Comprehensive Plan

Lafayette County, Mississippi

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PREFACE

PURPOSE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A Comprehensive Plan is used by cities and counties to establish a future vision for the community, to anticipate future growth and development, and to strategize decisions and resources in response to this growth.

Communities are constantly evolving; economic conditions and consumer development patterns have the means to transform communities, sometimes so fast the communities cannot influence growth in a positive manner. This document is a proactive measure that clearly defines where and how the Lafayette County community progresses and evolves over time. When major developmental changes are occurring or are proposed, this Comprehensive Plan will guide County officials in a direction they are prepared and confident to move towards. This plan also serves as a plan for updates, improvements, and expansions to community facilities.

COMPONENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The State of Mississippi Legislature defines minimum requirements for a Comprehensive Plan (Mississippi Code § 17-1-1). Lafayette County's Comprehensive Plan addresses each of the following and elaborates further in the chapters to come.

- *Goals and Objectives* for the long-range (20 – 25 years) development of the county or municipality. Required goals and objectives shall address, at a minimum, residential, commercial and industrial development; parks, open space, and recreation; street or road improvements; public schools and community facilities.

- A *Land Use Plan* which designates in map or policy form the proposed general distribution and extent of the uses of land for residences, commerce, industry, recreation and open space, public/quasi-public facilities and lands. Background information shall be provided concerning the specific meaning of land use categories depicted in the plan in terms of the following: residential densities; intensity of commercial uses; industrial and public/quasi-public uses; and any other information needed to adequately define the meaning of such land use codes. Projections of population and economic growth for the area encompassed by the plan may be the basis for quantitative recommendations for each land use category.

- A *Transportation Plan* depicting in map form the proposed functional classifications for all existing and proposed streets, roads and highways for the area encompassed by the land use plan and for the same time period as that covered by the land use plan. Functional classifications shall consist of arterial, collector, and local streets, roads and highways, and these classifications shall be defined on the plan as to minimum right-of-way and surface width requirements; these requirements shall be based on traffic projections. All other forms of transportation pertinent to the local jurisdiction shall be addressed as appropriate. The transportation plan shall be a basis for a capital improvements program.

- A *Community Facilities Plan* as a basis for a capital improvements program including, but not limited to the following: housing; schools; parks and recreation; public buildings and facilities; and utilities and drainage.

CHAPTER I ~ INTRODUCTION

Lafayette County has a total population over 50,000 people according to the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. The county seat is the City of Oxford, which has an estimated population of over 20,000. Lafayette County and the City of Oxford are thriving communities that have experienced significant growth over the last fifty years.

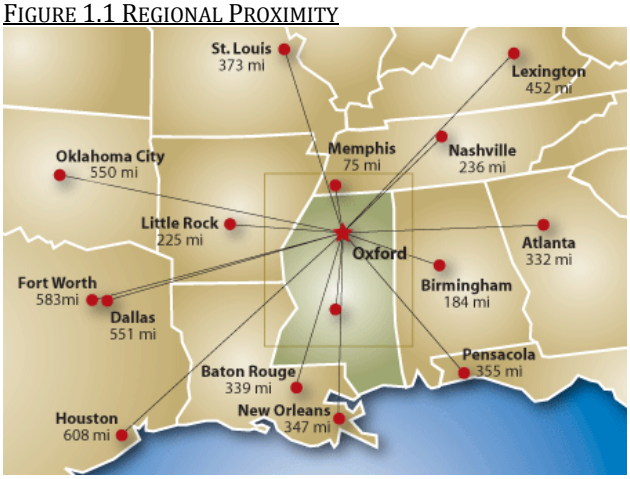
LOCATION

Lafayette County is located within the north-central portion of Mississippi, near the Tennessee state line. It is just over an hour's drive from Memphis, TN.

Surrounding counties include Marshall, Union, Pontotoc, Calhoun, Yalobusha, Panola, and Tate. These counties could best be described as rural. Lafayette County contains a portion of Holly Springs National Forest in the county's northeastern quadrant.

Lafayette County is home to the University of Mississippi. It is also within a three hour drive to Mississippi State University and the University of Alabama, two rival universities. These universities are mentioned because of the similar influences they have on their home counties. Oktibbeha County and Tuscaloosa County will be mentioned briefly throughout this chapter for demographic comparison purposes.

FIGURE 1.1 REGIONAL PROXIMITY



Source: Oxford-Lafayette County Economic Development Foundation

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Interstate 55 is a major north/south corridor running from Chicago, IL to the New Orleans, LA area. It connects Memphis, TN with Jackson, MS, and passes through Batesville less than ten miles west of the Lafayette County line. United States Highway 278 (also known as Mississippi Highway 6) bisects Interstate 55 at Batesville, running east/west across Mississippi roughly from Clarksdale to Tupelo. Included in this route is Lafayette County, where US Highway 278/MS 6 forms a crossroads with the north/south Mississippi Highway 7. Mississippi Highway 30 and MS 9W round out the County's arterial roadways.

FIGURE 1.2 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Source: Oxford-Lafayette County Economic Development Foundation

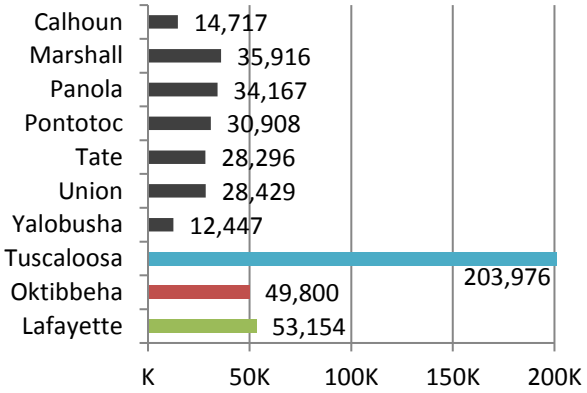
REGIONAL PROFILE

Chapter II provides a more detailed analysis of the demographic and economic profile of Lafayette County. However, general overall trends are illustrated here to provide a regional comparison and assessment of Lafayette County with surrounding conditions. All neighboring counties were used for this analysis as well as Oktibbeha County, MS, and Tuscaloosa County, AL, due to the location of major state universities.

The following figure illustrates the total population of these selected counties based on the 2015 Annual Population Estimates. Within the immediate vicinity, Lafayette is the largest county.

Various analyses within this plan will show many similarities between Lafayette and Oktibbeha County due to the university conditions. Even though Tuscaloosa County, AL, has a much higher population than any of the other selected counties in Mississippi, various demographic characteristics are still comparable to Lafayette County.

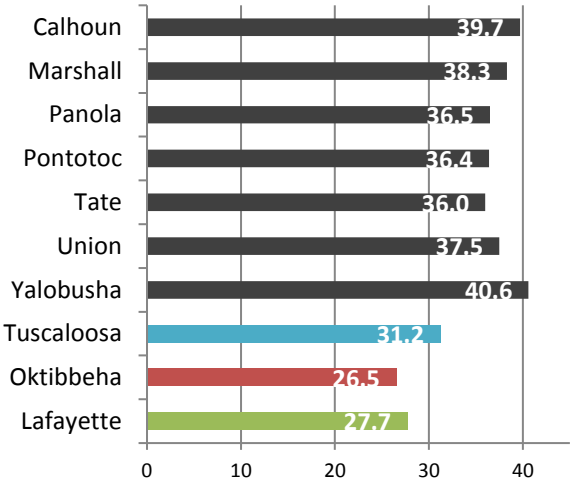
FIGURE 1.3 2015 TOTAL POPULATION COMPARISON



Source: 2015 Census Population Estimates

Figure 1.4 illustrates median age for these selected counties. The three counties with major universities have a significantly younger median age.

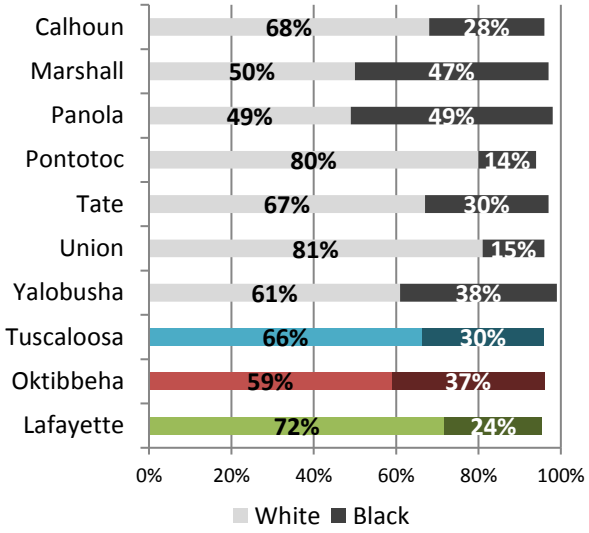
FIGURE 1.4 2010 MEDIAN AGE COMPARISON



Source: 2010 Decennial Census

Within Figure 1.5, a comparison of racial composition, the selected counties with major universities tend to have a higher number of whites as a percentage of the population. The remaining neighboring counties vary within the racial composition from close to an even split in Panola and Marshall County, to a wide majority white population in Pontotoc and Union County, the only ones with a higher percentage of white population than Lafayette County.

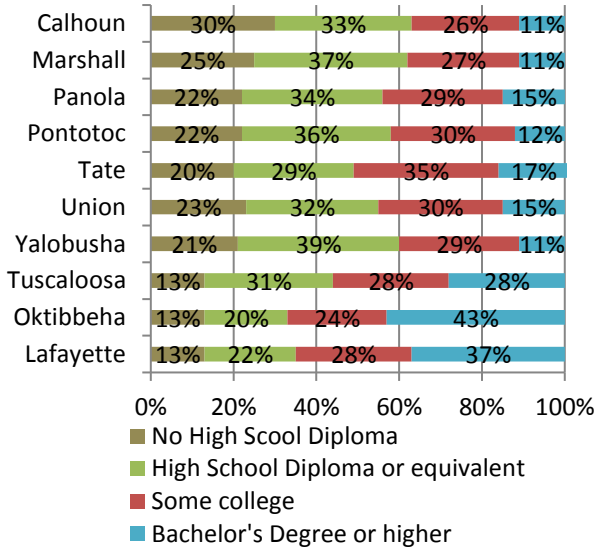
FIGURE 1.5 2010 RACIAL COMPOSITION COMPARISON



Source: 2010 Decennial Census

As discussed in more detail within Chapter II, Lafayette County's educational attainment statistics average higher than the State. Figure1.6 also illustrates that counties with major universities have higher percentages of residents with college degrees than other neighboring counties.

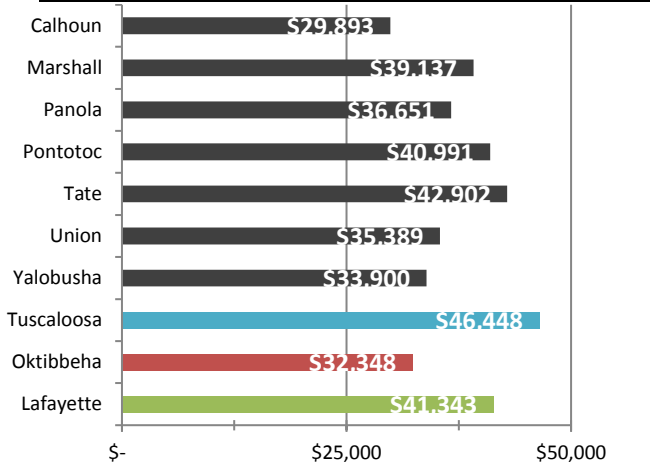
FIGURE 1.6 2014 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT COMPARISON



Source: (2014) 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates

Lafayette County has a median household income $2,000 higher than the Mississippi average. Figure 1.7 further reflects that Lafayette County income is more than all surrounding county estimates except for Tate County. It is also significantly more than Oktibbeha County. Among all county comparisons, only Tuscaloosa County has a notably higher median household income.

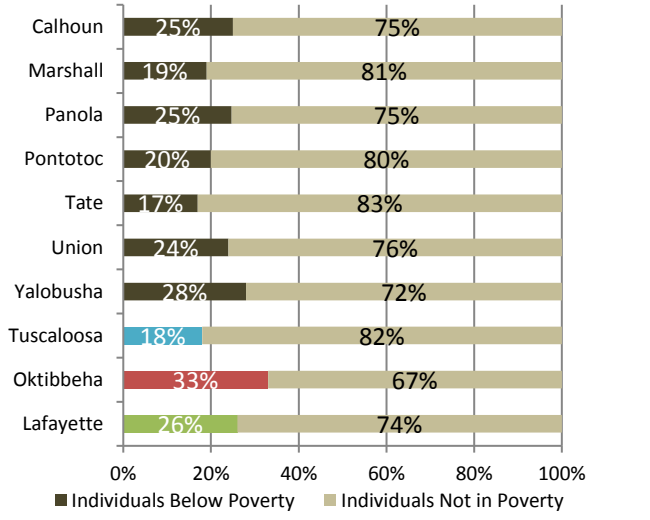
FIGURE 1.7 2014 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME COMPARISON



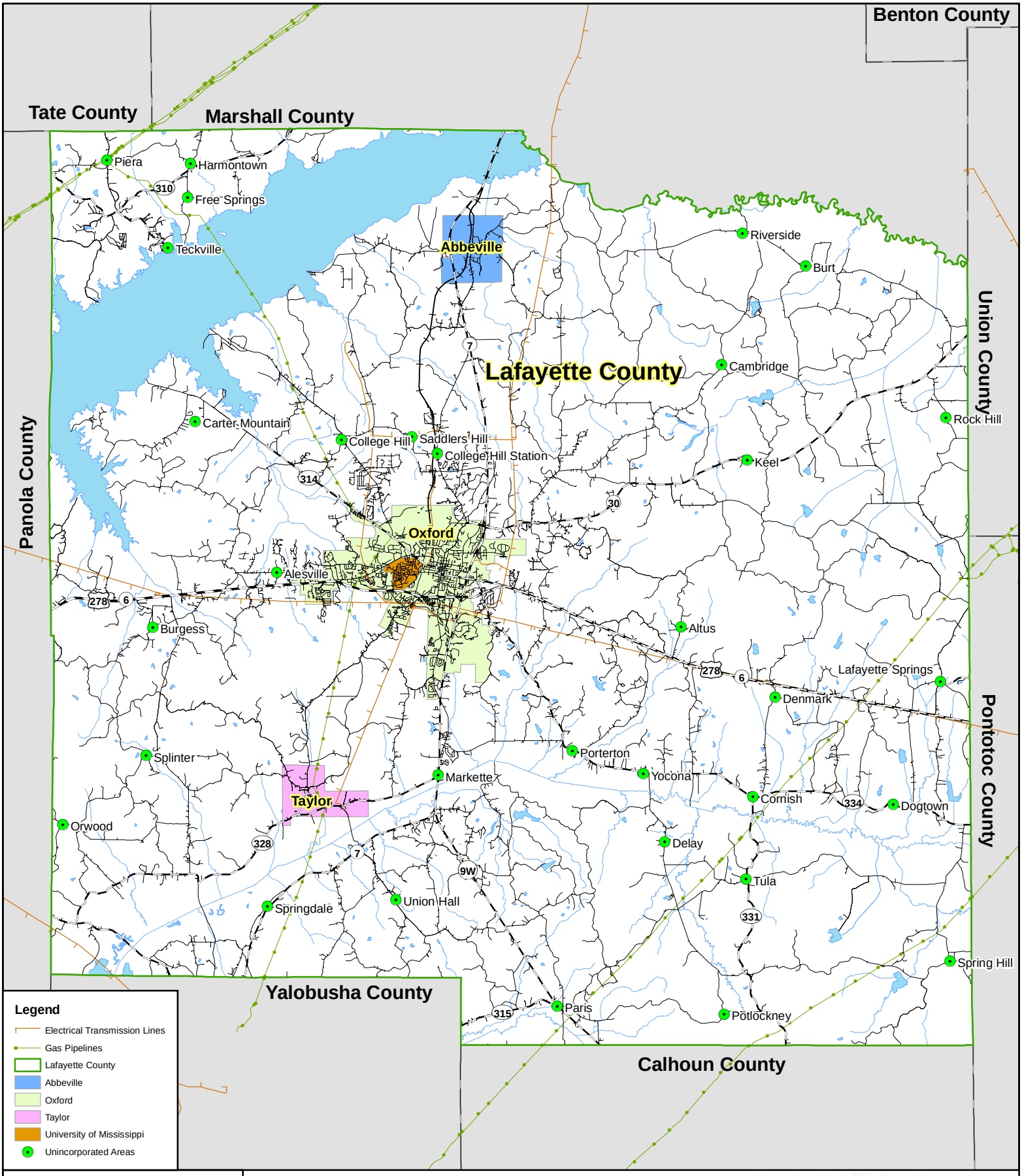
Source: (2014) 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates

Lafayette County has a relatively high percentage of individuals with an income below the poverty level, as seen in Figure 1.8 below. It is above the average for the State and is one of the highest percentages among the selected counties. For comparison, only Yalobusha County and Oktibbeha County have higher poverty rates.

FIGURE 1.8 2014 INDIVIDUALS BELOW POVERTY COMPARISON



Source: (2014) 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates



Legend

- Electrical Transmission Lines
- Gas Pipelines
- Lafayette County
- Abbeville
- Oxford
- Taylor
- University of Mississippi
- Unincorporated Areas

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

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Map 1.1

Comprehensive Planning Area Base Map

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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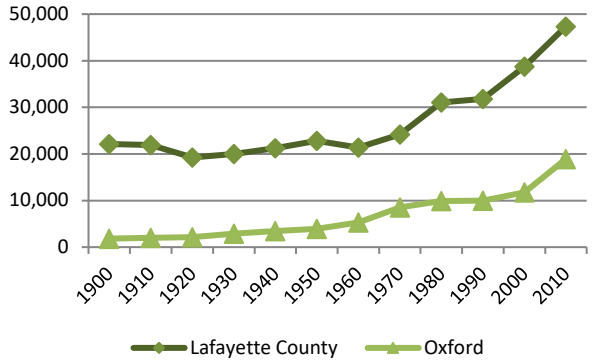
CHAPTER II ~ LAFAYETTE COUNTY PROFILE

This chapter compiles information, such as population, race, age, housing, and economics, to establish a community profile of Lafayette County. The majority of this information is recorded by the United States Census Bureau every ten years. Establishing a current community profile is useful in order to understand how the County has evolved over time and how it might continue to evolve into the future.

POPULATION

Historically, Lafayette County has experienced a steady increase in total population with few decennial Census population decreases since 1900 (see Figure 2.1). More rapid growth began to occur after 1960, and especially since 1990.

FIGURE 2.1 LAFAYETTE COUNTY HISTORICAL POPULATION



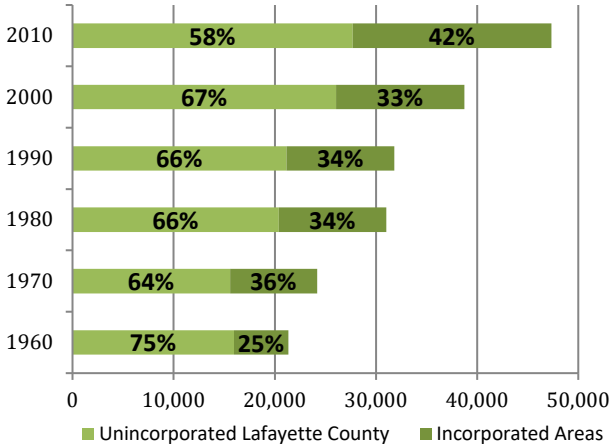
Source: Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990 compiled by Population Division and US Census Bureau

The average growth rate for the past 100 years has been a positive 8% every ten years. The largest population increase was between 1970 and 1980 which marked a 28% increase in population for the County as whole. As of the 2010 Census, Lafayette County had a total population of 47,351. Population growth has continued as the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates project Lafayette County to have a population of 51,169.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Lafayette County's population has always had a higher share of rural residents than urban, but the urban share is constantly growing, as can be seen in Figure 2.2. In 1960, nearly 75% of the County population resided in unincorporated areas. Over the past forty years, that distribution has declined to 59% living in unincorporated areas. The increase in urban population is primarily due to the City of Oxford's recent growth.

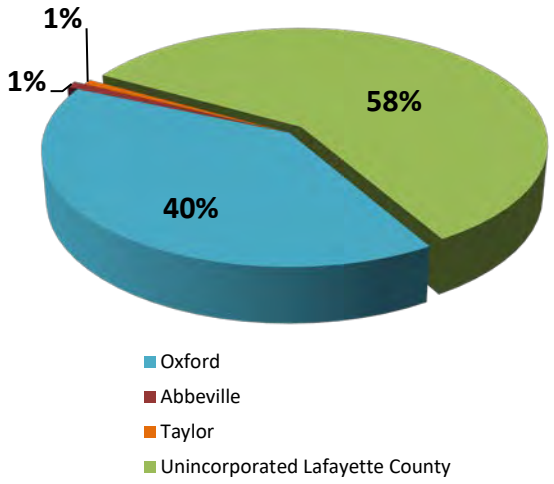
FIGURE 2.2 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION 1970 – 2010



Source: US Census Bureau

The City of Oxford has experienced significant growth since 1960, with particularly dramatic growth occurring since 2000. Oxford now represents 40% of the entire County population, as indicated below in Figure2.3. Abbeville and Taylor are the only other incorporated communities in the County. They both have populations under 500 and have experienced neither steady growth nor decline.

FIGURE 2.3 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION 2010



Source: 2010 Decennial Census

POPULATION CONCENTRATION

Map 2.1 graphically portrays population concentration across the County. Consistent with the City of Oxford comprising nearly half of the County's population, the concentration of people is heavily weighted to the city limits of Oxford as well as its nearby surroundings, particularly toward the north and west. There is a notable population concentration just northwest of the Oxford city limits in the College Hill area along County Road 102 north of Highway 314 near FNC Park. Another notable population area just outside of Oxford is to the north in the Woodland Hills area between Highway 7 and County Road 101. Just west of the Jackson Ave. / Hwy 278 interchange near Wellsgate Lake is a relatively new area of population concentration. Other unincorporated areas that appear to have population concentrations include the area just south of Abbeville along Highway 7, the area just south of Oxford along Highway 7, and the area just south of the Highway 7 and 9 split.

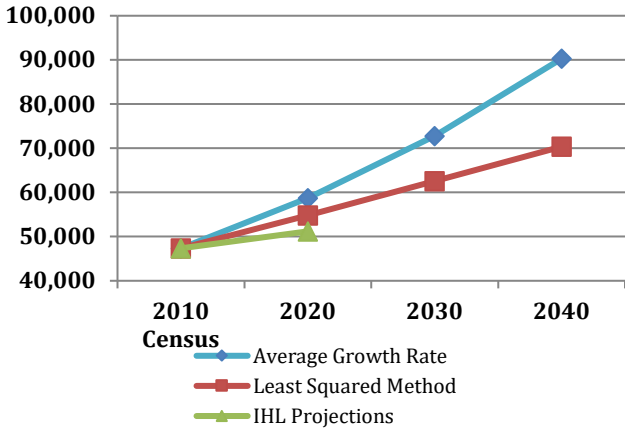
PROJECTIONS

Population projections can be performed in various ways through various sources (see Figure 2.4). The Mississippi Institute of Higher Learning (IHL) is a common source for county population projections in the State. IHL updated projections in 2012 based on the 2010 Census populations; these projections extend into 2025 with modest growth rates of 1% to 2% every five years. IHL projects a total population for Lafayette County of 51,757 in 2025, which is an increase of just over 4,000 people in fifteen years. When compared to other methods, the IHL calculations are usually the most conservative. The 2015 ACS population estimate for Lafayette County of 51,169 is nearly that of the IHL 2025 projection.

Population projections using the least squared method are based on a linear trend established over a historic time period. This analysis considers population trends for the last twenty-five years since 1990. The year 1990 was chosen as the starting point because the comparably low populations and low population gains of pre-1990 decades would translate to a lower projection than is thought to be accurate based on recent growth. This computer-generated analysis projects the County population into 2040 with growth rates of 12-14% for ten year increments. Lafayette County's population is projected to be 54,832 in 2020; 62,595 in 2030; and 70,357 in 2040, increases which seem more in line with current ACS estimates.

Calculating the growth rate of Lafayette County produces an average over time which can be used to project future population. Since 1970, the growth rate for Lafayette County has averaged 20% growth every 10 years. During the same time, the growth rate has ranged from 3% to 28%. The low growth rate of 3% from 1980-1990 is an outlier which has been removed to produce an average growth rate figure of 24% every 10 years. This method forecasts the population to be 58,715 in 2020; 72,807 in 2030; and 90,281 in 2040. That is average growth of nearly 7,500 residents every 5 years for the next 25 years.

