



BRIDGING DIVIDES, BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

A Community-Driven Blueprint for East Hardy Street & Hall Avenue

1. Project Information & Area Overview

OCTOBER 2021

Task 1: Discover

Task 2: Engage & Envision

Task 3: Study & Analyze

Task 4: Visualize & Plan

Task 5: Codify

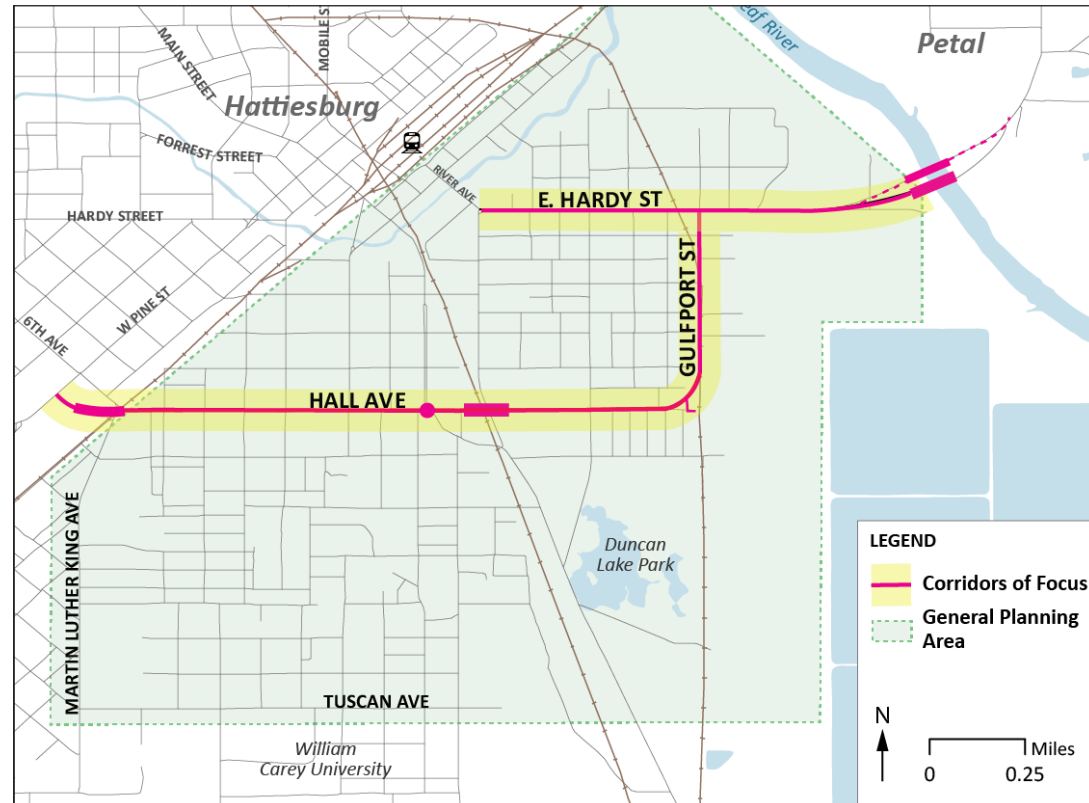


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Project Information

Project Background & Purpose

Since 2017, the City of Hattiesburg and its partners helped lay the foundation for more than \$55 million in projects along the Hall Avenue and East Hardy Street corridors—including two railway overpasses funded by federal grants. These game-changing transportation and infrastructure projects will be transformational for Hattiesburg, bridging divides and building opportunities for generations to come.

The construction of overpasses will allow people to travel to and from Downtown and East Hattiesburg without having to stop for cargo trains that frequently block traffic. The new, extended and redesigned streets (Hall Avenue and Gulfport Street) will create a road network that will allow people to travel more easily through East Hattiesburg, and, ultimately, throughout Hattiesburg and the region.

When complete, this uninterrupted road network will give the Hall Avenue, Gulfport Street, and E. Hardy Street corridors greater visibility to residents and visitors traveling through Hattiesburg. This will grow the customer base for existing businesses and services and create potential for more commercial activity along and near the corridors

through new businesses, the expansion of existing businesses, and/or redevelopment.

The [Bridging Divides, Building Opportunities](#) project will re-imagine the futures of these corridors. The result of this project will be a community-driven blueprint that identifies economic development, redevelopment, and creative placemaking opportunities that harness the energy generated by a connected transportation network.

