

## Literature Review

City planning is a process which produces guidance for the harmonious and orderly development of a community, promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of its citizens. Planning aims to translate the community's collective vision for a better future into a guide for making that vision a reality. The guidance may include plotting where land uses are to develop in the future, as well as addressing anticipated needs in transportation, housing, recreation, water/wastewater infrastructure, schools, etc., all the while setting in place a prioritization of city resources. The task for a planner consists of formulating said plans to make things better in our community, or at the very least, keep things from deteriorating (Rhea and Billingsley 2013).

City planning is also required by law in the State of Alabama. According to the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 11-52-8, a city must develop a master plan and adopt it in whole or in part. The inspiration for this and other state's planning and zoning enabling legislation is born out of the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act of 1926 and the Standard City Planning Enabling Act of 1928.

In his book *Redesigning Cities: Principles, Practice, Implementation*, Jonathan Barnett lists five main objectives that should be considered in drafting any city plan and design. These objectives include "community, livability, mobility, equity, and sustainability" (Barnett 2003, p. 4). With so many cities and towns currently plagued by "the weakening role of the neighbourhood in individual lives, commodification of public life and urban space, a waning public realm, and the propagation of nonplace edge-city phenomena," planners are looking for ways to remedy such ills and create communities that better meet the needs of the citizenry (Garde 2006, p. 34). For some communities these problems can be compounded by uncertainties in the economy. With energy prices remaining higher than in previous decades, the U.S. slowly emerging from a subprime mortgage crisis, and limited loaning capacity of many banks, the need for more sustainable and livable communities that provide a variety of "economic and social opportunities" is prevalent (Goodman 2008; Hanan 2005, p.27).

Sustainability is defined as development that "meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1986, 43). This definition, when applied at the local level, provides guidance on addressing the community's needs regarding the economy, environment, equity and livability without compromising the next generation's ability to do likewise (Berke et. al. 2006). To this end, planning serves as the means to accomplish the task through gaining an understanding of the community's current state and developing a course of action to achieve common goals (Daniels et. al. 2007).

Other important factors to consider in city planning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century relate to the changing demographics and social trends of the American populous. According to Carol Rhea and Graham Billingsley of the Orion Planning Group, in a presentation at the 2013 Alabama APA Annual Conference, the United States is "undergoing the most significant socio-demographic change since the huge wave of immigrants in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century." These trends illustrate the changing needs of the American public and will change the way cities nationwide approach land use, transportation, and housing among other planning topics.

Among the observed trends, the population is projected to become older due to the increased life expectancy of individuals and a decrease in the number of births. By 2030, 1 in 5 residents will be over the age of 65. The needs of this growing segment of the population require various smaller scale housing types, closer proximity to supportive services, the provision of alternative and accessible means of transportation.

While the overall life expectancy is still increasing, the quality of life and the level of health and fitness seem to be on the decline for many Americans. Obesity rates are on the rise across much of the nation, particularly the South and Appalachia. These areas also have witnessed an explosion in the number of cases of diabetes and other complications tied to obesity, with diagnosis rates over 10% for many counties in the two regions (Center for Disease Control, 2010). The geography of these trends seems to correspond to areas of the country where communities are more sparsely developed and automobile dependent and fewer opportunities exist to walk or bike to destinations.

The makeup of the American family has changed drastically over the past 50 years. The traditional nuclear family (husband, wife, and children) has been on a steady decline. Various factors, including fewer marriages, divorce, individuals waiting until later in life to marry, increased percentage of women in the workplace, increased number of births out of wedlock, and an increase in the number of individuals that cohabitate without marrying have led to an ever increasing make-up of alternative family arrangements that have different needs associated with them. These alternative family structures, many with a single adult, require affordable housing options other than large, single family detached homes on large lots. They also demand expanded transportation options such as walking and biking facilities and close proximity to schools, commercial services, and recreational facilities (Rhea and Billingsley 2013).

In summary, the national trend of development is beginning to sway away from the suburban style of development that has dominated communities for the past half century and moving toward a more compact, mixed-use type development pattern that is highly accessible by a number of transportation means other than the automobile. Even in Hoover, we are beginning to see the shift. More residents are making their thoughts known as to the need for improved alternative transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks and bike trails, the need to re-establish the neighborhood as a scale of development that meets most of the needs of its residents, a greater variety of housing options, and the need for more commercial and recreational destinations that are within a short distance of their home and accessible by walking or biking.

It is important to recognize that the suburban-style, automobile-oriented development pattern will remain a viable one for Hoover for the foreseeable future. It is the pattern of development with which most Americans are familiar. However, the aforementioned trends indicate that the need for more urban, compact development is on the rise. Cities across the country are finding themselves scrambling to meet the needs of the changing demographics. Those cities that plan ahead for these changes are more likely to succeed in providing a good quality of life for their residents. Our planning efforts should encompass a healthy balance of both development types.

