City of Cabot

Highway 321 Corridor Plan

May 2013

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Introduction

This document sets forth a strategy for the future development of the Highway 321 corridor in the southern and eastern portions of Cabot, Arkansas. This includes all of Highway 321 and its primary traffic-shed from U.S. Highway 67/167 to just east of Highway 321's intersection with Dogwood Lane. Although much of the material herein will deal with the neighborhood and areas adjacent to the corridors, this plan deals primarily with the corridor itself.

As a first phase in the general updating of the city's Comprehensive Plan for the Cabot Planning Area, the Cabot Planning Commission began looking at various corridors within the area. The commission made the decision to address the land use, transportation, and re/development issues of the corridors individually in order to allow a more focused analysis of how each corridor fits into the long-range future of the planning area.

Stakeholders for whom the plan this plan affects include the following:

1. Property owners along and adjacent to the Highway 321 Corridor.
2. Property owners and future business owners along the corridor's undeveloped portions.
3. Cabot residents that shop and travel along Highway 321 on a daily basis.
4. Residents of the neighborhoods affected by developments along the Highway 321corridor.
5. Cabot staff members, particularly those of the Public Works Department and Water Works.
4. Elected and appointed officials of the City of Cabot.
6. Potential residents and investors of the area not included in the above.

Context and Issues

The study area includes a boundary that can generally be defined as those properties falling within the primary traffic-shed of the Highway 321 corridor, meaning those properties that access the corridor for ingress and egress to other parts of the city. It covers an area of approximately 4,800 acres or about 7.5 square miles. The corridor can be broken down into two sub-areas. These include the Highway 321/5 Interchange at US Highway 67/67 and those portions of Highway 321 east of the Union Pacific Railroad.

Initial Analysis of the corridor identified and determined the following concerns and issues:

Entire Corridor

1. As Cabot further develops Highway 321 will become increasingly important as a chief east-west corridor.

2. Significant development opportunities remain along the corridor.

3. Future development of the city will cause traffic growth on Highway 321 even if no more development/redevelopment occurs on the corridor.

4. Significant portions of the corridor rest outside of the Cabot's city limits and, resultantly, do not benefit from the protection of zoning.

Area 1 – Highway 321/5 Interchange at U.S. 67/167

1. This area contains a sporadic mix of commercial, residential, and industrial/quasi-industrial uses, creating some use compatibility issues in certain areas.

2. Considerable land in this portion of the study area is zoned industrial but has limited suitability for new industrial development.

3. First Street is narrow and not well suited to handle the high intensity uses that are zoned along its frontage.

4. Significant portions of the land around the interchange lie within the floodplain and/or designated floodway. This will make development/redevelopment of these lands difficult.

5. Some development in this area has been poorly executed, which has led to decreased life cycles and prevented full utilization of the commercial structures.

6. While much of the land around the interchange is developed, much of the area has not been annexed into the city.

7. The interchange could provide a more welcoming and attractive gateway into the community.

8. The design of the interchange and traffic load has made the area around the interchange hazardous.

9. Traffic on this portion of Highway 321 is projected to increase by almost 50% by 2030.

Area 2 – Union Pacific Railroad to Dogwood Lane

1. Much of this area has a rural character and feel.

2. This area is dominated by single-family and scattered rural residential development.

3. Traffic on Highway 321 east of Highway 89 is only projected to modestly grow by 2030.

4. It is likely market forces will ensure development of this area remains compatible with the existing development on the corridor.

5. It is unlikely much demand will exist for commercial development east of Highway 89.

6. There is considerable development along the corridor just outside the city limits of Cabot.

7. Existing land development at very low densities will limit future development of the easternmost portions of this area.

Goals and Policies

GOAL 1 – To build and maintain a solid foundation for community growth and development.

Policies – It is a policy of the City that:

- Zoning patterns will conform to the land use component of this plan.
- Developments submittals that build upon and complement existing developments will be encouraged.
- Discourage development in areas that will require inefficient and costly outlays of municipal funds to provide utilities.
- Control the extension or provision of utilities in order to carry out the provisions of this plan.
- Preserve existing delineated floodplains and ensure new development does not adversely create flooding issues for existing development.

