

RUSTON RE-IMAGINED

CITY OF RUSTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



2 MAY 2016

Ruston Re-Imagined Acknowledgments

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WELCOME TO “RUSTON RE-IMAGINED”



There are many characteristics about Ruston that make it a wonderful place. Nestled in the rolling hills of North Louisiana, Ruston is a thriving community that provides all of the resources and advantages of a large city while maintaining a quality of life that remains true to its unique heritage. “Ruston Re-Imagined” establishes a plan that will enable us to build on the wonderful attributes of our community to the benefit of our children and future generations.

Our hope is that this document will be a vision for our citizens, business prospects, and guests to read and get a feel for what will happen in our great City of Ruston over the next ten years. This living document will be revisited and updated every five years.

I want to thank Neil Erwin, Attorney for our Planning & Zoning, for suggesting the name “Ruston Re-Imagined.” We are truly re-imagining as we grow our town, our university, and bring new ideas and plans to our city while preserving and honoring our rich history.

As my administration plans for “Ruston Re-Imagined”, we hope you as citizens will share your dreams and ideas for our city with us. Whether you have an original idea or something you have seen in other cities, we would appreciate your input.

Our promise is that Ruston will continue to be a great city that we all love and admire.

Ronny Walker
Mayor

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND VISION

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND VISION

Overview

The City of Ruston’s last comprehensive master plan was adopted in 2011 and provided the foundation for physical development, infrastructure investment, and policy decisions for the last five years. With both the election of Mayor Walker and the growth and development of the city over the last five years, an updated comprehensive master plan is needed to capture the vision of the new administration and guide the future development of the city.

“Ruston Re-Imagined,” the City of Ruston Comprehensive Plan was created to build upon the unique assets of the community while providing a framework that will guide growth for the next ten years. Ruston Re-Imagined is a set of goals, objectives, and strategies that are designed to guide policy decisions related to Economic Development, Transportation and Infrastructure, Downtown, Land Use, and Parks and Recreation. The plan will be used by city officials to benchmark a vision of how the city will develop over the

next ten years and guide investments in infrastructure and development. The comprehensive plan is a living document developed on a ten year timeline with updates planned at five year intervals.



Figure: 1. Ruston Fashion Week

Ruston Re-Imagined Vision

The vision of Ruston Re-Imagined is to preserve and celebrate our city's rich history while moving Ruston forward in positive progress. Ruston Re-Imagined is a benchmark and blueprint that guides the development of the goals, objectives, and strategies of the comprehensive master plan and a picture of where Rustonites would like to see their city in the next ten years.

Ruston Re-Imagined is based on the following vision:

- A strong, resilient, and sound economy that capitalizes on the Ruston educational assets and entrepreneurial spirit.
- A well connected multi-modal transportation network that moves people and goods safely and efficiently via air, rail, vehicular, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes.
- A robust infrastructure network that provides a high level of service, anticipates future growth, and protects property values.
- A thriving mixed use downtown that is the cultural, retail, and commercial center of the region.
- Efficient land use pattern that balances developable land with investments in infrastructure, transportation, and economic development.
- An open space and park network that provides diverse recreational programs, opportunities, and events that improve the quality of life for Ruston residents.



Figure:2. Local Ruston sporting event



Figure:3. Louisiana Tech University

Plan Organization

The plan is organized into five plan elements with an introduction and vision. Chapter 1, the vision is the overall picture that citizens would like to see the city become.

Chapters 2-6, the five plan elements are comprised of a set of goals, objectives and strategies that support the development of the citizens' vision.

The goals are the broad overarching ideas and practices that are essential to realizing the vision. The objectives are the specific and measurable items that guide the implementation of the comprehensive master plan. The strategies are the action items and tasks that are needed to implement the objectives.

This document references the City of Ruston's "Moving Ruston Forward Initiative" which are complimentary efforts. Details on this initiative can be found at www.ruston.org.



CHAPTER 2

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The economic development component is focused on improving the quality of life for city residents through sound economic principles that contribute to a strong business environment and promote high quality job creation by retaining and attracting new businesses, creating an environment that fosters entrepreneurship, and integrating land use decisions with investments in infrastructure.

The economic development chapter presents the goals, objectives and strategies to guide the City of Ruston economic development efforts for the next ten years. The goals for the economic development component include a number of action items that are designed to support and retain existing businesses, attract new businesses, and create a sustainable economy that fosters entrepreneurship and builds upon existing community assets.

Economic Development Goals

- Foster and support private sector business development, growth, and retention.
- Develop strategic partnerships and strengthen regional collaborations to promote economic growth.
- Continue to market the Ruston brand to promote economic development, recruit new businesses and market existing assets.

Economic Development Objectives and Strategies

2.1. Objective: Continue to support the retention and expansion of existing businesses.

- Develop a business visitation and call program to focus on local business growth and retention.
- Create a financial incentives package outlining available incentives and programs available to support business expansion and retention.
- Explore the development of a headquarters visitation program to track and monitor companies.

2.2. Objective: Create an environment that fosters and supports entrepreneurship.

- Capitalize on partnerships with Louisiana Tech University to support entrepreneurship, emerging technologies, and businesses.

2.3. Objective: Build strategic partnerships and collaborations to enhance coordination to better implement economic development goals.

- Partner with Louisiana Tech University to develop the Enterprise Campus by providing infrastructure improvements. (Figure:18. The Louisiana Tech University Master plan showing the development of the Enterprise Campus and Rock Island Railroad Multi-Use Path in relation to Downtown Ruston on page 26.)
- Form strategic partnerships with Grambling State University, Louisiana Tech University, Louisiana Delta Community College, and Ruston schools to promote the development of a high quality workforce.
- Utilize the non-profit entity Lincoln Economic Development Council to further economic development projects.



Figure:4. New manufacturing development in Ruston



CHAPTER 3

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

CHAPTER 3: TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Introduction

The transportation component is designed to strengthen the city's regional connections while developing a multi-modal interconnected transportation network. The transportation component presents goals, objectives and strategies to guide investments in vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, rail, and airport transportation infrastructure. For example, a number of strategies are outlined to increase bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, create shuttle service between popular destinations, and make improvements to the local road network.

