



# Walking and Biking in Shelby County

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A project of  
Leadership Shelby County  
Class of 2004



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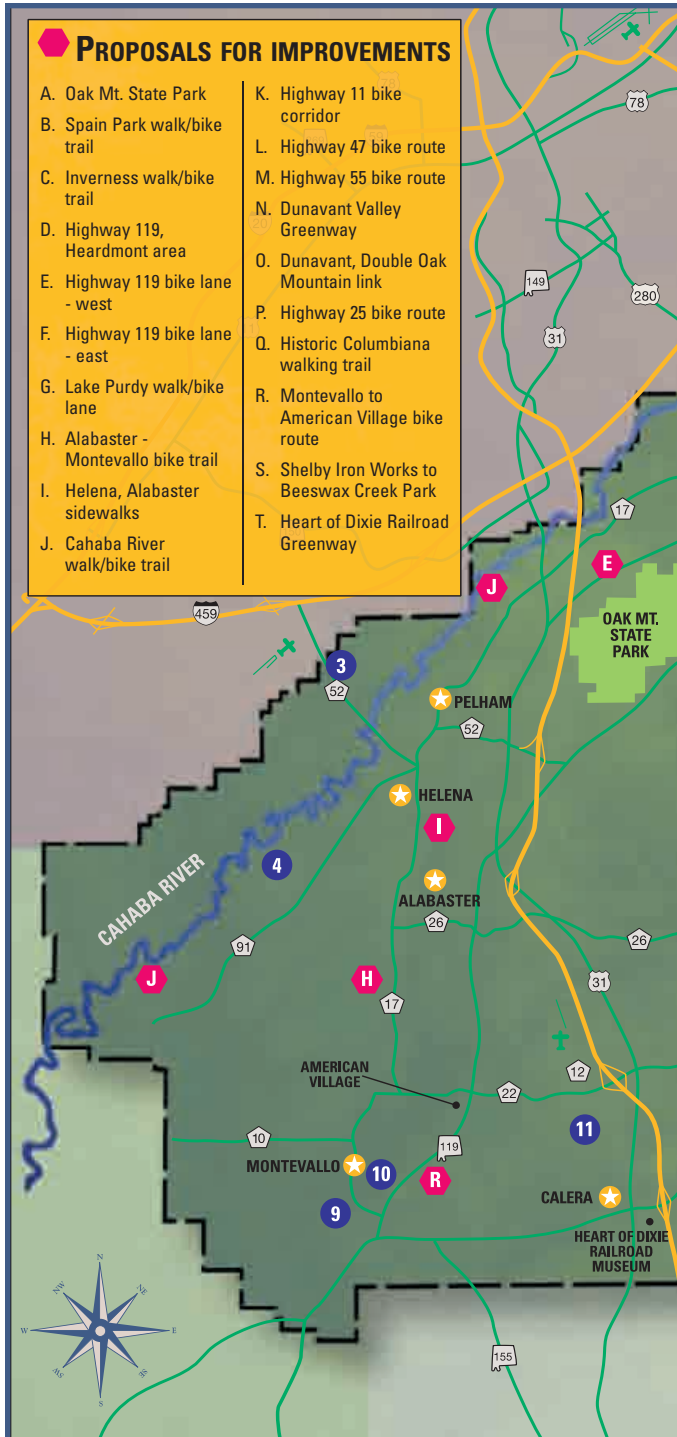
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# SHELBY COUNTY



## PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

- |                                      |  |
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| A. Oak Mt. State Park                | K. Highway 11 bike corridor                  |
| B. Spain Park walk/bike trail        | L. Highway 47 bike route                     |
| C. Inverness walk/bike trail         | M. Highway 55 bike route                     |
| D. Highway 119, Heardmont area       | N. Dunavant Valley Greenway                  |
| E. Highway 119 bike lane - west      | O. Dunavant, Double Oak Mountain link        |
| F. Highway 119 bike lane - east      | P. Highway 25 bike route                     |
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| H. Alabaster - Montevallo bike trail | R. Montevallo to American Village bike route |
| I. Helena, Alabaster sidewalks       | S. Shelby Iron Works to Beeswax Creek Park   |
| J. Cahaba River walk/bike trail      | T. Heart of Dixie Railroad Greenway          |







## INTRODUCTION:

Shelby County is a great place. We know this, because we – the authors of this report – are Shelby County residents. Shelby County's extraordinary growth and rising property values are testament to the county's wonderful array of resources, from its quality schools, housing stock and health care, to its business

opportunities, restaurants, entertainment venues and recreational facilities.

Ironically, Shelby County's popularity and growth are also its greatest challenges. As more people seek the lifestyle that Shelby County affords, county leaders must find ways to protect and improve on the attractive features that have drawn people here in the first place.

Many Shelby County residents will agree that the most pressing problems the county faces are traffic and suburban sprawl. Like many suburban counties, Shelby's growth has been fueled by the automobile, and many of its communities were designed with the automobile in mind. As a result, there are very few places in Shelby County where residents can walk or bike safely to work, to school or to the grocery store. This problem – that we must use our cars to get almost everywhere – only compounds the county's traffic mess.

Unfortunately, traffic-clogged roads are more than an annoyance, they are a serious health issue. While air quality in the Birmingham metro area has improved in recent decades, Shelby County continues to suffer from a summer ozone problem that puts vulnerable children and the elderly at risk. What's more, the sedentary lifestyle, of which driving is a part, is a major contributor to our health problems. Poor diet and physical inactivity have led to a disturbing increase in obesity, which is now second only to smoking as the nation's top preventable killer.

