

West Florence NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Adopted by the

City of Florence Planning Commission
February 24, 2009

Ratified by the City Council
March 3rd, 2009



West Florence Redevelopment/Community Committee

Ms. Barbara Abbott
Mr. Charles Armstead
Ms. Priscilla Armstead
Ms. Odessa Bailey
Mr. & Mrs. B. T. Beckwith
Ms. Hezzie Brannon
Mr. Dwight Brown
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Brown
Ms. Eddie B. Crayton
Ms. Ann Cole Doxie
Ms. Ioda Ford
Ms. Bonnie Sue Grant
Ms. Marion Green
Ms. Natalie Gordon
Ms. Easter Henderson
Ms. Bettie Hooks
Mr. Bennie Jarmon
Mr. Charlie J. Johnson, Sr.
Ms. Flora Johnson
Ms. Bessie S. Lovelace
Ms. Joyce Malone
Ms. Deborah Martin
Ms. Cadella McDaniel
Ms. Lorene Mitchell
Ms. Lazine Naphier
Rev. T. W. Parker, Pastor
Ms. Martha Pride
Mr. Bennie Ragland
Ms. Martha M. Rowell, Secretary
Ms. Lola Scott
Ms. Katie Simmons
Ms. Nina Stovall
Ms. Vernell Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. John Waits
Mr. Terry Wells
Ms. Mary Frances Williams

For copies of this document, please contact the City of Florence Planning Department

West Florence NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Using the Neighborhood Plan	3
II. THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN AND PROCESS.....	5
Neighborhood Assets	5
Neighborhood Issues	6
Visions for the West Florence Neighborhood	8
“WOWs” for West Florence.....	9
III. EXISTING CONDITIONS / OPPORTUNITIES.....	11
IV. NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC CONCEPT	13
Major Elements of the Concept.....	13
Gateways / Image Corridors	13
Green Infrastructure – Parks and Open Space	13
Activity Centers	14
Housing.....	14
Transportation.....	15
Conclusion.....	15
V. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS	17
Green Infrastructure, Parks and Open Space.....	17
Green Infrastructure Policies	18
Proposed Park Improvements	19
Gateways and Image Corridors	22
Neighborhood Activity Centers.....	25
Neighborhood Activity Center Policies	26
Neighborhood Commercial Centers	27
Neighborhood Institutional Centers	28
Retail Development Opportunities	29
Proposed Neighborhood Centers	30
Housing	32
Neighborhood Reinvestment Principles	34
Neighborhood Design Criteria.....	35
Housing Proposal.....	37
Streets and Sidewalks.....	38
Street Design Standards	39
Street Connectivity Projects.....	39
Sidewalks	40
VI. IMPLEMENTATION.....	41
Regulations.....	41

Zoning Ordinance	42
Subdivision Regulations	43
Access Management Standards.....	43
Public Improvements.....	43
Gateways and Signage	44
Streets and Sidewalks	44
Drainage and Utilities Improvements	45
Community Facilities.....	45
Parks and Recreation Projects.....	45
Funding.....	45
Tax Increment Financing	45
Conclusion.....	46
APPENDIX A: Economic Report	47
APPENDIX B: Meeting Notes.....	66
APPENDIX C: Illustrative Map.....	69

West Florence NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West Florence Neighborhood Plan is an extension and detailing of the City of Florence Comprehensive Plan. The neighborhood plan was developed through a series of meetings and community presentation that included local residents, the West Florence Redevelopment/ Community Committee and City representatives, with assistance from the planning consultants of KPS Group, Inc. of Birmingham and economic development consultants Dr. Arthur Allaway and Suzanna Allaway of Tuscaloosa Alabama.

The planning process was crafted to elicit the ideas and opinions of the community and to craft a consensus, illustrative vision for the West Florence Neighborhood. The process began with a community workshop with the West Florence Redevelopment/ Community Committee,



during which attendees provided the basis of the plan by sharing their thoughts and ideas on assets, issues, opportunities and visions for the neighborhood. During the next several community meetings, which were held at Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, local residents and citizens of Florence were invited to attend to hear the findings of the Committee and provide feedback to both the Committee and the planning consultants regarding any additional ideas, concerns or visions for the West Florence Neighborhood. During these meetings, KPS Group presented the plan as it had evolved through community participation.

This specific plan illustrates a vision for the West Florence Neighborhood as the prescribed by the community through the series of neighborhood meetings. The Plan is a



culmination of balancing the neighborhood's assets, issues, and opportunities. It illustrates the community's vision for the neighborhood, provides guidelines and recommendations for future growth, and demonstrates the ways in which several potential projects may help to realize the community's own vision for the West Florence Neighborhood.

The primary goals for the neighborhood outlines in the plan include:

Parks and Open Space

Enhance existing parks while utilizing and capturing opportunities to develop new parks that will serve the residents of West Florence and the citizens of the City of Florence. Proposed parks would serve multiple functions including passive and active recreation and places to celebrate the history and community of West Florence.

Gateways and Image Corridors

Maintain and enhance positive images throughout the West Florence Neighborhood, along major streets and gateways with the use of landscaping, streetlights, sidewalks, street design and quality private development.

Activity Centers

Encourage and enhance quality commercial and mixed-use development in neighborhood commercial centers that maximize the use of available land, retain and build upon West Florence's history, character and community. This will include building upon and reusing existing institutional centers to support the quality of life in the West Florence Neighborhood.

Housing

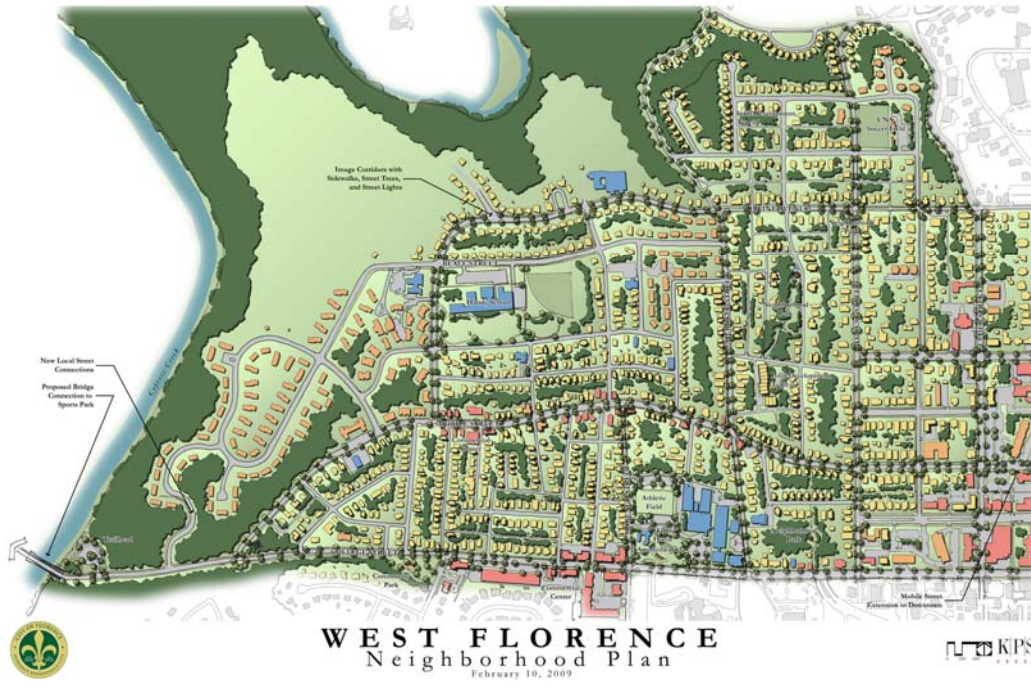
Encourage redevelopment and infill development that will build upon the values of the community and meets neighborhood standards of design and excellence, ensuring that new housing provides and meets the diversity needs of West Florence.

Streets and Sidewalks

Create an interconnected system of streets and sidewalks for the West Florence Neighborhood that will provide connections to existing activity centers and create new opportunities for commercial, recreational, and living opportunities within the neighborhood. The system of streets and sidewalks will be designed to provide for additional needs of the neighborhood by including street trees and lights and shall convey the neighborhood's ideals for safety while reflecting community pride.

It has been clear throughout the planning process that the goals of this specific plan will not be achieved overnight. It is also clear that the various public and community actions identified in the plan must be coordinated to assure effectiveness and efficiency, and must be prioritized to provide an attainable and realistic schedule for implementation.

The West Florence Neighborhood Plan does not seek to reinvent West Florence but instead to gather, identify and direct a commonly held vision for the neighborhood's future – one that builds upon the neighborhood's unique assets, history and community to further the safety, comfort and quality of its neighborhoods. The plan is a reflection of the West Florence community, whose members desire to move forward together, respecting one another's property rights and shared heritage.



I. INTRODUCTION

West Florence is one of the city's great neighborhoods—one in which its diverse community of residents and property owners honors its past and sees its potential. The members of the community bring to their neighborhood a level of care and pride in where each one lives and works that lends energy and heart to all facets of this neighborhood and this plan for its future.

Many of the residents and property owners of West Florence participated in preparing the new citywide Comprehensive Plan. Through that experience they realized how planning at a more specific neighborhood scale would help to focus on efforts to improve the quality of life for their own community. That realization has led to the preparation of this West Florence Neighborhood Plan.

The Florence Comprehensive Plan lays out a citywide vision for growth and investment. This is the first neighborhood plan and may serve as a model for detailed planning and urban design to extend and to provide greater detail for the citywide plan. The intention of this particular specific plan is to focus attention on the West Florence Neighborhood and to define a vision and plan for growth based on the community's own ideas in harmony with the overarching goals and vision provided by the citywide Comprehensive Plan.

The planning process relied heavily on community interaction, review and consensus. The project began with the formation of a West Florence Redevelopment/Community Committee to oversee and to guide the preparation of the plan, and it has become the backbone for citizen participation in the planning process. The results of each phase of plan preparation and development was reviewed and approved by the West Florence Redevelopment/Community Committee and shared with the residents of West Florence.

The West Florence Neighborhood Plan:

- *Illustrates ways and directions in which the neighborhood should grow, redevelop and invest over time.*
- *Provides a guide to land use and development decisions and a basis for making and revising regulations regarding type, intensity and character of development.*
- *Helps to ensure that, as development occurs, the neighborhood's most significant natural and cultural features are preserved and enhanced.*
- *Strives to protect and to improve property values.*
- *Illustrates a pattern for land use and investment aimed at reinforcing a more sustainable community of residents and property owners.*

- *Encourages community interaction and reflects the values and beliefs of the neighborhood.*
- *Coordinates land use and development recommendations with those for infrastructure improvements.*

The City Council, Planning Commission and citizens of the West Florence neighborhood intend to continually refer to this document in order to:

- *Visualize what may be reasonably expected to occur in West Florence as an aid to making development investment decisions.*
- *Review and evaluate development proposals—to test the fit with West Florence’s vision and expectations.*
- *Review rezoning requests—as an essential part of determining appropriateness.*
- *Provide guidance regarding adoption of development regulations and amendments.*
- *Identify and advise regarding priorities for infrastructure investments—streets, greenways, parks, schools and other public facilities.*



West Florence Neighborhood Planning Boundary

The West Florence Neighborhood Plan recognizes the value of the community’s investments in private property and public infrastructure, the quality of the natural and built environment, and the history of the neighborhood and its traditional

values. The plan encourages reinvestment that will balance growth with conservation of important natural and community resources.

The neighborhood's activity centers, image corridors and gateways are located to encourage concentration of a variety of functions and activities in appropriate locations. Public and private open space, streets, sidewalks, other pedestrian ways, and neighborhood residential patterns are organized to support these focal points and corridors.

The City of Florence intends to encourage and to support land uses and reinvestment that are located, planned and designed in a manner compatible with the patterns indicated in this plan in order to stimulate opportunities for creativity, efficiency, stability and diversity.

Using the Neighborhood Plan

This plan is a combination of vision, maps, development policies and guidelines. It provides a framework for guiding public and private decisions that will affect the growth, development and reinvestment of the West Florence Neighborhood. The plan is based on the community's vision for its own future—a long-term vision that may not be fully achievable in the lifetime of those participating in drafting the plan. Nevertheless, the plan looks ahead, focuses on the physical form and character of the neighborhood, and strives to shape development of public and private properties.

Like the citywide comprehensive plan, this document provides a *guide* to future development. It is designed to assist public officials and private citizens alike as they consider making investments that may have long-term implications for the community. The plan will be implemented through cooperative investments and other actions of developers and various private citizens, city staff, the Florence Planning Commission, various public boards and commissions, and the Florence City Council.

Public actions in support of plan implementation may include enforcement and revision of various parts of the city's growth management system. These may include development regulations, the capital improvement programming process as it relates to the city budgeting system, and decisions about the appropriateness of development proposals.

The West Florence Neighborhood Plan is intended to be a living document, to create a vision, and to provide guidance to achieve the vision. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment can the plan fully serve the West Florence Neighborhood.

II. THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN AND PROCESS

The West Florence Neighborhood contains a wealth of people, places and history, all of which played a part in the creation of this plan. The planning process relied heavily on continuing public participation, guidance and review.

To begin, the city and consultant engaged members of the West Florence Redevelopment/ Community Committee in a public discussion of existing conditions and residents' values and goals, and their visions for the neighborhood. Participants were provided a brief overview of the neighborhood and its resources, using maps of existing physical features, critical infrastructure, land use, zoning and other information. This was followed by discussion based on a series of questions designed to elicit specific comments and suggestions. KPS Group also presented the same background information and the results of the committee meeting to members of the neighborhood at large in a community meeting to elicit additional comments and share all that had been learned. The following is a summary of the main themes of the responses in each of several categories. Each section contains a representative sample of the responses gathered from the public meetings. A complete list of responses is included in the appendix.

Neighborhood Assets

Those attending meetings of West Florence Redevelopment/Community Committee and residents of the neighborhood at the community meetings were asked what they considered *assets* of West Florence—those features they hold in especially high regard and set their neighborhood apart from other places. The summary of responses has been organized here for convenience, but no attempt has been made to rank them in order of importance.

- People
- Churches
- W.C. Handy Home
- Handy School
- Handy Recreation Center
- The hospital
- Shopping on College Street
- City Recreation Department
- UNA relationship
- Undeveloped land
- Cypress Creek

The locations of these assets are illustrated on the following page.



