

CHAPTER VI: Community Facilities -- Other

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The City of Helena is served by two separate school systems. For those residents who live within Shelby County, students attend schools within the Shelby County School system, and for those residents who live within Jefferson County, students attend schools within the Jefferson County School system. There are four Shelby County schools within Helena's city limits.



Helena Elementary School

Helena Elementary School (HES), originally opened in 1928, serves students in kindergarten through second grade. The Helena Elementary School has undergone various additions over its lifetime. Since its inception, the school was expanded during the years: 1962, 1967, 1986, 1991, 1994, and 1996. Based on information provided by the Helena Fire Marshall, HES has 57 classrooms with an overall estimated student capacity¹ of 1,710 students.



Helena Intermediate School

Helena Intermediate School (HIS), which opened in 2001, serves children in third through fifth grades and has a capacity of 650 students. Additions made to HIS over the past ten years has provided additional classroom space and eliminated the need for portable classrooms. Based on information provided by the Helena Fire Marshall, HIS has 47 classrooms with an overall estimated student capacity¹ of 1,410 students.



Helena Middle School

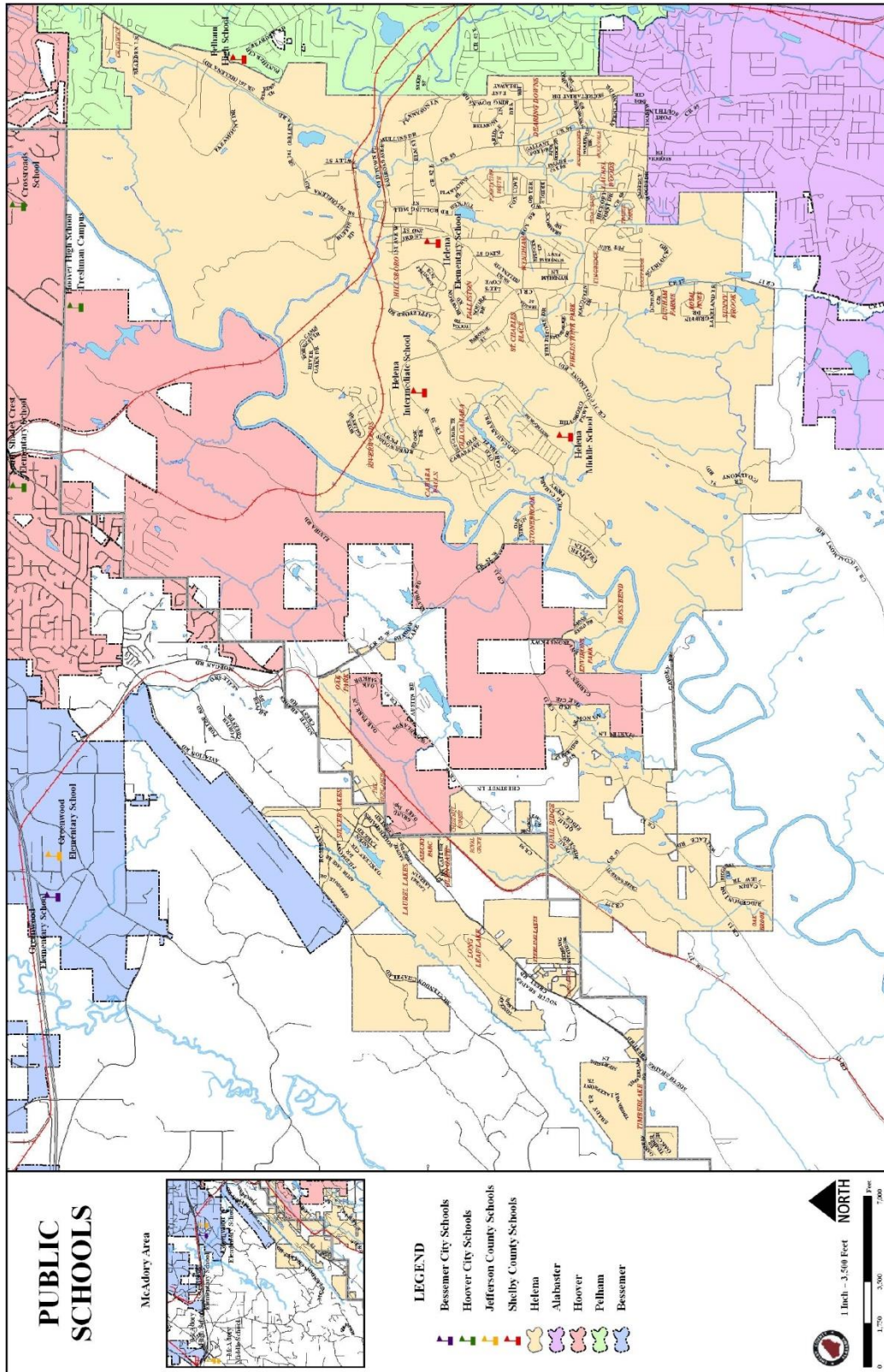
Helena Middle School (HMS), which opened in 2008 with a capacity of 1,000 students serves children in grades sixth through eighth. Based on information provided by the Helena Fire Marshall, HMS has 42 classrooms with an overall estimated student capacity¹ of 1,260 students.