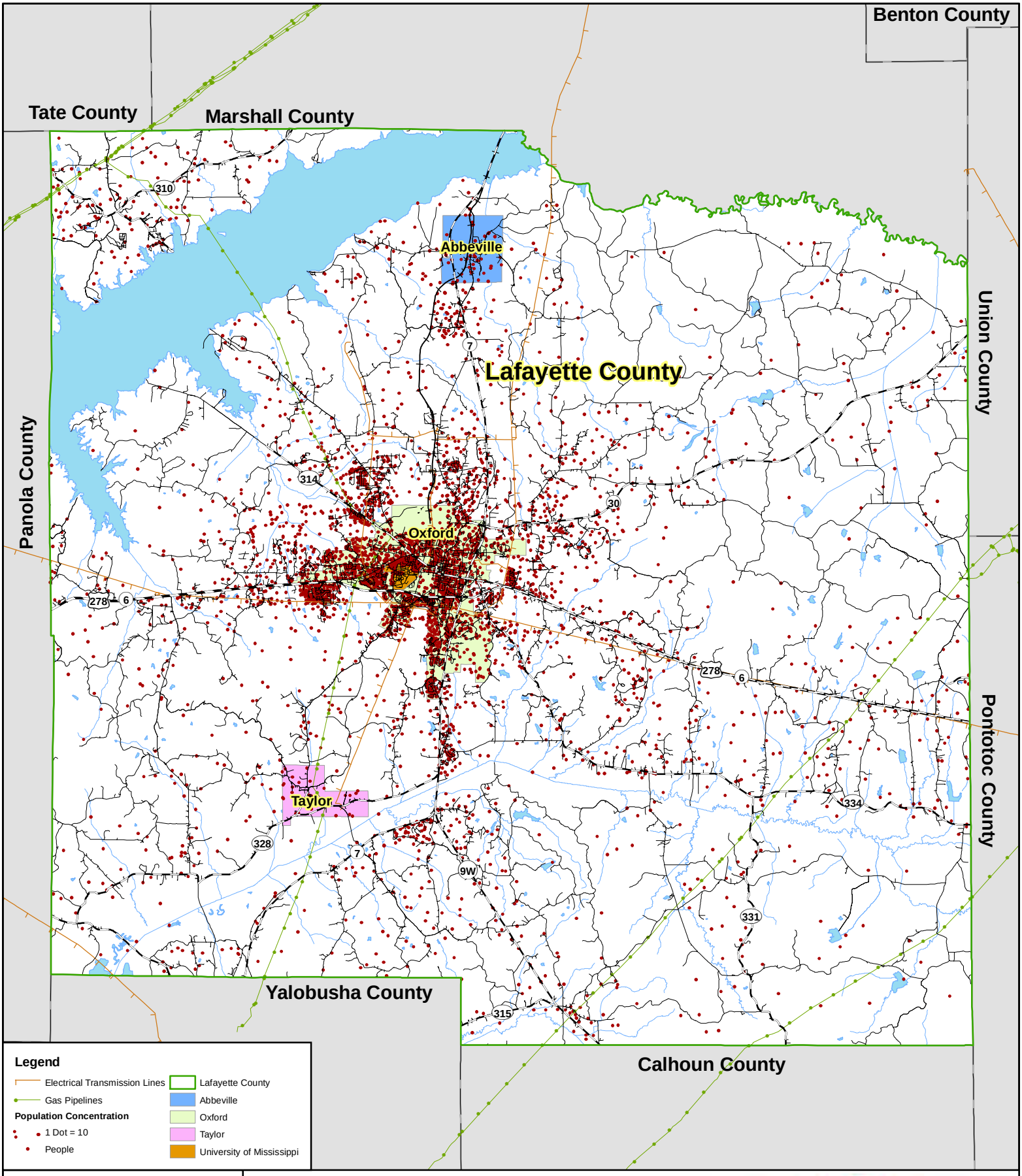
FIGURE 2.4 COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS 2010 – 2040



Source: Mississippi Institute of Higher Learning, US Census Bureau, and Slaughter & Associates calculations

RACIAL COMPOSITION

In general, racial composition in Lafayette County has changed very little. All racial categories have experienced growth in numbers, but remain close to the same representative percentage of the population that they have for years. The percentage of blacks appears to be slightly shrinking, but has still made up around 25% of the total population for each of the census counts over the last fifty years. The white population has hovered at just over 70% during the same time frame. The Asian population and other races have grown at steady rates but still represent a small



Legend

- Electrical Transmission Lines
- Gas Pipelines
- **Population Concentration**
  - 1 Dot = 10
  - People
- Lafayette County
- Abbeville
- Oxford
- Taylor
- University of Mississippi

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

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Map 2.1

2010 Population Concentration

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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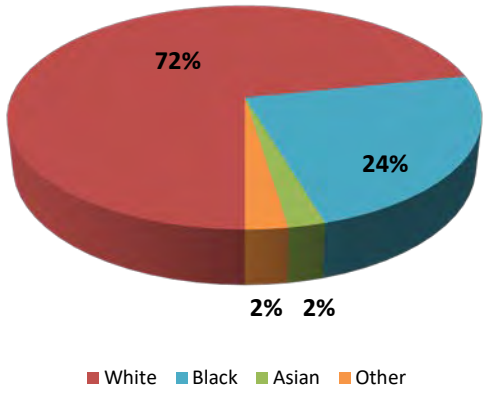
portion of Lafayette County as a whole, as depicted in Figure 2.5. Compared with overall racial composition for the State of Mississippi, Lafayette County has a much higher percentage of whites (72% vs 59%) and a much lower percentage of blacks (24% vs 37%).

FIGURE 2.5 RACIAL COMPOSITION 2010



Source: 2010 Decennial Census

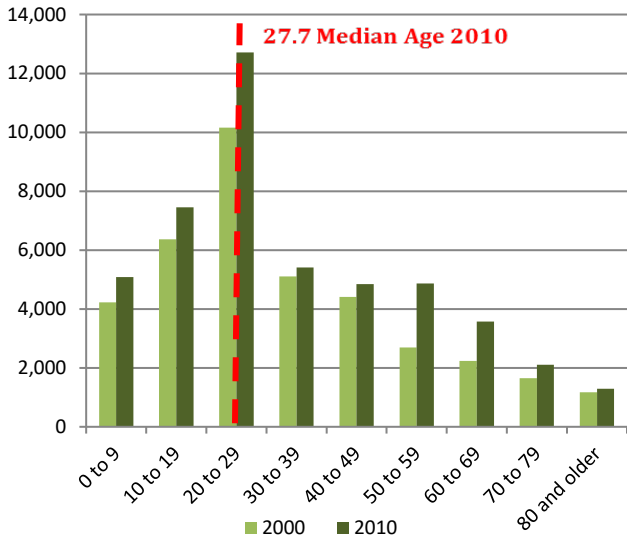
AGE STRUCTURE

Due to influences from the University of Mississippi, Lafayette County has a significant young population which is consistent with Oktibbeha County, home to Mississippi State University. The median age for Lafayette County in 2010 was 27.7 years, nearly ten below that of the State.

The largest age category for the County is 20 to 29 years old which accounts for 27%. The population of Lafayette County under 30 years old, including youth as well as some college students, accounts for 54% of the total population. The County's age distribution places important demands on primary, secondary, and higher education as well as student housing and other student services. The remaining 46% of the population, 30 years and older, has different needs and places different demands on the County in regards to housing, employment, and other services.

Since 2000, the age categories 30 to 49 years old have experienced a very slight decline in their overall share of the population. This decrease could be in part to the natural aging process as well as young adults or families moving out of the County. However, those categories 50 years and older all experienced significant growth since 2000, likely due in part to the increasing popularity of Lafayette County and Oxford as a retirement community (see Figure 2.6).

FIGURE 2.6 AGE STRUCTURE 2000 – 2010



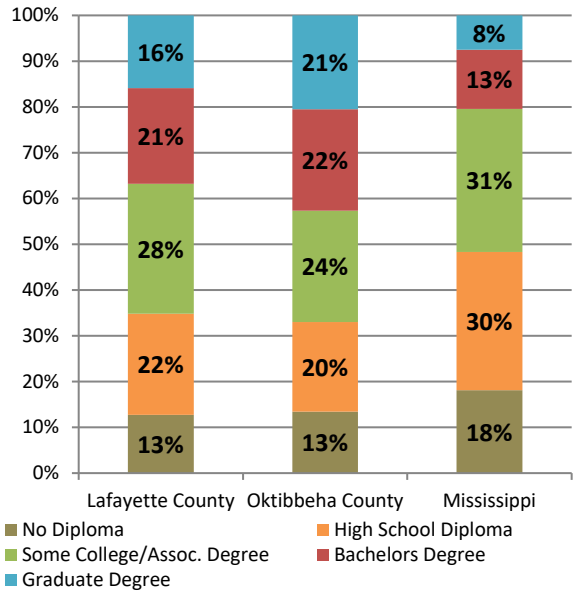
Source: 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Lafayette County is above the State average for educational attainment in regards to the percent of residents with college degrees. Nearly 40% of Lafayette's population (25 years and older) have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher professional degree. The Mississippi average is only 21%. Lafayette County also has a lower percentage for those with no high school education or no high school diploma than the State average; only 13% of Lafayette County does not have a high school diploma.

When comparing these statistics in the detailed chart below, Lafayette County clearly has higher average educational attainment than the State. However, the University of Mississippi has a significant impact on each of these statistics. Oktibbeha County is included for comparison purposes due to the similar characteristics being home to a major state university. Lafayette County is more comparable to Oktibbeha County than the State averages for educational attainment as can be seen in Figure 2.7.

FIGURE 2.7 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2014

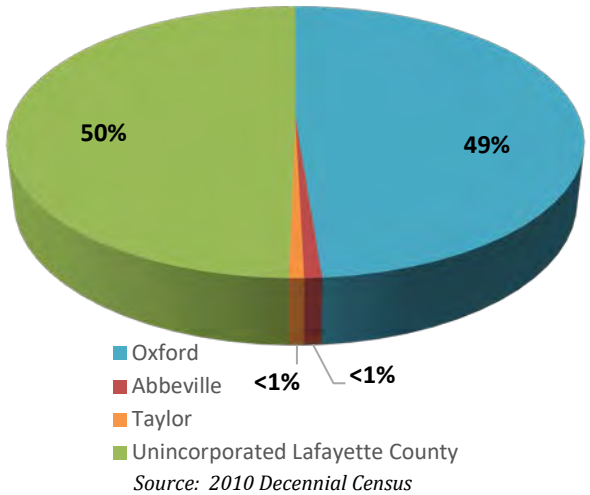


Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

As mentioned previously, Lafayette County has experienced significant population growth over the years, and housing units in the County are increasing at even faster rates than the population. From 2000-2010, Lafayette County's population increased by 22% while housing units increased by 58%. Nearly 50% of the County's housing units are located in the City of Oxford as depicted in Figure 2.8.

FIGURE 2.8 HOUSING UNIT DISTRIBUTION 2010



Source: 2010 Decennial Census

HOUSEHOLDS

The higher rate of increasing housing units has caused the average household size to drop from 2.4 persons per household in 2000 to 2.3 persons per household in 2010. This is below the 2010 State average of 2.6 persons per household. For Lafayette County, this means individual housing units are being occupied by fewer people. The total number of one-person households grew from 4,189 to 5,708 (an increase of 36%) between 2000 and 2010, representing almost one-third of all households. This is also an expected trend for university communities; Oktibbeha County has a similar household distribution due to a large student population.

Of the 18,356 total households in Lafayette County in 2010, approximately half are family households and half are non-family households. The 10,038 family households represent 55% of the County. Since 2000, the total non-family households have increased by 37% to 8,318; which is also reflected in the drastic increase of one-person households.

HOUSING OCCUPANCY

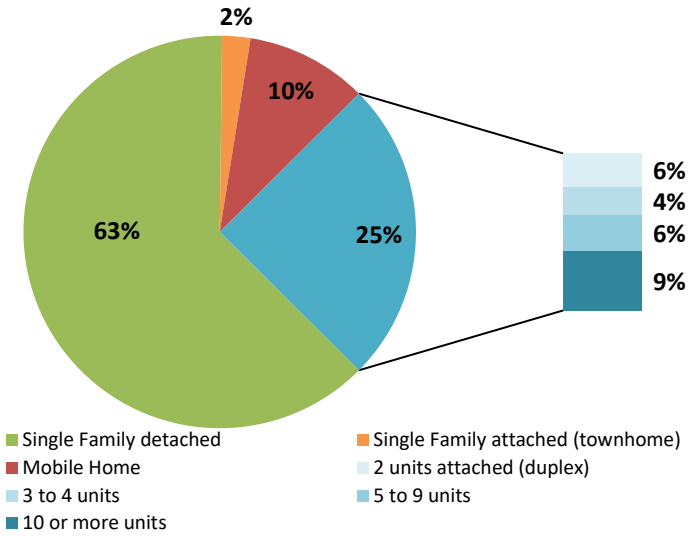
Housing unit vacancy has increased from 13% in 2000 to 19% in 2010. Many communities have seen a slight increase of vacancy with more units for sale/rent. Some of this can be attributed to the economic conditions across the country. Another trend is the increase in renter-occupied units, which grew from 39% in 2000 to 44% in 2010.

HOUSING UNIT TYPE

Housing unit analysis for Lafayette County includes all units in the municipalities as well as those in the unincorporated areas. Lafayette County had over 21,000 housing units in 2010, half of which are located outside of the municipalities.

Detached single family homes make up 63% of all housing units in Lafayette County, which is slightly under the State average of 69%, but significantly higher than Oktibbeha County's 52%. Mobile homes or manufactured housing represent 10% of the housing units in Lafayette County, the vast majority being in unincorporated areas (see Figure 2.9).

FIGURE 2.9 HOUSING UNITS 2014



Source: (2014) 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates

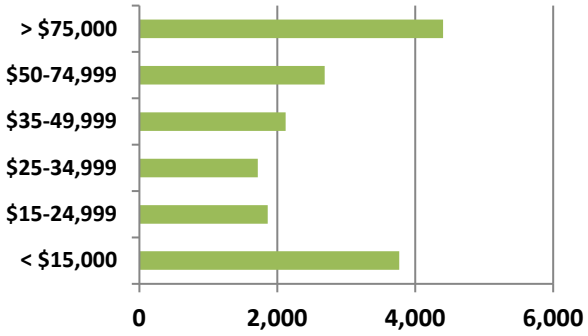
Multi-family housing represents 27% of all housing units in Lafayette County. Multi-family housing in Lafayette County is represented equally for the variety of different multi-unit categories ranging from duplexes to apartment complexes. While Lafayette County as a whole has a large percentage of multi-family housing units, it is the City of Oxford that accounts for 88% of total multi-family units in the County.

The 2014 estimates suggest that 37% of housing units in Lafayette County have been built since 1999. Approximately 60% of all housing structures have been built since 1990. With this rapid growth, Lafayette County is significantly above the State average (36%) for units built since 1990.

INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

Lafayette County has a 2014 estimated median household income of $41,343, a major increase of 45% since 2000. With that jump in median income, Lafayette County is now slightly higher than the State ($39,464). Figure 2.10 shows the number of households in different income ranges.

FIGURE 2.10 HOUSEHOLD INCOME 2014



Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates

The per capita income for Lafayette County in 2014 was $21,838; 4% higher than the State average ($20,956), but not to the same degree as in 2000 when the County per capita income was 122% that of the State ($19,406 vs $15,853).

HOUSING COST BURDEN

A common statistic used to analyze the burden of housing costs is the percentage of income spent monthly on mortgages and rent. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) states that households are cost-burdened if housing costs account for over 30% of household income.

The 2015 American Community Survey estimates that just under one-quarter of Lafayette County households with a mortgage spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs. For renter households, 65% are estimated to spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs.

POVERTY

Lafayette County is above the State average for families and individuals with an income below the poverty level. The 2015 statistics estimate 13% of families in Lafayette County and 26% of all individuals are below poverty level. Averages for the State of Mississippi reflect 18% of families and 23% of individuals have an income below the poverty level. Poverty figures in Lafayette County have increased since 2000 when 10% of families and 21% of all individuals were recorded as having an income below the poverty level.

EMPLOYMENT BASE

Approximately 57% of Lafayette County's population (16 years and older) are part of the labor force. Lafayette County's labor force had a slight fluctuation and decrease since 2000 (60%) but still is reflective of the State's overall averages. The 2015 American Community Survey estimates 8% of the labor force population is unemployed. However, more recent data from the Mississippi Department of Employment Security for 2016 reflects a 4.8% unemployment rate for Lafayette County.

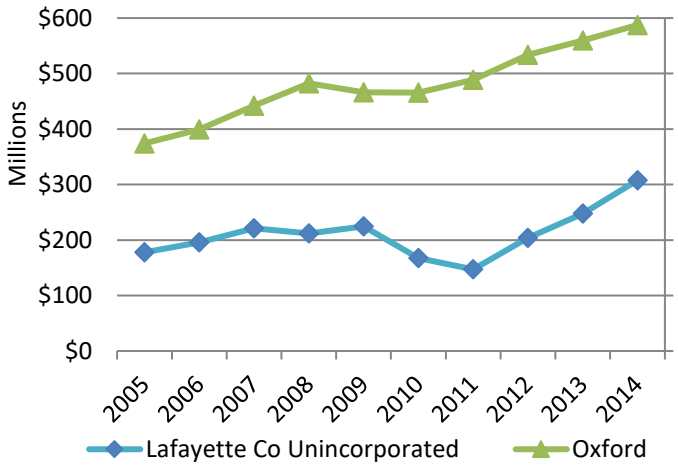
The University of Mississippi is the largest employer in the County with approximately 2,500 employees. The next largest employer is Olin Corporation, whose Winchester ammunition manufacturing operations support 1,100 jobs. Baptist Memorial Hospital has 1,000 employees. The City of Oxford and the Oxford School District combined employ 925. Lafayette County and the Lafayette County School District combined employ 615. Other major employers include North Mississippi Regional Center, Wal-Mart, Borg Warner, FNC, and SMW.

The American Community Survey estimates 35% of those Lafayette County residents employed work in the educational, health care, or social assistance fields which is reflective of the County's top employers. Arts, entertainment, recreation, and food service industries account for 13% of those employed, as does the retail industry. These three industry categories collectively employ over 60% of working County residents.

RETAIL SALES

The Mississippi State Tax Commission records trends of retail sales and retail establishments for cities and counties, as well as sales tax diversions for cities. Figure 2.11 reflects all retail sales within the County since fiscal year 2010. The City of Oxford is the most influential in terms of retail establishments and sales for the County. Despite the economic downturn, which saw decreases in Oxford's gross retail sales in 2009 and 2010, sales bounced back when Oxford added nearly $100 million in annual sales from 2011-2014. Abbeville and Taylor had fluctuating sales during this time period but generally increased. The unincorporated portion of the County experienced a decrease in sales in 2010 and 2011 when compared with earlier figures. However, the unincorporated portion gained over $100 million in retail sales from 2012-2014 and is at an all-time high as of the 2014 figures. Because the figures for Abbeville and Taylor are so much lower than Oxford and unincorporated Lafayette County and did not display on the following chart, they have not been included.

FIGURE 2.11 LAFAYETTE COUNTY RETAIL SALES



Source: Mississippi State Tax Commission

CHAPTER III ~ GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives chapter is an important element of the Comprehensive Plan that identifies a variety of future goals for residential, commercial and industrial development; parks and recreation; transportation improvements; and schools and other community facilities. Information within this chapter was gathered from one-on-one meetings with County Supervisors and County departments as well as from public meetings including a wide range of community representatives and county residents.

Lafayette County is thinking progressively in terms of their future whether they are thinking about land development, population growth, resident amenities, or public safety. County leadership and residents have direct concern for quality of life and how their actions today affect the future and their children's future. Every comment, concern, or goal expressed throughout this process was based on the desire to improve Lafayette County. This chapter further documents each of these goals in detail.

VISUAL PERCEPTION AND IMAGE

OVERALL VISUAL PERCEPTION AND IMAGE FINDINGS

The visual perception of a community varies depending on the status of resident versus visitor. A visitor's perception greatly influences future trips to and investments in the community. Perception begins not within the heart of a city or center of development or core of activity. It begins before one approaches any of these locations; it can begin on the highways that bisect the County. It is important to consider both the perspective of a resident who sees the county every day and a visitor passing through for the first time. Likewise, it is important to consider both the perspective on population growth and land development of a rural resident in the unincorporated portion of the county and that of a resident in or near the municipalities.

Goal 1: Enhance and promote a community image unique to and supportive of Lafayette County's assets as well as the City of Oxford's and the University of Mississippi's assets.

Objective: The University's image and influence has the ability to set the overall perception for the County and City. Work together on consistency and make collaborative efforts for implementation.

Objective: Establish a sense of arrival along the interchanges of the major thoroughfares in the County and the City.

Objective: Work with and provide assistance to the necessary parties to maintain all County roads in a neat and clean manner. Additional cooperation between City, County, and University should result in increased efficiency by combining resources, rather than duplicating them.

Objective: Establish an overall County image outside of the concentration core – the City and University.

Objective: Preserve the best of Lafayette County's rural resources (scenic views, rivers, streams, wetlands, tree canopy, and farmland) to the greatest extent possible in preparing for anticipated future growth and development.

Goal 2: Create and promote a community image unique to and supportive of Lafayette County's assets through adoption of proper ordinances and regulations.

Objective: Adopt a Zoning Ordinance for Lafayette County to help manage growth in urbanizing areas and rural areas alike.

Objective: Consider updating the current Subdivision Regulations.

Objective: Consider adopting a Sign Ordinance.

Objective: Consider adopting a Property Maintenance Code.

LAND USE DEVELOPMENT

OVERALL LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT FINDINGS

Lafayette County is a relatively rural county with a large amount of vacant land; however, the City of Oxford directly influences the more urban development at its borders. The rural character is becoming increasingly lost as unchecked development occurs immediately outside the Oxford city limits. According to the US Census Bureau's 2015 Population Estimates, Lafayette County was the fastest growing county in Mississippi from 2010-2015 and one of the fastest (67th) growing counties nationwide, with its population increasing 8.0% from 47,359 to 51,169. This sharp growth is expected to continue in coming years. Largely because of this growth (and despite the recent construction of multifamily housing complexes) there is a shortage of housing which could be described as affordable. Specifically, there is not enough housing that the local workforce can afford. The outlying areas around Oxford contain the densest residential development for the unincorporated portions of the County and are in need of more regulation and enhanced services. Commercial and industrial developments in the unincorporated areas of the County are less urban in nature, and the County desires to expand these options and create more economic development.

Goal 1: Be a community for all people.

Objective: Encourage affordable housing opportunities that will also address the County's high poverty rate and housing cost burden.

Objective: Promote a variety of housing types that will attract a wide range of household incomes.

Objective: Collaborate with City of Oxford, University of Mississippi, and nonprofit groups such as LOU-Homes, Doors of Hope Transition Ministries, United Way, and Habitat for Humanity to work together towards housing solutions and to ensure that there will be land dedicated to affordable workforce housing.

Objective: Provide incentives to encourage developers to focus on constructing workforce housing.

Objective: Prioritize workforce and affordable housing populations when planning for expanded services, including regional transit.

Goal 2: Advocate for quality construction and development.

Objective: Evaluate options and alternatives for various development ordinances and codes that standardize construction and also protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.

Objective: Improve subdivision design regulations to encourage sustainability and make sure they are enforced via regular construction site inspections.

Objective: Form cooperative and collaborative relationships with developers to further promote positive growth.

Objective: Take preventative measures to reduce off-site stormwater impact by limiting impervious surfaces, encouraging landscaping with native plant species, etc.

Objective: Implement design standards for commercial businesses in gateways and identified nodes.

Goal 3: Protect property values for future growth and assessed values for tax revenue.

Objective: Identify and determine a distribution of land uses that guide and control future residential, commercial and industrial development.

Objective: Identify prime commercial areas based on transportation networks and access, public utility availability, and concentration of supporting land uses.

Goal 4: Promote commercial and industrial growth in Lafayette County.

Objective: Make affordable, high-speed internet access in speeds of 1 gigabit or more available in every home and business in Lafayette County.

Objective: Work collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce, City of Oxford, and the University of Mississippi to promote Lafayette County, as well as the City and University.

Objective: Allow for future creation of small businesses by increasing utility support at strategically placed nodes across the County.

Objective: Strengthen vocational training opportunities at Oxford-Lafayette School of Applied Technology and create partnerships with local industries and businesses.

Objective: Identify tracts of land with transportation access and public utility availability for industrial opportunities.

Objective: Identify and consider tracts or industrial land that could be targeted for redevelopment.

Goal 5: Promote development and business practices that support principles of smart growth and sustainability.

Objective: Encourage the construction of passive, low-energy buildings where new construction is needed. When possible, retrofit existing buildings to operate more efficiently.

Objective: Collaborate with such groups as Sustainable Oxford, Sustainable Practices for Our Restaurant Kitchens (SPORK), Good Food for Oxford Schools, Oxford School District, Lafayette County School District, local farmers, and restaurants to increase education and awareness about local agriculture and its potential to decrease dependency on the resource-draining corporate food supply chains that currently exist.

Objective: Protect and preserve existing neighborhoods and rural residences from encroachment of incompatible development; consider creating conservation districts.

Objective: Encourage infill development and reuse of existing buildings that is appropriate within site context.

