



# COURTLAND, ALABAMA



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & RECOVERY PROGRAM

2017  
PREPARED BY:  
NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA  
REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



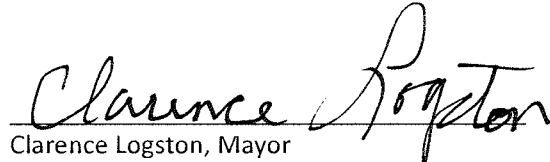
RESOLUTION 1-3-17A

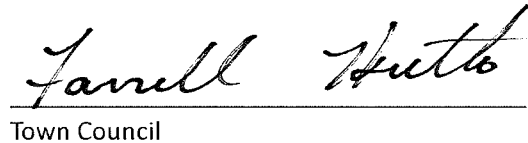
TOWN OF COURTLAND  
RESOLUTION TO ADOPT  
"Courtland Economic Development and Recovery Program"

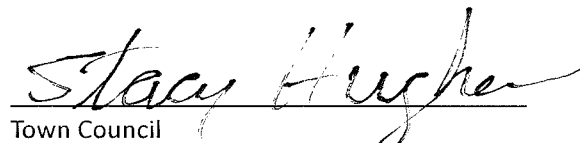
WHEREAS, Courtland was awarded a CDBG Planning Grant from ADECA in the amount of \$32,000 to prepare an "Economic Development and Recovery Program," and;

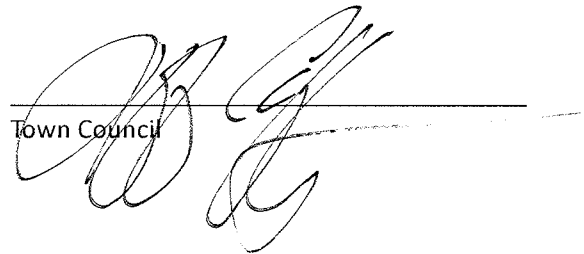
WHEREAS, this "Courtland Economic Development and Recovery Program" provides a framework for guiding economic growth to create jobs and revenue in the Town of Courtland; and for continued planning efforts in the future; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Courtland Town Council that the Town Council hereby approves and adopts the planning document entitled "Courtland Economic Development and Recovery Program" including all maps pertaining thereto on the 3rd day of July 2017.

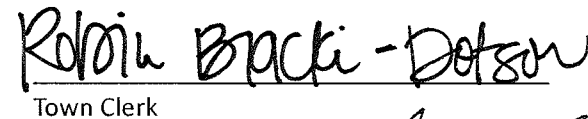
  
Clarence Logston, Mayor

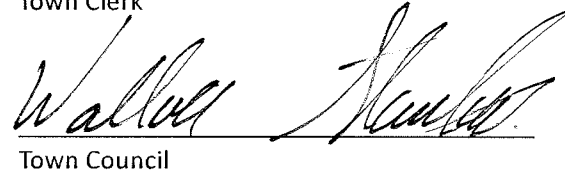
  
Town Council

  
Town Council

  
Town Council

ATTEST:

  
Town Clerk

  
Town Council

  
Town Council



## **TOWN OF COURTLAND**

The Honorable Clarence Logston, Mayor  
Jeff Coffey, Council Member  
Stacey Hughes, Council Member  
Shennell Hughes, Council Member  
Farrell Hutto, Council Member  
Wallace Stanley, Council Member

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Robin Brackin-Dotson, Town Clerk  
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## **NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA**

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### **Copies of this plan available:**

Courtland Town Hall  
61 College Street  
Courtland, AL 35618

This plan was made possible by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)  
CDBG Project# SM-PF-PL-14-001



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**Left** View through the town square in downtown Courtland.

**Middle** The Sherrod Building that sits across from the town square and has been restored as an event space.

**Above** The iconic clock in downtown.

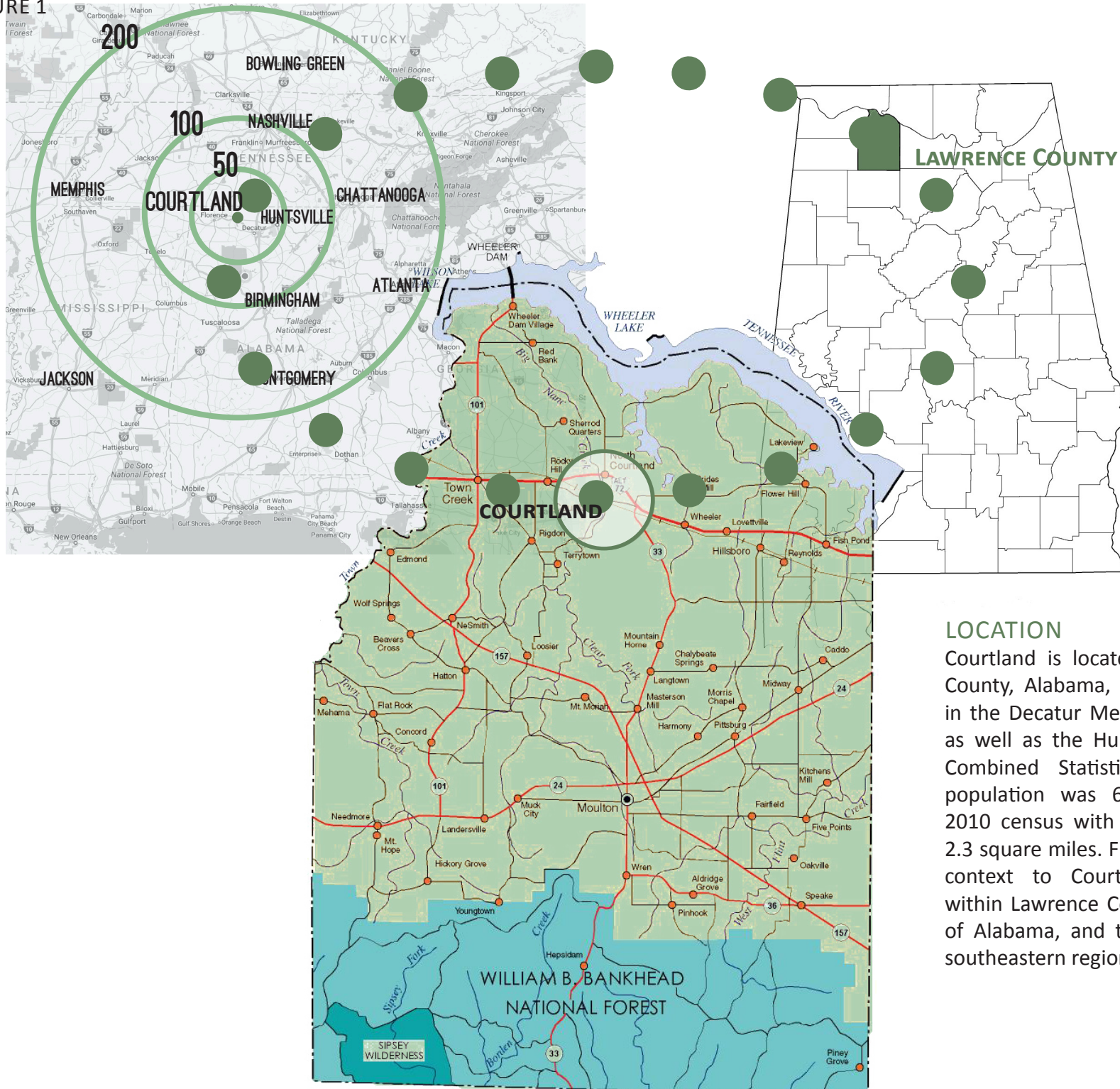
## INTRODUCTION

Courtland suffered a severe economic blow in late 2013 when International Paper (IP) announced the closing of the town’s mill facility. IP CEO John Faraci stated, “The decision to permanently close capacity is primarily being driven by demand decline for uncoated freesheet paper products.” An estimated 1,100 persons lost their jobs, and Courtland itself lost approximately \$771,000 in tax revenue paid annually from IP (which ended in December 2016). Indirectly as many as 6,000 other persons in surrounding counties and states have been negatively effected by the closure. Additionally, Lawrence County and the Lawrence County Board of Education lost funding due to the closure. These events prompted Courtland’s town leadership to prepare a long-range strategic program for the recovery and development of the local economy of the town.

This project is an “Economic Development and Recovery Program” for Courtland prepared by the North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG). The program includes an evaluation of current economic and physical conditions, development of a community vision and long-range goals, and creation of a strategic development concept. The study area includes the corporate limits of Courtland and immediate surrounding areas. On a larger scale, NARCOG concurrently prepared the South Bank Economic Recovery Program for the region, also necessitated by the IP plant closure.

A critical part of economic development is examining how land is currently being used within a given community, and how it contributes to vitality and attractiveness. In order for Courtland to recover and develop its economic base and create new jobs and revenue, the potential of current commercial, industrial, and agricultural properties, along with property owned and controlled by the town needs to be examined. New development and/or redevelopment in these properties can help to increase the tax base, spur new projects around them, and create new jobs in Courtland. Can Courtland reinvent itself? What does Courtland want to be? These are important questions to be asked and answered for the future financial prosperity of the town.

FIGURE 1



### LOCATION

Courtland is located in Lawrence County, Alabama, and is included in the Decatur Metropolitan Area, as well as the Huntsville–Decatur Combined Statistical Area. The population was 609 during the 2010 census with a total area of 2.3 square miles. Figure 1 provides context to Courtland’s location within Lawrence County, the state of Alabama, and the surrounding southeastern region.





## ECONOMIC HISTORY

Situated in the fertile Tennessee River Valley of North Alabama, Courtland was incorporated on December 13, 1819 by the Alabama territorial legislature. The Courtland Land Company bought the land upon which the town would be built in 1818 and subdivided it into 300 lots. These land speculators went so far as to reserve a plot for a town square in case the town became the county seat. The town's early settlers were wealthy planters mostly from the eastern states, and they were seeking a new path to ship cotton and other goods around the 'Muscle Shoals' of the Tennessee River. Cotton was the economic driver of the community in the early nineteenth century, so area planters and merchants met at Courtland in 1831 to consider a rail line. On January 13, 1832, the 45 mile long Tusculumbia, Courtland and Decatur Railroad was created, making it the first railroad west of the Appalachians. Early trains were usually horse-drawn, although an English-made steam locomotive was acquired in 1834. Absorbed by the Memphis & Charleston line after 1850, the railway was largely destroyed during the Civil War. The rebuilt railroad became part of the southern system in 1898 and is now known as the Norfolk Southern Railroad. Courtland was a prosperous town in the late nineteenth century, with businesses that included several saloons, a grist mill, three cotton gins, three blacksmith shops, and an ice house.

The residential and commercial buildings within the Historic District symbolize over 150 years of changing trends in architectural design. Several of Courtland's earliest buildings survive to this day. Downtown Courtland was an economic engine for the community and surrounding areas for more than a century. During World War II, Courtland was home to the Courtland Army Airfield in 1944 and 1945, and downtown bustled with activity. Sidewalks were so jam-packed in these years that people had to walk in the street. The Army Airbase transformed the local economy during this time in history. However, it was dismantled immediately after WWII and given to Courtland to use as an airport, ending that chapter in the town's economic history. Today, the airport is now the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark. It is home to Lockheed Martin and several other industrial companies.

**Top** The train depot that functions now as a community center.

**Middle** Historic home in downtown Courtland.

**Bottom** View of the agricultural lands that surround the town.

In 1971, Champion Paper opened a processing plant near the town. Years after the opening, the plant became International Paper. The International Paper Mill was an integral part of the local economy for over 40 years until September 11, 2013 when the company announced the closure of its facilities located on the south bank of the Tennessee River. The mill ceased operations on February 14, 2014. The mill was the largest employer in Lawrence and the surrounding counties and employed 1,100 workers with an annual payroll of \$86,000,000. Outside of the loss of jobs, preliminary impacts have been estimated at \$3.5 million lost in annual state and local taxes. In addition to employees directly affected by the closure, it is estimated that as many as 6,000 foresters and loggers will be indirectly affected as well. This event was catastrophic for Courtland and is the impetus for the Economic Development and Recovery Program.



**Top** International Paper's former office building in downtown Courtland.

**Middle** View of the IP plant.

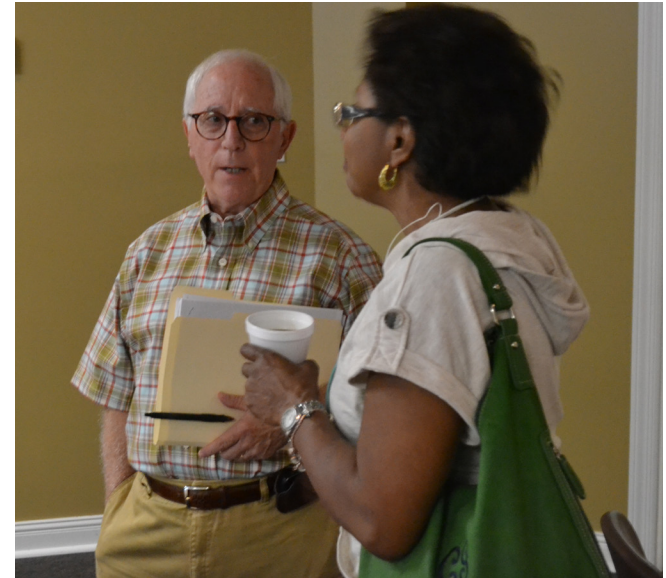
**Bottom** The former IP Courtland Mill.



**PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS**

Planning in Courtland dates back over 50 years — the majority of the previous planning effects were conducted in the 1970s. To the best of our knowledge, no official plans have been created or adopted in the past 30 years. A draft zoning ordinance and map were prepared for the town some time ago, and was just updated and adopted by the town in 2016. See list below of known plans for Courtland.

1963	FLOODS ON BIG NANCE CREEK IN COURTLAND
1970	INITIAL MINIMAL HOUSING ELEMENT
1971	PLANNING RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY AND PROGRAM DESIGN
1972	COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
1978	FISCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
1980s	HISTORIC DISTRICT MASTER PLAN
1986	GEORGE C. WALLACE INDUSTRIAL AIRPARK MASTER PLAN
2016	ZONING ORDINANCE AND MAP



**Top** A member of the Task Force and a Courtland resident discuss plans.  
**Bottom** Commissioner Mose Jones converses with community members.



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The most valuable resource in the planning process for Courtland, and any community planning process, is community participation. No one else knows a town like its own citizens, and the information NARCOG received from Courtland's residents was vital to the creation and completion of the Economic Development and Recovery Program. The Task Force was created before the onset of the planning process. This team is made up of a group of engaged Courtland citizens that NARCOG met with regularly to help guide the direction of the program. The NARCOG team visited Courtland regularly during the planning process — conducting fieldwork and meeting with town staff and the Task Force.

As part of the community participation process, NARCOG conducted two community meetings, one in November 2015 and another in August 2016, at the Valley Landing Golf Course located in Courtland. On average, 20–30 individuals (about 5% of the total population), attended each meeting and participated in the planning activities and discussions.



**Top** Residents examine the aerial map of the town.

**Left** Mayor Logston and residents sign in and get ready for the planning process.

**Bottom** The Task Force and community residents hard at work at one of the community meetings.



## COMMUNITY MEETING RESULTS

NOVEMBER 3, 2015

### DISCUSSION NOTES

- Capitalize on the history
- Recreational use on Big Nance Creek as a potential economic asset (operation and maintenance concerns)
- Concerns about golf course
- First railroad west of the Mississippi River
- Camera ready communities; state film office
- Analysis of facilities + proactive/market
- Opportunity for farm land to be converted to industry use — long term
- Access to river (issue with TVA)
- Need representatives/senators on board
- Advantage site designation for the industrial park (town is interested, but needs support)

### WRITTEN COMMENTS BY RESIDENTS

- Need to promote the Roy Coffey Park and ball fields
- Restore downtown with shops
- Capitalize on the history of Courtland (tours)
- Provide assisted living facilities for aging population
- Provide charter and/or trade schools that provides occupational skills for area youth
- Critical need to stop golf course debt
- Can we get ideas/estimates on developing Big Nance Creek so it doesn't flood future businesses?
- Push our great history by developing a senior citizen community.
- Courtland is a safe environment, relatively inexpensive, not far from health care centers. Senior citizens have a wealth of life experiences, which could be shared through an enrichment center (more like community education) that young and old would benefit from. Plus, there are no patio home communities in Lawrence County.
- Old Highway 20 trail



Joey Hester and Commissioner Mose Jones discuss outcomes from the planning activity.

### PLANNING ACTIVITY RESULTS

Topics prioritized by voting, focused on economic development opportunities.