GOAL 2 – To enhance the corridor and provide a welcoming attractive gateway for Cabot.

Policies – It is a policy of the City to:

- Promote uses and development that will serve as long term assets for the City.
- Encourage development that will enhance the aesthetic character of the corridor.
- Discourage intrusion of commercial and industrial uses in existing residential areas.
- Discourage “strip” type development along the corridor.
- Pursue annexation of areas near the Highway 321/5 Interchange at U.S. Highway 67/167.
- Encourage the beautification of public and private property in high traffic areas such as the Highway 321/5 Interchange.
- Discourage future industrial development along the corridor.
- Review all development applications for compliance with the city’s landscaping regulations.

GOAL 3 – To preserve the functioning and safety of the Highway 321 corridor.

Policies – It is a policy of the City to:

- Implement the Highway 321 Access Management Plan through the review of all development proposals.
- Evaluate traffic impacts during the development approvals process.
- Require that all newly constructed or improved streets conform to city standards and the Master Street Plan.
- Encourage state policies that limit excessive speeds on roadways inside the city limits.
- Require the construction of sidewalks for new development in areas where pedestrian traffic will be generated.

Land Use Analysis

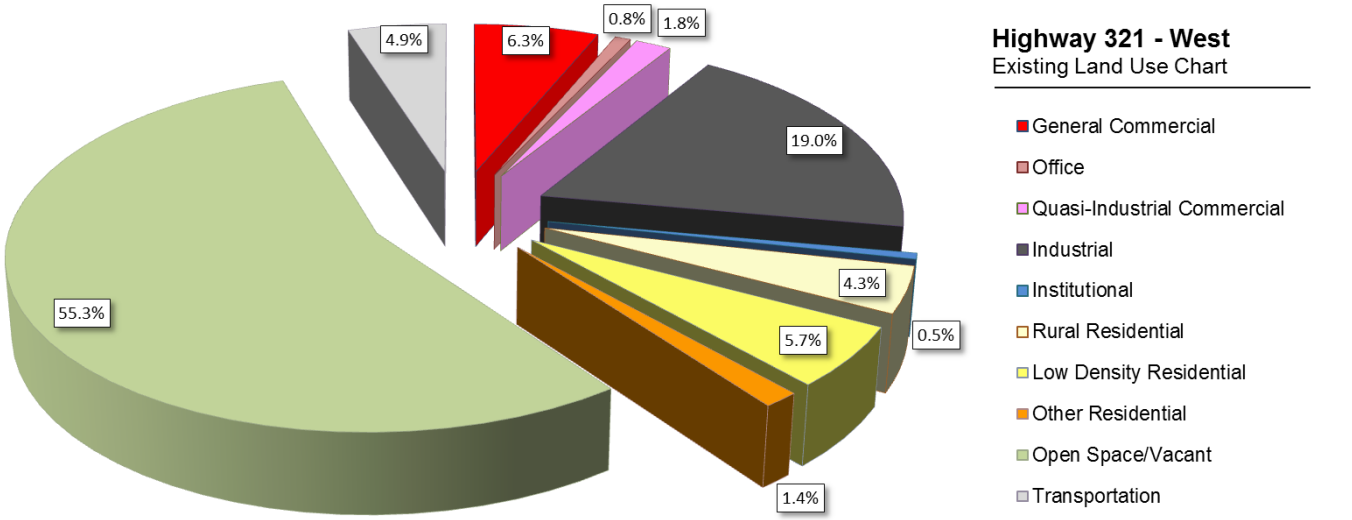
Land Use Study Summary – Western Portion: Highway 321/5 Interchange

