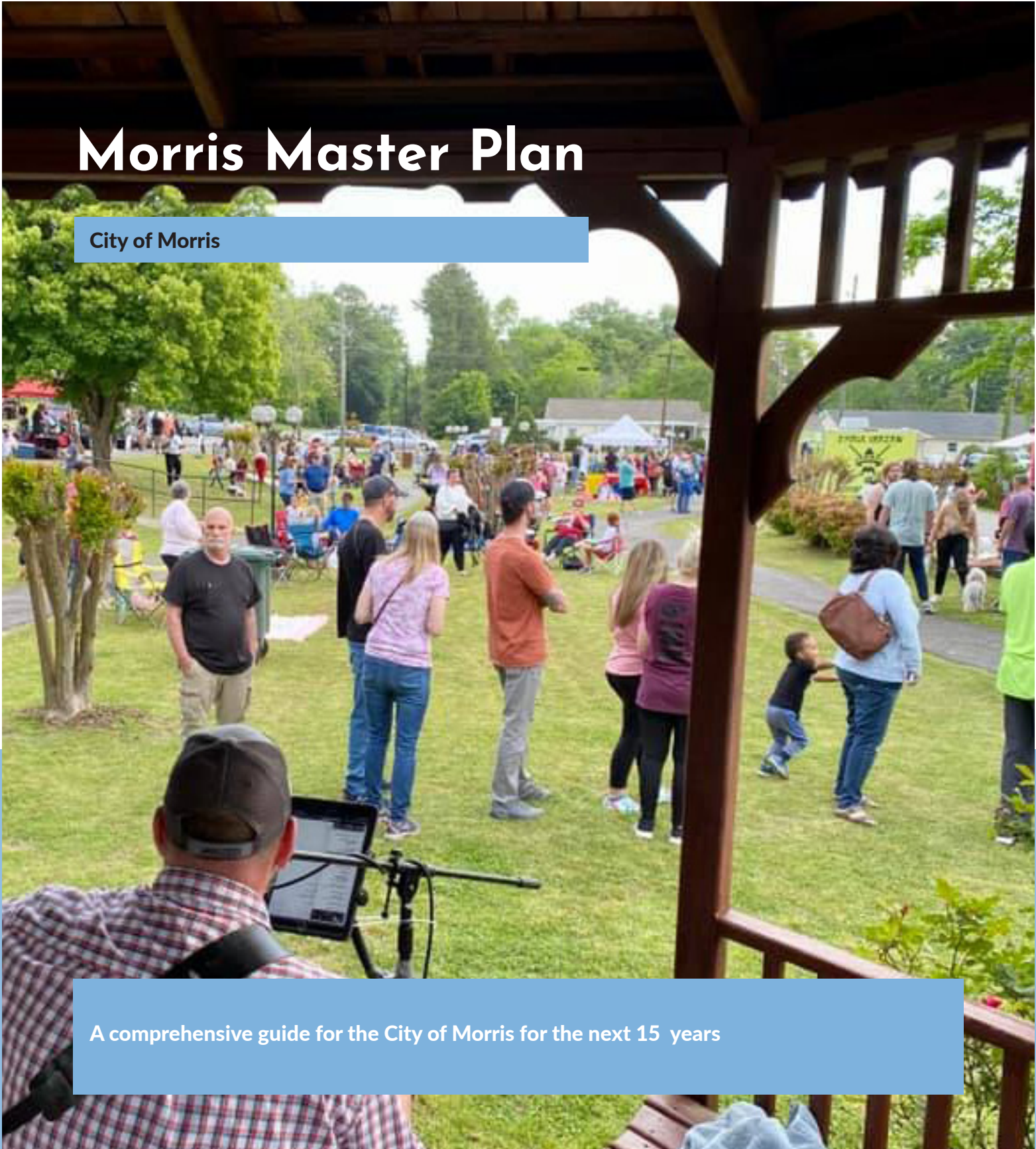


Morris Master Plan

City of Morris

A comprehensive guide for the City of Morris for the next 15 years



This project was supported by funding from the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) and the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Building Communities Program. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Birmingham MPO or the RPCGB. For more information on this program, please visit <http://www.rpcgb.org> or call (205) 251-8139.

This plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), MPO and RPCGB as a requirement of Title 23 USC 134 and the current federal transportation bill. The contents of the plan do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the USDOT.

The contents of this Master Plan reflect the City of Morris' community values. The Plan serves as a guide to interpreting citizen values into future land use decisions, capital investments and public policies. As such, this Master Plan is not legally binding upon the City of Morris.

Adopted by Morris Planning and Zoning Board on June 06, 2022

Endorsed by the Morris City Council on June 16, 2022



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Plan Overview

Geographic Location

The City of Morris is located in the more rural area of north Jefferson County and has an advantageous location situated along U.S. Highway 31 with easy access to Interstate 65 (I-65). It is approximately 20 miles north of Downtown Birmingham. The Downtown area is centered around the intersection of Stouts Road and Morris Majestic Road (CR 131) and is bordered to the north by the City of Kimberly, to the south by the City of Gardendale and by unincorporated Jefferson County. Morris encompasses approximately 2,006 acres, or 3.13 square miles (see **Figure 1.1**).

Background and Need

The development of this Master Plan is a cooperative effort between the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) and the City of Morris and will be developed in accordance with Alabama Code of Law Sections 11-52-8 through 11-52-10. The Alabama Legislature provides guidance for municipalities that choose to exercise their ability to plan for their City's growth and development. The Code of Alabama, 1975, Section 11-52-8 and Section 11-52-9 directs planning commissions "to make and adopt a Master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of such municipality." Section 11-52-8 goes further to state "Such plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts and descriptive matter shall show the commission's recommendations for the development of said territory." The procedure for adoption of the Master Plan is established in Section 11-52-10 of the Code of Alabama.

In 2002 a Master Land Use Plan was developed for Morris by the Jefferson County Department of Land Development, and within the last 19 years there have been no major updates to it, and therefore there are many portions of the plan that are outdated. The general rule of thumb is that citywide plans should be updated every ten years to reflect community changes and priorities through a public input process. The following are a handful of reasons why this new Master Plan is needed: a new Future Land Use Map needs to be created, the City wants to ensure that its transportation infrastructure can support continued growth and traffic in the future, the City desires guidance on modifications needed to its Zoning Ordinance, the City realizes the need for annexation strategies, and the City desires design assistance to revitalize its Downtown area.

Purpose of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is intended to express the City's overall community vision for growth and development over the next 5-15 years and identifies actions that can achieve that vision. It is not a law or a zoning ordinance (thus not regulatory in nature), but rather is a policy document that is intended to serve as a guide for use by elected officials, the planning commission, developers, business owners and citizens to make decisions about future growth, development, policy and capital improvements. Again, the Master Plan is not a legally binding document. The Master Plan is developed using public input, data analysis, and meetings with citizens, elected officials and other stakeholders. It is a long-term vision (typically covering 5 to 15 years) of how the citizens have expressed how they want their City to improve and grow in the future.

The Master Plan is intended to be used as a guide to decide where future housing and business growth should occur, to determine what types of transportation system investments are needed, to determine what changes are needed to recruit more businesses and jobs, to determine what housing needs exist, to protect environmentally sensitive areas and to determine what is needed for the safety and welfare of the citizens. The Future Land Use Map in the Master Plan is also a guide for zoning decisions, which in turn guides development permits in the City.

Planning in the State of Alabama is not compulsory, and there is no specific requirement on the frequency of Master Plan updates. However, it is strongly recommended that the City of Morris's Planning and Zoning Board and the Council regularly review and update the Master Plan. This is especially true if the City is experiencing changes such as an annexation of land or a major land development decision has occurred, or the completion of another study that impacts the Plan. Frequent review and updates also will help safeguard the City from legal challenges and enable them to be proactive in steering the City towards achieving its vision and goals, instead of being reactive to issues and challenges that arise because of the lack of adequate planning.

Figure 1.1: Morris City Limits Map

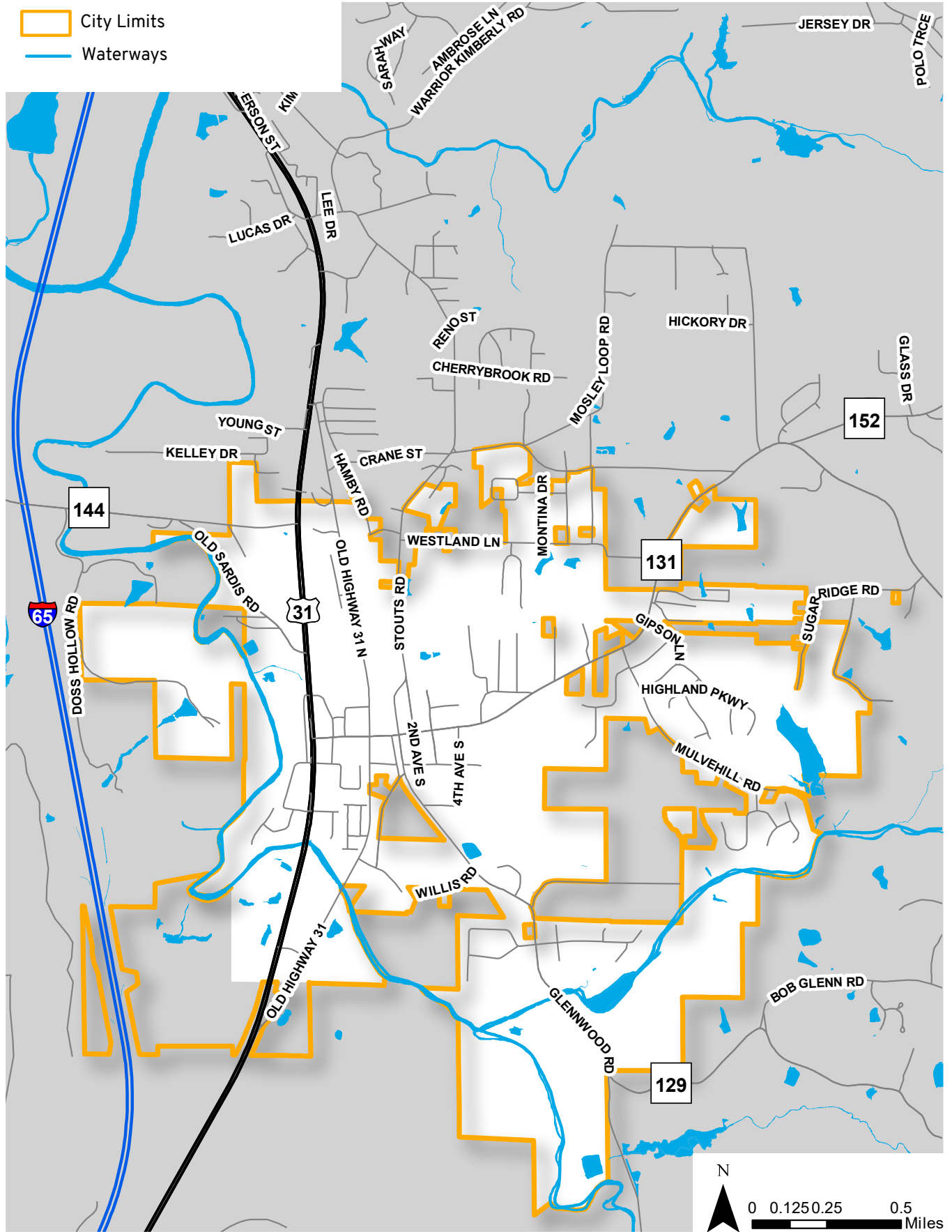




Image Credit: RPCGB

What is the difference between a Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance?

The Morris Master Plan will become the adopted policy document that will establish goals and policies for the location, type and intensities/densities of land uses desired by the citizens of the City, based on existing land uses today and desired land uses in the future. The Future Land Use Map component in the Master Plan will become a guide for future zoning decisions, which in turn will guide new development permits that are approved in the City.

The Zoning Ordinance is a legally binding document that is adopted by the City Council, whereby land is classified according to specific uses. Where the Master Plan is a guide for future growth and development, the Zoning Ordinance is the tool utilized by the City to influence and direct development so that it reflects the intensity, density and desired form envisioned within the Master Plan.

In short, the Master Plan neither changes the Zoning Ordinance, nor the zoning on any specific property. Instead, it guides the decisions of the Planning and Zoning Board and the City Council as they apply the Zoning Ordinance and make decisions about changes to zoning on individual properties. Changing the Future Land Use Map category for a parcel of land requires a Future Land Use Plan amendment and changing the zoning for that parcel requires a rezoning application.

Table 1.1: Master Plan vs. Zoning Ordinance

| Master Plan (Guide) | Zoning Ordinance (Law) |
|--|--|
| Provides general policies, a policy guide. It is not legally binding. | Provides specific regulations, the law. It's legally binding. |
| Describes what should happen in the long-term – recommended land use for the next 5-15 years, not necessarily the recommended use for today. | Describes what is and what is not allowed today, based on the zoning district regulations. |
| Flexible to respond to changing conditions. | Predictable, fairly rigid, requires formal text amendments and rezoning applications. |
| Future Land Use Map categories (e.g., Residential Low, General Commercial) | Zoning Districts (e.g., R-1 Single Family Residential District, C-2 General Commercial District) |

Plan Organization

The Morris Master Plan contains nine Chapters. Chapters 3-8 are organized by the following planning elements: Catalytic Project Ideas, Future Land Use, Transportation & Infrastructure, Planning & Development Regulations, Livability & Public Services, and Parks & Green Systems. Each chapter is organized into goals and recommended actions for implementation.

Table 1.2: Plan Organization

| Plan Chapters | | Description |
|---------------|---|--|
| 1 | Plan Overview | This chapter includes the purpose of the plan, the legal foundation for planning in Alabama, a summary of how the plan is organized, and a high-level summary of the public involvement process. |
| 2 | Morris Today | This chapter briefly highlights existing conditions and trends in Morris. Topics presented include socioeconomic data, housing data, an inventory of existing infrastructure and community facilities, as well as existing land use and zoning data. |
| 3 | Catalytic Project Ideas | This Chapter details 10 specific catalytic project ideas that are intended to connect the City's existing assets, enhance economic vitality, and direct new development opportunities. |
| 4 | Future Land Use | This chapter presents the Future Land Use Map, which will guide the City's future zoning and land use decisions. Descriptions of the future land use categories and the future land use goals are also provided. |
| 5 | Transportation & Infrastructure | This chapter provides goals and actions pertaining to the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation system, expanding the multi-modal transportation network and transportation infrastructure maintenance. |
| 6 | Planning & Development Regulations | This chapter provides goals and actions pertaining to code enforcement and recommended revisions needed to the City's codes and ordinances. |
| 7 | Livability & Public Services | This chapter provides guidance for adopting new codes and programs to encourage great places, a wide range of housing types, and to improve the condition of the City. |
| 8 | Parks & Green Systems | This chapter provides goals and actions pertaining to expanding and enhancing recreational opportunities for residents and incorporating best practices for environmental site design and stormwater management in development. |
| 9 | Implementation | This chapter includes the detailed implementation matrix for the Plan's recommended goals and actions and describes lead partners that should help with implementing each of the actions. |

Summary of the Public Involvement Process

Effective outreach provides ample opportunity for citizens to be involved in the plan development process. It educates citizens about the purpose of the planning effort, and the important role they play in developing the plan. As a part of the development of the Morris Master Plan, community stakeholders were engaged in several different ways throughout the planning process. They were encouraged to actively voice their opinions about Morris's future.

Stakeholders were engaged and gave input through the following outreach activities:

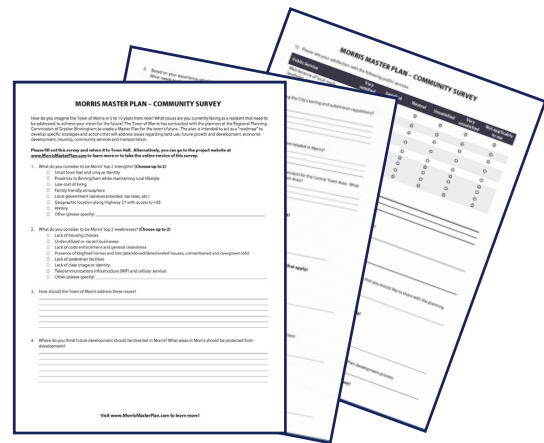
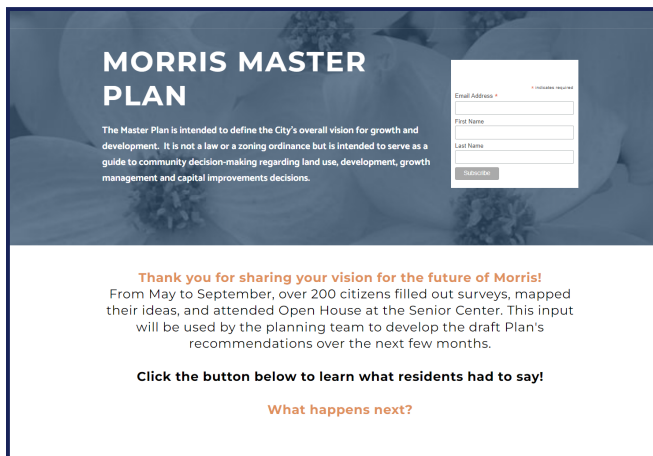
Project Website

A formal website for the project was maintained by the RPCGB and updated throughout the life of the project. This website, www.MorrisMasterPlan.com, served as an information gateway for the plan, and provided easy access for the public to take the survey as well as view plan documents, public input results, other related information.

Online Mapping Tool

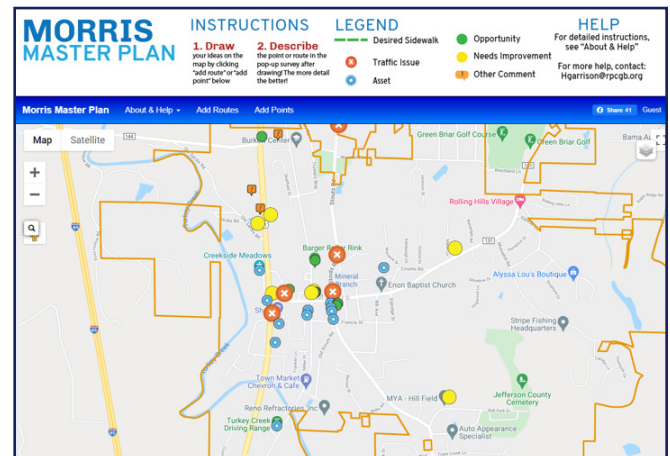
An online mapping tool, called a Wikimap, was available via a link on the project website and allowed participants to map: their issues, needs, and ideas on an interactive street map of Morris. Participants were able to note locations of community assets, areas that need improvement, opportunity areas, traffic issue areas, streets needing sidewalks, along with any other issue or idea they wanted to geographically pinpoint.

The Wikimap was open for answers from June 3, 2021 through September 24, 2021 and received 37 comments.



Visioning Survey

This multiple-choice and open-ended question survey was available via a link on the project website (to take in SurveyMonkey form) and was also provided in hard copy form via a mailout from the City to its citizens. The Visioning Survey was open for answers from June 3, 2021 through September 24, 2021 and included a series of survey questions that were intended to illustrate the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, as well as citizens' priorities to the planning team. Hard copies of the survey were made available at the City Hall, at community events and at the Kickoff Open House. In total, 228 survey responses were received.



Kickoff Open House

The Kickoff Open House was held on September 16, 2021 at Morris Senior Center from 5:30pm to 7:00pm, and a total of 18 people attended. The purpose of the Kickoff Open House was to gather feedback regarding the state of the City today and citizen's issues and desires regarding economic and leadership development, quality of life, community development, infrastructure and planning and public services. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback to the planning team through the following interactive activities:

- Project Fact Sheet
- Issue Banners
- Visioning Survey and Map Exercise



September 16th Kick-off Open House

Draft Plan Reveal Open House

This Open House was held on May 05, 2022 from 6:00pm to 7:00pm at the Morris Senior Center, and a total of 21 people attended. At the meeting, the attendees were encouraged to visit tables highlighting key recommendations from each chapter of the plan and to provide feedback.



September 16th Kick-off Open House

Stakeholder Interviews

Throughout the development of the plan, the project team conducted formal interviews with the Mayor, City of Morris department heads and Morris City Councilors. Interviews and discussions helped the plan development team to better understand baseline conditions. They also assisted with identifying key community initiatives, needs, and priorities.



May 05th Open House

How to Use this Plan Document

This Master Plan is separated into goals and actions.

Goals

The Plan's goals are created from data and comments received during the public involvement process. For each chapter in the Plan there are numerous goals that correspond with the overarching chapter theme.



GS Goal #1
Expand and enhance recreational opportunities for residents.

Actions

Supporting the goals are actions – specific measures that need to be undertaken by the City and partners to implement the goals. Some actions might already be ongoing, while others are new recommended ideas for the City to undertake. All actions have an entity(ies) tasked with leading its implementation (see Chapter 9: Implementation).



Action 1

Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

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Morris Today

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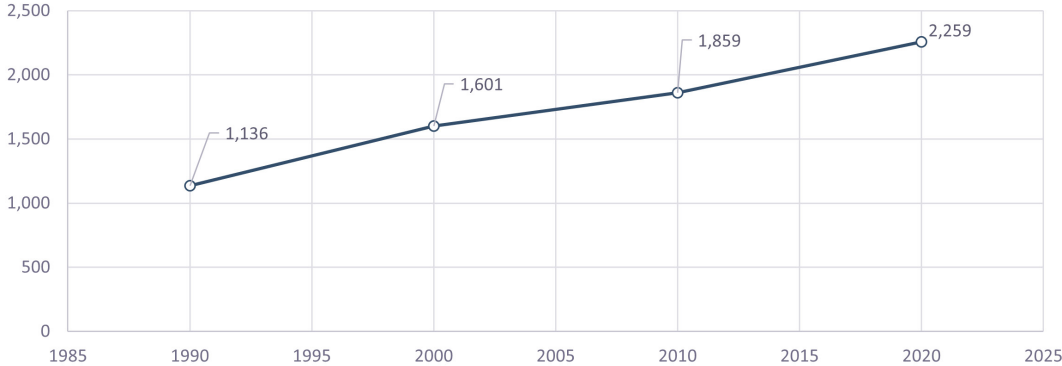
Demographic Profile

Population Trends

Morris is steadily growing and will continue to do so.

Over the past several decades, Morris has enjoyed much of the growth as the rest of Jefferson County. Since 1990, Morris's population has almost doubled, increasing by 99%. Several recently developed subdivisions have added to the City's growth, which is expected to continue.

Figure 2.1: Morris Population (1990 – 2020)



Source: 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020 U.S. Census


Age Distribution

Morris's population is aging, although many residents are still in their prime working years.


Morris's single largest age cohort are those between 55 to 64 years of age, which accounts for over 14% of the population. Over 55% of residents are between 25 and 64 years of age, while 18% are younger than 15 and almost 17% are over age 65.

Jefferson County's population tends to be younger than Morris's, with a higher percentage of adults in their prime working years and a lower percentage of people above retirement age. This is in line with the median age comparison: 42 years of age for Morris residents compared to 38 years of age in Jefferson County.

Median Age (2020)

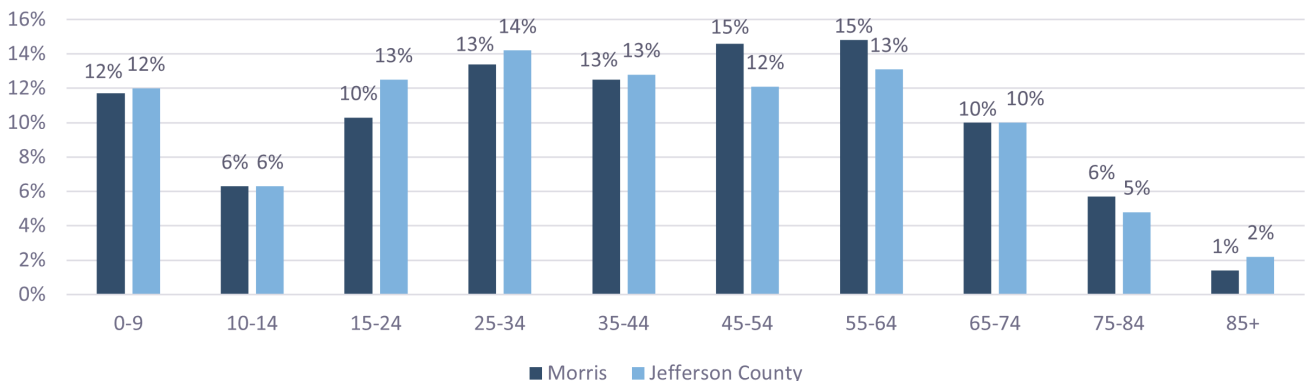


42 years
Morris



38 years
Jefferson
County

Figure 2.2: Age Distribution Comparison (2020)



Source: 2010 U.S. Census and ESRI forecasts for 2020

Racial Composition

Morris is less diverse than Jefferson County.

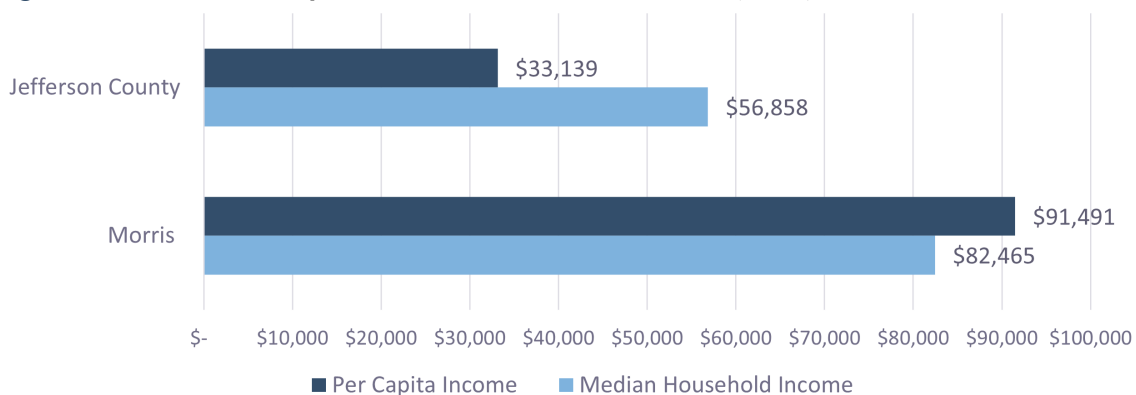
In 2020, the City’s demographic breakdown was 95.9% White, 2.0% Black, 0.2% Asian Alone, 0.6% Some Other Race Alone, and 0.9% Two or More Races. Jefferson County has a larger share of population that identifies as of Hispanic Origin (4.1% versus 1.1%).

Table 2.1: Race and Ethnicity Comparison (2020)

| | Morris | Jefferson County |
|-------------------------------|--------|------------------|
| Total Population | 2,101 | 672,307 |
| Race | | |
| White | 95.9% | 50.9% |
| Black | 2.0% | 43.2% |
| American Indian Alone | 0.2% | 0.2% |
| Asian Alone | 0.5% | 1.9% |
| Pacific Islander Alone | 0.0% | 0.1% |
| Some Other Race Alone | 0.6% | 2.3% |
| Two or More Races | 0.9% | 1.5% |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Hispanic Origin | 1.1% | 4.1% |

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 2.3: Median Per Capita Income and Household Income (2020)



Source: 2010 U.S. Census and ESRI forecasts for 2020

Per Capita Income (2020)

\$91,491

Is the per capita income of Morris residents. Per capita income measures the average annual income earned by each person, regardless of household.

Median Household Income (2020)

\$82,465

Is the median household income of Morris residents. Household income includes the incomes of all people aged 15 and over in a housing unit.

Housing Value

Most homes in Morris are valued more than \$200,000.

The number of housing units in Morris has increased from approximately 624 in 2000 to 841 in 2020. Most owner-occupied homes in Morris (60.2%) are valued more than \$200,000. While 29.0% of homes are valued between \$200,000 and \$299,999, 16.2% are valued between \$300,000 and \$399,999, and 15.0% are valued over \$400,000. Table 2.2 demonstrates that Morris has less affordable owner-occupied housing compared to Jefferson County.

Table 2.2: Owner-Occupied Housing Value Comparison (2020)

| | Morris | Jefferson County |
|------------------------------|--------|------------------|
| Under \$100,000 | 9.3% | 27.1% |
| \$100,000 - \$199,999 | 30.6% | 29.7% |
| \$200,000 - \$299,999 | 29.0% | 19.7% |
| \$300,000 - \$399,999 | 16.2% | 9.5% |
| \$400,000 - \$499,999 | 9.4% | 5.4% |
| \$500,000 - \$999,999 | 5.6% | 7.5% |
| Over \$1,000,000 | 0.0% | 1.2% |

Source: U.S. Census and ESRI forecasts for 2020

Housing Unit Occupancy

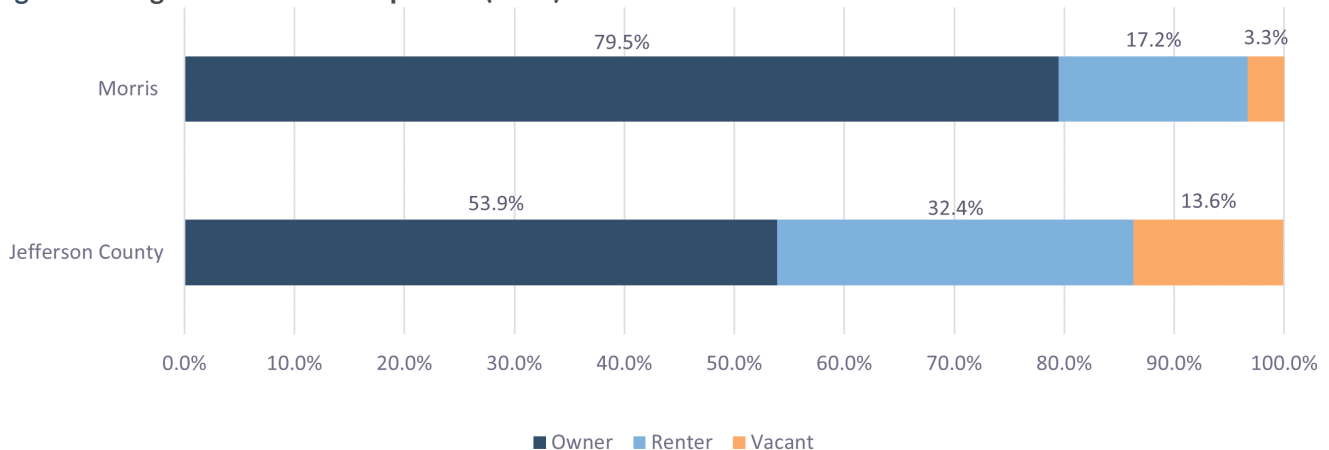
Renter vs owner occupied housing.

In 2020, 79.5% of Morris homes were owner-occupied and 17.2% were renter-occupied, while 3.3% were vacant. Compared to Jefferson County, Morris has a higher percentage of owner-occupied homes (79.3% compared to 53.8%) and a much lower percentage of renter-occupied homes (17.2% compared to 32.4%).

Morris has a low rate of housing vacancy.

The vacancy rate for households in Morris was 3.3% in 2020, which is incredibly low. For Jefferson County, this figure in comparison was 13.6%.

Figure 2.4: Age Distribution Comparison (2020)



Source: 2010 U.S. Census and ESRI forecasts for 2020

Housing Structure

Morris has a larger share of mobile homes than Jefferson County.

While single-family housing units are the largest housing type in Morris (84.4%), the City's abundance of mobile homes (10.5%) is at least three times the size of the share of mobile homes in Jefferson County (2.9%).

Table 2.3: Housing Unit Structure in Morris vs Jefferson County (2018)

| | Morris | Jefferson County |
|---------------------------|--------|------------------|
| Single Family | 84.4% | 72.0% |
| Multi-family units | 5.2% | 25.0% |
| Mobile homes | 10.5% | 2.9% |

Source: U.S. Census and 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Commuting Profile

Morris has a high share of residents driving alone to work.

Due to its peripheral location in the Birmingham metro area, Morris has more solo commuters when compared to Jefferson County, the Birmingham metro region and the state. In 2019, the average travel time to work for a Morris resident was 30.9 minutes, which was 5.2 minutes longer than the average travel time for Jefferson County as a whole.

Table 2.4: Average Travel Time to Work (2019)

| | Morris | Jefferson County | Birmingham Metro | Alabama |
|----------------|--------|------------------|------------------|---------|
| Minutes | 30.9 | 25.7 | 22.8 | 25.4 |

Source: U.S. Census Data and 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 2.5: Means of Travel to Work (2019)

| Means of Travel | Morris | Jefferson County | Birmingham Metro | Alabama |
|-----------------------|--------|------------------|------------------|---------|
| Drive alone | 86.0% | 83.8% | 81.3% | 85.2% |
| Carpool | 9.2% | 8.2% | 10.8% | 8.7% |
| Public transit | 0.0% | 0.7% | 1.2% | 0.4% |
| Walked | 0.5% | 1.7% | 1.9% | 1.2% |
| Work from home | 3.8% | 3.7% | 3.4% | 3.4% |
| Other means | 0.5% | 1.9% | 1.4% | 1.1% |

Source: U.S. Census Data and 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Commuting Profile

Employment Profile

Local employees and working residents work in different employment fields.

Morris's local workforce is comprised of approximately 163 full-time employees. Of these, approximately only 6 people live within the City limits, while the rest commute in from somewhere else.

The residential workforce (i.e. workers who live within the City limit regardless of their place of employment) totaled approximately 738 employees. Nearly all of these employees (732) commute out of the City limits for their job.

The predominant employment sectors for the local workforce of 163 employees are Real Estate and Rental Leasing (16.8%), Public Administration (10.4%), and Finance and Insurance (9.9%), while the predominant employment sectors for the resident workforce are Construction (54.6%), Wholesale Trade (12.3%), and Finance and insurance (11.7%).

Local Workforce



These people work in Morris,
and either live in Morris or somewhere else

Resident Workforce



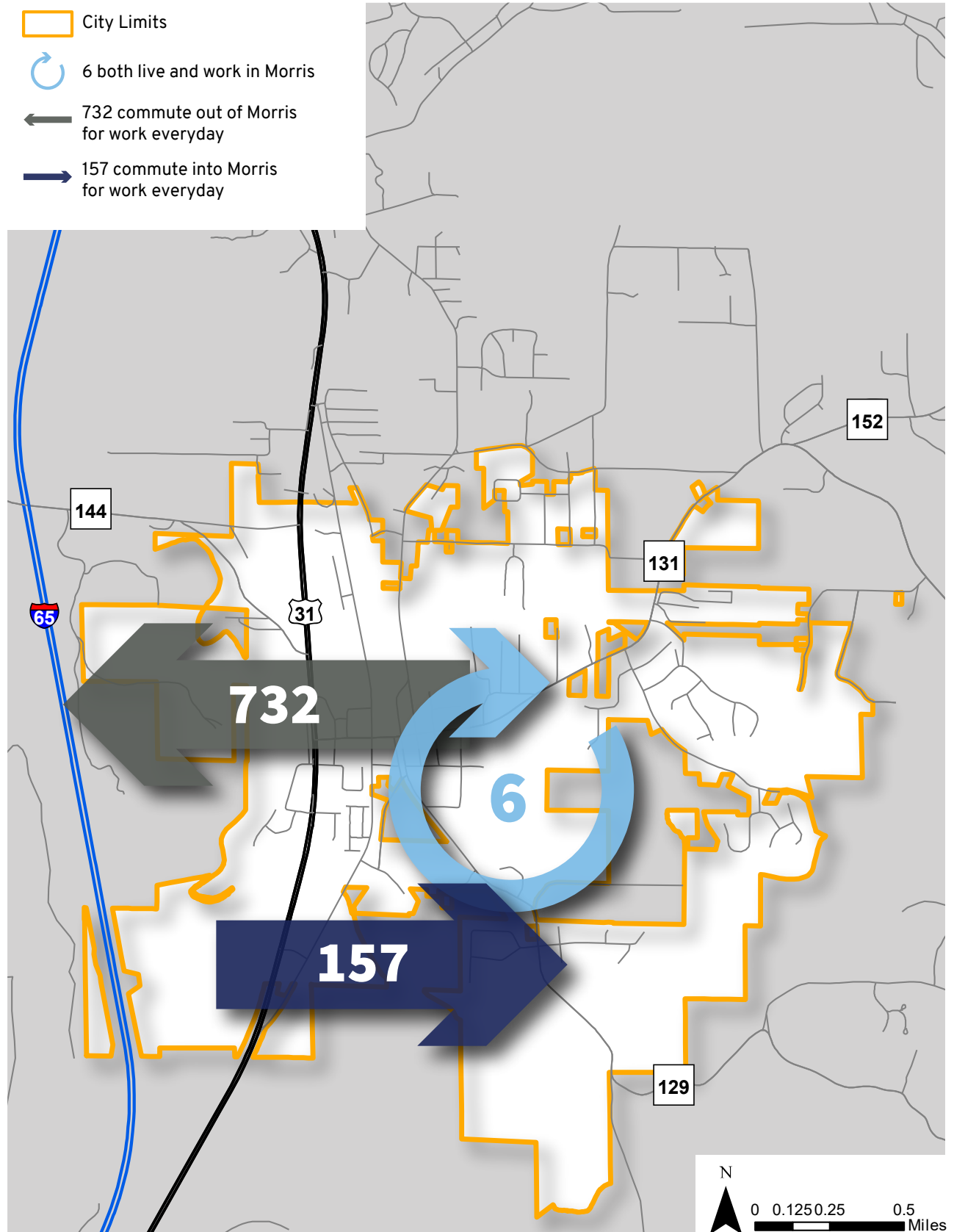
These people live in Morris,
and either work in Morris or somewhere else

Table 2.6: Local Workforce vs Resident Workforce by Employment Sector (2018)

| | Local Workforce | Resident Workforce |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|
| Construction | 9.2% | 54.6% |
| Wholesale Trade | 7.9% | 12.3% |
| Finance and Insurance | 9.9% | 11.7% |
| Educational Services | 7.2% | 9.2% |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 16.8% | 4.3% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 4.7% | 4.3% |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 6.0% | 3.1% |
| Information | 1.5% | 0.6% |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation | 0.7% | 0.0% |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | 2.0% | 0.0% |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 2.4% | 0.0% |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 6.1% | 0.0% |
| Manufacturing | 1.6% | 0.0% |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | 4.9% | 0.0% |
| Other Services (excluding Public Administration) | 1.5% | 0.0% |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 3.4% | 0.0% |
| Public Administration | 10.4% | 0.0% |
| Retail Trade | 0.8% | 0.0% |
| Utilities | 3.0% | 0.0% |
| Total | 738 | 163 |

Source: U.S. Census and Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Data (2018)

Figure 2.5: Community Inflow and Outflow Map



Source: U.S. Census and Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Data (2018)

Community Facilities and Services

Morris residents have access to a variety of community assets and services in and immediately adjacent to the City limits. These include the Morris City Hall, Morris Senior Center, three parks, four places of worship, two cemeteries, a post office, a roller rink, a driving range, and a golf course.

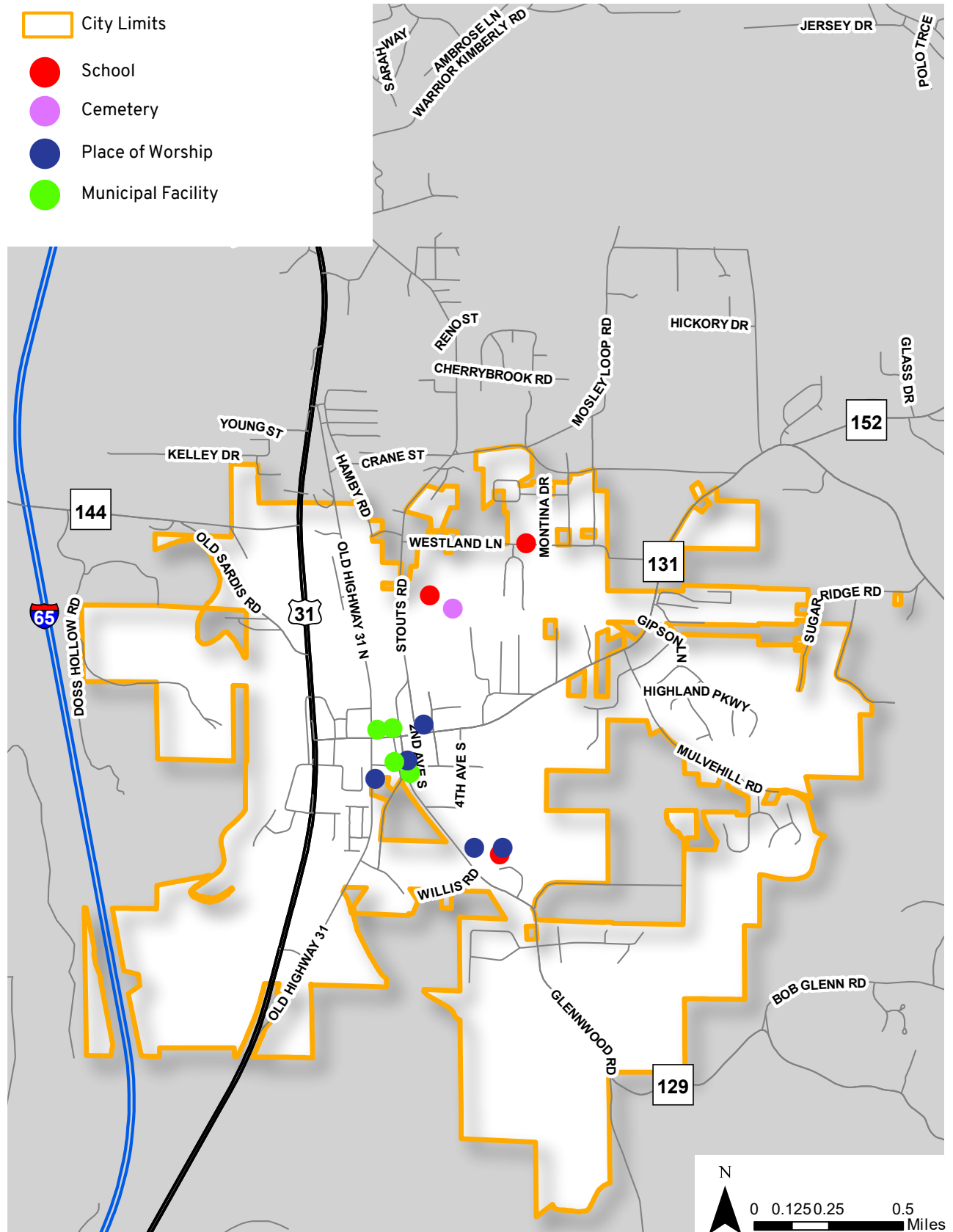
The City of Morris offers the comfort and safety of a small-City lifestyle. Full police protection, fire protection, by the Morris Fire and Rescue , and sanitation services are available to all residents.

