

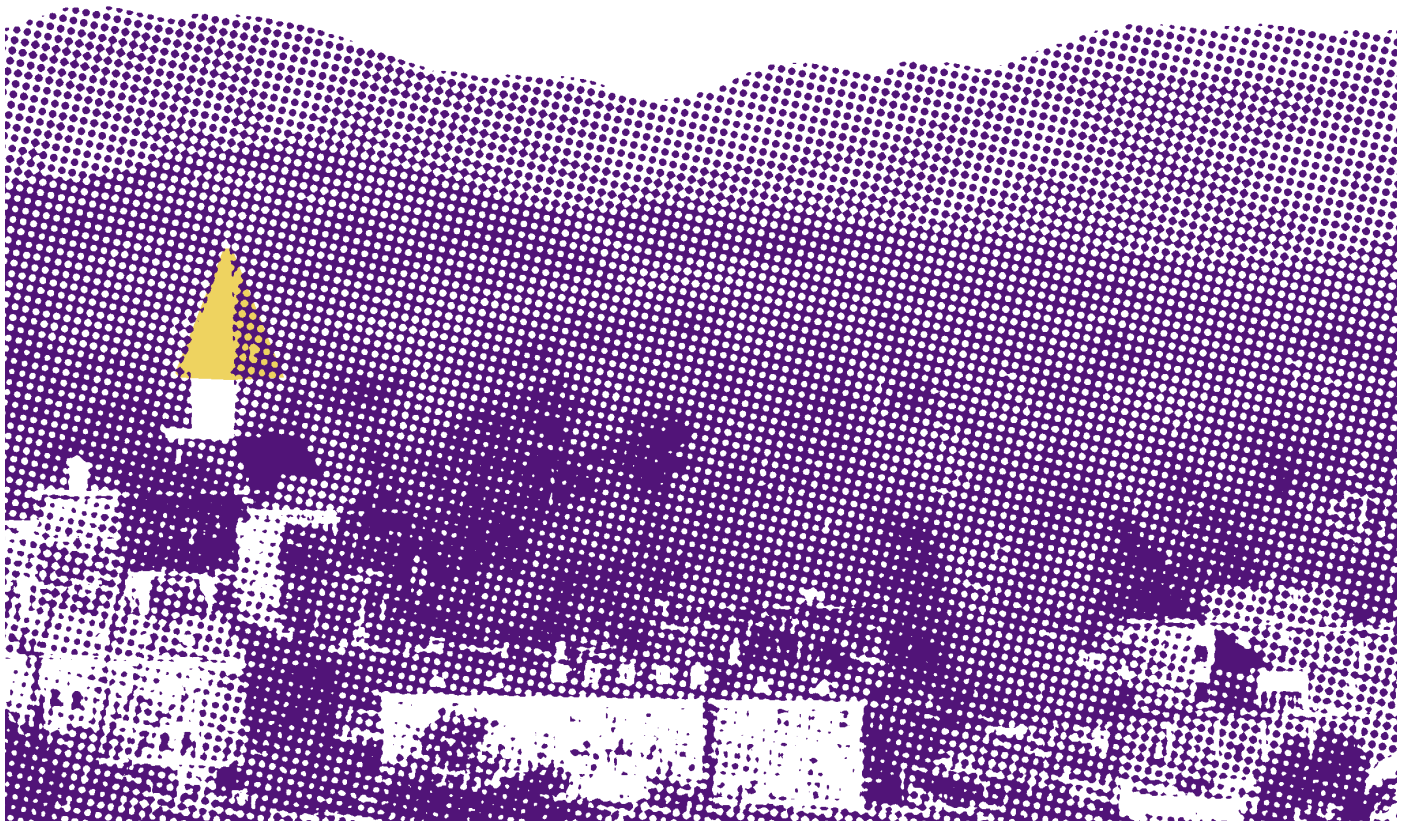
# DAHLONEGA DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN



Prepared for the City of Dahlonega and  
the Downtown Development Authority  
by Urban Collage, Inc. in association  
with PBS&J and Bleakly Advisory Group



AUGUST, 2008



# Acknowledgements

The Dahlonega Downtown Master Plan represents eight months of work by the City of Dahlonega, local residents, property owners, business owners and a Planning Team comprised of Urban Collage Inc., Bleakly Advisory Group and PBS&J. The Planning Team and City wish to thank all those who devoted their time, leadership, vision and ideas to this effort for the betterment of the City of Dahlonega.

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The Dahlonega Downtown Master Plan process included a series of three public workshops where community members were asked to provide input into the plan including establishing a vision for the future of Dahlonega, assisting the Planning Team in developing concepts for future improvements and prioritizing project initiatives. The following list includes all of those who signed-in and participated in one or more of the public workshops.

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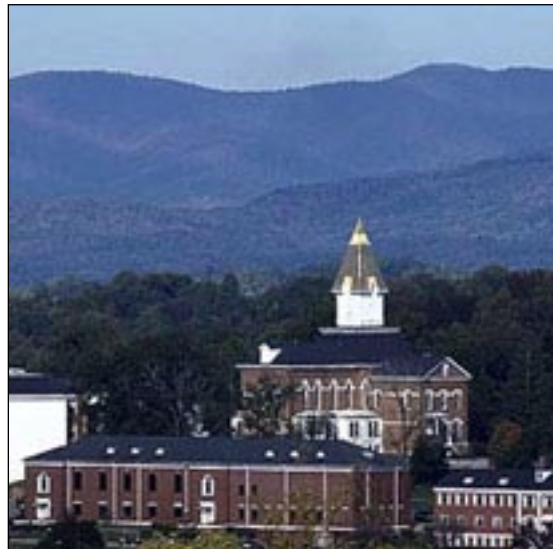
## Preface

The City of Dahlonega, nestled at the foothills of the Northeast Georgia Mountains, is a charming, historic city. Located at the north end of GA-400, Dahlonega is home to approximately 4,030 residents and is the county seat of Lumpkin County.

The name “Dahlonega” was derived from “Taloniga” or “Daloniga”, a Cherokee word for “yellow money” or gold and the city was so christened in 1883. Dahlonega catapulted into a successful town when it became the site of the first gold rush in the country. Gold mines dotted the landscape and a United States Branch Mint was built to function between 1838 and 1861. Price Memorial Hall now stands in its location as part of the North Georgia College and State University which was founded in 1873.

Now, Dahlonega is golden in more ways than one. Along with the mint and gold mines, the historic courthouse museum is a popular day-trip destination for families who want to experience the feeling of a “49er” without traveling to California. Culinary adventures broaden the appeal, from the down-home atmosphere of the Smith House to the growing sophistication of the surrounding Wine Country. The city’s Public Square, with multistory businesses and services organized around a landmark historic structure, is the envy of those who aspire to have quaint and active town centers. Occupied shops, restaurants and offices attract a myriad of patrons walking about the square on brick sidewalks accented by antique lighting. Any way you look at it, downtown Dahlonega is a mountain gem and the gold standard in regional attractions.

While Dahlonega’s Public Square thrives as a tourist destination and has tremendous appeal, the desired sustainability and future vitality of Downtown Dahlonega hinges on maintaining proper balances. How can a City manage and accommodate new growth yet preserve and retain the history and character that makes it distinctive? How can local needs and business opportunities co-mingle and thrive among tourist destinations and resources? How can the needs to tourists, students and local residents be met to create a viable year-round activity center? This plan addresses these questions in a visionary approach where it acknowledges that the surrounding environment and setting of the City plays an important role in molding and forming the future of the city. This document provides a summary of the existing physical and economic conditions within the city, the plan concepts and recommendations and an implementation plan that highlights the most important initiatives to implement in the plan.





# PART 1 - ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

Part 1 presents a summary of a comprehensive survey of downtown Dahlonega’s physical, social, and economic context as the basis upon which the planning recommendations discussed in subsequent chapters rest. The team relied on multiple field surveys to compile the physical conditions analysis, and over 20 stakeholder interviews to tease out pressing issues and community concerns. Combined with demographic and market research, the Issues and Opportunities information helped to establish the planning climate and growth potential that the master plan addresses, as well as providing a logical point for kicking off the public involvement process. Each of the three categories – the physical environment, the stakeholder outreach, and the market assessment - is covered in the following pages with additional information in the Plan Appendix.

## 1.1 - Existing Physical Conditions

The drawings on pages 1.2 to 1.12 are diagrams of the elements and conditions of various aspects of the city’s built environment including land use and zoning, building quality, public space, street network, natural features, landmarks, aesthetic elements, and other characteristics. The drawings also reflect the current real estate and development activity in the city, and properties that may face future development pressure if market demand for housing and retail continues to escalate. The culmination of analytical diagrams is the Development Opportunities Map, which proposes several areas that are candidates for increased planning focus and community dialogue regarding their future form.

