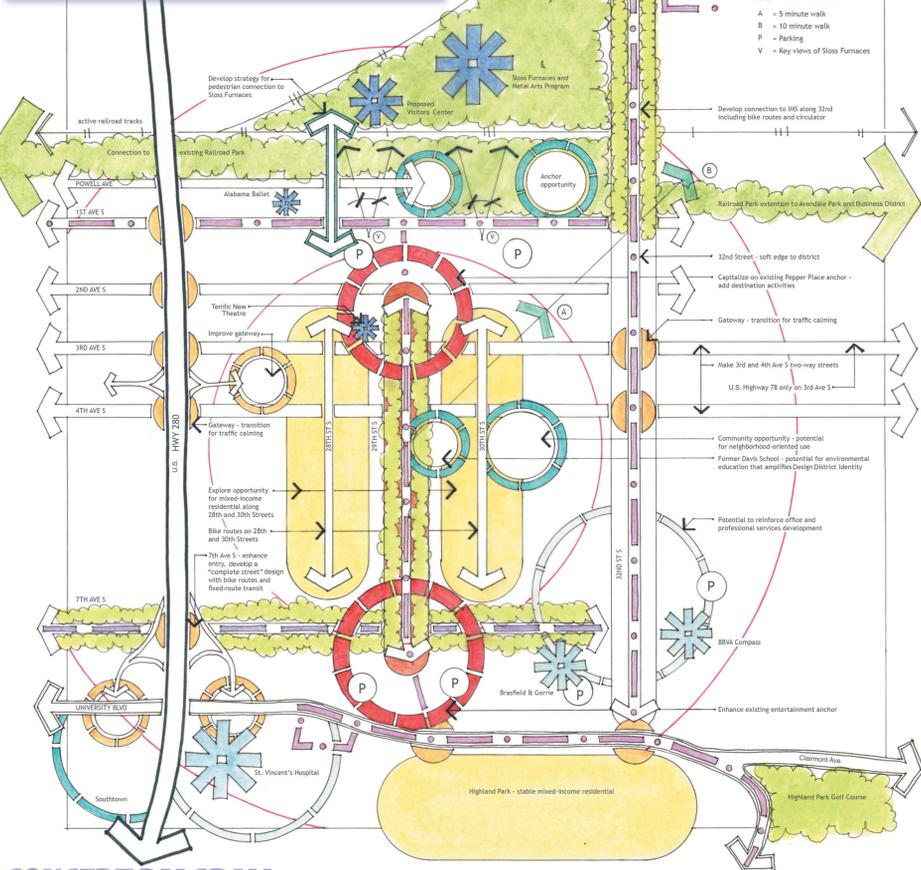


# LOCATION - BIRMINGHAM'S DESIGN DISTRICT

The Lakeview District is in the heart of Birmingham, Alabama immediately to the east of the City's central business district, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and the City's cultural and entertainment districts. Just to the north of the District is the National Historic Landmark Sloss Furnaces and active railroad tracks. The southern boundary is defined by University Boulevard and St. Vincent's Hospital. The elevated Highway 280 marks the western edge and 32nd Street South is the eastern boundary. The Forest Park neighborhood, Highland Park neighborhood and Highland Park public golf course are immediately adjacent to the District to the east and south. **Lakeview is the City of Birmingham's Design District.**



## CONCEPT DIAGRAM ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

### CAPITALIZE ON LAKEVIEW'S LOCATION

- Capture the opportunities and assets of being in close proximity to jobs, entertainment, established neighborhoods, UAB and downtown Birmingham
- Capitalize on 3rd and 4th Ave South connecting Lakeview to Birmingham's Eastern neighborhoods
- Capitalize on proximity and visibility from U.S. Highway 280
- Capitalize on being the eastern anchor of the Railroad Park Greenway and Park
- Capture the value of spectacular views of Sloss and downtown Birmingham
- Connect to developing greenways/trails, parks and amenities across the region

### DEVELOP LAKEVIEW AS A MIXED-USE DISTRICT

- Reinforce Lakeview as a strong mixed-use "downtown-adjacent" District
- Encourage mixed-use development that can foster living AND working in Lakeview
- Seek out institutional partnerships with BBVA Compass, St. Vincent's and UAB to develop new housing options - include investigating how Southtown might be a partner in the re-development of workforce housing that is in walking distance of jobs
- Explore housing options of different types and prices to attract young professionals, empty nesters, entrepreneurs, and the local workforce
- Maximize the potential and incentives for re-development of vacant and abandoned properties in order to increase density and economic opportunities
- Recruit new businesses that can support Lakeview's potential as a design/construction District, as an entrepreneurial district, and as an emerging neighborhood