Objective: Encourage mixed land use projects instead of single-use districts where environmental and infrastructural characteristics allow. Such efforts should serve to combat suburban sprawl development pattern that is currently consuming land on Oxford periphery and beyond.

Objective: Protect natural water systems and drainage ways from development by preserving critical environmental lands for only agricultural or recreational use.

Objective: Encourage mixed-use planned unit developments (PUD's) such as Plein Air in Taylor.

TRANSPORTATION

OVERALL TRANSPORTATION FINDINGS

Lafayette County's transportation infrastructure supports local and regional travel, but is primarily geared toward personal motor vehicles. Most other modes of travel lack the infrastructural support to achieve widespread use. The growth of Oxford University Transit (OUT)—a transit system that began in 2008—has given University of Mississippi students and Oxford residents an alternative to driving and has resulted in fewer cars on the roads than would otherwise be there without the transit system operating. A challenge for OUT is figuring out how to best serve riders as demand and distance increases while still operating efficiently with their current staff and fleet. Significant transportation improvements are currently being made that will increase connectivity around Oxford and should alleviate some of the traffic problems that have come to define certain roads, such as West Jackson Avenue. The West Oxford Loop extension is expected to

serve as a bypass of West Jackson Avenue and should allow commuters to more easily move around the western part of town. The Oxford Way extension is expected to similarly benefit commuters in the southern part of town.

Goal 1: Maintain County roads to the highest standard possible to adequately serve residents.

Objective: Eliminate all public gravel roads within Lafayette County within the planning horizon of this plan (20 years).

Objective: Establish a routine maintenance cycle (ten to twelve years) for all roadway improvements such as resurfacing, striping, etc.

Objective: Adopt and implement a capital improvements plan outlining road and bridge construction projects and needs for the 5-year period and updated annually.

Objective: Identify and determine road and bridge improvements based on the overall needs of Lafayette County as opposed to individual Supervisor districts.

Goal 2: Alleviate public safety and traffic concerns along existing public roads.

Objective: Identify and realign dangerous intersections.

Objective: Identify flooding and drainage problems along roadways.

Objective: Identify roadways and bridges that are inadequate for fire truck access.

Objective: Seek state and federal funding opportunities that will help to alleviate safety concerns on roadways.

Goal 3: Improve existing and establish new transportation network connections based on current and future traffic needs.

Objective: Identify corridors and intersections experiencing consistent traffic congestion.

Objective: Identify insufficient transportation routes which increase fire response times and potential connections to reduce response times.

Objective: Identify transportation corridors which are planned to experience significant traffic increases in the future and determine improvements needed.

Objective: Identify public roadways with less than the minimum right-of-way established by the County Engineer.

Objective: Acquire minimum right-of-way for county roads when the opportunity presents itself.

Objective: Require developers to improve existing roads/street fronting along planned development and dedicate necessary right-of-way in accordance with the transportation plan and subdivision regulations.

Goal 4: Encourage alternative modes of transportation throughout the County.

Objective: Determine cycling interests and needs throughout the County.

Objective: Prepare a "bike lane" map plan identifying corridors where cycling can be safely supported and implemented.

Objective: Develop an extensive and connected system of greenways in the outer part of the County to enhance and complement existing active transportation routes in Oxford, such as the Thacker Mountain Rail Trail and the Oxford Depot Rail Trail. Ultimately strive to create regional network of trails linking to the DeSoto County Greenways, the Tanglefoot Trail in Union and Pontotoc Counties, and low-traffic low-speed auto routes such as Natchez Trace Parkway, Great River Road, and William Faulkner Scenic Byway, etc.

Objective: Require all newly constructed roads and developments to adhere to Complete Streets criteria where possible and support a variety of mobility choices, as well as appropriate lighting.

Objective: Extend coverage area of OUT and increase number and frequency of routes.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

OVERALL COMMUNITY FACILITY FINDINGS

Lafayette County's most pressing and common concerns were regarding public safety upgrades and public utility opportunities. Public safety concerns included specifics for the Sheriff's department, fire services, emergency management, and health services. An overwhelming concern was expressed regarding emergency and fire services within the County (especially in remote areas such as Harmontown) and the impact the quality of these services have on development as well as the health and safety of residents.

Goal 1: Continue to provide for residents of Lafayette County at the highest feasible service level.

Objective: Periodically assess all County administration facilities to determine needed growth or expansion.

Objective: Periodically assess all County administration equipment to determine needed improvements, repairs, or replacements.

Goal 2: Provide and serve Lafayette County with the highest feasible level of public police protection.

Objective: Increase sheriff deputy manpower based on a proportional increase of the County's population.

Objective: Conduct an annual assessment of deputy personnel and equipment within the Sheriff's Department and the need for additional manpower and equipment.

Objective: Construct a Sheriff's Department building to provide for needed additional space.

Objective: Seek state, federal, and private grant mechanisms to help fund various equipment needs, such as dash and body cameras and upgraded jail locking system.

Goal 3: Provide and serve Lafayette County with the highest feasible level of fire protection.

Objective: Promote and encourage training and certification for volunteer fire fighters.

Objective: Open new fire station to provide fire protection on Highway 6 east of Oxford.

Objective: Encourage and support County and City collaborative measures to provide adequate water and sewer supply in densely developed areas of the County.

Objective: Identify available funding and grant opportunities for various emergency management services, facilities, and improvements.

Objective: Encourage the use of sprinkler systems within multi-family apartment residential developments and commercial developments.

Objective: Continue to identify and improve response times within each fire department.

Objective: Consider supplementing volunteer fire department with full-time personnel to improve levels of service and reduce response times.

Goal 4: Provide and serve Lafayette County with the highest feasible level of emergency management protection.

Objective: Centralize E911 dispatch to serve all agencies, rather than being administered by the Sheriff's Department.

Objective: Upgrade all emergency communication to be part of the Mississippi Wireless Information Network (MSWIN) system.

Objective: Move E911 to facility with additional office space.

Objective: Utilize the recently adopted Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) District 2 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan to reduce vulnerability to the impact of natural hazards.

Goal 5: Serve Lafayette County with the highest feasible level of public water and public sewer available in order to sustain and direct future growth and higher density developments in an effort to reduce sprawl and conserve land resources.

Objective: Encourage collaboration between local governments, water associations, and developers to provide adequate water supply for both domestic and fire-fighting water.

Objective: Work with the City of Oxford on water supply for dense developments in the County and address any long term effects on the City's system.

Objective: Increase sewer capacity at Industrial Park and limit development in areas of the County without adequate sewer.

CHAPTER IV ~ LAND USE

The goal of this chapter is to provide an inventory of existing land uses in order to determine spatial trends across Lafayette County and to further provide a general plan for evolving land uses. The existing land use inventory is parcel-based. This database was analyzed and categorized into common and comparable land uses and transformed into a visual representation of countywide parcel based land uses. In addition to individual parcel land uses, this chapter also addresses major environmental influences impacting Lafayette County on a larger scale. All of this information is used to develop a future land use plan which is discussed in detail at the end of this chapter.

EXISTING LAND USE (See Maps 4.1 and 4.2.)

Lafayette County encompasses 679 square miles, 47.5 of which are covered by water. Of the remaining 631 square miles, approximately 23 square miles are within municipalities and 0.7 square miles are within the University of Mississippi boundaries. Rights-of-way take up 11 square miles. Only the area outside the municipalities and University are considered for analysis. This analysis will look at the percentage of land used. However, these percentages may be slightly overstated because the inventory system is based on tax parcels; parcels were not split to further evaluate if the majority of the parcel was used or vacant.

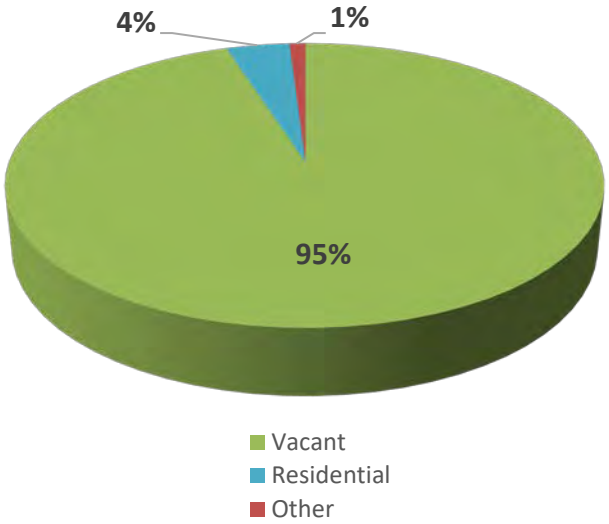
RESIDENTIAL USES

Accounting for less than 5% of the parcel area, Lafayette County's number one land use is residential. Less than one-sixth of a square mile is occupied by multi-family uses and less than 2 square miles are mobile homes, so the majority of County residential land is single family homes. Single family homes comprise nearly 25 square miles of land in the County.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES

Commercial and industrial land uses each occupy less than 1 square mile of parcels. Commercial land is found along the arterial roads closest to Oxford, as well as at key nodal points in the County, such as the Highway 328 / Highway 7, Highway 334 / Highway 331, and County Road 101 / Highway 7 intersections. The types of rural businesses located in Lafayette County range from cabinet making and antique shops to auto repair and body shops to mini storages and convenience stores.

FIGURE 4.1 EXISTING LAND USE DISTRIBUTION



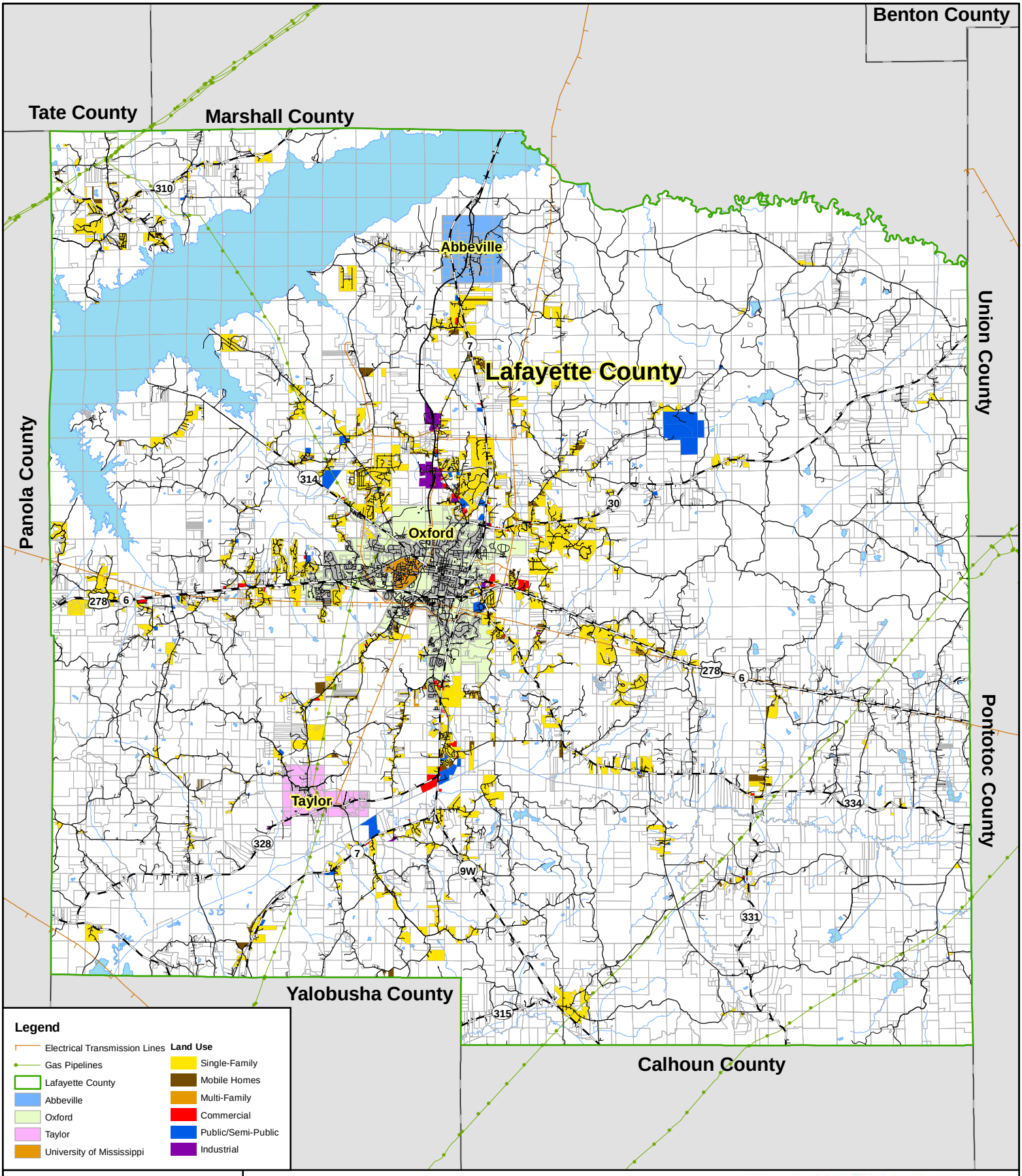
Source: Slaughter & Associates calculations

PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC USES

Public or semi-public uses could include government offices, utility towers, wells, community buildings, school facilities, fire departments, churches, cemeteries, recreational facilities, etc. Approximately 2.4 square miles (less than 0.5%) of the County are classified as these types of uses.

VACANT USES

Nearly 95% (565 square miles) of the parcels in unincorporated Lafayette County lack significant development and are considered vacant. This figure includes land that is in a natural state, as well as that used for farming and forestry. Approximately 26% (147 square miles) of those are within Holly Springs National Forest.



Legend

- Electrical Transmission Lines
- Gas Pipelines
- Lafayette County
- Abbeville
- Oxford
- Taylor
- University of Mississippi

Land Use

- Single-Family
- Mobile Homes
- Multi-Family
- Commercial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Industrial

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

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Map 4.1

Existing Land Use

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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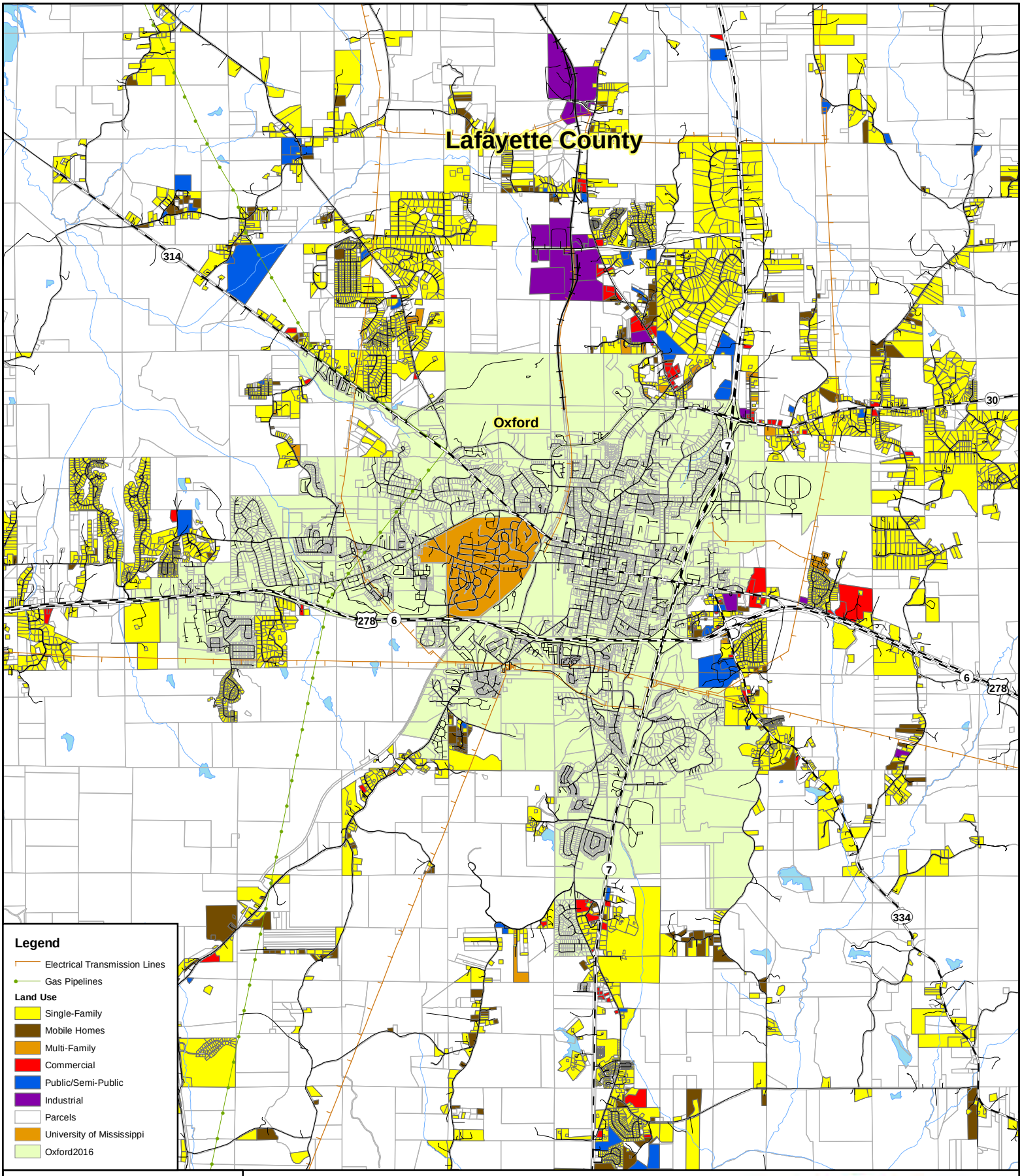

Map 4.2

Existing Land Use City of Oxford Zoom

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Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
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ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

Outside of individual parcel land use, Lafayette County has other attributes that influence land usage in the County. Flooding potential and federally identified flood zones have an impact on the land use distribution of Lafayette County.

FLOOD ZONES

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently released digital flood zones (DFIRM) for the State of Mississippi. Map 4.3 portrays the most current mapping of 100-year floodplain areas in Lafayette County.

Lafayette County is minimally affected by the floodway zone, consisting of the stream channel and adjacent areas that actively carry floodwaters downstream.

The floodplain is defined as any land area susceptible to being inundated by flood waters. The 100-year floodplain is the most common flood zone used for analysis purposes as opposed to the 500-year floodplain. The 100-year floodplain area has a 1% chance of flooding in any given year; the 500-year floodplain area has a 0.2% chance of occurring in any given year.

Approximately 20% of Lafayette County is within the 100-year floodplain or the floodway. The largest area with the potential for flooding is in the northern half of the County along Sardis Lake and the Little Tallahatchie River. In the southern half of the County, areas along the Yocona River and to the east of Enid Lake are exposed to flooding potential. The majority of land affected by the 100-year floodplain and floodway is vacant land.

SEPTIC TANK SUITABILITY

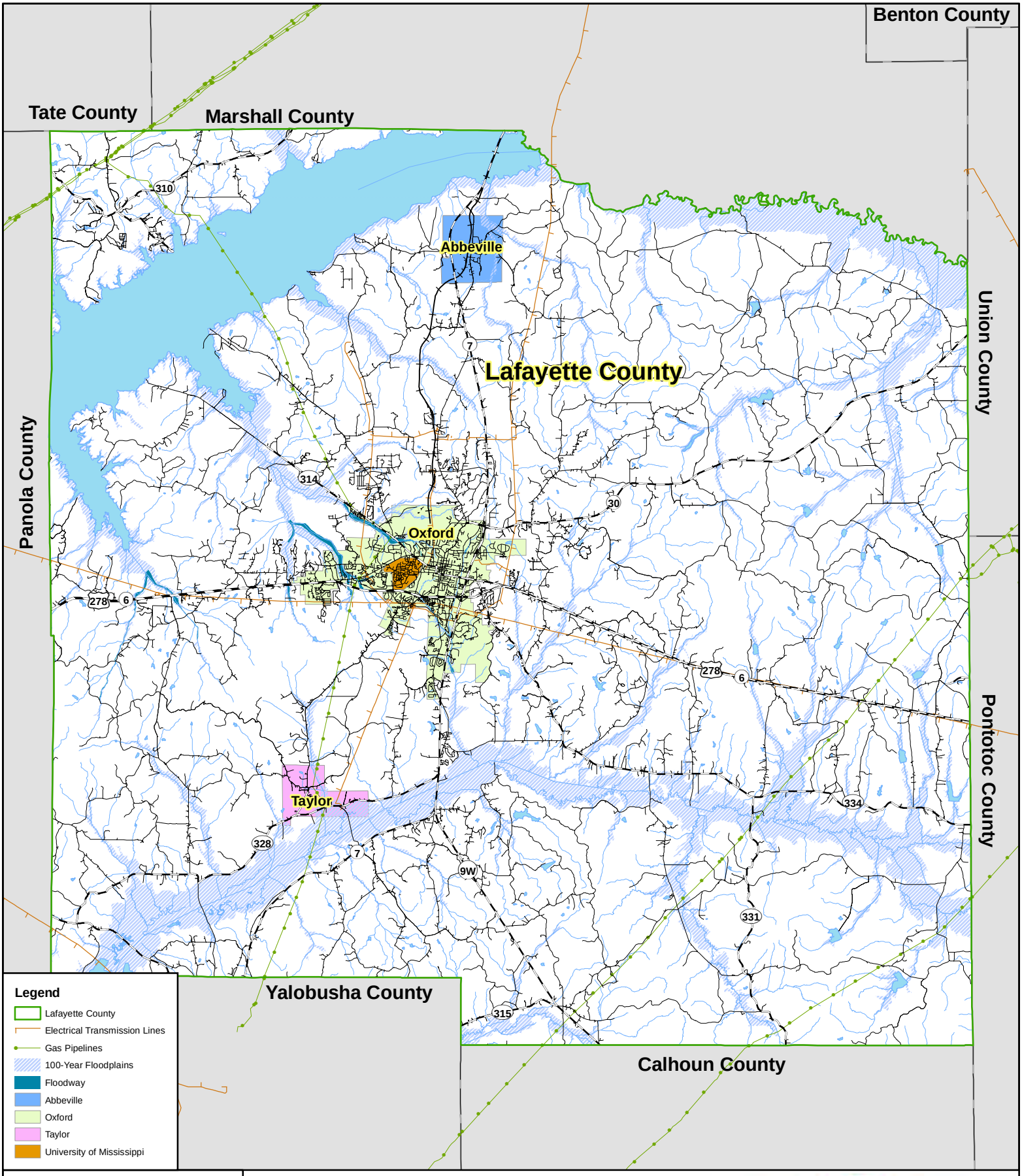
Lafayette County as a whole primarily consists of soil types where the use of septic tank absorption fields is highly limited (see Map 4.4). The soil survey produced by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) rates each soil type based on certain characteristics that are needed for adequate performance of alternative sewage disposal systems. Some limitations may be overcome but can be costly. County health departments are typically the entities that inspect and regulate the construction of absorption fields. However, the best way to regulate sewage disposal and to overcome any future constraints is through a centralized sewer system and requiring a connection to municipal sewer service.

SEVERE SLOPES

Defining severe slopes can vary depending on the community and location. For Lafayette County, severe slopes have been defined as slopes above 15%. This is based on the soil category defined by NRCS. The map does not represent the exact grading of the land, but the effective slope based on a combination of grading and soil. Soils with a higher tendency for erosion and shifting will have a higher slope (see Map 4.5).

WETLANDS

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service has developed a National Wetlands Inventory mapping system. Lafayette County is not significantly impacted by wetlands. About 87% is considered non-wetlands and about 6% is documented open water. About 6% (approximately 25,000 acres) of the County is documented by the National Wetlands Inventory as forest/shrub wetlands or emergent wetland. The majority of forest/shrub wetlands and emergent wetland are contained along the banks of the following rivers/streams in Lafayette County: Little Tallahatchie River, Yocona River, Toby Tubby Creek, Goose Creek, Hurricane Creek, Graham Mill Creek, Lee Creek, and Cypress Creek (see Map 4.6).



