



RENEW OPELIKA ROAD

PLAN JUSTIFICATION

WHY DO WE NEED A PLAN FOR OPELIKA ROAD?

- A successful corridor depends on the quality of the public realm and the businesses, institutions, and residences that are adjacent to it.
- The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the importance of focusing on infill development, and the Opelika Road corridor contains a large number of infill sites.

The Opelika Road corridor in its current condition does not possess a character that reflects well on the community:

Public Realm

- In most areas, the street right-of-way is designed to focus on automobile travel to the exclusion of other considerations.
- The street design encourages high vehicle speeds. This is particularly true of the section between North Dean Road and the Opelika city limits.
- There are limited or no provisions for pedestrian or bicycle access.
- Aesthetically unappealing and/or outdated infrastructure
 - Exposed stormwater infrastructure (open ditches)
 - No streetscape (street trees, medians)
 - Excessive curb cuts
- The corridor serves as an important connection between Opelika, Downtown Auburn, Village Mall, and Auburn University.
- Existing zoning is an impediment to redevelopment.

Private Realm

- Certain properties are undeveloped or contain vacant buildings and/or sites which are not well-maintained.
- Other properties are underdeveloped, but have significant development potential.
- Minimal amounts of landscaping with notable exceptions along certain roadway edges.
- Buildings and parking areas are often designed and placed on individual parcels with little consideration to the character of adjacent developments or of an overall theme.
- Many parcels are deep with little road frontage, making development difficult.
- Along certain sections of Opelika Road, the character of many developments reinforce a negative image.
- Many existing developments do not conform to current zoning regulations.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF RENEW OPELIKA ROAD?

The purpose of Renew Opelika Road is to revitalize and redevelop one of the City's most important corridors. The corridor is currently at an inflection point; intervention now will help us to not only prevent the corridor's further decline, but help to grow the corridor into the vibrant, beautiful, and economically-productive area that it has the potential to be.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO HIRE AN OUTSIDE CONSULTANT TO COMPLETE THE PLAN?

- With the completion of CompPlan 2030, the City is working to implement many of the plan's recommendations. Completion of a plan for Opelika Road is just one of these recommendations. Hiring an outside consultant will allow City staff to continue work on other important CompPlan initiatives while managing the overall work of the consultants.
- The City recognizes the urgent need to take action on Opelika Road. Hiring an experienced consultant team will allow the planning process to be completed more quickly than if completed solely in-house.
- The consultant team brings extensive experience and success in planning for corridors across the country.
- The consultant team consists of professional planners, architects, landscape architects, real estate consultants, and transportation planners and engineers with significant expertise working on corridor plans throughout the country.

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES WILL STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC HAVE TO BE INVOLVED?

Key to the planning process is an extensive process of public engagement. This will include:

- Property owner and business community representation on the project steering committee
- Engagement with a broad array of stakeholders through individual interviews and focus groups
- Online surveys and input
- Three design charrettes with interactive elements to engage stakeholders and the general public

WHAT WILL THE CITY RECEIVE FOR ITS MONETARY INVESTMENT IN THE PLAN?

The City will receive a comprehensive planning document that will address:

1. Project Introduction
 - a. Intent and scope
 - b. Project Steering Committee
2. Corridor Vision
 - a. Goals and Objectives
3. Existing Conditions and Trends
 - a. Land Analysis
 - b. Market Study
 - c. Transportation Study
 - d. Performance measures
4. Stakeholder and Public Input
 - a. One-on-one Interviews
 - b. Focus Groups
 - c. On-line surveys and input
 - d. Charrettes 1-3
5. Land Use Plan Alternatives
 - a. Preferred land use patterns
 - b. Recommended densities
 - c. Overall landscape, environmental, and aesthetic themes and improvements
 - d. Public open space and other amenities
 - e. Accommodations for parking
 - f. Recommendations concerning parcels to be acquired and existing buildings to be replaced or rehabilitated (by the private or public sector) along the Opelika Road Corridor
6. Transportation and Traffic Improvement Alternatives
 - a. Access management plan
 - b. Other transportation improvements
7. Conceptual Streetscape Plan

- a. Accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists
 - b. Pavement, crosswalk, and other materials recommendations
 - c. Site furnishing recommendations
 - d. Planting recommendations
 - e. Stormwater treatments
 - f. Gateway or nodal treatments
8. Implementation and Funding
- a. Private and public financing options
 - b. Financial incentives
 - c. Joint public/private development opportunities
 - d. Public investment
 - e. Property assembly
 - f. Regulatory changes

HOW WILL THE PLAN BE IMPLEMENTED?

As with CompPlan 2030, the outcomes of the plan will be a series of recommendations for implementation. The difference between CompPlan 2030 and Renew Opelika Road is, however, that the recommendations will both be more specific and will include designs for capital improvements such as streetscaping. Recommendations for capital items such as street improvements will be implemented through direct capital investment from the City; recommendations for zoning or incentive programs will require additional action, such as zoning changes or program creation, before becoming effective. Such action will take place separate from and immediately following the Renew Opelika Road planning process.