West Florence Neighborhood Assets

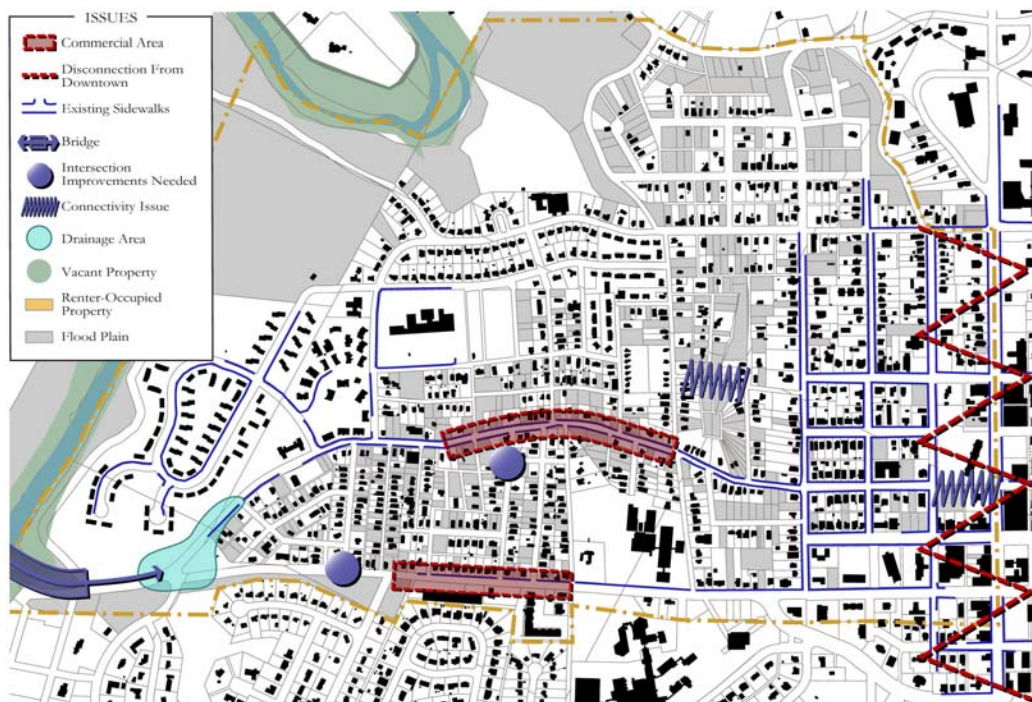
The West Florence Neighborhood is rich in physical resources. Nestled, as it is, between downtown Florence, Cypress Creek and the Tennessee River, the neighborhood contains some of the city’s most important historic resources, including many of the city’s landmarks. Local retail areas are embraced by a strong residential and community pattern. Neighborhood values are seen clearly in the churches and neighborhood facilities, including the recreation center, the W.C. Handy Home, and the Handy School. One of the greatest assets of West Florence is its proximity to downtown Florence and to the great variety of services in the area, including retail, health care, finance, recreation and higher education.

West Florence is a neighborhood that is also rich in social history—not only of Florence, but also of the region and state. The neighborhood’s community of concerned residents and volunteers consistently strive for the best for West Florence and the city as a whole.

Neighborhood Issues

Regardless of the affection shown by participants for their neighborhood, they made it clear that work remains to be done to bring various conditions up to the standards they would like to enjoy throughout the neighborhood. Again, the responses are organized, but not ranked in order of importance.

- Perception
- Lack of businesses
- Dilapidated buildings
- Lack of youth and senior activities/ centers
- City maintenance
- Closure of Mobile Street to the West; lack of a bridge
- Closure of Mobile Street to Downtown
- Lack of sidewalks
- Lack of street trees
- Landfill and cleanup
- Lack of developer



West Florence Neighborhood Issues

The consensus of the participants is there are too few community entertainment facilities, parks and recreational amenities, youth and senior facilities and services available in and adjacent to the neighborhood. Residents want additional sidewalks and street lighting. They noted especially that their neighborhood needs better connectivity for both vehicles and pedestrians. This includes in particular such infrastructure investments as restoration of the western bridge across Cypress Creek to allow direct access to Highway 20 and the new City of Florence Sports Park.

Residents noted deficiencies in the number, variety and quality of local businesses. They realize the need for and welcome additional private and public

investment. In addition to commercial needs the community also noted issues of the present residential patterns and the quality of housing in the neighborhood, citing examples of vacant, overgrown and blighted lots and structures (some seemingly abandoned). Too many cars are parked in front yards rather than in driveways. Residents cited vandalism and particular problem areas related to drainage and sight distances for turning movements.

Participants noted the citywide perception of the isolation of their neighborhood within the larger community. For example, it is rare to be able to receive a delivery at night. There is reportedly lack of consistent city maintenance, especially under utility lines and of sidewalks, and lack of cleanup following construction. These issues led to discussion of concerns regarding communication between the city government and the neighborhood, and the perception of the neighborhood portrayed in local media.

Visions for the West Florence Neighborhood

Building upon their discussions of assets, issues, and outside influences, participants were asked to envision West Florence as they would like it to be a decade or so from now. Following a few moments to consider this, individuals were asked to share with others at least one significant physical aspect of their community vision that is perceived to be absent from the West Florence Neighborhood today. The responses have been organized into several types, but no attempt has been made to set priorities, since none were agreed to during the initial public meetings.

- Respect
- Quality homes
- More local businesses
- Infill and redevelopment
- Clean up overgrown areas
- Better relationship with City
- Positive media attention
- Safer
- Better lighting
- Sidewalks
- Parks
- Slower traffic

The participants stressed the need for a unified vision of and for the neighborhood—an overall strategy for achieving their vision adopted as city policy and pursued consistently. West Florence should have an improved image overall. Development should be intentional, in accord with this neighborhood plan in support of the Florence Comprehensive Plan. Adjacent land uses and development densities, including those resulting from reinvestment in vacant and underutilized properties, should be compatible with one another and with the neighborhood as a whole.

The West Florence Neighborhood should be accessible. It should encourage walking and community interaction. The neighborhood should be strengthened through development of appropriately scaled activity centers. The city and neighborhood should seek reinvestment and new housing opportunities; while at the same time protect the community from inappropriate development.

Participants envision new parks, open spaces and other accessible gathering spaces that would help provide incentives for new investment. There should be direct vehicular and pedestrian access to the new Florence Sports Park, and the neighborhood as a whole should be clean and safe.

West Florence should become an even more walkable neighborhood, with a complete network of well-lit sidewalks linking not only neighborhood destinations, but also the neighborhood with its surrounding areas. There should be safe pedestrian crossings, and neighborhood vehicular traffic should be calmed by the design of the street. Sidewalks and trails should interconnect parks, recreation areas, schools and downtown. Commercial shopping destinations should be pedestrian friendly and connected by sidewalks to the entire neighborhood. The neighborhood's street trees should be well maintained.

During the public meeting, participants indicated their desire for reinvestment in and expansion of its local commercial areas. The neighborhood should be a place that encourages and draws new business and retail opportunities to serve all the citizens of Florence. The neighborhood's commercial centers should be places for the community as a whole to gather and shop as a way to help reflect community pride and present a positive attitude.

West Florence should continue to value its historic resources and become adept at capturing its value for the community and the City of Florence. This should parallel public and private efforts for neighborhood preservation and enhancement. West Florence and the city should celebrate their local history and their values. The West Florence Neighborhood should foster and encourage positive images and attitudes. The neighborhood should capitalize on its housing opportunities and encourage new and infill growth to add to and complement the community values and character of the existing neighborhood.

“WOWs” for West Florence

Building upon the personal visions expressed in the meetings, the planning team asked the residents,

What would make you say, ‘Wow!’— which of your visions being realized during the next few years would make you proud to have been a part of this process, and proud to have completed and followed your own neighborhood plan in the years to come?

The answers to “the WOW question” were diverse, and they built upon their visions for the future. Responses included a drug free neighborhood, a clean neighborhood filled with well-maintained homes and properties; neighbors interacting with one another at commercial centers; new parks and rebuilt connections to existing facilities. New investment and development would be seen throughout the neighborhood. The neighborhood would have a stronger connection with the city, both physically and with improved communication with city government. The perception of the West Florence Neighborhood would be positive throughout the city.

III. EXISTING CONDITIONS / OPPORTUNITIES

West Florence is a diverse neighborhood located in close proximity to downtown in the heart of the city. The neighborhood contains a variety of assets and existing physical conditions that provide opportunities for preservation and enhancement of the places valued by the West Florence community.



West Florence Neighborhood Opportunities

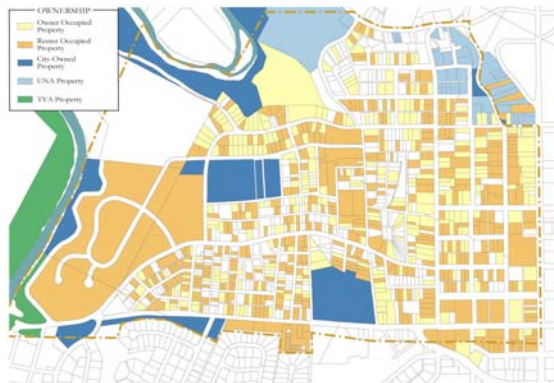
West Florence has many interconnected streets, creating a grid pattern with very few dead end or cul-de-sac streets. This pattern allows for vehicular and pedestrian access in and through the neighborhood. However, the pattern is broken in several locations, Tuscaloosa Street ending at Locust Street, Mobile Street ending at Cedar Street and College Street ending at Cypress Creek, to name a few. Some exist because of historic patterns and decisions of growth, such as removal of the Cypress Creek Bridge on College Street. Each presents opportunities to extend the existing street pattern, thereby creating stronger connections to downtown and to amenities such as the new City of Florence Sports Park.



The neighborhood street system contains an incomplete network of sidewalks. Completing the pattern would provide a means not only of moving about the neighborhood but also of getting to destinations within and adjacent to the neighborhood, including parks and open space; institutional destinations such as schools and museums; medical care and shopping and dining destinations. There are commercial areas along College and Mobile Streets, and a variety of historic places and activity centers that include the Handy House, the Burrell Slater School, the Handy Recreation Center, neighborhood churches and scattered retail locations. Each of these spaces and activity centers was mentioned as an asset during public meetings.



Along with the variety of existing neighborhood places and activity centers, there also exist a variety of housing choices. Individuals, the City of Florence, the University of North Alabama and TVA are all neighborhood landowners. Each represents a potential opportunity and partner for neighborhood growth and reinvestment.



There also exists a significant number of undeveloped and vacant properties. Undeveloped and vacant parcels are possible places for new homes, infill, and redevelopment projects. Each presents added opportunity for reinvestment and development in keeping with the goals and visions of the community.



The neighborhood's existing conditions, coupled with the community's perceived assets, goals and visions, present unique opportunities that are the foundation for this neighborhood plan. It is from these opportunities that the Strategic Concept outlined in the next chapter emerged—a pattern of desired private investment and public improvements within the West Florence Neighborhood.

IV. NEIGHBORHOOD STRATEGIC CONCEPT

The strategy for improving and enhancing the quality of life in West Florence is based on the strong value system expressed by local residents and the positive attitudes and responses they shared with one another during the community meeting. A plan built on their visions for West Florence.

The Strategic Concept provides what might be considered a “road map” to the physical design issues the neighborhood plan can address. The plan gathers and organizes the responses from the community and presents them in a graphic format. The plan is built from community responses, the physical mapping system, and the opportunities identified for West Florence.

The strategic concept presented in this chapter supports appropriate local commerce, recreation and institutions in locations accessible to people living and working in the neighborhood and its potential trade area. It protects the neighborhood’s streets while upgrading pedestrian, bicycle and motor vehicle accessibility. And the strategy focuses attention on improving and adding to the neighborhood’s recreation facilities and expanding its residential base through new development, infill and reinvestment by both the private and public sectors.

Major Elements of the Concept

The West Florence Neighborhood will have a plan and program for guiding public and private investment that supports its planned image, health, safety and welfare.

Gateways / Image Corridors

- West Florence will be a legible neighborhood—its edges and connectivity will be clear and visitors will be readily able to find their destinations. Gateways and image corridors are identified and defined and the streets will reflect an appropriate image.

Green Infrastructure – Parks and Open Space

- The West Florence Neighborhood’s *green infrastructure*, consisting of its park and recreation places, in combination with Cypress Creek and the neighborhood’s ponds, streams and floodplains, augmented by major portions of its tree cover, will be conserved and respected.
- There will be a trail system interconnecting major recreation and civic resources, including parks and open spaces.
- Unique parks and open spaces will serve as neighborhood gathering spaces and provide multiple activities.

Activity Centers

- The West Florence Neighborhood will have a plan and vision for commercial infill and reinvestment and for new commercial development in and around the neighborhood that will strengthen and add to its character.
- There are specific recommendations for appropriate development in each activity center type.
- There are recommendations regarding how new commercial development shall be developed to complement and support the neighborhood.
- Development is directed toward appropriate locations to enhance existing activity centers and to capitalize on vacant and undeveloped properties.
- The neighborhood will capitalize on its existing institutional activity centers with proposed ideas for the expansion of services, new design and potential re- use of existing spaces.
- There are recommendations regarding ways in which existing institutional activity centers may be enhanced to support the neighborhood.



West Florence Neighborhood Strategic Development Concept

Housing

- The West Florence Neighborhood will capitalize on opportunities of undeveloped and vacant lands for new housing growth.

- Specific locations are identified for potential new housing projects.
- Design standards and criteria for new housing will ensure compatibility with the existing neighborhood.
- Infill development is encouraged throughout the neighborhood, in keeping with the context and character of surrounding housing types and densities and the neighborhood's green infrastructure.
- Plans for new and infill housing development will fit and relate to the existing neighborhood and activity centers.
- There are tools recommended to encourage development of owner-occupied housing.

Transportation

- The West Florence Neighborhood's pedestrian network will be expanded through construction of sidewalks to provide access to neighborhood activity centers and to park and recreation facilities within and adjacent to the neighborhood.
- Development recommendations are included for construction of sidewalks in commercial and neighborhood development.
- Trail and sidewalk system interconnections of recreation, civic and commercial activity centers are recommended.
- All neighborhood streets will be managed, to improve and balance mobility and accessibility.
- The quality and capacity of the neighborhood's street system are to be upgraded through improvements to selected intersections and pedestrian crossings.
- Key street intersections are identified for further study and design refinement.
- New streets and other connections are proposed to enhance the neighborhood and provide greater connectivity: a new bridge connecting College Street with Highway 20; extension of Mobile Street into Downtown Florence; extension of Tuscaloosa Street to Cherokee Street; and selected other local street extensions.

