



PART ONE: INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Over the years, the City of Auburn has created a number of plans, strategies, and concepts to visualize its future. The purpose of this study is to assist the city in preparing a Strategic Implementation Plan to examine the compatibility of existing plans, establish a timetable for new developments/improvements, and formulate potential funding strategies for implementation. In addition, specific design concepts will be produced showing what the downtown area may look like in the next twenty-five years if certain proposals are implemented. The Downtown Master Plan will offer a twenty-five year vision that allows for a market-driven mixture of land uses in the downtown area.

STUDY AREA CONTEXT

Downtown Auburn includes the central business district centered at the intersection of the CSX railroad and 6th Street, a roughly four-block by two-block area. For the purposes of this study, downtown Auburn – as defined by the Downtown Auburn Overlay District – is the primary study area. Downtown Auburn is an area of approximately 168 acres in area, centered along Atlanta Highway and the CSX railroad.

Government buildings are prominent in downtown Auburn along with passive park space and mom and pop commercial establishments. Downtown includes areas on the south side of the railroad tracks that have the potential to develop in a town center manner, similar to development of Fourth Avenue on the north side of the tracks.

This downtown study area is where the existing conditions and future objectives and recommendations will apply. The secondary study area is the City of Auburn's limits and environs (Barrow County and East Gwinnett County). This will be studied and analyzed generally from a standpoint of the affects and influences on the primary study area – downtown Auburn.



Auburn's downtown district can be seen easily from Atlanta Highway.



Shopfront buildings, such as the Country Store, line the northern edge of 4th Avenue.

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REGIONAL CONTEXT

Auburn is located in northeastern Georgia in the western corner of Barrow County, Georgia. A small northwestern portion of the city extends into Gwinnett County. It borders the City of Dacula on the west side and the town of Carl on the east side. The land consists of rolling hills split by numerous creeks and streams typical of Georgia's upland Piedmont. The regional location is slightly more than 30 miles west of Athens, and 40 miles east of Atlanta.

Auburn's size and characteristics are more fitting of Barrow County than that of Gwinnett, which is a rapidly urbanizing county closer to the City of Atlanta, the region's major hub. The downtown area of Auburn is situated along Lawrenceville-Athens Highway/Atlanta Highway (Hwy 8). Auburn is the second largest city in Barrow County, with approximately 7,500 residents in 2010.

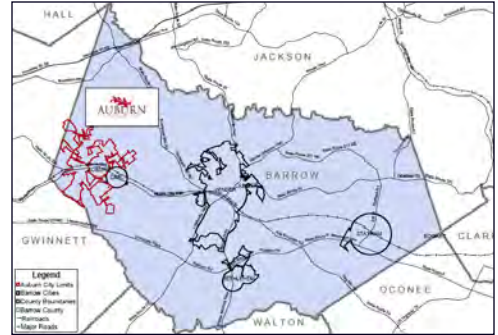
PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

Barrow County Comprehensive Plan, 2007-2027.

The Barrow County Comprehensive Plan provides a twenty year vision plan for the growth and development of Barrow County from 2007-2027. The City of Auburn's Community Agenda was prepared simultaneously with the Barrow County Comprehensive Plan process. Vision statements created during the Auburn 2015 Visioning Process were used in the development of this study. A Future Development Map and Character Area narratives were developed as part of this study.

Auburn Strategic Plan Study

The Auburn Strategic Plan (2005) was prepared to create a written statement that describes what type of community Auburn should aspire to become as growth and development occurs. This process provided an opportunity for stakeholders and the public to provide input regarding the Community's Vision for the future. An analysis of existing community infrastructure, land use, and demographic and development trends was prepared as a companion to the Community Vision statement.



Regional Location of Auburn in Barrow County.



New sewer improvements installed along 4th Avenue will help accommodate new development in the downtown district in future years.

