial amount of recreational opportunities can be found throughout the city and includes ball fields to parks.

Method

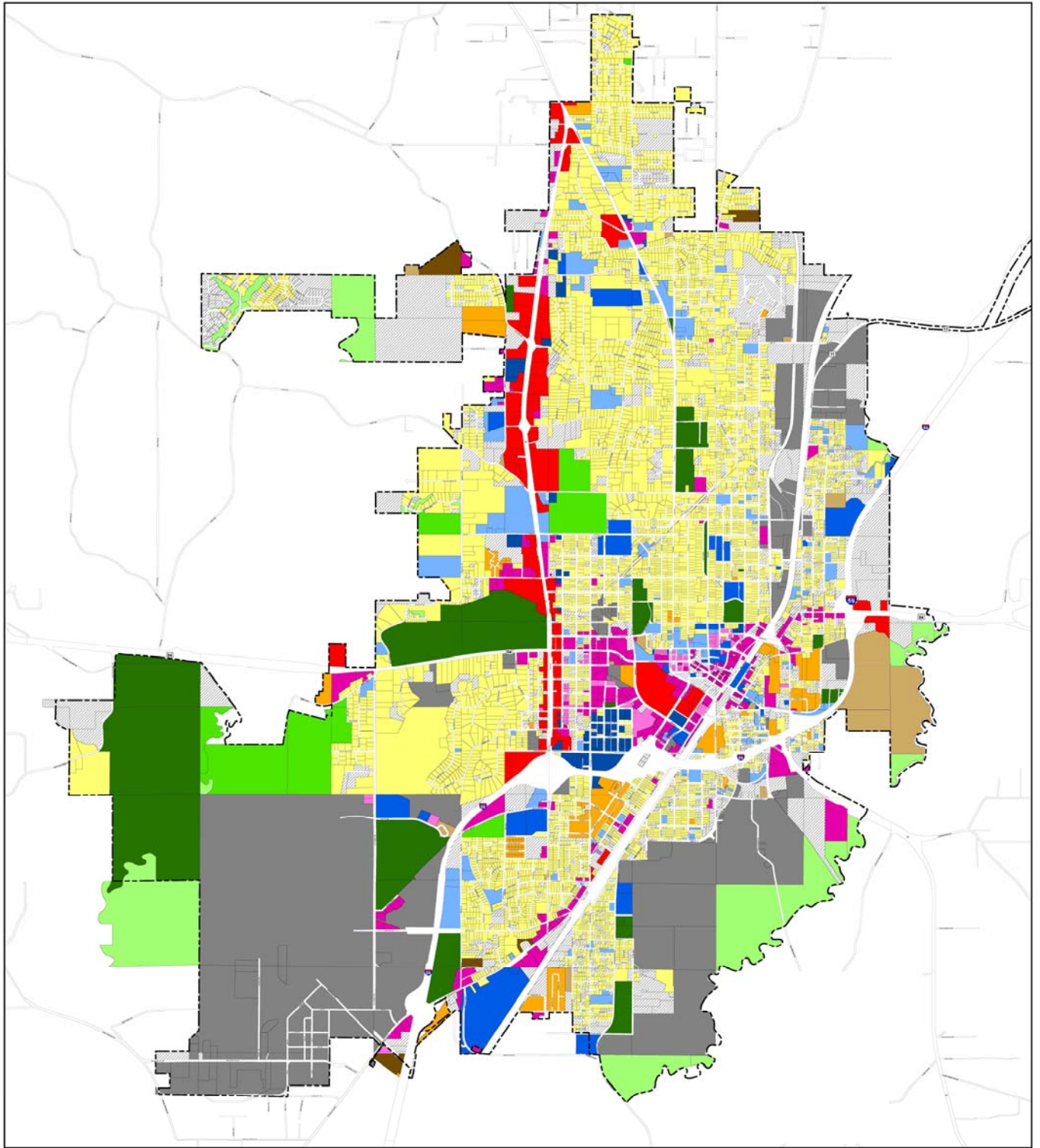
The existing land use map was created from a windshield survey conducted by Neel-Schaffer in 2007. A windshield survey is a survey that indicates a land classification by visual inspection. Aerial photography was used to confirm large areas of a single use, which was field verified and concurrence was obtained from residents and local leaders. The windshield survey was conducted along mixed use corridors and was used to supplement information identified in aerial photography. Each parcel provided by the City of Laurel and Jones County was categorized into one of 13 land use classifications. The parcel maps along with the land use classifications were used to generate a digital land use map with each classification as a different layer.

Classifications

The following existing classifications were used to develop the Existing Land Use map:

-  **Single-Family Residential**: land used for single-family detached dwellings on individual lots.
-  **Multi-Family Residential**: land used for multi-family dwellings. This category includes duplexes, townhomes and apartment complexes.
-  **Manufactured Home**: land used for the placement of single or multiple manufactured or mobile homes.
-  **Office**: land used exclusively for professional, personal and business services uses. This includes, but is not limited to, attorneys, realty and accounting services.
-  **Retail**: land used for detached retail and service uses that serve the entire community. This category includes auto repair shops, banks, nail salons, boutiques, and bookstores.
-  **Commercial**: land used for high intensity retail that serve the community and nearby regional customers. This category includes grocery stores, strip retail centers, and malls.
-  **Industrial**: land used primarily for industrial purposes. This category includes general manufacturing, wholesale and warehousing.
-  **Utility**: land owned or used by utility companies for the purposes of providing water, sewer, electric, natural gas, telephone or telecommunication services to the community.
-  **Quasi-Public**: land used primarily for semi-public uses. This category includes churches, private schools and lodge halls.
-  **Public**: land used for educational or governmental uses. This category includes schools, fire/police stations and government offices. It does not include public parks and open space.
-  **Medical**: land used primarily for medical purposes. This category includes hospitals, clinics, doctors offices and medical administration offices.
-  **Conservation**: undevelopable public or private land that should be reserved for environmental protection. This category includes lands located within the floodplain, wetlands or other environmentally-sensitive areas.
-  **Cemeteries**: land used or dedicated to the burial of the dead, including crematoriums, mausoleums, and maintenance facilities used for the upkeep of the cemetery.
-  **Recreation**: public and private land used for outdoor recreation facilities. This classification includes parks, playgrounds, ball fields and golf courses.
-  **Undeveloped/Vacant**: lands that are undeveloped or lands that are used primarily for forestry or agricultural purposes. This includes forested lands, farmlands without residences and pasture land.

Map 9 graphically depicts the existing land uses with the city.



NEEL-SCHAFFER
Professionals you can build upon.

FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY
MAY 2015 DATA

City of Laurel Comprehensive Plan

Map 9 Existing Land Use

Legend

Laurel Parcels
Existing Land Use

- Single Family
- Multi Family
- Manufactured Home
- Office
- Retail
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Utilities
- Open Public
- Public
- Medical
- Cemeteries
- Conservation
- Recreation
- Vacant

By examining the above referenced land use classifications, the largest land use was Single-Family Residential land use at 24.4%. The next largest classifications were Industrial and Undeveloped/Vacant land use at 19.5 percent and 11.8 percent, respectively. Table 10 indicates the percentage of land use by parcel in order of highest occurrence.

Future Land Use

The City of Laurel faces the unique challenge of encouraging growth but also retaining a small town atmosphere. The purpose of the future land use element is to promote the most appropriate use of land, water and resources within the city. Land use must also balance the interest of the community along with sound environmental practices that seek to improve the overall quality of life for those individuals. The end result is a list of recommendations along with a Future Land Use Map that will guide new development.

Method

The future land use element consists of an analysis of existing land use data, growth patterns and projects the future needs of the community. This map is conceptual in representation and is not intended to be parcel-specific. Future land use encourages a development pattern rather than dictating a land use.

Strategy

The future land use element consists of specific land use classifications in both textual and graphical form. A goal of this component is to incorporate citizen input with development policies to assist decision makers and staff in creating ordinances for future development.

In order to formulate a formal future land use strategy for Laurel, several existing criteria had to be evaluated, including:

- Current land use
- Transportation network
- Building types
- Environmental factors
- Access to water/sewer infrastructure
- Adjacent land uses
- Density
- Overall quality of life
- Existing zoning classifications

In addition, the following concepts were developed to guide decisions in the future land use planning process:

Table 10: Land Use by Categories

Classification	Percent
Single-Family Residential	24.4
Industrial	19.5
Undeveloped/Vacant	11.8
Recreation	7.56
Conservation	5.0
Commercial	2.9
Cemeteries	2.9
Retail	2.8
Quasi-Public	2.7
Public	2.2
Multi-Family	1.7
Utilities	1.6
Medical	0.7
Manufactured Home	0.4
Office	0.4

The data listed above is approximated values base on the occurrence of parcels that are in a specific land use category/classification.

Source: Neel-Schaffer

1. Allow only industrial uses at current sites.
2. Development in or near floodplain should be discouraged.
3. Commercial uses along Highway 15 should be designed with sound architectural principles.
4. Development in Downtown Laurel and around the Sawmill Square Mall should be controlled in order to develop this area as the Gateway into Laurel.
5. Any infill development within specified neighborhoods with historical significance should reflect existing architectural guidelines.
6. All new developments within the city shall adhere to Smart Growth principles (See Figure 23) which include sidewalks, tree lined streets and bicycle paths/lanes.

Common Principles

In projecting the future land use for an area, certain factors should be addressed. Among the factors are: budgetary constraints, environmental issues/constraints and the input of local residents. These factors along with a strong knowledge of the local economy and development trends can create livable communities. “Smart Growth” can be defined as development that serves the economy, community and the environment. In other words, it seeks not to limit development but to locate development where it is appropriate based on the principles found in Figure 23.











