

# PLAN JONESBORO

## Comprehensive Plan

11/12/26

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# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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CHAPTER 1

1

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

*Defining prosperity beyond economic growth*

Prosperity in Jonesboro means more than economic growth. It reflects the strength of the community, the quality of everyday life, access to economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, and responsible use of public resources. Together, these values establish a shared definition of prosperity that guides the remainder of the plan and helps ensure that growth produces lasting benefits for residents, businesses, and future generations.

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

The Meaning of Prosperity

## 1.1 The Meaning of Prosperity

### A Broader Definition of Success

Prosperity is often measured narrowly: population growth, new construction, or job counts. This plan defines it more broadly, through six connected forms of community wealth: individual opportunity, economic diversity, institutional capacity, social capital, natural resilience, and civic stability. A growing city is not automatically a prosperous one if growth outpaces infrastructure, drives up costs, or leaves neighborhoods behind. Unmanaged growth can produce more traffic, more strain on aging pipes and streets, and more pressure on housing costs without delivering a corresponding gain in quality of life. Plan Jonesboro measures success differently: by whether residents have the skills and access to opportunity they need to thrive, whether local businesses and productive property anchor a diverse economy, whether the City and its institutions have the capacity to serve residents well, whether residents trust one another and feel they belong, whether the region's natural systems remain healthy, and whether public finances are sound and government stays responsive. These six forms of wealth, taken together, are what this plan means when it uses the word prosperity.

This framework reflects what Jonesboro residents consistently say matters most: a strong sense of community, family-oriented character, safe and welcoming neighborhoods, and a small-city feel worth protecting as the city grows. It is also grounded in the city's current economic conditions. Median household income lags behind peer cities and the poverty rate is nearly double the national average, even as the city's employment base, nearly two-thirds white-collar and anchored by healthcare, education, and logistics, reflects real underlying strength. That combination, a solid economic foundation alongside real household strain, is the central challenge this plan is written to address. Prosperity, in this context, means translating that economic base into outcomes residents actually feel in their daily lives, their household budgets, and their neighborhoods.

### Quality of Life as an Economic Strategy

One of the clearest connections in this framework is between individual opportunity and economic diversity. Cities compete for employers not only on cost and location but on their ability to attract and keep a skilled workforce, and workers increasingly choose where to live based on neighborhood quality, housing options, safety, and amenities, then find employment from there. This is a shift from the way economic development has traditionally been practiced, recruiting employers first and assuming residents will follow. For a city like Jonesboro, where the local labor pool and regional workforce are among its strongest economic assets, the sequence matters.

For Jonesboro, this means retention is itself an economic development strategy: strong neighborhoods, good public spaces, and a high quality of everyday life are not amenities layered on top of economic growth, they are a condition of it. A city that keeps its residents, especially its early-career workers and graduates of Arkansas State University, keeps the employers who depend on them. Every household that chooses to stay, buy a home, or start a business in Jonesboro rather than move elsewhere represents an investment the city does not have to recruit from outside.

Each form of community wealth supports the others, and none should be pursued at the expense of the rest. The plan is written to avoid investments that advance one measure while weakening the community's long-term capacity elsewhere, such as a development that grows the tax base but erodes social trust, or a cost-saving decision that strains institutional capacity down the road. This broader lens gives the City a practical way to compare choices that may look beneficial in isolation but have very different effects on residents and public systems over time.

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

## The Meaning of Prosperity

**Six Forms of Community Wealth**

**Individual Opportunity:** people and skills development, public health, and access to resources and institutions

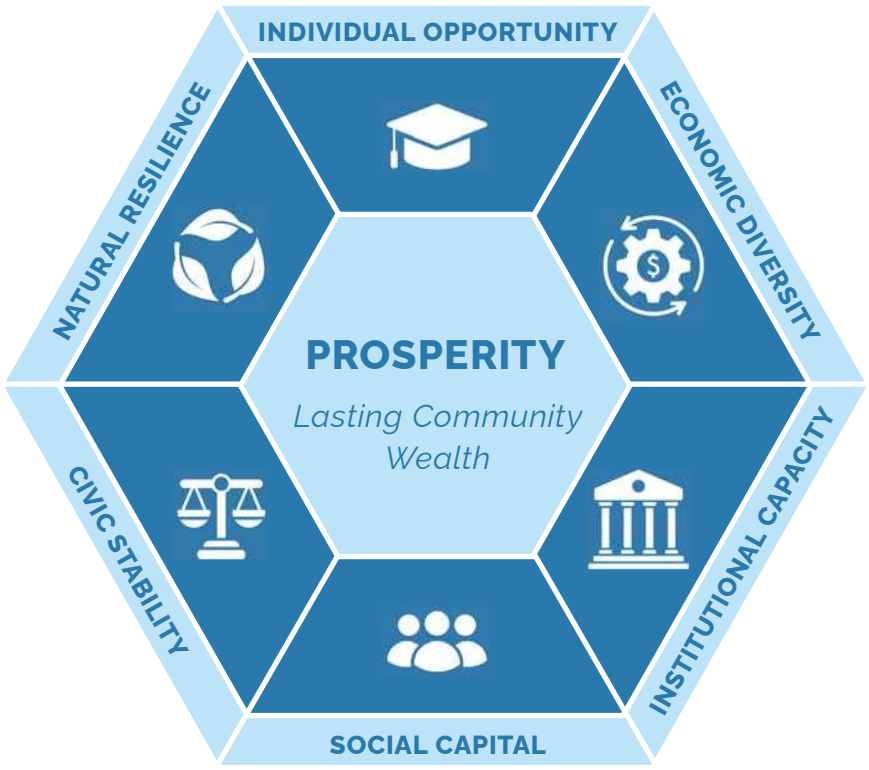
**Economic Diversity:** locally owned businesses and productive property

**Institutional Capacity:** civic and institutional capacity to serve residents

**Social Capital:** social trust and belonging

**Natural Resilience:** healthy natural systems

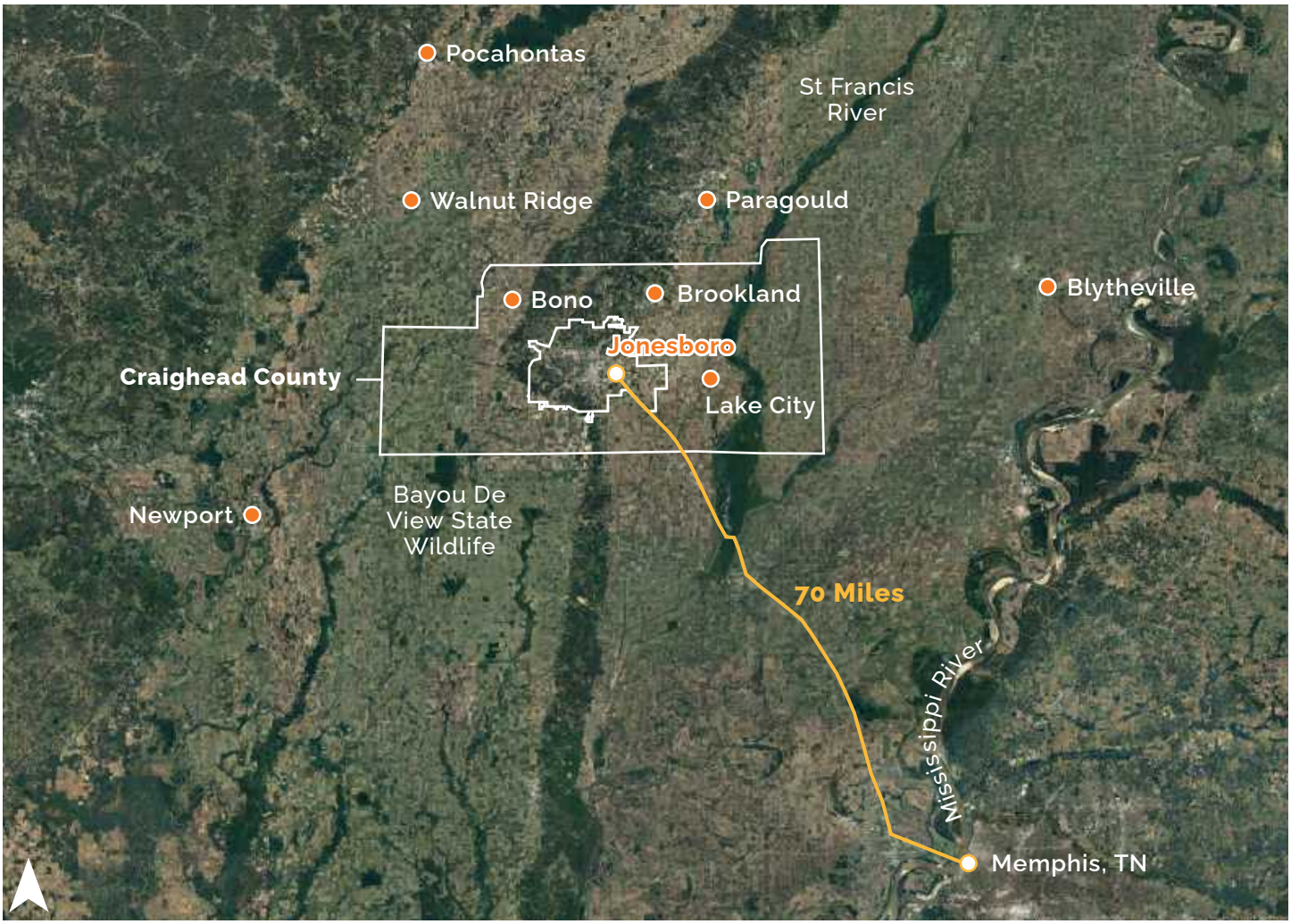
**Civic Stability:** sound public finances and public responsiveness




*Six connected forms of community wealth*

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

## Jonesboro's Regional Role




*Regional Context Map*

## 1.2 Jonesboro's Regional Role

**A Regional Center with Regional Responsibilities**

Jonesboro is the center of gravity for Northeast Arkansas. The city's population comprises **71%** of Craighead County's total population, and its trade and employment areas reach well beyond its municipal limits: an estimated **28,012 workers** travel into Jonesboro for jobs each day. Interstate 555, U.S. Highways 49 and 63, freight rail, and the municipal airport connect Jonesboro to Craighead County, Memphis, the Arkansas Delta, and national markets, supporting commuting, agriculture, manufacturing, distribution, healthcare access, and business travel. These connections are what allow Jonesboro to function as a hub rather than an isolated city: they bring in the workers, patients, and students who sustain a level of retail, medical, and cultural activity that the resident population alone could not support.

That regional pull runs through several major sectors. Manufacturing supports approximately **10,000 jobs** across two industrial parks, while healthcare and education have become the region's fastest-growing sectors. NEA Baptist Memorial Hospital and St. Bernards Healthcare together provide specialty and tertiary care available nowhere else in the region other than Memphis, drawing patients from across Northeast Arkansas. Arkansas State University, one of the city's major employers, enrolled a record **17,926 students** in **2026** and has expanded into professional education, including osteopathic and veterinary medicine. Young people are spending their college years in Jonesboro, but most don't stay, a gap between the city's ability to attract talent and its ability to keep it.

**Converting Regional Strength into Local Benefit**

Jonesboro also serves as the region's cultural stage, second only to Memphis. Its performance venues, parks, festivals, downtown events, local radio, and independent businesses give Northeast Arkansas a place to gather that no neighboring community can match. Residents recognize local strides to improve quality of life: nearly two-thirds believe the city is improving, and three-quarters intend to stay for the foreseeable future. That confidence is an asset Plan Jonesboro is written to protect and build on.

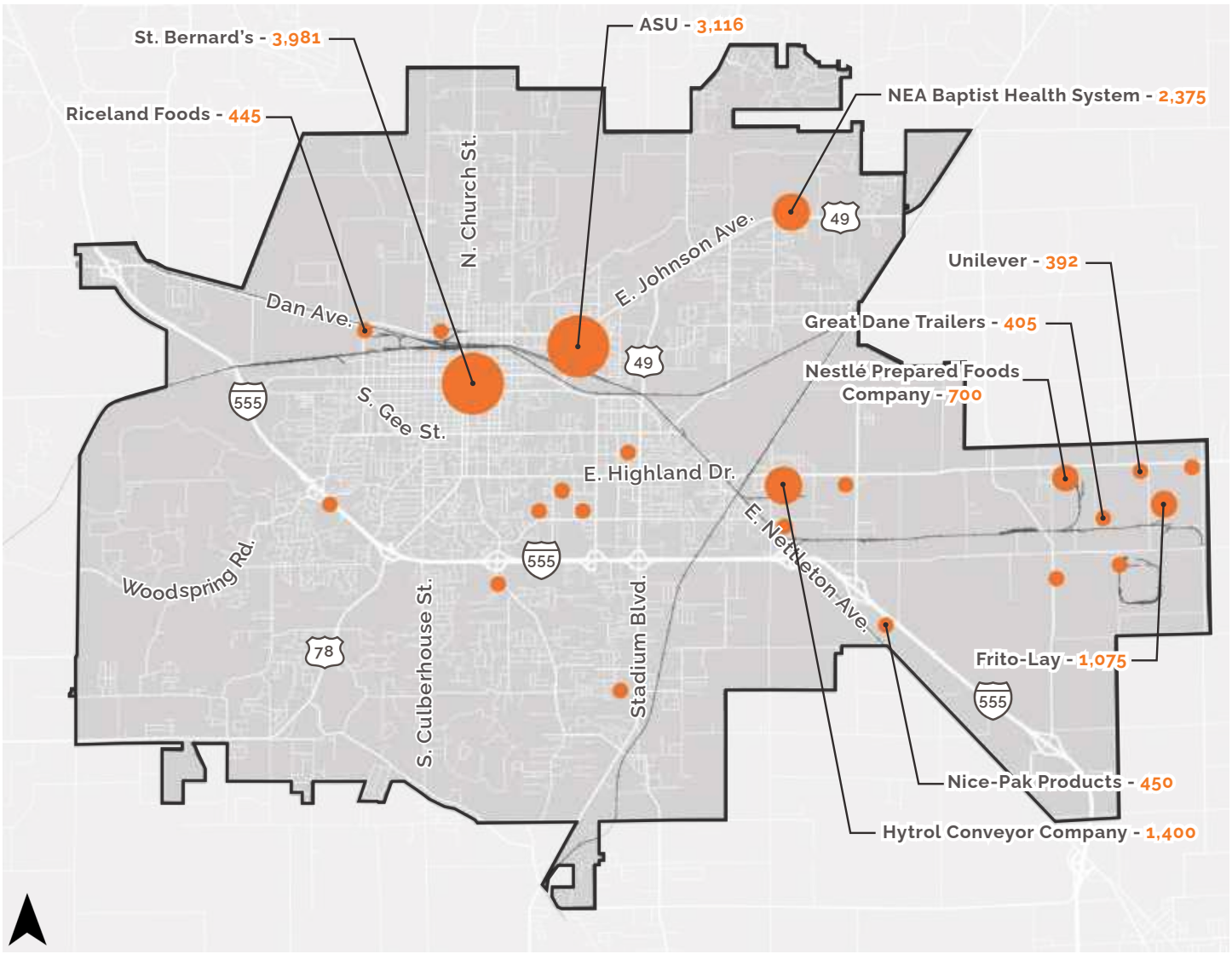
Regional centrality gives Jonesboro market depth that a city of its size could not otherwise sustain, supporting restaurants, retail, healthcare specialties, and cultural amenities that effectively serve a population of half a million rather than seventy thousand. It also gives the city institutional partners with land, capital, long horizons, and a talent pipeline that graduates skilled workers each year into a region ready to absorb them. Realizing that value depends on coordination rather than each institution acting alone. ASU, NEA Baptist, St. Bernards, area school districts, utilities, major employers, and county and regional agencies each hold resources, land, capital, workforce training programs, procurement budgets, and long-term facility plans that could be aligned toward shared goals rather than pursued in isolation. A hospital expansion, a new academic program, and a City infrastructure investment made without reference to one another can each be individually reasonable and still miss the chance to reinforce a shared district, a shared workforce pipeline, or a shared neighborhood outcome. Closer coordination among these partners is one of the more cost-effective tools available to the City, since it multiplies the impact of investment decisions these institutions are already planning to make.

But the responsibilities that come with regional centrality are heavy, and coordination with institutional partners does not by itself resolve them. As the regional epicenter of activity, Jonesboro's streets, infrastructure, stormwater systems, and public services absorb demand generated well beyond its tax base, and some neighborhoods have received significantly less coordinated public and private investment than others as a result. Closing that gap will require the City, not just its regional partners, to direct its own capital and attention more deliberately toward the areas that have been left behind.

These shortcomings mirror what residents consistently say they want: planned, intentional growth, shaped to strengthen each area of the city rather than straining the assets that make Jonesboro home. Plan Jonesboro takes up that charge, to grow the city's regional role while ensuring that role, and the coordination it depends on, serves its residents, in every neighborhood, for years to come.

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

## Jonesboro's Regional Role




*Geography of Large Employers*

## 1.3 What We Heard

**A Community That Wants to Grow on Its Own Terms**

Throughout the planning process, residents shared a clear and consistent vision for Jonesboro's future. Through community surveys, Design Week engagement activities, and pop-up events, residents expressed appreciation for the qualities that make Jonesboro a desirable place to live: its family-friendly character, strong sense of community, parks and recreational amenities, local businesses, educational institutions, and growing economy. Residents are not asking Jonesboro to stand still. They recognize that continued growth brings real opportunity, but they also want greater confidence that growth will strengthen the community rather than slowly erode the qualities that make Jonesboro feel like home.

That confidence depends on how growth is managed, not whether it happens. **90%** of survey respondents identified safety and comfort as one of the most important qualities of a strong neighborhood, and **65%** prioritized trees, green space, and appearance, both signs of a community that wants growth to enhance existing neighborhoods rather than detract from them. Across the engagement process, residents repeatedly emphasized preserving Jonesboro's identity, balancing new development with reinvestment in established neighborhoods, and ensuring that growth is intentional, well-coordinated, and reflective of the community's values. These themes echo directly through the forms of community wealth this plan is built around: residents are describing a desire for social capital, institutional capacity, and civic stability to keep pace with economic diversity as the city grows.

**Places, Connections, and Everyday Life**

Residents also described a community with more places that bring people together and enrich everyday life. Many expressed a desire for additional housing choices, more locally owned restaurants and retail, expanded entertainment opportunities, and vibrant gathering places where families and friends can spend time together. Strengthening Downtown, supporting the continued evolution of areas such as Gee Street, and creating additional activity centers throughout the city were identified as opportunities to support local businesses, encourage investment, and create destinations that reflect Jonesboro's unique identity. These places were envisioned as active throughout the day and evening, offering opportunities to shop, dine, recreate, attend community events, and enjoy more of what Jonesboro has to offer close to home.

Improving transportation and connectivity emerged as another consistent priority. Residents identified the need for safer streets, better traffic flow, and improved roadway conditions, alongside strong support for expanding sidewalks, trails, and bicycle facilities. Better connections between neighborhoods, schools, parks, shopping areas, employment centers, and community destinations were viewed as essential to a city where residents have safe, convenient, and connected travel





*Design Week's first Open House*

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

## What We Heard




*Community Comments*

options regardless of how they choose to get around.

Parks, trails, and public spaces consistently emerged as some of Jonesboro's greatest assets and remain central to the community's quality of life. Residents supported expanding trail connections, enhancing parks and recreational facilities, improving access to destinations such as Craighead Forest Park, and creating welcoming public spaces that encourage recreation, community events, and everyday interaction. Participants viewed these investments as opportunities to strengthen community health, foster social connections, and preserve the family-oriented lifestyle that makes Jonesboro a special place to call home, an expression of natural resilience and social capital working together.

Taken together, this input reflects a clear vision for Jonesboro: a city that embraces growth while preserving the qualities residents value most. Residents want thoughtful development, strong neighborhoods, diverse housing opportunities, connected transportation networks, exceptional parks and public spaces, and vibrant destinations that enrich daily life. These priorities form the foundation for the vision, goals, and recommendations presented through Plan Jonesboro.

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## 1.4 Principles for Prosperity

### A Shared Standard for Growing Well

Jonesboro's future will be shaped by hundreds of individual decisions: where a new development goes, which street gets rebuilt first, which corridor draws the next round of investment. No single one of these decisions determines the city's course, but taken together, over years, they decide whether growth strengthens Jonesboro or slowly wears away at what makes it home. This section sets out the principles meant to guide that accumulation of choices toward shared prosperity.

**Twelve principles** carry that charge, two for each of the six forms of community wealth introduced in Section 1.1: individual opportunity, economic diversity, institutional capacity, social capital, natural resilience, and civic stability. They are less a checklist than a shared understanding of what Jonesboro is trying to become: a city where opportunity reaches every resident, where local businesses and diverse industries anchor a resilient economy, where the City and its regional partners have the capacity to keep pace with growth, where neighbors know and trust one another, where the natural systems that shape daily life are protected rather than depleted, and where the City's finances stay sound enough to keep every other promise. These principles reappear throughout the plan because prosperity, as Jonesboro has defined it, is not the outcome of any one chapter or investment. It is the sum of many decisions made with the same values in mind.

### Growing Without Losing What Matters

The principles that follow are meant to outlast any single project, budget cycle, or election. Jonesboro will change leadership, funding sources, and market conditions many times over the life of this plan, but the values behind these principles should not. They ask the City, and the partners who help carry out the plan, to keep sight of a simple idea: growth is only worth pursuing if it leaves Jonesboro's residents better off across all six forms of wealth, not just one.

That is not always a straightforward test. A project that creates jobs might strain natural systems. A street redesigned for safety might compete with other priorities for limited dollars. These principles do not pretend such tensions away. Instead, they ask the City to weigh them honestly, favoring the choices that build lasting, balanced strength for the community over those that trade one form of prosperity for another. Applied consistently, they are how Jonesboro turns the vision of a prosperous place into the everyday decisions that make it real.

### Twelve Principles, Six Forms of Community Wealth

#### 1. Individual Opportunity

**Put daily needs within reach.** Locate housing near jobs, schools, parks, and everyday services so residents can meet routine needs close to home.

**Widen pathways into good jobs and entrepreneurship.** Support workforce training, education partnerships, and opportunities to start and grow a business, so a range of paths, employment and entrepreneurship alike, are open to residents at every skill level.

#### 2. Economic Diversity

**Keep ownership local.** Protect and grow opportunities for locally owned businesses within centers and corridors across the city.

**Avoid dependence on any single employer or sector.** Support continued growth across healthcare, education, manufacturing, logistics, and small business so the local economy can weather a downturn in any one industry.

### 3. Institutional Capacity

**Coordinate with the region's anchor institutions.** Align City planning and investment with Arkansas State University, the hospital systems, school districts, and other major institutions so growth around campuses, medical centers, and schools reinforces shared goals rather than proceeding in isolation.

**Build the capacity of civic and community partners.** Support the nonprofit organizations, neighborhood associations, business alliances, and civic groups that extend the City's reach and carry out much of this plan's day-to-day work, recognizing that Jonesboro's institutional strength extends well beyond City Hall.

### 4. Social Capital

**Distribute gathering places across the city.** Ensure every neighborhood has a civic space, park, or center within reasonable reach, rather than concentrating public gathering places in only one or two parts of Jonesboro.

**Invest in civic art and cultural identity.** Support public art, cultural institutions, and community events that give residents a recognizable sense of place and a reason for civic pride.

### 5. Natural Resilience

**Grow the tree canopy and green infrastructure.** Expand tree cover and natural stormwater management as the city grows, using today's conditions as the starting point.

**Slow the loss of natural and rural land.** Direct growth in compact formats and toward already-developed areas so farmland, floodplains, and natural areas at the city's edge are preserved.

### 6. Civic Stability

**Favor fiscally productive development.** Direct public investment toward development patterns that generate strong, lasting value relative to their public service costs.

**Tie the capital budget to the plan.** Align annual capital improvement spending with the plan's designated growth areas and adopted principles.

### Applying the Principles Together

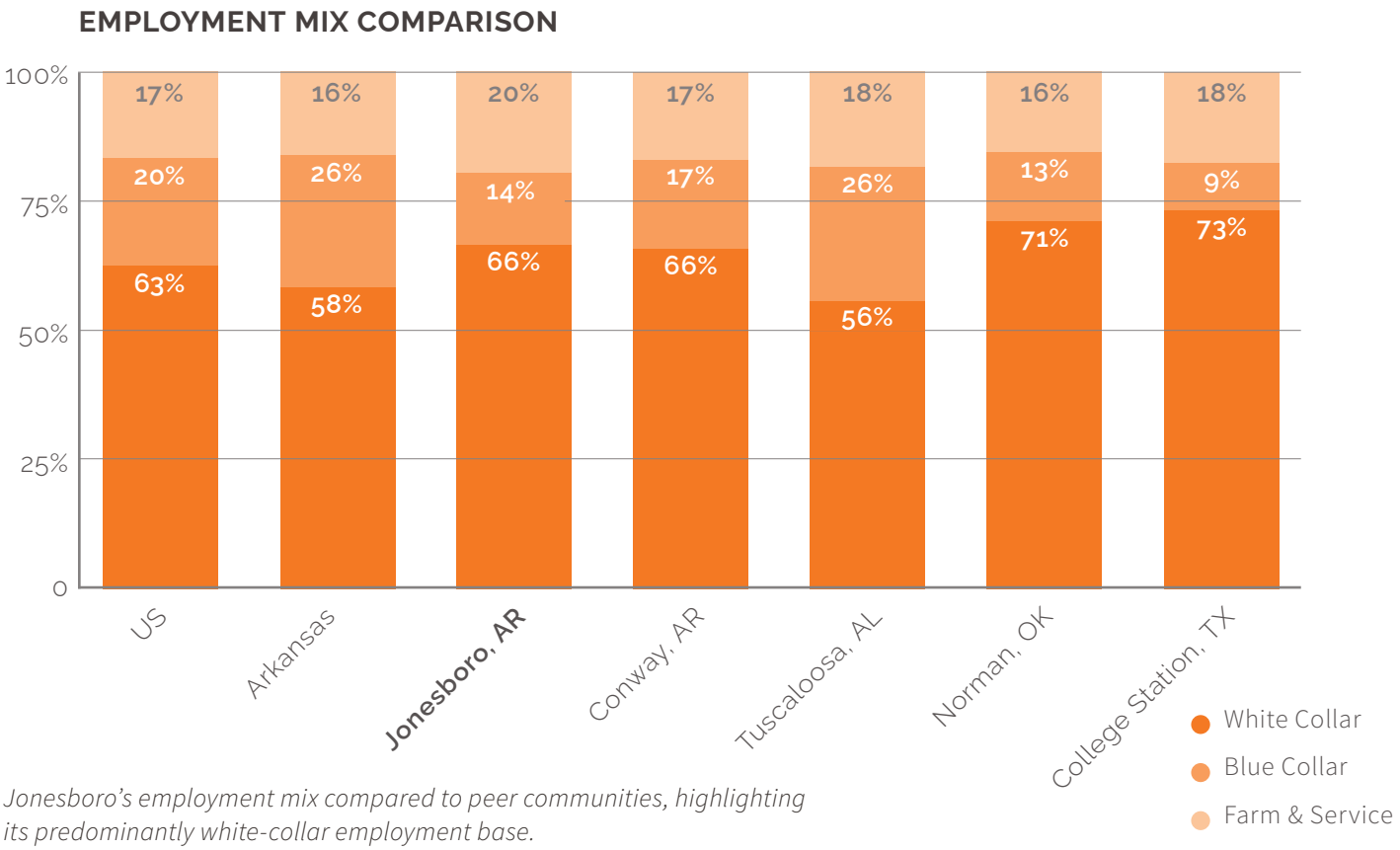
No single principle should be read in isolation, and no project should be judged a success because it satisfies one principle while working against another. A development that strengthens local enterprise but drains public resources, or an infrastructure investment that connects a neighborhood but fails to provide mobility options or access to nearby resources, has not advanced prosperity as this plan defines it, only shifted the balance among its parts. Applied together, these twelve principles are how Plan Jonesboro turns shared values into shared, balanced success as the city grows.

## 1.5 Economic Opportunity

**A Diverse Economy Anchored by Major Institutions**

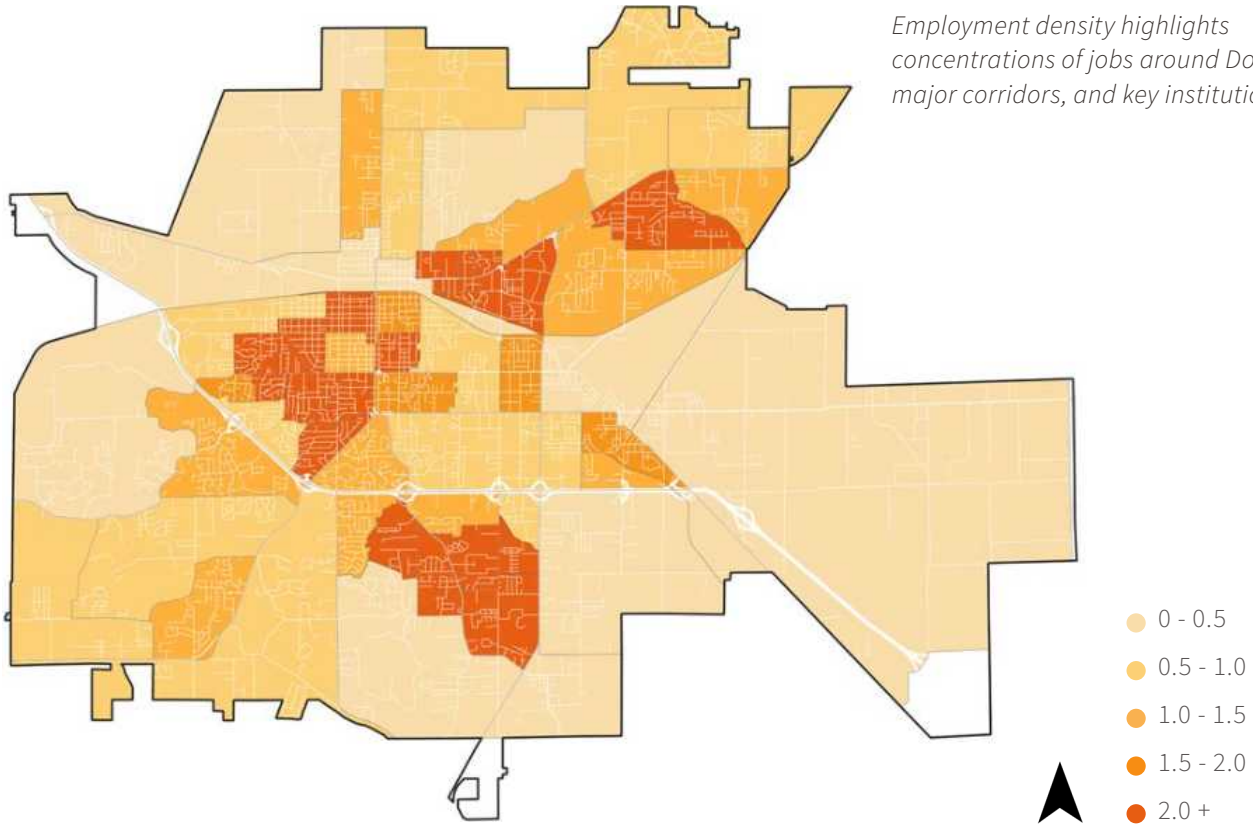
Jonesboro's economy is shaped by its role as the leading employment, healthcare, education, and commercial center in Northeast Arkansas, and it serves a population far larger than its municipal boundaries alone would suggest. Arkansas State University, St. Bernards Healthcare, NEA Baptist, major manufacturers and food processors, regional retail, logistics, government, and a growing base of local businesses together create a diverse economy with connections extending throughout the Delta and to the Memphis region. That diversity is one of Jonesboro's greatest economic assets. Roughly **two-thirds** of jobs are classified as white-collar, slightly above the national average and higher than Arkansas overall, reflecting the city's strength in healthcare, education, and professional services, while manufacturing, logistics, food processing, and retail provide additional pathways into stable work and connect Jonesboro to regional and national markets.

This economic activity is not spread evenly across the city, and it does not need to be. Employment concentrates around Downtown, Arkansas State University, the medical centers, major commercial corridors, and industrial areas, forming several distinct but complementary centers of activity rather than a single business district. Education and healthcare alone account for a substantial share of the city's major employment, with St. Bernards Healthcare and Arkansas State University employing more than **7,000 people** combined. These institutions do more than provide jobs: they bring students, patients, researchers, purchasing power, and expertise into the community every day. Strengthening the connections among these anchors, local businesses, entrepreneurs, and workforce programs allows more of that economic activity to circulate within Jonesboro rather than pass through it, an approach consistent with the plan's principle of coordinating with the region's anchor institutions rather than treating them as separate from the City's own economic strategy.




*Jonesboro's employment mix compared to peer communities, highlighting its predominantly white-collar employment base.*

## EMPLOYMENT MIX COMPARISON




*Employment density highlights concentrations of jobs around Downtown, major corridors, and key institutions.*

Even with these strengths, Jonesboro's household conditions point to real work ahead. Median household income, at roughly **$51,700**, lags behind several peer cities, and a poverty rate near **23%** is nearly double the national average, even as an unemployment rate near **6%** suggests that access to stable work remains uneven across the city. Economic development in Jonesboro is strongest when business growth, workforce opportunity, and the quality of the city's places reinforce one another rather than operate as separate initiatives. That means pairing continued recruitment and expansion of major employers with wage growth, career pathways, childcare, transportation, and attainable housing, so that economic growth is felt in household stability and not just in job counts.

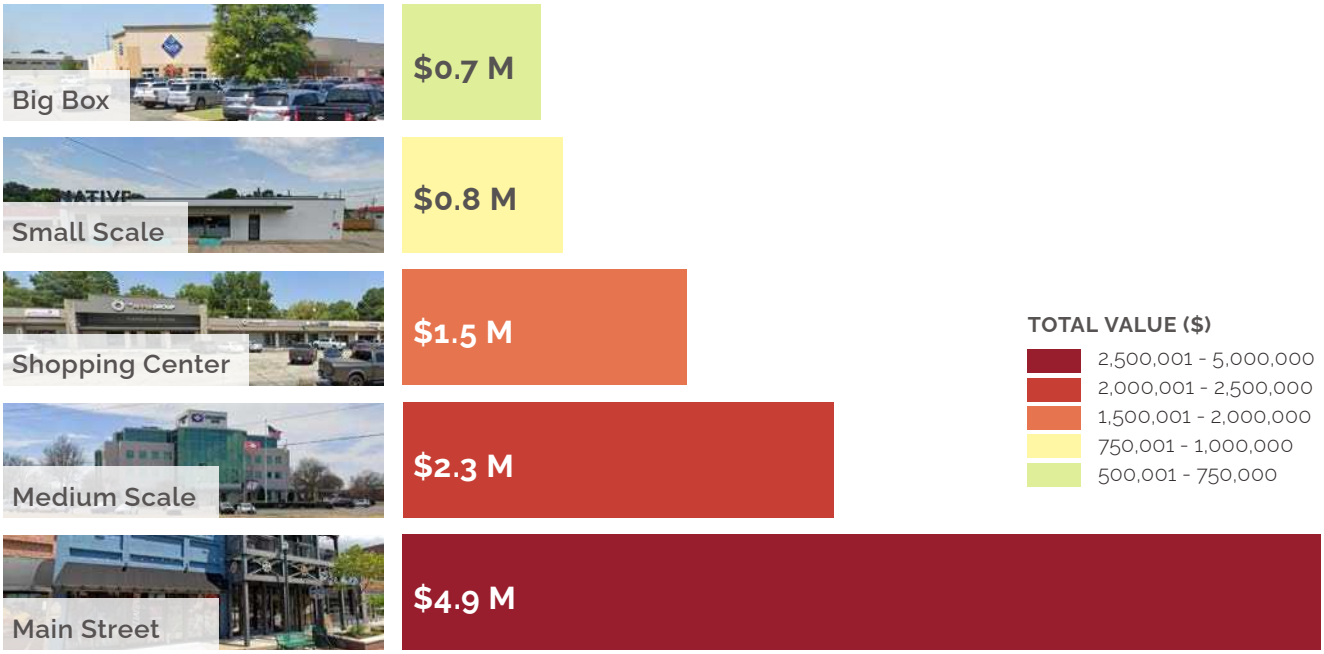
**Small Business, Redevelopment, and the Value of Place**

Local enterprise and distinctive places are just as important to Jonesboro's economic foundation as its major institutions. Residents consistently point to unique local businesses, job opportunities, and community character among the qualities they value most about the city. Emerging areas such as the Gee Street corridor, show how entrepreneurship, reinvestment, and placemaking can work together to strengthen local identity while generating new economic activity, and Downtown continues to combine civic, cultural, employment, residential, and small-business roles that a conventional commercial corridor cannot replicate. Supporting small business as both an employment sector and a placemaking strategy, through flexible commercial space, predictable approvals, technical assistance, capital access, and succession planning, helps these enterprises circulate income locally and makes Jonesboro's centers more distinctive and more useful to the residents who rely on them.

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

## Economic Opportunity

### COMMERCIAL VALUE PER ACRE




*Compact commercial development generates greater value per acre than land-intensive development.*

Jonesboro already contains clear evidence that compact, walkable development delivers more economic value from the same amount of land and infrastructure than large-format, land-intensive commercial development. Downtown's Urban Loft Co. property generates approximately **$5.7 million** in taxable value per acre, compared with an average of roughly **$0.7 million** per acre for the city's big box retail properties. While large-scale retail serves a real market function, economic development does not depend solely on outward expansion or major employer recruitment. Redevelopment, infill, and the more productive use of places the city already serves, guiding underperforming commercial properties toward more connected and adaptable formats, can add housing, workplaces, and local retail while reusing infrastructure the City has already paid to build and maintain, directly advancing the plan's principle of favoring fiscally productive development.

Quality of life belongs in this same economic strategy, not apart from it. Housing choice, parks and recreation, arts and culture, entertainment, and a strong sense of community all influence whether graduates remain after commencement, whether workers choose to relocate to Jonesboro, and whether businesses can attract and keep good employees. Recreation, events, and memorable public places also support tourism and longer visitor stays, giving Jonesboro's cultural and civic investments a measurable economic return alongside their community value. Measured this way, success in Jonesboro's economy looks like more than new jobs or recruitment announcements: it looks like more entrepreneurship, higher-quality employment, greater household stability, active centers for business and community together, and a growing number of residents who can participate in and benefit from the city's continued growth.

This district-level view should directly guide the capital improvement program, grant applications, development requirements, and annual budgeting, so that spending decisions can be checked against a citywide picture rather than made district by district in isolation. Coordinating related investments, a park alongside a planned school or drainage project, for instance, stretches limited dollars further and should be favored over single-purpose projects addressing only one need at a time.

Finally, this analysis should be revisited regularly, not treated as a one-time study. Tracking conditions across all ten districts on a recurring basis lets the City confirm that investment is actually narrowing the gaps between districts rather than simply moving forward everywhere at the same uneven pace. Sustained over time, this is how Plan Jonesboro can measure progress, district by district and year after year.

## Recommendations

Jonesboro should keep recruiting major employers while doing more to grow the businesses and talent already here. The recommendations below support local business, strengthen the workforce, and guide the redevelopment of aging commercial sites. Compact, mixed-use projects often cost more to build than they are worth when finished, so financing coordination under Move 9 (see Sections 2.1 and 3.5) is part of this work. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents**

### M7.1 - Create a small business support program

- **Description:** Offer technical help, capital referrals, and succession planning for local businesses. The City owns little commercial property, so any program that offers space needs a clear owner and timeline, likely through property owners or partners.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Jonesboro Unlimited, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### M7.3 Guide commercial redevelopment and incentives.

- **Description:** Prepare a strategy for redeveloping aging commercial sites, and judge incentives by jobs created, local ownership, and fiscal return.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term (6–10 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Jonesboro Unlimited, Mayor's Office
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

# A PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY

## Economic Opportunity

### Partnerships for Economic Opportunity

#### M7.2 - Expand workforce, entrepreneurship, and graduate retention.

- **Description:** Build training partnerships with ASU and schools, and keep more graduates working in Jonesboro.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** ASU, Jonesboro Unlimited, Jonesboro Public Schools
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M9.1 - Convene an anchor institution forum.

- **Description:** Align the hiring, procurement, and expansion plans of ASU, the hospitals, schools, utilities, and major employers.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Mayor's Office, ASU, NEA Baptist, St. Bernards, Jonesboro Public Schools
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Local business growth.** Number of small businesses assisted each year and their survival rate after three years.

## 1.6 Taking Action

### Move 1: Adopt a Unified Development Code

Jonesboro's rules are split across Chapter 117 (23 mostly single-use districts), the subdivision regulations, and the Downtown Jonesboro Development Code. This move replaces them with one Unified Development Code, prepared with a consultant and adopted with a new zoning map as one legislative action after outreach. Each place type allows about three districts. The UDC adds mixed-use center districts, a graduated range of residential districts, and corridor districts that support walkable mixed use on Core Corridors and automobile-oriented formats on Suburban Corridors. It also holds the subdivision, parkland, tree, and parking standards. Most private development in the plan, including the centers, reaches the ground through it.

### Move 2: Adopt the Master Street Plan and Build Connections

The Master Street Plan sets each street's design by function and context. City projects follow it, so not every street gets a bike lane, and connecting and fixing come before widening. Investment then runs as steady annual programs for sidewalks, crossings, and trails, alongside right-sizing, intersection fixes, transit stops, and truck routes, with barrier crossings and the East Highland pilot placed later. Many corridors are state routes, so ArDOT and the MPO are key partners, and consultants are likely for the plan, the active transportation plan, and the pilot.

### Move 3: Build Parks, Trails, and Tree Canopy

Start with low-cost steps: park access audits and a map of gap areas. Then fund an annual park access line, buy land in the six gap areas, build a creek corridor pilot, and run a canopy program. Parks and trail links required of new development come through the UDC, so City dollars go to existing gaps.

### Move 4: Implement the Catalytic Centers

For most centers the City enables private development through the UDC and invests in the public conditions around it. Downtown needs a consultant-led parking strategy, two-way streets and civic squares, and housing enabled by the UDC. Turtle Creek needs a consultant-prepared framework first. Gee Street needs flexible rules and a creekside plaza. North Church and Jessup needs the most public investment. Southwest Drive starts with pedestrian safety at the high school. Johnson and Bridger and the remaining centers need only zoning and reserved civic space.

### Move 5: Reinvest in Neighborhoods and Housing

Reinvestment works best when several improvements arrive together. This move picks priority areas, starting with North Jonesboro and the neighborhoods around Downtown, and delivers sidewalks, lighting, drainage, trees, and street repair at the same time. It creates programs that do not exist today: home rehabilitation, small-scale infill support, and displacement protection for homeowners, small landlords, and long-standing businesses. A yearly audit in Move 6 checks that investment reaches every district over time.

### Move 6: Align Capital Planning, Fiscal Policy, and Monitoring

Jonesboro relies on sales tax for about two-thirds of its operating revenue, so growth is a fiscal decision. This move aligns the capital plan with the Growth Framework, uses a lifecycle cost tool now in development in Arkansas, sets annexation and growth-area rules, and assesses service gaps by Planning District. It adds a yearly investment audit, an outside funding and tax credit strategy, a dashboard and annual report, and a five-year review.

### Move 7: Strengthen Economic Opportunity and Local Business

Keep recruiting major employers, and add a small business support program, workforce and graduate-retention partnerships, and a strategy for redeveloping aging commercial sites. The City owns little commercial property, so any program offering space needs clear ownership and timing, likely through property owners or partners.

### Move 8: Program Public Life and Stewardship

Civic spaces need events and a responsible caretaker. This move runs a year-round calendar with simple event permits, names a steward and operating plan before each public space is built, and tests ideas through pilots, public art, and programs for all ages.

### Move 9: Build Partnerships and Coordinate Financing

Much of the plan depends on others: ASU, the hospitals, schools, utilities, the MPO, ArDOT, GOJO, the railroads, Craighead County, the Downtown Alliance, and nonprofits. This move formalizes those relationships and adds light financing coordination for compact, mixed-use projects, which often cost more to build than they are worth when finished: a financing table, pro formas on real sites, and policies for partnerships, special districts, and business improvement districts.




CHAPTER 2

# 2

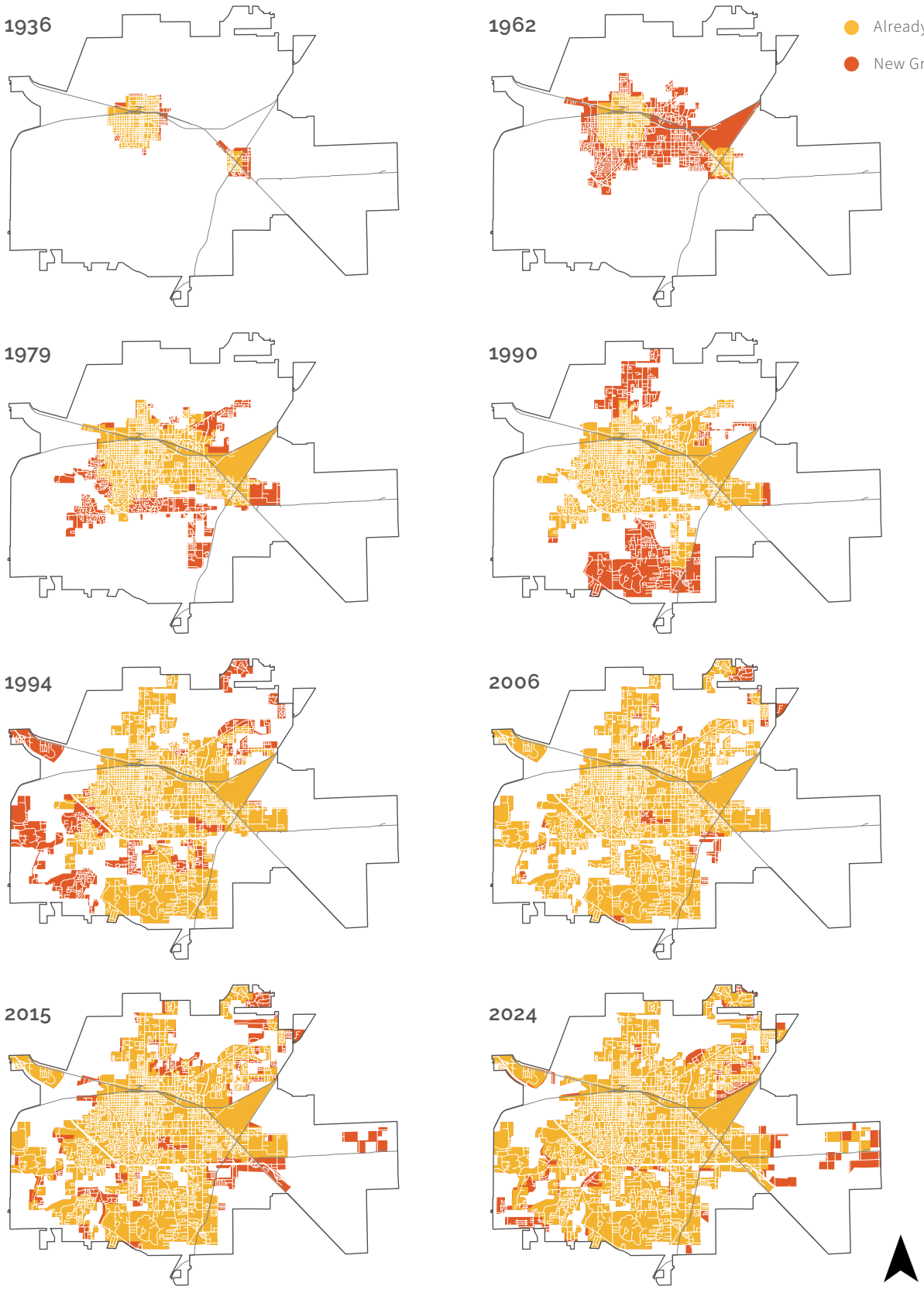
# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

*Structuring growth for shared prosperity*

Growth is coming to Jonesboro regardless of what this plan says; the question is where it occurs, what form it takes, and whether it strengthens the community or works against it. This chapter establishes a citywide strategy for accommodating growth while protecting the places and systems Jonesboro values, coordinating land use, infrastructure, transportation, housing, natural systems, and fiscal stewardship so that new development expands opportunity without creating avoidable long-term costs.

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Opportunity




*Historic Growth Maps (1936-2024).*

## 2.1 Growth Opportunity

**Jonesboro's Growth, and What It Has Cost to Accommodate**

Jonesboro's population has grown **48%** since 2000, reaching roughly **82,000 residents** today, and that growth shows no sign of slowing. The city is expected to reach **100,000 residents** in less than **15 years**, and **2050** projections range from approximately **114,500 to 176,900 residents** depending on the rate of growth the region sustains. That range is wide enough that Plan Jonesboro cannot be built around a single forecast. Instead, it needs a durable structure, one grounded in the principles established in Chapter 1, that holds up whether Jonesboro's growth over the next **25 years** lands at the low end of that range or well above it.

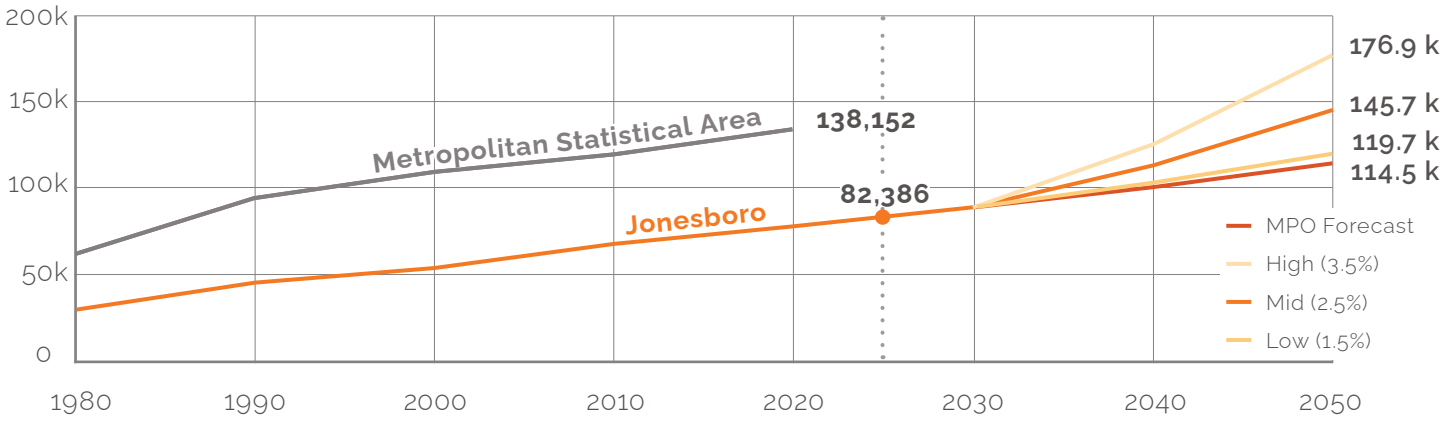
How Jonesboro has grown matters as much as how fast. Since about **1950**, the city has expanded outward from its historic core while average density has remained just above two dwellings per acre, much lower than the city's earliest neighborhoods, even as its land area and infrastructure network grew substantially. Each cycle of outward expansion has increased the distance between homes, jobs, services, and public facilities, a pattern visible in the accelerating footprint of new development from **1936** through today. A growth decision is therefore also a fiscal and infrastructure decision: the development pattern the city approves today determines the maintenance obligations and service demands it will carry for decades afterward. Roads, utilities, drainage, parks, and fire protection all require operation, maintenance, and eventual replacement long after construction is complete, and the obligation compounds with distance. Illustrative road-cost figures show the scale involved: work on a single lane for the distance of one mile (a lane-mile) can progress from roughly **$40,000** for preventive treatment to **$240,000** for resurfacing, **$640,000** for rehabilitation, and about **$2.64 million** for full reconstruction. Every mile of new roadway Jonesboro builds is a commitment to that full cost curve, whether or not the development it serves generates enough value to support it.

**Measuring Growth by the Value It Returns**

Value per acre offers a fair way to compare development patterns against those obligations. Compact blocks, mixed uses, and incremental infill tend to produce substantially more taxable value on less land than large, low-intensity sites with extensive parking, even when the large site's total value is higher. Local figures make the range concrete: roughly **$0.7 million per acre** for big-box commercial, **$0.8 million** for small-scale commercial, **$1.1 million** for shopping centers, **$4.9 million** for Main Street commercial, and **$7.4 million** per acre for mixed-use properties, over **10x** the value of large-scale commercial. The same pattern holds at a citywide scale. Jonesboro generates **74%** of Craighead County's taxable value on just **9%** of its taxable land area, and Downtown Jonesboro alone produces **2%** of citywide taxable value on only **0.2%** of taxable land, a clear illustration of how proximity and compact form multiply the return on land and infrastructure that the city has already built.

That return matters because of how Jonesboro's budget actually works. The city's 2026 operations and maintenance budget relies on about $27.3 million in city sales tax and $21.9 million

### JONESBORO POPULATION




*Jonesboro's population continues to grow steadily, with significant growth projected through 2050.*

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Opportunity

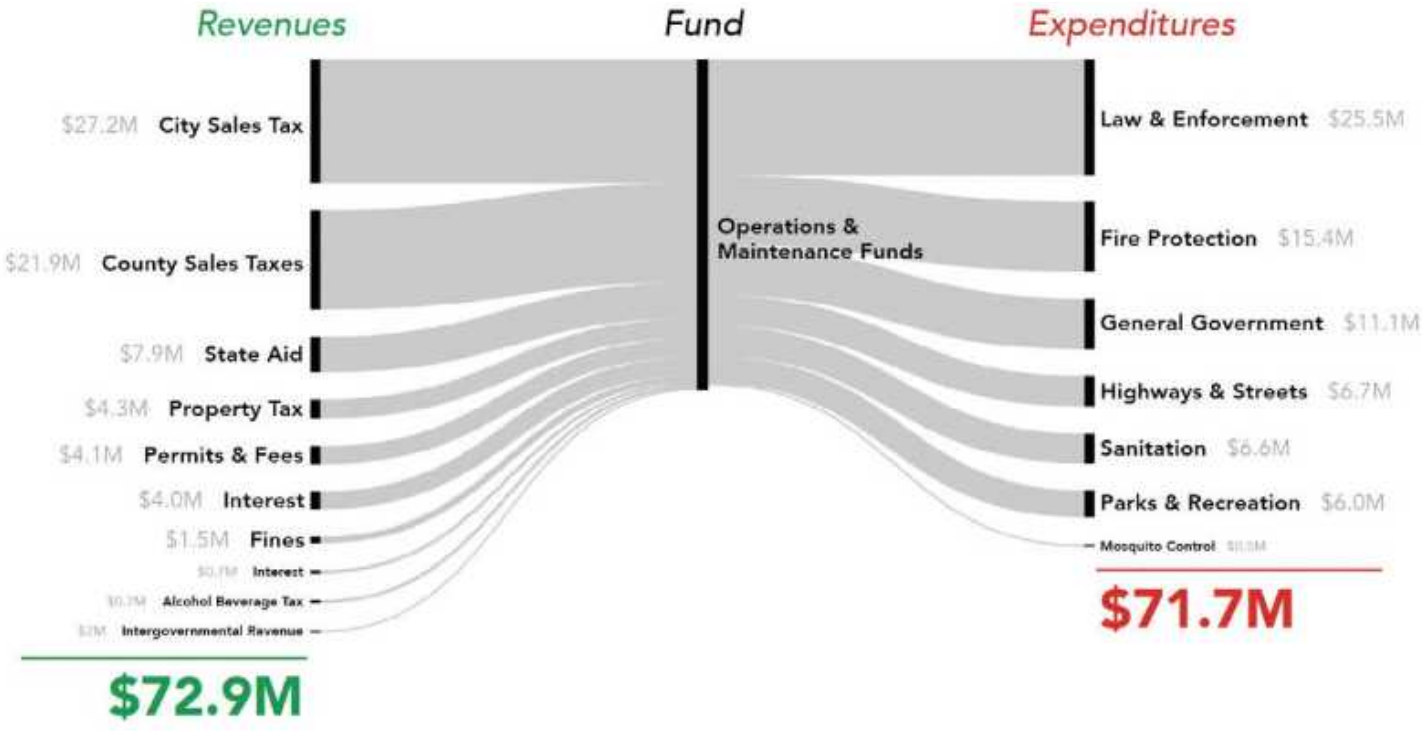
in county sales tax, together representing roughly 67 percent of operating revenue, and combined sales tax revenue runs about 11 times property tax revenue. Arkansas law caps how much property tax a city can collect far more tightly than most states, and no Arkansas city, Jonesboro included, can fund its streets, parks, drainage, and public safety on property tax revenue alone. A budget this dependent on sales tax depends just as heavily on active centers, local businesses, and commercially productive places generating that revenue year after year, which makes the location and form of new development a direct fiscal question, not just a land use one.

This single fact should shape how Jonesboro thinks about the relationship between where people live and where they shop. It cuts two ways. Places built almost entirely around commerce, Downtown's core blocks, Jonesboro's highway corridors, generate strong sales tax but carry very little housing, leaving them quiet outside business hours and dependent on customers driving in from elsewhere. Places built almost entirely around housing, whether older neighborhoods or newer subdivisions, generate property tax but little or no sales tax, leaving them permanently dependent on commercial activity happening somewhere else in the city to cover their own costs. Neither pattern, taken alone, is fiscally self-sufficient. The way forward runs in both directions at once: bringing more housing into and around Jonesboro's commercial areas, and bringing more commercial nodes into and around its neighborhoods, whether that means mixing the two directly within the same buildings and blocks or simply locating them close enough to reinforce one another. Both moves increase what the same acre of land can generate for the city.

### A Closer Look at What Jonesboro's Land Currently Produces

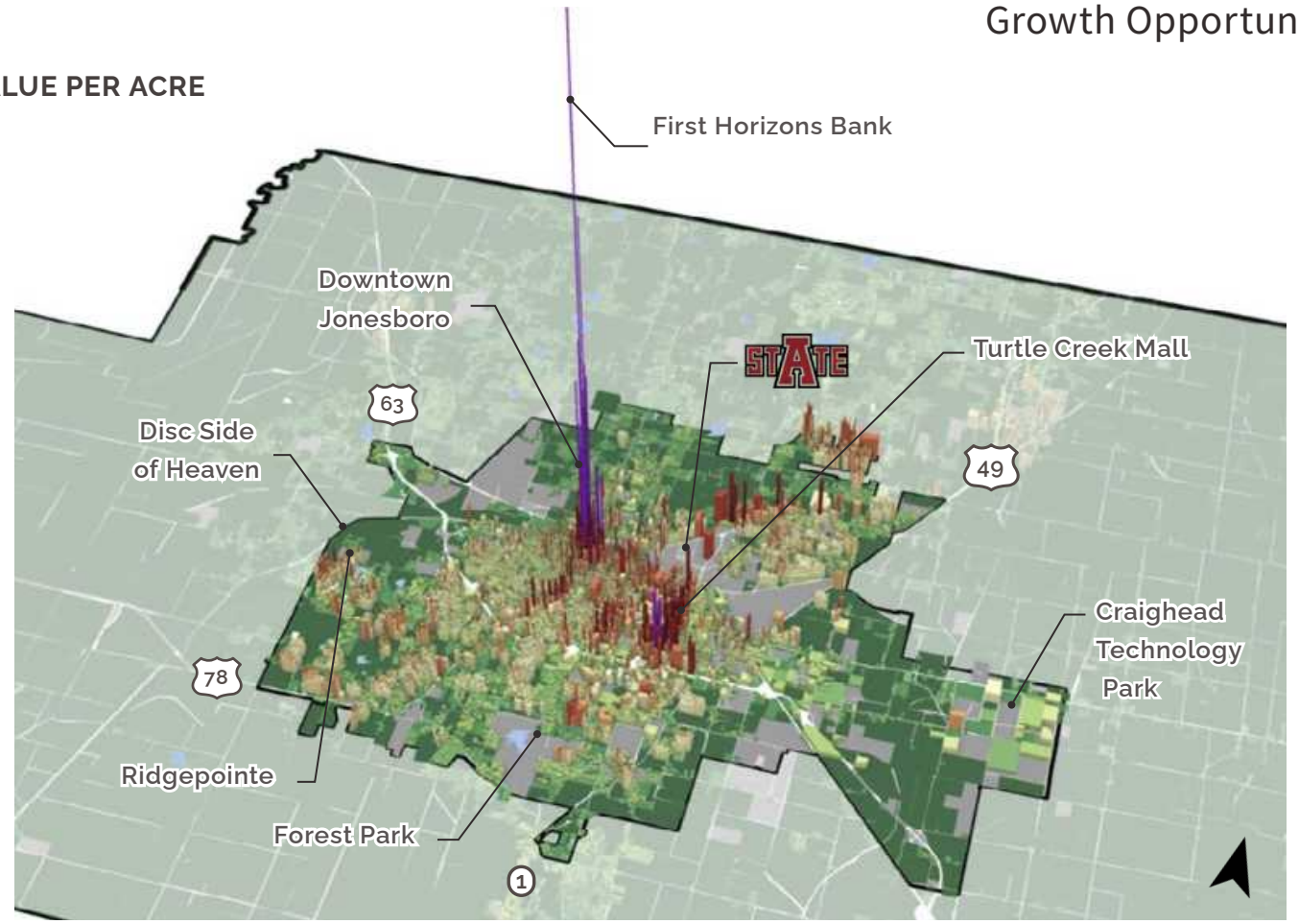
A sample of parcels from across Jonesboro, shown in the accompanying map, illustrates just how much this pattern varies block by block and neighborhood by neighborhood, and further supports the case for co-locating homes and commerce.

**FLOW OF FUNDS: 2026 APPROVED OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE FUNDS BUDGET**



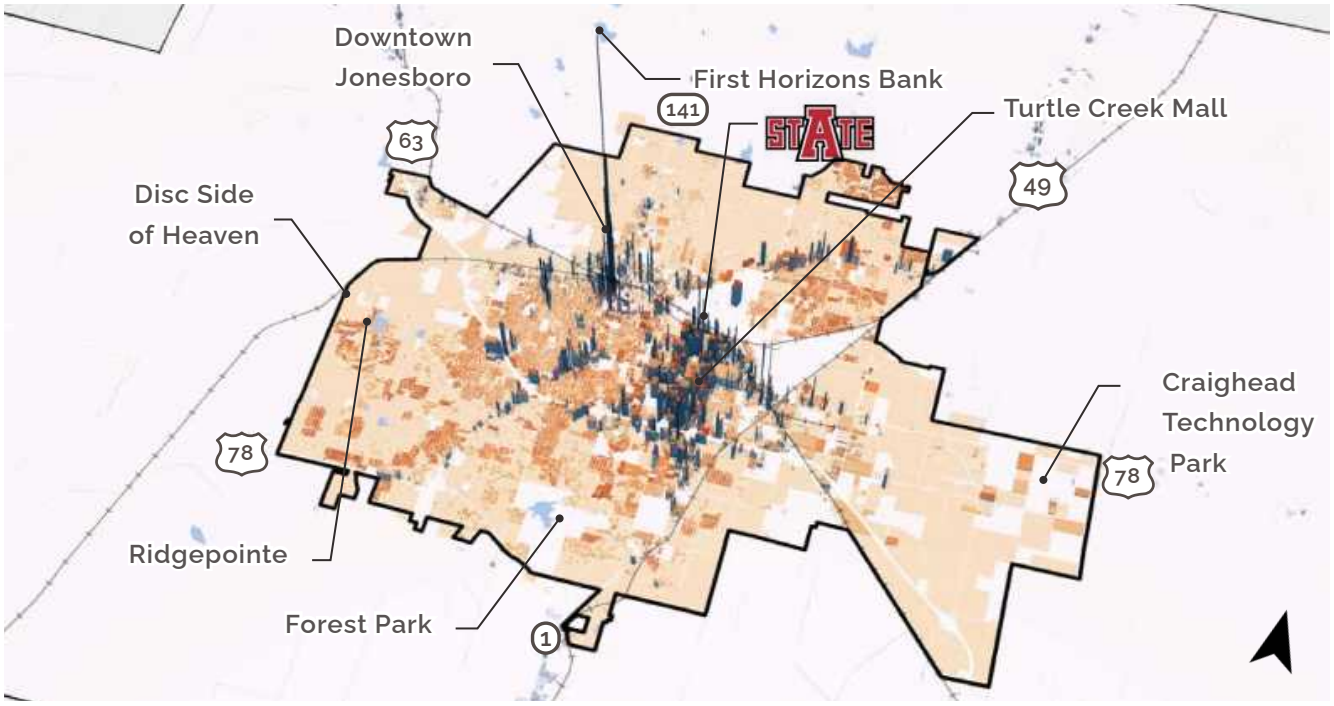

*Jonesboro's 2026 operating budget is primarily funded by sales tax revenues, supporting public safety, streets, sanitation, parks, and other essential services.*

## VALUE PER ACRE




*Jonesboro's 2026 operating budget is primarily funded by sales tax revenues,*

## PROPERTY & SALES TAX PER ACRE




*Jonesboro's 2026 operating budget is primarily funded by sales tax revenues,*

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Opportunity

**Downtown | 1-a**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $1,561 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $44,335 per year
Density: 0.4 units per acre

**Downtown | 1-b**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $362 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $2,168 per year
Density: 0.1 units per acre

**Older Neighborhood | 3-d**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $145 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $473 per year
Density: 3.5 units per acre

**Older Neighborhood | 3-e**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $183 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $486 per year
Density: 5.0 units per acre

**Suburban Neighborhood | 4-a**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $160 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $378 per year
Density: 3.9 units per acre

**Mixed Subdivision | 5-a**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $107 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $164 per year
Density: 0.5 units per acre

**Suburban Neighborhood | 4-b**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $141 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $391 per year
Density: 3.5 units per acre

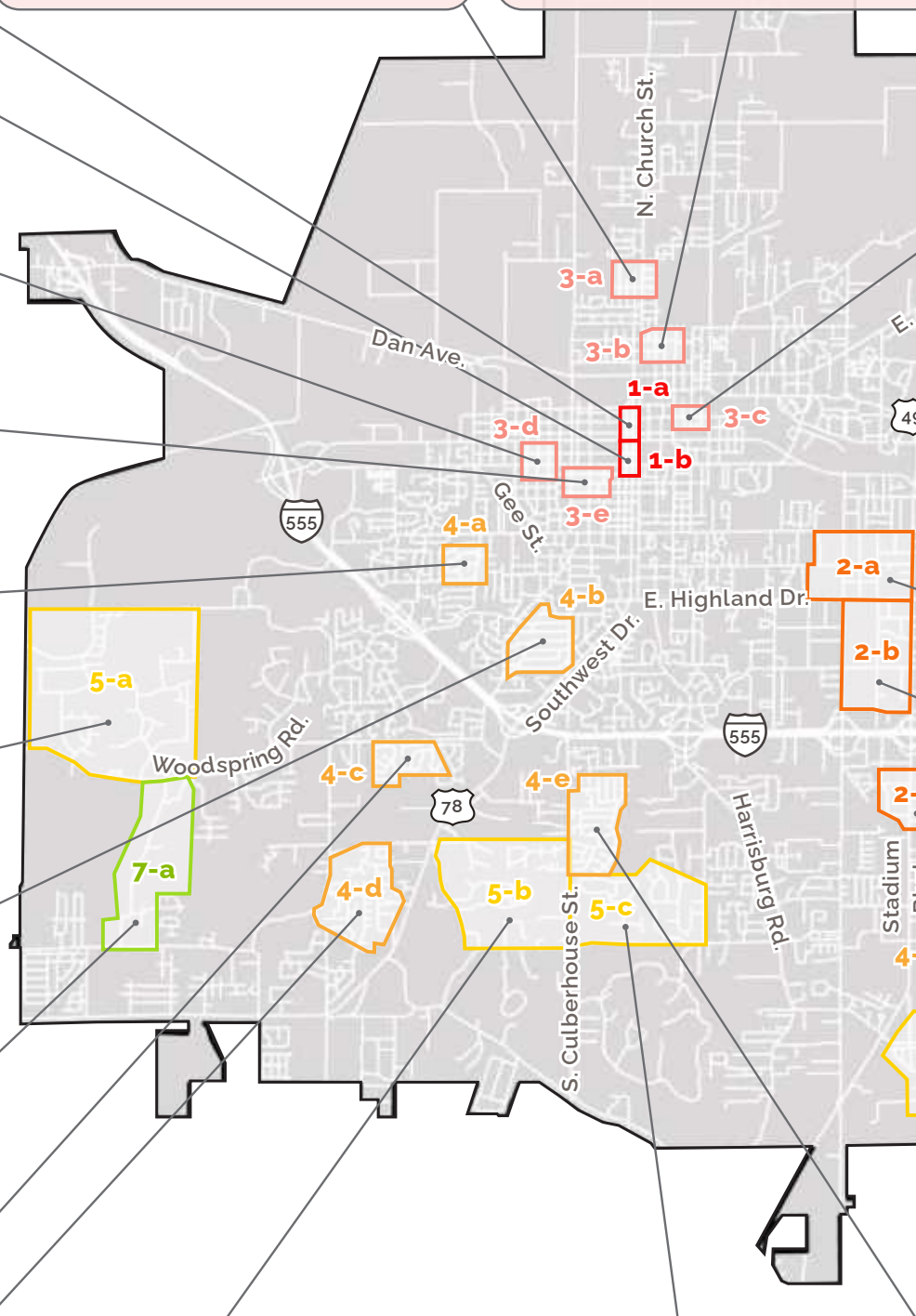
**Rural | 7-a**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $62 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $107 per year
Density: 0.3 units per acre

**Suburban Neighborhood | 4-c**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $194 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $320 per year
Density: 3.2 units per acre

**Suburban Neighborhood | 4-d**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $252 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $305 per year
Density: 3.0 units per acre

**Older Neighborhood | 3-a**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $99 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $472 per year
Density: 4.1 units per acre

**Older Neighborhood | 3-b**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $104 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $1,160 per y
Density: 5.2 units per acre



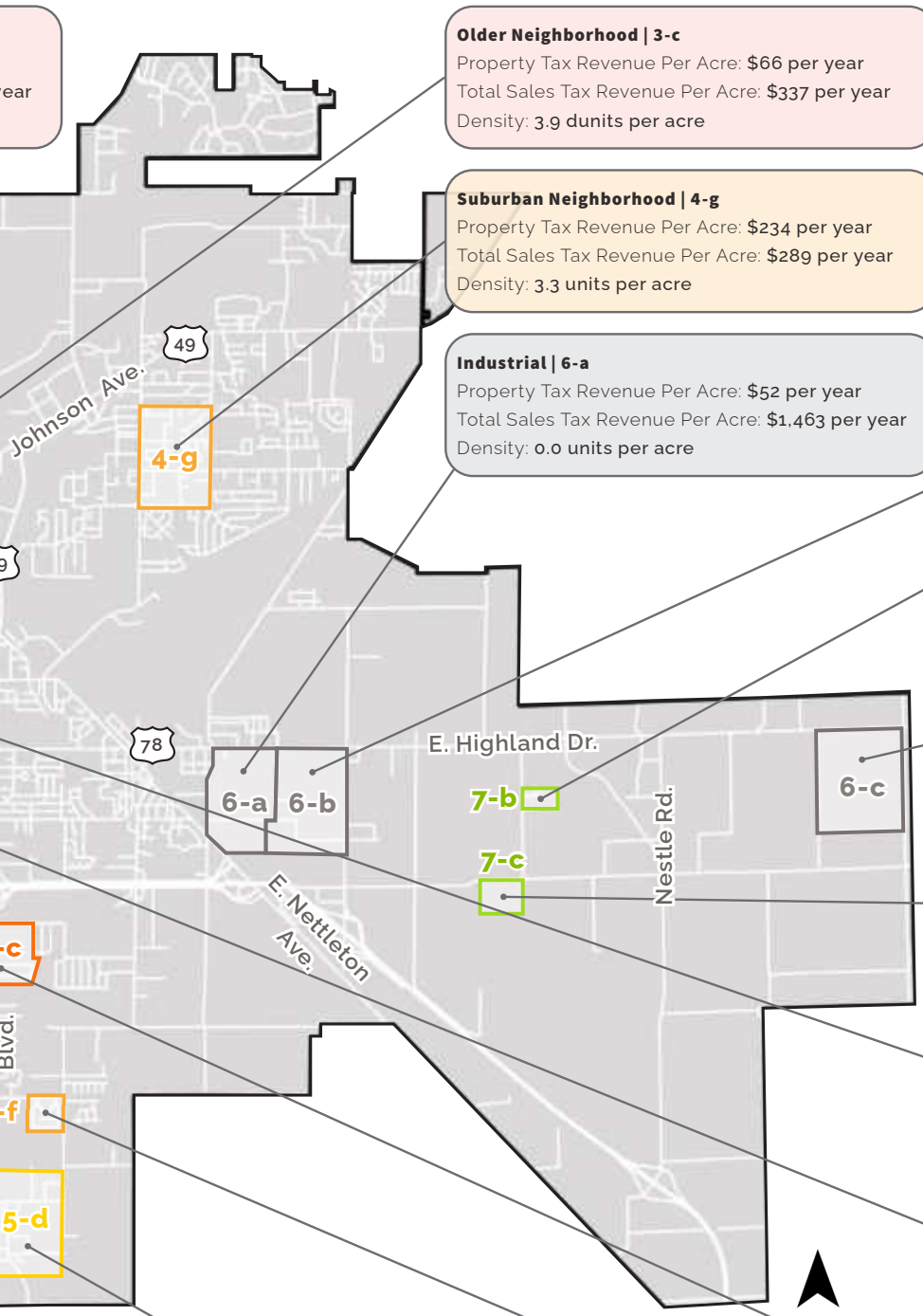

**Mixed Subdivision | 5-b**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $78 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $129 per year
Density: 0.7 units per acre

**Mixed Subdivision | 5-c**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $108 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $137 per year
Density: 0.7 units per acre per year

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Opportunity

*Pattern Analysis map showing property tax and sales tax revenue per acre, and residential density, for sampled sites across Jonesboro.*




**Older Neighborhood | 3-c**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $66 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $337 per year
Density: 3.9 dunits per acre

**Suburban Neighborhood | 4-g**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $234 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $289 per year
Density: 3.3 units per acre

**Industrial | 6-a**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $52 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $1,463 per year
Density: 0.0 units per acre

**Industrial | 6-b**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $82 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $1,712 per year
Density: 0.0 units per acre

**Rural | 7-b**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $19 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $118 per year
Density: 0.5 units per acre

**Industrial | 6-c**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $23 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $370 per year
Density: 0.0 units per acre

**Rural | 7-c**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $15 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $104 per year
Density: 0.5 units per acre

**Highway Oriented Development | 2-a**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $392 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $17,809 per year
Density: 1.2 units per acre

**Highway Oriented Development | 2-b**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $426 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $14,450 per year
Density: 0.0 units per acre

**Highway Oriented Development | 2-c**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $171 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $6,735 per year
Density: 0.0 units per acre

**Mixed Subdivision | 5-d**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $65 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $286 per year
Density: 1.0 units per acre

**Suburban Neighborhood | 4-e**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $271 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $353 per year
Density: 3.7 units per acre

**Suburban Neighborhood | 4-f**
Property Tax Revenue Per Acre: $209 per year
Total Sales Tax Revenue Per Acre: $310 per year
Density: 3.1 units per acre

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Opportunity

Two sampled segments of Downtown show how much performance can vary within the same small district. North of Washington, where the main street environment is active and largely built out, sales tax revenue reaches **$44,335 per acre**, the strongest performance of any pattern sampled in the city. South of Washington, where land use shifts toward nonprofit institutions with large surface lots, sales tax revenue drops to just **$2,168** per acre, a twentyfold difference within a few blocks of the first sample. Even Downtown's strongest block is far from its ceiling: much of the area remains surface parking or vacant buildings, and investment in public streets and parks, redevelopment of city-owned property, and incentives for underused parcels could plausibly double or triple the revenue this area already generates. Downtown Jonesboro currently holds fewer than half a dwelling unit per acre, among the lowest residential densities of any pattern sampled, and adding housing within and next to Downtown would likely outperform every other pattern in this analysis, since new construction here can reach densities none of the sampled areas have yet achieved.

