



CITY OF JASPER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopted by the City of Jasper
Planning Commission
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INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan describes the overall strategy for how Jasper will shape itself, through public and private investment, over the next twenty years. The City prepared this plan as a guide to making decisions regarding capital improvements, City services, growth management and economic development efforts. The plan gives Jasper residents, property owners, merchants, builders and developers a reasonable expectation of the city's future so that they may invest in the community with confidence. The plan is long-range, general, and focused primarily on the physical and economic development of the community. It will be a living document whose relevance will continue even as circumstances change over time.

Through the Jasper Comprehensive Plan, City officials wish to:

- Illustrate the ways in which the city should develop over time.
- Coordinate land use recommendations with those for transportation and other infrastructure improvements.
- Provide a guide to development decisions and a basis for making and revising zoning and other regulations.
- Ensure that as development occurs, the city's most significant natural and historic features will be conserved and enhanced, while property values are protected.
- Provide a pattern for land use and development that strives for a sustainable community with a diversified tax base to support necessary and desired facilities and services.

In response, the City of Jasper will continually refer to this document to:

- Visualize what can reasonably be expected to occur in Jasper—to provide some assurance and security regarding development investment decisions.
- Review and evaluate development proposals and rezoning requests in the context of Jasper's vision.
- Provide guidance on improving and updating the City's development policies and regulations.
- Identify priorities and strategies for making infrastructure investments.
- The Jasper Comprehensive Plan recognizes the value of the city's underlying natural resources, history and community values. The plan will guide development to balance growth with the conservation of important natural resources. For example, activity centers—where infrastructure is in place and private investment is already occurring—function as magnets for economic growth. This approach reinforces existing businesses, optimizes use of existing roads and infrastructure, while avoiding encroachment into neighborhoods and environmentally sensitive areas. And, development will be supported and encouraged by the City of Jasper to foster efficiency, stability, entrepreneurial activity and a strong quality of life and community image.

USING THE PLAN

- The Comprehensive Plan is a combination of vision, maps, priority actions and policies—a framework for guiding public and private decisions that will affect new development and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and business areas. The plan is based on the community's vision for its future. The plan looks ahead, focusing on the physical form of the city, and strives to shape Jasper's future development in a fiscally responsible pattern consistent with the community's vision.
- The plan is a general, long-range guide to assist public officials and private citizens as they consider investments that may have long-term impacts on the community. To do this, the plan must be continuously reviewed and updated as changes occur in physical, political and economic conditions.
- The plan will be implemented through actions by City staff, the City Council, the Planning Commission and other boards and commissions and by those of developers and private organizations and citizens. Major public actions in support of plan implementation will include adoption, revision and enforcement of the city's development regulations, capital improvement planning and budgeting, and decisions regarding development proposals and annexation. Guidance provided by this monitoring and renewal process will assist the city refine the Comprehensive Plan through consideration of amendments as may be needed over the years.
- The Jasper Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document, to evolve and grow in response to changes in community values and to market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, and updating can the plan fully serve Jasper.
- Jasper draws to it more people, businesses and private investment every year. The underlying question is how growth should be channeled. That is the role of Jasper's continuing planning process and the task of this Comprehensive Plan—to assure growth and change is compatible with the vision the people of Jasper have set for their community.



COMMUNITY VISION

The following section describes the community's vision for the continued development and improvement of Jasper that arose from an initial community visioning session. Over 500 residents, business and property owners and local workers responded to an online survey, the results of which were used, in combination with the results of the Visioning Session, to identify the major goals for the plan.

VISIONING SESSION

In Fall 2019 the City held three visioning sessions to discuss the state of Jasper and the community's vision for its future. The first session was held with city officials and staff, the second with residents and the third with representatives of the business community. Participants were presented a series of questions to elicit thoughts that would help the Planning Commission and City Council as they considered the future of the city. What follows are main themes of the responses (see Appendix for complete listing).

ASSETS

Those attending the visioning sessions were asked first about what they considered the assets of Jasper—those special features they hold in high regard and that set the community apart from other places.

Jasper has a unique natural setting featuring several local streams and convenient access to popular fishing and boating destination Lewis Smith Lake, Walker County Lake and the Black Warrior River. It is easy to get to Jasper, with four interchanges on Interstate 22, connecting to Memphis to the north and Birmingham and Interstate 65 to the southeast.

The city has been successful in growing industries and has land reserved for more. Bevill State Community College offers workforce training programs to support industrial growth and employment opportunity. As a business hub for Walker County and nearby communities, Jasper has a significant retail base, a hospital and an active, historic downtown shepherded by Main Street Jasper. The City serves the community well, improving and maintaining infrastructure.

Residents enjoy a strong parks and recreation system and cultural events, like the Foothills Festival. They are also proud of their city school system, sports teams and marching band. The Walker Area Community Foundation, arts alliance and others are actively contributing to progress in Jasper.

Jasper is affordable, open to growth and open to new ideas.



ISSUES

Regardless of their love for Jasper, participants in the visioning sessions made it clear that work remains to be done to bring conditions up to the standards they would like to enjoy throughout the community.

The community is concerned about its outside image—and negative perceptions of the surrounding county—as well as how residents view their city and its opportunities for the future. There is a desire for additional businesses, especially a movie theater, and new industries offering good paying jobs. Industrial growth may be stymied by limitations in the local workforce. Internet service is considered unreliable, though the City is working with a new internet provider to increase access, speed and reliability.

There is need for investment in older neighborhoods and image enhancement along major roads. Some feel there is not enough affordable and mid-range housing, including rental and senior living options.

Jasper is easy enough to get around in a car but not so much without one. Despite its enviable natural surroundings, access to outdoor recreation is seen as limited. And, residents are concerned about crime, poverty and homelessness and the effects that the national opioid epidemic has had in the area. Some noted the mental and physical health of the community needs improvement.



OUTSIDE FORCES

There are always factors outside the control of the community—occurring sometimes at county, state, national and even global levels—that can affect Jasper, for better or worse, over time.

Among those that residents perceive as potentially negative influences are the decline in the coal industry, a major economic force in the area for many decades, rising healthcare costs and Jasper being situated in a severe weather corridor.

As Alabama has attracted automobile manufacturing to the state, it has presented industrial development opportunities for Jasper, as does the completion of Interstate 22. Now with direct interstate access, those working in the Birmingham metro area could more easily choose to live in Jasper rather than commute through the major city's congested southern growth corridor. Jasper is getting younger, and these demographic shifts need to be considered in planning for the future.

SACRED COWS

In Jasper there are elements of the community that are considered “sacred” or essential to its character and should not be lost, tampered with or taken for granted.

Meeting participants noted the importance of Walker County Lake, the Black Warrior River and the Bankhead National Forest. Downtown Jasper and the community’s wealth of historic places—the Courthouse Square, City Hall, Sherer Auditorium, the WPA bridge and park, the Bankhead House and longstanding local churches—are essential the community’s identity. Jasper also prizes its locally owned businesses, the hospital, airport and Bevill State. Jasper is proud of its famous residents, including Alabama Senator Carl Elliott, and love the high school Vikings. The Walker Area Community Foundation has also become an important component of and proponent for the city in recent years.



VISIONS FOR JASPER

Building upon discussions of assets, issues, outside influences and the reasons people are drawn to the city, visioning participants were asked to envision Jasper as they would like it to be in at least a decade or so. Each person was asked to share one significant aspect of that future condition they perceived to be absent from Jasper today.

Participants envision Jasper becoming an industrial hub in north-central Alabama, offering increasing economic opportunities to a highly skilled and educated populace. The community will take better advantage of its natural environment, becoming a center for outdoor recreation and sports tourism. The newly thriving atmosphere in downtown will be sustained. Residents will have more choices for dining out and will be able to catch a new movie in town. The economy will grow without Jasper losing its history and character. There will be more and better housing options for older residents. Historic homes and neighborhoods will see much needed reinvestment. South and west Jasper will become proud gateways into the thriving city.

Community health will improve and opioid addiction eliminated. A well-supported police force will keep Jasper safe. Jasper will become easier to get around, whether or not you have a car. Pride in the community will soar, as Jasper sets out a new definition of itself—with the help of its engaged and optimistic residents.

THE “WOW” QUESTION

Meeting participants were asked to name one change to Jasper in the next 10-20 years that would impress them the most. Here's what they said:

major
industry

in twenty years, I
see more diverse
leadership

movie theater
and a nice
restaurant

trail town - a recreational
hub for river rafting, biking,
hiking and paddling

athletic complex to
encourage sports
tourism

more restaurants,
job opportunities,
diversity and residential
development

positive activities in
all areas will attract
others to come to
Jasper

full industrial
park

affordable
housing

COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community survey was published in August 2019 to understand the feelings of residents, property and business owners and local workers regarding the current state of the city, how it appears to be changing and the issues that are most important to the community's future.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Over 70% of respondents rated life in Jasper as “good” or “very good.” Asked how quality of life has changed Jasper in the last five years, respondents were generally positive. About 41% felt it had improved, and 30% felt it had somewhat improved. Only about seven percent felt it had “somewhat declined” or “declined.”

The top five conditions that respondents noted as contributing positively to their quality of life were: sense of community (55%), cost of living (42%), schools (39%), parks and recreation opportunities (38%) and access to goods and services (37%).

The top five conditions considered to be hampering quality of life were: limited access to goods and services (41%), economic opportunities (37%), traffic (33%), cost of living (21%), and parks and recreation amenities (18%).

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Respondents were asked to score thirteen categories of public facilities and services—most of which are under the umbrella of city government. The five top scoring categories were: fire protection, police protection, city schools, water system and garbage collection.

The five lowest bottom scoring categories were: road conditions, traffic, lack of pedestrian facilities, planning and zoning and stormwater drainage.

ISSUES

Respondents were asked to select three issues out of ten they felt were critical to the future of Jasper: The top five responses were:

1. Business development (57.0%)
2. Industrial and workforce development (51.4%)
3. PreK-12 education (33.5%)
4. Public safety and Community appearance/image (tied at (32.7%)
5. Recreational and cultural opportunities (31.7%).