### BUILD ON LAKEVIEW'S REPUTATION AS A DESIGN DISTRICT

- Reinforce Lakeview's leadership as the City's "Design District" by aggressively demonstrating sustainable principles/practices
- Work to make Lakeview a LEED Neighborhood Development District
- Reinforce Lakeview's leadership in design/construction by becoming home to a "Center for Sustainability" that provides classes, services and demonstration projects in best practices - not only for construction/neighborhood design but also for health/well-being/nutrition, gardening and recycling
- Become an incubator for emerging design/construction/tech professionals and entrepreneurs

### MAKE LAKEVIEW A DESTINATION

- Build on opportunities associated with Lakeview's strong destinations such as Pepper Place, Sloss, and the 29th and 7th Entertainment District
- Work to extend the Railroad Park into Lakeview in order to support recreation, community gatherings, festivals and economic development, and to attract visitors and new residents
- Build on Lakeview's existing strong businesses, eateries and attractions that give people a reason to visit and spend their time and money in Lakeview
- Reinforce and build on strong existing employment destinations: professional and workforce
- Make it easy and convenient to walk, shop and spend time in Lakeview by creating pedestrian-friendly streets
- Introduce new signage to direct visitors to key areas
- Seek out opportunities for lodging in the District
- Encourage new amenities such as movies, theater, hotels, and restaurants which will serve those already in Lakeview and attract people/visitors from across the downtown and the region

### CREATE A SYSTEM OF CONNECTIVITY

- Build a walkable urbanism that allows most daily needs to be met within walkable or transit distance of residents and workers
- Create a strong local transportation system/circulator within Lakeview
- Make Lakeview more pedestrian-friendly by connecting streets, sidewalks, trails, and bikeways to link schools, residential areas, adjacent neighborhoods, and recreational amenities
- Organize parking in a way that encourages walking and easy access to shops, services, and local amenities/attractions
- Strengthen safety within the neighborhoods with sidewalks, street parking, street lights, and traffic-calming methods

### CREATE A DISTINCTIVE IDENTITY FOR LAKEVIEW

- Explore new signage, graphics and branding to guide Lakeview's identity/marketing tools
- Explore the use of Sloss' internationally distinguished Metal Arts Program as a potential component of the District's identity in signs, lamp posts, wayfinding and directional tools
- Create a sense of identity at gateways: entering from under the U.S. 280 viaducts; from Sloss Furnaces; Forest Park; and from U.S. 280 off ramps at 3rd/4th and at University

### CREATE ORGANIZATIONS/TOOLS FOR ADVANCING THE DISTRICT'S GOALS/MASTER PLAN

- Create a Community Development Corporation and/or a local redevelopment authority to manage development, partnerships and coordination to advance the District's goals/concepts
- Create a strong set of principles that guide decision making and priorities
- Mobilize business, merchants and property owners as a strong advocacy voice for Lakeview
- Create a TIF or other financial tool to capture locally generated business/sales tax for re-investment in the District
- Create a strong recruiting, marketing and promotional program for the District

### Principles

- Make mixed-use a development goal
- Increase residential options
- Build synergies/zones of reinforcing activities
- Build density within the existing infrastructure
- Make the District walkable
- Prioritize development with a transit strategy
- Make the District easy to navigate and destinations easy to find
- Build connectivity between Lakeview and adjacent neighborhoods/districts
- Grow with best practices in sustainability/neighborhood development