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Based on the above efforts, projections for population growth, development, land use absorption, and infrastructure expansion were prepared, and existing city policies concerning infrastructure and development were evaluated. The study concludes with recommendations that were prepared to address potential changes in local policies and procedures as they affect future land use and zoning, infrastructure expansion and city/county service agreements. This information provides a guide for the City of Auburn's decision-makers as they consider these issues and their impacts on the City and the surrounding Community in western Barrow County.

PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS

Stakeholder Committee

A community stakeholder committee was established to help guide the downtown master planning/design process. This stakeholder committee consists of approximately ten local representatives coming from appointed boards, businesses, and the community. The Master Plan Steering Committee will provide leadership and review the consultant team's products as they are developed throughout the project.

The Master Plan Steering Committee will meet at scheduled intervals throughout the course of the ten-month project. The first Steering Committee kickoff meeting was held on January 30th, 2010. The meeting focused on introducing the stakeholder committee to the master planning process and an issues and opportunities visioning session was held.

Public Kickoff Meeting/ Image Preference Survey

The kickoff meeting for the public was held on Thursday, February 25th at the Auburn City Council Chambers. The team provided a presentation to introduce the attendees to the project and discuss the goals, scope and schedule. Noell Consulting provided an introduction to what the market study would accomplish, and they provided two case studies: Suwanee Town Center and Downtown Norcross.

After the presentation, an image preference survey was conducted. Rather than use a PowerPoint presentation for the study, 7 posters were made and spread throughout the room, each with 8 pictures grouped into various categories of development: single-family, multi-



Norcross, GA revitalized its downtown district through years of strong economic development efforts and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

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family, townhomes, commercial/office, civic buildings, streetscapes and public spaces. The pictures represented a cross-section of styles, arrangements, densities, etc. The participants were asked to place green stickers on images they liked, red/pink on images they didn't like and yellow stickers for images they didn't have a strong opinion on one way or the other.

After completing the exercise, the posters were put up on the wall, and the results were discussed with the group. The poster method worked well to generate immediate results that could be discussed right away without having to calculate responses. There was a good bit of consensus among the responses, and several themes of preference could be garnered through the discussion.

Preferences:

- Streetscapes with wide sidewalks with plenty of open room for walking around
- Separation between sidewalk and parking
- Greenery – trees and open spaces
- Mix of commercial row and individual commercial 'cottage buildings'
- Liked clustered residential development with common greenspace
- Traditional architecture – Tudor, craftsman, bungalow, depot style, etc.
- Ornamentation
- Large front porches

Dislikes:

- Contemporary/modern architectural styles
- Architectural styles that are not represented locally
- "More of the same" – didn't want development that fit the same pattern already there – run of the mill, conventional suburban development
- Didn't like strip commercial
- Lack of ornamentation, flat-faced buildings



Walkable neighborhoods with traditional architectural styles are preferred by Auburn residents.



Depot style buildings are seen by residents as a good architectural style for future civic buildings in Downtown Auburn.

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SECTION 2. DEMOGRAPHICS AND MARKET CONDITIONS

Auburn is located primarily within Barrow County, with a small amount of land in Gwinnett County. Both counties are in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area, but Barrow County is mainly rural in nature, whereas Gwinnett has been a rapidly expanding and urbanizing area. Auburn maintains a small town feel, but is in the path of Atlanta metro growth and beginning to show some signs of transition.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Auburn's population at the time of the last U.S. Census count (2000) was 6,904 people in 2,159 households. Data provided by Claritas, Inc. estimates a 2009 population of 9,048, which represents a 31% growth rate since 2000. The 2009 estimate for total households is 2,787, which is a 29% growth.