POSITIVE, LONG-TERM IMPACT

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to name any one change they felt would have a positive, long-term impact on the community. Responses were translated into categories, with the following five occurring the most frequently:

1. Business development
2. Industrial development
3. Recreation and entertainment
4. Housing
5. Community image

These responses coincide closely with respondents views of what issues they consider to be important to the city's future. The survey findings were also reflected in input at the three live visioning sessions. The graphic below shows the frequency of responses to the question, with the larger phrases appearing more frequently in responses.



GOALS

The following overarching goals were culled from input of residents, business and property owners, City staff and officials and other stakeholders. These topics should be areas of focus for the City and its partners over the next several years to elevate economic opportunity and provide a high quality of life for residents.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Jasper will continue to recruit retailers, restaurants and other businesses to the City, support existing businesses and grow new ones locally to provide residents with access to goods and services and assure a sustainable tax base to fund city services and facilities. To secure the quality and variety of goods and services desired by residents, continued population growth (and accompanying housing investment) will be valuable.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Jasper will continue to attract and grow industries that offer good-paying jobs to residents, taking advantage of land secured by the Industrial Development Board, rail and interstate access and proximity to major industry hubs in north-central Alabama. To optimize and sustain industrial development, the City, Beville State, Jasper City Schools and other partners must focus on efforts to offer a strong, capable workforce to current and prospective companies.

RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Jasper will build on its entertainment and recreational offerings to residents of all ages and grow arts and entertainment activities by tapping into its parks system, history and proximity to Smith Lake and Black Warrior River. Building a strong portfolio of “things to do” will enhance Jasper’s quality of life in ways that will attract residential growth and thus contribute to business and economic development.

HOUSING

While the US Census had estimated that Jasper lost population during the 2010s, recent housing development and interest indicate that trend is reversing. More rooftops will make Jasper more attractive to retailers and provide a greater variety of housing choices for households of different income levels. But new housing construction is only part of the picture. The City will also support neighborhood revitalization through blight elimination, infrastructure investments and partnerships to encourage private reinvestment in Jasper’s older and lower income communities.

COMMUNITY IMAGE

Jasper is on the rebound, with progress being made in industrial development, downtown revitalization, its parks and recreation system and housing growth. Now is the time for the city to establish a new forward-looking image to overshadow and replace past assumptions about Jasper. In so doing, the community will work on its self-image and improve its physical appearance—enhancing key roadways and public spaces and encouraging reinvestment in aging neighborhoods and business areas.



PLAN PRIORITIES

GOAL 1 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Jasper will continue to recruit retailers, restaurants and other businesses to the City, support existing businesses and grow new ones locally to provide residents with access to goods and services and assure a sustainable tax base to fund city services and facilities. Residential growth will also help to secure the quality and variety of goods and services desired by existing residents

OBJECTIVE 1 CONTINUE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

While its location along Interstate 22 and well-travelled SR 5 (former 78) has helped attract restaurants and retailers, the size of the community and its median income limit its drawing power for national and regional businesses that determine investments based on these indicators. While there are still businesses within Jasper's economic range, the community clearly desires more and higher quality retail businesses, restaurants and entertainment. Residential development and income growth will help Jasper recruit more and higher end businesses. The city maintains update community data, assesses market surpluses and gaps to help focus recruitment efforts and, like many communities, participates in International Council on Shopping Centers (ICSC) conferences.

OBJECTIVE 2 BUILD MORE HOUSING

Jasper is seeing much greater interest in residential development than it has seen in many years. Because Jasper is located along I-22, it has the potential to market itself as a residential suburb to Birmingham, offering prospective residents all of the desired characteristics of an authentic small town, not just a suburban bedroom community. Participants in community meetings indicated a need for both affordable and mid-range market-rate housing. Attracting middle-income households to Jasper will be particularly beneficial in convincing retailers to invest in Jasper.

OBJECTIVE 3 SUPPORT HOMEGROWN BUSINESSES

To meet the demands of the community for more and high quality businesses, Jasper should look to its own resources in addition to outside business investment. Communities can spur local business growth by creating a pipeline to cultivate entrepreneurial activity. Bevill State, local banks, the Chamber of Commerce and other community partners can enable business start-ups through business education, incubator programs, peer-to-peer mentoring, small business financing and promotional activities.



Business incubator programs help entrepreneurs launch successful businesses. Some offer co-working space and shared infrastructure to lower overhead costs, while others assist startups with mentoring and peer networking.

GOAL 2 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Jasper must continue to attract and grow industries that offer good-paying jobs to residents. Jasper will continue to build partnerships to create a skilled workforce to foster the growth of existing and new industries and provide a high quality of life that attracts corporate investment.

OBJECTIVE 1 CONTINUE RETENTION, EXPANSION AND RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Over the last twenty years Jasper has been successful in industrial recruitment. However, more work is needed. As indicated by community responses to the survey and in planning meetings, there is a desire for more higher pay jobs and a strengthened workforce to lift the city's economy. The Industrial Development Board has acquired considerable land in south Jasper with easy access to the interstate for these purposes. The City, IDB, Walker County Development Authority and utility companies will continue to promote Jasper, match interested companies with available sites and buildings and facilitate infrastructure investments needed to support industrial growth.

OBJECTIVE 2 SUPPORT WORKFORCE TRAINING

Growing a qualified workforce will be essential to retaining and recruiting industries. Jasper has a great asset to help in this endeavor—Bevill State Community College. Through collaboration with local industries and economic development agencies, the city, local schools and college can create education and training programs to produce the skilled workforce that industries are seeking.

Being in a county significantly impacted by the national opioid crisis, treatment and re-entry programs are needed to supplement training programs to help make Jasper's labor force ready to work. State and federal programs and funding have been created to help communities respond to these issues and encourage connecting recovery and career counseling and services.

OBJECTIVE 3 DEVELOP WORKFORCE HOUSING

Jasper offers a high quality-of-life and small town environment that is attractive to prospective companies and their employees. Quality, affordable housing is limited, particularly rental housing. The City can recruit housing developers, assemble land for residential development and make investments (road improvements, parks, fire stations, etc.) in areas of town targeted for residential growth to spur affordable (and middle income) housing construction.



GOAL 3 RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Jasper must build on its parks and recreation system and grow cultural and entertainment activities to enhance residents' quality of life but also as a component of the city's economic development goals. Developing a comprehensive recreation system and other entertainment amenities will draw visitors to Jasper, who will spend money with local retailers, restaurants and hotels.

OBJECTIVE 1 EXPAND PARKS SYSTEM TO SERVE NEW GROWTH AREAS

Most city park facilities are located in south Jasper. As residential development grows in Jasper, it is expected that much of that will occur north of SR 5 (former 78) where there are few parks and recreation facilities. The City should evaluate opportunities to acquire parkland as residential developments are proposed in north and east Jasper. Other than direct purchase, parkland acquisition can be facilitated during the planning and subdivision of land for private development. In this process, land that is part of a proposed subdivision is temporarily set aside to allow the City to consider its potential for public park use. If the City finds the land is suitable, it can then negotiate with the developer to acquire the land. The evaluation period gives the City the opportunity to consider other sites, including the possibility of joining the reserved land with adjacent land, if appropriate.



OBJECTIVE 2 EXPAND OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Walker County Lake and area waterways, together with other natural recreation areas and trails, can form a passive recreation system that attracts visitors from throughout the region and offer activities to encourage visitors to stay longer. The community should develop a long-range plan to inventory and augment its outdoor recreation system, connecting it with sports tourism and seasonal visitation to Smith Lake and touting

downtown as the place to shop and eat while visiting Jasper.

OBJECTIVE 3 GROW ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS

While there is a strong desire to bring back Jasper's movie theater, which closed in 2013, there is also great interest in a variety of other entertainment activities, especially for children and families. The City, Jasper Main Street, Walker County Arts Alliance and others, working together can offer cultural events and programs to the community appropriate for all ages and that complement parks and recreation offerings to residents and visitors.

Given declining movie attendance in the US's busiest markets, it is unlikely Jasper's former movie house will be re-occupied by a traditional theater company. However, local theaters have seen successes by investing in the movie-going *experience*—reclining seats, restaurant-style menus and other amenities—even while offering second-run and classic movie fare rather than current blockbusters. Given the distance to the nearest movie theater, there may be a market for a local entrepreneur to offer a unique movie theater experience in Jasper.

GOAL 4 HOUSING

Jasper is well on its way to reversing the slowdown in population growth it experienced over the last thirty years. While there have been several higher end housing developments in north Jasper more recently, there is pent-up demand for more housing choices in other parts of the city and for reinvestment in some existing neighborhoods. Housing growth will ultimately help Jasper recruit a wide range of businesses (Goal 1).

OBJECTIVE 1 MARKET JASPER AS A COMMUNITY OF CHOICE

Interstate 22 not only allows Jasper easy access for industries and other interstate commerce, it also affords an easier commute to jobs in nearby Birmingham. With its small town charm, good schools, low cost of living and excellent transportation access, Jasper could position itself as a bedroom community for workers in Birmingham. While Jasper is technically further than several of Birmingham’s southern suburbs, the commute to and from Jasper on I-22 is much faster than along heavily congested I-65 and US 280. These efforts should be coordinated with city branding (See Goal 5).

OBJECTIVE 2 DEVELOP WORKFORCE HOUSING

While there is affordable housing in Jasper, there is a lack of quality, affordable housing. The City can recruit housing developers, assemble land for residential development and make investments (road improvements, parks, fire stations, etc.) in areas of town targeted for residential growth to spur affordable housing construction. The City can also rezone land and modify development regulations to make it easier to build a wider range of housing products (townhouses, triplexes and quadplexes,



cottage and courtyard housing) and assist developers in obtaining tax credits for affordable housing development. In providing assistance, the City should encourage housing developments to offer a range of types and prices.

Census tracts in east Jasper (south of SR 5/former 78) have been designated an Opportunity Zone, which provides federal tax incentives for development. This includes two areas identified in the Growth Strategy section for targeted housing development (east of the high school and near Industrial Parkway).

OBJECTIVE 3 SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

Neighborhoods in central and west Jasper have experienced varying degrees of stagnation and disinvestment over time. Older homes are deteriorating and lots, on some streets, remain undeveloped decades after neighborhoods were originally built. Neighborhood revitalization is often a long-term endeavor, particularly in lower-income areas, and requires a comprehensive strategy to have a sustained, positive impact. While code enforcement strategies can reduce physical blight, they do not spur reinvestment. The City should work with schools, the housing authority and other community organizations and stakeholders to identify strategies and resources to improve physical, educational and economic conditions that will enable and encourage private reinvestment.