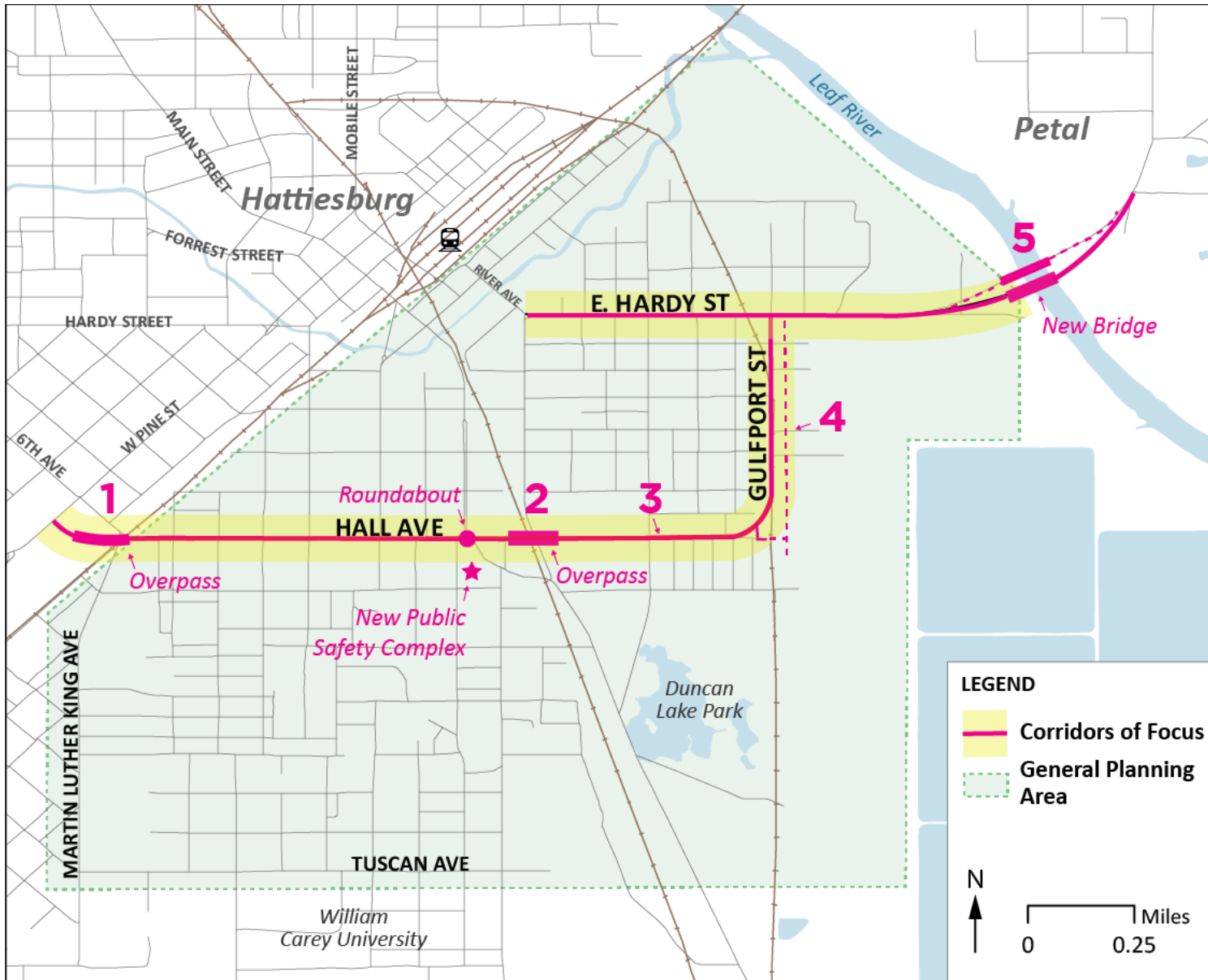
Purpose of this Report

The scope of work of this project is divided into five tasks. This report is a product of Task 1: Discover. The purpose of this report is to provide a common foundation of information about the area of East Hattiesburg that is the subject of this project.

Project Area

While the focus of the planning and zoning recommendations of this project will be on the Hall Avenue, Gulfport Street, and East Hardy Street corridors, the areas in between and around these corridors, which is being called the “general planning area,” will also be examined as part of

Project Area Map



◀ This map highlights the roadway corridors of focus for this project along with the general planning area. The major transportation projects that are underway in East Hattiesburg are identified by number and described on the next page. The location of the City's new Public Safety Complex is also identified on the map.

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the work. The map on [page 4](#) highlights the corridors that are the focus of this project and also outlines the general planning area in East Hattiesburg.

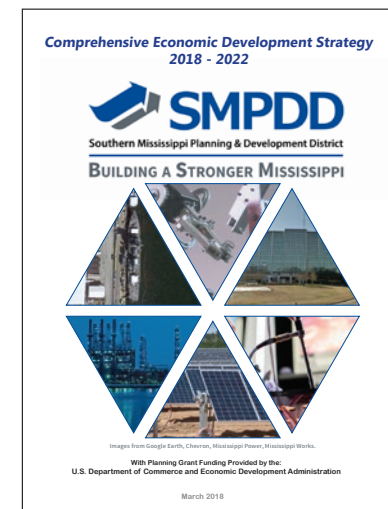
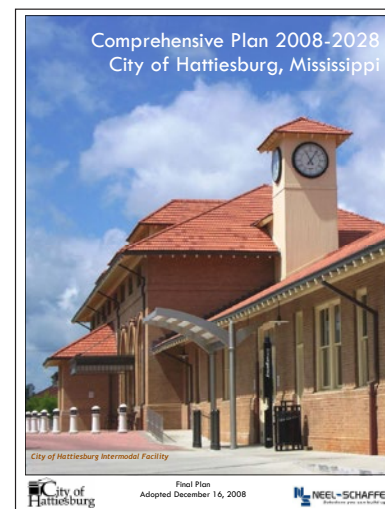
Engaging the Public

Residents, civic organizations, businessowners, and institutions will all play a vital role in this project by helping to develop the goals, principles, and priorities that will guide the creation of planning and zoning recommendations that will move this plan from paper to action. The public is also encouraged to share their vision and specific ideas for the future of the corridors of focus and for the general planning area.

Starting Points: Existing Plans

It is important to refer back to existing plans that involve or impact the corridors of focus and the general planning area in East Hattiesburg.

The City's [Comprehensive Plan \(2008-2028\)](#) notes that many of Hattiesburg's commercial districts face distinct challenges to long-term health and viability. It presents a framework for examining the corridors that is now reflected in the City's Land Development Code (i.e., zoning code).