Jonesboro's highway corridors near the interstate and Red Wolf/Stadium Boulevard tell a related story at a different scale. Two sampled areas north of the interstate, mostly strip commercial and big-box retail, generate sales tax revenue between **$14,450** and **$17,809** per acre, together producing about **$6.7 million** a year in the areas sampled, the largest total sales tax contribution of any pattern in this analysis. A third sample south of the interstate, dominated by car dealerships and automotive retail, produces less than half that per-acre revenue. These corridors matter enormously to Jonesboro's budget in absolute dollars, but the per-acre comparison to Downtown shows real room for improvement: matching Downtown's productivity on the same footprint could generate roughly **$10 million** annually from these areas alone. Turtle Creek Mall stands out as the clearest opportunity along this corridor. Its tornado damage, combined with acres of surface parking that were underused even before the storm, make it Jonesboro's single largest redevelopment opportunity, one this plan's Regional Center vision in Chapter 3 is designed to capture.

Industrial sites near Jonesboro's employment districts generate almost no property tax, ranging from **$23 to $82 per acre**, and their sales tax performance is no stronger than a typical residential neighborhood's. Judged purely on revenue per acre, industrial land looks unremarkable next to Downtown or a highway corridor, but that comparison misses the point of what industrial land actually contributes. Industrial areas generate value through the jobs they support rather than the tax revenue they produce directly. The wages earned at Jonesboro's manufacturing plants and industrial parks return to the city indirectly but substantially, spent on housing, groceries, restaurants, and retail throughout Jonesboro, generating the sales tax and property tax that show up on the ledgers of neighborhoods and commercial corridors elsewhere in this analysis. Industrial land was never intended to generate the kind of dense fiscal return a downtown block can, and it shouldn't be judged by that standard.

Jonesboro's residential areas show that no single factor, age, lot size, or income alone, determines fiscal performance. Older neighborhoods near the city core combine more homes per land area, **3.5 to 5.2 dwelling units** per acre, with modest property tax, generally under **$200 per acre**, but noticeably stronger sales tax performance than newer neighborhoods, ranging from **$337 to $1,160 per acre**. Some of that reflects proximity to Downtown, but older neighborhoods also retain a scattering of legacy corner stores and small commercial properties woven directly into their residential blocks, a pattern common before land uses were separated by zoning, and they tend to host more home-based businesses and online sales activity than newer subdivisions built without any commercial component at all. Suburban neighborhoods show the opposite balance: property tax per acre runs somewhat higher, from **$141 to $271**, reflecting larger, newer homes on larger lots, but sales tax is consistently weaker, from **$289 to $391 per acre**, since these neighborhoods were built without the small-scale commercial fabric many older neighborhoods retain. Mixed subdivision areas, with their inconsistent lot and street patterns, perform the weakest of any residential pattern sampled on both measures, with density as low as **0.5 to 1.0 dwelling units** per acre. Rural areas produce the lowest revenue of any pattern sampled on every measure, which is expected for land intended to remain low-intensity, but is also a caution against piecemeal suburban-style development pushing into rural land ahead of the infrastructure needed to support it.

No single pattern sampled here, not even Downtown's strongest block, generates enough revenue on its own to fund Jonesboro's full range of public services. What the comparison makes clear instead is that housing, commerce, and employment each perform better financially when they are located near one another rather than apart, whether folded into the same buildings or simply placed within easy reach of each other. The goal of this framework is not to prevent expansion. It is to make sure that wherever Jonesboro grows next, that growth co-locates homes, commerce, and employment closely enough to support the systems it will depend on for the rest of its life, and repairs missing connections rather than reproducing the gaps the city already has.

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Opportunity

## Recommendations

Jonesboro relies on sales tax for about two-thirds of its operating revenue, so every growth decision is also a fiscal decision. The recommendations below give the City tools to compare the long-term cost and value of different development patterns, set clear rules for where and how the city expands, and prepare its largest redevelopment opportunities. Because compact, mixed-use projects often cost more to build than they are worth when finished, they also coordinate financing so those projects can happen. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies to Guide Fiscally Productive Growth

#### M6.2 - Use a lifecycle cost and value-per-acre tool

- **Description:** Evaluate major development proposals and capital projects by their long-term service costs and value per acre. Use the Arkansas Municipal League tool now in development, with staff estimates in the meantime
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Finance, Planning, Arkansas Municipal League
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M6.3 - Set annexation and growth-area agreement rules.

- **Description:** Require expansion to be contiguous, connected, and funded. Use development agreements to sequence required parks and infrastructure partway through a project instead of leaving them to the end.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** City Council, Planning, Engineering, City Water and Light, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M4.4 - Enable Downtown housing and infill. Use

- **Description:** UDC rules, City property, and targeted incentives to bring new housing to Downtown and the neighborhoods around it.
- **Timeline:** Short- to medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M9.7 - Adopt partnership and special district policies.

- **Description:** Set a public-private partnership framework and clear rules for improvement districts and business improvement districts. Confirm state authority with the City Attorney.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** City Council, Planning, Finance, City Attorney, bond counsel, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M4.1 Prepare the Turtle Creek district framewor

- **Description:** Plan streets, blocks, public space, parking, and phasing for the mall vicinity before redevelopment begins. The framework should be consultant-prepared with property owners.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to short-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, property owners, Jonesboro Unlimited, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### M7.3 Guide commercial redevelopment and incentives.

- **Description:** Prepare a strategy for aging commercial corridors and sites, and weigh incentives by jobs, local ownership, and fiscal return.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term (6–10 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Jonesboro Unlimited, Mayor's Office
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### M9.6 Test the financing gap on real sites.

- **Description:** Prepare pro formas for Downtown, Turtle Creek, and a neighborhood center to show what it takes to make compact, mixed-use projects work.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Finance, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

## Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Value per acre.** Taxable value and sales tax per acre of new development, compared by development pattern.

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

Growth Opportunity

## 2.2 Growth Framework

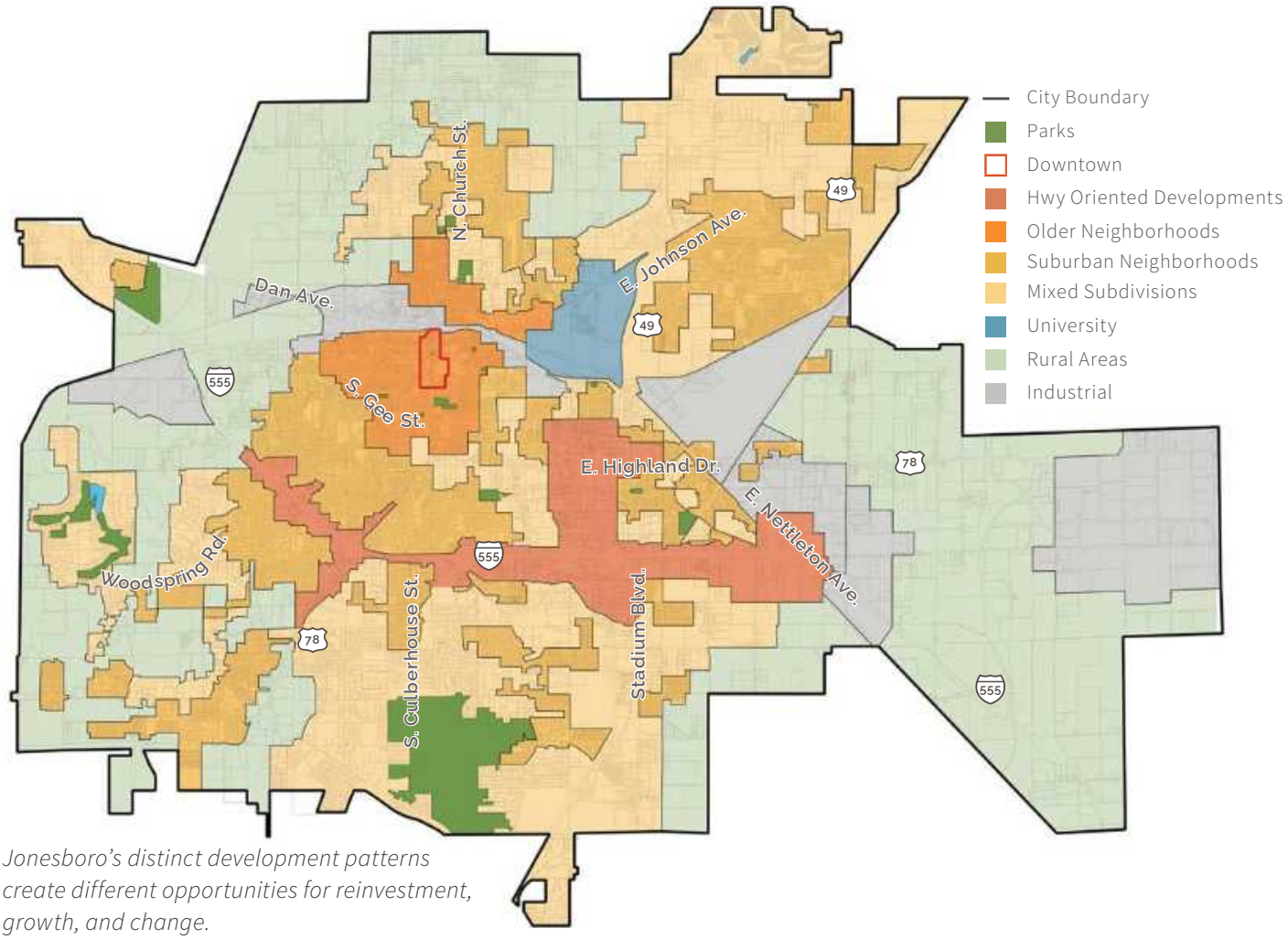
**A Framework for Growing With Purpose**

Jonesboro's next generation of growth should strengthen the city that already exists while creating a clear structure for where and how new development occurs. Rather than allowing individual projects to develop in isolation, the Growth Framework organizes public and private investment around a connected system of neighborhoods, activity centers, employment districts, corridors, parks, and natural systems, translating the principles from Chapter 1 into a spatial strategy that organizes Plan Jonesboro.

This represents a shift from simply accommodating growth to shaping it. Jonesboro has historically expanded outward from a compact core into an increasingly dispersed development pattern, with new neighborhoods, commercial areas, and infrastructure extending farther from established destinations and often without the connectivity found in older parts of the city. The Growth Framework accommodates continued expansion while making better use of the neighborhoods, infrastructure, institutions, and commercial areas Jonesboro already has.

That starting point looks different depending on where in the city you stand. Downtown and Jonesboro's older neighborhoods have smaller blocks and more connected streets, while later suburban and highway-oriented development occupies larger areas with fewer connections and greater distance between destinations. Growth should not look the same everywhere:

### LAND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS OVERVIEW




*Jonesboro's distinct development patterns create different opportunities for reinvestment, growth, and change.*

established neighborhoods call for sensitive infill and reinvestment, commercial corridors offer real opportunities for redevelopment, and undeveloped land at the city's edge requires a more coordinated approach before it becomes the Jonesboro of tomorrow.

**Place Types for a Growing City**

Before the Growth Framework can direct where reinvestment, focused growth, and expansion should occur, it needs a shared vocabulary for what should be built there. Place types describe the intended character, form, and function of future development, not simply a single permitted use, but how compatible land uses, buildings, streets, and natural systems should work together. They give property owners, residents, and decision-makers a common language for development review, zoning, and long-term investment, and they establish the kind of place each area of Jonesboro should contribute to rather than prescribing exactly what any one parcel must become.

**Organize Growth Around Connected Places**

These building blocks only function as a framework when they relate to one another. Centers should not stand as isolated destinations; their value comes from their relationship to surrounding neighborhoods, employment areas, institutions, parks, and each other. Corridors carry that relationship across the city, serving two roles at once: moving people and goods, and providing the connective structure between the places where community life and economic activity concentrate. The greatest intensity belongs in locations capable of supporting it, Regional and Community Centers can accommodate a broader mix of uses and larger-scale investment, while Neighborhood Centers and Nodes provide smaller concentrations of services and gathering space closer to where most people live.

## LAND DEVELOPMENT PATTERN



*Downtown*



*Suburban neighborhoods*



*Highway-oriented developments*



*Mixed subdivisions*



*Older neighborhoods*



*Rural areas*

*A single growth strategy should not be applied uniformly across a city built from such different parts.*

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

**NEIGHBORHOODS** remain the foundation of daily life.

### Core Neighborhood

Core Neighborhoods are Jonesboro's fine-grained, highly walkable areas near the center of the city, supporting the broadest mix of housing, detached homes, duplexes, townhomes, and small to mid-sized multifamily buildings, on small blocks with connected streets and mature tree canopy.



### Mid-Century Neighborhood

Mid-Century Neighborhoods cover the established residential areas built in the decades following Jonesboro's early growth, with somewhat larger lots and less connected streets than the Core but still within reach of daily destinations; reinvestment here should focus on filling sidewalk gaps, maintaining tree canopy, and keeping housing stock in good repair as it ages.



### Walkable Neighborhood

Walkable Neighborhoods provide a moderate mix of housing types, detached homes, townhomes, duplexes, cottages, and small multifamily buildings, on mid-sized blocks where walking and biking are practical for at least some daily needs.



### Suburban Neighborhood

Suburban Neighborhoods consist primarily of detached homes on larger lots within subdivision patterns that depend more heavily on major roads for access; future investment here should improve internal walking routes, tree canopy, and connections to nearby centers where feasible.



### Rural & Estate

Rural & Estate areas are Jonesboro's lowest-intensity places, agricultural land, wooded areas, and large lots with limited infrastructure, where future growth is a lower priority unless a coordinated expansion strategy can extend infrastructure efficiently.



**CENTERS** provide focal points for business, services, housing, and gathering, organized in a hierarchy scaled to the population they serve.

## Regional Center

Regional Centers are Jonesboro's largest and most active mixed-use destinations, serving residents from across the city and surrounding communities with a broad range of regional, national, and local businesses, entertainment, hospitality, and housing, organized as a connected district rather than a collection of isolated commercial sites.




## Community Center

Community Centers are large citywide or district destinations spanning several active blocks, supporting a mix of local and regional businesses, restaurants, services, and housing while maintaining a walkable public realm.



## Neighborhood Center

Neighborhood Centers are mid-sized, walkable clusters of local businesses and services, shops, restaurants, childcare, and civic uses, serving several surrounding neighborhoods at a scale compatible with nearby homes.



## Neighborhood Node

Neighborhood Nodes are the smallest centers in the hierarchy, typically a single intersection or short stretch of retail offering convenient, everyday services within easy reach of nearby homes, sized to grow incrementally as local demand develops.



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

**CORRIDORS** connect these places and provide access across the city.

### Core Corridor

Core Corridors are primary mobility routes within central Jonesboro that also function as destinations, evolving toward a walkable, mixed-use pattern with buildings oriented toward the street, improved crossings, and coordinated parking.




### Suburban Corridor

Suburban Corridors carry much of the city's large-format retail and strip commercial development, built primarily around automobile access; near-term improvements here should focus on access management, safer crossings, and redevelopment readiness, without assuming the immediate wholesale transformation of every corridor.




**INSTITUTIONAL & EMPLOYMENT AREAS** support Jonesboro's major economic anchors.

### Civic - University

Civic - University areas support Arkansas State University and its academic, research, cultural, and residential functions, with future growth reinforcing the campus while improving its relationships to surrounding neighborhoods, transit, and businesses.



### Civic - Other

Civic - Other areas accommodate major medical, educational, and civic campuses whose specialized functions require flexible site planning, with growth expected to create compatible edges and safe access rather than turning service or parking areas toward neighboring homes.



## Industrial

Industrial areas protect land for manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and maker and artisan uses that support the local and regional economy, preserving freight, rail, and utility capacity while providing appropriate buffers from neighborhoods.




## Airport

Airport protects the long-term operation and growth of Jonesboro Municipal Airport and related aviation and employment functions.



**OPEN SPACE & NATURAL SYSTEMS** round out the framework.

## Open Space - Public

Open Space - Public includes parks, floodways, drainage corridors, greenways, and natural areas that provide recreation, stormwater management, habitat, and community identity as a connected system that helps shape surrounding development.



## Open Space - Private

Open Space - Private includes privately owned lands, golf courses, large institutional grounds, and similar landscapes, that contribute meaningful recreation, habitat, or visual open space value even though the City does not own or manage them directly.

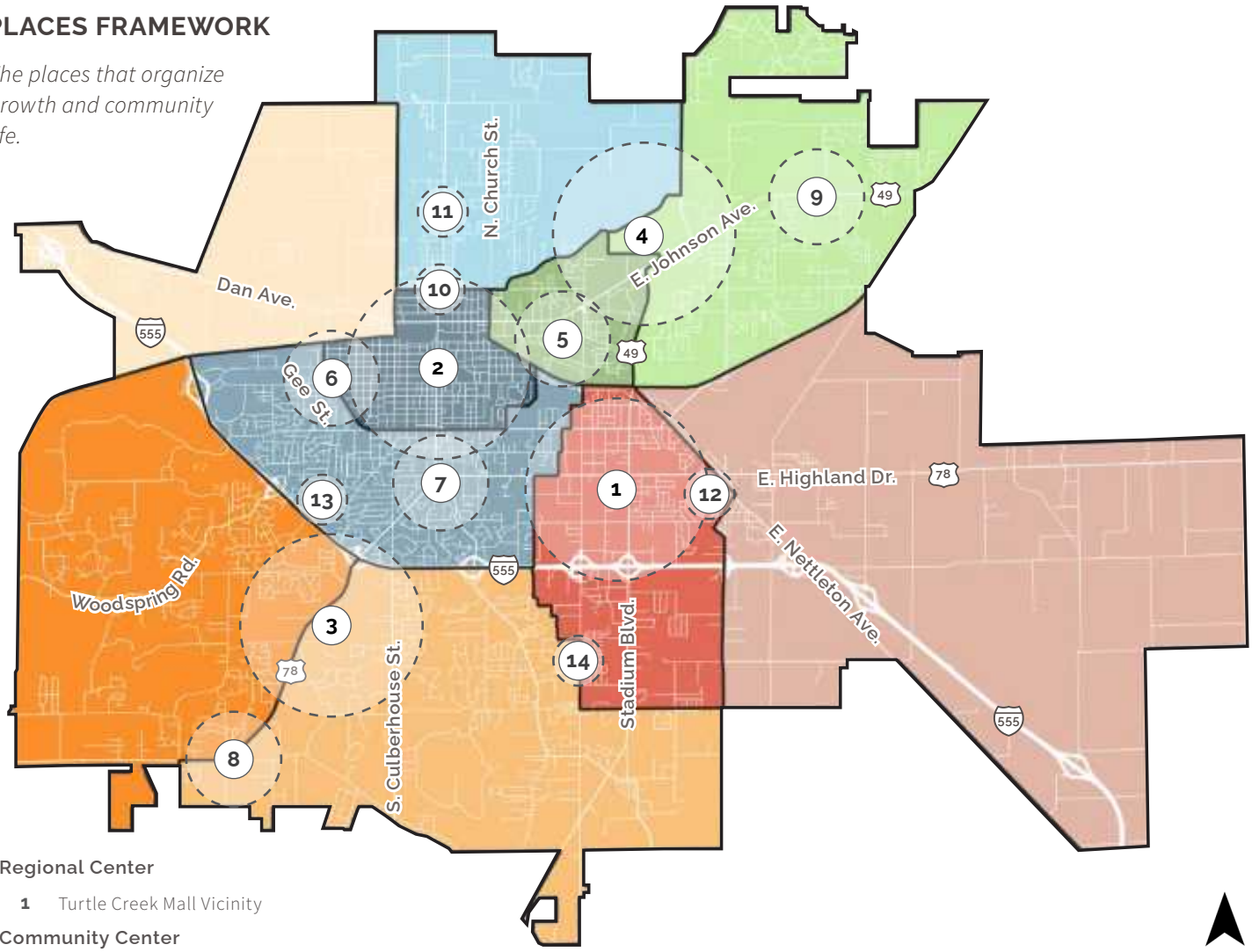


# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

### PLACES FRAMEWORK

*The places that organize growth and community life.*




**Regional Center**

1 Turtle Creek Mall Vicinity

**Community Center**

2 Downtown Core

3 Southwest Dr. & Southern Rdg. Blvd.

4 Old Greensboro Rd. & Johnson Ave.

**Neighborhood Center**

5 The Marion Berry Pkwy. & Aggie Rd.

6 S. Gee St. & W. Matthews Ave.

7 Southwest Dr. & Highland Dr.

8 Southwest Dr. & Valley View Dr.

9 Johnson Ave. & Bridger Rd.

**Neighborhood Node**

10 N. Main St. & Spruce St.

11 N. Church St. & Jessup Dr.

12 Nettleton Ave. & Watt St.

13 Woodsprings Rd. & Highway 555

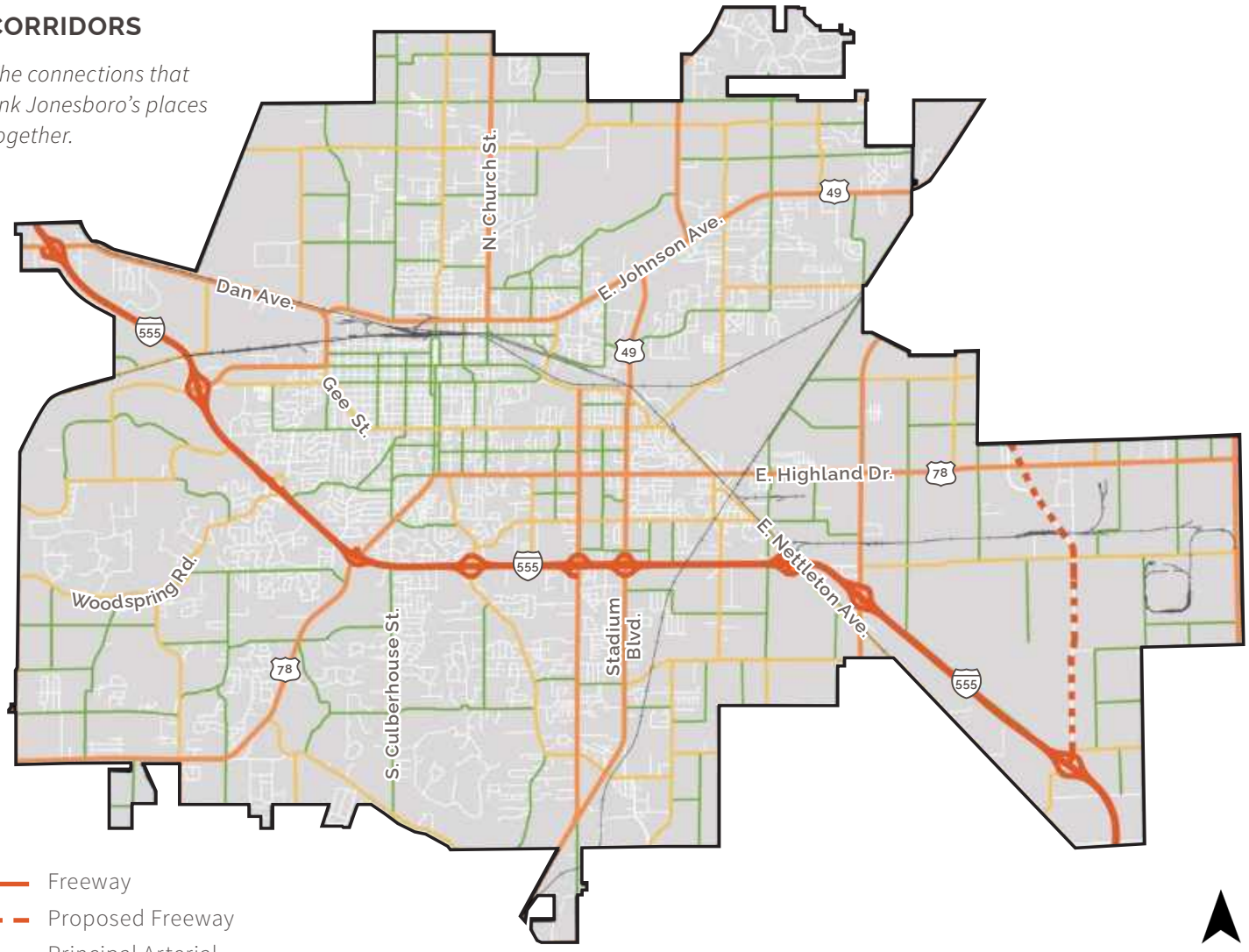
14 Caraway Rd. & Oakbrook Dr.

**Ten Districts, Fourteen Centers**

To apply this framework at a scale residents can recognize, Plan Jonesboro divides the city into ten Planning Districts, drawn along the historic growth patterns and physical barriers, major roads, railroads, and waterways, that already shape how residents experience different parts of the city. Within and across these districts, the plan identifies a citywide network of fourteen existing and future centers, ranging from Downtown's Community Center to Neighborhood Centers and Nodes distributed throughout the city. Together, the districts and centers give the Growth Framework a structure that is specific enough to guide real decisions in a given part of Jonesboro, while still reading as one coherent citywide pattern.

## CORRIDORS

*The connections that link Jonesboro's places together.*




**Reinvest, Focus Growth, and Expand Strategically**

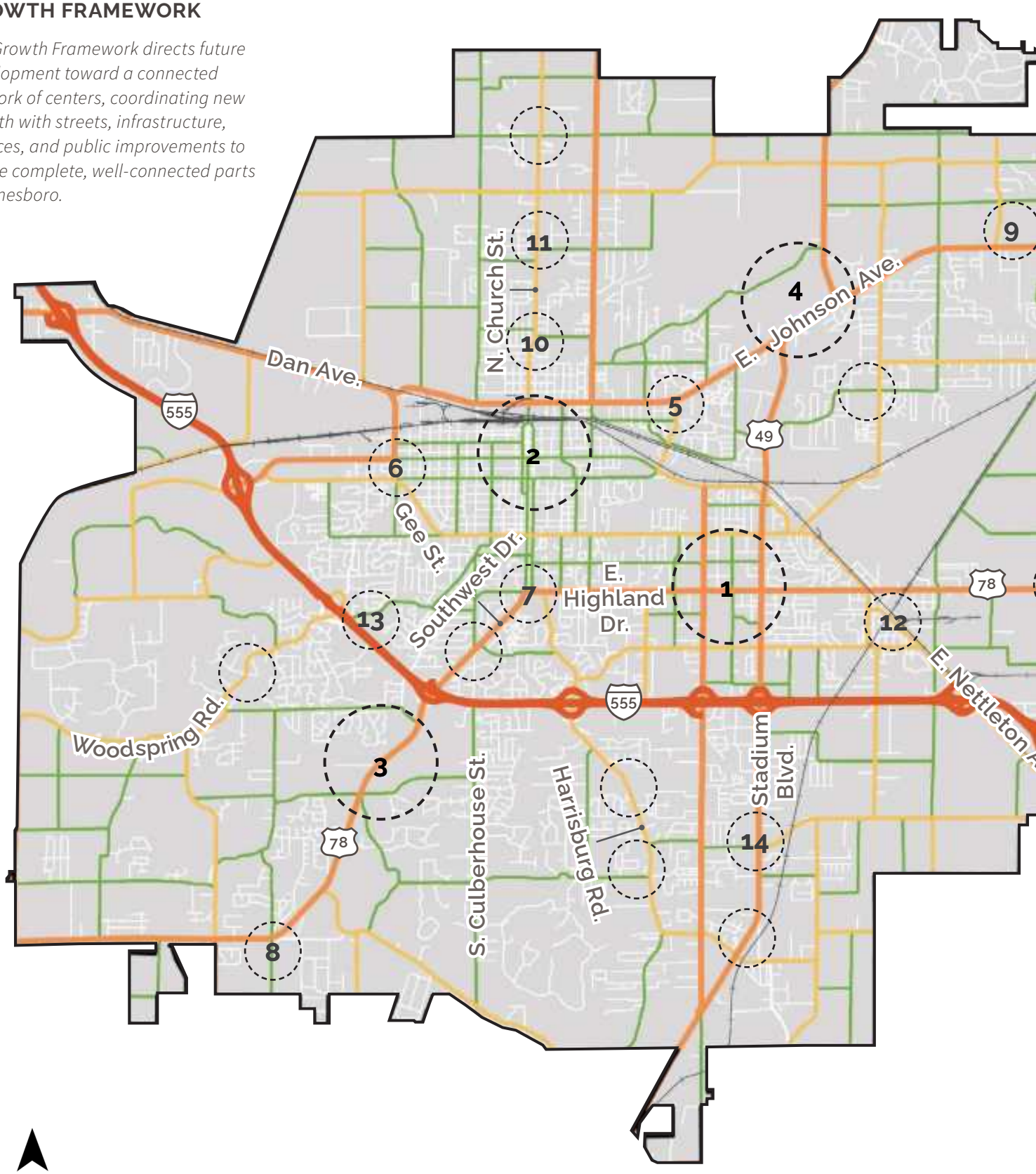
The framework establishes a sequence for growth rather than a single prescription applied everywhere. Reinvestment should strengthen existing neighborhoods, centers, corridors, and underused properties where infrastructure and services are already in place. Focused growth should direct greater development intensity toward activity centers, employment areas, and other locations where housing, businesses, and infrastructure can reinforce one another. Managed expansion should accommodate outward growth where it is necessary, but in a contiguous pattern that extends the city logically rather than creating isolated development at its edge.

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

### GROWTH FRAMEWORK

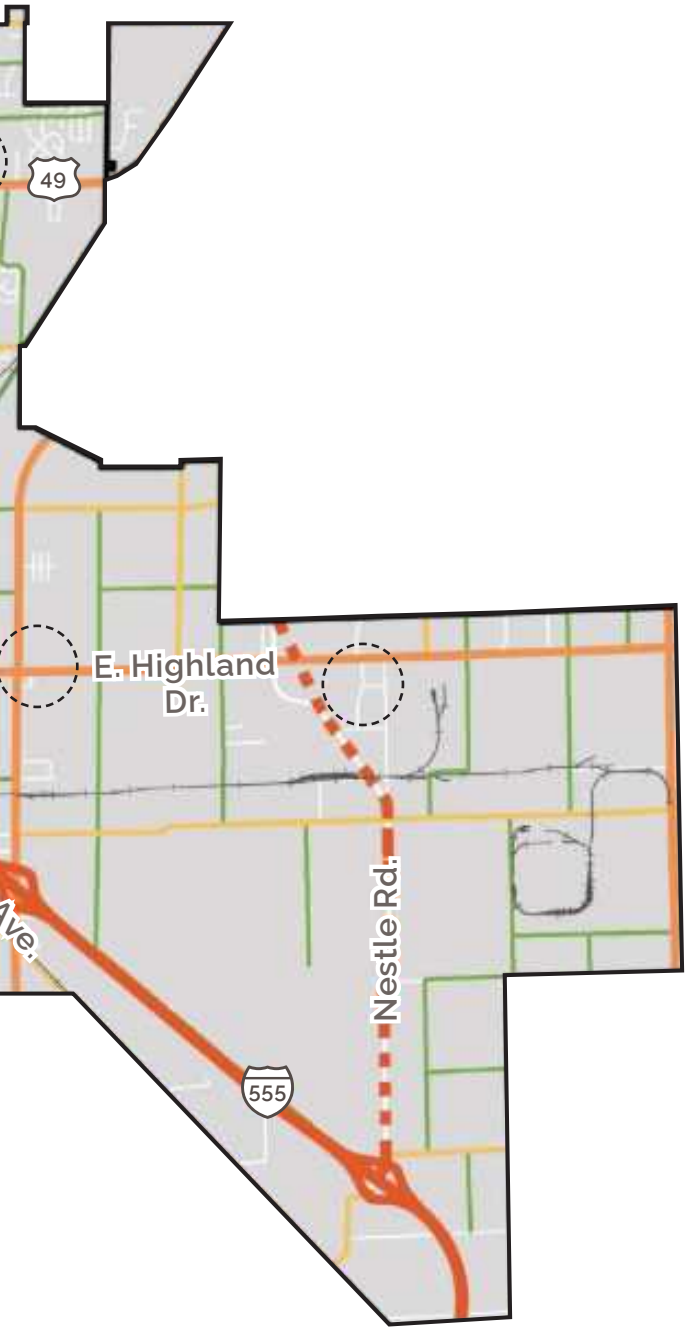
*The Growth Framework directs future development toward a connected network of centers, coordinating new growth with streets, infrastructure, services, and public improvements to create complete, well-connected parts of Jonesboro.*



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

New growth areas should be planned as complete parts of Jonesboro from the beginning, with connected streets, sidewalks, trees, usable open space, stormwater systems, a variety of lots and homes, and practical access to daily services or a center. Transportation, drainage, utilities, parks, schools, public safety, and environmental constraints should be considered together, before individual sites develop independently, so that infrastructure needs and responsibilities are understood up front rather than negotiated site by site. This approach does not prevent Jonesboro from expanding. It asks each phase of growth to contribute to a more connected and complete city, with public improvements, development approvals, zoning decisions, incentives, and partnerships all reinforcing the same long-term spatial strategy




**Regional Center**

1 Turtle Creek Mall Vicinity

**Community Center**

2 Downtown Core

3 Southwest Dr. & Southern Rdg. Blvd.

4 Old Greensboro Rd. & Johnson Ave.

**Neighborhood Center**

5 The Marion Berry Pkwy. & Aggie Rd.

6 S. Gee St. & W. Matthews Ave.

7 Southwest Dr. & Highland Dr.

8 Southwest Dr. & Valley View Dr.

9 Johnson Ave. & Bridger Rd.

**Neighborhood Node**

10 N. Main St. & Spruce St.

11 N. Church St. & Jessup Dr.

12 Nettleton Ave. & Watt St.

13 Woodsprings Rd. & Highway 555

14 Caraway Rd. & Oakbrook Dr.

**Streets**

- Freeway
- Proposed Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector

**Pedestrian Sheds**

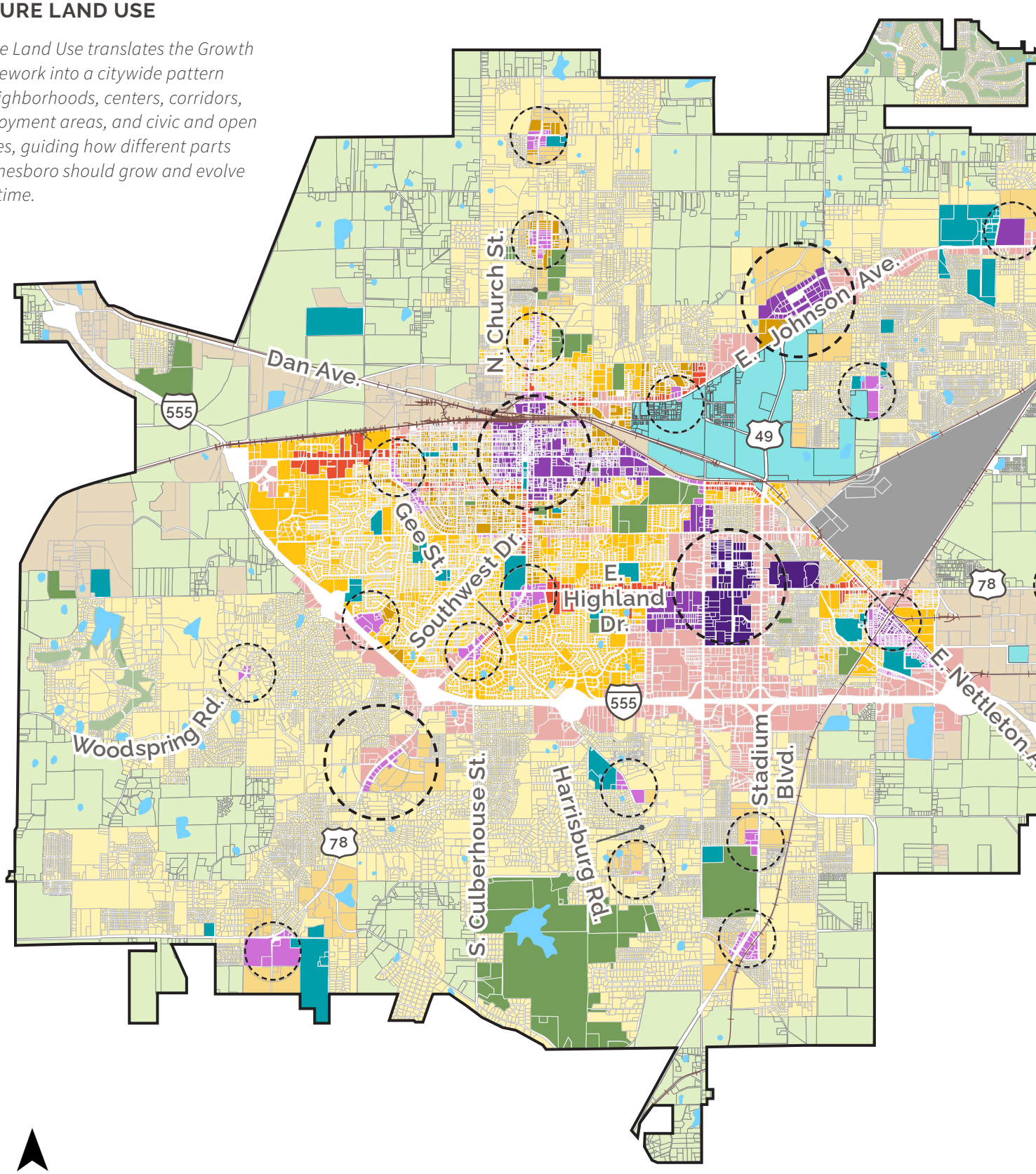
- 1/2 Mile Radius
- 1/4 Mile Radius

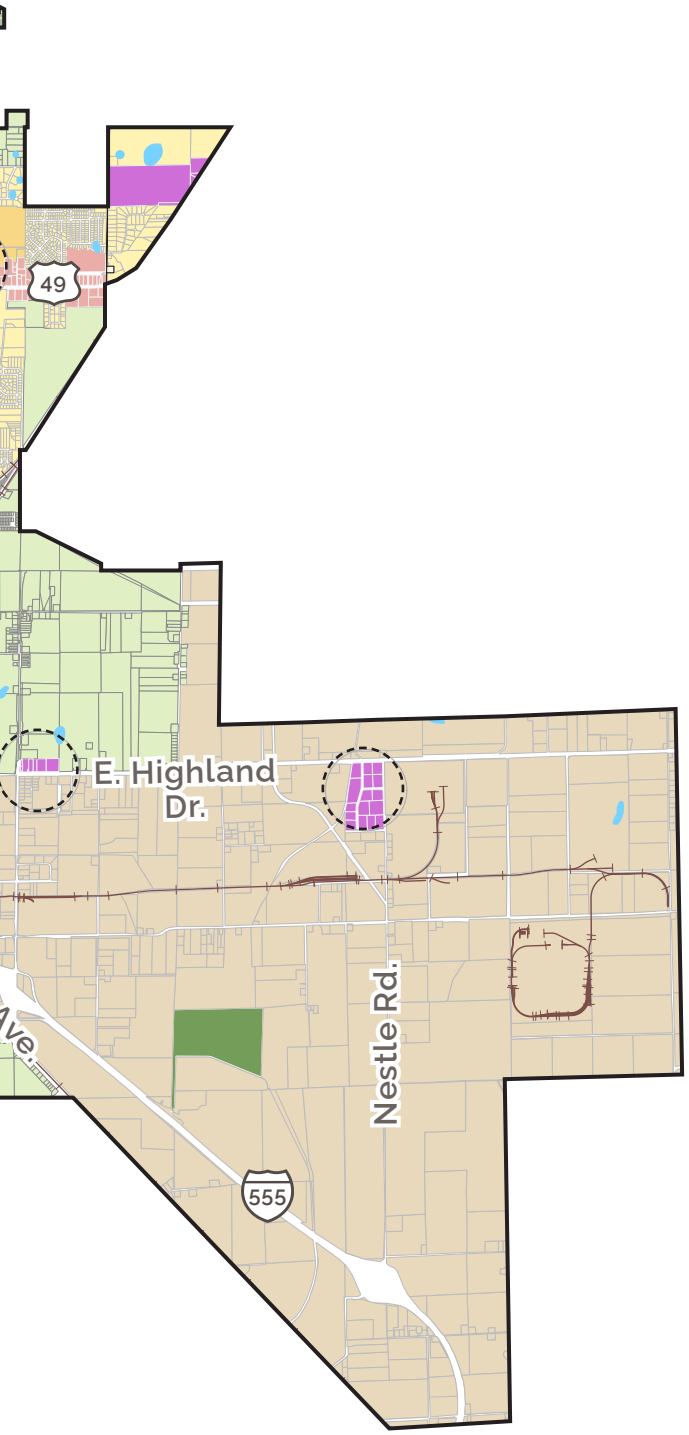
# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

### FUTURE LAND USE

*Future Land Use translates the Growth Framework into a citywide pattern of neighborhoods, centers, corridors, employment areas, and civic and open spaces, guiding how different parts of Jonesboro should grow and evolve over time.*






**Applying the Framework at the District Scale**

The citywide Growth Framework becomes more useful when viewed at the district scale, where different parts of Jonesboro face different combinations of development pressure, infrastructure conditions, and community needs. The pages that follow pair a Future Land Use map and a Mobility & Transportation map for each of the ten Planning Districts. Read together, these maps reinforce a central principle of this plan: land use and transportation decisions should shape one another, with development intensity supported by the right street context, and transportation investments reinforcing the character intended for the surrounding place. These district maps provide a coordinated framework for development review, capital investment, and further study as many individual decisions accumulate toward the same long-term citywide pattern.

Neighborhoods
- Core
- Mid-Century
- Walkable
- Suburban
- Rural

Centers
- Regional
- Community
- Neighborhood

Corridors
- Core
- Suburban

Industrial
- Industrial
- Airport

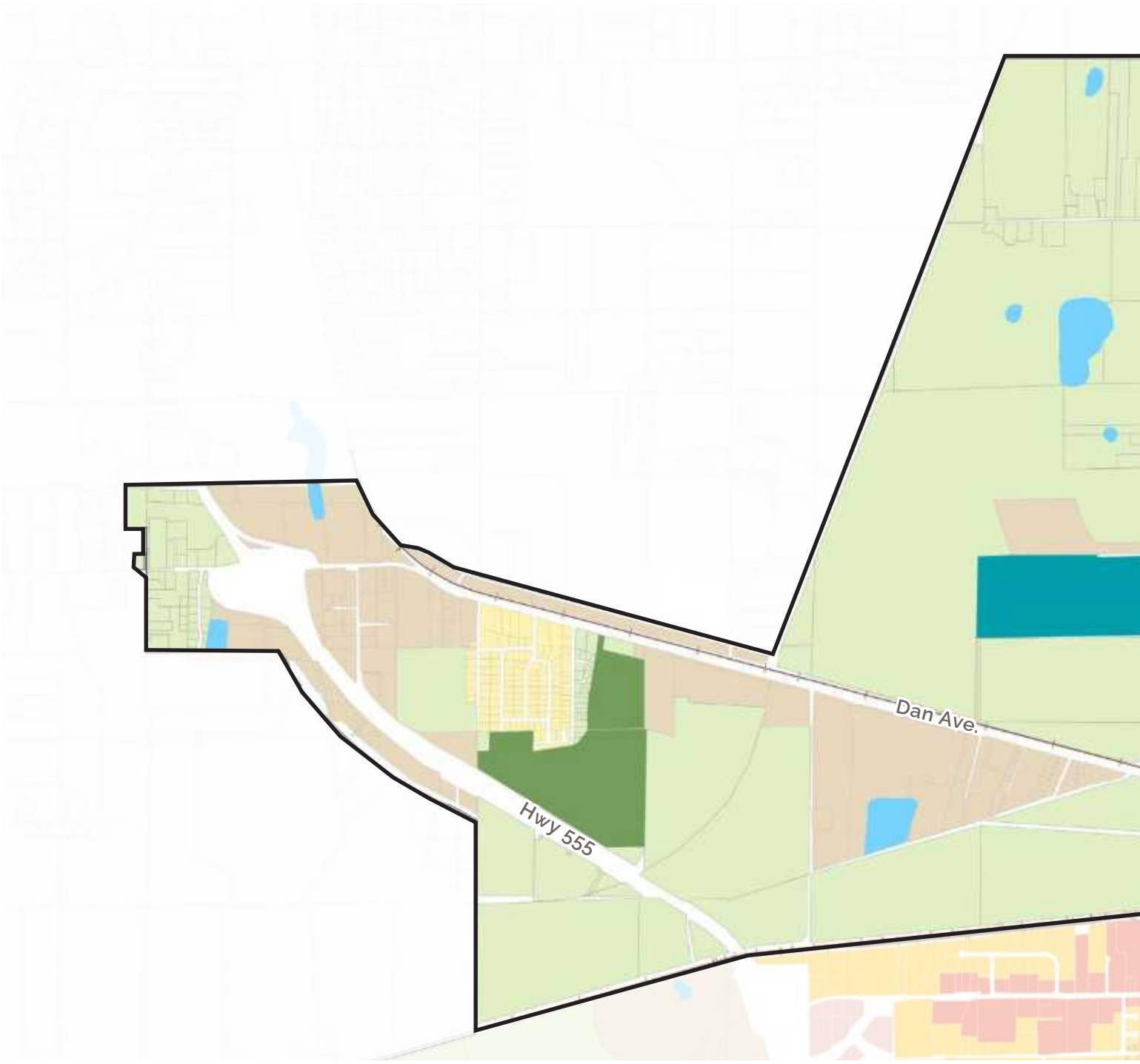
Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Open Space - Private
- Civic - Other
- Civic - University

Other
- Water
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/2 Mile Radius
- 1/4 Mile Radius

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework



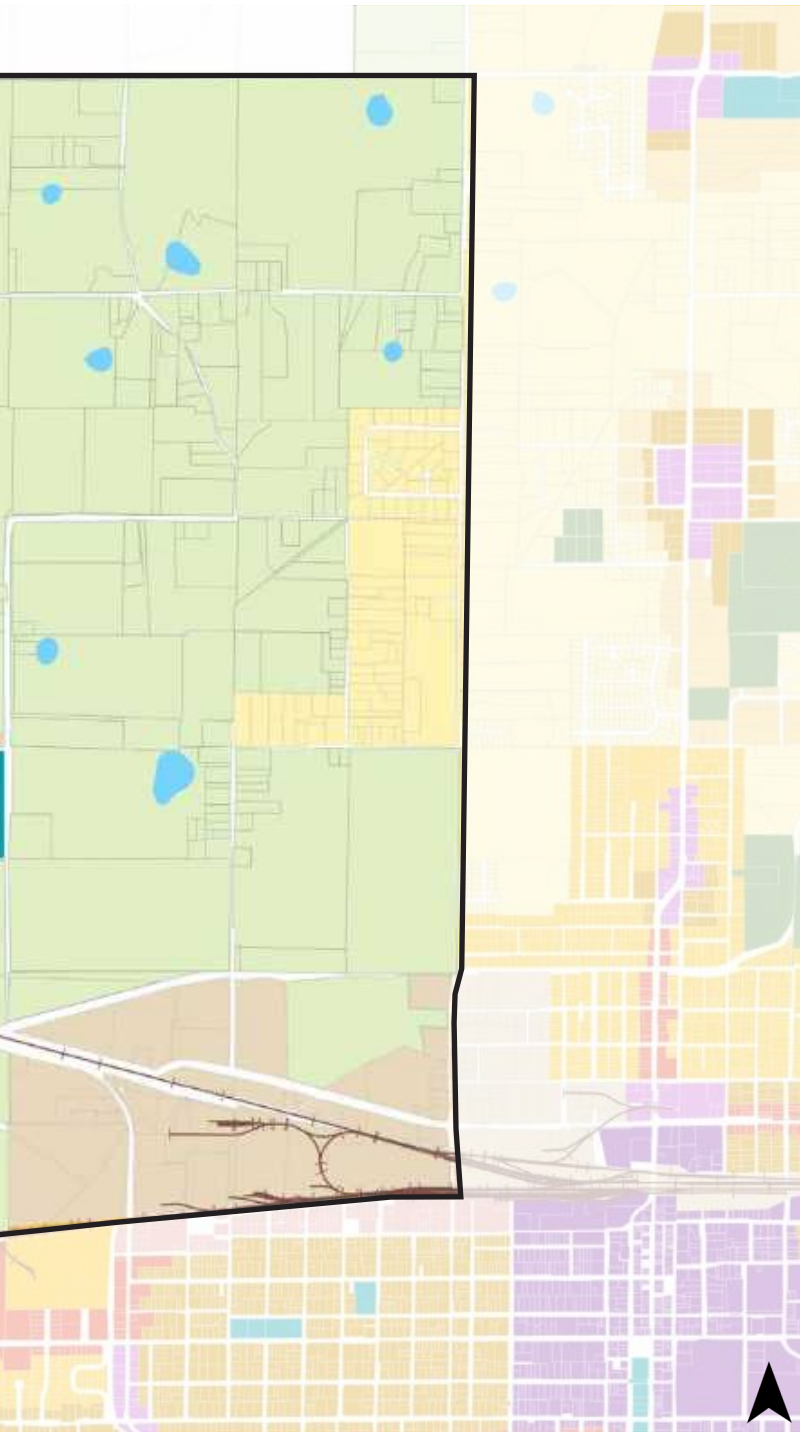

**FUTURE LAND USE**

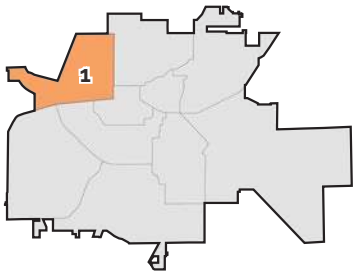
Neighborhoods
- Suburban
- Rural

Industrial
- Industrial

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Water
- Rail Road






**District 1**

### Land Use

District 1 comprises the far northwestern edge of Jonesboro. Primarily rural, this district is not slated for much future growth, as development pressure is concentrated in the southwest and northeast. The area's geography is low-laying and influenced by creeks and their confluence. Existing development is concentrated between Dan Ave and the interstate, especially near downtown and the interchange with Hwy 555. Joe Mack Campbell Park is a significant asset for the district. While the park could continue to expand as a regional sports complex, the surrounding area is not well suited for additional residential development. Due to the area's structure, limited physical and social infrastructure, and flooding concerns, it is not slated for new centers, growth, or significant investment.

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




**TRANSPORTATION**

Bike Network
- Proposed Trail/Facility

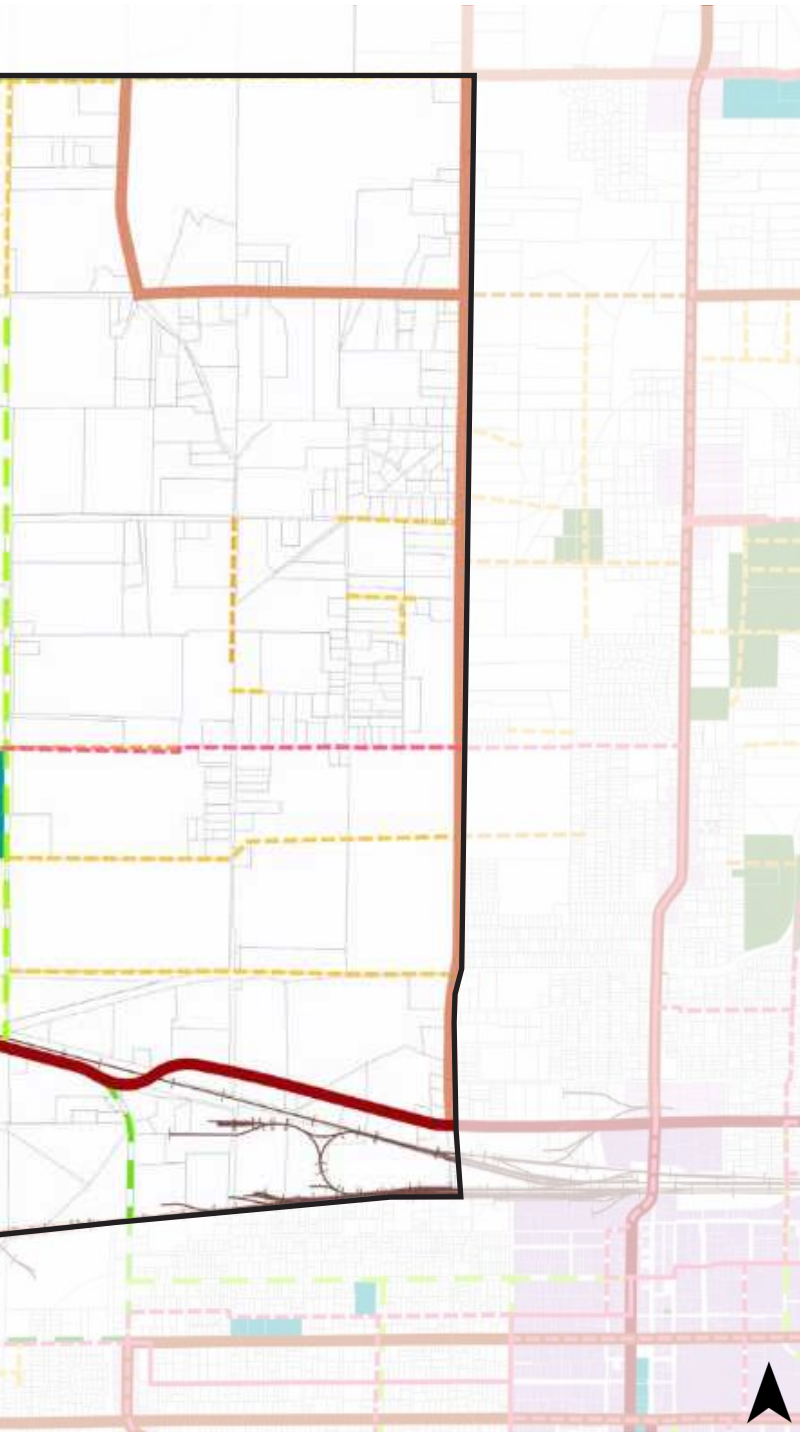
Existing Streets
- Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

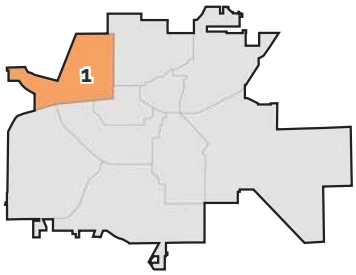
Infill Connections
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Local Road

Recommended Downgrades
- Arterial to Collector
- Collector to Local Road

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Lake
- Rail Road






**District 1**

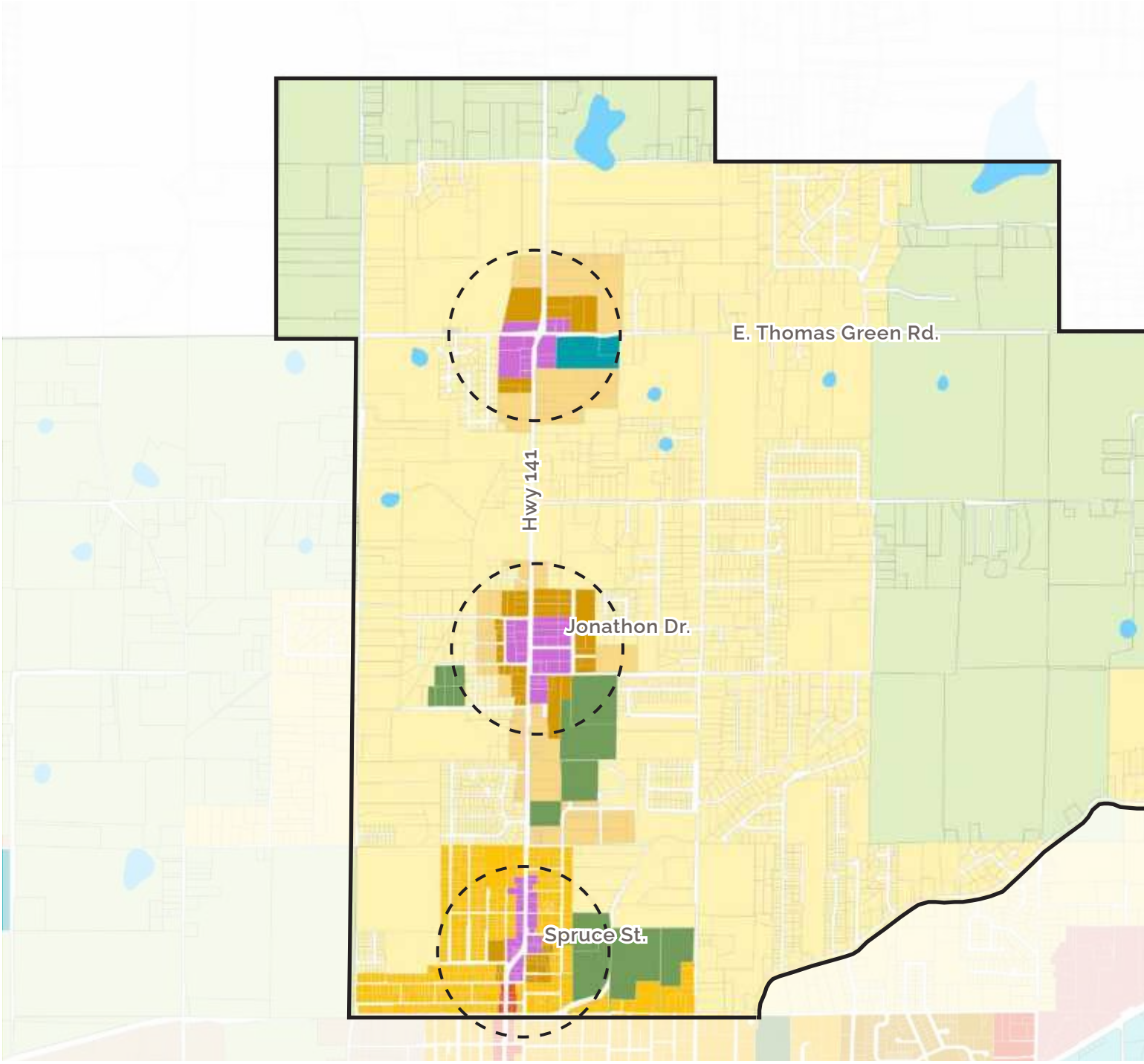
### Transportation

Slow, unplanned growth in District 1 has resulted in few clear through-connected streets. The transportation plan looks ahead to a future period when growth pressure reaches the eastern edge of the district, adding missing connections and planning ahead for more frequent collector roads. Along with updated subdivision rules requiring connected streets, the future collectors and added local legs will help distribute traffic within the district. Long-term traffic will continue to be limited by the railroad and will add pressure to Dan Ave, Gee Street, Main Street, and Johnson Ave.

While development is limited in District 1, Joe Mack Campbell Park is a local and regional destination that should be accessible by more than driving alone. Two paths for bikes are proposed, connecting to the more developed areas of Jonesboro. One bikeway connects south of the interstate across Mahon and Lacy Drives, accessing growth to the southwest and the central city. A second bikeway connects along a future extension of Judge Bearden Ave, providing access from North Jonesboro. Other than the immediately adjacent housing, pedestrian connections are limited and improvements are not practical. Instead, the proposed bikeways accommodate both pedestrian and bicycle access as shared-use trails.

