

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

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### 1.0 What is CompPlan 2030?

CompPlan 2030 is the City of Auburn's comprehensive plan. The plan is the product of many months of work on the part of city staff, elected officials, and citizens of the City of Auburn. As a *plan*, CompPlan 2030:



- Provides guidance for the future, based on examining existing and future conditions, the best examples of planning practice from around the United States, and Auburn's vision for itself
- Gives the aspirations of the community substance and form by providing recommendations on how to implement the community's vision
- Provides predictability and fairness for citizens, elected officials, city staff, and the development community by giving the City a Future Land Use Plan that provides parcel-level recommendations for the type, location and scale of new development for the existing city limits as well as areas the City may grow into over the next two decades.
- Helps the many plans that guide the City of Auburn work together effectively and towards a common purpose

CompPlan 2030 is the City of Auburn's guide to future land use and transportation, and a unifying document that brings together dozens of existing plans that guide the City.

CompPlan 2030 is comprehensive because:

- The plan analyzes a broad spectrum of existing conditions to provide a clear picture of the current state of the City, in regard to land use and transportation.
- The plan covers a wide array of subject areas related to the future growth and development of the City, from land use and transportation to the natural environment and open space.
- The plan moves from *acquisition*, in which we gather data on the broad spectrum of existing conditions; to *analysis*, in which the information is examined, reexamined, and examined again; to *awareness*, the end result of successful analysis in which the nature of problems and trends is revealed, connections determined, and goals and objectives stated; to *action*, the hard work of making the plan's recommendations more than just words on paper.
- The plan coordinates and unifies the dozens of existing plans and other documents that currently guide the City of Auburn.

Fundamentally, CompPlan 2030 is a plan about good growth. Auburn is a strong community built upon a foundation of a world-class university, a vibrant and innovative business community, an involved citizenry, and an efficient and responsive City government. As the City grows, its future is dependent on the vitality of and cooperation between each of those entities. Working together, we must ask ourselves: "How do we grow, and how do we do it well?"

## State Requirements for Comprehensive Planning

Alabama law requires that:

The [comprehensive] plan shall be made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the municipality and its environs which will, in accordance with present and future needs, best promote health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development, including, among other things, adequate provision for traffic, the promotion of safety from fire and other dangers, adequate provision for light and air, the promotion of the healthful and convenient distribution of population, the promotion of good civic design and arrangement, wise and efficient expenditure of public funds and the adequate provision of public utilities and other public requirements.

– *Alabama Code § 11-52-9*

The language of the statute is general in nature and allows local governments a broad degree of freedom in writing their comprehensive plans, while ensuring that the fundamentals of a good comprehensive plan are all present. The plan must help guide future development, protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Auburn, promote good civic design, and coordinate the efficient and adequate provision of public services.

### What is the difference between a zoning ordinance and a comprehensive plan?

**A zoning ordinance** is a regulatory tool used to implement plans and policies. It is a legal, enforceable part of City Code that is used to regulate the use of land and the type, scale, and intensity of use on that land. Zoning ordinances are legally binding, and as part of City Code they have the force of law. Requirements of a zoning ordinance *must* be met unless a waiver or variance is requested, and planning staff and decision-making bodies such as the Planning Commission and City Council must apply it to cases that come before them. A zoning ordinance may be amended from time-to-time, but it is not intended to have a limited timeframe. A zoning ordinance is one tool for implementing a comprehensive plan.

**A comprehensive plan** is a vision of what a community wants to become, and a framework for accomplishing that vision. A comprehensive plan consists of various elements that are separate but related to each other, such as transportation, the natural environment, and how land is used now and in the future. The elements share a set of common assumptions, such as where and how the City should grow, the geographic area covered by the plan, and the timeline the plan is intended for. The elements are intended to work together and reinforce each other so that the comprehensive plan addresses issues related to future growth and development in a holistic, comprehensive way.

A comprehensive plan is *advisory* in nature. A comprehensive plan will usually consist of a *Future Land Use Plan* that is intended to help achieve a jurisdiction’s long-range vision. Auburn’s Future Land Use Plan provides parcel-level recommendations for the type, location and scale of new development for the existing city limits as well as areas the City may grow into over the next two decades. A parcel’s future land use designation may be the same or may differ from what it is currently used for. If the designation is the same as its current use, then the Future Land Use Plan is advocating that no change occur. If the designation is different than the current use, the Future Land Use Plan is advocating that change to the “new” use be permitted, as redevelopment, *et cetera* occurs over time. A Future Land Use Plan may be used by planning staff and decision-making bodies such as the Planning Commission and City Council as a basis for evaluating cases that come before them.

A comprehensive plan also contains narrative recommendations in the form of goals, objectives and policies. The recommendations are intended to be implemented over the full timeframe of the plan, with some being implemented in the beginning, and others later; some will not be adopted at all. These recommendations come in several forms. Some recommendations may be *capital projects*, such as a new park or school. Other recommendations are *programmatic*, meaning they recommend items that are not necessarily regulatory, such as providing information to the public or establishing new processes for how work is done in the City. Still others are *regulatory*, in that, to be implemented, changes to regulations or ordinances may be required. The important distinction is that, while the recommendations may advocate for change to documents such as the zoning ordinance, the recommendations cannot be enforced unless changes are actually made to the regulations in question. Such changes require the review of the Planning Commission and the approval of City Council, with separate public hearings for each.

More information on the structure of the plan is available in Section 1.4.

### **Planning Principles**

A strong house requires a strong foundation. Just as a foundation does not determine the final form of a house, but instead works to ensure that a house stands the tests of time, the following planning principles do not determine the final form of CompPlan 2030. Rather, such principles work to ensure that the plan expresses those best planning practices and standards of excellence that underlie the very best urban planning.