Conclusion

The West Florence Neighborhood, through implementation of this plan, intends to strategically focus population concentrations upon commercial and institutional centers, supported by residential neighborhoods and interspersed with and structured by green corridors, all interconnected by a variety of accessibility options intended to require less automobile travel, provide better opportunities for future transit, and minimize adverse environmental effects.

The Strategic Concept is designed to build on the spirit of the people who make up the community of the West Florence Neighborhood, their history and their successes. The intent of this concept is to capitalize on the resources of the neighborhood within the city as a whole, and to build upon local history, traditions and institutions in combination with the physical advantages of the neighborhood's location and setting. The concept provides a physical expression of a consensus vision as presented in Chapter II, capitalizes on opportunities presented in Chapter III and provides a general, overall framework for the Strategic Development Components as outlined in Chapter V.

V. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS

No single solution can fully address the number and diversity of assets, visions and opportunities for the West Florence Neighborhood. The Strategic Concept outlined in the previous chapter combines a variety of physical ideas that may be used to help transform “space” into “place,” enhance neighborhood assets, and capitalize on opportunities in the neighborhood. The majority are physical design solutions based on ideas from and discussed with the West Florence Redevelopment/Community Committee and residents. All are consistent with and compatible to the City of Florence Comprehensive Plan

Green Infrastructure, Parks and Open Space

West Florence is located within and surrounded by a wealth of natural resources as defined in the City of Florence Comprehensive Plan. Natural resources have limits, and development decisions typically affect far more than the property’s owner and those in the immediate neighborhood, if for no other reason than the use, type and intensity of development ultimately affect the surroundings. Further, depending upon the approach to development, the land itself can present varying ranges of opportunities and hazards. For example, when floodplains are filled in and built upon, flooding is shifted to other locations, where little can be done to eliminate the problem. Once cut, neighborhood tree cover may take decades to grow, but they may return.

The West Florence Neighborhood is in a unique position to capitalize on surrounding natural resources such as Cypress Creek and the trail proposed by the Florence Comprehensive Plan. This proposed trail system should be designed and built to provide for important connections and pedestrian as called for in the Strategic Concept for the West Florence Neighborhood. The trail system can be extended to connect to proposed neighborhood sidewalks and parks so as to interconnect neighborhood parks and open spaces with those of the city park system.

West Florence’s open spaces—many of which may appear to be simply the neighborhood’s “undeveloped” lands—include many resources that are important to neighborhood character and well being. Some should appropriately be set aside for reasons of health and safety, managed production of woodlands along significant creeks and streams, parks and recreation, and protection or preservation. The pattern illustrated on the Green Infrastructure map on the next page generally depicts these resources and places. For example, West Florence contains one major park activity center and several potential recreation areas which are indicated on the map in dark green.



West Florence Neighborhood Green Infrastructure – Parks and Open Space

Local surface water resources include Cypress Creek and several smaller streams, all noted on the map in dark blue. The larger surface water resources have associated areas that are often wet and others that are intermittently flooded. The map indicates wetlands in a light green, and floodplain areas in a light gray (those mapped are so-called “100-year floodplains” or areas having a 1% chance of flooding in any given year). Encroachment into floodplain areas reduces the flood-carrying capacity of the drainage system, increases flood heights upstream, and contributes to stream bank scouring downstream. The floodway is the stream channel and adjacent portions of the floodplain that must be kept free from encroachment to allow the 1% storm event to be carried without substantial increases in flood heights.

Green Infrastructure Policies

Conserve green infrastructure and landscape form

The woodlands along Cypress Creek are some of the neighborhood’s greatest natural assets. Cypress Creek and its floodplains are linear elements of the landscape that should be conserved. Development should be planned and arranged within the landscape with all of these areas clearly in mind.

Organize development to capitalize on critical open spaces

The neighborhood has several parcels that provide excellent opportunities to expand and to create parks and recreation activity areas. These new green spaces would serve dual purposes by creating additional places for community gathering, potential connection with recreation programs and educational opportunities with the local school system and the University of North Alabama. These places and their interconnections should be accounted for as part of a neighborhood open space network. These open space resources should be linked together insofar as possible into an overall system, and development should be planned and designed so that buildings look into these areas rather than back up to them or otherwise wall them off from view.

Ensure green infrastructure accessibility

The neighborhood’s green infrastructure—and especially its parks and natural areas—should be accessible. Parks and open spaces should accommodate both active and passive recreation uses. Walking trails, play areas, and picnic facilities should be included as components of recreation parks.

Proposed Park Improvements

The pattern of open space on the green infrastructure map shows key locations that can be utilized for park and recreation sites. These have multiple uses and should be considered integral pieces in capitalizing on the assets and visions for the West Florence Neighborhood. As neighborhood-scale gathering places, they will add to the fabric and diversity of the park and open space system for the West Florence Neighborhood and city as a whole. The proposed parks will be activity centers for the neighborhood and reflect the unique character and positive sense of place that is found in West Florence.

The parks and open spaces recommended for the West Florence Neighborhood include:

A linear park along College Street will interconnect the proposed Bridge and gateway to West Florence with the proposed neighborhood sidewalk system. This park can contain several functions and features, such as a playground, benches and memorial elements to celebrate the history of the



West Florence Neighborhood. The park would provide an anchor at the corner of College Street and Beverly Avenue, and would serve as a destination for the neighborhood and entrance to the commercial area located along College Street.

A new community park complex is proposed at the existing Handy Home and Burrell Slater School Site. At this time the site has large areas of unused parking, unused open space and driveway and street connection issues. A series of parks on the site would capture currently unused open space and reclaim vacant asphalt areas to provide athletic fields, playground areas, walking trails, and an amphitheatre space at which to gather and celebrate the history of W.C. Handy and his home. The new spaces on the site encourage development and reuse of the partially vacant Burrell Slater Building for such uses as a new youth recreation center, senior activity center, new housing options, an entrepreneurial incubator, health care and assisted living options, and also a school site for the neighborhood.

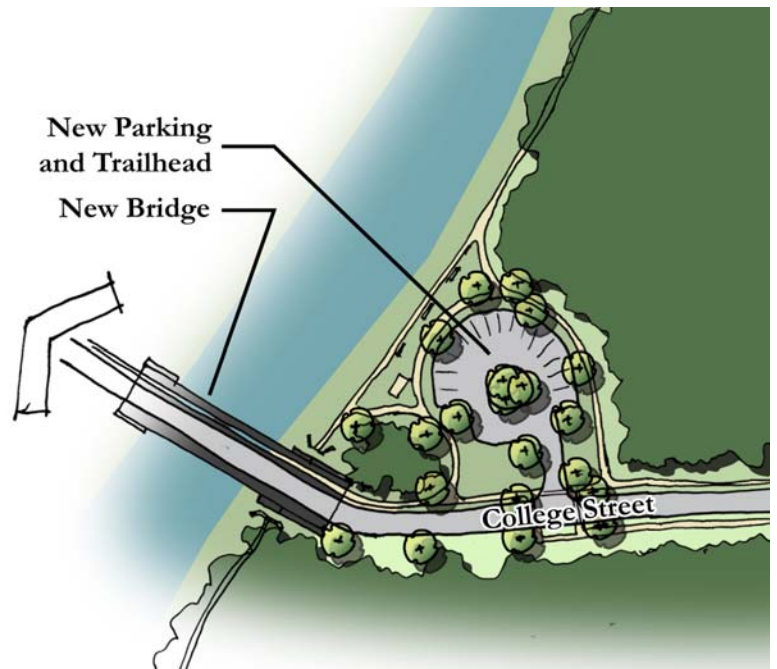


There are abundant park opportunities in the West Florence Neighborhood. These include multiple locations where small neighborhood parks and features can be built to reclaim currently vacant and unused open space within the neighborhood. These parks would primarily serve the residents of West Florence and would be interconnected to the proposed neighborhood sidewalk system. As illustrated on the facing page, such neighborhood parks can be as simple as small gazebos or places to sit and relax, surrounded by landscaping and walks that serve as places for neighbors to get together. The parks can include a series of walking trails that allow residents to explore the natural beauty of West Florence. The neighborhood parks and their facilities can serve as neighborhood beautification elements along image corridors and local streets.



Connections to Cypress Creek trail and Wildwood Park are also proposed for the West Florence Neighborhood. These include a trail system along Cypress Creek as called for in the Florence Comprehensive Plan.

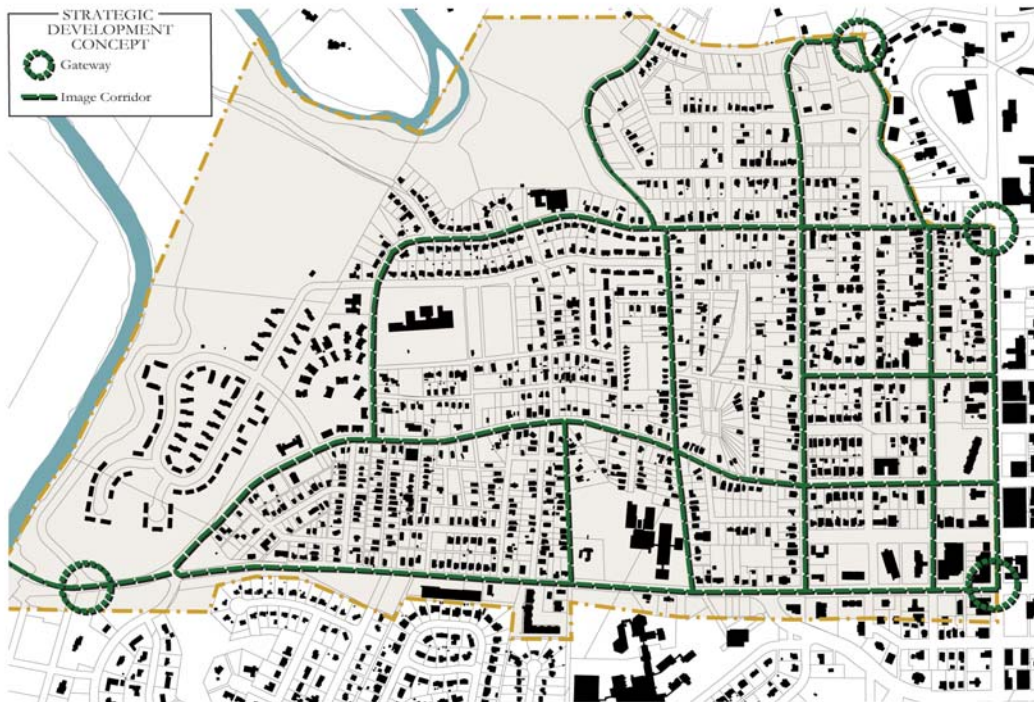
The Cypress Creek Trail would interconnect many of the City's park and greenway elements. Importantly, it would also serve West Florence Neighborhood residents by providing connections to the proposed sidewalk system, commercial centers and neighborhood parks and recreation.



As illustrated, such a proposed trailhead could serve not only as a place to stop adjacent to the proposed Cypress Creek Bridge. It could include features such as parking, restrooms, benches, and pavilions, in addition to a place for people to access and use Cypress Creek. The trailhead would also function as a Gateway element into the West Florence Neighborhood as people crossed Cypress Creek over the proposed bridge and up College Street.

Gateways and Image Corridors

Several streets provide first impressions of the neighborhood as a whole. These first impressions must convey a positive and lasting image to residents, visitors and potential investors. These *image corridors* should be safe, comfortable, shaded, calm, connected and interesting. This is not simply a matter of aesthetics, of planting trees and putting up lights. This issue is about quality of life; the connection to and the creation and support of positive places - places that allow for and encourage community interaction to occur.



West Florence Neighborhood Gateways and Image Corridors

West Florence enjoys major access from every direction. Its gateways and entrance corridors should be a major part of a positive image of the city. They should be treated as assets to be enhanced. By taking appropriate care with reinvestment and development along its image corridors and at its gateways, the West Florence Neighborhood intends to set itself apart in a positive manner and further enhance marketability and prosperity.

Each gateway to West Florence, its neighborhoods, activity centers and commercial corridors should provide a welcoming introduction that reflects the best of the particular characteristics of its setting. Image corridors should be designed to present and reflect a positive and safe attitude throughout the neighborhood. Image corridor design concerns should overlap with the street design opportunities and the expansion of the sidewalk and street lighting system,

in addition to having strong maintenance programs and upkeep to maintain the desired look.

Reinvestment and development planning and design should incorporate the following strategies to assure the West Florence Neighborhood offers a positive image by providing easily recognizable transitions from outside to inside the neighborhood:

- *A coordinated land use pattern for each of the neighborhood's entrance corridors and gateways should be planned, designed and implemented.*
- *Sense of place should be enhanced with strong, well-designed development that is visible from the street corridor.*
- *Appropriate lighting and tree plantings should be used at each gateway and along image corridors.*
- *A strong public and private commitment to maintenance of street tree plantings and street lighting must be made.*
- *Retail and other non-residential uses should address the street. Commerce should be easily accessible.*
- *Each building should be designed to form part of a larger physical composition of the area in which it is located. Adjacent buildings should relate in similar scale, height and configuration.*
- *For the sake of human scale, larger buildings should be broken down into separate volumes, both horizontally and vertically.*
- *Buildings should face and be relatively close to the street, with most off-street parking located behind and/or beside buildings.*
- *Development should be planned and designed to maximize street frontage of buildings and minimize street frontage taken up by parking lots.*
- *Pedestrian and bicycle circulation should be an integral part of the experience, and should be connected to the citywide system of sidewalks, trails and bicycle paths and lanes.*
- *Parking lots of adjacent business along the same side of the street should be physically and legally accessible to one another.*

Gateways and Image Corridors

Typical Appropriate Uses

- *Retail commercial*
- *Office or service commercial*
- *Residential--adjacent*

General Development Principles

- *Positive sense of place*
- *Visual coherence*
- *Pedestrian accessibility*
- *Well-defined edges*

General Design Guidelines

- *Street trees*
- *Parking to side or rear*
- *Density decreases to edges*
- *Transition to adjacent housing*

Gateways and image corridors contain design elements such as street trees, street lights, sidewalks, trail heads, parks and buildings that are designed to front the street and help define space at important intersections. The West Florence Neighborhood Plan calls for such improvements along the following streets:

- Irvine Street
- Tuscaloosa Street
- Mobile Street
- College Street
- Nance Street
- Cherokee Street
- Cedar Street
- Pine Street

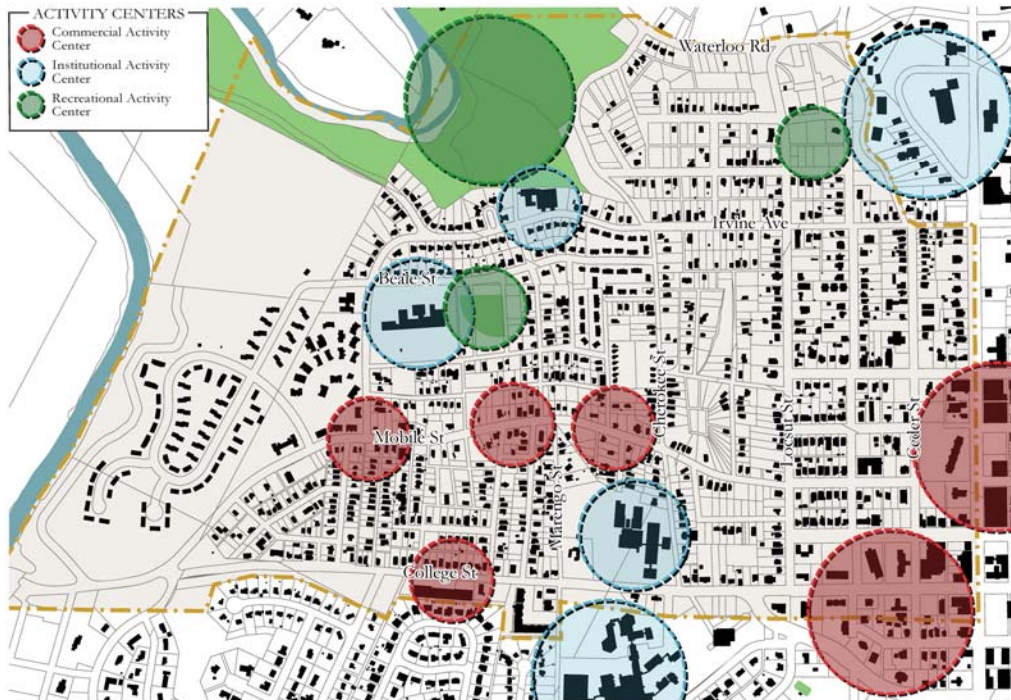


As shown to the right, proposed street tree and sidewalk placements such as these along Irvine Street will support the image of West Florence, while also improving connectivity and safety within the neighborhood.



