

# Glossary

**A Path to the Future -** Alternate title for this *Shelby County Comprehensive Plan*. Not to be confused with the report *Paths to the Future*.

**Action/action item -** A singular task or act employed at the direction of specific policies or implementation strategies of this plan, towards the advancement and realization of the plan's vision and goals and vision of this plan.

**Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO)-** A mechanism that restricts the approval of new developments, based on the existence of adequate public facilities and capacity, with the intention of ensuring that impacts from such new development not diminish the levels-of-service currently being enjoyed by the facility's existing users.

**Capital improvement plan/program -** A mid-range (usually five-year) financial planning tool that addresses a community's highest priority capital expenditure needs. The purpose of the capital improvement program is to address the community's long-term needs for improving streets, drainage, parks, public facilities, utilities and other municipal functions. Generally, projects included in a capital improvement program are relatively expensive, have a multi-year useful life, and result in the acquisition or improvement of a fixed asset.

**Community -** A well-defined area, such as a neighborhood, village or town, with distinguishing physical, social and cultural characteristics, and whose residents live, socialize and interact together and share in and identify with the peculiar institutions, customs, characteristics and/or landmarks of that place.

**Community Core -** The activity center or "downtown" of each community. A community Core has a lively, robust character suitable for employment, commercial and public activities. Its mix of land uses include dwellings, commercial and office uses, personal and household service establishments, institutional uses, public facilities, parks, playgrounds and other similar uses meeting the needs of the adjoining neighborhoods. Structures, facilities, streets and blocks in the Core are designed at a greater intensity relative to its scale than those of their adjacent, supporting neighborhoods. The Core's size and intensity is also relative to the context and scale of its community, in that the Core of a hamlet may include only one or two buildings housing a general store and/or a church, and/or a handful of apartments, while the Core of a village might include several blocks of mixed uses and attached residences serving the much larger (in terms of population) Hinterland associated with a village.

**Community Design Manual -** A tool for providing design standards and criteria for developing community master plans or placemaking projects, consistent with the vision and goals of this Comprehensive Plan.

**Community Focus Area -** The more intensely developed area adjacent to and supporting connected to the community Core; for incorporated communities, the Focus Area and Core will be within the existing boundaries of the municipality. In larger scale communities, such as in towns or villages, the Focus Area may include neighborhood schools, major civic activities, and subordinate mixed use neighborhood centersCores with their own Focus Area integrated into the

neighborhoods and special districts adjacent to the community Core. In the context of small communities in the Rural Landscape, the Focus Area should not extend much beyond the ¼ mile “five-minute walk” area that encircles the community Core, and represent the “boundaries” of the hamlet or crossroad. As the primary location for future residential and nonresidential development, the Focus Areas will absorb the bulk of growth in Shelby County in the coming decades. The manner of growth and redevelopment in the Focus Area is of vital importance; as each new development is absorbed into the Focus Area’s built environment, it is important that it be viewed in the context of its larger community, to ensure the long-term sustainability of both the individual development and the community.

**Community of place -** A dynamic, diverse, compact, and efficient center that has evolved and been maintained at a human scale, with an easily accessible central Core of commercial and community services, residential units, and recognizable natural and built landmarks and boundaries that provide a sense of place and orientation.

**Community Transition Area -** The expansion area around a community or municipal Focus Area in which the scale and intensity of the community blends into surrounding Rural Landscape. The Transition Area provides a balance between the natural and built environments, and while serving as both a visual and spatial transition between the built areas of the community and the Rural Landscape. Growth in the Transition Area must be carefully coordinated with the community or municipality to insure its consistency with the character and scale of that community, as well as to provide for the proper extension of utilities and roads, consistent with the master plan of the Community and the vision and goals of this Comprehensive Plan. Development in the Transition Area beyond the built edge of the

community will occur predominantly through the use of conservation design. This development pattern will result in the creation of Crossroads and Hamlets in areas outside the Hinterlands of the larger Villages and Towns, some of which will likely evolve into larger places, depending on their location and disposition relative to other larger places.