Figure 23: Smart Growth Principles

1. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
2. Create walkable neighborhoods.
3. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration.
4. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place.
5. Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective.
6. Mix Land Uses.
7. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas.
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices.
9. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
10. Take advantage of compact building design.

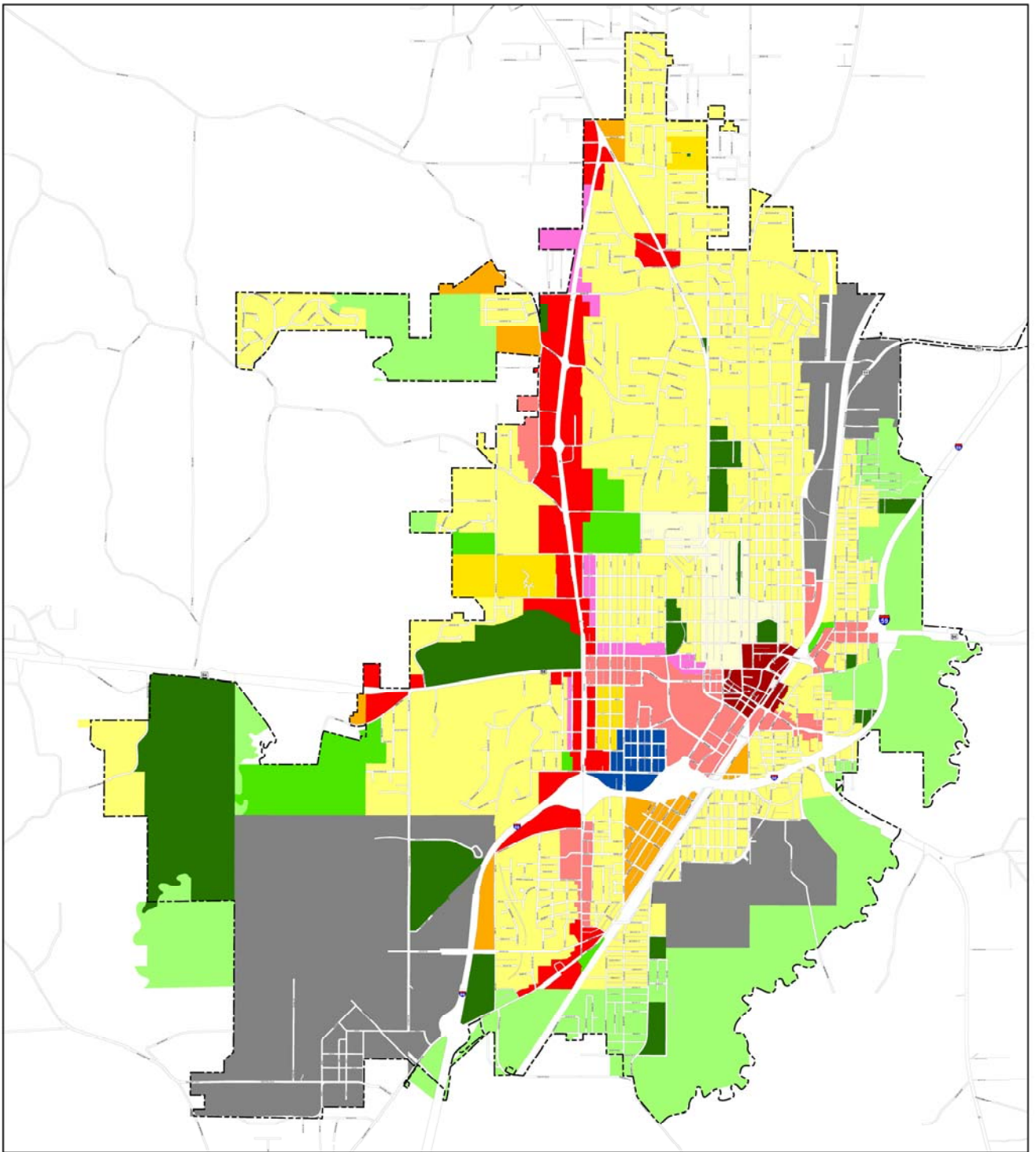
Source: Smart Growth Online. www.smartgrowth.org

Classifications

Using Smart Growth principles along with citizen input, the following classifications were developed:

-  **Protected Residential:** This category is composed primarily of homes containing historical significance. While homes and businesses with no historical significance can be found within this category, a large percentage of structures have been designated on the National Register of Historic Places or as Mississippi Landmarks.
-  **Single-Family Residential:** This category is composed of primarily residential neighborhoods or subdivisions of detached homes. Duplexes are allowed in this category.
-  **Compact Residential:** This category is intended for residential developments in clusters with limited private yards and a common green space between residences. This category is intended for clustered garden homes and patio homes.
-  **Multi-Family Residential:** This category is intended for apartment buildings and townhomes. Residential units in this category typically contain landscaped yards, off-street parking, shared amenities and common open space.
-  **Mixed-Use Retail:** This category is intended for mixed use developments where compatible retail, office and residential uses are found within a single parcel.
-  **Office/Retail:** This category is intended for office and light commercial uses. This category includes professional offices, except medical-related offices, and small retail uses such as boutiques, banks, bookstores, and salons.
-  **Commercial:** This category is intended for high intensity commercial uses along major arterials or along highway exits. This category includes shopping centers and big box retail development with limited office use and no residential uses.
-  **Downtown:** This category is designated for Downtown Laurel and its surrounding compatible uses. This category includes a mix of commercial, office, and civic uses.
-  **Medical:** This category includes South Central Medical Center and support uses. Support uses include medical research, medical offices, administrative offices and laboratory uses.
-  **Industrial:** This category includes a wide range industrial purposes not limited to general manufacturing, wholesale and warehousing.
-  **Conservation:** This category includes environmentally-sensitive areas that should be retained in a natural state to protect public health and safety. This category includes properties located primarily within the 100-year floodplain.
-  **Open Space:** This category includes areas, both public and private, that have limited development potential, such as cemeteries.
-  **Recreation:** This category includes land dedicated or preserved for recreational use. Included in this designation are parks, golf courses, country clubs, and other passive recreation spaces.

Map 10 graphically depicts the future land uses with the city.



City of Laurel Comprehensive Plan

Map 10 Future Land Use

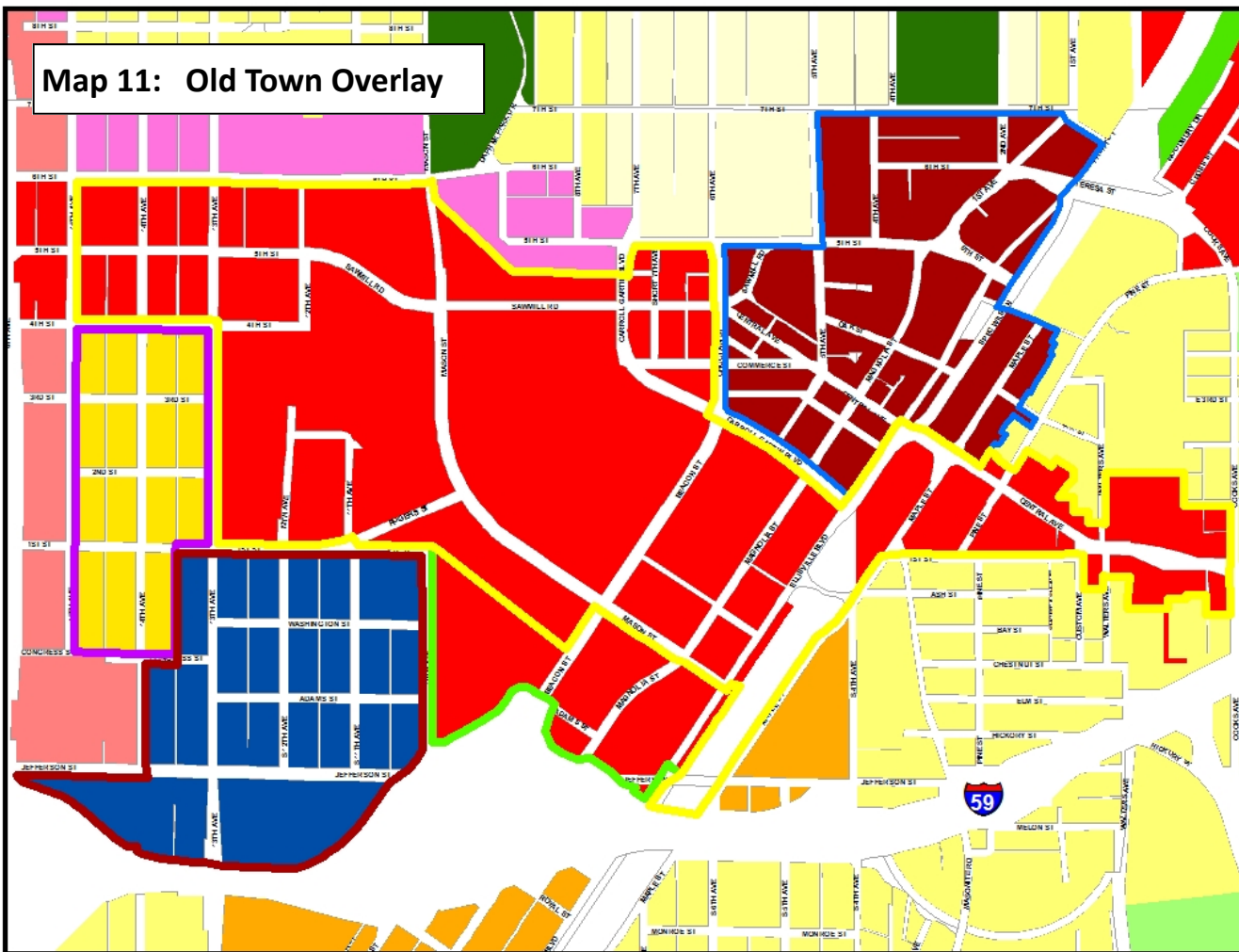
Legend
Laurel_Parcel_FLU
Future_Land_Use

- Protected
- Single Family
- Compact
- Multi-Family
- Office/Retail
- Commercial
- Mixed Use Retail
- Downtown
- Medical
- Industrial
- Conservation
- Open Space
- Recreation

Utilities, cemeteries, public, and quasi-public uses were not designated in individual categories on the Future Land Use Map. These uses are typically permitted in any zoning category.

