

PART 3 - THE VISION

The culmination of the existing conditions analysis, the stakeholder interviews, the public workshops, and the design framework plan is the development vision plan discussed in this chapter. This illustrated vision plan, combined with the implementation projects in Part 4, constitutes the Dahlenega Downtown Master Plan. Included in the vision plan are private-sector projects that address the potential market demand for residential, retail, office, and hospitality space; public-sector projects that address civic buildings like municipal administration space, cultural facilities, and schools; public improvements projects like parks, plazas, trails, streetscapes; and areas of preservation and enhancement of the existing Dahlenega urban landscape.

The vision plan is above all a product of a master plan process that involved over 100 stakeholders. With the input and guidance of the planning Core Team, the basic concepts for future growth were formalized out of development and redevelopment opportunities identified early in the process. Two well-attended public workshops helped the team understand what was important to preserve in the city, what was desired in its new buildings, and what was inappropriate in character. In particular, the second workshop (Figure 3.1) brought Dahlenega stakeholders very close to the ultimate plan, with interactive exercises that provoked discussion and eventual consensus on park and trail locations, areas of development focus, desired types of land uses, and a range of architectural and public space characteristics that approximate the identity of the city. The framework plan that underlies this vision is in effect a graphic rendition of the outcome of the stakeholder involvement process.

Figure 3.1: Workshop Action



Over the next 25 years, the vision plan will play a role in the many policy and budgeting decisions the city will make that affect its physical growth. Yet the plan should not be static, but flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and priorities without losing its underlying formal strength which is embodied in its design framework. The plan should be reevaluated every five to ten years to reflect completed development or public space projects, changing market conditions, or emerging priorities. The plan should also continue to serve as a marketing tool for the city, and above all as a token of the shared aspirations of its citizens.

In the pages that follow, the vision plan is discussed in detail, with the essence of the plan taking form out of the narratives of each project. These projects hopefully reveal something about the special identity of Dahlonega, and together create places that are both indistinguishable from their surroundings and memorable for their uniqueness.

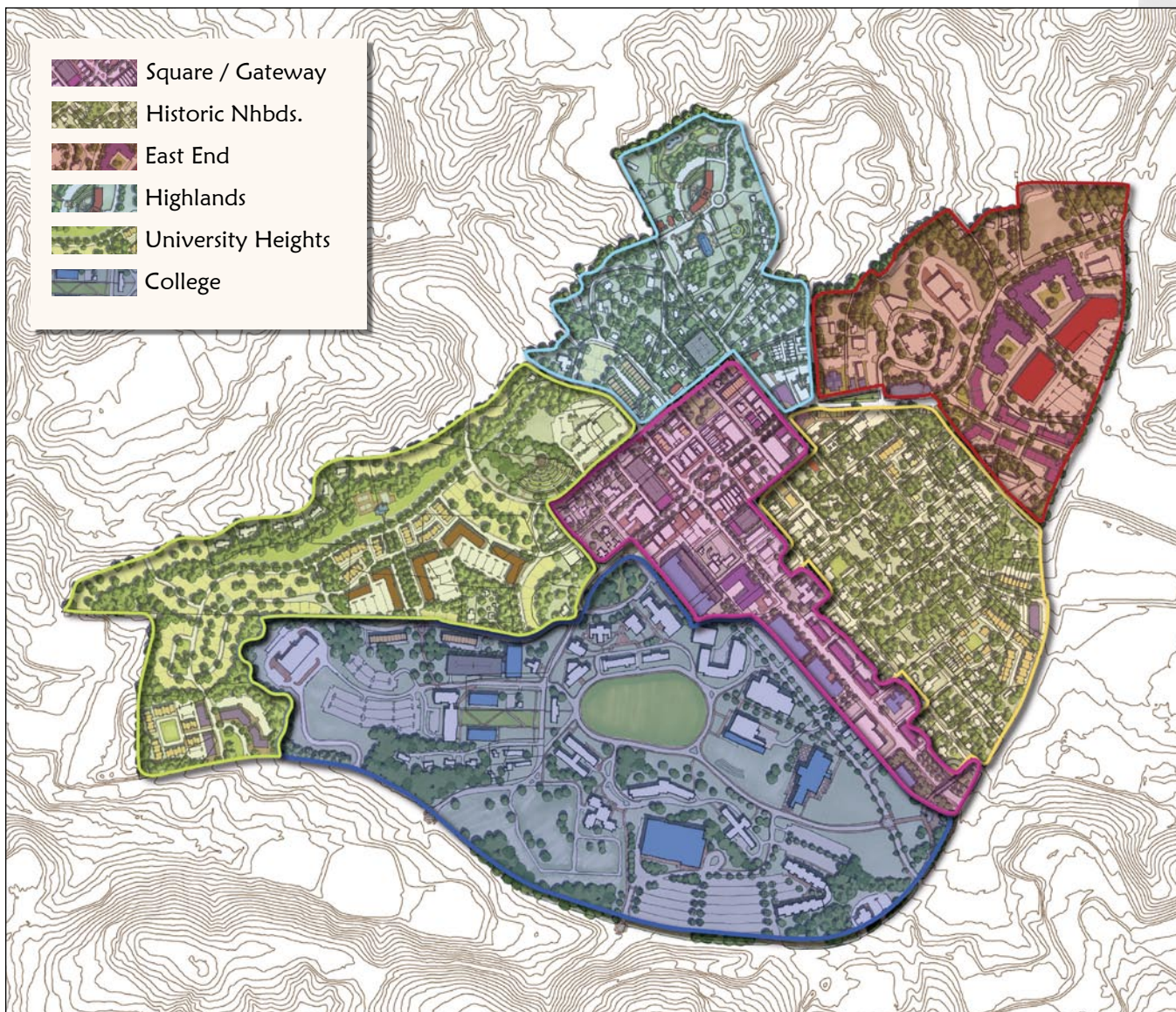
Figure 3.2: Historically-Influenced New Development