**Conservation -** The management of natural and historic resources to prevent unnecessary exploitation, waste, destruction, or degradation.

**Conservation easement -** A non-possessory interest of a holder in real property imposing limitations or affirmative obligations for the purpose of which include retaining or protecting natural, scenic, or open space values of real property, assuring its availability for agricultural, silvicultural, forest, recreational, or open space use, protecting natural resources, maintaining or enhancing air or water quality, or preserving the historical, architectural, archaeological, paleontological, or cultural aspects of real property.

**Conservation subdivision -** A grouping, or clustering, of building units on small lots with the largest part of the site remaining in open land, or conserved. The cluster is both visual and spatial with the dwellings scaled and sited to maintain coherent relationships to each other and the surrounding landscape. The residual open land accounts for the overall lower density of the site and serves to accommodate rural economy uses and preserve rural character.

**Context -** A condition of being, with regard to a particular place or setting (ie: a particular village or a particular rural roadway), which establishes a set of characteristics and/or conditions which must be incorporated into the design or evaluation of a development proposal or individual element of such development proposal.

**Crossroad -** A small rural community having distinguishing physical, social and cultural characteristics, and whose residents live, socialize and interact together and share in and identify with the peculiar institutions, customs, characteristics and/or landmarks of that place. The Crossroad is the least intense community type, often, but not necessarily, located at the intersection of an historic road or transportation crossing. The “Crossroad” represents the heart of the rural community. Where rural Shelby County communities exist having no crossroad to mark its existence, the community may be comprised of a group of rural farm families who come together in informal gathering places. A crossroad encompasses and serves less than 100 families. Where a physical center exists, the center may feature such traditional community structures as a general store, a railroad depot, a post office, a feed and seed store, one or more churches and/or an historic barn clustered at the Crossroad. These traditional structures suggest an appropriate scale, organization and character for future rural crossroads.

**Density/Intensity -** The permitted ratio of residential units to land area or the permitted ratio of building size to land area.

**Density/Intensity Bonus -** The allocation of development rights that allow a parcel to accommodate additional square footage or additional residential units beyond the maximum for which the parcel is zoned or otherwise permitted, usually in exchange for the provision or preservation of an amenity at the same site or at another location with appropriate design standards.

**Development -** The act of bringing about growth; to construct or alter a structure, to make a change in use or appearance of land, to divide land into parcels, or to create or terminate rights of access.

**Development Rights -** The right to develop land by a land owner who

maintains fee simple ownership over the land or by a party other than the owner who has obtained the rights to develop. Such rights usually are expressed in terms of density allowed under existing zoning, but may also be expressed in comparable non-residential units, such as lease able square footage.

**Entitlement -** The base level of development potential (units per acre; square footage per acre) for a particular piece of property, which may be vested by existing zoning or a development approval, or otherwise determined by site or area analysis as might result from the development of an area plan, as described in this Comprehensive Plan.

**Form-Based Regulations -** A type of land development regulations which allows market demand to determine the mix of uses within the constraints of building type set by the community. The community establishes zones of building type and allows building owners to determine the uses. The look and layout of a street is carefully controlled to reflect neighborhood scale, parking standards, and pedestrian accessibility, but building owners and occupants are allowed maximum flexibility to determine how the buildings will be used.

**Goal -** A long term end which reflects the overall vision of the Comprehensive Plan and towards the achievement of which the County’s effort is directed through the plans objectives, policies and action items.

**Green building -** Development practices that incorporate the principles of sustainable design — design in which the impact of a building or project on the environment will be minimal over the lifetime of that building or project. Green building incorporates principles of energy and resource efficiency, practical applications of waste reduction and pollution prevention, . Additionally, green building practices encourage good air quality (indoor and

outdoor) and natural light to that promote health and productivity, and as well as transportation efficiency in design and construction, during use and reuse.