GOAL 5 COMMUNITY IMAGE

Jasper will establish a positive image for itself. Jasper has many assets to build a new brand around—its authentic small town character, economic opportunities, wealth of natural assets and high quality of life. And, over time the community will focus on strategic improvements to enhance its physical appearance as well.

OBJECTIVE 1 DEVELOP A NEW IMAGE AND MARKETING STRATEGY

During community meetings, residents noted concerns that Jasper and the surrounding county have not projected a positive image to the outside world. But today, Jasper is experiencing a renaissance. The city has a growing, diverse industrial base, downtown is experiencing a rebirth and housing construction is on the upswing. This provides the community an opportunity to re-brand itself, to define and project an outward image reflecting its many positive attributes. The new brand can be promoted through print and online media, public buildings and facilities and wayfinding signage.

OBJECTIVE 2 ENHANCE CITY GATEWAYS AND MAJOR ROADS

Jasper has traditional gateway signs on the east and west ends of SR 5 (former 78) and a more contemporary gateway sign on Industrial Parkway near I-22. As these signs age, they should be replaced with larger monument signs coordinated with the City's new branding graphics and wayfinding system. Gateway signs should be landscaped appropriately and include lighting so that they are legible at night. Additional locations for gateway signage are identified in the Growth Strategy section.

Beautification on SR 5 (former 78), the city's most heavily traveled roadway, would have a substantial impact on Jasper's image. Highway beautification typically involves public investment in lighting, landscaping and signage. Any enhancements within the right-of-way must conform to ALDOT standards. Private investment in buildings and grounds can also be improved over time through design standards applied along the highway and other key roadways. This would also help assure new development at Jasper's interstate gateways project a desirable image for the city.



OBJECTIVE 3 PLAN AND INSTALL CITYWIDE WAYFINDING SYSTEM

A wayfinding system directs visitors to key destinations through signage placed along major roads. Places included on wayfinding signs are typically special districts, government, parks and cultural facilities, major institutions and other one-of-a-kind destinations. Wayfinding systems enhance the image of the community, giving visitors the impression that the community is thoughtful, organized and cares about its appearance. Comprehensive wayfinding systems include signage and landscaping at city gateways, vehicular directional signs and smaller scale signs and kiosks that give directions within a special district. District wayfinding may also direct visitors to lodging and public parking facilities, and can include informational kiosks and district banners.



GROWTH STRATEGY

Creating and seizing upon opportunities community-wide begins with the core elements of the city's physical development today—its downtown, commercial and industrial hubs, neighborhoods, major institutions and infrastructure. The strategy for Jasper's continuing development presented here supports commerce, industry, recreation and institutions in locations that will be accessible to people living and working in the community and its trade area. It protects the city's neighborhoods while acknowledging areas for improvement through public and private investment.

The strategy builds on and reinforces the prevailing patterns of existing development. The intent is to capitalize on the city's resources, to build on past investment, history and institutions in combination with the advantages of the city's location, land character and setting. The concept gives physical expression to the citywide vision that emerged from community meetings and provides a general framework for the economic and community development strategies of the plan.

The Development Concept on the following page illustrates the locations and relationships of existing development, growth opportunities, and key elements of the city's infrastructure. The locations of proposed activity centers and community facilities are not meant to be precise. These locations should be considered "placeholders" until more specific planning may be undertaken to determine detailed needs and locations for each. Each of the major elements portrayed in the Development Concept are described in this section and reflect the following development policies:

DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Jasper will be a legible city—its edges and districts will be clear; and visitors will be readily able to find their destinations. City gateways will be well defined and major roads will reflect an appropriate overall image.

Continued business development will be directed toward Downtown Jasper, SR 5 (former 78), interstate interchanges and other community and neighborhood business hubs. Through new development and reinvestment, each commercial center will become more attractive, accessible and sustainable.

Downtown will remain the civic heart of the community—the revitalization of Downtown Jasper will be supported by reinvestment to maintain its traditional "main street" environment, preserve its historic character and develop a mix of businesses and other uses that generate activity throughout the week.

Development of the street network will be managed to emphasize connectivity, safety, ease of travel on major roads and appropriateness to adjoining land uses.

The park and recreation system will grow so that a balanced system of passive and active parks and recreation facilities are distributed to best meet the needs of the city's neighborhoods and that support tourism and commerce.

Pedestrian and bicycle mobility will be enhanced between neighborhoods, schools, parks, downtown and commercial hubs.

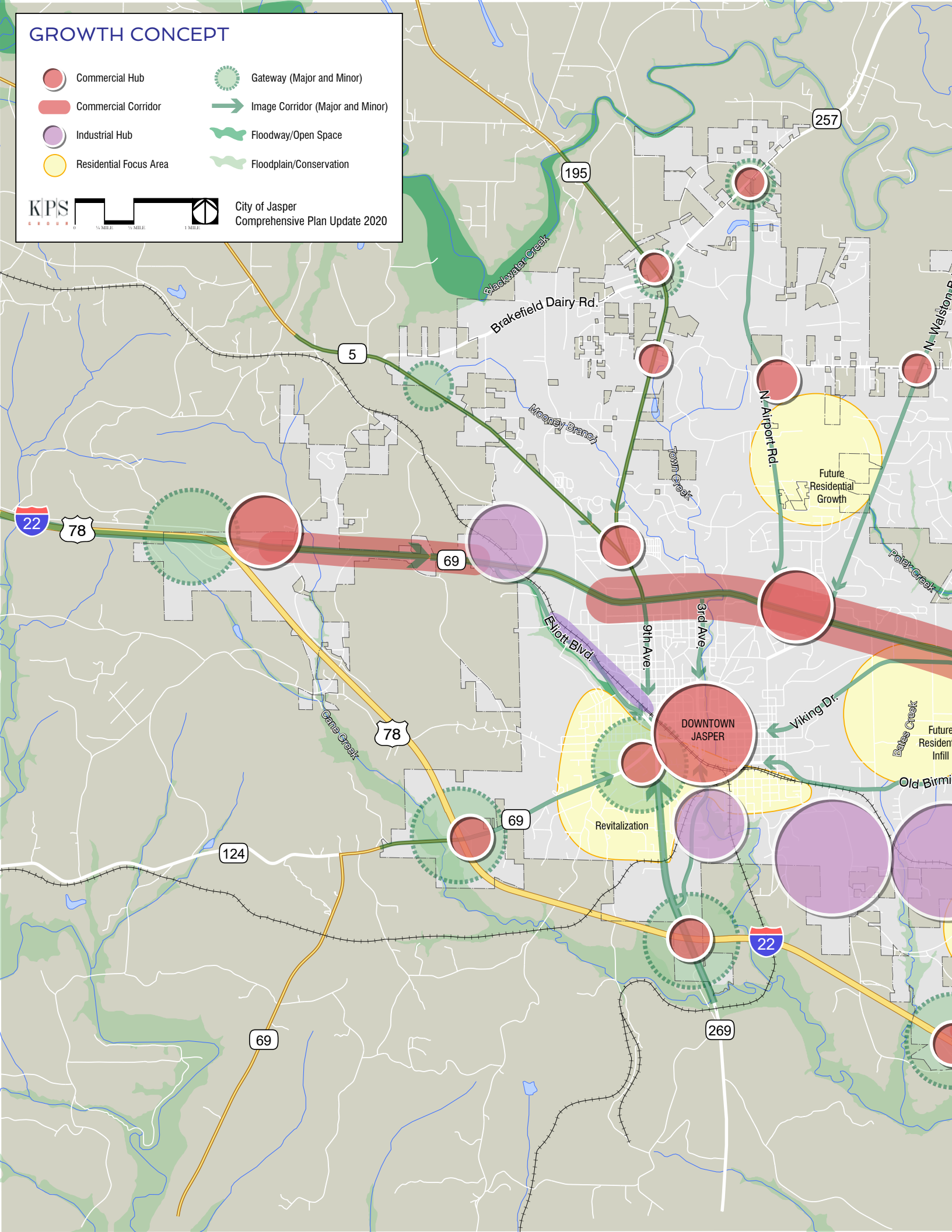
Green infrastructure will be conserved to enhance development, preserve community character and maintain environmental functions.

The city will plan and carry out public investments in ways that support the community's vision and encourage private investment to grow the city in accordance with that vision.

GROWTH CONCEPT

- Commercial Hub
- Commercial Corridor
- Industrial Hub
- Residential Focus Area
- Gateway (Major and Minor)
- Image Corridor (Major and Minor)
- Floodway/Open Space
- Floodplain/Conservation