As Shelby County residents, we want to improve the health and quality of life of our communities. We want our neighborhoods to become more connected, and more family friendly. And we believe one way to do this is to get us out of our cars.

We aren't the only ones who believe in making our home a better place for walking and bicycling. Across the county, and this region, there is growing enthusiasm about creating walkable





communities. A recent series of workshops on this issue, sponsored by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, drew hundreds of interested citizens, developers, professional planners and government officials. The recently completed Shelby County Comprehensive Plan speaks at length about this issue, including the need for tougher zoning rules that require new residential and commercial developments to incorporate sidewalks.



Meanwhile, communities are embracing the idea of building greenways, such as the successful project recently completed in Homewood along Shades Creek. A similar project along Five Mile Creek in Jefferson County is moving beyond the planning stages, while discussions are ongoing about a project along the Cahaba River in Helena.

As our contribution to this burgeoning movement, we present this guide to walking and biking in Shelby County. In this pamphlet we've tried to compile an accurate inventory of walking and biking facilities in the county. But we've also gone further. In the concluding section you will find proposals on how to make Shelby County a more inviting place for walkers and bicyclists. In addition, we make specific recommendations on where to construct new walking and biking routes.

In creating this pamphlet, our Leadership Shelby project team traveled across the county, documenting existing places to walk and ride and identifying practical locations for new facilities. We consulted with local planning experts, state and municipal officials, and neighborhood leaders. And we held our own discussions in order to refine our recommendations.

This guidebook does not discuss specific funding methods for new walking and biking trails. Suffice it to say that money is available from a variety of sources, including government agencies and private foundations. In many cases, a community interested in building a walk/bike trail can receive matching dollars that are triple or quadruple



its financial commitment to the project. It is also well-documented that walk/bike paths can help boost property values and, subsequently, tax revenues. In other words, these projects are a terrific value for our communities, let alone their recreational and health benefits.

We hope this document, in a small way, helps advance efforts to make Shelby County more attractive for walkers and bicyclists. And we hope it encourages county leaders to speed up efforts to build more walk/bike paths – projects we believe will not only benefit those who live here, but can help the county boost tourism, draw new businesses and improve the quality of residential and commercial developments.

Thanks to everyone who provided input, advice and encouragement during this project. Special thanks to designer Laura Borgman, to Alabama Power, to Alagasco, and to the Shelby County Historical Society which provided the resources for printing this publication and for producing the accompanying video. Thanks also to Shelby Baptist Medical Center, which provided meeting space for the project team, to Birmingham Color Graphics, to Means Advertising, ABC 33/40, Impressive Promotions, and to the Shelby County Economic & Industrial Authority. Finally, we want to thank Leadership Shelby County. Through this wonderful program, we've learned so much more about our community, and had a chance to put forth our own ideas for making Shelby County an even better place to live, work and raise our families.



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May 12, 2004



# WHAT WE HAVE: WALKING/BIKING IN SHELBY COUNTY:

All over Shelby County, you'll find people who love to walk or ride bicycles. For several generations, Oak Mountain State Park has been the county's Mecca for walkers and bikers. And in recent years Shelby County has made progress in building more public facilities for walking and biking. Nevertheless, the lack of sidewalks and bicycle lanes in many areas of the county makes it very difficult for residents to walk or ride safely from their neighborhood to another subdivision, or from their neighborhood to the supermarket, the library or the local school.

Here is a listing of existing places in the county, divided by geographic location, where residents and visitors can walk or bike with relative safety. We've given the best places a number; you can refer to the map on pages 2-3 for their location:

## *North Shelby (Hoover to Pelham, Inverness to Greystone)*

*The most densely populated part of the county, North Shelby has only a few locations designed specifically for safe walking or biking. In Hoover, preferred walking, hiking and biking facilities are located solely in the Jefferson County portion of the city. Those near the Shelby line include Moss Rock Preserve, the walking path in Aldridge Gardens and the walking path around Howard Lake on Municipal Drive. There are many subdivisions across North Shelby that provide relatively quiet streets for walking or cycling, but few have sidewalks. The two standout locations for walking, biking or hiking in North Shelby are Heardmont Park and Oak Mountain State Park.*

### **Heardmont Park 1**

Located on Highway 119 in North Shelby County, Heardmont Park features a paved walking trail as well as a quarter-mile running track used by Oak Mountain High School. The track is open to the public when not in use by school teams. The paved





walking trail provides two routes, marked by yellow and blue arrows painted on the path. Each route is about 1 mile. Many of the markers are faded, but there are plans to repaint them. The Heardmont Park trail, while not very scenic, is very kid- and senior-friendly. It passes by ball fields, tennis courts and a very popular playground. It's a great place for a casual stroll while your young children ride along on bicycles or tricycles.

For more information, contact county park representatives at (205) 991-2015.

## Oak Mountain State Park **2**

Oak Mountain State Park is located on the ridges and valleys of Double Oak Mountain, in the city of Pelham. There are two entrances to the 9,940-acre park, one off Highway 119 (east of Heardmont Park) and the main entrance on State Park Road in Pelham. There is a \$2 per person entrance charge. The park contains more than a dozen walking and biking trails totaling 47 miles. The trails are of varying length and difficulty. For more information call (205) 620-2520. Here are some of the key attractions:

- **Treetop Nature Trail** - After entering the park, follow the main road, John Findlay Drive, for about 2 miles. Turn right on the first paved road, Terrace Drive, and travel about 1 mile. Treetop Nature Trail is on your left with parking on the right. The 1/3 mile boardwalk winds through trees offering views of wild birds living in large, naturally furnished cages. The birds, now healthy though physically impaired, were brought to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center because of previous injury and would not be able to survive in the wild. The boardwalk connects to Eagle Trail, which continues up the hill to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. The boardwalk portion of this trail is easy walking and wheelchair accessible. The remainder of the hike does have some steep, rough parts and might be considered a moderate rather than easy walk. Total distance is about 1 mile one way. There is parking at the Wildlife Center and the trail could be done in reverse, avoiding a steep climb. There is something on this trail for most all ages and abilities.