The Districts

There are six thematic districts that make up the downtown master plan – Public Square / Chestatee Gateway, Historic Neighborhoods, East End, Highlands, University Heights, and College – each with its own distinctive design approach to growth management. The districts all contain new development or redevelopment projects, although in varying degrees; they also contain public space improvements that can be used as leverage to promote private-sector development or historic preservation efforts. Each district has a unique set of strategies that distinguish it from the others; these strategies are in several categories – character and identity, land use and development, open space, circulation, and market. The strategies are discussed at the beginning of each district section, followed by detailed descriptions of the major projects in the district.

Figure 3.3: Thematic Districts



project categories



Figures 3.4a,b,c: Project Types

Development: Each district includes catalytic development projects that are important to accommodate market demand that drives economic growth, reinforce the character of the district through preservation or new construction, and encourage additional investment in the area by the private sector. The development projects are varied in program, and include residential and commercial mixed-use, conventional retail, single-family detached homes and townhouses, multifamily housing, hospitality, and others. The projects also vary in scale and design, from traditional small-scale urban infill (Figure 3.4a) to large-scale redevelopment. Each project is tailored to the needs and assets of its district, and will usually include some aspect of direct public benefit such as park or plaza space, improved streetscapes, or shared parking.

Circulation: Pedestrian and mobility improvements are critical to support new development and improve connections between districts. Area-wide circulation projects such as streetscapes and multiuse trails link districts together while strengthening each district's character. More localized projects such as parking facilities (Figure 3.4b) and new street networks or two-way street conversions directly address mobility needs within a district, while contributing to the overall framework.

Community Facilities: A wide range of community projects are discussed in the following pages, including parks, plazas and gardens (Figure 3.4c); municipal centers; cultural buildings and spaces; public art; and others. Each district contains at least one community project and usually more, to enrich the district's public landscape and provide a fitting complement to private development.

District One - Public Square / Chestatee Gateway

The six blocks comprising the Public Square create one of the most engaging spaces in any Georgia city, and hold a building that is one of the few in the state outside Savannah to date back to the post-colonial period. And, unlike other Georgia county seats, Dahlonega's courthouse square has architecture that is uniquely derived from the vernacular patterns and folkways that migrated south through the mountain valleys. It is because of this highly individual context that an 18-block area of the historic city plat around the Public Square be considered as its annex, with a very specific design envelope that follows the principles established in the center.

South Chestatee Street, while originally a simple dirt road leading into the Square, is equally critical to the core area's integrity even though it lacks its historic charm. It is vital that the blocks flanking South Chestatee adhere to the same aesthetic that governs the core, and both engage and protect the North Park Street corridor only two hundred feet away.

The land use and development strategy for the core area and South Chestatee corridor heavily focus on preservation of eligible properties with physical upgrades to market expectations; and small-scale (two- to three-story maximum) new infill construction on suitable sites with historically-compatible designs. Primary focus for renovation and redevelopment should be on East and West Main, and South Chestatee near Arcadia Street, Ash Avenue, and Maple Street.

Open space strategies in the district assume continuing improvements to Hancock Park, and expanding Madeline Anthony Park across South Chestatee to create an entry to both