*Figure 1.1: The Public Square*

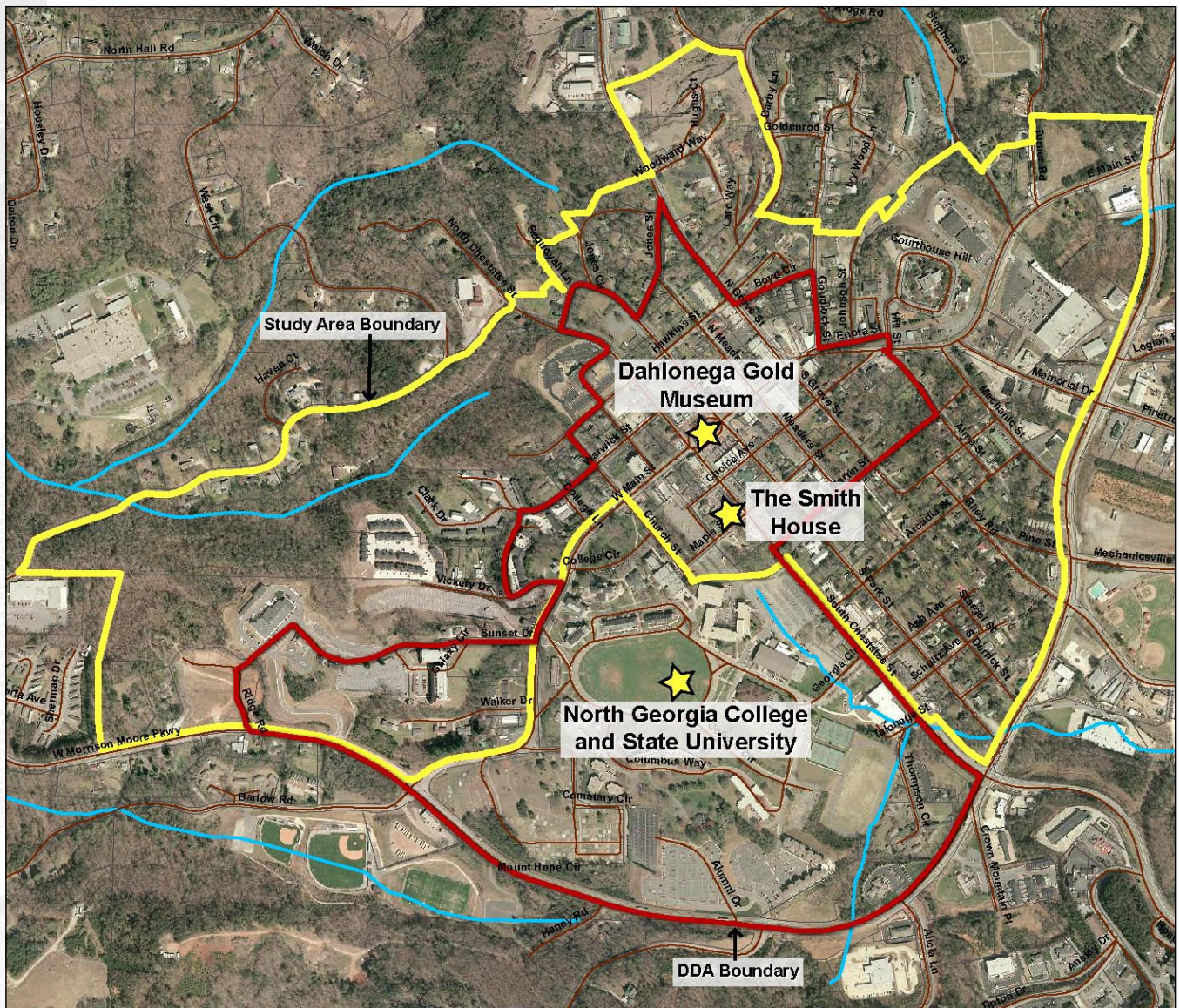




## downtown context

The master plan study area revolves around the Public Square and the small blocks surrounding it that constitute Dahlonega's historic plat. The study area boundary is roughly double that of the jurisdictional limits of the Downtown Development Authority, and extends east to include areas of existing housing and retail businesses, and west to cover larger tracts of vacant land. The majority of the North Georgia College campus is carved out of the study area, although the campus west of West Main Street is included. Morrison Moore Parkway defines the study area on the south and east; while to the north the boundary is an irregular tracing of parcel lines attached to land fronting East Main, North Grove, and several of the smaller radiating streets. Happy Hollow Road forms the study area boundary to the west. The study area covers approximately 300 acres of land and represents most of the urbanized area of Dahlonega.

Figure 1.2: Downtown Context

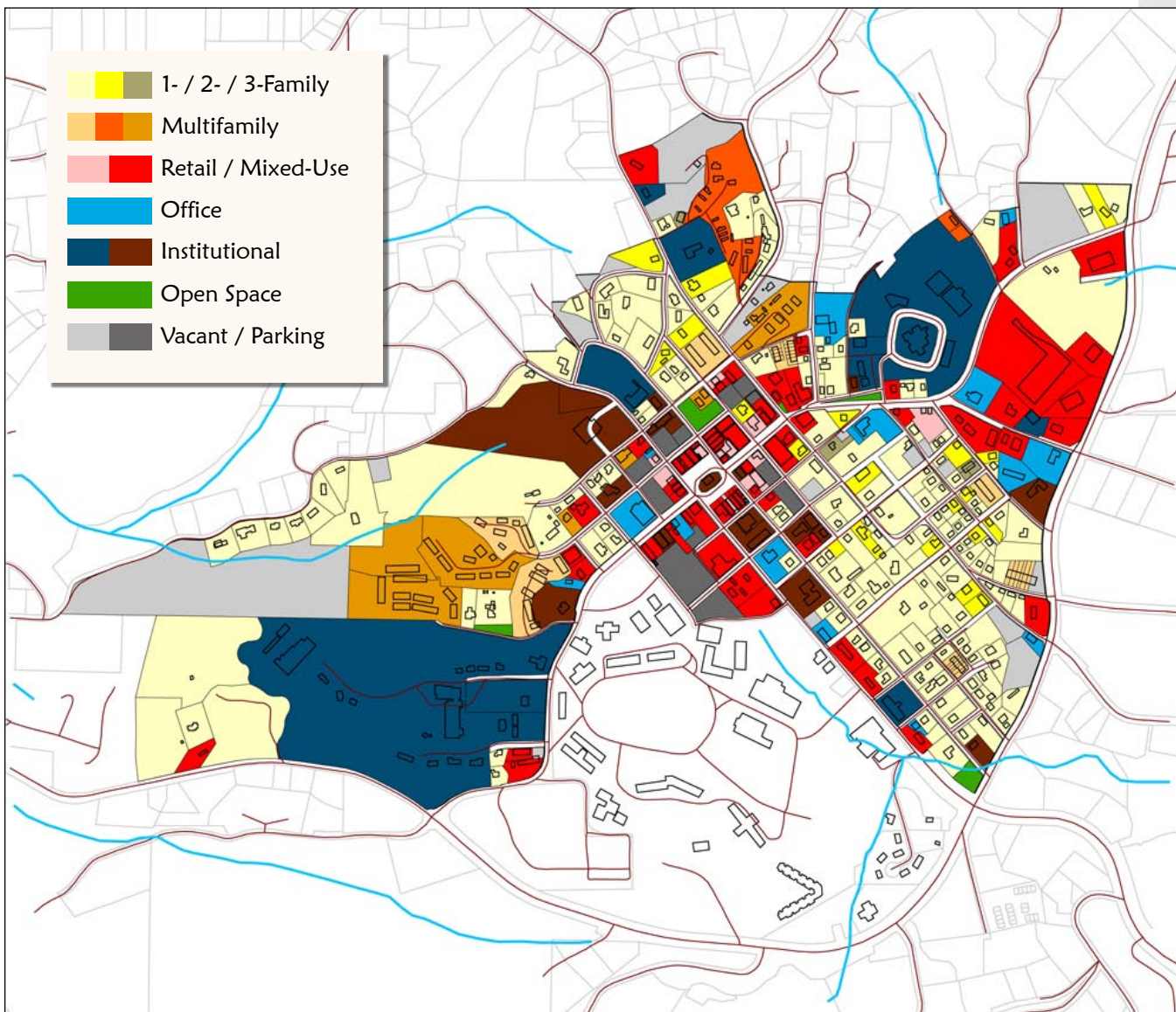




## existing land use

The study area consists of 379 parcels covering about 300 acres, and is characterized by a diversity of uses within close proximity of each other. Residential uses, dominated by single family units, make up 47% (140 acres) of the area indicating the prominent presence of an established community. Institutional and cultural facilities are represented by 25% (78 acres) of the area and includes some of the North Georgia College and State University (NGCSU) campus and the county administrative offices. Commercial uses anchor the historic core and are also located along the major roads covering 12% (35 acres) of the area. Offices located near the square and along Memorial Drive constitute 3% (9 acres) of the land uses. The core is served by 2% (6 acres) of parking and by a limited amount of open space (nearly 2 acres) that is not well connected with its surroundings. Opportunities for development are available on vacant land located along the edges, covering 10% (30 acres) of the study area.