Map 4.3

Floodplains (DFIRM)

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
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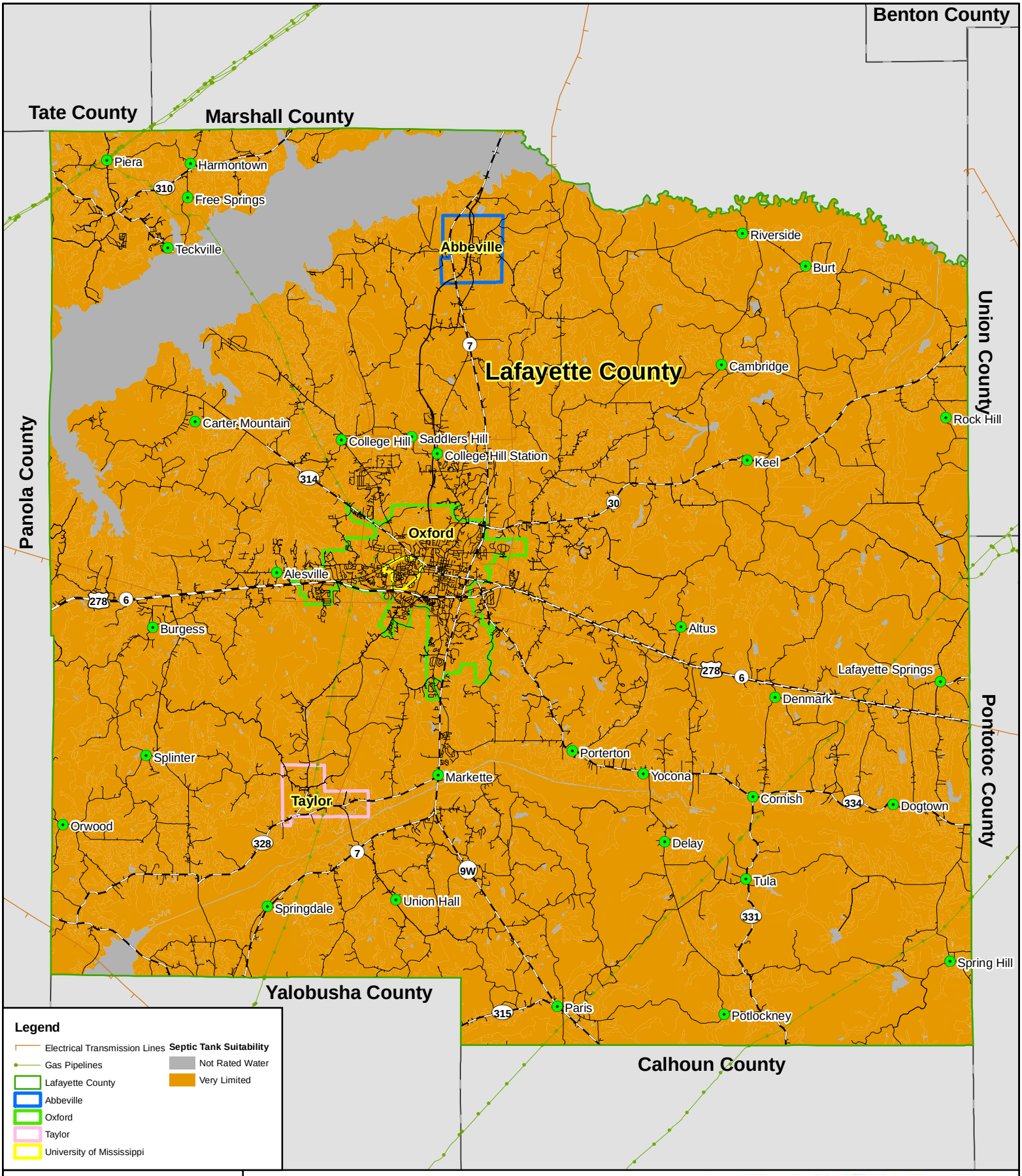

Legend

- Electrical Transmission Lines
- Gas Pipelines
- Lafayette County
- Abbeville
- Oxford
- Taylor
- University of Mississippi

Septic Tank Suitability

- Not Rated Water
- Very Limited

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Map 4.4

Septic Tank Suitability

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Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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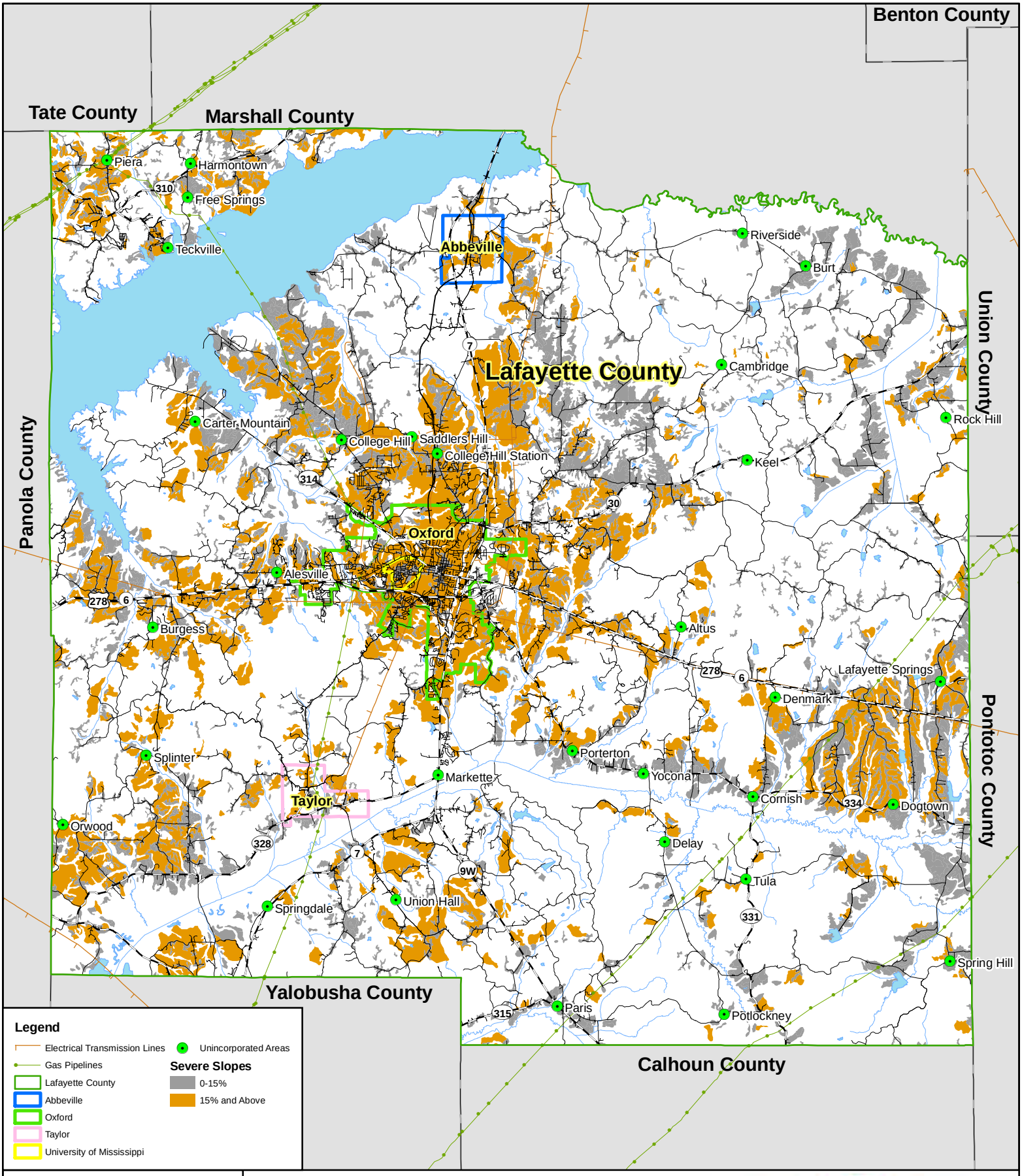

Legend

- Electrical Transmission Lines
- Gas Pipelines
- Lafayette County
- Abbeville
- Oxford
- Taylor
- University of Mississippi
- Unincorporated Areas

Severe Slopes

- 0-15%
- 15% and Above

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Map 4.5

Severe Slopes

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Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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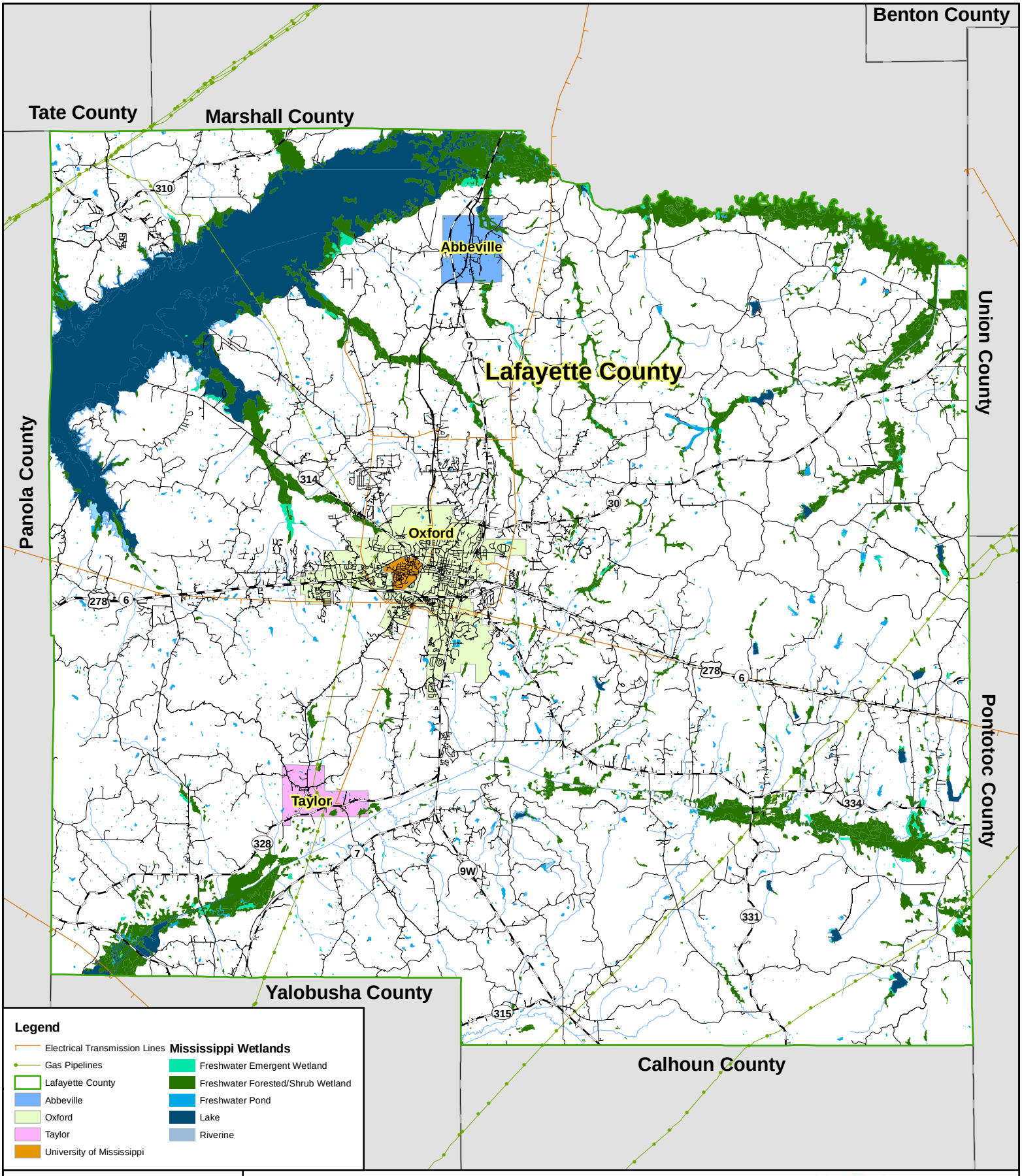

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Map 4.6

Wetlands

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

In order to comply with Mississippi planning enabling legislation, the future land use plan must designate in map or policy form the proposed general distribution and extent of the proposed land uses. The future land use plan serves two purposes. First, it provides for the general physical location for future development. The second purpose is to create order among the existing land uses.

In preparing a Future Land Use Plan, a necessary and responsible step, is that of considering environmentally sensitive areas. Some may see these areas as worthy of some degree of preservation, while other may see them as a constraint to development. Through the use of good design techniques, some of these environmentally constrained areas may be developed while preserving the sensitive areas at the same time.

The current land use plan for Lafayette County would allow anything to happen anywhere with little to no regulation at all. This section identifies policies that will shape how and where development occurs. These policies cannot prevent all negative things or incompatible uses from happening, but hopefully, they will introduce some control and guide future decisions. This section, along with the entire Comprehensive Plan, can promote these ideals even further. This chapter focuses on the highest and best location for certain land uses, the ideal mixture of land uses, and the ideal intensity of land uses by translating portions of the previous chapter into map form.

The Future Land Use Map illustrates various land use categories. The following is an explanation of the specific meaning of land use color codes as depicted on Maps 4.7 and 4.8.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The Lafayette County Future Land Use Plan categorizes future land uses in the following manner:

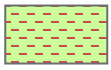
1. Agricultural
2. Rural Community Preservation
3. Residential Estate
4. Residential Low Density
5. Residential Medium Density
6. Residential High Density
7. Commercial Low Density
8. Commercial Medium Density
9. Commercial High Density
10. Rural Development District
11. Light Industrial
12. Heavy Industrial
13. Special Use
14. Parks and Open Space
15. Floodway

The following is an explanation of the specific meaning of land use colors codes depicted on Maps 4.7 and 4.8 contained in this chapter:

AGRICULTURAL:

Agricultural

This land use category depicts areas that are expected to remain predominantly agricultural with no significant concentrations of residential, commercial, industrial or other development, though these uses may and do exist. These areas of the Land Use Plan are not expected to be served by municipal sewer service within the next 10 to 20 years.



Rural Community Preservation

The purpose of this category is to preserve and enhance the small-scale communities of Lafayette County. These areas are often considered as crossroad communities that are the location of a small number of clustered residential, commercial, and/or institutional uses that are often tied to historic sites or place names. Rural communities are important to Lafayette County in that they provide small but historic focal points within the rural landscape. The intent of this

district is to preserve and enhance the unique character of these communities through standards that maintain the traditional form and use in the area. New development should respect the existing pattern and scale of development, should be compatible with existing buildings in character, configuration, orientation and materials, and should be consistent with the policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

RESIDENTIAL:

Residential Estate

The purpose of this category is to provide for large lot, low-density residential development. Residential Estate Districts may be located in areas that do or do not have public or any other approved sewerage. It is also the purpose of this district to protect the rural character and natural resources of Lafayette County while also protecting property of residents living in existing Residential Estate subdivisions or other large lot developments.

Residential Low Density

The purpose of this category is to provide areas for the development of low density, single-family detached dwellings and related compatible uses in relatively spacious surroundings which provide ample, usable open space for leisure time activities. It is the further intent that development support and protect the rural character and natural resources of Lafayette County while providing for limited low-density residential development that is consistent with the principles emphasized in this Comprehensive Plan.

Residential Medium Density

This category provides for existing subdivisions or areas that are expected to be developed at a moderate density. The intent is to provide for neighborhoods with single-family characteristics, while also allowing some latitude in the physical design of housing. Generally, this district will permit single-family detached and attached residential and town houses and such other structures as are accessory thereto. Areas shown on the Land Use Plan as moderate density residential either have sewer service or are expected to have sewer service within the next twenty years.

Residential High Density

This category provides locations for single-family detached and attached housing as well as low density, multiple family housing with adequate, usable open space to prevent overcrowding. The maximum density for apartment or condominium development included in this classification should be 8 units per acre, with a minimum of 30 percent of the gross site area reserved for "usable" open space. All areas shown on the Land Use Plan as high density residential now have sewer service or are expected to have sewer service within the next twenty years.

COMMERCIAL:

Commercial Low Density

This category provides for relatively quiet, attractive, and spacious areas for the development of limited retail and non-retail commercial uses that do not generate substantial volumes of traffic. This district is intended to encourage high quality office park development and to serve as a transition zone between residential uses and higher intensity commercial uses or arterial streets. These districts are appropriate for the fringes of retail districts

Commercial Medium Density

The purpose of this category is to promote the development of well-planned shopping centers and independent commercial uses within carefully selected areas of Lafayette County. Commercial uses in this district should be limited to those in which services performed and merchandise offered for sale be conducted or displayed entirely within enclosed structures. It is the intent of this Plan that shopping centers and independent commercial uses be developed so that pedestrian and vehicular circulation is coordinated with the circulation patterns of adjacent properties in the vicinity that are also affected.

Commercial High Density

The purpose of this category is to provide relatively spacious areas for the development of vehicle-oriented commercial activities which typically require direct auto traffic access and visibility from major transportation corridors. This district is intended to encourage those commercial activities which function relatively independent of intensive pedestrian traffic and proximity to other commercial establishments. Per the previously stated Goals and Objectives, outdoor commercial uses should be located well away from residential districts.

MIXED:

Rural Development District

The purpose of this category is to provide for mixed residential and limited commercial development consistent with rural neighborhoods. The intent of this district is to provide for moderate densities of development while maintaining a high level of protection for sensitive natural resources, preservation of open space, and ensuring compatible design with surrounding neighborhoods. These districts should have access to both certificated water systems and sanitary sewer.

INDUSTRIAL:

Light Industrial

This category includes areas for the exclusive development of light manufacturing and industrial uses with enclosed structures. These uses should generate no objectionable odor, smoke, fumes, vibration or excessive noise. Industrial uses should be located away from, or well buffered from, residential uses.

Heavy Industrial

The category provides for areas for the exclusive development of industrial uses involving manufacturing activities that are conducted out-of-doors or storage of materials out-of-doors. This district also includes manufacturing uses that use large amounts of water to process products or discharge large volumes of wastewater into the sewage system. These industrial uses generally have extensive space requirements and/or generate substantial amounts of noise, vibration, odors, or possess other objectionable characteristics. Industrial uses should be located away from, or well buffered from, residential uses.

PUBLIC/QUASI-PUBLIC:

Special Use

These areas are reserved for governmental, educational and other public uses.

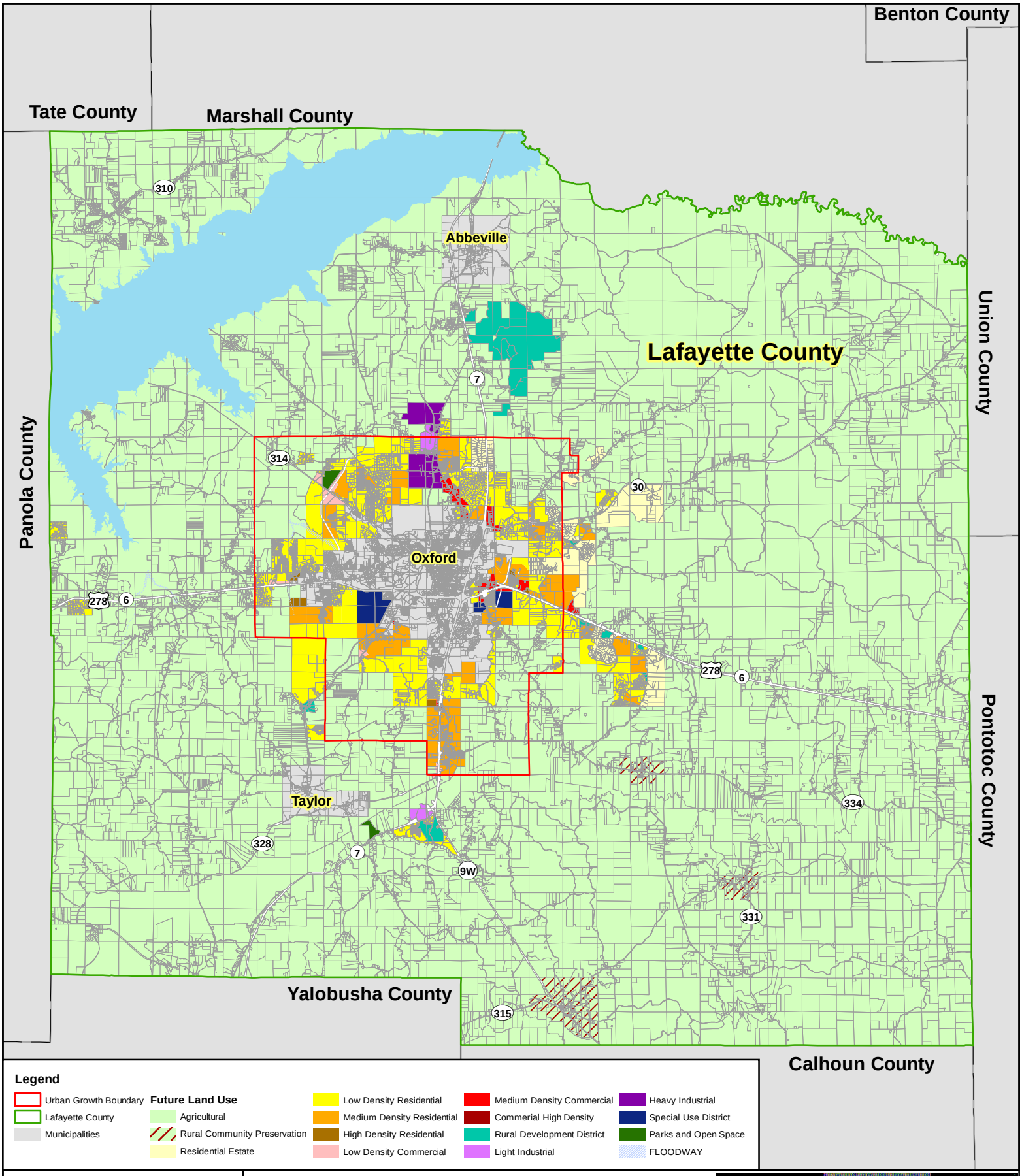
Parks and Open Space (including existing or proposed parks and required setbacks for commercial and industrial uses bordering single-family residential uses or zones)

The designation of an area as "open space" is not intended as a recommendation for acquisition of the property by the County for use as a park or other public use. These areas are generally meant to be used as natural preservation or recreation areas.

FLOODPLAINS AND FLOODWAYS:

Floodways

These areas are the actual creek channels needed to convey water under normal conditions as identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). All construction in floodways is prohibited.