Figure 3.5: Historic Lumpkin County Courthouse

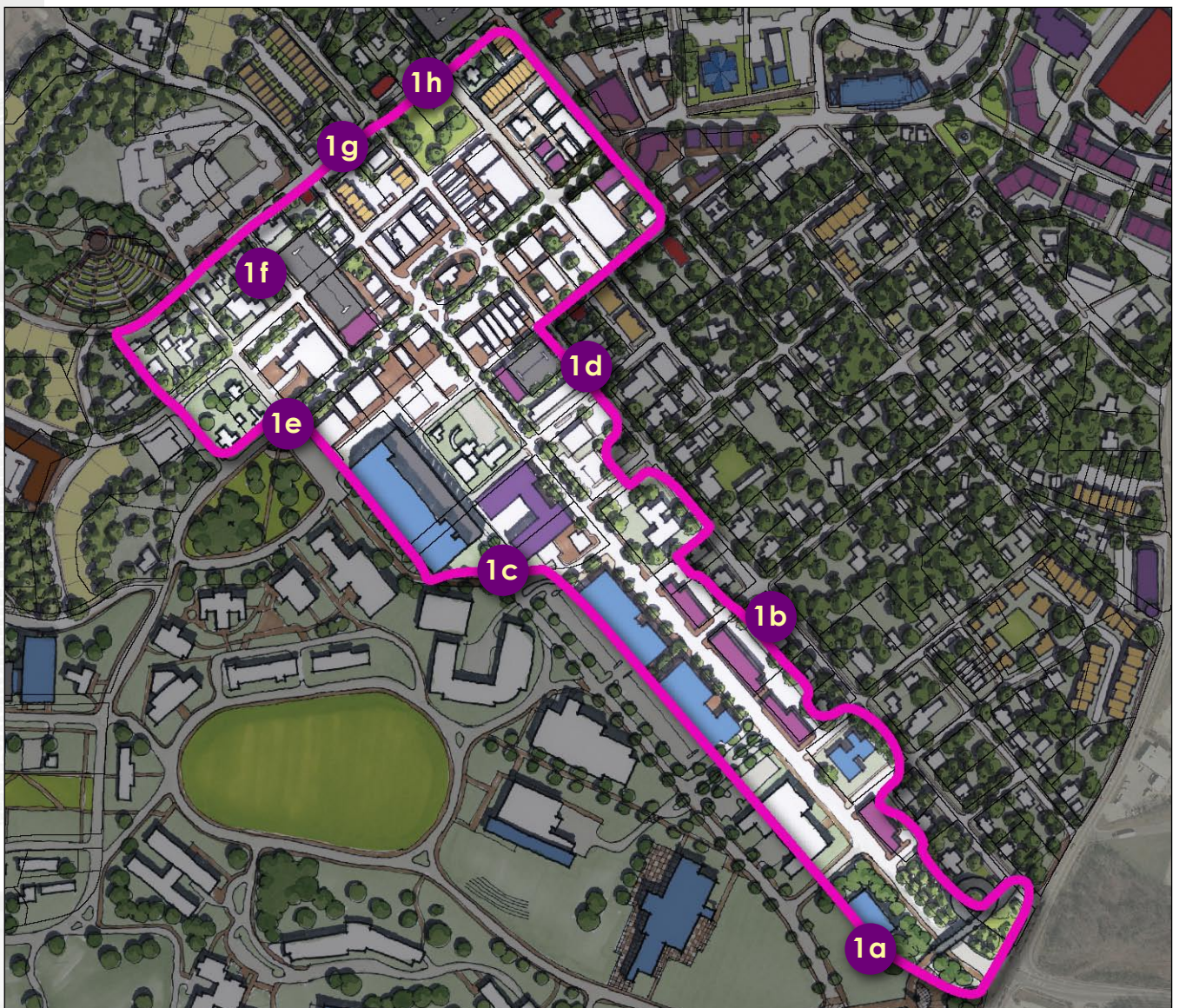


- 1a gateway park
- 1b east campus row
- 1c golden classics redevelopment
- 1d methodist church annex
- 1e main street improvements
- 1f waters street deck
- 1g warwick lot redevelopment
- 1h hancock park enhancements

the downtown and North Georgia College. The existing shelter in the park would remain, and a pedestrian bridge added to carry the Morrison Moore multiuse trail over South Chestatee. An additional option to increase open space in the core area is to resurface existing parking lots, notably the one at Choice Street and South Meaders, with unit pavers that provide space for grass or gravel. This allows the lots to function as plazas for special events, and has the added benefit of reducing runoff and contributing to water quality (Figure 4.4).

Significant improvements to the street network are essential to strengthen the historic character of the district, provide ample parking, and control the volume and velocity of traffic. Of prime importance are the streetscapes on East

Figure 3.6: Square / Chestatee District



Main, West Main, and South Chestatee. East and West Main in particular are highly symbolic and form the primary retail axis of downtown, but need traffic calming and shading to function as the public spaces they need to be. Parking is expanded considerably by inclusion in the streetscape improvements, but a number of new deck facilities and surface lots in strategic locations guarantee enough parking stock to meet the needs of current and future businesses. The confusing pattern of one-way streets around Warwick and Hawkins should also be converted to two-way wherever possible to improve mobility and wayfinding, and return to their traditional roots.

The market framework for the district emphasizes tourism and the unique retail opportunities associated with the Public Square. Regionally-produced craft and food products as well as restaurants with signature cuisine are especially appropriate, and underutilized second-floor space should be made available where possible for expanding businesses and other retail uses. Significant market opportunities relate to the university student population, although this should be directed toward South Chestatee Street and away from the Public Square. Downtown is also deficient in high-quality small hotels and inns; and several of the historic homes in the blocks surrounding the Square could be converted to meet this need. Finally, the residential market is strong for townhouses and loft condominiums that are within easy walking distance of the Square. The projects described below and other new infill development could provide approximately 100,000 square feet of new retail and office space in the district, as well as 120 new housing units.

Gateway Park

The expansion of Madeline Anthony Park and transformation into a new main gateway to downtown provides both a much-needed open space and a strong design statement to begin to mitigate the cluttered and inaccessible commercial landscape of the Highway 19 / bypass intersection. The prominent knoll in the southwest corner of the intersection serves as the focal point for the new park and a platform for a rustic stone bridge. The bridge vaults over South Chestatee Street carrying a multiuse trail safely over the busy avenue, while creating at the same time an arched passage into the district. The bridge (Figure 3.7) is compatible in materials and architecture to the stone and wood shelter that occupies the center of Madeline Anthony Park. The extent of the expansion area is variable depending on North Georgia College's master plan, but should at least be sufficient to incorporate the entire knoll and provide space for the trail to wind around, building



elevation for the crossing. Space limitations in Madeline Anthony Park may require a spiral descent ramp for the trail, which could be designed to be a formal counterpart to the cabin aesthetic of the existing shelter.

East Campus Row

South Chestatee Street is a disappointing entry to the Public Square over most of its length because of the harsh parking lots and the strip retail businesses between Schultz Avenue and Martin Street. Yet, the certainty of future College buildings replacing the lots and the redevelopment opportunities provided by the strip retail suggest that this part of South Chestatee could transform into a small Main Street serving the needs of students and university employees. Replicating the architecture of the Square on a more limited scale, East Campus Row combines three-story narrow loft office buildings with ground floor retail and a continuous arcaded sidewalk to give a distinctive identity to the north side of Chestatee around Arcadia and Ash Avenue. Limited parking is provided to the rear, but



Figure 3.7: Chestatee Gateway



Figure 3.8: South Chestatee Aerial View



because of the tight block dimension and the proximity of housing on South Park Street the lot configurations are generally single-loaded and screened from adjacent properties by opaque walls. Where redevelopment occurs on an entire block such as the one east of Ash Avenue, the new building should occupy the center of the block and be designed to resemble a large home such as the Baptist Student Union. Parking can be provided by head-in spaces in the flanking streets. South Chestatee Street itself would also be improved over its entire length with on-street parking, new sidewalks, and a double row of shade trees where dimensions allow (Figures 3.8 and 3.9).

Golden Classics Redevelopment

The block that is home to the Golden Classics auto lot is one of the largest redevelopment opportunities within a quarter-mile of the Square, and highly strategic because of its South Chestatee frontage. The site has the additional advantage of a twenty-to thirty-foot grade change from the street to the south property line, which allows two or three levels of parking concealed under a mixed-use building. Future development should focus residential apartments or condominiums, with ground-floor retail and restaurant space facing South Chestatee. The width of the parcel can comfortably hold an H-shaped building with two residential wings perpendicular to the street. This footprint provides for a plaza on South Chestatee - possibly as an outdoor café space – and a pool / amenities area between the rear wings. The architecture should reflect the adjacency of the Smith House and feature wooden cladding and details, and simple vernacular forms.

Methodist Church Annex

Across South Chestatee from Golden Classics is a landmark building over 100 years old, the Dahlongega Baptist Church. It had been part of the Folkways and Buisson cultural arts centers until recently, when Buisson shut

- a** future campus buildings with tuck-under parking
- b** 10' minimum sidewalk
- c** 8' minimum planting strip with shade trees
- d** 8' on-street parallel parking
- e** 11' two-way travel lanes
- f** 2'-3' planting strip with groundcover
- g** 8' arcaded sidewalk
- h** narrow mixed-use building
- i** single-loaded head-in parking

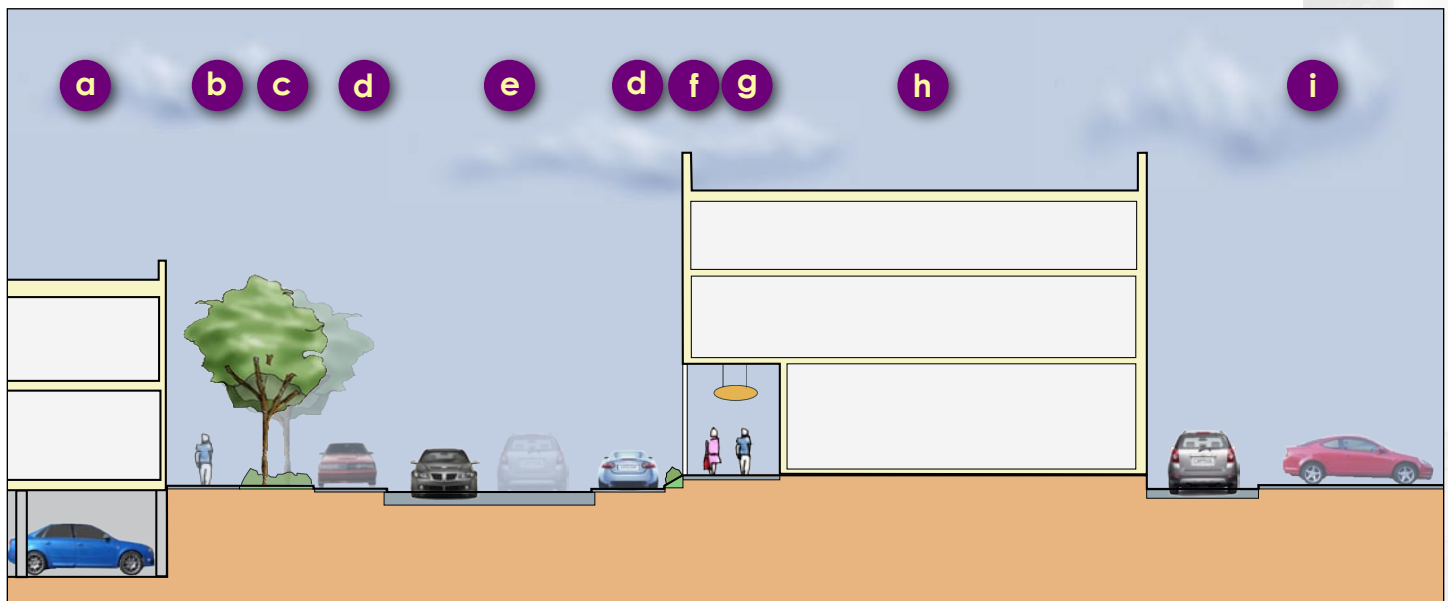


Figure 3.9: Proposed South Chestatee Street Section Looking West

down because of financial challenges. Since then, the First Methodist Church has purchased the Buisson property to use as an annex, partly with the intent to press the historic sanctuary into service as overflow worship space. The church should retain its authenticity – inside and out - against alteration into the future as one of the city’s most important historic structures. The balance of the block should be evaluated for the feasibility of building a small parking deck paralleling Choice Street, screened from South Chestatee by a ‘liner’ building that could contain retail space leased by the church or used for their outreach program. On the South Park Street side, a small pavilion or plaza / arbor might be constructed to also screen the deck from view, and to provide outdoor waiting or function space for future restaurants in the Head House and adjacent properties across the street. The deck is constrained by the lot size and limited to two levels without ramps, with direct at-grade access from Choice and South Park streets. Like other deck sites in the district, the lot width does not provide room for a liner on the flanking streets; landscape plantings should be used to soften the elevations. This parking is particularly important in that it could provide enough centralized space to allow the church to abandon their use of the existing South Meaders municipal lot, which could be redeveloped as housing. It could also provide shared retail and tourist parking for the Public Square when it is not being utilized by the church.

- a** existing / new development
- b** 8' sidewalk w/ canopy
- c** head-in parking with regular bulb-outs for shade trees
- d** 12' two-way travel lanes
- e** 8' arcaded sidewalk
- f** existing / new development with second-floor gallery

Main Street Improvements

Part of the challenge of expanding the core of the city is dealing with the Public Square, which is a masterpiece of urbanism but susceptible to losing its symbolism and design strength if placed in competition with other public spaces. Creating new public environments is essential in accommodating growth, but the core should revolve around the Public Square. For this reason the most appropriate and meaningful expansion of downtown focuses on improving East and West Main from Church to Grove streets. This five-block stretch of Main has the Public Square at its center, and is framed on each end by the limits of the original city plat. In some ways East Main Street is already functioning as an extension of the Public Square, with instances of wooden buildings, arcades and galleries, and head-in

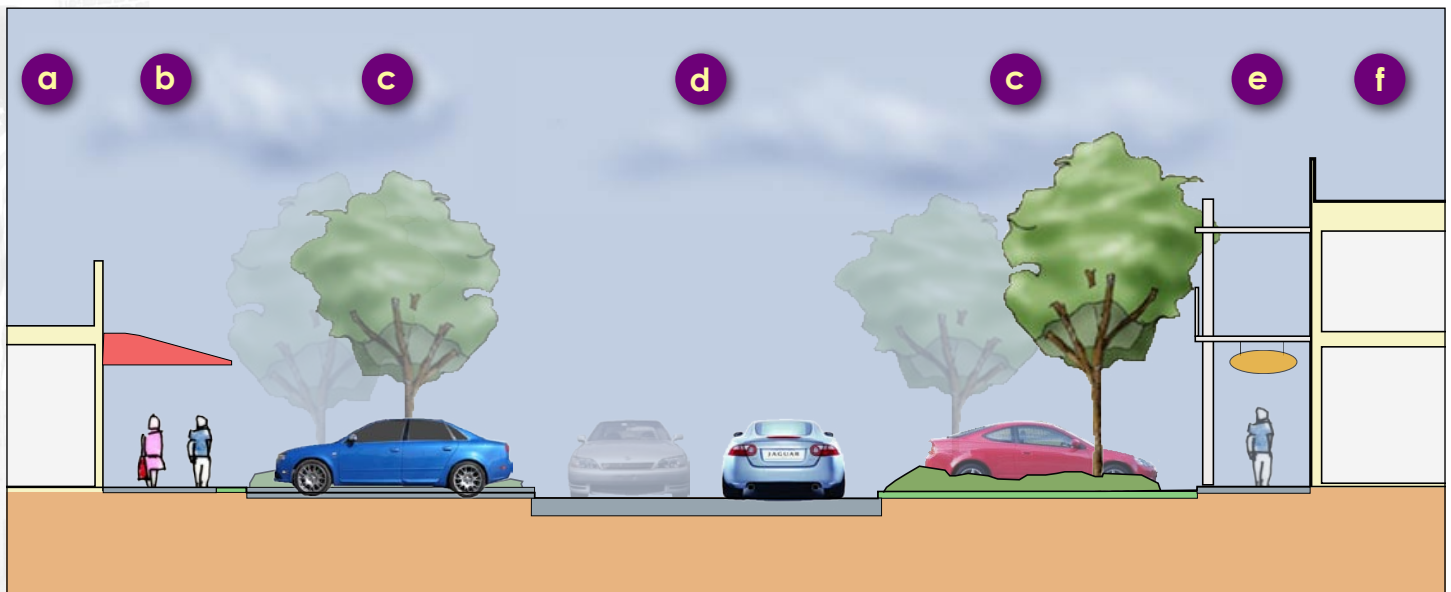


Figure 3.10: Proposed Main Street Section Looking South

parking. The section proposed for the five-block extent (Figure 3.10) formalizes this, but adds street trees in key locations to tie the street to its forested setting and supply shade and scale. Renovated buildings should be modified to provide shelter over the sidewalks, whether in the form of arcades or canopies cantilevered from facades after the fashion of mid-century modern design. New buildings should take formal cues from older architecture like the Hall House, the Crawford House, or the Parker Storehouse. Head-in parking should be maintained at East Main, and evaluated for feasibility on West Main.

The intersections of Main, Grove, and Church streets are equally important as gateways to the five-block “Downtown” that is defined by the new Central Main Street (Figure 3.11). Textured pavement, pedestrian crosswalks, deferential architecture, formal plantings, and entry signage could mark the transition and provide cues for adjoining streets. In particular, the southern gateway sets up the design rationale for improvements to Church Street, which becomes a Performing Arts Corridor anchored on one end by the Holly Theater and its future expansion, and on the other by a new open-air amphitheater terminating the linear park running through University Heights.



Figure 3.11: East Main Street

Waters Street Deck

Two surface parking lots served the three-story BB&T bank on West Main and Waters Street until the building recently sold to North Georgia College for administration space. Now open for an alternate use, they are ideally located to be expanded into a major parking resource for downtown. The sloping topography works well with the needs of a deck, with two levels at the rear extending to four at the West Main frontage. A mixed-use liner building would conceal the deck from West Main, and would be built to conform to the Main Street architectural standards discussed above. Warwick Street could continue through the deck's entry level and provide the principal access to the facility.



Warwick Lot Redevelopment

The small municipal parking lot on Warwick Street between North Chestatee and North Park streets is the main external parking area for the Public Square. It is also a superb site for redevelopment considering its location and the detrimental effect it has on Hancock Park and pedestrian movement to Hawkins Street. Approximately ten townhouses with tuck-under parking could be built facing North Chestatee and North Park, with enough internal room left for several visitor or paid spaces and a small service court to handle storage or dumpsters for the businesses backing up to Warwick. The townhouses (or other residential buildings) should have entries directly from North Chestatee and North Park, and have ground-level windows to extend the character of the Public Square into the surrounding blocks.

Hancock Park Enhancements

Hancock Park has served as the city's main urban park for many years and is loved by Dahlonega residents; but is small and sensitive to over-programming. Considering the new parks proposed in other districts, Hancock Park should retain its natural landscape but be improved to make the most of its trees and relatively flat topography. The park should be expanded to the north by converting the existing cottage apartments into a community meeting facility. Very selective demolition of a small portion of the structure would allow the park to increase notably in size, and position the remaining building to receive a parkside porch that would not only provide shelter in poor weather, but rationalize and enhance its distinctive architecture. The park would also benefit from the addition of a carefully-designed and historically-accurate gazebo or bandstand (Figure 4.2). Open-air performances could thus engage both the park and the northwest corner of the Public Square.



District Two - Historic Neighborhoods

Traditionally, communities resided close to downtowns. This proximity to the city core allowed people to be an intrinsic part of the urban fabric and involve themselves in the city's life and activities. The historic neighborhoods in Dahlonega are located directly to the east and southeast of the City's historic downtown. This district is a residential island surrounded by the changing and growing commercial core, the NGCSU campus and civic amenities. These neighborhoods are contained within the area bound by East Main Street, Mechanic Street, South Park Street and East Morrison Moore Parkway.

The uniqueness of the district lies in the character of the residential area that is generated by the large number of historical homes located within it. It is important to protect this special place that feels rural even though it lies in the urban heart of the City. Threats are generated by new developments surrounding the neighborhood and the possibility that they could encroach into this district.

This area is primarily zoned for residential development with commercial uses allowed along East Main Street and Morrison Moore Parkway. A majority of the buildings are single family residences with a scattering of duplexes and townhouses. The homes were built over a time period starting in the late 19th century to the 1940s. Over the past few years, larger lots closer to the district periphery toward Mechanic Street have redeveloped into townhouses and some duplexes have encroached into areas zoned for single family. Other facilities like a church, a daycare and some strip commercial are located within the district and serve the community.

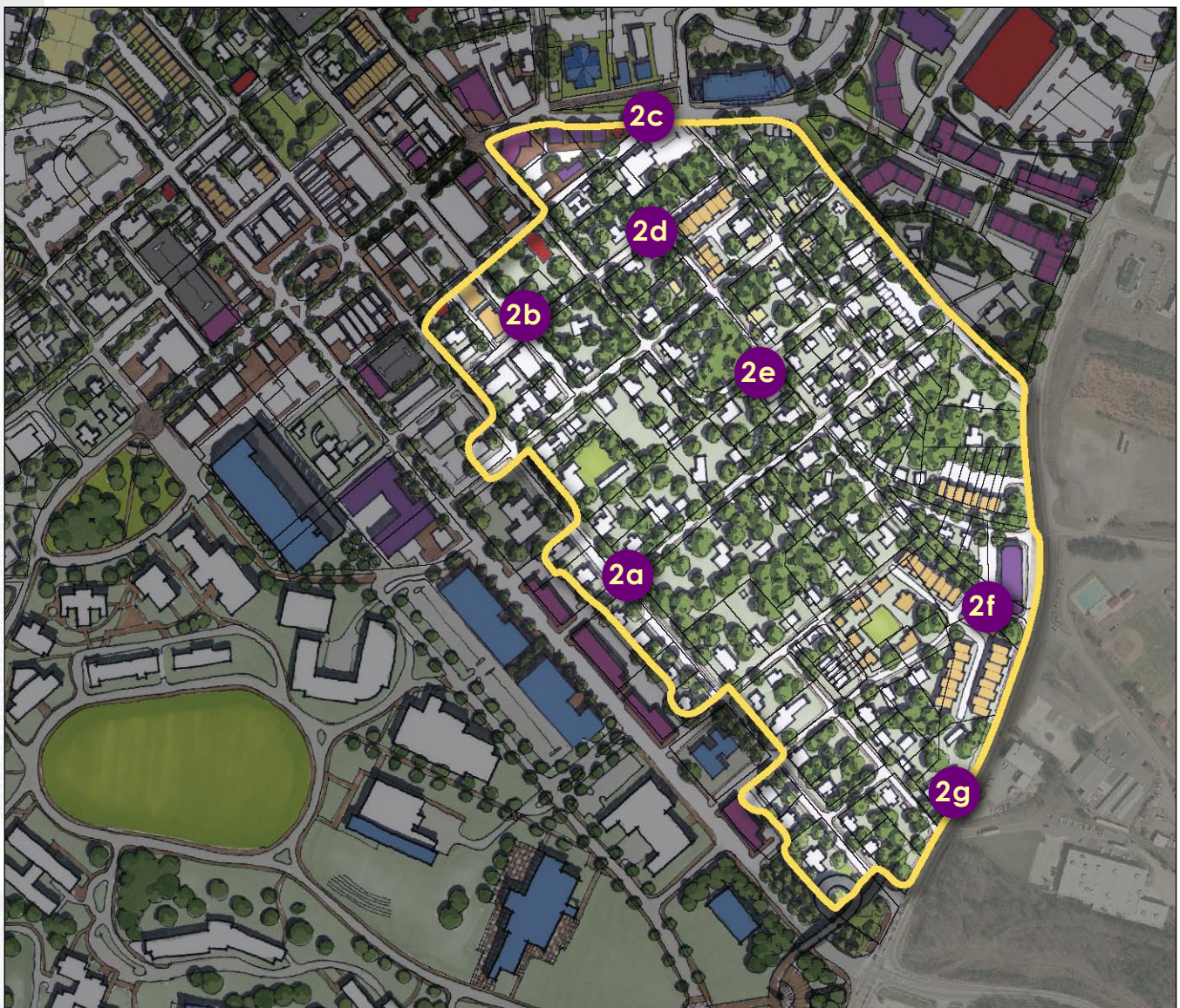
Figure 3.12: Park Street House



- 2a south park improvements
- 2b municipal parking redevelopment
- 2c kinnard project
- 2d mechanicsville street network
- 2e grove / riley streetscape
- 2f riley road housing
- 2g morrison moore multiuse trail

The housing stock in these neighborhoods is of a variety of styles ranging from central hallway plans, gable-ell cottages, bungalows, to Georgian cottages, I-houses and ranch-style homes. These one or two story homes exhibit features like porches, double-hung windows with shutters, doors with transoms, chimneys, double-storey entrances supported by columns, and combinations of different pitched roofs. Most of them have exterior finishes of wood clapboard sidings while some have brick finishes. Time has been detrimental to parts of this district. The maintenance of older buildings require vigilance; many historic features and materials have been compromised for ease in maintenance. These can be seen by the use of vinyl sidings, screened porches, wrought iron detailing,

Figure 3.13: Historic Neighborhoods District

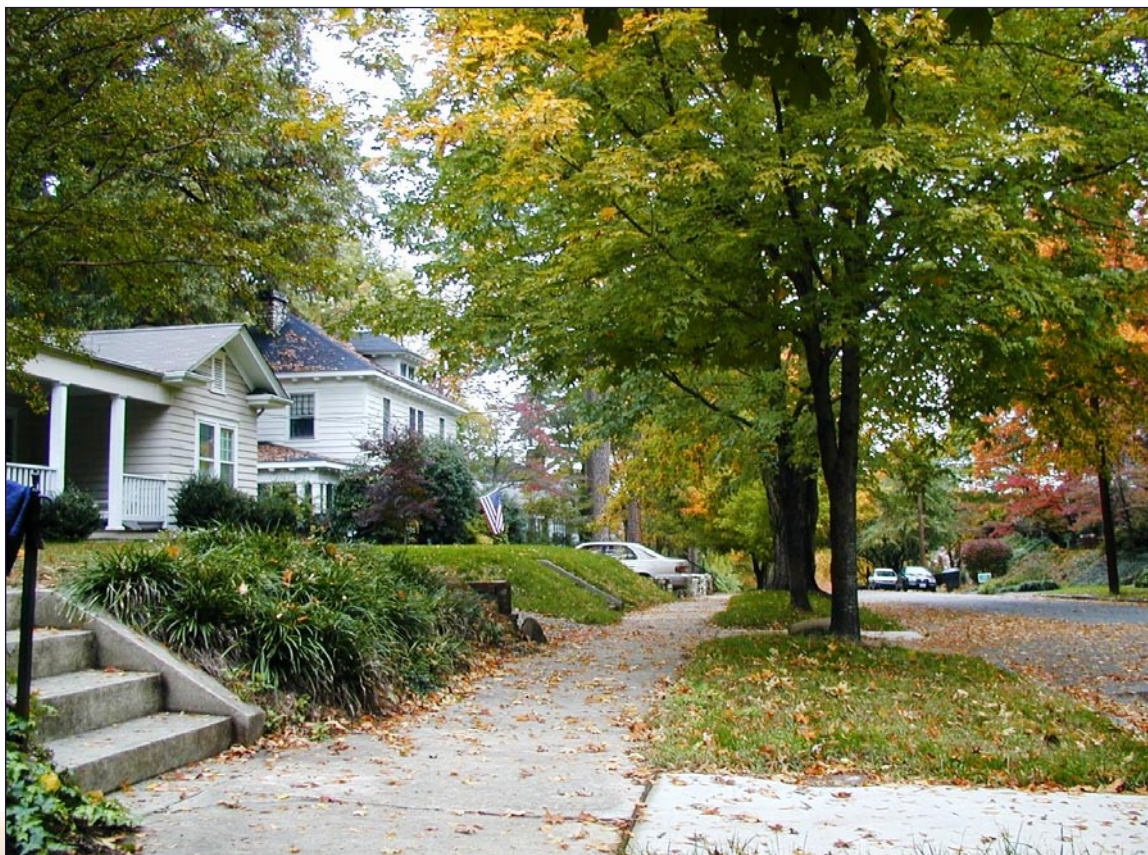


etc. that are not compatible with the building style or design. These, in combination with a few poorly constructed structures, have brought down the quality of about a quarter of the buildings to a substandard level. While a majority of the houses are occupied, some of the older and larger properties lie vacant and contribute to property deterioration. In this entire district, South Park Street is the most important of the residential streets. It has the most defined and consistent historic character, with the maximum number of historical homes that are in excellent condition and contribute to the city's heritage along its length. The Seven Oaks residential property located on this street is an architectural treasure and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The land use and development strategy within this district takes a subtle approach. The plan recommends the creation of a residential historic district to preserve the architectural heritage of the area. The creation of this district would require further study to decide the precise extents but in general it would cover most of the neighborhoods, mainly both sides of South Park Street but exclude areas immediately adjacent to East Morrison Moore Parkway and East Main Street. The historic district would not only serve a purpose of preserving buildings and large estate lots, but would also help preserve the overall rural character of the area through building and landscape guidelines. It would also offer guidance for both the rehabilitation of older buildings as well as for new infill development, so that the character and uniqueness of the district is maintained. A National Register listing would also qualify property owners to take advantage of available funding sources and tax credits offered by the State of Georgia and the Federal Government.

Infill opportunities exist on vacant land and on distressed properties. These are located at the corners of Alma and South Grove streets and along East Morrison Moore Parkway, close to Riley Street. These developments would be a buffer to unwanted encroachments into the historical areas and also serve as a transition from higher intensity development

Figure 3.14: Residential Street, Greensboro NC



that surrounds the district to the existing low intensity development of the neighborhoods. Particular attention would be given to buildings along the west of South Park Street. These buildings share a block with those that face South Chestatee Street where new development has been planned. It is important to prevent this new development from filtering into and affecting the quality of South Park Street. Design elements would screen the South Park residential buildings from those on South Chestatee and where buildings on a block share both street frontages, the building would follow design guidelines suitable to match the South Park residential district. Rehabilitation strategies would convert large unoccupied homes placed on estate lots into income generating properties that serve the residing and visiting population of Dahlonega.

Madeline Anthony Park is the only limited open space that exists for this neighborhood to use. Design strategies look to increase open space opportunities by taking advantage of the existing estate lots and infill designs. There are a number of large lots within this district whose grounds can function as landscaped oases for the neighborhoods. While some of them would be passive parks, not open to the public, others could be used by the residents if the city can negotiate terms and conditions with the property owners. This creation of a series of pocket parks would enhance the character of the residential district. In addition, a new greenway trail is proposed along East Morrison Moore Parkway.

The road network characterized by unmarked and undivided streets adds to the small scale and rural feel of the place. These streets have graveled shoulders and are lined with heavy vegetation and placed on a non-uniform grid. Improvements to this network would include completing the existing historic grid where possible, thereby increasing connectivity and providing alternate routes for the local population to move from one part of the City to another without disturbing the environment of the district. These improvements would also prove to be an incentive for developers to provide new infill housing.

Figure 3.15: South Park Street Character



South Park Street is the most pedestrian friendly street in the district with regular stop signs to control traffic speed and sidewalks running on either side of the street. Sidewalks do not exist elsewhere in the district and even though street improvements along all the streets would be ideal, attention needs to be given to the main arteries of this neighborhood namely, South Park and South Grove streets and Riley Road.

The market framework for this particular district supports limited housing opportunities through infill development on vacant and deteriorated lots. Based on market projections, developments could provide about 5-10 infill single family detached units and 50-70 single family attached units. It also recommends the rehabilitation and conversion of the older, large houses that currently lie vacant and are underutilized into income generating properties like bed-and-breakfasts, restaurants, daycares, etc. to cater to the tourists that visit Dahlonge as well as the local population. Small neighborhood stores would be ideal along the district periphery.

South Park Improvements

South Park Street is the jewel of the historic neighborhood district. It forms an essential component of the City's history and architectural heritage and serves as a residential extension of the city's historic core. It also serves as the gateway to the rest of the residential area. The character of this street is vastly different and very rural from the neighboring South Chestatee Street, and hence improvements need to be carried out in a sensitive manner. Older buildings should be preserved and rehabilitated according to guidelines specific to the district. Care should be taken that buildings fronting South Chestatee Street do not encroach into the South Park Street neighborhood and are screened from the residential properties. Buildings facing both the streets should comply with the residential district requirements such as building material, height, landscaping, etc.

Figure 3.16: Early Dahlonge House



The street needs to be designed for pedestrian safety and could serve as an important attraction for tourists because it showcases a historic residential avenue. Vehicular traffic should be controlled by regular spacing of stop signs. This would discourage increased volumes of pass-through traffic from the square to East Morrison Moore Parkway. The sidewalks should be repaved with textured paving materials and crosswalks should be provided at intersections. Since the sidewalks aren't very wide, formal planting should be used to define them. Street lighting should also be incorporated into the design so as to make the neighborhood safe even at night. Directional as well as informational signage related to the City and the historic structures should be located along the street and the design of these should blend in with the character of the place.

Municipal Parking Redevelopment

The Dahlongega Methodist Church is located at the intersection of South Chestatee and Maple streets. Parking for this facility currently exists along South Derrick Street at Choice Avenue which is a city-owned lot. The plan considers moving church parking to the newly acquired Buisson cultural arts center lot where the construction of a parking deck has been recommended and redeveloping the existing parking space into single family attached housing. The townhouses would be two stories tall and between 22' and 24' wide. Parking for these units would be through an alley at the back that divides the block off Choice Avenue. Proximity to the historic square and its various amenities make it a prime location for developers and future residents. The houses would face a landscaped estate lot and would be designed to meet the historic district guidelines and have wood details and features like porches and columns.

Figure 3.17: Crawford House, Public Square