Neighborhood Activity Centers

Significant concentrations of people, activity and development are collectively designated in this neighborhood plan as *Activity Centers*. There are several types provided for: each should be developed in accord with principles appropriate for location, size and type.



West Florence Neighborhood Activity Centers

The intent is that each of these centers be located, planned and designed to relate to, support and positively affect adjacent residential neighborhoods. These centers may come in a variety of types and sizes, but most should include many of the following characteristics:

- *Anchor or focus of activity: Regardless of size or type, every center should contain some activity or function for which it is primarily and integrally known in neighborhood, as appropriate.*
- *Compact, densely developed core: There should be a relatively high density of development of the types essential to the character of the neighborhood, ideally with greater density of use toward the center and less toward the edges.*
- *Pedestrian and bicycle accessibility: The center should be readily accessible by pedestrians and cyclists from the neighborhood.*
- *Pedestrian orientation: The center should be planned and designed with the overall needs of pedestrians given priority over those of motorists.*

- Sense of place: *Most people know a good place when they see it—and they have a good feeling about its overall character, its relation to surroundings, and a sense of security about the place.*
- Vehicular access: *The center should be readily accessible by motor vehicle.*
- Visual coherence: *Most people will sense that things fit together—signage, landscaping, location and organization of parking, the way most of the buildings seem to relate to one another.*
- Well-defined edge: *The center is a good neighbor--it is clear to most everyone where it begins and ends without having to resort to walls or signs.*

Neighborhood Activity Center Policies

Preserve and enhance the city and neighborhood's open space system

All activity centers should be carefully planned, organized and related appropriately to the neighborhood's green infrastructure. They should be strategically placed away from the most valuable or threatened natural resources. The natural environment should continue to be valued as an important ingredient of all the neighborhood's activity centers, which in turn should be designed to conserve and utilize natural systems to assist in filtering storm water drainage.

Design each activity center to relate to its context

Each activity center should have an appropriate scale and mix of uses, which relate to the neighborhood. Each of these centers should be integrated into the community, with appropriate connections and transitions made to adjacent land uses.

Streets and service drives should be located and designed appropriate to the users, mindful of the impact on street capacity and safety. Vehicular access should be designed to allow motorists access—yet discourage through traffic—while still accommodating service access and delivery.

Create discernable, compact activity centers

Each activity center should be planned and designed to have a sense of identity and place, distinguishable from one center to the next—perhaps by including a unique feature or activity. Activity centers should be compact and relatively densely developed. Their edges should be well defined. Each center, regardless of scale, should look and feel as if it has been designed, or at least considered, as a whole, in context with its surroundings. Continuity of major design elements, such as building setbacks, height, scale, materials, landscaping and signage should be evident. Differences should not be abrupt and overwhelming, but rather provide interest and diversity.

Design each activity center to maximize accessibility

Design can greatly influence the number of people willing to walk or ride a bicycle as an alternative to driving. Appropriate linkages between residential and nonresidential uses should be provided. Pedestrians and vehicles should be separated from one another insofar as practicable, with the length of pedestrian crossings of parking areas kept to a minimum. Human scale should be created through building mass and form, as well as scale and detail. Building location, setbacks and orientation should enhance pedestrian comfort.

Neighborhood Commercial Centers

These should meet daily “convenience” goods and service needs of local residents. Such a center may be anchored by a small grocery or drug store and could also include a limited variety of smaller scale shops, a neighborhood park or perhaps a small institutional use such as a fire station. The center would serve as a social and recreational focal point for the neighborhood. Access generally by local and collector streets should also provide walking and bicycling connections.

Typical appropriate uses might include a small grocery store, supporting retail and service commercial, office, restaurant and institutional uses. Residential uses should be close by and easily accessible to these centers, which in turn should present a positive face to the neighborhood.

- *Retail uses should be placed at street level; office and residential uses should be placed to the rear or on the upper stories.*
- *Each building should be designed to form part of a larger composition of the area within which it is located.*
- *Adjacent buildings should relate in similar scale, height and configuration.*
- *For human scale, larger buildings should be broken down into separate volumes, horizontally and vertically.*
- *Building heights should generally not exceed two stories.*
- *Buildings should be close to the street, with off-street parking located behind and/or beside buildings.*

Neighborhood Centers

Typical Appropriate Uses

- *Retail commercial*
- *Office or service commercial*
- *Restaurant*
- *Residential—upper story*
- *Small Institutional/Civic*

Development Principles

- *Positive sense of place*
- *Visual coherence*
- *Pedestrian oriented*
- *Pedestrian accessible*
- *Intense center of activity*
- *Well-defined edges*

General Design Guidelines

- *Stores serve neighborhood*
- *Required building line*
- *One or two stories*
- *Parking in the rear or side*
- *No drive-ins/drive-throughs*
- *Street trees*
- *Density decreases to edges*
- *Greenway connections*

- *At street intersections especially, the main building should be placed right up next to the corner. Parking, loading or service should not be located at an intersection.*
- *Pedestrian and bicycle circulation should be an integral part of the experience, and should be connected to the neighborhood system of sidewalks, trails, bicycle paths and lanes.*

Neighborhood Institutional Centers

These are relatively small centers, dominated by government, educational, medical and civic uses, and containing relatively few other uses except those that may be accessory to primary uses.

Each of these centers should convey the image of West Florence as an accessible, desirable neighborhood in which to live, work and invest. This image should be strengthened by a strong sense of community relationship, especially for those people who work or live near them. It is also important to maintain physical accessibility between these centers and the neighborhood.

- *Physical accessibility should be maintained between institutional facilities and the neighborhood, including by means of bicycle and pedestrian access and circulation.*
- *At street intersections, the main building should be close to the corner. Parking, loading or service should not be located at or near the intersection.*
- *Each building should be designed to form part of a larger physical composition of the center and the area in which it is located.*
- *Adjacent buildings should relate in similar scale, height and configuration.*
- *For the sake of human scale, larger buildings should be broken down into separate volumes.*
- *An appropriate transition should be made between the center and adjacent residential uses.*
- *Streets should be designed with street trees in a manner appropriate to their function, and should have trees that complement adjacent buildings and shade the sidewalks.*
- *Off-street parking should be placed behind and/or beside buildings.*

Institutional Centers

Typical Appropriate Uses

- *Governmental buildings*
- *Medical centers*
- *High schools*
- *Colleges*
- *Civic uses*
- *Support services*

Development Principles

- *Positive sense of place*
- *Visual coherence*
- *Compact, dense core*
- *Pedestrian accessible*
- *Support center of activity*
- *Well-defined edges*

General Design Guidelines

- *Street trees*
- *Landscape buffers at edges*

- *Pedestrian circulation should be an integral part of the center. The buildings should frame and reinforce pedestrian circulation, so that pedestrians may walk along building fronts rather than along or across parking lots and driveways.*

Retail Development Opportunities

During the course of the West Florence Neighborhood planning process, KPS consulted Dr. Arthur Allaway with the University of Alabama Economic Development program, to research and analyze current and potential retail development opportunities in West Florence. Dr. Allaway's full report is included in the appendix of this plan; the following is a summary of his findings and recommendations.

West Florence has experienced a decline in economic and social vitality over the past several decades, and there are few retailers remaining in an area that at one time housed a number of successful businesses serving the needs of local residents. Reversing this trend and restoring vitality to the business sector is very important to city officials and residents. However, new retailers in the area will need to proceed carefully and with a clear strategy for marketing. The first successful businesses may be those that tap into the daytime visitor segment of the market. Between serving employees, patients, and families associated with the Coffee hospital complex and tourists visiting the W.C. Handy home and museum, there are existing opportunities for several types of businesses.

The residents of West Florence, for the most part, are struggling to survive economically. As a result, the success potential for new retail offerings serving the residential segment of the market will be dependent on those retailers' ability to start small and focus on offering a variety of different product categories under one roof. A retailer that offers clothing for men, women, and children as well as accessories will have more chance to survive than a specialty store, for example. Similarly, a hardware store may need to offer household items, yard maintenance products, clothing, and other products.

However, retailers who locate to serve both the *daytime* and *residential* markets will have approximately twice the number of consumers available, and spending by visitors is likely to be much higher per trip than spending by West Florence residents. Nationwide, consumers have indicated a desire for a more intimate and entertaining shopping experience. Unique smaller stores, in particular, are of great appeal. West Florence is well positioned to further expand institutional and education activities because of its existing education base, transportation links, and comparatively low property costs.

Due to the popularity of the W.C. Handy Festival, a strengthened arts and culture segment would tie together and leverage growth of the education and tourism

sectors. There is an opportunity to promote the area as a cultural center that will attract tourism traffic to the region and provide possibilities for the strong talent pool surrounding the area. Another opportunity exists in stimulating development of music studios, production facilities, and other support services in the region that will promote the growth of both the music and arts culture areas.

Proposed Neighborhood Centers

The West Florence Neighborhood has a long history of commercial and institutional activity centers. These include the Handy Home, the Burrell Slater School, the medical offices and hospital, the commercial corridors along Mobile and College Streets, the University of North Alabama and additional neighborhood recreational sites such as the school athletic field and the Handy Recreation Center. These assets should be enhanced so as to capitalize upon their influence.

Neighborhood Commerce

The Strategic Concept calls for neighborhood commercial center locations along Mobile and College Streets. These have a wide range of existing conditions, from vacant structures to flourishing businesses. These uses and activities should be expanded, and their development should support the vision for West Florence. New business and commercial developments should address the street, which should be designed to accommodate the pedestrian with large sidewalks for walking and furnishing space for benches, street trees and streetlights. The streets should be designed to calm traffic, including on-street parking to provide pedestrians safe and clear access while affording drivers convenient places to park and access the commercial centers.



- *Enhance the surrounding streets with aesthetic improvements including sidewalks, street trees and streetlights.*
- *Provide good access for pedestrians, vehicles and delivery needs.*
- *Foster and create safe places with positive attitudes with image corridor improvements and owner improvements to property lighting and landscaping.*
- *Encourage and recruit new businesses into vacant areas to build and add to the assets of the commercial areas.*



- *Provide commercial design standards that reflect the history and character of the West Florence Neighborhood.*



Neighborhood Institutions

The Strategic Concept also calls for institutional centers that may be expanded:

- *Enhance the surrounding streets, with aesthetic improvements including sidewalks, street trees and streetlights.*
- *Provide good access for pedestrians, vehicles and delivery needs.*
- *Foster and create safe places with positive attitudes using the image corridor improvements and encourage owner improvements to property lighting and landscaping.*

In addition to these enhancements, some institutions may be expanded:

The Handy Home and Burrell Slater property

- *Work with the City of Florence School Board to devise potential uses, such as a new neighborhood school and or an additional youth activity center to complement the Handy Recreation Center.*
- *Expand park and recreation uses on the site in vacant and unused parking areas, which may provide places for performance areas and passive activities.*
- *Seek alternative uses for the Burrell Slater building, which may include a senior center and or an assisted living facility in association with adjacent medical and commercial centers. Alternative uses may include an entrepreneurial center for business start-up programs.*
- *Consider transformation of the building site into a mixed-use development to include housing and retail uses, which may complement the commercial center.*

- *Provide park and outdoor performance spaces to support the building uses and the neighborhood.*

Medical Centers

- *Consider expansion of medical services in the area to include an assisted living facility*

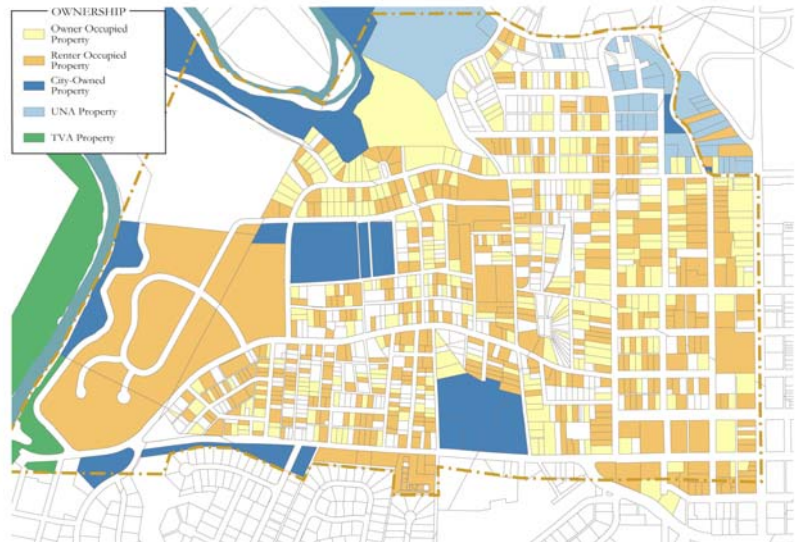


Housing

The West Florence Neighborhood is rich in history. It is primarily residential, consisting of single-family homes, duplexes and multi-family dwellings. While the majority of the neighborhood has been developed, there is a considerable previously undeveloped and currently vacant land available for new housing. New housing opportunities range from infill of single-family lots to new development of large, previously undivided tracts to the north and west alongside Cypress Creek. There are also opportunities for reinvestment in existing housing and redevelopment in strategic locations. Reinvestment in existing residences and new housing development will tend to enhance:

- *Community pride*
- *Homeownership versus absenteeism*
- *Property values*
- *Safety (perceived and real)*
- *Opportunities for business investments in the community*
- *Socioeconomic diversity*

The majority (about 59%) of occupied residential properties in the West Florence Neighborhood are currently renter occupied. High concentrations of renter occupancy are typically perceived to be associated with neglect, crime, and other safety and quality of life concerns. Through a coordinated effort of neighborhood stakeholders and city government, the trend toward increased renter occupancy should be controlled. A commonly used and effective tool for this is a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to assist residents, often in low-to-moderate income neighborhoods, in transitioning to homeownership. In some cases, CDCs develop new homes to encourage the purchase and rehabilitate rental property for owner occupancy.