The [Twin Forks Rising Master Plan](#) focuses on community-driven improvements in Ward 2 (see [page 23](#) for the Ward Boundaries Map), of which the general planning area includes a portion. The plan includes a number of principles

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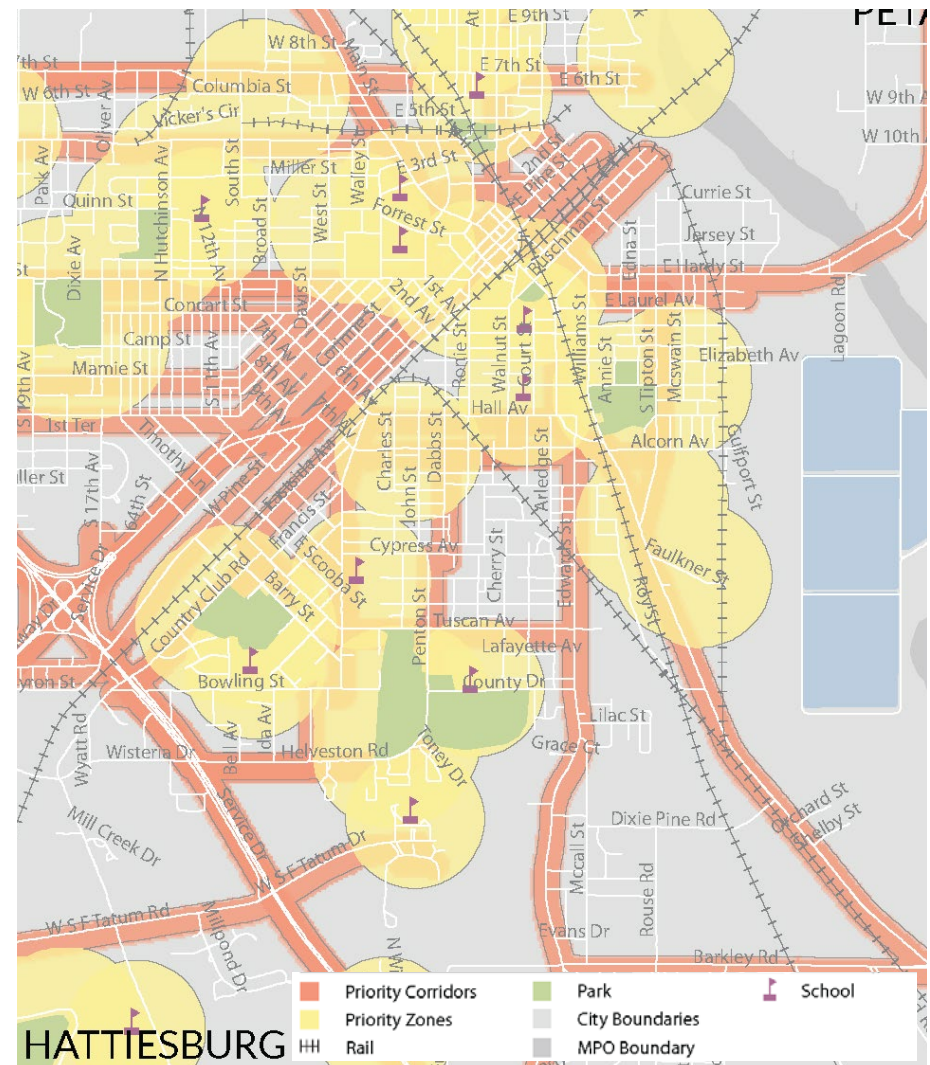
and recommendations for the area:

- **Economic Development.** Linking back to the City's Comprehensive Plan and the major transportation projects, the plan recommends creating nodes and corridors of economic development and neighborhood services at the Edwards Street commercial node at James Street; the East Hardy Street corridor; the Dabbs Street and Milton Barnes neighborhood corridor; and the Tipton neighborhood corridor.
- **Transportation.** The plan recommends improving transportation from east to west and for the City to continue to implement is "complete streets" policy on east-west arteries. The plan encourages pedestrian and bicycle connections between all neighborhoods. It also envisions a gateway installation at the end of East Hardy Street in Hattiesburg.
- **Parks & Open Spaces.** The plan envisions the creation of water retention parks along Gordon's Creek and the Leaf River to mitigate flooding and serve as amenities around which new development could be constructed.

The Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (SMPDD) produced the [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\) 2018-2022](#). SMPDD is a regional organization created to assist in the promotion of the economic resources of South Mississippi. SMPDD serves a 15-county area which includes 38 municipalities. Among the goals and recommendations of the CEDS are the following, which all could apply to this project:

- Support road and highway programs that will improve the transportation network in the region. (The City of Hattiesburg is accomplishing this goal through the transportation infrastructure investments to improve the connection between downtown, East Hattiesburg, and Petal.)
- Partner with community colleges, four-year institutions and other organizations to encourage new business start-ups, including the use of business incubators and accelerators.
- Support tourism-related industries that not only bring outside dollars to the region but also serve as amenities that are important to the quality of life of area residents, potential new business and potential new workforce.

The Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) began developing a bicycle, pedestrian, and trail plan for the entire Hattiesburg MPO area. The [2015 Pathways Master Plan](#) provides a framework for the development of new facilities, programs, and policies that will support safe and convenient walking and biking conditions for transportation and recreation. Among the many recommendations in the plan is the designation of Pedestrian Priority Corridors. These corridors should provide frequent and safe crossings, appropriate bus stop space and locations, and access to adjacent neighborhoods and businesses. The plan designates East Hardy Street as a Pedestrian Priority Corridor.