Table 2.7: Existing Community Facilities and Assets

| Name | Type | Address |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Jefferson County Cemetery | Cemetery | 494 Ball Park Drive |
| Morris Cemetery | Cemetery | 8515 Stouts Road |
| Morris Fire and Rescue | Civic Facility | 650 Glennwood Road |
| Morris Police Department | Civic Facility | 621 Banks Street |
| Morris City Hall | Civic Facility | 590 Morris Majestic Road |
| Morris Senior Center | Civic Facility | 601 Morris Majestic Road |
| US Post Office | Civic Facility | 8315 Old Highway 31 |
| Morris City Park | Park | Bordered by Morris Majestic Road and Glennwood Road |
| Morris Ballpark | Park | 430 Ballpark Drive |
| Barger Roller Rink | Place of Interest | 8371 Old Highway 31 |
| Turkey Creek Driving Range | Place of Interest | 7990 Old Highway 31 |
| Green Briar Golf Course | Place of Interest | 1130 Morris Majestic Road |
| Morris Memorial Park | Place of Interest | Located in the right-of-way of U.S. Highway 31 and River Bend Road |
| Enon Baptist Church | Place of Worship | 724 Morris Majestic Road |
| Eagles Wing Church | Place of Worship | 8350 3rd Avenue |
| Bryan Elementary School | School | 600 Kimberly Cut Off Road |
| Mortimer Jordan High School | School | 1920 Blue Devil Drive Kimberly, AL 35091 |
| Burkett Center | School | 8601 Old Highway 31 |

Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Figure 2.6: Existing Community Facilities and Community Assets



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Zoning

A zoning ordinance is one of its principal methods of land use control. This allows the City to influence and regulate the location, type, and scale of development within its jurisdiction. Morris' governing Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2002 and includes the following 18 districts:

- **R-1 Single Family Residential District:** Low density single-family homes on estate-sized lots
- **R-2 Single Family Residential District:** Medium density single-family homes on moderate-sized lots
- **R-3 Single Family Residential District:** Medium density single-family homes
- **R-P Planned Unit District:** Planned residential developments, along with complementary recreational and institutional uses
- **R-R Rural Residential District:** Low density single-family homes as well as limited agricultural uses on large, rural lots
- **A-1 Agricultural District:** Agricultural uses as well as complementary single-family homes on large, rural lots
- **INST-I Institutional District:** Low intensity institutional uses such as places of worship, school, and parks
- **INST-II Institutional District:** Moderate intensity institutional uses such as municipal facilities, post offices, and nurseries
- **CEM Cemetery District:** Cemeteries, with or without association with places of worship
- **U-1 Utilities District:** Utility facilities, towers, and antennas
- **U-P Present Use District:** Open space, natural areas, and existing uses not currently zoned for any other use
- **C-R Commercial Recreation District:** Privately owned indoor or outdoor recreational facilities
- **C-1 Restricted Commercial District:** Low-impact commercial such as professional and doctors' offices, and small-scale local retail
- **C-2 General Commercial District:** General commercial such as shopping centers, vehicle sales, and restaurants
- **C-3 Special Commercial District:** Special commercial such as adult uses, bars, and restaurants serving alcohol

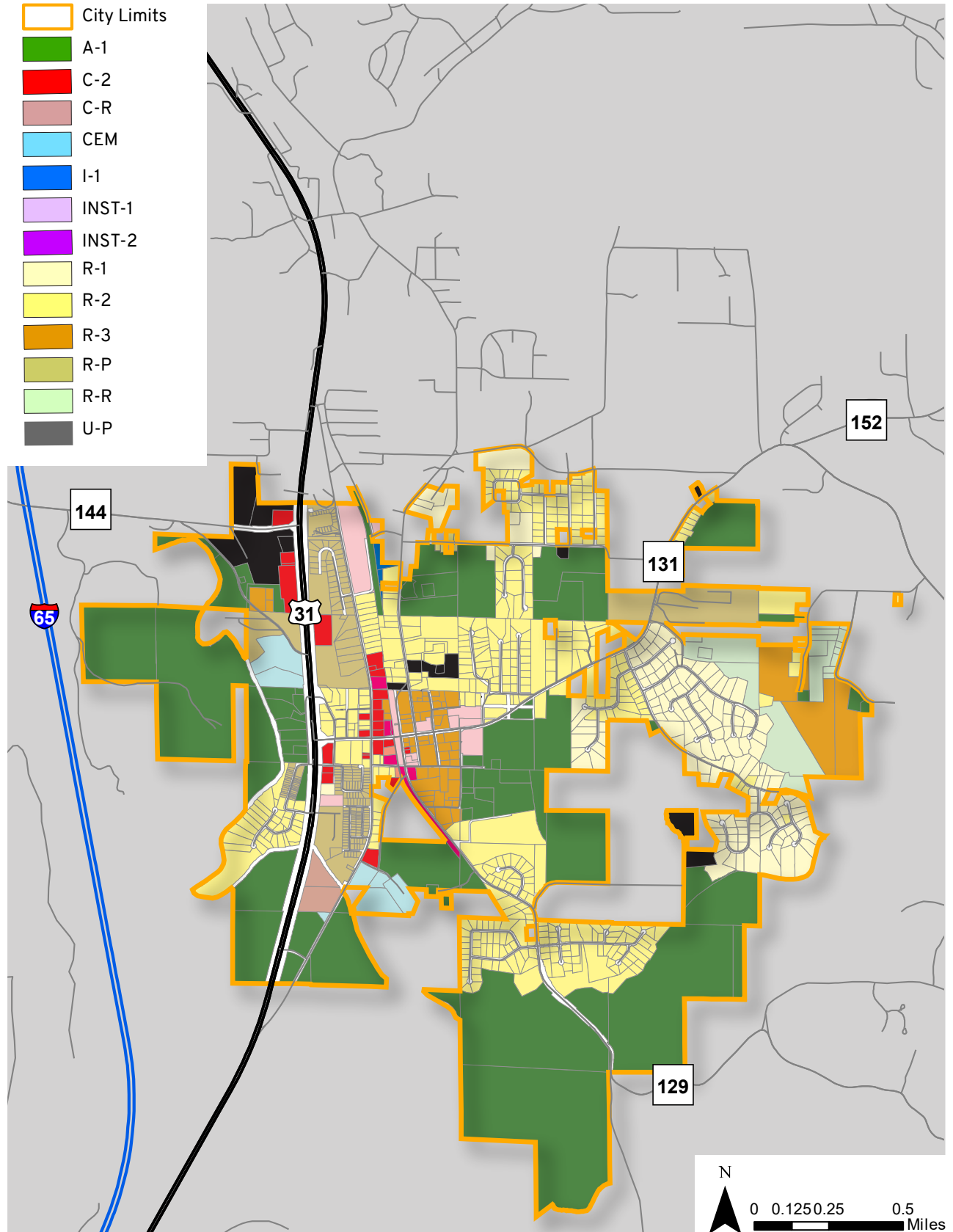
- **I-1 Light Industrial District:** Light industrial uses such as warehousing, lumber yards, automotive repair shops, and low-impact manufacturing and fabricating
- **I-2 Heavy Industrial District:** Heavy industrial uses such as cement plants, lumber processing, and rail yards
- **I-3 Mining and Manufacturing District:** Extractive uses such as quarries and mines

Table 2.8: Existing Community Facilities and Assets

| Zoning District | Acres | Percent of Total Acres |
|--|--------------|------------------------|
| R-1 Single Family Residential District | 181 | 7.7% |
| R-2 Single Family Residential District | 408 | 17.3% |
| R-3 Single Family Residential District | 93 | 3.9% |
| R-P Planned Unit District | 130 | 5.5% |
| R-R Rural Residential District | 60 | 2.6% |
| A-1 Agricultural District | 1,345 | 57.1% |
| INST-I Institutional District | 31 | 1.3% |
| INST-II Institutional District | 8 | 0.3% |
| CEM Cemetery District | 3 | 0.1% |
| U-1 Utilities District | - | 0.0% |
| U-P Present Use District | 54 | 2.3% |
| C-R Commercial Recreation District | 11 | 0.5% |
| C-1 Restricted Commercial District | 1 | 0.0% |
| C-2 General Commercial District | - | 0.0% |
| C-3 Special Commercial District | - | 0.0% |
| I-1 Light Industrial District | 33 | 1.4% |
| I-2 Heavy Industrial District | - | 0.0% |
| I-3 Mining and Manufacturing District | - | 0.0% |
| Total | 2,357 | 100.0% |

Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Figure 2.7: Existing Zoning Map (2020)

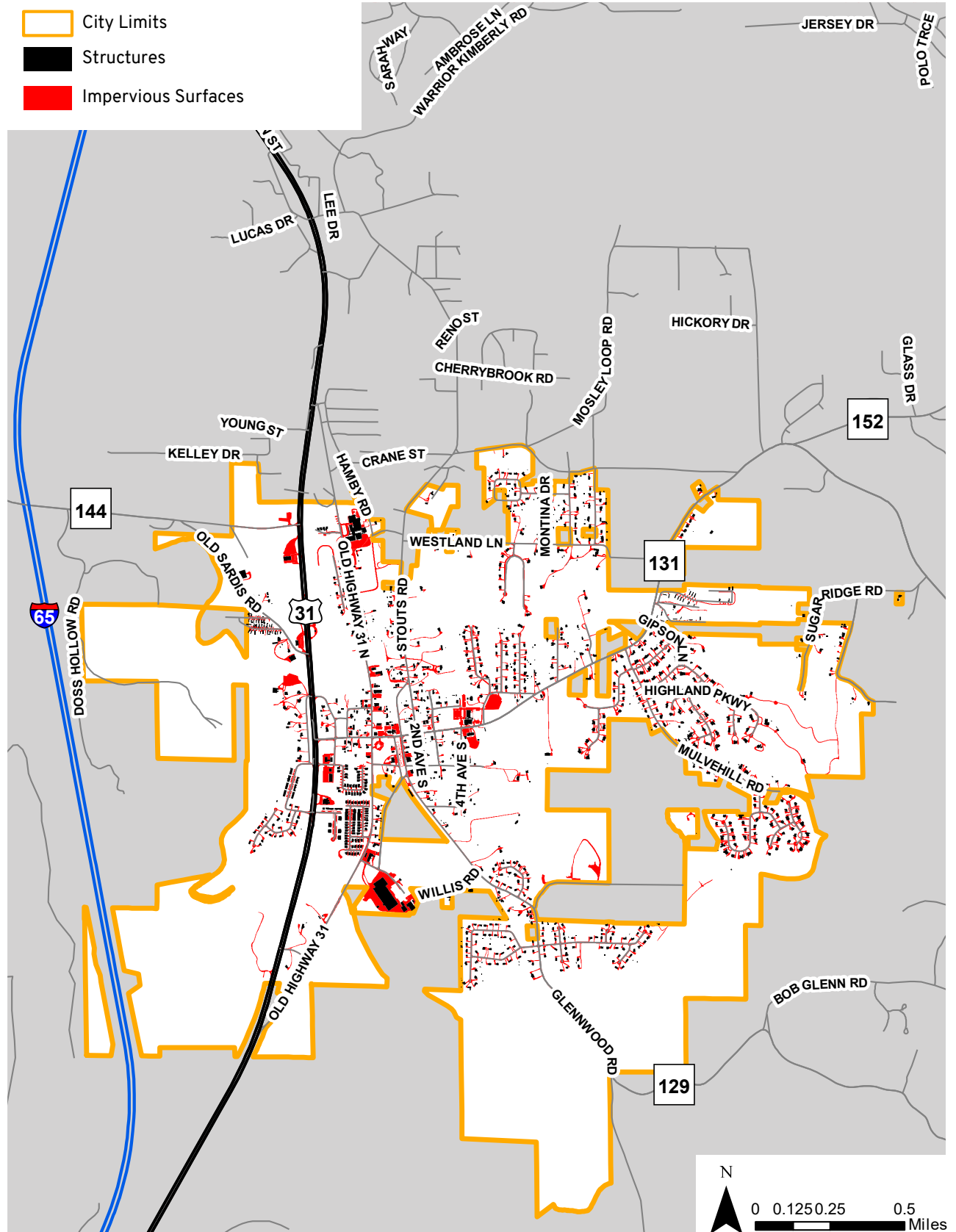


Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Existing Development Footprint

Buildings, pavement, sidewalks, and surface parking lots all combine to form impervious surfaces. These collect solar heat and produce the “heat island effect” and contribute to stormwater runoff. Runoff creates flooding potential and discharges harmful pollutants into waterbodies. Susceptible to runoff, Turkey Creek runs on the northwest and southern side of the City. **Figure 2.8** shows the existing development footprint within Morris. Currently, there are 74 acres of impervious surface within the Morris limits, which accounts for approximately 4% of the City’s total land area.

Figure 2.8: Existing Development Footprint and Impervious Surfaces Map



Source: RPCGB

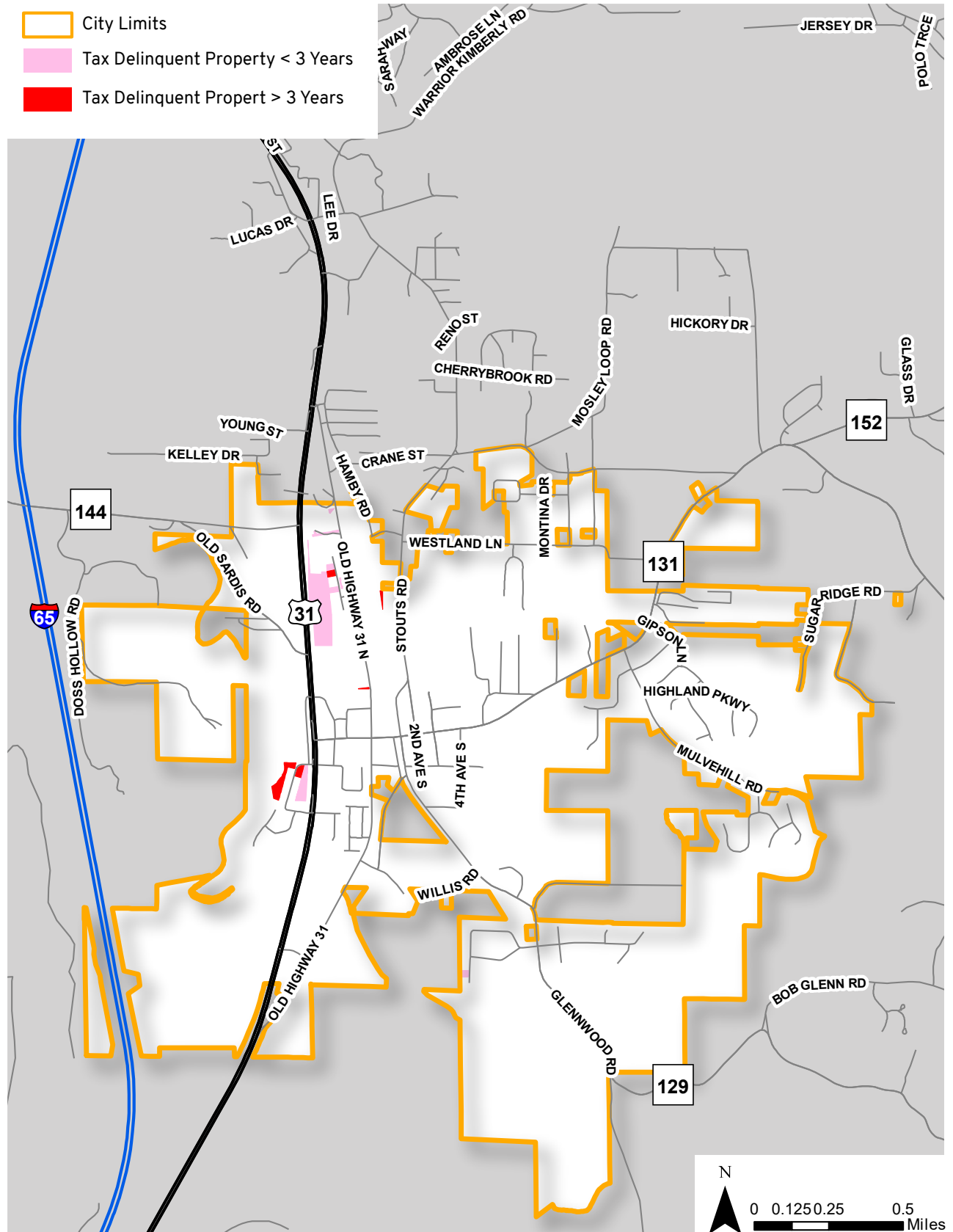
Tax Delinquent Properties

In 2020, there were approximately 16 tax delinquent properties in Morris. Many of these properties have been tax delinquent for an extended period of time. These properties have accrued liens for both taxes and other unpaid bills (like tax abatement). While not a quick process, tax delinquent properties can be purchased and redeveloped, usually at a discount.

How do I purchase a tax delinquent property?

Annually, Jefferson County holds a tax sale at the Jefferson County Courthouse on tax delinquent properties. If taxes are not paid the day before the sale, they are included in the tax sale. The tax sale usually takes place the third or fourth week of May each year. During this sale, tax certificates on delinquent properties are auctioned to the highest bidder. Properties that go unsold in the tax sale are then deemed sold to the State Department of Revenue. Following the tax sale, citizens may purchase tax certificates and deeds from the State. If the State has held a tax certificate less than three years, the purchaser is issued an assignment of the certificate. If the State has held the tax sale certificate over three years a tax deed will be issued to the purchaser. Note neither an assignment nor a tax deed gives the holder clear title to the parcel. It is advisable to consult a competent attorney regarding your contemplated purchase of a tax delinquent property.

Figure 2.9: Tax Delinquent Properties (2020)



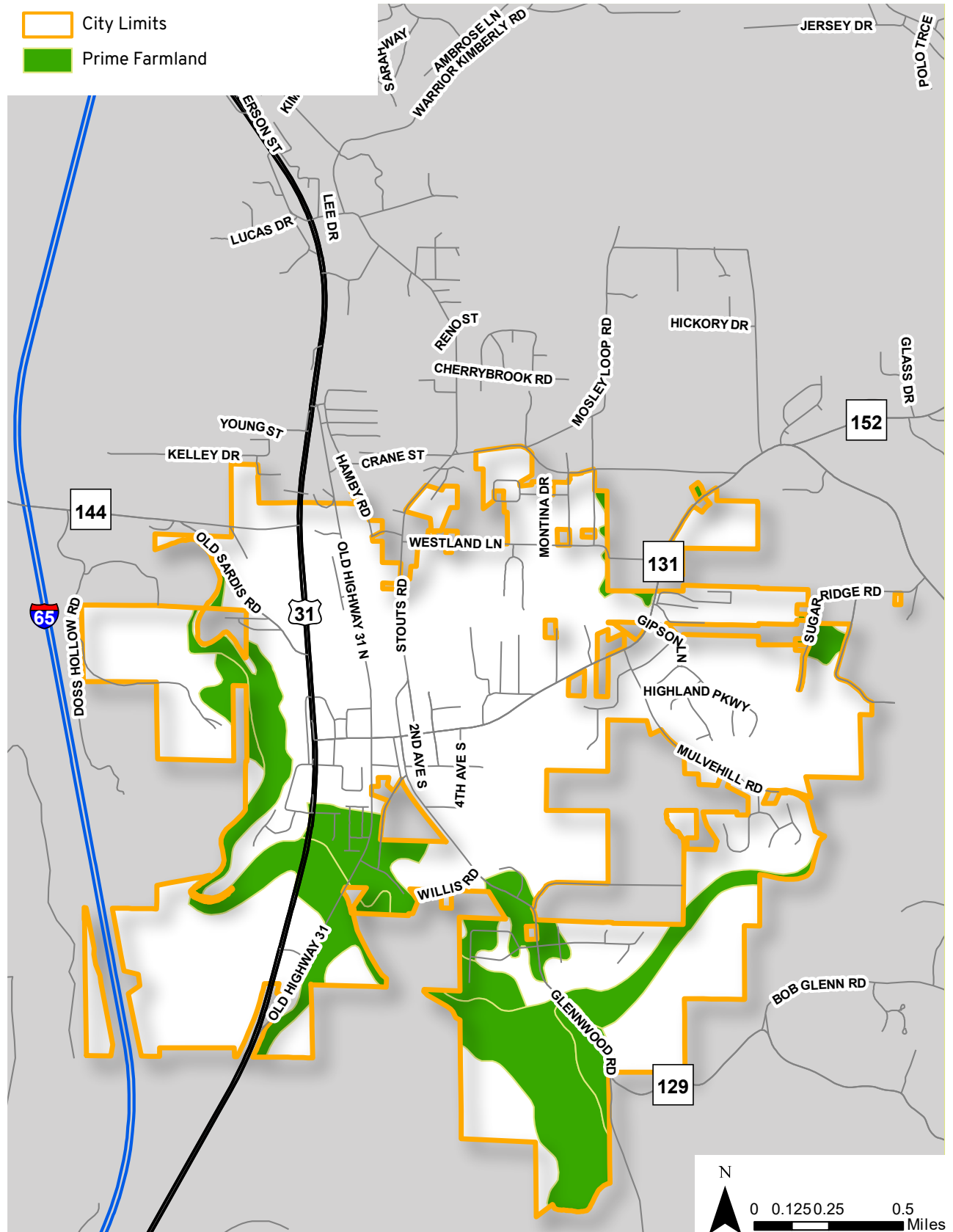
Source: Jefferson County

Development Constraints

Prime Farmland

Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and other crops and is available for these uses. Prime farmland includes cultivated land, pastureland, and forestland, but does not include urban land, developed land, or land in water areas. Prime farmland has a dependable water supply, plenty of moisture, favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable PH levels, and minimal rocks. Within the City of Morris, approximately 61% of the land is considered prime farmland. As shown in **Figure 2.10**, it can be found primarily along the northwest and southern portions of the city limits.

Figure 2.10: Prime Farmland Map



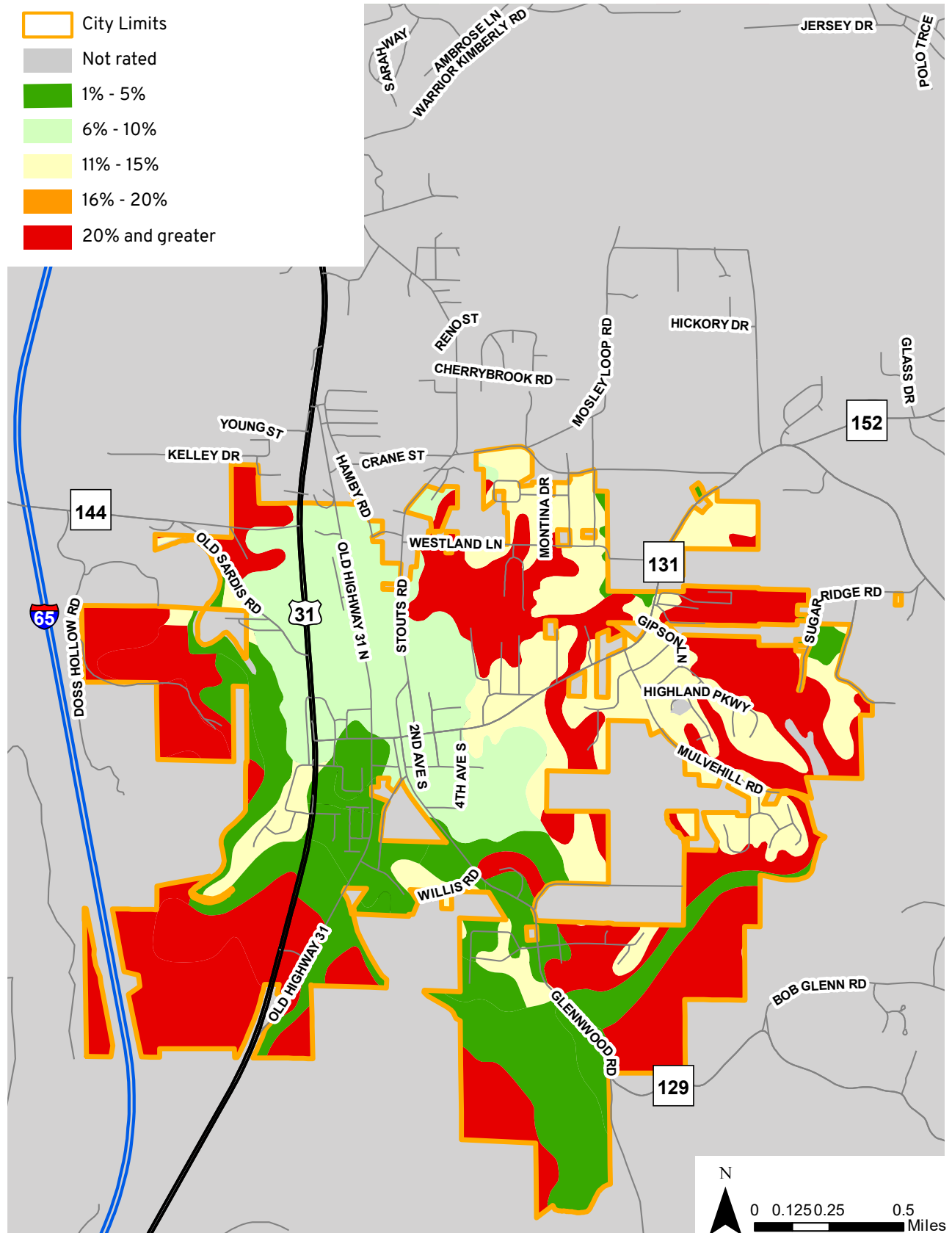
Source: RPCGB

Soils Conducive to Steep Slopes

Approximately 34% of the land within Morris consists of soils conducive to steep slopes—defined as slopes of 20% and greater. Areas of steep slopes pose constraints for land development because development on steep slopes is more expensive than on flat land and can pose unwanted impacts on stormwater drainage and exacerbate erosion. Morris' topographic features have had a direct influence on the community's past development pattern and will continue to be a factor in future growth. Although specific threshold criteria for steep slopes vary depending upon the type of development activity, the general slope thresholds used to determine where slopes become a significant engineering and design constraint to development are listed below:

- **0-5%:** Well-suited for large-scale shopping center development and small-scale individual commercial structures, single and multi-family residences. Acceptable limit for construction of roads and railroads.
- **6-10%:** Truck access becomes difficult and expensive when the slope exceeds 7%, and in areas of slope over 8% road routing is virtually dictated by the terrain. Small-scale, individual, commercial structures on slopes from 5 to 8% with virtually no parking demand or, if provided, with parking garages.
- **11-15%:** Financially impractical for industrial, commercial and Cityhouse developments. Hillside subdivision for single-family homes and apartment construction is often feasible, with special care taken with design of access roads and parking areas.
- **16-20%:** Point at which engineering costs for most developments become significant and extensive anchoring, soil stabilization, and stormwater management measures must be applied. Single-family homes and apartment construction is possible only if special care is taken in the design of access roads, parking areas, water supply, and sewage disposal. Any road design requires special care.
- **20-25%:** Financially impractical for all development activity. All urban areas which require the construction of roads and the provision of utilities are both prohibitively expensive and extremely damaging to the terrain.
- **25% and steeper:** As a general rule, land with a slope of over 25% should not be developed or disturbed.

Figure 2.11: Soils Conducive to Steep Slopes Map



Source: RPCGB

Hydrology

This section refers to the waterways, floodplains, wetlands and related hydrologic features, which altogether are an important consideration in the growth of the community. Turkey Creek and its tributaries run along the northwest side of Morris and through the southern portion of city. Morris lies within the Middle Locus Fork watershed of the Black Warrior Basin.

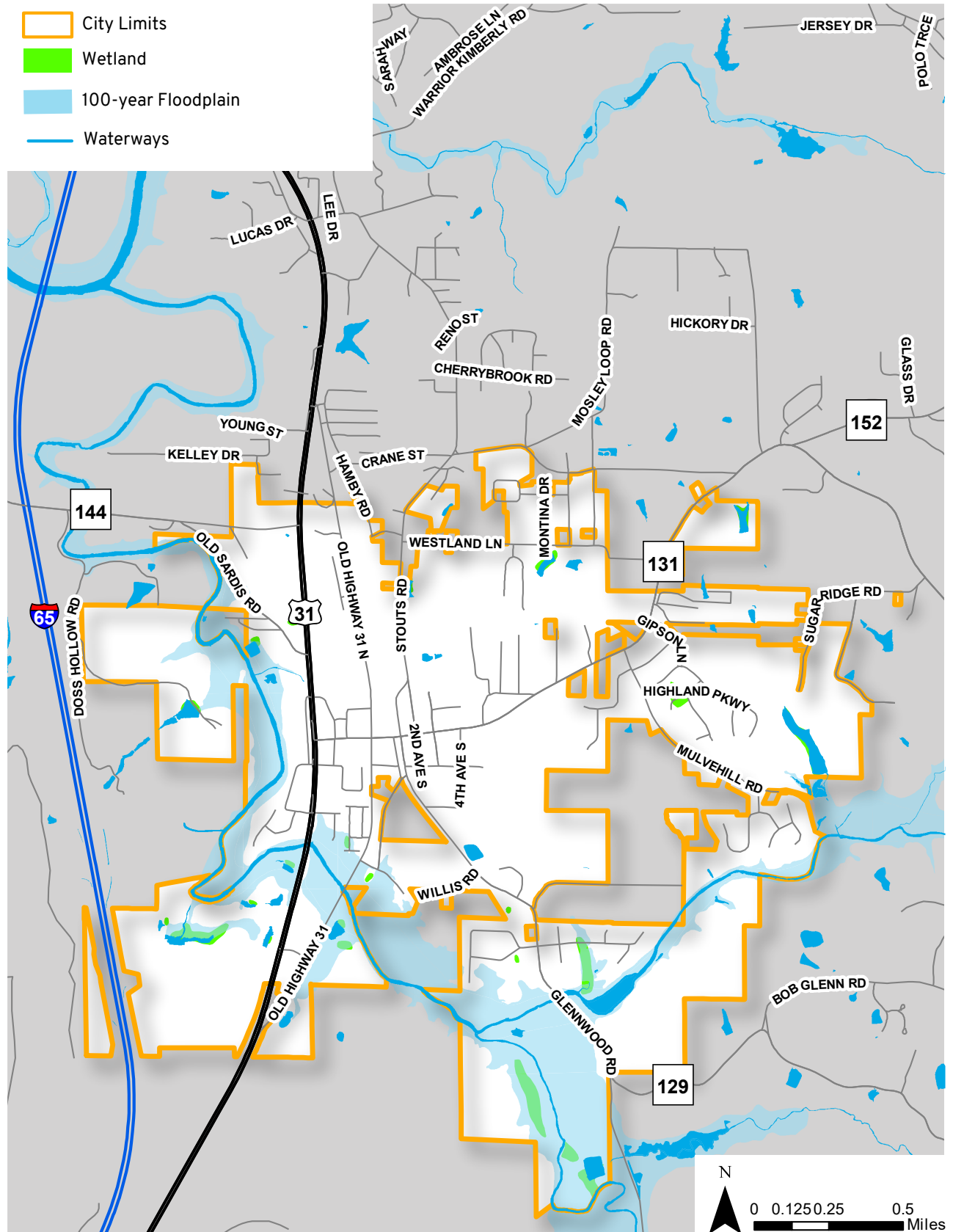
Floodplain areas are frequently inundated by rising water levels during major storm events, and flooding occurs within a floodplain whenever stormwater runoff collects or accumulates at a faster rate than the receiving river or creek is capable of transmitting the excess flow downstream. Development within floodplains is not recommended for three reasons. First and most importantly, the periodic inundations that occur within floodplains pose a threat to lives and property. Second, the addition of impervious surfaces and structures within floodplains can impede the flow or absorption of floodwaters, thereby increasing the chances or intensity of upstream flooding during major storms. Third, the undeveloped floodplain areas serve as natural filters for stormwater runoff which helps to improve water quality and helps to lessen the potential for flooding.

Zone A is the flood insurance rate zone that corresponds to the 100-year floodplains (or the one percent annual change floodplains) that are determined in the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) by approximate methods. Because detailed hydraulic analyses are not performed for such areas, no Base Flood Elevations or depths are shown within the zone. Mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements apply.

Zone AE is the flood insurance rate zone that corresponds to the 100-year floodplains (or the one percent annual change floodplains) that are determined in the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) by detailed methods. In most instances, Base Flood Elevations derived from the detailed hydraulic analyses are shown at selected intervals within this zone. Mandatory flood insurance purchase requirements apply.

In recent years, many communities have opted to use floodplain areas for community recreation such as linear parks and greenways. Funding assistance for such recreational developments may be obtained from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) through the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Figure 2.12: Hydrology Map



Source: RPCGB

Transportation and Infrastructure

Morris is bisected by U.S. Highway 31 that runs north-south and lies just east of Interstate 65 (I-65). The City's other major streets are Old Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, and Stouts Road, all two-lane roads. Morris Majestic Road and Glennwood Road connect the City with the northeastern section of Jefferson County.

34.7 Miles

of roadway exist within the City today.

But Only

0.56 Miles

of sidewalks exist within the City today (1.6% of total roadway miles) and are within the Downtown area and in the Morris Manor apartment complex.

Annual Transportation Costs

28%

is the percentage of household income that Morris residents spend on transportation costs annually. Transportation is considered "affordable" when it costs 15% or less of household income. Like other Jefferson County municipalities, most residents in Morris lack affordable transportation options. Moreover, the mean travel time to work for Morris residents is 30.9 minutes.

\$13,956

is the average cost that Morris residents spend annually on transportation costs. Transportation costs are higher for households in places that are least accessible and have the fewest mode options available, such as walking, biking, or transit.

Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology - H+T Index



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3

Catalytic Project Ideas

| | |
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| 1. Create a Downtown Morris Master Plan to inspire and guide. | 46 |
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| 6. Explore the feasibility of constructing a greenway along Turkey Creek. | 56 |
| 7. Explore the options to relocate the Morris Street Department to another area of the city and to expand or relocate the Morris Senior Center. | 58 |
| 8. Consider annexing the Kenamer properties into the city limits. | 60 |
| 9. Establish a food truck court on a vacant lot in Downtown Morris. | 64 |
| 10. Conduct an Advanced Planning, Programming and Local Engineering (APPLE) Study for potential roadway improvements along Morris Majestic Road from U.S. Highway 31 to Counts Road..... | 66 |



Catalytic Project Ideas For Downtown Morris

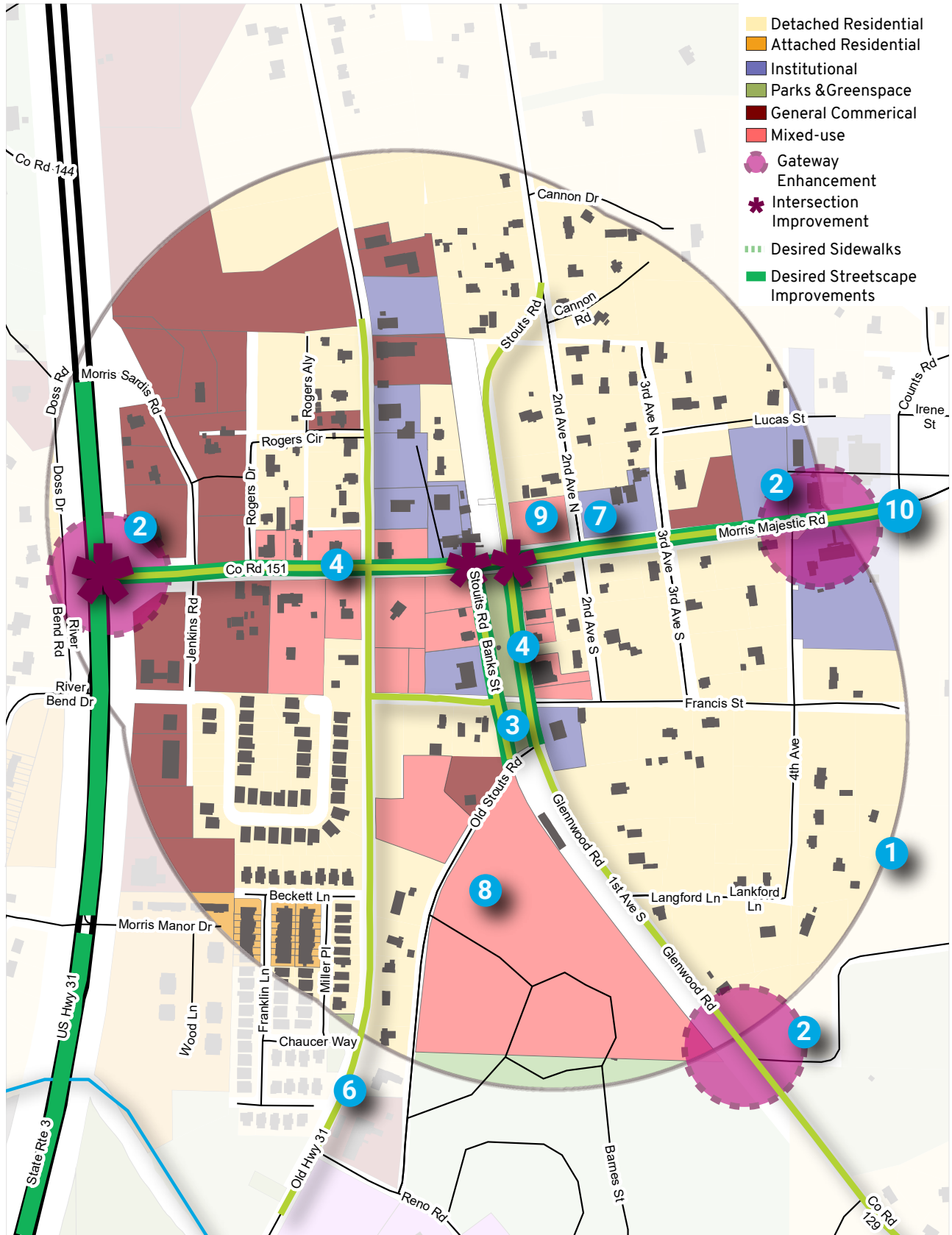
Throughout the planning and public input process for this Master Plan, the planning team identified several capital improvement projects and policies for their potential to enhance the City's economic vitality, connect the City's existing assets and direct new development opportunities. For this reason, this chapter utilizes a "catalytic project idea" approach. These projects are catalytic because of their ability to have a significant, direct, tangible, and positive economic impact on the City of Morris and because of their potential to leverage investment both in their immediate project area and in surrounding areas with spin-off projects that can add long-term value to the property tax base. These projects are designed to catalyze change in various spheres, such as through improved access and transportation, enhanced public services, and quality-of life.

This chapter describes each of the 10 catalytic project ideas recommended for Morris. Under each project is a project description along with suggested actions or "next steps" to take to implement the project. Some projects may be accompanied by photos and illustrated design concepts. These are intended to be conceptual and illustrative only and should not be interpreted as final design plans, nor do they negate individual property rights or zoning requirements.

These ideas are each best viewed as a "work in progress" requiring additional analysis and detailed studies. Some of these ideas are substantial and will require longer implementation timeframes and the right partners and funding sources. Other projects are more bite-sized and will have shorter implementation timeframes. Figure 3.1 illustrates the 10 catalytic project ideas for Morris, which are:

1. Create a Downtown Morris Master Plan to inspire and guide.
2. Commission a Gateway and Wayfinding Master Plan.
3. Enhance and expand Morris Town Park.
4. Improve the streetscape along U.S. Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road and Glennwood Road.
5. Construct the Morris Inclusive Playground.
6. Explore the feasibility of constructing a greenway along Turkey Creek.
7. Explore options to relocate the Morris Street Department to another area of the city and to expand or relocate the Morris Senior Center.
8. Consider annexing the Kennamer properties into the city limits.
9. Establish a food truck court on a vacant lot in Downtown Morris.
10. Conduct an Advanced Planning, Programming and Local Engineering (APPLE) Study for potential roadway improvements along Morris Majestic Road from U.S. Highway 31 to Counts Road.

Figure 3.1: Vision Map of the Catalytic Project Ideas



Source: RPCGB

1. Create a Downtown Morris Master Plan to inspire and guide.

Downtown revitalization is a complex process and cannot be accomplished through a single project. For successful long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach must be utilized. Already, there are several municipal projects in Downtown Morris that are in the early conceptual or planning phases, many of which are contained within this chapter. However, these projects are not necessarily united by a stated vision and plan. To better determine where these and other projects fit into the City's long-term vision for Downtown, this plan recommends that the City of Morris commission a Downtown Master Plan to establish a compelling and coordinated vision for the future of downtown Morris. The master plan will guide planning initiatives and strategic expenditures for years to come.

The master plan should be holistic and highly visual in nature, as opposed to a text-based plan. Recommended topics for the plan include public realm improvements, economic development strategies, and implementing practices that create a sense of community. While the Downtown Master Plan should be conceptual, it should address the following specific design and planning topics:

- Gateways and wayfinding signage
- Major thoroughfares in downtown (e.g., Morris Majestic Road)

- Streetscape designs (e.g. sidewalks, crosswalks, trees, on-street parking, etc.)
- Stormwater management infrastructure (e.g., curb and gutter)
- Parks and open spaces
- Traffic, transportation, and traffic calming strategies
- Infill and redevelopment sites and opportunities
- Facade enhancement studies
- Enhanced connectivity

Ultimately, the success of the Downtown Master Plan will be judged by the projects it recommends and by how these may be implemented. To that end, the plan should contain an in-depth implementation strategy that can provide a clear, phased, and prioritized road map for accomplishing the recommendations in the Master Plan. This could include:

- Written documentation of all recommendations that are to be implemented
- A prioritized "to-do list" of the recommendations which should be provided to the relevant municipal departments, municipal boards, and community partners
- A list and description of available, known funding sources that may apply to each recommendation within the plan



Image Credit: City of Lake Alfred, Florida



Image Credit: City of Greensboro, GA, and Georgia Department of Economic Development



Image Credit: City of Greensboro, Georgia

2. Commission a Gateway and Wayfinding Master Plan.

The City of Morris has recently begun to update and codify its branding, including a branding guideline document and updated signage. To carry this positive momentum forward, it is recommended that the City of Morris hire a consultant to develop a Gateway and Wayfinding Master Plan. This plan would create a comprehensive and coherent wayfinding system, clearly define key gateways into Morris and develop a comprehensive plan to welcome and orient visitors and residents. A unified citywide branding strategy may be included, which should take into account changes the City has already made and elements it wishes to preserve.

The Gateway and Wayfinding Master Plan should include:

- Consistent, recognizable wayfinding signage for all modes of transportation – by foot, in a car, or by bicycling
- A high-quality brand identity and design that captures the local character of Morris (e.g., continued use of the dogwood motif)
- Downtown maps and interpretive signage
- Preferred design concepts, specifications, and cost estimates
- Guidance for sign placement / replacement

Improvements should be made to key corridor entrances and gateways at major entrances to Downtown Morris. While the use of welcome signs is the most common way to identify a community gateway, other forms of communication include landscaped treatments, public art, and streetscape enhancements. The following gateways and intersections have been identified as opportunities for improvement:

- Morris Majestic Road at U.S. Highway 31
- Morris Majestic Road at Counts Road
- Glennwood Road north of Ball Park Drive

For example, the existing gateway on U.S. Highway 31 is one of the most prominent entrances into the city. This gateway welcomes visitors from Birmingham and beyond into Morris from the south. Currently, a large painted sign bearing the City's seal stands on the righthand side of U.S. Highway 31 where it is highly visible to drivers. Yet as motorists continue toward Morris Majestic Road, there is no signage to inform them that nearby to the east lies Downtown Morris.

Moreover, Morris Ballpark is a large attraction drawing visitors to Morris, yet these visitors may not know how close they are to Downtown Morris and what it has to offer. Wayfinding signage in this area could draw visitors already in Morris to Downtown.

These gateways also provide an opportunity to establish a design character for Morris. For example, landscaping could continue the dogwood motif and branded wayfinding signage would welcome and direct visitors toward destinations.

Did You Know?

The City of Morris recently just completed the process of updating the City's seal and logo.

The official seal is used when the City needs to portray authority, such as on bills and non-digital forms. It is also used to mark official sources of city information. The logo is used when the City is represented in a more casual way. The blue lines in the logo represent the roads that most citizens of Morris use to come home, and the green and blue colors symbolize the calming and inviting culture of the City. The City's seal and logo can be found below.

Official
Morris Seal
(right) and
logo (below)



Figure 3.2: Recommended Catalytic Project Idea # 2



Source: RPCGB

3. Enhance and expand Morris Town Park.

Morris Town Park is a vibrant gateway into the City of Morris. The linear park is centrally located between Stouts Road and Glennwood Road, near City Hall, the Senior Center, and the Police Department and Morris Fire and Rescue. The park contains a multi-use path, a gazebo for gatherings, and an outdoor seating area that surrounds the iconic fountain. The “bones” of the existing park are in great condition and provide a solid foundation to build upon.

The City of Morris is encouraged to pursue the following improvements to Morris Town Park:

- Continue to maintain the surface of the multi-use path and set funding aside for future resurfacing
- Mark the mileage along the walking track so that users can total their workout distances
- Provide additional shading within the park
- Replace the ornate benches and trash receptacles with furniture that reflects the modern and laidback culture of the City
- Work with a landscape architect to refresh and enhance the landscaping
- Work with Alabama Power to ensure that the park remains lit at night
- Continue to maintain the fountain, existing street furniture, and on-street parking

In addition to enhancing the existing park, the City of Morris is encouraged to expand the park as opportunities arise. Presently, the City owns land to the north of the park and adjacent to the Senior Center that would provide ample space and opportunity to expand the Morris Town Park across Morris Majestic Road and connect the two via crosswalks and other pedestrian safety measures. In addition to the land next to the Senior Center, the City is in negotiations with property owners to acquire the southernmost portion of the block that the park occupies. Approximately 0.4 acres in size, this site would be suitable for a large outdoor community gathering space such as an amphitheater. An amphitheater would provide a gathering and entertainment venue not currently present in Morris and programming may also provide benefits to tourism:

For marketing and continuity purposes, these proposed additions should be considered expansions to Morris Town Park, rather than act as three separate parks, and should be linked through shared design elements and pedestrian safety features. To ensure design unity, this Plan recommends that the City work with a landscape architect or another design consultant to design the full extension of the park. Moreover, to save the City money and allow time for fundraising, this park should be designed in phases. Rotary Trail in Birmingham and Jemison Park in Mountain Brook are wonderful examples of linear parks designed in phases. Specific detail about park expansion, such as the prioritization and timing phases, should be developed in the proposed **Parks and Recreation Master Plan** (please see **Action 1.1 in Chapter 8: Recreation and Green Systems**). As the crown jewel of the City's Park system, revitalizing and expanding Morris Town Park would enhance the recreational offerings and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

***Note:** Enhancements and maintenance should continue at Morris Town Park while the City acquires land and fundraises for the design and development of the entire park. This visionary project could take years of fundraising, will require extensive public engagement, and the design will likely evolve as the City continues to grow. Moreover, the City of Morris is encouraged to develop city-owned land next to the Senior Center to expand the park. It is recommended that the City preserve the existing trees to provide a buffer from residential development, use city equipment to clear and cut paths for a walking trails, and clearly mark trails using signage and paint.*

Did You Know?

It has long been known that parks contribute to quality of life and have benefits for conservation, health and wellness, and social equity. However, cities across the country are rediscovering how important parks are to their local economies. In 2020, local parks and recreation spending in Alabama¹ accounted for:

- Over 12,000 jobs
- Almost \$400 million in worker income
- Over \$1.5 billion in economic activity, including tourism

1: *The Economic Impact of Parks: An Examination of the Economic Impacts of Operations and Capital Spending by Local Park and Recreation Agencies on the U.S. Economy.* National Recreation and Park Association, 2020. <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-study-summary-2020.pdf>



Image Credit: City of Morris



Image Credit: Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin

4. Improve the streetscape along U.S. Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road, and Glennwood Road.

The aesthetic character of a roadway is very important to making a positive impression on residents and visitors. U.S. Highway 31 and Morris Majestic Road are the main thoroughfares into the City of Morris and to its Downtown, while residents or visitors to Downtown Morris will also likely travel on Stouts Road and Glennwood Road, which frame Morris Town Park. Currently, these roadways have a limited amount of sidewalks, inconsistent lighting, and a lack of coherent landscaping. However, these roadways are bursting with potential because of the important locations they connect, including many civic facilities. Investing in infrastructure and aesthetic improvements along these roadways will likely not only leave visitors with a good impression, but may also spur future development. Streetscaping is also a great way to contribute to placemaking, which is a term for the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in.

Targeted locations for streetscape improvements are shown in **Figure 3.3** and include:

- U.S. Highway 31 from Morris Manor Drive to Morris Sardis Road
- Morris Majestic Road from U.S. Highway 31 to Counts Road
- Stouts Road from Morris Majestic Road to Old Stouts Road
- Glennwood Road from Morris Majestic Road to Old Stouts Road
- Intersection of U.S. Highway 31 and Morris Majestic Road
- Intersection of Morris Majestic Road and Stouts Road
- Intersection of Morris Majestic Road and Glennwood Road



Image Credit: TSW Design

For these roadways, this Plan recommends the following streetscape improvements:

- Expansion of sidewalks
- Installation of curb and gutter to reduce flooding
- Improvements to landscaping, including the addition of street trees
- Installing lighting
- Providing safe crossings for pedestrians at intersections
- Repairing and maintaining existing on-street parking

While sidewalks should ideally be placed on both sides of the street, a sidewalk on one side of a street would be adequate.

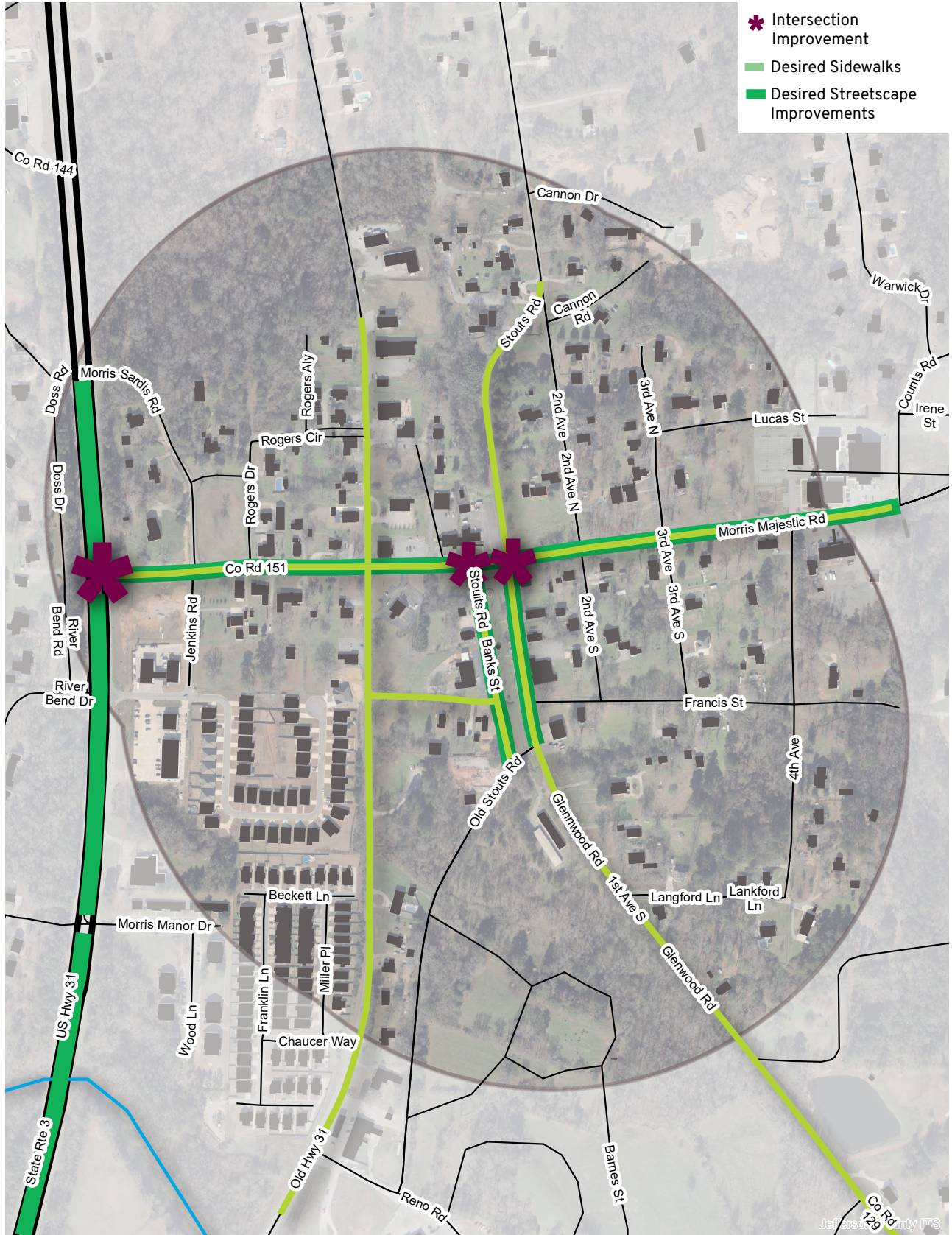
Next Steps:

- Work with the Morris Street Department and impacted downtown business owners to discuss the feasibility of the project and how to mitigate disruptions due to construction
- Engage a consultant team of engineers and landscape architects to explore professional technical design alternatives, including coordination with ALDOT
- Explore funding alternatives, secure funding sources, and identify construction phases
- Establish a maintenance plan
- Hire a contractor and construct the streetscape improvements

“Placemaking is the community-driven process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in. Quality places are active and unique sites – interesting, visually attractive, and often incorporating public art and creative activities. They are safe, accessible, comfortable, sociable, and conducive of authentic experiences. They have pleasing façades and good building dimensions relative to the street and are people-friendly.”

– Congress for the New Urbanism

Figure 3.3: Recommended Catalytic Project # 4



Source: RPCGB

5. Construct Morris Inclusive Playground.

For children, playing surpasses physical exercise and stimulates the development of young minds. Playing, in other words, is learning, and should therefore be accessible to all people, regardless of age or ability. An inclusive playground is one designed to be accessible and usable for all children, regardless of age or ability. Depending on ability, some children may require certain spatial designs and playground equipment, which is not commonly found in many playgrounds and is not currently available in the City of Morris.

