

**OXFORD DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN**

OXFORD  
PERFORMING ARTS CE

**GMC**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### MAYOR OF OXFORD

Alton Craft

### OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

Phil Gardner  
Charlotte Hubbard  
Mike Henderson

Chris Spurlin  
Steven Waits

### MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

Rod Harris

### EARPDC

Diane Glenn

### MAIN STREET BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# INTRODUCTION

## LOCATION

Oxford is located in northeast Alabama at the convergence of major transportation corridors: Interstate 20, US Highway 78, and State Route 21. Downtown Oxford is located approximately one-and-one-half miles from the interstate exit on SR 21 and within easy travel distance to a number of fantastic recreational hotspots, including Mt. Cheaha, the Talladega National Forest, and the Chief Ladiga Trail. Oxford is also conveniently located in proximity to both Birmingham and Atlanta. Downtown Oxford is located almost at the heart of the transportation corridor convergence, and as such is strategically positioned to function as the heart of the community.

Oxford has a significant number of national chain restaurants and retail establishments scattered throughout the city, but especially concentrated along South Quintard Avenue (SR 21), within Quintard Mall, and at Oxford Exchange (located off Exit 188). Local retail and restaurants are most limited in Oxford, and downtown buildings house mostly local establishments. There are a number of specialty establishments in downtown, including Hubbard's Off Main, Cotton Antiques, Stinson Howard Fine Jewelry, the Terrortorium, and Dorsey's Super Market. Downtown is also home to the Oxford Performing Arts Center, an inviting and exciting venue that attracts hundreds of visitors to downtown every time an event is hosted.



## WHAT PEOPLE WANT

Most residents/property owners that participated in various planning activities (Main Street, Comprehensive Plan) stated that downtown Oxford needs more activity, particularly at night. They envision downtown as an activity center, with most of the focus being on the Performing Arts Center as the biggest draw to downtown. Many see downtown as a strategic opportunity for reinvestment and revitalization. The City has begun the reinvestment process by securing funding for two major public improvement projects in downtown - a \$2.5 million streetscape project and the relocation of overhead utilities to behind the buildings. These investments are a great first step in establishing downtown as the City's next big development, a theme emphasized by the Main Street recommendations. The Downtown Master Plan is the next step in that development.

This plan focuses on downtown as defined by Oxford Main Street, which encompasses an area of approximately 43 acres, as shown on the map to the right. The commercial core of downtown Oxford is centered on Main

and Choccolocco Streets and is fairly clearly defined. However, the edges of downtown are less obvious, as there are many vacant lots, parking lots, and very low-density developments throughout the downtown area. It is unclear when one is entering or leaving downtown Oxford from any of the various entry points. There is also not a distinct identity for the district. Downtown Oxford needs additional density to produce consumer opportunities that support existing and encourage new business. This plan does two primary things that are suggested in the Main Street Resource Report:

1. Develops plan for what entire downtown can realistically become, utilizing all parts of buildings and establishing nodes that will uniquely satisfy needs of local and regional consumers, and
2. Looks for potential redevelopment opportunities with vacant lots and underutilized properties that do not conform to the fabric of the area.







# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## ZONING AND LAND USE

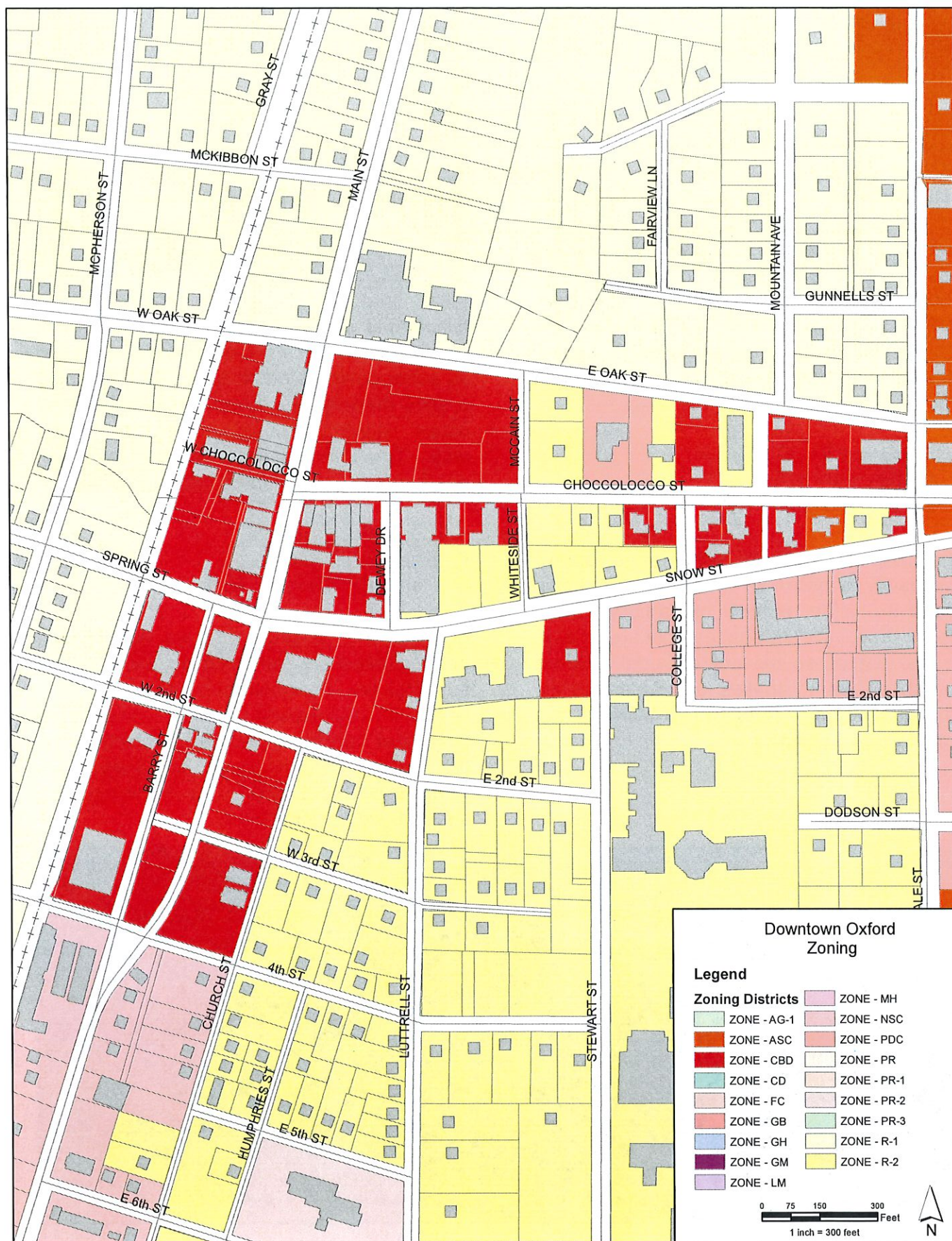
While Oxford does have a zoning classification specific to downtown, - Central Business District (CBD) - it is applied somewhat sporadically throughout the area defined as “downtown” in this planning process. The CBD, shown in red on the adjoining map, is concentrated primarily along Main, Snow, and Choccolocco Streets, with other properties zoned CBD farther to the east as well. There are also a number of R-2 zoned properties, most of which are still in use as residences. There are also a substantial number of properties zoned PDC - Planned Development Commercial. The zoning is generally reflective of the land use of the property. However, there are several public or institutional uses in the project area including many religious facilities, the Performing Arts Center, and the Board of Education. There are also some industrial-type uses along Barry Street that are zoned CBD, so are nonconforming in nature.

