

Focus Area Study FAQ

What is a “virtual open house” and how do I attend?

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Ivey’s “Safer at Home” order discouraging gatherings of more than ten people, staff will be adapting our normal public input practices to a virtual format. A virtual open house will be hosted via the “Zoom” application. Attendees will be able to join by registering [here](#) for the meeting. After registering, you will receive an email containing a link and meeting information. The purpose of the virtual open house is for staff to present information about the project, answer questions and receive comments. The meeting will be open throughout the day, but attendees may join the meeting when it is convenient for them to do so. Any presentations or data will be posted to the website for reference. Staff will be available to look at your individual property and answer any questions you may have. If you are unable to attend, please feel free to call, email, or make an appointment with the Planning Services Department to discuss individually.

Why did/didn’t I receive a postcard or letter about this?

When conducting a focus area study, we notify all property owners that are immediately within the study area boundary via mail. The property owner information is taken directly from the Lee County Tax Assessor’s public property tax data. Outdated mailing addresses can and do lead to interrupted communications, but we are happy to file a preferred contact for subsequent mail outs during the study. In addition to mail outs, staff also post banner signs in the area to notify others who may be interested as well as provide project updates on the City’s webpage.

What is the difference between land use and zoning?

Zoning is a legal, enforceable part of City Code that is used to regulate the use of land and the type, scale, and intensity of use on that land. **Current land use** is a description of how a parcel of land is currently being used; broad categories include residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional; land use designations can also be more specific. The **Future Land Use Plan** is *advisory* in nature and is intended to help achieve Auburn’s long-range vision. The Future Land Use Plan provides parcel-level recommendations for the type, location and scale of new development for the existing city limits as well as potential areas of growth as property owners elect to annex into the city. A parcel’s future land use designation may be the same or may differ from its current use. If the designation is the same as its current use, then the Future Land Use Plan recommends that no change occur. If the designation is different than the current use, the Future Land Use Plan may recommend a use if the owner desires to develop or redevelop the land.

How does the Future Land Use designation affect my property?

Zoning determines how a property can be developed in the here and now. Unlike zoning, the future land use designation is somewhat more abstract. **The future land use designation is advisory, and is a recommendation by the planning staff on what *should* or *might* be done with the property in the future based on growth trends and infrastructure needs.** While the future land use has no bearing on your property today, it can influence the use of the property should you or a subsequent owner wish to annex property into the city for development/redevelopment or rezone property currently in the city limits. Property in the county is not subject to zoning regulations.

Can a future land use designation be “down-graded”?

Yes, but there are limitations. A “down-grade” can occur when the future land use designation recommends a use that is less intense than what the current zoning district permits. “Down-grading” property whose current zoning already allows development greater than the proposed future designation is impractical, and is avoided where possible. **Even in such cases, the zoning of the property will take precedence because zoning establishes legal rights while the future land use designation simply helps guide decision-making.**

How do I find out what the future land use designation is for my property?

Open the Future Land Use web map at the link below. You can search for a property by the address (if it is in the city limits) or by panning the screen to find a property. You can click on any property and a pop-up will tell you what the future land use designation is for that property.

<https://webgis.auburnalabama.org/futurelanduse/>

How do I find out what my property is zoned?

Open the COA web map at the link below. Type in your address in the “Search for...” bar at the top left corner. Open the “Layer List” by clicking the icon that looks like three sheets of paper stacked on top of each other at the right-hand corner. In the list, there is a “Planning Layers” label with an arrow next to it. Expand the label to show all planning layers. Enable “Zoning Layers” by checking the box next to the label. The map should now populate with colors indicating zoning districts. Any property in the city limits can be selected and it will display the zoning district for that property.

<https://webgis.auburnalabama.org/coamap/>

What is the barcode on the postcard/letter I received used for?

A QR Code (abbreviated from Quick Response code) is a barcode that allows smartphone users to quickly access a website. iPhone users can use their camera to access the webpage directly. Some Android phones may be configured through their settings to do this as well. The QR code is a link to the U.S. Highway 280 Corridor Focus Area Study webpage below.

<https://www.auburnalabama.org/future/280-focus-area-study/>