Morris is also home to the Burkett Center, a Jefferson County school that provides education to students with special needs. Since the closest inclusive playgrounds are in the cities of Birmingham, Hoover and Alabaster, the Morris inclusive playground will provide an experience that the Burkett Center students may not otherwise be able to enjoy.

The City is currently working with consultants to develop and refine plans for the construction of an inclusive playground. To maximize the playground's use and its ability to improve quality of life, the layout and equipment at the playground should be chosen while considering the following five principles:

:

- 1. Multisensory elements.** Allow for a variety of ways for children to experience sensory play. Many pieces of equipment can stimulate multiple types of sensory input. The main sensory systems considered are:
 - Auditory (sound)
 - Proprioceptive (muscle movement)
 - Tactile (feeling and texture)
 - Vestibular (balance)
 - Visual (colors and shapes)
- 2. Accessibility.** Ensure that any child can enter and move about the playground and use the equipment. Considerations include appropriate surfacing materials in play areas, wheelchair access, and flush transitions between playground areas.
- 3. Play for all.** Ensure that equipment is available for children of any ability but is not grouped by ability. For example, traditional swings and chair swings can be side-by-side to allow friends of different abilities to play together.
- 4. Opportunity for calm.** Provide moments of lower sensory input. These areas can be near play equipment so a child who needs a moment of calm

can still feel connected to their friends who are playing. Having all equipment visible to the child from the entrance can allow them to see which types of play are available and which ones they may be comfortable using.

- 5. Social environments.** Ensure the layout of the space and equipment allows children to play in different ways. The playground layout should allow for cooperative play (playing with friends), solitary play (equipment the child can use without help), onlooker play (so children can be with friends without playing), and parallel play (such as using equipment near friends).

By incorporating these design principles into the proposed Morris Inclusive Playground, the City can ensure playground equipment specifically designed for children of all abilities will be organized in a usable, accessible way. This, can ensure convenient access for visitors as well as local residents, and can improve quality of life by providing a safe place for children of all abilities to play and grow together. Morris is encouraged to continue taking steps necessary to bring this project to fruition.



Image Credit: Tuscaloosa News



Image Credit: City of Birmingham



Image Credit: Struthers Recreation



Image Credit: City of Morris

6. Explore the feasibility of constructing a greenway along Turkey Creek.

Turkey Creek, a tributary of the Locust Fork, is a local gem. The City of Morris should explore the feasibility of constructing a greenway along Turkey Creek that can tie into the multi-use path at Morris Town Park. This proposed project would be transformative for the City and would enhance recreation, tourism, and quality of life for local residents. In fact, a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Homebuilders found that off-street trails and greenways are the number one community amenity desired by potential home buyers.¹ This was supported during this Plan's public involvement input, as over half of survey respondents rated additional trails and multi-use paths as one of the highest desired transportation improvements. Public involvement also revealed that Morris and the surrounding area is home to avid kayakers and watersports enthusiasts who may become some of the greatest advocates of this proposed greenway.

If the greenway is one day constructed, it is recommended that it tie into the existing and proposed sidewalk network in order to create an interconnected network for multimodal transportation and recreation (see **Action 1.1 in Chapter 5: Transportation**). Street segments proposed for sidewalk expansion include Old Stouts Road and Old Highway 31, which would connect Turkey Creek to Downtown Morris. As funding allows, the proposed greenway should be paired with sidewalk connections to the north, such as U.S. Highway 31 and River Bend Road, to form a loop, allowing multiple access points and connections to downtown and other sites of interest.

While right-of-way acquisition and engineering costs can pose serious challenges to the establishment of any trail, their enormous potential benefits to the local economy and quality of life should not be overlooked. In addition to preserving a portion of Morris' beloved rural setting for future generations to enjoy, trails can also draw regional visitors who spend up to \$18 per day at local shops and restaurants.²

This Plan recommends that the City work with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) to conduct an Advanced Planning, Programming and Local Engineering (APPLE) feasibility study for professional planning assistance to evaluate the feasibility and design location of a potential multi-

use greenway along Turkey Creek. The APPLE program has helped fund feasibility studies for similar trails in the region. The purpose of this APPLE study would be to evaluate options including potential trail alignments and funding opportunities and to identify a preferred build option. In addition, the City should work with property owners and conservation groups such as the Freshwater Land Trust to explore the feasibility of conservation easements along Turkey Creek for dedicated use of a trail. The Freshwater Land Trust, has helped to implement and construct over 100 miles of trails throughout the region and is a strong partner in supporting local recreational water access projects, such as Cahaba Landing and Cahaba Moon River Canoe Launch in the cities of Irondale and Leeds, respectively.

To help determine project feasibility, the APPLE study would create and summarize:

- Existing conditions, including field review, property ownership, utility identification, environmental features, and constraints
- The process used to identify potential alignments
- An evaluation of potential positive and negative impacts to the area and adjacent properties that may be associated with each potential alignment
- Trail surfacing options such as crushed stone, asphalt, or concrete (note that any federally funded trail must also be accessible for all users and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act)
- Typical sections
- Cost estimates for trail segments/phases
- Funding options
- Stakeholder and public input
- List of potential challenges (i.e., right-of-way acquisition and/or property easements, foot bridges over blue line streams, permitting, underground utilities, conflict points, etc.)

1: Vierbicher, 2019. <https://www.vierbicher.com/trails-without-rails-a-new-approach-to-trail-planning/>

2: *Ibid.*



Image Credit: The Birmingham News, Hal Yeager



Image Credit: Alabama Birding Trails

7. Explore the options to relocate the Morris Street Department to another area of the city and to expand or relocate the Morris Senior Center.

The Morris Senior Center and Morris Street Department are currently on the same property, located at 596 Morris Majestic Road in Downtown Morris. While being on the same property has worked well in the past, a reorganization of the City's municipal facilities could allow services to be better provided into the future. Best planning practices recommend that the highest and best uses of downtown space are people-centric uses that bring in residents and visitors, which indicates that the relocation of the Morris Street Department could benefit residents.

Morris Street Department

The Morris Street Department, currently located directly behind the Senior Center, is mainly used for the storage of equipment and materials for street maintenance and repair. The current arrangement is cramped and requires that some materials and equipment be stored outdoors, which is not visually appealing and may not be optimal for the equipment. Maintenance and repairs to the current facility would allow it to remain functional but would not address the issue of space. It is recommended that the Morris Street Department building be relocated in the future to another area of the city (outside of a 10-minute walk of Downtown).

Morris Community Senior Center

The Morris Senior Center is a treasured institution that provides valuable services to senior citizens and other members of the community, including blood pressure checks, lunch, and engaging programming. Members of the public may also rent out space for events. However, the facility itself is showing signs of age and does not have as much space as may be desired for some events. Minor improvements such as repainting can improve the experience for users, but the Senior Center would best be able to serve its users in an expanded space. Providing additional space would allow the Senior Center to host more attendees at its popular events. For example, the pottery and ceramics program is currently very popular, and more space could benefit this program by allowing room for items like a dedicated pottery painting area, a drying area, or a large kiln for firing. Additional space could allow the Senior Center to expand the variety of its programming by dedicating rooms for certain activities, such as listening to guest

speakers or indoor exercise classes. Some dedicated outdoor space could be popular and allow for gardening classes.

There is a great need for this additional space but renovating and expanding the current building may not extend its useful life by a wide enough margin to warrant the cost. Instead of renovating the existing center, the City could consider building a new or expanded municipal facility to house City Hall, the Senior Center, and other city services. This multipurpose facility could result in a cost savings compared to renovating or replacing both facilities. The two current facilities are adjacent to one another. Continuing to house both uses under one roof or in one complex would also give Morris more flexibility over time, with options to allocate administration and community space as the City grows. A new combined facility or complex would also have a much longer useful life than a renovation of either current facility.

Housing multiple municipal services in the same building or complex is increasingly popular today among cities of all sizes. For example, the Gardendale Civic Center Complex includes the City Hall, the Civic Center, Senior Center, and space for the local farmers market within the same block. The Auburn Public Safety Building each includes all public safety departments, council chambers, and the municipal court under one roof, with additional municipal offices in the same complex.



Image Credit: Encyclopedia of Alabama



Image Credit: City of Morris

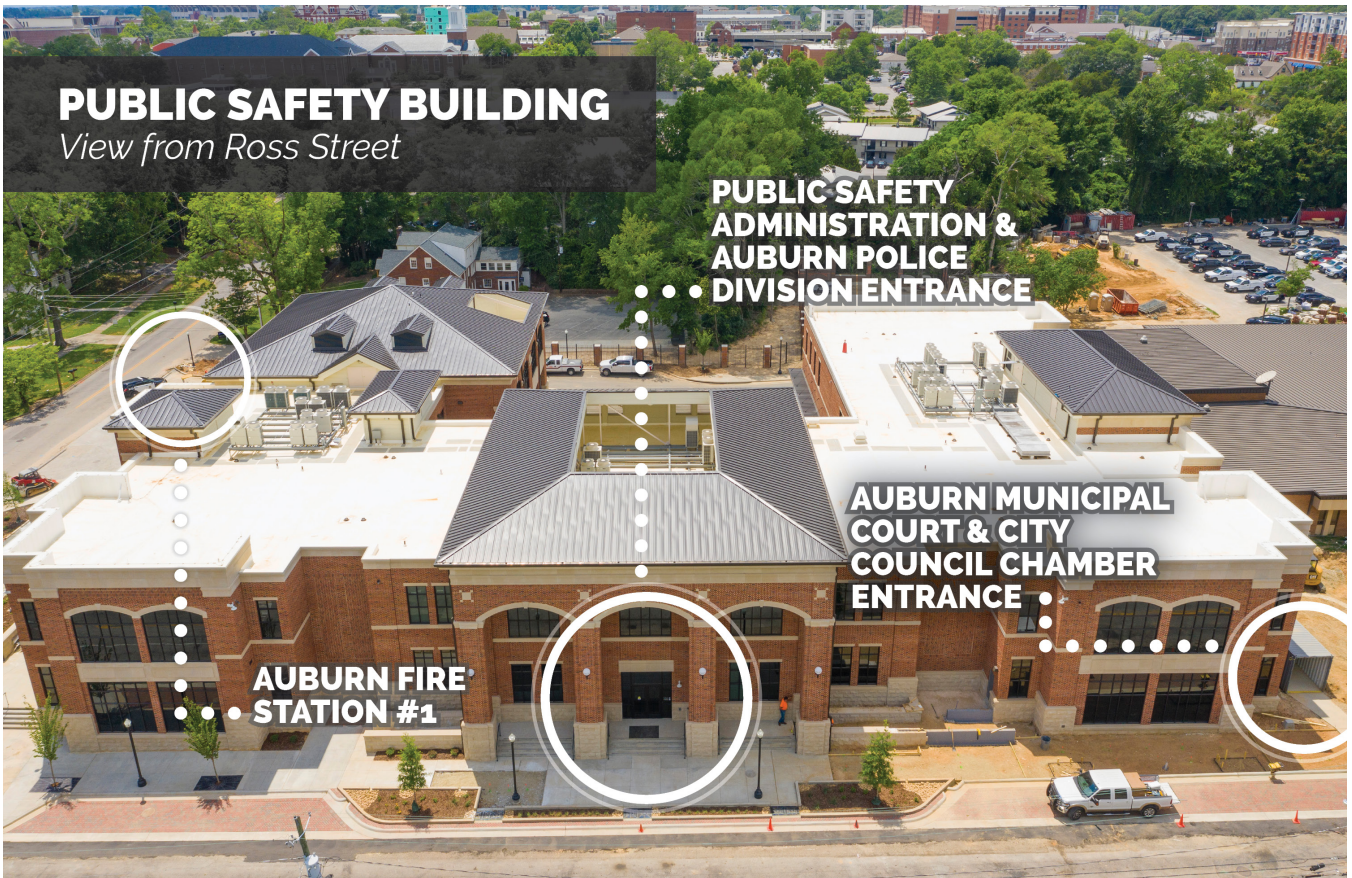


Image Credit: City of Auburn, Auburn Public Safety Building

8. Consider annexing the Kennamer properties into the city limits.

The Kennamer properties, highlighted in Figure 3.4, total approximately 17 acres and are located just south of Downtown Morris. They straddle Old Stouts Road (with approximately 2 acres to the northwest and approximately 15 acres to the southeast), and are bounded on the east by Glennwood Road and to the north by the intersection of Old Stouts Road and Glennwood Road. For development purposes, a former light industrial use abutting the 2-acre Kennamer property is included in this recommendation.

These properties currently lie within an unincorporated portion of Jefferson County, therefore forming a “donut hole,” meaning they are surrounded by incorporated parcels. Annexing these mostly undeveloped properties directly adjacent to Downtown Morris would help “round-out” Morris’ city limits.. The annexation of and corresponding zoning of these properties would allow the City greater influence over their future use. In their current state, Morris has no such ability to guide the use and design of their future development.

The proposed annexation is divided into two phases:

- **Phase 1:** Annexation and extension of the sidewalk and trail network
- **Phase 2:** Transformation of the site into a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) – this would need to be led by a developer, but a public-private partnership would be encouraged

Phase 1

In Phase 1, the City is encouraged to pursue annexation of the properties. This annexation would give the City of Morris the option to extend the City’s sidewalk and trail network. The City should consider prioritizing the construction of a new sidewalk along Glennwood Road on the eastern portion of this properties from Downtown Morris and continuing to the Morris Ballpark. A new sidewalk segment in this location was rated as highly desirable during the public involvement phase of this Plan.

Since annexation would require the application of a City of Morris zoning district, the U-P Present Use District should be considered until the City decides on a long-term zoning district to apply.

Phase 2

In Phase 2, the City is encouraged to encourage the development of a traditional neighborhood development (TND) on this site. TND is a planning technique that replicates the enduring and historic development patterns found in American towns and applies these patterns to new development. Whenever one pictures a “classic” American neighborhood or a historic neighborhood, it usually includes TND principles. Hallmarks of TNDs include gridded, narrow streets and homes with reduced front and side setbacks with streets and homes oriented around a pedestrian-friendly “town center.” A town center or community anchor within the TND should be located on the northern or eastern side, close to Downtown Morris or Glennwood Road. For more information about TNDs, please see the callout box on **pages 62-63**.

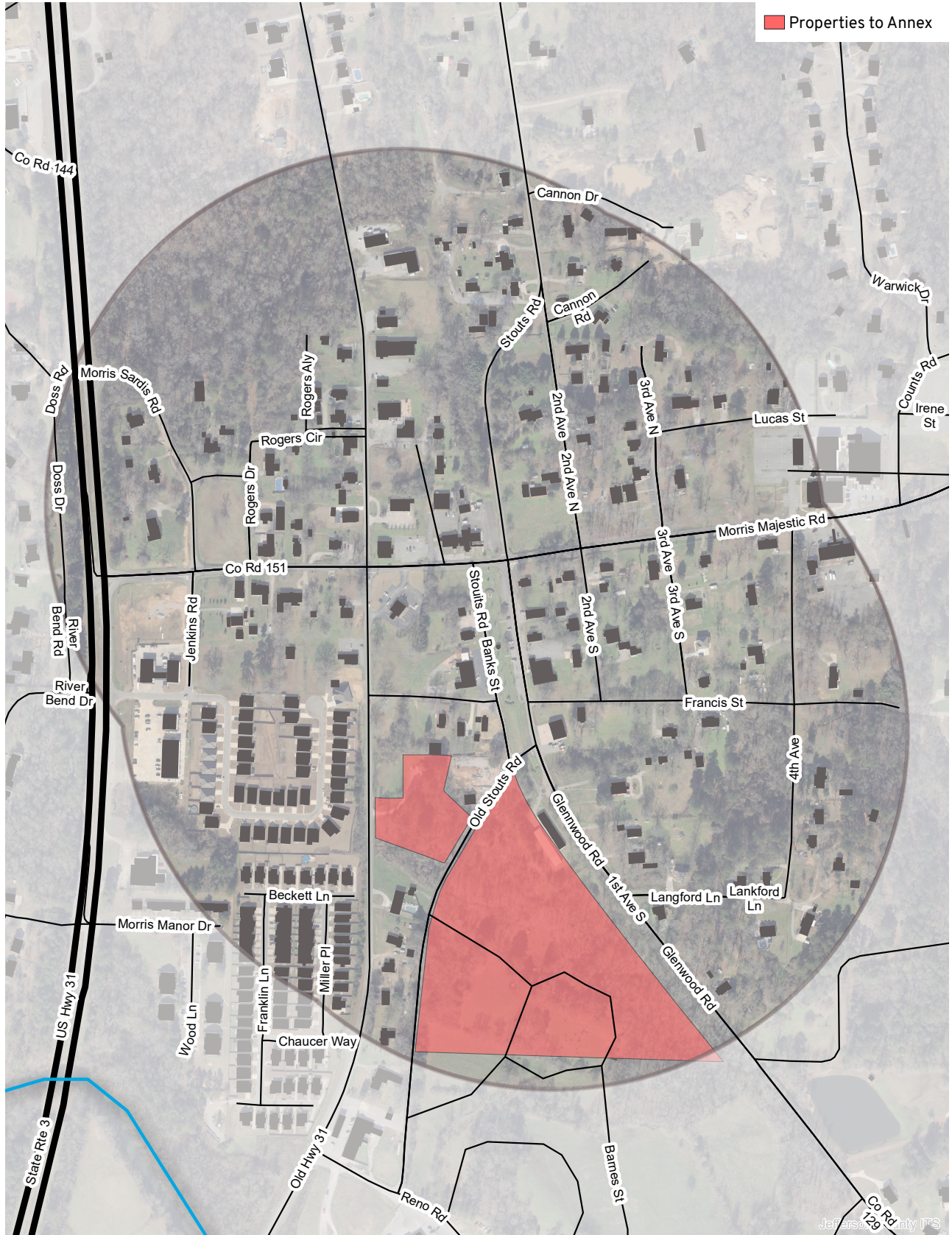
As the City seeks to enhance and revitalize its Downtown while adding additional housing and commercial options, a TND would help Morris provide these land uses in a walkable land use pattern. By giving people the option to reach many of their frequent destinations without needing a personal vehicle, TND principles allow new development that combats suburban sprawl and offers a higher quality of life.

Note: To reflect the diversity of future land uses that may be contained within such a TND development, these properties have been designated as Neighborhood Center on the Future Land Use Map shown in **Figure 4.1**. This allows, but does not require, a mix of compatible land uses. For more information, please see the Neighborhood Center category in **Chapter 4: Future Land Use**.



Image Credit: Tap Into Berkeley Heights

Figure 3.4: Properties to Consider Annexing into the City Limits



Source: RPCGB

DID YOU KNOW?

TNDs accommodate all members of the community by including a variety of housing types and encouraging pedestrian movement with interconnected streets, thoughtful public spaces, and neighborhood-appropriate businesses. The TND has a range of benefits over conventional subdivision because it encourages a range of housing types, provides a mix of land uses, encourages pedestrian movement, and can reduce the amount of required infrastructure.

Successful TNDs include:

- A community anchor that may feature a park, community meeting space, corner store, post office, library, or entertainment center. The community anchor is within a $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile (5 to 10-minute walk) of homes
- A range of housing types to attract people of various ages and socioeconomic levels
- A mix of land uses that support the residential needs including shops, offices, and restaurants
- Streets that are laid out to form an interconnected grid that that reduces traffic congestion by allowing multiple route options. Streets are relatively narrow and are shaded by trees – there are sidewalks and sometimes bike lanes
- Buildings that are located close to the street, creating a sense of place by framing the sidewalks with street trees and building walls
- Public parks and civic spaces that bring the community together and serve as a place to relax and recharge with friends and neighbors

Hampstead (shown here) is a TND in Montgomery, Alabama. Hampstead broke ground in 2008 to become a model community and illustrates all the core TND principles



Image Credit: Hampstead Living



Image Credit: Hampstead Living



Image Credit: DPZ CoDesign

9. Establish a food truck court on a vacant lot in Downtown Morris.

Since July 2019, Food Truck Fridays have been highly successful and a fixture in Morris from Spring through Fall. This event series benefits local and regional businesses and the City itself while also boosting civic pride and providing residents with enjoyable cultural programming. To build on this momentum and ensure this and other event series remain viable into the future, the City of Morris is encouraged to establish a food truck court in Downtown Morris.

Often located on vacant or underutilized lots, a food truck court provides space and infrastructure for food truck events and other community events to succeed. For example, the Morris Health Center property located behind Morris City Hall would provide visibility as well as accessibility to the Downtown parks and civic facilities, although other spaces exist in Downtown Morris that may be suitable. Space is key, both for the desired number of food trucks and for diners to safely queue. Once space has been secured, necessary amenities can be added, which typically include:

- Seating (e.g., picnic tables)
- Trash and recycling receptacles
- Lighting
- Shade trees and perimeter landscaping
- Utility hookups and/or safe space for generators, if applicable

While this space may be conceived of mainly as a food truck court, it should be designed as a flex space able to accommodate a variety of other pop-up events. These events may include:

- Farmer's market or other market
- Pop-up library
- Business fair

Morris has historically marketed Food Truck Fridays well and should continue to promote all these events. With the establishment of a food truck court in a flexible space, Morris can expand its programming repertoire. This may also have economic benefits. For example, a permanent food truck court provides predictability and

a customer base to existing and potential food truck operators, which could be the deciding factor in some of these businesses finding initial success.³ Since this can have benefits on the local and regional economy, Morris should continue to ensure that the food truck permitting process remains unburdened and easy to navigate, and this should apply to any pop-up event that would also be held in the shared flex space. These events, such as the ones listed above, can ensure the space is well-used, can provide cultural and economic benefits to residents and can contribute to downtown revitalization



Image Credit: Detroit Fleet Food Truck Park



Image Credit: Shawn Goggins

³ How Food Truck Parks Are Making America More Like Southeast Asia. Smithsonian Magazine, 2015. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/how-food-truck-parks-are-making-america-more-southeast-asia-180955264/>



Image Credit: RPCGB



Image Credit: RPCGB

10. Conduct an Advanced Planning, Programming and Local Engineering (APPLE) Study for potential roadway improvements along Morris Majestic Road from U.S. Highway 31 to Counts Road.

Morris Majestic Road is the main east-west thoroughfare through Morris and the second-busiest roadway in the City, trailing only U.S. Highway 31. In 2020, the roadway had an average annual daily traffic count of 5,893 vehicles (<https://aldotgis.dot.state.al.us/TDMPublic/>). This road is a prime gateway into Downtown Morris from U.S. Highway 31 and is heavily traveled by residents who commute south for work and by visitors to Morris from Birmingham. During the public involvement phase of this Plan, residents commonly voiced their concerns about the intersection of Morris Majestic Road and Stouts Road, stating that it is a problem intersection where congestion has increased over the years and is generally unsafe for pedestrians due to traffic speeding and a lack of crosswalks. Historically, this intersection was a four-way stop, but has since been turned into a two-way stop for north-south traffic, which could explain why residents also define it as “confusing.” Redesigning the intersection to include a roundabout instead of the two-way stop, could provide one solution to improve traffic flow, increase pedestrian safety, and create a more pronounced gateway and entry to Downtown Morris. Moreover, this Plan also recommends that streetscape and pedestrian improvements be made along Morris Majestic Road (see **Catalytic Project Idea #4**).

The City is encouraged to work with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) to conduct an Advanced Planning, Programming and Local Engineering (APPLE) feasibility study for professional planning and design assistance to evaluate roadway and intersection improvements on Morris Majestic Road from U.S. Highway 31 to Counts Road. The APPLE program has helped fund feasibility studies for similar roadways in the region. The purpose of this APPLE study would be to evaluate potential safety and

efficiency improvements.

To help determine project feasibility, the APPLE study would evaluate and summarize:

- Existing conditions, including intersections, traffic counts, turn lane warrant evaluations, capacity analyses, and crash data
- Future roadway conditions, including future traffic growth, turn lane warrant evaluations, and intersection and roadway capacity analysis
- Conclusions and recommendations based on existing and future conditions, which may include some combination of safety and efficiency improvements
- Planning-level cost estimates for recommended improvements

The result of the APPLE study would inform necessary changes to this targeted segment of Morris Majestic Road and implementing these improvements would allow this critical piece of the City’s transportation infrastructure to operate safely and efficiently into the future.

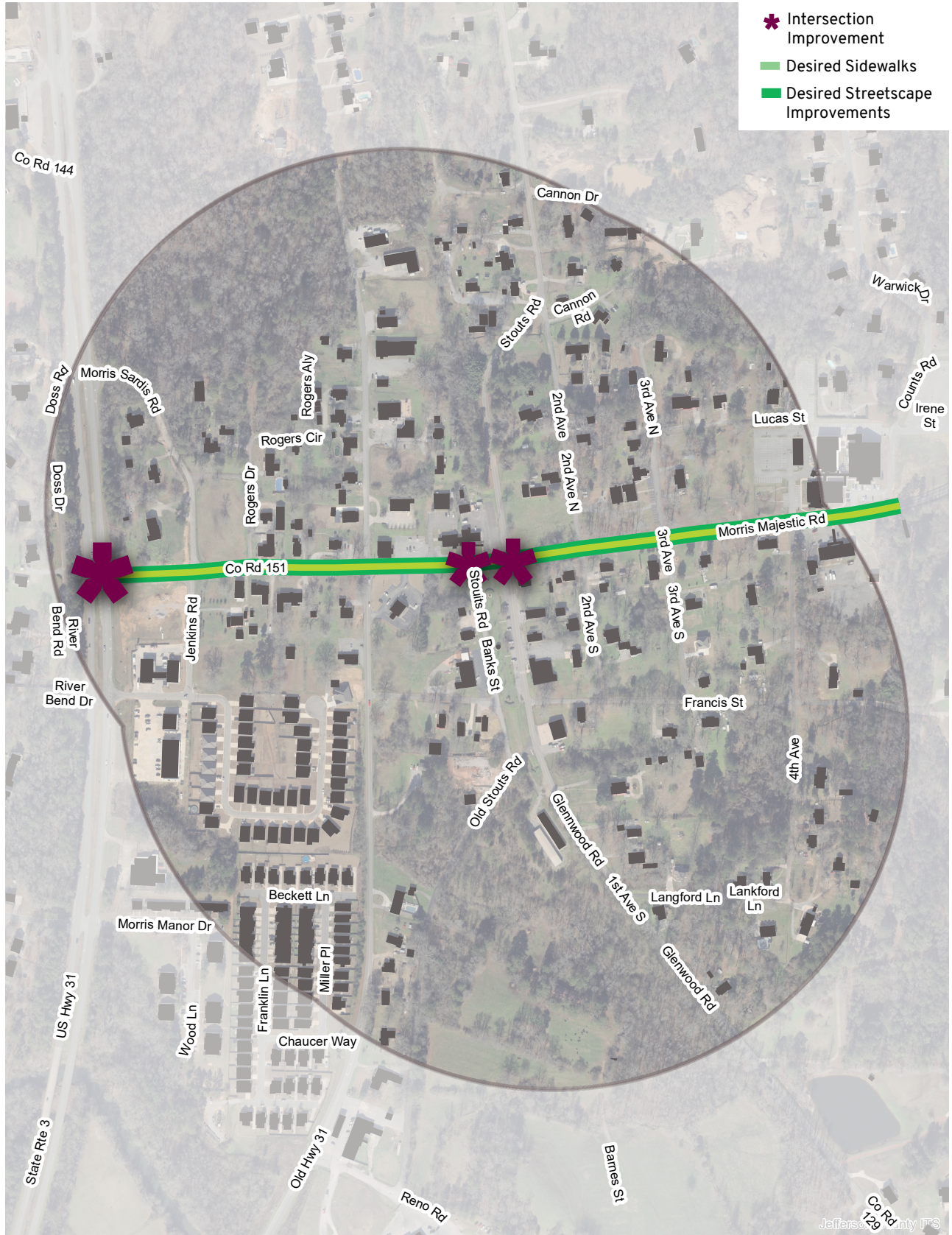


Image Credit: Bethesda Magazine, Bethany Rodgers



Image Credit: Cities Skylines

Figure 3.5: Recommended Catalytic Project Idea #10



Source: RPCGB

4

Future Land Use

| | |
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Future Land Use

Morris is a rural city that is centered along a major highway corridor on the edge of the Birmingham metropolitan area. The City has recently faced some growth pressures and has limited land to accommodate new development. But what is the residents' vision for how the City should grow?

Throughout the public involvement process of this Plan, residents expressed a desire to see managed and controlled growth, with an emphasis on preserving the City's farmland, natural areas, and open space. When asked the open-ended question about "Where do you think future development should be directed in Morris?", over half of the people who took the Visioning Survey noted that development should be concentrated along U.S. Highway 31 and Old Highway 31, along Morris Majestic Road and in the Downtown area.

This chapter's goals and actions aim to balance these desires. While conventional, more familiar development patterns can still be accommodated, this chapter provides a roadmap to creating more enduring, distinctive places that serve a variety of different lifestyles and needs. These goals and actions detail the policies necessary to make the collective vision in the Future Land Use Map become reality.

The two goals found within this Future Land Use chapter are:

1. Encourage sustainable long-term development patterns.
2. Encourage a wide range of housing choices.

About the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map is a long-range tool intended to guide future zoning decisions. It is not a zoning map. Whereas zoning maps are parcel specific and establish detailed requirements for setbacks, height, use, parking and other characteristics, the land use categories on the Future Land Use Map recommend a range of potentially appropriate land uses and intensities.

Morris's desired future land use patterns are shown on the Future Land Use Map, which is shown in **Figure 4.1**. It indicates the intended distribution and intensity of land uses over the next 5-15 years and should be used as a guide to define where different types of development should be directed in the future.

In some cases, the recommended future land use is the same as the existing land use. However, in certain

locations throughout the city, the Future Land Use Map contains areas where existing uses are proposed for a change in land use, or for redevelopment. In either case, it is not the intent of this plan to place existing uses in a situation where their value or the quality of life of residents is adversely affected. Rather, the intent is to demonstrate to potential purchasers or developers the City's long-range view of how particular properties should be reconfigured and used should it become feasible to do so.

In general:

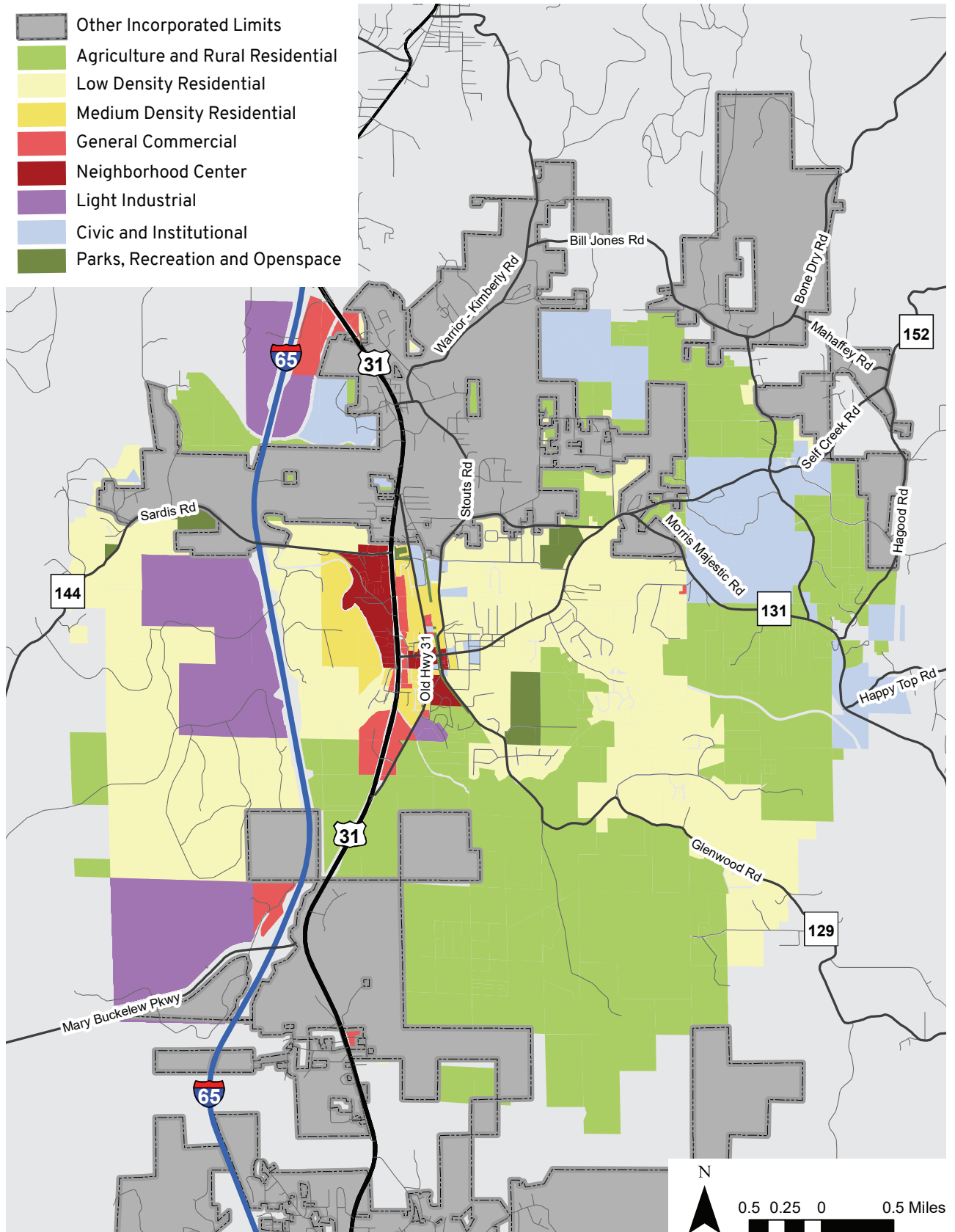
- The Future Land Use Map is a generalized depiction of intended uses. It is not an "existing land use map," although in many cases future uses in an area may be the same as those that exist today.
- The rezoning of any given area should be guided by the Future Land Use Map, interpreted in conjunction with the policies of the Master Plan. However, the Future Land Use Map is not a zoning map.
- While the Future Land Use Map will influence future zoning, it does not alter current zoning or affect the right of property owners to use the land for its purpose as zoned at the time of this Plan's adoption. The Future Land Use Map will not be referenced as part of the site plan review.
- Whereas zoning maps establish detailed requirements for setbacks, height, use, parking, and other attributes, the land use categories of the Future Land Use Map recommend a range of potentially appropriate land uses and intensities.

Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Map uses color-coded categories to express public policy on future land uses across the City. The land use designations have been drawn based on parcel lines, existing and desired development patterns, streets, environmental features, and other logical boundaries.

The Future Land Use categories on the following pages describe in detail the general character of each land use type, including primary and secondary land uses, and general characteristics. Each future land use category ties directly to an appropriate zoning district(s). Again, the land use categories indicated on the map must not be interpreted as zoning districts.

Figure 4.1: Future Land Use Map



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Agriculture, Forestry and Related Uses

The agriculture, forestry and related uses category applies to those areas that the community wishes to remain agrarian, scenic and rural in character, including prime farmland, forest and pastureland, large residential lots, and environmentally sensitive areas.

Primary Land Uses

Detached single-family residences that occupy large tracts of land and are designed to conserve land for agriculture or natural resources, forestry, farming, and other related uses, such as the raising of farm animals, grazing, dairying, etc.

Secondary Land Uses

Accessory structures and uses, outdoor recreation, places of worship, and supporting or complementary uses such as forestry and agriculture related businesses and farming support services (e.g., hobby farm, agritourism and eco-tourism, farm machine repair, and others).

Related Zoning Districts

- A-1 Agricultural District
- R-R Rural Residential District
- U-P Present Use District

General Characteristics

- Agricultural operations typically require very large parcels of land
- These residences rely on individual wells and septic systems
- Agricultural uses will be limited by topography and soil characteristics and will require some basic utility services
- Livestock and tree farms should occur on lots (or commonly owned land) of one or more acres
- Agriculture is permitted in floodplains and geologic hazard areas, subject to Federal, State and County regulations



Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS

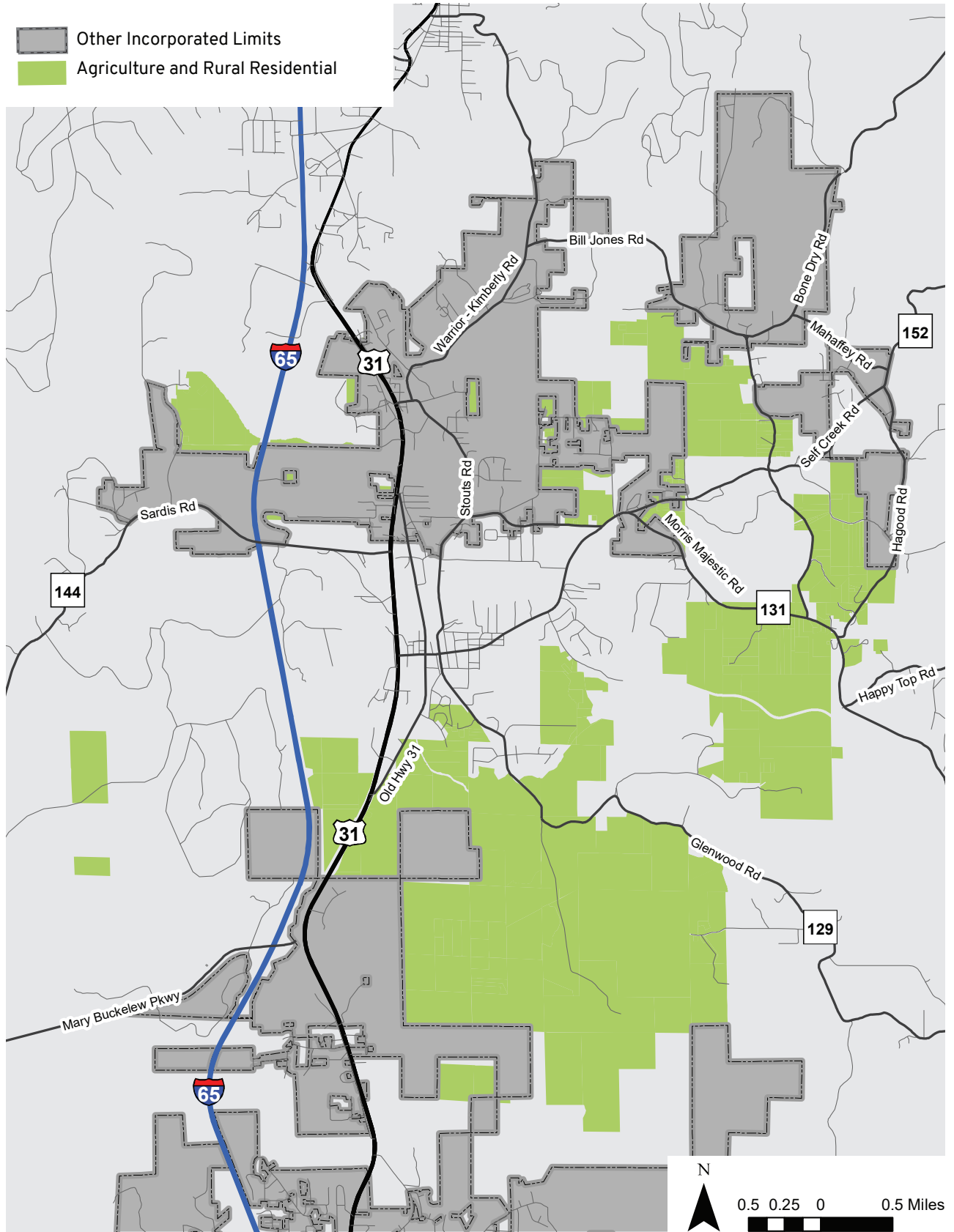


Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS



Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS

Figure 4.2: Future Land Use Map - Agriculture, Forestry and Related Uses



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Low Density Residential

The Low Residential category applies to those areas that the community wishes to remain rural and low-density in character, including large-lot estates, and very low-density subdivisions. Large setbacks, spacious lots, and extensive open space characterize these areas. Very low street connectivity effectively precludes pedestrian activity. The conservation of environmentally sensitive areas, such as steep slopes, heavily wooded areas, floodplains, and wetlands, should be a primary consideration in these areas.

Primary Land Uses

Single-family detached residences

Secondary Land Uses

Accessory structures and buildings, greenhouses, community gardens, pocket parks, home occupations

Related Zoning Districts

- R-R Rural Residential District
- R-1 Single Family Residential District
- R-2 Multiple Dwelling District

General Characteristics

- Single-family residences on individual large lots (clustering is encouraged in new developments)
- Each lot typically has access to the main road or subdivision road
- High degree of separation between homes
- Typically, adjacent to large expanses of open space and/or natural lands
- The large lots/yards are typically set in subdivisions with curvilinear cul-de-sac street networks and the lots have limited exterior connectivity and with few road access points
- Integrate stormwater management facilities (where feasible) in landscaped environment



Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS

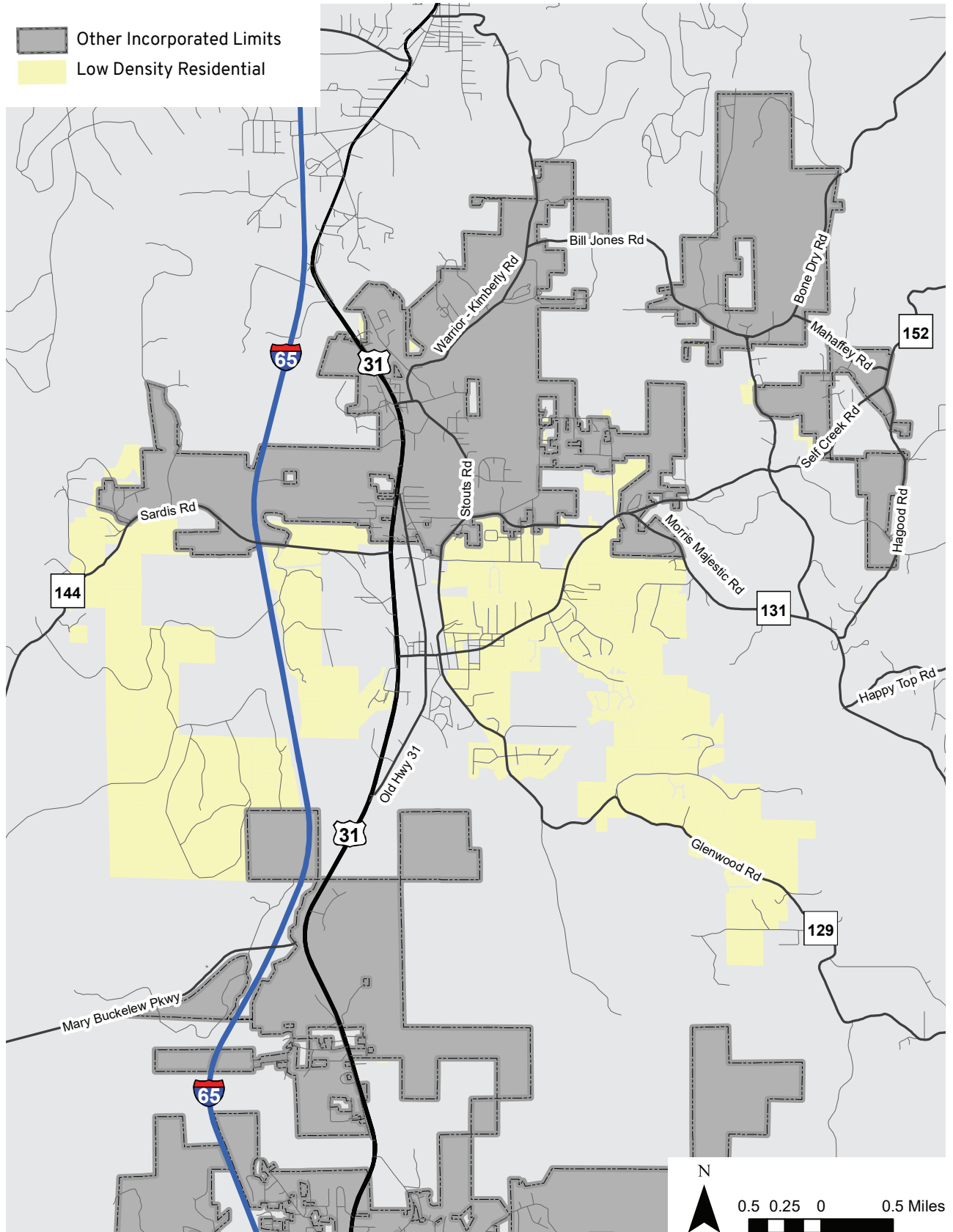


Source: Greater Birmingham MLS



Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS

Figure 4.3: Future Land Use Map - Low Density Residential



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Medium Density Residential

The Medium Density residential category applies to areas that offer slightly higher densities and smaller lots than their Low-Density counterparts. Single family detached homes, moderate setbacks and lot sizes, wide streets, cul-de-sacs, and limited connectivity characterize these areas. While existing subdivisions may not provide adequate connectivity, future development in these areas should provide for connections to adjacent neighborhoods. In the future, new development should be planned with a mix of uses, blending development with schools, parks, recreation, retail, and services linked in a compact pattern that encourages walking.

Primary Land Uses

Single-family detached residences, garden homes, townhomes, duplexes, multiple family dwellings (apartments or condominiums), manufactured homes, senior living facilities, cluster homes

Secondary Land Uses

Customary accessory structures and buildings, public utility services, community gardens, pocket parks, common open spaces, civic and institutional uses, home occupations

Related Zoning Districts

- R-3 Single Family Residential District
- R-P Planned Unit Development

General Characteristics

- The Medium Density Residential category is similar in character to the Low Density Residential category but accommodates slightly higher densities on smaller lots
- Individual lots are uniform in size (either rectangular or irregular in shape)
- Buildings typically are in the center of lots with regular front and side yard setbacks
- Streets have a narrow to moderate cross section. Sidewalks in new developments are encouraged on at least one side of the street and may connect common open spaces
- If new multiple-family dwelling developments are built, the buildings should face an internal area with a circulation network of roads and common green space, surrounded by landscaping or open space along the edges of the developments to act as a buffer



Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS

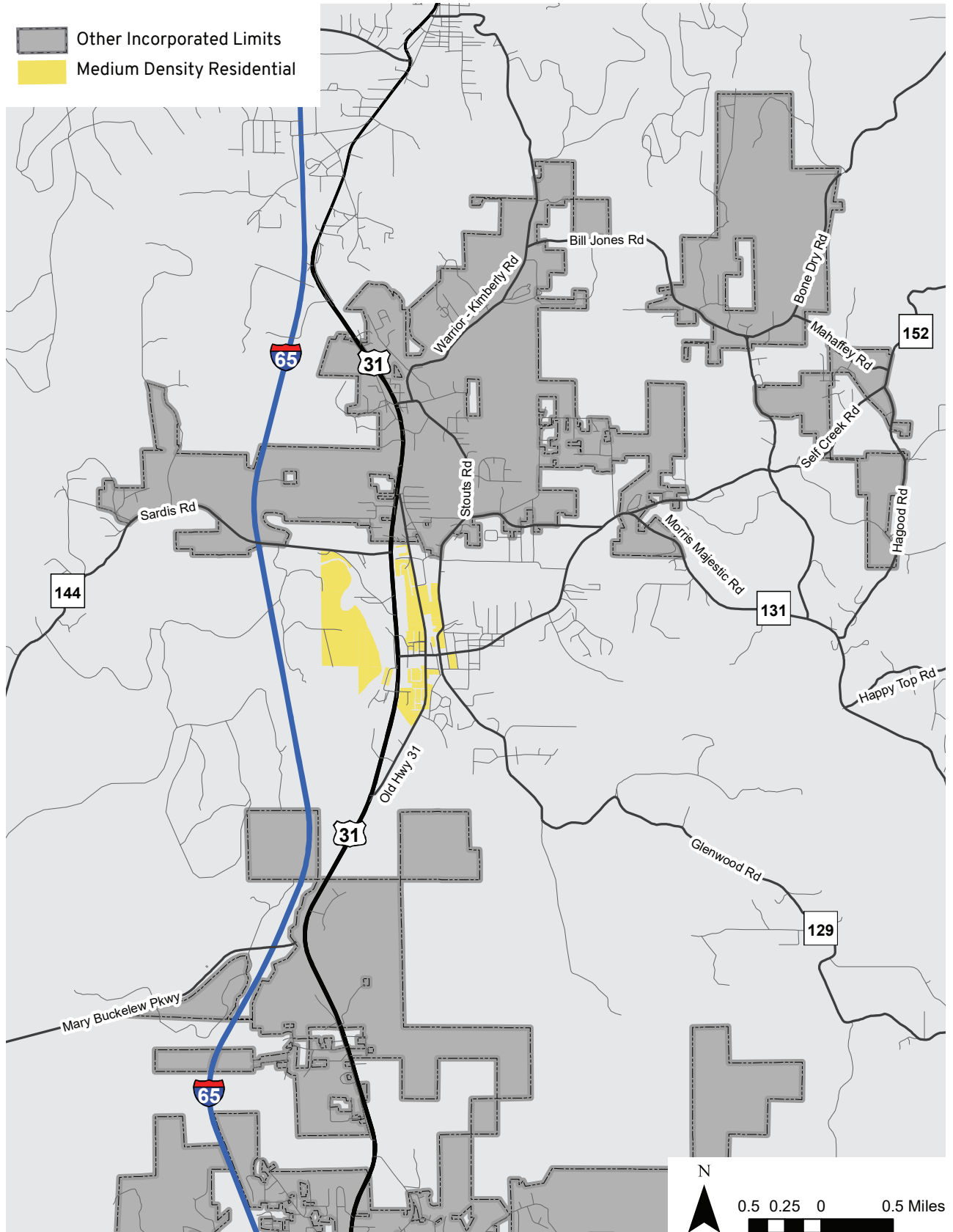


Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS



Image Credit: Re/Max Metro Atlanta

Figure 4.4: Future Land Use Map - Medium Density Residential



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

General Commercial

The General Commercial category applies to areas along major thoroughfares, such as U.S. Highway 31, that serve the day-to-day commercial needs of surrounding neighborhoods, or that serve as regional commercial areas, drawing from a service area of five miles or more, depending on the actual use. The category includes general retail and service uses, such as those in the food, hospitality, medical, and automotive service industries, as well as office spaces. These uses generate high volumes of vehicle trips, so highway access should be carefully managed so as not to impede traffic operations or preclude pedestrian circulation.