KPS  City of Jasper
Comprehensive Plan Update 2020



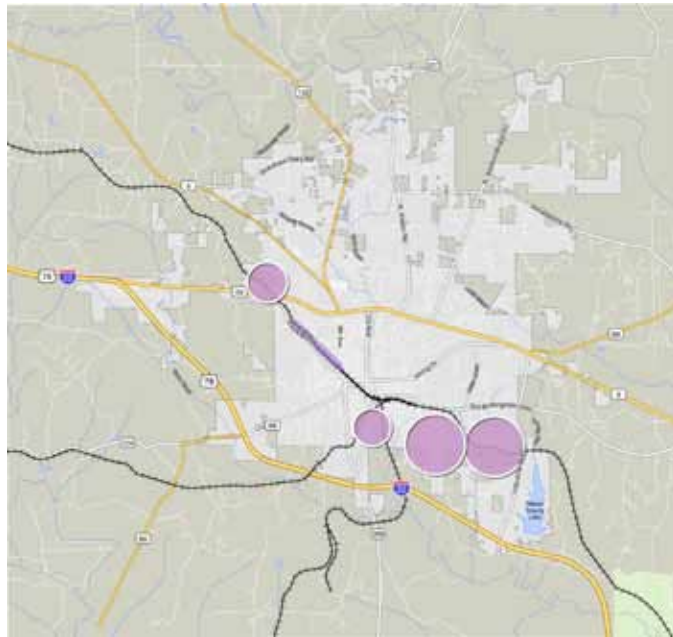
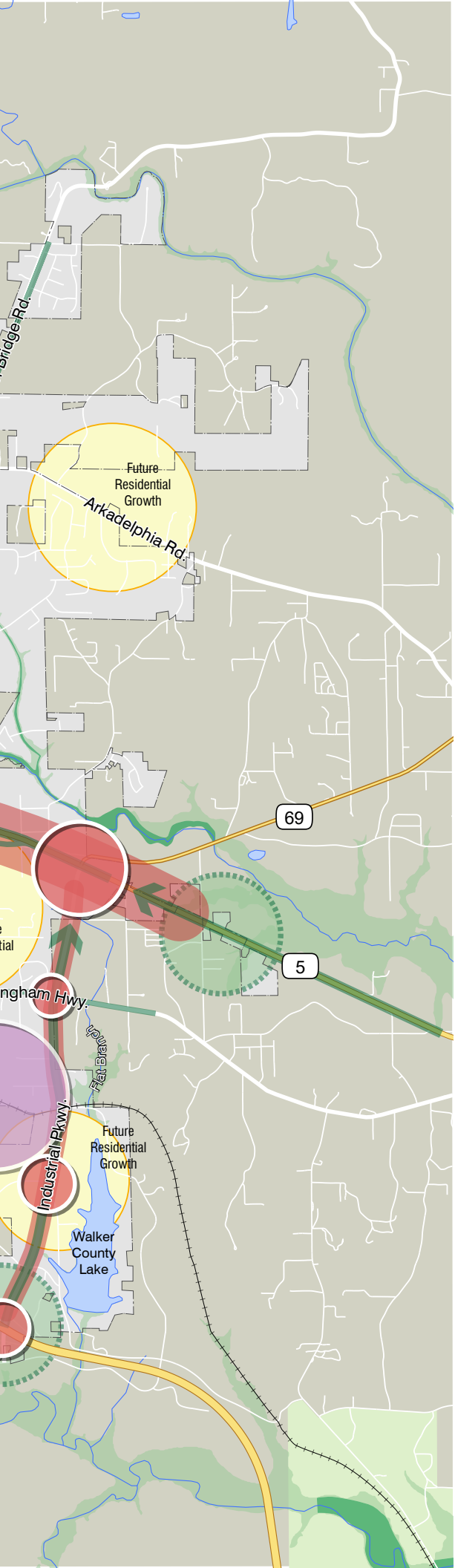
DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

INDUSTRIAL HUBS

Jasper has been successful in growing a varied manufacturing base that provides employment opportunities to residents. The Industrial Development Board has acquired a considerable amount of land to recruit industry. Jasper's original industrial development occurred mostly along the railroad on the west side of town. But with the completion of Interstate 22, the City and Industrial Development Board have focused on the areas between the railroad and interstate to prepare for industrial growth.

Future industrial development should continue to be focused around the existing concentration of industries between 3rd Avenue and Industrial Parkway, taking advantage of interstate and rail access.

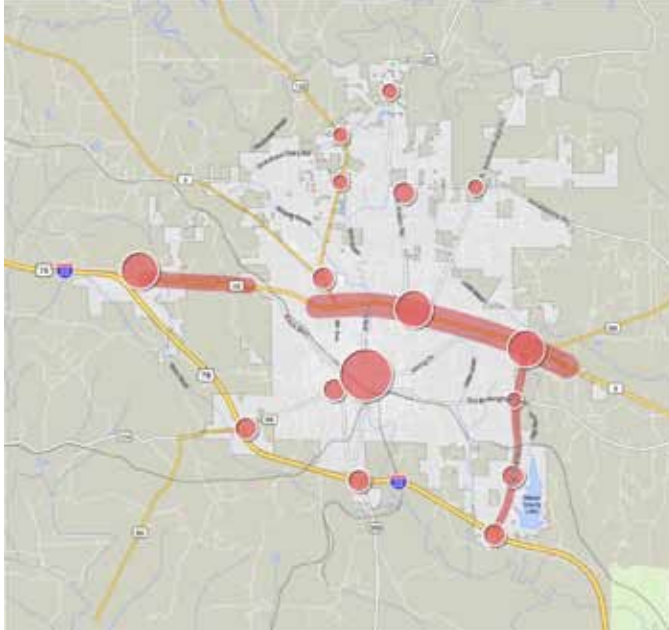
Care should be taken with industrial development to mitigate drainage and water quality impacts on adjacent creeks. Buffers should be provided to lessen noise, smoke, odor, light pollution and other impacts on neighboring residential development. Truck access is critical to most industries, and so streets providing access to industrial hubs must be designed to accommodate regular use by large vehicles, including greater lane widths and curb radii.



Industrial Hubs

COMMERCIAL HUBS

The Growth Strategy proposes strengthening of Downtown Jasper and other commercial areas through infill development, redevelopment and reinvestment in existing businesses. New development opportunities include the three western-most I-22 interchanges and several neighborhood commercial centers.



SR 5 (Former Hwy 78)

This corridor is an important shopping destination, not only for residents, but for travelers and those who live in nearby communities. Though the corridor has felt the impacts of the national decline in brick and mortar retail, it has continued to see reinvestment, despite the potential of competition when the interstate was completed. To make shopping centers and commercial strips more resilient in the face of national shrinkage, mall investors have looked to offer a better experience, stronger sense of place and a more varied mix of uses (including housing) to patrons. Such efforts would also help to improve the community's appearance along its primary image corridor. Along the

highway, the City will support infill and reinvestment in already developed areas while also planning for new development on the corridor's west end near Interstate 22.

Interstate 22

Because there is relatively little traveler-oriented commercial development along I-22 between Guin and Birmingham, Jasper is capitalizing on this with four interstate interchanges. Sewer and other infrastructure are already in place at exits 65 and 63 to enable development there. While exit 65 already has some commercial development, there is room for more. Exit 63, a primary gateway into central Jasper from I-22, could see more than just gas stations and fast food.

Neighborhood Centers

There are several small concentrations of businesses that should be fostered to provide everyday shopping and compatible activities convenient to neighborhoods. These neighborhood centers are often located at key intersections. Small offices, pocket parks and higher density housing can complement and draw traffic to neighborhood businesses. Each neighborhood center should be planned and designed for compatibility with adjoining residential areas and with walkability in mind, including installation of sidewalks and street trees and placing parking to the side and rear of buildings.

Linear Commercial

Linear or "strip" development of commercial areas should be managed to avoid traffic congestion and other unintended consequences. That is not to say that commercial development on former Hwy 78 is inappropriate. It is more a matter of optimizing use and long-term management

of infrastructure, emphasizing value of properties in other locations, encouraging walkable development patterns and decreasing traffic congestion caused by intermingling through traffic and local business traffic. These benefits emerge by encouraging commercial development in a clustered, hub pattern—rather than stretching businesses out along a corridor.

INSTITUTIONAL HUBS

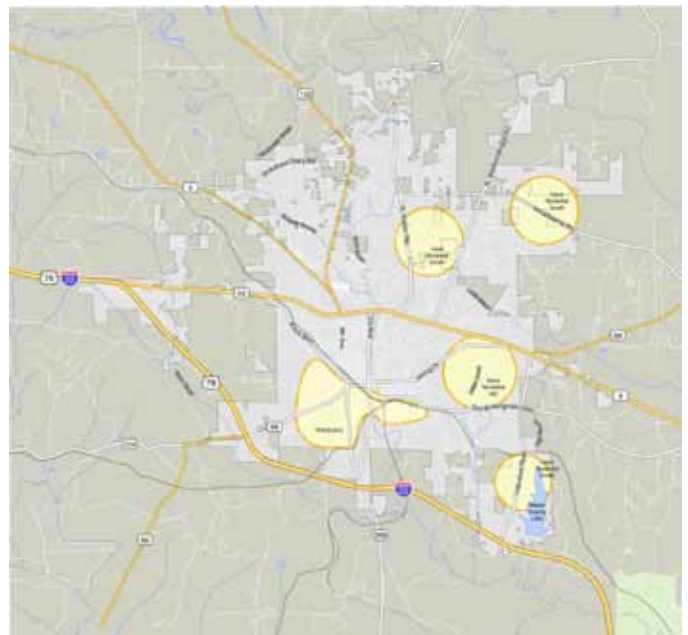
In addition to its business and industrial hubs, there are major institutions in Jasper that can be further leveraged to support the community’s economy—Walker Baptist Medical Center, Beville State Community College and Walker County Airport. These should be supported assuring infrastructure is adequate and well-maintained and by supporting appropriate, quality development around them.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Housing growth will help Jasper draw business growth, while providing quality living choices—across different price ranges—for existing and future residents. Jasper has many opportunities for future residential development, particularly in the eastern portions of the city.

Areas north of former Highway 78 should continue to see housing development; and strategic infrastructure improvements will help promote that private investment. Sewer availability will allow higher density housing. Capacity improvements on major collectors, Airport Road and Walston Bridge Road, will avoid congestion as traffic increases. In addition to traditional subdivision development, redevelopment of the former airport property should include housing as well as businesses and other uses.

Residential development is also an opportunity for areas along Industrial Parkway near Walker County Lake. While this area has generally been planned for industrial growth, there is enough land in south Jasper to accommodate continued industrial development and business and residential growth along this corridor, which has sewer access and generous traffic capacity on the parkway. With the county lake nearby and easy access to I-22, new neighborhoods here could be very attractive to Jasper residents working in the Birmingham area.



The sparsely developed area between the high school and Industrial Parkway represents an opportunity for “infill” residential development. Sewer availability, proximity to schools and easy access to I-22 (for commuting) and to downtown and SR 5 (for goods, services and entertainment) make this area highly appropriate for residential development.

The neighborhoods south and west of downtown are in need of revitalization, including redevelopment of deteriorated housing and infill housing development on vacant properties. To enable sustained improvement in these areas will require a comprehensive, long-term approach, including public and private efforts. Revitalization will also help to improve the image of the city, as two I-22 interchanges connect to Downtown Jasper through these neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY IMAGE

The city's major streets act as gateways to its activity centers and neighborhoods, and consequently they convey a lasting image to residents, business and industry, and visitors. Tending to the city's gateways and major roads should be considered part of Jasper's efforts to create a bold, new image for itself.

