

[2040]

Gardendale Comprehensive Plan



Existing Conditions Document

Prepared by:

Regional Planning Commission of Greater
Birmingham and KPS Group

For:

City of Gardendale

2014



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this the Existing Conditions Document is to provide the City of Gardendale with analysis of population and socioeconomic trends in Gardendale and surrounding areas (including Birmingham, Jefferson County and the State of Alabama) for comparative purposes. This document also includes projections for Gardendale through 2040 as well as land use, transportation and other community analysis. The information in this document allows the City to better understand the development patterns of their population – thus enabling them to plan for the delivery of services and infrastructure to accommodate future residential and economic growth.

The Existing Conditions Document is an essential component in the Gardendale Comprehensive Plan process that makes information readily available to both the City staff and citizens of Gardendale. The existing conditions of the City outlined in this document is presented in a text and graphic format to better communicate the findings in the document. The information provided in the Existing Conditions Document was derived using data collected from the U.S. Census, City of Gardendale, Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham(RPCGB) and KPS Group.



2.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Consideration of the environment is necessary when determining future land uses and development patterns due to the ability of these factors to influence the location and the types of developments possible. The purpose of doing such an analysis is to determine a growth pattern, allowing development to occur in a harmonious way with the surrounding environment. This section includes the physiography, geology and soil conditions and hydrology found throughout the Gardendale area.

The constraints placed on development because of environmental factors are determined based on the qualities of slope, soil types, hydrology, and other factors when substantially impacted. The overall impact of development on the land and these combined factors was considered for the entire study area.

2.1 Geographic Location

Gardendale is located approximately twelve (12) miles north of Birmingham, Alabama, just off Interstate Highway 65 (See Figure 2.1). U.S. Highway 31 North runs through the central portion of the City. Gardendale is bordered by Fultondale on the south with the remainder of the City being bordered to the north by Morris and Kimberly, and the east by Tarrant. The majority of the remaining adjacent land consists of unincorporated areas of Jefferson County, including Mount Olive to the west. The City encompasses some 17.95 square miles.

2.2 Climate

The City of Gardendale is located in a region of temperate climate with average summer temperatures of 73 degrees Fahrenheit and average winter temperatures of 50 degrees, which rarely produces temperatures low enough to cause frost penetration of soil cover deeper than six (6) inches. With an average annual temperature of 62 degrees, Gardendale has 117 days per year with precipitation and an average annual precipitation of 54 inches. The prevailing winds in the City are from the southwest.

2.3 Topography

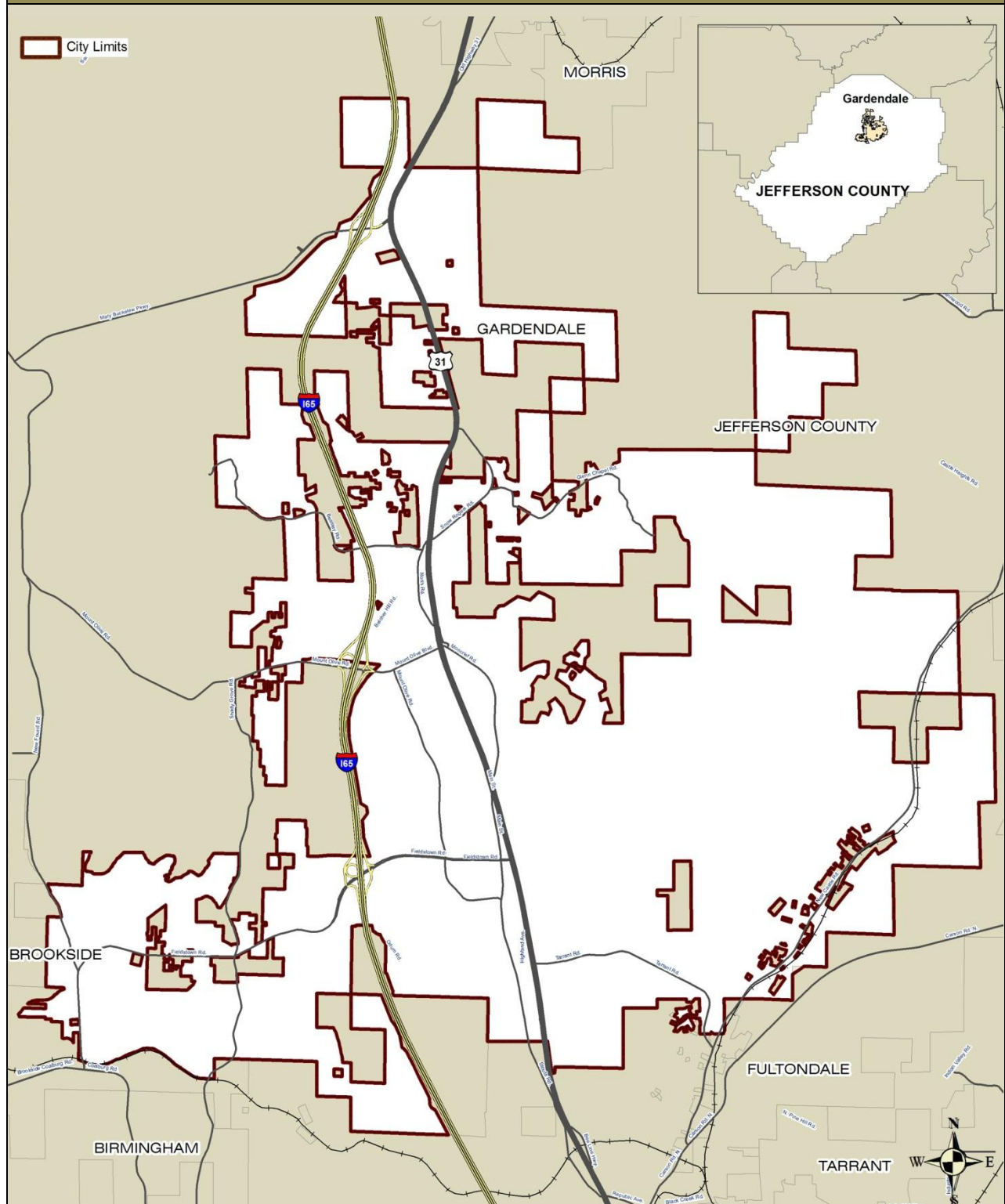
Gardendale is located northwest of Sand Mountain in the Cumberland Plateau section of the Appalachian Plateaus geologic province. Sand Mountain is a distinct natural boundary between Gardendale and other Jefferson County cities to the south and east, particularly Birmingham and Tarrant. Land forms in the area have an irregular pattern compared to the dominant linear Jones Valley south of Sand Mountain. They consist mostly of low hills, with gently rolling summits and steep slopes (See Figure 2.2).

The lowest points in the City are around 380 ft. above sea level, such as along Cunningham Creek and Crooked Creek. The City's highest elevations (about 800 ft. above sea level) are in the New Castle area along Sand Mountain. For comparison, the intersection of Fieldstown Road and Highway 31 at the center of town is at 640 ft. above sea level.



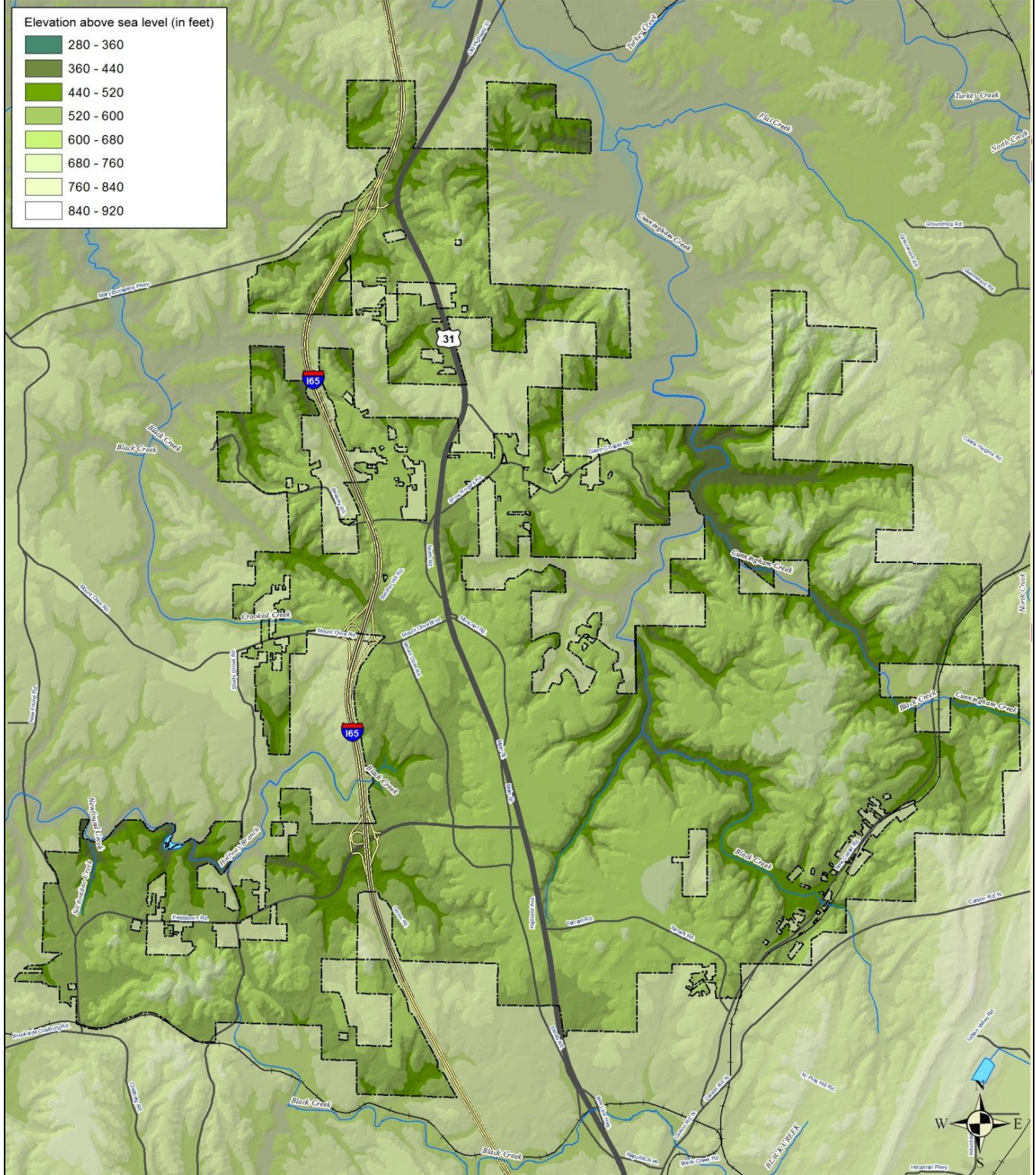
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Figure 2.1 Location Map



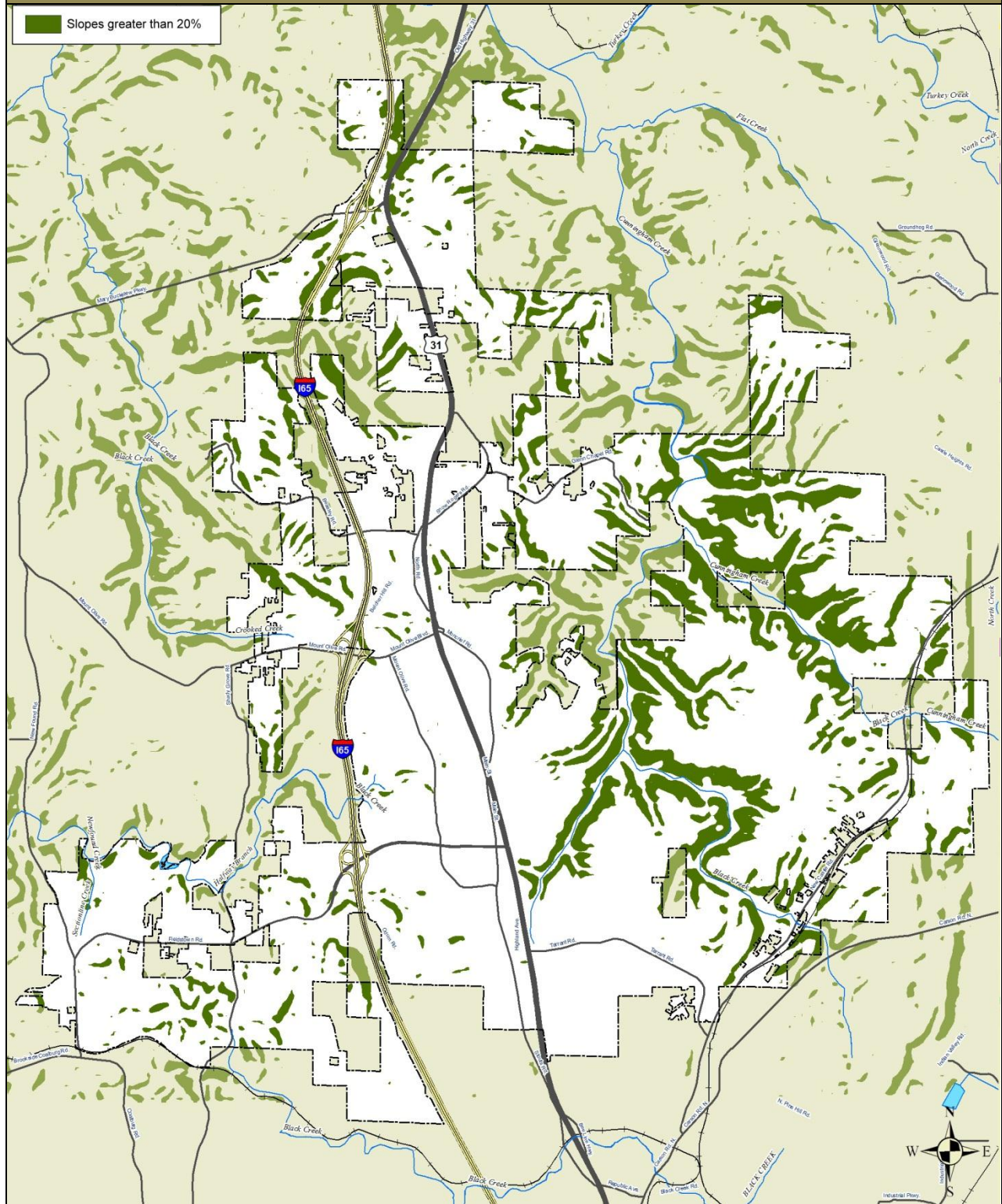
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Figure 2.2 Topography Map



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Figure 2.3 Step Slopes Map



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There are areas of steep slopes—20% and greater—in various locations in the City, particularly in the eastern and northern sections of the planning area (See Figure 2.3). Areas of steep slope pose constraints for land development. Development on steep slopes tends to be more expensive than on flat land and can have unwanted impacts on stormwater drainage and exacerbate erosion. Gardendale’s topographic features have had a direct influence on the community’s past development pattern and will continue to be a factor in the City’s future growth. Although specific threshold criteria for steep slopes vary depending upon the type of development activity, the general slope thresholds used to determine where slopes become a significant engineering and design constraint to development are listed below and:

0-5% Well suited to large-scale shopping center development and small-scale individual commercial structures, single and multi-family residences. Acceptable limit for construction of roads and railroads.

5-10% Truck access becomes difficult and expensive when the slope exceeds 7%, and in areas of slope over 8% road routing is virtually dictated by the terrain. Small-scale, individual, commercial structures on slopes from 5 to 8% with virtually no parking demand or, if provided, with parking garages.

10-15% Financially impractical for industrial, commercial and townhouse developments. Hillside subdivision for single-family homes and apartment construction is often feasible, with special care taken with design of access roads and parking areas.

15-20% Point at which engineering costs for most developments become significant and extensive anchoring, soil stabilization, and stormwater management measures must be applied. Single-family homes and apartment construction is possible only if special care is taken in the design of access roads, parking areas, water supply, and sewage disposal. Any road design requires special care.

20-25% Financially impractical for all development activity. All urban areas which require the construction of roads and the provision of utilities are both prohibitively expensive and extremely damaging to the terrain.

2.4 Geology

The most prevalent general soil type in the Gardendale area is Montevallo-Nauvoo, which occurs on dissected plateaus, or plateaus that have been severely eroded—by creeks and rivers—to create steep relief. Montevallo soils are generally not supportive of farming and can be a constraint to development because of steep slopes, erosion, and typically shallow soil depth. Steep slopes and shallow soil depth are also limitations on septic tank absorption. Nauvoo soils are less shallow and are more favorable to these uses, except where steep slopes occur. Nauvoo-Urban Land and Townley-Urban Land complexes are associated with the developed portions of the City. Nauvoo fine sandy loam and Townley-Nauvoo complexes are scattered in small, irregular areas throughout the community. Several other soil types occur around Gardendale, but in very small quantities (See Figure 2.5).

2.4.1 Soils and Road Construction

According to the US Soil Conservation Service, most soils in Gardendale present conditions that make road construction, a necessity for development, more difficult. In particular, Barfield, Bodine-Fullerton, Docena, Gorgas, Ketona-Sullivan, Montevallo-Nauvoo, Palmerdale, Sullivan, Townley and Tupelo soil associations and complexes are a challenge for road construction due to their association with steep slopes, rock outcrops, or other obstacles. These soils are shown in green in Figure 2.6. Gardendale has historically developed in areas where the characteristics of the land have been most accommodating for modern settlement. But over the last twenty to thirty years—with the most suitable land already built



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upon—mostly residential development has extended farther out into areas of the city that can require more careful planning and greater expense to build upon.

2.4.2 Soils and Septic Tank Absorption

Gently sloping, thick, permeable soils with deep water tables are most accommodating of septic tank use. However, in Gardendale those soils that present limitations for road construction also are limited for septic tank absorption. Use of septic tanks for single-family homes, for instance, can be more expensive in these areas to assure that effluent is properly absorbed and does not cause odors or health problems. Site-specific conditions are verified through soil or percolation (“perc”) tests required by Jefferson County whenever the use of a septic tank is being considered. Soils that present severe limitations to septic tank usage are shown in green in Figure 2.7.

2.5 Hydrology

Gardendale lies within the Locust Fork Watershed of the Black Warrior River Basin. The Locust Fork of the Black Warrior is the primary waterway traversing north Jefferson County and is located north and west of the City. However, several creeks that flow through Gardendale feed into the Locust Fork. Streams in Gardendale include Flat Creek, Newfound Creek, Black Creek, Cunningham Creek, Crooked Creek and Halfway Branch. Crooked Creek, Cunningham Creek and Flat Creek flow northward into Turkey Creek while Newfound Creek and Halfway Branch flow toward Fivemile Creek south of the City.

As shown in Figure 2.8, several area creeks are associated with floodplains of varying size that are prone to flooding during heavy rain events. There is typically very little development within these low-lying areas due to the damage that floodwaters can cause to buildings and property.