There are almost 13 acres of unoccupied or previously undeveloped, residentially zoned properties in the West Florence Neighborhood. Assuming a gross average density of four units per acre, this vacant land could accommodate some 50 additional housing units. New housing will fall generally into four categories: infill, greenfield development and redevelopment.



- *Residential infill includes the incremental development of single-family dwellings (and possibly duplexes) on previously undeveloped lots on neighborhood blocks that have otherwise been developed for such uses. A significant number of potential infill lots are distributed throughout the neighborhood. Infill development of these lots, in association with rehabilitation of deteriorated homes and other properties, will decrease the “broken window” effect in West Florence.*
- *Residential greenfield development opportunities in the neighborhood are limited to two large properties – one along the western end of the neighborhood along Cypress Creek and one to the north (CR-14 and Cherokee).*
- *Residential redevelopment includes reinvestment projects spanning from the tear-down and replacement of individual homes not feasible for rehabilitation, to the acquisition and consolidation of multiple homes for new development. Such larger redevelopment projects will likely involve for-profit development entities with an interest in higher density development, either attached or multi-family dwellings. Done properly in strategic locations, higher density housing such as this may be integrated successfully into the neighborhood.*

Neighborhood Reinvestment Principles

Good neighborhoods place an emphasis on community, livability, appearance, diversity, accessibility, convenience and safety for all residents. The West Florence Neighborhood generally exhibits several of these characteristics, which are typically missing from many recent conventional subdivisions. The following are several principles intended to guide planning and design for new residential development in the West Florence Neighborhood:

Design housing appropriate to its context

The scale and density of residential development should reflect its location in the neighborhood. The scale of development, housing types and sizes, and types of open spaces should be integrated into and fit the neighborhood. More dense development will be more appropriate when adjacent to or focused toward activity centers rather than in otherwise low-density surroundings.

Create a focus appropriate to the needs of the neighborhood

A focal point of a type and size appropriate to the needs of local residents adds a sense of place to the neighborhood—for example, a park or usable community facility or open space. The focal point should be pedestrian oriented and also provide easy vehicular access, but there should also be places for neighbors to venture out into the public realm without their vehicles.

Design the place for children

Places for children to play safely should be a staple in all neighborhoods. Open spaces add to the value of property and foster a more livable community. The West Florence Neighborhood should have at least several special gathering places, such as vest-pocket parks, small community or senior centers, and neighborhood greens.

Design the neighborhood with walkable, interconnected streets

Interconnected streets lined with sidewalks are the foundation of a pedestrian network. Pedestrian accessibility can also be greatly improved (walking distance and infrastructure costs substantially reduced) through the installation and maintenance of mid-block connections and cul-de-sac linkages. Creating interconnected neighborhood streets and providing alternate routes will help to improve emergency response time and also diffuse automobile traffic, thus lowering traffic volumes on neighborhood streets.

Design streets appropriate to the scale and character of the neighborhood

Neighborhood streets should be relatively narrow and include sidewalks, street trees, and homes that embrace the street. Traffic on neighborhood streets can be calmed by the presence of on-street parking and street trees, which give the neighborhood street a sense of enclosure and a comfortable setting by creating an environment where drivers understand that driving fast is inappropriate.

Neighborhood Design Criteria

- *Plan and design neighborhood-scale commercial, civic and open spaces to meet the daily needs of resident and to provide a focal point or gateway to the neighborhood.*
- *When commercial uses are appropriate, plan and design a walkable, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood commercial center with architecture that will add long-lasting value to the neighborhood overall.*
- *Through location, site arrangement and design, integrate non-residential and higher density residential uses in such a way that buffers are not necessary.*
- *Make all neighborhood centers pedestrian oriented with easy vehicular and pedestrian access from within the neighborhood. The areas around the center may contain higher density housing and a higher concentration of residents.*
- *Maintain an appropriate transition between all four degrees of community and privacy – public – semi-public, semi-private and private – in the relationship between the street, sidewalk, yard and home.*

- *Allow for porches and courtyards—they provide shelter, sitting places, and a comfortable transition from the public street to the private dwelling, and provide a welcoming gesture to visitors.*
- *Distinguish the front door as the primary welcoming feature of each residence.*
- *Provide a perception of a strong, solid foundation, a sense of durability, strength and importance with foundation walls and raised entrances—the residence will appear to be sitting on a platform, as an important structure, separated from street level.*
- *Set garages back from the main façade of homes or face them away from public views—they are utilitarian spaces, and do nothing to enhance a home’s curb appeal or the image of the street.*
- *Select appropriate street and front yard tree species and maintain them so as not to conflict with sight distances and power lines.*
- *Assure vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle interconnections within development areas and between adjacent land uses.*



Selected Housing Infill Opportunities

Housing Proposal

The West Florence Neighborhood has many opportunities to provide new housing and infill housing developments. To maintain the positive aspects of the West Florence Neighborhood and assure the quality of life, the following strategies should be considered:

- *Permit higher density housing in and at the edges of the commercial centers, while maintaining lower densities in the neighborhood and providing comfortable transitions.*
- *Establish design guidelines and design criteria mentioned previously that will support new and infill housing compatibility with the existing neighborhood*
- *Select appropriate street and front yard tree species and maintain them so as not to conflict with sight distances and power lines.*
- *Establish a community organization to facilitate ongoing community involvement in neighborhood needs, to promote maintenance and upkeep, and to represent community needs to the City.*



Public improvements, including installation of curb and gutter, sidewalks, street signs and repaving, are needed in several locations throughout the West Florence Neighborhood. Residents also wish to improve street lighting. In certain areas, traffic calming improvements may be needed to reduce vehicle speeds or cut-through traffic in neighborhoods. However, to effectively enhance and sustain the quality of these neighborhoods, private investment and reinvestment are also needed. These investments may be required as a result of monitoring and enforcement of local building codes and property maintenance ordinances. In

addition, zoning and subdivision requests within West Florence need to be evaluated to assure that new development or redevelopment is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.



Streets and Sidewalks

The use of land, and physical access to that land, are both critical to the well being of West Florence, its residents and the quality of life. The neighborhood's streets serve two essential purposes: access to adjacent property and mobility between destinations. The challenge is to provide a street network that serves and supports planned development patterns, balances access and mobility, moves vehicles efficiently and provides a sense of community to neighborhoods.

In addition to the purpose of streets with in the neighborhood pattern, the streets of West Florence will also be the image corridors of the neighborhood and will require design standards, and continued maintenance. The street system of West Florence shall serve multiple users, including pedestrian, cars and bicyclists. The street system shall encourage development and connectivity and shall provide access to the activity centers outlined earlier. The street system is a critical component of this plan and supports all other goals and visions for the West Florence Neighborhood.

Street Design Standards

To achieve a vision of connectivity and accessibility in the West Florence Neighborhood, the streets should be designed and built to reflect the positive sense of place, safety and mobility that the street system has. Design standards shall be developed which conform to the City of Florence, and shall include amenities, such as street trees, street lighting and benches where appropriate to reflect and support the character and attitudes of the West Florence Neighborhood. All new and redeveloped streets shall also be designed with pedestrian and traffic calming measures to ensure safety per the City of Florence guidelines.

Street Connectivity Projects

To achieve the neighborhood's desired levels of accessibility and mobility, given the proposed activity centers, will require several important improvements to the neighborhood's roadway system, as noted below and indicated on the map on the next page.



- Connect Mobile Street across Cypress Creek and to Highway 20
- Connect Mobile Street, through Cedar and Pine Street.
- Connect Tuscaloosa Street to Cherokee Street.
- Neighborhood interconnections to encourage neighborhood infill and development projects.

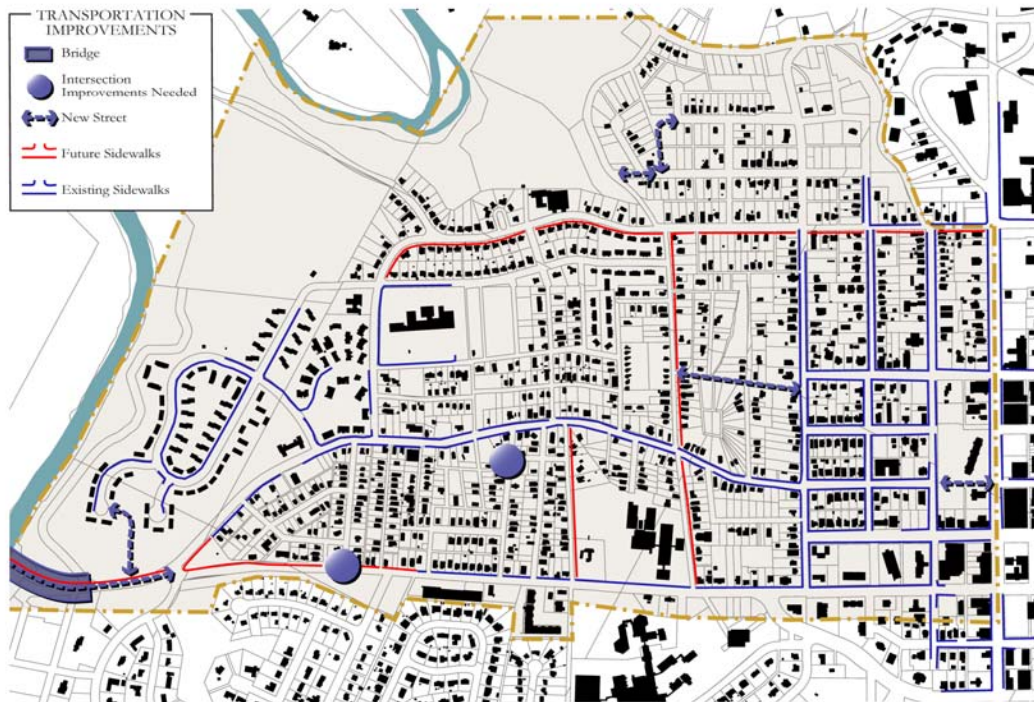
In addition to connectivity issues within the West Florence Neighborhood, there are also several intersections, which need improvements to provide safe sight distance per City of Florence standards.

- Corner of Nance and College Street

- Corner of Burrell and Travis Street

Sidewalks

Currently the West Florence Neighborhood has some existing sidewalks. The proposed sidewalks shall help knit together the West Florence Neighborhood while providing access for pedestrians to the City of Florence and the surrounding amenities. To improve pedestrian access the Strategic Concept calls for additional sidewalks to be built along image corridors in keeping with their standards of design, to connect the existing sidewalk pattern, and to connect the existing and proposed activity centers and gateways of the neighborhood. All new and redeveloped sidewalks shall be designed to meet the Americans with Disability Act and the City of Florence standards.



West Florence Neighborhood Street and Sidewalk Improvement Projects

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

This is a long-range plan. Parks, institutions, schools, new housing and commercial centers are not developed overnight. Nevertheless, changes recommended in this plan should proceed in a more or less continuous manner. Plan implementation will take time and goodwill.

The neighborhood plan does not propose “quick fix” solutions, nor should it be viewed simply as an economic development platform. Rather, the intent is that all aspects of life in the West Florence Neighborhood be strengthened and enhanced. To accomplish this, the neighborhood plan must remain a living document, able to be adapted as local conditions change.

The City of Florence and neighborhood residents and property owners must all strive to keep each other interested and involved in supporting and implementing the vision for West Florence. City government must continue to gather other agencies, public and private, onto the same team. The City and the community must continue to prioritize and take direct action on various recommendations of this plan by committing to tax themselves and to spend those local tax dollars in support of plan implementation.

City officials must help shape the action of others with effective regulation. The city must be willing to provide selected incentives to encourage others to take the lead in development activities that would further implementation of the plan’s policies. And finally, all community leaders should support city officials to support plan implementation.

The West Florence Neighborhood Plan is to be implemented through a comprehensive strategy that combines direct public and private investment, with supporting actions of the Mayor and City staff, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Zoning Adjustments and other boards and agencies. Plan recommendations have been translated into an action agenda that ranges from direct action to incentives and inducements that will involve revision and continued administration and enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, city budgeting and capital improvement programming, and empowerment of community and neighborhood organizations and volunteers.

Regulations

Application, updating and enforcement of City regulations will be essential to achieving the goals of this plan. This involves zoning and subdivision regulations, design review, and property maintenance standards. Improving the City’s development regulations, guidelines and procedures is the least costly of all of the plan implementation tools and can be achieved quickly. While the effects may not be obvious or immediate, they are widespread and will ensure, in an on-going

fashion, that new development and reinvestment is consistent with the neighborhood’s desired character.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
(click on link at end of each item for more information)	
Regulatory Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update of Zoning Ordinance ⇒ • Update of Subdivision Regulations ⇒ • Adoption of Access Management Standards ⇒
Public Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway signage and landscaping improvements ⇒ • Wayfinding signage program for commercial centers ⇒ • Ongoing street improvements – repaving, installation of curbs/gutters • Capacity, streetscape and access management improvements along major streets including the Bridge, Mobile Street extension and local street networking. ⇒ • Installation of sidewalks and multi-use paths along all planned image corridors ⇒ • Traffic-calming improvements on local streets, as needed • Ongoing drainage improvements • Land acquisition, public park construction- Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks at W.C. Handy Home, College Street and Beverly Street, and a Trailhead access at the Proposed Bridge ⇒
Other Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Tax Increment Financing District ⇒ • Organizing and marketing West Florence’s businesses ⇒ • Creation of community organization

Zoning Ordinance

The City uses its Zoning Ordinance to guide growth in accord with the land use plan element of the Comprehensive Plan and the City’s area-specific plans, including the West Florence Neighborhood Plan. To support plan implementation, the City Council and Planning and Zoning Commission will respond to and review zoning and development requests with consideration given to the land use recommendations. The City also intends to continue updating and improvement of the Zoning Ordinance to support the patterns and intensities of development indicated in this neighborhood plan document.