- **BMX Track** – A new BMX track is now open, replacing the well-worn track used by thousands of children and teens for years. The new track is nestled among trees and is chock full of steep dirt hills, twists and turns. The track is periodically the site of BMX races. Great for kids and adults. Helmets are required; gloves and pads are strongly recommended.
- **Bike and Hike Loop** - This is a loop that includes about five and a half miles of hiking and eight and a half miles of biking. This route allows you to make a 14 mile loop combining the Yellow Trail with the Red Trail. It is moderate level for hiking and difficult for biking. This is a trail for mountain bikes, not street bikes. Be sure to have a bike helmet. After entering the park, follow John Findlay Drive for 2 miles and turn right on Terrace drive. Drive up the hill past the site of the old BMX track and park in the lot on the corner of Terrace Drive and Day Use Road. There are bike racks there. Be sure to chain your bike securely before driving back to John Findlay Drive. Turn Right on John Findlay and follow it for about three and a half miles to the North Trail Head where you will start your hike. From the North Trail Head walk about 100 feet and turn right at a sign that says “Maggie’s Glen 1.3 miles”. This will put you on the Yellow Trail, which you will follow until you reach your bike. This is a pretty hike most anytime of year and will lead you over rolling hills of wooded terrain. You will skirt the north edge of Tranquility Lake till you come to the dam built by Civilian Conservation Corps in the late 1930s. You will see old cabins as well as the cabins in use today. The Yellow Trail intersects several other trails so be sure to follow the yellow blaze on trees and it will lead you back to the bike rack where you can start the bike ride up the mountain and back to the North Trail Head. After retrieving your bike start out going the wrong way on the one way road that circles the picnic area. The beginning of the Red Trail is immediately on your left. This is a single file narrow track that winds beside and back and forth across Peavine Falls Road. It is a long, steep





climb that eventually takes you to the northern most part of Double Oak Ridge and onto a wide dirt road. This is still the Red Trail and it is, as they say, all down hill from here. The ride is now along a wide trail that goes through pretty forested areas. There are streams that cross the trail in concrete culverts. This is the easier part of the bike ride, and you can go rather fast down to your car at the North Trail Head. You are sharing this part of the trail with hikers, so be aware.

- **The Blue Trail** - This trail stretches from the North Trail Head to Peavine Falls and is a little over 8 miles long. Most of the hike would be considered moderate level, but there are a couple of difficult steep climbs. Starting at the North Trail Head, the Blue Trail will be on the left soon after you begin your hike. You immediately begin a steep climb through a hardwood forest. The trail will level somewhat with up and down segments where you continue to gain elevation. It eventually turns into a meandering walk on or near the ridge top with junctures that lead to other trails, if you should want to loop back to your starting point. This is an interesting hike with some good views and great boulders for a picnic spot.

More detailed Oak Mountain trail information, and a printable map, is available at [www.bump.org](http://www.bump.org), the Web site of the Birmingham Urban Mountain Pedalers. BUMP also hosts bike races periodically at the park.

### Other places to walk, North Shelby:

- Walking paths around lakes in Meadowbrook Corporate Park, off U.S. 280 between Meadowbrook Road and Highway 119.
- A new sidewalk stretches from the new Publix shopping center on U.S. 280 along Doug Baker Boulevard to Highway 119. Unfortunately, the sidewalk does not connect directly to any residential neighborhoods.
- Highland Lakes - There are 6 miles of walking trails connecting community parks in this private, gated development off U.S. 280.
- Brook Highland subdivision - Some neighborhoods off Brook Highland Drive have sidewalks.
- Pelham City Park Complex - Entrance at U.S. 31 and from Bearden Road. Walking track - approximately 1/2 mile.
- Fun Go Holler - Enter from County Road 52 behind the tennis center and from County Road 35 at the County Services Building. Walking track - approximately 1/4 mile.



- Mallard Pointe Neighborhood Park - Entrance from County Road 72. Walking track - approximately 1/4 mile.

## *Alabaster, Helena*

*This is one of the fastest growing areas of Shelby County, with a need for more safe places to walk, bike and hike. Like the North Shelby area, there are only limited facilities available at this time:*

## *Alabaster*

### **Buck Creek Park**

Located on Sixth Avenue S.W., this park has an inviting playground and picnic areas as well as a 1/4 mile walking track. The track is on flat terrain and is well lighted for night walking. No pets or bikes are allowed on the track.

### **Abby Wooley Park**

Located in the Simmsville Community off of Highway 11, this park has a playground area and a 1/4 mile walking track. The track is on flat terrain.

Other walking facilities in Alabaster include a 1/4 mile track on Highway 12 at Fire Station No. 2. There is also a 1/4 mile track at Meadow View Elementary School, 2800 Smokey Road.

## *Helena*

### **Cahaba Lily Park Nature Trail 3**

The park can be accessed from County Road 52 in Helena near Helena Intermediate School. This is a one and a half mile easy walk on a wide gravel path. The trail is lit at intervals for a night walk. It is not on the Cahaba River and does not have Cahaba Lilies in the park.