Figure 1.3: Existing Land Use

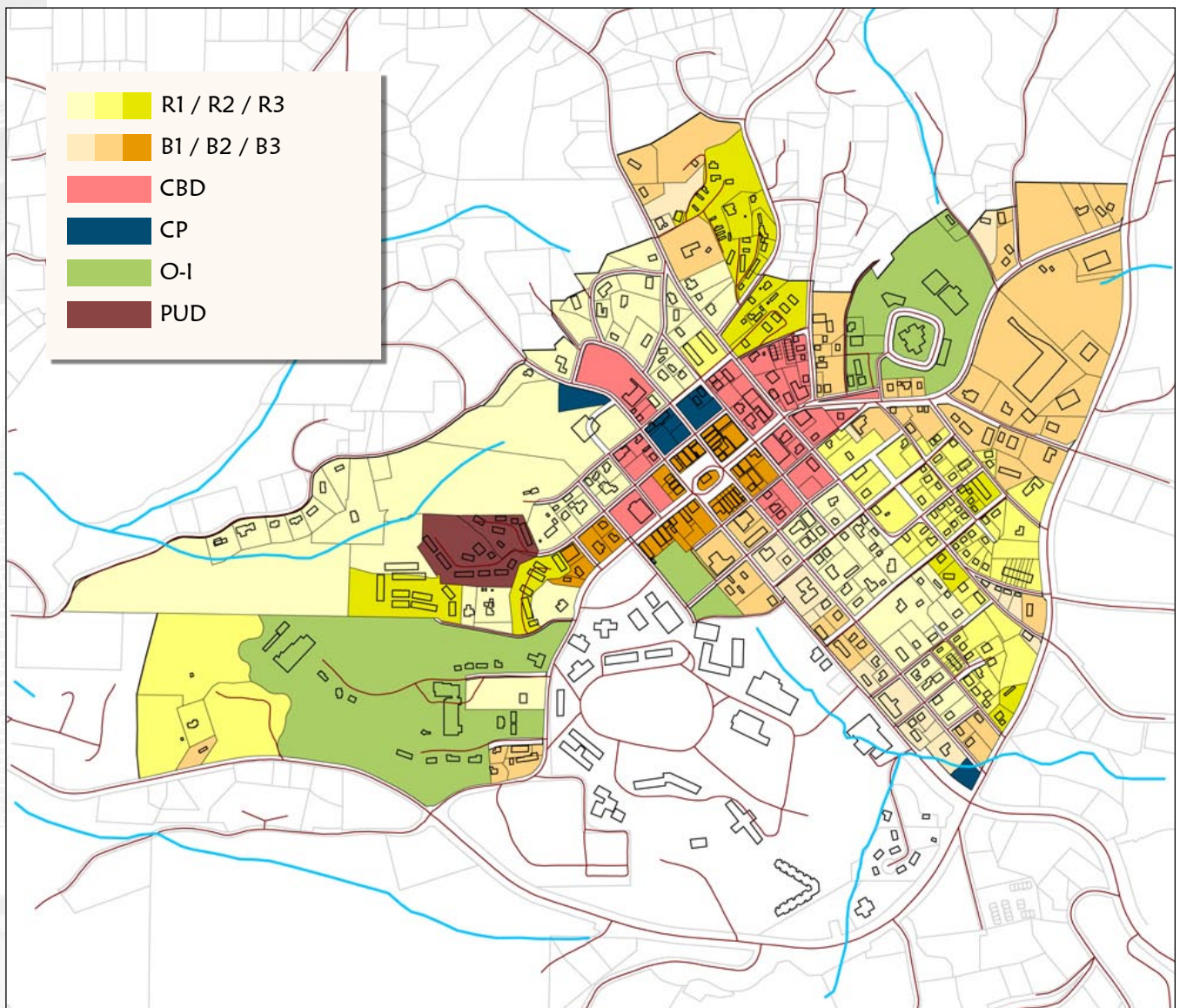




## existing zoning

The area has been zoned into categories that ripple out from the historic core. This core, zoned as the Historical Business District (B3) is surrounded by the Central Business District (CBD). Together they meet the retail, business, office and cultural needs of the residents while also preserving the cultural heritage of the community. The business districts and the CBD account for 30% of the uses. Neighborhood Businesses (B1) are located along S. Chestatee Street to serve the neighborhoods and Highway Businesses (B2) that serve the entire community are located close to heavy traffic volumes, primarily along Morrison Moore Parkway. About half the area (49%) is zoned as residential which flanks either side of the core. These are distinguished based on housing types and densities into single family (R1), town homes and duplexes (R2) and multi-family (R3). City Property (CP) covers parks and a church and Office-Institution (O-I) reflects the college and county uses. The single Planned Unit Development District (PUD) serves as a transition between the residences and the core.

Figure 1.4: Existing Zoning

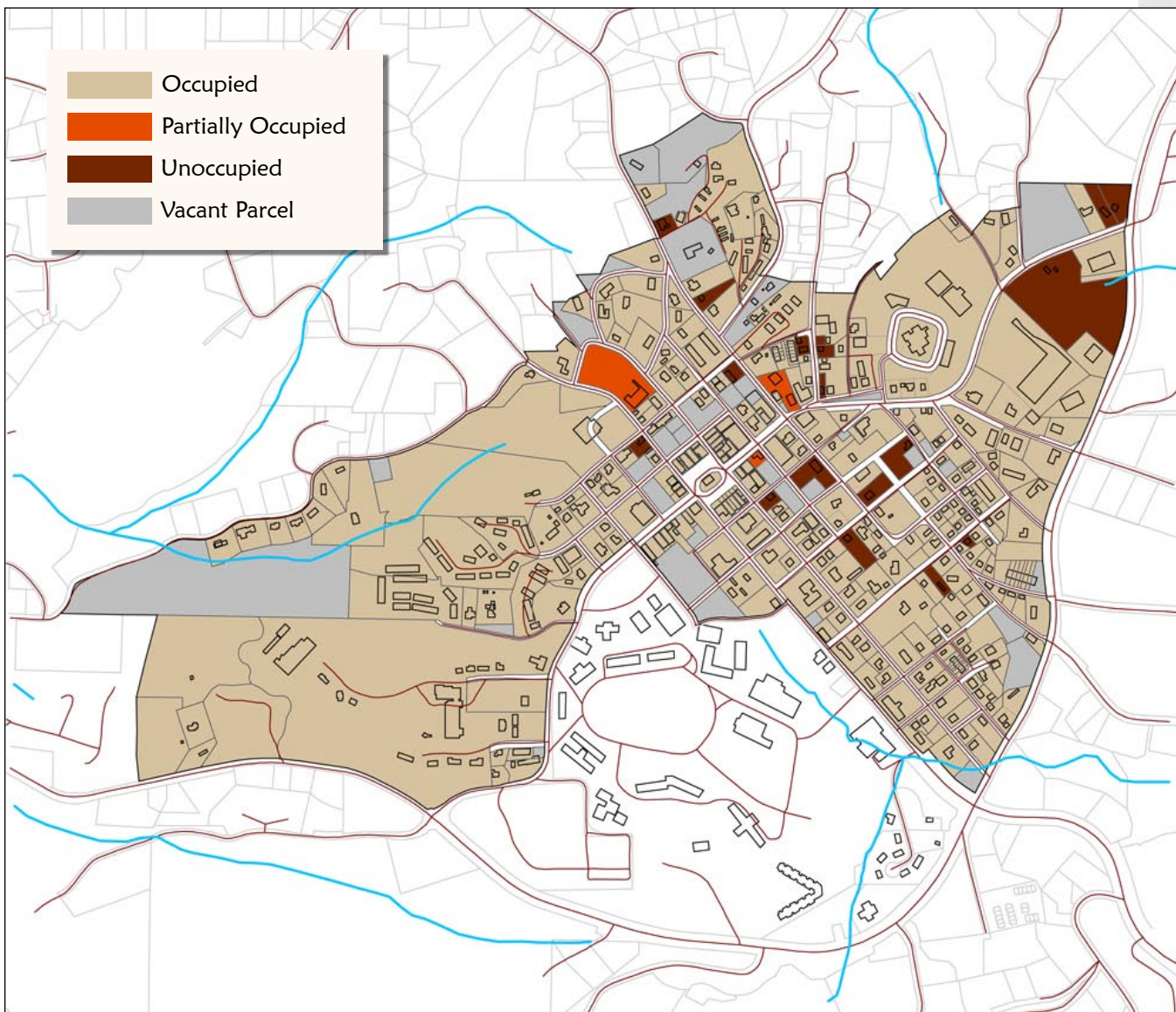




## building occupancy

An assessment of building occupancy sheds light on whether the area is being used to its full potential or not. It also allows development opportunities to be identified. 80% of the structures within the study area are visibly occupied. This indicates that potential new development would have the necessary foundations to grow upon. 1% of the structures appear to be partially occupied. These properties are potential redevelopment opportunities and are located within the central business district. 5% of the structures appear to be unoccupied. Most of these are located within the Mechanicsville neighborhood and some along Morrison Moore Parkway. A large percentage of these properties are historic structures that people have found difficult to maintain and hence could serve as opportunities for rehabilitation. 14% of the parcels are vacant. These not only include undeveloped parcels but also parks and parking lots. These are located along the study area periphery and immediately around the historic core.