Subdivision Regulations

Specific requirements for sidewalks and street design should be added to (or referenced by) the Subdivision Regulations to ensure that the West Florence Neighborhood becomes more walkable and that the current level of street connectivity is maintained and improved through new development. Future residential development should be required to incorporate sidewalks, street trees, and other elements as noted herein.

Street design standards for the image corridors should be developed and incorporated into (or referenced by) the Subdivision Regulations. These standards should address sidewalk, landscaping, drainage, lighting, traffic-calming and on-street parking expectations as applicable to the type of street (collector or local) and the land use context (e.g. residential, retail and service, mixed-use, etc.). The image corridors and local streets serving West Florence's commercial centers may be used as a basis for a broader set of standards for the City. The reference, *Context Sensitive Solutions for Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares*, published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, includes a comprehensive set of guidelines and standards that should also be consulted in developing appropriate street design standards to support neighborhood mobility and accessibility goals.

Access Management Standards

The City should prepare and adopt access management standards to encourage shared driveways, cross access and rear access between non-residential developments along major streets. These may be adopted as a stand-alone document and referenced by the City's development regulations. Referencing such requirements in the Subdivision Regulations assures that subdivided land may be developed and provided access in conformity with City standards. This is especially important to consider when relatively small or narrow lots might be created along collector streets. Generally, lots narrower than 50-60 feet should be required to have either shared, cross or rear access with adjoining properties rather than allowing individual driveways (except in compliance with driveway spacing requirements).

Public Improvements

Public improvements must be carefully planned, prioritized, coordinated with other public and private actions, funding secured, responsibilities assigned and partnerships created as needed. This plan included recommendations for a variety of investments necessary to bring public infrastructure and facilities up to neighborhood standards over time, to encourage maintenance and reinvestment in West Florence and to enhance the commercial centers in such a way as to maximize opportunities for their economic growth.

Gateways and Signage

Several gateways into the community and into its commercial centers are described in this plan. The City could partner with neighborhood leaders and property owners, the Florence Chamber of Commerce and other interested parties to fund gateway projects. Expansion and extension of the City's wayfinding signage program should be used to help locate and draw attention to historic resources, institutions and commercial centers. Neighborhood banners should also be considered for design and implementation of public-private partnering efforts.

Streets and Sidewalks

The street and sidewalk improvements described in this plan will be carried out over several years and through several coordinated strategies.

The City will carry out installation of curbs, streetscape, access management, and traffic-calming and intersection improvements. These projects may be funded in part through federal Transportation Enhancement Grants, which require a 20% local match. Access management improvements should be performed as part of an applicable streetscape, in accord with neighborhood access management standards.

Street connections proposed include the extension of Mobile Street to Pine Street and a new bridge connecting West Florence and College Street to the Florence Sports Park over Cypress Creek. Additional local streets interior to the neighborhood have been illustrated to support future residential development within West Florence and should be implemented as a part of those projects.

Sidewalks are proposed along all designated image corridors within the West Florence Neighborhood. In addition, the plan supports recommendations in the Florence Comprehensive Plan to construct a City trail system along Cypress Creek to interconnect the neighborhood and many City park facilities. A West Florence Neighborhood trailhead for this trail facility is proposed adjacent to the proposed Cypress Creek Bridge.

Installation of sidewalks should be considered in the context of any and all future street projects. As private investment in the neighborhood institutional and commercial centers continues over time, sidewalks should also be required as a part of new development and redevelopment, thereby incrementally filling gaps in the pedestrian network.

Recommended improvements may also be funded through transportation enhancement grants or Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). LWCF grants require a 50% local match and award amounts are limited.

Drainage and Utilities Improvements

Installation of curbs and gutters should be carried out in concert with sidewalk or other street improvement projects as much as possible. Installation, repair and replacement of storm water drainage facilities in some locations may be performed together with street improvements. Flood control and drainage projects may be eligible for Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) funding.

Community Facilities

Expansion of current community facilities to include additional recreation centers and programs for youth and seniors and also to adaptively reuse existing buildings are proposed at the Burrell Slater school for new school needs, potential housing infill, entrepreneurial center and assisted living facilities connected to the adjacent hospital. Space may be provided in one of the many public facilities currently located in West Florence or in other rented or purchased spaces. Paid or volunteer part-time staffing will be required.

Parks and Recreation Projects

Land acquisition for parks and other recreational projects sponsored by the City of Florence are eligible for LWCF grants through ADECA. Private acquisition of land for neighborhood park space is another opportunity to develop additional passive recreational opportunities for West Florence residents. A non-profit community organization should be considered to prioritize selected locations, raise funds and negotiate with property owners for the donation or purchase of land for small neighborhood open spaces, with support, as needed from the City.

Funding

Funding for many of the improvements recommended by this plan will be the responsibility, primarily, of the City. Even if the City of Florence is able to acquire each grant it sought, a considerable amount of local money may still be needed for matching funds and for projects not eligible for grants. Therefore, elected officials must plan ahead for such expenditures through the city's Capital Improvements Plan and Program; and projects must be prioritized based on their costs, need and benefits. In addition, City departments must also plan for the maintenance costs of public streets, sidewalks, drainage system, parks, etc.

Tax Increment Financing

For the various improvements related to existing and proposed West Florence neighborhood commercial centers, the City of Florence may consider establishing a tax increment financing (TIF) district to help pay for public investments in those

areas. Normally, capital improvements, including bonds generated to fund them, are paid for out of the City's general fund.

In a TIF district, public investments and associated bonds are funded using property tax revenues generated in the district. This method has been used by local governments throughout the nation, including several in the Birmingham metropolitan area. Creation of tax increment districts is authorized under Alabama state law (§11-99-1 to 10), which requires a resolution by the City Council and a schedule of improvements to be funded through the TIF program. TIF funds are intended to be used to correct conditions that discourage private investment, which can include public improvements, property acquisition and redevelopment.

Conclusion

This plan, as a part of the City of Florence Comprehensive Plan, is intended to evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and to market and physical conditions. Only through continuing use, evaluation, detailing, reconsideration and amendment can the plan fully serve the West Florence Neighborhood and the entire city. If the enthusiasm that led to the specific planning process and preparation of this document can be maintained, city government and the community at large will be able to use it fully and creatively as they seek achievement of their consensus vision.

Retail Development Opportunities In West Florence

For:

KPS Group
Birmingham, Alabama

Prepared By:

Arthur W. Allaway, PhD
Suzanna Allaway

January 2009

Retail Development Opportunities in West Florence

Objectives of the Study

This study is designed to assess the retail market potential which exists in West Florence, Alabama and identify potential business development and expansion opportunities in the area.

The objective of the study is to provide input to West Florence city officials about opportunities that exist in West Florence for retail development. Once officials have access to the insights and information in this study, specific plans can be put into place to approach existing or prospective business owners and entrepreneurs about the potential for new or expanded retail businesses in West Florence.

In addition, a corollary objective is to gather information that will begin to serve as a selling tool to those businesses targeted for recruiting into the West Florence market. Business recruiting is very much a data-driven exercise, and information showing prospective business owners the detailed economic advantages of a location in West Florence is an essential part of the recruiting process.

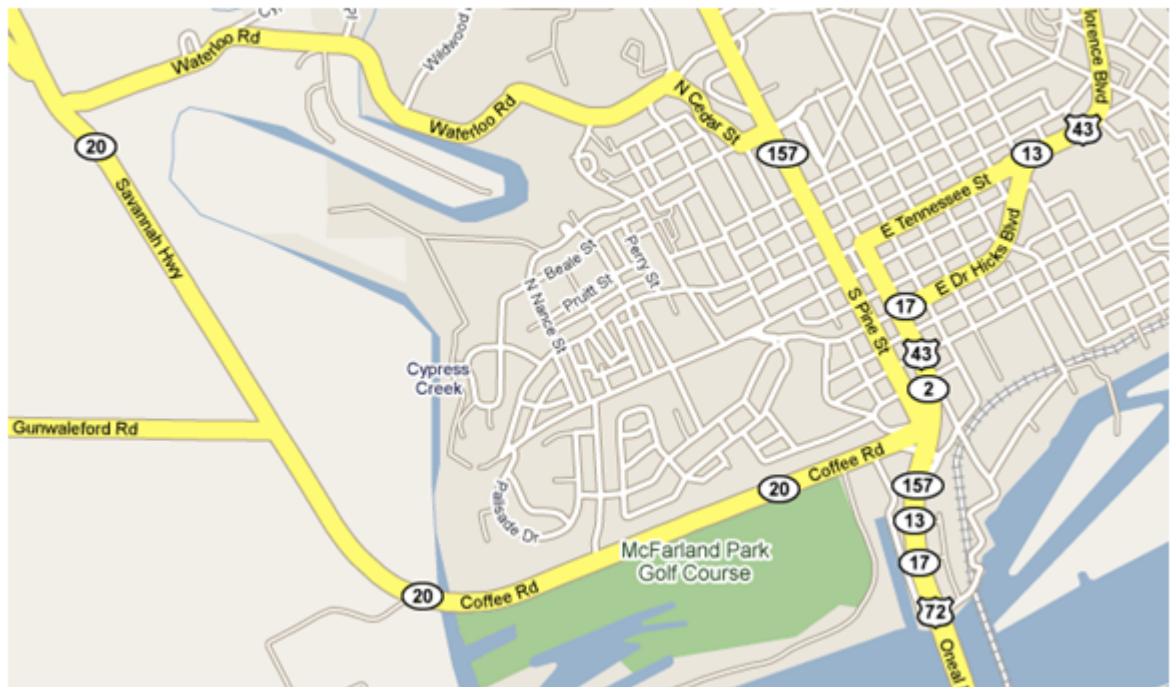
Overview

West Florence is a geographically, culturally, and economically unique area located just west of Downtown Florence, Alabama. A transition zone with a mix of downtown businesses and residents leads into West Florence proper. West Florence is bordered on the west by Cypress Creek, on the north by West Irvine Avenue near the University of North Alabama campus, and the south by College Street. Traffic access to West Florence from downtown is largely via three main thoroughfares, West College Street on the south, West Mobile Street in the center, and West Irvine Street which loops around West Florence on the north. West Dr.

Hicks Boulevard brings commuters and visitors into West Florence along College Street without them having to drive through the downtown area.

Like many older urban neighborhoods nationally, West Florence has experienced a decline in economic and social vitality over the past several decades. In West Florence, evidence of this decline is visible in the large number of empty and rundown commercial buildings. There is very little significant retail presence remaining in an area that at one time housed a number of successful businesses serving the needs of local residents. Reversing this trend and restoring vitality to the business sector is very important to city officials and residents.

West Florence, Alabama



Luckily, West Florence has a number of strengths which provide an opportunity for retail growth in the area.

- ✦ The consumer base living in West Florence has the potential to support several types of business initiatives, especially new retail offerings. There are over two thousand persons living within the immediate area that would benefit from expansion of retail shopping opportunities.
- ✦ The presence of the Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital brings a large number of possible consumers of retail products and services to the West Florence area on a daily basis. Healthcare is one of the most recession-free of industries, and businesses serving employees and patrons of that industry have high success probabilities.
- ✦ The W.C. Handy Museum has the potential to attract thousands of visitors to the West Florence area, either as part of the annual W.C. Handy Music Festival or simply as interested visitors drawn from north-south and east-west bound highways.
- The location of the West Florence study area is exceptional, with easy access from downtown Florence and other areas of the Quad Cities.

Street Details in Primary Study Area

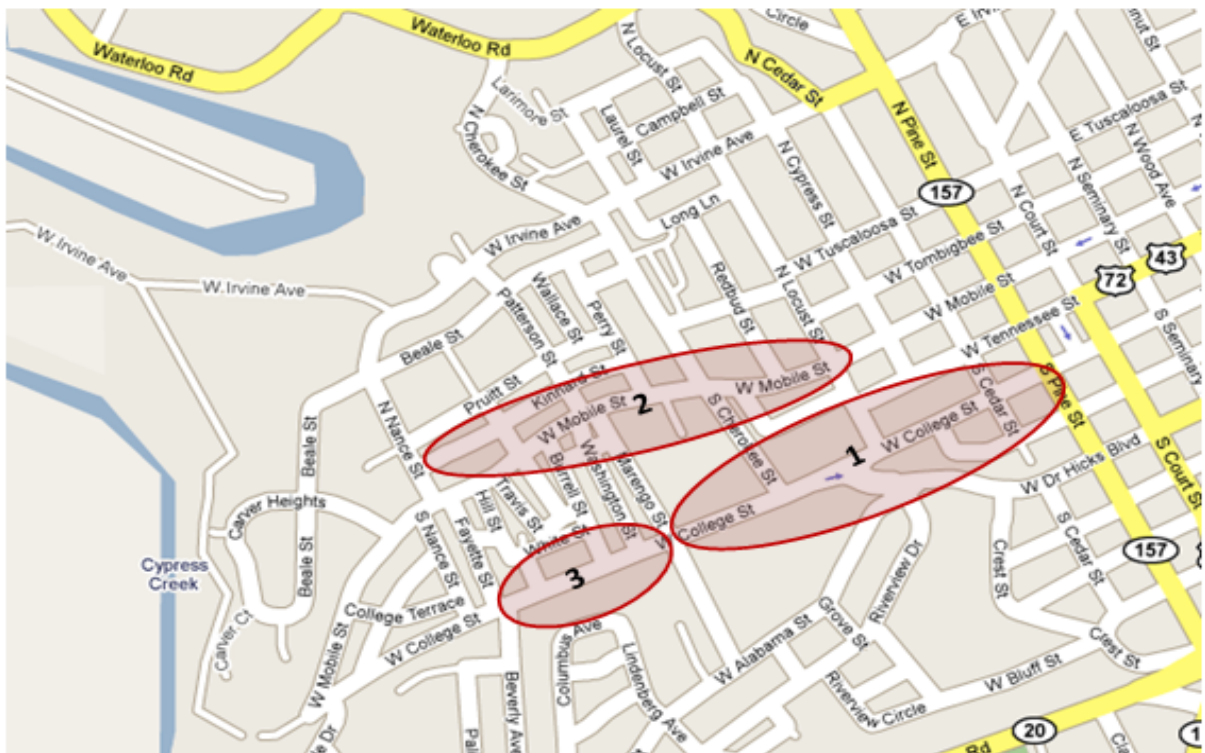


Retail Expansion Opportunities in West Florence

Based on an analysis of the West Florence market, there appear to be two categories of opportunity to expand the retail and service sector in the area.