The infrastructure component includes strategies related to drainage, drinking water, sewer, electrical distribution, and public services. The city's infrastructure systems are a major component in determining the amount, location and type of growth the city can anticipate. New development will require

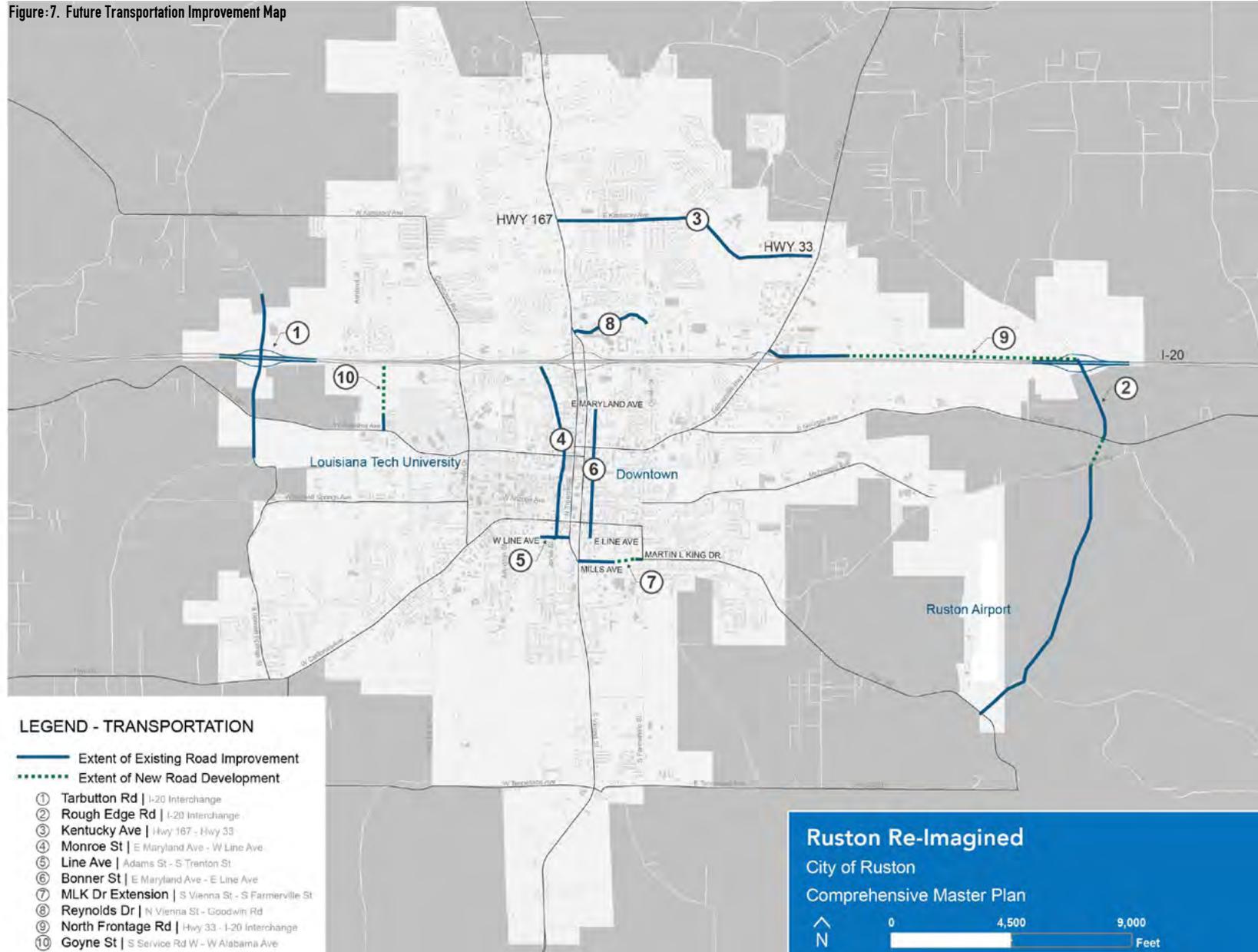
the expansion of existing systems while ongoing maintenance of legacy systems will continue. To ensure adequate infrastructure is readily available, land use should be carefully coordinated with infrastructure investments.

The infrastructure component presents goals, objectives and strategies to guide investments in electrical, sewer, water, drainage, fiber and public facilities. The goals of the infrastructure are to provide necessary capacity for future growth while maintaining existing systems to provide a high level of service.



Figure-6. The award winning Downtown Streetscape and Landscape Improvements.

