

The Laney Walker and Bethlehem

Urban Redevelopment Plan

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in association with

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1.0 Introduction

The Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment plan provides a general blueprint for redevelopment of blighted areas within the City of Augusta. The Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Plan was created in accordance with Section 36-61-7 of Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Law. Designation of the Laney-Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods as an urban redevelopment area will be a powerful tool to support significant economic development and enhanced quality of life for the citizens of these communities.

The desire to revitalize this historic area was initiated in 2008 when the Augusta City Council passed a \$1 dollar hotel-motel tax. This made approximately \$750,000 annually available over a 50-year period to finance future redevelopment projects. In order to pursue the issuance of bond financing for project development, an Urban Redevelopment Plan and Blight Findings Report is required.

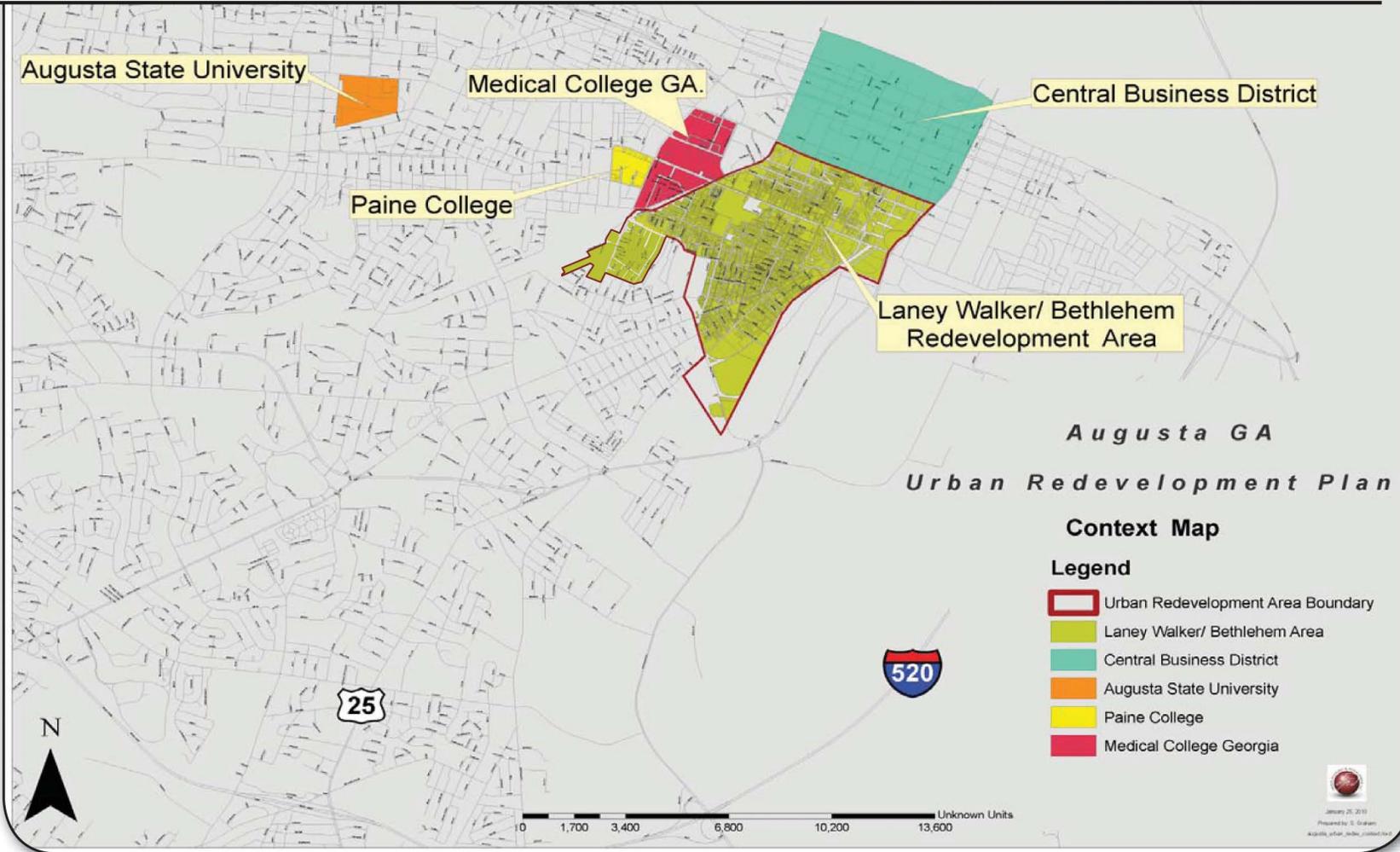
The Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the requirements of the Urban Redevelopment Law, Official Code of Georgia Annotated Section 36-61-1, et. seq. It includes supporting documentation that will facilitate its implementation, such as maps and graphic illustrations, in order to guide the development pattern and redefined the character of the area. The Redevelopment plan articulates goals and objectives, describes strategies for accomplishing them, and identifies financial incentives for redevelopment.

2.0 Urban Redevelopment Area Defined

Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area is within close proximity to key employment facilities such as Georgia Medical Center Complex, Medical College of Georgia, Paine College, area hospitals, and downtown amenities. Downtown businesses are diverse including the health care industry, public sector employers (City-County government, Board of Education, etc.) and local large industrial companies. Due to the redevelopment area's proximity to the Central Business District and major employers there presents considerable opportunities for redevelopment.



MAP 1. CONTEXT MAP WITH REDEVELOPMENT AREA BOUNDARY MAP



Much of the redevelopment area is part of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods and a National Historic District which includes a collection of properties listed individually as Historic Properties. The Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area benefits from being adjacent to downtown Augusta, near the Savannah River and is bisected by part of the Augusta Canal National a Historic Landmark.

2.1 Boundary & Description of Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area

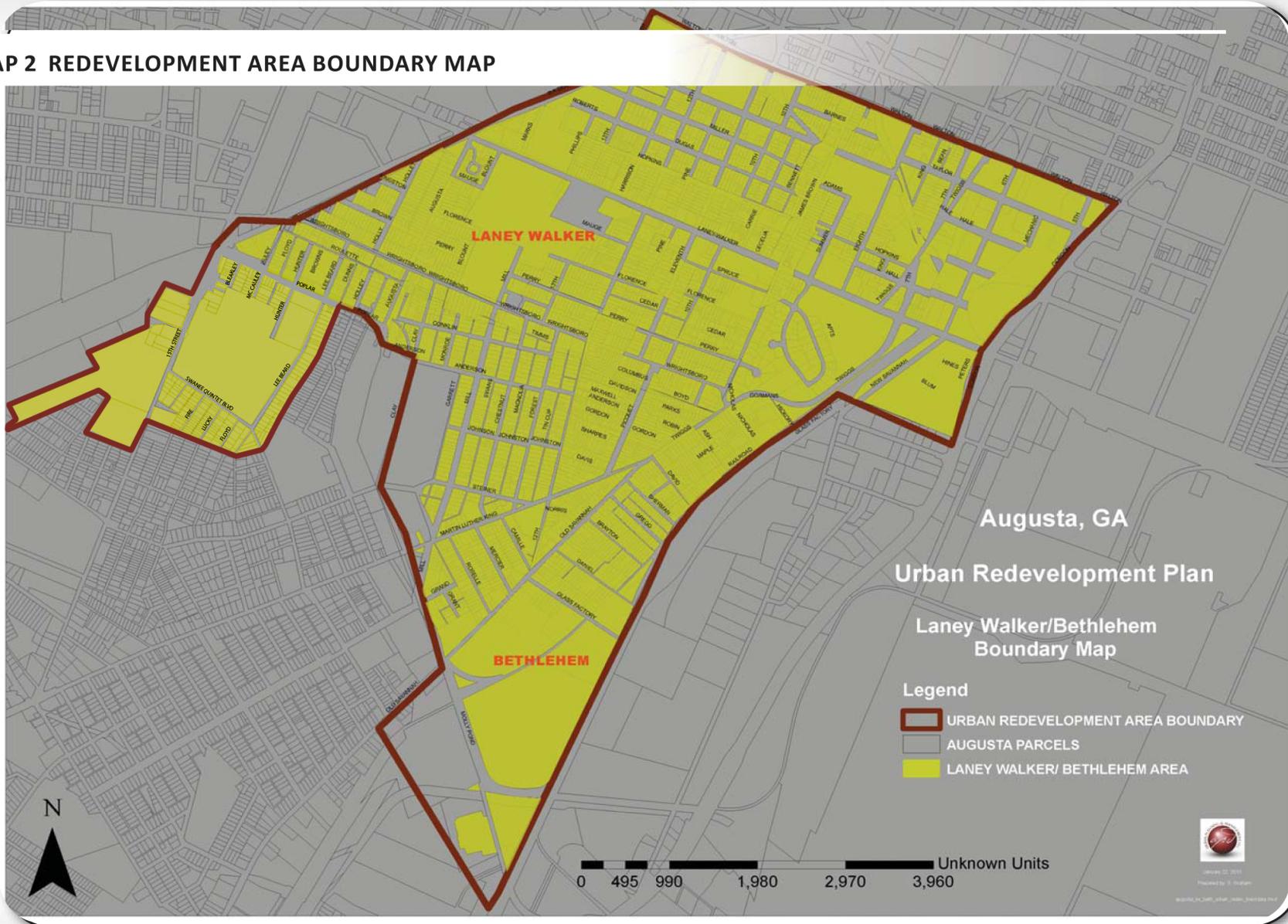
The Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area is located in the eastern portion of the City of Augusta, south of the downtown area and generally defined by Walton Way to the north, Gordon Highway, Old Savannah Road, Twiggs Street and Lee Beard Way to the east, the existing railroad line to the northwest and R.A. Dent Boulevard and the rail line west of 15th street to the west and Swanee Quintet Blvd to the south

2.2 Blight Findings Summary

The Blight Findings Report described the physical, economic and regulatory conditions within the Laney Walker and Bethlehem Redevelopment Area. The methodology utilized to accomplish the task included a review of City of Augusta GIS data; field studies and windshield surveys; a review of City provided statistics; a review of the City's Comprehensive Plan and other studies prepared by the City including a market analysis. The information summarized within the Blight Findings report is comprehensive and more than adequate by the standards established through the Urban Redevelopment Law (Official Code Georgia Annotated Section 36-61-1 et. seq.) to establish and support the finding of blighted conditions within the study area.



MAP 2 REDEVELOPMENT AREA BOUNDARY MAP



Analysis from the Blight Findings Report for the Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area documented the factors, which contribute to a finding of blight. The following blight indicators described in the Urban Redevelopment Law (Official Code Georgia Annotated Section 36-61-1, et. seq.) are listed below.

d) Deteriorated or poorly maintained housing stock

f) Visual Blight (examples might include poor quality strip commercial buildings, barren parking lots, broken or missing sidewalks and curbs, poor drainage, garish)

m) Greater percentage of the population below the poverty level

o) Substandard public infrastructure (lack of sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, lighting, recreational facilities or open space, poor water quality or drainage)

p) Confusing, dangerous or inefficient street layout

Additionally, several other factors of blight are believed to exist. APD Urban Planning and Management, LLC (APD) believes that these indicators currently exist in the study area and would be further supported by updated data. These factors include:

b) Low real estate values and

i) Higher unemployment rates than the surrounding area

2.3 Physical Conditions of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area

Properties within the urban redevelopment area are comprised of small, irregular-shaped lots, buildings close to or at the property



line, narrow setbacks between buildings, neighborhood scale businesses, pedestrian scale blocks with access to public transit, as well as, civic and institutional uses which are dispersed throughout the area. Analysis of the existing conditions was based on an APD survey of over 2,100 buildings and review of parcel maps.

If parcels remain sub-divided as they are currently the real estate value and taxable value of the properties within the redevelopment area will continue to decline. However, through reinvestment carefully designed land uses and building types could become more viable as a variety of housing types and options become available. Infill development will be vital to eliminate the vacant and underutilized parcels. A mix of uses and housing types will be needed to identify a renewed character to the neighborhood core as well as commercial corridors that make up the Urban Redevelopment Area.

The Urban Redevelopment Area has a relatively high percentage of housing units classified in below average condition. While a fair portion of the properties are identified as in good condition (639 properties) a comparison reveals that 71 percent are deteriorated and dilapidated compared to 29 percent which are either good, fair or poor condition. A significant factor contributing to the number of vacant, abandoned, or underutilized properties is due to the volume of obsolete inventory made up of both residential and commercial properties. Approximately 26 percent of units in the study area were reported as vacant.