TOPICS:	VOTES:
Highway 20/72 development	30
Industrial park	28
Small business incubator	18
Downtown revitalization	15
Education/work force development	13
Parks and recreation	10
International Paper mill re-use	6
Trail town	5
Tourism	4
Infrastructure	3
Camera ready communities	1
Re-branding and marketing	1
Pop-up shops	0

## COMMUNITY MEETING RESULTS

AUGUST 18, 2016

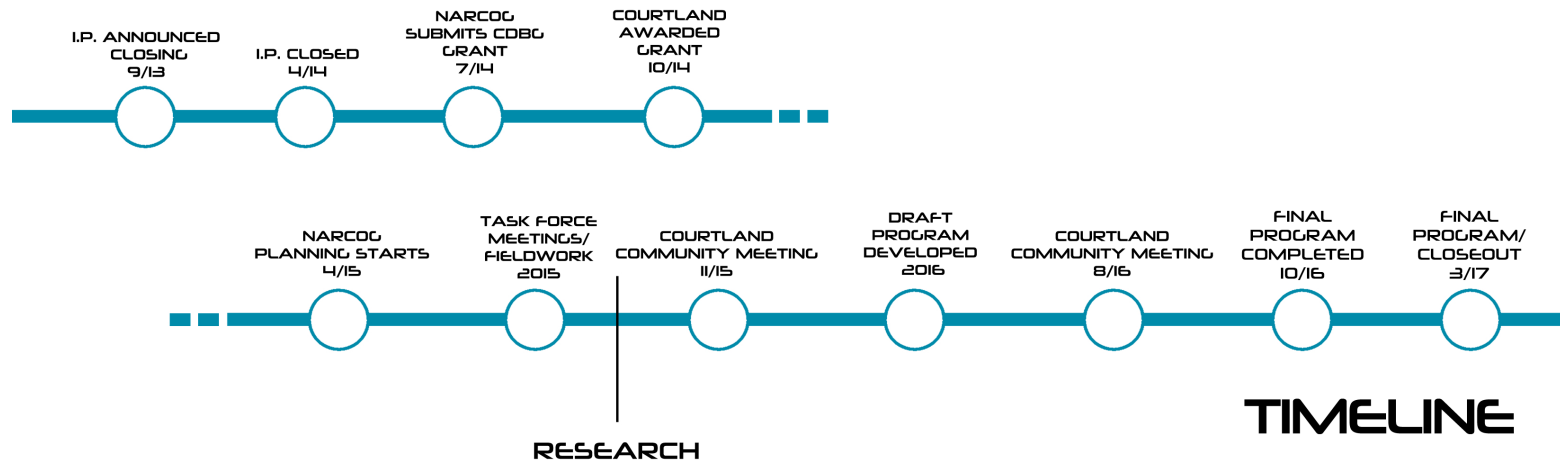
### COMMENTS BY RESIDENTS

- Need new parks and recreation opportunities, take into account the flooding into the design
- Highway development is a priority. Downtown should be focused on after that, then the industrial airpark
- Need downtown property owners involved with the planning process
- Need design guidelines and assistance for downtown
- Possible annexation south of Highway 20/72; opposed to annexation on the north side
- Cost of repairing buildings downtown expensive
- There was a previous proposal for a Dollar Tree in downtown Courtland area
- Someone needs to take the first step or nothing will change
- Promote “retirement community” concept



Residents cast their votes for community priorities.

FIGURE 2



# FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITY DESIGN

Functional community design does not refer simply to aesthetics, but also how a town functions as a whole. Kevin Lynch defined the concept of the physical form and design of a town in his iconic book, *The Image of the City*. Lynch identifies six elements — paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks, gateways — that define a town. The character or conditions of these elements occurring in a town affects its legibility and imageability, and help to create a mental image of how the town looks to the residents and visitors. Utilizing the six elements briefly defined on the following pages, the NARCOG Staff conducted a windshield survey of Courtland and identified some local examples of each.

Utilizing our collected information, NARCOG staff performed an exercise with the Task Force to identify where these six elements are in Courtland, as the Task Force envisioned them. From this exercise, an imageability map was produced and then presented to the community for their confirmation. The map then informed the Strategic Development Concept map.

Courtland's downtown is distinctly reminiscent of the classic southern American small town — unique architecture, situated around a central square.



## PATHS

Important channels of movement including streets, sidewalks, trails, waterways, and railroads. All other town elements are arranged around or along these paths.

HIGHWAY 20/72—MAIN HIGHWAY THROUGH COURTLAND

ALABAMA HIGHWAY 33—RUNS THROUGH THE EAST SIDE OF COURTLAND

COUNTY ROAD 150—RUNS THROUGH MIDDLE OF COURTLAND

JEFFERSON STREET—MAIN ARTERY IN COURTLAND

NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAILROAD—RUNS THROUGH COURTLAND

BIG NANCE CREEK—RUNS THROUGH COURTLAND

TENNESSEE STREET—RUNS THROUGH DOWNTOWN

## EDGES

Conditions that form a boundary between two distinct places such as walls, steep slopes, and spaces between developed areas. Though paths are not edges, paths may form edges (i.e. interstate highway).

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN COURTLAND AND NORTH COURTLAND

**Left** View of Big Nance Creek headed north out of town.

**Right** Norfolk Southern rail line leading into downtown. The train depot (now community center) is on the left hand side of the tracks, in the far center of the photo.





## DISTRICTS

Sections of a town that have some common internal character or activity that distinguishes them from other areas. They include neighborhoods, entertainment, shopping, office, historic, or industrial areas.

DOWNTOWN AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS—MAJOR COMMERCIAL AND CULTURAL CENTERS

LAWRENCE COUNTY INDUSTRIAL AIRPARK—OLD AIRBASE, MAINLY INDUSTRIAL USE

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT — TYPICAL SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING

## NODES

Important points or sub-centers in a town and usually formed at the convergence of major paths or the clustering of activities or elements.

INTERSECTION OF PATHS THROUGH DOWNTOWN COURTLAND, THE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CENTER OF TOWN



**Right** Courtland Presbyterian Church, c. 1859–68, is the town’s only remaining 19th century church. The interior gallery is original.

**Left** Lawrence County Industrial Airpark sign and entrance, with a listing for the businesses located on the site.

## LANDMARKS

Points of reference which help observers orient themselves within a town. They are unique, easily recognizable elements such as special buildings, trees, signs, and geographic features.

TOWN SQUARE—DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PARTS OF TOWN; UNIQUE ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

GOLF COURSE—LUSH LANDSCAPING WITHOUT ANY MAJOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

RAILROAD DEPOT—LOCATED ON THE RAILROAD IN DOWNTOWN COURTLAND

ROY COFFEY PARK—THE ONLY PARK IN COURTLAND

OLD HIGH SCHOOL—ABANDONED HIGH SCHOOL IN EAST COURTLAND

## GATEWAYS

Commonly recognized arrival points when entering into a town and are usually located along major paths or municipal boundaries.

COUNTY ROAD 150 AT COURTLAND / NORTH COURTLAND TOWN LIMITS—URBAN GATEWAY, SIMPLE GREEN SIGN

COUNTY ROAD 150 AT SOUTHERN TOWN LIMITS—RUNS ALONG BIG NANCE CREEK, SIMPLE GREEN SIGN

HIGHWAY 20/72 AT ALABAMA HIGHWAY 33—WHITE WOODEN SIGN AND LANDSCAPING

ALABAMA HIGHWAY 33 AT JEFFERSON STREET—HIGHWAY GATEWAY, NO SIGNAGE

HIGHWAY 20/72 AT COUNTY ROAD 389—HIGHWAY GATEWAY, NO SIGNAGE

COUNTY ROAD 270 AT HIGHWAY 20/72—HIGHWAY GATEWAY, WOODEN SIGN



**Left** This fountain anchors the town square, and is a great example of a town landmark.

**Right** Jefferson Street gateway



### NEIGHBORHOODS & DISTRICTS

Courtland has six distinct districts that define the town. The largest areas are the agricultural and airpark districts. Residential property exists in both the residential and historical districts. The most important district is the downtown district. The downtown and residential districts were the original boundaries of the town. When districts are combined or close to each other, as the downtown and historic district are in Courtland, drive times for residents reach work and shopping are minimal. With shorter drive times, less roads and infrastructure will be needed to be built and maintained by the town. These areas can contain growth in their current uses and other uses. For example, would you want a small coffee and breakfast shop in a walk-able distance from your neighborhood or on the highway far away from your neighborhood? Downtown is a perfect example of this and the surrounding homes are close and connected by sidewalks, which are in disrepair.

FIGURE 3

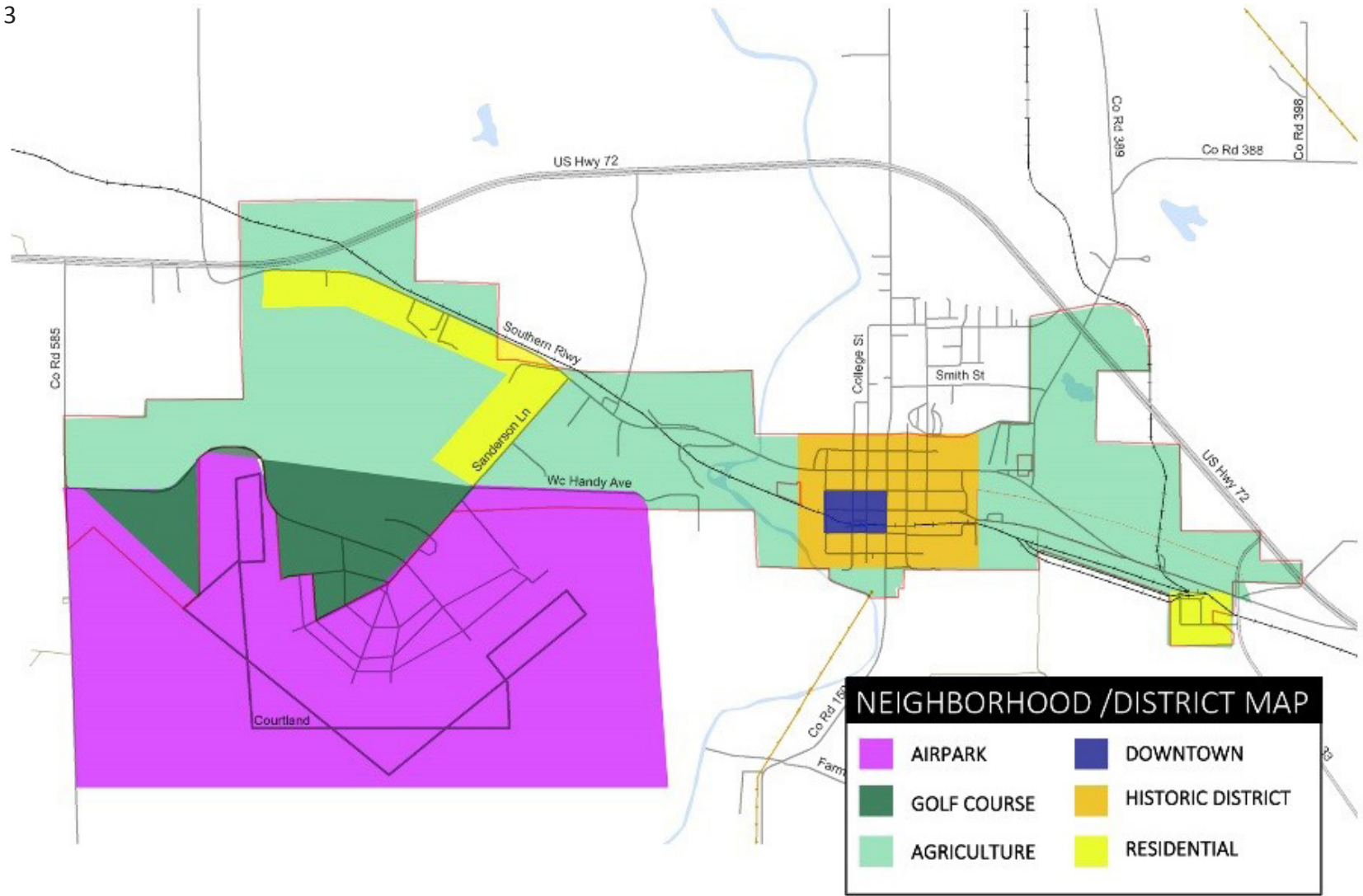
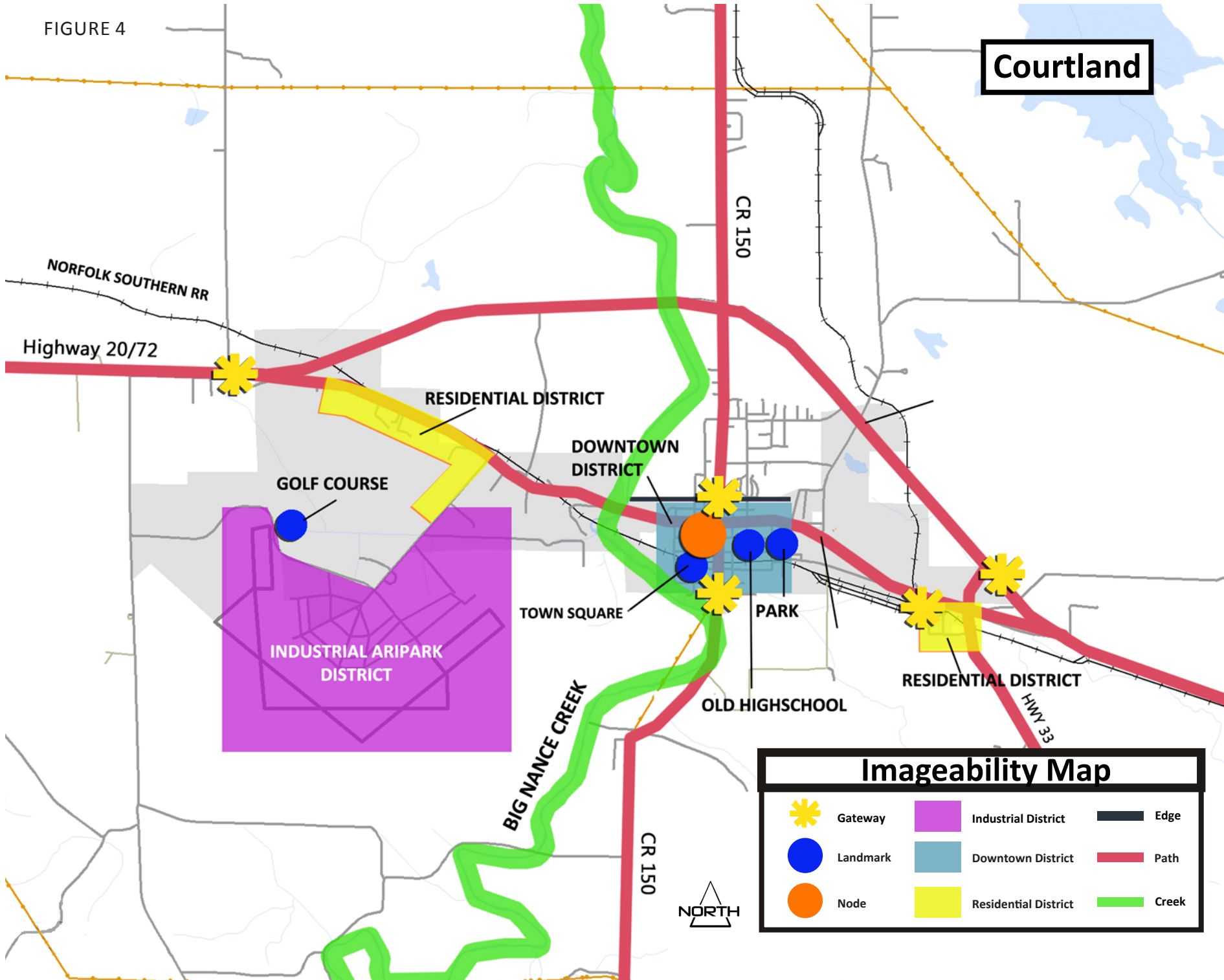


FIGURE 4



# STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

In many ways, the Strategic Development Concept map is one of the most important products of the program. It graphically depicts the road map for development and recovery in one image. This map is intended to be used in conjunction with the goals, objectives, strategies, and implementation matrix as a guide in decision-making by the town's elected officials.

The Strategic Development Concept is the result of fieldwork and reconnaissance by NARCOG staff, meetings held with the Task Force, and community meetings. NARCOG facilitated an exercise looking at functional community design elements of Courtland. These design elements were then presented to the community and based on their confirmation and input, the Strategic Development Concept was finalized.

## CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT ZONES

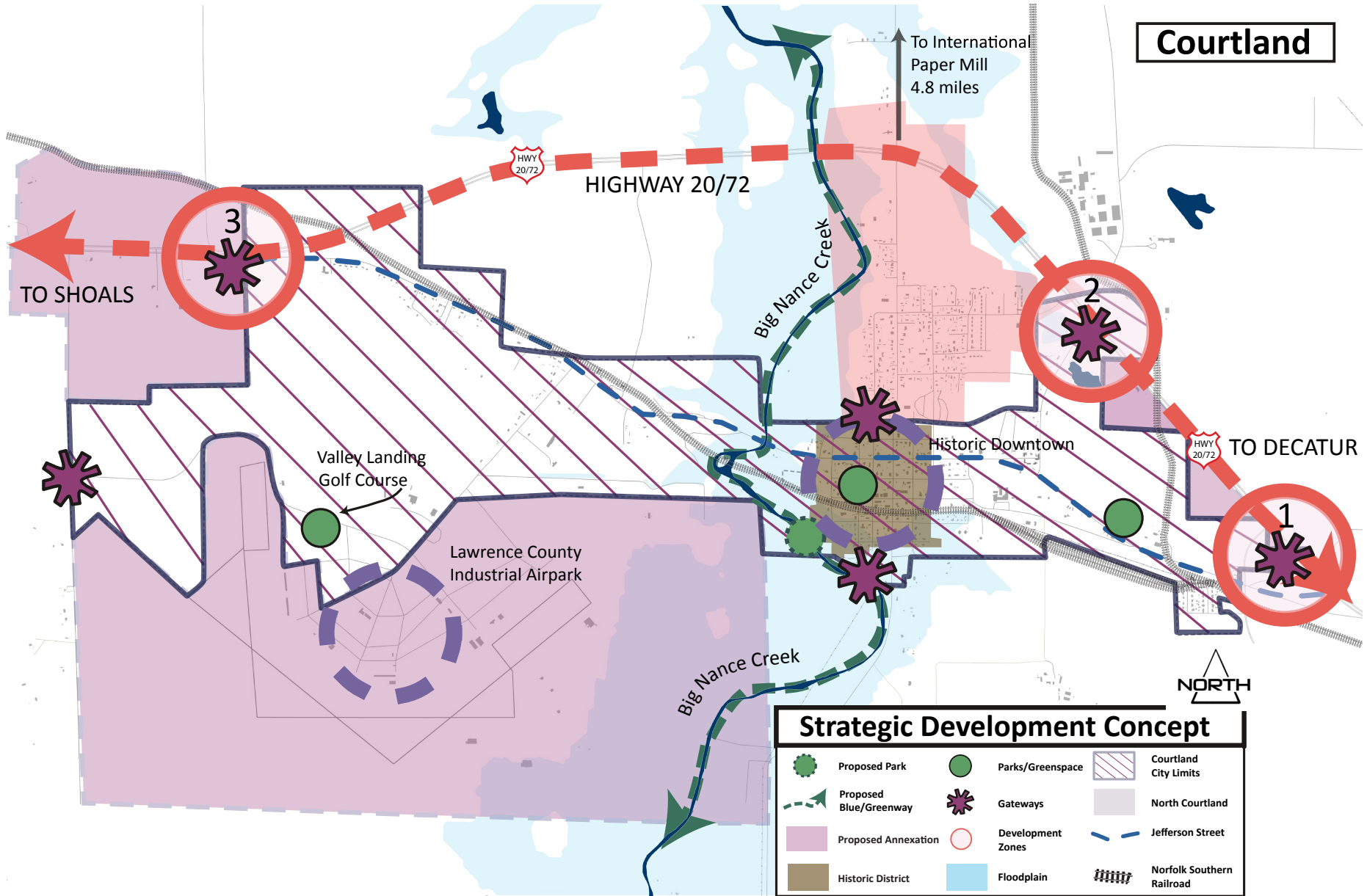
Three development zones have been identified and prioritized along the Highway 20/72 corridor. These zones represent economic development opportunities, and they also function as gateways to Courtland. The development zone with the most automotive traffic will be of highest priority for attracting businesses. The intersection of Highway 20/72 and Highway 33, located on the eastern edge of the town, averaged approximately 10,000+ vehicles per day in 2015, according to the Alabama Department of Transportation. Potential businesses that may locate in these zones should preferably pay homage to the historic downtown architecture and/or the agricultural heritage of the community. These new developments should aspire to be unique in nature as far as design aesthetics are concerned. Designing with the area's unique characteristics in mind would set these businesses apart from the cookie-cutter design that is standard along highways.



**Left** Agricultural-inspired design incorporating a barn and silo elements.  
**Below** Historic home-inspired design.



FIGURE 5



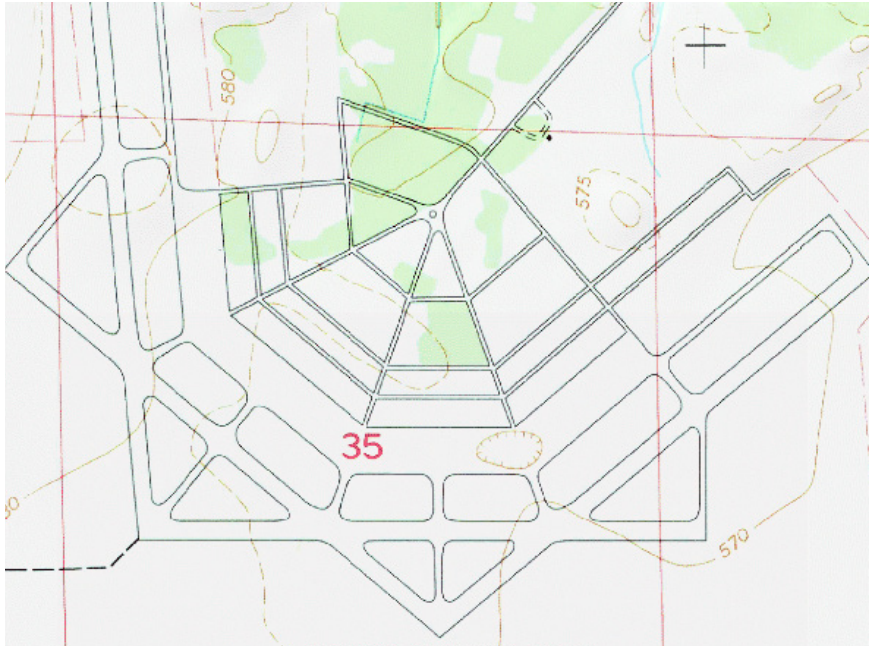
## INDUSTRIAL AIRPARK DEVELOPMENT ZONE

The Lawrence County Industrial Airpark was identified as a key opportunity for economic development during the community meetings. Existing industries in this zone should be retained by insuring that adequate infrastructure is in place to support existing business activities. Based on phone interviews with existing businesses, there are currently approximately 125 jobs located in the industrial airpark. These businesses have indicated that they may have as many as 34 new jobs created in 2017.

New industries can be attracted through strong partnerships in the region (town, county, industrial development board, chamber of commerce, and state agencies) to market the site. This site is also a prime candidate to become an AdvantageSite. This program is managed by the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA), and uses a teamwork approach between the private sector and state and local governments to prepare products, materials, and sites for industrial prospects. Since 2008, twenty-three projects have located on sites with AdvantageSite designations and created over 4,000 jobs for the state. More information about the program can be found here: [www.edpa.org](http://www.edpa.org)

**Bottom** Topographic map showing the layout of the former airbase, now the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark.

**Right** Aerial photo of the airpark site. The remaining existing roadways could inform design decisions. This historic site is a former WWII airbase, and could be a very unique industrial park for the region.



## HISTORIC DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT ZONE

Downtown is one of Courtland's most important economic assets and it needs to be preserved and revitalized. Courtland has an absolutely beautiful downtown. The buildings contain character that most modern buildings do not have — the detailed lettering on the façades are completely unique to Courtland. Ground level spaces can be used as retail opportunities — restaurants and shops — and the upper floors can be converted to office space and residential lofts. Buildings that are beyond repair and restoration can become infill opportunities, and empty lots on the square can become green space opportunities. The use of volunteer labor and donated materials can be an inexpensive and effective way to accomplish this effort.

### DOWNTOWN RECOMMENDATIONS:

- CLEAN BUILDINGS AND SIDEWALKS
- PAINT FAÇADES
- NEW WINDOWS WHERE MISSING
- NEW AWNINGS AS NEEDED
- ADD STREET FURNITURE
- RE-STRIPE STREETS
- ADD BIKE LANES
- PLANT STREET TREES
- CLEAN AND OPEN FIRST STORY WINDOWS
- INSTALL NEW HISTORIC STREET SIGNS
- IMPROVE TOWN SQUARE AND GAZEBO
- ENHANCE LANDSCAPE AND ADD SEASONAL PLANTINGS
- UTILIZE MAIN STREET ALABAMA DESIGN GUIDELINES

BEFORE



AFTER





## PROPOSED PARK, BLUEWAY, & GREENWAY

Big Nance Creek is Courtland's key recreational opportunity for utilizing asset based tourism as a tool for economic development. A design concept was developed for the proposed Big Nance Creek Park (see Figure 6). The 3-acre property is owned by the town and is in a flood plain. Flood plains are typical location for parks because the land is otherwise not able to be developed and park infrastructure is typically low impact. The proposed park location is within a 5-minute walk of downtown.

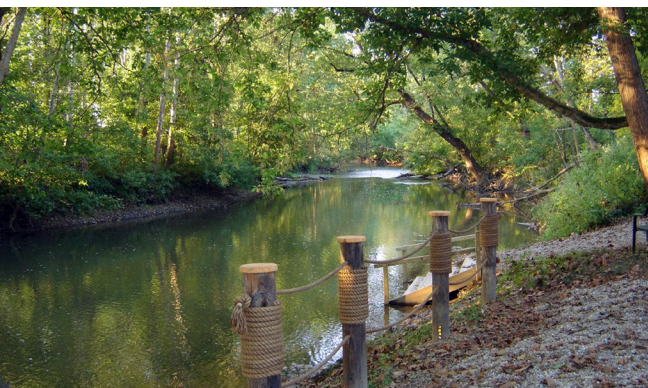
A blueway is a marked water trail on navigable waterways such as rivers, lakes, and coastlines for recreational use. This type of trail allows for access to waterways for non-motorized boats (and sometimes motorized vessels), innertubes, and other crafts. Developing this type of trail along Big Nance Creek is a low cost, short term opportunity. The proposed park could include a put-in and take-out on the creek for kayakers and canoers.

A greenway is long, narrow piece of land often used for recreational purposes and pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Greenways also include a park-like style of landscaping, and contain contiguous pathways. This type of trail could be developed from downtown Courtland, leading to the proposed park, and connecting to the proposed blueway on Big Nance Creek. This endeavour would be a mid to long-term project, but could eventually attract users from all types of recreational groups — runners, walkers, hikers, bikers, and equestrians.

The proposed blueway and greenway trail has the potential to transform Courtland into a trail town. Visitors seeking recreational activities would be drawn to the area, increasing traffic to downtown, and creating a new economic base. A larger, long-term vision is to one day connect the Tennessee River to Bankhead National Forest. This effort would entail working in partnership with North Courtland, Moulton, Lawrence County, and TVA to obtain funding. The Trail Town Program® is a great resource to explore ([www.trailtowns.org](http://www.trailtowns.org)) to learn how to start conversations, partnerships, and begin work on a trail that could connect to other regional rural towns and communities.

### ECONOMICAL CONSTRUCTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

- APPOINT A PARK BOARD TO SPEARHEAD PARK ACTIVITIES
- ORGANIZE COMMUNITY CLEAN UP DAYS
- SOLICIT LOCAL AND REGIONAL BUSINESSES AND LARGER CORPORATIONS FOR DONATIONS FOR BUILDING MATERIALS
- USE VOLUNTEER LABOR TO BUILD THE PARK
- PARTNER WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS AND/OR THE BOY SCOUTS TO INVOLVE STUDENTS AND YOUNG CITIZENS IN REVITALIZATION EFFORTS
- APPLY FOR GRANTS FOR FUNDING



Examples of river access for recreational opportunities.



FIGURE 6

## PROPOSED ANNEXATION

Over the years, annexation has caused many cities in the United States major problems. It has often been considered a quick fix for cities that want to increase their tax base. When cities annex more land, they do typically increase their tax base, but they also increase their expenses to provide expanded services for the annexed areas.

Analysis of annexation in Courtland should include looking at the increases in tax revenue, offset with the increase of expenses for providing services to the new areas. Annexation should be looked at for the long-term in terms of the town's finances and future feasibility. The largest area of proposed annexation is within the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark and the smaller areas are along Highway 20/72 corridor. These areas could aid in attracting new commercial and industrial developments, as well as expanding existing industries.

# COMMUNITY VISION AND GOALS

## DEFINITIONS

<b>VISION STATEMENT</b>	The collective understanding of the ideal future of a community; establishes a tone for the program.
<b>GOALS</b>	The result or achievement toward which an effort is directed.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	Efforts or actions to attain or accomplish goals. Aid community leaders in decision-making which will affect the future of the town.
<b>STRATEGY</b>	A plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall goal.

## VISION STATEMENT

LET'S GROW TOGETHER!

**Right** Street festivals have added vitality to West Chester, PA's downtown. Photo courtesy of West Chester BID, [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)

**Bottom** Wausau River District's Balloon and Rib Fest is a rousing success, and part of a successful 14-year-old Main Street program in downtown Wausau, WI. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Field, [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)



# GOAL 1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, REVITALIZATION, & RECOVERY

## OBJECTIVE 1.1 ATTRACT COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE HIGHWAY 20/72 CORRIDOR

Commercial development along the Highway 20/72 corridor was identified as the top priority by the community. New highway commercial development would provide both new jobs and revenue for the town.

### STRATEGIES

#### 1.1.1 Recruit commercial businesses in the identified Corridor Development Zones along Highway 20/72

Three Corridor Development Zones located along Highway 20/72 have been identified and prioritized, but need all or some of the necessary infrastructure for new development to occur.

1. Intersection of Highway 33 and Highway 20/72
2. Intersection of County Road 389 and Highway 20/72
3. Intersection of County Road 270/Jefferson Street and Highway 20/72

#### 1.1.2 Explore targeted annexation on the Highway 20/72 corridor

Complete annexation studies for the targeted areas along the Highway 20/72 corridor. The proposed Corridor Development Zones are not located entirely in the town limits. A strategic approach to annexation, along with future commercial development can increase revenue for the town.

## OBJECTIVE 1.2 PROACTIVELY ENCOURAGE REVITALIZATION OF THE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

In the past, downtown has been Courtland's commercial and cultural center. By bringing businesses back to Courtland's downtown it can be enlivened, reactivated, and reanimated to create jobs and revenue, and once again be the heart and soul of the Courtland community.

### STRATEGIES

#### 1.2.1 Update outdated existing plans and regulations for downtown that provide a more detailed focus for revitalization

Review and update existing plans, town ordinances, and zoning policies to ensure they support and promote appropriate property development in the downtown and historic residential districts.

**1.2.2 Explore grants for physical improvements to downtown infrastructure**

Grants are one way to provide the funding for infrastructure improvements needed to serve as the catalyst for new development downtown, i.e. streets, sidewalks, facades, water/sewer, parks.

**1.2.3 Organize new events and festivals and improve existing events**

Successful downtowns are the ones with people present. Festivals and special events bring people downtown, even if it's just for a temporary period of time. Create an event calendar for the town and market it. Tie-in to the state of Alabama's bicentennial three-year themed event schedule: 2017 focuses on places, 2018 is people, and 2019 is stories. Some ideas include local makers shopping events, concerts, movies on the square, farmers market, holiday bazaar, founder's day celebration. Coordinate activities with the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce.

**1.2.4 Utilize pop-up shops during events to further drive traffic downtown**

A pop-up retail space is a short-term sales space or event/installation space in a venue that temporarily activates an otherwise vacant space. The emphasis of pop-up spaces is to reinvigorate the public's perception of a district by energizing the streetscape and providing interesting new products and experiences. In addition explore a future business incubator space in downtown Courtland.

**1.2.5 Continue to participate in Main Street Alabama's Regional Downtown Network**

NARCOG has partnered with Main Street Alabama to establish a Regional Downtown Network for select communities in Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan counties. Courtland is a participating network community in this pilot program that will provide educational resources and technical assistance for the downtowns.

**1.2.6 Utilize Downtown Design Guidelines from Main Street Alabama**

Ensure that design guidelines for future development downtown are appropriate by utilizing Main Street Alabama guidelines. These free guidelines are available at online at: [www.mainstreetalabama.org](http://www.mainstreetalabama.org)

**OBJECTIVE 1.3 ATTRACT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT TO THE LAWRENCE COUNTY INDUSTRIAL AIRPARK**

The Lawrence County Industrial Airpark is strategically located along the Highway 20/72 corridor, Norfolk Southern Railroad, and the Tennessee River — providing multi-modal means of transport for industries. The airpark is already home to several light industries, including Lockheed Martin.

## STRATEGIES

### **1.3.1 Partner with the Lawrence County Industrial Development Board, Alabama Department of Commerce, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EDPA), Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and North Alabama Industrial Development Association (NAIDA)**

Work with regional organizations to attract industry to Courtland. Open lines of communication with these organizations to stay informed on happenings in the state of Alabama, and to share information about the town.

### **1.3.2 Market and advertise the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark**

Provide detailed information and photos to the Lawrence County Industrial Development Board for posting on their website, market the site through state or county organizations, and through real estate agencies.

### **1.3.3 Ensure the airpark has the necessary infrastructure to be competitive and retain existing industries, and also attract new industries**

Partner with West Morgan–East Lawrence Water and Sewer Authority to access the potential water/sewer improvements that may need to be completed on the site.

### **1.3.4 Seek an AdvantageSite Designation from the EDPA to attract industry to the airpark**

An AdvantageSite is a teamwork approach between the private sector and state and local governments geared toward having prepared product and materials ready for industrial prospects. Information about the process can be found on EDPA's website:  
<http://www.edpa.org>

### **1.3.5 Update the master plan for the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark**

The last master plan was completed in 1986 and needs to be updated to account for current conditions and future needs.

## OBJECTIVE 1.4 INVESTIGATE THE POTENTIAL RE–USE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PAPER PLANT

Since the shutdown on February 14, 2014, the plant has been vacant. The site is strategically located between Decatur and the Shoals.

**STRATEGIES****1.4.1 Stay engaged and involved with meetings regarding the future of International Paper in the region**

Stay in touch with International Paper and others (county, IDB, TVA, etc.) When they make decisions, be there to have a say in what happens. Have the mayor or a member of the town council make this a priority.

**1.4.2 Consider strategic annexation of the plant and land adjacent to the plant**

Perform studies to see if annexation is an economically viable and worthwhile option for Courtland.