In the future, existing commercial lands may need to be renovated to be more aesthetically appealing and, therefore, more marketable to prospective tenants by building new commercial structures to front the street, taking a portion of the parking lot and creating a shopping square. Moreover, facades can be improved with new architectural elements and awnings. Where appropriate, pedestrian amenities should be provided.

Primary Land Uses

Commercial /service shops, retail, banks, offices, restaurants, grocery / food stores, hotels / motels

Secondary Land Uses

Entertainment venues, repair shops

Related Zoning Districts

- C-R Commercial Recreation District
- C-1 Restricted Commercial District
- C-2 General Commercial District
- C-3 Special Commercial District

General Characteristics

- Commercial uses exist to serve the daily commercial needs of the City's population
- Some commercial uses with larger trade areas will attract customers from the surrounding area
- Shared and joint access points and pedestrian amenities should be considered for accessibility between adjacent land uses
- High degree of access to the site by vehicular traffic
- Integrate stormwater management facilities (where feasible) in landscaped environment



Image Credit: Bannett Group

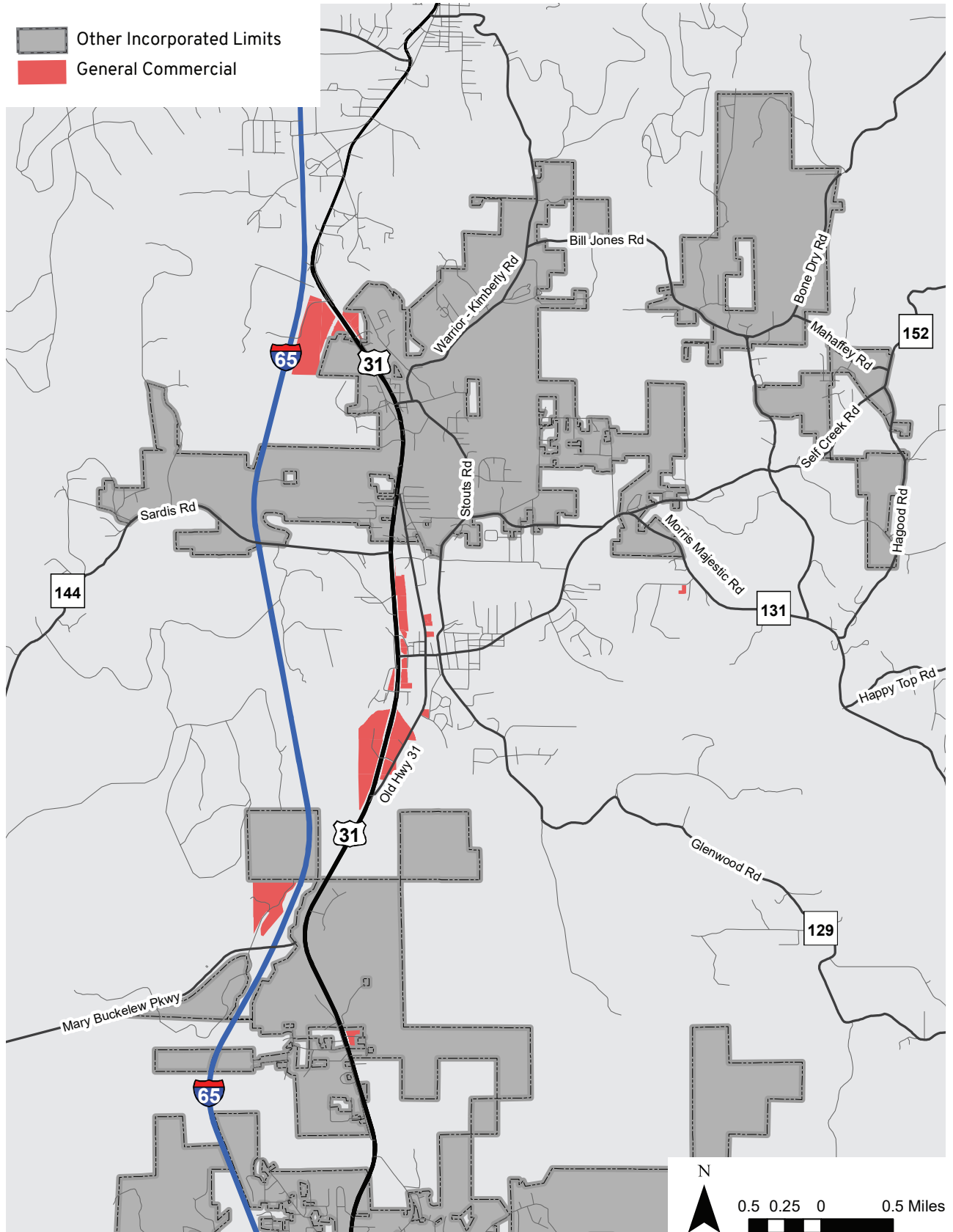


Image Credit: Wall Street Journal



Image Credit: RPCGB

Figure 4.5: Future Land Use Map - General Commercial



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Neighborhood Center

The Neighborhood Center category is intended to provide an integrated mix of commercial, retail, residential, civic and institutional land uses within a pedestrian oriented environment. The goal is to promote the great potential of establishing an attractive, vibrant, mixed-use downtown in Morris around the main intersection of Morris Majestic Road, Banks Road, and Stouts Road. Already located in the Downtown area are most of the City’s community facilities – City Hall, Post Office, Senior Center, Police Station, Fire Department, and places of worship – as well as several businesses. Currently, businesses and community buildings are spread apart, but by using vacant properties between them to “infill” develop new businesses, the community can create a downtown in which a resident or visitor can park and walk from place to place.

Primary Land Uses

Commercial, retail, offices, restaurants, civic and institutional buildings

Secondary Land Uses

Residential uses

Related Zoning Districts

- C-R Commercial Recreation District
- C-1 Restricted Commercial District
- C-2 General Commercial District
- C-3 Special Commercial District
- Light industrial uses that would allow the desired types of uses
- Residential districts that would allow the desired types of uses
- A Mixed-Use District, if adopted in the future into the Morris Zoning Ordinance, would be the most appropriate

General Characteristics

- Intended to allow small-scale, mixed-use development
- Ideal location for various types of commercial, residential, civic and institutional infill development
- Should allow for any future new development in mixed use buildings that might feature ground-floor retail, service, and office uses, with opportunities for office and residential uses in upper floors.
- Sidewalks should be built with new developments and infill developments to promote pedestrian walkability



Image Credit: Southern Land Company

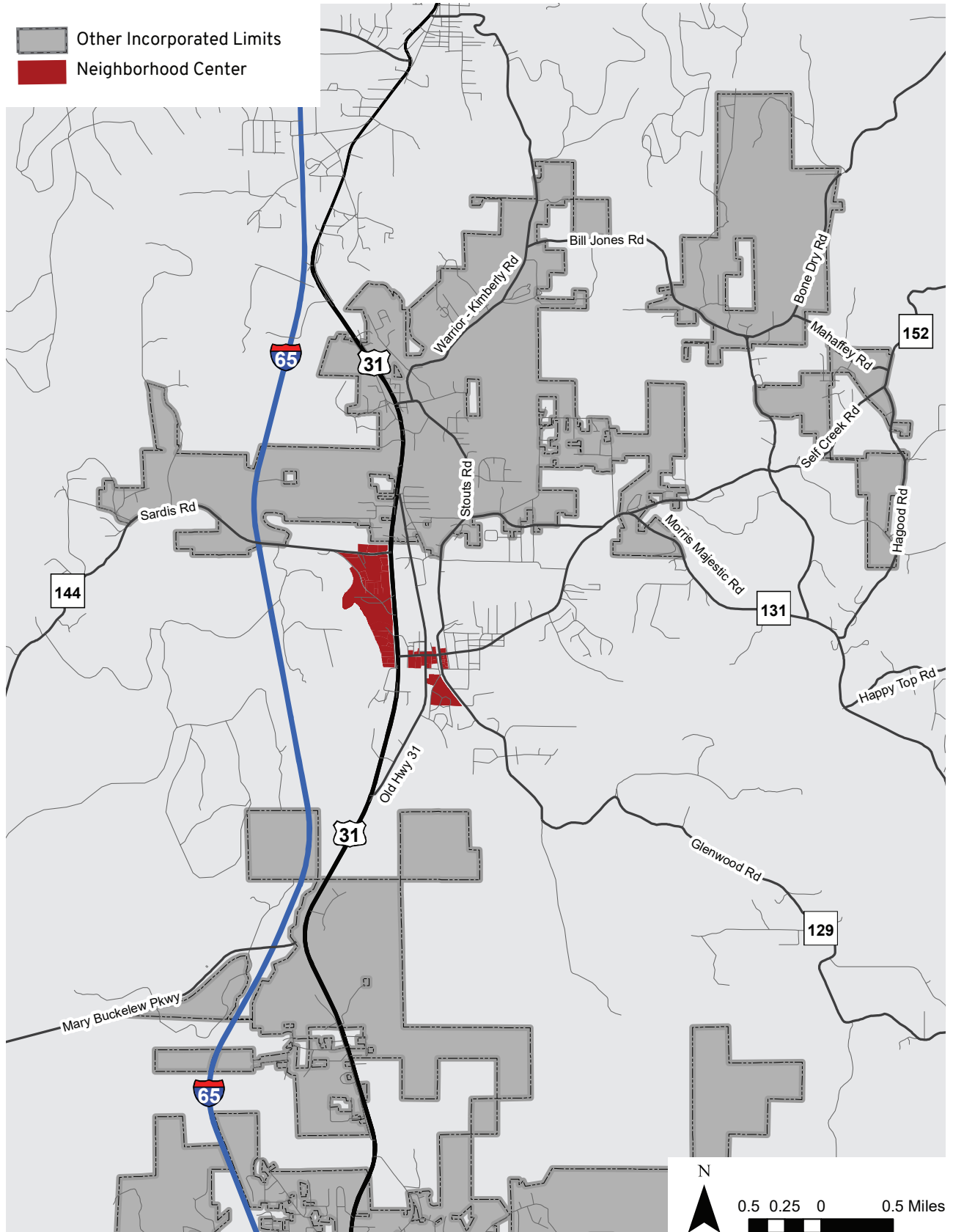


Image Credit: McMillan Pazdan Smith Architecture



Image Credit: Dix.Hite and Partners

Figure 4.6: Future Land Use Map - Neighborhood Center



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Light Industrial

The Light Industrial category is intended for lower intensity industrial uses that require a finished product consisting of small machine parts or electronic equipment, the manufacturing or assembling of small products within a business, and elements of wholesale and storage of products in a manner and character that does not create significant negative impacts to the environment or surrounding area. The category also encourages employment centers with a low degree of environmental impact.

New light industrial uses should be developed or, where possible, retrofitted as a part of a planned industrial park having adequate water, sewer, stormwater, and transportation and telecommunication infrastructure for all component uses at build-out.

Primary Land Uses

Light manufacturing, general industrial uses, logistics operations, industrial parks, warehousing, wholesaling, distribution, research laboratories and other limited impact activities

Secondary Land Uses

Supporting commercial, office and institutional uses

Appropriate Zoning Districts

- I-1 Light Industrial District

Design Principles

- Intensity: Low

Transportation

- Medium vehicular connectivity
- High volume of truck traffic
- Low pedestrian connectivity

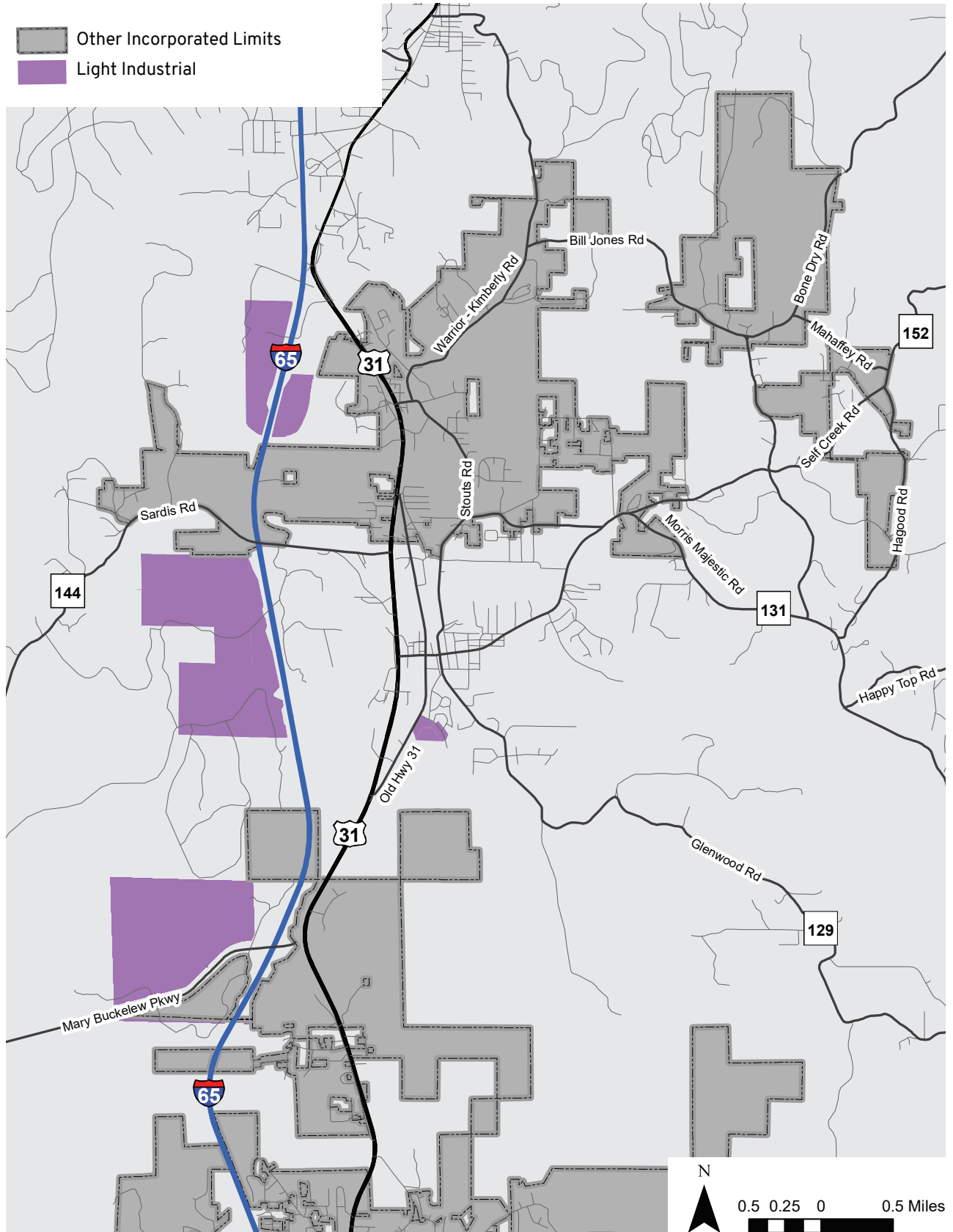


Image Credit: Loop Net



Image Credit: Jeffrey Sauers

Figure 4.7: Future Land Use Map - Light Industrial



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Civic and Institutional

The Civic and Institutional category applies to both public and privately owned or operated institutional and civic uses and lands. The category applies to existing and future public, civic, educational, religious, and utility uses, as well as medical clinics and cemeteries. These areas exist to provide necessary community services to residents and business alike. New institutional and civic uses should be located in high visibility places where access is suitable and adjacent land uses are compatible.

Primary Land Uses

Civic and government buildings, places of worship, cemeteries, community facilities, fire stations, police stations, schools, community centers, libraries

Secondary Land Uses

Childcare facilities, medical clinics, senior living facilities, parks and recreation, public utilities

Related Zoning Districts

- INST-I Institutional District
- INST-II Institutional District
- CEM Cemetery District

General Characteristics

- Intended to serve residential areas and the community as a whole. The uses can be publicly or privately owned
- As new opportunities to develop civic and institutional buildings arise, design that is complementary of surrounding land uses is encouraged
- The intensity of new institutional development should be determined based on use and location with consideration of surrounding land uses and neighborhoods
- Additional parking may be necessary for community or recreation centers that will frequently host a large number of people, and pedestrian access is encouraged where feasible



Image Credit: City of Morris

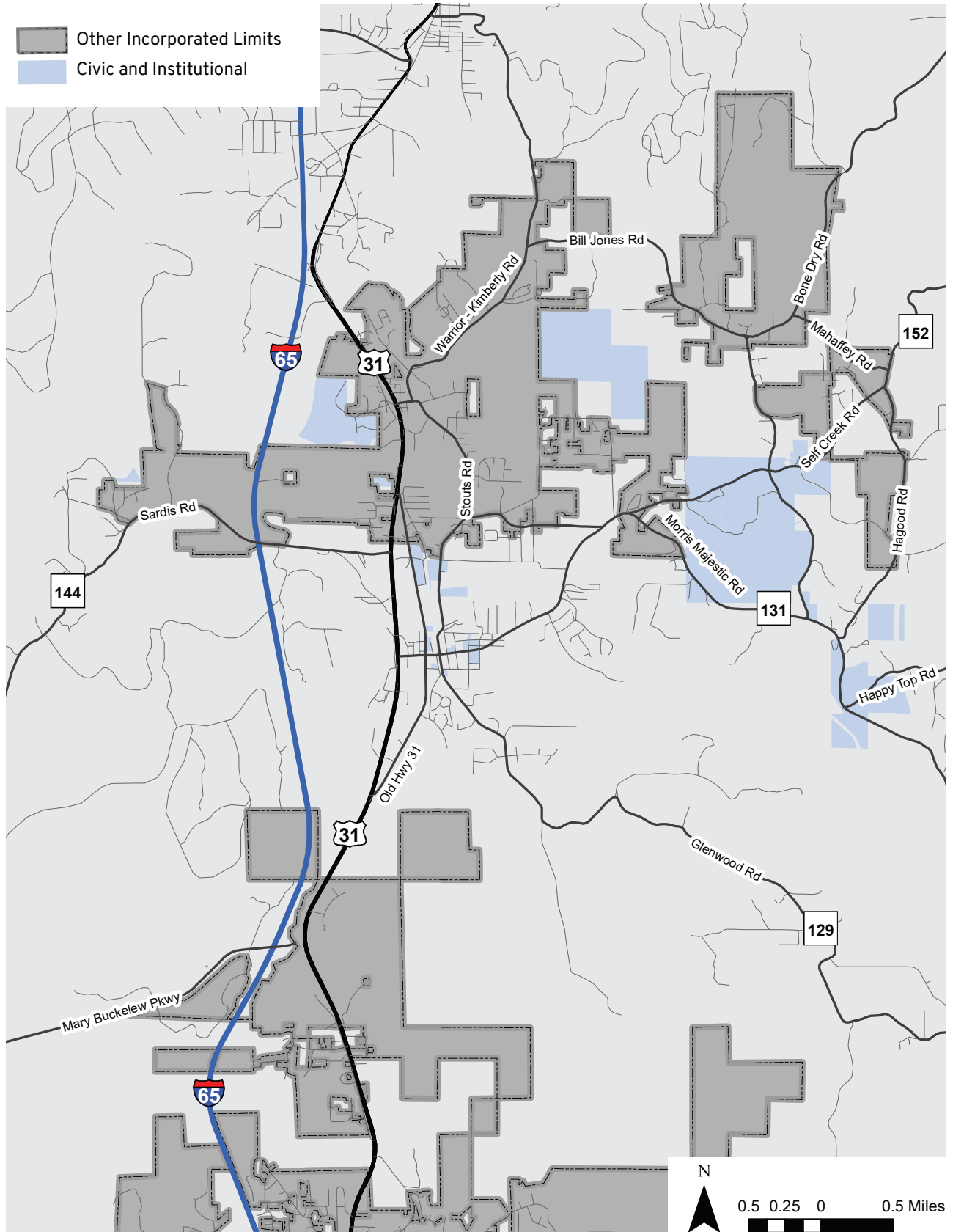


Image Credit: City of Morris



Image Credit: Jefferson County Schools

Figure 4.8: Future Land Use Map - Civic and Institutional



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space category applies to existing parks, sports fields, and golf courses, as well as areas designated for future parks and recreation or open space areas. These areas, whether publicly, semi-publicly or privately owned, are considered important natural resources and recreational amenities. They exist not only to provide sports and recreational outlets to residents, but also to preserve precious green space as Morris continues to develop.

The City’s most important natural resources and scenic locations should be reserved for open space, greenways, parks or simply conservation areas. These areas should be linked together to the extent possible into a city-wide open space system. Structures that support recreational uses (e.g., gazebos, pavilions, restrooms, snack bars, etc.) are appropriate in these areas, provided the primary land use remains green space and recreation.

Primary Land Uses

Sports fields, playgrounds, golf courses, active and passive parks, nature preserve, multi-use trails

Secondary Land Uses

Restrooms, parking lots, accessory structures

Related Zoning Districts

- INST-I Institutional District
- U-P Present Use District

General Characteristics

- Open Space areas should be promoted for passive uses, tourism, and passive recreation destinations.
- Park areas should include basic amenities such as pedestrian-scale lighting, walkways, seating, garbage receptacles, etc.
- Safe pedestrian connections from residential areas with a half mile of parks should be prioritized where they do not exist today
- Parks should be designed for multi-purposes and be flexible for a wide variety of uses and activities
- Multi-use trails should connect to activity areas such as parks, neighborhoods, and civic/ institutional uses
- Incorporate and preserve natural features, including drainage, habitats, hills, etc.



Image Credit: City of Mountain Brook

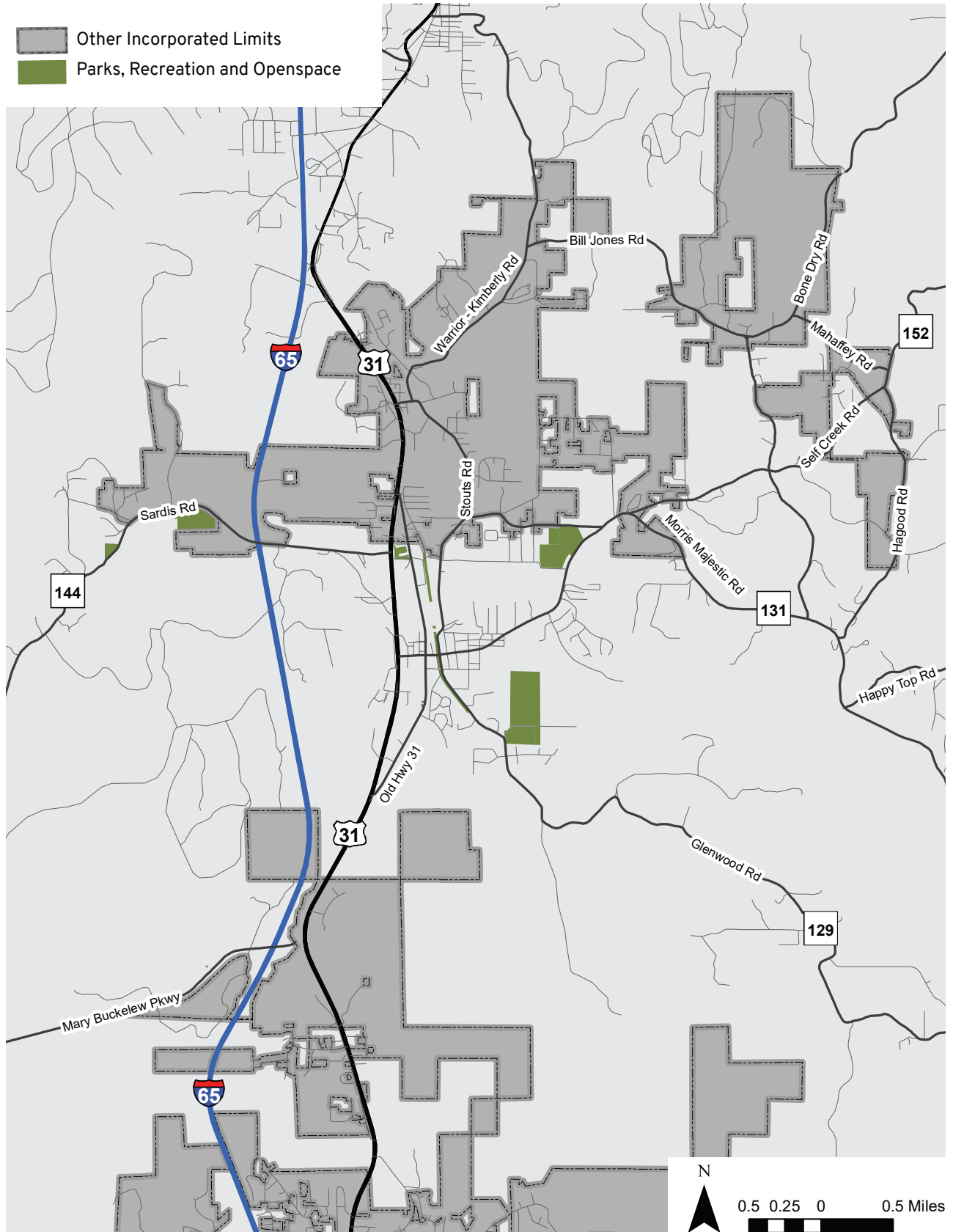


Image Credit: City of Raleigh



Image Credit: City of Chelsea

Figure 4.9: Future Land Use Map - Parks, Recreation and Open Space



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Evaluating Zoning Proposals for Consistency with the Future Land Use Map and Master Plan

The categories employed in the Future Land Use Map should not be interpreted to support or preclude developments without consideration of the policies and intent of the Master Plan. Site considerations relating to topography, soils, conservation resources, or hydrology are also important in establishing the specific use and intensity of a particular parcel. Similarly, the presence or absence of adequate streets, schools, parks, and other community facilities should be considered before a development is approved that would otherwise be in conformance with the Future Land Use Map. Determination of the consistency of a proposed use or zone with the Master Plan should include consideration of the following questions:

1. Is the proposal consistent with the themes and policies contained in the Master Plan?
2. Is the form and function of the proposed development appropriate for its category designated on the Future Land Use Map?
3. Will community facilities, parks, pedestrian connections, and other infrastructure be available at the appropriate levels to serve the development as proposed?

Relationship Between the Future Land Use Map and Zoning

The Future Land Use Map expresses the community's vision for how they want to see Morris develop over time. It is a policy map, not a regulatory map. It does not replace the City's zoning map. The Future Land Use Map and the descriptions of each Future Land Use category are intended guide decisions on zoning amendments by the Planning and Zoning Board and City Council. The Planning and Zoning Board and Council should refer to the Future Land Use Map whenever they evaluate a proposed rezoning or new development. If the proposal is consistent with the Future Land Use Map, then they should approve it; if it is not, then they should evaluate other alternatives. The Future Land Use Map is not a static map, however; it can and should be periodically updated to reflect changes in real conditions and community preferences.

The designation of an area to a specific category on the Future Land Use Map does not mean that one particular zoning classification is recommended. Rather, a range of zoning districts are appropriate for each Future Land Use category, as seen in **Table 4.1**. The table can be used to evaluate the consistency of zoning proposals with the Future Land Use Map. If a particular zoning district is appropriate within a Future Land Use category, then it will be shaded in green. If it is an inappropriate zoning district for that category, then it is left blank.

Table 4.1: Appropriate Zoning Districts for Each Future Land Use Category

| Related Zoning Districts | Future Land Use Category | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| | Agriculture and Rural Residential | Parks and Protected Open space | Low Density Residential | Medium Density Residential | General Commercial | Neighborhood Center | Institutional and Civic | Light Industrial |
| R-1 | | * | | | | | | |
| R-2 | | * | | | | | | |
| R-3 | | * | | | | | | |
| R-P | | * | | | | | | |
| R-R | | * | | | | | | |
| A-1 | | | | | | | | |
| INST-1 | | | | | | | | |
| INST-2 | | | | | | | | |
| CEM | | | | | | | | |
| U-1 | | | | | | | | |
| U-P | | | | | | | | |
| C-R | | | | | | | | |
| C-1 | | | | | | | | |
| C-2 | | | | | | | | |
| C-3 | | | | | | | | |
| I-1 | | | | | | | | |
| I-2 | | | | | | | | |
| I-3 | | | | | | | | |
| MXD (NEW)- | | * | | | | | | |

* Parks and protected open spaces shall be secondary uses in residential and mixed-use areas

“We must accommodate this influx of residents, but in the right manner”

– Morris resident



Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS

The influx of newcomers since 2000, drawn by the prospect of affordable homes, quality schools and a low cost of living, has left its mark on the city’s existing land use. New subdivisions and commercial developments have steadily replaced timberland and pastureland. Residential land uses account for 44% of the City’s total land area and 56% of the City’s developed land. Many of these new developments, however, are located far away from the city’s downtown walkable core and contribute to a growing pattern of automobile-dependent lifestyles.

During the public involvement process of this Plan, Morris residents expressed that they want their community to be more than just masses of homogenous subdivisions that are indistinguishable from each other, and they want managed growth.

With limited land left to be developed, yet ample land that could be redeveloped, Morris has an opportunity to encourage more sustainable land uses and can proactively shape the nature of new development to ensure it accomplishes broader community goals such as walkability, connectivity, and sustainability.

Goal #1

Encourage sustainable long-term development patterns.



Action 1

Enhance and revitalize Downtown Morris as the heart of the community.

Downtown Morris is already the heart of the City, and continued improvements and investments to this area can encourage additional growth that can have a direct and positive impact on the community. The Downtown area is currently home to most of the City’s municipal offices, businesses, and existing and planned parks, and is also adjacent to new walkable residential areas.

However, the downtown area is also home to several vacant lots. The result in a “missing teeth” effect, whereby vacant lots between successful businesses and other uses appear as large gaps between teeth. This detracts from the appearance of these existing uses and can depress the foot and vehicular traffic that so many businesses rely on. By incentivizing infill development and redevelopment, as well as encouraging new businesses to locate in the downtown area, the City can begin to fill these gaps. For more information about infill development and redevelopment, please see **Action 1.4** in this chapter.

The City should also address the physical appearance of existing uses, some of which would benefit from refreshing their exteriors. Developing a façade improvement program can also catalyze positive change and additional downtown investments. For more information, please see **Catalytic Project Idea #4 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas**.

Finally, to continue drawing people to the downtown area, the City should consider land use and programmatic decisions that support a greater variety of activities downtown. For more information, please see **Catalytic Project Ideas #3 and #9 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas**.



Action 2

Encourage mixed-use development in the Downtown area and along Morris Majestic Road.

Mixed-use development would allow residents and visitors to do more than one thing at a given location. These uses support each other and keep users from having to make multiple automobile-based trips. A key concept of this Master Plan is to encourage mixed-use development that is compact, diverse and walkable and that enhances character and form through appropriate design. The concept of mixed-use development:

- Encourages the construction of mixed-use centers and/or buildings that combine restaurants, offices, housing, live-work spaces, civic buildings, cultural buildings and other complementary uses arranged in an environment that is convenient for customers, employees, residents and tourists
- Promotes new infill residential and non-residential development
- Promotes site design that accommodates and enhances pedestrian activity along the street, that is not dominated by parking and that reduces conflicts between pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles
- Provides unique places for people to live, work, shop, play and learn
- Encourages appropriate transitions between higher-intensity uses and adjacent lower-density residential districts

Mixed-use development should be encouraged in Downtown Morris. The rehabilitation and re-use of existing historic and/or older buildings and structures should allow upper-



story dwellings in mixed-use buildings. New mixed-use development should include public amenities such as a pedestrian plazas, sidewalks, and landscaping that help to create a walkable and cohesive development.



Action 3

Ensure future developments improve pedestrian, bicyclist and vehicular connectivity.

Poor connectivity – the lack of convenient points of access within and between neighborhoods - makes walking and bicycling inconvenient and dangerous, and further forces Morris residents to rely on a car for even the most basic trip. New development proposals should provide a high degree of pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicular access within the development itself and between adjoining neighborhoods. Excessive cul-de-sacs and long blocks should be discouraged, while sidewalks, intersections, and street stubs that enable connections to future adjacent developments should be promoted.



Action 4

Encourage and incentivize infill development and redevelopment.

Infill development occurs in a pre-built area, often using vacant land or underutilized sites (such as parking lots) and involves the reconstruction of existing buildings. Infill development can utilize existing infrastructure and can reduce the need to expand expensive types of infrastructure such as sewer and water lines, roads, and public services.

The term “redevelopment” describes converting an existing built property into another use.

The following are some strategies and incentives that can be utilized by the City of Morris:

- Develop and maintain an inventory of vacant and buildable land. Such available properties might include those identified as tax delinquent
- Providing property tax exemptions, credits, or

abatements to developers conducting infill development and making developers aware of State programs that offer these incentives

- Leverage available federal funding programs for redevelopment such as CDBG, New Market tax credits, HUD loan programs, EDA programs, and other funding sources to provide additional resources for a variety of projects
- Waiving certain development or permit fees
- Streamlining the approval/permitting process
- Making amendments to adopted building and fire codes if they are making the redevelopment of properties become more challenging and costly to bring “up-to-code”
- Consider adopting an adaptive reuse ordinance (See **Action 3.3 in Chapter 6: Planning Development and Regulations**)



Action 5

Concentrate commercial development around major intersections and discourage additional highway strip development.

The U.S. Highway 31 corridor is one of the most prosperous commercial corridors in the region, providing a variety of goods and services along its entire stretch through the Birmingham metropolitan area. However, this prosperity has come with increased traffic congestion that poses a burden to residents, visitors, and businesses. That congestion is in large part attributable to poor land use planning. As businesses sprawled out along the highway and filled every gap with new structures, the addition of so many driveway cuts has impeded traffic flow and has created dangerous conflict points.

Prosperity and congestion can be decoupled by discouraging typical highway strip development and encouraging more sound land use decisions. The City of Morris is encouraged to allow future commercial development in distinct nodes at major road intersections that are served by well-phased traffic signals, rather than allowing the highway to be overrun by non-descript strip malls and parking lots. By clustering development into nodes, the City can encourage more attractive development

aesthetics, can more efficiently utilize its precious highway frontage, and can preserve traffic operations along U.S. Highway 31.



Action 6

Preserve and protect existing residential and agricultural areas from adjacent development.

Morris residents frequently expressed their love for the City’s small-town feel, including its residential areas and working agricultural land. Preserving and protecting these open spaces and established residential areas is also in line with planning best practices, which recognize that different densities are appropriate in different areas of the City. According to Smart Growth principles, development should naturally “step down” or decrease in intensity as it radiates outward from a “Downtown / Urban Core” area to higher intensity residential areas, to lower intensity residential areas, and finally to rural areas and then natural areas.

In Morris, this means encouraging relatively higher densities in the Downtown area and in the residential neighborhoods that are adjacent to the Downtown area, while protecting existing agricultural and rural residential areas from the impacts of future development. To ensure that current and future residents can enjoy their neighborhoods, these areas should be protected from future adjacent development to maintain residents’ quality of life. This can in large part be accomplished by directing future development elsewhere in the City, as this Plan suggests. Residential areas can also benefit from appropriate buffers. The City should ensure that appropriate buffer space, such as undeveloped open space and woods, remains between residential areas and any future development.



Action 7

Allow new development in undeveloped areas only when adequate infrastructure and public facilities are in place to accommodate growth and then only at a context and scale appropriate to the locale.

This Master Plan encourages new development to minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land in the rural areas of Morris and to maximize the use of existing infrastructure. Growth should not put existing neighborhoods at undue risk of change and should occur where there is adequate existing infrastructure and public facilities to accommodate it (such as roads, water, sewer, fire protection, etc.). By encouraging development in existing areas, the City can benefit from a stronger tax base, closer proximity of homes to services and jobs, increased efficiency of already developed land and infrastructure, and the preservation of prime farmland and open space.



Action 8

Adopt appropriate policies and regulations to protect prime farmlands, steep slopes, waterways, and scenic areas from inadvertent damage due to future development / construction.

Morris's small-town character is cherished by its residents. The City should make certain that future development is sensitive to the natural topography, views, drainage patterns, existing vegetation, and agricultural elements that define this character. The City should encourage developments that are sensitive to the natural landforms and that maintain scenic vistas and natural drainage patterns. Proposals involving massive cut and fill alterations that modify the visual character of the area should be avoided. The City should also ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made to preserve and incorporate existing trees into future development plans.



Action 9

Promote the use of conservation easements.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land to protect its conservation values. It allows the property owner to continue to own and use the land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs. When a property owner donates a conservation easement to a land trust, they give up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, some owners might give up the right to build additional structures, while retaining the right to grow crops. Future owners also will be bound by the easement's terms. The land trust is responsible for making sure the easement's terms are followed.

Conservation easements offer great flexibility. An easement on property containing rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development, for example, while one on a farm might allow continued farming and the building of additional agricultural structures. An easement may apply to just a portion of the property and need not require public access.

A landowner sometimes sells a conservation easement, but usually easements are donated. If the donation benefits the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation. The amount of the donation is the difference between the land's value with the easement and its value without the easement, but it is important to note that placing an easement on a property may or may not result in property tax savings.

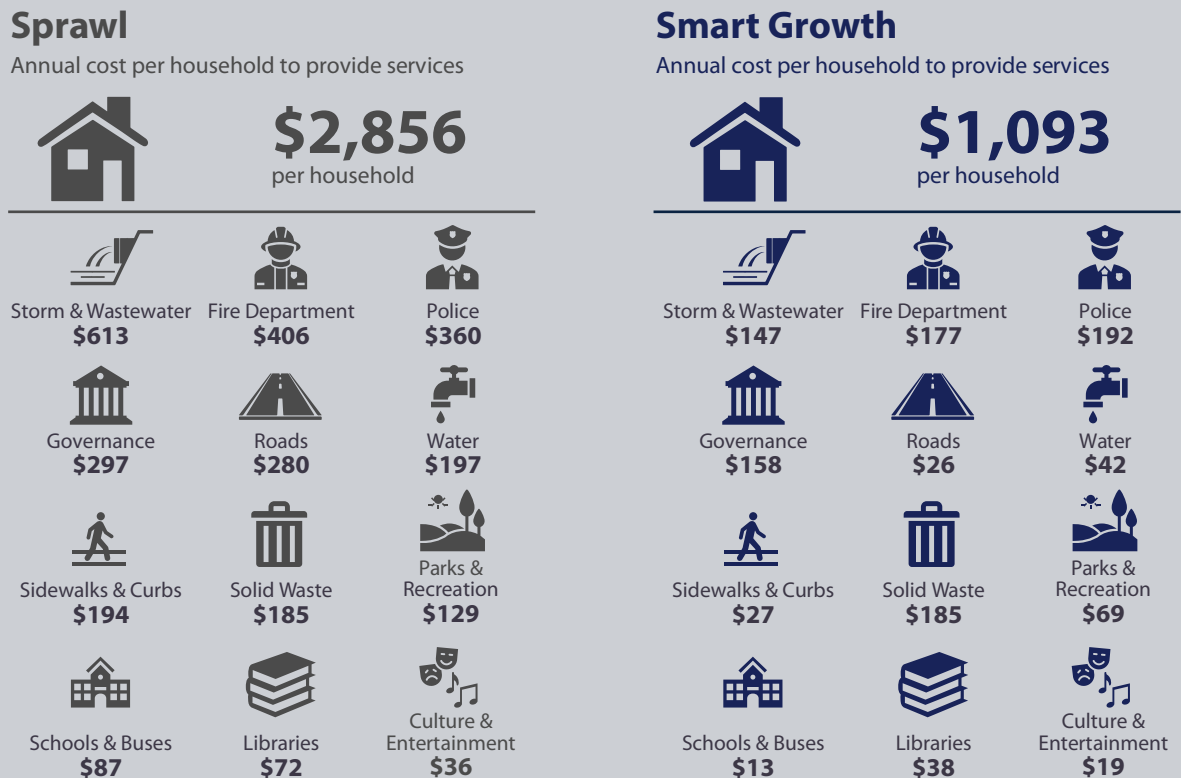
A conservation easement can be essential for passing land on to the next generation. By removing the land's development potential, the easement lowers its market value, which in turn lowers estate tax. Whether the easement is donated during life or by will, it can make a critical difference in conservation efforts. (Source: www.freshwaterlandtrust.org)

COUNTING THE COST – SUBURBAN SPRAWL VS. SMART GROWTH

All Morris residents are familiar with suburban sprawl – low density, automobile dependent, disconnected subdivisions that spread endlessly outward, consuming land and resources. It is the dominant form of suburban development, including some areas of Morris and much of the broader region, because it is typically the cheapest form to build. It is not, however, the cheapest form to sustain. Sprawling, disconnected subdivisions create artificially high traffic congestion by forcing all motorists onto the same few roads, increasing travel times and fuel consumption per resident. More importantly, however sprawl costs a lot of money to extend and provide City services. It costs more money to repair a street or a water pipe that connects four homes spread over eight acres than four homes spread over one acre. Police and fire protection must travel greater distances to reach the same amount of people, exacerbating safety issues. Buses must travel farther and longer to reach the same amount of students. Over time, the cost of maintaining these far-flung services can push even the most responsible public entities into insolvency.

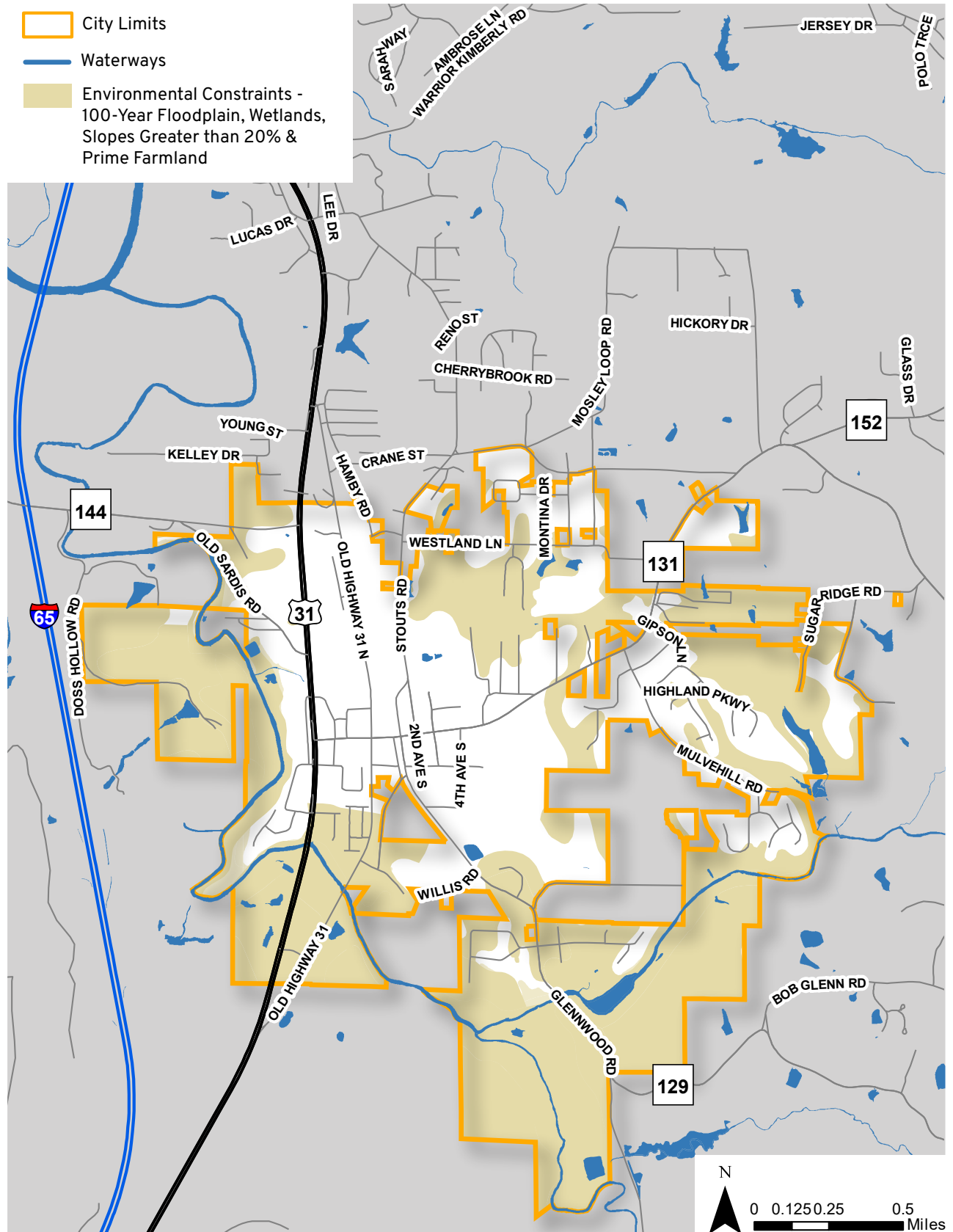
Smart growth, by contrast, describes development that encourages a mix of building types and uses, diverse housing and transportation options, and development within existing neighborhoods rather than in undeveloped areas. Smart growth takes advantage of compact design to create walkable, enduring neighborhoods that preserve open space and rural land. It creates distinctive, attractive neighborhoods with a strong sense of place that accommodate residents of all ages and backgrounds. It is also cheaper than conventional development – smart growth reduces annual public services per household by almost 10%. The keys to smart growth include directing development towards the community core where they can utilize existing community infrastructure, and using compact design that encourages walking and lowers municipal service costs per household. Smart growth helps the City satisfy development demand without excessive long-term infrastructure obligations. *Morris is here for the long haul; it should invest in development patterns that it can afford to maintain for a long time.*

Figure 4.10: Comparison of Selected Costs to Service Sprawl vs. Smart Growth



Source: Adapted from Halifax Regional Municipality

Figure 4.11: Environmental Constraints



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB



Action 10

Develop and adopt an annexation policy.

Annexation brings land and people fully into a municipality. The municipality benefits by gaining a larger tax base and greater land use controls, and annexation ensures new quality development that is consistent with existing community character, while also protecting rural and sensitive natural land from intensive development. Future residents whose land will be annexed gain full involvement in the local government process and benefit from the provision of municipal services, such as sewer, water, public safety, trash removal, and others.

It is recommended that the City of Morris develop and adopt a strategic annexation policy to guide future annexation decisions in a coherent manner. An annexation policy may be a stand-alone City policy that is adopted by the City Council and lays out priorities and conditions.

An annexation policy can guide municipal annexation in many ways, including setting annexation priorities. Factors to consider include:

- Desired direction of growth
- Current and future land uses in adjacent areas already within the city limits
- True costs of extending full municipal services, including a level-of-service review
- Degree to which annexation enhances the future tax base

Alabama Code of Law Section 11-42-2 gives guidance about annexation proceedings. The two primary methods for annexation that would be most likely to be used by Morris are:

- **Annexation by election:** This is where the City will seek interested property owners to sign a petition, to build an annexation map to identify the areas that are interested and want to be included in the annexation by election. Once the area is determined, and the petition is signed, the petition will be handed to the probate judge, who will go through the legal process to set up an annexation by election. Each voter included in the map will be eligible

to vote, for or against the annexation of the area; or

- **Petition to the Morris City Council** by a majority of adjacent property owners seeking to annex into the City - the land must be contiguous to the City's existing corporate limits.