The City’s zoning ordinance allows a number of uses in the CBD that are more appropriate for automobile-oriented locations, such as automobile showrooms, automobile diagnostic centers, and car washing establishments. The CBD does not allow residences on the second floor by right, but does allow this use on an individual basis if it is approved by the Planning Commission. While signs are regulated differently in the CBD than elsewhere in the City, there are no size requirements, and freestanding signs are allowed.

The PDC is intended for “large scale commercial developments” and only allows a limited number of large scale uses, with secondary uses at a smaller scale allowed as 30 percent of the total floor area. The minimum lot size for PDC is three acres. The district is not particularly conducive to urban development.









## OCCUPANCY

The City performed a downtown building survey in June of 2015 for a CDBG application. According to this survey, overall, downtown Oxford's occupancy rate is somewhat low, with almost a quarter of all buildings vacant. The following lists the vacancy rates for each type of building:

- Commercial - 28.3%
- Residential - 35%
- Public/Community - 0%

The map on the following page shows occupancy by property. The properties shown in red are either entirely or partially vacant (certain buildings are attached but are located on one parcel, so the entire parcel appears in red). "Vacant" applies only to buildings; parking lots or other lots without buildings are not shown as vacant.

## BUILDING CONDITIONS

During the same building survey, the City identified the condition of buildings, noting those that are in either deteriorated or dilapidated condition. Overall, 64 percent of downtown Oxford's buildings were classified as either deteriorated or dilapidated, meaning a solid majority of downtown buildings need either significant maintenance or repair work. The following lists the percentage of deteriorated or dilapidated buildings by type:

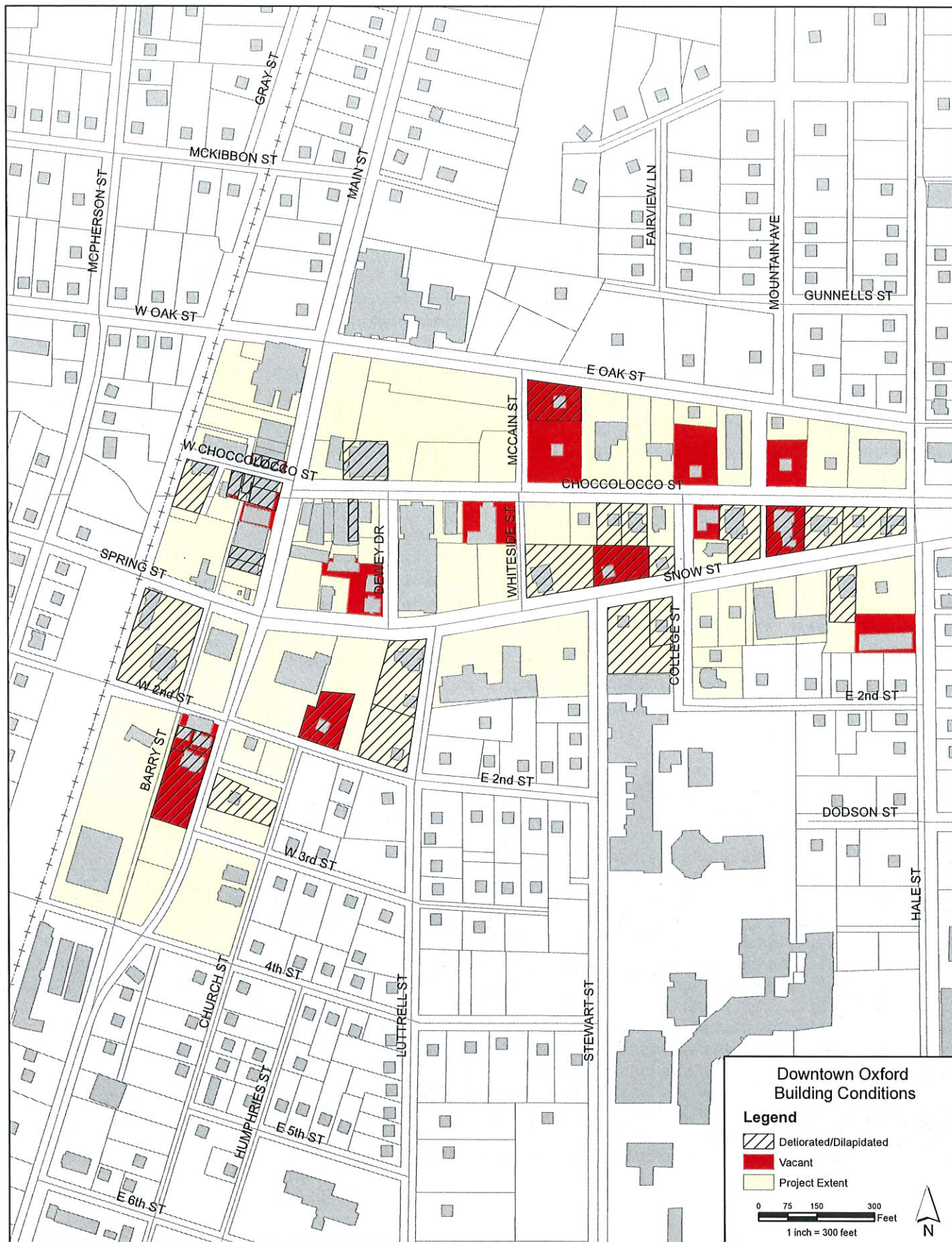
- Commercial - 88.4%
- Residential - 74.1%
- Public/Community - 40%

Many of the buildings that are deteriorated or dilapidated are still occupied. Most vacant buildings are in poor condition as well.