### **Cahaba River Wildlife Management Area 4**

Follow County Road 261 to the junction of C.R. 261, 52, 91 and 17 in Helena. C.R. 261 turns into C.R. 91 at this point, so you should continue straight at that point for 2.6 miles to





where the pavement ends and gravel begins. Soon you will see a sign for the Cahaba River Wildlife Management Area. The road splits and you should go left. The dirt road dead-ends in about 8 miles at a condemned bridge.

Logging and mining still go on in this area, so on weekdays you could be sharing your recreation area with other people's workplace. This area is hunted from September through April of each year.

This trail is a little over 5 miles. It includes a variety of forest types, including mixed hardwoods and pine, clear-cut land and secondary growth. There's also an abundance of wildflowers. The trail will take you to the Cahaba River. It is a moderately difficult hike with little change in elevation.

More detailed trail information is available for the Cahaba River Wildlife Management Area at [www.bump.org](http://www.bump.org), the Web site of the Birmingham Urban Mountain Pedalers.

## Joe Tucker Park

This park behind Helena City Hall has a 1/2 mile path around a small lake. There is also a playground. The park is the site of several events throughout the year.

## Old Town Helena

A small commercial district in Old Town Helena contains sidewalks, as does the new, "smart growth" residential development behind the district. Two small parks, one within the residential development, and one across Highway 17, where the town amphitheatre is located, offer access to Buck Creek, but very limited walking.

## Chelsea, Westover

*The Chelsea area has witnessed explosive growth during the past decade, and is expected to continue to grow at a fast pace over the next 20 years. Very few housing developments in Chelsea contain sidewalks, and many of the city's roads are two lanes with limited shoulders. Although the traffic isn't as congested as in some areas of Shelby County, biking and walking along the community's winding roadways can pose a hazard. In Chelsea there is clearly a need for more safe locations to walk and ride. One place*







*near Chelsea which offers a safe and interesting place to walk or bicycle is the Town of Mt Laurel. The town is a model for the rest of the county for what a “walkable community” truly means.*



## Chelsea Recreational Park 5

This recently opened city-county facility provides a beautiful setting for walking/biking. A path through open and wooded areas includes flat and hilly terrain. The course is well lighted for evening strolls. The park also has a playground, a pavilion for family gatherings and restrooms. The park, off Highway 39, is easily accessible from U.S 280 and Highway 47.

## Mt Laurel 6

This relatively new, but growing community, is built with walkers and bicycles in mind. Sidewalks run throughout the development, from residential areas to the expanding commercial district and eventually to the new Mt Laurel Elementary School. You can park your car here and take a pleasant walk or bike ride through town.

## Highway 41

This roadway from the Town of Mt Laurel east toward Highway 25 offers a pleasant rolling roadway for more experienced bicyclists. In fact, a short stretch of the road east of Mt Laurel already has a paved shoulder that is ideal for biking. Traffic diminishes east of Mt Laurel, although bicyclists must stay alert. As the road approaches Highway 25, the number of blind curves increases. A long-term plan calls for a greenway along this route.

## *East Shelby (Leeds, Vincent, Sterrett, Harpersville)*

*This area contains some of the county’s most scenic landscapes, and some of its best open-road biking. The Twin Pines Resort and Conference Center near Sterrett offers a superior walking trail, but it is*



*open only to guests of the facility. The public is invited to visit the historic Saunders Family Covered Bridge at Twin Pines.*

## Highway 25 **7**

A favorite route for area weekend bikers is to take Highway 25 south from Leeds through the Dunavant Valley and across Dunavant Mountain into Vandiver, Sterrett, past the old village of Calcis and on to Vincent. The route passes a historical marker and offers broad views along

Dunavant Mountain. The route is steep in spots, but automobile traffic is relatively light. Be sure to stop at Miller's Cheese Store on Highway 467, run by the family that used to have a dairy in this area.

In Vincent, Highway 25 and U.S. 231 are joined for a stretch, which means more traffic. Bikers can continue to Harpersville, site of Morgan Creek Winery and Baker's Farm, where a fall festival takes place each October.

From Harpersville, bikers can continue south on 25 toward Wilsonville. The road travels near the Coosa River and past some aging, historic homes. Here the terrain is relatively flat, but bikers must stay alert for speeding traffic.

## Highway 55 **8**

This road from Sterrett to Highway 25, west of Wilsonville, offers superior open-road bicycling. The road winds past farms and homes and is relatively flat its entire length. You can also continue on Highway 25 into Columbiana.

## Harpersville

J.W. Donahoo Municipal Park has a small black-topped walking track (not quite 1/4 mile), along with tennis courts, a picnic area, children play area and softball fields. Turn right off Highway 79 South at the sign for Coosa Valley Academy. Turn onto Park Street.

Also near Harpersville is The Meadows, a privately owned golf course on Plantation Drive, off U.S. 280. The course is open to walkers after 3 p.m. For more information, call (205) 672-7529.





## Vincent

Vincent Municipal Park is located on Highway 25/U.S. 231. The park features a 1/4 mile paved track, children's play area, tennis courts, softball fields and picnic area.