The following planning principles provide the foundation for CompPlan 2030:

- Planning is a process. The world is dynamic and changes every day. CompPlan 2030 is not prescient. It represents the best efforts of the people of Auburn to plan for the future. It is intended to be a guide to future development, not a prescriptive mandate. As conditions change, CompPlan 2030 should be updated to reflect those changes.
- Planning should be visionary.  
“Where there is no vision, there is no hope”. – George Washington Carver
- Planning should involve citizens in every stage of the planning process.
- Planning must serve the public interest.
- Planning must seek a balance between the good of the community and the rights of the individual.
- Planning must be just, fair, and equitable.
- Planning should integrate sustainability into every decision.
- Planning must be holistic, considering the full-range of economic, social, and environmental factors that influence communities and the people that live in them.
- Planning should be long-range and comprehensive: this includes awareness of the long-range consequences of present actions.
- Planning should promote wise stewardship of the community’s resources, making effective use of those resources in the present while preserving them for future generations.
- Planning should reflect the values and aspirations of the community while integrating the best practices of good planning.

- Planning should facilitate new growth while protecting existing neighborhoods, infrastructure, and the environment.
- Planning must provide effective recommendations for action and implementation as part of the planning process.
- Planning should recognize the importance and value of communities of choice by facilitating the provision of housing types and forms that meet the needs of the community.

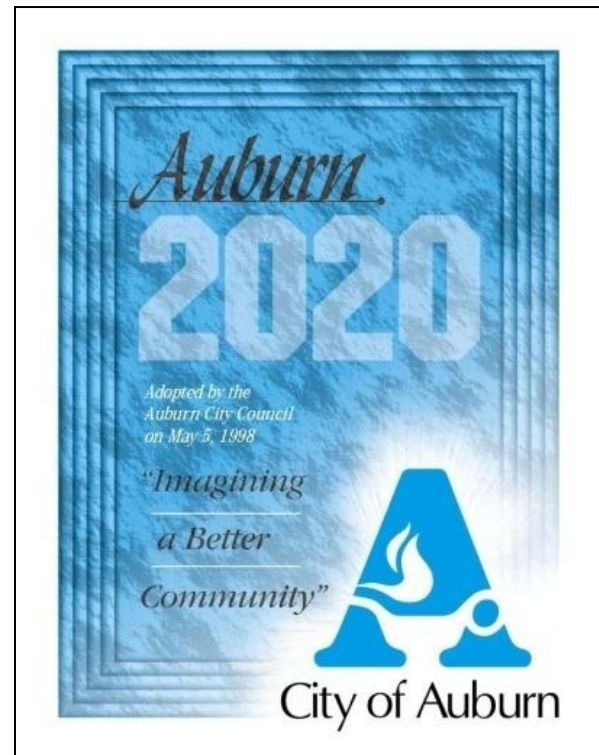
## 1.1 Previous Planning Efforts

CompPlan 2030 is far from the first long-range planning effort the City of Auburn has engaged in; however, it is the first parcel-based land use plan created for the Auburn community. As noted in the 2004 Land Use Plan:

In 1980, the new mayor of Auburn [Mayor Jan Dempsey] initiated the Auburn 2000 Project. She enlisted City Council members, a new City Manager appointed in 1982, and concerned citizens in an effort to set directions for the City for the remaining years of the 20th Century. The outcome of those efforts, the *Auburn 2000 Plan* published in 1983, helped the City grow and prosper and to forge a strong link between the quiet village of the past and the burgeoning community of the present.<sup>1</sup>

Auburn 2000 helped establish the City's strategic planning process. Auburn 2020, adopted in May 1998, took the City through additional visioning and strategic planning efforts to establish a clear and shared view of the kind of place in which the members of the community want to live.

The CompPlan is a unifying document that reviews and helps bring together the many plans and documents that guide the City of Auburn. The intent is not to replace existing plans, but to summarize and, where necessary, update, supplement, or bring into harmony any disparate elements of the plans. Dozens of documents were consulted when developing the plan. A full list is available in Appendix A.



<sup>1</sup> City of Auburn Future Land Use Plan 2004, p. 6

## 1.2 Background

### Study Area

The focus of this document is the City of Auburn, Alabama. Auburn is located in Lee County (2015 est. population 156,993<sup>2</sup>) in east-central Alabama, near the Georgia border. Auburn is adjacent to Interstate 85 and strategically located within the Birmingham, AL, Montgomery, AL, and Atlanta, GA triangle. The City is one of the fastest-growing in Alabama, with a 2015 estimated population of 62,059, an increase of 8,666 or 16.2% from the 2010 population of 53,380.<sup>3</sup>

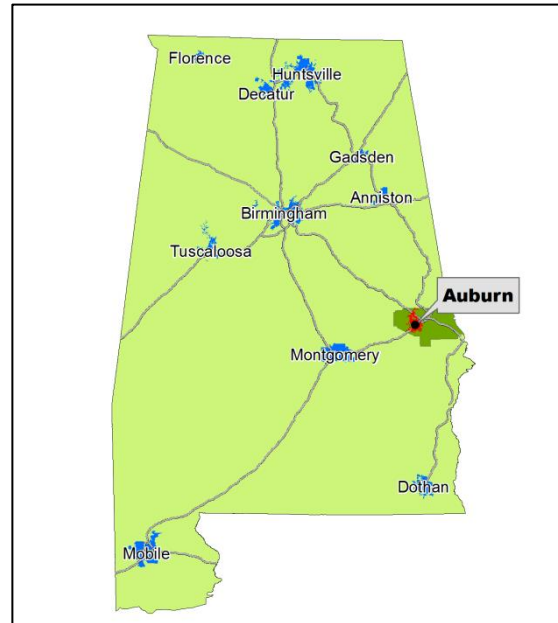
Lee County’s other municipalities include Opelika, Smiths Station, Loachapoka, and portions of Phoenix City, Notasulga, and Waverly.