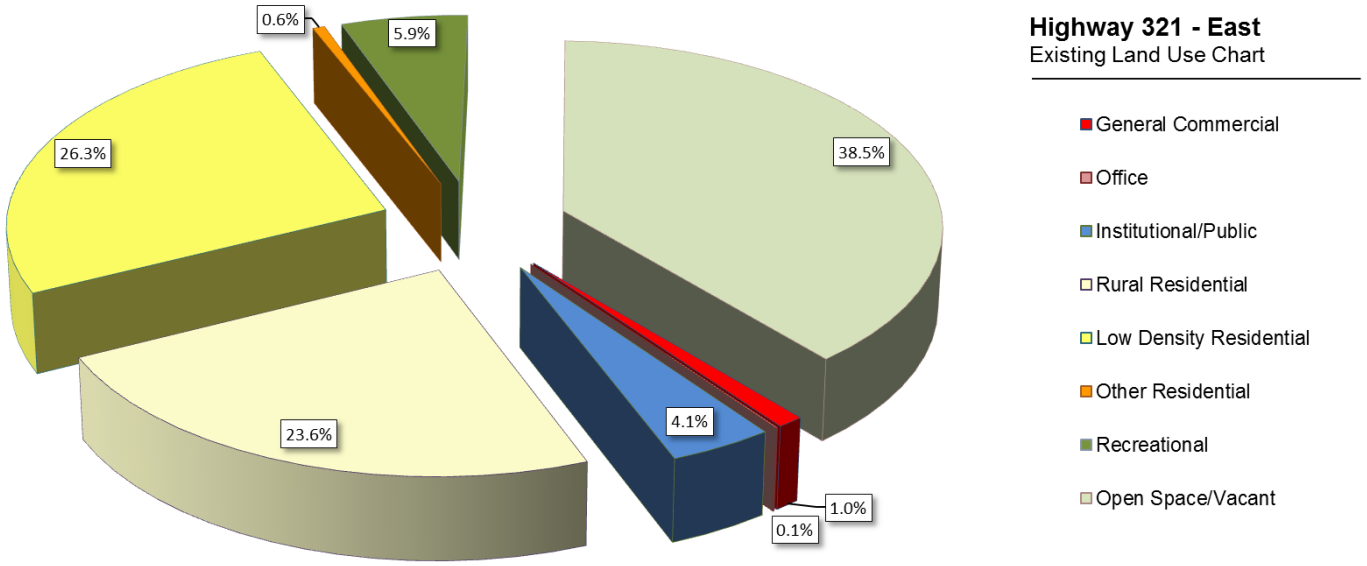
Basic Facts	Area in Acres	Area in Sq. Mi.
Study Area	1802.5 ac.	2.8 sq. mi.

Existing Land Use Type	Existing	Percent
General Commercial	113.2 acres	6.3 %
Office	14.3 acres	0.8 %
Quasi-Industrial Commercial	32.8 acres	1.8 %
Industrial	341.7 acres	19.0 %
Rural Residential	77.4 acres	4.3 %
Low Density Residential	102.2 acres	5.7 %
Medium Density Residential	0 acres	0.0%
Med.-High Density Residential	8.9 acres	0.5%
Manufactured Homes	16.9 acres	1.0%
Institutional	9.75 acres	0.5 %
Open Space/Vacant	996.5 acres	55.3 %
Transportation	89.0 acres	4.9 %

Land use patterns on the Highway 321 corridor reflect an area with contrasting characters. West of the Union Pacific Railroad the corridor sees high traffic and has a high intensity of commercial and industrial development. This area is also dominated by the large floodplains accompanying the Two Prairie Bayou and the White Oak Branch, resulting in large swaths of vacant land. All of this area drains into the Holland Bottoms Wildlife Management Area.

East of the Union Pacific Railroad the corridor has a much more residential character and feel that is rural or quasi-suburban in nature. There is very little commercial development but large amounts of single-family residential development at suburban and rural densities. While the western portion of the study area is encumbered by floodplains, the only development constraints in this portion of the corridor are access to utilities and the availability of large undeveloped tracts of land.