Community Revitalization

In analyzing and creating future land use classifications several areas of concern were raised by citizens. Many of these concerns related to protection of neighborhoods and development around the mall and Downtown. To address these issues an overlay district concept was developed to address future growth and development in these areas. As shown on Map 11, the Old Town Overlay District includes Downtown Laurel, the hospital and the mall. Land uses within these districts are unique but encourage the redevelopment of Laurel's core to promote a diverse retail development and provide residential uses for young professionals and retirees. The characteristics of each planning area are as follows:



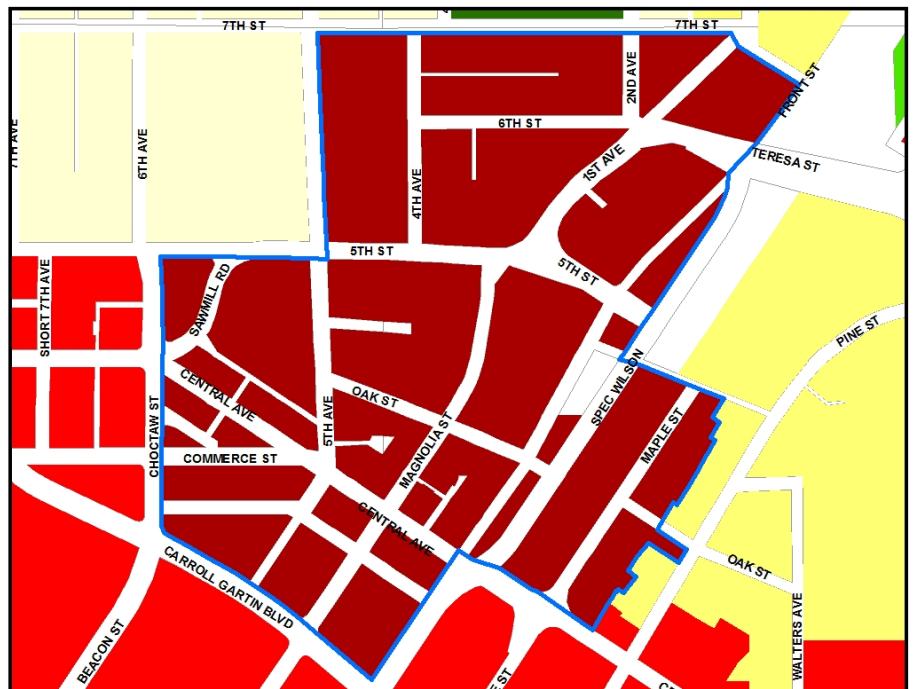
Downtown Overlay District: This planning area represents the historical and cultural core of the City of Laurel. It is bound by Central Avenue, Carroll Gartin Boulevard, Choctaw Street, 5th Avenue 7th Street, Front Street, Spec Wilson, and runs on either side of Maple Street by the Depot.

Development in Downtown Laurel should be consistent with the historic and cultural nature of the district. Development should be compact and pedestrian-oriented. Mixed uses are encouraged to have the biggest impact in the district. Residential uses above retail is ideal, but residential uses behind retail is also acceptable. Infill development should match the character of existing development with zero lot lines along Central Avenue more relaxed set-backs along surrounding roads.

Uses in this district should include:

- Boutique Retail
- Service (e.g., spa, salon, etc.)
- Office
- Government Office
- Art/Culture
- Restaurant
- Mixed Use Retail

Map 12: Downtown Overlay District



Sawmill Overlay District: This planning area represents development along major commercial corridors within the Old Town Overlay District. Development style will transition development to Downtown Laurel from higher intensity uses near the interstate. This area is centered on the Sawmill Square Mall and transitions to 16th Avenue on the west side of the mall and to Interstate 59 on the east side of the mall.

Expected uses for this planning area are identical to Downtown Laurel with lot lines being broadened to allow wide sidewalks in front of buildings that can be used for outdoor eating and amenities. Lot lines in new development/redevelopment should not exceed 20 feet bringing buildings closer to the road with limited or no parking in the front. Outparcel development at the Sawmill Square Mall is encouraged to infill the large underutilized outer parking areas. This will make this district appear more vibrant and attractive to tourists exiting the Interstate at Beacon Street.

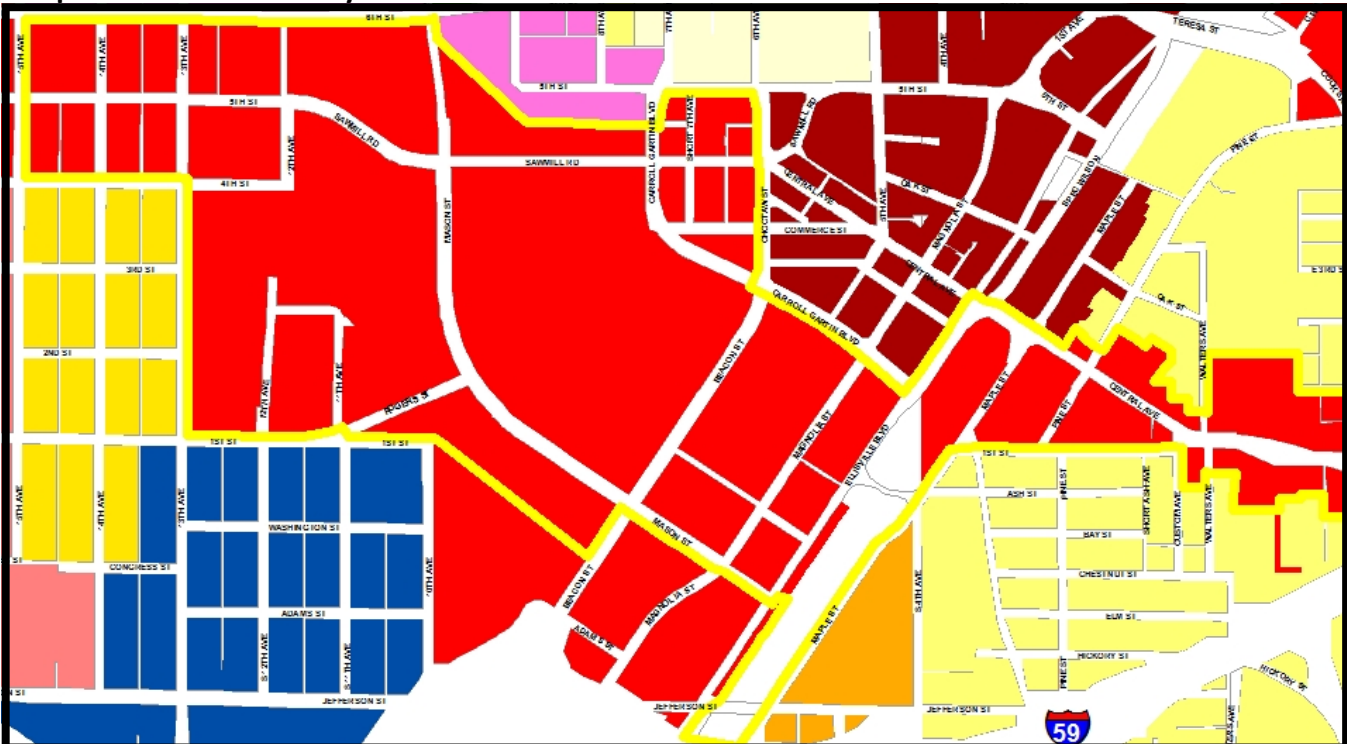
Immediate focus for this district should be along Beacon Street as redevelopment of this corridor is expected in the near future.

Figure 24:
Conceptual Outparcel
Development



Conceptual outparcel development along revitalized Beacon St.

Map 13: Sawmill Overlay District



Beacon Overlay District: This planning area includes development along Beacon Street from Interstate 59 to Mason Street. This area is intended to entice interstate travelers to exit at Beacon Street and enjoy the City of Laurel. Development style will feature large setbacks from the road with parking in the front, rear or shared between adjacent uses.

Map 14: Beacon Overlay District



Figure 25:
Conceptual Development at
Beacon Street Exit



Conceptual development at the intersection of Interstate 59 and Beacon Street.

Medical Overlay District: This planning area includes the South Central Regional Medical Center and surrounding land being used for medical purposes. This district promotes the hospital, medical research, medical offices, and complimentary services. The intent of this district is to develop an area where a large percentage of medical facilities are located that can be interconnected with sidewalks and trails or where a loop public transportation system can be developed.

Primarily medical uses are encouraged in this district, but mixed use developments that allow for residential units above doctor offices or at the back of doctor’s offices are not discouraged. This will provide young professional housing and possibly housing for retirees.