Good Condition



Fair Conditions



Poor Condition



Deteriorated



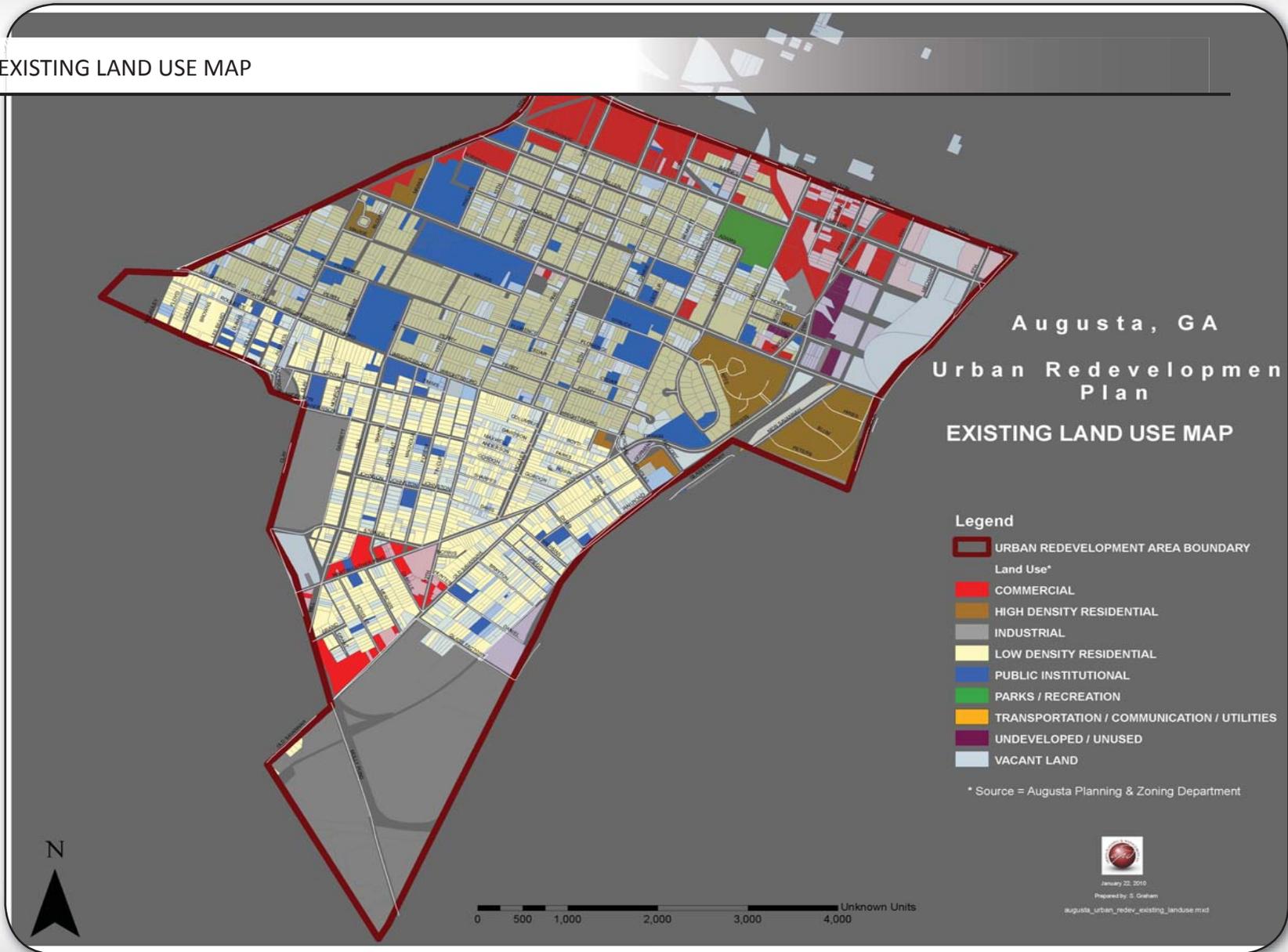
Dilapidated

In many cases demolition is the only option for non-conforming properties that do not meet code and are too costly to bring into compliance. Within the urban redevelopment area boundary, the Bethlehem neighborhood had one of the highest rates for city-initiated demolitions with a total of 102 homes. The Laney Walker neighborhood had 66 demolitions and ranked third when compared to all of the City of Augusta neighborhoods. Active demolitions and acquisitions have been made along key corridors (Wrightsboro Road, James Brown Boulevard and Holley, Florence and Twiggs Streets, Pine Street and Laney-Walker Boulevard) in order to gain control of vacant, abandoned and dilapidated properties within the redevelopment area.

Blight Findings Report Existing Land Use

The study area encompasses approximately 1,020 acres and approximately 3,300 parcels with varying land uses inclusive of residential, industrial, commercial and recreational. Overall the dominant land use in the study area is low-density residential (82%) with Commercial (7%) and Public Institutions (6%) a notable second and third.

MAP 3. EXISTING LAND USE MAP



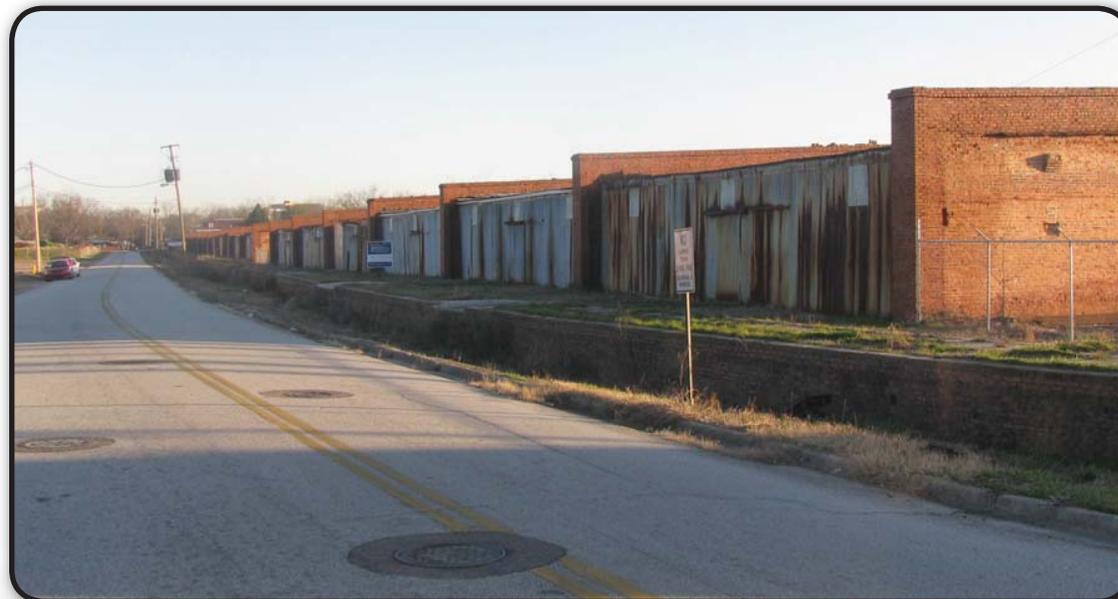
Single Family Residential Requiring Rehabilitation



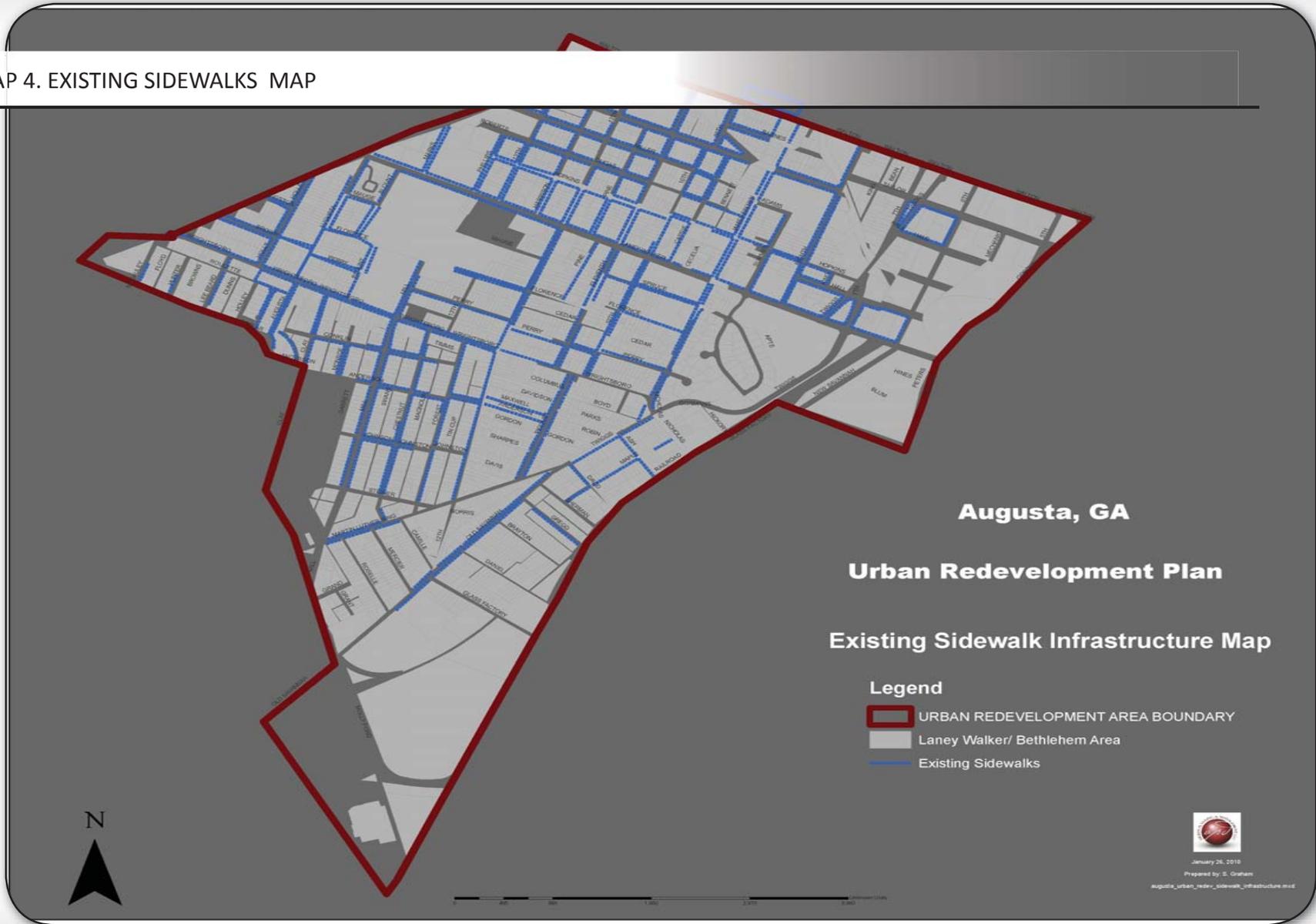
Unoccupied Industrial Property



Deteriorated Industrial Property



MAP 4. EXISTING SIDEWALKS MAP



Public Infrastructure

Elements of the public infrastructure that are inadequate or not at acceptable levels due to maintenance include, sidewalks, lighting, designated on-street parking, and hazardous at-grade rail crossings. Some of the effects resulting from these deficiencies in the public infrastructure compromised safety to pedestrians around railroad lines, increased vehicle incidents due to poor lines of sight, lack of effective signage, and insufficient placement to create safe crossings near transit stops and heavily used pedestrian intersections. Approximately 30 percent of the roads within the redevelopment area have missing sidewalks. The condition, connectivity and pedestrian level of service of these sidewalks is generally considered to be poor.



Curb and gutter with accumulated debris from insufficient drainage

Roadways

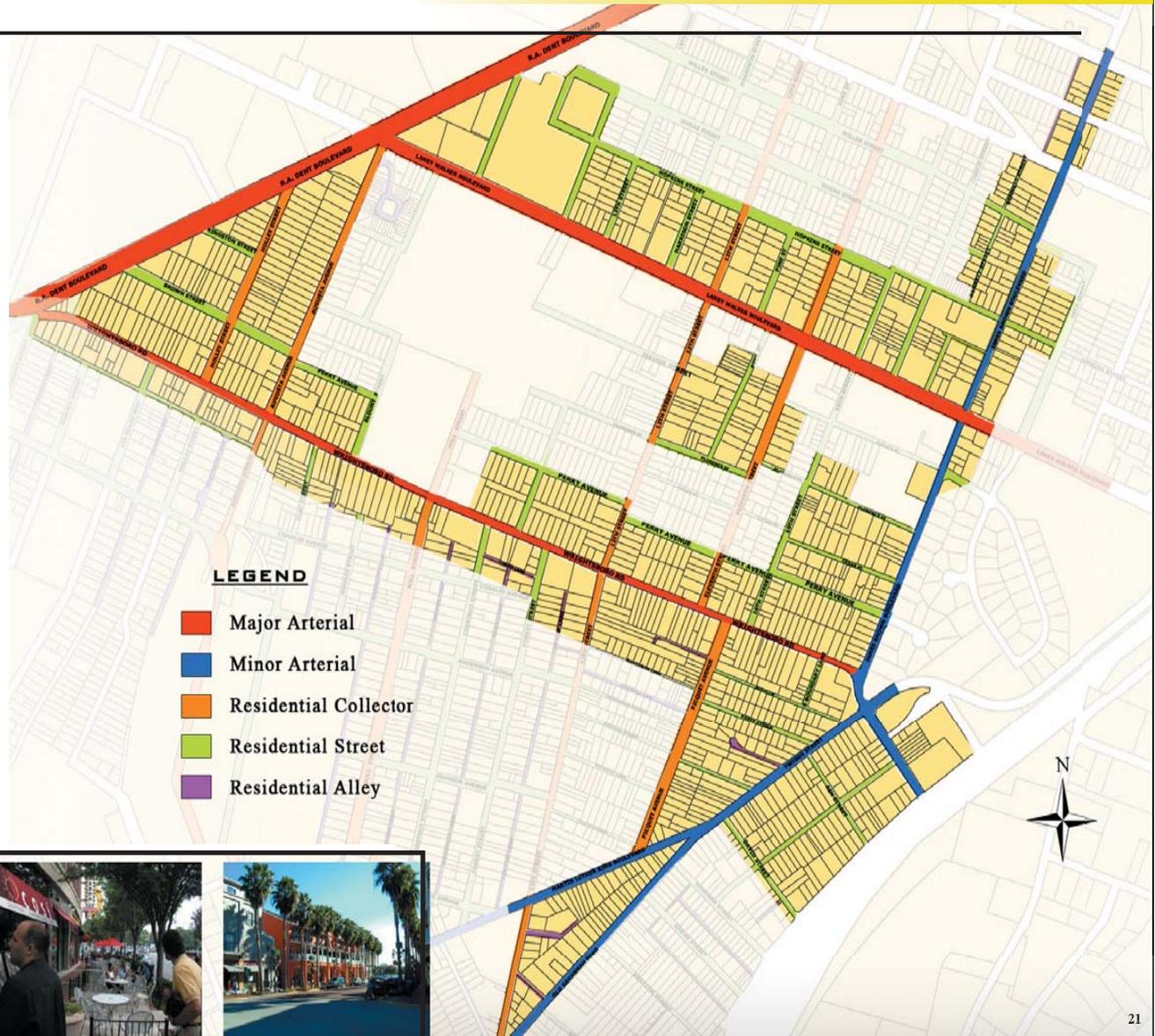


There are approximately 35 miles of road within the redevelopment area boundary. Minimal traffic volumes are associated with the primarily local and collector roads, which make up the roadway network within the redevelopment area. The integrity of the road network is poor as identified by potholes on the road surface and cracks on the contiguous sidewalks. The deficiency of the road network generates conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians due to the close proximity of building frontages to the curb, narrow streets and inefficient circulation grid. The lack of connectivity creates substandard conditions of the public infrastructure. New streets and alleys could be introduced and placed to the rear of properties for access to service residential garages as well as commercial properties. The redevelopment efforts will address access points to support and enhance the various vehicular movements as well as enhance the pedestrian environment.