NOTE: This survey was undertaken in 2014, so conditions may have changed somewhat. The map reflects both the survey and discussions with Main Street Staff. The following map shows building conditions.









## PARKING

Based on a cursory parking survey of downtown Oxford, the area does not have any parking problems. There is a parking lot, free for public use, very near the center of downtown that contains 282 parking spaces. This parking lot is owned by Oxford First Baptist Church, but the church only uses it for church services (Sundays and Wednesdays) and special events. Patrons of the Performing Arts Center can use this lot as well. In addition, the Performing Arts Center has its own parking lot, with approximately 60 parking spaces. There are also an additional 55 on-street parking spaces just in the area bounded by Snow Street, Main Street, Choccolocco Street, and Whiteside Street. Choccolocco Street has parallel parking along most of its length as well. All of the parking spaces mentioned are within a quarter-mile walk of the intersection of Main and Choccolocco Streets.

The reconfiguration of Snow and Choccolocco Streets will most likely include the addition of street parking along these streets, adding more parking capacity to downtown Oxford.

The adjoining map shows the existing properties dedicated solely to parking within downtown Oxford. While the school's parking lot to the south is not within the project extent for the downtown plan, it is merely a three-tenths of a mile walk from the main intersection at Choccolocco and Main Streets. The map does not highlight all of the parking associated with businesses in downtown Oxford, but many businesses have their own dedicated parking in addition to street parking and access to these lots available for public use.









## PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

There have been a few planning efforts in the recent past that are relevant and useful to the Downtown Master Plan. Oxford's comprehensive plan (currently in draft form) addresses downtown; under the goal of a "strong, diverse economy," the plan states that downtown Oxford and aging commercial areas will become vital components of the city's economy once again. Participants in this planning process envision Oxford as more walkable and attractive, and downtown reflects the highest integration of pedestrian facilities in the city, and the most unique collection of attractive structures as well. The plan designates different activity centers that all have a sense of place; downtown is designated an activity center, so that sense of place becomes doubly important.

During its resource report, Oxford Main Street developed a vision for downtown that is reproduced in its entirety here:

"Love of downtown Oxford and the formation of strong partnerships between businesses, property owners, and the city have re-established downtown as an inviting arts and entertainment center bustling with activity. Downtown boasts the Performing Arts Center, locally owned specialty shops and restaurants in renovated buildings that retain their historic architectural beauty in a safe, well-lit environment.

A quality streetscape features beautiful flowers, trees, vintage lamp posts, colorful banners as well as underground utilities

and infrastructure that support cutting edge technology which contribute to the economic growth and reuse of the historic business district.

The community draws thousands of visitors to a family-friendly, quaint setting in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains with biking and walking trails that connect downtown to greater Oxford and the surrounding area.

The Downtown area attracts residents and tourists of all ages for daytime and evening events such as historic walking tours, outdoor movies, weekly farmers market, OxfordFest and "Lick Skillet" heritage making downtown Oxford the most visited historic downtown in all of northeast Alabama.

In order to more succinctly define the vision for downtown Oxford, we have condensed the above vision from Main Street Oxford into a version that will be used for the Downtown Master Plan. That vision reads as follows:

Downtown Oxford is a bustling arts and entertainment center that attracts tourists and residents alike with its historic character, frequent events, sense of place, and excellent quality of life.



# DOWNTOWN PLAN

## CONCEPT

The Design team developed a concept for downtown Oxford that creates a framework for the future of downtown based on three primary districts. These three districts each offer a unique set of circumstances that need to be addressed both separately and in relation to downtown Oxford as a whole.

Located at the heart of Oxford is the **Downtown Core**, where everyday activities take place along Main Street and the perpendicular streets, primarily Choccolocco and Snow Streets. Within the Core, parking should be located along the street or behind the buildings. As significant off-street parking exists within and in close proximity to this district, better direction to that parking is needed. It is essential that the pedestrian network is extensive and well-maintained in this district; the City's current streetscape project works toward this end. Pedestrian crossings must be frequent and safe. The Downtown Core is anchored by Main Street and by the Oxford Performing Arts Center. The downtown park, Simms Park, is also an important piece of this district.

To the east of the Downtown Core is the **Gateway/Front Porch District**, so named because the two primary streets in this district, Choccolocco and Snow, are the primary entry routes to downtown Oxford. This district encompasses a wide variety of uses and structure types, including multifamily residential, strip retail, office buildings, single-family residential, and

religious institutions. The appearance of this district is especially important, as it serves as the first impression of downtown Oxford, or its "front porch." Many of the buildings in this district are residential in type but have been converted to commercial uses. There are also a significant number of vacant and deteriorated or dilapidated buildings in this district. Pedestrian connectivity is important throughout the area; most streets have sidewalks but may need improvements.

The **Downtown Neighborhood District** is composed of the neighborhoods that surround downtown in close proximity. These neighborhoods are primarily made up of single family dwellings, most of which are historic. These neighborhoods have small lots, sidewalks in most cases, and all are less than a half-mile from downtown's main intersection. These neighborhoods offer an exceedingly convenient location and historic charm. They are also within easy walking distance of Oxford High School.

At the southern end of Main Street lies the **Warehouse District**. This defined area are several older warehouse structures, some of which are still in use and some which are not currently occupied. Because of these large open structures, this district has the potential become a live/work area where the buildings can be used for a variety of purposes. This type of district could be used to transition an underutilized part of downtown into a more vibrant area by providing unique live/work