Map 15: Medical Overlay District

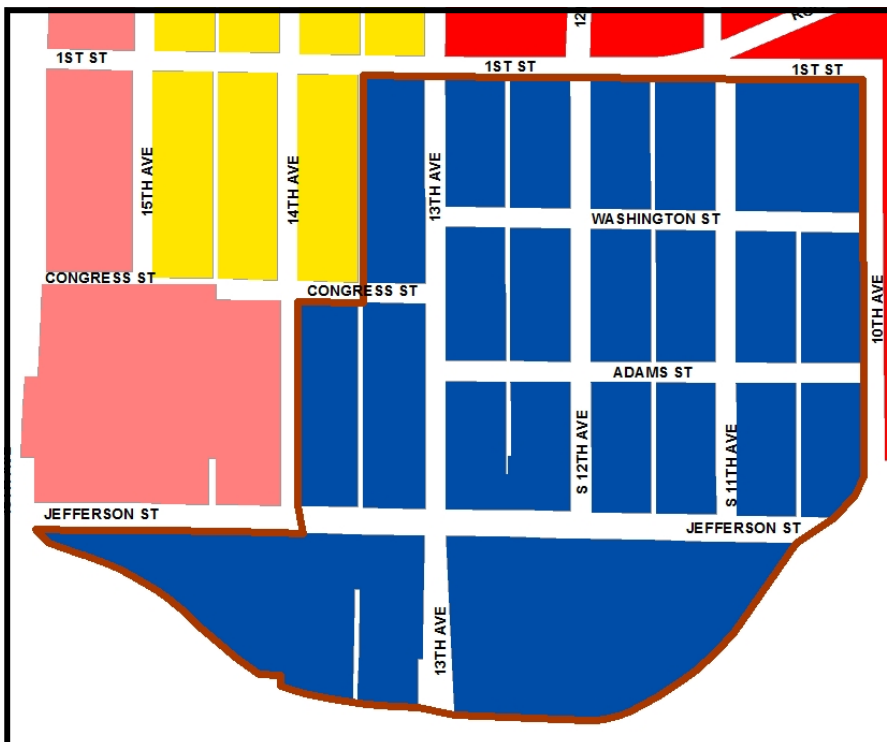


Figure 26:
Mixed use Residential
concept



Source: www.maac.com

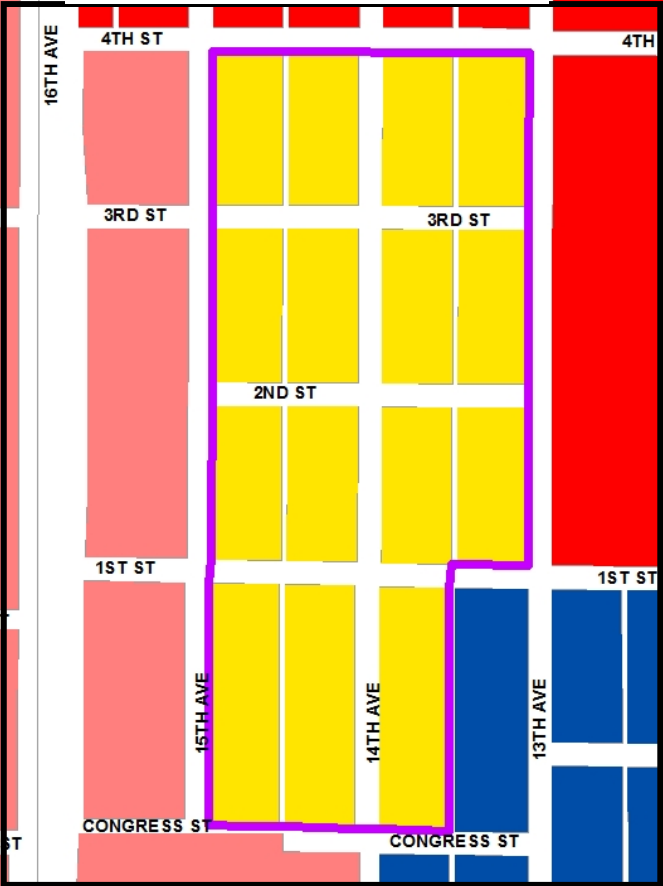
Garden Overlay District: This planning area is bound by 4th Street, 13th Avenue, the Medical District and 15th Avenue. Development for this area is intended as a high density residential neighborhood to serve the surrounding commercial and medical districts. This area should contain residential development attractive to young professionals due to its location to large employment centers and retail developments. This area should also provide appropriate residential uses to the growing retirement community due to its location to retail and medical facilities. The need for each type of residential unit should be studied, but should include apartments, townhomes, garden homes and patio homes. Residential units should be located as to provide common landscaped and open space areas that are used by several residents or residential units. Community gardens and pocket parks are ideal for this area and should be encouraged to balance the high density residential spaces.

Figure 27: Compact Cottage Home Development



Source: BQE Blog - Architect Ross Chapln

Map 16: Garden Overlay District



Summary and Recommendations

The land use study conducted for the City of Laurel indicates that a majority of the land can be classified as low density residential. As stated earlier, this classification is found throughout the city but in larger concentrations in the central portion of the community, to the north and to the south. The city utilizes zoning and subdivision regulations to enforce the land uses. The city also has a historic commission that meets regularly to promote and protect the historic integrity of the downtown area along with other community based projects. These regulatory tools all have a common goal of protecting the life, health and overall quality of each resident within the city.

The recommendations listed below will help further guide land use related decisions for Laurel:

1. Maintain the quality of life in residential areas by establishing zoning densities compatible with existing developments.
2. Establish zoning, landscaping, and architectural standards that protect and enhance existing neighborhoods and allow for infill development.
3. Make available city services to ensure that all services are in place to meet demands of anticipated developments.
4. Update ordinances to offer a wide-range of housing opportunities and allow mixed use developments in appropriate areas.
5. Continue to preserve trees through existing ordinances.
6. Promote infill for both residential and commercial areas.
7. Require or promote all new developments to follow Smart Growth principles.
8. Promote transitional open spaces to buffer intense land uses from other uses.
9. Support the creation of neighborhood associations to improve the overall quality of life.
10. Coordinate all new growth with capital improvements projects.
11. Consistently enforce zoning ordinances.
12. Update zoning code to include Old Town Overlay District
13. Work with area stakeholders to develop a master plan for the Old Town Development District and get buy-in from the community to move plan forward.

Chapter 10



Transportation

Introduction

A transportation system links communities and regions together through various networks. A system that is well designed is both safe and reliable. The connections provided are vital to connecting a city to a larger geographic network. The efficient circulation of people, materials and products depend upon a system of transportation routes. A component of transportation can also be recreational in the form of sidewalks, bicycle lanes and pedestrian lanes. This chapter describes the existing network and recommendations to enhance the future of transportation for the city.

Railways

Rail service for the city is provided by Norfolk Southern (NS) Railways. This is one of seventeen rail companies that service the State of Mississippi. Of the total 2,841.46 miles located within the state, 213.1 main lines are operated by NS. According to the Federal Railroad Administration and Association of American Railroads, this rail service is also classified as a Class I Major Line. The other category is Class II, which is for local services and not for national transport. Class I railroads typically have larger revenue budgets which exceed \$261.9 million, while Class II revenues are less than \$20 million.

The City of Laurel is serviced by the Crescent Line of Amtrak. The route for this line is between New York and New Orleans. The stop for Laurel is near the end of the route or at the beginning dependent upon your stage of the schedule. All those seeking to utilize the services of this line use the Laurel Train Depot. This renovated facility offers an enclosed waiting area along with restrooms during regular hours which are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