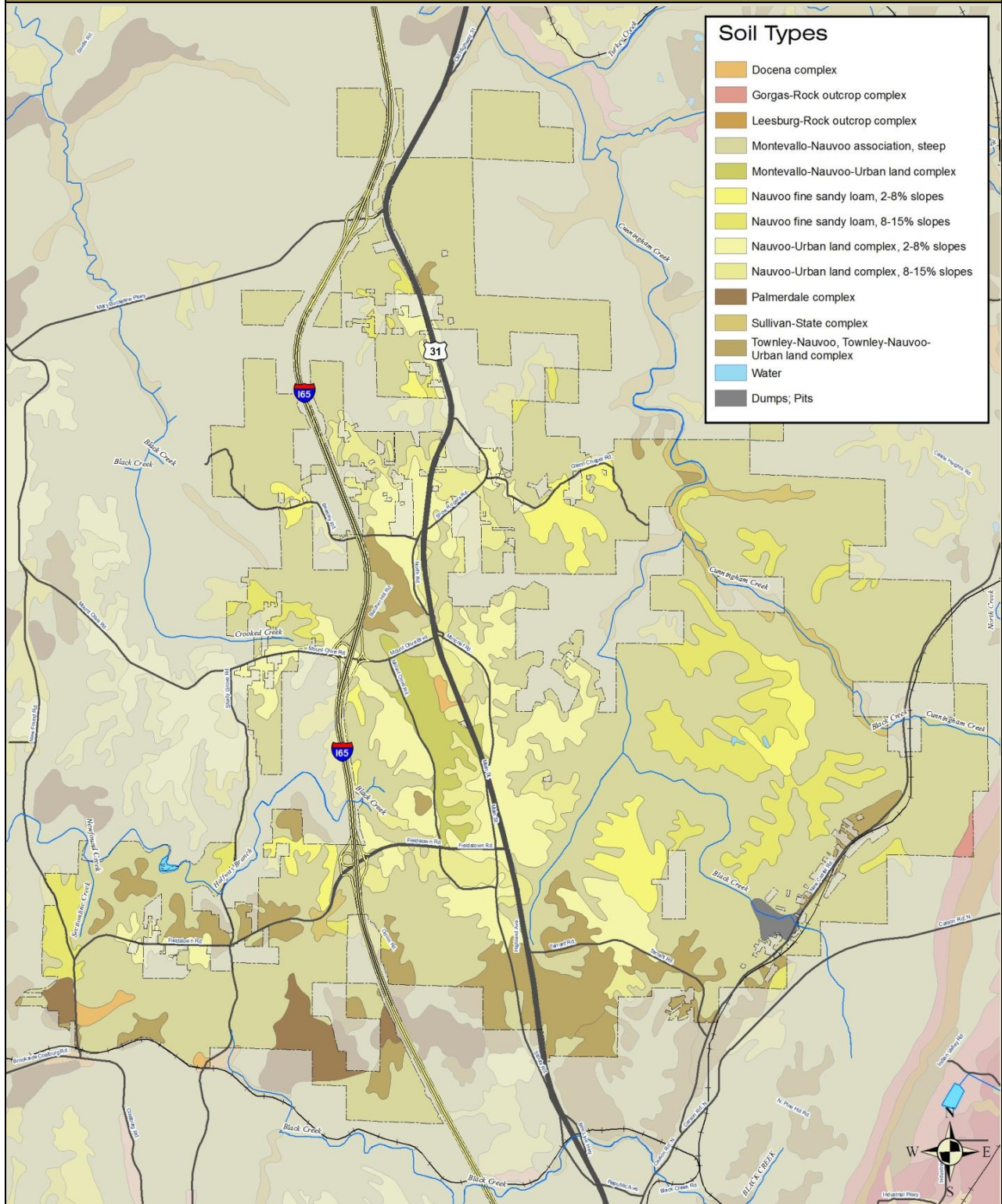
Newfound Creek is the only waterway in Gardendale to have been listed as “impaired” by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. The cause of impairment is sedimentation; however, no Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) have been established for the impaired portion of Newfound Creek, which flows from an impoundment east of Brookside Road to Fivemile Creek.

The primary flood prone areas within the City are located in the western and eastern areas of the City, as shown in Figure 2.8. Some of these areas include Cades Cove Drive, Laurel Lane and Shady Grove Road.



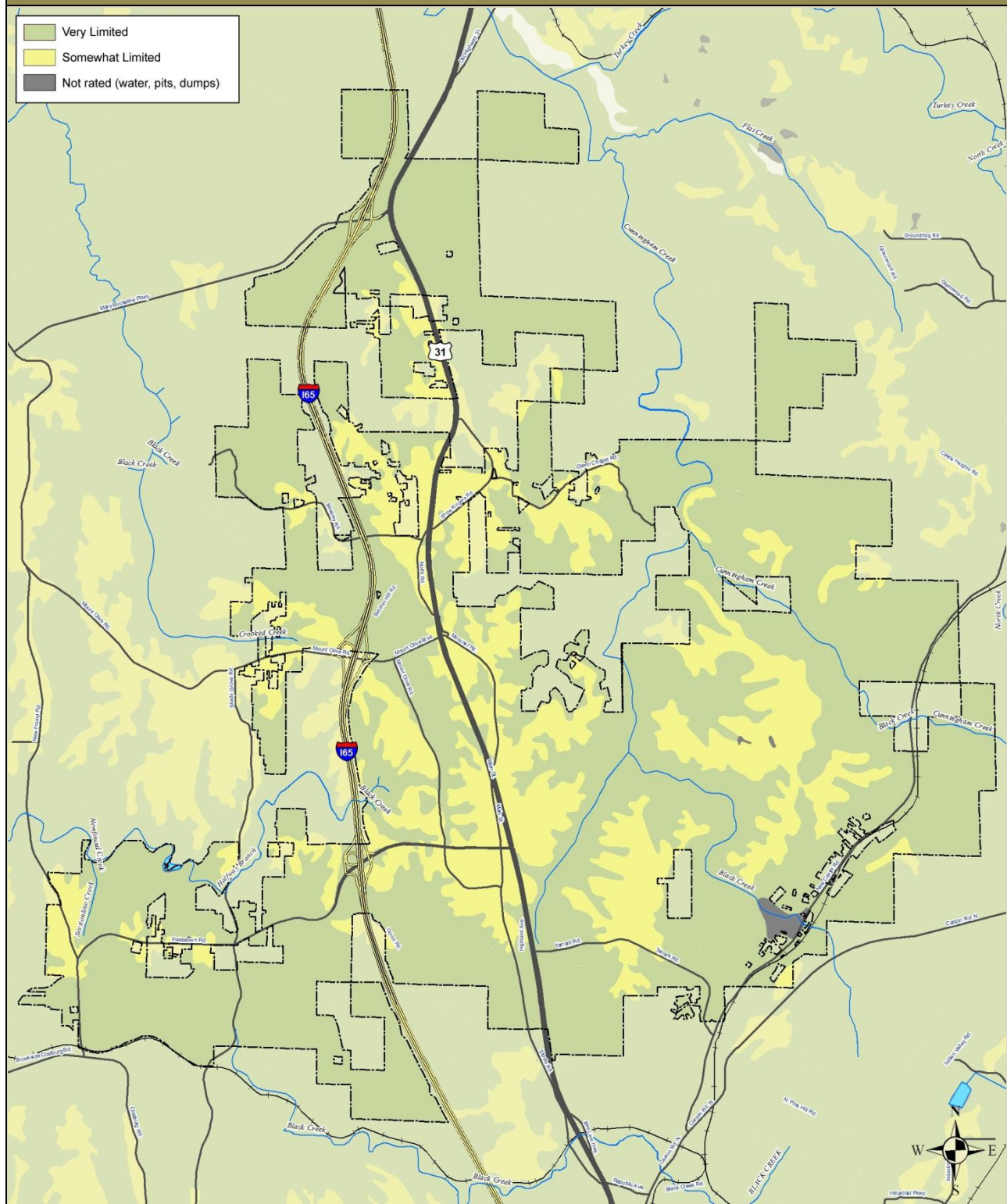
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Figure 2.4 Soil Types Map



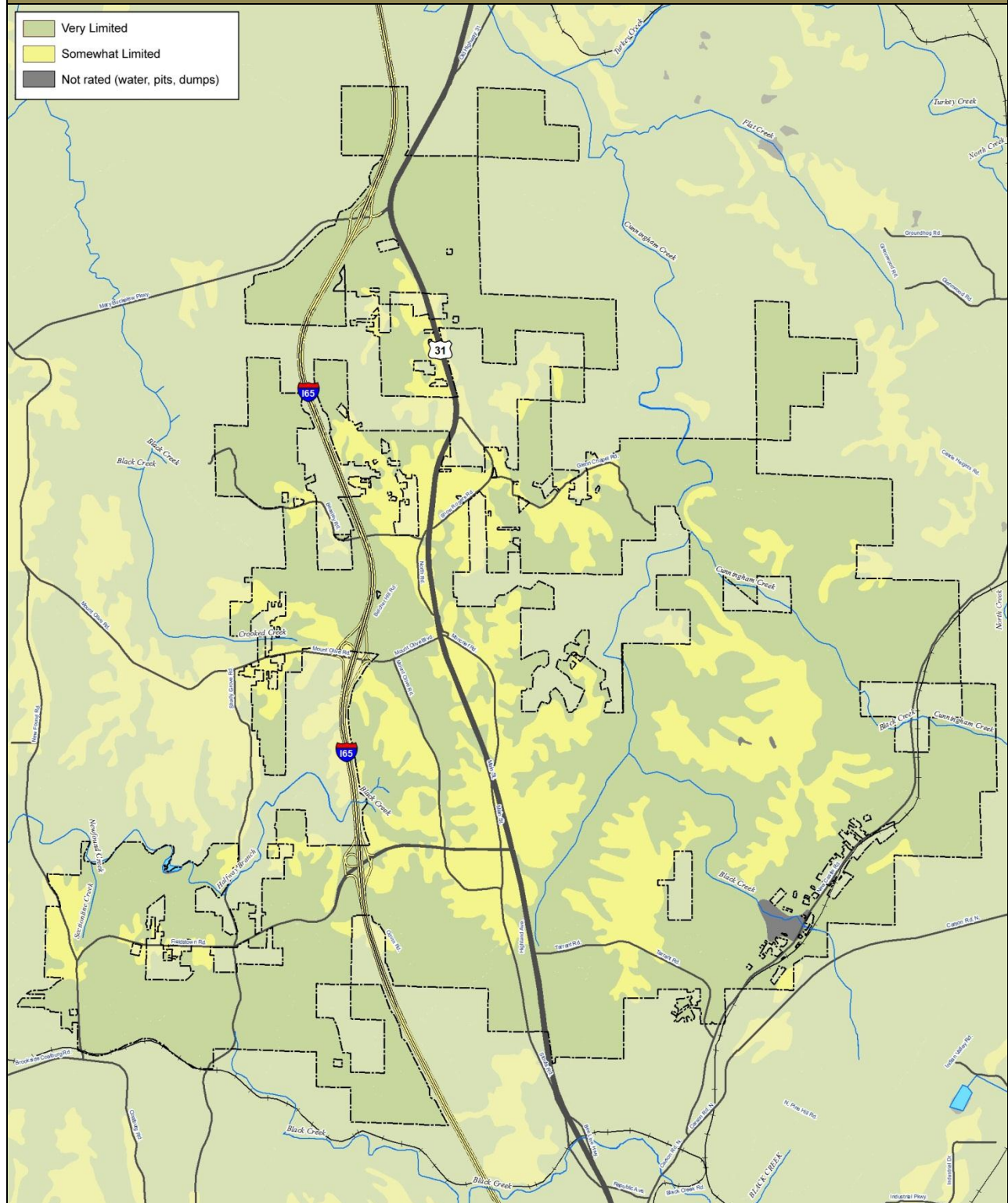
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Figure 2.5 Limitations on Road Construction Map



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Figure 2.6 Limitations on Septic Absorption Map



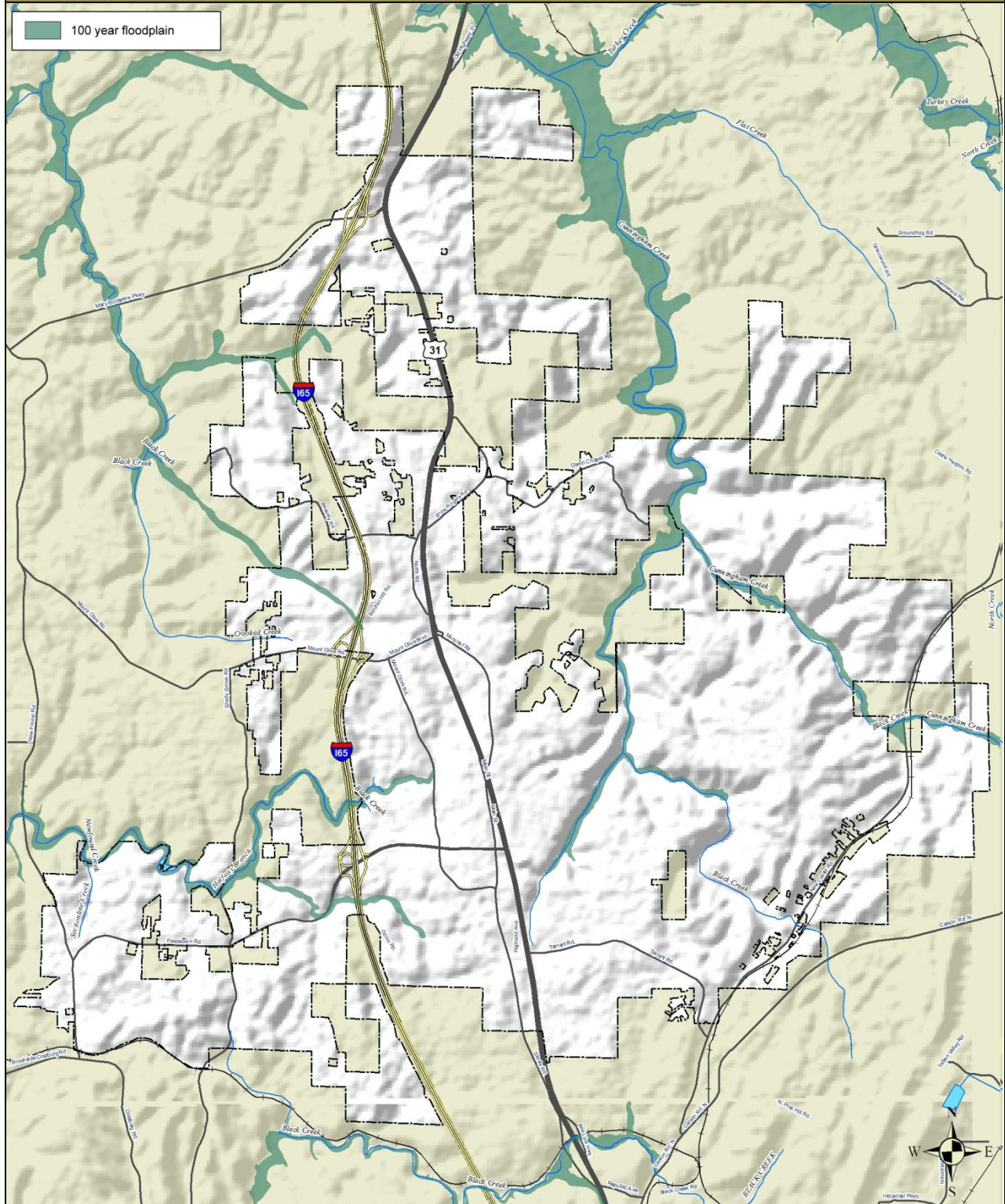
2.6 Green Infrastructure

Altogether, the City’s floodplains, streams, topography, tree canopy, parks and other protected open spaces represent Gardendale’s “green infrastructure.” Green infrastructure elements serve essential purposes—stormwater management, air quality, groundwater recharge and other functions—in much the same way that water and sewer systems do. These services go largely unnoticed by the community, though residents and visitors may appreciate the hills, valleys, trees, open spaces and waterways for aesthetic or recreational reasons. For adequate performance, man-made infrastructure, such as a sanitary sewer system, is managed as an interconnected whole—not as a collection of individual or isolated pieces. This is also true of natural green infrastructure. Making physical changes to the landscape will have an impact on other locations, most all of which are connected in some way or another. Adding impervious surfaces and buildings in areas prone to flooding can cause flooding to expand into areas not previously affected during heavy rainfalls. Problems that result from mismanagement of green infrastructure can be very costly to fix. As Gardendale continues to develop, these natural systems should be properly safeguarded, not solely for aesthetic or recreational purposes, but for the essential functions they provide in support of the community’s safety and well-being. Shown in Figure 2.9 are the core elements of Gardendale’s, including steep slopes, floodplains, streams, parks and other permanent open spaces.



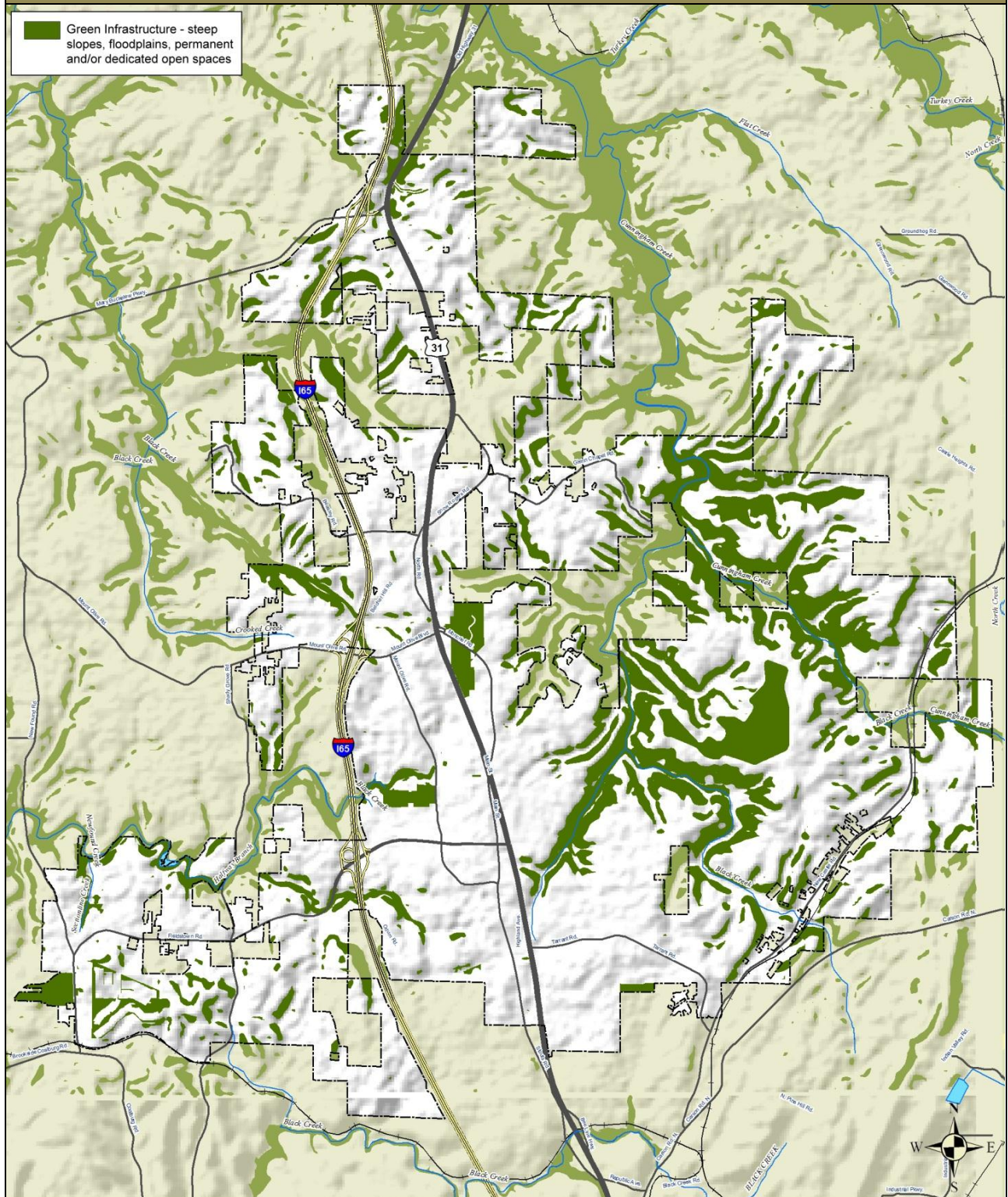
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Figure 2.7 Hydrology Map



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Figure 2.8 Green Infrastructure Map

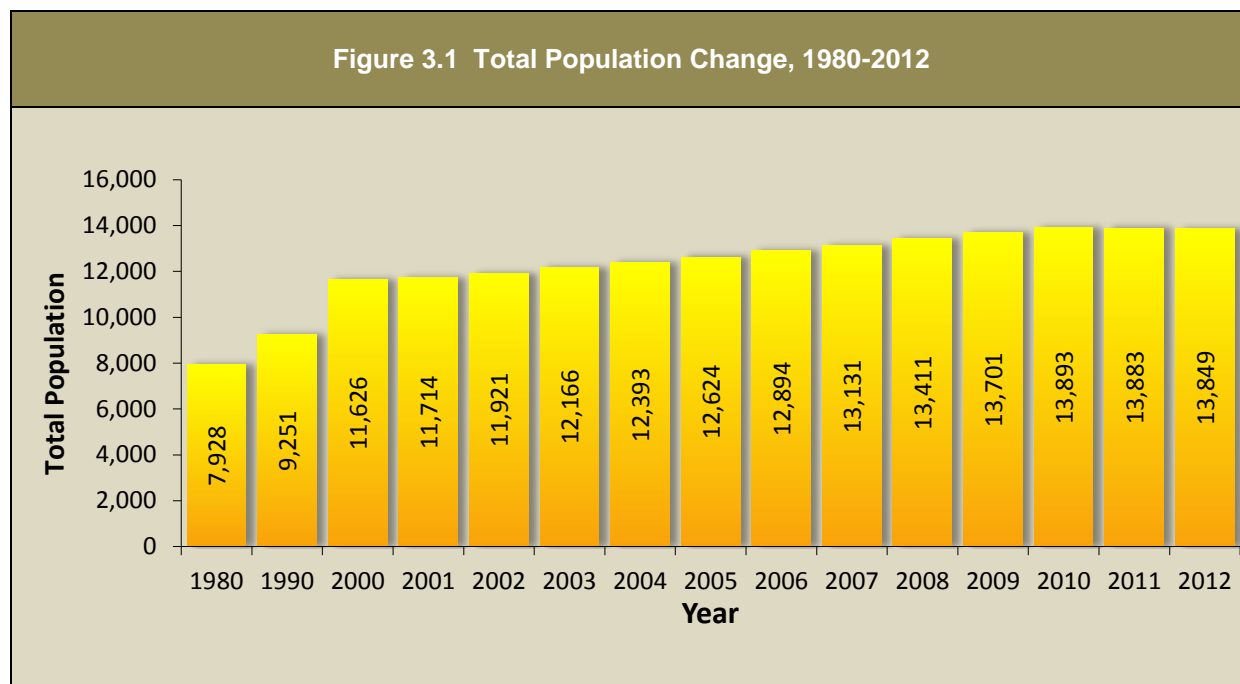


3.0 DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSEHOLDS

An analysis of the population and households characteristics in Gardendale is an essential element of the planning process. Understanding the densities and spatial distribution of the present and future populace enables local officials to better determine future housing needs, public service needs, future land use requirements, fiscal planning, and the timing of public improvements. This section outlines the population and households trends in Gardendale.

3.1 Population Change and Projection

The City of Gardendale was initially incorporated in 1955. Subsequent to the City’s incorporation, the U.S. Census showed that 4,712 people resided in Gardendale. By the 1970 Census, the City’s population had risen to 6,502 people, an increase of 38%. The population later increased to 7,928, an increase of 22%, by 1980. Figure 3.1 shows the population rate of change from 1980 to 2012, while Table 3.1 shows comparative population growth rates since 1980 in Gardendale. As shown in Table 3.1, Gardendale’s population has increased at a much faster rate than that of Jefferson County and Alabama as a whole. It is estimated that Gardendale’s population will continue to grow at a steady rate and will reach 17,107 in 2040 (see Figure 3.2).



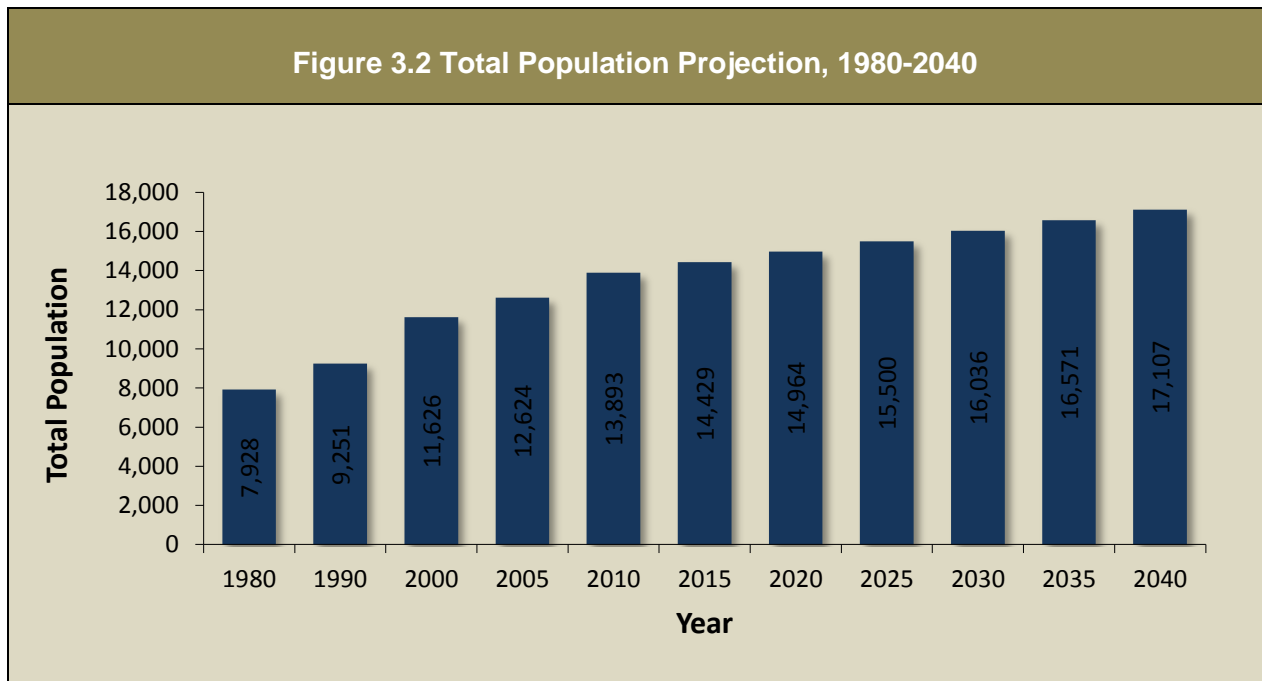
Source: US Bureau of the Census



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Table 3.1 Comparative Population Trends, 1980-2010						
Population Trends	Gardendale		Jefferson County		Alabama	
	1980 Census	7,928	22%	671,324	4%	3,893,871
1990 Census	8,521	7.5%	651,525	-3%	4,040,587	4%
2000 Census	11,626	36%	662,047	2%	4,447,100	10%
2010 Census	13,893	19.5%	658,466	-0.5%	4,779,736	7%

Source: US Bureau of the Census



Source: US Bureau of the Census

3.2 Population Distribution by Age Group

Gardendale’s population had a higher median age, 42 years, than Jefferson County (37.1 years) and Alabama (37.9 years) in 2010. The City, when compared to Jefferson County and Alabama, also had a larger percentage of individuals, 24.6%, 60 years of age and over and a smaller percentage of individuals, 23.7%, 19 years of age and younger (see Table 3.2).



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Table 3.2 Comparative Age Group Distribution , 2010

Age Group	Gardendale		Jefferson County		Alabama	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Under 5 Years	842	6.1%	43897	6.7%	304,957	6.4%
5-19 Years	2,454	17.7%	128,937	19.6%	971,355	20.3%
20-59 Years	7,176	51.7%	363,230	55.2%	2,569,505	53.8%
60 and Over	3,421	24.6%	122,402	18.6%	933,919	19.5%
Total Population	13,893	100.0%	658,466	100.0%	4,779,736	100.0%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

3.3 Population Projection by Age Group

In 2010, 51.7% of Gardendale’s population was between the ages of 20 and 59, while only 23.7% were 19 years of age and younger, and 24.6% were seniors (60 years of age and older). According to W&P Economics & RPCGB projections, the percentage of Gardendale’s population 19 years of age and younger is expected to increase to 27.9% of Gardendale’s population (see Table 3.3).

Gardendale’s population, 19 years of age and under, is expected to have the highest rate of growth, 23.7%, over the next 10 years than any other age group, while the senior population is anticipated to decrease at a rate of 5%. Over the next 30 years, the share of the population age 19 years of age and under will continue to have the highest rate of growth, 44.8%, and the senior population will have the lowest rate of growth, 9.2%.

Table 3.3 Age Group Projections, 2000-2040

Age Group	2010		2020		2030		2040	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Under 5 Years	842	6.0%	1,047	7.0%	1,079	6.7%	1,189	7.0%
5-19 Years	2,454	17.7%	3,030	20.3%	3,422	21.3%	3,582	20.9%
20-59 Years	7,176	51.7%	7,636	51.0%	7,903	49.3%	8,600	50.3%
60 and Over	3,421	24.6%	3,250	21.7%	3,632	22.7%	3,736	21.8%
Total Population	13,893	100%	14,964	100%	16,036	100%	17,107	100%

Source: W&P Economics & RPC projections



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3.4 Racial Composition

The racial composition of Gardendale, according to the 2010 estimates, consisted of 88.4% of residents reported as White, 8.6% Black or African American, and 3.1% making up the remaining racial categories (see Table 3.4). Persons of Hispanic origin made up 1.5% of the population. When compared to the racial composition of Jefferson County, Gardendale had a lower percentage of its residents who reported as Black or African American and as being of Hispanic origin.

Table 3.4 Comparative Racial Composition, 2010					
Race	Gardendale		Jefferson County		Gardendale as a % of Jefferson County
White	12,277	88.4%	349,166	53.0%	3.5%
Black or African-American	1,189	8.6%	276,525	42.0%	0.4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	41	0.3%	1,740	0.3%	2.4%
Asian/ Pacific Islander	163	1.2%	9,402	1.4%	1.7%
Other	223	1.6%	21,633	3.3%	1.0%
Hispanic Origin*	207	1.5%	25,488	3.9%	0.8%
Total Population	13,893	100.0%	658,466	100.0%	2.1%

Source: US Bureau of the Census

* Defined as an ethnicity, not a racial category.

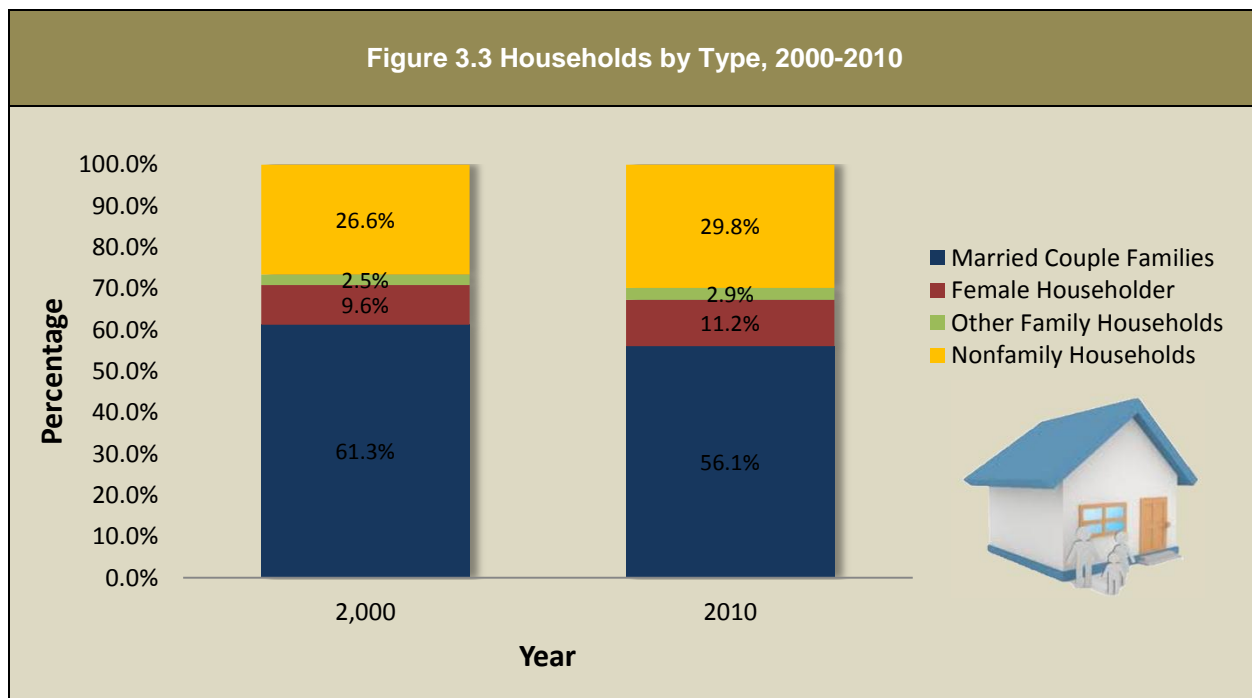
3.5 Household Type and Size

In 2010, Gardendale had 5,670 households, an increase of 19.8% from 2000. Of the 5,670 households in Gardendale, 70.2% were classified as family households and 29.8% nonfamily households. In comparison to 2000, Gardendale saw a 3.3% decrease in the number of family households and a 3.2% increase in nonfamily households. The most prevalent type of household found in Gardendale, according to 2010 estimates, was married couple families, which accounted for 56.1% of all household types and 83.6% of all family households (see Figure 3.3).

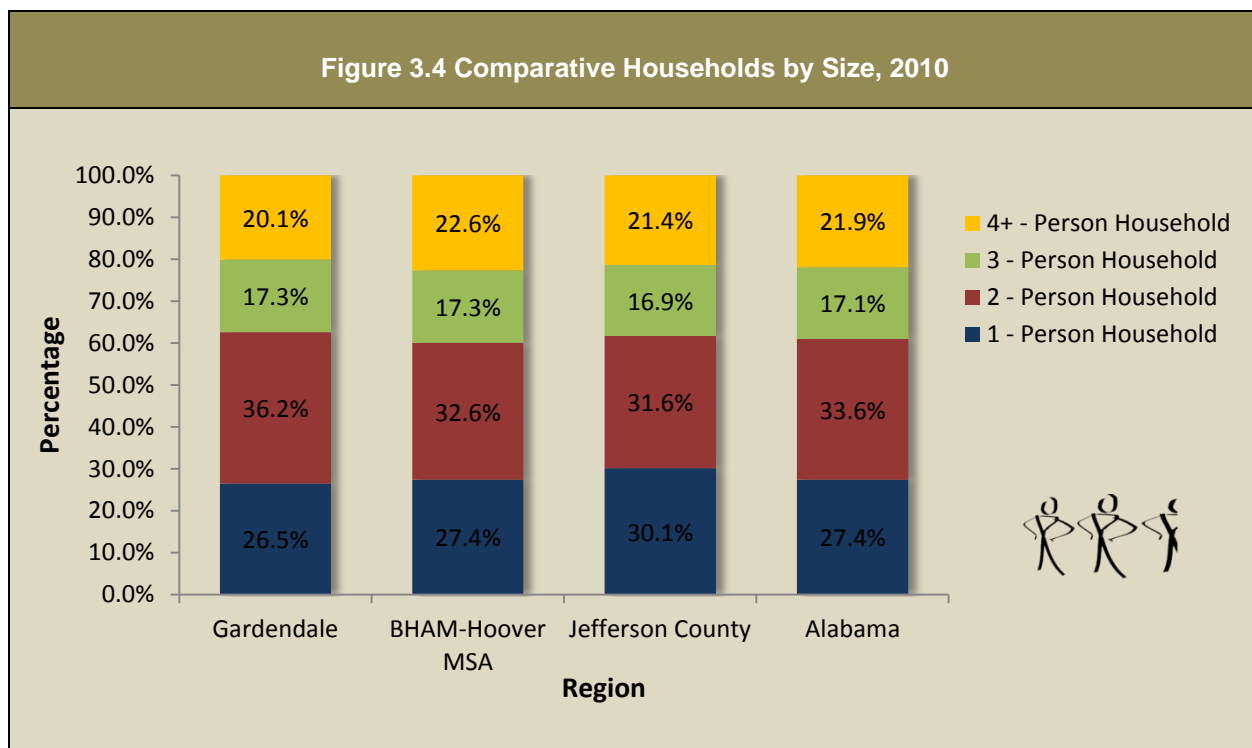
Gardendale's average household size in 2010 was 2.42 compared to 2.50 in the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Statistical Area (BHAM-Hoover MSA), 2.44 in Jefferson County and 2.48 in the state of Alabama. Gardendale had a higher percentage of 2 person households (36.2%) than the Birmingham-Hoover area, Jefferson County and Alabama (see Figure 3.4).



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Source: US Bureau of the Census



Source: US Bureau of the Census

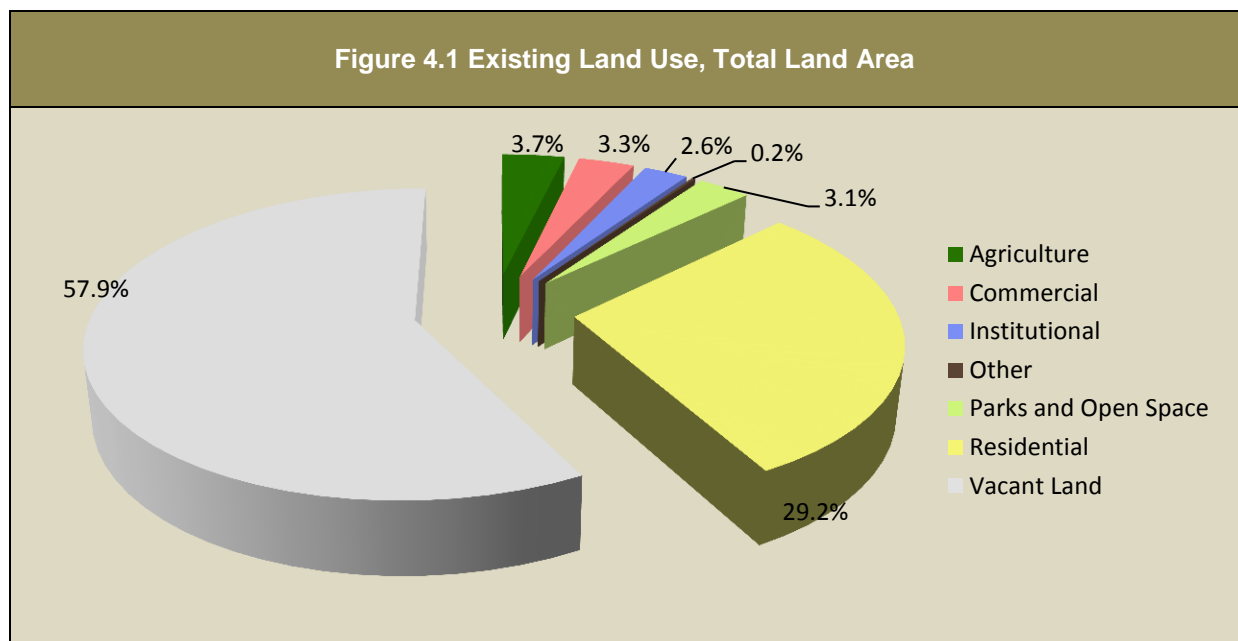


4.0 EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING

This section analyzes the land uses, development patterns and zoning in Gardendale. Understanding land use patterns in Gardendale helps the City identify areas for new and infill developments. In addition to identifying locations for various developments, land use patterns also help the City determine where to focus future infrastructure and services.

4.1 Land Area

There are a total of 13,148 acres of land (20.5 square miles) within the current city limits of Gardendale. Today, only about 40% of that total area has been developed (see Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2). As indicated in Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, single-family residential development is the primary use of land in Gardendale, which illustrates the City's initial development as a bedroom community, from which residents have travelled regularly to work, shopping and other destinations.



Source: KPS Group & RPCGB

4.2 Single-family Residential

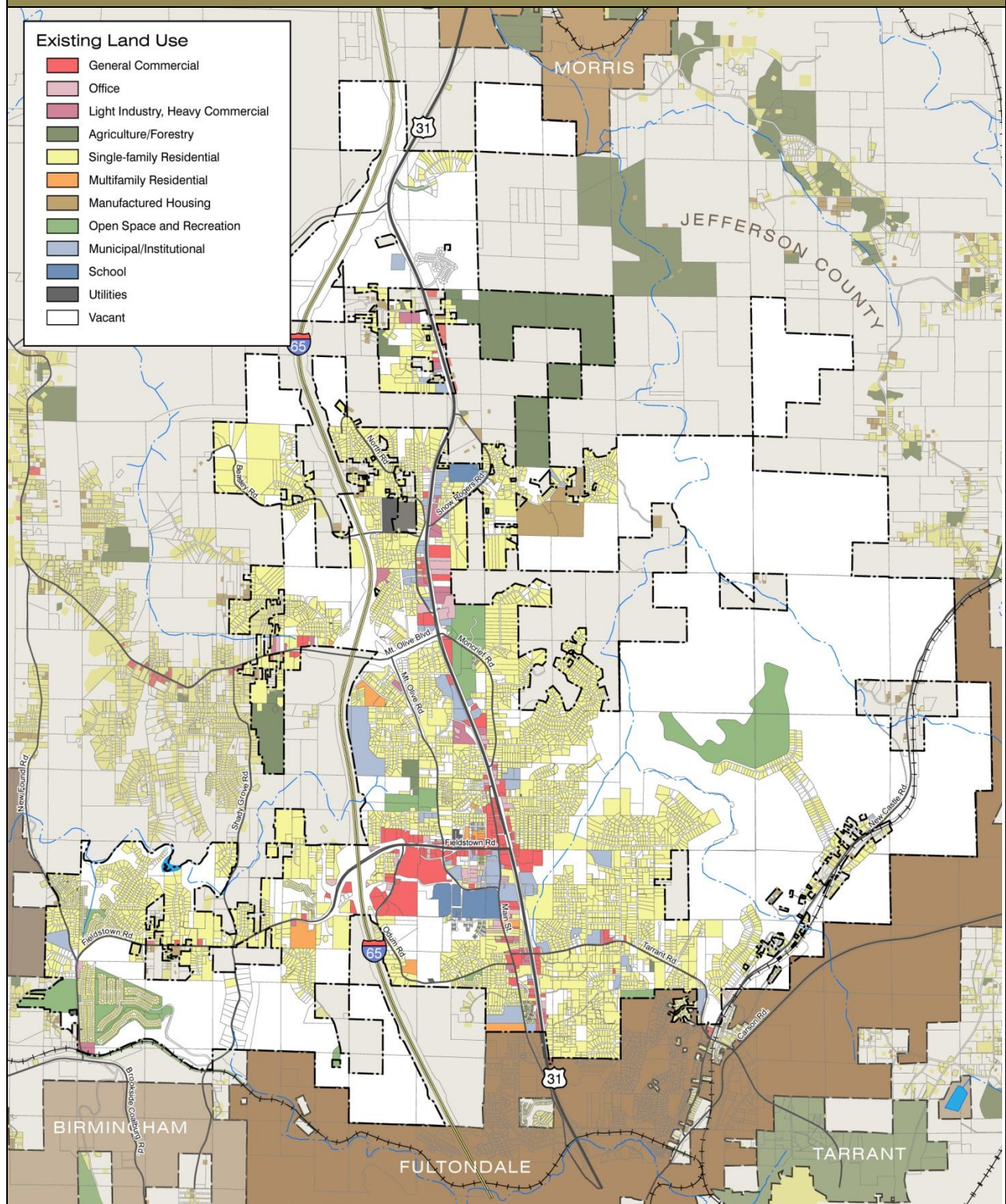
Single-family residences take up over 3770 acres in Gardendale, making it the largest single use of developed land in the community. While it accounts for only about 29% of the City's total land area, single-family residential development comprises two-thirds of all developed land in Gardendale (see Figure 4.3).

This category represents a wide variety of residential types, from large homes on multi-acre estates to duplexes and attached dwellings, or townhouses. Single-family neighborhoods are located throughout the community but are mostly clustered near Fieldstown Road, Mt. Olive Road, Tarrant Road, Moncrief Road, Beasley Road and other thoroughfares that provide easy access to Highway 31 and Interstate 65.

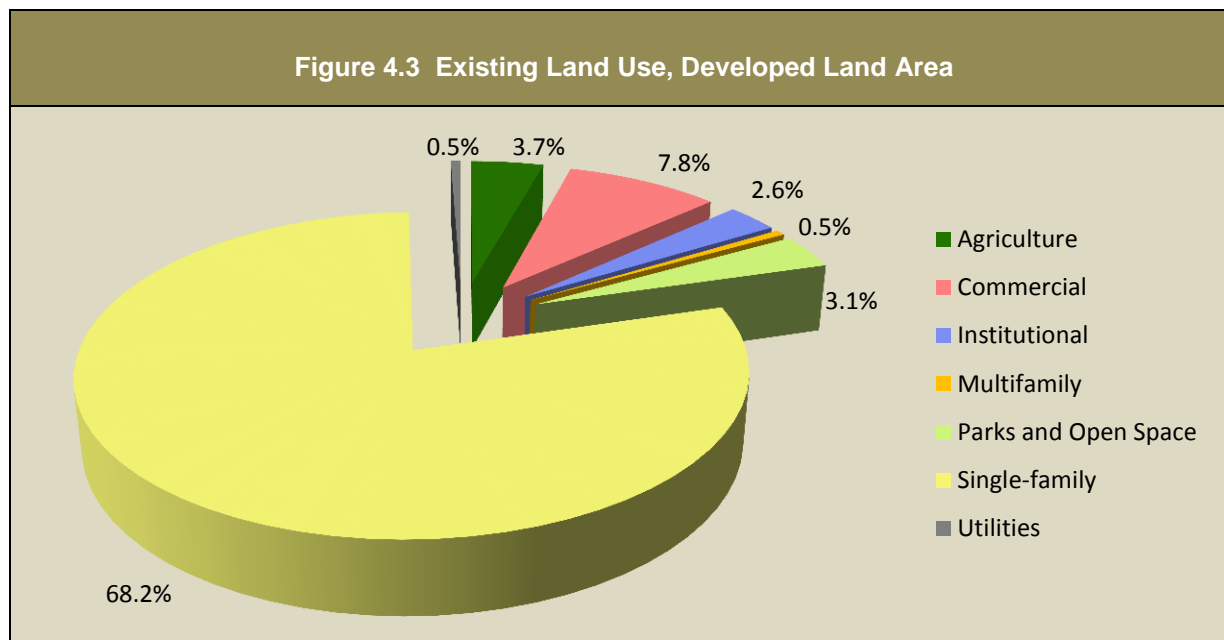


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Figure 4.2 Existing Land Use Map



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Source: KPS Group & RPCGB

4.2.1 Low Density (less than 1 du per acre)

Houses on lots larger than one acre make up 43% of all single-family residential lots in the City. There are approximately 670 house lots in this range. The average lot size for low density single-family dwellings is 2.4 acres.

4.2.2 Medium Density (1-6 du per acre)

Medium density single-family housing makes up 53% of all single-family residential lots in the City. There are approximately 4300 house lots (over six times as many low-density lots) in this range. The average lot size is 20,200 sf, representing a density of 2 du/acre.

4.2.3 High Density (more than 6 du per acre)

High density single-family housing makes up only 1.6% of all single-family residential lots in the City and includes garden homes, townhouses and other single-family homes on smaller lots. There are 526 house lots in this range. The average lot size is 4990 sf, representing a density of about 9 du/acre.

4.2.4 Manufactured Housing

Manufactured homes are another form of single-family housing found in Gardendale. Most manufactured housing is located in the City's only mobile home park—Peachtree Crossings—which accounts for 82 of 88 acres of land used for manufactured housing.



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4.3 Multifamily Residential

Land used for multifamily dwellings—apartment and condominium buildings and complexes containing three or more units—comprises 62.9 acres, or 0.5% of the City’s land area. Most multifamily development has occurred along or near Fieldstown Road and in locations in southern Gardendale.

4.4 Commercial

Commercial development takes up 430.5 acres of land in the City and includes professional offices, lodging, retail and service establishments. This accounts for 3.3% of the City’s total land area or 7.8% of the City’s developed land area. Most commercial establishments are located along Highway 31 and along Fieldstown Road (see Figure 4.2). Small concentrations of commercial development are also located along Mount Olive Road west of Interstate 65 and along Tarrant Road. Commercial development includes the following subcategories:

4.4.1 General Commercial

This category includes a variety of retail and service establishments, lodging and commercial centers containing a mix of retail, service and offices. There are approximately 270 acres currently devoted to general commercial uses. These businesses include individual establishments as well as those located in multi-tenant shopping centers and office complexes. Most retail shopping and dining establishments are clustered along Fieldstown Road, the adjacent interstate interchange and Highway 31.

4.4.2 Office

Land devoted exclusively to professional office uses—financial, legal, medical, insurance and similar practices—comprise 82.4 acres in Gardendale. There are no significant concentrations of office development; instead, offices are scattered throughout the City typically along Highway 31.

4.4.3 Heavy Commercial

This category includes outdoor sales establishments, truck rental, mini-storage centers, automotive repair and body shops, construction businesses, and other intensive commercial activities that are generally less compatible with residential uses. These uses take up 78.5 acres in the City. Heavy commercial businesses are located throughout the City, though most are located along or near Highway 31.

4.5 Industrial

There are no known properties devoted to heavy, general or light industrial uses within the City limits.

4.6 Institutional

Institutional uses, such as municipal facilities, churches and schools, account for 342 acres or 2.6% of the City’s total land area. The Gardendale Civic Center, Public Safety Center, library, fire stations and other municipal uses take up only about 28 acres throughout the City. A significant number of churches, including a few very large churches, account for the majority of institutional land in the City—about 270 acres. Jefferson County schools, located in the town center and on Snow Rogers Road, take up 82.6 acres.



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4.7 Parks and Open Space

There are 413.3 acres—3.1% of the City’s total land area—maintained for public and private parks and recreational uses, common open spaces serving residential developments, and cemeteries. City parks and recreation facilities (not including the Civic Center) make up 92 acres or just under one-fourth of all lands devoted to parks and open space.

4.8 Agriculture

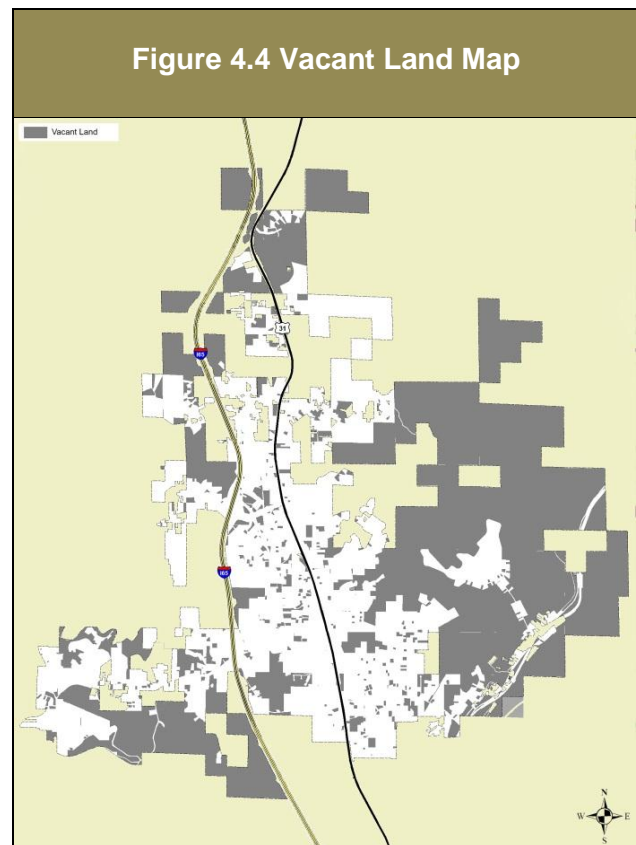
Agricultural land used for farming, timber production, hunting and fishing accounts for approximately 480 acres —3.7% of the City’s land area. Farming activities are minimal within Gardendale and only represent a small portion of the agriculture category. Three-quarters of Gardendale’s agricultural lands are owned by a private company that specializes in timber and hunting land management.

4.9 Utilities

Water, sewer, electric, gas, and communications utilities comprise just over 25 acres throughout the City, or 0.2% of the total land area.

4.10 Vacant Land

Currently vacant and otherwise undeveloped land accounts for the largest portion (57.9%) of the city’s total land area, at 7,615 acres (see Figure 4.1 and 4.4). The largest concentrations of vacant land are on the east side of the City. There are also large undeveloped tracts around the Barber Parkway/I-65 interchange and south of Fieldstown Road west of Interstate 65. These areas have not developed previously due to a combination of factors: limited accessibility, lack of water and/or sewer utilities, and rugged topography. While there are large tracts of undeveloped land in these fringe areas of the city, there is a significant number of smaller pockets of developable land in more central locations where road access and utilities are available or nearby.



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4.11 Existing Zoning

The Gardendale Zoning Ordinance (97-15) contains twenty (20) zone districts to guide development. They consist of the following districts:

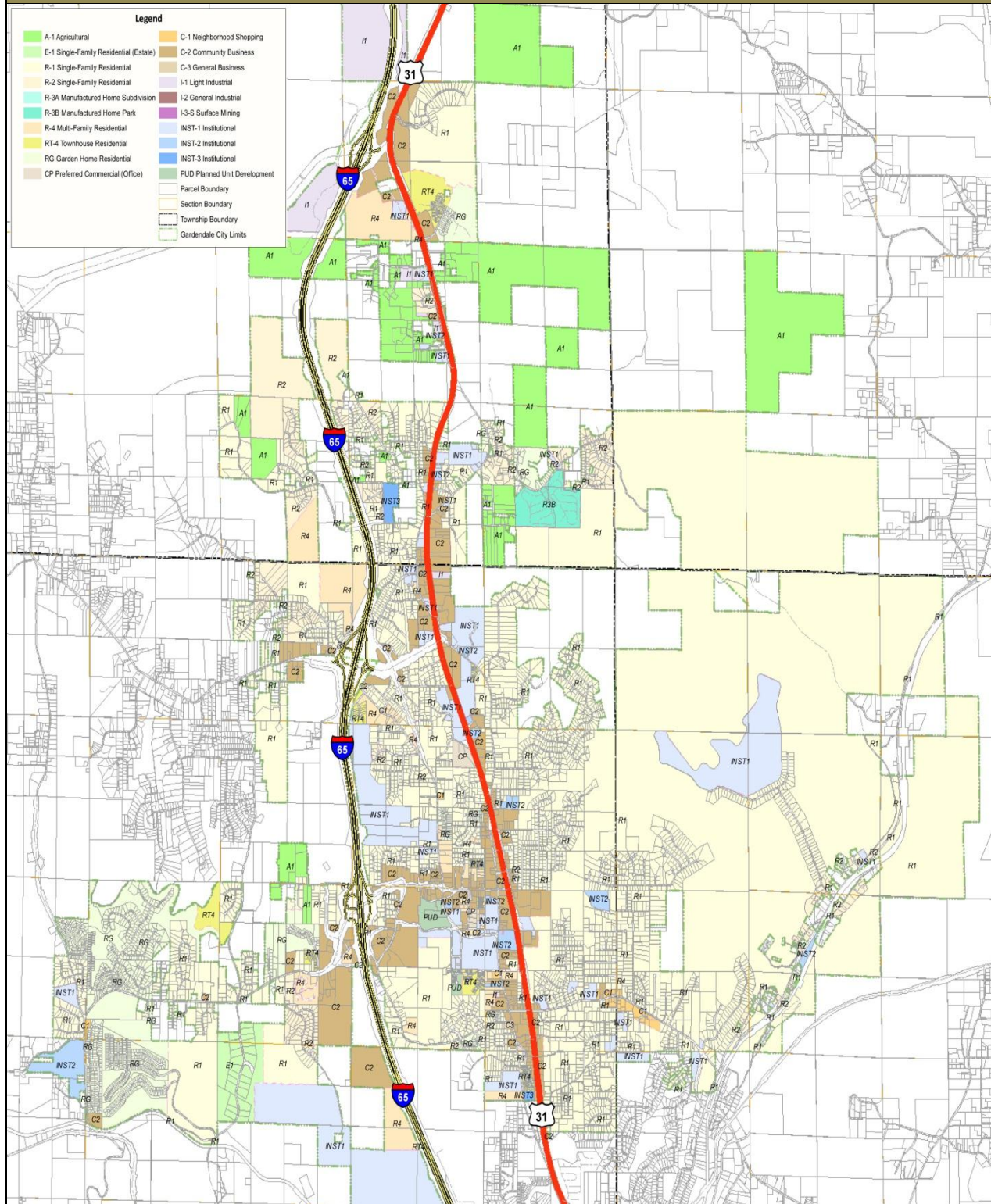
A-1	Agriculture District	C-1	Neighborhood Shopping District
E-1	Single-Family Residential District	C-2	Community Business District
R-1	Single Family Residential District	C-3	General Business
R-2	Single Family Residential District	I-1	Light Industrial District
R-3A	Manufactured Home Subdivision District	I-2	General Industrial District
R-3B	Manufactured Home Park District	I-3-S	Surface Mining District
R-4	Multi-family Residential District	Inst-1	Institutional District
RT-4	Townhouse Residential	Inst-2	Institutional District
RG	Garden Home Residential District	Inst-3	Institutional District
CP	Preferred Commercial (Office) District	PUD	Planned Unit Development

Figure 4.5 depicts the existing zoning for Gardendale.



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Figure 4.5 Existing Zoning Map



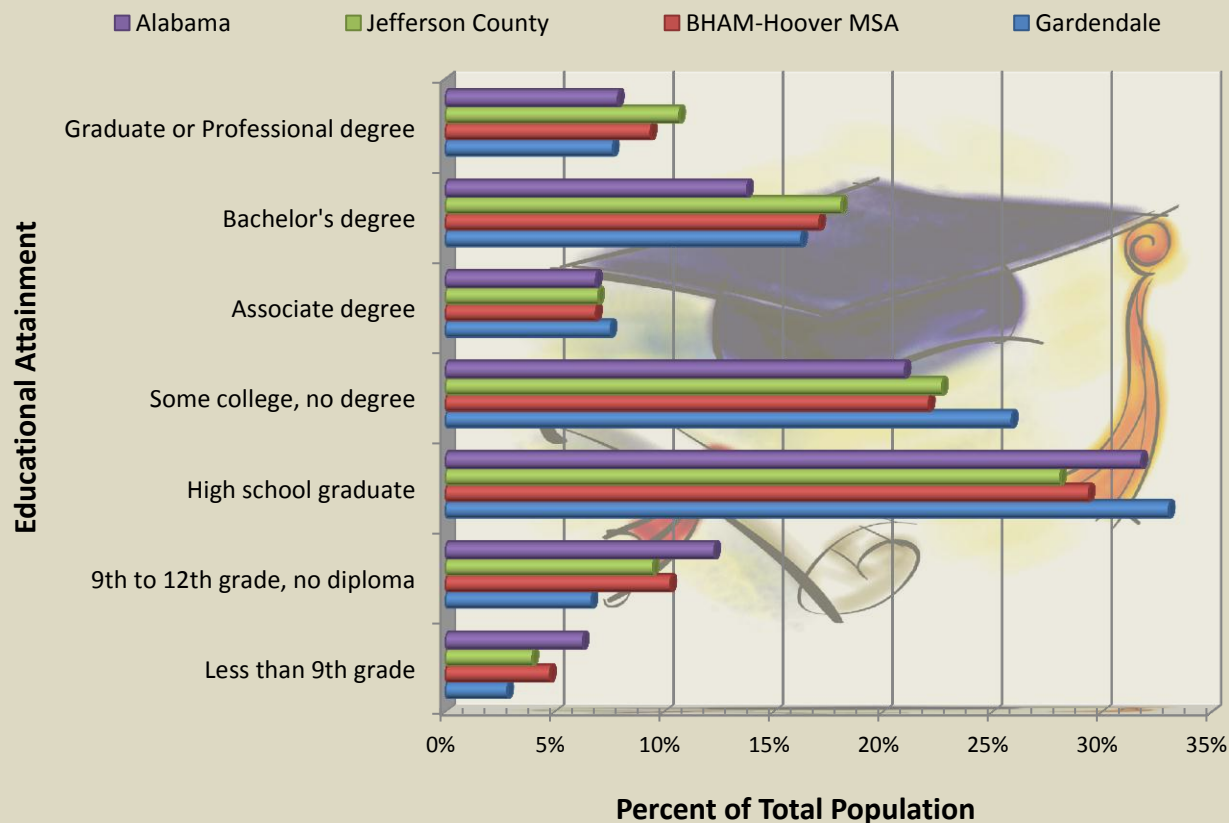
5.0 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT & INCOME

Education and income are two important factors that are directly related with the former oftentimes determining the latter. In addition to playing a pivotal role in the potential earning power of an individual, education also affects the labor force quality that is locally available for companies and industries looking to expand or relocate in the vicinity. This section documents information about Gardendale’s educational attainment and income levels - an important indicator of Gardendale’s economic vitality.

5.1 Comparative Educational Attainment

Gardendale fares well in educational attainment. The local population has a higher percentage of high school graduates and associate’s degree recipients than the Birmingham-Hoover MSA, Jefferson County, and the State of Alabama. Gardendale is competitive within the local market regarding post-secondary education; 16.3% of the population had attained a bachelor’s degree by the year 2010; 7.7% possessed a graduate or professional degree (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Comparative Educational Attainment (persons 25 years and over), 2010

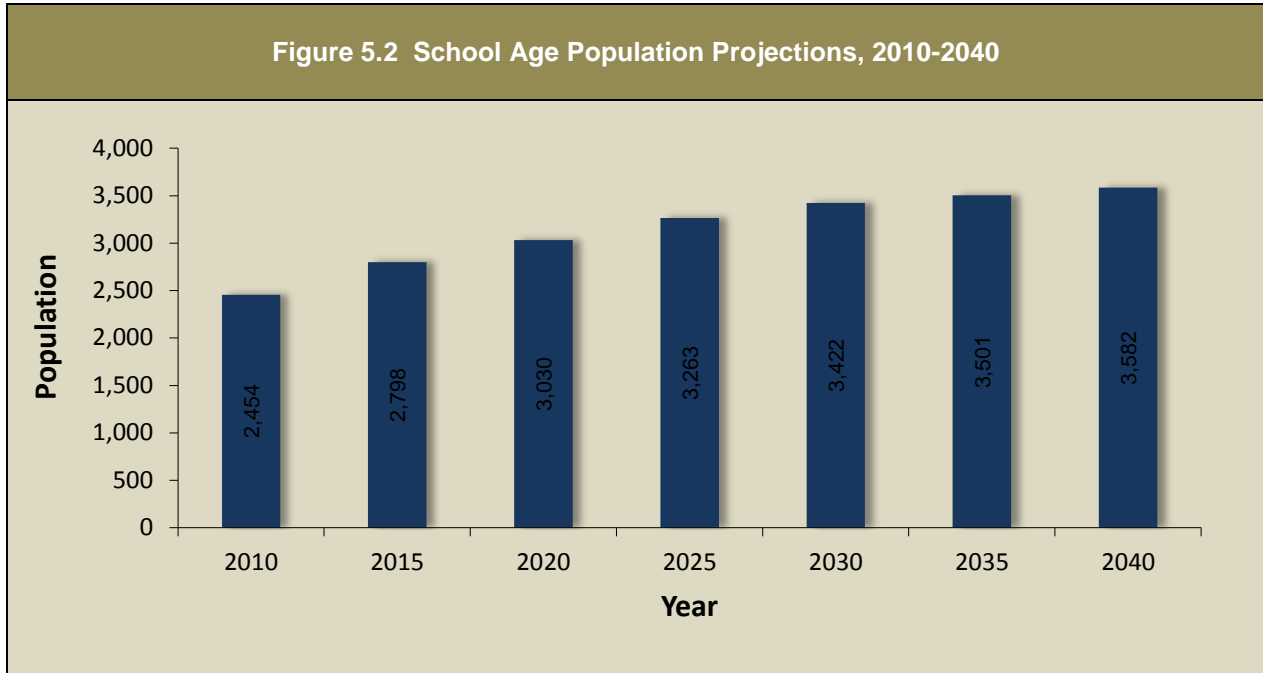


Source: US Bureau of the Census



5.2 School Age Population

The population of school age citizens is projected to increase steadily through 2040. School age is considered 5 to 19 years old. As Figure 5.2 displays, in 2010 this cohort had 2,454 members; by 2040 that number is projected to increase to 3,582.



Source: US Bureau of the Census

5.3 Income

Household Income includes the householder and all other people 15 years and older in the household, whether or not they are related to the householder. Figure 5.3 shows household income distribution for Gardendale and offers a comparative look at Birmingham-Hoover MSA and Alabama.

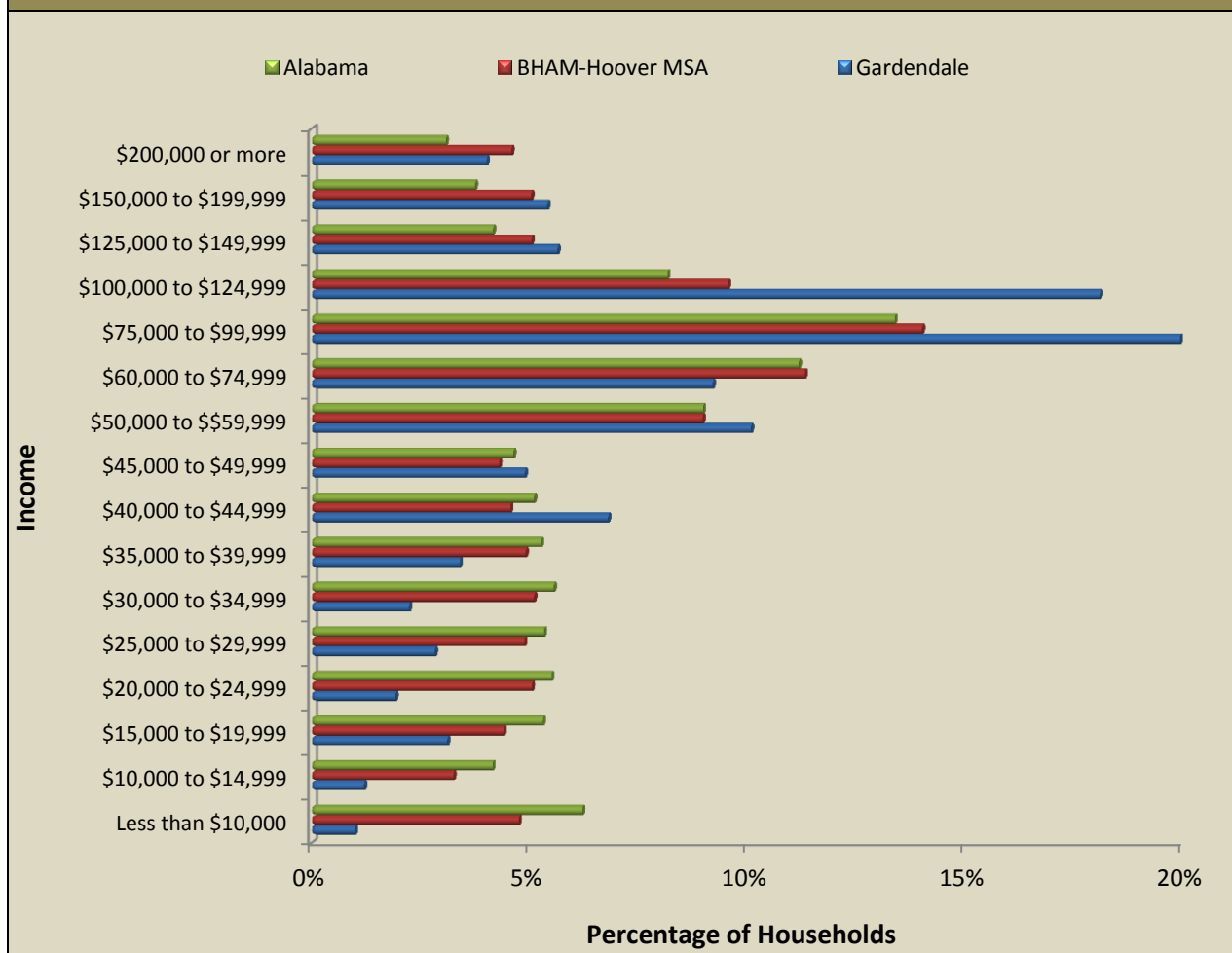
At \$79,044 the median household income in Gardendale for 2010 is on average more than \$20,000 higher than both the Birmingham-Hoover MSA and Alabama. The Birmingham-Hoover MSA and the State of Alabama had a median household income of \$59,532 and \$52,863, respectively.

Median household income is the point that divides the household income distribution into halves, one-half with income above the median and the other with income below the median. The median is based on the income distribution of all households, including those with no income (Noss 2013).



Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document

Figure 5.3 Comparative Household Income Distribution, 2010



Source: US Bureau of the Census

5.4 Poverty Thresholds

In 2010, the poverty threshold for household of 2.42 persons was \$18,284. Approximately 2.5% of the households in Gardendale fell below the poverty threshold.

The poverty threshold uses monetary income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as housing, Medicaid, and food stamps). Monetary income includes earnings, unemployment compensation, workers’ compensation, etc. All related family members in each household are included; housemates and non-relatives are not counted. All family members have the same poverty or non-poverty status. If the total family income is less than the threshold appropriate for the family size, then the family is in poverty. However, if the family income is equal to or greater than the threshold, the family is not in poverty.



6.0 ECONOMY

The purpose of this section is to analyze the employment sectors, retail market and the fiscal policy of Gardendale in order to determine the economic vitality of the City. By examining the various industry groups and the employment opportunities those industry groups provide – along with the retail demand in the City – Gardendale can better focus its efforts attract businesses and developments that enhance the City’s economy.

6.1 Comparative Employment by Major Industry Group

In Gardendale, the largest share of the workforce is employed in the education and health industry at 20.9%. This is followed by the retail trade with 11%, and finance, insurance, and real estate shares third place with manufacturing at 9.5%. Figure 6.1 illustrates the segmentation of Gardendale’s industry.

The education and health sector comprised of schools, colleges, universities and training centers; and health care and social assistance establishments (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics n.d.). Nationally, education and health is the largest industry sector; it is also the largest in both Jefferson County and the State of Alabama.

Many industry sectors in Gardendale and Jefferson County trend similarly. However, some differences can be seen on a state level where manufacturing jobs take a higher percentage of overall

employment. In fact, at 14.5%, the State of Alabama has a manufacturing industry share higher than the nation’s. On the national scale, public administration and professional sectors have higher percentages in comparison to Alabama and its localized jurisdictions (see Figure 6.1).

Education and health, professional, retail trade and manufacturing garner the highest percentages of employment at the local, state and regional levels. Also, the ratio of service-providing jobs to goods-producing jobs remains consistent at about an 80/20 split; with service jobs holding about an 80% share of the workforce.

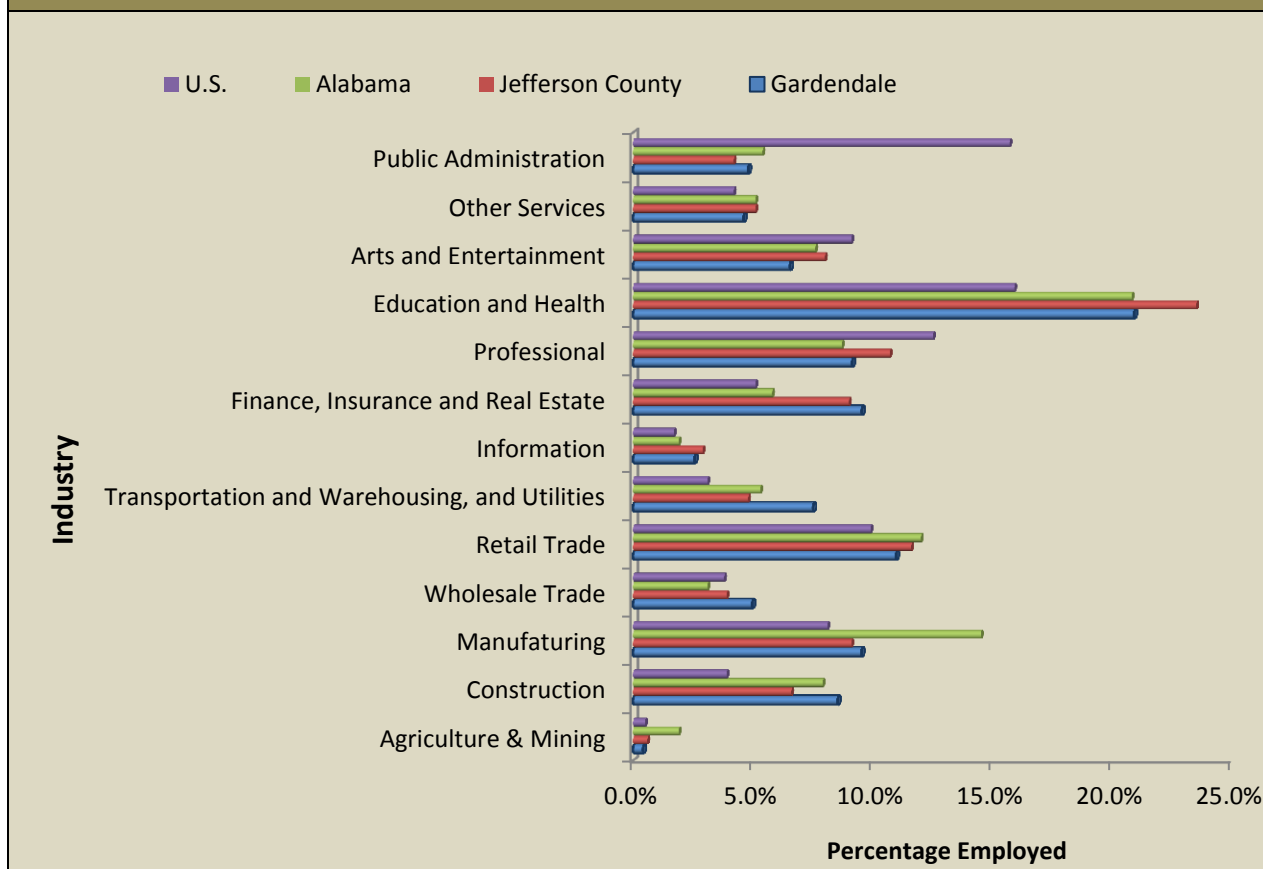
National and regional projections indicate that the education and health, finance and insurance, and trade and distribution industries will be the fastest growing industries over the next 10 years (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Birmingham Business Alliance 2013). Attracting and expanding these industries is an area of economic opportunity for Gardendale.

There are two major ways a particular job is counted, by industry –according to the type of good produced or service provided, and by occupation –according to the tasks or work activities performed. Jobs are grouped into a particular industry at work site or establishment. Everyone who works in a hospital, for example, is a part of the hospital industry. This includes not only healthcare workers, such as doctors and nurses, but also office managers, accountants, receptionists and janitors (Robson 2010).



Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document

Figure 6.1 Comparative Employment by Major Industry Group, 2010



Source: US Bureau of the Census

6.2 Comparative Employment by Occupation

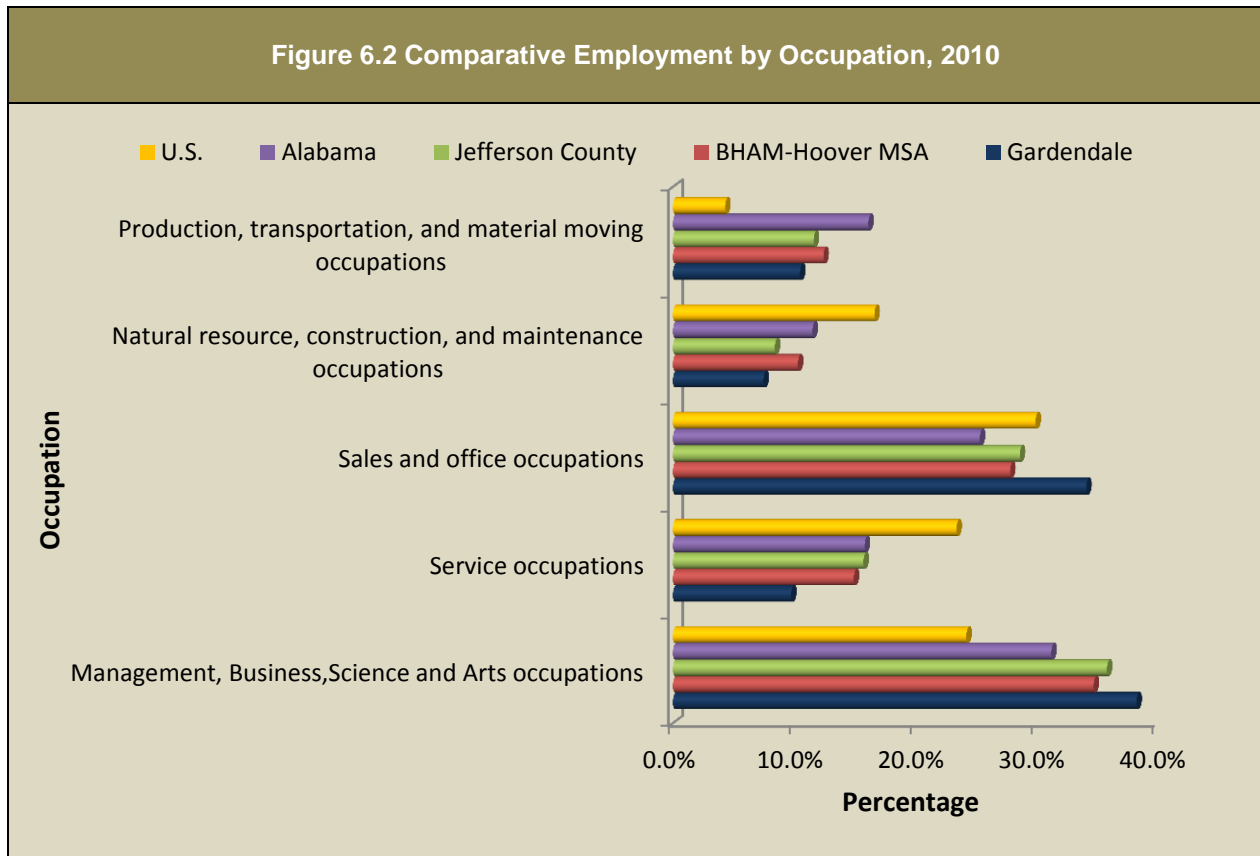
Gardendale’s largest group of jobs fall under the management, business, science and arts occupations at 38%; this is followed by sales and office occupations at 34%, and production, transportation, and material moving occupations at 11% (see Figure 6.2). In addition to being the largest occupational group in Gardendale, the management, business, science and arts occupation group is also the largest in the Birmingham-Hoover MSA, Jefferson County, and Alabama. However, service occupations such as healthcare support, food preparation, and community and social service have the largest job share in the nation.

Management, business, science and arts occupations require higher educational attainment.

A job is assigned into a particular occupation according to common tasks or work activities performed (Robson 2010). For instance, everyone who works in a hospital is part of the Education and Health Industry. However, an accountant who works for a hospital would be further classified under the management, business, and financial occupation. Like accounting, many occupations are found in a large number of industries.



Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document



Source: US Bureau of the Census

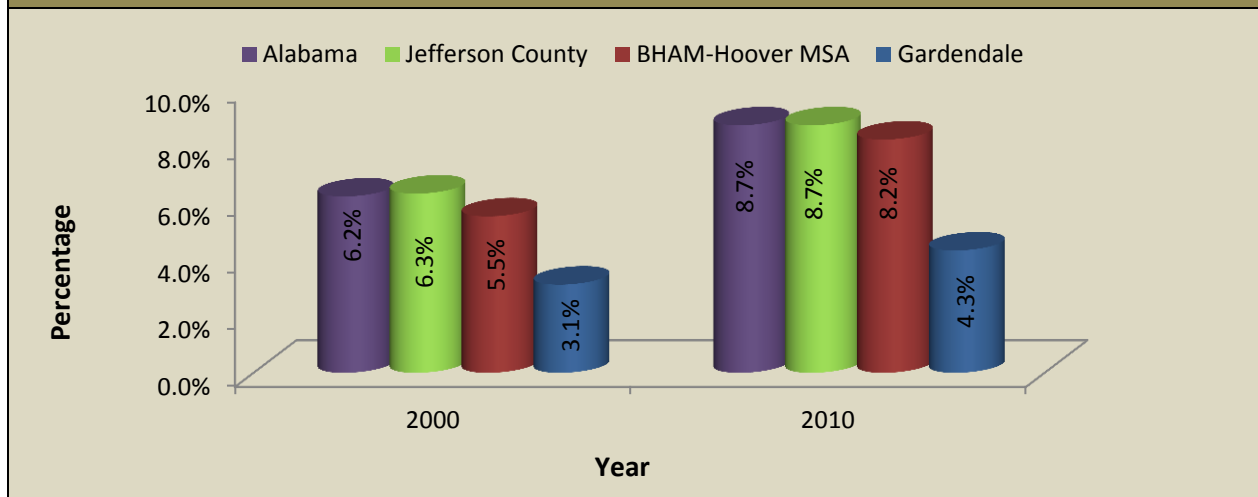
6.3 Comparative Unemployment

The unemployment rate for Gardendale’s civilian labor force in 2010 was 4.3%. When compared to the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Statistical Area (BHAM-Hoover MSA), Jefferson County, and Alabama, Gardendale had the lowest unemployment rate. However, Gardendale’s unemployment rate in 2010 was higher than it was in 2000, when it was 3.1%. As Figure 6.3 indicates, Gardendale has maintained a lower unemployment rate than the BHAM-Hoover MSA, Jefferson County, and Alabama.



Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document

Figure 6.3 Comparative Civilian Labor Force Unemployed, 2000-2010



Source: US Bureau of the Census

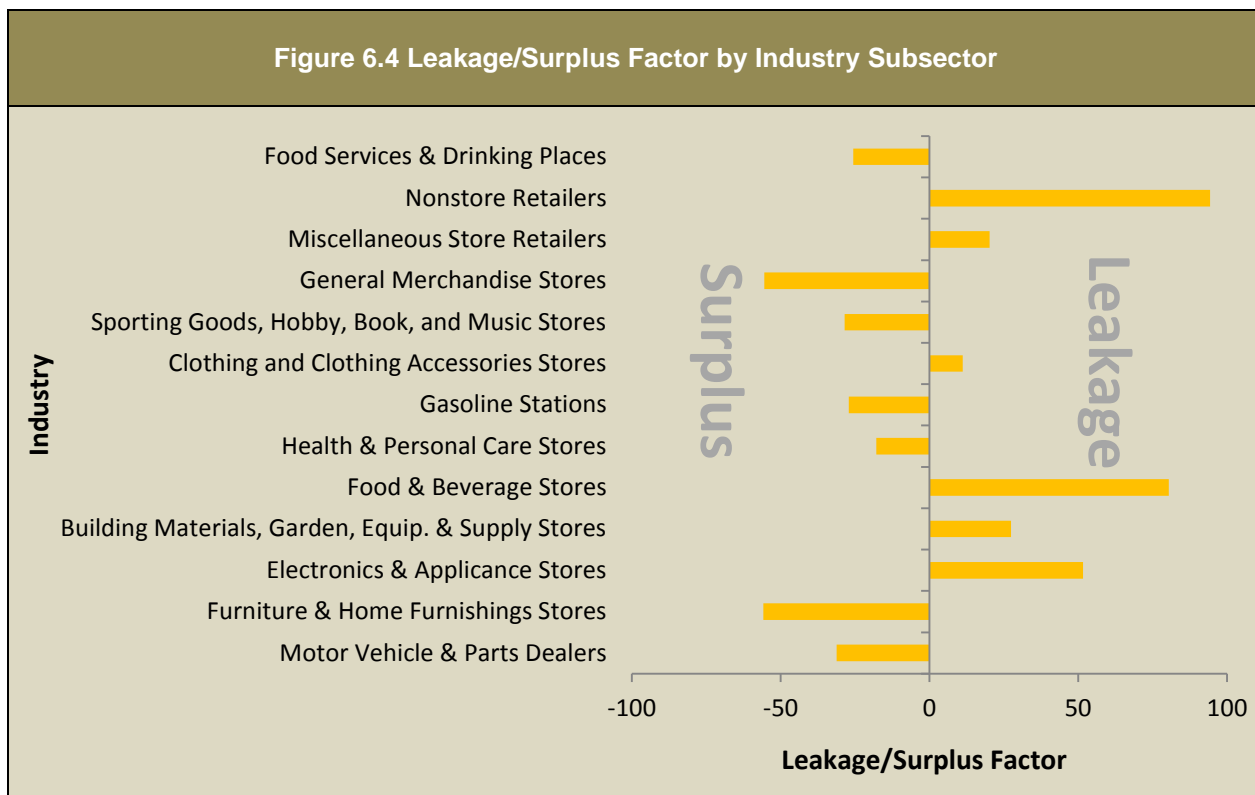
6.4 Retail Leakage

In 2012, analysis was conducted by ESRI and Dun & Bradstreet documenting the retail demand (retail potential) and retail supply (Retail Sales) in Gardendale. When demand was greater among certain retail types than the supply, retail opportunity leaked to trade areas outside of the City. In other words, the City was failing to capture retail opportunities and meet demand. Some of the industries in which Gardendale failed to capture were in Electronic & Appliance Stores, where \$2,595,697 of potential lost; Building Materials, Garden, Equip. & Supply Stores, with a loss of \$1,957,515; Food & Beverage Stores, \$14,672,297; Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores, \$1,508,705; Miscellaneous Store Retailers, \$1,045,041; and Nonstore Retailers, \$6,606,987 (see Figure 6.4).

Gardendale also had retail establishments that surpassed local demand and as a result were generating a surplus of retail sales - indicated by the negative value in Figure 6.3. This means that those retail establishments were capturing customers from outside the City's trade area. Some of the industry groups generating a surplus of retail sales in Gardendale were Food Services & Drinking Places, with a surplus of \$9,559,763; General Merchandise Stores, \$75,251,853; Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores, \$2,377,772; Gasoline Stations, \$12,010,054; Health & Personal Care Stores, \$4,871,676; and Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers, \$23,239,724.



Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document



Source: Esri and Dun & Bradstreet

6.5 Governmental Funds

The City provides the following services to its community: Public, Culture, Gardendale-Martha Moore Public Library and General Administration services. In order to provide these services the City allocates monies to separate funds in order to aid financial management.

The strength of a municipal budget is assessed by the number of revenue sources, uses, and the current total balance.

Major governmental funds include:

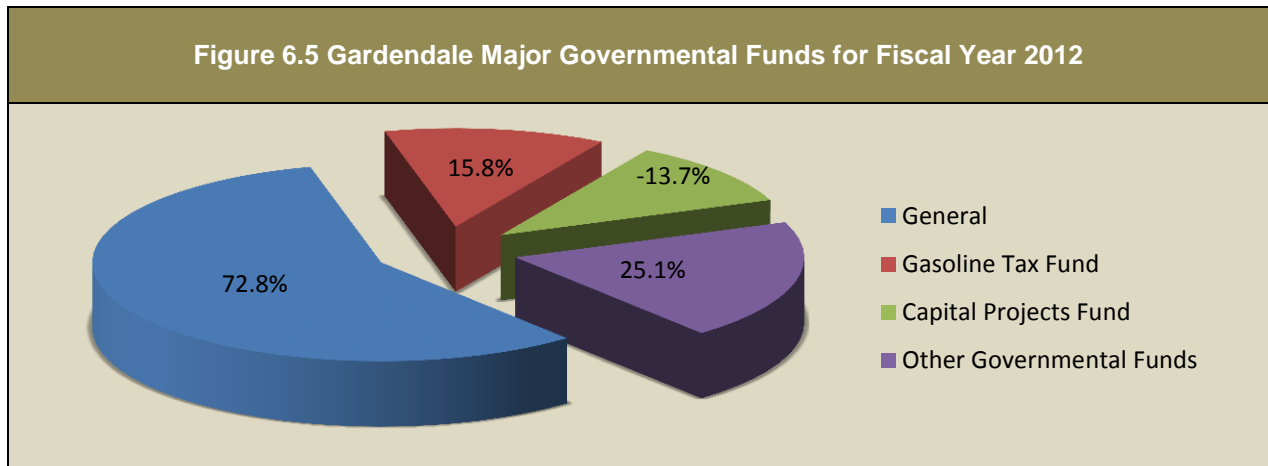
- **General Fund:** Serves as the general operating fund of the City and is always classified as a major fund. All generating revenues which are not restricted or designated as to their use by outside sources are recorded in the General Fund.
- **Gasoline Tax Fund:** Used to account for gasoline tax revenue received from the State of Alabama. Under state law, the city must use the seven-cent gasoline tax revenue only for street and highway purposes. The use of four and five-cent gasoline tax revenue is limited to resurfacing and rehabilitating roads, streets and bridges.
- **Capital Projects Fund:** These funds are used to account for financial resource to be used for the acquisition or construction of major capital facilities such as public works projects.

Gardendale’s major governmental funds for the end of the 2012 fiscal year were \$5,276,880. As indicated in Figure 6.5, the Capital Projects Fund had a negative year-end balance that accounted for 13.5% of the major total governmental funds, while the General Fund accounted for 72.8% of the major total governmental funds.



Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document

Figure 6.5 Gardendale Major Governmental Funds for Fiscal Year 2012



Source: City of Gardendale

Non-major funds include:

- Debt Service Fund: Used to account for the accumulation of resources and the payment of principal and interest on debt not accounted for in the General Fund.
- Corrections Fund: Used for the maintenance and operation of the City's jail and maintenance and operation of the City's Municipal Court. The State of Alabama requires that a certain portion of the amount received by court defendants is to be set aside in a special fund to be used for corrections.
- Drug Enforcement Fund: Used for drug enforcement policy in accordance with regulatory provisions.
- Court Ordered Fund: This permanent trust fund was established in 1985 and included payment received by the State of Alabama from its sale or lease of the rights to explore and drill for gas and oil. A percentage of the income of the trust is allocated between County and municipal governments. The City's allocations from this income source are to be used for capital improvements only.
- E-911 District Fund: Used for the purpose of communications with emergency personnel and communication equipment for the City's E-911 dispatchers to receive incoming E-911 emergency calls. The City receives an E-911 surcharge on all telephones within the City's E-911 District.
- Parks and Recreation Rental Fund: Used only for maintenance, repair, improvement, purchase or construction of parks and recreation facilities or property required by the City's parks & Recreational Department to meet the recreational needs of its citizens.

Proper use of these funds will help drive economic development and improve the quality of life for current and future residents.

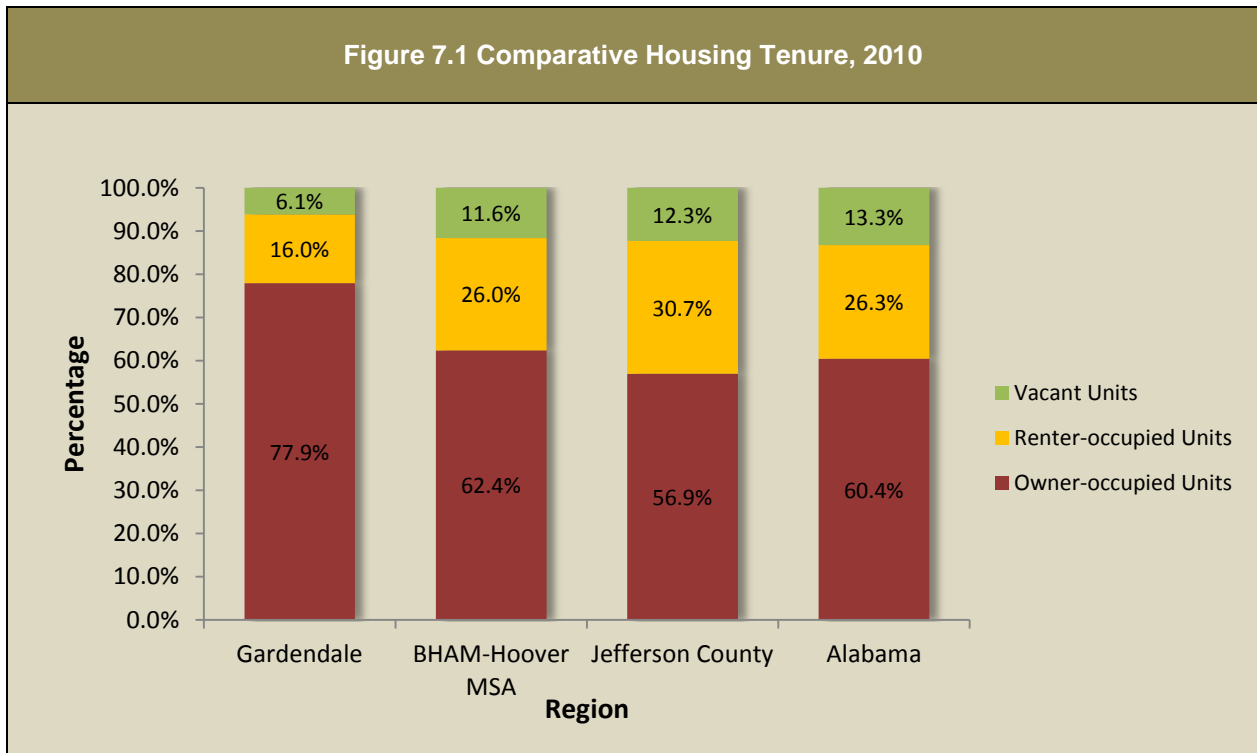


7.0 HOUSING

The Housing section of the Gardendale Existing Conditions Document analyzes the housing stock in Gardendale, focusing primarily on the housing tenure, vacancy rates, value, number of residential permits issued, and the age of the structures.

7.1 Housing Tenure

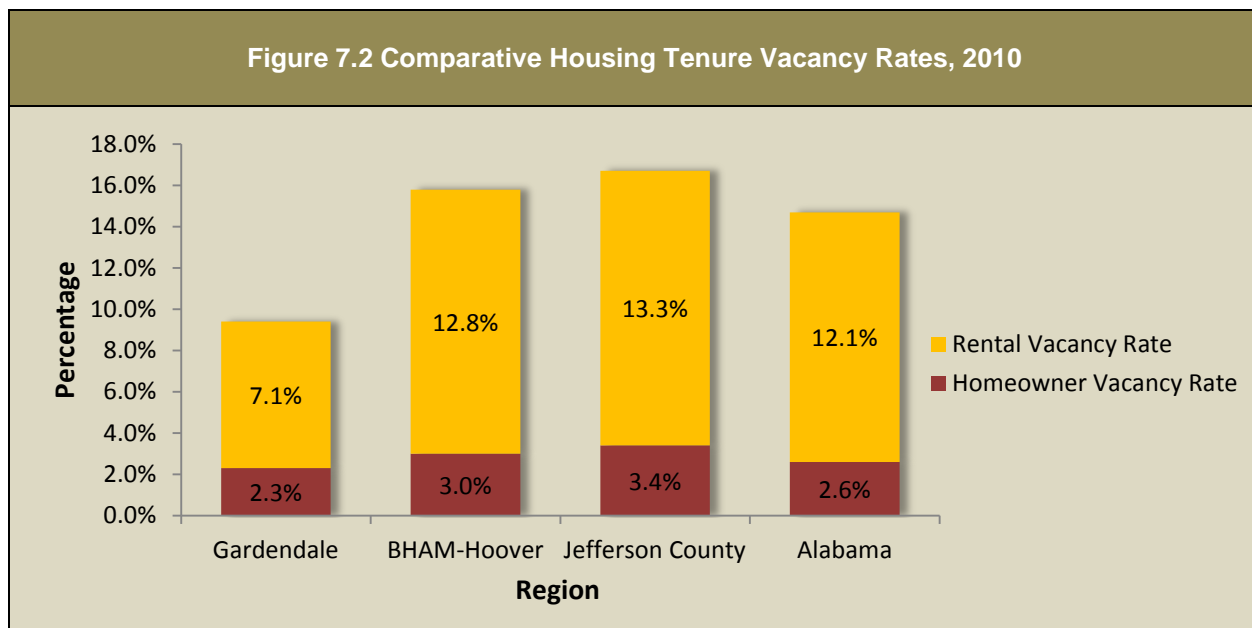
The City of Gardendale, in 2010, had 6,040 housing units which included 4,706 or 79.9%, owner-occupied units, 964 or 16%, renter-occupied units and 370 or 6.1%, vacant units (see Figure 7.1). When compared to the Birmingham-Hoover Metropolitan Statistical Area (BHAM-Hoover MSA), Jefferson County and the state of Alabama, Gardendale had the highest percentage of owner-occupied housing units and the lowest percentage of renter-occupied and vacant units. Additionally, Gardendale’s rental vacancy (7.1%) and homeowner (2.3%) vacancy rates were the lowest of the four regions compared in Figure 7.2.



Source: US Bureau of the Census



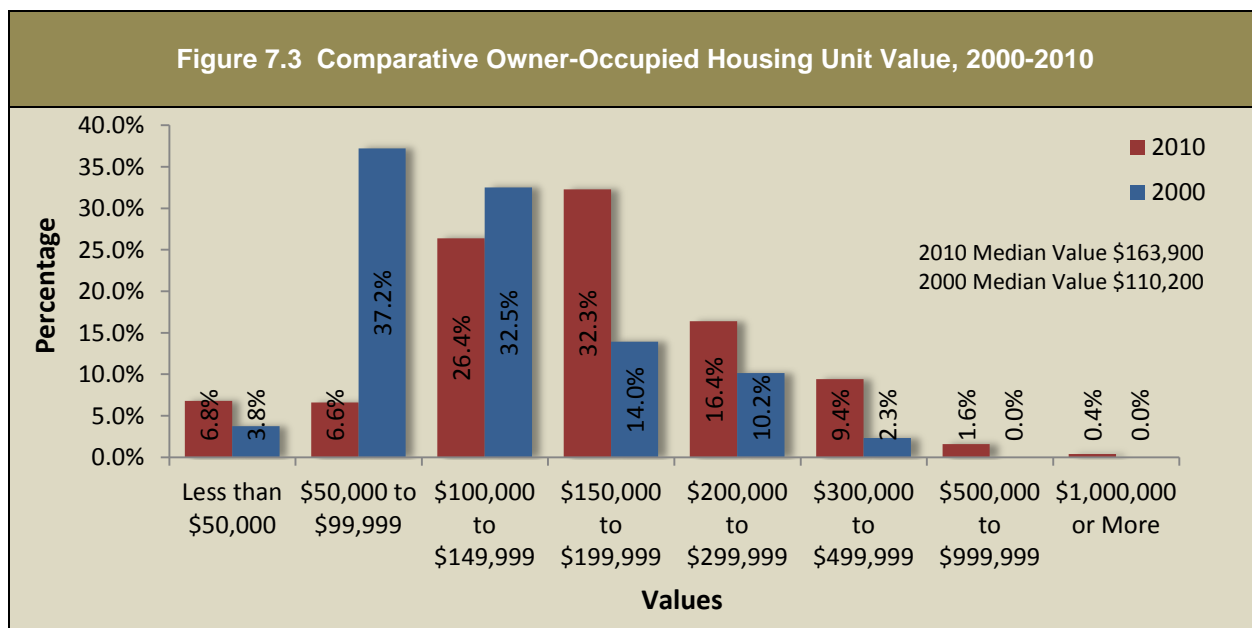
Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document



Source: US Bureau of the Census

7.2 Housing Value

In 2010, the median owner-occupied housing value in Gardendale was \$163,900, a 48.7% increase from 2000. The majority (32.3%) of Gardendale’s owner-occupied housing units in 2010 fell within the \$150,000 to \$199,999 value range, while only 0.4% of these units were valued at \$1,000,000 or above. The data provided in Figure 7.3 also indicates that from 2000 to 2010 there was an increase of 221.5% in owner-occupied housing units valued at \$150,000 and above, and a decrease of 23.4% in these units at or below \$149,999 in value.



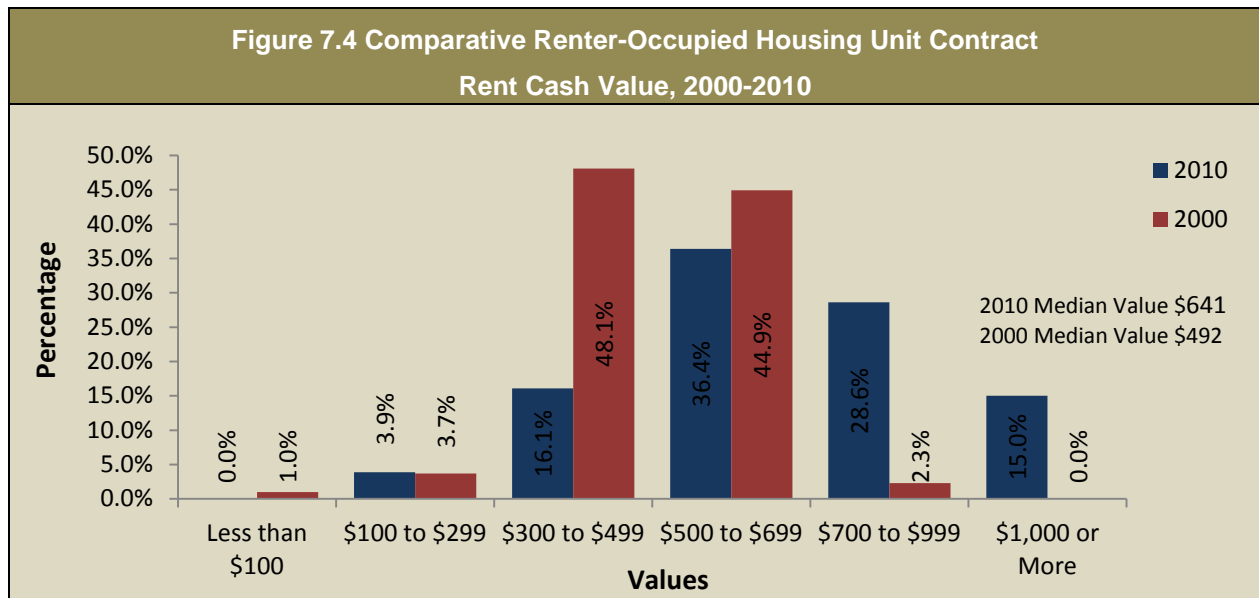
Source: US Bureau of the Census



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7.3 Renter-Occupied Housing Units by Contract Rent

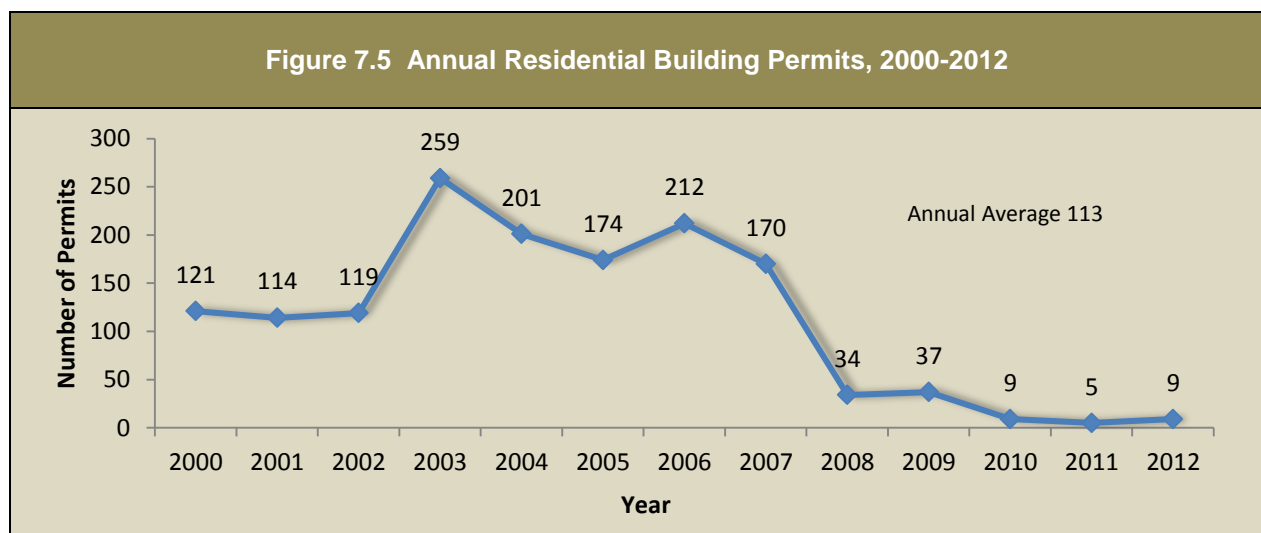
The majority (84.6%) of Gardendale’s renter-occupied housing unit contracts in 2010 were for rents with a median cash value of \$641 – up 30.3% from 2000 (see Figure 7.4). Gardendale also saw an increase of 28.7% in the number renter-occupied housing unit contracts valued at \$500 or more in 2010. However, there was a decrease of 71.2% in the number of renter-occupied housing unit contracts valued at \$499 or less in 2010.



Source: US Bureau of the Census

7.4 Annual Residential Building Permits

The annual average residential building permits for Gardendale from 2000 to 2012 were 113, with the lowest residential permit activity occurring in 2011 (see Figure 7.5).



Source: US Bureau of the Census



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7.5 Units in Structure

As indicated by Table 7.1, single-family detached units were the predominant (84.5%) housing unit type in Gardendale in 2010. Single-family detached units increased 28.4% from 2000, while housing with of 2 to 19 units saw a decrease of 23% during the same time period.

Table 7.1 Comparative Housing Units by Structure, 2000-2010				
Units in Structure	2000		2010	
	1 Unit Attached	222	4.5%	173
1 Unit Detached	3,936	79.3%	5,053	84.5%
2 Units	9	0.2%	0	0.0%
3 to 19 Units	256	5.2%	204	3.4%
20 or More Units	151	3.0%	155	2.6%
Mobile Home/ Trailer	387	7.8%	394	6.6%
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total Housing Units	4,961	100%	5,979	100.0%

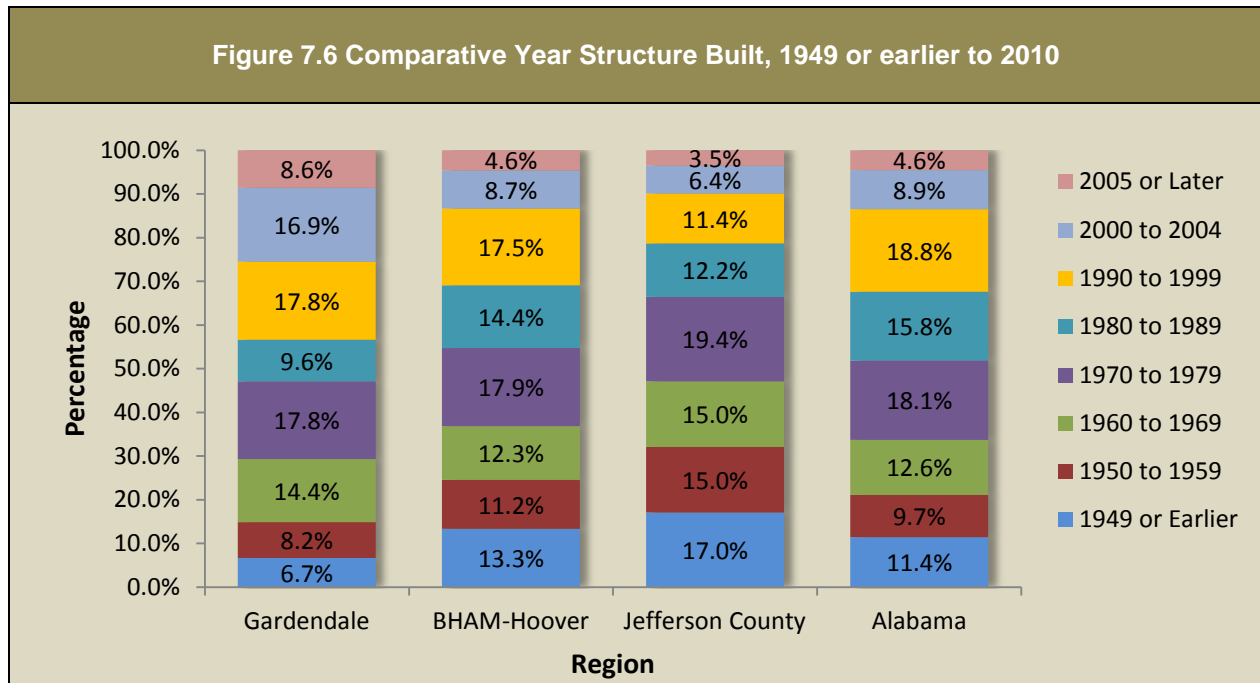
Source: US Bureau of the Census

7.6 Year Structure was Built

The median age of Gardendale’s housing stock in 2010 was 27 years, compared to the Birmingham-Hoover area (33 years), Jefferson County (39 years), and Alabama (31 years), Gardendale had the newest stock of houses. Of the four regions compared in Figure 7.6, Gardendale also had the largest percentage of houses (25.5%) built over the past 13 years and the smallest percentage of houses (47.1%) 31 years of age and older, while the state of Alabama had the highest concentration of houses (65.4%) 31 years of age and older.



Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document



Source: US Bureau of the Census



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8.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The provision of adequate facilities and services for residents of a community is important to the development and growth potential of a community. Generally, as the City grows, so does the demand for more and varied types of services. The Gardendale Comprehensive Plan strives to evaluate what additional services and facilities should be provided to meet the needs of the growing community. The information presented in this section is an analysis of the City’s current facilities and services.

8.1 Education Facilities

The public schools within the City limits are operated by the Jefferson County Board of Education. Table 8.1 lists the public schools found in Gardendale along with each school’s student-teacher ratio. For comparison, the national average for student-teacher ratios is 15:2 according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Table 8.1 Education Facilities					
School	Year Built/ Renovated	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student-to- Teacher Ratio	Number of Classrooms
Gardendale Elementary School (Grades K-5)	1920/1966, 1971, 1975, 1978, 2000 & 2007	859	57	15.1:1	53
Snow Rogers Elementary School (Grades K-5)	1974/2002	197	17	11.5:1	10
Bragg Middle School (Grades 6-8)	1976/2002, 2005 & 2010	877	46	19.1:1	39
Gardendale High School (Grades 9-12)	1967/1956, 1965, 1979, 2008 2010 & 2013	1095	64	17.1:1	60

Source: City of Gardendale

8.2 Fire Department

The Gardendale Fire Department has 26 staff members and currently operates two fire stations, Station 1 is located at 1811 Decatur Hwy and Station 2 is located at 1648 Fieldstown Road. Covering approximately 50 square miles, the Fire Department has three engines, one ladder truck, one rescue unit, one HD light tower and five service vehicles. Currently, the Fire Department maintains an ISO (Insurance Service Office) rating of “4”. The ISO rates fire protection and suppression services on a scale of “1” to “10” with a rating of “1” representing exemplary services, while a rating of “10” shows that the fire services program does not meet ISO minimum standards. Communities with better ISO ratings receive better insurance premiums for their residents. ISO ratings are based on three main criteria: 1) alarm, communications and dispatch systems; 2) equipment, staffing, training, and geographic



distribution of fire companies; and 3) available water supply and fire hydrants. Gardendale's ISO rating is within the top 10% of fire departments throughout the country.

8.3 Inspection Services Department

The Gardendale Inspection Services Department is located on Grubbs Avenue, adjacent to the City Hall Complex. The department occupies what was once the location of the City Library. The building contains some 2,800 square feet of floor space and houses building inspection services and administrative offices. The Inspection Services Department is responsible for plan reviews, code enforcement, issuing building permits and Certificates of Occupancy, and inspecting and verifying the zoning of properties for the release of business licenses. In addition to the aforementioned responsibilities, the department also regulates and controls the design, quality of materials, building and property use and location of all residential and commercial developments within the City.

8.4 Library

Gardendale Public Library was originally established in 1959. The current library, which is located at 995 Mt. Olive Road, was built in 1990 and renovated in 2012. The library is approximately 12,600 square foot with a state-of-the-art research and learning center offering meeting rooms, a reading porch, and computers for public use. The library also contains 62,152 volumes.

8.5 Parks and Recreation Facilities

The provision of recreational facilities is an essential component to fostering a healthy community and improving the quality of life for residents. Gardendale currently offers its residents a number of recreational facilities throughout the City – dedicating approximately 108 acres of land to recreational use. According to the National Recreation & Park Association standards (6.25 to 10.5 acres of land per 1000 population), Gardendale's 7.8 acres of land per 1,000 population is sufficient for its population. The facilities are outlined in Table 8.2.

8.5.1 Civic Center

Gardendale has a state-of-the-art civic center, located on South Main Street, directly across from Gardendale High School. The facility was constructed in 2000 and consists of a 6,000 square foot multi-purpose exhibition hall with catering kitchen, a 6,400 square foot basketball gymnasium, and a 6,000 square foot indoor walking track. In addition, it contains meeting or banquet rooms and modern fitness facilities, which offers a cardiovascular room, free weight room, an 18-station Cybex selectorized weight room, aerobics room with a floating maple floor, and spinning cycle room.

8.5.2 Senior Center

The Senior Center is located adjacent to the Civic Center. It contains some 3,647 square feet of heated and cooled floor space and provides residents and guests with excellent opportunities for recreational, social and other activities suited to seniors. Some of the activities provided are card games, dominoes, board games, and puzzles.



Gardendale Comprehensive Plan: Existing Conditions Document

Table 8.2 Parks and Recreation Facilities			
Facility	Location	Approx. Acres	Description
G William Noble Recreational Complex	5800 Bill Noble Drive, 35071	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six lighted baseball fields • Football field • Concession stands • Press box and restrooms • Home to the City’s Kiddie Park, Parks Maintenance office, Parks and Recreation office and Park Place
Luman Harris Park	601 Park Street, 35071	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three lighted softball fields • One ADA accessible softball field • Two concession stands • Press box and restrooms
New Castle Park	Keith Circle, 35071	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 feet by 20 feet pavilion • Designed for children ages 5-12 • Picnic tables and grills
Kenneth A Clemons Park	2101 Fieldstown Road, 35071	57	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two lighted regulation size soccer fields • ADA compliant splash pad water park • ADA compliant playground • Two lighted flag football fields • One multiuse field • Walking track

Source: *City of Gardendale*

8.6 Police Department

The Gardendale Police Department is located at 1309 Decatur Hwy and has 29 officers, which comply with the International Association of Chiefs of Police standards (2.0 officers per 1,000 population). The department uses an E-911 system for emergency response and currently operates 34 vehicles. According to the department’s analysis, 11 of their vehicles are in excellent condition, 12 are in good condition and 11 are in need of replacement.

8.7 Public Works Department

The Public Works Department headquarters is located at 327 Main. The 6,678 square foot facility currently has 26 staff members and contains buildings and space for the administrative offices, equipment storage and maintenance. The Public Works Department is responsible for the maintenance of approximately 500 streets in the City, covering about 57 square miles of area containing 400 lane miles of City streets, as well as 30 lane miles of Jefferson County roadways, and 52 lane miles of State of Alabama highways.



8.8 Sewer System

The sewer system in Gardendale is operated by Jefferson County Department of Environmental Services. The present sewer system covers approximately 10 percent of the City. It serves Fieldstown Road and surrounding area, the downtown area, parts of the southwestern area near Longwood Drive, and sections of U.S. Highway 31, stretching from near the intersection of Robbe Road and U.S. Highway 31 northward to the intersection of U.S. Highway 31 and Moncrief Road. Gardendale, along with Birmingham, Fultondale, Center Point, Tarrant and unincorporated portions of Jefferson County, uses the Five Mile Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant located in Fultondale. The plant has a permitted capacity of 30 million gallons per day and serves an estimated 77,000 persons in the area. The Five Mile Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant has the potential to accommodate significant residential growth, about 90,000 new residences or 180,000 new residents. Introduction of new businesses and industries would slightly decrease this available capacity. There are several pump stations located throughout the City. A package plant serves the Peachtree Crossing Manufactured Home Park in the northern portion of the City, while a portion of the subdivision in the Fox Hollow area is served with cap sewers. The City is striving to install sewer lines along the full length of U.S. Highway 31 to facilitate continued development along this corridor.

8.9 Water System

Water services for the City of Gardendale are provided by the Birmingham Water Works Board. The entire City is currently provided with water service. A sixteen-inch (16") water main runs along U.S. Highway 31 from Gardendale to Morris and Warrior. This is a primary main supplying Gardendale with twelve-inch (12") line from the Decatur Highway to Interstate Highway 65. This line serves all of Fieldstown Road as well as adjacent residential areas and the Wal-Mart development. The City does not allow any lines smaller than six inches (6") in diameter; the majority of the lines are composed of six and eight inch lines.



9.0 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Analysis of the City’s residential, commercial, civic and urban center forms and building typologies is presented in this section. Examining the form of Gardendale’s built environment allow the City to promote future developments compatible with its existing character while also preserving the inherent forms of Gardendale.

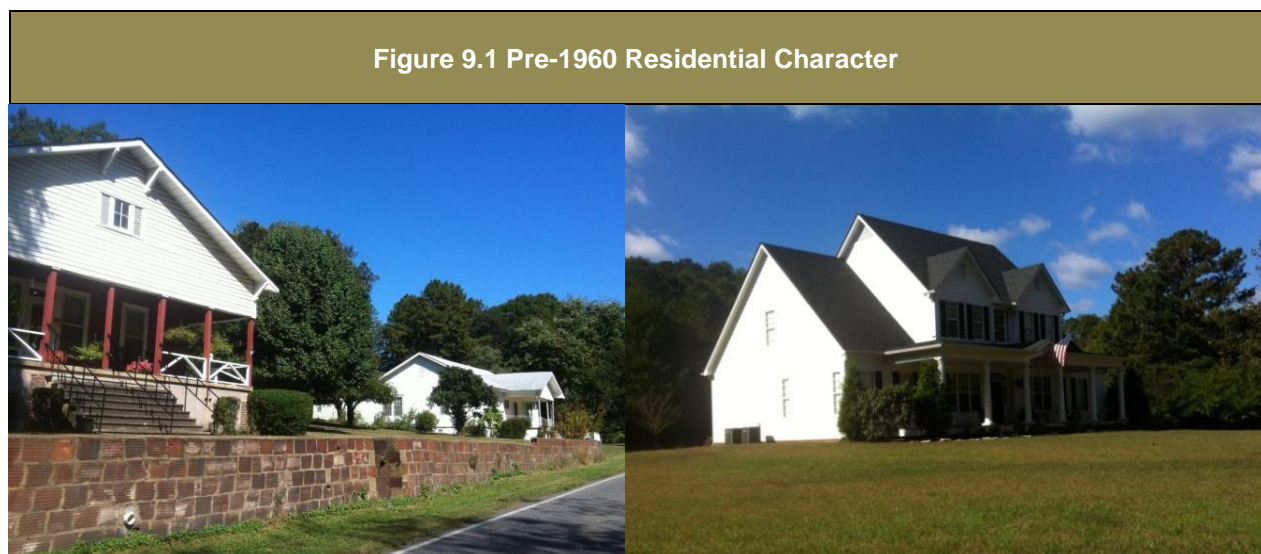
9.1 Residential

Most of Gardendale’s housing stock is relatively new. According to the US Census’ 2007-2011 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, there are over 5800 dwelling units in the City. ACS estimates indicate that about 86% of Gardendale’s dwelling units have been built since 1960, and the remaining 14% (832 units) were constructed before 1960. The character of Gardendale’s housing stock is dominated by homes constructed during two major growth cycles: 1) from 1960-1979 (31.8%) and 2) from 1990 to the present (45.2%).

9.1.1 Pre-1960

Older communities in the region such as Birmingham, Homewood, Bessemer, and Mountain Brook, have a significant amount of historic housing stock. Gardendale, by contrast, has relatively few of the bungalow and various “revival” house styles. Instead, original homes in the City are typically of a modest vernacular or early American Ranch style. Over time, some original residential areas have evolved into business districts. Some older homes in these areas have been adaptively re-used for commercial use.

