

**RUSSELL COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN**

**RUSSELL COUNTY, ALABAMA  
NOVEMBER 2011  
DRAFT**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Residents, and Businesses in Russell County

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Phenix City-Russell County Chamber of Commerce  
Columbus-Phenix City Metropolitan Planning Organization  
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# INTRODUCTION AND PLAN SUMMARY

# 1

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan is to establish a guide for the long-term development of the County including location, character and extent of growth as well as a vision, goals and recommendations for realizing that vision.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Russell County is authorized by the Legislature of the State of Alabama to establish a Planning Commission, adopt a Master Plan and enact development regulations in support of such a plan that is consistent with provisions for citizen involvement, the authorizing legislation and overall county government. The County is dependent in part, however, in terms of authority and financial resources, on its legislative authority. Active support and coordination with the county's legislative delegation as well as the County's congressional representatives is an ongoing need, including financial and regulatory matters.

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

The planning process has included (1) public involvement, (2) a county assessment, (3) drafting of a plan concept, vision, goals and recommendations, (4) review and approval by the Planning Commission and County Commission.



## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement is key to the Russell County Master Plan. The Plan was initiated through a series of town hall meetings for ideas and suggestions from citizens within the community, input from an initial coordinating committee and ongoing review with the Russell County Planning Commission. The Plan has been available for public input and consideration by the Planning Commission and County Commission.

### TOWN HALL MEETING PROCESS

The Town Hall meetings held for the Russell County Master Plan were designed to seek initial ideas from county residents. The result of these meetings provides a foundation for creating and refining goals, objectives and strategies for the master plan. During the Town Hall meetings that took place, participants received an orientation to the master planning process and an exercise where citizens were asked to identify assets and opportunities for the county. Participants also worked together to brainstorm ideas for the future of the county. This was accomplished through facilitated discussions on visioning and a mapping exercise to identify strong places and weak places in the county. Separate reports on this process are available.

**Figure 1.1 – Town Hall Meetings**

Date	Facility	Location
June 10, 2010	Central Activity Center	Phenix City
June 10, 2010	Old Russell County Courthouse	Seale
June 24, 2010	Fort Mitchell Senior Center	Fort Mitchell
June 24, 2010	Ladonia Elementary	Ladonia

### ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the Town Hall Meetings, assets and opportunities were indentified. This input, although not intended to be inclusive or capture everything, was incorporated with other planning input to confirm the following summary.

#### ASSETS

Two commonly noted assets within the county include (1) community facilities and services and (2) open space, natural and cultural resources. The high number of comments in these categories can be interpreted that participants in the Town Hall Meetings believe that the facilities and services provided by the municipalities, county and other agencies reflect a positive asset. Another asset noted is the public safety support provided by the Sheriff’s Departments including trained personnel, despite growing needs in the county and issues of physical distances from law enforcement to more remote parts of the county. The number of comments on open space, natural and cultural resources also reflects a sense of pride and importance on the rural attributes and historical aspects of the county located on the Chattahoochee River, as well as, perhaps, the asset of available of land for development, balanced with preservation.

The presence of Ft. Benning and Troy University in Phenix City are mentioned by the citizens as significant physical assets to build upon. The emerging economic strength of the bi-state metro area is viewed as a certain and growing asset. Russell County’s location on the Chattahoochee River is a unique asset, compared to many other counties, as is, the County’s location relative to the Ft. Benning Military Installation. The location of Russell County near the I-85/ Atlanta corridor is an asset along with transportation access along routes like US Highway-280, US Highway-80 and US Highway-431.

Other assets reported in comments during the planning process include the presence and involvement of churches and service organizations in the county that address peoples spiritual and physical needs; strong non-profit organizations and associations; public-private economic development initiatives; and the potential for recreation, transportation, water and sewer improvements.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

Two commonly noted opportunities within the county during the Town Hall meetings include (1) categories of community facilities and services and (2) economic development. Because community facilities and services were highly noted opportunities, it can be interpreted that, despite deficiencies or needs, participants believe there is the



opportunity for improvements of the existing facilities and services within the county. Considering community facilities and services were highly noted as assets as well it is clear that community facilities and services is critical to the county's future development.

Economic development was the other highly noted opportunity within Russell County. The importance of economic development to the participants suggests high priority of this important opportunity, especially as it relates to the expansion and growth at Ft. Benning and other businesses and industries in the region. The presence of Russell County within rapidly growing and multiple regions, along with and the military growth at Ft. Benning certainly reflects new opportunities expressed by participants in the planning process. The presence of Russell County in a relatively large metro area, and central cities in Phenix City and Columbus, present significant opportunities for development. Opportunities for development are also increasing as a result of transportation access provided by US-280/431, US-80 and potential for a new east-west connection into Ft. Benning. In addition, the combination of natural resources, like the Chattahoochee River, in the region suggest yet unrealized opportunities for recreation, tourism and unique commercial development within the county.

Other assets and opportunities are included throughout the County Assessment, along with various constraints to long-term development.

## IDEA GATHERING AND VISIONING

As part of the Town Hall Meetings, citizens were part of "idea gathering" about the future of the county. Common themes were evident in the idea gathering and visioning discussions, including:

- *Improved infrastructure*  
Participants noted the sewer was probably the most important aspect of infrastructure needed to realize the future of Russell County. Roads and transportation were another aspect noted, specifically increasing roadway capacity in growth areas, more paving of non-paved roads and improved safety of rural roads and bridges.
- *Protection of natural and rural environments*  
It became evident through the idea gathering with citizens that the participants highly valued the natural and rural aspects of Russell County. Outside of Phenix City, the protection and preservation of land should be carefully considered based on citizen comments. Ideas on protection of the natural and rural environment can be linked back to comments on open space, historic, natural and cultural resources being important to the county's future.
- *Increase in retail, commercial opportunities and economic development*  
Citizens noted that they would like to have more access to and opportunities for retail and commercial development within Russell County without traveling to neighboring county's or long distances within the county or even "across the river" for shopping. These ideas on retail and commercial development can be linked back to the comments about economic development being an important opportunity for the county, especially with regard to retail businesses. Other thoughts about economic development had to do with existing and increasing jobs in the county and region and taking advantage of unique tourism, recreation, military workforce, higher education, workforce and other economic development resources.
- *Improved community facilities, education and services*  
Participants in the town hall meetings noted that their vision for the future of the county reflected improved access to community facilities and services. Building on similar thoughts concerning assets and opportunities, these comments clearly illustrate that community facilities and services are extremely important to the citizens and providing access to high quality facilities and services should be an important priority.



## **IMPORTANCE OF AN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND APPROACH**

Ongoing implementation, action and updating is critical in ensuring that the plan is not the end, in itself, but is rather a tool for continuous county management and improvement. Leadership and responsibilities, organization, priorities, financial resources, standardization and regulation, ongoing and more specific area planning, legislative and intergovernmental coordination are all critical to the implementation of the plan. An ongoing implementation strategy or approach incorporating these components should be adopted as a starting point for implementation. The beginning of such a strategy is reflected in the goals, objectives and recommendations of the Master Plan.

Although not specific in details relative to commercial, residential or industrial land use, it is very important, and highly recommended, that the Planning Commission and County Commission use the Comprehensive County Master Plan in the County's budgetary and planning initiatives, including long term financing, and annual budgets. It is also important that the Planning Commission and County Commission consider Master Plan Goals, Objectives and Recommendations in subdivision and building development reviews and approvals and participation in various infrastructure, facilities, and public-private projects, etc.

## **PLAN SUMMARY**

In addition to public input and public involvement, the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan includes a county development concept; a vision for the future along with, goals, objectives and recommendations for implementation and development of the county. The plan is based on a general assessment of the County's current and future conditions which is included for reference in later sections of the plan report. The County Assessment examines the historical, current and projected situation in Russell County including population and growth trends; governmental conditions, structure and intergovernmental/regional context. The County Development Concept provides a basic direction, or framework, for growth and management. Specific studies of transportation, economic development and recommendations for water and sewer have also been incorporated into the plan report.

## **EARLY ACTION PROGRAM**

In order to take advantage of the Master Plan and focus on some of important next steps, the following are Early Actions the Planning Commission and County Commission should consider.

1. Adopt the Plan/Utilize Plan for review of development proposals, budgeting, financial planning, infrastructure and facility planning and coordination with governments, military and private interests.
2. Implement an education program on the importance of land use; discuss with citizens, business and others initial zoning proposal and updated subdivision regulations beginning with character area guidelines.
3. Establish Phenix City/Russell County planning liaison/task force/working committee.
4. Implement critical transportation improvement projects, especially Alabama Highway-24 extension and connection to the west gate of Fort Benning and access management plans for Alabama Highway 165, US Highway-80 and US Highway-431
5. Move forward with water and sewer agreement, based on the water and sewer study conducted in the course of this Master Plan; with priority on improvements/development to support Fort Mitchell area.
6. Identify targeted development centers for master planned commercial, residential and mixed use centers with connections to schools, parks, other facilities, and design guidelines consistent with the Master Plan and character areas.
7. Support current or immediate economic and development projects; including the Riverways tourism project, Troy University.
8. Complete critical short-term school, park and other community facility improvements and renovations consistent with the Master Plan; include joint improvements of the Russell County Jail facility.
9. Work with Fort Benning and Nature Conservancy and land owners to establish agreeable land buffers and transition areas consistent with the Fort Benning Expansion.
10. Consider legislation, intergovernmental agreements or other working solutions to address annexation issues and equitable cost sharing relative to county-wide services.

## COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# 2

### **SUMMARY REVIEW OF COUNTY ASSESSMENT**

A more detailed assessment of current and future conditions is included in subsequent sections of the plan report. The following is a summary overview of certain key factors to be considered, in conjunction with the visioning process, town hall meetings, assets and opportunities, in order to guide the County Master Plan.

#### **OVERVIEW OF KEY ISSUES**

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### **DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS AND ALTERNATIVES**

Based on past trends and likely prospects for the future a number of scenarios for growth in Russell County have been recommended in the past. The following generally describes these scenarios or alternative patterns for growth. These alternatives have been considered in order to establish the preferred scenario described as the basis of the County Master Plan.

#### **SUBURBAN CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT**

A predominant trend of growth existing within Phenix City and Russell County is a suburban development pattern extending from the influence of Phenix City to the more rural parts of the County. This trend is characterized by scattered low density residential developments that typically occur along the edges of previous developments or “leap-frog” to current agricultural land. Commercial development within this trend typically occurs within strip shopping centers along major transportation corridors. Typical of this type of residential and commercial growth, connectivity within this pattern of development is poor, depending on the use of automobile and often resulting in congestion on major roads large amounts of traffic being generated on very few connecting roads or streets. Because



of the piecemeal residential development, many neighborhoods are left separated from other neighborhoods and connections are only made along major transportation corridors. Also, walking within and between residential and commercial developments is discouraged because of the separation of land uses and emphasis on automobile-oriented corridors.

This type of development pattern requires major investments in infrastructure to support the outward expansion of needed facilities and services. Road infrastructure must be constantly upgraded for safety and to support the additional increase in traffic generated by new residential and commercial growth. A result of this development pattern is that services are typically inefficient or inconvenient in that they are spread over larger areas than necessary rather than consolidated in centralized locations. The cost for expansion of utility infrastructure can also be high because of the construction required for expansion in this suburban pattern. Finally, the suburban pattern can inhibit a sense of community in lieu of more automobile oriented communities.

## **CENTERS AND CLUSTERS**

An alternative to a suburban growth and development pattern is to focus growth and development in activity centers and clusters of varying types. These centers and clusters include traditional small towns, neighborhoods and villages where a concentration of commercial activity and residential developments occur in close proximity with each other. This pattern of centers and clusters allows for increased preservation of agricultural land and green space throughout the county while allowing growth and development to occur as needed in centralized locations.

Services within this development pattern can be provided efficiently by consolidating facilities in activity centers, using shared property and space within the county, even forming “satellite” locations within a limited number of centers and clusters throughout the county. The distribution of county services becomes more feasible in this pattern because of the concentration of population around the centers and clusters.

Infrastructure cost can be less in a centers and clusters pattern of development because of the proximity of multiple uses within the developments. Connectivity is substantially increased because of proximity and neighborhoods can be joined together by multiple street and roadway connections for automobile and increased walkability. The cost of utility infrastructure can be reduced by the proximity of the developments to each other, resulting in less need for expansion. In many cases, utility infrastructure might already be in place within existing centers and clusters in the county. A sense of community can be a result of such mixed use centers

## **PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION CONCEPT – CENTERS AND CORRIDORS**

In lieu of either of the above scenarios, a third likely development pattern is a combination of centers and corridors. Such a pattern provides for a balance between continuing trends of corridor development and transition to more clustered development and centers whenever possible, and preserving natural, cultural and financial resources.

## **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONCEPT**

Given these alternatives, the plan for future development of Russell County should be based on a centers and corridors growth and development concept. Recommended policies, strategies and actions should be based on the following concept:

- Urban core and urban centers in Phenix City
- Urban neighborhoods and general urban development in Phenix City
- Suburban centers and corridors along US Highway-80 (Ladonia and Crawford), US Highway-431 and along Alabama Highway-165 towards Ft. Mitchell (possibly including the County Road 24 extension into the back gate, the Holy Trinity site and others)
- Suburban neighborhoods and general suburban development between Phenix City and Seale generally
- Special Town or Community Centers in Seale and Hurtsboro
- Rural Centers in places like Pittsview, Cottonton and Hatchechubbee
- Rural neighborhoods and rural residential development

- Rural conservation and agricultural districts
- Mixed use corridors
- Natural preservation corridor or district along floodplains, creeks and other natural resource features
- Special Regional Districts

Coincidental with the development of centers and corridors is the development of neighborhoods or Districts of varying densities and character, consistent with urban, suburban and rural characters.

The growth and development concept also recognizes the opportunities and challenges with existing corridor development; to that end, the plan concept includes the establishment of more orderly corridor development along US Highway-80, US Highway-431, Alabama Highway-165, Alabama Highway-169 and others.

These various activity centers are expected to be “connected” through mixed use and compatible transportation and natural resource corridors using planning, design and development guidelines or standards, consistent with the character areas described in the following.

A specific corridor is depicted in the plan concept along the Chattahoochee River; this special corridor recognizes the unique value of the river and recommends special consideration should be given to planning, design and development in this corridor, given the proximity to the river.

## **RUSSELL COUNTY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT DIAGRAM**

The Growth and Development Concept Diagram for the Russell County is the heart of the Russell County Master Plan as depicted in Figure 2.1. Illustrated in the concept diagram are several different character areas. These character areas are described in the following. The County is encouraged to utilize the concept diagram as a guideline prior to any development plan approval and/or other planning and budgetary considerations by the Planning Commission, County Commission, County Departments and others.

### **CHARACTER AREAS**

The following character areas are meant to define different types of development proposed for Russell County, and serve as an aid in defining how these areas should be developed. These areas do not specify specific land uses, but, rather describe a general character that might include a mix of commercial, residential and other uses.

#### **URBAN CORE AND CENTERS**

Urban centers are defined as the center of a municipality which contains the highest mix and density of structures. Transportation systems in Urban Centers are in a grid pattern and include a good network of sidewalks and complete streets. Structures, residential, retail, etc. are typically built in close proximity to each other and property lines. Within Russell County, downtown Phenix City is defined as an Urban Center.

#### **URBAN GENERAL NEIGHBORHOODS**

This character area includes a mix of uses developed in a lower density than Urban Centers. Urban General Neighborhoods are typically within or in close proximity to an Urban Center. They can contain a mix of residential, retail and commercial uses located along corridors and intersections. Residential uses within Urban General are typically more traditional residential neighborhoods with complete streets and sidewalks. Typical urban services that are provided within a municipality are usually provided in an Urban General Neighborhood area. The area outside of the Urban Center in Phenix City is an Urban General Neighborhood area.

#### **SUBURBAN CENTER**

A suburban center is a mixed-use center located in a larger low density residential suburban neighborhood area. Much of the pattern of development in a Suburban Center is auto dependent because of the surrounding residential development, typically in subdivisions, although pedestrian and local street connections are encouraged. Typical urban services are limited within a Suburban Center because of their distance from larger municipal infrastructure



however some of those more urban services or facilities might be encouraged. Suburban Centers might be designed to service county wide or regional markets and, thus, designed to accommodate external traffic to the center. Within Russell County, the Alabama Highway-165 corridor has several Suburban Centers formed around Fort Mitchell and Oswichee.

### **SUBURBAN GENERAL NEIGHBORHOODS**

Suburban General Neighborhoods are primarily low density residential areas which are dependent upon an Urban Center or Urban General Neighborhoods. They are located outside of urban areas and generally are somewhat dependent on suburban centers for commercial services on the periphery either in a municipality or in the county. Suburban General Neighborhoods should encourage appropriate mixes of residential, either single family or multi family, and limited commercial use. This type of development should be predominant in the areas between Phenix City and Seale, Crawford and Fort Mitchell.

### **TOWN CENTER**

Town Centers are special areas of clustered commercial activities and somewhat increased density within the the county. Town Centers have traditional aspects typical of historic southern rural communities such as a mix of uses, including a downtown with civic space surrounded by single family residential on smaller lots, with limited setbacks, etc. These centers include complete streets and sidewalks. Urban services are typically limited within Town Centers because of their more remote locations, however, those services that are present are ideally located in an accessible "Town Center." In Russell County, Town Centers include Seale and Hurtsboro which each have a history of serving as centers for their surroundings.

### **RURAL RESIDENTIAL**

These areas are developed in a low density residential pattern located in close proximity to Town Centers and beyond the Suburban General Neighborhoods, usually in unincorporated portions of the county. These are areas composed of large lot. They are differentiated from a Suburban General Neighborhoods in that the residential pattern is usually not in such formal neighborhoods or subdivisions but might have a more "loosely" designed character. In Russell County, this type of area occurs outside of the Town Centers of Seale and Hurtsboro in the central portion on the County.

### **RURAL CENTER OR CROSSROAD**

Rural Centers are areas of clustered commercial activities and slightly increased density that occur within the unincorporated areas of the county. Rural Centers are designed primarily to serve the lower density rural residential and agricultural areas within the County. They typically occur at significant crossroads within the county to provide easy access. Urban services are typically limited because of their location; however, if there are post offices, churches, local cafes, these should be part of the "center." These Rural Centers can certainly grow into a Town Center if planned and designed properly. Within Russell County these Rural Centers are recommended for Crawford, Pittsview, Hatchechubbee and Cottonton.

### **RURAL AGRICULTURE/CONSERVATION**

These are areas in which the land is primarily used for agriculture or very large lot residential or land is undeveloped. Residential is very low density within this area.

### **NATURAL PRESERVATION**

These are areas where uses needing structures are generally prohibited. Natural Preservation areas are also located along floodplains and wetlands. This area could also be used for hunting or other outdoor recreation. Preservation areas can also be used to surround noxious uses within the county such as special districts or environmentally sensitive areas.

### **MIXED USE CORRIDOR**

A major linear transportation route that should include a mix of land uses and access management. Uses could include, but are not limited to: businesses, residential, limited light industrial, and institutional. Mixed use corridors should be used to connect centers such as urban centers and town centers.

### **RIVER CORRIDOR**

The River Corridor area is a special designation for Russell County along the Chattahoochee River. It should be used to protect the floodplain and wetlands along the river. The River Corridor designation allows for special uses along the river including recreational, residential, commercial development and special industrial land uses, providing adequate buffers, watershed and aesthetic measures are included. Much of this designation is in the Fort Benning Military Reservation land within Russell County.

### **SPECIAL REGIONAL DISTRICT S**

These are areas where large scale development is best located, so as not to conflict with local development patterns. These might include large utility installations, landfills, large industrial development and other developments which conflict with residential development. They could also include more compatible developments such as commercial centers and university campuses. These districts should be well planned and designed with appropriate buffers and specific design guidelines.

## **VISION AND GOALS**

### **VISION**

Russell County is envisioned as a growing county in a dynamic region, with geographically positive benefits, respecting its natural resources and rural character, taking advantage of its proximity to urban growth opportunities and supporting well planned community development and services.

### **GOALS**

#### **LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN**

Achieve a balance of land development and conservation which is sustainable and supportive of economic development while preserving natural and cultural resources, enhancing historic assets and communities of improving quality and livability.

#### **COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING**

Support building of sustainable communities and mixed use business districts, with choices of sound housing in good neighborhoods throughout the county, consistent with land use, transportation, infrastructure and other goals.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Ensure increasing opportunities for prosperity of existing and future residents of the county and increasing economic development opportunities for business development consistent with the provision of fiscally responsible public services and sustainable land use.

#### **TRANSPORTATION**

Create a multi-modal transportation system which provides for continued improvement in regional access, connections between regional communities and improves local traffic connections and safety within the county, consistent with land use and economic development goals.

### INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Partner with providers of water, sewer and other utilities to provide cost efficient infrastructure for current and future residents in Russell County and to support economic development consistent with land use goals and smart growth planning principles.

### EDUCATION, COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Work with communities and other organizations in the county and region to ensure cost effective access to community facilities and services on a par with the best standards of comparable counties including public safety, schools and education, parks and recreation, special facilities like senior services, libraries, etc.

### NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Protect and take advantage of the local, regional natural and cultural resources of the county, consistent with community and economic development, land use and other goals, especially the resources centered on the Chattahoochee River and other natural, historic and cultural resources and landscapes.

### INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Continuously improve cooperation between state, regional, local governments, agencies and other regional partners including the Lee-Russell Council of Governments, Columbus-Phenix City Metropolitan Planning Organization, Valley Partnership, other counties and municipalities.



## OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

#### OBJECTIVES

- Maintain and improve existing neighborhoods and centers as well as rural housing opportunities
- Provide for expansion of commercial development consistent with sustainable land use principles
- Grow well planned and designed sustainable communities and neighborhoods
- Protect the natural, historical and cultural assets of the county and buffer negative land uses
- Ensure proper locations of major commercial, industrial, utility, and institutional sites
- Minimize impact of development runoff into surface water
- Maintain important timber and agricultural resource lands
- Maintain scenic views and overall rural character in critical areas, per development concept

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### *Ongoing*

- Adopt County Master Plan as a framework for growth and development including the Russell County Growth and Development Concept Diagram and character guidelines which encourages mixed used centers and corridors and limit the impact of strip development
- Enforce floodplain protection ordinance and development guidelines to protect areas along rivers and creeks
- Review development proposals for well planned mixed uses, connections and lot sizes consistent with the Master Plan
- Consider a public information program to inform citizens, businesses, and property owners about various zoning provisions
- Support the efforts of land owners to preserve hunting, fishing and natural woodlands and farmland including consideration of land trusts and conservation easements
- Work with property owners to provide for conservation and harvesting of timber which continues to protect the natural resources and scenic character of the county
- Continue to participate in regional and local watershed protection programs and cooperation
- Work with Fort Benning, Nature Conservancy and others to incorporate military base expansion and land use buffers into Russell County plans for development and include appropriate airport and military noise control provisions into standards for future development
- Identify and coordinate county support for important commercial, residential and mixed use developments at major intersections such as County Highway-24, County Highway-18 extended into AL Highway-165 and the West Gate of Fort Benning; Holy Trinity site; other sites along Alabama Highway-165 and other corridors
- Consider special signage and landscape ordinances in lieu of total zoning ordinance
- Consider some form of mixed use corridor overlay standards for major corridors; US Highway-431, US Highway-80, and AL Highway-165, including access management and context sensitive design provisions
- Work with Phenix City and support downtown and riverfront revitalization and urban redevelopment of core urban center and neighborhoods
- Consider policies for siting schools, parks, other facilities consistent with the Master Plan
- Adopt development guidelines which minimize non-point source runoff impact



*Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Update Subdivision Regulations to include standards for sewer connections and lot sizes consistent with recommended land use densities, requiring connections to sewer for smaller lots or larger lots, when access to sewer is not provided; adopt conservation subdivision provisions as alternative to conventional subdivision development
- Work with citizens, businesses, and property owners to consider zoning provisions and design standards for centers, neighborhoods and corridors; include traditional neighborhoods where appropriate
- Adopt complete streets policy, consistent with county standards for roads and streets
- Identify and participate in redevelopment of brownfield, grayfield and other redevelopment sites, especially in areas threatening the river and other natural resources, for example along Brickyard Road and others
- Identify important scenic corridors and adopt context sensitive design guidelines to subdivision regulations
- Identify large sites for large scale commercial and industrial development to ensure appropriate siting and development consistent with the master plan and nearby residents, etc.; include designation of industrial sites as advantage sites through EDPA's Advantage site program
- Consider landscape and signage standards as part of subdivision regulations and establish a gateway, wayfinding and corridor beautification program for major entrances, landmarks and districts; include voluntary beautification board, committees, etc.
- Include subdivision regulations for drainage, streets, sidewalks consistent with the Master Plan character areas
- Incorporate county-wide open space and parks/recreation program
- Work closely with Fort Benning and Nature Conservancy to indentify and protect land use buffers and access to natural areas through the Fort Benning buffer program

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Consider establishing a special river corridor to protect river resources, promote river recreation and encourage special mixed use riverfront development consistent with white water sports, etc.
- Consider adopting more appropriate development standards for subdivisions and development consistent with Master Plan character areas; require interconnectivity and connections to major and minor thoroughfares; continue to coordinate drainage plans with plans, for adjacent properties; adopt access management standards as part of the subdivision regulations
- Adopt updated standards for location and development of mobile home subdivisions and provisions for free standing mobile homes
- Incorporate provisions for conservation subdivisions into the subdivision regulations to allow flexibility in development and protection of natural resources
- Consider conservation and mitigation banks; coordinate with land trust, Nature Conservancy, etc.

**Figure 2.2 – Matrix of Future Land Use**

	Single Family Residential	Multi Family Residential	Very Low Density Residential	Commercial General	Community Commercial	Industrial Light	Industrial Heavy	Agricultural	Public	Recreational/Open Space
Urban Core		•			•				•	
Urban Center					•				•	
Urban General	•	•		•	•				•	
Suburban Center		•			•				•	
Suburban General	•	•		•					•	
Rural Center	•	•			•				•	
Rural Residential	•		•						•	•
Town Center	•	•			•				•	
Community Center					•				•	•
Conservation	•		•					•	•	•
Preservation									•	•
River Corridor	•	•		•	•				•	
Mixed Use Corridor		•		•		•				
Special District						•	•			

## COMMUNITIES AND HOUSING

### OBJECTIVES

- Ensure adequate housing is available for projected growth – owner/rental
- Ensure housing to meet military market – current market and future retiree market
- Encourage a diverse range of viable housing options relative to density, affordability and well designed mixed-use neighborhoods
- Maintain and revitalize existing communities and neighborhoods
- Provide for the sustainable growth of new communities and neighborhoods, consistent with Master Plan
- Provide choices in housing relative to location, types and costs, including affordable and market rate housing
- Ensure safe and sound housing conditions for all communities in the County

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Ongoing*

- Enforce building and housing related code compliance for residential development
- Work with Phenix City, Hurtsboro, and others, to support a housing and neighborhood revitalization, or rehab program that could apply county-wide; focus on designated areas consistent with Master Plan
- Utilize historic preservation and conservation districts to preserve existing housing in sound neighborhoods.
- Work with municipalities, agencies and private sector to increase the availability and construction of new housing consistent with the Master Plan
- Cooperate with private developers to ensure infrastructure, school, park and related facilities to support housing, consistent with the Master Plan
- Create a housing task force to monitor and make housing recommendations
- Work with private sector, state and federal resources to ensure financing for housing, including HUD, USDA, State Housing Financing Agency

#### *Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Adopt building and/or design/development guidelines for housing in neighborhoods and centers consistent with Master Plan, including: emerging neighborhoods from vacant tracts of land; reinforcing mature neighborhoods; and carefully managing development of rural residential areas
- Work with and support the use of community or housing development corporations, housing authority, self-help agencies like Habitat for Humanity, and non profits to construct new “attainable” housing

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Support increased multi-family housing as part of mixed-use centers and neighborhoods and consistent with needs identified as the market changes
- Support projects which appeal to the needs of low-mod, minorities, senior housing and housing for the disabled in areas consistent with the Master Plan
- Update target area programs for concentrated housing improvements

*Long-Term (10 or more years)*

- Work with municipalities, community development corporations, agencies to increase infill of housing in vacant lots/sites in developed parts of the Russell County, Phenix City, Hurtsboro, etc.
- Work with and support large land owners for development of major mixed-use market and affordable housing in parts of the County consistent with Master Plan

**Figure 2.3 – Housing Recommendations by Area (Generalized)**

	Rehabilitation	Code Enforcement	New Housing	Needs Public Facilities and Improvements
Cottonton	Minor	Minimal	Moderate	Minimal
Crawford	Minor	Minimal	Moderate	Moderate
Fort Mitchell	Major	Moderate	Major	Major
Hurtsboro	Moderate	Moderate	Minimal	Moderate
Hatchechubbee	Moderate	Major	Moderate	Major
Ladonia	Minor	Moderate	Major	Moderate
Oswichee	Major	Minor	Moderate	Moderate
Pittsview	Major	Moderate	Major	Major
Seale	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

### OBJECTIVES

- Support and grow existing business and industry
- Help create opportunities for new industry and business
- Support entrepreneurial and small business enterprises
- Promote increased retail development consistent with the master plan
- Partner with others to improve workforce preparedness and lifelong learning for residents of the County; take advantage of higher education presence and expand
- Take advantage and leverage presence of US Military, Troy University, Chattahoochee Valley Community College and government workforce
- Take advantage of construction related development opportunities resulting from increasing growth of the County
- Grow tourism, recreation, the arts and cultural resources as economic development priority
- Continue to support natural resource industries, consistent with Master Plan and natural resource and scenic protection and other business at a regional and local scale
- Improve county's fiscal conditions, consistent with meeting the county's needs and fostering growth consistent with the Master Plan

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Ongoing*

- Continue to actively participate in regional economic development initiatives, such as LRCOG and the Lee-Russell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS); The Valley Partnership; Phenix City Economic Development Authority; Phenix City and Columbus Chambers of Commerce; BRAC and Fort Benning initiatives
- Support continued re-development and infill in Phenix City, consistent with other Russell County goals, especially downtown Phenix City as a regional center
- Work with economic development organizations in Russell County, LRCOG, BRAC, and others to support improvements to industrial sites and parks in order to recruit new industry; expand number of prepared EDPA Advantage Sites/preferred sites within the County
- Support transportation improvements that serve new economic development opportunities, especially a new major east-west corridor and other improvements to existing major arterials
- Continue to work with Chattahoochee Valley Community College, Troy University, AIDT and others on workforce programs; consider a life-long learning initiative with the university, community college, high schools and business community
- Support outdoor recreation and river recreation, white water initiative, as well as hunting and fishing opportunities/events, tourism and historic preservation as an "alternative industry"
- Work with economic development organizations to utilize a small business lending program and RLF to support community and rural mixed use centers
- Promote the expansion of arts and entertainment and encourage tourism businesses to increase local and visitor investments, for example farmers/arts markets
- Take advantage of a proposed Russell County Museum, NRA Annual Banquet, connected greenways, trails, abandoned railroad lines, bed and breakfasts in centers and rural parts of the county
- Support county legislation that ensures equitable sharing of revenue and promotes county-wide economic development, consistent with services provided by municipal, county and other agencies
- Adopt and implement long-term budgeting and financially consistent with the Master Plan

#### *Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Complete a next phase expansion of sewer and water systems to serve new businesses and development consistent with Master Plan

- Work with economic development agencies to support commercial, retail and mixed use sites consistent with the strategic development concept
- Work with water and sewer authorities to complete short to long term service to priority business development sites
- Support a retail/commercial development initiative that includes unincorporated sites in the county, consistent with the strategic planning and development concept
- Work with Columbus, Phenix City and others to implement “white water” recreation and related businesses

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Work with Troy University and Chattahoochee Valley Community College to create an educational “niche,” or presence, and leverage economic development in the county
- Consider a priority infrastructure investment program to support key development projects, consistent with the Master Plan



## TRANSPORTATION

### OBJECTIVES

- Preservation of existing transportation facilities and future efficiency of the highway and road system
- Reduce current and future congestion and increased vehicle miles traveled through land use and transportation coordination
- Improve regional access to Russell County and the region in general
- Improve connectivity and mobility within the county and communities
- Maintain and improve road and bridge safety/security and reduce crashes and fatalities
- Increase multimodal access to include transit and bike pedestrian mobility
- Improve access for rural residents, senior citizens, disabled citizens and lower income persons etc.
- Ensure that transportation improvements continue to protect the environment, preserve historic areas and increase energy efficiency and savings for individuals in the County as well as promote economic development
- Improve economic vitality through water, rail, air and truck traffic improvements and safety
- Support prioritization of cost effective ongoing improvements to transportation system taking maximum advantage of federal and state resources

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Ongoing*

- Actively participate in C-PCMPO and RPO transportation planning programs and identify projects and funding for major federal and state roadway improvements that support Russell County
- Continue to work with developers on site plans and subdivision approvals to ensure connectivity and multi-modal circulation in and between new subdivisions, including new standards and public-private financing if needed as part of subdivision regulations; include bikeways and trails as part of major developments, especially along creeks, rivers and other natural features
- Continue to support a regular schedule for maintenance and safety improvement of county roads, especially consistent with the Master Plan, as well as ongoing condition surveys
- Continue to utilize HRRR funds from ALDOT to make traffic safety and intersection improvements as a priority in locations based on best available crash data; continue to update crash data
- Work with others to support land use and economic development projects that will reduce or mitigate vehicle miles travelled, such as, but not limited to, in-fill development, brownfield development, redevelopment projects, etc.
- Support ongoing improvements to public transportation, extending LRCOG Transit, Phenix City, etc.
- Continue to review and monitor traffic volumes versus capacity

*Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Actively support the completion of a new east west connector into the Fort Mitchell area and Fort Benning back gate area
- Adopt a major thoroughfare plan/map of major and minor arterials, collectors and local streets coordinated with municipalities
- Adopt five year roadway and transportation improvement plan for the county based on priority needs and funding available
- Support improvements to state and federal routes that need improvement based on capacity and safety issues-includes AL Highway-165, US Highway-431, US Highway-280, US Highway-80 (especially related to truck traffic and increasing community and residential development); include access management standards and improvements to these major corridors
- Adopt modified “complete streets” policy and standards for the urbanizing parts of the county as well as “context sensitive design” guidelines for important corridors and roadways, more rural areas
- Continue to upgrade pedestrian and bike safety markings, especially incorporating such improvements in new or road widening projects
- Utilize “Safe Routes to Schools” and other bike/ped funds to improve pedestrian safety around and to schools
- Work with Phenix City to connect county trails into existing and expanded Phenix City Riverwalk or trail system
- Promote ridesharing and other para-transit initiatives supported by LRCOG, C-PCMPO to assist seniors and other transit dependent households
- Continue to support transportation technology improvements including intelligent transportation system etc.
- Support ongoing wayfinding and signage system, including right-of-way maintenance, sight distance improvements, etc.

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Continue and increase improvements to county roads consistent with a county-wide thoroughfare plan and Master Plan
- Work with ALDOT and others to adopt and implement, in some cases retrofit, major roadways to include access management standards and improvements; US Highway-80 and US Highway-431 and AL Highway-165 are priorities
- Support ongoing improvements to truck and freight movement, including the potential development or support of an intermodal center or continuously improving system for freight movement by truck, rail, water, air (consider need and potential for county airport or close relationship with Columbus, Montgomery, Auburn/Opelika, Atlanta airports)

*Long-Term (10-15 years)*

- Continue to support improvements to State and Federal roadways
- Continue to upgrade County roads as part of thoroughfare plan



## INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

### OBJECTIVES

- Ensure safe, adequate and cost-effective water and sewer services for citizens and businesses in Russell County consistent with Master Plan
- Plan for and develop up-to-date infrastructure in cooperation with private and public entities to increase electric, gas, telecommunications, broadband and other necessary technology, consistent with the needs of the citizens and businesses in Russell County and the Master Plan
- Ensure water and sewer capacity to support economic development consistent with the County Master Plan
- Take advantage of public-private partnerships to achieve needed infrastructure consistent with master plan and other government, citizen business interests

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Ongoing*

- Support the continued communication, coordination and mutual agreement on the provision of water and sewer to serve Russell County as a whole, consistent with the Master Plan; focus especially on coordination with existing water and sewer authorities in Fort Mitchell, Russell County, Hurtsboro and Phenix City
- Work with power, gas, telecommunications, and broadband providers to upgrade their capacity and availability, consistent with the Master Plan and ongoing community and economic development

#### *Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Adopt and implement recommendations from the current study for water and sewer, consistent with Master Plan, including short term provisions to serve the priority water and sewers needs in Fort Mitchell; provisions for long term water and sewer expansion to the remainder of the county such as: expansion or combining into a central water and sewer system(s), through public, and/or public/private partnership(s); connections to existing water and sewer plans/systems; temporary package plants serving multiple sites
- Adopt subdivision standards for sewer service consistent with the Master Plan including uniform regulations and installation and connections consistent with building codes, subdivision regulations

#### *Mid- to Long Term (5-15 years)*

- Continue to extend water and sewer consistent with Master Plan and Water and Sewer Study
- Expand or construct treatment plants for water and sewer as needed, subject to rate of growth

## EDUCATION, COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### OBJECTIVES

- Continued and improved access to excellent schools and education for all county residents and to support economic development as the county grows
- Expanding opportunities for higher education/lifetime learning
- Promote highest possible standard of public safety facilities and services for existing and future county residents
- Increased and convenient access to parks and recreation facilities and services for Russell County residents
- Increased access to county government facilities and services

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Education

##### *Ongoing*

- Support regional education initiatives and financing programs for schools
- Support ongoing expansion and development of Troy Campus and Chattahoochee Valley Community College

##### *Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Continue to support renovations and improvements to county schools in locations consistent with the Master Plan and as funds are available

##### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Continue to evaluate needs for schools in the areas projected for growth such as, Fort Mitchell and other community/neighborhood schools in growth areas consistent with the Master Plan, and identify potential funding for renovations and additional school facilities

##### *Long-Term (10 or more years)*

- Consider construction of additional schools in high growth areas if needed and if funds are available for new construction

#### Public Safety

##### *Ongoing*

- Support the location and upgrade of facilities, training and equipment for fire safety in unincorporated parts of the county and continue to work on mutual agreements that can provide for coordination of such services
- Promote legislation to support financial sustainability for fire services in unincorporated areas (i.e., a fee per home and per business)

##### *Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Complete plans for expansion of County detention facility in conjunction with other jurisdictions

##### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Continue to monitor opportunities for mobile or satellite Sheriff's facilities to determine need or feasibility for such facilities and services



Parks and Recreation*Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Develop or execute already existing specific plans for the preservation of open space and more park facilities, with accompanying recreational activities, especially in the sections of the county (southeastern and northeastern) which are expected to experience the greatest growth.
- Work with public and private entities to support a variety of parks and recreation facilities and programs, especially consistent with the Master Plan; including plans for regional, community, and neighborhood parks
- Support for river and white water recreational facilities and programs
- Support informal and accessible outdoor recreation to include birding, hunting, fishing as well as a state of the art public/private golf course in the rural part of the county, or perhaps near the river

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Develop increased access to neighborhood parks and playground facilities within walking distance of residential neighborhoods
- Begin to develop additional community and neighborhood parks, consistent with Master Plan and continued growth of the county
- Consider a county-wide bicycle, greenway, and trails system

*Long-Term (10-15 years)*

- Continue the gradual expansion of the County's community and neighborhood park program

Other Community Facilities and Services*Ongoing*

- Assess the needs and interests of new residents and plan for all facilities including arts and cultural facilities (Umbrella Group-Regional)
- Continue to support senior services and youth facilities, accessible to all parts of the County
- Improve the access to arts and cultural facilities consistent with County residents needs and desires

*Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Expand web-based library and other county facilities/services
- Support continued revitalization of core facilities in Phenix City and other county centers for art and cultural events

*Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Consider expansion of (satellite) county services facilities to more centrally located and readily accessible location(s), especially with respect to public safety, security, and library facilities and services requiring frequent visits to the courthouse; consider co-location of such facilities with existing or proposed school and park facilities; prioritized location for such facilities are the Fort Mitchell and Seale areas; consider multi-purpose satellite facilities in concert with Hurtsboro, subject to ongoing plans for satellite service, etc.
- Support cultural and recreational programs designed to serve a population with special needs, including physical challenges.

## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### OBJECTIVES

- Protect and enhance historical character of the County
- Protect and enhance the quality of the Chattahoochee River and related tributaries, flood plains and wetlands and improve water quality discharge into surface water
- Protect/conservate important rural landscapes and woodlands
- Increase opportunities for environmental tourism, to enhance recreation and economic opportunities, especially as it relates to the river and water resources
- Protect natural habitats for hunting, fishing, birding, etc.
- Maintain a balance of natural resource protection and the use of such resources for industrial and business development

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Ongoing*

- Support ongoing efforts of Historical Commission and related associations County wide and in historic communities such as Hurtsboro, Seale, as well as Phenix City
- Adopt and enforce flood plain regulations as well as development plan guidelines to protect areas along the river as well as other creeks and tributaries, incorporate community and neighborhood parts in the flood plain protection
- Support the efforts of land owners to preserve hunting and fishing sites in the county as well as conservation and or preservation of farmlands; consider cooperation with a land trust, use of conservation easements and other incentives for this purpose
- Continue to participate in regional and local watershed protection programs and plans, working with universities and others
- Support installation of and maintenance of historical markers
- Work with State and Federal preservation sites to protect, maintain, and enhance National and State historic sites
- Continue to participate in regional air quality compliance as part of C-PCMPO planning process

#### *Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Establish the Special River Corridor district as a zoning district or mutual compact of government and land owners, to include standards and guidelines for the development of this area as a unique asset
- Increase water related recreation and community development which takes advantage of and enhances the Chattahoochee River, especially as part of a regional “white water” initiative
- Consider acquisition of key open space and park areas in conservation and public access to recreation
- Work closely with Fort Benning and Nature Conservancy to indentify and protect land use buffers and access to natural areas through the Fort Benning buffer program

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Consider increasing historic district and site protection standards to include architectural review in selected districts of the County such as Hurtsboro, Seale, Fort Mitchell, and others
- Increase access to natural areas through county-wide greenway system

#### *Long-Term (10-15 years)*

- Establish and support a public-private fund/foundation for raising funds and matching grants for preservation of historic structures and sites
- Consider working with others to establish a Russell County/Phenix City Museum or comparable facility



## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

### OBJECTIVES

- Coordination of planning, development, infrastructure and transportation between county, municipal and regional interests especially in areas of mutual jurisdiction
- Reduce duplication of services and provide cost effective and convenient services for residents and businesses in Russell County
- Support a seamless delivery of government services for residents and businesses in Russell County
- Support an adequate and equitable funding base, including increased economic development and income, consistent with the Master Plan, that provides funding for County services

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### *Ongoing*

- Participation with LRCOG, Columbus-Phenix City MPO, Valley Partnership, Fort Benning, BRAC, and other regional agencies
- Participation in and support of multiple chambers of commerce for development and promotion of intergovernmental efforts
- Participation in other regional and cooperative economic development, environmental, transportation activities including the annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) developed in conjunction with LRCOG
- Maintain and improve County relationships with state and congressional representatives for legislative and financial support, especially for major projects
- Support regional initiatives consistent with the Master Plan

#### *Short-Term (0-5 years)*

- Establish a task force or working committee across jurisdictional lines to identify new opportunities for coordinating issues of mutual interest to the county and county interests
- Establish “utility coordinating committee” to improve communication and coordination of the planning and development of infrastructure in the county
- Establish a working committee to coordinate planning, zoning, subdivision standards especially in the police jurisdiction or areas subject to annexation
- Work closely with Fort Benning, Nature Conservancy to coordinate land use, re-use and acquisition plan with Master Plan, maintained continuously in the county

#### *Mid-Term (5-10 years)*

- Create stable and equitable tax and revenue base/consistent with services required for all jurisdictional agencies
- Consider intergovernmental corporative agreements on key services and facilities such as schools, parks, etc.

#### *Long-Term (10-15 years)*

- Consider more formal intergovernmental structures, or consolidation, to be determined through ongoing communication and coordination

## PLANNING AREAS

### SEALE

As the historical County Seat of Russell County, the continued significance of Seale as a major community center within the County is important in component of the Russell County Master Plan. Land uses include a cluster of mixed commercial and residential developments within the core of the Seale, the area surrounding the traditional community center of Seale and along Old Seale Highway. Community design within the traditional community center should include historic preservation of existing structures and infill of compatible new residential and commercial development infill along the US Highway-431 corridor and Old Seale Highway. Housing opportunities in Seale include rehabilitation of existing historic houses, infill and new medium density residential around the center. Away from the community center, residential development should occur as neighborhood clusters which include important amenities such as sidewalks and street lighting. Major transportation improvements within the area include improved east-west connectors to the Fort Mitchell area. These connections should occur along the existing County Road-24/Ridge Road route between Seale and Fort Mitchell and along County Road-18/Oswichee Road between Seale and Oswichee. Community facilities are an important component of Seale considering the central location within the County. Continued and needed expansion should occur in conjunction with Russell County High School, Russell County Middle School and Oliver Elementary School. Other significant facilities within Seale include the Recreational Complex along Old Seale Highway and the Old Russell County Courthouse.

