

# ABITA SPRINGS

## MASTER PLAN



TOWN OF ABITA SPRINGS  
FEBRUARY 2024



## THE ABITA SPRINGS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

was created by:

### Town of Abita Springs

#### Town Administration

Daniel J. Curtis, Mayor  
Janet Dufrene, Town Clerk  
Leanne Schaefer, Intergovernmental Affairs

#### Town Council

Pat Patterson, Mayor Pro Tem  
EJ Boudreaux  
Regan Contois  
Stephen Saussy  
Eric Templet

#### Utilities

Debbie MacLean, Director  
Linda Meeker, Clerk

#### Planning & Zoning

Kristin Tortorich, Director  
Heather Hockman, Clerk

#### Historic Commissioners

Thad Mancil, Chairman  
Otto Dinkelacker, Vice Chairman  
Ron Blich  
Andre Monnot  
Paul Vogt

#### Planning and Zoning Commissioners

John Pierce, Chairman  
Bryan Gowland  
Mike Lanaux  
Lex Leblanc  
Chad Hall

#### Public Works

Josh Mullan  
Cedric Little

*Other major participants on this project include:*

#### LA State Representative

Lawrence "Larry" Frieman

#### St. Tammany Parish Council

Mike Cooper, St. Tammany Parish President  
Cheryl Tanner, Council

#### Keep Abita Beautiful Coordinator

Sandra Slifer  
Jenny Carleton  
Adrienne Juttner

#### Abita Springs Trailhead Museum

George Long

### Project Team



Urban Design and Public Involvement



Economic Analysis

GEORGIADIS urban design

Comprehensive Planner and  
Plan Implementation

...and hundreds of participants from the Abita Springs Community

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# PUBLIC PROCESS

## THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The Town of Abita Springs faces development pressure for new homes as well as a desire for a more thriving downtown while wanting to preserve and enhance their existing character and Abita Springs charm. With the lack of a document to help guide growth, the town sought assistance in developing a Comprehensive Master Plan for their community.

The town engaged with the University of Notre Dame to assist in creating a vision for their community. In March 2020 students from the University engaged the community, learned about Abita Springs and started to get the community thinking about how they would like to see their town develop in the future. Following a long pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the town wanted to continue developing their vision and get a plan in place to help guide development in an efficient way that enhances the town without burdening existing residents.

In October 2022, after a review of other local Comprehensive Master Plans, the Town of Abita Springs engaged Dover, Kohl & Partners to assist the community in visualizing their ideas and creating a plan to help guide growth.

The Abita Springs Comprehensive Plan was created by the Town of Abita Springs staff, the consultant team led by Dover, Kohl & Partners including Andrew Georgiadis and Daedalus Capital, along with the crucial input of the Abita Springs community.

The public planning process began with online engagement and a virtual site visit in November 2022. The team met with stakeholders and other professionals to gain a well rounded understanding of the town's needs. The entire community was invited to participate a charrette in December 2022.

### WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

The guiding document to

- evaluate development projects,
- direct capital improvements,
- guide public policy, and
- ensure that ABITA SPRINGS is the place its residents want it to be.

### PUBLIC PROCESS

CHARRETTE EVENTS	Nov 28-29	Virtual Site Visit & Stakeholder Meetings	2022
	Dec 12	Kick Off & Hands-on Design Session	
	Dec 13-15	Open Design Studio & Stakeholder Meetings	
	Dec 16	Work-in-Progress Presentation	
ADOPTION MEETINGS	JAN 24	Public Open House	2024
	Jan 25	Public Open House	
	Jan 25	Planning & Zoning Meeting	



## ENGAGEMENT

The Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan had numerous opportunities for the community to be involved and provide input during the planning process. From virtual meetings, in-person workshops, website interactions, and livestreams, Abitians had the opportunities to help plan the future of their town.

### Online Engagement

EngageAbitaSprings.com was created to provide project updates, information about upcoming meetings and events, the ability to watch previous presentations, and multiple opportunities for community members to stay involved in the planning process. The engagement section of the website includes surveys, quick polls, and a comment section to provide the project team with valuable information in the creation of the plan and goals for the community on their own time.

During the charrette, the Kick-Off and Hands-On Design Session as well as the Work-In-Progress Presentation were livestreamed through the town's website. Community members were able to participate in the planning process at their convenience and from the comfort of home. This also allowed members of the community to go back and rewatch content at their discretion.

### Save the Date

Save the date cards were created and distributed throughout the community to invite everyone to participate in the charrette. It included descriptions of each event to occur throughout the week along with how people could participate.



Mobile Device View

[WWW.ENGAGEABITASPRINGS.COM](http://WWW.ENGAGEABITASPRINGS.COM)



### Stakeholder Meetings and Virtual Site Visit

On November 28-29 2022, representatives from DK&P Team and key team members from the sub-consultant team met with town staff, elected officials, and stakeholders in a series of meetings to better understand the dynamics and desires of the Abita Springs community. These online conferences, recorded for future viewing, laid the groundwork for the charrette. Each meeting focused on a specific topic with representatives from around the community and region invited to see how they would like the community to evolve as well as find out what they could do to help. Each session began with brief introductions followed by everyone’s interest in the town, what they hope the Master Plan will accomplish, and any concerns they have.

Attendees to the stakeholder meetings also helped to spread the word about the upcoming charrette to help boost attendance.

### Existing Conditions Analysis

Prior to the charrette, Dover-Kohl gathered base information and studied the existing physical and economic conditions of the area. This included reviewing previous plans and studies, examining existing town ordinances and land development regulations, and analyzing the physical, social, and economic characteristics the area.

### Meeting Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser

The Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan attracted a lot of attention not only across the town, but also statewide. During the charrette, the team was visited by Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser and his team. He expressed his interest on implementing some programs in Abita Springs, including the Main Street Program, among others.

### A Welcoming Town

Abita Springs’ residents showed the town’s homely character by kindly inviting the DK&P team to dinner at their homes. Throughout the week, residents showed their commitment to the well being of the Town by actively participating in conversations, providing meals, and donating much of their time to engage with the team and let them get to know the community better.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The design team had six different stakeholder meetings during the Virtual Site Visit:

- Historic Preservation and Land Use
- Transportation
- Economic Development and Urban Design
- Public Parks
- Environment and Resilience
- Regional Coordination



Meeting with Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser

**75+**

*Hands-On Design Session*

**55+**

*People in Meetings throughout the week*

**85+**

*Design Studio Visitors*

**550+**

*Online Engagement*

**765+**

*Total Engagement*



## CHARRETTE

The Abita Springs charrette was held December 12-16, 2022. The week long public charrette was an intensive multi-day set of workshops where the entire community could come together to craft their vision of the future.

### COMMUNITY TOUR

To further understand Abita Springs and its surrounding context, the team toured the area on the morning of December 12, 2022. The tour was guided by Jason King, the Project Director, who described previous and current initiatives in the area. The tour enhanced the team's understanding of current issues, concerns, and redevelopment prospects of the downtown core and throughout the surrounding neighborhoods including improvements to the newly expanded park along the Abita River. Team members walked, photographed, and noted building form, building placement, street design, and street connections on base maps of the existing conditions.

### KICK-OFF & HANDS-ON DESIGN SESSION

The Public Design Charrette began with an evening kick-off presentation followed by a Hands-On Design Session.

After Mayor Dan Curtis gave a brief introduction, the DK&P Team gave a short PowerPoint presentation that outlines the overall planning process, emphasizes the role of attendees in shaping the future of their community, and recapped the baseline analysis. During the presentation, participants were asked a series of polling questions with results displayed live as part of the presentation.

Following the presentation, participants broke out into small groups for a brainstorming/mapping session. Members of the DK&P team, along with town staff, guided each group to come up with ideas for the community. These sessions provided participants with the opportunity to interact with differing perspectives, allowed concerns to be quickly identified and resolved while helping establish strong community consensus around key issues. The goal was to build community support and develop a short and long-range vision for the future of Abita Springs, using the ideas from the residents of Abita Springs. Towards the end of the meeting, a representative from each table reported the top three big ideas back to the audience.

### OPEN DESIGN STUDIO

The Open Design Studio allowed the public more opportunities to share their ideas to the design team, ask questions, and have focused conversations. While the design team worked to create a plan, the public was encouraged to come in, look over the designers' and planners' shoulders, ask questions, and propose ideas. The public saw the details of the plan as they were developed and worked out and offered feedback on whether or not the team was getting it right.



*DK&P Team guiding group during Hands-On Design Session*



*Mayor Curtis welcoming residents to the Charrette*



*Team touring the town*

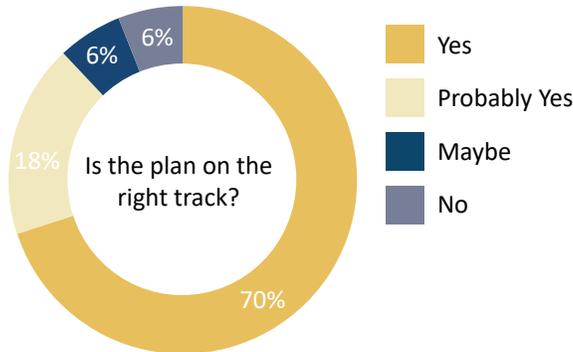


### TECHNICAL/STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Various technical and stakeholder group meetings were scheduled with specific topics and invited participants. The purpose of these meetings was to assist in the team’s continued understanding of the physical, market, environmental, and organizational forces at work in the project area and provide the team with direct feedback on developing concepts. Each meeting included a short presentation followed by an open conversation.

### WORK-IN-PROGRESS PRESENTATION

At the end of the charrette week, the team presented the work at the “Work-in-Progress” presentation. Draft work was introduced and discussed; methods of community participation (such as polling) were used to gather feedback on the ideas presented. At the end of the meeting participants were asked if the plan was on the right track.



### WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?

Charrette is a French word that translates as “little cart.” At the leading architecture school of the 19th century, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, students would be assigned a tough design problem to work out under pressure of time. They would continue sketching as fast as they could, even as little carts—charrettes—carried their drawing boards away to be judged and graded. Today, “charrette” has come to describe a rapid, intensive, and creative work session in which a design team focuses on a particular design problem and arrives at a collaborative solution. Charrettes are product-oriented. The public charrette is fast becoming a preferred way to face the planning challenges confronting American communities.

### PUBLIC WORKSHOP

The team returned to Abita Springs in February 2024 for a two-day workshop. The goal of this visit was to present the plan to the public and meet with stakeholder groups to hear their comments. The community was very engaged and agreed that the plan was on the right track.

The plan became available online at [www.engageabitasprings.com](http://www.engageabitasprings.com) after the meeting.



Residents during the Kick-Off and Hands-On Design Session



## CHARRETTE FEEDBACK

### ONE WORD CARD

During the kick-off presentation and hands-on design session, participants were asked to write down one word to describe Abita Springs as it is now and a different word to describe how it could be in the future. The words that are used more often become bigger while the rarely used words are smaller.

Now:



In the Future:

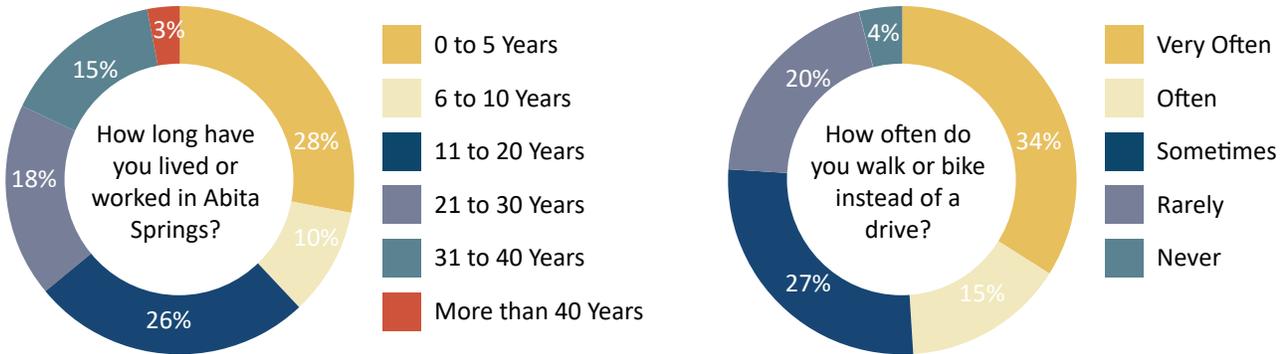




## KICK-OFF POLLING

At the kick-off presentation, residents were asked a few questions to get to know the community better. These polls are important to get to know the participating audience and help the team understand the context of the Town. The following are a few responses obtained from the town’s residents:

### Polling Responses



### Which THREE goals are most important for Abita Springs?

Responses are in order of most voted to least voted

1. Protect the Town’s unique character
2. Improve downtown area and park
3. Create new compact, mixed-use, walkable town center
4. Enhance public spaces, parks, and river access
5. Conservation
6. Reduce use of fossil fuels and prepare for climate impacts
7. More housing options
8. Produce food and energy locally



### COMMUNITY IMAGE SURVEY

“The Community Image Survey” asks about what someone would like to see (or not see) and also about the “look” of new additions to the area. During the kick-off presentation and the course of the week, residents came in to provide their input on their preferences for the town. Red dots were used on images they DID NOT want to see and green dots were used for things they DID want.

#### Predominantly Green Dots



Commercial



Commercial



Commercial



Residential



Single-Family



Single-Family



Open Spaces



Open Spaces



Streets



Open Spaces

#### Predominantly Red Dots



Commercial



Commercial



Commercial



Commercial



Single-Family



Residential



Civic Buildings



Civic Buildings



Streets



Signage



The residents of Abita Springs voiced their thoughts to the design team during all public engagement activities. The following are a few comments directly take from them:







# INTRODUCTION & VISION 1

## INTRODUCTION

The Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan reflects the Town of Abita Springs' desire to revitalize its downtown and restore its community fabric through good design, strategic redevelopment, and infill projects.

Abita Springs is a town in St. Tammany Parish, LA; also a part of the New Orleans–Metairie–Kenner Metropolitan Statistical Area. It is known for being a great access point for the Tammany Trace bike trail, a Rails-to-Trails paved path cutting through the heart of Abita Springs.

The aim of this document is to create a Comprehensive Master Plan that guides the growth and development of the community in Abita Springs. It aims to evaluate development projects, direct capital improvements, guide public policy, and ensure that Abita Springs is the place that its residents want it to be.

## EVERY GREAT TOWN HAS A PLAN

The Town of Abita Springs is planning its future with a goal to guide the development and growth of the community. It is looking to diversify its economy, increase employment opportunities, celebrate its history and culture, improve the health of its residents, improve affordability, and upgrade its quality of life. The *Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan* is a plan created through an inclusive, participatory public process that presents both a grand vision and a practical plan to accomplish goals in each of these areas. Strong infrastructure, education, and quality of life lay the foundation for long-term economic development. The plan presented in this document recommends public and private approaches that work together to help the town fully leverage its great potential. The plan also seeks to add more pedestrian and cycling transportation options, increase access to parks and neighborhood amenities, invest in the downtown, and enhance the unique community character.

The *Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan* is a living plan. Planning is an ongoing conversation about the future. The conversation that *Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan* began does not end with the plan's adoption. A town's needs evolve continually and just as the plan for one's own life must be allowed to evolve as opportunities and challenges change, so must the town's comprehensive plan.



Citizen engagement



Collaborative design



Participatory planning

### What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a guiding document that contains a detailed vision, using illustrative master plans and visualizations created with direct community input to insure that as the plan evolves it stays true to the overall vision. The plan identifies goals, objectives and policies that will enhance the town’s quality of life, respect its natural environs and support complimentary economic growth and development.

Each element of the plan contains:

1. A discussion of the town’s concerns or intentions;
2. Goals which chart a course of action based on the community vision;
3. Objectives to accomplish each goal; and
4. Policies which list implementation actions and the principles that form the basis for town regulations and procedures.

Within each element the plan’s goals, objectives and policies range from the level of the region, which includes the town and surrounding lands, to the level of the individual street and lot, both existing and proposed. By designing at all scales using the same overall principles the town has created a vision that can operate cohesively, and help guide the efforts of the town’s many stakeholders and decision makers at every level.

### USING THIS PLAN

The town’s comprehensive plan provides the basis for public policy in Abita Springs regarding physical and economic development. The Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan establishes priorities for public-sector action while at the same time providing direction for complementary private-sector decisions. This comprehensive plan provides a flexible framework that can be updated, revised, and improved upon over time to stay relevant to the issues the town must confront, as well as the ambitions the town chooses to pursue.

### Why we are here?

Dover, Kohl & Partners worked with the Town of Abita Springs to create the *Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan* through a participatory process called a “charrette”. The plan seeks to improve the quality of life throughout Abita Springs through redevelopment, urban infill in the downtown, streetscape improvements and revised design standards that will retain the character of the town.

### What if?

Many times, the planning process just continues what has been done many times before, leading to stagnant development. When asked why things are done a certain way, common responses are “...because that’s the way we always did it...” Other times people resist change or something different because they want things “...to stay as good as it always was...” As good as it always was, it is still only just “good”. The Abita Springs Comprehensive Master Plan seeks not only to maintain but also improve the existing character of the community.

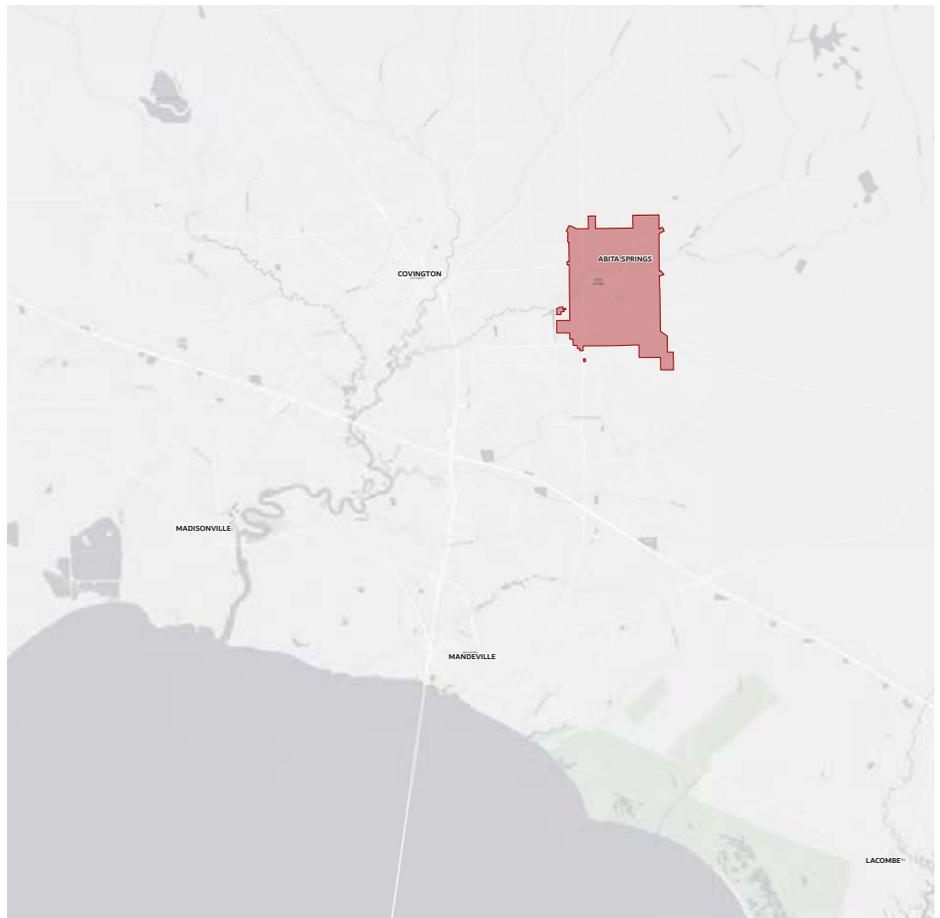


**LOCATION**

Before Abita Springs, Louisiana was established in 1820 by Louisiana pioneers, it was settled by the Choctaws for thousands of years. The Choctaws natives and pioneers lived in Abita Springs until 1830 when the Indian Removal Act forced the natives to migrate to Oklahoma. Some remained and integrated into the Abita Springs community.

Geographically, Abita Springs is located north of New Orleans across Lake Pontchartrain. The 4.6 square mile site is canopied by native pines and intersected by the Abita River and thinner running water veins. Underground natural spring water aquifers can be found across the land. The clear spring waters were determined to be of “high medical quality” and brought about the “healing waters” esteem that Abita Springs developed on.

Abita Springs became a destination for wellness traveling. Many resorts were open here for wellness retreats beginning with the Longbranch in the 1880s. Health tourism would continue to grow for decades, reaching its peak in the 1920s. Today the town is mostly known for its arts, music, and beer scene.



*Abita Springs Location Maps*



## VISION

*This report will help town leaders, the business community, non-profit organizations, and residents to ensure that change in Abita Springs diversifies the town’s economy, increases employment opportunities, enhances walkability, preserves green space, improves access to nature, grows sustainably, and upgrades the quality of life.*

Five “Big Ideas” form the overall vision and key recommendations of this plan. The five ideas (along with many others) came from conversations held in Abita Springs. Although specific details may change as the plan is implemented, the “Big Ideas” should remain intact. The ideas began as notes presented to the public as part of a public charrette. The overall big ideas are included below and the ideas are described in more detail on the following chapters.

### 1. ENHANCE THE DOWNTOWN AND MAKE IT A UNIQUE DESTINATION

Abita has a charming downtown, often visited due to its incredible Farmers Market on Sundays and the well-known Abita Springs Opry. There are a few key elements that could be implemented in the area to make it even more memorable. Walkability, beautiful architecture with a variety of uses, and a variety of activities are some of the proposed solutions to downtown Abita Springs. In order to make the downtown more walkable, parking has to be relatively close to the destinations, within walking distance. The town should invest in a parking lot, owned by the town, that could accommodate all the Downtown’s parking needs. Safe crossings and shuttles are other solutions to encourage pedestrian activity within the Downtown. Abita should take advantage of its proximity to highways and the amount of cars that pass through town on the daily, and incentive them to park and spend some time in town.

Another important aspect to enhance the downtown is the mix of uses and character of the buildings that encompass the area. One of the priorities in this effort is to fill in missing buildings with infill development that resembles the existing historic fabric. Abita Springs has beautiful historic buildings to take precedent from to create a timeless town. Mixed-use buildings should be encouraged in the downtown area, allowing more local businesses (instead of chains) to come into the town center while also providing affordable housing. This would mean the current height limit should be increased in some strategic areas. Currently, there are little to no residences within Abita’s center. A denser downtown would encourage more activity throughout the day and guarantee a dynamic, lively zone. In order to allow for some of these ideas to actually take place, the possibility of moving the Abita Springs Middle School should be explored. Making that land available would allow for more mixed-use and residential development in close proximity to the downtown. Moving the school would eliminate the majority of the traffic, and it would also allow other walkable centers, or small neighborhood hubs, elsewhere within the town.

Building the character of the town’s center is crucial to guarantee its success.

Once traffic and parking are handled, and the built environment is set, the livelihood of the downtown has to be established. A variety of activities is crucial to make a memorable downtown, and Abita has the potential to offer many unique experiences. Abita Springs is known as a regional art and music destination, so adding more art (galleries, public art, jewelry, make-your-own art, art workshops) and music (live music on the streets, concerts, several types of venues, music classes) is definitely something the town should implement. Abita is also historically known for its healing waters and as an escape destination from the city, so bringing in commerce related to those ideas (such as spas, salons, yoga, public pool, river activities) would attract people. Abita has many elements that make it a unique destination, so it should make more use of those traits.

The town should make it a goal to become part of the Louisiana Main Street program, something Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser already opened the door for. Implementing these suggestions would, as a resident expressed, “make the future of Abita look like the past.”



*Abita Springs Park*



## 2. NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE COMPATIBLE, RESPECTFUL OF CONTEXT, AND GREEN

Growth is inevitable. Because of that it is crucial to plan properly for future development in order to ensure it will be compatible with the existing character and charm of Abita Springs, while also respecting its natural areas.

Abita Springs was planned based on the railroad line that passes through town. The older neighborhoods have respected the street grid that was laid out at that time, and new neighborhoods should extend from the original grid to maintain the same town structure that is established. Streets should connect all throughout the community, and cul-de-sac subdivisions should not be allowed. Unfortunately, some of the newer subdivisions have divided the town and there is a lack of connectivity within neighborhoods.

New developments should maintain the community character and feel as though they are part of the rest of Abita. This can be achieved with connected streets, buildings of the same scale and character, and overall similar neighborhood compositions. The land development regulations should also allow for smaller homes and senior living facilities, guaranteeing housing for people in different stages of life. Although home interiors can be done more modernly, exteriors should take precedent from historic structures found all throughout town. This means front porches should continue to be built, including Abita Springs' famous three-sided porches. Getting the character of new buildings right is one of the most important elements to ensure the community is growing in a healthy way as development keeps coming in.

Commercial development should also be controlled and kept in tune with the rest of Abita's current commercial buildings. Strip-commercial buildings, such as those found all along Highway 190, should not be allowed anywhere within the town limits. Big developments with one way in and out create a fragmented community, which is the opposite of what Abita Springs is seeking to be. All buildings, including commercial, should ensure connectivity to the rest of town. All undeveloped areas such as those on Highway 36 should not become auto-only strip-commercial businesses, but rather beautiful human scale commercial buildings such as those already existing, specifically the ones found in the downtown.

With new development coming in, another big element to keep in mind is respecting the current protected natural parts of town, including the area by the river and all the wetlands. One of the reasons why Abita feels so peaceful is because of the way development has always respected its natural areas, conserving its beautiful trees and vegetation. The tree canopy should be preserved and general landscape interventions should be minimal. Abita Springs should protect the current aquifer, and invest in the swale system. Water quality is great in town and should remain that way. The ditches are dangerous to walk and drive through, and a better solution such as bioswales, could be implemented. Lastly, FEMA regulations need to be respected to stay away from any flood zones and guarantee long lasting homes that do not flood.

Keeping in mind all these elements when planning for new development will ensure Abita Springs' charming character will carry on, making new areas feel like the historic ones.



*Local architecture*



*Abita Springs Middle School*



### 3. STREETS SHOULD BE SAFE AND PROVIDE A “SENSE OF ARRIVAL” AT GATEWAY PLACES

One of the recurrent themes the town’s residents kept making emphasis on was safer, interconnected streets. Although Abita currently has a street grid laid out in the core of town, many of these streets do not connect, and the grid has been discontinued the farther you go from the center of town. Streets placement should be better planned and street designs should be enhanced not only for cars but also for cyclists and pedestrian use.

Streets within the neighborhoods are quieter and not as busy, but some of the big areas to improve in Abita are the highways and regional facilities (such as Highways 59 and 36) that pass right through the heart of the town.

Fortunately, there are several ways the infrastructure of these roadways can be improved to alleviate and control the heavy traffic they frequent. The town should plan on different routes to get in and through town besides driving on Highway 59, in order to diminish some local traffic. An alternative solution would be to turn 59 into a Main Street as it passes through town, ensuring the character of the community is carried over to the gateways. A street that feels like a main street will provide visual cues that tell drivers to slow down, ensuring safer pedestrian activity within town. Other ways to make 59 feel safer within the town boundary would be by adding a bike path (this also applies to Highway 36) and delineating alternative truck

routes for both long-haul and deliveries.

Other factors that highly contribute to street safety and connectivity are parking lots and alternate mobility choices, such as bikes, golf carts, and scooters. Any proposed parking locations should be located behind buildings, and the access to such should be controlled to limit interruptions to the flow traffic. Parking should be accessible and there should be enough for the demand, but it should not dominate the urban landscape. Additionally, multi-use paths for alternative vehicles should be implemented to increase interconnectivity within the pedestrian network. Some of the current ditches could become sidewalks, bikeways, or golf cart paths. These paths could also lead to trails along the river and other more natural areas. In general, the town needs more bicycle infrastructure, given the amount of cyclists the town receives from the Tammany Trace Trail.

All of these elements turn dangerous streets into safer, walkable, and more beautiful streets.



Level Street - Proposed



#### 4. PRESERVE LAND, INCREASE ACCESS TO NATURE, AND BUILD SUSTAINABLY

Given the beautiful landscape Abita Springs is submerged in, land preservation and sustainability are important aspects to conserve the town. People traveling through the Tammany Trace have the opportunity to experience that, and other local trails should do the same. Access to nature should be increased across town for people, including pedestrian access to the river and other vegetated areas throughout town. A greenway along the Abita River should be implemented, and development should stay away from the river. Regarding the river, the Hickory Street Bridge, which had to close after Katrina, should be rebuilt for pedestrian use. This would allow areas north of the river to be more connected to areas in the south.

Abita should utilize the correct trees in the correct locations, without interfering with power lines, partnering with the Right Tree, Right Place program. Additionally, some major power lines can be buried to avoid any disturbance with the natural landscape. Abita should use its natural traits to its advantage, including adding bioswales where some drains are currently located, ensure safe drinking water, add water

features across town like it had in the past, and preserving the swale system. The implementation of these elements could be ensured by the creation of a local conservation group, helping Abita Springs with all their needs related to nature preservation.

Sustainability also goes beyond planting trees and preserving the landscape, but also implementing smart building techniques that are friendly to the environment. For example, permeable pavement and solar roofs are solutions that help with mitigation and adaptation of natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes, both of which continue to affect Abita throughout the year. Sustainable building techniques help mitigation from fires and increased heat as well.

Adding electrical charging stations to the downtown and surroundings would also open the opportunity for people to obtain electric vehicles, reducing gas emissions to the atmosphere. Other solutions to ensure Abita remains green and respects its landscape are regular street cleaning, lifting homes, and updating FEMA maps.

#### 5. THE PLAN MUST BE IMPLEMENTABLE AND FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE

The comprehensive master plan goes beyond urban planning and takes into account implementation, funding, time frames, and other resources needed to ensure its successful execution. The town should be able to implement all aspects of the plan with the resources it currently has, or is able to obtain. Smart growth, as described in the plan, will help win funding for the projects that will emerge from this document. The plan will also help the town be part of important programs such as the Main Street Program, which brings more grants and funding opportunities. It is important to remember that although the plan is very specific and avoids generic goals, other ordinances will need to be revised to work together with the plan. Some regulations, such as current zoning regulations, could be waived or altered in order to encourage better designs that will emerge from the plan.

Just as Abita Springs needed a comprehensive master plan, it needs a business plan as well. The town needs to be able to sustain itself economically to enforce the code and implement proposed projects. Commerce should be geared specifically towards to the Abita residents and tourists. For example, given the high flow of cyclists the town sees due to the Tammany Trace, cycling-oriented businesses should be encouraged thereby leveraging the trail system. The

film industry is another big industry that has the potential to bring a lot of revenue into town. Music, art, sports, and other recreational activities can also help the cause.

Currently, property taxes from new homes and offices do not help the town's finances, and alternate solutions need to be explored. Other businesses related to Abita's natural landscape, food, art, and culture should be added to provide sales taxes and sustain the town. Abita has the potential to become one of the greatest destinations in Louisiana due to everything it has to offer.



*Potential Downtown Development*



## COMMUNITY PROFILE



People live in Abita Springs

Source - US Census 2020

The Town of Abita Springs is currently growing at a rate of **0.95%** annually and its population has increased by **9.24%** since the most recent census (2020).



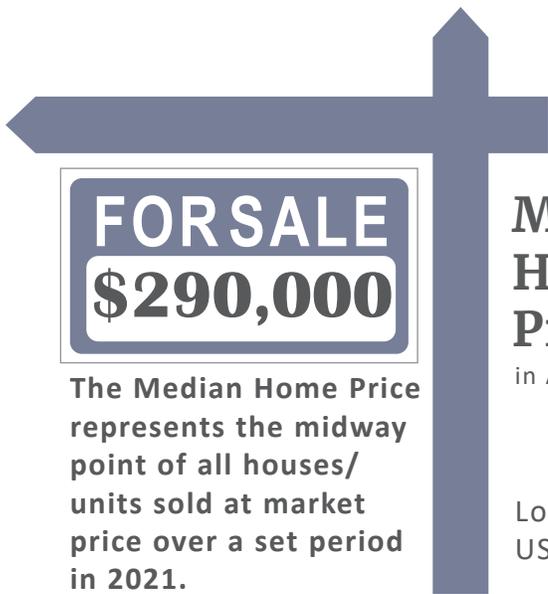
Source - 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Total Housing Units **1,218**  
in Abita Springs



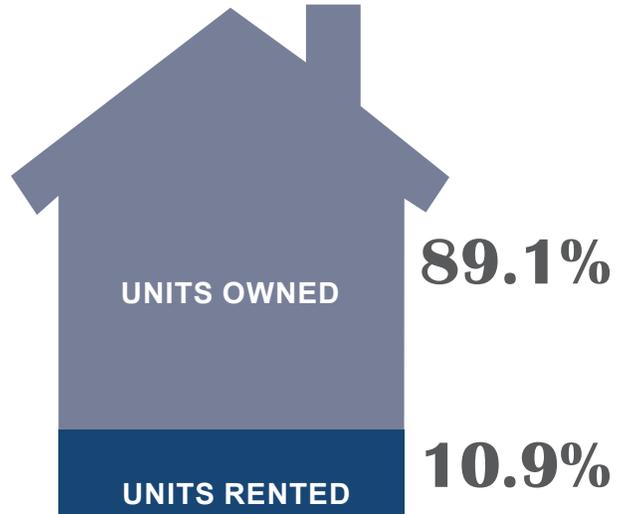


The Median Home Price represents the midway point of all houses/ units sold at market price over a set period in 2021.

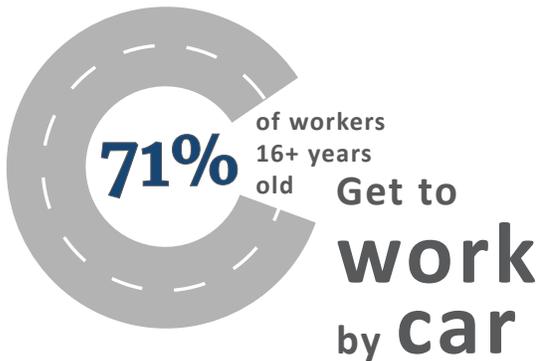
### Median Home Price

in Abita Springs

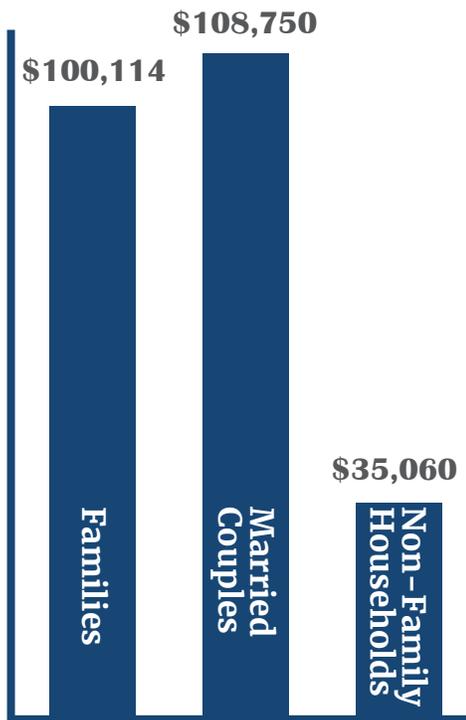
Louisiana: \$193,114  
US: \$303,288



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

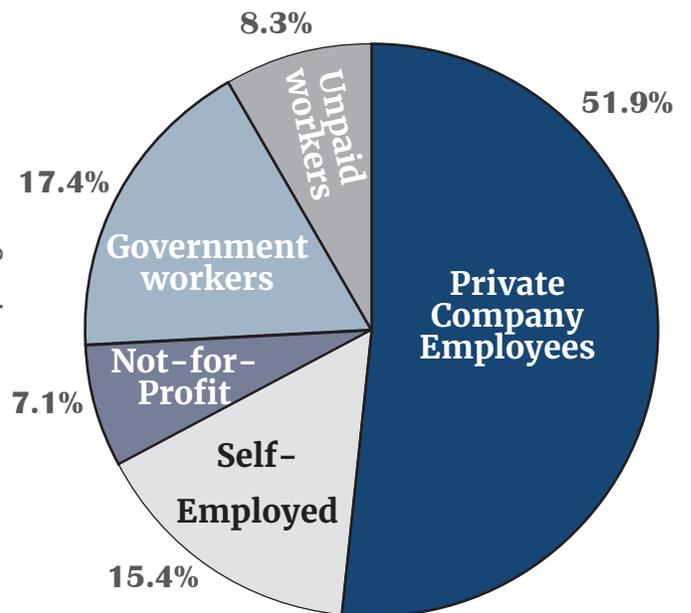


Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Median Income by Type of Families

### TYPE OF WORKERS in Abita Springs



Source: 2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



# COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC PRESERVATION 2

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Growth is inevitable, and the same forces that created Abita Springs years ago when the Louisiana Railroad passed through the heart of town are now channeled by Highways 36 and 59, along the same trajectories. Unfortunately, highways create townless stretches of linear development that never quite arrive anywhere distinguishable — except when they cross through historic towns such as Abita Springs. For this same reason, residents expressed concern that new development would dilute the charm and quality of life that Abita Springs has to offer. The late twentieth-century invention of prominent parking lots, autonomous buildings and formless-in-between residual spaces that characterize development today, did not exist in Abita Springs during its historic peak years.

Still, the town has been able to maintain slow and steady growth for the greater part of its history. Many of its historic buildings, including civic uses and houses, have been preserved and maintained. Abita has never experienced significant suburban sprawl, with the exception of a few subdivisions across town. The majority of the town's new residential growth can be seen closer to the highways, such as the Southwind Subdivision along Highway 59 or the Abita East Apartments along Highway 36.

The majority of the development and activity has been routed productively into its downtown core: the implementation of the roundabout between the major intersection coming into town to alleviate traffic, the efforts to create Historic Districts as well as listing buildings such as the Abita Springs Pavilion on the National Registrar of Historic Buildings, and new developments that reinforce the town's identity, all speak to Abita's ability to shape its future.

Abita Springs was in need of a Comprehensive Master Plan considering new infrastructures, development trends, and development pressure that the town has been experiencing in recent years.

This element describes how the physical pieces: buildings, open space, natural systems, and the roadways of the town work together to create a coherent whole, reinforcing and enhancing the character of Abita Springs.





## DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Abita Springs' history goes back more than 2,000 years, when it was the home of several generations of Native American tribes. These tribes were eventually forced out of their land through the government's repressive policy, the Indian Removal Act, in 1830.

In 1853, Captain Joseph St. Auge Bossiere purchased the land on both sides of the river and started building houses.

The area was then settled by Anglo-Saxon and Irish descents. Due to the high degree of medicinal quality the waters and surrounding nature proved to have, many hotels and resorts were built for those visiting Abita Springs and its healing water. Hotels such as the Longbranch were completely booked year-round. A part of the building now hosts the Abita Springs Trailhead Museum.

With the popularity of the railroad across America, the East Louisiana Railroad railway was constructed to cross through Abita Springs, and it was the primary way to get to town from the 1880s up until the early 1900s. The town was visited by hundreds of travelers daily, with the first train from New Orleans to Abita Springs arriving in 1887, with over 500 people on board.

The rail line made access to the town easy, and with the number of visitors Abita Springs received per day, more hotels, restaurants and summer homes led to the development of the town. People would escape the busyness of New Orleans and instead spend time in Abita, especially to evade diseases such as the Yellow Fever, since the mosquito carrier of this disease was not common in the area.

Many people with diseases such as tuberculosis were sent to Abita Springs by their doctors' orders, and they would stay at houses with "convalescing porches," which wrapped around three sides of the house, like the Main Street Bakery building.

Another iconic structure still found in Abita Springs is the Abita Pavilion, developed in 1880. It contained three springs, all part of the Ozone Belt. Residents and visitors used to refer to the spring water as "magnesium water." Although relocated, the structure is still standing today.

With the invention of the automobile, Abita Springs unfortunately began to lose its visitors. Many of the beautiful hotels and Victorian summer homes were demolished or lost due to various fires over the years. Highways were placed all around town and the quiet, walkable, and charming ambiance slowly became less attractive to tourists.

Where there was once a railroad, the Tammany Trace was created. The Trace draws tourists to Abita providing a natural setting for outdoor recreation activities.

Abita Springs is visited by those seeking to have a quieter lifestyle, or to spend a few days out of the bustling city. The town's charm has been preserved, and this plan seeks to ensure it remains that way by strategic improvements and guiding future development.

## HEALING WATER

Many eyes were drawn towards Abita Springs after "The Legend of Abita" was published in a newspaper in 1881. The story recalls an original Spanish New Orleanian called Henriquez crossing Lake Pontchartrain to visit the Choctaw village, the Native Americans that once inhabited the area. During his visit, he falls in love with the daughter of the chief, Abita. After marrying and returning to the New Orleans, Abita falls ill and no doctors are able to heal her. It was not until crossing the lake and drinking the water from the river that the legend recalls how she was miraculously healed. Abita Springs was inarguably named after her.



*Statue honoring the legend and the spring.*



*Abita Pavilion created to grab water from the Springs.*



*Rail station in Abita Springs*



*Historic postcard of Abita Springs during the time of the rail.*



*The Long Branch Hotel*



*The Mutti Hotel*



*The New Abita Springs Hotel*



*The Great Northern Hotel*



### HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In 1982, the Abita Springs Historic District was recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. Most of the commercial and residential buildings built within the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century are within this designation.

Many of the residential structures are shotgun or North Shore type houses, which were affordable typologies for New Orleans residents looking to own a vacation home. The convalescing porches came as a variation of the shotgun house, characterized by shingled gables, windows with borders of small lights, and Eastlake or Colonial Revival porches. Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, and bungalow styling are also present within the buildings in Abita.

Open spaces, stores, restaurants, and churches are part of the commercial part of the historic district. Some of these buildings include the Maple Street Bakery, Artigue’s Abita Market, the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Jane’s Catholic Church, and the Town Hall.

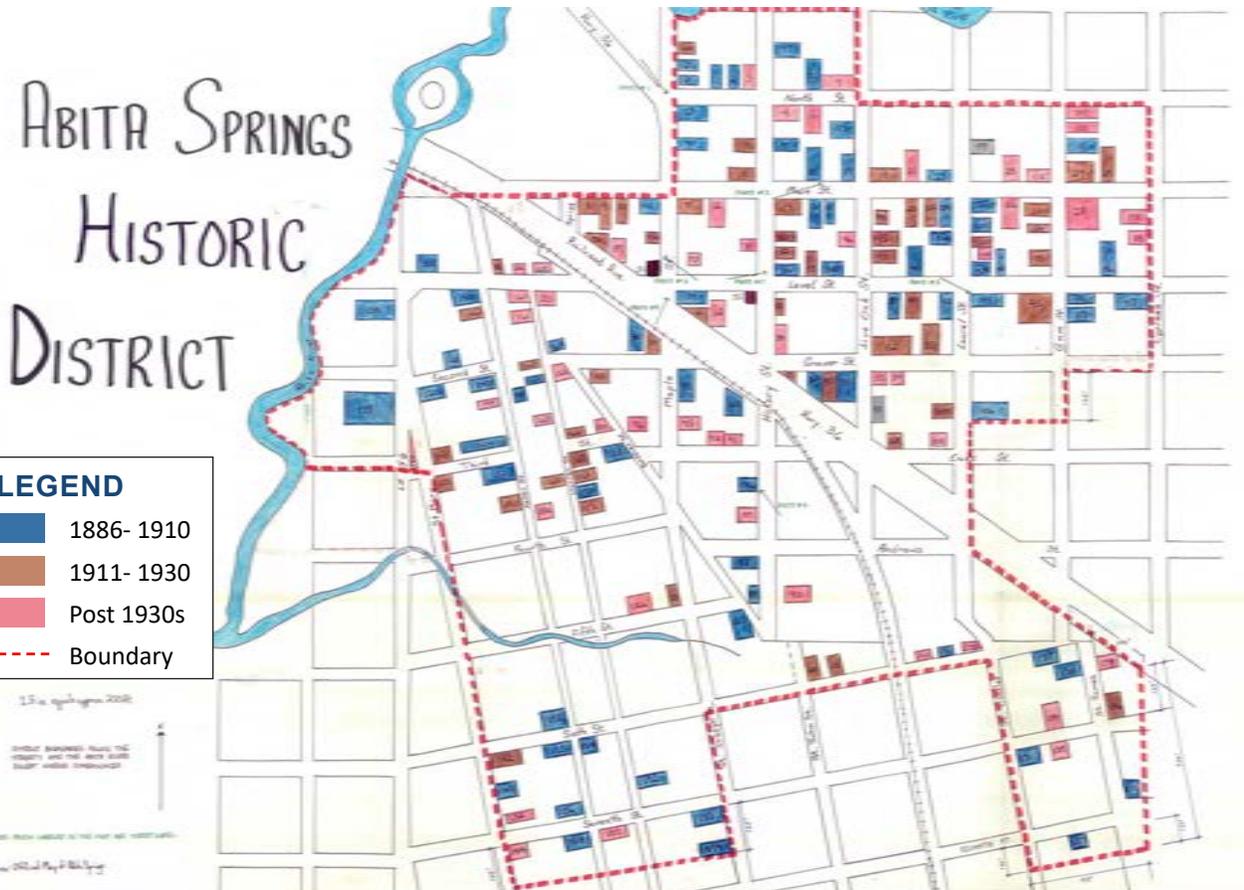
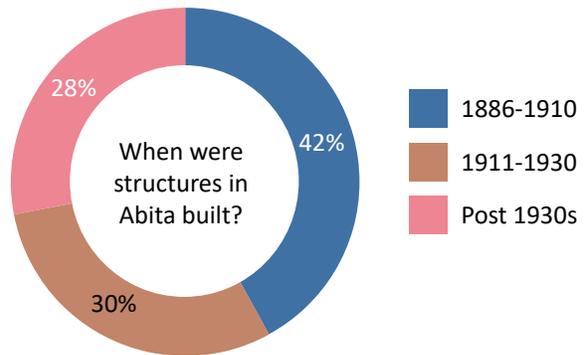
#### Midtown Cultural District

The Midtown Cultural District of Abita Springs is generally located around the Downtown area. Allowable commercial uses include cafe style restaurants, galleries, spaces for the arts, local shops, cycle oriented commerce, amongst others.

### Abita Springs Historic Commission

The Town of Abita Springs created the Historic Commission for the purpose of administering regulations pertaining to the preservation and protection of the historical architecturally worthy buildings, structures, sites, monuments, streetscapes, squares, and neighborhoods of the Historic District. Pursuant to this purpose, the Commission created a basic set of design guidelines for both residential and commercial properties.

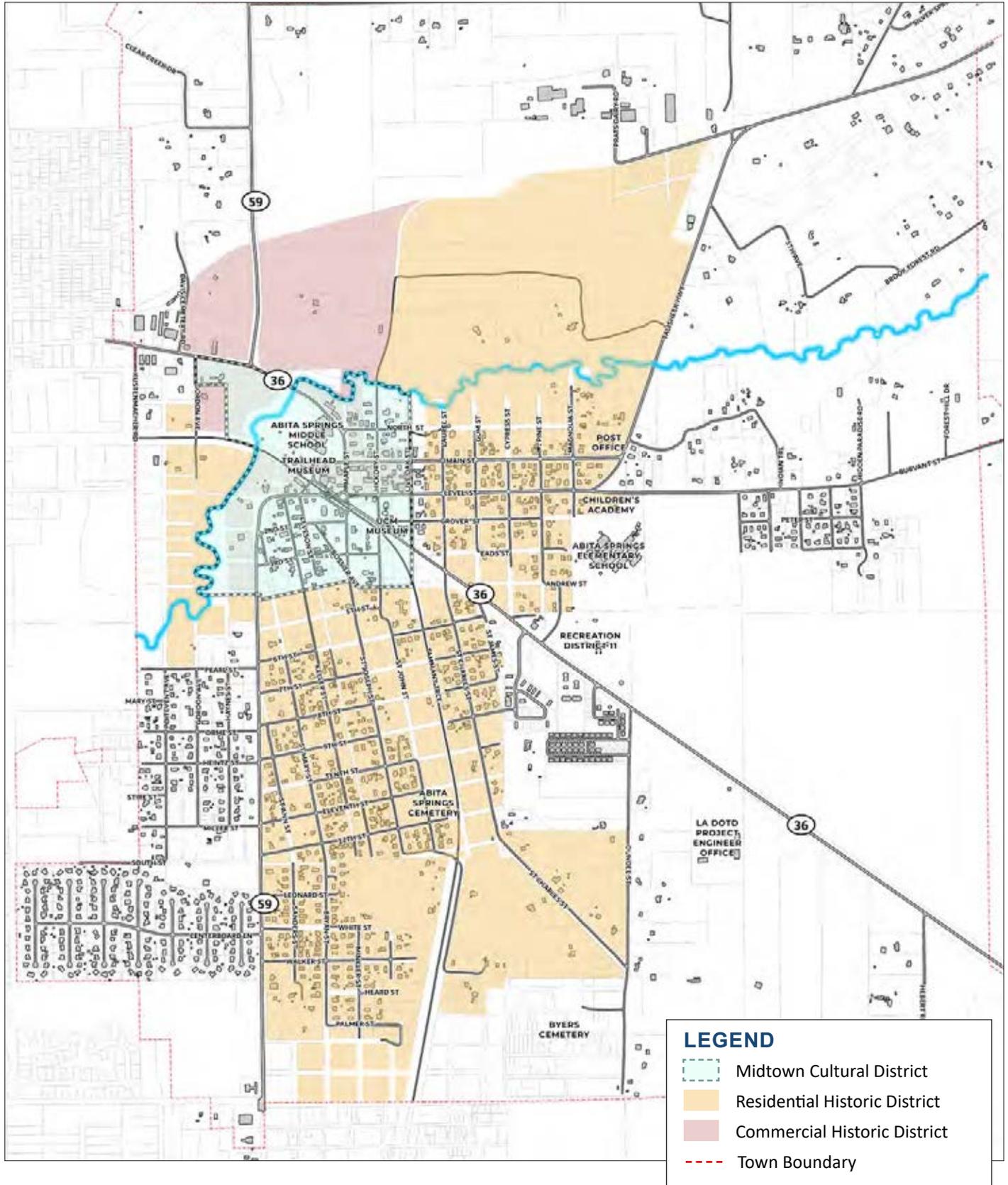
The Commission reviews applications and provides certificates of appropriateness prior to the issuance of buildings permits within the locally designated Historic District.



Map submitted by the Historic Commission of all historic structures located in Abita in 1982.



### Current Historic Districts





## COMMUNITY CONCERNS



*The Market and the Pavilion are two of the town's historic buildings.*



*Maple Street Bakery represents Abita's iconic building typology.*

COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION

#### Facilitate the Enhancement and Preservation of Historic Assets

Despite having both historic and cultural districts, there are still many historic buildings that fall outside of these areas. In order to keep Abita Springs historic character, every building should be preserved and restored. Stronger preservation guidelines and a missing comprehensive inventory of historic buildings could assist in strengthening preservation efforts.

### DOWNTOWN

#### Enhance What is Already There

The town's downtown is a source of local pride. The established area is built on a grid of streets that is cut across by the Tammany Trace that follows the historic rail-line. It features a mix of housing, commercial, and civic uses. Yet, the town center still remains capable of serving generations of new residents and future infrastructure. Efforts should be made to preserve the district and its unique character while encouraging high-quality, compatible infill development.

#### Promote Public and Civic Art

Public art is not only an important engine for economic development, but it also serves as a critical piece in the urban fabric of a town. A local investment in the arts has been proven to be an important inducement for businesses seeking a rich, diverse, and sophisticated lifestyle for their employees and families.

Public art can be continually woven into the fabric of the Town's growth, development, and education. Recognizing that art in public places enriches the social and physical environment, and provides experiences that enable people to better appreciate the community, the town should encourage ownership and pride in community-shared public spaces. Working with neighborhood residents and artists will enhance the community's vision for its cultural future.

#### Locate Parking On-Street and Behind Buildings

Downtown is limited in size and needs parking for people to visit the various businesses and parks. Parking should be carefully considered so that it is convenient but does not detract from the downtown.



## CORRIDORS AND GATEWAYS

### Improve Corridors

The main connections through Abita Springs are Highways 36 and 59. These roadways often bring people through town, with no intention of stopping. There are concerns that these roadways are hard to cross on foot or with a bike and subdivide the community and the downtown area. People want these corridors to help connect the town, not divide it.

### Improve Connections

During the charrette, the community expressed the desire to see a more unified Abita Springs in the future. This means creating an environment where all residents feel welcome to dine, shop, and relax in all parts of town, no matter how close or far they live from the town center.

The lack of sidewalks, safe crosswalks, trail networks within town, and interconnected streets isolate certain areas from enjoying all that Abita Springs has to offer. Improving physical connections to create a safe network of complete streets, bike facilities, and trails is crucial to reconnect the town physically and socially. Wayfinding can also help this cause.

### Identify Gateways

One should know when they have arrived someplace special. However, there is currently no distinction in architectural design or in the character of the street to announce one's arrival to Abita Springs. The entrances to Abita, especially along Highways 36 and 59 should be identified and announced in some manner.



*Beautiful vistas can be found all across Town.*



*The Town should take advantage of the Tammany Trace to improve connections within Abita.*



## NEIGHBORHOODS

### New Development Should Reflect the Character of Abita Springs

Abita Springs' residents are charged with managing change so that their economy, culture, and ecology are sustained and advanced, in the same way it was done in the past. The keys to this are straightforward: first, to adhere to the lessons in reliable precedents, and second, to treat each planning decision as an important part in a cumulative chain of events.

Abita Springs has a beautiful local architecture and urban fabric, and it should ensure any new developments are in agreement with the same typologies and aesthetics that the precedents in the town already follow.

### Continue Historic Development Patterns

There are many areas in Abita Springs, north of the river and towards the edges of town, that should follow the traditional patterns already laid out on the rest of the town. The town and property owners should extend the historic development patterns of the connected street grid, reserving prominent sites for civic buildings and civic amenities, have street-oriented buildings and a diverse mix of uses that complement the downtown and the needs of the community.

### Improvements should Extend Beyond Downtown

While Abita Springs has done a lot recently to encourage sensitive and forward-thinking re-development, the majority of the energy and investment has been focused on the town's core and the residents who visit and work there. Finding ways to make the town more accessible to the greater community would help mitigate this issue.

At the same time, many residents expressed frustration over the distribution of resources in Abita Springs. While improvements to the main core ideally serve everyone, there is an opportunity to target public space and street improvements in high traffic areas where a significant amount of Abita's history is located.

Moving forward it is important that public improvements, good urban design, and re-development efforts extend to all of Abita's districts, some of which feel left behind as the rest of the town continues to grow. Targeted enhancements throughout the town not only helps to create one unified Abita, but it also increases the town's overall attractiveness to visitors and future residents.