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Core
- Mid-Century
- Walkable
- Suburban
- Rural

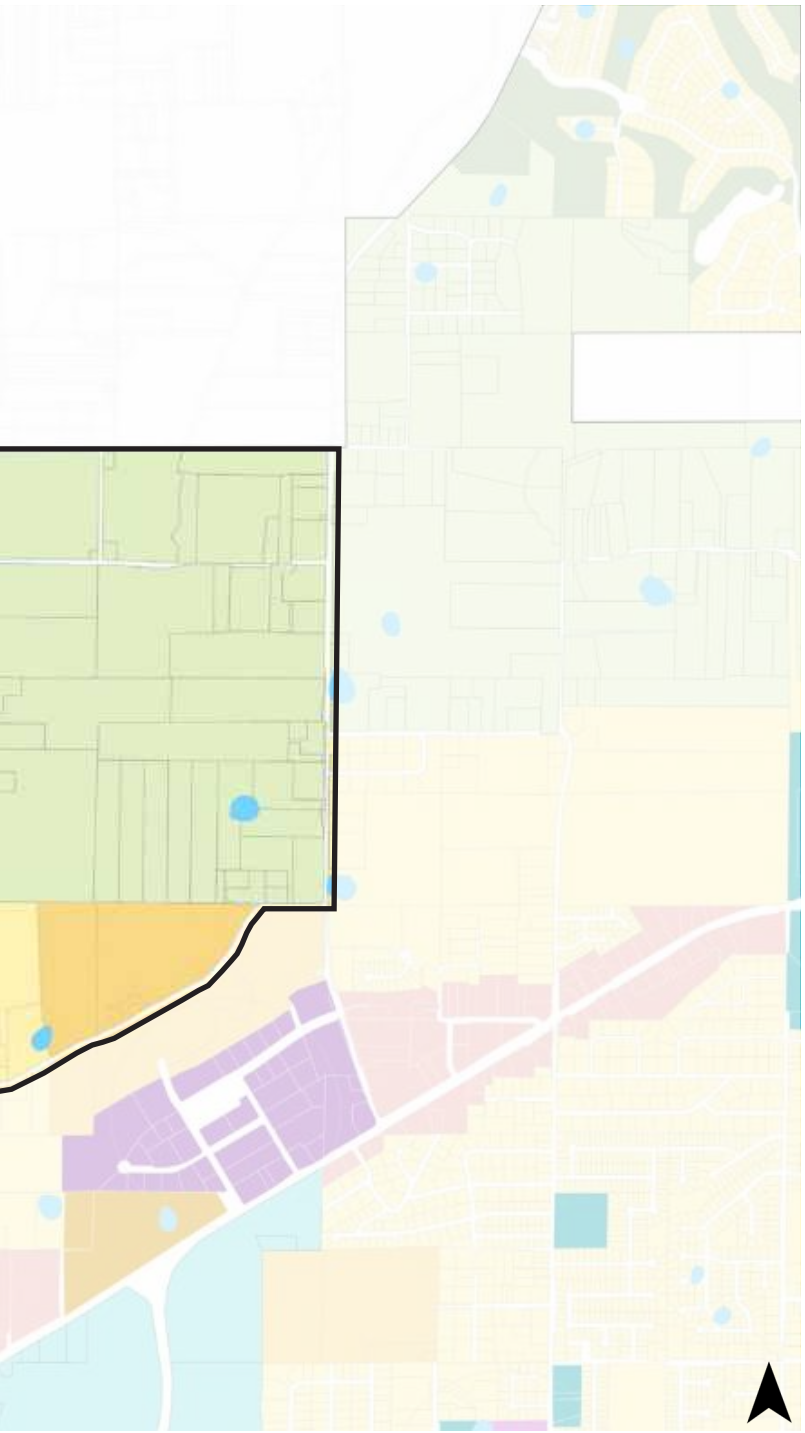
Centers
- Neighborhood

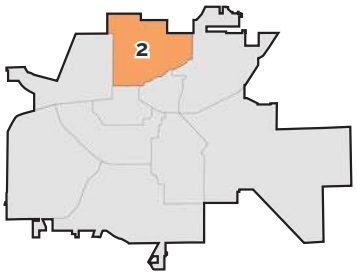
Corridors
- Core

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Water

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile






**District 2**

## Land Use

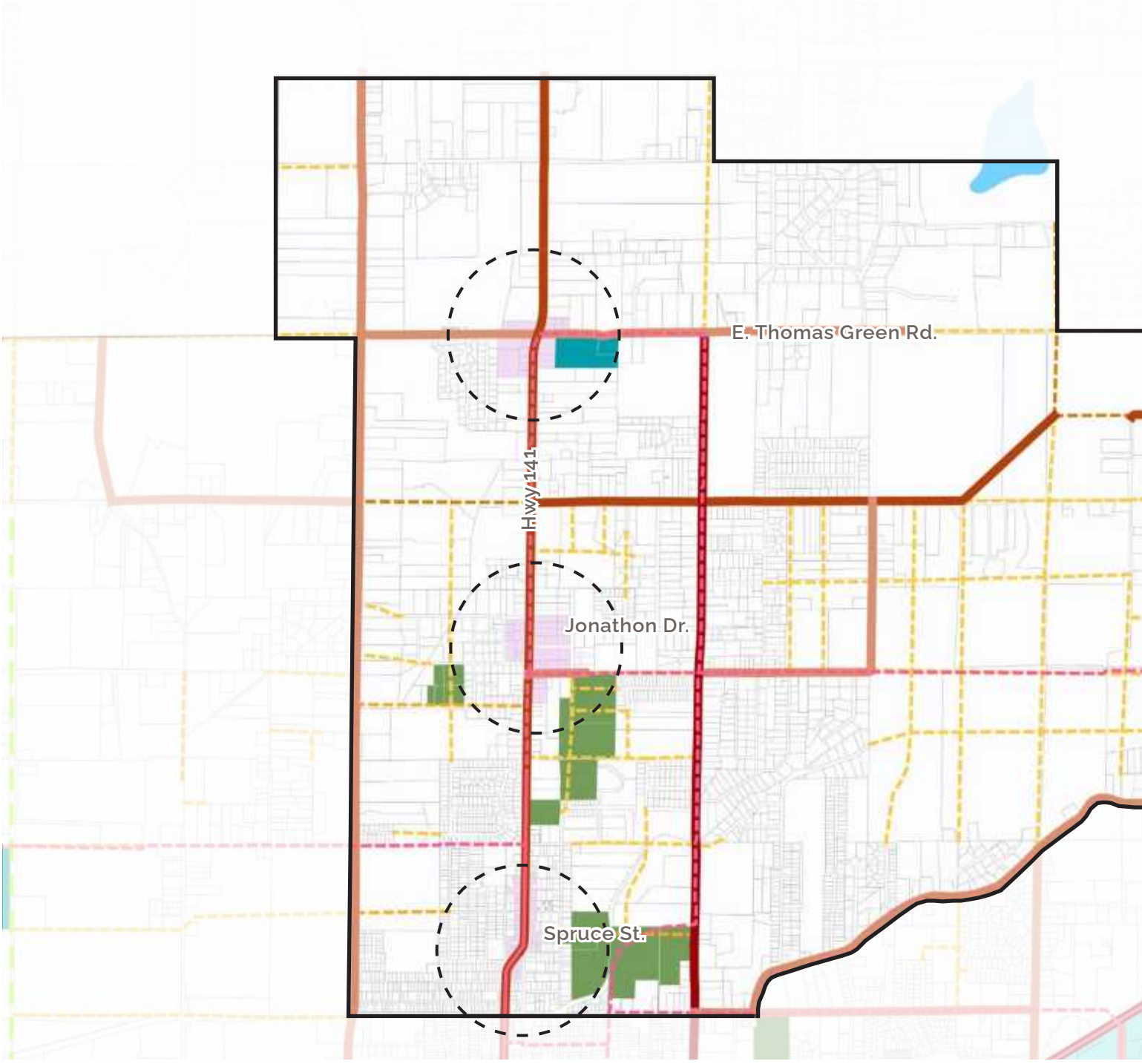
District 2 comprises North Jonesboro, an area of historic growth, and historic disinvestment. Centered along North Main and North Church street, developed areas are generally clustered in nodes, not extending far from the north-south spine. Recent growth has begun to extend east along North Patrick Street, signaling moderate development pressure for the district overall. North Jonesboro has all of the elements of community - homes new and old, churches and civic institutions, parks, and clusters of businesses. But these elements are not strategically organized into self-reinforcing centers.

The land use plan focuses on 3 neighborhood nodes along Main and Church, at Spruce, Jessup / Jonathon, and E. Thomas Green Road. Each center exists today as a cluster of mixed uses. These areas should be reinforced, creating clear mixed-use areas, supported by more diversified housing, and calm street connections tying growth east and west into the center. The easternmost portion of the district is slated to remain rural, focusing growth in relative proximity to the existing Main and Church spine.

The eastern edge of District 2 includes a portion of the mixed-use and walkable Greensboro Village development, which is anchored along Johnson. Over time this growth area can contribute to North Jonesboro overall, likely beyond the horizon of this plan. However the transportation plan looks to that future ahead of growth and land use.

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




**TRANSPORTATION**

Bike Network
- Existing Trail/Facility
- Proposed Trail/Facility

Existing Streets
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

Infill Connections
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Local Road

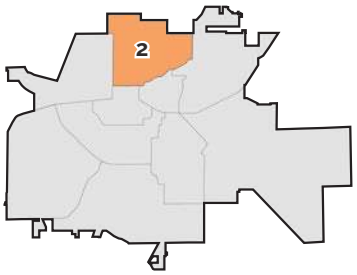
Centers
- Neighborhood

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Lake

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile






**District 2**

### Transportation

Growth in District 2 has varied significantly over the city's history, yet has remained a mostly rural, low intensity area. As recent growth has begun to extend east from Main and Church Streets and north from Johnson, North Jonesboro needs a more consistent street network to support and direct that growth. The transportation plan includes many street connections, stitching together the local, collector, and arterial networks, each of which exists in part, but with significant gaps. Between N Culberhouse Street and N Patrick Street, new street connections establish a more frequent network, supporting the Spruce and Jessup/Jonathon centers and distributing traffic to lessen the load on the area's limited through-connections. To the east, the transportation plan anticipates future growth beyond this plan's horizon by reserving locations for a future local and collector network so that growth can distribute traffic rather than concentrate it.

Bicycle connections focus on the Church and Patrick north-south connections, along with new local connections for alternative low-stress routes. A primary eastern connection is located along an extension of Blakenship Road and shared-use trail connections where road extension is not possible. Into District 1, this connection provides access to Joe Mack Campbell Park. To the east, Daybreak Drive is extended to Greensboro Drive and beyond, serving as a key vehicle and bicycle spine for the area's long-term growth.

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

**District 3**

### Land Use

District 3 covers northeast Jonesboro along East Johnson Avenue, from Greensboro Village toward Highway 49. Along with the southwest, it is one of the city's primary growth areas. Recent development consists largely of suburban subdivisions accessed from Johnson Avenue, with commercial uses along the corridor. Rural land and the Sage Meadows Country Club community lie to the north.

The land use plan establishes two anchors for future growth. At Old Greensboro Road and Johnson Avenue, Greensboro Village becomes a walkable, mixed-use Community Center. At Johnson Avenue and Bridger Road, NEA Baptist Memorial Hospital anchors a Neighborhood Center with medical offices, lodging, shops, apartments, and a central park and stormwater system. Both centers are enabled through the UDC's mixed-use districts (M1.1.2, M4.8), with the City reserving civic space and street connections. Walkable Neighborhoods surround each center, transitioning to Suburban Neighborhoods. A smaller center is reserved at the eastern edge for future growth.

Johnson Avenue remains a Suburban Corridor, prioritizing access management and safer crossings. Land to the north remains Rural until infrastructure can support development (M6.3). New neighborhoods should provide parks through UDC standards (M1.1.5), with City acquisition addressing remaining gaps (M3.3).

**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Walkable
- Suburban
- Rural

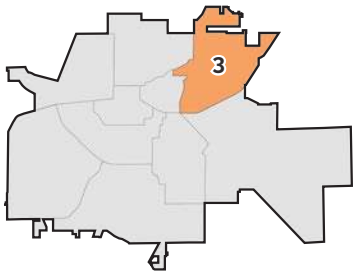
Centers
- Community
- Neighborhood

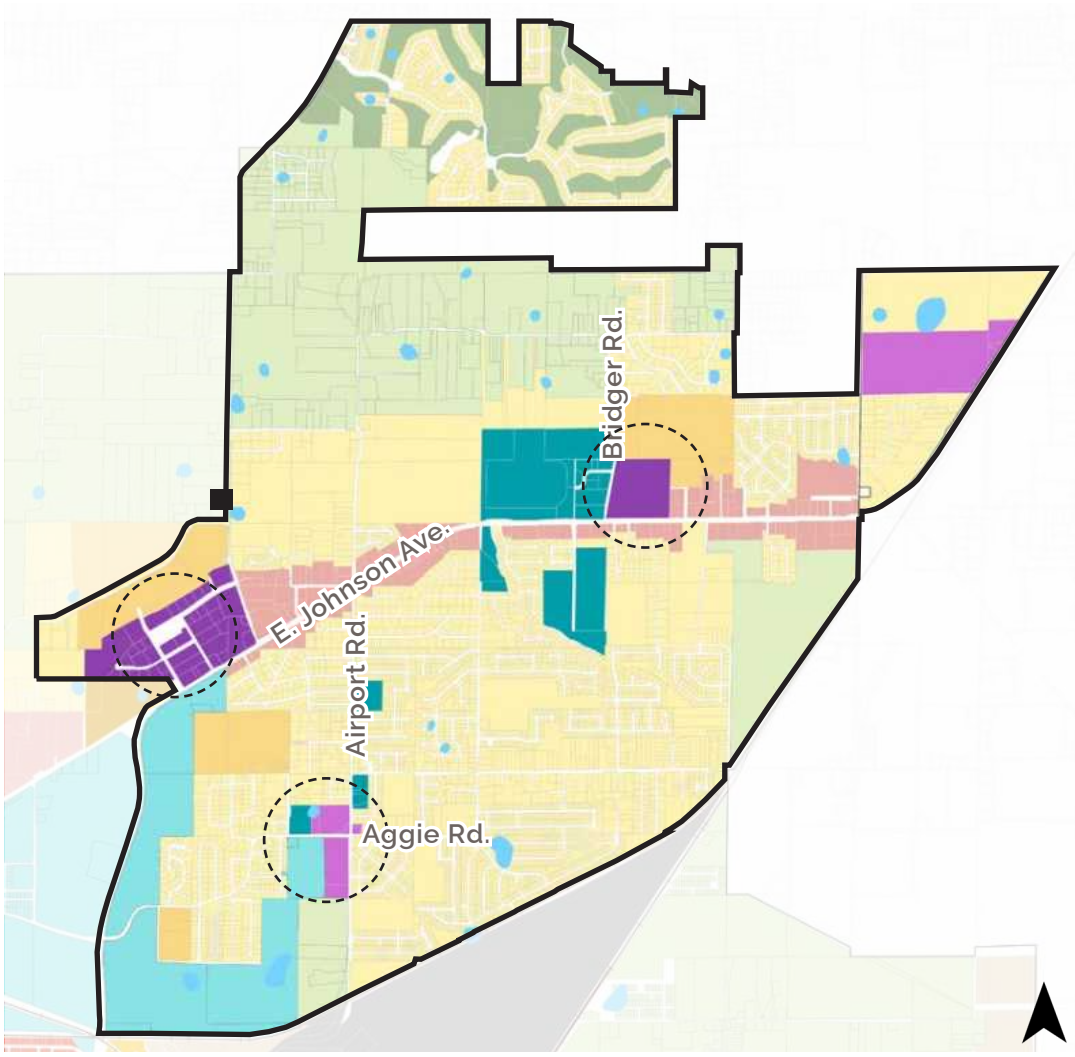
Corridors
- Suburban

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Private
- Civic - Other
- Civic - University

Other
- Water

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile



### Transportation

Most subdivisions connect only to Johnson Avenue, concentrating traffic along a corridor residents identified as a priority for investment. The transportation plan establishes a connected street network ahead of growth. North of Johnson, new collectors and local streets connect neighborhoods to Airport Road and Bridger Road. South of Johnson, local connections link subdivisions toward Aggie Road and ASU. The Master Street Plan identifies these connections (M2.1), with development implementing them through UDC standards (M1.1.5) and the City addressing remaining gaps (M2.6).

Bridger Road north of Johnson carries fewer than 3,000 vehicles daily and is recommended for reclassification from collector to local road, reflecting its future neighborhood context. Along Johnson Avenue, right-sizing and intersection improvements, coordinated with ArDOT, should precede any widening (M2.5).

A shared-use trail along Johnson Avenue will serve as the district's bicycle spine, connecting Greensboro Village and the Bridger Road center to ASU and Downtown. Bicycle routes along new collectors and neighborhood streets will connect homes to this trail, while paths through the hospital center's park will improve local access. Projects should be prioritized through the active transportation plan (M2.3) and implemented through the annual sidewalk, crossing, and trail program (M2.4).

**TRANSPORTATION**

Bike Network
- Existing Trail/Facility
- Proposed Trail/Facility

Existing Streets
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

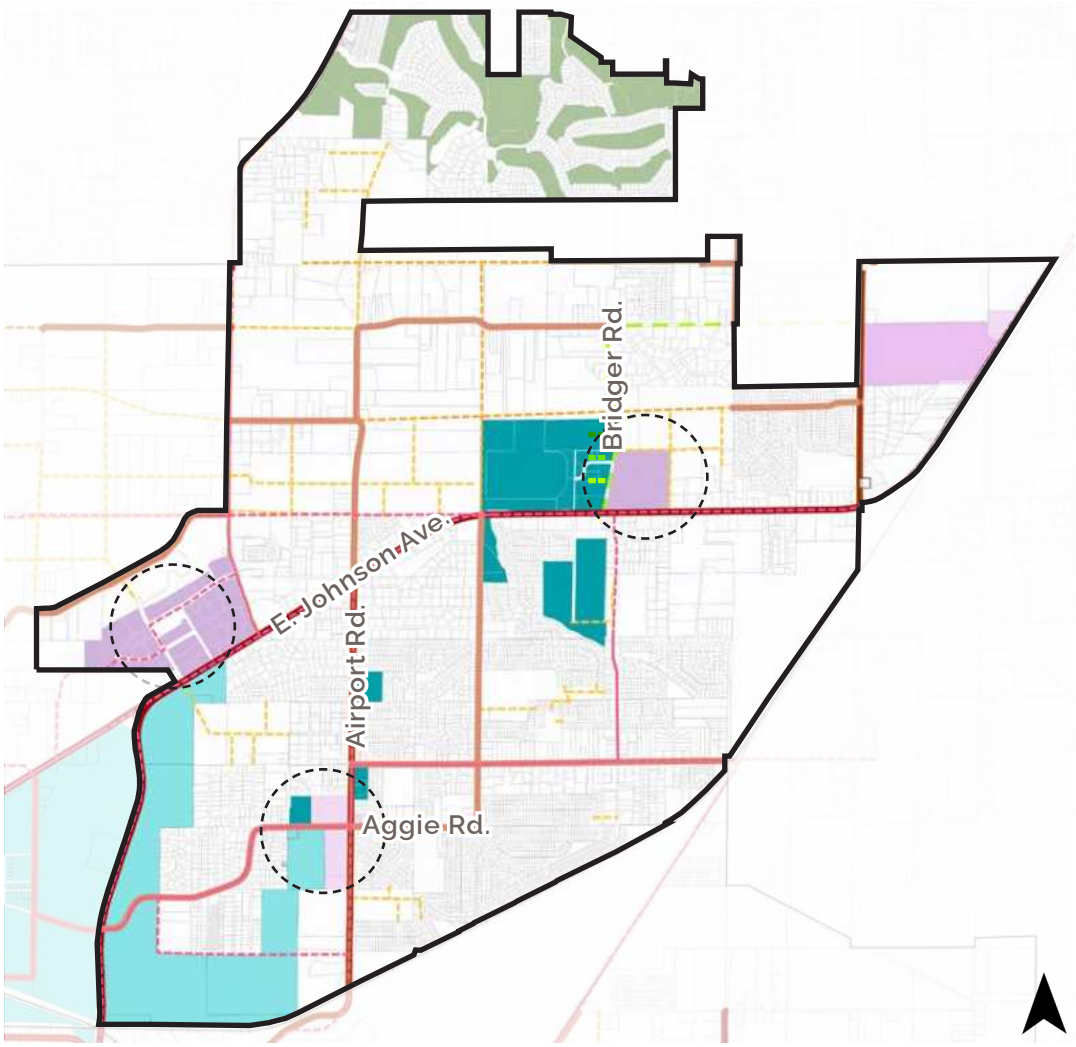
Infill Connections
- Collector
- Local Road

Recommended Downgrades
- Collector to Local Road

Centers
- Community
- Neighborhood

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Private
- Civic - Other
- Civic - University

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

**District 4**

### Land Use

District 4 is defined by Arkansas State University (ASU), one of Jonesboro's largest employers, with a record 17,926 students in 2026. Neighborhoods surround the campus to the north and west, while the railroad borders its southwestern edge. Student housing, older homes, and commercial strips sit near campus, but wide roads and limited crossings separate them.

The land use plan strengthens connections between campus and city. Core and Mid-Century Neighborhoods should accommodate small-scale infill, including duplexes, townhomes, and small apartments serving students, faculty, and young professionals (M1.1.3, M5.5). A Core Corridor along Johnson Avenue near campus encourages street-oriented development, transitioning to a Suburban Corridor farther east. A Neighborhood Center at Marion Berry Parkway and Aggie Road provides walkable shops, dining, and services, with potential to become a Community Center through additional mixed-use development and housing on campus.

ASU and City investments should be coordinated through the anchor institution forum (M9.1), while joint-use agreements can expand neighborhood access to campus recreation (M9.2). Strengthening these connections also supports the City's goal of retaining graduates (M7.2).

**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Core
- Mid-Century
- Walkable
- Suburban
- Rural

Centers
- Neighborhood

Corridors
- Core
- Suburban

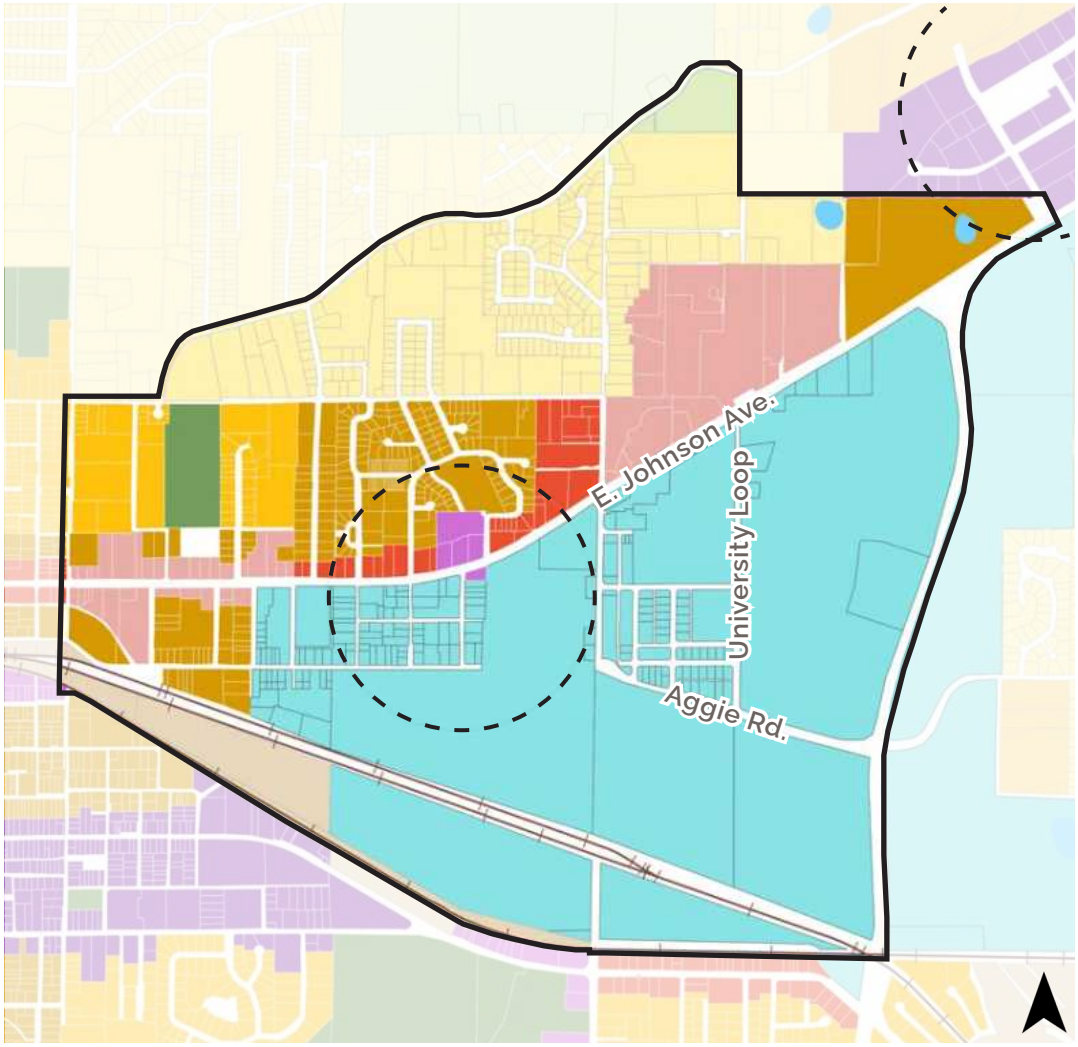
Industrial
- Industrial

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - University

Other
- Water
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile



### Transportation

District 4's primary transportation challenge is improving safety and connectivity rather than expanding roadway capacity. Johnson Avenue and surrounding arterials carry significant traffic between Downtown, northeast Jonesboro, and ASU. Residents identified campus-area congestion and pedestrian safety as recurring concerns. The plan prioritizes walking, bicycling, and transit access while recognizing the Johnson Avenue and Red Wolf Boulevard intersection as a priority for further study and investment.

A proposed shared-use trail along Johnson Avenue and new bicycle facilities on University Loop and Aggie Road connect campus to the citywide network, including routes toward Downtown and Craighead Forest Park. Safer crossings along Johnson Avenue, particularly near the Neighborhood Center, should be prioritized to improve access between campus, housing, and nearby businesses (M2.4, M2.5). New local street connections north of Johnson will close gaps in the neighborhood grid.

Red Wolf campus routes and City transit should be coordinated to serve the Neighborhood Center and campus edges (M2.7, M9.3). The railroad along the district's southwestern boundary remains a barrier to connectivity, with opportunities for improved crossings requiring further study (M2.6, M2.8). Together, these improvements will better integrate ASU with surrounding neighborhoods and support a safer, more connected university district.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Bike Network
- Existing Trail/Facility
- Proposed Trail/Facility

Existing Streets
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

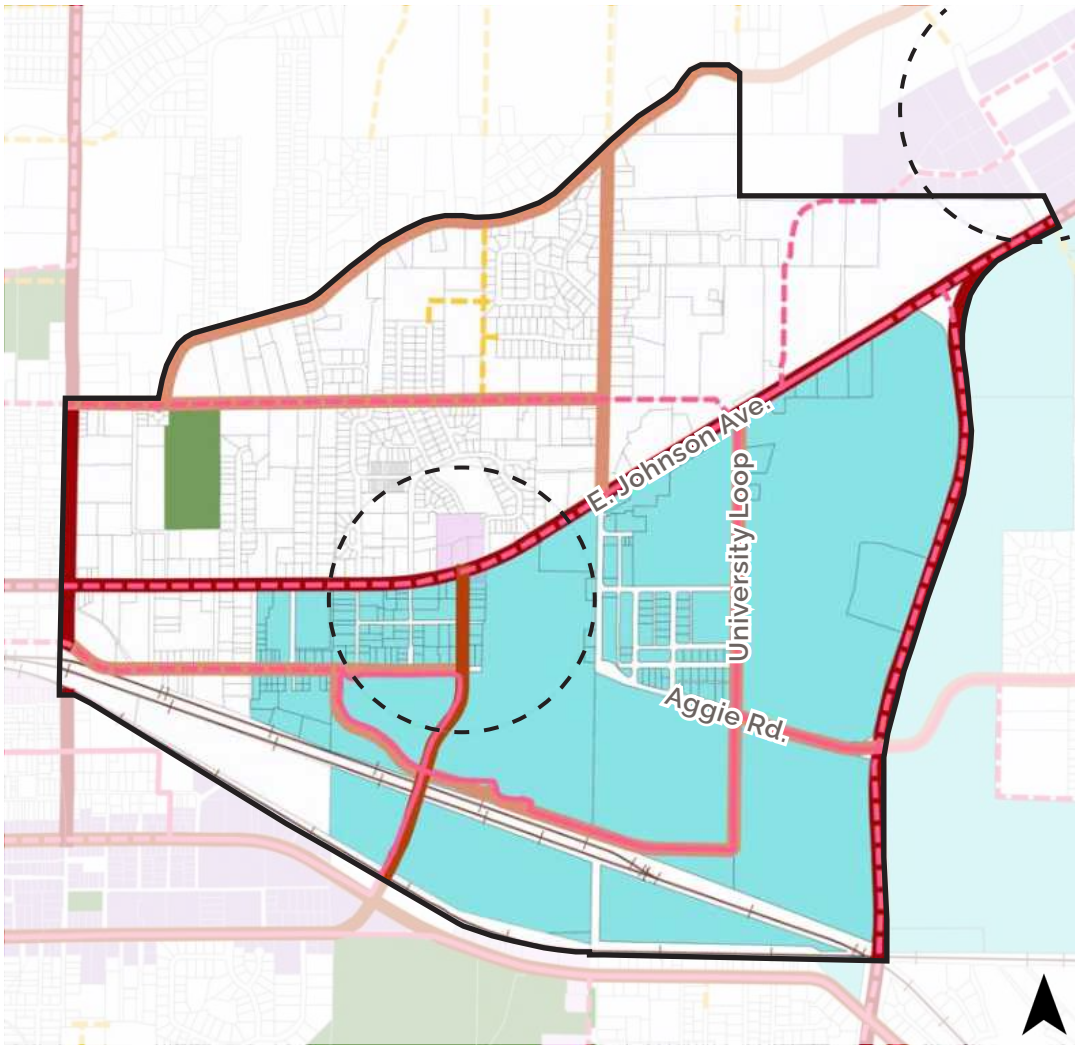
Infill Connections
- Local Road

Centers
- Neighborhood

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - University

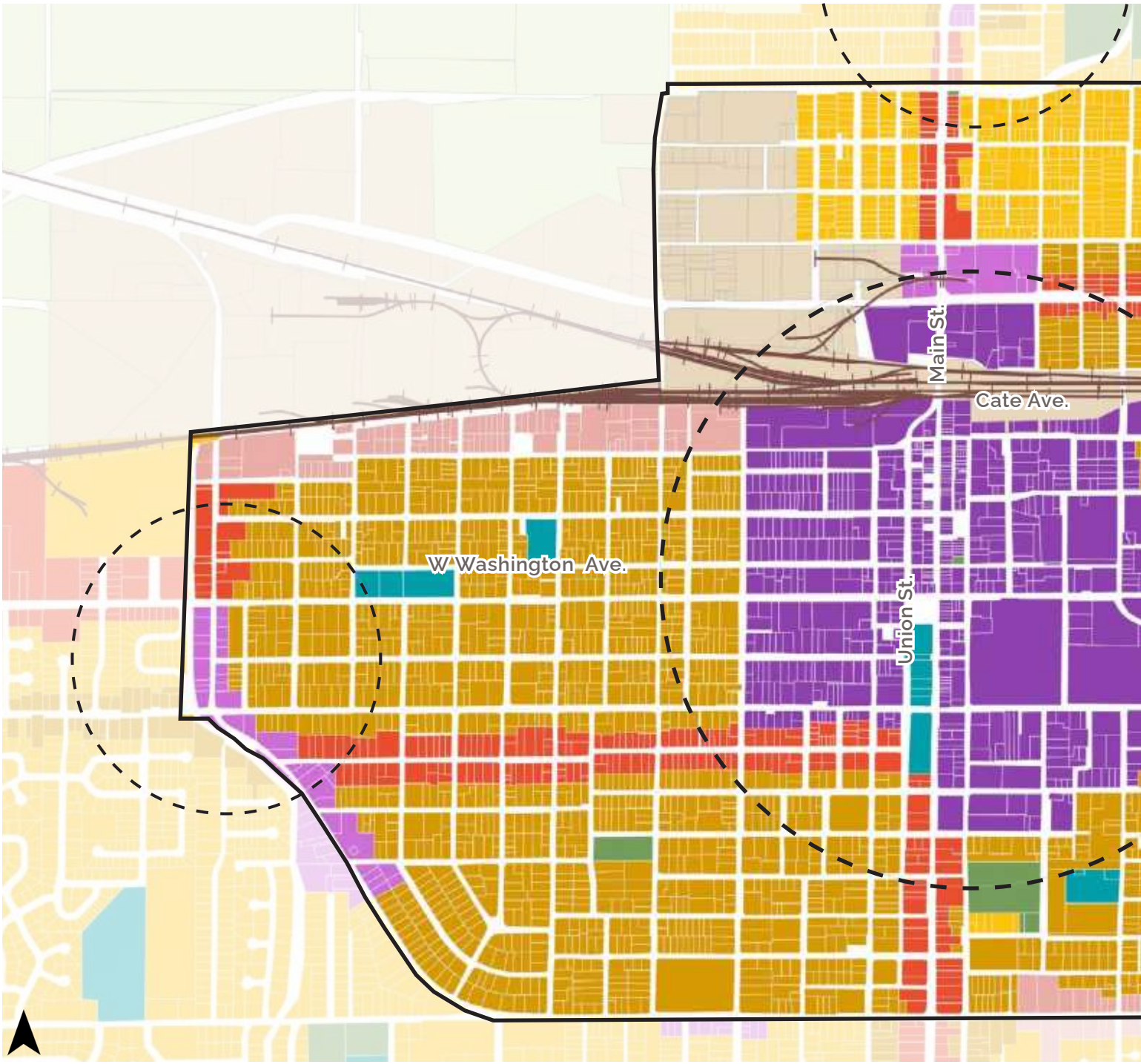
Other
- Lake
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Core
- Mid-Century

Centers
- Community
- Neighborhood

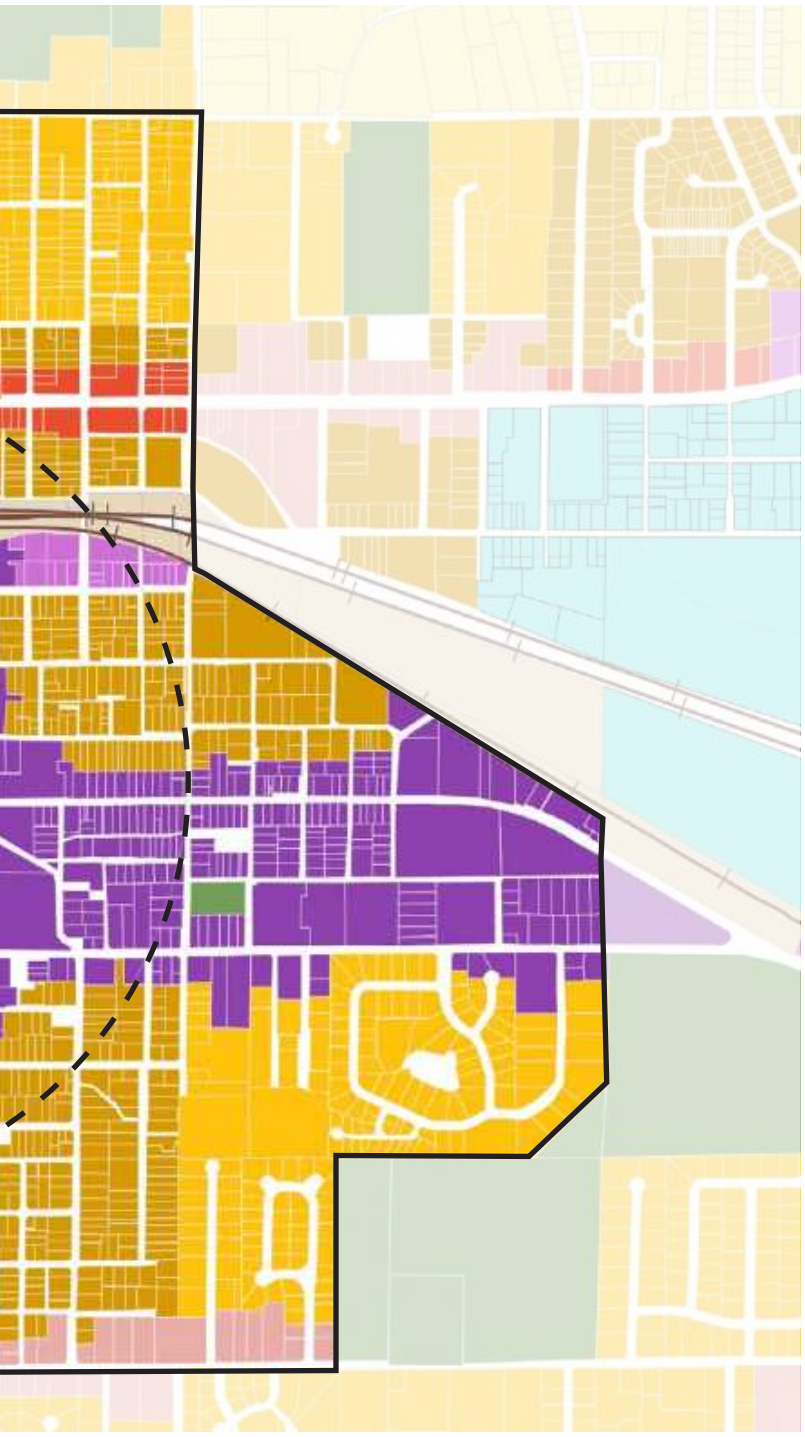
Corridors
- Core
- Suburban

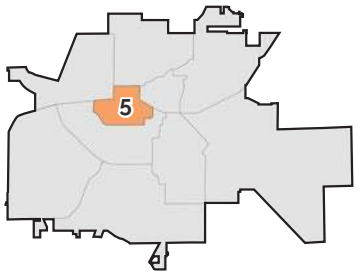
Industrial
- Industrial

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/2 Mile
- 1/4 Mile






**District 5**

## Land Use

District 5 encompasses Downtown Jonesboro and its historic neighborhoods, the city's civic and cultural heart and most walkable area. Downtown's storefronts, courthouse, and street grid remain central to its identity. Residents envision a Downtown balancing civic activity, dining, entertainment, and housing. Surrounding Core Neighborhoods feature mature trees, historic homes, and businesses.

The plan designates the Downtown Core as a Community Center, concentrating activity on Main Street between Washington and Cate Avenues. Three gathering spaces are proposed (M4.3): a civic green south of Washington Avenue, a plaza where Union, Main, and Church Streets converge, and Cate Avenue as a festival street. A parking strategy could consolidate surface lots into shared and structured parking (M4.2), freeing land for housing and retail through UDC provisions, City property, and incentives (M4.4). North of the railroad, a Neighborhood Node at North Main and Spruce Street connects Downtown to North Jonesboro, while industrial land remains along the tracks.

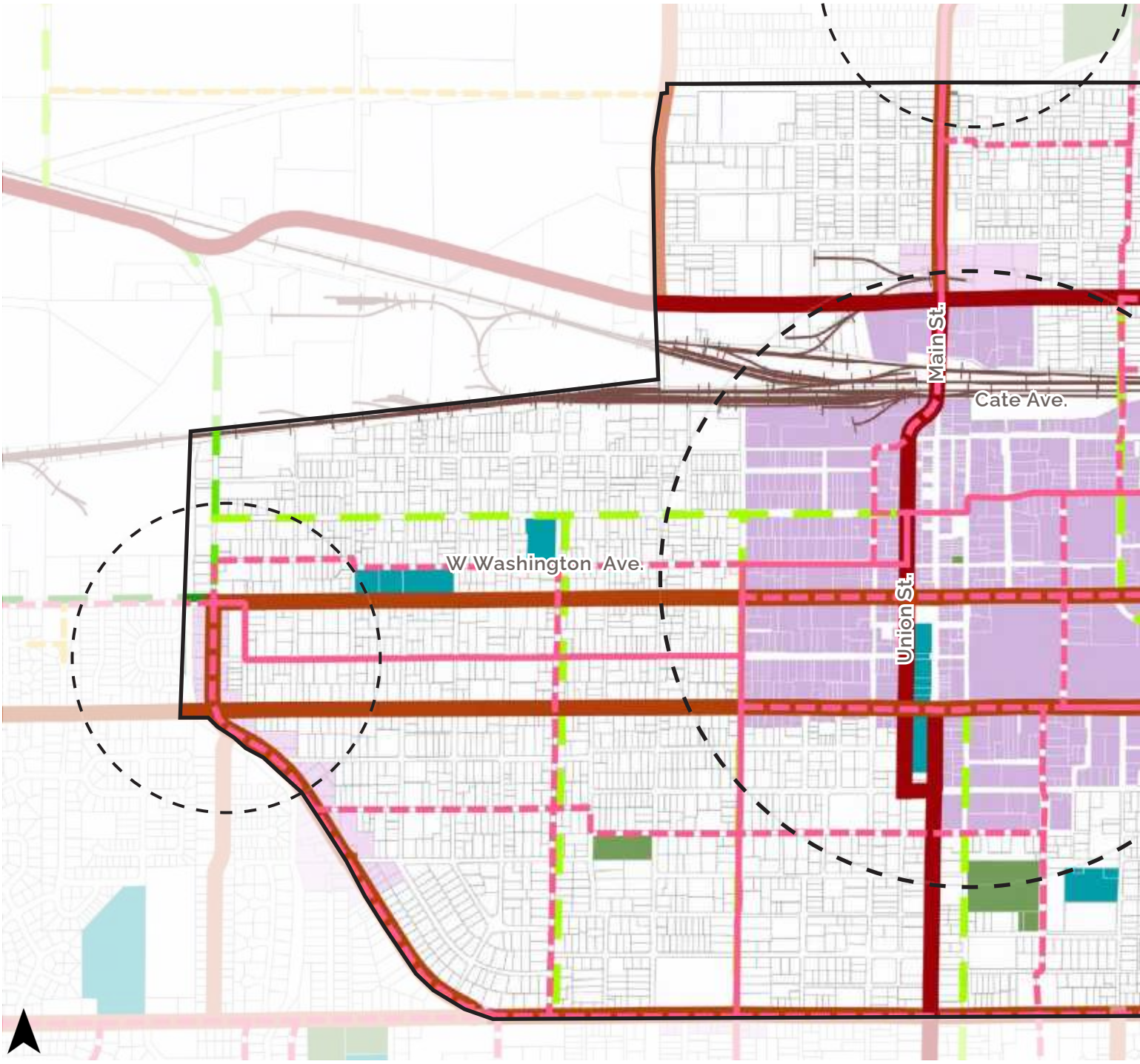
The Community Center designation extends beyond Downtown's boundaries, transitioning westward into surrounding neighborhoods with additional housing and eastward to strengthen connections with ASU.

The Gee Street business district becomes a Neighborhood Center, supporting its revitalization as a walkable main street. Streetscape improvements should calm traffic and encourage mixed-use development.

Core Neighborhoods west and south of Downtown can accommodate infill, including duplexes, townhomes, cottages, and small apartments, bringing more residents within walking distance of Main Street (M1.1.3, M5.5). Core Corridors along southern avenues and South Main Street support sidewalk-oriented mixed-use development while maintaining vehicle access. Surrounding neighborhoods are priority reinvestment areas (M5.1), where repairs and home rehabilitation can help longtime residents remain as investment increases (M5.3, M5.6).

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




**TRANSPORTATION**

Bike Network
- Existing Trail/Facility
- Proposed Trail/Facility

Existing Streets
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

Infill Connections
- Local Road

Recommended Downgrades
- Collector to Local Road

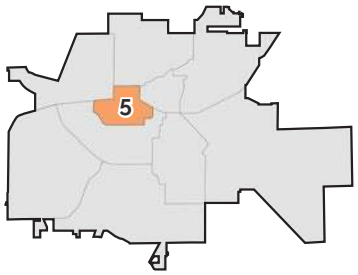
Centers
- Community
- Neighborhood

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/2 Mile
- 1/4 Mile






**District 5**

### Transportation

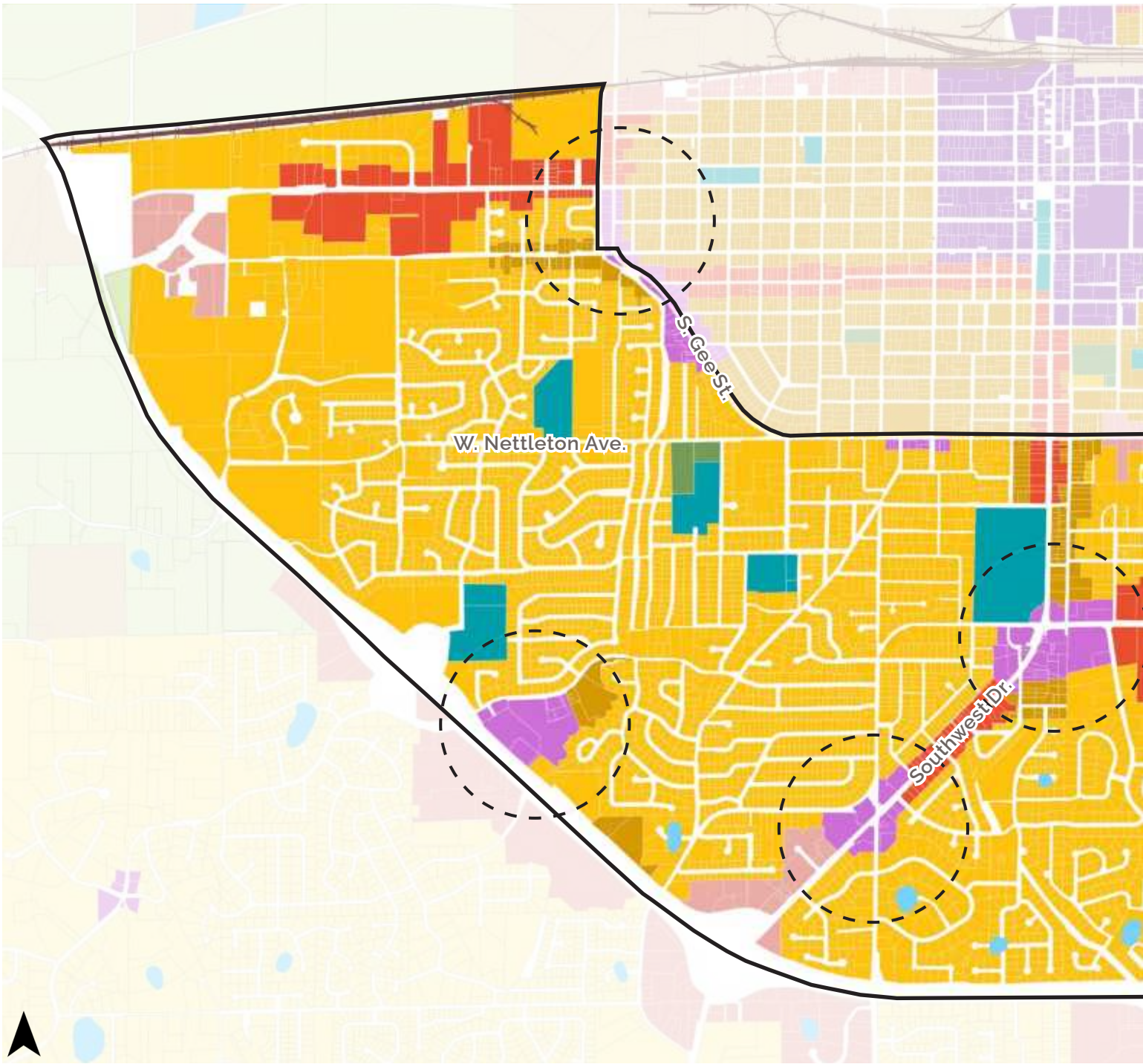
Downtown's street grid is its greatest transportation asset: short blocks and parallel routes spread traffic rather than concentrating it. The transportation plan builds on that grid. Main Street becomes a two-way street and remains the primary corridor, and Union and Church Streets are also converted to two-way traffic as convenient alternatives that will also support street-oriented businesses (M4.3). Together, these three streets keep traffic moving at low speeds while making Downtown easier to navigate and better for business. Washington Avenue and the district's other east-west arterials connect Downtown to Gee Street, ASU, and the neighborhoods beyond.

Several narrow residential streets now classified as collectors carry only neighborhood traffic and are recommended for downgrade to local roads, matching their design to their context. Gee Street from Washington Avenue to Dan Avenue carries about 5,800 vehicles per day, far below the standard for its class. It is recommended for downgrade from principal to minor arterial, consistent with Gee Street's role as an emerging center.

Downtown is also the hub of the proposed bicycle network. Bike facilities on Washington Avenue and a series of parallel neighborhood streets form a fine-grained network of low-stress routes rather than a single corridor. North-south routes cross the railroad to North Jonesboro on Main and Church Streets, and east-west routes connect to the Gee Street creek corridor and ASU. Sidewalk and crossing gaps near schools and civic destinations should be closed first through the annual program (M2.4).

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Core
- Mid-Century
- Rural

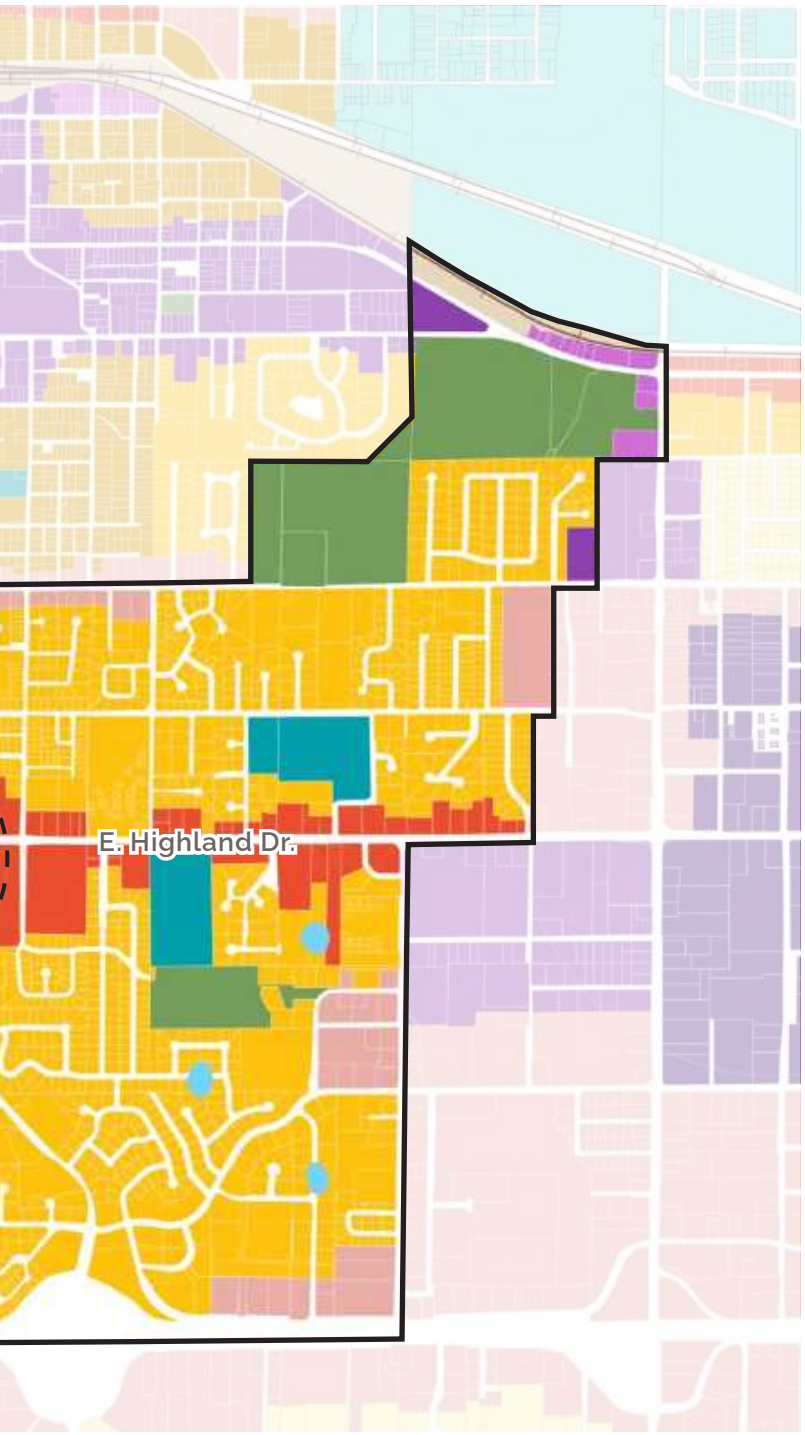
Centers
- Community
- Neighborhood

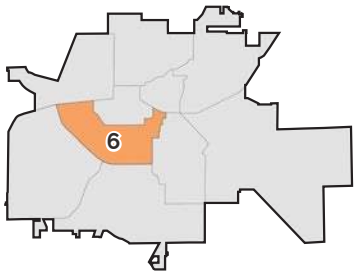
Corridors
- Core
- Suburban

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Water
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile




**District 6**

## Land Use

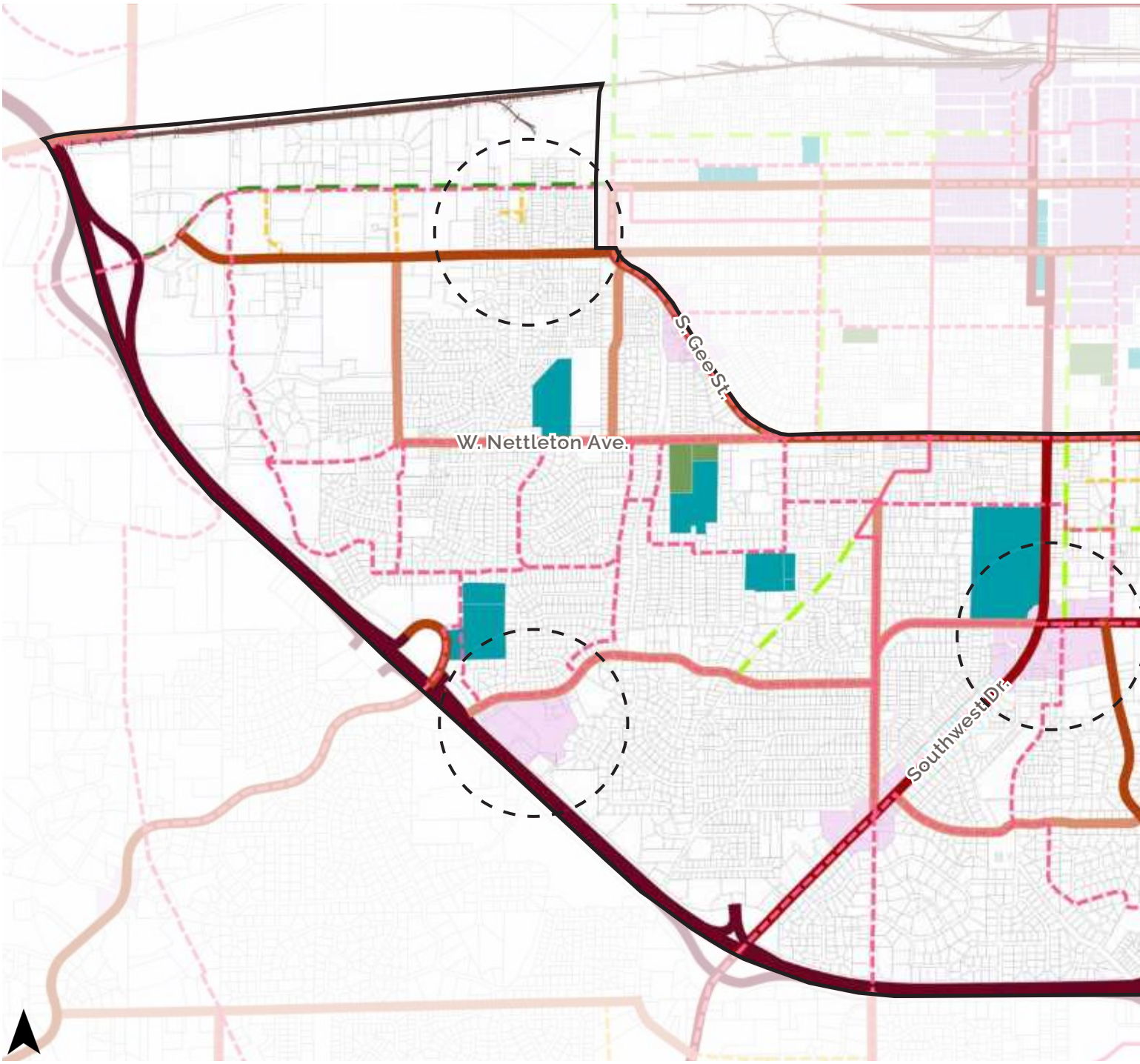
District 6 wraps Downtown to the west and south, covering the Mid-Century Neighborhoods that grew outward from the city core between the railroad and Interstate 555. Curving streets, mature trees, schools, churches, and parks make it one of Jonesboro's most established residential areas. Residents named Mid-Century neighborhoods as their most preferred place to live, both today and in the future. The district faces little growth pressure. Its challenge is keeping these neighborhoods healthy as homes and infrastructure age, and connecting them to daily destinations their street pattern often puts out of reach.

The land use plan keeps the district mostly Mid-Century Neighborhood. Reinvestment focuses on sidewalk gaps, tree canopy, and housing repair, with small-scale infill where it fits (M1.1.3, M5.3). Activity concentrates in three places along the district's edges. At Gee Street and Matthews Avenue, an emerging creative district of restored warehouses, makers, and local businesses is supported by flexible UDC rules and a creekside plaza that adds flood capacity (M4.5). Southwest Drive is a Core Corridor, with a Neighborhood Center at Southwest and Highland Drives anchored by Jonesboro High School, where a town square can serve students, residents, and businesses (M4.7). A Neighborhood Node at Woodsprings Road and Interstate 555 serves the district's western neighborhoods.

Underused church properties near the Highland center could host new homes built in partnership with congregations. The central city is one of the six park gap areas, where land acquisition and joint-use agreements with schools should be priorities (M3.3, M9.2).

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




### TRANSPORTATION

**Bike Network**
- Existing Trail/Facility
- Proposed Trail/Facility

**Existing Streets**
- Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

**Infill Connections**
- Local Road

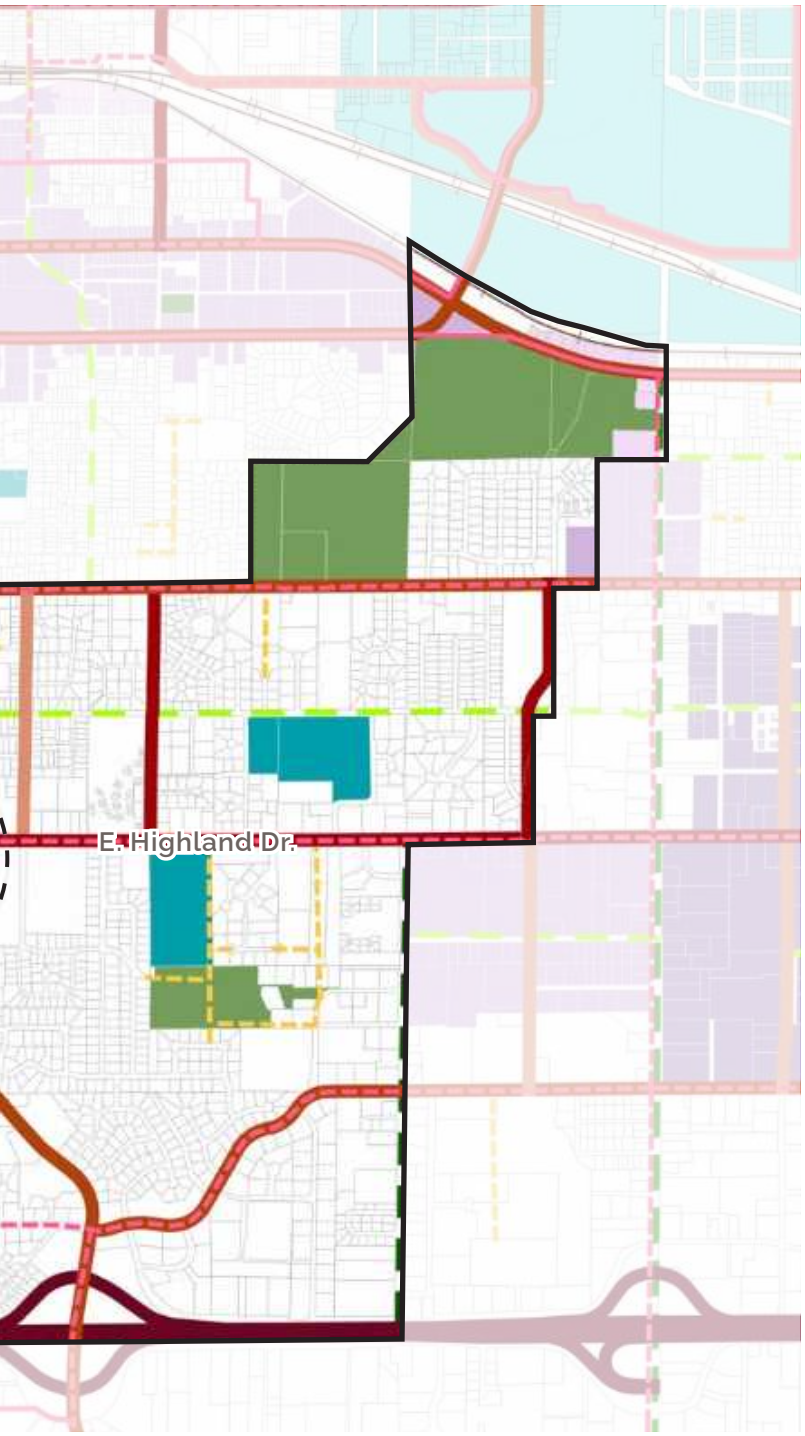
**Recommended Downgrades**
- 4:3 Conversion
- Principal to Minor Arterial
- Collector to Local Road

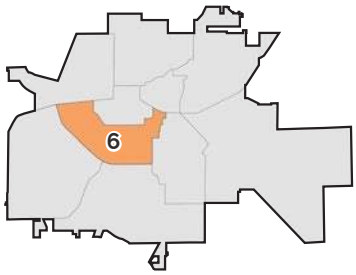
**Centers**
- Community

**Civic & Open Space**
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

**Other**
- Rail Road

**Pedestrian Sheds**
- 1/4 Mile




**District 6**

## Transportation

District 6's curving streets and cul-de-sacs funnel trips onto a few arterials: Southwest Drive, Nettleton Avenue, Highland Drive, Gee Street, and Washington Avenue. Interstate 555 forms the district's southwestern edge and the railroad its northern edge. The transportation plan focuses on making those arterials safer and adding modest local connections where they close meaningful gaps.

The first priority is pedestrian safety at Jonesboro High School, where students cross wide, fast streets every day. A square-about at Southwest and Highland Drives combines the traffic benefits of a roundabout with a walkable public square, improving flow and safety together (M4.7, M2.5). On Gee Street, a raised intersection at Matthews Avenue calms traffic and ties the two sides of the street together. Washington Avenue, from Gee Street west to Interstate 555, carries fewer than 5,000 vehicles per day and is recommended for downgrade from principal to minor arterial. Several narrow residential collectors are recommended for downgrade to local roads.

A connected network of bike facilities ties the district together. Primary routes on Southwest Drive, Nettleton Avenue, and Highland Drive lead toward Downtown, the high school, and Craighead Forest Park. Neighborhood routes on quieter streets link schools, parks, and the Woodsprings node. A creekside trail in the Gee Street corridor connects to Downtown and to flood storage north of the railroad. Sidewalk gaps around schools and parks should be closed first (M2.4), with projects ranked through the active transportation plan (M2.3).

# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

**District 7**

### Land Use

District 7 covers Jonesboro's western edge beyond Interstate 555, from industrial land in the north to subdivisions along Woodsprings Road and Southwest Drive. Rapid growth through largely disconnected single-family subdivisions has made it one of the city's primary growth areas. Wooded terrain, lakes, and a golf course maintain its rural character.

The land use plan supports continued growth through connected Suburban Neighborhoods, while Rural land to the west and north remains undeveloped until infrastructure can be efficiently extended (M6.3). New subdivisions should connect to neighboring developments, provide parks and trails, and protect natural features under UDC standards (M1.1.5). A future neighborhood center will serve daily needs, while Walkable Neighborhoods near Southwest Drive connect to District 8's centers. Suburban Corridors along the interstate accommodate automobile-oriented businesses. The City should prioritize parkland acquisition in the west and southwest, two identified park gap areas (M3.3).

**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Walkable
- Suburban
- Rural

Centers
- Neighborhood

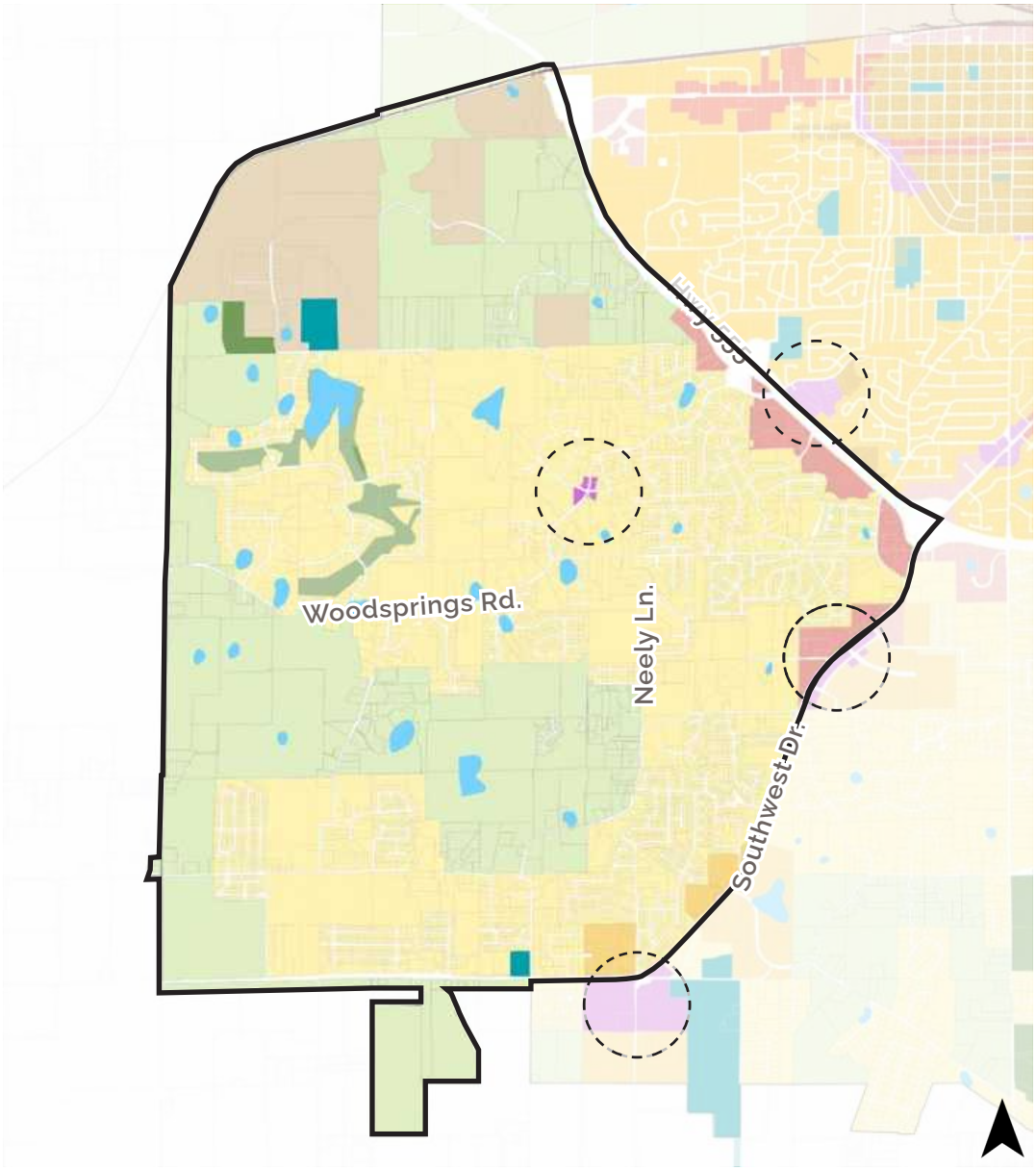
Corridors
- Suburban

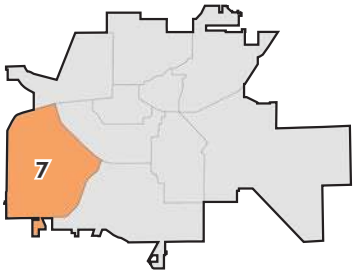
Industrial
- Industrial

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Open Space - Private
- Civic - Other

Other
- Water

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile



### Transportation

District 7's rural road grid and disconnected subdivisions create limited through streets, longer trips, and congestion along major corridors. The transportation plan uses Woodsprings Road, Neely Lane, and other existing roads to establish a connected network of arterials, collectors, and local streets.

The Master Street Plan identifies new connections (M2.1), implemented through development and UDC standards (M1.1.5). Streets should connect neighboring subdivisions to distribute traffic and improve access, with pedestrian and bicycle paths where street connections are impractical.

A proposed shared-use trail along Interstate 555 and across Southwest Drive will connect the district to Downtown and Craighead Forest Park. Additional bicycle routes along collectors will link neighborhoods to schools, parks, and commercial centers. Future trails should follow creeks and drainage corridors where possible, connecting parks into a broader network (M2.3, M3.1).