Figure 4.12 illustrates parcels that may be appropriate for annexation. An example annexation policy is outlined in the callout box on **page 98**.

Benefits of Annexation into Morris

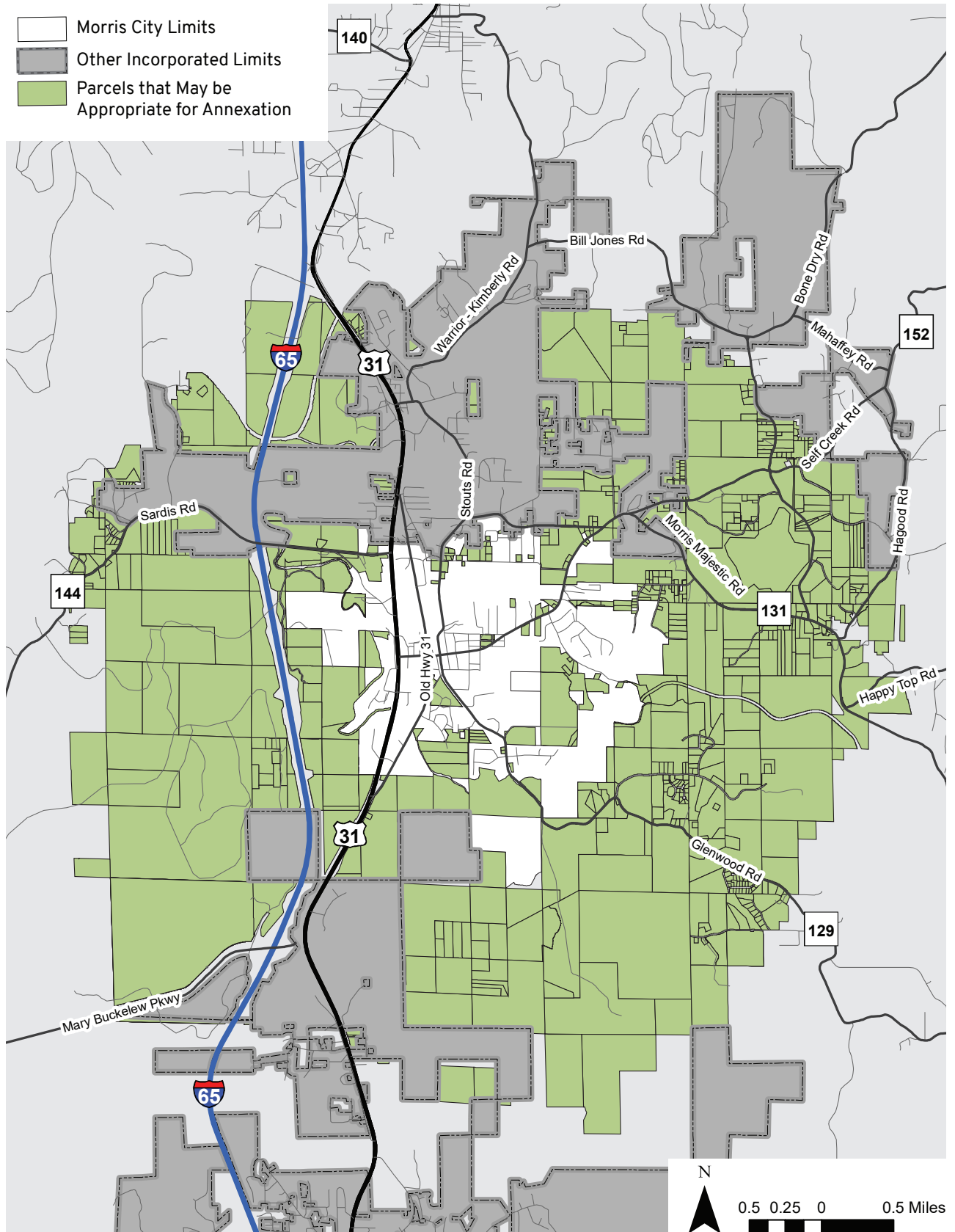
The City of Morris is encouraged to tout the benefits of annexation to those living on near-by unincorporated land. People may realize that Morris stands to benefit from annexation, as the City may gain additional property tax revenue and efficiencies associated with solidifying the municipal borders. But is it widely known that annexing into Morris offers benefits to future residents as well?

The City could start disseminating this information in a variety of ways, such as posting on its website or creating an informational packet. The messaging should be consistent and should describe how future residents stand to benefit from annexation, including:

- Access to municipal services, such as police and fire and rescue department coverage
- Access to municipal facilities, such as the Morris Community Senior Center and the city parks
- How the City's zoning and land use controls can protect their property from adjacent undesired land use types
- How their address will stay the same
- Highlights of proposed municipal capital improvements

In addition to highlighting all of these benefits, the promotional information should note that residents' tax dollars lead to tangible improvements in quality of life.

Figure 4.12: Parcels that May be Appropriate for Annexation



Source: City of Morris and RPCGB

Sample Annexation Policy

I. PURPOSE.

To establish the City's official policy position when considering future petitions for annexation or City referenda for annexation.

II. POLICY.

- The City will only approve annexation which would result in a demonstrable advantage to the City. Ensure consistency with the City's Master Plan.
- The City will consider each subdivision as a whole entity. No lots in a subdivision will be annexed without the annexation of the entire subdivision.
- Annexation petitions for territory eligible for annexation will be considered on a priority basis as follows:
 - Enclaves surrounded by the City's corporate limits.
 - Those areas which are already served by municipal services.
 - Those areas to which municipal services can be economically extended.
 - Those areas on which construction of undesirable land uses is imminent.
- Annexation conditions, such as:
 - Pre-zoning shall be required prior to annexation. Pre-zoning is proposed zoning that takes full effect upon annexation. This ensures that no land in the City is ever 'unzoned.' Pre-zoning in Alabama is only valid for 180 days, so this process should only begin when the annexation process begins. When developing pre-zoning, consider relevant factors such as this future land use plan and adjacent land uses.
 - The City shall require annexation as a condition of planning actions, such as subdivision plat approval, in the extraterritorial jurisdiction.
 - The City shall require annexation as a condition of extending municipal services into the extraterritorial jurisdiction.
- Annexed land shall receive an equal level of municipal services as other territory within the City's corporate limits.
- If a majority of subdivision residents wish to be annexed, they may file a petition with the City Clerk signed by a majority of property owners in the subdivision.
- The City Clerk will investigate such petitions in consultation with City staff and present a recommendation to the Mayor and City Council.
- If the City concurs by resolution, then the Mayor will certify a copy of such resolution to the judge of probate of the county where the land is situated. Said certified resolution shall have attached a plat or map of such area. The judge of probate will then hold an election. See Alabama Code of Law Section 11-42-2 for more information.

III. RESERVATION OF AUTHORITY.

The City reserves the authority to amend, modify or change this policy.

Goal #2

Encourage a wide range of housing types.



Action 1

Encourage the development of a variety of housing types for households of all configurations.

When it comes to housing, one size does not fit all. A healthy community accommodates a variety of people, backgrounds, and lifestyles, including first responders, managers, janitors, teachers, seniors or retirees, young professionals, and those living with disability. Today, homes in Morris are very affordable, but choices are limited. Nearly 40% of all homes in Morris are valued between \$100,000-\$200,000 and approximately 84% of the entire housing stock in Morris is composed of single-family homes. This lack of housing choices is a direct result of past market trends, flexible building practices, and existing zoning regulations. While the City cannot control the housing market, it can adopt modifications to the Zoning Ordinance (see **Action 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 in Chapter 6: Planning & Development Regulations**) to expand housing choices and improve the quality of housing being developed. In addition, a change from this dominant single-family development pattern will require the allocation of land for a diversity of housing choices, including estates, garden homes, townhomes, condos, live-work units, mixed-use buildings and others that cater to the preferences of all citizens.

Housing diversity offers the following benefits:

- **Economic development**– Diverse housing options at a variety of price points are critical to the local economy, as they improve the ability of businesses to recruit and retain employees that match their required skill sets.
- **Long-term economic stability** – Research has shown that communities with more variety in housing types have lower foreclosure rates in the long-run.¹ Like a diversified investment

portfolio, a community needs a broad range of housing choices in order to weather unpredictable economic cycles.

- **Accommodating our aging population**– As Morris’s proportion of senior citizens rises, so too will the demand for housing options that can accommodate them. Having a variety of housing choices that address a broad spectrum of income levels and lifestyle choices will allow Morris seniors to remain in their homes and keep contributing to their community.
- **Sustaining families** – Morris is a family-oriented community, and diverse housing options support the health and well-being of children and families. When housing needs are appropriately met, children are more likely to be healthy and perform well in school, and parents are more likely to participate in the workforce.



Action 2

Preserve rural areas throughout the city for estates and other large-lot residential developments.

During the public involvement phase associated with the Plan, Morris residents expressed a strong desire for additional estate and large lot single-family homes. When asked “Which housing types are needed most in Morris?”, survey respondents overwhelmingly (59%) selected large lot single-family homes. Morris is home to a wealth of undeveloped land, some of which should be preserved for this type of residential development. Today approximately 530 acres within Morris are undeveloped, accounting for almost 29% of the City’s land area. Of this, almost one quarter (24%) is developable, while the remainder is subject to one or more environmental constraints. While the **Future Land Use Map in Figure 4.1** recommends that much of Morris’ undeveloped land remain undeveloped, a portion that is suitable for development has been designated as low density residential, which includes estate homes and other large lot residential developments. This will complement the City’s existing housing stock and contribute to Morris’ semi-rural charm.

1: Chakroborty & McMillan, 2018. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0739456X18810787>

BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKFORCE HOUSING THAT FITS THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Many communities are seeking to diversify their housing stock as a way of attracting new residents from all walks of life. The concept of “workforce housing” in particular has gained traction. A stricter definition offered by the Urban Land Institute defines workforce housing as “housing that is affordable to households earning 60 to 120 percent of the area median income.”² In this context, affordable housing refers to total housing costs, including utilities, that do not exceed 30 to 40 percent of total income. This meaning has expanded to include ensuring the availability of housing for people whose careers provide invaluable services but whose earnings are typically middle-class. Teachers, firefighters, and nurses are common examples, as are the trades and service sector workers.

Housing Type

The concept of workforce housing is much more concerned with the provision of housing at certain price points than with the precise typologies these homes may fall into. A variety of home types may be affordable for middle-class residents, including:

- Single-family detached and attached
- Townhomes
- Duplexes, triples, and fourplexes
- Multiplex, typically with 5-8 units

In terms of weaving these homes into the neighborhood fabric, the form and bulk of each building can have a much larger effect than the number of units in the building. For example, many duplexes are built to look like a symmetrical single-family home. If the building itself is in keeping with the neighborhood character, then such homes can allow occupants the affordability of a two-family dwelling while integrating them into the larger community, while posing no threats to the aesthetics of the neighborhood.



Housing Location

Another component of workforce housing is location: ensuring that these homes are reasonably close to jobs, especially in communities that might otherwise be unaffordable to people with these careers. This is because transportation can be a significant monthly cost, especially for those with longer commute times. Urban sprawl is one factor contributing to long commute times and associated high transportation costs.

However in many cities, there are very few, if any, zoning districts where these different housing types can be built side-by-side. This makes it harder for these homes to be developed as infill and dispersed throughout the community. This relegates these developments to the periphery of the community, contributing to higher transportation costs. To alleviate this, cities can establish residential or mixed-use zoning districts where a variety of compatible housing types can be built near each other and near centers of employment.

*Housing typologies shown include:
Duplex (left and top of opposite page)
Triplex (center of opposite page)
Fourplex (bottom of opposite page)*





Action 3

Encourage traditional neighborhood developments that offer a variety of housing choices.

In order to help provide a variety of housing choices as discussed in FLU Action 1.5, the City should encourage traditional neighborhood developments that include a variety of home sizes, types, and densities. This can be accomplished either through creating a new Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) zoning district or the proposed Mixed-Use zoning district (see **Action 1.2 in Chapter 6: Planning & Development Regulations**). These zoning regulations can be effective methods for promoting walkable, sustainable neighborhoods that meet the needs of Morris's residents.

Traditional neighborhood development (TND) is a planning technique that replicates the enduring and historic development patterns found in American cities and applies these patterns to new development. Unlike conventional sprawling subdivisions, TNDs offer compact, pedestrian-friendly development with a mix of land uses that reduce reliance on the car. They accommodate all members of the community by including a variety of housing types and encouraging pedestrian movement with interconnected streets, thoughtful public spaces, and neighborhood-appropriate businesses. Their compact design requires less infrastructure per household, lowering future maintenance obligations on taxpayers. Development adhering to these principles can lead to vibrant, memorable neighborhoods that form the backbone of a community's life and identity.



Image Credit: The Birmingham News, Hal Yeager

Successful TNDs include the following design principles:

- A neighborhood center composed of a mix of commercial, residential, civic or institutional, and open space uses is within a ½ mile (10-minute walk) of the residential areas.
- A mix of residential land uses provides a variety of housing types for residents of various ages and socioeconomic levels. These may include single-family detached dwellings, duplexes, townhomes, multi-family dwellings, independent and assisted living facilities, and accessory dwelling units on single-family lots.
- The mix of uses should support the essential needs of immediate residents, including shops, offices, and restaurants.
- Buildings should front the street, creating a sense of place by framing the sidewalks with street trees and building walls.
- A system of relatively narrow, interconnected streets with sidewalks and bikeways that offer multiple routes for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists should provide for the connections of those streets to existing and future developments.
- Significant environmental features are incorporated into the design. These may include greenways / trails, protected natural areas, neighborhood or community parks, streams, ponds, and other water bodies, and stormwater detention / retention facilities.



Image Credit: Ronnie Pitman

GREEN SYSTEMS PRESERVATION TOOLBOX

Cities have a number of legal and administrative tools they can use to preserve the natural environment, address stormwater and flooding issues, and guide development in a sustainable fashion. The table below lists some of the tools available and the environmental issues that they address. Some of these tools, such as ordinances and overlay districts, are directly administered by a city. Others, such as conservation easements, are tools that property owners and non-profit land banks use to preserve land; cities would function in a support capacity by encouraging their use to interested land owners and helping them clear any administrative hurdles that may exist.

Morris officials may find that a number of these tools or solutions are needed to address an area of concern. Some options are more comprehensive

than others, and as such may require more up-front work, legal procedures, or planning. For example, both steep slopes ordinances and a mountain overlay districts address concerns due to erosion on higher elevations. An ordinance simply restricts development on grades over a certain percentage, making it relatively straight forward to administer. A mountain overlay district allows the City to incorporate the same regulations that a steep slopes ordinance would include, but it also would further allow the City to preserve scenic view sheds by incorporating aesthetic and density regulations that lie beyond the purview of a steep slopes ordinance. The City should use the table below to help guide decision making in determining what environmental regulations are most effective at [preserving the scenic and rural charm of Morris as well saving on future administrative and infrastructure costs.](#)

Table 4.1: Green Systems Preservation Toolbox

| Issue / Concern | Green Systems Tool | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| | Mountain Overlay District | Steep Slopes Ordinance | Conservation Subdivision | Conservation Easement | Low Impact Development Subdivision Regulations |
| Stormwater & flooding | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Erosion | ● | ● | ● | ○ | ● |
| Scenic views | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Sprawl prevention | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Critical habitat | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Walkable communities | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ | ● |
| Scenic/rural protection | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| Code update required? | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| Administrative Difficulty | Moderate | Low | Moderate | Low | Moderate |

Key: Directly addresses ● Partially addresses ● Does not address ○

5

Transportation & Infrastructure

Goal #1: Develop a multimodal transportation network with a wide range of mobility options. 106

Goal #2: Preserve and enhance the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation..... system. 110





SPEED
LIMIT
35

STOP

ALL WAY

NO PARKING
IN FRONT
OF DRIVE

“I would love to see more sidewalks for walking through central Morris”

– Morris resident



Image Credit: City of Asheville

Transportation plays a critical role in quality of life. It affects access to goods and services, recreational areas, community facilities, and more. Safe transportation connections have always been a precursor to growth and economic success. This chapter provides goals and recommended actions to develop a safe, healthy and efficient transportation network throughout Morris. The transportation network is a system of existing and improved vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian facilities that will ensure that residents, workers, and visitors have high-quality mobility and access for all of their travel needs.

Goal #1

Develop a multimodal transportation network with a wide range of mobility options.



Action 1

Expand pedestrian infrastructure to connect residents to the Downtown area and to other recreation and activity areas.

Improved walkability and pedestrian safety were consistent themes throughout the public involvement process associated with this Plan. The lack of pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks, crosswalks and pedestrian crossing signals, has created a safety hazard for those people attempting to walk to businesses, community facilities or job destinations.

Areas in need of pedestrian infrastructure within the Morris city limits are shown in **Figure 5.1**. This includes areas within Downtown Morris, as well as segments along frequently traveled roadway corridors. Funding of sidewalks could be included in streetscape and gateway improvement projects, particularly along U.S. Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road/ Glennwood Road, and Banks Street.

To further determine locations for additional sidewalk construction, this Plan also created a sidewalk suitability analysis that identified locations with the highest potential demand for pedestrian activity based on several indicators associated with a demand for walking. Appropriate walking radii or buffer distances were mapped from the locations of these indicators, and then the roadway segments that fell within these buffer areas scored points. Indicators included ¼ mile buffer distances from existing sidewalk segments, public parks, schools, and the Morris Community Senior Center. The indicators and associated scoring for each indicator are listed in **Table 5.1**. The highest possible score based on the indicators was 4, but no roadway segment scored higher than 3 in the analysis.

According to the sidewalk suitability analysis as shown in **Figure 5.1**, it is recommended that sidewalks are needed along the following road segments:

- Along U.S. Highway 31 from Morris Sardis Road to Morris Manor Drive
- Along Morris Majestic Road from US 31 to 4th Avenue
- Between Jenkins Road and Banks Street (behind Charleston Place cul-de-sac)
- Along Old Highway 31 from the Burkett Center through Downtown Morris to Turkey Creek
- Along Glennwood Road from Morris Town Park to Ball Park Drive
- Along Stouts Road from Cannon Drive to Morris Majestic Road
- Along Old Stouts Road from Glennwood Road to Barnes Street/Reno Road
- Along Banks Street from Old Highway 31 to Stouts Road
- Along 2nd Avenue, 3rd Avenue, 4th Avenue, Banks Street, Francis Street, Lucas Street, and Rogers Drive for their entire lengths

Given the City’s current level of development and anticipated future trends, locating a sidewalk on one side of a street is considered adequate. This is true even for areas where sidewalks on both sides of a street may be desired, such as Downtown Morris. In these areas, the City should consider phased sidewalk expansion, ensuring all street segments targeted for sidewalk expansion receive attention before adding a sidewalk to the second side of any street.

Table 5.1: Scoring Criteria for the Sidewalk Suitability Analysis

| Sidewalk Suitability Analysis Indicators | Scoring Weight |
|---|----------------|
| Road segments within ¼ mile of an existing sidewalk segment | 1 |
| Road segments within ¼ mile of a public park | 1 |
| Road segments within ¼ mile of the senior center | 1 |
| Road segments within ¼ mile of a school | 1 |



Action 2

Consider creating a sidewalk standard for all new residential development.

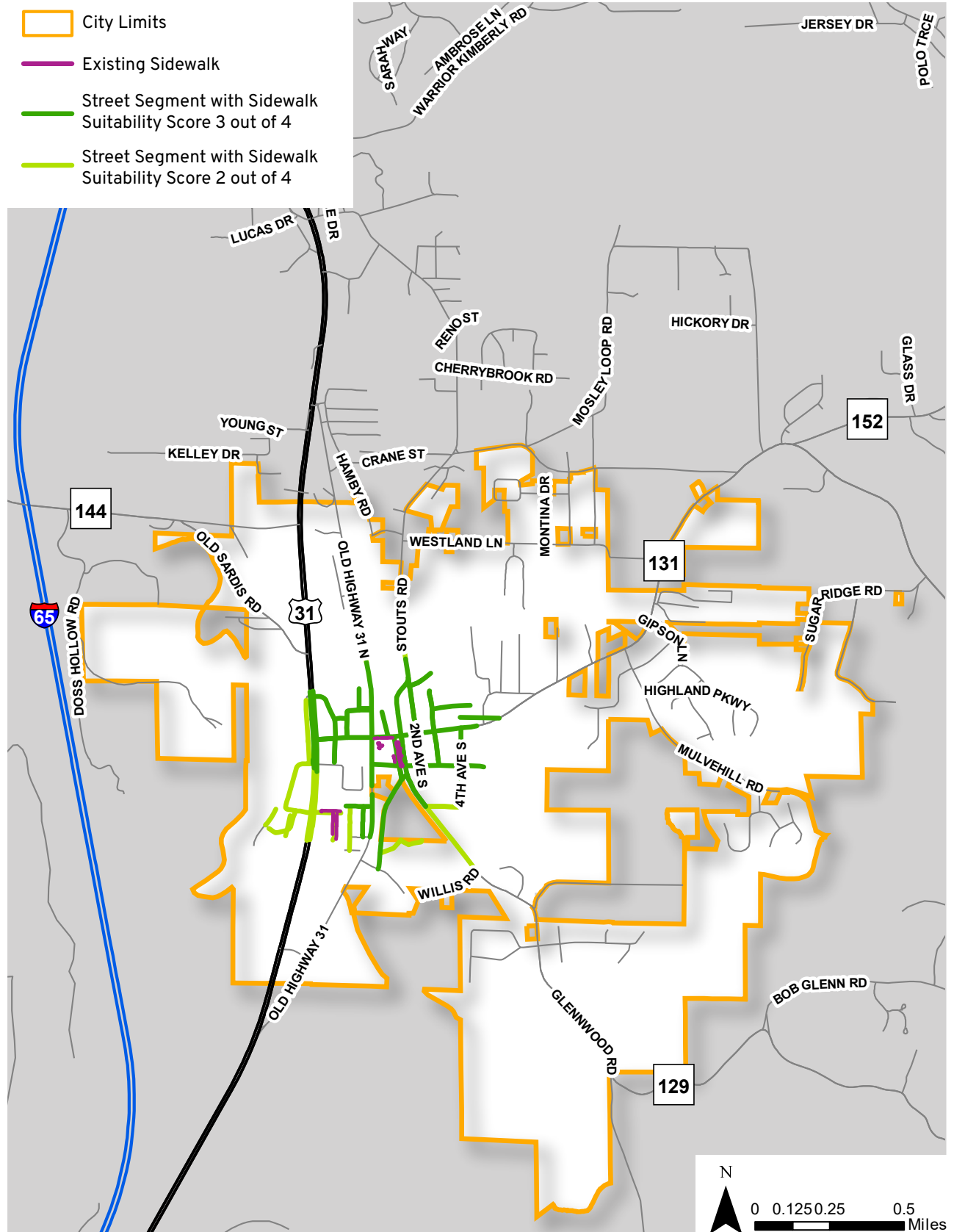
In addition to expanding sidewalk coverage in Downtown Morris and along U.S. Highway 31, Old Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road, and Glennwood Road, Morris should ensure that new developments accommodate pedestrians as well. This Plan recommends that the City modify the existing subdivisions regulations to require ADA accessible sidewalks on at least one side of the street in all new residential developments.

To ensure that new sidewalks adequately serve all members of the community regardless of ability or impairment, the City should consider creating a sidewalk design standard for all residential areas. This would provide design guidance for all new sidewalks and ensure that such sidewalks conform to ADA standards.



Image Credit: Dan Burden

Figure 5.1: Recommended Roadway Segments for New Sidewalk Construction





Action 3

Provide safe accessible crosswalks at targeted intersections.

Pedestrians are at their most vulnerable when crossing a street. A vehicle moving at only 30 mph has a 50% chance of killing or seriously injuring a pedestrian in the event of a collision. However, over 80% of all pedestrian fatalities occur away from intersections. This is typically because pedestrians choose to cross streets at locations directly along their path, rather than going out of their way to crosswalks.

It is recommended that the City of Morris invest in highly visible, convenient, and accessible crosswalks at targeted intersections to encourage pedestrians to cross streets where motorists expect them to do so. Traffic engineers have an ever-increasing toolbox of pedestrian safety measures including changes in signal phasing to give pedestrians a head start over traffic, the installation of count-down pedestrian heads, the installation of pedestrian-activated lighted crosswalks to warn motorists that pedestrians are crossing, innovative advance warnings, warning beacons, and pedestrian median refuge islands break up long crossing distances. In addition, crosswalks should be accessible to everyone who needs to use them including residents who are blind or may have mobility challenges.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, the following intersections were identified as needing safe crosswalks:

- Morris Majestic Road at Banks Street
- Morris Majestic Road at Stouts Road



Image Credit: City of Stone Mountain, Georgia



Action 4

Adopt a Complete Streets Policy.

The concept of Complete Streets involves planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining streets so that they provide safe access and circulation for all people, including motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. There is no singular design prescription for Complete Streets; each one is unique and responds to its community context. A complete street may include the following design elements: installation of sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, ADA compliant curb ramps, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more.

Complete Streets can be achieved by a city through a variety of policies: either adoption of an ordinance or a resolution, or by the rewrite of design manuals. An ideal Complete Streets policy includes the 10 elements as identified by the National Complete Streets Coalition. Visit the following link for more information and guidance.

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/elements-complete-streets-policy/>

In total, over 1600 Complete Streets policies have been passed in the United States. For example, the adoption of a Complete Streets Ordinance by the City of Morris would require the City to accommodate all modes of transportation in the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of public streets. The ordinance would specify the nature of roadwork that would trigger the required accommodations. For example, the ordinance could apply to new road construction, reconstruction, retrofits, upgrades, resurfacing and rehabilitation, any large-scale non-emergency utility work, but not to routine road maintenance. Complete Streets should be prioritized on roads that coincide with the high priority need for sidewalk infrastructure as identified in **Action 1.1** under this Goal.



Action 5

Raise awareness about the CommuteSmart program for Morris commuters.

CommuteSmart is a federally-funded initiative of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham that was formed in 1999 to promote alternative commuting options for the Birmingham Area that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. These options include carpooling, vanpooling, teleworking, riding the bus, biking and walking. The program offers a variety of incentives to encourage commuters to use these options, including gift cards, free emergency rides home, and even direct payments for each alternative commute. The City of Morris should actively promote and raise awareness about the CommuteSmart program to its residents.

Goal #2

Preserve and enhance the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation system.



Action 1

Conduct an Advanced Planning, Programming and Local Engineering (APPLE) Study for potential roadway improvements along Morris Majestic Road from U.S. Highway 31 to Counts Road.

Please see **Catalytic Project Idea #10 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas.**

CommuteSmart

Did you know you can get paid to commute to work? If you get to work by any means other than driving by yourself, you can!



People like options. When it comes to getting to work, having options that reward you is even better! The demand for attractive commuting alternatives to driving alone continues to grow significantly. CommuteSmart is a federally-funded initiative of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham that formed in 1999 to promote alternative commuting options for the Birmingham area.

CommuteSmart partners with organizations throughout the Birmingham region to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by encouraging workers to use alternative commuting options. These options include walking, biking, carpooling, vanpooling, riding the bus and even working from home. The program is designed to work with commuters and employers to make changing commute to work habits less intimidating. It offers incentives and services to help ease your transition from driving alone to a cleaner commute. By signing up with CommuteSmart, you could earn \$1 per day (up to \$70) in the first 90 days for getting to and from work (or class) in any way other than driving alone. After that, participants can earn a \$25 gift card for continuing to take alternative commutes at least 20 times each quarter afterwards.

Through CommuteSmart, you can reduce traffic, improve air quality, and strengthen our community. Visit www.commutesmart.org to learn more.



Action 2

Dedicate municipal resources to the necessary maintenance of culverts and ditches.

Throughout the public involvement period of this Plan, residents repeatedly noted the need for the maintenance of culverts and ditches throughout the City of Morris. Culverts and ditches help manage excess stormwater by channeling water through pipes, usually under roadways. The City should work with residents and the City engineer to identify culverts and ditches that need improvement and maintenance.



Action 3

Encourage the Morris Police Department to increase speeding enforcement in problem speeding areas.

During the public involvement associated with this Plan, there were many comments regarding the lack of adequate traffic enforcement on Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road, and residential streets. Slower response times were perceived due to the police officer shortage and the police officers not being seen in the neighborhoods frequently enough.



Action 4

Conduct a local street needs assessment to create a prioritized list of improvements and consider the use of a pavement management program.

According to 68% of the people who took the Visioning Survey associated with this Plan, making maintenance improvements to existing streets was noted as the community's highest priority transportation investment; this was followed by expanding the sidewalk network (42% of survey participants).

To ensure that public improvements and transportation grant funds are prioritized in the most effective and comprehensive way, it is recommended that the City conduct a street needs assessment. A street needs assessment would take into account all of the existing

infrastructure conditions and would result in a list of sidewalk and street improvement priorities.

Currently, the City's Street Department maintains all municipal streets and addresses issues such as potholes, damaged or missing street signs, and other needed repairs. There is not a formal method for identifying the timing of the maintenance and rehabilitation needs. While this is standard municipal practice, there are more effective methods of proactively managing the City's maintenance needs in a way that will save the City money over time. One such method is a pavement management program.

A pavement management program creates a workable and affordable plan for improving the integrity of local streets over the long term through preventative maintenance, while reducing the costs of deferred maintenance. Preventative maintenance means applying the right treatment on the right street at the right time, regardless of whether that street is currently in the worst condition of all local roads. Because preventative maintenance is more cost effective than totally reconstructing a failed street, a pavement management program would save taxpayer dollars in the long run.

The program could utilize an industry-standard pavement rating system, such as Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) or Pavement Condition Index (PCI). It would keep an inventory of all local roads, and periodically evaluate the conditions of all pavements. Finally, it would use these conditions to set maintenance priorities and alternative treatments, rather than simply fixing the oldest or worst first. See the callout box on **pages 114-115** to learn more about the PASER system.



Image Credit: Stuber Land Design



Action 5

Develop a traffic calming policy to reduce speeding in residential areas using context-appropriate measures.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, Morris residents expressed concern about the speed of traffic in their neighborhoods. It is recommended that the City establish a formal traffic calming policy. Traffic calming refers to the use of primarily physical measures to make streets safer by causing motorists to slow down. Measures can include roundabouts, median islands, speed tables, chicanes, and other design features that force drivers to drive more cautiously (see the traffic calming callout box on **page 113** for more information).

Every street is different, and appropriate traffic calming measures will differ accordingly. In addition, the City should consider adopting a formal traffic calming policy that enables citizens to petition for a traffic calming study in an orderly manner and assists the City in the selection of appropriate interventions.

Such a policy could include:

- Petition process by which residents or neighborhood associations request a study for traffic calming treatment installation or removal
- Cost-sharing procedures between the City and the impacted neighborhood
- Safety and operational warrant criteria
- Treatment alternatives

The City of Sandy Springs, GA possesses a formal traffic calming policy that could be used as an example. The Sandy Springs policy can be found at: <http://www.sandyspringsga.gov/home/showdocument?id=379>

In the event that a crash does occur, lower speeds significantly lower the probability of a fatality or serious injury. Each 1 mph reduction in traffic speed reduces vehicle collisions by 5% and fatalities by more than 5%. A driver travelling at 40 mph who sees a pedestrian 100 feet ahead will be traveling 38 mph on impact. If a driver was instead driving at 25 mph, they would have enough time to stop before ever reaching the pedestrian. Slowing traffic saves lives. Traffic calming measures have been called “the only antidote for the malady of child pedestrian accidents” (Transportation Alternatives Magazine).

Roadway Jurisdiction

Properly maintained roads are essential to residents, businesses, schools and emergency service providers. Numerous government agencies construct, maintain and repair roads in Morris.



U.S. Highways: U.S. Highway 31 runs north-south through the City of Morris. The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) has authority over “U.S.” routes and highways. Visit the ALDOT website at <https://www.dot.state.al.us/reportaconcern.html> or call 334-353-6535 to report a concern along this highway.



County Roads: This 5-sided blue and gold type of sign identifies county roads, such as Morris Majestic Road, that are under the authority of the Jefferson County. The Roads and Transportation Division for Jefferson County is responsible for planning, designing, constructing and maintaining Jefferson County highways. Visit the department’s website at <https://www.jccal.org/Default.asp?ID=995&pg=Report+a+Problem+or+Request+Assistance> or call 205-325-5141 to report a concern.



Municipal Streets: Municipal streets are located within municipal corporate limits that are not U.S. highways or part of the county highway system. Most municipal streets provide access to neighborhoods or within subdivisions. Each municipality, like Morris, is responsible for the construction, maintenance and repair of the streets within their municipal limits. Issues should be reported to Morris Town Hall at 205-647-0596.

TRAFFIC CALMING

Motorists often drive as fast as the road they are on will allow. Inappropriately high speeds not only lead to more frequent and severe crashes for the motorists, they also endanger pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. City officials can utilize traffic calming to improve safety by reducing vehicle speeds. Traffic calming refers to a combination of primarily physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use. Restricting the speed and volume of traffic to acceptable levels helps reduce accidents, collisions, noise, vibration, pollution and crime.

Traffic calming measures include both intrusive and non-intrusive strategies. Intrusive strategies involve an alteration to the physical environment that constrain driver behavior, such as horizontal shifts (chicanes and median islands), vertical deflections (speed tables, speed bumps and raised intersections) and turn restrictions, which reduce cut-through traffic. Non-intrusive strategies involve administrative or

operational improvements, such as traffic cameras, radar speed display signs and pavement re-stripping.

Slowing traffic saves lives. Each 1-mph reduction in vehicle speed reduces collisions and fatalities by over 5%. A motorist traveling at 40 mph who sees a pedestrian 100 feet ahead will not be able to stop in time, colliding with the pedestrian at 38 mph. At this speed, the pedestrian is highly likely to suffer a serious injury or die. By contrast, a motorist traveling at 25 mph would have enough time to stop before collision.

Each traffic calming measure is better suited to some street types than others. The City should work with traffic engineers to evaluate its streets where residents have expressed safety concerns, and determine whether and what traffic calming measures are warranted.



Image credits: Pinterest (above) and LADOT (below)



HOW PASER EVALUATES STREET SEGMENTS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) is a metric for street condition used by communities statewide in Wisconsin and Michigan to evaluate pavement condition and track it over time. It can also be used to prioritize street segments for improvement. For each type of pavement (e.g., asphalt, concrete, etc.) there is a manual freely available online at the University of Wisconsin's Transportation Information Center, which developed PASER. This can be found at: <https://interpro.wisc.edu/tic/document-type/publications/paser-manuals/>.

Before rating the community's roads, roadway segment data can be obtained in either spreadsheet or GIS format by visiting the Alabama Geographic Information Office's website at <https://data-geoohub.opendata.arcgis.com/> or by contacting the appropriate county department or the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. If the City has the capability, these segments can be mapped using GIS software. However, PASER was developed before this software was widespread, and ratings can be accomplished just as well using a clipboard or electronic tablet.

Within the manual, the page(s) for each rating contain user-friendly descriptions and several representative photos. This means ratings can often be completed by driving each segment and doing a "windshield survey" without leaving the vehicle.

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>18 Rating pavement surface condition</p> <p>RATING 7</p> <p>GOOD — Routine crack sealing recommended</p> <p>Roads show first signs of aging, and they may have very slight raveling. Any longitudinal cracks are along paving joint. Transverse cracks may be approximately 10' or more apart. All cracks are 1/4" or less, with little or no crack erosion. Few if any patches, all in very good condition. Maintain a crack sealing program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tight and sealed transverse and longitudinal cracks. Maintain crack sealing program. ▶ Tight longitudinal crack and sealed transverse cracks. ▶ Transverse cracks about 10' or more apart. Maintain crack sealing program. | <p>Rating pavement surface condition 19</p> <p>RATING 6</p> <p>GOOD — Consider preservative treatment</p> <p>Roads are in sound structural condition but show definite signs of aging. Seal-coating could extend their useful life. There may be slight surface raveling. Transverse cracks can be frequent, less than 10' apart. Cracks may be 1/4-1/2" and sealed or open. Pavement is generally sound adjacent to cracks. First signs of block cracking may be evident. May have slight or moderate bleeding or polishing. Patches are in good condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◀ Slight surface raveling with tight cracks, less than 10' apart. ◀ Transverse cracks less than 10' apart; cracks well-sealed. ▼ Large blocks, early signs of raveling and block cracking. ▼ Open crack, 1/2" wide; adjoining pavement sound. ▼ Moderate flushing. |
|---|--|

For example, the sample pages above comes from the asphalt PASER manual. The sample includes descriptions of indicators for various types of wear on asphalt surfaces as well as sample photos illustrating these indicators.

PASER ratings use a 1-10 scale with an associated recommended treatment for each rating:

Table 5.1: Asphalt Rating System

| Surface Rating | Visible Distress* | General Condition / Treatment Measures |
|------------------------|---|---|
| 10 Excellent | None | New construction. |
| 9 Excellent | None | Recent overlay. Like new. |
| 8 Very Good | No longitudinal cracks except reflection of paving joints. Occasional transverse cracks, widely spaced (40' or greater). All cracks sealed or tight (open less than ¼"). | Recent sealcoat or new cold mix. Little or no maintenance required. |
| 7 Good | Very slight or no raveling, surface shows some traffic wear. Longitudinal cracks (open ¼") due to reflection of paving joints. Transverse cracks (open ¼") spaced 10' or more apart, little or slight raveling. No patching or very few patches in excellent condition. | First signs of aging. Maintain with routine crack filling. |
| 6 Good | Slight raveling (loss of fines) and traffic wear. Longitudinal cracks (open 1/4" - 1/2"). Transverse cracks (open 1/4" - 1/2"), some spaced less than 10'. First sign of block cracking. Slight to moderate flushing or polishing. Occasional patching in good condition. | Shows signs of aging. Sound structural condition. Could extend life with sealcoat. |
| 5 Fair | Moderate to severe raveling (loss of fine and coarse aggregate). Longitudinal and transverse cracks (open ½" or more) show first signs of slight raveling and secondary cracks. First signs of longitudinal cracks near pavement edge. Block cracking up to 50% of surface. Extensive to severe flushing or polishing. Some patching or edge wedging in good condition. | Surface aging. Sound structural condition. Needs sealcoat or thin non-structural overlay (less than 2"). |
| 4 Fair | Sever surface raveling. Multiple longitudinal and transverse cracking with slight raveling. Longitudinal cracking in wheel path. Block cracking (over 50% of surface). Patching in fair condition. Slight rutting or distortions (½" deep or less). | Significant aging and first signs of need for strengthening. Would benefit from a structural overlay (2" or more). |
| 3 Poor | Closely spaced longitudinal and transverse cracks often showing raveling and crack erosion. Severe block cracking. Some alligator cracking (less than 25% of surface). Patches in fair to poor condition. Moderate rutting or distortion (greater than ½" but less than 2" deep). Occasional potholes. | Needs patching and repair prior to major overlay. Milling and removal of deterioration extends the life of overlay. |
| 2 Very Poor | Alligator cracking (over 25% of surface). Severe rutting or distortions (2" or more deep). Extensive patching in poor condition. Potholes. | Severe deterioration. Needs reconstruction with extensive base repair. Pulverization of old pavement is effective. |
| 1 Failed | Severe distress with extensive loss of surface integrity. | Failed. Needs total reconstruction. |

*Individual pavements will not have all of the types of distress listed for any particular rating. They may only have one or two types.

Per the table above, PASER does not recommend improvements for very highly rated road segments or for the lowest rated "failed" segments. This is because while failed segments are in need of complete reconstruction, their condition cannot deteriorate much more. On the other hand, regular maintenance on segments that are rated "Good" or "Fair" can extend their useful life, resulting in **lower costs for the municipality over the lifetime of the road surface**.

Table source: adapted from PASER Asphalt Manual, UW-Madison Transformation Information Center. <https://interpro.wisc.edu/tic/documents/paser-manual-asphalt-pubpas01/>



Action 6

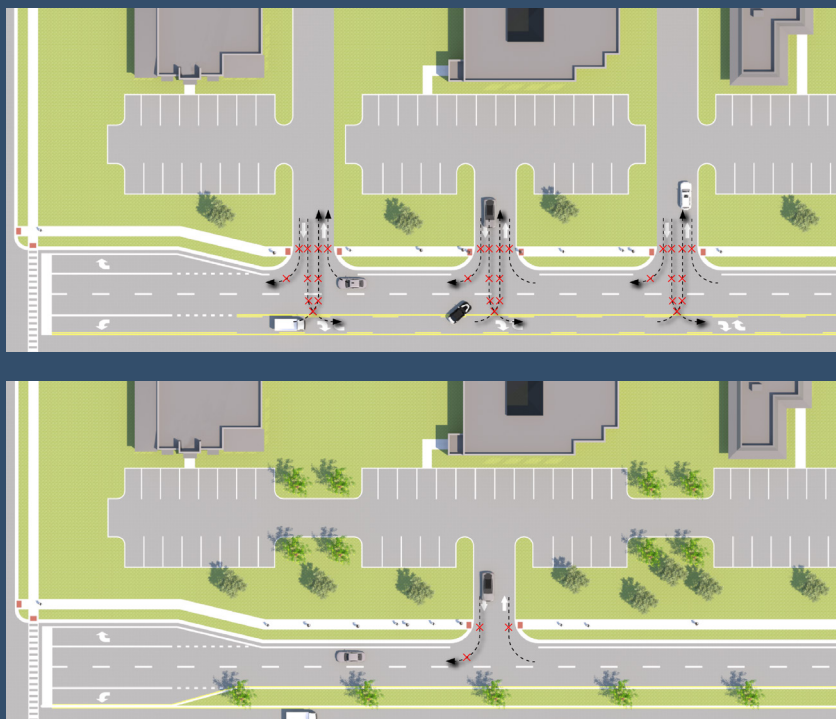
Adopt local access management standards along U.S. Highway 31 to preserve traffic flow and reduce crashes.

All properties require access to a road through a driveway. Each driveway, however, creates a potential conflict point where vehicle paths cross, merge, or weave. High concentrations of driveways along a road lead to high numbers of conflict points, which cause safety hazards and slow down traffic unnecessarily. Managing access – i.e., reducing the frequency of conflict points along a stretch of road – not only improves safety for motorists and pedestrians, but also improves the capacity of the road by preserving steady traffic flow.

It is recommended that the City of Morris develop and adopt a set of driveway spacing standards or local access management standards for the U.S. Highway 31 corridor within its city limits. Example language is provided in the callout box on [page 116](#). While large portions of U.S. Highway 31 are already developed, these standards could take effect as redevelopment occurs or on the currently undeveloped portions of the highway.

“Access management” is a term for the systematic control of the location, spacing, design, and operation of driveways, median openings, and street connections to a roadway in order to minimize conflicts and friction caused by multiple closely spaced driveways and intersections. Access management standards for driveways usually cover some or all of the following factors: maximum number of driveways permitted in any lot frontage, maximum width of driveway pavement and curb cuts, minimum distances of driveways from intersections, property lines, other driveways, fire hydrants, utility poles, street trees, specifications for curb returns (that portion of the curb that connects the driveway approach to the street curb), maximum and minimum slopes of driveways, and the type and quality of materials used in driveway and curb construction.

A local set of access management standards should be stricter than those found in the 2014 Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) Access Design and Management Manual, which already applies to the U.S. Highway 31 corridor because it is a U.S. highway. The City should strongly encourage ALDOT to adhere to their own adopted standards, and not grant unwarranted variances.



Access Management

By consolidating the number of intersections along a road, **access management dramatically reduces the number of potential crash locations**, all the while improving traffic flow and aesthetics. In this example, consolidating driveways and adding a median reduced 30 conflict points to only 3 – a 90% reduction.

Example Language for U.S. Highway 31 Access Management Standards

Highway Access. All projects shall be designed to minimize congestion on U.S. Highway 31, by incorporating the following principles set forth herein below.

A. Access Management.

1. Limit the number of conflict points by limiting left turning movements and cross highway through movements.
2. Separate conflict areas by adequate spacing between driveway and street intersections.
3. Reduce interference with through traffic by providing turning lanes, designing driveways with large turning radii and restricting turning movements in an out of driveways.
4. Provide sufficient spacing for at-grade signalized intersections.
5. Provide adequate on-site and intra-site circulation and parking areas in order to minimize the number of driveways to the highway (e.g., utilize joint-driveways wherever possible – see below).

B. Access Limitations.

1. All parcels which adjoin private property shall either share access with adjoining properties or have access to a frontage road.
2. The number and location of access points U.S. Highway 31 shall be determined as part of the site plan review process.
3. **Access.** Access to U.S. Highway 31 may be prohibited from any tract having access to a street intersecting U.S. Highway 31 or any tract with frontage on U.S. Highway 31 which has access through an existing joint-use access easement or driveway. Otherwise, access to U.S. Highway 31 shall be limited to one driveway unless otherwise permitted.
4. **Driveway Location.** Maximum practical spacing between driveways shall be required. Unless otherwise approved by the city engineer, no driveway accessing U.S. Highway 31 shall be located:
 - i. Closer than three hundred (300) feet from the nearest adjacent driveway, unless no other access is available to a parcel of land
 - ii. Where the sight distance is less than ten (10) times the posted speed limit.
5. **Landscape Medians.** U.S. Highway 31 medians shall be landscaped.

6

Planning & Development Regulations

| | |
|---|-----|
| Goal #1: Improve code enforcement efforts to address issues related to property maintenance and blight. | 120 |
| Goal #2: Enhance the physical character and appearance of Morris. | 125 |
| Goal #3: Recommended Zoning revisions to promote a healthy mix of land uses. | 127 |
| Goal #4: Recommended Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations revisions for Residential Development. | 128 |
| Goal #5: Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions for parking and access standards... | 133 |
| Goal #6: Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to permitted uses. | 135 |
| Goal #7: Other recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions. | 139 |



“I think Morris is doing a good job with zoning... it is still well-kept”

– Morris resident



Image Credit: Greater Birmingham MLS

Planning and municipal ordinances in large part determine the physical character of the city. This includes what our homes look like and what amenities we live and work near. Updating the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations will ensure that Morris’ downtown, commercial areas, and neighborhoods continue to thrive. Code enforcement is also a critical tool to ensure that development regulations are followed so that all residents benefit.

Goal #1

Improve code enforcement efforts to address issues related to property maintenance and blight.



Action 1

Consider hiring additional code inspectors and an enforcement officer to improve code enforcement efforts and decrease permit and inspection times.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents frequently cited code enforcement as a top concern. To address these concerns, the City is encouraged to dedicate more resources and personnel to code enforcement efforts. In many cities of comparable size, a code enforcement officer is a full-time position focusing almost entirely on code enforcement, allowing the staff person to build relationships with local property owners. A full-time position would also allow the code enforcement officer to master all relevant codes, including the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Design and Construction Specifications

As part of the effort to increase code enforcement efforts, the City is encouraged to review its inspections and planning and zoning organizational structure. The City may benefit from consolidating its planning and zoning, inspections, and code enforcement staff into one municipal department. Beyond a possible code savings benefit, consolidation can reduce ‘silos’ and encourage collaboration among staff working on similar projects. The City should consider retaining existing positions and consolidating these related staff into one department while also hiring a full-time code enforcement officer. The City can pursue other options if a full-time position is deemed unfeasible, such as creating a part-time code enforcement position or reorganizing job descriptions to ensure code enforcement is specifically within the purview of existing staff. These efforts will help the City ensure code enforcement is carried out in a regular and prompt manner.



Action 2

Adopt up-to-date versions of the technical “family” of codes developed by the International Code Council.

To address the patchwork of codes across the United States, the International Code Council (ICC) was founded in 1994. It merged three existing model code organizations—the Building Officials and Code Administrators International (BOCA), the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and the Southern Building Code Congress International, Inc. (SBCCI). The ICC consolidation became final in 2003, resulting in a single organization with over 100 years of history and experience developing model building codes.

The ICC publishes a comprehensive and coordinated set of codes applicable to commercial, institutional, and residential structures. These codes guide the compliance process to ensure safe, sustainable, and resilient construction. Below are three of the most widely adopted of the ICC codes, and all of them serve as living documents that are periodically reviewed and updated every three years to align with changing practices in the building industry:

- **International Building Code (IBC)** – The IBC is a model building code that addresses both health and safety concerns for buildings based upon prescriptive and performance-related requirements. The purpose of this code is to establish minimum requirements to safeguard the public safety, health and general welfare through affordability, structural strength, means of egress, stability, sanitation, light and ventilation, energy conservation and safety to life and property from fire and other hazards attributed to the built environment and to provide safety to fire fighters and emergency responders during emergency operations. Parts of the code reference other codes including the International Plumbing Code, the International Mechanical Code, the National Electric Code, and various National Fire Protection Association standards. Therefore, when a municipality adopts the IBC, it also adopts those parts of other codes referenced

by the IBC. Often, the plumbing, mechanical, and electric codes are adopted along with the building code.