Figure 7. Future Transportation Improvement Map



Transportation and Infrastructure Goals

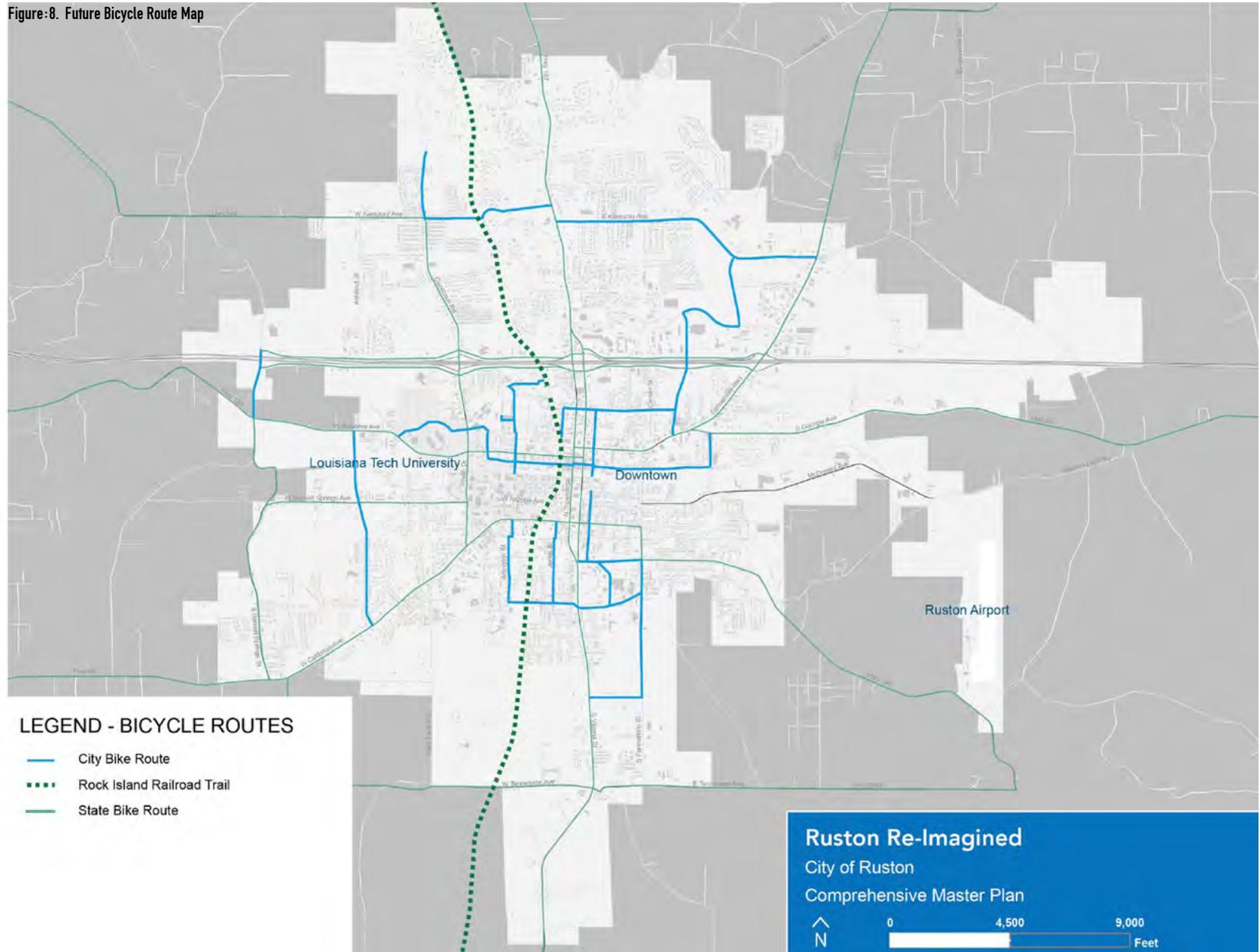
- Develop a high quality road network with a high level of service and connectivity.
- Provide a variety of interconnected transportation options for residents and industry including air, shuttle, vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian networks.
- Continue to invest in and promote a high quality infrastructure network to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of residents and businesses.
- Collaborate and partner with other parish entities to reduce cost, maximize efficiencies, and provide high quality public services and facilities to Lincoln Parish residents.

Transportation and Infrastructure Objectives and Strategies

3.1. Objective: Prioritize and continue to fund improvements in the transportation system.

- As outlined in the “Moving Ruston Forward Initiative,” continue to implement the proposed street and overlay improvement plan utilizing complete streets design standards. (Figure:7. Future Transportation Improvement Map on page 10.)
- Continue to make transportation and infrastructure improvements in the I-20 Tax Increment District.
- Develop and implement the extension of Rough Edge Road to the Ruston Regional Airport.

Figure-8. Future Bicycle Route Map



3.2. Objective: Continue to make strategic improvements in the I-20 corridor.

- Develop enhanced gateways along the I-20 corridor at designated locations with high quality gateway signage, lighting, and landscaping.
- Continue to anticipate future growth along the I-20 corridor and develop and implement two new I-20 interchanges at Tarbuton Road and Rough Edge Road. (Figure:7. Future Transportation Improvement Map on page 10.)

3.3. Objective: Develop a bicycle and pedestrian network that connects employment, retail, and recreational centers.

- Create a connected network of city bicycle travel routes that connect to state designated routes.
- Create a north / south shared use path in the former Rock Island Railroad right of way connecting Downtown, Enterprise Campus, and North and South Ruston. (Figure:8. Future Bicycle Route Map on page 12.)
- Explore the creation of a Ruston to El Dorado bike trail utilizing existing and new bicycle routes.

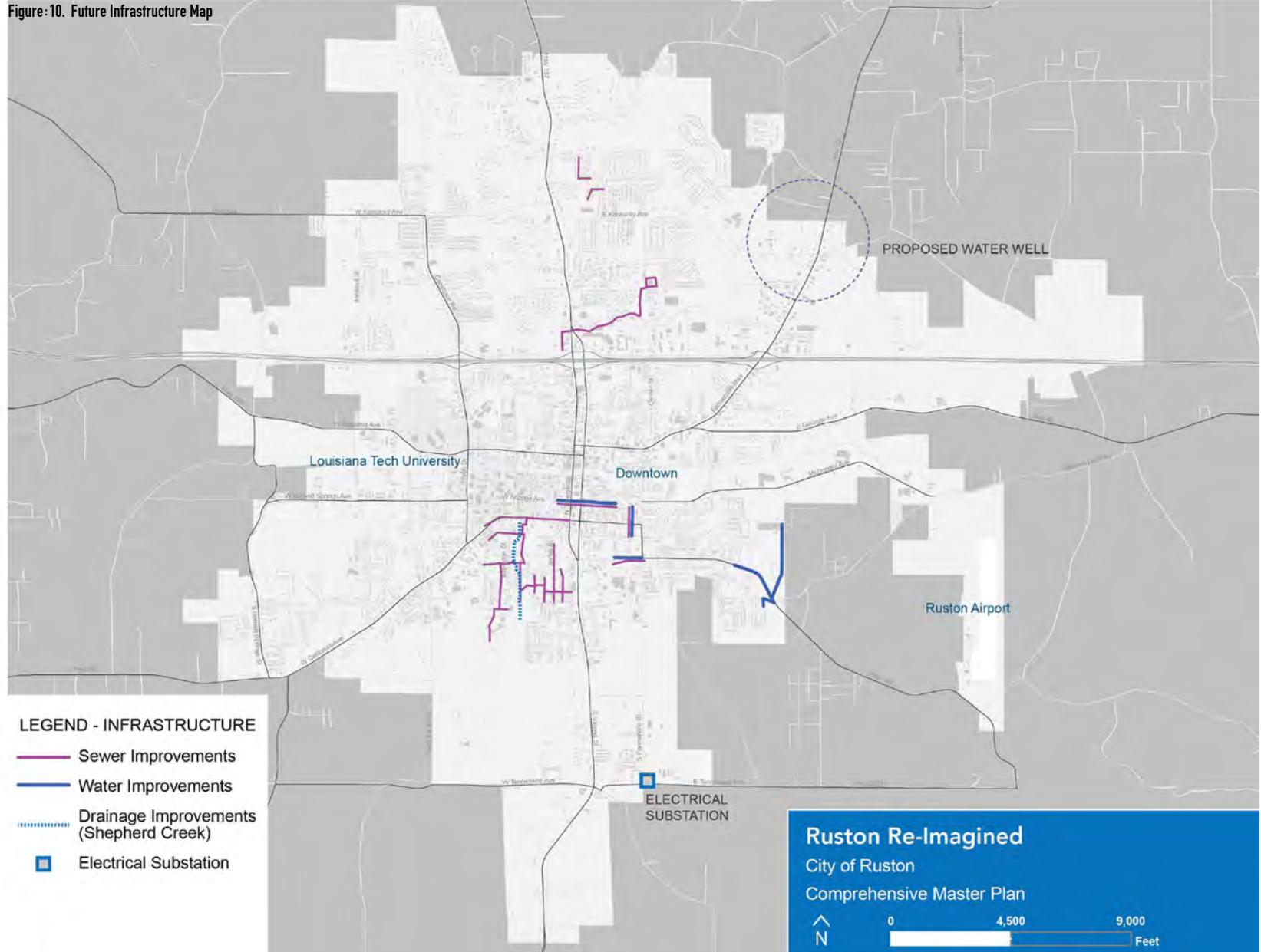
3.4. Objective: Continue to evaluate and work to provide transportation options.