At-grade railroad crossing conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians

MAP 5. STREET HIERARCHY MAP



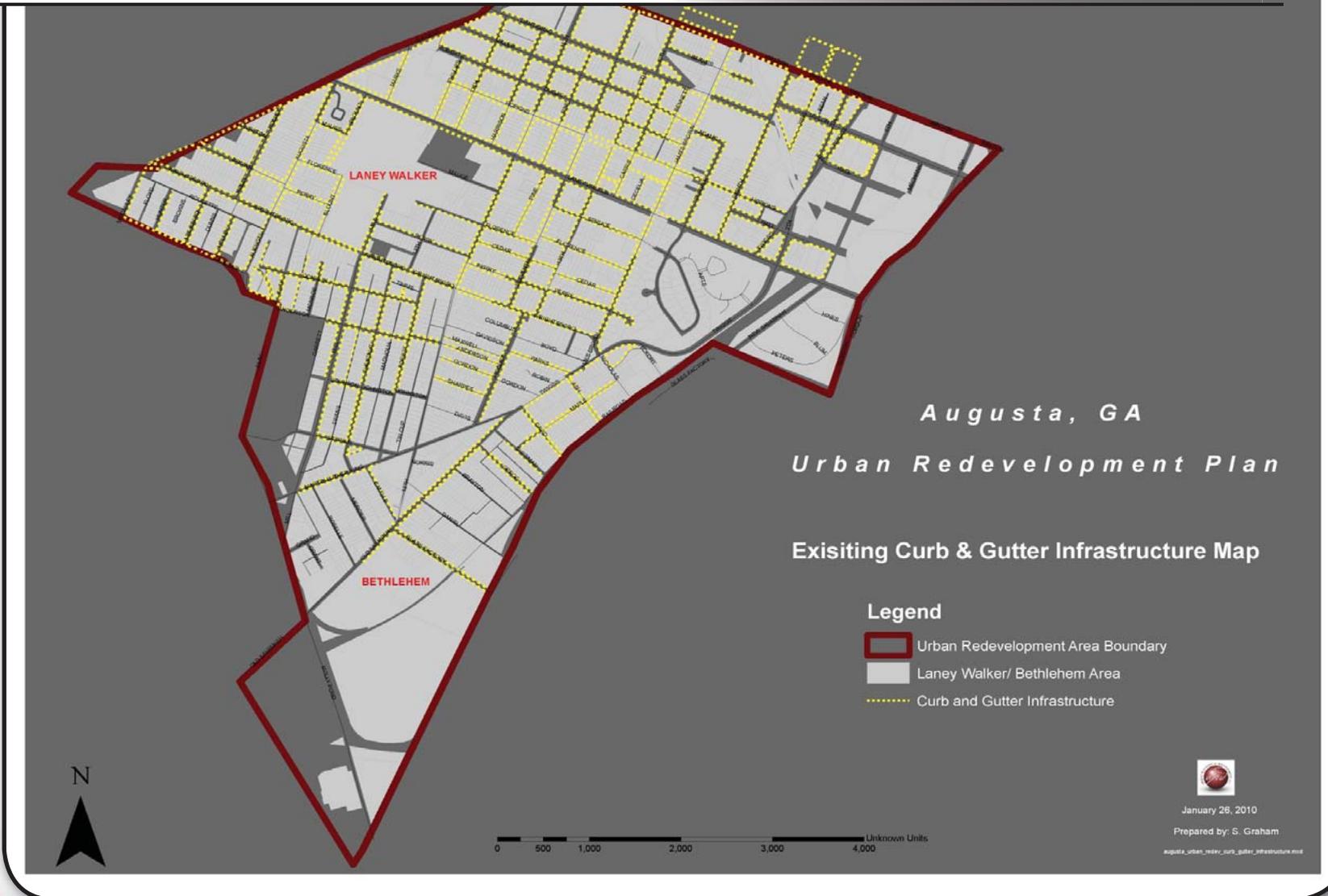


Piquette Street | Narrow Alley and Proximity of Building to Street

Drainage

A portion of the Augusta Channel and stream is within the redevelopment area. Most flooding due to the stream does not result in damage to buildings. However, drainage problems often result in water on major roads and presents risks to the traveling public. Flood hazard areas are found along all waterways, including the Savannah River and urban streams. The Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan identified Walton Way, Walker Street, Gordon Highway, Old Savannah Road, Olive Road and Wrightboro Road as flood prone roads based on citizen reports and other media accounts. An inventory of existing conditions identifies that approximately 35 miles of road have curb and gutter. A small portion, less than .5 percent, has curb and gutter but no paved roadway. The accumulation of rain causes drainage problems associated with, deteriorated culverts, accumulation of debris at curb and gutters, as well as, ponding in parking and vacant lots. Additionally, flooding may cause disruption to the normal flow of traffic, soil erosion and water quality problems.

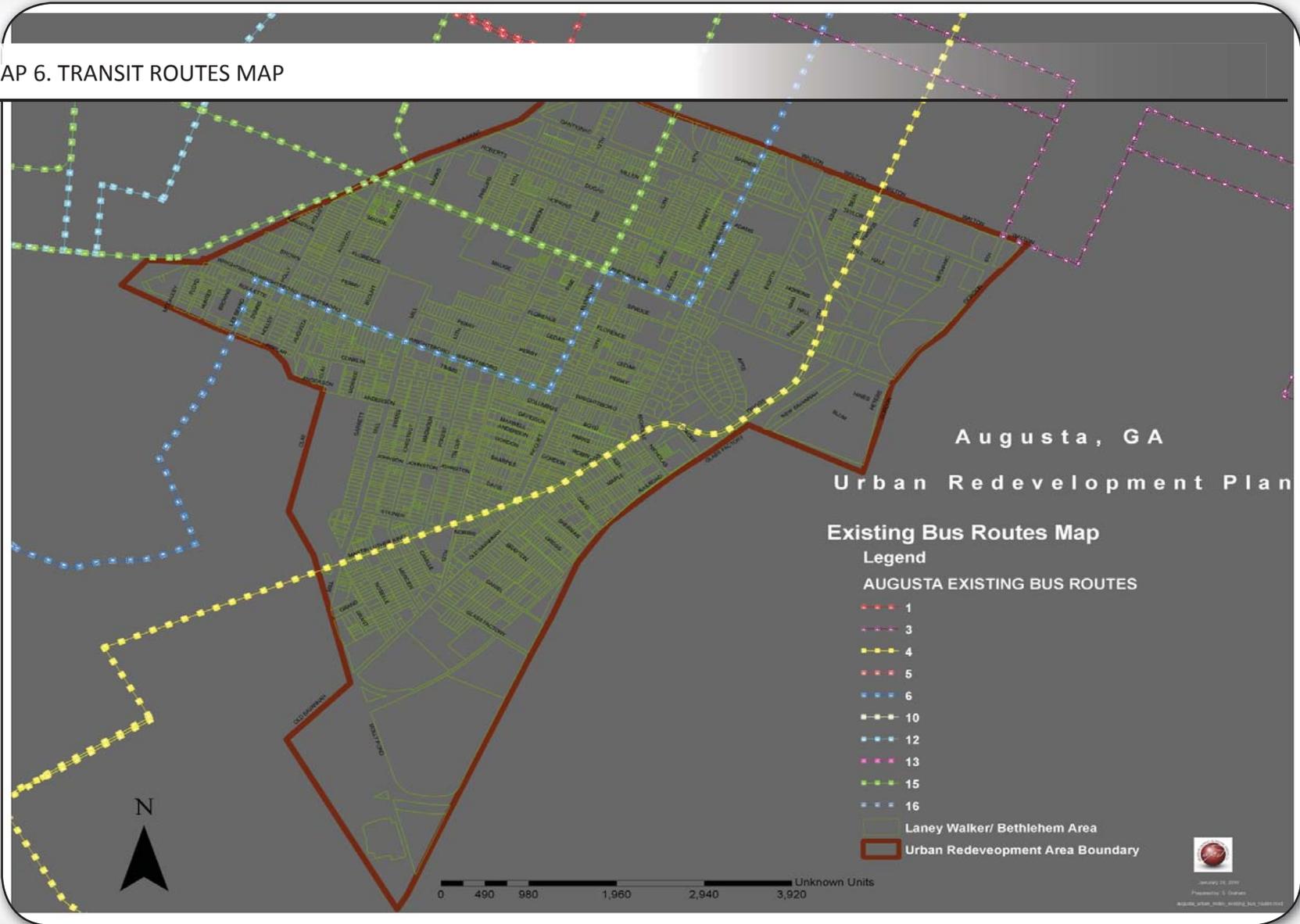
MAP 3. EXISTING CURB AND GUTTER MAP



Transit

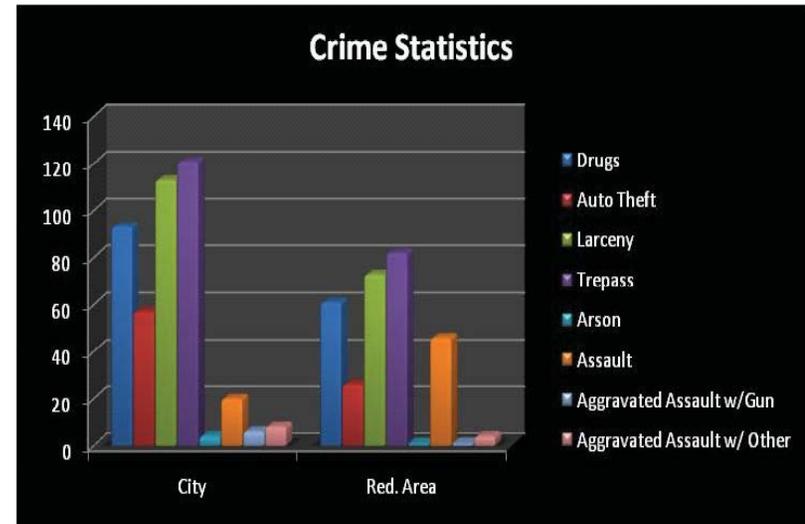
The Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area is well served by the city's public transportation routes. There are five (5) Augusta Public Transit (APT) routes that serve the redevelopment area. Route #3 runs along 5th Street and Route #4 runs from the Central Business District via 7th Street. Route #6 connects the Central Business District via James Brown Boulevard and runs along Laney Walker Boulevard toward the Georgia Medical Center Complex. Route #15 also provides services to the Central Business District and the Georgia Medical Center Complex via 11th Street and connects with Routes # 3, 4, and 6. The number of Households within the urban redevelopment area that are without a vehicle based on 2000 Census data is 82% more than compared to the City of Augusta. This is an indicator that a significant transit dependent population lives within the redevelopment area.