Highway 321 - West
Existing Land Use Chart
General Commercial
Office
Quasi-Industrial Commercial
Industrial
Institutional
Rural Residential
Low Density Residential
Other Residential
Open Space/Vacant
Transportation
6.3%
0.8%
1.8%
19.0%
4.3%
0.5%
5.7%
1.4%
55.3%
4.9%


Highway 321 - East
Existing Land Use Chart
General Commercial
Office
Institutional/Public
Rural Residential
Low Density Residential
Other Residential
Recreational
Open Space/Vacant
0.6%
5.9%
26.3%
38.5%
23.6%
4.1%
1.0%
0.1%

Land Use Study Summary – Eastern Portion: Union Pacific Railroad to Dogwood Lane

Basic Facts	Area in Acres	Area in Sq. Mi.
Study Area	2,964.5 ac.	4.6 sq. mi.

Existing Land Use Type	Existing	Percent
General Commercial	30.9 acres	1.0 %
Office	2 acres	0.1 %
Institutional	118.8 acres	4.0%
Public	2.5 acres	0.1%
Rural Residential	699.8 acres	23.6 %
Low Density Residential	778.3 acres	26.3 %
Medium Density Residential	9.5 acres	0.3%
Med.-High Density Residential	3.5 acres	0.1%
Manufactured Homes	3.5 acres	0.1%
Recreational	173.5 acres	5.9 %
Open Space/Vacant	1,142.3 acres	38.5 %

Plan Elements

Transportation and Land Use

Highway 321 currently exists as a three-lane road between Highway 367 and Nalley and between Kerr Station Road and Highway 89. The remainder of the corridor is a two-lane road. All of its right-of-way is set and acquired by the State of Arkansas. In addition, improvements to the roadway are made by the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department when funding is put in place by Metroplan, Central Arkansas' transportation planning body.

Currently, the roadway sees approximately 19,000 vehicles per day (VPD) at the Two Prairie Bayou bridge, 15,000 VPD just west of Highway 89, and 6,600 VPD near Cherry Street. A Metroplan traffic study of the City of Cabot projects these figures to increase in the next 20 years to 20,000, 17,000, and 7,000 VPD respectively. It appears very likely traffic will reach the projected levels well before 2030. Regardless, the traffic study calls for major widening of the roadway to a four-lane divided boulevard between U.S. Highway 67/167 and Highway 89. These improvements will be able to easily accommodate more than the traffic projected for 2030.

The traffic counts along Highway 321 between U.S. 67/167 and Highway 89 will generate increasing demand for commercial development along the corridor. However, much of the vacant land within this area lies in a floodplain or studied floodway. There is also additional land along the course of the Two Prairie Bayou which does not currently rest within a studied floodway, but likely would if subjected to a detailed FEMA flood hazard study. This is important because floodways cannot be developed and floodplains are becoming increasingly more difficult to develop. Given the city's current supply of vacant commercial land, development in these floodplain and floodway areas is strongly discouraged.

Floodplain along Highway 321
Source: Google Street View

Considering drainage and stormwater more broadly, replacement of natural drainage areas with development that lacks adequate drainage facilities can create problems where such did not exist before. Accordingly, new development along the corridor should not create new drainage problems for properties upstream and downstream. This means ensuring development preserves the natural drainage function of the subject property as much as possible. In addition, some high intensity land uses may not be feasibly accommodated without creating adverse drainage issues for neighboring properties. The city should consider limiting high-intensity development where it is uncertain the development would not negatively impact its surrounding area.

East of Highway 89, future land use demands will likely come in the form of additional single-family residential development. Most of this area is currently developed with platted subdivisions and unplatted, scattered single-family homes. Because of limited access to sewer utilities and few remaining undeveloped large tracts of land, it is likely that development densities will remain low in this area. And, few new large 10-40 acre tract subdivisions at typical suburban densities will be realized. However, continued small-scale subdivision of vacant and underdeveloped land will occur, resulting in a denser but decidedly rural residential character.