## *South Shelby (Montevallo, Calera, Columbiana, Wilsonville)*

*South Shelby County also is developing rapidly, but in many areas still maintains its scenic and rural character. For bikers, specific stretches of south county roadways, such as Highway 119 near American Village and Highway 42 near the Shelby Iron Works offer pleasant views of the countryside. Here's the best of walking and biking in South Shelby:*

## *Montevallo*

### Orr Park 9

Orr Park/Tingle Woods is a beautiful 40 acre park near the downtown area of Montevallo with a stream, small waterfall and a quiet atmosphere. It is the home of Tingle Woods, which features delightful carvings in the cedars by Tim Tingle, a local artist. There are 33 "Tingles," most of which can be seen from the walk/bike trail. The trail is approximately one and a half miles with a paved surface. The terrain is slightly hilly. The trail circles the children's play area and the softball fields. Great for children and seniors.



### Stephens Park

Stephens Park is located on Highway 10 just outside of Montevallo. The paved walk/bike trail circles the softball fields. The 3/4 mile trail is on flat terrain.



## University of Montevallo

10

There are several walking tours on the campus that individuals may take independently. Brochures with directions and points of interest may be obtained from the Lyman House at the corner of Oak and Middle streets. The first three tours are known as the “Red Brick Tours.”



- “Great Caesar’s Ghost” – A 1/2 mile walk highlights “Hauntings and things that go bump in the night.”
- “Through These Portals” – A 1.8 mile walk highlighting the columns and structural ornaments of the University.
- “A Walk Through Time” – This 2 mile walk highlights the historic structures of the university.

## Guide to Campus Trees

Thirty trees have been designated by black markers with the common and scientific names of each tree. Tour directions are available at the Lyman House. A frequent assignment for local schoolchildren is to collect a leaf from each tree.

## City/University Historic Walking Tour

This tour is approximately 3 miles and includes historic sites on the campus as well as historic sites in town and in Orr Park. A guided tour is offered regularly, normally on Saturdays. Or you can take a self-guided tour. For more information, call (205) 665-1519.





## Montevallo bike races, rides

There are two annual bike races that begin and end in Montevallo. The Shelby County Stage Race is timed, with distances ranging from 30 to 75 miles and cash prizes for the winners. The Birmingham Bicycle Club's Annual Century Ride features distances from 20 to 200 miles. There are also casual rides almost every Saturday, starting in town. For more information, call University Cycle at (205) 665-0302.



## The American Village

This impressive civic education center is becoming one of the region's most popular attractions. Stroll the Constitution Green among replicas of historical colonial structures, including Washington Hall, patterned after Mount Vernon. American Village is also home to the



Pettus Randall Miniature Museum of American History, a collection of dioramas that bring to life significant events in American history.

Admission is \$7.50 for adults, \$7 for seniors and \$6 for students. During special events, admission is usually \$5 per person. For more information and hours, call (205) 665-3535.





## *Calera*

### **George Roy Park** 11

This recently constructed facility is on Second Avenue, 1 mile west of U.S. 31. It features a 1/2 mile walk/bike trail that circles the park. The paved trail is on flat terrain. The park also has a playground and picnic area.

### **Oliver Park**

Oliver Park is located on Highway 25. There is a 1/4 mile track around the football field for walking or running. Adjacent to the football field is a large picnic and play area.

### **Columbiana** 12

The city of Columbiana is finishing up a redevelopment project that includes new sidewalks in the city center. Visitors can now stroll along Main Street to the old Shelby County Courthouse, circa 1854, which now houses the Shelby County Museum and Archives. A short walk from the courthouse is the Karl C. Harrison Museum of George Washington, which houses one of the largest private collections of George and Martha Washington memorabilia outside of Mount Vernon. For more information about the Shelby County Museum, call (205) 669-3912. For more information about the Karl C. Harrison Museum, call (205) 669-8767.

A 1/4 mile walking track is located at Elvin Hill Elementary School, 201 Washington St. It is available for community use after school.

## *Wilsonville*

### **Beeswax Creek Park** 13

Adjacent to Lay Lake on Highway 145, this county park encompasses nearly 100 acres and features a walking trail, boat launch facilities and picnic pavilions.

A 1/8 mile walking track is located beside Wilsonville Elementary School. Bikes are not allowed.





## WHAT'S COMING: WALK/BIKE PROJECTS IN DISCUSSION:

Municipal and county officials are beginning to recognize the need to expand walking and biking opportunities in the county. So are some developers, who realize that making their projects friendly to pedestrians also make them more attractive to homebuyers, shoppers and retailers. An encouraging sign can be found in some of the projects that will be coming to fruition in the next few years. And yet, as this relatively short list indicates, much more can be done. Here is the lineup of Shelby County walk/bike projects that are either under discussion or have funding already secured for their construction:

### *North Shelby (Hoover to Pelham, Inverness to Greystone)*

The City of Hoover plans to construct sidewalks along Valleydale Road from Caldwell Mill Road to U.S. 280. Rights-of-way for the project are expected to be purchased in 2004 with construction in 2005. The city should be commended for this ambitious project.

Sidewalks also are expected to be constructed by the City of Hoover from the back entrance of Greystone to Highway 119, east of U.S. 280. Construction is expected to take place in the 2005-2006 time frame.

The City of Hoover also plans to build a 3,100-foot walking trail from the Hoover Metropolitan Stadium to the Cahaba River.

### *Alabaster, Helena*

The City of Alabaster plans to construct a sports complex on Highway 119 that will include a track. The track will circle four sports fields and will accommodate walkers and bikers. The complex will be well lit and built on flat terrain.

The City of Helena has secured at least partial funding to construct a walking and biking trail, starting at Old Town Helena and stretching ultimately to the Cahaba River along Buck Creek. Construction of the first phase is expected to start this year, with a



second phase constructed in 2005 and a third phase in 2006. The trail would ultimately extend nearly 5 miles.