## STRATEGIES

- **Work with existing businesses to plan for growth in the District**  
Know the long-term plans of local businesses and what they need in order to grow. Work to find synergies among businesses that can support efficiencies in mutually beneficial development.
- **Recruit venues and businesses that expand the District as a destination**  
Consider movie theaters, boutique hotels, and a supermarket. The supermarket can benefit from easy access coming and going from downtown and from U.S. Highway 280.
- **Expand Pepper Place Farmers Market's potential as a year round venue by creating a "market hall" for local meats, cheeses, eggs, herbs, and seasonal produce**
- **Develop a public-use strategy for the historic Davis School**  
This scheme proposes a Sustainable Education and Resource Center. This use reinforces Lakeview's reputation as the Design District of the City/Region, and creates a use for the building that is neighborhood friendly - serving additionally as a community center as residential areas evolve in the District. Other potential uses include a private Montessori-type school, an academy of building crafts, a retirement community, or an incubator for design professionals.
- **Partner with the City to develop a parking strategy for the entire district**  
A new City parking deck near 29th and 7th Ave. South can create expanded capacity in this established entertainment anchor of the District. An expanded entertainment area creates new sales tax and higher visibility for other businesses that can be recruited to the District. Street redevelopment that creates "Complete Streets" allows for expanded parking as well as encourages alternatives to driving and parking: walking, bicycling, and use of a public trolley. Expanded public parking around Pepper Place increases event opportunities in the District and provides additional parking along the expanded Railroad Reservation Park and for Sloss' proposed Visitors Center. A pedestrian bridge over the active railroad tracks - connecting Sloss Furnaces and the Pepper Place area - can expand the retail visibility of Lakeview and increase event parking options for Sloss.
- **Work with the City to convert the one-way street couplet - 3rd and 4th Ave. South - into two-way streets**  
This proposal suggests that 3rd Ave. South would remain the designated U.S. Highway 78, and that 4th Ave. South which runs along the northern edge of the historic Davis School site would become a more traditional neighborhood street. The through-traffic concept of the one-way streets is not beneficial to businesses in the District and its use as the District increases its pedestrian and biking orientation. Two-way streets at 3rd and 4th Ave. South would also help traffic coming off of U.S. Highway 280 to move more smoothly into the District and downtown.
- **Be a champion of Railroad Park expansion to the east**  
The tremendous reception of Railroad Park and Red Mountain Park suggests real interest in outdoor recreation and green space in the heart of our community. The amenity of Railroad Park will enhance the District's potential to attract residential and boutique lodging. Streetscape improvements - Complete Streets - along 1st and 2nd Ave. South are incremental first steps in this potential.
- **Explore the pent-up demand for housing in the District**
- **Create a capacity-building tool for coordinated development and leveraging the potential of the District**  
This may be a Community Development Corporation or an expanded Business Association. The potential to promote, recruit, and advocate depends on a commitment to staff this organization. A City Redevelopment Authority would help the efforts of this group and the entire District.
- **Be a champion of local transportation options**  
Champion a fixed route for a circulator on 7th Ave. South in order to give confidence for development along this route. Also, study a local circulator provided by the employers/eateries of the District for nights/lunch hour. Study a District bike share and/or "zip-car" program.

## CONCEPTS

- Reinforce Lakeview's Design District leadership with demonstrable best practices in the development of a walkable mixed-use neighborhood
- Reinforce/recruit destination activities at anchor locations
- Advance Lakeview's potential as the eastern anchor of Railroad Park; champion this development
- Connect Lakeview's strong existing anchor destinations at Sloss/Pepper Place and at 7th and 29th by making 29th St. South a walkable neighborhood street lined with mixed-use development
- Recruit a neighborhood anchor use for the historic Davis School
- Add residential to Lakeview's strong existing mix of uses - reinforcing its downtown-adjacent potential and its proximity to growing employment centers
- Reinforce Lakeview's zone of professional offices to anchor 7th Ave. South
- Take advantage of the available/developable area along 28th St. South and 30th St. South to incrementally grow neighborhood mixed-use residential, office, and service retail
- Advocate for the potential that Lakeview has in developing in concert with transit and circulator routes

## CONCEPTS NARRATIVE

Lakeview has long been one of Birmingham's true entrepreneurial districts with a mix of established, thriving, locally owned and operated companies. Lakeview is also home to two large and growing employment centers: BBVA Compass Bank and the historic St. Vincent's Hospital.

Lakeview has rightfully become known as the City's "Design District" with hundreds of design/construction professionals, showrooms, suppliers and specialty retailers that support the building arts. The District also hosts: the long-standing entertainment nexus at 7th and 29th South; Pepper Place - with the Farmers Market, TNT Theatre, numerous restaurants and shops; and one of Birmingham's most beautiful and significant historic landmarks - Sloss Furnaces.

Sloss' new Visitors Center will soon break ground and will - along with the Lakeview District - anchor the eastern end of the region's Railroad Park Corridor.

These are incredible assets that are augmented by the District's "downtown-adjacent" location and significant available space to grow. As Christopher Leinberger argues in his landmark book, "The Option of Urbanism - Investing in a New American Dream": *As economic opportunities shift, districts with the location and attributes of "downtown-adjacent" offer some of the few places with immediate potential for investment.*

This master planning investigation has focused on:

- Adding new potential and strength to Lakeview's current mix of uses with the development of residential, particularly residential that can attract young professionals, empty nesters, and the large workforce that is already based in this area. New residential might be "jump started" by working with federal programs that support institutional partnerships in providing workforce housing within walking distance of good jobs.
- Focused development - particularly between the strong anchors of Pepper Place/Sloss and the Railroad Park extension on 1st and 2nd South and the entertainment anchors at 7th and 29th South. Twenty-ninth Street can become the heart of the District as a pedestrian-focused street lined with mixed-use development.
- Strengthening existing anchors with proposed new destination uses and activities.
- Reinforcing strong existing zones of office and professional activity.
- Advancing Lakeview's reputation as a Design District by advocating that the district be a leader in best practices for sustainability and all that that implies - both in how the District builds and how the District has the potential to be a center for helping to educate the entire region in these principles/practices of healthy living/life-styles.

The illustrations of the master plan are explorations - studies - of some of the ways that these concepts might play themselves out on the ground - both near-term and long-term.

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