Zoning and Annexation

Zoning patterns and the lack of zoning in areas present challenges for the corridor. Near the U.S. Highway 67/167 Interchange, a large portion of the study area is zoned for industrial development. However, this area is not suitable for modern industrial development. This is due in large part to the mix of uses present within the area.

The presence of residential and commercial uses nearby present a challenge to attracting industrial development. Many large-scale industrial developments will not locate adjacent to residential and commercial uses. Often these uses ultimately limit the full use and enjoyment of adjacent industrial property. As such, the plan proposes, where not limited by flood hazard constraints, the transition of those areas zoned for industrial development to commercial or residential zoning.

At the Highway 321/5 Interchange much of the land west of the interchange rest outside the city limits. This currently presents and will continue to present challenges for the city unless action is taken. Those areas outside of the city are not under the control and protection of zoning. Additionally, this interchange serves as Cabot's front door, greeting residents and visitors alike.

It is the area that defines the first impression people have of Cabot. However, the city has no control over the land use and development of much of it. Thus, the city has no way to prevent a true eyesore from being constructed that could very negatively harm the city's image. As such, the city should pursue annexation of the areas surrounding this interchange. Additionally, the city should consider pursuing the beautification of the interchange with landscaping and welcome signage.

Sample Interchange Beautification
Source: Virginia DOT

Utilities

In fast growing communities development demands can often outstrip utility supply. When utility capacity is not considered during development review, the existing infrastructure is prone to become overtaxed. This often results in costly retrofits and capacity upgrades. As such, new development should first be encouraged in areas where existing utility capacity is sufficient to meet demands. Development of land currently without utilities should occur in tandem with the extension of utilities into those areas. Following these practices will help the city better manage growth and ensure it provides city utility services efficiently at low costs to the taxpayer.

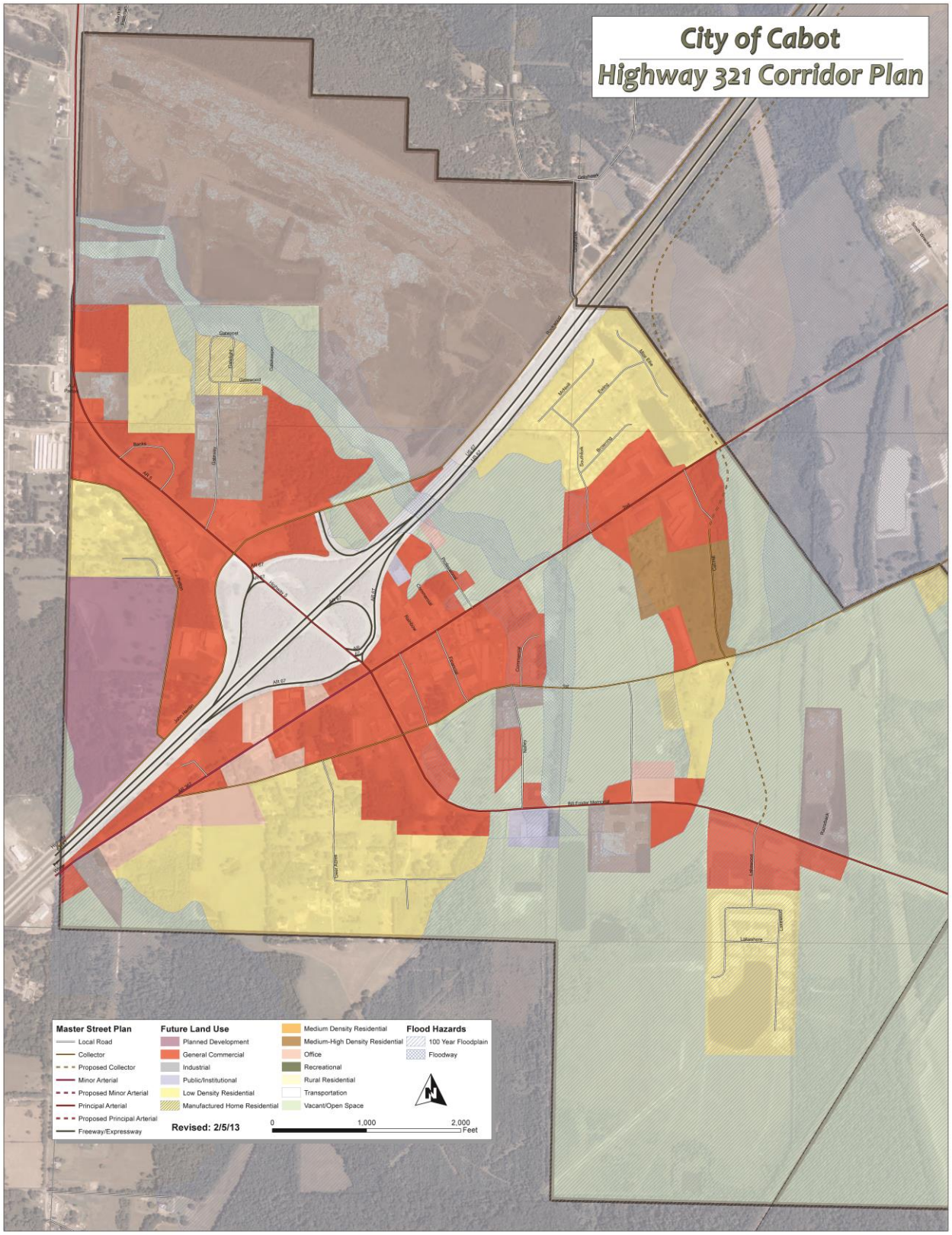
The extension of utilities should also be used as a tool of municipal policy. Some portions of the study area currently lay outside of the city limits. Public utilities will be required for these areas to be developed for their highest and best use. Public utilities should not be extended to these areas unless they become annexed and subject to the zoning controls of the city. This will help ensure these areas develop as long-term assets for Cabot residents rather than long-term liabilities.