The greenway will be a multi-use trail for bikes and pedestrians. A large part of the trail will be along the old Tocoa rail line with a 10-12 foot wide asphalt path, occasional seating, some bridges and signs. The section along Buck Creek will run from Amphitheater Park in Old Town to the Civil War era coke ovens near the Cahaba River, connecting to the new sports complex. A second section will branch off and run past Highway 52 to Beaver Creek, ending near the Helena Intermediate School. City leaders deserve praise for this project.

Also under discussion is a proposal in the Helena Comprehensive Plan that calls for the creation of pedestrian-friendly “Village Centers” in several Helena locations. These Village Centers would be connected via sidewalks to nearby residential neighborhoods. The Village Market Center would be located at County Roads 58 and 95. The Riverwoods Village Center would be located on County Road 52 across from Cahaba Lily Park, Helena Intermediate School and the Old Cahaba subdivision. Although these proposals are in the Comprehensive Plan, there is no specific timetable for construction, nor are they guaranteed to ever be built.

### *East Shelby (Leeds, Vincent, Sterrett, Harpersville)*

The community of Vandiver has applied for a grant to construct a park and walking track next to the fire station on Highway 43 North.

### *South Shelby (Montevallo, Calera, Columbiana, Wilsonville)*

Montevallo park link – There is an ad hoc committee in place to locate and plan a trail system that would ultimately connect Stephens and Orr parks to University of Montevallo lake. The proposed route follows the creek system in town. The interim route presently follows city streets. The committee is working to secure the rights-of-way between the two parks.

The City of Columbiana is in the process of constructing a sports complex on McDow Road that will include a walk/bike trail. The trail will circle the sports fields.





## WHAT WE NEED: PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

As noted several times in this guidebook, growing population, traffic problems and suburban sprawl are all challenges facing Shelby County. The new Shelby County Comprehensive Plan speaks at length of the need to plan better for growth while creating more walkable, bikable communities in the county. Here are some specific recommendations for public planners, private developers and the public to consider. These recommendations and proposals were selected by our team because they would provide real, tangible benefits to Shelby residents; because they are realistic; and because we believe there would be opportunities to secure matching government dollars to fund them.

### *General Recommendations:*

1. Create the “Shelby Trails”

program, a nonprofit, volunteer, countywide advisory panel that would encourage walking and biking and recommend additions and improvements to walk/bike facilities.

Responsibilities of Shelby Trails

could include: publishing walk/bike guides; working with the county and the state to install signage on walk/bike routes; presenting awards for residential and commercial developments that are walker- and biker-friendly; and partnering with walking and biking clubs to hold periodic events that promote walking and biking in the county. The Shelby Trails organization should seek input from residents, public officials, walking and biking enthusiast organizations and bicycle shops in crafting its mission and its





recommendations. The Shelby County Commission could provide limited seed money for the group; the organization could also seek public and corporate contributions.

2. Work closely with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham to ensure Shelby County is well-represented in the regional walking and biking plan and considered for both government and private funding for walk/bike trails.
3. Create a program for securing and expanding public open spaces, greenways and walking trails along the Cahaba and Coosa rivers. The program could be structured like the state's "Forever Wild" program or could fall under the jurisdiction of the Black Warrior Cahaba Rivers Land Trust. The ultimate goal of these efforts would be to construct multi-county greenways along portions of the Cahaba and Coosa rivers. These efforts should be based on multi-jurisdictional cooperation, similar to the partnership behind the Five Mile Creek Greenway in Jefferson County. Ultimately, all cities and counties along the Cahaba and Coosa rivers should join together with state and federal officials, nonprofit organizations and private landowners to help push this goal forward.
4. Encourage municipal and county governments to adopt policies that promotes construction of sidewalks, roadside bike lanes. As part of these policies, all new developments, redevelopments and road expansions should include a serious discussion about the benefit of adding sidewalks or bike paths.





5. Encourage the Shelby County Board of Education to build sidewalks at all new school construction projects. Encourage the school board, the Shelby County Commission and local municipalities to find ways to make existing schools more pedestrian friendly, including constructing sidewalks or paths that make it easier for students who live close to the schools to walk or ride their bicycles from home. Work with Shelby and Hoover schools to promote the health benefits of walking and biking.
6. As with the Heardmont Park walk/bike trail project, encourage county officials to identify other walk/bike projects that would be eligible for funding through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). Submit at least one county walk/bike project a year to ADECA for funding.
7. Encourage the state Department of Transportation (DOT) to consider the benefits and feasibility of including sidewalks and/or bike lanes with all road improvement projects. Urge DOT to work with other state agencies, municipal and county governments to secure federal matching grants for such projects.





## SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR WALKING/BIKING IMPROVEMENTS:

*See map on pages 2-3 for locations.*

### *North Shelby (Hoover to Pelham, Inverness to Greystone):*

#### **Oak Mountain State Park**

Park officials should extend the bike lanes on the main park road all the way to the fishing center, completing a roadway bike path that would run the length of the park. State and county officials should consider the possibility of adding a bike lane along the entrance road to the park from Highway 119. Some day, if possible, a bike lane should be built along Highway 119 and Highway 11 and connected to the Oak Mountain bike lane system.