Legend

- Urban Growth Boundary
- Lafayette County
- Municipalities

Future Land Use

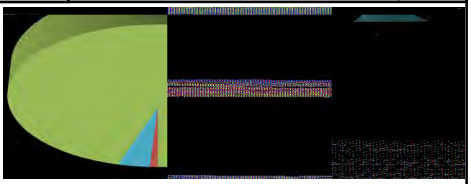
- Agricultural
- Rural Community Preservation
- Residential Estate
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Low Density Commercial
- Medium Density Commercial
- Commerial High Density
- Rural Development District
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Special Use District
- Parks and Open Space
- FLOODWAY

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Map 4.7

Future Land Use

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: October 23, 2017



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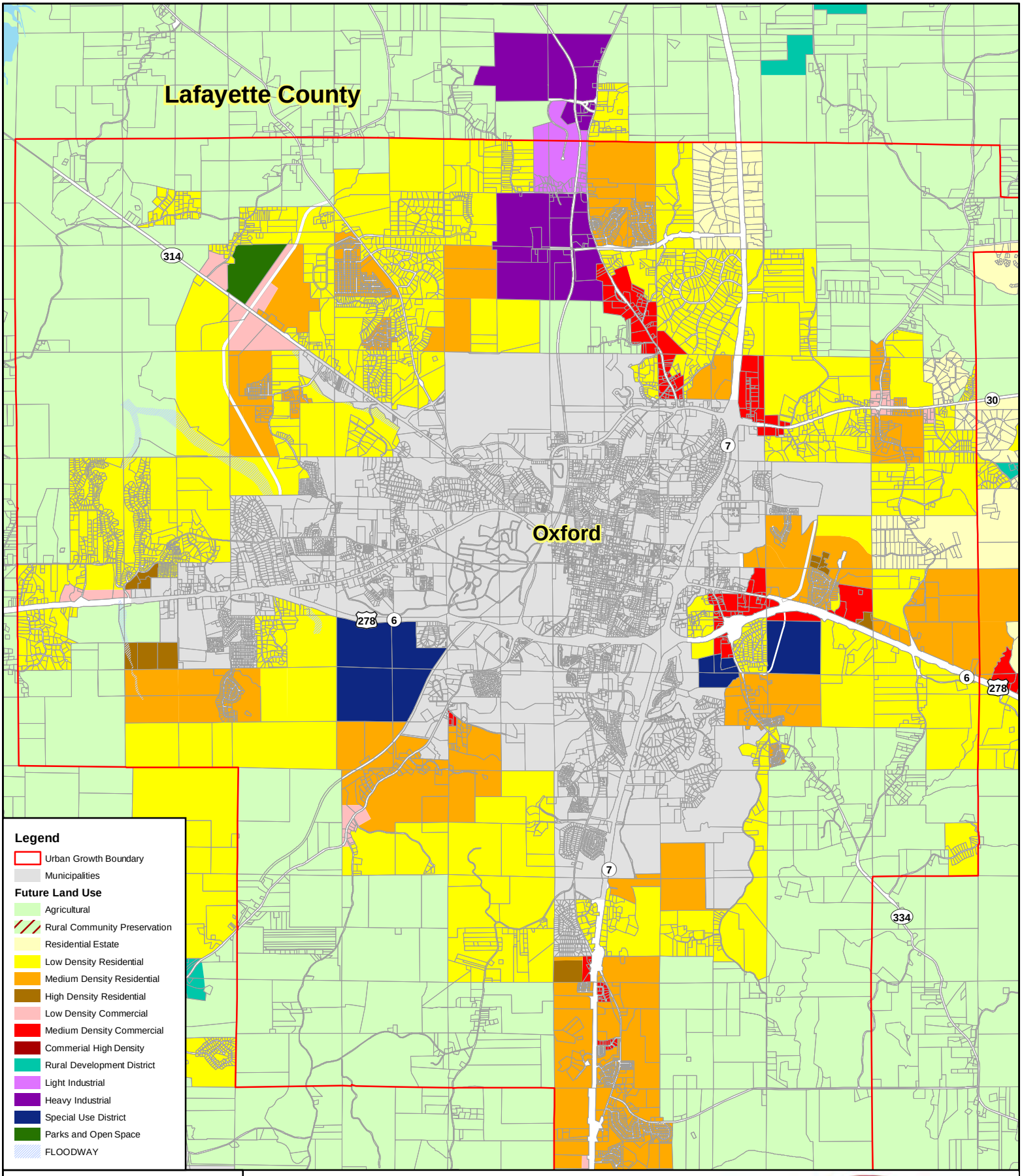

0 0.4 0.8 1.6 Miles

Map 4.8

Future Land Use, Oxford City Zoom

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Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: October 23, 2017

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CHAPTER V ~ TRANSPORTATION

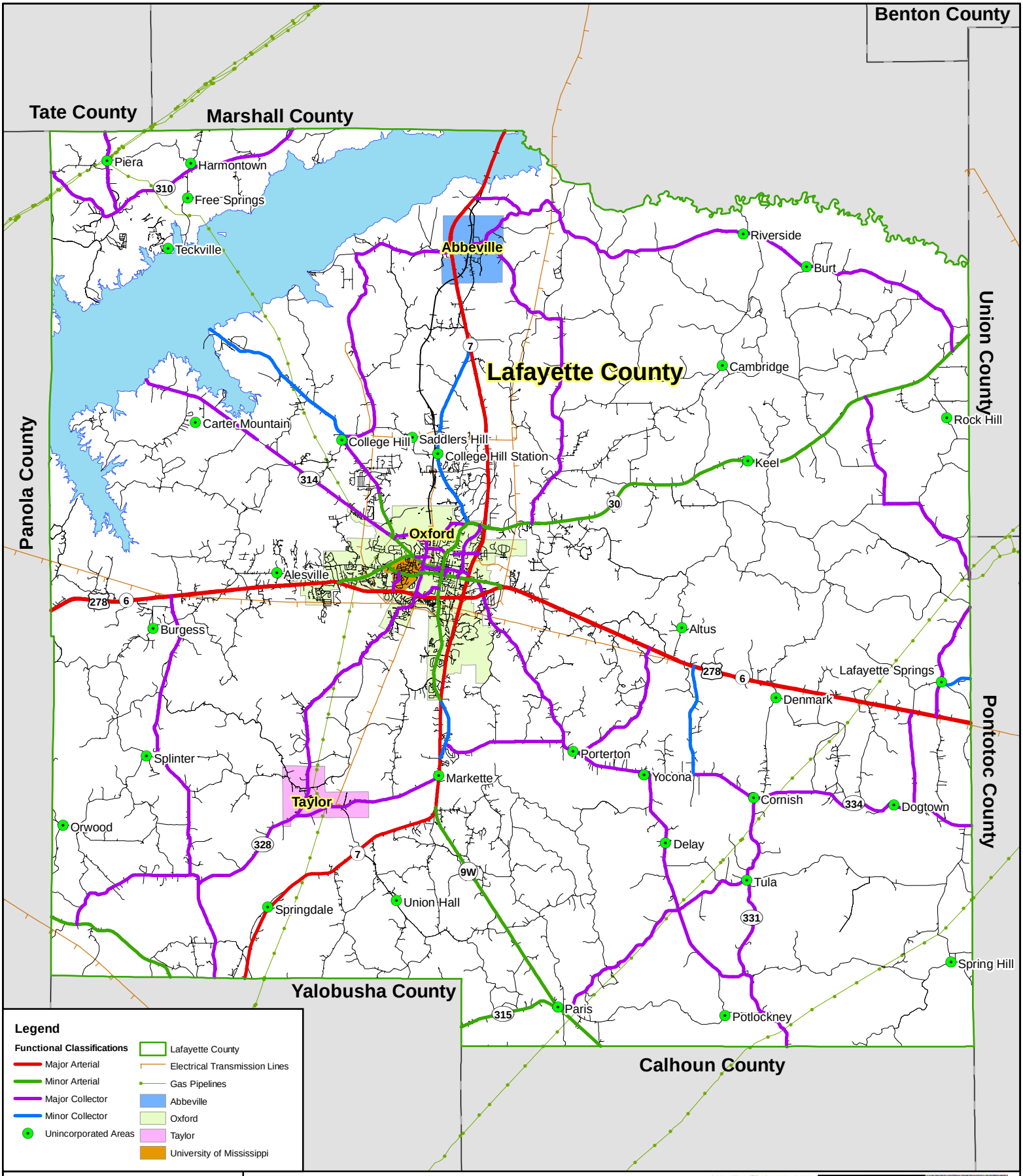
Transportation is an important component of the comprehensive planning process because future development, economic growth, jobs and quality of life are all tied to and influenced by the transportation system. Lafayette County has two main transportation corridors that divide the County into four parts. Mississippi Highway 6/US 278 runs east to west, while Mississippi Highway 7 runs north to south. These highways cross in Oxford.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION (See Map 5.1.)
According to the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) publication *Functional Classification Guidelines*, functional classification is a method used to group streets and roadways into categories based on the level of transportation service they provide. The assumption behind functional classification is that any roadway does not carry traffic independently, yet roadways work together to form a network of traffic flow. It is this overall network that helps assign classifications to roadways based on the portion of road used for the network traffic flow.

Transportation planners and engineers use three main classifications when determining the level of traffic on rural roadways: arterial, collector, and local. Any of those classifications can have a sub-classification (major and minor) as well depending on the conditions and transportation networks within a city or county. Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) assigns these classifications for rural and urban areas. The roadway classifications in this Plan are based on the MDOT functional classifications for Lafayette County.

ARTERIAL
Arterials (major and minor) in rural settings are roadways that serve a higher level of trips and travel density that is characteristic of statewide or countywide travel. Major arterials typically serve and connect the major activity centers and also accommodate the highest volume of traffic. The major arterials in Lafayette County are Mississippi Highways 6/278 and 7. Mississippi Highway 6/278 runs east and west, linking such North Mississippi cities as Tupelo, Oxford, Batesville, and Clarksdale. Mississippi Highway 7 runs north and south, linking such Mississippi cities as Greenwood, Grenada, Water Valley, Oxford, and Holly Springs. Minor arterials work alongside major arterials to form an intercounty network linking major cities and towns. They also should be spaced at a distance consistent with the population distribution that allows developed areas access to these major transportation corridors. The minor arterials in Lafayette County are Mississippi Highway 9W, Mississippi Highway 30, and Mississippi Highway 315. Mississippi Highway 9W begins north of Bruce and continues northwest for 20 miles where it connects with Mississippi Highway 7 just east of Taylor. Mississippi Highway 30 runs east from Oxford to the Natchez Trace Parkway in Tishomingo County. Mississippi Highway 315 runs west from Paris to Coahoma. In the Oxford City Limits, College Hill Road, Fraternity Row, Jackson Avenue, University Avenue, Lamar Boulevard, and South 9th Street all act as minor arterials.

COLLECTOR
Where arterials function as regional connections, collector roads (major and minor) serve the countywide traffic network. They collect and distribute the network of traffic from local roads to arterials. Lafayette County has major and minor collectors identified. Major collectors play a more significant role in the transportation network than do minor collectors. Major collectors in Lafayette County include Mississippi Highways 314 (Old Sardis Road), 328, 331, and 334, as well as County Road 102 (College Hill Road), CR 103, CR 108, CR 215, CR 244, CR 251 (Lafayette Springs Road), CR 296, CR 303 (Taylor Road), CR 313 (Clear Creek Road), CR 387, CR 415, CR 418, CR 429, CR 430, CR 436, and CR 445. In the Oxford City Limits, major collectors include Molly Barr Road, Price Street, Sisk Avenue, Bramlett Boulevard, Taylor Road, Old Taylor Road, Washington Avenue, and Chucky Mullins Drive. The West Oxford Loop extension currently planned for construction around Oxford's northwestern side will likely be classified as a major collector. The minor collectors include County Road 101, CR 102, CR 401, and CR 421.



Legend

Functional Classifications
- Major Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Unincorporated Areas

- Lafayette County
- Electrical Transmission Lines
- Gas Pipelines
- Abbeville
- Oxford
- Taylor
- University of Mississippi

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Map 5.1

Functional Classification

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

LOCAL

Local roadways connect and carry traffic from adjacent land uses to roadways of higher classification for dispersal of traffic flow. For Lafayette County, these would include all other county roadways.

ROAD, RIGHT-OF-WAY, & PAVEMENT STANDARDS

Road right-of-way is a specific designated area on either side of the road pavement that is reserved for drainage, utilities and/or future road work. The required dimensions are directly related to the functional classification of the roadway. The right-of-way area is normally dedicated to the City, County or State depending on the type of roadway.

Subdivision Regulations are documents that cover all aspects of roadway design and construction including right-of-way standards. Lafayette County last updated their Subdivision Regulations in 2015. This document is limited in scope but does include provisions for roadway width, drainage, pavement standards, utilities, subdivision access and right-of-way. The Subdivision Regulations prescribe a minimum right-of-way of 50 feet on local roads, 60 feet on collector roads and 80 feet on arterial roads.

Pavement standards are also important for the safe travel of roadways. In Lafayette County, pavement standards are covered in the Subdivision Regulations. The Subdivision Regulations require a minimum of 20 feet of pavement width plus 10 total feet of shoulder. A standard for pavement width of local roadways is 10 to 12 feet per lane; the width could be wider depending on the roadway classification. All materials used in the design and construction of roads are required to meet the most current standards of the Mississippi Standard Specifications for State Aid Road and Bridge Construction.

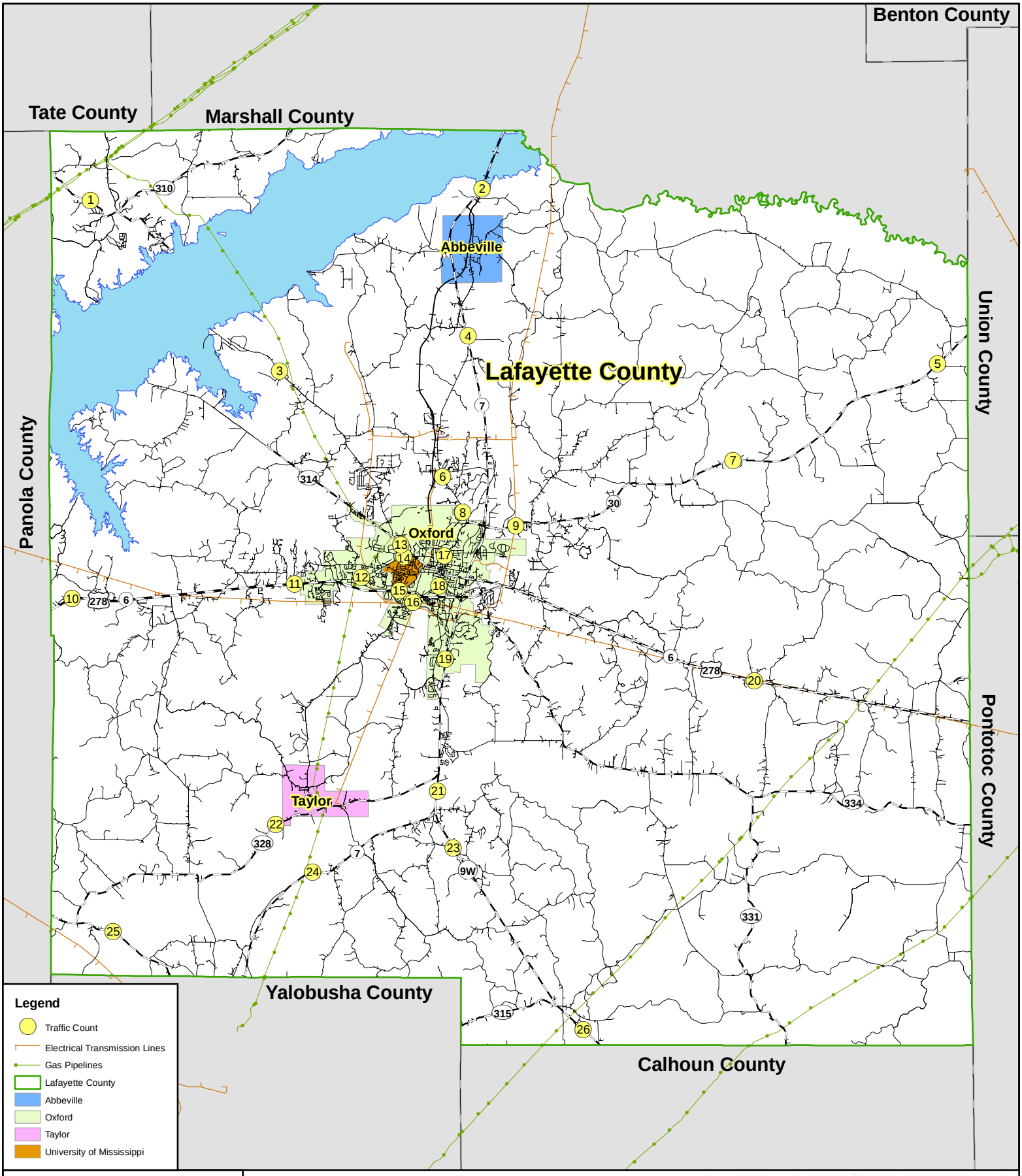
Dead-end streets are another road design element that should be taken into account as new development occurs. This topic is briefly covered in the Subdivision Regulations. They are accepted under phased construction only based on an overall development plan. Temporary turnaround shall be provided for all dead-end streets that extend more than one lot in length. Temporary turnarounds shall have a minimum all weather surface of 80 feet in diameter and 3 feet gravel shoulders. Dead-end streets cause connectivity issues, especially for the Fire Department and in turn cause a public safety issue. The creation of new dead-ends should be highly discouraged moving forward with the exception of properly designed cul-de-sacs.

TRAFFIC COUNTS

Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) conducts a series of traffic count surveys in order to produce statewide data for vehicle-miles-traveled. These surveys are conducted yearly but specific survey points in cities or counties may only be updated every three years because MDOT cannot count each traffic survey point every year. MDOT uses the data collected at each survey point to calculate the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT). These numbers are published for public use.

Lafayette County has a variety of survey locations along the main transportation corridors which are identified in the Select Traffic Counts (See Maps 5.2 and 5.3). For this Comprehensive Plan, traffic counts were analyzed yearly from 2005 to 2014. There has been an overall increase in traffic over the last ten years. However, most of that increase appears to have taken place from 2005 to 2009. The past five years have seen a lesser overall increase in counts, and in many situations have seen a decrease. Survey points 12-18, which are those closest to the University of Mississippi campus and the Oxford Square, have either decreased or remained the same as in 2010. One contributing factor to this may be Oxford-University Transit (OUT), which began running in 2008. Increased ridership and an expanded route network has likely played a role in reducing the number of vehicles on the road that would be there otherwise. Survey points 10 and 11, both located on Highway 6 east of Oxford have seen increases in the past five years. Survey point 2 experienced at least a 50% increase in each of the time ranges. This survey point is located on Highway 7 north of Abbeville at the Little Tallahatchie River bridge.

Lafayette County Selected Average Daily Traffic Counts															
Map NO.	MDOT ID	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Num. Change 2005-2014	Per. Change 2005-2014	Num. Change 2010-2014	Per. Change 2010-2014
1	360420	660	670	670	790	780	790	840	840	840	820	160	24	30	4
2	360180	3800	3800	3900	3700	3700	3700	3700	3800	5600	5700	1900	50	2000	54
3	361010	650	660	590	590	590	640	630	630	460	470	-180	-28	-170	-27
4	360170	6100	6700	6700	7300	5900	6100	6100	5800	5800	6000	-100	-2	-100	-2
5	360360	1700	1700	1700	1900	1800	1900	2300	2300	2300	2400	700	41	500	26
6	360160	3500	4600	4600	4400	4400	4400	4400	3500	3500	3600	100	3	-800	-18
7	360350	2700	2800	3500	3300	3300	2600	2600	2600	2700	2800	100	4	200	8
8	360140	5300	6800	6800	6800	8000	8200	8200	7200	7200	7300	2000	38	-900	-11
9	360330	8900	8900	8900	8600	8500	8700	8600	8700	8800	8700	-200	-2	0	0
10	360200	10000	10000	10000	10000	12000	13000	13000	13000	14000	14000	4000	40	1000	8
11	360220	22000	22000	22000	16000	16000	16000	19000	19000	20000	20000	-2000	-9	4000	25
12	360555	17000	17000	17000	23000	23000	23000	23000	23000	23000	23000	6000	35	0	0
13	360950	9400	9400	10000	9900	9700	8500	8500	8500	7600	7700	-1700	-18	-800	-9
14	360560	14000	14000	14000	21000	21000	21000	19000	19000	19000	19000	5000	36	-2000	-10
15	360240	35000	36000	37000	34000	34000	34000	29000	29000	30000	30000	-5000	-14	-4000	-12
16	365006	12000	14000	14000	13000	13000	13000	13000	11000	11000	11000	-1000	-8	-2000	-15
17	361060	6300	6300	6300	6900	6700	6900	6900	6900	6900	6800	500	8	-100	-1
18	361050	13000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	-1000	-8	0	0
19	360110	12000	15000	15000	15000	12000	12000	12000	14000	14000	14000	2000	17	2000	17
20	360300	4000	7600	7700	7300	6800	6900	6900	7500	7600	7700	3700	93	800	12
21	360080	8200	8200	8200	10000	10000	10000	8400	8500	8600	11000	2800	34	1000	10
22	360470	840	950	950	920	940	950	940	860	860	870	30	4	-80	-8
23	360380	2300	2300	2500	2400	2400	2600	2500	2500	2600	2700	400	17	100	4
24	360060	4400	4700	4800	5200	4600	4700	4700	3600	3700	3800	-600	-14	-900	-19
25	360770	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	1400	1400	1400	1400	200	17	200	17
26	360370	2300	2300	2500	2400	2400	2600	2500	2500	2600	2700	400	17	100	4
												Total Change		Total Change	
												18210		80	



0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Map 5.2

Select Traffic Counts

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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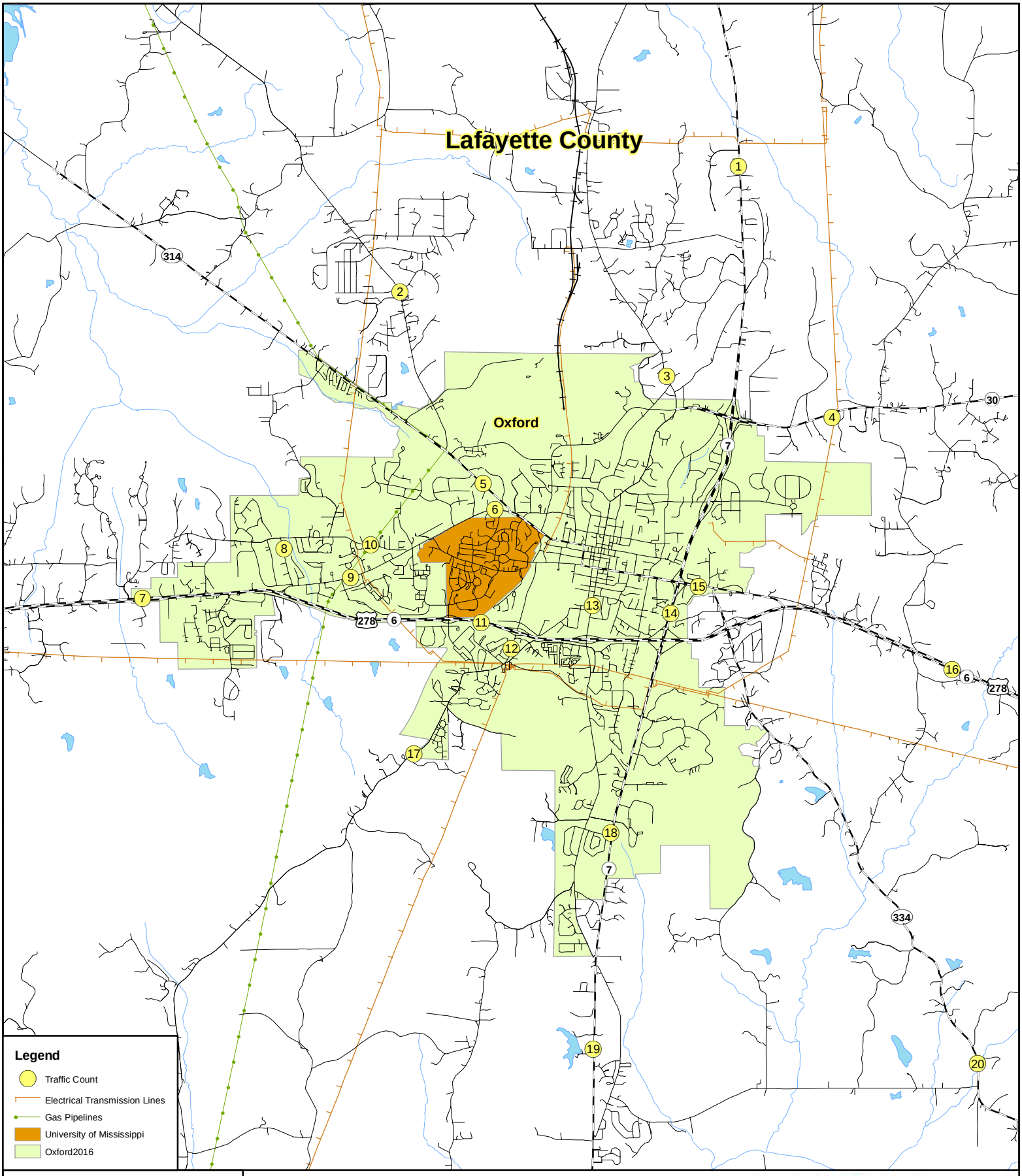
Lafayette County (Zoom) Selected Average Daily Traffic Counts															
Map NO.	MDOT ID	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Num. Change 2005-2014	Per. Change 2005-2014	Num. Change 2010-2014	Per. Change 2010-2014
1	360138	6100	6100	6200	5800	5700	5800	5900	6000	6100	6300	200	3	500	9
2	360510	6100	5500	5500	5200	5100	5200	5200	2500	2500	2500	-3600	-59	-2700	-52
3	360140	5300	6800	6800	6800	8000	8200	8200	7200	7200	7300	2000	38	-900	-11
4	360330	8900	8900	8900	8600	8500	8700	8600	8700	8800	8700	-200	-2	0	0
5	360950	9400	9400	10000	9900	9700	8500	8500	8500	7600	7700	-1700	-18	-800	-9
6	360560	14000	14000	14000	21000	21000	21000	19000	19000	19000	19000	5000	36	-2000	-10
7	360220	22000	22000	22000	16000	16000	16000	19000	19000	20000	20000	-2000	-9	4000	25
8	369009	270	270	280	270	270	270	270	380	380	570	300	111	300	111
9	360555	17000	17000	17000	23000	23000	23000	23000	23000	23000	23000	6000	35	0	0
10	361100	2700	2700	2800	4300	4300	4300	4300	3100	3100	3400	700	26	-900	-21
11	360240	35000	36000	37000	34000	34000	34000	29000	29000	30000	30000	-5000	-14	-4000	-12
12	365006	12000	14000	14000	13000	13000	13000	13000	11000	11000	11000	-1000	-8	-2000	-15
13	361050	13000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000	-1000	-8	0	0
14	360120	17000	22000	22000	23000	18000	18000	18000	21000	21000	21000	4000	24	3000	17
15	360630	12000	12000	12000	12000	11000	16000	16000	16000	15000	15000	3000	25	-1000	-6
16	360290	9200	9200	9300	8900	8800	9000	9800	9900	10000	11000	1800	20	2000	22
17	361006	12000	14000	14000	13000	13000	13000	13000	11000	11000	11000	-1000	-8	-2000	-15
18	360110	12000	15000	15000	15000	12000	12000	12000	14000	14000	14000	2000	17	2000	17
19	360090	8200	8200	8200	10000	10000	10000	8400	8500	8600	11000	2800	34	1000	10
20	360650	1800	1800	1900	1800	1800	1800	1800	1800	1800	1900	100	6	100	6
												Total Change		Total Change	
												12400		-3400	



Map 5.3

Selected Traffic Counts City of Oxford Zoom

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Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
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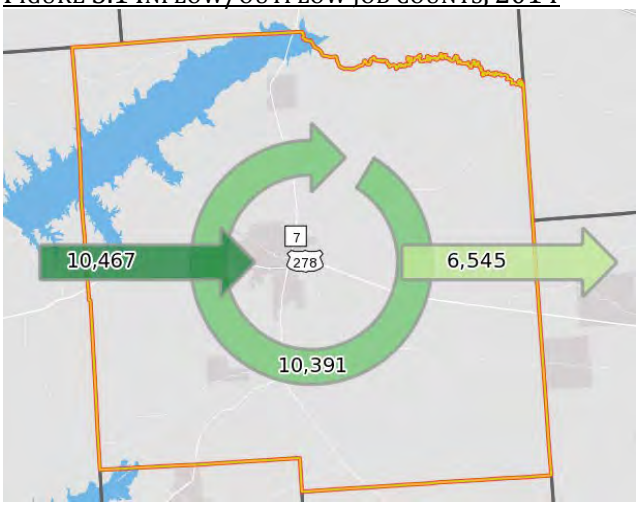
COMMUTING PATTERNS

Commuting patterns of Lafayette County residents and outside residents related to the work place is another important piece of the transportation system. Not surprisingly, most jobs in Lafayette County are concentrated in and around Oxford. Lafayette County's workforce is a near even split among those who live in the County and those who do not, with the latter category being slightly higher. In Figure 5.1, the number on the left indicates non-residents that work in Lafayette County, the number in the center indicates the number of Lafayette County residents that work in the County, and the number on the right indicates the number of Lafayette County residents that work outside the County. Of those who work in Lafayette County but do not live here, most are coming from bordering counties, such as Panola County and Yalobusha County (see Table 5.1). A distance-decay pattern emerges when looking at the home locations of those who work in Lafayette County. The biggest concentration is in Oxford and it spreads outward fairly evenly from there.