**Green infrastructure -** Open spaces characteristic of the County's traditional rural and scenic landscape such as heritage woodlands, agriculture and agriculture related activities, view sheds and rural roadways, steep slopes and ridge tops, buffered flood plains, as well as other lands of environmental significance. In developed areas, green infrastructure may include historical resources, recreational areas, parks, golf courses, etc.

**Greenbelt -** Any series or aggregation of integrated green infrastructure, Rural Landscape or open spaces, that may follow and incorporate natural features such as ridges, slopes, ravines and waterways. In the Rural Landscape, greenbelts may include manmade features such as agricultural fields and historic resources, rural roads, highways and vistas, as well as parks, recreational areas and golf courses. The prioritization of maintaining the integrity and functionality of natural systems and features in greenbelts, defines the areas suitable for place making and provides geographic relief between and among places and other developed areas.

**Hamlet -** A rural community having distinguishing physical, social and cultural characteristics, and whose residents live, socialize and interact together and share in and identify with the peculiar institutions, customs, characteristics and/or landmarks of that place. This rural community type is a little more intense than the rural crossroad, having a low intensity, mixed use community Core, within a small grouping of 100-150 homes. The Core would generally have a primary focal point, such as a church, a common green or a civic building, and a handful of non-residential uses and apartments serving the local needs. This Core area

encompasses detached homes typically loosely clustered in and around the Core, which are surrounded by farms or forests. Various housing sizes are appropriate in the hamlet. Homes near the center have large, deep lots located close to the street and the focal point. Other homes are set back far from the rural road

**Heritage resources -** Resources, such as farms, natural areas, and woodlands and historic resources, which make up an integral part of the historic and cultural legacy and Rural Landscape of Shelby County. Such resources have a high priority for conservation, preservation and/or restoration as part of the integrated system of green infrastructure identified in this plan.

**Hinterland -** The area within the sphere of influence of a particular place. Such areas vary in size based on the scale of the place, as well as the geography or terrain, but approximate the service area of the place upon which it is focused. A village should provide for the needs of a population base of 3,500-5,000 residents; the equivalent area required to yield that population at typical suburban densities is the hinterland.

**Impact Fee -** A fee levied on the developer or builder of a project by the county or other public agency as compensation for otherwise unmitigated impacts the project will produce.

**Incentives -** Various tools, strategies or mechanisms, such as density bonuses, tax breaks, public/private partnering, or streamlined approval processing, which are intended to encourage property owners and land developers to participate in projects that advance the vision of this Comprehensive Plan, by enhancing the potential benefit or profit to the participant.

**Incorporated -** The jurisdictional disposition of land which is located within the incorporated boundaries of a municipality.

**Infrastructure** - Facilities and services needed to sustain industry, residential, commercial, and all other land-use activities, including water, sewer lines, and other utilities, streets and roads, communications, and public facilities such as fire stations, parks, schools, etc.

**Joint Land Use Planning Area (JLUMA)** - An area of land planned as a joint effort of two or more local governments to promote a common vision, ensure a consistent, predictable and stable development pattern as well as address common issues, such as traffic congestion and circulation, duplication of public services, cost sharing of common programs and processes and revenue sharing.

**Level of Service (LOS) standard** - A standard used by government agencies to measure the quality or effectiveness of a municipal service, such as police, fire, or library, or the performance of a facility, such as a street or highway.

**Made Form** - buildings, roads, parks, farms and other physical features that exist as a result of human development activity.

**Natural Form** - land areas, geological features and other physical features and resources that exist in a natural state, unaffected by human development activity.