MAP 6. TRANSIT ROUTES MAP



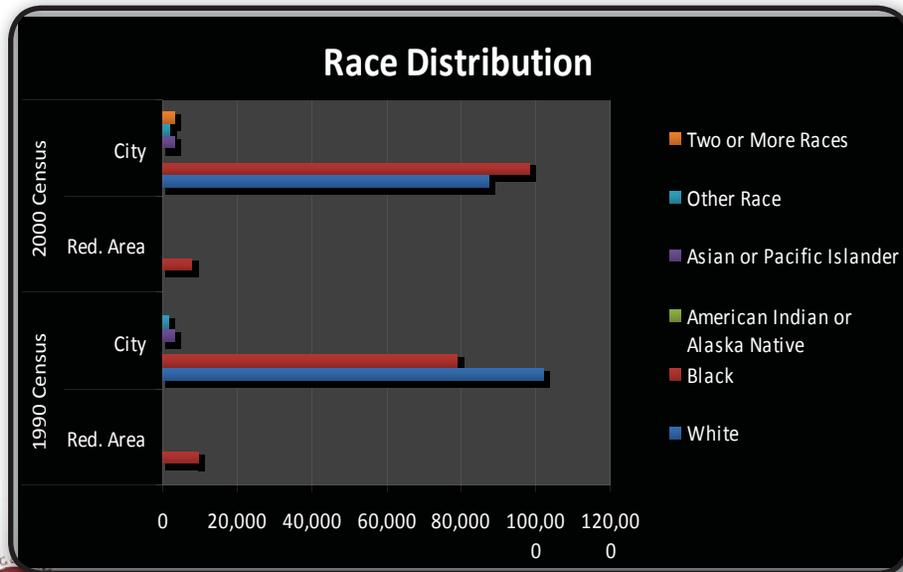
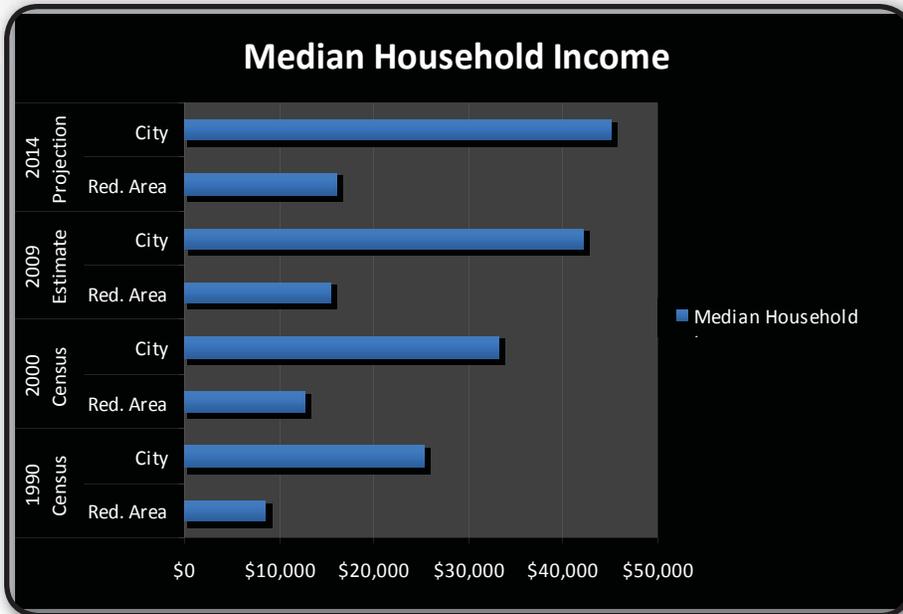
Crime

Safety concerns within the urban redevelopment area are elevated due to the number of vacant properties, declining values, and diminishing population. There were a total of 422 crimes recorded in the crime database for the redevelopment area. Data of criminal activity is largely concentrated in areas of commercial activity within and along the periphery of the redevelopment boundary. A crime statistics reported trespass, larceny and drugs as the top three criminal activities in the urban redevelopment area contributing over 78 percent of total crime in the area. Crime data indicates that out of the 422 crimes, 121 were for Criminal Trespassing, 113 for Larceny, followed by 93 drug crimes. The crimes that are least represented are Arson, Aggravated Assault and Aggravated Assault with a Gun. Previous reports noted that there has been some decline in reported crimes in the area due to the investment of the City-County and local community groups.



Crime Statistics	City	Percentage	Red. Area	Percentage
Drugs	93	22%	61	21%
Auto Theft	57	14%	26	9%
Larceny	113	27%	73	25%
Trespass	121	29%	82	28%
Arson	4	1%	1	0%
Assault	20	5%	46	16%
Aggravated Assault w/Gun	6	1%	1	0%
Aggravated Assault w/ Other	8	2%	4	1%
Total	422	100%	294	100%

Source: Augusta Police Department



2.4 Socioeconomic Summary

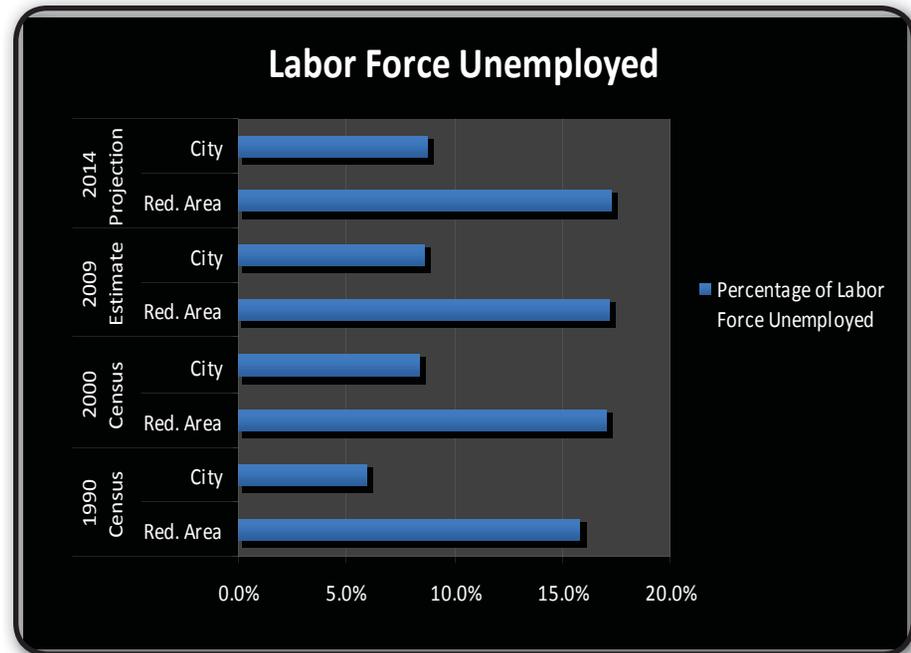
Historically, Laney-Walker and Bethlehem have been traditional working class neighborhoods with households of varying incomes, education and race. The median age in the redevelopment area is (37.3 years) compared to the City of Augusta (34.6 years). This slightly higher median age reflects the number of residents, which maintain their households and age in place. Many of the original families have vacated or relocated outside of the Urban Redevelopment Area. As a result, the age of the population within the redevelopment district is slightly above average with higher rates of unemployment and greater number of incomes below the poverty level. Over time these socioeconomic conditions have impacted the physical character of the Urban Redevelopment Area and surrounding community. The population in the City of Augusta was estimated to be 196,204 in 2009. The redevelopment area is approximately 4% of that total with a population of 7,658.

The Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area represents some of the poorest census tracts in the City of Augusta based on family household incomes. Census figures the redevelopment district consists of 3,323 households out of 72,082 in the City of Augusta. Of the 3,323 HH 2000, 84% earned less than the median HH income of \$33,222. The average HH income within the redevelopment area for 2009 was \$15,359.



While the City of Augusta has seen some fluctuation in racial and ethnic representation the racial demographic within the study area has not significantly changed over the years. Based on Census Data approximately 94% of the population is African American, 4% White and 1% Asian with less than 1 percent identified as Native American and Other. The median age in the redevelopment area is (37.3 years) and the City (34.6 years). This slightly higher median age reflects the number of residents, which maintain their households and age in place.

Another disparity within the redevelopment area is unemployment rates. Unemployment increased almost 17% between 1990 and 2009. It is anticipated that the designation of the redevelopment area will spur investment as well as offer incentives to builders, developers, and small business owners who will provide businesses and employment opportunities within the community. This redevelopment plan outlines some program services that will be made available to spur economic development and job training.



3.0 Redevelopment Objectives and Policies for Implementation

This Urban Redevelopment Plan recommends approximately (six) potential Project Development Areas within the Laney Walker and Bethlehem Redevelopment Area. These key catalyst project areas were selected for immediate, or short term, implementation. Within each of the selected project areas, initiatives will be developed that take into consideration opportunities for new infill construction, rehabilitation of vacant structures, and rehabilitation of houses occupied by current homeowners and renters. New housing development and community amenities will reference the historic character of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem communities. The holistic plans of revitalization incorporate development of community services, as well as economic and financial incentives that encourage renewed investment in the community.

3.1 Objectives and Policies

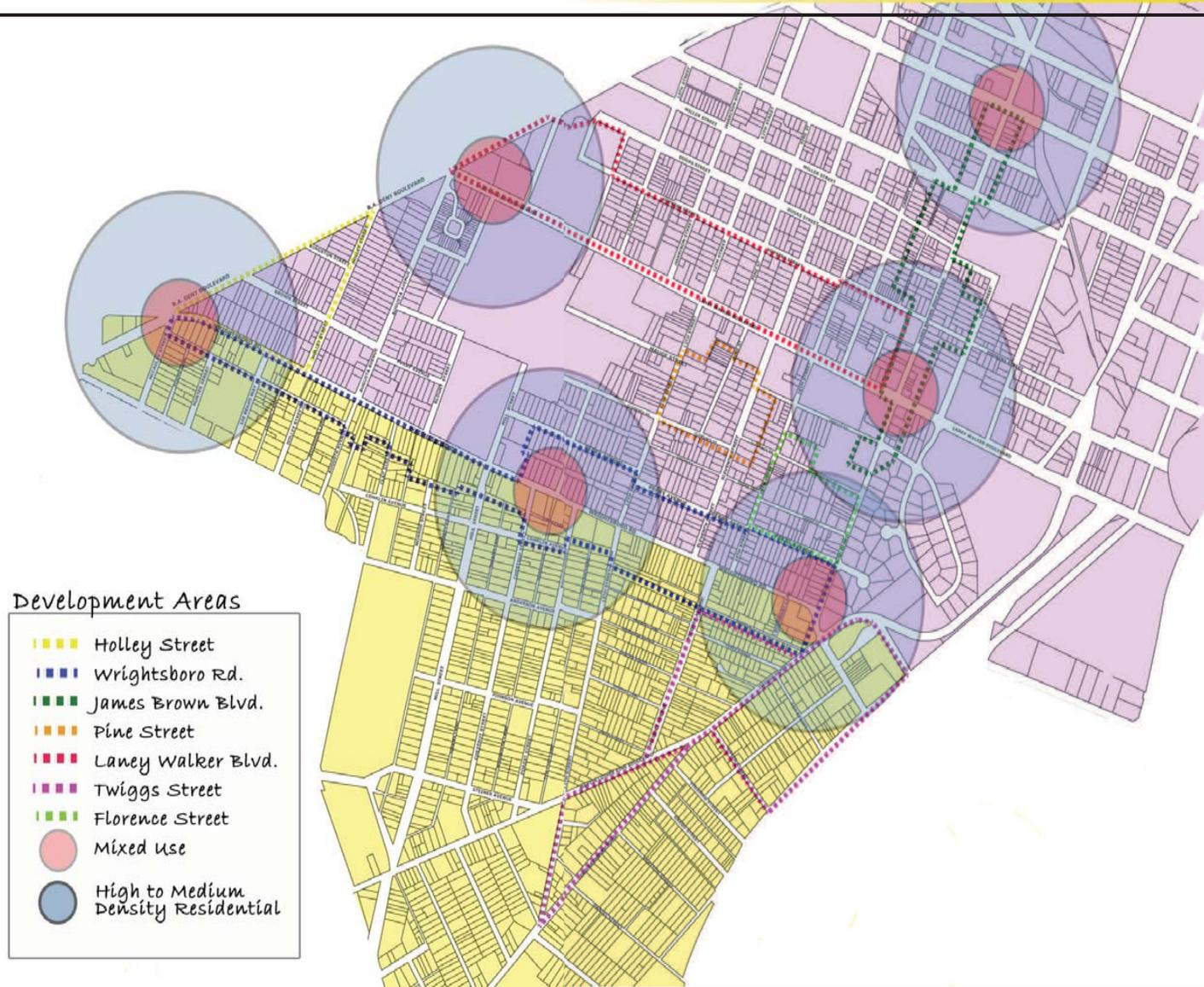
The Urban Redevelopment Law, O.C.G.A. Section 36-61-1, et seq. allows for a wide variety of activities, which can be pursued for funding in order to develop projects that can encourage new private investment. The Urban Redevelopment Plan is the tool that will be utilized to effectively outline the goals, objectives and implementation strategy for the Laney Walker and Bethlehem Redevelopment Area. The proposed programs are needed to mitigate and correct the conditions of blight and disinvestments made over a number of years.

The key themes identified by the goals and policies:

- Rehabilitate and replace substandard housing with an appealing and affordable mixture of housing types.
- Rehabilitate, produce, and/or redevelop affordable rental housing.
- Develop finance incentives to provide assistance to existing property owners and new investors in order to attract a mix of incomes to live and work in the redevelopment area.
- Redefine public open space to improve, enhance and create a variety passive and active uses.
- Recreate cultural heritage through conscientious restoration of existing buildings and the use of design criteria for new construction.