**1.4.3 Explore the concept of an inland port on the Tennessee River**

The former IP site has docking infrastructure in place on the river already. An inland port on a major body of water can bring industrial opportunities to Courtland by having direct access to water, the Norfolk Southern rail line, an airport, and a major 4-lane highway.

## GOAL 2 INFRASTRUCTURE

**OBJECTIVE 2.1 MAINTAIN A PARTNERSHIP WITH WEST MORGAN–EAST LAWRENCE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY**

Collaborate and communicate with the water and sewer provider to make sure infrastructure improvements work along with their company policies and goals, while continuing to make improvements that promote economic development in Courtland.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2 PLAN WATER AND SEWER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AND EXPANSIONS IN AREAS OF POTENTIAL GROWTH OR IN AREAS THAT HAVE MAJOR SEWER SYSTEM PROBLEMS**

Town officials should identify selected areas and then secure funding to prepare the selected areas for new economic growth and sewer upgrades.

**OBJECTIVE 2.3 IDENTIFY AREAS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND/OR EXPANSIONS**

The town needs to identify and prioritize areas to improve and/or expand infrastructure to increase economic development opportunities. Strategically placing infrastructure in un-served areas can help attract economic growth.

**OBJECTIVE 2.4 IMPROVE STREETS, STORMWATER DRAINAGE, AND SIDEWALKS**

Improving transportation infrastructure means more traffic flow to potential businesses and industry. Consider additions and improvement of sidewalks and bike lanes. Identify areas of improvements near the Corridor Development Zones and downtown.

**OBJECTIVE 2.5 EVALUATE THE ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT AND EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Look at future ownership changes for potential revenue increases. Cultivate relationships with Joe Wheeler Electric and the TVA to determine if there could be some economies of scale to gain from merging services, or improving quality of services.

**OBJECTIVE 2.6 BROADBAND INTERNET**

Research the feasibility and funding opportunities for high speed, broadband Internet in the downtown and commercial areas — a must in the 21st century. Consider installing WIFI hub in downtown to promote small business growth. Having access to the Internet not only would help new businesses operate more efficiently, but would also enhance the quality of life for Courtland residents. Work with state and federal agencies to secure grant funding for the project.

**OBJECTIVE 2.7 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY**

Support the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Norfolk Southern Railroad, and other regional transportation programs (i.e. NARCOG Regional Transit), to provide an enhanced transport system for businesses, industries, and residents to allow for connectivity to the surrounding region.



## GOAL 3 HISTORY, CULTURE, NATURE & RECREATION

### OBJECTIVE 3.1 PROMOTE COURTLAND'S HISTORY AS AN ENGINE FOR NEW ECONOMIC GROWTH

Courtland has an amazing history. Marketing this history and small town character can attract new people and businesses.

#### STRATEGIES

##### 3.1.1 Create a town website

A town website could be utilized to share this history, and also promote events. The website could work in conjunction with the existing social media sites and become the “source” for all official town information.

##### 3.1.2 Partner with the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce, North Alabama Tourism Association, and Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area

Developing relationships with these organizations can strengthen Courtland's town image, and also help promote the town's activities and events. Partnerships can develop with other towns and communities, cross promotion of events can happen, and ideas for eco-tourism can be shared.

##### 3.1.3 Tie into the state of Alabama's Bicentennial Celebration

The town of Courtland and the state of Alabama turn 200-years-old in 2019. The state kicks off its celebration with activities in 2017, and each year leading up to 2019 has a theme:

2017 — Explore Our Places

2018 — Honor Our People

2019 — Share Our Stories

The website for the bicentennial has an event tab and would be a great way for Courtland to share events related the town's bicentennial, as well as other events that tie into the state's celebration.

### OBJECTIVE 3.2 PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND MARKET THE HISTORICAL DISTRICT AND STRUCTURES OF COURTLAND

**3.2.1 Utilize the Courtland Heritage Museum as an asset for attracting people downtown**

This museum, although small, documents the lives, times, and artifacts of Native Americans, African Americans, early settlers and honored heroes of Courtland. The museum reflects the history and development of a small southern town. If the museum was marketed in conjunction with other historic sites in and around town, then this museum could become a destination attraction in downtown.

**3.2.2 Create a plan for preserving and protecting Courtland's historic architecture, but also market and promote this aspect of the town for future economic benefits**

The historical architecture in Courtland is breathtaking. This small town character can attract a large regional crowd. Today it is common for older houses to be converted to bed and breakfasts, become museums, and be converted into event spaces. These historic homes also have the potential to attract retirees who are interested in small town living, and being able to walk to town amenities.

**3.2.3 Assess current historic markers in town — determine which ones need replacing or refurbishing, and if new markers need to be added**

The Alabama Historical Association (AHA), in association with the Alabama Bicentennial Commission, has a one-year pilot refurbishment program — which will assume 100% of the costs for refurbishing approximately 45 AHA-sponsored markers. In addition to this program, the AHA also has an on-going refurbishment program for historical markers in need of replacement. These funds can be applied for through AHA's website: [www.alabamahistory.net](http://www.alabamahistory.net)

**OBJECTIVE 3.3 CAPITALIZE ON NATURAL AND RECREATIONAL ASSETS OF COURTLAND**

Courtland is situated in a central location relative to some of North Alabama's most important landscape features including the Tennessee River, Bankhead National Forest, and the Sipsey Wilderness.

**STRATEGIES****3.3.1 Improve Roy Coffey Park**

The property for Roy Coffey Park (12.85 acres) was acquired by the town in 1979 through a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. In 1988 the town received another grant for \$20,000

to develop the park. The park is in need of a renovation, including a new masterplan and a phased plan for improvements.

**3.3.2 Assess the town square**

The square downtown is the crown jewel of Courtland. Assess the current condition of the square and prioritize a list of repairs, clean up, and plantings. Create a list of enhancements that could be added to the square for the community's enjoyment.

**3.3.3 Create a regional blueway and greenway connecting Courtland to the Tennessee River along Big Nance Creek.**

Courtland is situated in a central location relative to some of North Alabama's most important landscape features including the Tennessee River, Bankhead National Forest, and the Sipsey Wilderness. A regional greenway system can connect Courtland to these other natural assets in North Alabama.

**3.3.4 Develop the proposed Big Nance Creek Park**

Big Nance Creek is a pristine, wild creek running through Lawrence County. A park along this creek will give community members and visitors a glimpse of the creek and an immersion into nature. The creek currently is not open to the public to view, except along some roads and bridges. This proposed park can be a trailhead for a regional greenway throughout Lawrence County.

## GOAL 4 FINANCE & REVENUES

**OBJECTIVE 4.1 ESTABLISH A DETAILED TOWN BUDGET AND A CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (CIP)**

A detailed budget will help Courtland balance expenses and revenue. This objective is an absolute necessity under the circumstances for fiscal responsibility and future economic growth. A Capital Improvements Program will help the town understand the costs associated with future projects and budget accordingly.

**OBJECTIVE 4.2 CONTINUE TO EXPLORE POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS IN THE TOWN'S BUDGET TO STABILIZE THE TOWN'S FINANCES OVER THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE**

Identify items that will save the town money, and then use these funds towards initiatives that will positively

effect future economic growth.

#### OBJECTIVE 4.3 EVALUATE THE FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY OF VALLEY LANDING GOLF COURSE

The golf course is currently in debt and is on the path to adding more debt. It needs to be controlled quickly before it becomes more of a financial burden for the town. The town must establish a sound and conservative budget for the golf course and/or aggressively market the land for sell.

#### OBJECTIVE 4.4 EXPLORE REVENUE SHARING OPPORTUNITIES

Revenue sharing is the distribution of profits and losses between stakeholders. Example: Cullman County

#### OBJECTIVE 4.5 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TOWN ELECTED OFFICIALS AND STAFF

Attend leadership development classes, grant workshops, Main Street Alabama workshops and webinars, Your Town Alabama conference and the Alabama League of Municipalities. Stay involved with the Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce and other partners and resources.

## GOAL 5 LAND USE & REGULATIONS

#### OBJECTIVE 5.1 ENFORCE ZONING ORDINANCE AND CONTINUE TO AMEND AS NEEDED

Zoning ordinances are regulations that define how property in specific geographic districts can be used. Zoning ordinances specify whether districts can be used for residential, commercial or industrial purposes, and may also regulate lot size, placement, bulk (or density) and the height of structures. Courtland recently adopted a zoning ordinance and map which will protect property values in the downtown and residential historic districts. The town should continue to refine their ordinance as new development opportunities arise in these districts.

## STRATEGIES

### 5.1.1 Explore establishing a planning commission

The recently adopted zoning ordinance and map can be more efficiently enforced by creating a planning commission and a board of zoning adjustments, to help to enforce land use decisions and regulations.

### 5.1.2 Consider developing subdivision regulations

Subdivision regulations set design standards for streets, drainage ways, sewage disposal, water systems, and other aspects of public welfare. Subdivision regulations are needed to protect communities and ensure building lots provide a wholesome living environment for future residents. These regulations ensure adequate lot size, public access, and the availability of public services to each lot created. In order to adopt subdivision regulations, a planning commission will have to be established.

### 5.1.3 Consider adopting design guidelines

Design guidelines need to be used in future projects in Courtland. Design guidelines provide the structure to help towns retain their physical character and function. Main Street Alabama has developed design guidelines that are available to use at no cost and could be utilized to customize a set of guidelines for the downtown Courtland.

# IMPLEMENTATION

## COURTLAND COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE

This committee has been organized to assist with the implementation of the Economic Development and Recovery Program. The committee can be strategically divided into subcommittees to spearhead the implementation of specific goals, objectives, and strategies that are identified in this program. Also, the committee should hold fund raisers, utilize volunteers for labor, solicit donations for materials, and potentially set up a GoFundMe site to implement projects.

### SUBCOMMITTEES:

COMMERCIAL RECRUITMENT  
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT  
DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION  
PARKS AND RECREATION  
EVENTS AND FESTIVALS  
INFRASTRUCTURE

## IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The implementation matrix (see Figures 5-9) describes the estimated cost, potential funding, responsibility, performance measures, and the time frame of the program. The implementation matrix is a tangible chart that both elected officials and citizens can use to move the town forward and implement these goals.

## FUNDING SOURCES

There is a wide range of funding sources available to municipalities for capital improvements such as the traditional general fund, general obligation bonds, and grants. However, due to the budgetary constraints related to the IP closure, it may be difficult for the town to utilize the general fund and general obligation bonds or come up with matching funds for grants to perform capital improvements.

A wide variety of federal and state grant monies are also available to municipalities. See opposite page for a list of some grant providers and programs (this is not an exhaustive list).

In addition to federal and state grants, NARCOG administers the Small Business Fund—a locally controlled source of capital used to finance start-up and expanding businesses whose projects will result in job creation, leverage private sector investments, and reduce unemployment in Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan Counties.

**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS (ADECA)**

- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS (CDBG)
- LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF)
- RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP)
- LAW ENFORCEMENT AND TRAFFIC SAFETY (LETS)

**APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION (ARC)**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)**

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)**

- ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT (ADEM)

**FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA)**

- ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (ALDOT)

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)**

**FOUNDATIONS**

**ALABAMA INVESTMENT INCENTIVES**

A variety of financial incentives is available to communities for economic development assistance. More detailed information about these programs can be found here:

- Alabama Department of Revenue  
<https://www.revenue.alabama.gov/>
- Alabama Department of Commerce  
<http://www.madeinalabama.com/>
- Alabama Historical Commission  
<http://www.preserveala.org/alabamarehabetaxcredits.aspx>
- Other state agencies

FIGURE 7

	GOALS AND STRATEGIES	COST LEVEL	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	CHAMPIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL 1</b>	<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, REVITALIZATION, AND RECOVERY</b>					
<b>OBJECTIVE 1.1</b>	Attract commercial development along the Highway 20/72 corridor					
1.1.1	Recruit commercial businesses	low	n/a	Chamber, Courtland, Task Force,	New businesses	1-3 yrs.
1.1.2	Explore targeted annexation	low	n/a	Courtland, Task Force	Complete studies	1-3 yrs.
<b>OBJECTIVE 1.2</b>	Proactively encourage revitalization of the historic downtown					
1.2.1	Update existing outdated plans	low	ARC, CDBG, local	Courtland, Task Force	Town+consultants	3-5 yrs.
1.2.2	Explore grants for improvements to downtown physical infrastructure	low	ALDOT, ARC, CDBG	Courtland, Task Force	Grants awarded	1-3 yrs.
1.2.3	Organize new events and improve existing	low	local	Courtland, Task Force	More visitors and revenue	1-3 yrs.
1.2.4	Utilize pop-up shops during events	low	local	Courtland, Task Force	More visitors and revenue	1-3 yrs.
1.2.5	Continue to participate in Main Street Alabama's Regional Downtown Network	low	local, NARCOG	Courtland, NARCOG, Task Force	Participation	1-3 yrs.
1.2.6	Utilize guidelines from Main Street Alabama	free	n/a	Courtland, NARCOG, Task Force	Review and adoption	1-3 yrs.
<b>OBJECTIVE 1.3</b>	Attract industrial development to the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark					
1.3.1	Partner with regional organizations to attract industry	free	n/a	Courtland, IDB, Task Force	Attend meetings and network	1-3 yrs.
1.3.2	Market and advertise the industrial airpark	low	Courtland	Courtland, County, IDB, Task Force	Create marketing material	1-3 yrs.
1.3.3	Ensure necessary infrastructure is in place	high	ARC, CDBG, EDA	Courtland, IDB, Task Force	Seek funding	3-5 yrs.
1.3.4	Seek an AdvantageSite Designation	mid	Courtland, IDB	Courtland, IDB, Task Force	Site designation	1-3 yrs.
1.3.5	Update the master plan	low	ARC, CDBG, EDA	Courtland, IDB, Task Force	Completed plan	3-5 yrs.
<b>OBJECTIVE 1.4</b>	Investigate the potential re-use of the International Paper plant					
1.4.1	Stay engaged with meetings regarding the future of IP in the region	free	n/a	Courtland, NARCOG, Task Force	Attend meetings	1-3 yrs.
1.4.2	Consider annexation of the land adjacent	low	n/a	Courtland, Task Force	Perform studies	3-5 yrs.
1.4.3	Explore the concept of an inland port on the Tennessee River	low	n/a	Courtland, NARCOG, Task Force	Perform studies	3-5 yrs.



FIGURE 8

	GOALS AND STRATEGIES	COST LEVEL	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	CHAMPIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL 2</b>	<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>					
OBJECTIVE 2.1	Maintain a partnership with West Morgan East Lawrence Water and Sewer Authority	free	n/a	Courtland, Task Force	Attend meetings	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 2.2	Plan sewer system improvements and expansions in areas of potential growth or in areas that have major sewer system problems	mid to high	ARC, CDBG, EDA, USDA	Courtland, WMELWSA	Identify needs and costs, apply for grants	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 2.3	Identify areas for infrastructure improvements and/or expansions	mid to high	ALDOT, ARC, CDBG, EDA, USDA	Courtland, NARCOG, Task Force, WMELWSA	Identify needs and costs, apply for grants	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 2.4	Improve streets, stormwater drainage, and sidewalks	low	ALDOT, ARC, CDBG, USDA	Courtland, Task Force	Identify needs and costs, apply for grants	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 2.5	Evaluate the electric department and existing infrastructure	low	Courtland, USDA	Courtland, Task Force	Identify needs and costs, apply for grants	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 2.5	Broadband Internet	low	ADECA, ARC, EDA, USDA	Courtland, Task Force	Identify needs and costs, apply for grants	3-5 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 2.7	Regional transportation and connectivity	low	ALDOT, FHWA	Courtland, NARCOG	Network, attend meetings	5+ yrs.

FIGURE 9

	GOALS AND STRATEGIES	COST LEVEL	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	CHAMPIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL 3</b>	<b>HISTORY, CULTURE, NATURE, AND RECREATION</b>					
<b>OBJECTIVE 3.1</b>	Promote Courtland’s history as an engine for new economic growth					
3.1.1	Create a town website	low	Courtland	Courtland	Completed website	1-3 yrs.
3.1.2	Partner with regional organizations	low	n/a	Courtland, Task Force	Increased visitors and revenue	1-3 yrs.
3.1.3	Tie into the state’s bicentennial celebration	low	n/a	Courtland, Task Force	Increased visitors and revenue	1-3 yrs.
<b>OBJECTIVE 3.2</b>	Preserve, protect, and market the historical district and structures of Courtland					
3.2.1	Utilize the Courtland Heritage Museum	low	Courtland	Courtland, Task Force	Increased visitors	1-3 yrs.
3.2.2	Create a plan for preserving and protecting the architecture, but also market and promote it for economic benefits	low	Courtland	Courtland, Task Force	Enforce and amend zoning ordinance, adopt design guidelines	1-3 yrs.
3.2.3	Assess historic markers	low	AHA, ATD, Courtland, RC&D	Courtland, Task Force	New signs	1-3 yrs.
<b>OBJECTIVE 3.3</b>	Capitalize on natural and recreational assets of Courtland					
3.3.1	Improve Roy Coffey Park	mid	ARC, CDBG, LWCF, RC&D, RTP	Courtland, NARCOG, Task Force	Apply for grants; community work days	3-5 yrs.
3.3.2	Assess the town square	low-mid	ARC, CDBG, Courtland, RC&D	Courtland, NARCOG, Task Force	Apply for grants; community work days	1-3 yrs.
3.3.3	Create a regional blueway and greenway	high	ARC, CDBG, local, LWCF, RC&D, RTP	Lawrence County, Courtland, Task Force, North Courtland, Moulton	Apply for grants; community work days	5+ yrs.
3.3.4	Develop the proposed Big Nance Creek Park	low-mid	ARC, CDBG, Courtland, LWCF, RC&D, RTP	NARCOG, Courtland, Task Force	Apply for grants; community work days	3-5 yrs.