**Neighborhood** - A self-sufficient community within a larger town or community, having distinguishing physical, social and cultural characteristics, and whose residents live, socialize and interact together and share in and identify with the peculiar institutions, customs, characteristics and/or landmarks of that place. This community type provides for daily retail, service, civic and educational needs within its relatively small, compact center. The Neighborhood Center has a mixture of uses — including a mixture of dense residential types — to meet the needs of the surrounding residents, mostly located

within a walkable distance of the center. Streets are designed at a pedestrian scale, and are interconnected throughout the Core and Focus Area, and to the major arterial rural or urban roadways adjacent to the Neighborhood.

**Objective** - A strategic item, benchmark, task, product, etc., whose attainment or achievement can be measured, identified, quantified, etc. The achievement, acquisition or completion of objectives is advanced, guided or directed through the policies and actions articulated in the Comprehensive Plan.

**Open Space** - Any land or area, the preservation of which in its present use would: (1) conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources; or (2) protect streams or water supply; or (3) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches, or tidal marshes; or (4) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations, or sanctuaries; or (5) enhance recreation opportunities.

**Paths to the Future** - Title of report preceding adoption of the *Shelby County Comprehensive Plan*, which summarizes the public involvement process as well as the themes, trends and conclusions that arose from the process. Not to be confused with *A Path to the Future*.

**Performance Zoning** - While traditional zoning specifies allowable land uses in each district, performance zoning specifies standards of land use intensity that are acceptable in each district. Performance zoning focuses on the performance of the parcel or project, in terms of how it impacts its' immediate surroundings, or public facilities, or how well it implements the goals and objectives of the plan, not on the use of the specific piece of land. This gives local governments and developers more flexibility in designing projects, by relating a proposal to a plan and/or the site's local context. The use of a property is not restricted as long as

the site specific use and its direct impacts to the surrounding land are not negative to the community (as defined in the specific regulation).

**Place** - A town, village, neighborhood, hamlet or crossroads having distinguishing physical, social and cultural characteristics, and whose residents live, socialize and interact together and share in and identify with the peculiar institutions, customs, characteristics and/or landmarks of that place.

**Policy** - A specific statement of principle and intent, or deliberate action that implies clear commitment. Policies are focused on specific issues or items (objectives) and derived from the broad goals and vision of the plan. Policies guide decision making and provide rules and guidelines for action by the County, in pursuit of the advancement and realization of the goals and objectives of this plan.

**Preserve** - An area or parcel of land that has been protected or preserved from further development intensification by regulation, public purchase, conservation easement or any other method, which results in such lands remaining in its preserved state, usually some form of park, open space or natural condition.

**Priority Funding Areas – (see also Targeted Public Investment Plan)**

Specific areas and locations of the community — as indicated by the Comprehensive Plan — by where investments in public facilities and infrastructure are concentrated, intended to attract development to locations designated or meeting the criteria for placemaking, or otherwise advancing the goals and objectives of this plan. A *Targeted Public Investment Plan*, is the companion document which provides the necessary guidance for prioritizing public investment consistent with this plan.

**Proffer** - An offer of restrictions on use of property tendered by an

applicant for conditional rezoning or a special exception. Voluntary promise or commitment given in writing by a developer to construct certain improvements, to make certain donations, or to develop property subject to specified conditions to mitigate the impacts of the proposed development and to develop the property consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

**Program** - An action, activity, or strategy carried out in response to adopted policy to achieve a specific goal or objective. Policies and programs establish the “who,” “how,” and “when” for carrying out the “what” and “where” of goals and objectives.

**Roundabout** - A circular intersection with yield control of all entering traffic, channelized approaches, counter-clockwise circulation, and appropriate geometric curvature to ensure that travel speeds on the circulatory roadway are typically less than 50 km/h (30 mph).

**Rural Design Manual** - see **Community Design Manual.**

**Rural landscape** - Unincorporated rural areas and communities outside of municipalities and suburbanized areas that enjoy established rural characteristics. These include green infrastructure (agriculture/pastures, large stands of timber), rural communities as well as other important agricultural, economic, scenic or historic resources and activities, all of which collectively comprise the traditional Rural Landscape of this county and the region.