Map 7. Proposed Development Areas Map



LANEY WALKER/BETHLEHEM HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	
OBJECTIVES	PROPOSED POLICY
Housing & Code Enforcement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build new single family homes for homeownership ▪ Help existing homeowners fix their homes ▪ Provide affordable rental options for residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote systematic code enforcement ▪ Prioritize single family homes with compatible architecture for multi-family dwellings ▪ Build new homes to attract a mix of incomes ▪ Prioritize homeowner assistance as part of the housing strategy ▪ Establish maintenance program for the elderly and grant assistance to correct code violations ▪ Assist investor owners repair their properties and keep rents affordable
Economic Development & Job Training	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create opportunities for small business owners ▪ Create opportunities for job training and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish funding sources to help start and maintain existing small business ▪ Link job training opportunities to construction trades used in home-building ▪ Create outreach programs with non-profits to assist unemployed and under-employed resident ▪ Maintain and promote existing retail and establish new mixed-use corridors



Open Space & Public Spaces	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase amount of passive and active open space ▪ Redesign existing open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use abandoned lots for passive open space ▪ Designate gateway locations into the neighborhood ▪ Create a cultural center for recreation programs ▪ Re-design existing open space to support and promote organized youth sports and promote senior wellness activities
Historic/Cultural Resources & Community Capacity Building	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build the historic character into housing development guidelines ▪ Build capacity of existing community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase police presence and organize crime watch programs to reduce the crime rate ▪ Reinforce historic architectural styles in new construction and renovate heritage sites ▪ Organize community stakeholders to reestablish community identity and ownership ▪ Establish African American Heritage Trail to link tourism with the celebration of neighborhood culture.

Housing & Code Enforcement

A significant portion of the properties in the urban redevelopment area are either vacant or in a condition which does not allow for the structure to be feasibly repaired. As a result a majority of the existing properties will require some level of renovation or replacement that presents a potential development opportunity. As part of the planned revitalization of the community new construction, will need to accommodate a variety of housing types and offer attractive options.

The objective of this Urban Redevelopment Plan must include a housing and code enforcement strategy. Defining minimum standards for both lots and infrastructure requirements is imperative in order to repair the code compliance issues associated with small lot sizes and narrow streets. Another tool that will be used is the Augusta Land Bank Authority. Vacant lots and vacant properties will be land banked, potentially with deed restrictions. The deed restrictions could be used to regulate the use of the property including the size



and design of homes. Developing an architectural style that relays the historic nature of the community will add value and continuity between new and older properties.

Demolition of Dilapidated Residential



Economic Development & Job Training List of Economic Development

The redevelopment area offers many opportunities to activate economic development and job creation. Job training should be a component of the construction and renovation of homes particularly where financial incentives are utilized as part of the business investment. Programs should target small local builders and train individuals to develop the skill-sets needed for the construction and renovation of homes.

While it is important to retain the single family residential component of the community, the corridor is prime for a compatible mix of uses. Including live work units and multi-family housing which would be supported by retail, restaurants, and a variety of services to attract investment from visitors to the community. Affordable workforce housing is an important element of the overall redevelopment plan. However, it is important that the housing strategies also include attracting a mixed-income range. Financial incentives should incorporate down-payment assistance, which focuses on first-time homebuyers, as well as development subsidies to encourage opportunities for commercial investors to increase the job base within the community.

Active Commercial



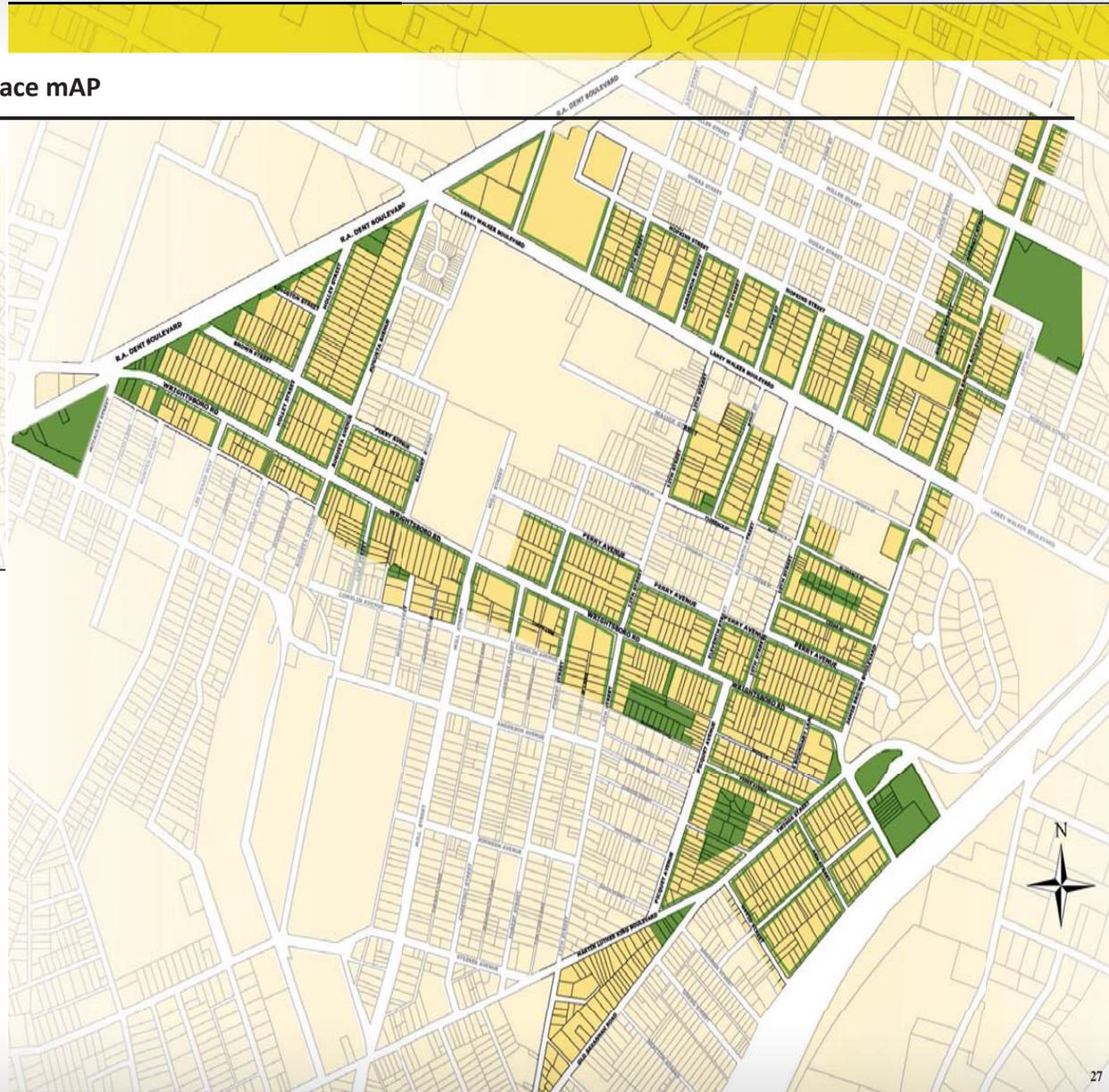
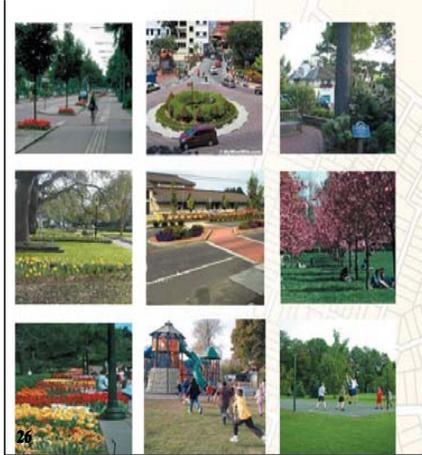


Twigg Street Abandoned Commercial

Open Space & Public Space

As redevelopment efforts begin and development patterns are defined it is important to reserve some of the land use for passive and active park space. Because there are a number of non-conforming lots that are too narrow to build, an opportunity exists to reclaim the parcels for a useful purpose. These smaller lots are ideally suited as passive open space. Another program that may be utilized is an Adopt A Lot Program. This program would allow for transfer ownership and maintenance of vacant lots to the adjoining owner occupied property. Adjoining property owners will be required to maintain the lot for a minimum of three (3) years before a clear title is conveyed. This would apply to properties next to vacant lots that are non-conforming and assembly for development is not an option.

Map 8. Proposed Parks and Greenspace mAP



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Both passive and active open spaces within the redevelopment area are needed. Larger parks are needed for organized activities and smaller neighborhood pocket parks for residential activity would be beneficial to the community fabric. The park spaces once defined would act as a neighborhood amenity, and could potentially add value to the homes located nearby. Larger active park spaces should be introduced adjacent to multi-family homes and mixed-use buildings lots to accommodate the higher densities.

Currently streetscapes and green corridors within the redevelopment area are limited. There are no identifiable gateway markers that announce entrance to the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods that make up the redevelopment area. Designation of gateway locations should incorporate signage, landscape elements, pedestrian amenities and infrastructure elements such as sidewalks and medians. These improvements will improve access all types of facilities and services within the community.



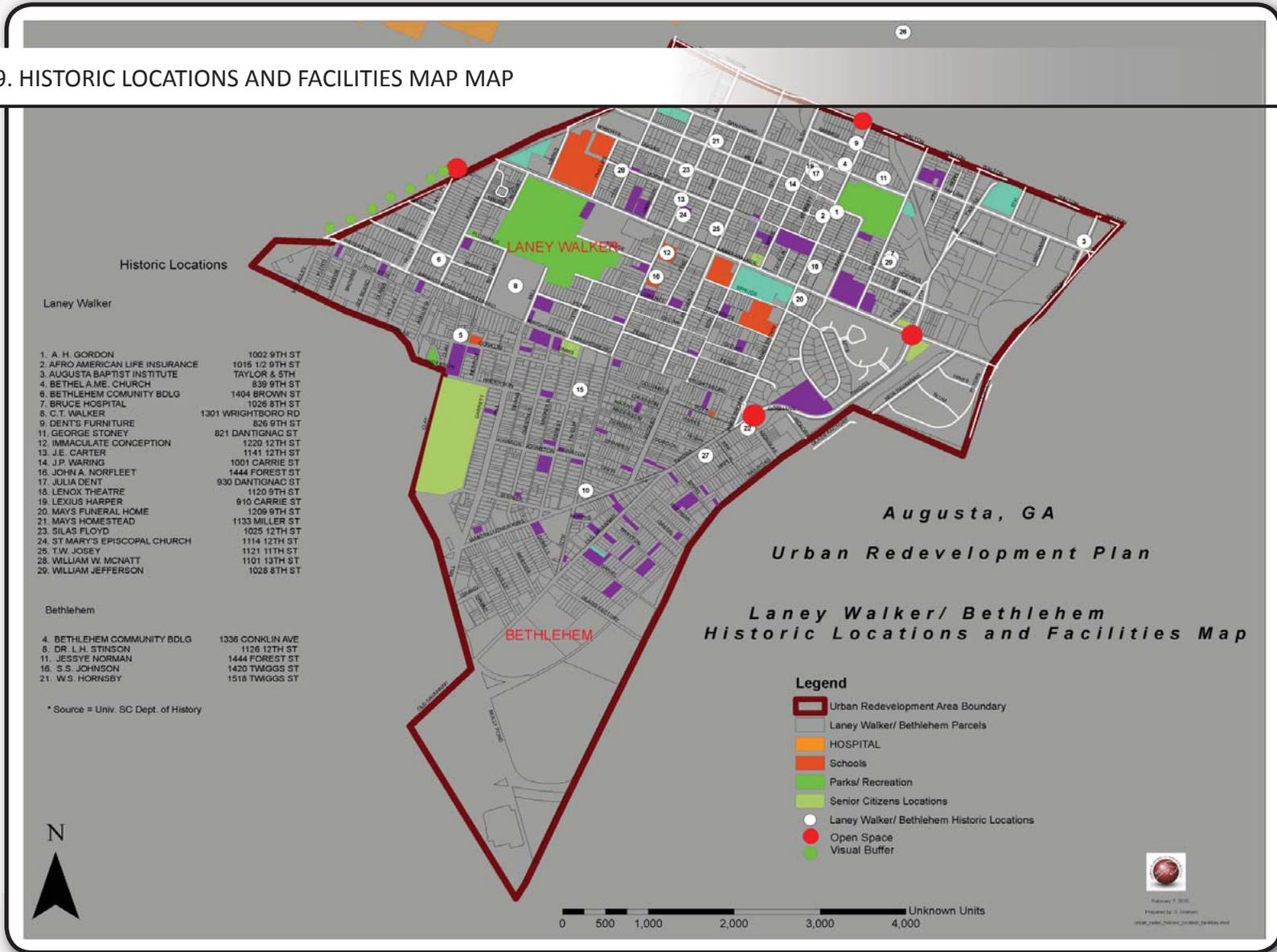
Historic/ Cultural Resources & Community Capacity Building

Much of the redevelopment area is comprised of a designated National Historic District with some properties in both the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods listed individually on the National Register. [See Map 9]. As part of the redevelopment plan all homes new or renovated should follow design guidelines that incorporate the architectural elements unique to the historic heritage of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods.