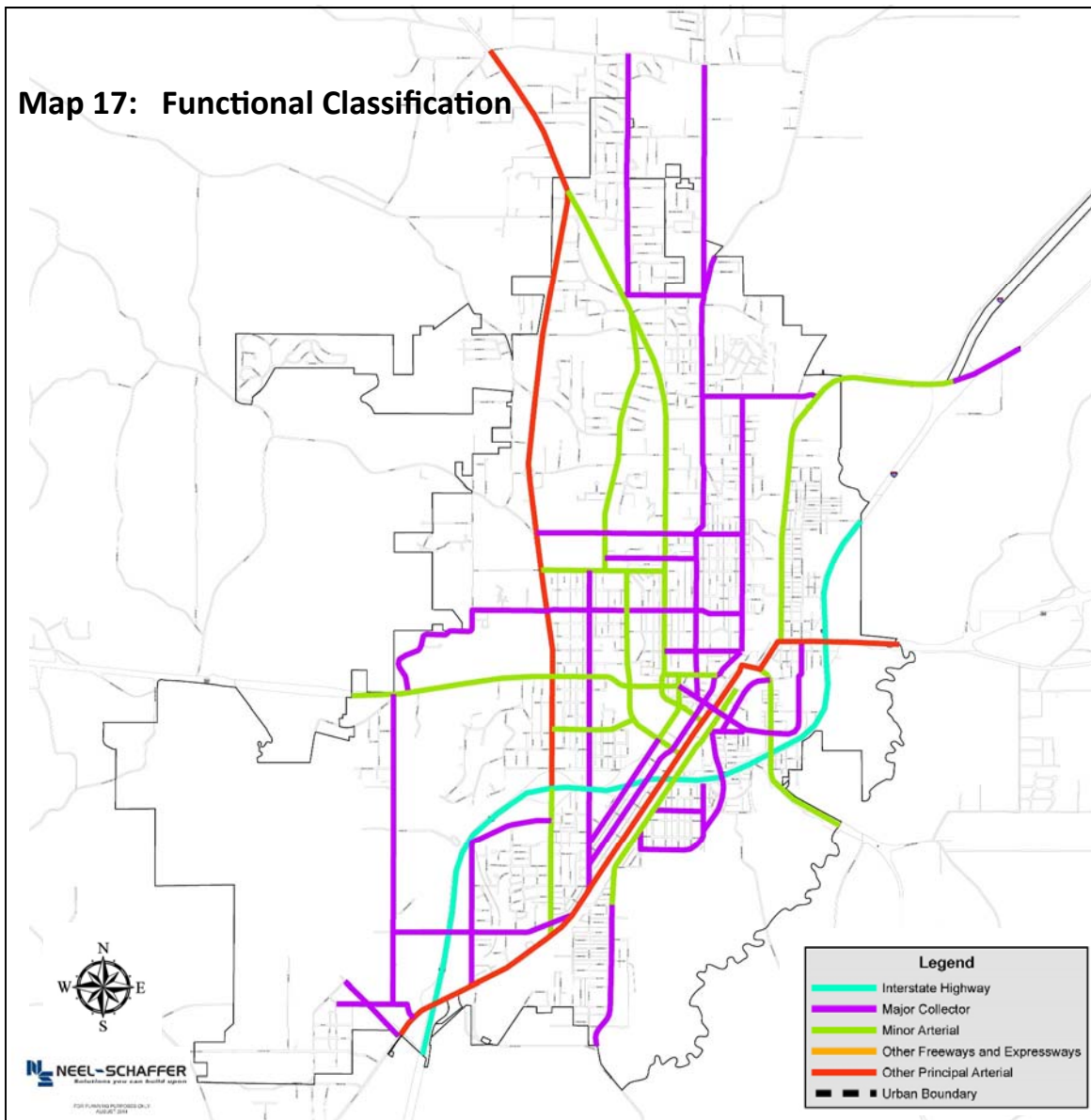
Roadways

Functional Classification System

Streets within the City of Laurel are classified according to functional classifications formulated by the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT). These classifications are determined by MDOT by reviewing a roadways primary function and the amount of traffic they sustain. This classification process is pursuant to the MS Code of 1972 Section 17-1. Map 12 shows the functional classification system of each street in graphical form. The functional classifications are:

- Local streets: primary function is to provide access to neighboring properties.

Map 17: Functional Classification



- **Collector:** serve to connect local/minor streets and major thoroughfares. Collector streets collect traffic from local/minor streets in residential neighborhoods and channel it into the arterial system.
- **Minor Arterial:** serve to move traffic between collector streets and move the principal arterials of the city and connect to various city districts.
- **Primary Arterial:** high speed, limited-access, grade separated roadways designed to move large volumes of traffic substantial distances throughout the city.

- Interstate Highway: the highest level of an arterial. This functional classification is characterized by full control of access and high speed design.
- Other Freeways and Expressways: serve to move large volumes of traffic at high speeds and are intended for long trips. There are relatively few intersections at grade which are controlled by traffic signals in this classification.

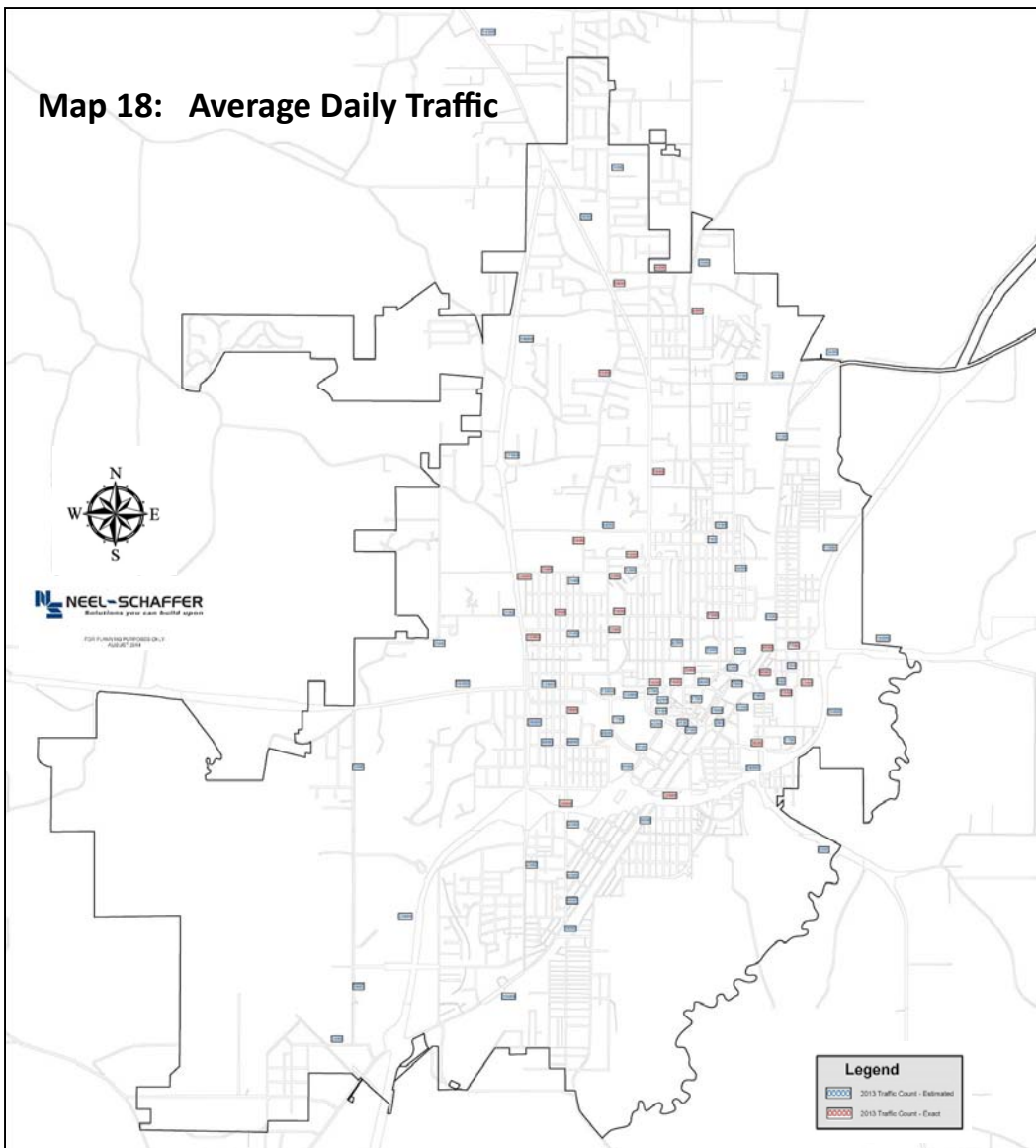
Average Daily Traffic (ADT)

The MDOT also calculates the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) at certain along roads at different locations throughout the state. The counts are typically taken during a 24-hour period and take into account various factors. These factors are: day of week, season, percentage of vehicles classified as trucks, and type of road. An increase in the amount of homes and commercial development can effect traffic count totals. If development exceeds the current ADT counts too greatly, roads may require widening to prevent congestion.

In order to achieve a balance among growth and level of service offered, land use must be balanced with transportation. The function of this balancing act is to ultimately anticipate demand upon roadways. Map 13 shows the ADT counts for Laurel as determined by MDOT. The larger traffic count totals are located near major corridors such as Highway 84 going east and west, on Interstate 59 entering the city, along Highway 15, near the Old Town Overlay District and near area schools.

There are certain land uses that create a higher volume of traffic. They are:

- Manufacturing: this includes such companies and properties as the Industrial Park, Howard Industries, Masonite, Wayne Farms and other manufacturing/industrial sites. Manufacturing generates increased traffic counts due to the high number of workers and truck traffic used to deliver products and supplies for production.
- Medical or health related: this includes South Central Regional Medical Center, its complimentary services and other health related offices that are within a concentrated portion of the city. These areas increase traffic count totals due to a large number of employees along with the demand of these services.



- **Retail Stores and Areas:** included in this category are major chains such as Wal-Mart, Walgreens and CVS. This also includes strip centers, neighborhood commercial nodes, and the Sawmill Square Mall. These areas generate increase traffic due to the services offered to the general public along locations near intersections or other highly trafficked areas.
- **Education:** this category includes all educational facilities at various levels which includes both public and private with a majority falling within the Laurel Public School District. Educational facilities generate high traffic volumes due to the large number of workers, parents and extracurricular activities that occur an hour before and after school.

- Government: included in this category are those buildings and properties that are within walking distance of each other that comprise the local government and its affiliated services. A majority of city offices are located in the courthouse downtown along with federal offices located in surrounding structures. Facilities located within this structure typically generate traffic during the early morning and late afternoon.
- Downtown: included in this category are all the offices, businesses and residences that are designated within . This district encompasses the downtown area along with some surrounding residential areas. The traffic generated in this category is continuous due to its various mixed uses. The majority of traffic generated in the downtown district is the early morning, mid afternoon and late evenings.

The list generated above is provided to give a brief description of categories that generate an increase in traffic volume. This list is not all inclusive and changes from time to time due to various reasons. Traffic generators are affected by an increase in either residential or commercial developments, the construction of new schools or additions to schools, expansions of large businesses and changes to the local industrial park. All of these factors can be addressed when an equilibrium is achieved between land use and the local street network.

Land Use and Roads

In order to make transportation planning a coordinated and efficient effort, decision makers must reach a balance with land use. Developing a street network should be priority. The placement of a street is determined by multiple factors which include: density, the intended use of the development, and the anticipated volume. The design element should include sidewalks, right-of-way, type of paving and the desired speed for vehicles. Other factors that should be addressed when looking at the design and placement of streets include: parking lots designed to serve multiple tenets, the addition of traffic calming devices to promote safety, bike and pedestrian lanes, and the addition of sidewalks that are ADA compliant.