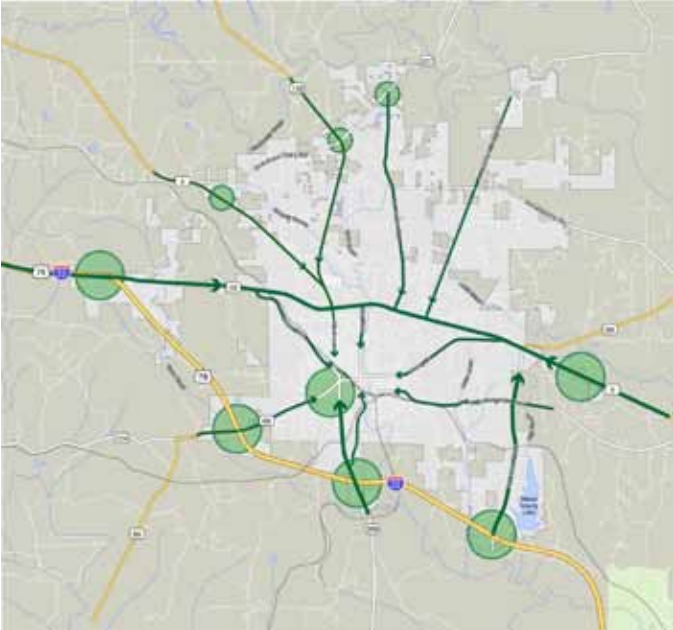
SR 5 (former 78) is the most frequently traveled part of Jasper, for residents, for those who work in Jasper and for those visiting and passing through. It is the city's primary "image corridor." Maintaining an attractive community image along such corridors involves public and private efforts. The city does its part through investment and maintenance of streets, landscaping, gateways and signage and adopting and enforcing building maintenance, nuisance abatement and development regulations. The private sector contributes to community image by investing in development that meets or exceeds community standards, that is compatible with its neighbors and that is well-maintained over time.

The City must be strategic, focusing on investments that will have the highest cost-to-benefit ratio, to make substantive improvements in the community's image. Its gateways and image corridors should be the primary focus of image enhancement efforts. This will encourage property owners in these critical areas to invest compatibly in their buildings and grounds.

GATEWAYS

The city should develop a wayfinding system that includes attractive gateway features at key entrances into the community. Gateway signs give visitors a positive first impression and can be part of a citywide re-branding effort.

They are more symbolic than literal (compared to signs indicating that you are entering or exiting the city limits). It is not necessary for them to be placed at city boundaries. Ideally, locations are strategically chosen to afford the best first impression, such as sites with pleasant natural scenery or where surrounding development and the street environment are particularly attractive. In developed areas, it is important that gateway signage is placed, designed and sized to fit into and complement



its built context, but also to stand out. Otherwise, signage can be lost amidst other signs, buildings, landscaping and activity. Major gateways are located along I-22, SR 5 (former 78) and the 69/269 entry into downtown. These locations are more heavily travelled, relevant to a potential wayfinding system and should be prioritized for city investments. Jasper's minor gateways are on the city's north side. Most travel through these locations is by people already familiar with Jasper, and so these gateways are less critical. Nonetheless, gateway signage and other opportunistic improvements are warranted to help create a positive arrival experience.



Jasper can enhance its image to visitors by installing attractive gateway signage at major entrances to the city and wayfinding signage that helps travelers find their destinations and explore all the city has to offer.

IMAGE CORRIDORS

State Route 5 (former Hwy 78) is the most traveled road in Jasper. It is a critical route for locals, commuters and visitors. It is also home to much of the city's commercial development. For these reasons the design and upkeep of the roadway as well as the development alongside it have a profound impact on the way that residents and visitors view Jasper. The degree to which traffic flows smoothly along the highway also leaves an impression.

The roads leading from I-22 into the city are becoming increasingly important image corridors. These should be cared for, with signage, streetscape improvements and possibly banners to mark arrival into special districts, such as Downtown Jasper.

To manage and improve the image of the community within the rights-of-way of image corridors, cities can invest in streetscape improvements, gateways, lighting, banners and wayfinding signage. Access management and other traffic improvements are sometimes necessary to address congestion and operational factors that negatively impact community impressions. To enhance the image of the city through private development along major corridors, cities adopt zoning rules and/or design guidelines that establish standards for site, building, signage, landscaping and lighting. This can be done through overlay regulations that apply only to specific areas or general requirements for commercial, multifamily and mixed-use development. This will be particularly effective in areas that are still in the process of development.

TRANSPORTATION

STREET CONNECTIVITY

Downtown and its adjoining neighborhoods have a highly interconnected street network. Connectivity in street networks is beneficial for traffic flow because it provides drivers options for moving around the community and disperses traffic. This also helps with emergency response times for police, fire and paramedics, which can save lives. By contrast, street networks with little connectivity, funnel daily trips onto a few major roads that can become congested. As development occurs in the future, particularly on the north side of SR 5 (former 78), the city should encourage street connectivity within developments and from one to the other, so that existing roads—like Airport Road and Walston Bridge Road—do not become overwhelmed.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

More than at any time in the past, Americans are willing to pay more to live in neighborhoods where their children can walk or bike safely to school and where they have the option to walk to nearby stores, parks and restaurants or simply for leisure or exercise.

Other than older streets near the center of town, there are few sidewalks in Jasper and no dedicated bicycle facilities or multi-use paths. As development occurs in the future and as the City reinvests in existing streets and public facilities, sidewalks and other pedestrian and bicycle accommodations should be encouraged. Adding sidewalks along existing streets can be more costly than including them when streets are first built. While state and federal assistance can be obtained to help fund such improvements, the City will need to be strategic to improve non-vehicular mobility in already developed areas. Developing off-street paths may be an effective approach for providing bicycle and pedestrian connections between some existing neighborhoods and community destinations.

Industrial Parkway should be studied for development of a multiuse path, connecting from Walker County Lake northward. This would be of most benefit if neighborhoods emerge along the corridor.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

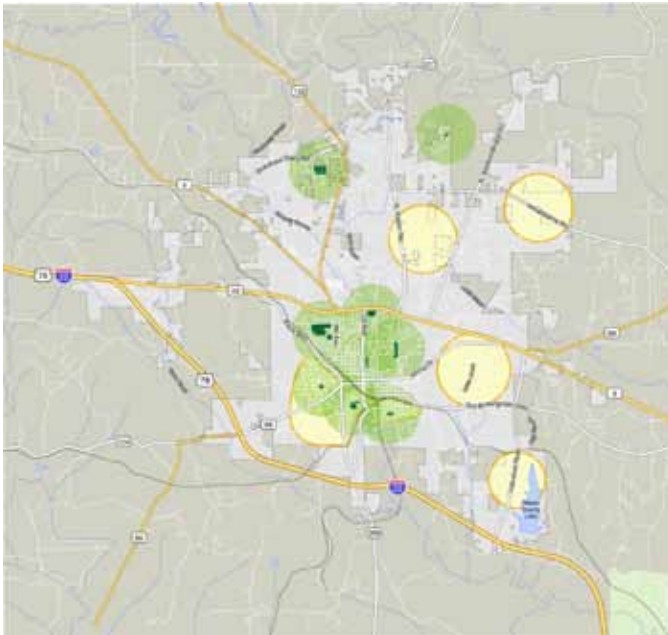
Access management is the practice of controlling the location, size and number of access points to a street to maintain traffic flow and safety. A lack of access management, particularly on busy, high speed roads tends to create congestion and increases conflict points where accidents may occur. As development has occurred on SR 5, more and more driveways were created, openings in the median were cut and traffic lights were installed. Through traffic levels increased while local use of the highway to access businesses also grew. Without adequate access management policies or rules in place, congestion has increased. To improve traffic flow and safety on the highway, there will need to be a reduction over time in the number and size of driveways, addition of turn lanes in strategic locations and related access management enhancements. The City should be proactive in implementing access management policies along major roads that are still developing to avoid costly fixes after-the-fact.

ANNEXATION

Typically, cities pursue annexation to incorporate properties likely to generate revenue through business development, to manage otherwise unregulated growth at the edges of the community and to absorb areas that are already served by municipal services so that the property taxes gained through annexation help fund those services. For the foreseeable future, only limited annexation is desirable, and that generally limited to areas along I-22 with clear development potential and incorporating islands not previously annexed into the city.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Most Jasper community facilities are south of SR 5 (former 78). With continued growth occurring north of the highway, there will be more pressure, and for good reason, for planning additional community facilities on the city's north side, such as one or more neighborhood parks and a new elementary school. Substantial housing development would have to occur to warrant a new school. Nonetheless, Jasper City Schools and the City of Jasper must work together in the coming years to monitor housing development so that they can respond proactively, acquiring land before growth pressures increase land costs too far.



If neighborhoods continue to develop on the north side of Jasper, the City will need to consider additional parks facilities closer to where residents will be living. Existing parks are shown with a half-mile radius service area.

Continued development in southeast Jasper will also increase the need for a new fire station to provide quicker response time to those areas. By planning ahead for likely growth, future facilities can be placed in the best locations to serve new development.