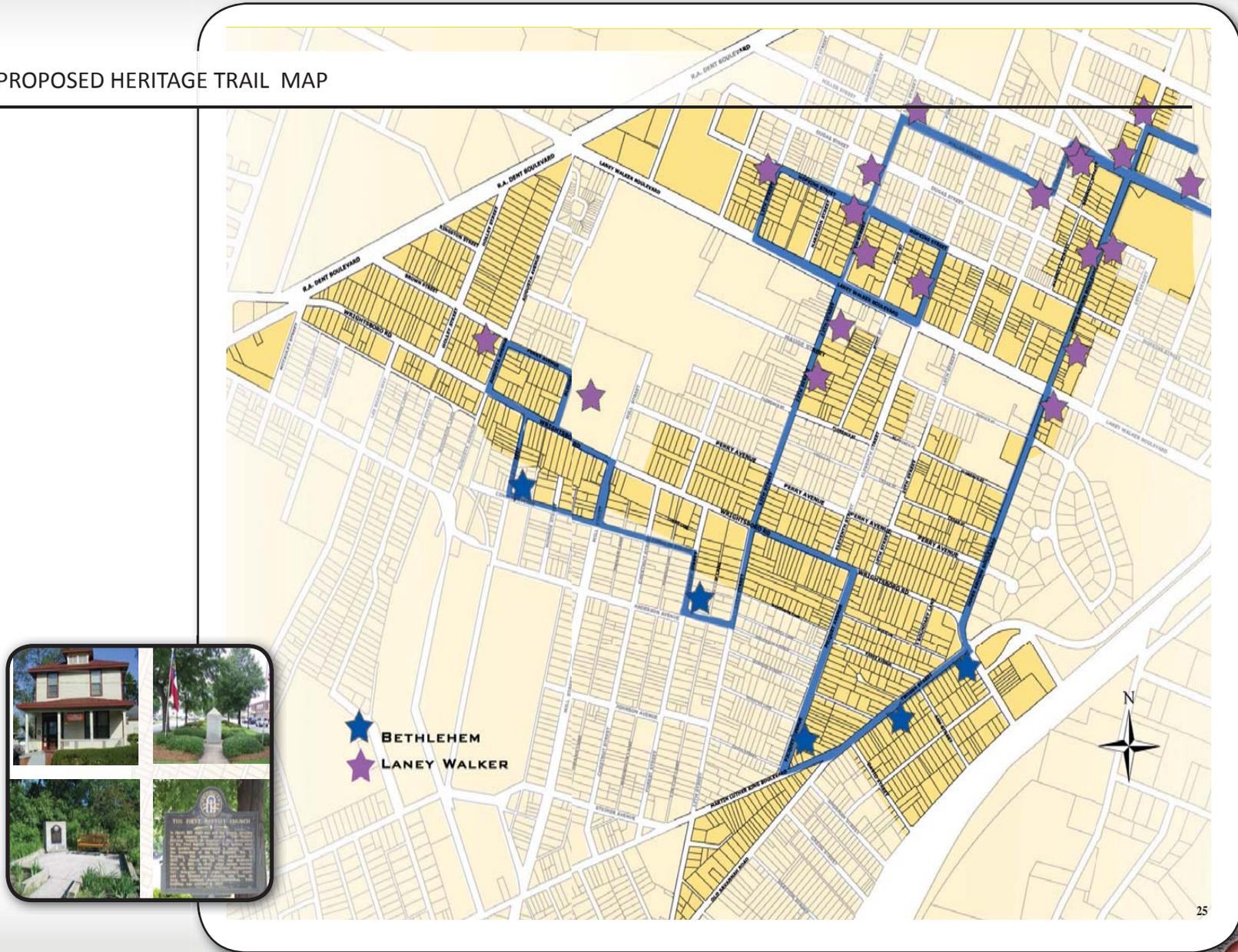
Creating a Heritage Trail within the Urban Redevelopment Area is a community building, as well as economic development tool that should be pursued. Re-building the historic character and establishing sites that identify the cultural heritage of the Historic Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods adds value to the properties. Establishment of a Historic Heritage Trail will attract visitors to the community and potential additional economic investment to support this tourist activity. [See Map 10].

Residents and organizations in Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area are actively engaged in community improvement activities. In addition to the traditional partnerships with local government new partnerships should be extended to include non-profit development corporations, for-profit organizations, and community stakeholders. The focus of these partnerships is to foster a greater sense of community and recognition of the assets within the redevelopment area. Building the capacity and leadership of existing neighborhood organizations is imperative to sustain the investments within the community over time.

MAP 9. HISTORIC LOCATIONS AND FACILITIES MAP MAP



MAP 10. PROPOSED HERITAGE TRAIL MAP





3.2 Development Project Approach

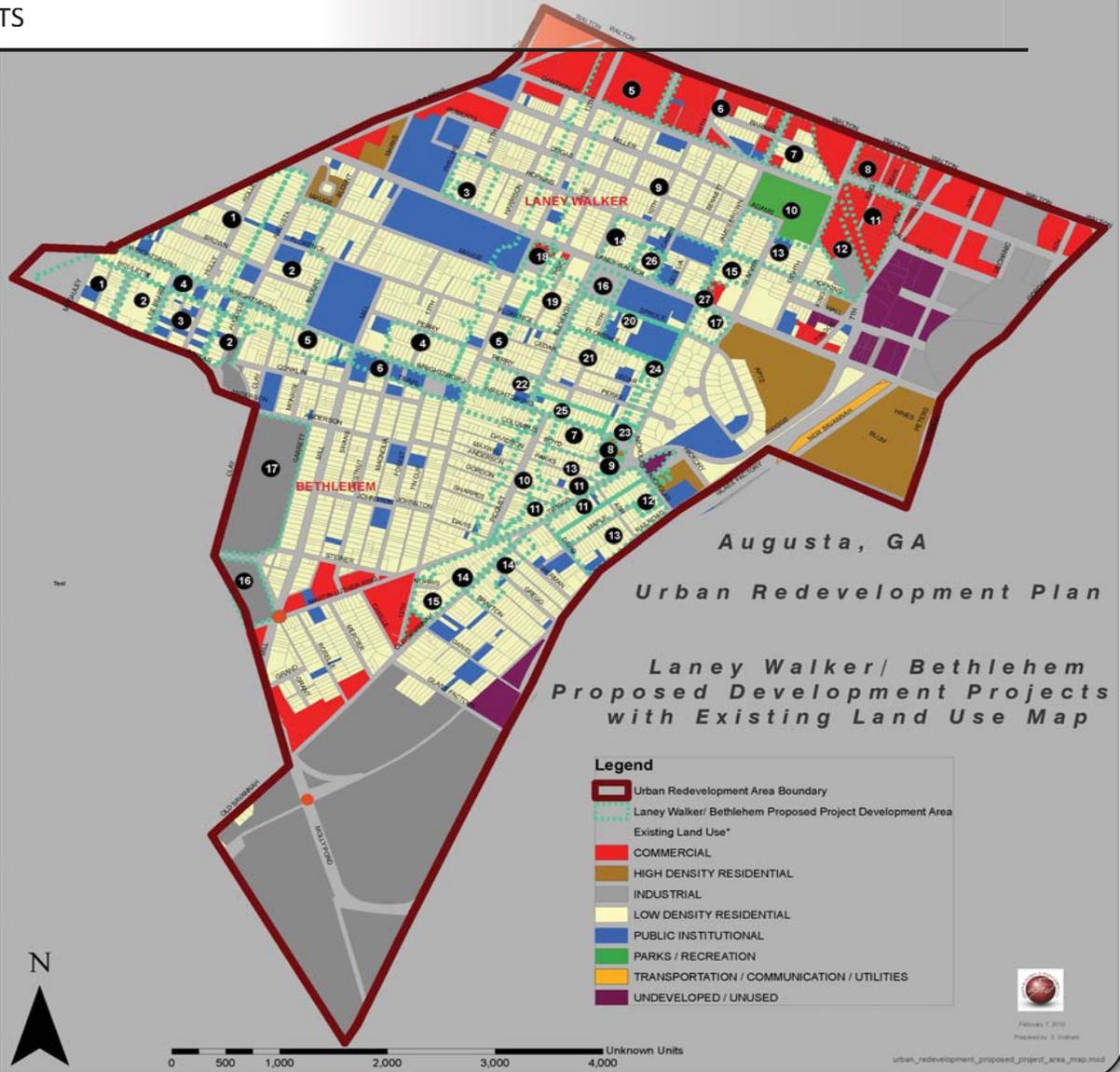
As part of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Plan, development projects are identified based on their current condition, location and development potential to transform the urban redevelopment area based on the vision of the community. The Augusta Housing and Community Development Department (AHCDD) will serve as the Master Developer for the revitalization of Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods and should take full advantage of the powers given by the Urban Redevelopment Law to

address the issues discussed in this plan. The AHCCD has elected to use a redevelopment approach that identifies carefully selected catalyst redevelopment projects that will act as the initial Priority Project Development Areas.

Each of the Project Development Areas is based on several guiding objectives and policies described in the previous section. The following maps outline the proposed project areas and provide a conceptual overview of how redevelopment could impact the area.

MAP 11. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- | Bethlehem | Laney Walker |
|---|--|
| 1. New mixed use - retail commercial on ground with residents above | 1. Single-Family residential: Holy Street Restore existing homes and build new infill |
| 2. Phase I single family residential: restore existing homes build new infill | 2. New infill multi-family units w/ village setting to attract medical students & staff |
| 3. Phase II of single family residential | 3. Laney Walker Museum Development area |
| 4. New mixed use - retail on ground with housing above | 4. Develop ground floor retail w/ residents above Restore existing homes facing Perry and build new infill homes |
| 5. Restore/ replace existing homes | 5. 12th St Mixed Use residential/retail/commercial corridor: Develop retail commercial on ground floor w/residents above. Introduce medium density development. Restore historic sites, install historic markers |
| 6. Planned development | 6. Walton Way Mixed Use: Develop retail commercial on ground floor residential above |
| 7. Restore existing single family homes develop new infill homes | 7. Single-Family residential: Develop new single family homes Restore existing homes |
| 8. Medium rise (3 stories) multi-family | 8. Office bldg/clinic |
| 9. Mixed use low rise | 9. ANIC Townhomes/ Condos development Phase I |
| 10. Restore existing single family homes develop new infill homes | 10. Renovate park: Remove tennis & basketball courts. Develop passive signature park |
| 11. Restore/ replace existing homes both sides of Twigg St | 11. New Single-Family development |
| 12. Restore/ replace existing shotgun houses for rental market | 12. Adaptive reuse of former cotton gin site |
| 13. Reconfigure existing lots Develop new infill housing w/central park | 13. Single-Family/Multi family residential by ANIC |
| 14. Restore existing homes build new infill homes | 14. Retail/commercial senior citizens support services |
| 15. New retail outlets Corner store Restaurants Laundry mat | 15. Mixed use low to medium density |
| 16. Big box retail: WalMart, chain grocery store | 16. Adaptive reuse of Immaculate Conception School |
| 17. Multi-family housing w/village setting medical students, university staff | 17. Entertainment District: Restore existing buildings. Introduce new restaurant entertainment venues |
| | 18. Potential adaptive reuse as residential lofts |
| | 19. Single-Family Pine St. Restore existing new infill homes Reconfigure parcels to accommodate new service alleys |
| | 20. Adaptive reuse of Silas Floyd Elem. School |
| | 21. Single-Family development same as #7 |
| | 22. Single-Family development same as #7 |
| | 23. Multi-Family Mid rise (3 story) apartment complex |
| | 24. Mixed use medium density retail/commercial |
| | 25. Mixed Use: Restore existing homes for adaptive reuse as retail/commercial (historic trail) |
| | 26. Senior Citizens Development: New Senior Citizen village site |
| | 27. Restore historic Penny Savings Bank and install landscape buffer around existing parking lot |



Augusta, GA

Urban Redevelopment Plan

Laney Walker/ Bethlehem Proposed Development Projects with Existing Land Use Map

Legend

- Urban Redevelopment Area Boundary
- Laney Walker/ Bethlehem Proposed Project Development Area
- Existing Land Use*
 - COMMERCIAL
 - HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
 - INDUSTRIAL
 - LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
 - PUBLIC INSTITUTIONAL
 - PARKS / RECREATION
 - TRANSPORTATION / COMMUNICATION / UTILITIES
 - UNDEVELOPED / UNUSED