Public Transportation

Currently, there is no form of public transportation for residents of Laurel. This includes local taxi service. Residents who lack any form of transportation rely on the support of family members and local churches for transportation.

Transportation Improvements

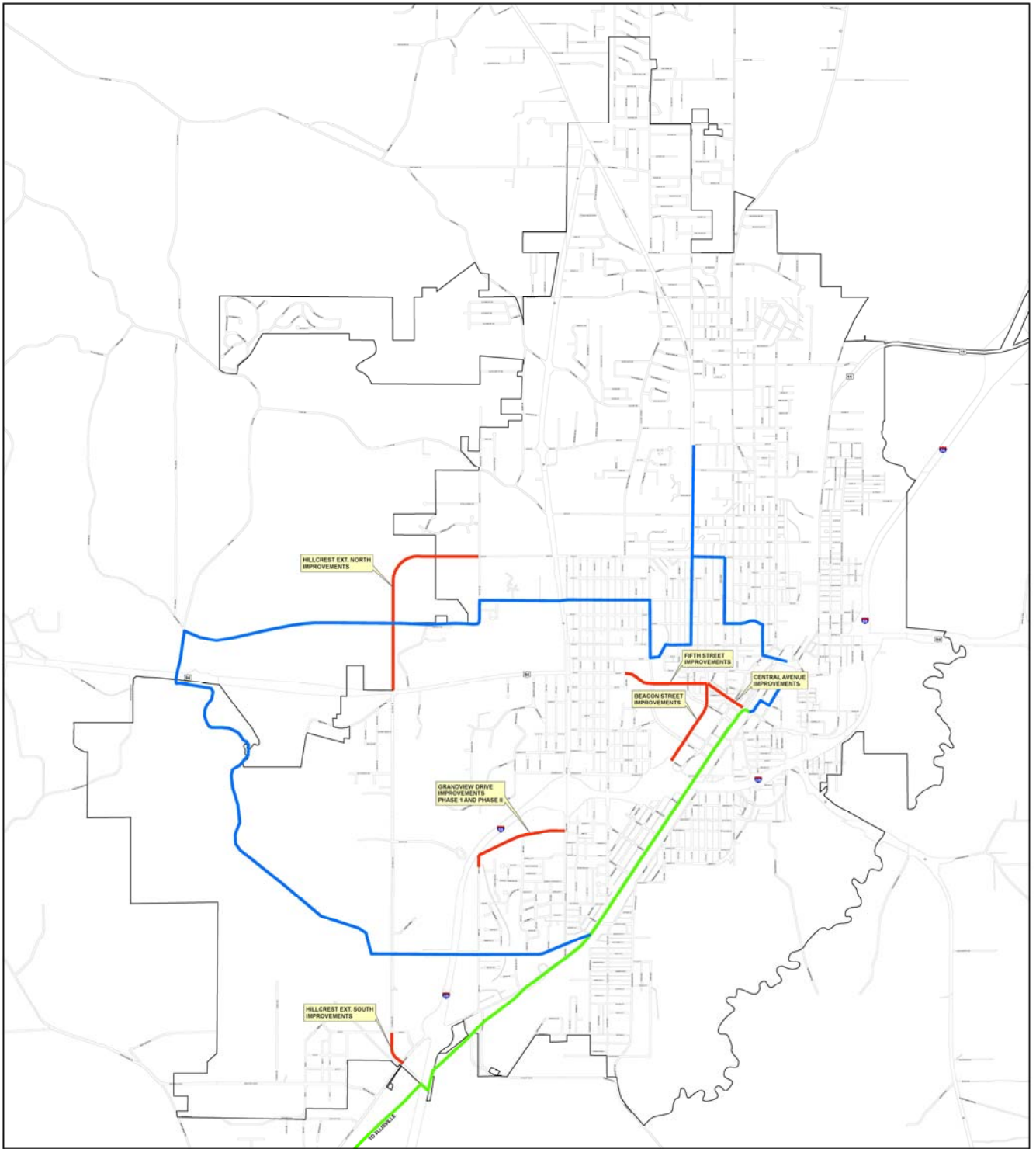
Local governments, along with the assistance of federal and state agencies, should seek to promote safety along with improving patterns of circulation. This is evident in both current and future transportation projects. Chapter 11 (Implementation Strategies) list various transportation projects ranging from corridor studies to signal improvements which seek to improve circulation patterns and promoting safety. The City of Laurel has adopted the following position as it relates to transportation:

The City of Laurel believes that the transportation system establishes the framework for the safety of our public, the livability of our community, the efficiency of movement of freight and people, the economic viability of our business and industry, and sustainability of our community for our future generations. In other words, 'our transportation system is comprised of the arteries through which the life our community flows.'

From the City of Laurel Transportation Briefing. 2008

The quote referenced above gives an indication to the high priority placed on transportation by the City of Laurel. The overall goal of transportation planning is the efficient movement of people and goods. However, it is through citizen involvement and sustainability that the goal becomes a reality. Transportation design should not be one dimensional and focus just on street layout. Effective transportation takes into account bicycle access, education, landscaping and access to local recreational opportunities and environmental management efforts. Map 19 identifies transportation improvements identified in this plan.

A list of projects related to transportation and other improvements can be found in the *Implementation Strategies* chapter.



NEEL-SCHAFFER
Engineering, Planning & Construction

FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY
AUGUST 2014

**City of Laurel
Comprehensive Plan**

Map 19

**TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS
PROJECTS**

Legend

- Trails to Major Parks
- Street Car Trail System
- Transportation Improvements
- City Limits_2011
- Street_ROW

Summary and Recommendations

The A city's transportation system is an integral component of connecting communities but also serves as a catalyst for growth and development. The City of Laurel is committed to improving the transportation network by improving traffic flow and promoting safety through innovative engineering standards and design. The design of these transportation networks must include the involvement of the citizens and consideration given towards both land use and environmental factors. The following recommendations related to transportation improvements are:

1. Develop a strategic plan for transportation improvements.
2. Improve an east-west corridor from Interstate 59 at Cook Avenue along Central Avenue and 5th Street to Highway 84 West.
3. Continue to work with MDOT to conduct transportation-related studies.
4. Seek funding from both state and federal sources for highway beautification which includes all corridors and gateways into the city.
5. Implement a pilot mass transit system to test feasibility of long-term system.
6. Implement traffic calming devices, such as roundabouts, divided boulevards, and landscaping where appropriate, to maintain safety.
7. Promote an integrated transportation system that connects neighborhoods through sidewalks, pedestrian trails and bike paths.
8. Develop an ordinance that requires sidewalks in new development where connectivity is needed or feasible.
9. Develop a comprehensive transportation plan for both the city and county that identifies major corridor improvements.
10. Inventory of all bridges located within the city for repair and replacement.
11. Implement bike lanes and sidewalks near schools to promote healthy transportation options for students.

Chapter 11



Implementation Strategies

The Implementation Strategies chapter will focus on individual projects derived from previous studies, interviews with city officials, citizen input and general knowledge of the community. The projects outlined range from construction projects to community development initiatives. They are listed with a reference to the appropriate chapter of the plan that the project originated. The projects also include a responsible city department, potential partners outside of the City of Laurel, estimated project costs, priority timeframe and potential funding sources when available.

Projects are listed in groups based on the anticipated timeframe for each project to begin initial work. Projects listed in the 5-10 year or 15-25 year timeframe are not of less value to the City of Laurel, but typically require greater coordination and larger financial contributions to complete. Projects are not prevented from moving up the timeframe schedule if financial support or stakeholder support increases.

Table 11: Implementation Projects

Project Name	Reference Page #	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners	Estimated Project Cost	Annual Budget	Timeframe (Yrs)	Action Steps
Update Land Development Code - Downtown Redevelopment District - Zoning Ordinance amendment For Mixed Use and Compact Development - Cell Tower Ordinance Amendment - Historic District Design Standards	90 74 68 34	Planning Commission	Laurel Main Street, Historic Preservation Committee, Sawmill Square Mall	\$150,000		1-5	Budget and contract for professional services.
Expand Downtown Façade Grants	34	Administration	Laurel Main Street		\$10,000	1-5	Work with Laurel Main Street to expand funding and grant area.
Bike Rack Campaign	67	Public Works	Laurel Main Street, Local Businesses, Leadership Jones County	\$2,000		1-5	Work with Laurel Main Street to expand the campaign.
Bike Lane Initiative	100	Public Works	MDOT, Community Cyclists Groups		\$10,000	1-5	Identify streets eligible for bike lanes with minimal design changes such as striping and signage.
Farmer's Market	68	Parks & Recreation Dept.	Laurel Main Street, Jones County, Local Farmers, MSU Extension Service	\$250,000		1-5	Work with Laurel Main Street to locate grant opportunities and construct a permanent marketplace.
Softball Complex at Sportsplex	68	Parks & Recreation Dept.	Jones County Supervisors,	\$8,000,000		1-5	Acquire legislative approval to continue one cent tourism tax to support a bond issue to expand the sportsplex.