*Homes closer to the river are raised in Abita.*



*New development should build upon the architectural patterns established by existing historic structures.*



## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION

#### Review Preservation Guidelines

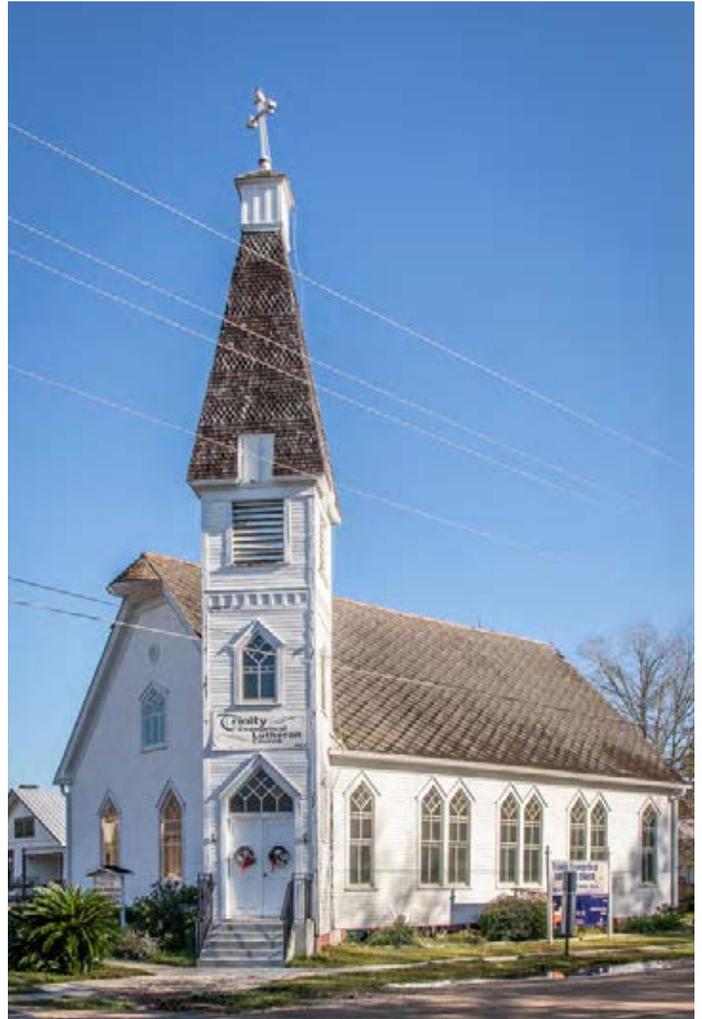
A review of Historic Preservation Guidelines and processes in Abita Springs should be reviewed to ensure they accomplish their desired goals. They should have clearly actionable recommendations and guidance when a plan does not comply. The guidelines should be highly visual in what is desired versus what is not desired.

#### Invest in a Comprehensive Inventory of Historic Structures

Currently, there is no database or catalogue of all the historic structures in Abita Springs. Building up this comprehensive inventory will allow preservationists and residents alike to understand the extent of their historic assets that need to be preserved.

#### ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN

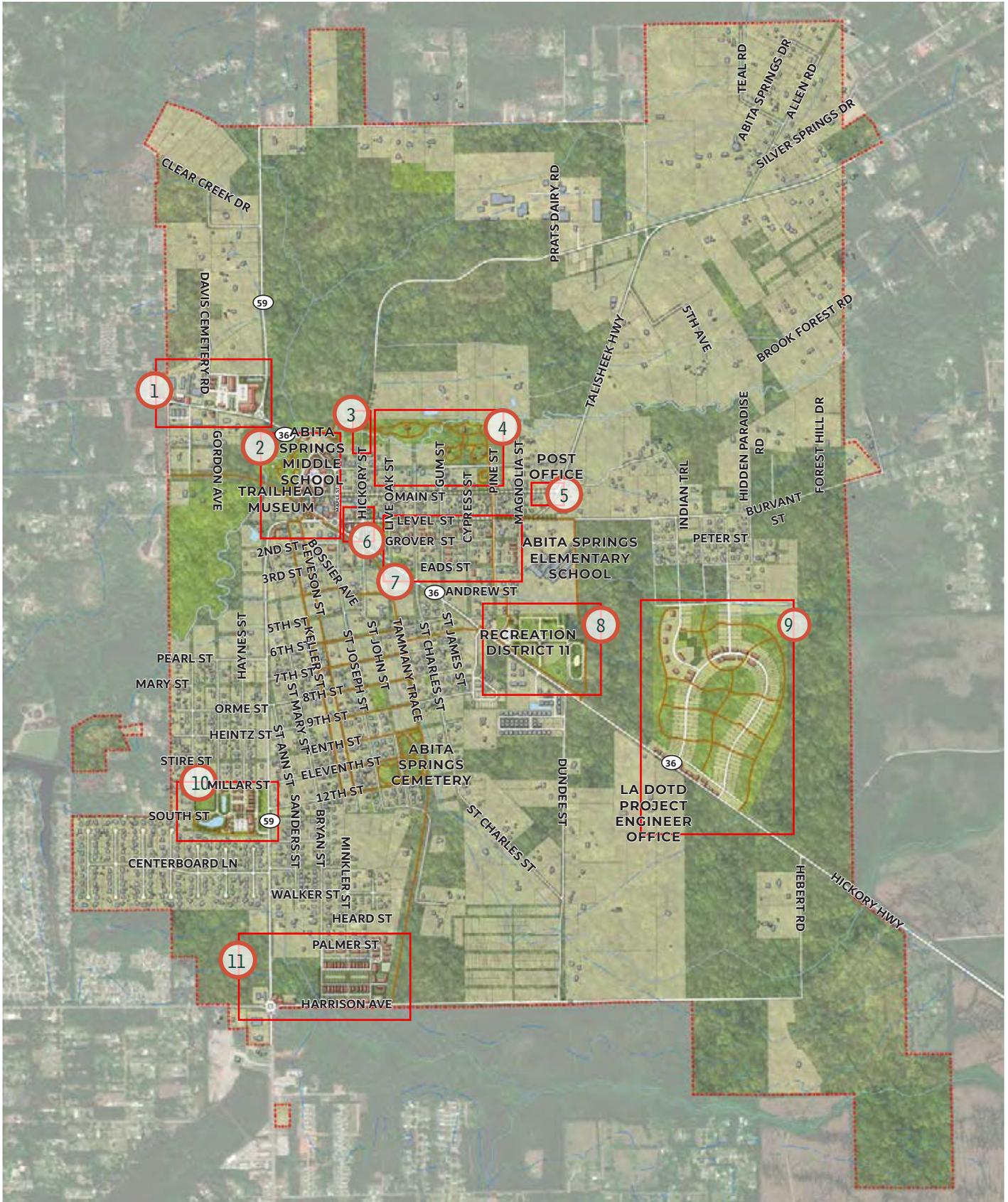
The illustrative master plans for Abita Springs identify key areas for how strategic, controlled growth can be achieved while preserving the character of the community. Each plan uses the complete neighborhood as the central increment of design, and combines to form a cohesive vision that will guide the growth and development of Abita Springs. This chapter includes specific design details and plan recommendations for each of the specific areas, and for Abita Springs as a whole.



*Historic Structures across town such as Trinity Church should be preserved.*



ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN



COMMUNITY DESIGN & HISTORIC PRESERVATION



- 1 Gateway- Hotel at Initial Entry Point to Town at intersection between Highway 59 and 36.
- 2 Downtown- Infill Development Around Round-a-Bout and Redevelopment of Current School Block.
- 3 Neighborhood- New bridge Connecting North and South Abita on Hickory Road.
- 4 Neighborhood- Activate Area around Abita River for River-Related Activities.
- 5 Gateway- Park in front of Church on Intersection of Talisheek Highway and Level Street.
- 6 Downtown- Pedestrian Street by Abita Cafe and Addition of New Shops and Restaurants.
- 7 Neighborhood- Infill Development throughout Town to Complete the Neighborhood.
- 8 Neighborhood- Improvements to Recreation District 11 by Highway 36.
- 9 Neighborhood- New Mixed- Use Cluster Development Towards the East End of Town on Highway 36.
- 10 Neighborhood- New Mixed-Use Development on Millar Street, near Highway 59.
- 11 Gateway- New Development on Intersection of Highway 59 and Harrison Avenue, geared towards Cyclists.

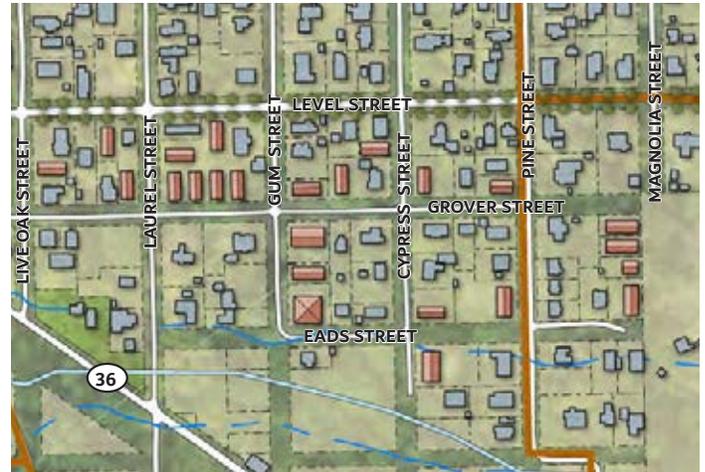
## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Add sidewalks/ trails along riverfront and main streets such as St. Joseph and Level Street
- Continue the street grid on new development.
- Add more pedestrian crosswalks on Highway 36 and Highway 59.
- Consider alternative traffic routes for trucks currently going through Highway 59.
- Add street connecting Level Street to Highway 36 close to the Abita Springs Elementary School to alleviate traffic.
- Consider relocating Abita Springs Middle School to another area with more land, and re-purpose the current site with more density around the Downtown area.
- Add a trail connecting Gordon Avenue for pedestrians and cyclist activity.
- Extend Harrison Avenue.
- Encourage Park and Ride, especially during larger events.
- Consider wetlands and floodzones when designing new developments.
- Create new neighborhood parks and community gardens.
- Keep the tree canopy and plant new street trees in main thoroughfares that currently do not have any.
- Expand the trail system all across Abita.



### Infill Development on Historic Neighborhood

There are many vacant lots around the town, especially in the historic neighborhood just east from Downtown. Restoring some of these homes and completing the blocks with a variety of housing types that resemble the architecture of Abita Springs will create a feeling of integrality all across the entire town.



### Mixed-Use Development on Intersection Between Highway 59 and Harrison Avenue Close to Trail

There is currently a proposal for commercial development on this intersection. However, the plans would encourage commercial strip development instead of mixed-use development. The plan shown takes the same uses and square footage from the current proposal and creates a more beautiful, mixed-used, urban neighborhood with some bike-oriented commercial uses facing Tammany Trace. Commercial uses would be located facing Harrison Avenue. Live-work housing, apartments, and single-family houses would face a common green in the middle.





**Improvements on Recreation District 11**

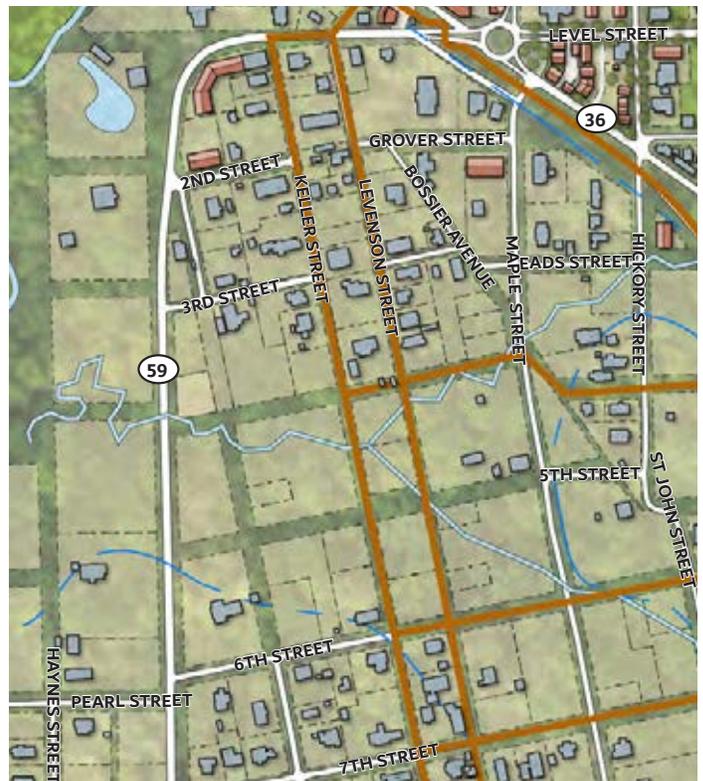
The current recreational facilities have been very well received, but they are in need of infrastructure improvements. Adding paths, designated parking, and better facilities for the Park and Ride would contribute to improve this area.



**Extend Trail System Around Leveson and Keller Streets and Across the River**

One location to expand the trail system would be around Leveson and Keller Streets.

Another place to extend the trail system would be around the river. During the charrette, people expressed interest in bringing river related activities back into town. Many residents have memories of the historic Morgan Swimming Pool at the river. Expanding the trail system with different viewing points, gazebos, benches, and water access points would enhance one of Abita's most beautiful natural traits.





### DOWNTOWN

In order to make a great, complete town, there are a few places in the downtown that can be improved, others that would benefit from infill, and some that could be redeveloped. The following are some focus areas the team suggests revising in order to improve the Abita Springs Downtown:

- 1 Expand local businesses and add new shops through infill development.
- 2 Parking area around the park, Abita Brew Pub, and the Artigue's Abita Market: Relocate parking to add more density to the Town Center.
- 3 Abita Springs Middle School: relocating the school to allow for expansion, would make room to add density closer to the Downtown.
- 4 Hickory Street: Rebuilding the bridge would allow the Northern part of town to be connected with the south.

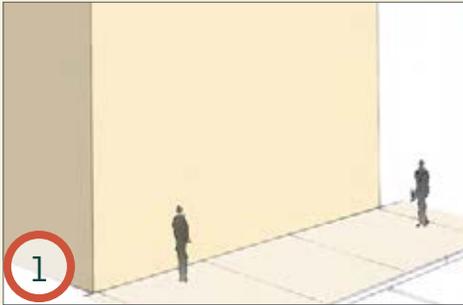


Illustrative Plan of Downtown Area

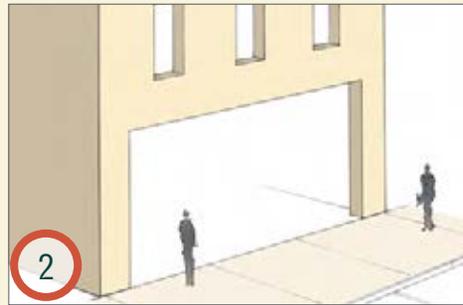
# THE ANATOMY OF THE STOREFRONT

The diagrams below outline some key considerations for commercial buildings that could be added in Abita, such as providing more shade by use of awnings and other appurtenances, improving the design quality of storefronts and signage, and regulating the impact of building additions.

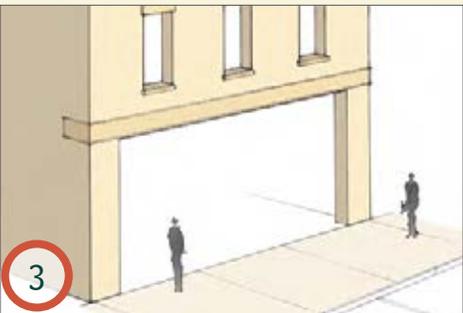
The Town of Abita Springs could benefit from well-planned storefront design on future downtown buildings and other neighborhood centers.



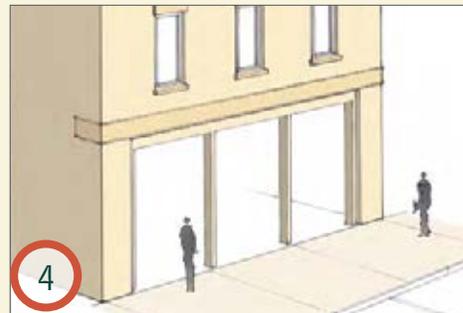
1 The basic building mass - placed close to the street.



2 Generous shopfront with vertically-oriented windows above. Ground floors should have a floor to ceiling height of 12 to 14 feet, minimum.



3 An expression line distinguishes the base of the building from the upper levels. Lintels and window sills provide a sense of structure.



4 Columns subdivide the shopfront opening and transoms help achieve well-proportioned shopfront windows.



5 Transoms help achieve well-proportioned shopfront windows.



6 Large clear glass windows provide an interface between the private interior and public street-scape allowing for "eyes on the street" and also a display of the business's goods or services.



7 Pedestrian-oriented entrance, signage, and lighting



8 Awnings provide shade and rain protection.



### Expand Local Businesses

There are many great local businesses currently in Abita, such as the Abita Cafe, the Abita Brew Pub, and the Maple Street Bakery. As infill comes downtown, a strategy to implement growth would expand on the current great businesses that need more space, as well as adding more local commerce. The residents communicated the desire to have more local shops instead of formula businesses.

### Abita Springs Cafe Expansion

The Abita Springs Cafe' and Abita Snoballs are two of the town's most beloved businesses. Although their success is indisputable, the restaurant is always full, and the facilities could use renovation and expansion. Expanding on the current building and adding outdoor dining would be a great opportunity for the businesses to grow and provide much needed space for people to enjoy a meal during their time in Abita.

The building is currently located next to an underutilized alleyway which has not been maintained and is in poor condition. This area could be reimagined as a pedestrian street, providing frontage for more local stores and restaurants.

More local shops would add to the economic development of the town and encourage more visitors to invest time and money in Abita Springs. Infill buildings should follow vernacular architecture with wrap around porches, wooden structures, and building's heights between one to three stories. The proposed design would respect existing trees and neighboring structures.



*New buildings would respect the current landscape and architecture would be in accordance with Abita's typology.*



*A number of businesses and restaurants could enhance this space and make it a beautiful street tailored to pedestrian activity.*



*Level Street Before*



*Level Street After*



### Enhance the Area Around the Roundabout

Currently, the roundabout welcomes people to the center of town, but it could be worked on to provide a better sense of arrival. Improving the current infrastructure and adding infill development will enhance the main gateway, encourage people passing by to stay longer, and create a memorable place.

- 1 All historic buildings such as the Abita Market should be respected by new developments.
- 2 Restaurants closer to the main gateways, especially in the downtown, are encouraged.
- 3 Parking should be located behind buildings to in order to have buildings frame the town entrance.
- 4 A building geared towards cyclists should also be placed to act as a gateway for people utilizing the trail.
- 5 Coffee house, dining, yoga studio or other uses can bring more people to the downtown on a regular basis.
- 6 The pavilion to the roundabout serves as an anchor for development.



Image of new Statue for Round-a-bout

Aerial view of gateway improvements



Existing Conditions





### Locate Parking on Street and Behind Buildings

Downtown Abita Springs has a vibrant, walkable core, but this area is limited in size and disconnected from the surrounding neighborhoods by large swaths of surface parking, which diminishes its desirability as a destination. Having adequate parking is essential for downtown businesses and residents, but making sure these parking lots are located in the right places – so as not to detract from an interesting and walkable streetscape and future growth – is just as important. A variety of buildings can be located adjacent to the sidewalk in place of the surface parking lots.

A balance between pedestrian and vehicular access to buildings should be struck by creating a variety of parking options, Parking should be located behind buildings, with on-street parking next to the sidewalk. Insist that varied uses (retail, entertainment, civic, office, housing) share their parking supply efficiently.

In this case, a parking lot is being proposed across the street from the Abita Springs Library, on Level Street. The area already serves as an informal parking amenity, so investing in the area to supply the town’s parking needs is a viable solution to the parking concern. Linear buildings would frame the parking lot on Level Street. If in the future the town finds a need to build a parking garage, the space would be large enough to accommodate a garage or parking deck.



Existing Conditions



A parking garage fits within the designated area.



Proposed parking lot across the street from the library.



**Increase Density At Main Intersections**

The town’s main intersections should be transformed into vibrant, mixed-use centers of development. One of the most important ones is the intersection on the round-a-bout, which serves as the welcoming point for people coming into Abita.

The commercial corridors, subdivisions, parks, recreation areas, and civic institutions should be integrated with streetscaping and architecture that reflects the elegant character of Abita Springs. Improved standards to encourage mixed-use development outside of the downtown will help to create a cohesive character for the area, and will increase community pride.

**Entrance to Abita Springs at the Roundabout**

Currently, the entrance to town through Level Street and the surrounding areas of the roundabout are difficult to cross, considering the heavy traffic that forms coming from the highways, including heavy truck traffic. The pedestrian crossings are not clearly identified, and the infrastructure could also be improved. Additionally, the entrance from the trail into town is through a parking lot. Creating a beautiful arrival point for cars, pedestrians, and bikers on the triangle formed between Level Street, Railroad Avenue, and Holly Street.

There are several strategies that can be implemented in this space to enhance it. First, adding a few buildings through infill development can create more activity and help frame the urban space. The addition of a few restaurants with outdoor seating would activate the sidewalks and encourage people to come to the space. Secondly, improving the infrastructure such as paving, crossings, and green areas will help improve

the aesthetics of the place. Safer crossings would also motivate more people to come and cross without fear of cars passing by. People coming in driving through Level Street would also have a visual queue that they have arrived somewhere beautiful. Lastly, adding a building right by the trail entrance would also let bikers and people using the trail know this place is a destination.

Uses geared towards bikers such as bike repair, bike parking, refreshments, restrooms, amongst others, would encourage people to stay in Abita for a while, buy and eat in the shops and restaurants, and tell other people about the wonderful place they got to spend some time in.



*Existing Conditions on the intersection between Level Street and Railroad Avenue*



*Proposed redesign with infill development and improved infrastructure*



Existing Abita Springs town hall

### Improve Existing Town Hall

Official government business and many community meetings are conducted at the Abita Springs Town Hall. The existing town hall is a one-story building, raised just a few feet off the ground level. There is also a detached building located behind the main town hall. Although the building was built around 100 years ago and has undergone some modifications, it still captures the charm and unique character of the town. While the current town hall is fitting for the town's character, flooding is of concern as climate conditions continue to change. There are opportunities to improve the space to bring about various community benefits.

### Elevated Town Hall

A significantly raised building can still keep the style and character of the community alive. Raising the ground floor of the building lessens the impacts of flooding and creates space for other functions, such as parking. Other advantages include improved ventilation and increasing access to natural light, which could reduce utility costs. A raised structure at this location would also enhance the architectural aesthetics and help the framing of views, especially of such an important building like the Town Hall. The proposed design borrows features from the Southern coastal vernacular architecture including deep porches, an elevated structure, and traditional lap siding. The traditional southern coastal architecture matches the fabric of its existing landscape and effectively responds to its environment while improving the user's experience.



Aerial view of proposed Abita Springs town hall



Front elevation of the proposed town hall



**Enhance Areas Around Downtown**

Downtown in Abita is one of the most attractive places in the community. Expanding towards the surrounding areas could allow more opportunities for new restaurants, shops, and activities. There are a few areas adjacent to the town center that could be redeveloped or improved on for such cause, such as the lots around the current school or areas by the park.

**Abita Springs Middle School Site**

Currently, the Abita Springs Middle School is situated just north of the downtown, and east from the pavilion and park. However, if the school wants to expand, there is no room for it to grow. The school could be relocated to another area of town with more land and could become part of a neighborhood center, leaving the land available for more civic, commercial, and housing options to emerge right by downtown. By providing more housing options close to the downtown, such as townhomes, duplexes, and apartments, people could be encouraged to move and stay in Abita, given that the cost of living would become more affordable to new families, children seeking to move out, or empty nesters looking to move out from their family home.

Abita is also in need of more senior residences, and this would be a great location to implement one. A beautiful senior residence could be built closer to the Abita River, offering recreational activities for their residents and in close proximity to needs found downtown.

Additionally, parking can be accommodated within the middle of the block, placing all buildings facing the street and creating a beautiful streetscape. This parking could be utilized by all businesses throughout the downtown.

The focus should not only be on the downtown, but enhancing the adjacent areas as well as the surrounding neighborhoods would create a complete Abita Springs, enjoyable in all areas of the town.



*Existing Conditions*



*A parking garage could be placed behind buildings if needed.*



*Proposed redesign with multiple housing types, civic, and commercial uses.*



## CORRIDORS AND GATEWAYS

### Design the Corridors

Every street in Abita is important. However, within the network of streets, there are certain streets that should be showcased, protected, and thought about with even more care such as Highways 36 and 59. These primary corridor streets should receive priority in regards to investment and a careful examination of their design. The desired character of the future urbanism adjacent to these corridors should be decided, and then the roadways should be designed to accommodate that type of urbanism.

### Level Street

This image focuses on an area on Level Street, just off the Roundabout, close to the Abita Springs Farmers’ Market and the Nutrition Building. Currently, the road has two 12 foot lanes, no sidewalks, and buildings set further back with minimum pedestrian access. The transformation aims to create a walkable street well-defined by trees, active building facades, and opportunities for pedestrian engagement. The following proposed street rendering illustrates ways to improve pedestrian access and safety throughout Level Street. The long-term street design proposed includes the transformation of an uninviting road centered for car mobility into a two-way street with narrower lanes, on-street parking, trees along sidewalks, and ample space for outdoor dining to increase pedestrian activity. Crosswalks are provided at regular intervals to facilitate access to cafés and other retail functions. The green space between sidewalks and vehicular lanes acts as a safety buffer to protect diners and pedestrians using the sidewalk. It also works as a means to facilitate shade and maintain a comfortable environment, encouraging people to walk shorter distances instead of driving. With appropriate street infrastructure, the city can help shift the means of transportation from motor vehicles to walking, biking, and public transit. This will help create a dense and compact street design network that focus on accessibility in Abita Springs.



*Existing Conditions*



*Proposed redesign with sidewalks, dining, pedestrian crossings, trees, lighting, and outdoor activity, creating a complete street.*



### **1. Level Street Should Become a Complete Street**

A Complete Street will include safer speeds for vehicles, accessibility for bicycles and buses, on-street parking, a safe sidewalk, shade, and other features that make a street pleasant and livable. Level Street should be considered for a Complete Streets grant by the Louisiana Department of Transportation.

### **2. Add Sidewalks to All Streets in the Downtown Core**

All streets in the Downtown Core (roughly all areas within a five-minute walk of Town Hall) should have sufficient walking space. Urban areas require wider sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians. Urban sidewalks should be at least 5 feet wide but can be up to 15 feet in areas where on-street dining is possible.

Suburban sidewalks should be wide enough for two to walk comfortably, but may be wider, particularly near parks, schools, and other public areas. Sidewalks should be clear of obstructions like signs, mailboxes, light poles, street trees, etc. These items should be located within a furnishing strip between the sidewalk and the street.

### **3. Add Street Trees to All Streets in the Downtown Core**

Street trees provide a natural border to street space, create shade for pedestrians, decrease traffic speed by creating a visual friction that results in more cautious driving, and increase property values. Ecologically, street trees reduce heat island effects and filter airborne particles and groundwater pollutants. In urban locations, shade streets should provide complete street cover, with different streets using a different species of trees in a strategic effort to prevent blight through biodiversity. Trees should be in planters and equally spaced along the curb.

In less urban locations, trees should be planted in a grassy strip between the street and sidewalk, spaced further to let the trees grow to their fullest potential. Along rural roads, trees may be planted in more natural arrangements, with clusters of a range of tree species in various distances from the road.

### **4. Shade the Pedestrian with Building Elements**

Building attachments such as awnings, porches, and balconies, infuse neighborhoods with activity and movement. To incentivize these elements, codes should permit these attachments to be constructed within the setback zones, where they may be considered a bonus to the building.

Awnings and arcades on commercial building afford a dual benefit: providing shade for shoppers and increasing the physical presence of the shop. These should be constructed over the public sidewalk. Many codes will have to be modified to allow awnings which casts shade from above the public right-of-way.

### **5. Reduce Design Speeds in the Downtown Core**

Vehicular speed is perhaps the single biggest determinant of pedestrian safety. Motorists do not necessarily drive at the posted speed, but at a speed that feels comfortable to them. To effectively manage the speed of drivers, roads should be designed in ways that suggest slower speeds, including narrower lanes, more sidewalks, on-street parking, and cues such as pedestrian crossings.



### Gateways should Present a Positive Image

One should know when they have arrived someplace special. Abita can be enhanced with the addition of gateways in and around the town which would signify when one is entering, leaving, or passing through important portions of the town. This sense of arrival can be achieved in several ways; it could be the change in the street section, through building being located closer to the street, the addition of on-street parking, with monument or gateways structures, or with the use of signage. Potential locations for gateways include the main corridors leading into the town.

Signage as a placemaking tool is an investment that could be done with a quick turnaround. A sign can communicate many things about a town, and a sense of arrival can be achieved through them. In this case, two sign locations are suggested: one next to the Attic to Awesome on Highway 36, and another one where the current lift station is located on the intersection

between Highway 59 and Harrison Avenue. The first one consists of big letters spelling out the town's name, which would create a plaza right in front of it. People can off their cars or take a short walk from downtown to take pictures. The sign would express the welcoming character of Abitians and invite people to stay in town for longer. The letters would become an iconic "photographic spot" in Abita and clearly designate where the entrance to the town is.

The sign would talk more about the small-town feeling Abita has to offer, focusing on its beautiful vegetation and rustic character of the town's architecture. The painted wood sign along with different plants would also serve as a symbol to orient people as they are driving into town.



Currently, there is nothing indicating cars coming from the highways that they are entering a town.



The lift station is what currently serves as a "welcome" to Abita Springs, a condition that can easily be improved.



A plaza right at the entrance of town would give a glimpse to those entering town of the beautiful place they are about to encounter.



A well-lit sign and local vegetation can help hide the lift station while creating an entry point into town, contributing to the positive image the town wants to project.



**Current Church at Talisheek Highway**

Coming into town going South on Talisheek Highway, there is a church building that is currently not being utilized at the intersection with Level Street. The church is a beautiful building brought in from Canada and sits on a wide lot with a great green right in front of it. The site has great potential to become a great entry point towards town.

The church can become a family restaurant where many parents, children, friends, and families go. The building towards the back would be the kitchen and storage facilities, while the church itself can become a grand dining room. Children can play around the green and barbecues can be held outside. Adding elements such as a trellis, benches, tables, chairs, slides, swings, and bike parking would let people be in the space for a variety of activities. A sidewalk, properly lighted, and green strip would create a buffer with the street. A small fence can also be added if there is a need.

Making a family-friendly area at one of the gateways of town would help present a positive image into Abita Springs, encouraging the Town is a place for people of all ages and walks of life.



*Existing Conditions*



*Proposed Restaurant and Park*



### Increase Density at Gateways

The creation of neighborhood centers or gateways into town would serve as desirable gathering places that enhance the identity of each individual neighborhood. This is possible because town centers provide a range of goods and services, amenities, and housing in close proximity to one another, eliminating the need to drive within that area. Not all town centers will be designed to function in exactly the same way as each should have their own identity and role. By having some commercial needs spread throughout the community, some trips could be made that do not necessitate driving. Even reducing a few trips could help to relieve traffic congestion, reduce parking needs, and improve walkability.

#### Highway 36 Gateway

Highway 36, as it enters Abita Springs town limits, can be turned into a gateway by adjusting the street, adding new amenities, and a new hotel. The hotel could be located at a new roundabout that would allow trucks to head toward the industrial areas and bypass the downtown. The hotel could have a drop-off and registration area toward the street but have the majority of its parking located mid-block. The block that is formed can also have a new commercial building and housing.

- 1 Intersection on Highway 36 and 59: A boutique hotel to accommodate larger amounts of guests can be added close to the Downtown area.
- 2 Parking is located in mid-block
- 3 A new commercial building adds amenities to the edge of town.
- 4 Missing middle housing can be added within the same block as a new hotel and commercial buildings



Illustrative Plan of Highway 36 Gateway area.



## NEIGHBORHOODS

### Control Character of New Development

New development and redevelopment areas should be planned for future growth which includes suburban retrofit, new communities on existing infrastructure and new neighborhoods requiring new infrastructure.

The character of Abita is not only determined by the development within the downtown area, but the character of the adjacent neighborhoods as well. Development patterns in these surrounding areas should contribute to Abita's character. The character of development in the areas towards the edges of Abita's boundary should still reflect the principles of the Abita community.

### Millar Street- South End Community

The 15-acre lot south of Millar Street and west of Louisiana Highway 59 has the potential to be redeveloped as a mixed-use community center housing within walking distance to local commercial spaces and a wellness center surrounding an existing spring water well. The wetland areas will be protected and celebrated with the current plan proposal.

- 1 Residential above Dining Space
- 2 Local Book Shop and Cafe
- 3 Corner Restaurant and Local grocery store
- 4 Mixed Use commercial space connected on an elevated platform
- 5 Parallel street next to 59 that maintains existing trees, powerline, and a bio swell
- 6 Single Family residences with Granny Flats along an parking alley
- 7 Existing Wetlands
- 8 Pavilion along the central axis to terminate the vista and slow down traffic
- 9 Multi Family Mansion Apartments
- 10 Spa and Wellness center surround a natural well



Proposed Millar Street Development



Elevated wooden structures with pastel painted buildings reflect the local vernacular architecture of the site and the desire of the community for colorful new buildings.

Roof top restaurants and wellness centers will provide a destination spot for visitors.

Existing trees and vegetation will be maintained as much as possible on the site.



Aerial View of the Millar Street Community

- 1 Residential above Dining Space
- 2 Local Book Shop and Cafe
- 3 Corner Restaurant and Local grocery store
- 4 Mixed Use commercial space connected on an elevated platform
- 5 Parallel street next to 59 that maintains existing trees, powerline, and a bio swell
- 6 Single Family residences with Granny Flats along an parking alley
- 7 Existing Wetlands
- 8 Pavilion along the central axis to terminate the vista and slow down traffic
- 9 Multi Family Mansion Apartments



Parallel Main Street with local commercial shopping, dining, and culture spaces.



*Pavilion terminating the vista along the central street*



*Multi-family housing and missing middle housing options.*



### Connectivity Throughout Abita Springs

Strong communities are well-connected in many ways. Having an interconnected web of streets is the most basic and effective form of bringing a community together. Outside of the historic downtown, Abita lacks an interconnected street network. This limits alternate routes for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians to access commercial areas and parks, resulting in traffic congestion and separation between residential and commercial areas.

One way to improve connectivity around Abita Springs' main intersections and along busy thoroughfares is to continue and expand the network of streets. A network of streets will help to distribute traffic away from key intersections and reduce congestion. Creating pedestrian connections between residences and public spaces, and allowing Abita's commercial corridors to become more pedestrian friendly and increase connectivity. A green network and trail system should be developed and marked that connects the parks and squares not only to each other but to the natural system of rivers and streams as well.



Conventional Subdivision



Clustered Development

Credit: Houseal Lavigne Associates



### Cluster Development Versus Conventional Subdivision

Typical Suburban Development features single family subdivisions that sit on large lots. Garages are usually placed at the front of the houses and sidewalks are often missing.

In contrast, cluster development groups residential and mixed-use development in close proximity. This type of arrangement can potentially preserve more existing natural features, agricultural land, or open space. A clustered development often has larger green and public space, stronger sense of community, and better stormwater management.

**1** Developments are concentrated along the main street access.



**2** Nature trails are in close proximity to the backyard of the houses.



**3** The residents have convenient access to the farm and community-supported agricultural (CSA) produce.



Image from Serenbe.com





### Future Residential Development

This rendering shows the development transitions from single family homes to town homes, and mixed-use commercial development as the street approaches Highway 36. The streetscape should be safe and comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists. Ample street trees should be provided along the sidewalk to provide shade for pedestrians.

### The Complete Neighborhood

Development should be centered around the neighborhood. Neighborhoods should be pedestrian friendly, and of a size that is easily walkable in a 5-to-10-minute time period. Neighborhoods should be complete, and contain amenities required by its inhabitants, including housing, employment, entertainment, and education. Neighborhoods should also be easily accessible by car as well as by other methods of transportation, including cycling and transit. Abita Spring’s only complete neighborhood is its historic downtown. The code recommendations in the Appendix of this report explores opportunities to create more complete, compact, mixed-use neighborhoods.

- 1 Bike share the street with the cars
- 2 On street parking for residents and visitors
- 3 Street trees and bio-retention basins
- 4 Houses should be facing the street with parking in the back



Proposed Design



## GOALS AND POLICIES

POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL CD 1: Historic Preservation</b>				
<b>CD 1.1</b>	<b>Preserve and enhance Abita Springs' Existing Small-Town character by first preserving and enhancing its history through historic preservation efforts.</b>			
<b>A</b>	The planning department should oversee the majority of historic preservation related goals and policies on behalf of the town. This includes the Historic Preservation Commission Board as outlined in the historic preservation code audit.		Town, Historic Commission	Mid-Term
<b>B</b>	Continue to identify, protect, and encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of Abita Springs' existing historic resources.		Town, Historic Commission	Immediately
<b>C</b>	Continue to identify the potential for new local historic districts within all of Abita Springs' current Historic District areas.		Town, Historic Commission	Immediately
<b>D</b>	Update the current Historic Preservation Guidelines to reflect current preservation practices and community goals and to provide more actionable recommendations.		Town, Historic Commission	Long-Term
<b>E</b>	Consider the use of pattern books to address the different architectural styles found within our historic districts.		Town, Historic Commission	Long-Term
<b>F</b>	Create a comprehensive inventory of all of Abita Springs' historic assets including parks, trees, buildings, and monuments.		Town, Historic Commission	Long- Term
<b>G</b>	Use Abita Springs' designated historic districts and structures as an integral element in revitalization and economic development efforts.		Town, Historic Commission	Long- Term
<b>H</b>	Continue to collaborate with various entities to promote historic preservation landmarks and historic events as tourist attractions.		Town, Historic Commission	Immediately
<b>I</b>	Improve Code Enforcement efforts in historic districts so that properties are consistently maintained and owners can be assured that inclusion in a historic district guarantees a certain neighborhood character and higher level of maintenance.		Town, Historic Commission	Mid- Term
<b>J</b>	Amend the Building Code for existing structures within historic districts to make it easier for property owners to undertake renovations and improvements.		Town, Historic Commission	Long- Term
<b>K</b>	Provide widespread cultural and educational resources and information programs on historic preservation techniques and benefits.		Town, Historic Commission	Mid- Term
<b>L</b>	Inform the public of tax benefits and funding resources available for restoration.		Town, Historic Commission	Short- Term
<b>M</b>	Provide workshops on how to care for a historic property in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.		Town, Historic Commission	Mid- Term
<b>N</b>	Encourage greater diversity on preservation boards and committees.		Town, Historic Commission	Short- Term
<b>CD 1.2</b>	<b>Recognize the public spaces and streets within the Town's historic district are themselves prime contributors to the vitality and appearance of the districts.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Create and enact a comprehensive green and public space plan to be integrated with downtown development to increase the overall amount of green space in the downtown.		Town	Long- Term
<b>B</b>	Ensure that the redevelopment and enhancement of plazas, greens, playgrounds, and other public spaces within historic districts are done in a way that is sensitive to the context.		Town	Mid- Term



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL CD 2: Focus on Downtown Improvements.</b>				
<b>CD 2.1</b>	<b>Continue to invest in Downtown and ensure it is a vibrant place for all Abita Springs residents and visitors to live, work, eat, and enjoy.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Enforce the International Existing Building Code.		Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
<b>B</b>	Investigate adopting a form-based code in Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Character Areas (discussed on Chapter 3) that provides development regulations based on lot orientation and building form tailored to the desired character of each neighborhood.		Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
<b>C</b>	Continue to enhance and improve Downtown in accordance with its existing character.		Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term
<b>D</b>	The Town should provide financial incentives, regulatory guidance, and technical support for the adaptive reuse of downtown buildings for use as housing.		Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
<b>E</b>	Adopt a rehabilitation code to facilitate the reuse of historic and non-historic buildings.		Town, P&Z Commission, Historic Commission	Long- Term
<b>F</b>	Create a Vacant Building Ordinance to encourage the use of existing structures instead of allowing them to sit vacant, detracting from a vibrant downtown environment.		Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
<b>H</b>	Encourage the walkable core of downtown with new street facing infill buildings, less visible surface parking, and pedestrian friendly design elements such as street trees, benches, and public art.		Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
<b>I</b>	Establish a Downtown residential parking program to ensure that prime commercial on-street parking spaces remain available to shoppers and ensures frequent turnover on major retail streets.		Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
<b>J</b>	Civic buildings should be acts of civic art, embedded within the urban fabric of downtown and sited memorably, when possible, on high ground and at the terminal axis of streets.		Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term
<b>K</b>	Important public facilities such as post offices, museums, libraries, and administration buildings should not be moved from downtown to outlying locations.		Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term
<b>L</b>	Encourage a wide mix of residential housing types downtown and within downtown neighborhoods to encourage a diversity of ages and incomes. Housing should include arrangements such as: studio units, 1-, 2-, and 3- bedroom units, townhouses, penthouses, live-work spaces, duplexes, quadruples, and mansion apartments; and should include both rental apartments and units that can be owned by their occupants.		Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
<b>M</b>	Create a program to encourage and facilitate the creation of “pop ups” downtown, including temporary and mobile businesses and art installations. These help to program and activate empty storefronts and other underutilized spaces.		Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
<b>N</b>	Establish a public art committee to assist in the regulation of public art, including murals, throughout the Downtown and city-wide.		Town	Short- Term
<b>O</b>	Review development regulations within the downtown and historic districts that encourages historic preservation while allowing for modern buildings that are contextual in form and intensity. This can be accomplished with the development of an overlay code, a complete code overhaul within the focus area that is transect based.		Town, P&Z Commission, Historic Commission	Mid- Term



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
	<b>P</b>	Establish a Pink Zone for the Downtown that would specifically remove barriers to development and streamline the process. A Pink Zone is a powerful tool for concentrating resources on the task of enabling small scale, community-centered development and revitalization. Within the Pink Zone: New development should be permitted to front onto a pedestrian passage or civic space, as well as a street, parking and building code requirements should be relaxed where possible, and secondary or accessory buildings for commercial use should be permitted.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	<b>Q</b>	Invest in wayfinding network that directs visitors to Abita Springs’ historic landmarks and popular destinations, most of which are within walking or biking distance from downtown.	Town, P&Z Commission Historic Commission	Mid- Term
	<b>R</b>	Develop a program to encourage more minority owned business in downtown.	Town	Long- Term
	<b>S</b>	Expand the commemorative plaques program to help celebrate Abita Springs’ history.	Town, Historic Commission	Mid- Term
	<b>T</b>	All businesses and/ or other community services on the ground floor should be accessible directly from sidewalks along a public space, such as a street, square, or plaza.	Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term

**GOAL CD 3: Create Neighborhood Centers.**

CD 3.1	Create places and destinations for people by improving the public realm, and focusing on the comfort and interest of the pedestrian and cyclist.			
	<b>A</b>	Determine desired land use, including a varied mix of uses, then design the transportation infrastructure that supports the desired land use.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	<b>B</b>	Enhance the pedestrian environment. In existing neighborhoods, streets can be retrofitted with sidewalk installation, tree plantings and interesting building facades.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	<b>C</b>	Street spaces should be designed to create prominent public spaces with a comfortable sense of enclosure.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	<b>D</b>	Provide street trees on both sides on at least 60% of the streets at intervals averaging 40’ or less	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	<b>E</b>	Provide streets with sidewalks at least 8’ wide on retail or mixed-use streets and 5’ wide on all other streets.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	<b>F</b>	Provide on-street parking on at least 70% of both sides of all new and existing buildings.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	<b>G</b>	Limit driveway crossings to no more than 10% of the length of sidewalks.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	<b>I</b>	Neighborhood streets are designed for pedestrians and bicyclists by moderating the speed of motorized vehicles. 75% of residential-only streets should be designed for a maximum speed of 20 mph.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term

CD 3.3	Considerations for General buildings			
	<b>A</b>	Development is encouraged along existing or planned bicycle networks where additional segments and/ or secure bicycle storage can be added to the network.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	<b>B</b>	Develop a method of streamlining the process and guaranteeing approvals, such as permit administrative approvals, when development is in accordance with the community’s vision as illustrated in the small area plans and urban design best practices.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	<b>C</b>	New buildings should create an interesting street frontage, with parking hidden from view, typically located in the rear of the building. Setback requirements should be changed such that this is encouraged.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
	D	The relationship between the fronts and the backs of buildings should ensure that public spaces have natural surveillance; the fronts of buildings should facade the primary street adjacent to the property.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	E	Local building types and elements that have proven to react well to local climate and weather patterns, should be encouraged.	Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term
	F	Parking should be located so that it is hidden from the street, either located behind the building or screened from view.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term

**CD 3.4 Consideration for Mixed- Use Buildings**

A	Adjust zoning ordinances to promote mixed-use development within neighborhood centers and crossroads.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
B	Large-format buildings and uses should be developed within a traditional street and block network.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
C	Large parking fields typically associated with large-format uses can be located within the interior of a block structure adjacent to the use.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
D	The block and street network will allow on-street parking to be used to meet some parking needs, as well as allowing for passenger loading zones and parking directly in front of retailers.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
E	Outbuildings shall front directly onto the primary street to screen front loaded parking lots for large-format buildings. A percentage of the street should be screened by buildings.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
F	Outdoor dining and seasonal sales should be allowed on city sidewalks provided that chairs and tables are placed in a manner that allows a minimum three-foot clear path for pedestrian movement.	Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term
G	In non-residential and mixed-use developments, uses on the ground floor should be accessible directly from sidewalks along a public space, instead of from a parking lot.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
H	A majority of the principal entries to buildings should face public spaces such as streets, squares, parks, or plazas, instead of parking lots.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
I	Awnings, balconies, arcades, galleries, and colonnades (privately maintained) should be allowed to extend into the right-of-way if city streets provided that adequate clearances are provided for pedestrian movement and for right-of-way maintenance.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term

**CD 3.5 Consideration for parking**

A	Non-residential and multi-family buildings should have their surface parking lots placed at the side of rear of buildings.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
B	Buildings should have no more than 20% of their lots devoted to surface parking lots, with no individual lot larger than 2 acres.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
C	Parking lots should be designed for pedestrians as well as cars with pathways and shade trees.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term

**GOAL CD 4: Enhance Neighborhoods.**

**CD 4.1 Consideration for Residential Buildings**

A	Semi-public building elements such as porches and balconies add to the congeniality of neighborhoods and should be encouraged within front setbacks. This applies to porches, stoops, bay windows, and balconies on residences.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
B	For homes with a front loaded garage, the garage should be set back a minimum of 20' from the primary facade.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
C	Encourage a reduction in the percentage of building walls that face streets that contain garage doors or service bays. A maximum of 20% of front walls containing garage doors or service bays should be encouraged.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
	D	When creating new subdivisions, residential buildings shall address the primary street providing access to avoid blank walls at the rear of a lot fronting primary streets. Alleys can be provided to these homes by either the town or on private land to create a vehicular entry to the lots instead of vehicular access directly from the busier arterial roads.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	E	Establish a tree bank or an urban canopy plan to plant shade trees along residential streets.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term

**GOAL CD 5: Improve Lighting, Signs, and Utilities**

CD	Streets and spaces are safe and inviting with adequate lighting and clear signage.			
5.1	A	Adequate and pedestrian-scaled lighting should line each street in Abita Springs.	Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term
	B	Utilities should not be located on the sidewalk, allowing clear access for pedestrians between destinations.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	C	Install clear wayfinding signage in all of Abita Springs, directing resident and visitors to significant locations including available parking.	Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term
	D	The Town shall consider requiring all new utilities to be built underground.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	E	When opportunities arise, such as city-led development or redevelopment initiatives, overhead utilities should be relocated behind buildings or underground.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term

**GOAL CD 6: Adopt a Downtown Pedestrian and Cycling Plan to define, articulate, and better employ streetscape elements including street trees, sidewalk furniture, signage, curbing, benches, bollards, plantings and landscaping, bike lanes, lighting, trash receptacles, and other street level amenities.**

CD	Continue to identify structures and places of historic and cultural significance and encourage efforts to preserve them.			
6.1	A	Continue to support and update the Abita Springs Historic District Guidelines	Town, Historic Commission	Immediately
	B	Continue to support and empower the Abita Springs Historic District Commission (HDC)	Town, Historic Commission	Immediately

CD	Promote improvement of properties showing evidence of deferred maintenance.			
6.2	A	Consider ways to help the owners of buildings which risk becoming a blight with loans, grants, and assistance programs to help as appropriate.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	B	Research the possibility of a Vacant Commercial Building Ordinance. The ordinance would create an inventory of vacant structures and a line of communication between the town and the owners of such structures. The ordinance would require a plan to keep vacant structures safe and ultimately re-open stores, restaurants, and offices.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term

CD	Continue to Improve the Uniqueness of the Downtown Experience			
6.3	A	Investigate the potential for food trucks in the downtown. Food trucks must compliment and not compete with the food and drink options provided by businesses bearing the costs of maintaining permanent structures.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	B	Explore the benefits of a Formula Business Ordinance which restricts chain commercial establishments to a limited size in order to keep the Downtown economically diverse.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	C	Research the feasibility of placing downtown power lines underground. This would accomplish greater safety, aesthetic quality, and resilience.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term



Artigue's Abita  
FRESH MEATS • PRODUCE

Farmer's Market  
SINCE 1913

Y367537



## CURRENT CONDITIONS

### A CHARMING DOWNTOWN

Abitians are very proud of their downtown. From the beautiful market building to the Tammany Trace Trailhead and park, the majority of the town's activities are concentrated in this area. Although it is quite a charming town center, some improvements could be made to enhance the area. Infill development encouraging other businesses such as restaurants and local shops would help frame the streets and create a sense of arrival as people come in to the town.

### TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Just outside of the town center are Abita Springs original neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are within walking and biking distance of the downtown and share the same connected street grid. Some of these neighborhoods have historic designations and are complete with many beautiful houses and some green areas. Other neighborhoods, although historic in value, have lacked investment over the years. While these locations have trees and are inviting, many of the streets in these neighborhoods do not follow the original grid, have wider block perimeters, and have many dead-end streets. There are many vacant lots, and numerous vacant and underutilized buildings. In all cases, as auto-dependent development occurred around Abita Springs, the neighborhoods and the downtown began to suffer from heavy traffic and limiting pedestrian activity. However, there is some new development that is working to promote new walkable places within the center of town.

### SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE COMMERCIAL STRIP

The further out from downtown one travels, the more recent and auto-oriented the development pattern becomes, reflecting national trends in development and predominant modes of transportation. In these areas, land uses are separated into different pods of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, and the street grid emanating from downtown breaks until there is no regularity of block size or interconnectivity within streets. Along some main corridors as one goes farther from the center of town, such as the intersection between Harrison Avenue and Highway 59, some commercial centers have been built and others have been proposed. These commercial establishments tend to be large buildings centered in parking lots, isolated from each other and pushed back from the road, such as the current Walgreens. This pattern results in individual trips to these locations that require the use of a car.

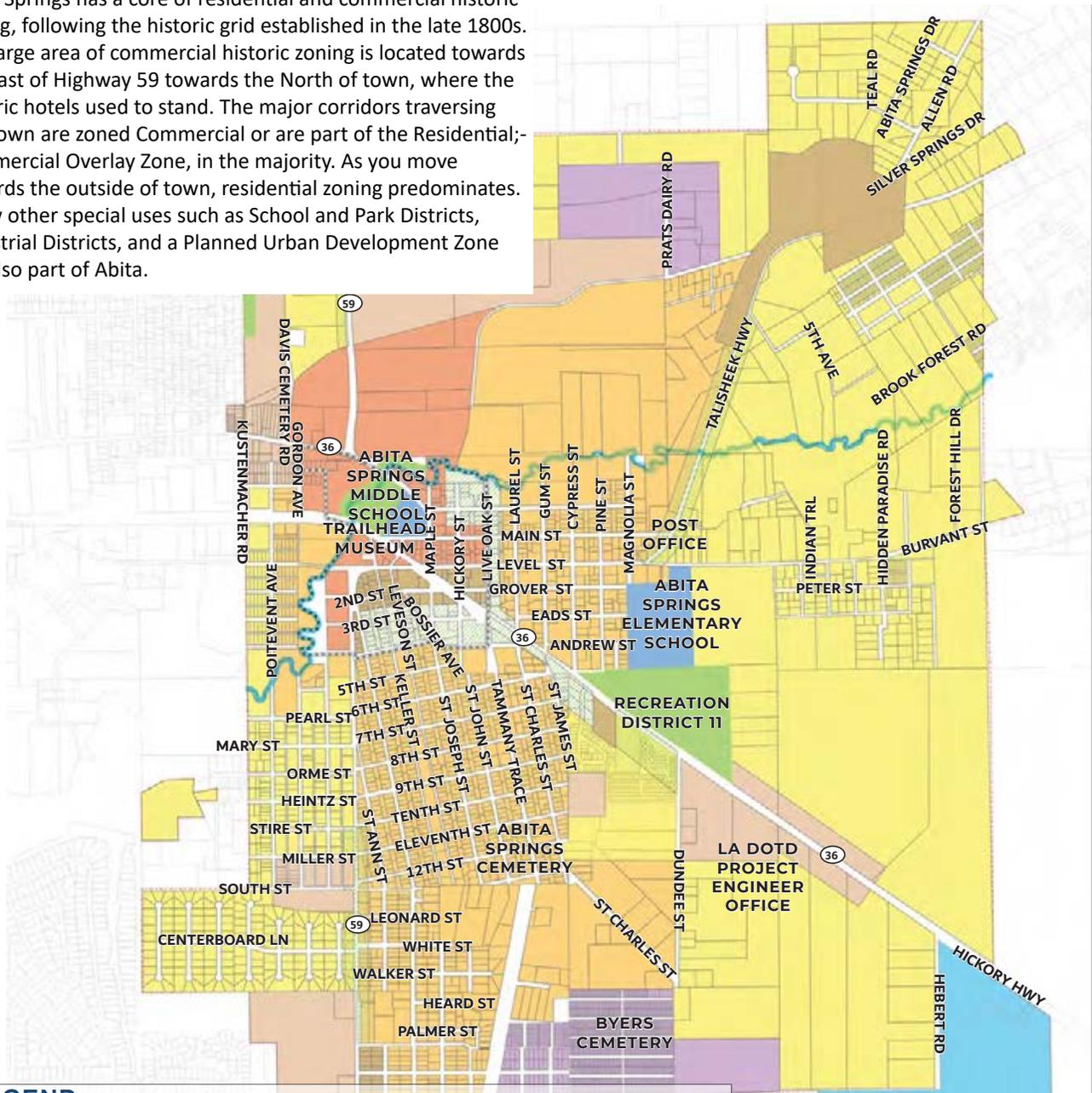
### NATURAL LAND

Abita Springs has beautiful natural resources that surrounds it all across the town. The Abita River crosses east to west close to the town center, and rich vegetation is predominant in many areas. Abita Springs should conserve the wetlands, ruling them as "natural areas," which disallows disruptive development. Any development needs to be conscious of the town's natural resources and enhance them, rather than destroy them.



# EXISTING ZONING MAP

Abita Springs has a core of residential and commercial historic zoning, following the historic grid established in the late 1800s. The large area of commercial historic zoning is located towards the East of Highway 59 towards the North of town, where the historic hotels used to stand. The major corridors traversing the Town are zoned Commercial or are part of the Residential;-Commercial Overlay Zone, in the majority. As you move towards the outside of town, residential zoning predominates. A few other special uses such as School and Park Districts, Industrial Districts, and a Planned Urban Development Zone are also part of Abita.