The first involves additional businesses to serve what can be called the *daytime* population of the area. Development Zone 1 focuses on new business opportunities along West College Street between Pine Street and the W.C. Handy Museum at Marengo Street to serve potential *daytime* consumers. The second is additional businesses to serve the *current residents* of the West Florence area. Development Zones 2 and 3 focus on business opportunities along West Mobile Street in the area which at one time was the retail center of West Florence and near Wilson’s Food Center in the 900 block of West College Street.

Key Development Opportunity Zones in W. Florence



1. Service to the Daytime Consumer

For the purposes of this study, the *daytime* population of the West Florence area includes employees, visitors, and tourists who have the potential to purchase goods and services in retail businesses in West Florence either daily, frequently, occasionally, or once.

There are nearly 2,000 daytime employees, patients, patient families, and visitors to the Coffee Memorial Hospital and nearby medical offices. In addition, there is also a significant 24 hour presence at the hospital. Although there are food and gift opportunities at the hospital, it appears that there are opportunities to expand those offerings.

Other potential consumers of retail businesses in Development Zone 1 include:

- Employees of downtown businesses
- Tourists during Festivals and cultural visitors to the Florence area at other times of the year in part or specifically to visit the W.C. Handy Museum and Frank Lloyd Wright house
- Travelers lured from North-South and East-West highway routes, including the Natchez Trace, by appropriate signage.

Appropriate offerings to serve the *daytime* consumer market would include one (or an additional):

- Home-style restaurant serving breakfast, lunch, dinner – for employees and visitors
 - Coffee / snack shop with desserts – for employees and visitors
 - Dollar Store or Convenience store with variety goods – for employees, visitors, and residents

- Antique / Notions store – for visitors and tourists
- Gift / Souvenir Shop – for tourists and hospital visitors
- Pharmacy
- With so many employees and visitors on a daily basis, the area near the hospital would also be an excellent location for an auto repair shop and an oil change / vehicle maintenance facility.
- An additional opportunity given the 24 hour nature of hospital could be a quick snack-type restaurant which would stay open in the evening and later at night. Similarly, a convenience store with a deli or a prepared foods section could be successful serving this market.

For service to businesses in the area:

- Office supplies store
- Business/Office services (repair, computer, cleaning)

Average sales in Alabama of several of these types of retail and service businesses are shown below.

**Average Revenue Generated by Alabama Retailers for Selected Categories of
Business
Appropriate for Serving the West Florence Daytime Consumer**

Retail Business Description	Average Annual Sales Per Establishment In Alabama
Full-service restaurants	\$739,296
Ice cream & soft serve shops	\$245,295
Coffee shops	\$439,076
Convenience stores	\$697,658
Pharmacies & drug stores	\$3,821,359
Office supplies & stationery stores	\$2,408,319
Gift, novelty, & souvenir stores	\$447,023
General automotive repair	\$325,057
Automotive oil change & lubrication	\$413,000
Computer & office machine repair & maintenance	\$750,069

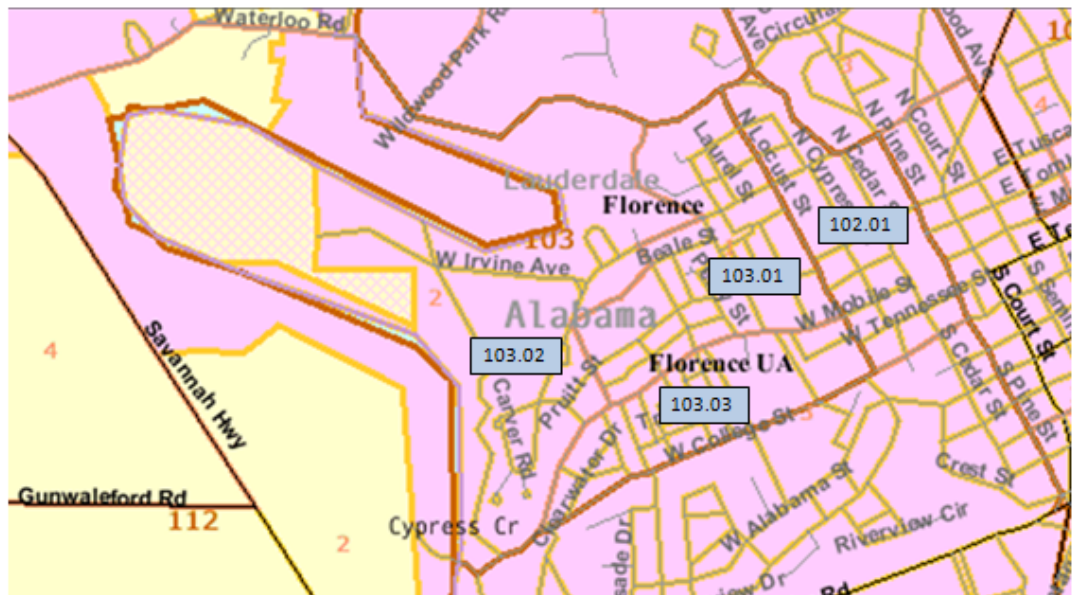
Source: U.S. Department of the Census, Economic Census 2002

2. Service to West Florence Residents

In addition to serving daily and occasional visitors to West Florence with retail goods and services, there is an excellent opportunity to expand the number of retail offerings serving the permanent population of the West Florence area as well.

The population of West Florence is comprised of parts of two Census Tracts shown below. Directly adjacent to the downtown area, Block Group 1 of Census Tract 102 is home to approximately 900 residents. Approximately 1,400 additional residents live in Block Groups 1, 2, and 3 of Census Tract 103.

Block Groups in West Florence



Overall, it is estimated that the population of West Florence generates nearly \$36 million per year in consumer expenditures, most of which has to be spent outside of West Florence because of the lack of retail shopping opportunities in the area. In general, the area is adequately served by beauty and hair cutting services and cleaning services, and Wilson's Food Center appears to meet the food-at-home

needs of residents as well as serving as a general store for several other categories of products for the home. However, as shown in the table below, there is significant potential to be successful in West Florence supplying residents with a number of retail offerings. Appropriate offerings to serve the *residential* consumer of West Florence would include one (or an additional):

- Home-style restaurant – to expand the draw and complement Bunyan’s
 - Hardware and household maintenance retailer carrying home furnishings
 - Dollar Store or with variety goods
 - Family clothing store
 - Automotive parts and repair supplies store

**Estimated 2008 Consumer Expenditures by West Florence Residents
by Block Group and Product Category (\$000)**

Block Group:	102.001	103.001	103.002	103.003	Total
Population (1/1/2008)	898	566	536	336	2,336
Total Consumer Expenditures (\$000)	18,688.50	6,852.70	5,481.60	4,697.70	\$35,721
Food					
Food at home	1,558.60	631.7	525.1	418.8	3,134
Food away from home	1,028.00	346.2	283.4	235.1	1,893
Alcoholic beverages	190.3	44.1	34.6	28.6	298
Housing					
Household operations	308.2	101.3	78.5	69.5	558
Household furnishings and equip	578.1	172	130.2	116.8	997
Household textiles	57.5	19.1	14.1	12.7	103
Furniture	153.3	53.4	41.5	37.2	285
Major appliances	84.9	24.8	18.3	16.4	144
Small appliances	9.9	2.9	2.1	1.8	17

Continued: Estimated 2008 Consumer Expenditures by
West Florence Residents by Block Group and Product Category
(\$000)

Continued:					
Block Group:	102.001	103.001	103.002	103.003	Total
Apparel and services					
Men and boys	175.1	73.5	61.8	51.2	362
Women's and girls	319.8	132.8	112.9	88.8	654
Children under 2	45.4	23	22.5	15.6	107
Footwear	155.7	85.7	77.9	57.3	377
Transportation					
Vehicle purchases (net outlay)	1,227.60	441.5	346.7	306.7	2,323
Gasoline and motor oil	947.9	369.2	305	251.4	1,874
Other vehicle expenses	918.5	346.6	277.7	241.3	1,784
Health Care	1,190.60	374.2	261.2	243.1	2,069
Medical services	249.3	57.6	41.2	37.2	385
Drugs	240.4	73.6	49.8	46.7	411
Medical supplies	45.6	11.7	8.3	7.5	73
Entertainment	809.6	227	173.5	153.8	1,364
Personal care products, services	240.5	104.4	84.7	72.3	502

Source: EasiDemographics /The Right Site 2009

**Average Revenue Generated by Alabama Retailers for Selected Categories of
Business
Appropriate for Serving the West Florence Daytime Consumer**

Retail Business Description	Average Annual Sales Per Establishment In Alabama
Full-service restaurants	\$739,296
Food services & drinking places	\$636,889
Home furnishings stores	\$1,125,340
Lawn & garden equipment & supplies stores	\$1,463,735
Used merchandise stores	\$428,378
Automotive parts & accessories stores	\$791,097
Automotive repair & maintenance	\$379,937
Men's clothing stores	\$838,690
Women's clothing stores	\$901,033
Cosmetics, beauty supplies, & perfume stores	\$581,830
Health & personal care stores	\$2,175,472

Source: U.S. Department of the Census, Economic Census 2002

Summary

West Florence has experienced a decline in economic and social vitality over the past several decades, and there are few retailers remaining in an area that at one time housed a number of successful businesses serving the needs of local residents. Reversing this trend and restoring vitality to the business sector is very important to city officials and residents.

However, new retailers in the area will need to proceed carefully and with a clear strategy for marketing. The first successful businesses may be those that tap into the daytime visitor segment of the market. Between serving employees, patients, and families associated with the Coffee hospital complex and tourists visiting the W.C. Handy home and museum, there are existing opportunities for several types of businesses.

The residents of West Florence, for the most part, are struggling to survive economically. As a result, the success potential for new retail offerings serving the residential segment of the market will be dependent on those retailers' ability to start small and focus on offering a variety of different product categories under one roof. A retailer that offers clothing for men, women, and children as well as accessories will have more chance to survive than a specialty store, for example. Similarly, a hardware store may need to offer household items, yard maintenance products, clothing, and other products.

However, retailers who locate to serve both the *daytime* and *residential* markets will have approximately twice the number of consumers available, and spending by visitors is likely to be much higher per trip than spending by West Florence residents. Nationwide, consumers have indicated a desire for a more intimate and entertaining shopping experience. Unique smaller stores, in particular, are of great appeal.

An institutional center is proposed for development in West Florence, and the area is well positioned to further expand education activities because of its

existing education base, transportation links, and comparatively low property costs.

Due to the popularity of the W.C. Handy Festival, a strengthened arts and culture segment would tie together and leverage growth of the education and tourism sectors. There is an opportunity to promote the area as a cultural center that will attract tourism traffic to the region and provide possibilities for the strong talent pool surrounding the area. Another opportunity exists in stimulating development of music studios, production facilities, and other support services in the region that will promote the growth of both the music and arts culture areas.

Appendix A
2008 Population Characteristics of
West Florence Residents by Block Group

Block Group:	102.001	103.001	103.002	103.003	Total
POPULATION					
Population (4/1/2000)	960	649	640	417	2,666
Population (1/1/2008)	898	566	536	336	2,336
HOUSEHOLDS					
Households (4/1/2000)	614	291	261	201	1,367
Households (1/1/2008)	587	259	224	166	1,236
POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS 2008					
Family Population	401	436	457	265	1,559
Non-Family Population	473	117	79	71	740
Families	133	148	146	95	522
Gender					
Male	360	243	208	156	967
Female	538	323	328	180	1,369
					0
Age					0
Median Age	44.2	45	23.2	39.7	152
Aged 0 to 5 Years	49	44	79	25	197
Aged 6 to 11 Years	32	48	56	27	163
Aged 12 to17 Years	52	38	84	24	198
Aged 18 to 24 Years	152	52	66	29	299
Aged 25 to 34 Years	95	55	51	37	238
Aged 35 to 44 Years	75	46	54	55	230
Aged 45 to 54 Years	114	91	53	35	293
Aged 55 to 64 Years	101	89	41	34	265
Aged 65 to 74 Years	91	51	24	24	190
Aged 75 to 84 Years	90	35	21	31	177
Aged 85 Years and Older	47	17	7	15	86
					0
Race/Ethnicity					0
White	498	21	7	3	529
Black	360	531	522	327	1,740
Asian	7	0	0	0	7
Other	33	14	7	6	60
Hispanic	19	2	4	2	27

Estimated 2008 Income Characteristics of West Florence Residents by Block Group

Block Group:	102.001	103.001	103.002	103.003	Total
DETAILED INCOME CHARACTERISTICS					0
Total Household Income (\$)	15,376,250	6,617,000	4,984,350	5,865,700	32,843,300
Median Household Income (\$)	13,422	15,887	12,632	24,000	65,941
Per Capita Household Income (\$)	17,123	11,691	9,299	17,457	55,570
					0
Households By Income					0
Less than \$15,000	328	124	133	56	641
\$15,000 to \$24,999	116	62	44	30	252
\$25,000 to \$34,999	44	36	13	19	112
\$35,000 to \$49,999	17	8	7	22	54
\$50,000 to \$74,999	32	6	10	28	76
\$75,000 to \$99,999	24	8	8	7	47
\$100,000 to \$124,999	17	8	0	0	25
\$125,000 to \$149,999	0	0	9	0	9
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0	7	0	1	8
\$200,000 and Over	9	0	0	3	12

Source: EasiDemographics /The Right Site 2009

Estimated 2008 Employment Characteristics of
West Florence Residents by Block Group

Block Group:	102.001	103.001	103.002	103.003	Total
Labor Force Characteristics (Pop 16+)					
Employment Potential	782	449	345	268	1,844
Not in the Labor Force Male	179	120	78	42	419
Not in the Labor Force Female	292	182	226	81	781
Industry (Pop 16+)					
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	0	0	0	5	5
Construction	44	5	9	10	68
Manufacturing	46	31	0	29	106
Wholesale Trade	5	6	1	0	12
Retail Trade	47	3	2	5	57
Transportation and Warehousing and Utilities	5	0	0	8	13
Information	0	0	0	2	2
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13	0	0	3	16
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, etc.	8	6	0	0	14
Educational, Health and Social Services	67	27	16	44	154
Arts, Entertainment, Accommodation and Food Services, etc.	34	47	0	4	85
Other Services	10	6	0	14	30
Public Administration	6	0	0	13	19
					0
Transportation to Work (Empl 16+)					0
Car, Truck, Van	264	111	13	124	512
Public Transportation	0	3	0	0	3
Other Transportation	11	17	15	13	56
Work at Home	10	0	0	0	10
					0
Travel Time to Work (Empl 16+)					0
Less than 15 Min	133	32	12	54	231
15-29 Min	125	99	16	72	312
30-59 Min	17	0	0	4	21
60+ Min	0	0	0	7	7
					0