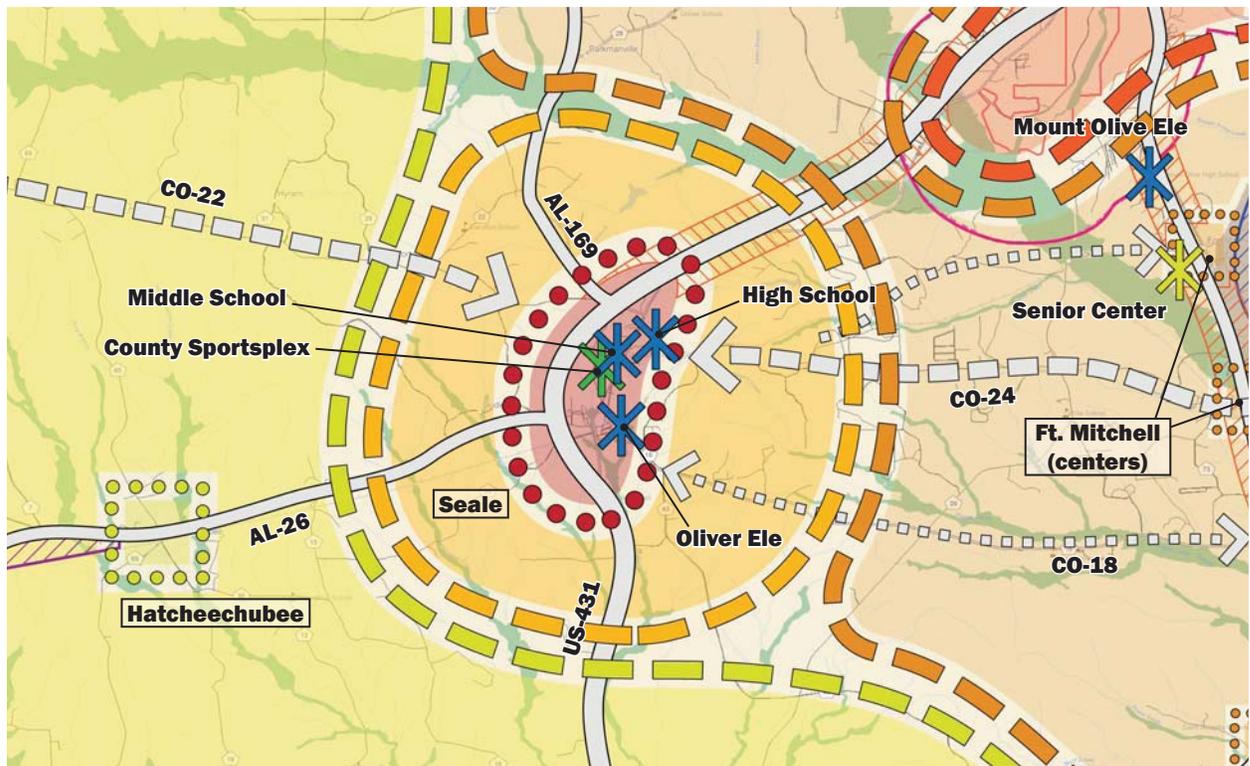


Figure 2.9 – Seale Planning Area

### FORT MITCHELL

Fort Mitchell will become a series of substantial suburban neighborhoods and centers extending from Phenix City, primarily along Alabama Highway-165 toward Eufaula. The Master Plan calls for development a series of suburban centers with mixed land uses and increasing community facilities with added county services, such a potential county satellite office, etc. Transportation improvements focus on improving Alabama Highway-165 and improved east west connectors into Fort Benning and Seale. Fort Mitchell also includes an emphasis on the preservation of the Chattahoochee River with recreational and residential opportunities along the river as well.

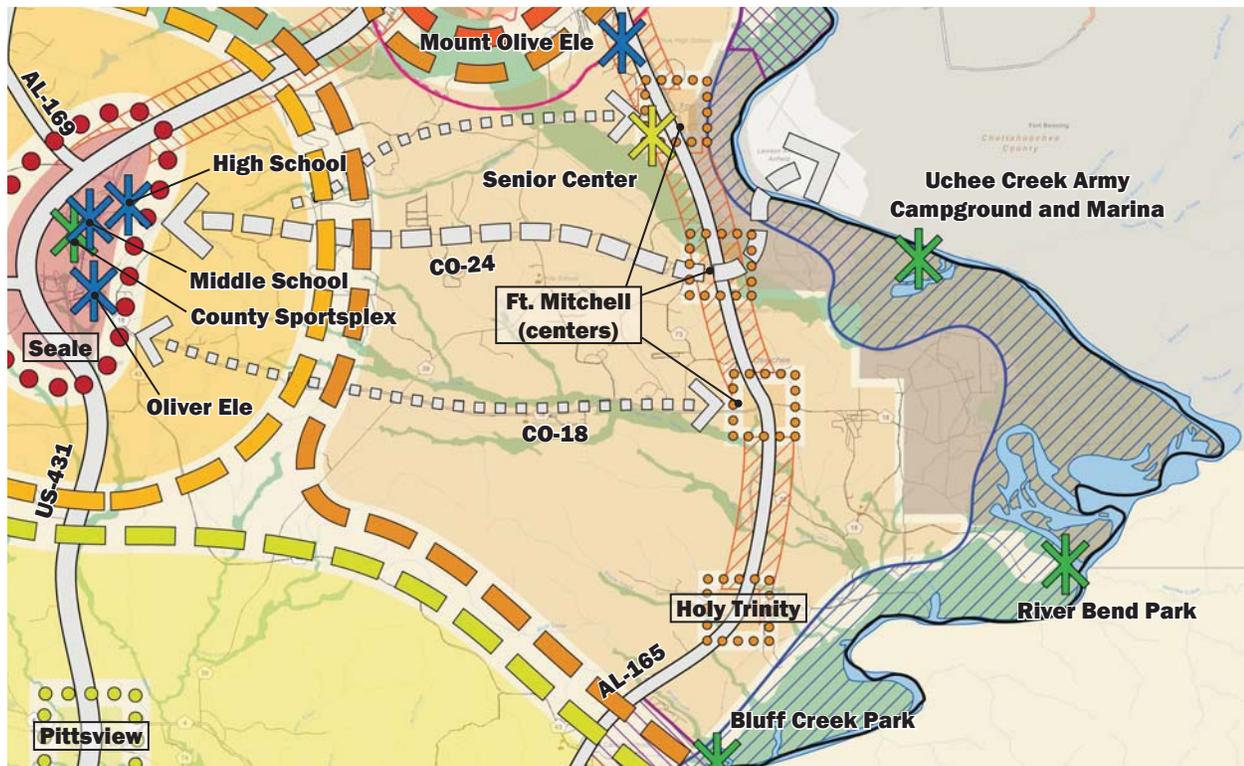


Figure 2.10 – Fort Mitchell Planning Area

## HURTSBORO

The Plan encourages the redevelopment of Hurtsboro as a town center, expanding on some of the historic character and existing patterns of development. Mixed commercial and residential land uses can be concentrated in the town center, with community facilities including some combination of town and county facilities. While located at the edge of the county, access includes good state and county roads. The Plan suggests that the area around the town center will be primarily rural residential with existing homes and new housing on large lots.

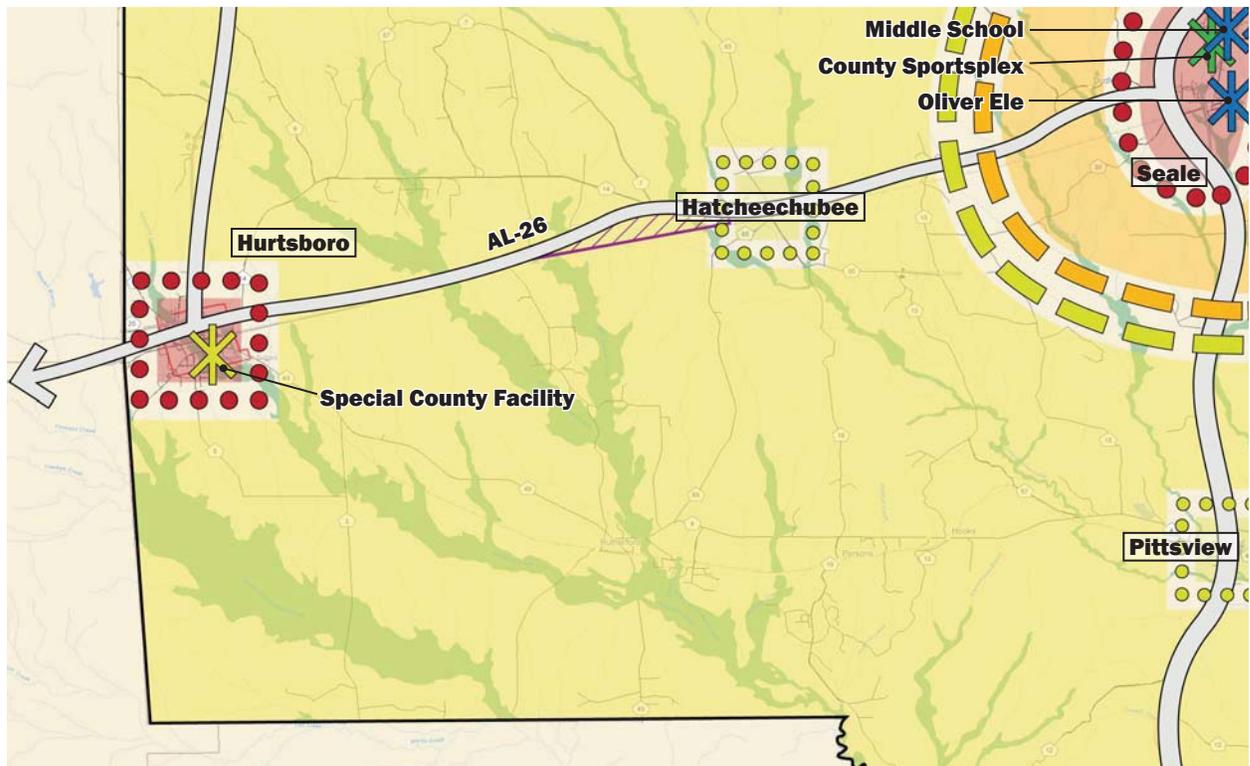


Figure 2.11 – Hurtsboro Planning Area

### LADONIA/CRAWFORD

Located along US Highway-80, Ladonia is expected to be a part of the suburban neighborhoods extending from Phenix City with commercial development in centers along US Highway-80 and suburban residential neighborhoods. The Plan suggests that Crawford develops toward the end of US Highway-80 as a suburban center with a mix of commercial and higher density residential. Part of the areas around Crawford would be more suburban where the area to the west would become more conservation oriented residential. Transportation improvements focus on access management along US Highway-80.

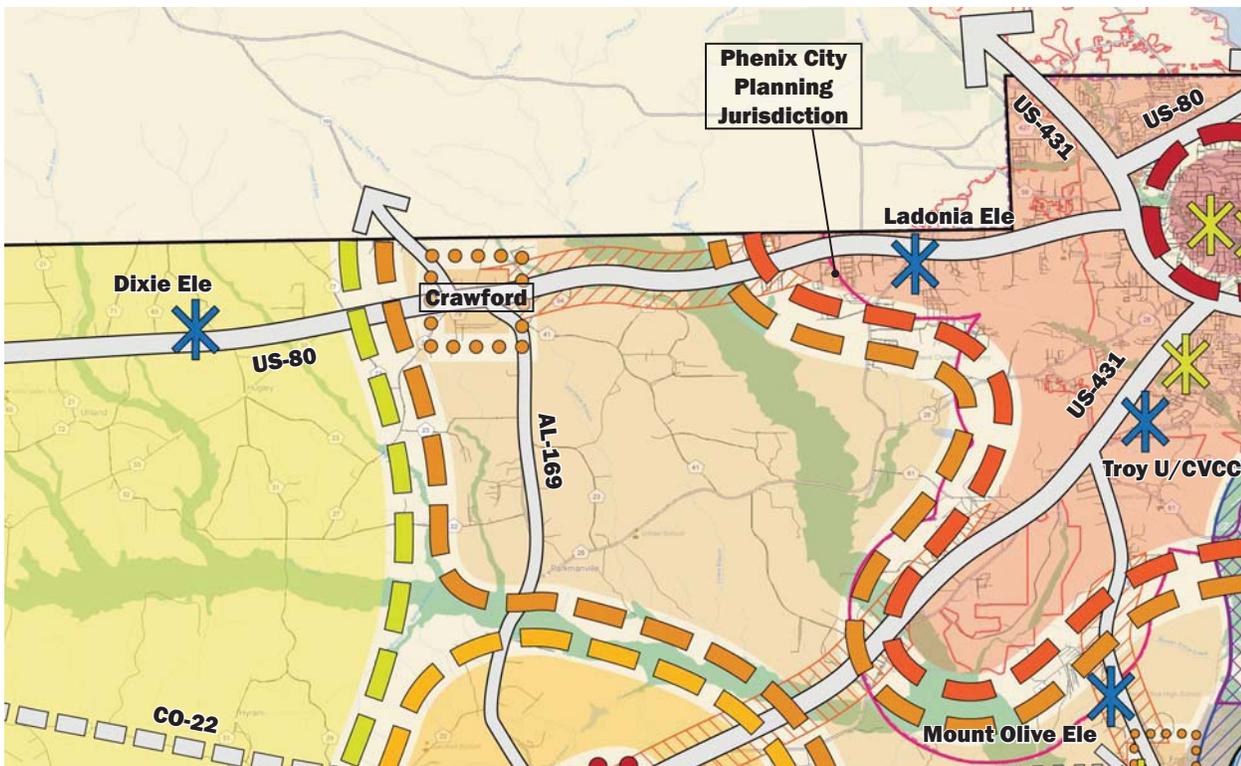


Figure 2.12 – Ladonia/Crawford Planning Area

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

### **ONGOING AND PROJECT PLANNING**

It is highly recommended that the planning Commission and County Commission utilize the Master Plan in conjunction with continued planning and budgeting. Continuous review of the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan is important to responsible implementation of the Plan. In addition, updating should be done as needed, and, at least every five years. Annual reports should be made by the Planning Commission to the County Commission on the status of the Plan.

More detailed district and project plans must be considered in order to implement the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan. These district plans may include entire commission districts, neighborhood, or other special district plans.

The Comprehensive County Master Plan is organized by broad goals, objectives and recommendations that may include policies and strategies for adoption and implementation of the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan. For each of the Comprehensive County Master Plan Policies and Strategies, action steps should be established in order to implement the policies or recommendations. These action items may change, over time, however it is important to identify some of these. Current plans should be continuously updated and implemented to ensure results and take advantage of momentum.

Recommendations and action items may include direct action by the County Commission or Planning Commission, however, many of the recommendations suggest cooperation, collaboration or coordination with other organizations, agencies or the private sector.

### **RESPONSIBILITY, GOVERNANCE, ORGANIZATION AND COOPERATION**

Implementation of the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan should be considered a Public-Private initiative, with organizations, business and the county working together for the good of all citizens; all departments must continue to work together; think outside the box/do things even though they have never been done before; volunteers are needed to make projects work; public and private leadership is key. The plan is structured in such a way as to foster the establishment of implementation teams to foster of the recommendations within the plan. These implementation teams may include land use and community design; streets and transportation; infrastructure; community facilities and services; education, health care; public services; neighborhoods and housing; arts and culture; natural and cultural resource preservation; economic and community development. Other implementation teams may be considered to include for example: civic participation, youth, seniors and others to work on specific projects.

### **PRIORITIES AND TIME FRAME**

With respect to timelines and priorities, recommendations should be incorporated in short-term (0-5 years), mid-term (5-10 years), and long-term (over 10 years) horizons based on importance and funding opportunities of the county or others, and the legal authority of the county. It is important to note that many recommendations are interconnected and despite priorities/timelines, opportunities might present themselves to combine certain recommendations at a particular time.

### **FINANCING, FUNDING AND PUBLIC/PRIVATE INVESTMENTS**

It cannot be presumed that the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan is implemented by county resources alone. In fact, many of the Plan recommendations will be implemented by others and the private sector. The county's goal is leveraging and supporting private sector resources to accomplish the desired results. Plan implementation should also be seen as a public/private investment strategy and not just the spending public of funds.

Financing and funding of county initiatives should include the use of county funds; grants; loans; other incentives and funding which can be generated through related development authorities such as a Commercial Development

Authority, a Land Trust and other public-private development organizations in addition to more common development authorities such as the utility board, school board, park board, etc.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING AND BUDGETING**

The financial planning for the county should include a five year capital improvement program or plan which should be consistent with the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan and be updated on an annual basis.

### **REGULATORY TOOLS**

Certain regulatory tools are important to the implementation of the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan. These tools include a possible zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, historic districts, redevelopment and design review districts/guidelines, others. These tools should be seen as consistent with the Master Plan and amended, as needed, to further the implementation of the Plan. Specifically, zoning regulations, including special overlay districts, etc. are subject to further approval by the County Commission. In order to consider such standards, a comprehensive education program should be undertaken on the benefit, methods, etc. of such standards and regulations.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Russell County, as are most counties in Alabama, is limited by its legislative authority, regulatory authority, funding sources, etc. For this reason, it is critical that the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan be continuously shared with legislative representatives for support and consideration, either for potential legislation supportive of the plan and/or funding support from the state or federal level or support the county's ability to finance projects, improvements consistent with the Master Plan.

### **COORDINATION OF THE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS**

Many recommendations in the Russell County Comprehensive County Master Plan can be related to other recommendations or opportunities. The county should, on an ongoing basis, identify where these opportunities for coordination of projects can achieve plan goals. This can be done on an annual or quarterly basis, as well as, a part of project planning and budgeting of projects to take advantage of and leverage funding that is already being spent. The coordination can serve as positive added value for leveraging the use of funds for more than a single benefit. The attached implementation matrix is a guide for how this coordination should be accomplished.

#### ***Early Action Program***

The County Master Plan includes recommendations as an early action program, which the County might consider for action sooner, rather than later, on items that could benefit from such action. This early action program is included in the plan summary.

### **FISCAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION**

#### **GENERAL TRENDS IN FISCAL CONDITIONS**

Capital and operating costs will continue to increase based on growth. Balancing these costs with revenue will be based in part on increasing commercial development, taking advantage of construction related jobs and spending. Public-private financing, leveraging state and federal resources and equitable intergovernmental cost sharing are also critical.

While the County Master Plan is not intended to be a comprehensive financial plan or budget, the Plan can be used to address and help support fiscal responsibility and opportunities. Balancing revenue and the costs or needs and demands for services as a result of current development and future growth requires ongoing and long term day to day planning and coordination. Options for such balancing include: increasing existing revenue sources, increasing future revenue sources, reducing existing costs and mitigating future costs to the extent possible through good planning and coordination, including intergovernmental and cooperative agreements, regionalization and innovative pub-private financing.

## KEY ELEMENTS IN FISCAL PLANNING AND COORDINATION

The following are some elements to be considered as important follow ups or companions to the master plan.

- Adopting multi-year financial plans coordinated with the Comprehensive County Master Plan
- Including a five year capital improvements program
- Incorporating major ongoing capital projects into annual budgets, financing plans, bond issues, etc.
- Conducting ongoing fiscal reviews, especially at quarterly, mid-year and annually and updating the five year plan
- Continuing to focus on financing incentives for economic development that will leverage private investment and increase revenues to the county
- Continuing to be progressive in maximizing available grants and public-private incentives for implementing projects consistent with the master plan.

## SOURCES OF LOCAL REVENUE

Property taxes are used largely for schools. Sales and use taxes are used for general purposes and schools. Fees collected from a variety of sources go to offset costs for specific services. Many of these taxes and fees are collected by or for the state and redistributed to the county as intergovernmental revenue.

Borrowing funds is a source of revenue, including general obligation bonds as well as revenue bonds based on returns from investments in capital infrastructure.

Potential grant and related funding sources

- ALDOT and USDOT transportation funds for US and state routes; Safety funds
- Congressional appropriations for special projects
- CDBG and HUD grants for community development
- USDA grants and loans for infrastructure and housing financing for rural housing
- Industrial revenue bonds to IDB
- Special EDA funds for economic development
- Brownfield loans and grants through EPA, ADEM and Department of Revenue
- ADEM funds for stream restoration
- ADECA and LWCF grants for parks and greenways
- Historic tax credits for restoration of historic properties (income generating)
- Special Business Improvement Districts and intergovernmental agreements

## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

(See separate report on file with the Russell County Commission Office)



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**COUNTY ASSESSMENT****3**

As a part of the master planning process, an assessment of various factors impacting Russell County was completed, primarily using previous or existing studies, information and analysis. This assessment includes governmental, intergovernmental relations and regional context; population and future growth; land use and appearance; natural and cultural resources; transportation; facilities and services; infrastructure and economic development. An overview of this assessment is provided in this section of the plan. Additional information and background information is provided in separate sections on transportation and economic development along with a water and sewer study on the county.

**RUSSELL COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL,  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT**

To better understand the situation of Russell County, it is important to review the county, municipal, intergovernmental and regional context.

**RUSSELL COUNTY**

Russell County is governed by a board of seven county commissioners elected in individual districts. The County is managed through a County Administrator and staff from the Commission office and various departments, including the following:

- Revenue
- Appraisal
- County Circuit Court
- Sheriff
- Building and Inspections



Various boards and agencies also serve the County, including the Planning Commission, Historic Development Commission and others. Several independent boards serve the County. The School Board, for example, is critical to the future development of the county. Volunteer Fire Departments are a vital part of Russell County. Utility, water and sewer boards are critical to future development of the county, especially with respect to water and sewer in support of economic and community development. The County also has licenses for, or agreements with, various utilities which serve the County such as power, gas, telecommunications, etc. Coordination of long-term land use planning with these various county boards, utility boards and other public-private organizations as well as those of related municipalities is very important.

In addition to governmental and quasi-governmental organizations, coordination with the private sector development community, including the Phenix City Russell County Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, as well as variety of non-profit and associations is essential for long-term planning and implementation of community development.

## MUNICIPALITIES

Incorporated municipalities in Russell County include the county seat and largest city, Phenix City, as well as the City of Hurtsboro.

- Phenix City
  - Composed of four elected council members - three service specific districts within the city and one council member is elected at-large The Mayor of Phenix City is the presiding officer.
  - The City has an appointed City Manager who serves as the head of the administrative branch of the Phenix City Government. The City Manager has the authority to enforce all laws and ordinances; appoint and remove all employees of the city, except otherwise provided by law; exercise administrative supervision over departments, boards and agencies except those otherwise provided for by law; prepare and administer the budget after adoption.
  - The City administers zoning, planning, subdivision regulations and building regulations and has certain extra-territorial jurisdiction through its police jurisdiction. Currently, the City exercises subdivision regulations out to 1.5 miles from the corporate limits.
- Hurtsboro
  - Includes Mayor and City Council, Police Department and separate water system.
- Russell County is also affected by the Columbus Georgia Consolidated Government, as it relates to the metropolitan development pattern.

The continuing coordination of Russell County and individual municipalities in the county and region is an important component of future development of the county.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The County is part of multiple regional layers of government and quasi-government. The regional and intergovernmental context is important to the long-term development and ongoing operation of the County. This context includes relationships to other adjacent counties, municipalities, multi-county regional organizations, the federal and state government and US Military at Ft. Benning. The County is served by separate utility boards providing water and sewer services requiring increasing cooperation. Coordination with municipal and volunteer fire departments, as well as the sheriff's office, police departments and emergency management services are examples of important intergovernmental relationships.

Russell County is located in East Central Alabama, on the boundary between Alabama and Georgia. The County is included in the bi-state Columbus-Phenix City MSA and is proximate to Atlanta and Montgomery as well as other mid-sized cities like Columbus, Auburn and Opelika. Russell County is part of the Lee-Russell Council of Governments and the Columbus-Phenix City Metropolitan Planning Organization. The County is part of the Valley Partnership which is a voluntary regional cooperative effort working with governments throughout the region. Russell County is greatly

impacted by the US Federal Government, especially the US Army, and has in its boundaries, part of the Ft. Benning Military Base. The County enjoys a good relationship with the Fort and participates in the long-term planning related to any off-base issues. Ongoing coordination with the military and regional organizations is important in term of future development. The county takes an active role in participating in these and other regional organizations and discussions. The location of Russell County on the Chattahoochee River also connects the county to the gulf coast and larger river region. State and federal highway systems help to connect Russell County into important larger markets.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGISLATIVE COOPERATION**

Russell County, as other counties in Alabama, is not a home rule county and thus, much of the county's legislative and fiscal control is dependent upon the Alabama Legislature and the county's representatives. This is especially true with respect to funding of major projects, as well as, ongoing taxation and financial issues. Support and cooperation between the county and the legislative delegation is critical to implementation of the county Master Plan.

Specifically, there is a history and ongoing concern with annexation in the county. Wherein, territory may be annexed into the municipalities with a loss of revenue to the county while certain expenses of the county government continue to grow. Efforts have been made to resolve this issue primarily between Phenix City and Russell County, through the concern is likely dependent to legislative cooperation.

## **POPULATION AND GROWTH/SOCIO ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

### **PROJECTIONS AND STUDIES**

For analysis purposes, a combination of population studies and projections has been reviewed, in order to develop a consensus or likely population growth for the next 25-35 years. An understanding of population growth requires a comparative and reasonable assessment of the various sources of information.

According to the latest 2010 Census estimates, the Russell County population was 52,947, an increase of a little over 3,200 since 2000. During the same period, 2000-2010, the population of Phenix City increased from 28,265 to 32,128 or about 3,800. This means that the area of the population in the county, outside of Phenix City, actually decreased by approximately 600 people. Much of this can be accounted for by the changes in Phenix City limits, rather than people leaving the county.

As of 2009, the MSA's total population was estimated at approximately 292,800, about 21% of which was located in Russell County. The county is one of five that comprise the Columbus, GA-AL Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes the unified City of Columbus-Muscogee County as its central city. Phenix City accounts for over half of the county's total population. The only other incorporated municipality, Hurtsboro had a 2009 population of 545. The population in Russell County outside these incorporated areas was around 21,800 people in 2009 and is expected to see proportionately more of the future population growth.

Population growth in Russell County has historically been very slow. From 1970 – 2005 the average annual growth rate was 0.22% ranking it 48<sup>th</sup> out of the 67 counties in Alabama. However, the growth rate did increase in the last fifteen years of this time period to 0.29% ranking it 37<sup>th</sup> out of the 67 Alabama counties. The balanced rate of growth of the past 35 years has changed of late with unprecedented development pressures accompanying future population increases attributed to The Base Realignment and Closure 2005 (BRAC) is relocating the U.S. Army Armor School to Fort Benning. Fort Benning is currently the sixth largest military installation in the U.S and has the third largest troop density. Only about 7% of Fort Benning is in located in Russell County, however, many residents are employed on the base and that percentage has been increasing. It is estimated that BRAC includes over 11,000 jobs and 28,000 people to the region and includes \$3.5 billion of capital investment at Fort Benning. Considering the significant and unique impacts associated with BRAC, there has been considerable planning activity to address the impact on Russell County, especially in the last five years. The increased planning activity concerning BRAC coupled with the planning efforts of local governments and regional planning commissions has produced a wide range of projections concerning future population and growth in Russell County. Local and regional planning efforts have hands on knowledge which



Figure 3.1 – Percentage of Total Population by Census Tracts – 1990

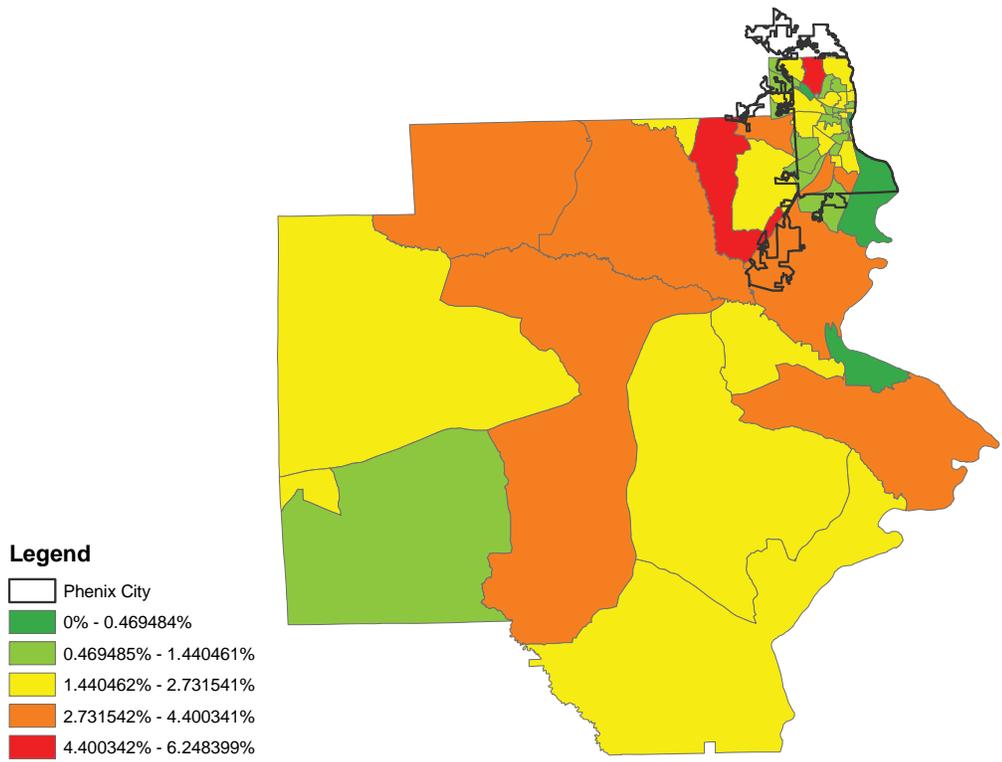
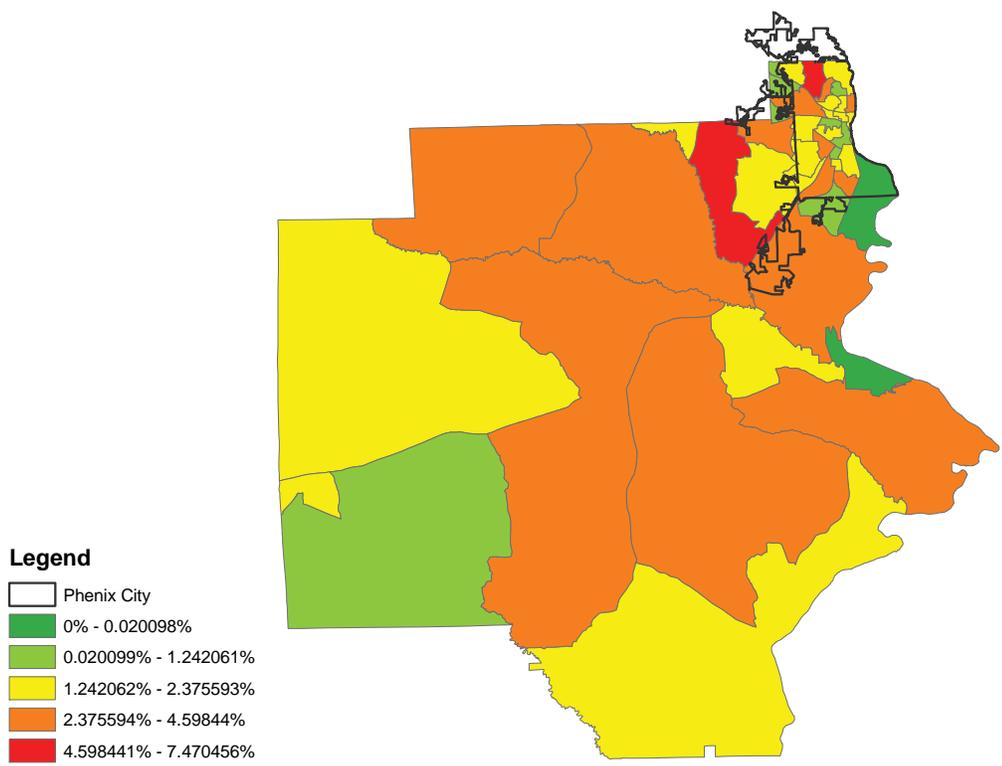
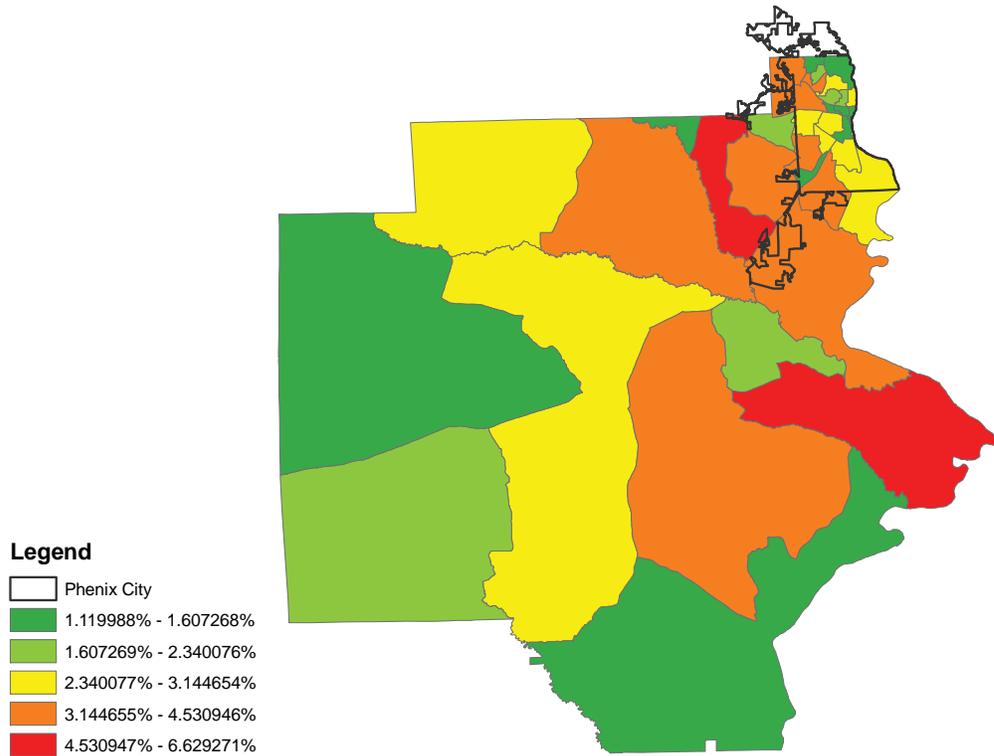


Figure 3.2 – Percentage of Total Population by Census Tracts – 2000



**Figure 3.3 – Percentage of Total Population by Census Tracts – 2010**



is relevant for the Russell County Comprehensive Plane. Population projections from several local/regional studies have been examined to gain perspective on the future population of Russell County and draw some conclusions. Unfortunately not all plans and projections are coordinated efforts, so time periods and intent of the planning efforts differ. The lists of studies which were examined are as follows:

Studies examined in the growth analysis included:

- The Columbus Valley Partnership’s Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan (RGMP)
- The Columbus-Phenix City Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 (LRTP)
- The Lee-Russell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) Long Range Transportation Plan

Population projections and forecasts examined:

- The U.S. Census Bureau
- The State of Alabama Data Center, The Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama (CBER)
- Environmental Systems research Institute (ESRI)
- Nielsen Claritas
- Woods and Poole Economics (WP)

## SUMMARY OF POPULATION KEY FINDINGS

The Regional Growth Management Plan, although questioned as to the accuracy in its future projections, is useful for the Russell County Master Plan because it specifically addresses the impact of BRAC on future growth. The impacts of BRAC on the degree of distribution of population growth and development in the County is significant and a summary of RGMP findings are provided below:

- Over the last two and a half decades (until recent, 2006-2010) Russell County experienced only moderate population growth, most of which occurred during the 1990s, as well as a net decrease in population in the 1980s. According to the Census Bureau estimates, most of Russell County's growth between 2000 and 2006 occurred within the Phenix City corporate limits (including growth in areas that were annexed to the city). According to the RGMP estimates, during this time, the City's population increased by approximately 5.4% (1,452). Outside the city limits, the county's population decreased by 4.7% (1,064). As a result, the County's estimated population increased by 0.1% (329). Their estimates clearly indicate that growth was mainly occurring in areas being annexed into Phenix City.
- An examination of historical population changes (1990-2006) indicates that Russell County's population has been heavily weighted in the older age groups (55 and over) by the end of this decade. This conclusion is highlighted by the lack of younger households (18 to 34) and a corresponding decline in the number of children under age 17.
- The average estimated household size in the County (2007) was 2.24, a somewhat smaller size than the state household size.
- Over this time period the County's median household income increased by 18.8% (\$32,819), which is slightly below the study area growth rate of 21.8% (\$39,654).
- Based on the impact RGMP projections Russell County will, between 2008 and 2028 (a 20 year period), experience a population growth of nearly 10,000 residents. A major portion of the growth is likely occurring between 2009 and 2013. However, population expansion for 2013 to 2028 will also occur at a greater pace than earlier periods in the county's history due to continued economic expansion within the region.
- Both gross regional product and personal income is expected to increase significantly during the period from 2008 to 2028.
- The County's labor force will grow at a rapid pace from 2008 to 2013 and then stabilize, subject to the pace of future economic development.
- Key employment growth areas in the future, in Russell County, include retail trade, accommodations, food services and other related services, construction and manufacturing.

## GROWTH PROJECTION COMPARISONS

For comparison purposes, the RGMP was compared to three other population projections. The Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) at the University of Alabama is the State of Alabama Data Center and produces projections for all counties in the state. A forecast produced by Woods and Poole Inc. (W&P) was examined. Also, the Columbus-Phenix City Metropolitan Planning Organization (C-PCMPO) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was used to observe projected growth and population distribution. Some observations of these population projections are:

- The RGMP forecasts a population in Russell County of 60,805 in 2028 an increase of 9,649 people from 2008. Extrapolated by the average annual growth rate to 2030 the projection would be people 61,954 in year 2030. This is 18.7% average annual growth rate of 0.94% from year 2008 to 2028.

- CBER projects an 8.13% increase in population for Russell County during the period 2010 to 2030. The CBER projection shows a 4,191 person increase during this period and a total population in the county of 55,714 about 0.41% annually. When compared to the recent 2010 census, the county has already outpaced this growth, this is about half of the increase projected by the RGMP projection.
- The Woods and Poole forecast projects Russell County to add 3,040 people from 2008 to 2030. This is 6.01% total growth and a total of 53,540 persons at an average annual growth rate around 0.27%. These estimates are much lower than the RGMP.
- The C-PCMPO projects the population for MPO area, which encompasses most of the developed area of Russell County, to add 4,274 people from 2008 to 2035. This is 12% total growth and a total of 39,626 in 2035 inside the MPO boundary with an average annual growth rate of 2.25%. The higher annual growth rates in the MPO area suggests it will continue to grow at a faster rate than the rest of the county. The MPO area in Russell County is likely to absorb a considerable amount of future population growth; however, the unincorporated areas of the County will experience higher proportions of future population growth than it has at any other time in the past 30 years.

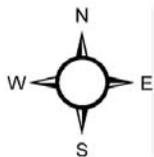
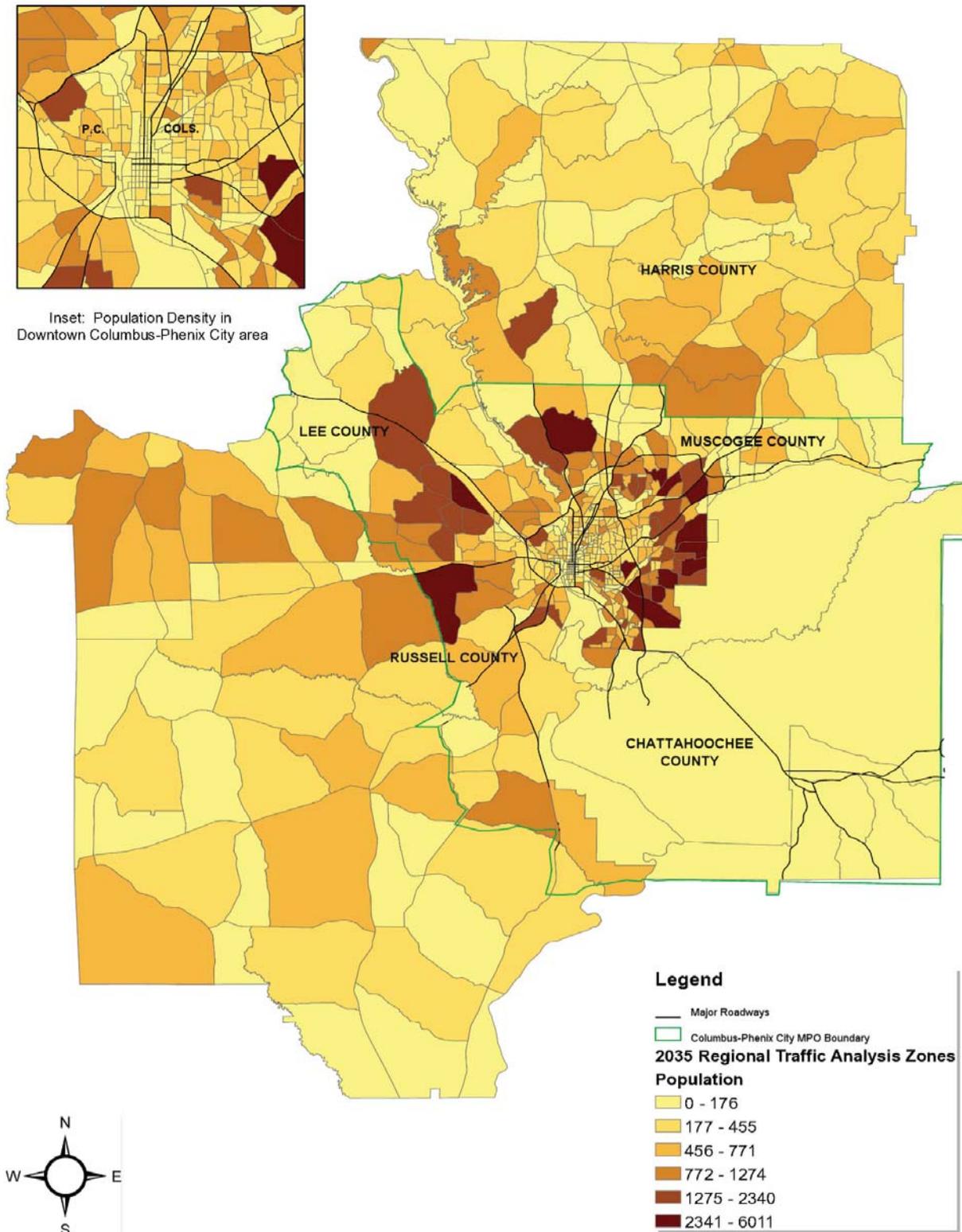
### CONCLUSION ABOUT FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH

The projections from the RGMP study are consistent and somewhat higher when compared with other studies. The studies concluded that Russell County will grow, and is growing, at a significantly greater rate compared to historical trends. The growth rates will increase by roughly double in the next thirty years for the entire county. However, most of the growth is expected inside the MPO boundary in the eastern and northeastern sections of the county according to MPO projections. Evidence of this trend further observed by the increased applications for building permits, parcel subdivision requests, and water connection permits in this part of the county. Recent water connections in Ft. Mitchell have shown a nearly 50% increase over the past two years. Approximately 4,000 lots have been planned for construction according to records at the end of 2010; with most of these in the Ft. Mitchell area. Taken as whole, these studies seem to confirm Russell County's population growth increase will range from 4,000 to nearly 10,000 residents from 2010 to 2030.

### DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

To examine potential population distribution in the Russell County Master Plan it is possible to use the Regional Growth Management Plan, the Census, or C-PCMPO modeling. Considering different factors used, the C-PCMPO projections are utilized for purposes of the County Master Plan. Based on the C-PCMPO projections, the future population growth is expected to be greatest in the northeast quarter of the county. This area includes census tracts and traffic zones between Seale and up to and including Phenix City, along the US Highway-80 corridor and the Alabama Highway-165 corridor toward Ft. Mitchell. The remainder of the County is expected to grow; however, increases are expected to be far less than the northeast quarter. The distribution of population and household growth is best described in the MPO projections, illustrated in [Figure 3.4](#).

Figure 3.4 – Columbus-Phenix City Transportation Study 2035 Population Distribution (per zone)



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

(temporary holder)

### LAND USE

Land use in Russell County, outside of Phenix City, has historically been and continues to be rural in character. Agricultural and woodlands are the dominant features on the landscape. Approximately 90% of the current land cover in the county is forest, agriculture or scrub grass lands. The National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD), was used to assess general land cover conditions. This data, collected from satellite remote sensing provides a quantifiable picture of land cover broken into different categories to represent the actual land cover on the ground. Russell County has a number of land cover classifications that apply and these are defined in [Figure 3.5](#).

Russell County had 222,121 acres of forest in 2001 totaling around 53% of the county’s land cover. The rural nature can be seen in the image as most of the county is “green”. The developed areas of the County are mostly in the northeastern part of the County in Phenix City. Other notable developed areas are Crawford, Ladonia, Fort Mitchell and Hurtsboro. Developed areas also extend along the major transportation arteries and reflect corridor development trends in the county. However, the developed areas only make up 8.1% of the county which is around 34,107 acres. Recent U.S. Forest service estimates in 2008 suggest that forest land continues to be the dominant use in the county, with agriculture or open land being next.

**Figure 3.5 – Russell County Land Cover Classification Distribution**

Value	Total Acres	Classification	Percentage
11	5,952	Open Water	1.41
21	25,415	Developed, Open Space	6.03
22	6,814	Developed, Low Intensity	1.62
23	1,878	Developed, Medium Intensity	0.45
24	433	Developed, High Intensity	0.10
31	1,011	Barren Land	0.24
41	96,932	Deciduous Forest	23.00
42	84,645	Evergreen Forest	20.08
43	38,544	Mixed Forest	9.15
52	68,031	Scrub/Shrub	16.14
71	971	Grassland/Herbaceous	0.23
81	37,611	Pasture/Hay	8.92
82	23,784	Cultivated Crops	5.64
90	28,869	Woody Wetlands	6.85
95	582	Emergent Herbaceous Wetland	0.14
	421,472		100

Urbanized and suburban land use in Russell County is mainly concentrated in Phenix City, including the historic city core and along major corridors, US-280, US-431, US-80, etc. There are small concentrations of housing and limited commercial uses in Hurtsboro and Seale, however, these are not extensive and there are large rural undeveloped areas in between. The land in the central, southern and southwest parts of the county has been mostly timber and agricultural. There has been some concentration of industry near Phenix City and a few sites close to the river and railroad. Much of the county has been underserved by sewer and has remained very low density. This pattern has begun to change, with growth, especially near the west gate of Fort Benning in the Fort Mitchell area.

Residential uses are located throughout the county, concentrations are found in the Phenix City, Hurtsboro, Seale areas. The predominant form of residential use is single family with small amounts of multi-family, duplex, etc. residential uses found scattered in the county.

Other than Phenix City, commercial uses are located in small areas throughout the County; commercial uses are also concentrated along US Highway-80, US Highway-280 and US Highway-431 in the northern part of the county. Commercial uses are comprised of mainly service-oriented retail establishments such as small grocery store, service stations, auto repair, and a few small strip centers along US Highway-80 and US Highway-280 in proximity to Phenix City.

Industrial uses are limited in Russell County to a major forest and wood product facility located near Cottonton, and other minor facilities spread throughout the county. Brick-manufacturing facilities and other facilities have occupied sites in and near Phenix City. Industrial uses comprise less than one percent of the County. A major industrial park has been developed southwest of the core of Phenix City along US Highway-431.

Public and quasi-public uses include public facilities, parks, schools and private education facilities, places of worship and cemeteries, etc. Such uses are located throughout the County with concentrations together in the more populous locations. A major area in the county included properties or access related to Fort Benning. Communications and facilities such as utility stations, etc. are located throughout the County.

Recreation uses have centered on organized sports and recreation facilities in Phenix City and a centrally located facility in Seale. Other recreation uses include golf courses in the more populated areas, river related recreation on the eastern border, large natural areas throughout the county for hunting and fishing.

For a complete list of Land Cover Definitions, refer to the Appendix in Chapter 7.

## **DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS WITHIN THE COUNTY**

The urban core of Phenix City features the county's highest concentration of mixed uses. There is a degree of decline in the parts of Phenix City with downtown and neighborhood revitalization a priority for the city currently. New residential communities are emerging near the Fort Benning West Gate in the Fort Mitchell community south of Phenix City. The remaining portions of the county in the west and south remain relatively rural. Within the developed areas of the county, land use is distributed among commercial, retail, industrial, residential and public uses and recreation.

### **COMMERCIAL**

Most commercial land use concentrated in the central parts of Phenix City and along corridors leading into and out of Phenix City and Columbus along US Highway-280/431, in the northern segments of Phenix City, and US Highway-80 leading west from Phenix City. South of Phenix City there sporadic commercial land uses along US Highway-431 and smaller nodes of commercial along Alabama Highway-165.

### **INDUSTRIAL**

Much of the industrial area of the County is concentrated to the immediate south of Phenix City, including brick manufacturing, etc. Much of this is closed and sites are vacant. There is a larger industrial park within the Phenix City limits along US Highway-431 South. Industrial uses in other segments of the county include MeadWestvaco Mill along the Chattahoochee River off of Alabama Highway-165.

### **RESIDENTIAL**

Residential land uses are comprised mostly of single family residential development that includes more dense development in central Phenix City and expansions of residential developments in suburban density along the major corridors leading away from city. There are more rural historic residential communities in Hurtsboro and Seale. The rest of the residential development is a combination of scattered subdivisions or rural farms or large estate residential. Many of the more recent scattered subdivisions in the county have been placed near, or within, the Fort Mitchell area which has access to Fort Benning via the West Gate. Multi-family apartments uses are limited mainly to Phenix City although there are some apartments elsewhere in the county and newer apartment development near Troy University-Phenix City along US Highway-431.

**Figure 3.6 – 2001 National Land Cover Dataset of Russell County**

Placeholder for 11x17 Foldout.

Placeholder for 11x17 Foldout.



## INSTITUTIONAL AND PUBLIC LANDS

Public uses in Russell County include limited military base uses, city and county government complexes, schools, and college campuses. There are also other public uses in Seale, Hurtsboro and elsewhere.

## RECREATION

Recreation uses are comprised of a larger park complex in the central part of the county, parks and open space scattered in smaller tracts. There are limited recreation uses along the river with most uses being only access points. Also within the county are private and public golf courses and recreation uses within residential developments. Phenix City has a Parks and Recreation department which maintains several parks and athletics fields.

## LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS BY AREA

The following provides an overview of land use, housing and other conditions in the various communities within Russell County.

### PHENIX CITY

Phenix City is the major urban development within the county and includes an historic downtown core and urban neighborhoods. The City has grown in a suburban pattern along major corridors away from the Chattahoochee River. Recreation and open space is an important land use along the edge of the river in Phenix City. Major highway routes traverse Phenix City, along with a relatively dense urban grid street system in downtown.

#### *Development Trends*

The City reflects a historic urban pattern with a central core and urban neighborhoods. The City has grown away from the core in all directions on the Alabama side of the Chattahoochee River, including into neighboring Lee County to the north. This growth has been in a more suburban pattern along the major corridors include US Highway-280, US Highway-431, US-Highway-80 and Alabama Highway-165, etc. A major growth pattern has extended along US Highway-431, to include commercial, industrial and multi-family residential units. Industrial uses have development along the River to the South of the city and within the city's industrial park on US Highway-431.

### HURTSBORO

Hurtsboro is an historical city in Russell County, including a small historical commercial center and a grid that is similar to historic rural community and neighborhoods in Alabama. Alabama Highway-51 and Alabama Highway-26, and other country roads, intersect or connect to Hurtsboro. There is some limited commercial development and suburban development further from the historic core. The community is surround by large rural residential, agricultural or woodlands. The topography is flat to gently rolling.

#### *Development Trends*

Hurtsboro reflects a historic commercial and civic core with small commercial businesses along with historic homes and neighborhoods surrounding the core. A majority of the land around Hurtsboro is rural development with large lots, farms and other agricultural uses.

### COTTONTON

Cottonton is located in the southeastern portion of Russell County, approximately four miles north of the Russell-Barbour County Line. It is less than one mile west of the Chattahoochee River.

#### *Historical Development*

Cottonton was developed as a result of the railroad selecting that area, south of Mount Lebanon Baptist Church and just north of Jernigan, as its route. In Cottonton a school was established for the town, as well as Jernigan and Hog Island, and a post office was established there.



*Topography*

The 100-year flood plain from Hatchechubbee Creek bisects and surrounds the community. Some residential properties, as well as roads, woodlands, farmlands and the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad are located either adjacent to or in the floodplain. This could present certain hazards to personal property and lives if a disaster were to occur.

*Land Use*

The predominant land use is single family residential, with housing structures comprised of detached homes and manufactured housing located on permanent foundations. Inter of public and quasi-public uses, churches are the major use. The use of open land is a combination of agriculture and woodlands.

*Circulation*

County Road-4 bisects the community and intersects with Alabama Highway-165 forming the two major east-west and north-south corridors. Right-of-way exists for the relocation of County Road 4. The Seaboard Coast Line Railroad bisects the community to the south of County Road-4.

*Existing Conditions*

The residential structures are generally of standard condition. There are a few vacant and dilapidated structures in the community.

**CRAWFORD**

The community is situated eight mile directly west of Phenix City along US Highway-80, and less than a mile south of the Russell-Lee County Line.

*Historical Development*

Crawford originally served as the center of government, beginning in 1839, and is located on the old Federal Road. The first store and residence were erected in 1843 and a brick courthouse was erected in 1842. By 1859 the community was one of the larger in the area, but began declining after the Civil War when the County seat was moved to Seale.

*Topography*

There are no major topographical features which immediately impact on development in Crawford. To the east approximately two to three miles is the 100-year floodplain of the Little Uchee Creek.

*Land Use*

The predominant land use is single family residential, with housing structures comprised of detached homes and manufactured housing located on permanent foundations. Commercial land uses include service stations, garages, groceries, and a greenhouse. Public and quasi-public land uses include a number of churches and church-owned property. Uses of open land include agriculture and woodlands.

*Circulation*

US Highway-80, the major east-west corridor, bisects Alabama Highway-169 and County Road-27, with County Road-79 bisecting US Highway-80.

*Existing Conditions*

Housing structural conditions vary from standard conditions to substandard, dilapidated residential two-family structures on County Route-79 immediately south of US Highway-80. There are also some substandard structures on Auburn Street, with the remainder being stable. There are some dilapidated commercial structures in the community. There are unpaved roads in the community, in particular County Road-79.

*Development Trends*

The Crawford area is mainly focused on commercial development along US Highway-80 with residential development north and south of the corridor being mainly single family use and small agricultural uses.

## FORT MITCHELL

Fort Mitchell is located in the east central portion of Russell County adjacent to the Fort Benning Reservation, and about six to eight miles east of Seale.

### *Historical Development*

A military fort was established in the area between 1813 and 1836. During the Creek Indian War, Fort Mitchell was one of the first semi-permanent U.S. Military garrisons in the region.

### *Topography*

There are no major topographical features which immediately impact on development in Fort Mitchell. Within a half-mile of the community is the 100-year flood plan of Uchee Creek.

### *Land Use*

The predominant land use is single family residential, with housing structures comprised of detached homes and manufactured housing on permanent foundations. Commercial uses include a food store, service stations, and garages. Public and quasi-public uses in a Fort Mitchell Water System Structure, a telephone company structure, a lodge and a Community Senior Center. These uses of open space include small family farms and woodlands.

### *Circulation*

Alabama Highway-165, the major north-south corridor, intersects with County Road-24, and County Road-75, leads to Oswichee, intersecting with County Road-24 about a half-mile west of the Alabama Highway-165. The Central of Georgia Railroad bisects the community.

### *Existing Conditions*

Housing structural conditions vary from standard condition to substandard and dilapidated. There are some substandard and vacant housing structures in the vicinity of the commercial uses. Manufactured homes in two areas, off County Road-24 and County Road-75, are located along unimproved roads and bisect existing property lines. There are three identifiable pockets of substandard housing in the community.

### *Development Trends*

Largely rural, until recent trends, the Fort Mitchell area has increase in single family, average density developments. Retail and commercial development has begun to spread south along Alabama Highway-165; however, those uses have been limited until recently. The Fort Mitchell area is near the River and Fort Benning. There is the potential for increased residential, commercial and perhaps recreational areas near the river.

## HATCHECHUBBEE

Hatchechubbee is located in the west central portion of Russell County, between Seale and Hurtsboro

### *Historical Development*

The town began developing before the railroad arrived in the mid 1850's and the town soon became an important trading post. A large department store was begun in the community. The town takes its name from the creek that bears the name.

### *Topography*

There are no major topographical features that immediately impact on the development in Hatchechubbee

### *Land Use*

The predominant land use is single family residential, with housing structures comprised of standard detached homes and manufactured housing on permanent foundations. Comprising equally as much land within the community is the manufacturing facility of the former Walker-Williams Lumber Company, which is no longer in operation. Small commercial uses exist such as a grocery and service station. A number of public and quasi-public facilities exist in churches and church-owned property. Uses of open space include agriculture and woodlands.



*Circulation*

Alabama Highway-26, the major east-west corridor, bisects the community and is crossed by County Road-65 and County Road-19. The Central of Georgia Railroad bisects the community south of Alabama Highway-26.

*Existing Conditions*

Housing structural conditions in general are standard and reflect stable residential area. The commercial uses are mixed in term of structural conditions. The land held by the Hatchechubbee Fire Department is undeveloped offers the community a valuable resource.

*Development Trends*

Pittsview is a community in the County that can be characterized from a land use perspective as rural crossroads with very little commercial and mainly rural housing.

**OSWICHEE**

Oswichee is located in the eastern portion of Russell County, directly south of Fort Mitchell and directly west of the Fort Benning Military Reservation.

*Historical Development*

Many individuals connected to Fort Mitchell through its early industry and the military garrisons actually resided in Oswichee. The name of the community is derived from the name of an earlier Indian community.

*Topography*

There are no major topographical features that immediately impact on the development in Oswichee

*Land Use*

The predominant land use is single family residential, with housing structures comprised of detached and manufactured housing on permanent and semi-permanent foundations. There are three large mobile home parts located in the community along Alabama Highway-175. There are a few commercial uses including groceries, service stations, garages and a closed motel. Public and quasi-public uses include churches. The use of open space includes extensive agriculture and some woodland.

*Circulation*

Alabama Highway-165 intersects with County Road-73 to form the major north-south and east-west transportation corridors. County Road-75 connects Oswichee with Fort Mitchell on the western side of the community.

*Existing Conditions*

An identified community development target area exists off of County Road-73 in the southwestern portion of the community. All of the uses in this area are residential and the structural conditions are mixed, with a substantial number substandard. Several new large residential developments have been constructed in recent years within the area, most of which contain single family residential units built on slab foundations.

*Development Trends*

Oswichee is a community in the County that can be characterized from a land use perspective as rural crossroads with very little commercial and mainly rural housing.

**PITTSVIEW**

Pittsview is located in the south central portion of Russell County, approximately seven miles directly south of Seale.

*Historical Development*

Originally named for the Pitts family, Pittsview began as an agricultural area for neighboring plantations. The family platted the community at an early state in anticipation of a large development.

*Topography*

The 100-year floodplain for the Hatchechubbee Creek falls adjacent to the center of Pittsview, paralleling County Road-4 and just west of its intersection with US Highway-431. The floodplain runs adjacent to numerous properties and the county middle school.

*Land Use*

Land use is primarily single family residential and limited commercial uses.

*Circulation*

US Highway-431 intersects County Road-4 in the center of the community forming the two major north-south and east-west corridors. A portion of the relocated County Road-4 is located just north of the central intersection and leads east to Seale.

*Existing Conditions*

There are two major areas of substandard single family housing and two substandard multi-family structures. All of these buildings appear to be of cinder block construction and have substandard sanitary facilities. The remaining housing in the community is of a higher quality in terms of structure. Commercial uses are mostly vacant, with some buildings substandard and dilapidated. There are unpaved roads serving the worst housing area.

*Development Trends*

Pittsview is a community in the County that can be characterized from a land use perspective as rural crossroads with very little commercial and mainly rural housing.

**SEALE**

Seale is located in the center of the County, approximately equidistance from Phenix City and Hurtsboro

*Historical Development*

Seale, known in its early days as Silver Run, gained a reputation as a trading center prior to the Civil War. Seale served as a center of commerce, retail and agri-business before such businesses shifted their location to Phenix City and Columbus. Seale became the County seat in 1868, with construction beginning on the original courthouse in 1869. The county seat was moved to Phenix City in 1985.

*Topography*

A large depression and area characterized by swamps lie adjacent to US Highway-431 on the western side of Seale.

*Land Use*

The predominant use of land is single family and public/quasi-public. Single family residential structures are located throughout Seale. Public and quasi-public uses include the Russell County High School, Old County Courthouse, some small buildings owned by the County, the US Post office and a number of churches. There are a few commercial uses, but a number of older commercial buildings are closed and vacant. The use of open space is mostly woodlands with some agriculture.

*Circulation*

Seale is bisected by US Highway-431, the north-south corridor and County Road-26, the east-west corridor. The Central of Georgia Railroad cuts through the center of the community.

*Existing Conditions*

In general, the structural condition of housing in Seale is standard, showing stable residential areas. There are a few pockets of substandard housing. Most structures are detached, single family homes. The older commercial properties are vacant and in need of rehabilitation. The County Courthouse has been rehabilitated and is used for community events. There are some major roads in the community that are unpaved.



*Development Trends*

Seale reflects historic commercial and civic core with small commercial businesses along with historic homes and neighborhoods surrounding. US Highway-431 has created the potential for commercial and other developments near Seale outside the historic center. A majority of the land around Seale is rural development with large lots, farms and other agricultural uses.

**LAND USE TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Historically, Russell County has been comprised of a number of unincorporated communities with one or two larger communities/municipalities serving as the economic, social and political center(s). Many of these centers serve as residential clusters with only minor economic, service-oriented, activity. Areas outside of Phenix City recently have been experiencing measurable growth are the Ladonia and Crawford areas along the US Highway-80 corridor, to the west of Phenix City, the Fort Mitchell and Seale areas along the Alabama Highway-165 and US Highway-431 corridors, to south.

Residential uses are predominantly comprised of single family detached homes and, to a lesser extent, manufactured housing. Subdivision activity appears most predominately in occurring in Phenix City, Ladonia, and Fort Mitchell, with minor subdivision located in various parts of the County. Manufactured housing clusters are located in and around the County, most notably in Fort Mitchell and Oswechee, and along the US Highway-80 corridor. From a structural standpoint, there are more stable neighborhoods comprised of older homes located in some of the community centers surveyed. Depressed housing conditions are found in the majority of the population centers surveyed, as well as scattered throughout the County. Many of the residents of these housing areas appear to be of low- and moderate-income and are members of minority groups. There are occupied housing units that appear to be past a condition that could be considered rehabilitable.

Commercial development occurs along most of the transportation corridors, major and minor, throughout the County, though these uses tend to be scattered somewhat haphazardly. Some uses are concentrated in or near population centers, such as Pittsview, Hatchchubbee and Crawford. Typically, these uses are comprised of small retail establishments that are service-oriented, such as groceries and service stations. Newer commercial development is occurring along US Highway-80 outside of Phenix City, including some strip commercial centers. This can be considered an indicator of the economic impact residential development in the area is having.

Russell County has limited industrial land use except for the forest-wood products sector, including the MeadWestvaco facility in the vicinity of Cottonton. This area, as well as development around the existing industrial park in Phenix City and other individual sites could offer potential industrial development and expansion.

A distinct trend has been a lack of park and recreational facilities throughout the county until the recent park and sports complex in Seale and park in Fort Mitchell. There are three access points to the Chattahoochee River that have been provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Greater numbers of acres have been being converted from crop and pasturelands to woodlands. The acreage dedicated to timber production has been increasing annually. This trend will continue to result in an ever increasing amount of woodlands in the County, reducing the amount of land in which agriculture is the predominate use.

**LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Russell County has enormous land assets available to encourage various forms of development dependent upon market forces and available infrastructure. Residential and commercial development from the west to the south of Phenix City is an opportunity for taking advantage of such growth with the provision of public facilities and public services to support these areas and attract new development. Discouraging development in identified 100-year floodplains is an issue in the county. Certain communities have areas within the 100-year floodplain and the 100-year floodplain places constraints on available areas of new development in certain corridors. The county has several opportunities for development in terms of recreation. New park and recreation facilities can be expanded, including some locations where new improvements can benefit schools and residents. In addition, the County's natural environment with

**Figure 3.7 – Russell County Land Use**

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Placeholder for 11x17 Foldout.



its abundant wildlife and woodlands, as well as the Chattahoochee River can help create regional recreation around public hunting, fishing, wildlife preservation, camping, biking, boating, etc. Relative to economic development, land is available and the location relative to the Columbus metro area, Fort Benning and the I-85 corridor.

## **LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROLS**

Russell County has limited development regulations, existing regulations in place that effect development are the County's subdivision regulations. The County currently has the authority to zone, but does not enforce those regulations. There have been discussions about exploring and implementing Smart Growth principals within the county. Those potential principals might include:

- Preserving critical land
- Conserve water resources
- Efficiency in public infrastructure
- Improving public health through community design
- Enhancing air quality
- Protect military missions from encroachment

Phenix City has a Comprehensive Plan to guide future growth and development and is currently in the process of updating that Plan. They also have zoning which is enforced within the municipal limits and subdivision regulations in which they enforce within the municipal limits and their 1.5 mile extra-territorial police jurisdiction.

ADEM is the principal environmental enforcer and the County Health Department deals with septic and sewer water applications.

County does not have a conservation subdivision code.

The county needs to utilize BMP for stormwater runoff for construction and land disturbance issues.

Consideration of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)

## **EXPANSION FOR FORT BENNING TRAINING AREA AND LAND USE BUFFERS**

An issue in Russell County is maintaining land use compatibility with Fort Benning. The Army Compatible Use Buffers (ACUB) program is an ongoing plan to prevent encroachment around Fort Benning. The plan includes provisions to acquire conservation easements that prohibit incompatible development in perpetuity and allowing fee ownership interest to remain private. The plan limits urban development but allows for uses such as farming and forestry. In collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, the Fort Benning ACUB proposal recommends a combination of easements and inter-governmental agreements with the surrounding jurisdictions.

The ongoing study and planning for the expansion of Fort Benning's training area, including over 20,000 acres, can have significant impact on future land uses in Russell County. The actual training facility appears to be focused on the eastern part of Russell County; however, the latest thinking is that Russell County might not be the prime site. In conjunction with the land for the training facility, the Army is planning to establish land use buffers that are primarily to remain open space, which can be purchased fee simple or through easements that can be held by the Army, perhaps in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy or Land Trust. There are large areas of forest and open land that could be attractive for this purpose in the central part of Russell County running west to Fort Benning on the east.

As noted in the Joint Land Use Study conducted in 2007-2008, the area near Lawson Army Airfield has some noise and safety exposure due to aircraft operations. Significant development in this area, particularly of noise-sensitive uses, such as housing and schools, could cause incompatibilities with performance of the military mission.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The dispersal of housing, jobs and community development in the current linear patterns produces some impacts worth noting on the environment, community character, transportation and infrastructure. Sprawling residential



development, even at low densities, can disrupt rural views, fragment wildlife habitat, interfere with adjunct farming and agriculture, strain existing infrastructure capacity and result in exclusive residential areas (not neighborhoods) that lack convenient access to retail, community facilities, etc. The delivery of public services and utilities can become less efficient and more costly to local providers.

Recommendations from the JLUS include updating the zoning code to include a Military Influence Overlay (MIO) district. The MIO does not change the existing zoning on a property, but instead adds requirements that mitigate the training impacts from Fort Benning. Land use policies should discourage noise sensitive uses, such as schools, churches, hospitals and nursing homes in close proximity to the post. Another recommendation from the JLUS is to require noise easements during the rezoning process for new residential developments within the MIO. The easement grants the military in perpetuity the right to continue training and other operations that may produce noise, dust, vibration and smoke on the property.

### **LARGE LANDOWNERS AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT**

The County has several large land owners that provide land use and development opportunities for mixed use and well designed and developed sites. These include owners like MeadWestvaco the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, etc. The land owned by the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity includes 2,400 acres between Fort Mitchell and Cottomton near the river and they are completing a Land Management Plan. This plan could serve as a model for future development, including mixed uses, environmental protection and amenities that will add value to the county. There are properties south of Phenix City where industrial development has vacated sites that can be used for very attractive redevelopment of mixed uses, incorporating brownfield improvements and other strategies. Other large land holdings, especially with access to infrastructure and transportation are similar opportunities.

### **LAND USE MANAGEMENT IN THE COUNTY**

Phenix City has a Comprehensive Plan, currently being updated, and Zoning Ordinance along with exercising Subdivision Regulations 1.5 miles into its Police Jurisdiction. In general, Phenix City incorporates some current thinking about mixed use zoning, etc. The City does not have extraterritorial zoning authority. Russell County has the authority to adopt a Master Plan and enforce Subdivision Regulations, which it does. The County also has the authority to adopt a Zoning Ordinance; however, the county has not implemented such.

### **FARMLAND IN RUSSELL COUNTY/ PRIME FARMLAND**

The number of farms in Russell County has followed economic trends over the last 30 years according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture. In 1972 there were 314 farms, 292 in 1982, 245 in 2002 and in 2007 there were 303. The slow food movement and other economic indicators show an increased interest in farming throughout the country. Russell County had 94,155 acres in farms in 2007. Although, the records show an increase in the number of farms from 2002 – 2007, the amount of land committed to farming decreased along with the average size of farms from 430 acres in 2002 to 311 in 2007. The 2007 Census of Agricultural figures below show the bulk of farms in Russell County are 10 acres to 179 acres and the majority of land in farms is used for timber farming, followed by crop land and pasture. The following graphic shows soils considered prime farm land by the U.S Soil Conservation Service.

Figure 3.8 – Russell County Farms by Size

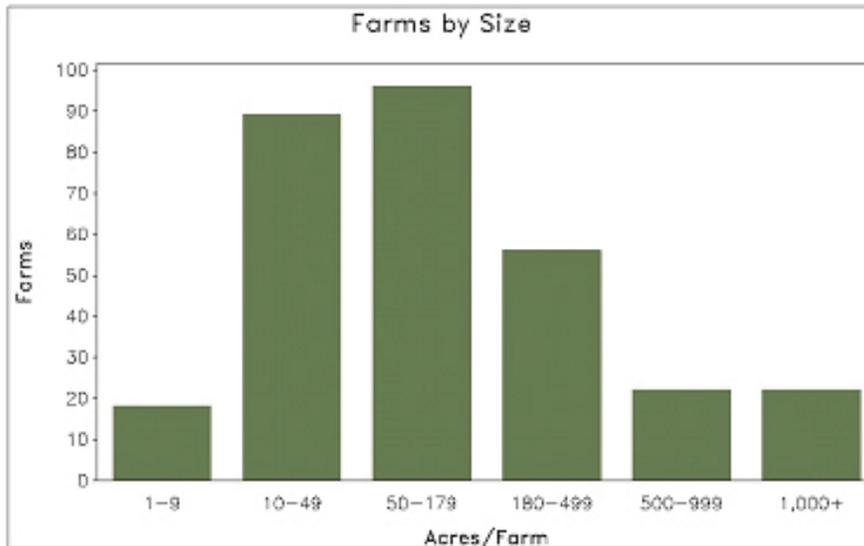


Figure 3.9 – Prime Farmland in Russell County



## APPEARANCE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

The visual character and community design features in Russell County may be characterized as a mixed use core city, highly developed highway corridors, scattered suburban neighborhoods/subdivisions, and a few centers in rural areas of the county. There are also a few rural crossroads and a scattering of farms and estate type housing in the rural landscape that includes open farmland and larger forested areas, all of which define a transition in character from more urban concentrations to attractive rural settings along major transportation arteries.

### URBAN CENTERS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Phenix City is the primary urban center within Russell County. Downtown Phenix City is a mixed use district composed of businesses and substantial residential areas. There are some urban neighborhoods with grid patterns and historic homes around downtown Phenix City, which are very attractive. The location of downtown along the river has the potential to be very scenic and a tremendous visual asset to the County. There are pockets of negative visual character, with deteriorated buildings, housing and generally poor conditions with conflicts in development. This is especially evident on the south edge of Phenix City and along Brickyard Road near the State Docks, landfill and old industrial sites.

### SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT AND SPRAWL

Extending from the core of Phenix City, a pattern of suburban development and aesthetics emerges. The suburban pattern ranges from more typical residential and commercial subdivisions, varying in age, to newer shopping centers, single family residential areas to a few institutional developments and apartments. These areas are primarily within the corporate limits or police jurisdiction of Phenix City. Recent subdivisions have been completed or underway south of Phenix City toward Fort Mitchell and west along US Highway-80 and along US Highway-431. These developments are newer, with suburban character and varying aesthetic qualities. Although occurring in limited areas of the county, primarily due to slower growth in the past, this pattern has the potential to carry with it the negative image of suburban sprawl, replacing more rural agricultural and wooded landscapes.

### URBAN AND SUBURBAN CORRIDORS

There are major stretches of parcel by parcel ad-hoc strip commercial type development along a few major corridors within and extending from Phenix City. These are composed of areas mostly along major US Highways.

- US-280/431 between Lee County line and the intersection with US-80E in Phenix City
  - Highly developed corridor
  - Intersection with US-80E is the major access point to Columbus
- US-431 between Barbour County Line and the intersection with US-280E in Phenix City
  - Sporadically developed by-pass around the core of Phenix City; less developed in spots
  - Access controlled by frontage roads in sections within Phenix City
- US-80 between Macon County Line and the intersection with US-280/431 in Phenix City
  - Highly developed along the 4-lane section to Ladonia
  - Major two-lane access to I-85, Tuskegee, Montgomery
- AL-165 has begun to urbanize from the northern terminus at US-431 to spots near Fort Mitchell
  - More typical suburban development on the north end
  - Less developed, with few exceptions near Fort Mitchell and Fort Benning west gate

### RURAL CORRIDORS, CROSSROADS AND COMMUNITIES

In the mostly rural sections of Russell County, state and county roads pass through rural areas and provide scenic corridors connecting to farmlands, forested areas, etc. There are also crossroads or rural neighborhoods with distinctive character throughout the county, some with historic building patterns and structures. The largest concentrations of these kinds of neighborhoods are in Hurtsboro, Seale, with similar smaller areas in Pittsview, Hatchechubbee and Crawford.

## NATURAL FEATURES, FORESTS, FLOODPLAINS AND RIVERS

Russell County is blessed with natural features including water resources as well as large forested areas and rural farm lands. For the most part, these features provide unique visual and aesthetic opportunities, including the following:

- Rivers, creeks, and flood plains in Russell County provide aesthetic as well as environmental benefits, including:
  - Chattahoochee River
  - Uchee Creek
- Coccohleekee Creek represents the natural fall line
- The removal of dams and the creation of “white water” provides an important recreational opportunity to Phenix City and the County.
- Forested areas and farmlands extend to the south and west of the urban and suburban development pattern

## RURAL LANDSCAPES

The appearance of much of Russell County is greatly influenced by rural landscapes, most of which is a valuable scenic asset. Forests and farmland comprise a typical rural aesthetic and provide a pastoral setting for estate and farm lifestyles.

## GATEWAYS

The Chattahoochee River provides primary gateways to the county. Such gateways exist at bridge crossings and where there are public places along the River in and near downtown Phenix City. Developments along US Highway-280 and US Highway-431 provide opportunities for other gateways, especially at major intersections, although they are not currently developed in such a way as to provide an attractive gateway to the county. While these intersections have potential for providing useful wayfinding, they don't quite serve this purpose effectively. Other potential important gateways exist along major routes throughout the county from the south, southwest and west.

## UNATTRACTIVE CORRIDORS AND BLIGHTED AREAS

While commercial development along major corridors can have positive economic benefits, some sections have declined and are a negative impact, dominated by curb cuts; excessive signage; poorly maintained parking lots and landscaping; vacant buildings; and form a poor appearance on major corridors in many cases. In addition, there are other areas, especially concentrated near the river, to the south of, or in the southern part of, Phenix City, where there are large industrial sites either in operation or vacant, which impact the appearance of the county. These sites are typically accompanied with with outside storage areas; borrow pits, even a landfill and other unattractive sites in conflict with the scenic character of the river and a few isolated residential areas. There are also pockets of poor conditions and appearances, much of which is concentrated in certain blocks of Phenix City, especially where there are conflicts between commercial and residential development and there are isolated cases of blighting influences, usually, vacant or poorly maintained commercial or housing structures.

## NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Natural and historic resources are not only a valuable aesthetic asset to Russell County; these resources are an integral part of Russell County's environment.

## TOPOGRAPHY AND SOILS

Russell County is part of the Southern Coastal Plain and the Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas Blackland Prairie Major Land Resource Areas. Soils in the Southern Coastal Plain range from sandy to clayey and from somewhat excessively drained to very poorly drained. The topography is varied, ranging from highly dissected upland areas that have high relief to broad, nearly level stream terraces and flood plains along the Chattahoochee River and other major streams. The fall line crosses Russell County with Coccohleekee Creek representing approximately where the fall line is located within the county. The steeper slopes are more apparent above the fall line, with the more gentle rolling terrain below the fall line along the coastal plain. Soils in the county have been suitable for timber and agriculture; however soils in certain areas are less suitable for septic tank sewer construction.



## **RIVERS, CREEKS, FLOOD PLAINS, SURFACE AND GROUND WATER**

The County is bordered by the beautiful Chattahoochee River along the entire eastern edge providing a powerful natural asset. Floodplains exist along the Chattahoochee River that border Alabama and Georgia. The 100-year floodplain is prominent along the Chattahoochee River and major tributaries, limiting development in a few locations although, for the most part, floodplains are not extensive or in wide expanses. Uchee Creek also has a significant flood plain within the county. Various types of wetlands exist within Russell County as well.

Russell County is located within the Southeastern Coastal Plain aquifer system. The water supply in the County is provided through both groundwater from wells and surface water from the Chattahoochee. Efforts are underway to maintain and improve water quality conditions with Russell County participating in clean water partnerships and watershed groups in varying ways to ensure ongoing water quality protection.

## **FORESTED AREAS**

Forested areas in the county include areas harvested for timber and forest products as well as natural stands of forested areas that are part of the environment of Russell County. Much of these forests are pines and have historically been seen as an industrial asset as well as a natural asset. These areas are predominant when reviewing the land cover map.

## **WILDLIFE AND HABITATS**

Wildlife has been abundant in the county, including a variety of birds and animals, including some rare and endangered species. In addition to protecting these natural resources for environmental purposes, these valuable aspects are critical to the potential for hunting, fishing, birding and economic development for the county.

## **AIR QUALITY**

Air quality in a given location is described by the concentration of various pollutants in the atmosphere. Air quality is determined by the type and amount of pollutants emitted into the atmosphere, the size and topography of the air basin and the prevailing meteorological conditions. The measure of air quality in an area is determined by comparing it to federal and state ambient air quality standards. These standards represent the maximum allowable atmospheric concentration that may occur and still protect public health and welfare, with a reasonable margin of safety. The national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) are established by the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA has developed numerical standards for air quality under the provisions of the Clean Air Act. Russell County is located in the Columbus (Georgia)-Phenix City (Alabama) Interstate Air Quality Control Region of the Clean Air Act. The USEPA tracks compliance with the designation of a particular region as "attainment", "nonattainment", or "unclassifiable". Areas meeting or having better air quality than the national standard are said to be in attainment. Russell County, for the present time is part of an attainment area.

## **HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### **HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Some of the oldest historical sites in the Southeast are found in Russell County and being actively preserved and restored. Russell County is home to the Apalachicola Fort Site (c. 1690); the Fort Mitchell Site, not ready for touring, includes the nearby Chattahoochee Indian Heritage Center; and Fort No. 5, a Civil War entrenchment.

Apalachicola Fort Site near Holy Trinity (unincorporated) is an archaeological site dating from 1690. Span established a blockhouse here on the Chattahoochee River in an attempt to maintain influence among the Lower Creek Indians. It was used for only one year, and destroyed by the Spanish when they abandoned the site.

The Fort Mitchell site is an archaeological site that was declared a National Historical Landmark in 1990. The Fort has been reconstructed and restored to the 1813 plans upon the same site. First established as a base for Georgia troops during the Creek War of 1813-1814, Fort Mitchell was an important post on the American frontier for nearly three decades. Eventually replaced with a smaller and better constructed stockade, Fort Mitchell was vital during the Creek War of 1836 and served as the launching point for the Creek or Muskogee Trail of Tears. Today the Fort Mitchell County Park features the Chattahoochee Indian Heritage Center, which details the culture and history of the Indians

who inhabited the valley. Included in the site are a stickball field, sacred fire sculpture, interpretive plaques, and interpretive trail and the names of the Indians removed to the west in the 1830's. At the Fort Mitchell site a Visitors Center is open with artifacts, a walk through museum and a video full of information about the area history. The Whitaker-Crowell cabin is located across from the Visitors Center and is also open for touring. Soon the Old Tavern will be reconstructed, marking the site where the Marquis de Lafayette once raised a glass and Francis Scott Key penned a settlement treaty with the Creek natives.

Fort No. 5, also known as the Confederate Breastwork, is found west of Phenix City on the Opelika Highway and represents a Civil War entrenchment in Russell County.

Russell County is also the home of Horace King, an African American engineer, bridge designer and former slave who oversaw construction of many bridges in the southeast. Friendship Bridge, now a main thoroughfare in Phenix City crossing the Chattahoochee River to Columbus, honors Horace Kind at the Gateway to Alabama.

### CHATTAHOOCHEE INDIAN HERITAGE CENTER

The Indian Heritage Center in Fort Mitchell is a memorial and interpretive center dedicated to the story of the Creek Indians who previously inhabited the area. The Heritage Center is located in Fort Mitchell which was a key post in the Creek War of 1813-1814 and the Creek War of 1836. The area is where thousands of Creek Indians camped and burned their last fires before starting west on the Trail of Tears.

At the Center is a recreation of the 1813 version of Fort Mitchell post, a ceremonial flame designed to recall the flame of Creek Councils and an Interpretive Center.

### FORT MITCHELL NATIONAL CEMETERY

In May of 1987, the old post cemetery of Fort Mitchell was designated as the national cemetery in Federal Region IV, to serve veterans residing in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi. The National Cemetery Administration of the Department of Veteran Affairs operates the Fort Mitchell National Cemetery as a service to military veterans and their families.

### HISTORIC SITES

There are numerous historic sites in the county including sites that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Alabama Register. Some of these are located in the Seale community and in the Hurtsboro community, as well as other isolated sites, these sites are listed in [Figure 3.10](#) and [Figure 3.11](#). Many historic resources are concentrated in the center of Phenix City, including the county courthouse, and downtown neighborhoods.

Russell County is part of the Historic Chattahoochee Trace Commission, promoting the preservation and utilization of historic properties in counties and communities along the Chattahoochee for tourism, economic development and recreation.



**Figure 3.10 – Properties on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage**

<b>Place</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Built</b>	<b>Registered</b>
Blessed Trinity Shrine	AL-165, Holy Trinity	1895	2/19/76
Cedar Heights Plantation*	US -431, Pittsview	1837	10/19/79
Cliatt Plantation	AL-165, Jernigan	1865	6/16/76
Confederate Breastworks (Ft No. 5)*	US-80/ 431, Phenix City	1863-1864	8/20/75
Crowell-Whitaker-Howard Log Cabin	AL-165, Fort Mitchell	1838	1/31/78
Davis House*	401 21st Street, Phenix City	1880-1890	2/3/83
Greenwood Plantation, (Samuel R. Pitts House)	US Hwy-431, Pittsview	1846	8/16/91
Kearney House	1223 Broad Street, Phenix City	1890	2/3/83
Morgan-Curtis House (Morgan Sanatorium)*	1815 Abbot Dr, Phenix City	1904, 1914	10/19/79
Southern Railway Depot Building	Depot Street, Hurtsboro	1884	2/4/81
Trinity United Methodist Church*	1600 5th Avenue, Phenix City	1872	2/3/83
Tuckabatchie Masonic Lodge No. 96 F&AM	US Hwy 80, Crawford	1948	7/6/78
Walker, Augustus Benning, House	596 Uchee Road, Hatchechubbee	1892	7/22/91
Williams-Holland House	2000 9th Avenue, Phenix City	1884	1/14/80

Source: Alabama Historical Commission

**Figure 3.11 – Properties on the National Register of Places**

<b>Place</b>	<b>Location</b>
Apalachicola Fort	Holy Trinity
Bass-Perry House	Seale
Brooks-Hughes House	1010 Sandfort Rd, Phenix City
Brownville-Summerville Historic District	Phenix City
Floyd-Newsome House	Phenix City
Fort Mitchell Site	Fort Mitchell
Fort No. 5	Phenix City
Girard High School	Phenix City
Girard Historic District	Phenix City
Glenn-Thompson Plantation	Pittsview (vic.)
Glennville Historic District	Pittsview (vic.)
Hurtsboro Historic District	Hurtsboro
Joel Hurt House	Hurtsboro
Kid Alley Residential Historic District	Phenix City
Lower Twentieth Street Residential Historic District	Phenix City
Morgan-Curtis House	Phenix City
Pitts, Samuel R., Plantation	Pittsview (vic.)
Russell County Courthouse at Seale	Seale
Shapre-Monte House	Phenix City
Smith Residential Historic District	Phenix City
Snow Valley Residential Historic District	Phenix City
Uchee Methodist Church	Hatchechubbee
Upper Twentieth Street Residential Historic District	Phenix City
Yuchi Town	

Source: National Register of Historic Place, National Park Service

## CULTURAL CENTERS

(Temporary holder)

## TRANSPORTATION

(See also Chapter IV)

### MPO AND RPO TRANSPORTATION PLANS

The urbanized parts of Russell County are included in the Columbus-Phenix City MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) with the remainder of the county being included in the Lee-Russell Council of Governments and a related RPO (Rural Planning Organization) network.

### OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A separate section on transportation is included as part of the Master Plan. As part of the county assessment, several key issues, opportunities and observations are summarized in the following.

For planning purposes the Russell County Master Plan relied on information provided through the Columbus-Phenix City MPO Long Range Transportation Plan as well as information from Lee-Russell Council of Governments documents, ALDOT and other sources. The transportation study component of the Russell County Master Plan includes an overview of transportations demand and travel patterns, existing and future roadway conditions and needs, a review of truck traffic, public transportation, rail, airport and bike pedestrian needs.

### TRANSPORTATION ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following transportation issues were raised during discussions with County staff. Additional issues, as well as potential opportunities, result from public outreach efforts as the planning process has progressed.

#### *Issues*

- Intersection safety and vehicle crashes
- Access problems and lack of interparcel circulation, particularly along key commercial corridors
- Roadway design (narrow lane width, minimal shoulders)
- Pace of development has outstripped County's ability to provide supporting infrastructure
- Limited resources to construct improvements or pave dirt roads
- Need for major east west circulation in the center of the county to serve expected population and growth
- Increasing need for pedestrian improvements as more parts of the county urbanize
- Limited access to public transit, especially in more rural areas

#### *Opportunities*

- Potential improvements to US-431 and AL-165 to address major issues
- Access management study along US-280/US-431 in Phenix City
- Potential east-west route connection to the west gate, providing circulation and support development opportunities
- Annual funding available through MPO and ALDOT for safety improvements, bridge repair/replacement, maintenance and roadway improvements
- New policies and possible funding for bicycled and pedestrian improvements
- Participation in Columbus-Phenix City MPO and LRCOG, including RPO

### DAILY COMMUTE PATTERNS

Examination of the commute patterns of county residents and employees enables a better understanding of the demands placed upon the transportation system. By identifying certain corridors as crucial to existing and future travel demand, improvement projects and necessary implementation funding can be targeted to those areas, in turn providing the greatest improvements to overall county-wide mobility. In combination with other data sources, journey to work data gathered by the US Census is used to confirm findings indicative of key destinations and transportation corridors within the county.



The following tables provide county commuting patterns according to US Census year 2000 journey to work data. **Figure 3.12** identifies the manner of commute for Russell County residents. Not surprisingly, the data indicates that Russell County residents overwhelmingly drive alone to work. Statistics for the entire state are also provided for comparison purposes.

**Figure 3.12 – Manner of Commute for Russell County Residents**

Location	Workers Age 18 and Over	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Transit	Walk	Other	Work at Home	Mean Travel Time
Russell County	19,852	82.1%	13.9%	0.6%	1.3%	1.1%	1.0%	24.6 min
Alabama	1,900,089	83.0%	12.3%	0.5%	1.3%	0.8%	2.1%	24.8 min

The county of employment for Russell residents is shown in **Figure 3.13**. In 2000, more of the county’s residents worked in neighboring Muscogee County (48.5 percent) than in Russell County (35.5%). The top three destinations for Russell residents commuting outside the county to work were Muscogee (GA), Lee, and Chattahoochee (GA) counties.

**Figure 3.13 – Location of Work for Russell County Residents**

County of Work	2000	
	Number	Percent
Muscogee County, GA	9,623	48.5%
Russell County, AL	7,051	35.5%
Lee County, AL	1,048	5.3%
Chattahoochee County, GA	981	4.9%
Other	1,156	5.8%
Total	19,859	100.0%

**Figure 3.14** shows commuters traveling into Russell County in 2000. A majority (53 percent) of Russell workers reside in the county. The top four counties of origin for workers commuting into Russell County were Lee, Muscogee (GA), Barbour, and Harris (GA) counties.

**Figure 3.14 – Location of Residence for Russell County Workers**

County of Residence	2000	
	Number	Percent
Russell County, AL	7,051	53.2%
Lee County, AL	2,682	20.3%
Muscogee County, GA	2,479	18.7%
Barbour County, AL	335	2.5%
Harris County, GA	214	1.6%
Other	482	3.7%
Total	13,243	100.0%

**ROADWAY ASSESSMENT**

Several of Russell County’s key cross-county roadway facilities radiate from the Columbus-Phenix City area. Traveling east-west across the extreme northern portion of county, US 80 provides access to the I-85 south corridor via Tuskegee



to the west, as well as to Atlanta and points north via I-185 from Columbus. Further east, US 80 connects with the I-75 corridor near Macon. The US 431 corridor also intersects I-85, in the Auburn-Opelika area to the north, before continuing north to ultimately connect with I-20 near Anniston. South from Phenix City, US 431 travels southwest to Seale before turning due south through Barbour County to Dothan and its ready access to I-10 and the Gulf Coast. Originating at US 431 on the southern limits of Phenix City, AL 165 provides critical north-south mobility adjacent to Fort Benning in the eastern portion of Russell County. It connects back into US 431 south of the county line near Eufaula. AL 26 is an important connection from Seale west to Hurtsboro. AL 51 and County Roads 33, 49 and 65 provide north-south mobility on the western side of the county. Additional east-west connectivity is offered by County Roads 4, 12, 18, 22, and 24.

#### *Roadway Characteristics*

Full understanding of transportation needs necessitates development of a thorough baseline description of the existing system to serve as the standard against which future scenarios can be assessed. Russell County has a diverse roadway network for which data from local, state and federal sources was collected. Required data included descriptive information such as roadway functional classification and type and number of lanes, as well as performance data such as usage (average daily traffic), crash history and condition. Assessment of the roadway system utilized a variety of analysis tools.

#### *Roadway Inventory*

A representative field inventory of roadway characteristics and conditions has been conducted as part of the roadway analysis. The inventory's emphasis was placed on County and State routes that provide cross-county connectivity, as well as those that serve schools and other community facilities. In addition to evaluating roadway characteristics such as number of lanes, lane/shoulder width and general traffic operations, surrounding land use was also considered.

#### *Roadway System and Mileage*

The State System in Russell County (those roadways maintained by the State) includes AL 1 (US 431), AL 8 (US 80), AL 26, AL 38 (US 280), AL 51, AL 165, AL 169, and AL 208. Russell County is responsible for maintaining 373 miles of paved road and 213 miles of unpaved roads.

Additional analysis of transportation in Russell County is reflected in Chapter IV.

## **SUMMARY OF FUTURE TRANSPORTATION DEMAND AND NEEDS**

In order to plan for future transportation needs, an assessment of future needs of projections is included in the transportation element. Information from the MPO and statewide models is used to projected needs from 2005 to 2035. Future traffic volumes are projected and compared to capacity of roads in the Federal and State system. No specific projections are provided for county and local roads. Existing/recent traffic counts are provided by the Russell County DOT.

### **FUTURE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS**

Based on available information, future road/highway needs are identified. These needs, based on 2035 traffic projections for major routes, compared to capacity of roads, truck traffic, safety and other future needs are reviewed in the transportation element.

#### *Other Future Transportation Needs*

Other transportation needs identified include

- Public transportation
- Rail and port facilities
- Airport needs
- Bicycle and pedestrian needs
- Intermodal needs/opportunities



## **HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

Housing is a basic necessity of life. An adequate supply of affordable housing available for rent or purchase is necessary to attract and retain business along with support the current and future residents of the county.

### **HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD TYPOLOGIES – URBAN, SUBURBAN, RURAL**

Neighborhoods in Russell County may be characterized as urban, suburban and rural. Most of the new housing in the county has been conventional subdivision development with large concentrations in the Fort Mitchell area along AL-165 recently.

### **EXISTING HOUSING CONDITIONS**

Housing conditions in the county range from older, historic homes in Phenix City, Seale and Hurtsboro to new subdivisions in Phenix City with other new subdivisions in the unincorporated parts of the county. Most of the housing in poor condition is located in the older parts of Phenix City and the County. The age of the housing stock in Russell County is comparable to the age of housing stock across the county, with 20.2% of the housing Russell County built since 1990. Also, Russell County has a lower percentage than they national average (48.7%) of housing built before 1970.

Housing has typically been more affordable in Russell County. Prices there have risen dramatically since 2000. In July, 2000, the median selling price for a home in Phenix City was \$90,500. By July of 2007, the median selling price was \$150,000. Although the economic downturn of 2008 impacted prices in 2008, dropping the median selling price to \$142,000, the median price in 2009 had reached \$164,500.

### **HOUSING AVAILABILITY IN GENERAL**

Growth in military and civilian workforce has caused concern with housing to meet demands of a variety of types and costs. Housing is being constructed and planned in the Fort Mitchell area. Multi-family housing is limited in the county. However, recent construction of apartments in the northern part of the county is underway, near US Highway-431 and north into Lee County.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SPECIAL NEEDS**

Concentrations of low income populations exist mainly in the older parts of the county, but also, in very rural areas as well. The housing needs of the familiar are met largely in public housing in Phenix City, rural houses and mobile homes.

To meet the needs of low income individuals, the Phenix City Housing Authority operates seven housing complexes. In the summer of 2009, there are a total of 922 apartments in the complexes with a waiting list that contained 75 families. The Housing Authority also reports that there are 635 Section 8 participants in Phenix City and the waiting list for Section 8 housing is closed.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

### **EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS**

Schools in Russell County will be impacted by future growth and development in the region and the county, especially as a result of Base Realignment and increase military related growth. Schools and Education facilities in Russell County are provided by the Russell County Board of Education, the Phenix City Board of Education and Private Schools.

### **RUSSELL COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

The Russell County School District currently serves a population of about 3,700 students in five elementary schools, one middle school and one high school.

While the overall student population has trended down, the District is anticipating future growth within the Fort Mitchell area of military families. This area within the county is in close proximity to the Eddy Point Access Control Point as is attractive for families who are employed at Fort Benning.



Currently, the county board is adding capacity at the Mt. Olive Elementary School and anticipates the possible addition of an additional elementary school in the Fort Mitchell area. In the long-term future, there might be a need for additional high school capacity to accommodate growth in the Fort Mitchell area. Russell County Elementary school, in Hurtsboro, has recently been closed, subject to future enrollment, etc. It is critical that Russell County continue to update population estimates in order to anticipate school enrollment versus capacity of schools in advance of actual deficiencies.

**Figure 3.15 – Russell County School Facilities**

Russell County School	Grades
Dixie Elementary	K-6
Ladonia Elementary	K-6
Mount Olive Elementary	K-6
Oliver School	K-6
Russell County High School	9-12
Russell County Middle School	7-8
Russell County Elementary (Recently Closed)	K-6

**PHENIX CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The Phenix City School District primarily located in Russell County to serve those students who live within the city limits of Phenix City. The system also serves a limited number of students who live in the Lee County portions of Phenix City. The current student population is around 6,000 students among six elementary schools, two junior high schools and one high school.

Recent trends have shown growth in the Phenix City School District and continued growth is anticipated. Estimated student population for the next several years are currently below the existing capacity for schools in Phenix City.

In 2007, the District attempted to pass a property tax increase to pay for additional facilities. For the first time, such an increase was denied by local citizens. The current property tax mill rate dedicated to public education is 28.5 mills.

In 2010, an ad valorem tax was renewed, adding additional resources to the county’s schools.

**Figure 3.16 – Phenix City School Facilities**

<b>Phenix City School</b>	<b>Grades</b>
Central High School	10-12
CHS Freshman Academy	9
South Girard School	8
Phenix City Intermediate School	6-7
Lakewood Elementary School	K-5
Meadowland Elementary School	K-5
Phenix City Elementary School	K-5
Ridgecrest Elementary School	K-5
Sherwood Elementary school	K-5
Westview Elementary School	K-5
Phenix City Head Start Center	Pre K
Phenix City Success Academy	All

**PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

In addition to public schools, the following private schools are also located in Russell County:

**Figure 3.17 – Russell County Private Schools**

<b>Private Schools</b>	<b>Grades</b>
Columbus Girls’ School of Excellence	7-12
Eagle’s Mount Academy	Pre K-2
Grace Christian Academy	Pre K-1
Mother Mary School	Pre K-8
New Testament Baptist School	1-12
Phenix Christian School	Pre K-4
St. Patrick School	1-8
Trinity School	9-12
Veritas Academy	K-9

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Within Russell County there are two state funded higher education facilities; Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Troy University – Phenix City. Both facilities are located within a close proximity to each other along US-Highway 431 south of downtown Phenix City.

*Chattahoochee Valley Community College*

Chattahoochee Valley Community College is part of the Alabama Community College System which consists of twenty-two community college and technical colleges across the state. Currently, CVCC has an enrollment of approximately 2,000 students at the main campus, Fort Benning and other off-campus sites. The three major programs of study offered at CVCC include; University Parallel Programs as Associates in Arts and Associate in Science degrees; Career Programs through Associate in Applied Sciences; and Certificate Programs geared toward career development.

Of major note for Chattahoochee Valley Community College is their influence on the larger region outside of Phenix City. Nearly forty percent of all students attending CVCC are Georgians, where neighbor honing Georgia county residents can qualify for in-state tuition rates.

Chattahoochee Valley Community College also has an athletics program on the main campus with basketball, baseball and softball that attract athletics from the immediate region and beyond.

**Troy University – Phenix City**

The Phenix City campus of Troy University is a satellite campus to Troy University located in Troy, Alabama. The campus offers flexible programs for students on campus through night, weekend, live class on tape, and online courses.

The Troy Campus is located south of the central part of Phenix City along US-431. There have been recent discussions concerning the opportunity to locate a portion of Troy in the downtown area of Phenix City as part of larger downtown revitalization plan.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

### **RUSSELL COUNTY SPORTSPLEX**

Russell County has park and recreation facilities and a major sports complex located near the center of the county in Seale serves a large population need in the County. This major complex provides multiple recreation fields for the county.

The City of Phenix City also operates a Parks and Recreation system as does the City of Hurtsboro.

Other recreational facilities in Russell County include facilities operated and maintained as Federal Recreation Areas.

### **BLUFF CREEK PARK – FEDERAL RECREATION AREA**

Located along the Chattahoochee River on the northern end of Lake Walter F. Georgia, Bluff Creek Campground is a recreational facility operated by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The campground at Bluff Creek has eighty-eight sites with electric and water hookups. Other amenities at Bluff Creek includes three bath houses, a dump station, laundry facilities and a boat ramp with access to the River. A pavilion is also available within the park for large group rentals.

### **BRIAR CREEK PARK – FEDERAL RECREATION AREA**

- Located along Hatchechubbee Creek
- Boat ramp, restrooms, fishing

### **HATCHECHUBBEE CREEK PARK – FEDERAL RECREATION AREA**

- Boat Ramp
- Fishing

### **RIVER BEND PARK**

### **UCHEE CREEK ARMY CAMPGROUND AND MARINA**

The Uchee Creek Army Campground and Marina is a recreational facility along the Chattahoochee River operated by the Fort Benning Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation. The facility is a 385 acre park with several recreational amenities. Several varieties of accommodations are offered within the park including, eighty-five recreational vehicle sites, forty cabins, fifteen chalets and several tent camping sites.

On-site amenities included within the park are three playgrounds, a pool that open from Memorial Day to Labor Day, a fishing pier and a Country Store. A boat ramp is also located within the park as well as boat rentals and docking facilities.

### **OTHER**

Access to recreation/entertainment on the Chattahoochee River is provided in the Phenix City and Columbus areas, and in other locations along the River to the south. In the near future, river recreation opportunities will be greatly expanded to include white water use on the river. Private recreation is provided in existing and planned golf courses, as well as hunting and fishing, hiking and bicycling, which are growing.

### **LIBRARIES**

The Phenix City-County Library is a public library serving Russell County. There is one volunteer-staffed library serving the community of Hurtsboro. Via its resources, residents may either access materials directly on the site at its Phenix City location or can have access via the Web to the Alabama Virtual Library. The Phenix City-Russell County Library also provides web access to the HomeworkAlabama service.

There is an active group of Friends of the Library which helps in supporting the facilities.

**ARTS AND CULTURAL FACILITIES AND EVENTS**

The Phenix City Amphitheater is located on the western bank of the Chattahoochee River. The amphitheater hosts a multitude of civic and cultural events throughout the year. The amphitheater also services as the anchor point from the RiverWalk and bicycle train, connected to Phenix City’s north side, at Idle Hour Park and Nature Trail. The Twin Cities Classic sponsored by the Phenix City Exchange Club is a major horse show, held in June at the Twin Cities Classic facility on Highway 431N in Russell County. The Annual Starlite Ball is held every year at the historic Old Seale Courthouse. Also located in Seale at 41 Poorhouse Road is the Museum of Wonder. Every year, the Museum curators feature Doo-Nanny, a fine collection of locally grown art, music and entertainment.

Other arts and cultural resources are assets to Russell County. Each October, the annual Festival of Art takes place in Phenix City and promotes the work of local artists and craftsmen. Hurtsboro has previously held a combination Arts and Crafts show, play and local fair.

The Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Phenix City campus of Troy University additionally provide arts and cultural resource opportunities.

Russell County enjoys easy access to performing arts and cultural resources in nearby Columbus. The RiverCenter, the Springer Opera House and the Columbus Civic Center host concerts, plays and seasonal shows throughout the year, all of which are attractions for residents and visitors to Russell County.

There is currently not an umbrella arts organization for Russell County, so there is no mechanism to survey longtime and new residents about their interests and desires in this arena.

**PUBLIC SAFETY – POLICE AND FIRE SERVICES**

Fire and emergency services in Phenix City are provided by an ISO class II department comprising three stations. This department has adequate resources for current population leve4ls and is expect to face only minimal challenges related to the increase of the jurisdiction due to future annexation. Volunteer fire departments in unincorporated Russell County have critical deficiencies in resources to provide for current population levels.

Emergency services in Russell County are provided by private ambulance providers. These providers currently have stations in Phenix City and in Seale, located in the central area of the County.

Law Enforcement in Russell County is provided by Phenix City within their police jurisdiction and by the Russell County Sheriff’s office in the remainder of the County. Both the Police Department and the Sheriff’s Office have adequate resources for current population levels. However, population growth in unincorporated areas of the county will strain the resources of the Russell County Sheriff’s Office.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**

While law enforcement has been able to cope with population increases in Russell County without critical shortages in personnel or equipment, fire mitigation, protection, and rescue services are facing critical shortages in both personnel and equipment. With the exception of Phenix City, all fire departments in unincorporated areas of the county are volunteer fire departments.

The county-level law enforcement agency is the Russell County Sheriff’s Office, headed by a publicly-elected Sheriff. The Sheriff provides patrol services in unincorporated areas of the County. The Sheriff’s Office has indicated that available equipment, including cruisers, weapons and other mission-critical assets, were in adequate condition and sufficient for mission requirements.

The City of Phenix City provides law enforcement and fire protection service within its municipal boundaries. The City of Hurtsboro has operated a police department in the past, as of September 2008, this police department is non-operational. The Phenix City Police Department has indicated that available equipment, including cruisers, weapons and other mission-critical assets, were in adequate condition and sufficient for mission requirements.



Both the Phenix City Police Department and the Columbus Police Department have access to communications bridging equipment to allow temporary patching between the two systems.

### 911 SERVICES

Russell County's 911 dispatch services are operated by a county-wide 911 authority located in Phenix City, with a full-time staff of dispatchers that provide service throughout the county. Presently, the Russell County 911 Authority operates under a memorandum-of-agreement (MOA) with Columbus to provide redundancy in case of a system failure with the Russell County PSAP. The authority is able to respond to current needs and is expect to face minimal challenges responding to future population growth.

### COURT SYSTEM

The county is located within the Alabama Middle District of the Eleventh Circuit. Cases in the circuit are heard at the Federal Courthouse in Atlanta. Russell County is located I the 37<sup>th</sup> Circuit, which is solely comprised of Russell County. These courts handle all felonies with exclusive jurisdiction in civil actions.

The Probate Court comprises an elected Probate Judge and appointed staff.

The Phenix City Municipal Court is organized and funded by the City Council. The municipal court judge supervises five magistrates and engages in the administration of the court. Court is held everying Thursday. The Municipal Court judge is appointed by the City Council.

The Hurtsboro Municipal Court is organized and funded by the City Council. There are five court magistrates, supervised by one municipal court clerk. Court is held every Wednesday.

### PRISON AND JAIL

There are no Alabama State Prison Facilities located in Russell County. There is one county operated prison in Russell County, the Russell County Jail. The jail is located within Phenix City along US Highway-431 south of the city center. The facility, originally built in 1991 could house 147 inmates. Following an expansion in 1994, the facility was expanded to house 215 inmates. The jail holds individuals awaiting transfer to State facilities, in holding pre-trial, servicing time for violation of county offenses, or serving short prison sentences.

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

The County EMA provides emergency services for the entire county.

### FIRE SERVICE

Within Russell County, fire services are provided from either municipal fire department within Phenix City or from the eleven volunteer fire departments located throughout the county.

#### *Phenix City Fire Department*

The Phenix City Fire Department is composed of three fire stations that are located distributed within the municipal limits of Phenix City. This department only serves the residents of Phenix City, but they do have mutual aid agreements with all Russell County Volunteer Fire departments and the Columbus Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department.

Currently, the Phenix City Fire Department employs one fire chief, four battalion chiefs, eleven captains, fifteen sergeants, twenty-six fire fighters, once technician and one administrative assistant.

According to records, the Phenix City Fire Department fleet of vehicles includes four engines, one aerial ladder platform, one aerial ladder quint, one command vehicle, two rescue vehicles, and four support and utility vehicles.

*Russell County Volunteer Fire Departments*

There are eleven volunteer fire departments located in Russell County that operate a total of eighteen volunteer fire stations. These departments are primarily located in the rural, residential areas of the county where the population is lower and more dispersed. As a result of their location in primarily residential areas, volunteers often have a difficult time in reacting to a call. Most volunteers do not work within a close proximity to their department and upon receiving a call must leave the place of business and travel to the station to retrieve equipment to fight the fire or meet the equipment at the scene of an incident. Because of these, those volunteers who do work near their station often work a disproportionate number of incidents from those who do not.

These volunteer departments are composed of residential citizen volunteers from within the immediate areas that their respective department serves. The citizens volunteer their time and money to serve with their department and because of that most departments operate with a critical shortage of personnel. It has been discussed by officials from the volunteer departments that maintaining a corps of volunteers is often difficult while more success has been made in retaining department leadership.

Equipment among the eleven volunteer fire departments varies.

Funding for volunteer fire departments in Russell County is accomplished through a combination of tobacco taxes and subscription fees. Within the county there is no per-house assessed value for fire department funding.

Some departments have had success in receiving federal money from the Assistance to Firefighters Grants. However, this money has been used for operations-related expenses. Funding for facilities and equipment is a continuing need. Resources to attain these grants are limited, those departments which have been successful have done so through individuals within the department who have grant writing experience through their work or voluntarily received grant writing training.

**Figure 3.18 – Volunteer Fire Departments**

<b>Volunteer Fire Departments</b>	<b>Operation Areas</b>	<b>Number of Stations</b>	<b>ISO Ratings</b>
Seale VFD	Seale	3	6
Ladonia VFD	Ladonia	1	6
Crawford VFD	Crawford, Phenix City, Salem	2	5
Uchee Creek VFD	Phenix City, Seale	2	4
Hatchechubbee VFD	Hatchechubbee, Hurtsboro	2	7
Hurtsboro VFD	Hurtsboro	1	6
Mt. Olive VFD	Seale	1	7
Fort Mitchell VFD	Cottonton, Fort Mitchell	2	7
Cottonton VFD	Cottonton	2	7
Pittsview VFD	Pittsview	1	9
Dixie VFD	Dixie, Huguley, Uhland	1	6

*Source: Regional Growth Management Plan, 2009*

*Fort Benning Public Safety*

Fort Benning provides civilian or partially-civilian operated emergency services on base that include fire protection/mitigation, law enforcement (provided through the on-post provost marshal), and emergency medical services. The post interacts with surrounding counties on an as-needed basis, primarily in response to motor vehicle accidents on roads that approach the base or are adjacent to the base. The provost marshal also has special jurisdiction over all active-duty military personnel temporarily located outside the base.

Although an analysis of Fort Benning’s public safety capabilities is not specifically concerned with the County master Plan, general information is given to provide context for discussions relating to collaboration and coordination



between civilian and military public safety personnel. These collaborations are likely to be enhanced as Fort Benning's complement of military personnel expands and the region's overall population increases.

Law enforcement services on the base are provided by the Provost Marshal Office. This Office administers both the Uniform Code of Military Justice and insures the compliance of all appropriate laws and regulations for civilians.

## **HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE**

### **HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**

Russell County and Phenix City are served by a single hospital in with county, the Jack Hughston Memorial Hospital. Located along River Chase Drive in north Phenix City, the hospital provides 70-beds within the 110,000 square-foot full service facility. Services at the hospital include surgical services, intensive care unit, diagnostic imaging and 24-hour emergency services department. Public Health services are provided through the Russell County Health Department.

### **AMBULANCE SERVICE**

There are three ambulance services that operate within Russell County; the Care Ambulance Service, the Crawford Fire Department and the Mid-Georgia Ambulance Service. Both the Care Ambulance Service and the Mid-Georgia Ambulance Service are for-profit corporations and the Crawford Fire Department is part of the non-profit Crawford Volunteer Fire Department.

Care Ambulance Service operates 13 trucks that are assigned to Russell County in two different stations. One station is located in Phenix City and the other is located in Seale. The operations are solely funded by user fees.

The Mid-Georgia Ambulance Service provides private sector service in the Columbus-Phenix City area, but generally does not travel outside of the city limits of Phenix City.

## **SENIOR, YOUTH AND OTHER CENTERS**

### **SENIOR SERVICES**

The Lee-Russell Council of Governments and the Area Agency for Aging, maintain three senior centers in Russell County and offers a broad range of senior services. Additionally, the Phenix City Parks and Recreation Department provides activities for seniors.

Nursing home, skilled nursing facility and assisted living centers are available in the county.

Russell County has a network of public transportation which enables many seniors to benefit from a reduced rate to travel to services which they otherwise would not be able to reach. Transportation, especially from the more remote areas of unincorporated Russell County, remains a challenge, and not all seniors can be services.

- Senior and other Special Facilities/Centers
  - Russell County Senior Center in Fort Mitchell
  - Hurtsboro Senior Citizen Center
  - Central Activity Center
- Health and Human Resources services are provided through the Department of Human Resources in Russell County

## **COUNTY COURTHOUSE AND RELATED FACILITIES**

The County administrative offices are located in the new facility on Broad Street in Phnie City. The former courthouse has been converted to a justice center and court building. The old Seale Courthouse is used for limited meetings and functions. The County also generates a transportation department building and another facility in the Seale area.



## SOCIAL SERVICES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- American Red Cross of Phenix City
- Area Agency on Aging (LRCOG)
- Boys and Girls Club (Columbus and Phenix City; Phenix City and Russell County)
- Chattahoochee Council of Boy Scouts
- Columbus Cycling Club
- Columbus Parks and Recreation Department
- Columbus Sports Council
- Columbus Youth Soccer
- Concharty Council of Girl Scouts
- Easter Seals of Alabama
- Food Stamp and Team Assistance for Needy Family
- Girls Inc.
- Goodwill
- Habitat for Humanity of Phenix City and Russell County
- Hands on the Valley
- Hope Harbor
- Maple Ridge Golf Club
- Metro Columbus Task Force for the Homeless
- Northern Little League
- Open Door Community House
- Phenix City Little League
- Phenix City Parks and Recreation Department
- Ronald McDonald House
- Russell County Child Advocacy Center
- Salvation Army
- Second Harbor Food Bank
- Shelter for Battered Women
- Stewart Community House
- Uchee Pines Institute
- United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley
- Urban League of Greater Columbus

## INFRASTRUCTURE

See also Chapter VI

### RUSSELL WATER AUTHORITY

The Russell County Water Authority (RCWA) was formed in 1972 under the name of the Ladonia-Crawford Water and Fire Protection Authority; the Authority adopted its current name in 1991. Over its nearly forty year history, the RCWA has grown to serve more than 5,700 customers throughout Russell County through both the operation of four (4) groundwater production wells and a Water Purchase Contract with Phenix City Utilities. In all, the RCWA has a storage capacity of over 2,500,000 gallons of water which is stored in seven (7) tanks across the County.

Historically, both the RCWA and the Fort Mitchell Water Authority (FMWA), a neighboring water authority in rural Russell County, have produced drinking water from groundwater wells strategically located throughout the County. In recent years, as rural growth in the County has increased, the RCWA has experienced an increased demand reaching approximately 1.5 million gallons of water each day. The existing groundwater wells are capable of contributing less than half of the demand, required water to be purchased from Phenix City Utilities to make up the balance of approximately 800,000 gallons per day.

Based on the projections included in the Russell County Comprehensive Plan, the future water demand is anticipated to experience a significant increase as BRAC related growth continues to occur in the northern, eastern and central portions of the County, coupled with projections for a gradual increase in demand over the next 25 years. In order to account for both the current and future demands in the County, there are several available options to consider.

#### I. Further Expansion of Groundwater Production

- While the RCWA has experienced success historically in the development of production wells to serve its customers, the geological and hydraulic conditions in the County are not considered conducive for the development of large capacity groundwater wells.
- Both the RCWA and FMWA have recently explored areas for future well development and groundwater production but they have not found much success in identifying potential large capacity production wells. As a result, both systems, especially RCWA, have had to increase reliance on purchasing water from Phenix City Utilities to supplement its water supply to meet system demands.
- In the short term, the development of groundwater wells continues to be an option to provide additional water production capacity; however, it is likely that this will only supplement the total system demand.

- Regarding a long-term solution to meet both the current and future water demands of the RCWA, further construction of groundwater wells is not anticipated to be an economically feasible means to meet the total system demands of either the RCWA or the FMWA.

## II. Development of a Water Supply District

- Phenix City Utilities owns a Water Filtration Plant (WFP) that is permitted to produce a total of 18.5 million gallons of drinking water per day. Currently, Phenix City Utilities has a daily usage less than one-half of the permitted limit at the plant.
- 
- The WFP has the capacity to support the current demands of Phenix City Utilities, the RCWA, and the FMWA. Additionally, the WFP would have the capacity to support future growth of more than 50% of the current demand.
- A Water Supply District could be established through an agreement between Phenix City Utilities, RCWA, and FMWA. That Water Supply District (WSD), which would be operated independently of each of those entities, would purchase the existing WFP from Phenix City Utilities.
- The WSD would be responsible for operations and maintenance of the plant, including treatment and distribution of the water to each of the three entities under a Contract agreement.
- In selling the plant, Phenix City Utilities would acquire funding to perform a multitude of improvements to its existing water distribution system and its infiltration and inflow reduction initiative, among others.
- It is understood that this option has been previously discussed between the three entities, but an agreement did not materialize from those discussions.

## III. Agreement with Phenix City Utilities

- If an agreement is unable to be reached in the establishment of a Water Supply District, the RCWA should still evaluate its existing purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities in order to prepare for its future demands.
- Phenix City Utilities has expressed an interest in providing both systems with enough water supply to meet the current and future demands through a purchase agreement; however the WFP is a considerable distance from both systems. Due to the distance from the WFP, water age once it enters either of those systems is a concern as it relates to the development of disinfectant by-products (DBPs).
- With more stringent regulations for DBPs taking effect in January 2012, Phenix City Utilities, RCWA, and/or FMWA will need to make considerations in any agreement which addresses the presence of DBPs in their systems, liabilities, and responsibility for water quality. All existing agreements between these entities should be evaluated as well.
- The ability of RCWA to enter into a suitable, long-term water purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities will depend largely on the resolution of the DBP discussion, but it will also depend on the establishment of an agreeable wholesale purchase price.

## IV. Construction of a Water Treatment Facility

- If an agreement is unable to be reached between the entities regarding either disinfection by-product concerns or failure to establish an agreeable pricing structure, then consideration should be given to the construction of a water treatment plant in east-central Russell County.
- It would not be economically feasible for the RCWA or FMWA to individually finance the capital costs required to design, permit, and construct a water treatment facility; however, this option becomes more feasible to implement if the two systems combined their resources to construct a water treatment facility in a more central location to their customer bases.
- A more centrally located facility would eliminate concerns about DBPs in either of their systems. This option would also provide independence from other utility systems as they would not be subject to purchase agreements.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

With over 600 miles of water main in its distribution system, the RCWA has identified several areas that it plans to address. Having operated for nearly forty years, portions of its infrastructure are of equivalent age and primarily consist of 160 psi rated pipe. There is an interest to improve and upgrade portions of the arterial mains to higher rated pipe, larger diameter pipe, or both. It is recommended that the RCWA continue to implement an annual maintenance and rehabilitation plan to make improvements to its existing infrastructure based on identified need.

It is understood that the RCWA plans to continue evaluation of its existing water service jurisdiction for the identification of potential large-capacity production wells. This exploration is encouraged as the other options presented are evaluated and a long-term strategy for meeting future water demands is developed.

The most economical and practical solution for all entities involved would be the establishment of a Water Supply District that could serve Phenix City Utilities, RCWA and FMWA. It would be a means to utilize the permitted capacity of the existing WFP, allowing for RCWA and FMWA to pay the lowest possible water rates and provide Phenix City Utilities with capital to complete vital improvements to their infrastructure. It is understood; however, that Phenix City Utilities is not interested in relinquishing ownership of the WFP at this time.

If a Water Supply District is unable to be established, then the most efficient solution would be for the RCWA to evaluate its existing water purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities. The parameters of the agreement which would need to be assessed are the long-term wholesale purchase price and the discussion of minimizing DBP generation in the system.

Finally, if a long-term water purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities cannot be reached, the most cost effective solution would be a partnership with the FMWA to permit and construct a centrally located Water Treatment Plant in central Russell County. While this option is not the most efficient solution due to the overall capital costs required to construct the project and the available capacity at the existing WFP, it is a solution that would provide RCWA and FMWA with independence and self-sufficiency in meeting its current and future water needs.

## RUSSELL COUNTY SEWER AUTHORITY

The Russell County Sewer Authority (RCSA) was formed in 1999 by the Russell County Commission. With limited available capital, it has been a challenge for the RCSA to establish a permanent sewage treatment system within its jurisdiction. A sewer study was commissioned and completed in 2002 to evaluate the feasibility for the development of the system. Recommendations from that study included a short-term strategy of reaching an agreement with Phenix City Utilities to treat collected sewage from the RCSA as well as a long-term goal of constructing a wastewater treatment facility.

RCSA entered into an agreement with Phenix City Utilities and currently has several customers connected to its sewer main along U.S. Highway 80 in Ladonia. The sewage from these customers is collected by RCSA and transferred to Phenix City Utilities' system, where it flows to the existing Phenix City Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), is treated and released into the Chattahoochee River.

Based on the estimates generated by the Russell County Comprehensive Plan (among other growth projections), the northwest quadrant of the County is anticipated to experience sustained growth and development over the next 25 years, with some minor growth in the southeast quadrant, and limited or no growth in the western half of the County. As a result, considerations have been made for the general growth of the northeastern portion of the County as suburbs are established outside of the current City Limits of Phenix City.

More specifically, the growth experienced in Fort Mitchell, Cottonton and surrounding areas as a result of the BRAC initiative has resulted in a significant increase in residential development in these areas. The development of a plan for the installation of sewer service throughout the County will be closely related to the manner in which sewer is first provided to the growth in Fort Mitchell. The potential methods for provision of sewer are on-site sewage treatment

systems, agreements for treatment with neighboring utility systems, installation of “decentralized” (packaged) treatment systems, or the construction of a centralized wastewater treatment plant.

#### I. On-Site Sewage Treatment Systems

- Historically, the installation and usage of on-site sewage treatment systems, known also as septic systems, has been the predominant means of sewage treatment throughout the RCSA jurisdiction.
- When favorable soil and water table conditions exist, a septic system is an economically feasible solution for sewage treatment in an individual home-site. In areas where soil percolation is poor or large developments are planned, including most commercial and industrial developments, septic systems typically do not perform satisfactorily.
- The continued implementation of septic systems is only recommended in limited situations. In areas where isolated developments are planned in locations with favorable soil conditions, an on-site sewage treatment system is recommended, especially in more rural locations. The further usage of septic systems in planned residential communities and developments, commercial developments, and especially industrial developments is not recommended. At a minimum, requirements should be adopted by the Russell County Planning Commission which limit the acceptable applications for installation of septic systems.

#### II. Agreements with Neighboring Utility Systems

- Ultimately, the long-term strategy of the RCSA should be the development of a sewage collection and treatment system that is independent from other utilities; however, the capital costs required to construct a wastewater treatment plant make it economically impractical at this time.
- There is also a considerable amount of time required to design, obtaining permits, and construct a new wastewater treatment plant, during which many new homes may be built with septic systems, missing the opportunity to connect to a permanent wastewater treatment system. By connecting to an existing system with available capacity, there will be no permits required and the process can be accelerated.
- With residential development moving at a high rate of construction and commercial development approaching, there is a need to provide an acceptable solution for sewage treatment as soon as possible. The option of partnering with an existing system is the most time-effective solution.
- There are two neighboring utility systems that were evaluated for their potential to enter into a long-term agreement for sewage treatment: Phenix City Utilities and Columbus Water Works (CWW). RCSA currently has a connection to Phenix City Utilities on U.S. Highway 80 in Ladonia which is available for future expansion. In the area in which the recent growth is most heavily concentrated, Fort Mitchell, neither CWW nor Phenix City Utilities currently have infrastructure in this area.
- While CWW does not have any infrastructure on the west side of the Chattahoochee River, they have an existing lift station located due east of the Fort Mitchell development. After evaluating the potential for connection to the CWW, it was determined that it is not economically feasible to continue to pursue this option.
- The nearest location to Phenix City Utilities’ collections system is approximately ten (10) miles north of the recent area of growth in Fort Mitchell. While there are capital costs involved in the construction of a sewer main to connect to Phenix City Utilities, the location of the line would allow for and encourage growth along the AL Highway 165 corridor between Phenix City and Fort Mitchell.
- Additionally, the installation of sewer main in this area provides an option for the eventual construction of a wastewater treatment plant adjacent to Uchee Creek, as originally recommended in the 2002 study.

#### III. Construction of Decentralized Sewage Treatment Systems

- A decentralized sewage treatment system is a hybrid, of sorts, between a conventional sewage treatment plant and an on-site sewage treatment system. It is utilized in planned residential developments or in commercial applications when it is not economically feasible to provide conventional sewage treatment.
- This technology is relatively new in comparison to central treatment plants, and it is not recommended to be utilized as a permanent treatment solution. While these plants are expandable from the standpoint of hydraulic capacity, they are not typically able to adjust to meet increased treatment limits when permits are



renewed, and this can result in significant capital expenditures in the construction of an entirely new system in the future.

- The number of decentralized sewage applications has increased in the past decade as the technology has evolved. For the particular application in Fort Mitchell, it could be considered if time were not a critical factor; however, permits are required for this operation, and this could slow the progress of making sewer available, potentially losing future connections and revenue as a result.
- ☒ This system has several instances where it could be applicable in other portions of the County. The planned development in the southeast corner of the County, Rivers Reach, would be a very strong candidate for the installation of a decentralized system. Additionally, there is a potential need in the Woodland Drive area, just south of U.S. Highway 80 in Ladonia. As development continues to progress and growth continues toward Seale over the next decade, there could be a need for this technology in that community as well.

#### IV. Construction of a Centralized Wastewater Treatment Facility

- The construction of a permanent, centralized treatment plant is the most ideal long-term strategy that should be pursued by the RCSA. Unfortunately, this requires significant capital that is unavailable to the RCSA at this time.
- As time is a critical factor in providing sewer for the growth in the Fort Mitchell area, the construction of a central wastewater treatment plant would not be time effective. The amount of time required to design, permit, and construct a new plant would result in a significant portion of the remaining residential construction to be developed with a septic system, reducing the available customer base.
- Based on the information available at this time, it appears that a likely location for the construction of a treatment plant would be adjacent to Uchee Creek near AL Highway 165. Whatever interim strategy is employed by the RCSA, it should be done by incorporating the eventual development of a wastewater treatment facility at this location.
- The eventual construction of a wastewater treatment plant in a more central location to the RCSA jurisdiction will allow for the system to be expanded to reach a larger customer base, and a newer wastewater treatment plant can be designed with adaptability to meet future treatment limits that may be imposed by ADEM.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, the RCSA has very little infrastructure and only a few customers. As the County Commission seeks to encourage growth, the expansion of sewer services will play a critical role in the rate at which that growth occurs. The historic practice of installing on-site sewage treatment systems cannot continue to be the predominant means of sewage treatment in order for this growth to occur.

Based on population growth projections, it appears that a substantial portion of the projected growth will occur in the next two to four years, leveling off to a gradual growth in the two decades to follow. As a result, the speed at which a viable means of sewage treatment can be provided in these growth areas is the most critical factor which must be addressed. Other factors that need to be considered are the capital costs need to implement the project, ability to incorporate the solution into a long-term strategy for sewage treatment throughout the County, and the interests of the customers being served.

Considering those factors, the most effective method to provide sewer service to the citizens of Russell County is to make a connection to a neighboring utility. This method can be implemented without the need for regulatory action and permit acquisition, reducing the amount of time needed to begin adding sewer customers to the RCSA system. The option of constructing and installing a sewer main along AL Highway 165 to the Phenix City Utilities' collection system requires the least capital costs of any option examined, and it provides sewer availability to approximately 10 miles of property along AL 165, which will further encourage residential, commercial, and industrial development in this area.

Finally, the installation of sewer along AL Highway 165 to connect to Phenix City Utilities will allow for the eventual construction of a wastewater treatment plant adjacent to Uchee Creek. It is understood that the RCSA already has property available in this area for this to occur, and with an established customer base and infrastructure in place to

transfer the sewage to this location, the capital costs to construct this system and the payoff time for the project will both be significantly reduced.

## **SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING**

The Russell County (Utilities Board) provides garbage service for residents outside of Phenix City and Hurtsboro. The garbage service area covers nearly 600 square miles of unincorporated Russell County where over 900 tons of refuse is collected on a monthly basis. The Utilities Board operates 35 different routes within the service area which are covered by 12 vehicles ranging from 3 to 25 yard capacity.

Solid waste disposal includes transfer stations provided in the County and transport and disposal of solid waste in the Salem Landfill. The capacity of the Salem Landfill is projected at 20-30 years, with potential expansion possible. A construction and debris landfill is located in Russell County along Brickyard Road near the intersection with AL-165. Consideration has been given to an additional landfill in this same general area.

Phenix City and Hurtsboro provide garbage service for residents and businesses in these incorporated municipalities.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

See also Chapter V

A complete assessment of economic conditions, opportunities, is critical to future development of Russell County and a beginning assessment of such type is included in Chapter V of this plan. A number of economic development organizations serve all or parts of the County. The Phenix City Economic Development Authority serves the urbanized area of Phenix City. Russell County is part of the Phenix City Chamber of Commerce, which supports Economic Development as does the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce. Russell County also participates in the Lee-Russell Council of Governments and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region.

In addition to these types of organizations, Russell County has historically supported economic development in various ways, short of developing separate industrial parks, major sites, etc. The County has endeavored to assist with infrastructure, traffic and roadway improvements, etc. in support of business development in the County. Although industries have closed in Russell County and the timber and textile industries have declined, Russell County is benefited by proximity to Fort Benning and the military/civilian job base, as well as the Kia Plant, north of the county. The overall growth projection for the region is expected to increase jobs from construction to other businesses. Diversifying the economy and expanding retail trade are keys to future community development along with workforce training.

Dynamic changes have come to the region, with projections of even greater development opportunities. Two large projects have fueled the current and expected development, Fort Benning and Kia. Estimated military invest on base is in the billions, including the relocation of the US Army Armory Center and School from Fort Knox. The transition and relocation is expected to bring more than 25,000 military and civilians creating in excess of 10,000 jobs and another 3,000 major retail and service jobs in the region. The Kia manufacturing plant in West Point is making a billion dollar investment and 300 jobs. Second tier, spin off jobs will follow in areas away from West Point. Other major business locations and expansions will bring other industry, jobs, and related commercial and residential developments.



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**TRANSPORTATION STUDY****4****INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND****STUDY AREA**

Located in east central Alabama along the Chattahoochee River bordering Georgia, Russell County encompasses a land area of 641 square miles. Russell County has two incorporated cities. Phenix City, the county seat, is located in the far northeast corner. Hurtsboro is on Russell's west-central border with Macon and Bullock counties. Other Russell County communities include Fort Benning, Fort Mitchell, Uchee, Pittsview, Seale, Cottonton, Crawford and Ladonia. Approximately 7 percent of eastern Russell County lies within the Fort Benning boundaries. [Figure 4.1](#) illustrates the study area.

The US Census reports Russell County had a population of 49,756 in 2000, ranking 23<sup>rd</sup> of Alabama's 67 counties. Phenix City has a population of nearly 29,000. Russell County experienced a modest 2.2 percent growth rate from 2000 to 2009, resulting in an estimated 2009 population of 50,846. The fastest growing areas of the county are the Fort Mitchell area, spurred by convenient access to Fort Benning via the Benning West Gate, and Ladonia, located west of Phenix City and the Smiths Station area.



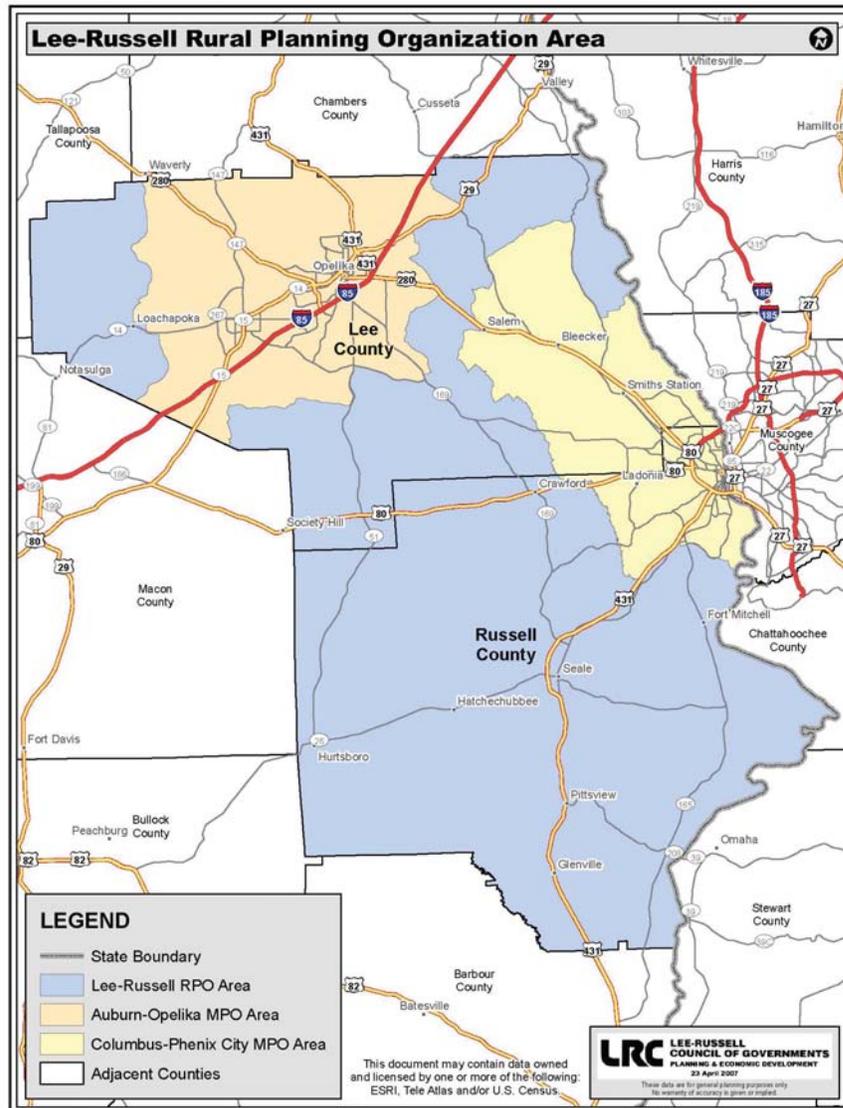
Figure 4.1 – Study Area



A large portion of eastern Russell County—including the Phenix City, Ladonia and Fort Mitchell areas—lies within the recently expanded Columbus-Phenix City Metropolitan Planning Organization (C-PCMPO) boundary. Improvements within this boundary are programmed in concert between C-PCMPO, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), and local jurisdictions.

The focus area for transportation considerations and recommendations in the Russell County Comprehensive Plan includes the portions of Russell County within the Lee-Russell Rural Planning Organization (RPO); in other words, outside the C-PCMPO boundaries. Improvements within the RPO are programmed by ALDOT in cooperation with the county. Transportation improvements specifically addressing needs within the C-PCMPO boundary, most particularly the Phenix City area, are included in C-PCMPO’s long range transportation plan (LRTP). It is important to note, however, that travel demand is dependent on attractor destinations and associated travel paths and patterns as opposed to planning boundaries. Therefore, consideration will be given to travel demands and resulting needs in the C-PCMPO area where they serve as feeders for travel demand and needs within the study focus area.

Figure 4.2 – Lee-Russell Rural Planning Organization Area



**TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Transportation goals serve as a structured target for evaluating conditions and deciding on appropriate recommendations. It is important that the goals have continuity with and are complementary to other related plans; therefore, the goals from the C-PCMPO 2035 LRTP were reviewed. They consist of: contributing to economic vitality and quality of life; coordinating land use decisions with transportation improvements; moving freight safely and efficiently; creating a seamless public transportation system; minimizing environmental impacts; assuring that transportation investments address needs; and enhancing safety.

The transportation goals drafted for the *Russell County Comprehensive Plan* state:

Create a multi modal transportation system which provides for continued improvement in regional access and improves connections within the county and between communities consistent with land use and economic development goals.

Performance measures are indicators of system operations and an important means of assessing how well the transportation system functions relative to specific goals. Measures can be quantitative or qualitative. A number of performance measures are used to evaluate the roadway system in order to identify facilities in potential need of improvement. These performance measures relate to congestion, safety and system preservation, as well as more qualitative analysis. The performance measures and associated factors are shown in [Figure 4.3](#).

**Figure 4.3 – Performance Measures**

<b>Performance Measures</b>	<b>Factors</b>
Congestion	Volume to capacity (v/c) ratio and Level of Service (LOS)
Safety	Vehicular crashes on road segments and at intersections
System Preservation	Bridge condition Pavement condition
Qualitative Deficiencies	Needs identified by stakeholder and public input

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

### **TRANSPORTATION ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **ISSUES**

The following transportation issues were raised during discussions with County staff:

- Need for an east-west connection from the Seale area toward AL 165 and Fort Benning
- Intersection safety
- Access problems and lack of interparcel circulation along key corridors, particularly in commercial areas (US 80, AL 165, US 431)
- Roadway design (narrow lane width, minimal shoulders)
- Pace of development has outstripped County’s ability to provide supporting infrastructure
- Limited resources to construct improvements or pave dirt roads

#### **OPPORTUNITIES**

The opportunities identified below appeared as recurring discussion themes during the June 2010 Town Hall Meetings:

- Increase roadway capacity in growth areas
- Improve road surfaces

### **DAILY COMMUTE PATTERNS**

Examination of the commute patterns of county residents and employees enables a better understanding of the demands placed upon the transportation system. By identifying certain corridors as crucial to existing and future travel demand, improvement projects and necessary implementation funding can be targeted to those areas, in turn providing the greatest improvements to overall county-wide mobility. In combination with other data sources, journey to work data gathered by the US Census is used to confirm findings indicative of key destinations and transportation corridors within the county.

The following tables provide county commuting patterns according to US Census year 2000 journey to work data. [Figure 4.4](#) identifies the manner of commute for Russell County residents. Not surprisingly, the data indicates that Russell County residents overwhelmingly drive alone to work. Statistics for the entire state are also provided for comparison purposes.



**Figure 4.4 – Manner of Commute for Russell County Residents**

Location	Workers Age 18 and Over	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Transit	Walk	Other	Work at Home	Mean Travel Time
Russell County	19,859	82.1%	13.9%	0.6%	1.3%	1.1%	1.0%	24.6 min
Alabama	1,900,089	83.0%	12.3%	0.5%	1.3%	0.8%	2.1%	24.8 min

The county of employment for Russell residents is shown in [Figure 4.5](#). In 2000, more of the county’s residents worked in neighboring Muscogee County (48.5 percent) than in Russell County (35.5 percent). The top three destinations for Russell residents commuting outside the county to work were Muscogee (GA), Lee, and Chattahoochee (GA) counties.

**Figure 4.5 – Location of Work for Russell County Residents**

County of Work	2000	
	Number	Percent
Muscogee County, GA	9,623	48.5%
Russell County, AL	7,051	35.5%
Lee County, AL	1,048	5.3%
Chattahoochee County, GA	981	4.9%
Other	1,156	5.8%
Total	19,859	100.0%

[Figure 4.6](#) shows commuters traveling into Russell County in 2000. A majority (53 percent) of Russell workers reside in the county. The top four counties of origin for workers commuting into Russell County were Lee, Muscogee (GA), Barbour, and Harris (GA) counties.

**Figure 4.6 – Location of Residence for Russell County Workers**

County of Residence	2000	
	Number	Percent
Russell County, AL	7,051	53.2%
Lee County, AL	2,682	20.3%
Muscogee County, GA	2,479	18.7%
Barbour County, AL	335	2.5%
Harris County, GA	214	1.6%
Other	482	3.7%
Total	13,243	100.0%

**ROADWAY ASSESSMENT**

Several of Russell County’s key cross-county roadway facilities radiate from the Columbus-Phenix City area. Traveling east-west across the extreme northern portion of county, US 80 provides access to the I-85 south corridor via Tuskegee to the west, as well as to Atlanta and points north via I-185 from Columbus. Further east, US 80 also connects with the I-75 corridor near Macon. The predominant north-south corridor is US 431. North of Phenix City, US 431 intersects I-85 in the Auburn-Opelika area before continuing north to ultimately connect with I-20 near Anniston. South of Phenix City, US 431 travels southwest to Seale before turning due south through Barbour County to Dothan and its ready access to I-10 and the Gulf Coast. Additional north-south mobility along the critical eastern edge of Russell

County near Fort Benning is provided by AL 165, which runs south from Phenix City to Eufaula in northern Barbour County. Meanwhile, County Road 28 provides convenient access from the southern Phenix City area westward to AL 169, or northward to Ladonia via Woodland Road.

Due to its central location, numerous key roadway connections also occur in Seale. AL 169 offers connectivity northward to US 80 and on to I-85 near Opelika in Lee County. AL 26 provides an important connection westward to Hurtsboro, while County Road 18 travels eastward to Fort Benning. On the western side of the county, AL 51 and County Roads 33, 49 and 65 provide north-south mobility. Additional east-west connectivity is offered by County Roads 4 and 12 in the southern half of the county, and County Roads 22 and 24 in the north.

## ROADWAY CHARACTERISTICS

Full understanding of transportation needs necessitates development of a thorough baseline description of the existing system to serve as the standard against which future scenarios can be assessed. Russell County has a diverse roadway network for which data from local, state and federal sources was collected. Required data included descriptive information such as roadway functional classification and type and number of lanes, as well as performance data such as usage (average daily traffic), crash history and condition. Assessment of the roadway system utilized a variety of analysis tools.

### *Roadway Inventory*

A representative field inventory of roadway characteristics and conditions has been conducted as part of the roadway analysis. The inventory's emphasis was placed on County and State routes that provide cross-county connectivity, as well as those that serve schools and other community facilities. In addition to evaluating roadway characteristics such as number of lanes, lane/shoulder width and general traffic operations, surrounding land use was also considered.

### *Roadway System and Mileage*

The State System in Russell County (those roadways maintained by the State) consists of a total of approximately 130 centerline miles and includes AL 1 (US 431), AL 8 (US 80), AL 26, AL 38 (US 280), AL 51, AL 165, AL 169, and AL 208. Russell County is responsible for maintaining 383 miles of paved road and 213 miles of unpaved roads. Phenix City and Hurtsboro maintain all roads within their city limits.

### *Functional Classification*

Classifying the roadway system by how each roadway functions allows for analysis and evaluation of the roadway's effectiveness within the system. Roadways are described by the federal functional classification system, which defines a roadway based on its accessibility and mobility. For the roadway system, accessibility refers to a facility's connections to surrounding destinations, while mobility refers to the movement of through traffic with neither origins nor destinations in the immediate area. On one end of the spectrum are expressways and interstates, which provide the greatest mobility but limited accessibility. On the other end are local roads that provide the greatest accessibility but restrict rapid through movement. Functional classification indicates a facility's relative importance within the roadway network, and may assist in prioritizing projects or allocating limited funding. Russell County's roadway system according to major functional classification categories is described below and illustrated in [Figure 4.7](#).

- *Interstates and expressways* provide the greatest mobility because they permit high-speed movement and access is generally limited to intersections with the network at defined interchanges. These roads are designed for interstate and inter-county travel. Russell County does not have any interstate facilities.
- *Arterial roadways* carry large volumes of traffic at moderate speeds and connect activity centers. They are continuous routes that form the backbone of the street network, and are primarily oriented towards community level vehicle travel, connecting town centers, corridors, main streets and neighborhoods. Arterials can be classified as either urban or rural, and further broken down into principal and minor arterials. Of the two, principal arterials provide more mobility and perform somewhat like an interstate. Minor arterials have slightly less mobility and connect principal arterials to collectors. Russell County's arterial system includes urban and rural principal and minor arterials. Rural principal arterials include US 80, US 280 and US 431; rural minor arterials include AL 26 and AL 169. Of these roadways, US 280/431 and

- US 80 carry the largest volumes, with year 2008 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) in excess of 35,000 vehicles per day (vpd) within the Phenix City urban area. The rural minor arterials (AL 26 and AL 169) experience AADT ranging from a high of 2,330 vpd on AL 26 east of Hatchechubbee to a low of 1,300 vpd on AL 26 immediately west of Hurtsboro.
- *Collector streets* accumulate traffic from local streets in residential and commercial areas and distribute it to the arterial system at low to moderate speeds. Called urban collectors in urbanized areas, rural collector roadways (outside the urban area) are classified as major collectors or minor collectors. Although numerous County Roads are classified as rural major or minor collectors, AL 51 and AL 165—both rural major collectors—are the only two State Routes classified as rural collectors in Russell County. The year 2008 AADT along AL 165 progressively decreases from a high of 11,590 vpd immediately south of the Phenix City limits to 2,520 vpd at the southern end near the Barbour County line. AADT along AL 51 averages 1,080 vpd or less.
  - *Local streets* make up the remainder—and typically the lion's share—of the roadway network. They feed the collector system, providing access to adjacent properties and carrying relatively low traffic volumes at low speeds. Local streets are often found in neighborhoods, near non-residential land uses that do not depend on a high volume of walk-in business, and rural areas.

#### *Number of Lanes*

The majority of Russell County roadways are two lanes. Within the Phenix City urban area, four-lane roadways include US 80 (Phenix City North Bypass), US 280, US 431, and Crawford Road (14<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Street) between US 80/280/431 and the Chattahoochee River. Outside the urban area, the only roadways with more than two lanes are US 431 and several miles of AL 165 from US 431 south towards Fort Benning.

#### *Capacity and Level of Service Measures*

The level of system performance varies by type of transportation facility, geographic location, time of day and other characteristics. Each roadway in the network has a theoretical capacity based on its functional classification and characteristics. When roadways are operating in free-flow conditions, capacity constraints are not apparent. However, as traffic volumes increase, available capacity is restricted and roadway congestion results. Federal regulations define traffic congestion as the level at which system performance is no longer acceptable due to congestion.

Capacity needs are identified using measures such as daily volume to capacity (v/c) ratio, which is an indicator of the level of service (LOS) that can be expected on a specific roadway. A v/c ratio less than 0.75 is an acceptable LOS in a rural environment, indicating that the road can handle additional volume and remain within capacity. A v/c ratio over 0.75 indicates the additional traffic volume will result in a less than acceptable LOS. A v/c ratio greater than 1.0 indicates that the road's traffic volume exceeds its capacity. The computation and analysis of roadway v/c allows system-wide analysis of the transportation network, thereby providing an approximation of the LOS of roadways or corridors based on information such as lane geometry, observed roadway speed and traffic volumes (AADT).

V/C ratios are linked to LOS to provide an easier way to communicate roadway operations. LOS is a user-based assessment of conditions that gives roadways a letter designation representing the best operating conditions (LOS A) to the worst (LOS F). The 2001 *Highway Capacity Manual* provides the following LOS guidelines:

- LOS A, B and C indicate conditions where traffic can move relatively freely.
- LOS D signifies that vehicle speed and freedom of movement is beginning to decline slightly due to increasing volume.
- LOS E indicates conditions where traffic volumes are at or close to capacity, resulting in serious delays.
- LOS F is the point at which a breakdown in vehicular flow occurs. This condition exists when the demand for space exceeds the capacity of the roadway.

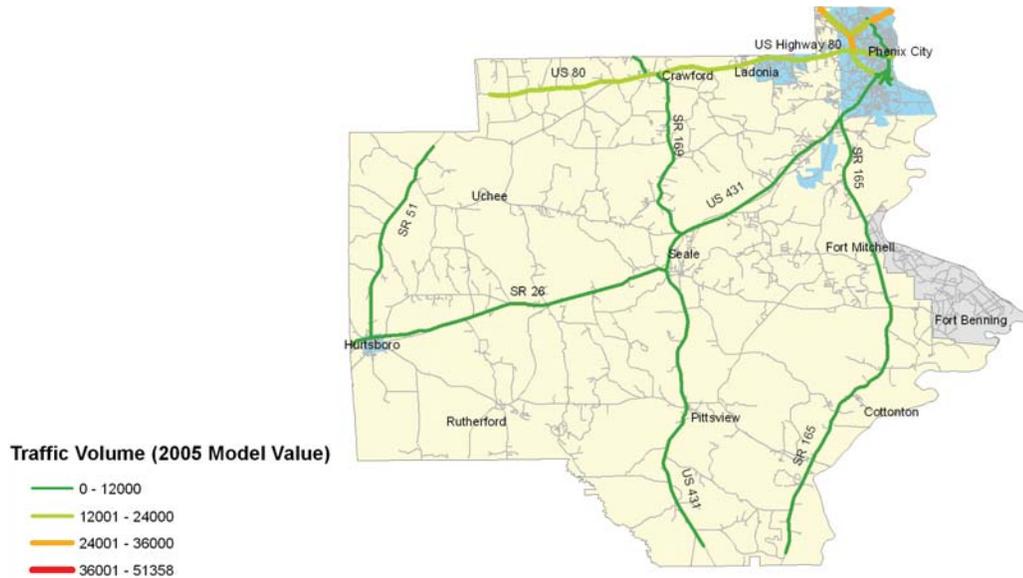




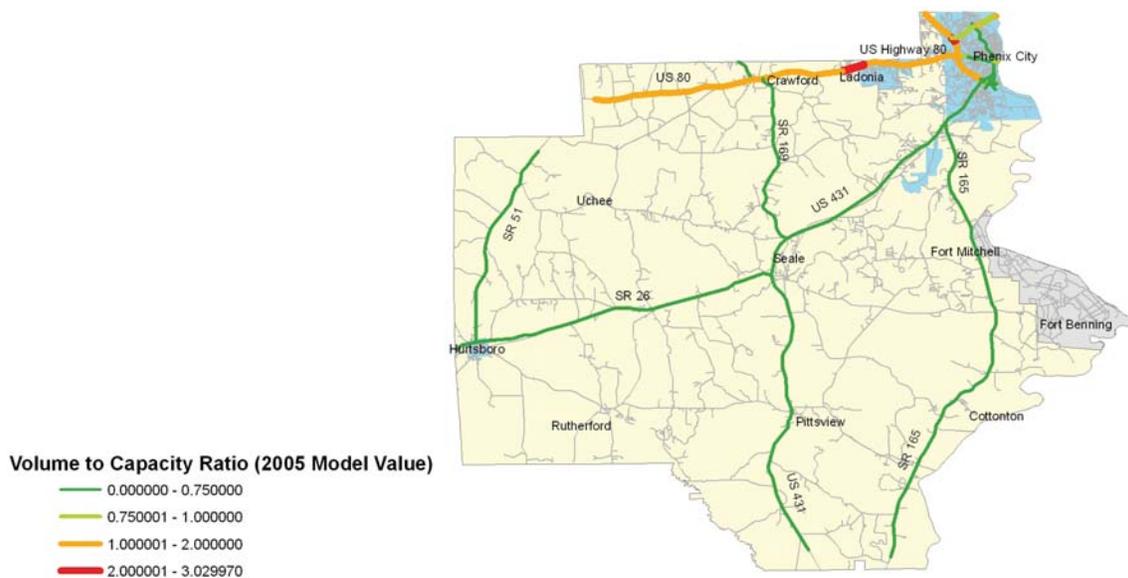
### EXISTING ROADWAY CONDITIONS

The focus of this transportation element is on the roadways that are primary to connectivity within and external to the county, and therefore carry larger volumes of traffic. For those segments most likely to be currently experiencing congestion (e.g., US 431, US 80, Crawford Road, and Broad Street within the Phenix City limits), information regarding levels of service (LOS) is available in the C-PCMPO 2035 L RTP. **Figure 4.8** provides existing (2005) traffic volumes from the Statewide Travel Demand Model along the State roadway network in Russell County, while **Figure 4.9** provides existing VC ratios.

**Figure 4.8 – Existing (2005) Traffic Volumes**



**Figure 4.9 – Existing (2005) VC Ratios**



**PROGRAMMED IMPROVEMENTS**

A review of programmed improvements included in ALDOT plans was conducted. Most of the projects are within the Phenix City limits, and therefore implementation is coordinated through the MPO. A limited number of improvements were identified in other areas of Russell County, as shown in **Figure 4.10**.

**Figure 4.10 – Currently Programmed ALDOT Projects**

<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Project Location</b>	<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Source</b>
Streetscape	Main Street, Hurtsboro (0.0 mile)	2010	\$100,000	STIP
		2010	\$100,000	Rural
Bridge Replacement	SR 1/US 431 over Hatchechubbee Creek (0.2 mile)	2011	\$205,000	STIP
		2011-2012	\$2,334,000	Rural
Bridge Replacement	SR 26 over High Log and Hatchechubbee Creeks (0.02 mile)	2010	\$243,000	STIP
		2010-2012	\$1,723,000	Rural
Bridge Replacement	SR 1/US 431 over Uchee Creek Relief (0.01 mile)	2014	\$326,000	Rural
Bridges & Approaches	SR 1/US 431 over Uchee Creek (0.25 mile)	2014	\$1,408,000	Rural
Widening & Resurfacing	SR 51 from Macon County Line to 1 mile north of CR 9 (7.57 miles)	2011	\$2,380,000	STIP
Signalization	SR 26 @ Main Street, Hurtsboro (flashing beacon) (0.01 mile)	2009	\$5,000	STIP

<sup>1</sup> STIP=ALDOT Statewide Transportation Improvement Program 2008 (10/1/2008-9/30/2011)

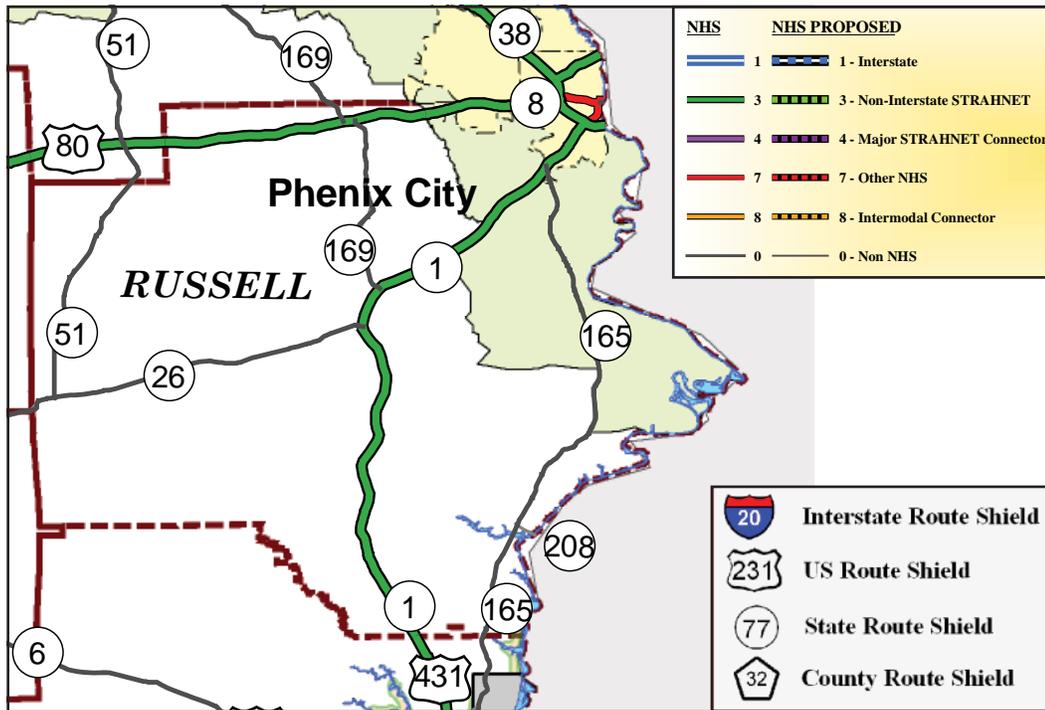
<sup>2</sup> Rural=ALDOT Rural Planning (2010-2015)

**TRUCK TRAFFIC**

A region’s economic vitality depends on its ability to safely and efficiently move goods through and within its borders, and truck is the most common mode of freight transport for delivery to businesses and manufacturers. Truck traffic is an important consideration for traffic patterns and countywide mobility, and a major factor in the efficiency of the county’s transportation system. In addition to occupying the physical space of more than two passenger vehicles, these large vehicles have operational characteristics that impact the flow of traffic. Roadways must be specially designed for truck traffic, including equipping them with longer sight distances and wider turning radii. Commercial vehicles operate at slower speeds and take longer to accelerate, which can impede the flow of surrounding traffic. Heavy vehicles can disrupt the flow of traffic, create hazards for pedestrians, and cause noise pollution in downtown areas.

The National Highway System (NHS) is a network of interlinking major highways (Interstate, STRAHNET (Strategic Highway Network), and other federal and state highways) important to the nation’s economy, defense and mobility, and of particular relevance to trucking. NHS facilities in Russell County are shown in **Figure 4.11**. Designed for the rapid mobilization and deployment of the armed forces, STRAHNET roadways connect military bases to the Interstate highway network. STRAHNET routes in Russell County consist of US 80, US 280 and US 431. Other federal and state highways in Russell County on the NHS are Crawford Road east of US 431 and Broad Street north of US 280/431.

Figure 4.11 – National Highway System (Russell County Excerpt)

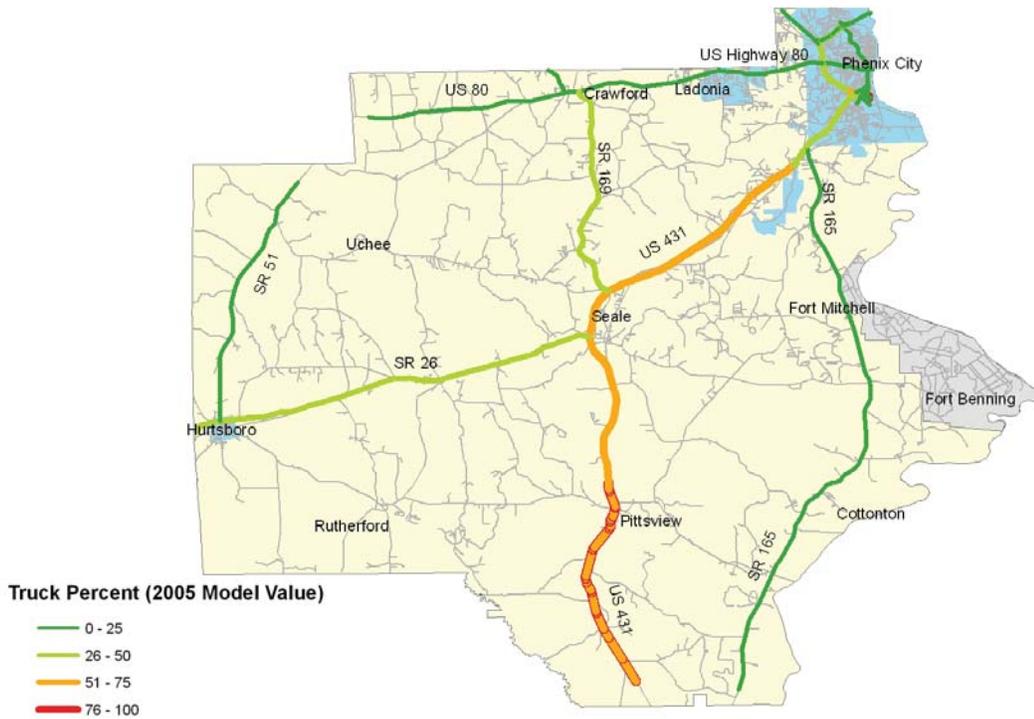


In addition to traditional goods movement and delivery, AL 165 currently experiences significant truck traffic associated with Fort Benning and the Mead paper factory. Truck traffic related to lumbering activities is also present in the western portions of the county, with numerous log trucks traveling County Roads 4 and 43 to connect with AL 165.

The percentage of total traffic attributed to commercial vehicles varies by location within the county. Figure 4.12 illustrates 2005 truck percent along the State roadway network in Russell County as indicated in the Statewide Travel Demand Model. Not surprisingly, the US 431 corridor is shown to carry large volumes of commercial vehicles.

ALDOT’s Alabama Traffic Data website provides 2008 TADT (commercial vehicles expressed as a percent of AADT) for its count locations along Russell County’s network. Locations along US 80 and AL 51 near the Lee County line record 24-hour commercial truck traffic (TADT) levels approaching 25 percent of total traffic. Similarly, truck traffic accounts for 15 to 20 percent of all traffic along AL 169, US 431 south of Seale, AL 26 and AL 51 near Hurtsboro, and AL 165 south towards Fort Benning and Barbour County. The location with the largest truck percentage in the county is AL 208, near the Georgia line east of Cottonton, where truck traffic accounts for 45 percent of total traffic. Increased truck volumes are likely to be seen in the coming years due to increased military activity in the Columbus area.

Figure 4.12 – Existing (2005) Truck Percent



**SAFETY**

According to ALDOT accident data, Russell County experienced a total of 1,780 on-road accidents in 2009, of which 413 were injury accidents and 8 fatal accidents. At the same time, there were a total of 915 intersectional accidents in Russell County in 2009, of which 211 resulted in an injury and 2 in a fatality. Not surprisingly, the Phenix City urban area experiences a majority of the accidents. Of the total accidents, 30 percent (536 accidents) of the on-road accidents and 19 percent (171 accidents) of the intersectional accidents were in rural Russell County. However, rural areas accounted for 75 percent (6 accidents) of the fatal on-road accidents. The number of accidents occurring in Russell County is expected to increase as population and traffic volumes continue to grow into the future.

In looking at Russell’s rural on-road accidents, 313 accidents (58 percent) occurred on State routes in 2009, including 4 (66 percent) of the fatality accidents. The State route with the largest number of on-road accidents was AL 8 (US 80) with 122 accidents, followed by AL 165 with 96 accidents (no fatality accidents) and AL 1 (US 431) with 76 accidents (1 fatality accident). Other State routes had significantly fewer accidents, with 9 accidents (1 fatality accident) on AL 26, 8 on AL 169, and 2 on AL 51. On-road accidents recorded along AL 8 (US 80) included 2 fatality accidents, while AL 1 (US 431) and AL 26 both recorded 1 fatality accident each. In considering this information, it is important to keep in mind that a majority of vehicle miles traveled are on State roads.

County roads in rural Russell that experienced 5 or more on-road accidents in 2009 included:

- Opelika Road (link 1430) – 16 accidents
- CR 28 east from AL 169 (link 1141) – 15 accidents (2 fatal accidents)
- CR 18 from Seale east to Fort Benning (link 1062) – 14 accidents
- CR 24 from AL 165 west towards US 431 (link 1100) – 12 accidents
- CR 157 from Seale northeast to US 431 south of Phenix City (link 1568) – 12 accidents
- CR 45/Woodland Drive from CR 28 to US 80 (link 1210) – 11 accidents
- CR 39 north from Pittsview to AL 165 (link 1047) – 8 accidents

- CR 33/65 between US 80 and CR 22 (link 1090) – 6 accidents
- Price Road west from US 280/431 (link 1244) – 6 accidents
- CR 43 south from Seale to AL 165 (link 1041) – 5 accidents
- Stafford Road west of Opelika Road/CR 427 (link 1240) – 5 accidents

The rural Russell County intersections that experienced the greatest numbers of accidents in 2009 were located in areas adjacent to the Phenix City urban area, where larger traffic volumes and more dense development contribute to a higher accident rate. In addition, many of these accident locations are also where State and County roads intersect. The three primary pockets for higher accident locations include:

- US 431 near the Lee County line – County Road 427 at Cutrate Road (11 accidents), US 431 at Price Road (10 accidents), and US 431 at the Zaxby's/Super Walmart access road (4 accidents)
- US 80 near Ladonia – US 80 at Evans Road 96 accidents), US 80 at Coffield Drive (5 accidents), and US 80 at County Road 212 (4 accidents)
- US 431 at AL 165 – US 431 at AL 165 (5 accidents), AL 165 at County Road 39 (4 accidents), and AL 165 at Seale Road (4 accidents)

County Road segments that experienced four or more accidents in 2009 include: CR 18 (Owens Road), CR 28 (Sandfort Road), CR 24 (Bradley Road), CR 39 (Nuckols Road/Greenburt Road), CR 45 (Woodland Drive), CR 137 (Old Seale Highway), Cutrate Road, Price Road, and Setter Drive. The 15 accidents on CR 28 (Sandfort Road) included 2 fatality accidents.

## SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITIONS

### *Bridge Condition*

Federal regulations require that bridges be maintained in safe condition before federal transportation funds can be used for other transportation projects. Maintaining the bridge network is important because of the delays created by diversions when bridges are posted or closed. Not only is the movement of goods and people diverted and delayed, but emergency vehicle response time can be increased greatly due to bridge restrictions.

All state and locally owned public bridges are inspected at least every two years as part of ALDOT's safety inspection program. The bridge sufficiency rating is a score, ranging from 0 to 100 (worst to best), that assesses a bridge's structural adequacy and safety, serviceability and functional obsolescence, and essentiality for public use. Generally, structural deficiency refers to the inadequacy of the bridge structure, while functional obsolescence is related to the bridge's insufficient geometric capability to carry traffic, including inadequate deck geometry, underclearance or approach roadway alignment. A functionally obsolete bridge is defined as too narrow to serve the existing volume of traffic, regardless of structural integrity. Each bridge must also be rated for its safe load capacity. If the maximum legal load exceeds the operating load, the bridge must be immediately strengthened, closed or posted.

ALDOT maintains and regularly updates the bridge inventory, with sufficiency ratings updated in accordance with FHWA's National Bridge Inventory (NBI) Coding Guide. The inventory includes 200 bridges in Russell County, of which 107 are maintained by the county, 74 by the the state, and 19 by municipalities. The median sufficiency rating of all 200 bridges was 93.9, with an average sufficiency rating of 84.2. A total of 11 bridges (6 percent) received a sufficiency rating less than 50, potentially signifying a need for near-term replacement. Of the 200 bridges, 13 (7 percent) were found to be structurally deficient and 20 (10 percent) functionally obsolete. As of \_\_\_\_\_, xx bridges (xx percent) were 25 or more years old, including xx bridges (xx percent) aged 55 or older. Generally speaking, after a bridge reaches the age of 50 years, some form of rehabilitation or replacement is anticipated.

Russell County has historically obligated \$\$\$ in annual revenue to fund bridge improvements. Those funds include \_\_\_\_\_ (historical Federal Aid allotment, local match, other???)



*Pavement Condition*

Resurfacing needs are addressed by Russell County for all County maintained roads, while the State is responsible for resurfacing on federal and state routes. For the last few years, Russell County has used its federal aid money on resurfacing. In addition to several small residential roads resurfaced this year, Opelika Road from Lee County to the Phenix City limits was resurfaced using federal aid (MPO funds).

A portion of County maintained roads are “State Inspected Roads.” As a condition for the prior use of federal funds to improve these facilities, the County is obliged to maintain the State Inspected Roads at a satisfactory level. To that end, ALDOT staff grade these roadways in the spring of every year, inventorying the condition of the surface, shoulders, paint/stripping, signage and potholes. Should a State Inspected Road receive a failing grade (below 70) for three years in a row, ALDOT has the option to withhold the County’s federal funding allotment until the roadway has been returned to an acceptable condition.

Russell County currently has \_\_\_\_ miles of State Inspected Roads, which also constitute the majority of through and connector routes in the county. Due to the significant impact such a funding withholding would have on the County’s transportation programs, the State Inspected Roads receive priority in resurfacing decisions.

*Unimproved Roadways*

The more rural portions of Russell County have a number of unimproved (dirt) roadways. Currently there are 213 total miles of dirt road, which are graded annually by the County.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

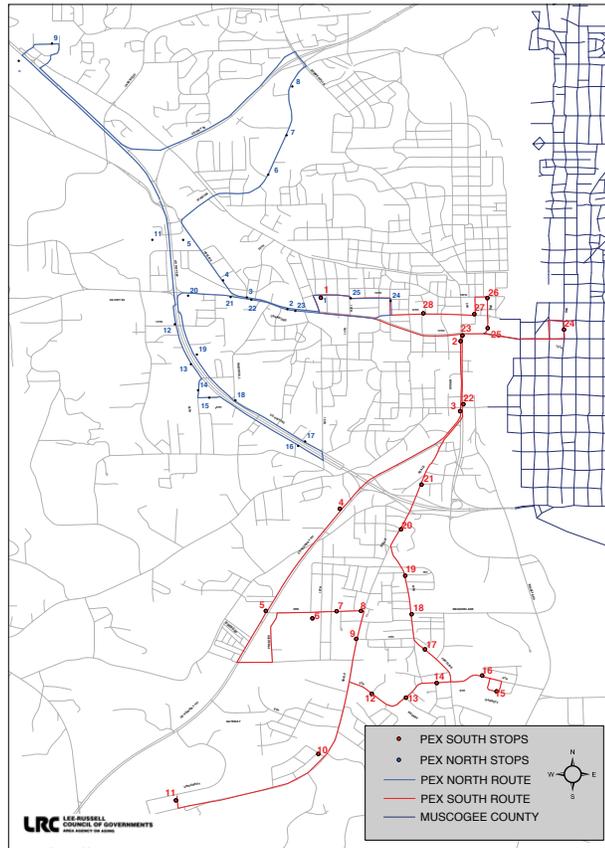
Russell County residents have two public transit service options available depending on their location: Phenix City Express and Lee-Russell Public Transit’s (LRPT’s) Russell Metro Connection. In addition, several human service agencies provide transportation for their Russell County clients. Depending on agency, services can be free, reimbursed through Medicaid or other governmental funding sources, or client fare based.

**PHENIX CITY EXPRESS (PEX)**

The Phenix City Express (PEX) operates two fixed routes and paratransit service within the city limits of Phenix City. Service is offered Monday-Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Both routes depart the Central Activities Center/Phenix City-Russell County Library on the hour and complete their circuit in 50 minutes. The North route primarily services locations along Stadium Drive and US 280/431 between the Walmart north of Lakewood Drive and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The South route travels south down Broad Street to service locations along US 431/Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway, Seale Road, and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Fontaine Road. The South route then travels over the river to Columbus, where it stops at 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to enable transfers to the METRA system, before returning to the library. **Figure 4.13** shows the PEX fixed routes.

PEX fixed route adult fares cost \$1.00 one-way. A discounted 15-trip fare card can be purchased for \$14.00. Children and senior citizens/the disabled also pay discounted rates for one-way/fare cards tickets of \$0.75/\$11.25 and \$0.50/\$7.50, respectively. PEX paratransit fares are \$2.00 one-way inside the Phenix City limits, or \$3.00 one-way inside the Columbus city limits (only available for medical visits).

Figure 4.13 – PEX Fixed Routes



**RUSSELL METRO CONNECTION**

Lee-Russell Public Transit (LRPT) offers the general public curb-to-curb Dial-a-Ride service in Russell County through its Russell Metro Connection. Service is available within a 2.5 mile radius from designated major roads in Russell County and the City of Smiths Station for transport to Phenix City locations (see Figure 4.14). Residents who do not live within the designated service area may schedule service from designated pick-up points along each route. Service is provided during two distinct morning and afternoon periods. The morning pick-up/ drop-off period stretches from 8:00-10:00 AM ET, with return pick-up/drop-off from 2:30-4:00 PM ET. Service is provided on a first come, first served basis, with advanced scheduling up to a maximum of two weeks and minimum of one day. Routine trip service may also be requested.

Service by day of week and corridor is listed below, along with the designated pick-up points.

- Monday—Pittsview/Seale (East Side) Route (US 431 corridor): Pittsview Gas Station (CR4), Old Russell County Courthouse, Citgo on Hwy 431
- Tuesday—Bleeker/Smiths Station Route (US 280 corridor): Piggly Wiggly, Bleeker Junction BP Station (Hwy 280)
- Wednesday—Hurtsboro/Hatchachubee/Seale (West Side) Route (AL 26 corridor): Hurtsboro Senior Center, Comprehensive Health Clinic, Our Town Gas Station, Seale Post Office, Citgo on Hwy 431
- Thursday—Crawford/Ladonia Route (US 80 corridor): Ladonia Square, Fred’s (Ladonia), Rainbow Foods (Crawford)
- Friday—Fort Mitchell Route (AL 165 corridor): Petro Station on Hwy 165, Russell County Senior Center, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, BP Station on Hwy 165

Figure 4.14 – Russell Metro Connection Service Days and Area

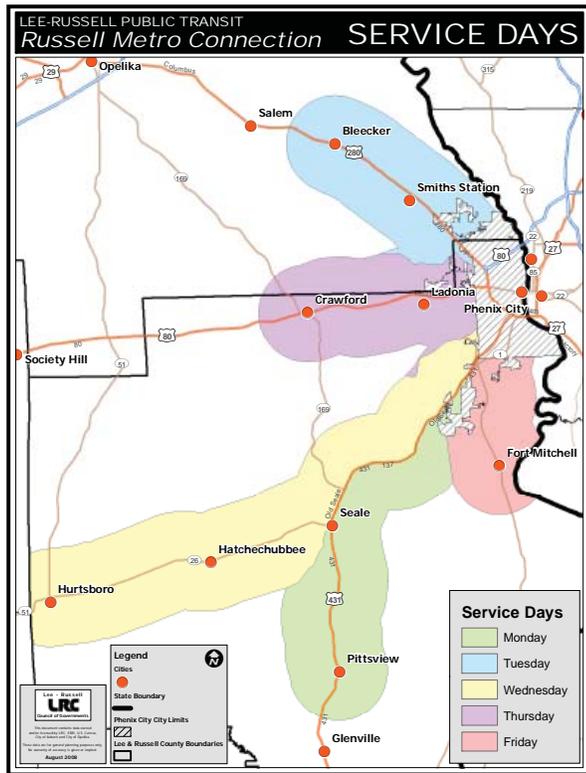
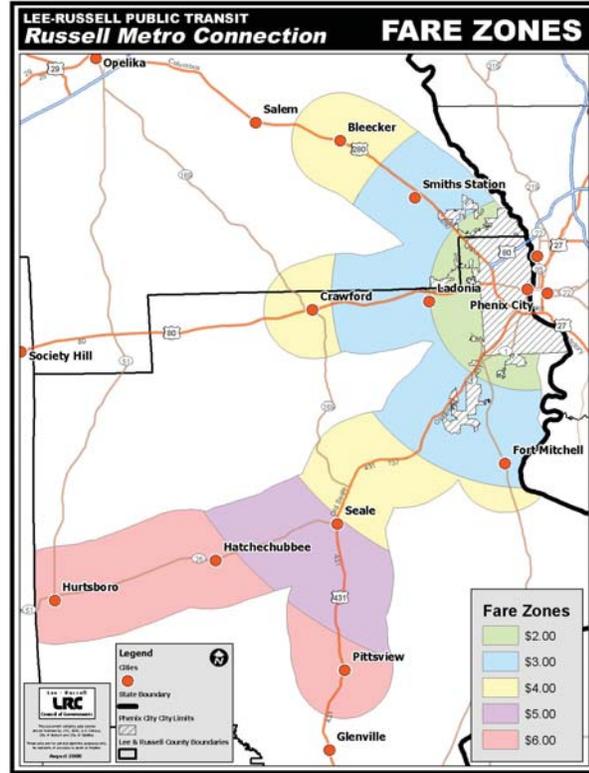


Figure 4.15 – Russell Metro Connection Fare Zones



One-way fares are based on zones and range from \$2.00 in Zone 1 (up to 5 miles from Courthouse) to \$6.00 for Zone 5 (up to 25 miles from Courthouse). Figure 4.15 shows the zones by route. Passengers utilizing the designated pick-up points are transported to Phenix City for half the zone fare. A fare card ticket allowing 10 one-way trips can be purchased at a 25 percent discount. The fare card ticket cost ranges from \$15.00 for a Zone 1 to \$45.00 for Zone 5.

**BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN**

Although an inventory of existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities does not currently exist for Russell County, sidewalks are present in various locations within Phenix City and Hurtsboro. The MPO is responsible for bicycle and pedestrian planning within its boundaries, in conjunction with the local jurisdictions. Several opportunities were identified in the Phenix City Comprehensive Plan, including the Holland Creek Greenway, north extension of the Riverwalk, and rehabilitation of the 14th Street Bridge into a pedestrian and bicycle only use facility. To date, the unincorporated areas have not experienced sufficient demand to warrant extensive facilities; however, increased attention will be required as growth occurs. The lack of adequate pedestrian facilities—sidewalks, crosswalks and refuge areas—within many activity centers countywide, including near schools, is a current concern that needs to be addressed.

The 2009 Draft Alabama Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan recommended one route in Russell County. Beginning near Linden in west Alabama, East/West 4 would cross through Selma, Prattville, Montgomery, and Tuskegee before entering extreme northern Russell County to terminate in Phenix City. The bike route alignment follows the Black Belt Nature and Heritage Trail Scenic Byway (US 80) east from Montgomery.

An increasingly popular method of adding bicycle and pedestrian facilities involves the conversion of old railway lines to multiuse trails. Two such potential future opportunities may exist in Russell County. These rail line segments were listed in the 2008 Alabama Rail Plan Update as having been abandoned from 1971-2008:

- Mahrt (north of Cottonton along AL 165) to Eastmont – 71.95 miles through Russell, Macon and Montgomery counties) – Seaboard System Railroad (SBD; later became CSX), 1986
- Troy to Hurtsboro – 45.96 miles through Pike, Bullock and Russell counties – Central of Georgia Railway (C of G; later acquired by Norfolk Southern), 1989

There are no ongoing projects or plans for rails-to-trails conversions in the Lee-Russell COG area, although a 2004 draft ALDOT Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identified a potential rails-to-trails project location extending from State Road 165 south of Phenix City to County Road 49. Rails-to-trails conversions should be investigated if future opportunities arise.

## RAIL

There are no passenger rail services in Russell County. Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) operates a secondary main line connecting Birmingham and Columbus, which enters Russell County along an alignment roughly parallel to US 280. In Phenix City, the line turns east following Railroad Street across the Chattahoochee River. In Columbus, it turns south and eventually back west along 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue before crossing the Chattahoochee River into Phenix City south of Dillingham Street. It continues southward through Fort Mitchell, eventually crossing back over the Chattahoochee into Georgia near Cottonton and AL 208. There are no intermodal operations in Russell County, but NS does maintain a large rail yard in downtown Columbus. According to year 2006 rail freight traffic density statistics for Alabama, the annual line density for the NS line through Russell County ranged from 1-5 Millions of Gross Tons (MGT).

## AVIATION

There are no public air carrier or general aviation airports in Russell County.

## PORTS

The Alabama State Port Authority's network of 11 inland docks includes a 110-acre facility at mile 153 along the Chattahoochee River at Phenix City.

## TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT

The primary objective of the transportation concept of the Russell County Comprehensive Plan is not merely the movement of motor vehicles, but to support land use activities and the efficient movement of people and goods through a variety of travel modes. In accordance with the overall Comprehensive Plan for Russell County, the transportation element seeks to balance mobility with access and to create pedestrian and bicycle friendly communities that improve neighborhood quality while meeting the mobility and economic development needs of the county.

An efficient transportation system is vital to the area's livability as well as the region's economic growth. This efficiency is achieved through the linking of land use planning with transportation planning, resulting in adequate roadway capacity to support planned or anticipated growth and accompanying travel demands. Public transit is an important part of a complete transportation concept. Because public transit is most effective in areas with high density development and population concentrations, it is not appropriate for most areas of unincorporated Russell County. However, targeted transit improvements to enhance the efficiency of the County's transportation network and facilitate energy efficient access to current and developing employment centers should be investigated as growth and development continue in the eastern portion of the county into the future.

The following principles guide continued development of the Russell County transportation system:

- Shorten commutes to work by encouraging growth near employment centers.
- Promote safe access to arterial roadways from collector streets.
- Provide adequate access to all properties.
- Maximize separation of through traffic and local traffic in street upgrades and widening.
- Identify high priority transportation corridors to direct infrastructure investments.



- Require new road construction and upgrades to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety and include transit stops where appropriate.
- Preserve the rural character of Russell County by carefully considering whether needs can be met through upgrades focused on roadway condition, access and safety.

Transportation and land use are inextricably linked. Existing roadways encourage development, with additional roads then built to meet the needs of anticipated and programmed future development. Certain land uses require particular types of transportation infrastructure to satisfy the nature and intensity of anticipated travel. Because of this close association, it is vital to coordinate the planning of both land use and transportation to ensure that limited funds are used in the most appropriate manner.

The transportation element of the Russell County Comprehensive Plan considers the factors that impact travel demand to ensure development of a multimodal transportation plan that is in harmony with land use plans and which provides recommendations to support long term county goals of improving mobility and access. The transportation program is reviewed in the context of local land use, activity centers, anticipated development and densification, and economic development, as well as public expectations and priorities. The role of initiatives that support existing and anticipated development while preserving local neighborhoods and quality of life is also an important component. Because they all influence the planning environment, a careful understanding of these factors is essential to create a plan that reflects and meets community needs for an integrated transportation system.

Based on recent developments, the highest growth areas in the county will be driven to a great extent by expansion of Fort Benning resulting from the 2005 Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC) recommendations. It is projected that Phenix City will continue to grow in a fairly suburban pattern to the south, southwest, and west. In addition, Seale is proposed to become a major growth center, with concentrations of future residential and commercial development in Fort Mitchell, Ladonia and Crawford. Hurtsboro is proposed to be a secondary growth center. This growth and its implications for transportation will be considered by the County when identifying and prioritizing projects due to the importance of having appropriate transportation infrastructure in place to support the projected growth.

Engagement with all Russell County residents was sought to ensure the concept for future development correlates to the visions and expectations of the county's residents. This plan provides guidance and recommendations on the areas subject to the greatest growth potential in Russell County. The transportation plan supports this vision by focusing its recommendations so as to provide a balance between mobility and land accessibility from now into the future.

To ensure compatible transportation services and roadway network as development continues, transportation characteristics and improvements can be grouped into 4 predominant typologies for which appropriate recommendations can be made. These four groups include:

- Urban core and suburban areas/centers
- Key corridors
- Rural centers
- Conservation and special areas

Transportation facilities within the urban core and suburban areas will be more urban in design character. Most roadways will include curb and gutter, often with sidewalk facilities. Major intersections will provide for pedestrians, and interconnected signal systems will facilitate traffic flow along key corridors. Additionally, these areas will be most likely to offer—and have sufficient demand to support—transit services.

Major linear transportation routes, defined as key corridors, exist along the major regional, state and/or federal facilities and include mixed land uses and access management. They currently include US 80 near Ladonia and Phenix City, US 431 south from Phenix City, and AL 165 from Phenix City through the Fort Benning area. Access management strategies addressing access/driveway breaks, signal spacing, and turning movements are critical components for supporting increased mobility along the corridors.

Major roadways in the rural areas should be monitored to identify where and when demand is sufficient to warrant turn lanes and acceleration/deceleration lanes. Intersections within rural centers also will require increased attention. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be oriented towards schools, parks and community facilities. In many cases, these will be better provided as part of a multi-use trail/greenway not requiring extensive work adjacent to the two-lane roadways without curb and gutter. Public transit opportunities will most likely be focused on connecting rural centers to each other and to the urban areas. In addition, providing service between rural centers and rural residential neighborhoods should be considered when sufficient demand exists, possibly through rideshare options.

Roadways expected within conservation and special areas would be two-lane facilities, which should be designed to the standards required to service the traffic that already exists. As such, some of these roadways may require more frequent resurfacing to maintain them under the heavier loads experienced by Fort Benning and at industrial and logging sites, along with additional base, shoulder, intersection and signage needs. Improvements should be concentrated on the County maintained roads important for countywide connectivity. Due to the desire to conserve and preserve within these areas, the addition of new roads or lanes should be avoided, and points providing permanent access to the road minimized.

## FUTURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### ROADWAY

The analysis of major Russell County roadway facilities relied on forecasts from the ALDOT Statewide Travel Demand Model. To examine the potential for traffic volume growth, the statewide travel demand model identifies traffic analysis zones (TAZs) in Russell County that are poised for growth. Traffic analysis zones (TAZ) are a means by which subareas of a larger geographic region are broken down in order to analyze traffic related data. A TAZ usually consists of one or more census blocks, block groups, or census tracts. The data associated for each TAZ includes the 2005 population and total employment as well as predicted/forecasted 2035 population and total employment. It should be noted that more intensely developed areas (represented by increased population density and associated development) typically contain more numerous TAZs representing smaller geographic areas, whereas TAZ boundaries for less developed, rural areas usually contain a much larger geographic area. Analyzing current 2005 and future 2035 employment and population estimates assists in identifying travel patterns and future demands.

Figure 4.16 provides forecast future (2035) traffic volumes from the Statewide Travel Demand Model along the State roadway network corridors in Russell County. Forecast VC ratios are shown in Figure 4.17.

### TRUCK TRAFFIC

Figure 4.18 illustrates projected 2035 truck percent along the State roadway network in Russell County as indicated in the Statewide Travel Demand Model. The US 431 corridor south from Seale is shown to carry large volumes of commercial vehicles. Additionally, AL 165, particularly the segment from Phenix City south to Fort Mitchell, is forecast to experience continued traffic growth, including substantial truck traffic. Improvements along federal and state highways are programmed through ALDOT, in coordination with County staff.



Figure 4.16 – Future (2035) Traffic Volumes

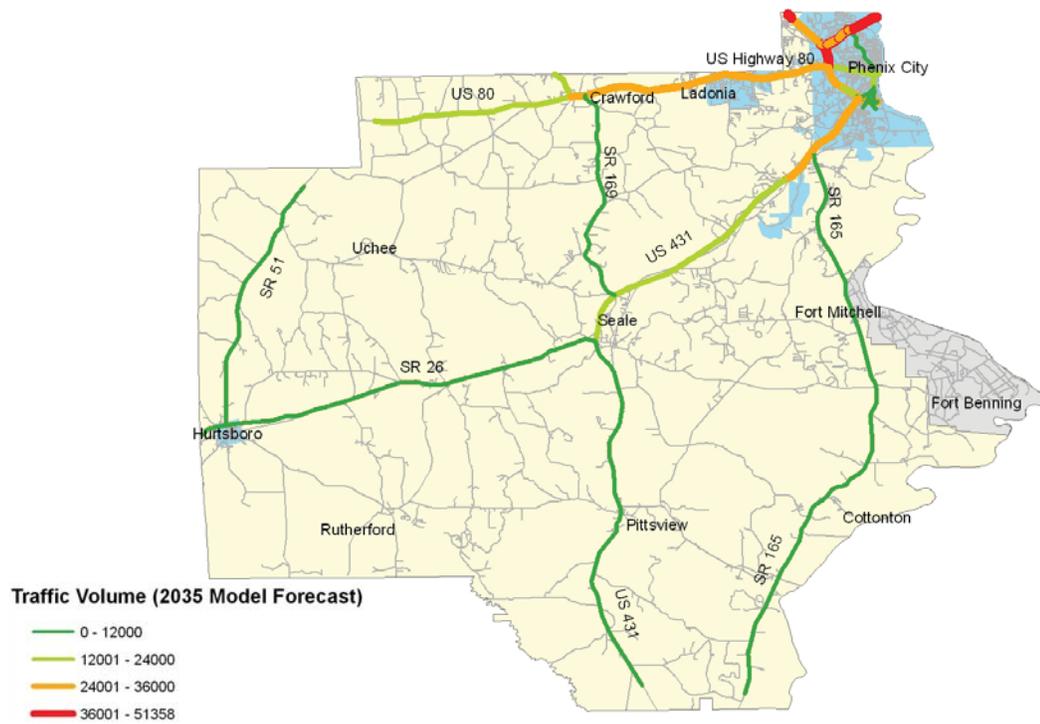
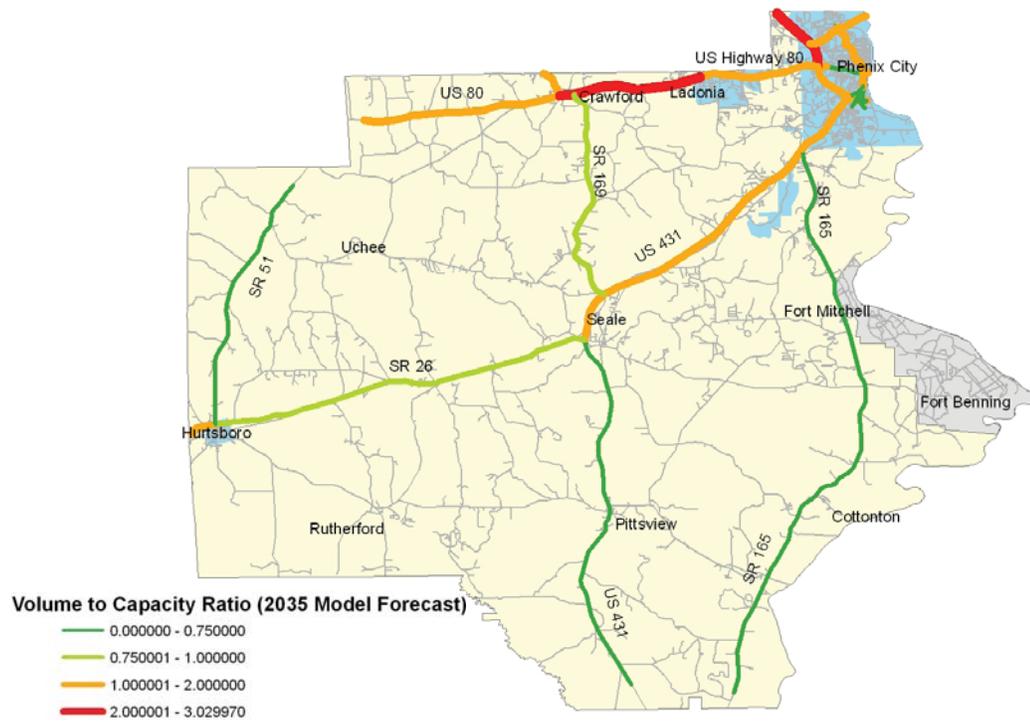


Figure 4.17 – Future (2035) VC Ratios



**Figure 4.18 – Future (2035) Truck Percent**



Truck traffic will continue to be an important consideration for traffic patterns and countywide mobility, especially with the increased military activity in the Columbus area. In addition to occupying the physical space of more than two passenger vehicles, these large vehicles have operational characteristics that impact the flow of traffic. Roadways must be specially designed for truck traffic, including equipping them with longer sight distances and wider turning radii. Commercial vehicles operate at slower speeds and take longer to accelerate, which can impede the flow of surrounding traffic. Heavy vehicles can disrupt the flow of traffic, create hazards for pedestrians, and cause noise pollution in downtown areas. The following items should be considered in mitigating freight transport issues:

- Truck restrictions near residential and school areas (peak hour bans, route diversions and noise controls)
- Incident management (automated detection and area surveillance/communications)
- Road design and construction to provide improved acceleration/deceleration lanes, capacity increases and/or safety improvements
- Information management (ITS systems, advisory radio, traffic information)
- Inspection and enforcement (truck scales and automated surveillance)
- Traffic engineering (lane design restrictions, wider lanes, variable message signs and speed restrictions)

**SAFETY**

County staff should continue coordinating with ALDOT, the MPO and local governments to ensure the State system continues to be evaluated and assessed as a part of ongoing safety programs that fund improvements in both urban and rural areas.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

There should be an increased emphasis on building a multimodal transportation system for transit and non-motorized modes of travel as development occurs in projected growth areas. Transit operations in rural areas are best when they target specific markets, such as commuters. As the county continues to develop, the opportunity for carpooling, vanpooling and other travel demand management services may be appropriate. The County should continue to monitor the need for additional transit in coordination with LRPT and ALDOT.

## **BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN**

Continued residential growth within two to three miles of Fort Benning's west gate, as well as upgrades along the northern portion of AL 165, will result in additional demand for pedestrian and bicycle facilities in these areas, including sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle lanes, and multiuse paths. In addition, providing a sidewalk network around schools and similar community activity centers, including the central areas of Seale and Hurtsboro, will be important. Improved pavement markings and "share the road" signage along the major roadways connecting to activity centers, employment and schools are examples of alternative transportation improvements that are lower in cost yet quickly implementable.

As bicycle and pedestrian facilities are constructed, opportunities should be sought for the development of an interconnected network of bicycle and pedestrian trails in Russell County. In addition, future development in the unincorporated portions of the county may facilitate the development of such facilities near schools and within neighborhood centers.

The design and development of transportation facilities with the following design considerations will improve conditions for bicycling and walking in the following ways:

- Bicycle facilities should be considered in the long term. For example, the construction of a bridge is likely to remain in place for 50 years, and should be built to handle a bike way in anticipation of future development at either end of the bridge even if it is not currently the case.
- Roadway plans should address the need by bicyclists and pedestrians to cross transportation corridors as well as travel along them. Therefore, intersections and interchanges shall be designed to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians.
- Bikeways shall be designed to the best possible standards and guidelines, such as, AASHTO's Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities.

In order to encourage communities to make walking and bicycling to school a safe and routine activity, the FHWA has created the "Safe Routes to Schools" (SRTS) program. The program makes funding available for a wide variety of projects, from building safer street crossings to establishing programs that encourage children and their parents to walk or bicycle to school. It is a cross-purpose program that reduces fuel consumption, promotes exercise, improves air quality, improves childhood health, increases security and promotes interest in bicycling. The program is divided into five components:

1. Engineering – Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.
2. Education – Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
3. Enforcement – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools, and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.
4. Encouragement – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.
5. Evaluation – Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the implementation of the program features.

The following objectives should be considered for the development of bikeways and pedestrian paths in Russell County:

- Establish a percentage increase goal (say 10 percent) for trips taken by bicycling and walking for all transportation purposes, and reduce the number of bicycle accidents by 10 percent.
- Increase and improve the number of connections for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Make local streets “bicycle friendly” in order to allow people to bicycle safely and conveniently within 5 miles of their home.

## **RAIL AND PORTS**

The County should continue its communication and coordination with relevant state agencies to ensure appropriate support for and access to railroad and port facilities and those businesses in Russell County which depend on them.

## **IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS, PHASING, AND POTENTIAL FUNDING**

The pace of development in Russell County is expected to continue through the Plan’s 2035 horizon year. With growth comes increased demand on the transportation network, requiring the coordinated attention of the State, Russell County and its municipalities. Each governmental unit has its focus and responsibilities for specific aspects of the network appropriate to its mission:

- The State system is geared to commercial traffic supporting the economy, as well as providing connectivity to and through Russell County. Therefore, the State road system is a key component of the network and services the larger share of traffic volumes.
- The Russell County system provides connectivity for rural, small urban and unincorporated areas of the county. The County road network facilitates access to destinations countywide, including schools, commercial, business and other primary attractors.
- Phenix City and Hartsboro maintain responsibility for their local City streets and circulation of traffic within the downtown areas.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Comprehensive Plan identifies concepts supportive of current and future development. Transportation needs differ depending on the unique characteristics of the anticipated demands generated by each type of use. This differentiation requires that functional classification of roads in the different character areas reflect the anticipated demands. Roads in areas where there is heavy industrial activity need to be able to meet the demands of the trucks and heavy equipment that will be generated. In contrast, residential areas require more context sensitive development reflecting the circulator needs of local suburban demands.

Russell County may want to consider the implementation of a “checklist” of transportation needs for new development that may be provided by developers. Bike trails and sidewalks are important assets for communities. As such, the County should establish standards for new development that include bicycle and pedestrian amenities tied to new commercial or housing developments, particularly those located in or adjacent to urban areas. In addition, when next revising its subdivision regulations, the County should consider specifically addressing provision of such facilities within new residential developments.

Imposing fees on development directly related to anticipated impacts is a means by which the County could proactively enlist the assistance of developers in providing traffic circulation and bicycle/pedestrian improvements resulting from development-driven growth. Counties and municipalities nationwide have exercised this option, which has in turn resulted in more integrated community projects.

## **ROADWAY CAPACITY AND SAFETY**

In accordance with the analysis findings, it is recommended that future roadway improvements focus on those corridors expected to experience the greatest travel demands, locations with higher accident occurrences and/or truck traffic, and facilities near freight generators. In consideration of anticipated growth areas, the County should continue to coordinate with ALDOT and the MPO to implement upgrades to support specific needs. Further examination of



roadway locations with both higher accident numbers and volumes could assist in prioritizing future improvements, particularly when serving areas expected to experience more aggressive growth.

Russell County Engineering Department staff is knowledgeable and focused on developing multi-year programs that are monitored and pursued in coordination with the County Commission. Ongoing initiatives by the County Engineering Department seek to utilize data on traffic volumes, accidents and pavement condition to provide a comprehensive and comparative look at transportation needs countywide. As a follow-up to the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission and County staff should consider developing a program of projects for the next 10-15 years that places emphasis on those areas anticipated to experience the most growth. It is important the program be structured to provide flexibility in the face of changing city limit and/or MPO boundaries subsequent to 2010 Census adjustments. One such structure would break the county into northern and southern portions. The northern portion would consist of the higher growth areas in the vicinity of US 80, AL 165, Phenix City and Fort Mitchell, while the southern portion would include Hurtsboro, Seale and areas further south. In addition, efforts should be undertaken towards development of typical sections, design standards and access guidelines for the key travel corridors in the county, making sure the proposed standards and guidelines are in accordance with each area's anticipated character.

Examples of improvements for consideration in the near future include intersection improvements in high accident areas, capacity improvements for high priority roads, and access management projects to improve utilization and efficiency and balance mobility with land access. Longer term projects would include widening and realignments for high priority transportation corridors, which typically require substantial time to gain necessary approvals, undertake design and allow for public comment.

## FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

The current ALDOT functional classification system's utilization of a number of finite categories, in addition to differentiation between urban and rural, appears applicable to Russell County's needs without further modification. In view of the fact that the C-PCMPO boundaries and urban/rural classifications are likely to be reviewed subsequent to completion of the 2010 Census, it is not recommended to currently alter ALDOT's system in favor of a simpler system for use by Russell County.

## ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Access management can be a very effective tool in providing a safer traveling environment. County roads that have been identified as locations for crash occurrences should be considered for access management improvements. Access management practices can benefit roadside properties throughout the county by promoting safety and improving roadway capacity. The following strategies can be used to retrofit existing roads or for incorporation into plans for new roadways:

- Separate conflict points, including preventing general driveways within an intersection's area of influence.
- Appropriately space traffic signals by only installing signals in locations where studies indicate their spacing and interconnection will not impact corridor capacity.
- Restrict turning movements at unsignalized driveways and intersections by limiting full directional unsignalized intersections. Turning movements should use joint access driveways or cross access easements, frontage or service roads should be used when possible, and access to public thoroughfares should be limited to public street intersections.
- Develop design standards that address access spacing, length of turn lanes and tapers, and driveway dimensions to be used throughout major corridors.
- Provide right and left turn lanes for all public streets and major access points to land uses.
- Provide shared/joint use driveways to reduce the number of driveways and preserve the capacity and mobility of the corridor.
- Accommodate pedestrian and bicycle needs when designing/phasing traffic signals in areas of significant bicycle and pedestrian activity.

Access management is primarily a factor with major rural collectors and US routes in Russell County. In addition, the safety analysis of Russell County roads can assist in identifying locations where access management may be appropriate.

It is recommended the County initiate development of access management guidelines and standards for use along roadways classified as County maintained major collectors and above in the unincorporated portions of the county as development continues.

In particular, a major access management and safety improvement study should be undertaken along US 80 in the vicinity of Phenix City by Russell County, in concert with the MPO. This portion of US 80 carries large traffic volumes and currently has numerous curb cuts, directly affecting roadway safety and capacity. The resulting improvement plan would provide multi-year/multi-phase recommendations to address access and safety for vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians. An important component of the roadway upgrades would include sidewalks and possibly bike lanes or multiuse trail.

## SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

### *Bridges*

Efforts to replace County maintained bridges should place priority on those receiving a sufficiency rating less than 50, as well as those found to be structurally deficient, functionally obsolete, or 50 or more years of age. Particular importance should be placed on any such bridges located along corridors projected for high traffic volumes and growth.

### *Pavement Condition and Paving*

The County anticipates using its federal aid money on resurfacing in the upcoming years, and plans to resurface approximately 5 miles of roadways this year. In addition, a federal aid project is planned for Firetower Road (CR 43). Another resurfacing project using federal aid with MPO funds is planned for Nuckols Road (CR 39) from AL 165 to CR 24.

It is recommended the County carefully examine its historic and proposed funding allocations for resurfacing and paving. Resurfacing demands in Russell County will continue to grow into the future due to the increased total mileage of paved roadways combined with additional travel demand driven by population growth. An imbalance resulting in insufficient resurfacing funds could threaten the County's ability to secure its federal funding allotment via ALDOT due to its inability to properly maintain the State Inspected Roads. As funding falls short of needs, roadway conditions continue to degrade, resulting in increased costs and time to return the roadway to satisfactory condition. Proper roadway maintenance provides the County with significant savings when compared to the major reconstruction needs required by roadways that are not properly maintained. In consideration of these factors, it is recommended the County aim first to properly maintain its current inventory of paved roadways prior to adding any further mileage by paving dirt roads.

The Russell County Engineering Department staff annually rates all paved County Roads utilizing the same grading system as ALDOT. The target acceptable score is 70 or above, in accordance with ALDOT standards. As a part of its long-term resurfacing and striping plan, the County maintains an up-to-date inventory of mileage ratings. In addition, the County has near-term plans to expand the program by tying the annual ratings data to specific geographic locations utilizing GIS mapping.

### *Signage*

Efforts by Russell County's DOT to establish a comprehensive signage inventory should continue.

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN

It is recommended the County initiate a study to develop a bicycle and pedestrian plan in concert with the growth concept identified through this study process. Plan development should be coordinated with the County's planning partners from the engineering, parks/recreation and other relevant departments, as well as with representatives from the municipalities and MPO. A primary plan goal would be development of a bicycle and pedestrian network that coordinates with plans already in place in the C-PCMPO area of Russell County. The plan would outline where bicycle and pedestrian facilities can complement local activity centers and enhance circulation. The plan should focus on potential opportunities for multi-use pathing, within the public right-of-way or separate, in order to connect rural



centers internally with nearby schools and community facilities. Connections to existing and planned facilities within the urban areas should then be considered.

Development of sidewalks should be undertaken in concert with local jurisdictions, with the goal to be getting as much in the front end as development occurs. When next revising its subdivision regulations, the County should consider specifically addressing provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as its own guidelines regarding the incorporation of such facilities in roadway upgrade projects.

**LEVEL OF EFFORT COSTS**

Figure 4.19 identifies recommended improvements to the Russell County transportation system over a 20-year planning horizon. In addition, planning level cost estimates are provided as an indication of the level of funding that would be required. Cost estimates are based on review of various unit cost assumptions/historic data (ALDOT, LRTP, County review).

**Figure 4.19 – Improvement Recommendations**

Improvement Type	Units for Improvement	Cost per Unit	Total Cost over 20 Year Planning Horizon
<b>Roadway</b>			
Major upgrade/reconstruction	20 miles <sup>1</sup>	\$510,000	\$10,200,000
Resurfacing/shoulder improvements	200 miles <sup>2</sup>	\$175,000	\$35,000,000
Paving (grade, drain, base and pave)	50 miles <sup>3</sup>	\$205,000	\$10,250,000
Intersection improvements	30 intersections	\$350,000	\$10,500,000
Bridge rehabilitation/replacement	107 bridges	*4	*4
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian</b>			
Bicycle/multi-use path connectors (both sides) <sup>5</sup>	40 miles	\$225,000	\$9,000,000
Sidewalk/pedestrian improvements (one side) <sup>5</sup>	30 miles	\$150,000	\$4,500,000

<sup>1</sup>Estimated needs for 20-year period address approximately 10 percent of County maintained arterials/collectors.

<sup>2</sup>Resurfacing program assumes upgrade of approximately 50 percent of total miles of County maintained system.

<sup>3</sup>Paving program assumes paving of approximately 25 percent of total miles of currently unpaved roads.

<sup>4</sup>Bridge rehabilitation/replacement improvements continued under ALDOT bridge program.

<sup>5</sup>Estimated needs aim to provide connectivity near schools and key activity centers/rural centers countywide.

**POTENTIAL FUNDING STRATEGIES**

Russell County has maintenance responsibility for the County roadway network. Available funding from federal, state and local sources is largely dedicated to specific transportation activities, such as paving state system roads and maintaining bridges. Unfortunately, current levels of funding are not sufficient to handle existing needs, delaying needed improvements and increasing the backlog of transportation projects. Options for further consideration by the County Commission include:

- Develop a methodology for tracking transportation improvement costs in rural/small urban areas of the county as a means of informing the Commission, local small urban municipalities and the public about where money is being spent.
- Continue participation by County staff in MPO planning activities to ensure the County receives its full share of funding to support improvement projects in applicable areas.
- Develop a formula for determining a balanced allocation of federal funds for incorporated/unincorporated areas based on total lane miles of road. Federal funds are allocated to the State, who in turn passes it on to the County.
- Identify local projects in small urban areas which focus predominantly on municipal needs (such as local street traffic circulation, sidewalk and bike trail improvements) for local funding.

For the past 50 years, surface transportation projects have been funded by the Highway Trust Fund. The primary source of revenue for the fund is fuel taxes (currently 18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline); mass transit receives 2.86 cents per gallon, with the remainder going to surface transportation projects. Although the current transportation act, SAFETEA-LU, expired on September 30, 2009, it is reasonable to assume the funding programs will remain essentially the same in the foreseeable future. Figure 4.20 identifies some of the possible SAFETEA-LU sources—discretionary and flexible—used by state and local governments as potential sources of project funding, which might be applicable for Russell County.

**Figure 4.20 – FHWA Funding Sources**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Federal Share</b>	<b>Project Type</b>
Interstate Maintenance	90%	Bridge, Highway
National Highway System	80%	Bridge, Highway, Transit
Surface Transportation	80%	All, including Bikeways and Pedestrian Paths
Transportation Enhancements	80%	Bicycle/Pedestrian, Bridge, Highway
Highway Bridge Replacement	80%	Bridges
Highway Safety	90%	Highways & Intersections
CMAQ	80%	Bicycle/Pedestrian, Highway, Transit
High Priority Projects	80%	All, including Bicycle/Pedestrian
National Scenic Byways	80%	All, except Transit
Rail/Highway Crossings	90%	Highways
Recreational Trails	80%	Bicycle/Pedestrian
Safe Routes to School	100%	Bicycle/Pedestrian, Highways, Planning & Other
Intelligent Transportation Systems	50-100%	All, except Bicycle/Pedestrian

It should be stressed that previous levels of funding are not available due to today’s economic circumstances. In general, revenues are down across all federal and state programs, worsening the gap between available funding and needs. The federal transportation bill has not been reauthorized, meaning federal funds are not forthcoming. In addition, funding is further reduced due to federal rescissions. As before, the County’s needs must compete with other jurisdictions for all federal and state funding categories. However, winning such funding has become increasingly competitive as needs exceed available funds by such a large margin across the board.

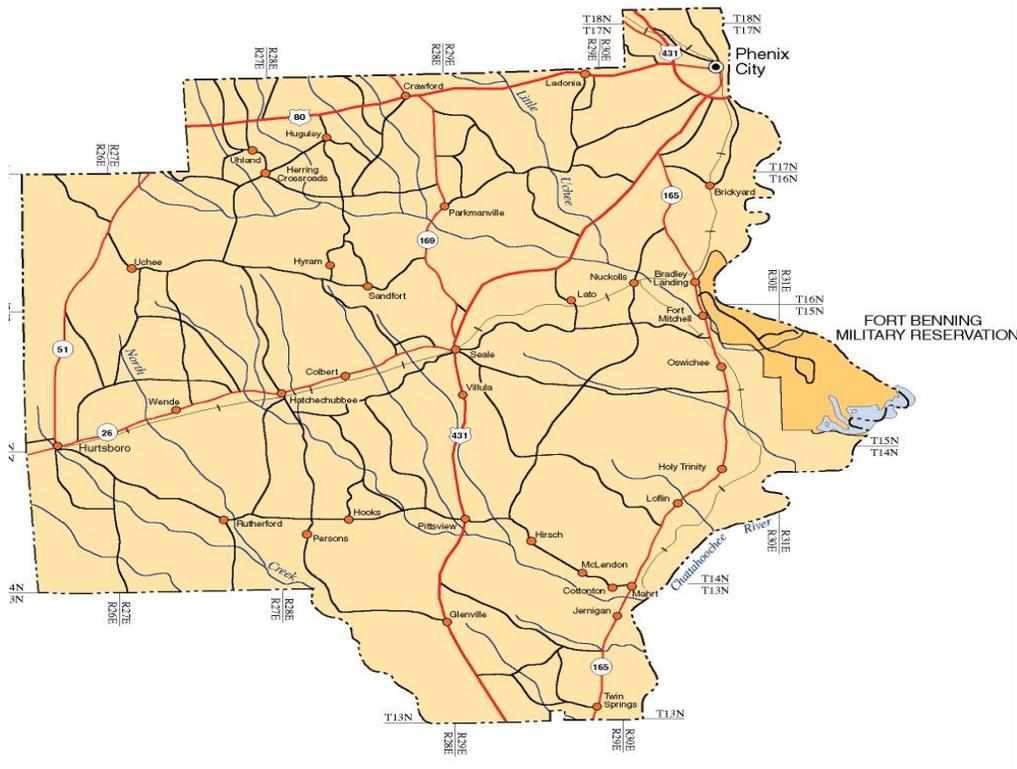
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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY**

**5**

# Russell County, Alabama *Comprehensive Plan*

## Demographic and Economic Profile



April 2011

Prepared by



**ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE**  
*Auburn University & Alabama Cooperative Extension System*



## PROFILE: RUSSELL COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMY

### Executive Summary

#### Population Demographics

- Russell County faces some challenging demographic issues, including a **potential decline in available young workers** and a corresponding increase in its older population. The latter has significance for the county in terms of **addressing the needs of mature county residents** in regard to medical, social and other services.
  - The age groups “under age 24” declined by 5% (533 individuals) from 2002 through 2010. Conversely, the projected largest growth sector is “age 65 and over.” In fact, for the 2010-2020 period, the most growth is projected to be the “70 to 74” year old sector (39%), followed closely by the “65 to 69” year old group (25%).
- Russell County has a small, but **growing Hispanic population**.
  - The county’s fastest growing population group from the 2002-2010 period was non-white Hispanics. This segment grew by 103% (1,397 individuals). Projections for 2020 indicate that the greatest percentage growth will be the white-Hispanic group, which should grow by 22%, or 302 individuals.
- There is a **widening population gap between Phenix City and the rest of the county**. Based upon 10-year projected zip code growth trends for the region, Phenix City is expected to gain population, while the rest of the county is expected to see population declines.

#### Economy

- Russell County is **below the state average in measures for household income and educational attainment**.
  - 67% of Russell County residents age 25 and older are high school graduates - well below the state average of 75%. 5.6% of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 19% for Alabama. Over the next decade, Russell County is projected to see declines in the number of college graduates (projected to be a decline of almost 52%) and individuals with graduate degrees or higher (projected to decline by 45%).
  - Russell County’s median household income (\$28,855 in 2008) was well below the state of Alabama’s median household income (\$42,586).
- Russell County is projected to see **declines in the number of college graduates** (projected to be a decline of almost 52%) **and individuals with graduate degrees**



or higher (projected to decline by 45%).

- Russell County's **unemployment rate is currently higher than the state average.**
- The makeup of jobs in Russell County reflects the continuing **decline in manufacturing jobs.** In 2010, "government" replaced "manufacturing" as the leading source of jobs in the county (21.2% of jobs).
- The **largest growth sectors in terms of total numbers employed between 2002 and 2010 were in service occupations** (2,864 in 2002 to 3,763 in 2010), office and administrative support occupations, and professional and related occupations.
- Data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau regarding commuting patterns indicates that **the majority of Russell County residents (over 48%) commute to work in adjoining Columbus-Muscogee County**, which is the largest employment center in the region in terms of total jobs.
- Russell County has experienced moderate economic development activity in recent years. Overall, declining sectors have outpaced growth sectors in the county resulting in a net decrease in total employment. However, **the BRAC growth related to Fort Benning, as well as expansion of the region's automotive manufacturing and related sectors, offer potential for expanded future economic growth that could begin to reverse historic losses.**

## Population Characteristics and Trends

### Population Changes from 2000 to 2010

According to the U.S. Census, Russell County's 2010 population was 52,947. This reflects an increase of 6.6% from its 2000 population of 49,756. The county's 6.6% growth rate was somewhat less than the state of Alabama's rate of 7.5% for the decade.

### Russell County Age Demographics

Russell County features a fairly uniform distribution of age groups, with no single group dominating the county age demographic (Table 1). Prime working age groups (ages 20 through 64) represent about 59% of the population, while individuals in the older age groups (ages 65 and older) represent about 14% of the county's total population. Younger age groups (ages under 15), representing potential members of the county's future work force make up about 20% of the total county population.

**Table 1: 2010 Age Demographics – Russell County**

Age	2010 Population	% of Population
Under 15	10,220	20.1%
15-19	3,376	6.7%
20-24	3,303	6.5%
25 – 44	14,084	27.7%
45-64	12,665	24.9%
65+	7,171	14.1%
Total	50,819	100%

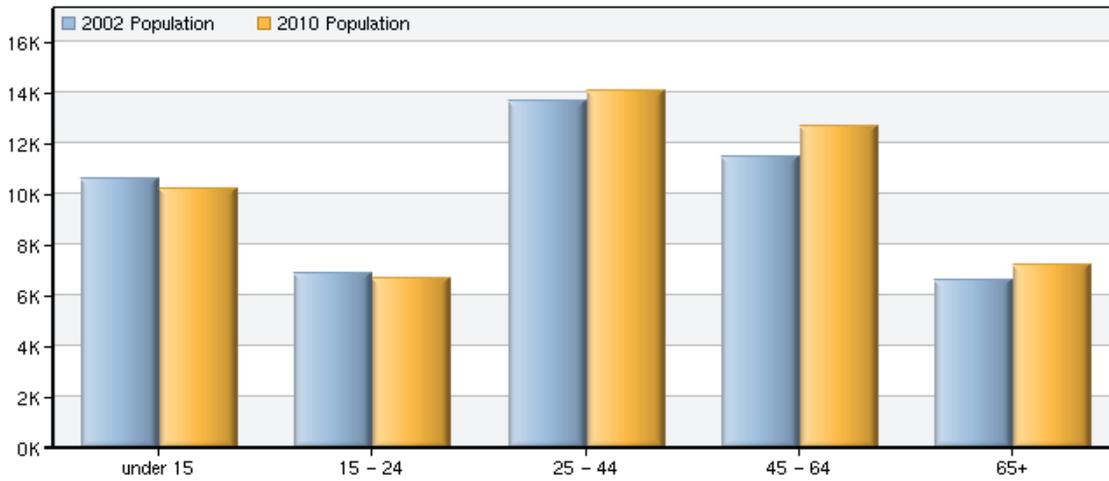
Source: Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI) Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011. (Note: EMSI population data reported in this table precede the release of the 2010 U.S. Census).

Figure 1 and Table 2 reveal changes in the county's age demographics over the past 8 years. A significant change from 2002 through 2010 was in the "under 15" age group and the "15 to 24" age groups. These two groups declined by 5% (533 individuals) during the time period.

Looking to the future, Russell County faces a challenge in terms of projected changes in the county's age demographics (Figure 2 and Table 3). The projected continuing decline in the county's population in the "15 to 24" age group (12% projected decline) is a concern. The shrinking of the "15 to 24" age group means fewer available young workers for future county employment opportunities. The decline in the "45 to 64" age group (4% projected decline) is also cause for concern, since this cohort represents the most experienced group of workers for the county.



**Figure 1: Age Size and Growth: 2002-2010 – Russell County**



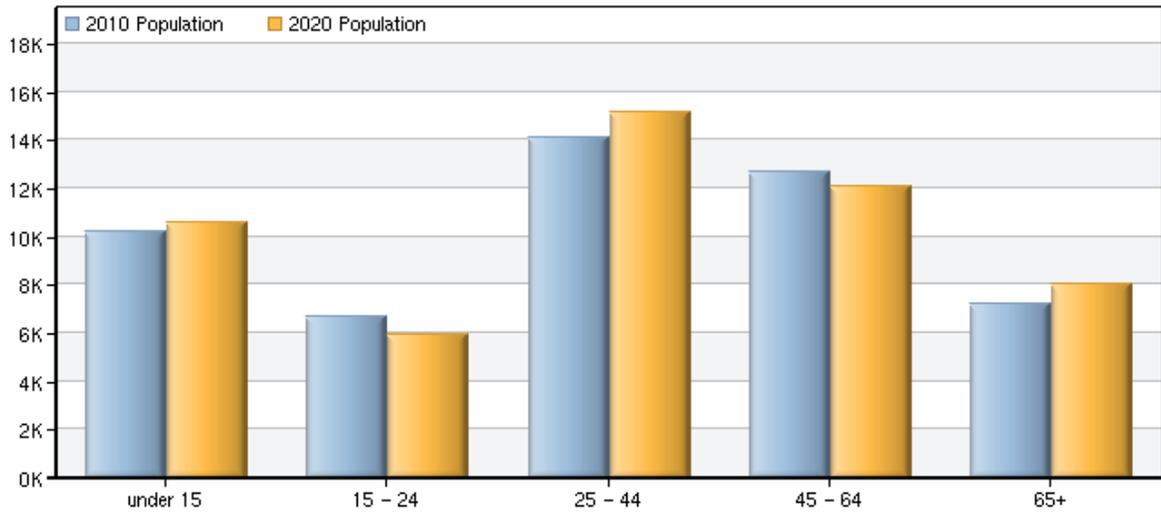
**Table 2: Age Size and Growth: 2002-2010 – Russell County**

Age	2002 Population	2010 Population	Change	% Change
Under 15	10,589	10,220	-369	-3%
15 – 24	6,843	6,679	-164	-2%
25 – 44	13,667	14,084	417	3%
45 - 64	11,483	12,665	1,182	10%
65+	6,606	7,171	565	9%
Total	49,188	50,819	1,631	3%

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

The projected largest sector for change is the “65 and over” age group, a group that is typically retired and more dependent on health and social services than younger age groups. The fastest growing age group in Russell County for the 2010-2020 period is projected to be the 70 to 74 year old sector (39%), followed closely by the 65 to 69 year old group (25%). This has significance for the county in terms of addressing the needs of older county residents in regard to medical, social and other services.

**Figure 2: 2010 - 2020 Projected Age Size and Growth – Russell County**



Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

**Table 3: 2010-2020 Projected Age Size and Growth – Russell County**

Age	2010 Population	2020 Population	Change	% Change
Under 15	10,220	10,590	370	4%
15 – 24	6,679	5,902	-777	-12%
25 – 44	14,084	15,138	1,054	7%
45 – 64	12,665	12,101	-564	-4%
65+	7,171	8,004	833	12%
Total	50,819	51,735	916	2%

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

### Russell County Racial and Ethnic Demographics

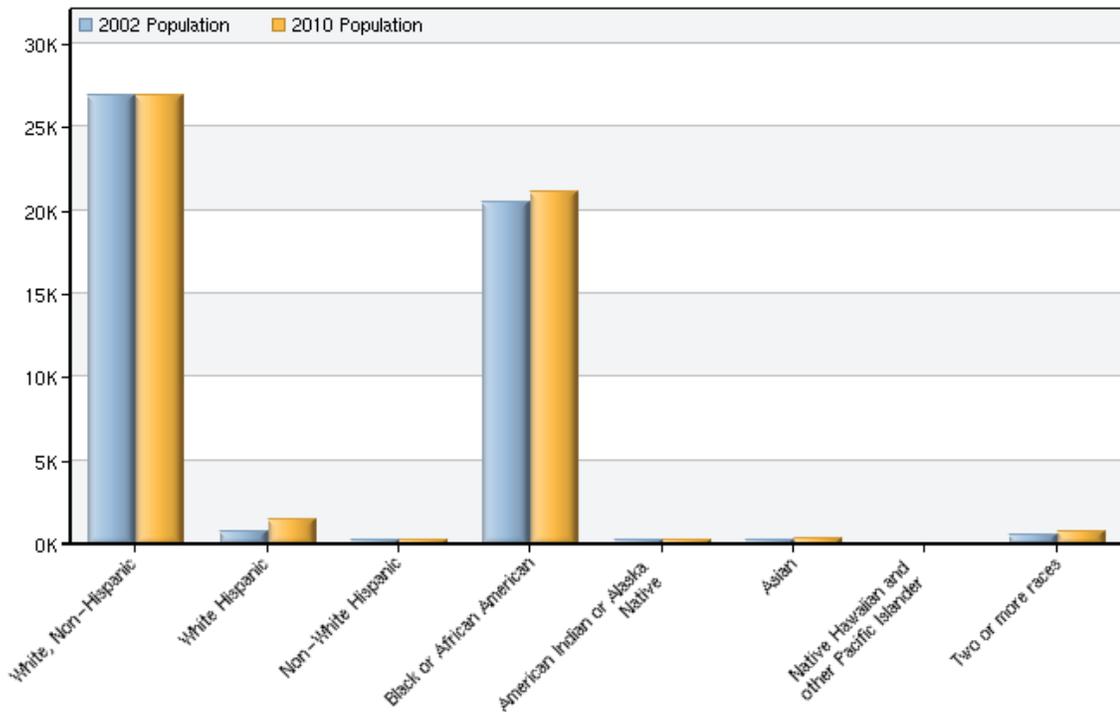
As illustrated in Table 4, Russell County’s population is 53% White (non-Hispanic), 41% Black or African American, and 3% White Hispanic. The remaining racial or ethnic groups represent 1% or less of the county population. There are approximately 26,801 females living in the county, or 53% of the total population, compared to 24,018 males (47% of the population). Russell County’s white (non-Hispanic) population declined slightly from 2002 to 2010, with a loss of 57 people (Figure 3 and Table 5). The largest growth sector in terms of race/ethnicity was the county’s white Hispanic sector that grew 103% from 689 individuals to 1,397 individuals.

**Table 4: 2010 Race and Ethnicity Characteristics – Russell County**

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>2010 Population</b>	<b>% of Population</b>
White, Non-Hispanic	26,876	53%
White Hispanic	1,397	3%
Non-White Hispanic	224	0%
Black or African American	21,057	41%
American Indian or Alaska Native	185	0%
Asian	358	1%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	38	0%
Two or more races	684	1%

EMSI projections for 2020 indicate that the greatest percentage growth in terms of racial/ethnic groups in the county will be the white-Hispanic group, which should grow by 22% or 302 individuals (Figure 4 and Table 6). The next largest racial/ethnic group in terms of projected growth is the Asian sector, which should grow by 19% or 67 individuals. Individuals of two or more races are projected to grow by 16% during the 2010-2020 time period, representing the third largest growth sector.

**Figure 3: 2002 - 2010 Race/Ethnicity Size and Growth - Russell County**

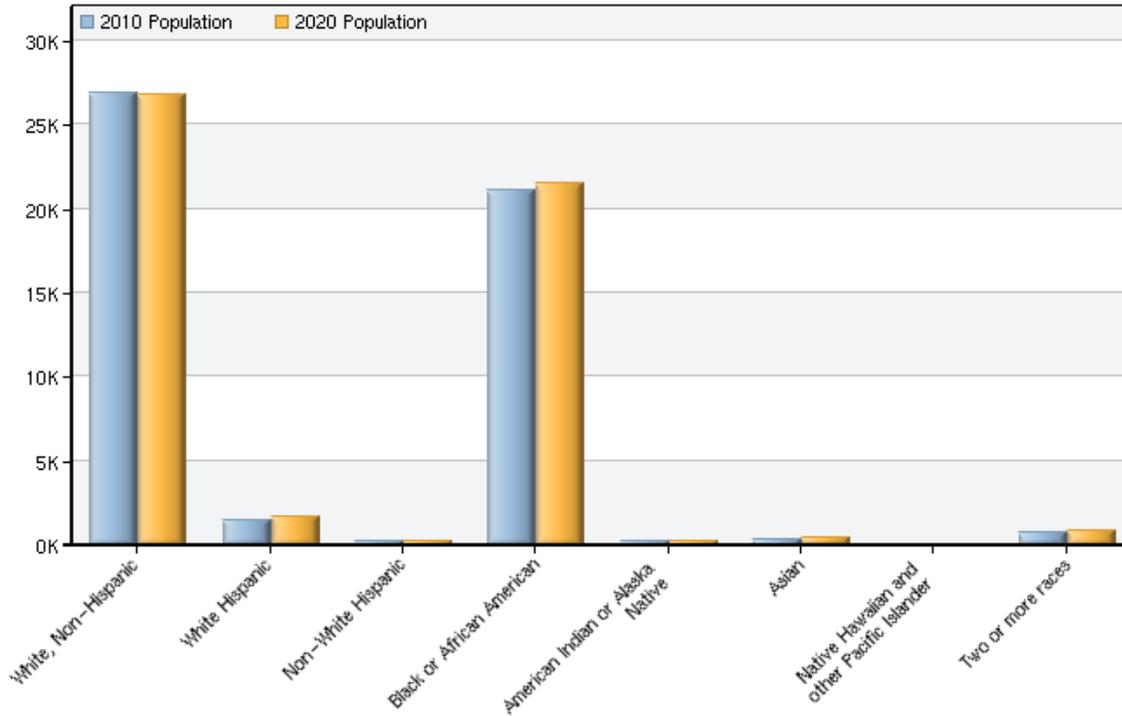


**Table 5: Race/Ethnicity Size and Growth 2002-2010 – Russell County**

Race/Ethnicity	2002 Population	2010 Population	Change	% Change
White, Non-Hispanic	26,933	26,876	-57	0%
White Hispanic	689	1,397	708	103%
Non-White Hispanic	187	224	37	20%
Black or African American	20,465	21,057	592	3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	168	185	17	10%
Asian	228	358	130	57%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	32	38	6	19%
Two or more races	487	684	197	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,188</b>	<b>50,819</b>	<b>1,631</b>	<b>3%</b>

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

**Figure 4: 2010 - 2020 Race/Ethnicity Size and Growth – Russell County**



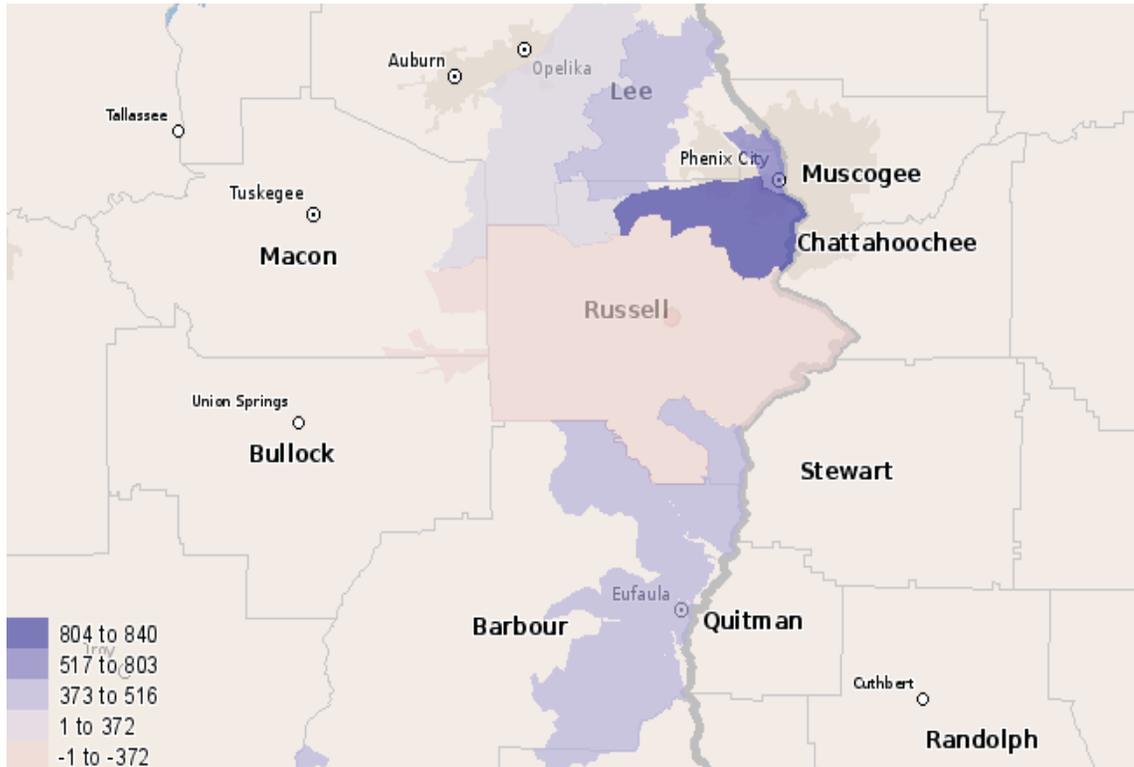
**Table 6: Race/Ethnicity Size and Growth: 2010-2020 – Russell County**

Race/Ethnicity	2010 Population	2020 Population	Change	% Change
White, Non-Hispanic	26,876	26,829	-47	0%
White Hispanic	1,397	1,699	302	22%
Non-White Hispanic	224	243	19	8%
Black or African American	21,057	21,516	459	2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	185	193	8	4%
Asian	358	425	67	19%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	38	40	2	5%
Two or more races	684	791	107	16%
Total	50,819	51,735	916	2%

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

### Geography of Russell County Projected Population Growth

**Figure 5: Russell County and Bordering Areas Projected Growth by Zip Code, 2010-2020**



Source: EMSI 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011

Based upon EMSI 10 year projected zip code growth trends for the region, Phenix City in Russell County is projected to gain 1,863 individuals in three zip code areas, or a gain of 18% (Figure 5 and Table 7). The largest zip code population growth area is code 36868, which is projected to grow by 254 people or 10% during the 2010-2020 period. Hurtsboro, Seale, Cottonton, Hatchechubee, and zip code 36856 in Fort Mitchell are all projected to experience population declines.

**Table 7: Russell County Highest Ranked ZIP Codes**

ZIP Code	2010 Pop.	2020 Pop.	10 Year Growth	% Growth	2010 LQ
36869 Phenix City (in Russell County, AL)	18,992	19,832	840	4%	1.00
36867 Phenix City (in Russell County, AL)	19,386	20,155	769	4%	1.00
36027 Eufaula (in Barbour County, AL)	17,359	17,858	499	3%	1.00
36874 Salem (in Lee County, AL)	7,953	8,435	482	6%	1.00
36804 Opelika (in Lee County, AL)	18,714	18,973	259	1%	1.00
36868 Phenix City (in Russell County, AL)	2,469	2,723	254	10%	1.00
36859 Holy Trinity (in Russell County, AL)	0	0	0	0%	
36851 Cottonton (in Russell County, AL)	188	180	-8	-4%	1.00
36858 Hatchechubbee (in Russell County, AL)	542	493	-49	-9%	1.00
36871 Pittsview (in Russell County, AL)	907	826	-81	-9%	1.00
36860 Hurtsboro (in Russell County, AL)	1,841	1,650	-191	-10%	1.00
36856 Fort Mitchell (in Russell County, AL)	3,019	2,741	-278	-9%	1.00
36875 Seale (in Russell County, AL)	3,475	3,134	-341	-10%	1.00

Source: EMSI 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2011

### Education Demographics

Table 8 shows that 67% of residents 25 and older are high school graduates - well below the state average of 75%. 5.6% of residents have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 19% for Alabama.

For 2010 Russell County’s education attainment statistics changed in several areas, as indicated in Table 9. The number of individuals with less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education in the county increased by almost 5% during the time period, while the number of people with a high school diploma (or GED) increased by almost 22%.

**Table 8: Educational Attainment: 2010 – Russell County**

Demographic	2010 Population	% of Population
Less Than 9th Grade	4,010	11.8%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	7,169	21.1%
High School Diploma	13,683	40.3%
Some College	5,138	15.1%
Associate's Degree	2,034	6.0%
Bachelor's Degree	1,214	3.6%
Graduate Degree and Higher	673	2.0%
Total	33,920	100%

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

**Table 9: Educational Attainment Change: 2002-2010 – Russell County**

Demographic	2002 Population	2010 Population	Change	% Change
Less Than 9th Grade	3,820	4,010	190	4.97%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	6,897	7,169	272	3.94%
High School Diploma	11,232	13,683	2,451	21.82%
Some College	5,589	5,138	-451	-8.07%
Associate's Degree	1,760	2,034	274	15.57%
Bachelor's Degree	1,566	1,214	-352	-22.48%
Graduate Degree and Higher	892	673	-219	-24.55%
Total	31,756	33,920	2,164	6.81%

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

**Table 10: 2010-2020 Projected Educational Attainment – Russell County**

Demographic	2010 Population	2020 Population	Change	% Change
Less Than 9th Grade	4,010	4,065	55	1.37%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	7,169	7,144	-25	-0.35%
High School Diploma	13,683	16,501	2,818	20.59%
Some College	5,138	4,250	-888	-17.28%
Associate's Degree	2,034	2,318	284	13.96%
Bachelor's Degree	1,214	598	-616	-50.74%
Graduate Degree and Higher	673	367	-306	-45.47%
Total	33,920	35,243	1,323	3.90%

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

A troubling statistic for the county is the substantial decline in the number of individuals with bachelor's degrees. There was a 22% decline between 2002 and 2010, representing 352 individuals. An equally large decline occurred in the number of individuals with graduate degrees. Russell County lost 219 individuals in this category, or a decline of about 25%. The loss of individuals with bachelor's or graduate degrees is a threat to the county's ability to attract high paying professional-type jobs.

Based on EMSI projections for the 2010-2020 period (Table 10), Russell County has concerns in terms of projected declines in the number of college graduates (projected to be a decline of almost 52%) and individuals with graduate degrees or higher (projected to decline by 45%). The education sector represents the best-educated elements of the workforce and includes those who earn the highest incomes.



## Economic Characteristics and Trends

### Income

The median household income in Russell County in 2008 was \$28,855, compared to \$42,586 for Alabama (Table 12). This represents a 1% increase in the county’s mediana household income since 2000, which is well below the 22% the increase for the state as whole for the same period.

**Table 11: Russell County and Alabama Median Household Income (2008)**

U.S.	\$52,029
Alabama	\$42,586
Russell County	\$28,855

Source: U.S. Census estimates; Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

### Industry and Occupational Change

The largest industry sector in Russell County is “State and Local Government,” with 3,068 jobs (Table 12). Among the top employers in Russell County are: the Phenix City Board of Education (1,130 employees), the Russell County Board of Education (450), the City of Phenix City (375), and Russell County government (221) (Table 13). Other top industry sectors are manufacturing (2,544 jobs), retail and wholesale trade (2,473), health care and social assistance (1,605 jobs) and accommodation and food services (1,452 jobs).

**Table 12: Total Russell County Employment by Industry, 2010: (17,035 Total Jobs)**

Rank	Industry Sector	Total Jobs 2010
1	State and Local Government	3,068
2	Manufacturing	2,544
3	Retail and Wholesale Trade	2,473
4	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,605
5	Accommodation and Food Services	1,452
6	Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,264
7	Construction	1,194
8	Finance and Insurance	613
9	Real Estate Rental and Leasing	534
10	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	449
11	Transportation and Warehousing	403
12	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	364
13	Educational Services	182

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

**Table 13: Russell County Major Employers (number of employees), 2009**

Phenix City Board of Education	1,130
MeadWestvaco (Kraft Container Board)	960
AlaTrade Foods, LLC (Chicken Processing)	560 (CLOSED)
Russell County Board of Education	450
City of Phenix City	375
Jack Hughston Memorial Hospital	305
Russell County (Government)	221
Kudzu (Caps)	170
Boral Brick	160
Vectorply (Reinforcement Material)	120
IIG MinWool (Insulation)	117
Regional Rehab. Hospital	112

Source: EDPA website, 2011

As illustrated in Table 14, the makeup of jobs in Russell County reflects the continuing decline in the manufacturing sector. In 2010 office and support occupations replaced production occupations (manufacturing) as the leading source of jobs in the county, while manufacturing declined by 23% from its 2002 level (470 fewer jobs). The state level of manufacturing jobs also declined from the 2002 level of 13.4% to the 2010 level of 10.3%.

**Table 14: Largest Occupations (2002-2010 Change) – Russell County\***

NAICS Code	Description	2002 Jobs	2010 Jobs	Change	% Change	2010 Median Hourly Earnings
51-0000	Production	2,066	1,596	-470	-23%	\$15.65
43-0000	Office and administrative support	1,949	2,074	125	6%	\$10.70
41-0000	Sales and related	1,753	1,865	112	6%	\$9.46
35-0000	Food preparation and serving related	1,190	1,400	210	18%	\$7.99
25-0000	Education, training, and library	1,175	1,344	169	14%	\$22.55
53-0000	Transportation and material moving	1,078	1,061	-17	-2%	\$11.46
11-0000	Management	1,031	1,174	143	14%	\$18.59

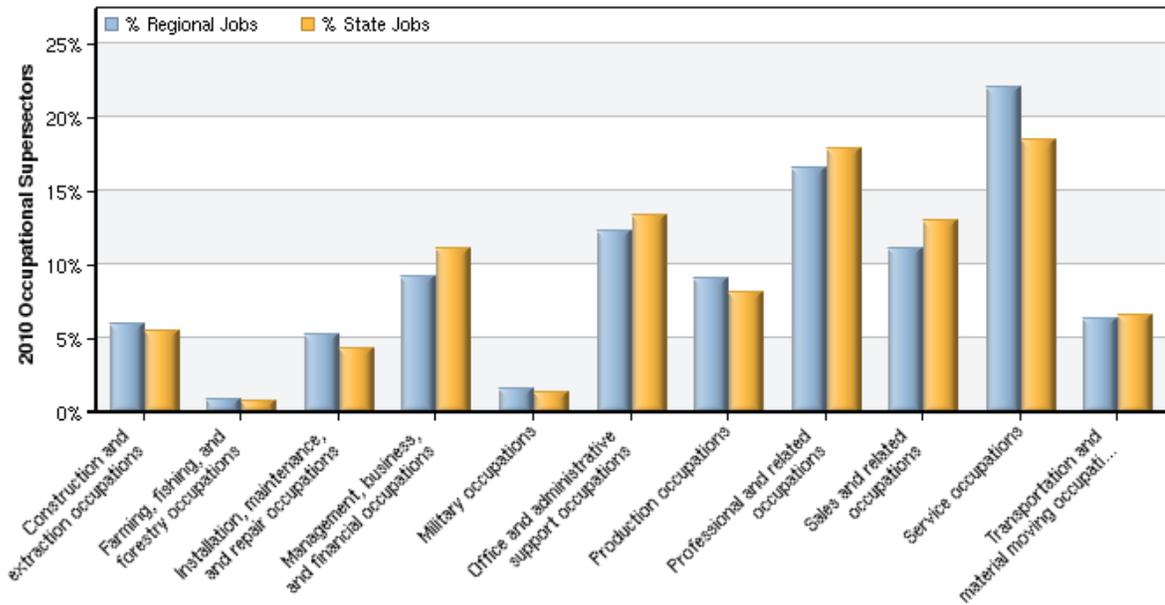
\* EMSI's occupation data are based on EMSI's industry data and regional staffing patterns taken from the Occupational Employment Statistics Program (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Wage information is partially derived from the American Community Survey. The report uses state data from the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations.

NAICS Code	Description	2002 Jobs	2010 Jobs	Change	% Change	2010 Median Hourly Earnings
47-0000	Construction and extraction	985	1,030	45	5%	\$12.25
49-0000	Installation, maintenance, and repair	846	908	62	7%	\$16.13
37-0000	Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	596	754	158	27%	\$8.37
29-0000	Healthcare practitioners and technical	466	609	143	31%	\$21.10
31-0000	Healthcare support	339	437	98	29%	\$8.68
13-0000	Business and financial operations	329	430	101	31%	\$16.04
33-0000	Protective service	312	356	44	14%	\$14.12
55-0000	Military	279	260	-19	-7%	\$9.74
21-0000	Community and social services	247	293	46	19%	\$12.39
27-0000	Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	219	231	12	5%	\$10.08
45-0000	Farming, fishing, and forestry	172	143	-29	-17%	\$9.32
15-0000	Computer and mathematical science	109	136	27	25%	\$21.34
17-0000	Architecture and engineering	101	97	-4	-4%	\$25.57

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

As illustrated in Figure 6 and Table 15, Russell County's leading occupations in 2010 were found in the service sector (19.7%), followed by professional and related services (14.2%), office and administrative support occupations (12.3%) and sales and related occupations (11.8%). 260 military jobs accounted for 1.5% of county employment. Clearly the numbers for military occupations will increase significantly with the BRAC relocation activities related to Russell County. Russell County had a smaller percentage of workers in management and professional occupations than did the state as a whole.

**Figure 6: 2010 Occupational Makeup, Russell County and Alabama**



**Table 15: 2010 Occupational Makeup, Russell County and Alabama**

Description	2010 County Jobs	% County Jobs	2010 State Jobs	% State Jobs
Construction and extraction occupations	1,030	6.0%	134,542	5.4%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	143	0.8%	17,091	0.7%
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	908	5.3%	104,435	4.2%
Management, business, and financial occupations	1,604	9.4%	272,863	11.1%
Military occupations	260	1.5%	32,929	1.3%
Office and administrative support occupations	2,103	11.8%	328,451	13.3%
Production occupations	1,596	9.4%	198,765	8.1%
Professional and related occupations	2,417	14.2%	441,766	17.9%
Sales and related occupations	1,865	10.9%	319,331	12.9%
Service occupations	3,355	19.7%	455,591	18.5%
Transportation and material moving occupations	1,061	6.2%	163,055	6.6%

Source: EMSI Complete Employment – 1st Quarter 2011

## Unemployment

In 1996, the Russell County had a lower unemployment rate than both the region and the state. However, beginning in 2001 the county’s rate rose sharply and, as of March 2011, its 10.3% unemployment rate was well above Alabama’s 9.0% rate (Table 16). While state unemployment dropped by 11% over the past year, the Russell County unemployment rate fell by only 5%.

**Table 16: Russell County, Alabama, and U.S. Unemployment Rates**

	March 2010	March 2011
Russell County	10.8	10.3
Alabama	10.1	9.0
U.S.	10.2	9.2

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor)

## Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns are useful in defining economic connections between various locations that document the flow of workers between home and work, travel patterns, accessibility, and to some extent, residential preferences. Data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau regarding commuting patterns indicates that 48% of Russell County residents commute to work in adjoining Columbus-Muscogee County, which is the largest employment center in the region in terms of total jobs. The next largest portion of the county’s population, approximately 35%, commuted to work at locations within Russell County. Lee (Alabama) and Cusseta-Chattahoochee counties also draw a significant number of commuters, approximately 1,048 and 980 respectively, with the latter primarily related to jobs associated with Fort Benning.

As of 2000, over 13,240 people commuted to jobs in Russell County. The great majority, over 53% of these commuters, are also residents of the county. Approximately 6,200 additional workers commute to jobs in Russell County with roughly an equal distribution residing in Alabama and Georgia, with the largest concentrations located in Lee County (Alabama) and Columbus-Muscogee Counties, according to census data.

## Recent Russell County Economic Activities

Russell County has experienced moderate economic development activity in recent years. Overall, declining sectors have outpaced growth sectors in the county resulting in a net decrease in total employment. However, the BRAC growth related to Fort Benning, as well as expansion of the region’s automotive manufacturing and related sectors, offer potential for

expanded future economic growth that could begin to reverse historic losses. Some of the major recent and pending economic activities in and around the county include the following.

- ♦ Expansion/transformation of Fort Benning will increase permanent military, federal civilian employees, and contract employees by an estimated 10,290 through 2012. In addition, the total number of troops trained at the post on an annual basis is expected to increase.
- ♦ Construction of a new Kia automotive plant in Troup County will employ approximately 2,800 workers. Expected construction of supply plants throughout the region to support this facility may employ an additional 3,000 workers. Based on a recently completed impact analysis of the Kia facility, it was estimated that approximately 19,985 jobs (direct, indirect and induced) would be created in the area by 2013. Russell County is predicted to have a job impact of 694 Kia-related jobs, according to the impact analysis.
- ♦ A new Quality Inn is located on U.S. Route 280 will continue to support the Accommodation and Food Services growth sector in the county. In addition, a Hampton Inn is located on U.S. Route 431.
- ♦ The Hughston Memorial Hospital in Phenix City has been expanded.
- ♦ The county continues to seek support for the proposed construction of a new/upgraded “rear gate” entrance to Fort Benning near Lawson Airfield. Access would be obtained from Route 165 via a five-lane roadway that would offer significant potential for economic development on the adjacent land area. Major construction financing is proposed through a \$5 million grant application to Congress.
- ♦ A proposal to merge the three area water/sewer systems of Russell County, Phenix City, and the community of Fort Mitchell, continues to be evaluated. Such a merger would potentially improve water and sewer service as well as enhance county economic development potential.

### Major Closings and Layoffs

Offsetting the economic expansion and initiatives noted above are significant plant closures and layoffs that have affected area businesses over the last half-decade. These major events are tracked by the states’ Departments of Labor by means of the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN) that became effective in 1989. WARN was established



to offer protection to workers, their families, and communities by requiring employers to provide notice 60 days in advance of significant layoffs or closing actions. Recent major closings in the county include AlaTrade Foods LLC (Phenix City) and Blaze Recycling in Phenix City (source: The Valley Partnership).

### Fort Benning and Russell County

Fort Benning is located south of Columbus, Georgia along US Highway 27 and covers over 180,000 acres and serves a daily population of approximately 105,000. About 93% of the base is in west central Georgia, spanning Columbus-Muscogee and Chattahoochee counties. The remaining 7% is in east central Alabama in Russell County. The major cities in proximity to Fort Benning include Columbus in Georgia and Phenix City in Alabama. Fort Benning employs and serves military personnel, military dependents, retired military, civilian employees, contractors, and defense contractors in addition to training new students. The existing installation has 34% of its military personnel living on-post and 66% living off-post who commute to work daily. The majority of the off-post military personnel (92%) reside in Georgia, primarily in Columbus-Muscogee, Cusseta-Chattahoochee, Harris and Marion counties, and the remainder (8%) in Russell County in Alabama. Of the existing civilian employees, about 78% reside in Georgia and about 19% live in Alabama. Nine major roadways serve Fort Benning, with I-185 (Lindsay Creek Parkway), Fort Benning Boulevard, South Lumpkin Road, and Victory Drive (US 27/US 280) being the most heavily used. Access to Fort Benning is controlled through seven permanent access control points (ACPs), with I-185 serving as the primary entry and exit point. The existing ACPs are located at Fort Benning Boulevard, I-185, South Lumpkin Road, Custer Road (south of US 27 / US 280 Eisenhower interchange), First Division Road (US 27/ US 280 at Harmony Church), Eleventh Airborne Division Road (Sand Hill) and Sunshine Road at Eddy Bridge. In addition, a temporary ACP is located on Buena Vista Road east of its intersection with Schatulga Road and provides restricted access to contractors and Government Common Access Card (CAC) holders.

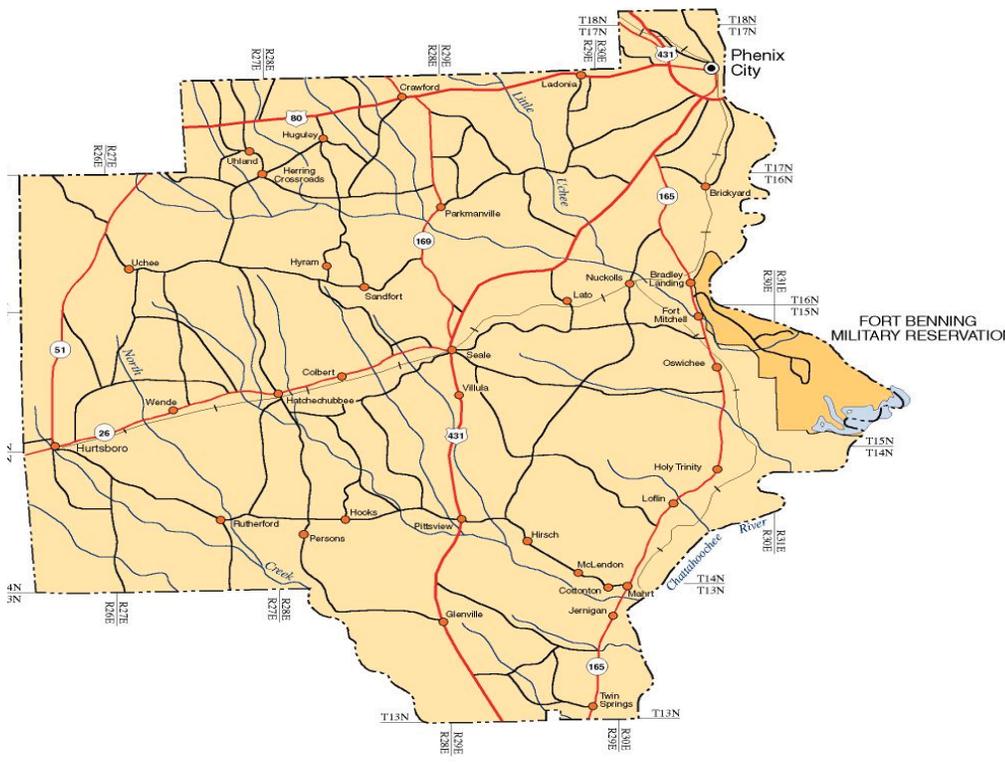
The I-185 ACP is the primary access point into the base with about 70% of the entering and exiting traffic using this access point. This ACP is open 24-hours a day and provides inspection to passenger vehicles, visitor vehicles and commercial trucks. Past studies and surveys report that most of the military personnel, civilian and contract employees live off post and commute on a regular basis to Fort Benning, with about 60% of the Fort Benning daily traffic generated from the Columbus-Phenix City area and the remaining 40% from the neighboring counties in Georgia and Alabama, including Russell County.

An additional gate has been proposed for Russell County, Alabama. This proposed project, called the “Fort Benning Alabama Gate Project,” would consist of grading, drainage and paving for a new access road to Fort Benning from the intersection of Alabama Highway 165 and County Road 24 to the existing west approach to the Eddy Bridge. The access road would require a new bridge across Uchee Creek. The estimated cost of this project is estimated at \$5,000,000. This proposed entrance was authorized by the Russell County Commission in 2007.



# Russell County, Alabama *Comprehensive Plan*

## Economic & Community Development Goals, Objectives and Strategies



April 2011

Prepared by the

# ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Economic development is an important component of Russell County's Comprehensive Plan. The county's economic development has a direct impact not just on land use, but on transportation patterns, infrastructure, housing, and the provision of community facilities and related services. The ability to pay for the costs of growth and to manage growth effectively is related to the balance achieved between commercial, industrial, and residential development.

Rural communities in Russell County struggle with problems common to smaller communities throughout the South – fewer jobs, older populations, and less money for schools and public services. They are feeling the impact of structural changes in a U.S. economy that is moving away from dependence upon low-skill, low-wage manufacturing and towards a knowledge-based economy.

Key issues facing the county are how to best manage and pay for the costs of growth and how to invigorate rural economies. Responding successfully to these challenges will require a merger of economic development and land use strategies.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEFINED

For purposes of this section, economic development is defined as “the process by which a community creates, retains, and reinvests wealth and improves the quality of life” (David Dodson, MDC, Inc.). Economic development is certainly about adding quality jobs and increasing the area’s wealth, but it is more than that. Economic development is about improving the quality of life for the people who live in Russell County. Economic development is a means to an end, not an end in itself. In fact, improving the quality of life for Russell County residents is the ultimate goal of the county's economic development program. Implicit is the premise that neither economic growth, nor industrial development, is always desirable. County residents’ improved welfare, as measured by changes in



development efforts. Simple aggregate growth or industrial expansion is acceptable only when consistent with these other goals and objectives.

"Quality of life" is also an important site selection criterion for many major employers. Businesses are attracted to, and want to stay in, communities that are good places to live, work, and conduct business. Top quality schools, exceptional medical care, diverse recreational opportunities, good roads, clean water, effective public safety, and much more, make a location appealing. Businesses want to locate or expand into quality communities, not just quality industrial sites. Therefore, preserving, promoting, and improving Russell County's educational systems, natural environment and community aesthetics, and civic life must be integral components of the county's economic development strategy.

A proper definition of economic development also embraces the concept of "sustainability" -- meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. That is, we can grow employers, jobs and incomes without compromising our natural and other assets.

## **PURPOSE**

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The purpose of this section is to describe a plan for creating a diversified Russell County economy that will provide economic stability, better-paying jobs, and a tax base sufficient to support improved public services and facilities. The goal of the economic development plan is to create a high-wage, knowledge-based economy that maintains and improves Russell County's quality of life while enhancing community identity.

This plan views Russell County both as a collection of communities and as a regional economic unit. It does not replace local decision-making or local priorities for economic development. It does support the integration of local planning efforts into a regional perspective. As a result, all Russell County communities, agencies, and organizations involved in economic development are free, and encouraged, to draw upon the county economic development plan to help advance their missions.

Finally, this plan recognizes that there is no "one size fits all" approach to economic development. For example, a strategy that might work well in Phenix City might be inappropriate for Hurtsboro. The key to the overall economic development approach must be

entrepreneurial support, or other kinds of development. Ideally, development will involve a diverse combination of strategies.

## **APPROACH**

In order to develop an economic development plan that reflects the ideas noted in the previous section, we utilized a carefully structured approach designed to capture the ideas and suggestions of the county's key economic development leaders. Structured interviews were conducted with Russell County's economic development leadership, including elected officials, economic development professionals, chamber of commerce officials, school leaders, community leaders, and county planning commission members. Interview participants were asked to identify the county's economic development strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities (SWOT analysis), offer a broad vision for countywide economic development, and discuss the county's major economic development goals and issues. In addition, stakeholders responded to an on-line survey to help establish priorities among economic development strategies.



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# RUSSELL COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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## WORKFORCE

- *EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:* Develop an educated workforce with the skills and training required to serve current and future Russell County employers.
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## INFRASTRUCTURE

- *INFRASTRUCTURE:* Finance and maintain infrastructure to support economic development.
- 

## CONNECTIONS

- *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION:* Facilitate engagement and cooperation among key stakeholders, the private sector, and other units of government.
- 

## SUSTAINABLE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- *ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING:* Support enhancements to existing growth areas that are consistent with the goals and objectives of the

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## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

- *SMALL BUSINESS*: Facilitate small business development and entrepreneurship.
  - *EXISTING BUSINESS*: Retain, expand, and promote existing business.
  - *TOURISM*: Diversify the county economy by supporting tourism.
  - *BUSINESS RECRUITMENT*: Support recruitment of appropriate new businesses to the county.
- 

## **ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT**

- *STRUCTURE*: Create organizational structures to ensure implementation of economic and community development strategies in the Russell County Comprehensive Plan.
  - *INFORMATION AND DECISION-MAKING*: Ensure that economic decisions are based on current and relevant information consistent with the Russell County Comprehensive Plan framework and that relevant information is communicated to appropriate audiences.
- 

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

- *COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT*: Enhance leadership capacity and citizen engagement throughout Russell County.
- 



## **VISION FOR RUSSELL COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

*Russell County, Alabama is recognized as innovative, inclusive, collaborative, and prosperous. The county features excellent schools, quality health care, diverse cultural, recreational, and employment opportunities, quality public services, a vibrant economy, and active involvement of all citizens.*

## **DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

The county's economic development plan is outlined in the following strategic objectives and strategies. These objectives and strategies describe actions that Russell County may take to achieve and implement its economic development goals for the future. The strategies are informed by, and supportive of, the recommendations found in the interview summary section (Appendix A) as well as the results of the stakeholder survey (Appendix B).

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## RUSSELL COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

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### WORKFORCE

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The number one issue in economic development today is the quality of a community's workforce. Companies will not be able to expand, nor will they be interested in locating in the county if they do not feel they can find the workers they need. Strengthening the workforce development system through the business community, public school systems, and Chattahoochee Valley Community College is a high priority issue for Russell County economic development.

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#### I. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: DEVELOP AN EDUCATED WORKFORCE WITH THE SKILLS AND TRAINING REQUIRED TO SERVE CURRENT AND FUTURE RUSSELL COUNTY EMPLOYERS.

*1.1 Foster a cooperative relationship among the boards of education, private employers, higher education, and training providers to enhance the county workforce development system.*

*1.2 Identify the workforce needs of local businesses and industries; support the establishment of career and technical training and apprenticeship programs that satisfy these needs, develop relevant skills in younger workers, and re-train existing workers.*

- **Engage the business community in hands-on learning, after-school programs, and curricula development.**

*1.3 Support a superior public education system throughout the county.*

- **Encourage greater collaboration between the county's two public education systems.**

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## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES A FOUNDATION UPON WHICH TO BUILD. STRONG LOCAL ECONOMIES REQUIRE A STRONG PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, WITH ADEQUATE ROADS, WATER, SEWER, GAS, ELECTRICITY, AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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### **2. INFRASTRUCTURE: FINANCE AND MAINTAIN INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

#### ***2.1. Enhance and promote state-of-the-art telecommunications technology to attract clean high-tech industry to the county.***

- **Encourage the provision of high speed Internet service capable of providing low-cost video, high-speed data, e-government, e-business and Internet services to all rural areas.**
- **Develop and implement an information technology plan to include GIS and broadband.**

#### ***2.2. Complete an overall assessment of public/private infrastructure conditions and needs throughout Russell County.***

#### ***2.3. Address sewer (waste water collection and disposal) issues associated with rapid growth in the Ft. Mitchell area.***

- **Ensure collaboration between the Russell County Water and Sewer Authority and the Ft. Mitchell Water Authority.**

## **CONNECTIONS**

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*Prosperous counties recognize the value of local and regional cooperation.* This means that the county government works closely with other units of government, chambers of commerce, schools, community organizations, and private sector groups to provide an integrated and coordinated economic development program. Public-private partnerships and collaborations, communication, cooperation, and planning are essential if the county is to ensure a strong economy, quality schools, and vibrant communities.

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### **3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COLLABORATION: FACILITATE ENGAGEMENT AND COOPERATION AMONG KEY STAKEHOLDERS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND OTHER UNITS OF GOVERNMENT.**

**3.1 *Encourage public-private partnerships to address the county's economic development needs.***

**3.2 *Initiate multi-jurisdictional efforts to promote economic and community development within the county.***

- **Encourage greater collaboration between Russell County and Phenix City officials and organizations.**
- **Encourage rural communities to join forces with other jurisdictions in the county and region for economic development planning, programs, and projects.**

**3.3 *Build connections among citizens, groups, and institutions within the county; promote alliances and partnerships to meet overall county needs.***

- **Create a Russell County Prosperity Alliance. The Alliance would be a network of stakeholders (government, business, education) that meet on a regular basis to ensure that existing county resources are fully utilized and that stakeholder groups are informed, engaged, and working together.**
- **Establish a communication and networking strategy to foster increased communication and coordination among all public and non-profit organizations**



## **SUSTAINABLE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Russell County embraces the concept of “sustainability” -- *meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. That is, we can grow Russell County employers, jobs and incomes without compromising our natural environment, community aesthetics, and other valued assets.

#### **4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING: SUPPORT ENHANCEMENTS TO EXISTING GROWTH AREAS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FRAMEWORK AND WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES.**

- 4.1. *Encourage all public policymaking organizations to incorporate sustainable development into their plans and activities.***
- 4.2. *Promote development of residential, convenience retail (grocery, pharmacy, etc and business service (child care, banking, and repair services) uses around major transportation arteries, municipalities, and densely populated communities.***
  - **Target new business development in areas that are already served (or planned be served) by utilities (e.g., water, sewer, electricity, gas) and high speed Internet service.**
  - **Locate jobs in proximity to residents; emphasize reasonable commutes for workers.**
  - **Promote residential development within reasonable walking distances of schools, retail, and business services.**
  - **Encourage the redevelopment of existing community areas over leapfrog-type development.**
  - **Locate most new public offices and buildings in municipalities or densely-populated communities.**
- 4.3 *Increase collaboration between the Russell County Planning Commission and the Phenix City Planning Department; share information about development trends and issues.***
- 4.4 *Involve Russell County real estate developers in the planning process.***

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

No longer can economic developers rely solely on traditional recruitment activities to generate job growth. Russell County must implement programs and policies that support economic diversification through small business development, business retention and expansion, tourism, targeted recruitment, and other job creation strategies. The combination of these approaches helps to achieve a more robust economy with multiple avenues for job growth.

Small business development and retention and expansion of local firms should be cornerstones of this diverse economic development strategy. Because each community's most valuable assets are the ones they already have, and existing businesses are already contributing to their home communities, economic development efforts should give priority to supporting existing enterprises as the best source of business expansion and local job growth.

### **5. SMALL BUSINESS: FACILITATE SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP.**

- 5.1 Inform entrepreneurs of government-sponsored small business loans, grants and incubator programs.***
- 5.2 Provide small and new businesses with information on how to find the necessary management and marketing skills to facilitate success; refer potential start-up businesses to sources of assistance, such as the Small Business Development Center at Auburn University.***
- 5.3 Evaluate current regulations that pertain to home-based and small businesses and recommend revisions that encourage the creation of new small businesses.***

### **6. EXISTING BUSINESS: RETAIN, EXPAND, AND PROMOTE EXISTING BUSINESS.**

- 6.1 Meet annually with Russell County's largest employers to express appreciation and to obtain information related to their current and anticipated needs; meet annually with some of the smaller business employers in Russell County that have shown steady employment growth.***
- 6.2 Survey local businesses on a regular basis for suggestions on how county government and other organizations can better meet their needs.***



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7. **TOURISM: DIVERSIFY THE COUNTY ECONOMY BY SUPPORTING TOURISM.**

*7.1 Document and promote county historic resources (homes, buildings, sites) as part of an overall tourism and heritage promotion program for the county; investigate the feasibility of creating a county historical museum.*

*7.2 Develop a Russell County branding/identity and marketing strategy for tourism attraction.*

*7.3 Create an inventory of potential visitor destinations and events in the county.*

*7.4 Support the development and enhancement of the county's hospitality infrastructure, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, and entertainment facilities.*

*7.5 Address quality and access issues related to outdoor recreation facilities (parks, fields, etc.), with special emphasis on the needs of military personnel and in underserved communities.*

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8. **NEW BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL RECRUITMENT: SUPPORT THE RECRUITMENT OF APPROPRIATE NEW BUSINESSES TO THE COUNTY, INCLUDING RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES.**

*8.1 Encourage the targeted recruitment of knowledge-based industrial sectors, especially research- and development-oriented industries, technology firms, and other industries with clean, high-value inventory and/or products (e.g., medical, pharmaceutical).*

*8.2 Identify local industry clusters, niches and gaps for each community (including retail); identify and promote unique attributes of each area of the county and share information with economic development prospects that provide a good match.*

*8.3 Develop a county branding/identity and marketing strategy for business development in Russell County; update and prepare promotional brochures and website.*

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## **ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT**

Successful economic development requires effective organization and structures to ensure that: current and relevant information is maintained and used to make decisions; action plans are developed and implemented; information is shared with external and local audiences; and actors in the local economic development system are working together in support of workforce development, economic prosperity, and a superior quality of life throughout the county.

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### **9. STRUCTURE: CREATE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES TO ENSURE IMPLEMENTATION OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN THE RUSSELL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.**

***9.1 Identify and define the roles of existing community and economic development organizations.***

***9.2 Investigate the feasibility of hiring a community developer to: foster stakeholder collaboration and civic engagement, monitor implementation of community and economic development strategies in the Russell County Comprehensive Plan, promote economic and community development, serve as a point of contact for economic development inquiries, and communicate local and regional economic development success stories. The primary focus should be for areas outside of the jurisdiction of Phenix City.***

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### **10. INFORMATION AND DECISION-MAKING: ENSURE THAT ECONOMIC DECISIONS ARE BASED ON CURRENT AND RELEVANT DATA AND INFORMATION, CONSISTENT WITH THE RUSSELL COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FRAMEWORK, AND THAT RELEVANT INFORMATION IS COMMUNICATED TO APPROPRIATE AUDIENCES.**

***10.1 Develop and maintain an inventory of available retail, commercial, service, and industrial properties in Russell County; ensure that available sites and buildings are listed in the Economic Development Association of Alabama (EDPA) database.***



***10.2 Maintain current county data useful to business and industry, such as information:***

- *Demographics*
- *Labor market conditions*
- *Tourism performance indicators*
- *Business and manufacturing directory; largest employer list*
- *Finance and incentive programs available to new or expanding businesses*
- *Regulatory procedures*
- *Workforce skills and trends*

***10.3 Create and maintain a county economic development website that includes information of interest, including the Economic & Community Development section of the Comprehensive Plan.***

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## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

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A prosperous Russell county requires community leadership that is diverse, engaged, and connects and active engagement of all citizens.

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### **II. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT: ENHANCE LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT THROUGHOUT RUSSELL COUNTY.**

#### ***11.1 Promote the development of local leadership capacity by supporting community based leadership development programs.***

- **Support Russell County community leadership programs.**
- **Encourage leadership programs to adopt interactive formats that maximize engagement and involve participants in community improvement projects.**
- **Encourage leadership programs to recruit a diverse group of participants.**

#### ***11.2 Support economic development training and development activities for elected officials and civic leaders.***

#### ***11.3 Provide multiple opportunities for public involvement through deliberative forums, town meetings, festivals, and community improvement projects.***

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## APPENDIX A

### SUMMARY RESULTS OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

#### Broad Vision

##### **What do you like?**

- ♦ The majority of people living in Russell County has a strong work ethic and is very interested in improving the county.
- ♦ County has plenty of available land for residential and commercial development. There is room to grow.
- ♦ Over 3,000 residential building lots are available for development in the county.
- ♦ There are high quality, ready to move into, industrial buildings at multiple industrial parks in the county (Fontaine Road area and Brickyard Road area).
- ♦ County has high quality agricultural land.
- ♦ Proximity to Columbus, GA and Ft. Benning provides an enormous economic boost for the county.
- ♦ County economy is growing, primarily due to BRAC and Ft. Benning growth.
- ♦ County revenue base is stable - one of very few counties in the state that has managed to have a stable revenue base during the current recession.

##### **What needs changing?**

- ♦ County needs additional revenue to support growth efforts.
- ♦ Russell County needs to recognize that it cannot remain the same- it must change in order to accommodate the growth at Ft. Benning and other areas.
- ♦ Distribution of sales tax revenues between Phenix City and the county government needs to be discussed between the two governing bodies.
- ♦ County jail facility is overcrowded.
- ♦ Issues linked to Phenix City annexation policies and actions need to be discussed with county government representatives.

##### **What should the county economy look like in 10 years?**

- Would like to see current median family income double within this time frame.
- Would like to have a new "back stop" established for Ft. Benning off Highway 165 (West

- ♦ County economy would be characterized as a vibrant commercial/retail based economy with excellent public school systems.
- ♦ County growth would be supported by appropriate infrastructure, especially sewer service in high growth areas.

### **What should the county economy not look like in 10 years?**

- ♦ We do not want to become like Birmingham, Atlanta or some areas of Columbus. Russell County needs to grow in a manner that supports our best qualities and prevents some of the issues associated with these other cities.
- ♦ A hodgepodge of random growth and development without appropriate planning or infrastructure support.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)**

#### **What are the greatest strengths or assets of the county (your community)?**

- ♦ Proximity of the county to Columbus and Ft. Benning.
- ♦ Bedroom community to metropolitan Columbus.
- ♦ Excellent workforce - strong work ethic, trainable, willing to work.
- ♦ Chattahoochee Valley Community College and Troy University branch campus.

#### **What are the most serious weaknesses? What are the greatest obstacles or threats facing the county?**

- ♦ Loss of textile and apparel industry jobs in Phenix City.
- ♦ Sewer service issues in high growth areas (such as Ft. Mitchell) are a major issue facing the county.

### **Issues and Goals**

#### **What are the most important industries, businesses or institutions in Russell County (your community)?**

- ♦ Mead / WestVaco - manufactures coated board.
- ♦ Kudzu, Inc. (The Game) - manufactures sports caps.
- ♦ Boral - produces face brick.
- ♦ Pitts Trailers - manufactures logging trailers.
- ♦ IIG Minwool - produces insulation materials



- ♦ Alabama Trade Foods- poultry processing facility.
- ♦ Vector Ply - produces fiberglass fabrics.
- ♦ Two public school systems - Phenix City and Russell County schools.
- ♦ Regional rehabilitation hospital - Houghston Orthopedic Clinic.
- ♦ Chattahoochee Valley Community College.
- ♦ Troy University campus in Phenix City

**What are the most important economic development issues facing Russell County (your community) today?**

- ♦ For Russell County, need to retain all major employers and work closely with them to support their growth and development.
- ♦ Need to encourage the attraction of large retail businesses that can provide sales tax revenues to local governments.
- ♦ Need to address sewer issues associated with new development in high growth portions of the county.

**What are the key workforce development issues facing Russell County?**

- ♦ Chattahoochee Valley Community College leads workforce development effort for the county- part of Alabama's regional workforce development strategy.

**What is the most effective industrial recruitment strategy for Russell County?**

- ♦ Phenix City has established its own economic development department that is focused on recruiting new business and industry to the area (not exclusively to Phenix City, but the entire county). Phenix City department works closely with the Russell County Chamber of Commerce in developing and carrying out a recruiting strategy for the county.

**What are the most important community development needs for Russell County (your community)?**

- ♦ County needs to address quality of life type issues associated with outdoor recreation facilities (parks, ball fields, etc.) in underserved communities throughout the county.
- ♦ County historic resources (homes, buildings, sites) should be documented and promoted as part of an overall tourism and heritage promotion program for the county.
- ♦ The development of a county historical museum should be evaluated and pursued if feasible.
- ♦ Particular attention needs to be devoted to the recreational needs of military personnel and

**What is the most appropriate economic development strategy for rural (unincorporated) communities in Russell County?**

- ♦ Rural community infrastructure needs (water, sewer, gas, electricity) must be addressed. Two systems provide water and sewer service to some rural areas in the county. Russell County Water and Sewer Authority and Fort Mitchell Water Authority. These two service providers need to work together in the provision of needed water and sewer services. There needs to be a much higher level of cooperation between these service providers in order to meet the needs of rural community residents.
- ♦ The Fort Mitchell area is a prime growth area for the BRAC-driven expansion at Ft. Benning. This area has serious limitations for septic tank utilization in connection with new housing development. The community is a prime area for nontraditional or alternative sewer treatment options.
- ♦ Special attention needs to be provided to the Hurtsboro community in terms of assisting that area in stabilizing its local economy and developing strategies to begin growing the Hurtsboro economy.
- ♦ The Hurtsboro community has been declining economically for a number of years. Crime associated with drug use and sales has increased in the community. Hurtsboro residents and leaders need to come together to identify their primary problems and begin to address them as a community.

**Connections**

**How would you describe the level of coordination/collaboration among key stakeholders (government, business, education) in Russell County (your community)?**

- ♦ The Phenix City and Russell County governing bodies need to do a much better job of working together and cooperating on projects of mutual interest and benefit. Level of cooperation is better than it has been in a long time, but could be improved even more.

**How involved are the citizens in the civic life of Russell County (your community)?**

- ♦ Citizens become involved when they feel issues have a direct impact on themselves or their families.



### Top Recommendations from Interviews

- ♦ There needs to be a much higher of cooperation and collaboration between the two primary local governing bodies (Russell County and the city of Phenix City).
- ♦ County must address sewer (waste water collection and disposal) issues associated with rapid residential development in the Ft. Mitchell area. Until this issue is successfully dealt with, the county will not be able to follow a path of planned development supported by appropriate infrastructure.
- ♦ Two public education systems in the county need to work more closely together and cooperate more.
- ♦ In general, county needs to be more united in terms of dealing with issues of widespread concern. Citizens need to be better informed and educated about major issues facing the county.
- ♦ There needs to be a higher level of cooperation between the county planning commission and the Phenix City planning department. The two organizations should share information about development trends and issues on a regular basis.