▲ This part of a map from the 2015 Pathways Master Plan highlights Priority Pedestrian Corridors and Priority Pedestrian Zones in East Hattiesburg and surrounding areas

Area Overview: Public Infrastructure Investments

Major Transportation Investments

The following are descriptions of the major transportation infrastructure projects that are currently underway in East Hattiesburg:

1. An overpass over the Norfolk Southern rail line that runs parallel to W. Pine Street will connect W. Pine Street in Downtown Hattiesburg via Hall Avenue.
2. An overpass connecting Hall Avenue over the Canadian National rail line that runs parallel to James Street.
3. A redesigned and extended Hall Avenue up to Gulfport Street. Lighting and landscaping improvements will be part of the redesign.
4. The creation of a new Gulfport Street, which will include a trail connection that allows for multiple transportation opportunities (vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian, etc.).

5. A new bridge over the Leaf River along East Hardy Street that connects Hattiesburg and Petal, plus the conversion of the existing bridge into a path for pedestrians and bicyclists. This is a County project.

The map on [page 4](#) highlights the locations of these projects. They are keyed to the numbers in the descriptions. These projects are in various stages of development, but they are all likely to be completed between 2022 and 2024.



▲ Cargo trains block traffic in downtown several times a day for up to 30 minutes at a time, a problem that the major transportation infrastructure projects will solve, when completed.

Bicycle, Pedestrian & Open Space Investments

Cars are not the only way people get around Hattiesburg. The City has invested in system of bike lanes, paths, and multi-purpose trails to facilitate travel connections and recreation by bicycle and foot. The major transportation investments include facilities for bicycles and pedestrians. Other projects include the following:

- **Duncan Lake Park Trail Extension.** The City recently completed construction of a trail extension at Duncan Lake Park. An 8-foot wide path now extends around the back of Duncan Lake to Alcorn Avenue in the East Jerusalem neighborhood. The trail will eventually be extended to Hall Avenue.
- **Gordon's Creek Linear Park.** A plan was completed for the Gordon's Creek Linear Park in 2011 that aims to capture the potential of Gordon's Creek. The plan features the creation of a linear park that will include a multi-purpose path, landscaping, historic lighting, artwork, pavilions, and interpretive signage. The City has recently receive funding to move forward on the first phases of this project.



▲ City officials celebrate the opening of the Duncan Lake Park Trail Extension in May 2021 (photo courtesy of City of Hattiesburg).



▲ A view of Gordon's Creek, which the City aims to transform from a drainage ditch into an amenity (photo courtesy of City of Hattiesburg).

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The map on [page 11](#) locates these projects and also highlights the existing parks and open spaces in East Hattiesburg, such as those pictured on the right.

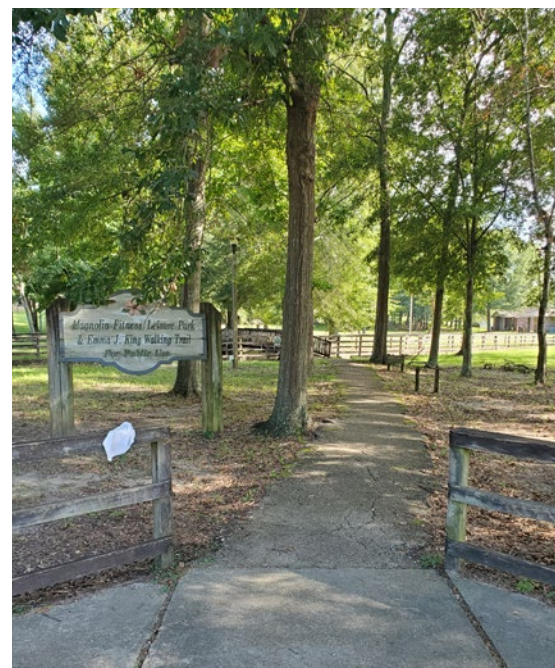
Other Public-Focused Investments

Public Safety Complex. Another major public-focused investment is the development of the City's new Public Safety Complex. This new facility will house the Hattiesburg Police Department and the municipal court. It will also include a community room and a media room.

Transit. Hub City Transit provides bus service within East Hattiesburg (see map on [page 12](#)). The Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar MPO is leading the development of the Hub City Transit Master Plan, which will identify public transit needs and recommend future changes and mobility options like on-demand transit. It will also develop a long-term funding strategy and propose an implementation plan.