### History

The history of the City of Auburn began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since its formal incorporation in 1839, the City’s growth has been parallel to the growth of Auburn University. Over the years, the City and the University have shared in each other’s improvement, and occasional strain, due to growth. From the beginning, the City of Auburn has been a progressive, continuously evolving place. Auburn has matured from a small village on the plains to one of the fastest growing cities in the United States.

Auburn’s history began in the 1830’s. Creek Indians resided in the area on land that would eventually become Lee County in 1866, named after U.S. Civil War veteran Robert E. Lee (Encyclopedia of Alabama 2008). The land was ceded to the United States by the Creek Indians by the 1832 Treaty of Cusseta. They inhabited the area currently occupied by Auburn University, including the area now home to Toomer’s Corner and Samford Hall. As white settlers began to migrate to the region, the Creeks found themselves frequently cheated of the land guaranteed to them by the treaty. Disagreements about land rights led to war between the Creeks and white settlers. The war eventually resulted in the forced removal of the Creek Nation westward to Oklahoma. Judge John J. Harper, a settler of the area, intended to build a town that would be the religious and educational epicenter of the region. The City of Auburn was incorporated on February 2, 1839. At the time, the town was one mile wide and two miles long.<sup>4</sup>

After 15 years of growth, the East Alabama Male College (EAMC) was established in 1856. Although it was a private Methodist college, it created the foundation for what later became Auburn University. During the Civil War, East Alabama Male College became bankrupt as a result of losing many enrolled students to the military. In desperate need of funds to continue operation, the college agreed to transfer ownership to the State of Alabama through the Morrill Act, which made it a land-grant university. The Morrill Act required its recipients to offer courses in military science, agriculture and



<sup>2</sup>American Fact Finder <http://factfinder.census.gov>

<sup>3</sup>American Fact Finder <http://factfinder.census.gov>

<sup>4</sup> League of Women Voters, 1971



engineering. EAMC president at the time, William Leroy Broun, struggled to implement the new requirements due to objections from administrators who wanted the college to offer more of a liberal arts education. President Broun was able to forge a compromise. He introduced separate departments for engineering and scientific disciplines, agriculture, liberal arts, and established a pharmacy department. EAMC's various course offerings attracted more students to the institution. The school's new direction led the state legislature to change its name to Alabama Polytechnic Institute (API) in 1899.

The growth of the college caused an explosion in population for the City of Auburn. A large amount of construction, both commercial and residential, led to many annexations which expanded Auburn's growth outside of the city's original boundaries to accommodate the influx of students and business.<sup>5</sup> The sudden population growth in the City from 1,831 in 1910 to 3,338 in the 1920's led the town council to officially name the streets and number the houses in preparation for mail delivery in 1926. In 1940, the town council approved Auburn's first zoning ordinance.<sup>6</sup>

During World War II, university enrollment decreased by almost two-thirds due to many students' enlistment in the military; however, the GI Bill and the end of the War quickly reversed the trend. API hired new professors, increased class sizes, and even housed students in a prisoner of war camp in nearby Opelika where they were transported by bus. API awarded more degrees in the first decade after the War than it had in its previous history. Enrollments rose from almost 2,300 in 1945 to more than 8,000 in 1947.<sup>7</sup> In 1947, Ralph Brown Draughon oversaw API's growth into a true university. The increase of enrollment led him to reorganize the school's administrative functions and academic structure. Through the growth of the school, a plethora of jobs were available through the institution. He established new offices, and brought faculty into university governance. For this effort, API won accreditation from the Association of American Universities. In 1960, API became Auburn University (AU). During Draughon's administration (1947-1965), API and AU awarded more than 27,000 degrees, many in new masters and doctoral programs.<sup>8</sup>

In 1957, the construction of Interstate 85 began. This highway connected the City of Auburn to the major cities of the state. The new route created convenient access to Auburn University's campus, and afforded the school opportunities to schedule more home football games in Auburn rather than in larger cities. This created a strong tourism component in Auburn's economy. However, during the 1970's, the growth slowed, and it became clear that Auburn's sole economic reliance on Auburn University was not conducive for long-term growth and sustainability.<sup>9</sup>

Although the city experienced some lulls in growth, reports show that from the 1960's through the 1980's Auburn's population increased by leaps and bounds. The U.S. Census shows that the City's population grew from 16,260 in the 1960's to 28,610 in the 1980's.<sup>10</sup> During this 30-year period, 330 commercial buildings were built, including the Village Mall. A series of reports in the 1980's and 1990's ranked the Auburn public school system among the top in the state and nation. This, coupled with the University's high ranking in similar reports, helped convince thousands of people to move to the

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<sup>5</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auburn, Alabama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auburn,_Alabama)

<sup>6</sup> Logue & Sims 1996

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopedia of Alabama, 2008

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopedia of Alabama, 2008

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auburn,\\_Al](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auburn,_Al)

<sup>10</sup> [www.auburnalabama.org](http://www.auburnalabama.org)

area.<sup>11</sup> As citizens’ satisfaction with the city administration reached record levels, Auburn began very rapid residential growth. Residential building permits were issued for 1,964 apartment units, and 1,715 private homes. From 1980 through 1996, Auburn built another 1,946 private homes and 4,199 apartments, totaling 6,395 homes and 10,200 apartments.<sup>12</sup> Throughout this period, the city installed needed infrastructure, such as water and sewer lines, and paved miles of dirt roads.