**Sense of place** - The constructed and natural landmarks and social and economic surroundings that cause someone to identify with a particular place or community.

**Sprawl** - The process by which the spread of development across the landscape far outpaces the population growth. The landscape sprawl creates has four dimensions: (1) a population that is widely dispersed in

low-density development; (2) rigidly separated homes, shops, and workplaces that require automobiles to move between; (3) a network of roads marked by huge blocks and poor access; and (4) a lack of well-defined thriving activity centers such as downtowns and town centers. Most other features usually associated with sprawl (e.g., the lack of transportation choices, relative uniformity of housing options, or the difficulty of walking) are the results of these conditions.

**Strategic Development Concept (SDC) -**

The concept advanced and articulated in Part II of this Comprehensive Plan, which describes a development pattern of compact and traditional communities (towns, villages/neighborhoods, hamlets, crossroads), nestled into a functional system of green infrastructure and connected via a network of interconnected regional and rural roadways.

**Strategy** A consciously intended course of action, expressed through objectives and policies, for guiding or directing implementing actions towards the realization of the goals and vision of this plan.

**Sustainable development -**

Development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while, maintaining, protecting and restoring the functionality of the natural environment upon which people and economies depend. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Sustainable/sustainability -** The finite capacity of any place to support human activities, given a set of impacts that those activities have on the place. Once capacity is reached, the impacts of additional growth or activities harm the integrity of the place and impair its ability to function as intended.

**Targeted Public Investment Plan – (see also Priority Funding Area)**

A capital improvement program that concentrates public infrastructure investments in specific areas and locations, while requiring developers to provide infrastructure for new developments outside of those areas. By prioritizing public investment in areas that will help achieve the vision and goals of the comprehensive plan, the County or community can efficiently use public resources and properly maintain infrastructure in the desired areas. Additionally, developers may be encouraged to invest in those areas knowing that there is a commitment from the County or community to provide and maintain high-quality infrastructure in that area(s).

**Tax increment financing, (TIF) -**

A state enabled program allowing a local government to recoup the investment it makes to encourage development in a specified geographic area. The County or community defines the area and makes the improvements needed to encourage development. These improvements may include a variety of investments, such as extensions of water and sewer lines, improvements to highways, or cleanup of brownfield sites. Property taxes generated by new development in the area would be earmarked to repay the bonds (or other financing mechanisms) used to pay for the local government's up-front investment, based on the increase in property values in the designated area that resulted from the public investment.

**Tax /Revenue Sharing -**

Intergovernmental cooperation in a region, such as in a joint land use planning area (JLUMA), for pooling and redistributing part of the increase in tax revenues generated by new development. Tax sharing can help to reduce competition among jurisdictions for fiscally desirable development, and encourage more efficient development patterns that benefit the County/region as a whole.

**Terminated/Terminating Vista -** A framed view through a community street or corridor, which terminates with a visual building, monument, block of buildings, etc., so that when one is looking up the street the view ends with the site.

**Town -** Towns include the incorporated communities of Shelby County, which vary in size from a small village or hamlet, such as Wilton, to larger municipalities such as Pelham or Alabaster. The term does not refer only to incorporated places, but in the hierarchy of *places*, also describes a community larger than a village, that may include one or more smaller village or neighborhood centers within its hinterland, and having distinguishing physical, social and cultural characteristics, and whose residents live, socialize and interact together and share in and identify with the peculiar institutions, customs, characteristics and/or landmarks of that place. Towns have a Core that relates to and serves its constituent neighborhoods and/or villages. Towns or their hinterlands may include a number of special districts accommodating larger, non-compatible land uses or activity centers, such as mining or industrial operations, school campuses, etc. The Core and center generally serves the shopping, civic, educational and cultural needs of this larger community, and feature a highly intensive, dense activity center with integrated mixed uses and a connected, walkable street grid.