#### **Spain Park walk/bike trail**

Originally part of the design plans for the Spain Park High School and Recreation Complex property, the future of this proposal is unclear at the present time. The City of Hoover already intends to construct sidewalks along Valleydale Road past Spain Park. The city should also plan and secure funding for a walking and biking trail in the open space surrounding the old pond south of the high school. The trail could connect to the Valleydale sidewalk, providing pedestrian and bike access to communities along Valleydale Road. At this time, there are no sidewalks running through the Spain Park complex. Many area residents are already walking or jogging along the shoulder of the Spain Park road system, posing a safety problem for the runners and for motorists. In the interim the roadways within the complex should be marked as part of the Shelby Trails system.

#### **Inverness walk/bike trail**

There has been ongoing discussion among members of the Inverness Master Homeowners Association about constructing a walk/bike trail along Inverness Parkway. With plans already in



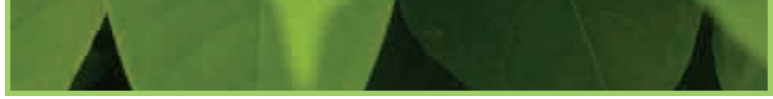
place to build sidewalks along east Valleydale Road, this project represents a natural extension of that project and should be encouraged. The Inverness walk/bike trail would provide a multi-mile, safe walking and riding route from the Caldwell Mill Road commercial district down Valleydale Road, through Inverness and on to the Inverness entrance at U.S. 280. It would also provide pedestrian and bicyclist access from several North Shelby neighborhoods to the Inverness corporate park. In addition, it would provide biking and walking access from the Spain Park recreation complex to the City of Hoover's pocket park off Inverness Parkway.

### Walk/bike paths on Highway 119 linking Heardmont Park, the North Shelby Library and Oak Mountain Elementary and Middle Schools **D**

Planners should find a way to provide a pedestrian and bicyclist path linking these three public complexes, which exist within a quarter-mile of each other. There have been discussions in the past about a path behind Oak Mountain Elementary and Middle Schools to the park. If this is not feasible, a sidewalk along Highway 119 is recommended. Crossing 119 to the library does pose a hazard. If a sidewalk is constructed here, county officials should consider a pedestrian crossing with a stoplight and a button that pedestrians can use to make the light change. An alternative would be a pedestrian overpass. Federal funding should be available for this project.

### Shoulder bike lane on Highway 119 from Pelham to U.S. 280 **E**

Despite resistance from residents in Indian Springs, and from state highway officials, this idea should be given serious consideration. Plans



are already developed for three-laning Highway 119 from the Broken Bow neighborhood to U.S. 280. A shoulder bike lane should be seriously discussed as part of this project. Matching money would be required from Shelby County. Although Indian Springs residents have essentially rejected sidewalks and bike paths through their town as part of their proposed comprehensive plan, that decision is counter-intuitive from their stated goal of maintaining the rural and open-space character of the village. When Highway 119 is widened through Indian Village to Caldwell Mill Road, a shoulder bike lane should be given very serious consideration. The bike lane, if ever built, should be extended to Heardmont Park, and up Caldwell Mill Road to Oak Mountain Intermediate and High Schools. Eventually, a sidewalk should be extended from the schools to the Caldwell Mill commercial district and Valleydale Road.

## Shoulder bike lane on Highway 119 from U.S. 280 to Leeds **F**

Highway 119 east of U.S. 280 past Lake Purdy and on to Leeds in Jefferson County would also be a strong candidate for a shoulder bike lane at the time the highway is improved and widened. The road, actually a historic stagecoach route between Asheville and Montevallo, already offers a relatively wide utility right-of-way along the Shelby County portions east of U.S. 280. In the Jefferson County portion, however, there is very little shoulder available at this time for bike riders, although they are seen regularly along this route. State highway officials, along with Shelby and Jefferson counties, should work together on exploring this project.

## Lake Purdy walk/bike trail **G**

The Birmingham Water Works owns substantial property surrounding Lake Purdy. Already some recreational opportunities are available on the eastern side of Lake Purdy in the way of fishing and boating. The Birmingham Water Works should give serious consideration to developing a greenway with walk/bike paths on the west side of Lake Purdy. This is especially important as land along





Highway 119 east of U.S. 280 and along the Grants Mill Road corridor face development pressures.

## *Helena, Alabaster*

### **Alabaster to Montevallo bike trail** **H**

Consider construction of a shoulder bike trail to connect Alabaster and Montevallo. The trail, possibly following Highways 17 and 22 and portions of 119, would connect both communities to the American Village and would encourage more visitation to that site. A first step would be to mark the route as part of the Shelby Trails, although safety issues for bikers along this route would have to be considered.

### **Helena, Alabaster sidewalks** **I**

Consider construction of sidewalks to connect schools to residential areas. Specifically, consider construction of sidewalks to connect Thompson Intermediate, Middle and High Schools. There is a short distance among all three of these schools.

### **Cahaba River walk/bike trail** **J**

As noted in our general recommendations, continue efforts to extend greenways with walk/bike trails along the Cahaba River. Explore ways to tie together the Buck Creek Greenway and Tocoa rails-to-trails projects with the Cahaba River Wildlife Management Area. Officials in Shelby and Bibb counties should work with state and federal officials to secure additional lands along the Cahaba River, ultimately creating a multicounty, regional greenway along this beautiful waterway.

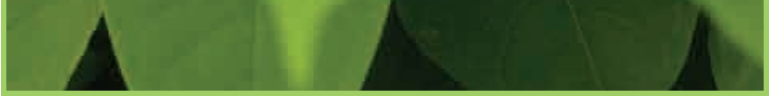
## *Chelsea, Westover*

### **Highway 11 bike corridor, new Oak Mountain State Park entrance** **K**

Explore the possibility of creating a shoulder bike lane in conjunction with the widening of Highway 11 from old U.S. 280 to U.S. 31.