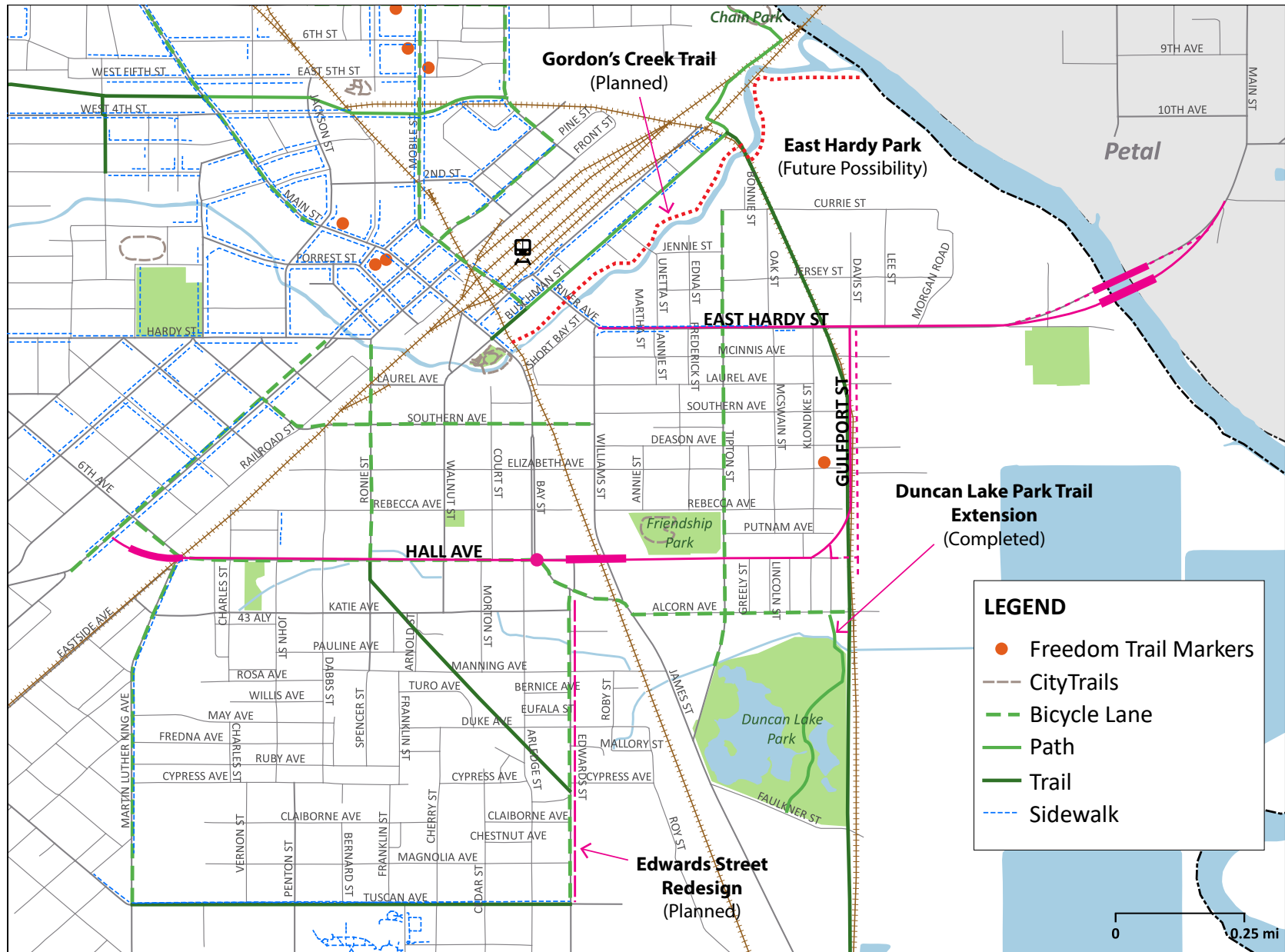


▲ *Walthall Park is located at the corner of Rebecca Avenue and Walnut Street.*



▲ *The entrance to the Magnolia Fitness Leisure Park is on Katie Avenue near John Street.*

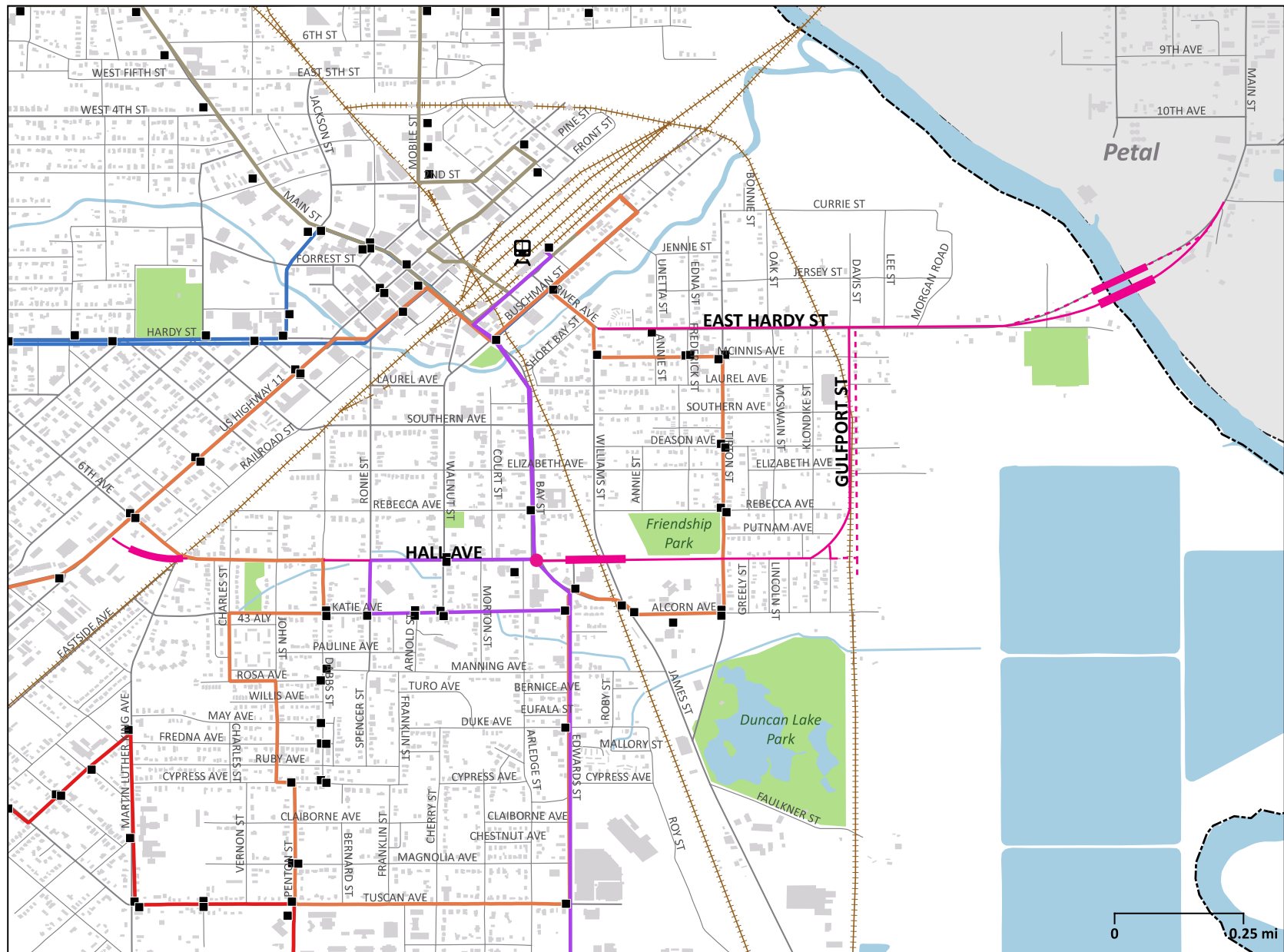
Parks, Trails & Sidewalk Network Map



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Bus Routes & Stops Map



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Area Overview: Focus on the Corridors