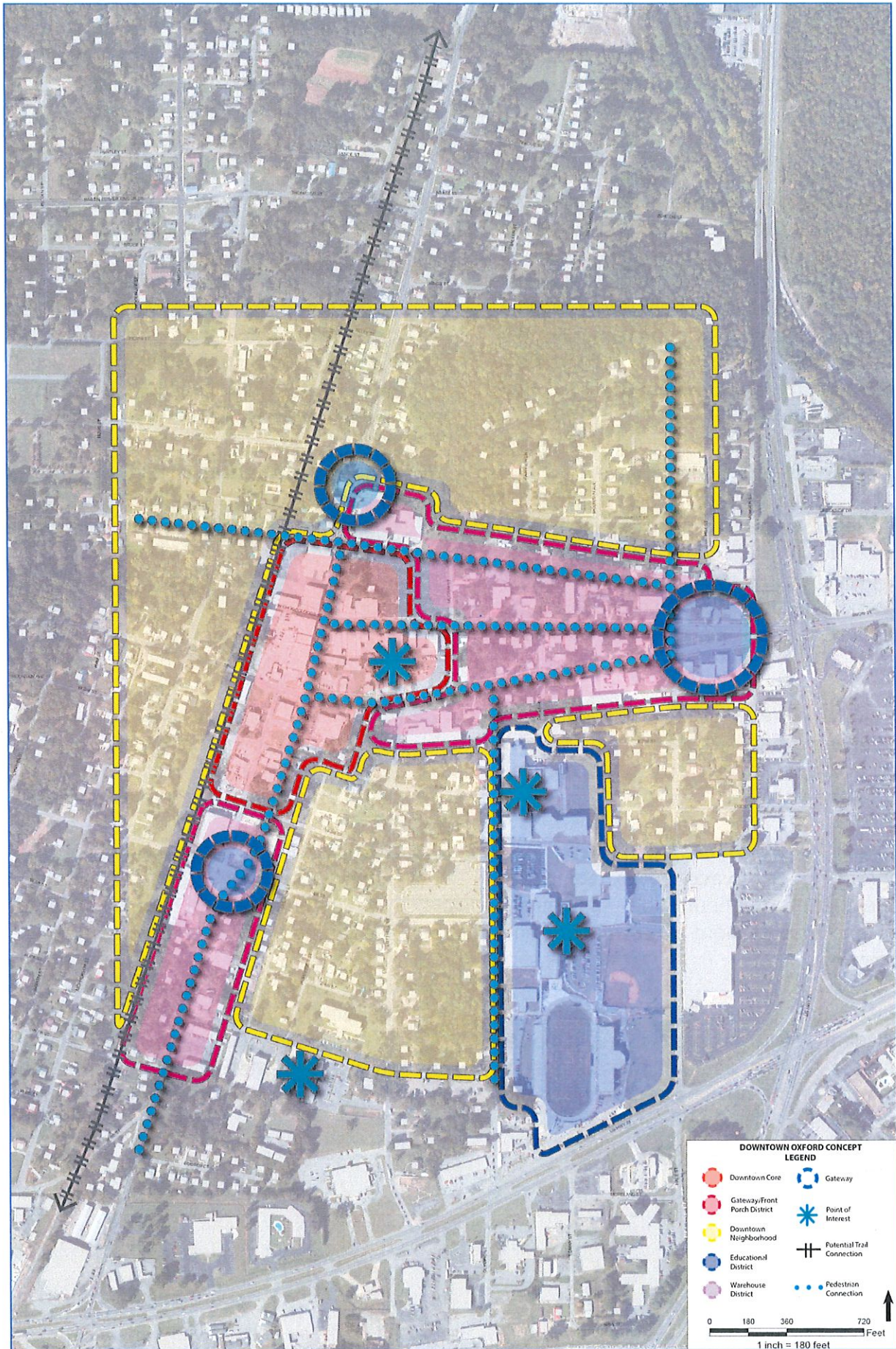


opportunities or innovative uses such as a brew pub with a garden on underutilized property across the abandoned rail line. Within this district, parking is still located along the street and in certain circumstances might be located in closer proximity to the structures. Pedestrian connections should still also be made along the streets with crossings at intersections and parking lots.

The Concept also identifies the **Educational District**, which consists of Oxford High School and the vocational building and its environs. This district is adjacent to both the Front Porch/Gateway District and Downtown Neighborhoods. The high school represents an opportunity for downtown merchants to capitalize on events that take place in such close proximity. The proximity of the school is a major strength for downtown Oxford.