Estimated 2008 Household and Housing Characteristics of
West Florence Residents by Block Group

Block Group:	102.001	103.001	103.002	103.003	Total
HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS					0
Total Units	689	301	244	209	1,443
Occupied Units	587	259	224	166	1,236
Vacant Units	102	42	20	43	207
Occupancy					
Owner Occupied	80	124	45	98	347
Renter Occupied	507	135	179	68	889
Median Rent (\$)	322	408	229	583	
Owner Occupied Home Value					
Median Value (\$)	145,313	52,840	57,826	99,091	
Less than \$20,000	0	8	2	0	10
\$20,000-\$39,999	0	2	0	0	2
\$40,000-\$59,999	7	81	23	0	111
\$60,000-\$79,999	0	8	20	28	56
\$80,000-\$99,999	7	0	0	22	29
\$100,000-\$124,999	0	25	0	28	53
\$125,000-\$149,999	32	0	0	0	32
\$150,000-\$174,999	0	0	0	20	20
Over \$175,000	34	0	0	0	34
Year Built					
Median Year Built	1973	1957	1965	1952	
Built 1999 or Later	0	0	0	0	0
Built 1995 to 1998	0	0	0	3	3
Built 1990 to 1994	45	0	0	0	45
Built 1980 to 1989	127	10	10	0	147
Built 1970 to 1979	277	58	64	22	421
Built 1960 to 1969	78	57	120	18	273
Built 1950 to 1959	67	119	50	87	323
Built 1940 to 1949	32	49	0	45	126
Built 1939 or Earlier	63	8	0	34	105
Year Moved In					
Year Moved in 1999 or Later	164	18	20	2	204
Year Moved in 1995 to 1998	230	35	106	53	424
Year Moved in 1990 to 1994	101	47	25	40	213
Year Moved in 1980 to 1989	41	40	10	12	103
Year Moved in 1970 to 1979	27	43	16	7	93
Year Moved in 1969 or Earlier	24	76	47	52	199

Organizations Located within One Mile of the W.C. Handy Home

NAME	ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	EMP SIZE
Handy Recreation Ctr	1105 Beale St	Fitness & Recreational Sports Centers	3
Wilson's Food Ctr	929 W College St	Supermarkets & Other Grocery Stores	20
New Spot	925 W College St	Used Merchandise Stores	1 to 4
John's Package Store	923 W College St	Beer Wine & Liquor Stores	1
Nu-Look Barber Shop	921 W College St	Barber Shops	3
Bridges Brite Ideas Florist	916 W College St	Florists	3
Bunyan's Bar-B-Que	901 W College St	Full-Service Restaurants	6
Auxier Medical Ctr	216 Marengo St # B	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	5
Auxier, Patricia L MD	216 Marengo St # B	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Beer Simon Williams & Assoc	216 Marengo St # C	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Boyer, David Lynn MD	216 Marengo St # C	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Bennett, Ann MD	216 Marengo St # D	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Wiregrass Hospice	216 Marengo St # F	Home Health Care Svcs	25
Tri-Cities Allergy Clinic	216 Marengo St # H	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Da Vita Inc	216 Marengo St # I	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Retina Specialists Of Alabama	216 Marengo St # K	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Bethesda Regional Cancer Ctr	208 Marengo St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	5
Gourmet Shoppe	205 Marengo St	Gift Novelty & Souvenir Stores	1 to 4
Simon, J Michael MD	205 Marengo St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Lifesouth Community Blood Ctr	205 Marengo St	Blood & Organ Banks	2
Coffee Health Group	205 Marengo St	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals	50 to 99
ECM	205 Marengo St	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals	60
Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital	205 Marengo St	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals	1500
Florence MRI Diagnostic Ctr	552 W Alabama St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	6
Lauderdale Radiology Group	546 W Alabama St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Holy Sanctuary Temple Of God	1121 W Mobile St	Religious Organizations	6
Carver Homes Boys & Girls Club	1115 Carver Homes	Civil & Social Organizations	2
Warren, Scott H MD	635 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Riverbend Center-Mental Health	635 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Bowers, Mary Phd	635 W College St	Offices Of Misc Health Practitioners	1 to 4
W C Handy Museum	620 W College St	Museums	2
Shoals Commercial Culinary Ctr	610 W College St	Packaged Frozen Food Merchant Whls	1
Florence Learning Ctr	610 W College St	Elementary & Secondary Schools	11
Slater Burrell Cmnty Ed Ctr	610 W College St	Elementary & Secondary Schools	3
Nw-Shoals Adult Education Prgm	610 W College St	Other Technical & Trade Schools	3
NACOLG Senio Rx	610 W College St	Services For The Elderly & Disabled	1
City Skills Of Lauderdale	610 W College St	Other Social Advocacy Organizations	8
Barnes, Carl A MD	603 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4

Sandella, Surender K MD	603 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
White, Steven D MD	603 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Florence Pathology Svc LLC	603 W College St	Medical Laboratories	15
Patricia Edwards & Assoc Co	401 Crest St	All Other Professional & Technical Svcs	2
Mc Gee, Burton H DDS	412 S Cedar St	Offices Of Dentists	1 to 4
Tina M Parker PC	406 S Cedar St	Offices Of Lawyers	1
Sinclair-Lawrence & Assoc	402 S Cedar St	Insurance Agencies & Brokerages	5
Hayes Garage	1019 W Mobile St	General Automotive Repair	1
Burdine & Burdine	408 W Dr Hicks Blvd	Offices Of Lawyers	8
Self Smith & Burdine	408 W Dr Hicks Blvd	Offices Of Lawyers	8
DDI Inc	416 W Dr Hicks Blvd	Diagnostic Imaging Centers	5
Thigpen Behel Engelthaler	420 W Dr Hicks Blvd	Offices Of Lawyers	1 to 4
Maples, James L DDS	310 W Dr Hicks Blvd	Offices Of Dentists	1 to 4
Northwest Alabama Cancer Ctr	302 W Dr Hicks Blvd	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Jamieson, Drew	302 W Dr Hicks Blvd	Other Individual & Family Svcs	1 to 4
1 Step At A Time	1002 Beale St	Child Day Care Svcs	5
Rhodes & Rhodes Counseling Svc	530 W College St	Other Individual & Family Svcs	5
Endocrinology & Diabetes Clnc	541 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Gastrointestinal Specialists	541 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
B Cm	541 W College St		1 to 4
Tennessee Valley Cardio Ctr	541 W College St # 1100	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	25
Alabama Heart & Vascular Ctr	541 W College St # 2000	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	7
Lung Center PC	541 W College St # 2200	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Florence Ob/Gyn Group	541 W College St # 2400	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Aldridge & Keith	541 W College St # 3100	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	10 to 19
Florence Urological Assoc PC	541 W College St # 3300	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Charles E Wilson Medical	541 W College St # 3500	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Clemons, Linda C MD	503 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Chad's Pay-Less Pharmacy Inc	501 W College St	Pharmacies & Drug Stores	15
Johnson's Cleaners	929 W Mobile St	Dry-Cleaning & Laundry Svcs	3
Olene's Beauty Salon	10 Courtview Towers	Beauty Salons	1
Courtview Towers	17 Courtview Towers	Lessors Of Residential Buildings	9
Light House Ministries	921 W Mobile St	Religious Organizations	1 to 4
O'Brien Orthopedics PC	426 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	5 to 9
Shoals Orthopedics	426 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Infants' & Children's Clinic	421 W College St	Freestanding Emergency Medical Centers	50
Florence Housing Authority	110 S Cypress St # 1	Residential Property Managers	5 to 9
Lister Healthcare Labs	401 W College St	Misc Ambulatory Health Care Svcs	1 to 4
NCIC	401 W College St # B	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	5
Magnolia Nutrition Ctr	103 S Cypress St	Services For The Elderly & Disabled	2
Florence Senior Citizens Svc	103 S Cypress St	Legislative Bodies	2
Greater St Paul AME Church	129 S Cherokee St	Religious Organizations	6

Schneider, Jeffrey R Dpm	120 S Locust St	Offices Of Podiatrists	1 to 4
Central Clinic	108 S Locust St	Offices Of Chiropractors	1 to 4
Herman's Cut & Style Shop Inc	806 W Mobile St	Barber Shops	1
Domco Inc USA	212 S Cedar St	All Other Durable Goods Merchant Whls	73
Carr Allison	212 S Cedar St	Offices Of Lawyers	7
Douglas A Wright Law Office	211 S Cedar St	Offices Of Lawyers	6
Joe M Patterson Jr Law Office	211 S Cedar St	Offices Of Lawyers	6
Shelton, Beaumont L DDS	313 W College St	Offices Of Dentists	1 to 4
Handy School	955 Beale St	Elementary & Secondary Schools	40
Thompson, Donald F MD	311 W College St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Odem, C David	205 S Cedar St	Offices Of Lawyers	1 to 4
Hearn, Joel P DDS	309 W College St	Offices Of Dentists	1 to 4
Listerhill Employees CU	301 W College St	Credit Unions	9
Madison's Beauty Salon	521 W Tennessee St	Beauty Salons	1 to 4
Mitchell's Bail Bonding	715 W Mobile St	Direct Property & Casualty Insurers	1
Suds R Us	715 W Mobile St	Dry-Cleaning & Laundry Svcs	1
Mademoiselle Beauty Salon	713 W Mobile St	Beauty Salons	2
Hiz & Herz	653 W Mobile St	Beauty Salons	2
Northwest Alabama Children Ctr	404 W Tennessee St	Child & Youth Svcs	7
Heritage Child Care	909 Pruitt St	Child Day Care Svcs	2
Revival Center 2	802 Kinnard St	Religious Organizations	1 to 4
Daniel E Boone PC	330 W Tennessee St	Offices Of Lawyers	1 to 4
Womens Health Clinic	328 W Tennessee St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	1 to 4
Womens Health Clinic	328 W Tennessee St	Offices Of Physicians Except Mental Health	7
Mt Zion SDA Church	825 Pruitt St	Religious Organizations	1 to 4
Store-N-Deli	121 N Cedar St	Supermarkets & Other Grocery Stores	1
St James Baptist Church	225 Wallace St	Religious Organizations	1 to 4
Heritage Manor Assisted Living	310 W Mobile St # 310	Homes For The Elderly	12
Community Health Clinic	309 Handy Homes # B	Freestanding Emergency Medical Centers	3
Little Miracles	424 N Locust St	Child Day Care Svcs	5
Mt Moriah PB Church	820 W Irvine Ave	Religious Organizations	1 to 4
Cedar House	455 N Locust St	Caterers	2
Touch Of Class Barber Shop	621 Campbell St	Barber Shops	1

APPENDIX B: Meeting Notes

WEST FLORENCE COMMUNITY MEETING NOTES from Steering Committee Meeting December 4th, 2008

Assets

School / Education Center	Florist
Handy Homes	Historic Places – W.C. Handy Home/ Frank Lloyd Wright House
Recreation Department	People
Shopping on College Street – Grocery Store/ BBQ/ Beauty and Barber Shops/ laundromat	Bank/ Credit Union
UNA Relationship	Newspaper
Mental Healthcare Center	Burrell museum
Churches	Carver Homes
Day care center	Magnolia Towers
Boys and Girls Club	Nursing home
Good, undeveloped land	Court View Towers
Cypress Creek	_____
Hospital, Doctors complex	_____
McFarland Park	_____
Smack 2, restaurant	

Issues

Lack of businesses	Sight distance issues at some intersections – Travis & Burrell, Nance & College St.
Dilapidated buildings	Older trees leaning, pulling up ground
No entertainment for youth and adults/ after school activities	Inconsistent leaf pickup
Drainage – West Mobile Street, Long Lane to Mobile	City is inconsistent (maintenance)
Vandals	Perception
City upkeep under utility lines	Few restaurants
Maintenance of empty lots	Few gas stations
Debris pick up after maintenance work	Lack of developers
Old bridge is missing	Property values
Lack of sidewalks	Neighbors property (upkeep)
No food deliveries to West Florence at night	Not pricing homes but neighborhood
Sidewalk maintenance	Landfill and cleanup
Closure of Mobile St. to Downtown (connectivity)	_____
Street lighting – West Moreland (300 Block)	_____
Trees vs. power lines	_____

Outside Forces

City of Florence	News and media focus on the bad
Maintenance (street cleaning issues)	_____
Utility departments not checking meters	_____
Medical profession and their treatment of patients	_____
Developers	

Reasons to live, work, invest in West Florence

Born here, home	Make a difference
Went to school here	Positive, get out the negative
Only place to buy, affordable here	
Historic	_____
People, connections	_____
Neighbors	
WC Handy Home	_____

One Word to describe your personal Vision for West Florence

Respect	More jobs
Quality homes, upkeep	More, better maintained trees
More investment	Lots cleaned after demolition
Walking	People not afraid to come to West Florence
Public transportation	Positive media attention
Drug free	Safer
More local business	Better lighting
Better relationship with City	Wider Street, Parking
Franchise restaurants, grocery store, fast food	Slower traffic (West Irvine and West Mobile and Carver Homes area)
Infill, redevelopment	School bus drivers go slower
Park	
Cars parked in driveways, not yards	
Clean-up overgrown areas	_____
New homes	_____
Construction jobs (with new homes)	_____

Missing from personal visions for West Florence

Street trees	School reopened
Street lights	Entertainment, nightlife
Park, kids sports field/ soccer, other	Get good name back
Cleaner	_____
Sidewalks	_____
Flowers	_____
Speed bumps	
New homes and businesses	

What would make you say “WOW” 10-15 years from now?

Drug free	School, elementary or middle,
Clean neighborhood	also serving other parts of the
Pretty homes	City
Neighbors interacting	Well maintained streets, trees,
Park	ROW
New businesses	Zoning changes (consistent with
City of Florence recognize Black	plan and vision)
History	
Vacant lots cleaned up	_____
Reinvestment, growth, jobs	_____
Better communication with City	_____
Bridge	_____

Additional Comments

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

APPENDIX C: Illustrative Map