It is important to understand the existing character and design of each corridor and their overall purpose in the roadway network. East Hardy Street is classified as a “minor arterial,” a type of street that provides service for trips of moderate length and that connects places within a community. Between River Avenue and Tipton Street, East Hardy Street has two lanes and a center turning lane. After Tipton Street, it transitions into a two-lane roadway.

Hall Avenue is classified as a “collector,” a type of street with low-to-moderate capacity that moves traffic from local streets to arterial roads. Hall Avenue is a two-lane road that will be extended to connect to a new Gulfport Street. The redesigned Hall Avenue will have a landscaped center median.

Both East Hardy Street and Hall Avenue pass through historic districts (see map on [page 20](#)) and various neighborhoods (see map on [page 21](#)). Furthermore, most of the East Hardy Street and Gulfport Street corridors, along with a portion of the Hall Avenue corridor, are within a special flood hazard area (see map on [page 22](#)). The following pages include photos of some of the commercial or institutional properties along or near each corridor.



▲ The East Hardy Street corridor has the characteristics of a typical suburban commercial corridor. For people traveling west from Petal, this roadway is the gateway into the City of Hattiesburg.



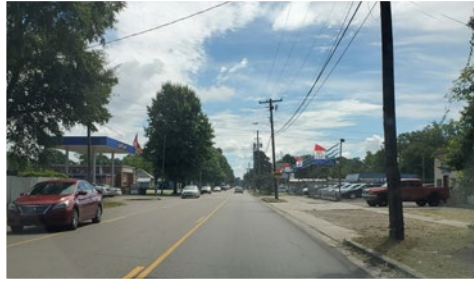
▲ The character of the Hall Avenue corridor is more residential, with houses and large trees lining the streets.

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East Hardy Street Area Businesses & Services

2 Quick Save | Craft Auto



4 Victory Church



6 Stop -N- Save, Vacant Building



1 Vacant Building



3 Blake's Complete Auto Care



5 Gary's Small Engine Repair

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2 Fairview Compounding Pharmacy



4 Jackson Bail Bonding, Barber Shop



6 Bay Street



1 Danny's Grocery & Deli, The Pound Cakery, Sports 22 Cafe & Lounge



3 R&M Foods Warehouse



5 Public Safety Complex

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Hall Avenue Area Businesses & Services (James St to Gulfport St)

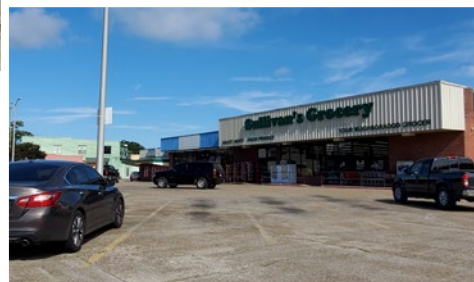
2 Vacant, A Cut Above, Vacant



4 Forrest County Juvenile Center



1 Deville Cooperative



3 Sullivan's Grocery


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Zoning for Business

Zoning laws regulate the use of land within a municipality. They regulate the ways in which the land can be developed and control what purposes the zoned land can serve.

The images to the right have been extracted from the [City's Land Development Code](#). They summarize the description and purpose of the commercial zoning districts that are present along East Hardy Street and Hall Avenue. They each also include a photograph that showcases the characteristic development type within that particular district. See [page 18](#) for a zoning map of the area.

4.5.8 B-1 Professional Business	
Description and Purpose.	Characteristic Development Type
The purpose of this business district is to provide areas for professional and business offices and related activities that require separate buildings and building groups surrounded by landscaped yards and open areas. The intent is to provide compact locations for business offices, medical and dental offices, as well as suburban locations near residential neighborhoods.	

4.5.9 B-2 Neighborhood Business District.	
Description and Purpose.	Characteristic Development Type
The purpose of the B-2 District is to provide for retail and personal service uses in locations convenient to residential neighborhoods consistent with comprehensive planning policies. This district is consistent with the Neighborhood Business District in the Comprehensive Plan.	

4.5.10 B-3 Community Business District.	
Description and Purpose.	Characteristic Development Type
The purpose of the B-3 District is to provide for retail, personal service , and offices in locations with convenient access to the community consistent with comprehensive planning policies. This district is consistent with the Community Business District in the Comprehensive Plan.	