Among Lafayette County's residents that work, 61% live in the County (see Table 5.2). The next leading work locations of Lafayette County residents are Shelby County, TN; DeSoto County, Lee County, and Panola County, respectively. Lafayette County residents have a mean travel time to work of 17.9 minutes; this is considerably lower than the mean travel time of the State (24.0 minutes) and the overall United States (25.7 minutes). Still, given that over 6,000 residents are leaving the County to work, and given the number of County jobs being occupied by non-residents, it seems that there are opportunities for residents to stay in the County to work and ultimately reduce average commute times. The vast majority (83.4%) of Lafayette County residents drive alone to work while 9.1% carpool, with the remainder taking another form of transportation to work.

FIGURE 5.1 INFLOW/OUTFLOW JOB COUNTS, 2014



Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies

TABLE 5.1 RESIDENTIAL LOCATIONS OF LAFAYETTE COUNTY WORKERS, 2014

All Counties	20,858	100.0%
Lafayette	10,391	49.8%
Panola	1,417	6.8%
Yalobusha	1,001	4.8%
Lee	758	3.6%
DeSoto	616	3.0%
Calhoun	459	2.2%
Pontotoc	376	1.8%
Marshall	371	1.8%
Shelby, TN	342	1.6%
Tate	292	1.4%
Other	4,835	23.2%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies

TABLE 5.2 WORK LOCATIONS OF LAFAYETTE COUNTY RESIDENTS, 2014

All Counties	16,936	100.0%
Lafayette	10,391	61.4%
Shelby, TN	934	5.5%
DeSoto	600	3.5%
Lee	595	3.5%
Panola	580	3.4%
Yalobusha	234	1.4%
Union	233	1.4%
Pontotoc	228	1.3%
Hinds	220	1.3%
Alcorn	215	1.3%
Other	2,706	16.0%

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies

FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION

There are several modes of transportation in Lafayette County. The primary mode of transportation is automobile travel. In recent years, more importance has been placed on the value of public transportation and infrastructure designed to support active transportation (e.g. walking and cycling). Some of the reasons for the increased efforts to promote these alternative transportation modes is the trend of people striving to have healthier active lifestyles, as well as concerns about rapid population growth and the associated vehicular traffic issues.

AIRPORTS

Lafayette County is home to the University-Oxford Airport. The airport is owned by the University of Mississippi and located in the northwestern portion of the city. The airport opened for operations in the 1950s. According to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the 5,600 foot paved runway is in fair condition, as are the runway markings. In 2015, 63% of University-Oxford Airport's traffic was local general aviation; 26% was itinerant general aviation; 9% was air taxi, and the remaining 2% was military.

AUTOMOBILE TRAVEL

Lafayette County's road network is made up of approximately 668 miles of roads. The County has 136.5 miles of State Aid roads. These roads receive state funding to help with maintenance and improvements. The County is responsible for funding and maintaining the other 531 miles of road, of which 438 miles are paved and 93 miles are gravel. In January of 2017, the County adopted an updated four-year plan to maintain roadways and bridges. The four-year plan details priorities for paving, building and reclaiming roadways in Lafayette County. This is a positive step in maintaining and improving the county road network. This four-year plan should continue to be updated annually and as new funds become available for roadway projects. Given the level of development that is expected to occur over the next twenty years, significant road construction or widening is necessary to accommodate traffic.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The growth of Oxford University Transit (OUT)—a public transit system that began in 2008—has given University of Mississippi students and Oxford residents an alternative to driving and has resulted in fewer cars on the roads than would otherwise be there without the transit system operating. There are currently 14 routes. Future route additions and expansions are being considered. These include a new route/stop to serve the new Baptist Hospital and a circular campus-only route. A challenge for OUT is figuring out how to best serve riders as demand and distance increases while still operating efficiently with their current staff and fleet.

RAIL TRAVEL

No passenger rail service is currently available in Lafayette County. The Mississippi Central Railroad played a role in freight transportation in Lafayette County as recently as 2015, but the tracks are not currently used for anything other than rail car storage. The short line railroad is owned by Pioneer Railcorp and runs 51 miles from Grand Junction, TN to Oxford, ending at the University-Oxford Airport. The railroad provides connections to the Burlington Northern Railway at Holly Springs and the Norfolk Southern Railway in Grand Junction. The railroad is available to move freight for tenants of the Lafayette County Industrial Park, but is not currently used. Roseburg Forest Products, a large national company that closed their Oxford plant in 2015, was the only remaining local industry that made regular use of the railroad for shipping freight. The railroad currently has reliability issues related to the condition of the tracks and time performance. The tracks south of the University-Oxford Airport were abandoned in recent years and the right-of-way has been converted for alternate transportation uses. In order to remain a desirable location for the manufacturing industry, a commitment should be made to improving the condition of the tracks north of the airport and to recruiting an increasing number of customers over time. This will help ensure that freight-shipping industries are supported in the future.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Active transportation modes such as cycling and walking are increasing in popularity, especially as the trend of living close to the workplace and downtown has emerged across the country. This trend does not appear to be slowing down in the future. Part of this trend includes new downtown populations creating a demand for more inclusive mixes of land use, and better urban design to serve their needs. People of all ages are becoming more active and civic infrastructure is being altered to accommodate them.

The Lafayette-Oxford-University Pathways Commission is a group that formed around 2007. Their goal is to diversify and increase transportation and recreation opportunities in the area by creating an interconnected grid of bike lanes, pedestrian sidewalks, and multi-use paths. They encourage adherence to a Complete Streets policy that promotes the design and creation of streets that serve all people and all forms of mobility.

There are several dedicated trails that have been developed in recent years. The Oxford Depot Trail is a paved path found on a portion of the old Mississippi Central Railroad right-of-way near the old train depot. The Thacker Mountain Rail Trail is a wide, flat unpaved path that starts on the University of Mississippi campus and runs 3.5 miles southwest towards Taylor. Stemming off of the Thacker Mountain Rail Trail is a series of more traditional primitive trails with rougher surface conditions and more challenging topography. These are collectively known as the Whirlpool Trails. Another dedicated trail in the County is the Clear Creek Trail, a mountain biking trail found at Clear Creek Recreation Area on Sardis Lake. There are beginner, intermediate, and expert portions of the trail network.

Lafayette County regional bike routes have been identified and mapped by the Pathways Commission. They were based on common routes taken by cycling groups that favored county roads with relatively low speeds, little traffic congestion, and good surface conditions. These routes include the 40-mile Abbeville Loop, the 32-mile Roubaix Loop, the 49-mile Water Valley Loop, and the 36-mile Tula Loop. Other cycling routes might best be identified with the STRAVA heat mapping app, which displays routes based on user frequency.

RECENT, ONGOING, & FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Several projects are currently being planned to help manage future traffic concerns, as seen in Map 5.4. Highway 7 South has been scheduled for road improvements by MDOT that will result in the widening of the road from two to four lanes from the stretch of two-lane highway starting just south of the interchange with Highway 6/278 and continuing south to the Highway 7/9W split and on to Water Valley. The project has been delayed but should begin soon. The highway will eventually be widened to four lanes as far south as Grenada. This will emphasize Highway 7 South's status as a major arterial.

Mississippi's State Aid Road Program assists counties with funding to help support the construction and maintenance of secondary, non-state owned roads and bridges. The Local System Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program is also administered by the State Aid office. As the governing agency of Lafayette County, the Board of Supervisors is required to appoint a County Engineer to act on the Board's and County's behalf and administer engineering functions. The Board is also required to appoint a Local System Bridge Engineer. Roads that are included in the State Aid plan must be designated by the Board of Supervisors. Annual supervisor inspections of County roads in their respective districts result in a list of desired improvements. Road improvements funded by State Aid include the construction of hot mix asphalt overlays and the maintenance and resealing of bituminous surfaces.

An updated Four-Year Road and Bridge Plan was adopted in January 2017. The plan covers building, paving, and reclamation projects that are needed for the county road and bridge system from 2017 to 2020. The projected State Aid Road Program budget during that time is $2.6 million, while that of the Local System Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program (LSBP) is projected to

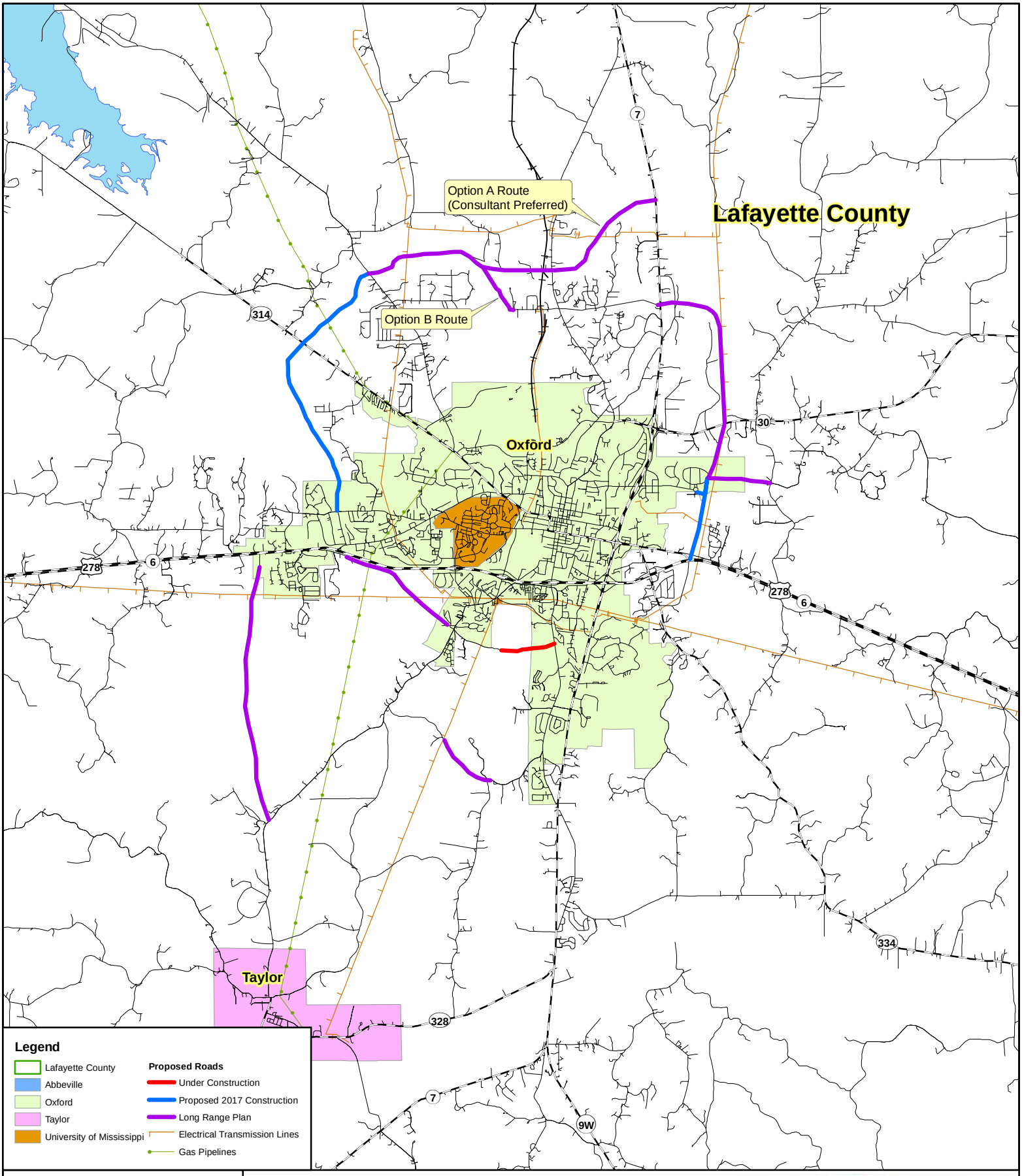
be $2.2 million. Another source of funds utilized by Lafayette County is the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). The FLAP attempts to provide safe and adequate transportation access by improving facilities that lead to, are adjacent to, or are located within federal lands. State and local resources for transportation facilities are supplemented by the FLAP. An emphasis is placed on high-use recreation sites and economic generators. Federal lands in Lafayette County include Sardis Lake and Holly Springs National Forest. Necessary bridge improvements on Highway 314 near the approach to Sardis Lake are eligible for FLAP funds. Rather than use a large portion of the LSBP budget on the bridge improvements, Lafayette County will match roughly 20% of the total estimated project cost and the FLAP will pay for the rest. This amounts to Lafayette County paying $400,000 for a $2.1 million project. The remaining $1.7 million is paid by the FLAP. Because the FLAP covers a large portion of costs that would otherwise be paid for by the County and/or State, Lafayette County is able to maximize their State Aid funds and get more improvement projects completed at a lower total cost.

According to the City of Oxford's Vision 2037 Comprehensive Plan, West Oxford Loop will be extended from its intersection with Anderson Road to College Hill Road (see Map 5.4). Three roundabouts will be installed where West Oxford Loop meets Anderson Road, Old Sardis Road (MS Highway 314), and College Hill Road (CR 102), respectively. This project has already received budget approval but currently has no projected start or finish date. However, it is likely that construction will begin in 2017. Of all the proposed roads in the Vision 2037 Plan, the West Oxford Loop extension has been the most widely discussed and is the most likely to be constructed. Lafayette County has plans to ultimately extend West Oxford Loop even further from College Hill Road to Highway 7 North in a second phase of construction. A portion of this additional County extension will incorporate a section of County Road 104. This new road will effectively serve as a northwest route around Oxford, allowing commuters to move between Highway 6 East and Highway 7 North without entering the central city. West Oxford Loop will likely be classified as a major collector.

Another planned major collector will be a new road connecting Sisk Avenue with University Avenue and Highway 6/278 just to the east of Oxford High School. A new traffic light at the intersection of this future road and Highway 6/278 will likely be necessary for safety purposes and its installation will be coordinated with MDOT. The newly constructed road commonly known as Oxford Way is an overlay and extension of County Road 300 that connects South Lamar Boulevard and Old Taylor Road. The road is complete but has not yet officially opened. Once it does, commuters will no longer need to access Old Taylor Road via Highway 6 near central Oxford or from Highway 328 off of Highway 7 South. A traffic light at the intersection of Oxford Way and South Lamar Boulevard may eventually be needed to control traffic flow.

Additional active transportation amenities are desired by many Lafayette County residents. There are several funding sources available that support the creation of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, such as the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant, which is administered by the U. S. Department of Transportation. The County should explore the various outside funding opportunities and try to use them.

Some active transportation infrastructure is currently being built and planned for. The new Oxford Way (CR 300) extension features a sidewalk on one side of the street and a wide multi-use path on the other side, each separated from the road by a landscaped grass strip with trees. The West Oxford Loop extension will have bike lanes as far as the Oxford City Limits, with wide shoulders beyond that point that may one day allow bike lanes. Recent road improvements that have increased accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists include the conversion of Molly Barr Road from four lanes to three lanes with bike lanes on each side. Additionally, many "share the road" signs have been installed to increase awareness among drivers.



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Map 5.4

Transportation Plan

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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CHAPTER VI ~ COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities are locations and services usually provided by a local government but also may be provided by a private enterprise. Some examples of community facilities include public schools, fire stations and fire protection, libraries, parks, cemeteries, water and sewer service, solid waste disposal, ambulance service, police protection, court systems, etc. Providing a brief inventory and analysis of the existing services in Lafayette County will be beneficial when planning for the future. This information will also assist in developing goals and objectives for improving the variety and quality of services currently provided and can be used as support for developing a plan for future capital improvements.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

Lafayette County's governmental and administration services operate out of the County Courthouse (Circuit Clerk) and the Chancery Court Building (Administrator's Office, Chancery Clerk, and Tax Assessor/Collector). The Chancery Court Building was constructed in 2002, and adequately serves the County's administration needs. However, the County should perform a regular assessment of the capacity and functionality of all administration facilities.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Lafayette County expressed a variety of needs and expectations for the County public safety facilities over the next twenty years. Specific discussions included needs, upgrades, and new construction within the Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, Emergency Management Agency and Health Department. Each sub-category of public safety needs is discussed below.

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

The Lafayette County Sheriff's Department operates out of the Lafayette County Detention Center building. There is a need for additional office space. More desk space for officers and a meeting room is desired. Ideally, the additional space would take the form of a dedicated building for the Sheriff's Department that remains in close proximity to the jail facilities.

The Detention Center building opened in 1993 and currently contains the Sheriff's Department, the E-911 Department, and the County Jail. More space is needed by the Sheriff's Department and E-911. The jail currently is not operating at capacity, but this does not provide a solution for the space shortages of other departments. The jail has 209 beds, of which approximately 130 are currently occupied. The jail has been at capacity in the past, but is no longer due to governmental policy changes regarding the housing of federal prisoners. The Sheriff's Department currently employs 35 deputies. Because of recent rapid growth patterns that are expected to continue into the foreseeable future, the department hopes to double the number of officers to 70 by 2025. The jail employs 24 jailers and 4 civilian workers. A full-time nurse is desired by the department, as well as a dedicated juvenile jail facility.

Equipment needs include newer radios that can operate on the MSWIN system, dash cameras, and body cameras. The lock system at the jail needs upgrades within the next 5 years. The necessary upgrades include new physical locks and a system to operate them. The expected cost is over $300,000.

FIRE DEPARTMENT (See Map 6.1)

The Lafayette County Fire Department is a countywide "all-hazards" fire department, which consists of 14 stations and numerous pieces of firefighting equipment, and provides fire suppression, prevention, and public education. Department membership is approximately 150, with the majority being volunteer members. This number varies monthly based on additions and deletions to the roster. Currently, 13 of these members are part-time employees of the County. These part-time firefighters work 12-hour shifts, Monday – Friday, 7am – 7pm. Responses to motor vehicle accidents that involve extrication are provided jointly with the City of Oxford Fire Department. Emergency Medical Services are provided by Baptist Memorial Hospital and Lafayette County EMS, a volunteer organization. Administratively, the County employs 1 full-time Fire Coordinator and 1 part-time Fire Coordinator. These personnel are responsible for all

administrative functions of the department on the County's behalf. Nine additional full-time employees will be needed to operate the central fire station when 24-hour staffing begins. This is projected to happen no earlier than October 2017.

Other functions the department provides include rope rescue, overland search and rescue, and hazardous materials (HAZMAT) response to the operations level. Each of these disciplines requires specialized training that is outside the realm of basic firefighter training. All rope rescue technicians have a minimum of 40 hours of rope rescue training from the Mississippi Fire Academy. Many of the volunteer firefighters are trained to the HAZMAT Technician level, but deficiencies in equipment limit the response capabilities.

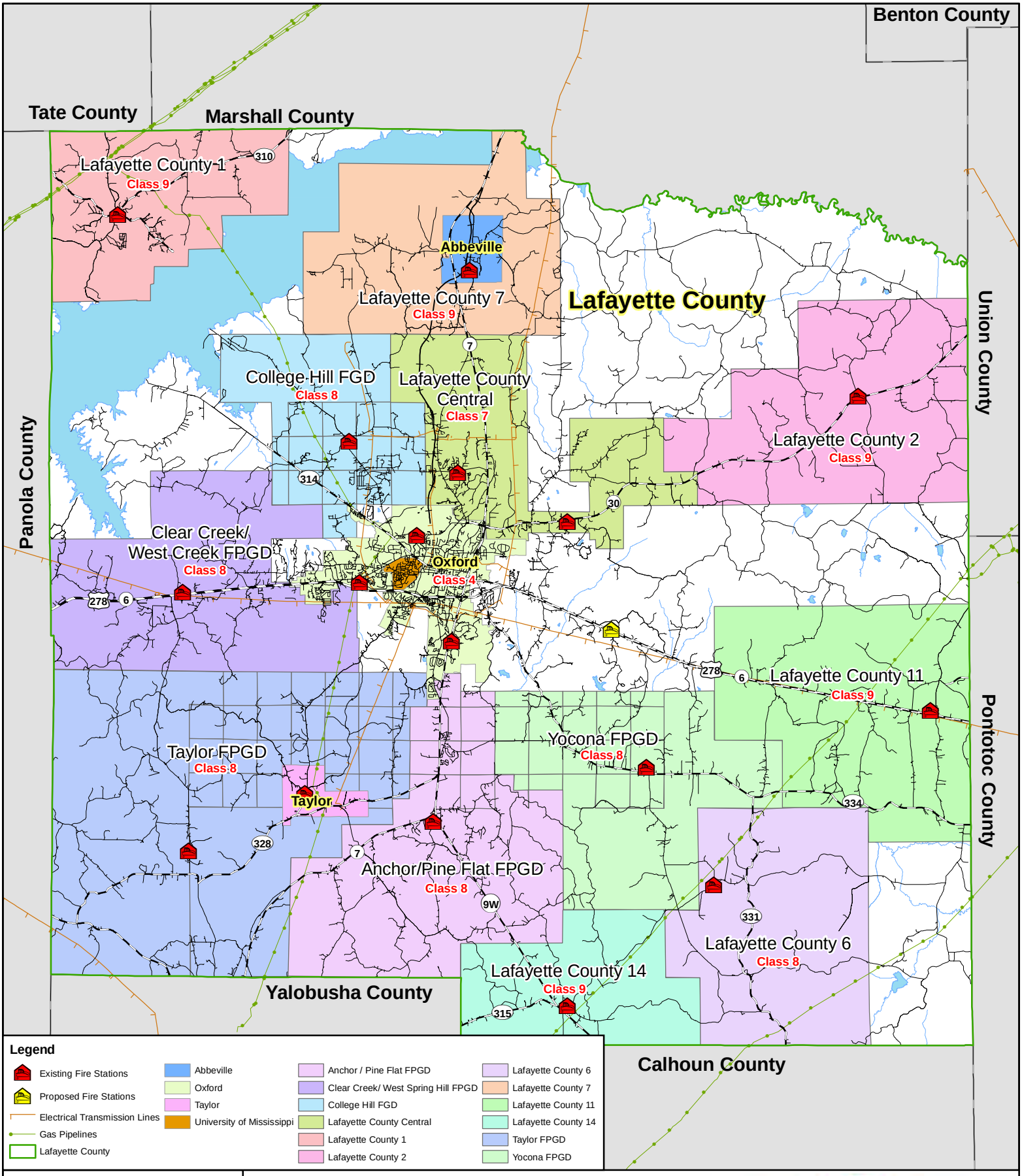
Fire rating by district varies greatly. They also vary by geography and not all areas of the County are in a ratable district. Fire districts are graded for insurance rating purposes on a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being the most desirable. The City of Oxford has a Class 4 rating for their fire district. Lafayette County's fire districts range from Class 7 to Class 9. Ratings are determined by a number of factors such as water supply, run distance from existing stations, and equipment. Areas more than five road miles away from the district's fire station are not eligible for inclusion in the district and are considered a Class 10.

County Fire Departments should conduct a regular assessment of all fire protection equipment and maintain equipment and facilities in a manner that improves the class rating. Fire trucks and other types of fire equipment may have a specific lifespan for recommended operation. There are proposed plans for building a new fire station on Highway 6 East. A station built in this area will give the County the ability to form a grading district and in turn, improve fire protection and lower the insurance costs for local residents. The new district may be annexed into the Central District. The County should work with the Mississippi State Rating Bureau to determine facility and equipment requirements to maintain and/or improve fire ratings countywide. Other necessary facility improvements include the replacement of Stations 3, 4, and 12. These stations have capacity issues and are near the end of their projected lifespan of 30 years. Station 11 needs to be renovated. Station 5 and the Central Fire Station are both due for additions.

Response time is very important to all fire departments. Lafayette County is concerned about response times in certain fire department districts due to inadequate roadway connections. Measures should be taken to evaluate transportation connections to better accommodate fire protection and fire response in all fire districts. Lafayette County has such a wide variation of terrain, development intensity, landscape and infrastructure which makes countywide fire protection difficult at times. For example, areas around the City of Oxford and the University of Mississippi campus are greatly influenced by dense developments demanding some of the highest levels of fire protection while other areas of the County are primarily rural and sparsely developed.