In 1982, the City of Auburn reorganized its local government. A new mayor had been elected and the previous city government system was replaced with a council-manager system. With a new government in place, the city developed the Auburn 2000 plan, which would successfully organize the City for further expansion.<sup>13</sup> The results of Auburn 2000 were very significant. Auburn 2000 created a comprehensive strategy that led to tangible successes; a few being the expansion of water and sewer systems to ensure adequate capacity to meet future needs; the adoption of a proactive approach to economic development, including the involvement of Auburn University; the initiation of a number of significant public-private partnerships; and the development of innovative housing through the adoption of performance zoning.<sup>14</sup> During this time, the City also began aggressively pursuing industry, leading to a large increase in the number of industrial jobs.<sup>15</sup> From 1990 to 1997, approximately 1,375 jobs were created through the expansion of existing and new industries. Many internationally known firms, such as Briggs & Stratton Corp., Hoerbiger Drivetech USA, Inc., and Donaldson Company, Inc., established building plants in Auburn’s industrial parks.<sup>16</sup>

In the late 1990’s, the City of Auburn developed the Auburn 2020 plan, which further expanded on the success of Auburn 2000. The Auburn 2020 plan consisted of 22 goals, including the continued strong community support of Auburn City Schools and the identification and purchase of additional suitable property for future industrial parks to maintain the City's industrial recruitment program.<sup>17</sup> The plan helped organize Auburn for a resurgence of rapid growth as a newly designated Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Its status as an MSA has made it a more appealing location for commercial businesses.<sup>18</sup>

Since 1960, Auburn’s population has grown steadily, with an average of more than a 3% increase per year.<sup>19</sup> From its incorporation as a town in 1839, Auburn has evolved from a small village on the plains to one of the fastest growing cities in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

**Timeline**

**1830’s** Elizabeth Taylor Harper gives Auburn its name “Sweet Auburn, loveliest village on the plain.” The idea came from Oliver Goldsmith’s poem “The Deserted Village.”

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<sup>11</sup> [www.auburnalabama.org](http://www.auburnalabama.org)  
<sup>12</sup> Logue, Simms 1996  
<sup>13</sup> [www.auburnalabama.org](http://www.auburnalabama.org)  
<sup>14</sup> [www.auburnalabama.org](http://www.auburnalabama.org)  
<sup>15</sup> [www.auburnalabama.org](http://www.auburnalabama.org)  
<sup>16</sup> Growth Boundary Plan, Feb 2000  
<sup>17</sup> [www.auburnalabama.org](http://www.auburnalabama.org)  
<sup>18</sup> Growth Boundary Plan, Feb 2000  
<sup>19</sup> [www.auburnalabama.org](http://www.auburnalabama.org)  
<sup>20</sup> [www.auburnalabama.org](http://www.auburnalabama.org)

- 1832** The Creek Indians are allotted homesteads under a treaty signed between the United States and the Creek Nation. They reside near what is presently Auburn University, including Toomer’s Corner and Samford Hall.
  
- 1836** Creek Indians and treaty violators go to war over land disputes. The war eventually leads to their forced removal westward to Oklahoma.
  
- 1839** February 2, 1839, Auburn is incorporated as a town of 1,280. It is founded by Judge John J. Harper.
  
- 1856** East Alabama Male College, a private Methodist college, is established. This is the original Auburn University.
  
- 1872** February 26, 1872, financially broke East Alabama Male College (it never recovered from the Civil War) agrees to transfer ownership to the State of Alabama through the Morrill Act, thus making it a land grant university. The institution’s name is changed to the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama.
  
- 1899** The Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama changes its name to Alabama Polytechnic Institute.
  
- 1926** The city council officially names the streets and numbers the houses’ in preparation for mail delivery.
  
- 1940** The city council approves Auburn’s first zoning ordinance.
  
- 1957** The construction of Interstate 85 begins, connecting Auburn to the major cities of the state.
  
- 1960** Alabama Polytechnic Institute becomes Auburn University.
  
- 1964** Under federal court order, Auburn University admits its first black student, Harold L. Franklin, as a graduate student.
  
- 1965** Under federal court order, Auburn public schools begin integrating students. It will not be until 1970 that full integration is achieved.

**1960-1980**

Auburn’s population grows by leaps and bounds. During this 20-year period, 330 commercial buildings are built, including the Village Mall. Building permits are issued for 1,964 apartment units, and 1,715 private homes. Throughout this period, the city installs needed infrastructure such as water and sewer lines and paves miles of dirt roads.

**1970’s** Prevailing conditions make it clear that the city can not solely rely on the University for long-term growth and sustainability. The City purchases its second industrial park for light industrial use.

**1982** Auburn reorganizes its local government, establishing a council-manager form.



**1983** Auburn 2000 is adopted by the City.

**1980's-2009**

The Auburn public school system's ranking as one of the best systems in the state and nation results in thousands of people moving to Auburn.

**1980-1996**

Auburn builds 1,946 private homes and 4,199 apartments totaling 6,395 homes and 10,200 apartments.<sup>21</sup>

**1990-1997**

Approximately 1,375 jobs are created through the expansion of existing companies and the relocation of new industries to Auburn, including many internationally known firms, such as Briggs & Stratton Corp., Hoerbiger Drivetech USA, Inc. and Donaldson Company, Inc.

**1998** City of Auburn adopts Auburn 2020.

**2009** The City of Auburn receives the Outstanding Planning Award for Project/Program/Tool from the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association.

**2010** The population of Auburn grows to 59,563 citizens<sup>22</sup> with a university enrollment of 25,078 students<sup>23</sup> from 1,400 citizens and 400 students in 1900.

**2010** Auburn successfully recruits several large manufacturers to Auburn, including Viper Motorcycle Company and GE Aviation.