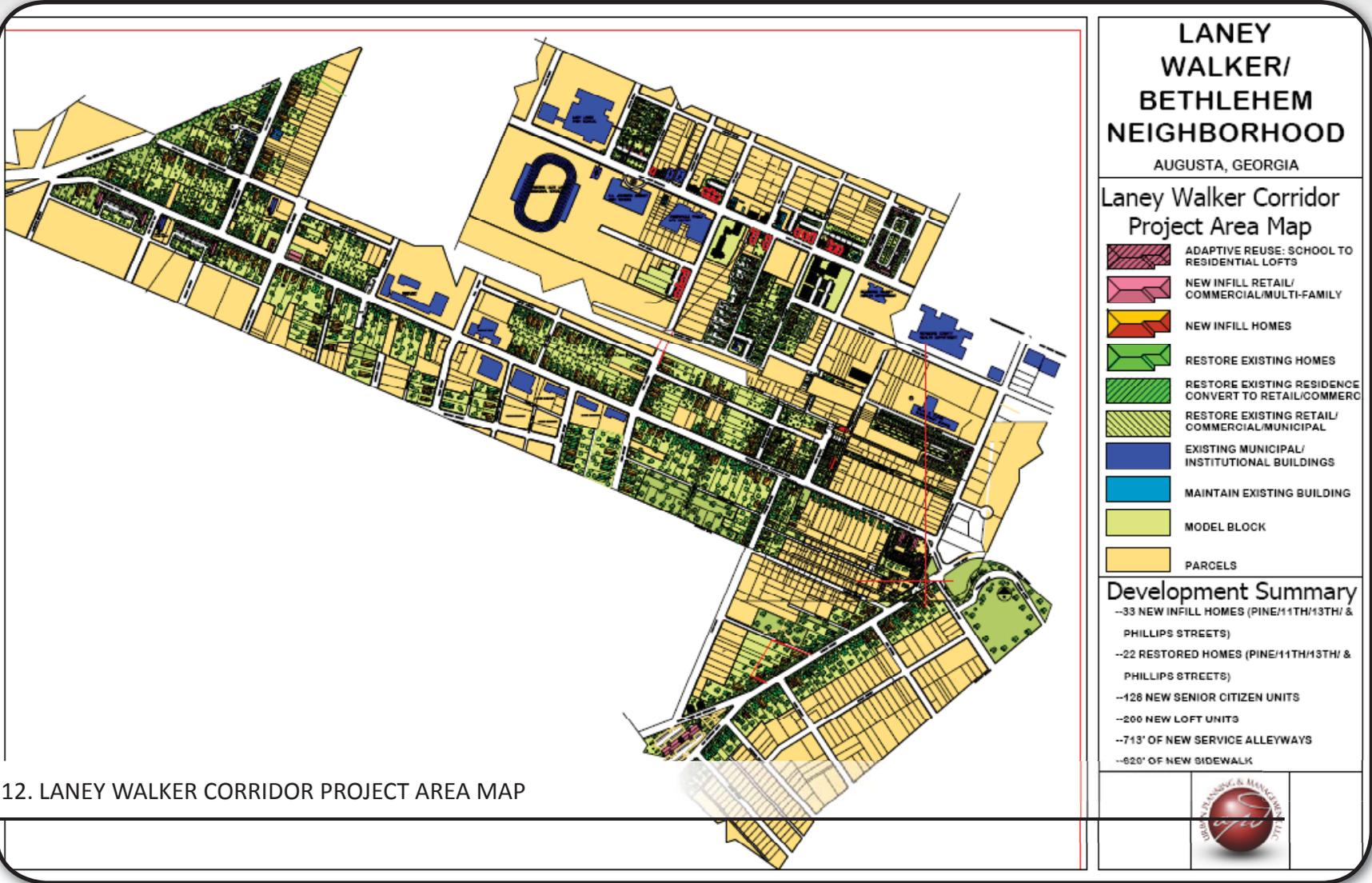
February 7, 2010
Prepared by: S. Graham

urban_redevelopment_proposed_project_area_map.mxd



PRIORITY PROJECT AREA DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY MATRIX								
PRIORITY PROJECT AREA	TOTAL PROPERTIES (EXCLUDING CHURCHES)	TOTAL PROPERTY VALUE	TOTAL OWNER-OCCUPIED	TOTAL COMMERCIAL	TOTAL CHURCHES & OTHERS	PROPERTIES ACQUIRED	TOTAL PROPERTIES TO ACQUIRE	IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES (INCLUDING DEMOLITION & PREDEVELOPMENT)
P1	41	\$580,806	1	1	2	28	11	Property acquisition assistance to new homeowners, loans to investor owners and loans to developers
H1	86	\$347,297	23	0	24	15	45	Property acquisition assistance to new homeowners, loans to investor owners and loans to developers
L1/W1	98	\$805,456	27	0	14	6	48	Property acquisition assistance to new homeowners, loans to investor owners and loans to developers
T4	26	\$289,973	1	1	0	0	24	Property acquisition assistance to new homeowners loans to investor owners and loans to developers
W4	119	\$812,575	41	18	34	8	46	Property acquisition assistance to new homeowners, loans to investor owners and loans to developers





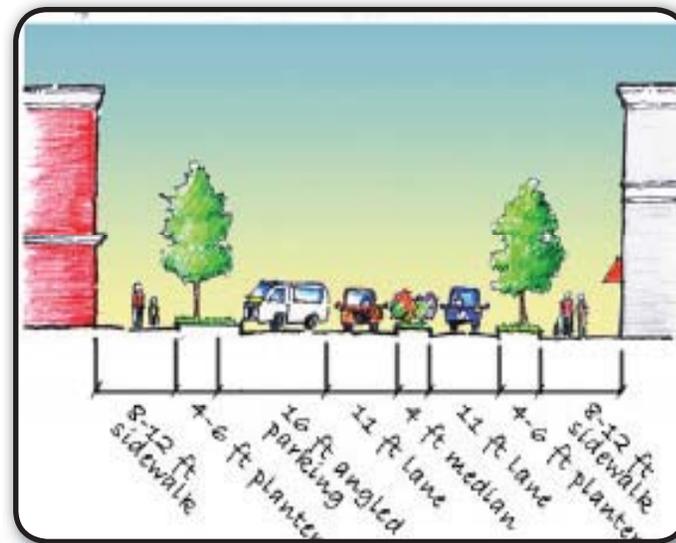
MAP 12. LANEY WALKER CORRIDOR PROJECT AREA MAP



The following development approach is as follows:

Sidewalk & Curb/ Gutter Projects: Enhancements to the pedestrian facilities will provide safer connectivity. The plan proposes installation of facilities to connect to existing streetscape improvements along Laney Walker in addition to serving as a main gateway into the area with its proposed activity centers and surrounding residential development. These installations will improve the network for pedestrians near schools, parks and activity centers with minimum widths compliant to the City of Augusta standards. It is suggested that a 3 to 4 feet wide grass strips from back of curb to sidewalks to accommodate tree planting and streetlights, and new 4 to 5 feet wide sidewalks be installed.

Drainage improvements to accommodate storm water runoff are necessary to reduce impediments to existing and future development in the area. The installation of curbs and gutters are needed to mitigate the blighted conditions within the urban redevelopment area and will in turn make the area more attractive to development and reinvestment in the long run.

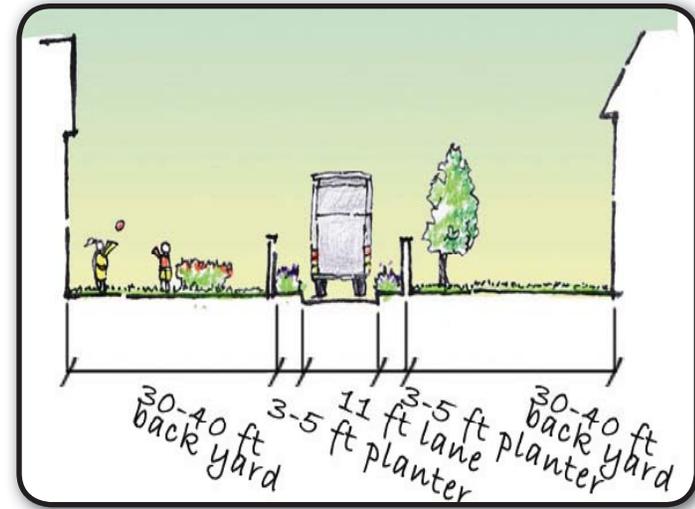


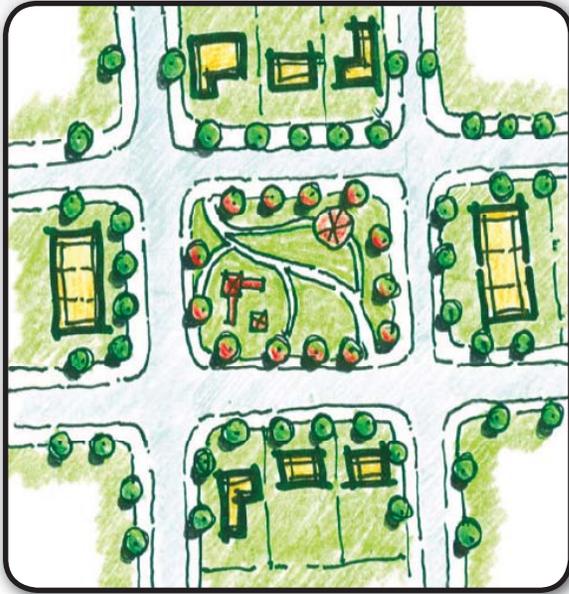
Alleyways:

A core value emphasized throughout the redevelopment project is the importance of creating a pedestrian oriented community conducive to walking as a primary means of moving throughout the neighborhoods. In an effort to accomplish this objective, infrastructure improvements will be required in each of the Priority Project Development Areas. Each of the redevelopment projects will include new alleyway system to facilitate rear access to garaged off-street parking.

Open Space Projects:

Open space in the area is limited and should be expanded to support new residents moving into the community. The amenities in the new and existing open space should create a safe and aesthetically appealing environment that includes benches, lighting, trees, and signage. Creating opportunities for more recreational activity through organized programming is a way to ensure its preservation and increased utilization as an open space amenity in the Laney Walker and Bethlehem community.





Single-family Residential Projects:

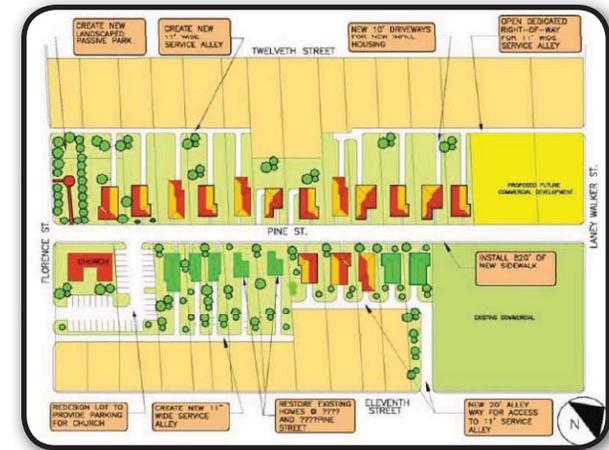
Building on the single-family character of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods, the plan proposes the preservation of the existing single-family character through a selective rehabilitation program while providing the opportunity to develop new single-family housing on existing vacant lots. The plan proposes an aggressive increase in the number of owner-occupied single-family homes.

A critical objective within the overall redevelopment strategy is to stabilize these neighborhoods through residential infill and rehabilitation projects that significantly increasing homeownership. An important part of the homeownership



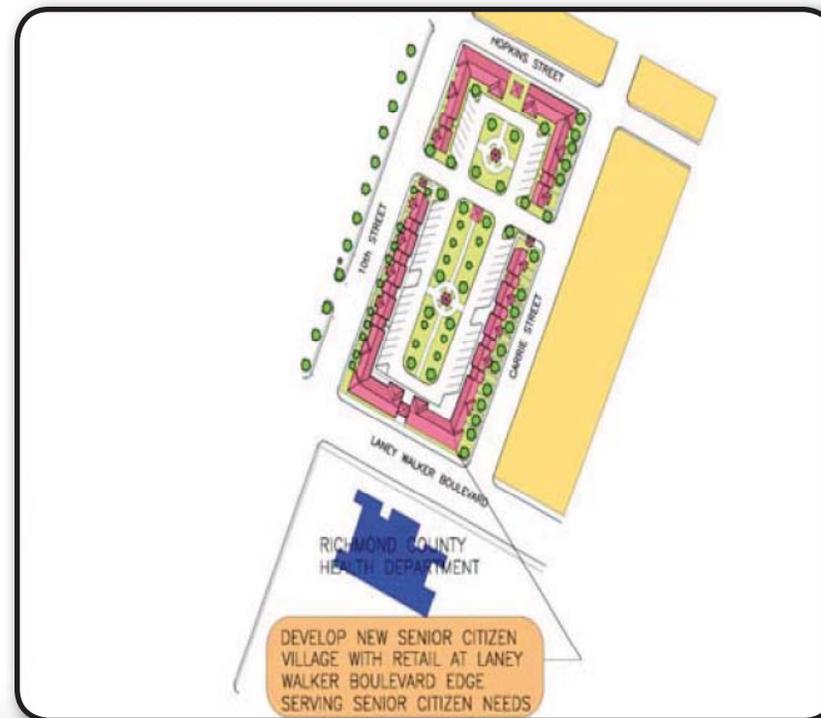
strategy is the creation of mixed income neighborhoods that will include a combination of low-to-moderate income first-time homebuyers and moderate to middle income homebuyers who desire in-town living. The Laney Walker/ Bethlehem homeownership project development approach will include several important elements:

- Building architecture that incorporates the existing historic character of the community
- Homeownership training through a home ownership center that prepares families and individuals for homeownership
- Financing and development subsidies that encourage non-profit and for-profit development and leverages the involvement of conventional lenders
- Mixed-Income development that attracts a range of household incomes
- Establish maintenance program for the elderly and grant assistance to correct code violations
- Assist investor owners repair their properties and keep rents affordable



Multi-family Residential Projects:

In an effort to provide a diversity of housing options to the area, higher density housing (such as 2 and 3 story multi-family apartments, townhomes, and senior citizen housing) is proposed on vacant lots. This development concept will strengthen the surrounding residential area and may present opportunities to spur other development in the urban redevelopment area due to an increase in households with varied income levels. In addition, there is a slight increase in multi-family development through the adaptive reuse of older buildings. The market indicates that this new housing option should perform well due to the location to the medical center and central business district as well as strengthen the surrounding neighborhood, amenities, schools and transportation system.