FIGURE 10

	GOALS AND STRATEGIES	COST LEVEL	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	CHAMPIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL 4</b>	<b>FINANCE AND REVENUES</b>					
OBJECTIVE 4.1	Established a detailed budget and CIP	free	n/a	Courtland	Approved town budget and CIP	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 4.2	Explore cost savings in the budget	free	n/a	Courtland	Cost savings	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 4.3	Evaluate Valley Landing Golf Course	low	Courtland	Courtland, Task Force	Continue operations or sell	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 4.4	Explore revenue sharing options	free	Courtland	Courtland, Task Force	Revenue sharing agreement	1-3 yrs.
OBJECTIVE 4.5	Professional development for town elected officials and staff	low	Courtland	Courtland, NARCOG	Trained officials and staff	1-3 yrs.

FIGURE 11

	GOALS AND STRATEGIES	COST LEVEL	POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES	CHAMPIONS	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TIME FRAME
<b>GOAL 5</b>	<b>LAND USE AND REGULATIONS</b>					
OBJECTIVE 5.1	Promote Courtland’s history as an engine for new economic growth					
5.1.1	Explore establishing a planning commission	low	n/a	Courtland	Establish commission	1-3 yrs.
5.1.2	Consider developing subdivision regulations	low	Courtland	Courtland	Adoption	1-3 yrs.
5.1.3	Consider adopting design guidelines	low	n/a	Courtland	Adoption	1-3 yrs.

# CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

## BACKGROUND

Since the early 1970s Courtland's economy had depended primarily on one major industry — International Paper (IP) — to support its economy. Courtland, Lawrence County, and the north central region of Alabama has been tremendously affected by the closing of this industry because it was one of the biggest employers in the region. Most businesses and tree farms in the region indirectly served the IP mill. When the IP mill went away, so did those businesses.

## FRAMEWORK

Courtland needs to create a framework to establish a diverse and sustainable economy for the future. For Courtland, promoting, investing, attracting, and supporting small businesses can help slowly bring back the economy by creating new jobs and revenue. If Courtland's future economy is based on a diverse set of businesses, the town will be able to withstand economic shocks and dips, thereby sustaining its community residents, businesses, and industries.



Looking south down Alabama Street in downtown. The Courtland police station is to the right, and across the railroad tracks is the historic train depot building on the left.

**ECONOMIC RESILIENCY:** (in the context of economic development) The ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether.

Shocks/disruptions to an economic base of an area are manifested in three ways:

- Downturns in the economy that impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region's economic activity
- Other external shocks (man-made/natural disasters, exit of a major employer, impacts of climate change)

**DISASTER RESILIENCY:** The ability of individuals, communities, organizations, and states to adapt to and recover from hazards, shocks, or stresses without compromising long-term prospects for development.

- **REFLECTIVE**  
DECISIONS INFORMED BY OUR PAST EXPERIENCES
- **RESOURCEFUL**  
EFFICIENT USE OF OUR LIMITED RESOURCES AND ATTRACTED NEW RESOURCES
- **ROBUST**  
PROJECTS NEED TO BE STRONG, BUT ALSO COULD FAIL SAFELY
- **REDUNDANT**  
RETAIN BACKUP OR SPARE CAPACITY WHEN NEEDED
- **FLEXIBLE**  
INCLUDE ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO ACHIEVE THE SAME OUTCOME
- **INCLUSIVE**  
INVOLVE THOSE WHO BEAR RISK AND RESPONSIBILITY
- **INTEGRATED**  
COORDINATED ACROSS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS TO ACHIEVE COMMON PURPOSES

This sustainability checklist will guide town leaders and the community when discussing and making decisions regarding the economic future of Courtland.

**TOP** College Street in downtown Courtland. A facade in need of repair next door to the Courtland Heritage Museum.

**BOTTOM** The College Street block ends with the Norfolk Southern rail line.



## COMMUNITY GROWTH & POPULATION

Historically the population of Courtland has fluctuated since 1880, with the population being nearly identical now as it was then. The largest shift occurred in the 1980's, when the population increased from 456 people to a peak of 803 people in 1990. The population has been declining since then, and this continual decline is likely to continue. Courtland's population decline is reflective of Lawrence County as a whole — the county has been in a slight decline from 2000 to 2013. In contrast, Cullman and Morgan counties and the state of Alabama have seen slight increases in population. However the population growth in the region as a whole has been relatively stagnant.

## ECONOMIC BASE AND EMPLOYMENT

The following demographic data helps to reveal the economic conditions of the town and local residents, and inform our understanding of the town and local economy. Shown below is the economic data relating to education, housing, employment, income, occupation, and industry. By examining these indicators, a baseline can be established, and then an economic growth plan suitable to Courtland can be created.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The level of education for 18 — 24 year-olds compares poorly to Lawrence County and the state; 32% have no high school diploma (higher than county and state) and 51% only have a high school diploma (high than county and state). This translates to 16% of this age group having some college or degree, compared to approximately 50% in Lawrence County and the state.

The level of education for 25 years+ fares much better. At all levels Courtland performs approximately the same as Lawrence County and the state, with the exceptions of the state having a much lower % of high school graduates, and a much higher % of bachelor's degrees or higher.

## HOUSING OCCUPANCY & AGE

In terms of occupied housing units in Courtland, 76.5% of homes are occupied, which is less than Lawrence County and the state. Vacant housing units are higher than the county and state as well, at 23.5%. Vacancy does not necessary mean the housing is in poor or unusable condition, but it does mean there are housing opportunities for growth and improvements in the community. Having these available properties makes Courtland more marketable for new businesses to move in and to create jobs.

The housing stock in Courtland is aging, with over 50% of the housing stock being built prior to 1960. Not many new homes have been built in the last few years — only 20 houses have been constructed since 2000. Older homes have a higher chance of having major problems, and some of these homes are located in Courtland's historic district. Recently, there has been some activity related to the buying and remodeling of homes in the historic district.

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The median and mean household incomes for Courtland is substantially lower than Lawrence County and the state. Households making more than \$75K in Courtland is approximately 12%, compared to approximately 25% for Lawrence County and the state.

## ADDITIONAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Additional household income for Courtland residents include earnings, retirement, social security, public assistance, and food stamps. In terms of additional household income, Courtland residents compare favorably with Lawrence County and the state when it comes to overall earnings, social security, retirement, and supplemental security income. However, Courtland households receiving public assistance and food stamps/SNAP benefits are substantially higher than the county and state.

## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

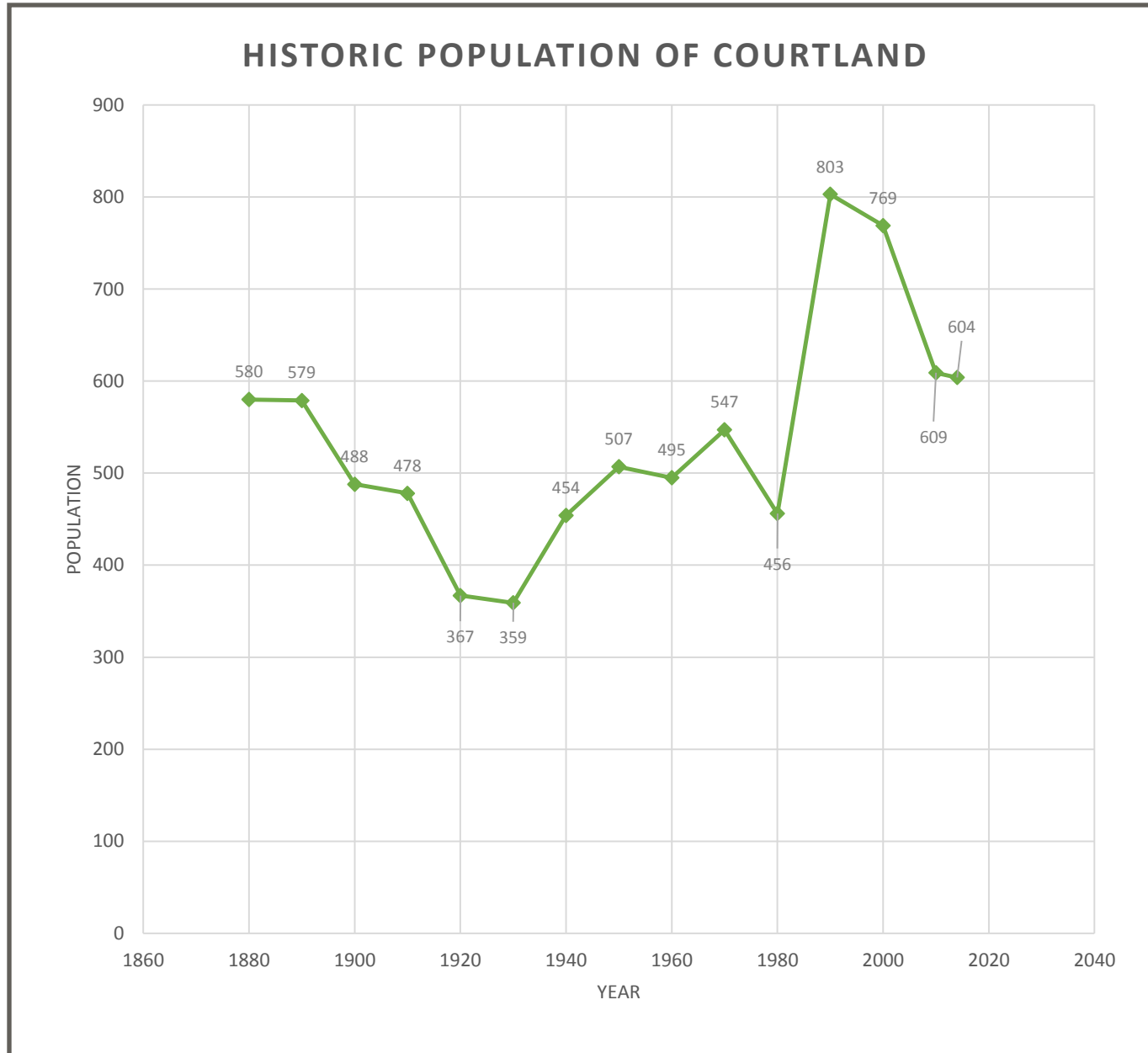
46% of workers in Courtland are employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining, construction, and manufacturing— compared to 38% in Lawrence County, and 22% in the state. Courtland has a lower percentage of white collar jobs — 25%, compared to 32% in Lawrence County and 43% in the state.

## RETAIL MARKET AND TRADE AREA

The following table reveals the retail leakage and surplus in the Courtland market along with the spending habits of residents in 2015. Green figures show retail leakages — residents spending money outside of Courtland, and figures in red are surplus — non-residents spending money in Courtland. Future potential businesses and industries can analyze this data to determine whether there is a market for their product or service in Courtland. This data encompasses a 5-mile radius of downtown Courtland, and also includes North Courtland. According to the table, opportunity to retain local dollars exist in every area, other than gasoline stations.

The following demographic and economic information was referenced from the United States Census Bureau's website, utilizing the data from the 2011–2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates: <https://factfinder.census.gov>

FIGURE 12





FIGURES 13,14,15

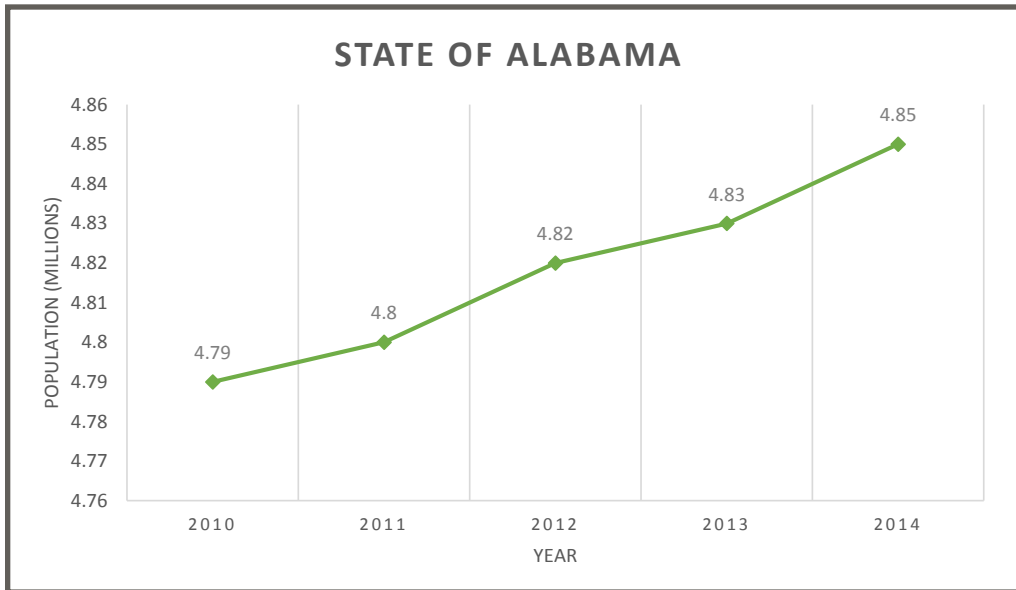
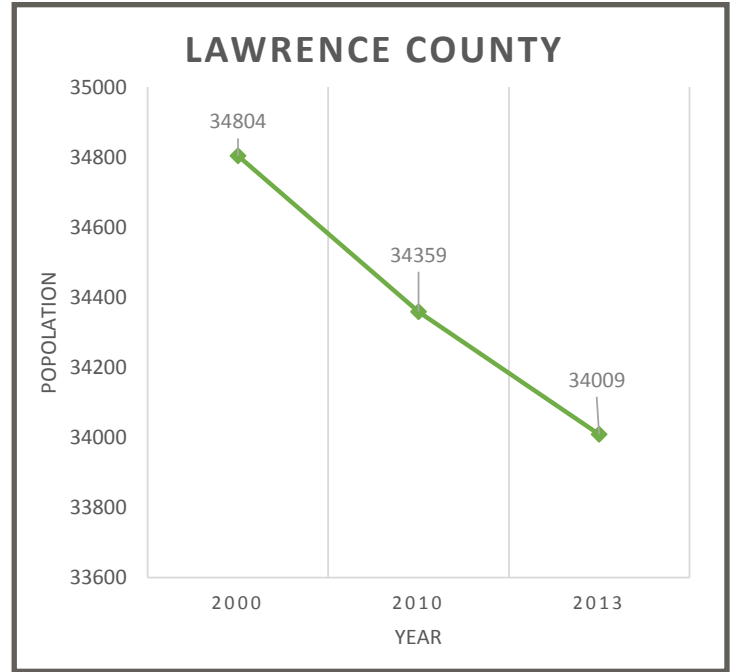
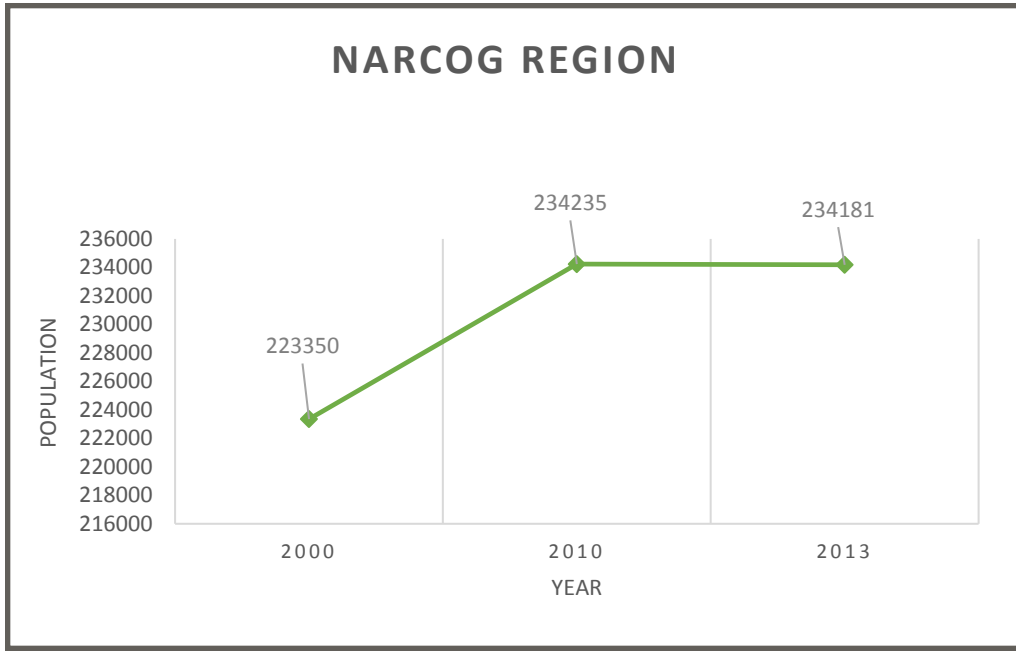