Project Name	Reference Page #	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners	Estimated Project Cost	Annual Budget	Timeframe (Yrs)	Action Steps
Mississippi Power Light Pole Identification Initiative	68	Inspection Department	Mississippi Power and Laurel Main Street	\$0		1-5	Contact MS Power to request light poles be numbered.
Comprehensive Water and Wastewater Improvement Plan	68	Administration	Public Works, United Water	TBD		1-5	Coordinate with operator to develop a schedule for potential projects to be completed over the next 20 years.
Develop a Complete GIS Database of City Services	68	Public Works	City Department Heads		\$25,000	1-5	Work with GIS contractor to complete and update GIS database of water, sewer, drainage, etc.
Transportation Assessment	100	Public Works	MDOT, Jones County	TBD		1-5	Budget for preparation of assessment.
Parks & Recreation Master Plan	67	Parks & Recreation Dept.	Jones County, EDA	\$50,000		5-10	Budget and contract for professional services.
5th Street/Central Avenue Improvements	100	Public Works	MDOT	\$6,000,000		5-10	Apply for funding through MDOT.
Agri-Tourism Marketing Plan	34	Administration	Jones County, Agri-Tourism Venues, Laurel Main Street, EDA, MSU Extension Service	\$30,000		5-10	Budget and contract for professional services.
"Plant Laurel" Initiative	34	Administration	Garden Club, Laurel Main Street, MDOT		\$8,000	5-10	Designate city department to spearhead this initiative including developing a plan of action.
Sidewalk & Pedestrian Lighting Inventory	67	Public Works		\$10,000		5-10	Budget and contract for professional services.

Project Name	Reference Page #	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners	Estimated Project Cost	Annual Budget	Timeframe (Yrs)	Action Steps
Regional Transportation Strategic Plan	100	Public Works	MDOT, Jones County	\$25,000		5-10	Budget and contract for professional services.
Streetcar Trace	67	Parks & Recreation Dept.	MDOT, Ellisville, Jones County, MS Power, JCJC	\$6,000,000		5-10	Develop a steering committee to coordinate with professionals on a feasibility plan with funding strategies.
I-59 Lighting and Landscaping	50	Public Works	MDOT	\$750,000		5-10	Coordinate with MDOT secure permit to construct and plant in ROW. Budget and contract for professional services.
Laurel-Jones County Library Renovations	67	Administration	Laurel Jones Co. Library Board, Jones County	TBD		5-10	Budget and contract for professional services.
South Laurel Water Tank	68	Public Works	United Water	\$1,500,000		5-10	Conduct a water supply study to determine the need for water storage in the area. Construct a elevated tank.
Water Supply Well	68	Public Works	United Water	\$350,000		5-10	Conduct a water supply study to determine the need and availability of water in the area.
Housing Study	74	Administration	Laurel Housing Authority, JCJC, USM, MSU Carl Small Town Center	\$20,000		5-10	Contract through a university planning department to conduct a housing study including markets for alternative housing types.

Project Name	Reference Page #	Responsible Entity	Potential Partners	Estimated Project Cost	Annual Budget	Timeframe (Yrs)	Action Steps
Bridge Inventory	100	Public Works	MDOT, Jones County	TBD		5-10	Budget and contract for professional services.
Safe Routes to School Initiative	100	Public Works	MDOT, Laurel School District	\$200,000		5-10	Develop a priority listing of sidewalks around schools. Prepare a grant application for priority areas.
Splash Pads	67	Parks & Recreation Dept.	Leadership Jones County	\$100,000		5-10	Utilize the Park and Rec Master Plan to locate splash pads in neighborhood parks.
Dog Park	68	Parks & Recreation Dept.		\$225,000		5-10	Utilize the Park and Rec Master Plan to locate a dog park in an appropriate location.
Develop a Hospitality School in Downtown	41	Administration	Jones County Junior College, Laurel Main Street	TBD		10-25	Set a meeting with JCJC to discuss possible Hospitality School downtown.
Develop a Web based GIS application for the City's website	68	Public Works		\$15,000		10-25	Secure software and upgrade website to include GIS mapping tools.
Archery Range	67	Parks & Recreation Dept.			\$50,000	10-25	Utilize the Park and Rec Master Plan to locate archery ranges in local parks, where appropriate.

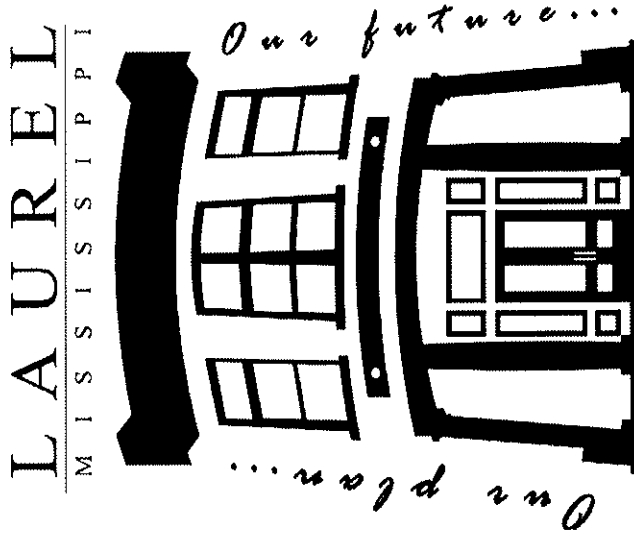
Appendix

Laurel Chooses Its Future!

You are invited to help shape the future of Laurel for the next twenty years. The City of Laurel will hold a series of meetings to allow citizen input to create a new comprehensive plan.

Ward 1 April 7th 6:00-7:00 p.m.	Ward 2 April 15th 6:00-7:00 p.m.	Ward 3 April 10th 6:00-7:00 p.m.
Ward 4 April 14th 6:00-7:00 p.m.	Ward 5 April 17th 6:00-7:00 p.m.	Ward 6 April 21st 6:00-7:00 p.m.
	Ward 7 April 24th 6:00-7:00 p.m.	

All meetings will be held at the Laurel Train Depot. If you have any questions, please call Corey Proctor or Mary Merck at 601-545-1565.



2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DREAM BIG!

Think 'outside the box'.

HAVE FUN!

Enjoy the meetings and generate new ideas.

GET INVOLVED!

Attend the meetings and get the word out to fellow residents.

City of Laurel 2030 Comprehensive Plan

Community Visioning Exercise

Ward 1

1. What do you like best about the City of Laurel?

- 3-Downtown Revitalization
- 3-The restaurants
- 3-Easy access to medical care
- 4-Arts (museum)
- 1-City Beautiful (get back to that point)
- 1-Downtown Churches
- 1-Laurel Little Theatre
- 1-Architecture
- 2-Accessible to major cities (driving distance)
- 2-Potential for growth
- 0-Mall
- 0-Number of grocery stores
- 2-Trash pick-up
- 4-Mayor who cares
- 3-LRMA
- 0-Historic District
- 0-Great Administration
- 2-Open door policy with administration
- 2-Low crime rate
- 3-Friendly city
- 2-Great churches (Christian city)
- 4-Beautiful
- 4-City as a whole; pulling together in a time of need
- 2-Rich history
- 2-Places to eat
- 1-City progress
- 2-Small town atmosphere
- 2-Lauren Rogers Museum
- 0-Sporting Events
- 3-Industry

2. What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?

- 4-New water
- 4-Litter
- 5-Less crime
- 3-Traffic on 16th Ave.
- 6-Street improvements
- 7-Loud music in vehicles

- 1-Parking Improvements
- 4-“Slum Lords” to be held accountable
- 2-Incorporate into county “Annexation”
- 4-School System
- 1-Improved gateways
- 1-Leash laws
- 4-Enforce noise ordinance
- 5-Officer patrol (Visibility)
- 3-After school programs
- 4-More vocational training
- 3-Involvement with children
- 3-More places to eat and shop
- 2-Food court in mall
- 4-More professional jobs
- 1-Better community centers and no charges
- 3-Need Boys and Girls Club
- 1-Night Spots and Music
- 0-More adult entertainment
- 8-Better sewer and streets
- 0-More sidewalks
- 2-Restrictive Covenants
- 5-Industries that provide professional jobs
- 1-Entertainment factor (cultural events)
- 5-Traffic flow on 16th Ave.
- 4-Neighborhood “Clean-Up”
- 3-Employment
- 0-Education (Drop-Outs)
- 2-Improved shopping and dining areas
- 1-Police Substations (Storefront)
- 1-Consistency in police department
- 0-More businesses step up security (Indemnity)
- 3-In place neighborhood watch
- 2-Front yard activity needs to be in back yard for safety reasons
- 4-Condition of streets
- 0-Improve Infrastructure

3. Finish the sentence below with your vision for the City of Laurel in 20 years.

“In twenty years, I would like Laurel to be”

- A beautiful, friendly town where everyone who lives here would be proud to call it home.
- A safer place to live.
- Possibly bigger and more opportunities.
- Greater.
- A bigger and safer city with a small town environment. To also have a rich history, with pride in natural features and livability.
- Progressive growing city.

- Safer place to work and live and educate our kids.
- Offer better starting pay for the young to return and live.
- Vibrant in business and industries.
- Family oriented.
- Bringing people back to the city .
- Accountable
- Harmonious
- City Beautiful

City of Laurel 2030 Comprehensive Plan Community Visioning Exercise Ward 2

1. **What do you like best about the City of Laurel?**
 - 3-Atmosphere of town, architecture and landscape.
 - 2-Receptive to new-comers
 - 3-Quaintness of city
 - 1-Willingness to grow
 - 2-Willing people to work together
 - 1-Close knit community
 - 4-Small town atmosphere
 - 1-Laurel Express
 - 3-Hospital
 - 1-City Services
 - 2-Accessibilty to public officials
 - 0-City government
 - 5-Accessible to other cities
 - 4-Care about what matters; appreciate variety of things
 - 0-Businesss Climate
 - 4-Cost of living
 - 4-Cultural Facilities
 - 1-Parks and Recreation
 - 0-Cleanliness
 - 0-Lack of congested traffic
 - 2-Friendly city
 - 4-Awareness of arts and culture
 - 1-Museums
 - 2-Proximity to JCJC
 - 0-Wellness Center
 - 1-Police Presence (visibility)

2. **What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?**
 - 3-Train wait staff
 - 2-Downtown revitalization
 - 2-Neighborhood Clean up
 - 3-Dilipadated rental houses
 - 1-City administration should provide support to the Preservation Commission
 - 0-Unemployment
 - 3-Truancy laws enforced
 - 0-Why are kids not in school?
 - 0-Commerical Activities
 - 3-More upscale retail stores and restaurants

0-Street improvements

1-City sewer systems

1-Water systems

3. **Finish the sentence below with your vision for the City of Laurel in 20 years.**

“In twenty years, I would like Laurel to be”

-Arts destination system

-Choice of newcomers for small size, hospitality and reasonable cost of living.