Figure 1.5: Building Occupancy

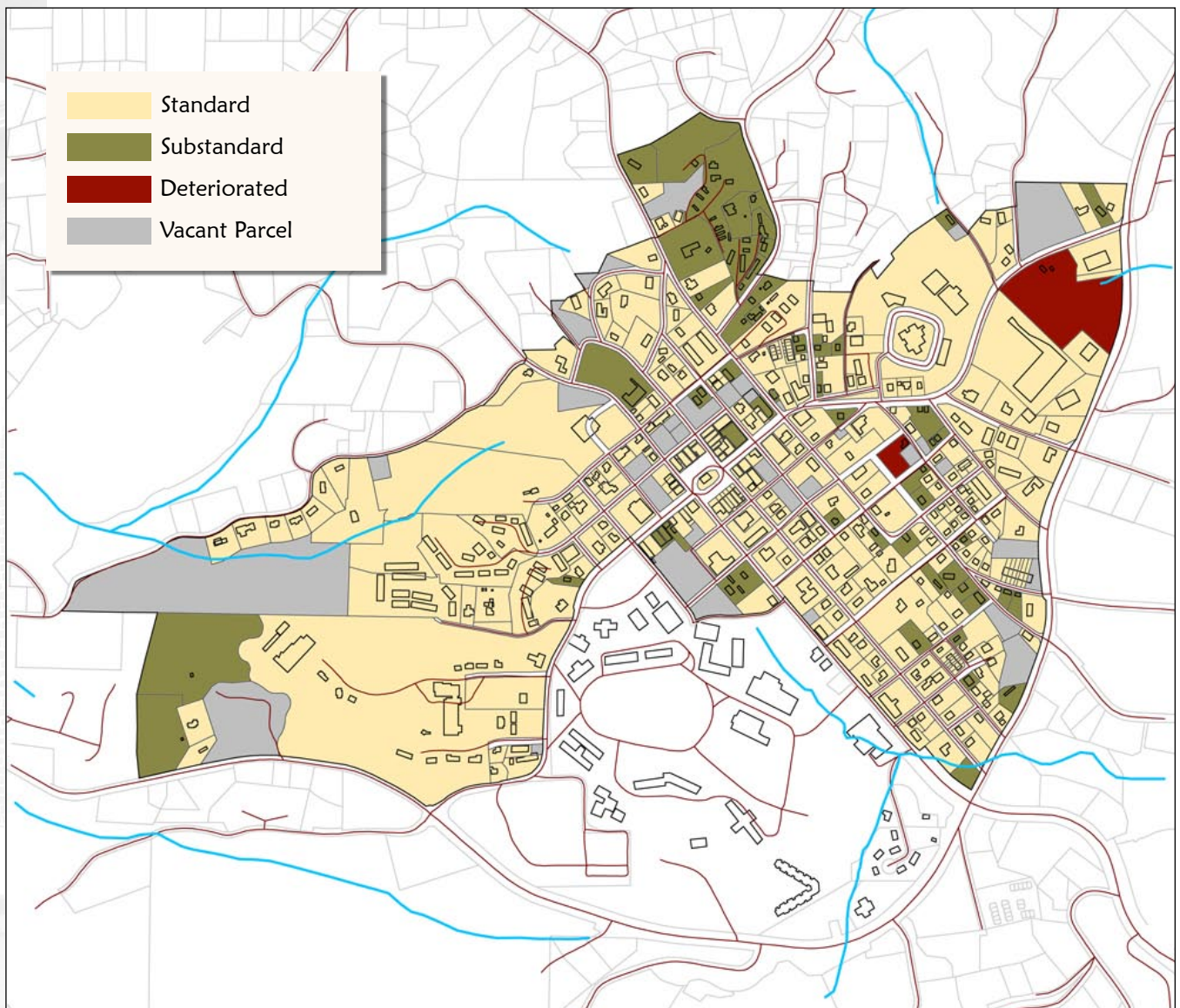




## building condition

Assessing conditions of properties within the area helps to further understand the quality of building stock currently available to play a role in the future vision of the City. On the whole the study area consists of properties that are in standard condition. These properties cover 71% of the area and have structures that are sound in construction, undergo regular maintenance and would most likely require only minimal repairs. 13% of the properties are considered to be in substandard condition. These properties have been neglected for a period of time and are now in need of some level of repair. They primarily consist of residential structures located in the Mechanicsville neighborhood. Some commercial structures around East Main and Morrison Moore Parkway are also considered as substandard. 3% of the properties are considered to be deteriorated. Negligence towards these structures has left them in disrepair and made them uninhabitable. They would have to be demolished, hence providing opportunities for new construction.

Figure 1.6: Building Condition

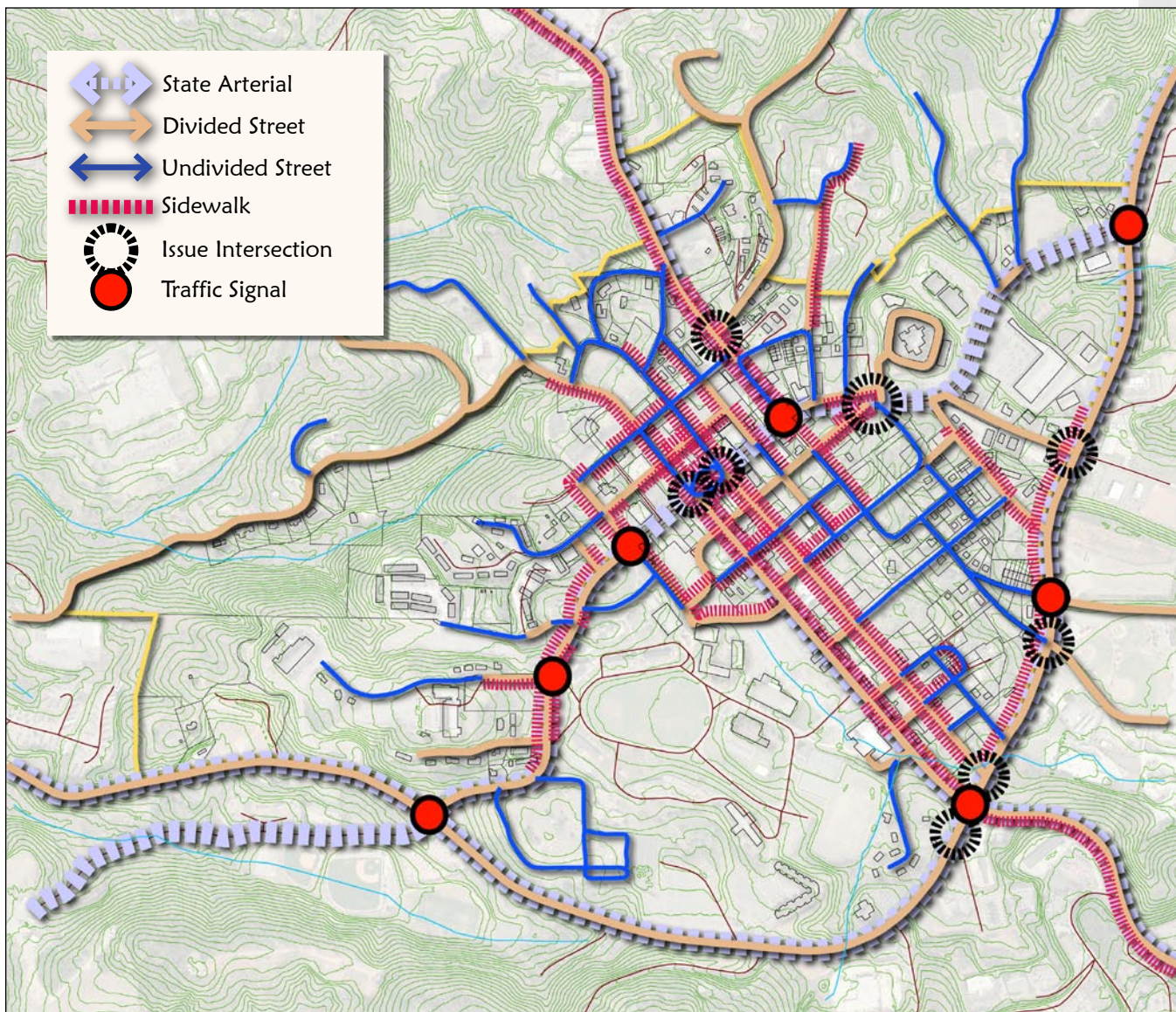




## *circulation framework*

Dahlonge is fortunate to have a well-connected grid of streets with small, walkable (200' x 200') blocks forming the central core. The small block subdivision pattern somewhat extends out into the residential neighborhoods to the southeast; but the greater street network consists mainly of major roads radiating from the core with smaller dead-end roads extending further into flanking hilly terrain. State arterial highways penetrate the study area only along North Grove Street and Main Street East and West. While major streets and roads are two-way divided two-lane sections, most of the remaining network is unmarked, giving the study area its pronounced and distinctive small scale and rural character. Sidewalks are concentrated along the major roads, but limited elsewhere. Traffic signals punctuate Main and Morrison Moore Parkway; but several unsignalized intersections are potential conflict sites, and the Public Square is often congested.

*Figure 1.7: Circulation Framework*

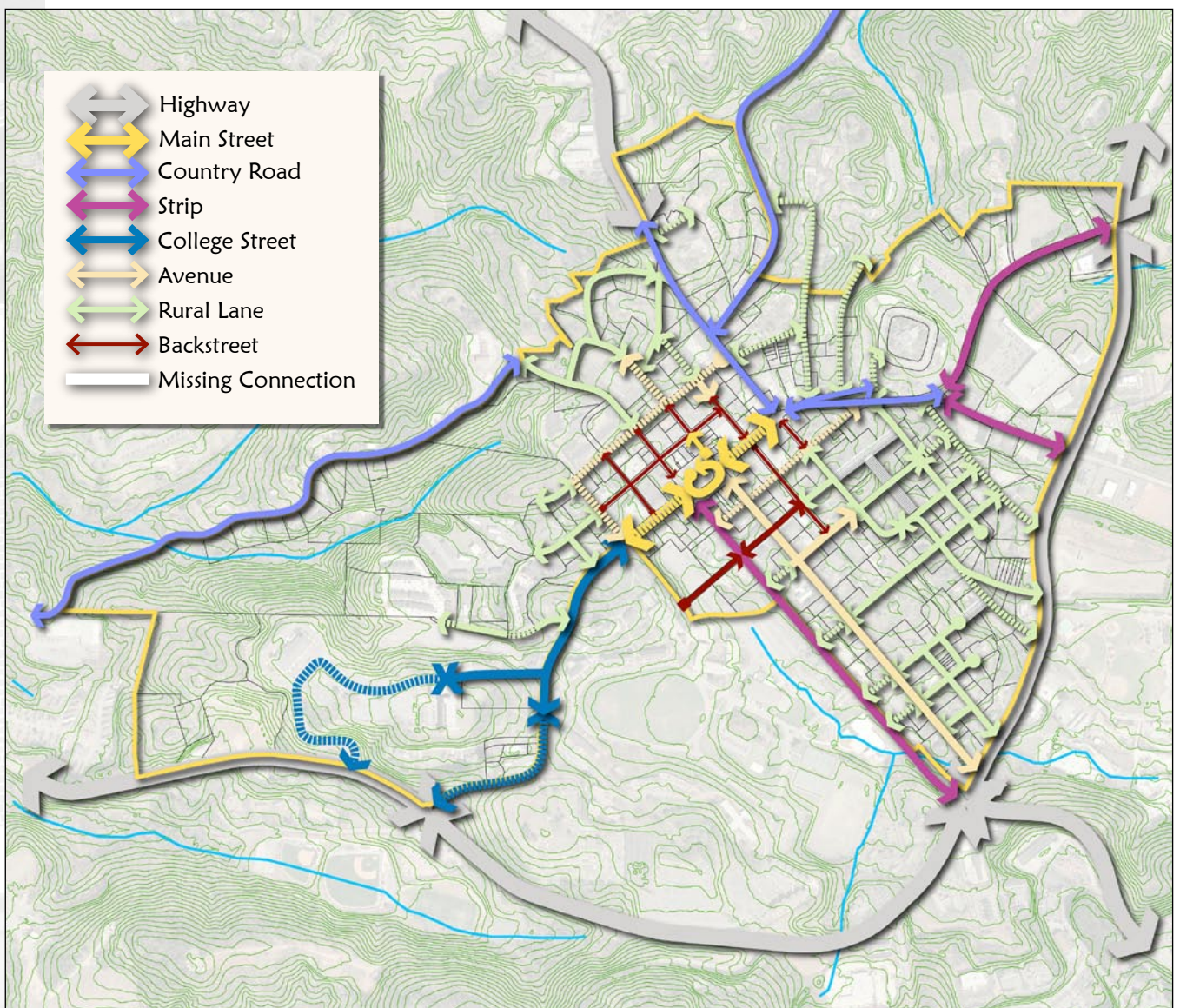




## street character

Several different street typologies contribute to the unique sense of place characterizing the study area. The most important section of the core is Main Street East, West, and the Public Square, which together form the principal ceremonial axis of the city. Conversely, the radiating streets just outside the core have a variety of environments which relate to adjoining development. Main Street West functions as a college artery; Main Street East resembles a rural highway before transitioning to a commercial strip at Memorial Street, which is also a strip. Secondary streets fall into two categories: rural lanes with graveled shoulders, swales, and heavy vegetation; and core backstreets which are narrow and often contain service areas for Public Square businesses. The backstreets are also largely one-way in the northwest half of the core, though one-way streets appear infrequently in other locations. Park Street rivals Main in importance as the only well-defined historic residential avenue in the city.

Figure 1.8: Street Character

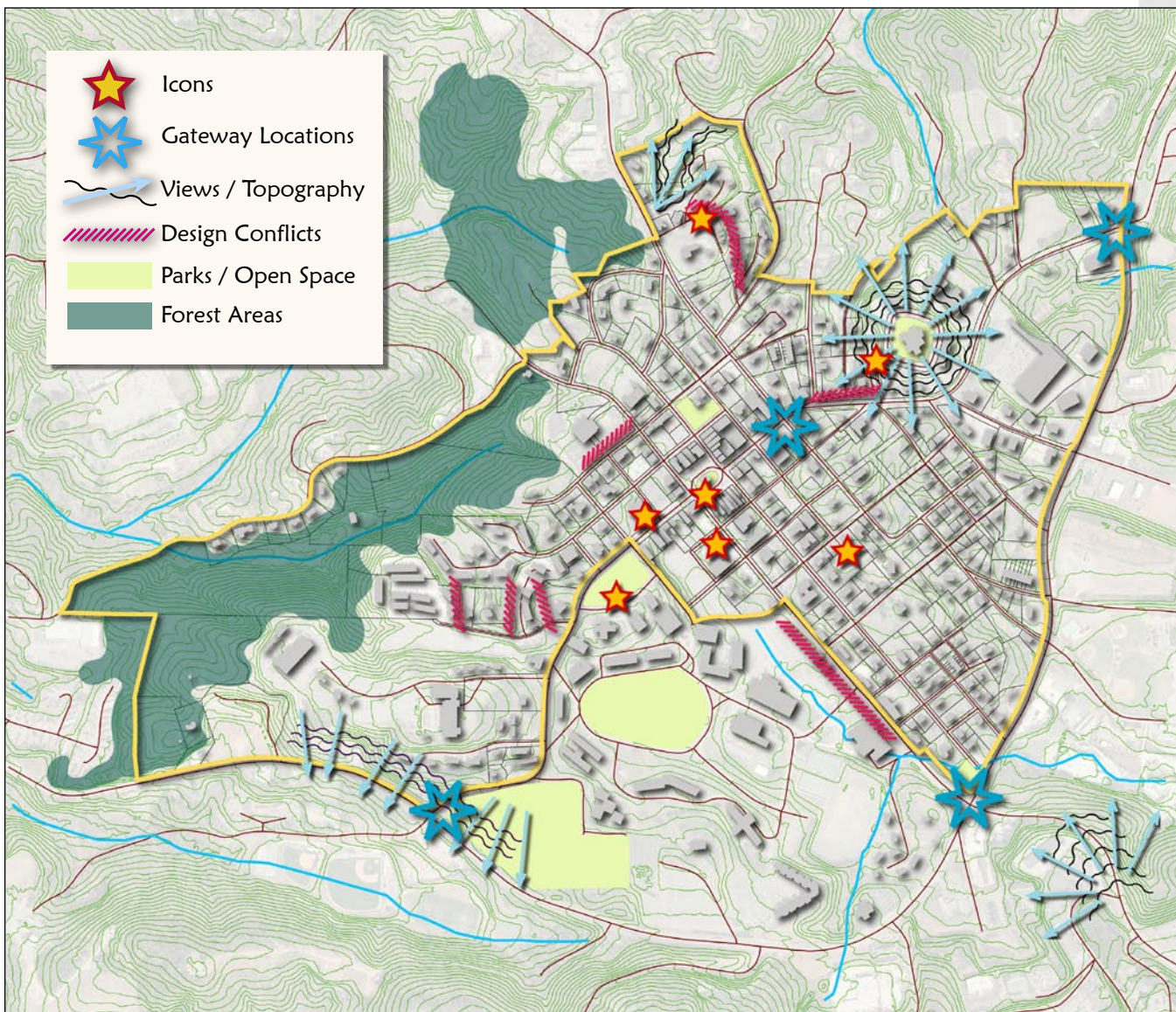




## urban design framework

Much of Dahlonega's appeal comes from its Piedmont landscape and historic buildings and spaces. Icons of the city – the Gold Museum, the Old Jail, Price Hall, and structures like the Smith, McGuire, Head, and Vickery houses – cluster on and around the hilltop that contains the Public Square. High ground also provides views into and from the city, especially around the current courthouse, along Memorial Drive, near the Hillcrest/McKinney property, and from Highway 19. The west side of the study area is dominated by steeply sloping, undeveloped forest land; and heavy tree cover shades much of the Mechanicsville and Park Street neighborhoods. On the other hand, the few formalized open spaces in the study area are on or near Main Street. Despite the superb and pristine physical context there are places where design conflicts do exist. The parking lots along South Chestatee, the student housing on Vickery Drive, and the mobile homes behind the Hillcrest/McKinney property compromise their historic surroundings.

Figure 1.9: Urban Design Framework

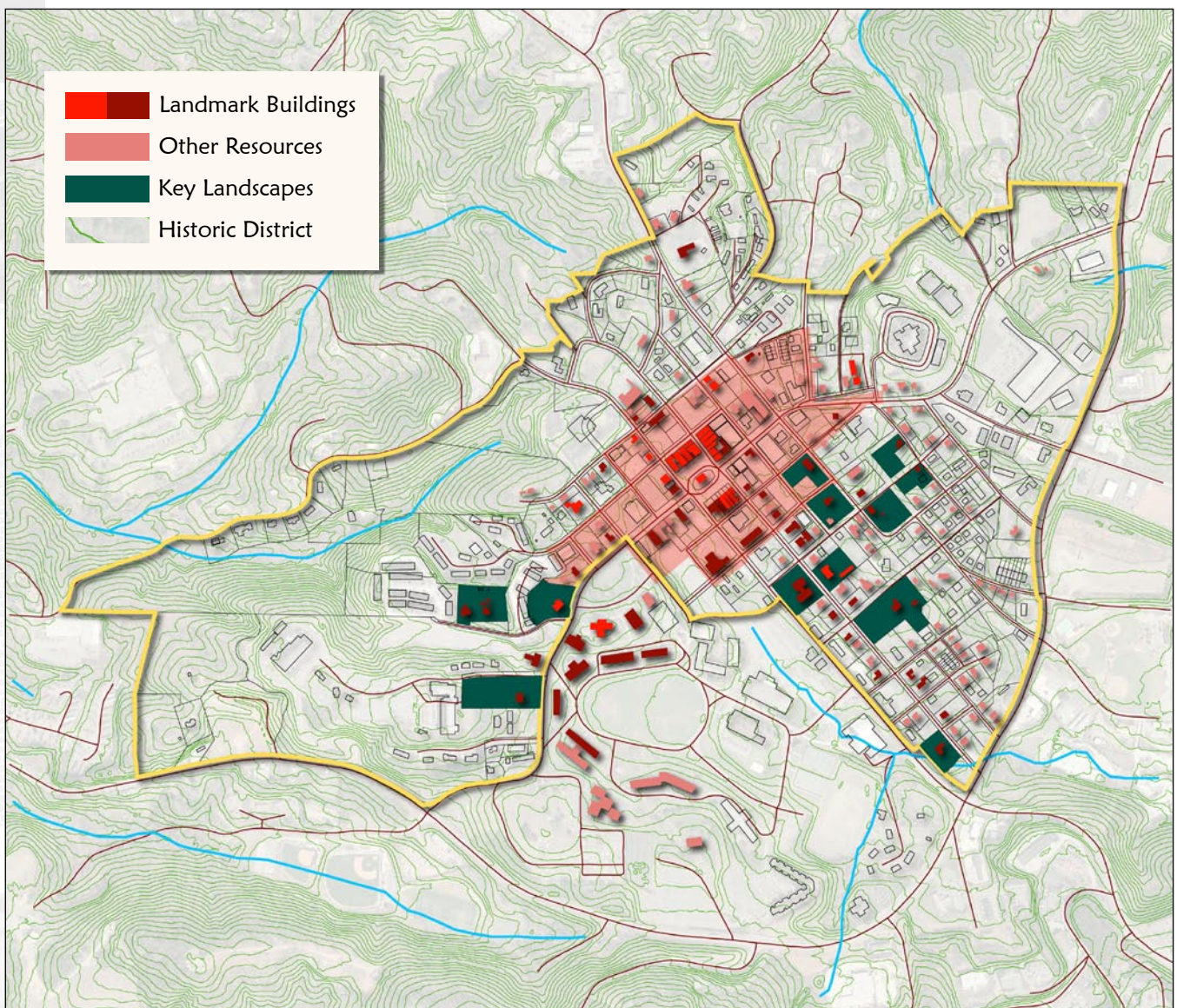




## historic resources

Dahlongega's commitment to historic preservation is evident throughout the core and elsewhere in the study area. The downtown historic district covers twenty-two blocks and 75% of the core, and contains at least 24 buildings on the National Register. Other National Register buildings lie within a few blocks of the district. There are also many other landmark buildings present that are not on the National Register but are of equal quality and stature, like the Community House, the Worley Homestead, several college facilities, and many houses along Park Street. Beyond this notable inventory, many other newer or simpler structures fall within the time period and physical criteria for National Register eligibility. In addition to buildings there are historic landscapes that are extremely valuable to the city's identity such as the College Lawn and Drill Field, or large residential lots that are either relatively urban like Seven Oaks, or uniquely rural like those on South Grove Street.

Figure 1.10: Historic Resources

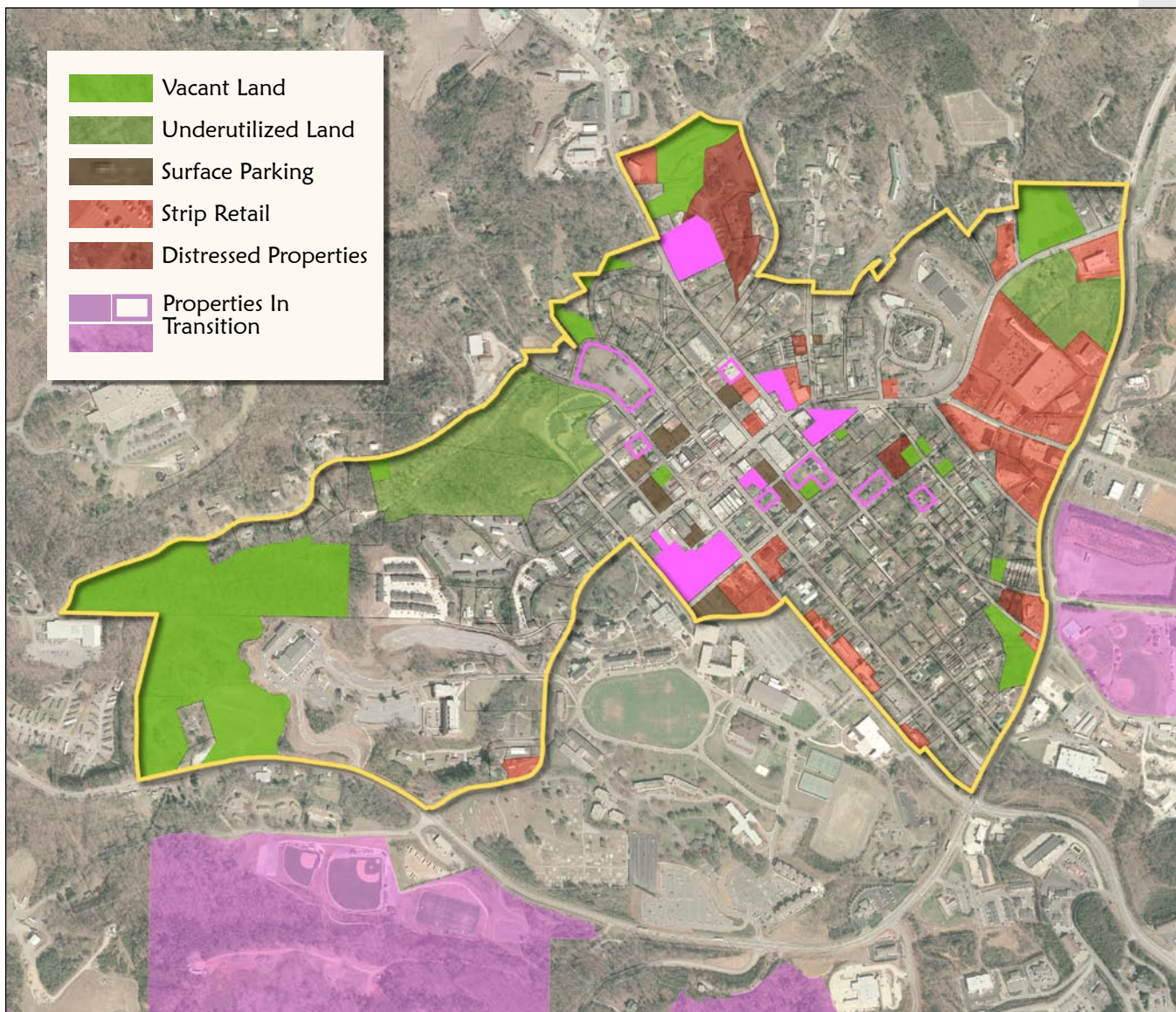




## *susceptibility to change*

Many properties in the study area are likely to change in the future, or are in the process of changing now. Foremost among them are vacant or grossly underutilized properties, concentrated in large parcels on the north and west sides of town. Other vacant parcels are scattered throughout more developed areas but tend to be small; as are the downtown parking lots or distressed properties that could redevelop over time. Some strip retail centers like Greenbriar Plaza are approaching obsolescence and will need investment to stay viable; other stand-alone uses are in locations where change is surrounding them. In general, strip commercial is increasingly at odds with the maturing development character of the study area except in limited locations along the bypass. Finally, properties currently in transition include development programs like the Smith House expansion, the new city hall, and university-related projects outside the study area, or properties offered on the real estate market (pink outline).

*Figure 1.11: Susceptibility To Change*

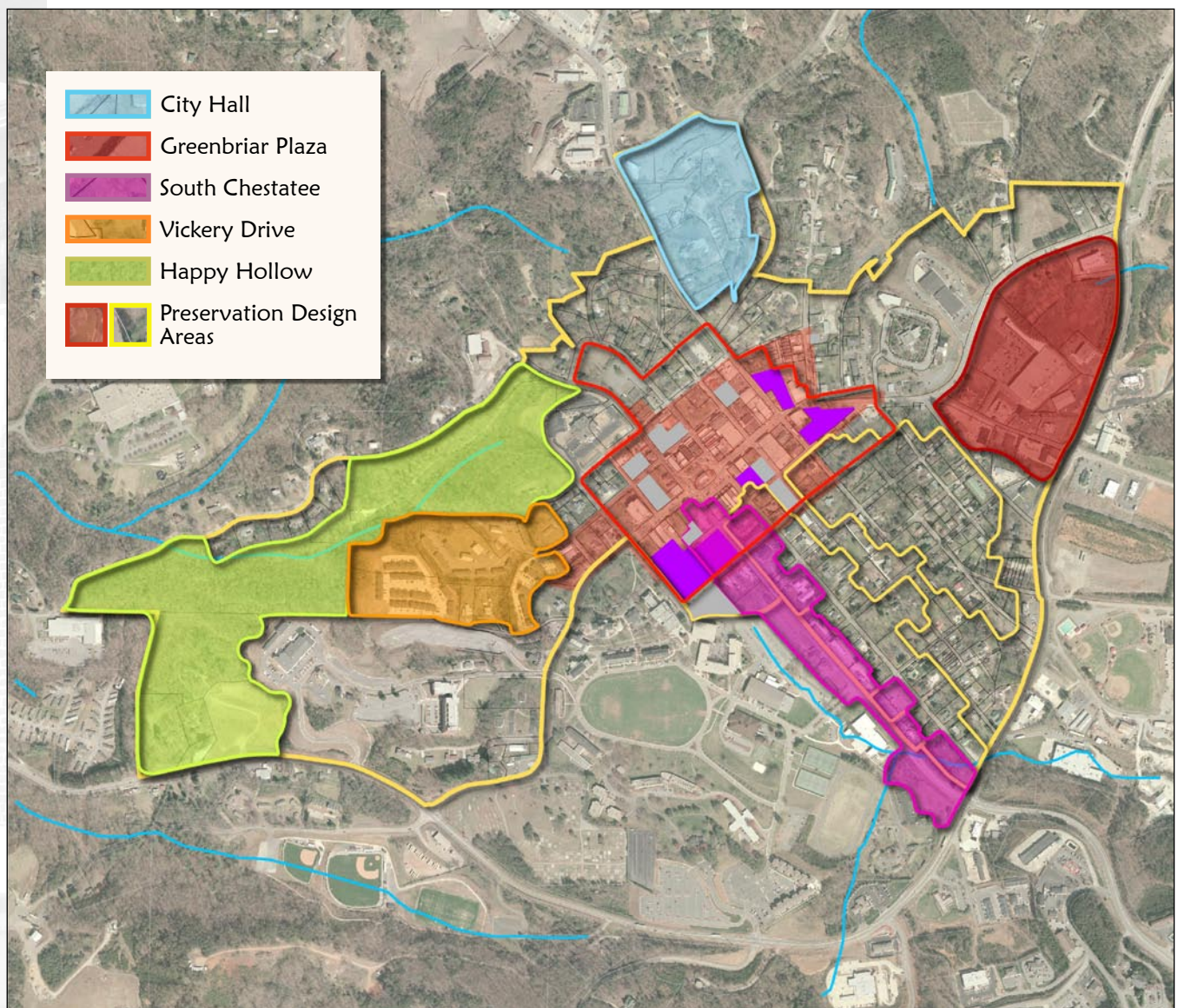




## *development opportunities*

Concentrations of large properties likely to change (visible in Figure 1.11) can be formalized into a number of new development or redevelopment opportunities that could support new construction and historic renovation. Most significant are the vacant and underutilized parcels designated as the Happy Hollow area on the west side of downtown; and the strip commercial parcels around Greenbriar Plaza and Memorial Drive (Figure 1.11). Additional redevelopment opportunity areas include the South Chestatee Street corridor; the Hillcrest/McKinney property and the surrounding parcels; and the outdated student apartments and surroundings along and near Vickery Drive. Plentiful infill and renovation opportunities exist in the historic core and neighborhoods as well, which have been indicated in the diagram as “Preservation Design Areas”. Potential development and refined boundaries of these opportunity areas are discussed further in Parts 2 and 3 of the document.

*Figure 1.12: Development Opportunities*





## 1.2 - Stakeholder Issues


The design of a city's masterplan results from a finely orchestrated balance between the physical environment and the needs of its inhabitants. While an assessment of the area's existing conditions throws light on land use, building stock, community facilities, traffic and transportation, a conversation with the community helps in building an understanding of the intrinsic patterns that exist between various entities, and identifying any underlying issues and thus aids in the formulation of a strong vision for the future of the area.

Stakeholders are identified as those community members who play an active role in the welfare of the area that they live and work in. They hold a rooted interest in the future of their community and are willing to spend time towards improvements that can benefit the area as a whole. They aim to make their community function like a well-oiled machine that meets everyone's varied needs.

While the general public was provided with opportunities to participate in the planning process through meetings and workshops, certain citizens were selected for individual dialogues with the planning staff. Eighteen stakeholders were given an opportunity to meet the consultants over a period of 3 days (October 2nd, 4th and 23rd, 2007) to voice their likes and dislikes about the study area and to share their ideas about improvements that could enhance the quality of life in the City. These stakeholders represent the various entities that come together to make Dahlonega. The different groups represented were residents, business owners, historic and non-historic property owners, caretakers and owners of important cultural landmarks and community facilities, members of the college as well as representatives of Lumpkin County. Conversations lasting between 45 minutes to 1.5

*Figure 1.13: Public Workshop*





hours with each stakeholder brought to attention various aspects of the city that worked well and many others that needed help and improvement. The stakeholders voiced their thoughts about policies, laws, process, activities, traffic situations, that currently exists in the city as well as deficiencies in the system that needs to be changed. Based on the minutes noted during each meeting, a matrix was generated (Figure 1.14: Stakeholders Issues Matrix) where the issues were divided into the following 7 categories: Land Use and Development, Economic Development, Housing, Historic and Natural Resources, Traffic and Transportation, Community Facilities and Urban Design. The categories are the foundation on which a successful masterplan is built, and addressing the components within each section help create a balanced and workable plan toward the community's vision.

While the community members treasure their historic heritage and want future plans to help preserve and protect it, they are also aware of the need to adapt to the demands of a growing population and the importance of providing a mix of uses towards the core. The city needs to link itself with its surroundings like the vineyards, trails, mines and mountains. It needs to present itself as a small, charming city that is rooted in its history but providing amenities to a modern and developing world.

Land use and development should be oriented toward pedestrians and alternate transit routes should be encouraged. Bringing different uses together would allow people to live and work in close proximity to establishments that can meet their daily food, recreational and cultural needs.

While a few community facilities like the Holly Theatre and the Cannery exist, the stakeholders feel there is a need to increase these. There is an acute lack of open spaces that can serve as locations for various events and gatherings. It is also strongly felt that these facilities should be well connected by sidewalks and trails to surrounding areas, thus making them an intrinsic part of the city and its activities.

Housing opportunities need to be diversified, providing a cross-section of society an opportunity to reside in and around the downtown core. Housing types should meet the needs of students, faculty, as well as young and old families. Housing too should be well connected to all other land uses thereby encouraging people to decrease automobile trips.

Stakeholders are aware that to be able to address the above issues, there is a need to also establish a strong economic base, one that can support the desired changes as well as manage growth in the area. This economic base needs to diversify and address tourism, students and retirees.

Historic resources are rich in this area and every effort should be made to preserve them. These not only include individual buildings but also include the character, either commercial or residential of an area as well as the natural landscaping and topography.

Finally another key aspect that needs a lot of attention is the traffic and transportation. Parking facilities need to cater to the tourists, local businesses as well as residents. Street improvements are required on all major streets and these need to address traffic speeds, street lighting, and sidewalk design in terms of furniture and landscaping.

Creating a design where each aspect complements the other, strengthens the masterplan and provides a direction towards accomplishing the overall vision.



Land Use and Development	Economic Development	Housing	Historic and Natural Resources	Traffic and Transportation	Community Facilities	Urban Design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the Holly Theatre's plans to expand to lots on either side</li> <li>- NGCSU will grow to 6000 students and will require new facilities</li> <li>- The 300-acre Radar Ridge development will provide student housing and potentially single-family</li> <li>- Follow up on shared events space at NGCSU</li> <li>- Hancock Park should be expanded</li> <li>- Expand green space and play areas downtown</li> <li>- The university is open about their space being used for events</li> <li>- Upper floors in some commercial buildings are now being used as residential</li> <li>- Provide mixed-use buildings with parking decks</li> </ul>	<p>Downtown needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Old-style" grocery store with a pharmacy</li> <li>- More restaurants (fine dining)</li> <li>- Art galleries / other art-related facilities</li> <li>- Live music venue</li> <li>- Coffee shop</li> <li>- Bakery</li> <li>- Sports store focusing on adventure and outdoors</li> <li>- Photography store</li> <li>- Bird watching and other specialized retailers</li> <li>- Shoe store</li> <li>- High-quality furniture store</li> <li>- Specialty food shop</li> <li>- Hotel</li> <li>- Conference center</li> <li>- "True" general store</li> <li>- Toy store</li> </ul> <p>There is a need to attract more businesses that are suitable for the city</p> <p>The city should cater to the three markets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourism – the most important to the city's economy</li> <li>- Retirees</li> <li>- University faculty, administration</li> <li>- Increase in numbers and shift to a residential student population versus commuters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are no condos in the city - should be more</li> <li>- There is a lack of amenities that need to cater to a rental population</li> <li>- Housing and amenities should meet the needs of students, faculty, and medical community</li> <li>- Residential properties need improvements</li> <li>- Park Street is an important residential street</li> <li>- A large apartment complex is undesirable even given the need for rental</li> <li>- There would be a demand for multifamily housing, but design standards need to apply</li> <li>- Faculty and students would like to reside close to campus</li> <li>- Infill residential should be added within downtown</li> <li>- There should be residential development on the college-owned property along Mechanics Road</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Historic buildings should be preserved</li> <li>- Landscaping should be native foliage like mountain laurel</li> <li>- A trail is needed through downtown and to the ball fields or the lakes</li> <li>- Need for a dedicated residential historic district</li> <li>- Trees are cut arbitrarily</li> <li>- Historic buildings should not be duplicated</li> <li>- The city allows historic structures to be moved</li> <li>- Preserve the topography</li> <li>- The Park Place Motel is not compatible with the rest of the historic district</li> <li>- There is a need to identify "run down" buildings for renovation</li> <li>- Provide incentives for application of a historic district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Find / make places for school buses to park</li> <li>- Increase the number of handicapped parking spots</li> <li>- Increase parking in general</li> <li>- Route traffic away from the square</li> <li>- Parking should be made easier to locate</li> <li>- Improvements are needed along South Chestatee Street</li> <li>- Slow down traffic at the East Main light to make it easier for pedestrians to cross</li> <li>- Provide parking decks</li> <li>- Provide centralized parking and shuttles to the square</li> <li>- Motorcycle parking needs to be provided away from the square</li> <li>- Non-customer parking in front of stores should be limited</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a need for a city park with a gazebo / pavilion</li> <li>- Hancock Park needs a pavilion</li> <li>- Move the location of the skating rink out of Hancock Park</li> <li>- 24-hour security and police presence is required downtown</li> <li>- There is a lack of events facilities</li> <li>- All green / open spaces need some activities</li> <li>- Provide amenities for teenagers, like skate parks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient crosswalks</li> <li>- Tie residential areas to downtown with sidewalks</li> <li>- Existing sidewalks should be spruced up</li> <li>- Increase bike lanes</li> <li>- Increase street lighting and pedestrian amenities from the square out for safety</li> <li>- Stress city's charm and authenticity, especially in the Square</li> <li>- Visually link the Rec Deck with the square</li> <li>- Maintain the integrity and style of downtown</li> <li>- Define downtown by a gateway (banners on poles)</li> <li>- Develop the areas surrounding downtown to match the square (through building codes)</li> <li>- Make Dahlonega a walkable community and more handicapped-accessible</li> <li>- Development should change away from the core</li> <li>- Improve signage to indicate parking areas, available amenities and directions</li> </ul>

Figure 1.14: Issues Matrix

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Property along East Main and South Grove is to be redeveloped</li> <li>- Annex the commercial at the GA400 intersection</li> <li>- The bypass is being lined with fast food and other commercial uses</li> <li>- The reservoir is a good development opportunity</li> <li>- Create a "walking perimeter" around the core and let development follow</li> <li>- Protect historic neighborhoods against commercial encroachment from Highway 60</li> <li>- Develop guidelines for multifamily housing including minimum open space requirements</li> <li>- Encourage mixed-use condo projects downtown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Greenbriar Shopping Center should attract better tenants</li> <li>- Make the side streets off the square attractive to merchants</li> <li>- Increase activities to attract the college population</li> <li>- Advertise and market the city, the history and the amenities to attract people</li> <li>- Add mid-sized business space (2,000-3,000 sq.ft.)</li> <li>- Improve downtown options for local residents</li> <li>- Stores should stay open late</li> <li>- Stores should sell locally-made products</li> <li>- The city website needs to be revamped</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New residential construction should consist of historical architecture and landscaping with modern interiors</li> <li>- R-1 zoning is not being enforced along South Park Street</li> <li>- Create trails with complimentary residential development</li> <li>- Opportunities for faculty housing has decreased</li> <li>- concentrate on improving</li> <li>- Housing is more expensive within the city - provide more affordability</li> <li>- Well-run apartments will not pose a problem to growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Noise pollution from traffic near the square will make living there undesirable</li> <li>- Trucks should not be allowed into the square unless making deliveries</li> <li>- Pass-through traffic creates congestion</li> <li>- control</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- East Main Street should look like West Main Street</li> <li>- Streetscape all relevant streets</li> <li>- Front porches contribute to the character of Dahlonaga - promote</li> <li>- The city should not develop commercially like Helen and Gatlinburg</li> <li>- Improve the connection to the old jail</li> <li>- Improve downtown visibility</li> <li>- Link to vineyards</li> <li>- Reduce asphalt on the south side of the square</li> <li>- Need for more seating</li> <li>- New buildings should look historic</li> <li>- Pedestrian-only core</li> <li>- Better connectivity to NCCSU</li> <li>- Correct inequity in the enforcement of ordinances</li> <li>- Don't compromise individuality for tourists</li> <li>- Manage signage and display, equitably</li> <li>- Utility wires should run underground</li> <li>- Remove dumpsters from along the back of the square</li> <li>- Mix the modern look with the old</li> </ul>
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## 1.3 - Demographic / Market Overview

The following conclusions are made based on the evaluation of resident, household and housing, business and tourism characteristics.

### *KEY DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS*

The population living in Downtown Dahlonega is small and is projected to have relatively modest growth. Downtown Dahlonega has 871 residents, representing 21.6% of Dahlonega's population of 4,030 and 3.5% of Lumpkin County's population of 25,133. From 2007-2012, Downtown is projected to grow 5.2%, slower than the City or County, at 6.7% and 11.1%, respectively. Residents of Downtown Dahlonega are younger, more diverse and less well educated than Lumpkin County as a whole. Downtown residents have a median age of 32.7, slightly younger than Lumpkin County at 33.1 years. Over 16% of Downtown residents identify themselves as non-white, compared to 12.0% in Dahlonega and 6.6% in the County. Over 30% of Downtown residents have not earned their high school diploma or equivalent.

Households in Downtown Dahlonega are smaller and have lower incomes than those in the City or County. The average household in Downtown Dahlonega has 2.21 persons, compared to 2.3 persons in Dahlonega and 2.58 persons in Lumpkin County. The median household income in Downtown is \$26,190, or 85.2% of Dahlonega's median income of \$45,010 and 58.2% of Lumpkin County's median income of \$59,261. Dahlonega has a mix of housing types which are predominately renter-occupied. Approximately half of all housing units in Downtown are single family units with an additional 37% of housing units in multifamily buildings with mobile homes making up the balance. Renters occupy 62.2% of housing units,

*Figure 1.15: Student Housing*





a higher proportion than in the surrounding areas. The median owner-occupied housing value in Downtown is \$216,667, or 87.3% of housing values in Dahlonega.

#### *KEY BUSINESS, RETAIL AND TOURISM TRENDS*

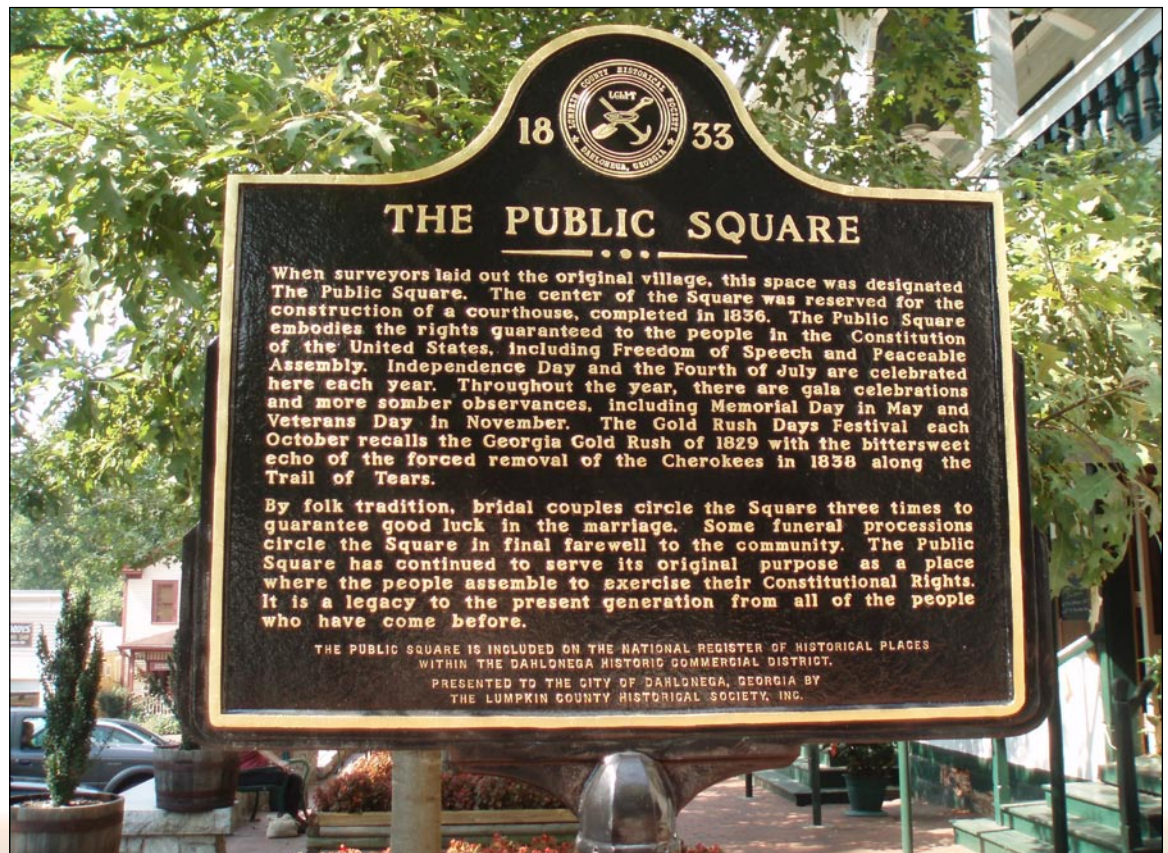
Downtown Dahlonega is a significant employment center. Downtown Dahlonega contains 358 business establishments employing 3,483 people. In Downtown, 64.4% of workers are employed in the retail and services sector. In terms of jobs/housing balance, there are 9.6 jobs for every household indicating downtown is a commercial center.

Downtown Dahlonega has significant retail sales-primarily sales to visitors from outside of the Study Area. The estimated total retail sales volume occurring in Downtown is \$62.0 million, compared to a total potential retail demand of downtown residents of \$11.3 million. Thus, the area has an overall retail capture rate of 548.6 % -- with \$50.7 million of retail sales in the area occurring due to spending from persons living outside of downtown.

The student population will continue to grow providing additional demand for housing and businesses in Downtown Dahlonega. The University anticipates growing by an additional 1,100 students over the next five to ten years, providing an additional \$10.9 million in spending, for an estimated \$59.6 million annually in student spending, much of which could be captured in downtown.

Tourism, one of the most important segments of Dahlonega's economy, can grow in both number of visitors and spending. Lumpkin County accounts for only 1.7% of visitor spending in the North Georgia Mountains. Increasing the number of visitors to Dahlonega, encouraging overnight visitors and promoting hotel and inn lodging options can help Dahlonega increase visitor spending.

*Figure 1.16: Historic Market*





## *KEY REAL ESTATE TRENDS*

There have not been significant new single family sales in the Downtown Study Area. There were 70 new single family sales in the City of Dahlonega from 2002 to 2006, or 9.9% of Lumpkin County's 710 sales over the same time period. The average sales price for a single family home in the City of Dahlonega increased from \$235,224 in 2002 to \$342,875 in 2006, an increase of 45.8%. While there were few new sales in the downtown area, there was significant growth in Dahlonega with 9.9% of Lumpkin County's sales and prices 152.1% higher than in the County. The County is experiencing significant growth in new home sales.

While there are few townhome sales in the Study Area or the City as a whole, prices for townhomes have increased significantly. From 2002 to 2006, there were three new townhome sales in Downtown Dahlonega and 33 new townhome sales in the City of Dahlonega. (All of Lumpkin County townhome sales were in the City of Dahlonega.) The average sales price for a townhome in the City of Dahlonega and Lumpkin County increased from \$125,000 in 2002 to \$251,286 in 2006, an increase of 101.0%. The average sales price for a new townhome in Downtown from 2002 to 2006, \$164,767, was 67.0% of the average sales price in Dahlonega and Lumpkin County at \$245,918.

There are 225 renter households in the Downtown Dahlonega Study Area and 45.6% live in rental complexes. There are two apartment complexes within the Study Area, both located across West Main Street from NGCSU and catering primarily to students. Overall, rents in Downtown Dahlonega average \$523 for a one-bedroom, \$688 for a two-bedroom and \$996 for a three-bedroom unit. Overall, rents average \$648 per month, or \$0.82 per square foot in Downtown.

*Figure 1.17: Achasta Landscape*



Downtown Dahlonega is the commercial center of the City and Lumpkin County. Within the Study Area, there is approximately 443,900 square feet of commercial uses. The majority of this space, 292,000 square feet, or 65.8%, is retail space while 24.6% is Professional/Office space and 9.6% is restaurant space. Rents average \$18.00 per square foot with Retail space averaging the highest rents, \$19.20, Restaurant space averaging \$16.68 and Professional/Office space averaging \$15.12 per square foot. Approximately 27,600 square feet, or 6.2%, of commercial space in Downtown Dahlonega is vacant.

There are two types of hotels in Dahlonega, limited-service motels and bed and breakfast inns. Dahlonega's four limited service motels have a total 220 rooms, with an average size of 55 rooms per hotel. Their reported ADR (Average Daily Rate) averages \$39 and their average occupancy rate is 59%. There are three Bed and Breakfast Inns (over 5 units) in Dahlonega. The inns contain 82 units, or an average of 27 units per inn. Average ADR is \$117 and reported occupancies average 64%.

*Figure 1.18: Downtown Retail*