**Traffic Calming -** The installation of speed humps, roundabouts, or traffic circles, or similar devices intended to improve conditions for non-motorized street users, discourage speeding or to discourage through traffic. Other calming mechanisms include narrow streets, buildings situated closer to the street and on street parking. Traffic calming effectively alters driver behavior by physically constricting the driver's visual corridor.

**Traffic Circle -** A circular intersection that does not have one or more of the characteristics of a roundabout. They often have large diameters, often in excess of 100 m (300 ft), allowing high travel speeds on the circulatory roadway. Also known as a rotary.

**Transfer of development rights (TDR) easement -** A legal covenant that protects the subject land in perpetuity from development beyond any development rights reserved subject to the underlying zone at the time the covenant is signed and grants enforcement of the covenant to the couan appropriate third partyty.

**Transfer of development rights (TDR)**  
The removal of the right to develop or build, expressed in units per acre or floor area ratio, from one lot or parcel to another, or from a portion of a lot to another part of the same lot.

**Transfer of development rights (TDR), receiving area -** In a TDR program, the designated zones to which development rights may be transferred from property in a sending area, beyond the base density through the transfer of development rights. Master planned Core and Focus Areas of designated places are receiving areas.

**Transfer of development rights (TDR), sending area -** In a TDR program, the designated zones from which development rights may be severed or transferred from property to be transferred to property in a receiving area. Lands designated as green infrastructure and Rural Landsape are sending areas.

**Transit Oriented Development -**  
Moderate and high-density housing concentrated in mixed-use developments located along transit routes, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, foot, or car. The location, design, and mix of uses in a TOD emphasize pedestrian-oriented environments and encourage the use of public transportation. People are

more inclined to use transit if it is within convenient walking distance to where they work, live, or shop, and if adequate walkways are provided to link those activities.

**Unincorporated -** The jurisdictional disposition of land which is not located within the incorporated boundaries of a municipality.

**View Shed -** The area potentially visible from a particular location, limited by physical constraints such as development, topography, landscaping and by considerations such as perspective and angle of view. The priority for preservation and conservation of green infrastructure is the maintenance and enhancement of the functional integrity of the larger ecosystem and the sustainability of our activities within it.

**Village -** A self-sufficient neighborhood or small town, having distinguishing physical, social and cultural characteristics, and whose residents live, socialize and interact together and share in and identify with the peculiar institutions, customs, characteristics and/or landmarks of that place. This community type is somewhat more urban in design than a hamlet, and provides for daily retail, service, civic and educational needs within its a relatively small, compact center. The Village Center has a mixture of uses — including a mixture of dense residential types – to meet the needs of the surrounding walkable neighborhood. Streets are designed at a pedestrian scale, and are interconnected throughout the Core and Focus Area, and to the major arterial rural or urban roadways adjacent to the Village.

**Vision -** The long-term goal of the Comprehensive Plan: “A Community of Communities”, which reflects the County’s desire to accommodate growth and preserve its historical rural landscape through the creation and enhancement of compact and distinct communities – whether incorporated or unincorporated – woven together through a network of green infrastructure and rural roadways.

**Wildlife Corridor -** A protected corridor of land intended to facilitate the migration of wildlife from one area to another, by incentivizing the creation of conservation easements along and adjacent to existing utility transmission corridors (power, natural gas), and/or creek and flood way corridors. For example, the deer population in Oak Mountain State Park has increased substantially beyond the Park’s capacity to support it due to a lack of predation. This, in turn, is damaging the health and diversity of the Park’s flora due to over grazing, and has also resulted in a significantly undernourished deer population. Out migration is hindered by the Park’s being surrounded by development, so therefore, the Comprehensive Plan has called for the creation of a wildlife corridor connecting the Park’s lands to wilder and far less developed areas located in the central areas of the County.

**Zoning -** The division of a city or county by legislative regulations into areas, or zones, which specify allowable uses for real property and size restrictions for buildings within these areas. Also, a program that implements policies of the general plan.

# Notes

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