- Continue to encourage, evaluate, and monitor the potential of developing a shared shuttle service with Grambling State University, Louisiana Tech University, the Louisiana Center for the Blind, Downtown, and employment centers.
- Continue to support the development of the North Louisiana Passenger Rail Line with service to Ruston, refer to Chapter 4 Downtown. (Figure:9. Map of the proposed route of the North Louisiana Passenger Service Rail on page 13.)



Figure-9. Map of the proposed route of the North Louisiana Passenger Service Rail

Figure 10. Future Infrastructure Map



3.5. Objective: Continue to support the development and continued improvement of the Ruston airport.

- Develop and implement a plan to make the Ruston Regional Airport the top B-2 Airport in North Louisiana and South Arkansas.

3.6. Objective: Improve the drainage infrastructure throughout the city.

- Implement the Shepherd Creek drainage improvements and pipe replacement projects as outlined in the “Moving Ruston Forward” initiative.
- Continue to maintain, improve, and upgrade the city’s drainage infrastructure to reduce the risk of flooding to existing and future structures. (Figure:10. Future Infrastructure Map on page 14.)

3.7. Objective: Provide high quality water supply to meet existing and future demand.

- Continue to implement the city’s Advanced Metering Infrastructure Program.
- Continue to maintain, improve, and upgrade the city’s water infrastructure to meet existing and future demand. (Figure:10. Future Infrastructure Map on page 14.)

3.8. Objective: Provide a wastewater treatment system that meets existing capacity and future demand.

- Continue to maintain, improve and upgrade the city’s wastewater system to meet existing and future demand.

3.9. Objective: Continue to provide high quality electrical service to city residents.

- Develop new electrical substations to meet future demand in growing areas of the city including a substation in the northeast section of the city.

3.10. Objective: Continue to provide internet and data services to the Ruston community utilizing high speed fiber optic network.

- Continue to implement 10 gigabyte fiber data services. Fiber is a major catalyst for economic development and higher education, enabling people to work smarter, maximizing resources, expanding healthcare services, and improving the needs of the business community.
- As outlined in Chapter 4, continue to provide and implement free wireless internet in the downtown district.

3.11. Objective: Implement curbside recycling for Ruston residents by January 2017.

- Provide curbside recycling as an option to Ruston residents for the recycling of paper, aluminum cans, plastic, and cardboard.



Proposed Image
at California Ave.

Figure: 11. Before and After Image of the Proposed Rock Island Railroad Trail at California Avenue



Before Image at California Ave.

3.12. Objective: Provide high quality public services.

- Continue to work to form a partnership with Lincoln Parish Police Jury to provide high quality public services for Lincoln Parish and City of Ruston citizens.
- Develop a cooperative endeavor partnership with the Lincoln Parish Police Jury, 4 Paws Rescue, and the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Department to develop an operating agreement for a new animal control facility.

3.13. Objective: Provide for the health, safety, and welfare of Ruston citizens by cultivating high quality public safety departments including police, fire, and emergency medical services.

- Reserve future sites for police, fire, and emergency services to serve growing population centers and to ensure the most efficient service times.
- Require annual reporting standards on fleet status, coverage service times, and personnel for budgetary prioritization and review.
- Continue to recruit and retain the highest caliber of professionals by providing competitive pay, providing opportunities for training and advancement, and maintaining clear standards.



CHAPTER 4 DOWNTOWN

CHAPTER 4: DOWNTOWN

Introduction

One of the city's greatest assets, Historic Downtown Ruston is at the center of the community and offers a variety of attractions and events. Downtown has experienced a cultural growth and is once again becoming the historic and commercial center of the city. Downtown is exemplified by multiple historical, cultural, and governmental anchors all located within close proximity to Louisiana Tech University. Building upon the assets of Downtown, the plan includes a number of strategies that are designed to strengthen the Downtown as a vibrant mixed use regional center. Goals include supporting downtown residential development, redevelopment of blighted sites, and the creation of a cultural district.

"Downtown has been reborn as a cultural, entertainment, professional and retail hub, much like its glory day when the town center was the heartbeat of the city."