A first step could be to install Shelby Trails signage along Highway 11. Work with the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to create a new, passive, walk/bike path entrance into Oak Mountain State Park from Highway 11 west of Chelsea.

### Highway 47 bike route **L**

This roadway would be a strong candidate for signage as part of the Shelby Trails system, providing a bike route from Chelsea to Columbiana. An alternative would be to use Highways 47, 39 and 69 to connect the two cities. In the long run, consider building a shoulder bike path.

### Highway 55 bike route **M**

This highway offers a relatively safe route from eastern sections of the county to Columbiana. This road should be marked as part of the Shelby Trails system, with additional markers from the intersection of Highway 25 into Columbiana.

### Dunavant Valley Greenway **N**

This proposal calls for an 11.4 mile walk/bike path along Highway 41, from U.S. 280 to Highway 25. The greenway would create a linear park similar to Jemison Trail in Mountain Brook, and provide pedestrian links among the valley's communities while preserving the scenic quality of the area. The proposed greenway consists of three phases. Phase I would begin at U.S. 280 at the Soccer Blast facility and continue to Mt Laurel. Phase II would extend the Greenway from Mt Laurel to Lake Wehapa, including pocket parks along the way. Phase III would continue the trail from Lake Wehapa to Highway 25. Along many sections of Highway 41, walkways can be constructed with minimal site work. Existing roadside setbacks by developers of Shoal Creek, Greystone and Mt Laurel have helped to maintain a park-like

setting along Dunavant Valley Road. However, there are portions of the road where the right-of-way is inadequate. This has prompted the county to suggest a corridor study and traffic control plan for the area. The idea is to keep traffic flowing, without traffic lights, and to incorporate pedestrian areas. A first step for this proposal would be to mark sections along the main route as part of the Shelby Trails system, provided safety concerns are addressed.



### Dunavant Valley, Double Oak Mountain link

This is a long-term proposal, but as an extension of the Dunavant Valley Greenway, consider connecting the greenway to Double Oak Mountain and Oak Mountain State Park via a walk/bike tunnel under U.S. 280 at The Narrows development. With the addition of recommended walk/bike paths from the Fishing Center at Oak Mountain to 119 and Heardmont Park, and along Highway 11, bicyclists would ultimately be able to travel safely from the Meadowbrook/Heardmont areas of North Shelby through the state park to Chelsea, Mt Laurel, Vandiver and even to Pelham.

### *East Shelby (Leeds, Vincent, Harpersville)*

#### Highway 25 bike route

Mark Highway 25 from Leeds through the Dunavant Valley and on to Vincent as part of the Shelby Trails system. Consider the long-term possibility of creating shoulder bike lanes in sections where traffic or blind curves would pose a hazard to cyclists.

### *South Shelby (Montevallo, Calera, Columbiana, Wilsonville)*

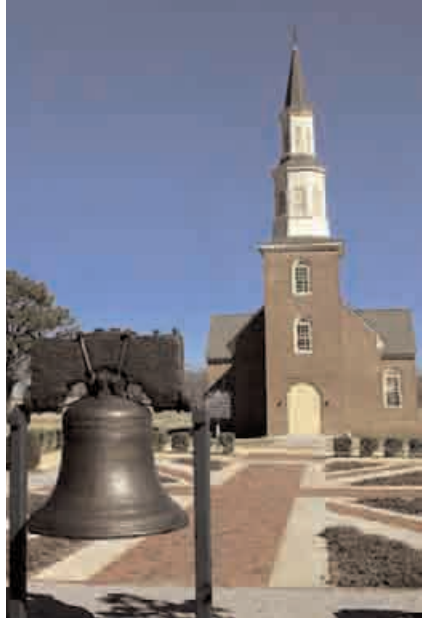
#### Historic Columbiana walking trail

Develop a historical walking trail, with accompanying brochure, that would connect the Shelby County Museum and Archives, in the

old county courthouse, with other sites of historic significance, including the Karl C. Harrison Museum of George Washington.

### Montevallo to American Village **R**

Mark Highway 119 from American Village to downtown Montevallo as part of the Shelby Trails system. Consider the possibility of ultimately building a shoulder bike path along Highway 119, linking American Village to downtown Montevallo. This route could ultimately link to the proposed trail connecting Stephens and Orr parks.



### Bike link, Shelby Iron Works to Beeswax Creek Park **S**

Mark as part of the Shelby Trails system Highways 145, 47 and 42 between the park and the historic Shelby Iron Works. The markings could later be extended along these roads to Wilsonville and Columbiana and, finally, to Calera along the proposed Heart of Dixie Railroad Greenway.

### Heart of Dixie Railroad Greenway **T**

Construct a walk/bike path on the right-of-way adjacent to the Heart of Dixie Railroad, from Calera to Shelby Iron Works. The right-of-way is already secured and is wide enough to add a path. Plans are already in place to extend the rail line to Shelby Iron Works. A walk/bike path would give visitors the option of walking or biking one way and then riding back on the railroad. This project would also provide additional riders for the railroad, helping sustain this community asset. We believe the railroad's concerns about safety can be adequately addressed in the greenway's design.



*Acknowledgements:*

ABC 33/40

Alabama Power

Alagasco

BUMP (Birmingham Urban Mountain Pedalers)

Birmingham Color Graphics

Impressive Promotions

Leadership Shelby County

Means Advertising

Regional Planning Commission of Greater  
Birmingham

Shelby Baptist Medical Center

Shelby County Economic and Industrial Authority

Shelby County Historical Society