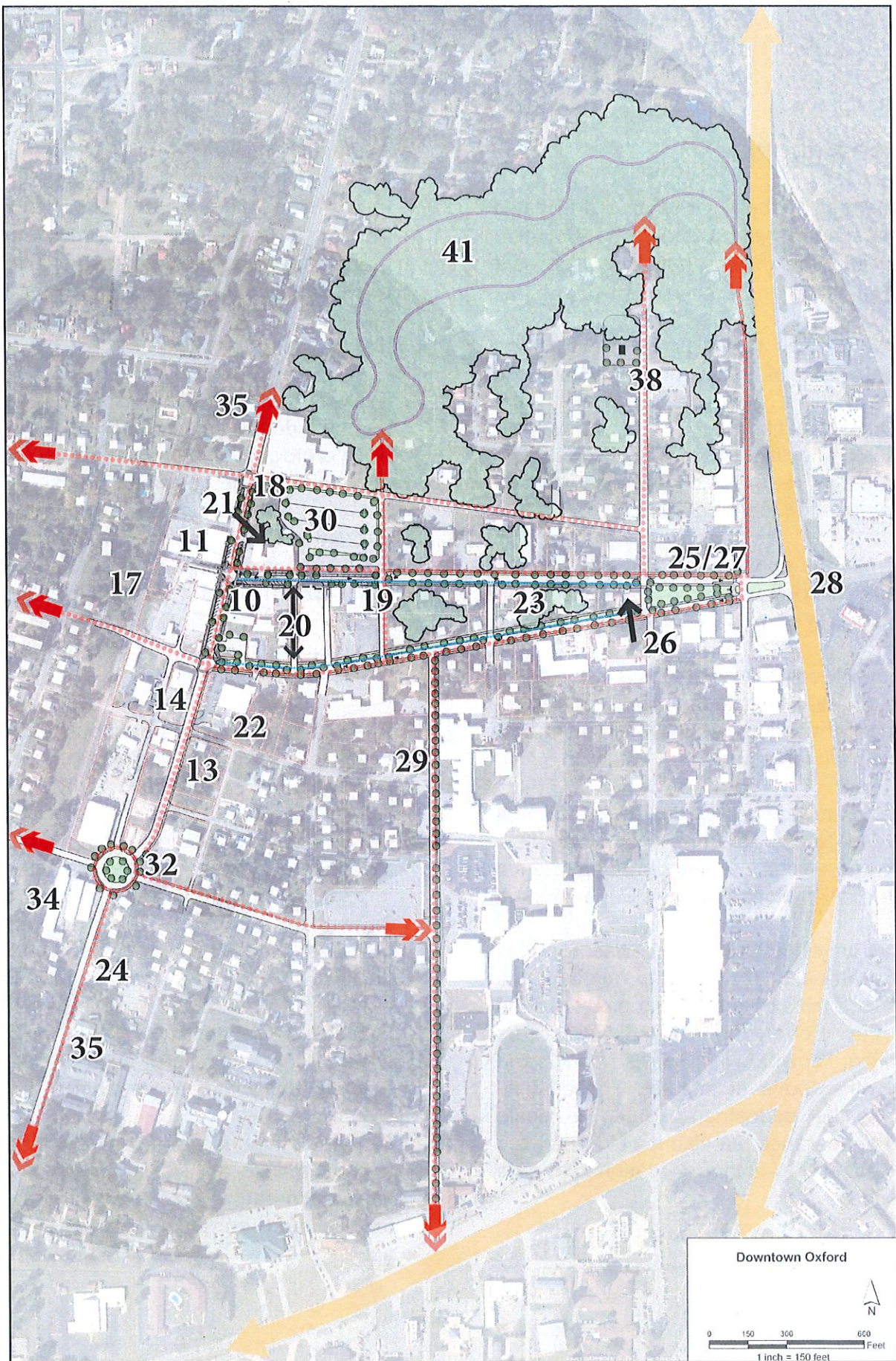
## URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The Urban Design Framework for downtown Oxford consists of the previously defined districts from the Concept as well as understanding the relationships amongst those districts, gateways, and transportation related connections. The purpose behind the Urban Design Framework is to relate these attributes to actual recommendations and policies.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide the same or similar tax incentives for new businesses locating downtown that are provided to new businesses locating elsewhere in the City. This may include sales tax rebates, infrastructure projects, etc.
2. Develop a property maintenance ordinance to enable the City to force property owners to rehabilitate or, at the very least, mothball their properties.
3. Establish a city-sponsored land banking program in order to acquire tax delinquent properties throughout the downtown area and market them to developers and residents.
4. Revise the City's zoning ordinance, particularly with regard to the Central Business District (CBD). Include design requirements for buildings, structures, and parking in the CBD. Consider a form-based or hybrid code for this area of the City.
5. Rezone the majority of the downtown area covered in this plan. In particular, the Planned Development Commercial (PDC) district is inappropriate for the type of uses and development that is desirable downtown. The majority of the Gateway/ Front Porch District should be zoned for mixed use, which would allow a variety of development types and uses.
6. Survey downtown and surrounding residential districts for the National Register of Historic Places. This will allow property owners to take advantage of a variety of tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic properties.
7. Become a Certified Local Government through the Alabama Historical Commission and establish a local historic preservation commission. Create design guidelines for local historic districts and begin enforcement of said guidelines.
8. Develop a landscape ordinance for the entire City that requires stormwater management through landscaping and the beautification of impervious surfaces.
9. Using the new downtown and Main Street branding, develop a unified signage system for the entire downtown area in order to provide a greater sense of cohesiveness.







## DOWNTOWN CORE

10. Implement the existing downtown streetscape project, including the relocation of utilities behind the buildings (see next page).
11. Partially close the alley across from the intersection of Main and Choccolocco Streets for a pedestrian-only area with lighting, seating, etc. Use removable bollards and differentiated paving materials so the alley remains accessible to vehicles when needed (see page 18).
12. Improve the appearance of the facades of buildings along Choccolocco Street as the entrance to downtown.
13. Extend pedestrian connections to the south along Main Street to the merge with Barry Street for continuous sidewalks along this route from the south.
14. Extend the streetscape project to the south beyond Snow Street to the intersection with 2nd Street. Enhance the appearance of the parking lot at Dorsey's Super Market.
15. Install wayfinding signage that incorporates Main Street's branding throughout the district. This signage should direct visitors to the Performing Arts Center, free parking, downtown, Simms Park, and any other point of interest. These signs should be pedestrian-oriented in scale and appearance but also legible to drivers traversing the district at reasonable, safe speeds.
16. Seek developers for the properties on either side of the north side at the intersection of Main and Snow Streets. These underutilized properties at a prominent intersection are essential pieces of downtown that currently detract from the overall character and cohesion of the district.
17. Explore the acquisition or use rights of the abandoned rail corridor to the west of downtown for conversion to a trail connection to the north and south.
18. Expand Simms Park into the parking lot and improve the park's functionality with additional park equipment. Screen the parking lot from view of the park with plantings or a fence that could be used for public art installations.
19. Add on-street parking throughout the district to offset losses from the park expansion and to enhance pedestrian safety.
20. Convert Choccolocco and Snow Streets to a one-way pair. In this district, it is imperative that cars move slowly and pedestrians and bicycles are given priority. Increase safety by using on-street parking, narrow (10'-11') travel lanes, highly visible crossings, street trees, pedestrian scale lighting, etc. Ensure signage for one-ways is characteristic of other wayfinding signage appropriate to the district.
21. Outdoor gathering spaces, even small ones, enhance an area's sense of place while encouraging businesses and people to use and enhance the underutilized spaces.





*Before and after example of Oxford's main intersection..*





*Rendering of the partially closed alley across from the intersection of Main and Choccolocco Streets.*

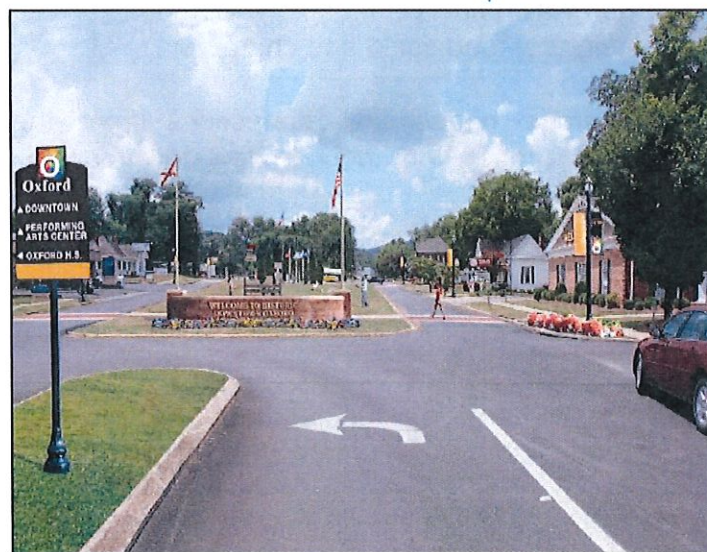




22. Enhance the bus stops at the Oxford Senior Center, Dorsey's Super Market, and the public library with signage, seating, and shelters.