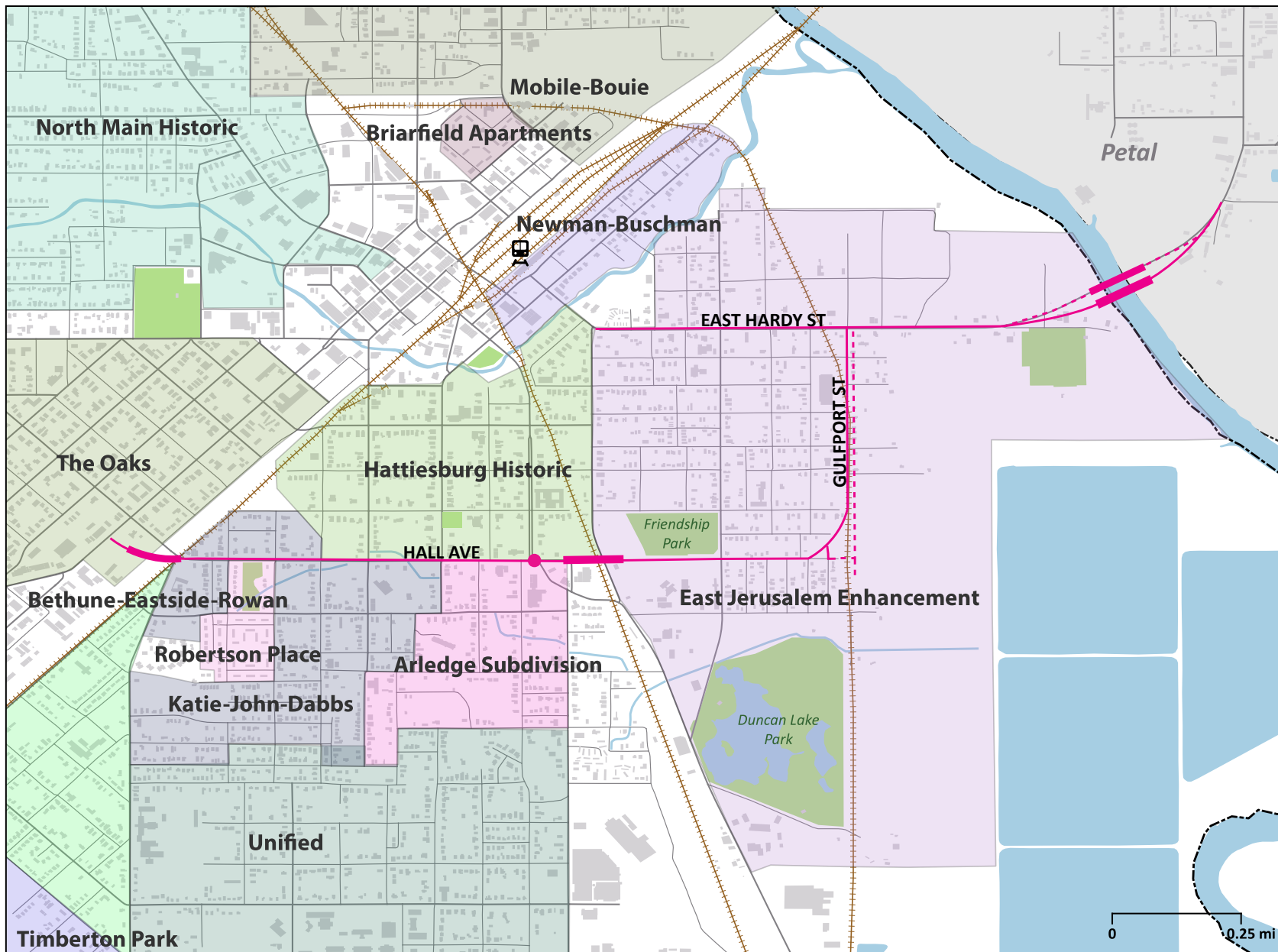


Additional Maps for Reference

The following pages contain additional maps that are referenced within this report.



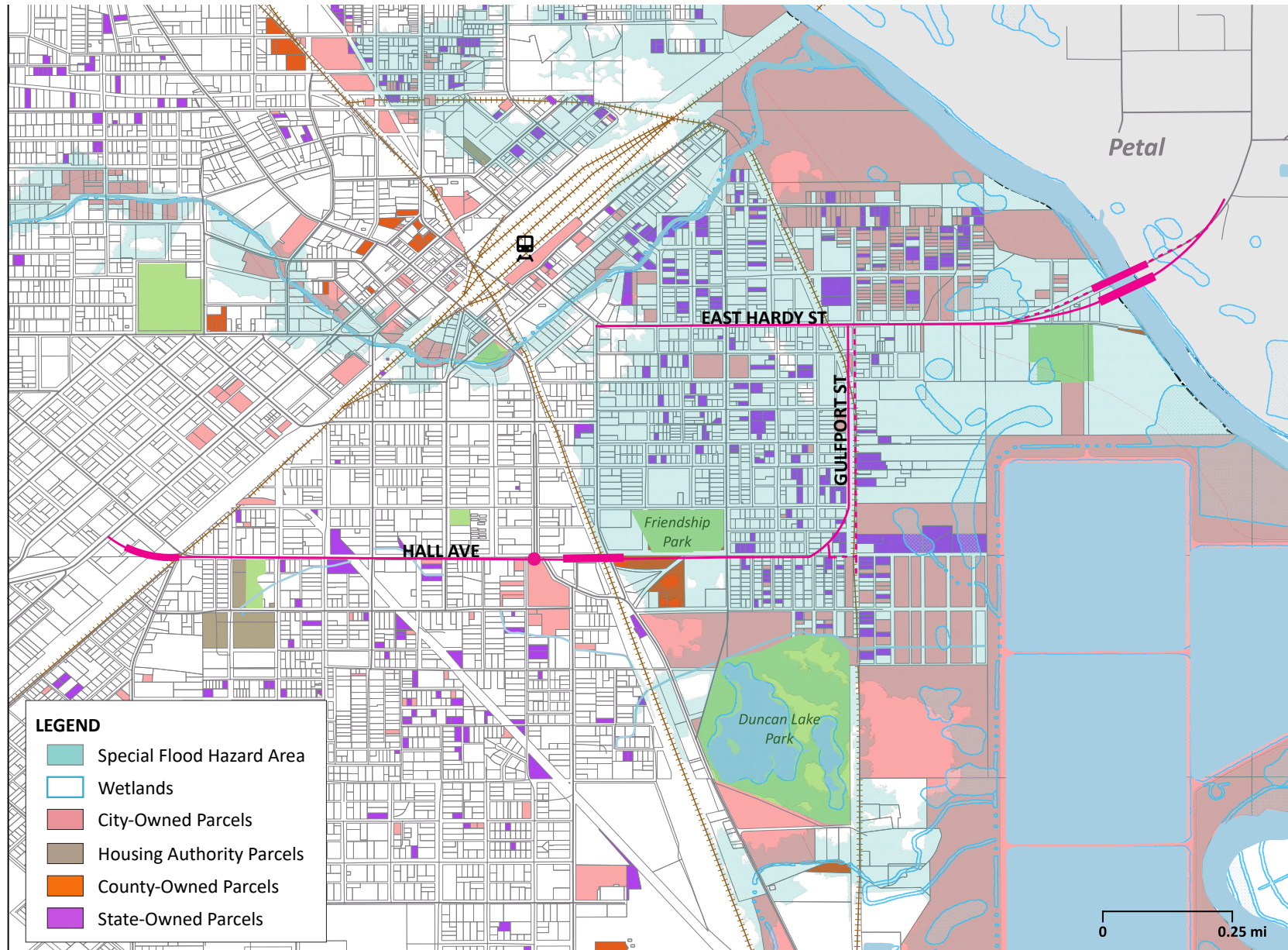
Neighborhood Associations Map



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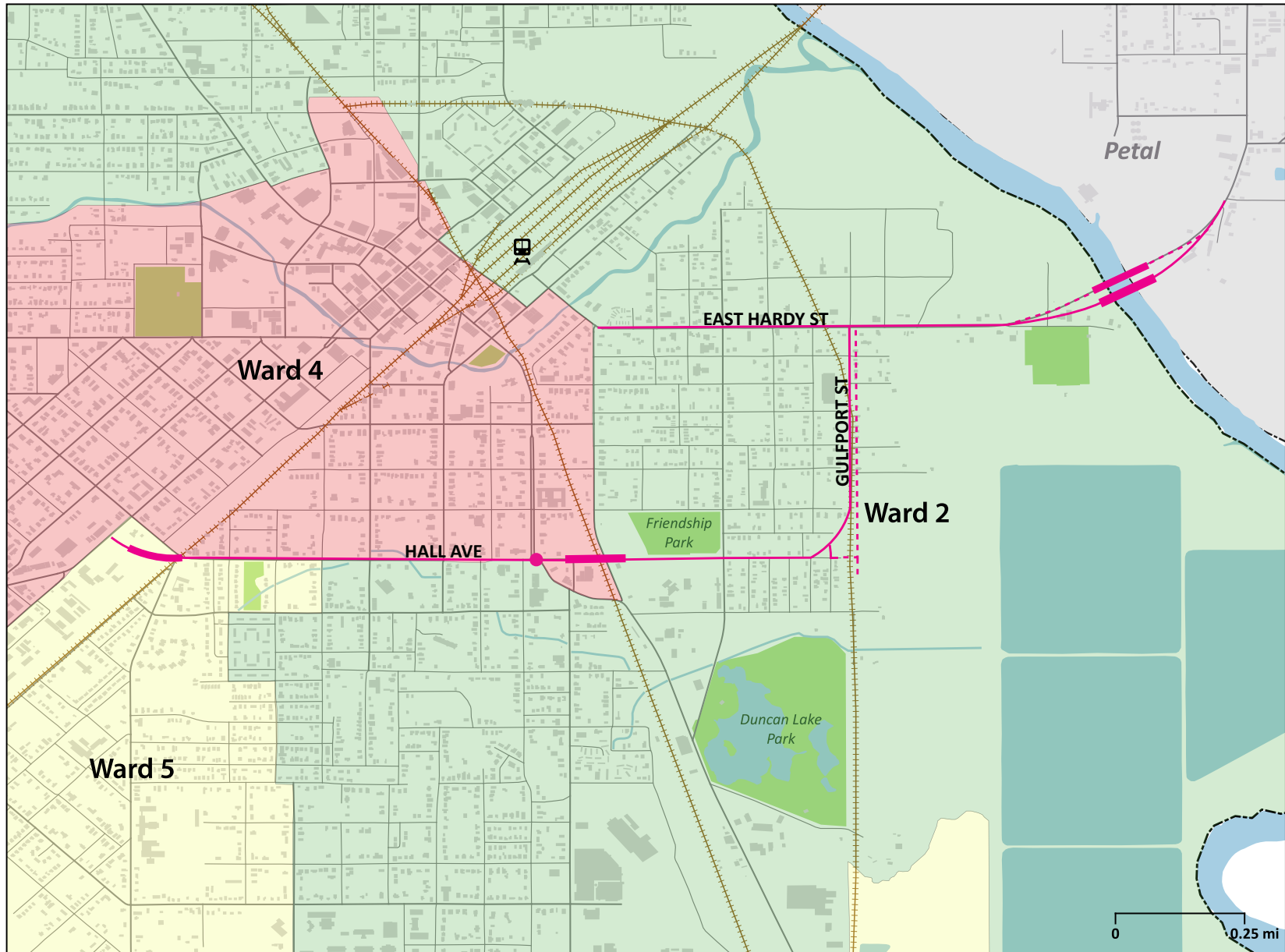
Floodplains, Wetlands & Government-Owned Parcels Map



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Ward Boundaries Map



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