Lafayette County does not own or operate any type of water system. Private water associations are relied on to supply the department with hydrants. There are 25 private water certificates in the County that reserve the right to provide water service. Water pressure and the number of hydrants, if any, vary drastically throughout the entire County and department leadership continually works with local water associations to improve their systems. Some areas have fire hydrants, but the reliability of these functioning properly during an emergency is low. The lack of adequate water lines and fire hydrants has a negative impact on fire ratings.

While the department has historically been staffed by volunteer firefighters, the current and projected future growth of the County will ultimately require the need for paid firefighters and 24-hour service. The first station that should become full-time is the Central Station because of its centralized location and current staffing. A steady progression over several years should lead to 24-hour staffing at up to five stations. Volunteer support and response will still be needed because of the County's overall land area.



Map 6.1

Fire Districts, Ratings, and Stations

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (EMA)

The Emergency Management / Homeland Security Agency (EMA) is responsible for the preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery activities before, during, and after an emergency or disaster affects Lafayette County. Emergency Management coordinates the direction of County government operations in response to emergencies. Lafayette County's current EMA Office is located within the Chancery Building in downtown Oxford, which is inadequate in terms of space needs and operational needs. From an administrative standpoint, the current facilities serve the department's needs well, but there is a lack of storage space for equipment. This has resulted in the department acquiring a storage container that is kept at the Fire Department's Central Station. The EMA has four emergency standby generators in its inventory that are kept at the Lafayette County Maintenance Shop. While this arrangement has worked for the department in the past, it has only worked because of the willingness of the Road Department and Fire Department to share their already limited space. Dedicated secure storage space is needed for the EMA.

Lafayette County does not have a dedicated Emergency Operations Center (EOC). It would be desirable to have a secure facility that could be used as a meeting place equipped with redundant wireless and landline communications equipment for County officials and representatives from the various Emergency Support Functions to manage emergency situations at various levels. This facility would also be used as an office and base of operations for Emergency Management. The current default location for coordinating emergency operations is the Central Fire Station. This is not ideal, as basing operations at the station can get in the way of the Fire Department's own work requirements. The City of Oxford has a new storm-resistant Emergency Operations Center that has been made available to Lafayette County EMA as needed. Until the County has their own EOC, they should take advantage of this offer.

Current EMA staff is at two employees—the Director and one part-time Administrative Assistant. The recent addition of the Administrative Assistant has been extremely helpful. However, with increasing responsibilities and the associated documentation, as well as an effort to provide outstanding services to the citizens of the County, the part-time status of the Administrative Assistant is not sufficient to meeting the department's needs. The position needs to be increased to full-time. An Assistant Coordinator position may need to be created in the future. It may also be desirable to consider a specialized maintenance person that could be dedicated to such services as generator maintenance, siren maintenance and possibly other duties. This individual could provide services to several County departments. Another eventual need of the department will be the replacement of the emergency vehicle. The current vehicle is in generally good condition but has over 118,000 miles on it and may need to be replaced in the next couple years to ensure its emergency operations status.

E-911

The Lafayette County Emergency E-911 is the Public Safety Answering Point for all of Lafayette County, including the City of Oxford and the University of Mississippi. In addition to the four E-911 lines, emergency operators also answer five administrative lines, five ring-down lines and monitor/dispatch on eight different radio channels, 24 hours a day. Lafayette County E-911 is directly responsible for the dispatch operations of the Lafayette County Sheriff's Department, the Lafayette County Fire Department, the Oxford Fire Department, the Lafayette County EMS, and the Baptist Oxford EMS. Callers who require a law enforcement agency other than the Lafayette County Sheriff's Department are transferred to that agency once the initial contact information is obtained. All E-911 operations are performed by a staff of nine full-time and four part-time dispatchers. The E-911 department is currently housed in a small room in the Lafayette County Detention Center. While the department works well with the Sheriff's Department in their shared facility, there is a major need for more space. In addition to extra space, the department needs more dispatchers. Adding 2 full-time dispatchers to the staff should be sufficient for the department's current and future needs.

SOLID WASTE DEPARTMENT

The purpose of the Lafayette County Solid Waste Department is to maintain a clean and environmentally safe place for people to live. The main service provided is garbage pick-up. The department currently has 20 employees. Garbage pick-up is currently done using 5 "rear loader" trucks that require an employee to ride on the back. Due to a combination of safety concerns for employees riding on the backs of trucks, as well as the increased efficiency of automated trucks compared to rear loaders, the County is transitioning its truck fleet over the next 2-3 years to become fully automated. Because the current rear loaders are still in good working condition, the plan is to slowly phase them out and replace the oldest ones first. The new trucks will require new roll out garbage containers. Approximately 10,500 new containers will be purchased and distributed to residents in the coming months. Although the new trucks will require fewer employees to operate them, the plan is not to terminate any employees, but rather to reassign personnel from garbage pickup to other areas such as trash collection and litter control. The department also has 2 "clam trucks" for picking up items such as tree limbs and rubbish piles. An additional clam truck is expected in the next couple years. Aside from the new trucks that have already been approved, there are no needs for the department at the present.

HUMANE SOCIETY

The Oxford-Lafayette Humane Society provides an invaluable service to County residents by rescuing, sheltering and promoting the adoption of abandoned animals. The Humane Society manages the Oxford Animal Shelter, provides full-time Animal Control services for the City, and administers dog licensing in Oxford. The Lafayette County Sheriff's Department is responsible for animal control outside of Oxford city limits. The County should support the Humane Society efforts wherever possible through financial or other means. The county could partner with the shelter on a county wide dog licensing program much like the Oxford licensing program.

The Humane Society operates several programs that help carry out their goals. The Spay/Neuter Assistance Program (SNAP) provides low-income pet owners with affordable spay and neuter services through a partnership with the local veterinary hospitals Animal Clinic of Oxford and Crossroads Animal Hospital. The Prevent a Litter (PAL) program, which encourages community members to sponsor the spay/neuter services of pet owners who are unable to pay, is similar to the SNAP program and has the same goal of controlling the pet population. The transfer/rescue program partners with rescue organizations and no-kill shelters to provide an alternative to euthanasia in the event that there is no space at the shelter or nobody willing to adopt. Reading with Rover is a community-based literacy program that takes place once a month at the Oxford-Lafayette County Public Library and features children reading books to shelter dogs.

PUBLIC SERVICES

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Lafayette County Health Department is part of the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH), but the facility is owned and partially funded by Lafayette County. The MSDH currently pays for any utilities and upkeep associated with this facility, but since the facility is county owned there is no charge for rent. The facility and staff is funded through State budget, local Board of Supervisor contributions, third party earnings, and some federal funds. The Lafayette County Health Department is currently open three days per week. Patients are seen by appointment and on a limited basis by walk-in. The facility is sufficient to meet the current and future needs and there are no immediate plans for expansion. Renovations to the current facility are expected to take place when Highway 7 South is widened.

There are a host of services provided by licensed registered nurses, nutritionists, social workers, and other public health professionals at this facility and within the immediate community. Some of the services are nutrition education and counseling through the Women, Infant, and Children's (WIC) program; family planning services for both females and males; pregnancy testing; intervention, diagnosis, treatment and follow up for sexually transmitted diseases, HIV testing and counseling; tuberculosis testing,

treatment, and daily observed preventive therapy; genetic screening and counseling for new born infants; etc. As soon as staff are properly trained more services will be provided within the community such as diabetes self-management training, tobacco prevention, and other prevention programs.

Mississippi State Department of Health staff also ensure there is safe drinking water, proper sewage protection, and safe eating establishments by providing inspections and/or soil and site evaluations through a regional environmental health team. Environmental health services are mandated by state law. Child care facilities are also inspected and licensed by a regional child care team. The County should continue to support the Health Department in every way possible and promote healthy lifestyles for all residents.

CORONER/MORGUE

The Coroner investigates all deaths and determines the cause of death. Lafayette County lacks a dedicated morgue facility. Currently, the County is storing remains at local funeral homes and the hospital. This is not an ideal arrangement. A new morgue should be constructed with enough space and equipment to handle all of Lafayette County's needs. There is a potential opportunity to take this a step further and build a state of the art forensic center combined with a new morgue that could service the needs of Lafayette County, as well as surrounding counties. Under this plan, Lafayette County would collect a morgue fee from other counties who send their deceased here. The additional fees could potentially offset operating costs.

COUNTY EXTENSION

The Mississippi State University Extension Service provides research-based information, educational programs, and technology transfer focused on issues and needs of the people of Mississippi, enabling them to make informed decisions about their economic, social, and cultural well-being. Extension program areas include Master Gardeners, 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture & Natural Resources, Enterprise & Community Resource Development, and Family & Consumer Sciences.

Each county has an Extension office that supports the program areas and provides resources such as science-based information, hands-on help, educational workshops, and problem-solving experts to community members. Lafayette County's Extension office is a county-owned facility that includes office space, storage space, and a meeting room. Lafayette County Extension office staff includes 2 County Extension Agents, 1 Food Nutrition Program Assistant, 1 Area Livestock Agent, and 1 Office Associate. A full-time Horticulture Agent is desired by the department to enhance their program area expertise. A dedicated 4-H facility is something Lafayette County does not have that many other counties do. The County should attempt to identify property where a 4-H camp could be located and support its creation. A new multi-purpose building will be needed in the future, especially when the current facility is demolished to make way for the widening of Highway 7. This new building is slated for construction on the County-owned 160-acre property. The new multi-purpose building will include office space and a livestock arena.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

The Lafayette County office of the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS) is dedicated to providing services to people in need. New facility space is needed. Child Protective Services (CPS) is a division of DHS, but is currently housed in a separate facility in a different location. A new combined facility housing both DHS and CPS is expected to be constructed at the County-owned 160-acre property.

DRIVER'S LICENSE TESTING

The Lafayette County Driver's License Testing office, which falls under the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, provides license testing and renewal services to drivers that meet legal requirements to operate motor vehicles in the State. The current office location on Highway 7 South will be demolished during the upcoming road widening project. A new facility is expected be constructed at the 160-acre site.

ROADS

This plan proposes to update and improve the transportation network and quality of the infrastructure. To support the updates and improvements outlined in this plan, Lafayette County will need to acquire newer and additional road equipment. The Road Department has identified the equipment additions that are needed within the next five years, including various work vehicles and construction equipment. There are 45 full-time and 4 part-time employees with the department as of 2016.

Currently, the department has the equipment needed to meet the requirements set forth by the Office of State Aid Road Construction. State Aid provides funds and the County provides the equipment and labor for constructing, improving, widening, straightening, surfacing or reconstructing of secondary, non-state owned roads and bridges. It is the responsibility of the Board of Supervisors to designate the roads to be included in the County's State Aid System, adopt annual construction programs, acquire rights-of-way for State Aid projects, advertise for bids, award contracts, and maintain completed projects after construction.

A Four-Year Road and Bridge Plan was updated and adopted in January 2017. The plan covers building, paving, and reclamation projects that are needed for the county road and bridge system from 2017 to 2020.

Another plan that is developed concurrently with the road and bridge plan is the maintenance cycle plan. The maintenance cycle plan covers elements such as stripping, signage, drainage, and resurfacing. Each member of the Lafayette County Board of Supervisors is required to perform an annual roads inspection of their respective district. Their findings are very influential in deciding which types of improvements on which roads get included in the Four Year Plan.

PUBLIC UTILITIES

While the County is not in the utility business, they can serve as the advocate for certain utility services and promote and encourage extended service. The populated areas of the County are served by water but severely lack sewer service.

WATER SERVICES (See Map 6.2)

Lafayette County has 25 different water certificates that cover 181 square miles (29% of the County's land area). These certificated areas are well distributed across the County but there are some large isolated areas that lack water service, particularly in the eastern portion.

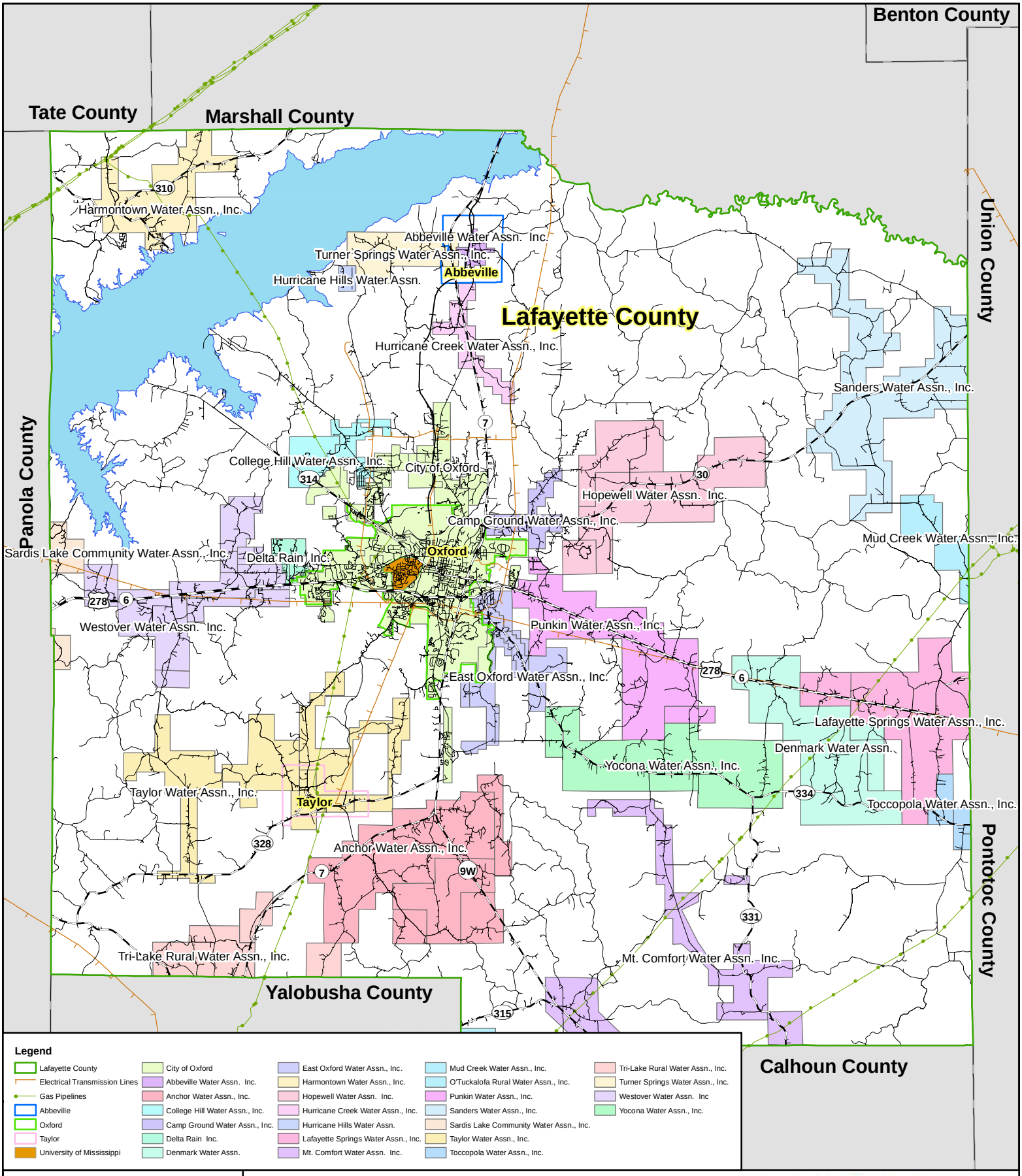
For the most part, the County is well served by these community water associations. However, the number of different entities can pose a problem for future development. Currently, there are development problems for some of the smaller water associations that are not able to handle the development that is proposed within their boundaries. At the same time, these associations are not willing to work together to provide water service across certificate boundaries leaving some proposed developments lacking adequate water service.

As some of these water associations are only capable of serving a limited size and density of development, this system leads to the creation of disconnected water lines and facilities. Each water association may enforce different requirements as far as water line construction, installation, and materials.

SEWER SERVICES (See Map 6.3)

Lafayette County has 9 different sewer certificates that cover 5 square miles (less than 1% of the County's land area). These certificated areas are clustered primarily around Oxford with a few near Taylor. Sewer service has been identified as one of the major concerns of the County in terms of future service, connections and environmental impacts of the lack of service. The potential expansion of sewer is especially limited in the northern part of the County. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers will not allow sewer service in this area because of concerns that it would flow into Sardis Lake.

The State of Mississippi Health Department has closed many county department offices and dramatically reduced staff that conduct inspection of septic tanks and other sewer disposal systems.



Legend

- Lafayette County
- Electrical Transmission Lines
- Gas Pipelines
- Abbeville
- Oxford
- Taylor
- University of Mississippi
- City of Oxford
- Abbeville Water Assn. Inc.
- Anchor Water Assn., Inc.
- College Hill Water Assn., Inc.
- Camp Ground Water Assn., Inc.
- Delta Rain Inc.
- Denmark Water Assn.
- East Oxford Water Assn., Inc.
- Harmontown Water Assn., Inc.
- Hopewell Water Assn. Inc.
- Hurricane Creek Water Assn., Inc.
- Hurricane Hills Water Assn.
- Lafayette Springs Water Assn., Inc.
- Mt. Comfort Water Assn. Inc.
- Mud Creek Water Assn., Inc.
- O'Tuckalofa Rural Water Assn., Inc.
- Punkin Water Assn., Inc.
- Sanders Water Assn., Inc.
- Sardis Lake Community Water Assn., Inc.
- Taylor Water Assn., Inc.
- Toccopola Water Assn., Inc.
- Tri-Lake Rural Water Assn., Inc.
- Turner Springs Water Assn., Inc.
- Westover Water Assn. Inc
- Yocona Water Assn., Inc.

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Map 6.2

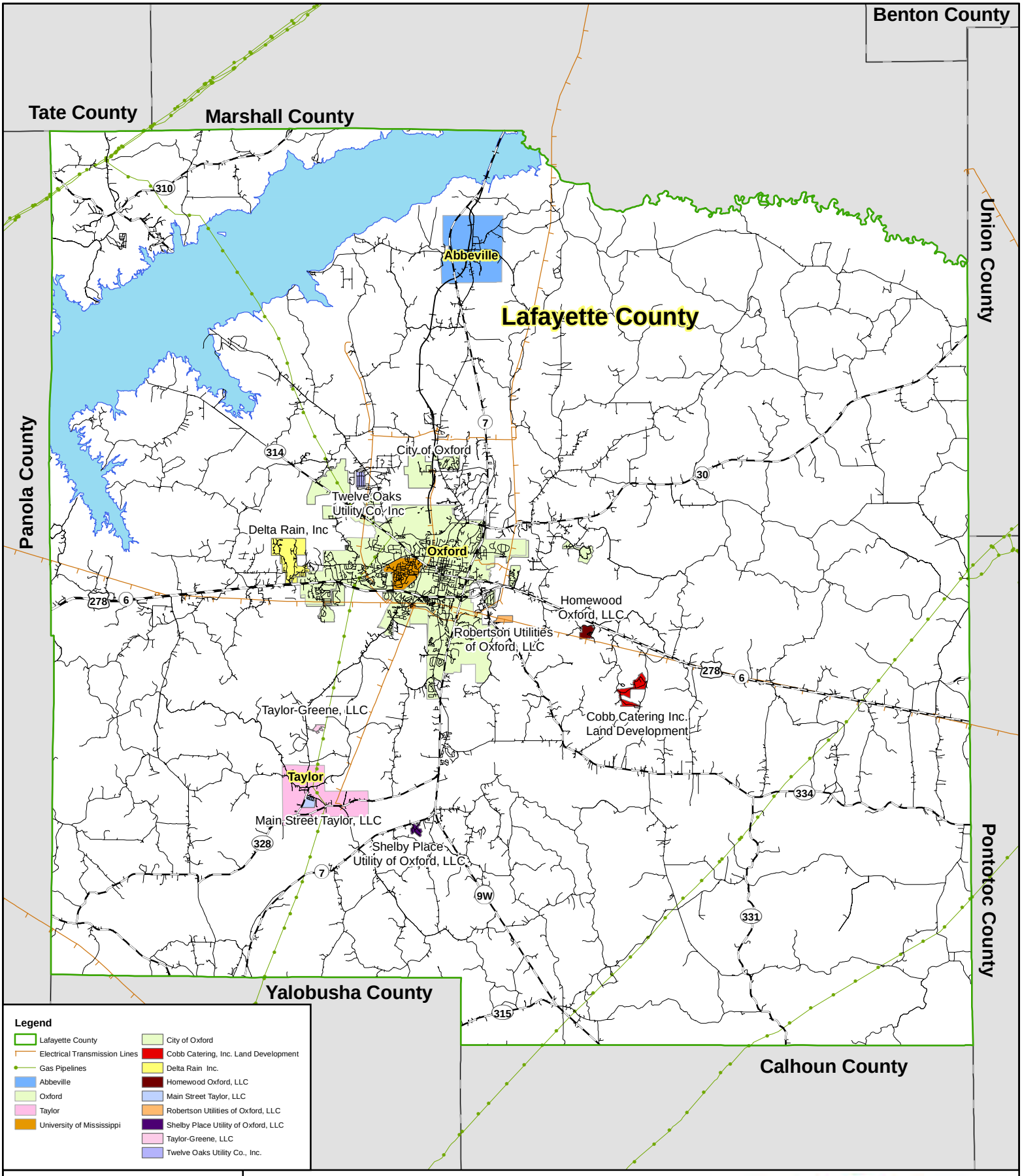
Water Certificated Areas

SLAUGHTER & ASSOCIATES
URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

LAFAYETTE COUNTY
Est. 1836
Greatness Happens Here

2017 Comprehensive Plan



Map 6.3

Sewer Certificated Areas

SLAUGHTER & ASSOCIATES
URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970

Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016

LAFAYETTE COUNTY
Est. 1836
Greatness Happens Here

2017 Comprehensive Plan

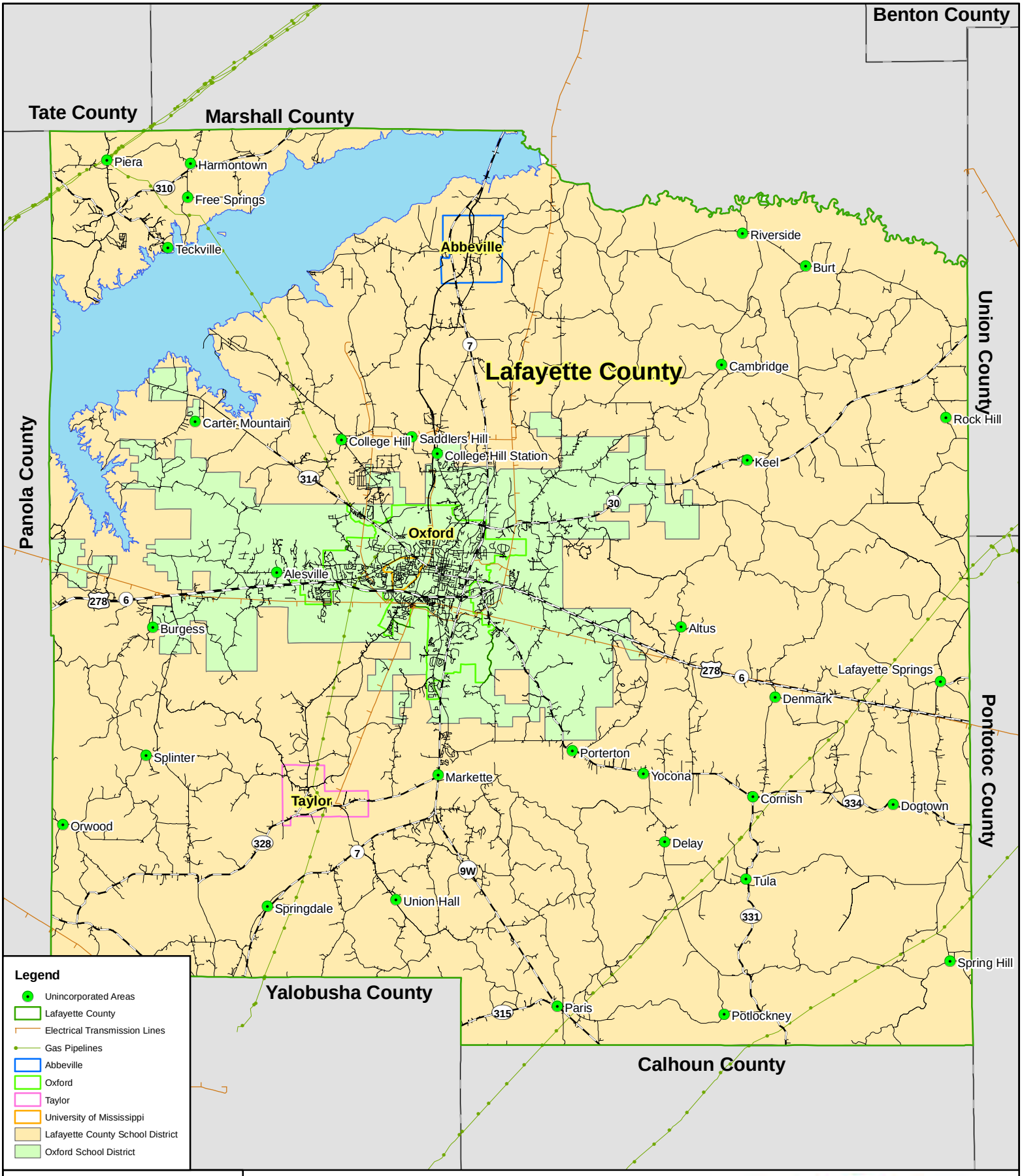
Inspections of these facilities are crucial so that they function adequately and safely. Lafayette County has adopted the International Waste Water Disposal Code which parallels State regulations. The County is able to enforce this code despite not being able to perform waste water disposal inspections through a policy of connecting electricity only with proof of an approved disposal system.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS (See Map 6.4)
There are two public school districts in Lafayette County—the Lafayette County School District and the Oxford School District. Additional primary education providers in the County include the private Regents School, Oxford University School, and Magnolia Montessori School. The North Mississippi Japanese Supplementary School is a weekend school that provides additional instruction to Japanese students. Secondary education institutions in Lafayette County include the University of Mississippi (Mississippi's flagship and largest university) and Northwest Mississippi Community College (satellite campus of the main facility in Senatobia).