- Mayor Walker



Figure: 12. Image of the Dixie Theater in Downtown

Downtown Goals

- Create a vibrant mixed use Downtown district with active cultural, entertainment, and retail venues that celebrate the city's heritage while embracing new development.
- Promote the "Downtown Living" initiative to support the development of Downtown residential.
- Continue to support the growth of Downtown by working to bring transit and rail service Downtown.
- Continue to promote Downtown as a destination and cultural venue by supporting unique programmed events and city sponsored activities.



Figure: 13. One of many downtown cultural events



Figure: 14. Downtown Christmas lights display

Downtown Objectives and Strategies

4.1. Objective: Develop Downtown into a thriving cultural and retail destination.

- Support the development of the downtown cultural district, the downtown farmers' market, and the Bulldog Village entertainment and retail venue.
- Promote the redevelopment of the former Diesel Plant Site through partnerships with developers or through an invited RFQ (request for qualifications) process.
- Continue to support Downtown as a cultural venue by supporting the Dixie Theater, the Ruston Arts Education Center (Federal Building), and the development of other cultural venues.
- Continue to provide free wireless internet coverage in the Downtown District to attract, retain, and provide an amenity to downtown visitors.

4.2. Objective: Continue to support the development of the Downtown Living Initiative.

- Continue to work with regulatory agencies and developers to promote upper story residential and identify and market potential development sites in the Downtown District.
- Identify properties and sites, and work with developers to incentivize the development of quality Student Housing adjacent to Louisiana Tech and Downtown.
- Continue to cultivate a downtown environment that is attractive to the college student population by providing quality retail, entertainment, and cultural venues.

4.3. Objective: Create a Garden District Neighborhood to preserve and enhance the property values and aesthetic quality of downtown neighborhoods.

- Identify the proposed Garden District Neighborhood boundaries, and explore and apply for appropriate district designations. The City of Ruston Historic

Downtown Living Initiative

"More than 20 businesses currently have empty upstairs space, which, if turned into apartments or condos, could provide homes for 100 to 150 people. Some businesses have large unused space that could be turned into numerous living quarters, while others still have room for one or two tenants."

- Mayor Walker



Figure: 15. The Downtown Living Initiative is designed to increase the number of Downtown Residential Units

Building Survey forms the foundation for this process.

- Develop and adopt “Garden District” design standards and regulations to ensure development is compatible with the district.
- Develop “Garden District” themed regulatory and wayfinding signage, district street lighting standards, and landscape and tree planting standards to strengthen the district’s identity.

4.4. Objective: Continue to provide streetscape improvements in the downtown district.

- Continue to plan and implement high quality streetscape improvements in the downtown district including areas south of the Railroad tracks and west to Louisiana Tech University, complete with street furniture, inhabitable zones, and street trees. (Figure: 17. The Streetscape Improvement and Phasing Master Plan on page 23.)

4.5. Objective: Continue to provide City sponsored events and unique cultural activities in the downtown.

- Install a unique Christmas light display over streets and throughout Downtown and Railroad Park that draws and attracts both local residents and out of town visitors. (Figure: 14. Downtown Christmas lights display on page 20.)



Figure: 16. Ice skating in Downtown Ruston.

- Implement a city-owned ice skating rink in Downtown for the entertainment and attraction of local and surrounding communities during the holiday season.

4.6. Objective: Continue to support the development of North Louisiana Passenger Rail service connecting Dallas to New York.

- Work with Railroad operators to develop a passenger rail station in Downtown Ruston as part of the North Louisiana Passenger Rail Service.