**TRANSPORTATION**

Bike Network
- Proposed Trail/Facility

Existing Streets
- Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

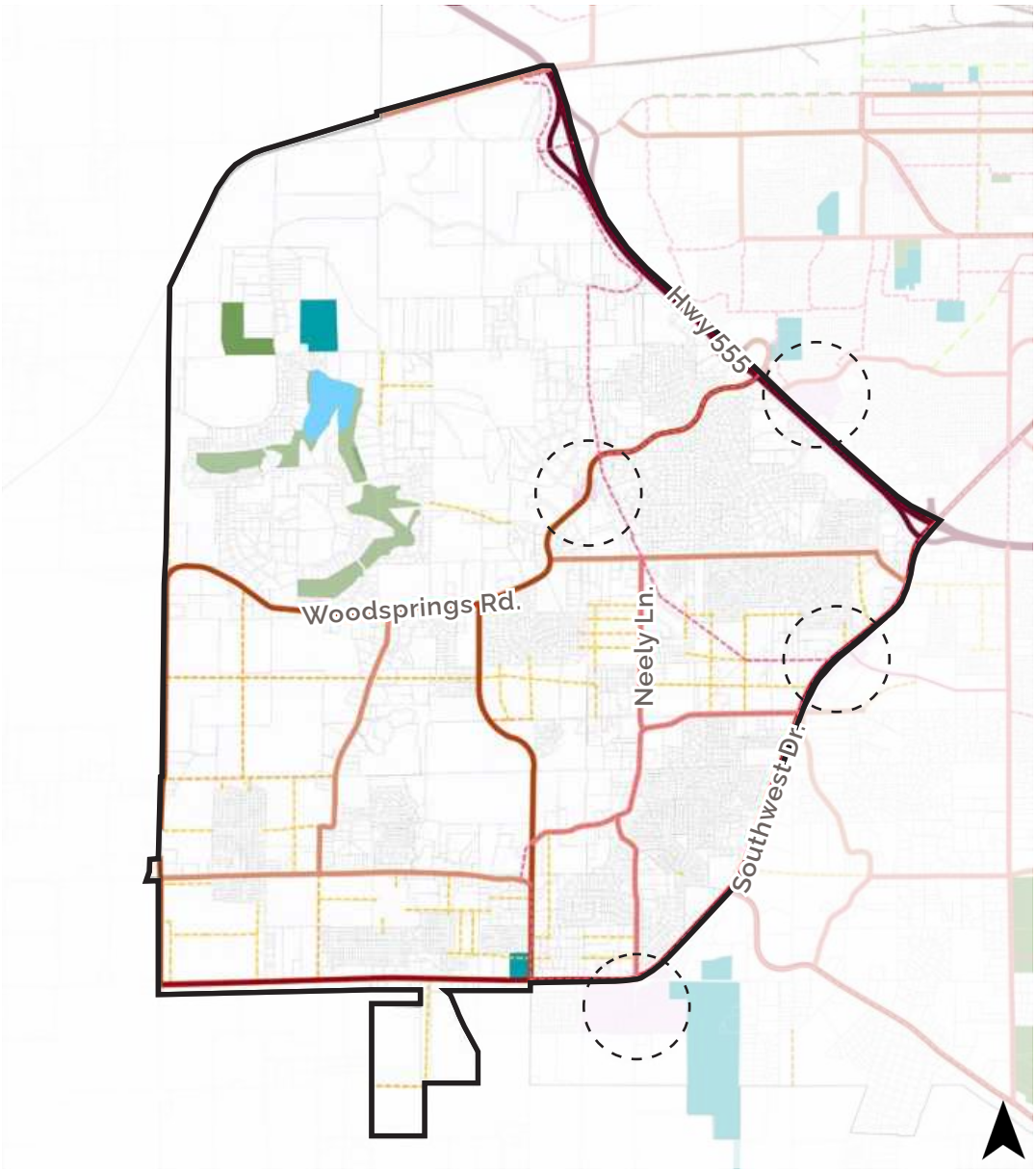
Infill Connections
- Local Road

Centers
- Neighborhood

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Open Space - Private
- Civic - Other
- Civic - University

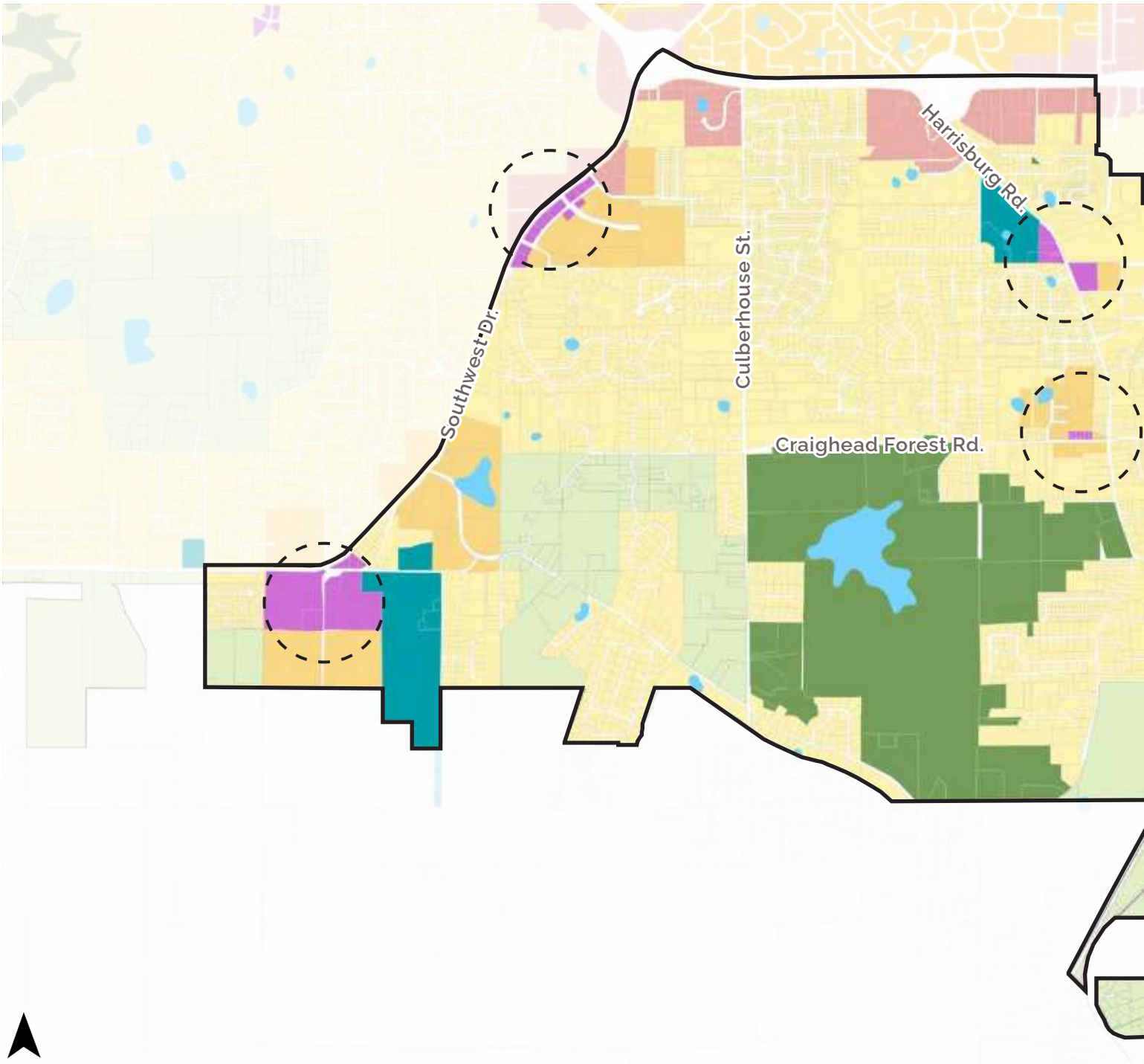
Other
- Lake
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Walkable
- Suburban
- Rural

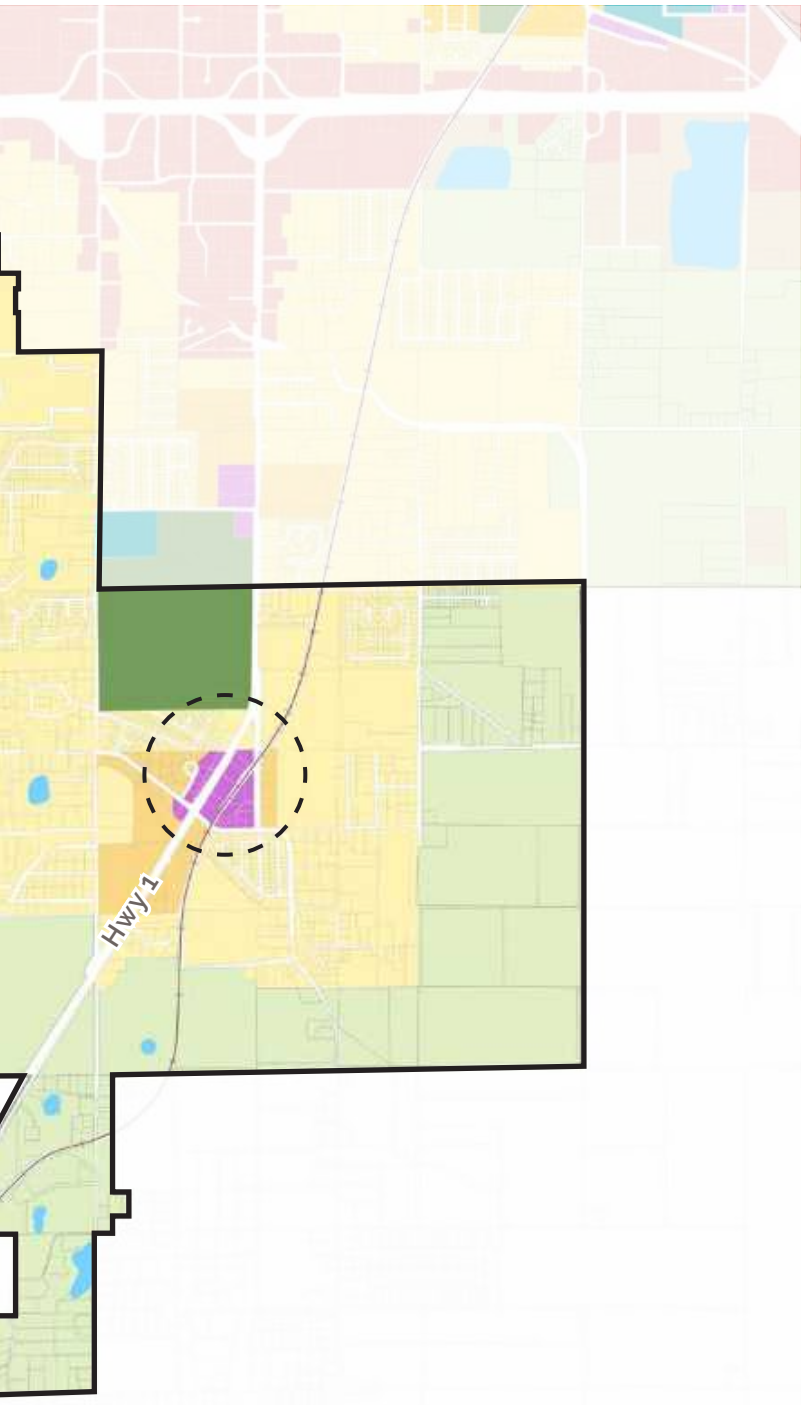
Centers
- Neighborhood

Corridors
- Suburban

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Water
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile




**District 8**

## Land Use

District 8 is southern Jonesboro, reaching from Interstate 555 past Craighead Forest Park to the city limits. It holds the city's signature park, the Valley View schools, and much of its recent residential growth along Southwest Drive and Harrisburg Road. Most of that growth has come as separate subdivisions. They concentrate traffic on Southwest Drive and around the Valley View campuses, and they offer few places for the community to gather.

The land use plan organizes the district around three centers:

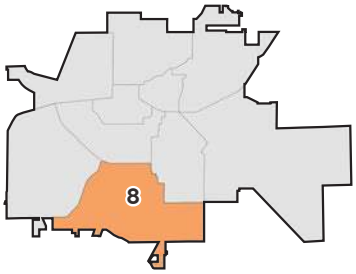
Southwest Drive and Southern Ridge Boulevard. A Community Center near the interstate recognizes the potential of in-progress development to gather shopping, services, and housing at a scale that serves much of south Jonesboro.

Southwest Drive and Valley View Drive. A future Neighborhood Center built around a pair of public squares gives families a place to shop, eat, and wait for school pickup, with townhomes and small homes on connected streets around it. It can serve as a model for financially responsible growth in the southwest.

Highway 1 (Harrisburg Road). A Neighborhood Node in the district's southeast provides daily services for nearby neighborhoods.

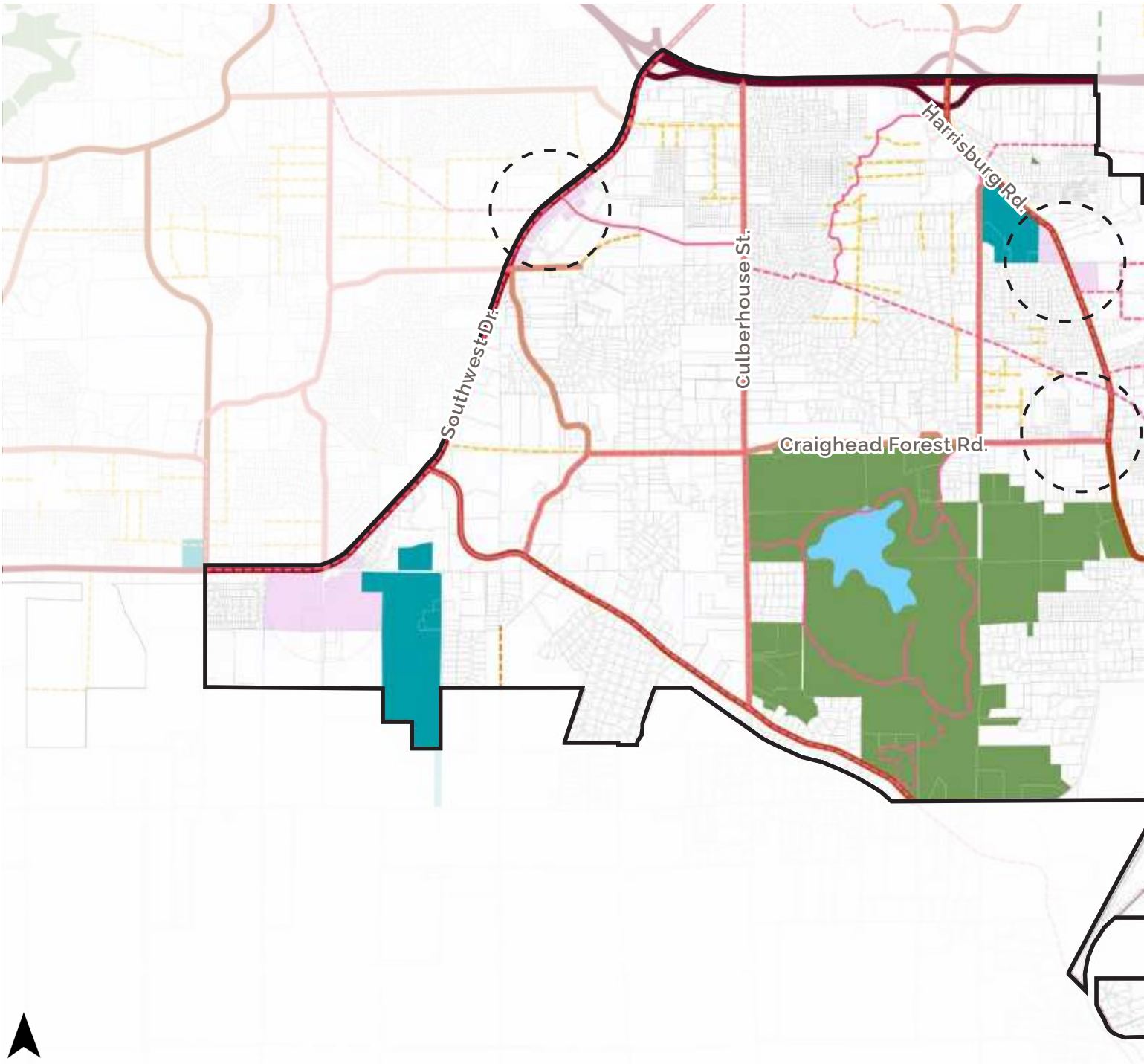
Development in these centers is private and enabled through the UDC's mixed-use center districts (M1.1.2, M4.8). Walkable Neighborhoods surround each center and transition to Suburban Neighborhoods, with Rural land kept in the southeast.

Craighead Forest Park remains the district's defining asset, and its edges deserve care. Residential streets next to the park should connect into its trail system through signed soft-surface connectors where owners agree. Higginbottom Creek, between Ingels Road and the park, is the city's largest continuous opportunity for a linear park that also manages stormwater (M1.3, M3.1).



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




### TRANSPORTATION

**Bike Network**
- Existing Trail/Facility
- Proposed Trail/Facility

**Existing Streets**
- Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

**Infill Connections**
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Local Road

**Recommended Downgrades**
- Principal to Minor Arterial

**Centers**
- Neighborhood

**Civic & Open Space**
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

**Other**
- Lake
- Rail Road

**Pedestrian Sheds**
- 1/4 Mile



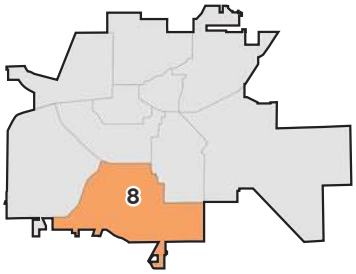

**District 8**

### Transportation

Southern Jonesboro's growth has outpaced its street network. Subdivisions connect almost entirely to Southwest Drive, Culberhouse Street, and Harrisburg Road. The growing Valley View schools add significant traffic, with very few homes within walking or biking distance. The transportation plan adds a more frequent network of collectors and local streets, where opportunities exist, both between existing neighborhoods and through land still to be developed. That gives residents more than one way to reach school, the interstate, and the park (M2.1, M2.6).

At Valley View, multiple access points on Southwest Drive and new streets in the future Neighborhood Center west of campus spread school drop-off traffic instead of concentrating it at one driveway. The Neighborhood Center's businesses and squares give parents a place to wait, keeping some cars out of the queue. Along Highway 1, new minor arterial and collector connections east and west of the node support future growth in the southeast.

Craighead Forest Park already has the district's strongest trail network, and the plan extends it outward. Existing trails along Culberhouse Street and around the park lead north toward the central city. A proposed shared-use trail along Southwest Drive links Valley View, the Southern Ridge center, and District 7. A trail along the rail corridor and new local bike routes connect more neighborhoods to the park. Linking Craighead Forest Park to Downtown and ASU was residents' strongest trail priority during Design Week, and those routes should rank high in the active transportation plan (M2.3) and the annual trail program (M2.4).



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework

**District 9**

### Land Use

District 9 is Jonesboro's primary commercial hub, centered on East Highland Drive, Red Wolf Boulevard, Caraway Road, and Interstate 555. The tornado-damaged Turtle Creek Mall area contains the region's largest retail concentration but lacks the walkable, mixed-use environment residents desire.

The land use plan designates Turtle Creek Mall as a Regional Center, guided by a redevelopment framework addressing streets, public spaces, parking, and phasing (M4.1). The mall could evolve into a walkable main street with plazas, workplaces, and housing while retaining anchor stores. Surrounding Suburban Corridors prioritize access management and redevelopment (M7.3). East of Red Wolf Boulevard, Mid-Century and Walkable Neighborhoods connect to a center at Nettleton Avenue and Watt Street, supporting Historic Nettleton's identity. A Neighborhood Node at Caraway Road and Oakbrook Drive serves nearby residents.

South of the mall, open space and stormwater improvements can reduce flooding while expanding recreation opportunities (M1.3).

**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Mid-Century
- Walkable
- Suburban
- Rural

Centers
- Regional
- Community
- Neighborhood

Corridors
- Core
- Suburban

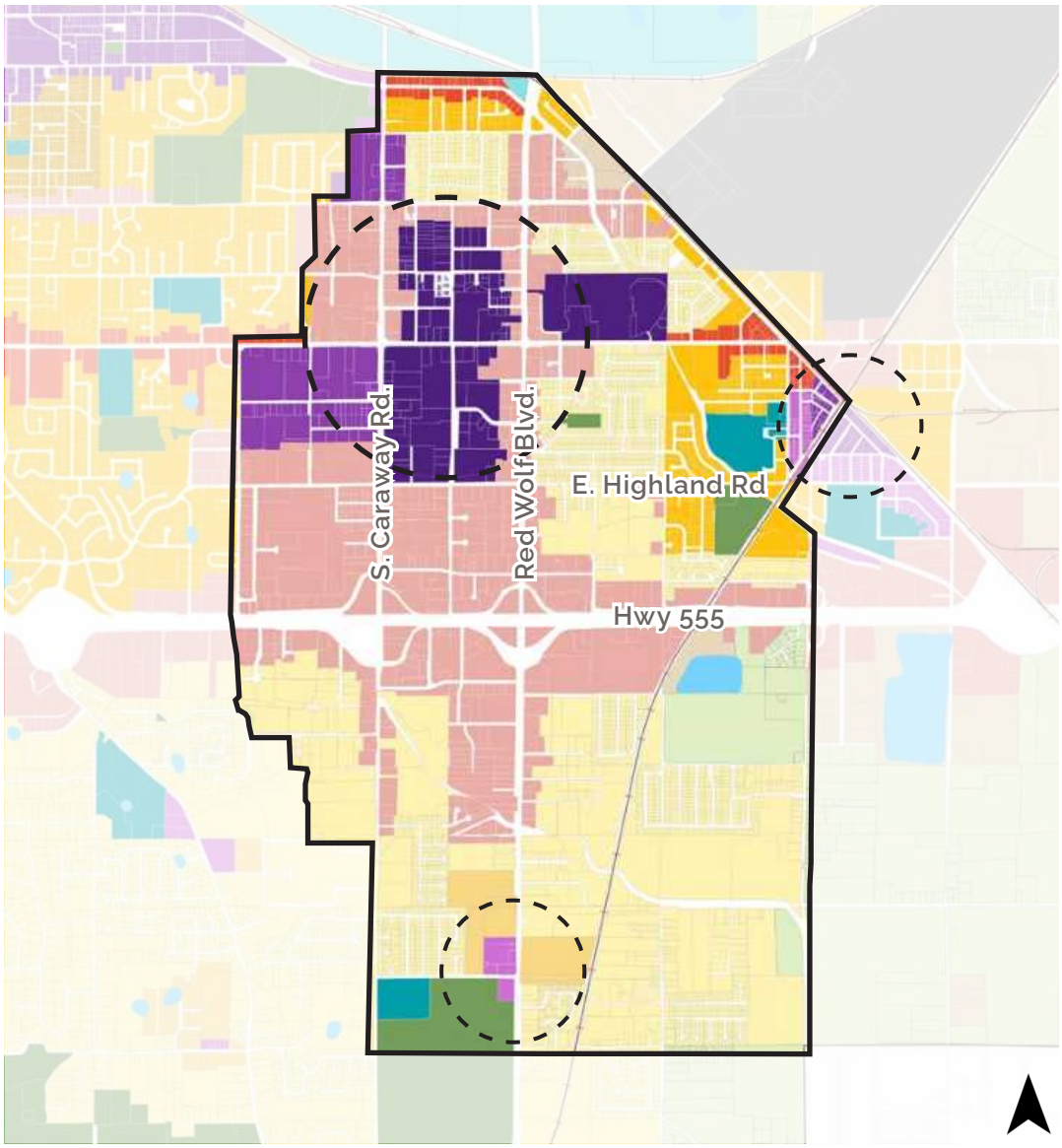
Industrial
- Industrial

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other
- Civic - University

Other
- Water
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/2 Mile
- 1/4 Mile



### Transportation

District 9 carries some of Jonesboro's heaviest traffic, with congestion and safety concerns along Highland Drive, Caraway Road, Red Wolf Boulevard, and Stadium Boulevard. The plan prioritizes safer, more efficient corridors through road diets, roundabouts, and signal improvements (M2.5).

Caraway Road is recommended for reclassification as a minor arterial, with selected four-lane segments converted to three lanes. Longer-term improvements could transform Highland Drive and Caraway Road into multiway boulevards, separating through traffic from walkable frontage lanes. An East Highland Drive pilot could test this approach (M2.9).

Within the Turtle Creek Regional Center, new streets will improve connectivity and reduce arterial dependence. Additional connections south of Interstate 555 will serve surrounding neighborhoods. A proposed rail corridor trail links the Regional Center to ASU and south Jonesboro, supported by bicycle routes along major corridors. Transit stops should be integrated into the redevelopment framework (M2.7).

**TRANSPORTATION**

Bike Network
- Existing Trail/Facility
- Proposed Trail/Facility

Existing Streets
- Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector

Infill Connections
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Local Road

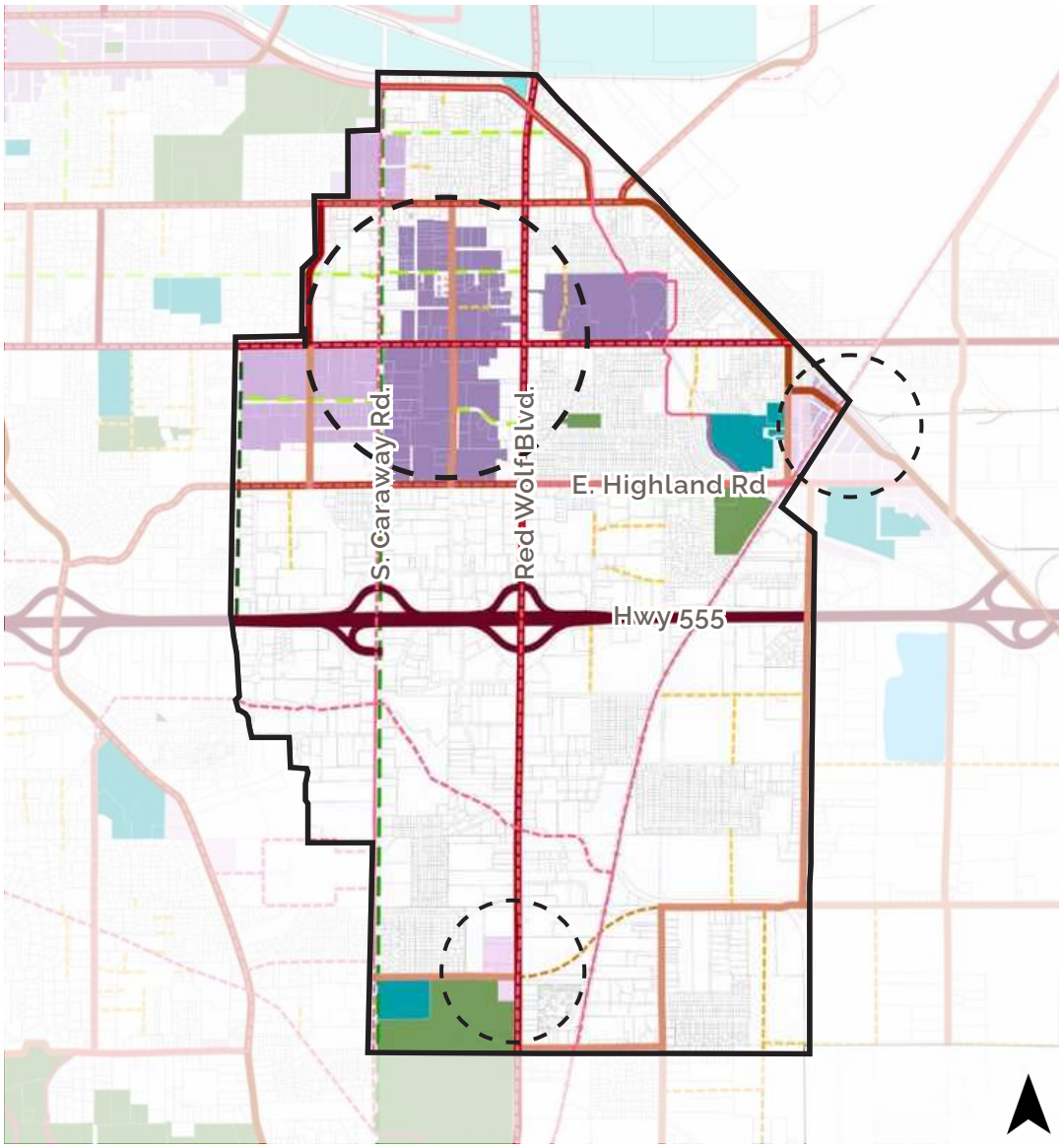
Recommended Downgrades
- 4:3 Conversion
- Principal to Minor Arterial
- Collector to Local Road

Centers
- Regional
- Community
- Neighborhood

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other
- Civic - University

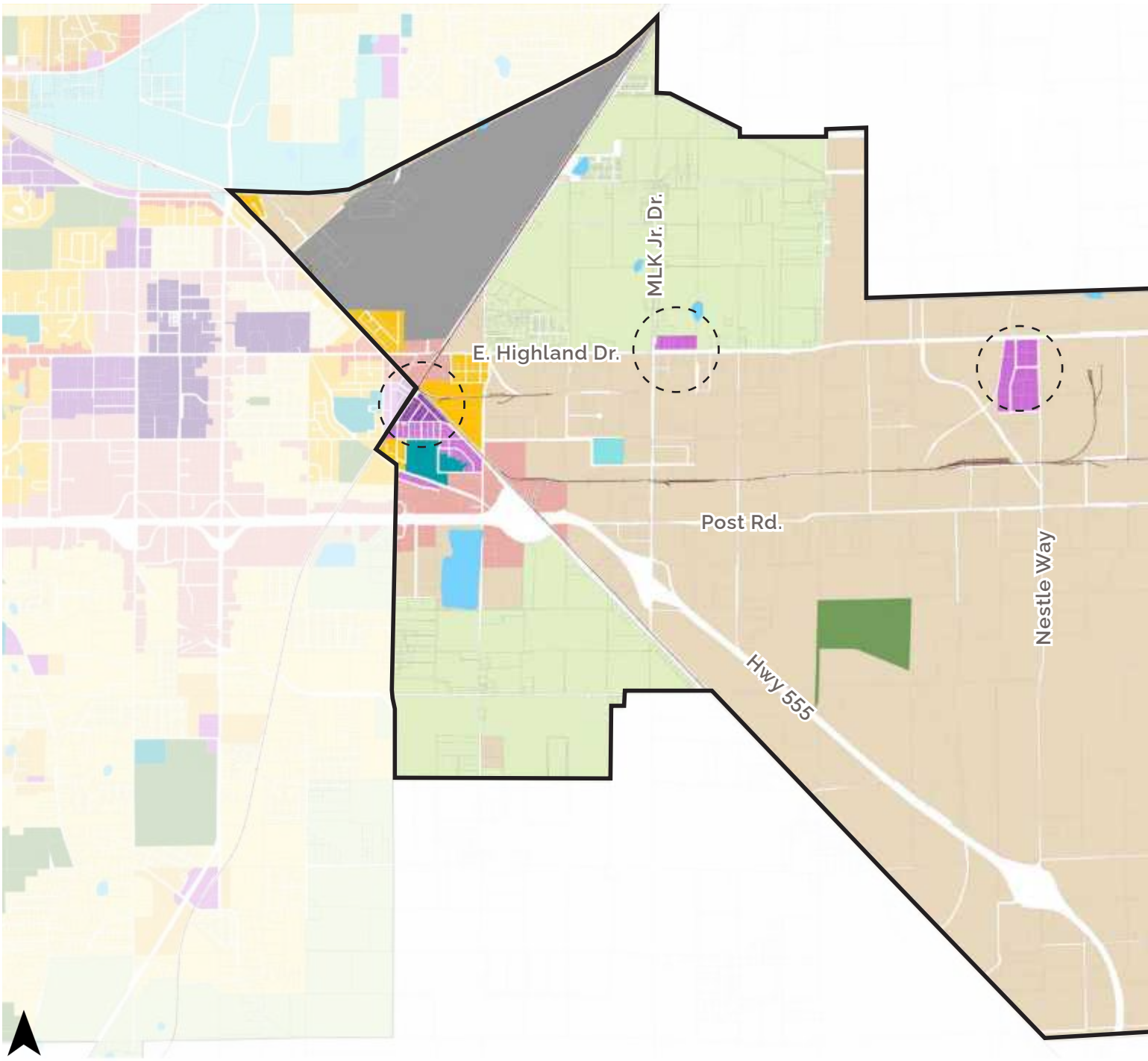
Other
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/2 Mile
- 1/4 Mile



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




**FUTURE LAND USE**

Neighborhoods
- Mid-Century
- Rural

Centers
- Community
- Neighborhood

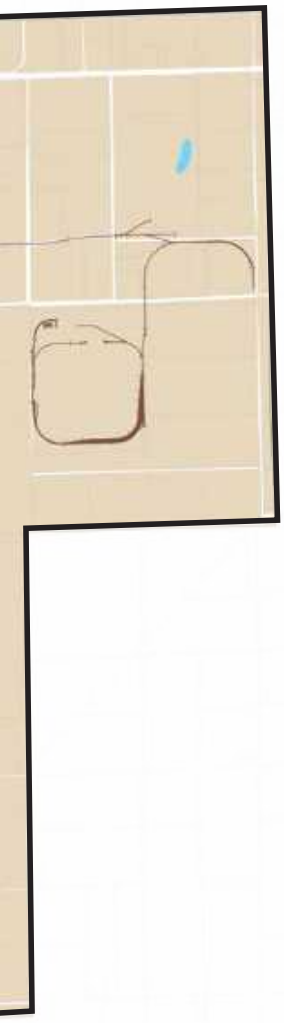
Corridors
- Core
- Suburban

Industrial
- Industrial
- Airport

Civic & Open Space
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

Other
- Water
- Rail Road

Pedestrian Sheds
- 1/4 Mile



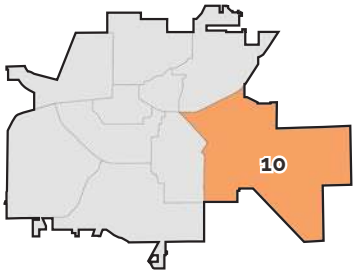
**District 10**

### Land Use

District 10 is Jonesboro's eastern employment district. It holds Jonesboro Municipal Airport, the city's major industrial land, and rail-served manufacturers and distributors. It anchors a manufacturing sector that supports about 10,000 jobs. Interstate 555 crosses the district diagonally, and Highland Drive and Nettleton Avenue connect it to the rest of the city. Housing is limited to rural homes and the center and close-in neighborhood areas of Historic Nettleton along the district's western edge.

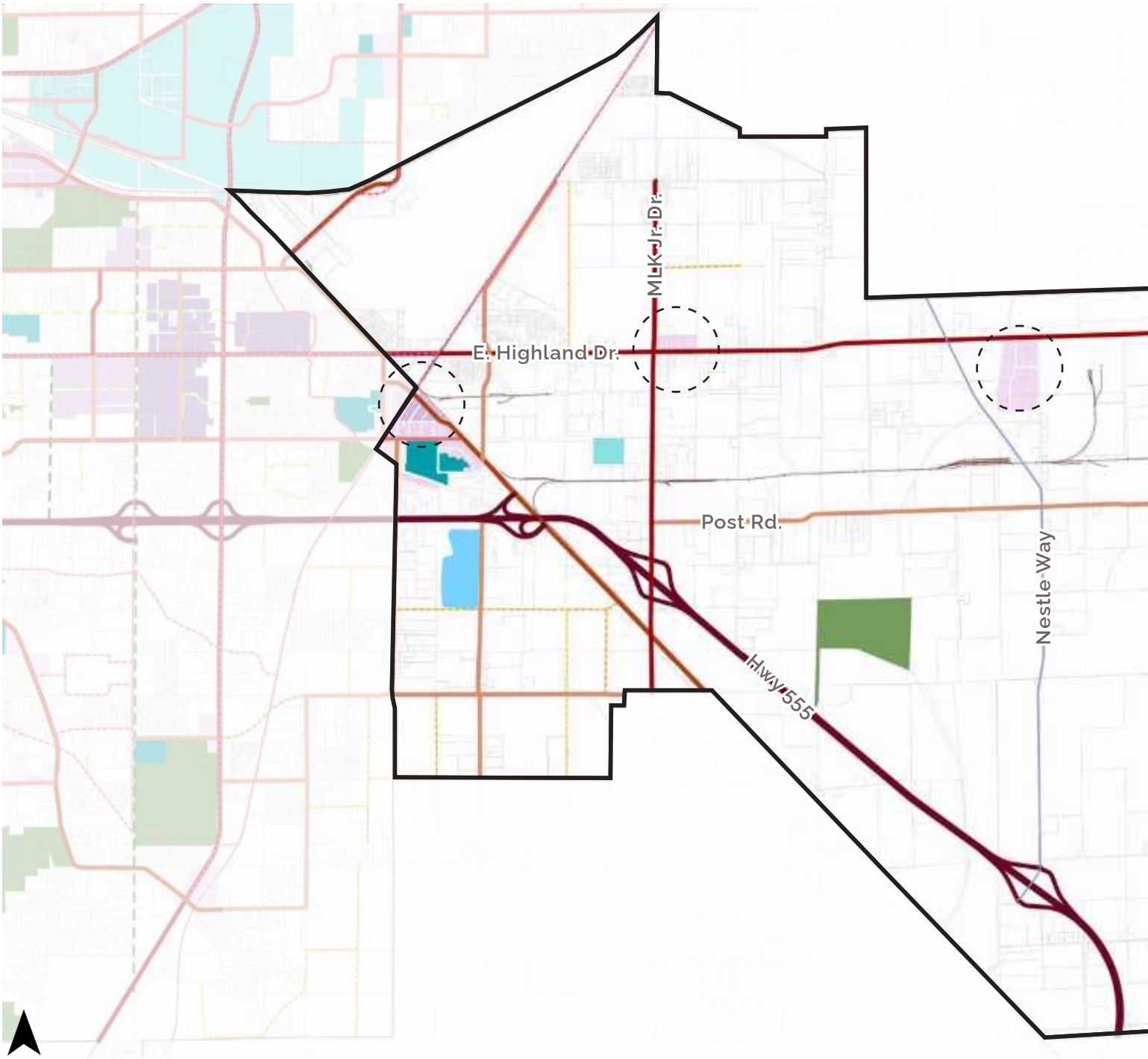
The land use plan protects this land for the work it does. Industrial areas are reserved for manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and maker uses, with rail and freight access preserved and buffers maintained from neighborhoods. New homes and other sensitive uses should not be placed where they would conflict with truck, rail, or airport operations. Rural land north and south of the industrial core stays low-intensity until a coordinated expansion strategy can extend infrastructure efficiently (M6.3).

On the district's western edge, Mid-Century Neighborhoods and a center focus reinvestment in Historic Nettleton, shared with District 9. Small centers reserved within the industrial area can offer food, business support services, and personal convenience services to employees and businesses, cutting midday trips across town. The City and its economic development partners should keep working with industrial employers on site readiness and workforce needs (M7.2, M9.1).



# GROWING WITH PURPOSE

## Growth Framework




### TRANSPORTATION

**Bike Network**
- Proposed Trail/Facility

**Existing Streets**
- Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Local Road

**Infill Connections**
- Collector
- Local Road

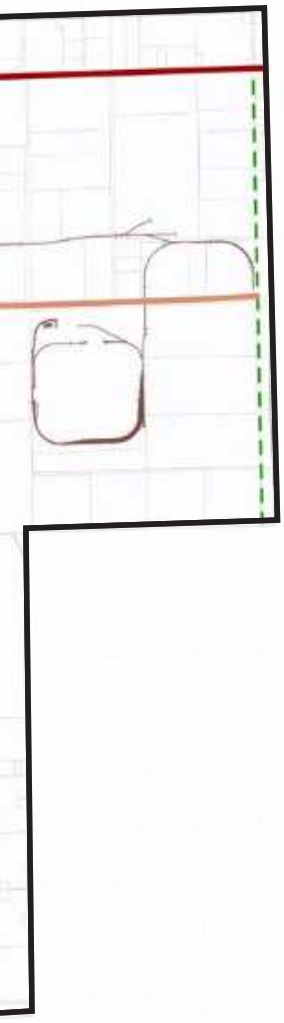
**Recommended Downgrades**
- Principal to Minor Arterial

**Centers**
- Community
- Neighborhood

**Civic & Open Space**
- Open Space - Public
- Civic - Other

**Other**
- Lake
- Rail Road

**Pedestrian Sheds**
- 1/4 Mile



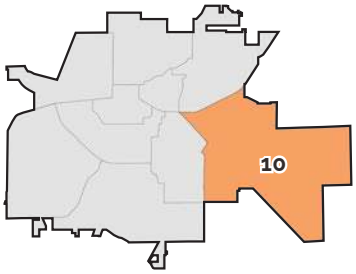
**District 10**

## Transportation

District 10's transportation network serves freight first. Interstate 555, Highland Drive, Nettleton Avenue, MLK Jr. Drive, and the rail lines connect the airport and industrial land to regional and national markets. Keeping those connections working is the district's main transportation goal. The plan designates a freight network and truck routes, so most other streets in the city can be designed for their neighborhood context, and it continues coordination with the railroads on crossings (M2.8).

Airport access is a priority. Improvements such as the Airport Road connector should give the airport and nearby industrial land efficient, direct connections to the freight network. MLK Jr. Drive and Highland Drive serve as the district's principal arterials, north-south and east-west, and their improvements should be coordinated with ArDOT and the MPO (M9.3). New collectors and local streets are planned in the district's southwest, where neighborhoods meet industry, and Post Road and other section-line roads frame future industrial access as land develops.

Walking and biking play a smaller role here, but workers still need safe ways to reach their jobs. A proposed shared-use trail along the rail corridor runs northeast toward the airport. Safe crossings at Nettleton Avenue and the interstate connect western neighborhoods to the center at Nettleton and Watt. Transit service timed to industrial shift changes can widen access to jobs for households without a reliable vehicle (M2.7).



## Recommendations

Most private development in this plan, including the centers, reaches the ground through Jonesboro's development code. Today those rules are split across Chapter 117 (23 mostly single-use districts), the subdivision regulations, and the Downtown Jonesboro Development Code. The recommendations below replace them with one Unified Development Code (UDC) organized by the place types in this chapter. They also align the capital plan with the Growth Framework and set up regular tracking so the plan stays current. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies to Carry Out the Growth Framework

#### M6.1 - Align the capital plan to the Growth Framework.

- **Description:** Prioritize capital spending in reinvestment areas, centers, and planned growth areas.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Mayor's Office, Finance, Engineering, Planning
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M6.3 - Set annexation and growth-area agreement rules.

- **Description:** Allow expansion only where growth can be connected and funded, consistent with the Growth Framework map.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** City Council, Planning, Engineering, City Water and Light, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Regulations to Shape Growth

#### M1.1 Prepare and adopt the UDC.

- **Description:** Prepare one consultant-led code that combines zoning, subdivision, and Downtown rules, and adopt it together with a new zoning map after public outreach. Each place type should allow about three zoning districts.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to short-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, consultant, Planning Commission, City Council
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

##### M1.1.1 Code audit and district crosswalk.

- **Description:** Compare current codes to the place types and map each existing district to its new equivalent.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low

##### M1.1.2 Mixed-use center districts.

- **Description:** Create districts at about three intensities that mix housing and shops on connected blocks with civic space.
- **Timeline:** Short-term
- **Cost:** Low

##### M1.1.3 Residential district range.

- **Description:** Create graduated districts by neighborhood type that allow duplexes, townhomes, cottages, and accessory homes where they fit.
- **Timeline:** Short-term
- **Cost:** Low

#### M1.1.4 Corridor districts.

- **Description:** Allow walkable mixed use on Core Corridors and flexible, automobile-oriented formats on Suburban Corridors.
- **Timeline:** Short-term
- **Cost:** Low

#### M1.1.6 Parking and review process.

- **Description:** Lower parking minimums near centers, make approvals clear and predictable, and reduce reliance on PUDs.
- **Timeline:** Short-term
- **Cost:** Low

#### M1.1.7 Outreach and adoption.

- **Description:** Hold public outreach, then adopt the UDC and zoning map together.
- **Timeline:** Short-term
- **Cost:** Medium

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M1.2 Train staff and amend the UDC yearly.

- **Description:** Publish a user guide, train staff, and adopt an annual cleanup amendment.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Continuous Planning

#### M6.6 Publish a dashboard and annual report.

- **Description:** Track a few measures each year and report progress publicly.
- **Timeline:** Short-term to ongoing
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

#### M6.7 Review the plan every five years.

- **Description:** Update the plan's maps and repeat the community survey.
- **Timeline:** Long-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Jonesboro MPO
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Growth in the right places.** Share of new housing units and commercial square feet located in centers and Walkable Neighborhoods.




CHAPTER 3

# 3

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

*Creating places where community happens*

A city's centers are where its public life actually happens: where residents shop, gather, celebrate, and run into people they know. This chapter supports a network of identifiable places where commerce, housing, culture, services, public space, and transportation reinforce one another, focusing growth and reinvestment where coordinated public and private action can strengthen community life, support local business, and give more residents a gathering place close to home.

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

Why Centers Matter

## 3.1 Why Centers Matter

**More Than a Collection of Destinations**

A center is not simply a cluster of stores, a stretch of road with stand-alone businesses, or a strip of shops surrounding a parking lot. Centers are intentional places that combine businesses, walkable streets, and public spaces in self-reinforcing, identifiable places that are worthy of a name: Downtown, Uptown, the North End. The concentration of destinations, services, homes, jobs, parks, and plazas creates a buzz of activity that supports a vibrant local businesses environment. A single public improvement such as a new sidewalk, a plaza, or new street lights serve an entire area and several community goals at once. A successful center is more than a collection of destinations: it is a connected place where public and private investment increase one another's value, each new business making the next investment more likely to succeed, and each public improvement making the next private investment more likely to pencil out.

This is true of Jonesboro's established center: Downtown. It can also be true of the commercial nodes that have grown up along the city's older corridors, new centers in still-growing parts of the city, and places ripe for reinvention such as the Turtle Creek Mall vicinity. Areas like Johnson Avenue and Bridger Road, North Church Street and Jessup Drive, and the neighborhoods forming around Southwest Drive did not inherit a historic Main Street the way Downtown did. Left alone, recent patterns of growth tend to produce rooftops without gathering places and new business spaces focused internally rather than serving a greater purpose. Building a center's worth of connected streets, shared parking, and public space into these areas from the outset, rather than treating commercial uses as separate from each other and the neighborhoods around, can give the city's overlooked and newer neighborhoods the same kind of walkable daily destination historically available in Jonesboro and which communities throughout the country value most.



*A vision for transforming the Turtle Creek Mall vicinity into a walkable, mixed-use regional center.*

## COMPARING SALES TAX PRODUCTIVITY




*A comparison showing how compact Main Street development generates significantly more sales and property tax revenue per acre than a larger commercial block.*

### Centers Carry More Than Their Own Weight

Centers matter to Jonesboro's finances for a reason that goes beyond any single property's tax bill. A **2.6-acre** block along South Main Street generates about **$70,000** in sales and property per acre each year, compared with roughly **$20,000** per acre on a **54.5-acre** commercial block near South Caraway Road and Fair Park Boulevard. The larger block produces more total tax revenue simply because it is larger, but the Main Street block puts far more value on every acre or land it occupies, and that difference compounds across the whole of Jonesboro's centers and commercial corridors.

It compounds because residential neighborhoods, on their own, rarely generate enough revenue to cover the full cost of the streets, parks, drainage, and emergency services required to support them over their lifespan. As Chapter 2 discusses, roughly two-thirds of Jonesboro's operating revenue comes from sales tax, and sales tax is generated almost entirely by commercial activity concentrated in centers and corridors, not by the rooftops spread across the city's residential land. In practice, this means Jonesboro's centers are not simply amenities that happen to sit near where people live. They are what allows the City to afford the things residents consistently say they want: well-maintained parks and trails, community events and civic gatherings, responsive public safety, and streets and utilities kept in good repair.

A city with strong, productive centers can support its residential neighborhoods generously. A city without them has to choose between raising taxes, cutting services, or letting infrastructure quietly deteriorate. Forming more compact, walkable centers in places where Jonesboro has already grown reuses infrastructure the City has already built, and can generate stronger returns to fund the surrounding area into the future. New centers in new growth areas function the same, funding city services and long-term maintenance of roads and pipes. Isolated buildings surrounded by large parking fields generate positive returns, but not enough to pay for the city's expanding residential footprint and the demand for city services that come along with it, Compact centers are one of Plan Jonesboro's core principles: they make the city solvent at the same time that they support community cohesion, not simply a matter of aesthetic preference.

### Places That Work by Car, Bike, and Foot

Centers earn their place in the community by remaining useful from morning through evening, and by working well for however people choose to arrive. Housing, offices, shops, healthcare,

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## A Network of Centers



*A vision for transforming Southwest Drive and Valley View Drive into a walkable neighborhood center.*

education, worship, recreation, and culture should be arranged so each use brings customers and community members, shared visibility, and informal oversight to the others, rather than each closing its doors and leaving the street empty once the workday ends. Convenient parking and easy vehicle access remain part of what makes a center work, both along streets and in larger parking areas, But driving should not be the only practical option. Connected streets, comfortable sidewalks, safe crossings, bus access, and nearby housing give nearby residents and the larger community real choices, shortening trips and expanding access for young people, older adults, people with disabilities, and households with one or no vehicle, while still serving those who drive.

**A Reflection of Community Values**

A center also needs a civic heart, not just a commercial one. Parks, plazas, libraries, arts spaces, faith institutions, schools, markets, and community activities create the shared spaces and common ground that turn a commercial area into a place of belonging. This matches what Jonesboro residents have consistently said they want: not simply more retail, but places to gather, celebrate local culture, and spend time with neighbors. Places that reflect community values and character, and worthy of the civic and public art that celebrate it. Judged this way, a center's performance is measured by more than sales figures. Access by car, bike, and foot alike, activity throughout the day, business vitality, how public space actually gets used, safety, and fiscal productivity together tell the fuller story of whether a center is succeeding, both on its own terms and in what it makes possible for the rest of the city.

## Recommendations

Centers produce more value per acre than any other development pattern in Jonesboro, but the compact, mixed-use buildings that make them work often cost more to build than they are worth when finished. The recommendation below measures that gap on real sites so that the City, lenders, and developers can plan how to close it, through the financing coordination described in Section 3.5. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M9.6 Test the financing gap on real sites.

- **Description:** Prepare pro formas for Downtown, Turtle Creek, and a neighborhood center that show what each project costs, what it would be worth, and which tools could close the difference.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Finance, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Feasibility.** Number of center sites with a completed pro forma and an identified approach to the financing gap.

## 3.2 A Network of Centers

**Centers Scaled to Their Place**

A network of centers only works if each one is scaled to the place it serves, both the neighborhoods around it and the corridor that connects it to the rest of the city. This plan organizes centers into four tiers, each matched to a different combination of neighborhood context, corridor scale, and market reach, first introduced in the Growth Framework in Chapter 2 and defined in full here.

The Regional Center, anchored by the Turtle Creek Mall vicinity, sits along Jonesboro's largest commercial corridors and is capable of supporting a wide mix of retail, entertainment, employment, lodging, housing, and civic space. Its scale calls for a coordinated district framework rather than a single project's site plan, and its ongoing reinvention is one of the most significant opportunities addressed later in this chapter. Scale in this context is set by both connection to the interstate and the size of large commercial parcels and major arterials that structure the surrounding area.

Community Centers are citywide or district destinations along Core Corridors, with a broad mix of businesses, services, housing, institutions, and public space. Downtown is the primary civic example, with other community-scale locations able to mature into connected districts as growth and market demand increase over time. The interstate's location and local and regional connections which centers are in this cohort. Downtown is in essence demoted in scale because its key crossroads of regional rail and vehicle traffic are no longer the strong drivers they were, its role now defined as the cultural and institutional center of the city.  Other community centers are defined by their location along major regional connections, which are set further from the interstate than the Turtle Creek Mall vicinity.

Neighborhood Centers are walkable clusters along smaller corridors or at key intersections of local streets, serving several nearby neighborhoods with local businesses, food, childcare, personal services, housing, and a small park or square. Neighborhood centers are sized to serve as a useful daily destination without overwhelming the residential streets around them. Ideally, neighborhood centers anchor a cluster of existing or new neighborhoods and offer locations for both services and diverse housing options, supporting neighborhood complexity and long-term success.

Neighborhood Nodes are the smallest tier: compact intersections or small commercial clusters within a single neighborhood. They offer a few convenience uses, ideally anchored by a civic space. Neighborhood nodes should be reachable by car, bike, or foot from nearby homes, assisted by

### Regional Center

Regional Centers are Jonesboro's largest and most active mixed-use destinations, serving residents from across the city and surrounding communities with a broad range of regional, national, and local businesses, entertainment, hospitality, and housing, organized as a connected district rather than a collection of isolated commercial sites.




### Community Center

Community Centers are large citywide or district destinations spanning several active blocks, supporting a mix of local and regional businesses, restaurants, services, and housing while maintaining a walkable public realm.



### Neighborhood Center

Neighborhood Centers are mid-sized, walkable clusters of local businesses and services, shops, restaurants, childcare, and civic uses, serving several surrounding neighborhoods at a scale compatible with nearby homes.



### Neighborhood Node

Neighborhood Nodes are the smallest centers in the hierarchy, typically a single intersection or short stretch of retail offering convenient, everyday services within easy reach of nearby homes, sized to grow incrementally as local demand develops.




*The four center types establish a hierarchy of destinations, scaled to serve different areas across Jonesboro.*

their limited scale which increases their compatibility in lower-scale residential areas. Over time, more neighborhood nodes can be supported throughout the city, increasing access and opportunities for community-building.

This scaling works in both directions. A Walkable or Core Neighborhood, with its connected streets and existing block structure, can comfortably support a Neighborhood Center or even a Community Center at its edge, while a Suburban Neighborhood, built around larger blocks and fewer connections, is often better matched to a Neighborhood Node sized to the limited surrounding street network. The same logic applies to corridors: a Core Corridor's connectivity and existing activity can support a Community or Regional Center, while a Suburban Corridor may be better suited to a Neighborhood Center until access, connections, and redevelopment interest justify something larger. Matching a center's scale to its context this way keeps investment proportional to what each place and each street can support, rather than assuming every location can or should become the next Downtown. Section 3.3 sets out the physical design principles that apply within every tier, but the tier itself determines the extent of design strategy, scale of civic space, and diversity of uses that a given center should carry.

**A Distribution That Reaches Every Part of the City**

Plan Jonesboro identifies fourteen existing and future centers distributed across the city, spanning established districts and the newer growth areas discussed in Section 3.1. They are distributed in balance between need and market, serving as many neighborhood-focused planning districts as the market is likely to bear. Distributing centers this way, rather than concentrating investment in one or two large destinations, means more residents can reach a Neighborhood Center or Node without crossing the city, while Downtown and the Regional Center continue to serve the broader trade area that only they have the scale to support. Over time, other existing commercial corridors can coalesce into walkable centers, following the models established in the initial roster. This network of centers can then grow to expand access, and expand this connected model as the city grows.

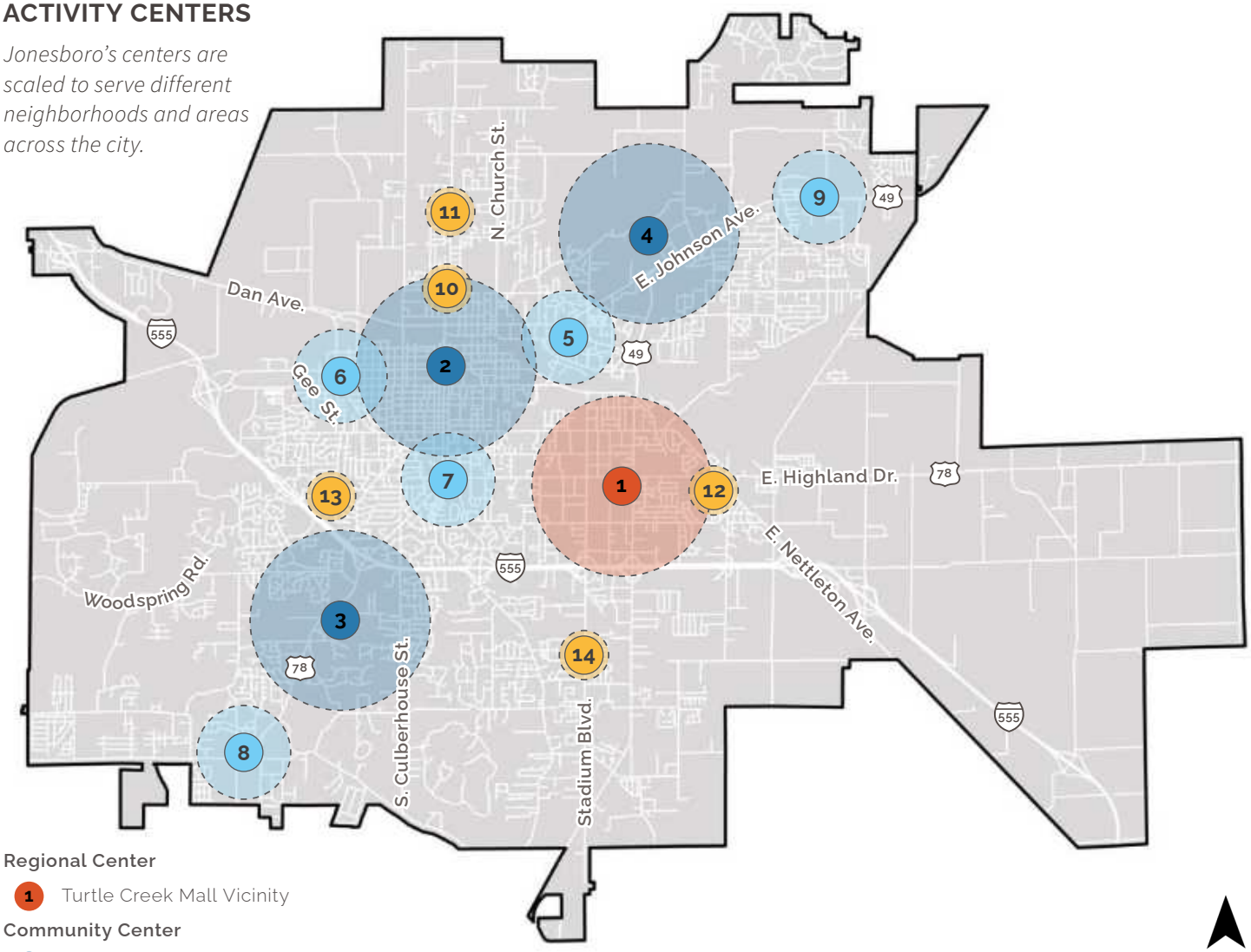
No center functions in isolation, and the connections between centers matter as much as the centers themselves. Residents need practical routes between homes, services, jobs, parks, and institutions that work whether they are driving, biking, or walking, which means center designations should be coordinated with future land use, bus routes, trails, parks, schools, and utility investment, so each center functions as an organizing element for the neighborhood and corridor around it rather than as a standalone development site. Every tier, from

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## A Network of Centers

### ACTIVITY CENTERS

*Jonesboro's centers are scaled to serve different neighborhoods and areas across the city.*




**Regional Center**

1. Turtle Creek Mall Vicinity

**Community Center**

2. Downtown Core
3. Southwest Dr. & Southern Rdg. Blvd.
4. Old Greensboro Rd. & Johnson Ave.

**Neighborhood Center**

5. The Marion Berry Pkwy. & Aggie Rd.
6. S. Gee St. & W. Matthews Ave.
7. Southwest Dr. & Highland Dr.
8. Southwest Dr. & Valley View Dr.
9. Johnson Ave. & Bridger Rd.

**Neighborhood Node**

10. N. Main St. & Spruce St.
11. N. Church St. & Jessup Dr.
12. Nettleton Ave. & Watt St.
13. Woodsprings Rd. & Highway 555
14. Caraway Rd. & Oakbrook Dr.

the Regional Center down to the smallest Node, should also carry its own civic heart scaled to its size, well-programmed plazas and squares at the Regional and Community Center scale, small greens or gathering spots at the Neighborhood Center and Node scale, built using the same design components that Section 3.3 sets out in more detail. Even the most modest center should reflect Jonesboro's community character through gathering and civic and public art, not only serving its commercial function.

This hierarchy is a long-term framework, not a fixed blueprint to be completed all at once. Public agencies should secure key connections and civic space opportunities early, particularly in the newer growth areas where that structure does not yet exist. New buildings, businesses, and partnerships then grow incrementally as market demand develops in each location, structured by a shared vision and policy and regulation that directs suitable outcomes. Phasing this way protects the long-term structure of the network while giving each center room to mature at its own pace, at a scale appropriate to its context, through manageable public and private investment rather than a single large undertaking.

## Recommendations

A network of centers depends on the right rules, the right public spaces, and the right partners in each location. The recommendations below create zoning for centers at each scale, reserve land for parks before centers develop, prepare the Regional Center's framework, and align institutional plans with the network. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations to Enable Centers

#### M1.1.2 - Mixed-use center districts.

- **Description:** Create UDC districts at about three intensities that mix housing and shops on connected blocks with civic space, matched to the Regional, Community, and Neighborhood tiers. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

#### M4.8 - Enable other centers through the UDC.

- **Description:** Apply center zoning to Johnson Avenue and Bridger Road and the other centers that do not need a dedicated public project, and reserve civic space and street connections as they develop.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, NEA Baptist, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** No

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## A Network of Centers

### Investments for a Network of Centers

#### M3.3 - Acquire park land in gap areas.

- **Description:** Buy sites in the six park gap areas, giving priority to land near planned centers and trails.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term (6–10 yrs)
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, City Council, Craighead County
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M4.1 - Prepare the Turtle Creek district framework.

- **Description:** Plan the Regional Center's streets, blocks, public space, parking, and phasing before redevelopment begins.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to short-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, property owners, Jonesboro Unlimited, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Partnerships for Centers

#### M9.1 Convene an anchor institution forum.

- **Description:** Align ASU, hospital, and school facility plans with the centers nearest them, including Johnson Avenue and Bridger Road and Southwest Drive at Jonesboro High School.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Mayor's Office, ASU, NEA Baptist, St. Bernards, Jonesboro Public Schools
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Centers ready to grow.** Number of the 14 centers with adopted center zoning and reserved civic space.

## 3.3 Designing Great Centers

### Learning From Places That Already Work

Before setting out design principles, it helps to see them in action. Some of the best examples are close to home: Eureka Springs' historic downtown and Hot Springs' Bathhouse Row show what a distinctive, walkable Arkansas center looks like when it has had a century to mature. South Main (SoMa) in Little Rock shows how an older commercial corridor can be revitalized into a walkable neighborhood destination through local businesses, reinvestment, public spaces, and a strong sense of place. Hendrix Village in Conway shows that new centers can anchor institutions, achieving many of the same qualities. Farther afield, successful mall conversions demonstrate how an aging, single-use commercial property like the Turtle Creek Mall area, can be reorganized into a walkable, mixed-use district.

Well-known main streets, active town squares, and university villages across the country illustrate the same handful of design moves at different scales and budgets. Placed side by side, these examples make a simple point: great centers are not defined by their age, their size, or their architectural style, but by a consistent set of physical relationships between buildings, streets, and public space.

### What Makes a Center Feel Like a Place

The centers that work, whether a hundred years old or built in the last decade, share the same handful of physical qualities. Plan Jonesboro organizes these into seven components that should guide the design of every center, regardless of its tier or setting. The intended outcome is consistent: centers should strive to be vibrant, filled with people and chance encounters, which rely on the built environment and programming for success. When the details align, people linger, it just feels right.




*Historic Downtown - Eureka Springs, AR*




*Mall Conversion: Masphee Commons - Mashpee, MA*



*Revitalized Commercial Corridor: SoMa - Little Rock, AR*



*Bathhouse Row - Hot Springs, AR*

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Designing Great Centers



*College Town: Hendrix Village - Conway, AR*

**A consistent building wall.** Buildings should line the street with few gaps, so that parking lots, blank walls, and vacant setbacks do not interrupt the sense of enclosure that makes a street feel like an outdoor room. A single missing building (known as a missing tooth) in an otherwise continuous row of buildings (or a frontage) can undercut the whole block's sense of place. As seen along Main Street, a missing building here and there can be overcome, but when there are more significant and regular gaps, activity fades.

**An interesting walk.** Active frontages, transparent windows, frequent doors, and varied businesses give a pedestrian something new to notice every few steps. This is best achieved with small business spaces and a carefully designed streetscape, providing storefront variety, outdoor seating, planting, and interesting window displays. A walk that offers this kind of frequent visual stimulus feels shorter and safer than a walk past a long blank wall or parking lot, even when the distance is the same. An interesting walk compels people, they continue along the street and visit more destinations in a single trip.

**Outdoor rooms.** Civic spaces such as parks and plazas need defined edges, with buildings facing into the space rather than turning their backs on it. Within those spaces, people need variety, roughly ten things to do or see, keeping a critical mass of people engaged in the space. Seating and walkways should be located along the edges, where people can get around and watch activity without being in the middle of it. Both programmed and unprogrammed space should be included, none too large in scale. Even small spaces need activity and variety, much like a living room is decorated, separating a plaza people actually use from one they avoid or only pass through.

**Small streets.** Streets within a center should be easy to cross, with slow, predictable traffic and enough pedestrian activity that people, not cars, feel like they set the pace. This does not mean eliminating vehicle access, but sizing streets so that walking across one is a comfortable, unhurried decision rather than a calculated risk. Centers are places to linger, not simply pass through. Street width not only sets the speed, it determines whether the street feels like a room, comfortable and inviting. Large streets can be overcome by taller buildings and wider sidewalks, but eventually, at the scale of Jonesboro's arterials, the size of the street undermines success.

**A right-sized streetscape.** The width of the street, the sidewalk, and the space between them should be scaled to the height and spacing of the surrounding buildings, reinforcing the sense of enclosure, the sense of an outdoor room. Wider streets, within reason, need wider sidewalks and more programming: street trees, outdoor dining and public seating, bike lanes and racks, and lighting and other right-sized street furnishings. Very narrow streets, on the other hand, are often successful with little programming, even without trees, provided that vehicle speeds are very slow and parking buffers pedestrian areas from vehicles.

**A pedestrian scale.** Signage, window displays, entry frequency, lighting, street trees, and other streetscape elements should be sized and placed to engage someone walking, not someone driving, reinforcing pedestrian-priority. Frequent and low lighting at a walking scale, rather than a highway scale, does more to make a street feel safe after dark than increasing brightness. Signs with smaller letters, window signage, and projecting signs over sidewalks engage pedestrians. Building entries should be frequent, and the street wall should primarily be glazed and lined with active interior spaces, giving a view into active interiors. The pedestrian pace, about three miles-per-hour, and human height set the scale of a comfortable and vibrant center.

**A supportive mix of uses.** A center needs enough variety of retail, services, and institutions to be useful for more than one reason to visit. Some centers can carry a theme, such as a dining district or shopping street, without becoming so narrow that it goes quiet outside of specific hours. Each center, even with a theme, should include a sprinkling of everyday uses and civic anchors like a library, school, or public building. Variety of activities, inside and outside of buildings, keeps a center active throughout the day rather than only during its peak.

### Applying These Principles Without Uniformity

These **seven components** describe relationships, between buildings and streets, between public space and the These seven components describe relationships, between buildings and streets, between public space and the businesses that face it, not a single style or a fixed formula every center must follow identically. A center's mix of uses and building intensity should still match its tier and context: stepping down in scale and activity as a center transitions into an adjacent neighborhood. Civic buildings, public art, historic resources, and local materials should be used as landmarks within this framework, securing the physical relationships that make a center work while leaving room for each one to express its own history, market role, and aesthetic. Applied consistently as an approach, not a formula, these components let Downtown, a Neighborhood Node in a newer growth area, and a converted mall all succeed as centers in their own right, without asking any of them to look like the others.

## Recommendations

The design principles in this section reach the ground mostly through private development. The recommendations below write those principles into the UDC (street-oriented buildings, connected blocks, civic space, and right-sized parking) and use pilots to test public space before it is built permanently. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations to Shape Center Design

#### M1.1.2 Mixed-use center districts.

- **Description:** Require buildings that face the street, connected blocks, and a civic space sized to each center. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

#### M1.1.6 Parking and review process.

- **Description:** Lower parking minimums near centers, allow shared parking, and make approvals predictable so that well-designed projects do not need a PUD.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Planning Commission, consultant ·
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M8.3 Test ideas with pilots and public art.

- **Description:** Test street and public space designs with pop-ups, parklets, and public art before committing capital funds.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, arts groups
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Parking right-sized.** Parking spaces approved per 1,000 square feet in center projects, before and after UDC adoption.

## 3.4 Supporting Public Life

### Beyond Shopping and Dining

A center can have every physical ingredient in place, a consistent building wall, an inviting outdoor room, a well-scaled street, and still feel empty if there is nothing to do there beyond browsing storefronts. Physical improvements alone will not create public life unless programming, operations, safety, maintenance, and local stewardship are addressed from the beginning. This section turns from the design of centers to what happens inside and around them: the events, everyday gathering spots, and ongoing care that determine whether a well-designed public space actually gets used.



*Downtown Jonesboro JoyFest 2025 - Nightime event.*



*Live Music - Community programming in Jonesboro.*

Residents have been clear that this is where Jonesboro's centers currently fall short. Jonesboro residents have shared a strong interest in having more to do beyond shopping and dining, which is the hallmark of center programming. Programming includes recruiting businesses and civic anchors, and ensuring that civic spaces are active and varied. Arts and cultural facilities, music and theater venues, museums, children's activities, community classes, farmers markets, community gardens, indoor recreation, live music, and larger gathering and event spaces enliven centers. Programming must also engage with a variety of age groups: children and families, teenagers, young adults, college students, singles, couples, and older adults. Centers designed around retail and restaurants alone will not meet these needs, programming and public life must be treated as seriously as the buildings and streets around them.

### A Rhythm of Small Activities and Signature Events

A balanced calendar matters more than any single event. Festivals, markets, performances, arts and cultural celebrations, recreation, and educational programs each draw people for different reasons. Recurring small events, a weekly farmers market, a monthly gallery walk, an ongoing class series, all do more over time to build habits of regular use and support local businesses, not otherwise achieved by occasional large gatherings alone. A steady rhythm of small activities builds familiarity and repeat visits, which can be supplemented with signature festivals, holiday markets, and seasonal celebrations.

A regular rhythm also depends on places where people can spend time together without a formal event or an expensive purchase. Coffee shops, libraries, community rooms, faith

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Supporting Public Life



*Parker Park Community Pool - Recreation for all ages and abilities.*

spaces, bookstores, studios, and informal seating areas function as the "third places" that fill the gaps between planned programming, giving residents somewhere to linger, run into neighbors, and build the social capital that Chapter 1 identifies as one of Jonesboro's six forms of community wealth. Activities should also reach beyond any single group. Expanding youth, family, senior, and all-abilities programming, including low-cost and non-sports options alongside continued support for athletics, responds directly to residents' calls for more culture, nature, interactive play, music, gathering space, and activities for young adults, not just the sports and retail options that exist today.

Extending that activity into the evening takes deliberate coordination, not just longer hours. Evening programming should be paired with adequate lighting, safe walking and biking routes, transportation choices, sound management, and responsible business operations, so a lively nighttime environment feels welcoming rather than disruptive to nearby homes and does not come at the expense of public safety. Done well, an active evening in a Jonesboro center should feel like an asset to the surrounding neighborhood, not a nuisance it has to tolerate.

### Partnerships, Operations, and Testing Ideas First

No single organization, least of all the City alone, can sustain this level of programming by itself. Partnerships among the City, the Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, Arkansas State University, arts and cultural organizations, schools, libraries, faith communities, businesses, and neighborhood associations extend the capacity available for public life while keeping activities locally grounded rather than imported from elsewhere. These partnerships work best when they make room for locally led ideas and lower the barriers, permitting, insurance, and access to space for residents and small organizations to organize their own community-serving activities.

Not every space, event, or idea needs to be built permanently to be tested. Temporary events, pop-ups, parklets, public art installations, and tactical changes to a street or plaza let the City and its partners try an idea, measure attendance, length of visits, effects on nearby businesses, safety, and community response, and refine the permanent design based on what actually happens rather than what was assumed in advance. This kind of ongoing observation and feedback should continue even after a space is permanently built, letting programming evolve alongside the people who use each center over time.

## Recommendations

Civic spaces need events and a responsible caretaker as much as good design. The recommendations below run a year-round calendar with simple permits, name a steward and operating plan before each space is built, and build the capacity of the partners who program and maintain Jonesboro's public spaces. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies to Support Public Life

#### M8.2 - Plan stewardship before building public spaces.

- **Description:** Inventory civic spaces, and name a steward and an operating plan for each new space before it is funded.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M9.7 - Adopt partnership and special district policies.

- **Description:** Set rules for business improvement districts and similar tools that can fund programming and upkeep in centers.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** City Council, Planning, Finance, City Attorney, bond counsel, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M8.1 - Run a public life calendar.

- **Description:** Hold year-round events and markets, and simplify permits so recurring events do not need a new approval each time.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M8.3 - Test ideas with pilots and public art.

- **Description:** Bring pop-ups, parklets, public art, and programs for all ages to centers and neighborhoods.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, arts groups
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Partnerships for Public Life

#### M9.4 - Support the Downtown Alliance and nonprofits.

- **Description:** Build the capacity of Downtown, neighborhood, and creek groups to program and care for public spaces.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, nonprofits
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Active spaces.** Events held per civic space each year, and the share of civic spaces with a named steward.

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## 3.5 Catalytic Centers

**From a Citywide Framework to Catalytic Places**

Jonesboro's citywide center framework identifies places of different scales that can support community life, local businesses, housing, services, recreation, and gathering. Within that larger network, seven locations stand out as Catalytic Centers. These are places where opportunities or a significant need for coordinated public and private action have already been identified, with the potential to produce benefits beyond an individual property or project.

These locations were explored during Design Week because each presents a different opportunity. Some, such as Downtown and Gee Street, already have strong identities and visible reinvestment underway. Southwestern Drive at the high school is an opportunity identified by an existing need for pedestrian safety. Others, such as Turtle Creek and Southwest Jonesboro, offer opportunities to reshape future growth before existing development patterns become more difficult to change. North Church Street and Jessup Drive present a different challenge: using coordinated investment to strengthen an established community that has historically received less investment. Together, the seven concepts demonstrate how the broader center framework can respond to very different conditions across Jonesboro

**Frameworks, Not Fixed Master Plans**

The concepts shown in this section are frameworks, identifying opportunities and strategies for further coordinated effort. They illustrate an opportunity to direct street design, new public spaces, development outcomes, housing opportunities, and community wealth building. Outcomes will depend on collaboration, market conditions, capacity, funding, and continued coordination with residents, businesses, institutions, and landowners. The City's role is therefore to protect and invest in the essential pieces of each framework—particularly street connections, public spaces, infrastructure, and development relationships—so that individual projects can gradually contribute to a larger vision rather than occur in isolation.

**Building Confidence Through Incremental Action**

Jonesboro residents favor active places that combine multiple destinations and experiences, including restaurants and local businesses, shopping, entertainment, housing, parks, and gathering spaces. Those places rely on walkable streets, cared-for landscaping, supportive infrastructure, programmed public space, and an attractive overall environment. But implementation timelines, traffic impact, and the overly-ambitious concepts raise concerns.

Transforming centers takes time; catalytic does not mean immediate or all-at-once, it is rather an indication of potential community impact. Each center will require a different sequence of actions. In some places, the first step may be a street or park improvement; in others, zoning changes, infrastructure planning, rehabilitation of an existing building, or coordination with a major landowner may come first. Temporary programming and pilot projects can also test ideas before permanent investments are made.

Over time, these smaller actions can establish confidence and create the conditions for larger private and public investments. Along with incremental change, the story of place and vision are critical to sustain effort and collaboration. There is an overall vision for Jonesboro, and it is achieved a few steps at a time. First continuing with existing efforts, such as in downtown. At the same time setting the stage for future steps, such as grants for major traffic improvements near the high school. In both cases the outcomes and story need to be reinforced.

Public interest should likewise be one consideration in determining priorities, but not the only one. Downtown, Turtle Creek, and Southwest/Highland generated particularly strong interest through the planning process, while other locations may warrant earlier action because of infrastructure needs, safety, equity, market readiness, fiscal return, or partnership opportunities. The seven visions should therefore be understood as long-term guides capable of being implemented incrementally through many projects, partners, and funding cycles.

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

## 1 Regional Center: Turtle Creek Mall Vicinity




*Regional Center - A major mixed-use destination serving a broad regional area.*

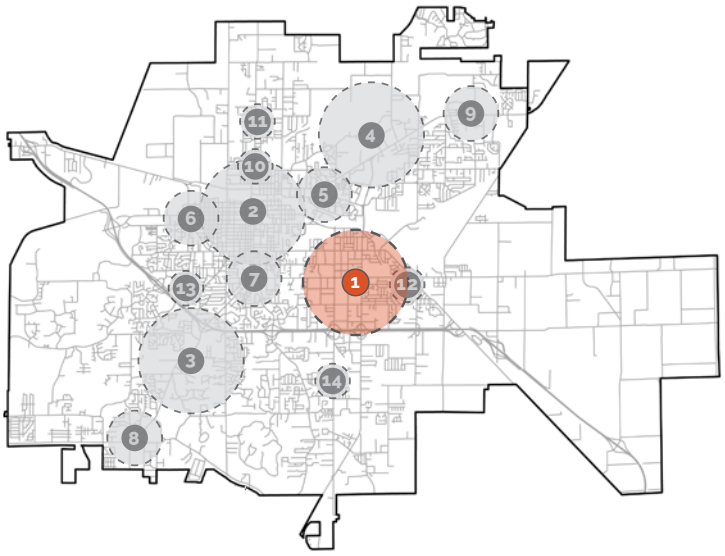
**From Mall to Mixed-Use Regional Destination**

The Turtle Creek Mall vicinity remains one of Jonesboro's most important and viable regional commercial destinations. Located near Interstate 555 at Red Wolf Boulevard and Highland Drive, the area benefits from exceptional visibility, access, and an established concentration of retail. Yet the partial destruction of the mall, combined with large surface parking areas, oversized blocks, limited pedestrian connections, and flooding concerns, has left a significant portion of this strategically located area underperforming.

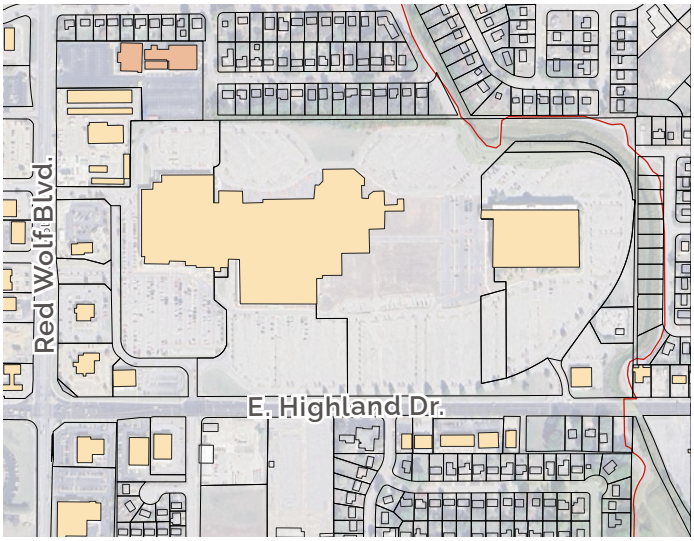
That underperformance has a fiscal dimension as well. The mall property's estimated taxable value per acre declined from approximately **$1.2 million in 2019** to approximately **$0.4 million in 2025**, reinforcing the importance of reinvestment in a place already served by major infrastructure and surrounded by established development. Targeted investment could see that value increase to nearly **$5 million per acre**, a significant benefit for private landowners and the public through increased tax revenue.

The long-term vision is to transform the area from an inward-facing shopping mall into a walkable Regional Center that continues to serve its retail role while adding housing, workplaces, entertainment, recreation, and public space. The mall and vicinity, including large commercial properties along Red Wolf and Caraway roads, are Jonesboro's most significant redevelopment opportunities. The location supports its role as a regional shopping and entertainment destination, the only viable location within the city today. But the area lacks the structure and land use diversity to evolve beyond strip shopping and commercial outparcels, limiting the national retailers it can attract and the local businesses it can support.

## Regional Center: Turtle Creek Mall Vicinity




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

- Commercial
- Civic Institutions

Today, successful retail districts are walkable ones. Malls have been turned from an interior-focus to an exterior focus on main streets and plazas. To facilitate this competitive position, a new main street can be built parallel to Highland Drive, becoming the organizing spine of the district. This connects existing anchors with plazas, squares, and main street shops, turning formerly blank mall edges outward toward streets and public spaces. To support all-day activity, the renovated shopping district can add housing, workplaces, and programmable recreation spaces.

The public realm should do more than organize development. Shaded sidewalks, safe crossings, transit access, connected internal streets, and recreational paths allow visitors to move within the district without returning to their car for every trip. Creek corridors offer opportunities for naturalized stormwater management, solving for flooding while adding value for residences, recreation, open space, and civic identity.

Transformation should occur incrementally. A district regulating plan establishes future streets, plazas, development blocks, and infrastructure responsibilities so that near-term projects do not preclude the long-term vision. Early phases could include temporary programming, reuse of existing anchors, landscape and pedestrian improvements, and construction of an initial complete street and public-space segment. Housing and additional mixed-use blocks can follow as market demand and infrastructure capacity allow.

The district should be more than just the mall site, extending into redevelopment opportunities of nearby underperforming retail areas. This long-term strategy may begin with small steps, activating opportune sites by adding housing and workplaces, and scaling-down and diversifying retail spaces. More significant transformation is held back by the design of the area's major arterials. While wholesale transformation is unlikely, segments of Highland and Caraway can become multi-way boulevards, and major intersections improved with square-abouts or roundabouts. The greatest opportunity for change is on the mall site itself, which is worthy of coordinated public and private investment that can spur long-term change within the vicinity, decades in the future.

## Regional Center: Turtle Creek Mall Vicinity




*Proposed Illustrative Plan*

## Recommendations

Turtle Creek is Jonesboro's largest redevelopment opportunity, and it needs a plan before parcels redevelop one at a time. The recommendations below prepare a consultant-led district framework with property owners, then line up the parking, phasing, and financing tools that a project of this scale requires. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Policies to Support Redevelopment**

**M9.7 Adopt partnership and special district policies.**

- **Description:** Set a public-private partnership framework and rules for improvement districts that could fund shared streets, parking, and public space.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** City Council, Planning, Finance, City Attorney, bond counsel
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

## Regional Center: Turtle Creek Mall Vicinity




*Proposed Program*

**Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents**

### M4.1 Prepare the Turtle Creek district framework.

- **Description:** Plan streets, blocks, public space, parking, and phasing before redevelopment begins, working with property owners
- **Timeline:** Immediate to short-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, property owners, Jonesboro Unlimited, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### M4.1.1 Street, block, and public space plan.

- **Description:** Set the street pattern, the main street and plazas, and connections to surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low

### M4.1.2 Parking, phasing, and financing approach.

- **Description:** Plan shared parking and build-out phases, and identify financing tools such as a special district.
- **Timeline:** Short-term
- **Cost:** Low

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

## **Regional Center:** Turtle Creek Mall Vicinity



*Proposed Illustration*



## Recommendations

### M9.6 Test the financing gap on real sites.

- **Description:** Prepare a Turtle Creek pro forma that shows what redevelopment costs, what it would be worth, and how to close the difference.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Finance, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

**Partnerships for a Regional Destination**

### M9.5 Convene a financing table.

- **Description:** Bring lenders, CDFIs, foundations, ADFA, employers, and developers together around one pipeline of projects.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Mayor's Office, Planning, Finance
- **Consultant Needed:** No




*Existing Conditions*

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

Catalytic Centers

## 2 Community Center: Downtown Core




*Community Center - A walkable district serving multiple neighborhoods with a broad mix of daily needs.*

**Strengthening Jonesboro's Civic and Historic Heart**

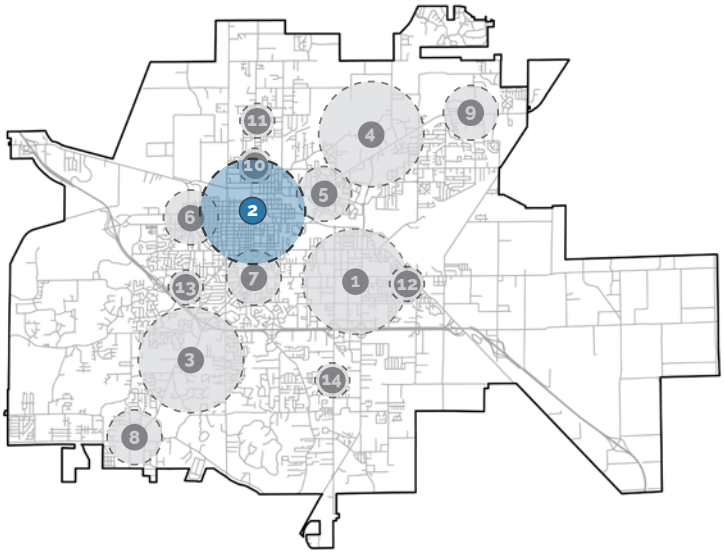
Downtown is unlike any other center in Jonesboro. It is simultaneously the city's historic core, civic center, cultural destination, small-business district, and an increasingly important neighborhood. It is also exceptionally productive from a fiscal standpoint: Downtown's taxable-value productivity is approximately **10.5 times** its share of city acreage, while Main Street commercial properties average roughly **$4.9 million** in taxable value per acre.

The opportunity is therefore not to reinvent Downtown, but to build on what already works while addressing the gaps that prevent it from functioning as a complete center. Today, the strongest pedestrian environment is concentrated along a relatively short portion of Main Street, while approximately **61 acres**—more than **one-fifth** of the study area—are devoted to surface parking. These gaps interrupt storefronts, separate destinations, and consume land that could accommodate housing, businesses, civic spaces, and other productive uses.

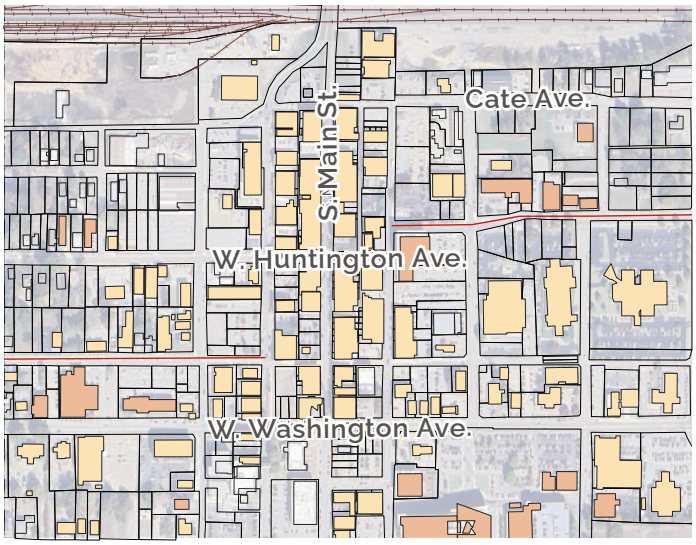
Investment and growth don't mean that the scale of Downtown should change. Rather, due to traffic patterns and housing growth overall, Downtown is categorized as a Community Center, the second-highest tier. Its two to five story historic character remains viable into the future, retaining its cultural significance and pedestrian comfort. Strategies therefore focus on strengthening Downtown's identity and building on what works today.

Main streets, which anchor Downtown districts, can be activated for up to a quarter-mile, roughly the distance between Washington Street and Cate Avenue. Naturally, Main Street today is most active for this stretch. Expanding Downtown further, and growing its success means signaling the beginning and end of the Main Street retail district, activating the parallel streets of Church and Union, targeting parking consolidation, and supporting the district with more housing.

## Community Center: Downtown Core




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

To reinforce Main Street's active area, a civic square south of Washington Street is proposed, celebrating the County Courthouse and signaling the southern end of Main Street. This square should be formal in design and passive in programming, serving as a transition from the shopping and entertainment portion of Downtown to its institutional district.

The northern end of Main Street is signaled by another civic space, a double-square that manages the convergence of Union, Main, and Church Streets. It should be lined on all sides with buildings, particularly to the north, enclosing the space and allowing it to be activated during community celebrations. Carefully managed circulation would allow the double-square to be a single space by closing a short Main Street segment during events. Decades-old plans called for a large, semi-circular square in this location, which this proposal builds upon while retaining the important and direct Main Street connection necessary for local business success. Entertainment programming is further supported by the proposed St. Bernard's amphitheater, just a block away at Cate and Church, both spaces used in concert for larger events.

Traffic circulation is incredibly important for the success of Downtown. Today's circulation strategy detracts from Downtown's potential, and recent proposals also threaten its long-term success. Successful retail streets need to be small, a quality shared by all Downtown streets, but they also need slow, two-way traffic movement. Vehicle counts through downtown require more than one lane in each direction, however splitting traffic onto two, one-way streets increases speeds and splits traffic into morning and evening flows. Together, Church, Main, and Union can function as three coordinated, narrow two-way streets, carrying well over the traffic volume needed at slow and safe speeds.

Circulation is also influenced by parking access and distribution. Downtown Jonesboro was established well before cars. Its small-block structure is excellent for walking and creating an active retail and entertainment district, but parking doesn't fit-in well. Active downtowns of this era need consistent on-street parking, supplemented by structured parking. To take Downtown to the next level, a structured parking strategy is necessary, locating and reserving sites for parking structures to achieve a **2.5-minute** walk coverage for most of the Downtown district. Between city, county, and institutional properties, sufficient space is available today. While structured parking is costly, the increased taxable value created is substantial.

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Community Center:** Downtown Core




*Proposed Illustrative Plan*




More than only retail and entertainment parking, Downtown structured parking should serve housing and institutional needs as well, carefully managed by time of day. A viable parking strategy consists of metered street parking, free short-term garage parking, monthly passes for Downtown residents and businesses, and wayfinding. Today, Downtown parking is sufficient despite perception, however the district's growth requires a long-term solution.

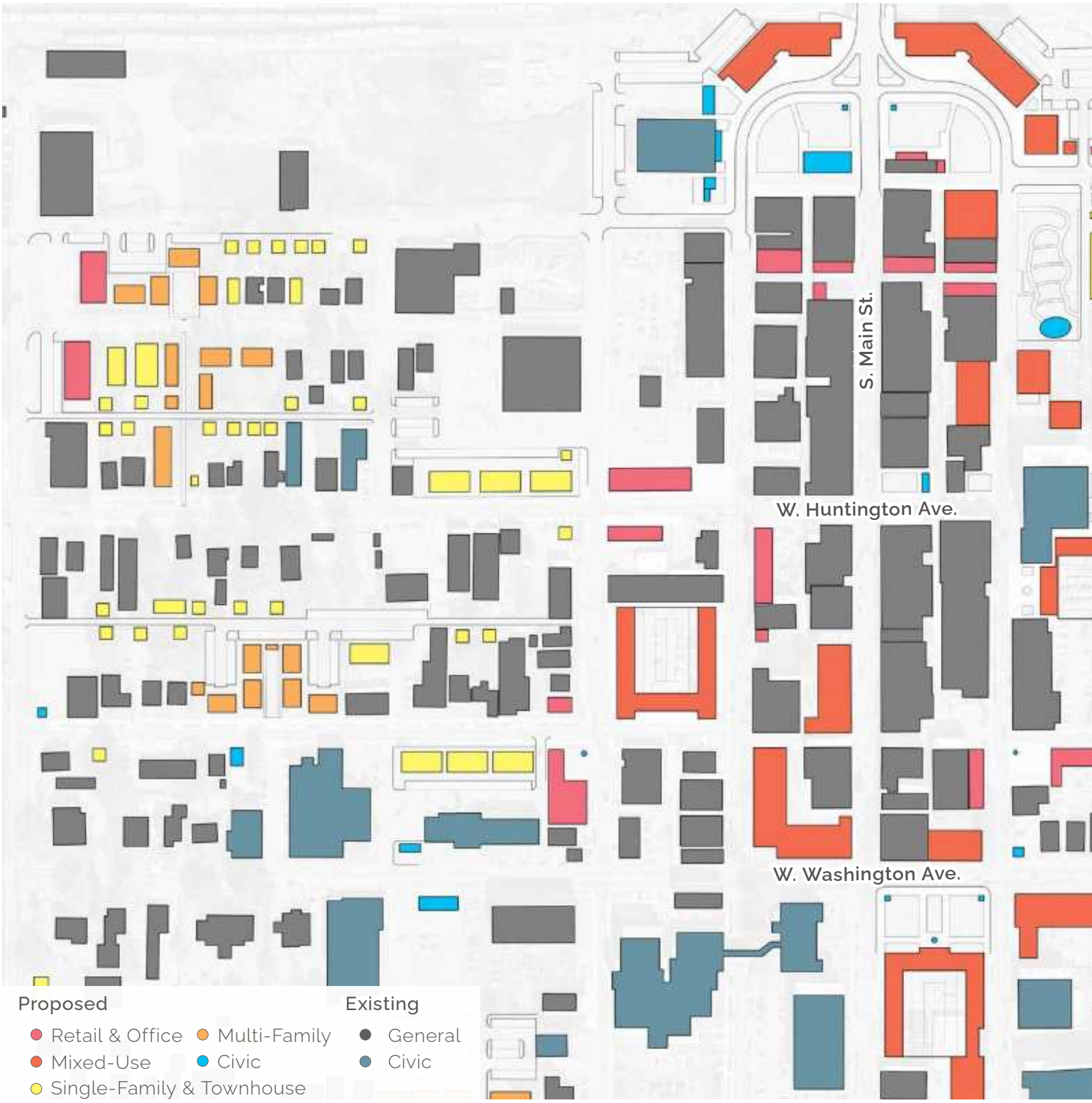
More people living Downtown is also essential to sustaining businesses beyond event nights and peak dining hours. New housing within the core and surrounding neighborhoods can put more customers within walking distance while filling gaps in the urban fabric. Structured parking in Downtown should support monthly residential passes, reducing land otherwise dedicated to surface parking. Multi-family buildings are best accommodated at and near the edges of the Downtown core, where they are close to future parking and away from lower-scale neighborhood areas. Within adjacent neighborhoods, smaller multi-family buildings, townhomes, duplexes, cottages, and accessory dwellings can provide housing near activities and jobs, compatible in scale with existing residences.

Implementation should combine visible near-term streetscape and programming improvements with longer-term infill, civic-space, circulation, parking, and redevelopment strategies. Maintaining affordable space for local businesses should remain part of that effort so that reinvestment strengthens the independent businesses and character that distinguish Downtown. New business spaces should remain small-scale, keeping the fine-grained rhythm that activates Main Street, and limits the parking impact of restaurants and entertainment venues. Zoning and design regulations should be updated to reflect the scale, mix of uses, building frontage and streetscape, and parking strategies that will support the continued growth and activation of Downtown.

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Community Center:** Downtown Core




*Proposed Program*




## Recommendations

Downtown needs more residents, better use of its parking, and civic spaces worthy of its role. The recommendations below begin with a consultant-led parking strategy that frees surface lots for housing and retail. They then convert the core streets to two-way traffic, build civic squares, and support the businesses that give Downtown its character. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies for a Downtown Neighborhood

#### M4.4 Enable Downtown housing and infill.

- **Description:** Combine UDC rules with City property and incentives to bring new housing to Downtown and nearby neighborhoods.
- **Timeline:** Short- to medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M6.5 Pursue outside funding and tax credits.

- **Description:** Use historic and New Markets tax credits, grants, and state programs for building rehabilitation and public space.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Finance, Parks and Recreation, Engineering, Jonesboro MPO
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Investments for Downtown

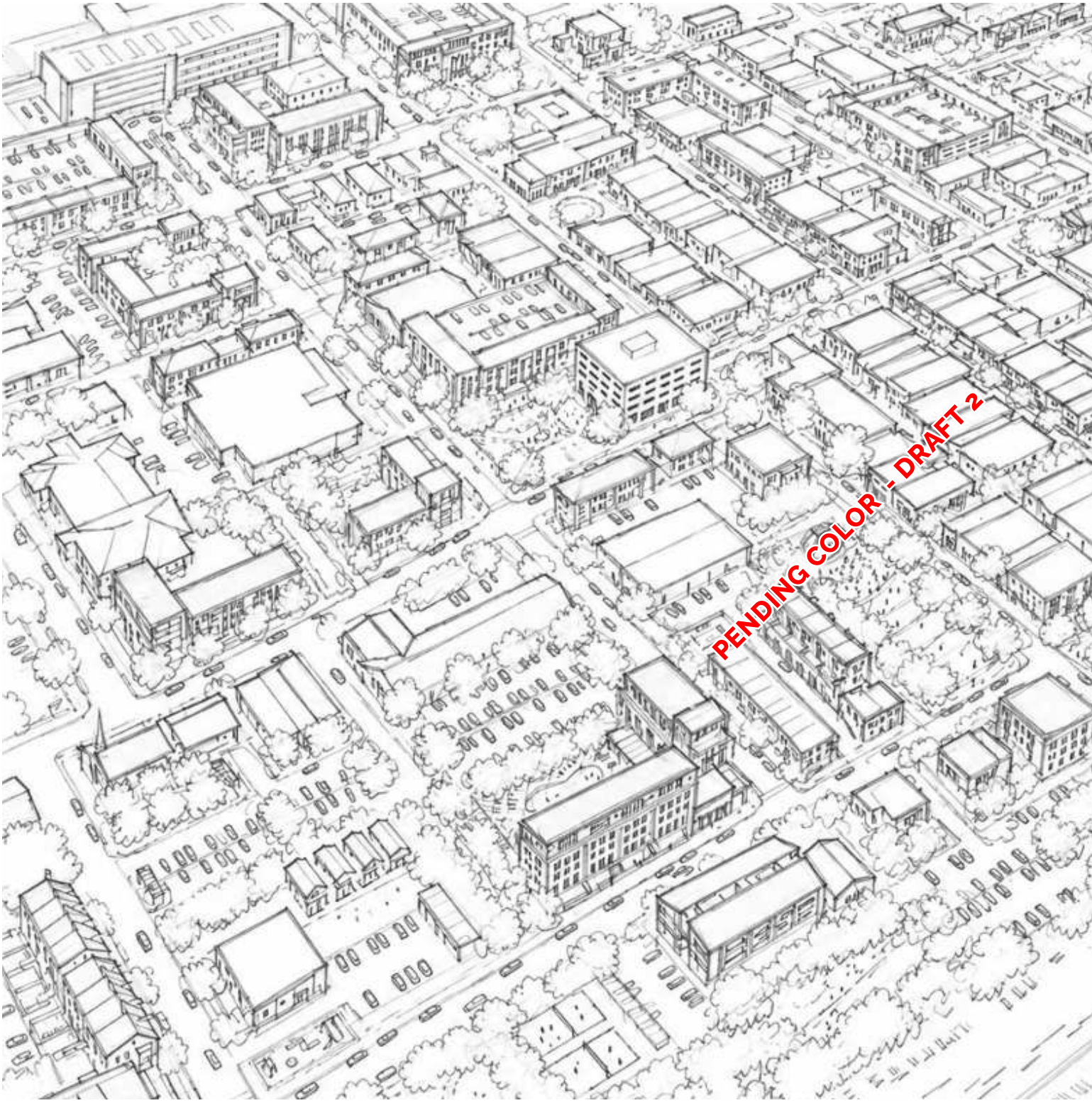
#### M4.3 Build Downtown streets and civic squares

- **Description:** Convert Church, Main, and Union Streets to two-way traffic, and build the civic green, the plaza at Union, Main, and Church, and a downtown park.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term (6–10 yrs)

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

Catalytic Centers

## **Community Center:** Downtown Core




*Proposed Illustration*



## Recommendations

- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Planning, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

**Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents**

### M4.2 Prepare a Downtown parking strategy.

- **Description:** Prepare a consultant-led strategy that consolidates parking and frees surface lots for housing and retail.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, Craighead County, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### M4.2.1 Parking inventory and demand study.

- **Description:** Count spaces and measure demand by time of day before any structured parking is built.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low




*Existing Conditions*

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Community Center:** Downtown Core



*Proposed Illustration*



## Recommendations

### M4.2.2 Structured parking sites and management

- **Description:** Reserve garage sites, and manage metered, short-term, and monthly parking.
- **Timeline:** Short- to medium-term
- **Cost:** High

### M4.2.3 Funding and governance.

- **Description:** Define partner roles and evaluate a business improvement district.
- **Timeline:** Short-term
- **Cost:** Low

### M7.1 Create a small business support program.

- **Description:** Offer technical help, capital referrals, and succession planning to Downtown's local businesses.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Jonesboro Unlimited, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

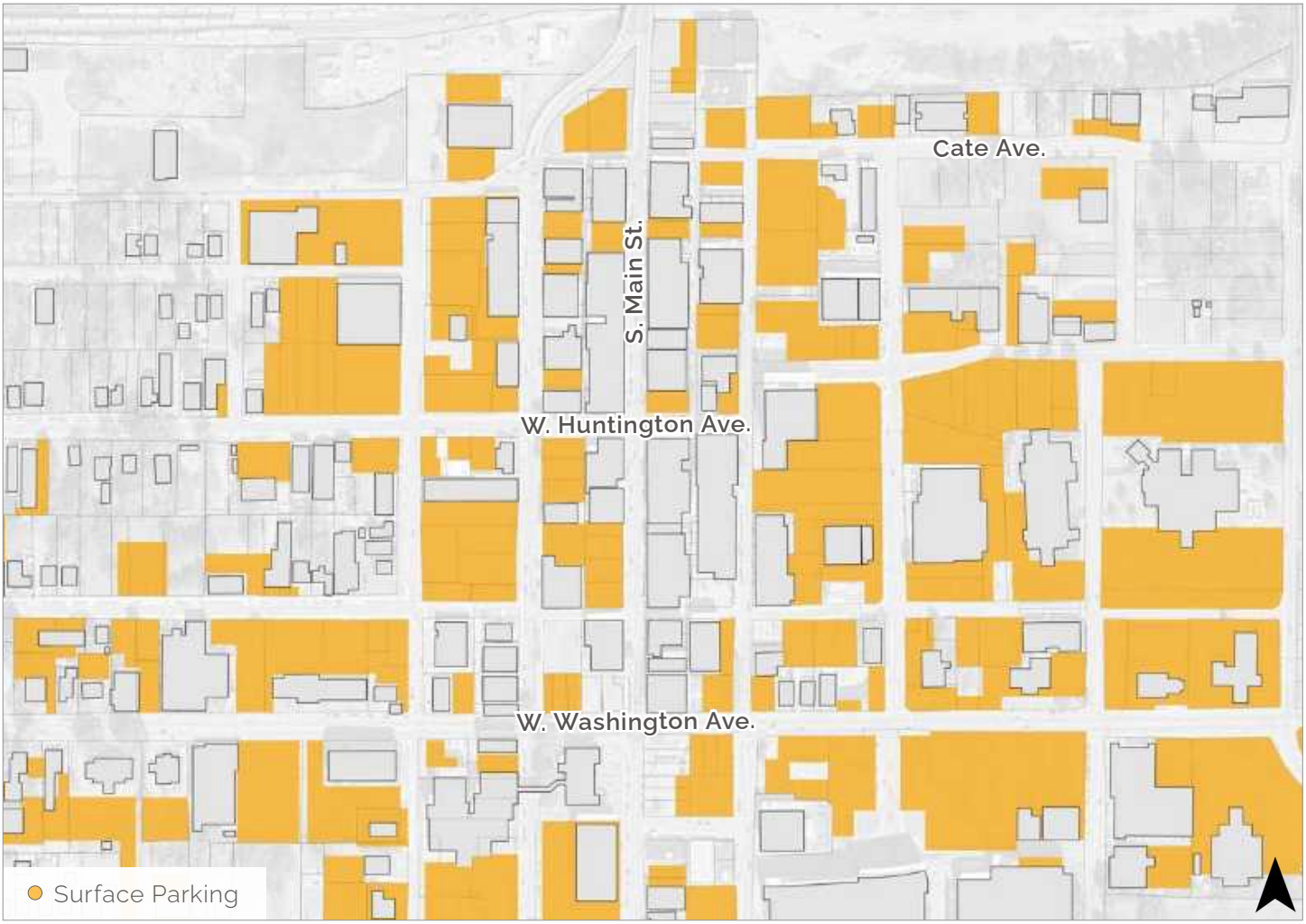



*Existing Conditions*

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

## **Community Center:** Downtown Core

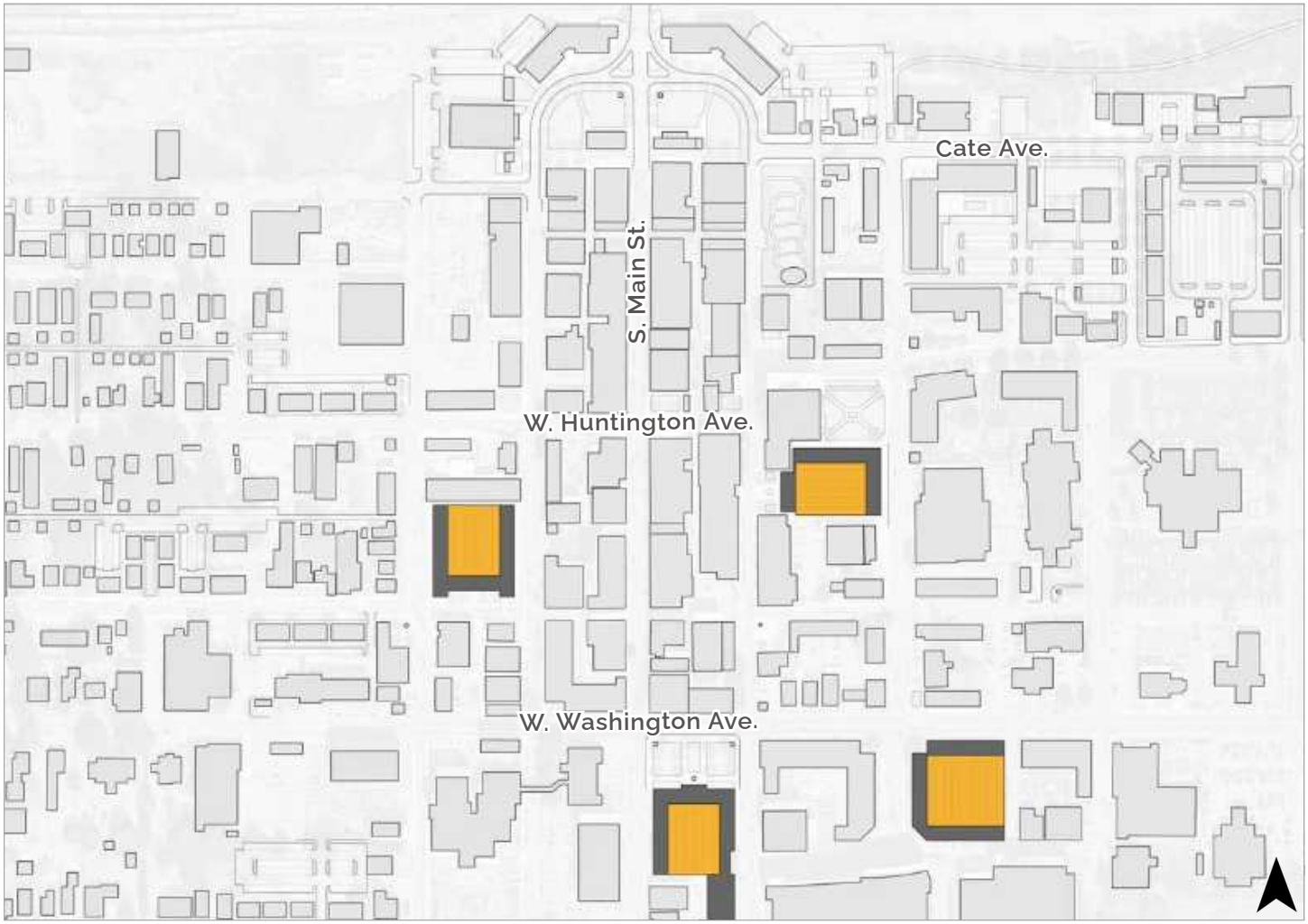



*Existing Surface Parking*

### Existing Surface Parking

About **61 acres** of the Downtown study area is surface parking, more than one-fifth of it. These lots break up storefronts, separate destinations, and take up land that could hold housing, businesses, and civic space. Today there is enough parking Downtown despite the common perception, but that won't hold as Downtown grows. Any new strategy should start with a count of spaces and how they're used by time of day (M4.2.1).

## Community Center: Downtown Core




*Proposed Parking Structures*

### Proposed Parking Structures

Four reserved garage sites would put most of Downtown within a **2.5-minute walk** of structured parking. Enough suitable land already exists on City, County, and institutional property. The garages would serve shoppers, residents, and institutions at different times of day. Management would combine metered street parking, free short-term garage parking, monthly passes for Downtown residents and businesses, and wayfinding (M4.2.2, M4.2.3). As surface lots are freed up, they can be developed for housing and retail (M4.4).

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

## **Community Center:** Downtown Core




*Existing Civic Uses*

### Existing Civic Uses

Downtown holds the city's densest concentration of civic buildings: City Hall, the County Courthouse, churches, and institutions. Its civic spaces, though, are few and small. Union Park and Centennial Plaza work for small gatherings but can't host larger events or offer everyday open lawn. Main Street has no gathering place that marks where it begins or ends.

## Community Center: Downtown Core




*Proposed Civic Uses*

**Proposed Parking Structures**

Two new squares mark the ends of Main Street's active blocks (M4.3):

**South end:** a formal, quiet civic square south of Washington Avenue faces the County Courthouse. It forms the transition from shopping and dining to the institutional district.

**North end:** a double-square at the meeting of Union, Main, and Church Streets is enclosed by buildings. A short segment of Main can close during events so the two squares work as one space.

Together with the proposed St. Bernard's amphitheater at Cate and Church, these give Downtown a connected set of event spaces. Each should have a named steward and operating plan before it is built (M8.2).

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

## **Community Center:** Downtown Core




*Pedestrian Frontage Quality*

### Pedestrian Frontage Quality

High-quality frontage, where buildings meet the sidewalk with windows and doors, is concentrated on Main Street between Washington and Cate Avenues. That stretch is about a quarter-mile, the distance a main street can typically keep active. Church and Union Streets have more neutral frontage and gaps left by parking. Converting all three streets to slow, two-way traffic (M4.3) and filling those gaps with small-scale storefronts can extend the active area beyond Main (M4.4, M7.1).

## Community Center: Downtown Core




*Ownership*

### Ownership

A large share of Downtown land is held by the City of Jonesboro, Craighead County, utilities, St. Bernard's, other healthcare providers, and churches. That concentration is an advantage. A handful of public and institutional owners can work together to reserve garage sites, consolidate parking, and make land available for housing and civic space. Formal partnerships, and possibly a business improvement district, can coordinate those decisions (M4.2.3, M9.7)

## 3 Community Center: Southwest Dr. & Southern Ridge Blvd.




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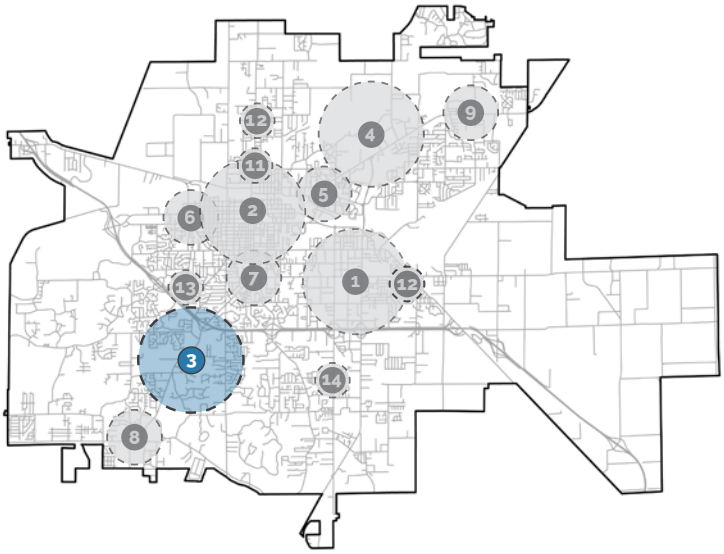
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## Community Center: Southwest Dr. & Southern Ridge Blvd.




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

- Commercial
- Civic Institutions

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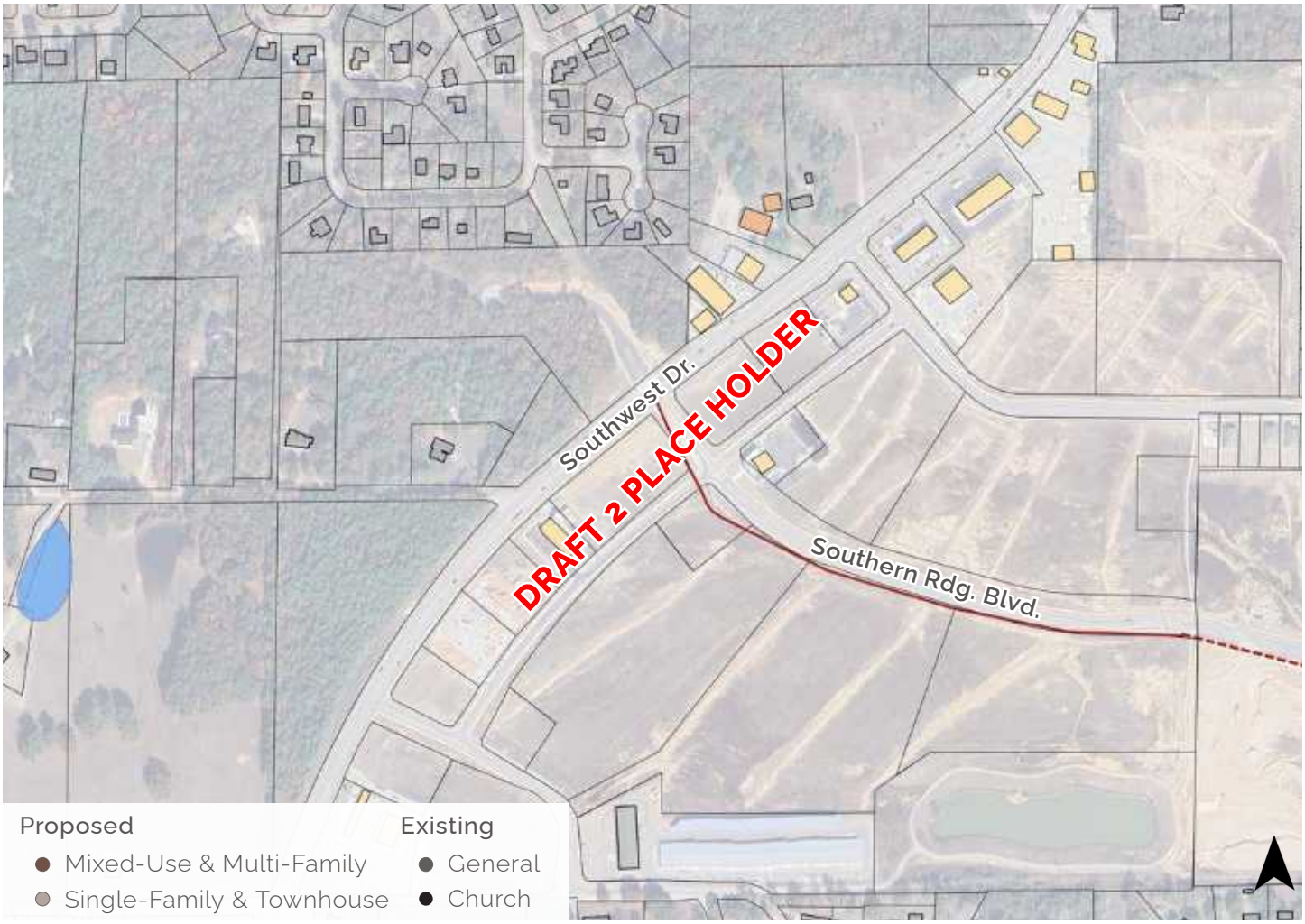
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# CENTERING COMMUNITY

Catalytic Centers

## **Community Center:** Southwest Dr. & Southern Ridge Blvd.




*Proposed Illustrative Plan*

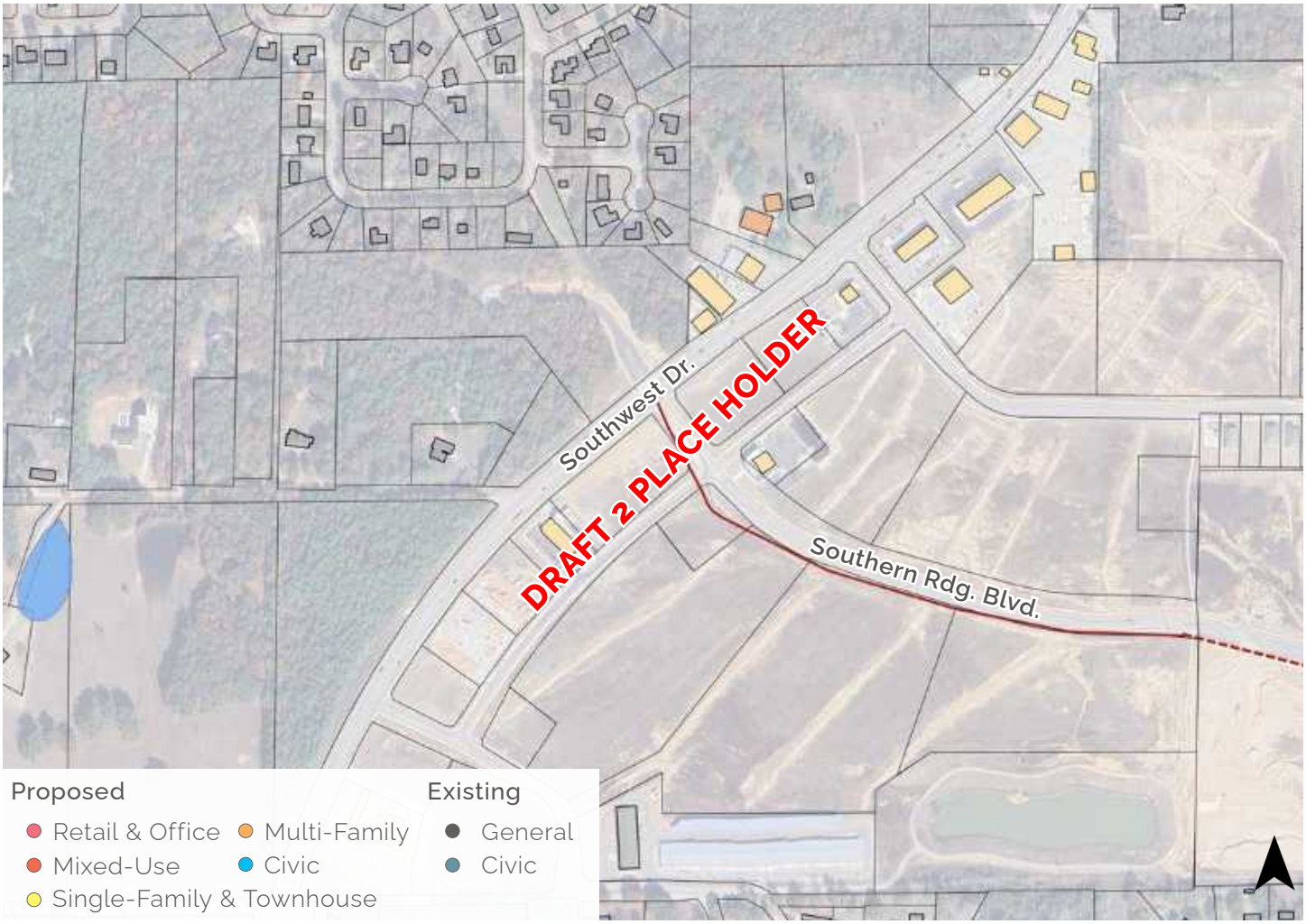
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DRAFT 2 PLACE HOLDER

## **Community Center:** Southwest Dr. & Southern Ridge Blvd.




*Proposed Program*

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DRAFT 2 PLACE HOLDER

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Community Center:** Southwest Dr. & Southern Ridge Blvd.




*Proposed Illustration*



## Recommendations

Development of this Community Center will be private, enabled by the UDC rather than a City project. The City's role is to put the right zoning in place and to protect the civic space and street connections that will make the center work. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Regulations to Enable the Center**

**M4.8 Enable other centers through the UDC.**

- **Description:** Apply mixed-use center zoning, and reserve civic space and street connections as sites develop.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** No




*Existing Conditions*

## 7 Neighborhood Center: Southwest Drive & Highland Drive



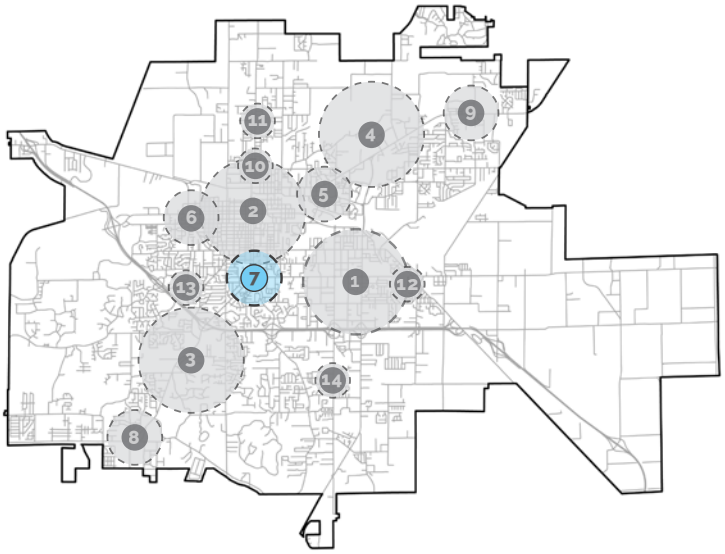

*Neighborhood Center - A local gathering place with shops, services, and everyday amenities.*

### Creating a Safer Crossroads and Neighborhood Destination

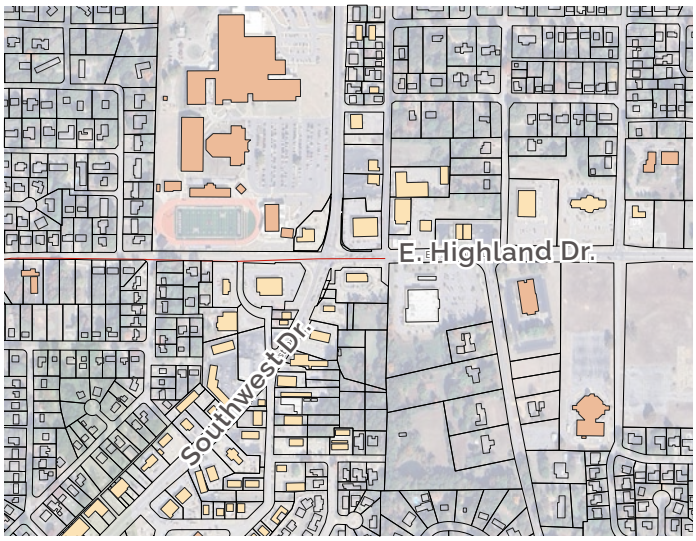
The intersection of Southwest Drive and Highland Drive already contains many of the ingredients of a neighborhood center. Jonesboro High School, churches, businesses, surrounding neighborhoods, and two major streets bring substantial activity to the area every day. But the physical environment spreads these uses apart rather than bringing them together. Large intersections and auto-oriented development make walking difficult, particularly for students. Underused and vacant properties are opportunities for reinvestment, but they lack the supportive streetscape and civic space network that signal the area as a place to linger rather than pass through.

Today, the congested intersection erodes the area's opportunity to become a place to linger, a hostile environment for pedestrians and pedestrian-oriented businesses. Citing traffic volumes and concerning crossing habits by students, a transportation-driven solution could transform the area. The default approach would target the Southwest and Highland Drive intersection for a roundabout, aimed at simplifying vehicle movements and improving throughput. However, roundabouts are not compatible with pedestrian-centric places. Instead, a square-about is proposed, combining the transportation function of a roundabout with the civic function of a town square. This creates a programmable civic space and supports pedestrian-oriented buildings, while slowing traffic more substantially than a roundabout, improving pedestrian crossing safety.

## Neighborhood Center: Southwest Drive & Highland Drive




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

- Commercial
- Civic Institutions

Beyond the traffic-induced intersection solution, the larger area could benefit from a number of different yet coordinated improvements ahead of more significant investments in the major roads. Church and Madison Streets could support the seeds of new activity, along with the Posey Plants block. Small changes to building fronts, new micro-retail, and tactical streetscape interventions can set the stage for larger, more coordinated investments.

With improved streetscapes, shops, services, offices, and housing can gradually establish stronger street frontages throughout the area. Underdeveloped sites, such as those along Church Street, can support townhomes and small multifamily buildings, adding activity and a transition to nearby neighborhoods. Underused institutional properties may offer opportunities for community facilities or attainable housing. The objective is not to rebuild the entire crossroads at once, but to ensure that individual improvements gradually contribute to a safer, more coherent neighborhood center.

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Neighborhood Center:** Southwest Drive & Highland Drive




*Proposed Illustrative Plan*

Proposed
- Mixed-Use & Multi-Family
- Single-Family & Townhouse

Existing
- General
- Church

## Neighborhood Center: Southwest Drive & Highland Drive




*Proposed Program*

Proposed
- Retail & Office
- Multi-Family
- Mixed-Use
- Civic
- Single-Family & Townhouse

Existing
- General
- Civic

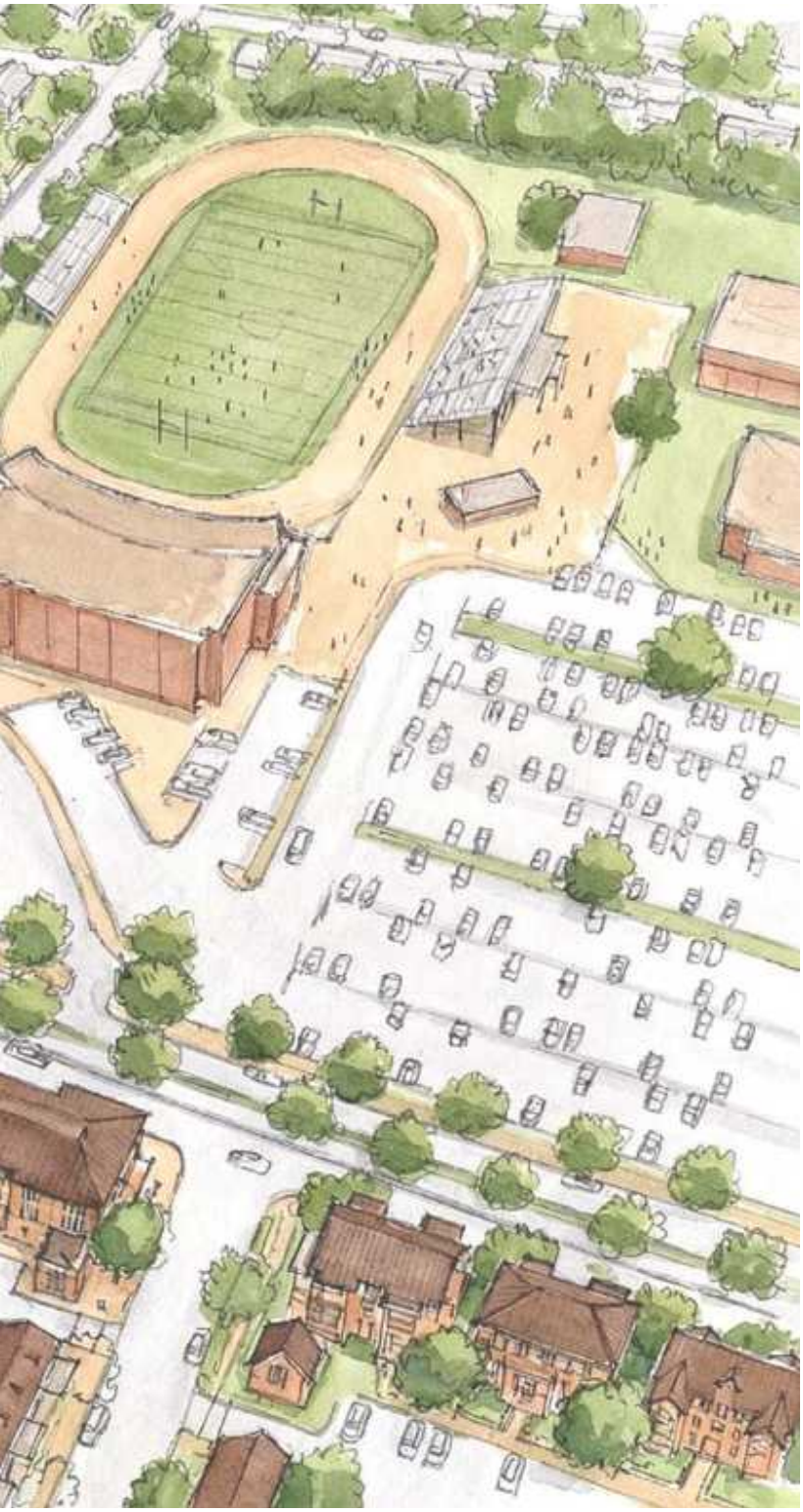
# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Neighborhood Center:** Southwest Drive & Highland Drive



*Proposed Illustration*



## Recommendations

This center begins with a safety need: students cross wide, fast streets at Jonesboro High School every day. The recommendation below addresses pedestrian safety first, then builds the streets and square that turn the intersection into a center. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Investments for a Safer Center**

**M4.7 Improve Southwest Drive safety and public space.**

- **Description:** Make pedestrian safety at the high school the first priority, then build the square-about, connected streets, and civic space.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Jonesboro Public Schools, ArDOT
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely



*Existing Conditions*

## 8 Neighborhood Center: Southwest Drive & Valley View Drive



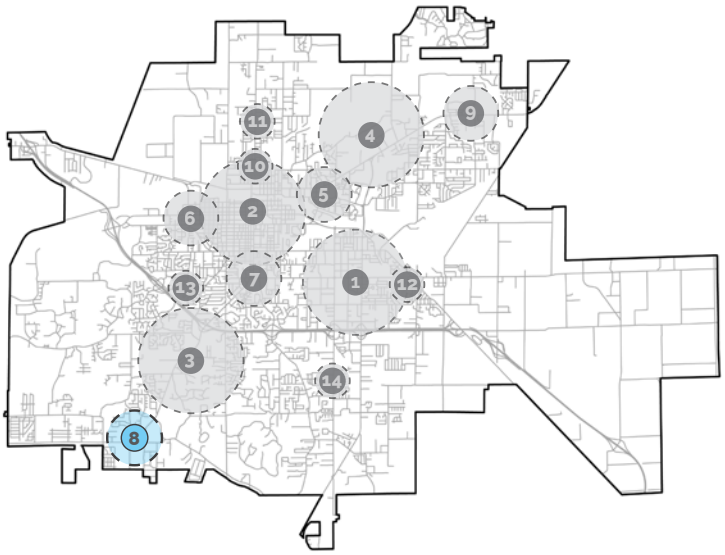

*Neighborhood Center - A local gathering place with shops, services, and everyday amenities.*

**Giving Southwest Jonesboro a Center of Its Own**

Southwest Jonesboro has absorbed substantial residential growth in recent decades, but much of that growth has occurred through separated subdivisions with relatively few connected streets or community gathering places. The result is a development pattern that directs many local trips onto Southwest Drive, and more daily trips further away, both increasing traffic volume and congestion. The growth of Valley View schools adds another significant source of traffic and circulation pressure, with very few homes within walking or biking distance. Both housing and school traffic share just a few connected roads.

Rather than continuing this pattern, future growth provides an opportunity to establish a modest mixed-use center that gives surrounding neighborhoods access to services, public space, and a greater range of housing closer to home. The area concept organizes a new center around a connected street grid and a civic double-square along Southwest Drive, creating a walkable interior neighborhood while buffering pedestrian-oriented spaces from high-speed traffic.

## Neighborhood Center: Southwest Drive & Valley View Drive




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

- Commercial
- Civic Institutions

Counterintuitively, bringing more activity to the area can alleviate traffic congestion over time. A walkable center and neighborhood, as is planned for Greensboro Village, provides both a connected street grid that spreads cars across multiple routes, and a series of daily destinations that can cut down on longer-distance trips, reducing traffic demand. School traffic also needs convenient turning movements from Southwest Drive and queuing space. The double-square connects to frontage roads that multiply the opportunities for cars to enter and exit the area, distributing rather than concentrating turning movements. Businesses and programmed civic space give parents an opportunity to park and wait on a park bench or at a cafe, rather than rushing to the queue, keeping some cars from clogging Valley View Drive.

Housing diversity within proximity to the center and schools brings multiple benefits to the area. Close proximity to a center can reduce **50%** or more of household car trips. The location along Southwest Drive also means that new traffic won't impact the area's other small collectors. Diverse housing types support businesses and school populations, including townhomes and small multifamily buildings near the center, transitioning to small and medium detached homes in surrounding blocks.

A walkable center and neighborhood at Southwest and Valley View Drives would serve as a model for financially responsible and community-supportive growth for southwest Jonesboro, just as Greensboro Village serves as a model for the northeast.

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

Catalytic Centers

## **Neighborhood Center:** Southwest Drive & Valley View Drive




*Proposed Illustrative Plan*

Proposed

- Mixed-Use & Multi-Family
- Single-Family & Townhouse

Existing

- General
- Church

## Neighborhood Center: Southwest Drive & Valley View Drive




*Proposed Program*

Proposed
- Retail & Office
- Multi-Family
- Mixed-Use
- Civic
- Single-Family & Townhouse

Existing
- General
- Civic

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Neighborhood Center:** Southwest Drive & Valley View Drive



*Proposed Illustration*



## Recommendations

Development of this Neighborhood Center will be private, enabled by the UDC. The City should secure the public squares, school access points, and street connections early, before surrounding land develops piece by piece. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Regulations to Enable the Center**

**M4.8 Enable other centers through the UDC.**

- **Description:** Apply center zoning, reserve the civic squares, and require the street connections that spread school traffic.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** No




*Existing Conditions*

# 9 Neighborhood Center: Johnson Avenue & Bridger Road




*Neighborhood Center - A local gathering place with shops, services, and everyday amenities.*

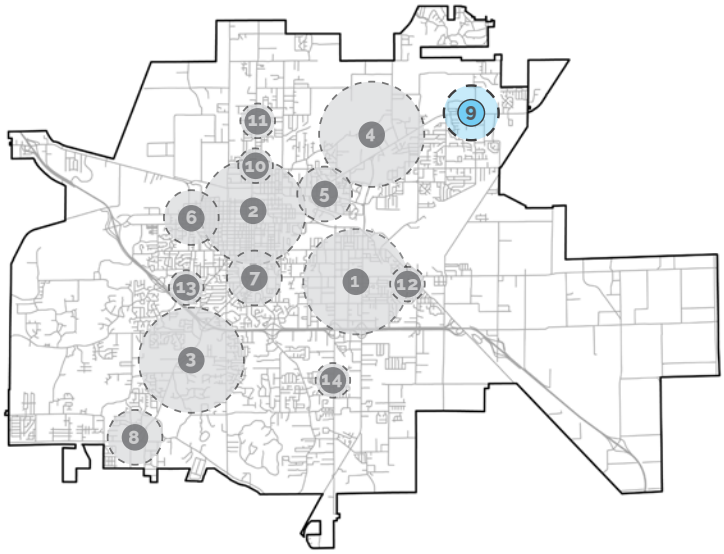
**Building a Mixed-Use Center Around a Regional Medical Anchor**

NEA Baptist Memorial Hospital is both a major employer and a regional destination, and the medical campus continues to grow in the form of medical offices, east towards Bridger Road. Future expansion creates an opportunity to reorganize future buildings into a complementary center where hospital employees, patients, visitors, and surrounding residents can access housing, lodging, services, recreation, and everyday needs within a connected district.

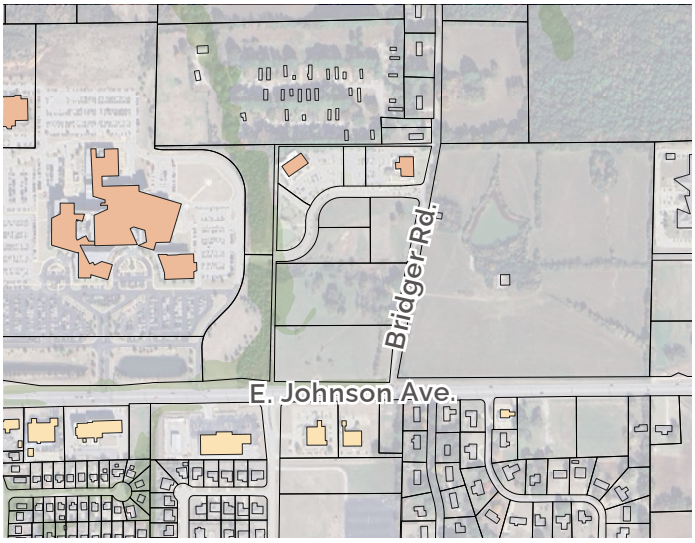
The vision organizes development around a central park and connected stormwater system, allowing infrastructure and public space to reinforce one another. Medical offices, lodging, shops, apartments, and condominiums can cluster around the park, while a frontage road along Johnson Avenue gives buildings a walkable address.

The center concept concentrates mixed-use, medical office, hotel, and multifamily development west of Bridger Road and along Johnson Avenue, transitioning through townhomes to smaller detached homes towards the northeast. Parks, sidewalks, and trails connect the center to the hospital campus, allowing nearby destinations to be reached safely without requiring every trip to be made by car. Hospital visitors could find a peaceful place to stay, to spend time in parks, and to find a meal. Partially on hospital land, housing could be oriented to fill affordability gaps for staff. These opportunities could be realized without sacrificing medical office space by sharing parking areas, and would create more desirable addresses for key medical office tenants.

## Neighborhood Center: Johnson Avenue & Bridger Road




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

- Commercial
- Civic Institutions

Because much of this area is already in development yet remains capable of changing substantially, coordination with NEA Baptist is particularly important. An area-wide plan with NEA Baptist, landowners, transportation agencies, utilities, and stormwater partners should establish a future structure, access points, streets, drainage areas, parks, and development phases for the type of coordinated growth needed to build a coherent center. This is an opportunity to shape growth proactively rather than retrofit a disconnected pattern later.

## Neighborhood Center: Johnson Avenue & Bridger Road




*Proposed Illustrative Plan*

## Recommendations

Development of this Neighborhood Center will be private, led by the growth of the NEA Baptist medical campus and enabled by the UDC. The City's role is zoning and reserving the park and street connections. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Regulations to Enable the Center**

**M4.8 Enable other centers through the UDC.**

- **Description:** Zone for mixed use, medical office, lodging, and housing, and reserve the central park and frontage road connections.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, NEA Baptist, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** Consultant: No

## **Neighborhood Center:** Johnson Avenue & Bridger Road




*Proposed Program*

## 10 Neighborhood Center: Nettleton Ave. & Watt St.



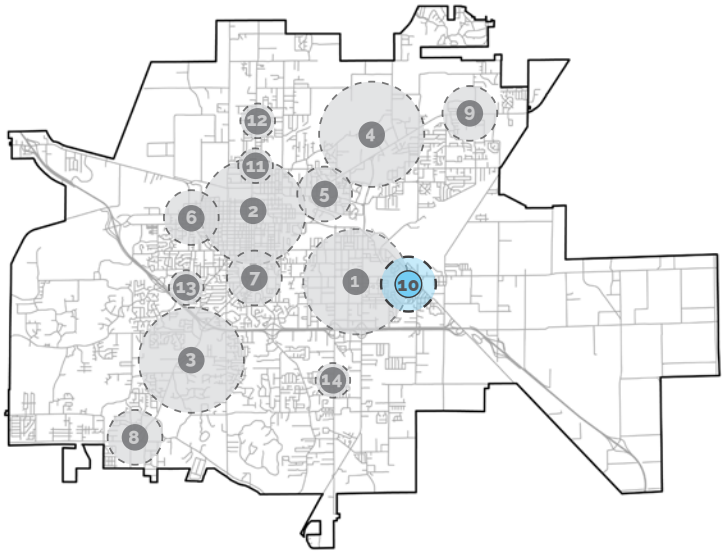

*Neighborhood Center - A local gathering place with shops, services, and everyday amenities.*

**Subtitle for Neighborhood Center**

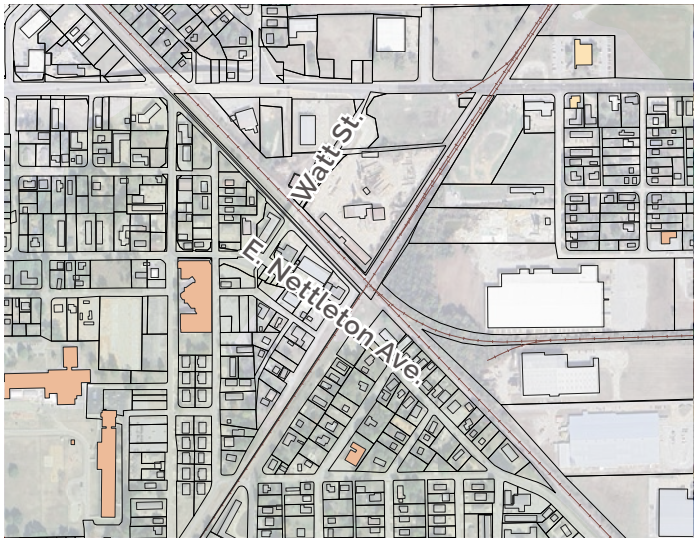
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## Neighborhood Center: Nettleton Ave. & Watt St.




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

- Commercial
- Civic Institutions

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# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

## **Neighborhood Center:** Nettleton Ave. & Watt St.




*Proposed Illustrative Plan*

**Subtitle Text For Neighborhood Center**

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DRAFT 2 PLACE HOLDER

## **Neighborhood Center:** Nettleton Ave. & Watt St.




*Proposed Program*

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DRAFT 2 PLACE HOLDER

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Neighborhood Center:** Southwest Drive & Highland Drive




*Proposed Illustration*



## Recommendations

This center grows incrementally from an existing commercial cluster, enabled by the UDC. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Regulations to Enable the Center**

**M4.8 Enable other centers through the UDC.**

- **Description:** Apply center zo nd reserve civic space and connecti e surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Timeline:** Short-t yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Respons ies:** Planning, developers
- **Cons eeded:** Consultant: No

DRAFT 2 PLACE HOLDER




*Existing Conditions*

## 6 Neighborhood Node: S. Gee Street & West Matthews Avenue




*Neighborhood Node - A small-scale cluster of convenient uses within easy reach of nearby homes.*

**Building on an Emerging Local District**

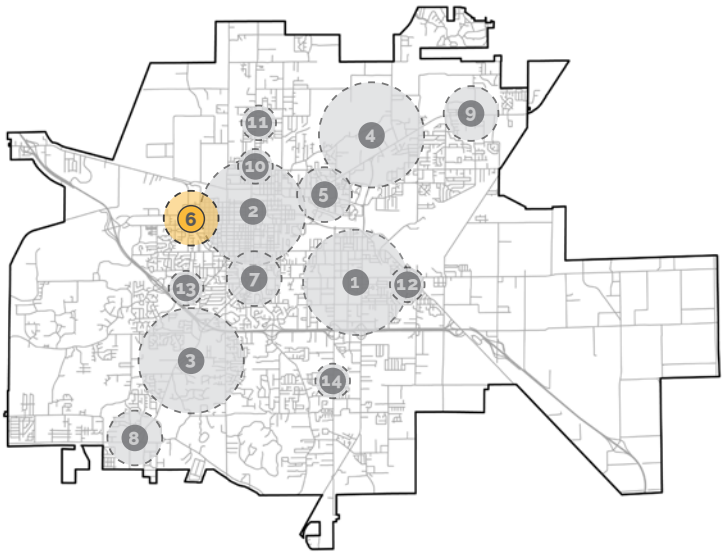
South Gee Street is already demonstrating what incremental, locally driven revitalization can look like in Jonesboro. Restored historic buildings, locally owned businesses, makers, restaurants, events, and community destinations have begun to establish the corridor as a creative mixed-use district between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Unlike several other catalytic centers, the strategy here begins with momentum that already exists.

The priority should be to support that momentum without erasing the character that created it. The district's warehouse buildings and adaptable spaces provide opportunities for small businesses, arts and cultural uses, makers, food, entertainment, and community gathering. Flexible zoning, rehabilitation assistance, small-business support, and incremental development can help existing and new local enterprises continue to shape the district as investment increases.

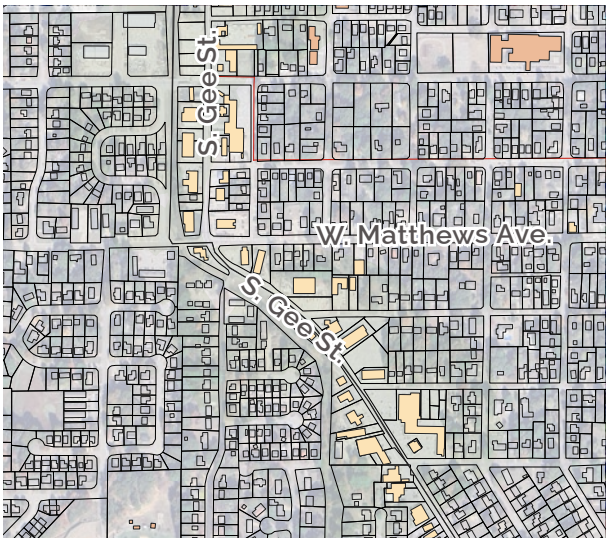
At Matthews Avenue, the creek corridor offers an opportunity to create a defining public space for the district. A multi-use trail, creekside open space, public plaza, and pedestrian-oriented streetscape can connect people to the waterway and nearby businesses. This is not only a potential civic asset, it is also an opportunity to address flooding issues that threaten the business community today. Naturalizing the creek corridor and expanding flooding capacity, such as on uncontaminated portions of the former General Electric property and north of the railroad, are necessary public improvements to support the long-term success of businesses in the area as well as nearby homes whose values are impacted by regional drainage issues.

Along with creekside improvements, a raised intersection or similar traffic-calming treatment can tie the two sides of Gee Street together at Matthews while improving pedestrian safety. Surface parking along the street and creek can gradually transition to outdoor gathering areas, infill development, and active frontage as more parking is accommodated through well-managed on-street and shared spaces.

# Neighborhood Node: S. Gee Street & West Matthews Avenue




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

- Commercial
- Civic Institutions

Gee Street's design and streetscape should lead the way to transform the center's character. Context-focused street design, detailed in Chapter 6, allows parking to move to the street and travel lanes to be reduced through the center, while still supporting the wider transportation network. Existing business buy-in is important to accommodate on-street parking through consolidated or relocated curb-cuts, driven by a strategic future vision.

Implementation should pair rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and local-business assistance with improvements to streets, sidewalks, trails, the creek, and public space. Events and temporary programming can activate improvements early, while small development increments allow the district to continue evolving without requiring a single transformative project.

## Recommendations

Gee Street already has momentum, and the City's job is to support it without erasing the character that created it. The recommendations below provide flexible rules, a creekside plaza that adds flood capacity, and help for the small businesses and historic buildings that define the district. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies for an Emerging District

#### M6.5 Pursue outside funding and tax credits

- **Description:** Use historic tax credits and grants for warehouse rehabilitation, creek restoration, and flood mitigation.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Finance, Parks and Recreation, Engineering
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Neighborhood Node:** S. Gee Street & West Matthews Avenue



*Proposed Illustration*



## Recommendations

**Investments for Gee Street**

### M4.5 Support Gee Street and Matthews Avenue.

- **Description:** Adopt flexible UDC rules, and build a creekside plaza, a raised intersection at Matthews, and added flood capacity along the creek.
- **Timeline:** Short- to medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

**Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents**

### M7.1 Create a small business support program.

- **Description:** Offer technical help and capital referrals to the makers, restaurants, and local businesses that are reviving the district.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Jonesboro Unlimited, Chamber of Commerce
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely



*Existing Conditions*

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

## 11 Neighborhood Node: North Church Street & Jessup Drive




*Neighborhood Node - A small-scale cluster of convenient uses within easy reach of nearby homes.*

**Reinvestment That Builds From the Community**

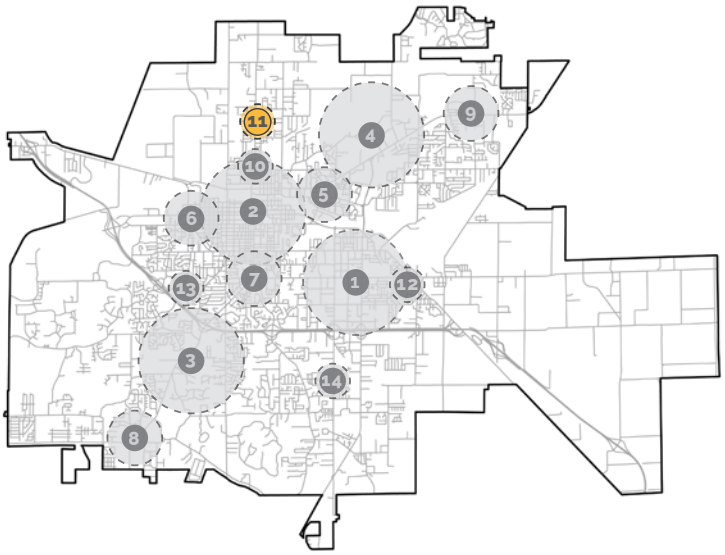
North Church Street and Jessup Drive require a different kind of catalytic strategy. This historically Black and Hispanic area of North Jonesboro has experienced lower public and private investment, property values, household incomes, and homeownership rates than many other parts of the city. Incomplete streets also limit movement between Church and Patrick Streets, disconnecting new growth areas from the existing commercial clusters that would benefit from their patronage. Jessup Drive is one of **3 mixed-use clusters**, retaining churches, civic institutions, and businesses, connecting existing neighborhoods, and full of community history that can provide a strong foundation for reinvestment.

The goal is not to import a large new development model, but to strengthen what is already there. Small businesses, mixed-use buildings, new and rehabilitated homes, churches, gathering spaces, and an extension of Miles Park can reinforce Jessup and Church as a lasting and vibrant neighborhood-serving node. A more connected street network between Church and Patrick Streets, as well as connections further west, can improve access and create additional opportunities for housing while making it easier to walk between neighborhood destinations. Churches, already community hubs, anchor and ground reinvestment in streets, businesses, and housing.

Community history and stability are critical aspects of investment in North Jonesboro, focused on wealth-building and opportunity to avoid displacement. Specific community visioning should lead to a detailed area plan, similar to the two other Neighborhood Nodes identified north and south along Church. Public investment should be paired with rehabilitation programs, support for local developers and businesses, and tools that help existing households benefit from growth.

North Jonesboro first needs steady investment in basic necessities, households, and local entrepreneurship to benefit from more ambitious improvements. That incremental approach should define the center's implementation strategy: invest with the community, build local capacity, and allow larger opportunities to grow from those improvements over time.

## Neighborhood Node: North Church Street & Jessup Drive




*Activity Center Regional Location*




*Existing Conditions*

- Commercial
- Civic Institutions

## **Neighborhood Node:** North Church Street & Jessup Drive




*Proposed Illustrative Plan*

## Recommendations

North Church and Jessup needs more public investment than any other center, because it has received the least. The recommendations below deliver resident-led street connections, a park extension, and housing programs, and line up outside funding and financing partners to stretch City dollars. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Policies to Leverage Investment**

**M6.5 Pursue outside funding and tax credits.**

- **Description:** Pursue grants, New Markets tax credits, and state programs for streets, parks, and housing.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Finance, Parks and Recreation, Engineering
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

## Neighborhood Node: North Church Street & Jessup Drive




*Proposed Program*

**Investments for North Jonesboro**

**M4.6 Reinvest in North Church and Jessup.**

- **Description:** Build resident-led street connections between N. Church and N. Patrick Streets, extend Miles Park, and support new and rehabilitated homes.
- **Timeline:** Short- to long-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, churches
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

**Partnerships for Reinvestment**

**M9.5 Convene a financing table.**

- **Description:** Bring lenders, CDFIs, foundations, and ADFA together on housing and small business projects in the area.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Mayor's Office, Planning, Finance
- **Consultant Needed:** No

# CENTERING COMMUNITY

## Catalytic Centers

### **Neighborhood Node:** North Church Street & Jessup Drive



*Proposed Illustration*





*Existing Conditions*



CHAPTER 4

4

# SUPPORTING NEIGHBORHOODS

*Strengthening the places people call home*

Most of Jonesboro is not Downtown or a commercial corridor. It is neighborhoods: streets of houses where residents spend the majority of their daily lives, raise families, and build the relationships that Chapter 1 elevates through social capital. This chapter establishes how Jonesboro will preserve neighborhood strengths while responding to changing households, housing demand, growth, and uneven access to services, helping established and future neighborhoods become more complete, connected, attainable, and resilient without erasing the different patterns that give them character.

## 4.1 Neighborhood Types

**Five Patterns, Five Sets of Priorities**

Not every neighborhood in Jonesboro was built the same way, and treating them as though they were leads to policies that fit none of them well. This section describes the five Future Land Use neighborhood types in terms of the physical patterns that define daily life within them: how their streets and blocks are laid out, what mix of housing and uses they support, how their streets feel to move through, how well they are planted with trees, and how easily residents can reach a park, a center, or a daily destination. These patterns are a starting point for understanding each neighborhood, not a substitute for the conditions on any individual block, but they give the City a practical basis for matching policies and reinvestment priorities to what each neighborhood actually is and needs, rather than applying one approach citywide.

### 1. Core Neighborhoods



Found in Jonesboro's historic areas near Downtown, **Core Neighborhoods** are built around small, regular blocks and a connected street grid that gives residents multiple route choices to reach the same destination on foot, by bike, or by car. This is the most diverse neighborhood type in the city, mixing detached homes with duplexes, small multifamily buildings, and occasional neighborhood-serving businesses within the same few blocks. This pattern has evolved over decades as original homes have been replaced, altered, or supplemented with infill.

Streets here are narrow and slow by design, lined with sidewalks and homes oriented toward the street with front porches and stoops, while garages and service access sit to the rear. Core Neighborhoods carry Jonesboro's most extensive and mature tree canopy among neighborhood types, giving these streets a shaded, established character even where the housing stock itself has evolved considerably.

Their central location and connected streets put Core Neighborhood residents within easy walking or biking distance of a center, park, or daily destination. Yet these neighborhoods have suffered decades with insufficient investment, leaving many properties empty or overgrown, sidewalks and streets in need of repair, and a public image that overlooks the many advantages and qualities of Core Neighborhoods.

### 2. Mid-Century Neighborhoods



Occupying Jonesboro's first ring of growth, **Mid-Century Neighborhoods** were built outward from the historic core in the decades before the interstate reshaped the city's edges. Their streets are mostly connected to one another, but without the clear, regular grid of the Core, forming a looser network that still generally offers more than one way to get where you are going, even if it isn't the most convenient. Streets tend to be a bit wider, curvier, and faster than in the Core, and most without sidewalks.

Housing diversity narrows considerably compared to the Core, with these areas dominated by detached single-family homes in a narrow range of sizes, though some areas include a scattering of duplexes or small multifamily buildings. Many of these neighborhoods carry substantial mature tree canopy within private yards, though few include trees along streets. Access to a center or daily destination varies more here than in the Core, with some Mid-Century neighborhoods within easy reach of a historic commercial corridor, but most depending more heavily on a car to reach daily destinations.

### 3. Walkable Neighborhoods



A newer category, **Walkable Neighborhoods** are intended to guide how Jonesboro's future growth areas are built rather than describing an existing pattern found somewhere in the city today. They are designed to balance the attributes that make the Core and Mid-Century types function well with the realities of building at a larger scale and a faster pace: a moderate mix of housing types, detached homes, townhomes, duplexes, cottages, and small multifamily buildings, arranged on mid-sized, reasonably connected blocks that keep at least some daily destinations within comfortable walking or biking distance.

Streets are sized to keep speeds low and crossings manageable, and tree planting is treated as a required part of the neighborhood's infrastructure from the outset rather than something added only if a developer chooses to, deliberately building in the mature canopy that Core and Mid-Century neighborhoods only acquired over many decades. Every Walkable Neighborhood should be planned with practical access to a Neighborhood Center or Node as part of its design, and an integrated or nearby park.



*Core Neighborhood in Jonesboro.*



*Mid-Century Neighborhood in Jonesboro.*

# SUPPORTING NEIGHBORHOODS

## Neighborhood Types

### 4. Suburban Neighborhoods



Much of Jonesboro's outward expansion since the mid-twentieth century has been in the form of **Suburban Neighborhoods**, and they are also the most internally variable of the five types. In their more uniform stretches, Suburban Neighborhoods consist of curving streets, cul-de-sacs, and one or two repeated house sizes within a single subdivision. Each subdivision tends to be isolated with limited connections to the streets and developments around them.

In other areas, particularly where development occurred incrementally rather than through a single coordinated subdivision, the pattern is far less consistent: one street may look markedly different from the next, mixing larger and smaller lots, older homes and newer infill, and a wider range of house sizes and styles. Here street connections were extended piecemeal as well, achieving a similar lack of connectivity as intentionally disconnected Suburban Neighborhoods.

Sidewalks are often incomplete or absent throughout Suburban Neighborhoods regardless of which pattern applies, and homes are typically set back from the street with front-facing garages and driveways that dominate the streetscape. Tree canopy follows a similar divide: earlier suburban development tends to have mature trees and generous yards, while more recently built stretches often lack shade almost entirely. In both instances, trees are set back on private lots, if they exist at all, and not aligned along streets. Access to a center, park, or daily destinations generally requires a car, due to both distance and lack of direct routes.

### 5. Rural & Estate



**Rural & Estate** areas sit at Jonesboro's edges and are shaped by a mixture of agricultural land, wooded tracts, large lots, and occasional, dispersed subdivisions. Streets here are narrow, infrequent, and rural in character. Despite being small, streets are speedy and unfit for walking, lacking both sidewalks and accessible destinations. Housing is overwhelmingly single-family and low in density, uses remain almost entirely residential or agricultural. These areas depend on a car for nearly every trip, and reaching a center or daily destination typically means a considerable drive rather than a short one. While rural areas are not a target for growth, haphazard development of empty or wooded parcels has transitioned many towards a suburban pattern, introducing commuting into an insufficient and unfit street pattern.



*Rural Area in Jonesboro.*

### Reading the Typology Alongside Local Conditions

These five types describe the physical patterns that shape daily life in Jonesboro's neighborhoods, but they are a lens for understanding, not a label that fully captures every block. Two neighborhoods of the same type, particularly among Suburban Neighborhoods, can still differ meaningfully from one another in condition, housing stock, and investment needs. The chapters that follow use this typology as a starting point for identifying what a complete neighborhood requires, where housing diversity can be added compatibly, and where public investment should focus first, always alongside the specific conditions found on the ground in a given neighborhood.

Most newer neighborhoods are unlikely to change, and have been designed specifically not to. But they can benefit from nearby investments that add a sidewalk or trail, a Neighborhood Node or a park, and street improvements for safety, connectivity, and access. Many older neighborhoods are more able to evolve, albeit slowly. Their age, housing types, and street configurations can support new homes and new home types, and nearby nodes and corridors mean that sidewalks, street trees, and trails can make walking and biking meaningful options.

## Recommendations

Each neighborhood type calls for its own range of housing and lot patterns. The recommendation below writes those ranges into the UDC, so the rules for a Core Neighborhood differ from those for a Suburban one. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations to Match Neighborhood Types

#### M1.1.3 - Residential district range.

- **Description:** Create graduated residential districts by neighborhood type that allow duplexes, townhomes, cottages, and accessory homes where they fit. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Housing choice by type.** Number of housing types permitted by right in each neighborhood type.

## 4.2 Components of a Complete Neighborhood

### Completeness and Connectivity

A complete neighborhood does not require every destination within its own boundaries. It requires a connected network of assets, walkable blocks, slow and safe streets, nearby parks and trails, a mix of homes, and reasonable access to a center, so residents can meet most daily needs without a long drive. Completeness is achieved through that network rather than by placing every use on every block, which means the priorities in this section apply differently depending on each neighborhood type; a Core Neighborhood may already have most of these pieces in place and simply need repair and reinvestment, while a Suburban Neighborhood may be missing several of them entirely and need new connections built from scratch.

Walkable blocks and slow streets are the foundation everything else depends on. Connected streets and low-stress routes to schools, parks, jobs, services, and transit distribute traffic across multiple paths rather than forcing every trip onto a single arterial, improve emergency response times, and make short trips on foot or by bike a realistic option rather than a risk. This comes naturally to Core Neighborhoods and, to a lesser degree, Mid-Century Neighborhoods, given their more connected street patterns, but it has to be designed in deliberately for Walkable Neighborhoods in new growth areas and retrofitted carefully into Suburban Neighborhoods, where curving streets and isolated subdivisions were often built specifically to avoid this kind of connectivity. Sidewalks and street trees complete the picture: a connected street network without sidewalks still leaves walking uncomfortable or unsafe, and a sidewalk without shade discourages use in Jonesboro's summer heat. As Section 4.1 notes, tree canopy in Jonesboro follows a pattern many residents find counterintuitive, concentrated in the city's oldest neighborhoods and thinnest in some of its newest, which makes street tree planting a priority investment in Mid-Century and Suburban Neighborhoods specifically, not just an amenity to add wherever it is convenient.

ANATOMY OF A COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD

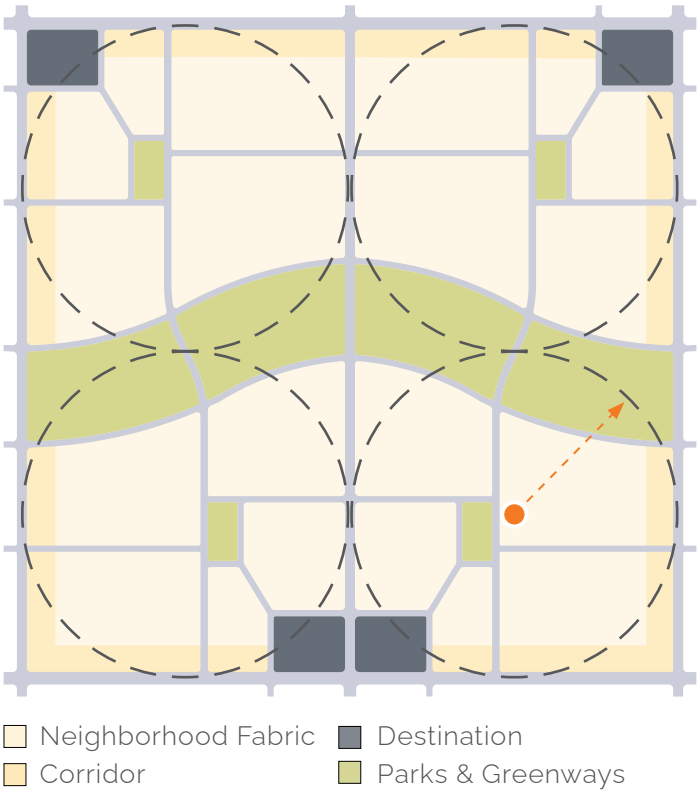



*A complete neighborhood connects homes, parks, Neighborhood Centers, and Nodes through a safe, walkable network of streets and paths..*

### Parks, Housing, and Everyday Gathering Places

Access to parks, small greens, and natural areas should be judged by how safely and comfortably a resident can actually reach them, not simply by the straight-line distance on a map. Crossings, shade, sidewalks, trails, and lighting all determine whether a park that is technically nearby is actually accessible. The practical test of a complete neighborhood is whether residents of different ages and abilities can safely reach the places and services they use every day, not just whether those places exist somewhere within city limits.

## CONNECTING COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS




*Multiple complete neighborhoods connect through shared corridors, parks, greenways, and destinations to form a larger neighborhood structure.*

Housing diversity plays a similar role, where more housing types make neighborhoods where residents can stay through the full course of their life. Two-person and one-person households together account for about **64%** of Jonesboro total households, meaning a neighborhood built almost entirely around the conventional large detached home is already mismatched to how most residents actually live. Complete neighborhoods need larger and smaller homes, duplexes, townhomes, cottages, and small multifamily buildings. This mix, whether in the same block, neighborhood, or general area allows an empty nester to downsize, a young adult to find an entry point, or an aging parent to move closer to family without leaving the neighborhood altogether. Section 4.3 addresses this housing mix in detail; the point here is that housing diversity is not a separate concern from neighborhood completeness, it is one of its core components, as important as a sidewalk or a park.

Finally, a complete neighborhood needs practical access to a Neighborhood Center or Node, not as a commercial convenience but as the place where daily life outside the home actually happens. These centers provide local food, childcare, personal services, and small-business space at a scale compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. They also anchor the institutions, gathering spaces, and civic and public art that give a neighborhood its identity, a library branch, a small plaza, a piece of public art at a key corner, a place for a farmers market or a neighborhood gathering. Schools, libraries, faith communities, and other civic institutions function as anchors in their own right, and their value extends further when they are connected to nearby homes by safe routes and made available for uses beyond their primary purpose, through joint-use agreements and coordinated programming, rather than sitting isolated behind their own parking lot. A Neighborhood Center or Node that is well connected to the homes and institutions around it, rather than positioned behind an arterial road, does far more to support daily life than one that is technically present but practically hard to reach.

### Investing Where It Matters Most

Not every neighborhood needs the same investment to become complete, and treating every gap as equally urgent spreads limited resources too thin to fix anything well. A neighborhood completeness assessment, evaluated by the type established in Section 4.1, can identify the most consequential gaps in each area and prioritize the capital projects and partnerships that connect several assets at once or serve residents with limited mobility, lower incomes, or fewer transportation choices, rather than treating every missing sidewalk segment or every underused institution as an isolated problem. Public and private investment coordinated this way lets a single project repair more than one missing piece at a time, moving a neighborhood measurably closer to complete. Jonesboro's Planning Districts are designed for such an analysis. While they are larger than a single neighborhood, they divide the city by pattern, location, and scale, better aligning need and investment.

# SUPPORTING NEIGHBORHOODS

## Components of a Complete Neighborhood

## Recommendations

A complete neighborhood has connected streets, parks, trees, and daily destinations within reach. The recommendations below build those components into new subdivisions, open school grounds where parks are missing, and measure which Planning Districts lack them. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations for Complete Neighborhoods

#### M1.1.5 - Subdivision, parkland, and tree standards.

- **Description:** Require connected streets, parks and trail links, stream buffers, and tree protection in new development. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M6.4 - Assess service gaps and audit investment by district.

- **Description:** Compare access to parks, schools, centers, and services across the ten Planning Districts.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to ongoing
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Partnerships for Neighborhood Amenities

#### M9.2 - Sign joint-use agreements.

- **Description:** Open school and ASU facilities to residents after hours, and coordinate safe routes to school.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Jonesboro Public Schools, ASU
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Walkable access.** Share of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park, a school, or a center, by Planning District.

## 4.3 Housing for Every Stage of Life

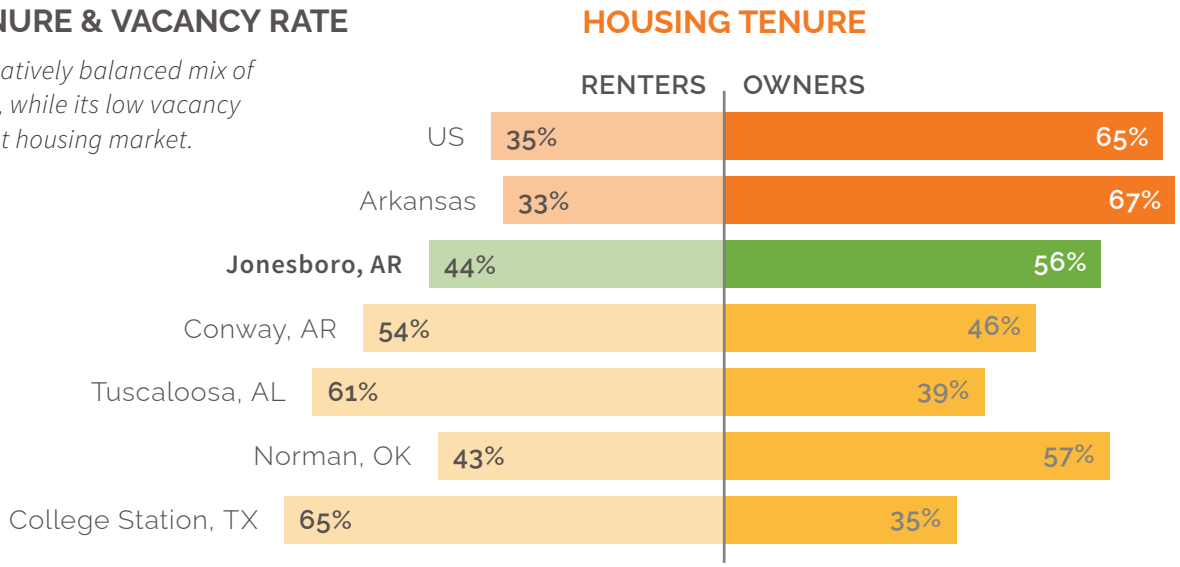
### A Market That Needs More Than One Housing Type

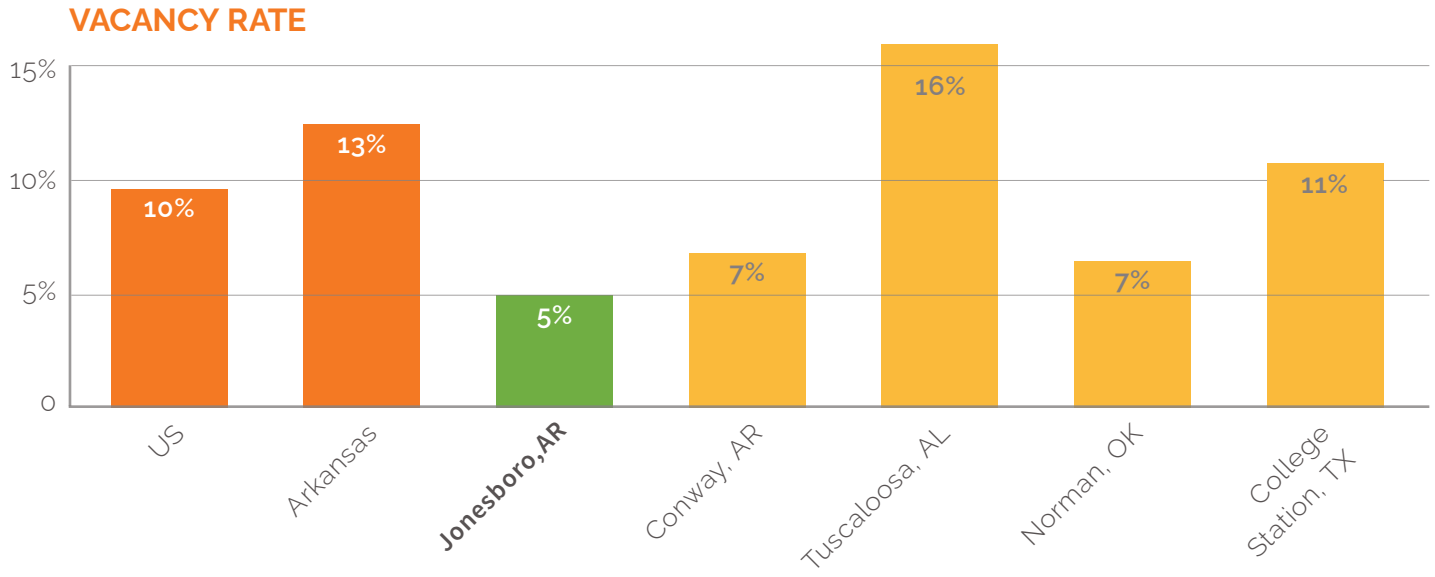
Jonesboro's housing market includes more than **35,000 units**, with about **56%** owner-occupied and **44%** renter-occupied. Vacancy runs near **5%**, conditions that together describe a tight market by most conventional measures. **One in five** residents moved within the past year. That level of turnover reflects students, workers, and new households moving through the city in search of housing that fits their circumstances. Jonesboro needs both stable long-term housing for residents who plan to stay for decades and a flexible supply that can absorb people who are just getting their lives started or are only passing through for a season of their life.

A varied housing supply lets residents stay where they've made social ties as their household size, income, mobility, and life circumstances change, rather than forcing a move across town every time their needs shift. A young professional renting a small apartment today may want a starter home in **five years,** a growing family a larger house after that, and an empty nester a smaller home or accessory unit decades later. If Jonesboro's housing stock cannot accommodate that progression at every stage and in each Planning District, residents may loosen their social bonds, or leave the city to find what they need elsewhere. Chapter 1 identifies housing choice as part of what keeps residents, and by extension employers, in Jonesboro for the long term. This section turns that principle into a specific strategy for how that choice should be built and distributed.

### HOUSING TENURE & VACANCY RATE

*Jonesboro has a relatively balanced mix of owners and renters, while its low vacancy rate points to a tight housing market.*



# SUPPORTING NEIGHBORHOODS

## Housing for Every Stage of Life

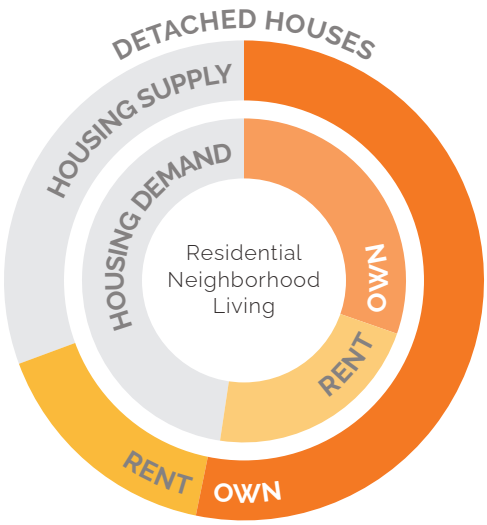
A subdivision built all at once, with a narrow range of home sizes and prices, tends to attract a narrow range of buyers too, often households at a similar age and stage of life who arrive within the same few years of one another. That uniformity can feel like an advantage at first, such as a neighborhood full of families with children the same age. But it creates a problem that only becomes visible a generation later. When a subdivision's residents all bought in around the same time, they also tend to reach the next stage of life together, and a home that once fit no longer fits for many households in the same neighborhood at nearly the same moment. Upkeep can fade together as aging homeowners find maintenance harder to keep up with. More houses go up for sale within the same few years, and that clustering of listings can saturate the local market and depress values just when longtime residents are counting on those sales to fund their next move. People who might otherwise have stayed near friends and neighbors they built relationships with over decades are instead pushed out of their own social circle, because the housing nearby was never built to accommodate what they need at this later stage of life.

Jonesboro's older neighborhoods have generally avoided this fate, despite their ups and downs. This is not by accident, but because they were built, and have continued to evolve, with a genuine mix of housing types and price points woven throughout, rather than sorted into separate, single-purpose subdivisions. That ongoing diversity keeps a healthy cross-section of ages and incomes present at all times.

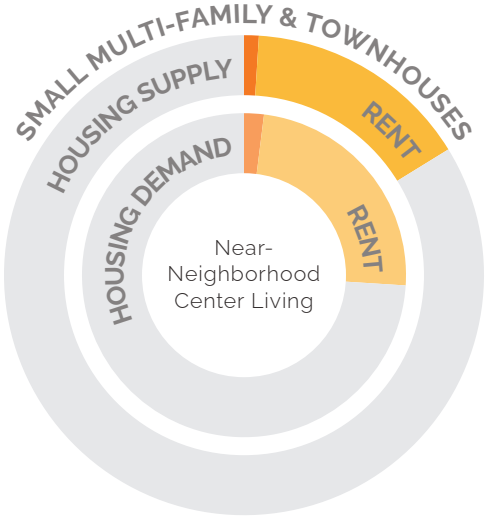
### Matching Supply to Demand

Near-term demand should be read as a range rather than a construction mandate, since market conditions, interest rates, and household preferences will shift over the life of this plan in ways no single forecast can fully anticipate. Conservative estimates identify annual potential for about **650** new for-sale homes and **2,125** new for-lease homes over the next five years. Higher scenarios reach roughly **1,210** for-sale and **2,535** for-lease units. These figures exclude on-campus student housing from the rental forecast entirely.

**HOUSING DEMAND BY TYPE**



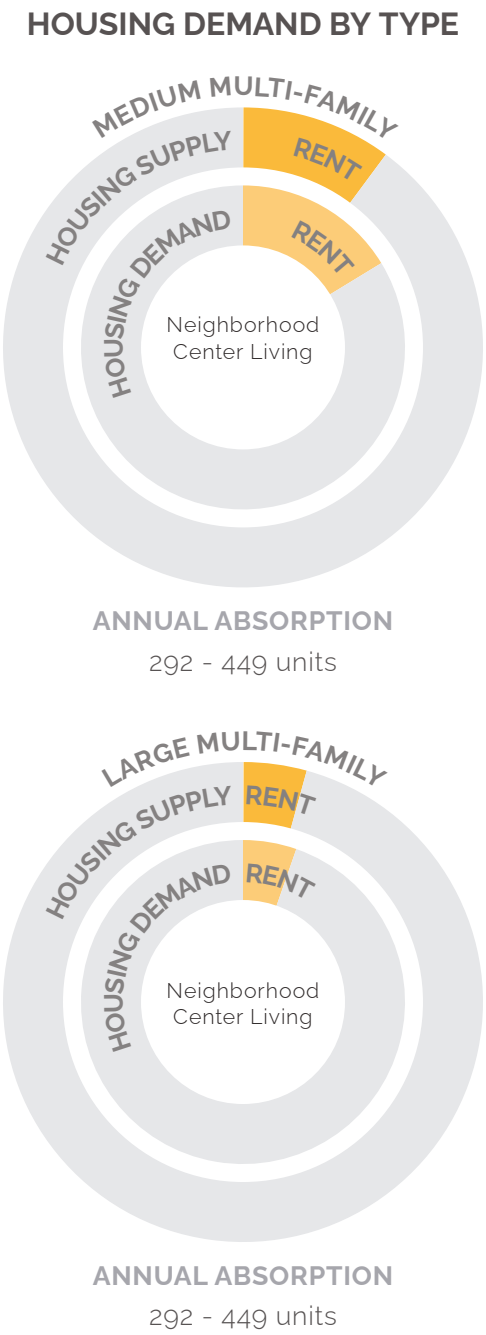

**ANNUAL ABSORPTION**
1,284 - 1,961 units




**ANNUAL ABSORPTION**
810 - 974 units

*Projected demand supports detached homeownership alongside small-scale multifamily and townhome options.*

Detached homes remain the dominant form of ownership demand, with about 95 percent of new for-sale demand projected for detached houses. Rental demand looks considerably different: an estimated **55%** favors buildings with three or more units, supporting triplexes, fourplexes, rowhouses, apartment houses, lofts, and courtyard apartments rather than




*Projected multifamily demand supports additional rental housing in and near neighborhood centers.*

additional single-family rentals. Jonesboro's housing strategy should reflect both realities at once, protecting detached homeownership as a core part of the market while expanding the multifamily and missing-middle options that most renters are actually looking for.

Price and rent targets matter as much as unit type when it comes to whether new housing actually serves the households who need it. Most prospective buyers are seeking homes below **$300,000**. About half of prospective renters want monthly rents near **$1,125 to $1,250**, and roughly **30%** need rents lower than that range. Small cottages, efficiencies, accessory dwelling units, shared units, and modest multifamily formats can serve these price points far more directly than conventional new construction, which increasingly clears **$300,000** before land and site costs are even factored in.

New construction is only part of the answer, and treating it as the whole strategy would overlook the housing Jonesboro already has. Annual potential for renovation is estimated at roughly **1,135 to 1,325** for-sale homes and **3,360 to 3,625** rental units. Repair, code assistance, weatherization, accessibility upgrades, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings should carry as much weight in this strategy as greenfield construction does. Much of Jonesboro's most affordable housing already exists today, and keeping it habitable is often more cost-effective than building new supply to replace it later.

**Where New Housing Should Go**

Distribution matters as much as unit count; housing built in the wrong location can fail to serve the households who need it even when the unit itself is well designed. This plan directs new housing through four complementary strategies working together rather than in competition with one another: small increments spread across suitable neighborhoods citywide, more housing in and near Downtown and other activity centers, additional housing choices near Arkansas State University, medical employment, and transit, and a full range of housing types built into future neighborhoods from the very start rather than added as an afterthought once a subdivision is already built out.

Each strategy works together, and is matched to the neighborhood typology established in Section 4.1: small-scale infill in Core and Mid-Century Neighborhoods, higher intensity in and around centers, and a complete mix designed in from the outset in Walkable Neighborhoods, so that no single neighborhood type is left to age the way a homogeneous subdivision would.

# SUPPORTING NEIGHBORHOODS

## Housing for Every Stage of Life

### NEIGHBORHOODS THAT MIX HOMES HARMONIOUSLY




*The neighborhood of Norton Commons near Louisville, Kentucky, shown above, demonstrates how different housing types can fit together comfortably when designed with compatible scale and placement. Small and larger houses, duplexes, townhomes, and small apartments are scaled and oriented toward the street in similar ways, creating a cohesive environment rather than a crowded one. This approach allows people of different ages, incomes, and household sizes to live near one another.*

**Design That Fits the Neighborhood**

Compatibility should be judged by scale, frontage, transitions, trees, parking placement, access, and building design, not by tenure or unit count alone, since those latter measures say little about how a building will actually feel from the sidewalk. A well-designed fourplex that matches the height, setback, and street orientation of its neighbors can fit into a Core or Mid-Century Neighborhood with little visual disruption. A poorly designed one, regardless of how few units it contains, can still feel out of place. Development standards should be written to distinguish between these two outcomes directly, rather than relying on unit count as a stand-in for compatibility.

### Affordability Beyond the Sale Price

Affordability depends on supply and targeted assistance working in combination, since neither tool on its own is likely to close Jonesboro's affordability gap. The City and partners should preserve naturally occurring affordable units before they are lost to redevelopment or neglect, support rehabilitation and accessibility improvements for existing homes, use public land and infrastructure strategically to encourage attainable development, and coordinate with housing providers serving older adults, people with disabilities, fixed-income residents, and households waiting for assistance. These efforts should reinforce one another rather than operate in isolation.

Transportation is part of that affordability equation as well, even though it never appears on a lease or a mortgage statement. Combined housing and transportation costs average about **52%** of household income in Jonesboro. Housing located near jobs, services, transit, and safe walking routes can improve household stability even when the monthly housing cost itself does not change, simply because it reduces what a household spends getting to work, school, and daily errands. Locating new housing near centers and along transit routes, consistent with the distribution strategy described above, is therefore an affordability strategy in its own right, not simply a land use preference.

## Recommendations

Jonesboro's tight housing market needs both more types of housing and help keeping existing homes in good repair. The recommendations below open neighborhoods to a wider range of housing, help small builders and existing owners, and coordinate with the partners who build and finance housing. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations to Expand Housing Choice

#### M1.1.3 - Residential district range.

- **Description:** Allow duplexes, townhomes, cottages, and accessory homes in the neighborhood types where they fit.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M5.3 - Create a home rehabilitation program.

- **Description:** Create a new program of repair grants or loans, weatherization, and accessibility improvements.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- Medium cost
- Planning, lenders, nonprofits
- Consultant: Likely

#### M5.5 - Support small-scale infill.

- **Description:** Offer pre-approved building plans and simple permits for small builders and local owners.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

# SUPPORTING NEIGHBORHOODS

## Housing for Every Stage of Life

### Partnerships for Housing

#### M5.7 - Partner on housing and monitor the market.

- **Description:** Work with housing providers, ASU, and the hospitals on housing for students, staff, and seniors, and refresh demand estimates every few years.
- **Timeline:** Ongoing
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, housing providers, ASU, hospitals
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M9.5 - Convene a financing table.

- **Description:** Bring lenders, CDFIs, foundations, ADFA, employers, and developers together on one pipeline of housing projects.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Mayor's Office, Planning, Finance
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

**Housing variety.** New housing units permitted each year by type, and homes repaired through the rehabilitation program.

## 4.4 Neighborhood Reinvestment

### Appearance, Pride, and the Case for Reinvestment

Residents consistently connect how Jonesboro looks to how they feel about living here. Beyond parks and landscaping, residents raised concerns about building architecture and design, the preservation and reuse of older buildings, property maintenance, litter, and deteriorating properties, all impacting community pride, tourism, property values, and Jonesboro's ability to attract new residents and investment. A neighborhood that looks cared for signals that it is cared for, and that signal shapes decisions residents and investors make about where to put their money and their time.

This concern falls unevenly across the city. Older and historically underinvested areas, including North Jonesboro and neighborhoods surrounding Downtown, carry the deepest need for coordinated attention, a reflection of decades in which public and private investment did not keep pace with these neighborhoods' needs. Reinvestment in these areas should combine housing, drainage, street, sidewalk, tree, park, and public safety improvements so that each investment reinforces the others. Reinvestment works best when these pieces move together within a defined area, rather than arriving one at a time over many years with no clear relationship to one another.

### Rehabilitation, Infill, and Vacant Properties

Rehabilitation should be a primary housing strategy, not a secondary one, and Section 4.3 already identifies substantial market potential for renovating Jonesboro's existing homes. Grants or loans, code assistance, weatherization, accessibility upgrades, and insurance and financing support, delivered through partnerships with lenders and nonprofits, can help residents repair and stay in their homes rather than watching them decline toward vacancy. This approach treats existing residents as an asset worth investing in, not an obstacle on the way to new development.

Small-scale infill and adaptive reuse offer a second path, letting a neighborhood add housing and activity without changing its underlying character. Local owners and small builders are often best positioned to add cottages, accessory dwellings, duplexes, and small apartment houses incrementally, but only if the City removes barriers standing in their way. Pre-approved building patterns matched to neighborhood form and lot pattern, predictable permitting timelines, and direct technical assistance can turn what is often an intimidating and expensive process for a small owner into a realistic option, expanding housing choice one lot at a time rather than waiting for a single large development to arrive.

Vacant, abandoned, and unsafe properties call for a more deliberate response than simply waiting for the market to



*Madison Place row houses, S. Madison Ave. This townhouse infill near downtown adds new homes to an established, walkable neighborhood, using streets and utilities already in place.*

resolve them. A graduated toolkit, beginning with early outreach to owners, moving through code assistance and enforcement, and escalating where necessary to acquisition, land banking, and redevelopment partnerships, gives the City options short of demolition as a default response. The goal throughout should be productive reuse and neighborhood stability, since a vacant lot, however well maintained, still represents a missing piece in the street wall and a missed opportunity for reinvestment.

## Recommendations

Reinvestment works best when several improvements arrive together in a defined area. The recommendations below pick priority areas, starting with North Jonesboro and the neighborhoods around Downtown, and deliver coordinated capital projects there. They also create new programs for home repair, vacant properties, small-scale infill, and displacement protection. The yearly investment audit in Section 4.5 (M6.4) checks that reinvestment reaches every district over time. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies to Guide Reinvestment

#### M5.1 - Choose priority reinvestment areas.

- **Description:** Select reinvestment areas with residents, starting with North Jonesboro and the neighborhoods around Downtown.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, neighborhood associations
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Regulations to Support Reinvestment

#### M1.1.6 - Parking and review process.

- **Description:** Simplify approvals and reduce parking requirements so small infill and reuse projects are practical on older lots.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Planning Commission, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Investments for Neighborhoods

#### M5.2 - Coordinate neighborhood capital projects.

- **Description:** Deliver sidewalks, lighting, drainage, trees, and street repair together in each reinvestment area.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, City Water and Light
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M4.6 - Reinvest in North Church and Jessup.

- **Description:** Build resident-led street connections, extend Miles Park, and support housing programs in North Jonesboro.
- **Timeline:** Short- to long-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, churches
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M5.3 - Create a home rehabilitation program.

- **Description:** Create a new program of repair grants or loans, weatherization, and accessibility improvements.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, lenders, nonprofits
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

#### M5.4 - Add code assistance and a vacant property toolkit.

- **Description:** Help owners first, then use enforcement, land banking, and reuse partners. Confirm land banking authority with the City Attorney.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Code Enforcement, City Attorney, nonprofits
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

#### M5.5 - Support small-scale infill.

- **Description:** Offer pre-approved plans and simple permits for small builders.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

#### M5.6 - Protect residents from displacement.

- **Description:** Track neighborhood change and create new assistance programs.
- **Timeline:** Short- to medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Finance, nonprofits
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

##### M5.6.1 - Track displacement indicators.

- **Description:** Monitor rents, taxes, vacancy, and ownership in reinvestment areas.
- **Timeline:** Short-term
- **Cost:** Low

##### M5.6.2 - Create a legacy homeowner assistance program.

- **Description:** Provide repair help and, where state law allows, tax relief.
- **Timeline:** Short- to medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium

##### M5.6.3 - Create small landlord and legacy business assistance programs.

- **Description:** Provide repair help for small landlords and stay-in-place help for long-standing businesses.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium

### Partnerships for Reinvestment

#### M9.4 Support the Downtown Alliance and nonprofits.

- **Description:** Build the capacity of neighborhood groups and nonprofits that carry out reinvestment.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, nonprofits
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

- **Reinvestment reach.** Households assisted and vacant properties returned to use in reinvestment areas each year.

## 4.5 Closing Service Gaps

**A District-by-District View of Access**

Every strategy in this chapter, complete neighborhoods, housing diversity, reinvestment, depends on knowing where Jonesboro's gaps actually are. This section establishes a method for identifying and closing the most consequential of those gaps, directing limited resources toward the connections and facilities that improve daily life for residents facing the greatest barriers. The analysis is organized around Jonesboro's ten Planning Districts, giving the City a consistent geography for comparing conditions and tracking whether investment is reaching every part of the city over time.

A gap in service is not the same as a destination that happens to be far away. The analysis should focus on whether residents can actually reach and use a park, school, or center, not simply whether one appears nearby on a map. A neighborhood a half-mile from a park with no safe sidewalk or crossing has a real gap, even if the park shows up as close by on paper. In some districts, the missing piece is not a destination at all but a safe connection to one already nearby, and a modest investment, a crossing, a sidewalk segment, a transit change, can close that gap more effectively than building something new.

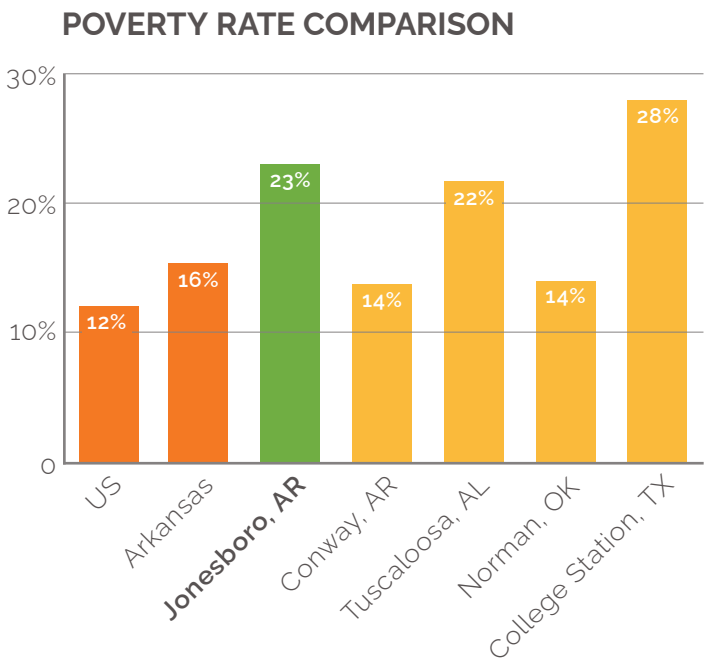
**Directing Investment Toward Equity**

Not every gap carries equal weight. Priority should go to districts and residents facing the fewest alternatives: children, older adults, people with disabilities, and households without a reliable vehicle. Jonesboro's poverty rate, near **23%**, and the uneven distribution of income across districts make this a matter of equity, not simply efficiency, and it means investment cannot be allocated only to where it is easiest to build or where demand is loudest. Comparing districts against one another is what allows the City to see where investment has lagged and correct course deliberately, rather than continuing to favor the districts that have already received the most attention.

This district-level view should directly guide the capital improvement program, grant applications, development requirements, and annual budgeting, so that spending decisions can be checked against a citywide picture rather than made




*Gap Analysis Map*




*Jonesboro's poverty rate is higher than state and national averages, reinforcing the need to prioritize investment in neighborhoods where residents face the greatest barriers.*

district by district in isolation. Coordinating related investments, a park alongside a planned school or drainage project, for instance, stretches limited dollars further and should be favored over single-purpose projects addressing only one need at a time.

Finally, this analysis should be revisited regularly, not treated as a one-time study. Tracking conditions across all ten districts on a recurring basis lets the City confirm that investment is actually narrowing the gaps between districts rather than simply moving forward everywhere at the same uneven pace. Sustained over time, this is how Plan Jonesboro can measure progress, district by district and year after year.

## Recommendations

Knowing where the gaps are is the first step to closing them. The recommendations below compare service levels across the ten Planning Districts every year, direct reinvestment to the districts that lag, and close the network gaps that keep residents from reaching nearby destinations. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

**Investments to Close Gaps**

**M2.6 - Add street connections and barrier crossings**

- **Description:** Close network gaps, and study new crossings of the railroads, the interstate, and creeks.
- **Timeline:** Medium- to long-term
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Jonesboro MPO, ArDOT, railroads
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

**Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents**

**M6.4 - Assess service gaps and audit investment by district.**

- **Description:** Compare the ten Planning Districts, and check every year that investment reaches all of them.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to ongoing
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation ·
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

**M5.1 - Choose priority reinvestment areas.**

- **Description:** Use the district comparison to select and update priority reinvestment areas.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, neighborhood associations
- **Consultant Needed:** No

**Metrics to Track Implementation Success**

- **Investment by district.** Capital spending per resident in each Planning District, compared to its measured service gaps.



CHAPTER 5

5

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

*Making it easier to move around*

Jonesboro's parks, natural areas, waterways, and urban forest are essential to the community's quality of life and identity. As the city grows, connecting these assets can create more opportunities for recreation while bringing nature closer to everyday life. Expanding park access, strengthening the urban forest, creating civic spaces, and building a connected network of greenways and blueways will help Jonesboro become a healthier, greener, and more connected community.

## 5.1 Park Access

### Connecting People to Parks & Nature

Residents of Jonesboro love being outside as much as anyone else in the Natural State. Parks and green spaces are among the community's most treasured public assets: not simply spaces for playgrounds, but settings where neighbors become friends, where children adventure, and where the community gathers to celebrate what it means to live here. Public input envisioned a Jonesboro where a shaded trail, an open green, or a welcoming neighborhood park sits within an easy walk of every doorstep, connecting people to nature, to recreation, and to one another. Connecting nature and recreation will require a concerted effort to bring together Jonesboro's goals for smart development, transportation safety, and park expansion. The reward will be a healthier, connected, and vibrant Jonesboro for generations to come.

Access to parks depends on more than the amount of park land within a city. The location, type, programming, and connections to each park all influence how well the system serves Jonesboro residents. Evaluating the existing park system provides a starting point for understanding where recreation opportunities are already available, where service gaps remain, and where new parks and connections can expand access as the city grows.

### Existing Parks

Jonesboro's existing park system includes different classifications of parks that serve different recreation needs and geographic areas. Looking at the distribution of these parks provides a clearer picture of where the system currently meets community needs and where additional neighborhood and community parks are needed.

According to its recent Parks System Master Plan, Jonesboro is currently underserved by community and neighborhood parks:

These deficits reinforce the Comprehensive Plan goal of strategically locating new parks in underserved areas of the city, with particular emphasis on expanding neighborhood park access..

### Accessing Parks

Outdoor destinations should not only be within safe walking distance; the journey should also be shaded and comfortable. While the Trust for Public Land estimates that nearly **22%** of Jonesboro residents live within a **10-minute walk** of a park, the 2024 Park System Master Plan estimates that only **4%** of residential areas fall within a 5-minute walk of a city park.

New park locations are a key consideration for increasing access in underserved areas, but without multiple connectivity methods, they will remain isolated destinations rather than integrated recreation opportunities. This is a significant issue for Jonesboro's parks currently: only **6.9%** of park land is accessible by sidewalk or trail. While community parks like the Shooting Complex and Joe Mack Campbell Park are not generally considered suitable for non-motorist access, reframing access in terms of total programmable recreation supply reveals a sharp disparity between park offerings and how easily the

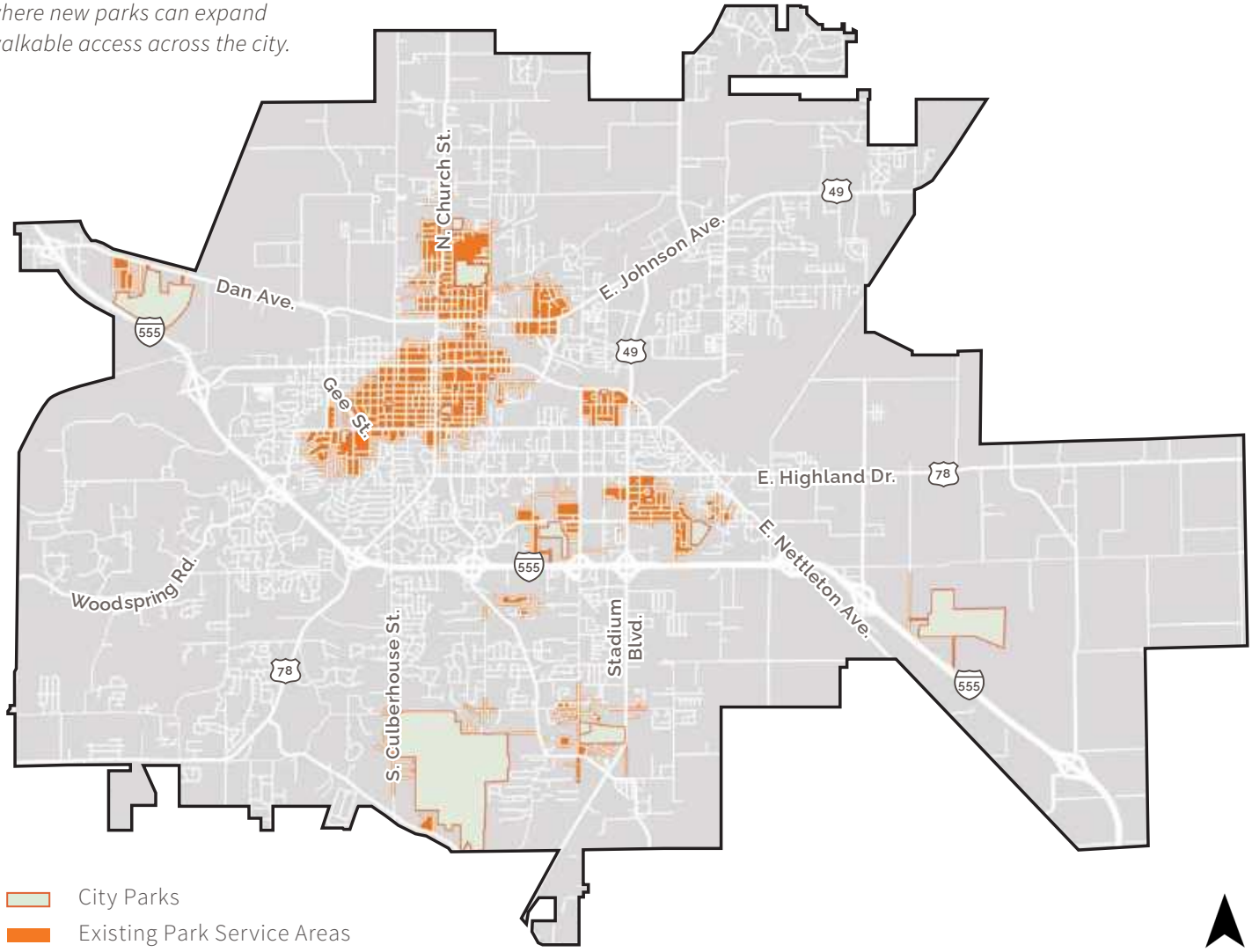
**PARK LEVEL OF SERVICE AND EXISTING NEEDS**

| Classification | Target LOS | 2026 Surplus/Deficit | 2040 Surplus/Need |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Regional Parks** | 8.0 ac/1,000 | 64.5 ac | -105.7 ac |
| **Community Parks** | 2.0 ac/1,000 | -59.5 ac | -102,1 ac |
| **Neighborhood Parks** | 1.0 ac/1,000 | -73.4 ac | -94.8 ac |

**Based on a 2040 projection of 105,558 (Source 2024 Parks System Master Plan).*

## EXISTING PARK SERVICE AREAS

*Existing park service areas show where new parks can expand walkable access across the city.*




average resident can access the park system as a whole. Despite the limited share of park land that is immediately accessible by sidewalk or trail, **93.5%** of Jonesboro parks have good or excellent recreation offerings in terms of variety of activities and indoor or outdoor options.

### Locating New Parks

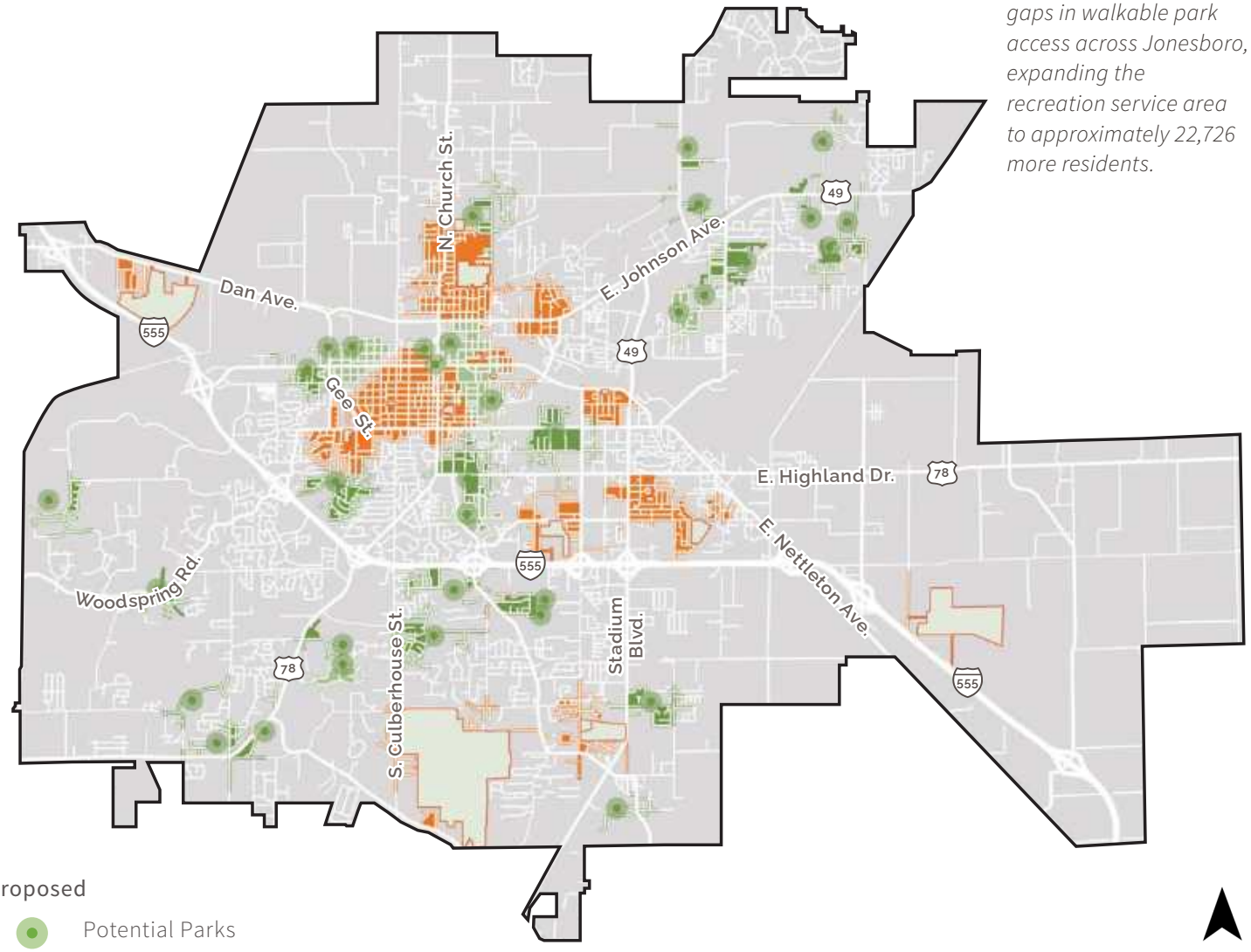
The most pronounced recreation service gaps exist in the northeast, northwest, southwest, north-central, west, and central portions of Jonesboro. These service gaps highlight potential areas for new parks. If each of the proposed parks were built, Jonesboro's recreation service area would increase by approximately **22,726 people**. New parks should be either neighborhood parks or community parks that meet the needs of several nearby neighborhoods.

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## Park Access

### EXISTING & PROPOSED PARK SERVICE AREAS

*Proposed parks fill gaps in walkable park access across Jonesboro, expanding the recreation service area to approximately 22,726 more residents.*




Proposed

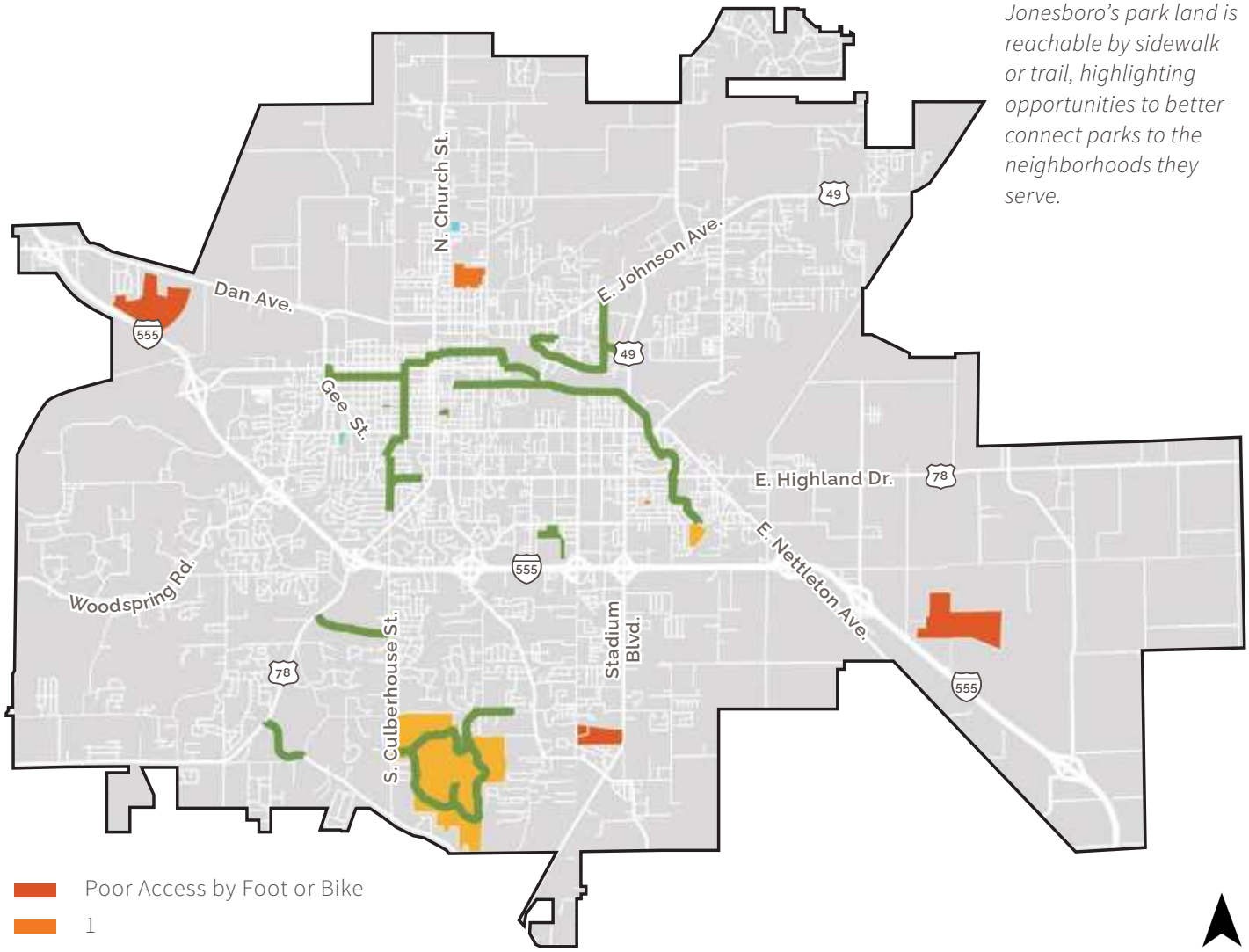
- Potential Parks
- Proposed Park Service Areas

Existing

- City Parks
- Existing Park Service Areas

## PARK ACCESS BY SIDEWALK & TRAIL

*Today, only 6.9% of Jonesboro's park land is reachable by sidewalk or trail, highlighting opportunities to better connect parks to the neighborhoods they serve.*

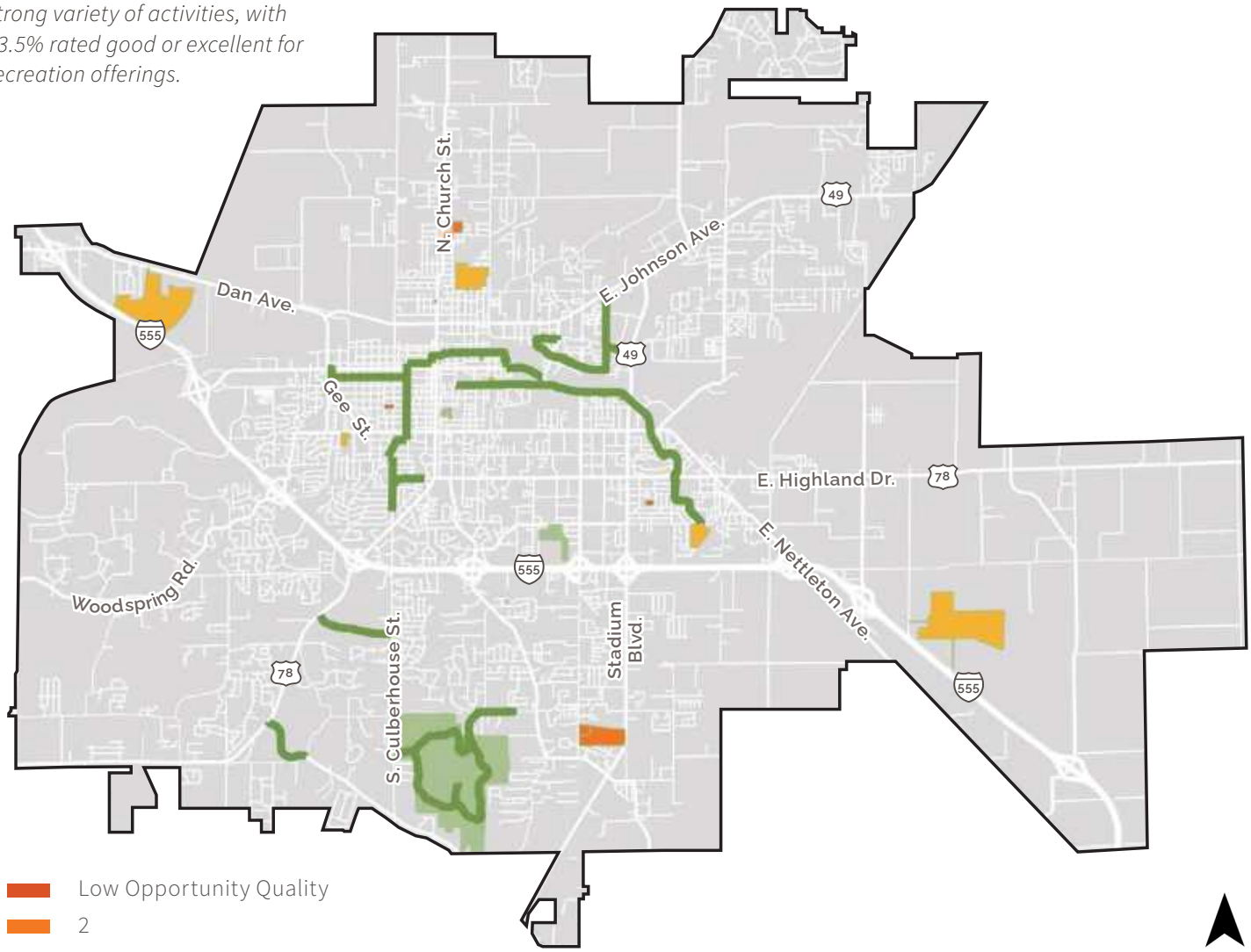


# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## Park Access

### PARK AMENITIES & OFFERINGS

*Most of Jonesboro's parks offer a strong variety of activities, with 93.5% rated good or excellent for recreation offerings.*



## Recommendations

Jonesboro has too few neighborhood and community parks, and many existing parks are hard to reach on foot. The recommendations below begin with low-cost audits that map the gaps. Then they fund an annual line for park access and buy land in the six gap areas. Parks and trail links required of new development come through the UDC, so City dollars go to existing gaps. Through development agreements, required parks are sequenced partway through a project rather than built first. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies to Support Park Access

#### M6.3 Set annexation and growth-area agreement rules.

- **Description:** Require connected, funded growth, and use agreements to sequence required parks partway through each project.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** City Council, Planning, Engineering, City Water and Light, developers
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M6.5 Pursue outside funding and tax credits.

- **Description:** Pursue state and federal grants for park land, trails, and park access improvements.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Finance, Parks and Recreation, Engineering, Jonesboro MPO
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Regulations to Improve Park Access

#### M1.1.5 Subdivision, parkland, and tree standards.

- **Description:** Require parkland dedication with location criteria, trail corridor dedication, and connections from new subdivisions to adjacent parks, schools, and trails. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

#### M1.3 Update stormwater and park design standards.

- **Description:** Credit detention areas built as usable open space and trail easements, and set amenity standards for park entrances, sidewalks, and crossings.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, City Water and Light
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Investments to Upkeep & Expand Parks

#### M3.2 Fund a park access capital program.

- **Description:** Create an annual budget line for sidewalks, crossings, paths, shade, and restrooms that connect people to existing parks.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Finance
- **Consultant Needed:** No

## Park Access

### M3.3 Acquire park land in gap areas.

- **Description:** Buy sites in the six gap areas (north-east, northwest, southwest, north-central, west, and central), favoring land near centers and trails.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term (6–10 yrs)
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, City Council, Craighead County
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

**Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents**

### M3.1 Audit park access and map gap areas.

- **Description:** Walk park edges with residents, and map missing sidewalks, crossings, and creek routes.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Engineering
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### M2.3 Complete the active transportation plan.

- **Description:** Use park access as an explicit criterion when ranking walking, biking, and trail projects.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Jonesboro MPO
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

**Partnerships for Park Access**

### M9.2 Sign joint-use agreements.

- **Description:** Open school grounds and ASU facilities after hours in park gap areas until public parks can be established.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Jonesboro Public Schools, ASU
- **Consultant Needed:** No

**Metrics to Track Implementation Success**

### M6.6 Publish a dashboard and annual report.

- **Description:** Report the share of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park and the share of park land reachable by sidewalk or trail, now 6.9%.
- **Timeline:** Short-term to ongoing
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

## 5.2 Park Programming

### Introduction

Jonesboro's parks are not all intended to look, function, or be programmed the same way. The appropriate mix of recreation depends on the scale of the park, its physical environment, the neighborhoods it serves, and the needs that already exist elsewhere in the park system. Larger parks may accommodate major facilities, specialized recreation, or community-wide events, while neighborhood parks can provide more everyday opportunities for recreation, gathering, and access to nature. Some sites may also be better suited to natural areas or specialized activities because of their existing landscape and environmental features.

Rather than expecting every park to provide every type of recreation, Plan Jonesboro organizes park programming into five broad categories: passive recreation, community gathering, specialized activity, natural areas, and sports. These categories can overlap within an individual park, but the balance between them should respond to the role each park plays within the larger system.

**Passive Recreation.** Low-intensity activities that allow residents to enjoy a park without requiring specialized facilities.

**Community Gathering.** Spaces and amenities that allow parks to function as places for neighbors, families, and the broader community to gather, socialize, and participate in events. Craighead Forest serves this role by hosting events that draw a wide section of residents.

**Specialized Activity.** Recreation designed around a particular activity, facility, or site condition. Mountain biking is Craighead Forest's signature specialized offering, built on terrain and a trail network that few other sites in Jonesboro can replicate.

**Natural Areas.** Portions of the park system where the natural environment itself is the primary amenity, providing opportunities to experience woods, water, trails, and less-programmed open space. At Craighead Forest, these areas extend beyond the park's more actively programmed spaces.

**Sports.** Facilities designed for organized or informal athletic activity, including fields, courts, gyms, and other spaces that support individual and team sports.

No single park is expected to carry all five: Craighead Forest is the exception rather than the model, and asking every neighborhood park to become a smaller version of it would produce parks that do many things poorly. The goal is to achieve balance across the park system rather than within every individual site. A resident should be able to reach a court, a gathering space, a quiet trail, and a stretch of unmanaged woods without leaving the city, even if no one park offers all four. Programming decisions should be made with the whole network in view, and each new park should be evaluated based on what the surrounding area is missing

### Park Programming

The five programming categories provide a framework for understanding what Jonesboro's park system offers and where additional investment is needed. The 2023 community survey for parks identified specific amenities and recreation opportunities residents want more of, helping reveal gaps within each type of programming. Rather than concentrating these improvements in a single destination, the City can use these priorities to determine which amenities belong in different parks based on park scale, environment, surrounding needs, and existing recreation opportunities.

Following water park offerings that are now being fulfilled by the Ridge Athletic Center, citizens wanted restrooms more than anything. A restroom is not a destination, but its absence quietly caps how long anyone stays at a park, and that limitation is felt most by families, older adults, and anyone with a medical need. Residents also want more spaces for fishing, walking, and resting.

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## Park Programming



***Passive Recreation*** *- Fishing on Craighead Forest Lake*



***Community Gathering*** *- Jonesboro Christmas Parade '25*



***Specialized Activity*** *- Jonesboro Ridge Riders biker*



***Natural Areas*** *- Craighead Forest Park*



***Sports*** *- Joe Mack Campbell Park*

Other priorities point toward parks that offer more than open space alone. Residents want places intentionally designed for gathering, including community gardens and indoor and outdoor amphitheaters. They also identified opportunities to rent canoes and kayaks, play pickleball, use rock climbing walls, access water, and bike on trails. Together, these priorities expand the range of experiences available throughout the park system without requiring every park to provide every activity.

One of the clearest opportunities is additional enclosed, programmable recreation space, including recreation centers, multi-use gyms, and classroom, meeting, and event rooms. These are the spaces that let a neighbor shoot baskets in January, join a league that meets after dark, or find a pickup game within walking distance instead of driving to a complex across town. They can also serve multiple purposes: a gym is a court on Tuesday morning and a craft fair later that evening, while a meeting room can host a fitness class, a scout troop, and a neighborhood association the same week. Jonesboro has built the fields; the next investment is the enclosed, programmable space that allows neighborhood and community parks to support the sports residents already play alongside everything else a park is asked to hold.

The City should prioritize these documented recreation gaps and distribute them deliberately rather than concentrating them in one destination, and while treating support amenities as critical recreation infrastructure rather than as finishing touches.

## FACILITY LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) GAP MATRIX

| Facility / Amenity | Primary Programming Use (general category) | Current Facilities | Current LOS | Target LOS (2040) | 2040 Need | Facility Gap | Standing vs. Peer Avg (50-99k pop. communities) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baseball Fields (adult) | Adult baseball leagues/tournaments | 4 | 1:19,831 | 1:19,500 | 5 | 1 | Better (peer 1:27,566) |
| Baseball Fields (youth) | Youth baseball leagues | 15 | 1:5,288 | 1:5,000 | 21 | 6 | Better (peer 1:7,237) |
| Multi-purpose Fields (outdoor) | Flexible field sports (football, lacrosse, rugby, practice space) | 9 | 1:8,814 | 1:8,300 | 13 | 4 | Better (peer 1:13,244) |
| Multi-purpose Fields (indoor) | Indoor field sports, camps | 2 | 1:39,662 | 1:35,000 | 3 | 1 | **Worse (peer 1:34,834)** |
| Soccer Fields | Youth/adult soccer leagues | 24 | 1:3,305 | 1:2,900 | 36 | 12 | Better (peer 1:17,741) |
| Softball Fields (adult) | Adult softball leagues | 4 | 1:19,83 | 1:19,500 | 5 | 1 | **Worse (peer 1:17,078)** |
| Softball Fields (youth) | Youth softball leagues | 7 | 1:1 | 1:11,000 | 10 | 3 | Better (peer 1:12,716) |
| Basketball Courts (outdoor) | Drop-in/pickup basketball | 10 | 23 | 1:7,000 | 15 | 5 | Better (peer 1:8,790) |
| Multi-purpose Courts (indoor) | Indoor basketball/volleyball, gym rec programs | 19 | 1:4,175 | 1:4,100 | 26 | 7 | Better (peer 1:22,960) |
| Pickleball Courts | Drop-in play, leagues, lessons | 6 | 1:13,221 | 1:10,000 | 11 | 5 | **Worse (peer 1:11,150)** |
| Tennis Courts | Lessons, leagues, drop-in play | 1 | 1:4,666 | 1:4,000 | 26 | 9 | Better (peer 1:5,577) |
| Splash Pads | Unstructured water play, summer programming | | 1:19,831 | 1:15,000 | 7 | 3 | N/A (not reported) |
| Swimming Pools (indoor/outdoor | Swim lessons, lap swim, aquatics programs | 4 | 1:19,831 | 1:13,500 | 8 | 4 | Better (peer 1:43,100) |
| Community Gardens | Garden plots, horticulture programs | 1 | 1:79,324 | 1:20,000 | 5 | 4 | **Worse (peer 1:52,906)** |
| Dog Parks | Off-leash recreation | 2 | 1:39,662 | 1:32,100 | 3 | 1 | Better (peer 1:54,119) |
| Playgrounds | Unstructured play, youth programming | 57 | 1:1,392 | 1:1,300 | 81 | 24 | Better (peer 1:3,779) |
| Skateparks* | Skate/BMX programming | 13500 | 170.2 SF/1,000 | 192.7 SF/1,000 | 20330 | 6830 | **Worse (peer 414 SF/1,000)** |
| Disc Golf Courses | Casual/league disc golf | 3 | 1:26,441 | 1:26,500 | 4 | 1 | N/A (not reported) |

IN PROGRESS

*Existing facilities compared with 2040 level-of-service targets highlight where additional recreation amenities may be needed as Jonesboro grows.*

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## Park Programming

## Recommendations

Park programming depends on essential infrastructure and on knowing what each part of the city lacks. The recommendations below set design standards for park amenities, fund the shade, restrooms, and paths that let people stay, and open school and ASU facilities to fill gaps. They also use pilots to test new offerings and review the system every five years. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations for Park Amenities

#### M1.3 Update stormwater and park design standards.

- **Description:** Set amenity standards for restrooms, shade, seating, and enclosed flexible space, matched to each park's scale.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, City Water and Light
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Investments for Park Programming

#### M3.2 Fund a park access capital program.

- **Description:** Phase in restrooms, shade, and seating, starting with community parks, heavily used parks, and parks on the trail network.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Finance
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M8.3 Test ideas with pilots and public art.

- **Description:** Pilot new programs, such as water-based recreation, programs for older adults, and pop-up events, before committing capital funds.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, arts groups
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Partnerships for Programming

#### M9.2 Sign joint-use agreements.

- **Description:** Share school and ASU gyms, fields, and meeting rooms to expand year-round programming.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Jonesboro Public Schools, ASU
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Continuous Planning

#### M6.7 Review the plan every five years.

- **Description:** Update the park programming inventory and gap map, and repeat the community survey to confirm whether gaps are filled.
- **Timeline:** Long-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Jonesboro MPO
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

**Programming balance.** Share of residents who can reach each of the five programming categories, by Planning District.

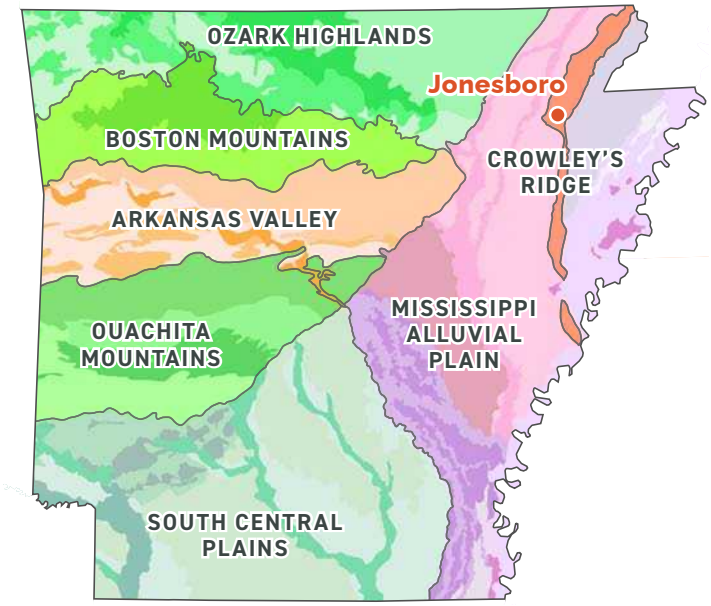
## 5.3 The Urban Forest

An urban forest is the complete network of trees and vegetation within the city limits, including trees in parks, along city streets, in neighborhoods, and on public or private property. These natural resources provide ecological, economic, and community benefits by improving air quality, reducing heat, providing shade, reducing stormwater runoff, and enhancing overall quality of life.

Trees can also be viewed as part of the City's infrastructure. As trees mature, their ability to capture stormwater, provide shade, and deliver other community benefits increases. While the value of an individual tree varies based on its size, age, species, and location, even a simplified estimate can demonstrate that preserving and expanding Jonesboro's urban forest provides measurable value beyond appearance alone. Rather than assigning a definitive value to every tree, these estimates can help illustrate the broader return provided by a healthy, mature urban canopy.

*"Urban & community forests function to mitigate the environmental impacts of urbanization." - US Forest Services*

### ECOREGIONS - EPA LEVEL III




*Jonesboro sits at the intersection of the Mississippi Alluvial Plain and Crowley's Ridge, giving the city a distinct and diverse ecological setting.*

**Introduction**

Jonesboro's landscape character is shaped by its location within the Mississippi Alluvial Plain and the presence of Crowley's Ridge, creating a unique opportunity to restore and preserve the unique ecological diversity of the region. Historically, the Delta landscape supported extensive bottomland hardwood forests, wetlands, and native grassland systems, while Crowley's Ridge provided a distinct upland forest environment with plant species diversity uncommon to the surrounding flatlands, This rare ecological identity shaped by diverse hardwood forests and heritage tree species includes regionally significant native trees such as tulip trees, American beech, magnolias, oaks, and hickories.

These species should be recognized as valuable community assets, and the City should consider adopting stronger tree preservation ordinances that prioritize the protection of significant trees, establish heritage tree classifications, and require preservation strategies during future development. Unlike the City's current tree preservation standard, which recommends a **18" DBH** minimum for tree protection, the heritage trees in the rare ecological planes should have more proactive protection with a minimum of **3" DBH**. Connecting greenways and public spaces to these natural features can help highlight regional biodiversity while creating opportunities for education, recreation, and conservation. Future ordinances and greenway investments should prioritize landscape restoration by incorporating native and restorative species that strengthen habitat and support long-term ecological health.

Furthermore, expanding tree canopy, restoring native vegetation, and creating pollinator pathways can help reconnect fragmented gaps in the natural systems throughout the city. Strategic planting along waterways, trails, parks, and public spaces can improve shade, reduce heat impacts, support wildlife, and enhance the overall experience of residents. By using native species suited to Jonesboro's ecoregion, the City can create resilient landscapes that reflect the natural character of the Delta while strengthening connections between people, water, and nature.

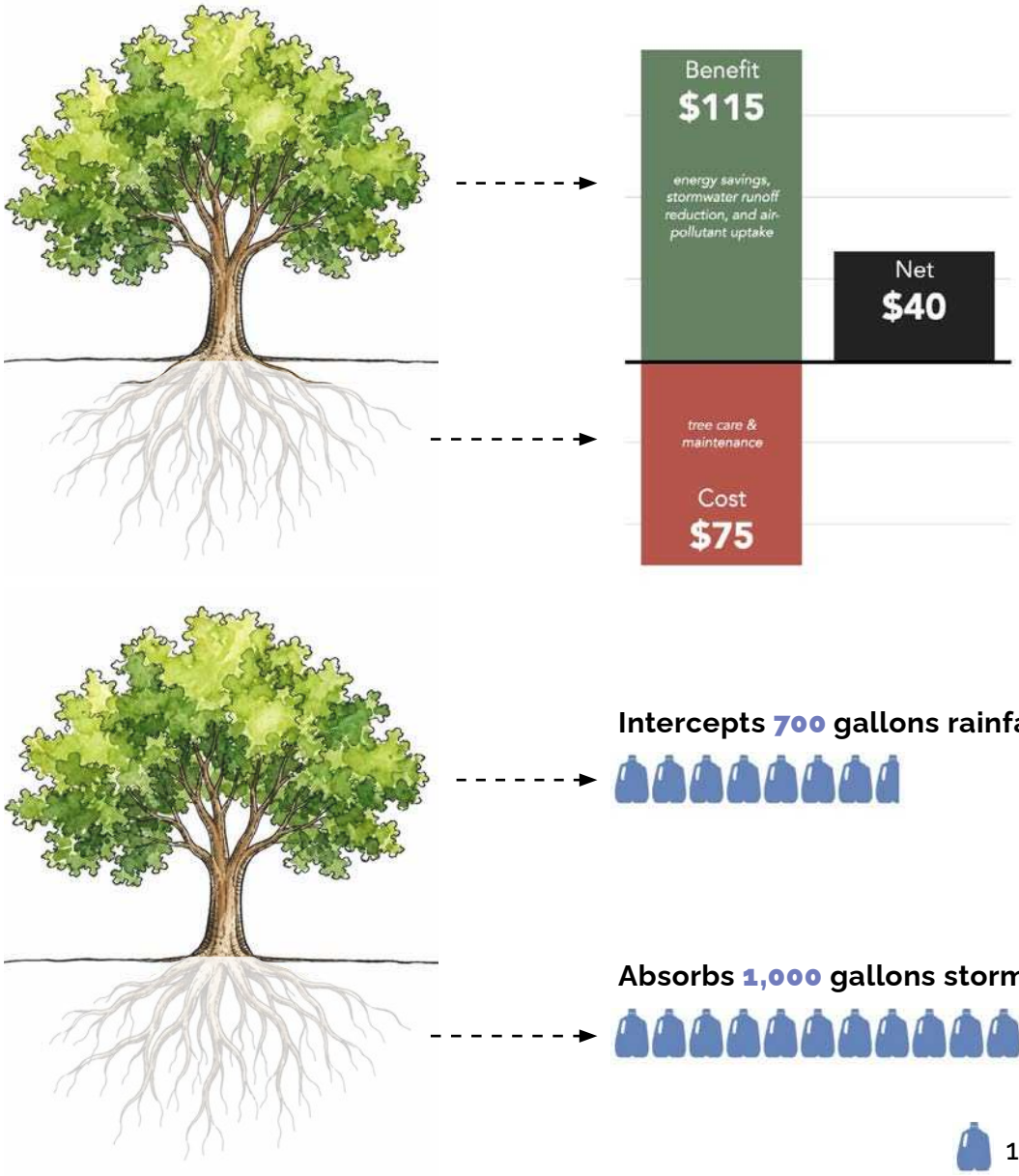
**Cooling the City Through Shade**

As communities grow, traditional urban materials such as asphalt roads, concrete sidewalks, and buildings absorb and retain heat, creating what is known as the heat island effect.

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## The Urban Forest

### ANNUAL IMPACT OF A SINGLE TREE




*A mature tree can provide benefits that outweigh its care and maintenance costs—generating an estimated $40 in net value each year while also intercepting rainfall and absorbing stormwater.*

These surfaces can make areas significantly warmer than surrounding natural landscapes, increasing heat exposure for residents and reducing outdoor comfort.

Trees are a natural tool for reducing heat in urban areas. Tree canopy provides shade over streets, sidewalks, parks, and public spaces, helping lower surface temperatures and reduce the heat island effect. Research has shown that streets with greater tree coverage can be several degrees cooler than areas without trees, making outdoor spaces more inviting and encouraging walking, gathering, and recreation. Expanding the urban forest is an important strategy for helping Jonesboro become a more resilient and comfortable community during periods of extreme heat. Long periods of exposure to extreme heat can increase

the risk of heat-related illnesses, including heat exhaustion and heat stroke, while placing additional strain on vulnerable populations such as older adults, children, and individuals who spend significant time outdoors. Expanding the urban forest provides a natural cooling strategy that can help create safer and more comfortable outdoor environments.

*"Extreme heat is one of the leading weather-related causes of death in the United States. Expanding tree canopy is a proven strategy to reduce heat exposure and improve community resilience." — Centers for Disease Control and Prevention / U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

**Beautification**

Trees play an important role in shaping the appearance and identity of a community. Tree-lined streets, landscaped corridors, and green public spaces create a more attractive and welcoming environment while improving the overall experience of residents. Surveys and studies have shown that people consistently prefer places with trees, recognizing them as more comfortable, vibrant, and visually appealing. Investing in the urban forest enhances community character while creating spaces where people want to spend time.

**Gateways to City**

The urban forest serves as an important part of the community's gateways and helps shape a visitor's first impression of Jonesboro. Streetscapes with healthy trees and well-maintained landscaping create a sense of pride, care, and connection for residents and visitors. Urban forestry principles often highlight the importance of accessible green spaces, including the goal that residents can see trees from their homes, live near areas with substantial tree canopy, and have convenient access to quality green spaces. By strengthening tree cover along major corridors and entryways, Jonesboro can create welcoming gateways that reflect the character and values of the community.

Measuring the **3-30-300 rule** to help cities meet nature access thresholds | US Forest Service Research and Development

**Application**

Establishing a strong urban forest requires a long-term commitment to planning, planting, and stewardship. The City should evaluate existing tree canopy conditions, identify areas with limited shade or increased heat exposure, and develop a strategic tree planting and maintenance plan for streets, parks, public spaces, parking lots, neighborhoods, and community corridors. The City should also consider updating development codes to require trees in new developments, parking areas, streetscapes, and residential neighborhoods while encouraging the preservation of existing mature trees through a tree preservation ordinance. A resilient urban forest depends not only on adding new trees but also on protecting and maintaining existing resources through proper care, pruning, preservation, and replacement strategies. By incorporating urban forestry into future development decisions and engaging residents,



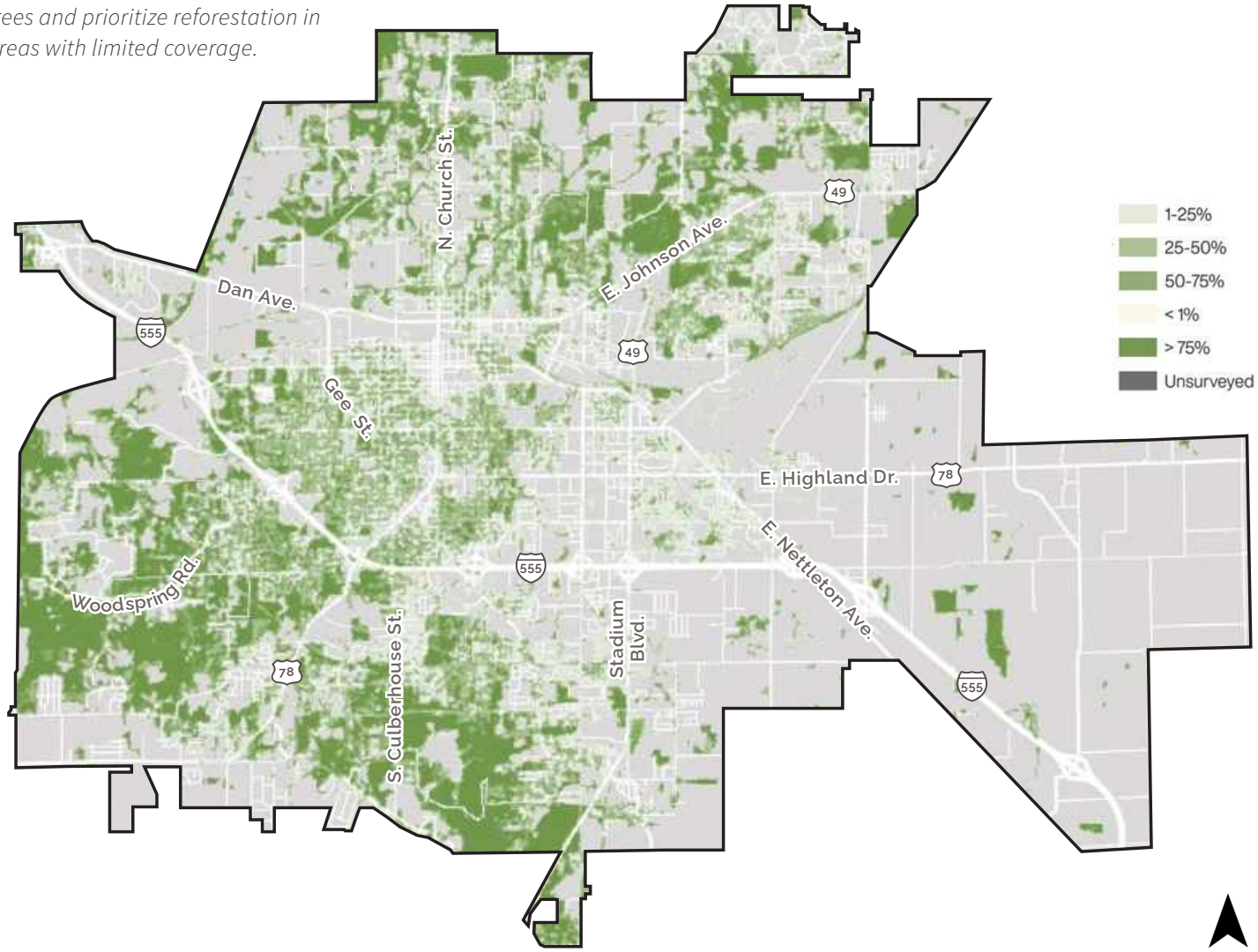
*Members of the City's Keep Jonesboro Beautiful group help expand Jonesboro's urban forest through community tree planting and stewardship.*

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## The Urban Forest

### CANOPY COVERAGE

*Existing tree canopy reveals opportunities to preserve mature trees and prioritize reforestation in areas with limited coverage.*




Jonesboro can create a healthier, cooler, and more connected community that enhances quality of life for generations to come.

**Tree Preservation**

Protecting existing mature trees should be a priority as Jonesboro continues to grow. The City can strengthen

tree preservation efforts by encouraging the retention of significant trees during development, incorporating preservation standards into new residential and commercial projects, and requiring replacement strategies when removal is unavoidable. Preserving existing canopy provides immediate benefits by reducing heat, improving neighborhood character, and maintaining the environmental value of established trees.

The City's Tree Preservation Ordinance should be updated to reflect this priority. Currently, the ordinance does not define a clear threshold for which trees warrant protection. It should be amended to define a "Significant Tree" as any tree with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of **18 inches** or greater, excluding black locust, cottonwood, and Bradford pear. The ordinance should also be broadened to apply to the removal of any significant tree, not only those removed in connection with new development or redevelopment, extending protection of mature canopy citywide regardless of the reason for removal.

### Reforestation

Reforestation provides an opportunity for Jonesboro to strategically expand its urban canopy while accommodating future growth. The City can support reforestation efforts by establishing tree planting programs and incorporating canopy goals into new residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments. Tree planting in parking areas, and development corridors can help restore lost canopy, reduce heat impacts, and create a more attractive and resilient community. Through coordinated planning, maintenance, and partnerships with developers and residents, Jonesboro can ensure that new growth contributes to a healthier, more resilient urban forest.

On a city level, several actions can help translate this goal into measurable canopy growth. The Jonesboro Urban Forestry Council, already established to advise the City on tree-related policy, could take a lead role in setting citywide canopy targets and prioritizing planting locations. The City could incorporate tree planting into its Capital Improvement Plan, dedicating a portion of annual funding to street tree and park reforestation projects, particularly along rights-of-way and in parks with thin or aging canopy. Public parking lots and City-owned facilities could be prioritized as demonstration sites for shade tree planting, both to reduce urban heat and to model canopy standards the City hopes to see in private development. The City could also pursue Tree City USA designation to formalize an annual planting budget and tree care standards. Partnerships with the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Urban and Community Forestry Program and community tree giveaway events can extend the City's planting capacity at low cost, supplementing municipal efforts with volunteer and resident-led planting.

Other communities have expanded their urban forests by pairing city-led initiatives with opportunities for residents to participate in tree planting. Programs such as resident reforestation incentives and annual tree giveaways encourage private property owners to become partners in increasing community tree canopy. These efforts extend tree planting beyond public spaces by empowering residents to contribute to a healthier, more connected urban forest. Jonesboro can look to similar programs as a model for expanding canopy coverage through community involvement and long-term stewardship.

### Development

For private development Jonesboro currently addresses tree protection primarily through its zoning ordinance, which includes standards for landscaping and screening (Sec. 117-326) and a tree preservation removal permit (Sec. 117-326.1). These provisions are applied through the development review process, meaning tree protection is only applicable when a site comes in for a zoning certificate, site plan approval, or planned development review, rather than functioning as a standalone, citywide protection.

This approach captures canopy loss tied to new construction and redevelopment, but it can falter in a few predictable ways. It typically does not address tree removal that happens outside the development review process, and it may lack a clear and measurable definition of which trees are significant enough to warrant protection. This provides an opportunity for the City of Jonesboro to strengthen their code regulations and require more intentional criteria to help restore and preserve the community's tree network.

Jonesboro's landscape ordinance provides a strong foundation for expanding and protecting the community's urban forest. Beyond requiring landscaping for new development, it includes meaningful provisions for preserving mature trees, encouraging native species, reducing urban heat island impacts, and increasing tree canopy in parking lots and along streets. However, opportunities remain to build upon this foundation through broader urban forestry initiatives, such as establishing citywide canopy goals, developing an urban forest management plan, expanding tree planting in underserved areas, and tracking long-term canopy growth.

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## The Urban Forest

### SHADE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

**Residential**



Residential Existing Conditions

Shade Coverage Comparision

| | Existing | Revised |
|---|---|---|
| Tree Totals | 0 | 2 |



Residential Revised Code

This revised code provides approximately a 25% shade increase on site

**Streets**



Streets Existing Code

Shade Coverage Comparision

| | Existing | Revised |
|---|---|---|
| Tree Totals | 4 | 10 |



Streets Revised Code

This existing code only provides about 18% of shade on the street corridor while the revised version offers 44% coverage.

**Civic & Open Space**



Civic Space Existing Code

Shade Coverage Comparision

| | Existing | Revised |
|---|---|---|
| Tree Totals | 4 | 9 |



Civic Space Revised Code

This existing code only provides about 7% of shade inside the civic plaza, while the revised version offers 38% coverage.

*Revised development standards can expand tree canopy & shade across residential areas, streets,& civic spaces, reducing heat & improving outdoor comfort.*

## Recommendations

Jonesboro's tree canopy shades its streets and parks, cools neighborhoods during extreme heat, and absorbs stormwater, but coverage is uneven across the city. The recommendations below protect significant trees as land develops and start a citywide program to plant where shade is missing. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations to Protect the Canopy

#### M1.1.5 Subdivision, parkland, and tree standards.

- **Description:** Carry citywide tree protection into the UDC, including the updated definition of a Significant Tree and the replacement standards described in this section. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M3.5 Start a canopy program.

- **Description:** Set canopy targets by area, plant street and park trees where shade is lowest, and pursue Tree City USA designation.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Urban Forestry Council, Keep Jonesboro Beautiful
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

**Canopy cover.** Citywide and district tree canopy percentage, and trees planted each year.

## 5.4 Small Civic Spaces

### Introduction

Small Civic Spaces are areas accessible to the public that are designed with community in mind for socialization, gathering, and community-oriented events. These types of spaces include pocket parks, plazas, courtyards, green space, and street-side seating that offer opportunities for rest, recreation, and social interaction. While often smaller in footprint, small civic spaces play a pivotal role in creating vibrant and resilient community assets that help strengthen a city's sense of place.

### Programming

Small civic spaces are most successful when they are designed for everyday passive use, but also support community programming. Farmers markets, food trucks, art exhibits, live music, and annual events can activate public gathering spaces and become a focal point for fostering social connections and supporting local businesses. Successful civic spaces become destinations because they offer both quality design and meaningful activities throughout the year.

### Distribution

An effective network of civic spaces should be distributed throughout the community so residents can conveniently access places to gather, relax, and connect. Rather than relying on a single destination, a variety of civic spaces integrated into neighborhoods, commercial zones, parks, and community corridors helps create a more connected, walkable, and inclusive city.

Jonesboro has established several successful public gathering spaces, including Downtown and community parks that regularly host festivals, markets, concerts, and other public events. As the city continues to grow, it is important to expand this network by creating additional civic spaces at the neighborhood scale. This can help strengthen connections between destinations and increase programming in underserved areas. Expanding the number of civic spaces can give more residents access to welcoming places for recreation, gathering, and everyday social interaction.





*Civic spaces in Downtown Jonesboro.*

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## Small Civic Spaces

## Recommendations

Jonesboro's pocket parks and civic spaces add up to only about 1.2 acres across four small sites. The recommendations below build Downtown's missing squares and park, and give every civic space a year-round calendar of events. Each space also gets a named caretaker before it is built. Standards and incentives for privately owned public space belong in the UDC. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies to Encourage Small Civic Spaces

#### M8.2 Plan stewardship before building public spaces.

- **Description:** Inventory public and publicly accessible private spaces, and name a steward and operating plan for each new space before it is funded.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Investments to Ensure Development and Continued Use

#### M4.3 Build Downtown streets and civic squares.

- **Description:** Build the civic green south of Washington Avenue, the plaza at Union, Main, and Church Streets, and the downtown park identified in the Parks Master Plan study.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term (6–10 yrs)
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Planning, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M8.1 Run a public life calendar.

- **Description:** Program year-round movie nights, markets, and music, designate event-ready spaces, and simplify permits for recurring events.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance, Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

**Civic space access**. Share of residents within a 10-minute walk of a civic space, and events held per space each year.

## 5.5 Greenways & Blueways

### Greenways & Blueways as Community Connections

Jonesboro's creeks, drainage corridors, and floodplains represent some of the City's greatest opportunities to expand its network of greenways and blueways, connecting parks, trails, natural open spaces, and waterways while enhancing stormwater management. Greenways are land-based corridors, such as trails and linear parks, that follow natural features and link neighborhoods to destinations. Blueways treat creeks and other waterways as connected ecological, recreational, and stormwater assets. They are valued for habitat, flood conveyance, water quality, and places where people can reach the water. Together, greenways and blueways can create an interconnected system of land- and water-based corridors that improve flood resilience, protect natural resources, expand recreational opportunities, and strengthen connections between neighborhoods and destinations. Rather than viewing streams and drainageways solely as infrastructure, the City should recognize these corridors as multifunctional community assets and leverage them as such for beautification and opportunities for new access.

### Creek Corridors & Blueways

Jonesboro's blueway network is comprised of its creeks and the drainage corridors that feed them. Treating these waterways as one connected system, instead of a series of separate drainage projects, lets the City plan for flood conveyance, habitat, water quality, and public access together. Christian Creek and Lost Creek present one of the strongest opportunities to create a continuous blueway, with a greenway alongside it, that supports both stormwater management and recreation. As drainage improvements are planned, the City should preserve stream buffers and evaluate opportunities for trails, habitat restoration, and public access to the water where appropriate. Design Week identified similar opportunities along other corridors, including:

- Higginbottom Creek between Ingels Road and Craighead Forest Park, the largest continuous opportunity area;
- Whiteman Creek at Race Avenue; and
- the area south of Turtle Creek near the former mall site

**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**



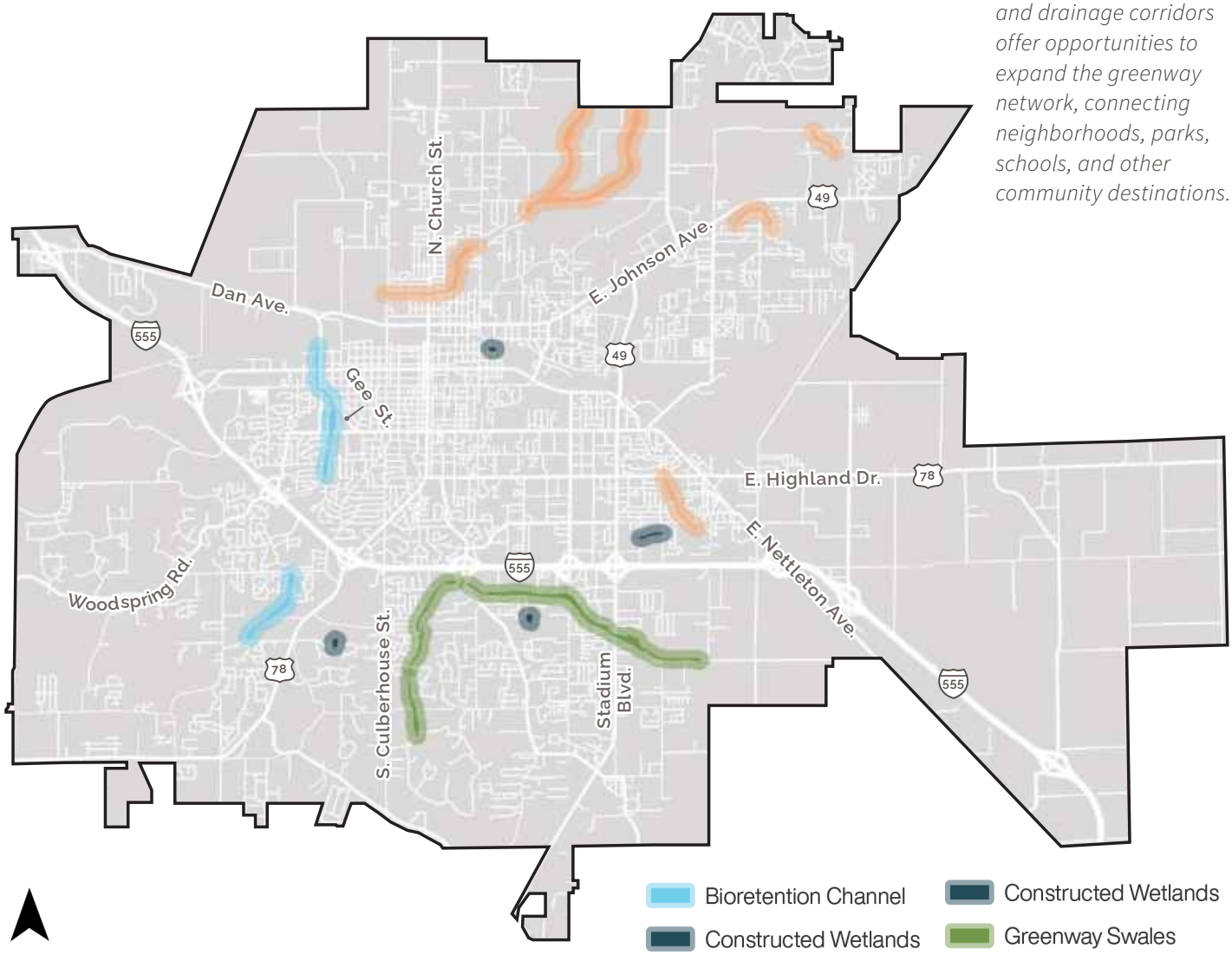

*Green infrastructure practices such as bioswales, rain gardens, street trees, and multi-use detention slow and filter runoff while adding shade, habitat, and open space to streets and neighborhoods.*

# CONNECTING NATURE & RECREATION

## Greenways and Blueways

### GREENWAY OPPORTUNITIES

*Jonesboro's creeks and drainage corridors offer opportunities to expand the greenway network, connecting neighborhoods, parks, schools, and other community destinations.*




Together, these corridors can form a network that connects neighborhoods, schools, parks, and commercial areas while maintaining flood conveyance and providing maintenance access. Where water depth and conditions allow, as at Craighead Forest Lake, blueways can also support paddling and fishing.

**Stormwater as Community Infrastructure**

Stormwater infrastructure itself can provide additional community benefits when designed with multiple purposes in mind. Regional detention facilities should be evaluated for opportunities to incorporate walking trails, open space, native landscaping, fishing areas, and other passive recreational amenities that remain functional during normal conditions while continuing to provide flood storage during major storm events. Likewise, roadway reconstruction projects along major corridors should consider green infrastructure practices such as bioswales, street trees, rain gardens, and landscaped drainage features that reduce runoff while improving the appearance of public streets.

By viewing stormwater infrastructure as an investment in both resilience and quality of life, Jonesboro can leverage future drainage improvements to create new recreational opportunities, strengthen neighborhood connectivity, protect natural resources, and enhance the community's identity.

## Recommendations

Jonesboro's creeks and drainage corridors can control flooding while adding trails, habitat, and places to reach the water. The recommendations below set stream buffers and multi-benefit drainage standards through the UDC and the City's design standards. They map the corridors, build a first pilot along Christian Creek and Lost Creek, and support the groups that will care for them. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations to Protect & Enhance Creek Corridors

#### M1.1.5 Subdivision, parkland, and tree standards.

- **Description:** Establish stream buffers and require new development to dedicate creek corridor trails where they cross or border a site. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

#### M1.3 Update stormwater and park design standards.

- **Description:** Credit green infrastructure and trail easements, and require major drainage and detention projects to look for recreation and habitat opportunities during design.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, City Water and Light
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Investments for a New Type of Public Asset

#### M3.4 Build a creek corridor pilot.

- **Description:** Prepare a concept plan and first phase for combined drainage, trail, habitat, and public access along Christian Creek and Lost Creek.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term (6–10 yrs)
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, City Water and Light
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

#### M4.5 Support Gee Street and Matthews Avenue.

- **Description:** Build the creekside plaza at Matthews Avenue so that it adds flood capacity for nearby businesses and homes.
- **Timeline:** Short- to medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

#### M3.1 Audit park access and map gap areas.

- **Description:** Map creeks, floodplain, drainage easements, and land ownership, and rank corridors by flood benefit, connectivity, and ease of acquisition
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Parks and Recreation, Engineering
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Partnerships to Build Support for a New Concept

#### M9.4 Support the Downtown Alliance and nonprofits.

- **Description:** Build the capacity of creek groups, Keep Jonesboro Beautiful, and other partners to lead cleanups, plantings, and stewardship.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Parks and Recreation, nonprofits ·
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

**Protected corridors.** Miles of creek corridor protected by buffers or easements, and miles of greenway trail along creeks.



CHAPTER 6

# 6

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

*Making it easier to move around*

Jonesboro's transportation network shapes how residents reach jobs, schools, parks, businesses, and one another. Improving mobility requires more than simply adding roadway capacity; it means creating a connected system of streets, sidewalks, trails, transit, freight routes, and safe crossings that works together. This chapter establishes a more holistic approach to transportation—strengthening connections, designing streets to fit their surroundings, improving safety and access for all users, and making better use of existing infrastructure as Jonesboro grows.

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Connecting Jonesboro

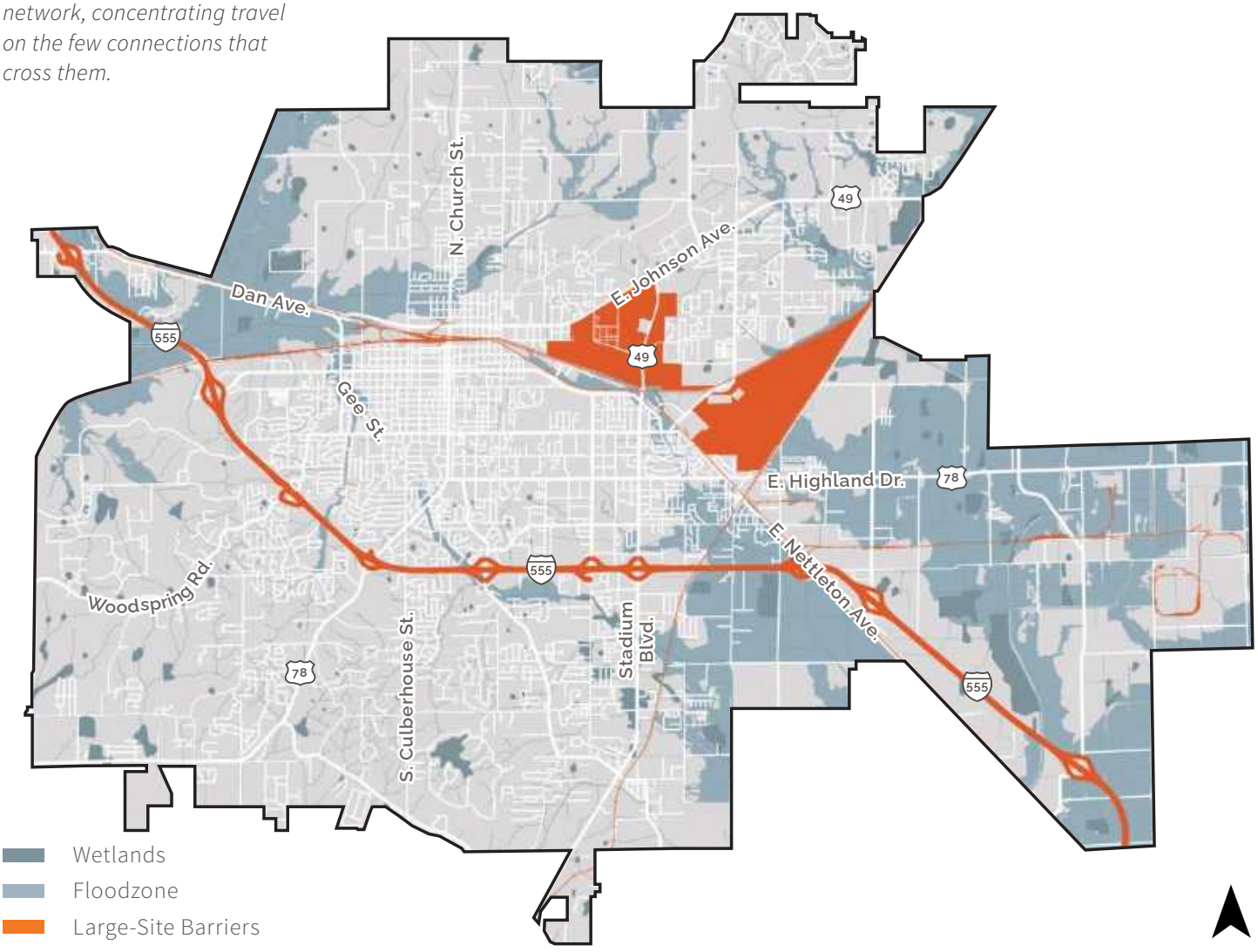
## 6.1 Connecting Jonesboro

**Increase connectivity to reduce bottlenecks**

Traffic congestion can result from a variety of factors. While insufficient roadway capacity is often assumed to be the primary cause, congestion can also result when intersections are constrained, there are gaps in the network, limited multimodal connections, conflicting traffic movements, or challenges from land-use patterns concentrating travel during the same periods. There are often physical barriers such as railways, interstates, creeks, or large tracts of land such as an airport that limit connections - leaving gaps in the network. These limited access areas concentrate travel on the connections that do exist and create bottlenecks at key points in the network.

### BARRIERS

*Natural and built barriers create gaps in Jonesboro's network, concentrating travel on the few connections that cross them.*



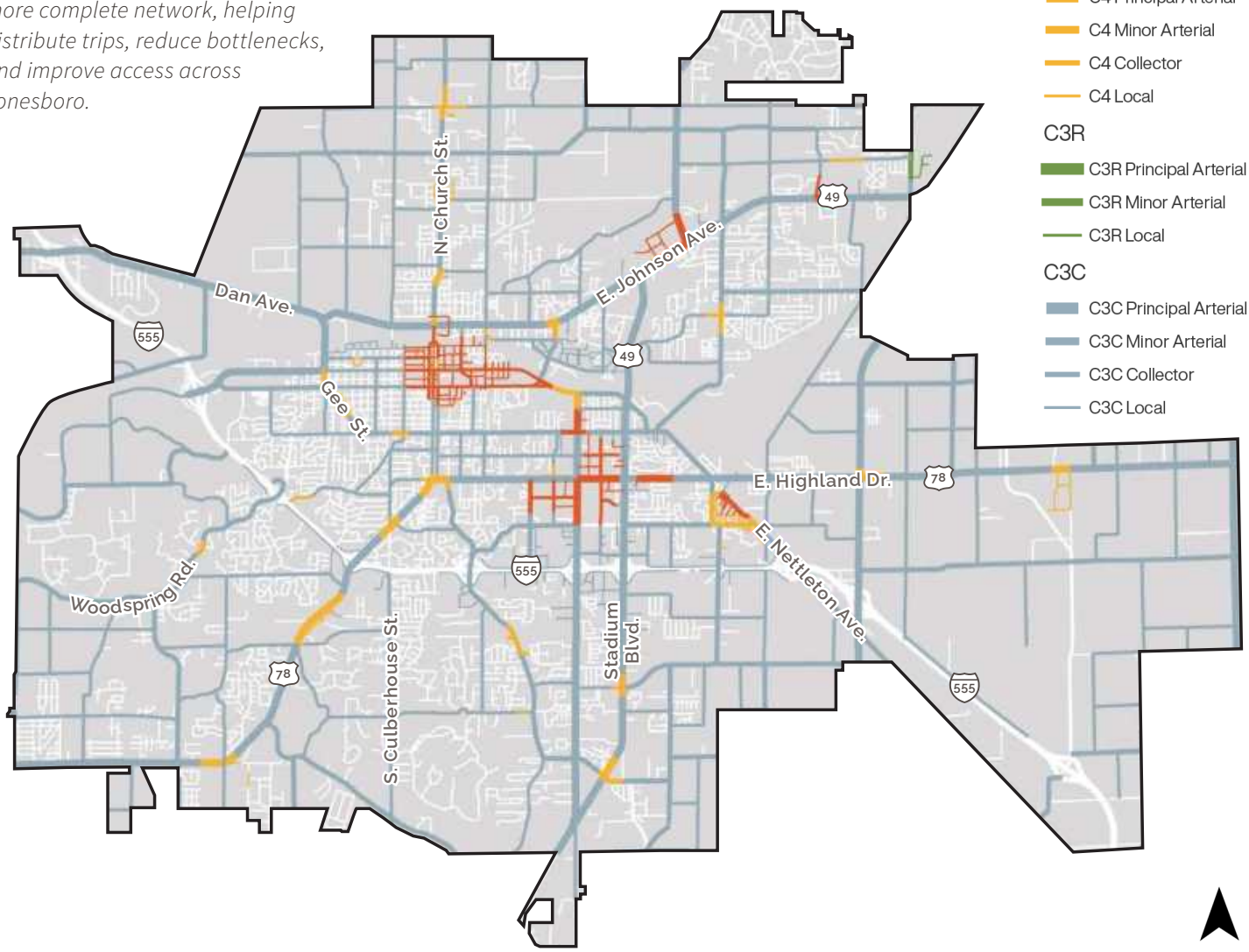
**Connect all available modes**

Creating or improving connections for all mobility types (driving, walking, rolling, bicycling, transit, and freight) creates a more complete and resilient transportation network. It gives people practical alternatives for reaching jobs, schools, parks, businesses, and services. Multimodal connections can reduce community reliance on single-occupant vehicle trips and can help distribute travel demand across the network. A complete network also supports safer crossings, stronger local business activity, and more equitable access to community resources.

Connectivity also depends on where destinations are located. Better distributing jobs, services, entertainment, and recreation through Jonesboro can help distribute trips across the transportation network rather than concentrating travel in the same locations and during the same periods. Together, stronger street connections, multimodal options, and a better distribution of destinations can reduce pressure on individual corridors while creating a transportation network that serves more of the community.

### CONNECTED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

*Existing and proposed street, trail, and bikeway connections create a more complete network, helping distribute trips, reduce bottlenecks, and improve access across Jonesboro.*



# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

Connecting Jonesboro

## Recommendations

As Jonesboro grows toward 100,000 residents, it cannot widen its way out of congestion. The recommendations below adopt a Master Street Plan that sets each street's design by its function and context, so not every street gets a bike lane, and connecting and fixing come before widening. Investment then runs as steady annual programs for sidewalks, crossings, and trails, with barrier crossings following as budgets and partners allow. Many corridors are state routes, so ArDOT and the MPO are key partners. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies to Guide the City Toward Connectivity

#### M2.2 Follow the plan in City street projects.

- **Description:** Design City street projects to their context under the Master Street Plan, and connect and fix before widening.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- Engineering, City Council
- Consultant: No

#### M6.5 Pursue outside funding and tax credits.

- **Description:** Pursue federal and state transportation grants for connections, crossings, and trails.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Finance, Engineering, Jonesboro MPO
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Regulations for a Connected Network

#### M2.1 Adopt the Master Street Plan.

- **Description:** Adopt street types, context zones, cross sections, driveway spacing, and right-of-way rules, and reserve right-of-way for collectors in growth areas.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- Engineering, Planning, Jonesboro MPO, City Council
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

#### M1.1.5 Subdivision, parkland, and tree standards.

- **Description:** Require new development to connect its streets to neighboring properties and build the trail segments that cross it. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Investments for Connectivity

#### M2.4 Fund an annual sidewalk, crossing, and trail program.

- **Description:** Close sidewalk gaps and add crossings and trail segments each year, starting near schools, parks, centers, and ASU. Ongoing
- **Timeline:** High cost
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation
- **Consultant Needed:** No

#### M2.5 Right-size streets and fix intersections.

- **Description:** Use three-lane conversions, round-abouts, and signal retiming at priority locations before considering widening
- **Timeline:** Short- to medium-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, ArDOT
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

#### M2.6 Add street connections and barrier crossings.

- **Description:** Close network gaps between neighborhoods, schools, and centers, and study crossings of the railroads, the interstate, and creeks.
- **Timeline:** Medium- to long-term
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Jonesboro MPO, ArDOT, railroads
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Partnerships for Success

#### M9.3 Coordinate regionally.

- **Description:** Align the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, state route projects, and GOJO service with the Master Street Plan.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to ongoing
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Mayor's Office, Jonesboro MPO, ArDOT, GOJO, Craighead County
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

#### M6.6 Publish a dashboard and annual report.

- **Description:** Report miles of sidewalk gaps closed, new street connections built, and the share of trips residents can make on foot or by bike.
- **Timeline:** Short-term to ongoing
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning
- **onsultant Needed:** Likely

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

Street Context

## 6.2 Greenways & Blueways

### Land Use & Transportation

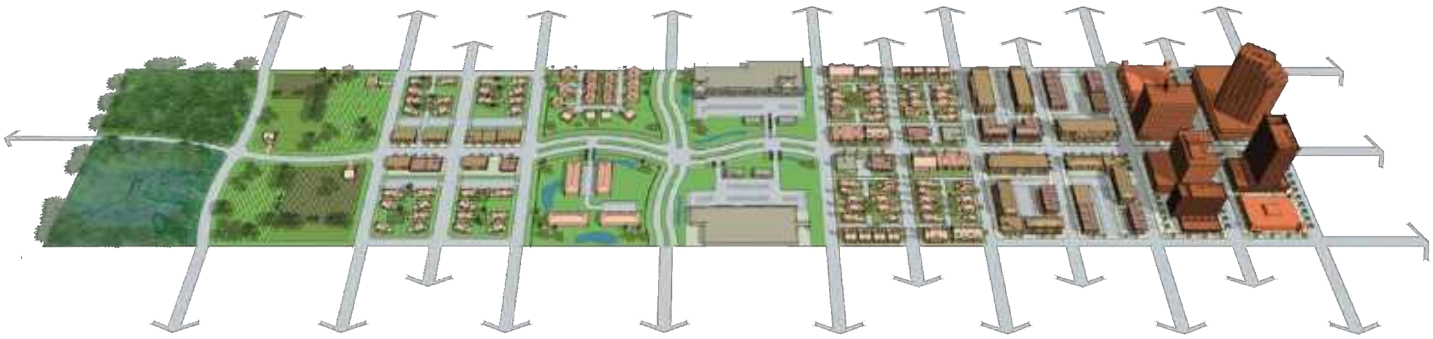
The character and function of a street should reflect the surrounding land use and the people it serves. While every street provides mobility, streets also shape the appearance of neighborhoods, business districts, employment centers, and public spaces. Designing streets that respond to their context creates safer roadways, supports economic development, enhances community character, and provides transportation choices for all users.

Transportation and land use are closely connected. The surrounding development influences how a street functions, while the design of a street influences the type and intensity of development that occurs along it. As Jonesboro grows, street design should support the vision established in the Future Land Use Plan by balancing mobility with safety, access, economic development, and community character.

Rather than applying a single design approach throughout the city, streets should respond to the places they serve. As corridors pass through Regional Centers, Community Centers, Neighborhood Centers, and other land use contexts identified in the Future Land Use Plan, their design should transition to reflect the surrounding environment. A roadway's functional classification may remain the same, but lane configuration, medians, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, transit accommodations, landscaping, street trees, lighting, and pedestrian crossings should be tailored to the adjacent land uses and the level of activity along the corridor. This context-based approach creates streets that move people efficiently while reinforcing the character, identity, and function of the places they connect.

### STREET CONTEXT & DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

*Context classifications illustrate how street design and development patterns transition from natural and rural areas to more connected, mixed-use urban centers. Credit: Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).*



**C1-Natural**

Lands preserved in a natural or wilderness condition, including lands unsuitable for settlement due to natural conditions.

**C2-Rural**

Sparsely settled lands; may include agricultural land, grassland, woodland, and wetlands.

**C2T-Rural Town**

Small concentrations of developed areas immediately surrounded by rural or natural areas; includes many historic towns.

**C3R-Suburban Residential**

Mostly residential uses with large blocks and a disconnected or sparse roadway network.

**C3R-Suburban Commercial**

Mostly non-residential uses with large building footprints and large parking lots within large blocks and a disconnected or sparse roadway network.

**C4-Urban General**

Mix of uses set within small blocks with a well-connected roadway network. May extend long distances. The roadway network usually connects to residential neighborhoods immediately along the corridor or behind the uses fronting the roadway.

**C5-Urban Center**

Mix of uses set within small blocks with a well-connected roadway network. Typically concentrated around a few blocks and identified as part of a civic or economic center of a community, town, or city.

**C6-Urban Core**

Areas with the highest densities and building heights, and within FDOT classified Large Urbanized Areas (population greater than one million). Many are regional centers and destinations. Buildings have mixed uses, are built up to the roadway, and are within a well-connected roadway network.

**Functional Classification & Context Zones**

Street types in Jonesboro are assigned based on both roadway function and surrounding context zone. Functional classification identifies the roadway's primary purpose—such as moving traffic, providing property access, or connecting neighborhoods—while context zones guide design characteristics and accommodations for all users. Together, these factors support growth, preserve mobility, and create streets that reflect adjacent land uses.

**Traditional functional classifications include:**

- **Freeways and Expressways** - Provide high-speed travel between urban and rural areas. Freeways maintain mobility through full access control, divided travel lanes, and interchange ramps. Expressways provide partial to full access control and may include signalized intersections and median openings.
- **Principal Arterials** - Provide both long-distance connections through the urban area and connections to major traffic generators within the community. Their primary function is to move traffic rather than provide direct property access. Medians, driveway-spacing standards, and limited traffic signals help maintain capacity and traffic flow.
- **Minor Arterials** - Function similarly to principal arterials, but operate under lower traffic volumes, serve trips of shorter distances, and provide a higher degree of property access than principal arterials.
- **Collectors** - connect local streets to arterial roadways. They carry moderate traffic volumes over moderate distances and provide a higher degree of property access than arterials.
- **Local Streets** - Serve low traffic volumes at slower speeds and are intended to support neighborhood access and livability. New development should avoid creating cut-through routes that function as commuter routes reduce quality of life for residents.
- **Alleys** - Primarily provide service access and should not function as through streets. Where used for walking or bicycling, they should include appropriate signage, markings, lighting, and safe street-crossing design.

Context classification helps identify the roadway design elements most appropriate for an area. Context zones are primarily defined by the type and intensity of surrounding development. As shown in the FDOT Context Classification Figure, C1 and C2 zones generally consist of natural or rural land uses with sparse development. C3 zones may include residential or commercial development at a higher density, often with a less connected roadway network. C4 and C5 zones represent more urban, mixed-use environments and are best supported by well-connected street networks. C5 zones are typically community hubs and are located at concentrated areas of activity within a community. Jonesboro doesn't have any C6 development at this time, but it has the highest density.

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Street Context

A variety of factors change in context zones including land use, lot size, building size/types, setbacks, and transportation functions and needs. Additionally, transportation functions and user needs vary across context zones, and roadway design should account for and meet those needs. Generally, streets in the different context zones in Jonesboro will have the following characteristics:

### STREET DESIGN BY CONTEXT

| | C1/C2 | C3C | C3R | C4 | C5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Generally include on-street parking? | No | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| General block length | Varies | >660' | Varies | <500' | <500' |
| Allowable Speed Range (local roads are lower speeds and arterials are higher speeds) | 25-45 MPH | 20-45 MPH | 20-45 MPH | 15-35 MPH | 15-35 MPH |
| Front Setbacks | ≥10' | ≥10' | ≥10' | 0' or more | 0' or more |
| Minimum Sidewalk Width | 6' | 6' | 6' | 8' | ≥10' |
| Bicycle Facilities | 12' shared-use path | 12' shared-use path or bike lanes | 12' shared-use path or bike lanes | Separated bike lanes | Separated bike lanes |
| Land Use | Open Space, Park, Conservation, Agriculture, Single-Family Residential | Retail, Office, Industrial, Multi-Family Residential, Institutional | Single-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential | Single-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Institutional, Neighborhood Scale Retail, Office | Retail, Office, Single-Family Residential, Multi-Family Residential, Institutional, Light Industrial |

*Street design standards vary by context, aligning features such as speed, block length, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and land use with the character and function of each area.*

The Master Street Plan includes **13 primary** street cross sections based on these functional classifications. These cross sections incorporate sidewalks, bicycle facilities, shared-use paths, landscaped medians, traffic calming, and context-sensitive design to safely accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists while responding to roadway function and surrounding land use. The following street cross sections are used in the Master Street Plan. The following figure identifies each Master Street Plan cross section, its functional equivalent, appropriate context zone, and key design considerations:

## MASTER STREET PLAN CROSS SECTIONS

*The Master Street Plan pairs each street type with its appropriate context and identifies key design features for accommodating vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.*

| Street Type | Classic Functional Equivalent | C1/C2 | C3C | C3R | C4 | C5 | On Street Parking | Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities | | | | Median |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | Shared Use Sidepath | Sidewalk | Separated Bike Lanes | Shared Roadway | |
| Divided Highway | Principal Arterial | X* | X | X | | | | X | | | | X |
| C4 Boulevard | Principal/Minor Arterial | | | | X | | X | | X | X | | X |
| C5 Boulevard | Principal/Minor Arterial | | | | | X | X | | X | X | | X |
| Divided Avenue | Minor Arterial | X* | | X | | | | X | X | | | X |
| C3C Divided Avenue | Minor Arterial | | X | | | | | X | | | | X |
| Avenue | Collector | X | | X | | | | X | X | | | |
| C3C Avenue | Collector | | X | | | | | X | | | | |
| C4 Avenue | Collector | | | | X | | X | X | X | X** | | |
| C5 Avenue | Collector | | | | | X | X | X | X | X** | | |
| Neighborhood Street | Local Street | X | X | X | | | | X*** | X | | X | |
| C4 Local | Local Street | | | | X | | X | | X | X** | X | |
| C5 Local | Local Street | | | | | X | X | | X | X** | X | |
| Alleyway | Alleyway | | | | X | X | | | | | X | |

* *Only half of the roadway is built in C1/C2 conditions – resulting in a 2-lane roadway that can be built out to a divided roadway in the future.*

** *Separated bike lanes are provided when specified in the Active Transportation Master Plan, in which case only sidewalks will be used and not a shared use sidepath.*

*** *A shared use sidepath is only needed if traffic speeds are higher than 25 MPH or traffic volumes are above 3,000 vehicles per day.*

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Street Context

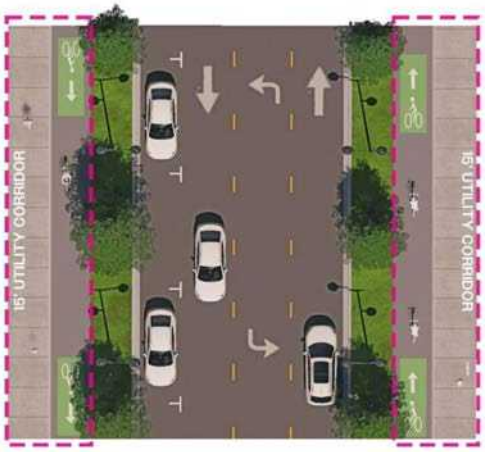
The following graphic shows street sections for the streets outlined in the chart above. The cross sections show the roadway configuration, landscaping, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and how each functional class of roadway changes based on the context zone.

### STREET DESIGN ACROSS CONTEXT ZONES

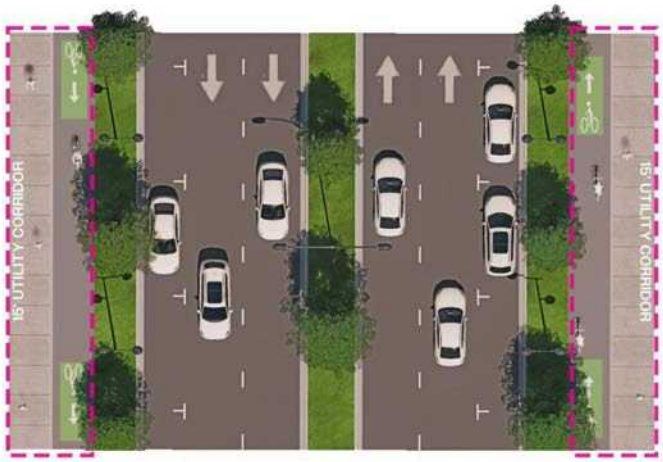



*Street cross sections adapt to their surrounding context, with roadway configuration, landscaping, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities changing from rural and suburban areas to more urban centers.*

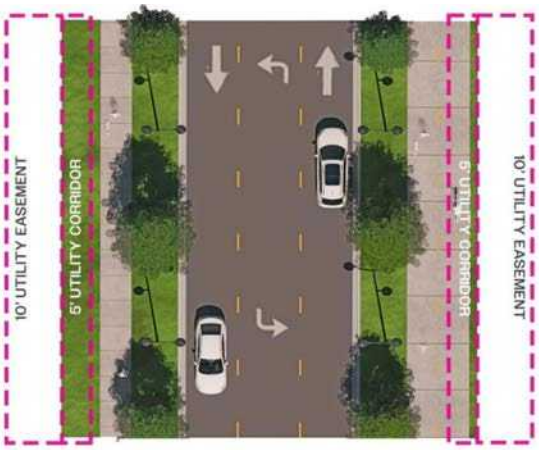
## DETAILED STREET CROSS SECTIONS



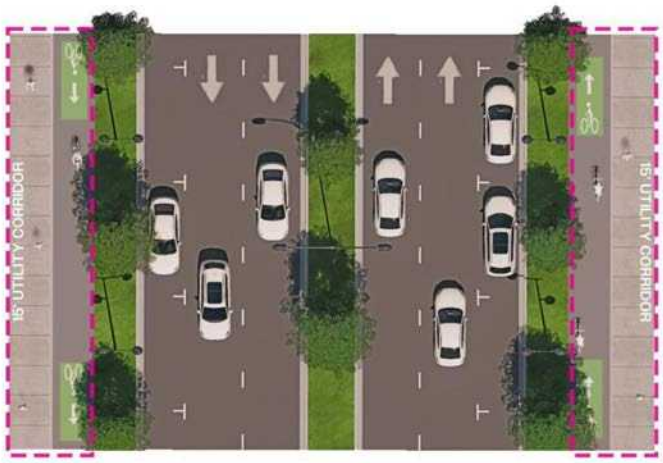

***Collector C4*** *- 90' ROW*




***Collector C4*** *- 90' ROW*




***Collector C3R*** *- 80' ROW*




***Collector C3R*** *- 80' ROW*

*Detailed cross sections show the roadway configuration, right-of-way, landscaping, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities for individual street types and context zones.*

## Recommendations

The context zone approach lets Jonesboro design each street for both its role in the network and the place it passes through. The recommendations below build that approach into the Master Street Plan and the UDC's corridor districts, and apply it to City projects. They begin with Downtown's core streets and keep the approach current through regional coordination and regular review. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Policies for Guiding Street Context

#### M2.2 Follow the plan in City street projects.

- **Description:** Use functional class to set a street's role and the context zone to set its design, including whether it needs a bike facility.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, City Council
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Regulations for New Street Types

#### M2.1 Adopt the Master Street Plan.

- **Description:** Adopt the 13 cross sections and the context zone map as the basis for City and private street design.
- **Timeline:** Immediate (0–2 yrs)
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Planning, Jonesboro MPO, City Council
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

#### M1.1.4 Corridor districts.

- **Description:** Match building frontage and parking rules to each corridor's context: walkable mixed use on Core Corridors, flexible formats on Suburban Corridors. See M1.1 in Section 2.2.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Engineering, consultant
- **Consultant Needed:** Yes

### Investments for New Street Types

#### M4.3 Build Downtown streets and civic squares.

- **Description:** Convert Church, Main, and Union Streets to two-way traffic as the first application of context-based design in the city's core.
- **Timeline:** Medium-term (6–10 yrs)
- **Cost:** High
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Planning, Downtown Jonesboro Alliance
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Partnerships for Street Context

#### M9.3 Coordinate regionally.

- **Description:** Work with ArDOT and the MPO to apply context zones on state routes that pass through centers.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to ongoing
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Mayor's Office, Jonesboro MPO, ArDOT
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Continuous Planning

#### M6.7 Review the plan every five years.

- **Description:** Update the context zone map as centers and corridors change.
- **Timeline:** Long-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** Planning, Jonesboro MPO
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

**Context in practice.** Share of City street projects each year built to the cross section for their context zone.

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## 6.3 Freight & Regional Routes

**Regional Transportation Hub**

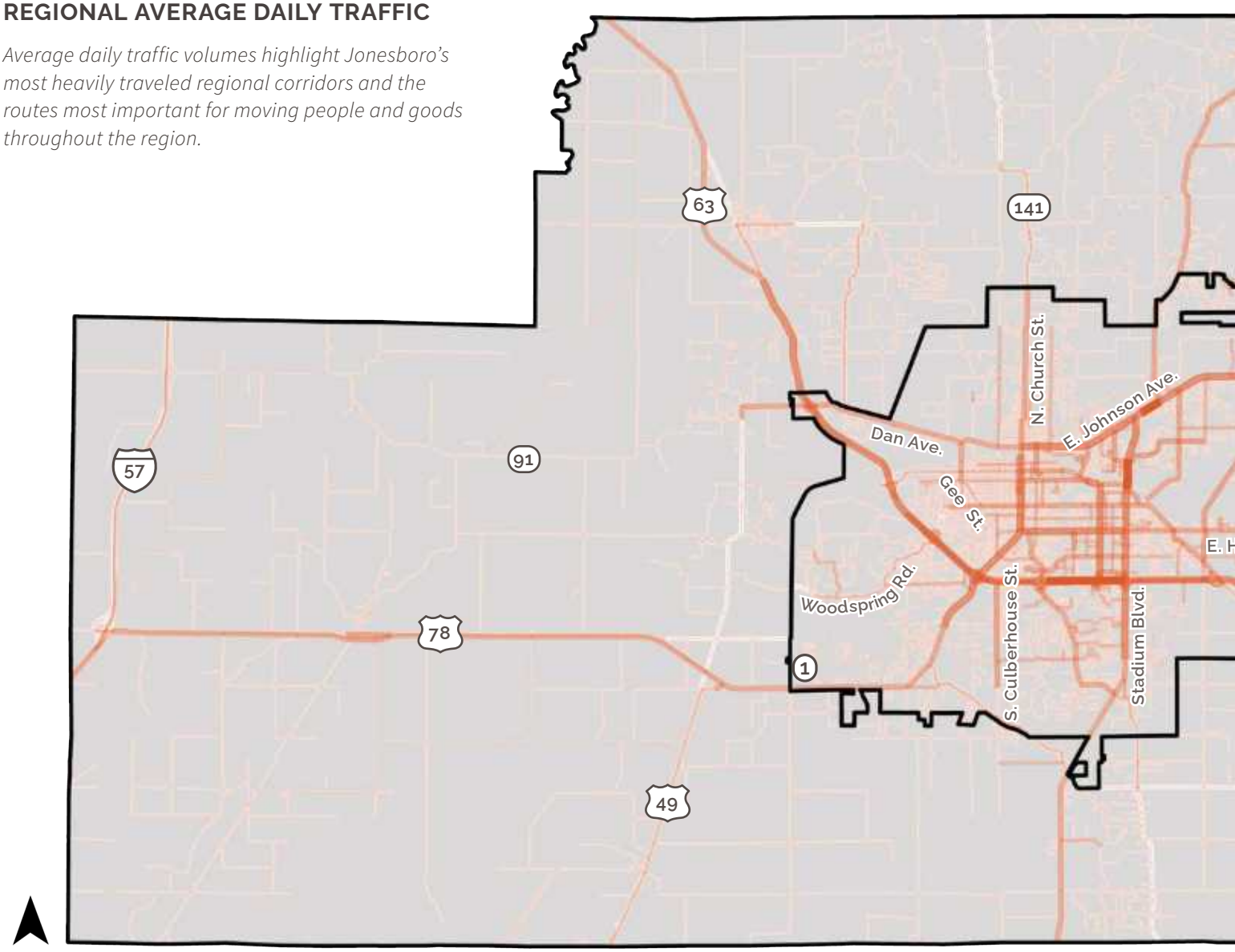
Jonesboro is the transportation hub of Northeast Arkansas, serving as a regional center for commerce, industry, education, healthcare, and distribution. Interstate highways, U.S. highways, freight rail, designated truck routes, and the Jonesboro Municipal Airport connect the city to regional and national markets, making multimodal transportation essential to the community's continued economic growth.

**Freight Movement**

The efficient movement of freight is critical to Jonesboro's economy. Manufacturing, agriculture, retail distribution, and industrial employers rely on a network of designated truck routes that connect industrial districts with Interstate 555, U.S. highways 49 and 63, freight rail facilities, and the Jonesboro Municipal Airport. Concentrating heavy truck traffic on these corridors improves freight mobility.

### REGIONAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC

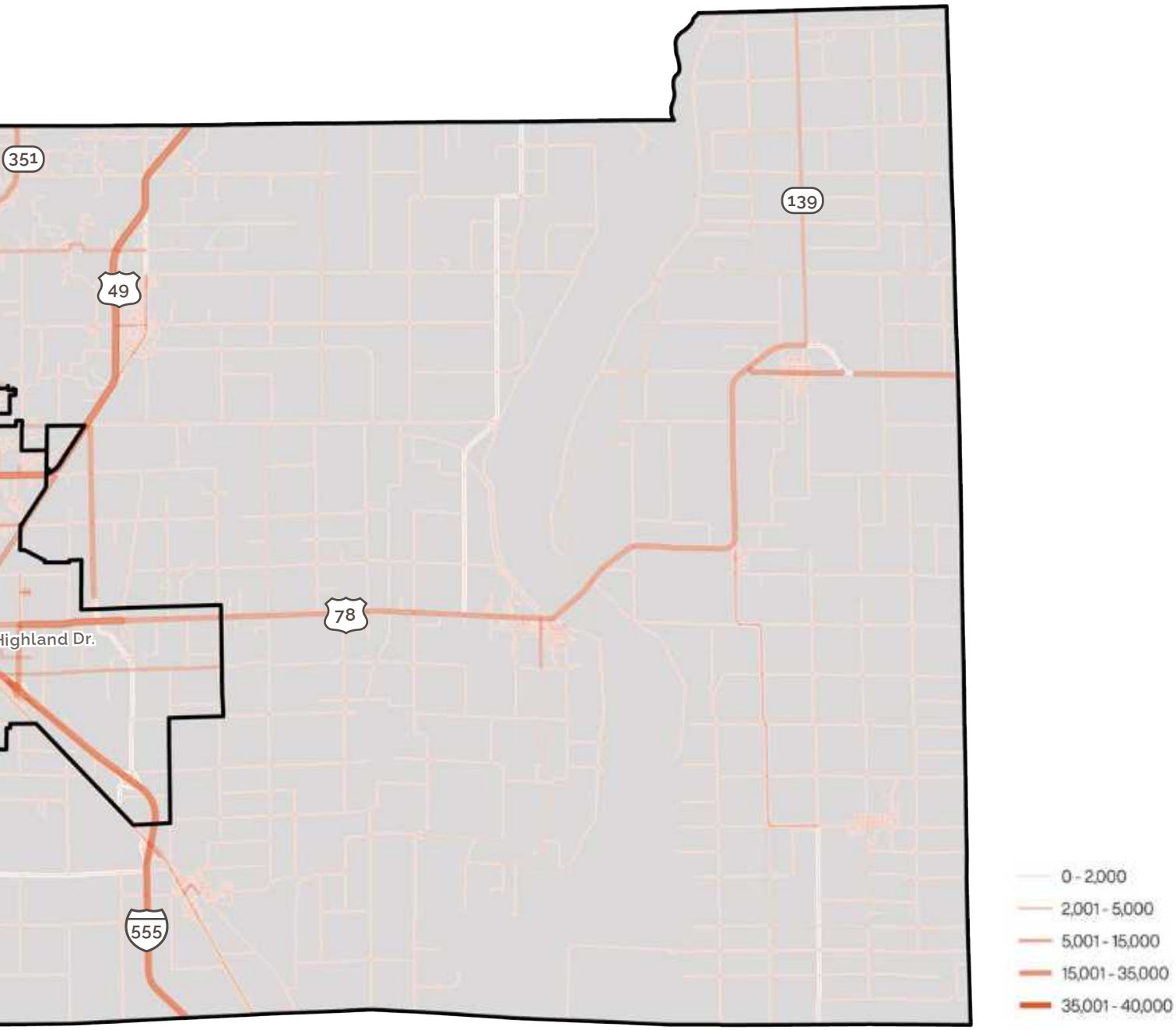
*Average daily traffic volumes highlight Jonesboro's most heavily traveled regional corridors and the routes most important for moving people and goods throughout the region.*



# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Freight & Regional Routes

As the city grows, roadway improvements should continue to preserve the efficiency of the designated truck route network by maintaining adequate roadway capacity, improving key freight intersections, protecting freight access to industrial areas, and minimizing conflicts between trucks and pedestrians, bicyclists, and neighborhood traffic.

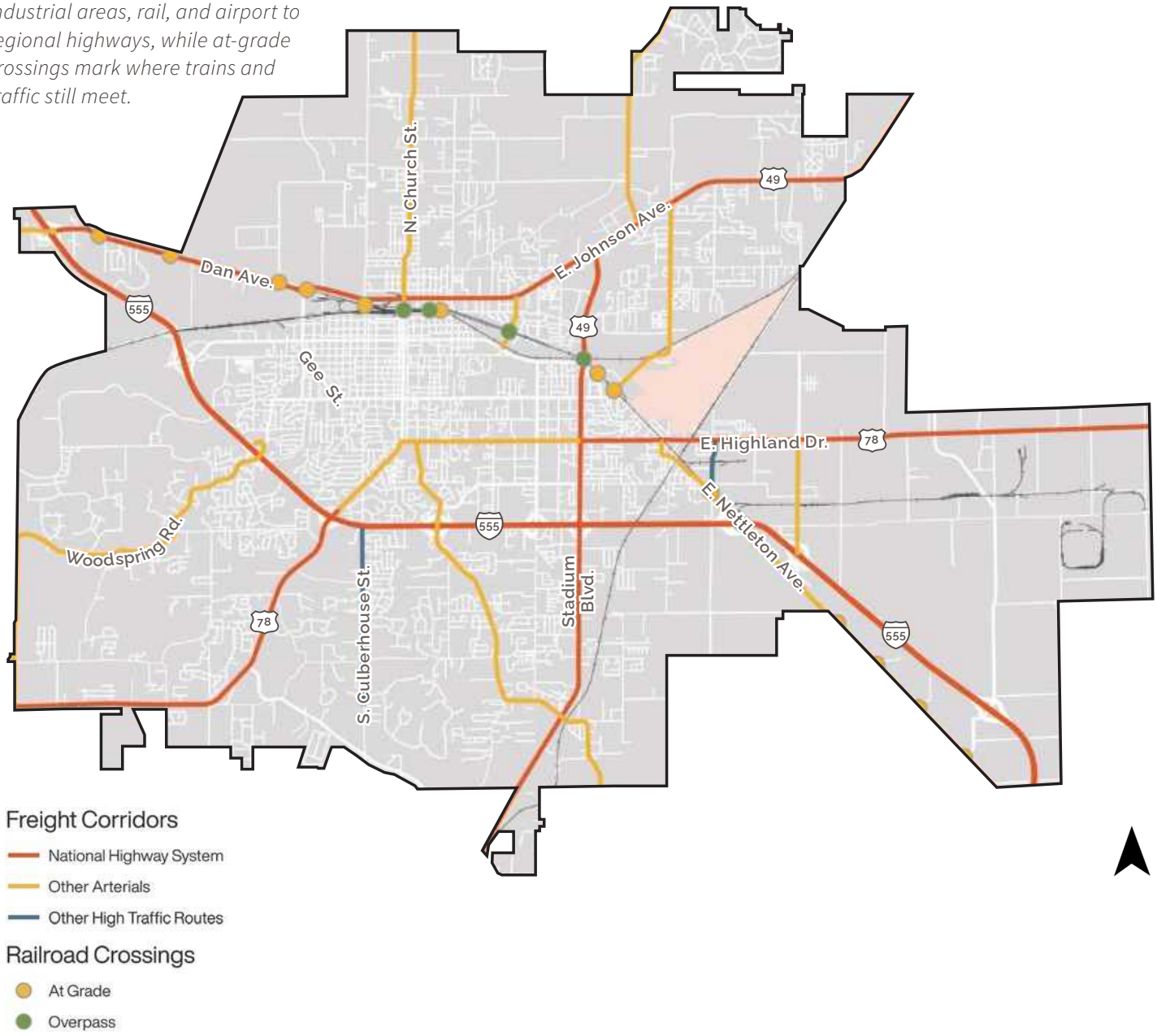


# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Freight & Regional Routes

### FREIGHT & REGIONAL ROUTES

*Freight corridors connect Jonesboro's industrial areas, rail, and airport to regional highways, while at-grade crossings mark where trains and traffic still meet.*



### Rail

Jonesboro is served by both the Union Pacific Railroad and BNSF Railway, providing direct freight rail connections to regional and national markets. Rail service remains an important competitive advantage for manufacturers, agricultural producers, and industrial businesses by offering efficient long-distance freight transportation. Future land use and transportation decisions should preserve access to rail-served industrial properties, improve safety at rail crossings, and reduce conflicts between rail operations and surrounding development.

### Airport

The Jonesboro Municipal Airport supports business travel, corporate aviation, emergency services, and economic development while providing an important transportation asset for Northeast Arkansas. Maintaining efficient roadway access to the airport, protecting compatible surrounding land uses, and coordinating future transportation improvements will help ensure the airport continues to support regional commerce and economic growth.

### Balancing Freight & Local Mobility

Jonesboro's role as the freight and logistics hub of Northeast Arkansas depends on a comparatively small number of corridors that move goods for the city, Craighead County, and the wider region. Because these facilities carry a disproportionate share of heavy vehicle traffic, the City should identify them as the local freight network and maintain them accordingly.

For roadways, applying freight design standards across the entire network produces streets that are wider and faster than the places they serve require. Most of Jonesboro's streets exist to connect residents to homes, schools, jobs, parks, and businesses, rather than moving freight. Distinguishing between local and freight networks allows the City to protect its economic infrastructure while investing in walking, bicycling, transit, and street design improvements that make the rest of the network safer and more enjoyable to travel.

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Freight & Regional Routes

## Recommendations

Jonesboro's economy depends on moving goods across Northeast Arkansas. The recommendation below designates a local freight network and truck routes, so most other streets can be designed for their neighborhood context. It also continues the City's work with the railroads on crossing safety. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Regulations for Freight Movement

#### M2.8 Adopt truck routes and continue rail coordination.

- **Description:** Designate the freight network and truck routes, protect industrial, rail-served, and airport land, and keep working with the railroads on crossing safety, consolidation, and new crossings.
- **Timeline:** Short-term (3–5 yrs)
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, City Council, railroads
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

**Freight reliability.** Truck volumes on neighborhood streets, and crashes at at-grade rail crossings.

## 6.4 Transit Routes

### Transit as Essential Infrastructure

Public transit provides an essential transportation option for residents, employees, students, seniors, and visitors while supporting economic development and expanding access to jobs, education, healthcare, and commercial services. As Jonesboro continues to grow, transit should evolve alongside new development to provide reliable connections between activity centers and reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.

### Existing Network

The City's newly rebranded GOJO transit system provides fixed-route bus service connecting major destinations, including Downtown, Arkansas State University, medical facilities, shopping areas, employment centers, and residential neighborhoods. These routes provide an important mobility option for residents while reducing transportation barriers for those without access to a personal vehicle.

As roadway improvements are completed, the City should continue improving access to transit through sidewalks, ADA compliant crossings, bicycle accommodations, lighting, and accessible bus stop amenities.

### Connecting Destinations

Transit is most effective when it connects the places where people live, work, learn, shop, receive services, and gather. As part of this Comprehensive Plan, several nodes have been identified as existing and future activity centers. Providing transit service to these nodes is essential to improving mobility, expanding access to employment, education, healthcare, shopping, recreation, and other daily destinations. As Jonesboro continues to grow, the transit network should evolve to better connect these activity centers, expand service to developing areas, and provide residents with convenient access to destinations throughout the city. Future transit investments should remain flexible to accommodate changing development patterns, travel demand, and community needs.

As the city grows, transit should expand strategically to serve existing and future activity centers while improving accessibility, connectivity, and mobility throughout the community.




*Jonesboro's GOJO transit system connects residents, students, and visitors to major destinations, supporting access to employment, education, healthcare, and other daily needs.*

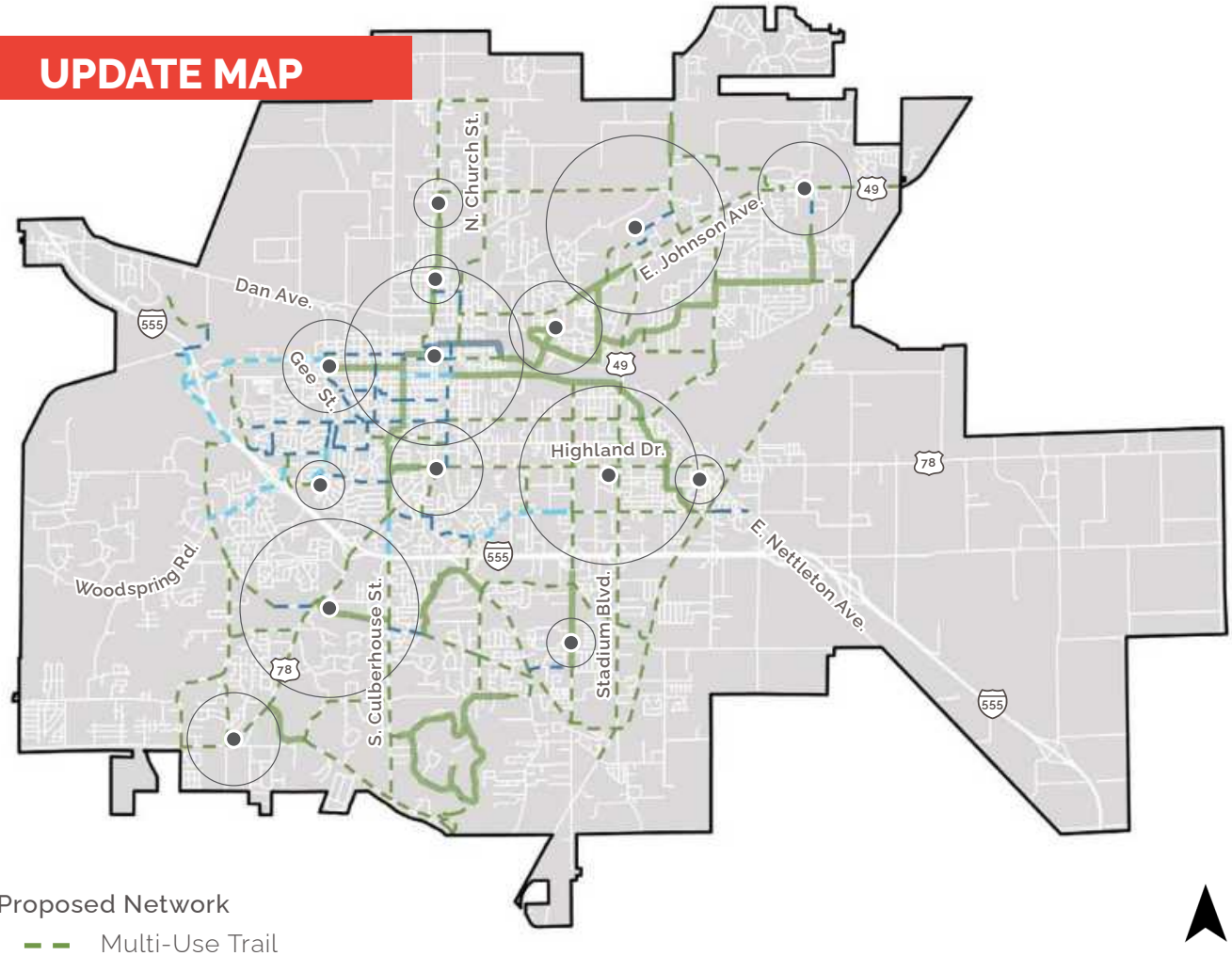
# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Transit Routes

### PROPOSED TRANSIT NETWORK

*Proposed trails and bicycle facilities build on the existing network to connect activity centers, neighborhoods, and key destinations across Jonesboro.*

**UPDATE MAP**




Proposed Network

- Multi-Use Trail
- Separated Bicycle Facility
- On-Street Bicycle Facility

Existing Network

- Existing & Funded Multi-Use Trails
- Existing Bicycle Facilities

## Recommendations

Transit is most useful where it reaches the places people need to go. The recommendations below improve stops and extend routes to serve centers, ASU, and parks, in coordination with GOJO and the region's other transportation partners. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

### Investments for Transit

#### M2.7 Improve transit stops and routes.

- **Description:** Make stops accessible and comfortable, and add or extend routes to serve centers, ASU, and parks.
- **Timeline:** Short- to long-term
- **Cost:** Medium
- **Responsible Parties:** GOJO, Engineering
- **Consultant Needed:** Likely

### Partnerships for Regional Transit

#### M9.3 Coordinate regionally.

- **Description:** Align route planning, stop locations, and street projects with GOJO, the Jonesboro MPO, ArDOT, Craighead County, and neighboring cities.
- **Timeline:** Immediate to ongoing
- **Cost:** Low
- **Responsible Parties:** Engineering, Mayor's Office, Jonesboro MPO, ArDOT, GOJO, Craighead County
- **Consultant Needed:** No

### Metrics to Track Implementation Success

**Transit access.** Share of residents and jobs within a quarter mile of a transit stop, and share of stops that are accessible.

## 6.5 Walking & Biking

**Networks**

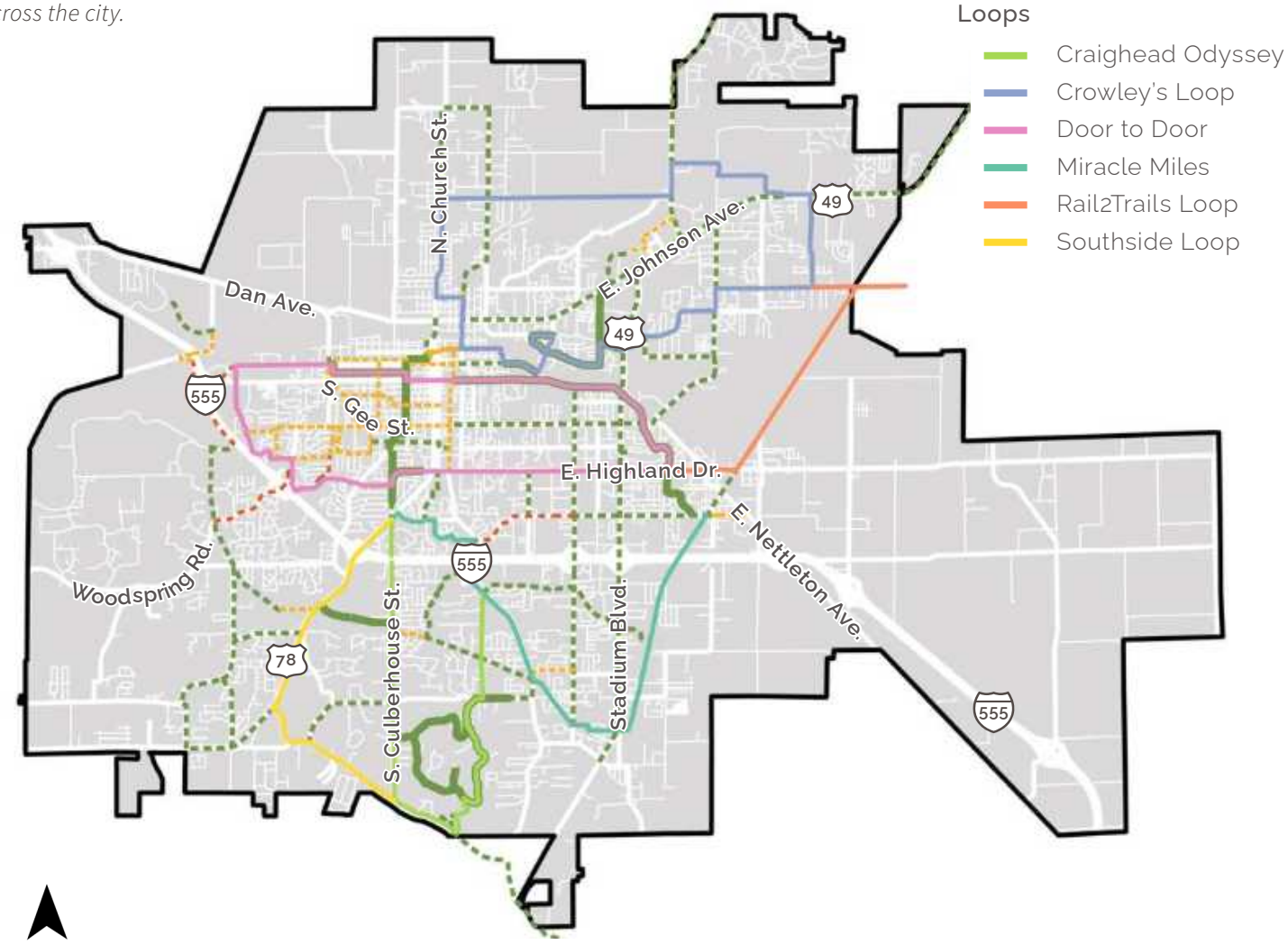
Jonesboro's pedestrian and bicycle facilities should function as a connected network rather than a collection of individual projects. Sidewalks, trails, bicycle facilities, crossings, and transit access are most useful when they connect neighborhoods to schools, parks, employment centers, commercial areas, Downtown, Arkansas State University, and other community destinations.

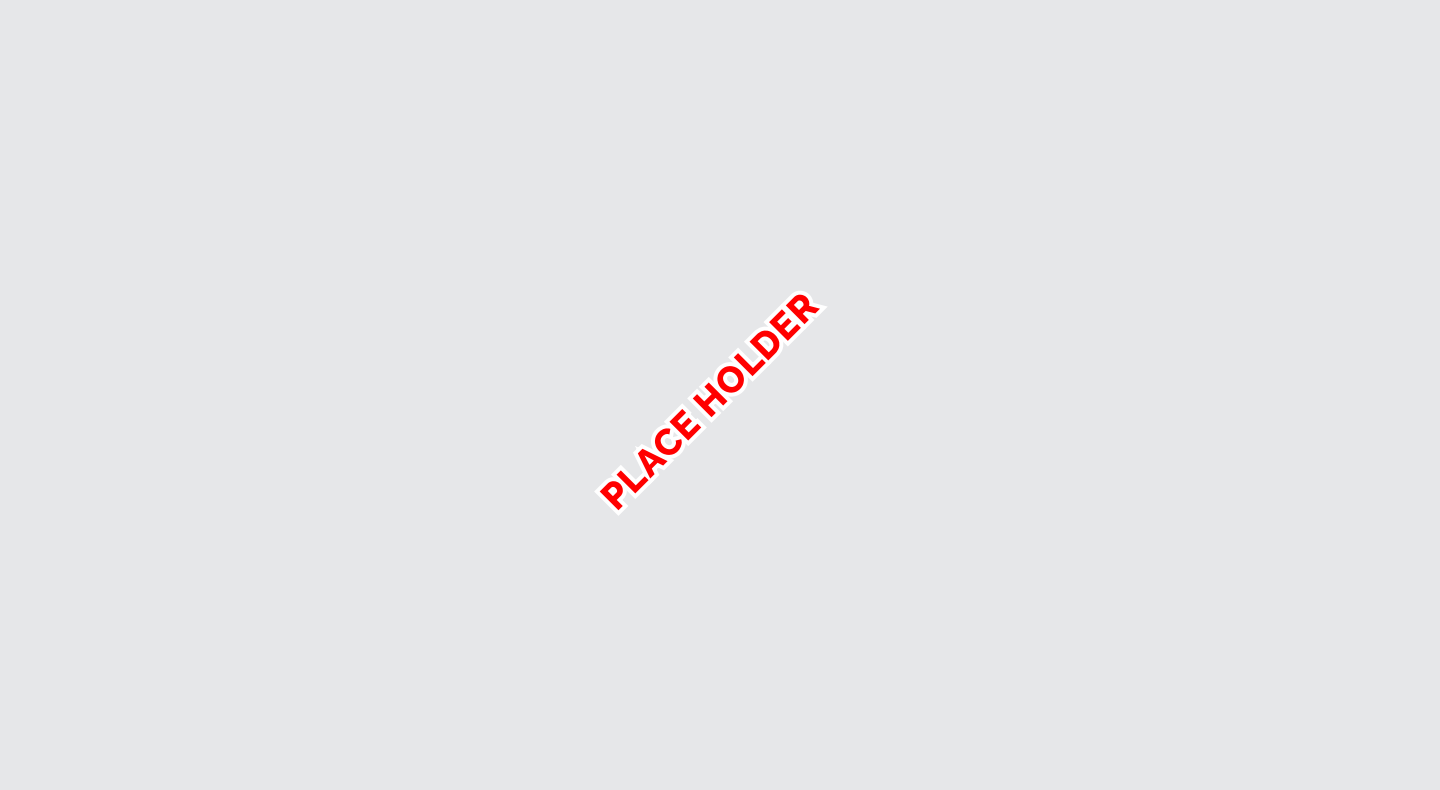
As the network expands, the City should prioritize connections that close existing gaps, link major destinations, and create continuous routes across the community.Particular attention should be given to locations where relatively short improvements can connect otherwise separated portions of the network or provide safer access across major roadways.

The goal is not simply to build more sidewalks and trails, but to create a system that allows residents to make complete trips safely and comfortably without relying on a vehicle for every trip. A system is only as good as its gaps.

### PROPOSED WALKING & BIKING NETWORK

*Proposed trail loops create a connected active transportation network linking neighborhoods with Downtown, Arkansas State University, parks, schools, and other key destinations while helping close gaps across the city.*






*Propsed Loops*

**Sidewalks**

Sidewalks are the foundation of Jonesboro's pedestrian network, but their value depends on where they lead. A sidewalk that ends before reaching a school, park, transit stop, neighborhood center, or commercial destination does little to complete a trip. As the City expands its pedestrian network, priority should be given to closing gaps that connect existing sidewalks to the places residents use every day.

Jonesboro already requires sidewalks along the street frontage of new development. The City's sidewalk ordinance also allows fees to be collected in lieu of construction in certain circumstances and specifically directs those funds toward pedestrian improvements that improve connectivity between new and existing sidewalks. This creates an opportunity to use new development not only to build individual sidewalk segments, but to systematically close gaps in the larger network.

Schools and parks should be among the highest priorities for these connections. The 2024 Parks and Recreation Master Plan calls for improving pedestrian and bicycle access to parks from surrounding neighborhoods, linking parks to a citywide active transportation network, and adding shade along sidewalks and other active transportation routes.

As sidewalk investments are made, the City should prioritize continuous routes over isolated segments, focusing first on gaps that connect neighborhoods to schools, parks, GOJO stops, activity centers, and other community destinations.

**Trails**

Trails can provide some of Jonesboro's safest and most comfortable connections for walking, bicycling, and other forms of active transportation, as well as using mobility devices. Partially where they can be separated from vehicle traffic. As the trail network expands, the City should prioritize routes that connect key community destinations.

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Walking & Biking

Jonesboro's creeks, drainageways, and other natural corridors provide unique opportunities to create these connections. Rather than treating these areas solely as drainage infrastructure, trails can be incorporated where appropriate to create continuous routes while supporting recreation and access to natural areas. This approach also provides opportunities to connect portions of the city where the traditional street network is interrupted or where an on-street route would be less comfortable.

There is already precedent for this approach in Jonesboro. The Master Watershed Plan proposed a 5.3 mile combined maintenance access and walking trail along Lost Creek, connecting Joe Mack Campbell Park with a proposed park on the east side of the city.

Public input during Design Week also showed strong support for north-south and east-west trail connections linking Downtown, Arkansas State University, Craighead Forest Park , surrounding neighborhoods, parks, schools, and employment areas, with particular interest in connections between Downtown, Craighead Forest Park, and the university area.

**Crossings**

Within any pedestrian and bicycle network, crossings are a critical link. A sidewalk or trail can provide a comfortable route for most trips, but major streets can become barriers when safe crossing opportunities are limited. As Jonesboro expands its active transportation network, crossings should be planned as part of the route itself rather than treated as isolated intersection improvements.

Public input reinforces this need. 33% of survey respondents identified safer street crossings, including crosswalks and signals, as a transportation priority, while 54% indicated they would walk or bicycle more often if conditions felt safer. Residents also identified roadway safety concerns along major corridors such as Johnson Avenue, Red Wolf Boulevard, Highland Drive, and around Arkansas State University.

Crossing improvements should be prioritized where sidewalks and trails intersect major roadways and where people are expected to walk more frequently, including near schools, parks, transit stops, Downtown, and the Centers identified in the Future Land Use Plan. Depending on the location, improvements may include marked crosswalks, pedestrian signals, refuge areas, lighting, curb extensions, and other treatments that make crossings more visible and comfortable.

This also fits directly with the Centers concept. During Design Week, residents specifically identified safe crossings alongside trails, sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and transit stops as desired features within Neighborhood Nodes.

## Recommendations

Many residents would walk or bike more if it felt safer and destinations were closer. The recommendations below rank projects by access to parks, schools, and centers. They fund a steady annual program instead of one-time projects, and they build facilities that suit each street's context under the Master Street Plan, so not every street gets a bike lane. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

Policies for Walking and Biking

M2.2 Follow the plan in City street projects. Design City street projects to their context and connect before widening. Provide the walking and biking facility the Master Street Plan calls for on each street. Short-term (3–5 yrs) · Low cost · Engineering, City Council · Consultant: No

Investments for Walking and Biking

M2.4 Fund an annual sidewalk, crossing, and trail program. Close sidewalk gaps, add safe crossings, and build trail segments, starting near schools, parks, centers, and ASU. Ongoing · High cost · Engineering, Parks and Recreation · Consultant: No

Actions from the City that will be Visible to Residents

M2.3 Complete the active transportation plan. Rank walking, biking, and trail projects by access to parks, schools, and centers. Immediate (0–2 yrs) · Medium cost · Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Jonesboro MPO · Consultant: Yes

Metrics to Track Implementation Success

Network growth. Miles of sidewalk gaps closed and miles of bike facilities and trails added each year.

**FORMAT TEXT**

## 6.6 Right-sizing Streets

**Right Sizing**

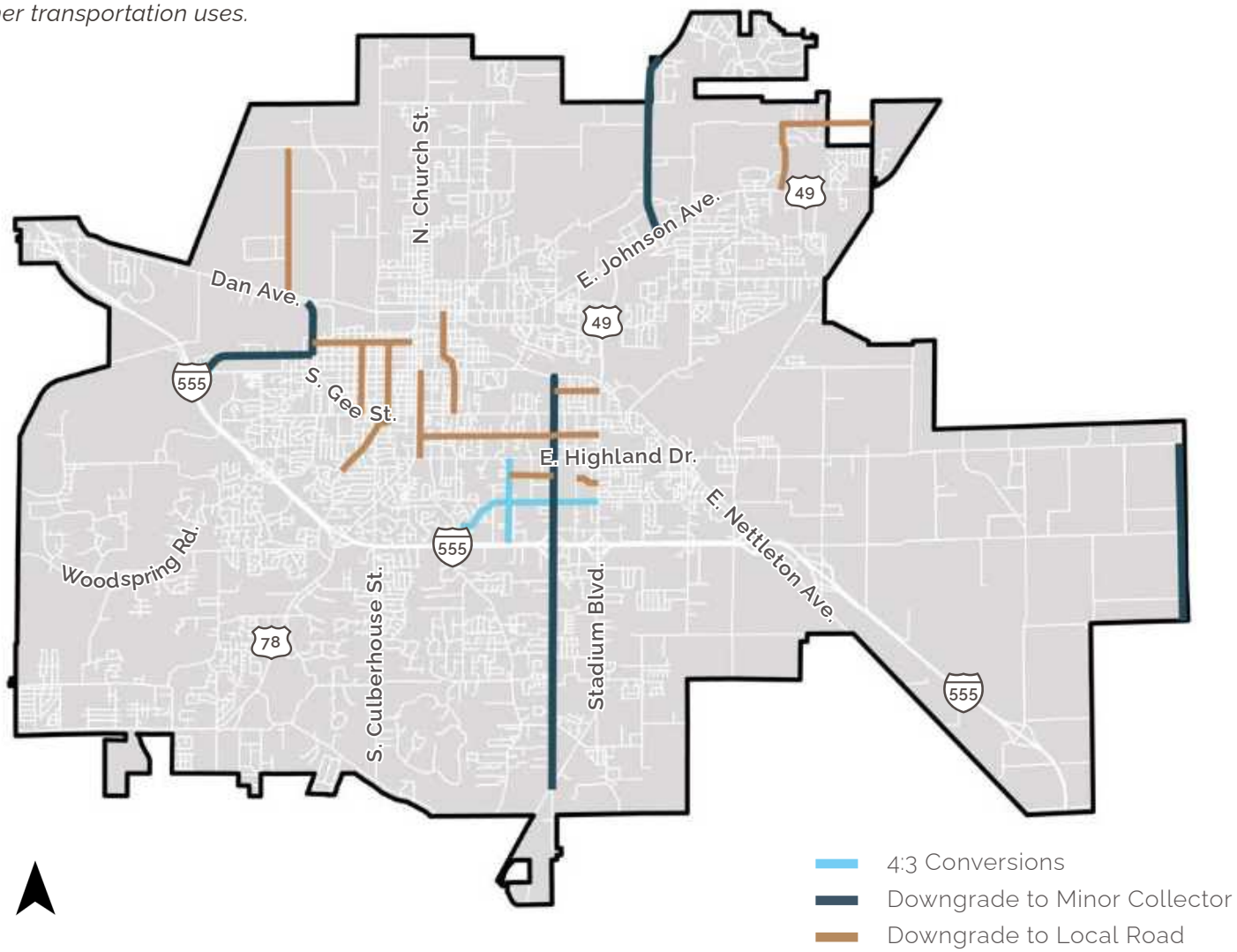
As Jonesboro grows, investments in the transportation network should focus not only on expanding capacity where needed but also on making more efficient use of existing streets. Right-sizing is the process of designing or modifying roadways to better match current and projected traffic volumes while improving safety and providing space for all users.

Many streets were designed primarily to move vehicles as quickly as possible. In some locations, however, traffic volumes do not and are not anticipated to justify the number of travel lanes provided and/or the available pavement could better serve multiple transportation needs. Right-sizing allows the City to reallocate excess pavement to sidewalks, bicycle facilities, landscaped medians, turn lanes, on-street parking, transit accommodations, or streetscape improvements without requiring additional right-of-way.

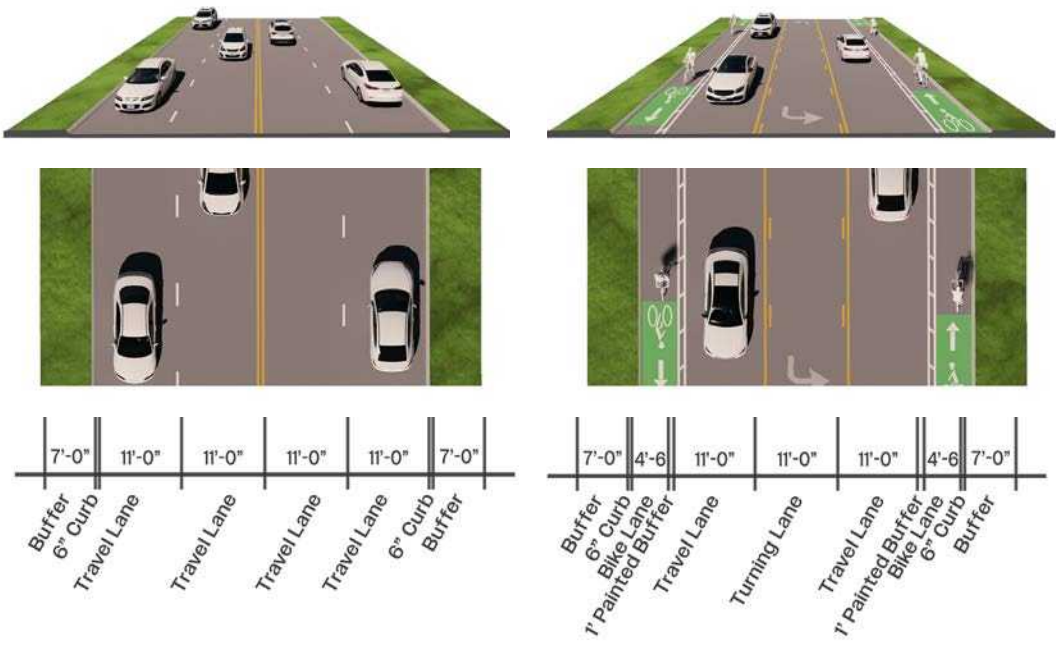
When applied appropriately, right-sizing can improve safety, reduce crashes, calm traffic, enhance access to adjacent

### RECOMMENDED STREET RIGHT-SIZING

*Recommended 4-to-3 lane conversions and roadway reclassifications identify opportunities to better align street design with traffic needs while improving safety and creating space for other transportation uses.*



### 4-TO-3 LANE CONVERSION EXAMPLE




*A typical 4-to-3 lane conversion reallocates roadway space to a center turn lane and bicycle facilities while maintaining vehicle access and improving conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists.*

properties, and create more attractive streets that support economic development while maintaining acceptable traffic operations.

**Roadway Reallocation**

One of the most common right-sizing strategies is a 4-to-3 lane conversion, often referred to as a roadway reallocation. This involves converting a four-lane roadway into one travel lane in each direction with a center two-way left-turn lane.

The design can:

- Reduce rear-end and left-turn crashes.
- Improve traffic flow by removing turning vehicles from through lanes.
- Create space for bicycle lanes, wider sidewalks, landscaped medians, or on-street parking.
- Improve pedestrian crossings by reducing the number of travel lanes that must be crossed.
- Calm vehicle speeds while maintaining capacity on corridors with moderate traffic volumes.

Roadway reallocations are evaluated using traffic volumes, turning movements, safety history, and future land use to ensure they are appropriate for a particular corridor.

**Reallocating Street Space**

Right-sizing is not limited to reducing travel lanes. Many roadway improvements projects provide opportunities to reallocate existing pavement to better meet community needs. Depending on the corridor, excess pavement may be converted into:

- Wider sidewalks and ADA improvements.
- Bicycle lanes or side paths.
- Landscaped buffers and street trees.
- Dedicated turn lanes or raised medians.
- Transit stops and passenger amenities.
- On-street parking in commercial or downtown areas.
- Stormwater features such as bioswales or rain gardens.

These improvements can often be incorporated during routine resurfacing or reconstruction projects, reducing costs while creating safer, more attractive streets.

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Right-sizing Streets

### Recommendations

Several Jonesboro streets carry far less traffic than their width was designed for. The recommendation below right-sizes them at priority locations, adding turn lanes, crossings, and bike facilities while keeping traffic moving. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

Investments for Right-sized Streets

M2.5 Right-size streets and fix intersections. Convert selected four-lane streets to three lanes, and add roundabouts and signal retiming at priority locations, coordinated with ArDOT on state routes. Short- to medium-term · Medium cost · Engineering, ArDOT · Consultant: Likely

Metrics to Track Implementation Success

Safer corridors. Injury crashes and travel times on right-sized corridors, before and after conversion.

FORMAT TEXT

## 6.7 Optimizing Intersections

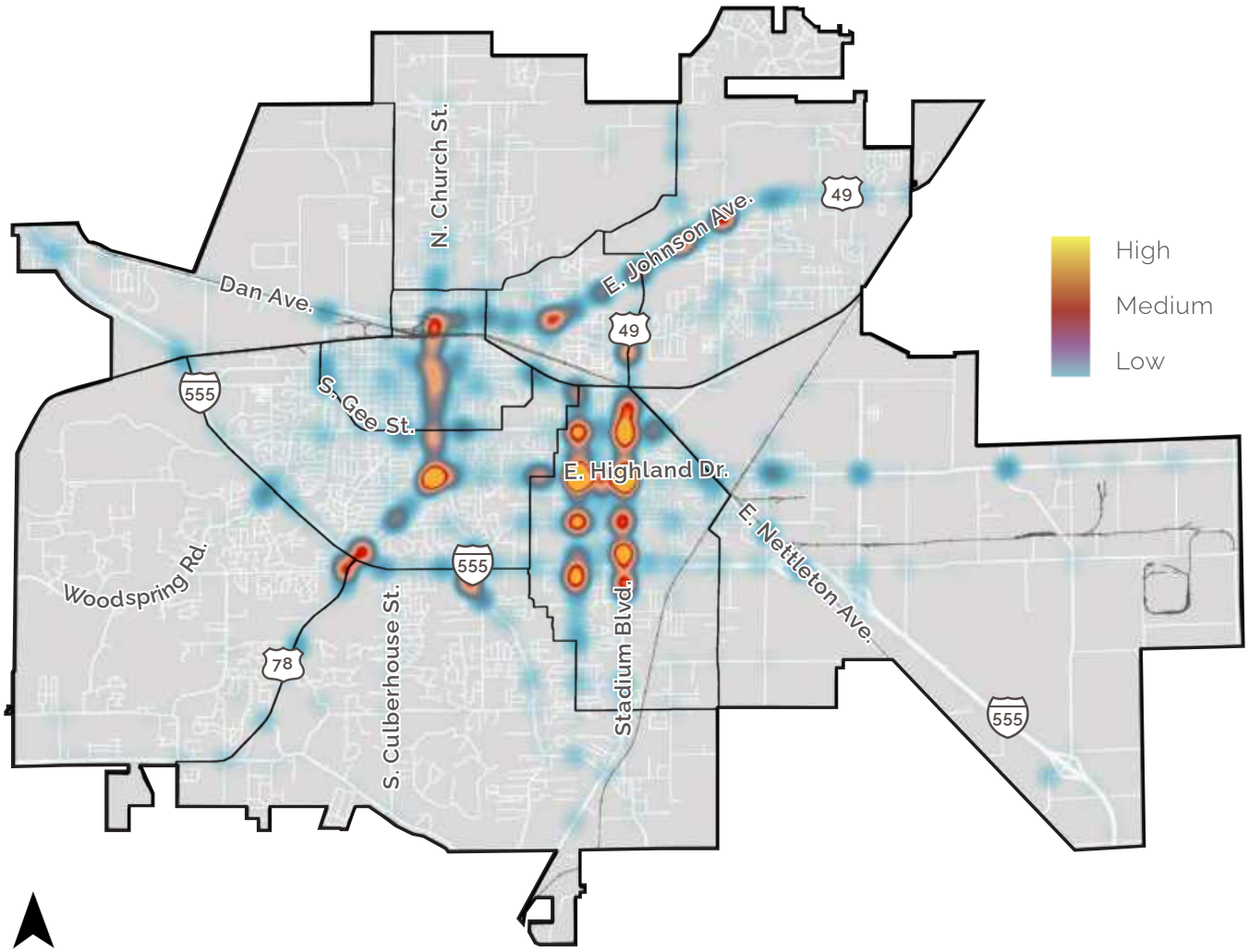
**Improving Intersection Safety & Performance**

Intersections are among the most important components of the transportation network. They influence traffic operations, roadway safety, emergency response, pedestrian crossings, bicycle connectivity, and access to surrounding development. As Jonesboro continues to grow, improving intersection performance will be essential to maintaining mobility while creating a safer and more efficient transportation system for all users.

Many transportation challenges occur at intersections rather than along roadway segments. Strategic intersection improvements can often reduce congestion, improve traffic flow, and enhance safety without requiring costly roadway widening. Future investments should evaluate operational improvements such as signal timing, turn lanes, access management, intersection geometry, and coordinated traffic control before considering major roadway expansions.

### CRASH CONCENTRATIONS

*Crash concentrations highlight key corridors and intersections where targeted improvements to signal timing, access, geometry, and pedestrian crossings can improve safety and operations for all users.*



# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Optimizing Intersections

Safe intersections benefit all roadway users. Improvements should consider motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and freight movement while reducing the potential for severe crashes. Enhanced crosswalks, pedestrian refuge islands, accessible curb ramps, improved lighting, curb extensions, and clear sight distance can improve safety while maintaining efficient traffic operations. Intersection design should also reflect the surrounding land use context, particularly within the Centers where pedestrian activity is expected to be higher.

**Roundabouts**

Roundabouts are an effective intersection alternative that can improve traffic flow while reducing the frequency and severity of crashes. By reducing vehicle speeds and eliminating many conflict points associated with traditional signalized intersections, roundabouts can improve safety for motorists while providing opportunities for shorter pedestrian crossings. As intersections are reconstructed or expanded, roundabouts should be evaluated where traffic volumes, available right-of-way, and surrounding land uses make them an appropriate solution.

**Squareabouts**

Within Downtown and other activity centers, squareabouts may provide an opportunity to balance vehicle circulation with placemaking. These intersections combine the operational benefits of slow-speed circulation with enhanced public spaces, pedestrian activity, landscaping, and streetscape improvements. While not appropriate for every location, squareabouts should be considered as transportation improvements that can also strengthen community identity, support adjacent development, and create memorable public places.

### INTERSECTION DESIGN STRATEGIES



***Roundabout Concept:*** *S. Caraway Rd. & Phillips Dr.*

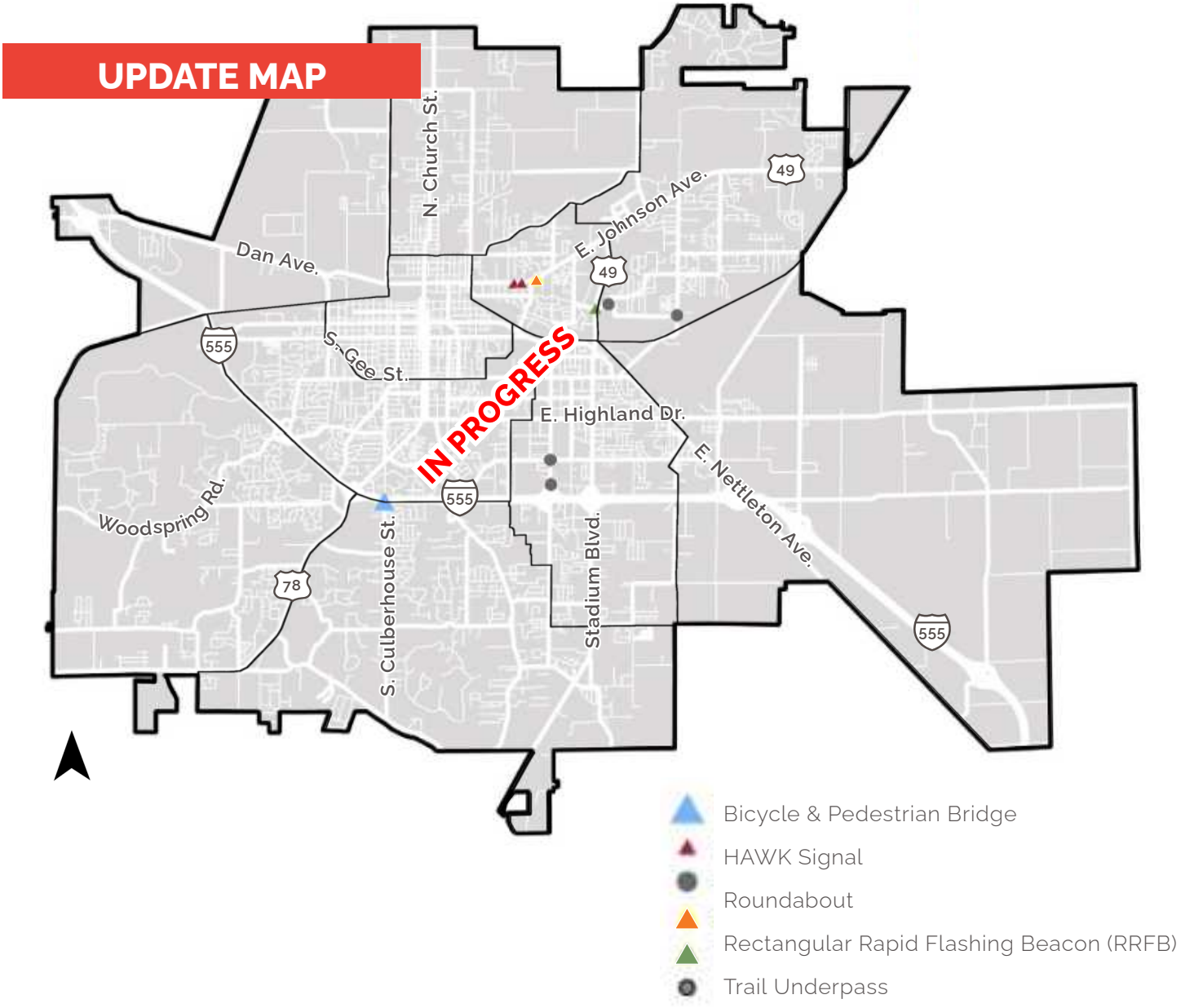


***Squareabout Concept:*** *Southwest Dr. & Highland Dr.*

*Roundabouts and squareabouts offer context-sensitive approaches to improving intersections. Roundabouts can improve safety and traffic flow, while squareabouts adapt slow-speed circulation to create pedestrian-friendly public spaces within activity centers.*

## RECOMMENDED INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

*Targeted intersection improvements—including roundabouts, enhanced pedestrian crossings, signals, and grade-separated trail connections—can improve safety, mobility, and connectivity at key locations throughout Jonesboro.*



# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Optimizing Intersections

### Recommendations

Intersections are where most delay and most crashes occur. The recommendations below fix priority intersections with roundabouts, square-abouts, and signal timing, starting with pedestrian safety at Jonesboro High School. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

Investments for Safer Intersections

M2.5 Right-size streets and fix intersections. Add roundabouts and retime signals at priority intersections before considering widening. Short- to medium-term · Medium cost · Engineering, ArDOT · Consultant: Likely

M4.7 Improve Southwest Drive safety and public space. Make pedestrian safety at Southwest and Highland Drives the first priority, then build the square-about and civic space. Immediate to medium-term · Medium cost · Engineering, Jonesboro Public Schools, ArDOT · Consultant: Likely

Metrics to Track Implementation Success

Intersection safety. Injury crashes and peak-hour delay at treated intersections.

FORMAT TEXT

## 6.8 Creating Multiway Boulevards

### Stroads

Roadways serve many purposes, but trying to meet too many at once can reduce safety and performance. A common example is a stroad—a wide, high-speed roadway designed both to move large volumes of traffic and to provide direct access to businesses and services. Combining these functions creates conflicts for drivers, pedestrians, and people on bicycles.

Although stroads are designed for higher speeds, their frequent driveways and turning movements require drivers to slow, merge, and change lanes often. Entering and exiting businesses along a high-speed roadway can create unsafe conditions and increase the risk of serious crashes.

Stroads often provide limited accommodations for people walking, biking, or rolling. They may lack bicycle facilities, sidewalks, or adequate separation between sidewalks and vehicle traffic needed to create comfortable access. These conditions make short trips between nearby businesses unsafe or uncomfortable, often requiring people to drive instead of walking or biking, even for short trips.

Their multiple travel lanes also create wide crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists. The absence of marked crosswalks, pedestrian infrastructure, and adequate lighting further increases crossing risk.

The car-centric design of stroads tends to attract drive-throughs, strip malls, and big-box retail. This development pattern, combined with limited walkability, makes successful mixed-use development more difficult.

Stroads may provide a lower return on investment than other street types. Their multiple travel lanes, large signalized intersections, and heavy truck traffic make them expensive to build and maintain. Adjacent underused parking lots and vacant land also limit economic productivity. Redeveloping these areas with businesses could increase tax revenue and better support the community.

Finally, stroads are often visually uninviting, with extensive asphalt, parking lots, and little vegetation. In addition to diminishing the pedestrian experience, these extensive impervious surfaces can worsen stormwater runoff.

### Converting C3C to C5

In urban areas, limited space makes large parking lots costly and inefficient. C3C development typically includes parking lots between the road and the businesses that front it. These parking lots use valuable land and separate businesses from the street and sidewalks, reducing walkability and visual appeal. Developing these areas into C5 developments can improve business visibility and activity as the businesses are pulled closer to the street and walkability is improved through wide sidewalks to support increased foot traffic.

### Multiway Boulevards

Roadways often shape a visitor's first impression of a city and can contribute to community identity and sense of place. While stroads can diminish these qualities, multiway boulevards can support placemaking, safety, and multimodal mobility.

Multiway boulevards reduce congestion by providing multiple travel lanes that primarily serve through traffic rather than local access between intersections. A median restricts left-turn movements, which reduces conflict points, calms traffic, and can provide landscaping and visual interest. The corridor also includes space for people walking and bicycling, typically through sidewalks, bike lanes, and landscaped buffers.

Limited access points and fewer turning movements can improve safety and create a more consistent driving experience. Pedestrians and bicyclists benefit from fewer conflicts with vehicles, greater separation from traffic, and dedicated facilities. Pedestrian refuge islands, marked crosswalks, curb extensions, and lower speeds in urban areas can further improve crossing safety and comfort.

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Creating Multiway Boulevards

Many businesses worry that customer traffic will decline without a front parking lot accessed by a major roadway. Multiway boulevards can address this concern by pairing a main thoroughfare with parallel access streets that provide direct connections to businesses and convenient on-street parking. This configuration supports retailers while creating a safer, more accessible environment for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and drivers.

By accommodating vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, multiway boulevards can create more active, vibrant streets. Better walking and bicycling conditions can support nearby mixed-use development and local businesses by encouraging short trips on foot or by bicycle.

**Access management**

In addition to improving safety, access management through consolidating curb cuts allows roadways to support higher traffic volumes without increasing the road width through better lane utilization. Decreasing the frequency of stopping or slowing down for turns creates a more efficient roadway for vehicular travel.

**Building Frontage**

Fronting a busy roadway can be seen as an asset since it provides more visibility. And as discussed earlier, it can be advantageous to pull the front of buildings to the roadway as is done in C5 development. In these areas of high pedestrian activity it is important that roadway speeds are decreased to make them more comfortable and safe. This decreased traffic speed can also be ideal for streets with on-street parking.

When businesses are fronting the street, there is often the question of where parking can be placed. Options can include on-street, behind the building, or in downtown parking lots.

**Incremental Change Strategy**

Transitioning from C3C to C5 in established areas will occur gradually as properties develop or redevelop. A clear framework will help guide businesses and developers toward the desired development pattern.

As sites are redeveloped, building frontages should move closer to the roadway to align with the area's intended context. While individual projects may create incremental change, redevelopment of larger sites will have a more substantial impact. Over time, these improvements will transform entire blocks to reflect the desired C5 character.

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Creating Multiway Boulevards

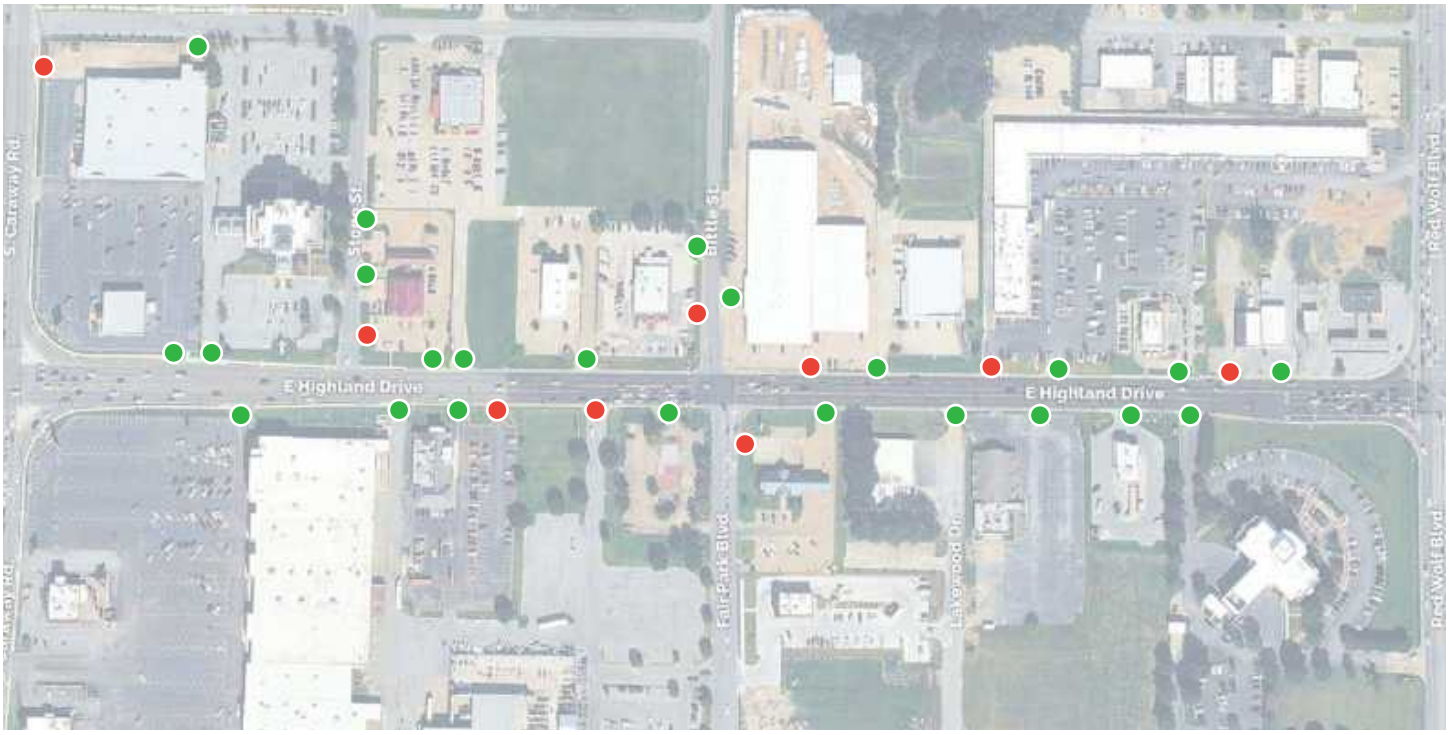
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**Access management**

In addition to improving safety, access management through consolidating curb cuts allows roadways to support higher traffic volumes without increasing the road width through better lane utilization. Decreasing the frequency of stopping or slowing down for turns creates a more efficient roadway for vehicular travel.

### EAST HIGHLAND DRIVE ACCESS MANAGEMENT




*Consolidating driveways along East Highland Drive can reduce turning conflicts and improve traffic flow and safety while maintaining access to adjacent businesses. Over time, coordinated access improvements can support the corridor's transition toward a safer, more walkable urban street.*

- Drive access to remain off of E. Highland Dr.
- Drive access to be removed off of E. Highland Dr.

***Planning Notes:***

- *ARDOT coordination required*
- *Right of way acquisition required*
- *Utility relocation may be required*
- *Property owners meetings needed*
- *Conceptual only: not based on survey data*

# IMPROVING CONNECTIONS

## Creating Multiway Boulevards

## Recommendations

Multiway boulevards let a major corridor carry through traffic while giving businesses a walkable, accessible frontage. The recommendations below write corridor rules into the UDC and test the approach on East Highland Drive once the Master Street Plan and corridor districts are in place. Recommendations are grouped by implementation type.

Regulations for Corridors

M1.1.4 Corridor districts. Allow walkable mixed use on Core Corridors and flexible, automobile-oriented formats on Suburban Corridors, with frontage standards that support future boulevards. See M1.1 in Section 2.2. Short-term (3–5 yrs) · Low cost · Planning, Engineering, consultant · Consultant: Yes

Investments for Multiway Boulevards

M2.9 Pilot a multiway boulevard on East Highland Drive. Consolidate driveways and add a frontage lane on one segment as a test of the corridor approach. Long-term (11–20 yrs) · High cost · Engineering, Planning, ArDOT, property owners · Consultant: Yes

Metrics to Track Implementation Success

Pilot results. Driveways consolidated, crashes, and business activity on the pilot segment.

**FORMAT TEXT**

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PLACEHOLDER

# 7

# IMPLEMENTATION

# IMPLEMENTATION

## Summary of Moves

This chapter explains the nine moves in the Plan Jonesboro action table and shows how the actions should appear in the plan. The set is sized for Jonesboro's budget and staff over a 20-year horizon: each move groups related work, and each action is one the City and its partners can realistically carry out. The companion spreadsheet, Plan Jonesboro - Implementation Actions, lists every action with its type, plan section, timeframe, relative cost, responsible parties, consultant need, and prerequisites. Where one plan or code delivers several actions, such as the Unified Development Code, the table adds sub-actions. Section numbers follow the September 25, 2026 draft, and the table feeds Chapter 7.

Timeframes are Immediate (0-2 years), Short-term (3-5 years), Medium-term (6-10 years), Long-term (11-20 years), and Ongoing. Relative cost is Low for mostly staff time and policy adoption, Medium for a budget line, study, or program, and High for major capital investment or multi-year funding. Consultant support is marked Yes where the work is likely consultant-led, Likely where part of it probably needs a consultant, and No where staff or partners can lead. Actions that depend on state authority, such as land banking, tax relief, special districts, or annexation criteria, should be confirmed with the City Attorney.

### Summary of Moves

The table lists the nine moves with their key actions, plan sections, timeframe, and cost. Moves 1 and 2 set the rules for private development and streets. Moves 3 through 5 deliver parks, centers, and neighborhood investment. Moves 6 through 9 keep the budget, economy, public life, partnerships, and financing aligned.

| Move | Key actions | Plan sections | Timeframe | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **M1 Adopt a Unified Development Code** | M1.1 UDC with sub-actions, including the zoning map adopted at the same time; M1.2 staff training; M1.3 stormwater and park standards | Sec. 2.2 to 6.2 | Immediate to Short-term | Medium |
| **M2 Adopt the Master Street Plan and Build Connections** | M2.1 Master Street Plan; M2.3 active transportation plan; M2.4 annual sidewalk, crossing, and trail program; M2.5 right-sizing | Sec. 4.5 to 6.8 | Immediate to Long-term | High |
| **M3 Build Parks, Trails, and Tree Canopy** | M3.1 park access audits; M3.2 park capital program; M3.3 land acquisition; M3.4 creek pilot; M3.5 canopy program | Sec. 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5 | Immediate to Long-term | High |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **M4 Implement the Catalytic Centers** | M4.1 Turtle Creek framework; M4.2 Downtown parking strategy; M4.3 Downtown streets and squares; M4.6 North Church and Jessup | Sec. 2.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 5.4 | Immediate to Long-term | High |
| **M5 Reinvest in Neighborhoods and Housing** | M5.1 reinvestment areas; M5.2 coordinated capital projects; M5.3 rehabilitation program; M5.6 displacement protection | Sec. 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 | Immediate to Long-term | High |
| **M6 Align Capital Planning, Fiscal Policy, and Monitoring** | M6.1 capital alignment; M6.2 fiscal tool; M6.4 district gap assessment and audit; M6.6 dashboard | Sec. 1.4 to 6.2 | Immediate to Ongoing | Low |
| **M7 Strengthen Economic Opportunity and Local Business** | M7.1 small business program; M7.2 workforce and retention; M7.3 commercial redevelopment | Sec. 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.5 | Short-term to Ongoing | Medium |
| **M8 Program Public Life and Stewardship** | M8.1 public life calendar; M8.2 stewardship plans; M8.3 pilots and public art | Sec. 1.4, 3.3, 3.4, 5.2, 5.4 | Immediate to Ongoing | Medium |
| **M9 Build Partnerships and Coordinate Financing** | M9.1 anchor forum; M9.3 regional coordination; M9.5 financing table; M9.6 gap analysis; M9.7 special district policies | Sec. 1.2 to 6.4 | Immediate to Ongoing | Low |

# IMPLEMENTATION

## Summary of Moves

The first five years should concentrate on the work others depend on: the UDC (M1.1), the Master Street Plan (M2.1) and active transportation plan (M2.3), park access audits (M3.1), the Turtle Creek framework (M4.1) and Downtown parking study (M4.2.1), reinvestment areas (M5.1), capital alignment (M6.1) and the district service-gap assessment (M6.4), the public life calendar (M8.1), the anchor institution forum (M9.1), and the financing gap analysis (M9.6). Large capital items, including land acquisition, barrier crossings, the creek corridor, Downtown squares, and the East Highland pilot, follow in years 6 to 20 as budgets and partners allow.

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**Prepared by DPZ CoDesign**

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