**LEGEND**

- - - - - Town Boundary
- - - - - Lots
- Abita River

**Existing Land Use**

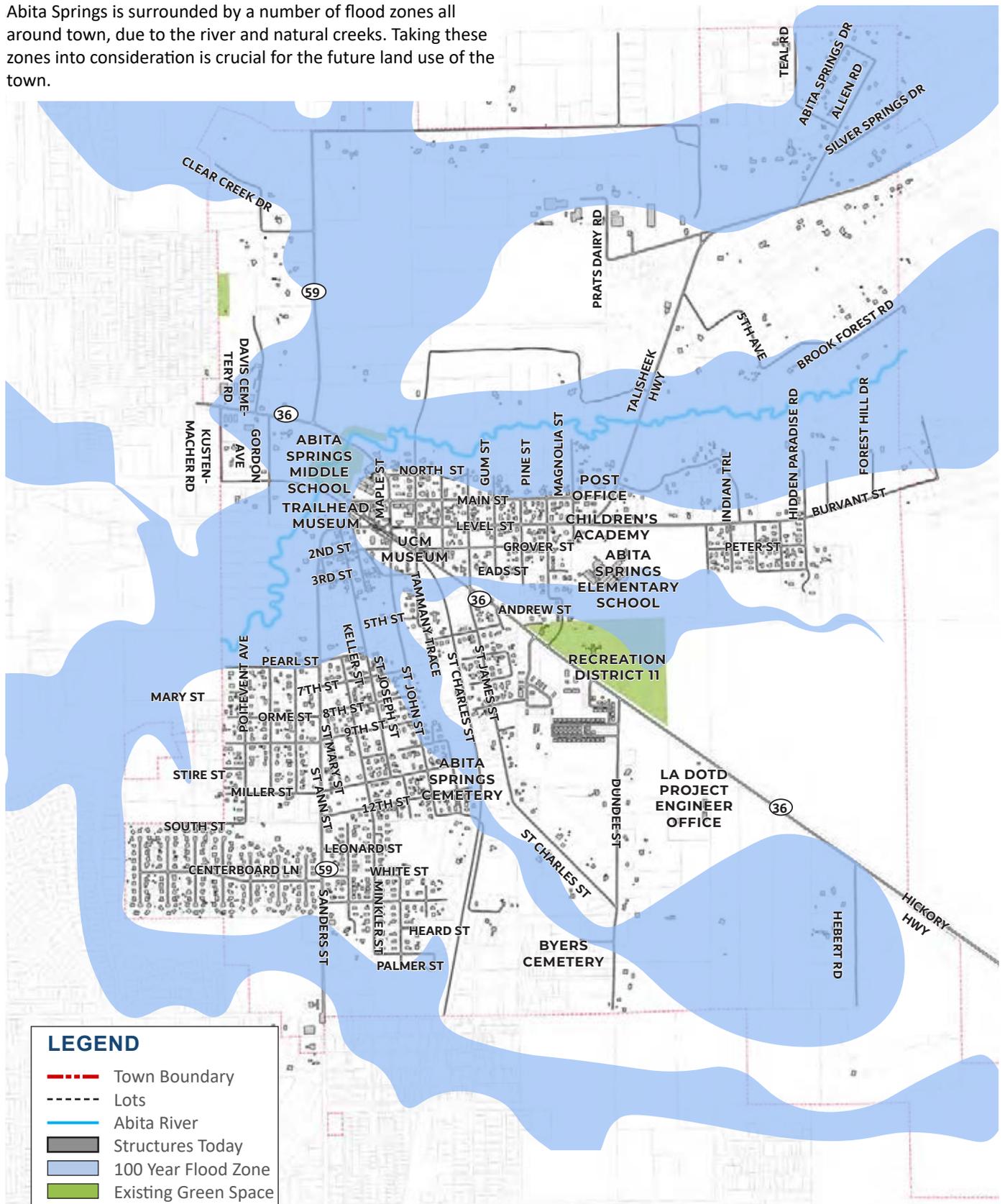
<span style="background-color: #8B4513; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Low Density Residential	<span style="background-color: #FFDAB9; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> C-1 Commercial Historic
<span style="background-color: #FFFF00; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Residential	<span style="background-color: #FF8C00; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> C-2 Commercial Historic
<span style="background-color: #9ACD32; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Multi-Family Residential	<span style="background-color: #FFD700; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Residential - Commercial Overlay
<span style="background-color: #FFD700; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Townhouse/Condominium	<span style="background-color: #FFDAB9; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Commercial District
<span style="background-color: #8B4513; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Mobile Home	<span style="background-color: #FFDAB9; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> C-1 Commercial
<span style="background-color: #FF8C00; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Residential Historic	<span style="background-color: #8B4513; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> C-2 Highway Commercial
<span style="background-color: #FF4500; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Commercial Historic	<span style="background-color: #9370DB; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Light Industrial District I
	<span style="background-color: #800080; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Light Industrial District II
	<span style="background-color: #90EE90; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Park District
	<span style="background-color: #4682B4; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> School District
	<span style="background-color: #ADD8E6; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> PUD Planned Unit Development
	<span style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Midtown Cultural District

LAND USE



## FLOOD ZONES MAP

Abita Springs is surrounded by a number of flood zones all around town, due to the river and natural creeks. Taking these zones into consideration is crucial for the future land use of the town.





## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### PRESERVE EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS

Abita Springs' historic, established neighborhoods are built on a connected grid of streets and feature a mix of housing types with a limited amount of neighborhood commercial and civic uses. These neighborhoods support a high quality of life for residents at a low cost in terms of gas mileage, infrastructure, and environmental degradation. Efforts should be made to preserve these neighborhoods and their unique character while encouraging high-quality, compatible infill development.

### GROW COMPLETE, COMPACT, WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS IN AND AROUND ABITA SPRINGS

Abita Springs' downtown and adjacent historic neighborhoods are good examples of complete, compact, walkable neighborhoods. Future development should look to the downtown and historic neighborhoods for cues as to how to build in complete, walkable neighborhood increments, with a mix of housing types and land uses on an interconnected, walkable street network. In time, the growth of the town will have a clear pattern that will be easy to continue building upon throughout the years.

### KEEP A PERMANENT GREEN PRESERVE IN AND AROUND THE TOWN

The existing wetlands and natural open spaces in Abita Springs are a source of pride for residents and contribute to the small-town, rural character of the community. Abita Springs has a history of enhancing its natural features, such as the Abita River, and should continue to do so. This land should be preserved, protected, and enhanced in a planned, rational manner that contributes to the quality of life for residents and maintains Abita Springs' small village character.

### PRIORITIZE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

In the interest of long-term fiscal responsibility, development should occur first where there are available adequate public facilities or proximity to existing services. New subdivision roads in unbuilt areas may be constructed by the private sector initially but they will be inherited by the municipality and new residents will require utilities (water and electricity) and services (schools, police and fire protection, to name a few). The extension of the utilities and services will be paid for by all residents in Abita Springs as property taxes of new homes will not cover all of these costs.

### PRESERVE HISTORIC CHARACTER

Abita Springs is committed to its history and takes pride in maintaining its historic character. Abita has commercial and residential designated historic districts, which are a testament to the community's commitment to preserving its character. However, much of the town's historic fabric that contributes to its traditional charm spreads beyond these designated districts. Efforts should be made to protect the historic structures and development patterns throughout the town.

### EXPAND THE SUCCESS OF DOWNTOWN BY PRIORITIZING INFILL

Abita Springs has a charming downtown and has worked hard to preserve it as much as possible. Most of the activity currently surrounds the traffic circle, and the few blocks around it. This success should be expanded to more of the downtown area to create additional commercial opportunities for a broader range of businesses and patrons. Housing options should also be expanded, implementing some apartment units and duplexes. The town should prioritize making compatible commercial and mixed-use infill in this area and outlying neighborhoods a development priority. This would allow the center of town to become a more complete, safe, and beautiful destination for both residents and visitors.



*Beautiful buildings, green spaces and trees, pedestrian safety and proper parking management are some of the traits that will create a memorable Town Center.*



## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### FOCUS ON DOWNTOWN

Downtown Abita Springs features design characteristics that have contributed to its success. By retooling regulations for the downtown to encourage new development that emulates the successful existing character and by utilizing policies to promote the habitation of the upper stories of buildings, the vibrancy and commerce around the circle can be expanded. This will provide a diverse range of options that cater to people of all backgrounds and ages.

### REVITALIZE TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Revitalizing Abita Springs' traditional neighborhood areas, which feature walkable streets, parks, a mix of uses, a variety of housing types, and many historic buildings is a priority for community members. Revitalization includes improving public infrastructure, infilling empty lots and parking lots, and restoring valuable older buildings. Zoning and development regulations should be revised to support and restore neighborhood centers in these areas.

### REIMAGINE COMMERCIAL GATEWAYS

Commercial areas on the edges of Abita Springs should be developed in keeping with the character of the area. By not allowing strip commercial centers along Highways 36 and 59, it will create a gateway into Abita Springs by being different and announce that one has arrived somewhere. This involves numerous aspects including enhanced landscaping, bringing new buildings closer to the street with parking to the side or rear, and improvements to the right-of-way with wider sidewalks with street trees.

### CREATE A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING A FORM-BASED CODE

#### What is a Form-Based Code?

A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form as the organizing principle for the code. Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and type of streets and blocks.

A form-based code uses a regulating plan to designate transect zones, each with varying urban characteristics, calibrated to fit with the envisioned future context. Each transect zone is defined by particular characteristics that correspond with building placement, building form, and frontage standards, all of which influence the level of walkability and vibrancy in a particular place.

#### A Framework for a Form-Based Code

The Future Character Area Map establishes a framework in which to develop a form-based code. The desired type and form of development in each part of town as defined by the Future Character Areas corresponds with the intent of a form-based code to use physical forms as opposed to use as the primary regulating tool. The Future Character Areas are more general in description and broader in coverage than an individual form-based code transect zone. However, each Future Character Area corresponds with at least one of a form-based code typical transect zones. This relationship is shown on the spread for each Future Character Area.

A form-based code can translate the intent of the comprehensive plan into zoning law. Because each character area is defined by the physical characteristics of the development within it, a form-based code is the natural land development regulation to implement the ideals of the comprehensive plan.

### LAND USE VERSUS CHARACTER AREAS

This Comprehensive Plan moves away from land uses and instead focuses on character areas, which reflect the type, form, scale, and pattern of the built environment. The purpose of this shift is twofold: to recognize the historic character and places of Abita Springs that make it unique and loved by residents and visitors; and to protect and enhance these place types. It is vital to support the continued investment in and growth of Abita Springs' neighborhoods without sacrificing the character that has made them successful in the first place. Likewise, it is important to take the qualities of Abita Springs' most successful places and expand them to other parts of the town.

This document recognizes that commercial and residential uses, and all uses for that matter, can take on a multitude of forms and shapes, and that these forms and shapes have a much greater impact on the character of a place than what happens inside of the buildings.



## FUTURE CHARACTER AREAS

### Future Character Areas Map

The Future Character Areas Map categorizes Abita Springs into seven different Character Area types, largely based on existing development patterns and logical extensions into the future. The purpose of the Future Character Areas Map is to guide future development to help ensure that it is compatible with existing development and to achieve the town’s vision. The Future Character Areas have been defined such that they can be further subdivided into more specific place types and transects. Character Areas are vital to guide street design that is compatible with the town’s vision.

### Neighborhood Centers

Many areas all across Abita Springs have small commercial uses dispersed within the predominantly residential areas. These commercial areas come in a variety of sizes from just one or two buildings to several blocks. The Future Character Areas Map shows these as Neighborhood Centers (with a 1/4-mile buffer representing a roughly 5 minute walking distance).

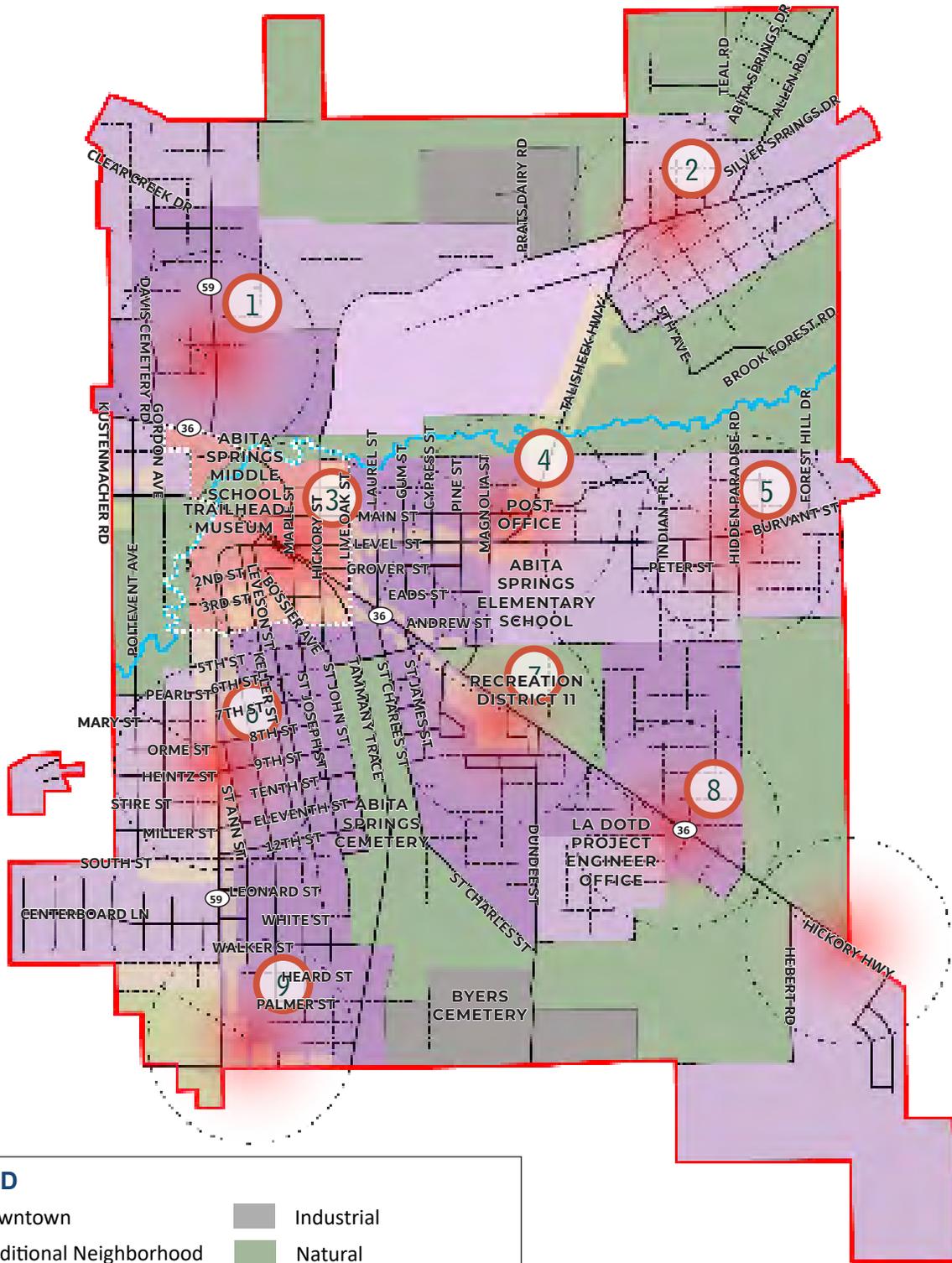
Neighborhood Centers cover one or more blocks, with a 1/4- mile pedestrian shed. Buildings in the focal point are one or two stories in height and contain a mix of uses with commercial shopfronts on the ground floor.

Regardless of size or location, many of these areas are struggling and are a shadow of their former and possible conditions. Reinvigorating these areas is a key focus of this plan as Neighborhood Centers promote community and are a vital element of walkable neighborhoods.

There is also the potential of new Neighborhood Centers. Following the principles of traditional neighborhood design, new centers can be located on vacant or retrofitted suburban areas at strategic locations to create new gateways in the town and to provide local services to meet daily needs of local residents close to where they live, This is especially important for areas that are currently not well served with commercial uses.

The following locations have been identified for potential neighborhood center locations in Abita Springs:

- 1 Site of Old Commercial Hotels on Highway 59
- 2 Abita Quail Farm on Tailsheek Highway
- 3 Abita Springs Downtown
- 4 Intersection between United States Postal Service and old Church Building on Tailsheek Highway
- 5 Neighborhood on the East end of Level Street
- 6 Honey Snoballs and Abita Board Barn on Highway 59
- 7 District 11 on Highway 36
- 8 Main Gateway on Main Corridor at the East end of Highway 36
- 9 New Commercial Development on the intersection between Highway 59 and Harrison Avenue

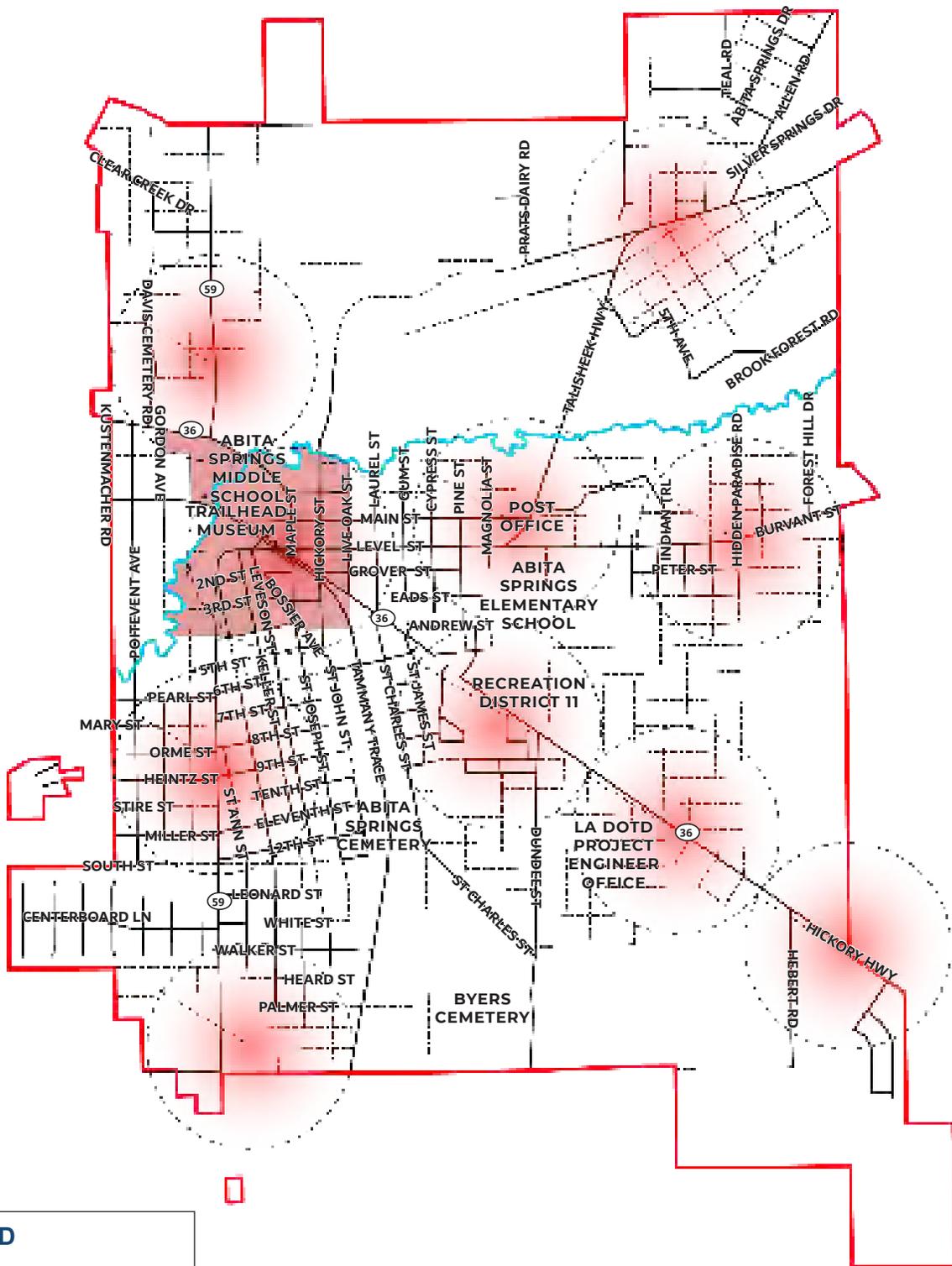


**LEGEND**

<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #f08080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Downtown	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #808080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Industrial
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #800080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Traditional Neighborhood	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #008000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Natural
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #c0c0ff; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Suburban Neighborhood	<span style="display: inline-block; border: 1px dashed black; border-radius: 50%; width: 15px; height: 15px;"></span> Neighborhood Centers
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #ffb6c1; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Estates	



FUTURE CHARACTER AREA: DOWNTOWN



LAND USE

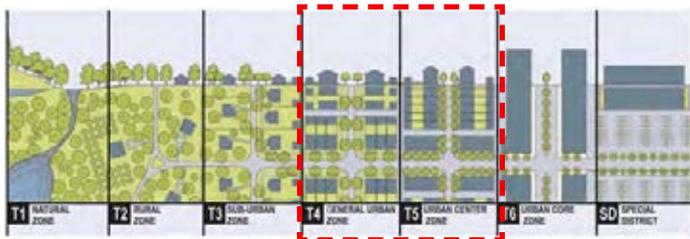


### Downtown

Downtown describes the most intense urban development in the Town of Abita Springs. It serves an important role for both the economy and culture, serving as a social gathering place- downtown is the heart of the community. It includes mixed-use buildings with commercial, office, and residential uses. Multifamily residential buildings and attached townhomes are appropriate as a transition between the downtown and primarily residential neighborhoods. The addition of residential uses on the upper floors of downtown building is encouraged as a priority for the downtown’s continued prosperity and vibrance.

### Transect

Buildings in the Downtown Character Area are brought up to the street or have shallow setbacks and are lined with shopfronts or residences. There is little or no space between buildings. Building types range from historic warehouses to repurposed single family homes to multi-story mixed-use buildings.



### Special Considerations

The Downtown Character Area is at the convergence of several historic districts and a zoning overlay district. Each of these adds special considerations to what happens in the Downtown Character Area.

*Historic Districts:* The Downtown Character area overlaps with portions of the Commercial Historic and Residential Historic Zonings

*Residential-Commercial Overlay District:* Applied to several areas of the main streets that cross Abita Springs, this overlay allows commercial development on what is currently zoned as residential.

*Midtown Cultural District:* This is the general downtown area currently identified in Abita Springs.

### Typical Conditions



<b>General Description</b>	The commercial heart and center of Abita Springs representing the most intense development in the town
<b>Street Network</b>	Regular, rectilinear street grid with small blocks and high intersection density  Max Block Perimeter: 1,800 to 2,000 ft
<b>Building Placement</b>	Front Build-to-Zone: 0 to 15 feet Side Built-to-Zone: 0 to 18 feet
<b>Building Frontage</b>	Shopfront, porch, stoop
<b>Building Height</b>	Generally one to three stories with some buildings up to four stories
<b>Parking</b>	Parking is located on-street and in mid-block locations
<b>Building Types</b>	Multi-story mixed-use, apartments, attached townhouses, repurposed warehouse, maker spaces, shared office, and single-family detached
<b>Civic Types</b>	Library, day care, houses of worship, parks, town hall, pavilion



### Streets

Downtown Character Area streets should prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists over the automobile, although all modes of mobility are accommodated. Pavement widths should be minimized to encourage safe vehicular speeds of no more than 25 mph while also including space for on-street parking. Sidewalk widths should be maximized to provide space for businesses to have outside dining or events, street furniture, and street trees.

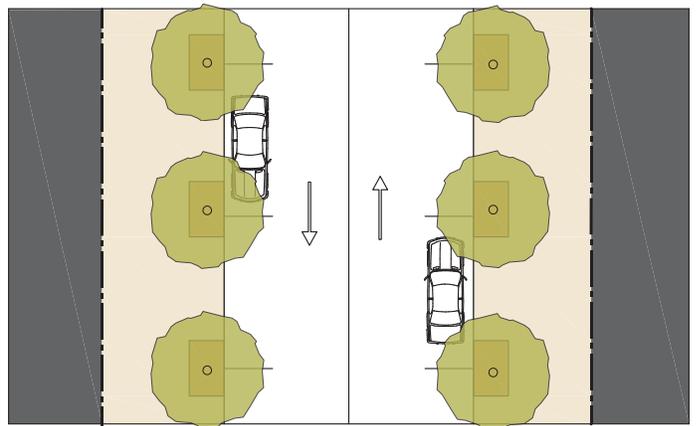
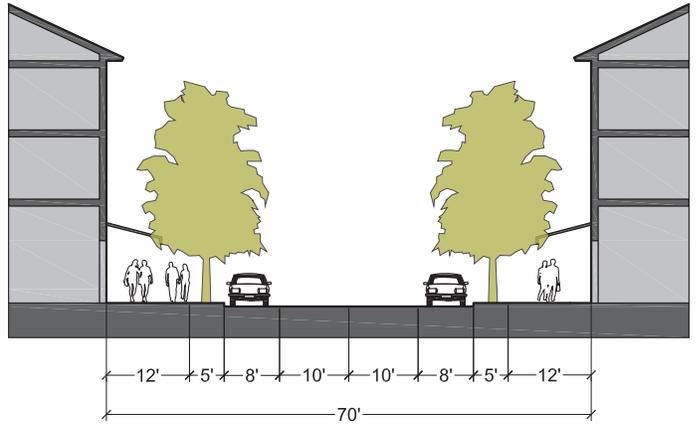
### Typical Street Sections Applicable to the Downtown Character Area

- On-street parking buffers pedestrians from moving traffic and provides parking spaces for those businesses on lots that are too small for on-lot parking
- Narrow streets encourage slower automobile speeds, which is particularly important on a main street for the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Sidewalks and street trees are recommended on more residential streets to provide safe and comfortable spaces for pedestrians. This is key to walkable neighborhoods and for walking to be a common means to and within the downtown.

### Utilities

Utilities should be buried underground throughout this area, with the exception of fire hydrants. Any above-ground projections of utilities should be placed in rear service areas or otherwise hidden from view wherever practical.

Stormwater should be handled through improved bioswales and utilize regional detention systems rather than requiring on-site stormwater retention. Bioretention systems, bioswales, tree filters, and other vegetated stormwater best management practices are encouraged for treatment of stormwater runoff from streets, parking lots, plazas, and other impervious surfaces. Properly designed pervious pavement is also encouraged.





**Representative Images of Downtown Future Character Area**



*The Abita Springs Park attracts a lot of locals and tourists across the year. It is a great civic space to have in downtown.*



*The Abita Springs Trailhead Museum is a great civic space located at the heart of downtown.*



*Town Hall has its front towards one of the main streets and is brought up to the sidewalk.*



*Downtown should be filled with local restaurants such as the Abita Brew Pub.*



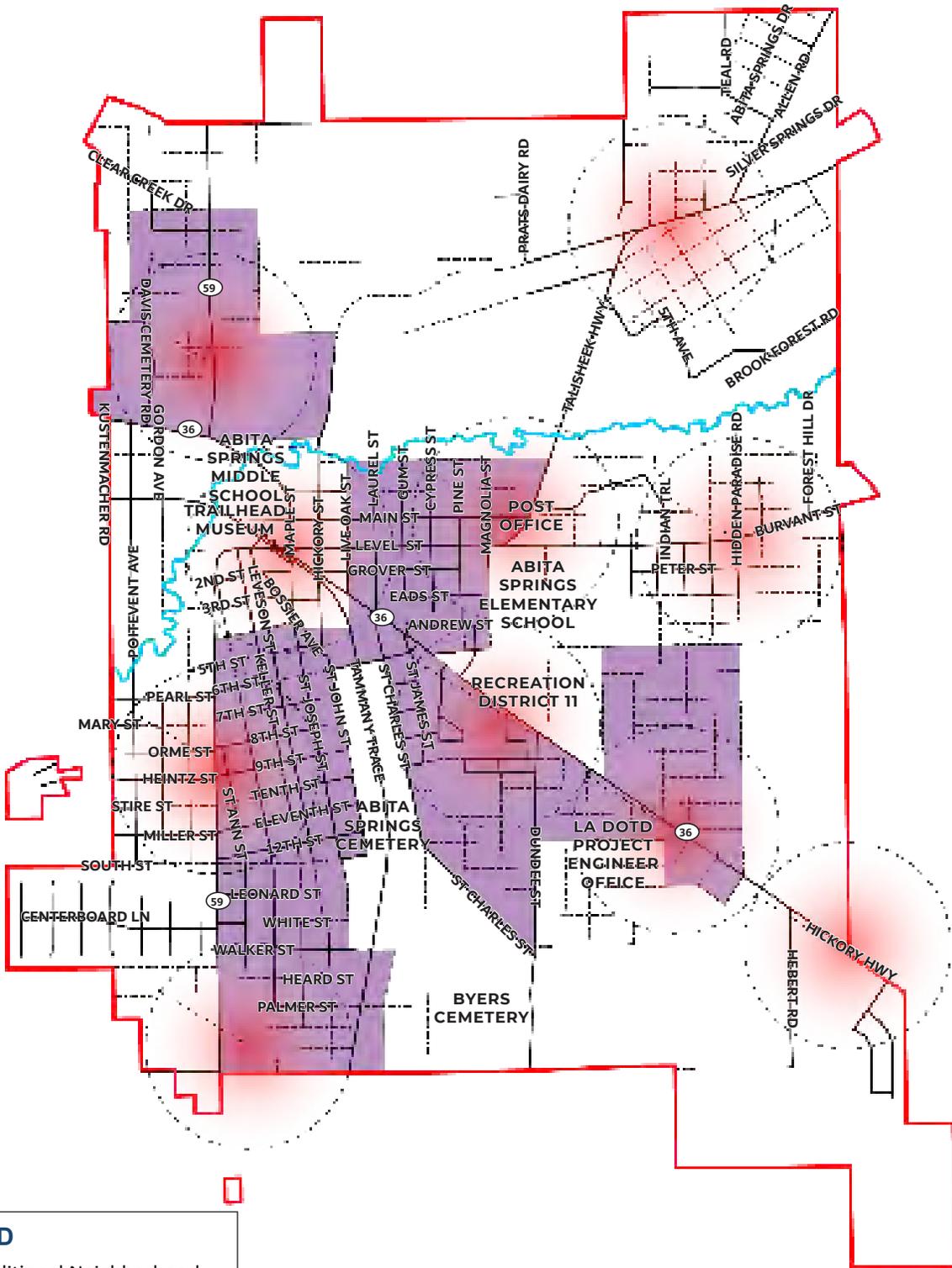
*Hotels such as the Abita Springs Hotel are encouraged in the area.*



*Future architecture should look at buildings such as the Abita Springs Bakery and cafe and resemble its typology.*



FUTURE CHARACTER AREA: TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD



**LEGEND**

- Traditional Neighborhood
- Neighborhood Centers

LAND USE

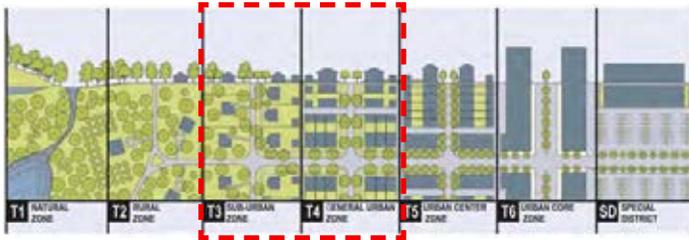


### Traditional Neighborhood

These neighborhoods are primarily residential in nature and are defined by single-family housing. Denser housing types such as duplexes, fourplexes, and small apartment buildings designed to fit with the character of a single-family neighborhood are also part of the housing mix. Some commercial and civic uses are mixed in, particularly at neighborhood centers that are dispersed throughout where conditions are slightly denser and more urban. Thoughtfully designed small office, retail, and mixed-use buildings can be built at key intersections and along main corridors to provide neighborhood and townwide amenities. Civic buildings should respect the character of primarily residential neighborhoods, but can also be used as landmarks.

### Transect

The Traditional Neighborhood Character Area consists of buildings on smaller lots with shallow setbacks and small front yards set within a regular street grid. Buildings are further apart than in the downtown but more closely spaced than in the Suburban Area. Along main thoroughfares and in neighborhood centers, buildings may come up to the sidewalk.

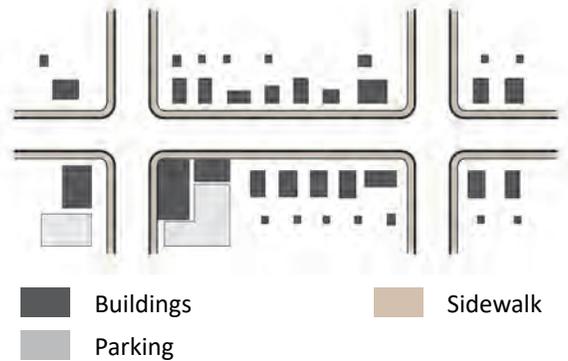


### Neighborhood Center

Neighborhood Centers have different building types and placement than typical for the Character Area.

- Build-to-Zones should be shallower than surrounding areas, with buildings brought up to the sidewalk and directly adjacent to neighboring buildings.
- Parking should be on-street or behind buildings.
- Access should be prioritized by walking and biking and efforts should be made to ensure safe and comfortable conditions for these modes of travel. Wider sidewalks and street trees are critical for creating a space where people wish to be. They also provide locations for outdoor seating.

### Typical Conditions



<b>General Description</b>	Typically older, residential neighborhoods surrounding the downtown that were primarily developed before 1950
<b>Street Network</b>	Regular, rectilinear street grid with small blocks and a high intersection density Max Block Perimeter: 2,000 ft
<b>Building Placement</b>	Front Build-to-Zone: 0 to 30 feet Side Built-to-Zone: 0 to 18 feet
<b>Building Frontage</b>	Shopfront, porch, stoop
<b>Building Height</b>	Generally one to two stories with some buildings up to three stories along main thoroughfares
<b>Parking</b>	Parking is located on-street or to the rear and side of buildings
<b>Building Types</b>	Primarily single-family detached, some duplexes, fourplexes, small apartment buildings, and a few small office, retail, maker spaces, shared office and mixed-use
<b>Civic Types</b>	Library, day care, houses of worship, parks, playground, cemetery



### Streets

Traditional Neighborhood streets should prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists over the automobile, although all modes of mobility are accommodated. Pavement widths should be minimized to encourage safe vehicular speeds of no more than 25 mph while also including space for on-street parking on at least one side of the street. Sidewalks should be provided on a least one side of the street and be separated from the pavement with a landscaped strip planted with street trees. In neighborhood centers or commercial areas, sidewalks should be widened to accommodate the need of businesses and a higher pedestrian volume.

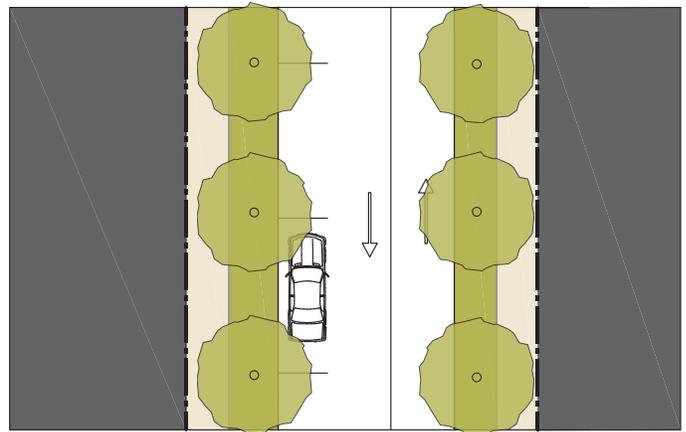
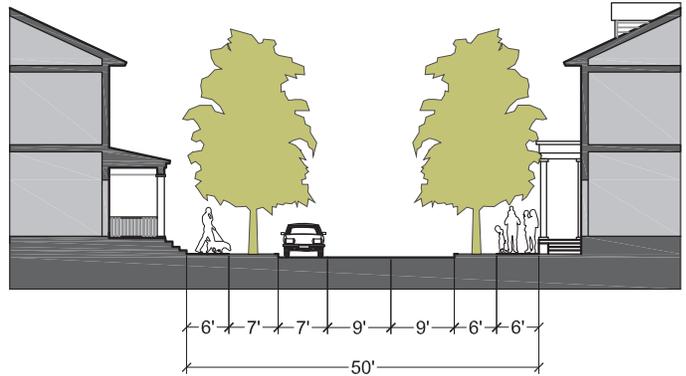
### Typical Street Sections Applicable to the Traditional Neighborhood Character Area

- On-street parking is featured throughout the Traditional Neighborhood area on at least one side of the street.
- Narrow streets encourage slower automobile speeds, which is particularly important on residential streets and for the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Sidewalks and street trees are recommended on the more residential streets to provide safe and comfortable spaces for pedestrians. This is key to walkable neighborhoods.

### Utilities

Utilities can be either above ground or buried underground throughout this area. Priority for buried utilities should be placed in neighborhood centers, along commercial streets and gateway corridors. Above-ground projections of utilities should be hidden from view wherever practical.

Bioretention systems, bioswales, tree filters, and other vegetated stormwater best management practices are encouraged for treatment of stormwater runoff from streets, parking lots, plazas, and other impervious surfaces. Properly designed pervious paving is encouraged.





**Representative Images of Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Area**



*A variety of single family homes are seen within this future character area.*



*Some civic uses can be located within the Traditional Neighborhood, such as the Abita Springs Cemetery.*



*Recent developments, such as Abita Villas, offer more affordable options within the Traditional Neighborhood area.*



*The architectural features within the Abita Springs typologies should be implemented in new developments.*



*Churches and parks are other civic uses that are encouraged in the Traditional Neighborhood character area.*



*Houses currently in Abita Springs are elevated, have spacious front porches, and side setbacks.*



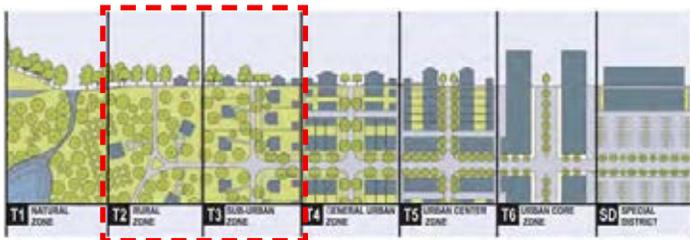


### Suburban Neighborhood

The Suburban Neighborhood areas are generally the more recently developed portions of Abita Springs. The design of these neighborhoods necessitates the use of automobiles as individual buildings are spread farther apart with few pedestrian amenities. These neighborhoods are defined by single-family houses and isolated apartments. Some commercial and civic uses are mixed in. Office, retail, and mixed-use buildings can be built at key intersections, at neighborhood centers, and along main corridors. Civic buildings should respect the character of a primarily residential neighborhood, but can also be used as landmarks.

### Transect

The Suburban Neighborhood Character Area consists of buildings on larger lots with larger setbacks and front yards than in the Traditional Neighborhood Character Area. Buildings are spaced farther apart and the regular street grid extending from downtown begins to dissipate with larger blocks and fewer connections.

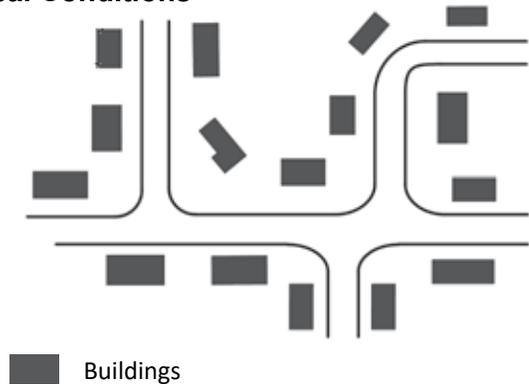


### Neighborhood Center

Neighborhood Centers have different building types and placement than typical for the Character Area.

- Neighborhood Centers in this character area may consist of several larger buildings at a key intersection or several new blocks of mixed-use development on the site of a previous shopping center.
- Build-to-zones should be shallower than surrounding areas with buildings brought closer to the sidewalk and may be directly adjacent to neighboring buildings.
- Parking should be on-street or behind buildings.
- Access should be prioritized for walking and biking and efforts should be made to ensure safe and comfortable conditions for these modes. Wider sidewalks and street trees are critical for creating a place where people wish to be. They also provide locations for outdoor seating.

### Typical Conditions



<b>General Description</b>	Primarily defined by single-family homes built after 1950 following an automobile-oriented pattern
<b>Street Network</b>	Larger blocks with curvilinear and rectilinear streets forming a connected and consistent network where cul-de-sacs are discouraged
<b>Building Placement</b>	Front Setbacks: 24 feet Min. Side Setback: 12 feet Min.
<b>Building Frontage</b>	Shopfront, porch, stoop
<b>Building Height</b>	Generally one to two stories
<b>Parking</b>	Existing parking is located to the front or side of buildings. For future development, parking should be located on-street or to the side and rear of buildings
<b>Building Types</b>	Primarily single-family detached, some duplexes, apartment buildings, and small office, retail, and mixed-use within neighborhoods centers and along corridors
<b>Civic Types</b>	Library, day care, houses of worship, parks, playground, venues



### Streets

Suburban Neighborhood streets should safely accommodate pedestrian, bicyclists, automobiles and all other modes of mobility. Pavement widths should be designed to encourage safe vehicular speeds of no more than 25 mph in residential areas and 35 mph on larger thoroughfares. On-street parking should be provided, especially within neighborhood centers. Sidewalks should be provided on at least one side of the street and be separated from the pavement with a landscaped strip planted with street trees along larger thoroughfares and within neighborhood centers. Separated bicycle facilities should also be included on larger streets and along important routes.

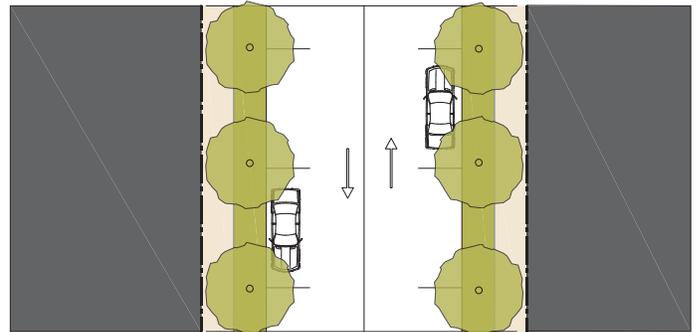
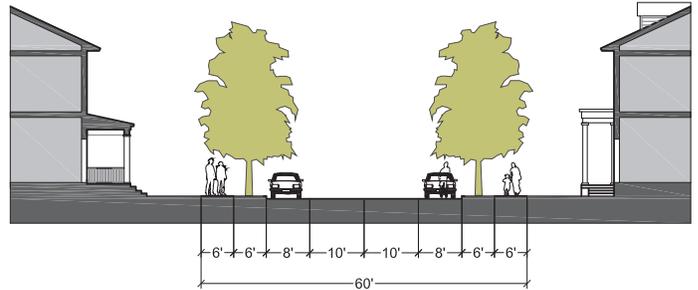
### Typical Street Sections Applicable to the Traditional Neighborhood Character Area

- On-street parking is featured in some parts of the Suburban Neighborhood Character Area.
- Pavement width should be designed to encourage appropriate automobile speeds for the context, which is important for the safety and comfort of all roadway users.
- Separated bicycle facilities are attractive to a wider spectrum of cyclists due to the added level of comfort and safety. On higher-speed roadways, separated bicycle facilities should be considered as part of a larger, comprehensive bicycle network.

### Utilities

Utilities can be either above ground or buried underground throughout this area. Priority for buried utilities should be placed in neighborhood centers, along commercial streets and gateway corridors. Above-ground projections of utilities should be hidden from view wherever practical.

Stormwater should be handled through storm sewers and prioritize regional detention over on-site stormwater retention. All on-site detention should be treated as an amenity and civic space. Bioretention systems, bioswales, tree filters, and other vegetated stormwater best management practices are encouraged for treatment of stormwater runoff from streets, parking lots, plazas, and other impervious surfaces. Properly designed pervious paving is encouraged.





**Representative Images of Suburban Neighborhood Future Character Area**



*Homes in the Suburban Neighborhood typically have deep front and side setbacks.*



*This character area has some of Abita Spring's grandest homes.*



*In Abita Springs, larger lots respect much of the current landscape and vegetation.*



*Single family homes of all sizes are located within the Suburban Neighborhood.*



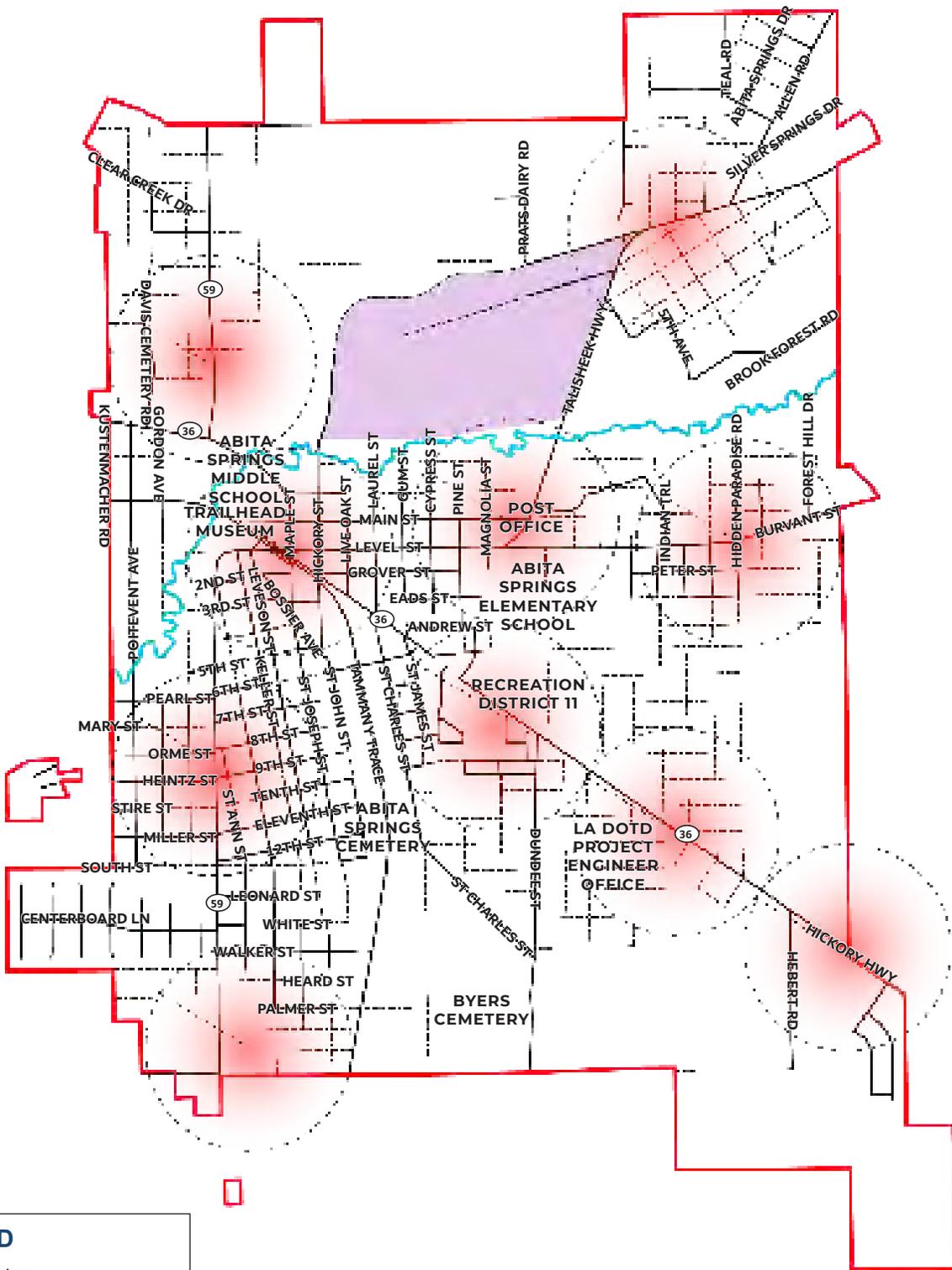
*Buildings such as The Abita Quail farm are the type of public buildings that can be found on this Character Area.*



*Houses are tucked in within the existing landscape, without causing major disruptions to the natural areas across Town.*



FUTURE CHARACTER AREA: ESTATES



**LEGEND**

- Estates
- Neighborhood Centers

LAND USE

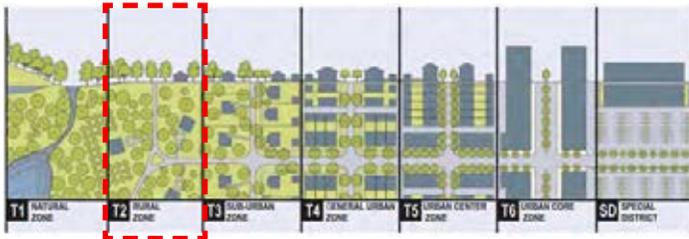


### Estates

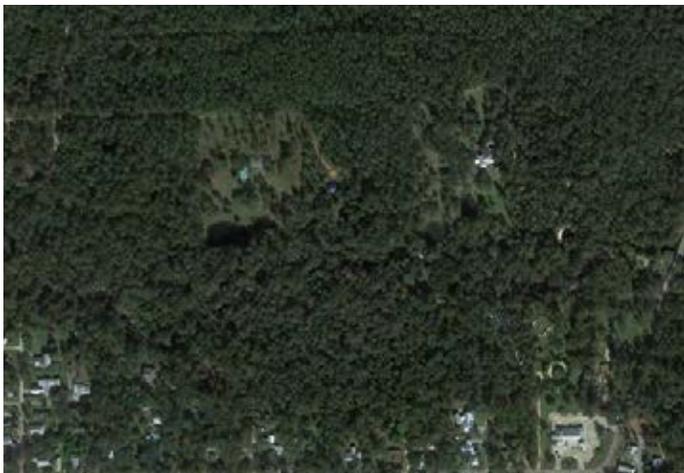
The Estates Future Character Area consists of larger lots of land with single-family homes. Many of these areas have already been built, and are currently located within the floodzones. Abita Springs currently has some larger homes on extensive areas of land in this area. These areas of land are not often visited by the public and do not have heavy traffic passing by. There are a few existing estates in Abita Springs that have been owned by the same families through several generations.

### Transect

The Estates Character Area consists of buildings on larger lots with larger setbacks and front yards than in the Suburban Neighborhood Character Area. Buildings are spaced farther apart and the regular street grid dissipates, given these areas of land do need an extensive street network.

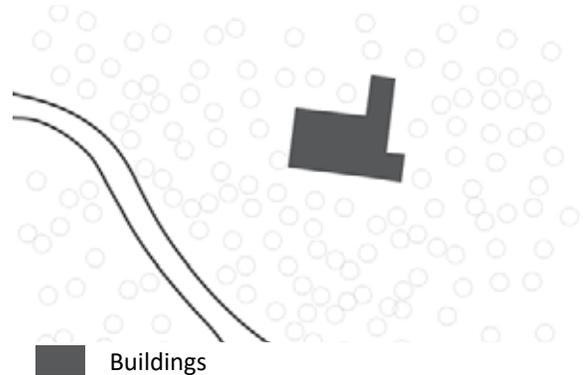


### Representative Images of Estates Future Character Area



Aerial of existing land with Estates Character Area in Abita Springs

### Typical Conditions



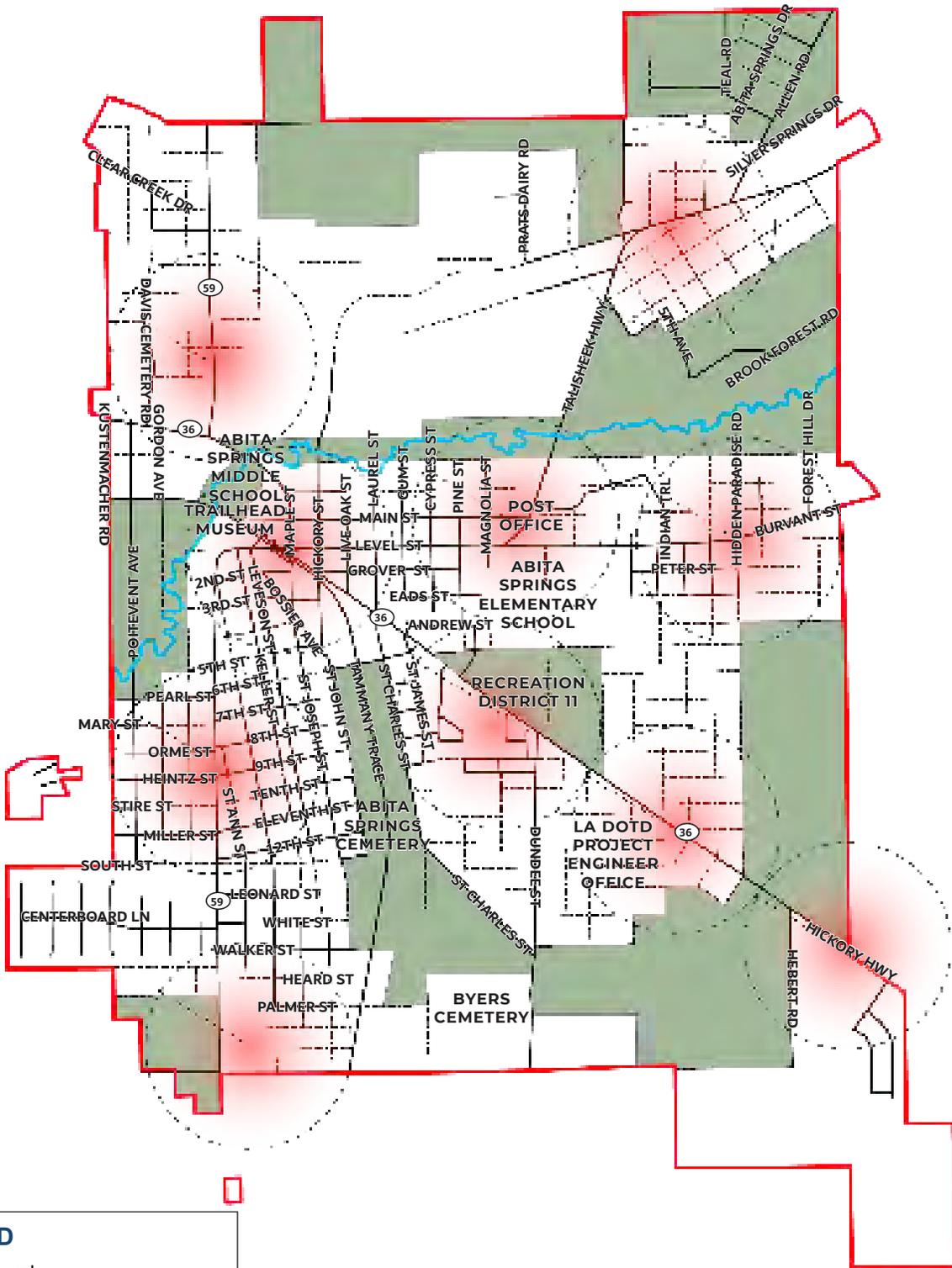
<b>General Description</b>	Primarily defined by single-family homes
<b>Street Network</b>	Larger blocks with curvilinear and rectilinear streets forming a connected and consistent network where cul-de-sacs are discouraged
<b>Building Placement</b>	Front Setbacks: 24 feet Min. Side Setback: 16 feet Min.
<b>Building Frontage</b>	porch
<b>Building Height</b>	Generally one to two stories
<b>Parking</b>	Parking should be located to the side and rear of buildings
<b>Building Types</b>	Primarily single-family detached, larger homes
<b>Civic Types</b>	Parks, venues, churches



Estate homes take over larger areas of land.