FIGURE 16&17

<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
<b>Level of Education: 18 - 24 years</b>	<b>Courtland</b>	<b>Lawrence County</b>	<b>Alabama</b>
Less than high school	<b>32%</b>	16%	16%
High school	<b>51%</b>	38%	30%
Some college or associate's degree	<b>16%</b>	39%	46%
Bachelor's degree or higher	<b>0%</b>	7%	7%
<b>Level of Education: 25 years+</b>	<b>Courtland</b>	<b>Lawrence County</b>	<b>Alabama</b>
Less than high school	<b>20%</b>	21%	16%
High school	<b>43%</b>	41%	31%
Some college or associate's degree	<b>30%</b>	27%	30%
Bachelor's degree or higher	<b>7%</b>	11%	24%

<b>Housing Occupancy and Age</b>						
<b>Households</b>	<b>Courtland</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Lawrence County</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Alabama</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>327</b>		<b>15,190</b>		<b>2,199,329</b>	
<b>Occupied Units</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>76.5%</b>	<b>13,537</b>	<b>89.1%</b>	<b>1,848,325</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>Vacant Units</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>23.5%</b>	<b>1,653</b>	<b>10.9%</b>	<b>351,004</b>	<b>16%</b>
Built 2014 or later	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	80	0.5%	2,297	0.1%
Built 2010 to 2013	<b>2</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	158	1%	46,152	2.1%
Built 2000 to 2009	<b>18</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	1,967	12.9%	369,246	16.8%
Built 1990 to 1999	<b>30</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	3,146	20.7%	400,549	18.2%
Built 1980 to 1989	<b>61</b>	<b>18.7%</b>	2,643	17.4%	327,368	14.9%
Built 1970 to 1979	<b>31</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	2,555	16.8%	378,802	17.2%
Built 1960 to 1969	<b>34</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	1,708	11.2%	245,869	11.2%
Built 1950 to 1959	<b>36</b>	<b>11%</b>	1,465	9.6%	198,579	9%
Built 1940 to 1949	<b>52</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	766	5%	97,716	4.4%
Built 1939 or earlier	<b>63</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	702	4.6%	123,751	5.6%

FIGURE 18&19

Household Income			
Households	Courtland	Lawrence County	Alabama
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>13,537</b>	<b>1,848,325</b>
<b>Median Income</b>	<b>33,125</b>	<b>40,003</b>	<b>43,623</b>
<b>Mean Income</b>	<b>40,502</b>	<b>52,205</b>	<b>60,511</b>
Less than \$10,000	14.8%	8.7%	9.9%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	9.6%	8.3%	7%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	11.6%	13.8%	12.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	16.4%	14.3%	11.5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11.6%	15%	14.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	24.4%	16.2%	17.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	6%	11.9%	10.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	5.6%	9.1%	10.4%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	0%	2.2%	3.4%
\$200,000+	0%	.7%	2.7%

Additional Household Income						
Additional Income by Household	Courtland	% of Total	Lawrence County	% of Total	Alabama	% of Total
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>250</b>		<b>13,537</b>		<b>1,848,325</b>	
<b>Median Income</b>	<b>33,125</b>		<b>40,003</b>		<b>43,623</b>	
<b>Mean Income</b>	<b>40,502</b>		<b>52,205</b>		<b>60,511</b>	
<b>With Earnings</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>66.8%</b>	9,420	69.6%	1,343,438	72.7%
<b>Mean Earnings</b>	<b>\$40,245</b>		\$55,979		\$63,059	
<b>With Social Security</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>32.4%</b>	4,611	34.1%	636,523	34.4%
<b>Mean Social Security</b>	<b>\$16,169</b>		\$17,581		\$17,058	
<b>With Retirement Income</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	3,395	25.1%	387,959	21.0%
<b>Mean Retirement Income</b>	<b>\$15,043</b>		\$16,030		\$22,126	
<b>With Supplemental Security Income</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	1,058	7.8%	123,416	6.7%
<b>Mean Supplemental Security Income</b>	<b>\$9,950</b>		\$9,083		\$8,870	
<b>With Cash Public Assistance Income</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	164	1.2%	33,642	1.8%
<b>Mean Cash Public Assistance Income</b>	<b>\$3,886</b>		\$3,601		\$2,672	
<b>With Food Stamp/SNAP Benefits</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>30.0%</b>	2,609	19.3%	297,919	16.1%

FIGURE 20&21

Employment Status						
Population: Age Ranges	Courtland	Unemployment Rate	Lawrence County	Unemployment Rate	Alabama	Unemployment Rate
16 to 19	13	0%	1,665	37.2%	259,450	29%
20 to 24	25	14.3%	2,097	22.7%	348,044	17.3%
25 to 29	37	0%	1,954	9.5%	314,792	11.7%
30 to 34	41	16.7%	1,873	9.5%	306,800	9.8%
35 to 44	60	9.6%	4,261	5.7%	609,415	7.3%
45 to 54	70	3.7%	5,189	7.5%	665,372	6.3%
55 to 59	43	6.7%	2,719	5.9%	326,349	5.1%
60 to 64	38	0%	1,990	2.5%	297,297	5%
65 to 74	64	0%	3,293	5.7%	416,983	4.8%
75 years and older	30	0%	2,013	0%	302,343	4.1%
<b>Total Population: 16 years and older</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>27,054</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>3,846,845</b>	<b>9.3%</b>

Employment by Industry						
Industries	Courtland	% of Total	Lawrence County	% of Total	Alabama	% of Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, mining	11	5.3%	478	3.8%	34,153	1.7%
Construction	22	10.5%	1,041	8.2%	130,220	6.4%
Manufacturing	63	30.1%	3,338	26.3%	281,016	13.9%
Wholesale trade	2	1%	207	1.6%	50,843	2.5%
Retail trade	34	16.3%	1,256	9.9%	243,586	12.0%
Transportation and warehousing, utilities	6	2.9%	753	5.9%	105,000	5.2%
Information	7	3.3%	116	0.9%	34,642	1.7%
Finance and insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	0	0%	345	2.7%	112,398	5.6%
Professional, scientific, and management, administrative, waste management services	3	1.4%	849	6.7%	187,246	9.3%
Educational service, health care, social assistance	39	18.7%	2,257	17.8%	455,178	22.5%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, accomodation, food services	11	5.3%	733	5.8%	167,019	8.3%
Public administration	11	5.3%	614	4.8%	114,994	5.7%
Other services, except public administration	0	0%	717	5.6%	106,030	5.2%
<b>Total Employed</b>	<b>209</b>		<b>12,704</b>		<b>2,022,325</b>	

FIGURE 22

<b>Summary Demographics</b>						
2015 Population						2,426
2015 Households						1,053
2015 Median Disposable Income						\$24,700
2015 Per Capita Income						\$17,981
<b>Industry Summary</b>	<b>NAICS</b>	<b>Demand (Retail Potential)</b>	<b>Supply (Retail Sales)</b>	<b>Retail Gap</b>	<b>Leakage/Surplus Factor</b>	<b>Number of Businesses</b>
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	44-45,722	\$26,317,330	\$22,915,812	\$3,401,518	6.9	11
Total Retail Trade	44-45	\$24,157,709	\$22,484,040	\$1,673,669	3.6	10
Total Food & Drink	722	\$2,159,622	\$431,773	\$1,727,849	66.7	2
<b>Industry Group</b>	<b>NAICS</b>	<b>Demand (Retail Potential)</b>	<b>Supply (Retail Sales)</b>	<b>Retail Gap</b>	<b>Leakage/Surplus Factor</b>	<b>Number of Businesses</b>
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	\$6,308,535	\$391,875	\$5,916,660	88.3	1
Automobile Dealers	4411	\$4,741,218	\$0	\$4,741,218	100.0	0
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	4412	\$1,221,759	\$0	\$1,221,759	100.0	0
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$345,558	\$309,739	\$35,819	5.5	1
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$599,919	\$0	\$599,919	100.0	0
Furniture Stores	4421	\$376,045	\$0	\$376,045	100.0	0
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$223,874	\$0	\$223,874	100.0	0
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$936,735	\$0	\$936,735	100.0	0
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$1,068,783	\$363,243	\$705,540	49.3	2
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$926,612	\$339,795	\$586,817	46.3	2
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$142,171	\$0	\$142,171	100.0	0
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$3,512,653	\$1,090,753	\$2,421,900	52.6	1
Grocery Stores	4451	\$3,127,998	\$1,090,753	\$2,037,245	48.3	1
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$200,364	\$0	\$200,364	100.0	0
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$184,291	\$0	\$184,291	100.0	0
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$1,461,671	\$0	\$1,461,671	100.0	0
Gasoline Stations	447,4471	\$2,155,598	\$19,477,047	-\$17,321,449	-80.1	3
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$633,643	\$373,251	\$260,392	25.9	1
Clothing Stores	4481	\$419,490	\$373,251	\$46,239	5.8	1
Shoe Stores	4482	\$82,266	\$0	\$82,266	100.0	0
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$131,888	\$0	\$131,888	100.0	0
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$588,534	\$202,438	\$386,096	48.8	1
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	4511	\$447,162	\$202,438	\$244,724	37.7	1
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$141,372	\$0	\$141,372	100.0	0
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$5,424,255	\$585,432	\$4,838,823	80.5	1
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$3,917,813	\$0	\$3,917,813	100.0	0
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$1,506,441	\$585,432	\$921,009	44.0	1
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$952,011	\$0	\$952,011	100.0	0
Florists	4531	\$35,150	\$0	\$35,150	100.0	0
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$251,659	\$0	\$251,659	100.0	0
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$98,924	\$0	\$98,924	100.0	0
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$566,277	\$0	\$566,277	100.0	0
Nonstore Retailers	454	\$515,374	\$0	\$515,374	100.0	0
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	4541	\$282,509	\$0	\$282,509	100.0	0
Vending Machine Operators	4542	\$72,306	\$0	\$72,306	100.0	0
Direct Selling Establishments	4543	\$160,558	\$0	\$160,558	100.0	0
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$2,159,622	\$431,773	\$1,727,849	66.7	2
Full-Service Restaurants	7221	\$1,061,011	\$428,032	\$632,979	42.5	1
Limited-Service Eating Places	7222	\$1,036,610	\$0	\$1,036,610	100.0	0
Special Food Services	7223	\$27,878	\$0	\$27,878	100.0	0
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$34,123	\$0	\$34,123	100.0	0

Source:  
[http://www.esri.com/data/esri\\_data/explore-data](http://www.esri.com/data/esri_data/explore-data)

## TOWN FINANCES

Courtland's budget has been in an acceptable state over the past 5 years, staying in the black, with the exception of 2011. The town has a reserve of just over \$700,000, currently invested in certificate of deposits (CDs). Courtland's biggest revenue source was the contribution from International Paper — in 2014, the IP Bond Contribution was \$775,000. The town expected the revenue from IP to continue until 2020, gradually decreasing over time. However, the IP revenue unexpectedly ended in December 2016, and the loss of this revenue in 2017 will be a major financial hit for Courtland. The Electric Department is currently in a stable position — it has maintained a positive budget over the past 4 years and increased revenue. The Electric Department's fund balance is \$1,326,589 as of 2015.

Valley Landing Golf Course's finances are not in the same condition as the town — outside of 2011, the golf course's debt has continued to grow. Each year the golf course goes over budget anywhere between \$100,000 and \$200,000. The latest financial statement shows the golf course is approaching \$1.8 million in debt.

### ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

- Town is debt free, except for golf course.
- Former IP office sold for approximately \$50,000
- The town owns a little over 100 acres of land at the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark

Valley Landing Golf Course that the town owns. View of the clubhouse.



FIGURE 23

Courtland, Alabama: Town Finances						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
<b>Reveune</b>	\$ 1,959,755	\$ 1,107,907	\$ 1,182,090	\$ 1,131,820	\$ 1,104,290	
<b>Expenses</b>	\$ 1,119,578	\$ 1,698,829	\$ 1,013,814	\$ 987,737	\$ 877,685	
<b>Total</b>	\$ 840,177	\$ (590,922)	\$ 168,276	\$ 144,083	\$ 226,605	\$ -
<b>Fund Balance</b>	\$ 4,054,383	\$ 3,836,780	\$ 3,982,271	\$ 4,103,640	\$ 4,309,444	

Courtland, Alabama: Electric Department Finances						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Reveune</b>		\$ 2,332,368	\$ 2,214,129	\$ 2,315,042	\$ 2,248,492	\$ 2,131,271
<b>Expenses</b>		\$ 2,190,635	\$ 2,177,807	\$ 2,202,565	\$ 2,192,065	\$ 2,123,862
<b>Total</b>		\$ 141,733	\$ 36,322	\$ 112,477	\$ 56,427	\$ 7,409
<b>Fund Balance</b>		\$ 1,285,149	\$ 132,471	\$ 1,432,484	\$ 1,486,013	\$ 1,326,589

Courtland, Alabama: Valley Landing Golf Course Finances						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
<b>Reveune</b>	\$ 481,809	\$ 952,942	\$ 428,668	\$ 456,931	\$ 412,728	
<b>Expenses</b>	\$ 583,890	\$ 554,065	\$ 676,291	\$ 562,348	\$ 546,023	
<b>Total</b>	\$ (102,081)	\$ 398,877	\$ (247,623)	\$ (105,417)	\$ (133,295)	\$ -
<b>Fund Balance</b>	\$ (1,641,963)	\$ (1,243,086)	\$ (1,490,709)	\$ (1,658,664)	\$ (1,791,959)	

\*2015 & 2016 numbers not available at the time of this plan.

Wear, Howell, Strickland, Quinn & Law, LLC (Comp.). (2016, January 28). Financial Statements With Other Supplementary Information: Town of Courtland Electric Department. Courtland, Alabama. [Financial statement and commentary for fiscal year ended June 30, 2015.]. Alabama, Decatur.

# POTENTIAL ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Windshield surveys of buildings, property, natural features, and structures of Courtland were completed by NARCOG staff from 2014 to 2016, beginning with the Town Center Assessment in 2014. Below are a few selected economic resources that were identified along with a brief description.

## HIGHWAY 20/72 CORRIDOR

This 4-lane highway runs east–west from Decatur to the Shoals area. Downtown Courtland is located approximately 1 mile south of the corridor. The corridor sees heavy traffic from transport trucking and automobiles traveling across the Tennessee Valley. Several commercial development opportunities exist along the corridor, with the first priority being the intersection of AL–33. This area could be developed into retail or restaurant space that could add to the town’s tax revenue base.

## NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAILROAD

This rail line, part of the Norfolk Southern rail system, runs east/wide through Lawrence County, and crosses through Courtland on the south side of downtown. A rail spur branches off east of downtown and connects to the former IP site. This existing rail infrastructure is an opportunity for new industrial development on the site as it already connected to the rail line.

Historic buildings line the square in downtown Courtland. The square has the potential to host town gatherings, weddings, and other events.







Big Nance Creek meanders west of downtown and flows all the way to the Tennessee River to the north.



Lockheed Martin's Courtland office complex, located in the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark. Lockheed employs 58 employees in this location of their operations.

## DOWNTOWN & HISTORIC DISTRICT

Courtland is fortunate to have a picturesque downtown — anchored by a square that exhibits the physical design form of a traditional small town. Although a majority of the buildings are vacant, they are in above average condition for their age and previous uses. Due to the high degree of vacancy, downtown Courtland seems to be suspended in time. Downtown has inherent potential to be an economic asset and resource for Courtland. Downtown has 42,000 square feet of vacant or under used commercial property. Three of these properties are owned by the Courtland. One of the town's oldest businesses — HA Phippen Co., the hardware store — moved to nearby Town Creek due to a decline in business related to IP closing. Pop-up shops and downtown festivals can show the potential that downtown has to grow. Downtown is in need of more retail and potential loft housing, which is nonexistent currently.

## LAWRENCE COUNTY INDUSTRIAL AIRPARK

Originally the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark was the Courtland Airbase during World War II — used for training pilots. During the war, the airbase was an economic boom for Courtland. After being shut down at the end of war, it became the Courtland Airport. Later the airport was re-imagined as an industrial park, and a masterplan was completed in 1986. Currently, Lockheed Martin and other similar light industrial businesses are located at the airpark. While the industrial park has not ever really reached its full potential, it still has the opportunity to be an economic resource for Courtland again. The airpark has a total of 2,247 acres and has close access to a four-lane highway, Highway 20/72. The site is also situated on the Norfolk Southern rail line, has access through docks to the Tennessee River, and is within 35 miles of the Huntsville airport.



### BIG NANCE CREEK

Big Nance Creek is adjacent to Joe Wheeler Dam on the Tennessee River, and begins flowing southward towards Courtland. Access to the river is only about a quarter of a mile from downtown, and could be easily accessible through a 3-acre parcel of land the city owns that borders the creek. This land could become a park, trailhead, blueway/greenway access, and public space amenity for the town.

### TENNESSEE RIVER

The Tennessee River is located north of Courtland and just outside of the town limits. It does have the potential to be an economic resource for the community as it forms the northern boundary of Lawrence County. Cities on the Tennessee River include: Knoxville, Chattanooga, Guntersville, Huntsville, Decatur, Florence, and many more. The 652-mile river is a major tributary to the Ohio River and connection to the Tombigbee Waterway, connecting to the port of Mobile. The former IP has an inland port located on the river near Courtland. Also of note, Joe Wheeler State Park and Wheeler Dam is located approximately 15 miles northwest of Courtland and the former plant site, off County Road 101.