- **International Residential Code (IRC)** - The IRC is a comprehensive model code for residential buildings that establishes minimum regulations for one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses using prescriptive provisions. It combines provisions for many elements and systems pertaining to residential home construction including building, plumbing, mechanical, fuel gas, energy and electrical.
- **International Existing Building Code (IEBC)** - The IEBC establishes minimum regulations for upgrades and improvements addressing the alteration, addition or change of occupancy in existing buildings. It uses prescriptive and performance-based provision and is intended to ensure public health and safety pertaining to the existing building stock.



Action 3

Consider adopting the 2021 International Property Maintenance Code.

The City should also consider adopting the 2021 International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), in whole or in parts, to ensure that residential and commercial properties are safe, upheld to modern standards. The IPMC outlines property maintenance regulations including weeds and debris, vegetation maintenance, junk vehicles, water pollution, public decency, driver sight obstructions, dilapidated properties and more.

Adopting the IPMC would raise the minimum standard for building and living conditions and would provide a better opportunity to address issues at an earlier stage before they compound. The IPMC also provides an enforcement mechanism that applies to existing residential and commercial properties and enables the City to impose fines on the owner rather than attach liens to the dilapidated property, strengthening the City’s ability to reduce blight.

For more information visit: <https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IPMC2021P1>



Action 4

Create a citizen's guide for code enforcement that enables residents to report code violations.

A code enforcement guide could educate residents about their responsibility to follow local ordinances while also increasing the City's capacity to identify and track blighted properties by streamlining the public reporting process. Through the code enforcement guide, residents would be able to report various issues related to property maintenance and other health and safety violations.

To improve the accessibility and efficiency of the guide and reporting process, the City should create and market a hard copy of the guide, an online version, and a mobile app. The municipal mobile app marketplace has grown steadily in recent years, with new companies entering this space and lowering costs. Many of these apps contain a feature called "constituent relationship management" (CRM) which allows residents to report issues, geo-tag the location of the issue, and attach photos and notes before submitting it to the appropriate municipal department. This would provide code enforcement officers with real time data, enabling them to better track violations in the community and provide prompt feedback to residents concerning the status of their reports.

Two code enforcement guides to reference as models are the "Citizen's Code Enforcement Guide" from Manatee County, Florida and "Access Cupertino" from the City of Cupertino, California. Common code violations in the City of Morris include:

- Weeds and debris
- Inoperable vehicles in driveways
- Parking in front yards



Action 5

Continue to support the use of technology to improve code enforcement.

The City of Morris should consider implementing the recommendations below to streamline the plan review and inspection process and improve code enforcement:

- Maintain high levels customer service by continuing to make permit applications, inspection information, fee schedules, and other relevant information available online and as fillable forms where possible.
- Replace paper systems with electronic plan review software to enable stakeholders to digitally review documents. Electronic plan review programs aggregate all reviewers' comments and allow all stakeholders, such as other City departments, to track their project's status easily. Common electronic plan review software includes: Avolve's ProjectDox, EnerGov, or CRW System's TRAKit.
- Invest in tablets for code enforcement officers to use during inspections. Tablets allow inspectors to fill out checklists on-site and notify stakeholders of the results and can save time by using an automated scheduling program for inspections.

Using technology can streamline the regulatory process and can save the city time and money. In addition to reducing the administrative burden on staff, increased technology adoption could allow code enforcement officers to provide more thorough inspections and plan reviews, thus improving code compliance rates. Any financial savings could be redirected to train staff.



Action 6

Consider adopting a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents expressed concern with the utilization of some vacant structures for storage or other uses while not being properly maintained or located in a zoning district where such storage is permitted. To combat this, Morris should

consider adopting a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance. This ordinance would require that property owners register any unoccupied property within the City within a certain timeframe after it becomes vacant or after foreclosure actions begin. Registration would be accompanied by a nominal fee. The property owner would be required to maintain the property, and the City could impose fines if these conditions are not met. This ordinance would also allow the City to impose fines on lien holders if these conditions are not met. By requiring the establishment of ownership and responsibility, the ordinance makes it easier for the city to seek recourse if the property begins to deteriorate.

Morris should consider how these registration fees are structured. According to the National League of Cities' Municipal Action Guide, this structure could be challenged if it is seen as a revenue-generating tool.



Action 7

Consider adopting an Unsafe Structures and Dangerous Building Ordinance.

As Morris seeks to keep reduce the number of dangerous and unsafe buildings within the city, it is recommended that the City Council adopt an Unsafe Structures and Dangerous Building Ordinance that is in compliance with §11-40-30 through §11- 40-36 and §11-53B-1 through §11-53B-16 of the Alabama Code of Law.

The City of Center Point's Unsafe Structures and Dangerous Building Ordinance ([https://www.thecityofcenterpoint.org/Ordinance%20 2107-4.pdf](https://www.thecityofcenterpoint.org/Ordinance%202107-4.pdf)) maybe used as a model ordinance. It clearly defines what may be deemed a "dangerous building" and outlines the procedures that Morris can follow to demolish an unsafe or dangerous building. This ordinance also addresses property owner rights and outlines the procedures through which they can appeal to court. Using this ordinance as a starting point can enable the City to address properties that contribute to blight, while also giving the City the legal means to quickly and efficiently correct violations.



Action 8

Modify the Subdivision Regulations to require that a Homeowner's Association (HOA) be set up when new subdivisions are developed.

Homeowner's associations (HOAs) offer a possible solution for some code enforcement issues within the City. It is recommended that the City revise its Subdivision Regulations to require that a HOA be set up as a part of the development process for all new subdivisions. Currently, this is not required within Morris. HOAs often adopt minimum standards for homeowners within their jurisdiction to ensure properties are maintained to a high standard.

A revised set of Subdivision Regulations could stipulate that the developer (or a management company chosen by the developer) will draft governing documents. The governing documents would include: Articles of Incorporation, bylaws and resolutions; Original Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CRRs); and How the HOA is registered as a nonprofit with the State of Alabama.

- Articles of Incorporation, bylaws and resolutions
- Original Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CRRs)
- How the HOA is registered as a nonprofit with the State of Alabama

The developer should run the HOA until "turnover." Turnover is the point at which the developer transfers day-to-day HOA operations to the homeowners. Typically, turnover thresholds are triggered after a certain amount of time and after a certain percentage of residential parcels in the subdivision are developed (e.g., 90 days after 90% of residential parcels are developed).



Action 9

Create a Rental Property licensing inspection system and establish a Good Landlord Program.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, absentee landlords and associated code violations were mentioned as an issue. Poorly maintained rental properties can contain illicit uses and safety hazards and negatively impact the neighborhood. A municipal licensing and inspection system would provide flexibility and the authority to require higher standards.

Such a program would require residential landlords to be licensed and follow minimum standards. These standards would include proper maintenance, addressing public safety concerns, and other general compliances – all recommended in Allan Mallach’s 2015 “Raising the Bar” report (p. 17). A rental property license would include an annual fee proportionate to the cost of services. To incentivize participation in the Good Landlord Program, rental property owners who

complete the program’s qualifications could have their annual fees reduced or waived. Revenue from licenses would go towards the cost of servicing apartments including code enforcement, mowing by the Department of Public Works, and Morris Police Department responses to 911 calls. Landlord licensing fees in other cities typically range from \$50 to \$115 a year.

The Good Landlord Program would require that landlords follow standards such as these required by Salt Lake City:

- A written lease for every dwelling unit will be required
- All current, adult tenants living in a residence will be listed on the lease
- The landlord or manager will serve notice of eviction within 5 days of receiving substantial evidence that a tenant or guest was involved in criminal or nuisance activity on the premises
- The landlord will maintain the rental dwelling in a fit and habitable condition, as required by State code and relevant building, fire, and land use codes



Image Credit: Ellis and Ellis Sign Systems

Goal #2

Enhance the physical character and appearance of Morris.



Action 1

Develop a city-wide signage replacement program.

A signage replacement program is an orderly method for the City of Morris to replace all municipal signage over a period of time. Signage replacement might be done for several reasons including to replace signage in poor condition, to incorporate a new city-wide branding campaign, or to meet higher reflectivity standards. Costs for the signage replacement program include signage design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance and will have to be included in the annual municipal budget. The program should also account for how many signs can be replaced each year and which criteria, such as poor condition and strategic locations, will be used to determine signage replacement priority.



Action 2

Clearly define gateways into Morris through urban design and beautification enhancements.

- U.S. Highway 31 at I-65 Exit 275
- U.S. Highway 31 at Morris Majestic Road
- U.S. Highway 31 at city limits near Old Highway 31
- U.S. Highway 31 at city limits north of Sardis Road
- Glennwood Road at Sam Thomas Road
- Morris Majestic Road at County Road 152
- Stouts Road south of Kimberly Cut Off Road

Successful gateways provide a definitive sense of place and announce that someone has arrived in Morris. By giving a sense of place

and arrival, investing in urban design and beautification enhancements at gateways can be a strategic investment that pays dividends. Examples of enhancements to construct at gateways include:

- Gateway signage, such as a landmark or monument sign
- Streetscape improvements, such as a landscaped median and street trees

Whenever possible, gateway improvements and signage should include design elements repeated elsewhere in the city, such as in a city-wide branding or wayfinding system. Design consistency helps visually reinforce that these gateways belong to Morris and serve to announce the transition into the city.



Action 3

Develop a city-wide wayfinding signage system.

See **Catalytic Project #2 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas.**



Action 4

Reactivate Morris Beautification Board to spearhead and conduct quality cleanup efforts and identify an annual list of sites for cleanup.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents expressed a strong desire for aesthetic improvements throughout the city, including reducing litter and debris and cleaning up strategically important sites. The City is encouraged to capitalize on this strong desire from residents by appointing new members to the Morris Beautification Board, and empower them to take the lead in beautification efforts.

In addition to fundraising, the Morris Beautification Board could be responsible for several initiatives, including cleanup efforts and organizing cleanup days. These cleanup days should be well-promoted and held at regular intervals, such as bi-monthly. The Board could also be responsible for identifying catalytic sites for cleanup. Catalytic sites are those with the potential to have an

outsized impact and drive change in the area, and by identifying these sites the Morris Beautification Board could catalyze local beautification efforts.



Action 5

Improve streetscaping along U.S. Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road, and Banks Street.

U.S. Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road, and Banks Street contain Morris' largest entryways and comprise some of its most visible streets. Because of this visibility, the aesthetics along these thoroughfares plays an outsize role in peoples' experiences of Morris. During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents frequently expressed disappointment with the appearance of U.S. Highway 31 and shared concerns that it fosters a negative expression of their city. Addressing these concerns and expanding the targeted area to include Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road, and Banks Street will improve experiences for residents and visitors as they enter and move about the City.

The City of Morris is encouraged to implement the following items to improve the streetscaping along these streets:

- Install gateway and wayfinding signage
- Install more public trash cans at regular intervals
- Improve pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks and crosswalks
- Update streetlights
- Install new street furniture
- Undertake a branding initiative and install branded banners on streetlighting

As an ALDOT policy road, the City of Morris must work cooperatively with ALDOT on any improvements within the U.S. Highway 31 right-of-way.

For more information on improvements to Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road, and Banks Street see **Catalytic Project Idea #4 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas.**



Action 6

Develop initiatives to minimize illegal dumping.

See **Action 1.8 in Chapter 7: Livability and Public Services.**



Action 7

Conduct an analysis of garbage pickup to determine if an increase in frequency (or additional trash cans) is warranted.

See **Action 1.10 in Chapter 7: Livability and Public Services.**



Action 8

Consider creating a city-wide recycling program or a recycling drop-off area.

See **Action 1.11 in Chapter 7: Livability and Public Services.**



Action 9

Promote Jefferson County's Household Hazardous Waste Day.

Some materials, if not properly discarded, pose a threat to the environment and human health. To ensure the proper disposal of these items, the City should promote Jefferson County's Household Hazardous Waste Day which takes place annually in April. For more information, visit www.jccal.org.



Action 10

Permit and promote public art and murals on blank walls throughout Morris.

Public art and murals add life and vibrancy to the public realm, often incorporating local history and important events. The City should permit and promote them, and there are low-cost ways to do so. The City should begin by adopting a public art and mural ordinance showing support for these mediums and outlining the approval process. To encourage

submissions, the City could present an annual award which would include positive coverage for the artist and could include a small cash prize.

Goal #3

Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to promote a healthy mix of land uses.



Action 1

Modify the Zoning Ordinance to adopt a mixed-use zoning district.

See **Action 1.2 in Chapter 4: Future Land Use**. Example Mixed-Use District regulations can be provided upon request by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.



Action 2

Encourage the use of the R-P Planned Unit zoning district for new developments to promote flexibility, creativity, and a mix of uses.

If a mixed-use zoning district has not been adopted yet into the Zoning Ordinance, then the City should encourage the use of the R-P Planned Unit District by developers. This zoning district allows for a range of uses, including single-family and multifamily housing, and compatible institutional uses. To make this district more successful, the City should consider permitting compatible commercial uses such as restaurants and neighborhood-scale retail and service uses. Developments that utilize Planned Unit Development Districts (PUD) are often sought after by residents and business owners, and developers often appreciate the land use flexibility offered by this district. By encouraging additional PUDs, the City can benefit from new residential and mixed-use developments offering more appealing homes and businesses.



Action 3

Adopt an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance.

An adaptive reuse ordinance makes the reuse of vacant buildings easier by minimizing certain zoning and code regulations for reuse projects. Currently, reuse projects are required to meet the same regulations as new developments. The City should consider adopting an adaptive reuse ordinance in areas with concentrations of historic and underused buildings, such as along Stouts Road and Banks Road.

The ordinance works by reducing specific zoning requirements for reuse projects, such as parking, setback and density requirements. The City should work with architects, engineers, and developers to find out which requirements are the most difficult obstacles when considering the redevelopment of sites. If successful, the ordinance could increase the number of rehabilitations and reduce the number of demolitions of older buildings.



Image Credit: Southern Land Company

Goal #4

Recommended Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations revisions for Residential Development.



Action 1

Modify the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that future residential construction meets certain durability requirements and safety-related performance requirements.

It is recommended that the City modify the residential zoning districts to ensure that new residential construction meets certain aesthetic requirements and safety-related performance requirements. Adopting these types of additional regulations will allow Morris to ensure that future residential construction will be aesthetically appealing and safe and will help prevent undesired bland and uniform “tract home” development. The following types of regulations can help improve the safety and aesthetic appearance of detached single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, and multifamily dwellings:

- **Yard setbacks.** Modify the minimum yard setbacks to ensure home security, privacy, a uniform appearance, and provide enough space for utilities
- **Home size.** Consider increasing the minimum livable floor area to increase the size and value of homes in Morris (residents would like to see larger homes)
- **Durable building requirement.** Ensure that new homes are made of quality durable materials. Durable materials include brick, stucco, heavy timber, wood, slate, metal, and tile roofing. Vinyl and cementitious siding may be used as an accent material
- **Front façade enhancements.** Require that each dwelling unit provide a public entrance from the street – a covered porch, covered stoop, or balcony over the main entrance provides shade and protection from the elements
- **Landscaping and driveway standards.** Expand the landscape and buffer requirements and regulate the location of garages and driveways

These types of additional regulations may be added as text amendments to the zoning ordinance in the various residential districts. It may be desirable to require different dwelling unit sizes and façade enhancements for certain types of residences, e.g., different requirements for detached single-family homes than for multifamily buildings. To see an example of how these types of regulations might be included in the R-2 Single Family District, see the **red text** in the callout box on **pages 130-131**.



Action 2

Modify the Zoning Ordinance to include Conservation Subdivision standards.

During the public involvement process of this Plan, residents frequently cited Morris’ small town semi-rural charm as one of its greatest assets, with 69% of Visioning Survey respondents rating it one of the City’s greatest strengths. Conservation subdivisions are an effective tool for preserving that rural character while also protecting the environment.

Conservation subdivisions (also known as cluster subdivisions) are an alternative way of building traditional single-family subdivisions that “cluster” development on a site to preserve land as common open space for residents. These types of subdivisions have numerous benefits, both financial and environmental including:

- Higher home values
- Preservation of rural community character
- Reduced infrastructure costs per home
- Greater access to open space for residents
- Improved stormwater management
- Wildlife conservation

Morris currently has no guidelines and standards for the creation and use of conservation subdivisions. Therefore, it is recommended that the City modify the Zoning Ordinance to include Conservation Subdivision regulations. The regulations would be permitted under any of the residential zoning districts per new language added to Article 10: General Regulations and Provisions.

To further encourage developers to build conservation subdivisions rather than conventional subdivisions, the City could include any of the following developer incentives for conservation subdivisions:

- Density bonuses
- Flexibility in lot size and siting requirements
- Waivers of application or permit fees

Since developers often first consult the Subdivision Regulations when considering a site, they might not realize that conservation subdivisions are an option available to them. Adding developing standards for conservation subdivisions to the Subdivision Regulations, after they are added to the Zoning Ordinance, would also make the process clearer for everyone and could encourage their utilization.

Example language for Conservation Subdivision regulations can be provided upon request by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.

For more information about Conservation Subdivisions, please see the callout box on [page 132](#).



Action 3

Modify the Subdivision Regulations to include Traditional Neighborhood Development standards.

Traditional neighborhood development (TND) is a planning technique that replicates the enduring and historic development patterns found in American towns and applies these patterns to new development. Hallmarks of TNDs include gridded, narrow streets, reduced front and side setbacks, and an orientation of streets and neighborhoods around a pedestrian oriented “town center.” TNDs accommodate all members of the community by including a variety of housing types and encouraging pedestrian movement with interconnected streets, thoughtful public spaces, and neighborhood-appropriate businesses. Unlike conventional subdivisions, they encourage a range of housing types, provide a mix of land uses, encourage pedestrian movement, and can reduce the amount of required infrastructure. Successful TNDs include:

- A community anchor that may feature a park, community meeting space, corner store, post office, library, or entertainment center. The community anchor is within a ¼ to ½ mile (5 to 10-minute walk) of homes
- A range of housing types to attract people of various ages and socioeconomic levels
- A mix of land uses that support the residential needs including shops, offices, and restaurants
- Streets that are laid out to form an interconnected grid that that reduces traffic congestion by allowing multiple route options. Streets are relatively narrow and are shaded by trees – there are sidewalks and sometimes bike lanes
- Buildings that are located close to the street, creating a sense of place by framing the sidewalks with street trees and building walls

Because Morris currently has no guidelines and standards for the creation and use of TNDs, it is recommended that the City modify the Zoning Ordinance to include TND regulations. The regulations would be permitted under any of the residential zoning districts per new language added to Article 10: General Regulations and Provisions.

To further encourage developers to build TNDs rather than conventional subdivisions, the City could include any of the following developer incentives for TNDs:

- Density bonuses
- Flexibility in lot size and siting requirements
- Waivers of application or permit fees

Since developers often first consult the Subdivision Regulations when considering a site, they might not realize that TNDs are an option available to them. Adding developing standards for TNDs to the Subdivision Regulations, after they are added to the Zoning Ordinance, would also make the process clearer for everyone and could encourage their utilization.

For more information about TNDs, please see the callout box on [pages 62-63 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas](#).

Example Modifications to the R-2 Single Family Residential District

SECTION 902: R-2 SINGLE FAMILY DISTRICT

A district designed to provide exclusively for single family residential housing, and to facilitate and maintain a relatively more compact or higher density neighborhood environment through generally smaller lot, yard and house size requirements.

902.1: Permitted Uses:

- a. single family dwellings
- b. customary accessory buildings or structures in accordance with Articles 10 and 11
- c. home occupations (permitted on appeal only) in accordance with Article 15

902.2: Area and Dimensional Requirements:

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Minimum Floor Area: | |
| 1-story dwelling | 1,200 sq. ft |
| 2-story dwelling | 1,000 sq. ft on first floor, total minimum 1,200 sq. ft |
| Minimum Lot Sizes: | 10,000 sf (15,000 sq. ft if septic tank and field lines are required) |
| Minimum Lot Width: | 80-foot minimum width |
| Minimum Yards: | 35-foot front yard setback* 35-foot rear yard setback 10-foot side yard setback |

*Corner lots shall observe front yard set backs on all sides abutting streets or rights-of-way.

902.3: Accessory Structures, Setbacks:

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| Rear Setback: | 10 ft. |
| Side Setback: | 8 ft. * |

*Corner lots shall observe front yard set backs on all sides abutting streets or rights-of-way.

902.4: Building Facades:

Where in conflict, these standards supersede those of Article 10: General Regulations and Provisions.

- a. Eave Overhangs: Cornices or eaves may extend into adjoining property when allowed by properly executed and recorded covenants between property owners. All such cornices and eaves shall be fire-proof.
- b. The front façade of each dwelling unit shall have a covered porch, covered stoop, or balcony over the main entrance.
 1. Finish floor elevation: eighteen (18) inches above grade at front façade.
 2. Porch depth: six (6) ft of clear space, exclusive of railings, pillars, columns, or other porch features.
 3. Stoop depth: three (3) ft to six (6) ft deep
 4. Covered porches and stoops may encroach into the front yard up to six (6) ft.
- c. All buildings shall maintain a public entrance, accessible by public sidewalk, along the street on which the building fronts. Additional entries are permitted, as necessary.
- d. Building facades must use durable materials. Durable materials include brick, stucco (EIFS is not permitted within 36 inches of finished grade), heavy timber, wood, slate, metal, and tile roofing. Metal, vinyl, and cementitious siding may be used as an accent material (up to 30% of the building façade, based on the total square footage of the exterior walls, excluding openings for windows and doors).

902.5: Buffer Requirements:

A fifteen (15) foot buffer is required for all property adjoining the R-2 district. See Article 10 for buffer definition.

902.6: Parking Requirements:

Where in conflict, these standards supersede those of Article 13 Parking Regulations.

- a. Spaces required. A minimum of two off-street parking spaces shall be provided each dwelling unit.
- b. Garages in the R-2 Multiple Dwelling District:
 1. A detached garage may be placed at the rear of the lot.
 2. A front-accessed garage shall be recessed a minimum of two (2) ft behind the front façade (not including porches, stoops, balconies, and other architectural treatments).

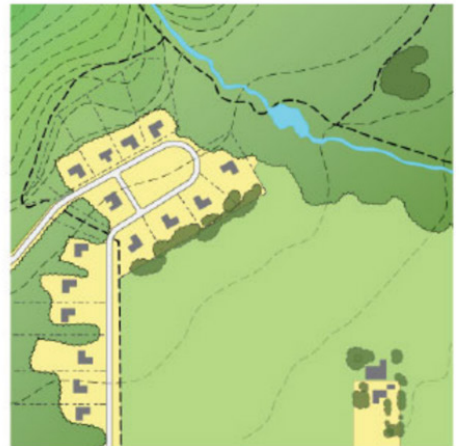
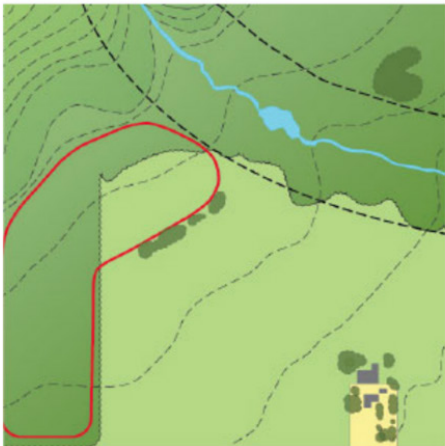
902.7: Additional Regulations (When Applicable):

- a. Article 10: General Regulations and Provisions
- b. Article 11: Area and Dimensional Requirements

CONSERVATION SUBDIVISIONS

The image below depicts two types of development, both occurring on the same site, with the same number of housing units. The image on the left is for a conventional subdivision and the right for a conservation subdivision. As can be seen below, conservation subdivisions “cluster” development on a more compact piece of land, preserving the remainder for outdoor recreation, rural preservation, agriculture, and wildlife habitat.

This type of development has myriad benefits compared to traditional subdivision design. It is easier to travel out of and within, it preserves rural farmland, it is better at managing stormwater and has been shown to have higher property values particularly over time. Ideally, in a conservation subdivision 50 to 70 percent of buildable land is set aside as open space by grouping homes on the developed portion of the land.



Existing Landscape

Subdivision Sprawl

Conservation Neighborhood

Image credits: Better Town Toolkit

Conservation subdivisions are also ideal places to build new amenities such as recreational trails. While residents do lose out on large individual lots, this is more than made up for by the open space that can be provided to the community through higher density.



Action 4

Modify the Zoning Ordinance to require open space in new developments.

Morris should consider amending the zoning ordinance to include open space requirements for new residential development. This requirement can increase quality of life by ensuring that residents of new developments have convenient access to usable open space. To see an example of how this type of regulations might be included in the Zoning Ordinance, please see the callout box on page 134.



Image Credit: Landscape Structures



Image Credit: Bham Now, Sharron Swain

Goal #5

Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions for parking and access standards.



Action 1

Revise the C-R Commercial Recreation District, C-1 Restricted Commercial District, C-2 General Commercial District, C-3 Special Commercial District, and R-P Planned Unit District to establish parking location criteria for new developments.

Vast amounts of visible parking lots occupy valuable real estate and make travel less pleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. To prevent these negative effects in new commercial and multifamily areas, parking location criteria should be established in these districts. Parking should be allowed only behind or beside the building, with a limited amount of parking between the building and the front street, such as only one or two rows of parking stalls with a two-way drive aisle. Relegating parking to the rear or side of buildings preserves the relationship between buildings and the sidewalk and results in more aesthetically pleasing, human-scaled commercial areas.



Action 2

Allow on-street parking to count toward minimum parking requirements in all commercial districts.

In areas where on-street parking exists, parking spaces along each building's frontage should count toward satisfying that use's parking requirements. Complying with off-street parking requirements can often be burdensome for developers, especially in infill situation, effectively limiting infill development which could otherwise benefit Morris. Easing this burden would also make adaptive reuse easier, because such a change is use would not always necessitate providing more off-street parking spaces.

Example Open Space Requirements

SECTION 1011: OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

1011.1: Permitted Uses:

The following uses are permitted:

- a. Pocket parks
- b. Neighborhood parks
- c. Playgrounds
- d. Storm water retention/detention facilities (where incorporated into one of the above)

1011.2: Area and Dimensional Requirements:

No less than fifteen (15) percent of the site area shall be improved and maintained as Common Open Space for the recreational use of tenants. At least twenty-five (25) percent of the Open Space shall be dedicated, designed, and improved as a Common Open Space for the recreational use of residents. Such space shall be no less than forty (40) ft in width along its narrowest dimension. Shade must be provided for 1/3 of the area at minimum.

1011.3: Concurrency:

Open space must be built when the development occurs. Amenities provided within the open space, such as benches, planters, art, and water features will be maintained by the owner for the life of the project.

1011.4: Parking:

Common open space and other permitted uses shall require addition parking, beyond the required number of parking spaces per unit.

1011.5: Site Conditions:

The Common Open Space shall not include steep grades, areas with poor drainage or other constraints to its recreational use.

Goal #6

Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to permitted uses.



Action 1

Add a summary table of permitted uses across all zoning categories.

Currently, the existing Morris Zoning Ordinance provides a separate list of permitted uses under each individual zoning district. It is recommended that an overall summary table, or matrix, of permitted uses be added, possibly under Article 9 Use Regulations for Zoning Districts. The table should contain a listing of uses that may be permitted in one or more of the various zoning districts established by the Zoning Ordinance. Uses should be listed in alphabetical order under functional categories. This would provide more information at a glance and would benefit anyone reading the ordinance, including applicants, city staff, and elected officials.



Action 2

Revise the zoning use categories to align with the larger use categories within the International Building Code.

Currently, the zoning use categories in the Morris Zoning Ordinance do not align with the use categories in the 2021 International Building Code. Both the Zoning Ordinance and International Building Code regulate use, but the two sets of categories were written separately and have not been reconciled. This requires applicants to reconcile differences between the two codes. Both code types were developed independently, with building codes being heavily based upon use to determine standards of safety. Zoning uses were defined with a focus on differences in explicit uses that affect issues such as parking demand, traffic generation, and noise.

It is recommended that the use categories in the Zoning Ordinance be revised to match the larger set of International Building Code uses, with conditions or restrictions as necessary to control environmental impact. The result is a

tighter coordination between zoning and building regulation, and a much simpler process for applicants.



Action 3

Modify the Zoning Ordinance to permit home occupation uses by right in all residential zoning districts.

Home-based businesses expand the local economy by providing additional opportunities to open a business without buying or leasing formal space. Permitting home-based businesses also contributes to home affordability and may help defray the costs of childcare if one or both parents work at home. Some level of home occupation should be permitted in all residential zoning districts. To implement this recommended action, the following steps should be considered:

- Provide a definition for home occupation including appropriate uses
- Expand allowances for home occupation - square footage, hours, and employees

Currently, home occupations are permitted by right in the R-1 Single Family District, R-2 Single Family District, R-3 Single Family District, and RR Rural Residential District. In these districts, home occupation uses are permitted subject to an appeal that is granted by the Planning and Zoning Board and further subject to Article 15 Home Occupations, as well as other appropriate permits and/or licenses needed.

It is recommended that the City modify the Zoning Ordinance to permit home occupations by-right in the R-1, R-2, R-3, and RR districts. This would allow residents, no matter the housing type, to partake in home occupations, while also reducing the burden on the Planning and Zoning Board.

It is also recommended that the City consider updating the home occupation regulations. Recommended modifications and updates include:

- Signage. Limit signs to one per home occupation in the A-1 district and disallow home occupation signage in other zoning districts



Action 4

Permit upper-story residential uses in the C-2 General Commercial District and C-3 Special Commercial District.

Upper-story residential uses have been common uses above commercial uses for decades, and their recent rise in popularity marks a return to how cities have historically functioned. Upper-story residential uses can take a variety of forms, including live-work units or apartments or condominiums rented or sold on the market. All of these units provide residential space downtown and in commercial zones. These residential uses are often highly desirable and add life and vibrancy. Because residents can often access their workplaces and shopping destinations on foot or by bicycle, upper story residential uses offer the potential to reduce congestion as well. It is recommended that upper story residential uses be permitted for all uses in the C-2 General Commercial District and for compatible uses in the C-3 Special Commercial District.



Action 5

Provide a definition for live-work units and permit live-work units in all zoning districts except the R-R Rural Residential District, R-1 Single Family District, and industrial districts.

A live-work unit, which includes commercial space and residential space for the business or property owner, should be permitted in all zoning districts except low-density residential single-family and industrial districts. Live-works units are typically small office or service uses, which create negligible traffic and parking demands. While some single-family residential areas may resist their inclusion, they have a very low impact on a neighborhood and a positive impact on the City as a whole.



Action 6

Modify the Zoning Ordinance to include definitions for microbrewery and brew pub and revise the permitted uses in the C-1 Restricted Commercial District, C-2 General Commercial District, and C-3 Special Commercial District.

Brewery, Micro: “Any building used for the production of beer that manufactures less than 40,000 barrels per year, with a barrel containing 31 U.S. liquid gallons. A micro-brewery, actively and continuously engaged in the manufacture of alcoholic beverages on the manufacturer’s licensed premises, may conduct tastings or samplings on the licensed premises, and for that purpose give away or sell alcoholic beverages manufactured there for consumption on only the premises where manufactured.”

- A “Brewery, Micro” could be allowed with conditions in the C-1 Restricted Commercial District, the C-2 General Commercial District, and in the I-1 Light Industrial Districts.

Brew Pub: “An establishment, meeting the qualifications of a brew pub under the State alcoholic beverage control laws in Title 28, Chapter 4A of the Code of Alabama 1975, as amended, where beer is actively and continuously manufactured or brewed, in a quantity not to exceed 10,000 barrels in any one year, for consumption on the premises or for sale to any designated wholesaler licensee for resale to retail licensees; and which contains a restaurant or otherwise provides food for consumption on the premises.”

- A “Brew-Pub” could be allowed with conditions in the C-R Commercial Recreation District, C-1 Restricted Commercial District, the C-2 General Commercial District, the C-3 Special Commercial District, and in the R-P Planned Unit District. In addition, if the City adopts a Mixed-Use District in the future, then Brew-Pubs would be an appropriate permitted use (see **Action 1.2 in Chapter 4: Future Land Use**). These would have a much smaller footprint, and per the Alabama state code, would need to contain a restaurant on the premises.



Action 7

Modify the Zoning Ordinance to better regulate the use of storage in buildings.

During the public involvement associated with this Plan, residents expressed concern with the utilization of some vacant structures for storage. It is recommended that the Zoning Ordinance be modified to specify that such storage is not permitted. To see an example of how this type of regulations might be included in the Zoning Ordinance, please see the callout box on [page 138](#).



Action 8

Adopt and regularly update a Capital Improvement Plan.

A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a statement of the City's policies and financial abilities to manage the physical development of the community. This vital tool sets the schedule and priority by which public improvements can be funded, in conjunction with revenue projections. A CIP should be updated annually as part of the budget process. Maintaining an updated CIP gives the City greater certainty in forecasting infrastructure capacity, which can lay the groundwork for adopting standards such as concurrency requirements or capital recovery fees. These standards would ensure new developments add adequate infrastructure capacity to mitigate their impacts but would require a CIP to accurately forecast this capacity.



Image Credit: Better Town Tool Kit



Action 9

Modify the Subdivision Regulations to include curb and gutter requirements.

During the public involvement phase associated with this Plan, residents noted concerns with flooding issues in Morris, including areas within newer subdivisions. A curb and gutter system can alleviate some flooding issues by ensuring that stormwater has a path to be conveyed away from the road surface and yards and into the storm sewer via storm drains. This system has additional benefits beyond stormwater management. Because the gutter stiffens the edge of the road surface, it can also reduce road surface cracks and failure at the edge when compared with a grass swale or ditch. A curb and gutter system also requires less maintenance when compared to the existing system.

While the City's Design and Construction Specifications contain curb and gutter standards, these should also be added to the Subdivision Regulations to promote consistency and code compliance. The following is some example language that can be inserted into the Subdivision Regulations:

- Curb and gutter shall be provided on both sides of new thoroughfares and extensions to existing thoroughfares in R-1, R-2, R-3, and R-P zones.
- Where all lots are three acres or larger and an acceptable drainage plan is submitted and approved the requirement to install curb and gutter may be waived.



Image Credit: Ayres Associates

Example Storage Standards

SECTION 913: C-1 RESTRICTED COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

913.3: Additional Requirements:

In cases where a Restricted Commercial district adjoins or abuts any residential zoning district, all of the required side and rear setback space may be utilized for parking space except the outermost fifteen (15) feet (minimum) along the property line(s) abutting the residential zoning district(s). Said outermost fifteen (15) feet shall be grassed or landscaped, or otherwise maintained as a buffer strip or green belt.

No drive-through windows will be permitted.

No sales of alcoholic beverages of any kind will be permitted.

No open or outside storage of any kind will be permitted. **Dumpsters and utility appurtenances, loading and service areas, etc. shall be located behind the front building line and screened from public view in accordance with §XX Outdoor Storage and Waste Disposal.**

No interior storage shall be permitted as a primary use or temporary use. Such storage shall only be permitted as an incidental use in accordance with §1003.



Image Credit: Philadelphia Inquirer, Southdown Homes

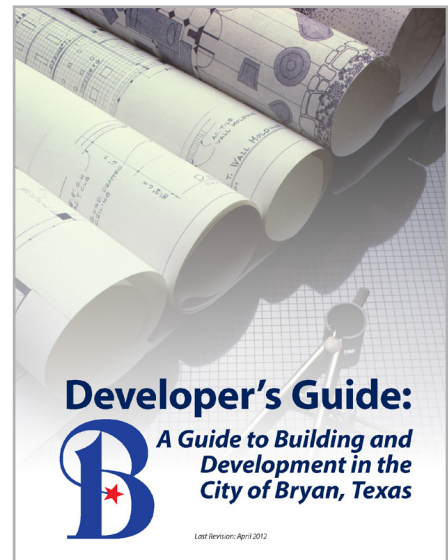


Image Credit: City of Bryan, Texas

Goal #7

Other recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions.



Action 1

Provide a list of current development application fees.

Application review and permitting fees should be clear, easily accessible, and simplified wherever possible. The current fee schedule is established by the City in the Municipal Code, §4-8: Fee schedules. This fee schedule should be publicly accessible and made available online on the City's website. Where possible, fees should be flat and common fees should be combined. These best practices make fees very easy to calculate and increase predictability for applicants and developers. Fees should also be adjusted to reflect the policies of the community. For example, if redevelopment and infill is prioritized along U.S. Highway 31, then fees in that corridor should be lowered to incentivize preferred development.



Action 2

Establish and publish a step-by-step application process guide for development and redevelopment.

Development and redevelopment can often be hindered by opaque municipal permitting requirements and approval processes. Even experienced developers may find unfamiliar regulations difficult to interpret if they have not worked in Morris before. To alleviate these issues and incentivize development and redevelopment, the City is encouraged to create and a step-by-step guide or checklist to help applicants and entrepreneurs navigate the process. This guide should be updated regularly, posted online, and distributed through relevant networks such as the Chamber of Commerce.

The guide should include a comprehensive checklist for each type of development or redevelopment covering each step the developer must take throughout the entire process. Wherever possible, this process guide should link to fillable forms, many of which are already

available on the City's website. This process guide could be packaged with additional helpful documents, such as a fact sheet describing municipal, state, and federal development incentives, and promoted as a development assistance toolkit. When completed, the process guide should be published on the City's website, promoted on social media, and disseminated through interest groups such as the Morris Chamber of Commerce.



Action 3

Modify the Sign Regulations to ensure content neutrality.

In the 2015 case of *Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Arizona*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that sign regulations must be content-neutral. The sign regulations in §5:22 of the Morris Zoning Ordinance are mostly, but not entirely, content-neutral. Some content-based categorical sign descriptions in the current sign regulations include occupational signs, flags or insignias, and political signs. A general rule of thumb is that if a person needs to read a sign to know how to regulate it, then it is content based. If a sign can be regulated through descriptions such as type, number, size, style, and location, then the regulations are likely content-neutral. For example, 'political yard sign' is a content-based description because it references the sign's message while 'temporary lawn sign' is content-neutral because it only refers to sign type, location, and duration.

In order to comply with the *Reed v. the Town of Gilbert* ruling, the sign regulations should be modified to regulate by type, number, size and style of sign, and all references to categorical sign descriptions should be removed. Examples of regulating by type of sign include freestanding signs (i.e. monument and pole signs) and attached signs (i.e. roof signs, wall signs, canopy and awning signs, marquee signs and window signs). Additional regulations for temporary signs, such as maximum number of signs per parcel, are required since it is no longer possible to regulate by type of sign.



Action 4

Develop and adopt an annexation policy.

See **Action 1.10 in Chapter 4: Future Land Use.**

7

Livability & Public Services

Goal #1: Provide efficient municipal services and adequate facilities that contributes to a better quality of life for the community. 142

Goal #2: Preserve the safety and welfare of the community. 150

Goal #3: Promote and encourage the continued development of commerce within Morris. ... 152



MORRIS
FIRE
DEPARTMENT

"Out of Dedication"

Emergency Dial 9-1-1



My BIG idea for the future of Morris is....
"Growth while maintaining a small town feel!"
– Morris resident



Image Credit: Trussville Chamber of Commerce

Morris residents enjoy a high quality of life in a livable place, and municipal planning can ensure these standards are maintained and enhanced.

Livable communities provide all residents with the security necessary to thrive, regardless of age, income, and ability. Livability refers to elements that make a community great, such as codes that encourage desirable development, quality services and facilities, safety for all residents, and attractive neighborhoods. This Livability and Public Services chapter provides concrete guidance on all these issues as the City of Morris seeks to enhance the unique characteristics that make it an attractive community.

Goal #1

Provide efficient municipal services and adequate facilities that contributes to a better quality of life for the community.



Action 1

Create a mobile app or purchase software to enable the City to send out push notifications to improve communications with its residents.

A "City of Morris" mobile app could provide timely updates on issues of city-wide importance, such as special called meetings, community events, utility service updates, and other issues. The purchase and use of such an app would increase communication between residents and the City's administration on issues affecting the community and would increase the involvement of residents in the decision-making process of the City government.



Action 2

Increase the communications capacity of the City government, boards, and commissions by regularly updating the City's website.

Conduct a quarterly review of website content to ensure that information is relevant, and that the website remains user friendly and informative. Residents would like to see the city post meeting minutes from City Council meetings and Planning and Zoning Board meetings. In addition, it is recommended that that the city purchase a domain for email contacts for local communication and business development use. This would pay dividends by increasing Morris's online presence, an increasingly effective and popular way to engage residents.



Action 3

Continue to make improvements to the Morris Senior Center.

During the public involvement process of this Plan, numerous positive comments were received from senior citizens regarding the Morris Senior Center and rightfully so. The Center provides a variety of speakers, programs, games, and arts and crafts in order to improve the wellbeing of people ages 60 and older. A nutritious lunch is available on weekdays. Lunches must be ordered by 10:00 a.m. each day and a \$2 donation is suggested. Transportation is available for seniors upon request and scheduling.

The Morris Senior Center may be rented for functions by the general public. A rental agreement must be completed and submitted to City Hall. The Senior Center improves the quality of life of residents by providing them with an outlet for socialization, recreation, and other resources.

Listed below are recommended improvements to the Senior Center as noted by residents:

- Enlarge the Senior Center so that programming and daily activities can be expanded
- Repaint the interior and exterior of the Senior Center
- Provide updated décor and amenities, like new TVs, to help with events
- Consider offering transportation service to medical appointments



Action 4

Continue improving municipal facilities.

During the public involvement process associated with the Plan, residents also expressed a desire for continued improvements to municipal facilities. Morris has recently improved some of its municipal facilities. One example is when the City moved its City Hall into the new building (formerly home to a Jefferson County facility) adjacent to the Morris Senior Center in 2021.

The City should consider budgeting for the following improvements:

- **Fire Station:** Renovate and expand the building as recommended in the 2021 Report provided to the City, see Action **Police Station and Court Chambers:** Renovate and expand the building to suit the needs of the Police Department, Court, and City Council Chambers. In the short-term the City should budget to paint the interior and exterior of the building
- **City Hall:** Refresh the interior and exterior through repainting and updated signage
- **Streets Department Building:** Relocate the facility to another area of the city. For more information, please see **Catalytic Project Idea #7 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas**
- **Morris Senior Center:** For short-term improvements, see **Action 1.3** above. In the long-term Morris may consider building a new complex to house City Hall, the Senior Center, and other municipal services. For more information, please see **Catalytic Project Idea #7 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas**



Action 5

Work with the Jefferson County Library Cooperative to establish mini-libraries, pop-up reading centers, and additional satellite services throughout Morris.

Like pop-up shops, pop-up libraries are temporary flexible libraries that bring services provided at a library – library card signups, material checkouts, digital resources, and device help - to patrons. Pop-up libraries are a great way to reintroduce residents to the library who otherwise not go to the physical building to the other resources available such as digital downloadable auto books, digital magazines, music borrowing, online homework help, and research databases. One case study to research and follow is the Suffolk Public Library in Suffolk, Virginia.

Pop-Up Library

A pop-up library is an easy and exciting vehicle to engage residents, foster a love of reading, build relationships, and bring library services to those who otherwise wouldn't have access.

Consider the following steps to create a pop-up library.

- Fill a two-sided book cart with popular titles, high-interest fiction, nonfiction, and graphic novels
- Create a pop-up library sign, with easy-to-read font
- Create a checkout system, and include relevant information (name, book title, bar-code)
- Use foldable, and light furniture to set up your event - to ensure flexibility.
- Hold event in high traffic area. Consider a school playground, vacant store front, or community event
- Promote the pop-up library through social media, city newsletter, or municipal mailing
- Set up the pop-up library and start checking out books and other library material!



Image Credit: Suffolk Public Library



Action 6

Partner with Gardendale Library for a summer reading initiative.



Action 7

Establish a periodic or seasonal farmer's market.

During the public involvement process of this Plan, numerous comments were received regarding the desire for a farmers' market in Downtown Morris. Farmers markets provide a venue for local farmers and artisans to gather and sell their products to the community. Beyond benefits to farmers, who gain access to new consumers, farmers markets can foster economic revitalization in the districts they are held. For this reason, the City should work with local farmers to establish periodic and seasonal markets in Downtown Morris.

The Montevallo Farmers' Market, which began in 2010, is a cooperative effort between the City of Montevallo and the Montevallo Chamber of Commerce. The market runs weekly in the summer months and provides access to fresh produce and other goods from a variety of local farmers and other vendors. This provides support to local businesses as well as an outlet for civic engagement and community gathering. The Montevallo Farmers' Market is an excellent local example of a mid-sized city's farmers' market, and the City of Morris should consider reaching out to its organizers to learn from their success to establish a small-scale market in Downtown Morris.



Action 8

Encourage the creation of a local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) has become a popular way that locally grown food products are made available to consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from a farmer. The basic rules of a CSA are – a farmer offers a certain number of “shares” or memberships to the public and in return, customers receive a box, bag, or basket of seasonal produce each

week throughout the farming season. This arrangement creates several rewards for both the farmer and the consumer. Advantages for the farmer include receiving payment early in the season (helping cash flow), having the opportunity to meet the customer and spending time marketing before the busy season. Advantages for consumers include getting to eat fresh local food, getting exposed to new vegetables and new ways of cooking and exposure to their local community.



Image Credit: Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Freewheel Farm



Action 9

Develop initiatives to minimize illegal dumping.

To combat and minimize illegal dumping, the City should consider the following initiatives and programs:

- Post signs that educate residents on illegal dumping fines and protected areas. Install lighting in areas where illegal dumping occurs to deter violators.
- Install monitoring devices, motion sensing beepers, surveillance cameras, and provide additional police to patrol known dump sites.

Create a volunteer-based illegal dumping and litter abatement task force to serve as an instrument of change in the City by aiding residents with unmaintained properties, educating the community about the harmful effects of illegal dumping, and reporting those who participant in illegal dumping to City officials and staff.



Action 10

Explore the feasibility of providing bulk trash and debris pickup to Morris residents.

According to public input received as part of this Plan, when asked “Are there any additional public services you would like to see in Morris?” the desire for debris pickup was the second most requested public service improvement, accounting for 22% of responses. This service is not currently provided to residents. To meet this need, the City should explore the feasibility of providing it either through a contract with a private company or by municipal staff. Communities use a variety of schedules for debris and bulk trash pickup depending on community needs, including weekly, biweekly, quarterly, or upon request. Municipalities in the area use a variety of private services, and the City could contact these or others. Morris could also consider discussing these municipalities’ level of satisfaction with their providers.



Action 11

Conduct an analysis of garbage pickup to determine if an increase in frequency (or additional trash cans) is warranted.

Morris currently works with a private trash removal service, which picks up trash weekly. Residents expressed a desire for increased garbage pickup, and the City should explore ways to meet this need. The City could discuss increasing garbage pickup frequency to twice a week, providing additional or larger trash cans to residents, or picking up leaf and limbs monthly, if feasible, similar to other Jefferson County municipalities.

The City should post the garbage pickup schedule (and any changes) on the municipal website and their Facebook page. Moreover, the City should continue to investigate ways to make the pickup program more efficient for residents yet cost effective for the City. Picking up more trash through any of the methods mentioned can improve the aesthetics of an area, can decrease the amount of illegal dumping and can support code enforcement and compliance with Morris’ Weed and Litter Ordinance.



Action 12

Consider creating a city-wide recycling program or a recycling drop-off area.

Municipal recycling programs have grown increasingly popular, as cities have recognized the benefits of diverting waste from landfills and preventing code violations related to littering. The City should consider establishing a city-wide recycling program or establishing a municipal recycling drop-off area. A city-wide recycling program could be created alongside garbage and debris pickup under the Department of Public Works or through one of many local private contractors. Private contractors typically issue waste barrels and have pick-up schedules, while city-run systems can do this or maintain a drop-off location for recyclables. A municipal recycling drop-off area would likely be administered by the City on municipal land. To save space, this potential site could be combined with a compatible municipal facility, such as the Streets Department building.

Either type of program could be rolled out in phases, such as allowing a limited number of materials, such as newspaper and aluminum, before adding capacity for additional types of recyclables. As the City explores the feasibility of a city-wide recycling program or drop-off area, consider ways to promote participation. Single-stream recycling—which does not require residents to sort—often has higher participation rates and therefore offers the most benefits.

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) administers Recycling Fund Grants which provide reimbursement to local governments for developing, implementing, and enhancing recycling programs. For more information, please visit their website at <https://adem.alabama.gov/programs/land/recycling.cnt>.