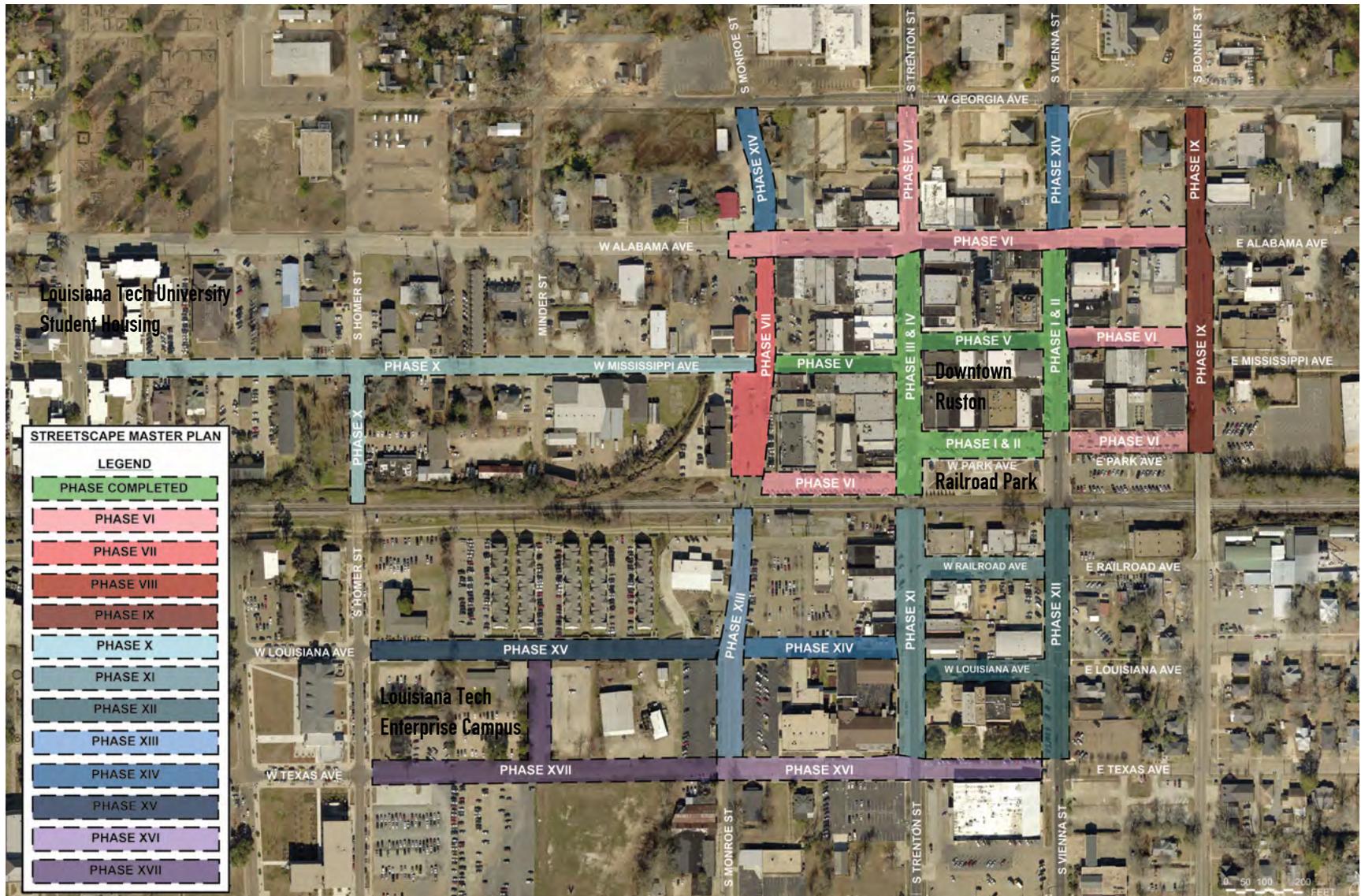


Figure: 17. The Streetscape Improvement and Phasing Master Plan



CHAPTER 5 LAND USE

CHAPTER 5: LAND USE

Introduction

The future land use plan identifies the desired pattern of land use in the City of Ruston and provides a framework to be used in conjunction with the land use goals, objectives, and strategies to guide new development, future zoning changes, and policy decisions related to land use. The land use component also includes a number of strategies that are intended to facilitate the development process, encourage growth and stability, and focus resources in underutilized areas.

Land Use Goals

- Provide an orderly, efficient, and cost effective growth pattern by balancing infrastructure investments with annexations and the supply of developable land.
- Protect and enhance the appearance, visual character, and historical value of the community while minimizing conflicts between incompatible land uses.



Figure: 18. The Louisiana Tech University Master plan showing the development of the Enterprise Campus and Rock Island Railroad Multi-Use Path in relation to Downtown Ruston

Land Use Objectives and Strategies

5.1. Objective: Promote growth in an orderly, efficient, and cost effective pattern.

- Continue to align capital improvements and future annexations to ensure a suitable inventory of developable land including residential, commercial and industrial land uses.
- Align all land use regulations including zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and transportation and infrastructure improvements with the future land use plan.
- Continue to provide a stable development environment by adopting and enforcing the future land use plan to promote growth.
- Develop a streamlined efficient permit process to facilitate development and lessen upfront development cost.
- Develop an Extra Territorial Jurisdiction zone to influence and promote quality development at the city's edge.

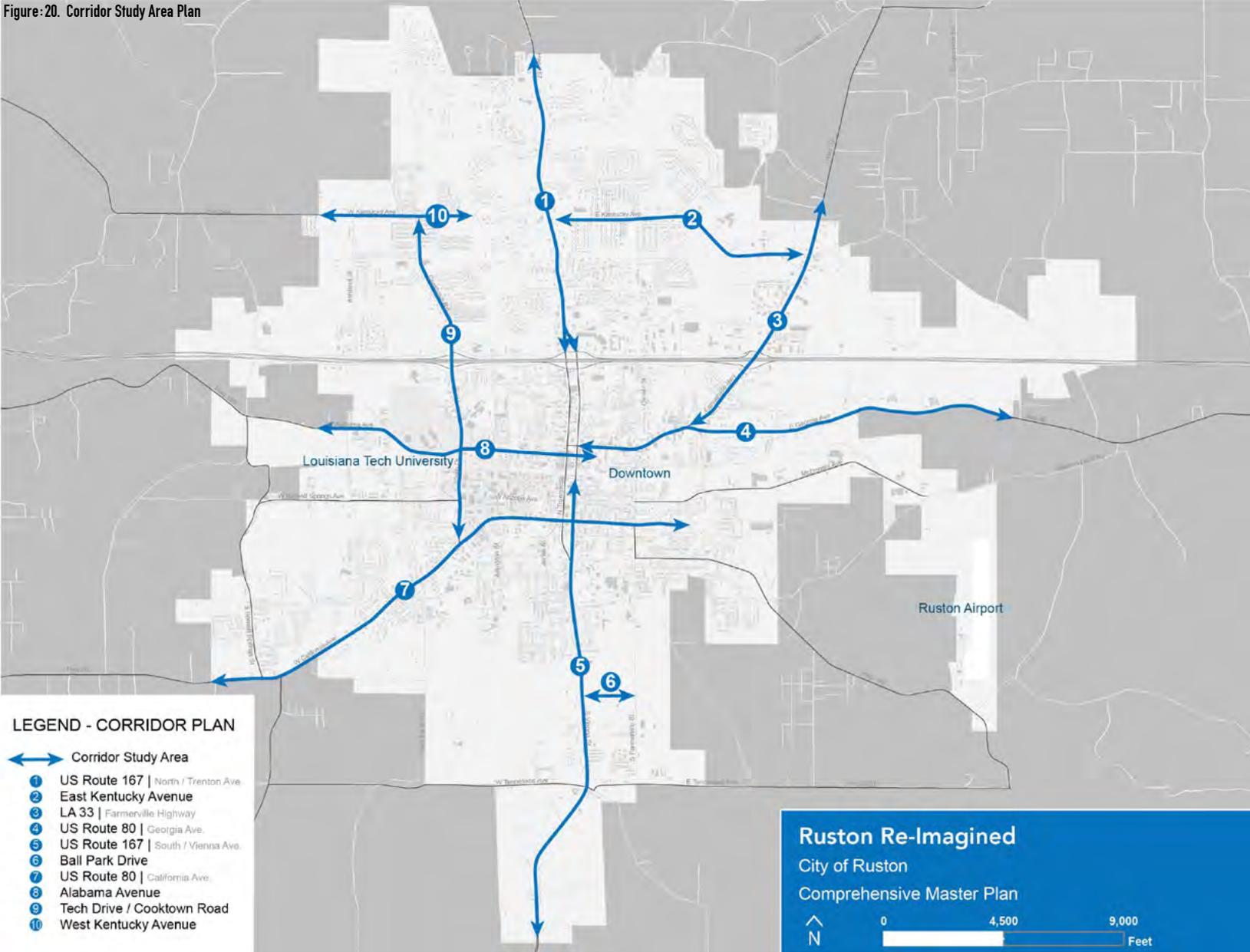
5.2. Objective: Use the future land use plan to facilitate quality development in the city's corridors.