**Top left** Another view of the Courtland town clocks.

**Bottom left** A gazebo sits on the corner of the town square.

**Bottom** Courtland High School, empty since 2004.



### COURTLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Courtland High School was closed in 2004 and recently purchased by a private individual at auction. The building has operated seasonally as a haunted house. If deemed structurally sound, the old building has the potential to be converted into new business — such as an assisted living facility or a call center. The 16-acre site is located near the core of downtown and optimal for new development. The building is in severe disrepair but the owner is willing to work with the town to explore ways to maximize the potential of the old high school property and structures.

### INTERNATIONAL PAPER CORPORATE OFFICE

This now vacant, 9,900 square foot, former corporate office building of International Paper is located downtown near Courtland Baptist Church, and offers a potential economic resource for the community. As of January 2017, the property has been sold to a private investor from Cincinnati. Future plans for the building have yet to be determined, but the new owners are soliciting ideas such as a salon, spa, or toy museum.

Unique details found in Courtland — an old warehouse structure with “Courtland” still visible, colonial clocks located throughout downtown, the weathervane on top of the gazebo downtown, and a building facade downtown.



### CAMERA READY COMMUNITIES

Another potential opportunity for market growth in Courtland is inclusion as one of NARCOG’s Camera Ready Communities. NARCOG’s Camera Ready Communities program is a new initiative and is envisioned to help communities like Courtland attract film and TV business to their community. Courtland’s unique town appearance, layout, and conditions make it a prime location for filming. The historic downtown, as well as the historic homes scattered through town lend itself to this “suspended in time” atmosphere that could be marketing to film makers and others in the entertainment industry.

### RE-BRANDING AND MARKETING

One of ways to attract people and businesses to Courtland is to create advertisements and marketing material for the town. Advertising events and festivals in Courtland can attract people that may not simply know about the town or activities that are happening. Creating an official town website and Facebook page is integral town promotion. Developing marketing materials and advertisements can be inexpensive in the grand scheme of things, ranging from a couple hundred to a thousand dollars. See below right, examples of new conceptual logos for Courtland.

### TOWN LOGO RE-IMAGINED

CURRENT TOWN LOGO



## CURRENT PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Between 2014 and 2016 NARCOG staff performed multiple windshield surveys of Courtland and collected data. This ongoing assessment covered physical conditions of the town's assets, as well as provided detailed information on the services available to residents. The following areas were investigated: housing; land use; transportation; water, sewer, and electric services; community facilities; flood and drainage facilities; economic conditions; and demographic information.

### HOUSING

According to the windshield survey conducted in the summer of 2015, 29 housing units in Courtland are dilapidated and 76 housing units are deteriorating, which can be an indication of a housing issue. Courtland also exhibits a large concentration of beautiful, grand historic homes along, with some historic churches in the district surrounding downtown. The Historic District, and the contributing structures within, represents an opportunity for Courtland. Overall, the community exhibits a mixture of housing types (single family, multi-family, duplexes, and manufactured housing) distributed throughout the community with some intrusion into the Historic District. Also of note, in the extreme southeastern corner of Courtland off County Road 33, a newer subdivision (circa 1970s–80s) is located, which was most likely developed during the population boom of the 1980s.

According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 2013 Census, Courtland has 330 total housing units within its corporate limits. Of the total housing units, 239 (77%) are occupied units and 11 (23%) are vacant units. In terms of ownership, Courtland has 188 (79%) owner-occupied housing units and 51 (21%) renter-occupied housing units out of the 239 total occupied units. The majority of the housing units in Courtland are single-family detached structures and of these, 51 (16.5%) are mobile home units. The town has 12 multi-family units, mostly Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Farmers Home Administration (FMHA) subsidized units. Additionally, there is one public housing complex, Courtland Park, located at 2961 Jefferson Street and containing 24 units at 100% occupancy as of 2015.



**Top** Historic home near downtown Courtland, currently undergoing restoration.

**Middle** Home in the newest subdivision in Courtland — Terry Heights.

**Bottom** Courtland Park apartments on Jefferson Street.



**Top** Edge of downtown flanked by the Norfolk Southern rail line.

**Middle** Courtland's iconic downtown square containing a remnant from the past. This stone step was used as a step-down for riders on horses.

**Bottom** The Sherrod building, directly across from the square, has been converted into an event space.

## LAND USE

In terms of the existing general land uses, commercial property is located throughout the town with the highest concentration in downtown. Primarily on the west and east sides of town a concentration of large low-density, agriculture-related parcels exist. The few industrial properties are primarily located in western Courtland in and around the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark. Lockheed Martin is the largest company in this industrial park. Adjacent to and around downtown Courtland the majority of land use is residential. Spatially, Courtland is very linear (east-west) and follows the Norfolk Southern Railroad and Jefferson Street (old Highway 20), but the original town is very compact and centered on the town square.

## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The availability of all modes of transportation is important to the economic and physical well-being of a town and its residents, to existing businesses, and any potential future businesses and industries. A transportation system needs to continually adapt to the current and future needs of a community. Having a multi-modal transportation system is beneficial because it provides a variety of transportation choices and creates a desired community with a quality of life worth investing in.

Courtland's street system consists of approximately five miles of locally maintained streets. Approximately 80% of all local streets are paved. There is approximately one mile of unpaved streets (Masonic Lane and Cemetery Road) in the town's residential areas. Jesse Jackson Parkway (Lawrence County Road 150) is the major north-south thoroughfare in Courtland connecting with Alabama Highway 20/Alternate U.S. Highway 72. This highway sees just under 11,000 cars travel on the road daily. Poor civil engineering and road construction has significantly contributed to the substandard road conditions in the town. Several local roads do not conform to minimum standard for local streets as determined by the Lawrence County Road and Bridge Department and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Common street problems include substandard road and pavement width, unpaved roads, potholes, offset alignments, inconsistent street signs, lack of lights, poor drainage, and inadequate sidewalks. Courtland's street department has one full-time employee and one contracted employee that works on an as-needed basis.

FIGURE 24

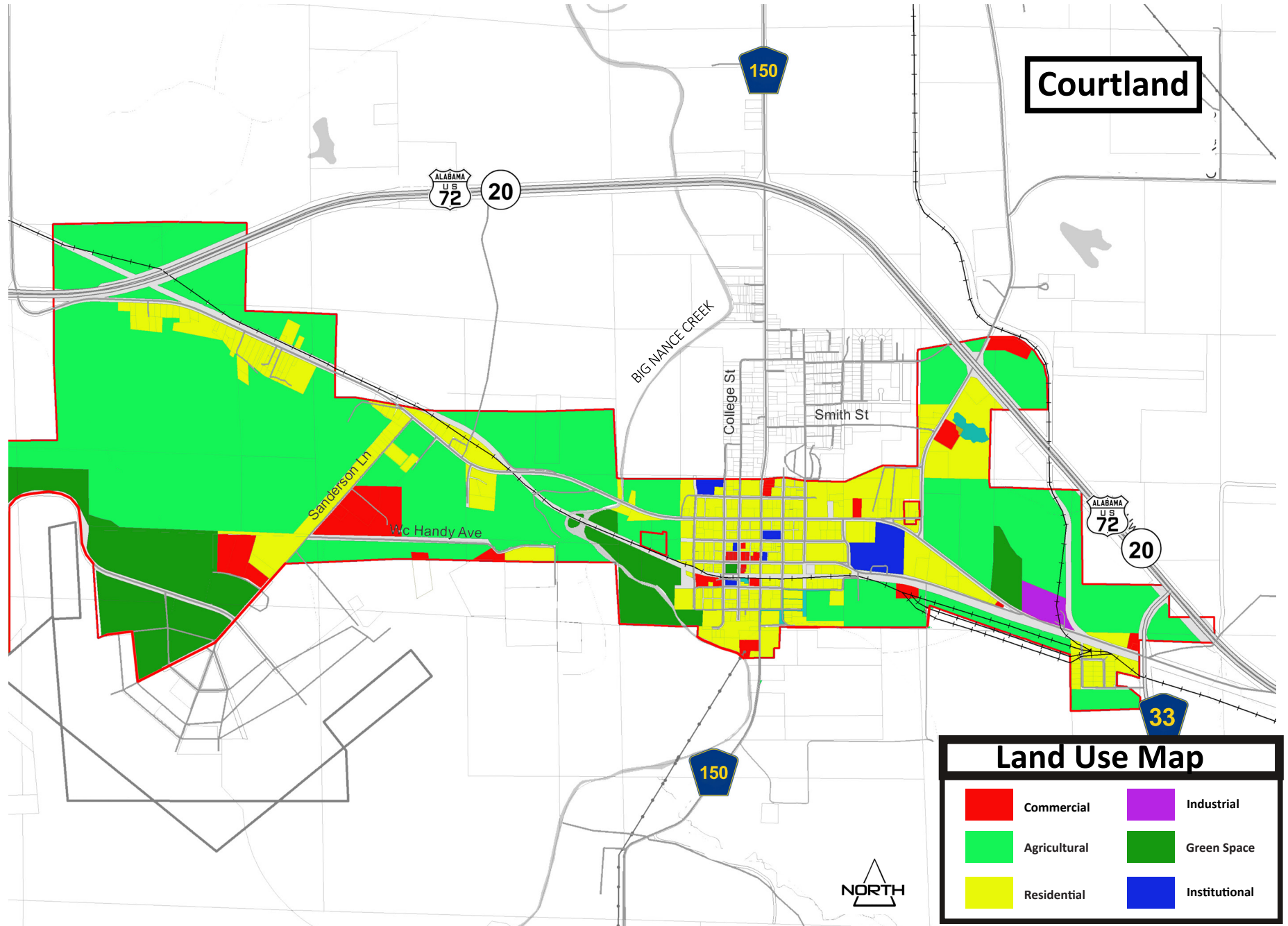
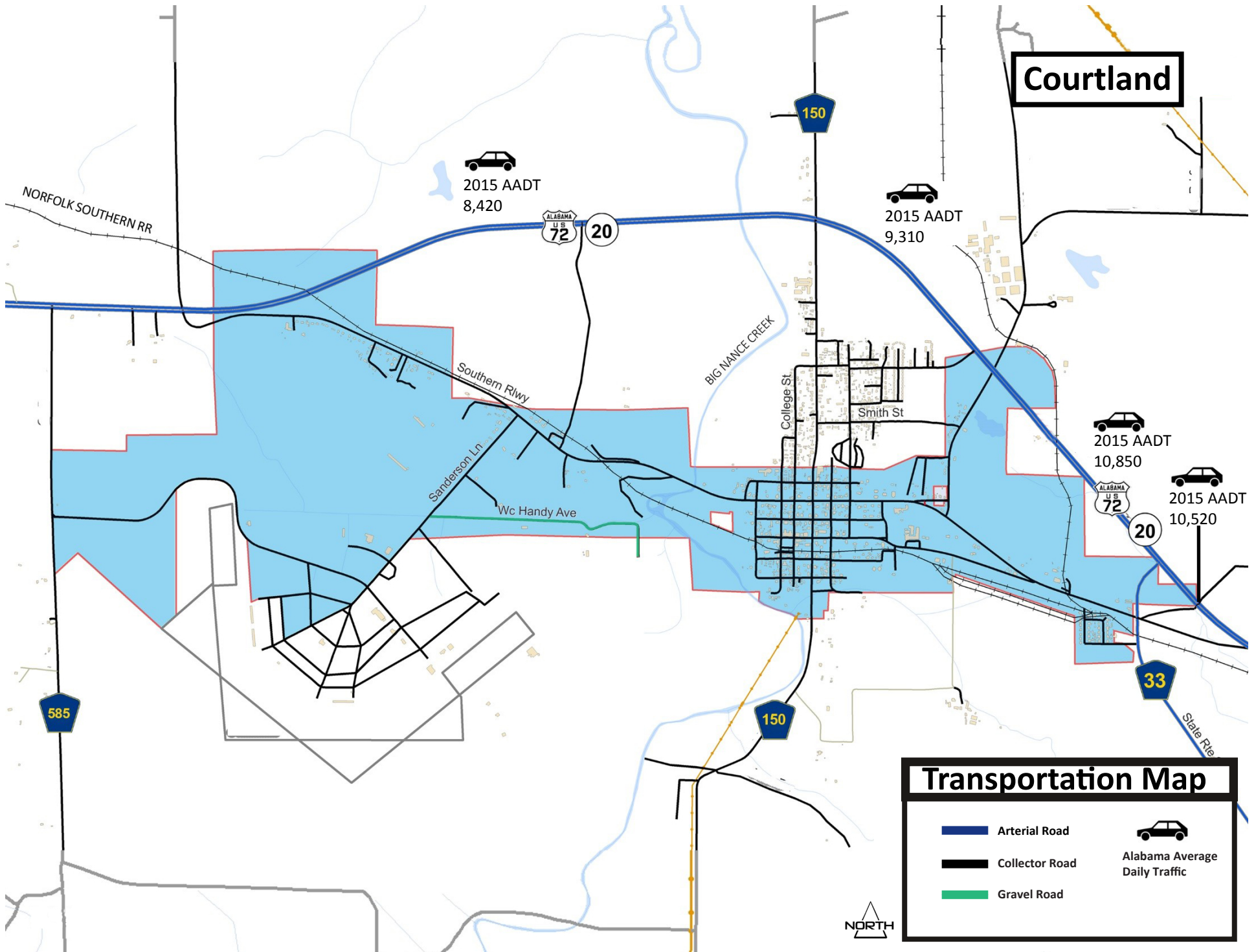


FIGURE 25





In regards to important transportation needs, Courtland has identified three bridges to be replaced with Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (ATRIP) money utilizing Rural Assistance Match Program (RAMP) funds for the local match. According to local sources, additional funding is needed to replace the bridge on County Road 150, south of old Highway 20. This bridge was relocated and installed in this location with issues cited by the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC). All of these bridges present significant obstacles and safety concerns relative to fire protection services due to their inability to accommodate fire trucks (three-ton weight limit and safety restrictions.) Recently \$3,500 was approved to pave Dillard Street and one hazardous railroad crossing was addressed. Additionally, three at-grade railroad crossings have been closed on Clinton Street, College Street and Monroe Street to address continuing safety concerns. Sidewalks located throughout the historic district are aging and fragmented. It is recommended that street signs should be replaced in the Historic District. The recent closing of the College Street at-grade crossing has created the need to widen the alley at the south side of the square in order to maintain traffic flow around the square.

### WATER & SEWER SERVICES

The West Morgan–East Lawrence Water and Sewer Authority provides water service for the Town of Courtland. In 2011, the authority purchased Courtland Utilities, which had previously provided water service for Courtland and North Courtland. In regards to Courtland, a total storage capacity of 1,500,000 gallons in two tanks is available. A 500,000 gallon elevated tank is located downtown, and a 1,000,000 gallon elevated tank is located at the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark. The tank located at the industrial airpark was constructed as part of \$900,000 in improvements funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and matching local funds. The Courtland distribution system consists of approximately seven miles of 6", 4", and 2" water lines. Relocation of some of the water meters to more accessible locations and additional shut off valves is an immediate need. The potable water system provided to residents of Courtland is distributed through an aging and deteriorating system composed of a mixture of cast iron and PVC water mains ranging in size from 2" to 6". The water distribution system has very few isolation valves and even fewer fire hydrants. Since the West Morgan–East Lawrence Water and Sewer Authority owns and operates the water system, they are responsible for maintaining and improving it unless an agreement is reached with the town for assistance with any potential grants.



**Top & Middle** Two of the closed railroad crossings.

**Bottom** The alley on the southern side of the town square. This street became a necessity when the railroad crossing was closed on College Street.

In addition to water service, West Morgan–East Lawrence Water and Sewer Authority provides sewer service to Courtland. In 2011, the authority purchased Courtland Utilities, which had previously provided sewer service for the Town and North Courtland. The Courtland portion of the sewer system was constructed in 1984 for a total cost of \$1.95 million – funded by a \$600,000 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Grant, a \$750,000 Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) Loan, and \$600,000 from local sources. The Courtland portion of the sewer system has a design capacity of 150,000 gallons per day (GPD), and present levels of treatment run approximately 100,000 GPD. Wastewater treatment is provided by a four cell hydrograph controlled release lagoon system, and the point of discharge is Big Nance Creek. Collection is a complete system of 8” and 10” mains (primarily gravity flow), with town pumping collectors to service any new commercial and/or industrial prospects. The sewer system capacity is currently deemed sufficient to meet the areas’ projected growth demand for the next 20 years, however an expansion of infrastructure is needed for future economic growth along the Highway 20/72 corridor.