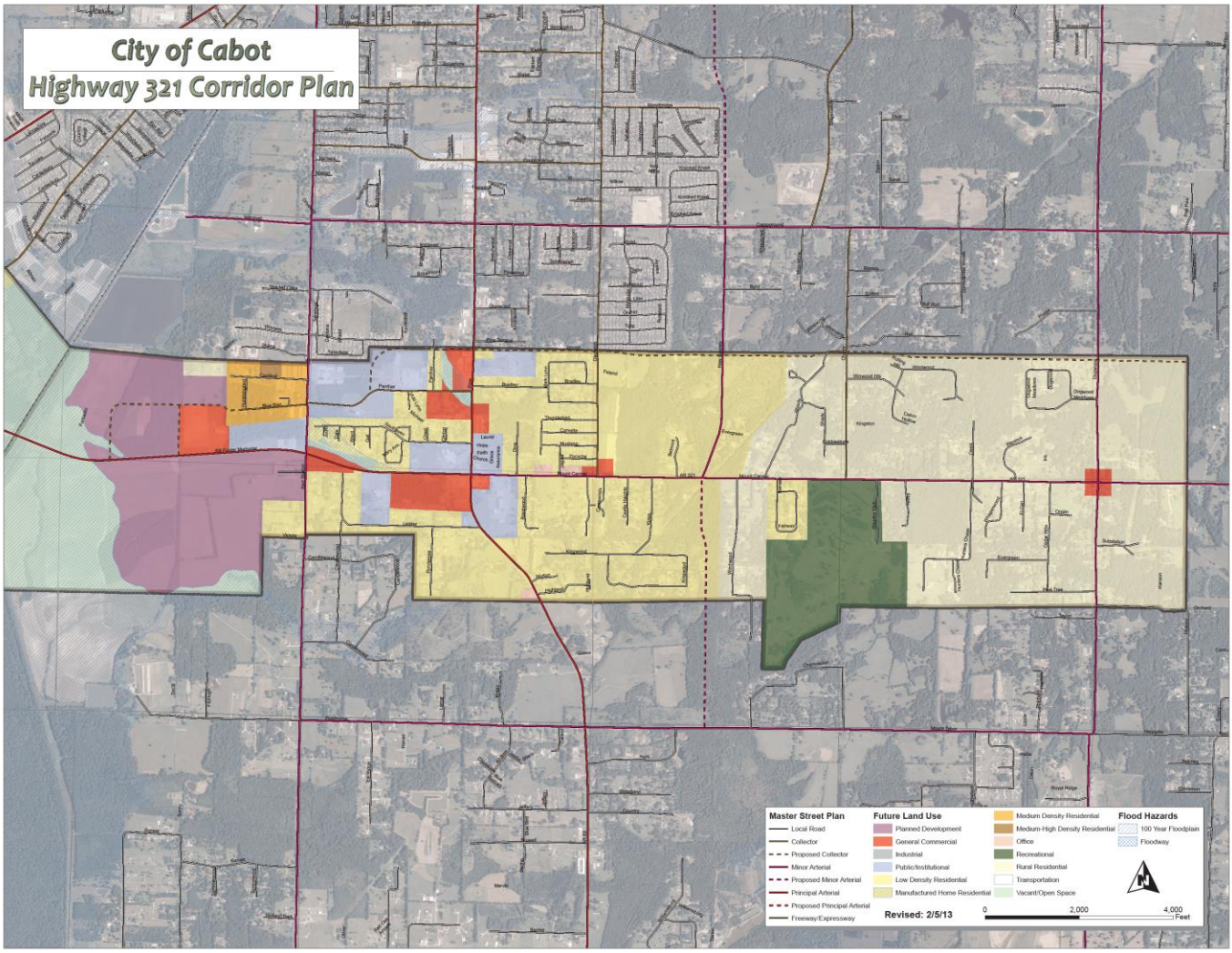
Action Plan

Included in this section are actionable steps and goals that will be used to carry out the proposals in the corridor plan.

Plan Implementation Matrix	Time Frame			
	Short (0-3 yrs.)	Medium (3-5 yrs.)	Long (5+ yrs.)	Ongoing
Transportation				
1) Widen Highway 321 between U.S. 67/167 and Highway 89			✓	
2) Improve the Highway 321/5 Interchange		✓	✓	
3) Extend the proposed Service Rd via Cut Hill Rd to Hwy 321			✓	
4) Widen First Street			✓	
5) Implement access management policies for Highway 321				✓
Land Use, Zoning, and Annexation				
1) Use the land use element of the corridor plan to guide future land use decisions.				✓
2) Beautify the Highway 321/5 Interchange and Install welcome signage.		✓	✓	
3) Pursue annexation of all the area around the Highway 321/5 Interchange.	✓	✓		
4) Control the extension of city utilities as tool to create incentive for annexation.				✓
5) Work to protect and preserve the floodplains and floodways in the study area.				✓
6) Discourage further industrial development on the corridor.				✓

Plan Map


City of Cabot
Highway 321 Corridor Plan
Master Street Plan
Local Road
Collector
Proposed Collector
Minor Arterial
Proposed Minor Arterial
Principal Arterial
Proposed Principal Arterial
Freeway/Expressway
Future Land Use
Planned Development
General Commercial
Industrial
Public/Institutional
Low Density Residential
Manufactured Home Residential
Medium Density Residential
Medium-High Density Residential
Office
Recreational
Rural Residential
Transportation
Vacant/Open Space
Flood Hazards
100 Year Floodplain
Floodway
Revised: 2/5/13
0
1,000
2,000
Feet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Proposed Collector
Minor Arterial
Proposed Minor Arterial
Principal Arterial
Proposed Principal Arterial
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Future Land Use
Planned Development
General Commercial
Industrial
Public/Institutional
Low Density Residential
Manufactured Home Residential
Medium Density Residential
Medium-High Density Residential
Office
Recreational
Rural Residential
Transportation
Vacant/Open Space
Flood Hazards
100 Year Floodplain
Floodway
Revised: 2/5/13
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