

# Focus Area Study FAQ

## ***What is an open house? Do I have to attend?***

The Planning Department will hold an open house to allow residents to come and speak with staff about a project or proposal. This is an opportunity for residents to come at any time during the day, view poster boards and maps, and express their concerns in a casual setting. If we are unable to provide you with the information requested, we will take your contact information and reach out to you at a later date. Staff are also available to speak with residents by phone, email, or by making an appointment to come and meet with us individually. The materials that are presented are also available on the website.

## ***Why did/didn't I receive a postcard or letter about this?***

### ***The owner/ mailing address is incorrect.***

When conducting a focus area study, we notify all property owners that are immediately within the study area boundary via mail. The property owner information is taken directly from the Lee County Tax Assessor's public property tax data. To request a change to the address or owner information listed in the tax records, please contact the Lee County Tax Assessor's office. Outdated mailing addresses can and do lead to interrupted communications, but we are happy to file a preferred contact for subsequent mail outs during the study. In addition to mail outs, staff also post banner signs in the area to notify others who may be interested as well as provide project updates on the City's webpage and e-notifier. A second notice was delivered to the post office on 8/18/2021 to be distributed to property owners within the study area and surrounding areas to notify them of the August 26th open house.

## ***I have concerns about the area that are not related to the Future Land Use Plan.***

The Future Land Use Plan takes into consideration a multitude of factors and staff review each area holistically and in conjunction with other departments and agencies. This includes available information about transportation and traffic, parks, utilities, future capital improvements, socio-economic factors, and growth trends. We invite any and all feedback about the area and we are happy to provide information and direct these concerns to the appropriate agency or department, but please keep in mind that the primary focus of the project is a review of existing and future land uses in the area. The State of Alabama provides explicit powers that are granted to municipalities to regulate growth and development. Applicable land use laws strictly **prohibit** the City from any of the following actions:

- Requiring a property to annex into the city limits
- Requiring any property owned by the State or any agency of the State (including Auburn University) to comply with city zoning regulations
- Requiring any property in unincorporated Lee County to comply with city zoning regulations
- Requiring privately owned property to remain undeveloped, if it is entitled to development rights
- Prohibiting the subdivision of land where the minimum requirements of the Subdivision Regulations of the City of Auburn are met
- Prohibiting the use of an On-Site Wastewater Treatment System (septic) where all applicable regulations have been met and approved by the Lee County Health Department

### ***What is the difference between land use and zoning?***

**Zoning** 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. **Current land use** is a description of how a parcel of land is currently being used; broad categories include residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional; land use designations can also be more specific. The **Future Land Use Plan** is *advisory* in nature and is intended to help achieve Auburn's long-range vision. The Future Land Use Plan provides parcel-level recommendations for the type, location and scale of new development within the existing city limits as well as properties within the Optimal Growth Boundary. A parcel's future land use designation may be the same or may differ from its current use. If the designation is the same as its current use, then the Future Land Use Plan recommends that no change occur. If the designation is different than the current use, the Future Land Use Plan identifies a desired future use for the property in general terms (i.e. residential, commercial, etc.)

### ***How does the Future Land Use designation affect my property?***

Zoning determines how a property can be developed in the here and now. Unlike zoning, the future land use designation is somewhat more abstract. **The future land use designation is advisory, and is a recommendation by the City of Auburn on what *should* or *might* be done with the property in the future based on growth trends and infrastructure needs.** While the future land use has no bearing on your property today, it can influence the use of the property should you or a subsequent owner wish to annex property into the city for development/redevelopment or rezone property currently in the city limits. Property in the county is not subject to city zoning regulations.

### ***Can a future land use designation be "down-graded"?***

Yes, but there are limitations. A "down-grade" can occur when the future land use designation recommends a use that is less intense than what the current zoning district permits. "Down-grading" property whose current zoning already allows development greater than the proposed future designation is impractical, and is avoided where possible. **Even in such cases, the zoning of the property will take precedence because zoning establishes legal rights while the future land use designation simply helps guide decision-making.**

### ***How do I find out what the future land use designation is for my property?***

Open the Future Land Use web map at the link below. You can search for a property by the address (if it is in the city limits) or by panning the screen to find a property. You can click on any property and a pop-up will tell you what the future land use designation is for that property.

<https://webgis.auburnalabama.org/futurelanduse/>

### ***How do I find out what my property is zoned?***

Open the COA web map at the link below. Type in your address in the "Search for..." bar at the top left corner. Open the "Layer List" by clicking the icon that looks like three sheets of paper stacked on top of each other at the right-hand corner. In the list, there is a "Planning Layers" label with an arrow next to it. Expand the label to show all planning layers. Enable "Zoning Layers" by checking the box next to the label. The map should now populate with colors indicating zoning districts. Any property in the city limits can be selected and it will display the zoning district for that property.

<https://webgis.auburnalabama.org/coamap/>

### **What is the barcode on the postcard/letter I received used for?**

A QR Code (abbreviated from Quick Response code) is a barcode that allows smartphone users to quickly access a website. iPhone users can use their camera to access the webpage directly. Some Android phones may be configured through their settings to do this as well. The QR code is a link to the U.S. Highway 280 Corridor Focus Area Study webpage below.

<https://www.auburnalabama.org/future/280-focus-area-study/>