Helena High School

Helena High School (HHS) opened for the 2014 school year, graduating its first senior class in the spring of 2015. The School building offers a wireless environment for students and faculty and its classroom are constructed to double as storm shelters. HHS serves children grades nine through twelve. Based on information provided by the Helena Fire Marshall, HHS has 55 classrooms with an overall estimated student capacity¹ of 1,650 students.

¹ *Student capacity as used in this document is not “occupancy load” but rather a number based on an average of 30 students per classroom (schools with younger students may have fewer per classroom). Further this number does not include rooms currently used for art, music or labs.*



A table showing enrollment numbers at the Shelby County Schools serving Helena residents from the school years 2005 through 2014 is shown. During this ten year time period, the Helena Elementary School experienced a more than a sixteen percent (16.5%) increase in students and the Helena Intermediate School grew twenty-seven percent (27%). Pelham High School grew approximately thirty percent (30%) for the period 2005-2013; however with the opening of Helena High School, and likely the switch to a city school system Pelham High showed a decline of approximately fifty-one percent between 2013 and 2014. This trend should correct itself as the new school system becomes established. Although Riverchase Middle School no longer serves Helena residents, the enrollment figures are shown to emphasize what affect a new school can have on not one but two communities. Between the school years 2001-2002 through 2007-2008, attendance expanded forty three percent at Riverchase Middle School, but with the addition of the Helena Middle School, the middle school attendance level for the school year 2008-2009 was nearly split evenly. Relief was not only provided for Helena residents with a new middle school but for Pelham residents as well. It is recommended that, during the next Comprehensive Plan Update, the City remove all other school systems from this Table and begin reporting on the percent change from one school year to the next for the four Helena Schools.

Table 20						
Shelby County Schools Enrollment						
Year	Helena Elementary	Helena Intermediate	Riverchase Middle	Helena Middle	Helena High	Pelham High
2005	715	668	1,166	NA	NA	1,295
2006	774	692	1,240	NA	NA	1,392
2007	824	752	1,283	NA	NA	1,463
2008	831	798	685	701	NA	1,523
2009	825	721	699	860	NA	1,586
2010	810	856	686	786	NA	1,665
2011	831	852	706	833	NA	1743
2012	826	878	747	870	NA	1805
2013	794	884	730	887	NA	1846
2014	856	915	730	951	1035	940
<i>Source: State of Alabama Department of Education</i>						

POST OFFICE

Helena is served primarily by two postal routes or zip codes. The main route is zip code 35080 provided by the post office located at the intersection of Highway 52 West and State Route 261, and the other route is zip code 35022, which serves those residents along South Shades Crest Road in both counties and is handled by the post office in Bessemer. Attempts have been made to combine all of the city limits under zip code 35080, but the only positive to come out of these attempts is that those Helena residents within zip code 35022 may substitute Helena instead of Bessemer as the city on mailing addresses.

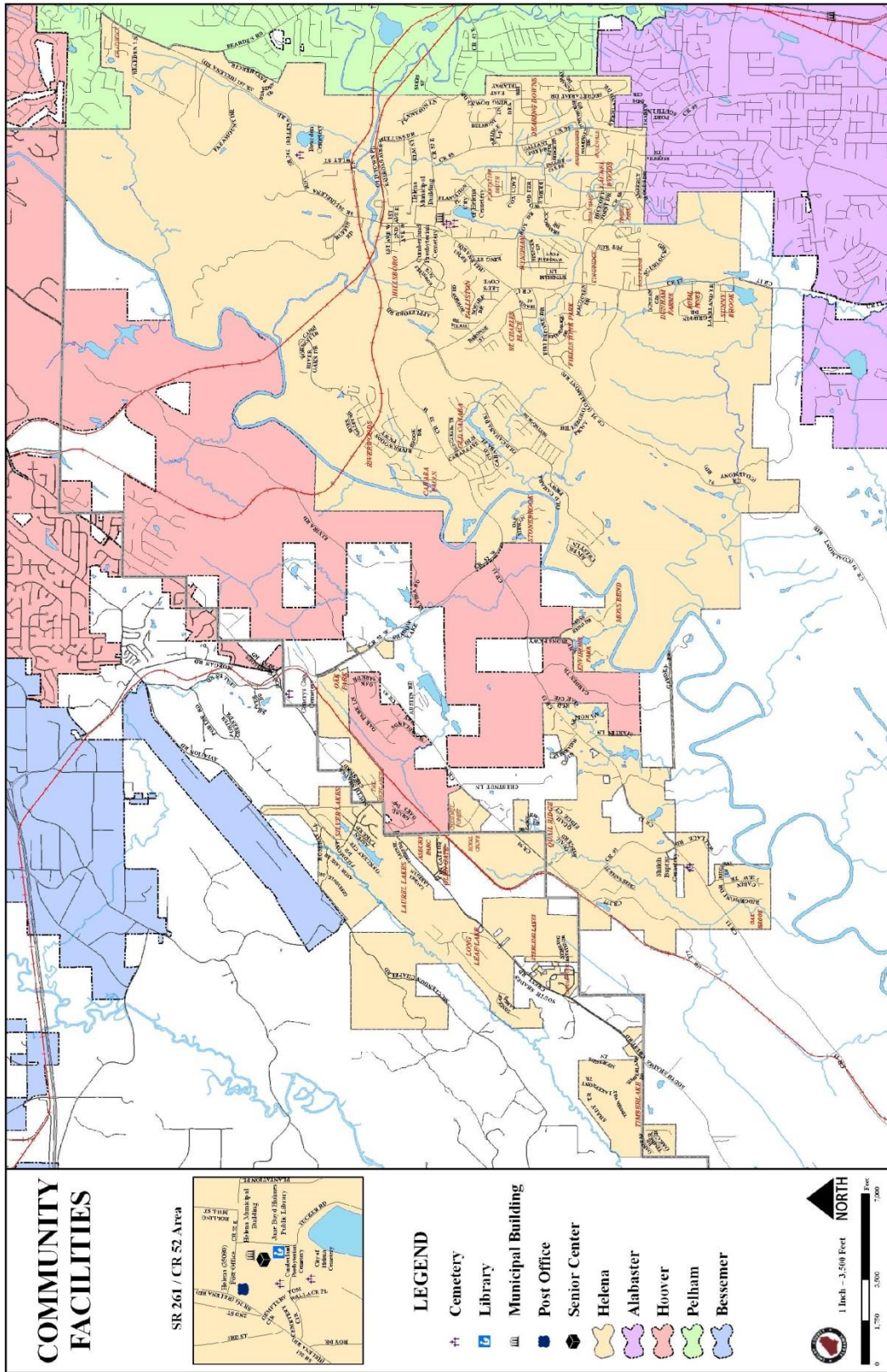
Built in 1980, the post office in Helena is 2,200 square feet in size, and the parking lot, which accommodates customers and postal employees, was recently expanded from eleven to twenty-

six parking spaces and the driveway was made one way. Still, its location, though centrally located, is too small to handle the increase in traffic from customers who use the post office, and the location will become more congested as Helena's population continues to grow. However, the United States Postal Service (USPS), due to unprecedented losses and significant decline in number of pieces mailed which are forecasted to continue for the next decade, is currently exploring ways to get leaner and move away from standard post offices. Ideally, the USPS desires to bring, via the internet or in person, many of the services and products found in a post office to the customer at his home or office and also to provide services such as mailboxes offsite at retail establishments. Although the USPS is not in favor of shutting down or merging post offices in order to trim costs, it is not keen on the idea of building post offices either. Even though the USPS may not support building a new post office, a precedent has already been set recently for a Helena neighbor. A new post office was constructed off State Route 119 in Alabaster within the past decade.



Helena Post Office

A possible option to building a new, or another, post office might be to provide a post office annex within an existing business located in an area some distance from the existing facility. Businesses located along Highway 52 in the vicinity of Riverwoods Subdivision might be a possibility worth exploring, given that this area has experienced significant residential growth and will likely continue to do so.



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