LAND USE & TRANSPORTATION

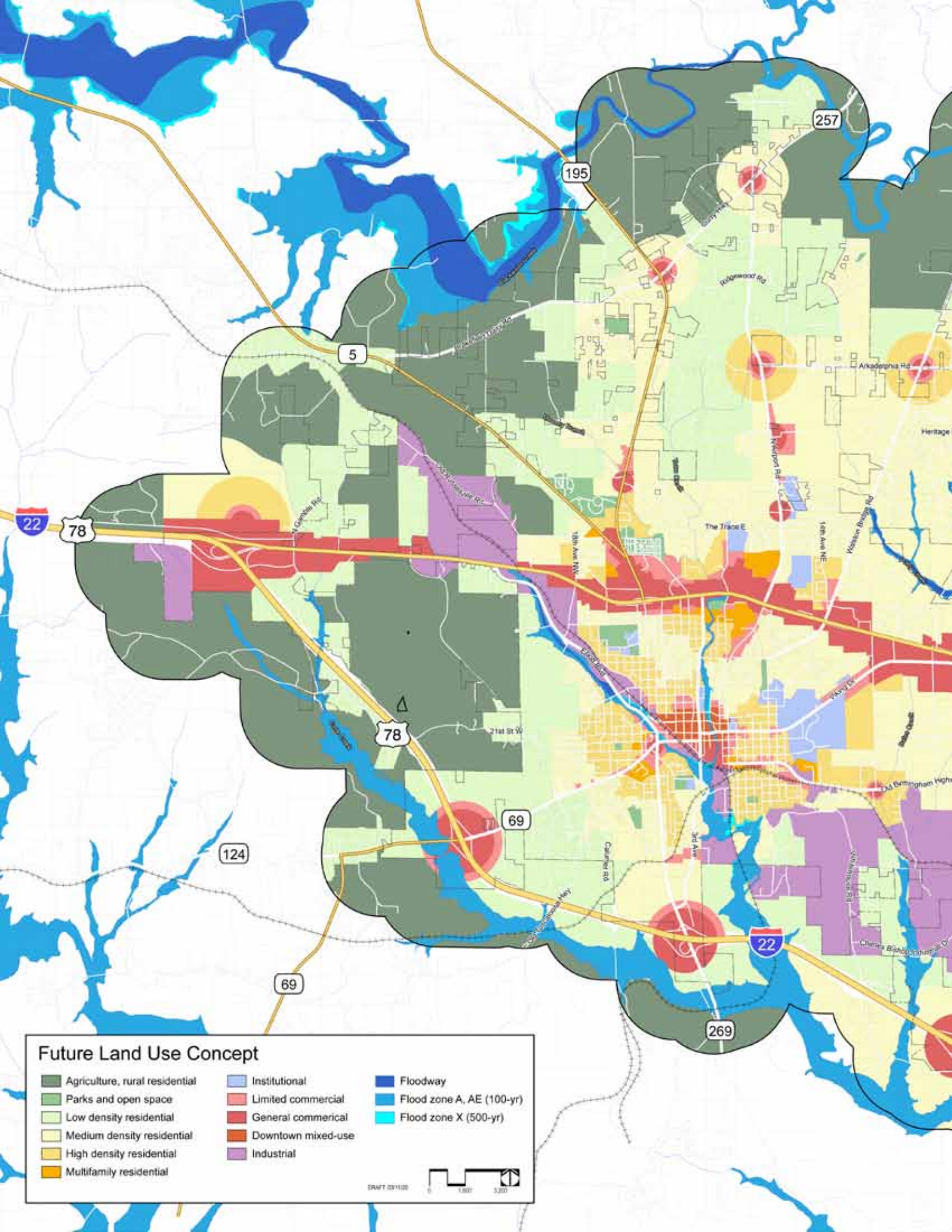
The following land use and transportation strategies result from analysis of existing land uses, environmental and man-made conditions, and the principles embedded in the Vision and Growth Strategy. Plans for land use and transportation are included together in this chapter to reinforce that they are integral to one another and must be evaluated and planned for simultaneously. Simply put, different land uses and densities require different levels and types of transportation infrastructure. Conversion of one type of use or density to another will have direct impacts on street design and capacity, property access, connectivity and pedestrian facilities.

The Future Land Use map illustrates generally how different parts of the community should function and relate to one another. The map portrays a pattern of various activity centers, their relationships with each other and with the city's neighborhoods. Building on this structure, Jasper intends to invest, reinvest and develop so that new growth is suited to the capacity of the land and to the city's ability to economically provide infrastructure and quality services and facilities.

LAND USE & TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT

The integrated land use and transportation concept is built around the following principles:

- Arrange uses to avoid incompatibility that can harm property values.
- Provide comfortable transitions between uses of different types, densities and intensities.
- Arrange uses so that traffic from industrial, commercial and other traffic generators is not funneled through residential areas.
- Treat commercial areas as centers or hubs around which residential, institutional and other community elements are arranged.
- Locate higher density residential uses close to commercial hubs and major roads and lower density residential areas further out from commercial hubs and major roads.
- Designate environmentally sensitive areas for recreational uses or development types with low impact on flood plains, steep slopes, etc.
- Face similar uses across streets. Arrange uses so that land use transitions occur mostly along rear lot lines and man-made and natural barriers (railroads, highways, streams, etc.). Land use transitions along side lot lines should be considered on a case by case basis and may require buffers between some uses.

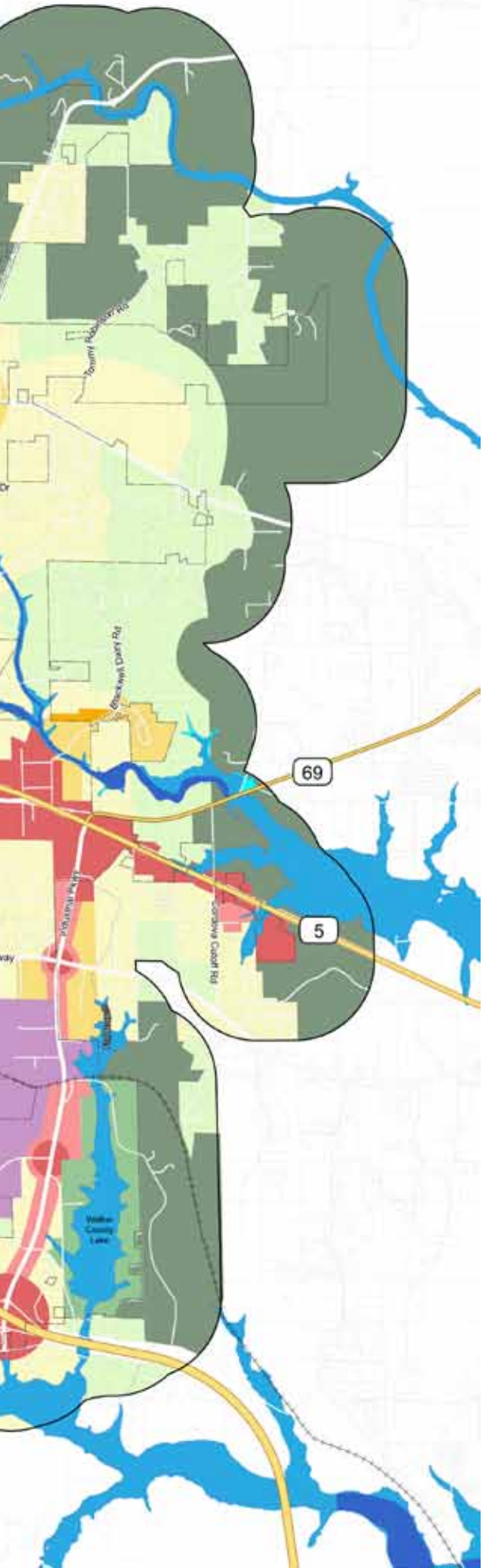


Future Land Use Concept

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Agriculture, rural residential | Institutional | Floodway |
| Parks and open space | Limited commercial | Flood zone A, AE (100-yr) |
| Low density residential | General commercial | Flood zone X (500-yr) |
| Medium density residential | Downtown mixed-use | |
| High density residential | Industrial | |
| Multifamily residential | | |

0 1,000 3,200

DATE: 03/11/20



LAND USE PLAN

The purpose of the Land Use Plan is to identify the range of uses, densities and development patterns that may be allowed in a given area—should changes occur in the future—to support orderly growth and avoid incompatibility between neighboring uses that can harm property values. The Plan represents a desired pattern of land uses. It is not intended that existing uses, which differ from the land use plan, must change. But, if they do change, then changes should be consistent with the overall pattern established in the Land Use Plan.

The Land Use Plan is used by the City for a variety of purposes. One of the most common of these is in reviewing the appropriateness of zoning and subdivision applications. The Future Land Use map is not a zoning map but a guide to how the zoning map may change. The boundaries of land use categories shown on the Future Land Use map should not be interpreted rigidly but the general pattern should be observed to support comfortable transitions between uses.

The Land Use Plan should be consulted in planning for expansion and new development of public facilities and utilities to serve the growing community because it represents a reasonable picture of the future state of the community.

The Future Land Use map is not intended to be static and unchanging. There will likely be instances when otherwise appropriate development requests will not conform exactly to the Future Land Use map. At those times it may be necessary for the City to consider amending the Land Use Plan (and/or map).

The designation of land uses on the Future Land Use map should not be interpreted to propose, approve, deny nor preclude any specific action without full consideration of all policies, principles, standards or intentions expressed in this plan and the city's development regulations. Specific site conditions, such as topography, geology, soils and hydrology, must be considered when choosing sites for new developments, especially those of larger scale, and planning and designing their uses and densities. These realities, plus attitudes toward development on the part of public officials, other agencies, area residents, property owners and developers will play a large part in determining appropriate development location and design. Similarly, adequate community facilities and infrastructure – streets, parks, fire protection services, and water and sewer systems, should be assured before making any significant development proposals or decisions.

LAND USE TYPES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The following land use types are depicted on the Future Land Use map. Land use categories include street design guidance appropriate to the type and intensity of development that should be applied to development involving the construction of new streets or changes to existing streets. For categories without such information, street design should be consistent with the broader land use context.

Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces

Includes land permanently reserved as open space and/or recreation including public parks, land trust properties and cemeteries.

Agriculture and Rural Residential

Includes very low density single-family housing, crop farming, timbering, raising of livestock and some agriculturally-related business uses that produce little traffic and involve a low ratio of building to land area.

Street-side stormwater drainage is handled by swales rather than curb and gutter. Sidewalks are not provided but off-street paths may be desirable for pedestrian, bicycle, horse or all-terrain vehicle use where desirable.

Residential

Includes detached single-family housing, townhouses, manufactured housing and multifamily residential uses. Low intensity institutional uses, parks and open spaces are also included within each of four residential categories—low density single-family, medium density single-family, high density single-family and multifamily (refer also to illustrations below).

Low density residential uses are single-family detached houses on large lots (under three dwelling units per acre) that vary in character from suburban estates to more rural housing areas. These areas are located where transportation and other infrastructure are limited.

Green space is incorporated through generously-sized yards.

Sidewalks should be provided on both sides of collector streets and set back from the road edge. Alternatively, low density subdivisions can be connected to community destinations through trails. Streets may include vegetated swales, valley gutters or raised curbs for stormwater purposes.

Low density residential



Medium density residential



Medium density residential uses include single-family detached homes and duplexes with moderate lot sizes (three to six dwelling units per acre). Manufactured home subdivisions may be considered on a case-by-case basis in these areas and should be designed to the same standard as subdivisions for site-built homes.

Green space is provided in common open spaces and in the streetscape (primarily in front lawns).

Five foot wide sidewalks are provided on at least one side of the street (on both sides of collector streets). Sidewalks are set back from the curb by a buffer strip planted with street trees. Streets serving the lower end of this density range may have swales, valley curbs or curb and gutter for stormwater purposes. Otherwise, streets should generally have curb and gutter.