Gardendale’s early neighborhoods were also generally less dense than the older neighborhoods of adjacent cities, reflecting more of a rural or semi-rural character. Typical streets on which early homes fronted were rural in design, having a relatively narrow pavement width and lacking the sidewalks and curb-and-gutter elements prevalent in neighborhoods in adjacent, more urban communities (see Figure 9.1).



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9.1.2 1960-1979

This housing development period, which accounts for nearly 1/3 of the City's housing stock, is characterized by the American Ranch style and its many variations. American Ranch homes were generally one-story and built on open crawl spaces. They also featured a linear floor plan with the long axis of the home aligned parallel to the street to accommodate relatively large front and rear yards. Due to Gardendale's often hilly terrain, many Ranch homes varied from the typical single-story design, and included garages below the main level of the home.

Homes in this period were developed as part of larger subdivisions with a sense of uniformity that contrasted with the more variable, rural character of older neighborhoods. However, streets in these new subdivisions continued to be modest and somewhat rural in character—lacking sidewalks and conventional curb and gutter systems (see Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2 1960-1979 Residential Character



9.1.3 1990 to Present

The last twenty years have been a time of rapid residential growth for the City compared to previous decades. During this time, houses varied from the linear arrangement of Ranch homes; instead, floor plans were oriented around open, common areas. Newer homes also varied from their Ranch predecessors by featuring more complex, steeper roof forms and more architectural detail.

This period also featured homes being developed on smaller lots, including garden homes and townhouse developments. Two-car garages became a staple of contemporary homes. Larger homes often feature side-loaded garages while smaller homes (on smaller lots) typically have garages projecting from the front of the house.

Figure 9.3 1990-Present Residential Character



9.1.4 High Density Housing

High-density housing, including attached townhouses and multifamily developments, comprises a relatively small amount of the overall residential stock in Gardendale (see Figure 9.4). Most townhouse developments are relatively new to the community, with several under or just recently completing construction. They range from the modest single story homes of Willa Lane and Summit Boulevard to the more generously-sized, two-story Tudor- inspired townhouses on Lochshire Lane. Like many contemporary townhouse developments in the Southeast, Gardendale’s townhouses are set back from the street to accommodate off-street parking in front of each home and even front-loaded garages.

Multifamily developments vary from clusters of single-story triplexes to two- and three-story “garden apartment” complexes. Gardendale’s apartment complexes vary in age, though all are under 50 years old, according to the US Census. The most recently developed complex, High Gate built in 2008 off of Fieldstown Road, is the City’s largest multifamily complex containing over 200 units.

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Figure 9.4 High Density Residential Character



9.2 Commercial

Most of Gardendale’s commercial areas developed along US Highway 31, and over the last 20 years, along Fieldstown and Odum Roads between I-65 and US 31. The community’s earliest businesses developed along the original Highway 31, which is now Main Street and Stouts Road. With some exceptions, most of Gardendale’s commercial development is of a suburban, “highway-oriented” character (see Figure 9.5). Buildings, both single- and multi-tenant, are typically one-story and are set back from the street behind surface parking lots. There is considerable architectural variety within Gardendale’s business areas: small offices adapted from older homes, highway retail franchises, refurbished strip centers and newer shopping centers and office developments.



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Figure 9.5 Commercial Character



9.3 Civic and Institutional Buildings

Gardendale’s municipal buildings, schools and churches are important, distinguishing elements to the City’s overall sense-of-place. A strong emphasis on quality and image is reflected among several local churches and facilities constructed in the last two decades by the City of Gardendale and Jefferson County Board of Education—the Civic Center and Gardendale High School, in particular (see Figure 9.6).



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Figure 9.6 Civic and Institutional Character



9.4 Decatur Highway (US Highway 31)

When the winding Decatur Highway was realigned through north Jefferson County to provide a straighter, safer roadway for growing traffic, it was also widened significantly and a tree-lined median was installed (see Figure 9.7). While the landscaped median has since been removed from the segment of US 31 that travels through Fultondale, the City's southern neighbor, it still traverses the length of Gardendale, giving the community a unique visual appeal along this heavily traveled corridor. The highway includes two southbound and two northbound lanes with acceleration, deceleration and left-turn lanes at major intersections. Median openings accommodate turning movements at intersections of local streets.

Figure 9.7 US Highway 31 Character



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9.5 Town Center

Having developed mostly after World War II from a semi-rural highway town on the outskirts of Birmingham, Gardendale did not grow up around a traditional, small town downtown. But most residents would agree that Gardendale has an obvious town center—the area generally bounded by Mt. Olive Road and Main Street south of Fieldstown Road. While traditional downtowns are often characterized by historic storefronts aligned along tree-lined sidewalks, Gardendale’s town center lacks some of those compact, pedestrian-oriented design elements. But this area does have a strong mix of businesses, municipal, school and institutional uses and housing all within a walkable distance. The construction of the Civic Center at the intersection of Mt. Olive and Main was an important addition that solidified the area’s civic importance (see Figure 9.8). In the last several years, the City has pursued opportunities to develop land between Mt. Olive and Odum Roads as a walkable, mixed-use center. The Gardendale City Center, previously known as the Caufield Square development, was intended to add a more pedestrian-oriented component within the town center. The development has also been considered as a new home for City Hall; however, another site along Main Street was recently announced.

Figure 9.8 Town Center Character



10.0 TRANSPORTATION

An examination of Gardendale’s transportation and pedestrian networks as well as the availability of public transit is provided in this section. This analysis provides the City with current traffic conditions, especially on the major thoroughfares, and allows the City to assess the components of its transportation system that need improvement.

10.1 Geographic Context

The City of Gardendale is located in the north central area of Jefferson County and is approximately twelve miles north of the City of Birmingham along U.S. Highway 31 and Interstate 65. Of the two major entry points, U.S. 31 provides greater accessibility to local streets in the city of Gardendale.

There are three major intersections along U.S. 31 that connect the City both east to west and north to south: US Hwy 31 and Tarrant Road; US Hwy 31 and Fieldstown Road; US Hwy 31 and Mt. Olive Road; and US Hwy 31 and Barber Boulevard.

10.2 Existing Transportation Network

10.2.1 Limited Access Principal Arterials

Interstate 65 is a major Interstate Highway that stretches through the City of Gardendale and carries about 50,000-60,000 vehicles on a typical day. The posted speed limit in this area is 60 MPH.

10.2.2 Minor Arterials

US Highway 31 is a longitudinal connector that travels through the City of Gardendale. This highway has an average annual daily traffic (AADT) that ranges from 13,000 to 20,000. The posted speed limit is 40 MPH. This roadway is also referred to as Decatur Highway and State Route 3. The parts of Mt Olive Rd and Fieldstown Rd that connect US Highway 31 to Interstate 65 are also classified as minor arterials. Tarrant Rd is another minor arterial within the City limits.

Roadway Functional Classification System

The City of Gardendale’s street network is comprised of roads that have different travel service characteristics, each are intended to provide, ranging from rapid through access to local land access. The purpose of functional classification is to enhance overall travel efficiency and accommodate traffic patterns and land uses by designing streets to the standards suggested by their functional class. There are four main functional classes:

Principal Arterials serve longer inter-urban type trips and traffic traveling through urban areas, including interstate highways and other freeways. While interstates and freeways are defined as limited access principal arterials, some state highways defined as full access principal arterials.

Minor Arterials provide moderate length trips. They serve to moderate size geographic areas and offer connectivity to higher classified roadways such as interstates and principal arterials. They also provide intra-community trips and carry local transit systems.

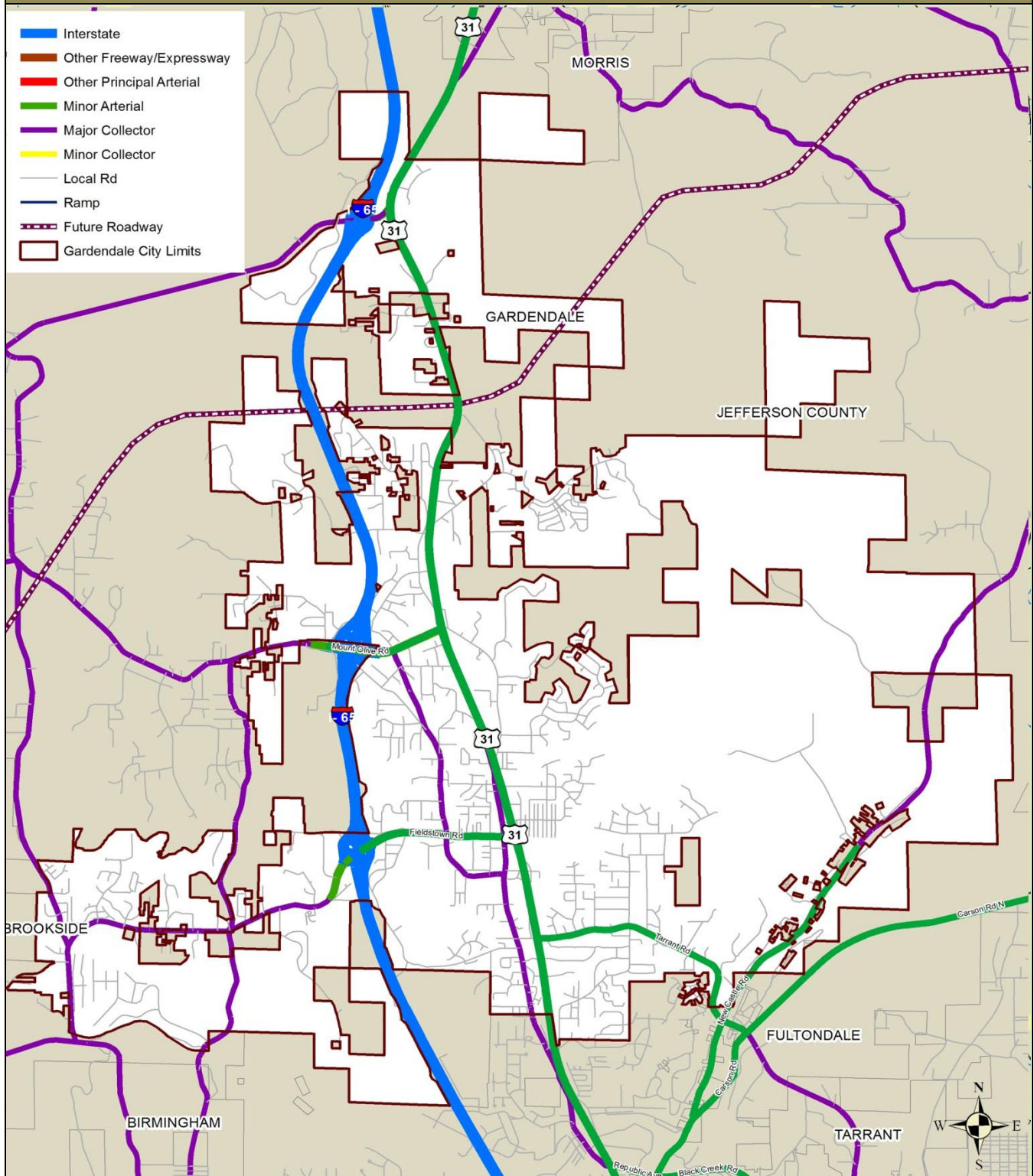
Minor and Major Collectors are medium-speed, medium to high-volume streets that “collect” traffic from local roads and connect traffic to arterial roadways. Access is provided by driveways and/or alleys. Major collectors are longer in length when they are compared to their minor counterparts. While major collectors offer more mobility, minor collectors offer more access.

Local Streets provide a high level of access to abutting land but limited mobility. They function primarily to serve local circulation and land access. They also customarily accommodate shorter trips and have lower traffic volumes and lower speeds than collectors and arterials.



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Figure 10.1 Functional Classification Map



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10.2.3 Collectors

Major collectors in Gardendale include Main Street, part of Mt. Olive Road, part of Fieldstown Road, Mary Buckelew Parkway, New Castle Rd and Shady Grove Rd.

Other than these functionally classified roadways, an additional interstate highway proposed by the Alabama Department of Transportation would pass through the northern portion of the City; the Birmingham Northern Beltline. Figure 10.1 illustrates the functional classification of roadways in Gardendale.

10.3 Traffic Analysis

The City of Gardendale has localized congestion problems during peak periods at the main intersections along the US Highway 31. As summarized in Table 10.1, the US Hwy 31 intersections at Tarrant Rd, Fieldstown Rd and Mt Olive Rd present moderate to high levels of congestion. Using the October 2012 traffic data provided by INRIX, travel time index (TTI) values for the roadways in Gardendale were calculated.

As Table 10.1 details, most congestion occurs on the northbound lanes of US Highway 31 at the intersections of Tarrant Road, Fieldstown Road, and Mt. Olive Road. The TTI value reaches its highest point (2.32) at the Fieldstown Road intersection during the AM peak period. The value of 2.32 indicates that the time to traverse this intersection is 130% longer than off-peak hours. Congestion at the Mt. Olive Rd and Tarrant Rd intersections are at a moderate level in both AM and PM peak hours.

*The **Travel Time Index (TTI)** is a measure to identify and quantify the congestion on major roadway segments. The TTI for a given roadway segment is defined as the ratio of the travel time during the peak period to the time required to make the same trip at free-flow speeds. A value of 1.3, for example, indicates that a peak-period trip takes 30% longer than a free-flow trip. Simply put, the higher the TTI value the worse the congestion.*

Table 10.1 Congestion Levels at Major Intersections				
Intersection Name	Travel Time Index			
	AM Peak Period		Location	
	SB	NB	NB	Location
US Hwy 31 - Tarrant Road	1.25	1.53	1.06	1.31
US Hwy 31 - Fieldstown Road	1.16	2.32	1.14	1.27
US Hwy 31 - Mt. Olive Road	1.17	1.52	1.24	1.62

Source: INRIX Traffic Data

To assess the performance of these major intersections in detail, a traffic analysis was conducted on a typical weekday during peak periods. RPCGB staff collected turning movement counts between 7:30-



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8:30 AM and 4:00-5:00 PM. Traffic flowed smoothly along the US Highway 31 corridor as dedicated right and left turns reduce conflict between local and through traffic. Traffic volume observations indicate that Gardendale’s residents tend to use US Highway 31 to commute to downtown Birmingham, rather than traveling on I-65. Since 20% of all jobs in the region are within the Birmingham city center, most vehicles on US Highway 31 in Gardendale travel in the southbound direction in the morning peak period, and northbound in the afternoon. The exception to this is on Fieldstown Road in the afternoon peak period, where traffic is almost evenly divided in the northbound and southbound directions.

A Level of Service (LOS) analysis was also conducted using turning movement counts to assess the performance of the intersections and segments along US Highway 31. The ARTPLAN software developed by the Florida Department of Transportation was utilized. Table 10.2 summarizes segment LOS and intersection LOS of these major roadways along the US Highway 31.

The results indicate that, through movements on the segments and at the intersections reflect a good level of service, ranging from A to C. The main congestion problem at the intersections arises from left turn and right turn movements. This problem could be related to poor signal timing or roadway geometric design.

Level of Service (LOS) is a quality measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream. The six defined levels of service, A to F, describe

Table 10.2 Quality/Level of Service for Major Street Segments					
Segment	AADT	Posted Speed Limit(mph)	Average Speed (mph)	Segment LOS	Thru Movement Intersection LOS
Barber Blvd-Mt Olive Rd	12,530	40	44.2	A	B
Mt Olive Rd-Fieldstown Rd	16,250	40	40.4	A	C
Fieldstown Rd-Tarrant Rd	19,420	40	35.7	B	B

Source: RPCGB

10.4 Transit

The City of Gardendale currently does not have dedicated transit routes. However, all individuals who are disabled or 60 years of age and over are able to qualify for subsidized transportation in the urbanized areas of Jefferson and Shelby counties. This service is provided through ClasTran which qualifies riders through an application process.



10.5 Non-Motorized Transportation

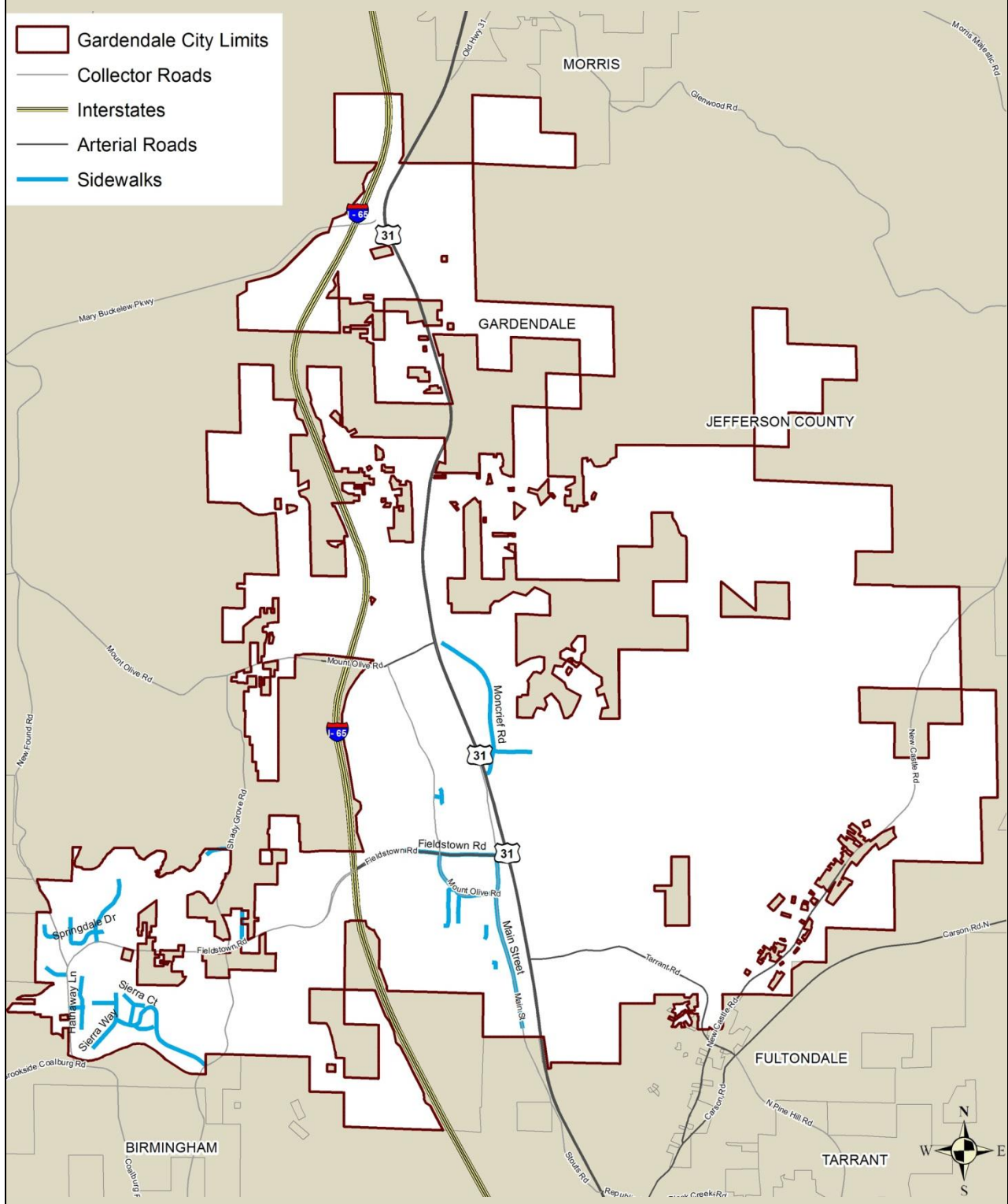
Non-motorized transportation, also known as active transportation, includes walking and cycling. Gardendale has 6.54 miles of sidewalk which, can mostly be found in its residential areas (see Figure 10.2). Gardendale's sidewalks also connect local parks and schools to neighborhoods. For instance, the G. William Noble Complex is connected to the nearby Pinehurst Neighborhood through the sidewalk system on Moncrief Road; Gardendale High School is connected to local residences via Mt. Olive Road and Main Street.

Bike lanes serve the purpose of informing motorists of the presence of cyclists, to create a safer environment for all users. Presently, there are no visibly marked bike lanes in Gardendale.



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Figure 10.2 Sidewalk Map



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