Action 13

Explore the feasibility of increasing the City's property tax to implement the goals and actions of this Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Morris could consider raising its property tax rates, which are markedly lower

than its neighbors. For the 2021 tax year, Morris assessed 6.5 mills, while nearby cities assessed between 8.0 and 12.5 mills. The additional revenue from raising these rates closer to the local average could be used to fund the ideas expressed in this Master Plan.



Action 14

Allocate money in the City budget for the Planning and Zoning Board to attend training courses and workshops on community planning and related issues.

Attending training seminars and workshops is one of the best ways for Planning and Zoning Board members to remain informed about ever-changing topical issues. The Alabama Planning Institute offers a range of annual workshops and training courses. To best position these boards to tackle the complex issues brought before them and remain ahead of the curve on emerging issues, the City should consider allocating funds in the annual budget for Planning and Zoning Board members to attend these and other relevant training courses.

For more information, see the callout box on **page 147** and please visit <http://alabamaplanning.org/professional-development/alabama-planning-institute/>.



Action 15

Work with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham's (RPCGB) Economic Development Department to pursue, apply for, and manage grant programs.

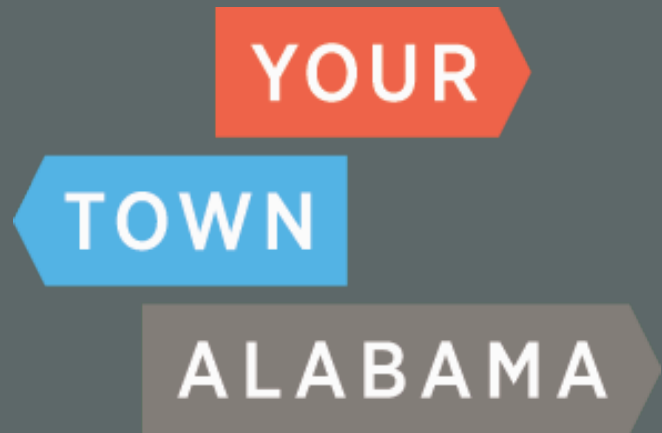
The most common way RPCGB helps their member governments with economic development is through assistance with grant writing and applications for project funding. RPCGB also provides members with notices of funding opportunities and administrative assistance during the implementation of a grant. For an overview of how RPCGB can assist with your grant projects and what opportunities may be available for your project, visit <https://www.rpcgb.org/grant-application-assistance>.

YOUR TOWN ALABAMA

Your Town Alabama was founded to meet the challenge facing small-town and rural communities, including pressure from suburban sprawl, the loss of jobs, and stagnation. While communities may face different specific issues, **asset-based design is a common tool that small town and rural communities across the state can use to meet the challenges they face.**

Since its inception in 1999, almost 1,000 elected officials and civic leaders have graduated from Your Town Alabama workshops, which promotes asset-based design as a tool for small town and rural communities across the state to meet the challenges they face. This concept gives communities the tools to capitalize on what does work, not what doesn't. These intensive, hands-on workshops give community officials, business leaders and concerned citizens the opportunity to study common issues facing our communities and develop practical solutions they can bring home to improve their livability and prosperity.

Workshops are held annually. Information will be announced on the Your Town Alabama website (<https://www.yourtownalabama.org/>).



BECOMING A CERTIFIED PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICIAL (CAPZO)

The Alabama Planning Institute, through the Office of Continuing Studies and Outreach at the University of North Alabama, offers six training courses to become a Certified Alabama Planning and Zoning Official (CAPZO).

The training courses are designed to educate municipal staff, Planning and Zoning Board members, mayors, councilors, zoning and building staff, clerks, other city staff and anyone involved with local zoning with a **basic understanding of the constitutional and statutory framework for comprehensive and regulatory planning in Alabama.**



The six training courses are:

- The Legal Foundation for Planning and Zoning in Alabama
- Comprehensive Planning: How to Prepare, Update, and Implement Your Plan
- Basic Zoning & Subdivision Regulations
- Powers, Duties, & Responsibilities of Planning Commissions and Boards of Adjustment
- Meeting Management and Dispute Resolution
- Home Study Course: Community Planning in Alabama

Course descriptions and registration can be found at www.una.edu/continuing-studies. Select CAPZO Certification under the Alabama Planning Institute category.

ABOUT CDBG GRANTS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to provide funds on a competitive and need-driven basis to help communities improve their infrastructure, facilities and services. In north-central Alabama, CDBG funds are administered by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). Eligible CDBG projects must meet at least one of the following three goals:

- Benefit low- and moderate-income persons
- Aid in the prevention or clearance of slum and blight
- Meet a particularly urgent need

Projects are awarded annually, and a 20% local match is a common requirement. ADECA provides CDBG funds for four types of projects:

- **Competitive Fund:** intended for infrastructure and facility improvements such as water and sewer extension, street and drainage improvements, as well as neighborhood and downtown revitalization and housing rehabilitation.
- **Community Enhancement Fund:** intended to address quality of life issues, typically used for service and facility improvements such as senior citizen centers and community centers, boys and girls clubs, recreational facilities, and fire protection.
- **Planning Fund:** a small fund for communities to develop community-wide plans and downtown revitalization plans
- **Economic Development Fund:** a small fund intended for projects that support the creation or retention of jobs.



Image Credit: Valley Times-News

CASE STUDY: LANETT, AL

Lanett, Alabama (population 6,970), located in Chambers County, knows the value of CDBG funds. After the City was hit by the closing of manufacturing plants and the loss of several hundred local jobs, Lanett sought to revitalize its historic downtown and make itself attractive for businesses. In 2015 the city applied for funds for downtown streetscape improvements. Awarded over \$220,000, Lanett began widening sidewalks, adding street furniture such as benches, planters and lighting, and repaving. The city leveraged this success into successful applications in 2018 and 2019, bringing in almost \$440,000 more to expand the streetscaping program throughout downtown.

To date much of the historic downtown has updated and improved thanks to CDBG funds. Including the local match portion and some private funds almost one million dollars has been invested into the downtown physical infrastructure.



Image Credit: City of Lanett



Image Credit: Valley Times-News



Image Credit: Valley Times-News

"I like the way it looks right now, but it's going to look really good ten years from now...I think this will be money well spent. I see it like this: if you don't invest in your hometown, no one else will."

-Lanett Mayor Kyle McCoy

Opposite page: Downtown Lanett during CDBG-funded construction

Top, clockwise from left: fountain in downtown Lanett, sidewalks in Lanett during and after CDBG-funded construction

Sources: <https://chattvoice.com/ivey-announces-nearly-grant-for-lanett-downtown-revitalization-p2893-184.htm>

<https://www.valleytimes-news.com/2020/05/lanett-approves-grant/>

<https://www.valleytimes-news.com/2020/09/council-awards-contract-for-streetscape-project/>



Action 16

Meet with local internet service providers to ensure that high-speed internet is available in underserved areas and improved in existing areas of the city.

Morris residents, like others that live in rural communities, want faster, cheaper internet just like their suburban and metro-dwelling neighbors so that they can better work remotely, use online services, and access shopping, news information, and government data. Primarily, Morris residents receive internet service through their cable company (AT&T or Spectrum), or through their land lines via a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) connection. Although functional, these older internet systems are not upgraded that often, making them slower than those in the metro Birmingham area.

The City should be proactive about meeting with local service providers to encourage the installation of new infrastructure in underserved areas, the maintenance of existing internet infrastructure, and plan for infrastructure upgrades. During the public involvement phase of this Plan, residents reported that they would like to see expanded internet service throughout the City. To implement this action, the City should consider partnering with internet service providers to apply for funding through the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund.



Image Credit: Sharon Rich



Action 17

Increase awareness of the Medicaid Waiver Program administered by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham as a continuum of affordable care that allows elderly and disabled individuals who are at risk of nursing home placement to remain in their homes for as long as possible.

Medicaid Waiver is a program of the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) and the Alabama Medicaid Agency and is administered by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB). The program is designed to allow elderly and disabled individuals who are at risk of nursing home placement to remain in their homes as long as possible. To be eligible, the individual's income cannot exceed \$2,250 per month and the individual cannot have resources in excess of \$2,000. Individuals must exhibit same disabilities and frailty for admission to a nursing home in Alabama as determined by their physician.

In 2020, the Medicaid Waiver program served 882 elderly or disabled individuals throughout the Birmingham metropolitan area. To learn more, visit the RPCGB's website at <https://www.rpcgb.org/medicaid-waiver-program>.

Goal #2

Preserve the safety and welfare of the community.

Morris residents are highly satisfied with public safety. As the City continues to grow, it should ensure its public safety departments maintain their ability and level of service to protect residents.



Action 1

Ensure that the Morris Police Department and Fire and Rescue Department have sufficient resources to respond to emergencies effectively.

The Morris Fire and Rescue Department and Police Department currently operate on limited budgets, and their coverage responsibilities continue to grow as the

city limits expand, further stretching their resources. To ensure that these critical Morris public safety departments can effectively respond to emergencies, the City should budget and allocate the resources necessary for them to recruit new full-time volunteers or staff. In particular, the Fire and Rescue Department would benefit from additional firefighters and administrative staff to carry out building inspections and fire prevention and education, while the Police Department would benefit from additional officers and detectives.



Action 2

Allocate funding to renovate and expand the Morris Police Department, Court, and Council Chambers Building to ensure that facility and equipment needs are met.



Action 3

Ensure that the City's Police Department fleet is well maintained and updated as necessary.



Action 4

Continue to implement recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Morris Fire and Rescue Department.

The City of Morris has been working with a consultant since mid- 2021 to propose improvements to the Morris Fire and Rescue Department. The City is encouraged to continue this relationship and begin implementing recommendations. Some recommendations may require a larger financial commitment on the part of the City. In this case, the City is encouraged to pursue grants, loans, and other sources of funds, if necessary, to defray the costs of implementing these recommendations.



Action 5

Allocate funding to renovate and expand the Morris Fire and Rescue Department's building and to ensure that facility and equipment needs are met.



Image Credit: City of Morris



Image Credit: City of Morris

Did You Know?

Morris police officers administer a “close patrol” program. Before Morris residents go out of town, they can notify the police department, who will then dedicate additional patrol time around the residence.

Goal #3

Promote and encourage the continued development of commerce within Morris.



Action 1

Promote a unified branding strategy to foster community identity and differentiate Morris within the region.

The City has begun to compile a set of meaningful symbols that represent Morris, such as the dogwood tree. Officials are encouraged to work with branding and marketing professionals to build on this by developing a unified and consistent visual identity along with a branding strategy for the City. One potential strategy is to focus on Morris's ecotourism opportunities (see **Action 3.2** below). Once a branding and marketing campaign has been selected, the City should consider the following:

- Launch a promotional campaign market to showcase the new branding.
- Update the City's website and social media accounts with new logos, themes and graphics.
- Utilize new branding on all events and promotions associated with the City of Morris.
- Update gateway signage to showcase new logos to ensure visitors know they have "arrived."
- Update signage at City Hall and other facilities.



Action 2

Promote Morris as an ecotourism destination.

Ecotourism targets an eco-conscious segment of the population that wants to engage in nature-related tourism on conservation lands while reducing the ecological footprint of their visit. Rural landowners can earn revenues from tourism activities on their land, including

traditional recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, and observing wildlife. A prime example of potential ecotourism activity in Morris is Turkey Creek. The City of Morris should consider utilizing the creek as an asset – visitors could canoe, kayak, run, or bike along the creek. Moreover, a greenway could be constructed along the creek to connect the southern half of the city limits to the Turkey Creek Nature Preserve in Pinson.

In addition, the City should consider creating promotional brochures to promote the City as an ecotourism destination. The brochure could include information about Turkey Creek and blueway /canoe launch sites, recreational sites, including the Turkey Creek Nature Preserve, trails, and local businesses. For more information about a potential greenway along Turkey Creek, please see **Catalytic Project Idea #6 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas.**



Action 3

Sponsor a façade improvement program.

Facade improvement programs are incentive programs created to encourage property owners and businesses to improve the exterior appearance of their buildings and storefronts through financial incentives such as a matching grant or loan, a tax incentive, or through design assistance. They can be focused on commercial or residential development in either historic or non-historic districts.

Funding for facade improvement districts usually comes from a variety of sources including annual tax levies, federal and state grants for community and economic development, housing, and downtown revitalization, and municipal reserves. To maintain the program, application fees and interest income generated by the facade improvement loans are used to help keep the funding available.

Components of Facade Improvement Programs include:

- Statement of purpose that explains why the program was established
- A well-defined target area shown on a map, with the streets well defined in the ordinance

- language
- Eligibility requirements
- A description of eligible and ineligible proposed projects – which may include anything related to improvement of the building exterior or projects visible from the street
- Stabilization and weatherization – roof repairs, securing windows and doors
- Facade painting, repair, reconstruction, or replacement of historic features
- Awnings or canopies
- Signage
- Exterior lighting
- Window and door repair or replacement
- Rear building treatments
- Alley enhancements
- An emphasis on good design – when no review process exists, the Planning and Zoning Board could rely on the Secretary of Interior’s standards for rehabilitation, which apply if the target area or property has been listed in the National and State Register of Historic Places
- Application and selection process



Action 4

Utilize vacant city-owned property for the needs of the community.

The former Morris Community Health Center, located behind the Morris City Hall at 590 Morris Majestic Road, is roughly 3,000 square feet. When considering its reuse, the city should consider a use that enhances the community. The building could provide several opportunities including:

- Expand the programming provided at the Senior Center, see **Catalytic Project Idea #7**.
- Work with Jefferson County Library System to create a pop-up library, see **Action 1.5** in this Chapter.
- Reserve the space for additional city offices.

- Lease the building to another medical clinic.
- Create a shared co-working space.
- Create a job training center or business incubator, see **Action 3.6** below.



Action 5

Maintain a database of sites and buildings that are suitable for new development and redevelopment.

There are many vacant or underutilized retail, office, and industrial buildings in the City of Morris that could be well-suited to new or existing businesses. Often, one of the largest obstacles to starting or expanding a business is space. By maintaining a database of available business space, the City can help foster economic development and business growth and expansion. It is recommended that the City maintain an online database of commercial, office and industrial properties and spaces available for sale or lease.

The database should include information such as square footage, existing zoning, lease rates and sale price, available utilities, condition, and any other pertinent information. Where possible, photos and floorplans would be helpful for prospective businesses. Depending on the City’s capacity, consider the feasibility of partnering with an economic development consultant for the creation and maintenance of the database. The City and partners should promote the database locally and to businesses considering locating to Morris. The Jefferson County Economic & Industrial Development Authority, whose website is <https://jeffmet.com/home>, has experience operating a similar database and may be a valuable partner.



Action 6

Explore the feasibility of creating a job training center or business incubator.

Throughout the public involvement phase of this plan, residents expressed a desire for a job training center or business incubator to locate in the city. A job training center or business incubator would be beneficial to community

CASE STUDY: THE SOURCE - DENVER, CO

The Source Hotel + Market Hall complex is a prime example of creative, flexible adaptive reuse of an obsolete industrial facility. The building housing the Market Hall was built in the 1880s by the Colorado Ironworks as an iron foundry and boiler factory. Over the years, it has served many light and heavy industrial uses, including production, and warehousing as well as government surplus storage. Beginning in 2010, it sat vacant until being purchased for redevelopment in 2013.

With 45,000 square feet across two connected spaces, this cavernous area was too large for a single consumer-facing commercial use. The Source's redeveloper and architect decided on a market hall commercial concept. This concept has grown in popularity recently, with examples being opened

in many cities across the country. The Source is an example of adaptive reuse, but it goes further by modifying a single large space to accommodate multiple small-scale businesses.

Today, the Source Market Hall is home to 25 vendors whose businesses range from a restaurant and a pizzeria to retail apparel, a barber, and a microbrewery. Individually these businesses would not have been able to occupy such a large space, but with creative and flexible design, collectively they are able to return life to an obsolete foundry. Visitors benefit from a shopping experience that not every commercial development offers, and each vendor benefits from additional foot traffic encouraged by other businesses under the same roof.



Sources: https://www.confluence-denver.com/features/adaptive_reuse_101415.aspx
<https://denverarchitecture.org/recap-from-foundry-to-market-hall-adaptive-reuse-at-the-source/>
[https://rinoartdistrict.org/post/the-source`](https://rinoartdistrict.org/post/the-source)

residents who are interested in starting a small business. Such a use could be a catalyst for the community while providing employment and business opportunities. The City should pursue partnerships with local colleges, financial institutions, and the business community to help support these efforts. For a list of existing business incubators visit <https://www.madeinalabama.com/business-development/small-business/incubator-programs/>.



Action 7

Encourage compatible infill development and redevelopment in existing commercial areas.

For more information about infill development and redevelopment, see **Action 1.4 in Chapter 4: Future Land Use**.



Action 8

Recruit and attract additional commercial services and retail businesses to serve the needs of residents while increasing revenue.

During the public involvement process associated with this Plan, residents frequently expressed their desire for additional commercial and retail options throughout the City. In fact, when asked what types of businesses and/or additional services are needed in Morris survey respondents noted a need for additional restaurants (31%), a grocery store (15%), local non-chain retail (12%), and cultural attractions and entertainment (16%).

According to market research*, the following business types show potential for expansion and recruitment throughout Morris:

- Gasoline Stations
- Florist
- Use Merchandise Stores



Action 9

Establish a community events organization to develop both community-interaction events as well as regional events that will promote the City.

Cultural programming promotes the arts, music, and local or regional traditions, which strengthens social involvement among community members and can increase tourism. These festivals, cultural events, and guided activities are essential to quality of life. The City should consider establishing a community events organization to solicit feedback from residents about events they would enjoy as well as design and plan events which will bring in visitors from within the region.



Image Credit: Calera Main Street



Image Credit: Hoover Sun



8

Parks & Green Systems

Goal #1: Expand and enhance recreational opportunities for residents. 158

Goal #2: Restore and sustain water quality, natural habitats and groundwater by incorporating best practices for environmental site design and stormwater management in development. .. 166



My BIG idea for the future of Morris is....

“Accessibility for kids, parents, disabled citizens to walk and enjoy more parks and nature areas”

– Morris resident



Image Credit: Turkey Creek Nature Preserve

A high quality of life depends on access to parks, sports, and family-friendly places to enjoy nature. Morris is blessed with scenic rural views and access to Turkey Creek, and the creation of additional green spaces can promote mental and physical health and stimulate social cohesion among residents. One of Morris’s greatest assets is its natural landscape, which can be preserved and enhanced alongside thoughtful development.

Goal #1

Expand and enhance recreational opportunities for residents.



Action 1

Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Based on the number of desired improvements to parks that were heard during the public involvement process of this Plan and the popularity of city-owned parks, it is recommended that the City of Morris commission the development of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The purpose of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to provide a comprehensive vision for the overall park system, as well as overall guidance for improvements and expanded programmatic needs in individual parks.

A Parks and Recreation Master Plan would help the City prioritize improvements and expansions to existing parks and would help the City identify areas for new parks. Specific recommendations, such as park expansion, can more easily be prioritized once a vision and high-level goals for the City’s parks system has been established. This type of plan would provide a framework for orderly and consistent planning, acquisition, development and administration of the City’s parks and recreational resources, programs and facilities.



Action 2

Address upgrades needed at Morris Town Park and plan for its expansion.

Centrally located across from Morris City Hall between Morris Majestic Road and Glennwood Road, Morris Town Park is the centerpiece of downtown. The park contains a paved and lighted walking track, a gazebo for gatherings, and an outdoor seating area with benches and a fountain. Residents indicated that while they are generally pleased with Morris Town Park, they would like to see ongoing and continued park maintenance.

According to public input, the following are recommended improvements to consider at Morris Town Park:

- Continue to maintain the surface of the multi-use path and set funding aside for future resurfacing
- Mark the mileage along the walking track so that users can total their workout distances
- Provide additional shading within the park
- Replace the ornate benches and trash receptacles with furniture that reflects the modern and laidback culture of the City
- Work with a landscape architect to refresh and enhance the landscaping
- Work with Alabama Power to ensure that the park remains lit at night
- Continue to maintain the fountain, existing street furniture, and on-street parking

The City should consider expanding Morris Town Park to the north and south as opportunities arise. If expanding southward, the City should consider acquiring the

southernmost portion of the city block on which Morris Town Park is located. This site may be appropriate for a large outdoor community gathering space such as an amphitheater.

The City is also encouraged to expand Morris Town Park north across Morris Majestic Road to the city-owned property adjacent to Stouts Road. This property, approximately the same size and shape as the existing park, has been proposed as a nature trail and bike path. This would meet a desire expressed by survey respondents during public involvement process for this Plan, where 51% indicated that trails and multi-use paths should be one of the community's highest priority transportation improvements.

Further details about the Morris Town Park expansion should be informed by the proposed Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which should provide for the well-planned expansion of this park and funds become available. For more information about the Morris Town Park expansion, please see **Catalytic Project Idea #3 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas.**



Image Credit: City of Morris



Action 3

Work with the Morris Youth Association to address upgrades needed at the Morris Ballpark.

Located at 430 Ballpark Drive, the Morris Ballpark is a joint venture between the City of Morris and the nonprofit Morris Youth Association. At present, the City owns the property and the Morris Youth Association manages it, providing youth sports such as football, cheerleading, baseball, and softball in the community.

The City of Morris should continue the joint venture with the Morris Youth Association to ensure that these sports facilities continue to be provided and maintained. According to public input, the following are recommended improvements to consider at Morris Ballpark:

- Refresh and maintain ballpark playing surfaces
- Consider upgrading lighting
- Refurbish concession areas
- Consider updating landscaping
- Revitalize parking area



Image Credit: Morris Youth Association



Action 4

Continue to maintain Morris Memorial Park.

Morris Memorial Park, located on the west side of U.S. Highway 31 where it intersects River Bend Road, was built in 1983 to honor service members. From Memorial Day through Veterans Day, American flags line U.S. Highway 31 in the area. The park generates civic pride and should continue to be maintained by the Morris Beautification Board, with the City offering assistance if necessary.



Action 5

Establish new parks in currently underserved residential areas.

When asked in the public survey associated with this Plan “Are there any additional public services you would like to see in Morris?” the top answer noted was additional park areas.

Parks make great communities, but not all Morris residents have easy access to them. Approximately 68% of residents live within a 10-minute walk, or one half-mile, of a public park (see **Figure 8.1**). However, this access is not evenly distributed. The majority of homes outside of the 10–minute walking distance to parks are located in the City’s northern and eastern areas, where much of the recent residential growth has been concentrated.



Image Credit: City of Morris

Higher quality of life is not the only benefit for residents within walking distance of a park. These residents typically report better health and are less prone to chronic diseases. Decades of research have demonstrated that proximity to parks and green spaces support health and wellness. In addition, proximity to pedestrian-accessible parks allow parents to make fewer car trips – thereby reducing local congestion – and are less limiting on recreational opportunities for all age groups.

The City should therefore enact policies that can increase the share of residents within walking distance of public parks or publicly accessible green spaces. These policies may include:

- Identifying locations for future parks of varying sizes near currently underserved residential areas, or locating pocket parks on flood-prone land
- Directing future residential development as close as possible to existing parks
- Ensuring future residential development contains accessible park space



Action 6

Fund and construct the Morris Inclusive Playground.

For more information, please see **Catalytic Project Ideas #5 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas.**



Morris Inclusive Park. Image Credit: City of Morris



Action 7

Explore the feasibility of constructing a dog park.

During the public involvement process of this Plan, residents expressed a desire for a public dog park. Dog parks are increasingly popular for dog owners throughout the country. The Morris Ballpark and adjacent land, included land recently donated by Jefferson County, has been suggested as a viable site for the dog park. This site is spacious enough to accommodate all the necessary features of a successful dog park.

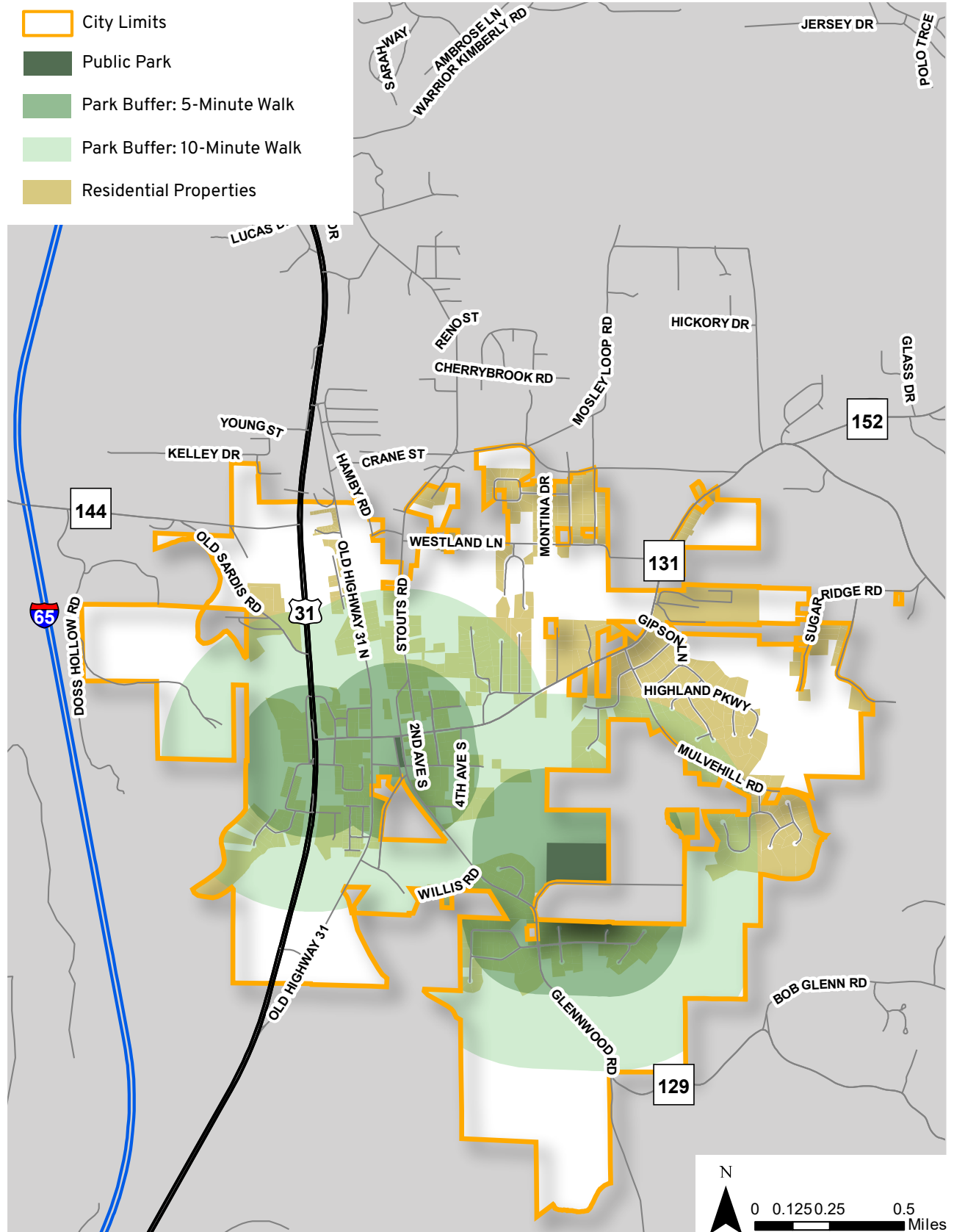
The Beneful Dream Dog Park, located in the City of Alabaster, is an excellent example of a municipal dog park. Components of a successful dog park might include:

- Fenced leash-free areas that separate small (35 lbs. and below) and large dogs for safety
- Pet waste stations
- Covered sitting areas with picnic tables
- Water drinking stations for owners and pets
- Obstacles and varied terrain for dogs to play on



Image Credit: City of Johns Creek, Georgia

Figure 8.1: Existing Access to Parks in Morris



Source: RPCGB



Action 8

Explore the feasibility of constructing a disc golf course.

Disc golf is played much like golf. Instead of a ball and clubs, though, players use a flying disc or frisbee. The sport was formalized in the 1970s and shares with golf the object of completing each hole in the fewest strokes (or, in the case of disc golf, fewest throws). A golf disc is thrown from a tee area to a target, which is the “hole.” The hole can be one of a number of disc golf targets; the most common is an elevated metal basket. As a player progresses down the fairway, he or she must make each consecutive throw from the spot where the previous throw landed. The trees, shrubs, and terrain changes located in and around the fairways provide challenging obstacles for the golfer. Finally, the “putt” lands in the basket and the hole is completed. Disc golf shares the same joys and frustrations of golf, whether it’s sinking a long putt or hitting a tree halfway down the fairway. There are a few differences, though: Disc golf is often free to play in public parks, although pay-to-play courses are trending upward; you probably won’t need to rent a cart, but converted golf course layouts are also on the rise; and your “tee time” will usually come during tournament competition, not casual play.



Action 9

Construct tennis and basketball courts for residents.



Action 10

Establish a minimum required HOA-maintained park space per residential development.

During the survey associated with this Plan, when asked “What is working well or not working well regarding the City’s zoning and subdivision regulations?”, the answers noted the desire to ensure that new developments have adequate open space. As Morris explores modifying the subdivision regulations to require homeowners associations (HOAs) for new developments

(see **Action 1.8 in Chapter 6: Planning and Development Regulations**), one opportunity to expand green space would be for the City to require subdivision developers to build a certain amount of park space per residential development. These requirements should be added to the Zoning Ordinance and include requirements such as:

- The type of appropriate green space - neighborhood park, pocket park, playground, trail, community garden, etc.
- The minimum size and width of new green space
- Potential shade tree requirements
- Thresholds for adequate playground equipment, street furniture, lighting etc. The City should examine examples of such thresholds requirements prior to adoption to ensure they meet Morris’ needs

Pedestrian access would be assured because these parks would be within a new subdivision and developed according to subdivision regulations. Because each subdivision’s parks would be tailored to the needs of its households with maintenance overseen by the governing HOA, there would be strong motivation for HOAs to maintain these facilities in a good state of repair.



Action 11

Explore the feasibility of acquiring land along Turkey Creek for a greenway.

For more information, please see **Catalytic Project Idea #6 in Chapter 3: Catalytic Project Ideas**.



Tuckey Creek. Image Credit: www.SwimGuide.org



Action 12

Consider establishing a Morris Parks and Recreation Board to oversee and expand recreational programming.

During the public involvement process of this Plan, municipal staff expressed the need for a volunteer Parks and Recreation Board. A board could aid existing Parks and Recreation staff in the setting of annual goals, setting budget priorities, and assisting in the management of sports leagues. Board members could volunteer to assist individual leagues or specific age groups within those leagues to reduce the burden on existing staff. In addition, if the City chooses to establish a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the board would be responsible for overseeing its implementation.



Action 13

Consider hiring a full-time parks and recreation director.

Currently the City's Parks and Recreation Director is a volunteer position. While this arrangement remains successful, this position can expect an increasing workload as the City's park and open space portfolio expands. It is recommended that the City consider hiring a full-time parks and recreation director to coordinate:

- Setting goals and budget priorities
- Fundraising and planning for new recreation facilities
- Facilitating the needed improvements at Morris Town Park and the Morris Ballpark

HOW TO ESTABLISH A PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

Many municipalities have chosen to establish a Parks and Recreation Board, which is a **resident-led group tasked with overseeing parks facilities and programming**. These Boards are often tasked with ownership and management of parkland and other facilities, overseeing programming, setting annual goals and budget priorities, and assisting in the development and implementation of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Under AL Code § 11-60 municipalities are authorized to create a Parks and Recreation Board.

The process begins with residents. First, a group of at least three residents must file a written application to establish a Parks and Recreation Board with the City Council. The City Council must then adopt a resolution endorsing the Board's creation. After this resolution has passed, the group must then file a certification of incorporation with the probate judge. This certificate must include pertinent information laid out in AL Code § 11-60-4 including the Parks and Recreation Board's proposed name, the names of its initial applicants, and the number of board members.

The Board must consist of at least three residents of the community who are to be appointed by the City Council. These positions are all volunteer, and elected officials and staff are precluded from serving. The City has some leeway in how these positions are filled, but community representation is key. Many communities allow residents to apply to these positions to ensure interested community members can lend their experience and expertise.

Once the Board has been incorporated, it may begin taking actions granted to it under state law. These Boards are also commonly tasked with:

- Holding, acquiring and leasing land for parks and open space
- Securing funding for park improvements
- Assisting with developing and implementing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Setting budget priorities
- Setting fees for park use, such as renting a space
- Organizing and promoting programming

Note: State law is subject to change, and counsel should be consulted to ensure the Board is established according to current law.

- Overseeing maintenance at all municipal parks
- Maintaining coordination with the Morris Youth Association

This position could also be responsible for helping coordinate the activities of a possible Morris Parks and Recreation Board. Volunteers on the board would be able to assist the director in accomplishing many goals, such as managing sports leagues and promoting programming.

chapter and the callout box on [page 164](#)). When developing programming, consider physical accessibility and varying activities designed for all people. For recreational programming, include varying levels of exertion (e.g., ultimate frisbee for younger people, and guided yoga in the park for others). For cultural programming, consider separate educational activities and food and drink offerings geared toward both children and adults.



Action 14

Continue to support the Morris Youth Association as they oversee youth recreational programming.

The Morris Youth Association is a nonprofit organization that manages the Morris Ballpark and oversees a variety of youth recreational programming in the community, including football, cheerleading, baseball, and softball. The City of Morris is encouraged to continue this arrangement in which the Morris Youth Association administers sports teams and other youth recreation. The City is also encouraged to continue a dialogue with the Morris Youth Association and offer any support they may need.



Action 16

Partner with the Tivity Health’s SliverSneaker Program to expand recreational programming for seniors.

Tivity Health’s SliverSneakers offers fun and effective options for helping older adults and Medicare-eligible individuals live healthy and active lives. The program includes a fitness membership with access to more than 11,000 locations nationwide where participants can use equipment, take group exercise classes, and enjoy other social activities. The program also offers flex options with classes such as tai chi, yoga, and certified walking groups. Currently, the closest fitness centers and program locations are off U.S. Highway 31 in Gardendale and Warrior. An expanded partnership with the program to utilize a local building to create an indoor exercise area, such as a room in the Senior Center, could give seniors better access to fitness programs.



Action 15

Expand cultural and recreational programming to include activities for all ages.

Cultural programming refers to events which promote the arts, music, and local or regional traditions. Community gatherings, especially when they include these aspects, strengthens social ties among community members. Because programming (e.g., festivals, events, and guided activities) is essential to quality of life, it should be supported and expanded. Morris has a wealth of cultural and recreational programming to build upon, including Food Truck Fridays, programs at the Morris Community Senior Center, and teams and events overseen by the Morris Youth Association. Expanded programming can be developed in cooperation with a variety of community partners, including the proposed Morris Parks and Recreation Board (for more information, please see [Action 1.11](#) in this



Image Credit: Alabama Tourism Department

Goal #2

Restore and sustain water quality, natural habitats and groundwater by incorporating best practices for environmental site design and stormwater management in development.



Action 1

Encourage the use of Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development Best Management Practices (BMPs) on all new developments and redevelopment projects larger than one acre during construction and post-construction to control soil erosion and minimize pollutant runoff and instream erosion of waterways downstream.

During the public involvement phase of this Plan, many residents cited flooding issues, particularly in the downtown area along Morris Majestic Road as well as in newer subdivisions. The use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) can help ensure that new development does not contribute to flooding.

As areas are developed, the amount of paved surface increases leading to an increase in stormwater volume and pollutants, which can harm ponds, lakes, rivers, and streams. To mitigate the stormwater impacts of new development and redevelopment projects, the City should encourage the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that treat and store runoff and allow it to infiltrate on-site before it affects water bodies downstream.

Innovative site designs and other Green Infrastructure (GI) practices that reduce paved (impervious) surfaces and increase infiltration are recommended to reduce flows and improve water quality. In addition, many of these BMPs provide greenspace for users of new development and improve a site's aesthetics. For more information on BMPs and to see examples, see the callout box on **pages 170-171**.

It is recommended that Morris revise regulations to require and/or provide incentives for BMPs.

The City could take actions such as:

- Establish uniform procedures for reviewing site plans
- Improve staff training and staff expertise for construction and post-construction stormwater management, including in the topics of GI and Low Impact Development (LID)
- Develop strategies to implement a combination of structural and non-structural BMPs
- Adopt a post-construction stormwater ordinance to regulate and control post-construction runoff
- Create a program to ensure adequate long term operation and maintenance of BMPs
- Establish incentives for developments that use GI and LID BMPs
- Improve resources for enforcement of stormwater and zoning regulations
- Tax Credits for implementation of BMPs
- Expedited permitting processes for developers using BMPs
- Waiving of permit fees for developers using BMPs



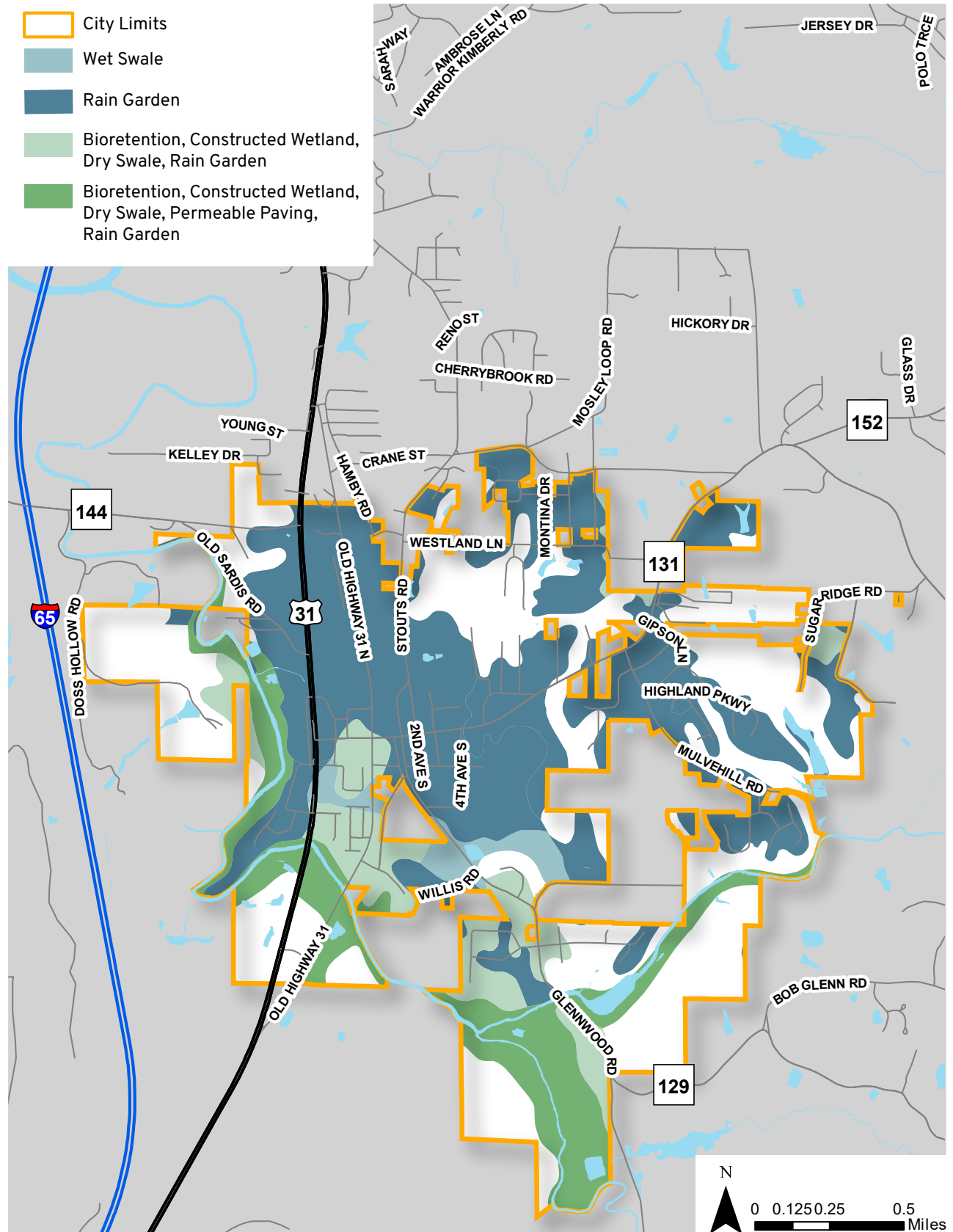
Action 2

Provide incentives and education to developers and homeowners who utilize Low Impact Development (LID) practices or green infrastructure techniques in new development.

Low Impact Development (LID) is an approach to site planning, design and development that seeks to avoid, minimize and manage impacts to water resources by stewarding and reintroducing natural hydrological processes into developed watersheds. Incentivizing LID could ensure that new development minimizes stormwater runoff, which many residents mentioned as a serious issue during this plan's public involvement phase.

For more information on LID practices, see the callout box on **pages 172-173**. For areas appropriate for green infrastructure, along with potential infrastructure improvements, see **Figure 8.2**.

Figure 8.2: Areas Appropriate for Green Infrastructure



Source: RPCGB



Action 3

Continue to improve stormwater management throughout Morris.

Morris faces challenges with stormwater management, and intermittent flooding has been noted downtown and in some newer subdivisions. Most streets in Morris are served by open drainage ditches and some culverts, and there is no citywide storm drain or curb and gutter system. In the short term, the City is encouraged to continue supporting the Streets Department. During this plan’s public involvement phase, municipal staff noted that the following improvements would help with stormwater management

- Drainage ditch maintenance
- Culvert maintenance
- Pipe replacement

In the long term, it is recommended that any communitywide or area plans that may call for streetscaping improvements or redevelopment, such as a Downtown Master Plan, consider the feasibility of retrofitting a curb and gutter system.



Action 4

Adopt a riparian buffer ordinance to manage development within a certain distance from streams and wetlands to protect water quality and habitats.

Streams flowing to the Turkey Creek are an important asset to Morris and should be protected as such. New development presents a high risk to water quality, habitat, and overall stream health due to the increase in pollutants and stormwater that are byproducts of new development.

As such, the City should take protective measures to mitigate these negative side effects. To protect the City’s streams, the City of Morris should consider adopting a riparian buffer ordinance to require a minimum riparian buffer of 25 feet for new development.

Riparian buffers are permanently vegetated transition zones that connect upland areas

to streams. Vegetation helps to slow runoff velocity, creates diffuse flow, and reduces non-point source (NPS) pollution before it enters streams. In addition to filtering pollutants, riparian buffers help to stabilize stream banks and provide food and shelter to wildlife. Furthermore, the City could utilize the riparian buffer to create additional greenspaces, such as educational classrooms, pocket parks and future trail expansions.

Note: Riparian buffers are also known as filter strips, streamside vegetation, riparian zones and buffer strips.



Action 5

Create a system of Simple Green Streets.

Some of Morris’ streets are prone to flooding due to a combination of topography, development patterns, and type of stormwater infrastructure. A system of green streets, such as “simple green streets,” can help address some of these issues. A green street is a natural stormwater management approach that uses plants and soil to slow, filter and cleanse stormwater from streets. Traditional stormwater management directs runoff into pipes. Green streets manage stormwater at its source, where rain falls. Benefits of green streets include:

- Protecting water quality in rivers and streams by removing up to 90% of pollutants
- Replenishing groundwater supplies, absorbing carbon and improving the air quality and neighborhood aesthetics
- Providing green connections between parks and open space
- Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety by calming traffic
- Reducing peak stormwater flows and overflows that lead to sanitary sewer backups, as well as other public health concerns
- Adding street trees and plantings that provide shade and reduce the urban heat island effect

For more information, please see the callout box on [page 168](#).

DID YOU KNOW: SIMPLE GREEN STREETS

“Simple green streets” can be formed by creating bioswales in existing roadside drainage ditches. These bioswales, which are ditches or trenches planted with vegetation, are used as a Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater management solution. This promotes on-site water infiltration, allowing the water to soak into the soil over time and reducing the volume and velocity of runoff. It also promotes evapotranspiration, which is the effort of evaporation and transpiration to remove water from the soil and vegetation.

Bioswales and their close cousin, rain gardens, are easier and less costly to install and maintain than most of the other solutions for stormwater runoff control. In Morris, they would fit well in many existing roadside stormwater ditches.

The image at right illustrates how an existing roadside ditch can be retrofitted to contain a bioswale, creating a simple green street. This greenery also adds beauty and softens the appearance of the street

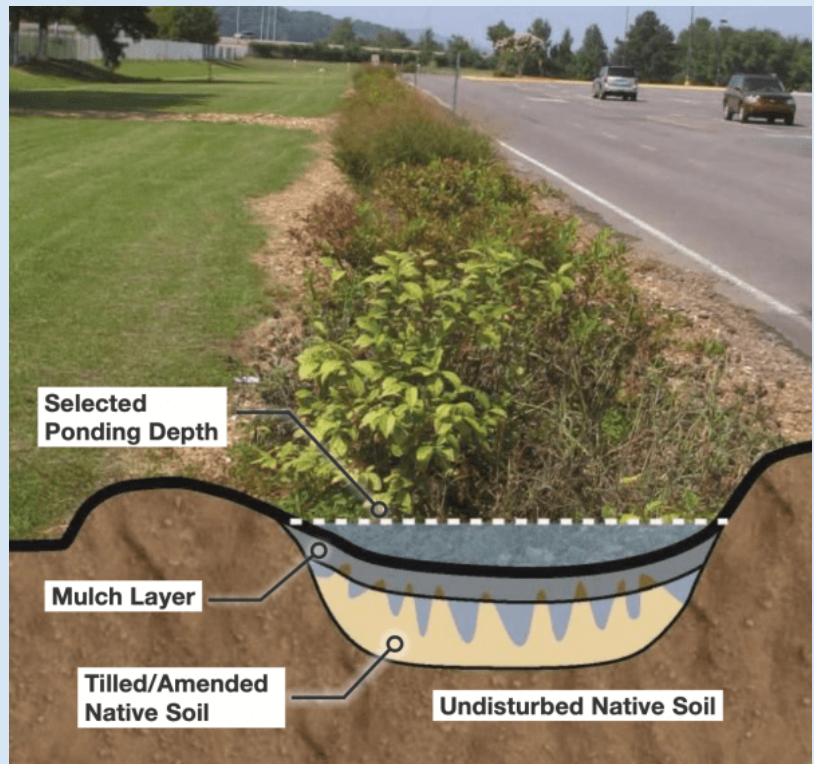


Image credit: Alabama Cooperative Extension System



Image credit: Lake County, IL

The image at left shows another example of a simple green street. This bioswale is planted with native flowers and grasses with deep roots. These plants are well-suited to a bioswale, where they will tolerate both wet and dry conditions.

Note how in both images, bioswales are used in place of a curb and gutter system. Simple green streets can be retrofitted into a system of stormwater ditches and do not require a curb and gutter system.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPs)

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are used to mitigate the effects of development and redevelopment (pollutants to waters, stormwater runoff, stream erosion, etc.). In developed areas, impervious surfaces, like pavement and roofs, prevent water from naturally soaking into the ground. Instead, water runs rapidly into storm drainage systems and natural streams causing flooding, stream bank erosion, sediment, habitat destruction, sewer overflows, infrastructure damage, and contaminated streams, rivers, and other water bodies. Impervious surfaces also reduce recharge of groundwater, which, during drought, reduces the base flow discharge into rivers and streams that maintains water levels. BMPs help to mitigate this effect by incorporating systems that allow infiltration, evapotranspiration, and re-use of stormwater to maintain natural hydrology. Careful management of BMPs that infiltrate surface runoff to groundwater should be considered to protect the City’s drinking water source because they could inject pollutants. All of the BMP practices listed below are referenced from the City of Baltimore’s Green Pattern Book.

Rain Gardens

Rain gardens are shallow, vegetated basins that collect and absorb runoff from rooftops, sidewalks and streets. The rain gardens are used as a Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater management solution that promotes evapotranspiration, which is the effort of evaporation and transpiration to remove water from the soil and vegetation. These gardens are typically smaller and simpler than a bioretention system – they are less than 2,000 square feet in size and do not include an under-drain. Rain gardens are versatile features that can be installed in almost any unpaved space.

Bioretention

The bioretention process utilizes a bed of sand, soil, and plants to filter contaminants and pollutants from stormwater runoff. Although water may briefly pond during heavy rain events, bioretention areas are designed to be dry most of the time. The filtered stormwater is either returned to a storm drain through an under-drain or partially infiltrated into the soil. Like rain gardens, bioretention areas may also be vegetated.

Green Parking

Green parking differs from traditional asphalt parking lots by incorporating permeable paving materials, tree planting, and rain gardens that capture stormwater runoff and shade surfaces, thus improving water quality and cooling the parking areas. Green parking would provide residents, faith-based organizations, and businesses in the community additional parking that cannot otherwise be accommodated on the street or one’s property.