**2011** Auburn University wins the BCS National Football Championship.

**2012** Forbes.com ranks Auburn 17<sup>th</sup> on its list of "Best Small Places for Cities and Careers."

CNN Money ranks Auburn as one of the 100 "Best Places to Live."

Auburn receives Quality of Life Award from the Alabama League of Municipalities for cities greater than 12,000 in population.

CompPlan 2030 receives "Outstanding Planning Award for a Comprehensive Plan" from the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Exit 50, Auburn's third interstate interchange opens.

**2013** The Renew Opelika Road corridor plan is adopted.

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<sup>21</sup> Logue, Simms 1996

<sup>22</sup> Auburn Interactive Growth Model projection

<sup>23</sup> www.auburn.edu

**2014** The Renew Opelika Road corridor plan receives the “Outstanding Planning Award for a Plan or Planning Program” from the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association.

CompPlan 2030 is updated to reflect land use changes as a result of the Renew Opelika Road plan and the Exit 50 land use study.

**2015** The estimated population of Auburn is 62,059, an increase of 16.2 percent over 2010, making it the 22<sup>nd</sup> fastest growing community in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

The City Council adopts the Auburn Downtown Master Plan.

The Toomer’s Corner construction project wins the Alabama Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects State Merit Award.

**2016** CompPlan 2030 is updated to include the land use recommendations prescribed in the Auburn Downtown Master Plan.

The Auburn Downtown Master Plan wins the “Outstanding Planning Award for a Plan or Planning Program” from the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Forbes.com ranks Auburn 10<sup>th</sup> in job growth and 26<sup>th</sup> in education.

**Detailed Source Information:**

- *Auburn: A Pictorial History of the Loveliest Village* by Mickey Logue and Jack Sims
- Encyclopedia of Alabama, 2008
- Growth Boundary Plan for the City of Auburn, Feb. 2000
- *This is Auburn, Alabama* by League of Women Voters

**1.3 Plan Process**

The planning process for CompPlan 2030 began in early 2008. The initial phase of the plan involved determining the size and scope of the plan, identifying stakeholder groups, and beginning to acquire data. The City of Auburn has a well-accepted strategic plan, Auburn 2020, that was adopted in 1998. Initially, some thought was given to combining the CompPlan 2030 process with a process to update Auburn 2020. In the end, it was decided to concentrate upon developing CompPlan 2030 as a replacement for the 2004 City of Auburn land use plan, with a focus on future growth and development.

One tool that has been central to the planning effort from the beginning is the Auburn Interactive Growth Model (AIGM). The AIGM is a rule-based (zoning) and analytical tool for predicting the total population and population distribution of Auburn over time. The model helps us predict the location of future growth based on a variety of factors. Other components of the model assist in predicting optimal future locations for schools, parks, commercial centers, and fire stations.

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<sup>24</sup> American Fact Finder <http://factfinder.census.gov>

The AIGM consists of a number of separate but linked models, including demographic, economic, socio-political, spatial relationship, and land resource models. The AIGM is a very complex model applied to a very complex environment, but it provides the City of Auburn with a valuable tool in predicting where future population growth will occur. The AIGM allowed City staff to test what impact changes to land uses, zoning, or other factors would have on our future growth; it served as the foundation of the Future Land Use Plan.

Key to the development of the CompPlan ~~has also been~~ was the input from the general public, external stakeholders, and City staff. Input from the general public was gathered through a series of public meetings held at locations throughout Auburn. Promotion of public meetings was accomplished through emails, stories in City publications, newspaper articles, radio and TV interviews, promotional posters downtown, public service announcements, event notices on radio and online, and social media. A brief synopsis follows of each major public meeting follows. Summaries of public input received can be found in Appendix C.

**Public Meeting #1: Auburn Junior High School**

The first public meeting for CompPlan 2030 was held in two locations. The first meeting was held on October 13, 2009 at Auburn Junior High School (AJHS). Approximately 80 citizens attended. The meeting was opened by Mayor Bill Ham and began with a presentation on the planning process. Attendees then broke into groups with facilitators to respond to the following statements/questions:

- Imagine the best possible Auburn in the year 2030. Describe one aspect of it.
- What challenges must Auburn address between now and 2030 to become the best possible place it can be?

Attendees then ranked the responses by group. Staff then summarized these results for use in the next public meeting.

**Public Meeting #1: Northwest Auburn**

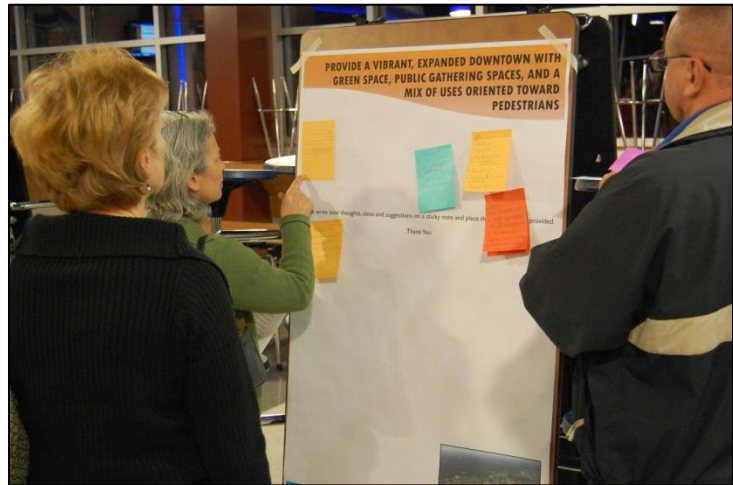
A second public meeting similar in structure to the meeting at AJHS was held in Northwest Auburn on February 9, 2010. Input from this meeting was combined with input from the meeting at AJHS as well as focus groups held in several locations (Auburn High School, Auburn Junior High, Planning Department) to generate the vision statements that were reviewed in Public Meeting #2.