FUTURE CHARACTER AREA: NATURAL



**LEGEND**

- Natural
- Neighborhood Centers

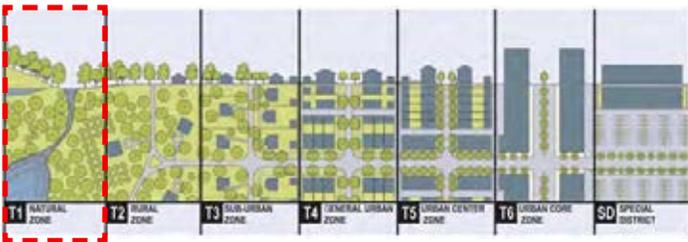


**Natural**

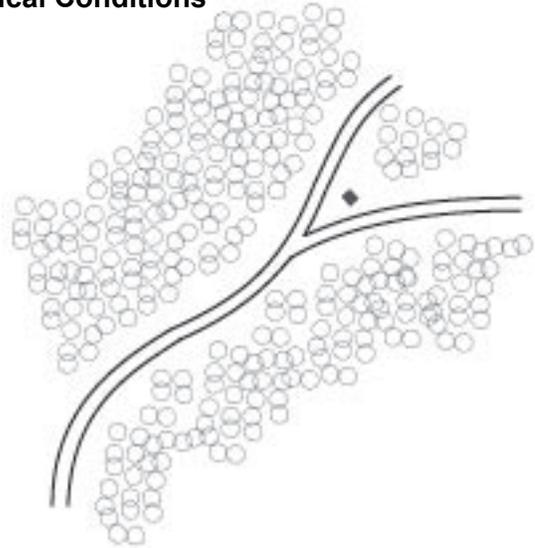
The Natural Future Character Area consists of protected land that is, for the most part, in a natural and unimproved state. Town regulations and policy decisions should help keep these lands in their natural state for drainage, natural habitat, and scenic protection, Hiking and biking may occur in this area. The areas defined with this designation respect the wetlands in Abita Springs.

**Transect**

The Natural Character Area consists of unimproved land in its natural state. Development within this area is limited to preserve the natural character and ecosystem services. Limited trails and trailheads may be provided in order to access the area for recreational purposes.



**Typical Conditions**



**Representative Images of Estates Future Character Area**



Wetlands and thick vegetation are part of the natural areas the Future Character Areas map seeks to preserve.

**General Description**

Natural areas for recreation, conservation, provision of ecosystem services such as drainage

**Street Network**

Trails for recreation and access for maintenance

**Building Placement**

N/A

**Building Frontage**

N/A

**Building Height**

N/A

**Parking**

Parking is located along adjacent streets or in designated lots along the periphery

**Building Types**

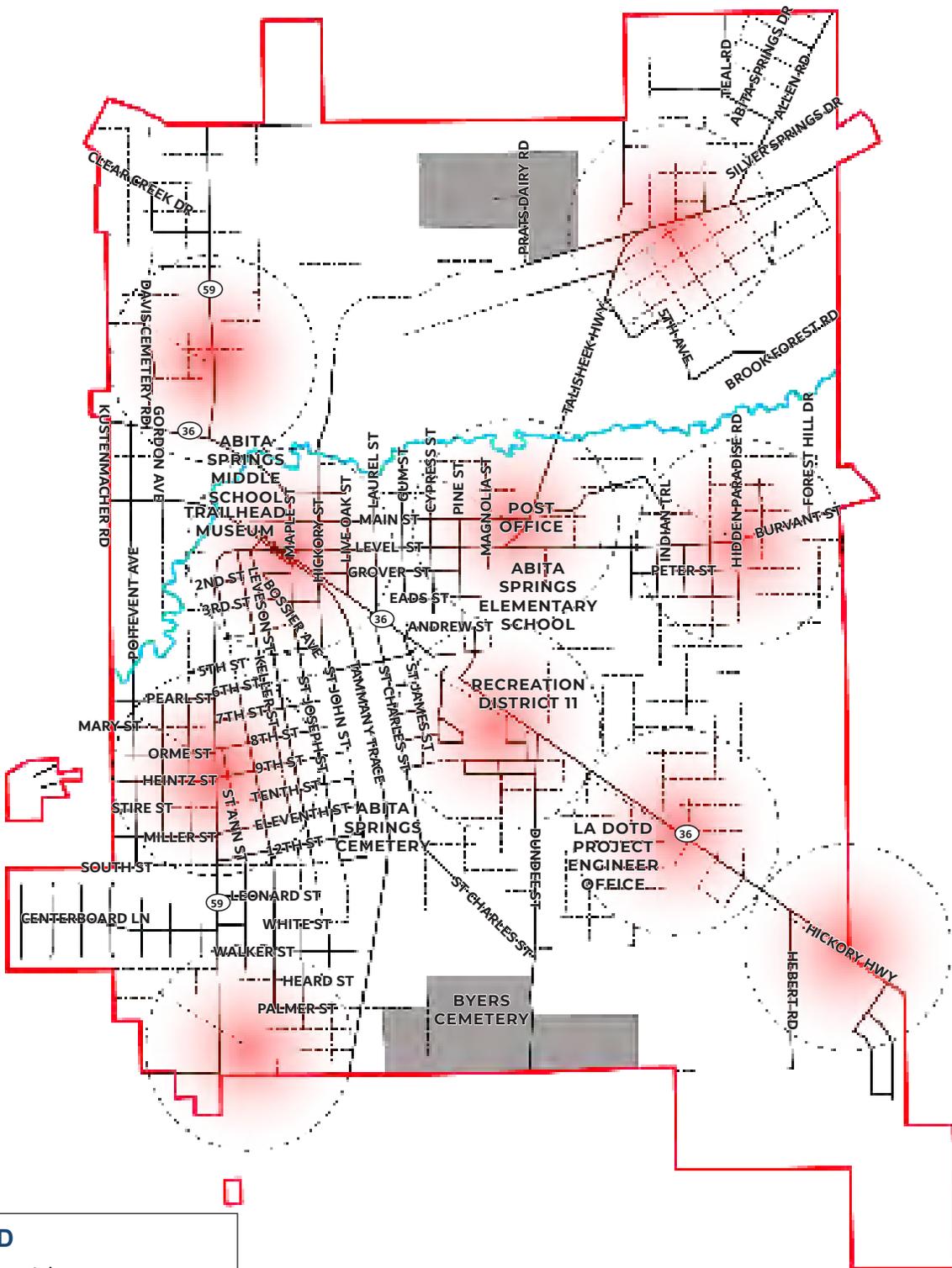
Trailheads, visitors and nature centers, restrooms

**Civic Types**

Parks



FUTURE CHARACTER AREA: INDUSTRIAL



**LEGEND**

-  Industrial
-  Neighborhood Centers

LAND USE



### Industrial

Industrial lands are treated differently than the mixed-use or residential areas in Abita Springs, however, some placemaking and multi-modal transportation approaches still apply. Major thoroughfares should connect through industrial areas to keep the overall connectivity of the town consistent. Creating isolated areas within or around industrial lands is undesirable.

Residential uses can be a short commute to industrial areas as workers should have the choice of living within close proximity of where they work, thereby reducing household transportation costs. However, residential areas should not be placed within industrial-only areas because conflicts typically result.

### Transect

The buildings in the Industrial Character Area span a large range of sizes and placement. This flexibility is needed to accommodate businesses with unique requirements. Generally, buildings are one story in height and are located on large lots with generous setbacks and parking for cars and trucks.

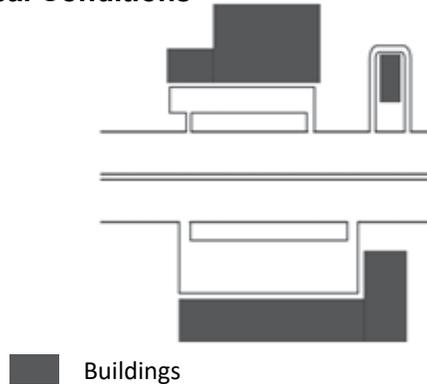


### Representative Images of Estates Future Character Area



Aerial of the current industrial area in Abita Springs.

### Typical Conditions



<b>General Description</b>	Areas designated for industrial and warehousing with highway and rail access
<b>Street Network</b>	Larger streets and block to accommodate large footprint buildings and large trucks
<b>Building Placement</b>	Buildings are set back from the street and other buildings
<b>Building Frontage</b>	N/A
<b>Building Height</b>	One story
<b>Parking</b>	Parking is located in front of or to the side of buildings
<b>Building Types</b>	Warehousing, manufacturing facilities, distribution and fulfillment centers, storage facilities
<b>Civic Types</b>	N/A



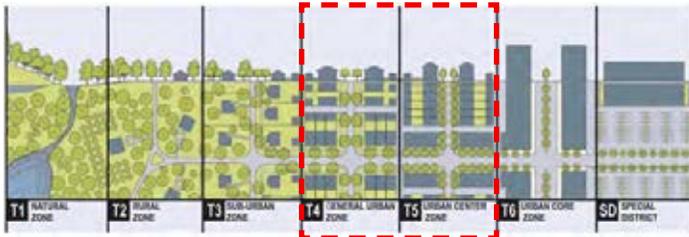


### Scenic Corridor Overlay

The Scenic Corridor Overlay would extend the current Commercial-Residential Overlay and serve to bring civic and commercial uses to all areas along main corridors that cross through Abita Springs. Despite their Character Area, this Overlay allows and encourages commercial developments to activate these spaces and create more beautiful main streets through town. The town has already made an effort to implement this with the Residential-Commercial Overlay. This new overlay seeks to build upon it and provide further clarity to uses permitted on these zones.

### Transect

Areas on the Scenic Corridor would follow a similar density to the one in downtown. These buildings would not be as prominent as the core, they should still be closer to the lot line, facing the main street, and follow the current street grid.



### Typical Conditions

<b>General Description</b>	Areas along main corridors like Highway 59, 36, and Tailsheek Hwy
<b>Street Network</b>	Regular, rectilinear street grid with small blocks and a high intersection density
<b>Building Placement</b>	Front Build-to-Zone: 0 to 15 feet Side Built-to-Zone: 0 to 18 feet
<b>Building Frontage</b>	Shopfront, porch, stoop
<b>Building Height</b>	Generally one to three stories
<b>Parking</b>	Parking is located in mid-block locations
<b>Building Types</b>	Commercial and Civic Spaces
<b>Civic Types</b>	Library, day care, houses of worship, parks, squares, courthouse, town hall, government offices, post offices

### Representative Images of Estates Future Character Area



Honey Snoballs Shack is a popular place in Abita during the summer. This overlay would allow similar businesses to emerge, as well as help the existing ones be upgraded.



Abita Springs used to have many hotels all through what is now Highway 59. The Residential-Commercial overlay is being proposed through this area to activate it once again.



## TOOLKIT 1: CIVIC BUILDING PLACEMENT

*The following toolkits serve as design guides to ensure beautiful, memorable spaces are created all across town. From placement of buildings to the pedestrian network, many elements are important to consider when designing spaces within Abita.*

### Civic Building Placement

Civic buildings should be placed prominently and should have grander proportions and materials than their surrounding urban fabric. Approaches include locating public buildings at the end of the streets, across greens, or at the center of greens. Public buildings can be relatively small if placed strategically in the public view. Sites for civic purposes can be reserved even before there is a need for them to be constructed. The uses of these buildings may change over-time as the needs of the community evolve.

Abita Springs has a tradition of grand and prominently cited civic buildings like the Abita Springs Town Hall. However, some recent civic buildings do not enhance the public realm in the same way. Future civic buildings should strive to enhance the public realm and be properly sited to have the prominence in the community that they deserve.

Many of the town center civic institutions, such as churches, are surrounded by surface parking lots. Opening up these parking areas for public good can benefit all users downtown. New development should build up to the street edges and complete the street frontage, replacing parking lots at the street edge.



*St Jane de Chantal Parish*



*Abita Springs Town Hall*

## TOOLKIT 2: THE NEIGHBORHOOD UNIT

The building block of every town is the neighborhood. A genuine neighborhood is not the disconnected, single-use development that characterizes sprawl. Complete neighborhoods- unlike the stand-alone apartment complex or the subdivision tract- provide housing, workplaces, shopping, civic functions, and more. Pedestrian-friendly and mixed-use, these communities are designed to be compact, complete, connected, and ultimately more sustainable- Although the parameters of an ideal neighborhood vary in terms of size, density and mix of dwelling types. There are five basic design conventions that provide a common thread linking great neighborhoods. The diagram of a complete neighborhood will be used to illustrate the five basic principles of a neighborhood.

### 1. Identifiable Center and Edge

One should be able to tell when one has arrived in the neighborhood and when one has reached its center. A proper center has places where the public feels welcome and encouraged to congregate. Typically, at least one outdoor public environment exists at the center that spatially acts as the most well-defined outdoor room in the neighborhood. While it is also possible to give a shape to the neighborhood center with just a special “four corners” intersection of important streets that include shade and other protection from the elements.

### 2. Walkable Size

The overall size of the neighborhood, which typically ranges from 40 to 200 acres, should be suitable for walking. Most people will walk approximately one-quarter mile before turning back or opting to drive or ride a bike. Most neighborhoods built before World War II were approximately one-quarter mile from center to edge.

Neighborhoods of many shapes and sizes can satisfy the quarter-mile radius test. Civic spaces requiring a great deal of acreage such as schools with play fields can be situated where they are shared by more than one neighborhood. Larger planned communities can satisfy the quarter mile radius test by establishing several distinct neighborhoods within the community, being sure to place different neighborhood centers one-half mile apart or less.

### 3. Mix of Land Uses and Housing Types with Opportunities for Shopping and Workplaces close to Home

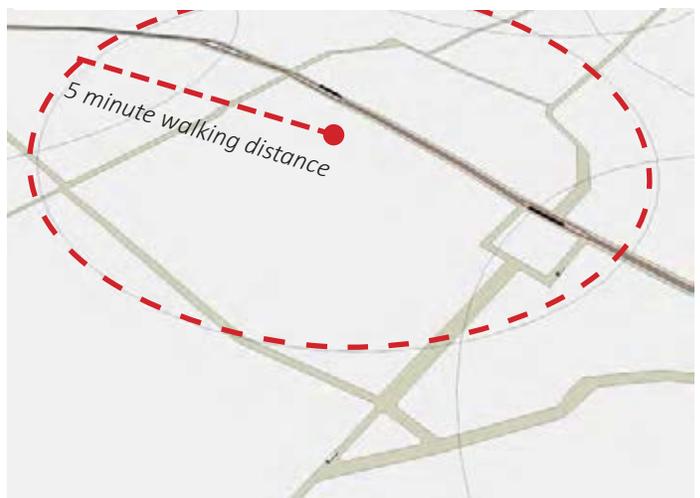
Great neighborhoods have fine-grained mix of land uses and housing types. This condition enables residents to dwell, work, socialize, exercise, shop, and find some daily needs and services within walking distance. Variety rich- neighborhoods, in comparison with single-use, single “pod” developments, have multiple benefits.



Diagram of a Complete Neighborhood



Identifiable Center and Edge



Walkable Neighborhood Size



Mixing uses is a powerful way to alleviate traffic congestion as it reduces the number of car trips needed throughout the day. A mix of housing is better socially, allowing people with diverse lifestyles and incomes to live in the same neighborhood. Residents have the choice to move elsewhere within their community as their housing needs change over time, while families of modest means are no longer forced into segregated concentrations. In addition, households with varied schedules and interests will activate the neighborhood at different times of day, adding both to the vibrancy and security of a place.

#### 4. Integrated Network of Walkable Streets

A network of streets allows pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists to move safely and comfortably through a neighborhood. The maximum average block perimeter to achieve an integrated network is 1,500 feet with a maximum uninterrupted block face of, ideally, 450 feet, with streets at intervals no greater than 600 feet apart along any one single stretch.

A street network forms blocks that set up logical sites for private development, provides routes for multiple modes of transportation, and provides non-motorized alternatives to those under the driving age as well as for senior citizens. Streets should be designed to be walkable first while also serving cars and emergency vehicles. Slow traffic speeds, coupled with features such as narrow curb-to-curb cross sections, street trees, on-street parking, architecture close to the street edge, and tight radii at the street corners, work together to create highly walkable environments. A connected web of streets then allows for numerous driving patterns and the orderly management of traffic.

#### 5. Special Sites of Reserved for Civic Uses

In complete neighborhoods, some of the best real estate is set aside for community purposes. These locations are made significant by the geometry of the town plan. Unique settings such as terminated vistas or locations with greater activity should be reserved for landmark buildings that will act as permanent anchors for community pride. Similarly, special sites should be set aside for parks, greens, squares, plazas, and playgrounds (each of which has its own distinct character). Each neighborhood should have one special gathering place at its center, such as a village green.



*Transect provides opportunity for a mix of land uses*



*Network of Walkable Streets*



*Special Sites are reserved for Civic Purposes*



## GOALS AND POLICIES

POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
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### GOAL LU 1: Adopt the Future Character Areas

LU 1.1	Use the new Future Character Areas map as an integral part of the Comprehensive Master Plan, in order to assist Town officials and private developers in understanding the growth management goals and policies of this plan, particularly as to the form, direction, and timing of future development. The designations on these maps are subject to change as Abita Springs grows and the master Plan is modified accordingly.			
A	Adopt the Future Character Areas Map. It is a base map that defines distinct Character Areas for all of Abita Springs. This map defines six character areas that reflect the desired type and form of development in each part of the Town. In addition to these six base character areas, a scenic corridor overlay defines key areas with unique characteristics that differentiate them from the typical development patterns surrounding them. The locations of neighborhood centers and cross are also identified on this map.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid-Term	
B	Use the Future Character Areas Map to guide land use, development, and infrastructure decisions.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	
C	Adhere to the Town’s Historic District designations in all land use and permitting decisions.	Town, Historic Commission	Immediately	
D	Utilize the Future Character Areas Map to guide street design as further described in the Mobility Chapter.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	

### GOAL LU 2: Revise Development Regulations and Zoning

LU 2.1	Revise and amend the Town’s zoning and land development regulations to support the Future Character Areas Map and the goals and policies of this document.			
A	Create a town-wide Unified Development Ordinance using a form-based approach. This document should be a single source, easy to use, highly illustrative code that combines all development related ordinances into one document.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	
B	Protect and enhance Abita Springs’ historic character utilizing the Unified Development Ordinance.	Town, Historic Commission	Long Term	
C	Modify the Town’s zoning and development regulations to conform to the qualities and intent of the Future Character Areas.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	
D	Encourage a greater interconnection of internal streets.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid Term	
E	Provide small parks, community gardens, and civic functions within neighborhoods.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	
F	Allow a wide range of unit types to be utilized in each neighborhood to encourage complete communities.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	
G	Allow a wide range of street types to create streets that are safe, comfortable and interesting to the pedestrian as well as require an interconnected network of streets with small block sizes.	Town, P&Z Commission, DOTD	Long- Term	
H	Require well-designed public spaces. All streets and open space created should be open to the public.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term	
I	Protect natural features such as the river and flood zones.	Town, P&Z Commission	Immediately	



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
	J	Include mixed-use zoning	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	K	Perform a Town-wide review of existing parking requirements and update these in the town-wide Unified Development Ordinance in accordance with the desired outcomes of each Future Character Areas.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	L	Provide design assistance as an option for new public and private development within the Town to assist with future character area compliance and expedite approval processes. Services may include assistance with concept design, illustrative drawings, and preliminary site design, among others.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term

**GOAL LU 3: Improve the Downtown**

<b>3.1</b>	<b>Place the highest priority on the continued reinvigoration of downtown, whose strategic location, walkable blocks, and historic buildings make it a vibrant destination and center of culture, shopping, and the arts. This goal and its associated policies apply to land designated as the Downtown Future Character Area on the Future Character Areas Map.</b>			
	A	Encourage new mixed-use buildings with windows and doors facing all towards the main street to be constructed on vacant lots.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	B	Consider eliminating parking requirements for the Downtown and consider innovative approaches to using off-site and on-street parking.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	C	Incorporate new downtown complexes such as a boutique hotel or venue urbanistically within the downtown. As new uses are added, updated, or replaced, they should be integrated into Abita Springs' original street network and other land uses rather than being isolated in; large complexes of civic buildings.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term
	D	Include new and improved civic buildings and civic spaces, plus shared parking for residents, employees and visitors in Downtown redevelopment strategies.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term
	E	Continue to support Downtown Abita Springs in its effort to improve the Downtown.	Town, P&Z Commission	Immediately
	F	Become part of the Main Streets Louisiana Program.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
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**GOAL LU 4: Protect Natural Areas**

<b>LU 4.1</b>	<b>Protect Natural open space in the Town of Abita Springs for environmental health and for recreational opportunities for residents.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Identify priority conservation zones, especially along waterways and low lying natural drainage areas, and create Town ordinances to discourage development within these conservation areas.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term	
<b>B</b>	Identify and maintain a permanent green preserve of some form in and around the Town with a focus on improving and protecting ecological areas.	Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term	
<b>C</b>	Create urban parks and coordinate the Town’s natural trail network that connects parks and natural areas to create a greenway network throughout the Town largely following natural drainage patterns.	Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term	
<b>LU 4.2</b>	<b>Due to its ecological significance, Abita Springs should protect the natural areas and wetlands inside the Towns limits from development that would threaten the old growth longleaf pine forest and other natural resources on this iconic property.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Collaborate with St. Tammany Parish on land use and transportation issues to protect natural areas from incompatible development.	Town, Parish	Mid- Term	
<b>B</b>	Coordinate with the U.S. Highway Administration, the Louisiana Department of Transportation to avoid activities that could adversely affect these natural areas.	Town, USHA, DOTD	Mid- Term	
<b>C</b>	Maintain public access to the Abita River to allow the public an opportunity to view the natural landscape. Support the protection of the river by allocating resources to mitigate littering and trespassing that threaten this resource.	Town	Mid- Term	
<b>D</b>	Enhance the Trailhead Head and Museum and connect local trails to the Tammany Trail.	Town, Trailhead Museum	Short- Term	

**GOAL LU 5: Plan Industrial Areas**

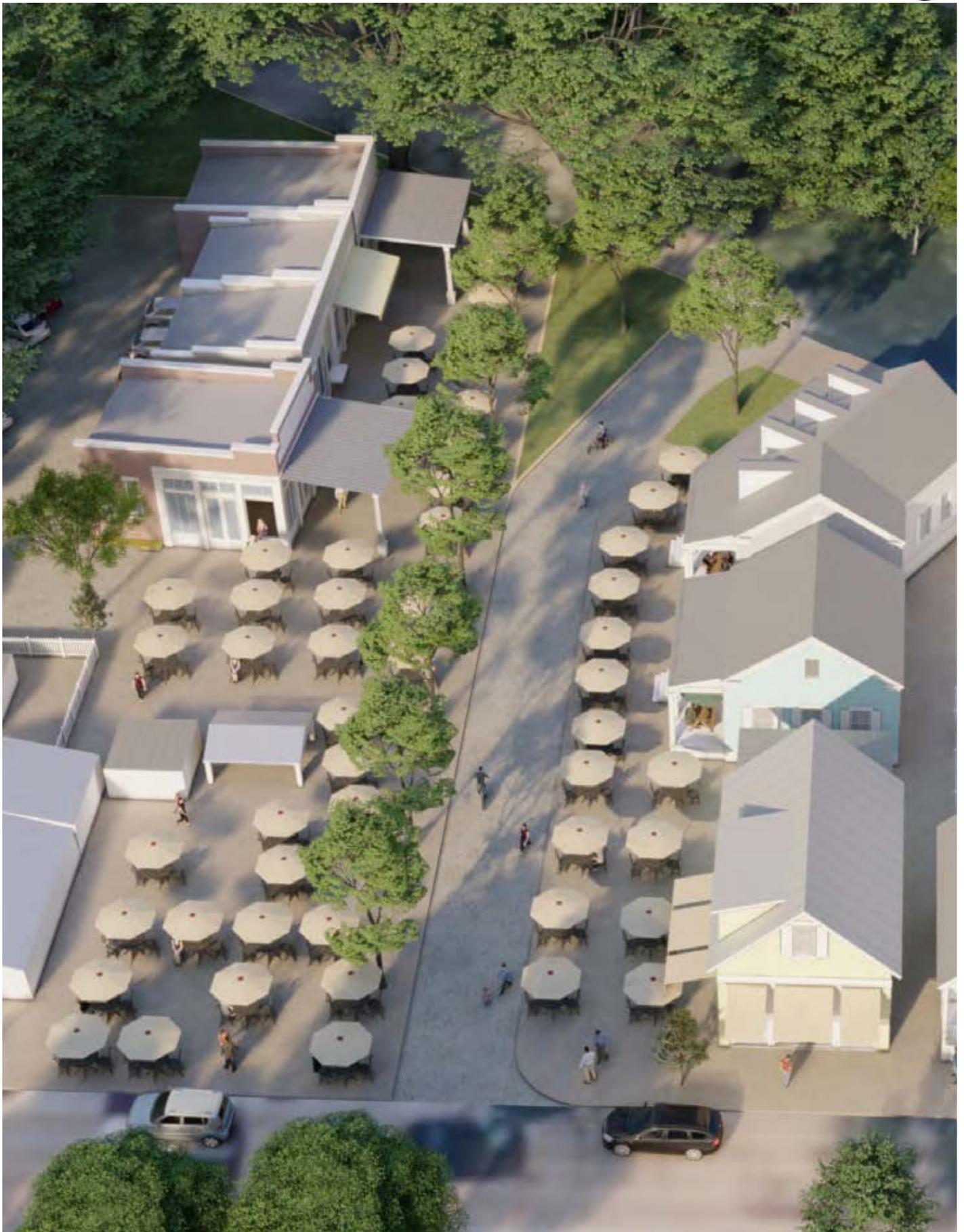
<b>LU 5.1</b>	<b>Designate land that is well-suited for industrial facilities and ensure that industrial facilities do not adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of the community. These policies apply to land in the Industrial Future Character Area on the Future Character Area Map.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Encourage the development of industrial uses and businesses within existing industrial areas.	Town, P&Z Commission	Short- Term	
<b>B</b>	Discourage primary access to industrial development through residential areas.	Town, P&Z Commission	Immediately	
<b>C</b>	Discourage the development of residential uses on designated industrial land.	Town, P&Z Commission	Immediately	

**GOAL LU 6: Encourage Healthy Growth in New and Retrofit Development Areas**

<b>LU 6.1</b>	<b>Diversify the Town of Abita Springs’ neighborhoods in strategic locations to increase the variety of housing options (including townhomes, apartments, and condominiums), create new gateways to the Town, and expand opportunities for employment and neighborhood shopping without requiring long car trips.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Create small area plans for each of the new development areas, prioritizing Neighborhood Centers.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term	
<b>B</b>	Establish incentives for the private sector that encourage growth and new development with an emphasis on Neighborhood Centers.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL LU 7: Encourage Infill Development Areas</b>				
<b>LU 7.1</b>	<b>Maintain and improve the highly walkable character, diverse mix of land uses, and historic building stock in the historic neighborhood that were laid out in a grid, specifically around the South of Downtown</b>			
<b>A</b>	Promote the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized parcels in and around the Town's traditional historic neighborhoods in a manner corresponding with the scale and character of these existing neighborhoods rather than imposing a suburban model. These parcels can be excellent locations for redevelopment that adds housing, shopping, employment, entertainment, and recreational options for nearby residents.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term	
<b>B</b>	Create small area plans for the Infill areas, prioritizing Neighborhood Centers and promoting affordable housing.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term	
<b>LU 7.2</b>	<b>Direct both public infrastructure funding and private development to infill areas where they will have the greatest social and economic benefit, with the least environmental and transportation costs. Additional infill incentives should be considered by the Town.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Address the Town's vacant lots and abandoned homes and provide affordable housing.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term	
<b>B</b>	Develop a strategy for financial assistance in the form of public-private partnerships, incentives, or utility relief for projects for infill projects.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	
<b>LU 7.3</b>	<b>Encourage infill development to address affordable housing needs.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Encourage multi-unit or clustered housing types that are compatible in scale and form with single-family homes. Types may include duplex, triplex, and fourplex, apartments and bungalow courts.	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid- Term	
<b>GOAL LU 8: Invest on Corridors and Gateways</b>				
<b>LU 8.1</b>	<b>Encourage and support the evolution of exclusively auto-oriented, strip-style commercial development into mixed-use activity centers, Allow a diverse, complimentary mix of residential and non-residential uses to meet the needs of the Town's businesses and residences in these areas.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Promote interconnectivity between adjacent land uses, including connectivity between non-residential development and adjacent neighborhood	Town, P&Z Commission	Mid Term	
<b>B</b>	Support beautification and mobility improvements along these corridors.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	
<b>C</b>	Create corridor plans for major corridors such as Highway 36.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	
<b>D</b>	Establish density incentives, as part of a code rewrite, for suburban strip centers to redevelop in a traditional neighborhood pattern. This includes establishing new blocks and streets on existing parking lots.	Town, P&Z Commission	Long- Term	



LAND USE



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

*Abita Springs' goal is to optimize all modes of travel so that there is a choice for residents and visitors regarding how to move around and experience Abita Springs, as well as to increase the livability of Abita Springs by creating more biking and walking opportunities.*

Travelers would make the trip to Abita Springs to heal ailments and relax in the lush pine forests. Today, travelers visit Abita Springs for the art and culture. Travel into Abita Springs will change over the years as new transportation technology and infrastructure is developed.

Abita Springs is fortunate to inherit an extensive transportation network developed before 1900. This pre-auto pattern of streets as well as the rail corridor was established when walking and bicycling were essential to satisfying daily travel needs. Short blocks and interconnected streets create a highly walkable central main street core. The surrounding neighborhoods, immediately adjacent to downtown, offer reasonable downtown access via a short walk or bicycle ride.

Generous street tree coverage is the product of wise officials and individuals maintaining the native pines and planting new trees with an eye toward the future. Extensive tree coverage of both the downtown and surrounding areas are cherished assets entrusted to current and future residents for maintenance and expansion.

## TRANSPORTATION HISTORY

### Steamboat

When Abita Springs was first established, travelers would make the long passage by horse and buggy around Lake Ponchartrain from New Orleans, a 40-mile journey along unstable roads.

In the 1880s, a steamboat route was established to connect the southern and northern shores. Steamboat travel was much faster and was able to carry dozens of travelers at a time in about two and a half hours. Two steamboats were the main form of travel at the time: the Susquehanna and the New Camelia. The voyage was comfortable and included entertainment with food, music, and dancing.



*New Camelia Steamboat*





### Railroad

In 1887, the East Louisiana Railroad connection with Abita Springs was established and offered regular service. The trip from New Orleans to Abita Springs was about 20 miles.

In 1981, the Great Southern Lumber Company who had purchased the East Louisiana Railroad, renovated and extended the route from Covington to Slidell that ran through Mandeville, Lacombe, and Abita Springs. This route known as the “shore line” was subsequently abandoned in 1992 despite its renovations.

### Gas/Electric “Doodlebug” Trolley

A secondary rail route was created in 1909 to accommodate the Doodlebug Trolley Motor Car that ran between Covington and Mandeville through Abita Springs. The gas, then later electric, train made several trips a day to collect travelers landing in Mandeville by steamboat.

In 1939, the gas-electric “Doodlebug” motorized rail-cars were discontinued. These trolleys were a means of providing local passenger service while being less costly to operate than traditional trains.

### The Watson-Williams Pontchartrain Bridge

The bridge was the longest concrete cast-in-place bridge spanning 4.7 miles and connects New Orleans with Slidell north of the lake. The bridge was opened in 1928 as a toll bridge until the State of Louisiana bought it and made the crossing toll free.

### Lake Pontchartrain Causeway

In 1952, the Parish of Jefferson and St. Tammany Parish joined to build a toll bridge across Lake Pontchartrain to connect New Orleans with Mandeville. Construction began in 1955. The southbound bridge was completed in 1956 and the northbound bridge was completed in 1969. The Lake Pontchartrain Causeway is the longest continuous bridge over water in the world spanning 24 miles.

The Causeway is an average of 10 feet above the water level. A drawbridge is located 8 miles from the Northshore and is 45 feet above the water level when closed. The drawbridge is not operable during weekday commute hours between 5:30 am to 9:30am and 3:00pm to 7:00pm to mitigate traffic during work day commuting hours.

### Louisiana Highway 36 and 59

With the advent of personal motor vehicle transportation, soon after 1900, Abita Springs, like the rest of America, was released from the close-knit pattern of small blocks and streets. While greater freedom of movement was introduced and opening many opportunities for recreation, employment and daily living, the essential walkability was unwittingly lost for almost half a century between 1924 and 1980.

During this period, new development was simply connected from driveways and parking lots to streets, roadways and highways. Trucks knit the goods movement services together, between the national network of highways built coast to coast and the loading zones, warehouse loading docks, and farm fields.



East Louisiana Railroad



Organized in 1910, the St. Tammany & New Orleans Railway and Ferry Co. operated between the steamer landings at Mandeville to Covington, via Abita Springs. It was a gasoline-driven car, later converted to electric. The line had three passenger cars, four trailers, two work cars and three freight cars. After World War I, the line liquidated its bonded indebtednesses by selling the equipment as scrapiron.

Gas/Electric “Doodlebug” Trolley



Lake Pontchartrain Causeway Opening Day



**STAR Transit Bus**

Current public transit in Abita Springs includes the STAR Transit; a bus route that operates within the boundaries of St. Tammany Parish. This bus system is available to all St. Tammany residents and runs both rural and urban services on a call-in first come first served basis.

The STAR transit runs from 7:00am to 5:00pm and charges a one way fee of \$1.50 for 0-10 miles, 3.50 for 11-25 miles and \$4.00 for more than 26 miles. Elderly passengers that register with COAST ride for free from 7:30am to 2:30pm.

The Abita Springs pickup location is at 22516 Highway 36 at the Park and Ride lot located in Charlie Finn Memorial Ball park.

**Hours of Operation**

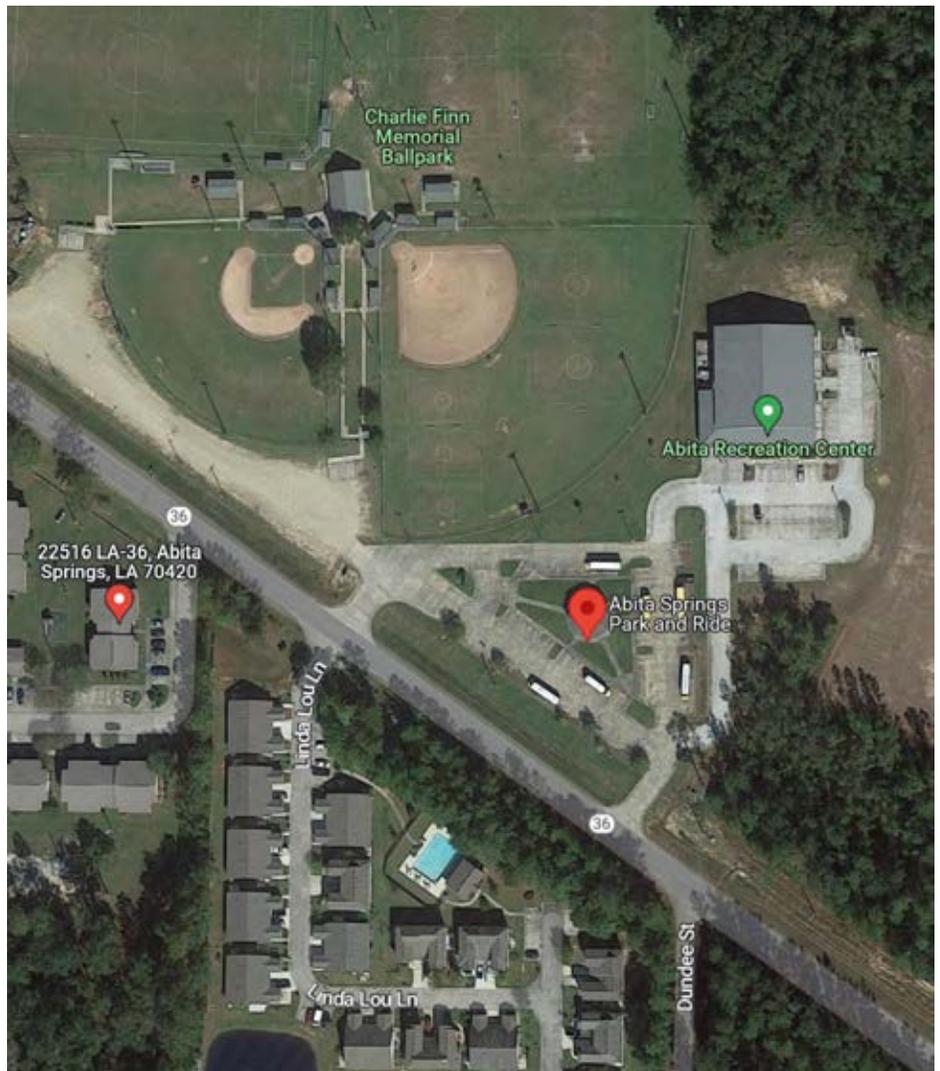
Urban Transite Service	7:00 am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday
Rural Transite Service	7:00 am to 4:00pm Monday to Friday

**Current Fare Structure**

0 to 10 miles	\$3 round trip / \$1.50 one way
11 to 25 miles	\$5 round trip / \$2.50 one way
26+ miles	\$8 round trip / \$4.00 one way
Elderly Passengers 60+	Ride Free from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm



Star Transit Logo



Abita Springs Pick up / drop off location



### EXISTING ARTERIAL STREET NETWORK

This map locates the main thoroughfare networks in Abita Springs including highway, arterial/collector, and local roads as well as delineates where dirt roads could be formalized or continue in Future Character Areas.

In the future, as roads are resurfaced or reconfigured, their location within the community should be taken into account. For example, rather than retrofitting an entire corridor, only the one or two blocks that pass through a neighborhood center would be made more pedestrian friendly. Between these centers the streets would maintain their current intensity,

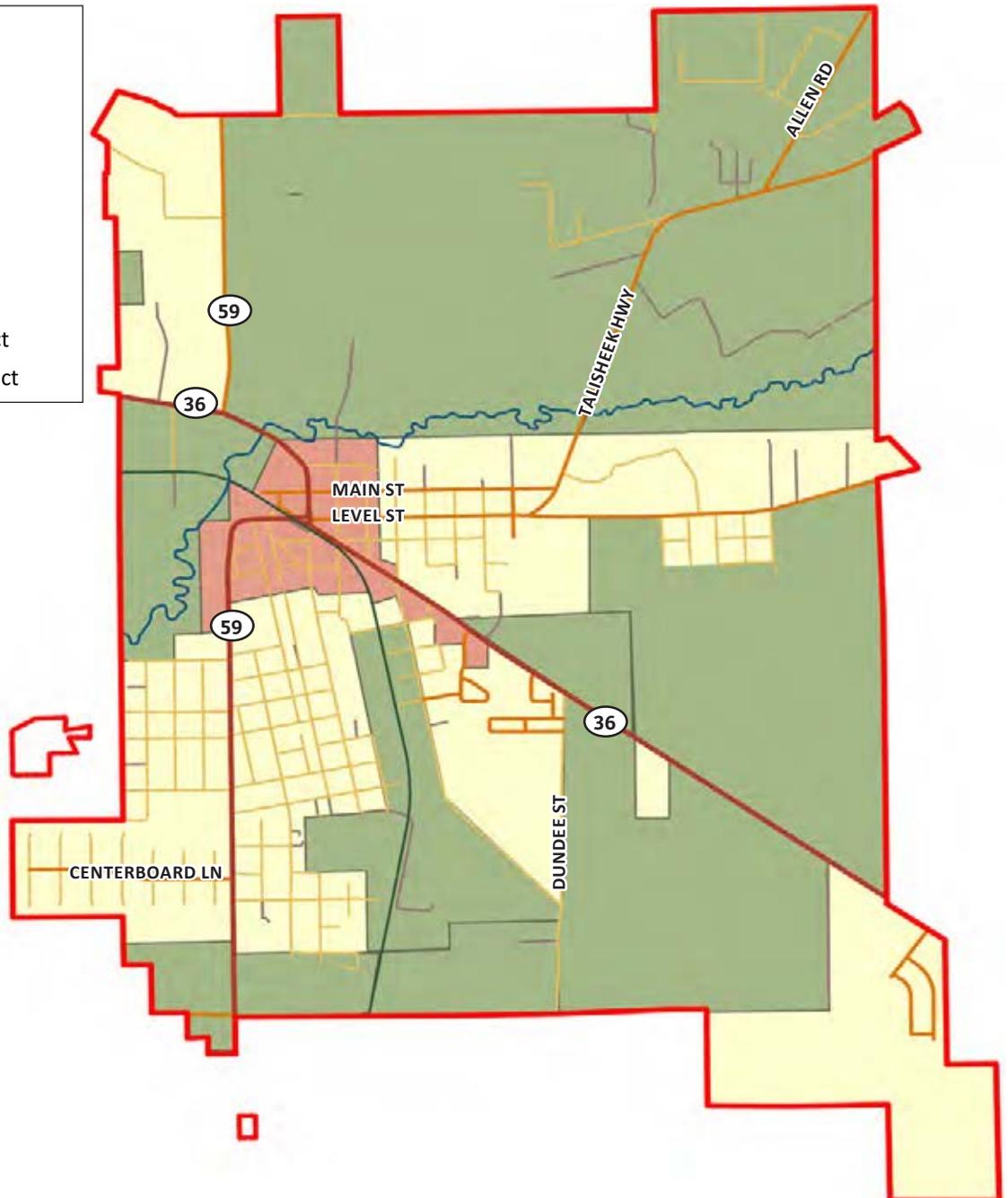
possibly with aesthetic improvements.

While the street grid downtown offers numerous routes to get from one place to another, the surrounding inconsistent streets forces the majority of trips onto a few roadways. In contrast, the more suburban areas of the city, developed largely after World War II, have a disconnected street pattern. Rather than a fine-grained grid, many streets are dead-ends or disconnected from other local streets.

As the parish and Abita Springs' populations continues to increase, improving connectivity of the street network is necessary to avoid a state of gridlock and blight.

**LEGEND**

- Highway
- Arterial/Collector
- Local road
- Dirt Road
- Tammany Trail
- Abita River
- Park District
- Residential District
- Commercial District





## TRAVEL TRENDS

### Traffic

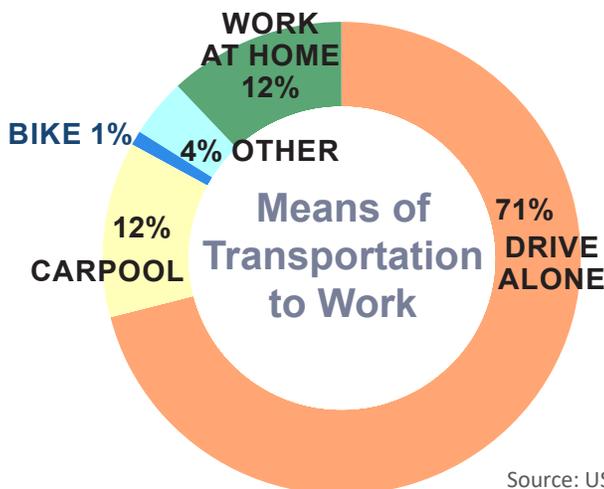
Thoroughfare network performance can be analyzed using Google Maps Typical Traffic displays. Within Google Maps, for typical traffic, red signifies much slower than normal traffic flows, green signifies free flow traffic without delay due to congestion and orange shows intermediate speeds. Multiple views are selected for a typical Wednesday.

The Wednesday 7:30 AM peak flow image shows expected delays along intersection of Highways 59 and 36 and at the roundabout downtown. Traffic flow during the 3:00 PM peak period shows expected delays on the eastern intersection of Level Street near the elementary school. A closer look at 5:00 PM on a typical Wednesday begins to show considerable slowing of motor vehicles specifically on the intersection of Highways 59 and Level Street.

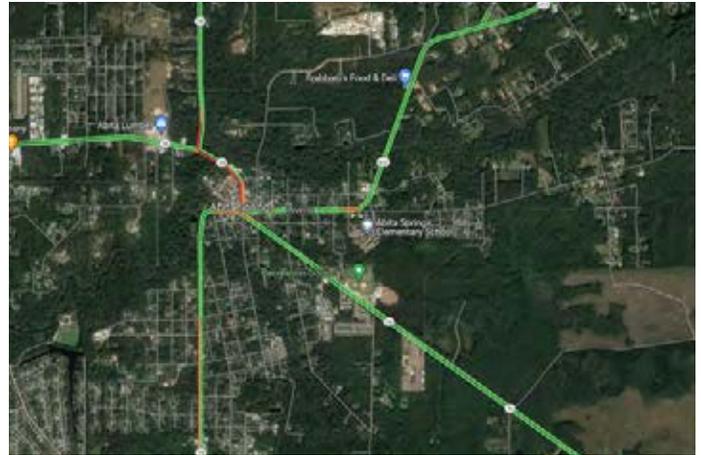
### Speed Limits

Today, walkable patterns of downtown thrive with pedestrians and many bicycles are seen. In July 2022, vehicle speeds were reduced from 25 to 20 miles per hour. This new speed limit applies to all streets under the jurisdiction of the town including unmarked streets. This speed makes street crossing very comfortable for walkers. This new ordinance does not affect the speed limit for the state roads that cut through town.

Mean Travel time of  
**40.2 MINUTES**  
 to get to work



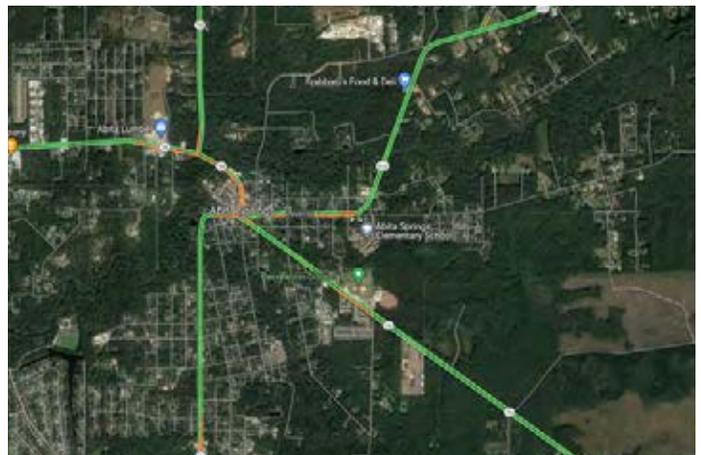
Source: US Census



Wednesday 7:30 AM

Typical traffic

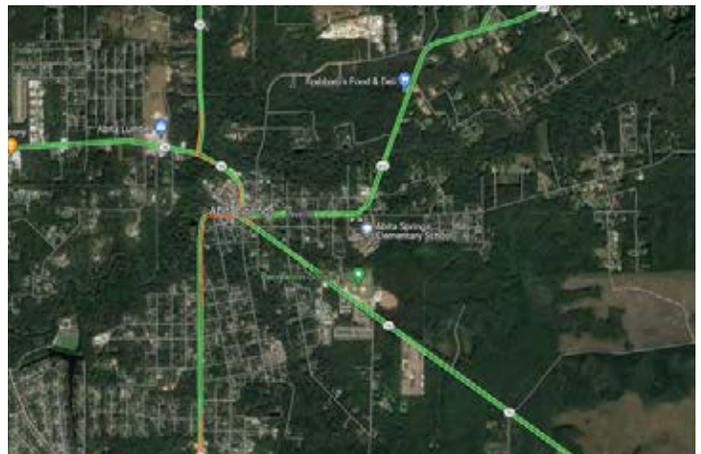
Fast Slow



Wednesday 3:00 PM

Typical traffic

Fast Slow



Friday 5:00 PM



## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### BUILD ON THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERN OF ABITA SPRINGS

Downtown, with its small blocks and streets, has an established fine-grained transportation network that functions well for vehicles, pedestrians, bikes, and other modes of transportation. Areas outside downtown Abita Springs suffer from an emphasis of vehicular mobility over all other modes. Identifying the specific criteria for livable streets will help civilize thoroughfares within the entire community.

### INCREASE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The community realizes that quality of life in Abita Springs is threatened by the lack of transit service in the town. In order for residents and businesses to be less vulnerable to fluctuations in fuel prices, it will be necessary to create more complete transit networks that offer service.

The town should work with rail companies, Parish government, and other municipalities on the Northshore to provide passenger rail service on existing rails. Most of the rails already lead to the heart of historic towns along the north shore and are poised for reactivation of passenger service.

There is not an existing direct public transportation route that connects New Orleans to Abita Springs. Tourists looking to take public transportation would have to take a bus or train to Slidell, LA then take a taxi the remaining 30-minute drive to Abita Springs.

### IMPROVE LEVEL STREET

Level Street was noted as an opportunity to improve the street design, especially in front of public buildings. There was a concern that some sidewalks should be extended, more street trees for shade should be added, and on street parking available to everyone should be considered.

### WALKABILITY AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

The quality of the pedestrian experience is determined by the design of both the public right-of-way and the design of the buildings that shape it. In order to encourage and maintain pedestrian activity careful consideration must be made to ensure a comfortable environment. Downtown Abita Springs is one of the areas that would benefit from additional sidewalk connections, wide sidewalks, safe street crosswalks, street-oriented buildings and on-street parking to successfully inspire confidence in pedestrians while allowing drivers to proceed slowly. Outside the core pedestrian amenities breakdown and often disappear altogether.

One space that has been developed for walking and biking is the Tammany Trace. The community continuously described their positive experiences walking and biking along the Tammany Trace. Continued growth and further connectivity to this trail would encourage walking and biking as an alternative to vehicular transit.

### SLOW TRAFFIC THROUGH DOWNTOWN

Vehicle speed is directly related to the comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists. Streets that encourage high traffic speeds discourage activities other than the movement of vehicles. Street design details, such as lane width, use of on-street parking and curb radii all influence the behavior of vehicles and their drivers.

The Louisiana Highways 59 and 36 have seen increased traffic as well as large trucks speeding through the community. Fast vehicle speeds on these highways have caused concerns for pedestrian safety and discourages walking or crossing the highways. Many residents and business owners raised concerns about the larger vehicles and higher speeds seen in the community. Interventions to help slow traffic speeds, allow





safe pedestrian and bike crossings, should be explored with the Louisiana Department of Transportation. In addition, there is no distinction between Highways 59 and 36 as they enter Abita Springs. Changing the street section of these thoroughfares as they enter or leave Abita Springs can send signals to drivers that they are expected to behave differently and slow their speed.

**IMPROVE DOWNTOWN PARKING**

Parking in downtown Abita Springs needs to be sufficient in number to meet demand, well designed to not detract from the pedestrian experience and well signed to direct motorists to areas of surplus parking. Many members of the community suggested during the charrette that there was a lack of parking in the downtown, particularly when events occur within the park downtown.

The town needs to be careful with parking requirements as these may inhibit the revitalization of existing older buildings and the construction of new buildings in the downtown, especially the addition of residential uses. The town could look for options for additional public or on-street parking to meet parking needs without overburdening private landowners or businesses.

**INCREASE BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

The integration and accommodation of bicycles in the transportation network is an important component of sustaining a true multi-modal system. It is vital to identify the various types of cyclists and plan accordingly to create safe and inviting routes for them. There are several different strategies for increasing comfort for cyclists. On the slowest streets, cyclists should feel comfortable mixing with automobile traffic and occupying the travel lane. On faster streets, a separate bike lane is sometimes needed; ideally this bike lane should

be protected from fast-moving car lanes by a curb or a planted median. Increased connectivity to the Tammany Trace network should integrate with additional cycling routes to surrounding neighborhoods, homes, and businesses.

**SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

**Walkable**

Safe trail connections to local schools can result in a reduction of many car trips per household, which would also encourage healthier lifestyles for children.

**Vehicular**

Streets in the downtown around the middle school and around the elementary school off of Level Street see a significant amount of parent traffic as they drop off and pick up students from school. Some of this traffic could be eliminated by making it easier to walk or bike to the schools, but alternate flows of traffic was also discussed.

**PROVIDE NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING RETAIL**

The current planning paradigm separates land uses from one another and connects them with few, high volume streets rather than providing a network of streets. This configuration results in the generation of a large number of car trips per household. By mixing uses – even in small quantities – some of those additional vehicle trips can be replaced with walking or cycling, or at least be shortened. In addition to reducing stress on the vehicular network, mixing uses can also encourage a healthier lifestyle for adults and children.

There are multiple places within Abita Springs that have small commercial uses. These areas are highlighted within the future land use map as locations to add more neighborhood serving retail. The streets in these areas should include on-street parking and connected sidewalks.





## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### COMPLETE STREETS

“Complete Streets” is a concept for streets designed to enable safe access and mobility for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Like safe vehicular travel, bicyclists and pedestrians are important components of Abita Springs’ transportation system. Where gaps in the bicycle and pedestrian networks exist, effective and safe circulation is hindered. In key locations, including retail and mixed-use centers like downtown and neighborhood centers, schools, and parks, a well-connected network is especially important.

Presently, Abita Springs has not adopted a Complete Streets Policy, which would help facilitate more community-oriented neighborhoods. Streets within the downtown and Traditional Future Character Areas, as well as surrounding Neighborhood Centers, should be prioritized for complete streets treatments.

### INCREASE CONNECTIVITY

Increase connectivity and number of possible routes for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers by healing the grid and creating additional routes. A Connectivity Master Plan could be created that identifies where paper streets (unimproved rights-of-way) should be designated for the following future conditions:

- No change, leave unimproved
- Complete street or one that accommodates all users
- Non-motorized street that has routes for cyclists and pedestrians.

In addition to the bridge that should be repaired to add connectivity across the river, other bridges and complete street extensions across Abita Springs River such as Poitevent Street or Gordon Avenue should be considered.

In collaboration with the Parish and the State, the following new streets or street extension should be considered:

- Create an east-west connection between Highway 59 and Highway 36 in collaboration with state, parish and federal transportation officials.
- Extend 12<sup>th</sup> Street to St Charles Street across Tammany Trace.
- Create a north-south connection aligned approximately with Dundee Street linking Highway 36 with Level Street along the western edge of Abita Springs Elementary School and Abita Recreation Center.
- Create a north-south connection that extends either Angelina Street, Stephen Street, Regina Street, or Rosalie Road to Highway 36 (Hickory Highway); extend Paul Street to Angelina Street.
- Extend Hickory Street to Prats Dairy Road.
- Create an east-west connection by extending Prats Dairy Road to Highway 59.
- Connect Prats Road to Prats Dairy Road and Talisheek Highway.