Planter Boxes

Urban rain gardens with vertical walls and open or closed bottoms that collect and absorb runoff from sidewalks, parking lots, and streets. Planter boxes are ideal for space-limited sites in dense urban areas and as a streetscape element.

Bioswales

Vegetated, mulched, or xeriscaped channels that provide treatment and retention as they move stormwater from one place to another. Vegetated swales slow, infiltrate, and filter stormwater flows. As linear features, vegetated swales are particularly suitable along streets and parking lots.

Permeable Pavements

Paved surfaces that infiltrate, treat, and/or store rainwater where it falls. Permeable pavements are constructed from pervious concrete, porous asphalt, permeable interlocking pavers, and several other materials.

Rain Garden



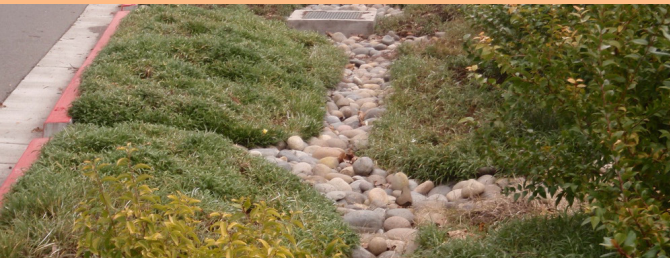
Bioretention



Permeable Pavement



Dry Swale



Constructed Wetland



Planter Boxes



LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT (LID)

When used in the context of stormwater management, Low Impact Development (LID) is defined as an approach to land development (both new development and redevelopment) that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible, ideally using natural hydrologic processes such as infiltration, interception, and evapotranspiration. Stormwater LID practices employ principles like preserving and recreating natural landscape features and minimizing effective imperviousness to create functional and appealing site drainage that treats stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product.

Reduction of adverse stormwater impacts using stormwater LID practices should be the first consideration of the site designer for every land development, including redevelopments. Operationally, economically, and aesthetically, LID practices can offer significant benefits over treating and controlling stormwater onsite or downstream. Therefore, feasible opportunities for using these methods should be explored and exhausted before considering the use of the Green Infrastructure Practices (GIPs) or Total Suspended Solids (TSS) Removal Best Management Practices (BMPs). Land developments can be designed to reduce, and sometimes even eliminate, stormwater impacts when careful efforts are made to conserve natural areas, reduce impervious cover, and better integrate stormwater management techniques. By implementing a combination of these nonstructural approaches, it is possible to reduce the amount of stormwater, and therefore pollutants, that are generated from a development after construction.

This overall reduction in stormwater can yield multiple benefits, such as minimizing costs for infrastructure construction and long-term post-construction maintenance.

In general, stormwater LID practices are based on the following general goals:

- Early communication and coordination between the City and the development's multi-disciplinary design team
- Prioritization of infill and redevelopment to capitalize on use of vacant properties and existing infrastructure
- Management of stormwater (quantity and quality) as close to the point of origin as possible resulting in minimized collection and conveyance
- Prevention of negative impacts that can result from post-development stormwater, so that mitigation is unnecessary

- Utilization of simple, nonstructural methods for stormwater management that are lower cost and lower maintenance than structural control
- Creation of a multifunctional landscape that can manage stormwater and address or benefit other development needs
- Reliance on hydrology as a framework for land development design

Stormwater LID practices include several site design techniques such as preserving natural features and resources, effectively laying out the site elements to reduce impact, reducing the number of impervious surfaces, and utilizing natural features on the site for stormwater management. The aim of using LID practices is to reduce the environmental impact "footprint" of the site while retaining and enhancing the owner/developer's purpose and vision for the site. Many of the LID practices and concepts can reduce the cost of infrastructure while maintaining or even increasing the value of the property.

The reduction in stormwater and pollutants using LID practices can reduce the required peak discharges and volumes that must be conveyed and controlled on a site and, therefore, the size and cost of necessary drainage infrastructure and GIPs. In some cases, the use of LID practices may eliminate the need for structural controls entirely. Hence, LID practices can be viewed as both a water quantity and water quality management tool.

Common LID practices include:

- Early coordination, collaboration, and communication
- Work with multi-disciplinary design team (civil engineers, landscape architect, ecologist, etc.)
- Participate in stormwater pre-concept process
- Conservation of natural features and resources
- Tree and stream buffer protection and restoration (incentive available)
- Soil restoration (incentive available)
- "Build with the Land" Design Techniques
- Implement retrofits (incentive available)
- Reduce impervious surface (incentive available)
- Redevelopment and infill (incentive available)
- Greenspace enhancements
- Complete streets
- Greenway connections
- Pocket parks

CASE STUDY: MEADOWLAWN PARK



Did You Know? In 2018, Meadowlawn Park was awarded a Watershed Development Conservation Award from the Cahaba River



In 2017, the City of Vestavia Hills opened Meadowlawn Park, a one-acre pocket park adjacent to a small tributary of the Cahaba River. The site's flood-prone nature threatened nearby homes, and a park was considered the best option to allow development without posing additional dangers to the sensitive Cahaba River watershed, which provides the City of Birmingham and Jefferson County with drinking water.

The park, which is home to a walking track and pavilion for community events, was designed with a host of best management practices (BMPs) to protect the watershed. The creek's banks were stabilized and its channel restored to promote smooth flow. A constructed wetland provides space for on-site infiltration of stormwater before it can reach the creek. The small parking area is designed to reduce stormwater runoff and promote on-site infiltration by using a permeable parking surface.

Meadowlawn Park was a 2018 recipient of the Cahaba River Society's Watershed Development Conservation Award, celebrating responsible and environmentally friendly development

society!

9

Implementation

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|---|-----|
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| Grants and Other Funding Sources by Topic | 190 |
| Local Funding Sources | 196 |





Implementation

This Morris Master Plan sets forth a bold vision for the future of the City of Morris and includes a set of action steps to achieve the goals. The Plan focuses on a mix of policies and program initiatives, and it identifies criteria for decision-making and the kinds of projects that are preferred, given the goals of this Plan. This Plan will require a significant commitment of time, energy and financial resources to implement and is intended to be implemented incrementally over time, one step at a time.

The adoption of this Morris Master Plan is the first step in the implementation process. It is the product of considerable efforts on the part of the City of Morris and its community leaders and concerned citizens. Working with a range of potential implementation partners, the Mayor, City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, and staff within the various municipal departments should be the lead facilitators to implement the Plan. This Plan should be revisited and updated over the coming years to ensure that its goals and recommend actions still meet the desires of the community, and to ensure that there is adequate political support for these ongoing planning efforts. Continued community discussion and cooperation will be necessary.

It is important to note that the contents of this Master Plan are designed to serve as a guide for growth and development, in both the public and private sectors, and as such are not binding upon the City of Morris when making specific land use decisions and public investments. This Master Plan is not law or a zoning ordinance, and it is instead intended to serve as a policy guide for community decision-making regarding land use, development, growth management and capital improvements decisions.

Implementation Matrix Table

To guide the implementation of this Plan, the following implementation table has been created. The table highlights the list of recommended action items, their relevant page numbers in the Plan, a suggested time frame for completion of each item, as well as potential partners who can be charged with leading the implementation efforts.

The suggested time frames for implementation may vary based on financial influences, potential funding sources and other factors, but they are defined as:

- **Short-term:** tasks that could be initiated and/or implemented within 1-5 years of the adoption of the Master Plan
- **Long-term:** tasks that are on a 6 year or greater time frame after the adoption of the Master Plan
- **On-going:** tasks that may be implemented in a series of incremental steps involving numerous partners, or tasks that are ongoing, continuous efforts

Implementation Partners

Since the Master Plan is intended to be implemented over several years, during which administrations, departments, boards and commissions may change, it is important to identify which partners should take the lead and be in a supporting role for a particular action task. It is important to note that the goals and recommended actions outlined in the matrices are for consideration only, and do not constitute an obligation on any Town department, board or organization's part to lead, support or participate in any given activity. The implementation matrices simply identify the recommended actions and potential partners in furthering the plan's goals and actions.

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Table 9.1: Implementation Matrix

| Chapter 3 – Catalytic Project Ideas | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| # | Catalytic Project Idea | Potential Partners | | | | |
| | | Mayor and City Council | Planning and Zoning Board | Parks Department | Street Department | Consultant |
| #1 | Create a Downtown Morris Master Plan to inspire and guide. | X | X | | | X |
| #2 | Commission a Gateway and Wayfinding Master Plan. | X | X | | | X |
| #3 | Enhance and expand Morris Town Park. | X | X | X | | X |
| #4 | Improve the streetscape along U.S. Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road and Glennwood Road. | X | X | | X | |
| #5 | Construct the Morris Inclusive Playground. | X | | X | | X |
| #6 | Explore the feasibility of constructing a greenway along Turkey Creek. | X | X | | | X |
| #7 | Explore options to relocate the Morris Street Department to another area of the city and to expand or relocate the Morris Senior Center. | X | | | | X |
| #8 | Consider annexing the Kennamer properties into the city limits. | X | X | | | |
| #9 | Establish a food truck court on a vacant lot in Downtown Morris. | X | | | | |
| #10 | Conduct an Advanced Planning, Programming and Local Engineering (APPLE) Study for potential roadway improvements along Morris Majestic Road from U.S. Highway 31 to Counts Road. | X | X | | | X |

Chapter 3 – Catalytic Project Ideas

| Priority | Time Frame | Other Partners |
|----------|------------|--|
| High | Short-term | |
| Medium | Short-term | |
| High | Short-term | Landscape architect or design consultant |
| High | Long-term | ALDOT, downtown property and business owners, contractor |
| High | Short-term | |
| High | Long-term | RPCGB, Freshwater Land Trust |
| Medium | Long-term | |
| Medium | Short-term | Property owners |
| Medium | Short-term | |
| High | Short-term | RPCGB |

Chapter 4 – Future Land Use

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #1: Encourage sustainable long-term development patterns. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Enhance and revitalize Downtown Morris as the heart of the community. | 90 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.2 | Encourage mixed-use development in the Downtown area and along Morris Majestic Road. | 91 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.3 | Ensure future developments improve pedestrian, bicyclist and vehicular connectivity. | 91 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.4 | Encourage and incentivize infill development and redevelopment. | 91 | Low | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.5 | Concentrate commercial development around major intersections and discourage additional highway strip development. | 92 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.6 | Preserve and protect existing residential and agricultural areas from adjacent development. | 92 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.7 | Allow new development in undeveloped areas only when adequate infrastructure and public facilities are in place to accommodate growth and then only at a context and scale appropriate to the locale. | 93 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.8 | Adopt appropriate policies and regulations to protect prime farmlands, steep slopes, waterways, and scenic areas from inadvertent damage due to future development / construction. | 93 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.9 | Promote the use of conservation easements. | 93 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.10 | Develop and adopt an annexation policy. | 96 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| Goal #2: Encourage a wide range of housing types. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Encourage the development of a variety of housing types for households of all configurations. | 99 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.2 | Preserve rural areas throughout the city for estates and other large-lot residential developments. | 99 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.3 | Encourage traditional neighborhood developments that offer a variety of housing choices. | 102 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |

Chapter 5 – Transportation & Infrastructure

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|--|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #1: Develop a multimodal transportation network with a wide range of mobility options. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Expand pedestrian infrastructure to connect residents to the Downtown area and to other recreation and activity areas. | 106 | High | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.2 | Consider creating a sidewalk standard for all new residential development. | 107 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.3 | Provide safe accessible crosswalks at targeted intersections. | 109 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Streets Department |
| 1.4 | Adopt a Complete Streets Policy. | 109 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.5 | Raise awareness about the CommuteSmart program for Morris commuters. | 110 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council |
| Goal #2: Preserve and enhance the safety and efficiency of the existing transportation system. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Conduct an Advanced Planning, Programming and Local Engineering (APPLE) Study for potential roadway improvements along Morris Majestic Road from U.S. Highway 31 to Counts Road. | 110 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.2 | Dedicate municipal resources to the necessary maintenance of culverts and ditches. | 111 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Street Department |
| 2.3 | Encourage the Morris Police Department to increase speeding enforcement in problem speeding areas. | 111 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.4 | Conduct a local street needs assessment to create a prioritized list of improvements and consider the use of a pavement management program. | 111 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Street Department |
| 2.5 | Develop a traffic calming policy to reduce speeding in residential areas using context-appropriate measures. | 112 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.6 | Adopt local access management standards along U.S. Highway 31 to preserve traffic flow and reduce crashes. | 116 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |

Chapter 6 – Planning & Development Regulations

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|---|------|----------|------------|--|
| Goal #1: Improve code enforcement efforts to address issues related to property maintenance and blight. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Consider hiring additional code inspectors and an enforcement officer to improve code enforcement efforts and decrease permit and inspection times. | 120 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.2 | Adopt up-to-date versions of the technical “family” of codes developed by the International Code Council. | 121 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.3 | Consider adopting the 2021 International Property Maintenance Code. | 121 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Morris Municipal Court |
| 1.4 | Create a citizen’s guide for code enforcement that enables residents to report code violations. | 122 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.5 | Continue to support the use of technology to improve code enforcement. | 122 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, City Clerk |
| 1.6 | Consider adopting a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance. | 122 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.7 | Consider adopting an Unsafe Structures and Dangerous Building Ordinance. | 123 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.8 | Modify the Subdivision Regulations to require that a Homeowner’s Association (HOA) be set up when new subdivisions are developed. | 123 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.9 | Create a Rental Property licensing inspection system and establish a Good Landlord Program. | 124 | Low | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| Goal #2: Enhance the physical character and appearance of Morris. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Develop a city-wide signage replacement program. | 125 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Street Department |
| 2.2 | Clearly define gateways into Morris through urban design and beautification enhancements. | 125 | High | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.3 | Develop a city-wide wayfinding signage system. | 125 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |

Chapter 6 – Planning & Development Regulations

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| 2.4 | Reactivate Morris Beautification Board to spearhead and conduct quality cleanup efforts and identify an annual list of sites for cleanup. | 125 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 2.5 | Improve streetscaping along U.S. Highway 31, Morris Majestic Road, Stouts Road, and Banks Street. | 126 | High | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.6 | Develop initiatives to minimize illegal dumping. | 126 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 2.7 | Conduct an analysis of garbage pickup to determine if an increase in frequency (or additional trash cans) is warranted. | 126 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 2.8 | Consider creating a city-wide recycling program or a recycling drop-off area. | 126 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 2.9 | Promote Jefferson County’s Household Hazardous Waste Day. | 126 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 2.9 | Permit and promote public art and murals on blank walls throughout Morris. | 126 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council |
| Goal #3: Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to promote a healthy mix of land uses. | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance to adopt a mixed-use zoning district. | 127 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 3.2 | Encourage the use of the R-P Planned Unit zoning district for new developments to promote flexibility, creativity, and a mix of uses. | 127 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 3.3 | Adopt an Adaptive Reuse Ordinance. | 127 | Low | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| Goal #4: Recommended Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations revisions for Residential | | | | | |
| 4.1 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that future residential construction meets certain durability requirements and safety-related performance requirements. | 128 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 4.2 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance to include Conservation Subdivision standards. | 128 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 4.3 | Modify the Subdivision Regulations to include Traditional Neighborhood Development standards. | 129 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 4.4 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance to require open space in new developments. | 133 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |

Chapter 6 – Planning & Development Regulations

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #5: Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions for parking and access standards. | | | | | |
| 5.1 | Revise the C-R Commercial Recreation District, C-1 Restricted Commercial District, C-2 General Commercial District, C-3 Special Commercial District, and R-P Planned Unit District to establish parking location criteria for new developments. | 133 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 5.2 | Allow on-street parking to count toward minimum parking requirements in all commercial districts. | 133 | Low | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| Goal #6: Recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions to permitted uses. | | | | | |
| 6.1 | Add a summary table of permitted uses across all zoning categories. | 135 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 6.2 | Revise the zoning use categories to align with the larger use categories within the International Building Code. | 135 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 6.3 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance to permit home occupation uses by right in all residential zoning districts. | 135 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 6.4 | Permit upper-story residential uses in the C-2 General Commercial District and C-3 Special Commercial District. | 136 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 6.5 | Provide a definition for live-work units and permit live-work units in all zoning districts except the R-R Rural Residential District, R-1 Single Family District, and industrial districts. | 136 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 6.6 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance to include definitions for microbrewery and brew pub and revise the permitted uses in the C-1 Restricted Commercial District, C-2 General Commercial District, and C-3 Special Commercial District. | 136 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 6.7 | Modify the Zoning Ordinance to better regulate the use of storage in buildings. | 137 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 6.8 | Adopt and regularly update a Capital Improvement Plan. | 137 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 6.9 | Modify the Subdivision Regulations to include curb and gutter requirements. | 137 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |

Chapter 6 – Planning & Development Regulations

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #7: Other recommended Zoning Ordinance revisions. | | | | | |
| 7.1 | Provide a list of current development application fees. | 139 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, City Clerk |
| 7.2 | Establish and publish a step-by-step application process guide for development and redevelopment. | 139 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, City Clerk |
| 7.3 | Modify the Sign Regulations to ensure content neutrality. | 139 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 7.4 | Develop and adopt an annexation policy. | 139 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |

Chapter 7 – Livability & Public Services

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|--|------|----------|------------|--|
| Goal #1: Provide efficient municipal services and adequate facilities that contributes to a better quality of life for the community. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Create a mobile app or purchase software to enable the City to send out push notifications to improve communications with its residents. | 142 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, City Clerk |
| 1.2 | Increase the communications capacity of the City government, boards, and commissions by regularly updating the City's website. | 142 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, City Clerk |
| 1.3 | Continue to make improvements to the Morris Senior Center. | 143 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.4 | Continue improving municipal facilities. | 143 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.5 | Work with the Jefferson County Library Cooperative to establish mini-libraries, pop-up reading centers, and additional satellite services throughout Morris. | 143 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Jefferson County Library Cooperative |
| 1.6 | Partner with Gardendale Library for a summer reading initiative. | 144 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, |
| 1.7 | Establish a periodic or seasonal farmer's market. | 144 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.8 | Encourage the creation of a local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. | 144 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.9 | Develop initiatives to minimize illegal dumping. | 145 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.10 | Explore the feasibility of providing bulk trash and debris pickup to Morris residents. | 145 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.11 | Conduct an analysis of garbage pickup to determine if an increase in frequency (or additional trash cans) is warranted. | 145 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |

Chapter 7 – Livability & Public Services

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| 1.12 | Consider creating a city-wide recycling program or a recycling drop-off area. | 146 | Low | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.13 | Explore the feasibility of increasing the City's property tax to implement the goals and actions of this Comprehensive Plan. | 146 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.14 | Allocate money in the City budget for the Planning and Zoning Board to attend training courses and workshops on community planning, and related issues. | 146 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.15 | Allocate money in the City budget for the Planning and Zoning Board to attend training courses and workshops on community planning and related issues. | 146 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.16 | Meet with local internet service providers to ensure that high-speed internet is available in underserved areas and improved in existing areas of the city. | 150 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Internet service providers |
| 1.17 | Increase awareness of the Medicaid Waiver Program administered by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham as a continuum of affordable care that allows elderly and disabled individuals who are at risk of nursing home placement to remain in their homes for as long as possible. | 150 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council |
| Goal #2: Preserve the safety and welfare of the community. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Ensure that the Morris Police Department and Fire and Rescue Department have sufficient resources to respond to emergencies effectively. | 150 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Morris Police Department, Morris Fire and Rescue Department |
| 2.2 | Allocate funding to renovate and expand the Morris Police Department, Court, and Council Chambers building to ensure that facility and equipment needs are met. | 151 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Morris Police Department |
| 2.3 | Ensure that the City's Police Department fleet is well maintained and updated as necessary. | 150 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Morris Police Department |
| 2.4 | Continue to implement recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Morris Fire and Rescue Department. | 150 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Morris Fire and Rescue Department |
| 2.5 | Allocate funding to renovate and expand the Morris Fire and Rescue Department's building to ensure that facility and equipment needs are met. | 151 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Morris Fire and Rescue Department |

Chapter 7 – Livability & Public Services

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #3: Promote and encourage the continued development of commerce within Morris. | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Promote a unified branding strategy to foster community identity and differentiate Morris within the region. | 151 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council |
| 3.2 | Promote Morris as an ecotourism destination. | 151 | Medium | Long-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 3.3 | Sponsor a façade improvement program. | 152 | Medium | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 3.4 | Utilize vacant city-owned property for the needs of the community. | 152 | Medium | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 3.5 | Maintain a database of sites and buildings that are suitable for new development and redevelopment. | 153 | Low | On-going | Mayor and City Council, City Clerk |
| Goal #3: Promote and encourage the continued development of commerce within Morris. | | | | | |
| 36 | Encourage compatible infill development and redevelopment in existing commercial areas. | 153 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 3.7 | Explore the feasibility of creating a job training center or business incubator. | 155 | Medium | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 3.8 | Recruit and attract additional commercial services and retail businesses to serve the needs of residents while increasing revenue. | 155 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council |
| 3.9 | Establish a community events organization to develop both community-interaction events as well as regional events that will promote the City. | 155 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |

Chapter 8 – Parks & Green Systems

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|--|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| Goal #1: Expand and enhance recreational opportunities for residents. | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. | 158 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Parks Department |
| 1.2 | Address upgrades needed at Morris Town Park and plan for its expansion. | 158 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Parks Department |
| 1.3 | Work with the Morris Youth Association to address upgrades needed at the Morris Ballpark. | 160 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department, Morris Youth Association |
| 1.4 | Continue to maintain Morris Memorial Park. | 160 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department |

Chapter 8 – Parks & Green Systems

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|------|---|------|----------|------------|---|
| 1.5 | Establish new parks in currently underserved residential areas. | 160 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Parks Department |
| 1.6 | Fund and construct the Morris Inclusive Playground. | 161 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department |
| 1.7 | Explore the feasibility of constructing a dog park. | 161 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department |
| 1.9 | Explore the feasibility of constructing a disc golf course. | 161 | Low | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department |
| 1.10 | Construct tennis and basketball courts for residents. | 163 | Medium | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department |
| 1.10 | Establish a minimum required HOA-maintained park space per residential development. | 163 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.11 | Explore the feasibility of acquiring land along Turkey Creek for a greenway. | 163 | Medium | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 1.12 | Consider establishing a Morris Parks and Recreation Board to oversee and expand recreational programming. | 164 | High | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.13 | Consider hiring a full-time parks and recreation director. | 164 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council |
| 1.14 | Continue to support the Morris Youth Association as they oversee youth recreational programming. | 165 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department, Morris Youth Association |
| 1.15 | Expand cultural and recreational programming to include activities for all ages. | 165 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department |
| 1.16 | Partner with the Tivity Health's SliverSneaker Program to expand recreational programming for seniors. | 165 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Parks Department, Tivity Health |

Chapter 8 – Parks & Green Systems

| # | Action | Page | Priority | Time Frame | Potential Partners |
|---|---|------|----------|------------|--|
| Goal #2: Restore and sustain water quality, natural habitats and groundwater by incorporating best practices for environmental site design and stormwater management in development. | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Encourage the use of Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development Best Management Practices (BMPs) on all new developments and redevelopment projects larger than one acre during construction and post-construction to control soil erosion and minimize pollutant runoff and instream erosion of waterways downstream. | 166 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.2 | Provide incentives and education to developers and homeowners who utilize Low Impact Development (LID) practices or green infrastructure techniques in new development. | 166 | Medium | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.3 | Continue to improve stormwater management throughout Morris. | 168 | High | On-going | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Street Department |
| 2.4 | Adopt a riparian buffer ordinance to manage development within a certain distance from streams and wetlands to protect water quality and habitats. | 168 | Medium | Short-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board |
| 2.5 | Create a system of Simple Green Streets. | 168 | Medium | Long-term | Mayor and City Council, Planning and Zoning Board, Street Department |

Grants and Other Funding Sources by Topic

This section is meant to jump-start a discussion of potential funding sources that will assist with implementation of this Master Plan update and move the City of Morris closer to implementing its vision for the future.

Transportation & Infrastructure

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives. The total amount of Federal participating funding for a particular project (or project phase if part of a large multi-phased project) application is limited to \$800,000; (\$640,000 Federal and \$160,000 local match). The total project estimated costs may exceed the \$800,000 limit, but any amounts in excess of the limit will be the responsibility of the sponsor and should be shown as such. Sponsors that currently have an active TAP project will not be eligible to submit another application for funding consideration until the awarded project has been authorized and let to contract.

For more information, go to <https://www.rpcgb.org/transportation-alternatives-program-tap>.

Transportation Project Feasibility Studies (APPLE)

Advanced Planning, Programming and Logical Engineering (APPLE) is a program which funds transportation project feasibility studies designed to educate local governments about the project development process, assist them in their decision making process, and provide resources to help develop and advance transportation projects. This program is intended to provide information to decision makers about whether or not a project is technically and financially feasible by aiding local government in clearly defining transportation problems, articulating a project's purpose and need, and clearly defining a project's scope. It also assists local governments to better understand the potential environmental challenges, benefits, and burdens.

For more information, go to <https://www.rpcgb.org/transportation-project-feasibility-studies-apple>.

Planning & Development Regulations

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

This program is run by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and administered in Alabama by ADECA. CDBG offers several grants to non-entitlement communities (those not receiving funds from HUD) that meet applicable thresholds. All projects must meet one of the three national objectives: benefits at least 51% LMI persons, aid in prevention or clearance of slum and blight, or meet an urgent need.

- **Competitive Fund:** With a population less than 3,000, Morris qualifies in the Small City category. Funds may be spent on water and sewer extensions and rehabilitation, housing rehabilitation, neighborhood and downtown revitalization, and street and draining improvements. Applicants are scored based on several competitive factors including community need, cost efficiency, appropriateness and impact. Applications deadlines are announced during the annual workshop in the first quarter of the year. Funding for Small Cities is up to \$350,000.
- **Community Enhancement Fund:** for projects that address quality of life issues. Funds may be spent on fire protection, senior citizens centers, community centers, boys and girls clubs, and recreational facilities. Application deadlines are announced during the annual workshop in the first quarter of the year. Funding is up to \$250,000.
- **Planning Fund:** allows communities to develop community-wide comprehensive plans and downtown revitalization plans. Funds may be spent on comprehensive plans, downtown revitalization plans, and similar plans. Funding varies.
- **Economic Development Fund:** this infrastructure fund supports the creation or retention of jobs. Applicants for ED assistance should have a commitment from the business to create or retain 15 or more jobs. The business should fall within the SIC codes 20-39 or provide a significant economic benefit, and projects must not include intrastate relocation. This program is available on a continuous basis, and funds may be spent on water, sewer, and road improvements and rail spurs. Funding is up to \$200,000, with a minimum 20% local match.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/cdbg/>.

HOME Investment Partnerships Program

HOME is the largest federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. HOME provides grants to fund a wide range of activities to create and increase access to affordable housing. Funds may be spent on building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership, and providing direct rental assistance to low-income people. States, counties, local units of government, and coalitions with nonprofits may apply. Funding is formula-based and requires a 25% local match.

For more information, go to https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/home.

Alabama Power Foundation Grants

The Alabama Power Foundation offers several small grant programs focused on livability and public services.

- **Gateway:** intended to unlock the economic and cultural value within our communities by helping our towns invite new visitors, new industries, and new neighbors to their little part of our great state. Local units of government may apply. Funds may be spent on signage to enhance community aesthetics, maintain civic pride, and assist with event promotion and economic impact, and grants are typically up to \$2,500.
- **Elevate:** empowers nonprofits by funding community-centered projects, helping them expand their impact and address some of the community's most pressing needs. Eligible nonprofits may apply, and funding is up to \$10,000.

For more information, go to <https://powerofgood.com/grants/>.

Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit

This program provides tax credits for substantial preservation activities for historic, federally-listed income-producing structures. Owners of qualifying federally-listed buildings may apply, and funding is in the form of a tax credit up to 20% of project cost.

For more information, go to <https://ahc.alabama.gov/federaltaxcredits.aspx>.

Alabama Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

This program provides tax credits for substantial preservation activities for qualifying historic buildings, including private homes and commercial structures. Private homeowners and owners of commercial properties may apply, if property is federally listed (or

eligible for listing) and at least 60 years old. Funding is in the form of a tax credit up to 25% of project cost.

For more information, go to <https://ahc.alabama.gov/alabamarehabtaxcredits.aspx>.

Livability & Public Services

Tourism Department Community Grant

Started in 2020, this grant program provides assistance to municipal and nonprofit Alabama organizations promoting travel and vacation business to Alabama. Possible uses include brochures, tourism promotion, advertising, websites, and apps. Funding is up to \$2,500 or \$5,000 depending on the events. Grants are on a per-event reimbursement basis.

For more information, go to <https://tourism.alabama.gov/forms/matching-grants/>.

Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund

The Broadband Accessibility Fund provides grants for service providers to supply high-speed Internet services in unincorporated areas or communities with 25,000 people or fewer. Grant funding varies, but generally covers a maximum of 20% of the project cost.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/broadband/>.

Arts in Education (AIE) Grants

The Alabama State Council on the Arts funds two Arts in Education (AIE) grants. The AIE Curriculum-Based Project Grant provides support for specific projects that advance the goal of the arts as an essential component of PreK-12 education. Funds may be spent on in-school classes, workshops, consultants, guest artists, exhibits, and/or artist residencies. The AIE Enhancement Grant provides support to schools and organizations engaging in arts exposure and arts enrichment activities. Funds may be spent on performances, field trips, or professional development workshops. Funding for both grants varies, and applications are due throughout the school year depending on the semester for which funds are requested. Qualifying schools and arts organizations may apply. Both programs require matching funds.

For more information, go to <https://arts.alabama.gov/#resources>.

Arts and Cultural Facilities Grants

The Alabama Council on the Arts funds three grants in this category: Planning, Design, and Construction. All three provide support for arts organizations to provide arts programming. The Planning Grant may be used for feasibility studies, needs assessment, and other preliminary work. The Designing Grant may be used for designing a specific arts-supporting facility. The Construction Grant may be used for a new facility, renovation, or other significant capital expenditure. Qualifying school and arts organizations may apply, although schools receiving state appropriations are not eligible for Construction Grants. Funding varies.

For more information, go to <https://arts.alabama.gov/#resources>.

Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham REMY Fund

This foundation's Remy Grant program covers the Greater Birmingham area, defined as Shelby, Jefferson, St. Clair, Blount, and Walker counties. Remy Fund Grants promote the human and dignified treatment of cats, dogs, and horses through rescue programs, animal-assisted therapy, spay/neuter programs, and education and advocacy. Registered public charities in eligible counties may apply, and funding varies. The grants are anticipated to continue in the next cycle.

For more information, go to <https://www.cfbham.org/remy-fund/>.

Alabama Power Foundation Grants

The Alabama Power Foundation offers several small grant programs focused on livability and public services.

- **Foundation:** designed to meet many needs, and projects must focus on at least one of five areas: Educational Advancement, Civic and Community Development, Arts and Cultural Enrichment, Health and Human Services and Environmental Stewardship. Projects must address undeserved segments of the population. Grants are on a quarterly basis. Local units of government and eligible nonprofits may apply, and funding varies.
- **Classroom:** seeks to close the gap between classroom funding and classroom needs by offering the opportunity to enhance the classroom environment. Schools with demonstrated financial need and partner nonprofits may apply. Funds may be spent on classroom materials, COVID relief supplies, technology support, and mental health needs for students and teachers, and are typically up to \$1,000.

- **ABC Trust:** is nonprofits offering health and human services programs to low-income citizens, especially as part of ongoing Covid-19 relief efforts. It also includes programs that improve network services from parent organizations programs that assist children and youth. Eligible nonprofits may apply, and funding is up to \$500.

For more information, go to <https://powerofgood.com/grants/>.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program

This program provides coupons to low-income seniors who may purchase fresh, locally grown produce at participating farmers markets. Applicants must reapply each year, and funding varies by household size.

For more information, go to <http://fma.alabama.gov/seniornutrition/>.

Emergency Solutions Grant Program

This grant provides funding used to upgrade existing homeless facilities and domestic abuse shelters, to help meet the operating costs of such facilities, to provide essential services (such as health and mental health services) to both sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons, to help prevent homelessness, to rapidly re-house homeless persons and to assist in the costs of administering the Homeless Management Information System. Local units of government and nonprofits may apply, and funding is up to \$300,000.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/esg/>.

Daniel Foundation of Alabama Grants

The Daniel Foundation of Alabama currently funds four grants that focus on the priority areas of arts, culture, and community assets; community needs; education and youth; and health. Registered 501(c)(3) nonprofits may apply, and funding varies by grant type and proposal.

For more information, go to <http://danielfoundationofalabama.com/arts-culture-community-assets/?grant-category=arts-culture-community-assets>.

Home Depot Foundation: Community Impact Grants

The Foundation offers grants to use the power of volunteers to improve the community, with focuses on veteran service organizations and short-term disaster relief and long-term rebuilding. Eligible 501(c)(3) nonprofits and tax-exempt public services agencies

may apply. Funds may be used for the purchase of tools, materials, and services for housing repair for vulnerable/ underserved populations and for veteran service organizations. Funding varies.

For more information, go to <https://corporate.homedepot.com/foundation/grants>.

Partnerships for Opportunities and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER)

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) administers the Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative. This program targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production. Counties, cities, local units of government, special purpose units, and colleges and universities within coal-impacted communities may apply. Funds may be spent on workforce training and refocusing, supporting small manufacturing companies, strengthening substance abuse response, and broadband deployment projects. Funding varies by grant type: up to \$50,000 for planning grants and between \$400,000 and \$1,500,000 for implementation grants.

For more information, go to <https://www.arc.gov/arcs-power-initiative/>.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

The Alabama Department of Commerce administers a set of grants funded by the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This variety of grants provides resources, services, and leadership tools for the public workforce system to help individuals find good jobs and stay employed, and improves employer prospects for success in the global marketplace. Grants focus on incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, and adult, youth, and dislocated worker funding. Funding varies.

For more information, go to <https://wioa-alabama.org/wioa-grant-administration/>.

Parks & Green Systems

Land and Water Conservation Fund

This program provides assistance may be used for the acquisition of land and water interests for park purposes, the development of new outdoor recreation facilities, and in certain instances, the renovation of existing public outdoor recreational facilities. Any unit of government may apply. Funding varies and generally provides a 50% match to project sponsors on a cost-reimbursable basis.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/lwcf/>.

ADECA Recreational Trails Program

This program provides grant assistance for the acquisition and/or development/improvement of recreational trails and trail related resources. State and Federal agencies and local units of government may apply. Funds may be spent on eligible trail types which include but are not limited to walking, jogging, cycling, skating, mountain biking, hiking, backpacking, off-highway vehicle, and equestrian trails. Funding varies and requires a 20% local match.

For more information, go to <https://adeca.alabama.gov/trails/>.

Alabama Power Foundation Grants

The Alabama Power Foundation offers several small grant programs focused on green systems.

- **Good Roots:** help to maintain an excellent quality of life and encourages active community involvement through the planting of additional trees throughout the community. Local units of government, schools, universities, and eligible nonprofits may apply, and funding is up to \$1,000.
- **Power to Play:** offers funding for athletics and the arts for middle and high schools to increase participation in these extracurricular programs, add new programs, and enhance or upgrade equipment. Middle and high schools with demonstrated need may apply, and funding varies.
- **Students to Stewards:** provides dynamic stewardship initiatives to schools through conservation education and outdoor classrooms to teach students the importance of preserving Alabama's natural resources. Schools with demonstrated financial need may apply, and funding is up to \$7,500.

For more information, go to <https://powerofgood.com/grants/>.

CAWACO Resource Conservation and Development Council

CAWACO offers two grants: Education and Challenge. Through 2023, their funding priorities are workforce development, access to local food, access to outdoor recreation, community planning and design, first responder support, and improvement of local habitats. Qualified public entities or 501(c)(3) nonprofits in Jefferson, Shelby, Blount, and Walker counties may apply. For both grants, the grant cycle is between April 1 and July 1 each year, and the average funded project ranges from \$5,000 – \$10,000.

- **Education:** funding for job/trade skills training, scholarships, field trips, books, or materials.
- **Challenge:** funding for materials, infrastructure, or educational/safety equipment.

For more information, go to <https://cawaco.org/the-cawaco-grant-program/>.

Financial Incentives and Programs

Housing Tax Credits and Programs

New Market Tax Credits

This program is funded through the U.S. Department of Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund. Developers and property owners may sell, trade, or package these tax credits to investors who use them to fund community development in blighted areas. Tax credits assist developers by making redevelopment of blighted areas economically viable. Certified Community Development Entities (CDEs) certified by the U.S. Department of the Treasury may apply. Funds may be used for funding development or redevelopment of blighted areas. Funds are in the form of tax credits, which may be traded or sold.

For more information, go to <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/programs/new-markets-tax-credit>.

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

LIHTC provides tax credits for developers who construct affordable housing. To receive the full 10 years of tax credits, a certain percentage of rental units within a development must be reserved for households earning no more than 60% of area median income (AMI), generally for a period of 30 years, after which units may be rented at market rate. Housing developers and CDFIs may apply. Funds are federal income tax

credits for up to 10 years.

For more information, go to <https://www.ahfa.com/multifamily/multifamily-programs/home-housing-credits>.

Step-Up Mortgage Program

This program is designed for low to moderate-income home buyers who can afford a mortgage but need assistance with a down payment, closing costs, and other up-front expenses. Low to moderate-income households may apply, and funding is on a rolling application basis. Funds vary by household size and income. Households of any size earning \$130,600 or less are eligible for down payment assistance in the form of a 10-year second mortgage.

For more information, go to <https://www.ahfa.com/homebuyers/programs-available/step-up>.

Alabama Housing Trust Fund

The Alabama Housing Trust Fund provides funds for affordable multifamily housing for people earning below 60% of area median income, with a preference for extremely low income (ELI) populations and homeless or at-risk veterans. Developers and CDFIs may apply, and funding is formula-based.

For more information, go to <https://www.ahfa.com/multifamily/multifamily-programs/housing-trust-fund>.

Business Tax Credits and Programs

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 Loan

U.S. Small Business Association (SBA) 504 Loan The SBA 504 Loan Program provides healthy, expanding businesses with long-term, belowmarket, fixed-rate financing for the acquisition of land and building, machinery and equipment, and construction and renovation. For-profit businesses may apply, unless the business is speculative developer, insurance company, gambling-related business, or a private club that restricts access. Funds may be used for acquisition of land and building, machinery and equipment, and construction and renovation. Funding is in the form of long-term, fixed rate financing of up to \$5,000,000 for fixed major assets.

For more information, go to <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/504-loans>.

Sabre Finance Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) and Micro Loans

Sabre Finance is a nonprofit approved to offer SBA products under SBA's Lender/Microloan Program. They administer a revolving loan fund (RLF) and micro loan program. Eligible businesses in Jefferson County may apply. Sabre Finance administers micro loans offering financing for up to 6 years with a \$50,000 maximum. Programs also offer financing for building and real estate, machinery and equipment, and working capital.

For more information, go to <https://sabrefinance.org/services>.

Full Employment Act of 2011

Small businesses with 50 or fewer employees may receive a one-time income tax credit equal to \$1,000 per new job paying over \$10 per hour. The credit is available in the tax year during which the employee has completed 12 months of consecutive employment. The employer must have a net increase in the total number of full time employees in Alabama on the last date of each tax year during which employees are hired for which the employer claims a credit, over the number employed in Alabama as of the last day of the tax year immediately preceding the first employment year. The increase must equal or exceed the number of newly hired employees for which a credit is sought by one employee for each newly hired employee for whom a credit is being sought for the current year, plus one employee for all employees for whom credits were claimed in prior years. Small businesses with 50 or fewer employees may apply, and funds are up to \$1,000 per qualifying job.

For more information, go to <https://revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/about/income-tax-incentives/>.

Veterans Employment Act

The Veterans Employment Act offers two tax credit programs. The two tax credits may not be combined.

- **Employer Credit:** This credit provides a tax credit to qualifying businesses for each unemployed or combat veteran hired for a full-time position paying at least \$14 per hour, the majority of the duties of which are at a business location within Alabama. It is available to qualified employers as an additional credit against the Alabama income tax liability in the amount of \$2,000 for hiring full time recently deployed and now discharged unemployed veterans. The new hire must be 1) a resident of Alabama at the time of entry into military service or mobilized to active, federal military service while a member of the Alabama National Guard or other reserve unit located in

Alabama; 2) received an honorable or general discharge from active, federal military service within the two-year period preceding the date of hire; and 3) has certification by the Department of Labor at the time of hire by either collecting or being eligible to collect unemployment benefits or having exhausted their unemployment benefits. Funding is up to \$1,000 per qualifying job. This credit may not be claimed if the credit is claimed under the Veterans Employer Act – Business Start-up Expense Credit.

- **Business Start-Up Expense Credit:** This credit allows a \$2,000 nonrefundable credit against the income tax liability associated with one start-up business in which the recently deployed unemployed veteran holds at least 50% ownership interest. It is only applicable to businesses started after April 2, 2012, located within Alabama with a net profit of at least \$3,000 in the year in which the credit is taken. Funding is up to \$2,000 per qualifying job. This credit may not be claimed if the credit is claimed under the Veterans Employer Act – Employer Credit. This program expires December 31, 2023.

For more information, go to <https://revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/about/income-tax-incentives/>.

Basic Skills Education Credit

An employer may qualify to receive an income tax credit of 20% of the actual cost of an employer-sponsored educational program that enhances basic skills of employees up to and including the twelfth grade functional level. This includes programs that teach English as a second language. Funding is up to 20% of the cost of qualifying education.

For more information, go to <https://revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/about/income-tax-incentives/>.

Disabled Access Tax Credit

The IRS offers three programs for businesses who incur expenses as a result of employing people with disabilities. The three programs may be combined.

- **Disabled Access Credit:** provides a nonrefundable credit for small businesses that incur expenditures for the purpose of providing access to persons with disabilities. An eligible small business is one that earned \$1 million or less or had no more than 30 full time employees in the previous year; they may take the credit each and every year they incur access expenditures. Funding varies depending on costs incurred.
- **Barrier Removal Tax Deduction:** encourages businesses of any size to remove architectural

and transportation barriers to the mobility of persons with disabilities and the elderly. Businesses may claim a deduction of up to \$15,000 a year for qualified expenses for items that normally must be capitalized. Businesses claim the deduction by listing it as a separate expense on their income tax return.

- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit:** incentivizes employers to hire from these target groups. The maximum tax credit ranges from \$1,200 to \$9,600, depending on the employee hired and the length of employment. The credit is available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. This includes people with disabilities and veterans.

For more information, go to <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/tax-benefits-for-businesses-who-have-employees-with-disabilities>.

Tax Abatement Programs

In an abatement program, property taxes can be reduced or eliminated for a number of years, followed by gradual increases in taxes until a certain period in time. Such abatement programs are locally mandated. Sales and Use Tax Abatement guidelines are found in Code of Alabama 40-23- et al. Qualifying industries may abate all state and the local non-educational portion of construction related transaction (sales and use) taxes associated with constructing and equipping a project for up to 20 years. Data processing centers are eligible for tax abatement for up to 30 years. The local granting authority must grant the abatement for the qualifying project before the abatement can be used. Alabama offers three types of abatements:

- **Chapter 9B** for new and expanding projects, including upgrades
- **Chapter 9C** for brownfield development projects
- **Chapter 9G** for renovation, modification, and replacement of equipment projects

Funding varies by type of abatement.

For more information, go to <https://revenue.alabama.gov/tax-incentives/major-tax-incentives/tax-abatements/>.

Local Funding Sources

Local governments in the region utilize locally generated revenues such as sales taxes, property taxes, franchise fees, business taxes, etc. to assist them in funding for local transportation improvements. These funds typically go directly into the local government general fund and transportation improvements are funded from this overall pot of money. Revenues generated are utilized mostly for local roadway resurfacing projects, and to a lesser degree to provide match to federal funds for intersection and signal improvements road widening, and routine maintenance. Below are some examples of potential local funding sources:

Municipal Bonds

Municipal bonds, consisting of general obligation bonds and revenue bonds, both use debt to build infrastructure and make other necessary capital improvements, which is standard practice and an integral part of municipal fiscal sustainability. This is particularly the case when the assets will be used by both current and future residents and businesses. Those paying for the improvements will enjoy and benefit from the capital improvements.

- **General obligation bonds:** backed solely by the credit and taxing power of the issuing jurisdiction rather than the revenue from a given project and are paid back from general tax revenues and require voter approval.
- **Revenue bonds:** supported by the revenue from a specific project, such as utility rates or user fees, and are paid back from these specific revenue sources.

Sales Taxes

Morris' sales tax is 4%, which when added to the state sales tax of 4% and Jefferson County's 2%, totals 10% sales tax experienced by the consumer. When spending by residents, workers, and visitors generates revenue, a small increase in sales tax can result in a significant amount of new revenue for specific projects or improvements.

Public Private Partnerships (P3)

A public private partnership (P3) is a financing package that combines public and private debt, equity, and public funding. The private sector provides an infusion of cash, while the public sector agrees to repay the

private investment with interest. P3s are contractual agreements between a public agency and a private entity, which allows greater private sector participation in the delivery and operation of transportation projects and facilities. P3s involve a sharing of responsibilities, risks, and rewards between public sector owners and a private sector partner(s), but the public partner retains full ownership of the facility. This is a procurement strategy that allows for the transfer and/or sharing of risks associated with project delivery. P3s have been successfully used in many areas such as utilities, water/wastewater, healthcare, and transportation.

Capital Recovery Fees

Capital recovery fees are levied on developers as a condition of real estate construction. Such fees (also called impact fees or development fees) may be levied on commercial, industrial, or residential development; they may be assessed on a per-unit or per-square foot basis. Unlike taxes, capital recovery fees must be shown to have a link with the purposes on which they are being spent. They must therefore only be used to mitigate the impacts of particular developments (for example, if a commercial development will cause more traffic at a particular intersection, the impact fees can be used to improve the intersection).

Alabama Financing & Investment Tools

Industrial Revenue Bonds

In Alabama, Industrial Revenue Bonds may be used as long-term financing of up to 100% of a large commercial project. The following types of projects eligible for this bond are: acquisition of land, buildings, site preparation and improvement, construction of buildings, acquisition and installation of furnishings, fixtures and equipment, and capitalized soft costs (e.g., architectural and engineering, interest incurred during construction, cost associated with bond issuance, etc.) Typically, tax-exempt IRBs have interest rates ranging from 70% to 85% of prime and are limited to \$10 million per single issuance and \$40 million total maximum per company, while taxable IRBs have an interest rate equal to conventional loans and have no limit. Terms for both are normally 10 to 20 years.

Alabama Special Improvement Districts

The Code of Alabama allows a number of special districts that may be useful in financing the development

within a municipality or county. They rely on existing forms of taxation and the value generated is in some cases dependent upon the bonding authority of the government entity involved in the process. Typical eligible costs include roads, water, sewer, storm sewers, drainage, curb and gutter, docks, harbors, flood control, dams, berms, sidewalks, parks, schools, athletic facilities, fire and police protection facilities, mass transit facilities, air transport, business and industrial recruitment, hospitals and medical facilities, and planning activities are also permissible within some districts.

Capital Improvement Cooperative District (CICD)

A Capital Improvement Cooperative District (CICD) is formed through a combination of public entities, all of whom retain their individual authorities. This allows a local government to form a smaller board to manage details such as projects, incentives, and fees within the district. It is intended to encourage and facilitate cooperative efforts by public entities to provide projects for their own use and for the use and benefit of their citizens and users. CICDs may raise funds by issuing revenue bonds or general obligation bonds. CICDs are authorized by Code of Alabama §11.99B.

Alabama Improvement District (AID)

An Alabama Improvement District (AID) is formed by property owners in a designated geographic area who then make property improvements, issue bonds, and secure these bonds through liens on the property. Developments may be residential, commercial, or industrial, although private roads generally will not qualify for tax exempt financing. The municipality assesses the lots to pay principal and interest on the bonds, and assessments are payable over the term of bonds. An AID has the authority to raise funds by issuing revenue bonds. AIDs are authorized by Code of Alabama §11.99A.

Tax Incremental Financing District (TIF)

A Tax Incremental Financing District (TIF) is a public financing method where redevelopment, infrastructure, and other improvements within the TIF district are financed through incremental tax revenues generated by property taxes. Property rates do not change, but as property values within the district rise, the extra revenue is reinvested for improvements within the district. TIFs require upfront spending by the municipality, which may be financed through bonds or other sources. TIFs are designed to end after a certain number of years, by which time the desired improvements have been completed. TIFs are authorized by Code of Alabama §11.99.