The Oxford School District consists of Bramlett Elementary School (Pre-K – Kindergarten), Oxford Elementary School (1st – 2nd grade), Della Davidson Elementary School (3rd – 4th grade), Oxford Intermediate School (5th – 6th grade), Oxford Middle School (7th – 8th grade), and Oxford High School (9th – 12th grade). The Oxford Learning Center and the C. M. Scott Center provide alternative instruction techniques and settings for certain students that may struggle within the traditional school environments. Part of Oxford School District's Capital Improvement Plan that attempts to address concerns related to the rapid population growth of the City and County includes the construction of a new elementary school campus.

The Lafayette County School District contains an Elementary School (Pre-K – 2nd grade), an Upper Elementary School (3rd – 5th grade), a Middle School (6th – 8th grade), and a High School (9th – 12th grade). The school system provides education to approximately 2,700 students and employs approximately 200 teachers. All schools are located on the same central campus space. The district has experienced rapid growth in recent years and has outgrown the elementary school. A new elementary school with the capacity to support projected future enrollment figure is needed. As the County grows, there may be a need for separate elementary schools. Growth around Abbeville may eventually require an elementary school being constructed there.

The Oxford-Lafayette School of Applied Technology is a career and technical education school that offers elective courses to students from Oxford High School and Lafayette County High School. The school's mission is to provide students with the necessary academic, occupational, technical, and social skills to be successful in the applicable workforce or in post-secondary education. The school's operating budget is jointly supplied by Oxford School District and Lafayette County School District. Facilities and equipment are sufficient to meet the school's current needs. Additional funding for equipment is often provided by the federal government as arranged by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. Both districts should continue to support the school. Programs and course offerings should be regularly updated to ensure that they stay relevant to current technological trends and are representative of local businesses and industries. Additional interaction with local businesses and industries through tours and work partnerships would increase awareness of the kinds of job and career opportunities available in the County.


Benton County
Tate County
Marshall County
Panola County
Union County
Pontotoc County
Yalobusha County
Calhoun County
Lafayette County
Piera
Harmontown
Free Springs
Teckville
Abbeville
Riverside
Burt
Cambridge
Rock Hill
Carter Mountain
College Hill
Saddlers Hill
College Hill Station
Keel
Oxford
Alesville
Burgess
Altus
Lafayette Springs
Denmark
Splinter
Porterton
Yocona
Markette
Taylor
Cornish
Dogtown
Orwood
Delay
Tula
Springdale
Union Hall
Spring Hill
Paris
Potlockney
310
314
30
278
6
7
328
9W
331
334
315
Legend
Unincorporated Areas
Lafayette County
Electrical Transmission Lines
Gas Pipelines
Abbeville
Oxford
Taylor
University of Mississippi
Lafayette County School District
Oxford School District
0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles
SLAUGHTER &ASSOCIATES
URBAN PLANNING CONSULTANTS
POST OFFICE BOX 2401
OXFORD, MS 38655
662.234.6970
N
W
E
S
Map 6.4
School Districts
Source(s): Mississippi Automated Resource Information System (MARIS); Mississippi State Rating Bureau
US Census Bureau TIGER Line Files
Note: This map is accurate for planning purposes only
Date: November 28, 2016
EST. 1836
LAFAYETTE COUNTY
Greatness Happens Here
2017 Comprehensive Plan

HOUSING

Because Lafayette County is the fastest growing County in Mississippi, there is a higher demand for the existing housing stock. This has resulted in higher housing costs, especially in Oxford. Rapidly growing enrollment at the University and an increase in the number of "game-day" condos and short-term rentals has exacerbated the problem. Oxford's workforce—restaurant workers, emergency service workers, teachers, etc.—can hardly afford to live in the city in which they work. Over half of those who work in Lafayette County are not residents and commute daily from their homes outside the County. This creates a strain on transportation infrastructure that would not be as pronounced if there was more workforce housing and a better mix of housing types.

According to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), families who pay more than 30% of their income on housing are considered cost burdened. Another common formula for calculating the affordable housing threshold is that which defines affordability as paying less than 30% of 80% median household income. This definition can be adjusted to take local economic conditions into account.

Housing considered affordable for Oxford's workforce is estimated to fall in the range of $90,000-$150,000. These figures are based on 30% of income being used for housing with a 30-year mortgage payment at 4% interest. The low end of the range has an assumed one-person household earning $25,000 in annual income. The high end assumes the median household income for Lafayette County of $41,343. A household with two workers that earns $75,000 in annual income could afford houses up to $270,000. As of December 2016, there were 21 single-family homes in the $90,000-$150,000 range for sale in Lafayette County. In the range of $150,001-$270,000; which is thought to be affordable to a two-person working household, there were 74 single-family homes on the market.

According to Oxford's *Vision 2037* Comprehensive Plan, Lafayette County's lack of affordable workforce housing is especially conveyed by measures of housing costs relative to household income. Already with some of the highest housing costs in the State, the issue is emphasized by the fact that Lafayette County has the highest housing cost to household income ratio by a large margin. With a ratio of 3.82, Lafayette County residents are purchasing homes that cost nearly four times what they earn in a year. Ratios closer to 2.5 are generally considered to be affordable.

Lafayette County had a total of 23,180 housing units in 2014 (see Table 6.1). Of these units, almost 63% (14,514) are in single-family detached housing. The remaining housing units are either single-family attached (2.3%), duplex (5.4%), multi-family (19.7%), or mobile homes (10%). However, these figures are reached by combining housing data from Oxford and the remainder of the County and do not accurately portray the housing conditions of either. For example, the figure for multi-family housing is reached by combining the high number of units in Oxford with the low number of units outside the city limits. While the figures are certainly true on paper, they create confusion because Oxford's numbers weigh on the County to the point that it results in a somewhat misleading conclusion that is not representative of Oxford or the unincorporated part of the County.

Looking individually at figures (see Tables 6.2 and 6.3) for Oxford and Lafayette County (excluding Oxford) gives a better idea of the characteristics and condition of the local housing supply. At the same time, the Oxford figures cannot simply be forgotten about because they can influence figures in the outer County and vice-versa. For example, multi-family housing units make up nearly 20% of total housing units in the County, but a quick look at the numbers for Oxford and the numbers for the rest of the County show that this does not mean they are spread evenly across the County. Rather, the more location-specific numbers show that the 20% figure is reached because of the high numbers of Oxford (36%) and the low numbers of the non-Oxford portion of the County (<4%). Among the total multi-family housing units in Lafayette County, Oxford accounts for over 90%. Similarly, the non-Oxford portion of the County accounts for over 95% of mobile homes in the County. So, while the 19.7% multi-family units

figure and the 10% mobile homes figure is true for the County overall, it does not tell the whole story for all parts of the County.

There are several creative financing programs that can be used to further affordable housing initiatives. These include tax increment financing (TIF) programs, the federal New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) program, payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT), and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits. There are also competitive funding sources such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the HOME Investments Partnership Program (HOME), and the National Housing Trust Fund. However, there is much that can be done by Lafayette County and Oxford to support affordable housing that does not require grant applications or the need to compete against other municipalities for funds. This includes acquiring land to be used for affordable housing and expanding utility infrastructure. Developers can be incentivized with density bonuses for providing affordable units and waived system development charges (fees collected to offset development impact). The County should strive to identify various strategies to increase affordable and workforce housing. This will be a more realistic goal if the City of Oxford is also invested in a partnership with the County that seeks affordable/workforce housing solutions.

TABLE 6.1 LAFAYETTE COUNTY (INCLUDING OXFORD) HOUSING UNIT DISTRIBUTION, 2014

Occupied	16,557	71.4%
--Owned	9,825	59.3%
--Rented	6,732	40.7%
Vacant	6,623	28.6%
1 detached	14,514	62.6%
1 attached	538	2.3%
2 duplex	1,246	5.4%
Multi-family	4,561	19.7%
Mobile home	2,321	10.0%
Total units	23,180	100.0%

Source: (2014) 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates

TABLE 6.2 OXFORD HOUSING UNIT DISTRIBUTION, 2014

Occupied	7,504	65.9%
--Owned	2,859	38.1%
--Rented	4,645	61.9%
Vacant	3,890	34.1%
1 detached	5,760	50.6%
1 attached	402	3.5%
2 duplex	998	8.8%
Multi-family	4,119	36.1%
Mobile home	115	1.0%
Total units	11,394	100.0%

Source: (2014) 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates

TABLE 6.3 LAFAYETTE COUNTY (EXCLUDING OXFORD) HOUSING UNIT DISTRIBUTION, 2014

Occupied	9,053	76.8%
--Owned	6,966	76.9%
--Rented	2,087	23.1%
Vacant	2,733	23.2%
1 detached	8,754	74.3%
1 attached	136	1.2%
2 duplex	248	2.1%
Multi-family	442	3.8%
Mobile home	2,206	18.7%
Total units	11,786	100.0%

Source: (2014) 2010-2014 American Community Survey Estimates

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development in Oxford and Lafayette County is supported by a variety of partners. The primary organizations responsible for promoting economic development on behalf of Lafayette County are the Oxford-Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and the Oxford-Lafayette Economic Development Foundation. These organizations are both housed in the same building in Oxford.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Oxford-Lafayette Chamber of Commerce represents the business community in problem solving, promoting economic development, raising the per capita income and providing strong financial resources to create a better life for all citizens. The Chamber holds a variety of events, programs, and activities that benefit and promote members.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

The mission of the Oxford-Lafayette County Economic Development Foundation (EDF) is to be a leader in creating opportunities for responsible economic investment, thereby raising the per capita income for all citizens of Lafayette County. The EDF's overall goals include business retention and expansion, workforce development, infrastructure and technology assessment and development, business and industrial recruitment, and the enhancement of local quality of life. The EDF manages some local industrial properties such as the 68,000 square foot former Toro plant; the 550,000 square foot former Roseburg plant; and the 450 acre Lafayette County Industrial Park. Other economic development groups that the EDF works with include the Mississippi Development Authority, North Mississippi Industrial Development Association, Tennessee Valley Authority, and Three Rivers Planning and Development District.

INDUSTRIAL PARK

The Lafayette County Industrial Park is located just north of Oxford and comprises 450 acres, 200 of which are currently available for development. The park is not within a floodplain and is equipped with electric, water, sewer, and natural gas utility support. The park is accessible via MS Highway 6 and 7, and is served by the Mississippi Central Railroad, a short line that runs from Grand Junction, TN to the University-Oxford Airport. Existing tenants at the park include major local employers Winchester and Caterpillar, although the latter is preparing to close operations.

Lafayette County should identify additional tracts of land both in the City of Oxford and in the County suitable for industrial development. The tracts identified in the city could lead to opportunities for redevelopment and attract industry that may not need or want to locate in one of the industry parks. Large vacant tracts or even several tracts with one owner would be ideal if the creation of a new industrial park is desired.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce development programs are offered by the WIN Job Center, Oxford-Lafayette School of Applied Technology, Northwest Mississippi Community College, and the University of Mississippi. These programs provide services to individuals and businesses with the goal of helping to improve the skillsets of the local labor pool and, in doing so, improving performance of area businesses.

BUSINESS INCUBATORS

Efforts to help small start-up companies have resulted in the opening of 2 business incubators. One is the Oxford Enterprise Center, a 37,000 square foot facility managed by the North Mississippi Enterprise Initiative that aims to support high-tech, high-wage job creation for Lafayette County. The other is the Innovation Hub, a 62,000 square foot facility that serves as the gateway for the 19 acre Insight Park, a research and business park at the University of Mississippi. Insight Park is a partnership between the University and the Mississippi Small Business Development Center, which is headquartered on campus.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Lafayette County does not have a parks and recreation department under the leadership of the County Supervisors nor do they provide direct recreational opportunities to residents. FNC Park, located northwest of Oxford just outside of the city limits on Highway 314, features 5 soccer fields, 10 baseball fields, and 4 softball fields on over 75 acres. The park also features over 950 parking spaces, 4 concession buildings, 24 shade structures covering the bleachers, and a 7,500 square foot indoor practice facility with 6 batting cages. Opened in 2009, the park serves as host to more than 25 baseball and soccer tournaments each year. A standalone department of the City of Oxford, FNC Park works closely with the Oxford Parks Commission to host local youth and adult recreational leagues. Another sports facility in the unincorporated area of the County is the Oxford-Lafayette Sportsplex, located just south of the Highway 7/9 split. The Sportsplex features 5 soccer fields and 4 baseball fields. There are some additional opportunities for activities such as fishing, picnicking, and camping at Sardis Lake in the northwestern part of the County, and Puskus Lake east of Oxford in Holly Springs National Forest. Enid Lake is primarily in Yalobusha

County, but serves as a nearby recreational amenity to those residents in southwestern Lafayette County.

The County has expressed a need and desire for improving recreational opportunities. Lafayette County should assess the need and demand for recreational areas and/or community buildings in each Supervisor district. Recreational interest and demand may vary by district, but this will provide some insight as to whether community buildings, pavilions and low maintenance recreational ball fields would be needed.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources are collective evidence of the past and present activities and accomplishments of people. Buildings, objects, features, locations, and structures with scientific, historic, and cultural value are all examples of cultural resources. It is important to identify and document sites of historical and cultural significance because otherwise their stories and lessons will be lost forever.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. National Register properties have significance to the history of their community, state, or the nation. Lafayette County has fifteen properties and districts listed. Of these sites, eleven are located within the Oxford city limits and four are located in unincorporated Lafayette County. These four are College Hill Presbyterian Church, Hopewell Presbyterian Church, Sand Spring Presbyterian Church, and the George Wright Young House.

MISSISSIPPI LANDMARKS

The Mississippi Landmark designation is the highest form of recognition bestowed on properties by the State and offers the fullest protection against changes that might alter a property's historic character. Publicly owned properties that are determined to be historically or architecturally significant may be considered for designation. Lafayette County has 24 Mississippi Landmarks, 23 of which are located within the Oxford city limits. The other landmark is the Price-Crawford House (aka Washington Price House), located in the vicinity of Lafayette Springs.

MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL

The Mississippi Blues Trail was created in 2006 to promote tourism and celebrate the role of blues music culture in the State. Funding for the project has been provided via grants from such organizations as the National Endowment for the Arts and the Mississippi Department of Transportation. Local communities where blues markers are placed also contribute funds and provide maintenance. Lafayette County has two Blues Trail markers, both of which are located in Oxford. The County should identify sites that are significant to blues culture and take the necessary steps to getting a marker installed. One potential location is Harmontown, the birthplace of blues guitarist and inaugural Fat Possum Records recording artist, R. L. Burnside.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Lafayette County has over 500 known archaeological sites. Some of the oldest sites date back 14,000 years, while the younger ones depict the lives of humans during the time of the Civil War. Of these, most are concentrated in the areas of Enid Lake, Sardis Lake, and Holly Springs National Forest. These areas are heavily represented because they are on federal land where laws require the surveying and salvaging of sites with archaeological significance. Future development should be sensitive to these sites that help tell the story of human settlements over time. While all of these sites should not necessarily be given full protection from development, they should all be documented prior to development. The County should encourage all future development projects to coordinate with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) to ensure project sites have been properly surveyed and documented before breaking ground. This will allow researchers to record essential data and may encourage developers to complete projects in a way that minimizes impact on archaeological sites.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Lafayette County & Oxford Public Library is located in Oxford and is the only public library in the County. The current location opened in 1977 with a building addition completed in 1997. It is a member of the First Regional Library cooperative system that operates 14 library branches across five counties in Northern Mississippi. In addition to a large collection of books, periodicals, music and movies (over 100,000 circulating materials), the library offers weekly events, such as story time, adult book clubs, guest speakers, puppet shows, and movie showings, all open and free to the public. The library also provides access to the internet for those not able to do so at their homes. Efforts should be made to help provide all citizens with more access to public information and to a calendar of activities taking place in Lafayette County. The library must be maintained and enhanced when necessary. The library is primarily supported by local funding. In fiscal year 2015, the library received nearly $700,000 combined from the City of Oxford and Lafayette County.

The library is also home to the Lafayette County Historical and Genealogical Society. The Society's purpose is to collect and preserve information pertaining to local history and genealogy, and to promote public interest in research of the subjects. They occupy a room at the library where holdings include obituaries, cemetery records, maps, etc. The room cannot be locked because it contains a fire escape. This results in a lack of protection for the genealogy collection. A future goal should be to ensure that the collection is treated with care by taking measures to handle and hold the materials in a safer, archival manner. Because the Society is a non-profit organization, it is not supported by County funds.

CHAPTER VII ~ IMPLEMENTATION & PLAN MAINTENANCE

Specific steps have to be taken in order to bring about the goals and strategies described in the earlier chapters. The implementation of the suggested actions makes the plan happen. There are a number of tools for implementation and several are described below. Over time the plan assumptions and all of the goals and objectives must be checked to ensure that they are still important and relevant. This is the process for maintaining the plan.

IMPLEMENTATION

PLANNING STAFF

Many of Lafayette County's goals and objectives involve setting and enforcing policies. Lafayette County will need to develop some capacity for day-to-day policy enforcement in order to raise the levels of service. It should be a top priority of Lafayette County to hire a full-time Planning Director that can work with the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and County Engineer to ensure that the County stays on track and works towards a realization of the plan.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (CIP)

A Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a budgeting tool that outlines proposed public investments or roadway improvements over a specific timeline. A CIP is usually established (and projects costs for various investments) over a five year period and updated annually. This method or other similar methods are effective ways to plan for major capital investments. It clearly identifies the investment needs of the County and can alleviate monetary stresses if projects are spaced over a certain period of time.

ZONING ORDINANCE

Zoning is the regulation of land uses; it is intended to guide development into compatible land use patterns. Zoning protects the individual land owners, protects property values and preserves and establishes the character of a community. The adoption of a Zoning Ordinance in Lafayette County is one effective way to put specific elements of this Comprehensive Plan into action.

As it exists now, development in Lafayette County is allowed, for the most part, to take place unrestrained. This means that incompatible land uses can build next to one another without regulation by county government. The Future Land Use Map sets forth general land use categories but lacks the legal backing of a Zoning Ordinance. A Zoning Ordinance would regulate items such as: land use, minimum lot size, setbacks, building heights, locations of manufactured housing, housing density, landscaping and parking. A Zoning Ordinance can be tailored to the County's specific objectives and goals. It is strongly recommended that the County adopt a Zoning Ordinance.

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Subdivision Regulations control the process for division of land and establish design standards for any improvements made to the divided parcels. These regulations ensure that new property owners of this subdivided land have adequate public services and that the developers pay their share of construction cost for these services so the County or existing residents are not burdened with the expense. It is recommended that Lafayette County review and consider updating their Subdivision Regulations to ensure that it can be used to help achieve the goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, especially when it comes to infrastructure improvements, right-of-way (ROW) dedication, and street and roadway widening and improvements along the frontage of developed property.

CONSTRUCTION, BUILDING AND FIRE CODES

Construction, building and fire codes, including electrical, mechanical, plumbing, etc., provide a standard upon which to build safe structures. Lafayette County adopted the 2012 International Building Code for subdivisions and commercial properties. It also adopted the 2012 International Residential Code but omitted the requirement for sprinkler systems. Other codes include the International Fire Code, International Property Maintenance Code, and the recently-adopted International Private Sewage Disposal Code. The adoption of these standards will greatly assist Lafayette County in efforts to ensure safe housing

and safe buildings. However, with the adoption of such codes comes the responsibility to make inspections to assure that the codes are being complied with. It is recommended that the 2012 International Building Code is eventually adopted County-wide for all types of properties and developments.

SIGN ORDINANCE

A sign ordinance helps promote a positive visual perception by reducing and managing the visual signage clutter that can result in an unregulated community. Sign ordinances control the number, size, height, type and placement of signs. The ordinance can also be tailored to control temporary signage, billboards and other signage issues. The overall goal of the ordinance is to help protect the existing character of a community, establish or enhance community identity. It is recommended that Lafayette County adopt a sign ordinance.

LANDSCAPING ORDINANCE

A landscape ordinance preserves the visual environment of a community. They help improve the visual perception and image for both residents and visitors. This is especially true in Lafayette County since it attracts many visitors to University of Mississippi sporting events. Landscaping can visually screen undesirable features required in an urbanized landscape, protect privacy of residents and promote the community as one that cares about its appearance. It can also improve the physical environment of a community through using plants best suited to the climate, improving drainage and enhancing air quality. It is recommended that Lafayette County adopt a landscape ordinance for commercial property development.

UNKEMPT PROPERTY ORDINANCE

An unkempt property ordinance enhances the visual quality of a community by controlling weed height, rubbish, junk and other public safety hazards caused by unsightly conditions on properties. The ordinance sets a community standard for maintenance of real property which enhances property values and ensures that the rights of all businesses and residents to privacy, safety, and an attractive environment are respected. It is recommended that Lafayette County adopt an unkempt property ordinance.

PLAN MAINTENANCE

AMENDMENTS

This plan, along with all of its elements, is intended to be a guide for the long-term development of the County. Market conditions and major investments made by others have the ability to shift growth patterns and influence land use in ways that were not anticipated by the Comprehensive Plan. In order to deal with these various changes, the County should set up a process for any amendments to this plan or elements/maps within this plan. It should also be noted that multiple amendments can unintentionally alter the policies that this plan was based on; amendments should be limited and well justified.

PLAN REVIEW AND FUTURE UPDATES

The Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic document. Periodic review and update of the Comprehensive Plan is essential in order to accurately reflect the changes within the County. The plan should be updated at least every five years, but if drastic changes occur in the County, a plan review and update may be needed sooner. During review, the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, or Comprehensive Planning Committee should examine the success in implementing the current before making any changes. After all elements and goals and objectives have been updated as necessary, a draft of the revised plan must be viewed at a public hearing before being adopted and implemented.

RECOMMENDED PROJECTS AND ESTIMATED COST

The following section includes a summary of projects recommended in this plan and an estimate of the cost of those projects. The list is intended to be a quick reference guide to the projects recommended by this plan. The cost estimates provided are simply a current estimate of the cost of completion and intend to only act as a guide to the project cost. The table that follows includes a list of projects by County Department and the estimated cost. If desired, this summary list could be used to create the basic framework of a Capital Improvements Program.

PROJECTS PLANNED AND RECOMMENDED

Projects slated for 160-acre County property (2017 construction)	
Justice Court	$1,500,000
Municipal Court addition?	$500,000
Site work if Justice Court is behind jail	$1,000,000
Extension offices	$1,000,000
Multi-purpose facility	$1,515,000
DHS/CPS/DA	$1,296,000
DL, Morgue, WIN	$1,000,000
Site work / grading	$250,000
Roads	$500,000
Sewer	$500,000
Water	$500,000
Electric	$50,000
Engineering / architect fees	$1,400,000

Additional Future Departmental Needs	
Public Safety	
Sheriff's Department	
Jail lock upgrades	$320,000
Fire Department	
Work with Mississippi State Rating Bureau (MSRB) to determine facility and equipment needs	Cost dependent on MSRB-determined facility and equipment need recommendations
New fire station on Hwy 6 E	$600,000
Replacement of station #4 (contingent on West Oxford Loop)	$600,000
Hire additional full-time employees (9 needed for 24-hr staffing of station)	$40,000/each
Replace old trucks as needed	$300,000
Jaws of life	$30,000
Emergency Management	
New Emergency Operations Center	$850,000
New equipped 4x4 pickup truck	$35,000
Hire Deputy Director	$50,000
Roads	
West Oxford Loop / Sisk Avenue extension	$7,000,000
Acquire minimum right-of-way	Include projects in 4-year Road Plan
Pave all county roads in 10 to 20 years	Include projects in 4-year Road Plan
Repair substandard bridges	Include projects in 4-year Road Plan