### STREETS OF BOTH CAPACITY AND CHARACTER

Community character is a major concern of the residents of Abita Springs and this applies to streets as much as to the development along those streets.

The Future Character Area Map includes an extended street network. It delineates areas as Downtown (the most urban), Neighborhood, Industrial, and Natural. In addition, there is a corridor overlay.

Arterial roads should become urban main streets as they enter the downtown or Neighborhood Centers. High-speed roads should transform to low-speed designs as they enter Abita Springs to slow traffic to pedestrian-friendly speeds of 20 miles per hour or less for the sake of safety.

Widening roads to accommodate through-traffic decreases local livability and should be avoided. New road capacity created through widening is quickly absorbed by drivers who previously avoided the congested road. This is known as “induced traffic” and this explains the failure of newer, wider roads to reduce traffic congestion. To reduce congestion, bikeways, sidewalks and mixed-use zoning and land use patterns that allow people to walk between destinations rather than drive should be explored.

The proposed extension of Harrison Avenue along the southern boundary of Abita Springs will provide an alternate truck route to avoid the busy downtown. The extension of Harrison Avenue should not necessarily result in an up-zoning of roadside properties to long linear strips of commercial uses. Neighborhood Centers are desirable, as identified in the Character Area Map and as part of a coordinated program for developing complete neighborhoods, but changes to land use should be accompanied by planning for entire areas as coherent neighborhoods and centers. The commercial center should stay focused on the downtown.

### Speed Management

An important aspect of community character, walkability and public safety involves reduced traffic speeds and the use of traffic calming devices. The speed of vehicles is a critical component to pedestrian safety and comfort. A pedestrian involved in a collision with a vehicle has a 95% chance of survival if the car is traveling at 20 miles per hour; there is a 10% chance of pedestrian survival if the car is traveling at 40 miles per hour.

Pedestrian-friendly speeds are typically 20-25 miles per hour and are no more than 30 miles per hour. Furthermore, many of the key design criteria for streets that are safe and comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as for streets that are beautiful, such as lane widths, tree placement and curb radii, are dimensions stipulated in the design manuals as factors of speed. With slower speeds, acceptable lane widths decrease



and the space between street tree and curb is reduced. Designing for slower speeds is critical for creating streets that actually encourage motorists to travel at lower speeds rather than relying on signage and posted speed limits alone. The geometry of the street has a much greater effect on motorist behavior.

### **Sidewalks**

The availability of a complete sidewalk network supports the movement of residents and visitors, particularly around the downtown. Wide and continuous sidewalks allow for active, safe, and healthy lifestyles for citizens. Properly designed pedestrian networks accommodate persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children who walk to school and other places.

Currently, many Abita Springs streets have disconnected sidewalks or no sidewalks at all. For walking to become a regular, acceptable and dignified means of transportation in Abita Springs, the town should embark on a process of adding missing sidewalk segments when possible. A comprehensive sidewalk plan should be developed to prioritize sidewalk investments and to ensure the investments result in a connected network. Emphasis should be placed on connecting the downtown and neighborhood centers to their surrounding communities, along routes used by students, and along corridors with both high pedestrian and automobile demand. These connections do not always need to follow streets but can also include the trail system.

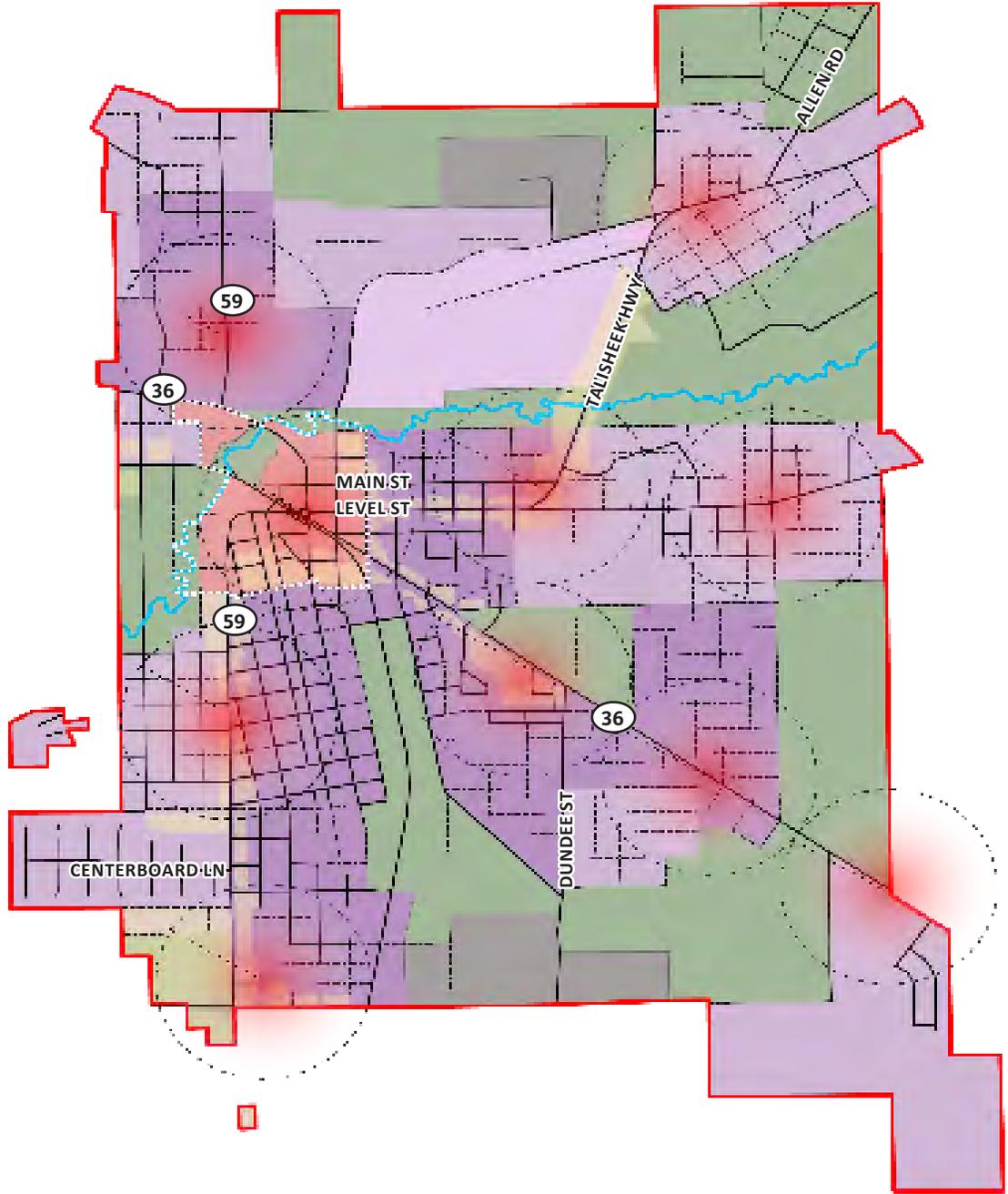
Sidewalks must also be comfortable places as well, and in south Louisiana's hot climate, shade is much needed to make walking an inviting means of getting around. Sidewalks should be lined with street trees that have shade-providing canopies. Street trees should be planted between the sidewalk and edge of pavement. All sidewalks should have a minimum clear zone of 5 feet, which should be wider along main corridors and mixed-use/commercial streets.

### **Crosswalks**

High visibility crosswalks should be added to the downtown to assist people wanting to cross Highway 59 or Highway 36. People should be able to easily cross at the roundabout at Level and Maple streets, but also to elsewhere in the downtown. Specific places to consider adding new crosswalks include along Millar Street at 11th Street and Highway 59 as well as at the intersection of Centerboard Lane and Highway 59.



### PROPOSED FUTURE CHARACTER AREA MAP



The proposed Future Character Area Map identifies major roadway links required to connect existing roads to enhance their efficiency or ability to accommodate traffic. The Map created through the illustrative master plan design process recommends local streets which will add to system capacity by adding routes to the network and increase pedestrians in the town by reducing block size. At the same time the new streets will add character by being multi-modal, walkable, and tree-lined.

**LEGEND**

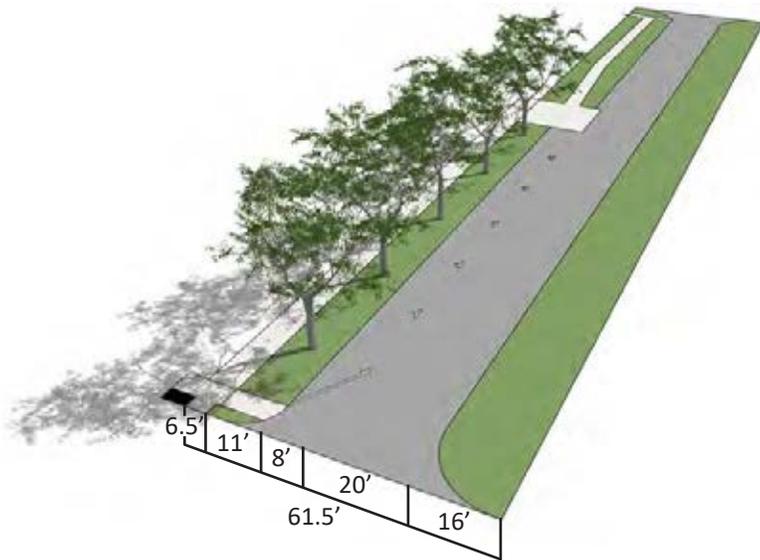
Downtown	Industrial
Traditional Neighborhood	Overlay
Suburban Neighborhood	Natural
Estates	Neighborhood Centers



## LIVE OAK STREET

### Existing

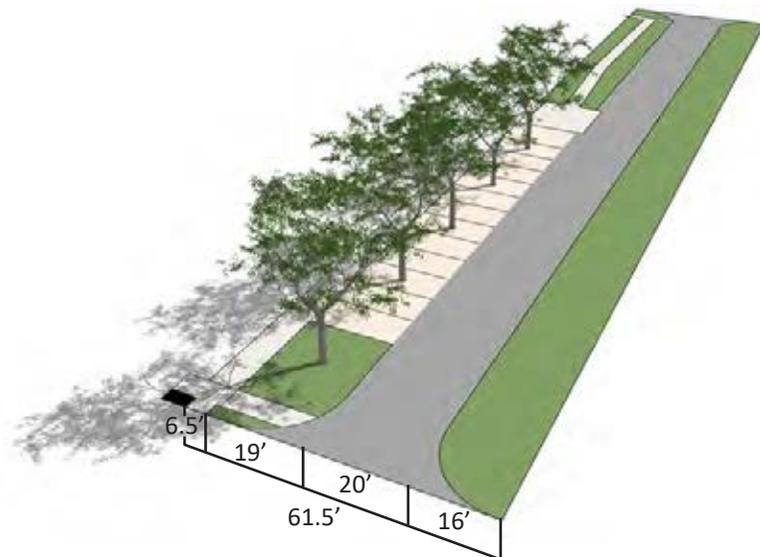
Live Oak Street is located two streets east of the Maple and Level streets roundabout intersection. The area is being considered for on-street parking improvements on Live Oak Street between Main Street and Level Street. The configurations below add a sidewalk for this street segment along with the addition of street trees and will provide parking options. In either configuration, a sidewalk is added.



### PROPOSED RECONFIGURATION OPTIONS

#### Parallel Parking Configuration

Parallel Parking would provide ample space for a sufficiently wide landscape strip between the new sidewalk and the street where new trees could be planted. An estimated six new parallel parking spaces could be added along this stretch.



#### Head In Parking Configuration

Head-in parking would provide more parking spaces along this Oak Street stretch. This configuration could be done by removing the asphalt along the parking area and replacing the parking area with gravel instead. The gravel would provide natural drainage as well as allow for street trees to be planted between the head-in parking spaces. A tree can be planted every two parking spaces, leaving a total of about nine head-in parking spaces fitting in between the new street trees.

## 10 STEPS FOR MAKING GREAT STREETS

### 1. Design for Pedestrians First.

Great streets are designed to provide a high-caliber experience for pedestrians foremost; once this is accomplished, great streets generally accommodate a wide range of other modes of travel.

### 2. Proportions Matter.

A street should function as an outdoor room, surrounding its occupants in a space that is welcoming and usable. A 1:3 ratio for building height to street width is often cited as a minimum section for a sense of enclosure. Creating this sense of enclosure involves more than just narrow street width, however. There are well-defined eight-lane roads just as there are two-lane roads that seem to be impassable. Streets must be sized properly for their use and should be designed with appropriate building sizes. Street trees and features such as lighting also play a critical role in defining the space of the street.

### 3. Design the Street as a Unified Whole.

An essential distinction of great streets is that the entire space is designed as an ensemble, from the travel lanes, trees and sidewalks, to the very buildings that line the roadway. Building form and character are particularly important in shaping a sense of place. The best streets invariably have buildings fronting them, with a particular height and massing that creates an appropriate sense of enclosure. The random setbacks generated by conventional zoning rarely produce this effect; form-based regulations must be put in place to control building form and

placement. Furthermore, urban buildings must front the street with features such as doors, windows, balconies, and porches. These features promote a lively streetscape, and ultimately provide passive security for pedestrians by focusing “eyes on the street.”

### 4. Include Sidewalks.

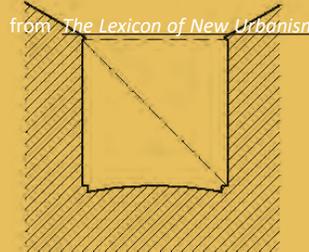
Appropriately designed sidewalks are essential for active pedestrian life. Pedestrians will be more willing to utilize sidewalks if they are protected from automobile traffic. One of the simplest ways to buffer the pedestrian is to place street trees between the street and the sidewalk. Other street furniture such as streetlights, bus shelters, and benches occupy wider sidewalks and provide additional separation between pedestrians and automobile traffic. The width of the sidewalk will vary according to the location. On most single-family residential streets, five or six feet is an appropriate width, but streets with townhouses and multi-family buildings require a more generous sidewalk. On Main Streets, fourteen feet is an ideal minimum sidewalk width, which must never fall below an absolute minimum of eight feet.

All new streets in Abita Springs should include sidewalks. Retrofitting existing streets, which is to say adding sidewalks where there aren't currently sidewalks, is often an expensive and time-consuming process. Choose streets for new sidewalks with care based on which streets are most likely to see pedestrians.

#### SCALE STREETS COMFORTABLY FOR USERS

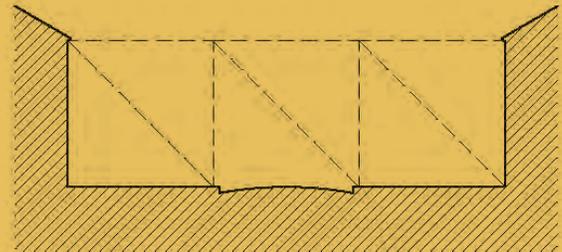
The height-to-width ratio is the proportion of spatial enclosure. If the width of space is such that the cone of vision encompasses less street wall than open sky, the degree of spatial enclosure is slight. As a general rule, the tighter the ratio, the stronger the sense of place. The ratio of 1:6 is the perceivable maximum. The ratio of 1:3 is best for public spaces. The ratio of 1:1 creates pedestrian paseos. Note that the ratio is not based merely on the curb to curb measurement but instead on the entire right-of-way and including building frontages, from building face to building face. In the absence of spatial definition by facades, disciplined tree planting is an alternative. Trees aligned for spatial enclosure are necessary on thoroughfares that have substantial front yards.

from *The Lexicon of New Urbanism*



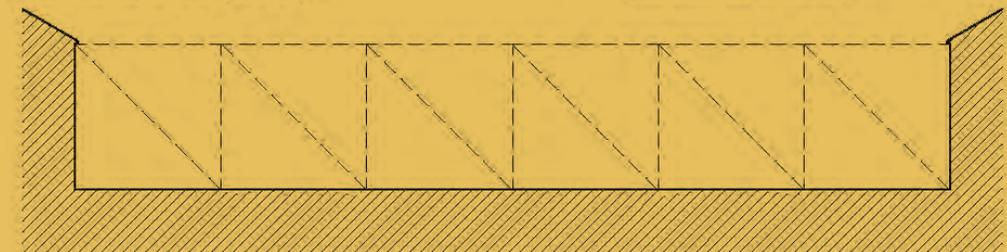
1:1

(The best for thoroughfares)



1:3

(The best for squares)



1:6

(The perceivable maximum)

Excerpted

## 5. Provide Shade.

Louisiana is hot. Pedestrians and cyclists need shady streets and motorists typically prefer them. Shade provides protection from heat and sun and contributes to the spatial definition of a street. Maintaining canopy trees can provide shade as well as architectural encroachments over the sidewalk. Canopy trees should be planted in a planting zone between the sidewalk and the street in order to provide continuous definition and shade for both the street and the sidewalk. Architectural encroachments over the sidewalk such as awnings, arcades, and cantilevered balconies are another way to protect pedestrians from the elements and shield storefronts from glare.

## 6. Make Roundabout Medians Sufficiently Wide.

Where roundabouts are present or needed, medians must be generous enough to serve as a pedestrian amenity. A minimum median width of 8' will accommodate a row of street trees and will provide adequate refuge for pedestrians crossing a wide roadway.

Quite often an 8' median isn't possible. That's okay, the right species can grow in even a 3' median. The tree may never reach its growth potential but it isn't necessary that it does to provide shade and beauty.

## 7. Plant the Street Trees in an Orderly Manner.

Great streets are typically planted with rows of regularly-spaced trees, using consistent species. This formal tree alignment has a powerful effect; it at once shapes the space and reflects conscious design. More importantly, the shade produced by the trees will be continuous enough to make walking viable. Furthermore, the spatial impression of aligned trees also has a traffic calming effect.

Louisiana can host a variety of street trees like towering oaks, flowering dogwood, and showy southern magnolias. Abita Springs hosts some of the region's finest pines such as the bald cypress, red cedar and southern pines. Every tree has its positive attributes. In general, though, the wider the spread of limbs and greater the provision of

leaves, the more shade. Providing shade is the central reason for street trees. At the same time, some species like elm and dogwood are susceptible to disease. When using these trees variety is key to providing a long-lasting urban canopy.

## 8. Use Smart Lighting.

Streets should be appropriately lit for automobile and pedestrian safety. Pedestrians naturally avoid streets where they feel unsafe. Widely spaced, highway-scaled "cobra head" light fixtures do not provide appropriate light intensity and consistency for pedestrian well-being. More frequently spaced, shorter fixtures are more appropriate, and provide light beneath the tree canopy as street trees mature.

## 9. Allow On-Street Parking in Suitable Locations.

On-street parking buffers pedestrians from moving cars and calms traffic by forcing drivers to stay alert. Parallel parking is the ideal arrangement, because it keeps streets as narrow as possible. Diagonal parking is acceptable on some shopping streets, as long as the extra curb-to-curb width is not achieved at the expense of sidewalk width. Parking located in front of a street-front business encourages people to get out of their cars and walk and is essential to leasing street-oriented retail space.

## 10. Avoid Parking Lots in front of Buildings.

The bulk of a building's parking supply should occur behind the building. The conventional practice of placing surface parking lots in front of buildings results in a disconnected pedestrian environment. If current zoning regulations are reformed to provide "build-to" lines rather than mandatory front setbacks for commercial buildings, parking can be accommodated in the interior of the block. As a result, the pedestrian realm of the sidewalk will be defined by shop fronts and building entrances rather than parking lots.



Alexandria, VA



Savannah, GA



## SIDEWALK DESIGN GUIDE

Abita Springs sidewalks can be divided into three primary functional zones, the Frontage Zone, the Clear Path, and the Furnishing/Landscape Zone. The purpose of each zone remains the same across the entire downtown, but the actual design and dimensions will vary depending on the unique character of each street and block. More detailed descriptions of each zone are provided in the following pages.

“The design of cities begins with the design of streets. To make a good city, you need good streets, and that means streets where people want to be.”

- John Massengale

Street Design: The Secret to Great Cities & Towns



### Frontage Zone

This is the space between the building façade or property line and the clear path. This space supplements the buildings’ activities and provides a buffer between pedestrians, building appurtenances, and opening doors. It is the location for seating, signs, retail displays, and landscaping.

### Clear Path

This is the portion of the sidewalk dedicated to pedestrian travel. It must be accessible and free of physical obstructions to allow for the movement of people. It should be well lit and functional in all weather conditions.

### Furnishing/Landscape Zone

This space serves many functions, varying greatly depending on the type of street. Its primary purpose is to separate the clear path from motorists and provide a location for street furniture and utilities. These may include street trees, benches, storm water elements, lighting, transit stops, bike racks, parking meters, and signage, to name a few.



**Street Trees & Landscaping**

Street trees and landscaping provide many natural, physical, and psychological benefits. They bring nature into the city, add shade in the summer, help shape the street, add character, and provide an opportunity for green storm water infrastructure.



**Active Ground**

The relationship between a building façade and sidewalk is critical to creating a comfortable and inviting place. Building entrances should be frequent and the street-level façade designed to be human-scaled, transparent, and interesting to people traveling at a walking pace.



**Pedestrian Ramps**

All crossings should have pedestrian ramps to facilitate access to the sidewalk and street for all. Tactile paving strips on sidewalks, station edges, and pedestrian ramps should be provided to facilitate accessibility for people with vision impairment.



**Street Furniture**

Public seating should be available for people to rest, linger, and watch the world go by. Private café seating can accompany adjacent businesses and add to the vitality of the street. Other amenities can include recycling and waste receptacles, bike racks, and parking meters.



**Lighting**

Lighting serves both safety and aesthetic purposes. It should be pedestrian-scaled and create a feeling of comfort without being overly bright and contributing to excess light pollution (Missoula’s Dark Sky ordinance provides further guidance on this topic). The lighting type should be tied to the street’s context.



**Sidewalks**

Sidewalks provide a space for people to travel, gather, relax, meet, and connect with others. They constitute a large portion of a city’s public space and should be carefully designed to reflect this and to fit their context.



### RE-IMAGINING HIGHWAY 36

Within a network of walkable thoroughfares, all streets are expected to carry automobile traffic as well as provide a walkable environment. The balance between walkability and automobile access may shift to favor one or the other, depending on the context of the street. For instance, a neighborhood street is designed to favor walkability through the use of narrow lanes, short blocks, and lower vehicle operating speeds of 20 mph or less. Other thoroughfares may strike a balance between high levels of walkability and high levels of automobile access, perhaps allowing slightly higher operating speeds but providing a richer environment for pedestrian activity.

The Louisiana Highway 36 and 59 are streets where slightly wider lanes are required by the frequency of large truck traffic, permitting slightly higher automobile speeds, but the overall design of the street with building enclosure, street trees, on-street parking, a mix of uses, and short blocks still provides high levels of walkability. These arterial streets pass through walkable areas such as the downtown, where walkability is important, but automobile access for through-traffic must also be provided.

### Preserve Greenery along Highway 36

Highway 36 is a state highway that connects Abita Springs to the Greater St. Tammany Regional Airport. The District 8 Fire Station and the St. Tammany Recreational District 11 are both located along Highway 36. Although the land on either side of the highway past the LA DOT office is zoned for commercial and residential uses, the land currently remains mostly undeveloped. During the charrette process, residents voiced that greenery is what makes the town a unique place and preserving the green character should be a high priority for the community. The right-of-way for Highway 36 is about a hundred feet. Future developments on either side of the road should preserve the existing vegetation within the right of way. More trees should be planted in areas where vegetation is removed.

Sidewalks and crossings should be extended along Highway 36 to enable walking and biking connection to the Tammany Trace and the town center. New commercial development should be facing the sidewalk and have parking in the back to create a more inviting experience for pedestrians and bikers.





**GATEWAYS**

**Existing Roundabout at the Level Street and Maple Street intersection**

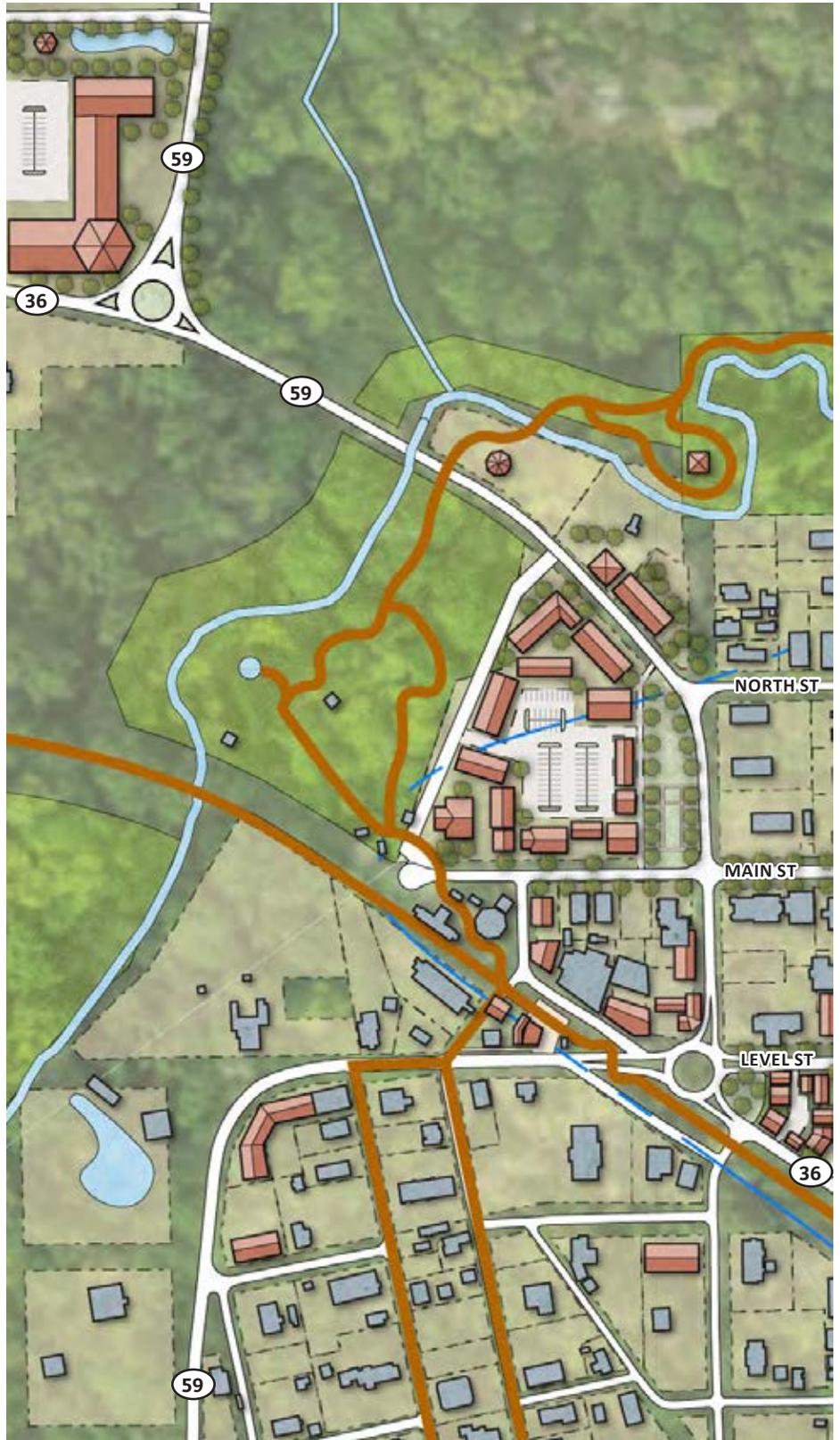
As has been witnessed by the roundabout at Level Street and Maple Street, walkability at a roundabout is increased due to lower traffic speeds as vehicles approach and exit the roundabout, and pedestrians have fewer lanes of traffic to cross at one time. A roundabout’s distinctive design and greater opportunities for urban design provide a greater sense of place. Statuary, fountains, or landscaping can be placed in the center of the roundabout, although care must be taken to preserve adequate sight lines.

**Proposed Roundabout at Highway 59 and Highway 36 intersection**

One way to create a gateway is through changing the road section, creating a different kind of intersection, or by bringing development up to the road. It was suggested that a new roundabout at the intersection of Highway 59 where it joins Highway 36 north of the downtown be created to accommodate traffic flow while creating a greater sense of arrival to Abita Springs. A roundabout at the highway intersections will slow down traffic allowing for safer conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Bicyclists on Roundabouts**

Bicyclists are sometimes concerned about travel through a roundabout, especially if they have experience with the much larger and faster traffic circles. In fact, modern roundabout intersections are much safer for bicyclists than traffic signals. This is due to the slower traffic speeds found in a roundabout. Entering and circulating at 25 mph or less, automobiles can easily share space with bicycles traveling through a roundabout. To traverse the roundabout, the cyclist simply travels through in the vehicle lane just like an automobile. Cyclists who are uncomfortable sharing the road with automobiles may, alternatively, go around the roundabout using the sidewalk system as if they were a pedestrian.



*Proposed and Existing Northern Roundabouts*



### HARRISON AVENUE

A study was done in 2017 to extend Harrison Avenue from Highway 59 to Highway 36 in Abita Springs. Extending Harrison Avenue across the southern edge of Abita Springs will improve east-west connectivity. The study concluded that the Harrison and Highway 59 intersection would need to be improved.

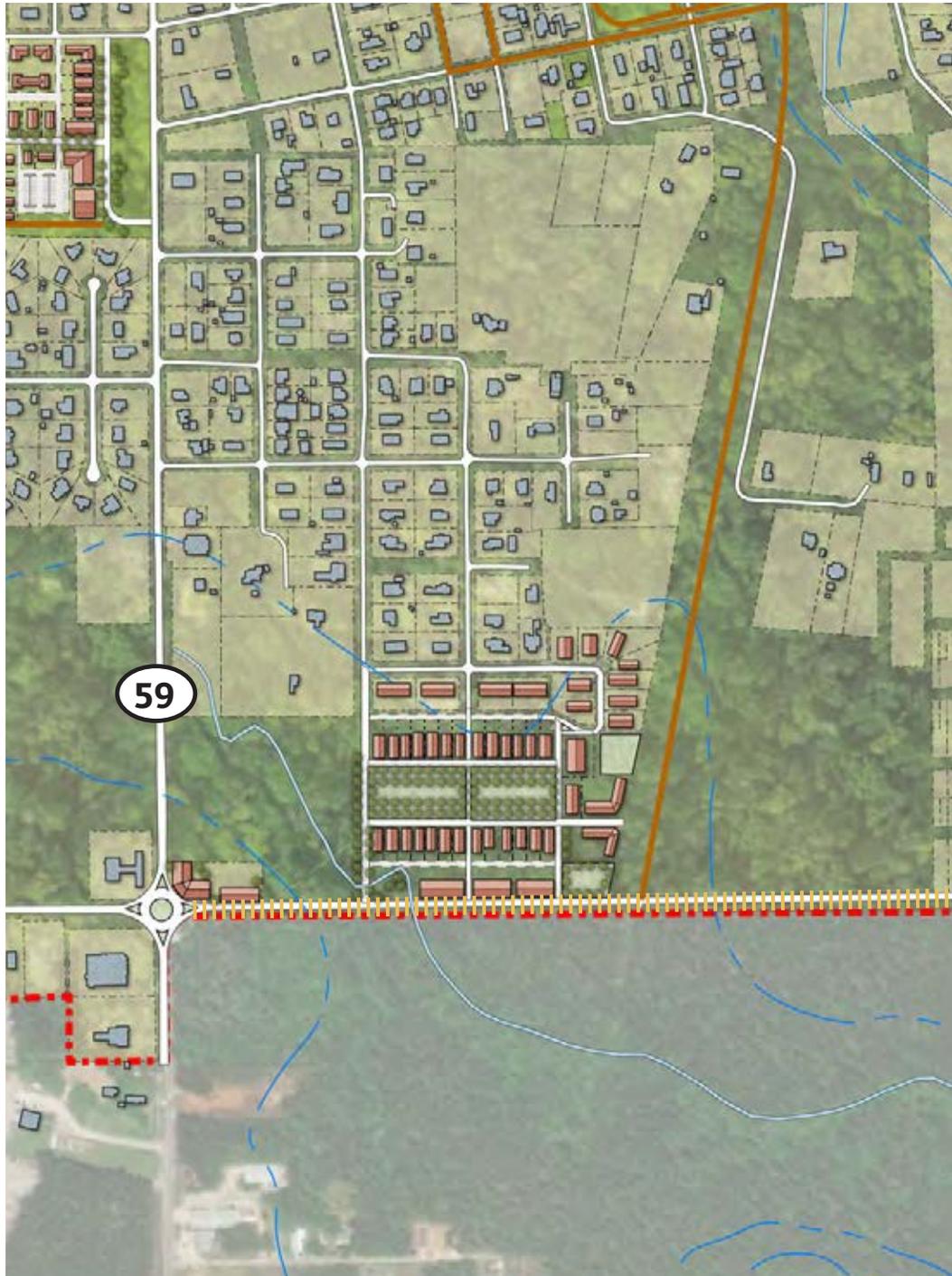
St. Tammany Parish contracted Vectura Consulting Services, LLC to complete a traffic analysis for the Harrison Avenue Extension Land Use and Transportation Study. The study examined the impact the Harrison Avenue extension would have on the existing roundabout at the intersection of Highway 59 and Highway 36.

The study results indicated that the Harrison Avenue extension is estimated to decrease the average stopped delay from 114.1 seconds to 81.6 seconds in the year 2044 am peak hour, while the average stopped delay will decrease from 291.5 seconds to 178.6 seconds in the year 2044 pm peak hour.

The most efficient cross section for Harrison Avenue with the greatest impact on street performance is a two-lane street with one lane in each direction. Additionally, a roundabout at the intersection of Harrison Avenue and LA 59 would provide the most efficient traffic results. A roundabout at this intersection as Highway 59 enters Abita Springs would alert drivers that they were entering Abita Springs.

Creating a larger interconnected street network will improve connectivity and reduce traffic. Providing outlets to smaller dead-end streets such as Dundee Street and Hebert Road could improve connectivity from the north.

- 1 Existing end of Harrison Avenue at the intersection with Hwy 59
- 2 New commercial/ mixed use development at the intersection of Harrison Ave with Highway 59.
- 3 New roundabout at the intersection of Harrison Avenue and Highway 59 that leads to the Harrison Ave eastern extension



Proposed Harrison Avenue Extension and Roundabout

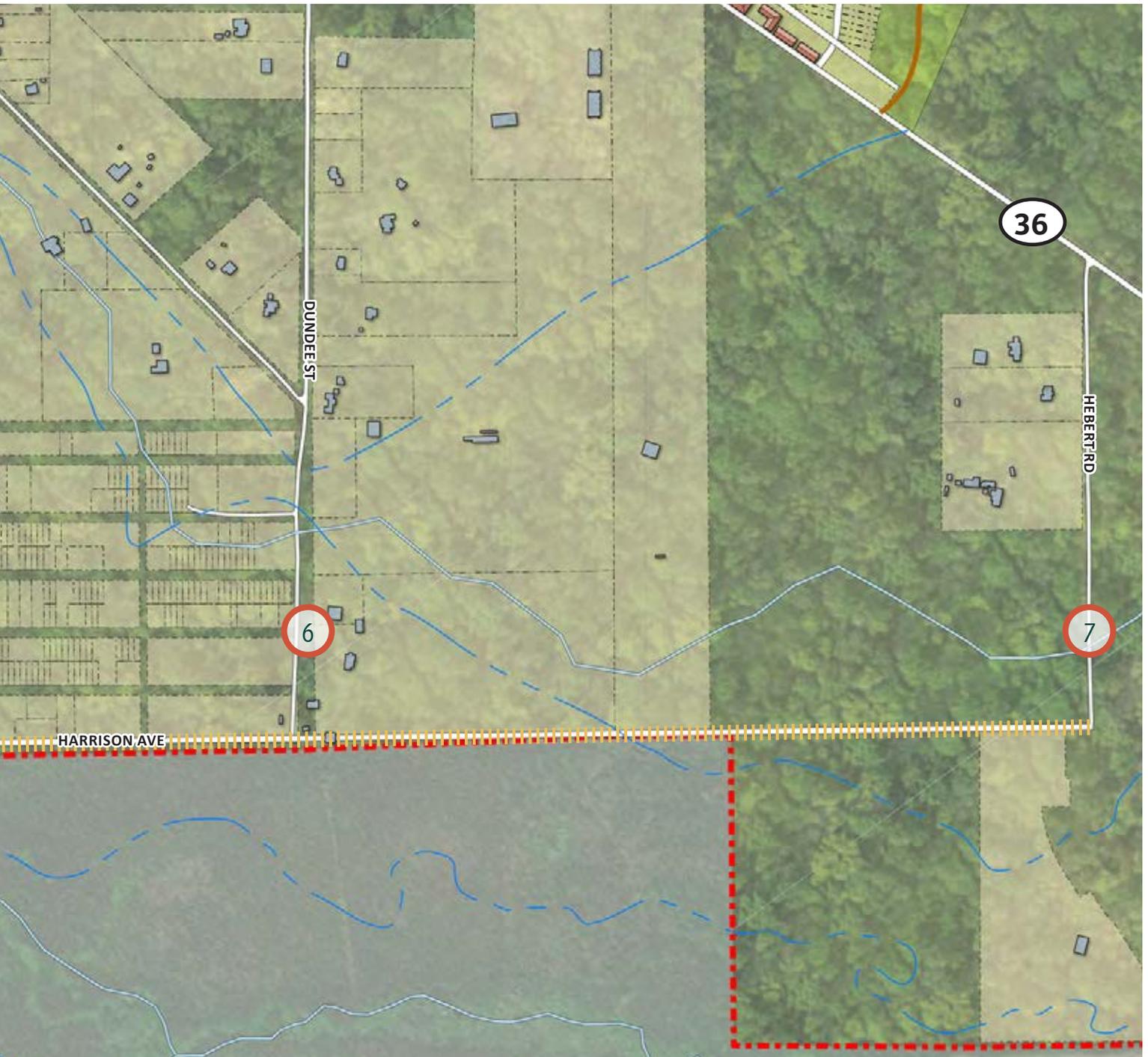


4 Additional residential housing could connect to the existing neighborhoods through Harrison Avenue.

5 Continuous east-west connection across the southern border of Abita Springs

6 North-South connection along Dundee Street

7 Connecting street network to Highway 36 along Hebert Road forms a larger interconnected street network





## MAKE USE OF MODERN ROUNDABOUTS AT APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS

The use of modern roundabouts at several intersections throughout Abita Springs was discussed during the traveling workshops. Modern roundabouts keep traffic flowing at safe speeds and allow pedestrians and bicyclists to maneuver through the intersection as well.

### Modern Roundabout

A modern roundabout accommodates traffic flow and capacity while creating a greater sense of place and allowing safer conditions for pedestrians. Walkability at a roundabout is increased because traffic speeds are lower as vehicles approach and exit the roundabout, and pedestrians have fewer lanes of traffic to cross at one time. Roundabouts provide a greater sense of place because of their distinctive design and greater opportunities for urban design. A statuary, fountains, or landscaping can be placed in the center of the roundabout, although care must be taken to preserve adequate sight lines.

### Pedestrians

Roundabouts are designed to achieve a consistent, low vehicle speed (15 to 25 mph) to minimize crash potential; this by nature renders them pedestrian friendly. When traffic volumes are light, many gaps are available for pedestrian crossing. When vehicle volumes are high, more vehicles pause at the

yield line, allowing pedestrians to cross safely behind the first vehicle. The pedestrian crosswalk should occur one car length back (approximately 20 feet) from the yield line to place the pedestrian safely in view of the second waiting vehicle's driver. Again, an appropriately low speed is the key pedestrian safety element of roundabout design.

### Bicyclists

Bicyclists are sometimes concerned about travel through a roundabout, especially if they have experience with the much larger and faster traffic circles found in New England. In fact, modern roundabout intersections are much safer for bicyclists than traffic signals. This is due to the slower traffic speeds found in a roundabout. Entering and circulating at 25 mph or less, automobiles can easily share space with bicycles traveling through a roundabout. To traverse the roundabout, the cyclist simply travels through in the vehicle lane just like an automobile. Cyclists who are uncomfortable sharing the road with automobiles may, alternatively, go around the roundabout using the sidewalk system as if they were a pedestrian.

## TRAFFIC CIRCLES VS. ROUNDABOUTS

A modern roundabout is not the same as the traffic circles common in the northeastern United States. Traffic circles do not contain many of the pedestrian-friendly elements of the roundabout:



### Traffic Circles

- Large (300' to 800' diameter)
- Fast (30 to 50 mph)
- Scary
- High speed merge
- Dangerous (many more crashes)



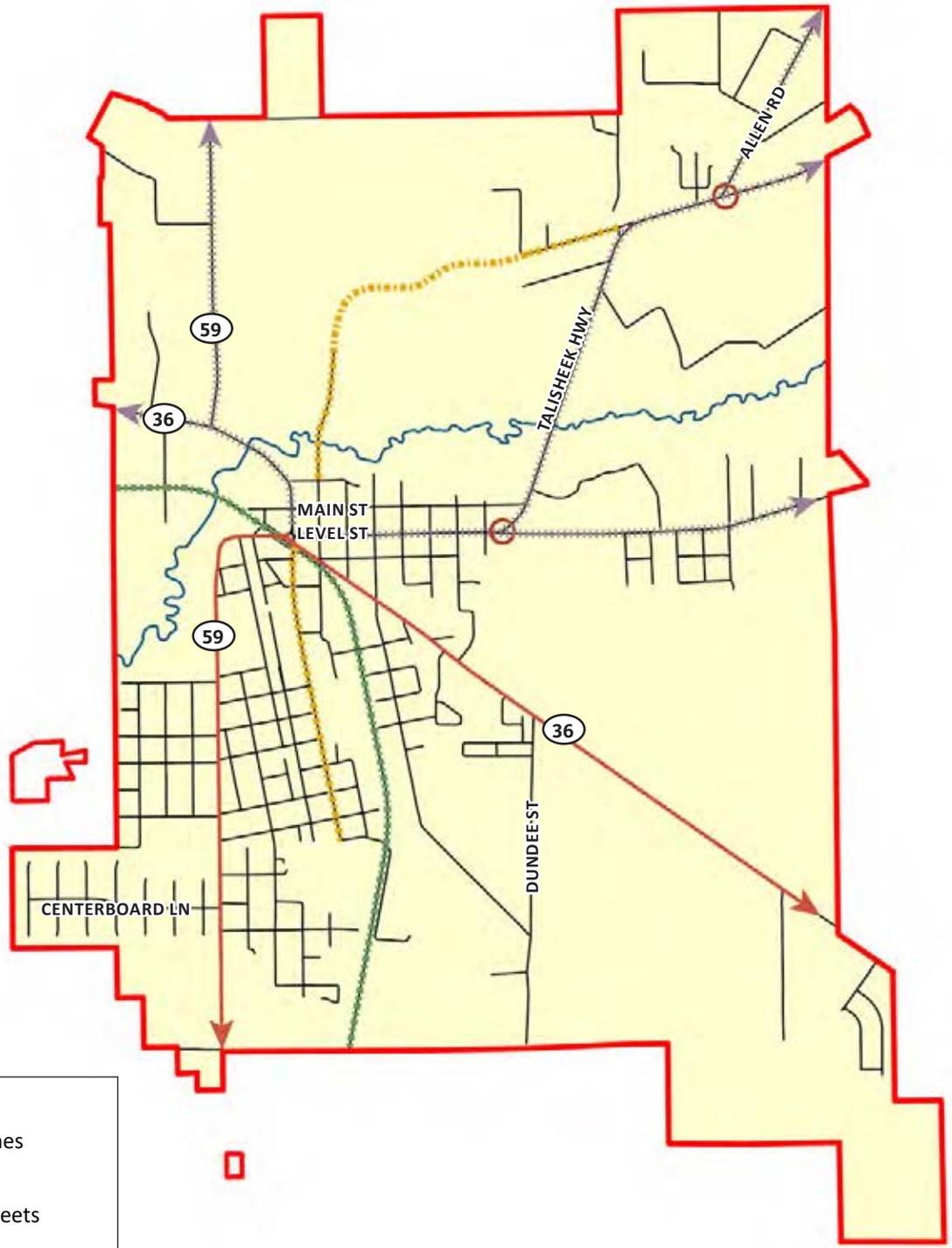
### Roundabouts

- Smaller (110' to 180' diameter)
- Slower (15 to 25 mph)
- Friendly
- Yield at entry
- Safer



### BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE

Bicycling is a popular means of getting to Abita Springs along the Tammany Trace. Abita Springs should enhance its overall bike network to better connect the neighborhoods, Neighborhood Centers and Downtown. As a tourist destination, bicycling can be an attractive amenity and offer a way for tourists to travel throughout Abita Springs without having to drive a car - reducing traffic and the need for parking.



**LEGEND**

- Protected Bike Lanes
- - - - - Striped Bike Lanes
- . . . . . Bicycle friendly streets
- . . . . . Tammany Trail
- Intersection Augmentations



## Recommended Bicycle Facilities



### Bike Lanes

A typical bike lane is a portion of the roadway which has been set aside for the exclusive or preferential use of cyclists. It is usually designated by adding a stripe, signage, and pavement markings. Bike lanes allow cyclists to ride at their own speed without interfering with motorists.

Conventional bike lanes run along the curb sides of the roadway, or adjacent to parked cars when on-street parking is present. Cyclists usually travel in the same direction as traffic. These unprotected bike lanes work best on streets where the posted speed is less than 35 mph and should ideally be 6 feet in width, although 5 feet is also possible.



### Buffered Bike Lanes

Like typical bike lanes, buffered bike lanes run along the curbs of the roadway or adjacent to on-street parking. However, they offer additional protection from moving traffic in the form of a buffer space between the edge of the bike lane and the edge of the vehicular travel lane. Adding a buffer encourages more cyclists to use the facility.

If the buffer is 3 feet or wider the interior should have diagonal cross hatching or chevron markings. Narrower buffers can be marked with two solid white lines, which also helps discourage crossing. Buffered bike lanes are strongly preferred to typical bike lanes in areas with greater traffic volume and higher travel speeds.



### Shared-Use Path / Trail

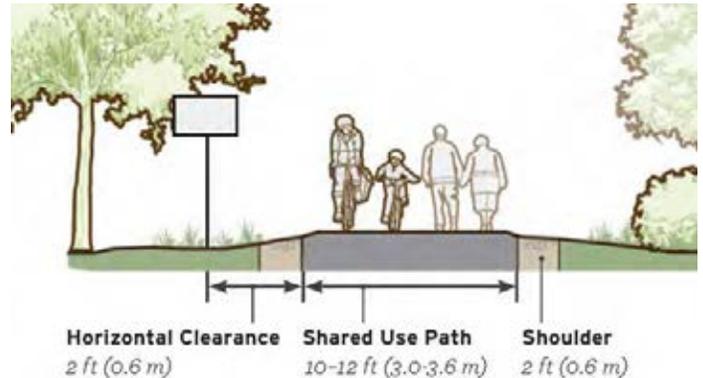
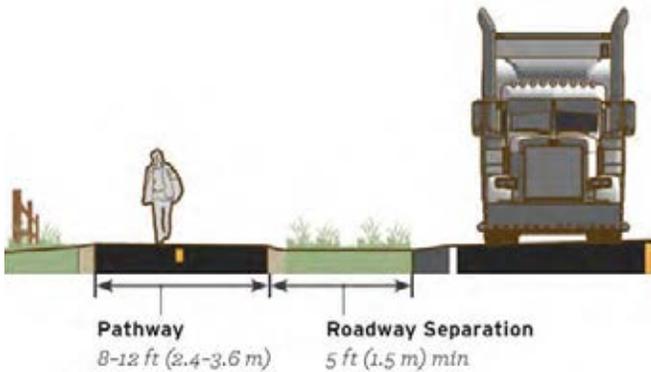
Shared-use paths are a type of trail designed to provide off-road routes for many different users including cyclists, runners, pedestrians, and manual or motorized wheelchair users. While similar to other recreational trails, these paths are part of a larger transportation system and serve as a supplement to on-street bike lanes, shared roads, and paved shoulders. For walking and biking to be safe and comfortable, shared-use paths should generally be 12 feet wide, where possible, and no less than 8 feet.



### Separated Bike Lanes

Separated bicycle lanes (also known as protected lanes or cycle tracks) offer significant improvements in safety performance over other on-street bicycle facilities, including buffered lanes. Raised cycle tracks are bike facilities that are vertically separated from the roadway. Sometimes they occur at the plane of the sidewalk, often with a furnishing zone or planting strip between the cycle track and the roadway, and sometimes they are placed at an intermediate height between the road and the sidewalk. At intersections, they may be dropped and merged with the street or continue on the sidewalk, where they cross with pedestrians.

Raised cycle tracks / Separated bicycle lanes are more attractive to a wider variety of cyclists and work best along streets with higher speeds or traffic volumes. When adjacent to on-street parallel parking, the separation between the parking lane and the bike lane should be three feet.



The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) illustrations showing key dimensions for shared use path adjacent to motor vehicles (left) and for shared use path separate from vehicles (right)

### Bike Parking

Planning for safe and comfortable shared-use paths, separated bike lanes, cycle tracks, and other bicycle facilities are just part of the equation for improving biking experience in Abita Springs. There must also be convenient and secure locations to park and store bicycles. Ample bicycle parking should be provided, including sheltered long-term parking for residents and workers and both public and private parking.

To ensure ample secure and convenient bicycle parking, regulations identifying the minimum amount and type of parking should be required by zoning. The town should also expand its public bike parking facilities and incorporate those facilities into its wayfinding and tourist information programs.

### THE SAFETY BENEFITS OF SEPARATED BICYCLE LANES

The safety benefits of separated bicycle lanes result from a number of interrelated factors. Depending on specific design details, they may:

- Protect bicyclists from turning vehicles – the most common form of vehicle/bicycle collision in cities;
- Shorten pedestrian crossing distances, reducing the length of time people are exposed to risk of collision with moving vehicles;
- Reduce overall vehicle speeds – with exponential reductions in crash severity;
- Reduce the speeds of turning vehicles at intersections; and
- Reduce or prevent the vehicle weaving maneuvers (lane changing) that are a common cause of collisions.



### TAMMANY TRACE TRAIL

The Tammany Trace follows the old rail line through the heart of Abita Springs. There is a trailhead at the park downtown. Some features of the trailhead area include the historic renovated 1884 pavilion and the Abita Springs Trailhead Museum housed in the historic 19<sup>th</sup> century Longbranch Hotel. The museum hosts historic exhibits and provides information about the area.

Daily and annual events take place in the park by the trail. A playground and splash pad provide space for children to play and the weekly Sunday Abita Springs Art and Farmers Market sells local produce and crafts. Additionally, the outdoor performance stage hosts events such as the Abita Springs Busker Festival, Abita Springs Water Festival, and Earth Fest.

### Trail Extension

The Tammany Trail bike network can be expanded to include surrounding green spaces along the Abita River as well as through the neighborhoods to the south through the street network. Perpendicular trail connections onto the Tammany Trace will systematically interconnect the city promoting further use of the bike system as a major artery for bicyclist transit with greater connections to the local neighborhoods that would use this trail to get to the center of town.

- 1 Trail network along the Abita River
- 2 Extension of trail network off of the Tammany Trace
- 3 Connection to the ball park
- 4 Trail network connection from the elementary school
- 5 Neighborhood trail network developments



Proposed trail extensions



## GOALS AND POLICIES

GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS		RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL 4.1: To Increase Walkability And Pedestrian Safety And Comfort.</b>			
<b>4.1.1</b>	<b>Perform an audit to determine needed crosswalks and in certain key intersections, premium crossing infrastructure such as hawk signals or speed tables.</b>		
<b>A</b>	Walkability will be prioritized with wide sidewalks, shade, alleys, and street-facing access to adjacent land uses.	Town	Short Term
<b>B</b>	Provide safe and convenient crosswalks at intersections, and at mid-block crossings where feasible and needed.	Town	Near Term
<b>C</b>	Curb radii should be small to discourage drivers from turning corners quickly and to shorten pedestrian crosswalk lengths.	Town	Near Term
<b>D</b>	Where possible, and especially where pedestrians are prioritized, tools such as protected left turns, pedestrian head start, raised crosswalks, curb extensions, medians, pedestrian refuge islands or mid-block crossings, and restricted right turns on red should be used to improve pedestrian and bicycle movements and safety.	Town	Near Term
<b>4.1.2</b>	<b>Perform an audit to determine where to add sidewalks or increase their widths in order to create a more continuous and usable sidewalk network, especially on key routes.</b>		
<b>A</b>	Build safe and continuous sidewalks	Town	Mid Term
<b>B</b>	Curb radii should be small to discourage drivers from turning corners quickly.	Town	Mid Term
<b>C</b>	Provide safe and convenient crosswalks.	Town	Short Term
<b>D</b>	Widen sidewalks where appropriate	Town	Mid Term
<b>E</b>	Plant regularly spaced canopy trees adjacent to sidewalks in order to provide continuous shade for both the street and the sidewalk.	Town	Short Term
<b>F</b>	Architectural encroachments over sidewalks such as awnings, arcades, and cantilevered balconies in areas with zero setback requirements should be encouraged to protect pedestrians from the elements.	Town	Near Term
<b>G</b>	Curb and gutter construction should be used to prevent flooding on sidewalks where appropriate.	Town	Near Term
<b>H</b>	Establish priority locations for sidewalks, sidewalk repairs, and sidewalk improvements in areas with high or potentially high levels of pedestrian activity such as near schools, parks, Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads, and within the Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Areas.	Town	Near Term
<b>I</b>	Continually update the city-wide sidewalk master plan to monitor progress and reflect changing conditions and needs.	Town	Near Term



GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS

RESPONSIBLE ENTITY

TIME FRAME

**GOAL 4.2: To Increase Safety and Convenience For Cyclists.**

**4.2.1 Adopt a Vision Zero Policy in order to eliminate or mitigate dangers to cyclists of all ages and levels of experience.**

<b>A</b>	Install bike paths, bike lanes and infrastructure including bike racks and signage along key bicycle routes.	Town	Near Term
<b>B</b>	Provide streetlights that improve safety for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians while maintaining a dark sky.	Town	Near Term
<b>C</b>	Infrastructure that encourages students to walk or bike safely to school should be supported.	The Town	Near Term
<b>D</b>	Continue to foster and implement Safe Routes to School programs.	The Town	Near Term
<b>E</b>	Enhance the safety and visibility of the bicycle network through the implementation of safety and wayfinding signage improvements along all current and future bikeways.	The Town	Near Term
<b>F</b>	Use best practices in physical design (i.e. bikeway width, type, signing, and advanced bicycle facility types) to create safer bikeways. Train select Town staff to design bikeways.	The Town	Near Term
<b>G</b>	Safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities should be maintained and should be universally accessible, adequately lit, and properly designed to reduce conflicts between motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.	The Town	Near Term
<b>H</b>	Bicycle and pedestrian circulation, access, and safety should be enhanced, especially along major corridors, in the Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Areas, in Neighborhood Centers, and near schools, libraries, and parks.	The Town	Near Term
<b>I</b>	Work with the Abita Springs Police Department to address bicycle-vehicle safety measures through increased awareness of bicycle-related traffic laws and enforcement of existing and new laws.	Town, Parish	Near Term
<b>J</b>	Provide on-going training for Abita Springs police officers regarding bicycle safety laws and issues.	Town, Parish	Near Term
<b>K</b>	Provide streetlights that improve safety for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians while maintaining a dark sky with full cut off lighting. Lights should be partially shielded within the Downtown and Neighborhood Centers and fully shielded everywhere else.	The Town	Near Term

**4.2.2 Create a Cycling Master Plan for Abita Springs with an emphasis on premium cycling infrastructure such as protected bike lanes, cycle tracks, protected intersections, and bike boxes at intersections.**

<b>A</b>	Complete and adopt a Bicycle Master Plan incorporating the Abita Springs Community Trail.	Town	Short Term
<b>B</b>	Continue developing and maintaining the Abita Springs Tammany Trail and connectivity Network.	Town	Short Term
<b>C</b>	Install bike paths, bike lanes and infrastructure including bike racks and signage along key bicycle routes identified in the Bicycle Master Plan.	Town	Mid Term
<b>D</b>	Augment the network of cycle tracks and trails started by Tammany Trace with protected bike lanes on the following priority routes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Along Highway 59 between Harrison Road and Downtown</li> <li>• Along Highway 36 (Hickory Highway) between Downtown and Greater St. Tammany Regional Airport</li> </ul>	Town, Parish	Mid Term



GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS		RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
E	<p>Augment the network of cycle tracks and trails with priority cycle routes with appropriate signs or stripes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Along Level Street at its intersection with Talisheek Highway, extending along Burvant Street</li> <li>• Along Talisheek Highway and Allen Road</li> <li>• Highway 59 north of Downtown</li> <li>• Highway 36 west of Downtown</li> </ul>	Town, Parish	Short Term
F	<p>Augment the network of cycle tracks and trails with safe bicycle-friendly streets along routes roughly parallel to highways such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prats Dairy Road and Hickory Street and Hickory Street Bridge Parallel to Talisheek Highway</li> <li>• St Joseph’s Street parallel to Highway 59</li> </ul>	Town, Parish	Mid Term
G	Identify and install parking and bathrooms for cyclists at key locations.	Town	Long Term
H	Continue to work with local businesses and partners to expand bike share and bike rental stations.	Town	Short Term
I	Create and distribute printed and online versions of the Abita Springs Bike Master Plan on an annually updated basis, to include wayfinding, safety, and facility type information.	Town	Mid Term
J	Based on the Future Character Areas and Neighborhood Centers along the arterial and collector corridors, context should replace simple functional classification as the foundation and function of the streets. Designs should include bicycle and pedestrian mobility updates, include three or more new cross sections where speed limits are set to match context and modal function and focus.	Town	Long Term
K	The Abita Springs Community Trail network should be treated as part of the Town’s transportation network and connections should be planned for accordingly.	Town	Short Term
L	Bicycle facilities such as secure racks, personal lockers, and showers should be encouraged in new and redeveloped office and employment centers to facilitate bicycling and walking as viable alternative modes for commuting to work.	Town	Long Term

**GOAL 4.3: To Make Most Streets Comfortable For All Users.**

**4.3.1 Reduce the risk of injury and fatality by mitigating vehicular speeds.**

A	Work with the Parish and the State to reduce both design speeds and posted speed limits along key corridors	Town, Parish	Ongoing
B	On roads that are maintained by Abita Springs, use natural traffic calming measures including intersections/small blocks, narrow pavement width, street trees, on-street parking, shallow front setbacks for buildings, and pavement texture in order to provide visual clues to drivers so that they drive more slowly.	Town	Near Term
C	Use gateways and special district designations to encourage slower speeds and walking.	Town	Near Term
D	The other Future Character Areas are likely to maintain a predominately automobile-dependent development pattern while adding enhancements that promote beautification and safety. Thoroughfares will have sidewalks and bike lanes will be provided where travel speeds are higher.	Town	Near Term
E	Traffic calming measures should be incorporated into the design of new or retrofitted streets in the Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Areas, near schools and parks, and around Neighborhood Centers and Crossroads. Pedestrians and bicyclists should have safe, convenient, well-marked means to cross streets.	Town	Near Term



GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS		RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>4.3.2 Create and Adopt a Complete Streets Policy for Abita Springs.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Create a set of context-sensitive design criteria to evaluate specific roadway design and encourage multi-modal options.	Town	Near Term
<b>B</b>	Adopt and design new streets where possible in consultation with the text: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach: An ITE Recommended Practice (2010).	Town	Near Term
<b>C</b>	Where thoroughfares traverse the Downtown and Traditional Neighborhood Future Character Area multi-modal or complete streets treatments should be considered. Where these streets traverse through the Downtown Future Character Area and/or a Neighborhood Center a road diet or lane reallocation should be considered.	Town	Near Term
<b>D</b>	Complete street elements should be designed with all users in mind, with multimodal amenities appropriate for the type of roadway and its context.	Town	Near Term
<b>E</b>	Street design standards should provide safe, accessible, and meaningful travel choices – driving, walking, and bicycling.	Town	Near Term
<b>F</b>	The majority of the Town’s streets should be designed as public spaces that are scaled for pedestrians and should be enhanced with appropriate street trees and landscaping.	Town	Near Term
<b>G</b>	When reviewing traffic impact analyses for infill and redevelopment, level of service measurements should consider all modes of transportation, including bicycles, pedestrians, and transit, in addition to automobile level of service.	Town	Near Term

**GOAL 4.4: To Encourage The Use Of Low Emitting And Electric Vehicles.**

**4.4.1 Create a plan that identifies electric vehicle charging stations, both on public land and those located on private property but which are associated with commercial parking lots.**

<b>A</b>	A parking committee should establish performance goals and advise on the management of downtown parking. Staff should gather data focused on committee goals and report periodically (quarterly at first) regarding parking operations informed by data surveys.	Town	Near Term
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**GOAL 4.5: To Create a Master Plan For Needed Traffic Lights And Roundabouts.**

**4.5.1 Consider installing Traffic Lights and Crosswalks at the following intersections.**

<b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Millar Street, 11th Street, Highway 59 or</li> <li>• Centerboard Lane and Highway 59</li> </ul>	Town, Parish	Near Term
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**4.5.2 Install roundabouts at the following intersections:**

<b>A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harrison Avenue (already planned)</li> <li>• Highway 59 and Highway 36 on the north side of the Abita Springs River</li> </ul>	Town, Parish	Ongoing
<b>B</b>	Roundabouts to calm traffic, increase safety, diminish the need for traffic lights, and create sites for public art and monuments.	Town, Parish	Near Term



GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS		RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL 4.6: Increase Connectivity and Number of Possible Routes For Pedestrians, Cyclists, and Drivers by Healing the Grid and Creating Additional Routes.</b>			
4.6.1	<b>Create Connectivity Master Plan that identifies where paper streets (unimproved rights-of-way) should be designated for the following future conditions:</b>		
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change, leave unimproved</li> <li>Complete street or one that accommodates all users</li> <li>Non-motorized street that has routes for cyclists and pedestrians.</li> </ul>	Town	Near Term
4.6.2	<b>Consider additional bridges and complete street extensions across Abita Springs River such as Poitevent Avenue or Gordon Avenue.</b>		
4.6.3	<b>Pursue, in collaboration with the Parish and the State, the following new streets or street extensions:</b>		
A	Create an east-west connection by extending a road from Highway 59 to the East in one or more locations. The location of those extensions will occur in conjunction with parish and state entities.	Town, Parish	Ongoing
B	Extend 12 <sup>th</sup> Street to St Charles Street across Tammany Trace.	Town, Parish	Near Term
C	Create a north-south connection aligned approximately with Dundee Street linking Highway 36 with Level Street along the western edge of Abita Springs Elementary School and Abita Recreation Center.	Town, Parish	Near Term
D	Create a north-south connection that extends either Angelina Street, Stephen Street, Regina Street, or Rosalie Road to Highway 36 (Hickory Highway); extend Paul Street to Angelina Street.	Town, Parish	Near Term
E	Extend Hickory Street to Prats Dairy Road.	Town, Parish	Ongoing
F	Create an east-west connection by extending Prats Dairy Road to Highway 59.	Town, Parish	Near Term
G	Connect Prats Road to Prats Dairy Road and Talisheek Highway.	Town, Parish	Near Term

<b>GOAL 4.7: To Increase Access To Neighboring Cities And Communities With Public Transportation</b>			
4.7.1	<b>Work with the State and the Parish to activate existing Park-and-Ride Areas and inaugurate daily and then hourly service to other cities on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain as well as New Orleans and Cities across the Lake.</b>		
A	Explore public-private partnership to operate passenger vehicles and establish fare schedules and departure/arrival schedules.	Town, Parish	Near Term
B	Trolley service can connect periphery parking locations to downtown and special event locations.	Town, Parish	Near Term
C	Service can be initiated for special events, festivals, weekends and First Fridays.	Town	Near Term



GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS		RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL 4.8: To Coordinate With Parish and State Governments on Mobility Issues That May Affect Abita Springs' Quality of Life</b>			
4.8.1	<b>To coordinate with St. Tammany Parish in order to craft the Parish Transportation Master Plan and embed items into it that improve Abita Springs' quality of life.</b>		
A	Discuss milestones in the Parish's initiative or opportunities for engagement and shaping the plan	Town, Parish	Near Term
4.8.2	<b>To coordinate with the State of Louisiana in order to create multi-modal thoroughfares along State Highways and Roads.</b>		
A	Create cross sections, street and intersection designs for State Highways and Roads that traverse Abita Springs in order to establish a town-authored vision for roads even if they are under the State's jurisdiction.	Town, Parish	Near Term
4.8.3	<b>Use existing right-of-way width when creating cross sections and road designs so that the State and the Parish can avoid eminent domain and costly land acquisition.</b>		
A	Ensure that the Town's street system is compatible with adjacent land uses and not "over-designed" in a way that will change the character of areas to be protected.	Town, Parish	Near Term
<b>GOAL 4.9: To Attract Federal Money For Transportation Improvement By Identifying Projects For Abita Springs on Behalf of St. Tammany Parish and the State of Louisiana.</b>			
4.9.1	<b>Envision transportation-related improvements with the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program (Previously known as Transportation Alternatives Program, 'TAP').</b>		
A	Items eligible for STBG are pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity.	Town, Parish, State	Near Term





## EXISTING CONDITIONS

“The Legend of Abita”, the tale that contributed to the growing mysteries of Abita Springs’ water, was published in an 1811 edition of the St. Tammy Farmer. The town became a well-known destination for its healing water, landscape, and air in the early nineteenth century.

The character and early growth of the town were entirely shaped by its abundant natural resources. Environmental health is a cornerstone to the quality of life. Yet, those same natural resources are facing the threat of growth pressure, human demands, and climate change. This element discusses the community’s goals and objectives for the management of those natural resources that are the basis of Abita Springs prosperity, character, and quality of life.



*At the Abita Springs Hotel, a small fountain is emblematic of the way that cleansing spring water is celebrated throughout the town. This small private pool receives waters from the town’s storied springs.*  
Photo by Jason Christian



## NATURAL HISTORY OF ABITA SPRINGS

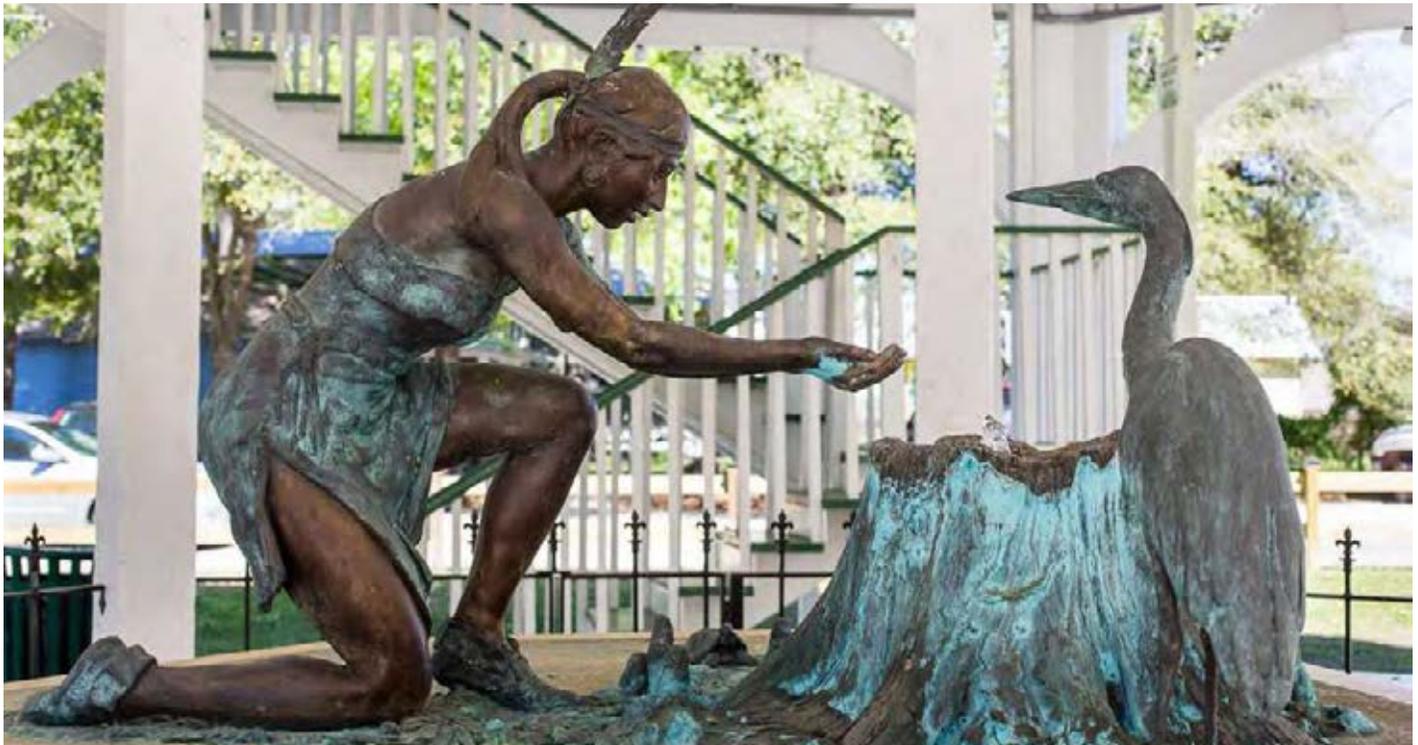
*“Some hundred years have passed away, and still the same sweet scene -  
The same old cypress branches, the gray moss and the green:  
Where should be placed a Temple, is but fond Nature’s bower,  
And flowing calmly onward, the stream of wondrous power.”*

*- The Legend of Abita*

The Choctaws found the natural springs in the area to produce water of exceptional quality, thought to have medicinal properties. The name of the town is derived from these springs. Throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, St. Tammany and adjacent parishes were known as the “Ozone Belt.” Abita Springs and Covington formed the heart of the Ozone Belt. Limited medical and scientific knowledge caused many to associate maladies with New Orleans and lower lying stagnant areas. Ozone was considered to be cathartic fresh air. People believed that the pine forest, artesian springs, and the frequent lightning storms were remedies for maladies.

Though previous generations’ ideas on ozone are now known to be erroneous, they were correct regarding the connection between disease and geolocation. Disease vectors may be more concentrated and insect-borne infections may be transmitted more easily in certain urban environments. For instance, the mosquito that carries yellow fever is more likely to be found in the inner core of New Orleans than in rural regions. Sharp temperature drops in Abita Springs and the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain due to the frequent cold fronts also inhibit the mosquito population.

We disdained wetlands a century ago but now we value them. Since the decline of Abita Springs’ popularity as a health destination, the town recentered its economy around the natural landscape and artistic wealth. Its current environment offers access to trails, intact forests, and a bustling culinary scene. Visitors and residents continue to be attracted by the bracing fresh air and cleansing waters found in Abita Springs.



At the Abita Springs Trailhead, a statue of the Native American woman ‘Abita’ rests under the town’s pavilion.

*Photo by Gorge Long*



## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Abita Spring is surrounded by pine forests, wetlands and the Abita River. The natural resources of Abita Springs are one of the greatest assets of the town and a source of pride for the residents. The community has a number of concerns regarding the environment and sustainability. This page summarizes the key concerns and challenges relating to natural resources and resilience in Abita Springs.



### PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Abita Spring is known for the Tammany Trace and its attractive park system. The parks are an important part of the community because they support recreation, athletics, and social activities. The residents have raised concerns about the maintenance and accessibility. The following sections will discuss ideas to improve the existing parks and create new parks.



### Flooding

A considerable portion of the town is situated in the flood zone and vulnerable to flooding which can result in significant property damage.



### Water Supply and Wastewater

The quality of drinking water is a vital public health issue. The pollutants and other environmental impact on the Abita River can influence the quality of drinking water.



### Stormwater Management

Abita Springs has moderate to heavy rainfall throughout the year. The town is also susceptible to hurricanes and tropical storms which also lead to erosions and flooding. The community is also concerned about excessive runoff from new impervious surfaces.



### Climate Mitigation

The town has become the first municipality in Louisiana to commit to a full transition to clean and renewable energy by 2030. The town needs to create policies and incentives along with investment in renewable energy technologies to achieve the goal.



### Improve Access to Locally Produced Foods

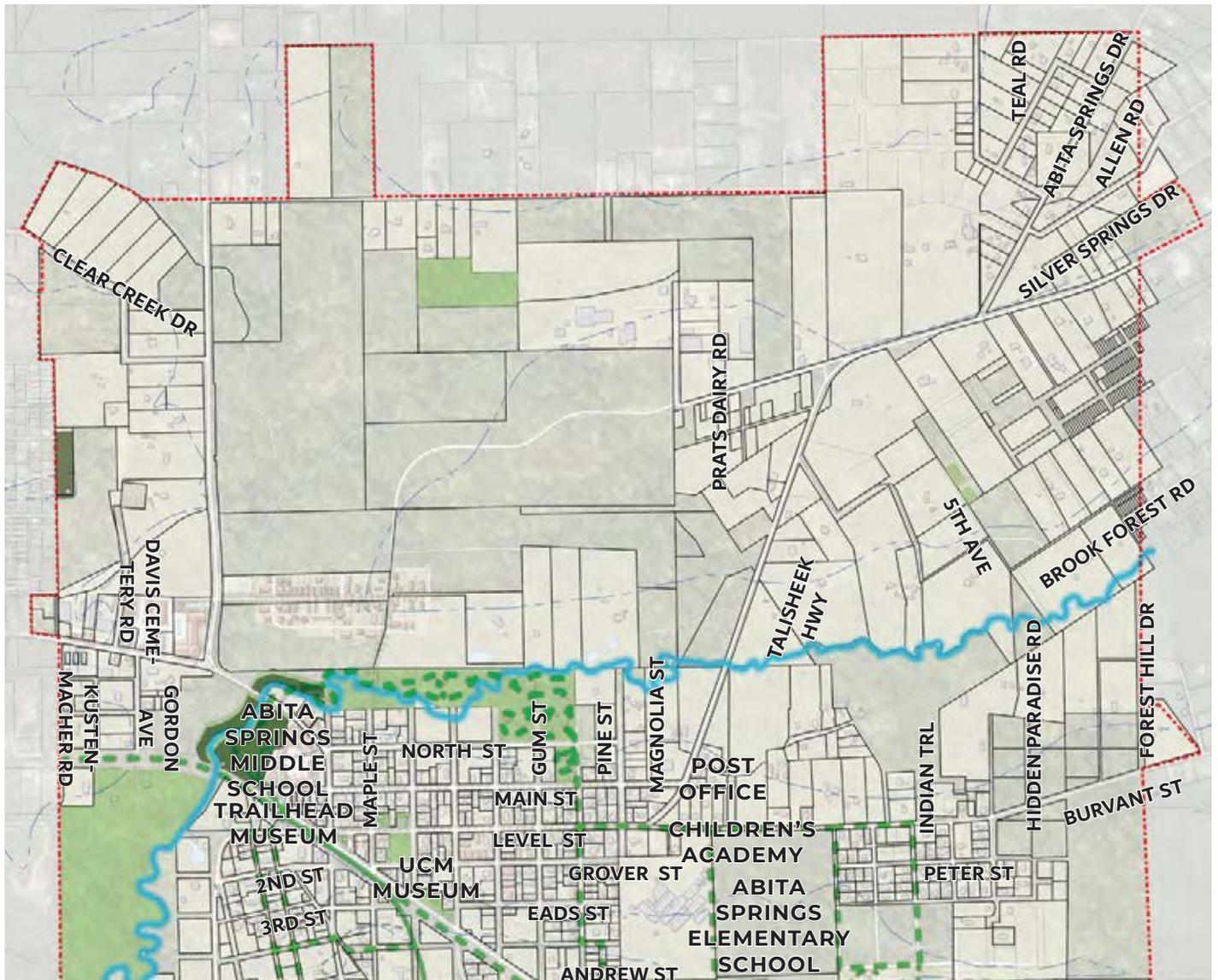
Currently, Abita Springs has very limited access to local food sources. Improving access to locally produced foods supports local farmers and businesses as well as reducing the overall urban footprint on the environment.



## STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### PROPOSED PARKS IN ABITA SPRINGS

This map below identifies potential new parks to be added to different neighborhoods. These new parks would ensure the residents have convenient access to parks within walking distance. Some of the smaller proposed parks could be community gardens, playgrounds, dog parks, or community gathering spaces. The town should further investigate these ideas that add additional parks along the Abita River.



North Side of Town

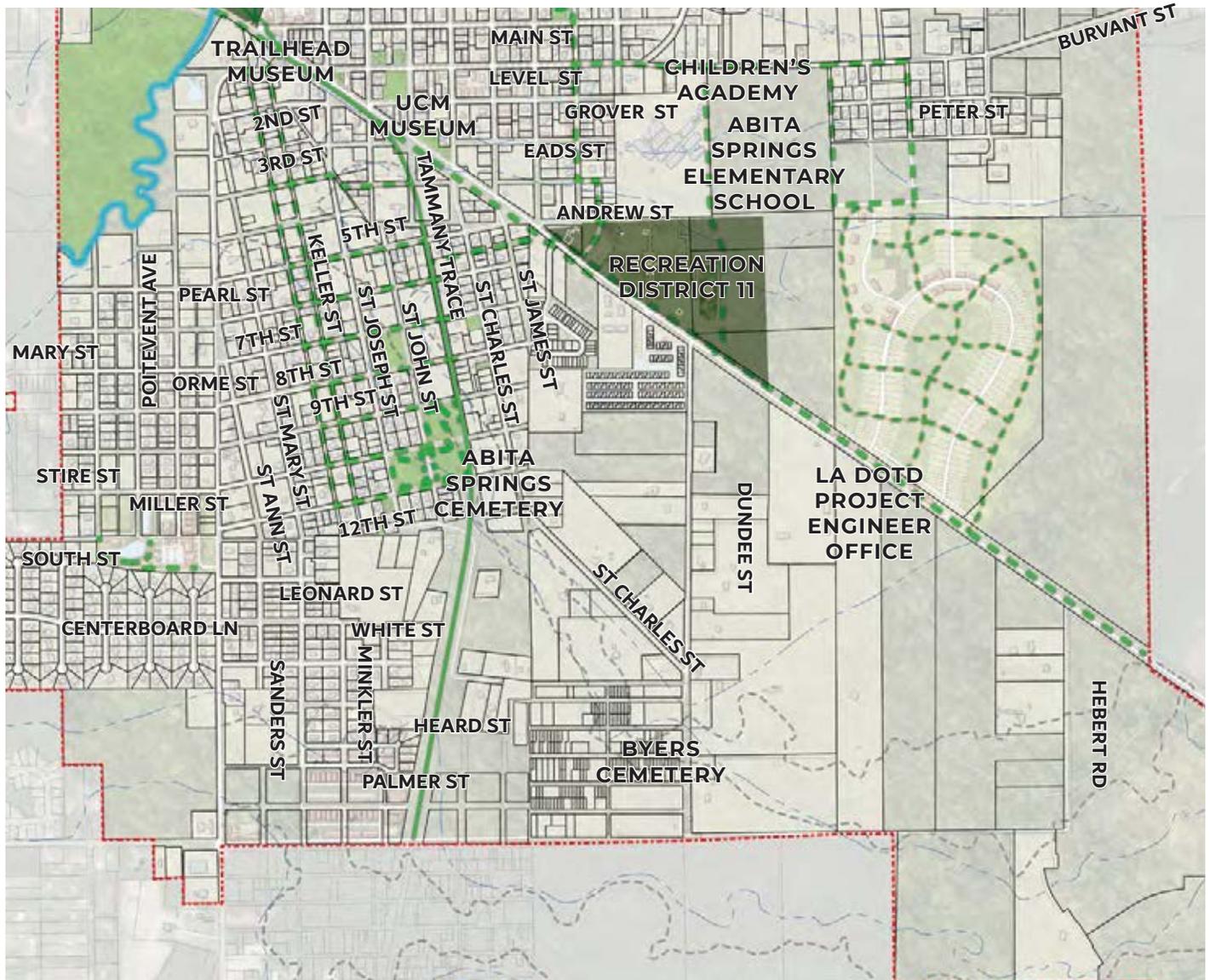
#### LEGEND

- - - - Town Boundary
- - - - Lots
- Abita River
- Proposed Parks
- Existing Parks
- Existing Trails
- - - - Proposed Trails



## ENHANCE THE TRAILS

The Tammany Trace is a valuable asset to Abita Springs as it provides opportunities for walking, biking, and other forms of active transportation in town as well as provides important connections to parks, schools, and other community destinations. However, the connection to the trails can be improved and new trails should be added to expand the access. This map shows existing trails and potential new trails.



South Side of Town



## PARK IMPROVEMENTS

The residents in Abita Springs have offered many suggestions on improving the parks in town during the Master Plan Public Process.

### Improve Trailhead Park

The Tammany Trace is a 31-mile asphalt hike and bike trail that goes through Abita Springs. Abita Springs attracts numerous tourists and visitors to access the trail facility. The Abita Springs Trailhead lies in the heart of the town. The Abita Tourism Plaza, museum and children’s playground are all situated near the trailhead. The Trailhead Park provides an excellent introduction to the town’s railway history and Choctaw heritage. The Abita Springs Art & Farmers Market takes place weekly on Sunday just outside the museum in the park. The park is a place where people get together. The park facilities and programming can be enhanced to create an even better visitor experience.

### Add Shade to the Amphitheater

The amphitheater in the park is located along the river on the back side. Shade trees and shade structure can be added to the amphitheater so the space can be better utilized for performances.



The Trailhead Museum and the Tammany Trace

Credit: George Long

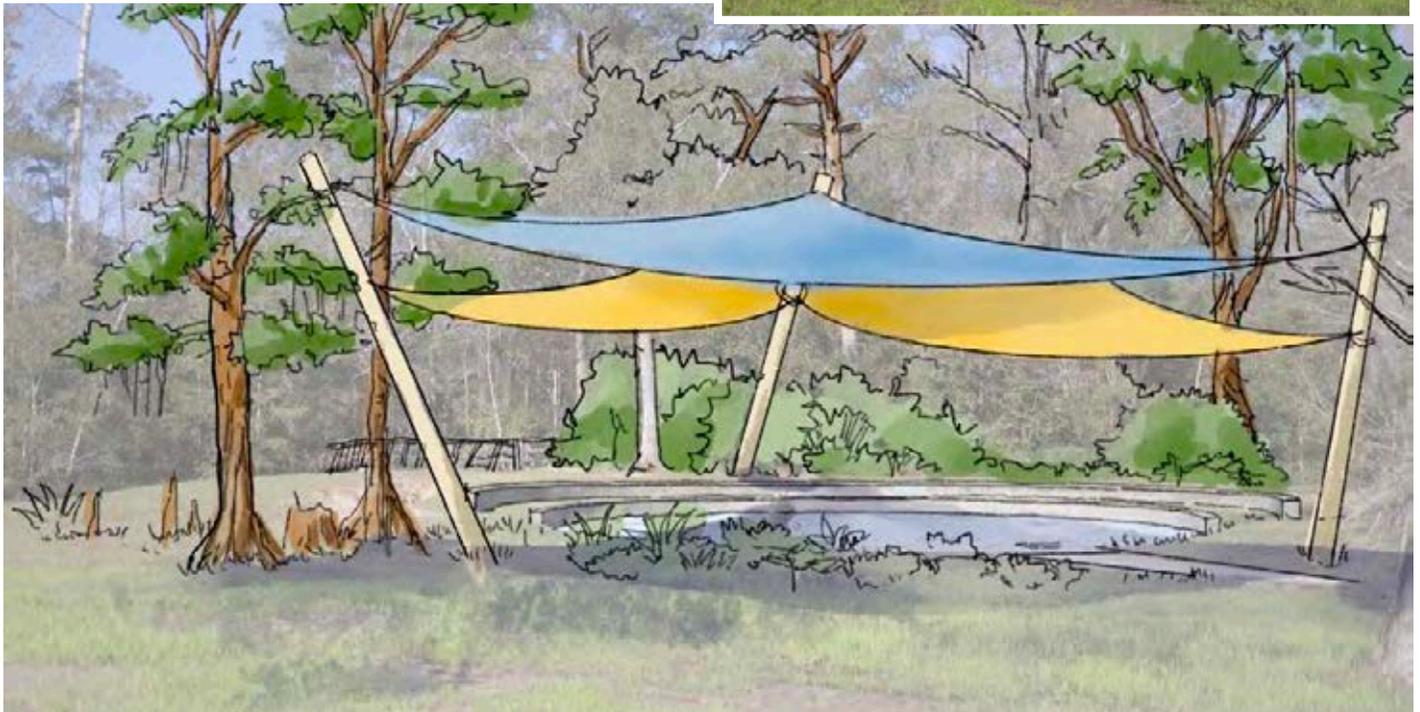
- 1 Add Shade trees/ shade structure
- 2 Address flooding in the playground
- 3 Outdoor Movie Ground
- 4 Expand or relocate the playground
- 5 Enhance existing splashpad
- 6 Remove fence to allow flexible use during events





**Improve Facilities**

The town should consider adding certain new structures and upgrade existing facilities in the park to enhance the programming and functions.



**Enhance Programming**

The park can be more active and livelier with curated events such as outdoor yoga, outdoor movies, and social mixers. These programs provide families and the business with an opportunity to connect with the community in a relaxed and fun atmosphere.



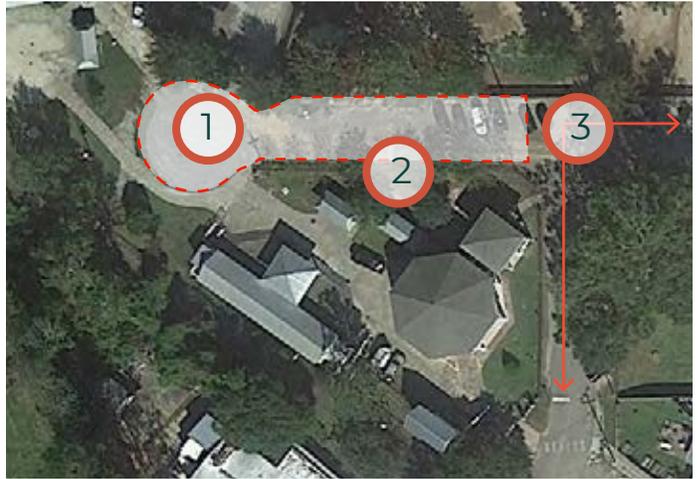
*Shreveport Projector Screen Rental Equipment*



### Create Flexible Space

The fences along the main street in the park could be removed to allow more flexible use of the space during events and gatherings. This portion of street in the park could be closed down temporarily for through traffic to allow more space during events.

- 1 Temporary close down parking and turn-around during events
- 2 Remove fences in the park along Main Street
- 3 Recirculate traffic during events





### Extend Trails along Highway 36

The Trace curves around Hickory St and turns South towards Mandeville. There is a “sidewalk trail” that connects at Hickory Street and heads East along Highway 36. This “sidewalk” could be extended along Highway 36 to expand walking and biking connection to the Tammany Trace and the town center. There should also be a crossing to provide access to the recreation district and school district. New commercial development along Highway 36 should be facing the sidewalk and have parking in the back to create a more inviting experience for pedestrians and bikers.



The trail along the south side of Highway 36 currently terminated at the east boundary of the Abita Oaks neighborhood.





## FLOODPLAINS AND WATERSHEDS

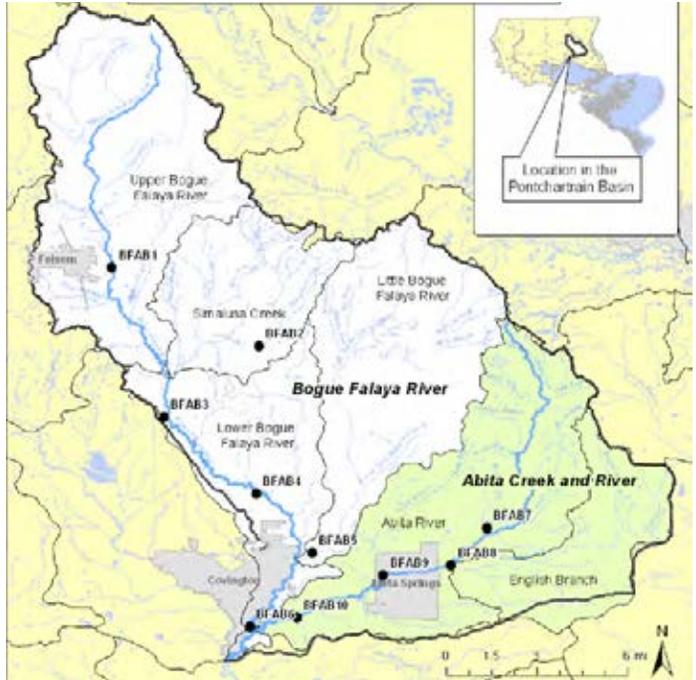
### Striving to Improve the Abita River Watersheds

A ‘watershed’ is the land area that drains into a stream. The Town of Abita Springs is located in the Abita River watershed. The Abita River is a major tributary of the Bogue Falaya River. The geographical boundary of the Abita River watershed extends beyond the Town of Abita Springs within St. Tammany Parish. Improving the health of the watershed and rivers requires collaboration between Abita Springs, neighboring towns, and the parish. Pollution from wastewater and stormwater runoff are two major impairments to the health of the watershed. The parish has improved wastewater treatment over the past years by consolidating services into regional wastewater treatment facilities. The town should continue to coordinate with the parish and state agencies in order to maintain and improve the hydrology and health of surface water and aquifers.

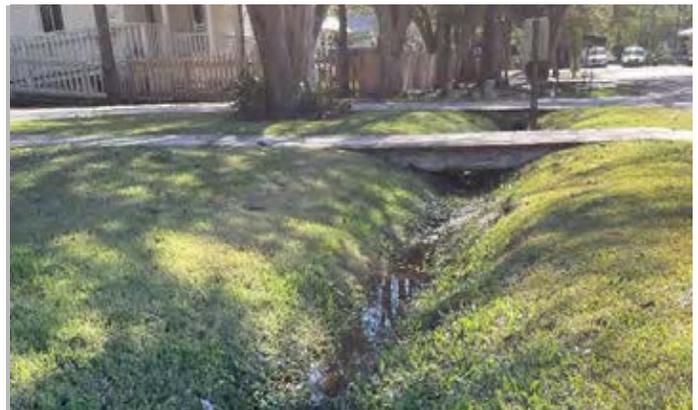
### Drainage Improvement

Seasonal flooding has been a constant issue for the eastern neighborhoods of Abita Springs. The drainage system of Abita Springs consists of a network of ditches, driveway culverts, and cross drains. A proper drainage infrastructure moves water from neighborhoods to downstream drainage laterals. However, severe flooding can happen when ditches become stagnant and fail to channel the stormwater away effectively. The ditches require regular maintenance and clearing. In some cases, the capacity of the drainage system has not kept up with growth.

The parish has embarked on the creation of a comprehensive drainage plan. Close coordination between the town and the parish will be necessary to ensure that it is accurate and best meets the needs of the town. An overall engineering study is required to properly evaluate the existing conditions and improve the drainage system. A comprehensive Drainage Plan should be created to systematically evaluate and improve the drainage condition in Abita Springs.



*Abita River Watershed Map by Ezra Boyd*



*Drainage ditches are common throughout residential neighborhoods in Abita Springs*



**Floodplain Management**

The National Flood Insurance Program was created by Congress in 1968 and is managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA identifies flood plains and flood hazard zones in neighborhoods. FEMA prices flood insurance based on whether a home is inside the so-called 100-year flood plain. The 100-year flood plain means an area that has a 1 percent chance of flooding in any given year — not an area that will flood only once in a century.

**Flood Plain Regulations**

FEMA requires communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations that help mitigate flooding effects. Floodplains and coastal floodplains are areas of land that are prone to flooding and new structures within floodplains must be elevated or reinforced to minimize flood damage.

Local governments can go further and use floodplain regulations to prohibit or limit development in flood-prone areas to help reduce the number of properties at risk of flooding. The town can consider raising development standards requirements. For developments currently held to the standard of the 25-year flood event could apply the standard of the 100-year flood event.

Properties built in low-lying areas are much more likely to be inundated. Limiting development in floodplains may be the most effective way to lower a community’s flood risk and reduce future loss of life and damages.

St. Tammany Parish has not approved the most recent FEMA floodplain maps which can make managing and mitigating flood plain risk difficult to enforce. Abita Springs should adopt the current FEMA floodplain maps locally to have better defined floodplain regulations that in alignment at the state and federal level if additional assistance is needed.

Abita Springs’ current code of ordinance has a chapter on Flood Management. This chapter could be updated to reflect best practices and current FEMA regulations as well as to identify regulations that exceed FEMA standards to account for the geography of Abita Springs.

**Wetlands Mitigation**

Development in wetland areas should be limited to protect valuable natural resources. However, when new developments are inevitable, the wetlands need to be mitigated. Mitigation refers to the actions of restoration, creation, or enhancement of wetlands in order to compensate for the permitted loss. When mitigation of wetlands is necessary, locate mitigation projects within the same floodplain to minimize impacts.



*Abita Springs Park during floods  
Image Credit: George Long*



*Example of raised home in Slidell  
Image Credit: Roubion Shoring*





## WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT

### Drinking Water

Sources of drinking water include rivers, lakes, springs, and wells. For over 100 years, the quality of Abita Springs’ water has been a source of pride and reputation. The main drinking water source in Abita Springs is from the Highway 36 Ballpark well. The state Department of Health is requiring Abita Springs to have a second water well that is equal to or bigger than the current well. The town should continue to seek funding for the creation of a new well that is compliant with the state’s requirements.

According to a 2014 state ordinance, public drinking water in Abita Springs is required to maintain a minimum chlorine level throughout its distribution lines. After the chlorination of the water in 2014, there have been complaints from residents in recent years about the water’s unpleasant taste and odor. Treated water is usually devoid of any detectable odor or taste. The town should continue to seek grants for additional funding that improve the quality of the water supply for Abita Springs. Multiple injection sites, looping dead end water main lines, and flushing the water main lines to remove bottom sediments are ways to improve water quality.

### Wastewater Treatment

The water quality issues from under-treated wastewater should be addressed to prevent health hazards. Rapid growth has led to decentralized sewer practices in unincorporated areas. St. Tammany Parish has more sewage treatment systems at individual homes and businesses than any other parish in the state. Individual treatment units and septic tanks have led to a decline in surface water quality. The town should have residents connecting to the regional system and decommission individual septic units. In cases where connections to the regional sewage treatment are not feasible, the town should ensure proper maintenance and operation on the individual systems. No new septic tanks should be permitted, all new developments should include hookups to the regional system.

### Ways to Improve Water Quality

#### Benefit of Multiple Injection Sites

Public drinking water systems must maintain a residual chlorine level throughout their distribution lines. Which means enough chlorine has to be added to the water at the Point of Entry (POE) to still maintain the required level at the furthest connection from the POE. If an additional injection site was established then the level of chlorine added at POE could be lessened.

#### What is Looping?

“Looping” typically refers to the elimination of a dead end water main by constructing an additional water main from the dead end to another water main to complete a “loop”. Sometimes water mains that are constructed to better integrate a major water system component (like a well, reservoir or tank) into the water system or the construction of a second water main to serve an isolated portion of the distribution system are referred to as a “loop”.

#### What is Flushing?

Why does the Town of Abita Springs “flush” the water mains? Flushing the water mains improves water quality by removing sediment that slowly builds up at the bottom of the water main over time. The sediment comes from internal corrosion of the water mains over many years.

*Quoted from <https://www.townofabitasprings.com/improvingwaterquality>*



The wastewater treatment plant is located at the southwest side of the town along the Abita River.



### STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Stormwater management refers to the efforts that reduce impervious runoff from storm events and improve water quality. Stormwater runoff often carries debris, chemicals, and various pollutants into streams, rivers, lakes, or wetlands. Detaining stormwater runoff and removing contaminants can reduce non-point source pollution and improve water quality.

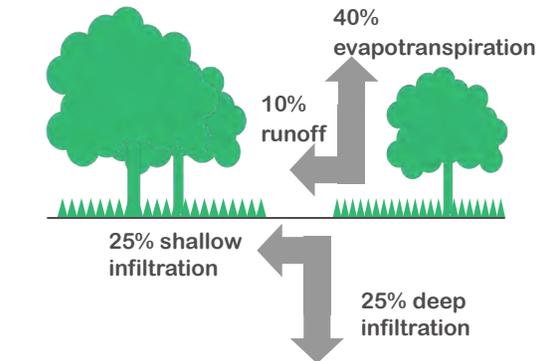
#### Reduce Impervious Surface

In natural conditions, stormwater is mostly absorbed through evapotranspiration and infiltration. Developed areas dramatically alter this natural process due to a loss of vegetation and an increase in impervious surfaces. An impervious surface has three times more runoff than a forested cover.

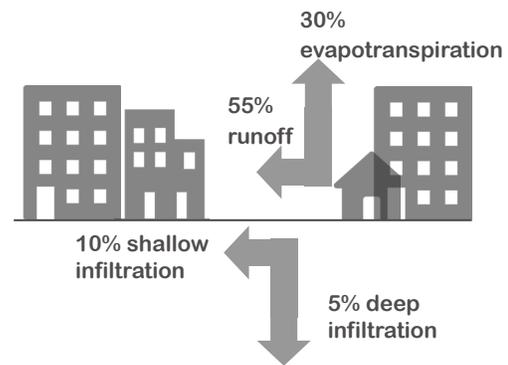
The town should examine the low density residential areas and find opportunities to apply natural materials such as gravel and pavers in parking lots and pathways to reduce impervious surfaces. When new developments are inevitable, conservation design techniques such as cluster development that minimize impervious surfaces should be considered. The town could limit the percentage of impervious surface in new developments in the zoning code.

#### Reduce Runoff with Street Trees

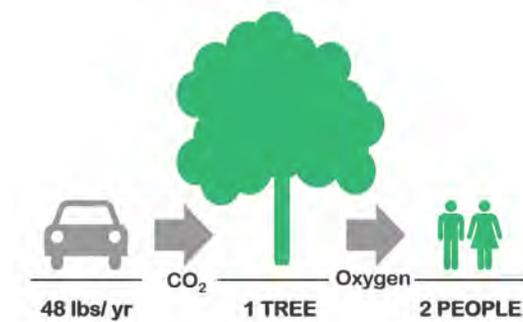
Trees decrease the amount of stormwater runoff and pollutants that eventually reach local waterways. Trees perform this important service through evapotranspiration and retention. The leaves and branches of trees intercept rain and prevent a portion of it from reaching the ground. The root structure of trees improves conditions for the infiltration of stormwater into the soil, further reducing the amount of runoff. Trees are also capable of absorbing certain pollutants.



Natural ground cover



75% -100% impervious cover





### Improve the Health of the Abita River

The water quality of the Abita River has far-reaching impacts on public health and water resources for the town. Riparian areas, the vegetated ecosystem bordering the river, have critical influence on the health of the river. A riparian buffer that is no less than 100 feet should be preserved from all future development.

Clearing native vegetation from stream banks exacerbates stormwater runoff and erosion. Native vegetation can be applied to stabilize the riverbank and help prevent erosion. The ecological function of the river can also be improved by removing invasive exotic plant species, solid waste, and other litter, and monitoring water flowing into the river for nutrients and pollutants.

Glyphosate is toxic to animals and humans. It should not be used as an herbicide anywhere. It has been connected to Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in humans. The town should consider eliminating the use of herbicides that include glyphosate as an ingredient in locations where water contamination is possible.

The water that goes into ditches in Abita Springs eventually ends up in Abita River. Residential water may be treated, but many other sources are untreated before they are released into the Abita River. Untreated runoff should be prevented from releasing into the river. Green infrastructure devices should be implemented to capture and treat runoff before it enters the river. When designing paved areas or surface parking, the use of permeable paving, turf or grass block pavers, and gravel can trap pollutants and encourage ground-water recharge on-site. The town can create locally calibrated LID (Low Impact Development) Standards that provide guidance on the implementation of green infrastructure in town. The following sections discuss the implementation of green infrastructure devices in more detail.



*The health of the Abita River is crucial to ensure the town's good water quality.*



*Example of porous asphalt in a parking lot.*



### Green Infrastructure Devices

There are many techniques that can be implemented to help reduce the amount of pollutants in water. The installation of infiltration devices, which would allow stormwater to be filtered and treated before it enters the ground, is one of them.

Another technique that can help improve water quality is referred to as “green infrastructure”. Green infrastructure are devices that capture and reuse stormwater to mimic and restore natural hydrology. Green Infrastructure uses vegetation, soil, and natural processes to manage stormwater and create healthier built environments with fewer negative impacts on surrounding green spaces and wildlife habitat. It is able to do this because it soaks up, stores, and facilitates evapotranspiration. This in effect reduces the frequency of nuisance flooding and the demand on drainage infrastructure. Permeable pavement, green roofs, cisterns, and constructed stormwater wetlands are all common green infrastructure devices.

### Bioretention Areas

Bioretention basins and rain gardens are shallow depressions filled with sandy soil and planted with dense vegetation. Stormwater is retained and treated in the bioretention area before it is infiltrated or discharged. An overflow outlet is usually present to prevent flooding during larger storm events. Bioretention areas remove suspended solids, metals, and nutrients from the first flush of stormwater runoff.

Planting with native grasses and wildflowers in bioretention areas can not only create a visually appealing garden but also provides essential ecological services for wildlife and usually requires less maintenance. A rain garden can be created with deep-rooted native plants on a shallow depression of soil to mitigate the impact of rainwater.

### Permeable Pavement

Permeable pavement can help reduce runoff by infiltrating rainwater. Common permeable materials include pervious asphalt, porous concrete, and interlocking pavers. Pervious pavers are interlocking paving units that allow water flow through the joints between individual pavers.

### Green Roofs

A green roof or living roof is the top covering of a building that is partially or completely covered with vegetation, soil or another growing medium, and a waterproof membrane. Green roofs absorb rainwater and reduce stormwater runoff, provide insulation, create a habitat for flora and even wildlife, provide an aesthetically pleasing landscape, mitigate a building’s carbon emissions through sequestration, reflect solar radiation, and help lower urban air temperatures and mitigate the heat island effect. Green roofs are urban carbon sinks which sequesters carbon in their biomass.



Bioretention cells in SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue Portland



Rain Garden built by New Orleans Redevelopment Authority

Image Credit: SMM



Collect rainwater with rain barrel is a good way to conserve water.



## Stormwater Transect

The stormwater management transect approach promotes traditional neighborhood design and at the same time develops an environmentally friendly strategy to manage stormwater. A sample of tools for addressing stormwater runoff is introduced here. The tools are broken down into four categories: paving, channeling, storage and filtration. Each category has three options representing some typical conditions. The tools can be used jointly at different scales.

More Urban



Less Urban

### Paving

Paving plays a large role in receiving, producing and directing stormwater runoff. Sturdy materials are often times less permeable. Paving in dense urban areas requires larger traffic loads, thus they are less pervious.



Concrete



Concrete Paver Block



Crushed Stone/Shell

### Channeling

Channeling directs and controls the flow of stormwater. Channeling tools should consider the amount of impervious surface and pedestrian movement. Some tools have the potential to create artful expressions with stormwater.



Planting Strip Trench



French Drain



Vegetative/Stone Swale

### Storage

Many kinds of tools could be applied to collect and store stormwater. Storage tools are utilitarian for the development process.



Pool & Fountain



Landscape Tree Well



Retention Basin

### Filtration

The goal of filtration tools is to mimic natural systems to reduce and remove contaminants in stormwater. Filtration tools can also serve as an amenity when they are well integrated into a design.



Green Roof



Bioretention Swale



Filtration Pond



## CLIMATE MITIGATION

### Preserve Natural Resources and Apply Native Species

The greenery in Abita Springs not only attracts visitors and residents but also supports wildlife and ecological functions. Some rare plant species such as Spring Hill flax and little-leaf milkwort are only known in the flatwoods wetlands. Varieties of pine-dominated wetland communities including longleaf pine savanna, longleaf flatwoods, bayhead swamp, and slash pine-pond cypress woodland can be found in Abita Springs. Longleaf pine savannas are among the most threatened habitats in North America and only 1 to 5% of the original communities remains today. These natural lands sequester carbon as well as providing an important role in climate resilience. Conservation efforts are needed to protect valuable natural resources in town. Natural lands and urban green spaces should be preserved and expanded to maximize climate mitigation.



*Longleaf pine savannas are among the most threatened habitats in North America. Image from Abita Creek Flatwoods preserve*

### Protect Local Trees

Abita Springs has been recognized as a Tree City USA for 17 years. The town should further strengthen the thriving forestry by creating an Urban Forestry Master Plan. The town should also seek ways to enhance the urban forestry in town. There are several strategies to increase canopy and understory plantings. Current zoning regulations provide some protection for species such as Live Oak, Cypress, Long Leaf Pine, and Magnolia. The tree-protection ordinance should be audited and updated to ensure its effectiveness of tree protection. The town can also consider working with local growers and nurseries to establish a tree giveaway program for residents.



### Protect Native Species

Native species provide important ecological services because the wildlife is dependent on them for food and shelter. Invasive species pose the threat of crowded out native plants and deprive native species of necessary resources and habitat. Providing education and tools to homeowners can help them identify and remove invasive species from private properties. The town could also partner with local garden and volunteer groups to remove species within public rights-of-way and town owned parcels. The legal regulations that create barriers for invasive plant removal should be eliminated.



*Longleaf Pine (Pinus palustris), Live Oak (Quercus virginiana), Sourwood (Oxydendrum arboreum), Sweetbay Magnolia (M. virginiana var. australis), Mountain Laurel (Kalmia latifolia) are a sample of the common native species in Abita Springs*



**Reduce Greenhouses Gas Emission**

The State of Louisiana has set the goal to reduce carbon emissions to “net zero” by 2050. The 2050 climate action states that failure to reduce carbon emissions will result in rising temperatures, declining air quality, and a variety of health threats. Abita Springs can reduce carbon emissions through promoting alternative ways of transportation, prudent community design, expanding natural and urban canopy, and employing energy-efficient building standards.

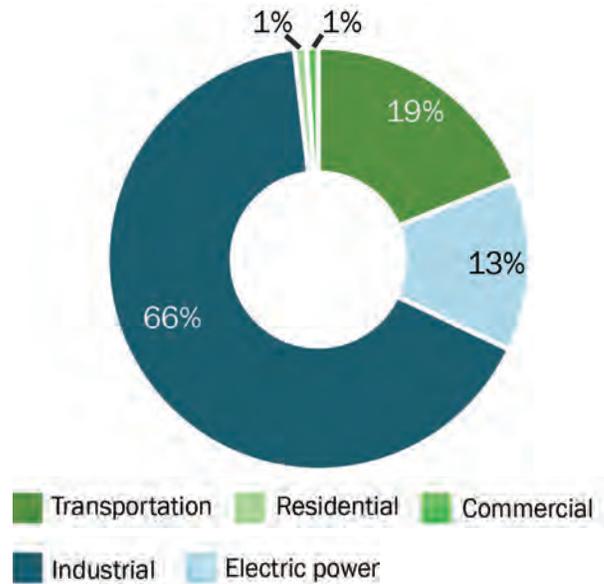
**Electric Vehicle Infrastructure**

The transportation sector generates the second largest share of greenhouse gas emissions in Louisiana, it is responsible for 19% of the total carbon emission according to the Louisiana 2021 GHG Inventory. The transition from traditional fossil fuel combustion to electric vehicles and low-carbon fuels can play an important role in carbon reduction. The town can help the transition to low- and zero-emission vehicles by creating the required infrastructure such as building electrical charging stations that are accessible to drivers and passengers across income levels.

**Community Design**

Community design can promote carbon neutral development through creating complete streets and proper land use planning. A complete street will include safer, slower speeds for vehicles, accessibility for bicycles and buses, on-street parking, a safe sidewalk, shade, and other features that make a street pleasant and livable. Driving becomes less necessary in a place with multimodal streets and that means less carbon pollution overall. Increased access to safe and interesting routes for biking and walking can reduce vehicle miles traveled by cars locally. Neighborhoods should be created in a size that is easily walkable, a distance of a 5 to 10 minute walk from the center of a neighborhood to the edge. Neighborhoods should be mixed-used to contain amenities required by their inhabitants including housing, employment, entertainment, and education.

Forested areas “are a considerable carbon sink” with wetlands according to the 2021 GHG Inventory. There is wide support in town to conserve the natural resources and unique environment. Planning strategies such as smart growth and cluster development can address land use and development and preserve habitats and open space at the same time. The town’s land use regulation should discourage sprawl and support healthy and resilient communities. The town should also seek ways to increase the number of trees (including street trees), shrubs, and ground cover to increase carbon sequestration.



*Louisiana energy consumption referenced from Louisiana Climate Action Plan 2022*



## Retrofit Buildings

A green retrofit is any refurbishment of an existing building that reduces the building's carbon emissions, energy use, and environmental impact. Retrofitting buildings with improved insulation, energy-efficient climate control equipment, smart lighting choices, updated appliances, new windows, and upgraded electricity management systems substantially reduce the energy required for operations, productivity, and heating and cooling. Retrofits are typically conducted to save money on the long-term cost of building operations. Climate retrofits can seek to raise the building ground floor elevation, add green roofs, green stormwater infrastructure, and solar panels.

Traditional buildings often have wider porches that provide shade and have operable windows that can easily allow cross breezes to cool down the interior space. The buildings are typically raised to allow a crawl space that can also help with cooling. However because most modern homes use AC units, buildings over 40 years old have significantly worse energy performance than modern buildings due to deteriorated mechanical systems and the amount of air that "permeates" through gaps and cracks in the building. At the same time, the greenest building is one that is already built. Retrofit involves less embodied carbon, the carbon emitted in both the production of new structures and manufacturing of steel, concrete, and other building materials than building new.

The Town of Abita Springs can team with specialty non-profits and contractors to begin green retrofits with public buildings and civic facilities in a building-by-building approach. Energy efficiency retrofits can be combined with resilience improvements to ensure homes in Abita Springs are prepared for the future. The town can also consider ways to support building retrofit programs as well as update energy efficiency standards and building codes.

## LED Lighting Retrofit

A light-emitting diode (LED) is a light source which uses less energy and lasts longer than conventional incandescent light bulbs. The town can require public buildings and lighting infrastructure to use LEDs. Streetlights that use LED lights can save up to 70 percent on energy use and significantly reduce the maintenance costs of bulb replacement. The town can consider passing laws requiring that all light bulbs be more efficient and thereby begin to phase-out most incandescent light bulbs. Objections to the replacement of incandescent bulbs include the higher purchasing expense of alternative light bulbs (though the price has steadily decreased in recent years) and the different variety of light produced by LEDs (which has increased in recent years).



*Example of raised home in Mandeville*

*Image Credit: Roubion Shoring*



## Green Building Standards

New buildings should be encouraged to have a long life span and flexible design for a variety of different uses. New construction should have enhanced insulation and other measures to reduce heating and cooling loads. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED standards, are a major component of sustainable smart growth. Widely respected and considered to be the main benchmark of sustainable growth, more communities are working to wholly adopt LEED. This does not mean, however, that it is without criticism. LEED standards have faced disapproval from both extremes of the spectrum, with some saying it is too aggressive, and others saying it is not nearly comprehensive enough. Ultimately, LEED is a useful tool for providing long-term benefits to the community, and should be implemented as much as possible, while retaining sight of its limitations.

## Original Green

Our ancestors before the modern age practiced living traditions with the wisdom of sustainability. Insulation, natural ventilation, and natural lights are required for survival without electricity. The original green is our ancestors' way of sustainable living. Many of the original green design principles can be applied to building and planning processes to reduce energy costs. These principles include:

- Encourage piers rather than fill for foundations to preserve water flow by elevating houses on piers rather than by changing the grade of the entire site in a way that causes neighboring properties to flood.
- Encourage raised-finished floors rather than slab-on-grade construction to create crawl spaces and ventilation.
- Encourage porches to be of a sufficient depth that they are usable and so that doors and windows are sheltered from direct rain and sun. Porches also provide people with access to the fresh outdoors while still being sheltered. Wide porches are a staple in Abita Springs and should be encouraged.
- Encourage tall ceiling heights so that interiors are airy and comfortable even in the absence of air conditioning.
- Encourage narrower footprints and alignment of windows and doors across structures, so that building inhabitants may enjoy cross ventilation.
- Encourage operable shutters that filter light, provide tropical storm protection, provide privacy, and accentuate authenticity of building facades.
- Encourage tall windows, and windows or doors with transoms in order to provide natural daylighting and enhanced ventilation.



*Examples of original green buildings in Abita Springs*

- Encourage the use of deep overhangs to protect windows and walls from rain and sun.
- Encourage the use of thoughtfully sourced construction materials such as rapidly renewable, locally sourced, salvaged, repurposed, or Forest Stewardship Council certified materials.
- Encourage the use of cisterns and rain barrels. Minimize impervious surfaces on sites.



## Renewable Energy

Abita Springs has claimed the title of the first community in Louisiana committed to a 100% renewable energy future. The volunteer-led Abita Committee for Energy Sustainability in collaboration with Sierra Club's Ready for 100 campaign has achieved successful organizing efforts. The mayor and town council unanimously adopted a resolution in 2017 to power the town with energy from renewable sources by 2030.

Renewable energy generation includes solar, hydropower, geothermal, and wind but does not include propane, natural gas, or any carbon dioxide polluting source. Renewable energy can be developed at a utility-scale, or a domestic-scale and local plans and codes must allow both.

The town should set goals to enable both large-scale photovoltaic farms and individual solar panels. Land development regulations list permitted uses and should allow both ground-mounted and rooftop photovoltaics under 15 acres in size as-of-right and without a public hearing. Solar farms, large-scale ground-mounted photovoltaic facilities greater than 15 acres, should be allowed with a Special or Conditional Use Permit. The Special or Conditional Use Permit requires public meetings and design controls to help utilities fit into their surroundings.

## On-Site Energy Generation

Methods of small-scale energy production have advanced dramatically since the introduction of the first solar panels. Suburban homes can use more advanced solar panels, and may be able to receive tax benefits, in addition to selling excess production back to the utility. While on-site energy generation is vital, moving towards large-scale alternative energy methods is something that must still be considered.

## Solar Panels

Solar panels use photovoltaic (PV) solar cells to convert sunlight into electricity. Domestic-scale PV installations may be ground-mounted, rooftop-mounted, wall-mounted, or floating. The mount may be fixed or use a solar tracker to follow the sun across the sky. Solar panels generate electricity without emitting greenhouse gases. They provide power even after grid transmissions stop due to destructive natural events.



*Abita Brewing Co. installed 340-panel 84 kilowatt photovoltaic rooftop solar system in 2013. The solar power is used to brew beer.*

## Solar Co-ops

Solar co-ops organize neighbors in a group to go solar together. Solar co-ops have members which leverage bulk-purchasing power to get discounted pricing and quality installation. There are many co-ops people that can join and information is readily-available on creating new co-ops. Essentially, as enough qualified homes with sunny roofs join a co-op, a Request for Proposals is issued to installers. Installers submit competitive bids and participants in the co-op volunteer to be on a selection committee and choose one installer for the entire group.

## Microgrids and Distributed Energy Systems

A microgrid is a self-sufficient energy system that serves a specific geography, such as a school campus, hospital complex, business center, or neighborhood. Microgrids can involve localized groupings of renewable energy sources such as rooftop solar, micro-wind, geothermal, in-stream and tidal hydro, and biomass. In microgrids, energy storage is needed to ensure power availability and quality.

Participants in distributed energy systems stop being passive consumers of energy source utility companies offer. Grid independence means more renewable choices become available. Microgeneration can be more resilient and less prone to blackouts than large-scale energy distribution. Locally supplied energy reduces energy lost in transmission and distribution. Microgrids present an alternative to dirty, fossil-fuel, large utilities. The town should advocate for microgrids in local plans and allow for microgrids in codes.



## Solar Farms

Solar farms are composed of large-scale arrays of hundreds, thousands, or millions of photovoltaic (PV) panels generating solar power at utility scale. Every plan for reversing global warming includes a massive increase in solar power. Constructing a solar farm is cheaper and faster today than creating a new coal, natural gas, or nuclear plant and the number of solar farms is growing at a fast pace. Modern solar farms do not reflect light, generate more noise than other neighbors, create pollution, or bring down property values.

## Disaster Planning

High wind, tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding, and storm surge are common natural hazards in Abita Springs. The town should consider maintaining and expanding the Town Operations Center that provides essential services such as cooling and heating, electric power, and meals ready-to-eat. The residents should be educated regarding shelter locations. The town should coordinate with the parish to provide transportation to shelters as well as stock them with supplies.

Resilient electricity infrastructure investments should be promoted so that the town can withstand and recover quickly from future climate hazards. The town should investigate the possibility of placing overhead wires underground. A long-term plan could be created to phase out the construction and identify priority projects.



*Power lines should be placed underground. This makes the power system more resilient. The cost is significant and grants from the parish, state, and federal government are typically required.*



## IMPROVE ACCESS TO LOCALLY PRODUCED FOODS

The Abita Springs Art and Farmers Market on Sundays offers the residents the opportunity to purchase from local farm vendors include Foxboro Farms, Gallo D'oro Farms, Heidelberg Farms, Myers Mushrooms, and Talcacha Farms. The town should expand and improve access to locally produced food.

From a survey during the planning process, a majority of the residents in Abita Springs drive outside the town to purchase food and groceries. The creation of farm fields and community gardens could be promoted through public investments, policies, and private partnership.

- Explicitly allow and encourage the planting of edible species in public spaces and on private properties, either as permaculture, tree crops, or planting beds.
- Identify sites for community food gardens and work with residents to install and maintain them. Provide irrigation and composting infrastructure for food gardens.
- Protect the rights of citizens to maintain hens on private property.
- Continue to expand food banks, 'blessing boxes', and other food exchange sites in order to battle hunger and undernourishment.
- Strengthen farmers' markets and provide sites for such to take place.
- Encourage farm-to-table restaurants and caterers who source local ingredients and establish relationships with local farmers and growers.
- Work with grocers, restaurants, and residents to reduce food waste, reduce organic matter in landfills, and build topsoil by:
  - distributing food to those who are in need or malnourished,
  - supply produce and grain to those who keep hens in town, and
  - supply material for compost and vermiculture.



*Abita Farmers market allows the residents and visitors to purchase from local farmer. The town should expand access to healthy and local food providers.*



## GOALS AND POLICIES

POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>Goal NR 1: To improve management of floodplains and watersheds.</b>				
<b>NR 1.1</b>	<b>Improve the function of drainage ditches.</b>			
	<b>A</b>	Coordinate with the parish to create the St. Tammany Parish Comprehensive Drainage Plan. Within the limits of the town, this should also show existing ditches within rights-of-way on traversing private property, flow directions, and how these interact with water flow and water bodies.	Town, Parish	Short-Term
	<b>B</b>	As part of the drainage plan, implement a servitude master plan in order for the town to maintain ditches and enhance water flow on ditches that traverse privately owned properties.	Town, Parish	Short-Term
<b>NR 1.2</b>	<b>Reduce non-point source pollution and slow stormwater runoff.</b>			
	<b>A</b>	Examine low density residential (LDR) areas for opportunities to reduce maximum impervious surfaces, especially for parking lots and pathways.	Town	Ongoing
	<b>B</b>	Encourage the use of bioswales, filtration marshes, and other landscape designs that use plants to polish stormwater and promote recharge of aquifers.	Town	Ongoing
<b>NR 1.3</b>	<b>Improve the health of the Abita River.</b>			
	<b>A</b>	Improve banks of the river by removing invasive exotic plant species, remove plastics and other litter, and monitor water flowing into the river for nutrients and pollutants.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>B</b>	Promote the use of permeable paving, turf/grass block pavers, and gravel for parking lots in order to trap pollutants on-site.	Town	Ongoing
	<b>C</b>	Create and locally-calibrated LID (Low Impact Development) Standards.	Town	Mid-Term
	<b>D</b>	Eliminate the use of herbicides that include glyphosate as an ingredient.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>E</b>	Continue to coordinate with the parish and state agencies to maintain and improve the hydrology and health of surface water and aquifers.	Town, Parish	Ongoing
<b>NR 1.4</b>	<b>Implement higher standards of floodplain management.</b>			
	<b>A</b>	For developments currently held to the standard of the 25-year flood event, consider using the standard of the 100-year Flood Event.	Town	Mid-Term
	<b>B</b>	When mitigation of wetlands is necessary, locate mitigation projects within the same floodplain.	Town	Ongoing
	<b>C</b>	Adopt or accept new FEMA floodplain maps.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>D</b>	Update 'Part 9, Planning and Development, Chapter 4, Floodplain Management' to reflect best practices and current FEMA regulations as well as to identify regulations that will have to exceed FEMA standards to account for the geography of Abita Springs.	Town	Short-Term



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
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**Goal NR 2: Enhance water supply and treatment of grey water and solid waste.**

**NR 2.1 Increase water supply standards.**

<b>A</b>	Because a secondary water well is required by the state, the town should continue to seek funding to comply with the state’s requirement.	Town, State	Short-Term
<b>B</b>	Identify a location for a secondary water well.	Town	Short-Term
<b>C</b>	The town should continue to seek grants for additional funding that improve the water quality of Abita Springs.	Town	Long-Term

**NR 2.2 Improve conveyance and treatment of solid waste.**

<b>A</b>	Coordinate with the Parish to have residents connect to central sewer systems and decommission septic systems if possible.	Town, Parish	Mid-Term
<b>B</b>	Ensure the proper maintenance and operation of the individual sewer systems where connections to the regional system are not feasible.	Town	Ongoing
<b>C</b>	Encourage the use of enhanced individual sewer systems that are more efficient and produce less pollutants.	Town	Ongoing

**Goal NR 3: Accentuate habitat and native species.**

**NR 3.1 Protect and increase both canopy and understory plantings.**

<b>A</b>	Land Development Regulations should be audited to encourage planting of native species and encourage removal of invasive species on private property as well as rights-of-way and publicly owned parcels.	Town	Short-Term
<b>B</b>	The town should work with local growers and nurseries to establish a tree giveaway program for residents.	Town	Short-Term
<b>C</b>	Further the town’s status as a ‘Tree City USA’ by creating an Urban Forestry master Plan.	Town	Mid-Term
<b>D</b>	Audit and update the town’s tree-protection ordinance.	Town	Short-Term
<b>E</b>	Delete the necessity of obtaining a permit for the removal of invasive exotic species.	Town	Short-Term

**Goal NR 4: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by implementing strategies stated throughout the comprehensive plan’s elements.**

**NR 4.1 Reduce carbon emission at an individual level.**

<b>A</b>	<p>Promote and educate residents and business owners that greenhouse gas emissions may be attributed to diverse activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tail-pipe emissions from automobiles and excessive VMT (vehicle miles traveled)</li> <li>• Inefficiencies in building design and lack of sealing and insulation.</li> <li>• Deforestation and clearing of lots.</li> <li>• Using electricity produced in fossil-fuel based plants.</li> </ul>	Town	Ongoing
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POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>NR 4.2 Reduce carbon emission through planning and design</b>				
	<b>A</b>	Promote carbon neutral development patterns such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging a mixture of uses and pedestrian and cycle-friendly design in order to reduce the length and number of car trips (VMT reduction).</li> <li>• Encouraging networks, interconnectivity, and grid healing as a way to shorten trips and create multiple routes between any origin and destination.</li> <li>• Maximizing the number of trees, shrubs, and ground cover planted in order to sequester carbon.</li> <li>• Promote organic agriculture methods.</li> <li>• Promote renewable energy production.</li> <li>• Encourage long-life and loose fit design of buildings and infrastructure.</li> <li>• Encourage adaptive reuse and retrofit of buildings; encourage salvage and repurpose of building materials if demolition is inevitable.</li> </ul>	Town	Ongoing
<b>NR 4.3 To encourage the use of renewable energy and reduce dependence upon fossil fuels for building systems.</b>				
	<b>A</b>	Create regulations and modify land development regulation to remove barriers and obstacles to installing solar photovoltaic panels and solar water heaters on roofs.	Town	Mid-Term
	<b>B</b>	Allow by-right on-site renewable energy generation on sites that have sufficient area.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>C</b>	Identify land in order to create a solar farm or community solar energy harvesting.	Town	Short-Term
<b>NR 4.4 To conserve energy by making buildings more efficient.</b>				
	<b>A</b>	Weatherize existing buildings and specify for new construction, enhanced windows, insulation, and other measures to reduce heating and cooling loads.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>B</b>	Encourage the use of efficient HVAC systems, Low-flow plumbing fixtures, and other measures to reduce energy consumption	Town	Ongoing
	<b>C</b>	Buildings owned by the town should lead the way in setting an example of building design and retrofit.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>D</b>	Continue to lead the example by the town’s striving to comply with the 2030 Resolution for net zero operations of town-owned facilities.	Town	Ongoing



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>NR 4.5</b>	<b>To emphasize ‘Original Green’ and vernacular strategies for building design.</b>			
<b>A</b>	<p>Create a short manual of design guidelines that would draw upon time-tested building and site-planning strategies in order to reduce dependence upon mechanical heating, cooling, and utilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage piers rather than fill. Preserving water flow by elevating houses on piers rather than by changing grade in a way that causes neighboring properties to flood.</li> <li>• Encourage raised-finished floors rather than slab-on-grade construction in order to create crawl spaces and ventilation.</li> <li>• Encourage porches to be of a sufficient depth that is usable so that doors and windows are sheltered from direct rain and sun and so that building inhabitants have access to transitional spaces that are outdoor but sheltered.</li> <li>• Encourage tall ceiling heights so that interiors are airy and comfortable even in the absence of air conditioning.</li> <li>• Encourage narrower footprints and alignment of windows and doors across structures, so that building inhabitants may enjoy cross ventilation.</li> <li>• Encourage operable shutters that filter light, provide tropical storm protection, provide privacy, and accentuate authenticity of building facades.</li> <li>• Encourage tall windows, and windows or doors with transoms in order to provide natural daylighting and enhanced ventilation.</li> <li>• Encourage the use of deep overhangs to protect windows and walls from rain and sun. Encourage the use of thoughtfully sourced construction materials such as rapidly renewable, locally sourced, salvaged, repurposed, or Forest Stewardship Council certified materials.</li> <li>• Encourage the use of cisterns and rain barrels. Minimize impervious surfaces on sites.</li> </ul>	Town	Mid-Term	

**Goal NR 5: Minimize the Impacts of Natural Hazards.**

<b>NR 5.1</b>	<b>Provide central locations to mitigate the effects of disaster and hardship:</b>			
<b>A</b>	<p>Maintain and expand TOC (Town Operations Center) that provides services and supplies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooling and heating.</li> <li>• Electric power.</li> <li>• MREs (Meals Ready-to-Eat)</li> </ul>	Town	Short-Term	
<b>B</b>	Educate residents regarding shelter locations and coordinate with the Parish to provide transportation to shelters as well as stock them with supplies.	Town, Parish	Short-Term	
<b>NR 5.2</b>	<b>Promote resilient electricity infrastructure.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Recognizing that it is a costly endeavor, create a long-term plan for placing overhead wires underground. The plan should be phased and identify priority projects.	Town	Long-Term	



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>Goal NR 6: To Improve Access to Locally Produced Foods.</b>				
<b>NR 6.1</b>	<b>Encourage the development of sustainable food networks rather than depend solely upon industrial food systems.</b>			
	<b>A</b>	Explicitly allow and encourage the planting of edible species in public spaces, and private properties, either as permaculture, tree crops, or planting beds	Town	Short-Term
	<b>B</b>	Identify sites for community food gardens and work with residents to install and maintain them. Provide irrigation and composting infrastructure for food gardens.	Town	Mid-Term
	<b>C</b>	Protect the right of citizens to maintain hens on private property	Town	Short-Term
	<b>D</b>	Continue to expand food banks, ‘blessing boxes’, and other food exchange sites in order to battle hunger and undernourishment.	Town, Private Businesses	Short-Term
	<b>E</b>	Strengthen farmers’ markets and provide sites for such to take place.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>F</b>	Encourage farm-to-table restaurants and caterers who source local ingredients and establish relationships with local farmers and growers.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>G</b>	Work with grocers, restaurants, and residents to reduce food waste, reduce organic matter in landfills, and build topsoil by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• distributing food to those who are in need or malnourished</li> <li>• supply produce and grain to those who keep hens in town</li> <li>• supply material for compost and vermiculture</li> </ul>	Town, Private Businesses	Long-Term

<b>Goal NR 7: Improve Parks and Enhance Trails.</b>				
<b>NR 7.1</b>	<b>Develop a system of connected trails that serve the community’s recreational and mobility goals.</b>			
	<b>A</b>	Create linear public open space that links parks, recreation facilities, schools and natural areas.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>B</b>	Update development regulations to provide for standards that address critical natural areas and that require usable open space.	Town	Short-Term
	<b>C</b>	Identify priority conservation zones, especially along waterways, and discourage development within these areas.	Town	Short-Term



**COVINGTON TRAILHEAD**

Map of the trailhead area showing various paths and landmarks.

**Trailhead Amenities:**

- Restrooms
- Water
- Picnic Area
- Playground
- Historic Water Tower

**COVINGTON TRAILHEAD**

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Abita Springs is located within St. Tammany Parish and is one of several Northshore communities which have attracted vacationers seeking health, relaxation, and a country retreat since the 19th century. The parish was not accessible to automobiles by Highway 11 until 1965 and the population remained small and growth rates low. In 2000 the population reached roughly 190,000 and then grew quickly to 340,000 by 2020. Today, St. Tammany Parish is one of the fastest growing parishes in the state.

The New Directions 2040 Comprehensive Plan is the foundation of St. Tammany's urban planning. This report describes how the combination of high population growth and a lack of urban planning has resulted in traffic jams, inadequate drainage systems, and a loss of quality-of-life. The plan recommends a commitment to a more sustainable approach to growth which includes addressing traffic, protecting green spaces and waterways, and fostering community through increased connectivity and walkability.



*St Tammany Parish Justice Center*



## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### THE ENVIRONMENT

In St. Tammany Parish 40 percent of the land base is made up of wetlands and floodplains. The plan discusses the ecological benefits to floodplains including: floodwater management, natural water filtration, animal and plant habitat, and natural air filtration. Dry upland is prone to flooding from these wetlands and floodplains as well as rising waters in rivers, bayous, and lakes.

### SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The New Directions 2040 Comprehensive Plan discusses the loss of a “small-town feel” within the parish due to exclusively automobile-oriented growth. The plan discusses how places with a “small-town feel” have central public spaces near where local businesses and services are clustered, people who participate in local governance, and history of careful stewardship when it comes to natural resources.

### TRANSPORTATION

The New Directions 2040 Comprehensive Plan discusses how new residential subdivisions are designed to communicate a sense of exclusivity and security by use of restricting egress. The designs for new subdivisions usually provide just one road into and out of subdivisions. However, this also has the effect of creating traffic chokepoints during peak travel hours and placing all residents onto the same crowded arterial roadways and highways. This necessitates the widening of roadways and highways at the detriment of the character of the communities which they pass through.



*Charming restaurants like Abita Pub contribute to the “small town feel.”*



## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### THE ENVIRONMENT

New Directions 2040 recommends lessening the Parish’s vulnerability to floods by further restricting construction in the wetlands and floodplains. The plan also discusses reclaiming wetlands and floodplains when business, industry, and residents vacate properties that are within or border wetlands and floodplains.

The New Directions 2040 Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies concerning:

#### Wetlands and Floodplains

- Reclaiming floodplain land,
- Protecting natural habitats,
- Defining the physical limits of floodplains, and
- Restricting buildings in floodplains.

#### Sewerage, Water and Drainage

- Creating a unified drainage system,
- Flood reduction via retention ponds and other landscape investments,
- Water-conscious paving,
- Limiting building on land where new construction affects drainage, and
- Maintaining natural flood protection.

### Parks and Recreational Areas

- Protecting Parish parks,
- Protecting natural reserves, and
- Investing in recreational areas.

### Rural Land

- Establishing controls on density to retain rural character,
- Creating an updated urban growth boundary based on emerging and expected towns and villages,
- Locating industry adjacent to major highways away from rural land, towns, and villages, and
- Anticipating development of new town centers at designated points.

### Utilities

- Coordinating and connecting a Parish-wide system, and
- Investing in points where town centers will emerge.



*Abita Springs sits in the middle of wetlands and would benefit from this plan.*



## SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

The plan recommends guidelines for new growth which help protect local character. This includes the creation of distinct neighborhoods, villages, and towns which have definable centers and edges, walkable street networks, amenities such as green space with benches and shade, a variety of housing types, and enough variety in land uses to make the community relatively self-sufficient.

St. Tammany's primary source of identity, culture, and recreation is the waterfront and the plan recommends incorporating more public access into new development, including the creation of more public spaces along waterways accessed by streets that run parallel to the shore.

The New Directions 2040 Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies concerning:

### Village and Town Centers

- Identifying locations for village and town centers at points where the transportation network naturally convenes,
- Anticipating growth by investing in infrastructure that will support town and village centers,
- Overseeing land use on a high level, and
- Adopting mixed-use zoning in village and town centers.

### Schools

- Overseeing locations of schools through a parish-wide school system map based on neighborhood-village-town grid concepts.

### Governance

- Managing development patterns according to the plan,
- Allowing compliant local councils internal governance of villages and towns, and
- Insuring that local governance respects Parish mandates, rules, and regulations.

### Transit

- Planning for connected transit systems, and
- Assuring that village and town centers have transit connections appropriate for their size.

### Commercial and Industry

- Locating industry and big-box stores only adjacent to freeways and other large throughways, and
- Investing in service roads adjacent to freeways.

### Zoning

- Establishing upper-level regulations to guide towns and villages as they develop, and
- Establishing a system for the reclamation of built-on wetlands and floodplains.



Structures such as the Abita Pavilion is one of the points to guide public access.



## TRANSPORTATION

The plan discusses how single-use areas like subdivisions require all residents to drive in order to satisfy daily needs. The plan recommends that new subdivisions include more networks of streets and a greater mix of uses. The plan also recommends developing other modes of travel including transit, cycling, and walking in order to improve local quality of life.

The New Directions 2040 Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies concerning:

### Towns and Villages

- Building sidewalks and bike lanes,
- Planning for trees along walkable roads,
- Restricting speeds on local roads as appropriate,
- Anticipating growth,
- Reducing dependence on highways by building compact centers for local services, and
- Holding developers accountable for connections, sidewalks, and bike lanes.

### Transit Lines

- Anticipating alternate modes like light rail, bus, and bike,
- Anticipating places for transit connections, and
- Ensuring transit access at all levels of neighborhood, villages, and towns.

### Roadways

- Planning new roadway additions and modifications on the basis of the neighborhood-village-town grid framework,
- Locating existing places where new connections can be made,
- Requiring developments to include connections to adjoining neighborhoods,
- Connecting neighborhoods, villages, and towns with local roads, intervillage roads, and intertown roads, and
- Assuring that freeways serve commerce and commuting.



*Abita benefits from the Tammany Trail and should use it to guide more bike lanes and other means of transportation.*



## GOALS AND POLICIES

POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>Goal RC 1: Partner with the Parish to add and improve public infrastructure.</b>				
<b>RC 1.1</b>	<b>Coordinate public infrastructure with the Parish to maintain acceptable levels of service and reduce overall costs.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Correspond the town's capital investments with the Parish's capital improvements programming to ensure maximum efficiency and fiscal responsibility in infrastructure delivery and expansion.		Town, Parish	Long- Term
<b>B</b>	Coordinate planning and funding efforts to expand and link walking/bicycle paths and sidewalks throughout the region.		Town	Long- Term
<b>C</b>	Maintain regional commitment to state and federal programs in planning areas related to community and economic development such as highway improvements, public access and stormwater drainage.		Town, Parish	Short- Term
<b>D</b>	Continue to work with the Parish and the MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) to actively pursue state and federal programs intended to improve conditions in blighted neighborhoods and redevelop greyfield sites.		Town, Parish, MPO	Short- Term
<b>E</b>	Continue to work with the MPO and Department of Transportation (DOT) to slow the major thoroughfares in the town and redesign them as more multi-modal facilities		Town, MPO, DOT	Long- Term
<b>RC 1.2</b>	<b>Coordinate City/Parish law enforcement activities in order to establish cost effective operations.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Stay committed to spending prudently on law enforcement and not overspending. Abita Springs is a safe town with little to no crime.		Town	Short- Term



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>RC 1.3 Continue to advocate for the children of Abita Springs.</b>				
	<b>A</b>	Coordinate with the St. Tammany Parish School System to guarantee that the development or redevelopment of schools coincides with the Town’s goals and objectives for neighborhood enhancement, recreation provision and transportation improvements.	Town, TPSS	Long- Term
	<b>B</b>	Coordinate with the St. Tammany Parish School System (TPSS) to phase development in a manner that maintains levels of service and provides safe environments for children to go to school.	Town, TPSS	Mid- Term
	<b>C</b>	Coordinate with TPSS to ensure that new school sites, or expanded existing sites, can be adequately served by existing and planned infrastructure (including streets, sidewalks, water/wastewater, and public safety facilities).	Town, TPSS	Long- Term
	<b>D</b>	Encourage joint development of facilities for parks and recreation use between the school system, the Parish, and the Town’s Recreation District.	Town, TPSS, Parish, Recreation District	Mid- Term
	<b>E</b>	Coordinate with TPSS to ensure that new schools are sized appropriately and located within walking distance to neighborhoods to give children the benefit of exercise, and participation in their community.	Town, TPSS	Long- Term



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 7

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

*This document serves as a review of Abita Springs' area, people, economy, business base and core assets that may propel its economy now and into the future. The goal of this report is to collate and present social, economic and key current trends to provide a basis for policy discussions on future economic development, placemaking, housing and infrastructure as part of the city's Comprehensive Planning process.*

## APPROACH TO THE MARKET STUDY

Our approach to the study begins with comprehensive research using key data sources on the market and demographic trends, including segmented population, economy and economic analysis coupled with conversations and insights gleaned during a week-long charrette at Abita Springs held during December 2022. We also collate the relevant megatrends that may impact the town's planning more strongly over the coming decade.

Small towns and suburban communities throughout the United States are looking for ways to strengthen their economies, provide better quality of life, and build on local assets. Many small towns are also facing new challenges, including rapid growth at metropolitan edges, preferences for suburban living vs small town living, declining rural populations, and a potential loss of a "special small-town feel" as homogeneous development and congestion percolate into main streets.

Changing national, regional and local circumstances and major disruptions, such as those caused by the pandemic, resource depletion, globalization, or shifts in consumer preferences, can also shake the economic foundations of many towns and communities, leaving people with fewer job options and a depleting tax base.

A common approach is to simply seek to attract large, anchor business to rejuvenate and add jobs. But many towns and communities have found that this is not enough to truly create a truly unique and memorable experience for visitors and residents alike. Alternatively, an emerging but now more common shift toward place-based approaches to economic development does support a diversity of interests and also create longer term economic prospects. In fact, even larger cities are successfully deploying this strategy to build upon existing assets, taking incremental actions to strengthen communities, and build long-term value to attract a range of investments.





Slow-growing towns and areas might find that their policies are not bringing the prosperity they seek, while fast-growing rural areas at the edge of metropolitan regions face metropolitan-style development challenges and opportunities.

We believe that well thought out growth strategies can help small town communities achieve their goals for growth and development while maintaining their distinctive character and “cultural feel”. Such strategies will complement the overall planning framework by supporting the following:

- Planning where mixed use or other development should or should not go can encourage growth in towns, where businesses can thrive on a walkable main street and families can live close to their daily destinations.
- Policies that protect the towns specific landscapes helping to preserve cherished parks, open space, and provide places for recreation, and create tourist attractions that bring investments and sales tax revenues into the local economy.
- Policies that support a more environmentally sustainable future through both large and small actions: increasing walkability, biking, and other transport options as well as engaging in Public-Private Partnerships (PPP's) to increase investments in social and physical infrastructure.

The goal of this element is to establish a base line description of the current situation such that future discussions among stakeholders may be fruitful and the identified policies enhance the area’s competitive advantage over the long term in a meaningful way. This report does not make recommendations about specific solutions to identified challenges, but rather sets the stage for developing the framework for implementing key programs that are important to the city’s competitive advantage.

Maintaining and enhancing its competitive advantage is more than an academic concern for Abita Springs. Like businesses, towns and cities are constantly being judged against their competitors. Investors want to know if the area will be a good place to put their money: does it have the people, schools and quality of life needed to satisfy their employees? Does it have good transportation connections for goods coming in and going out? Young people are interested in educational and employment opportunities – as well as outdoor adventures and after work activities. Older people are looking for cultural and social experiences, good health care services, as well as living spaces with character. All people are looking for safety, both day and night, along with social opportunities and outdoor options. The quality of a city, its character, charm and memorable corners add un-measurably, but magnetically, to it.

Using the competitive advantage approach to economic development planning, towns and cities may think more about how best to use their assets as the basis for sustaining their economies, building new programs around them, while enhancing those that work well. Simultaneously, they seriously examine how to shore up their weaknesses (often using their assets or revenues from them) to create new opportunities or close funding gaps.

The benefits to Abita Springs for enhancing its competitive advantage echo beyond the current Comprehensive Plan planning horizon. Long term investments in infrastructure, the opening of new businesses in the area, movements of educated residents and tourism flows tend to be sticky, providing benefits for several years – often with substantial multiplier effects. Enhancing the locations ability to compete for these goods eases its ability to offer satisfactory answers to the questions asked above by key constituents.

Conversely, cities who do not take their competitive positioning seriously, either taking their current success for granted or never engaging on a plan of relative improvement, often find themselves left behind in slow decline, and often, unable to catch up. Abita Springs has a unique opportunity to build a solid growth plan for itself that adds to its competitive advantage from a position of strength.



## ABITA SPRING'S ECONOMIC SITUATION

### Louisiana

In 2022, the state of Louisiana has a population of 4.6 million, having declined at an annualized rate of -0.3% over the five years to 2022, which ranks it 48<sup>th</sup> out of all 50 US states by growth rate. Louisiana's gross state product (GSP) in 2022 reached \$228b, with growth of -0.5% over the 5 years to 2022. The GSP, a key measurement of the state's economic output adjusted for inflation, shrank 3% in the three months that ended in June 2022, according to the U.S. Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

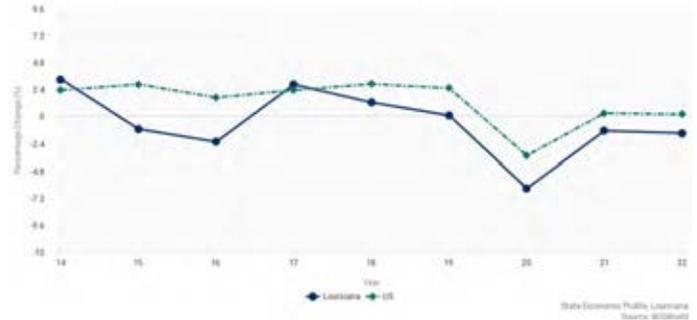
Primary reasons for the slump are attributed to slow construction activity and the energy industry.

Businesses in Louisiana employed a total of 2.04M people in 2022, with average employment growth over the past five years of -0.7%.

The top three sectors by total employment are manufacturing, real estate and rental and leasing, healthcare and social assistance, while the unemployment rate across the state in 2022 was 4.0%.

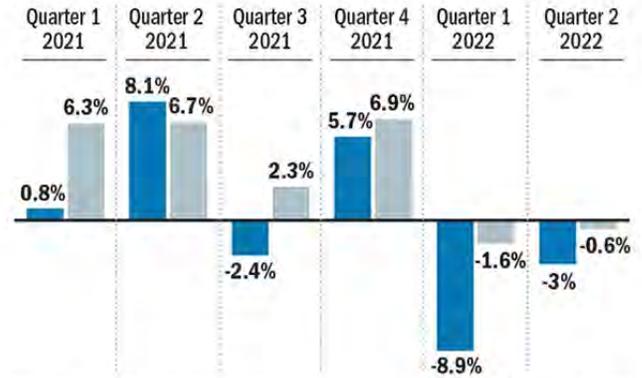
The State's credit rating was lifted by Moody's from Aa2 from Aa3 reflecting the significant progress the state has made restoring its financial reserves and liquidity in recent years by structurally aligning revenue and spending, despite a generally declining trend and volatility in gas and oil production and unfavorable demographic trends.

The Aa2 issuer rating reflects the state's large and diverse tax base and moderate combined debt and pension burden. The rating also incorporates the state's vulnerability to the volatility in the energy sector and its exposure to social risks, including slow population growth, low per-capita personal income and a low labor force participation rate, and its above-average exposure to environmental risk, particularly hurricanes and flooding.



Gross State Product Growth in Louisiana (2014-2022)

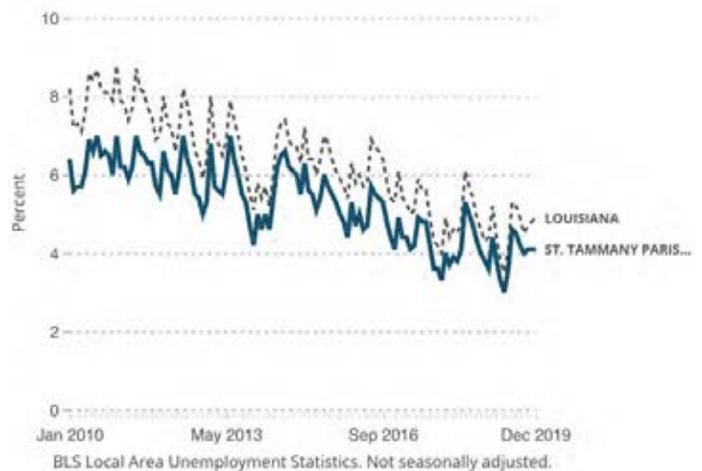
Louisiana's GDP contracted by 3% in the second quarter of 2022, a sharper drop than all but three other U.S. states:



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Times-Picayune graphic

Louisiana's Recent Economic Performance



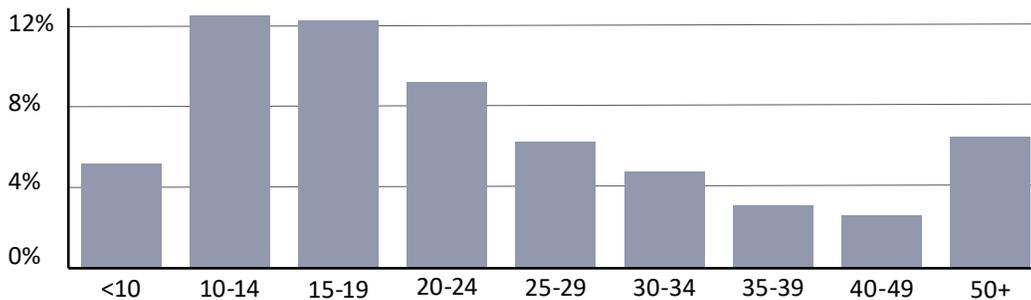
St. Tammany's Economic Performance in Comparison with the State Overall



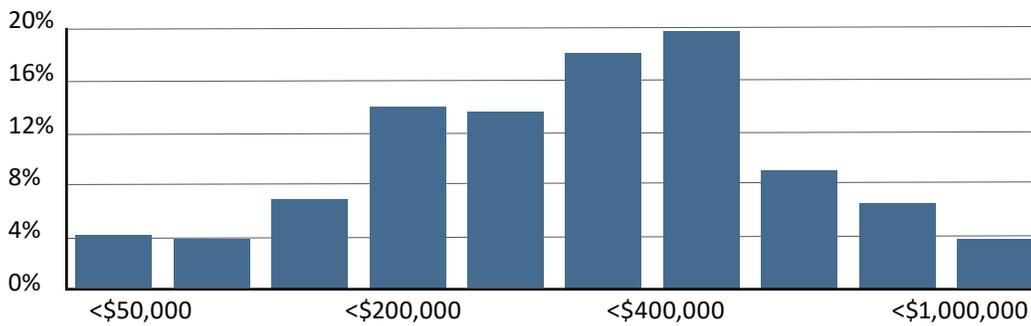
### Community Profile

<b>271, 100</b>	<b>1.09%</b>	<b>\$271,755</b>	<b>51.6</b>	<b>40.9</b>	
Population Total	Population Growth	Median Home Value	Diversity Index	Median Age	
<b>\$75,731</b>	<b>2.56</b>	<b>\$199,542</b>	<b>22.8%</b>	<b>59.1%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>
Median HH Income	Average HH Size	Median Net Worth	Age <18	Age 18-64	Age 65+

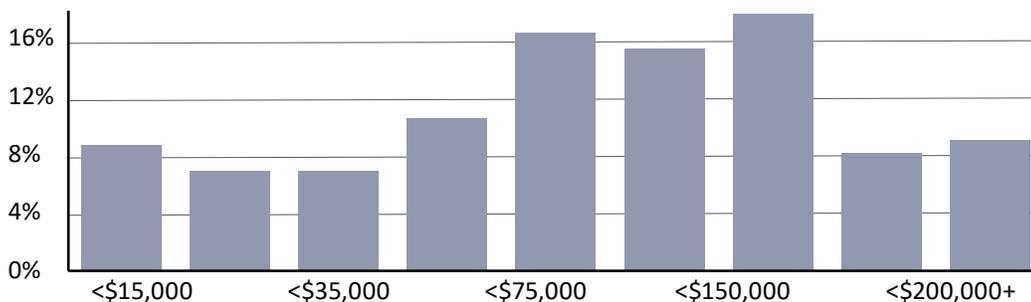
### Mortgage as Percent of Salary



### Home Value



### Household Income



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



**14.8%**

Services



**18.3%**

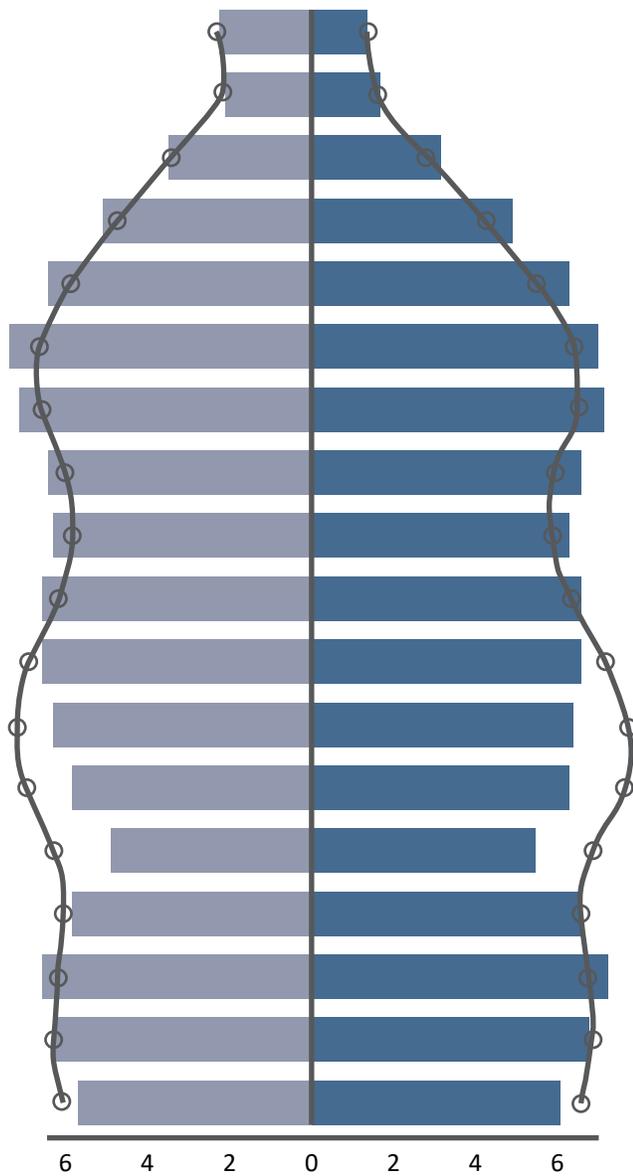
Blue Collar



**66.9%**

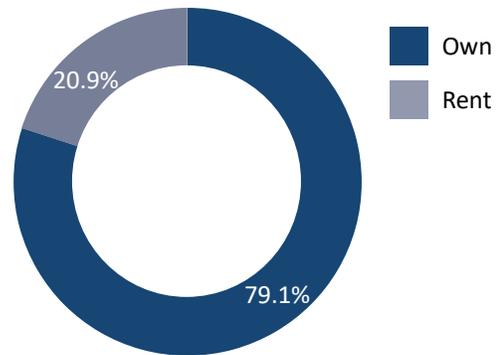
White Collar

**Age Profile: 5 Year Increments**

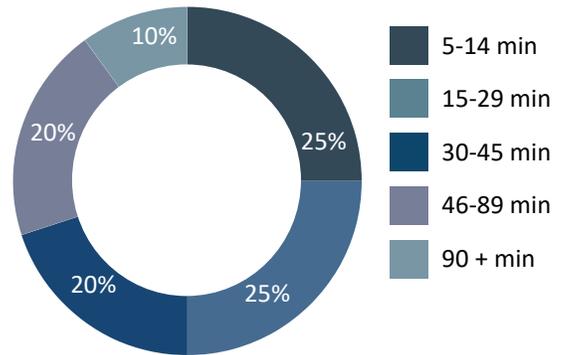


—○— Comparison to Louisiana

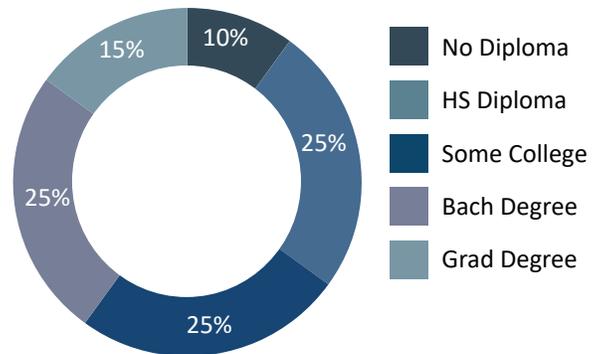
**Home Ownership**



**Commute Time in Minutes**



**Educational Attainment**





### St. Tammany Parish

St. Tammany Parish is a fast growing area north of New Orleans that includes 271,000 people in 106,000 households, with the population growing by roughly 1% per year. Homes are generally affordable currently, with 45% of households spending less than the 30% of income rule of thumb for housing affordability. But 6% of households spend more than 50% of their income on housing, an indication that housing affordability may be declining as property prices continue to grow.

Household incomes are substantially higher than the state level in 2022, with St. Tammany households earning \$75,000 per year against the state average of \$55,000. Abita Springs falls in the middle at \$63,000.

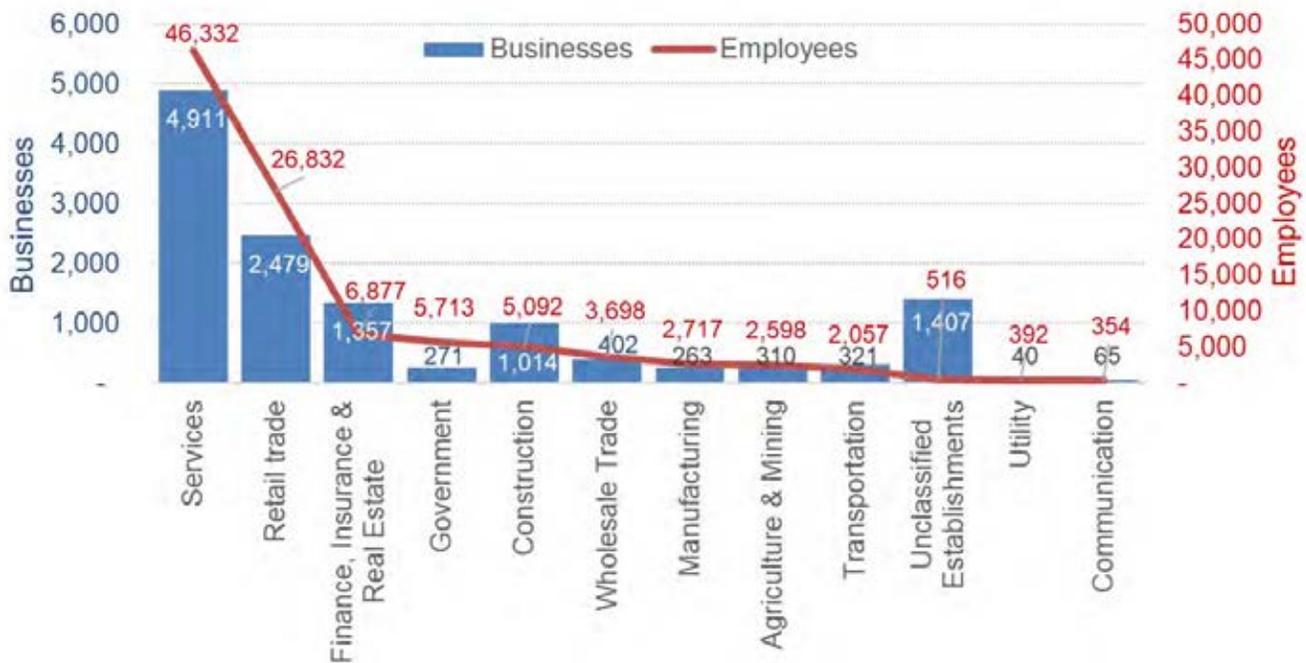
Households in St. Tammany are 70% family households and 30% non-family households, higher than the state average of 64% family households. Abita Springs is even higher at 80% family households.

While St. Tammany used to be primarily a bedroom community to New Orleans, its economy is now substantially self-sufficient and home to a strong white collar professional class. Being adjacent to, but far enough away from, New Orleans to avoid the typical issues that affect big cities allows residents of St. Tammany to take advantage of all that New Orleans has to offer, but in a lower tax, lower crime and lower cost housing environment.

St. Tammany is home to 12,840 businesses, employing 103,178 people. As the figure below shows, the dominant employment sector is Services, with more than 46,000 employees (and with the largest single subsector being health and medicine). In fact, the top three industries, Services, Retail Trade and Finance, Insurance and Real Estate account nearly 80% -- 4 out of 5 -- jobs in the parish.

When looking at the number of businesses, it takes six industries to exceed the 80% threshold: Services, Retail Trade and Finance, Insurance and Real Estate as well as Government, Construction and Wholesale Trade.

In practical terms, having a large number of businesses within each industry indicates a healthy market with few large companies providing the bulk of employment. The fewer the number of businesses, the more likely it is that either market demand is weak for a particular sector or a major player dominates it.



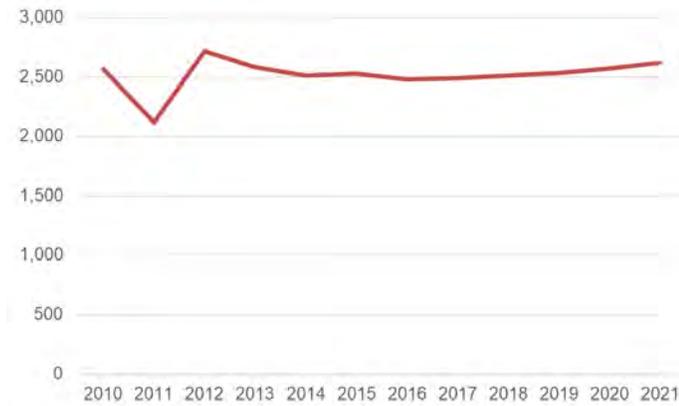
St Tammany Parish Business and Employment Sector Overview (ESRI 2022)



## Abita Springs

### Population and Education

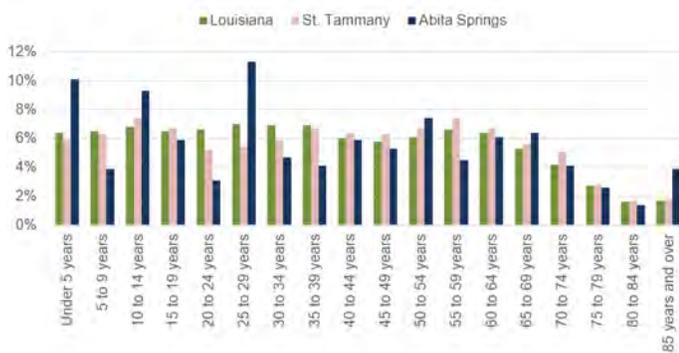
The basis of any town’s economic base is its population. For Abita Springs, town’s overall population has remained steady averaging around 2,600 residents over the last ten years, recovering from a dip in the 2010-2011 time frame. The 2021 Census figure is at 2,678 with approximately 1,010 households, and 636 families residing in the town. There has been an ever-slight population growth since 2019, but the trend is not yet long standing enough to draw conclusions from it.



Population Over Time (2010-2021 ACS)

### Age Structure of the Population

Abita Springs generally tracks with the state and parish trends, with a variance seen at the younger cohorts (<30 years) and the super senior age bracket of 85 and above. These figures are in line with the town’s location, amenities and single family housing options.



Comparative Age Structure of the Population (2021 ACS)

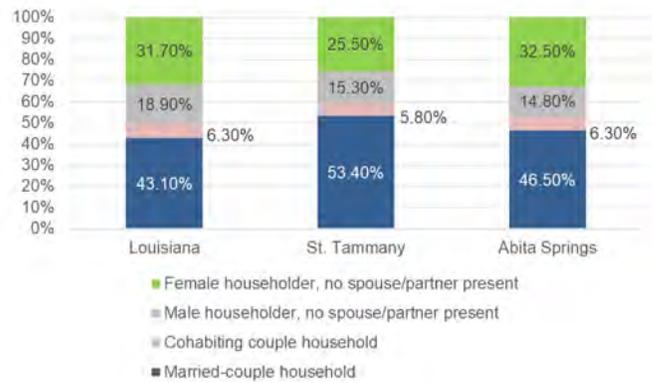
The 25-29 age cohort is likely higher mainly due to the quality of life, location and affordability. Also, access to K-12 schooling is a draw for young families as well as younger singles who choose to either move or return to Abita Springs after college.

The household type mix also tracks broadly with the state



Difference in Age Structure of the Population from the State and Parish Level (2021 ACS)

and parish with one exception: the number of single female led households is higher than compared to the parish but is in line with the state’s mix. Over the past 30 years, women have increased their presence in the housing market, with the homeownership rate of households led by women rising while the homeownership rate of households led by men falls. This reflects two factors: today, more women are head of household, and women have reached higher education and income levels, which can put homeownership into reach.



Comparative Household Type (2021 ACS)



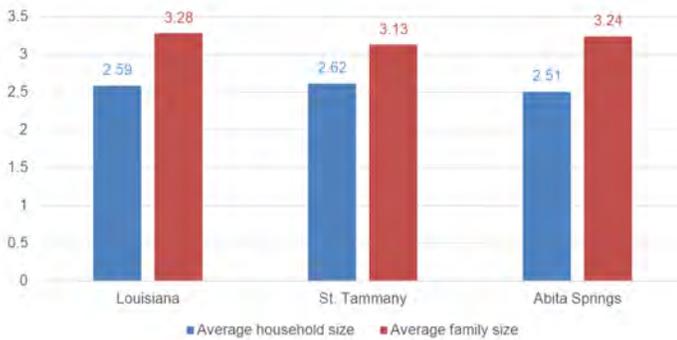
### Household Sizes

Abita Springs and the state track closely with national trends. According to the 2021 American Community Survey, average family size has shrunk from 3.20 in 2007 to 3.15 in 2021. This is indicative of several reasons: fertility, working couples and a gradual change in the perception of family size.

Similarly the average household size has been declining for many years for the U.S. - in 2022 is 2.6 people per household. It is calculated by dividing the household population by total households. One interesting side-effect of falling average household sizes is that even as family sizes have fallen because of fewer births per family, the demand for households has increased in many areas of the country because of the growth divorce and single-parent families.

However, there are an array of demographic, economic and social forces at work: multi-generational families are a growing segment, and decades long surge of nuclear families saw fewer members of the extended family living in the same household. Also, while two-person households continue to dominate the US household landscape, single-person households have grown to be nearly equal in number.

In terms of economic development policy, these trends have impacts on demand for housing, schools, jobs and services.

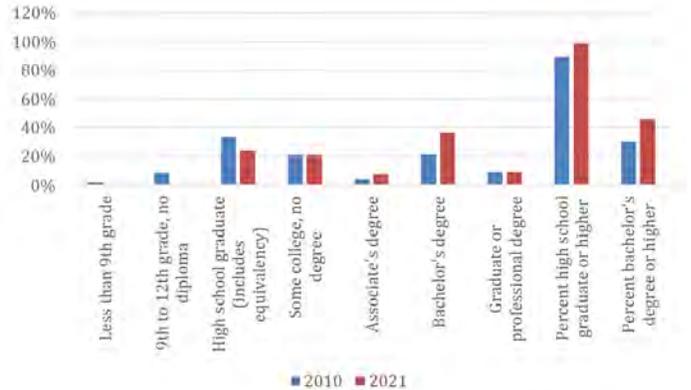


Comparative Household Sizes (2021 ACS)

### Educational Attainment

The educational attainment section provides information about the education an individual has completed, which tends to be related to income and occupation potential over an individual's working life. The graph to the upper right includes prior educational levels in the earlier ones, so (as an example), an individual with a bachelor's degree would be included in both the categories of having completed high school and having a bachelor's degree.

In 2021, nearly all adult residents have completed high school, while in 2010, only about 90% of adult residents had. By 2021, over 40% of adult residents had received a bachelor's degree, while in 2010 only about 30% had. Graduate degrees remained rare and under 10% of the population in both 2010 and 2021. A bit more than 20% of adult residents had only a high school education in 2021 versus more than 30% in 2010.

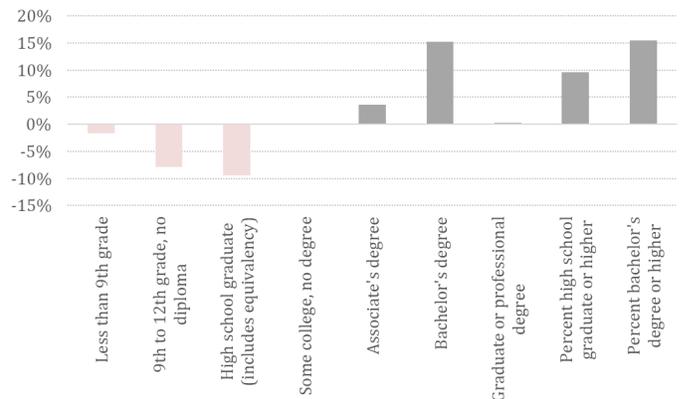


Educational Attainment (2010-2021 ACS)

### Change in Educational Attainment

Abita Springs data shows the town is attracting more highly educated residents. Education tends to increase both inward and outward migration trends. For this reason, locations that tend to attract inward migrants should have higher levels of educational attainment as well.

Furthermore, large urban areas are increasingly attractive to more educated class of residents because more educated individuals demand amenities that are more readily available in large metropolitan areas (Glaeser et al., 2001). That said, towns like Abita Springs that are close to dynamic metro areas, but offer the benefits of small town quality of life, have the potential to become more attractive to a certain segments of incoming residents, such as retirees, skilled service providers who work from home (WFH), and even small-scale makers and entrepreneurs who choose where they want to live first and then build their career there.



Change in Educational Attainment (2010-2021 ACS)



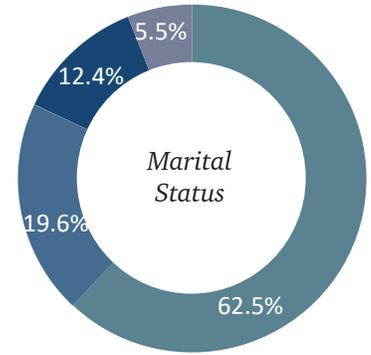
### Marital Status

Since marriage rates tend to be related to household formation rates and housing demand, understanding how the town is similar or different from its surroundings will help when creating housing policies.

Although marriage rates are in decline at the state and national level, especially among the non-college educated and youngest marriageable age cohorts, Abita Springs marriage rates at 62.5% are substantially higher than what is seen at the state level, at 43%.

Interestingly, the town also has higher levels of divorced individuals than the state, at 12.4% for the town and 11.3% for the state as a whole.

And while the town’s never married population stands at nearly 20%, the same population at the state level is nearly double that level, at 36%.



### Mobility

Understanding the scale of inward migration gives clues to an area’s attractiveness to outsiders. While examining the source locations from which inward migrants come allows for more precise future targeting and a clearer picture of where the area’s attractiveness is best known.

	Total	Moved; within same county	Moved; from different county, same state	Moved; from different state	Moved; from abroad
Population 1 year and over	2,520	63	43	30	3
1 to 4 years	152	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
5 to 17 years	370	3.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
18 to 24 years	99	7.10%	5.10%	0.00%	0.00%
25 to 34 years	388	8.50%	3.90%	3.90%	0.50%
35 to 44 years	191	5.80%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
45 to 54 years	325	0.00%	0.00%	1.20%	0.00%
55 to 64 years	276	0.00%	3.60%	0.00%	0.00%
65 to 74 years	536	0.00%	0.00%	1.10%	0.00%
75 years and over	183	0.00%	7.10%	3.30%	0.00%
Median age (years)	47.3	25.7	59.2	45.1	-

#### Inward Migration to Abita Springs by Age (2021 ESRI)

On this basis, the tables above show that 63 individuals moved to the town from St. Tammany in 2021, with an average age of 26 years old; a further 43 moved from another parish in Louisiana, with an average age of 59; 30 people migrated from another state (in some cases, likely with roots or other links to Abita Springs), with an average age of 45; and finally, 3 people moved to the town from another country.

Looking at the same information by income level, the data show that those individuals who moved to town from St. Tammany tended to be upper income, at \$63,000, nearly 18% higher than the town’s \$52,000 average. Those who moved from other parishes or out of state were substantially under the town’s median, possibly reflected moves for affordable quality of life reasons more than income generation potential.

#### INDIVIDUAL INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (IN 2020 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)

	Total	Moved; within same county	Moved; from different county, same state	Moved; from different state	Moved; from abroad
Population 15 years and over	2,085	63	44	31	2
\$1 to \$9,999 or less	162	0.00%	3.10%	0.00%	1.20%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	120	0.00%	4.20%	3.30%	0.00%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	219	2.30%	8.20%	9.60%	0.00%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	158	3.80%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	170	0.00%	0.00%	2.40%	0.00%
\$50,000 to \$64,999	288	5.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
\$65,000 to \$74,999	404	4.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
\$75,000 or more	345	0.00%	4.30%	0.60%	0.00%
Median income (dollars)	52,167	61,833	23,750	20,917	-

#### Inward Migration to Abita Springs by Income (2021 ESRI)



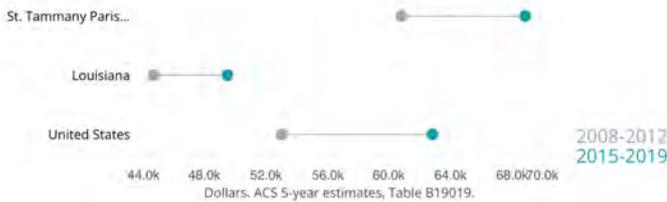
### Income, Employment and Occupations

Real gross domestic product (GDP) and GDP per capita and income serve as an indicator of recent larger economic trends. For the US GDP increased at an annual rate of 3.2 percent in the third quarter of 2022, boding well for a continued recovery from the pandemic.

Middle-class incomes have historically been shaped by three factors: how productivity has grown, how income is distributed, and how many people are participating in the labor force. Each factor is extensively measured and analyzed at the national, state and local levels and is generally embodied in income, employment and occupational data and trends.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the median weekly income (including overtime, commission and tips) for full-time workers (excluding those who are self-employed) in America was \$1,041 as of the second quarter of 2022. If that rate persists for the entire year, that will equal \$54,132 a year. The ACS 2020 survey reports Louisiana’s annual median household income stands are around \$50,935 and that for the parish is at \$70,986 and per capita income at \$37,196.

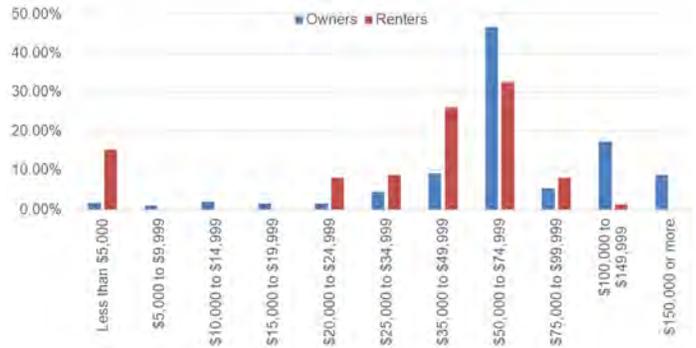
Being situated in St. Tammany parish brings certain advantages for Abita Springs – proximity to the county that rates among the highest in Louisiana for both household income and



Median Household Income (2019 ACS)

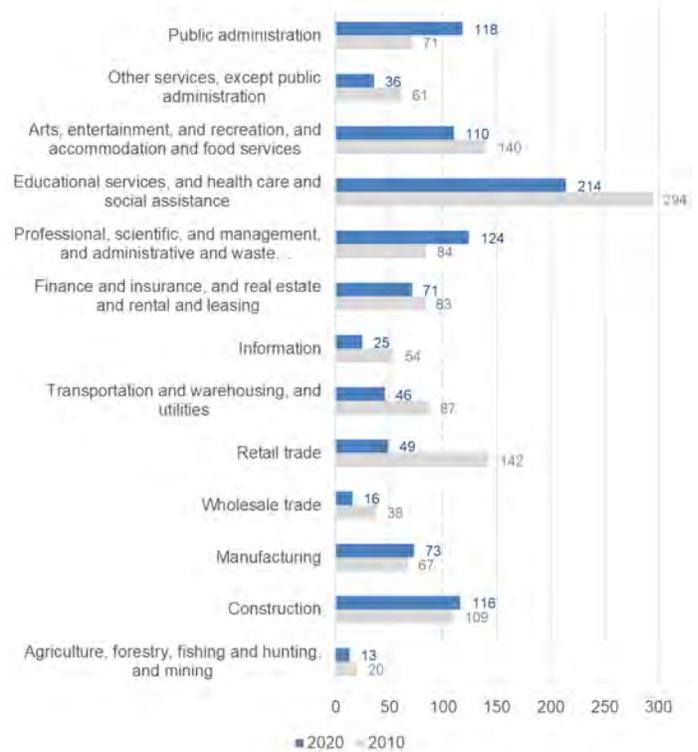
educational attainment and exceeds even the New Orleans Metro area figures.

Another way to examine an area’s household income levels is to look at who makes specified levels of income and their housing situation. In many jurisdictions outside of the largest major metro markets, such as New York City or San Francisco, higher incomes are associated with higher rates of home ownership. In many cases, there is a clear delineation of incomes associated with buying or renting property, with lower incomes renting by necessity, rather than by choice.



Household income in the past 12 months (2020 inflation-adjusted dollars, ACS)

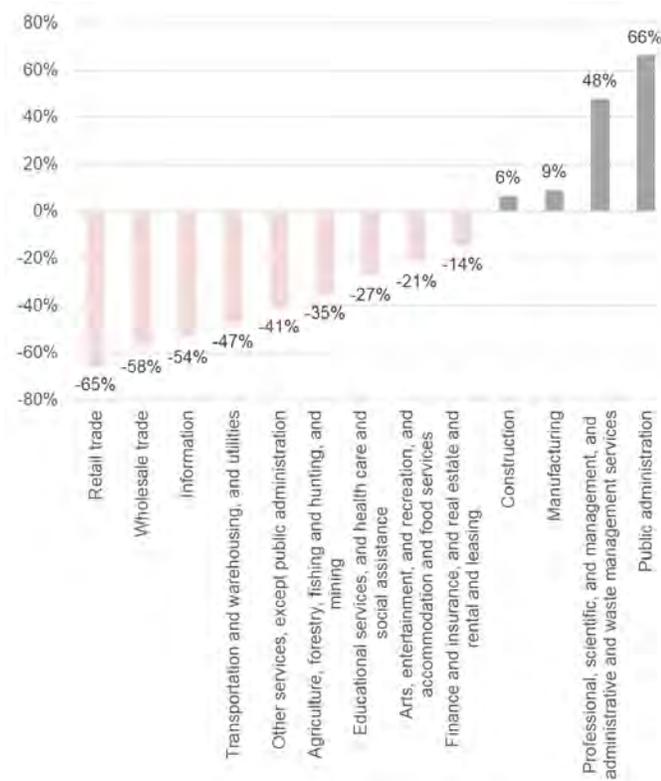
Abita Springs shows a similar pattern of home ownership increasing along with incomes. Nearly half of home-owning households earned between \$50,000 to \$74,999 per year, while a further 30% of owners earned more than that amount. Of note, a bit more than 30% of renters earned between \$50,000 to \$74,999, as well. They may be renters by choice or saving for a home purchase, but many households in this income bracket and higher tend to become owners. Since the rental population is quite low in the town, having a large percentage of the renters earning more than the town’s median income may also reflect a lack of available home purchase options.



Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over (2010-2020 ACS)



The employment base for an area gives an indication of employment stability, growth potential and linkages to wider economic trends. Comparing Abita Springs’ employment base over the past decade (2010 and 2020), we can see that while a number of sectors had notable declines in employment, 72% of the total decline in employment came from just two places: “Eds and Meds”, with a 27% decline over the analysis period and Retail Trade, with a 21% decline. Both sectors together employed 173 fewer Abita Springs residents in 2020 than in 2010. Keep in mind that some sectors may shrink as employees change careers (especially post-Covid), but in those cases, other sectors show offsetting employment growth.



Change in Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over (2010-2021 ACS)

Employment growth in Abita Springs between 2010-2020 was limited to limited growth in Manufacturing (6% growth), Construction (9% growth), and substantial growth in Professional, Scientific and Management occupations (48% growth) and public administration (66% growth).

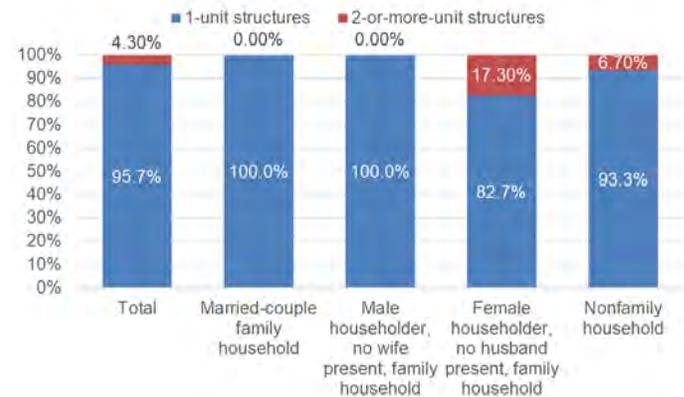
### Housing Units, Types and Costs

There are 1,005 households in Abita Springs, of which 527, just over half, are married couple households. The next largest segment are non-family households (often roommate-style living conditions of unrelated or non-romantically involved individuals sharing living quarters). These 298 households represent nearly 30% of the households in the town. Female-headed households are 13% of the total (133 households), with male-headed households being just 5% of the total, at 47 households.



Households (2021 ACS)

Should marriage rates continue to decline or even hold at their present position, there may be more households in the categories outside of married family households, which may increase demand for multi-family or smaller single family residences that are affordable for single income families.



Units in Structure (2021 ACS)



Currently, just 4.3% of all housing units in Abita Springs are multi-family (roughly 43 structures), with the remaining 962 as single family residences. Looking again by type of households, married family households are 100% in single family residences, as are male-headed family households, but 6.7% of non-family households live in multi-family structures as are 17.3% of female-headed family households.

There may be increasing market pressures to accommodate more single-parent households in the future, whether through smaller single family units or multi-family units.

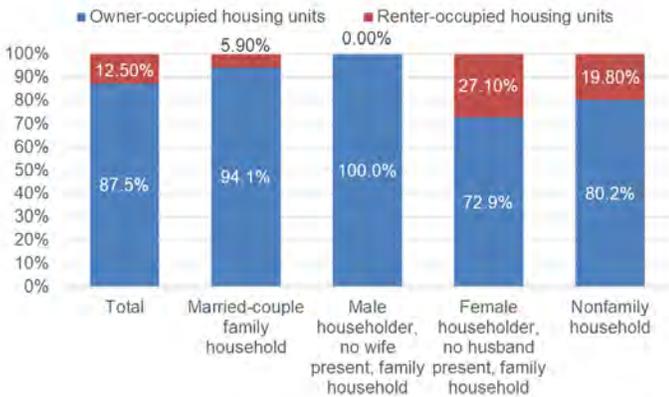


Monthly Housing Costs (2021 ACS)

The distribution of housing costs shows that about half of owners pay between \$1,000 to \$1,499 dollars per month and just over 30% of renters pay the same. The next highest group of owners (~14%) pay between \$1,500 - \$1,999 per month, while the second largest group of renters (nearly one-third) pays between \$500 to \$799 per month for their rent. Interestingly, nearly a third of owners pay less than \$800 per month for their housing costs and roughly 5% of renters pay no cash rent at all.

The bulge in the \$1,000 - \$1,499 monthly costs for both owners and renters reflects the relatively affordable cost of living in Abita Springs and the fact that home values remain reasonable. Under 5% of owner households pay more than \$2,000 per month and essentially no renters pay more than \$2,000 per month.

Using the rule of thumb that a household should devote no more than 30% of gross income to its housing costs, the \$1,000 - \$1,499 monthly housing costs are appropriate for incomes between \$36,000 - \$55,000 per year. These income bands are reasonable and indicate that housing is currently affordable in the town, with low demand pressures that would tend to push prices higher.



Housing Tenure (2021 ACS)

Among all households in Abita Springs, just 12.5% are occupied by renters and an exceptionally high 87.5% are occupied by the property's owners. This high level of home ownership can be a net positive for the community, as it reflects individuals with economic "skin in the game," and who tend to think for the long-term about the decisions facing the town. The downside of such a high ownership occupancy rate is that NIMBY-ism can increase, and with the strength of numbers, new initiatives with attractive economic prospects may be stalled or stopped entirely.

Among married families, nearly 6% are renters and 94% are owners. For single parent households, 100% of men and 72% of women-led households are owners. Single female headed households and non-family households were the most likely to be renters, at 27% and 20%, respectively.



**Local Businesses, Economy and Assets**

The local business environment in Abita Springs includes a range of offerings that include retail, industrial, hospitality and event spaces along with nature or culture. These local assets are broad enough to support incoming tourism flows and support local consumption, but the offerings are limited in a number of ways.

Because the town has a small population (approximately 2600 people), the immediate catchment area for retailers is too small for many types of convenience retail, such as a full service grocer. And while tourism adds substantially to the retail demand, that additional demand is too sporadic to support meaningful increases in the retail footprint within the town.

Additionally (and importantly), although a number of owners of existing businesses in Abita Springs have indicated that they are willing to invest in new retail concepts and limited infrastructure, the shortage of parking spaces for their customers means that any expansion would only create problems with their neighbors and the town. Thus, the lack of a coherent parking strategy reduces the retail offerings in the town from those most well placed to be successful (owners of existing successful businesses).

A non-exclusive selection of local businesses is shown in the table below that illustrates a general overview of the business environment as of early 2023.

Retail	Industrial (I) or Services (S)	Hospitality and Event Spaces
Abita Brew Pub	Abita Inboards (boats) -I	Abita Springs Hotel
Abita Springs Cafe	TwistedUp 4x4 (Jeep Customization) -I	Abita Quail Farm
Abita Farmer’s Market	Abita Lumber - I	Abita Springs RV Resort
Artique’s Abita Market	Tammany Computer Consulting -S	Abita Mystery House
Attic to Awesome	Tim Pazos Insurance Agency - S	
Maple Street Bakery	Ladouceur Law Firm - S	

**Festivals and Places of Interest**

The town is also home to several large and small festivals that are well supported locally and bring visitors into the town.

Events are good mechanisms for both re-introducing different aspects of the city to repeat visitors and for establishing new relationships with first time visitors. Hosting a unique event allows micro and small-scale retail sales opportunities and provides an opportunity for the city to put its best foot forward by showcasing what makes it unique.

Festivals need not be large-scale to be powerful magnets for attracting people to town, either. Nearly any hobby or niche interest group can be the basis for an event. The Abita Spring Push Mow parade is an outstanding example of this approach, which combines a unique theme for a Mardi Gras Krewe with a distinctly Abita Springs humor.

The list of even events shown, however, could be expanded such that nearly every week the town would host a unique gathering. Even the regular farmer’s market could become a microcosm of regionally interesting food, drink, music, crafts and culture.

The primary places of interest in the town are either natural or manmade. In the natural category are the Abita River, which meanders through the town and has a number of informal trails running near it. In the manmade category are the Tammany Trace (a former railway line now used for hiking and biking among cities in St. Tammany) and the Trailhead Museum, which tells the story of Abita Spring’s history and includes a memorial fountain that flows with the town’s namesake waters.

The river, riverbanks and nearby trails could each be improved materially to enhance usage during non-flood events. A strong trail network would encourage outdoor activity among local residents and attract non-residents as well. Allowing horseback riding on designated trails is another niche that could be attracted to the area with the appropriate trail development.

The Trailhead Museum tells an engaging story about the town’s founding and development, but could be expanded to include both temporary or seasonal presentations of local life and to highlight local artists (since no art museum or exhibition space exists in town).

**CURRENT EVENTS**

- Abita Spring Push Mow Parade
- Abita Springs Whole Town Garage Sale
- EarthFest
- Busker Fest
- En Plein Air
- Louisiana Bicycle Festival
- Water Festival



## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### **PURPOSE OF AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION**

A strong and compelling economic development vision builds consensus by identifying what the effort is aiming towards and can also set limits on what it does not want – critical in a place like Abita Springs, where residents are passionate about their small town way of life.

To this end, the economic development vision should provide sufficient resonance for residents that they embrace it's message and want to support it.

### **AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION FOR ABITA SPRINGS**

An indicative economic development vision for Abita Springs is provided below and should be adapted, shaped and refined by local residents until it reflects the ideal end state condition (which is never reached, but is always striven for):

*Abita Springs is the gem of St. Tammany Parish, offering a compelling mix of unique experiences, memorable architecture, unexpected delights and many reasons to return.*

*The town provides residents with the amenities needed for a modern lifestyle for all ages and job opportunities for a range of skills and experience levels.*

*Visiting the town is like stepping back in time, as the retailers appear to be largely one of a kind and no visit feels like you've seen it all.*



## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

### BACKGROUND

There is no one-size-fits-all economic development strategy for small towns. So how can local and regional leaders—including local governments, businesses, and citizens—put small towns on the track to advance their potential and thrive? In the simplest terms of economic development strategy, there are three ways to deliver a sustainable outcome: 1) invest in growing organically, with the assets already at hand; 2) or attract investment interest (business, people, tourism) from the adjacent metro regions, state and nationally; and 3) combine organic and in-organic growth options.

Many small towns have implemented such approaches and are thriving, while others have yet to fully capture their potential value. But all small towns could benefit from an economic development strategy that strengthens their key assets, residents and workers, community and connectivity.

### APPROACH

Proper economic development policies begin with and focus on the elements that exist in each area that have economic potential. Since not all assets in an area are in the same state of economic usage or have the same economic prospects, the most prudent approach to economic development is to focus on reinforcing or even creating the supportive conditions that allow businesses to exist and grow. Only then should effort be expended on actions that can help existing businesses to grow, followed by focusing on those assets that are largely undeveloped or that require substantial resources to bring into commerce.

This approach can be likened to a pyramid, as the primary elements that strengthen its base take the majority of the policy focus, with fewer policies developed for expanding existing assets and then even fewer devoted to the creation of new ventures or economic growth avenues.

Continuation and refining of existing policies that strengthen the base of an area’s economic competitiveness are useful for all residents and businesses in the area and allow the town to build additional trust with the community. Performing key services well will allow for expanding on successes and also support a few well-structured policy initiatives with longer term paybacks.

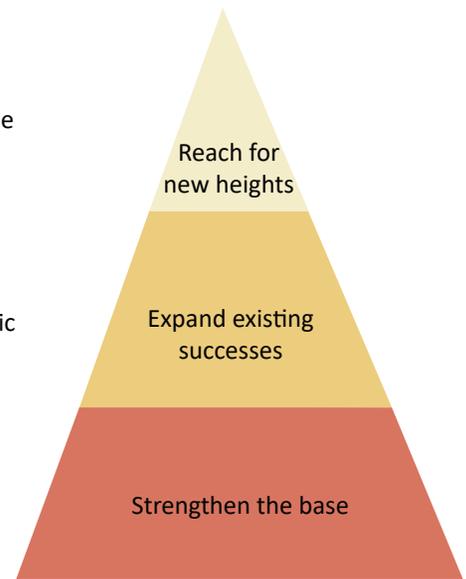
For example, finding ways to help existing businesses build and strengthen relationships with other local businesses. Most small business owners are

over-committed in terms of time and resources and many bite-sized and attractive opportunities remain undeveloped. Hence, towns can help bridge this time and organizational gap by supporting networking activities.

Generally, expanding existing businesses, existing economic linkages and clusters tends to generate a virtuous cycle resulting in higher economic and social outcomes.

Finally, the apex of the pyramid reflects activities that are more like testbeds for new ideas, e.g., innovation areas for new business, in part because smaller towns can deploy prototypes quickly and effectively.

Such a policy framework may take more effort than supporting existing businesses, but if done correctly, have the potential to provide an entirely new economic growth engine for the town.





## SWOT – TOWS ANALYSIS

One of the most common tools used in strategic planning is a SWOT analysis, which simply lists the Strengths and Weaknesses of an area (the factors under its direct control) against its Opportunities and Threats (or the factors that it does not control in the wider environment). These inputs can be used in a TOWS analysis to create powerful strategies that bring together multiple parts of the SWOT analysis into coherent focus as strategies that can then be disaggregated into tactics as specific economic development policies with associated budget, manpower and timing considerations.

For Abita Springs, a simple SWOT analysis would include the following items:

### SWOT Analysis

#### STRENGTHS

- Good small-town quality of life
- Committed citizens and local government
- Many long-term residents
- Stable economic & population base
- Some very strong local businesses
- Very well respected brand in Southern Louisiana for tourism
- Municipal ownership of local utilities
- Attractive, small town architecture and layout
- Situated in a dynamic parish with strong economic growth prospects

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Economic growth across St. Tammany Parish in multiple sectors
- Small towns near big cities are becoming popular locations for recent graduates, entrepreneurs and retirees
- Investment funding for local expansions is available
- Untapped pure water resources in an aquifer under the town
- Part of a network of historic towns to boost tourism
- Access to state, local and federal grants to build and upgrade infrastructure sustainably

#### WEAKNESSES

- Aging population
- Few families with children
- Limited business base
- Business expansion hampered by parking challenges
- Limited land available for new buildings in the town's core
- Very small public budget & staff size, implying limited planning capacity
- Unfunded fiscal commitments for the Meadows's utilities
- Limited retail options, from grocery and pharmacy to niche concepts

#### THREATS

- Strong NIMBY cohort
- Development that is out of character with the town's vision
- Loss of population
- Loss of business base
- Limited housing choices
- Limited transportation options



The SWOT analysis shows that the town's primary strengths include its small town look and feel, its committed residents and city staff and the stability of its long term residents and businesses. These strengths are countered by the fact that the population is aging and there isn't a large family-based cohort in the town (or moving in). Current businesses and festivals are hampered by a lack of parking and no existing plans exist to permanently solve that parking issue. In addition, the town's core is largely built out and thus new development will have to be built in outer areas that may feel disconnected from the town or by redeveloping parts of the town that locals care passionately about (which increases the risk that redevelopment doesn't happen).

Abita Springs can take advantage of opportunities that come from the economic and population growth in St. Tammany Parish, including the burgeoning film industry and investments in transportation and retail. In addition, many young entrepreneurs and retirees are specifically looking for small towns with a quaint core that are near enough to large cities to allow for easy access, but far enough away that traffic jams and crime are largely avoided. A number of local business owners have indicated that they would expand their business or open entirely new concepts if parking were available for their visitors. Finally, the town's name and entire development history are inextricably tied to the water in the aquifer under it. This aquifer has been tested and the water quality is among the purest anywhere – an asset with very strong market potential.

Lastly, the threats that would limit the town's development potential include a loss of the residential population or business base, whether due to sub-replacement level population growth or businesses leaving the area. Other threats that exist on different sides of the issue of economic growth are very strong anti-development forces in the city (those who want very little to change in the town, either economically or physically) or from investors who want to develop as they wish, with no concern for the city's vision for its own growth or existing residents views of reasonable development.

Bringing these disparate ideas together is the job of a TOWS Analysis. The TOWS analysis creates actionable economic development policies from the different SWOT concepts and the resulting strategies guide the rest of the economic development policies described in this element.

Each box in the TOWS analysis contains two SWOT boxes, one for at least one internal element (either a Strength or a Weakness) and one external element (either an opportunity or a threat). In some cases, there may be multiple elements (either internal or external) referenced in a given TOWS Analysis strategy, if the strategy addresses multiple issues.



**TOWS Analysis**

**OPPORTUNITIES**

**THREATS**

STRENGTHS

**Strengths- Opportunities**

- Leverage assets & expand opportunities to take advantage of tourism flows
- Formally explore options to unlock the value of the water for the public good
- Expand the festivals and events economy
- Expand efforts to access grants and funding to upgrade infrastructure and hardscapes
- Expand sales tax collection
- Develop green economy initiatives & linkages to existing businesses
- Enhance marketing push to attract visitors, businesses and residents to the town

**Weaknesses- Opportunities**

- Prioritize parking solutions (near term & long term)
- Leverage local investment appetites to launch new businesses
- Create periodic pedestrian / bike events on city streets
- Analyze options to enter regional economic trends (film, eds & meds)
- Allow pop-up & small-scale retail options (beyond the farmers market)

WEAKNESSES

**Strengths- Threats**

- Use committed citizens & city government to create a Master Plan that addresses development, parking, traffic
- Expand city fiscal policy by increasing reserves and Enterprise Fund options
- Improve attractiveness to family HHs to attract & retain them
- Enhance housing options that expand both home rental and ownership opportunities

**Weaknesses- Threats**

- Leverage Master Plan (once completed) to attract new investment, residents and visitors, while improving the quality of development, housing options and parking solutions
- Strengthen public budget through right-sizing the ad valorem tax
- 

**KEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THEMES**

From the TOWS Analysis, several themes are apparent. The Comprehensive Plan should enhance or develop:

1. The town’s look and feel (its physical character);
2. The town as a place to live, grow old and to raise a family;
3. The town’s business environment and attractiveness for new businesses.
4. The existing tourism, festival and event economies and wider economic trends;
5. The town’s budget through ad valorem and sales taxes;
6. The opportunities around establishing a water bottling company for the pure water aquifer.

By examining each theme in more detail, the resulting policies will become apparent and will follow logically from the analysis.



## ENHANCE THE TOWN'S LOOK AND FEEL

Abita Springs is a small town with residents who take immense pride in the fact that the town retains a small-town character. Over the recent past, the most vociferous citizen objections to growth have come from development plans that some portion of the community has viewed as a threat to this vision of a small town that changes only slowly and then only in a distinctly Abitean way.

Town leaders have to grapple with the issue of how best to balance growth and development opportunities with those that wish to avoid development to maintain the town's character.

To this end, one economic development theme is to embrace the vision for a small town, but include within that vision how best to differentiate small town experiences such that they stand out regionally. Many small towns have a good restaurant or two, but very few offer the full sensory experience of a beautiful well-landscaped building along with live local music and a farm to table experience.

New developments should be planned to include appropriate and unique touches across not only the development plat (which would include a mix of uses and housing styles and tenures), but extend across the hardscaping choices (street lights, signs, pavement and utility coverings) such that the experience of the place is distinctive.

The existing portions of the town should be similarly reconceived so that the hardscaping decisions reflect a small town vision of a place lost to time, but that seamlessly interacts with the best of modernity and technology. Beginning with the roundabout in the middle of town and then up and down the core traffic corridors, signage, lights, curbs, pavement and other public infrastructure should reflect a distinctive place: Abita Springs.

Public-private partnerships may facilitate this area-wide character development, as tasteful naming rights or other subtle marketing messaging may be included on (for example), decorative light poles, without being eye-sores.

As nice as Abita Springs' character is already, a thorough and wide-ranging management of the town's look and feel in all respects, only adds to its competitive positioning among small towns across the South. Towns with significant tourism history and potential often attract and support linked venues, e.g., breweries, yoga studios, farm-to-table restaurants—these all fit together with attracting younger, and often more affluent cohorts. Similarly combining these investments with “experience” investments, like the trail system, can catalyze strong local spending. This enhanced positioning makes it a more attractive place for visitors to come, residents to stay (or choose to move to), and for businesses to want to locate in. Tasteful, appropriate development is a very strong method of stimulating other economic development drivers, as well, such as a filming location for movies and TV shows and festival and event location.

Although parking may not be an apparent issue for the town's look and feel, it very much is at the core of easing a common friction point for business expansions and events in the town. While a final solution may be many years away and may take the form of one or more municipally owned parking decks that are tucked away or otherwise hidden from the primary streetscapes, there are interim options for parking that could be considered that include permanent surface parking lots, expanded park and ride options or the more innovative solution of allowing residents to rent spaces in their yards and driveways. There are companies that facilitate such driveway rentals, like spacer.com, which makes the process painless, frees up critical parking areas without constructing anything new and provides revenue sources for neighbors that they would otherwise not generate.



*Example of Abita Springs friendly restaurant differentiation*



## A PLACE FOR ALL AGES

By definition, any town that cannot retain its residents will eventually cease to exist at some point in the future as residents age or move away. One solution to reduce or severely limit the loss of residents (while adding to the reasons for outsiders to consider living in a place) is to support or actively encourage the establishment and maintenance of businesses that are essential to modern life, such as doctors' offices, entertainment options and full service grocery stores, each of which supports different stages of life in different degrees.

The challenge for very small towns like Abita Springs, of course, is that their own quaintness and small town attractiveness works at cross-purposes with the need for many types of businesses to support a relatively large number of people to be profitable.

But even small towns that are well off the beaten track have successful businesses that have leveraged the internet to add virtual people to the local existing business demand and in so doing allow the business to survive and thrive.

In some cases, such as doctors' offices, there is likely insufficient demand for a fully staffed medical facility that covers multiple clinical specialties open seven days per week. But there may be sufficient demand for a smaller clinic with rotating medical specialists who come just once per week (or even month), along with an Urgent Care type of facility, such that local residents would then have medical care available in the town.

Similarly, while the town has an excellent local specialty grocer (Artiques), few local residents are able to do all of their grocery shopping at that location alone. In practical terms, this means that the entire town has to leave city limits to buy at least some portion of their essential daily groceries. Now apply that same idea to most other categories of consumption and the pattern and scale of retail expenditures leaving the town to be spent in other places becomes more obvious.

Attracting and retaining retail options that can support the local population, those in a wider catchment area within the Parish, and potentially people online as well, would help to staunch the loss of revenue to businesses outside of the town while also substantially adding to the reasons for residents to remain in or move to the town, particularly the elderly or those households with young children. In addition, local retailers add to the municipal coffers through sales tax revenues retained locally (discussed in more detail later in this section), which is a critical source of funding.





**RETAIN AND ATTRACT NEW BUSINESSES**

Businesses share a number of characteristics with residents when examining where to locate or whether to remain in an area. They tend to look at local amenities, the stock of talent, housing and connections to other markets. But they have unique requirements, as well, that can often be the most critical reason why a business decides to move into or out of a market. Among the reasons that could be cited here, local regulatory issues are in most businesses top three.

Whether it be old regulations that keep out certain businesses or heavy-handed recent regulations to limit potential abuses of (for example) short term rentals in attractive markets, local regulations can be important criteria for business decision-making.

Obviously, the larger the town and the larger the scope of municipal operations, the greater the chance there is that there are regulatory burdens that are creating friction for local businesses. But even small towns, like Abita Springs, may be suffering from undiagnosed regulatory issues that limit the types of businesses that come to the area or that choose to remain in the town.

And since technology and social mores change over time, well-intentioned and well-functioning regulations may eventually become detrimental to the overall business environment. One example of laws such as this is the ability for restaurants to serve alcohol at outdoor tables. While historically it was unacceptable to drink alcohol outside, today many restaurants (especially post-covid) rely on outdoor tables as a core part of their seating plan, and alcohol sales forms a core part of their revenue base. When a restaurant is limited by regulation to serve alcohol only indoors but not on public sidewalks, then their business viability suffers.

Regular regulatory audits and the ability for the public to request regulatory reviews of selected topics can each enhance the town’s attractiveness for businesses.

Another area where a town can help to enhance its business attractiveness comes from having a strong talent pool. Since the town cannot directly control who lives in it, it must rely on other methods (such as controlling the town’s character, expanding housing options and facilitating cluster development) to attract and retain residents.

Among housing types in the town currently, single family homes owned by the resident are the dominant type. As the price of homes has steadily increased and with wages for many occupations not keeping pace with inflation as of early 2023, home ownership has become challenging for many first-time home buyers and for many seniors on fixed incomes. Common housing solutions that add optionality to the housing stock and provide mechanisms to be homeowners under more affordable conditions include zoning for townhouses, duplexes and condominiums that allow for smaller housing units to be owned (which reduces their cost).

In addition, while some types of multi-family rental properties have earned bad press for being havens of crime, the vast majority of multi-family rental housing is small scale and well run – often by local resident landlords who own just one or two properties for additional income. Allowing multi-family housing to be constructed in more places increases the options for non-traditional (single male or single female headed) households to live in the area, as well as provides flexible housing options for recent graduates or senior citizens who no longer want the maintenance burden that comes with home ownership.





## ENHANCE TOURISM

### Festival and Event Economies and Wider Economic Trends

Abita Springs has a good tourism economy currently and several well-attended festivals and events. In addition, the town has a small food and beverage cluster and a few attractive retail destinations. Strengthening or directly building up related businesses in these sectors (“developing clusters”) is a well-tested approach to economic development that works by bringing more market participants for a given economic activity into an area, from customers and producers to suppliers and support businesses, such as law, accounting or consulting.

Among these clusters, linkages between existing businesses and potential new entrants could be developed to expand, as examples, farm-to-table options that would link either restaurant and bar suppliers or restaurants themselves to producers of high-quality local ingredients from the town or Parish. Visitation patterns to the town could be strengthened through additional festivals or events or simply by adding more programming to existing programs, as well as an expanded retail sector. Niche market opportunities in culturally aligned sectors, such as antiques or small-scale live music in selected genres, could resonate well with both visitors and locals as supportive of the town’s vision and fitting its existing business landscape.

There are several ways to stimulate cluster development, but the method with the greatest payoff for municipalities with limited resources is simply to facilitate business introductions. Much like local talent pools, the local government has only a limited direct impact on what types of businesses will open in the town, but it can facilitate linkages through trade shows and other meetings that announce that it is open for businesses. In addition, through its regulatory processes, it may be able to ease the process for businesses of finding and opening new locations in the town. Some towns also actively promote their own businesses to one another to cross-pollinate business relationships within the area.

Where economic activity may be occurring outside of the town, such as logistics or television / movie filming, the town may be able to create events together with Parish or state authorities to introduce local businesses to others outside of the town as a form of business development. In addition, the town can look to Parish or state specialists to understand other actions that they could undertake at the municipal level to specifically increase their attractiveness to targeted industries (such as film).

As clusters develop, the municipality can concentrate its resources on additional marketing to attract end-users, permitting or licensing or transportation planning to facilitate suppliers and producers.





## EXAMPLE OF UNIQUE SMALL-SCALE RETAIL

Rococo Chocolate is a UK company that makes and serves chocolate in its retail premises. What sets the company apart, and makes it an interesting model for retailers in Abita Springs, is how the company has broken up its activities into discrete experiences that target different audiences.



While many companies sell chocolate to enjoy on site, very few offer you the ability to create your own chocolate confections under the guidance of a skilled chocolatier, or provide the experience to groups for business events or birthday parties. In addition, they have varieties of tasting classes, so each visit to the store is simply an invitation to come again and try something new.

When retailers think about how they can best leverage their skills and knowledge for market advantage, often their process knowledge can be leveraged to this end.

In addition, having retail spaces that echo in physical form the retail concept and brand image of the business, helps to reinforce the uniqueness that is lost in a generically designed shop that sells items that can be easily found elsewhere.

The more retailers who can combine sales with experiences in high quality surroundings, the more powerfully will their combine pull bring visitors and market recognition to Abita Springs.



## ENHANCE THE TOWN'S BUDGET

### Add Stability Through Tax Reassessments and Rainy Day Funds

In many cases, a town's ad valorem taxes (property taxes) fund the vast majority of the municipal budget, in some cases including local fire, police and school systems, while sales tax receipts are often a lower ranking revenue source.

In Abita Springs, however, sales taxes (highlighted in light orange below) provide 50% of all the budgeted tax revenues for the town, whereas property taxes (highlighted in yellow) provide just 37% of all tax revenues, which increases the current focus on economic development activities within the town that generate sales tax revenue.

Unless property tax receipts become the dominant form of revenue to the city at some point in the future, economic development initiatives that increase local sales taxes will be the most efficacious for the municipality in terms of creating revenues that the town can use for other purposes.

While the town itself is unlikely to grow its municipal staff or budget to many multiples of its current values, there are increasing demands for services beyond what is currently being offered and, together with envisioned investments in infrastructure and hardscaping and increasing development pressures that create public sector costs, the municipality will need additional revenue or funding sources to be able to support the demands placed on it. Not only new revenue streams, but also periodic reviews of existing tax rates, particularly the ad valorem tax, which at an average of \$317 per household in Abita Springs, is quite low by regional standards.

In addition to the direct cost of services, the town should also endeavor to have reserve funds for emergencies, such as post-hurricane clean-up or fire recovery. Since emergencies can be any number of different events, but the need for funding to clean up after one is a given, it is prudent for the town to proactively set budget reserves into their planning to better account for those potential future events.

GENERAL FUND REVENUE	2021 Actual	2022 Budget	2022 Estimate	2023 Budget
<b>PERMIT &amp; LICENSE REVENUE</b>				
<b>SUB TOTAL PERMITS &amp; LICENSES</b>	<b>\$ 205.9</b>	<b>\$ 181.7</b>	<b>\$ 222.2</b>	<b>\$ 202.8</b>
% of Total Revenue	14.8%	7.5%	10.5%	7.6%
<b>TAX REVENUE</b>				
Ad Valorem Taxes (100%)	\$ 381.6	\$ 379.3	\$ 392.6	\$ 400.9
Beer Distribution Tax	\$ 4.8	\$ 6.8	\$ 5.5	\$ 5.5
Franchise Fee Tax	\$ 110.4	\$ 110.0	\$ 110.1	\$ 125.0
Sales Tax	\$ 354.8	\$ 345.0	\$ 422.9	\$ 400.0
Sales Tax - Marshal	\$ 118.2	\$ 115.0	\$ 140.8	\$ 133.3
<b>SUB TOTAL TAXES</b>	<b>\$ 969.8</b>	<b>\$ 956.1</b>	<b>\$ 1,071.9</b>	<b>\$ 1,064.7</b>
% of Total Revenue	69.8%	39.7%	50.7%	39.9%
<b>FINES &amp; FEES REVENUE</b>				
<b>SUBTOTAL FINES &amp; FEES</b>	<b>\$ 28.6</b>	<b>\$ 43.0</b>	<b>\$ 24.3</b>	<b>\$ 41.0</b>
% of Total Revenue	2.1%	1.8%	1.1%	1.5%
<b>RENTAL REVENUE</b>				
<b>SUB TOTAL RENTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 3.9</b>	<b>\$ 22.8</b>	<b>\$ 14.9</b>	<b>\$ 25.0</b>
% of Total Revenue	0.3%	0.9%	0.7%	0.9%
<b>GRANTS &amp; REIMBURSEMENTS</b>				
<b>SUB TOTAL GRANTS &amp; REIMBURSEMENTS</b>	<b>\$ 21.0</b>	<b>\$ 1,125.8</b>	<b>\$ 753.3</b>	<b>\$ 1,066.5</b>
% of Total Revenue	1.5%	46.7%	35.6%	40.0%
<b>EVENTS &amp; OTHER REVENUE</b>				
<b>SUB TOTAL EVENTS &amp; OTHER REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 160.2</b>	<b>\$ 80.9</b>	<b>\$ 27.8</b>	<b>\$ 268.3</b>
% of Total Revenue	11.5%	3.4%	1.3%	10.1%
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 1,389.4</b>	<b>\$ 2,410.3</b>	<b>\$ 2,114.4</b>	<b>\$ 2,668.3</b>
% of Total Revenue	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%



## Grants

In the interim between the launch of the Comprehensive Plan and when any new or enhanced revenue sources add meaningfully to the town's funding, there are many types and sources of grants available for both physical infrastructure and for social good development.

The town is already in progress with a number of grants, among them the Louisiana Main Streets grant. Louisiana.GrantWatch.com lists 225 grant programs available for municipalities and the State of Louisiana offers a number of grant programs that can stimulate historic preservation and tourism visitation, as well as providing historic tax credits. Lieutenant Governor, Billy Nungesser, offered to send staff from his office to Abita Springs to give an overview of the grants available to city staff and the public, as well as to provide guidance on grant applications.

In addition to public sector grants, there are private foundations that have funding available for projects that address their concerns. For example, the Joe W. and Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation (<https://www.thebrownfoundation.org/>), based in Metairie, has funding for programs that alleviate suffering, whether homelessness or feeding the hungry. One of their departments is focused on education and provides grants that support local STEM educational development and summer camp programs for special needs children, as examples. A review of local foundations and the issues that they provide funding for would be a useful exercise in economic development.





## ESTABLISH A WATER COMPANY

### Enhance the Opportunities Around Establishing a Water Company for the Pure Water Assets in the Aquifer.

The bottled water industry is big business, with Statistica’s estimate for 2023 being just over than \$94 billion USD in the United States alone – nearly the size of Guatemala’s entire economic output. An interesting fact about the bottled water business is that much of the bottled water that is sold is simply treated tap water. True spring water typically generates a market sales price premium and also provides positive market differentiation among consumers. Since Abita Springs’ water quality is among the purest in the world, any water business established using it would rank highly in terms of customer value.

But since entering a new business is challenging and time consuming, particularly with limited staffing and funding available at the municipal level, a public-private partnership (PPP) may need to be created to bring the concept to life. A strong pre-feasibility study may be needed as a proof of concept to further discussions with potential private sector partners.

A PPP to bring the water business back to Abita Springs would support additional industrial development, expand the town’s tourism appeal and provide ongoing revenues from the sale of the water that would add to the municipality’s revenues without relying on direct area taxation. With a strong operating partner, the venture could provide a critical support to the town’s ambitions to both maintain its small town vision of itself and to provide the additional services and infrastructure that residents have requested.

## IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Since each initiative discussed above would have its own timeline that varies in terms of start dates and durations, it is helpful to conceptually think of the economic development process over the short, medium and long terms as generally proceeding in the following way.

### Short-Term Actions (within three years)

These actions (indicatively shown below) are often the simplest to undertake and complete and can provide noticeable momentum to other comprehensive planning efforts. They should be able to be begun and completed within three years, but in some cases may continue for the life of the plan.

- Completing Grant applications for infrastructure (and other items)
- Creating & maintaining a list of quick wins for city beautification and simple infrastructure fixes
- Experimenting with parking options
- Expanding marketing for tourism, retail and festivals

### Medium-Term Actions (from three to ten years)

These actions (indicatively shown below) take more time and effort to launch than the short term actions and are expected to provide bigger payoffs to the town in terms of economic impacts. Typically, these types of activities have longer planning periods and may need up to a decade to really mature.

- Beginning the commercialization of the town’s water assets
- Developing economic clusters through better business linkages and outward relationship building
- Building wider economic integration with the Parish and State
- Finalizing parking solutions

### Long-Term Actions (beyond ten years)

The final group of actions are those that take more than a decade to plan and execute in their fullest expression. In many cases, these actions take a long time to plan and fund and never truly end.

- Improving physical infrastructure
- Continually expanding economic opportunities through deepening cluster development
- Adding residents and families to the area
- Building up the retail base



## GOALS AND POLICIES

The resulting policies that follow from the strategies discussed in the economic development pillars are shown below, and provide Abita Springs’ administrators with a guide to future actions that support economic growth, while also giving residents a clear sense of the city’s economic development priorities and focus.

### OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL

*Abita Springs should create an economic and investment environment that positively differentiates it through careful management of its vision and a supportive posture towards development that maintains that vision.*

### Targeted Outcomes

The targeted outcomes from this action include:

- Increasing business openings or migrations into the area by more than the prior five years average;
- Increasing the number of employed persons by more than the prior five years average, increasing options for both those out of the workforce to participate in it and for part-time workers who wish to remain part time;
- Increasing satisfaction as measured by a consistently measured and annually given survey by at least 5% over the prior year’s score among citizens and businesses who are doing business in the town.

Each policy pillar shown below provides discrete actions and sub-goals that combine to achieve anticipated economic and employment growth.

### Pillar One: Enhancing the Base for Economic Growth

POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
<b>Goal ED 1: Establish an Economic Development Working Group.</b>				
<b>ED 1.1</b>	<b>Have a representative working group to advise policymakers on actions that would benefit Abita Springs economic development activities.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Create open invitations for public discussion around economic development (ED) and an ED working group, along with the details of the group’s composition and policy recommendations role.		Town	Ongoing
<b>B</b>	Regularly assess the group’s contribution to economic development policy making, refining membership at least annually (though without a requirement for service or term limit).		Town	Ongoing

<b>Goal ED 2: Leverage Grants to Support the Town’s Budget.</b>				
<b>ED 2.1</b>	<b>Generate sufficient grant income to fund selected improvements in planning, infrastructure or quality of life initiatives.</b>			
<b>A</b>	Expand efforts to access grants and funding to upgrade infrastructure and hardscapes through maintenance of a grant opportunity tracker, with the most likely or promising being highlighted.		Town	Mid- Term
<b>B</b>	Actively meet with local private foundations, family offices and grant giving sources to learn more about their preferences and application processes.		Town	Short - Term
<b>C</b>	Establish annual thematic targets for grant applications, such as education, infrastructure or streets.		Town	Short - Term



POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
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**Goal ED 3: Expand Sales Tax Generation and Employment Options in the Town Through Expanded Retail, Festival and Event Offerings.**

ED 3.1	Build an increasing volume of sales taxes generated from local sales and corresponding growth in employment related to such sales.		
A	Expand retail outreach efforts, particularly for niche businesses with strong potential for building local events around (antiques, specialty foods or beverages, bespoke production of unique items).	Town	Immediately
B	Develop green economy initiatives & linkages to existing businesses, particularly as they relate to businesses servicing the Trace or the Abita River.	Town	Mid- Term
C	Enhance existing marketing efforts to attract visitors, businesses and residents to the town through regular reviews of messaging, channels and sponsorships.	Town	Short - Term
D	Encourage local investors to launch new businesses and support their efforts.	Town	Ongoing
E	Create periodic pedestrian, golf cart or bike events on city streets.	Town	Short - Term
F	Evaluate ways to increase the use of golf carts for local in-town usage.	Town	Mid - Term
G	Support pop-up & small-scale retail options (beyond the weekend farmers market) through additional zoning overlays and simple, inexpensive business licensing regulations.	Town	Short - Term

**Goal ED 4: Expand Parking Solutions.**

ED 4.1	Expand the number of parking spaces available to visitors and residents frequenting local businesses sufficiently to support the town's people and visitors.		
A	Create legal clarity around the short term rentals of driveway and other private land.	Town	Short - Term
B	Examine the feasibility of expanding park and ride options for nights and weekends in addition to large festivals or events.	Town	Mid - Term
C	Undertake an analysis of structured parking solutions that include potential locations, development costs, operational economics and demand over the coming decade.	Town	Long - Term

**Goal ED 5: Deepening Housing and Employment Options for Different Stages of Life.**

ED 5.1	Provide greater living and working options that recognize the increasing importance of part-time work, work from home, rental housing and non-single family home ownership for recent graduates, mid-career life transitions and retirees.		
A	Clarify through zoning and regulations what acceptable future development in different parts of town looks like and at what scale.	Town	Immediately
B	Limit, to the extent of the law, what development typologies or plat plans would not align with the comprehensive plan or the town's vision for itself.	Town	Mid - Term
C	Verify that non-single family zoning, mother-in-law suites and multi-family rental opportunities are included in current and any potential future zoning.	Town	Short - Term



**Pillar Two: Expanding Existing Successes**

POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
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**Goal ED 6: Establish a Tourism Working Group.**

ED 6.1	Deepen the tax base and add various revenue streams to fund expanded municipal operations.		
<b>A</b>	Strengthen city fiscal policy by increasing emergency reserves.	Town, Zoning Department	Long - Term
<b>B</b>	Evaluate the operations of entities that provide Enterprise Funds to determine their most effective ownership structure for the public.	Town, Zoning Department	Short - Term
<b>C</b>	Strengthen the public budget through right-sizing the ad valorem tax to reflect the true cost of public service provision.	Town, Zoning Department	Mid - Term

**Goal ED 7: Deepen Municipal Budget Sophistication.**

ED 7.1	A representative working group to advise policymakers on actions that would benefit Abita Spring’s tourism development activities.		
<b>A</b>	Leverage assets & expand opportunities to take advantage of tourism flows	Town	Mid - Term
<b>B</b>	Expand the festivals and events economy through additional programming	Town	Short - Term
<b>C</b>	Involve local businesses in festival and event planning to create brand promotion opportunities for themselves and the town	Town	Short - Term

**Goal ED 8: Develop Existing Economic Clusters.**

ED 8.1	Support the development of a wider tax base and deeper local participation across the supply chain in existing clusters in tourism, food and beverage and retail.		
<b>A</b>	Create or expand networking and relationship building events for local and regional businesses.	Town	Short - Term
<b>B</b>	Participate in regional and state level economic development and business delegations.	Town	Long - Term
<b>C</b>	Encourage local investors to bring new retail concepts to life in the town.	Town	Mid - Term



**Pillar Three: Reaching for New Heights**

POLICY	ACTION	GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTION ITEMS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY	TIME FRAME
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**Goal ED 9: Establishing a Spring Water Venture.**

ED 9.1	Create a new water business to create an income stream for the town, provide strong positive brand equity for it, and that would allow for other new business concepts to be linked to it.		
A	Perform an early stage conceptual assessment of the spring water market and Abita Springs' options for entry, partnership and financial / equity contributions to determine a viable business approach.	Town	Short - Term
B	Evaluate a potential partnership framework plan and determine pathways for moving the concept into implementation.	Town	Immediately
C	Commit resources, as needed, and perform all necessary diligence and reviews prior to launch.	Town	Mid - Term

**Goal ED 10: Seed New Economic Clusters.**

ED 10.1	Support the development of a wider tax base and deeper local participation across the supply chain by seeding new clusters or expanding laterally from existing clusters.		
A	Analyze options to enter regional economic trends (film, eds & meds), then pursue those with the best probability of success.	Town	Short - Term
B	Facilitate a working group with relevant parties to determine the best approaches for market entry for businesses based in Abita Springs or wishing to locate there.	Town	Short - Term
C	Determine any supportive public policy actions to enhance the probability of success for new cluster development.	Town	Short - Term

**Goal ED 11: Improve Infrastructure.**

ED 11.1	Deliver residents a modern, well-developed physical infrastructure, from roads, sewer, sanitary water, gas and electrical utilities.		
A	Maintain forward estimates for the design, timing and costs for replacement or expansion for key infrastructure, including roads, sewer, sanitary water, gas and electrical utilities and match potential funding needs with possible funding sources.	Town	Long - Term
B	Maintain discussions with possible funding sources regarding the process of securing funding, probability of success and likely changes to the town's time, cost or design estimates for infrastructure.	Town	Ongoing
C	Look for opportunities to create new through streets or traffic flows to move through-traffic out of the center of town and onto peripheral roads.	Town	Short - Term





Trinity  
Evangelical  
Lutheran  
Church

Trinity Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
Service - 10:00  
AM  
WELCOMED  
ALL ARE  
INVITED