### GATEWAY/FRONT PORCH DISTRICT

23. Convert Choccolocco and Snow Streets to a one-way pair. In this district, it is essential that cars travel slowly and pedestrians and bicycles are prioritized. Include dedicated bike lanes, on-street parking, and narrow travel lanes to enhance safety. Slow traffic will have the added benefit of giving drivers more time to locate their destination or to see downtown businesses.



*Before and after example of Oxford's primary gateway from the Main Street Alabama Resource Team Report, 2014.*

24. Expand the downtown streetscape project to the intersection with State Route 21. Improve sidewalks and add street trees, lighting, and signage. Safe and highly visible crosswalks are essential in this district.
25. Improve the soon-to-be-former Veterans Park space so that it serves as a true aesthetic and inviting gateway to downtown Oxford. Include new plantings, entryway signage, public art, wayfinding signage, small playground equipment such as swings or slides. Expand the park space into the current travel lanes on either side and add sidewalks and crosswalks.
26. Work with the property and business owners of Batteries Unlimited to find an appropriate relocation site. Acquire this property if feasible and redevelop as either park expansion or an attractive, mixed-use, gateway-appropriate building.
27. Install screening elements and/or plantings at the park to draw the eye away from the



use until the Batteries Unlimited property can be redeveloped.

28. Install wayfinding signage and banner signage at the intersection with State Route 21 and in the park area to declare that visitors are entering downtown and to direct them to various destinations.
29. Improve and expand the pedestrian connections on Stewart Street to better connect Oxford High School to downtown. Add sidewalks, lighting, signage, and street decorations such as a series of yellow jackets marking the route between the two destinations.
30. Improve the appearance of the large parking lot owned by Oxford First Baptist Church; the streetscape project will help screen it from view along Choccolocco Street. Add similar plantings along the north side of the lot on Oak Street. Work with the church to add landscape islands within the lot. Ideally this lot could eventually be redeveloped with tax-producing uses or into a large public gathering space.

## **WAREHOUSE DISTRICT**

31. Convert the intersection of Barry, Main, and East and West 4th Streets into a roundabout that can serve as a welcoming gateway to those arriving from the south and that can improve the functionality of the intersection for all users.
32. Introduce wayfinding signage to encourage user-friendly activity. Signage should be pedestrian-oriented and scaled but visible to drivers traversing the district at safe and reasonable speeds.

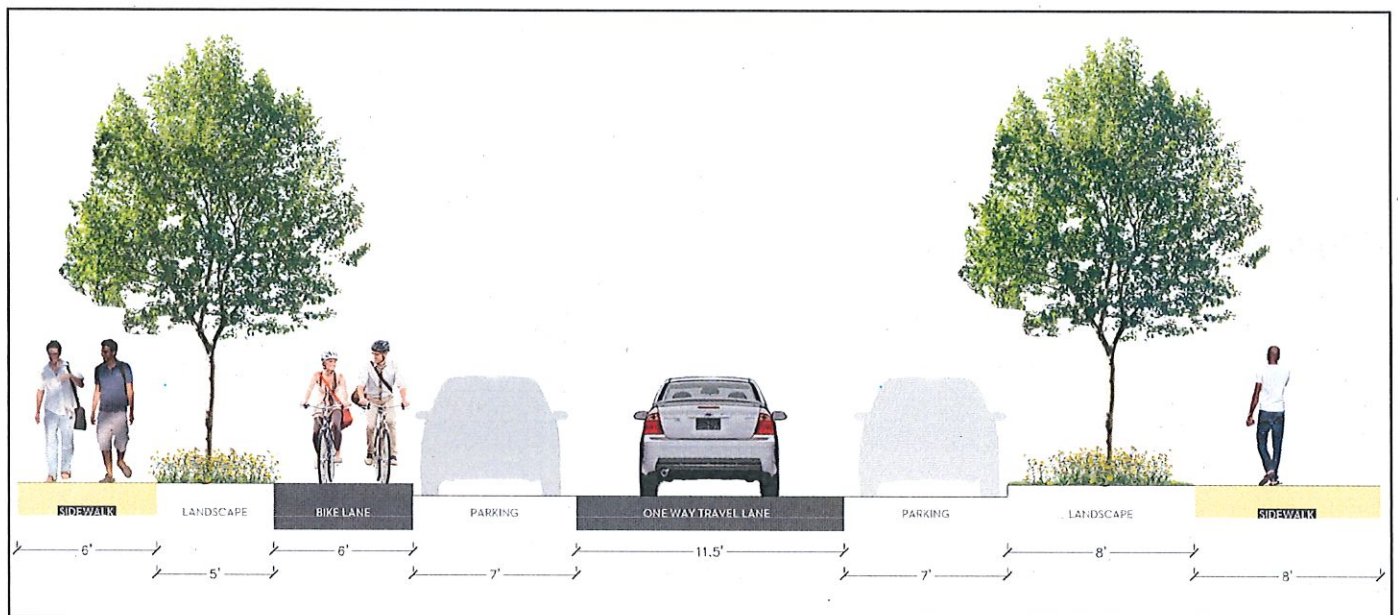
33. Seek redevelopment opportunities for vacant warehouses and property. These large buildings have tremendous potential for a versatile range of uses.

34. Connect southern neighborhoods to downtown with pedestrian improvements along Barry Street to US 78. This project could be done in small sections as downtown develops.

## **DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICT**

35. Improve the gateway on Main Street at First Baptist Church with signage and landscaping. Use the downtown branding to tie this gateway to other signage and branding throughout the area. As this is a residential area, ensure that gateway improvements are compatible with neighborhood scale and character.
36. Improve pedestrian connections from the adjacent neighborhoods to downtown Oxford.
37. Install attractive street signs and lighting throughout the neighborhoods to add to the cohesiveness of the downtown area as a whole.
38. Develop the small neighborhood park on Hale Street into a community gathering space.
39. Seek opportunities to incorporate new housing throughout the neighborhoods on vacant lots.
40. Improve housing conditions overall through property maintenance and other means.
41. Explore the development of short mountain bike trails in the large wooded area north of downtown.