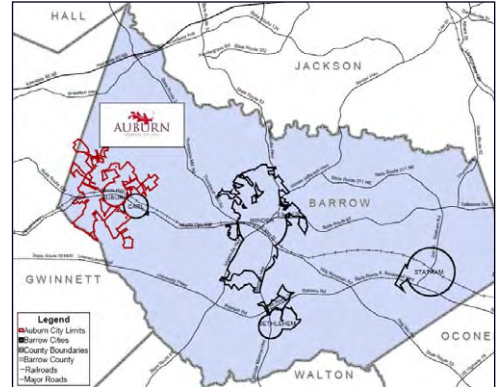
Auburn's 2007-2027 Comprehensive Plan, which was drafted in early 2008 before the 'Great Recession' and collapse of the real estate market showed a continued aggressive growth in Auburn in its projections going forward for Auburn's population. Some of the numbers may prove to be reasonable, particularly in the longer term (2020, 2025, 2030); however the growth from 2010 to 2015 is not as likely to grow as the real estate market will limit the ability for new housing from now (2010) through the next few years as the market gradually normalizes.

TABLE 2.1: POPULATION PROJECTION, COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

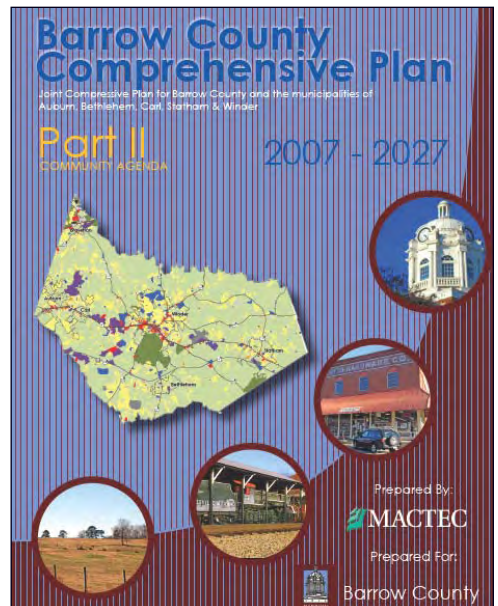
	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population*	7,134	9,979	12,724	15,514	21,143	21,674
5-year growth (absolute)	--	2,845	2,745	2,790	5,629	531
5-year growth %	--	39.9%	27.5%	21.9%	36.2%	2.5%

*Sources: Mactec, Northeast Georgia Regional Development Commission.

What these numbers do not reflect is the economic climate that has changed dramatically since January 2008 when the Comprehensive Plan was written. Whereas the above projections show a dramatic population growth from 2005 through 2025 with a sudden plateau between 2025 and 2030, a more likely scenario would attribute slow growth in the near term (2010 to 2015) followed by steadier growth through 2025.



City of Auburn (red lines) in context with Barrow County (in blue) and Gwinnett County.



The Barrow County Comprehensive Plan provides the population figures at left, but were generated before the current recession and market conditions.

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Recent data provided by Clartias, Inc. suggests a growth projection of 10,434 based on the 2009 Census estimate of 9,048. This shows a more moderate growth rate (15% 5-year growth) than those provided by the comprehensive plan.

TABLE 2.2: POPULATION GROWTH COMPARISONS

	Population			Average Annual Compound Growth	
	2000	2009	2014	2000-2009	2009-2014
City of Auburn	6,904	9,048	10,434	3.1%	2.9%
Barrow Co.	46,144	66,036	76,239	4.1%	2.9%
Gwinnett Co.	588,448	860,477	1,004,033	4.3%	3.1%
5-Mile Radius	27,520	47,367	58,203	6.2%	4.2%
15-Mile Radius	362,321	584,114	699,601	5.4%	3.8%

Source: Noell Consulting; U.S. Census, Claritas, ESRI.

As indicated in the Market Feasibility Report, even though Auburn is almost entirely in Barrow County with only a small amount of land area in Gwinnett County, Auburn's growth trends reflect the pattern shown in Gwinnett County more so than the characteristics shown in Barrow County. This is true with average household size, where 2009 household size in Auburn was 3.2 persons per household, compared with 3.1 in Gwinnett County, and 2.5 in Barrow County. Similar figures are shown projected forward to 2014.