High density single-family residential uses include single-family detached homes on small lots (more than six dwelling units per acre), including townhouses. In these areas, duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes may also be appropriate. These developments are located around mixed-use and commercial hubs in relatively close-in locations. Manufactured home parks may be considered on a case-by-case basis in these areas and should be designed to a comparable standard to subdivisions for high density site-built homes.

Green space is provided in common open spaces and in the streetscape.

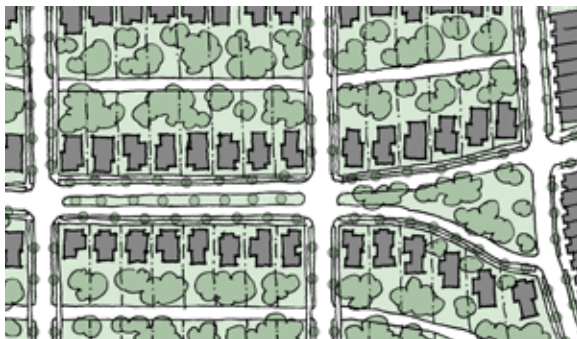
Alleys or shared driveways are encouraged for access to the rear of lots. Rear alleys provide a discrete location for parking, utilities and garbage pick-up. Due to the narrowness of townhouse lots, front driveways would take up most of the front yard and so are discouraged. Parking can instead be provided in common parking areas or at the rear of individual lots.

Five foot wide sidewalks are provided on both sides of the street. Sidewalks are set back from the curb by a buffer strip planted with street trees. Streets should have curb and gutter.

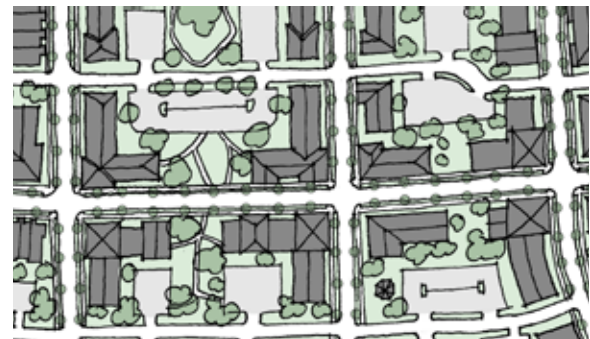
Multifamily residential uses includes residential developments in which three or more units are located within the same building, duplexes and high density single-family residences. They are generally intended to develop within or at the edges of mixed-use and commercial hubs. This provides a transition between the more intensive activity in these hubs and the desired quiet in medium and low density neighborhoods. Green space is provided in common open spaces and within the streetscape.

Sidewalks are provided on both sides of the street and are separated from the street by a buffer strip planted with street trees. Streets feature vertical curb and gutter for stormwater purposes. Mid-block alleys or private drives provide access to parking areas, which should be located within the development rather than in front of buildings.

High density single-family residential



Multifamily residential



Commercial

Includes retail, business and personal services, office, dining, entertainment and lodging accommodations. These are to be concentrated in community and neighborhood commercial centers identified in the Growth Strategy. Shopping and dining uses should be concentrated at the heart of each commercial center with other business uses located in upper stories of buildings or flanking the core uses. High density and multifamily residential uses may be appropriate at the edges of commercial activity centers and in upper floors of buildings. Institutional uses may also be appropriate in commercial areas.

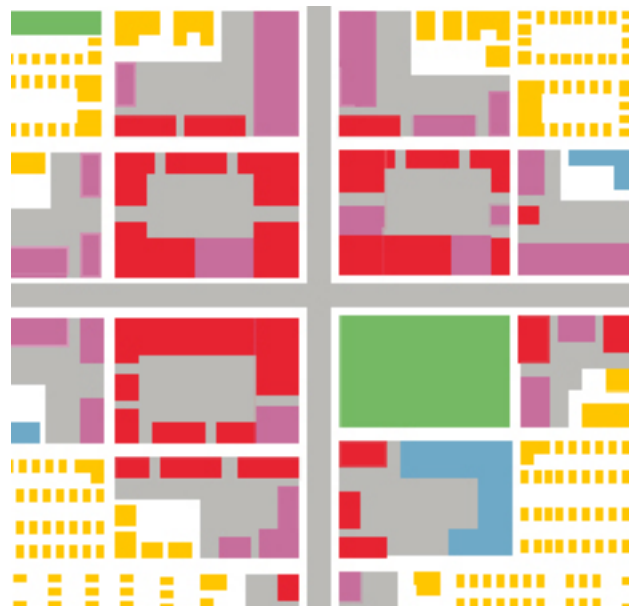
New commercial development should feature sidewalks on both sides of the street to provide pedestrian access throughout the district and to connect to adjoining neighborhoods. With the exception of SR 5 (former US 78), streets in commercial areas should have vertical curb and gutter.

General Commercial includes a wide range of businesses that serve patrons from throughout the city and nearby areas, regardless of size and traffic impact. This category applies primarily along SR 5 (former 78), interchanges along I-22 and other important intersections. In new development, parking areas of adjacent businesses should be connected and the number and size of curb cuts along the highway minimized.

Limited Commercial includes businesses that serve the daily and weekly needs of nearby residents or that, by function and design, have little impact on adjoining residential areas. Large businesses and ones that draw considerable traffic from outside the general vicinity are not generally appropriate. Auto-oriented businesses (businesses with drive-throughs, car washes, auto repair businesses and gas stations) are appropriate when designed to minimize traffic, light, noise and other characteristics incompatible with adjacent residential areas. If permitted, drive-through elements should be located away from streets and from adjoining housing. In new development, parking areas should be located to the side or rear of buildings rather than along the front.

Downtown Mixed-use

Includes a variety of commercial, residential, recreational and institutional uses in a compact, walkable pattern. Shopping and dining uses should be concentrated at the heart of downtown with other business uses located in upper stories of buildings or flanking the core uses. High density and multifamily residential uses may be appropriate at the edges and in upper floors of buildings. Future infill development and redevelopment is intended to be compatible in scale and density to existing downtown development, with buildings fronting on sidewalks and parking areas located to the side or rear of buildings.



Mixed use areas should operate as hubs with residential areas orbiting around them, decreasing in density further from the hub. Parking is located internally to each block (to the sides and rear of buildings rather than in front) so that the area is walkable and the streetscape is defined by landscaping and buildings rather than parking lots and signs. Uses can be mixed vertically or horizontally, with a focus on shopping and dining at the center.

Institutional

Includes government facilities, schools, places of worship, medical, and community service uses and lands. NOTE: Only existing institutional uses are shown. Large churches and schools, hospitals and other higher intensity institutional uses, which tend to comprise larger buildings and draw larger amounts of traffic, should generally be located in high visibility places where access is suitable and adjacent land uses are compatible. Less-intense institutions, which range from small churches to elementary schools, may be appropriate in strategic locations in or adjacent to neighborhoods provided there is sufficient transportation access that does not interfere with the enjoyment of the neighborhood.

The development pattern—building heights, setbacks, parking location, street and sidewalk design—of institutional uses is generally determined by the pattern of the dominant use in the area (i.e., residential, commercial, mixed-use, etc.).



Industrial

Includes warehousing and distribution, light and heavy manufacturing, industrial and technology parks, mining and extraction, and similar uses.

Light manufacturing, storage, research laboratories and similar uses that tend to be less land intensive and more compatible with non-industrial uses may be appropriate in relatively central locations and can provide transitions between heavy industrial areas and non-industrial uses. Resource extraction, heavy manufacturing and other industrial operations that are land intensive and that generate excessive noise, smoke, odor or dust are considered heavy industries and should be located away from commercial centers and neighborhoods.

Industrial areas need not have sidewalks except as determined by context. For example, sidewalks may be desirable to connect industries to an adjacent commercial area so that employees can walk to nearby restaurants and other businesses. Context may also determine whether streets are lined



TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Jasper has a strong, well-functioning network of streets that provides a high level of mobility for motorists. The primary transportation goals in the coming years are:

- Improving traffic flow and safety on SR 5 (former US 78)
- Correcting deficiencies among existing streets and intersections
- Maintaining the street network in good condition over time
- Enhancing mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists and those with limited access to vehicular transportation

Transportation Policies

The following policies will guide transportation decisions and investments made by the City of Jasper and the City's evaluation and decisions regarding new development and subdivisions:

- Promote higher level of street connectivity in more intensively developed areas
- Encourage development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and other forms of mobility
- Manage access on major roads
- Maintain an attractive, functional street network that enhances community character

CONNECTIVITY

As new development occurs—that involves the creation of new streets—connectivity should be highly encouraged. This is of particular concern where single-family residential development occurs. An interconnected street network disperses traffic, provides better emergency access and helps people move about the community more easily and more safely.

Connectivity is important for safety. When poorly connected street systems funnel local trips onto major roads, it unnecessarily exposes local drivers to accidents on roads with higher design speeds, which increases the severity of injuries and the potential for fatalities. Connected street systems are more beneficial to emergency response by police, fire and paramedics because they provide shorter routes to calls and alternative routes if primary routes are clogged.

Because interconnected streets inherently see more traffic than cul-de-sacs, residents—and the developers who design and build subdivisions for them—often oppose the connection of streets internally and from one neighborhood to another. But, a balance must be struck between accommodating residents' desires for minimal traffic and the general welfare and safety of the community overall.

Greater connectivity in street networks increases walkability—regardless of whether or not there are sidewalks—by providing connected walking routes. By contrast, in a subdivision with a large number of cul-de-sacs, a person must walk (or bike) a greater distance to reach another part of the same neighborhood.

Street connectivity can be ensured in new development through the City's development regulations by establishing maximum block sizes and other connectivity standards based on the type and intensity of development.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities along streets are of most value to the community in commercial and medium and higher density residential areas and around parks, schools and similar destinations.



On-Street Facilities include sidewalks or multiuse, or shared use, paths that run alongside streets, dedicated bicycle lanes within the roadway, and sharrows or shared lanes, which are travel lanes shared by motorists and bicyclists.

Sidewalks should be provided on-streets within any type of development near schools, parks and Downtown Jasper. They should also be required, as described in the Land Use Plan, in medium and higher density residential subdivision, multifamily developments and in commercial and mixed-use development areas. This can be implemented through the City's subdivision regulations.