-Retail destination

City of Laurel 2030 Comprehensive Plan

Community Visioning Exercise

Ward 3

1. What do you like best about the City of Laurel?

- 2-People
- 2-Parks
- 3-Recreational Facilities
- 3-Natural beauty/trees
- 5-Lauren Rogers Museum “Historical significance”
- 3-Location/Weather
- 2-Low Crime Rates
- 0-Stable environment (business, government and recreation)
- 0-Easy to get around
- 0-Accessible
- 0-Close to other cities in South MS
- 0-Churches
- 0-Location
- 1-Great Museum
- 1-Little Theatre
- 1-Natural Beauty
- 0-Parks
- 1-Golf Courses
- 0-Veteran’s Museum
- 1-Living here
- 0-Southern community
- 4-Small community atmosphere
- 1-Easy to get around
- 4-Parks and recreation
- 3-Regional location
- 0-Good interstate access

2. What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?

- 2-Infrastrucure
- 4-Civic Pride
- 5-Education System
- 0-Negative Attitude
- 4-Better shopping and finer dining
- 3-Racial reconciliation “Relations”
- 2-Downtown parking
- 0-More/addition of community centers
- 0-Drainage

- 0-More entertainment
- 1-Restoration of old neighborhoods
- 1-Need tree maintenance
- 2-East-West corridor
- 0-Maintenance of drainage ditches
- 2-Street improvements
- 2-Water/Sewer lines
- 2-Need increased tax base
- 0-Intergovernmental cooperation to fix streets
- 3-Business development
- 1-Support for small businesses
- 5-Upgrade schools
- 1-More business friendly
- 1-Do away with ad valeroum taxes over 5 years
- 0-Tax rolls to be accessible on the Internet
- 2-Lower taxes-use taxes fairly
- 1-Be more competitive with other cities
- 0-A city government treats everyone the same
- 1-Enforce city ordinances that are passed

3. Finish the sentence below with your vision for the City of Laurel in 20 years.

“In twenty years, I would like Laurel to be”

- Art Center for the South “Cultural Center”
- Consolidated school system
- Better transportation
- Great retirement center
- Improve downtown (Fairhope, AL)
- Metropolitan Govt.
- Better infrastructure system
- To become a metro government with consolidation of school system and law enforcement
- More people come in the city to help and pay taxes
- A community in which people want to live in Laurel
- Enforce the ordinances and work by them or abolish them
- Total metro government and schools

City of Laurel 2030 Comprehensive Plan Community Visioning Exercise Ward 4

1. What do you like best about the City of Laurel?

1-Small city—no freeways running through

5-Feeling of community

2-People friendliness

0-Job Market

0-Convenient shopping

3-Parks and recreation (Sportsplex)

0-Low cost of living

2-New development on 16th Ave.

2-Churches

4-City Schools (community)

2-Feeling safe

2-Effective law enforcement

0-Community activities

1-City codes

0-Location

2-History of city and historical district

0-Museum

1-Banking

0-Library

0-Train Depot

0-Community Awareness

3-Support of local charities

1-Climate

2. What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?

0-Public Transportation

7-Slum Lords

2-Roads and Infrastructure

2-Enforcing Codes

2-Trash, Trash, Trash (stiffer fines)

0-Effective communication with Hispanic population

0-Truancy laws enforced

1-After school programs (volunteers)

0-Program coordinator

0-Summer programs for teenage kids

1-Ethnic and racial diversity (treatment)

0-Continuing revitalization efforts in downtown

- 0-Taxes (grocery, tag)
- 0-Image change
- 1-More drugs off the street
- 0-Welcome sign on the Interstate
- 3-Back to City Beautiful
- 0-Senior Communities (gated, senior daycare and recreation)
- 2-School facilities
- 0-Brain drain

3. Finish the sentence below with your vision for the City of Laurel in 20 years.

“In twenty years, I would like Laurel to be”

- A place to live, work and raise a family equipped with better housing, schools, jobs and education.
- A family oriented community
- Community oriented regardless of race or ethnicity
- Thriving downtown
- Industrious
- A culturally diverse, family and faith oriented, with a sound economical and educational emphasis.

City of Laurel 2030 Comprehensive Plan Community Visioning Exercise Ward 5

1.) What do you like best about the City of Laurel?

- 2 –Construction of new homes.
- 1 –Doctor Offices and shopping stores are in convenient locations
- 0 –Family friendly town
- 2 --Quiet
- 2 –Beautification (parks, lights on central AVE.)
- 4 –Tearing down of dilapidated properties
- 1 –Growth but keep the small town atmosphere
- 3 –Trash pick-up (friendly workers)
- 0 –Police dept. connecting with the community
- 4 –Good school system

2.) What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?

- 3 –Bus transportation (grey hound departures and public transportation)
- 0 –Business development
- 1 –Lack of communication (no way to voice concerns or know of issues)
- 2 –More sidewalks
- 2 –More curb and gutters
- 2 –Sewer and drainage
- 2 –Programs to assist the elderly property owners
- 4 –Place for senior based activities
- 0 –enforcement of ordinances
- 1 –Property upkeep
- 1 –City Council meet with ward residents more frequently

3.) Finish the sentence below with your vision for the City of Laurel in 20 years.

“In twenty years, I would like Laurel to be

- A retail destination for everyone
- To be nationally recognized as a livable city
- Thriving, growing city
- Maintain/ Preserve Historical/ Cultural Resources

City of Laurel 2030 Comprehensive Plan Community Visioning Exercise Ward 6

1.) What do you like best about the City of Laurel?

- 2 –Small town atmosphere.
- 2 –Parks
- 5 --Historic Districts
- 1 –Spirituality
- 1 –Museum
- 1 –Beauty
- 1 –Friendly citizens
- 1 –“Home”
- 4 –Downtown Potential
- 3 –Compactness
- 2 –Central Location
- 0 –Familiar-grew up here
- 5 –Openness & friendly people
- 1 –Beautiful Homes
- 0 –Wonderful Churches
- 4 –History
- 2 –Great Councilperson
- 0 –Schools
- 0 –Near Major Highways
- 1 –Accessible to other places
- 3 –Diversity

2.) What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?

- 0 –Parking
- 3 –Business Taxes (too many)
- 4 –Enforcement of Litter Laws
- 4 –Better schools
- 0 –Centralized businesses
- 2 –Enforce ordinances
- 0 –Smoke Free city
- 0 –Public transportation (lights)
- 1 –Lack of family entertainment
- 3 –More restaurants (more variety)
- 0 –Movie Theater
- 0 –After Hours businesses (after 5)
- 0 –More civic-youth organizations
- 1 –More Pedestrian – oriented
- 2 –More annual festivals

- 2 –Better communication
- 0 –Truancy during school Hrs.
- 2 –Curbs & gutters (maple St.)
- 5 –Rental Ordinance
- 6 –Public Transportation
- 1 –Stop Lights need to be recalibrated
- 3 –Fairness in disbursing housing funds
- 1 –More housing grant money
- 1 –Higher penalties & better animal control ordinances
- 3 –Youth curfew enforcement
- 3 –Indecent exposure ordinance enforcement
- 0 –Preserve Historic District boundaries
- 3 –Clean up overgrown lots

3.) **Finish the sentence below with your vision for the City of Laurel in 20 years.**

“In twenty years, I would like Laurel to be”

- Eliminate drugs & all the evils from the use of drugs**
- a beautiful, quiet retirement city**
- City that could be modeled all over united states**
- City where children would move back to after college**
- Have better sampling of retail stores. (Boutiques, specialty clothes)**
- Place where magazines would feature in top ten lists**
- Grocery store that would sale organic products**
- to be more energy efficient**
- Have a water park**
- AGRI- Tourism (fishing camp, bird watching, nature trails)**
- For Presidential Parkway to become recognized gateway**
- Tourist Destination**

City of Laurel 2030 Comprehensive Plan Community Visioning Exercise Ward 7

1.) What do you like best about the City of Laurel?

- 1 –Friendly people.
- 4 –Recreation (overall & Dept.)
- 5 –New Housing Development
- 2 –Churches
- 2 –Small town Atmosphere
- 4 –Stress Free
- 4 –Schools

2.) What would you like to change about the City of Laurel?

- 7 –Change attitude & decisions of leadership
- 8 –Utilize funds to improve city
- 5 –Enforce noise ordinance
- 3 –Cost of utilities (too high)
- 2 –Community participation increase
- 2 –Transportation (general and senior citizen)
- 9 –Infrastructure (water and sewer)
- 10 –Open government
- 1 –Vacant properties/lots (demolition and infill)
- 11 –rental property maintenance (strict rules for landlords)

3.) Finish the sentence below with your vision for the City of Laurel in 20 years.

“In twenty years, I would like Laurel to be”

- Sidewalks throughout the city**
- programs for seniors**
- drug court reinstated**
- greyhound bus hub**
- open government**
- change 100 year flood designation to build housing**
- boys and girls club**
- upkeep of communities**