## Appendix B

### **RUSSELL COUNTY STAKEHOLDER SURVEY**

#### **OVERALL RANKING OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES**

1. Develop an educated workforce with the skills and training required to serve current and future Russell County employers.
2. Finance and maintain infrastructure to support economic development.
3. Promote sustainable development of natural resources (e.g., air, land, and water).
4. Facilitate small business development and entrepreneurship.
5. Provide professional leadership for economic development in Russell County.
6. Ensure that economic decisions are based on current and relevant information and consistent with the Russell County Comprehensive Plan framework and that relevant information is communicated to appropriate audiences.
7. Create an entity to facilitate stakeholder engagement and monitor implementation of economic development strategies in the Russell County Comprehensive Plan.
8. Facilitate engagement and cooperation among incorporated municipalities, the private sector, and other key stakeholders.
9. Enhance leadership capacity and citizen engagement throughout Russell County.
9. Retain, expand, and promote existing business.
9. Diversify the county economy by supporting tourism.
9. Expand and promote more diversity in the size, number, and type of businesses in the county.

#### **OVERALL RANKING OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

1. Support a superior public education system throughout the county. [Objective #1. Strategy #3]
2. Inform entrepreneurs of government-sponsored small business loans, grants and incubator programs. [5.1]
3. Provide small and new businesses with information on how to find the necessary management and marketing skills to facilitate success; refer potential start-up businesses to sources of assistance. [5.2]
4. Develop and maintain an inventory of available retail, commercial, service, and industrial properties in Russell County. [10.1]
5. Meet annually with Russell County's largest employers to express appreciation and to obtain information related to their future needs; meet annually with some of the smaller business employers in Russell County that have shown steady employment growth. [6.1]



6. Identify the workforce needs of local businesses and industries; establish and support vocational training and apprenticeship programs that satisfy these needs, develop relevant skills in younger workers, and re-train existing workers. [1.2]
7. Promote development of residential, convenience retail (grocery, pharmacy, etc.) and business service uses (child care, banking, and repair services) around major transportation arteries, municipalities, and densely populated communities. [4.2]
8. Encourage public-private partnerships to address the county's economic development needs. [3.1]
9. Involve Russell County real estate developers in the planning process. [4.4]
10. Support economic development training and development activities for elected officials and civic leaders. [11.1]
11. Enhance and promote state-of-the-art telecommunications technology to attract clean high-tech industry to the county. [2.1]
12. Encourage the targeted recruitment of knowledge-based industrial sectors, especially research and development oriented industries, technology firms, and other industries with clean, high-value inventory and/or products (e.g., medical, pharmaceutical). [8.1]
13. Identify and define the roles of existing community and economic development organizations. [9.1]
14. Evaluate current regulations that pertain to cottage industries and home-based business and recommend revisions to these regulations to encourage the creation of such businesses. [5.3]
15. Survey local businesses on a regular basis for suggestions on how county government and other organizations can better meet their needs. [6.2]
16. Identify local industry clusters, niches and gaps for each community; identify and promote the unique attributes of each area of the county and share information with economic development prospects that provide a good match. [8.2]
17. Initiate multi-jurisdictional efforts to promote economic and community development within the county. [3.2]
18. Promote county historic sites that are accessible to the public as part of the tourist economy. [7.1]
19. Promote the development of local leadership capacity by supporting community-based leadership development programs. [11.1]
20. Develop a Russell County branding/identity and marketing strategy for tourism attraction. [7.2]
21. Provide financial incentives to support the expansion of existing businesses. [6.3]
22. Create an inventory of potential visitor destinations, including events, in the county. [7.3]
23. Complete an overall assessment of public/private infrastructure conditions and needs. [2.2]
24. Encourage all public policymaking organizations to incorporate sustainable economic development into their activities and plans. [4.1]
25. Investigate the feasibility of hiring a community developer. [9.2]

27. Support the development and enhancement of the county's hospitality infrastructure, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, restaurants, and entertainment facilities. [7.4]
28. Build connections among citizens, groups, and institutions within the county; promote alliances and partnerships to meet overall county needs. [3.3]
29. Provide multiple opportunities for public involvement through deliberative forums, town meetings, concerts, festivals, and community improvement projects. [11.3]
30. Create and maintain a county economic development website that includes information of interest, including the Economic Development section of the Comprehensive Plan. [10.3]

## **OTHER POSSIBLE STRATEGIES**

### *WORKFORCE*

- ♦ Support the expansion of adult education opportunities available to residents who seek high school degrees or GEDs.
- ♦ Encourage employers to provide and support continuing education for their employees.

### *INFRASTRUCTURE*

- ♦ Establish a process for prioritizing infrastructure projects for federal, state, county, and local sources of funding; finance priority infrastructure projects through short and long-term financing plans that maximize opportunities for grants and low interest loans.
- ♦ Provide adequate water supply by securing water rights, planning for additional surface water treatment plants, developing water interconnection, enhancing water storage capacity, and coordinating efforts to gauge future water capacity needs.
- ♦ Maintain existing sanitary sewer facilities; provide sanitary sewer to rural areas as feasible to eliminate problems with failing septic tanks, and develop sanitary sewer facility plans to respond to future sewage service needs.
- ♦ Encourage each county municipality to develop a capital improvement plan (CIP) to prepare for future infrastructure needs (if they are not already doing so).
- ♦ Redevelop downtown areas to increase opportunities for retail shopping, restaurants, lodging, civic buildings, and entertainment in downtown areas; improve downtown facades and improve streetscapes; encourage municipalities to participate in existing and planned Main Street and historic district development programs.
- ♦ Develop a transportation plan that identifies and prioritizes transportation needs and identifies potential strategies.
- ♦ Promote a balanced transportation system that gives people options other than the automobile in which to travel to work, schools, recreation, and commerce.

### *SUSTAINABLE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT*



- ♦ Encourage efforts to preserve and improve the county's natural beauty and aesthetics.
- ♦ Encourage conservation, recycling, and energy conservation and efficiency by residents, businesses, and governments.
- ♦ Support adequate setbacks, vegetative buffering, and unobtrusive signage in large-scale commercial and industrial uses to protect primary roadways.
- ♦ Survey citizens periodically to help guide economic development efforts.
- ♦ Identify and preserve open space, environmental habitats and prime agricultural land.
- ♦ Seek funding to support green infrastructure systems and sustainable growth practices.
- ♦ Discourage strip development for large-scale commercial and industrial uses.

#### *BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT*

- ♦ Support local industries such as floriculture, truck farming and horticulture, which can take advantage of increasing suburban and urban markets.
- ♦ Support the development of tourist attractions, facilities, and activities.
- ♦ Participate in regional tourism efforts that link and promote the east Alabama region's unique attractions and activities; coordinate with local, regional, and state tourism development organizations.
- ♦ Enhance local recreational, artistic, cultural, and entertainment venues and events.
- ♦ Encourage efforts to develop, refurbish, or maintain scenic open space, cultural, historic, and heritage resources.
- ♦ Promote outdoor recreation opportunities, including fishing, hunting, biking, hiking, boating, and horseback-riding.
- ♦ Participate in the marketing of the county's existing industrial sites and parks.
- ♦ Clean and redevelop polluted "Brownfield" industrial sites.

#### *ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT*

- ♦ Develop and communicate positions on economic development policy issues important to the economic health of the county and region.

#### *CIVIC ENGAGEMENT*

- ♦ Educate county residents by disseminating relevant information, describing plans and activities, and communicating success stories.
- ♦ Develop strategies and support community-based actions to involve economically disadvantaged individuals in improving their economic futures.
- ♦ Encourage private-sector initiatives to enhance quality of life and public amenities.

**WATER AND SEWER STUDY**

**6**

**WATER & SANITARY SEWER STUDY**  
**FOR**  
**RUSSELL COUNTY, ALABAMA**  
**WITH A**  
**CONCENTRATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT**  
**OF**  
**SANITARY SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**IN THE**  
**FORT MITCHELL AREA**  
  
**FOR THE**  
**RUSSELL COUNTY COMMISSION**  
  
**January 2011**  
**WATER & SANITARY SEWER STUDY**  
**FOR**  
**RUSSELL COUNTY, ALABAMA**  
  
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1. Introduction
  - 1.1 Russell County is located in east central Alabama on the state line, just west of the Chattahoochee River and across from Columbus, Georgia. The City of Phenix City is the largest in Russell County and serves as the County seat. The County encompasses approximately 647 square miles, six of which are water. There are more than 700 miles of State and County roads.
  - 1.2 Based upon data from the 2000 Census, Russell County has a total population of 49,756. Russell County, largely a rural County, consists of two (2) incorporated cities: Phenix City, in the northeastern portion of the County, and Hurtsboro, located in the southwest corner. Phenix City has a population of just less than 29,000 while Hurtsboro has an approximate population of 570 citizens. Unincorporated communities in Russell County consist of, but are not limited to: Ladonia, Crawford, Pittsview, Seale, Fort Mitchell, and Cottonton.
  - 1.3 Russell County is served by three United States Highways and two Alabama State Highways. US Highway 80 enters the County in the northwest corner and travels east through the northern portion of the County, crossing the Chattahoochee River and into the State of Georgia. The other major highway running east and west is Alabama State Road 26. US Highway 431 runs north and south throughout the County as does Alabama State Road 165. Alabama State Road 165 bisects the Fort Mitchell area and parallels the Chattahoochee River only the eastern side of Russell County.
  - 1.4 Russell County is led by a governing body comprised of County Commissioners. Each Commissioner represents a particular district within the County. There are a total of seven (7) districts within Russell County, each varying in land mass, geographical location, and population. Commissioners are elected to represent their district by the citizens of each for a term of **four** years.
  - 1.5 In 2005, the Department of Defense published its finished report and recommendations for the Base Re-alignment and Closure (BRAC) initiative; this was adopted by Congress and passed into law. As a result of the recommendations

presented in the BRAC initiative, the Armor school, located in Fort Knox, was planned to be relocated and joined with the Infantry school at Fort Benning, Georgia. This announcement, among other Army re-organization initiatives, has resulted in a projection of substantial growth in the areas immediately surrounding Fort Benning.

- 1.6 Several growth models have been completed by various organizations since the announcement of BRAC several years ago with varying results regarding the total population anticipated to be added to the Fort Benning area. One constant that has developed from those various models is that the counties in Alabama adjacent to Fort Benning, Russell County in particular, stand to experience significant increases in population in the years ahead.
- 1.7 At the West Gate of Fort Benning, Eddy Bridge crosses the Chattahoochee River and connects to Alabama Highway 165 in the Fort Mitchell area. This area was among the first designated to experience significant growth; in fact, since the announcement of BRAC, several hundred new residences have been constructed in the Fort Mitchell area. Development continues to take place in the Fort Mitchell and surrounding areas with more than 1000 home sites still planned in the next several years.
- 1.8 Based on the results of the Russell County Comprehensive Plan, which are not limited to BRAC-related growth, several projections have been made regarding the future growth and development of Russell County. Over the next 25 years, the majority of growth is anticipated to occur in the northeast quarter of the County.
- 1.9 Phenix City is projected to continue to grow as an urban area, while the areas including Crawford, Ladonia, Seale, and Fort Mitchell are projected to develop as suburban areas. Seale has been identified as an area in which growth may be more significant, serving as a location for County services in the future. County Road 169 between Crawford and Seale, County Road 18 between Seale and Fort Mitchell, and US Highway 431 and AL Highway 165 are anticipated to experience significant growth in the future. There is not a significant amount of growth anticipated in the balance of the County.



- 1.10 As a result of the projected growth and increased demand related to the BRAC initiative and in conjunction with the Russell County Comprehensive Plan, the Russell County Commission requested that an evaluation of water and sewer needs be conducted. The following report encompasses that evaluation. For further information regarding the project population growth, growth patterns, and overall recommendations for the County, please refer to the comprehensive plan.
- 2 Fort Mitchell Water Authority
- 2.1 Fort Mitchell, located south of Phenix City and Ladonia and due east of Seale, is a rural community in western Russell County. Fort Mitchell has an approximate population of approximately 1,500 people, and the town encompasses an area of approximately 38 square miles.
- 2.2 State Road 165 is the major corridor through the town and provides the most direct access route to both Phenix City and Eufaula from Fort Mitchell. Additionally, the only entrance into Fort Benning in the state of Alabama is accessed at the “West Gate” via SR 165.
- 2.3 Residents in the Fort Mitchell and Cottonton areas, primarily those residents along the Alabama Highway 165 and County Road 18 corridors, are provided drinking water by the Fort Mitchell Water Authority. The system has grown gradually over its history, with more than 2,500 customers as of 2008.
- 2.4 The Fort Mitchell Water Authority generates drinking water from three (3) groundwater wells with a combined permitted pumping capacity of 750 gallons per minute. Additionally, Fort Mitchell operates and maintains two (2) water storage tanks with a total capacity of 1,150,000 gallons.
- 2.5 With the impending BRAC initiative at Fort Benning, the Authority has experienced a sharp increase in customer growth with the onset of new residential neighborhood developments along County Road 18. As a result, Fort Mitchell Water Authority has

initiated a water purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities in order to offset the shortfall between the permitted water production capacity and the customer demand.

- 2.6 The Authority continues to explore its system in order to identify other potential locations for the development of additional groundwater production capacity. In recent years, attempts to identify potential well development have yielded little success. As a result, Fort Mitchell Water Authority continues its purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities.
- 3 Hurtsboro Water & Sewer Board
  - 3.1 The Town of Hurtsboro, Alabama is located on the extreme western edge of Russell County. According to the recent census data, Hurtsboro has an approximate population of XXXX citizens.
  - 3.2 Hurtsboro provides both water and sewer services to its citizens by the Hurtsboro Water and Sewer Board. Water services are provided for more than 400 customers, and sewer services are provided to more than 300 customers.
  - 3.3 Drinking water is generated through two (2) groundwater wells and distributed through the system. An elevated storage tank is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of AL Highway 26 and AL Highway 51, in the northern portion of the water distribution system.
  - 3.4 Both of the groundwater wells and the elevated tank are owned, operated, and maintained by the Hurtsboro Water and Sewer Board. On average, the Board sells more than 2,000,000 gallons of water each month to its customer base.
  - 3.5 Several years ago, the Board implemented a project to replace a large portion of its aging distribution system, improving water main integrity in various locations throughout the system. Last year, the Board approved a project to clean and repaint the elevated water storage tank in the system.



- 3.6 Sanitary sewer flows are treated at the two-cell, hydrograph controlled release (HCR) lagoon which is located in the southeastern portion of the collection system. Flows average approximately 70,000 gallons per day at the lagoon.
- 3.7 In 2008, improvements were made to the lagoon as a result of directives by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. A new chlorination basin, along with a 36" diameter pipe to provide contact time, and a dechlorination basin were installed at the plant effluent.
- 3.8 Currently, the plant appears to be operating in satisfactory condition, and the only recommended improvements at this time are the construction of a new headworks system at the plant influent.
- 3.9 Hurtsboro has also identified a concern with the level of inflow and infiltration in the existing sanitary sewage collection system. Grant funding has been applied for on several occasions in the past, and according to Town officials, has recently been granted in order to perform rehabilitation on various portions of the sewer system that has displayed the most significant concerns.
- 4 Phenix City Utilities
- 4.1 General
- 4.1.1 The City of Phenix City is located in the northeast corner of Russell County. Based on recent census data, the City has approximately XX,XXX citizens. The City of Phenix City provides both water and sewer services to its residents through the Phenix City Utilities Department.
- 4.2 Water System
- 4.2.1 Drinking water is generated by a surface water filtration plant that draws water from the nearby Chattahoochee River. The plant is permitted to treat as much as 13 million

gallons of water per day and includes approximately 4.0 million gallons of finished water storage in clear wells at the plant.

- 4.2.2 Phenix City Utilities operates and maintains more than seven million gallons across five water storage tanks throughout its water distribution system. Additionally, Phenix City maintains two high service pumping stations at the water filtration plant and three additional booster pumping stations located in various locations throughout the system. Phenix City maintains as many as six pressure zones across the distribution system.
- 4.2.3 The water filtration plant generates approximately 6.0 million gallons per day during the winter months. During the summer, water generation increases to more than 8.0 million gallons per day. Currently, Phenix City Utilities is evaluation the possibility of expanding permitted treatment capacity to as much as 15 million gallons of water per day.
- 4.2.4 Currently, the only significant issue facing the water filtration plant is the need to ensure compliance with the impending Stage II rules and regulations for disinfectant and disinfection by-products. These regulations reduce the minimum allowable limits of trihalomethanes and haloacetic acids that may be present in drinking water in a system.
- 4.2.5 Disinfectant by-products develop as a result of the mixture of organic materials present in surface water and the dosage of chlorine applied to it during the treatment process. As the age of the water increases, the amount of time for development of DBPs also increases, which is to say that the longer the water travels when it leaves the treatment plant, the longer the opportunity for DBPs to develop.
- 4.2.6 Phenix City has been performing an analysis of their treatment processes as well as distribution and storage systems in order to maintain compliance with the regulations when they take effect in 2012.

4.2.7 Phenix City Utilities has installed mixing systems in two of their water storage tanks and is performing a comprehensive cleaning and inspection of the existing raw water storage tanks at the water filtration plant. Other items currently being considered are the addition of treatment systems at the water filtration plant, additional mixing systems in storage tanks, and the optimization of water flow through the plant's clear wells and the distribution system.

4.2.8 Regarding water distribution, Phenix City Utilities has identified a need to increase its distribution to the southern portion of the system as the majority of the growth in the City has been concentrated in this area. Currently, the existing hydraulic water model is being used to analyze and identify the needs of the distribution system to increase its efficiency.

#### 4.3 Wastewater System

4.3.1 The existing wastewater treatment plant is a trickling filter plant permitted to treat 7.75 million gallons of sanitary sewage per day. The plant was constructed more than 50 years ago and has been expanded on several occasions since it was initially completed.

4.3.2 During the summer months, the plant treats an average of approximately 3.5 million gallons per day. In the winter, the plant flow increases to an average of more than 5.0 million gallons per day.

4.3.3 In 2008, the treatment plant experienced a catastrophic failure of one of its existing digester tanks. Phenix City is currently implementing a construction project to rehabilitate the failed digester along with several other components that are in need of repair. This project does not include any plant expansion, nor does it involve improvements to the treatment process itself.

4.3.4 Similar to Hurtsboro, Phenix City Utilities has identified a concern with inflow and infiltration throughout its collection system. Phenix City is currently performing an

analysis of the performance of its collection system to identify areas of high inflow and infiltration in order to reduce occurrences of high flows at the water treatment plant.

## 5 Russell County Water Authority

### 5.1 Background

5.1.1 In 1972, with a growing need for clean, safe drinking for its rural citizens, the Russell County Commission, along with the County Attorney, created the Russell County Water Authority (formerly known as the Ladonia-Crawford Water & Fire Protection Authority). The water authority services all areas within Russell County which are not served by the Fort Mitchell Water System, the Phenix City Utilities Department, or the Hurtsboro Water & Sewer Board, which are the only other water systems in Russell County.

5.1.2 The Water Authority is governed by a three member Board of Directors. Each member of the Board is appointed by the County Commission and serves a term of six years. The Board is responsible for oversight of the Water Authority, which includes the selection of a general manager to handle daily operations of the water system. Of the many responsibilities of the general manager and support staff, the two most important are to adequately provide enough supply to meet the demand of the customers in the system and to remain in compliance with the standards and regulations published by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

5.1.3 The Russell County Water Authority has experienced several periods of expansion since its founding in 1972. The system began with two ground water wells and the capacity to provide safe drinking water to approximately 900 customers. Over the past four decades, four new wells have been drilled and a total of seven water storage tanks have been constructed, which allow for total storage of more than 2.5 million gallons of water. The Water Authority now services more than 5,700 customers.

5.1.4 In addition to the expansion of services to rural customers, the Russell County Water Authority has also developed several interconnections with neighboring water



systems. Russell County Water Authority maintains connections to the Macon County Water Authority, Phenix City Utilities and the Hurtsboro Water and Sewer Board.

5.1.5 Russell County Water Authority currently produces drinking water from four active groundwater wells, and, to meet the increased water needs of the system, the Water Authority also purchases treated surface water from Phenix City Utilities. Over the past several years, the Water Authority has averaged a purchase of approximately 1.0 million gallons of water per day from Phenix City Utilities.

## 5.2 Projected Growth / Demand

5.2.1 Based on the various projections and models that have been performed to account for the effect of the BRAC initiative, the projections included in the Russell County Comprehensive Plan, and observation of development patterns that are currently forming in Russell County, it is anticipated the majority of the BRAC-related growth will not initially have a substantial impact on the Russell County Water Authority.

5.2.2 The immediate growth pattern appears to be focused in the Fort Mitchell area. Water service for Fort Mitchell residents and businesses are provided by the Fort Mitchell Water Authority. As growth continues in east Russell County over the next several years and commercial development follows, the Russell County Water Authority will also experience an increase in demand, particularly as the County Road 169 and County Road 18 corridors develop along with Seale.

5.2.3 Over the next 25 years, Russell County is expected to realize a population growth of approximately (20,000) citizens. Of those, approximately (5,000) are anticipated to live in the City Limits of Phenix City and (5,000) are in the Fort Mitchell area, adding approximately (10,000) people to the Russell County Water Authority's jurisdiction.

5.2.4 This addition in population equates to an additional demand of approximately 1.0 million gallons per day. When added to the current demand of approximately 1.5 million gallons per day, the Russell County Water Authority can anticipate the need to plan for a daily demand of 2.5 million gallons.

### 5.3 Planning for Growth

5.3.1 As stated above, the Russell County Water Authority currently has a production shortfall compared to demand, and this shortfall is anticipated to increase as the County's population grows. The Russell County Water Authority understands the needs of their customers and their current system limitations, and they are continually exploring alternatives to improve their system.

5.3.2 The two most critical factors which limit the amount of drinking water in a system are availability and quality. In order for the Russell County Water Authority to account for its current and projected demand, an available quantity of water must be found that is also high enough in quality to meet or exceed the standards and regulations set forth by ADEM.

5.3.3 There are typically three options for a system to increase its supply of drinking water: develop groundwater wells, treatment of surface water, or the purchase of water from a neighboring system. Russell County currently produces its drinking water through two of those options; however, the development of a surface water treatment plant has historically been considered economically unfeasible. Each of the three options has been considered for the purposes of this study as they relate to quantity, quality, and economic feasibility.

5.3.4 The first option considered is the method of water production historically utilized by the Russell County Water Authority, which is the development of additional groundwater wells. The limiting factor when considering this alternative is quantity.

5.3.5 There is growing concern regarding the amount of available groundwater present beneath Russell County. The Russell County Water Authority is currently evaluating potential locations for development of future production wells. The aquifer system in Russell County is the Tuscaloosa Group; all of Russell County Water Authority's and Fort Mitchell Water Authority's existing wells are located within the Tuscaloosa Group.



- 5.3.6 The most recent well explorations performed by the Russell County Water Authority have not yielded the quantities of available groundwater that are anticipated or required in order to develop adequate wells to provide for the demands of their system. As previously referenced, the neighboring Fort Mitchell Water System has also had difficulty in exploration of adequate groundwater supply, with test wells yielding less than the necessary quantities to make permanent development economically feasible.
- 5.3.7 While the continued exploration and development of wells is an opportunity to support the demand of the Russell County Water Authority and the Fort Mitchell Water System, past performance indicates that the development of groundwater wells is not a viable alternative to provide for all of the Authority's current and future water demands.
- 5.3.8 The second alternative considered when planning for the current and future demands is the purchase of drinking water from a neighboring utility. As stated above, Russell County has a Contract to purchase water from Phenix City Utilities which typically averages approximately 1.0 million gallons per day.
- 5.3.9 As demand in the system increases and the availability of adequate groundwater becomes less of an option, it may be necessary for the Russell County Water Authority to increase their purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities. Russell County Water Authority is currently evaluating options to secure its long term water needs extending its long-term, wholesale contract with Phenix City.
- 5.3.10 As mentioned, Phenix City Utilities owns and operates a surface water treatment facility that has the quantity to meet the long-term needs of both Russell County Water Authority and the Fort Mitchell Water System.
- 5.3.11 Ultimately, Phenix City Utility's ability to take the necessary actions to ensure the overall quality of its drinking water and the development of DBPs will determine the

availability of Russell County Water Authority to meet its demands through a wholesale purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities.

- 5.3.12 The third option considered regarding the availability of drinking water is through the development of surface water treatment. Commonly, the limiting factor in utilizing this option is the availability of surface water adjacent to the customers and system demand.
- 5.3.13 Russell County is fortunate to have an abundance of available surface water including the Chattahoochee River, Little Uchee Creek, Uchee Creek, and Hatchechubbee Creek. Currently, Phenix City Utilities is the only system in Russell County with a surface water treatment facility.
- 5.3.14 Based on the anticipated costs, in order to design and construct a new surface treatment facility, it would first be recommended that Fort Mitchell Water System and the Russell County Water Authority reach an agreement to participate in the project jointly.
- 5.3.15 If both parties participated in the project, it is anticipated that a water treatment plant would need to be constructed that could produce approximately 4 to 5 million gallons per day. Based upon current knowledge of the industry and anticipated treatment limit requirements by ADEM, a total cost to acquire land, design, permit, and construct a treatment facility could be as much as \$20 million to \$30 million dollars.

## 6 Russell County Sewer Authority

### 6.1 Background

- 6.1.1 In 1999, the Russell County Commission acknowledged a growing need for sanitary sewer services in the rural areas of Russell County. As a result, the Commission voted to create the Russell County Sewer Authority (RCSA) to service all of rural Russell County outside the service areas of Phenix City Utilities and Hurtsboro Water & Sewer Board. These are the only two other sanitary sewer systems in Russell County.



- 6.1.2 In 2002, three years after the Russell County Sewer Authority was formed, no sewer infrastructure had been installed and no customers had been developed. Therefore, the County Commission funded a study to develop a Master Plan and Feasibility Report of Sanitary Sewer Improvements for the RCSA. From that report, several recommendations were made regarding the development of sewer infrastructure in Russell County.
- 6.1.3 The primary recommendation was a short-term, interim solution by which Russell County would negotiate an agreement with the City of Phenix City to treat the sanitary sewage in the Ladonia area. This recommendation was made in the interest of developing revenue for the RCSA while minimizing capital expenses. Regarding a long-term strategy, several options were provided including the development of a central treatment facility in Russell County and a joint venture with Smiths Station to build a treatment plant.
- 6.1.4 Upon publication of the study in 2002, the RCSA pursued the short-term recommendation of reaching an agreement with the City of Phenix City to treat sanitary sewage of new commercial developments in the Ladonia area. Currently, there are two commercial customers along Highway 80 in Ladonia that are located within the RCSA's service area. These customers are subject to the standard RCSA rate structure which includes \$35.00 for the first 1,000 gallons and \$3.75 for each additional 1,000 gallons. The Rules and Regulations of the Russell County Sewer Authority are enclosed as Appendix XX.
- 6.1.5 Recently, the RCSA has entered into an agreement with Phenix City Utilities regarding a new neighborhood development located within the RCSA jurisdiction. Per the agreement, Russell County will own the infrastructure in their jurisdiction and collect sewer fees from the customers connected to the infrastructure. Phenix City Utilities will maintain the infrastructure and treat the sewage at its wastewater treatment plant, for which RCSA will pay Phenix City a monthly fee. This agreement follows the intent of the recommendation made in the 2002 study.

## 6.2 Rules & Regulations

6.2.1 All on-site sewage treatment systems in the jurisdiction are required to be permitted by the Russell County Health Department. The Russell County Health Department follows the rules and regulations for permitting established by the Alabama Department of Public Health.

6.2.2 The regulations can be found in Chapter 40-3-1 Onsite Sewage Treatment and Disposal of the Rules of State Board of Health Bureau of Environmental Services. A copy of these rules is attached in Appendix XXX.

6.2.3 Systems treating over 10,000 gallons per day of wastewater must obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). The regulations for an NPDES permit can be found in Chapter 335-6-12 of the Administrative Code. A copy of these regulations is attached in Appendix XXX.

6.2.4 As referenced in paragraph 6.1.4 above, the Russell County Sewer Authority has adopted its own set of regulations that must be met in order to develop a sewer system within its jurisdiction. These regulations are also attached.

## 6.3 Existing Developments in the Fort Mitchell area

6.3.1 Development in Fort Mitchell has historically been gradual. Because Fort Mitchell has existed as a primarily rural region of Russell County, most residential developments have occurred in single lot increments. As a result, it was typical for residential developments to consist of on-site sewage treatment systems.

6.3.2 Development in the Fort Mitchell area began to increase significantly in 2008. A map illustrating the locations of the existing developments, including Misty Forest, Ridgebrook, Bradley Landing, Moore Place, Riverside Estates, Sweetwater Park, Villages at West Gate, Patriots Point, Warrior Flats, and Farmbrook, is enclosed in Appendix XX.



- 6.3.3 Many of these developments consist solely of Phase I of their master plans and will continue to expand into multiple phases. Misty Forrest and Ridgebrook currently have a conventional infrastructure which pumps wastewater to the Phenix City Wastewater Treatment Plant. The remaining existing developments consist solely of septic tanks to handle wastewater.
- 6.3.4 In addition to the subsequent phases of existing developments, the Fort Mitchell community has several other proposed developments. A map of these developments is included in Appendix XX. These developments include Avery Place, Stone Creek, River Mill Plantation, Ihagee Creek Plantation, Rivers Reach, and the Landings.
- 6.3.5 Several miles south of County Road 18 and Alabama Highway 165 is a development formerly known as Rivers Reach. This development was initiated several years ago and has changed ownership on several occasions since that time. While the end state of the development is not currently known, various potential aspects of the development may include a hotel, grocery store, and an 18-hole golf course.
- 6.4 Summary of Proposed Need
- 6.4.1 Similar to the projections for increase in water demand in the coming years, the increase in demand for sanitary sewer will develop in the same areas as a result of the BRAC-related growth and continued development of northeast Russell County as a suburban area to Phenix City.
- 6.4.2 The Russell County Health Department has expressed concern in the growing number of residential developments that are serviced by on-site sewage treatment systems, especially given the size of the homes and the lot sizes on which they are being constructed. The request from the Health Department, along with the Russell County Commission, has been to provide a long term solution to the growth being experienced in the Fort Mitchell area.

- 6.4.3 Based upon conversations with developers currently constructing new neighborhoods and continuing to expand existing neighborhoods, approximately 1000 new housing starts have been committed to along the AL Highway 165 corridor within the next several years.
- 6.4.4 Additionally, several developers identified areas along the AL Highway 165 corridor that have not previously been developed due to poor soil conditions that are not conducive to on-site sewage treatment systems. As a result, developers have expressed an interest to develop these areas as well if a traditional sewage treatment option was made available.
- 6.4.5 Finally, there are several hundred acres of land that may be developed commercially along the AL Highway 165 corridor but cannot due to lack of a sewer system. This additional acreage must also be considered when determining an estimated future demand in the area.
- 6.4.6 Based on developer's current plans for development as well as projections for future residential and commercial development, it is estimated that plans for sewage treatment in Russell County, particularly along the AL Highway 165 corridor, include a minimum flow of 1,000,000 gallons per day with a peaking factor of at least 2,000,000 gallons per day.
- 6.5 Options for Development of Sewer
- 6.5.1 On-Site Sewage Treatment Systems
- 6.5.1.1 Historically, the installation and usage of on-site sewage treatment systems, known also as septic systems, has been the predominant means of sewage treatment throughout the RCSA jurisdiction.
- 6.5.1.2 Traditional systems generally consist of a septic tank and drain field piping at each home-site or development. The treated wastewater is allowed to pass through the



pipings and permeate the existing soil located adjacent to or near the development.

The cost to permit and install a conventional on-site treatment system is approximately \$6,500 per home site.

- 6.5.1.3 As the sites where ideal soil conditions exist have become fewer in frequency, more elaborate systems such as drip irrigation or “mounded” systems have become more prevalent. The average cost to install these systems typically exceeds \$20,000 and can cost as much as \$30,000 per home site.
- 6.5.1.4 When favorable soil and water table conditions exist, a septic system is an economically feasible solution for sewage treatment in an individual home-site. This has been the traditional means for sewage treatment throughout the majority of Russell County.
- 6.5.1.5 In areas where soil percolation is poor or large developments are planned, including most commercial and industrial developments, septic systems typically do not perform satisfactorily. As a result, the future of commercial and industrial development of Russell County will be severely limited without the development of an additional sewage treatment alternative to on-site treatment systems.
- 6.5.1.6 The continued implementation of septic systems is only recommended in limited situations. In areas where isolated developments are planned in locations with favorable soil conditions, an on-site sewage treatment system is recommended, especially in rural locations.
- 6.5.1.7 The further usage of septic systems in planned residential communities and developments, commercial developments, and especially industrial developments is not recommended. At a minimum, requirements should be adopted by the Russell County Planning Commission which limit the acceptable applications for installation of septic systems.
- 6.5.2 Agreement with Neighboring Utility System

- 6.5.2.1 Ultimately, the long-term strategy of the RCSA should be the development of a sewage collection and treatment system that is independent from other utilities; however, the capital costs required to construct a wastewater treatment plant may make it economically impractical at this time.
- 6.5.2.2 There is also a considerable amount of time required to design, obtain permits, and construct a new wastewater treatment plant, during which many new homes may be built with septic systems, missing the opportunity to connect to a permanent wastewater treatment system. By connecting to an existing system with available capacity, there will be no permits required and the process may be accelerated.
- 6.5.2.3 With residential development moving at a high rate of construction and commercial development approaching in the near future, there is a need to provide an acceptable solution for sewage treatment as soon as possible. The option of partnering with an existing system is the most time-effective solution.
- 6.5.2.4 There are two neighboring utility systems that were evaluated for their potential to enter into a long-term agreement for sewage treatment: Phenix City Utilities and Columbus Water Works (CWW). RCSA currently has a connection to Phenix City Utilities on U.S. Highway 80 in Ladonia which is available for future expansion. In the area in which the recent growth is most heavily concentrated, Fort Mitchell, neither CWW nor Phenix City Utilities currently have infrastructure in this area.
- 6.5.2.5 While CWW does not have any infrastructure on the western side of the Chattahoochee River, they have an existing lift station located due east of the Fort Mitchell development that is closer in proximity to Fort Mitchell than Phenix City Utilities. After evaluating the potential for connection to the CWW, it was determined that the cost associated with boring a new sewer main beneath the Chattahoochee River was not economically feasible.
- 6.5.2.6 The nearest location to Phenix City Utilities' collections system is approximately ten (10) miles north of the recent area of growth in Fort Mitchell. While there are capital costs involved in the construction of a sewer main to connect to Phenix City Utilities,

the location of the line would allow for and encourage growth along the AL Highway 165 corridor between Phenix City and Fort Mitchell.

6.5.2.7 Additionally, the installation of sewer main in this area provides an option for the eventual construction of a wastewater treatment plant adjacent to Uchee Creek, as originally recommended in the 2002 study.

### 6.5.3 Construction of Decentralized Sewage Treatment Systems

6.5.3.1 A decentralized sewage treatment system is a hybrid, of sorts, between a conventional sewage treatment plant and an on-site sewage treatment system. It is most commonly utilized in planned residential developments or in commercial applications when it is not economically feasible to provide conventional sewage treatment.

6.5.3.2 This technology is relatively new in comparison to central treatment plants, and it is not recommended to be utilized as a permanent treatment solution. While these plants are expandable from the standpoint of hydraulic capacity, they are not typically able to adjust to meet increased treatment limits when permits are renewed, and this can result in significant capital expenditures in the construction of an entirely new system in the future.

6.5.3.3 The number of decentralized sewage applications has increased in the past decade as the technology has evolved. For the particular application in Fort Mitchell, it could be considered if time were not a critical factor; however, permits are required for this operation, and this could slow the progress of making sewer available, potentially losing future connections and revenue as a result.

6.5.3.4 This system has several instances where it could be applicable in other portions of the County. The planned development in the southeast corner of the County, Rivers Reach, would be a very strong candidate for the installation of a decentralized system. Additionally, there is a potential need in the Woodland Drive area, just south of U.S. Highway 80 in Ladonia. As development continues to progress and growth continues

toward Seale over the next decade, there could be a need for this technology in that community as well.

6.5.3.5 The cost to construct a decentralized facility is heavily dependant upon the capacity of the facility to be constructed. Decentralized treatment systems may be developed and constructed for less than \$250,000, but they may also cost several million dollars, depending upon the application.

#### 6.5.4 Central Treatment Facility

6.5.4.1 Ideally, the Russell County Sewer Authority would construct a central wastewater treatment facility along Uchee Creek that was capable of handling the wastewater in the Fort Mitchell and surrounding areas as a result of this project growth. A series of lift stations, force mains, and gravity sewer mains would be needed to carry the sewage from both the north and south areas of Fort Mitchell to this facility.

6.5.4.2 This solution does not account for the southernmost planned development, Rivers Reach, along Highway 165. A separate, decentralized treatment facility would need to be constructed as it is not cost effective to pump the wastewater several miles to the nearest lift station.

6.5.4.3 It is estimated that a combination of 8-inch and 12-inch gravity sewer mains with 4-inch and 10-inch force mains would handle the projected flows in the area and that the treatment limits assigned by ADEM would be comparable to other NPDES limits in the area. As a result, an SBR treatment system is recommended for this area.

6.5.4.4 In order to implement this option, the wastewater treatment plant would need to be designed, permitted and constructed. Based on conservative estimates, a design period of 9 months, permitting period of approximately 8 months, a construction period of 12 months, and a one month start up period are anticipated, for a total of approximately two and a half years to complete an operable system.



## 7. Summary and Recommendations

### 7.1 Russell County Water Authority

7.1.1 With over 600 miles of water main in its distribution system, the RCWA has identified several areas that it plans to address. Having operated for nearly forty years, portions of its infrastructure are of equivalent age and primarily consist of 160 psi rated pipe.

7.1.2 There is an interest to improve and upgrade portions of the arterial mains to higher rated pipe, larger diameter pipe, or both. It is recommended that the RCWA continue to implement an annual maintenance and rehabilitation plan to make improvements to its existing infrastructure based on identified need.

7.1.3 It is understood that the RCWA plans to continue evaluation of its existing water service jurisdiction for the identification of potential large-capacity production wells. This exploration is encouraged as the other options presented are evaluated and a long-term strategy for meeting future water demands is developed.

7.1.4 The most economical and practical solution for all entities involved would be the establishment of a Water Supply District that could serve Phenix City Utilities, RCWA and FMWA. It would be a means to utilize the permitted capacity of the existing WFP, allowing for RCWA and FMWA to pay the lowest possible water rates and provide Phenix City Utilities with capital to complete vital improvements to their infrastructure. It is understood; however, that Phenix City Utilities is not interested in relinquishing ownership of the WFP at this time.

7.1.5 If a Water Supply District is unable to be established, then the most efficient solution would be for the RCWA to evaluate its existing water purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities. The parameters of the agreement which would need to be assessed are the long-term wholesale purchase price and the discussion of minimizing DBP generation in the system.

7.1.6 Finally, if a long-term water purchase agreement with Phenix City Utilities cannot be reached, the most cost effective solution would be a partnership with the FMWA to permit and construct a centrally located Water Treatment Plant in central Russell County. While this option is not the most efficient solution due to the overall capital costs required to construct the project and the available capacity at the existing WFP, it is a solution that would provide RCWA and FMWA with independence and self-sufficiency in meeting its current and future water needs.

## 7.2 Russell County Sewer Authority

7.2.1 Currently, the RCSA has very little infrastructure and only a few customers. As the County Commission seeks to encourage growth, the expansion of sewer services will play a critical role in the rate at which that growth occurs. The historic practice of installing on-site sewage treatment systems cannot continue to be the predominant means of sewage treatment in order for this growth to occur.

7.2.2 Based on population growth projections, it appears that a substantial portion of the projected growth will occur in the next two to four years, leveling off to a gradual growth in the two decades to follow. As a result, the speed at which a viable means of sewage treatment can be provided in these growth areas is the most critical factor which must be addressed.

7.2.3 Other factors that need to be considered are the capital costs need to implement the project, ability to incorporate the solution into a long-term strategy for sewage treatment throughout the County, and the interests of the customers being served.

7.2.4 Considering those factors, the most effective method to provide sewer service to the citizens of Russell County is to make a temporary connection to a neighboring utility. This method can be implemented without the need for regulatory action and permit acquisition, reducing the amount of time needed to begin adding sewer customers to the RCSA system.



- 7.2.5 The option of constructing and installing a sewer main along AL Highway 165 to the Phenix City Utilities' collection system requires the least capital expenditure of any option examined, and it provides sewer availability to more than 10 miles of property along AL 165, affording the opportunity for both existing developments and future developments to connect. This will further encourage residential, commercial, and industrial development in this area.
- 7.2.6 The installation of sewer along AL Highway 165 to connect to Phenix City Utilities will allow for the eventual construction of a wastewater treatment plant adjacent to Uchee Creek. It is understood that the RCSA already has property available in this area for this to occur, and with an established customer base and infrastructure in place to transfer the sewage to this location, the capital costs to construct this system and the payoff time for the project will both be significantly reduced.
- 7.2.7 In other locations throughout the County that have experienced past growth and have the potential for future growth, such as the Ladonia and Crawford areas, there are two solid options to provide sewer service to these locations.
- 7.2.8 There are several areas that, if properly planned and developed, would be ideal situations for the design and installation of a decentralized treatment system, such as the Woodland Drive area. Potential growth areas could be encouraged to grow more rapidly with the presence of available sewer, and a permanent treatment system would be the most cost effective long term solution for providing this.
- 7.2.9 If the capital funding is not available to construct a separate decentralized treatment system, then the recommended solution would be to negotiate a connection to the nearby Phenix City Utilities' collection system. Based on previous agreements between the two entities, Russell County Sewer Authority already has an established collection system along U.S. Highway 80 in Ladonia, which could be extended to future areas of growth.

- 7.2.10 As Russell County's growth continues to extend south of Phenix City and Fort Mitchell and Ladonia continue to grow, it is anticipated that the community of Seale will begin to experience growth as well. Depending upon the growth rate of Fort Mitchell, Ladonia, and Crawford in relation to Seale, there will also be several options to provide sewer in that location as well.
- 7.2.11 Ideally, significant growth will have occurred in Fort Mitchell, Ladonia, Crawford, or south of Phenix City that available conventional sewage treatment will be available near Seale. If so, the most cost effective option would be to connect to the established Russell County treatment system.
- 7.2.12 If growth has not occurred that results in the construction of a traditional wastewater treatment plant, then a cost effective solution may be to evaluate the possibility of constructing a decentralized treatment system in Seale as well. It is recommended that this be reevaluated as growth is experienced in the Seale area.



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## APPENDIX

## 7

**LAND COVER DEFINITIONS**

- 11 Open Water - All areas of open water, generally with less than 25% cover of vegetation or soil.
- 21 Developed, Open Space - Includes areas with a mixture of some constructed materials, but mostly vegetation in the form of lawn grasses. Impervious surfaces account for less than 20 percent of total cover. These areas most commonly include large-lot single-family housing units, parks, golf courses, and vegetation planted in developed settings for recreation, erosion control, or aesthetic purposes.
- 22 Developed, Low Intensity - Includes areas with a mixture of constructed materials and vegetation. Impervious surfaces account for 20-49 percent of total cover. These areas most commonly include single-family housing units.
- 23 Developed, Medium Intensity - Includes areas with a mixture of constructed materials and vegetation. Impervious surfaces account for 50-79 percent of the total cover. These areas most commonly include single-family housing units.
- 24 Developed, High Intensity - Includes highly developed areas where people reside or work in high numbers. Examples include apartment complexes, row houses and commercial/industrial. Impervious surfaces account for 80 to 100 percent of the total cover.
- 31 Barren Land (Rock/Sand/Clay) - Barren areas of bedrock, desert pavement, scarps, talus, slides, volcanic material, glacial debris, sand dunes, strip mines, gravel pits and other accumulations of earthen material. Generally, vegetation accounts for less than 15% of total cover.
- 41 Deciduous Forest - Areas dominated by trees generally greater than 5 meters tall, and greater than 20% of total vegetation cover. More than 75 percent of the tree species shed foliage simultaneously in response to seasonal change.



- 42 Evergreen Forest - Areas dominated by trees generally greater than 5 meters tall, and greater than 20% of total vegetation cover. More than 75 percent of the tree species maintain their leaves all year. Canopy is never without green foliage.
- 43 Mixed Forest - Areas dominated by trees generally greater than 5 meters tall, and greater than 20% of total vegetation cover. Neither deciduous nor evergreen species are greater than 75 percent of total tree cover.
- 52 Shrub/Scrub - Areas dominated by shrubs; less than 5 meters tall with shrub canopy typically greater than 20% of total vegetation. This class includes true shrubs, young trees in an early successional stage or trees stunted from environmental conditions.
- 71 Grassland/Herbaceous - Areas dominated by grammanoid or herbaceous vegetation, generally greater than 80% of total vegetation. These areas are not subject to intensive management such as tilling, but can be utilized for grazing.
- 81 Pasture/Hay - Areas of grasses, legumes, or grass-legume mixtures planted for livestock grazing or the production of seed or hay crops, typically on a perennial cycle. Pasture/hay vegetation accounts for greater than 20 percent of total vegetation.
- 82 Cultivated Crops - Areas used for the production of annual crops, such as corn, soybeans, vegetables, tobacco, and cotton, and also perennial woody crops such as orchards and vineyards. Crop vegetation accounts for greater than 20 percent of total vegetation. This class also includes all land being actively tilled.
- 90 Woody Wetlands - Areas where forest or shrubland vegetation accounts for greater than 20 percent of vegetative cover and the soil or substrate is periodically saturated with or covered with water.
- 95 Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands - Areas where forest or shrubland vegetation accounts for greater than 20 percent of vegetative cover and the soil or substrate is periodically saturated with or covered with water.