*Typical section example for the one-way conversion of Choccolocco Street.*



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*Oxford has a variety of facade types in downtown.*



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# IMPLEMENTATION

## CRITICAL STEPS IN IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the Oxford Downtown Master Plan requires several critical steps, including:

1. A commitment to Downtown, as embodied in the plan
2. Adoption of the Downtown Master Plan
3. The formation of a public-private implementation team and implementation strategy

## PLAN ADOPTION, ONGOING AND PROJECT PLANNING

Adoption of the Oxford Downtown Master Plan by Oxford Main Street, Planning Commission and City Council is an important step in implementation. Continuous review and updating of the Plan is essential to responsible implementation of the Plan. Such updating should be done as needed, and, at least every five years. Annual reports should be made to the Planning Commission, Mayor, the City Council, and others on the status of the Plan. Regular meetings of an implementation team should also be considered.

## ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Oxford Main Street should be the primary overseer of the Downtown Master Plan's implementation, as it has the organizational structure and support needed for this oversight. It also has the benefit of the support of Main Street Alabama. Along with Oxford Main Street, the Implementation Team should include:

- The City of Oxford Planning Commission, Mayor, City Council, and Departments
- Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce
- Calhoun County Community Development Corporation
- East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission
- Proposed City of Oxford Historic Preservation Commission

The roles of these organizations are suggested as follows:

- Oxford Main Street - promotion, events, business recruitment, facade program implementation, etc.
- Chamber of Commerce - promotions, business recruitment
- Community Development Corporation - project supports, financial partnerships
- City of Oxford Planning Commission - approval of the Master Plan, zoning recommendations
- City Council - approval of plan; zoning changes; public funding
- Historic Preservation Commission - creation of local historic districts, adoption of design guidelines



- East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission - assistance with grants and loan programs, economic development and community development projects

The mission of the implementation team should include:

- Ongoing plan review, reporting, updating and specific project planning
- Management of downtown planning and revitalization
- Coordination of agencies and responsibilities

## MANAGEMENT AND RECRUITING RECOMMENDATIONS

Some general action items recommended include:

1. Create a working management plan for day to day management and strategy for funding for revitalization
2. Create a retail recruitment package and actively recruit new businesses
3. Implement parking information and coordination program (public and private) to ensure availability of convenient parking for visitors and residents
4. Create an attractive wayfinding and directional system using the new branding developed by Main Street

## RECRUITING AND PROMOTION

Recruiting and promotion should be a complement to the Plan and its implementation, beginning with the recommendations included in the plan. In addition, land assembly and making properties available for development in accordance with the Plan, supported by the incentives described here, is also essential. Consideration should be given to using land banking to bring together multiple properties for various development projects as incentives for recruiting businesses through redevelopment projects.

### RECRUITING RECOMMENDATIONS

Some general action items required to manage recruiting include:

1. Create a retail recruitment package.
2. Actively recruit new businesses and expansion of existing businesses to the Downtown district.



## PROMOTION RECOMMENDATIONS

The promotion of Oxford is an important element to implementing the Oxford Downtown Master Plan. Activities should include:

1. Regular promotion of events with an annual calendar.
2. Consideration of trade days, daily farmers market, etc.
3. Consideration of joint advertising campaigns for Downtown.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation of the Oxford Downtown Master Plan requires an effective and assertive public-private partnership to leverage public and private resources and facilitate development projects. There are many economic restructuring tools and incentives that should be considered towards the implementation of this downtown development guide. Tools and incentives that should be considered include:

- Business Improvement District (BID). The City and property owners can adopt a self-improvement BID. A BID can create a special tax for specific improvements agreed to by a consensus of property owners.
- Tax Increment Financing District (TIF). Oxford can consider a tax increment financing district. This district can be used to finance larger projects.
- Cooperative Improvement District. This type of district allows the City to invest in public/private projects through tax incentives and other financing in cooperation with a private developer.
- Historic Tax Credits. Historic Properties can be improved using a 20 percent federal tax credit. Properties can also take advantage of the Wallace-Cater Act to reduce state tax that allows historic property owners to be eligible for an additional 20 percent State of Alabama Property Tax Reduction on top of the Federal income tax credit. Alabama is also in the process of considering reinstating the State Historic Tax Credit Program, which can provide 25 percent tax credits for eligible projects.
- Brownfield/Department of Revenue Programs. Certain properties may be eligible for Brownfield tax credits and/or grants for assessments of properties that have environmental questions. These programs are administered through the Alabama Department of Revenue, ADEM and EPA.
- Facade Rehabilitation Grant or Loan. A facade rehabilitation program can be used to provide funds for renovations to facades. These funds can also be used to remove signs, abandoned parts of buildings, etc. The fund must be established using federal or private funding and used as a grant or part of a revolving loan.
- Land Banking Programs. A land bank can be created using federal funds to acquire property and hold it for re-sell to a private developer who will improve the property. The cost of the land can be negotiated to "make" the deal feasible.
- Transportation Alternatives Program. These funds can be used for streetscape improvements, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, historic preservation, and environmental mitigation.



## IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX/SCHEDULE

A matrix, or schedule, for implementation should be utilized as a tool to plan and follow-up on implementation. The matrix should be prepared as a companion document to the revitalization plan and include the following.

### RECOMMENDATIONS, PROJECTS, AND ACTION ITEMS

For each of the Plan recommendations, there are action steps that should be considered in order to implement recommendations. These action items may change, over time however, it is important to identify some of these in the beginning.

Projects should include (1) ongoing project planning (2) regulatory tools (3) public improvements (4) public-private development (5) recruiting and (6) promotion.

### PRIORITIES AND TIME FRAME

Priorities may be considered short-term, mid-term and long-term. These designations take into account the importance of a recommendation as well as a sense of time sensitivity or urgency. Such priorities are reflected in the plan and should be included and updated as part of the implementation matrix.

### FINANCING AND FUNDING PUBLIC/PRIVATE INVESTMENTS/PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS/LAND ACQUISITION

The Oxford Downtown Master Plan cannot be funded by city resources alone. Many of the Plan recommendations will be implemented by the private sector. The city and redevelopment authority's goal is leveraging and supporting private sector resources to accomplish the desired results. Plan implementation should also be seen as an investment strategy and not just the spending of public funds.

Financing and funding of the city initiatives should include the use of city funds, bond issues, grants, loans, other incentives and perhaps through financing generated through entities like the Redevelopment Authority, Industrial Development Board or others. Cooperation with other agencies, organizations, non-profit and philanthropic groups is critical to plan implementation as well.

Partnering with Federal, State, and Regional Agencies for funding is critical as well as such partnering with utilities, investment partners, tourism agencies and organizations and others.