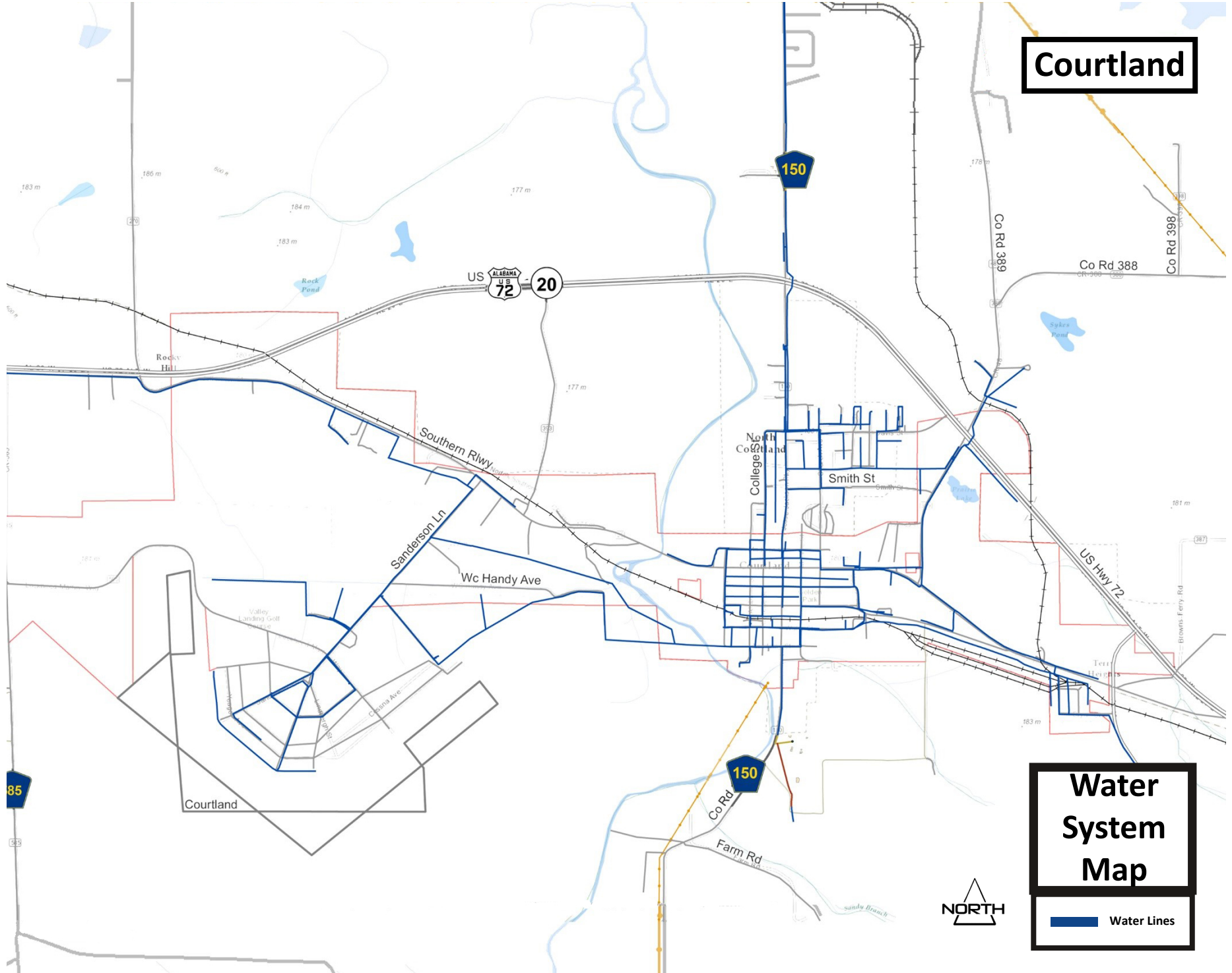
### COURTLAND ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

The Courtland Electric Department was incorporated in 1938 as a department within the town. The department of two employees serves approximately 604 residential customers, 170 small business and 24 large commercial customers. As of June 30, 2014, the Electric Department had invested a total of \$1,095,708 in capital assets, including a distribution plant, general plant, and construction in–progress. This amount represents a net increase of \$5,936 over the prior year. The total assets at the year–end were \$1.92 million and exceeded liabilities by the amount of \$1.49 million. Operating revenues were \$2.25 million, a decrease over fiscal year 2013. Operating expenses decreased by less than 3 percent, and operating income for the year was \$53,529 over fiscal year 2013.

### PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS AND OTHER RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Roy Coffey Park, Courtland’s only park, is located at 3581 Jefferson Street and offers ball fields, a playground, pavilions, and a storm shelter. Even though it is not officially a park, the town square located downtown serves as an important community focal point and gathering place. The square has a gazebo and fountain, along with numerous historical markers, and is a popular place for weddings and other social events. Park facilities are in need of maintenance and repair, due to the age and lack of proper maintenance over the years. Also, the town has a community center located in the old train depot, but they do not own it. The old train depot is in need of repairs, and in a recent community meeting, the town expressed an interest in owning its own community center. The Valley Landing Golf Course is located to the north of the Lawrence County Industrial Airpark and is owned and operated by the town. The town has a parks and recreation department located at 227 Alabama Street and currently has no full time employees, but relies on the two electric department employees to handle mowing and other routine maintenance. Equipment owned by the department includes a 1997 Chevrolet International dump truck in poor condition. The addition of more recreational facilities in Courtland would not only greatly benefit the youth but all other residents in the community, including the elderly, along with the surrounding area by improving the overall quality of life. Better facilities would enable Courtland to expand the amount of festivals and events held every year.

FIGURE 26



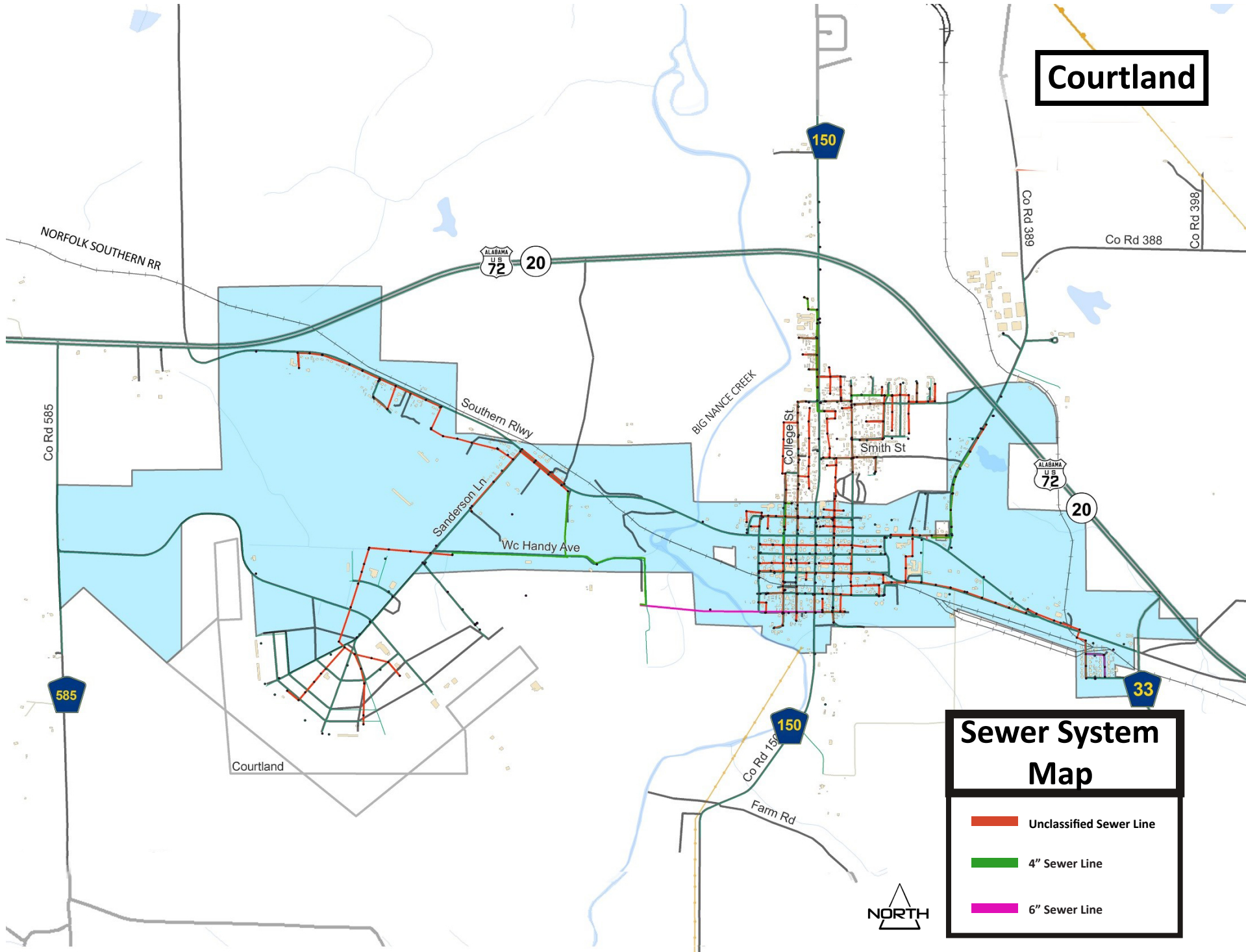
**Courtland**

**Water System Map**

Water Lines



FIGURE 27



**Courtland**

**Sewer System Map**

- Unclassified Sewer Line
- 4" Sewer Line
- 6" Sewer Line

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities in Courtland include the post office, library, police and fire department, community center, heritage museum, and town hall. All are in acceptable and usable conditions, but in need of minor repairs and upgrades. They are regularly used by community members and their guests. The facilities are maintained by the town and are decorated during the holidays. In 2015, NARCOG secured a RC&D grant to replace the windows that were leaking at town hall.

## FLOOD & DRAINAGE FACILITIES

According to flood maps, only a small area of land located in the central portion of Courtland's town limits is subject to periodic flooding from Big Nance Creek, which runs north-south through the center of town. Fortunately, the majority of land located in the floodplain of the creek is undeveloped. However, based on the windshield survey of the town by NARCOG staff and by communicating with town staff, the inadequacy of the streets and related storm water drainage facilities cause moderate problems during heavy storms particularly along Alabama, Water, Academy, Madison, and Dillard Streets. These areas should be redesigned to meet and/or exceed the current standards of the Lawrence County Road and Bridge Department and ALDOT.

**Right** The train depot that serves as the community center.

**Left** Entrance to Roy Coffey Community Park.





From clockwise, top left Courtland Police Station, Public Library, Town Hall, Fire Station, Post Office

FIGURE 28

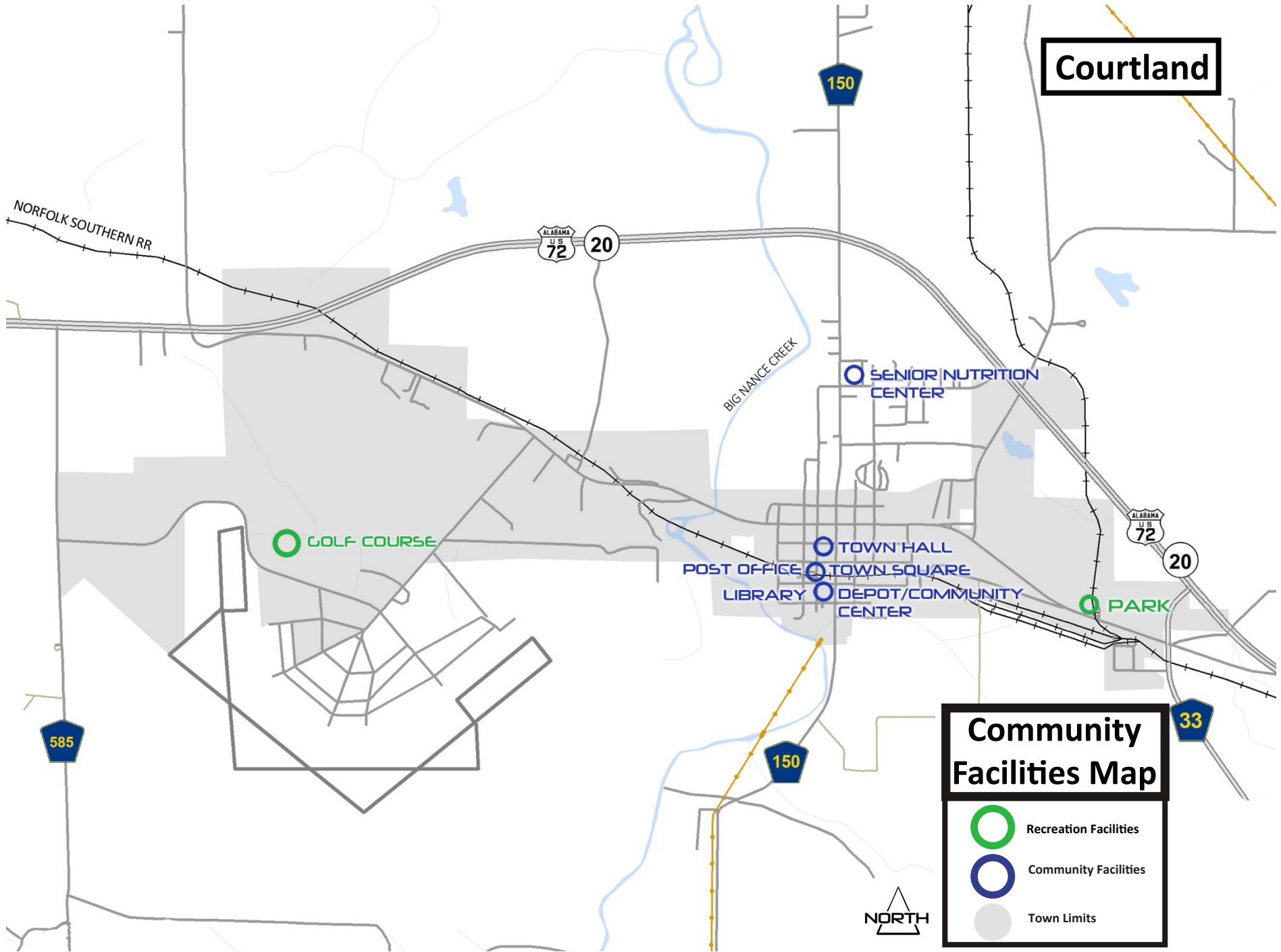
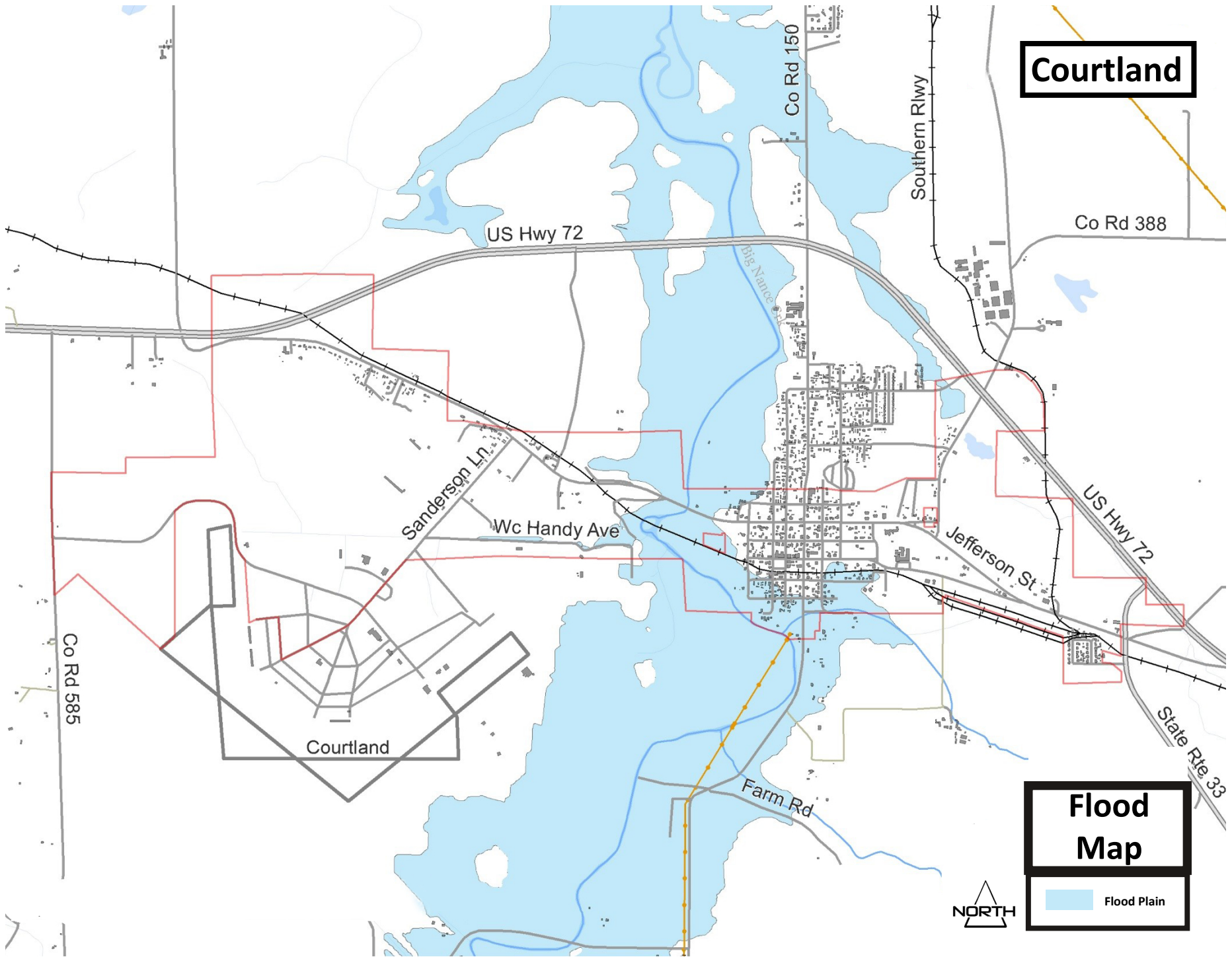


FIGURE 29





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