**Facilitating group input at the NW Auburn meeting**

**Public Meeting #2**

After gathering input from focus groups and public meetings, the Planning Department compiled and tallied the comments received. Vision statements (see Section 1.7) were synthesized from the input. Public Meeting #2 was held on February 23, 2010 at Auburn Junior High School. The draft vision statements were presented to the public in an open house format. Comments were left on the vision statements as post-it notes, offering opportunities for meeting attendees to review the comments of others. The draft vision statements were received well by those attending the meeting, with only minor adjustments to one vision statement being necessary.



**Citizens commenting on vision statements at Public**

**Public Meeting #3 and Open House**

Public Meeting #3 was held on December 2, 2010, while an open house was held on December 6th. The intent of both of these meetings was to share the draft Future Land Use Plan as well as draft plan recommendations.

**Other Public Input Opportunities**

As part of the plan’s development, the City sent surveys to nearly 100 stakeholder organizations to solicit their input regarding issues and needs in their areas of expertise. Draft recommendations were also sent to the organizations for their review in late 2010/early 2011. General public input on the draft recommendations was accepted during the same time period. Draft recommendations were posted online, and the draft Future Land Use Map was available as a dynamic GIS-based application on the CompPlan website, allowing users to see land use recommendations and zoning, and post comments on individual parcels (see Appendix E for more information). The public was also able to attend any of the 12 Planning Commission work sessions or the three joint meetings of the Planning Commission and City Council.

**Planning Commission Work Sessions & Planning Commission/City Council Joint Meetings**

Key to the development of CompPlan 2030 was a series of 12 Planning Commission work sessions held throughout the plan development process. These meetings allowed staff and commissioners to communicate on issues of importance during the creation of the plan, and ensured that the development of CompPlan 2030 took place under the oversight of the Planning Commission.

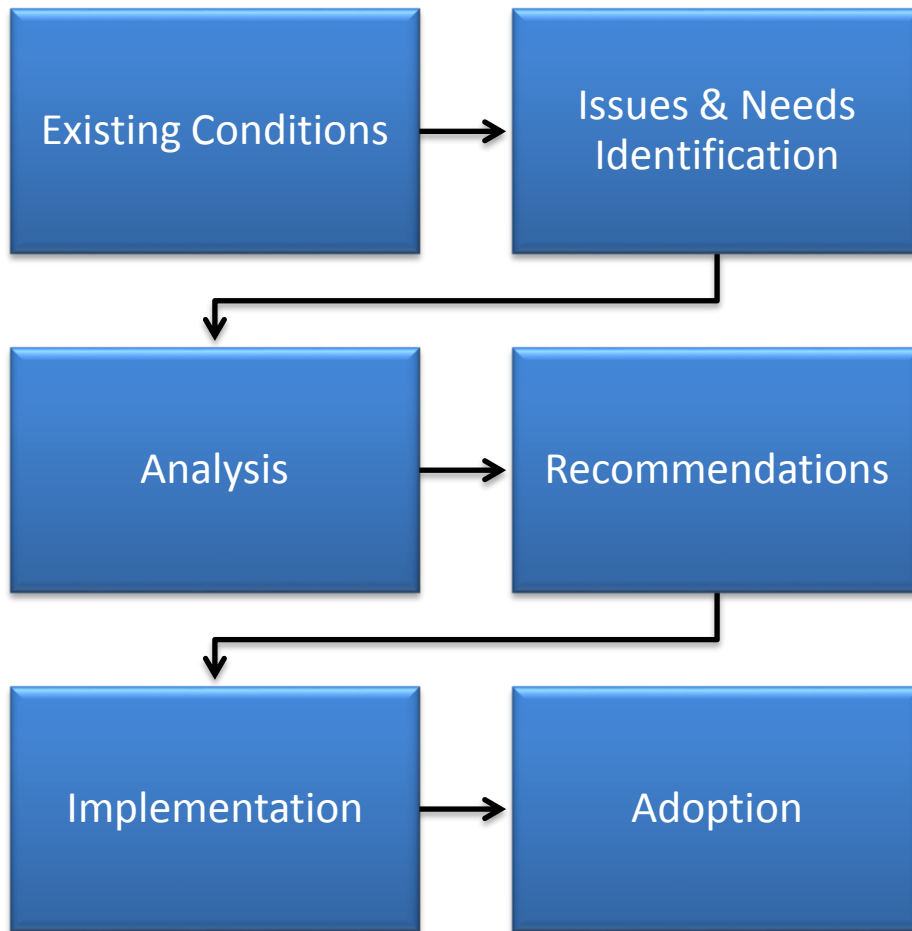
Three joint meetings of the Planning Commission and City Council were held at various points in the planning process. Because the CompPlan is a vital guiding document for both bodies, it was felt that holding a series of joint meetings would allow dialogue between members of both bodies as well as involve the City Council in the overall planning process.

**CompPlan Task Force**

A joint body of four planning commissioners and four members of the City Council reviewed the full draft CompPlan document and provided recommendations for changes to a limited number of recommendations, meeting four times in June and July 2011.

**Major Steps in the Planning Process**

The CompPlan 2030 planning process can be broken broadly into six steps as outlined below.