Household Growth

TABLE 2.3: HOUSEHOLD GROWTH, 2000 - 2014

	Households			Average Annual Compound Growth	
	2000	2009	2014	2000-2009	2009-2014
City of Auburn	2,159	2,787	3,174	2.9%	2.6%
Avg. Household Size	3.2	3.2	3.3	0.2%	0.2%
Barrow Co.	16,354	26,412	31,472	5.5%	3.6%
Avg. Household Size	2.8	2.5	2.4		
Gwinnett Co.	202,317	280,042	323,486	3.7%	2.9%
Avg. Household Size	2.9	3.1	3.1	0.6%	0.2%
5-Mile Radius	9,283	15,935	19,549	6.2%	4.2%
Avg. Household Size	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.0%	0.0%
15-Mile Radius	121,375	193,911	233,067	5.3%	3.7%
Avg. Household Size	3.0	3.0	3.0	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Noell Consulting; U.S. Census, Claritas, ESRI.

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Income

Auburn is more affluent than Barrow County as a whole. This is again reflective of the fact that Auburn is closer to Atlanta and on the far west of Barrow County adjacent to Gwinnett, where affluence is more widespread. Projections for 2014 show affluence will rise in Auburn and Barrow County at a faster rate than Gwinnett County as growth pushes east and north from Atlanta and more of Barrow County's rural character is replaced by characteristics of a bedroom community.

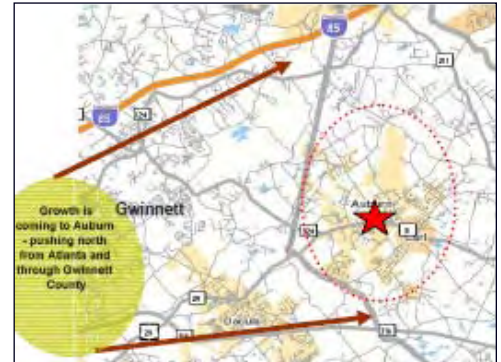


TABLE 2.4: HOUSEHOLD INCOME COMPARISONS

	Median Household Income			Average Annual Compound Growth	
	2000	2009	2014	2000-2009	2009-2014
City of Auburn	\$51,346	\$59,738	69,300	1.7%	3.0%
Barrow Co.	\$45,019	\$54,153	\$60,104	2.1%	2.1%
Gwinnett Co.	\$60,537	\$65,387	\$80,355	0.9%	4.2%
5-Mile Radius	\$54,084	\$76,727	\$78,683	4.0%	0.5%
15-Mile Radius	\$59,400	\$79,177	\$81,913	3.2%	0.7%

Source: Noell Consulting; U.S. Census, Claritas, ESRI.

Age

Auburn is a destination for younger families. As a whole, Auburn has a younger population than Gwinnett and Barrow Counties. This trend is expected to continue as Auburn is projected to age less quickly than its two host counties over the next five years.

TABLE 2.5, Share of Households by Age Group, 2009, 2014, 2009-2014

Age Group	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-64	65+
City of Auburn - 2009	19%	15%	14%	20%	15%	9%	3%	6%
-2014	17%	15%	13%	18%	15%	10%	4%	7%
Growth in Share	-9%	5%	-7%	-8%	2%	16%	19%	22%
Gwinnett County - 2009	16%	15%	13%	15%	17%	13%	4%	7%
-2014	14%	15%	13%	13%	16%	15%	5%	9%
Growth in Share	-12%	1%	3%	-15%	-7%	11%	23%	34%
Barrow County - 2009	16%	15%	14%	17%	15%	11%	4%	9%
-2014	15%	16%	12%	15%	16%	12%	4%	10%
Growth in Share	-10%	5%	-8%	-10%	3%	14%	16%	12%

Source: Claritas, 2010.

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INDUSTRY & EMPLOYMENT

Characteristic of a bedroom community, Auburn has a very low ratio of jobs to households. Statistics for 2008 from the U.S. Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics show that Auburn had 690 jobs citywide compared to 2,293 households – a ratio of 0.3. This is lower than Barrow County as a whole (0.5), the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (0.9), and Georgia (1.0).