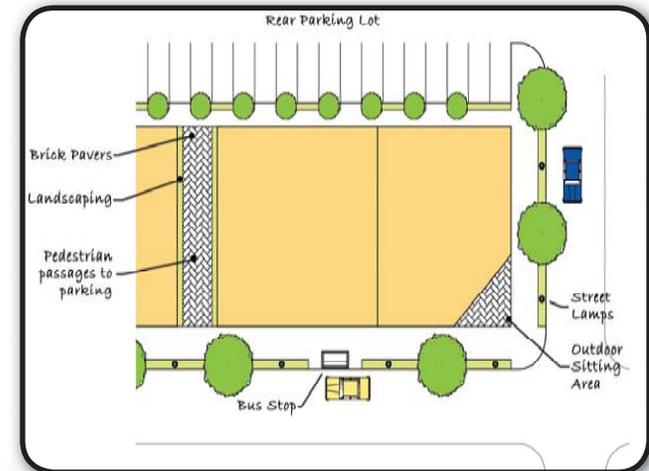
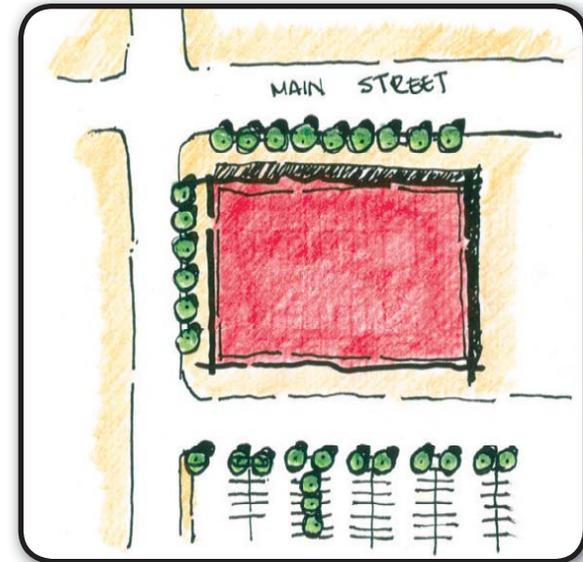


Mixed Use Projects:

Several of the initial Project Development Areas will support higher density and mixed-use development projects. Project Development Areas that are located within close proximity to the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) and the downtown business district are ideally suited for small apartment complexes, townhouse developments, and the development of neighborhood retail districts. It is anticipated that the neighborhood retail districts will feature ground floor retail and apartment located at the 2nd floor levels. Additional rental is proposed through the development of mixed-use projects that feature ground floor retail and second floor residential. The emphasis of the long-range planning is to promote single-family development and homeownership.

Stabilize the Retail and Commercial Corridors:

Laney Walker Boulevard is the primary historic retail corridor of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem communities. This street was once the source and home of entertainment and viable retail services. Due to location, heritage and close proximity to the Georgia Medical facility, Laney Walker Boulevard is ripe for revitalization and investment. As revitalization occurs, it is critical that the design and details of new and rehabilitated buildings are compatible with adjacent structures in terms scale and building materials. In addition, as other opportunities for retail and commercial development occur along the periphery of the area it is important to promote the development of both residential and non-residential development. Compatible uses may coexist and transition from single-family residential to the low to medium density retail/commercial; provisions are made to accommodate appropriate on-street and off-street parking; and that the development is designed to be neighborhood serving. These activity centers will act as a boost to the economic investment in the area.



Restoration of the Historic District:

Reinforcing the identity of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods by celebrating its heritage, history, and culture is essential to its revitalization. Portions of the study area have an extensive collection of early twentieth century housing stock, which has enabled these communities to receive a National Historic District designation. This Historic District extends to both the Laney Walker and Bethlehem community. Adopting restoration and design standards for initiatives involving existing properties and new developments respectively will ensure that the historic character will be preserved. It is important that, at a minimum, development standards be applied to properties located within proposed development areas. In addition, some level of development guidelines should be established throughout the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods for new infill construction as a means of protecting the character of the neighborhoods.



Also, it is important that redevelopment is achieved in a way that respects and celebrates the existing character and history of these historically significant communities. In an effort to ensure that this occurs the Laney Walker/Bethlehem Pattern Book, has been created to provide both guidance and tools for the designers and builders.

Property Acquisition, Disposition and Relocation:

While it is recognized that the private sector will be relied upon in many instances to initiate redevelopment as described in this plan, all properties within the Urban Redevelopment Area may be subject to City acquisition to proactively jump start redevelopment. To the extent that such power is used by the Augusta Housing and Community Development Department on behalf of the City, all procedures and requirements as set forth in the Urban Redevelopment Law shall apply.

Any such property that is acquired by the City of Augusta will be actively developed and disposed of according to the proposed plans and Redevelopment Controls as outlined in this plan. To the extent that occupied properties are acquired by the City, adequate relocation assistance will be duly provided within the Laney Walker and Bethlehem communities in full accordance with the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance Act of 1973.

4.0 Implementation Strategy

It is important to recognize that t public funding will be use to leverage the private sector funding needed to support the redevelopment projects in the Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area. The projected period for build out of the six Project Development Areas outlined above is 2009 thru 2017 at a cost of approx. \$99.3 million. During this period, approximately \$19 million in public funding will be needed to leverage approx. \$80.3 million in private funding.

To assist in the implementation of the priority projects identified in the previous section, the City of Augusta and AHCCD are expected to make the following development incentives and funding sources available for homeowners, investors and developers.

4.1 Incentives

Predevelopment Services:

One of the key incentives needed to attract builders and developer to the Laney Walker/ Bethlehem project is the ability to deliver pre-development services to “jump start” projects. As part of the incentive package offered to builders and developers, the Master Developer/AHCCD will provide architectural services, engineering services, marketing and public relations, home ownership counseling, survey work, and land assemblage for each of the initial Project Development Areas.



Homeownership Incentives for New In-fill Homes and Restoration of Vacant Houses:

As an incentive to increase home ownership in the LW/B neighborhoods AHCDD will provide a variety of incentives to new homebuyers including:

- Down payment and closing cost assistance to low-to-moderate income first-time homebuyers
- Funding to assist in the purchase of a new home dependent on the income of the homebuyer and amount of the conventional loan available to qualified homebuyers
 - Purchase assistance is a non-amortizing deferred loan at 0% interest with a term that is equal to the first mortgage, or for a term to-be-determined by the AHCDD. The loan will be a 2nd mortgage, collateralized by the property.

Incentives for Development Partners:

The AHCDD initiated a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to solicit qualified developers interested in working with the City of Augusta on projects in the Laney Walker and Bethlehem communities. Given the type of development all prospective development partners were evaluated on the basis of their prior development experiences in communities with characteristics similar to the LW/B neighborhoods. The solicitation noted that the AHCDD has started the land acquisition process in the target areas and expects to be responsible for all the acquisition activities required for each project. Six highly qualified developers were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Prior work with the AHCDD or similar community development agencies in the sales and marketing of homeownership units,
- Ability to secure the required financing,
- Work experience in developing projects on the basis of established design guidelines,
- Ability to communicate with neighborhood based community groups and resident stakeholders,
- Experience in coordination with local government officials all review/permit processes, and
- Experience in the management, development and delivery of high-density mixed use projects.

The AHCCD, as the Master Developer, understands the perceived risk in the early stages of redeveloping a community with characteristics identified in the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods. As a means of developing meaningful partnerships with the selected Development Partners, the AHCCD will assemble land needed for development and initially provide a full range of pre-development services including preparation of site plans, survey work, securing zoning variances, and preparation of construction drawings. In addition the AHCCD may provide the following financial incentives during the initial phases of developing the six to eight Project Development Areas:

- Payment of construction interest for up to six months on single family and duplex residential development projects
- Land write-down
- Fund up to 25% of the construction loan amount on single family and duplex residential developments

All development assistance is repaid as part of the proceeds derived from the sale of the home.

Incentives for Existing Owner-Occupants:

Despite the decrease in home ownership within the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods over the past 20 years, there still remains a significant number of existing lower income homeowners who serve as the foundation for many of the more stable areas of the community. An important part of the Laney Walker and Bethlehem redevelopment initiative is to work cooperatively with these stakeholders by providing incentives that encourages them to reinvest in their property. The renovation of existing owner-occupied homes are designed to help address existing code violations, address needed repairs that may become code violations within the next 3 to 5 years, and help stabilize the neighborhood block in which the home is located.

Qualified applicants will be eligible for structural, electrical, roofing, carpet replacement, plumbing and other repairs.

The Single Family Owner-Occupied Rehab program will feature:

- Deferred, non-amortizing 0% loans,



- The loan will be due and payable when the ownership of the house is transferred through the sale of the property or death of the owner

The program will be eligible to families with household income under 80% of the Augusta-Richmond County Median Area Income.

Incentives for Existing Investor Owners:

Currently there are more small investor-owners in the LW/B neighborhoods than owner-occupied households. While many of these properties will be acquired and demolished because of their current condition, there will be a significant number that will be renovated as part of the LW/B redevelopment process. Because of the large number of investor-owned homes that are occupied and need only minor to moderate rehabilitation, this project category represents the best opportunity to address the housing needs of current LW/B residents who will remain in the community are renters. The renovation of existing investor owned rental properties are designed to help address existing code violations, address needed repairs that may become code violations within the next 3 to 5 years, and help stabilize the neighborhood block in which the property is located.

The Investor Owner Rental Rehab Program will feature

- Up to 50% of the cost of rehab at 0% to 3% interest for a loan term of 5, 10, 15, or 20 years,
- The applicant will be required to provide matching funds and cover the cost of rehabilitation if it exceeds the maximum program limit,
- The assisted units must be occupied by families with incomes at or below 80% of the Augusta-Richmond County MAI, and
- Rehab standard will be established for all exterior and interior repairs.

Development Incentives for Mixed-use Projects:

Several of the qualified developers selected for the Laney Walker and Bethlehem redevelopment projects have extensive track records in the area of mixed use and higher density developments located in urban centers. Each of these highly qualified development

partners will be offered the following development incentives:

- Land write-downs
- ACHDD funding at below market rate financing,
 - Subordinated loan to the developer's first mortgage financing
 - Amount: To-be-determined based on the developer's commitment for conventional financing, projected cash flow, and debt coverage ratios
 - 5, 10, 15, 20, loan term to-be-determined based on projected cash flow, and debt coverage ratios

Incentives for Redevelopment of Existing Neighborhood Retail Property:

AHCDD will offer competitive matching financing as an incentive to owners of buildings and businesses to improve facades within the Laney Walker and Bethlehem redevelopment area. Special emphasis will be placed on existing neighborhood retail districts. Building owners, or business owners occupying storefronts, in an eligible building that have obtained written approval from building owners will be invited to participate in the program. Applicants must use the loan proceeds only on buildings within the designated Laney Walker and Bethlehem redevelopment area. Applicants must match loan funds dollar-for-dollar.

- The dollar for dollar match provided by the AHCDD shall be cash value for goods and services.

Façade matching loan terms and conditions:

- 0% to 3% interest
- Term of loan: 5, 10, 15, 20 years
- Deferred loan payments: Up to 18 months before first loan payment is due



4.2 Financing Options

The following section provides a general review of potential sources of funding for redevelopment programs. In general, a variety of financing options are presently available to the City and the Augusta Housing and Community Development Department for the Laney Walker – Bethlehem redevelopment area. Among these are the following:



Laney Walker Enterprise Zone

Augusta-Richmond County created an ordinance pursuant to the Georgia Enterprise Zone Employment Act of 1997 to provide tax incentives and other incentives establishing the Laney Walker Enterprise Zone to include business or service enterprises and housing enterprise zones.

Hotel Tax

Enabling legislation, which earmarked \$750,000 annually collected from a special \$1 per night room tax, supports the redevelopment efforts to purchase properties, complete infrastructure improvements and provide financial assistance to homebuyers within the Laney Walker – Bethlehem redevelopment area. Additionally, in December 2009 the Augusta Commission designated \$1 million to the revitalization effort in the form of a short-term loan from the city's general fund. To date approximately \$1.7million has been collected since April 2008 as part of the city's \$1 a night bed fee for hotels.

Bond Financing

The provisions of the Urban Redevelopment Law allow the City to issue revenue bonds to finance redevelopment actions. In addition to financing options under the Urban Redevelopment Law, the City may issue revenue bonds secured by the anticipated "tax increment" in the Urban Redevelopment Plan because it is largely co-terminous with or included in a taxable allocation district. Prior to the issuance of long-term revenue bonds, the City may issue bond anticipation notes or undertake other financing to provide up-front redevelopment actions until sufficient tax increment or other funds are available to amortize a bond issue.



5.0 Conclusion

This Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area conforms to the general plan for the City of Augusta as a whole and the Comprehensive Plan.

This plan represents a vision and guide for the redevelopment of select properties within these historic communities. This Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Area has witnessed periods of physical decline, economic and employment instability, population shift, and lack of investment. The cultural and historic prominence coupled with the hope and pride of its residences has helped this area slowly regain prominence.

To date, the strategy for development and growth in the Laney Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods has been fragmented and in many cases under-funded. One of the underlining strategies associated with establishing these neighborhoods as an Urban Redevelopment Area is the process of first documenting blight and then outlining a plan of action to eliminate blight. The plan of action documented through the Laney Walker and Bethlehem Urban Redevelopment Plan will leverage bond financing with private conventional financing and private equity. The Urban Redevelopment Agency of Augusta, and City officials responsible for executing the recommendations in the plan, will be guided by development programs and approaches described in this document.

The Challenge before the City is to use the plan as a tool to proactively plan and implement the physical development of the Laney Walker/Bethlehem community. Redevelopment of the area in a manner that celebrates its history and culture will provide a foundation for attracting new residents to these important neighborhoods and opportunities for economic development also.