**Existing Conditions**

- Existing conditions data provides a snapshot of the City demographically, and otherwise
- Updated current land use data for all parcels in the City
- Met with departmental or other stakeholders to determine information needs
- Planning staff assembled readily available data; stakeholders assisted with assembling more specialized data
- Reviewed existing plans and standards
- Reviewed departmental goals and objectives

**Issues & Needs Identification**

- Utilized vision statements generated from public meetings



- Planning staff and stakeholders (included City departments and other stakeholders as identified in Appendix B) generated formalized issues and needs lists through strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis and other means
- Surveys of stakeholders also used SWOT analysis variant
- Issues and needs lists formed one basis for recommendations and helped inform analysis

### **Analysis**

- Varied by section, but in general used issues and needs identification and existing conditions as base
- Varied by section. Example: Parks and Recreation
  - Review facility inventories: Do current facilities meet level of service standards?
  - Review existing plans: What recommendations still need to be implemented?
  - Review current literature: What are emerging trends in the field of parks and recreation?
  - Stakeholder interviews
- Connects the existing conditions (where we are) to the recommendations (where we want to be)

### **Recommendations**

- Developed thorough review of staff analysis, issues and needs lists, public input, and the Auburn Interactive Growth Model (AIGM). These are the heart of the CompPlan.
- Used a goals, objectives, policy format, in which the goal is the top-level general recommendation, the objective is more specific, and each policy is an actionable item; all the policies under a given objective work together to implement that objective. For more information see Section 1.6.
- The Future Land Use Plan was developed through a multi-step process described in Section 3, Land Use.

### **Implementation**

- Includes all policies.
- Action steps are assembled, and timelines and responsible agencies or stakeholders are assigned.
- Example:
  - Complete a facility review to identify underutilized facilities
  - Responsible Agency: City of Auburn Parks and Recreation
  - Timeline: 1-3 years
- An implementation database will track implementation of all policies over time.
- See Section 1.6 for more information.

### **Adoption**

- Adoption of CompPlan 2030 by the City Council will make it an official policy document of the City, and is imperative for the plan to be successful.
- The CompPlan was recommended for adoption by the Planning Commission on September 8, 2011, and adopted by the Auburn City Council on October 4, 2011.

## 1.4 Plan Structure

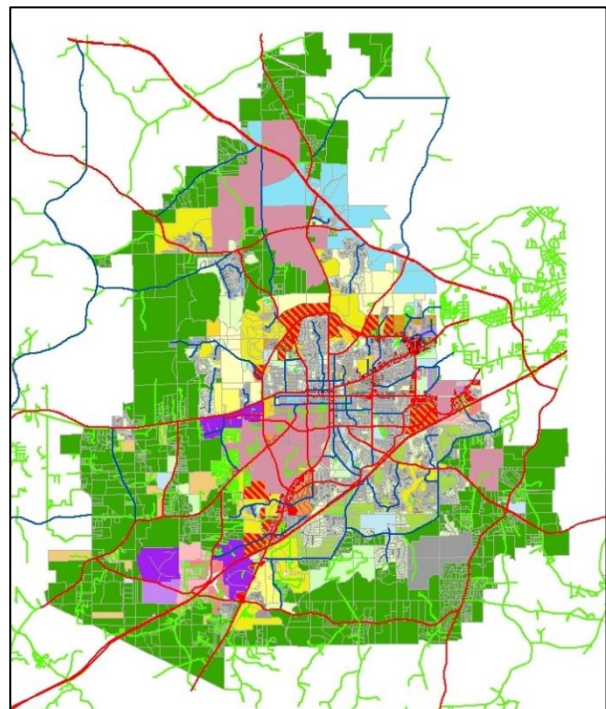
One of the strengths of a comprehensive plan is its *comprehensiveness*. Unlike a transportation plan, a sewer master plan, or even a neighborhood plan, a comprehensive plan covers a wide variety of topical areas. More importantly, it works to integrate those disparate systems into one harmonious whole.

This plan uses a systems approach. Related topic areas are grouped together into *systems* that, while individually different, are best considered together. For example, in the last 50 years, transportation planning has largely been dominated by automobiles: how to get them from point A to point B, and where to put them once point B is reached. What has been lost in that process is that we should not be planning for how to get automobiles from point A to point B, but rather for the *people* who drive them. When viewed in this way, all of the many ways people move from place to place (foot, bicycle, mass transit, air) quickly become more important. That is not to say that automobiles are left behind. They remain the dominant form of transportation in the United States. What it does mean, however, is that we recognize that by planning for all the different ways people can travel, we allow them to choose how they want to travel, instead of leaving them with only one option. As a result, the transportation systems section includes subsections on roads, bicycles, pedestrians, transit, rail, air and freight. Other systems are covered in similarly comprehensive ways. The table of contents provides a full outline of the plan.

### The Future Land Use Plan

The various systems: Land Use, Transportation, Natural Systems and Open Space, and Civic all work together. They each provide goals, objectives, and implementation recommendations. The Future Land Use Plan (FLUP) is different. It is meant to function as the central and unifying element in the City’s planning activities. All of CompPlan 2030’s other elements ultimately have their use and need of land in common.

A component of the Land Use section, the FLUP provides parcel-based recommendations for the City of Auburn’s future land use. The FLUP takes into consideration all of the goals, objectives, and implementation recommendations of the other sections, and is a powerful tool to help guide the decisions of City staff, citizens, elected and appointed officials, and the development community regarding land use, development, zoning, and capital improvements.



**Future Land Use Plan Map**

## 1.5 How This Plan Is Used<sup>25</sup>

This is a plan about good growth and serves as a framework for future decision-making and as a guide to future land use and transportation. As a guide, the plan is **not** a prescriptive mandate; it is intended to be flexible and adaptable to changing conditions. The plan, particularly the Future Land Use Plan,

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<sup>25</sup> Some language in this section is from the 2004 City of Auburn Land Use Plan section “Using and Refining the Plan”.

is based on the Auburn Interactive Growth Model (AIGM), a tool that provides a wealth of information on the City's future land use needs. Future changes to the FLUP should be based on the best possible combination of sound data and stakeholder input.