Off-Street Facilities include pedestrian paths and multiuse paths (generally designed for use by pedestrians and bicyclists) that are not located within a street right-of-way. They may follow waterways or other natural features, abandoned railroad lines, utility easements or any reasonable route that can be obtained outside of public rights-of-way. Off-street paths provide safe routes for bicyclists and pedestrians, to and from their homes, schools, parks, business areas and other strategic destinations.

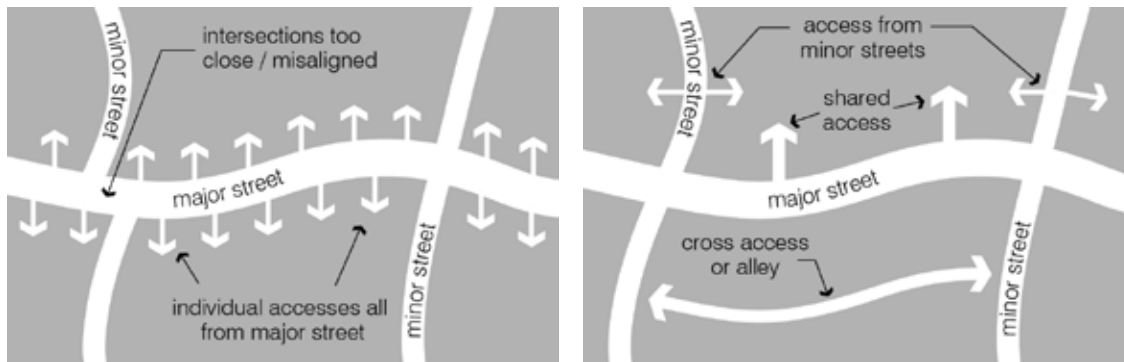
Recommended Projects As discussed earlier in the Growth Strategy, a multi-use path along Industrial Parkway should be planned and installed as development along the corridor takes place. The City should look for opportunities in north Jasper where new residential development is occurring to start building a network of on- and off-street pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists, one that would ultimately connect to parks, natural amenities and other community destinations.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

As described in the Growth Strategy, access management will be the primary approach to improving traffic flow and safety on SR 5 (former 78), Industrial Pkwy and other major roads. Improving access management after development occurs is a politically difficult, lengthy and expensive process because it involves making access changes to existing developments involving many individual property owners. This illustrates why it is important to have access management standards in place as property along a major road is developed. The following strategies can be incorporated into the City's development regulations to manage access on other major roads in Jasper:

- **Separate conflict points** The distance between intersections of arterials and collectors and driveways should be regulated. As a general rule, driveways should not be located within the area of influence of intersections.
- **Restrict turning movements** The use of full directional unsignalized streets and driveways should be limited. Full movement intersections should serve multiple developments through joint use driveways or cross access easements.

- **Design standards** Design standards that address access spacing, the length of turn lanes and tapers and driveway dimensions should be developed for application throughout the city on arterials and major collectors and adopted as part of a Public Works Manual.
- **Traffic signal spacing** Signals should only be installed when appropriate studies indicate their spacing and interconnection can be accomplished without significant impacts on corridor capacity.
- **Turn lanes** Left and right turn lanes should be required for developments on arterial and major collector streets. In some cases, acceleration lanes may be required.
- **Shared driveways and access** Joint use driveways and inter-parcel interconnections, including alleys, should be required to reduce the proliferation of driveways in order to preserve the capacity of the corridor.



An excess number of driveways and driveways too close to one another and to intersections causes congestion and creates safety hazards.

Access management helps avoid congestion and increases safety by limiting the frequency of driveways on major roads through shared driveways, access from minor streets and cross access between properties.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

The street system is a fundamental part of the community's image and is, with the exception of SR 5 (former 78) and other US highways and state roads, under the direction of the City of Jasper. Over time, the City can enhance the community through streetscape upgrades. Wherever possible these investments should be incorporated into other capital projects, such as traffic safety, drainage, access management and other improvements. If appropriate and as funding allows, streetscape projects can certainly be carried out in their own right. For state and US roadways, the City can partner with the ALDOT to pursue corridor beautification. This can be done in tandem with other projects, such as access management improvements.

While streetscape enhancements may be dependent on coupling those with other street improvement projects, a priority should be placed on seeking funding and otherwise pursuing enhancements at major gateways and along Jasper's image corridors.

Through its Subdivision Regulations, the City of Jasper should require most new streets include sidewalks, lighting and trees appropriate to the function of the street and the type of development alongside it. As discussed in the Land Use Plan, sidewalks should not necessarily be required in lower density residential areas and industrial corridors.





KEEPING THE PLAN UP TO DATE

Comprehensive planning is often viewed as an occasional activity overseen by the Planning Commission, while preparing the city budget is an annual responsibility of the City Council. As a result, the comprehensive plan can become less useful as a guide to city budgeting if not reviewed and updated over time. This can be avoided by coordinating plan updates with budgeting processes every year or so.

Coordinated updates may help the Mayor and Council better determine capital budget priorities, consider plan and development regulation amendments, and coordinate public investments toward reaching the vision set out in the plan. To coordinate plan policies and their implementation, each city department, board and commission (and non-city groups that may be eligible for city funding assistance) should review the comprehensive plan and submit a report to the city that would include the following:

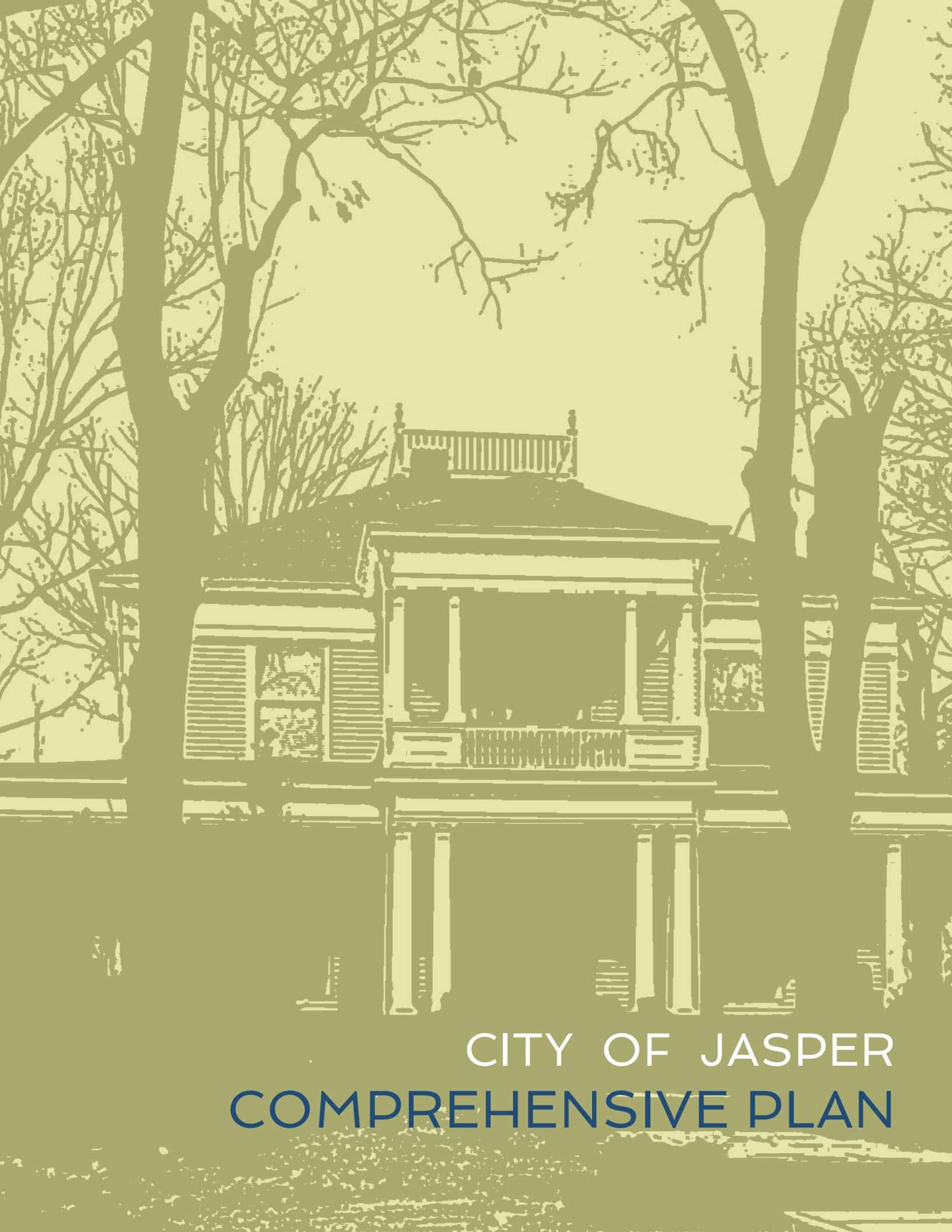
- All tasks essential for accomplishing elements of the comprehensive plan during the coming year that are or should be the responsibility of the respondent.
- Suggested changes in city programs – including but not limited to regulations, capital investments, operation and maintenance, and intergovernmental coordination – that the respondent feels to be in the best interests of overall plan implementation.
- Suggested changes in city policy toward growth and development as described in the comprehensive plan.
- Suggested changes in the respondent's responsibility or authority that would better enable implementation of any parts of the comprehensive plan.
- A preliminary budget proposal, including capital equipment and investments needed to deal with the above, and the portion of those costs it is requested that the city bear.

The mayor's office would collect this information for consideration in drafting a capital budget and suggested plan amendments for the coming year. After discussions with department heads and others, the mayor's office would forward a draft capital budget and suggested plan amendments to the Planning Commission, who would review it in light of the comprehensive plan. The Planning Commission would report to the mayor's office the findings of its review of proposed capital investments, recommendations for plan amendments, and adjustments to development regulations.

The mayor's office would prepare and present a proposed capital budget and revenue forecast to the City Council. The Planning Commission would take action regarding any recommended changes to the comprehensive plan and/or subdivision regulations and suggest zoning ordinance amendments, as needed, to the Council.



Prepared by the
City of Jasper
with assistance of:
KPS Group, Inc.



CITY OF JASPER
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN