BESSEMER GAMEPLAN FOR GROWTH

2030

The contents of this master plan reflect the City of Bessemer's community values. The plan serves as a guide to interpreting citizen values into future land use decisions, capital investments, and public policies. As such, the recommendations within this master plan are not legally binding upon the City of Bessemer.

Cover photo: Voices of Truth Jefferson County Memorial Project

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IMAGES

MAPS

TABLES

GRAPHS

INTRODUCTION

Known as the Marvel City, Bessemer thrived as a
center of industry and still embraces that character.

Founded in 1887 by Henry F. DeBardeleben, Bessemer quickly grew into a prominent industrial city due to its rich deposits of iron ore, coal, and limestone. These natural resources attracted the iron and steel industries, establishing Bessemer as a key player in the industrialization of the South. The city's strategic location, coupled with its robust rail network, facilitated rapid economic growth and population expansion. Today, Bessemer honors its industrial heritage while striving to adapt and thrive in a modern economy.

Image 1. Civic art on 14th Street at Arlington Avenue, by the Voices of Truth Jefferson County Memorial Project (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

THE VISION

Vision 2040 is a long-term strategic vision crafted to capture the aspirations of Bessemer's residents. It envisions a city with a high quality of life, robust economic opportunities, and a commitment to sustainability and inclusivity. During the April 2024 comprehensive plan workshop, community members reviewed and refined the vision statement, emphasizing the importance of revitalized neighborhoods, enhanced public safety, and accessible recreational spaces. This collaborative effort ensures the implementation of Vision 2040, reflecting the collective hopes and ambitions of the Bessemer community.

Bessemer envisions itself as a vibrant, inclusive, and diverse community, where all residents enjoy a high quality of life and ample opportunities for growth and success. The city is inviting and attractive, offering a variety of housing options and fostering a safe, healthy, and secure environment. With well-defined green spaces, parks, and recreation areas, Bessemer thrives on revitalized neighborhoods and cherishes its historic Downtown as the city's crown jewel.

Image 2. DeBardeleben Park

Image 3. Old City Hall

Image 4. Bessemer Public Library

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW

Under Alabama state law, municipalities are required to develop comprehensive plans to have zoning and qualify for certain types of federal and state funding. These plans must address various elements, including land use, transportation, and public utilities.

For Bessemer, the Comprehensive Plan is more than a statutory requirement; it is a tool to shape a prosperous and sustainable future. By fostering economic development, improving infrastructure, and enhancing the quality of life, the plan sets out to make Bessemer a more attractive place to live, work, and invest.
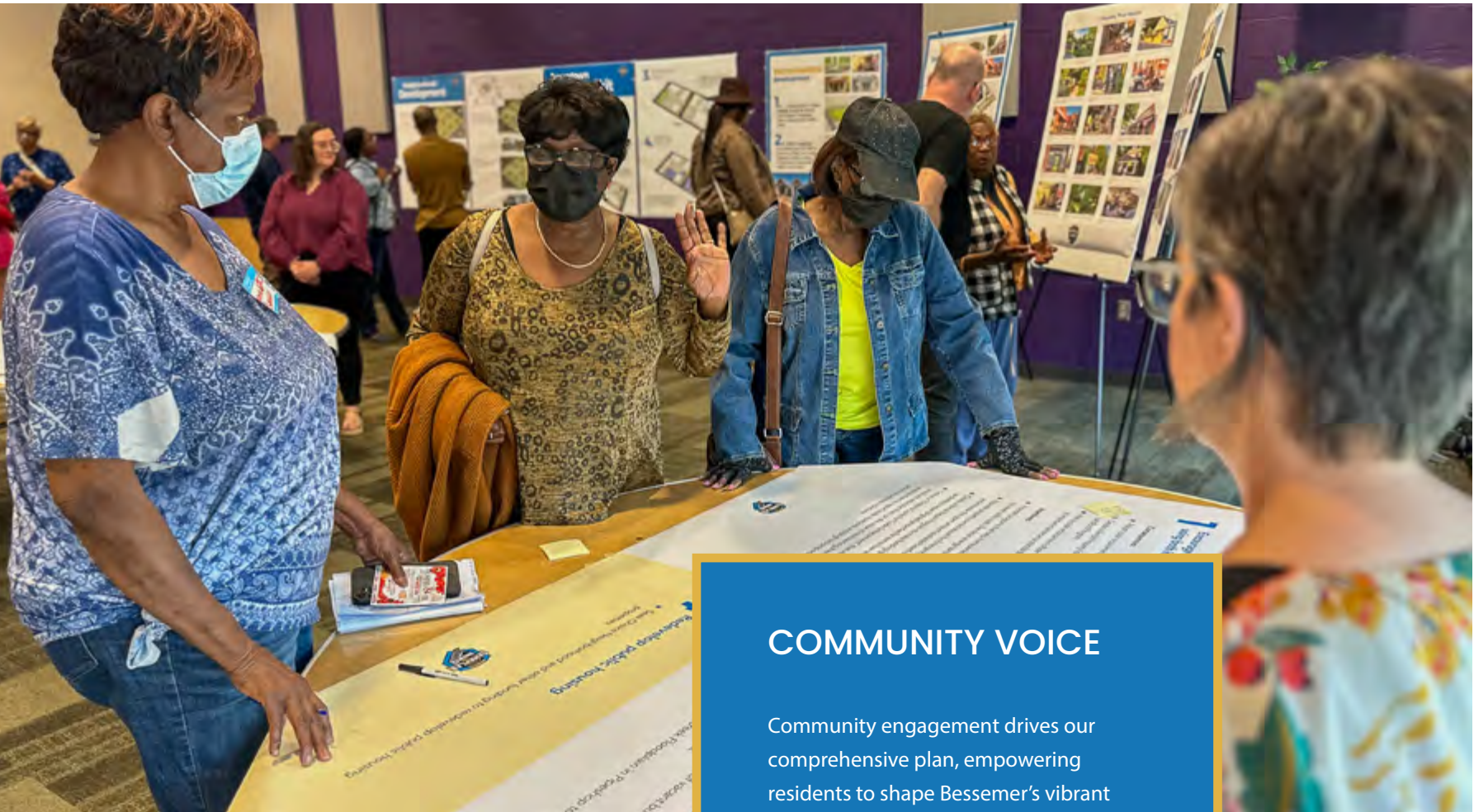
Image 5. Community Visioning Workshop

COMMUNITY VOICE

Community engagement drives our comprehensive plan, empowering residents to shape Bessemer's vibrant future.

GAME PLAN FOR GROWTH

Creating a championship city, play by play.

If Bessemer is to become a championship city, it's going to take teamwork. The city must consider what they can do together to overcome challenges. How can they invest their talents and resources to build a stronger, more prosperous community?

Growth, development, and economic opportunity are key focus areas. Transportation options for everyone are essential. Better city services and preservation of the good bones that strengthen downtown and their historic neighborhoods are also priorities.

This Comprehensive Plan effort has been branded as a "Game Plan for Growth," and it is not just a vision but a roadmap for achieving the community's goals. It is designed to be flexible and responsive to changing conditions, ensuring that Bessemer can navigate future challenges and seize new opportunities. Through continued community engagement and strategic planning, Bessemer is poised to

build on its rich history and create a vibrant, dynamic future for all residents.

The Bessemer Comprehensive Plan presents a strategic vision for the future growth and development of the city. It is informed by a detailed analysis of current demographics and land use patterns, setting the stage for targeted interventions in key areas of opportunity and concern. The plan outlines specific goals and actions for catalyst areas such as Downtown redevelopment, historic neighborhoods, and the Bessemer Super Highway. Additionally, it addresses broader objectives in housing and neighborhood stabilization, transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, community facilities, and code reform.

PLAY BY PLAY OF BESSEMER'S PLAN

This comprehensive plan for Bessemer sets out a clear gameplan for the city's growth and revitalization in ten key chapters that outline specific goals and actions designed to achieve the community's vision. By following these guidelines, Bessemer intends to create a vibrant, sustainable future for all its residents. The plan chapters include:

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The demographic analysis reveals trends in population growth, age distribution, income levels, and housing types, providing a comprehensive understanding of Bessemer's social and economic fabric. The land use analysis identifies areas of high potential and existing challenges, setting a foundation for strategic planning.

CATALYST AREAS

DOWNTOWN

The Downtown area, with its rich history and architectural charm, faces challenges such as aging infrastructure and economic stagnation. The plan aspires to stabilize and restore historic buildings, enhance streetscapes, and promote mixed-use development to increase economic activity and residential options.

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

Historic neighborhoods, such as Pipe Shop, Jonesboro, Northside, and Southside, are characterized by cultural heritage and strong community bonds but also face maintenance issues and economic decline. The plan focuses on improving property maintenance, leveraging community pride, and implementing strategic redevelopment initiatives to revitalize these areas.

BESSEMER SUPER HIGHWAY

The Bessemer Super Highway (US Highway 11) is a vital commercial route that requires modernization to meet current transportation needs by enhancing pedestrian and cyclist safety, promoting mixed-use redevelopment, and integrating public transit options to create a dynamic transportation corridor.

SEVEN KEY PLAYS

Seven topic chapters of the Bessemer Comprehensive Plan create the goals and actions required by an effective policy plan, which are broadly summarized as:

1. FUTURE LAND USE

A comprehensive plan's core function is to guide the city's evolution, focusing on land development and redevelopment. It includes a Future Land Use Map, which will direct the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council in rezoning and development decisions for the next decade.

2. HOUSING

The city should adopt code requirements for property maintenance. The plan seeks to expand housing types and redevelop blighted properties. Efforts will be made to mitigate flood risk in vulnerable areas. A land bank should be established to manage vacant properties effectively.

3. TRANSPORTATION

The city is encouraged to redesign key streets for multimodal transportation. It plans to improve transit services and expand active transportation options.

4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The city supports Downtown development through strategic zoning changes and event programming. It plans to promote Bessemer to attract new businesses and residents. Efforts will be made to support entrepreneurship and facilitate brownfield redevelopment. Mitchell Field should be protected while

zoning codes are updated to encourage economic growth.

5. PARKS & RECREATION

The city is encouraged to improve access to parks by securing grants and modifying subdivision codes. It plans to enhance active transportation options.

6. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Reliable sewer, water, and electricity services will be prioritized; library services will be enhanced and high-quality fire and police protection will be maintained.

7. CODE REFORM

The zoning code will be updated, maintenance requirements will be adopted, and residential and mixed-use development will be encouraged in key areas.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX AND FUNDING SOURCES

The plan includes an implementation strategy that outlines specific actions, responsible parties, and timelines. It identifies potential funding sources to support these initiatives, ensuring that Bessemer has a clear roadmap for achieving its vision of growth and revitalization.

LEGEND

- ☐ -1.25% – 0%
- ☐ 0% – 1.25%
- ☐ 1.25% – 1.9%
- ☐ >1.9%

Map 1. Projected Population Change 2021 – 2026

ESRI, US CENSUS
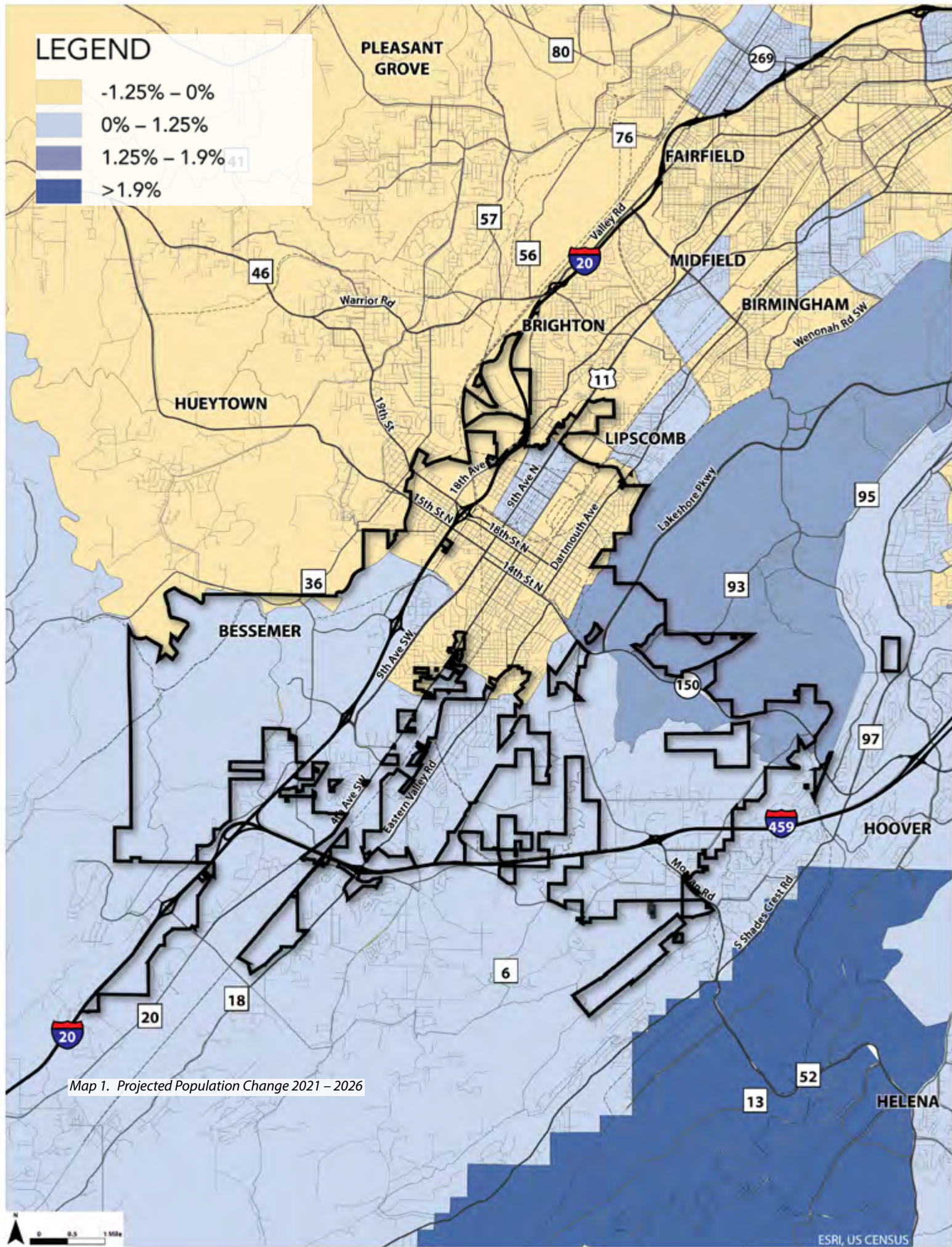
DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

The population of Bessemer has experienced notable changes since 2000, reflecting a dynamic story of the city's evolution over more than a quarter of a century. This period has seen varying trends in demographic shifts, influenced by factors such as economic fluctuations, urban development, and regional migration patterns. By closely examining the population data across these years, we gain valuable insights into the social and economic fabric of Bessemer, offering a windows into the past and present that informs the city's future trajectory. The analysis of these changes is not just a reflection of numbers but a narrative of the community's resilience, challenges, and potential growth.

Over the past two decades, the population of the City of Bessemer has been on a downward population trend, and this pattern is anticipated to persist in the short term. Similarly, Jefferson County experienced a decline in its population from 2000 to 2010, but it has recently started to witness a slight uptick in growth. With the current shift in market preferences favoring urban communities, there's potential for Bessemer to experience a rise in its population, particularly if enhancements in economic conditions and safety are realized.

The Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has seen a general decrease in growth over the last twenty years. Jefferson County's population dropped by 0.4% from 2000 to 2017 according to the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (2019). These trends are expected to level out over the next five years, except for a notable spike in growth in downtown Birmingham. Bessemer is expected to level off, with a slight decrease in population of -0.7% expected between 2023 and 2028.

This growth pattern, particularly the revitalization and growth in Downtown Birmingham, mirrors a national shift towards urban living, favored by both the emerging younger generations and retiring Baby Boomers. Given Bessemer's close proximity to Birmingham's rich cultural, business, and shopping amenities, the city is in a strategic position to not only stabilize but potentially reverse its two-decade trend of population loss, provided effective policies are implemented.

Graph 1. Percent Change in Population
2023 – 2028
(Source: US Census, Esri)
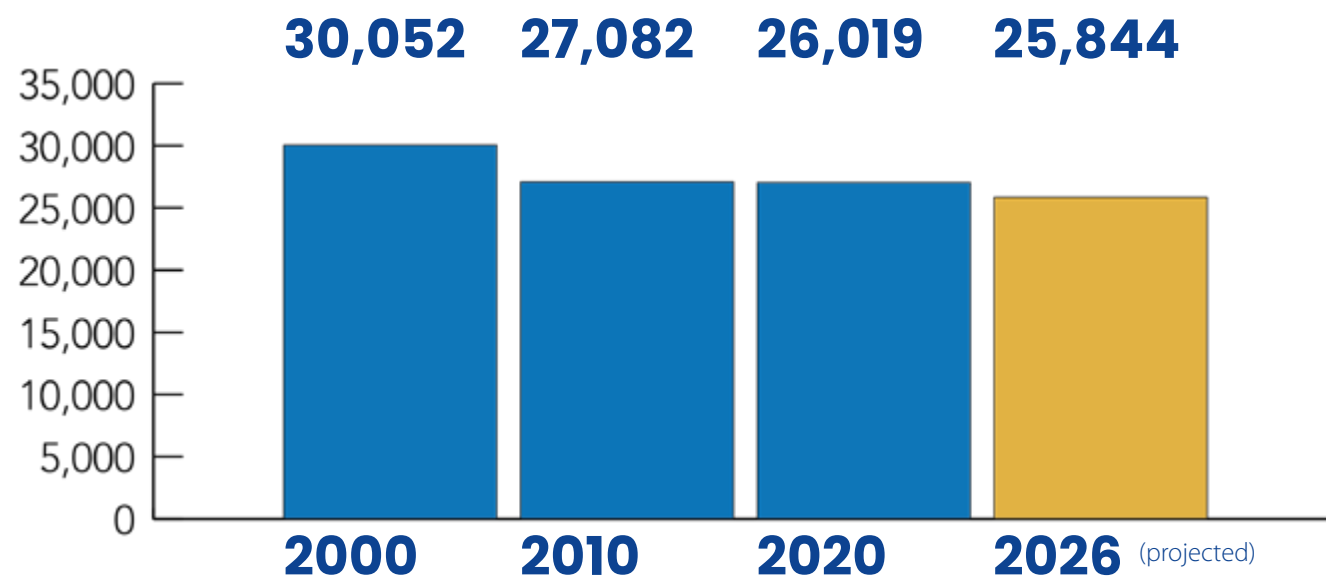
Graph 2. Bessemer Population Change
(Source: US Census, Esri)

AGE

Bessemer's age distribution mirrors that of Jefferson County closely. The most populous age group in the city is women aged 60-64, while the least represented is males aged 85 and older as of 2023.

Notably, the proportion of residents 60 years old and older in Bessemer exceeds that of Jefferson County, suggesting that the city appeals to those returning to their roots, offers housing that is affordable relative to the region, and possesses the charm of a small town within a larger metropolitan area. This demographic trend also highlights the importance of fostering private equity growth to support the needs and lifestyles of this age group.

MEDIAN AGE 39.7
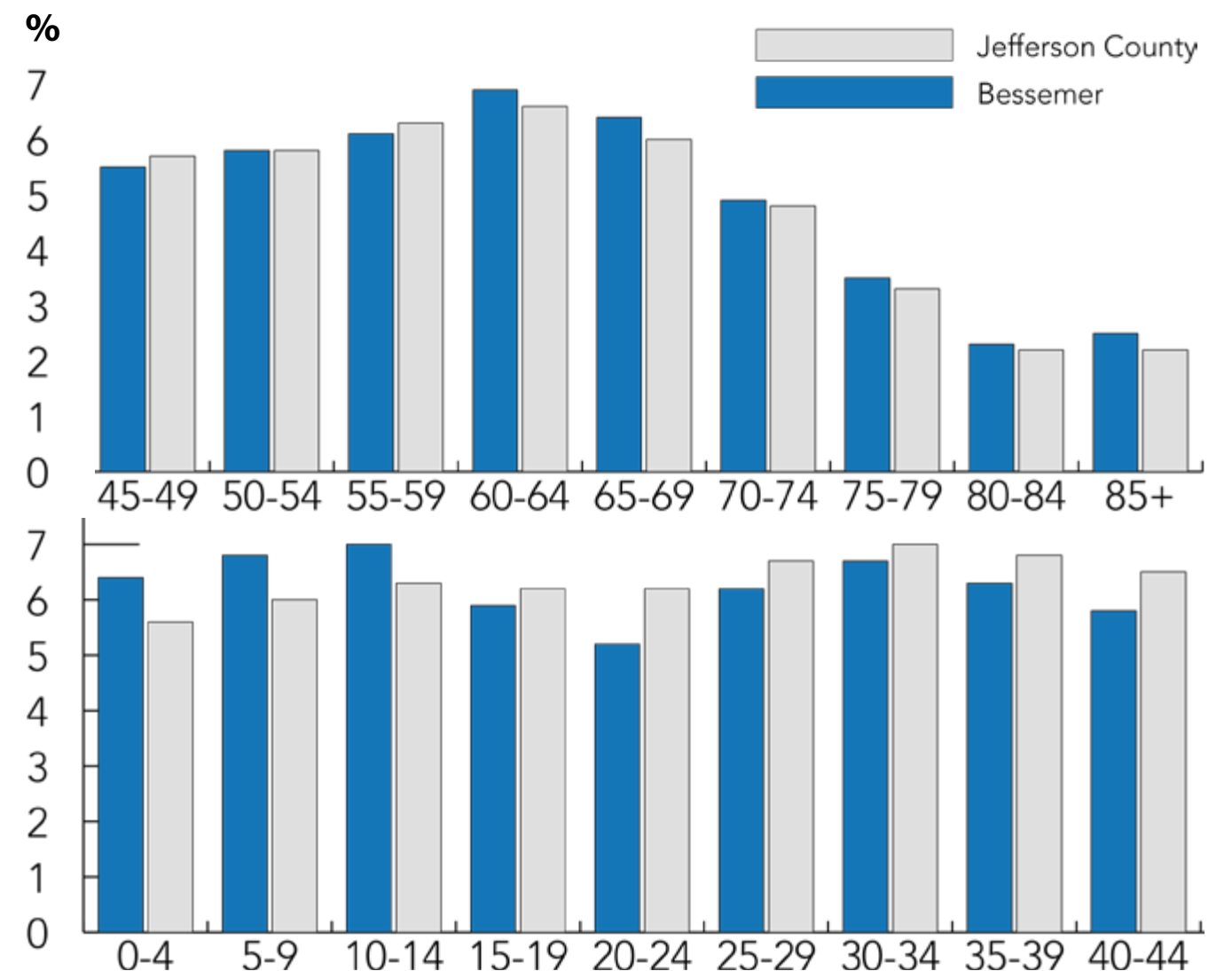
Graph 3. Percent of Population in Each Age Group
(Source: US Census Bureau, Esri)

Males Females

7.5% 5.5 3.5 1.5 0.5 2.5 4.5 6.5

BESSEMER

JEFFERSON COUNTY
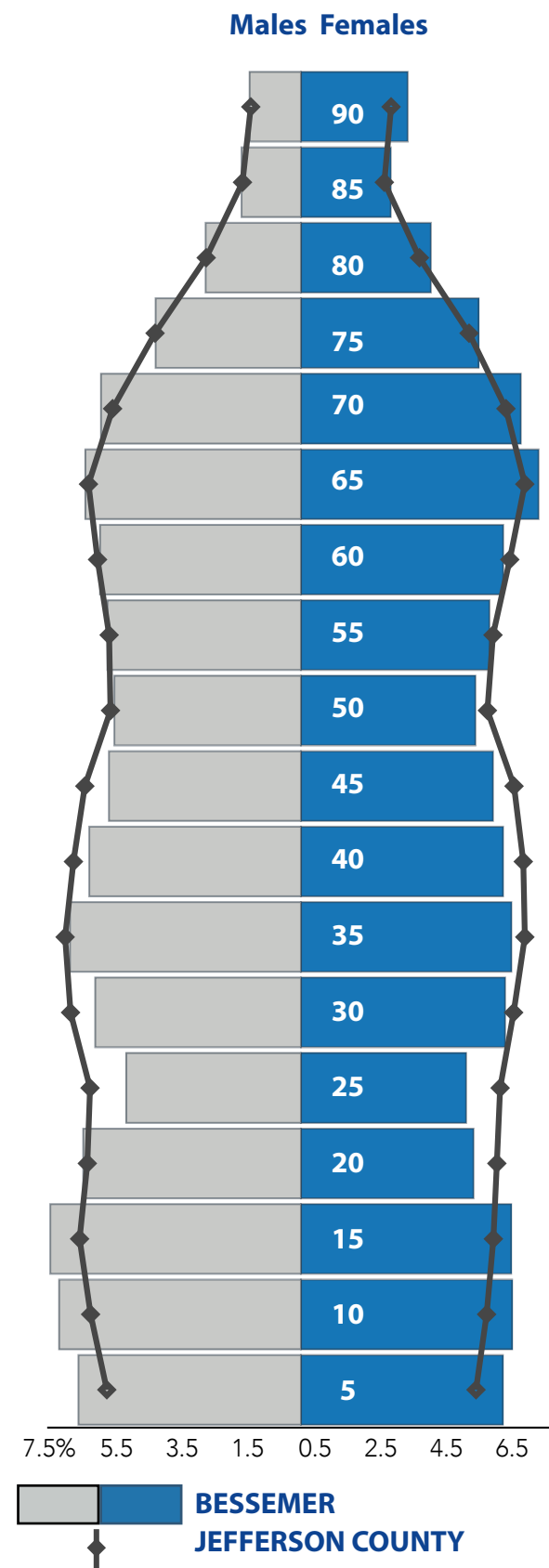
Graph 4. Percentage of Bessemer Population per Age Group
(Source: US Census Bureau, Esri)

SEX

In Bessemer, the most prominent age groups are women aged 60 to 64 and children aged 10 to 14, indicating a significant demographic presence. On the other end of the spectrum, the least populous group is males aged 85 and older. When comparing Bessemer's age demographics to Jefferson County overall, represented by the black line, distinct patterns emerge.

Notably, children and adolescents under the age of 18 constitute a larger portion of Bessemer's population compared to the same age group's proportion in Jefferson County. This suggests a younger demographic profile for the city. In terms of numbers, Bessemer's population includes 6,202 individuals under the age of 18, a sizable 14,742 people between the ages of 18 and 64, and a significant segment of 5,073 residents who are 65 years old and above.

The largest segment of the population has never married (9,541), followed by married individuals (7,177). Those widowed (1,896) and divorced (3,402) also form significant groups.

TAPESTRY SEGMENTS

The Esri Tapestry Segmentation system categorizes neighborhoods across the United States into different segments based on their socioeconomic and demographic composition.

Hometown: This is the most dominant group in Bessemer, comprising an overwhelming 55.06% of households, and far exceeds the national average of 6.01%. This suggests that the values and lifestyles associated with the Hometown group resonate deeply with the character of Bessemer.

GenXurban: Accounting for a significant 22.38% of households, the GenXurban group in Bessemer is notably prevalent, with their representation here nearly double the national figure of 11.26%.

Midtown Singles: Representing the single, urban dwellers, this group forms 9.40% of Bessemer's households, which is higher than the national average of 6.16%.

Family Landscapes: This group, representing traditional, family-oriented lifestyles, makes up just 5.67% of Bessemer households, slightly lower than the national average of 7.63%, indicating a lesser concentration than typically seen across the US.

Five other segments make up less than 3% of the Bessemer population each. Typically, a segment like **Hometown**, which is about **55%** of Bessemer, would be characterized by resisdents who value the sense of community and tradition often found in small towns or close-knit urban neighborhoods. They might prioritize local businesses, access to community resources, and the preservation of local culture and heritage in their city planning.

On the other hand, **GenXurban**, which is the next largest Bessemer cohort at **22%**, is likely to consist of a mix of Generation X and older Millennials who are established in their careers and family life. This group might seek a balance of suburban comfort with access to urban amenities. They may desire good schools, job opportunities, and housing that offers space and affordability, as well as proximity to cultural activities, dining, and entertainment that a city offers.

Both groups, while distinct, would likely share a desire for safety, economic stability, and community services that enhance their quality of life. Their influence in Bessemer suggests that the city might focus on developing policies that foster community engagement, economic revitalization, especially in the Downtown area, and the maintenance of a family-friendly environment with strong local character.

The data on housing units, population, and households in Bessemer from 2010 to 2028, when examined alongside the age cohort information discussed earlier, provides a deeper understanding of the city's demographic and housing trends.

77% OF BESSEMER IS HOMETOWN AND GENXURBAN MARKET SEGMENTS

RACIAL COMPOSITION

Bessemer's racial makeup is markedly different from that of Jefferson County at large. The city's African American community represents a significant majority at nearly 70%, compared to the county's 44%. Aside from the Asian demographic, Bessemer's racial diversity exceeds that of the county, indicating a unique and rich ethnic landscape within the city.

Legend:
- Black
- White
- American Indian
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Some Other Race
- Two or More Races

Bessemer
- Black, 69.9%
- White, 19.8%
- Some Other Race, 5.2%
- 4.5%

Jefferson County
- White, 52.7%
- Black, 43.7%
- 4.4%
- 1.9%
- 1...

Graph 5. Racial Comparison
(Source: US Census Bureau 2020, Esri)

EMPLOYMENT & AT RISK POPULATION

26,017
Population

10,639
Households

2.39
Avg Size Household

39.7
Median Age

AT RISK POPULATION

5,072
Households With Disability

5,073
Population 65+

1,240
Households Without Vehicle

POVERTY

28%
Households Below the Poverty Level

2,951
Households Below the Poverty Level
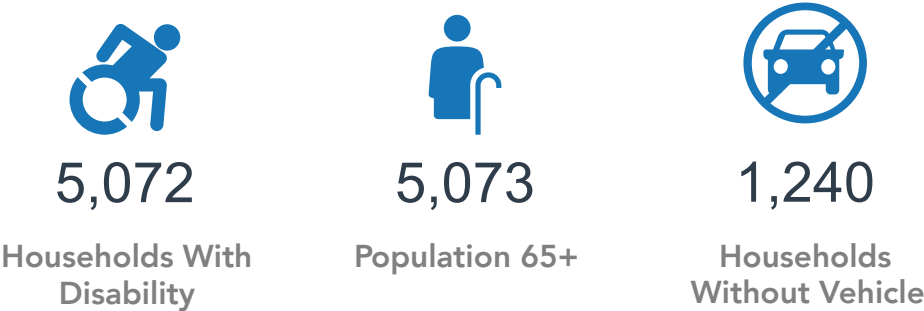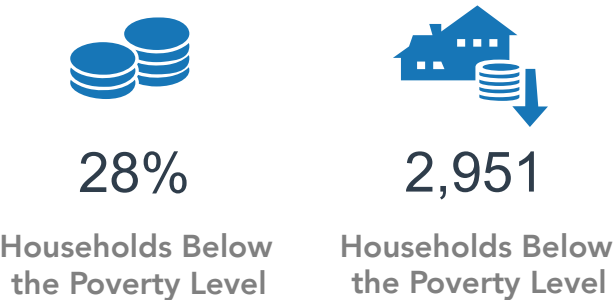
POPULATION AND BUSINESSES

35,295
Daytime Population

1,398
Total Businesses

21,094
Total Employees

Image 6. Employment and At Risk Population
(Source: Esri (2023, 2028), ACS (2017-2021), Esri-Data Axle (2023)

HOUSEHOLD INCOME
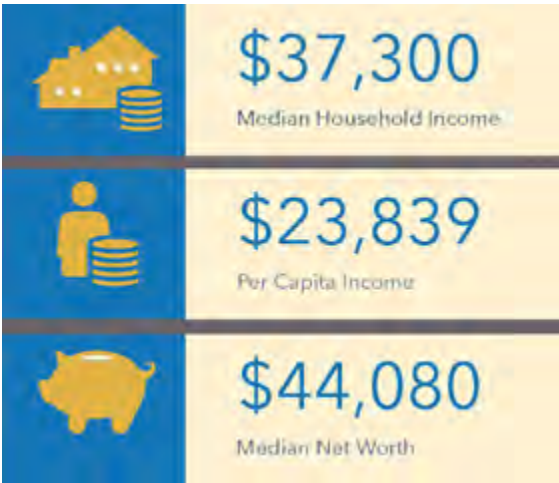
Image 7. Income
(Source: Esri Forecasts 2023)

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

BESSEMER $37,300

JEFFERSON CO. $53,994

The median household income in Bessemer stands at $37,300, which is notably lower than Jefferson County's median of $53,994. This disparity may be influenced by several factors. Bessemer's economy is predominantly based in sectors such as Health Care & Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Manufacturing, which are not among the highest paying industries in the region. The more lucrative sectors, like Utilities and Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services, employ a smaller portion of the city's workforce.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread job losses across the United States, and Bessemer was no exception. From 2020 to 2021, the city experienced a 2.9% decline in employment. This local job market contraction, potentially more severe in higher-paying sectors, likely contributed to the decrease in Bessemer's median household income during this period.

Graph 6. Household Income Range
(Source: US Census Bureau, 2023)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment in Bessemer presents a contrast when compared to the broader Jefferson County. 13.7% of Bessemer's population does not hold a high school diploma. This figure is in contrast to Jefferson County, where a higher proportion, 91.1%, have completed high school. This disparity indicates a potential gap in educational opportunities or accessibility for residents of Bessemer, which can have long-term impacts on employment prospects and economic mobility.

Higher education levels further illustrate the differences between Bessemer and Jefferson County. In Jefferson County, 35.6% of residents aged 25 and older have attained at least a bachelor's degree. In comparison, Bessemer lags behind with only 17.6% of its residents in the same age bracket holding a bachelor's degree or higher. This gap in higher education attainment could be due to a variety of factors, including economic barriers, the availability of higher education institutions, or differing local priorities in education.

However, a substantial portion of Bessemer's population has achieved some level of post-secondary education. 40.1% are high school graduates, which, while lower than the county average, represents a considerable segment of the population. Additionally, 28.6% of Bessemer's residents have completed some college coursework or have attained an associate's degree. This indicates that while the city may trail in terms of higher educational attainment, a notable percentage of its population is engaged in furthering their education. beyond high school, offering a foundation for future educational and economic development initiatives.
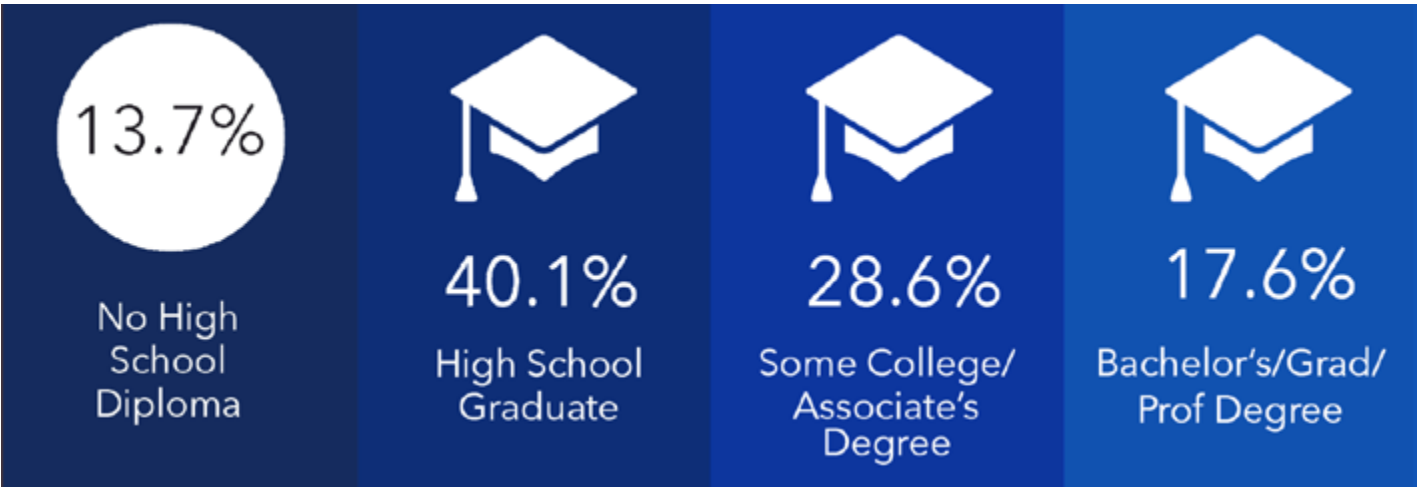
Image 8. Educational Attainment Summary
(Source: US Census, Esri forecasts for 2023)

CATALYST AREAS

1 Downtown

2 Historic Neighborhoods

3 Bessemer Super Highway
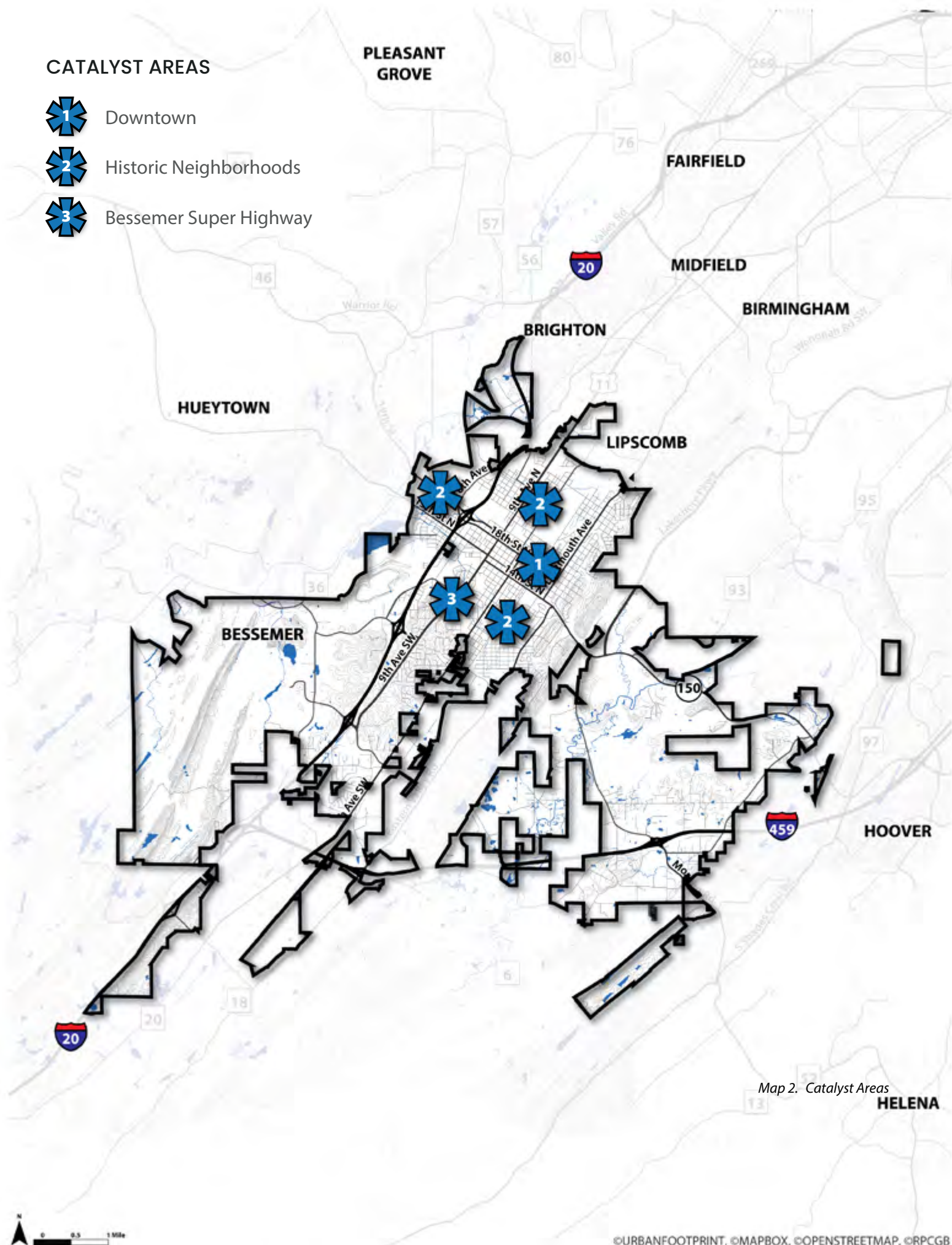
Map 2. Catalyst Areas

CATALYST AREAS

Bessemer's historic buildings, community amenities, and entrepreneurial spirit highlight its strengths, while acknowledging the challenges is essential to harnessing these assets for transformative change.

This chapter focuses on the primary areas of opportunity and concern identified by Bessemer residents and business owners in recent surveys and at the community workshop. By leveraging existing assets and addressing current threats, these areas have the potential to drive significant positive change. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate how incremental improvements can unlock the value of these areas, fostering a vibrant and sustainable future for Bessemer. These catalyst areas represent the highest priorities for development and revitalization, as highlighted by community feedback.

Map 3. Downtown Detail
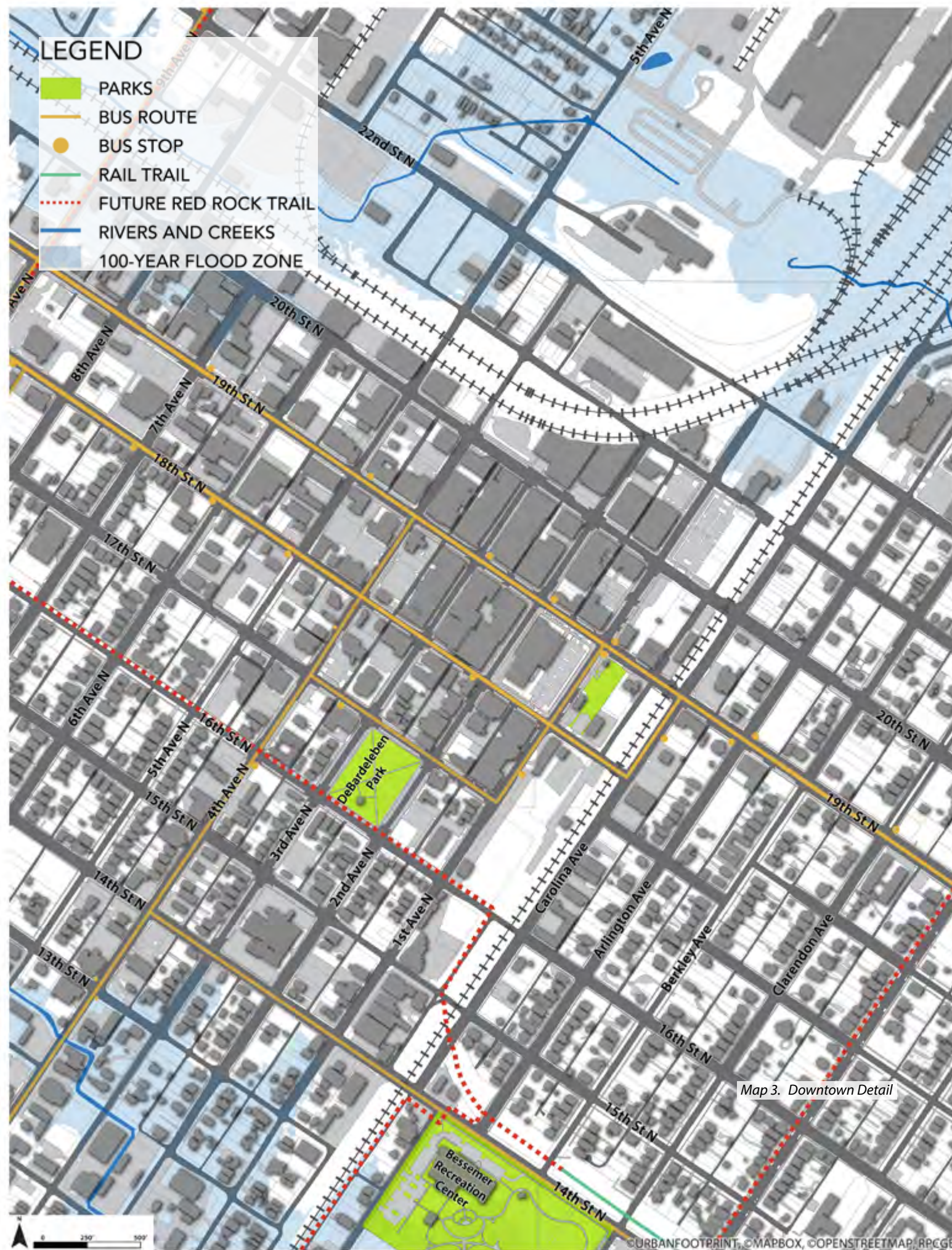
DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT

CATALYST AREA 1

Downtown Bessemer, with its rich history and architectural charm, stands as a testament to the city's vibrant past.

However, the area faces challenges such as aging infrastructure, underutilized buildings, and economic stagnation. Despite these threats, there are significant opportunities for revitalization. The goals for Downtown redevelopment focus on stabilizing the area, attracting new businesses, and enhancing the urban experience for residents and visitors. Bessemer's historic core is a valuable asset, but it requires strategic interventions to unlock its full potential. The area is characterized by historic buildings, a walkable street grid, and proximity to key transportation routes. Threats include deteriorating structures, limited economic activity, and a lack of residents. Opportunities abound in the form of increasing interest in historic preservation, potential for new mixed-use developments, and the growing demand for walkable urban environments.

Image 9. 3rd Avenue N (image credit: Steve Mouzon)

DOWNTOWN TOOLKIT

The following pages illustrate the potential phasing of infill and redevelopment between 18th Street North and 20th Street North in five phases. This illustration can serve as a prototype for other parts of Downtown.

Phase 1: Downtown Bessemer can rise again. The bones are strong but individual properties must be assessed realistically.

Phase 2: Rightsize a range of retail options, allowing much smaller retail as well as larger, too.

Phase 3: Activate live-work opportunities through zoning edits.

Phase 4: Infill small-scale commercial and mixed-use.

Phase 5: Infill gaps along Downtown streets with medium-scale housing and commercial.

Image 10. Jefferson County Courthouse (image credit: Steve Mouzon)

PHASE 1: ASSESS INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES REALISTICALLY

IDENTIFY & ADDRESS ALL BUILDINGS BEYOND REPAIR
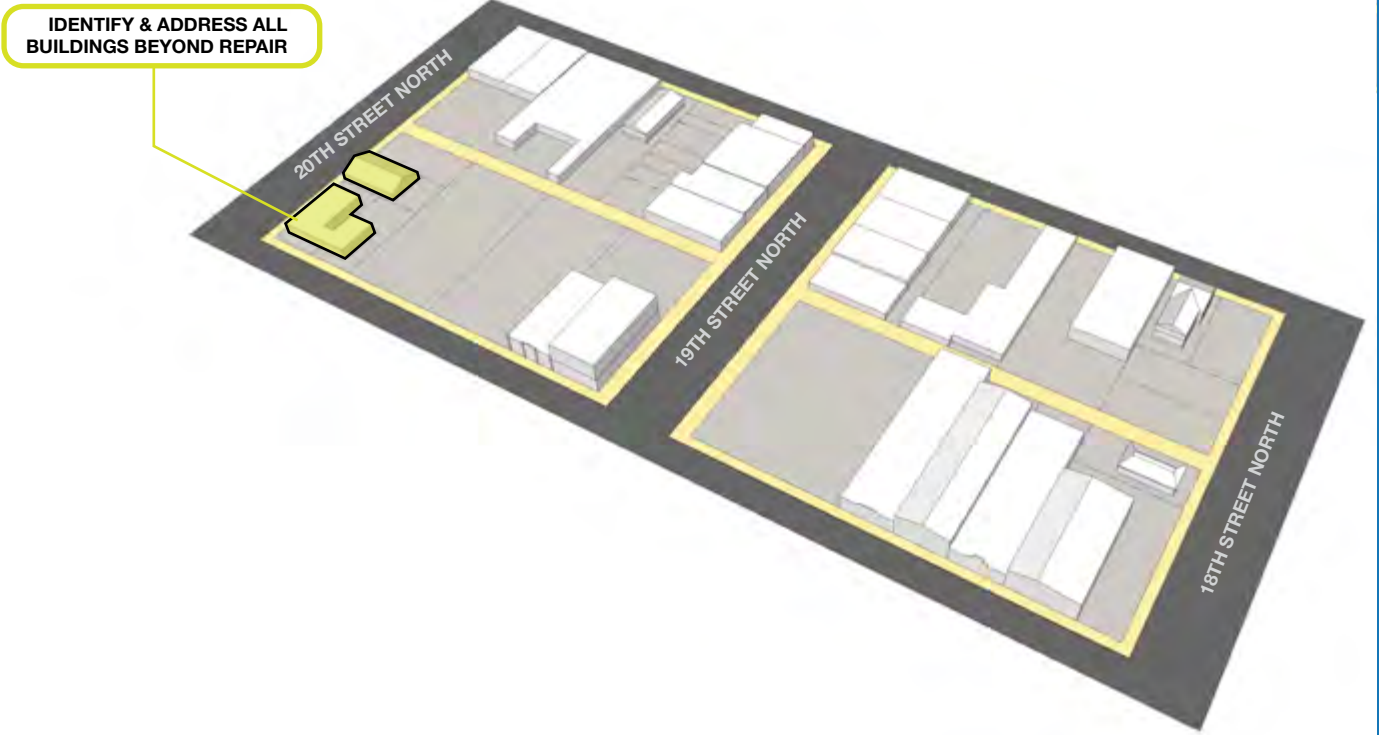
Image 11. Identify buildings beyond repair and schedule demolition.

PHASE 2: RIGHTSIZE A RANGE OF RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL OPTIONS

RIGHT SIZE EXISTING RETAIL & COMMERCIAL SPACE. PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES & OPTIONS FOR MUCH SMALLER RETAIL TENANTS, LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS, AND LARGE RETAILERS
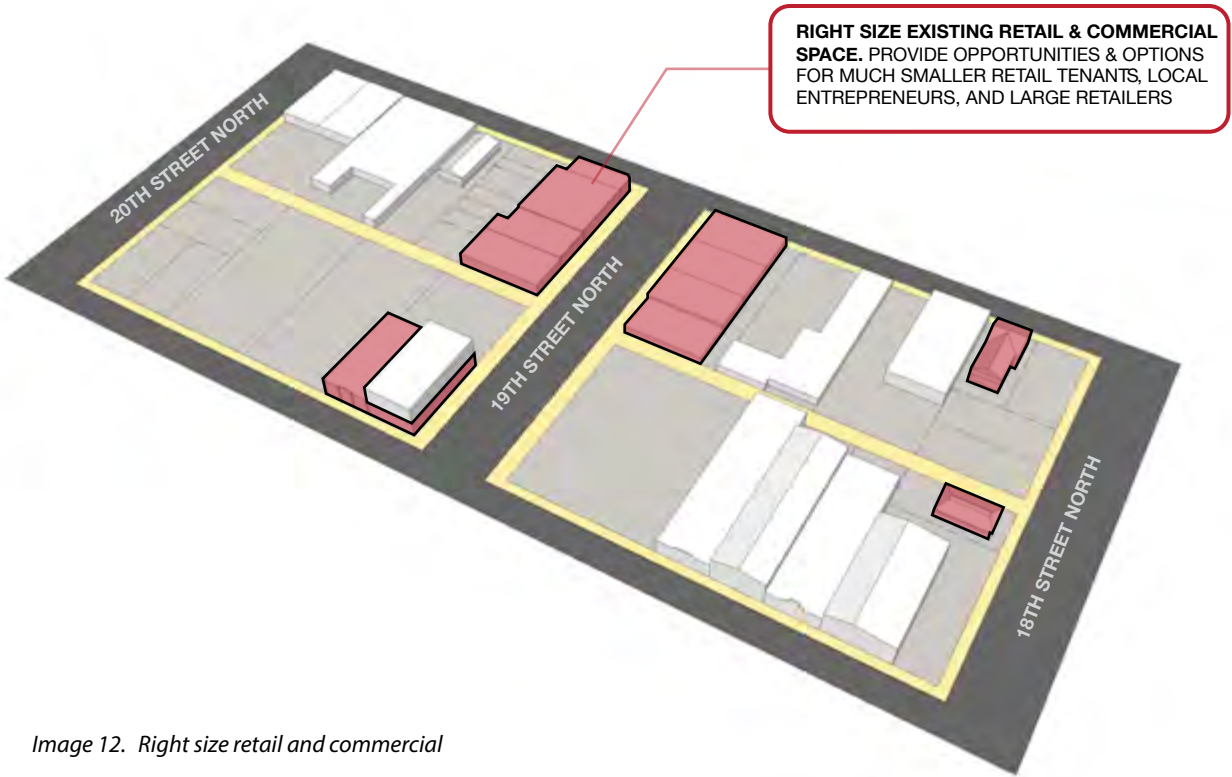
Image 12. Right size retail and commercial

PHASE 3: ACTIVATE LIVE-WORK UNITS AND ALLOW MIXED USE BY ZONING EDITS

ACTIVATE EXISTING LIVE-WORK & MIXED USE RESIDENTIAL SPACE. ADOPTION OF THE EXISTING BUILDING CODE AND MINOR ADJUSTMENTS TO THE LOCAL ZONING ORDINANCE CAN UNLOCK THESE UNITS.

Image 13. Add live-works and mixed use

PHASE 4: INFILL GAPS WITH SMALL-SCALE COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE

BUILD NEW SMALL SCALE CONSTRUCTION. INTRODUCE A COMBINATION OF RIGHT-SIZED COMMERCIAL SPACES AND SMALL SCALE MIXED USE BUILDING TYPES TO HELP FURTHER ESTABLISH THE LOCAL MARKET

Image 14. Infill small scale mixed use buildings

PHASE 5: INFILL GAPS WITH MEDIUM SCALE HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL

BUILD NEW MEDIUM SCALE CONSTRUCTION. 3-4 STORY MIXED USE BUILDINGS ALONG MAINSTREET CONDITIONS TO INFILL STREET GAPS AND PROVIDE MORE HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL OPTIONS.

BUILD NEW MEDIUM SCALE CONSTRUCTION. 2-4 STORY 'MISSING MIDDLE' TYPE APARTMENT BUILDINGS OR MIXED-USE BUILDINGS INSIDE THE BLOCK MOVING AWAY FROM MAIN STREET.

Image 15. Infill with medium scale housing and commercial options

THE DOWNTOWN TOOLKIT REINFORCES THE HISTORIC STRUCTURE OF BESSEMER

Image 16. 3rd Avenue N (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) TOOLKIT

Bessemer's downtown revitalization faces challenges in upgrading older buildings due to high costs for code compliance and accessibility improvements. To support adaptive reuse and new investments, expanding the city's TIF program offers a vital financing strategy. The current Bessemer TIF district, which facilitated Academy Drive's growth, is set to expire in 2025. This toolkit provides strategies to extend and repurpose TIF, taking inspiration from successful models like Avondale.

HOW TIF WORKS

Tax Increment Financing captures increased property tax revenues in designated areas to fund local improvements, such as infrastructure and building upgrades. Extending the TIF district's life and focusing on downtown will continue to provide resources for redevelopment while attracting private investment.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

Bessemer's TIF program can play a crucial role in overcoming redevelopment barriers, enhancing amenities, and spurring economic growth. Extending and refocusing the TIF district will help the city achieve its downtown revitalization goals, creating an economically vibrant urban center.

LEARNING FROM SUCCESS: THE AVONDALE EXAMPLE

Avondale's resurgence offers a blueprint for Bessemer. Once a struggling industrial area, Avondale transformed through strategic investments in public infrastructure, support for small businesses, and fostering a community-oriented culture. Key factors included leveraging public financing tools, offering incentives for adaptive reuse, and prioritizing walkability and cultural amenities. By extending and focusing its TIF program, Bessemer can adopt similar approaches to transform downtown into a dynamic, community-oriented space.

STRATEGIES FOR EXPANDING TIF

1. Extend the TIF District Timeline

Prolonging the current TIF district from 2025 to 2040 will allow more time to capture tax increments, securing ongoing funding.

2. Define Downtown as a TIDD

Expanding the existing Tax Increment Development District (TIDD) to include downtown will direct revenues from new developments to local infrastructure upgrades and accessibility enhancements.

3. Create a TIF-Funded Grant Program for Accessibility and Code Compliance

Use TIF revenues to create grants for building owners to fund costly code upgrades like elevators and fire suppression systems, incentivizing rehabilitation of historic properties. Grants could cover a percentage of the total cost, incentivizing property owners to rehabilitate historic structures rather than leaving them vacant.

4. Leverage TIF for Amenities and Services

Allocate TIF funds to projects that drive foot traffic and activity, such as breweries, restaurants, and cultural venues, creating a lively downtown environment beyond business hours.

Image 17. Avondale cottage court

ALABAMA TIF RESOURCES

These resources provide a foundation for understanding TIF's role in redevelopment and offer examples of successful implementation across Alabama.

DDAA TIF Resources

This site outlines the eligibility and guidelines for creating TIF districts in Alabama. It details eligible projects, such as infrastructure improvements, and the requirement for the area to be designated as "blighted" before TIF can be used. www.appalachiandevelopment.org/rural-broadband-programs/alabama-tax-increment-financing/

Huntsville TIF Page

The City of Huntsville has implemented multiple TIF districts to support development projects, including downtown revitalization and school improvements. Their experiences provide insights into using TIF to finance infrastructure and public facility upgrades. www.huntsvilleal.gov/

Madison County TIF Resources

Madison County offers resources and guidelines for using TIF to finance public infrastructure projects. Their page includes information on applying for TIF financing and details about how TIF funds can support economic development. https://madisoncountyeda.com/business-industry/resources/tax-increment-financing/

Alabama Code Title 11

The legal framework for TIF in Alabama, including the process for establishing TIF districts and the criteria for eligible projects, can be found in the state's code. This provides a detailed legal background on TIF regulations and requirements. https://codes.findlaw.com/al/title-11-counties-and-municipal-corporations/

DOWNTOWN STABILIZATION & REDEVELOPMENT

GOALS

The primary goals for Downtown Bessemer include:

Image 18.   Downtown building (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 19.   Downtown storefront (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

- **GOAL 1:** Stabilize, restore, and reuse historic buildings.
- **GOAL 2:** Enhance the Downtown streetscape to attract visitors and businesses.
- **GOAL 3:** Promote mixed-use development to increase economic activity and residential options.

The following **ACTIONS** will help make the play.

DOWNTOWN ACTION 1.

Make Code and TIF Changes to Enable Desirable Development

To facilitate Downtown redevelopment, the city should update zoning ordinances and building codes and expand Tax Increment Financing (TIF). These changes will encourage the development of desirable commercial, residential, and mixed-use properties. By adopting the Existing Building Code, Bessemer can unlock new live-work units and mixed-use residential spaces, encouraging adaptive reuse of historic structures, and fostering a vibrant downtown environment.

DOWNTOWN ACTION 2.

Leverage Existing Events to Support Downtown

Relocate events from parks to Downtown streets, increasing foot traffic and showcasing the area's potential as a vibrant community hub. This approach involves closing certain streets to create pedestrian-friendly spaces during events, encouraging exploration of local shops and restaurants.

By leveraging existing events and creating new ones tailored to Downtown streets, Bessemer can create a dynamic atmosphere that supports local businesses and enhances the overall Downtown experience.

DOWNTOWN ACTION 3.

Allow Food Trucks to Occupy Downtown Parking Spaces

Adopt a policy allowing food trucks in designated Downtown parking spaces, subject to a two-year renewal period. Include restrictions to avoid direct competition with active restaurants, ensuring a balanced dining ecosystem. For detailed guidelines, refer to the Bessemer Food Truck Toolkit on page 150.

This initiative can be coordinated through the revitalized Main Street program, integrating food trucks into the overall strategy for Downtown event planning.

LEGEND
- 🟩 PARKS
- ━ BUS ROUTE
- 🟠 BUS STOP
- ┅ FUTURE RED ROCK TRAIL
- ── RIVERS AND CREEKS
- ▨ 100-YEAR FLOOD ZONE

Map 4. Bessemer Super Highway Detail

BESSEMER SUPER HIGHWAY

CATALYST AREA 2

Constructed in the 1920s, the Bessemer Super Highway (US Highway 11) was designed to serve as a major commercial route, providing regional connectivity. Over the decades, it has maintained its importance as a connector but has lagged in adapting to modern transportation needs. The highway is primarily designed for vehicular traffic, creating accessibility issues for pedestrians and cyclists. This limitation disproportionately affects individuals who cannot afford cars or are too young or old to drive, reducing their mobility and access to essential services.

Image 20. Bessemer Plaza, Hwy. 11 (image credit: Steve Mouzon)

BESSEMER SUPER HIGHWAY INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

Adding buildings over time in an intentional way that shapes the space can build both community and business. Here's how:

Phase 1: A food cart or a shop cottage facing the street can incubate a business with a single-person workforce.

Phase 2: Other single-person businesses can add to the mix as they are ready, shaped around a series of convivial courtyards to make a work hub.

Phase 3: Over time, a mixture of apartments, job centers and retail join in, relocating some of the movable edge buildings to the other side of the block.

Phase 4: After several years, this incremental way of building delivers a full city block, while incubating and accelerating local businesses along the way.

Image 22. Portland food cart (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 23. Beaufort grocery (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 25. Auburn Midtown (Image credit: Hazel Borys)
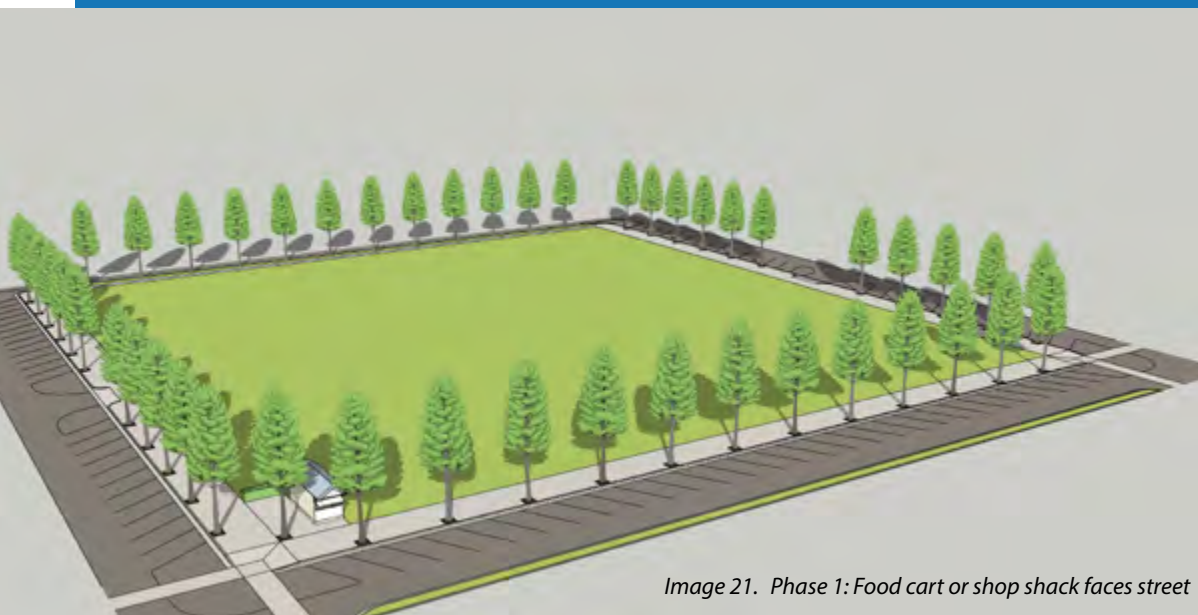
Image 21. Phase 1: Food cart or shop shack faces street

Image 24. Single-crew work space

Image 26. Phase 2: Single crew clusters around courtyards to form work hubs

Image 27. Work hubs with parking on edge

Image 28. Norton Commons (Image credit: Hazel Borys)

Image 29. Auburn Midtown (Image credit: Hazel Borys)

Image 30. Carlton Landing (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 31. Phase 3: Job centers, apartments, and retail join in

Image 32. Buildings come up to sidewalk

Image 33. Northport (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 34. New Town St. Charles (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 35. Marigny, New Orleans (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 36. Phase 4: Incremental building delivers full city block

Image 37. Shop shacks can remain as long as needed

Image 38. Charleston (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 39. Bessemer (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 40. Bessemer (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 41. New Orleans (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 42. New Orleans (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 43. Bessemer (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

BESSEMER SUPER HIGHWAY REDEVELOPMENT

GOALS

The primary goals for the Bessemer Super Highway catalyst area include:

Image 44. Carlton Landing single crew work place example (image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 45. Wynwood Yard retail incubation space example (image credit: Steve Mouzon)

- **GOAL 1:** Enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety through the development of dedicated infrastructure and improving accessibility for all residents, regardless of car ownership.

- **GOAL 2:** Promote incremental, mixed-use redevelopment to address the decline in retail demand, especially with the presence of a dead mall and many vacant strip centers. Residential and service uses will play a crucial role in revitalizing these properties and fostering an economically robust corridor.

These targeted **ACTIONS** will drive progress and ensure successful outcomes.

SUPER HIGHWAY ACTION 1.

Encourage Incremental Development

The redevelopment of the Bessemer Super Highway will likely be achieved through small-scale, incremental projects.

This approach focuses on grassroots development, encouraging local entrepreneurs and small developers to take on manageable projects one step at a time. This method will ensure sustainable growth and a cohesive urban environment that supports both commercial and residential needs.

SUPER HIGHWAY ACTION 2.

Establish Shop Shack Strategies

Introducing "shop shacks" along the highway will provide flexible and affordable retail spaces for local entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Shop shacks are very small temporary buildings that allow for business incubation to thrive, catering to diverse business needs, and fostering economic growth. They can be relocated to other available sites as permanent construction occurs. This permits very low cost space for start ups.

SUPER HIGHWAY ACTION 3.

Create Walkable Mixed-Use on Private Property

Since the Bessemer Super Highway is an ALDOT owned road, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure within the right-of-way may be challenging. Creating a boulevard with access lanes and dedicated pathways outside the right-of-way will enhance safety and accessibility. The proposed Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority Bus Rapid Transit route along US Highway 11 can provide an efficient public transportation option that reduces the need for personal vehicles. See
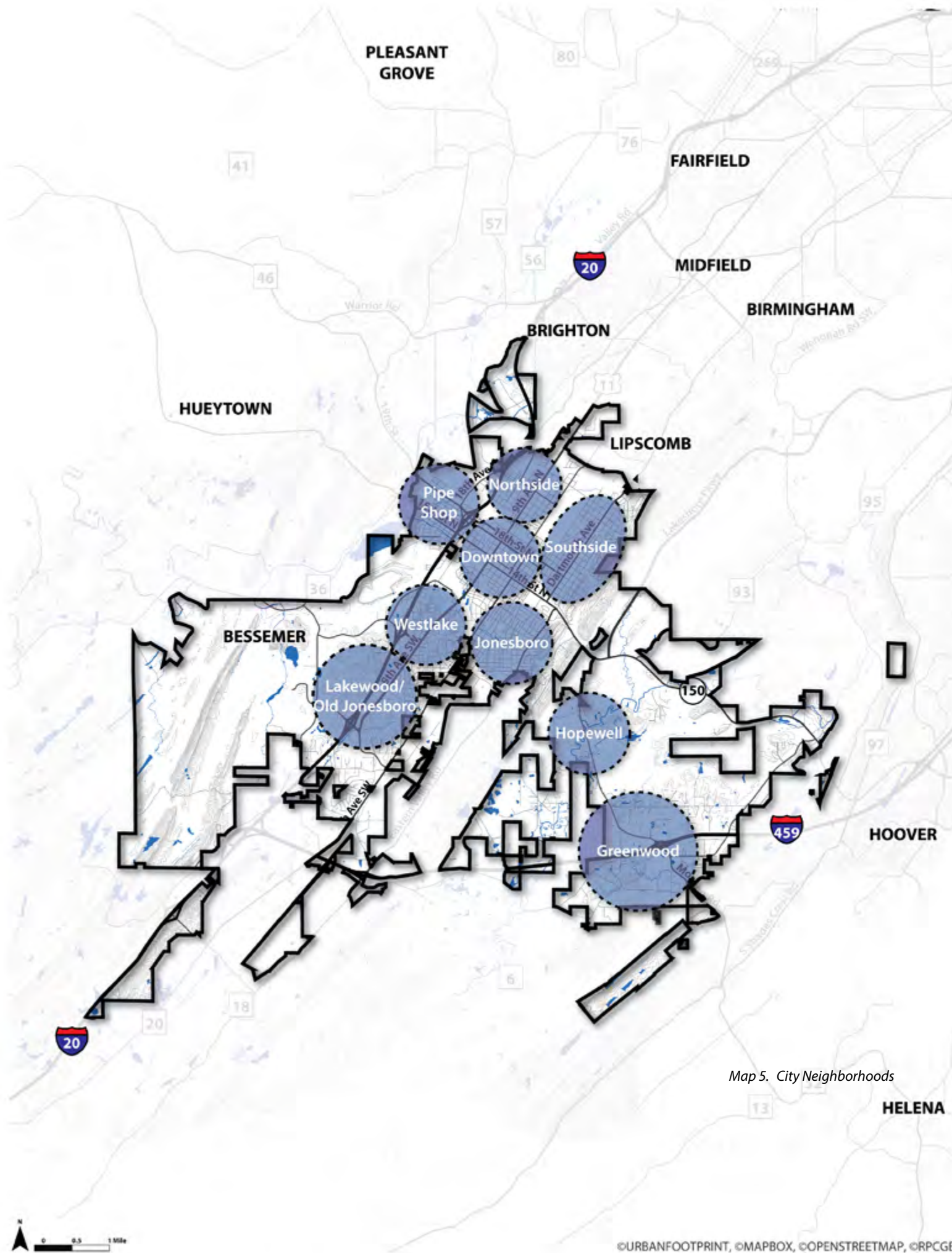
Map 5. City Neighborhoods

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

CATALYST AREA 3

Bessemer's historic neighborhoods, including Pipe Shop, Northside, Downtown, Southside, and Jonesboro, reflect the city's rich cultural heritage and a strong sense of community. However, these areas face significant challenges, including deferred maintenance, high vacancy rates, and economic decline. The primary goal for these neighborhoods is stabilization, focusing on preserving their historical significance while revitalizing the local economy and improving living conditions. Opportunities lie in community engagement, leveraging local pride, and implementing strategic redevelopment initiatives to breathe new life into these areas with economic gardening.

Image 46. Downtown historic neighborhood (image credit: Steve Mouzon)

NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

The following pages illustrate the potential phasing of infill and redevelopment between 27th Street North and 30th Street North and between 9th Avenue North and 12th Avenue North, in four phases. This area is a prototype for other historic neighborhoods.

Phase 1: Neighborhoods rise and fall (then rise again). Revival begins by assessing each home and identifying those beyond repair.

Phase 2: Find the center. Civic space like a park or green helps create a sense of neighborhood connection and identity.

Phase 3: Make space for all. Diversifying housing types allows a broader collection of people to find a home within the neighborhood.

Phase 4: Flesh it out. Historic lots can once again become the site of new homes.

Image 48. Building Recycling

Image 47. Learning from Bessemer's neighborhoods (Image: Steve Mouzon)

NEIGHBORHOOD PHASE 1
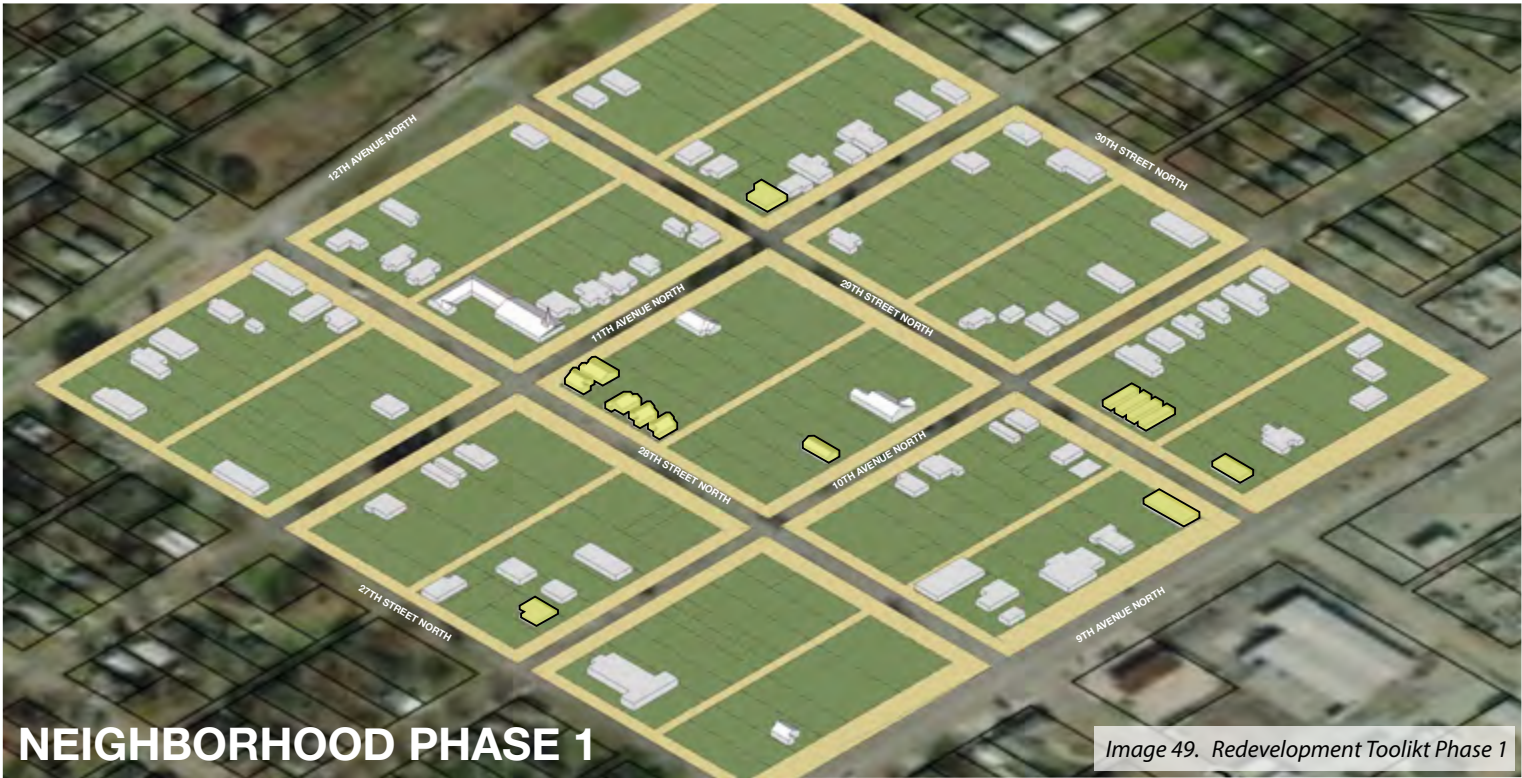
Image 49. Redevelopment Toolikt Phase 1

IDENTIFY & ADDRESS ALL BUILDINGS BEYOND REPAIR

ESTABLISH A LOCAL AN INTERNAL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

ESTABLISH EDGES & 'GENTLE' DENSITY AROUND CENTER

INFILL SURROUNDING BLOCKS W/ RESIDENTIAL SCALE BLDGS.

Phase 1: Identify buildings requiring demolition.

Image 50. Community gardens and picnic gazebo
(Image credit: Marques King)

Image 51. Community playground
(Image credit: Marques King)

Image 52. Classic park: trees, shrubs, bench
(Image credit: Marques King)

Image 54. 16 homes
(Image: Marques King)

Image 55. 4 homes
(Image: Marques King)

Two person couple
1 Bedroom Apartment

Three Person Family/Corner Coffee Shop Manager/Homeowners
Detached Residence w/ Commercial Office

Young Family of 4
3 Bedroom Apartment looking to buy a home

Disabled Veteran w/ Care Taker
Accessible Granny Flat ADU Apartment

Father & Son/Entrepreneur
2 Bedroom Flat above Coffee Shop/ Owner

Single /Digital Entrepreneur
Live/Work Apartment

Large Extended Family
4 Bedroom Detached Residence w/ ADU Granny Flat

Young Couple w/ Small Child
2 Bedroom Detached Residence w/ Carriage House Above Garage

NEIGHBORHOOD PHASE 2

Image 53. Redevelopment Toolkit Phase 2

IDENTIFY & ADDRESS ALL BUILDINGS BEYOND REPAIR | **ESTABLISH A LOCAL INTERNAL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER** | ESTABLISH EDGES & 'GENTLE' DENSITY AROUND CENTER | INFILL SURROUNDING BLOCKS W/ RESIDENTIAL SCALE BLDGS.

Phase 2: Identify an existing park or civic space as a center. If none exist, choose empty lots for this purpose.

NEIGHBORHOOD PHASE 3

Image 56. Redevelopment Toolkit Phase 3

IDENTIFY & ADDRESS ALL BUILDINGS BEYOND REPAIR | ESTABLISH A LOCAL INTERNAL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER | **ESTABLISH EDGES & 'GENTLE' DENSITY AROUND CENTER** | INFILL SURROUNDING BLOCKS W/ RESIDENTIAL SCALE BLDGS.

Phase 3: Incentivize infill in a range of densities and types of housing to accommodate many types of households.

Image 57. Cottage court (Image: Ross Chapin)
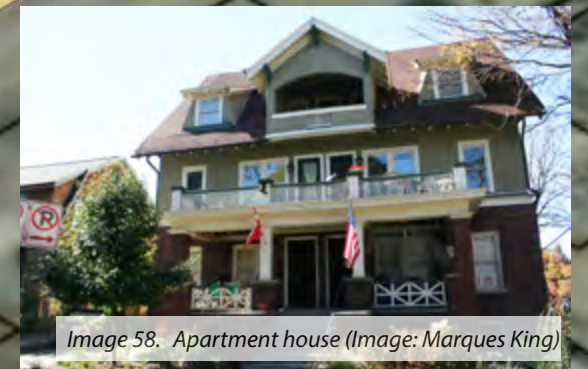
Image 58. Apartment house (Image: Marques King)

Image 59. Redevelopment Toolkit Phase 4

NEIGHBORHOOD PHASE 4

IDENTIFY & ADDRESS ALL
BUILDINGS BEYOND REPAIR

ESTABLISH A LOCAL INTERNAL
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

ESTABLISH EDGES & 'GENTLE'
DENSITY AROUND CENTER

**INFILL SURROUNDING BLOCKS
W/ RESIDENTIAL SCALE BLDGS.**

Phase 4: Use existing lots for new homes. This will assure the massing
and scale of the new buildings are harmonious for the neighborhood.

PROPERTY ACQUISITION TOOLKIT

Some actions in this game plan require property acquisition, from private ownership, a land bank, or the city. This toolkit lays out strategies to help across a range of situations.

STEP 1.
IDENTIFY PROPERTIES FOR ACQUISITION

See ED Action 6. Develop a Database for Marketing Vacant Properties Online.

STEP 2.
ASSESS THE PROPERTY CONDITIONS

Abandoned: a building that is deserted

Brownfield: abandoned or underused industrial and commercial site available for reuse

Dilapidated: a building that is in a state of disrepair or ruin as a result of age or neglect

Grayfield: a once viable site that is economically obsolescent, failing, or morbid

Underdeveloped: a structure or parcel of land that is utilizes less than or below its potential use in regards to its location and marketability

Tax Delinquent: a property a county probate court deems available at a tax sale

Vacant: a parcel without a physical structure

STEP 3.
IDENTIFY THE ACQUISITION STRATEGY

Purchase or Donation: acquire property directly from the owner through a negotiated sale or receiving it as a gift or donation, typically used when the owner is willing to transfer ownership.

Purchase Tax Deed: buy a property at a tax sale after the owner fails to pay property taxes, acquiring a deed that may come with certain legal risks or redemption periods.

Acquire Through Land Bank: obtain property from a land bank, a public authority that acquires, manages, and redevelops vacant, abandoned, or tax-delinquent properties to return them to productive use. See Neighborhood Action 2. Land Bank Implementation.

Eminent Domain: The government's power to forcibly acquire private property for public use, with fair compensation provided to the owner.

Foreclose on Liens: seize property through the legal process of foreclosure when the owner fails to pay debts secured by a lien, such as property taxes or special assessments.

STEP 4.
FOLLOW THE ACQUISITION PROCESS

Direct purchase or donation when the property has an identifiable owner with a clear title: 1.) Inspect property; 2.) Write the owner with an offer to purchase or accept donation of property; 3.) Obtain the title.

Purchase Tax Deed if the property is tax delinquent but the owner does not wish to donate or sell. The property is "sold to the state." After three years, if no private investor has purchased the lien, the Revenue Department can transfer the tax lien to the city or a non-profit. The city can "purchase" the tax lien. The city or non-profit files a judicial tax foreclosure of the tax payer's redemption rights. In three more years, the city is in possession of the property. After three years of possession, the city can bring a "Quiet Title" Action, which settles the entirety of title interest in the municipality.

Table 1. Property Acquisition Scenarios

PROPERTY CONDITION	ACQUISITION STRATEGY				
	PURCHASE OR DONATE	PURCHASE TAX DEED	ACQUIRE BY LAND BANK	EMINENT DOMAIN	FORECLOSE ON LIENS
ABANDONED	◆			◆	◆
ABANDONED AND TAX DELINQUENT	◆	◆	◆		
BROWNFIELD	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
TAX DELINQUENT & VACANT	◆	◆	◆		
UNDERDEVELOPED	◆			◆	◆
UNDER DEVELOPED AND TAX DELINQUENT	◆	◆	◆		
UNDERDEVELOPED AND DILAPIDATED	◆			◆	◆
UNDERDEVELOPED & TAX DELINQUENT & DILAPIDATED	◆	◆	◆		
VACANT	◆			◆	◆

Acquire through Land Bank if the property has been tax delinquent for at least 5 years, complete "Last Deed of Record" research to categorize properties by ease of Quiet Title. If an owner is found, the Land Bank should offer to purchase or receive donation to avoid litigation. The Revenue Department prepares A "Certificate of Purchase" for each property. Submit addresses of all stakeholders and parcel IDs to the circuit court. File petitions for Quiet Title and/or condemnation. Circuit court renders judgment, and deeds are prepared for properties. The Land Bank can now sell the property with Clear Title.

Eminent Domain is preferred if the property is intended for a public project, or if the property is a "health, safety, and general welfare risk". Order title research. Appraise properties. File a complaint to acquire properties through Eminent Domain. Circuit court orders condemnation. A Clear Title is given to the city.

Foreclose on Liens is preferred if the property holds demolition and/or neglect liens. The city's housing official cites the property is not in compliance with code. Inspector writes a formal complaint and posts a "Danger Do Not Enter" notice at each entrance of the building. The property is deemed a public nuisance. The city has the power to place a "demolition by neglect" lien on property. Title company researches property ownership and names of the interested parties. Inform the owner of liens by a notice sent out by formal mail. Lien foreclosed upon. The city brings a Clear Title Action in circuit court to gain title of the property.

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS STABILIZATION

GOALS

The primary goals for Bessemer's historic neighborhoods include:

- **GOAL 1:** Improve maintenance and preserve historic properties.
- **GOAL 2:** Manage and repurpose vacant properties through the land bank.
- **GOAL 3:** Enable local neighborhood centers to enhance community engagement and economic activity.

Here's how Bessemer can score big and turn plans into **ACTIONS**.

Image 60. Bessemer's neighborhoods and civic art by the Voices of Truth Jefferson County Memorial Project (image: Steve Mouzon)

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION 1.

Improve Property Maintenance

Implementing a robust property maintenance program is crucial for the stabilization of Bessemer's historic neighborhoods. This involves regular inspections, enforcement of building codes, and providing resources and incentives for homeowners to maintain and restore their properties.

Successful examples from other cities, like Detroit's Motor City Mapping program, have shown that regular maintenance and clear communication with residents can significantly reduce blight and improve neighborhood aesthetics. (Harvard University Smart City Solutions)

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION 2.

Land Bank Implementation

The City of Bessemer has incorporated the Bessemer Land Bank Authority to manage and repurpose vacant and underutilized properties. The next step is for the Office of Mayor to nominate the five (5) members of the Board of Directors who are residents and/or operate businesses in Bessemer, subject to approval of City Council. No Board members shall be an elected official, with the exception of the Mayor, should he or she choose to serve. Implementation will involve securing funding through grants and public-private partnerships and acquiring distressed properties, maintaining them, and then selling or leasing them to developers committed to revitalizing the area. See Property Acquisition Toolkit on page 50.

Lessons can be learned from the Birmingham Land Bank Authority and Genesee County Land Bank in Michigan, which have transformed vacant properties into community assets through strategic planning and community partnerships. The Birmingham Land Bank has almost 1,000 properties, with their 5-page bylaws shared publicly. (Birmingham Land Bank Authority)

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION 3.

Establish Local Neighborhood Centers

Enabling neighborhood centers can serve as focal points for community activities, commerce, and social interaction. These centers provide spaces for local businesses, community services, and recreational activities. Implementing economic gardening strategies can attract existing regional businesses to expand to Bessemer and foster local business growth and innovation, enhancing the vitality and economic resilience of these neighborhood centers.

By focusing on these strategic actions, Bessemer can stabilize and revitalize its historic neighborhoods, preserving their cultural heritage while creating vibrant, sustainable communities for the future. The combination of property maintenance, effective land banking, and the development of local neighborhood centers will ensure that these areas become attractive places to live, work, and engage, contributing to the overall growth and prosperity of Bessemer.

LEGEND

- NATURAL CONSERVATION
- NATURAL RESOURCES
- AGRICULTURE
- OTHER
- CEMETARIES
- PARKS & RECREATION
- HOSPITALS
- EDUCATION
- CIVIC FACILITIES
- INDUSTRIAL
- COMMERCIAL RECREATION
- OFFICE
- RETAIL
- MULTI-FAMILY
- SINGLE-FAMILY
- TRANSPORTATION/UTILITY
- WATER

Map 6. Existing Land Use

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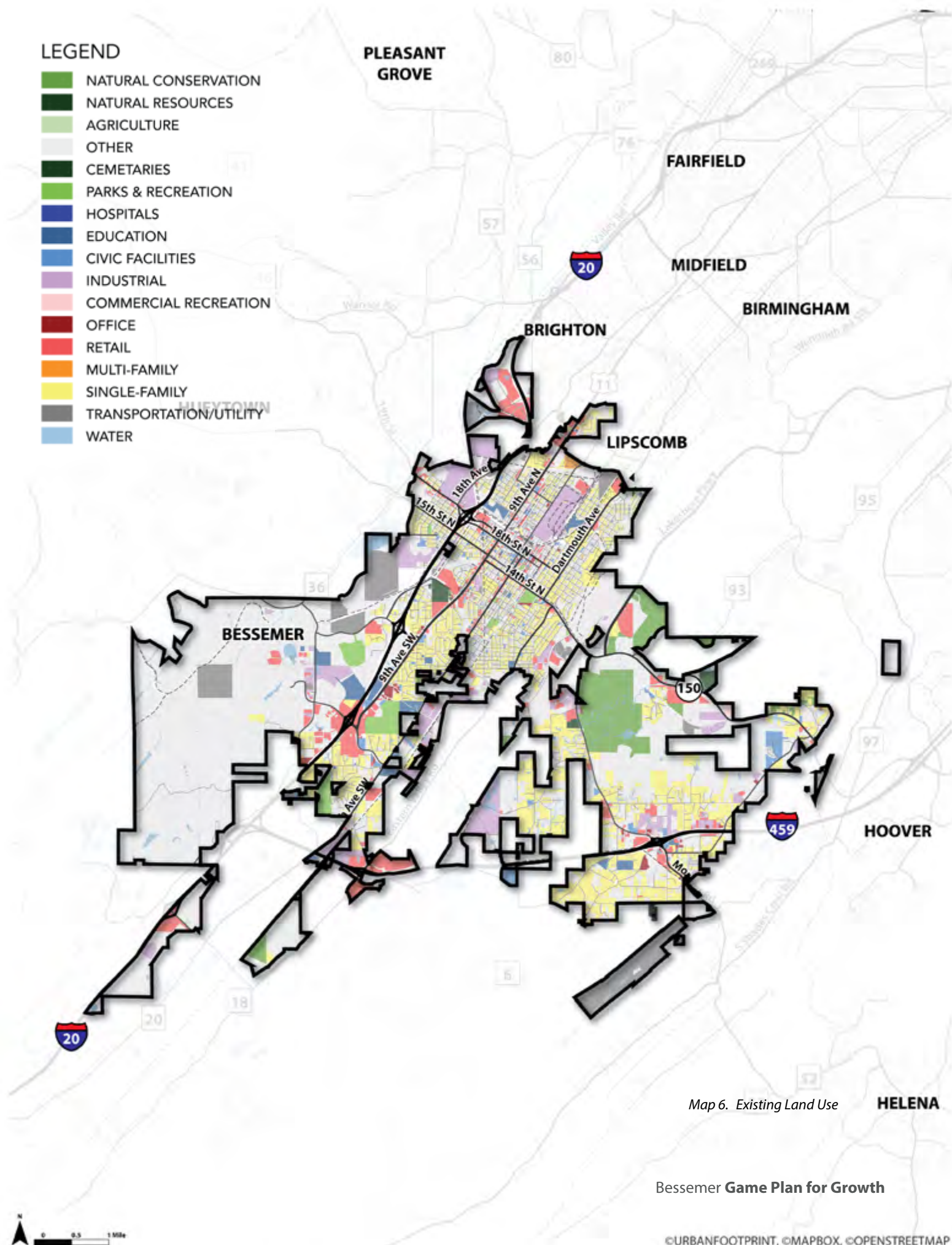
LAND USE

The policy framework to make future land use choices is informed by the land use laws that enabled what's on the ground today, community input, physical constraints, and market dynamics reflected in Bessemer's Game Plan for Growth.

The current use of land as shown on Map 6 Existing Land Use generally aligns with the zoning designations. With over 25% of the City allocated to industrial uses, local land use patterns exemplify the history of an industrial workforce town evolving into warehousing and distribution for the Birmingham region. Most of the historically successful suburban commercial and main street mixed use has declined with the population decline. The productive redevelopment of those areas to support the City's tax base is a crucial element required for the success of the Comprehensive Plan strategy.

LEGEND

- WATER
- FLOODWAYS
- EXISTING BUILDINGS
- NATURAL CONSERVATION
- NATURAL RESOURCES
- CEMETARIES
- PARKS & RECREATION
- CONTOURS

Map 7. Constraints

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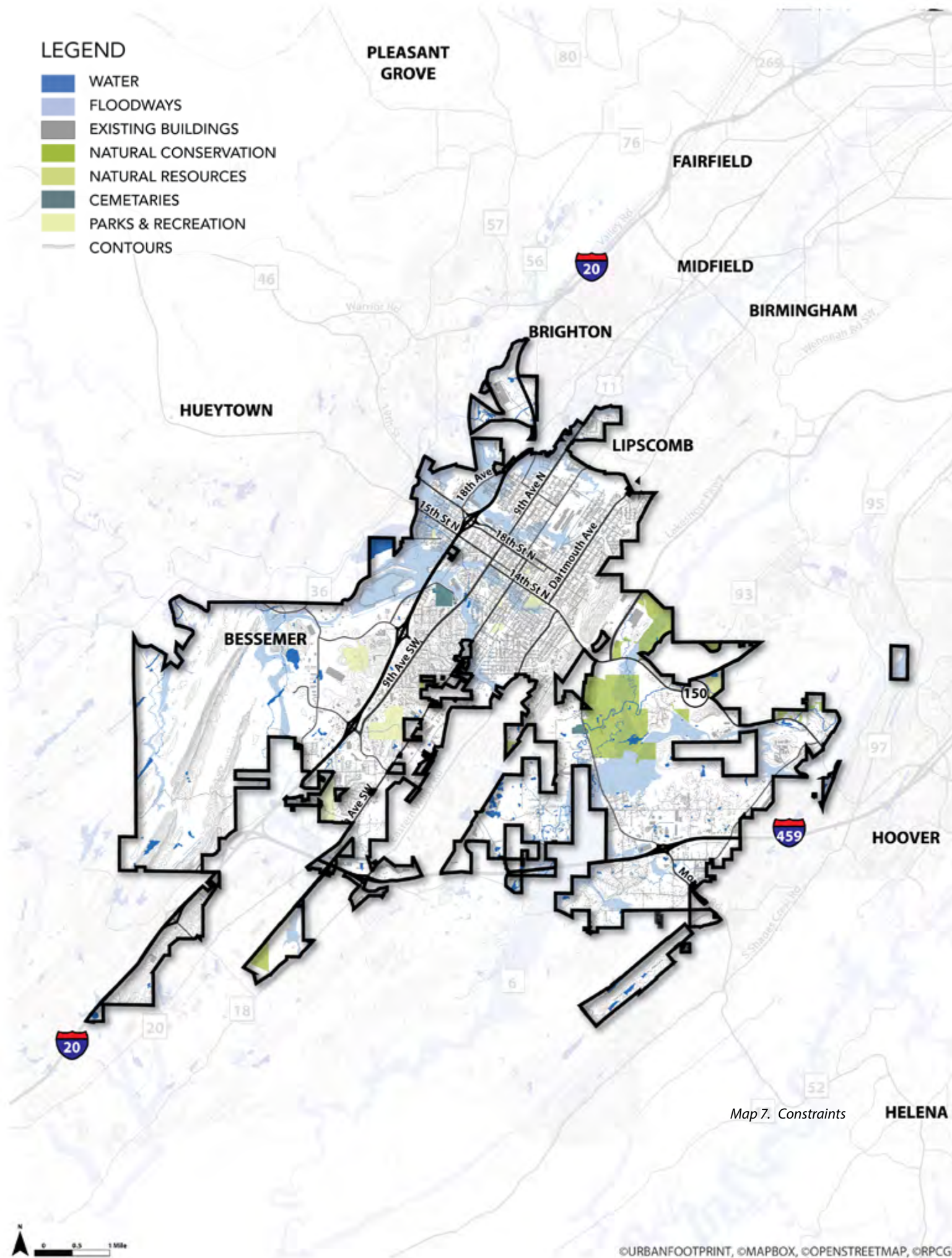
CONSTRAINTS

The 40.74 square miles of Bessemer still has significant space for future development in the southwest and portions of the southeast of the city as illustrated in Map 7 Constraints. The topography is rolling but without substantial steep slopes, and the flood plains follow the interstate corridor and are located along Valley Creek in the northeast and along Shades Creek in the southeast.

Other than the significant area in the southwest, and adaptive reuse of the historic Downtown buildings, the underutilized parking lots along the Bessemer Super Highway provide further opportunity for future development.

LEGEND

- **REGIONAL CENTER**
- **DOWNTOWN**
- **TRANSITIONAL CORRIDOR**
- **SUBURBAN CORRIDOR**
- **URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD**
- **TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD**
- **SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD**
- **PRODUCTION**
- **CIVIC**
- **PARKS**
- **RURAL**

Map 8. Future Land Use Map

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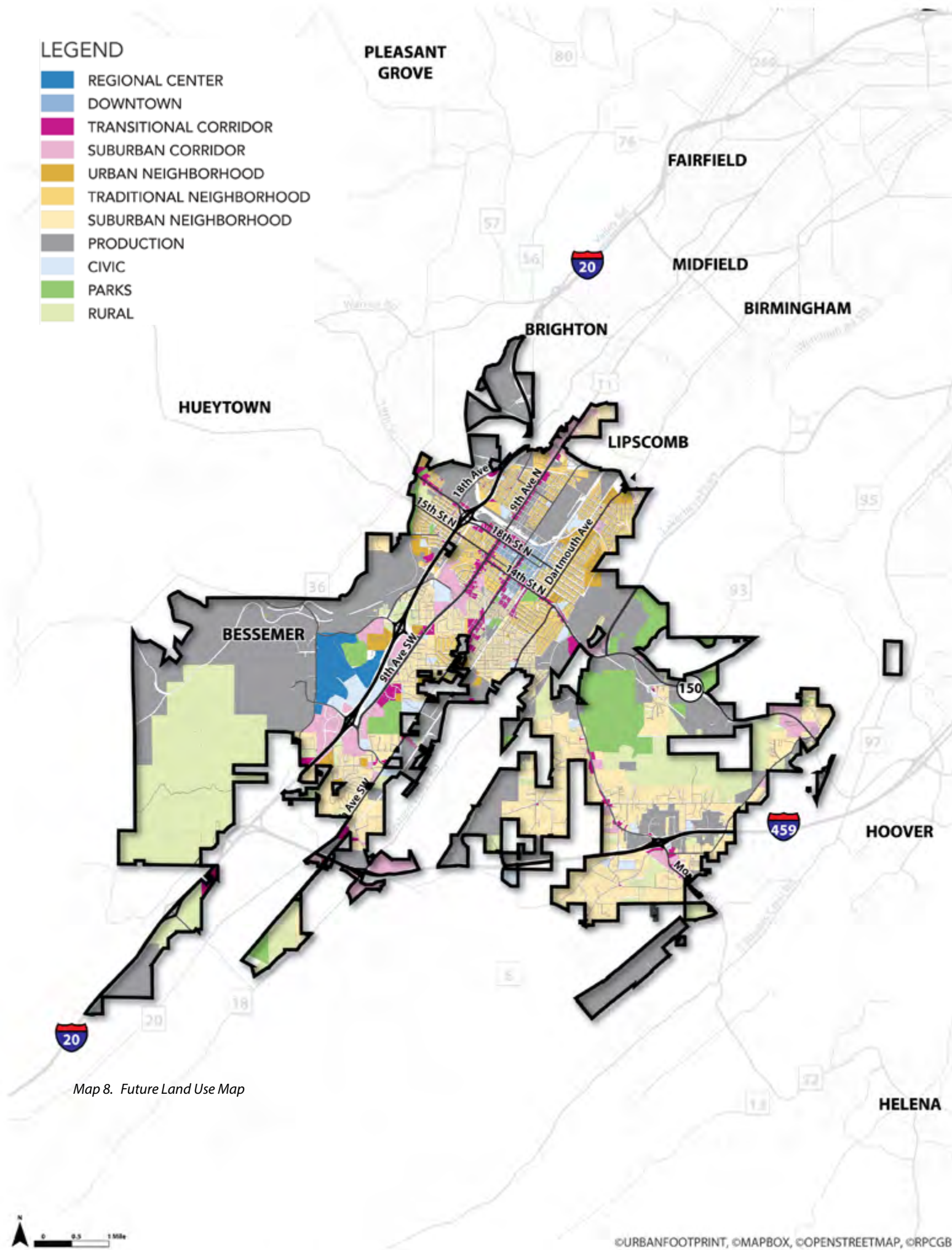
FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is an essential component of the Bessemer Comprehensive Plan, serving as the policy framework for the city's growth and development.

The FLUM outlines the character of different areas within the city, helping to manage development in a way that aligns with community goals. The FLUM is distinct from zoning maps, which are regulatory tools that define specific land use regulations and property rights. While the FLUM sets broad policy goals and provides a framework for future growth, zoning maps and codes implement these goals by establishing the legal standards for land use and development. The future land uses envisioned in Map 8 Future Land Use Map reflect today's context to establish tomorrow's vision for: Rural, Suburban Residential, Traditional Residential, Urban Residential, Suburban Corridor, Traditional Corridor, Downtown Center, Urban Center, Production, and Civic, Parks, and Open Space. As future development and rezoning requests are made, they should be in line with the contexts described in this chapter.

PLEASANT GROVE

FAIRFIELD

MIDFIELD

BIRMINGHAM

BRIGHTON

HUEYTOWN

LIPSCOMB

BESSEMER

HOOVER

HELENA

Map 9. Rural

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RURAL

Rural areas in Bessemer are characterized by open spaces, agricultural activities, and low-density residential development, see Map 9 Rural. These areas often provide a transition from urban and suburban development to natural landscapes. The primary objective for rural areas is to maintain their agricultural and open space functions, support conservation efforts, and provide opportunities for rural lifestyles. Rural zoning districts help achieve these goals by permitting agricultural activities, very low-density residential development, and certain resource-based industries.

Rural areas often feature large parcels of land used for farming, forestry, or simply maintained as natural open spaces. These areas are crucial for preserving the rural character and providing a buffer between urban environments and the natural landscape. Development in these areas should prioritize conservation and low-impact land uses to maintain the environmental integrity and rural ambiance.

Image 61. Quail Drive

Image 62. Freeman Avenue

CHARACTERISTICS

Primary Land Uses: Agriculture, very low-density residential, conservation

Secondary Land Uses: Rural businesses, recreation

Related Zoning Districts: A-1 Agricultural, R-7 Estate lots, R-8 Rural residential

DESIGN

Intensity: Very low intensity

Building Envelope: Large setbacks, minimal impervious surfaces

Transportation: Limited infrastructure, primarily rural roads

Map 10. Suburban Neighborhood

SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

Suburban neighborhood areas are predominantly composed of single-family homes, often within planned subdivisions, as shown on Map 10 Suburban Neighborhood. These neighborhoods offer a quiet, auto-dependent environment with amenities such as parks, schools, and local shopping centers. Zoning for suburban residential areas supports low to moderate density housing and restricts higher-density developments to preserve the suburban character.

Suburban residential neighborhoods typically have wide streets, and limited connectivity. Future development in these areas should aim to incorporate a mix of uses, blending residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail, and services linked in a compact pattern that encourages active transportation modes and adds diversity to these areas.

Image 63. Lakewood

Image 64. Hilltop Rd SE

CHARACTERISTICS

Primary Land Uses: Single-family homes, some townhouses and garden apartments

Secondary Land Uses: Parks, schools, local retail

Related Zoning Districts: R-1 Single family, R-2 Single family, R-3-A Patio/garden home/townhouse, R-3-B Townhouse, R-6 Planned residential, INST-1 Institutional, MHP Mobile home park district

DESIGN

Intensity: Low intensity

Building Envelope: Consistent setbacks, detached structures

Transportation: Local streets, sidewalks, and bike paths

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PLEASANT GROVE

FAIRFIELD

MIDFIELD

BIRMINGHAM

BRIGHTON

HUEYTOWN

LIPSCOMB

BESSEMER

HOOVER

HELENA

Map 11. Traditional Neighborhood

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TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Traditional residential neighborhoods in Bessemer are inspired by late 19th- and early 20th-century urban planning principles, featuring a mix of housing types. These areas promote a high degree of housing diversity, allowing people of different circumstances to live within the same neighborhood. The zoning regulations for traditional residential areas encourage this mix, supporting higher densities than suburban neighborhoods while preserving the community-oriented atmosphere.

Traditional residential areas often have historic significance, with tree-lined streets and proximity to parks and amenities. These neighborhoods support a variety of housing types, including single-family homes, duplexes, quadplexes, and small apartment buildings. The goal is to create vibrant, inclusive communities that offer a variety of housing options, promote efficient use of existing infrastructure, and facilitate infill development. See Map 11 Traditional Neighborhood.

These neighborhoods have a grid street network with small blocks, defined centers and edges, and connections to surrounding areas. They can include appropriately scaled nodes of small-scale retail and offices, and complementary uses like parks and community facilities should be within walking distance.

Image 65. Northside

Image 66. Downtown

CHARACTERISTICS
Primary Land Uses: Single-family homes, townhouses, small apartments

Secondary Land Uses: Parks, schools, local retail

Related Zoning Districts: R-2 Single family, R-3 Single family, R-4 Multifamily low density, R-5 Multifamily medium density, INST-1 Institutional, INST-2 Institutional, INST-3 Institutional, C-1 Neighborhood commercial

DESIGN
Intensity: Moderate intensity

Building Envelope: Varied setbacks, integrated housing types

Transportation: Grid street patterns, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure

LEGEND
URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

FAIRFIELD

PLEASANT GROVE

MIDFIELD

BIRMINGHAM

BRIGHTON

HUEYTOWN

LIPSCOMB

BESSEMER

HOOVER

HELENA

Map 12. Urban Neighborhood

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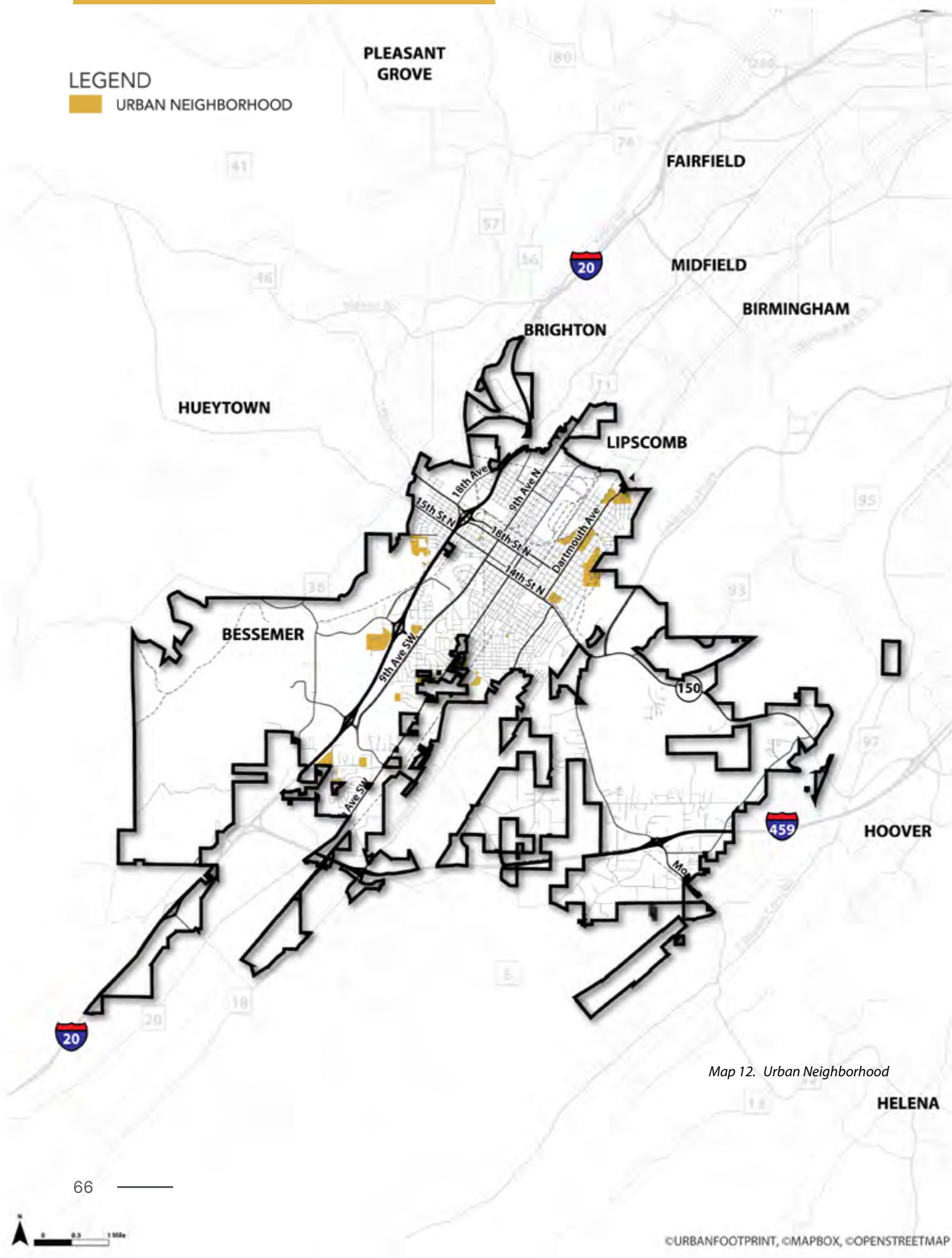
URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

Urban residential neighborhoods are designed to accommodate a high population density, often through multi-family housing and mixed-use developments as shown on Map 12 Urban Neighborhood. These areas are strategically located near job centers, public transit, and commercial hubs to support a walkable lifestyle. The zoning for urban residential areas promotes high-density development, facilitating the creation of vibrant, compact neighborhoods with easy access to amenities and services.

These neighborhoods cater to those seeking more flexible, lower maintenance lifestyles, providing considerable housing in a relatively small footprint and supporting walking and biking as viable transportation alternatives. Financially, urban neighborhoods provide a strong contribution to the city's tax base, covering more than their costs and reducing the amount of land needed for growth.

Image 67. Uptown, Dallas

Image 68. West End, St. Louis

CHARACTERISTICS

Primary Land Uses: Multi-family housing, townhomes, mixed-use

Secondary Land Uses: Retail, offices, community services

Related Zoning Districts: INST-1 Institutional, INST-2 Institutional, R-5 Multifamily medium density, MXD Mixed use, C-1 Neighborhood commercial

DESIGN

Intensity: High intensity

Building Envelope: Minimal setbacks, taller buildings

Transportation: Public transit, pedestrian and bike infrastructure

Map 13. Suburban Corridor

Image 69. 9th Ave N Plaza

Image 70. 150 Plaza

SUBURBAN CORRIDOR

Suburban corridors serve as major commercial arteries, connecting suburban residential areas with shopping, dining, and service establishments, see Map 13 Suburban Corridor. These corridors are designed for high vehicular traffic and often include large parking lots and drive-thru facilities. They typically feature strip malls, big-box stores, and other car-oriented developments. The zoning for suburban corridors supports a wide range of commercial activities, aiming to balance accessibility and convenience for drivers with the need for aesthetic and functional improvements.

Buildings in these corridors are often large, with significant parking areas, limiting their financial performance. Many of these buildings are currently empty, providing an opportunity for reconfiguration. Future consideration should include the potential for these sites to serve as warehousing, light industrial, healthcare, or new residential development.

CHARACTERISTICS

Primary Land Uses: Retail, offices, services

Secondary Land Uses: Multi-family housing, entertainment

Related Zoning Districts: C-4 Arterial services, C-5 General business, C-6 Planned shopping, I-1 Light industrial, O-1 Office services, INST-1 Institutional, INST-2 Institutional, INST-3 Institutional, R-4 Multifamily low density, R-5 Multifamily medium density, SC-1 Neighborhood shopping center, MXD Mixed use, C-3 community business, C-4 Arterial services, C-5 General business

DESIGN

Intensity: Moderate to high intensity

Building Envelope: Large parking areas, setbacks from roads

Transportation: Arterial roads, limited pedestrian infrastructure

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Map 14. Transitional Corridor

TRANSITIONAL CORRIDOR

Transitional corridors, Map 14, offer opportunities for revitalization and redevelopment, transforming from auto-centric commercial strips to vibrant, mixed-use environments. These corridors can support a variety of uses, including retail, residential, and office spaces. Zoning in transitional corridors encourages higher densities and mixed-use developments, promoting walkability and connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.

These areas are currently arterial roadways lined by strip-commercial uses that have the potential to become human-scaled, connected destinations where adjacent neighbors can safely walk or bike to retail and services. They offer better housing and job performance compared to suburban corridors as an alternative land use along arterial roadways

Image 71. Excelsior, Minnesota

Image 72. Columbus, Ohio

CHARACTERISTICS

Primary Land Uses: Retail, mixed-use, apartments

Secondary Land Uses: Offices, services

Related Zoning Districts: C-1 Neighborhood commercial, C-3 Community business, INST-1 Institutional, R-4 Multifamily low density, R-5 Multifamily medium density, MXD Mixed use

DESIGN

Intensity: Moderate to high intensity

Building Envelope: Mixed setbacks, integrated uses

Transportation: Enhanced pedestrian and bike infrastructure

Map 15. Downtown

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Image 73. 3rd Ave N

Image 74. 3rd Ave N & 19th St N

DOWNTOWN

Downtown Bessemer is the vibrant core of the city, characterized by its historic architecture, walkable streets, and diverse mix of activities. This compact area serves as a hub for commerce, entertainment, services, and civic life. The Downtown center's zoning supports a variety of uses while applying certain restrictions to residential development, limiting the ability to create a more active center. See

The streetscape features an eclectic blend of single-story shops, multi-story office buildings, and beautifully preserved historic structures, some dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Notable landmarks include the Art Deco-style Bessemer City Hall and the Renaissance Revival Bessemer Courthouse. The Downtown area is home to a range of businesses, from local boutiques and restaurants to professional services and cultural venues. Regular events like the Bessemer Farmers Market and seasonal festivals enliven the streets, fostering a strong sense of community. While primarily commercial, the Downtown also incorporates some residential options, typically in the form of apartments above ground-floor businesses. This mix of uses, combined with the area's walkability and historic charm, makes Downtown Bessemer the city's most active and engaging district.

CHARACTERISTICS

Primary Land Uses: Offices, retail, housing

Secondary Land Uses: Entertainment, civic institutions

Related Zoning Districts: O-1 Office services, C-2 Central business district, INST-1 Institutional, INST-2 Institutional, INST-3 Institutional, MXD Mixed use, R-5 Multifamily medium density

DESIGN

Intensity: High intensity

Building Envelope: Minimal setbacks, multi-story buildings

Transportation: Walkable streets, public transit

PLEASANT GROVE

FAIRFIELD

MIDFIELD

BIRMINGHAM

BRIGHTON

HUEYTOWN

LIPSCOMB

BESSEMER

HOOVER

HELENA

Map 16. Regional Center

REGIONAL CENTER

Regional Centers, though not yet established in Bessemer are envisioned as hubs of concentrated economic activity and employment. These centers, as seen on Map 16, are typically strategically located near significant job centers and transit routes, making them ideal for future development in the city. The establishment of major distribution centers in Bessemer presents an opportunity for such centers to emerge.

These areas have a diverse mix of multi-family housing, businesses, and supportive services. Zoning for Regional Centers should encourage mixed-use projects and high-density development. By doing so, Bessemer can create walkable environments that offer abundant job opportunities and support a vibrant local economy.

Regional Centers play a role in generating income for residents and supporting a robust ecosystem of businesses. These hubs not only provide direct employment but also indirectly generate significant sales tax revenue through the growth of supportive businesses. As Bessemer works to attract major employers and develop its infrastructure, the implementation of Regional Centers could be a key strategy in maximizing economic potential and improving quality of life for residents.

Image 75. 3rd Ave S, Birmingham

Image 76. Soho, Homewood

CHARACTERISTICS

Primary Land Uses: Multi-family housing, offices

Secondary Land Uses: Retail, services

Related Zoning Districts: O-1 Office services, C-2 Central business district, INST-1 Institutional, INST-2 Institutional, INST-3 Institutional, MXD Mixed use

DESIGN

Intensity: High intensity

Building Envelope: Minimal setbacks, taller buildings

Transportation: Public transit, pedestrian and bike infrastructure

Map 17. Production Future Land Use Map

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PRODUCTION

Bessemer's history as an industrial hub has endowed it with a large number of properties zoned for industrial use. The Production designation is intended for areas that accommodate a full range of moderate to heavy industrial activities as well as lighter, greener high-tech industries. These areas are vital for the city's economic health, providing spaces for manufacturing, processing, and distribution. Map 17 Production Future Land Use Map shows the extent of Production lands int the city at this time.

Historically, Bessemer's industrial areas generated significant environmental impacts, including noise, dust, and other pollutants. Modern production areas transition to cleaner industries that minimize these negative impacts. New light industrial uses should be developed with adequate infrastructure, including water, sewer, stormwater, transportation, and telecommunications.

Image 77. Amazon Fulfillment Center

Image 78. Production example

CHARACTERISTICS
Primary Land Uses: Industrial, manufacturing

Secondary Land Uses: Warehousing, commercial

Related Zoning Districts: I-1 Light industrial, I-2 Heavy Industrial, I-2A Industrial, I-3 Industrial, I-3S Strip Mining I-4 Industrial Park, I-6 Planned industrial, I-O Obnoxious odors district, U-1 Utility

DESIGN
Intensity: High intensity

Building Envelope: Large buildings, setbacks vary

Transportation: Access to major roads, rail

LEGEND
- CIVIC
- PARKS
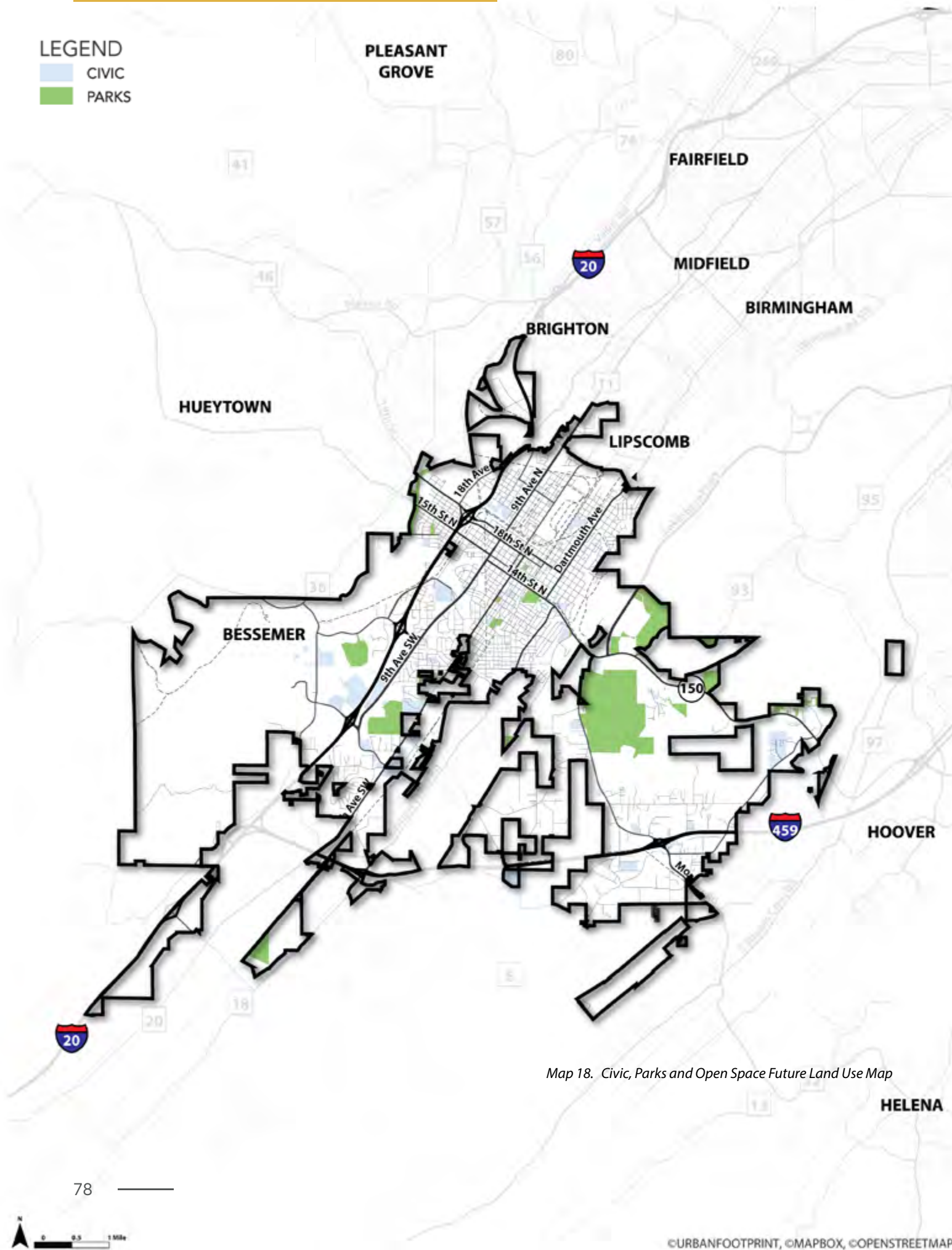
CIVIC, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The Civic, Parks, and Open Space designation encompasses existing civic buildings and uses, parks, conservation areas, and sports fields, Map 18. These areas are crucial community resources, providing spaces for recreation, civic activities, and preserving green space. Zoning for these areas supports their continued use and expansion to meet community needs.

Civic spaces include government buildings, schools, and libraries, while cemeteries, parks and open spaces offer recreational opportunities, contemplative spaces, and improve residents' quality of life. New neighborhood parks, or pocket parks, should be designed flexibly to accommodate impromptu uses, such as community gardens, playgrounds, and dog parks. These parks may be temporary or permanently acquired by the city to expand the existing park network.

Map 18.   Civic, Parks and Open Space Future Land Use Map

©URBANFOOTPRINT, ©MAPBOX, ©OPENSTREETMAP

Image 79. Bessemer City Hall

Image 80. Bessemer Rail Trail

CHARACTERISTICS

Primary Land Uses: Public services, recreation

Secondary Land Uses: Community centers, cultural institutions

Related Zoning Districts: INST-1 Institutional, INST-2 Institutional, INST-3 Institutional, CEM-1 Cemetery, PRD Planned recreational

DESIGN

Intensity: Variable

Building Envelope: Context-sensitive design

Transportation: Pedestrian-friendly, public transit access

Table 2. Appropriate Zoning Districts for Land Use Categories

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

ZONING DISTRICT	RURAL	CIVIC, PARKS & OPEN SPACE	SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD	TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD	URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD	SUBURBAN CORRIDOR	TRANSITIONAL CORRIDOR	DOWNTOWN	REGIONAL CENTER	PRODUCTION
A-1	◆	◆								◆
R-7	◆		◆							
R-6	◆		◆	◆						
R-5				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
R-4			◆	◆						
R-3B			◆	◆	◆		◆	◆		
R-3A			◆	◆				◆		
R-3				◆	◆			◆		
R-2			◆	◆						
R-1			◆							
PRD		◆	◆	◆					◆	
MP			◆							
INST-1		◆		◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
INST-2		◆			◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
INST-3		◆				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
CEM-1	◆	◆								
O-1				◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
C-1				◆	◆		◆			
C-2							◆	◆	◆	
C-3						◆			◆	◆
C-4						◆				◆
C-5						◆	◆			
C-6					◆				◆	
MXD					◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
AP										◆
I-1						◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
I-2										◆
I-2A										◆
I-3										◆
I-3S										◆
I-4										◆
I-6										◆
IO										◆

Image 81. Community reviews first draft FLUM

EVALUATING ZONING PROPOSALS FOR CONSISTENCY WITH THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP AND MASTER PLAN

The Future Land Use Map is intended to be used as a guide for zoning decisions by the Planning Commission and City Council. While they are not bound to adhere to the Future Land Use Map, the Commission and Council should evaluate future zoning proposals for consistency with the Map as strictly as possible, because it represents the community's vision for development.

While the FLUM will influence future zoning decisions, existing land uses will not be affected, nor will the right of property owners to use their land for the purpose as currently zoned. The designation of an area to a specific category on the Future Land Use Map does not mean that a particular zoning classification is recommended. Rather, a range of zoning districts are appropriate for each Future Land Use category, as seen in Table 2.

Site considerations relating to topography, soils, conservation resources, or hydrology are also important in establishing the specific use and intensity of a particular parcel. Determination of the consistency of a proposed use or zone with this plan should include consideration of the following questions:

1. Is the proposal consistent with the goals and recommended actions contained in the Comprehensive Plan?

2. Is the form and function of the proposed development appropriate for its category designated on the Future Land Use Map?

3. Will community facilities, parks, pedestrian connections, and other infrastructure be available at the appropriate levels to serve the development as proposed?

FUTURE LAND USE

GOALS

The primary goals for future land use in Bessemer include:

■ **GOAL 1:** Align land use with the community vision.

■ **GOAL 2:** Promote sustainable and resilient development.

■ **GOAL 3:** Foster economic growth through strategic land use.

These key **ACTIONS** will drive the vision forward.

Image 82. 19th St N (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 83. Bessemer Rail Trail route to Downtown (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

FUTURE LAND USE ACTION 1.

Review rezoning requests for land use alignment

The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council should respond to staff recommendations for rezoning requests in alignment with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), prioritizing sustainable and resilient development that grows the economy. Rezoning requests that do not align with the FLUM should be rejected, or if conditions or the community vision change, the FLUM should be updated to permit the request.

FUTURE LAND USE ACTION 2.

Work with regional partners to leverage needed land use assistance

Advocate for the Jefferson County GIS parcel updates to correct errors in the current parcel layer for the City.

Explore possible Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) assistance resources. RPCGB's Planning Commission training and resources may be available to help implement this plan, including workshops, online courses, and guidance documents, including:

■ How to Use the Future Land Use Map,

■ How to Adopt Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance or Zoning Map,

■ Subdivision Plat Approval Process Diagram, and

■ Zoning Approval Process Diagram,

all available at: www.rpcgb.org/community-planning-resources.

LEGEND

- $15,385 – $17,951
- $14,356 – 15,384
- $13,544 – 14,355
- $12,902 – $13,543
- $12,235 – $12,901
- $11,500 – $12,234
- $10,884 – $11,499
- $10,120 – $10,883
- $9,013 – $10,119
- $7,180 – $9,012
- $4,000 – $7,179
- $0 – $3,999

Household costs: dollars/household/year
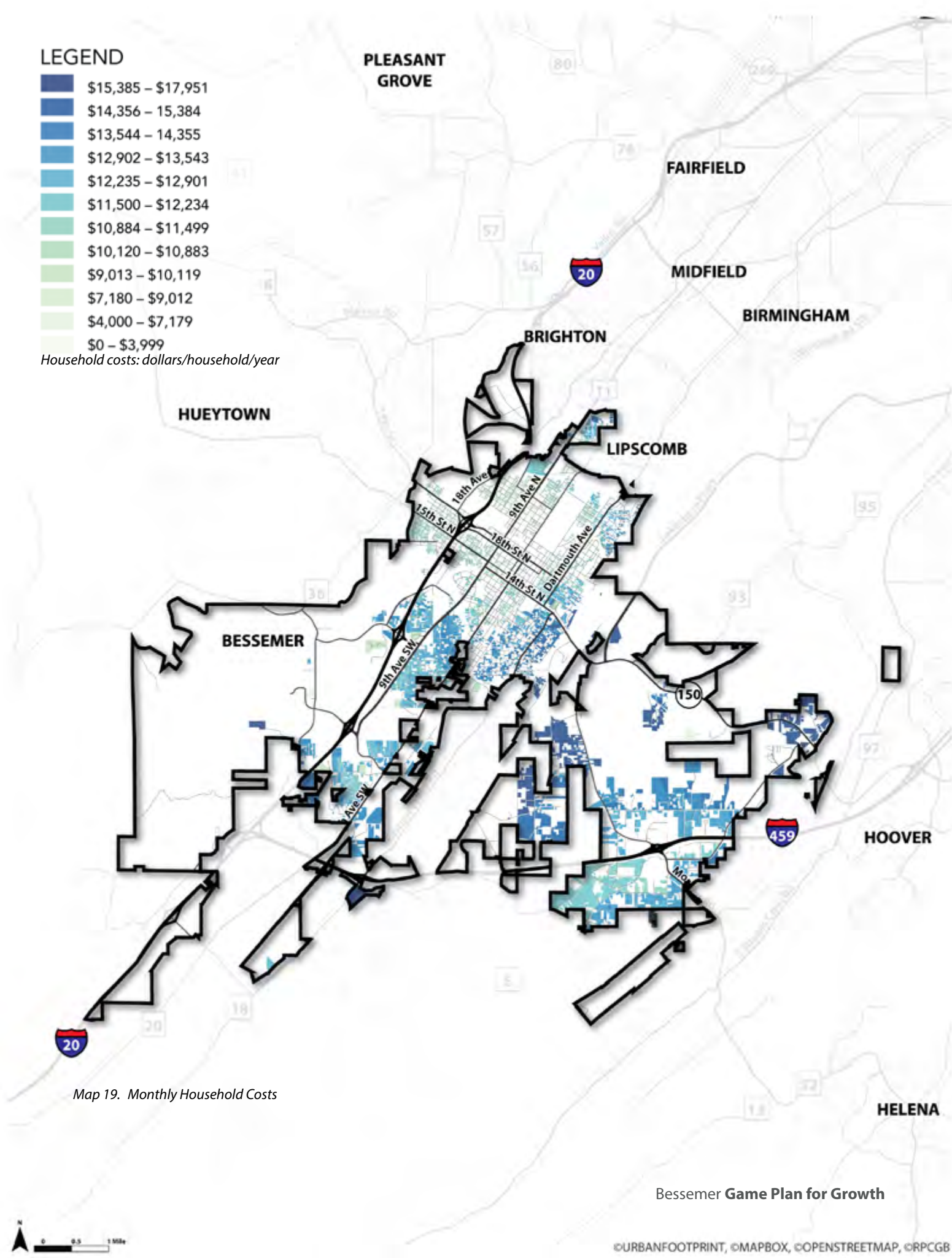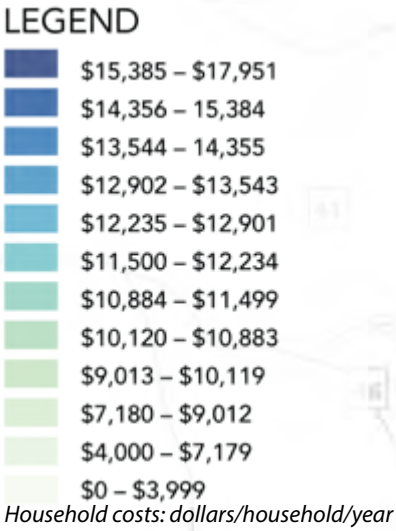
Map 19. Monthly Household Costs

HOUSING

Enhancing property conditions is crucial for stabilizing neighborhoods, preserving property values, and improving the overall quality of life.

Bessemer faces challenges common to many cities, including neighborhood blight and property deterioration. This chapter outlines a comprehensive approach to housing and neighborhood revitalization, addressing property maintenance, housing diversity, blight redevelopment, and flood risk mitigation.

Central to this discussion is household affordability, which extends beyond rent or mortgage payments. As shown in Map 19, true housing costs include utilities, maintenance, taxes, and transportation expenses. In Bessemer, affordability varies based on location and property characteristics, with homes closer to the city center and public transit often being more affordable than larger suburban or rural properties.

This chapter explores strategies to improve housing quality and affordability across Bessemer, aiming to create diverse, resilient neighborhoods that meet the needs of current and future residents.

Map 20. Home Values

©Esri. U.S. Census Bureau. (2024)
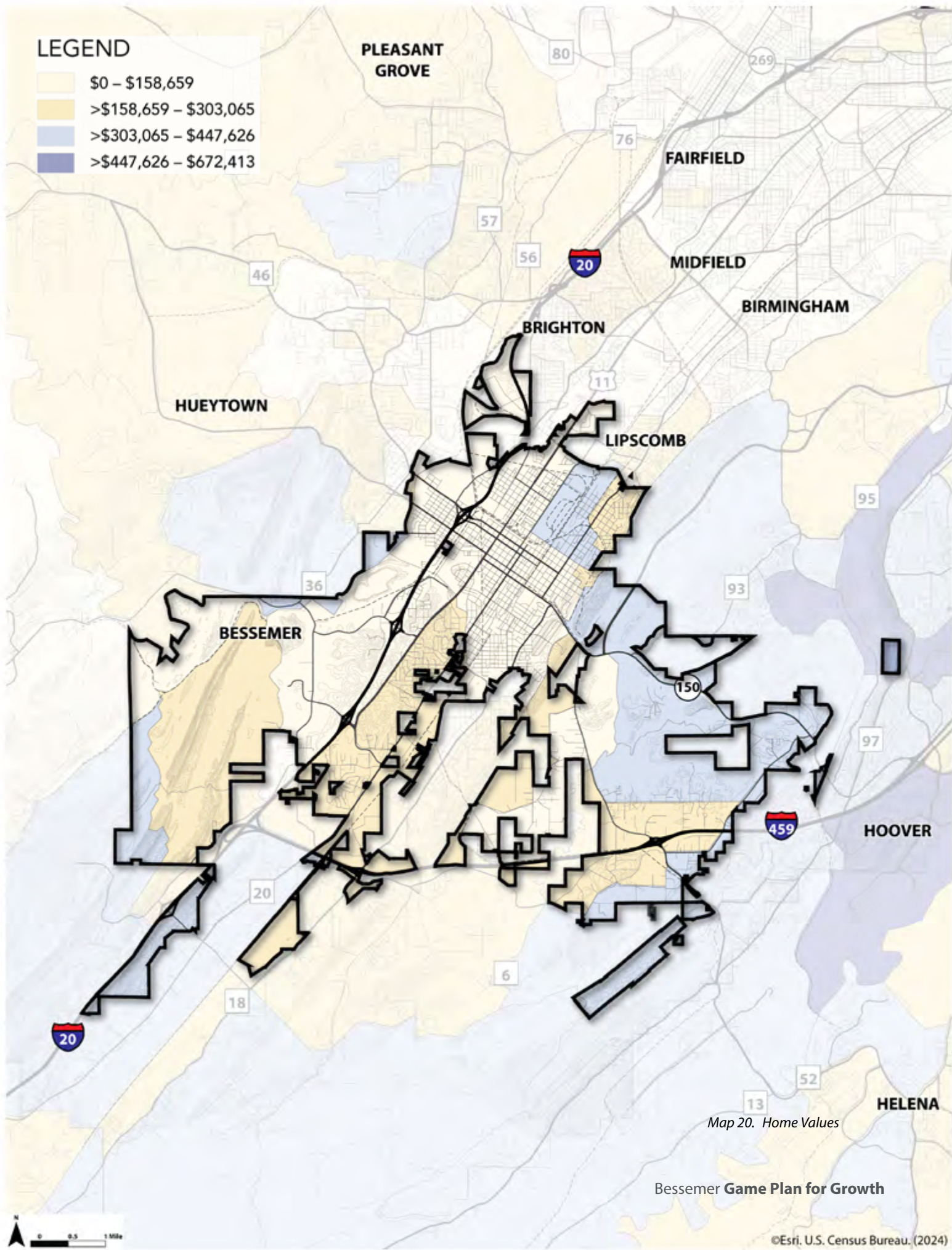
HOUSING MARKET DYNAMICS

Review of current value, tenure, vacancy, and types of dwellings

Bessemer presents a notably affordable housing market when compared to the broader Jefferson County. In 2023, the median home value in Bessemer stood at $151,784, which is significantly lower than the county's median of $208,900. This difference underscores the relative affordability of homes in Bessemer, making it an appealing choice for those in search of budget-friendly housing options.

The city's historic neighborhoods add a unique charm to this affordability. Home to a range of beautiful buildings that date back to Bessemer's founding in 1887, these neighborhoods offer a glimpse into the city's rich architectural past. With the right care and modern updates, these historic homes can offer incredible value. They present an opportunity not just for affordable housing, but for living in spaces that are steeped in history and character, appealing to those who value both heritage and affordability in their choice of home.
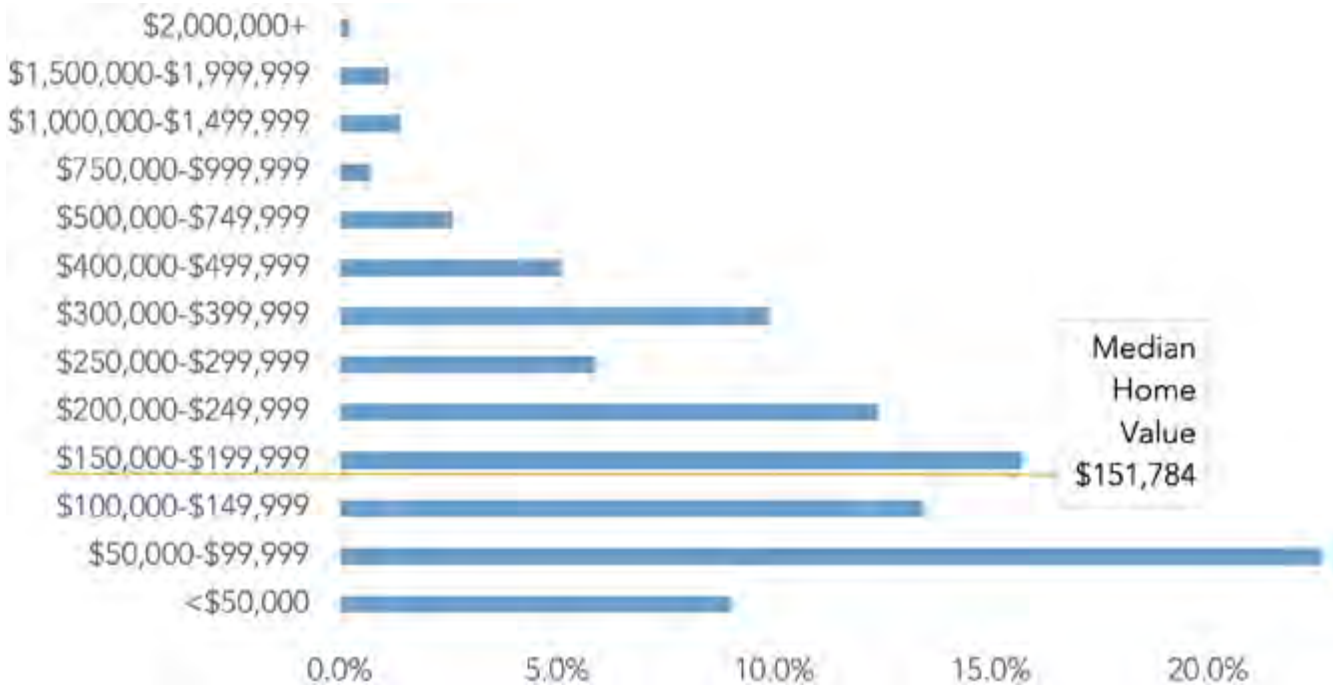
Graph 7. Percentage of Homes within Value Ranges
(Source: Esri ARC GIS Business Analyst, 2023)

HOME OCCUPANCY

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018-2022 American Community Survey, 54% of dwelling units in Bessemer are owner-occupied, which is somewhat lower than Jefferson County's 64%.
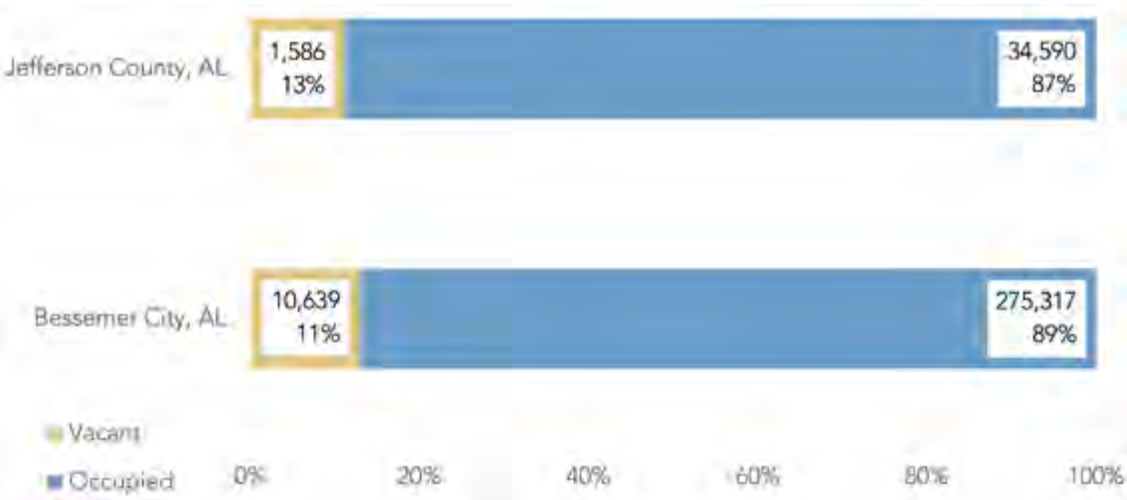
Graph 8. Housing Vacancy Comparison
(Esri ARC GIS Business Analyst, 2023)

Graph 9. Housing Tenure Comparison
(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey)

This lower rate of homeownership reflects broader economic factors and differences in the housing market. Both median home prices and median gross rents are notably lower than those of Jefferson County, showing competitive pricing regionally.

Vacancy rates in Bessemer were 13% in 2023, roughly on par with Jefferson County's 11%, per Esri Business Analyst. This rate is influenced by factors such as economic conditions, quality and availability of housing, and demographic trends. Abandoned houses in historic neighborhoods present challenges and opportunities for adaptive reuse, community gardens, and redevelopment.

Despite these challenges, Bessemer also boasts a supply of late 20th-century houses, suggesting potential for residential growth and revitalization.

While Bessemer leans more towards homeownership, the high vacancy and lower owner-occupancy rates compared to the county highlight specific local housing issues. These figures underline the need for targeted housing policies in Bessemer, aimed at addressing abandonment, encouraging homeownership, and balancing the rental market. This approach could help in revitalizing neighborhoods, stabilizing the housing market, and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents.

Apartment complexes make up 11.8% of the housing stock. Other housing types, such as duplexes, homes converted to apartments, or other small apartment buildings, account for 11.5% of Bessemer's total housing. Mobile homes or trailers also form part of the housing mix at 2.8%, albeit a smaller fraction.

When compared to Jefferson County, Bessemer has a higher percentage of single-family homes (73.9% vs. the county's 69.5%). Conversely, the county has a higher proportion of large apartments (20%), compared to Bessemer's 11.8%. Smaller apartment buildings make up 7.8% of the housing in the county, which is less than Bessemer's 11.5%.

The prevalence of mobile homes or trailers is nearly the same in both areas, with the county at 2.7% and Bessemer slightly higher at 2.8%.

The significant amount of affordable historic housing stock in Bessemer presents a redevelopment opportunity in close proximity to metro area jobs.

HOUSING TYPES

Bessemer's housing landscape is diverse, with single-family detached homes being the dominant housing type, comprising 73.9% of the city's housing units.
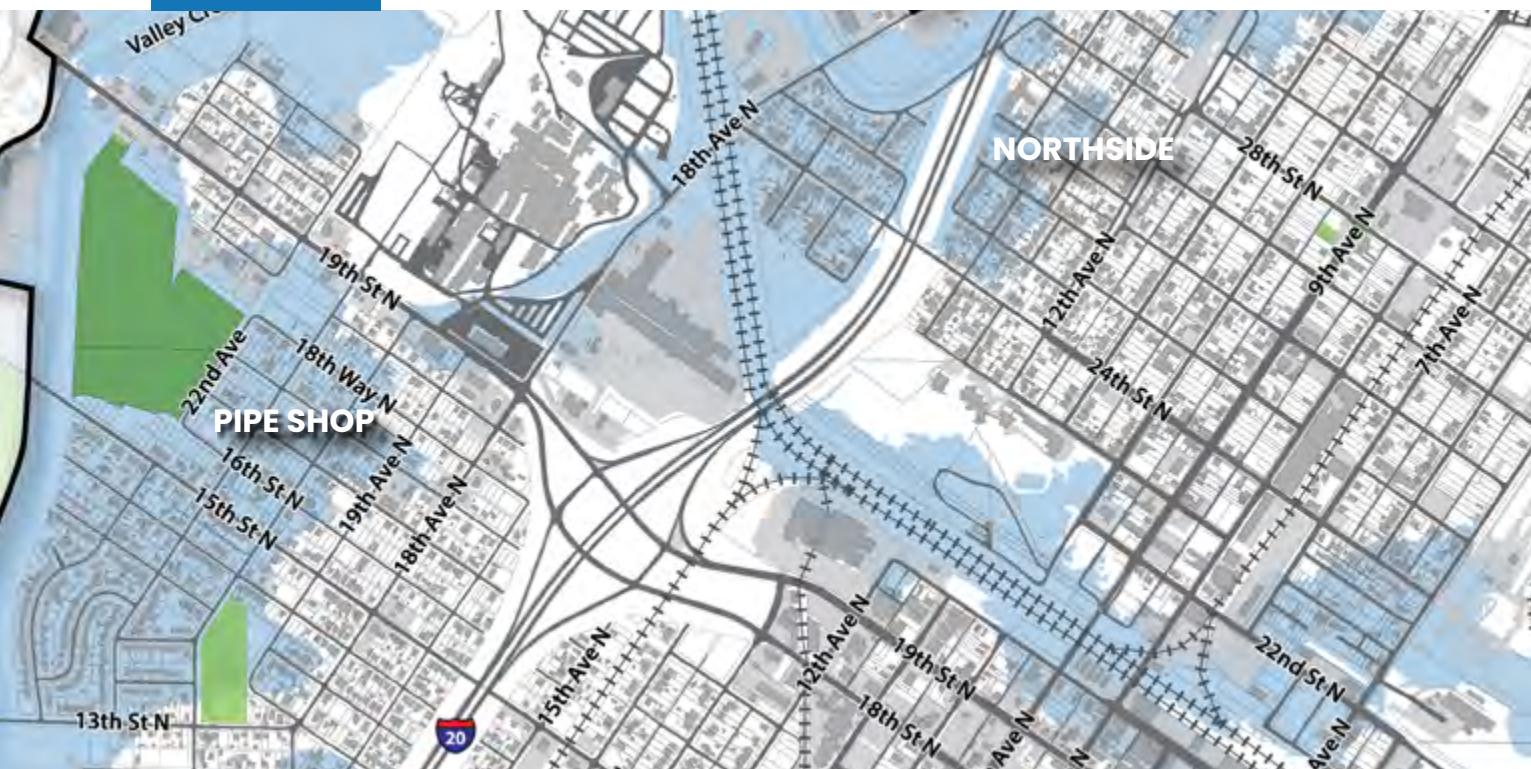
Map 21. Pipe Shop and Northside neighborhoods 100-year flood map

Image 84. Wet swale in Ranson, WV (Image credit: Hazel Borys)

FLOOD MITIGATION TOOLKIT

One of the challenges to housing include flood control. Solutions for Pipe Shop and Northside from the 2012 Bessemer Master Plan in the Short and Medium Term are in this toolkit.

The 2012 Bessemer Master Plan emphasizes the importance of green infrastructure to manage systemic flooding and standing water issues in the Pipe Shop and Northside neighborhoods. Flooding in these areas result from inadequate slope, blocked drainage pipes, and erosion, which prevent effective stormwater flow into Valley Creek. The Master Plan identifies critical areas such as 21st Avenue and McNeil Park where strategic stormwater management can mitigate these issues, enhancing both the neighborhood environment and public safety.

BESSEMER MASTER PLAN KEY POINTS

Systemic Flooding and Standing Water

Issues: Lack of slope, blocked drainage pipes, and erosion lead to standing water and flooding.

Critical Areas: 21st Avenue and McNeil Park are major problem zones.

Flood Mitigation Strategies

Short-Term Solutions: Implement bioswales and rain gardens at the Pipe Shop Community Center to slow water velocity and promote infiltration.

Medium-Term Projects: Develop a bioswale corridor along 21st Avenue and create constructed wetlands to manage stormwater during various rain events.

Greenway Integration: Incorporate the Valley Creek Greenway into the regional parks and trails system.

Community Engagement and Sustainable Development

Sustainable Design: Incorporate green infrastructure elements such as bioretention systems and stormwater management practices into neighborhood planning.

By integrating these strategies from the 2012 Bessemer Master Plan, the Pipe Shop neighborhood can become a sustainable, resilient, and vibrant community, addressing challenges of stormwater management and urban development. These methods may then be applied to other flood-prone areas.

Map 22. Bessemer Green Infrastructure Ideal Locations

LEGEND

- Wet Swales
- Rain Gardens
- Bioretention, Constructed Wetlands, Dry Swales, Rain Gardens
- Bioretention, Dry Swales, Constructed Wetlands, Permeable Pavement, Rain Gardens

Esri, TomTom, Garmin, RPCG
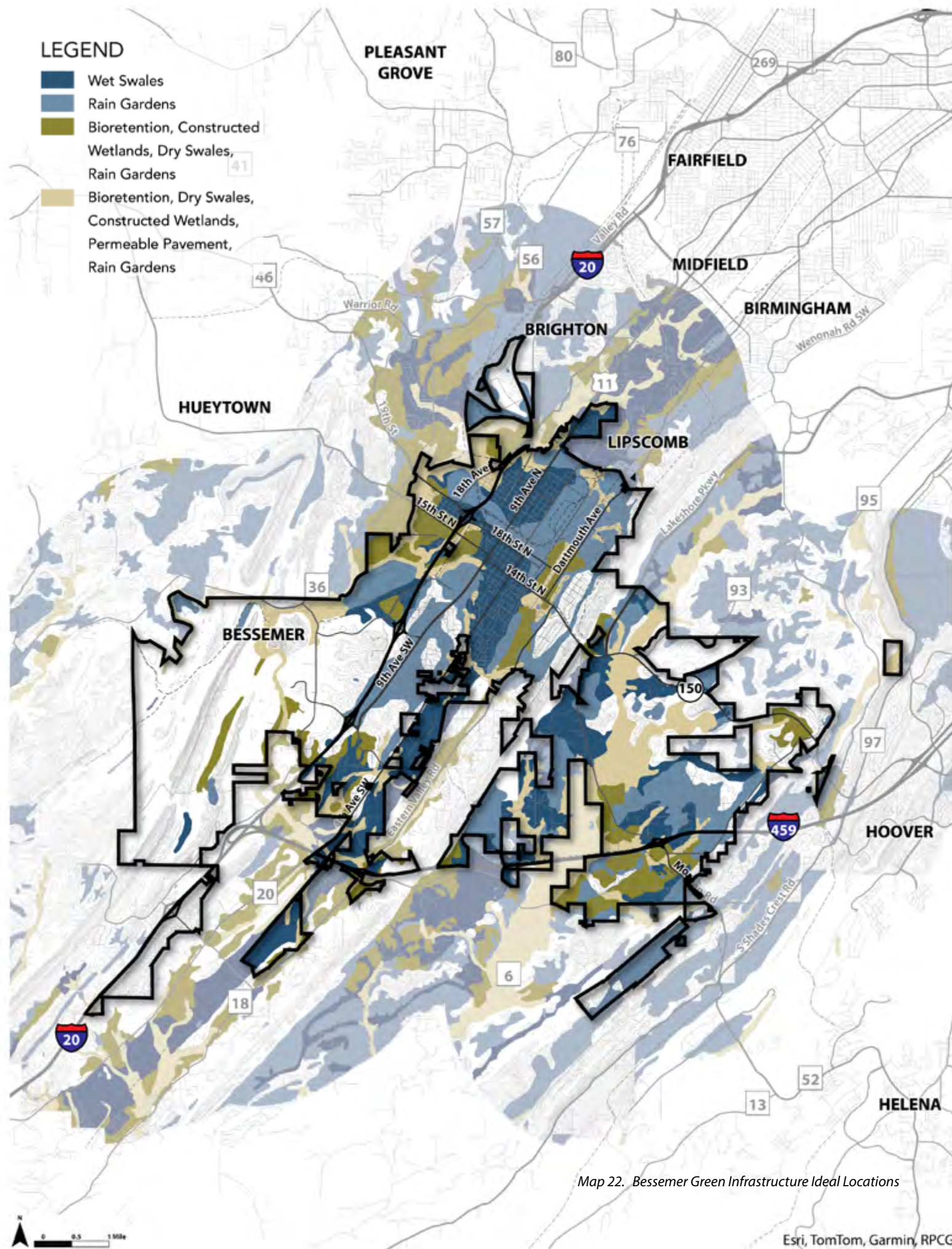
Image 85. Wet swale (image credit: Hazel Borys)

Image 86. Dry swale (image credit: Hazel Borys)

Image 87. Rain garden (image credit: Paul Crabtree)

Image 88. Bioretention (image credit: Hazel Borys)

BESSEMER GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE BEST LOCATIONS

Optimal sites for various green infrastructure types based on soil types and slopes are identified on Map 22. Bessemer Green Infrastructure Ideal Locations. Here's a brief overview of each green infrastructure type:

Wet Swales: Ideal for areas with gentle slopes and frequent water flow, wet swales help filter pollutants and manage stormwater through natural vegetation in swales, or ditches.

Dry Swales: Suitable for moderate slopes and well-drained soils, dry swales temporarily hold stormwater, allowing it to infiltrate and reduce runoff, often found on private or public property.

Rain Gardens: Perfect for residential and commercial areas, rain gardens capture and absorb rainwater runoff from roofs, driveways, and compacted lawns, improving water quality and aesthetics.

Bioretention: Used in urban settings, bioretention cells collect and treat stormwater using soil and plant-based filtration systems, managing runoff and enhancing landscaping.

Constructed Wetlands: Best for large, flat areas, constructed wetlands mimic natural wetlands to treat stormwater through biological processes, providing habitat and recreational benefits.

Permeable Pavement: Ideal for parking lots and low-traffic areas, permeable pavement allows rainwater to pass through the surface, reducing runoff and recharging groundwater.

These green infrastructure elements collectively help manage stormwater, improve water quality, and enhance the urban environment in Bessemer.

HOW TO BUILD A RAIN GARDEN

A rain garden is an eco-friendly landscape feature to capture and absorb rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces like roofs, driveways, and streets. This guide covers the steps to create a rain garden in Bessemer to effectively manage stormwater and enhance community aesthetics.

STEP 1: SELECT AN IDEAL LOCATION

Assess Your Property: Identify low-lying areas where water naturally flows and collects. Choose a spot at least 10 feet away from your home's foundation to avoid water damage.

Check Soil Drainage: Perform a soil percolation test by digging a hole about 12 inches deep and filling it with water. If the water drains within 24 hours, the site is suitable for a rain garden.

STEP 2: DESIGN YOUR RAIN GARDEN

Determine Size and Shape: Calculate the size of your rain garden based on the area it will drain. A general rule is to make the rain garden 20-30% the size of the impervious surface.

Plan the Layout: Design your garden with a flat bottom and gently sloping sides. The depth should be between 6-12 inches.

STEP 3: CHOOSE APPROPRIATE PLANTS

Select Native Plants: Opt for native plants adapted to the local climate and soil conditions. Native species such as Black-eyed Susan, Switchgrass, and Purple Coneflower are excellent choices.

Plant Zones: Arrange plants based on their water tolerance. Place moisture-loving plants in the center and drought-tolerant plants around the edges.

STEP 4: PREPARE THE SITE

Excavate the Area: Dig out the designated area to the planned depth, creating a slight slope from the edges to the center.

Amend the Soil: Mix excavated soil with compost and sand to improve drainage and nutrient content.

STEP 5: INSTALL THE RAIN GARDEN

Create an Inlet and Outlet: Direct downspouts and runoff sources into the rain garden using a rock-lined channel or buried PVC pipe. Install an overflow outlet to manage excess water during heavy rains.

STEP 6: PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE

Planting: Place the chosen plants according to your design plan. Water them thoroughly after planting.

Add Mulch: Spread a 2-3 inch layer of mulch to retain moisture and suppress weeds.

Ongoing Care: Water the rain garden regularly during the first growing season. Remove weeds, replenish mulch annually, and replace any dead plants.

Building a rain garden in Bessemer is a rewarding project that contributes to water conservation and landscape beautification. By following these steps and selecting the right plants and materials, you can create an effective rain garden that enhances your property's ecological and aesthetic value.

Based on the slopes and soils of Bessemer, rain gardens are the green infrastructure intervention that is helpful in most places.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Alabama Cooperative Extension System www.aces.edu/blog/topics/fish-water/how-to-install-a-rain-garden/

ACES Watershed Planning https://ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/natural-resources/water-resources/watershed-planning/stormwater-management/documents/Chapter5-1RainGardensDISPLAY.pdf

Best Native Plants for Wet Areas content.gardenforwildlife.com/learn/gardening-with-native-plants-for-wet-areas-from-soggy-to-stunning

8 Best Native Plants for Birmingham www.wikilawn.com/lawn-care/al/birmingham/best-native-plants-birmingham/

Rain gardens capture runoff from impervious surfaces, using native plants to filter water and reduce flooding.

HOUSING

GOALS

The primary goals for housing include:

- **GOAL 1:** Encourage better property maintenance.
- **GOAL 2:** Expand the variety of housing types.
- **GOAL 3:** Redevelop at-risk properties.
- **GOAL 4:** Mitigate flood risk.

By implementing these strategies, Bessemer can effectively address blight, improve property maintenance, and foster more vibrant, sustainable neighborhoods. These efforts will not only enhance the quality of life for residents but also contribute to the city's economic resilience and environmental sustainability.

Image 89. Jonesboro (Image credit: Google Earth Pro)

HOUSING ACTION 1.

Adopt Code Requirements for Property Maintenance

Adopt the 2021 International Property Maintenance Code: Implementing this code sets clear standards for maintaining existing buildings to ensure they are safe, sanitary, and fit for occupancy.

Adopt an Unsafe Structures and Dangerous Building Ordinance: This ordinance will help identify and address buildings that pose a risk to public safety.

Hire a Code Enforcement Officer: Work with property owners to improve maintenance standards and compliance with city codes.

HOUSING ACTION 2.

Promote Programs for Homeowners

Energy Efficiency Improvements: Encourage homeowners to take advantage of clean energy tax credits and weatherization assistance programs. These initiatives can lower utility costs and improve property values, enhancing overall neighborhood stability.

Emergency Housing Repair Grant Program: Educate property owners about available grants and increase the grant amounts to reflect market conditions. This program helps homeowners make necessary repairs to prevent further deterioration.

Rental Repair Program: Develop funding options to assist landlords in repairing blighted properties for rent to low- and moderate-income tenants. This will improve housing conditions and expand affordable rental options.

HOUSING ACTION 3.

Enable More Community Engagement

Citizen's Guide for Code Enforcement: Create a guide that educates residents about code violations, the importance of property maintenance, and how to report violations and monitor city actions. This will empower residents to take an active role in maintaining their neighborhoods.

Encourage Community Clean-Up Initiatives: Promote the establishment of community clean-up groups similar to the Black Warrior Riverkeeper, "Love Your Community" in Mobile County, and the Penfield Park Neighborhood Association. These initiatives organize local residents to regularly clean and maintain public spaces, fostering community pride and environmental stewardship. Provide necessary supplies and support to enable residents to actively participate in keeping their neighborhoods clean and compliant with city codes.

Image 90. Berkley Avenue (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

HOUSING ACTION 9.

Redevelop Public Housing

Seek funding through programs like Choice Neighborhoods to redevelop declining public housing, improving living conditions and community outcomes. This will enhance the quality of life for residents and contribute to neighborhood stability.

HOUSING ACTION 10.

Undertake EPA Flood Risk Assessment

Utilize the EPA Flood Risk Assessment to identify areas at high risk of flooding. Implement best practices to reduce flood risk, particularly in areas along creeks and in the south, considering the impacts of climate change.

HOUSING ACTION 11.

Develop Flood Mitigation Strategies

Employ strategies such as creating green infrastructure, restoring natural waterways, and implementing stormwater management practices to mitigate flood risks. These measures will protect properties and improve environmental sustainability.

HOUSING ACTION 12.

Acquire Floodplain Properties

Convert properties in the Valley Creek Floodplain to a wetland park, reducing flood risk and creating valuable green space. This will improve environmental resilience and provide recreational opportunities.

HOUSING ACTION 6.

Allow "Missing Middle" Housing Types

The term "missing middle" refers to housing types between detached single-family homes and large apartment buildings.

Update zoning regulations to permit diverse housing types, such as twins, cottage courts, and accessory dwelling units, across more parts of the city. This will provide more housing options and support neighborhood diversity.

HOUSING ACTION 7.

Establish a Vacant Building Registration

Adopt an ordinance requiring the registration of vacant buildings to monitor and address property vacancies more effectively.

HOUSING ACTION 8.

Develop the Land Bank

Develop the Land Bank to address vacant and tax-delinquent parcels, focusing on neighborhood revitalization and returning properties to the tax rolls.

Map 23. Transportation Network

TRANSPORTATION

Creating a balanced, multimodal network is essential for Bessemer's prosperity, livability, and environmental health.

Transportation forms the backbone of Bessemer's urban fabric, enabling residents and visitors to navigate daily life, from work and school to shopping and recreation. This component of the plan aims to enhance mobility and connectivity in ways that complement existing and future development patterns while respecting the character of Bessemer's neighborhoods and unique spaces.

The approach focuses on targeted interventions with the potential to significantly impact Bessemer's transportation landscape. These strategies are designed to work in harmony with other aspects of the comprehensive plan, addressing key areas such as Downtown revitalization and improvements along US Highway 11, as well as citywide initiatives for active transportation and transit.

By addressing transportation and land use together, Bessemer can create a more cohesive and accessible environment for all. The strategies consider the specific contexts of neighborhoods, emerging regional centers, and transitional corridors, ensuring a comprehensive approach to the city's transportation needs. This holistic perspective takes into account Bessemer's unique challenges and opportunities, including its industrial heritage and proximity to major transportation hubs, to create a transportation system that serves the community's current and future needs.

Image 91. General Aviation News Picture of the Day

Image 92. EKY Aerial View (Image credit: Mitchell Field)

MITCHELL FIELD

With over $23 million in annual economic impact and strategic investments in advanced technologies, EKY is poised to be a critical driver of Bessemer's long–term growth.

EKY is a general aviation airport owned by the City of Bessemer and operated by the Bessemer Airport Authority. The airport is located south of I-459, six miles southeast of Downtown Bessemer and 15 miles southwest of Downtown Birmingham. Designated as a reliever to BHM, the facility is equipped to relieve congestion and provide general aviation access to the community. EKY's 6,000-foot runway primarily supports general aviation, although it also supports small-scale cargo operations. Its proximity to the interstate and clusters of industrial facilities allows it to serve suppliers in the Mercedes-Benz Automotive Corridor, at the Jefferson Metropolitan Park locations in McCalla and along Lakeshore Parkway, and the Birmingham Regional Intermodal Facility in McCalla.

Recent years have seen significant investment in EKY's infrastructure. In addition to a $750,000 investment in a 14,220-square-foot hangar, the airport secured over $5 million in FAA grants for runway resurfacing, taxiway improvements, and airfield lighting upgrades. These improvements, combined with a $500,000 HUD grant for the construction of a drone cage to support research and development of autonomous aerial systems, position EKY as a growing economic engine for the region. With an annual economic impact of over $23 million, long-term plans include further runway extension to 7,000 feet, the expansion of air freight operations, and industrial aviation development, ensuring EKY remains a vital community resource and an integral part of the region's growth strategy

©URBANFOOTPRINT, ©MAPBOX, ©OPENSTREETMAP

Map 24. Bessemer Interchanges

STREET, TRANSIT, AND RAIL NETWORKS

A well-connected city can boost commerce, reduce transportation costs, and improve the overall quality of life for its residents, driving sustained economic growth and development.

Located southwest of Birmingham, Bessemer plays a crucial role in the regional transportation network, acting as a hub that enhances connectivity not only with Birmingham, but also with neighboring cities such as Hoover, Helena, and Hueytown. This network of interstates and arterial roads makes Bessemer a key component in linking these communities, thereby facilitating the flow of people and goods across the region and bolstering both mobility and economic growth.

Bessemer's strategic position along major transportation routes, including I-20, US Highway 11, and I-459, is instrumental in enabling regionally efficient travel and commerce. This is evident in Map 25 Regional Context, which illustrates Bessemer's location along these significant corridors. Further detailed in Map 24 Bessemer Interchanges, Bessemer's accessibility is highlighted through the identification of three critical interchanges within the city to I-20 and two to I-459, underscoring the city's vital role in regional transportation.

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Map 25. Regional Context

RAIL NETWORK

Bessemer's rail network serves as a cornerstone for the city's contemporary economic activities in warehousing and distribution. This modern development leverages Bessemer's extensive rail infrastructure, historically integral to its emergence as an industrial powerhouse. The city is served by major rail carriers including Norfolk Southern, CSX, and BNSF Railway, which operate Class I rail lines through Bessemer, echoing its long-standing role as a critical junction in the regional and national transportation landscape.

The strategic presence of the Central Alabama Intermodal Yard and CSX Intermodal Yard within Bessemer underscores its pivotal position in facilitating the efficient movement of freight across the region. These yards connect Bessemer not only to key Alabama cities such as Birmingham, Leeds, Montgomery, and Mobile, but also extend its reach to major regional hubs like Atlanta, Macon, and Savannah. This network integrates seamlessly into the broader national freight infrastructure, ensuring that Bessemer remains linked to every significant freight destination across the country, thereby supporting commerce and industry on both local and national levels.

However, while the rail lines bolster regional and national connectivity, they also introduce challenges, particularly with numerous at-grade crossings throughout the city, see . These crossings can lead to congestion and delays, posing hurdles to both the efficiency of the rail network and the fluidity of urban traffic. Addressing these challenges is crucial as Bessemer continues to adapt its historic rail infrastructure to meet the demands of modern warehousing and distribution, particularly with facilities like the Amazon Fulfillment Center relying on the swift and reliable transportation of goods.

The integration of rail into Bessemer's distribution network not only enhances the capacity for local warehousing operations but also provides a substantial benefit to the wider economic landscape. This is particularly pertinent in the context of modern e-commerce, where the rapid movement of a vast array of products is essential. The rail network's capacity to support large-scale distribution centers is a testament to Bessemer's enduring industrial legacy while pointing towards its future as a key player in the logistics and distribution sector.

Map 26. Rail Network

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Map 27. At-Grade Rail Crossings
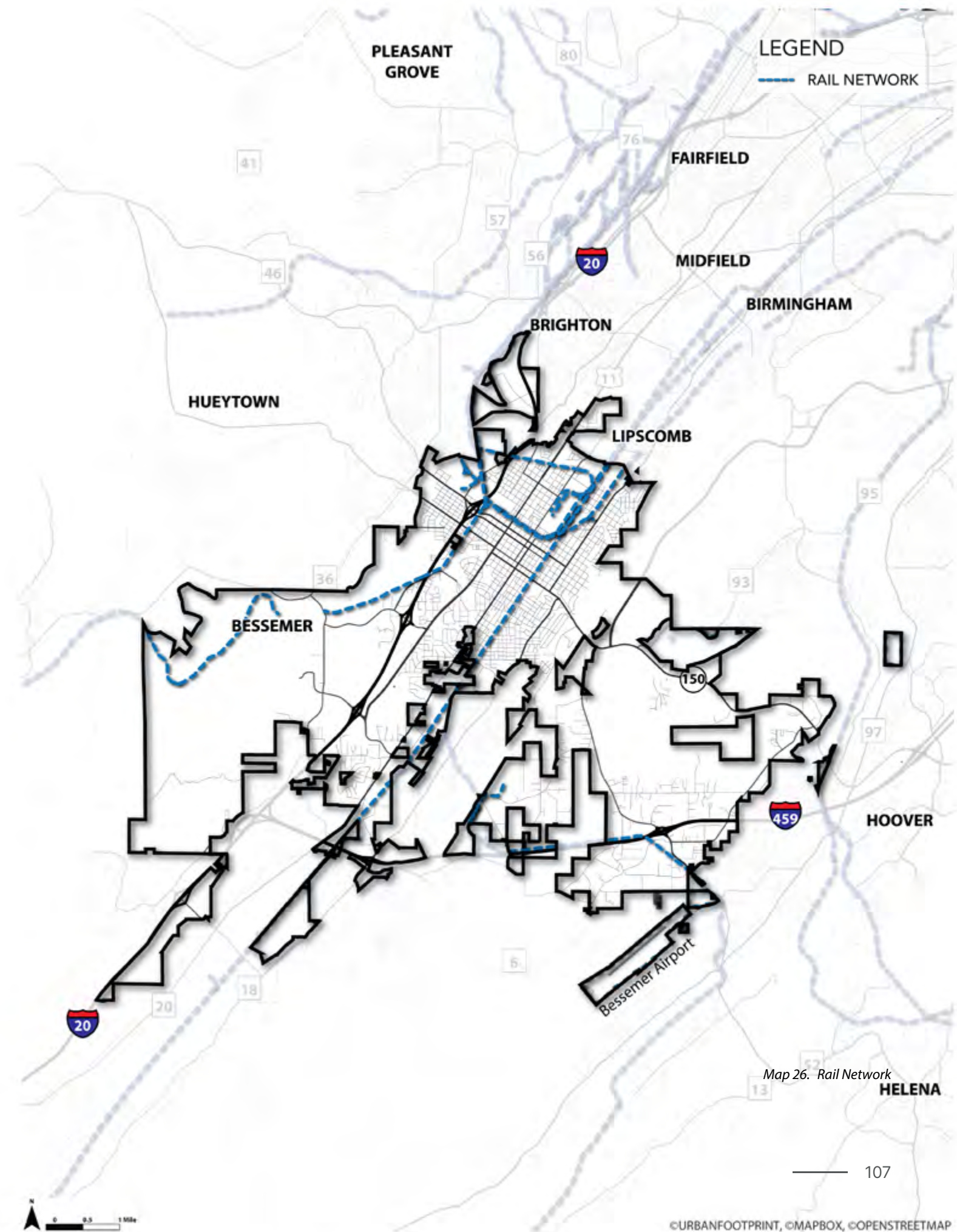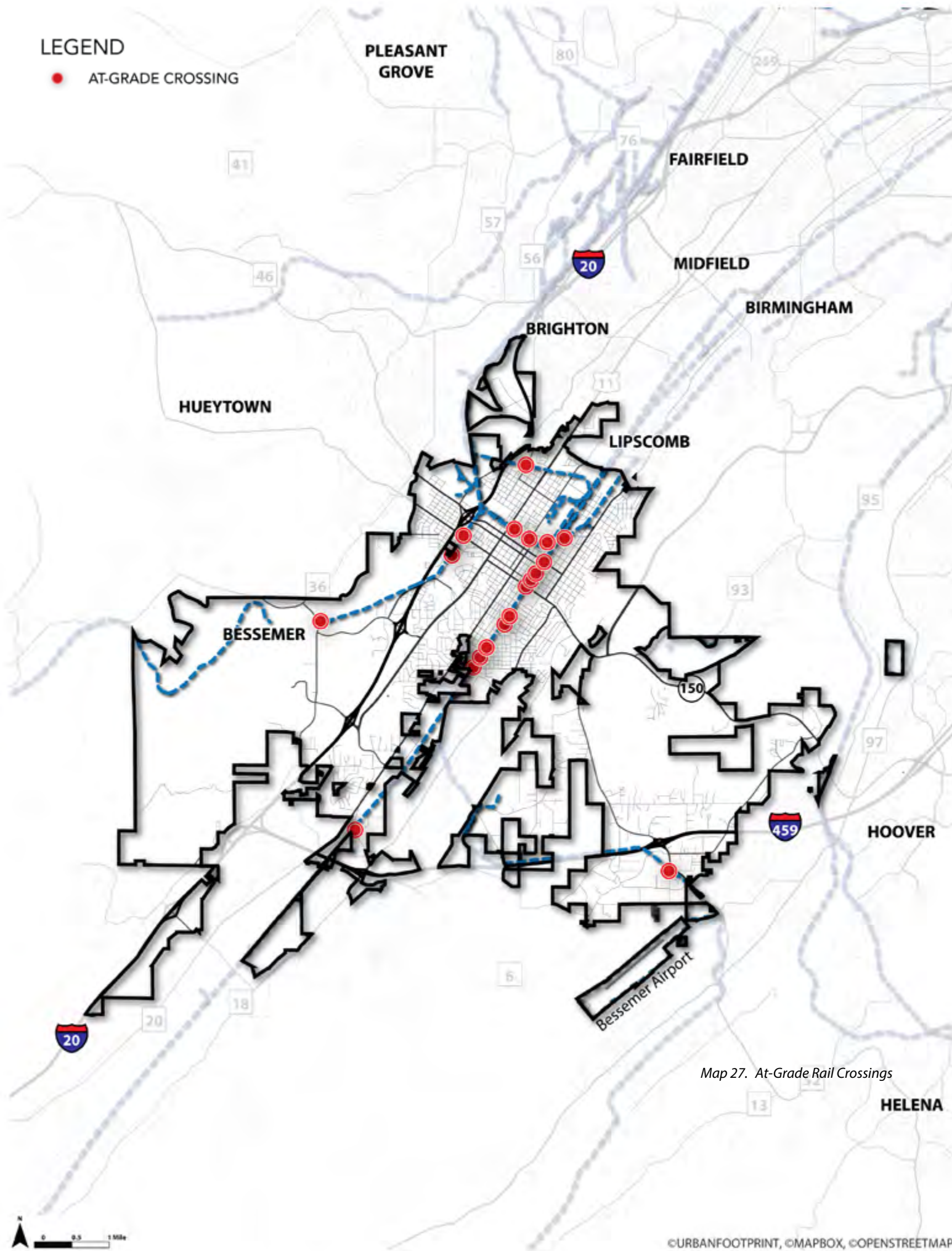
At-grade railroad crossings are an issue in Bessemer, which present several challenges for traffic flow and safety. The community raised concerns about trains stopping Downtown, blocking roads, and impacting emergency services. These crossings disrupt vehicle movement and create safety risks for pedestrians and cyclists.

Several strategies can help address these issues. One approach is grade separation, which involves building overpasses or underpasses to keep vehicles and pedestrians away from train tracks. Although this significantly improves safety, it is costly and requires major infrastructure changes. Another option is enhanced signaling systems that alert drivers when a train is coming and sometimes even stop cars from entering the crossing. While this improves safety, it doesn't resolve traffic flow issues. Additionally, railway blockage notification systems can help drivers avoid blocked tracks, reducing delays.

Other methods to improve safety at at-grade crossings include active warning systems like flashing lights and gates, which clearly signal to drivers and pedestrians that a train is approaching. Gates can physically block access, preventing collisions. Four quadrant gates and pedestrian-specific gates provide additional safety by creating barriers. Channelization devices such as wide raised medians or curbs with upright panels guide traffic, reducing the likelihood of accidents.

Bessemer should consider these strategies and explore funding sources like the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program (CRISI) and the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program to improve safety and connectivity around at-grade crossings.

CROSSING ISSUES

Ensuring safety at at-grade crossings is crucial to protect lives and enhance traffic flow.

Image 93. At-Grade Crossing (Image credit: Sundry Photography - stock.adobe.com)

Map 28. Intersection Density

LEGEND

250 INTERSECTIONS / SQ. MILE
125 INTERSECTIONS / SQ. MILE
0 INTERSECTIONS / SQ. MILE
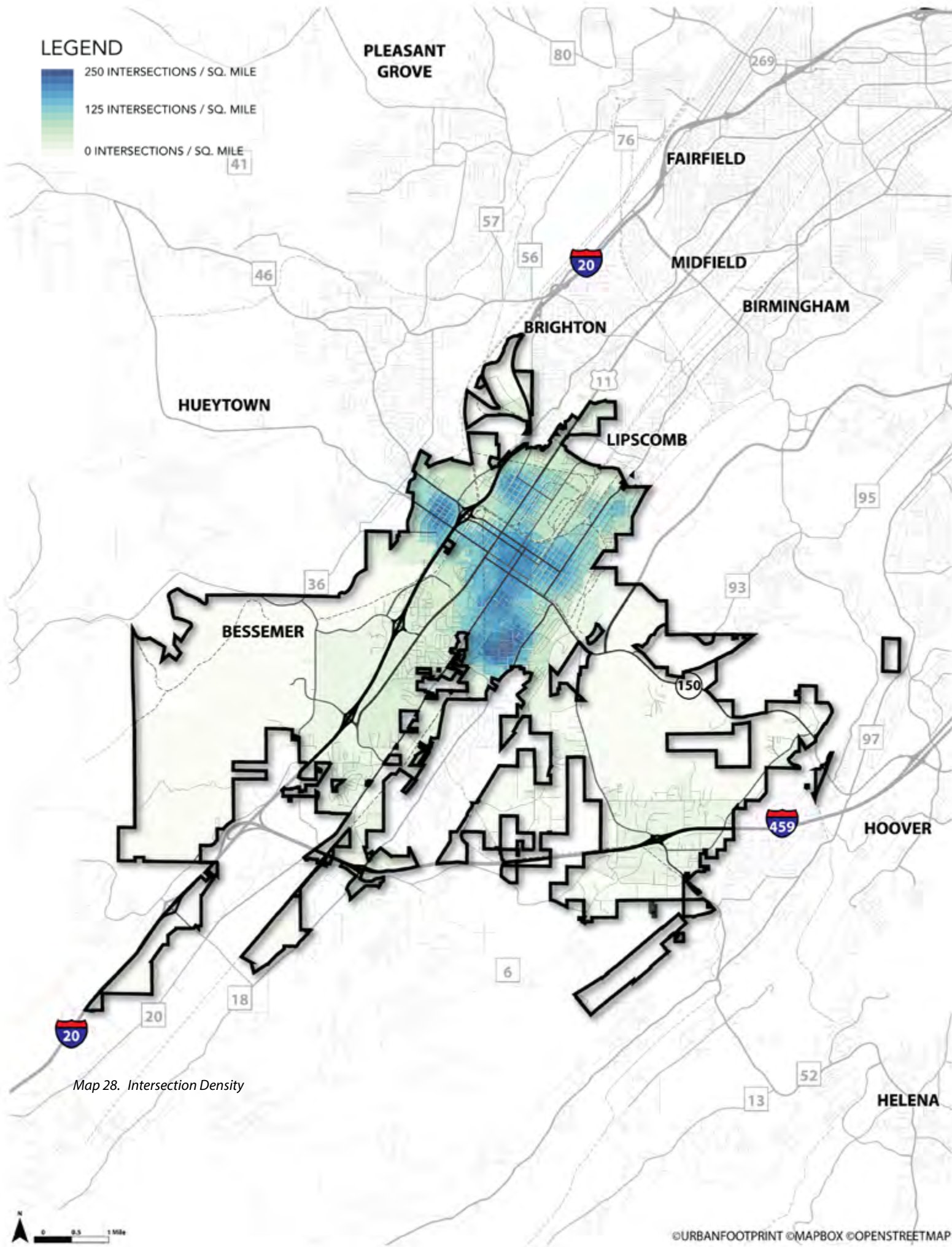
STREET NETWORK

Grid street networks are celebrated for their ability to enhance transportation efficiency across various modes, from vehicular to pedestrian and cycling. This structure alleviates congestion by offering alternative routes for destinations, dispersing traffic evenly and preventing bottlenecks. Moreover, the grid system fosters development at a more human scale, resulting in narrower streets that are inherently safer and more inviting for cyclists and pedestrians.

Intersection density, defined as the number of intersections per area unit, serves as a key indicator of street network connectivity. Bessemer showcases this aspect through Map 28 Intersection Density, which utilizes a heat map to illustrate intersection densities, with darker blue shades signifying areas with a higher intersection count per square mile. Downtown Bessemer and its adjacent historic neighborhoods stand out for their elevated intersection density, indicating a built environment conducive to pedestrian and cyclist safety due to shorter block lengths and more frequent crossing opportunities.

This grid layout is a testament to the city's historic commitment to enhancing urban connectivity. Image 94 and Map 30. Bessemer Historic Grid on page 113, underscore the contrast between the dense, interconnected streets of the Downtown core and the sparser, more arterial-based networks of the outskirts. Supporting this observation, research such as the study by Wesley E. Marshall and Norman W. Garrick, published in the Journal of the American Planning Association, titled "Evidence on Why Bike-Friendly Cities Are Safer for All Road Users," finds a strong correlation between cities with denser street networks, like Bessemer's historic Downtown, and lower rates of accidents and fatalities for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists. This body of work emphasizes the critical role of urban planning and street design in safeguarding the lives of those on foot or bike, validating Bessemer's grid system as not just a facilitator of movement, but as a significant contributor to community safety.
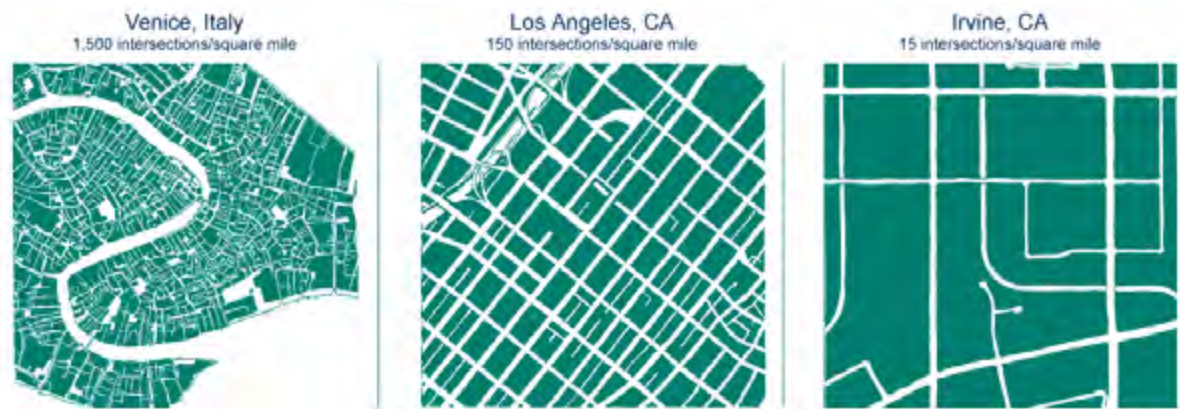
Image 94. Street Maps at the Same Scale (Source: Allan B. Jacobs, Great Streets, 1993)

Map 29. Functional Classification

LEGEND

— INTERSTATES
— PRINCIPAL ARTERIALS
— MINOR ARTERIALS
— MAJOR COLLECTORS
— MINOR COLLECTORS
— LOCALS

Map 30. Bessemer Historic Grid

©URBANFOOTPRINT, ©MAPBOX, ©OPENSTREETMAP
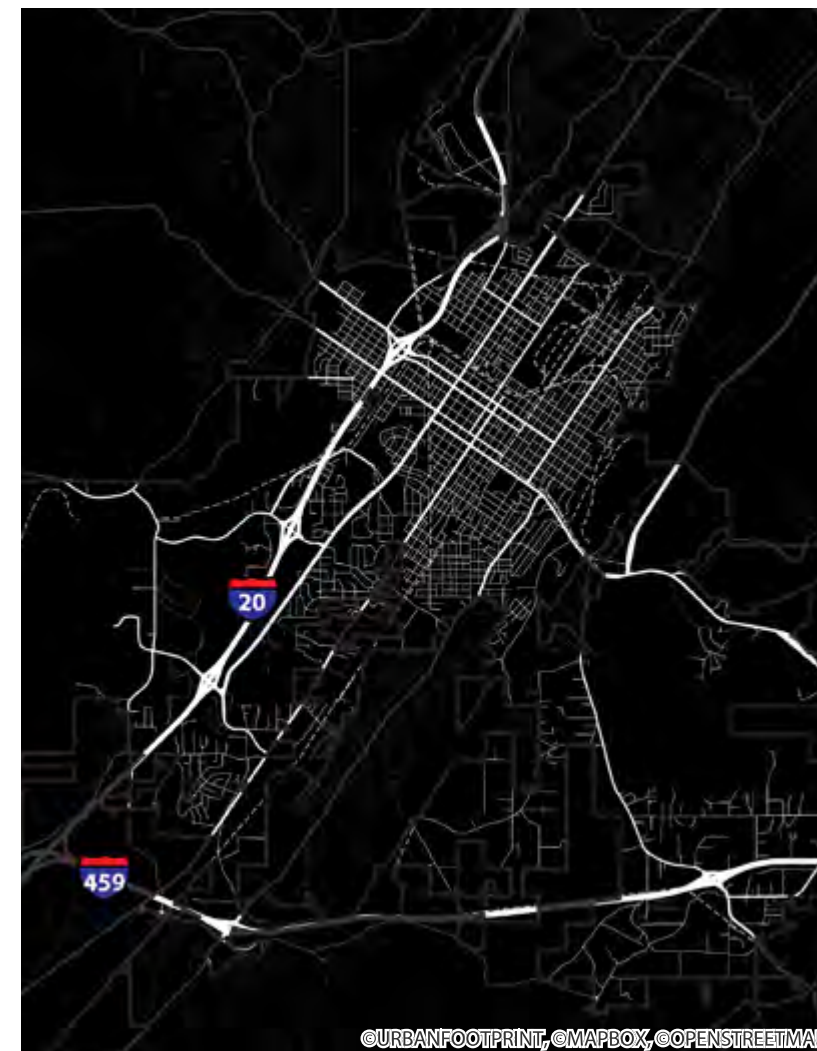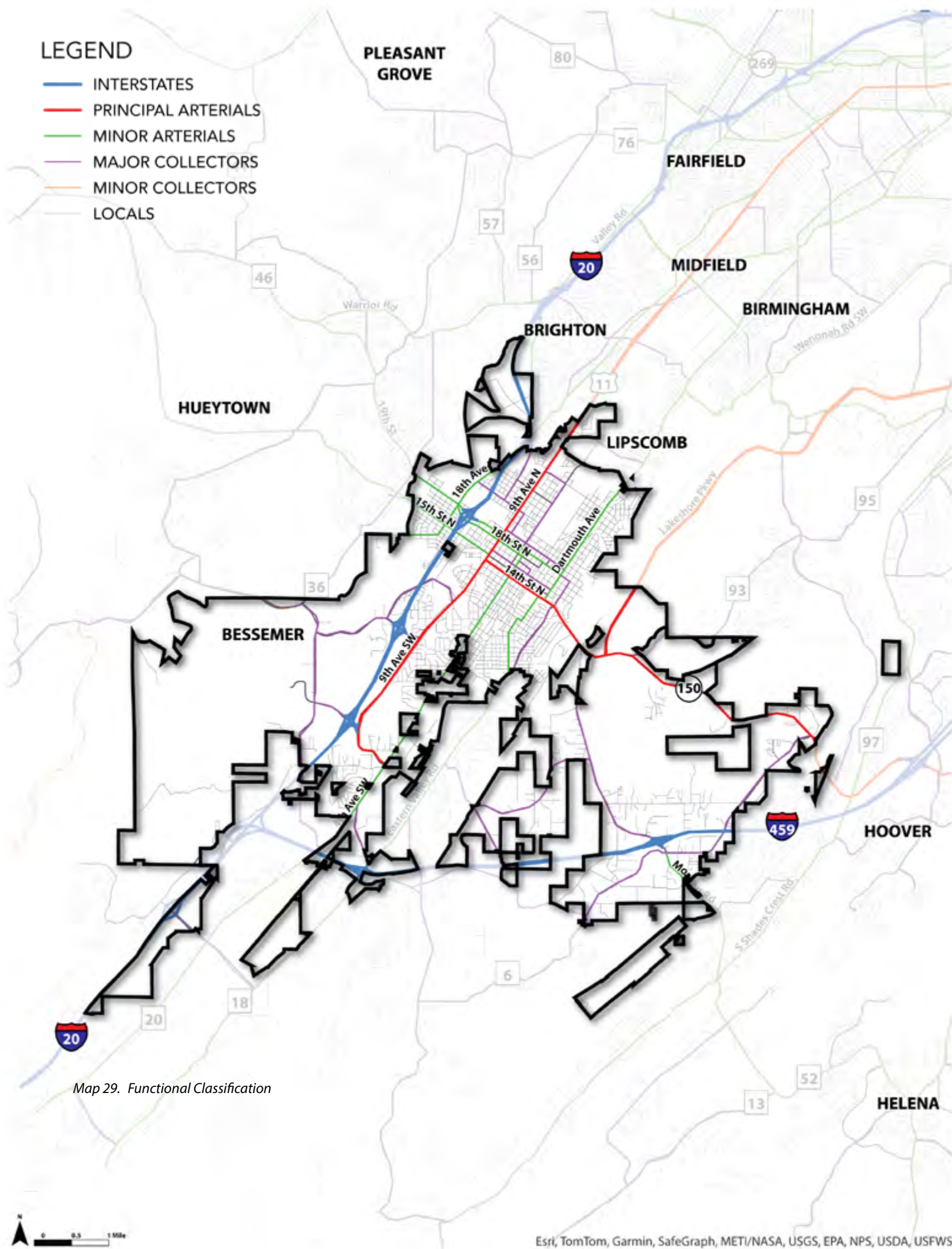
STREET HIERARCHY

Functional classification sorts streets into categories based on the kind of service they provide, and it's essential for getting federal funding. Map 29 Functional Classification outlines the classification of roads in Bessemer, showing a hierarchy within its vehicular transportation system.

The major roadways include two key interstates, Interstate 20 and Interstate 459, as well as important arterial roads like US Highway 11 and State Route 150. Additionally, a few collector streets, such as Dartmouth Avenue, Fairfax Avenue/Eastern Valley Road, and 4th Avenue South, enhance the arterial network by providing more localized routes. These collectors and the main streets facilitate both local and through traffic, with a notable organization in a north-south direction due to geographical constraints. This layout results in limited east-west connections. Most other streets, especially those around the Downtown area, are categorized as local roads, serving the immediate neighborhoods.

TRIPS ENDING IN BESSEMER

- 1 – 204
- 205 – 955
- 956 – 3,355
- 3,356 – 7,132
- 7,133 – 14,722
- REGIONAL ROADWAYS

Map 31. Trips Ending in Bessemer

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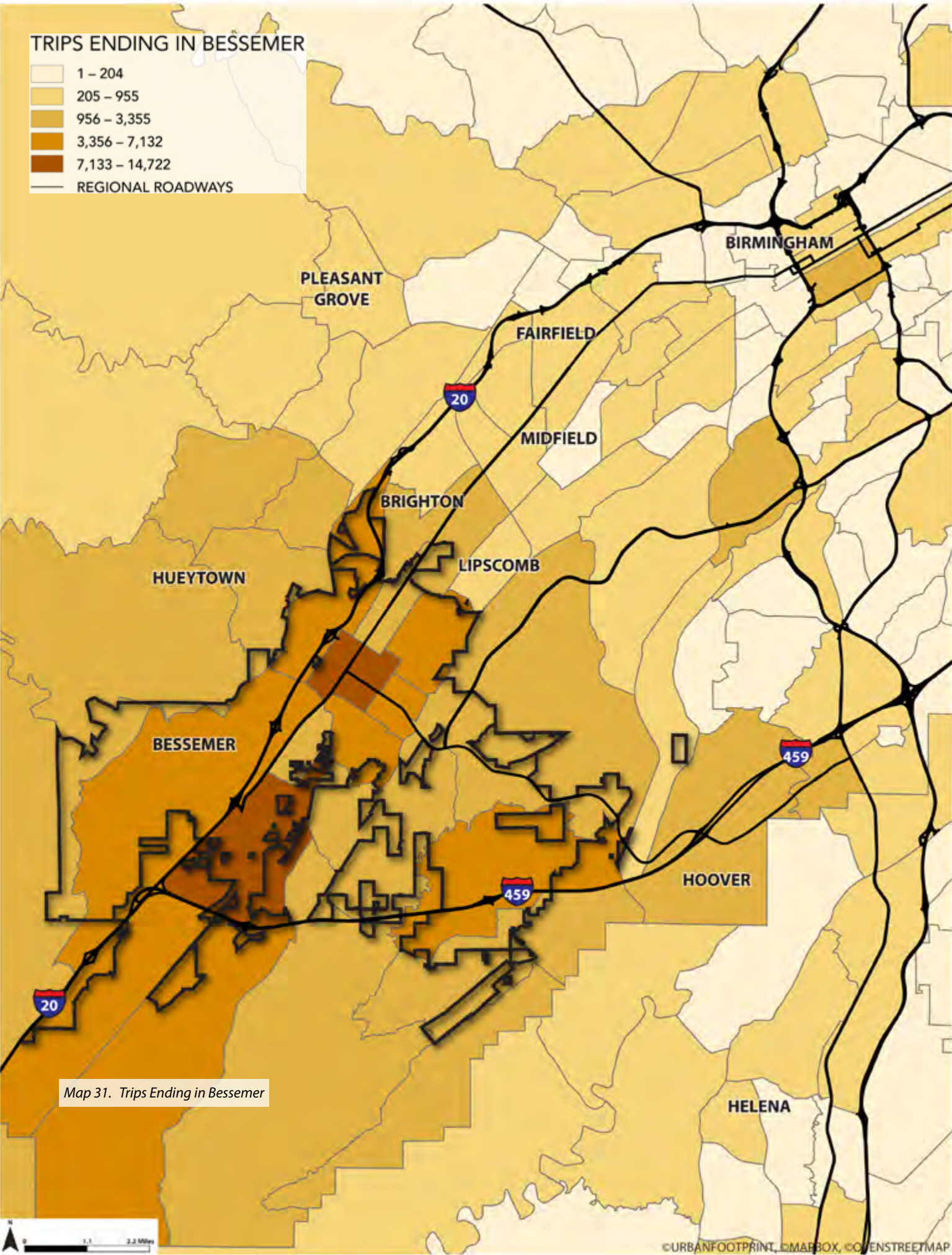
COMMUTING

Commuting patterns in Bessemer reveal a dynamic interplay between local and regional travel. According to Map 31 and Map 32 on page 116, nearly half of all trips both originating and ending in the city remain within its boundaries, highlighting significant internal mobility. Beyond city limits, Birmingham stands out as the primary hub for both incoming and outgoing trips, with Hoover, McCalla, and Hueytown also playing notable roles in this commuting network. This pattern underscores Bessemer's strong economic ties within the broader Birmingham metropolitan area.

An analysis of trip distances, as shown in Table 3, provides further insight into the city's transportation needs. A substantial portion of journeys are relatively short, with about a quarter being two miles or less. This high proportion of short trips suggests untapped potential for promoting walking and cycling, provided appropriate infrastructure is developed. On the other hand, approximately 40% of trips extend beyond eight miles, emphasizing Bessemer's role as a key node in the regional transportation system.

These diverse commuting patterns, illustrated by Map 31, Map 32, and Table 3, reflect Bessemer's dual identity as both a self-contained community with considerable local travel and an integral part of the wider regional network. This balance presents both challenges and opportunities for transportation planning, calling for strategies that enhance local sustainable travel options while also strengthening regional connections to support economic growth and improved mobility for residents.

TRIP LENGTH	PERCENT OF TOTAL
> 8 Miles	42%
4 - 8 Miles	17%
2 - 4 Miles	13%
1 - 2 Miles	11%
< 1 Mile	16%

Table 3. Trips by Length

TRIPS ORIGINATING IN BESSEMER

- 1 – 209
- 210 – 817
- 818 – 3,139
- 3,140 – 6,342
- 6,343 – 15,384
- REGIONAL ROADWAYS

Map 32. Trips Originating in Bessemer

LEGEND

- 40 – 51
- 37 – 40
- 35 – 37
- 34 – 35
- 32 – 34
- 30 – 32
- 28 – 30
- 27 – 28
- 26 – 27
- 24 – 26
- 12 – 24
- 0 – 12

Residential VMT: miles/day/household

Map 33. Vehicle Miles Traveled per Day per Household
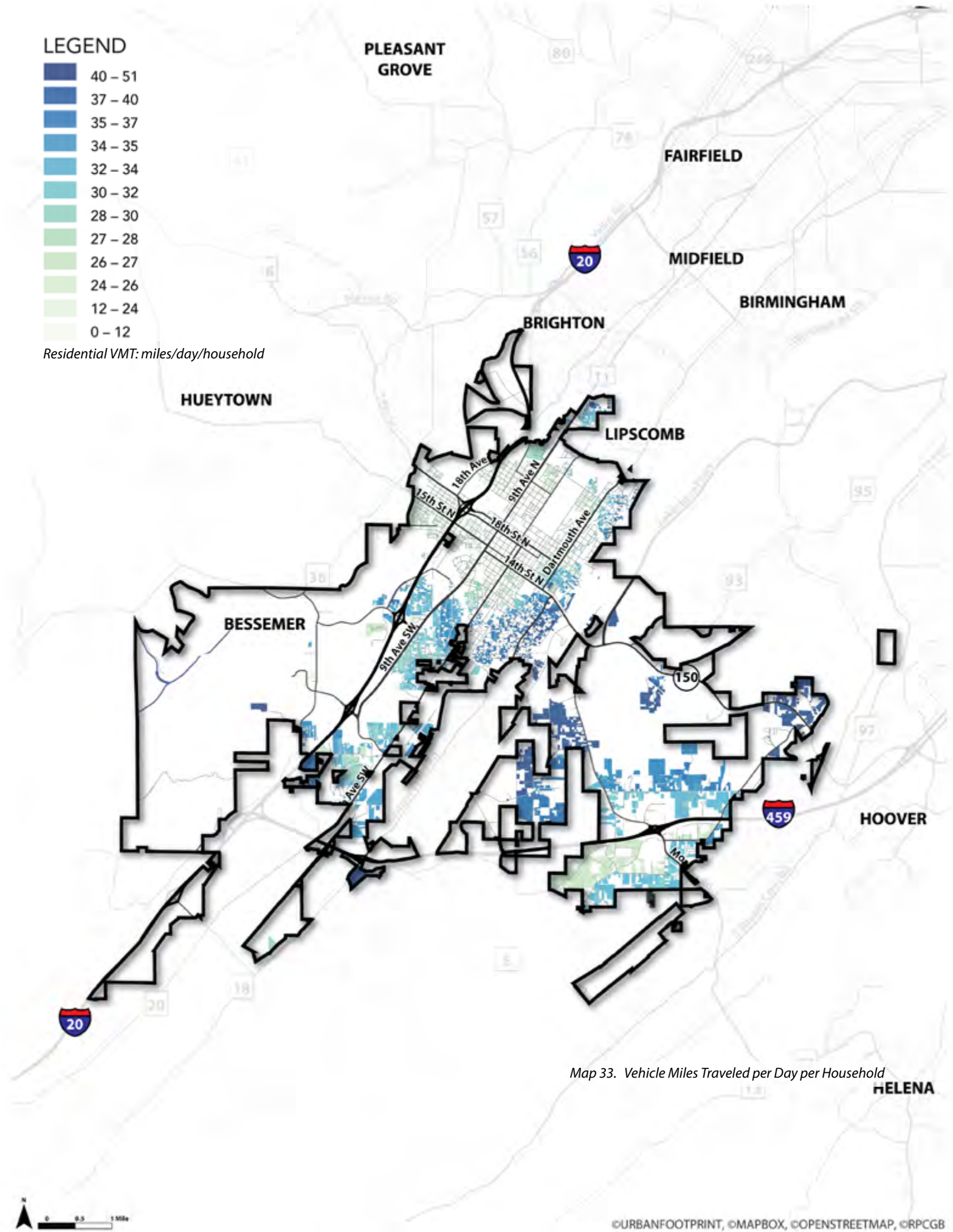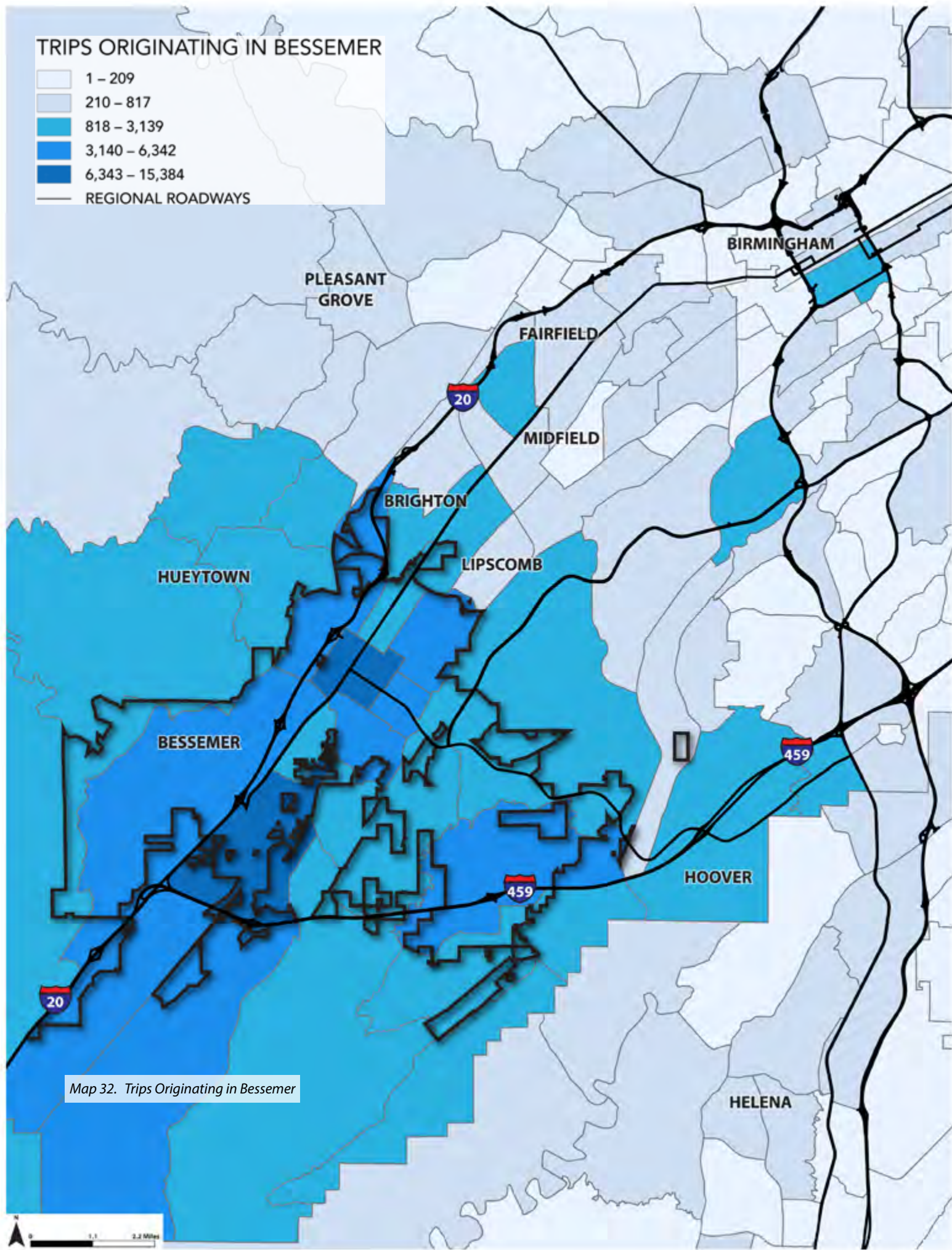
ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Image 96. 19th St N & 3rd Ave N (Image credit: Google Earth Pro)

In Bessemer, the pedestrian infrastructure is most intact in the historic areas of the city. However, this does little to decrease the reliance on private vehicles for commuting, given 77% of Bessemer residents drive alone to work. Incubating and accelerating local businesses could reduce car reliance with shorter commutes. Establishing a link to the High Ore Line Greenway in neighboring Midfield could be a viable strategy to enhance active transportation options, potentially reducing the need for private vehicle use.

Image 95. Bessemer Rail Trail (Image credit: Kevin Tilbury)
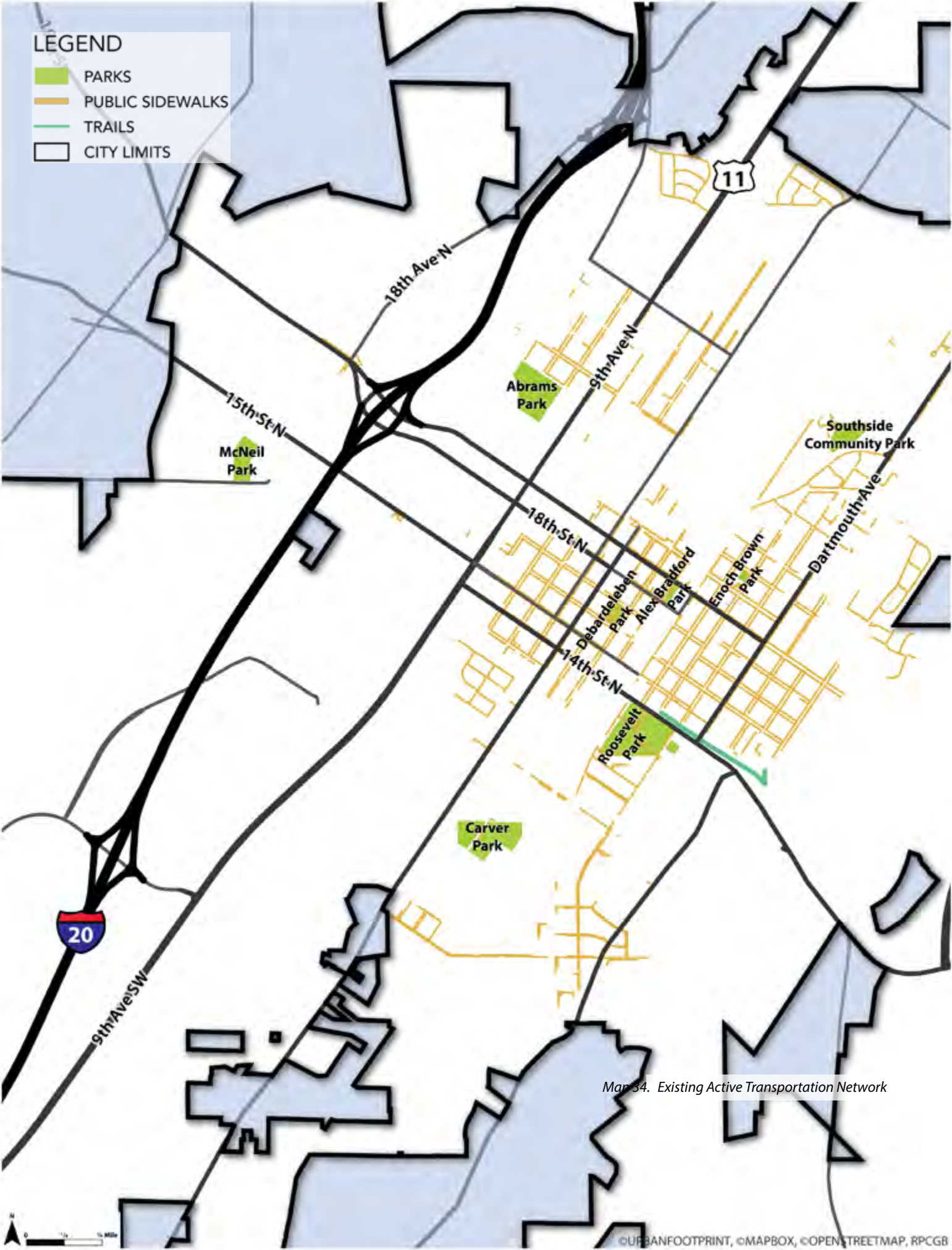
Map 34. Existing Active Transportation Network

Map 35. Walk Time to Retail

LEGEND

- 0 – 5 MINUTES
- 5 – 10 MINUTES
- 10 – 15 MINUTES
- 15 – 20 MINUTES
- 20 – 30 MINUTES
- 30 – 61 MINUTES
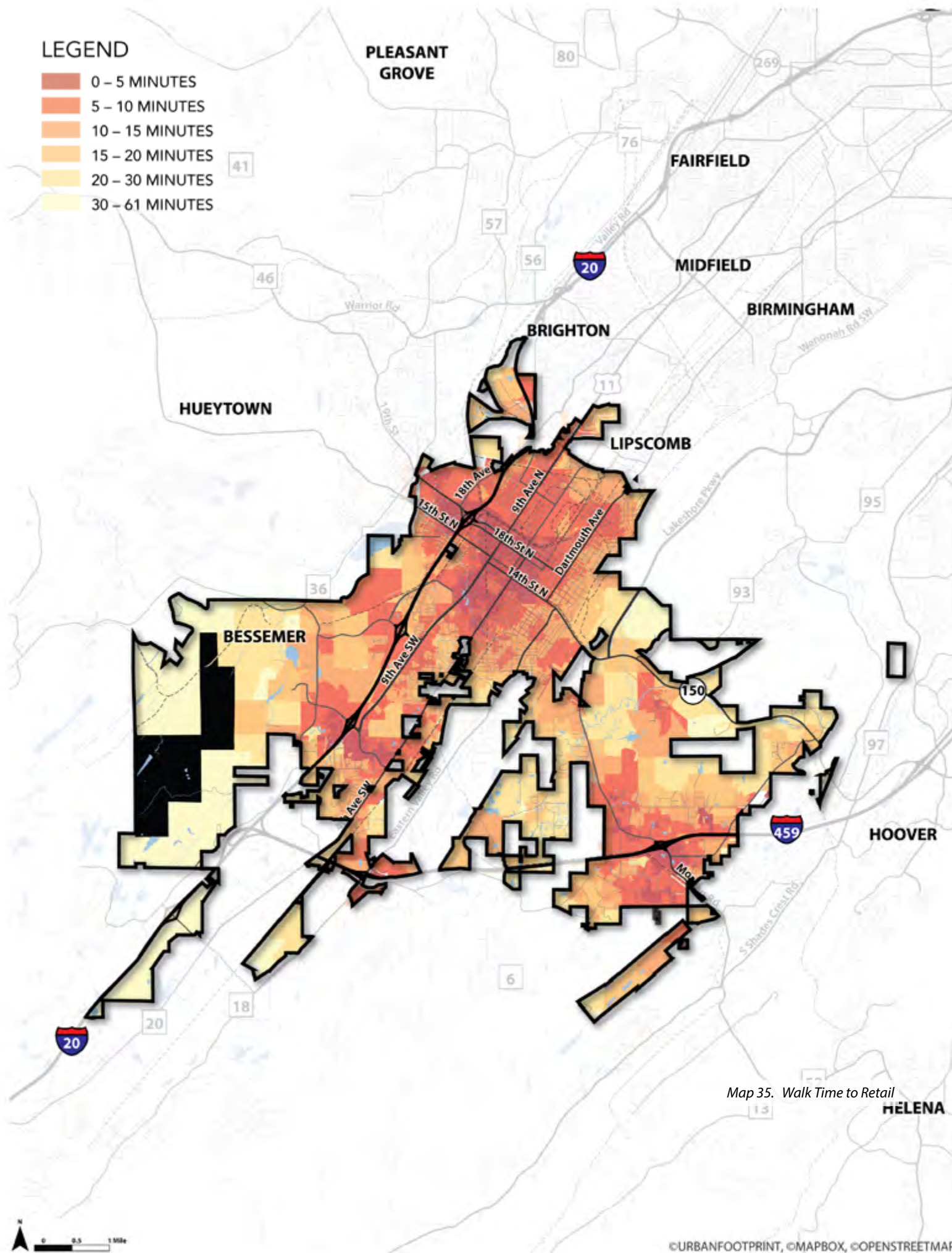
WALK PROXIMITY

The following maps, Map 35 Walk Time to Retail, Map 36 Walk Time to Schools, and Map 37 Walk Time to Parks, reflects the accessibility based on location within Bessemer. These maps indicate those uses are generally situated in similar city areas, suggesting a uniform level of proximity across these essential amenities. Parks are shown to have the most limited access, with their locations being more concentrated. Retail destinations, on the other hand, are more evenly distributed, especially around the Downtown area and near interstate interchanges where small businesses like convenience stores and gas stations are common.

Despite this, there are noticeable disparities in walkability to these destinations, particularly on the city's outskirts and some mid-city areas, indicating that residents living further from schools, parks, or retail centers may face difficulties accessing them by foot. Table 4 Less than a 15 minute walk to destinations clarifies that the more urbanized and densely populated areas of Bessemer, which typically include parks, retail, and schools, are within a 15-minute walk for a considerable portion of the population. However, it's important to highlight that proximity doesn't guarantee accessibility. Safe and comfortable walking paths are necessary to truly connect residents with these amenities.

Table 4. Less than a 15 minute walk to destinations

DESTINATION	% OF POPULATION
Parks	46.6%
Retail	75.4%
Schools	60.9%
Transit	72.1%

LEGEND
- 0 – 5 MINUTES
- 5 – 10 MINUTES
- 10 – 15 MINUTES
- 15 – 20 MINUTES
- 20 – 30 MINUTES
- 30 – 61 MINUTES
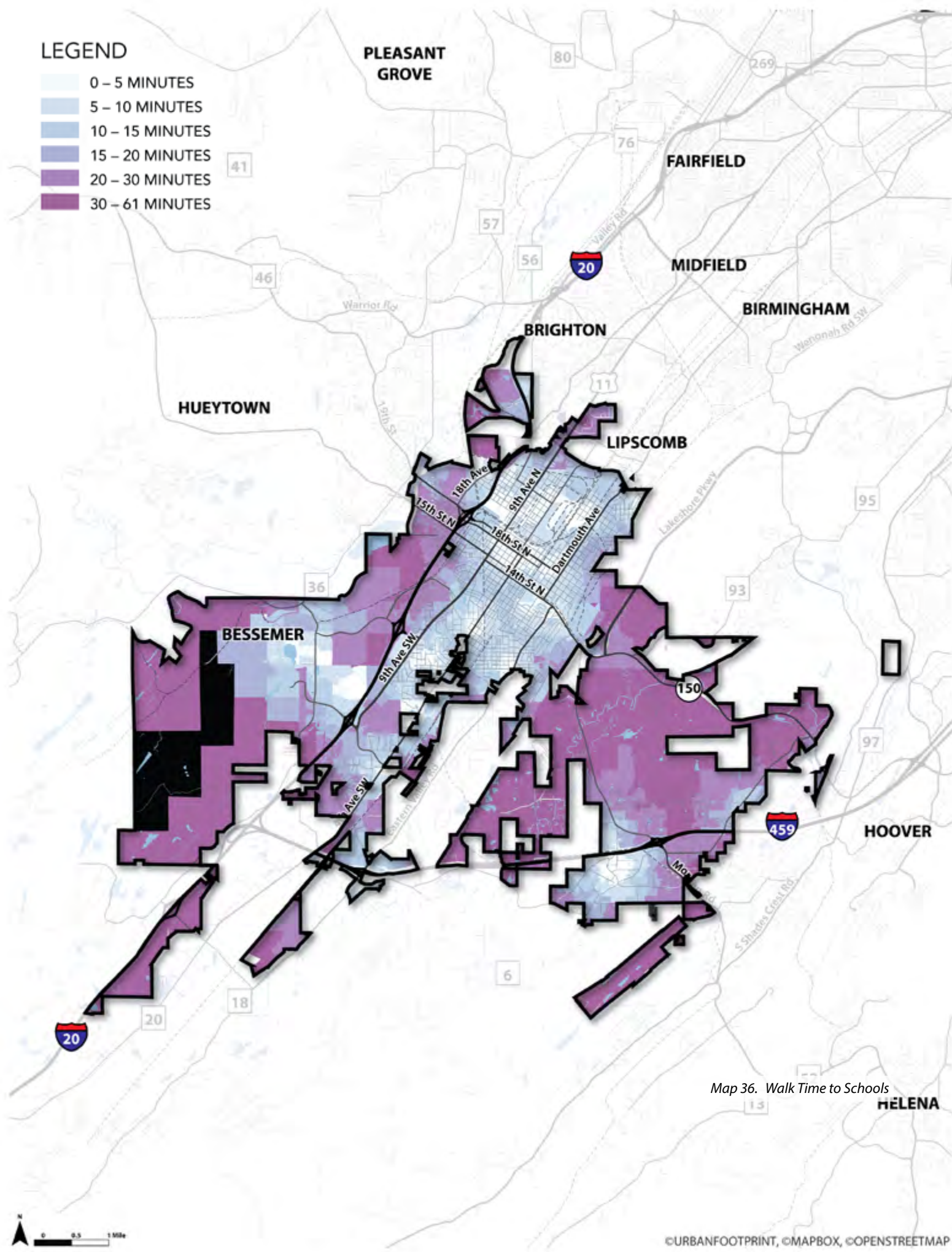
Map 36. Walk Time to Schools

LEGEND
- 0 – 5 MINUTES
- 5 – 10 MINUTES
- 10 – 15 MINUTES
- 15 – 20 MINUTES
- 20 – 30 MINUTES
- 30 – 61 MINUTES

Map 37. Walk Time to Parks

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©URBANFOOTPRINT, ©MAPBOX, ©OPENSTREETMAP

Map 38. Walk Time to Transit
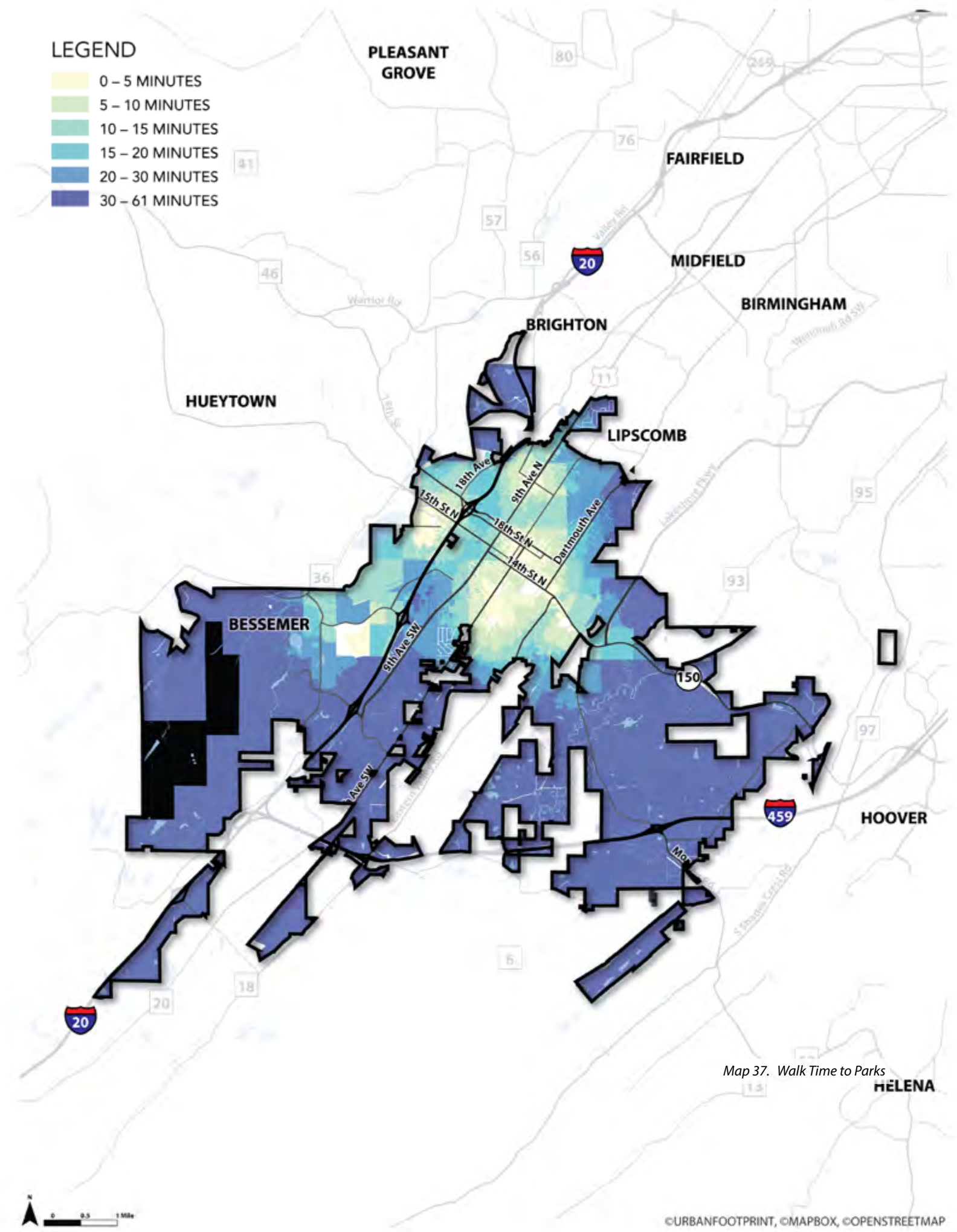
Map 39. Existing Transit Routes and Stops
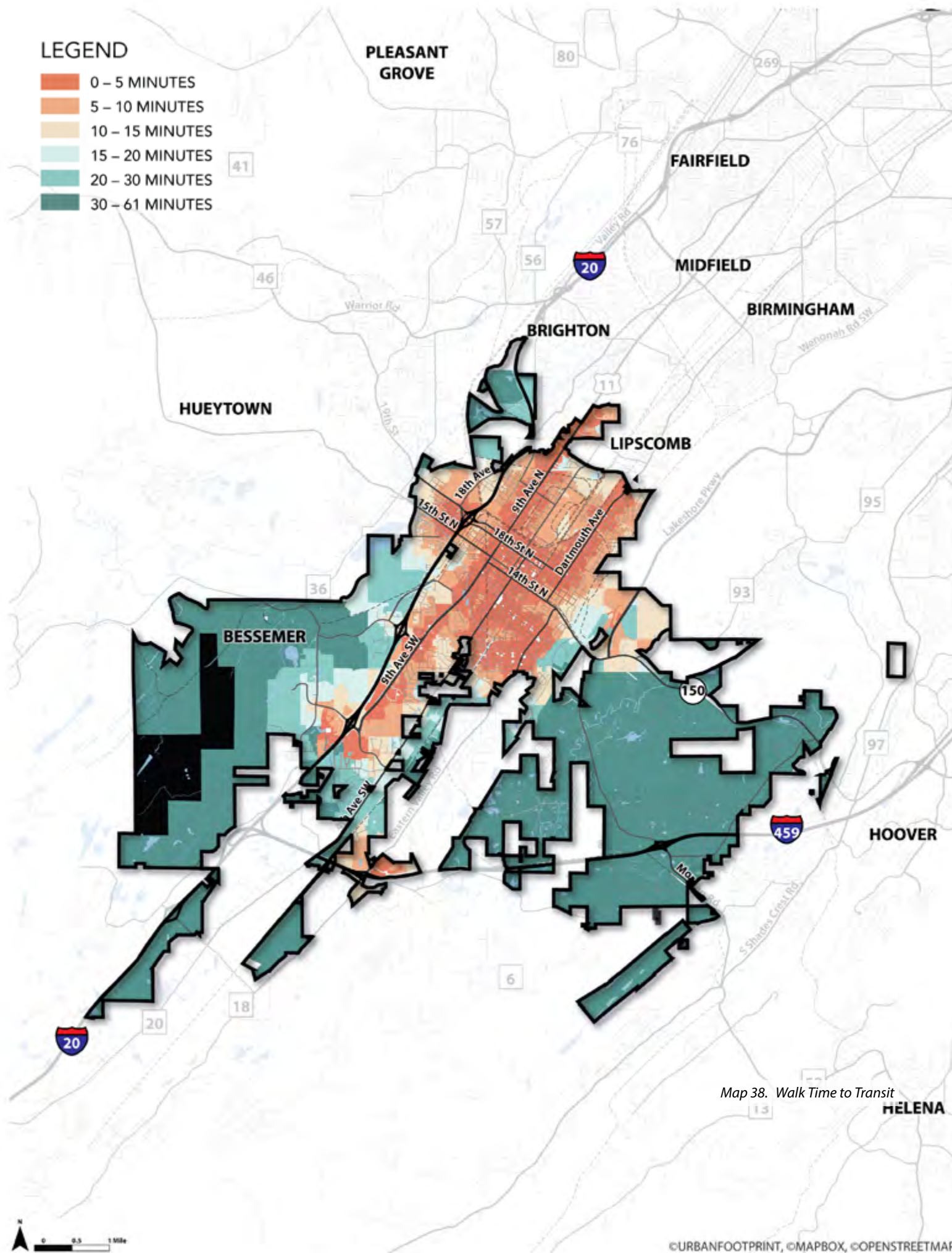
TRANSIT ACCESS

Fixed-route transit in Bessemer is provided by two Metro Area Express (MAX) Transit routes, operated by the Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA). Routes 1 and 45 serve several destinations within Bessemer, including Downtown, the public library, Bessemer Civic Center, the Social Security Office, the Bessemer Super Highway, and the Post Office. Both routes offer connectivity from Bessemer to Central Station in Birmingham, which provides access to Downtown Birmingham and to other routes serving Jefferson County. Through these bus routes, residents and visitors in Bessemer have connections to key local destinations and Downtown Birmingham. However, direct transit access from Bessemer to surrounding suburbs of Birmingham does not exist.

Map 39 Existing Transit Routes and Stops illustrates the transit coverage and stops, while Map 38 Walk Time to Transit depicts walk times to transit stops. Gaps in transit coverage are observed in east and west areas, where urbanization and population density are lower. Additionally, only about 10% of the region's employment can be accessed by transit within 30 minutes. This provides insight into a significant gap in the transit accewssibility across the region. It should be noted that while transit coverage is good in Bessemer, indicated by over 70% of the population being less than a 15-minute walk from a transit stop (Table 4), the service characteristics associated with the routes is minimal. Currently, Route 1 operates on an 80 minute frequency and runs from 4:12 AM to 10:39 PM, while Route 45 operates on an 44 minute frequency and runs from 4:20 AM to 10:29 PM.

TRANSPORTATION INTERVENTIONS

DOWNTOWN

Downtown Bessemer, the historic heart of the city, features a traditional street grid that offers excellent connectivity and creates human-scaled blocks. However, the city faces several challenges in revitalizing this area. One of the main issues is the prevalence of one-way streets, which prioritize motor vehicles over other forms of transportation. Additionally, at-grade rail crossings pose conflicts for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists, while a lack of adequate pedestrian infrastructure hampers safe and convenient travel.

To overcome these challenges, several interventions have been proposed. These include redesigning one-way streets to support walkable urbanism, addressing conflicts at rail crossings to improve safety for all users, and developing a multimodal network to ensure safe and convenient active transportation throughout Downtown Bessemer. By implementing these strategies, the city can breathe new life into its historic core, making it a vibrant and accessible area for all residents and visitors.

ONE-WAY STREETS

Downtown Bessemer is intersected by several multi-lane one-way streets designed to carry high volumes of motor vehicle traffic. This design is not only unnecessary but also detrimental to the Downtown area, creating wide expanses of pavement and encouraging higher vehicle speeds.

This plan recommends converting these streets to two-way traffic and repurposing excess pavement into more functional elements such as protected bike lanes and on-street parking, see Image 98. 19th Street N, proposed two-way conversion above. This design would provide additional multimodal and parking options while reintroducing a walkable, human-scaled environment. This approach is business-friendly, shifting the focus from simply passing through to slowing down and enjoying the Downtown area. Image 97 illustrates the existing conditions and Image 98 illustrates this concept with 19th Street as an example where this intervention could be implemented. Other potential candidates for this type of intervention include 18th Street, 10th Avenue, and 2nd Avenue.

LEGEND
- PARKS
- A RED ROCK NETWORK
- B ON-STREET BIKE LANES
- C OFF-STREET PATH
- D MULTI-USE PATH
- E AUTO LANE CONVERSION
- F BESSEMER RAIL TRAIL
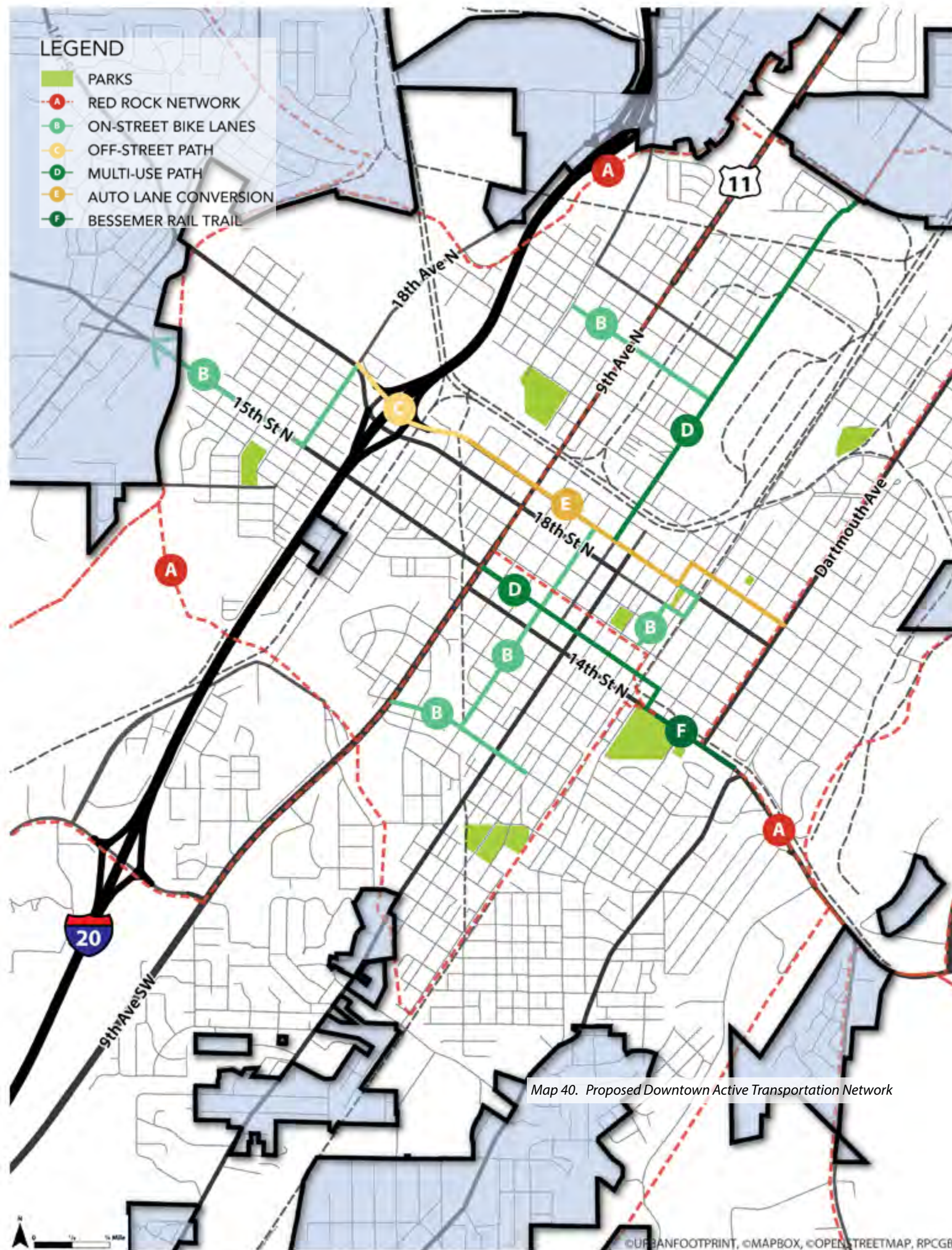
Map 40. Proposed Downtown Active Transportation Network

DOWNTOWN MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY

Prioritizing active transportation connectivity and mobility is essential in a downtown context, as human-scale environments are vital for a thriving city center. By creating a well-connected, bicycle, and pedestrian-friendly downtown, areas become more accessible and attractive for residents, workers, and visitors. Active transportation promotes healthy lifestyles and sustainability, reducing reliance on motorized vehicles, decreasing fuel consumption, and improving air quality.

In Bessemer, the traditional grid network provides a strong foundation for active transportation connectivity. Map 40 illustrates a potential active transportation network throughout Bessemer's Downtown, linking destinations such as parks, schools, community facilities, retail, and neighborhoods. This network includes sidewalks, bicycle lanes, protected on-street facilities, and off-road facilities based on the type of facility and the available right-of-way and pavement. Table 5 Proposed Active Transportation Facilities describes each proposed segment within Map 40.

Table 5. Proposed Active Transportation Facilities

SEGMENT	PROPOSED FACILITY TYPE
A	Red Rock Trail Network - Jones Valley Corridor routes
B	Striped on-street bike lanes
C	Off-street path transition
D	Parallel multi-use path
E	Repurpose vehicular lane for bike paths
F	Existing Bessemer Rail Trail

Image 99. Protected bike lanes (Image credit: Alta Planning and Design)

Image 100. Shared use path
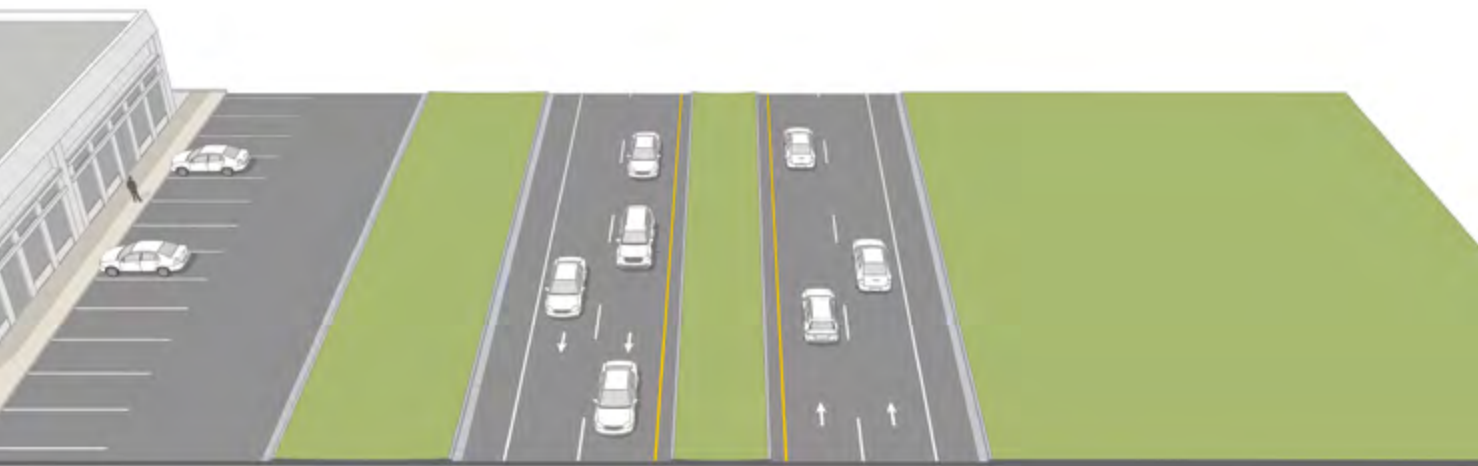
Image 101. Highway 11/9th Ave N, existing conditions
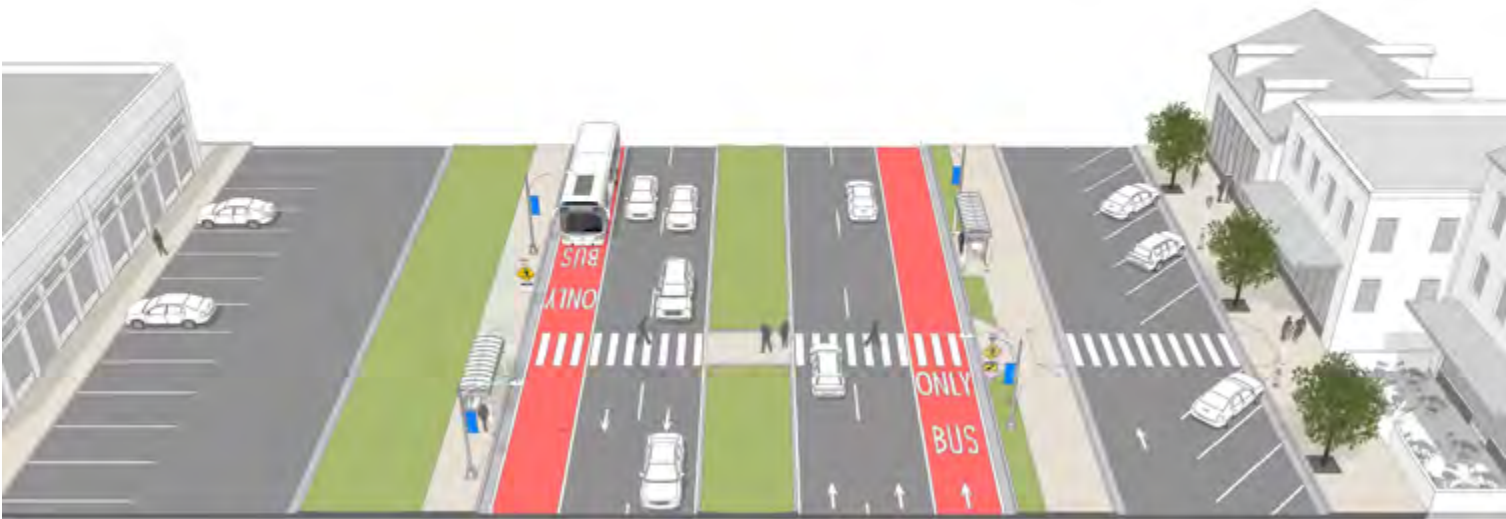
Image 102. Highway 11/9th Ave N, proposed transit improvement conversion

BESSEMER SUPER HIGHWAY

US Highway 11, also known as the Bessemer Super Highway, is a multilane state highway designed to carry high volumes of motor vehicles between Bessemer and other communities in southwest Jefferson County and Birmingham. The design features wide travel lanes, expansive pavement, high vehicle speeds, and minimal roadside buffers. These characteristics have created a barrier within the community and contributed to disinvestment in properties along the corridor.

Implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along US Highway 11 could provide key transit connectivity between interconnected neighborhoods, employment centers, commercial activity centers, recreational areas, and the greater Birmingham area. These destinations are noted on Map 41 on page 132. This not only improves regional access to and from these destinations but also reduces traffic congestion, promotes sustainable transportation options, and becomes a catalyst for growth on the US Highway 11 corridor.

BUS RAPID TRANSIT

The concept of integrating BRT and active transportation facilities into US Highway 11 is illustrated in Image 102. This includes dedicated bus lanes along the curb, narrow travel lanes to encourage appropriate motor vehicle speeds and minimize crossing distance, a raised median that serves as a pedestrian refuge, and marked and signed crosswalks. Additionally, the concept includes the implementation of multiuse paths and wide sidewalks on either side of the roadway, enhancing pedestrian connectivity and improving accessibility to potential development and redevelopment opportunities along the corridor.

By keeping the curbs in their existing locations, the concept minimizes construction and right-of-way costs. Instead, the concept suggests making the existing lanes narrower and removing the extra-wide shoulder lanes on either side to reclaim space within the existing roadway width. This cost-effective approach improves transit and pedestrian infrastructure along US Highway 11, reducing the road's impact as a barrier in the community.

BRT features such as dedicated lanes and efficient boarding processes reduce travel time and improve reliability. Working with regional partners to implement BRT would help connect Bessemer to the greater Birmingham area, supporting local economic growth and providing a sustainable transportation option for residents.

LEGEND
- ✳ EMPLOYMENT DESTINATION
- ✳ SHOPPING DESTINATION
- ✳ RECREATION DESTINATION
- ----- FUTURE RED ROCK TRAIL NETWORK
- ◁┈▷ LOCAL CONNECTORS

Map 41. City Destinations

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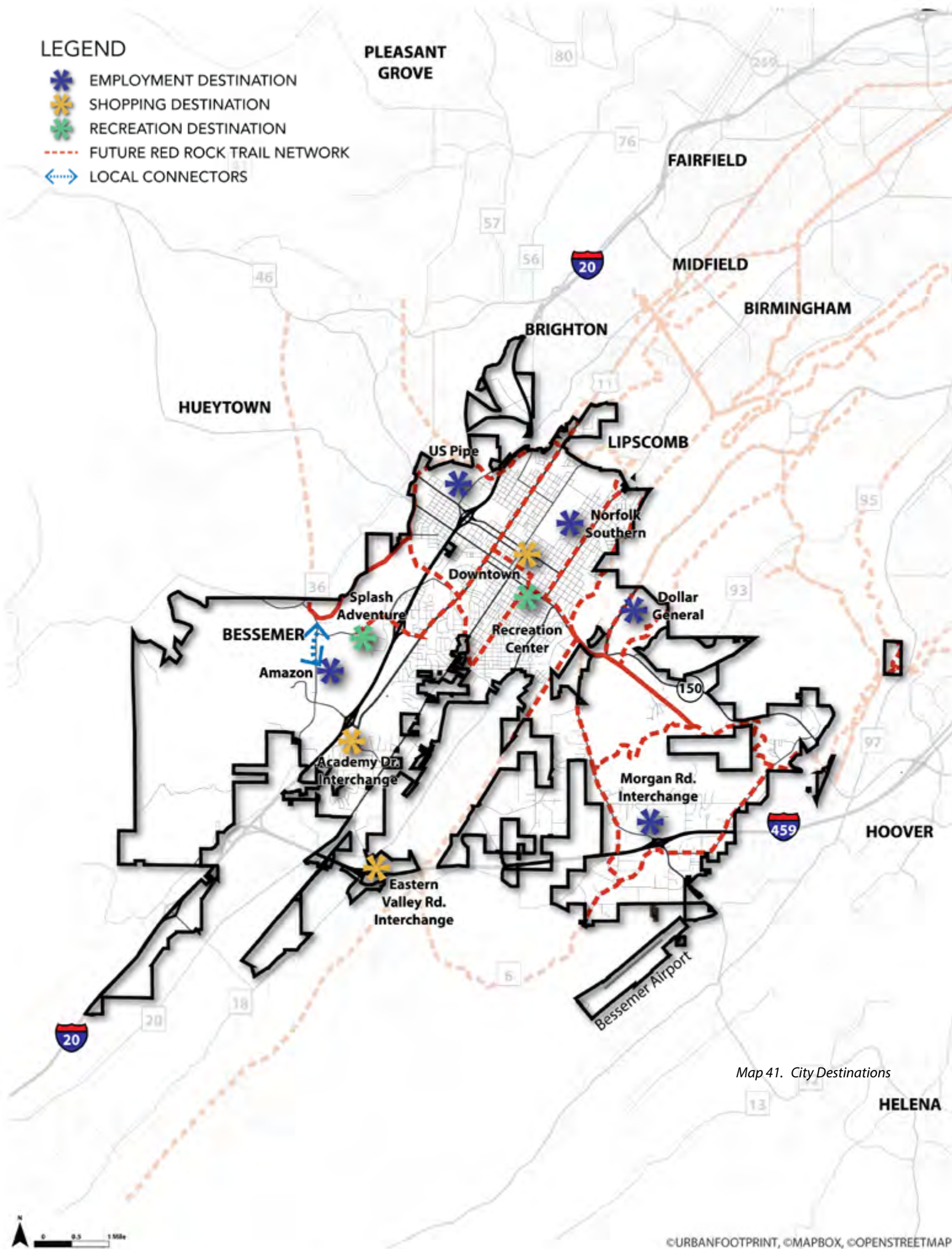
CITYWIDE INTERVENTIONS

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

The employment centers, shopping destinations, and recreation areas within Bessemer are essential hubs of activity, as shown in Map 41 City Destinations. These locations are the key origins and destinations that need to be connected through an active transportation network. Fortunately, much of this network is already planned through the Freshwater Land Trust's Red Rock Trail System. The portions of that network planned for Bessemer are shown on Map 41 with two small connections to major destinations that will be needed.

Creating an active transportation network to link these areas offers numerous benefits. It enhances accessibility, making it easier for residents and visitors to reach essential services, job opportunities, and recreational facilities. Improved connectivity fosters a more inclusive and equitable city, ensuring that residents of all ages, abilities, and incomes have access to key destinations. Additionally, promoting active transportation options positively impacts public health and reduces carbon emissions, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable city.

The detailed active transportation framework for Downtown, depicted in Map 40 Proposed Downtown Active Transportation Network, builds upon this network. It leverages available right-of-way and excess pavement to develop a low-impact, cost-effective active transportation infrastructure.

LEGEND

* EMPLOYMENT DESTINATION
* SHOPPING DESTINATION
* RECREATION DESTINATION
* FUTURE TRANSIT CONNECTIONS
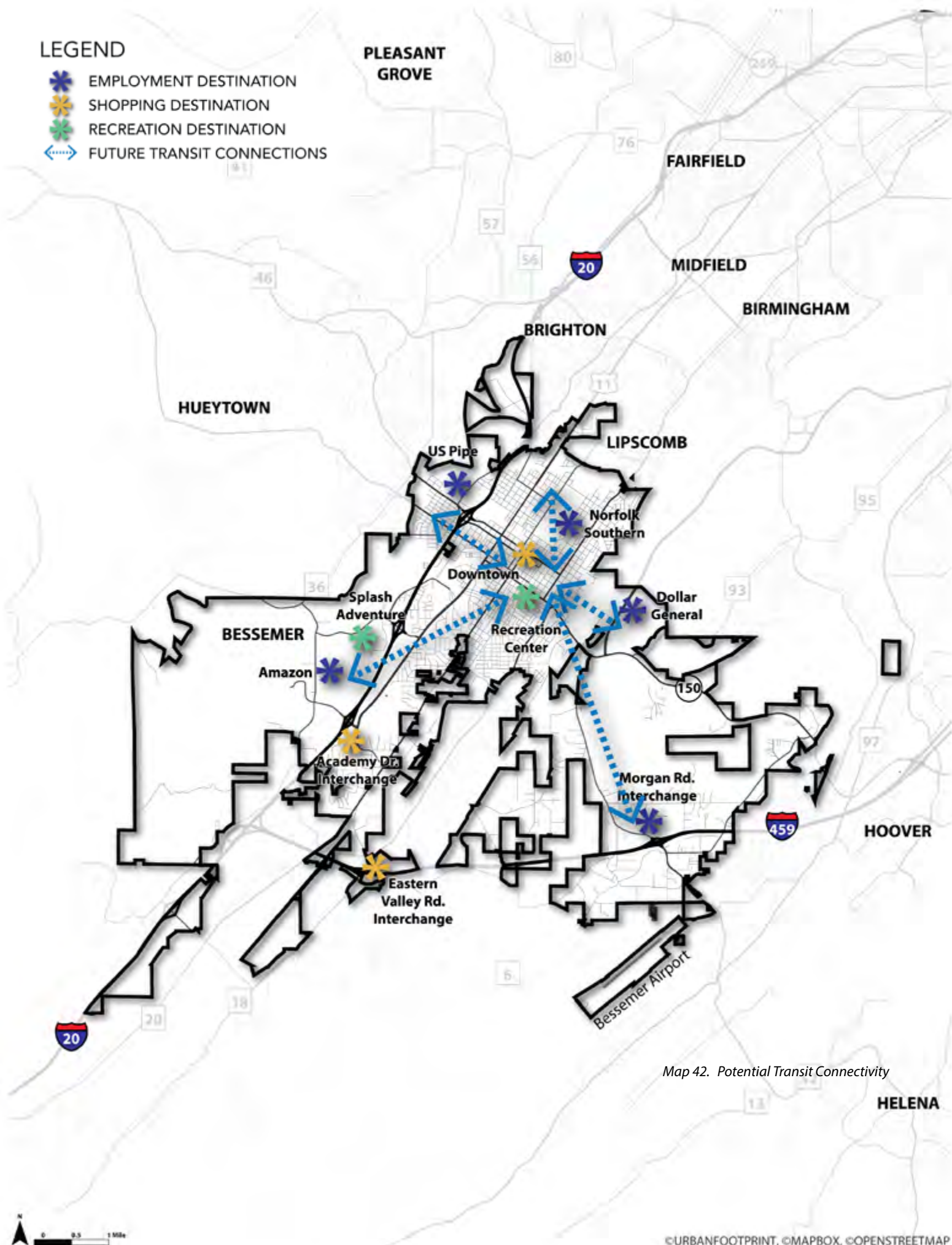
Map 42. Potential Transit Connectivity

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LEGEND

* MICROMOBILITY SERVICE AREAS
* FUTURE BRT

©URBANFOOTPRINT, ©MAPBOX, ©OPENSTREETMAP
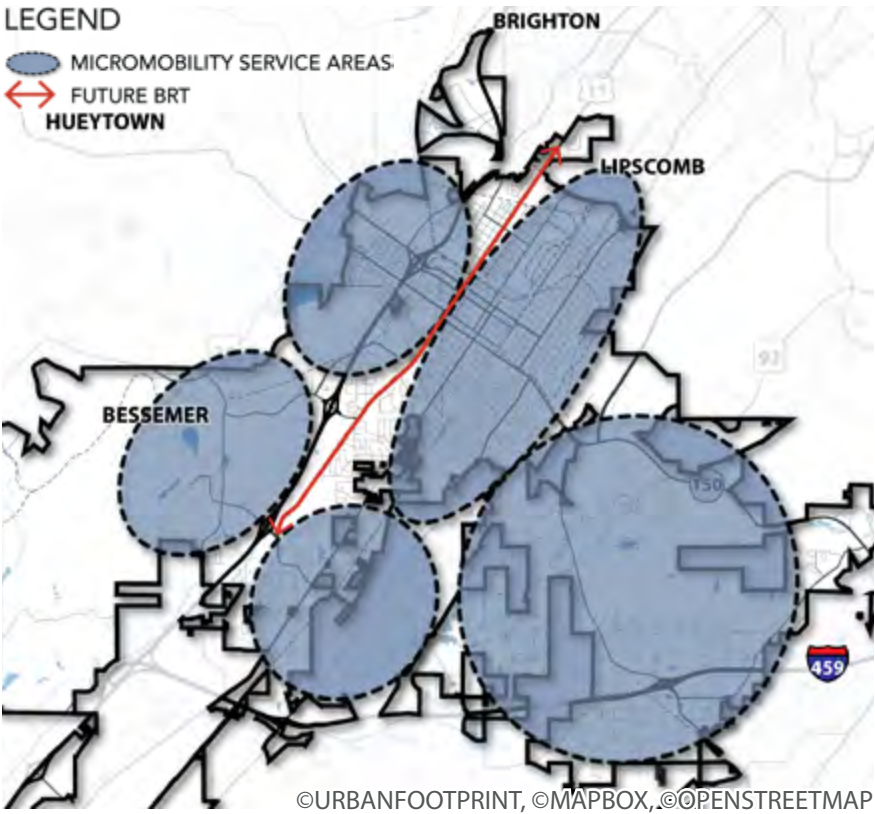
Map 43. Potential Micromobility Zones

MICROMOBILITY & TRANSIT

Micromobility and transit can significantly benefit cities like Bessemer by providing enhanced access to the greater Birmingham region. Alongside the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, introducing micromobility or on-demand rideshare services can further improve transportation options. For example, Birmingham's Max On Demand, service allows riders to call a transit vehicle through a mobile app for short trips.

On-demand ride services offer benefits over fixed routes, such as increased flexibility, shorter wait times, and cost savings for the jurisdiction. In areas with unpredictable or lower trip demand, these services ensure efficient use of resources.

The neighborhoods, employment, commercial centers, and recreation areas throughout the city should be connected for better transit accessibility. These connections, as illustrated by Map 42, facilitate access to all of Bessemer's key destinations. Establishing micromobility zones similar to Birmingham's approach can ensure that requested rides fall within a specific area, reducing wait times and improving service efficiency. Map 43 illustrates how these zones could be located. Mobility zones ensure requested rides are located within a specific area, improving overall efficiency. Combined with these zones, the potential for high-capacity regional transit along US Highway 11 is highlighted, enhancing connectivity to Birmingham, surrounding areas, and local destinations along the corridor.

As Bessemer's population density and demand for transit increase, modifying the existing fixed route service by MAX to exclusively serve local destinations within Bessemer could be a viable long-term strategy. This would require further exploration to determine feasibility, costs, and implementation strategies.

TRANSPORTATION

GOALS

The primary goals for transportation in Bessemer include:

- **GOAL 1:** Redesign and improve key streets and paths.
- **GOAL 2:** Optimize transportation infrastructure to reduce costs, increase safety, and promote healthy mobility options by efficiently allocating resources and repurposing excess capacity.
- **GOAL 3:** Reduce barriers caused by parked trains blocking streets.

By addressing these goals and actions, Bessemer will create a transportation network that enhances mobility, safety, and sustainability, supporting the city's overall vision for growth.

Image 103. 3rd Ave N (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 1.

Convert specific Downtown streets from one-way to two-way

Specifically, convert 18th and 19th Streets from 9th Avenue to 1st Avenue, to enhance traffic flow, accessibility, and economic activity in the area.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 2.

Add bike lanes and landscape improvements Downtown

Incorporate bike lanes and street trees on streets with excess pavement, and consider the use of low-cost design interventions such as those outlined in the Tactical Urbanist's Guide to Materials and Design by Street Plans Collaborative.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 3.

Extend the Bessmer Rail Trail

Extend the Bessmer Rail Trail from the Recreation Center to Downtown Bessemer. The trail could terminate near the Hall of History Museum or a new amphitheater.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 4.

Redesign Bessemer Superhighway (US Highway 11)

Encourage the use of transit, walking, and biking through both public investment and private redevelopment efforts.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 5.

Work with Partners to Construct Segments Identified in the Red Rock Trail Master Plan

The Freshwater Land Trust's 750 mile Red Rock Trail Master Plan envisions numerous segments running through Bessemer. As funding becomes available, the City should prioritize funding to construct segments identified in the Master Plan.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 6.

Partner with the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA) to improve Transit Service throughout the City

Image 104. Clarendon Ave. (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 105. Separated bike lane (Image credit: National Association of Transportation Officials

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 7.

Seek grant funding and partnerships for bus shelters.

Work with major businesses to sponsor installation of bus shelters and ensure safe connections to nearby businesses and neighborhoods.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 8.

Conduct an Audit of Transit Routes and Stops

Eliminate unnecessary stops and analyze the potential creation of an in-city transit option that connects transit to industry clusters along Morgan Road and Lakeshore Parkway, shopping areas along I-459, and the Medical West Hospital just outside the city.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 9.

Identify and prioritize improvements that would qualify for Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Implementation Grants

Ensure Bessemer's readiness when the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham completes the SS4A Action Plan.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 10.

Promote the CommuteSmart program, www.commutesmart.org

Lower residents' commuting costs by encouraging carpooling, vanpooling, and other smart commute options.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 11.

Identify streets with excess traffic capacity

Develop a plan to reduce pavement areas, repurposing public space for beneficial uses such as biking, walking, or outdoor dining.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 12.

Address Rail Blockages and seek after Grants

Coordinate with elected officials and lobby state regulators to address the issue of trains blocking streets and seek grant funding to construct grade separation infrastructure, ensuring smoother and safer travel for residents.

TRANSPORTATION ACTION 13.

Develop a citywide Bessemer Transportation Plan

Ensure a comprehensive approach to future transportation planning and development by developing a citywide Transportation Plan.

Image 106. Bright Star Restaurant, Downtown Bessemer (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is vital for Bessemer's growth and resilience, focusing on revitalization, regional appeal, and zoning updates.

Bessemer's economic development strategy builds on the city's unique assets, including its historic downtown, strategic location, and industrial heritage. The plan focuses on creating a vibrant local economy by fostering entrepreneurship, attracting new businesses, and supporting the growth of existing enterprises. Key initiatives include revitalizing downtown, promoting mixed-use developments, and enhancing transportation infrastructure to improve connectivity and accessibility.

A critical component of this economic development strategy is the city's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, which provides essential funding to support community revitalization and economic growth. The annual CDBG Action Plan outlines specific projects and initiatives that directly align with the broader goals of this comprehensive plan. Leveraging CDBG funds will enable Bessemer to advance key economic development actions, such as improving infrastructure, supporting small businesses, and enhancing public facilities. This strategic use of CDBG funding will be instrumental in achieving the city's vision for a prosperous and inclusive economy.

Image 107. Perfecting Reconciliation Church

EMPLOYMENT

In 2023, Bessemer's civilian labor force consisted of 9,998 individuals, with the vast majority, 96.3% or 9,631 people, employed full-time, according to the Alabama Department of Labor and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The city's unemployment rate for the year averaged 3.7%, aligning closely with the national average of 3.6%. This rate is significantly higher than Jefferson County and the State of Alabama, which each reported lower unemployment rates of 2.3%.

However, from 2018 to 2022, the total percent of the Bessemer population age 16 years+ in the civilian labor force was 49.9% (U.S. Census Quick Facts).
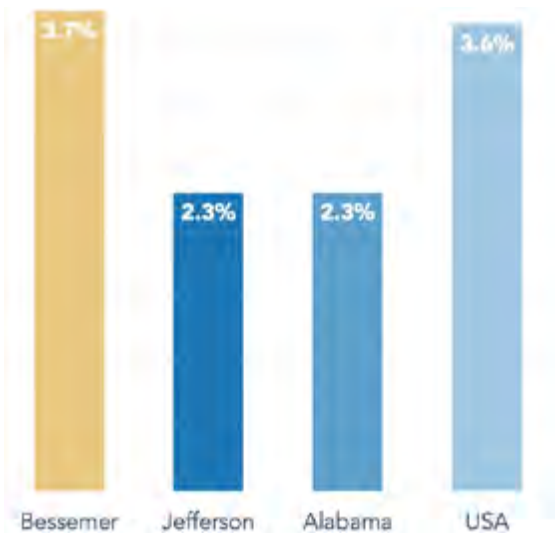
Graph 10. 2023 Annual Average Unemployment
(Source: Alabama Department of Labor in Cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics)

EMPLOYERS

1,398 businesses in Bessemer employ 21,094 people.

The largest industries are:

- Health care (17%)
- Manufacturing (13%)
- Retail trade (13%)
- Accommodation and food services (9%)
- Finance and insurance (8%)
- Educational services (7%)
- Transportation (7%)
- Administration (5%)
- Public Administration (4%)
- Construction (4%)

SECTORS

For residents of Bessemer in their working years, employment predominantly falls within the professional and administrative domains. Specifically, 20.6% of the workforce is employed in the services sector, 29.6% in blue-collar jobs, and a significant 49.8% in white-collar roles.

Image 108. Employment by Industry
(Source: Esri (2023), Esri-Data Axle (2023), ACS (2017-2021), Esri-U.S. BLS (2023), AGS (2023))

96.3% of Bessemer's civilian labor force is employed full-time.

To get to work:

77% drive alone

12% carpool

2% walk

Image 110. Macon, GA (Image credit: CiSmithphotography)

Image 109. Van Wert, OH (Image credit: Bill-Badzo)

Image 111. Florence, SC (Image credit: True Light Photography)

SUCCESS STORIES

Examples of other successful downtown redevelopments can provide helpful lessons for Bessemer.

DOWNTOWN

AS AN ECONOOMIC ENGINE

Revitalizing a historic downtown not only preserves the cultural heritage of a city but also serves as a powerful economic engine. Historic downtowns, when revitalized, attract tourists, stimulate local businesses, and create a sense of place that fosters community pride. For instance, Rockford, Illinois, once known for its declining manufacturing sector, has seen a resurgence thanks to private investment and state-run tax breaks, transforming old industrial buildings into trendy shopping centers and mixed-use spaces. Similarly, Birmingham, Alabama, has leveraged its well-preserved historic buildings to create Pepper Place, a bustling entertainment and retail destination that revitalizes the local economy. Another notable example is Van Wert, Ohio, where a $90 million public-private initiative focuses on revitalizing downtown buildings, converting them into commercial spaces with residential units above. These efforts, supported by federal and state historic tax credits, have preserved the city's architectural heritage while boosting economic activity.

Other small towns like Wheeling, West Virginia, and Laramie, Wyoming, have successfully revitalized their downtowns through strategic partnerships and targeted investments. Wheeling leveraged its industrial history and created a robust entrepreneurship support system, while Laramie's Main Street program has focused on enhancing its historic district and supporting small business growth. These examples demonstrate that with a focused strategy and collaboration, small towns can transform their historic downtowns into vibrant economic hubs, providing a replicable model for Bessemer's revitalization efforts.

By learning from these success stories, Bessemer can adopt similar strategies to breathe new life into its historic downtown, making it a cornerstone of the city's economic development and community identity (Bob Vila) (Brookings) (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy) (Next City).

Image 112. 3rd Ave N

DOWNTOWN BESSEMER
FACADE IMPROVEMENT TOOLKIT

Historic Downtown facades play a pivotal role in economic development by enhancing the visual appeal and unique character of commercial districts.

In Downtown Bessemer, maintaining and improving historic facades can significantly boost the economic success of surrounding businesses. By encouraging property owners, merchants, and residents to recognize, enhance, and promote their historic assets, a vibrant, creative, and diverse commercial environment can be fostered. This **Facade Improvement Toolkit** provides essential guidance for building renovations and new construction, ensuring that improvements respect historic design while creating distinctive images for businesses. This can develop a coherent and attractive downtown appearance, thereby contributing to the overall economic vitality and growth of Bessemer.

The toolkit identifies and highlights the unique character of each building asset, thereby enhancing the economic viability of the surrounding commercial establishments. Property owners, merchants, and residents are encouraged to recognize and promote the historic and aesthetic value of their properties within Downtown Bessemer. The focus is on fostering creativity and diversity while developing a more coherent and attractive downtown appearance.

The Facade Improvement Toolkit offers guidance for renovations and new construction. It supports renovations that respect historic design parameters while creating unique business images. Promoting the toolkit, documenting results, analyzing outcomes, and addressing challenges are key components of this initiative, aimed at driving the economic development of Bessemer's historic Downtown.

MAJOR STRATEGIES

Historic Elements: Improvements should showcase each building's historically significant elements, respecting its original organization (base, body, cap).

Composition: Facade improvements should present a visually balanced composition, emphasizing pedestrian scale to encourage street use by residents and business patrons.

Scale: Building facades should respond to the pedestrian experience, providing protection from the elements and activating the street with entries, awnings, and transparent display windows.

Detailing: Emphasize three-dimensional detailing such as cornices and window moldings to create visual interest and reflect the historic context.

Materials: Facade styles and materials should reflect and reinforce Downtown's character, using a variety of durable materials appropriate for the region. This will largely be brick in Downtown Bessemer.

GREAT FACADES SHOW

attention to historic elements, composition, scale, detailing, and materials.

Image 113. 3rd Ave N (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Awnings and Canopies: Incorporate awnings and canopies to add shelter and character to the street, protecting pedestrians from the weather.

Windows and doors: Ensure storefronts have high transparency to encourage pedestrian activity and visual engagement with ground-floor uses.

Signage: Building and business signs should identify the business at both automobile and pedestrian scales, enhancing the architectural design without obscuring details.

Facade lighting: Provide adequate lighting for building signage, storefront displays, and pedestrian entries to ensure safety and encourage patronage.

Public artwork: Engage local artists to shape the character of the space, integrating branding strategically.

Cornice
Central architectural element that tops the facade. Do not cover with signage.

Windows
Do not block windows with signs or other materials.

Lighting
Use gooseneck lights to illuminate signs and building features.

Sign
Keep sign wording simple and clear. Use consistent lettering and limit the number of colors to two or three.

Transom
These windows provide natural light into the store and enhance the customer experience. Do not cover with signs or install air conditioners in this location.

Awning
Use sturdy fabric or canvas awnings. Avoid vinyl awnings which deteriorate quickly.

Display Window
Maintain an excellent window display as the centerpiece of the storefront. Avoid blocking the display with signs. A view of happy diners is the best advertisement for restaurants and coffee shops.

Image 114. Facade improvement essentials

FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Investing in facade improvements not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of historic downtowns but also drives economic growth by attracting new businesses, increasing property values, and fostering community pride. The city should prioritize the development of a facade improvement grant program to assist in the preservation of historic buildings Downtown.

HOW-TO DEVELOP A FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Simple changes like a new paint job, repairs, and new signage can highlight each building's historic details and attract interest. Actions that are a part of the downtown facade improvement program should be exempt from permits and fees. Any effort to reduce the cost of the improvement should be supported. Any properties within the proposed Local Historic District (see Map 44 on page 161) should be eligible. Steps to develop a downtown facade improvement program should be kept as simple as possible:

■ Create a partnership that will support the program. Likely partners include the City of Bessemer, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Downtown Redevelopment Authority, Chamber of Commerce, and the Community Development Block Grant Program.

■ Create the program goals and objectives to include:
  ■ Building maintenance and improvement;
  ■ Support local businesses:
  ■ Improve property values; and
  ■ Increase the city tax base.

■ Define project and applicant eligibility. This includes the area that is eligible, the minimum requirements including completion timeframe, zoning compliance, funding sources, and a list of eligible and non-eligible activities.

■ Create the terms and conditions of the program and the program procedures.

STUDIES

National Trust for Historic Preservation's Dollar & Sense Series: Commercial building improvements lead to increased sales, attracting new businesses and shoppers. (National Trust for Historic Preservation) savingplaces.org/

Analysis of Downtown Storefront Improvements increase in first-time customers, conversions to better uses, and influence others to make their own improvements. (Ryan) economicdevelopment.extension.wisc.edu/files/2021/08/G3914.pdf

BESSEMER FOOD TRUCK TOOLKIT

Food trucks can boost Bessemer's economy by diversifying the food scene, fostering local entrepreneurship, and revitalizing public spaces. This toolkit provides a guide for aspiring food truck operators, existing businesses, and city officials to successfully integrate food trucks into the city.

Benefits of Food Trucks

Economic growth: Food trucks can stimulate local economies by creating jobs and supporting local food suppliers.

Cultural diversity: They bring diverse culinary options, enhancing the city's cultural fabric.

Urban activation: Food trucks can enliven public spaces, attracting foot traffic and increasing the vibrancy of the city.

Image 115.   Campus Martius in Detroit (Image credit: Hazel Borys)

ACCELERATING SMALL BIZ

This toolkit serves as a guide for launching and managing a successful food truck business in Bessemer, ensuring compliance with local regulations and fostering a thriving food truck community.

STARTING A FOOD TRUCK BUSINESS IN BESSEMER

There are several essential steps for community members looking to start a food truck business in Bessemer.

Image 116. Food court at the Rayback in Boulder, Colorado (Image credit: Tate Norden)

Image 117. Food court in Seaside, Florida (Image credit: Hazel Borys)

BUSINESS PLANNING

Market research: Identify potential customers, popular locations, and competitors. Understand the demand for different types of cuisine.

Business plan: Develop a detailed business plan that includes your menu, pricing strategy, target market, marketing plan, and financial projections.

Licensing and permits: Obtain the required documents, including:

Business license: Obtain a general business license from the City of Bessemer. www.bessemeral.org/business-licenses-forms/

Health permit: Secure a health permit from the Jefferson County Health Department. www.jcdh.org/SitePages/Misc/PlanReview.aspx

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Vehicle standards: Ensure your food truck meets all safety and sanitation standards set by local health and safety regulations.

Location: Choose strategic locations with high foot traffic, such as near parks, commercial districts, and event venues. Adhere to city zoning regulations and designated vending areas, which this plan seeks to expand to the Transitional Corridor place type, commercial zoning districts, and designated Downtown parking spaces.

Waste management: Implement proper waste disposal practices to maintain cleanliness and comply with environmental regulations.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SUCCESS

Quality and innovation: Offer high-quality, unique, and innovative menu items to attract and retain customers.

Customer service: Provide excellent customer service to build a loyal customer base.

Marketing: Utilize social media and local advertising to promote your food truck. Participate in local events and food truck festivals to increase visibility.

Community engagement: Engage with the local community by participating in charity events, partnering with local businesses, and sourcing ingredients locally.

CITY SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Designated food truck zones: The city will identify and promote designated food truck zones to streamline operations and attract customers. See the Code Reform_chapter regarding the recommendation to allow food truck pods in commercial zoning districts, US Highway 11, and designated parking spaces in the Local Entertainment District for Downtown.

Events and festivals: Bessemer will host food truck events, festivals, and workshops to boost the visibility and popularity of food trucks, as part of the action later in this chapter to restart the Main Street Program.

Economic incentives: Explore potential economic incentives such as grants, low-interest loans, and tax benefits to support food truck entrepreneurs. See the references in the section below.

REGULATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

Health and safety: Adhere to all health and safety regulations, including regular inspections by the health department.

Zoning laws: Comply with zoning laws and ensure you are operating in approved areas.

Operational hours: Follow city guidelines regarding operational hours to minimize disruptions to local residents and businesses.

The integration of food trucks into Bessemer's economic landscape promises to enhance the city's vibrancy and economic resilience. By following this toolkit, food truck operators can navigate the regulatory landscape, maximize their business potential, and contribute to the city's growth and cultural diversity.

FOOD TRUCK TOOLKIT REFERENCES

Mobile Food Unit Plan Review Packet (Alabama Public Health)
www.alabamapublichealth.gov/shelby/assets/mobilefoodplanreviewpacket.pdf

5 Food Truck Licenses and Permits Required in Alabama: How to Start a Food Truck Business in 2024 (Boyarsky)
https://pos.toasttab.com/blog/on-the-line/food-truck-licenses-and-permits-in-alabama

Small Business Funding Programs in Alabama: 2024 Guide (Resolve)
https://resolvepay.com/blog/post/small-business-funding-programs-alabama

Image 118. Food carts in Portland, Oregon (Image credit: Hazel Borys)

Image 119. Food truck in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Image credit: Hazel Borys)

CITYBUILDING STORYTELLING TOOLKIT

The Bessemer Game Plan emerged from extensive community input, gathering insights from interviews, focus groups, community workshops, online surveys, and a project website. These conversations formed the current vision, rooted in residents' aspirations for a more economically vibrant, connected, and inclusive city. Now, as Bessemer shifts from planning to action, the next chapters call for an ongoing commitment to communicating this shared vision. The Citybuilding Storytelling Toolkit is designed to guide these efforts, ensuring a narrative to chronicle and explain the city's progress.

The aim is not to establish a new vision but to continually reaffirm, update, and energize the one already articulated in this game plan. This toolkit provides strategies for conveying the ongoing transformation in ways that resonate with the community and bring to life the impact of new developments, policies, and initiatives. By capturing and sharing the stories that emerge from Bessemer's growth, the city can reinforce its commitment to excellence and inclusiveness.

SHAPING THE NARRATIVE – STORYTELLING PRINCIPLES FOR THE GAME PLAN'S IMPLEMENTATION

1. Reinforce the Vision

As Bessemer moves forward, the narrative should consistently connect back to the Game Plan's vision. Frame each new development or initiative as part of the shared roadmap established through community dialogue. This approach will help residents see themselves in the story and understand how changes benefit their daily lives.

2. Engage Residents in Ongoing Conversations

Community input does not end with the initial plan. Continue to invite residents to share their experiences and ideas. Use updates on projects as opportunities to gather feedback, ensuring that the narrative remains grounded in the community's evolving needs. More on this at the end of this game plan, in the Implementation chapter.

3. Highlight Progress and Future Potential

Focus on the successes and the journey ahead. Show how recent projects have made a difference while also setting the stage for future improvements. This helps maintain momentum and keeps the community invested in the story.

TOOLS FOR BRINGING THE GAME PLAN TO LIFE

Visual Storytelling Techniques

Leverage visuals that reflect the city's ongoing transformation, including construction milestones, community events, and before-and-after images of revitalized spaces. Infographics can also help explain complex changes in a simple, engaging way.

Digital and Physical Engagement Strategies

Maintain an active presence across social media, newsletters, and community spaces to share stories and updates. Host pop-up events, information boards, and interactive displays around town to bring the narrative to life.

Image 120. Bessemer neighbors sharing their vision for the future

Storytelling through Data

Use data to support the narrative, showing measurable improvements in areas like job growth, infrastructure investments, or community satisfaction. Communicating these metrics can reinforce the message of progress and accountability.

Collaboration with Local Voices

Partner with local organizations, schools, and civic groups to amplify the narrative. Engage youth, seniors, and cultural groups to share stories that reflect the whole community's experiences.

Evolving Bessemer's Story

The Citybuilding Storytelling Toolkit offers a framework for sharing Bessemer's ongoing transformation in a way that keeps the Game Plan's vision alive. This approach ensures that as the city grows, the narrative remains a living, breathing reflection of its people and their aspirations. Through consistent storytelling, the city can maintain transparency, encourage community pride, and drive sustained engagement.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

Building on the foundation set by the Game Plan, this toolkit helps guide the way forward, setting the intention that Bessemer's story is not only told but felt by everyone who calls the city home. This approach emphasizes the power of narrative in fostering community connection and motivating action.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The primary goals for economic development in Bessemer include:

- **GOAL 1:** Welcome businesses and visitors Downtown, celebrating the City's history, arts, and entertainment.
- **GOAL 2:** Promote Bessemer to the region and beyond.
- **GOAL 3:** Support entrepreneurship.
- **GOAL 4:** Redevelop brownfields.
- **GOAL 5:** Protect the airport's ability to operate.

By focusing on these goals and the following actions, Bessemer will foster a robust economic environment, promote Downtown revitalization, and support sustainable development. These efforts will contribute to a vibrant, thriving city that attracts investment and provides a high quality of life for its residents.

Image 121. Bessemer bridge (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

Image 122. Bessemer City Hall Lofts (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

ED ACTION 1.

Re-start the Main Street Program

Revitalize this program to support small businesses, historic preservation, and community events, fostering a vibrant Downtown. Utilize the Main Street program to organize regular events such as farmers' markets, festivals, and art shows to attract visitors and create a lively atmosphere. The Main Street program could also manage the proposed Facade Improvement program.

To learn more about Main Street's Four-Point Approach and about other Main Street programs in Alabama, visit https://www.mainstreetalabama.org/about-us/four-point-approach/.

ED ACTION 2.

Start a Façade Improvement Matching Grant Program for Historic Buildings

Façade improvement programs provide financial assistance to property owners to renovate the exteriors of their buildings, enhancing the visual appeal of downtown areas.

ED ACTION 3.

Create a Local Entertainment District for Downtown

Designate a Downtown area for entertainment venues, restaurants, and bars to attract nightlife and tourism as permitted by Alabama § 28-3A-17.1 (2023).

ED ACTION 4.

Market the Benefits of Bessemer's Opportunity Zone

Promote the financial incentives available in the Opportunity Zone to attract investment and development.

ED ACTION 5.

Develop a Database for Marketing Vacant Properties Online

Create an online platform to showcase available properties, making it easier for potential investors to find opportunities in Bessemer.

ED ACTION 6.

Create an Innovation District and Co-Working Spaces

Downtown can attract start-ups and entrepreneurs, particularly those focused on innovation and the sciences.

ED ACTION 7.

Develop a Community Services Center

Co-locate non-profits and provide community meeting and workshop space to support social services and community engagement.

ED ACTION 8.

Pursue grant funding to conduct a Phase II environmental assessment

For sites identified through the Phase I assessments of the 2020 Brownfields Assessment Grant.

ED ACTION 9.

Pursue Grant Funding for Environmental Cleanup

Seek funding to clean up sites with environmental concerns identified through Phase II assessments conducted as part of the 2020 Brownfields Assessment Grant.

ED ACTION 10.

Work with Jefferson County and the City of Helena on Zoning Changes to Protect the Bessemer Municipal Airport

Coordinate with Jefferson County to implement zoning changes limiting incompatible development near the airport, ensuring its long-term viability.

ED ACTION 11.

Create a Local Downtown Bessemer Historic District

A local historic district for Downtown will encompass the existing National Historic District, creating a clearly defined boundary for local preservation efforts per the Historic Resurvey recommendations from 2023. Collaborate with the Bessemer Historic Preservation Commission determine the final boundary.

Establishing a local historic district brings significant benefits. Properties within these districts often appreciate at rates higher than the overall market and are more resilient to economic downturns. Additionally, they enhance the appeal of the area, making it more attractive for business recruitment and tourism, further contributing to the local economy.

LEGEND

- PARKS
- NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
- PROPOSED LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Map 44. Proposed Local Historic District

Map 45. Park Priority
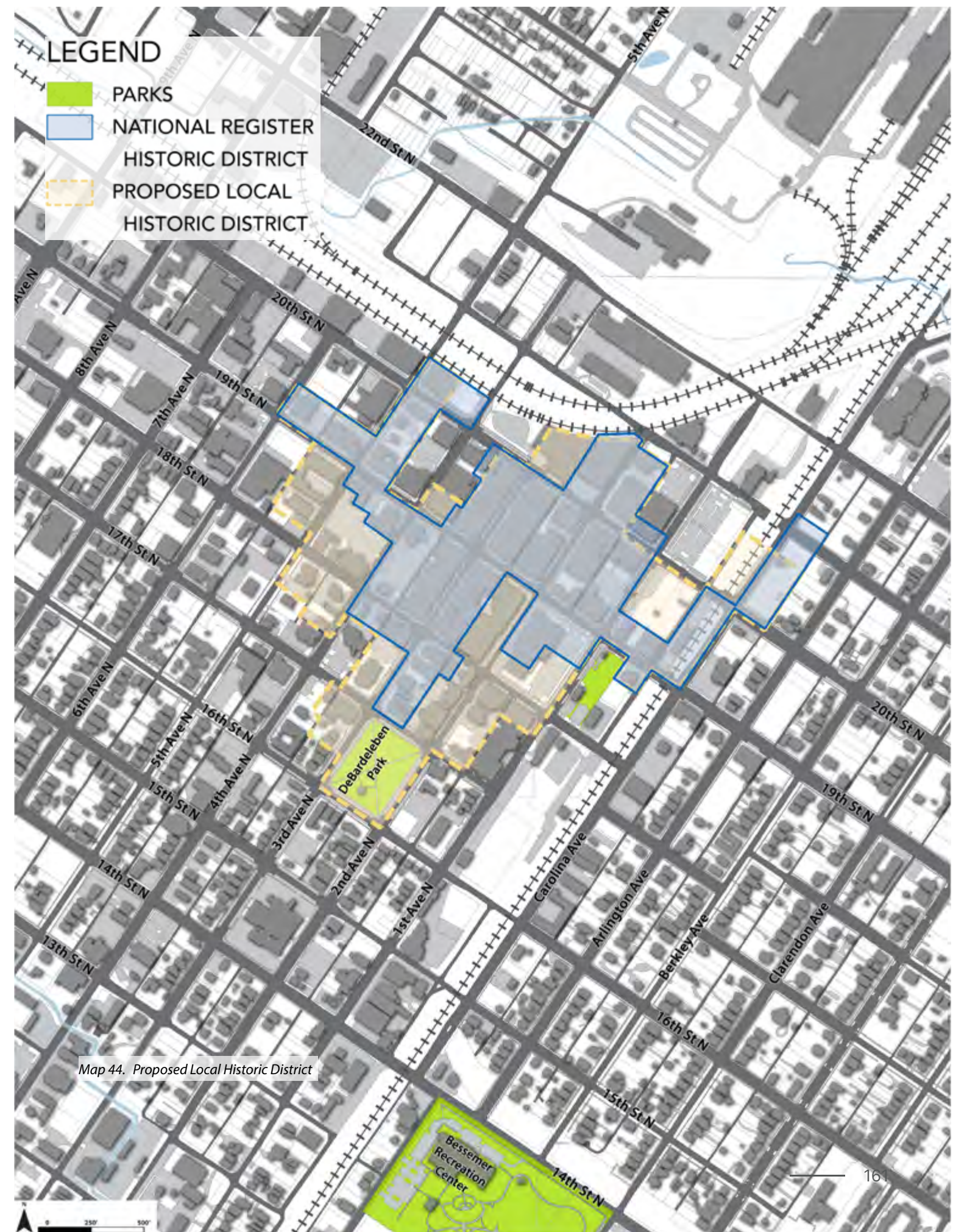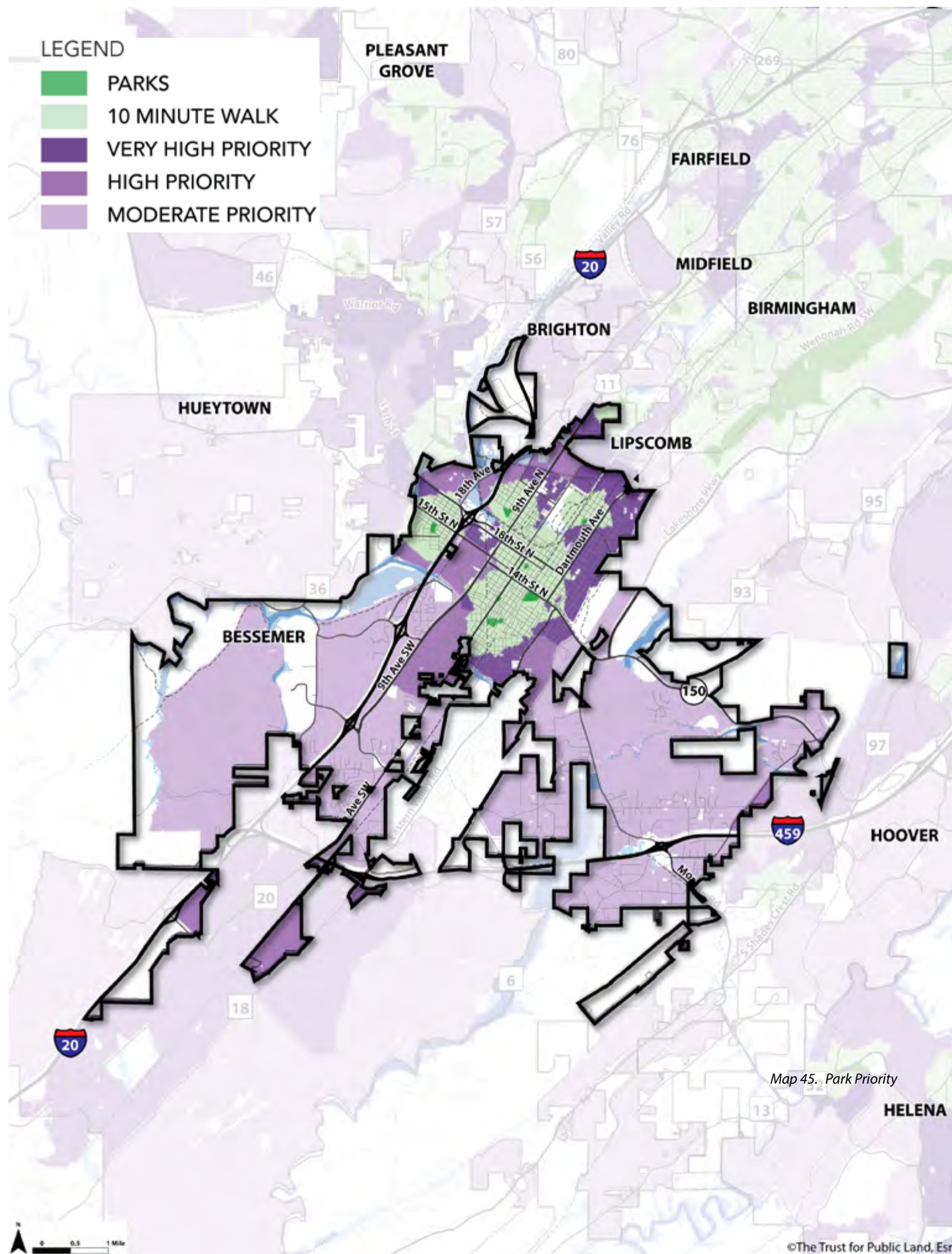
PARKS & RECREATION

Parks and recreation facilities enhance Bessemer's quality of life, and this chapter outlines strategies to improve park access, expand programming, and promote active transportation.

Parks and recreation facilities play a vital role in enhancing the quality of life for Bessemer's residents by providing spaces for physical activity, social interaction, and community events. Building on the success of the well-programmed Bessemer Recreation Center, the goals and actions outlined in this chapter aim to further improve access to parks, expand recreational programming, and promote active transportation. As indicated on Map 45 Park Priority, the historic neighborhoods of Bessemer are fairly well served by accessible parks. However, a number of the newer residential areas are lacking accessible parks. By implementing the strategies in this chapter, Bessemer can create a more vibrant, healthy, and connected community.

The Bessemer Recreation Center, completed in 2016, serves as a cornerstone of the city's recreational facilities. It features a diverse array of amenities including a pool deck, splash pad, fitness area with an oval track, and a large gymnasium. The center also offers group fitness classes and provides spaces for private events, meetings, and various activities. The success of this facility has informed the development of goals and actions for the broader Parks and Recreation strategy, with an eye toward potentially replicating or expanding upon this model in other areas of the city.

CITY PARKS

The City of Bessemer maintains eight public parks of various sizes throughout the city. The existing parks have a wide variety of amenities including ball fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, walking paths, and passive recreation areas such as gazebos and seating areas. Within the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, sidewalks provide sufficient connectivity to the parks. However, beyond these locations the sidewalk infrastructure has significant gaps, making it difficult to access the parks without a motor vehicle. Notably, the sole trail in the city, the Rail Trail along 14th Street (State Route 150), currently offers limited connectivity beyond the immediate vicinity. **Map 45. Park Priority** illustrates how the historic areas of Bessemer are accessible on foot to residents, while more recently developed areas lack park accessibility.

Image 123. Alex Bradford Park

Image 124. Roosevelt Park

Map 46. Bessemer Parks

PARK	OVERVIEW
Abrams Park 1200 23rd St N	Abrams Park is conveniently located next to Abrams Elementary School. The park features a baseball field and soccer field. Upgrades include the refurbishment of the concession stand and the addition of picnic tables.
Alex Bradford Park 1831 1st Ave N	Named after Bessemer native and popular jazz musician Alex Bradford, this lighted public park has benches and a fountain. In Downtown Bessemer at First Avenue North and 19th Street.
Carver Park 601 2nd Ave N	Located at Second Avenue North and Seventh Street, Carver Park is a large park featuring a little league baseball field, walking track, picnic and family areas, children's playground equipment, and city-owned fields.
Debardeleben Park 1623 2nd Ave N	Described as an oasis, Debardeleben Park is named after the city's founder, Henry Debardeleben. Nestled in the heart of Downtown, the park includes picnic tables, a bandstand, and a renovated Doughboy statue. It is the site of the annual Bob Sykes Blues and BBQ Festival, summer concerts and events.
Enoch Brown Park 2100 Berkley Ave	This green space celebrates Enoch Brown's legacy and provides a place for residents and visitors to enjoy outdoor activities and reflects the community's respect and admiration for a notable individual.
McNeil Park 1320 20th Ave N	Located in the heart of Pipe Shop, McNeil Park is on the site of the former McNeil School. It features a walking track, two new pavilions, a basketball court, a children's playground, picnic tables, and splash pad. It hosts Valley Creek Cleanup and Pipe Shop Day Celebration, held each August.
Roosevelt Park Hall Ave at 14th St	Located beside the city's new Recreation Center Hall, Roosevelt Park includes a walking trail, tennis courts, baseball and softball fields, an amphitheater, a picnic pavilion, and more. A tourist attraction in the park is an old captured German artillery piece aimed toward the roadway.
Southside Community Park	This park, next to Hard School, includes a baseball/softball field for youth sports, picnic tables, and basketball goals. It will soon feature a new walking track named in honor of former councilwoman Sarah Belcher. The park is located at the end of Berkley Avenue and 29th Street South.

Table 6. City Parks (Source: City of Bessemer Parks Department)

In addition to parks, other facilities include a recreation center, library, civic center, and a golf course.

AMENITY	OVERVIEW
Bessemer Public Library 400 19th Street North	The Bessemer Public Library is a cornerstone of community. Located at 400 North 19th Street since its renovation in 1967 and subsequent expansion to a state-of-the-art facility in 2008. Beyond traditional library services, it features study rooms, a Career Connect Workforce Initiative, a newly launched Makerspace, and free access to a variety of online resources and educational tools. The library is a vibrant center for learning and creativity, hosting regular events and programs.
Bessemer Civic Center 1130 9th Ave SW	The Bessemer Civic Center, a striking two-story glass and brick facility, stands as a versatile venue capable of hosting a wide range of events, from Broadway plays to banquets. The Civic Center boasts a Main Hall with seating for up to 1,200 for entertainment events and 550 for banquets with cost-effective catering options. Services, including ticket printing, ushers, and stagehands, are available to ensure events run smoothly. Meeting rooms and a mezzanine are supported by ample free parking for 500.
Cedar Hill Cemetery 650 Circle Heights Cir	Cedar Hill Cemetery stands as a serene and sacred space dedicated to the internment of those who have passed. The cemetery remains a place of beauty and tranquility, serving both as a final resting place for the honored dead and a peaceful retreat for visitors. Emphasizing the significance of heritage in it's inclusion in the State's historic cemetery register, it diligently preserves the records and memories of individuals laid to rest, honoring the contributions of lives who have shaped the community.
Frank House Golf Course 801 Golf Course Rd	The City of Bessemer Frank House Golf Course, a Par 72 regulation golf course, caters to golfers of varying skill levels. The complex includes a clubhouse, grill, and spacious banquet facility that accommodate a range of events. Operations are overseen by a PGA Class A Golf Professional, ensuring a high standard of golfing experience.
Recreation Center 100 14th St. South	The Bessemer Recreation Center offers membership plans for individuals of all ages and is equipped with a range of facilities. Completed in 2016, this multi-functional space includes a pool deck, splash pad, group fitness classes, a comprehensive fitness area with weights, a second-floor oval track, and a large gymnasium. The center is available for private rentals, accommodating groups for overnight or after-hours events and currently hosts the Farmers Market.

Table 7. City Facilities (Source: City of Bessemer Parks Department)

LEGEND

- ◼ BESSEMER PUBLIC LIBRARY
- ★ BESSEMER CIVIC CENTER
- ▲ CEDAR HILL CEMETERY
- ✚ FRANK HOUSE GOLF COURSE
- ● RECREATION CENTER
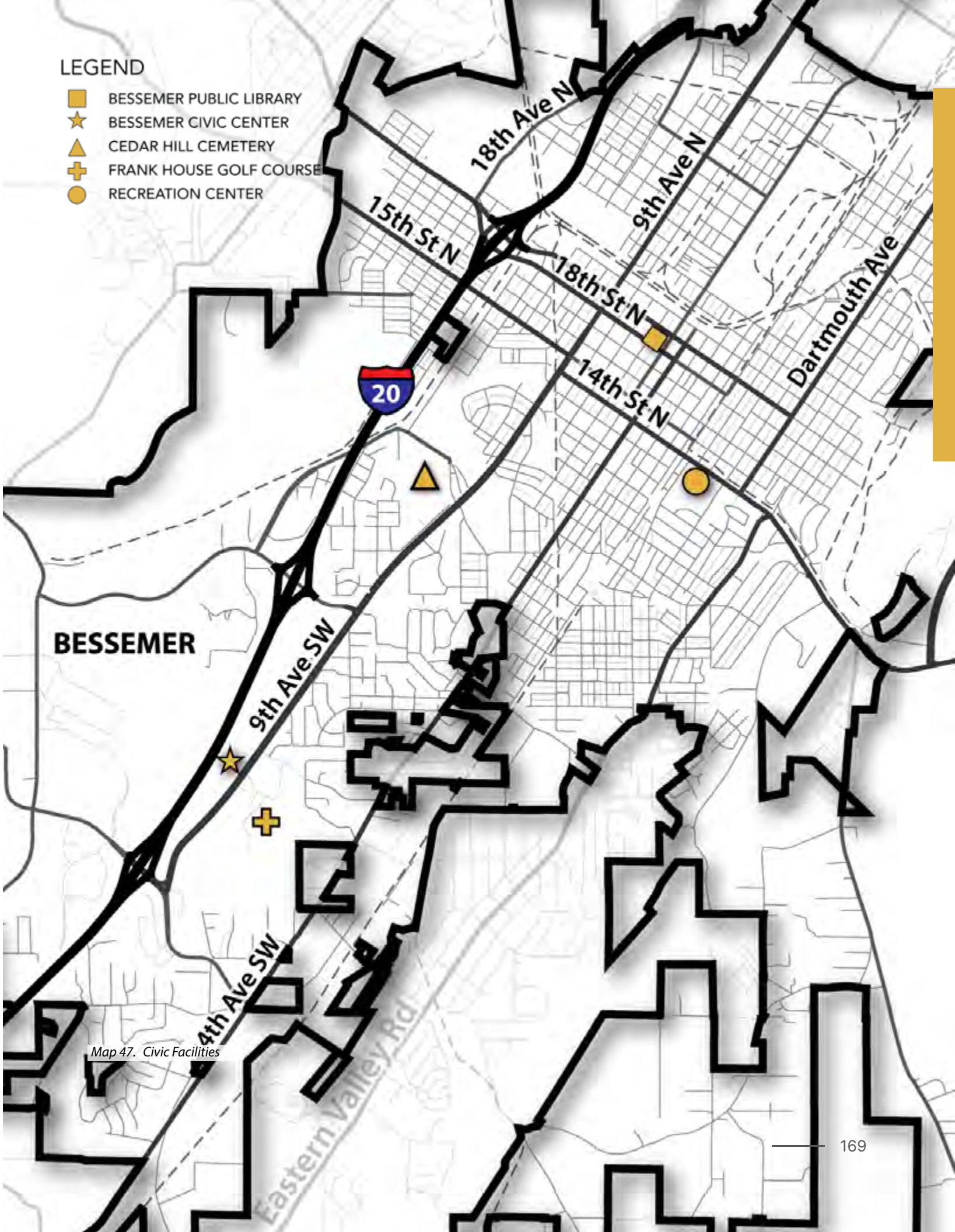
Map 47. Civic Facilities

PARKS & RECREATION

GOALS

The primary goals for Parks & Recreation in Bessemer include:

- **GOAL 1:** Improve access to parks.
- **GOAL 2:** Coordinate Parks and Recreation programming.

By recognizing and building on the success of the Bessemer Recreation Center, expanding park and recreation amenities within a 10-minute walk of most homes, and improving access to parks and programming, Bessemer can create a more vibrant, healthy, and connected community. Investing in these strategies will enhance the quality of life for residents and boost the local economy through strategic planning and community involvement.

Image 125. Bessemer Recreation Center (Image credit: Google Earth Pro)

PARKS AND REC ACTION 1.

Incentivize the Development of Playgrounds and Pocket Parks

Use models from Detroit for community management, involving residents in maintenance like lawn and tree steward initiatives. Establish guidelines for volunteers to ensure effective upkeep and foster community pride. Gather feedback to continuously improve these spaces.

PARKS AND REC ACTION 2.

Pursue Grants for Park Access Improvements

Seek grant funding to enhance access to parks. This includes improving intersections, lighting, sidewalks, and bike lanes on streets leading to parks.

PARKS AND REC ACTION 3.

Complete, Adopt, and Implement a Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Develop a plan that outlines long-term strategies for park development, maintenance, and programming. Utilize Map 45 Park Priority to prioritize new park locations.

PARKS AND REC ACTION 4.

Coordinate Parks and Recreation Programming

Create additional recreational programs tailored to children, ensuring that they have ample opportunities for physical activity and social engagement. Align schedules for recreation between Parks and the Recreation Center to enhance rather than compete with programming.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community services are crucial for Bessemer's development, supporting essential services and ensuring smooth operations.

Community services are the backbone of a thriving city, providing essential services that enhance residents' quality of life and ensure the smooth functioning of the community. In Bessemer, the future of water treatment, fire stations, police stations, and other community services is pivotal for sustained growth and development. This chapter outlines the current status, planned improvements, and future goals for these vital services.

One crucial issue in providing effective community services is appropriate staffing levels. Bessemer has a reputation for developing excellent staff but they are frequently hired away by other regional municipalities with larger budgets. This is likely to remain a priority for the city if it is to retain staff.

Image 126. Bessemer Police Emergency Operations Center (Image credit: Google Earth Pro)

COMMUNITY SERVICES

GOALS

The primary goals for community facilities include:

- **GOAL 1:** Enhance public safety and emergency services, including high-quality fire protection and law enforcement.
- **GOAL 2:** Ensure reliable and high-quality essential utilities, including water, sewer, and electricity services.
- **GOAL 3:** Improve quality of life through enhanced community facilities and services, including library resources and collaborative efforts with the school district to support education.

Investing in community services is vital for Bessemer's continued growth and prosperity. These goals aim to support the city's development, ensuring that all community facilities are equipped to meet future challenges and opportunities.

WATER

Water services are provided by Bessemer Utilities, the City of Bessemer Electric and Water Services, sourcing outstanding water for treatment from rivers and lakes in the Warrior River Basin. The 2022 Water Quality Report indicates that the water met or exceeded federal standards, ensuring safe and clean water for all residents. (Bessemer Utilities)

WATER ACTION 1.

Continue to maintain high water quality standards

Invest in infrastructure improvements to support the city's growth.

SEWER

Sewer services in Bessemer are provided by Jefferson County. The county has several upcoming capital projects aimed at improving and expanding the sewer infrastructure. These projects are detailed in the online Jefferson County Sewer Capital Projects Map, and include infrastructure improvements aimed at enhancing the sewer system's capacity and efficiency.

SEWER ACTION 1.

Provide Information to Jefferson County

Facilitate ongoing maintenance and upgrades to the sewer system. Upgrade treatment plants, expand sewer lines, and rehabilitate existing infrastructure to ensure compliance with environmental standards and accommodate future growth. These projects are essential for maintaining a reliable sewer system that supports the community's needs, and are detailed on the Jefferson County Sewer Capital Projects Map.

ELECTRICITY

Electricity is provided by Bessemer Utilities, the City of Bessemer Electric and Water Services. Ensuring reliable and efficient power supply is crucial for both residential and commercial areas.

ELECTRICITY ACTION 1.

Continue to work with Bessemer Utilities

Support the ongoing upgrades to the electrical grid to enhance reliability and support renewable energy initiatives.

BESSEMER FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Bessemer Fire Department has 116 firefighters and operates five fire stations with headquarters at 1111 Second Ave. North. Bessemer has a Class 1 ISO rating, the best rating for fire protection, which helps maintain low insurance rates for properties in Bessemer. The department's goals include expanding station coverage, station updates, and training facility improvements.

FIRE ACTION 1.
Consolidate Station #2
Combine with the new ladder truck facility on Fairfax Avenue.

FIRE ACTION 2.
Construct a new station
Plan for the I-459 corridor growth and provide mutual aid to neighbors.

FIRE ACTION 3.
Upgrade fire Stations 1, 3, & 4

FIRE ACTION 4.
Study feasibility for Station 5
Determine an upgrade or replacement.

FIRE ACTION 5.
Study feasibility for Airport
Consider fire service and pursue funding.

FIRE ACTION 6.
Renovate training facility
Update the existing facility to improve department training efforts.

BESSEMER POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Bessemer Police Department is dedicated to maintaining public safety through various facilities and a committed team of officers. The department's goals include building a new police facility, enhancing equipment and technology, and recruiting additional officers to improve community safety. The department has 115 sworn police officers and a professional staff of 40 persons, with plans to add additional officers to meet the city's expansion. The Department's facilities include:

- Emergency Operations Center, 651 9th Ave.
- Police records, Municipal Jail and Municipal Court, #23 15th Street North
- S. Precinct at Tannehill Promenade
- Southside Homes Public Housing Precinct, 2700 block of Dartmouth Avenue

The Police Department has these specific plans:

POLICE ACTION 1.
Enhance Public Safety Services
Construct a new public safety facility to replace the aged facility on 15th Street North, housing the police administration, the City jail, and the City's municipal court.

POLICE ACTION 2.
Maintain adequate equipment and personnel levels for Public Safety
Enhance equipment and technology and recruit additional officers to improve community safety.

Map 48. Public Safety

©URBANFOOTPRINT, ©MAPBOX, ©OPENSTREETMAP
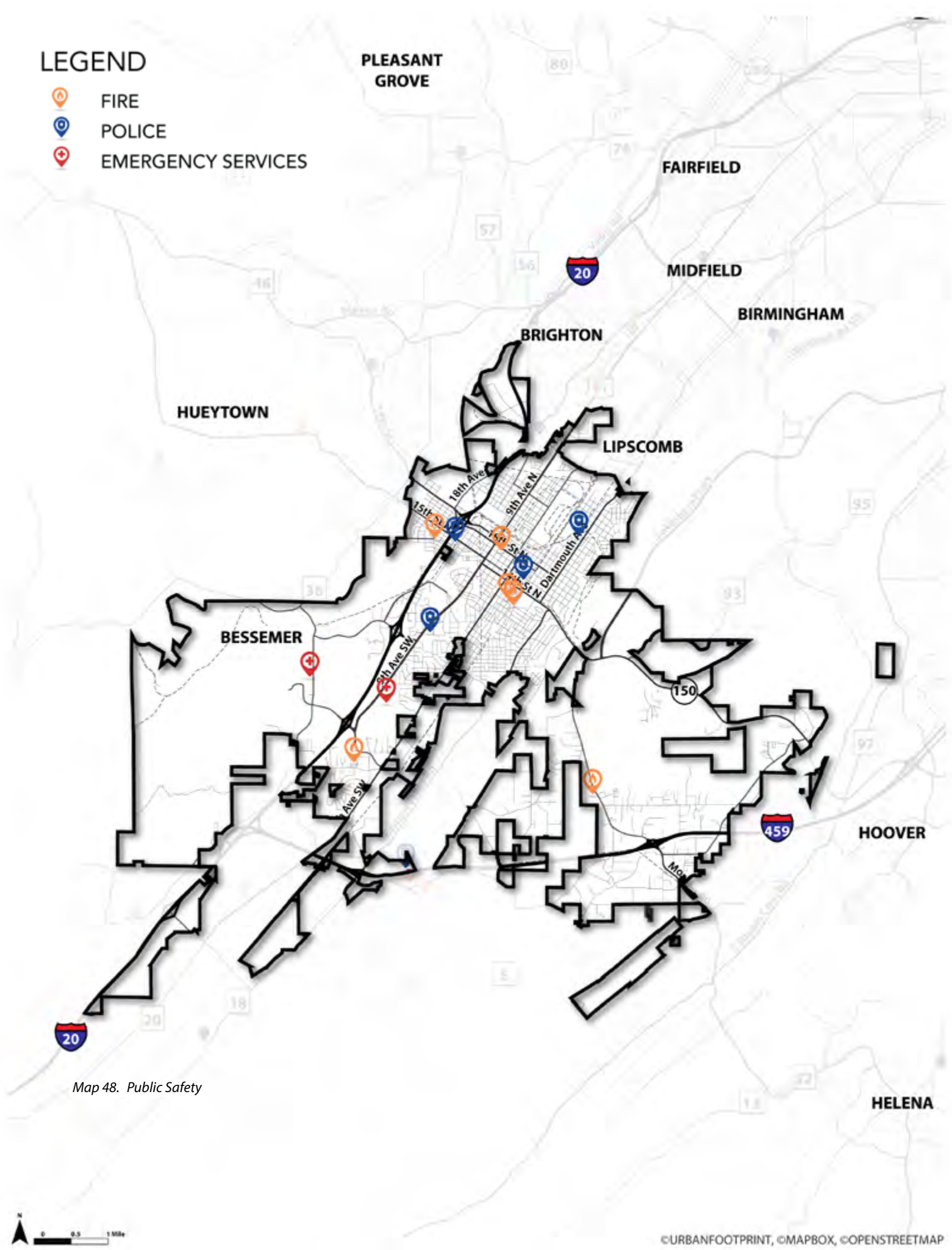
Image 127. Bessemer Public Library (Image credit: Steve Mouzon)

BESSEMER PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Bessemer Public Library is a cornerstone of the community and a key Downtown anchor, offering a wide range of services and resources, including study rooms, maker spaces, job initiatives, online resources, and a technology lab. The formation of Bessemer's first public library was initiated in December 1905 obtaining a Carnegie Foundation grant. This effort led to the establishment of the Bessemer Carnegie Library, which opened in September 1907 at 321 North 18th Street. In 1965, the City of Bessemer acquired the Old Post Office building at 400 North 19th Street for the library, which was remodeled and reopened as the Bessemer Public Library in 1967. A significant expansion completed in 2008.

The library's mission is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens by providing resources that contribute to individual knowledge, lifelong learning, and enjoyment. It also seeks to instill a love of books and library materials in young people to satisfy their needs and interests. The library envisions a future where everyone enjoys an intellectually and culturally rich life, where diversity is celebrated, and where staff value their contributions to this mission. Currently, the Bessemer Public Library serves approximately 23,000 patrons annually, including over 12,000 library cardholders.

The Bessemer Public Library is headed by an executive director and a five-member board of trustees appointed by the City Council for four-year terms. The library has 18 total employees and is a part of the Jefferson County Library Cooperative. Currently the library serves approximately 23,000 patrons annually, which includes over 12,000 library card holders. (Bessemer Public Library)

Some of the Library's plans and objectives include the following actions.

LIBRARY ACTION 1.

Enhance the Maker's Space

Upgrade equipment, expanding STEM programs, and adding resources for adult creative projects. Strengthen partnerships with schools and community organizations to ensure the space continues to serve as a dynamic hub for innovation in Bessemer.

LIBRARY ACTION 2.

Modernize Services

The Library is focused on modernizing its services, including offering a coffee shop to attract more Gen X, Millennial (Gen Y), and Gen Z patrons.

LIBRARY ACTION 3.

Enhance Library Services

Expand programming, enhance digital and physical collections, and improve facilities to better serve the community.

LIBRARY ACTION 4.

Upgrade the Auditorium

Make improvements to the auditorium to make space accessible to local businesses and the public, including upgrading audio-visual equipment.

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Bessemer's educational resources are dedicated to fostering academic growth and community engagement. While there is a recognized need for scholastic improvement to attract more families to the city, the commitment of the School Board leadership to enhancing the local district is evident. The Bessemer School System includes the facilities listed in Table 8. Additionally, the Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School, a newly established charter school, welcomed its first class of students in the fall of 2022, further expanding educational opportunities in the city.

Image 128. Bessemer City High School (Image credit: Davis Architects)

SCHOOL	GRADES
JS Abrams Elementary School	Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5
Charles F. Hard Elementary School	Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5
Jonesboro Elementary School	Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5
Greenwood Elementary School	Kindergarten through Grade 5
Westhills Elementary School	Kindergarten through Grade 5
Empower Community School	Kindergarten through Grade 8
Bessemer City Middle School	Grades 6 through 8
New Horizon Alternative School	Grades 7 through 12
Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School	Grades 9 through 12
Bessemer Center for Technology	Grades 9 through 12
Bessemer City High School	Grades 9 through 12
Bessemer Academy	Grades K through 12

Table 8. Bessemer School Facilities
(Source: Alabama State Board of Education)

LEGEND

- ⦿ SCHOOLS
- ⦿ JUNIOR COLLEGES
- ⦿ COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Map 49. Bessemer Schools

©URBANFOOTPRINT, ©MAPBOX, ©OPENSTREETMAP, ©RPCGB
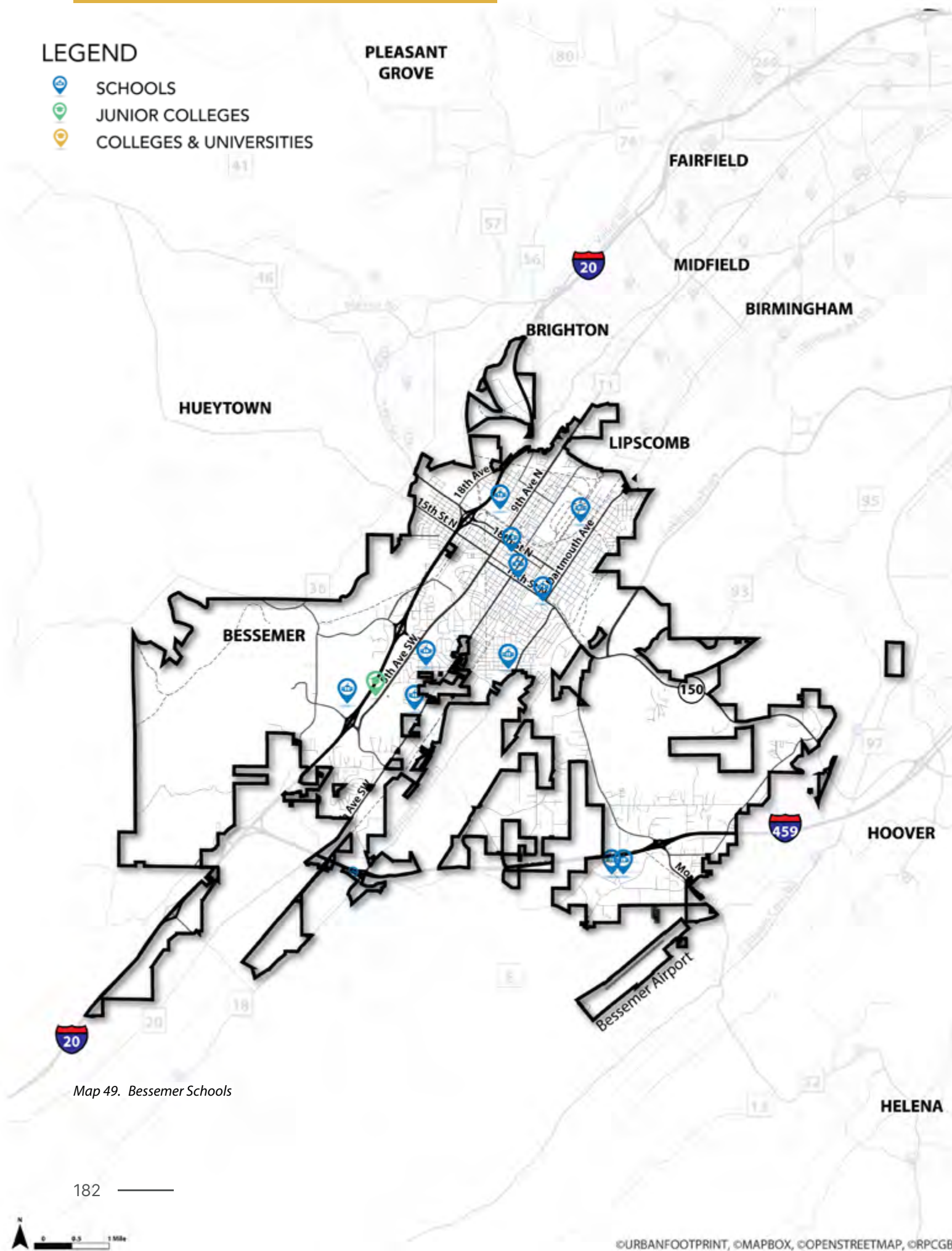
Bessemer's education landscape is anchored by a network of elementary schools: Abrams, Charles F. Hard, Greenwood, Jonesboro, and Westhills, all catering to K-5 students and emphasizing foundational learning. The New Horizon Alternative provides specialized education pathways. Bessemer City Middle School serves grades 6-8, building on this foundation and preparing students for the transition to high school. Bessemer City High School, catering to grades 9-12, focuses on preparing students for higher education and career readiness. Additionally, the Bessemer Center for Technology offers vocational and technical training, equipping students with practical skills for the workforce. The Alabama Aerospace & Aviation High School positions graduates for leadership positions in the aerospace and aviation industries.

In the population aged 25 and over, 86.3% of people hold high school diplomas or GEDs. Those with some college experience form 28.6% of the population. 17.6% have obtained bachelor's, graduate or professional degrees.

Recognizing the critical role schools play in community development, the comprehensive policy plan emphasizes collaboration between the city and the school district. While governance of educational facilities lies with the school board, the plan outlines goals and actions to ensure that city infrastructure and development efforts support educational needs. This section focuses on fostering strong partnerships, aligning infrastructure planning, and integrating schools into the community fabric to enhance the overall quality of life and support sustainable growth.

SCHOOL ACTION 1.

Share demographic & development data

The City and School Board should collaborate to align school capacity with community growth.

SCHOOL ACTION 2.

Collaborate on the development of shared facilities

Recreational spaces and community centers can be shared resources between schools and residents.

SCHOOL ACTION 3.

Plan transportation routes

Sidewalks and bike routes should provide healthy alternatives to buses and cars.

SCHOOL ACTION 4.

Promote schools as community hubs

Extracurricular activities and events can form a bond between schools and residents.

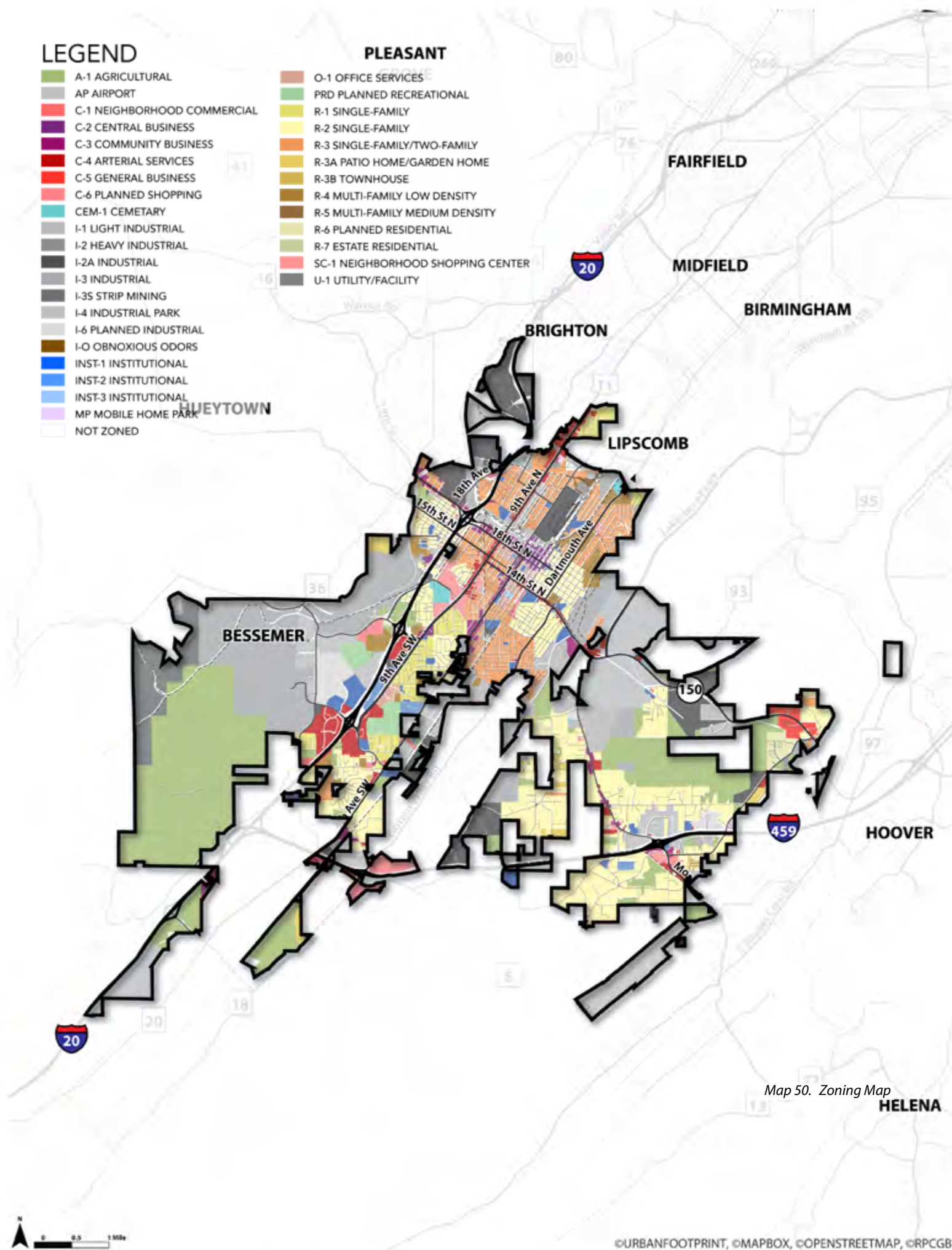By focusing on these collaborative and supportive actions, the comprehensive plan can support schools without overstepping governance boundaries. This approach ensures that the educational needs of the community are in harmony with the overall development goals of the city.

LEGEND

- A-1 AGRICULTURAL
- AP AIRPORT
- C-1 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL
- C-2 CENTRAL BUSINESS
- C-3 COMMUNITY BUSINESS
- C-4 ARTERIAL SERVICES
- C-5 GENERAL BUSINESS
- C-6 PLANNED SHOPPING
- CEM-1 CEMETARY
- I-1 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- I-2 HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
- I-2A INDUSTRIAL
- I-3 INDUSTRIAL
- I-3S STRIP MINING
- I-4 INDUSTRIAL PARK
- I-6 PLANNED INDUSTRIAL
- I-O OBNOXIOUS ODORS
- INST-1 INSTITUTIONAL
- INST-2 INSTITUTIONAL
- INST-3 INSTITUTIONAL
- MP MOBILE HOME PARK
- NOT ZONED

- O-1 OFFICE SERVICES
- PRD PLANNED RECREATIONAL
- R-1 SINGLE-FAMILY
- R-2 SINGLE-FAMILY
- R-3 SINGLE-FAMILY/TWO-FAMILY
- R-3A PATIO HOME/GARDEN HOME
- R-3B TOWNHOUSE
- R-4 MULTI-FAMILY LOW DENSITY
- R-5 MULTI-FAMILY MEDIUM DENSITY
- R-6 PLANNED RESIDENTIAL
- R-7 ESTATE RESIDENTIAL
- SC-1 NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPPING CENTER
- U-1 UTILITY/FACILITY

Map 50. Zoning Map

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CODE REFORM

Zoning regulations are one of the most important tools to assure a community vision is realized. Land use laws translate the policies of a comprehensive plan into regulations that are applicable for individual lots and new master plans. The alignment of regulations with vision assures the city grows in a way that is authentic to its identity, preserves its neighborhoods, supports the economy, and stewards the environment.

The Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map develop the policy that implement Vision 2040. Then, the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations specify how each property can be used to achieve those goals. These "codes" are the body of rules and regulations that control what is built on the ground, as well as what uses occupy buildings and sites. They determine the form and nature of development such as the size and height of buildings, and they also include provisions to assure new development will be a "good neighbor" to existing neighborhoods.

The City of Bessemer adopted its existing Zoning Ordinance in September 2008, and it reflects common 20th century zoning practices. The largest area of residential use is allocated to single-family detached homes. Additionally, the R-3 zoning district has been applied to the historic neighborhoods, and much of that is also single-family homes along with two-family homes. All the single-family districts are very similar in density and uses.

One item of interest is the sheer number of zoning districts for a city of 26,000 people. There are a total of 45 districts codified and 34 that are mapped. The current best practice in zoning is to consolidate districts that are very similar in use and form. This has both an administrative and economic development benefit. The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) provided a zoning audit in the summer of 2023, making a series of recommendations for the City to consider. Many of these would modernize the 2008 code, simplify administration, preserve historic character, and spur economic development. They will be referenced in greater detail in this chapter.

EXISTING ZONING DISTRICTS

A review of existing districts reveals a number of redundancies and others that are unused.

RESIDENTIAL

Ten residential districts, of which six have very similar single-family regulations. Eight of these districts are in use and are shown on the Zoning Map, while two are unused.

COMMERCIAL

Nine commercial districts, which include six for retail. Eight of these are in use and are shown on the Zoning Map, while one is unused.

INDUSTRIAL

Eleven industrial zoning districts cover 25% of Bessemer. Most cities have two or three. Three of these districts are unused.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Of the 15 Special Districts, nine are in use. Many of them are similar districts, such as cemetery and pet cemetery. There are three separate institutional districts and two types of mobile home park districts.

Image 129. Community Workshop - April 2024

VISION SETTING

The community brainstorming about how and where Bessemer should evolve.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Image 130. Community Open House - April 2024

Community input, along with feedback from the Planning and Zoning Commission and city staff, has highlighted the urgent need to update Bessemer's zoning and subdivision regulations.

The 2023 RPCGB audit underscores several structural improvements, with key recommendations aligning closely with the community's vision and the city's economic future. These include establishing standards that encourage residential development in Downtown Bessemer and declining commercial areas, streamlining the review process to reduce costs while ensuring quality construction and legal compliance, and limiting the expansion of businesses that negatively impact the city's image, such as used tire shops, predatory lending facilities, and Downtown warehousing.

CODE REFORM

GOALS

The primary goals for code reform include:

- **GOAL 1:** Update the Zoning Ordinance to reflect the vision of the Comprehensive Plan.
- **GOAL 2:** Make it easier to use land without discretionary review.
- **GOAL 3:** Use available regulatory tools to assist with property maintenance.

Zoning and subdivision regulations are key to a successful implementation of the community vision. These **ACTIONS** could be the most strategic play of the entire game plan.

CODE ACTION 1.

Review and implement the 2023 RPCGB audit of the Zoning Code

These reforms may be done in phases as budget and staff capacity permit. Immediate actions include:

- **Delete unused zoning districts** with the exception of MXD, which is the only contemporary district in the current code.
- **Permit residential uses Downtown by-right with explicit conditions**. By allowing more residential development in Downtown, Bessemer can boost its urban vibrancy and provide more housing options. At the moment, residential is a conditional use in the Downtown. This adds a layer of cost and delays in the approval of projects.
- **Prohibit storage as an allowed first-floor use in Downtown**. This encourages active, engaging street-level uses that attract visitors and residents. This action can be implemented through a zoning code text amendment.

- **Allow residential uses on commercial corridors.** Integrating residential spaces into commercial areas can promote mixed-use developments, increasing convenience for residents. The commercial corridors of Bessemer have a very low occupancy rate, but could be reused for housing if it became a permitted use.
- **Encourage mixed-use and residential development on US Highway 11**. This promotes economic activity and efficient land use along a key corridor. Residential should become a by-right land use within specific commercial areas targeted for redevelopment within the zoning code.
- **Allow more types of housing.** Diversifying housing types will cater to different needs and preferences, making the community more inclusive. Most residential zoning districts are very limited in the numbers of dwellings or types of buildings permitted on a parcel. Permitting compatible densities in more zoning districts will allow housing to respond to a diverse range of households.

- **Limit used tire shops**. Restricting the proliferation of used tire shops through zoning will improve neighborhood appearance and reduce potential environmental hazards.
- **Require outdoor storage to be screened from the street**. This will enhance the visual appeal of commercial and residential areas.

CODE ACTION 2.

Conduct a process audit of development regulations

Review and streamline zoning, subdivision, and building permit processes to simplify development while maintaining appropriate oversight. This should include eliminating as many discretionary reviews as possible and assuring a clear and objective path to speedy approvals for desirable projects.

CODE ACTION 3.

Establish a change of use permit

Clarifying and simplifying the process for changes of use should be a priority of the code update process. This can inform an applicant what the criteria for change is, in advance of the investment of time or money.

CODE ACTION 4.

Add food truck pods as an allowed use in commercial zoning districts

Single-person workplaces can incubate and accelerate local business. This action was robustly supported by the community at the April 2024 visioning workshop. associated with the development of this Plan. It can be very useful in the incremental improvement of US Highway 11.

CODE ACTION 5.

Simplify zoning districts and land use designations

Consolidating into fewer zones makes the code easier to navigate and apply. This action is a longer term action as it requires a city-wide rezoning. Land use designations can be simplified in the near term with a simple text amendment.

CODE ACTION 6.

Adopt the 2024 International Existing Buildings Code (IEBC)

A date must be established that the code applies to buildings constructed before that time. The City's Community Development Department should collaborate with the Historic Preservation Commission to determine the appropriate year. For more information visit: https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IEBC2024P1.

CODE ACTION 7.

Adopt the 2024 International Property Maintenance Code

To enforce property maintenance for both occupied and vacant properties, adopt all or part of the 2024 edition of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) to deter property neglect. The IPMC outlines property maintenance regulations including weed and debris, vegetation maintenance, junk vehicles, water pollution, public decency, driver sight obstructions, and dilapidated properties.

Adopting the IPMC would raise the minimum standard of what is acceptable for building and living conditions and would provide a greater opportunity to address issues at an earlier stage before they compound.

The code provides an enforcement mechanism that applies to existing residential and commercial properties and enables the City to impose fines on the owner rather than impose liens upon the dilapidated property. For more info visit: https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/IPMC2024P1.

CODE ACTION 8.

Update the Sign Ordinance to ensure Content Neutrality

This is one of the most pressing changes within the city's land use regulations. Following the Supreme Court's decision in Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Arizona, municipalities across the United States need to revisit and update their sign codes. The ruling established that content-based restrictions on signs are subject to strict scrutiny, making many existing sign regulations potentially unconstitutional.

To comply with this decision, Bessemer should focus on content-neutral regulations that address size, location, and timing of signs rather than their subject matter. Avoid creating categories based on a sign's message and ensure that any distinctions between types of signs are justified by non-content-based reasons, such as safety or aesthetics.

Additionally, the City should review the permitting processes to ensure there is not an inadvertent favor for certain types of speech over others.

CODE ACTION 9.

Add Requirements for Parks in New Developments

Requiring parks in the Subdivision Regulations can offer substantial benefits to Bessemer. Health-wise, parks provide spaces for physical activity, improving residents' cardiovascular health and mental well-being. Economically, parks can increase nearby property values, potentially boosting the city's tax base. They also attract new residents and businesses, fostering growth. Well-designed parks may reduce community healthcare costs by encouraging active lifestyles and providing environmental benefits.

It is recommended that the City update Appendix A. Subdivisions to require development over a specified area to provide park land for the new community. Many subdivisions have been permitted without amenities for the residents. As the city continues to develop to the south, these areas are the farthest from parks. (See Map 37 and Map 45.) Parks for new communities may be dedicated to the City park system, or controlled and maintained by homeowner's associations (HOA).
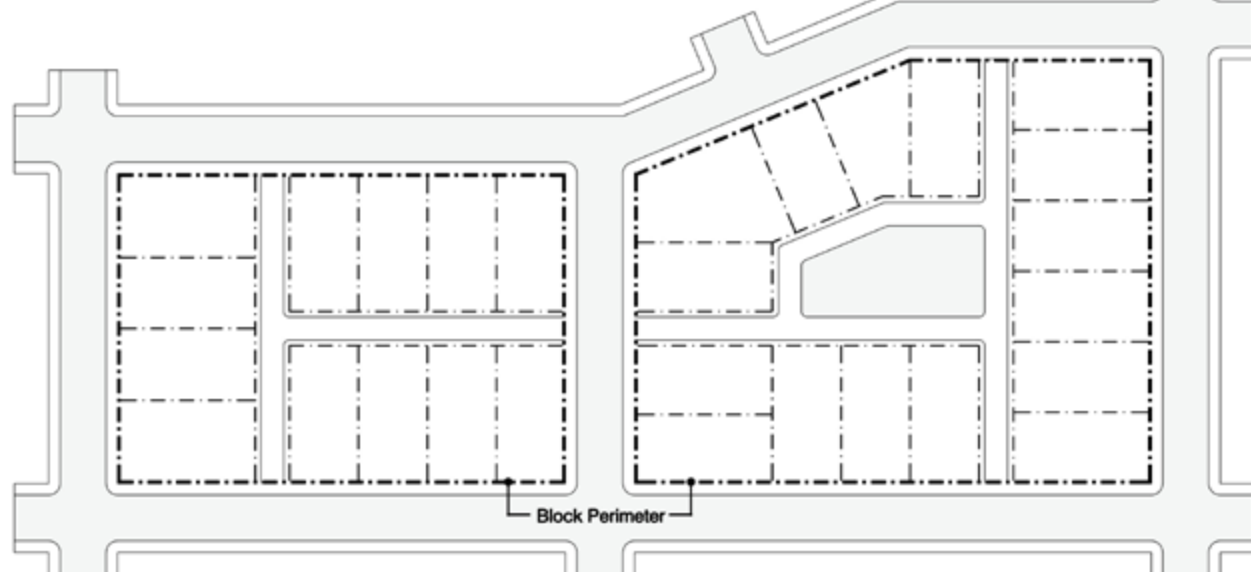
Image 131. Block perimeter illustration (Image credit: DPZ CoDesign)

CODE ACTION 10.

Require Interconnected Streets in New Development

Develop block perimeter standards within Appendix A. Subdivisions. A connected network of streets with shorter block lengths offers several key benefits including:

Pedestrian Safety: Shorter blocks create more intersections, which naturally slow traffic and provide more crossing opportunities for pedestrians. This increased visibility and reduced vehicle speeds contribute to a safer walking environment.

Congestion Mitigation: An interconnected street network distributes traffic more evenly, reducing bottlenecks on major arterials. This grid-like pattern offers multiple route options, allowing drivers to adjust their paths based on real-time traffic conditions.

Economic Vitality: A well-connected street network increases foot traffic, benefiting local businesses and creating more vibrant neighborhoods.

Emergency Response: Interconnected streets provide multiple access points for emergency vehicles, potentially reducing response times.

By basing these standards on Bessemer's historic Downtown and neighborhoods, the city can maintain its character while improving functionality. This approach would help create a more resilient, efficient, and livable urban environment that respects Bessemer's heritage.

IMPLEMENTATION

Turning Vision into Reality

Over the past chapters, the Bessemer Comprehensive Plan has outlined a vision for the city's future; a future marked by sustainable growth, enhanced quality of life, and resilient communities. However, a vision, no matter how inspiring, remains merely a concept without actionable steps. This implementation chapter serves as the critical bridge between the aspirations detailed in this plan and the tangible outcomes the community seeks to achieve.

The road to victory requires a unified team effort, a well-coordinated game plan, and the ability to adapt to changing conditions on the field. By drawing up clear plays, assigning roles to each player, and setting targets for success, Bessemer is positioned to not just dream about the future, but to actively build it, one play at a time.

Image 132. Community Open House - April 2024

The Implementation Matrix on the following pages summarizes the critical actions derived from the plan's various chapters. The matrix is organized to provide a clear and concise reference, for stakeholders to track progress and stay aligned with the plan's goals. Each action is supported by a timeline, responsible entities, and potential partners, ensuring that every step is coordinated and accountable. The matrix is structured as follows:

Topic: The major focus areas, such as transportation, housing, or economic development.

Number: A simple numbering system for easy reference.

Action: Directly drawn from previous chapters and represented in blue text, reflecting the priorities established in the plan.

Page: A quick reference to the page number where the action is discussed in more detail. Look in the previous pages before each action for toolkits that help complete the ideas.

Time Frame: Actions are categorized based on their anticipated time frame, Ongoing, Short Term, or Long Term, allowing Bessemer to prioritize efforts accordingly.

Potential Partners: Identifies the entities, organizations, or community groups that could collaborate or provide support in executing the actions. Advertise in the Western Star Newspaper.

The Implementation Matrix is not just a list of tasks. It's a strategic framework designed to guide Bessemer's growth over the coming years. Each action, while specific and targeted, contributes to the broader vision of making Bessemer a vibrant, inclusive, and thriving community.

The Essence of Implementation

mplementation is the heartbeat of any comprehensive plan. It transforms strategic objectives into real-world initiatives, ensuring that the city's growth is both intentional and reflective of its residents' needs. Recognizing the dynamic nature of urban environments, this chapter emphasizes flexibility, allowing Bessemer to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities while staying true to its core objectives.

KEY COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION:

Prioritization: Not all initiatives can be pursued simultaneously. Establishing priorities ensures that resources—be they financial, human, or temporal—are allocated efficiently to areas of greatest impact.

Collaboration: Success hinges on the collective efforts of city departments, community organizations, businesses, residents, and regional entities. Fostering partnerships amplifies our capabilities and ensures diverse perspectives are integrated into decision-making.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Regular assessment of progress keeps the plan on track, identifies areas needing adjustment, and celebrates milestones achieved. Transparent reporting fosters community trust and sustained engagement.

THE MATRIX WILL EVOLVE

as progress is made, challenges arise, and new opportunities present themselves.

Image 133. Community Workshop - April 2024

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

More details on each of these actions are in previous chapters on the pages noted in the matrix.

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Downtown Stabilization & Redevelopment				
1	Make Code Changes to Enable Desirable Development Downtown	28	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council
2	Leverage Existing Events to Support Downtown	29	Ongoing	Event Organizers, Chamber of Commerce
3	Allow Food Trucks to Occupy Downtown Parking Spaces	29	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council
Bessemer Super Highway Redevelopment				
4	Encourage Incremental Development	40	Long Term	Local Entrepreneurs, Small Developers
5	Establish Shop Shack Strategies	41	Ongoing	Local Entrepreneurs, Chamber of Commerce
6	Create Walkable Mixed-Use	41	Long Term	Property Owners, ALDOT, BJCTA
Historic Neighborhoods Stabilization				
7	Improve Property Maintenance	52	Ongoing	Code Enforcement, Homeowners
8	Land Bank Implementation	53	Ongoing	Land Bank Authority, Community Organizations
9	Establish Local Neighborhood Centers	53	Ongoing	Community Organizations, Local Businesses
Future Land Use				
10	Review Rezoning Requests for Land Use Alignment	82	Ongoing	Planning Commission, City Council
11	Work with Regional Partners to Leverage Needed Land Use Assistance	83	Ongoing	RPCGB, Jefferson County GIS
Housing				
12	Adopt Code Requirements for Property Maintenance	96	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council
13	Promote Programs for Homeowners	97	Ongoing	City Council, Bessemer Utilities
14	Enable More Community Engagement	97	Ongoing	Community Organizations, Community Development
15	Allow "Missing Middle" Housing Types	98	Ongoing	Planning Commission, City Council

Table 9. Implementation Matrix

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
16	Establish Vacant Building Registration	98	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council
17	Develop the Land Bank	98	Ongoing	Land Bank Authority, City Council
18	Redevelop Public Housing	99	Long Term	Housing Authority, HUD
19	Undertake EPA Flood Risk Assessment	99	Short Term	EPA, Community Development
20	Develop Flood Mitigation Strategies	99	Long Term	Planning Commission, Community Development
21	Acquire Floodplain Properties	99	Long Term	City Council
Transportation				
22	Convert Specific Downtown Streets from One-Way to Two-Way	136	Short Term	Public Improvements, Traffic Division
23	Add Bike Lanes and Landscape Improvements Downtown	136	Long Term	Public Improvements, Traffic Division
24	Extend the Bessemer Rail-Trail	137	Ongoing	Parks Department, Nonprofits

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
25	Redesign Bessemer Superhighway (US11)	137	Long Term	ALDOT, BJCTA, RPCGB
26	Construct Segments Identified in the Red Rock Trail Master Plan	137	Ongoing	Freshwater Land Trust
27	Partner with the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA) to Improve Transit Service	137	Ongoing	BJCTA, Community Development
28	Seek Grant Funding and Partnerships for Bus Shelters	138	Ongoing	Local Businesses, BJCTA
29	Conduct an Audit of Transit Routes and Stops	138	Short Term	BJCTA, Community Development
30	Identify and Prioritize Improvements that Qualify for Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Implementation Grants	138	Ongoing	RPCGB, Community Development
31	Promote the CommuteSmart Program, commutesmart.org	138	Ongoing	Community Development
32	Identify Streets with Excess Traffic Capacity	139	Ongoing	Community Development, Traffic Division
33	Address Rail Blockages and Seek after Grants	139	Short Term	Mayor, City Council
34	Develop a Bessemer Transportation Plan	139	Ongoing	Engineering Firm

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Economic Development				
35	Re-start the Main Street Program	158	Short Term	Chamber of Commerce, Community Development
36	Start a Facade Improvement Grant Program for Historic Buildings	159	Ongoing	City Council, Community Development, Historic Preservation Commission
37	Create a Local Entertainment District Downtown	159	Short Term	City Council
38	Market the Benefits of Bessemer's Opportunity Zone	159	Short Term	Mayor, City Council, Chamber of Commerce
39	Develop a Database for Marketing Vacant Properties Online	159	Short Term	Chamber of Commerce
40	Create an Innovation District and Co-Working Spaces	160	Ongoing	Local Businesses, Chamber of Commerce
41	Develop a Community Services Center	160	Ongoing	Community Development, Local Non-Profits
42	Pursue Grants for Phase II Environmental Assessment	160	Ongoing	Finance & Revenue

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
43	Pursue Grand Funding for Environmental Cleanup	160	Long Term	Finance & Revenue
44	Work with County on Zoning Around Bessemer Airport	160	Ongoing	Community Development, Airport Authority
45	Create a Local Downtown Historic District	160	Short Term	Mayor, City Council, Historic Preservation Commission
Parks & Recreation				
46	Incentivize Development of Playgrounds and Pocket Parks	170	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council
47	Pursue Grants for Park Access Improvements	171	Ongoing	Parks Department, Finance & Revenue
48	Complete, Adopt, and Implement a Parks & Recreation Master Plan	171	Long Term	Parks Department, Planning Commission, City Council
49	Coordinate Parks and Recreation Programming	171	Ongoing	Parks Department, Alton Woodard
Utilities (Water, Sewer, Electricity)				
50	Continue to Maintain High Water Quality Standards	174	Ongoing	Bessemer Utilities

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
51	Provide Necessary Imformation to Jefferson County Sewer	175	Ongoing	Mayor, Public Improvements
52	Continue to work with Bessemer Utilities	175	Ongoing	Mayor, Public Improvements
Emergency Services (Fire, Police)				
53	Consolidate Station #2	176	Short Term	Fire Department
54	Construct a New Station	176	Long Term	Mayor, City Council, Fire Department, Finance & Revenue
55	Upgrade Fire Stations 1, 3 & 4	176	Ongoing	Mayor, City Council, Fire Department, Finance & Revenue
56	Station 5 Feasibility Study	176	Short Term	Fire Department, Finance & Revenue
57	Airport Feasibility Study	176	Short Term	Fire Department, Finance & Revenue
58	Renovate Training Facility	176	Long Term	Fire Department, Finance & Revenue

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
59	Enhance Public Safety Services	176	Long Term	Mayor, City Council, Police Department, Finance & Revenue
60	Maintain Adequate Equipment and Personnel Levels for Public Safety	176	Ongoing	Police Department, Finance & Revenue
Library				
61	Create a Maker's Space	179	Short Term	Library Board, Chamber of Commerce
62	Modernize Services	179	Ongoing	Library Board, Jefferson County Library Cooperative
63	Enhance Programming and Collections	179	Ongoing	Library Board
64	Upgrade the Auditorium	179	Ongoing	Library Board, Library Foundation, Finance & Revenue
Education				
65	Share Demographic & Development Data	183	Ongoing	Community Development, Board of Education

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
66	Collaborate on Shared Facilities	183	Ongoing	Community Development, Board of Education
67	Coordinate Safe Routes to Schools	183	Ongoing	Community Development, Board of Education
68	Promote Schools as Communtiy Hubs	183	Ongoing	Mayor, Parks Department, Community Development, Board of Education
Code Reform				
69	Review and Implement the RPCGB Code Audit	188	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council, Community Development
70	Conduct a Process Audit of Development Regulations	189	Short Term	Community Development
71	Establish a Change of Use Permit	189	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council, City Attorney
72	Permit Food Truck Pods in Commercial Zones	190	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council

#	ACTION	PAGE	TIME FRAME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
73	Simplify Zoning Districts and Land Use Designations	190	Long Term	Planning Commission, City Council, City Attorney
74	Adopt the 2024 IEBC	190	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council,
75	Adopt the 2024 IPMC	190	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council
76	Update the Sign Ordinance	191	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council, City Attorney
77	Require Parks in Subdivision Regulations	191	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council, City Attorney
78	Require Street Grid in New Developments	192	Short Term	Planning Commission, City Council, City Attorney

This matrix provides a comprehensive overview of the strategic actions necessary to implement the Bessemer Game Plan for Growth.

IDENTIFY AND SECURE FUNDING SOURCES

A successful implementation of the Bessemer Game Plan requires not only strategic planning and collaboration but also the identification and securing of appropriate funding sources. Funding is essential to support the various projects, programs, and initiatives outlined in the plan, enabling Bessemer to achieve its vision for sustainable growth and development.

To finance the actions detailed in the Implementation Matrix, the following potential funding sources should be explored:

Federal and State Grants: Numerous federal and state programs provide grants for urban development, infrastructure improvements, transportation projects, and community services. Agencies such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offer funding opportunities that align with many of Bessemer's goals.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG): Administered by HUD, CDBG funds can be used for a wide range of community development activities, including affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, and economic development.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP): Private sector collaboration can leverage additional funding and resources. PPPs can be particularly effective in areas such as infrastructure development, downtown revitalization, and economic development projects.

Local Government Funding: The city's budget should allocate resources for priority projects.

This could include setting aside funds in the capital improvement plan (CIP) for infrastructure upgrades, park enhancements, and public safety improvements.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): TIF can be utilized to finance redevelopment projects by capturing the future tax benefits of increased property values within a designated area. This tool is especially useful for revitalizing blighted or underdeveloped areas.

Special Assessments and Local Improvement Districts (LIDs): Special assessments can be levied on property owners who directly benefit from specific improvements, such as new sidewalks, street lighting, or drainage projects. LIDs can be formed to finance infrastructure improvements in specific neighborhoods or districts.

Bond Financing: The issuance of municipal bonds can provide upfront capital for large-scale projects, such as transportation infrastructure or public facility improvements, with repayment spread over time.

Philanthropic Organizations and Nonprofits: Grants and donations from foundations and nonprofit organizations can support community services, arts and culture, and environmental initiatives. Engaging with these entities can also foster long-term partnerships.

Crowdfunding and Community Fundraising: For smaller projects, crowdfunding platforms and community fundraising efforts can generate grassroots financial support. These methods also help build community buy-in and engagement.

STRATEGY FOR SECURING FUNDING

Grant Writing and Management: The city should consider dedicating staff or hiring consultants with expertise in grant writing and management to pursue federal, state, and foundation funding opportunities. This will maximize the chances of securing competitive grants.

Building Partnerships: Engaging local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and community groups early in the planning process will help identify shared funding opportunities and resources. Collaborative efforts often strengthen funding applications.

Monitoring and Accountability: Establishing clear processes for tracking the use of funds, measuring project outcomes, and ensuring accountability will be crucial for maintaining public trust and meeting the requirements of grantors and investors.

By strategically identifying and securing diverse funding sources, Bessemer can ensure that the actions outlined in the Comprehensive Plan are well-supported and achievable. This proactive approach to funding will enable the city to leverage available resources effectively, fostering the sustainable growth and development envisioned in the plan. As the city moves forward, ongoing exploration of new funding opportunities will be essential to maintaining momentum and adapting to future challenges and opportunities.

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

To ensure the successful execution of the Bessemer Comprehensive Plan, it is crucial to establish an Implementation Committee dedicated to overseeing and guiding the plan's progress. This committee will play a pivotal role in coordinating efforts, monitoring progress, and adjusting strategies as needed to ensure that the goals and actions outlined in this plan are achieved.

Purpose of the Implementation Committee

The Implementation Committee will serve as the central body responsible for:

Coordinating Efforts: Bringing together key stakeholders, including representatives from city departments, local businesses, community organizations, and residents, to align efforts and resources.

Monitoring Progress: Regularly reviewing the status of actions outlined in the Implementation Matrix, ensuring that milestones are met, and identifying any barriers to progress.

Adjusting Strategies: Responding to changing circumstances by recommending adjustments to actions, timelines, and resources to keep the implementation on track.

Reporting to the Community: Providing transparent updates to the public on the progress of the comprehensive plan, fostering community trust and ongoing engagement.

The committee's diverse members include:

City Officials: Representatives from key city departments such as planning, public works, transportation, and economic development.

Community Leaders: Individuals from local organizations, neighborhood associations, and advocacy groups who can represent the interests and needs of different community segments.

Business Representatives: Members of the local business community who can offer insights into economic development initiatives and partnership opportunities.
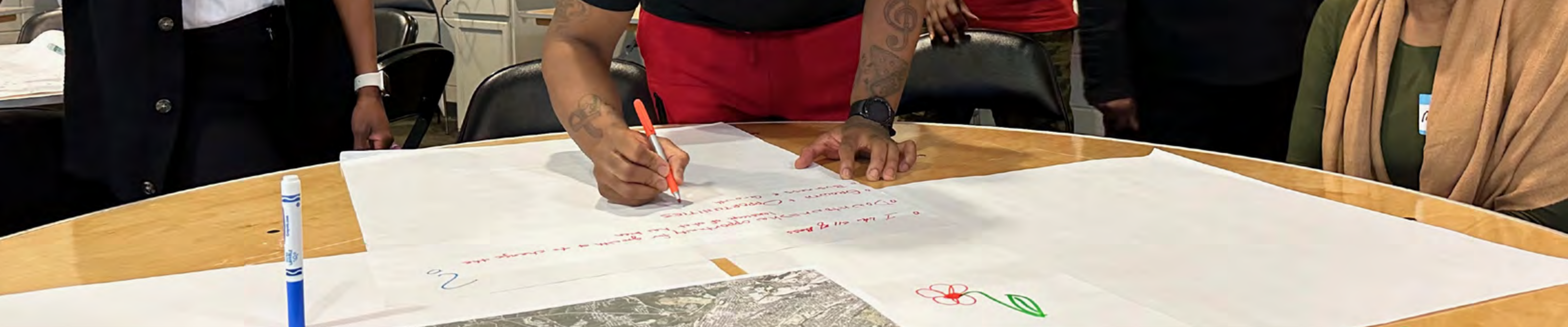
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