As a guide to future growth and development, CompPlan 2030 has provided predictability and fairness for citizens, elected officials, city staff, and the development community by giving the City a Future Land Use Plan that provides parcel-level recommendations for the type, location and scale of new development for the existing city limits as well as areas the City may grow into over the next two decades, as well as by providing recommendations to guide future investment. For it to be effective in its purpose, the plan must be continuously monitored and revised as changes occur in markets, the city's demographics, the built environment, and the political sphere. As part of the implementation process, recommendations have been made for plans and projects with timelines provided for completion (from immediate to 20 years). The plans and projects are assigned to the agencies responsible for their implementation. Not all recommendations have been or will be implemented. The overall success of the plan will rely on a continued commitment from citizens working hand-in-hand with the appropriate government agencies and the private sector to fully realize the vision and initiatives set forth in the plan. The local government must still approve funding for any programs or capital improvements such as parks, sidewalks, and streets. The implementation of the plan will occur as noted in Section 1.6.

Planning is a process, and it must not end just because the plan has been completed and adopted. CompPlan 2030 is intended to be a living document that will evolve and grow in response to changes in public values and to market and physical conditions. The plan is intended to be fully updated at least every five years. There have been interim updates to the plan since its adoption, such as the land use changes associated with the August 2013 adoption of the Renew Opelika Road and the Exit 50 Study, as well as the September 2015 adoption of The Downtown Master Plan. CompPlan 2030 can only serve Auburn as intended through a continual process of use, evaluation, revision, and amendment. If used wisely, the CompPlan will provide Auburn with an important tool to achieve the City's vision for the future.

## **1.6 Ongoing Plan Implementation**

Implementation of CompPlan 2030 is vitally important. The plan has been implemented through the following processes, under the oversight of the Planning Commission with staff support from the Planning Department:

- The Future Land Use Plan map serves as a guide for citizens, elected officials, city staff, and the development community providing guidance for the desired uses for individual parcels during the time horizon of CompPlan 2030. The Future Land Use Plan is used in the evaluation of development proposals presented to City staff, the Planning Commission, and the City Council.
- City departments and outside partners continually work to review plan policies and determine which departments and agencies will be responsible for implementation. Through that review process, plan policies have been assigned to responsible agencies, with timelines for completion typically ranging from two years for short-term implementation (biennial budget cycle) out to ten or more years for long-term implementation. Items that require funding will also be identified in this process, though funding sources will not be explicitly identified.

- The City’s staff continuously review policies and ordinances to ensure they encourage implementation of the plan’s recommendations, while making necessary changes where appropriate. Documents and policies that are part of the on-going review process are; the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and Public Works and Water Resource Management manuals and have resulted in substantial modifications to those regulations to bring them into conformance with the recommendations of the CompPlan. The implementation of the plan has resulted in a major update and revisions to the zoning ordinance as part of the implementation of Renew Opelika Road Plan and The Downtown Master Plan. It is expect that with continued updates to CompPlan 2030, additional changes will be made to the City’s policies and ordinances.
- Reviewing existing zoning and making recommendations for possible changes to that zoning based on the Future Land Use Plan. Similar to the process described above, a systematic on-going process of reviewing existing zoning will result in modifications to the zoning map to bring it into compliance with the Future Land Use Plan. Some zones have been eliminated, and new zones have been added along with new zoning regulations. Additionally, as market demands, economic trends, and growth patterns change, the community will need to adapt and, therefore, the CompPlan will require updates to reflect those changes.

### **1.7 Auburn’s Vision for the Future**

Beginning in October 2009, the City of Auburn held a series of public meetings with the goal of determining Auburn citizens’ vision for the future. Hundreds of citizens provided the City hundreds of comments that have been used in developing a series of vision statements (a full list of comments may be found in Appendix C). These vision statements are intended to act as top-level guiding concepts for CompPlan 2030. They may be thought of as a “constitution” for the plan, in that, while not all of the plan’s recommendations may be directly related to the vision statements, none of the recommendations should contradict the vision statements. The vision statements, in alphabetical order, are:

- Build a strong community upon a foundation of a world-class university, a vibrant and innovative business community, an involved citizenry, and an efficient and responsive City government.
- Encourage continued diversity in housing opportunities with a sensitivity toward affordability.
- Enhance the walkability of Auburn with a pedestrian-friendly downtown and a street network that is safe and promotes circulation, health and well-being throughout the City.
- Maintain existing parks and greenspace while acquiring additional land as needed to provide a quality park system that is accessible to all citizens.
- Promote a government that is engaged with its citizenry, is transparent, and able to balance diverse interests.
- Promote redevelopment, densification and infill development in an effort to better utilize existing infrastructure and limit sprawl.
- Protect Auburn’s rich and distinct character and heritage while continuing to foster a future character and heritage worth preserving.
- Provide a vibrant, expanded downtown with green space, public parking, public gathering spaces and a mix of commercial, institutional and residential uses oriented toward pedestrians.

- Provide a well-balanced range of transportation choices including a well-functioning road network, a viable mass transit system and a system of on- and off-street walking/biking paths that connect the places we live, work, learn and play.
- Provide enhanced cultural and recreational opportunities for all ages, especially youth and seniors.
- Sustain a high standard of living for all residents by valuing diversity, quality education and a healthy economy while maintaining a high level of civic services to our citizens.
- Utilize our land, make public investments and manage our natural resources in a manner that encourages growth that is both economically viable and environmentally responsible for the long-term.

These vision statements remain appropriate as of the 2017 Plan update.