- Implement the recommendations of the Corridor Zoning Study (2016). The study makes a number of recommendations for improving the quality of development, landscaping, signage, and the aesthetic quality of the city's major corridors. The recommendations are tailored to preserve or enhance the character of each corridor.
- Support and incentivize the development of high quality retail along California Avenue and Louisiana Tech Campus. (Figure:20. Corridor Study Area Plan on page 28.)



Figure:19. Proposed housing development along the California Avenue corridor

Figure-20. Corridor Study Area Plan



5.3. Objective: Partner with area universities and developers to create a university affiliated senior living center.

- Work with Louisiana Tech University and developers to create a senior living community that provides opportunities for intellectual growth, creative development, and physical wellness.

5.4. Objective: Promote the redevelopment of underutilized parcels.

- Develop a process to assemble and clear title on underutilized, adjudicated, and blighted properties to bring them back into commerce.



CHAPTER 6 PARKS AND RECREATION

CHAPTER 6: PARKS AND RECREATION

Introduction

The City of Ruston has an extensive and high quality park system comprised of neighborhood, community, and regional sized parks offering high quality and diverse programs to the City of Ruston residents. The park system is linked closely to the transportation and infrastructure component of the master plan, and priority should be given to making pedestrian and bicycle improvements that connect parks, neighborhoods, and schools. A high quality park and recreation system provides a number of community benefits including attracting new residents, increasing property values, contributing to the tax base and promoting healthy lifestyles.

The vision for Ruston Re-Imagined includes the creation of new parks, as well as improving existing parks to provide enhanced recreational opportunities and experiences designed to improve the quality of life for Ruston residents. Ruston Re-Imagined includes a number of strategies to promote the continued

improvement of the Ruston park system, including adding new programs and recreational opportunities, creating new parks, and increasing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.



Figure:21. One of Ruston's many high quality parks.

Parks and Recreation Goals

- Increase the quality of existing parks and create new parks to provide a high quality park network with improved recreational opportunities, programs, and access.
- Improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian paths and trails to increase park connectivity and expand recreational opportunities.
- Expand existing parks and create new parks to meet changes in user demand and provide increased recreational opportunities to all citizens.
- Ensure all park and recreation facilities are compliant with accessible design standards.



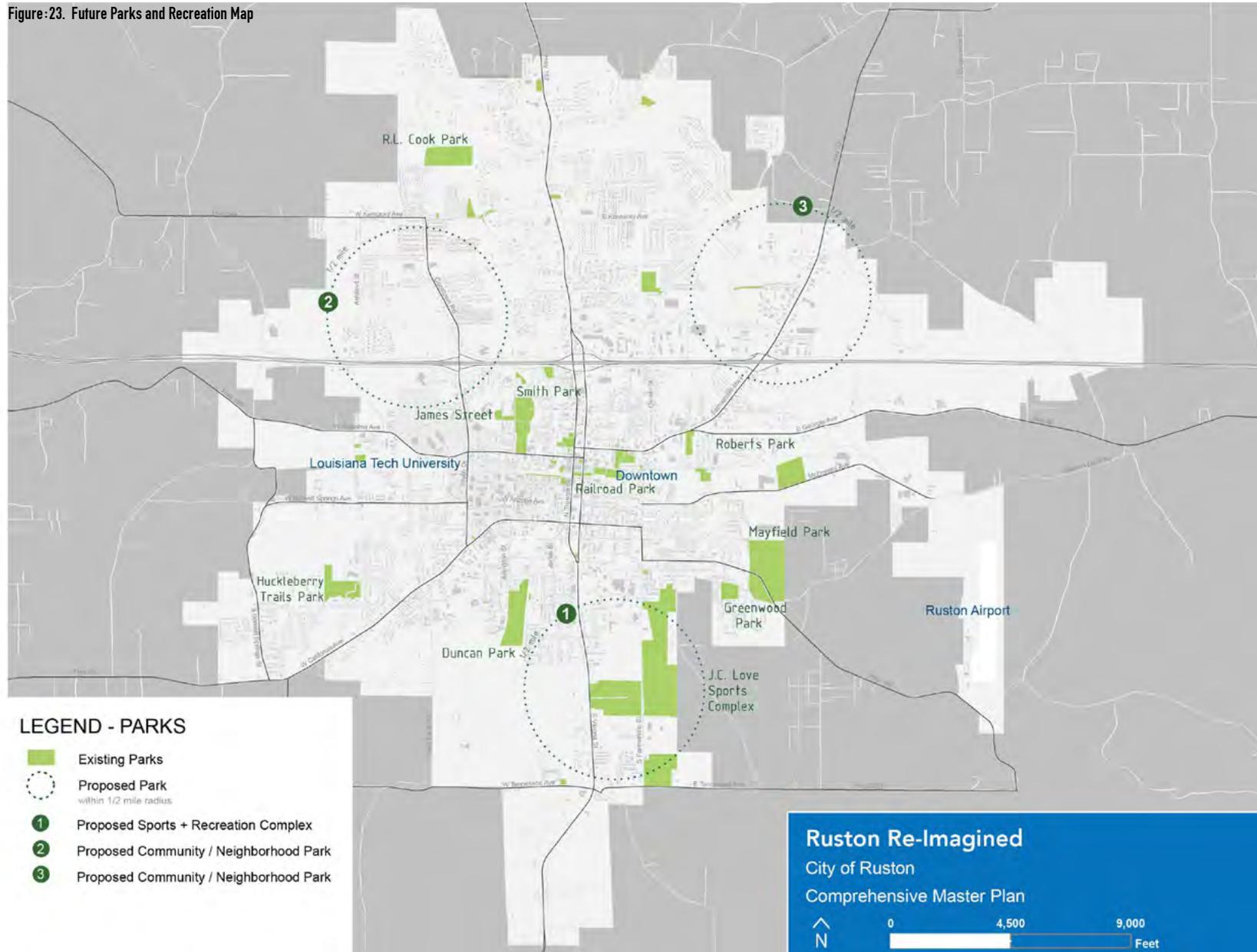
Figure:22. City of Ruston Parks and Recreation offers many programmed activities

Parks and Recreation Objectives and Strategies

6.1. Objective: Continue to provide a balanced and diverse high quality park and recreation system.

- Continue to develop a high quality park system composed of a network of neighborhood, community, and regional sized parks by upgrading existing and constructing new parks.
- Develop and implement a city wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide the future development of Ruston Parks and Recreation facilities and capital improvements.
- Work with Lincoln Parish Police Jury on the creation of a Special Recreation District to provide park and recreation services to City of Ruston and Lincoln Parish residents.