## REGULATORY TOOLS

Certain regulatory tools are important to the implementation of the Oxford Downtown Master Plan. These tools include zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, historic districts and design review, and others. These tools should be seen as consistent with the Master Plan and amended, as needed, to further the implementation of the Plan. Specific recommendations for revisions to the zoning ordinance were given earlier in the Plan. A mechanism for design review through a Historic Preservation Commission should be considered.

## PHASING PLAN

### PHASE I (1-3 years)

#### **Streetscape Improvements (#10)**

- Currently underway
- Utility relocation

#### **Develop Tax Incentives for Downtown Businesses (#1)**

- Similar to incentives offered elsewhere in the City
- Rebates, infrastructure projects, etc.

#### **Develop Property Maintenance Ordinance (#2)**

- Enforce property maintenance for needed repairs, rehabilitation

#### **Establish City-sponsored Land Banking Program (#3)**

- Acquire tax delinquent properties
- Market to developers and residents

#### **Revise Zoning Ordinance - Possible Options (#4)**

- Create downtown overlay district
- Revise zoning for CBD
- Rezone properties zoned PDC
- Add landscape requirements or a separate landscape ordinance

#### **Survey Downtown/Neighborhoods for Historic Listing (#6)**

- List on National Register
- Eligibility for tax credits





### **Become a Certified Local Government (#7)**

- Establish local historic preservation commission
- Develop design guidelines

### **One-Way Conversion of Choccolocco and Snow Streets (#20)**

- Design to include bike lanes, on-street parking, narrow travel lanes, high visibility crosswalks, sidewalk improvements, pedestrian-scale lighting

### **Wayfinding Signage and Branding throughout Downtown (#9, 15)**

- Direct visitors to various destinations and parking
- Use branding from Main Street



### **Research Ownership of Properties on North Side of Main and Snow Street Intersection (#16)**

- Discuss the possible sale of these properties
- Seek developers for these properties

### **Improve the Appearance of Facades (#12)**

- Facade grant programs
- Pop-up shops in vacant storefronts
- Property maintenance

### **Partially Close Alley (#11)**

- Temporary or removable bollards
- Differentiated pavers
- Outdoor seating/lighting

### **Enhance Bus Stops at Oxford Senior Center, Dorsey's, Library (#22)**

- Add lighting, seating, shelter, signage



### **Install Screening Elements in Veterans Park (#27)**

- Plantings, public art, etc.
- Screen the Batteries Unlimited site

### **Install Wayfinding Signage at Intersection with State Route 21 (#28)**

- Use downtown branding
- Direct visitors to places of interest



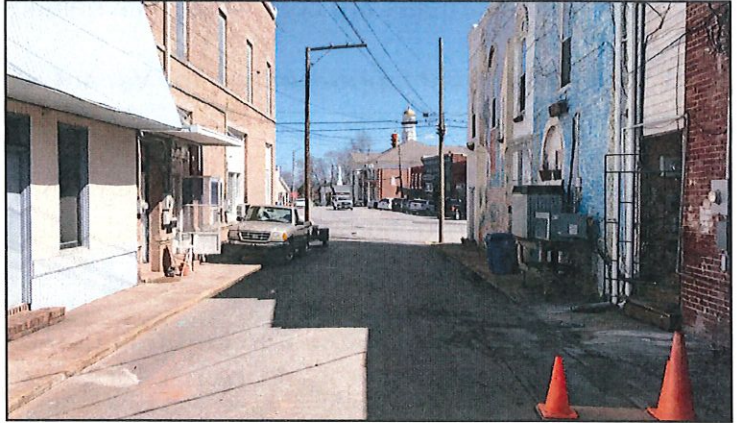
**Add Small Outdoor Gathering Spaces (#21)**

- Behind buildings
- Add seating, lighting, etc.

**PHASE II (3-5 years)**

**Extend the Streetscape Project South (#14)**

- To the intersection of 2nd Street
- Enhance the appearance of Dorsey's parking lot
- Sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, etc.



**Explore the Acquisition or Use Rights of Abandoned Rail Corridor (# 17)**

- Possible trail connection to the north and south

**Expand Streetscape Project to Intersection with State Route 21 (#24)**

- Sidewalks, lighting, landscaping,
- High-visibility crosswalks
- Narrow travel lanes
- Bike lanes



**Work with Owners of Batteries Unlimited to Find Relocation Site (#26)**

- Acquire property if feasible
- Redevelop as either park expansion or attractive mixed-use building

**Improve and Expand Pedestrian Connections on Stewart Street to Connect Oxford High School to Downtown (#29)**

- Add sidewalks, lighting, signage, and street decorations
- Series of yellow jackets leading to downtown

**Improve Appearance of Large Parking Lot Owned by Church (#30)**

- Add plantings on the north side along Oak Street
- Add landscape islands within the lot

**Improve Gateway on Main Street at First Baptist Church (#35)**

- Add signage and landscaping
- Use downtown branding to tie gateway to other signage throughout



- Ensure improvements are compatible with neighborhood scale and character

#### **Seek Redevelopment Opportunities for Vacant Warehouses and Property (#33)**

- Large, versatile buildings

#### **Improve Pedestrian Connections from Neighborhoods (#36)**

- Many adjacent neighborhoods without pedestrian infrastructure
- Add sidewalks

#### **Install Attractive Street Signs and Lighting (#37)**

- Throughout the neighborhoods, consistent with signage and lighting downtown

### **PHASE III (5-10 years)**

#### **Extend Pedestrian Connections to South (#13)**

- Sidewalks to intersection with Barry Street
- Landscaping, lighting, signage, etc.

#### **Expand Simms Park into the Parking Lot (#18)**

- Improve park's functionality with new equipment
- Screen the parking lot from view

#### **Add On-Street Parking throughout the District (#19)**

- Offset losses from the park expansion
- Enhance pedestrian safety

#### **Improve Veterans Park Space (#25)**

- Inviting gateway to downtown
- Plantings, entryway signage, public art, small playground equipment
- Expand into current travel lanes
- Sidewalks and crosswalks



#### **Convert the Intersection of Barry, Main, and 4th Streets into Roundabout (#31)**

- Serve as welcoming gateway
- Improve functionality of intersection

#### **Connect the Southern Neighborhoods with Pedestrian Infrastructure (#34)**

- Neighborhoods south of the Barry intersection



### **Develop Neighborhood Park into Community Gathering Space (#38)**

- Located on Hale Street

### **Seek Opportunities for New Housing (#39)**

- Vacant lots throughout neighborhoods
- Houses in need of renovation

### **Development of Short Bike Trails (#41)**

- Large wooded area to north of downtown
- Surrounded by neighborhoods