Figure-23. Future Parks and Recreation Map



6.2. Objective: Improve bicycle and pedestrian paths and trails to provide active recreational opportunities and connectivity.

- Continue to work with other City Departments to evaluate and implement a multi-use path network utilizing utility and pipeline easements and/or right of ways.
- Expand, improve and develop walking and running paths within new and existing parks.

6.3. Objective: Provide new facilities and upgrade existing to meet changing user needs and expand recreational opportunities.

- Develop a regional sized sports complex with multiple field types and venues suitable for hosting large multi-team events and tournaments. (Figure:24. Conceptual Plan of the Proposed Recreation and Sport Complex on page 36.)
- Continue to build new parks to serve growing parts of the city, including new community/ neighborhood parks in the northeast and northwest portions of the city by utilizing existing city-owned lands or new land acquisitions.
- Upgrade existing parks and develop new park facilities to provide increased recreational opportunities and programming including the following additions:
 - BMX and Skate Park
 - Splash Pads
 - Community Parks
 - Basketball courts and goals
- Work with community partners to develop neighborhood parks, community gardens, and passive recreation opportunities in strategic locations, neighborhoods, and under-served areas.
- Work with Downtown stakeholders and City Departments to redevelop Memorial Park and Railroad Park into cultural venues with amenities.
- Prepare Feasibility studies on the construction of a Par 3 or regulation municipal golf course.

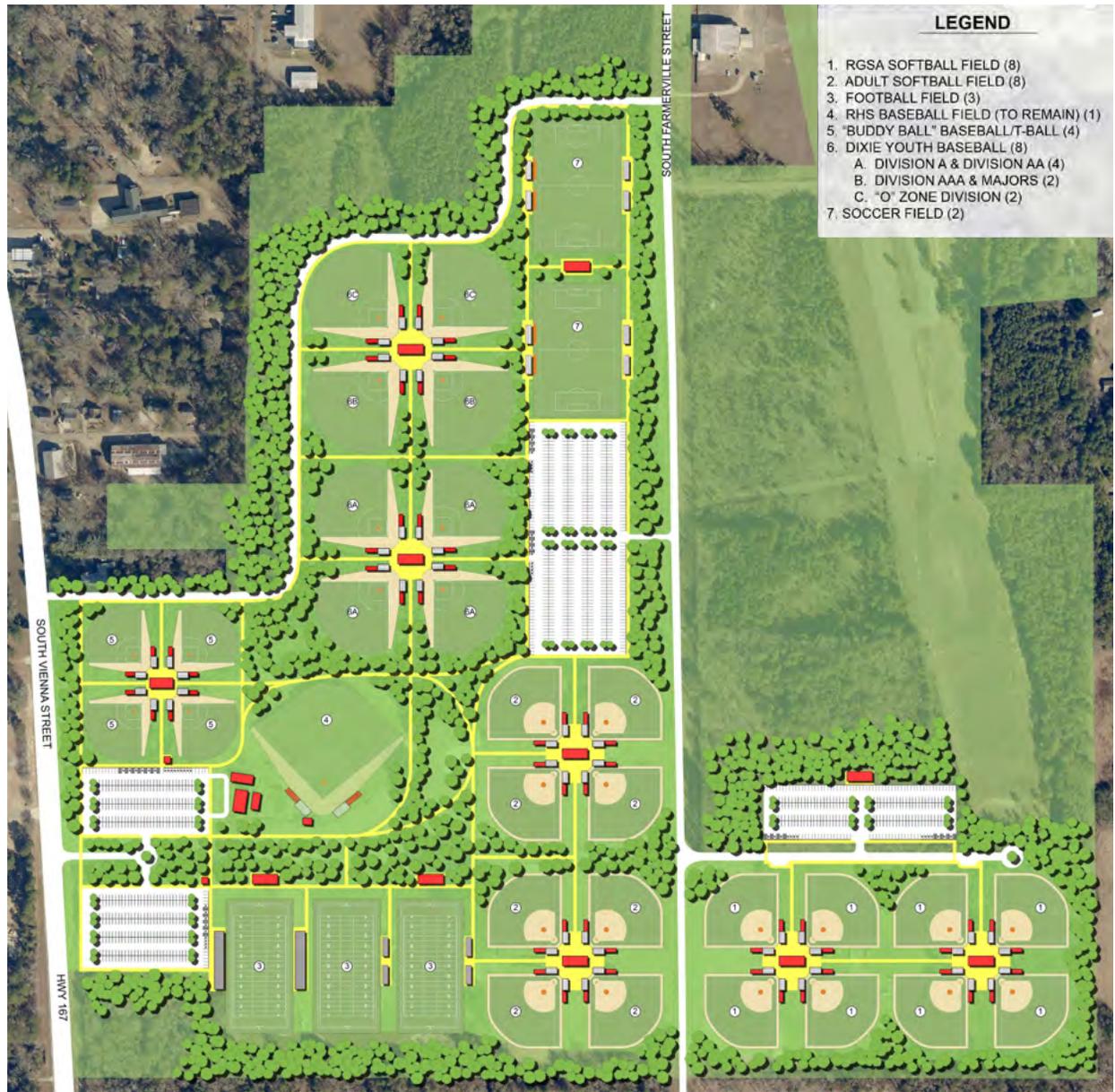


Figure: 24. Conceptual Plan of the Proposed Recreation and Sport Complex