Auburn had an estimated total 690 employees working in the city in 2008. Of those 690 employees, the greatest percentage were employed in Trade, Transportation & Utilities (40%), followed by Education & Health Services (17%), and Manufacturing (11%). The concentration of job types available in Auburn are shown to be overrepresented in some industries and underrepresented in others (in comparison to statewide). In general, Auburn is underrepresented in well-paying 'white collar' jobs and over represented in lower wage industries. Of Auburns employees, only 11% are employed in Professional & Business Services, compared to 22% in the Atlanta MSA, and 17% statewide.

This represents a mismatch between income levels and locally based earnings, indicating that a large proportion of Auburn residents work in other locations. Census numbers show that the highest concentration of Auburn residents (40%) work in Gwinnett County, primarily in job centers along the I-85 corridor. Only 11% of Auburn residents actually work within Barrow County. Despite the blue-collar nature of most locally based jobs in Auburn, a significant share of Auburn's residents are employed in white-collar industries (41%). This information is displayed in Table 2.6 on the right side of the page.

HOUSING AND REAL ESTATE CONDITIONS

Auburn's demographic and market trends show that Auburn is transitioning from a small town with rural character to that of a true bedroom community of Atlanta. Located adjacent to the eastern edge of Gwinnett County, households are more affluent than Barrow County as a whole, but not as affluent as Gwinnett County.

Prior to the recent economic recession and housing crash, Auburn was experiencing slightly slower growth than both Barrow and Gwinnett Counties.

Table 2.6: Auburn Residents' Location of Employment

Work Location	Residents	Share of Total
Gwinnett County	1,528	40%
Barrow County	411	11%
Fulton County	345	9%
DeKalb County	311	8%
Hall County	166	4%
Cobb County	145	4%
Forsyth County	96	3%
Clarke County	89	2%
Jackson County	87	2%
Walton County	58	2%
All Other Locations	553	15%
TOTAL	3,789	100%

Source: U.S. Census.

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Part 1: Existing Conditions

Home Sales

Because Auburn’s residential market is smaller and less mature than most of the Atlanta Metro area, it did not experience the over inflation of home values as significantly. As a result, the city has not experienced as sharp a decline in the housing markets as compared to Atlanta metro. From 2005 to 2009, annual total home sales volume has dropped by 33% in Auburn, compared to 57% in Atlanta metro. Similarly, average home sales price dipped 14% in Auburn over the same time period, while dropping 21% in Atlanta metro.

Home Sales Prices

Zip Code 30011, which encompasses a slightly greater area than the Auburn city limits showed home sales prices that were significantly higher than those of Barrow countywide sales and the City of Winder (Zip Code 30680). Home sales prices were closer in value to some of Gwinnett County’s municipalities, such as Suwanee.

TABLE 2.7, TOTAL HOME SALES & SALES PRICE COMPARISONS

	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total Change 2005-2008
Auburn (Zip Code 30011)					
# New Home Sales	325	363	104	30	-91%
Total Home Sales	344	387	134	74	-78%
% Total Home Sales New	94%	94%	78%	41%	-57%
Median New Home Price	\$232,450	\$237,413	\$241,812	\$227,495	-2%
Suwanee (Zip Code 30024)					
# New Home Sales	883	744	446	261	-70%
Total Home Sales	1,724	2,568	1,083	737	-57%
% Total Home Sales New	51%	47%	41%	35%	-31%
Median New Home Price	\$256,268	\$247,381	\$264,882	\$256,996	0%
Barrow County					
# New Home Sales	1,157	1,178	897	391	-66%
Total Home Sales	1,908	2,107	1,692	1,088	-43%
% Total Home Sales New	61%	56%	53%	36%	-41%
Median New Home Price	\$146,400	\$159,000	\$159,570	\$159,900	9%
Winder (Zip Code 30680)					
# New Home Sales	642	677	539	199	-69%
Total Home Sales	1,043	1,170	989	584	-44%
% Total Home Sales New	62%	58%	54%	34%	-45%
Median New Home Price	\$139,900	\$147,794	\$148,900	\$133,000	-5%

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Recovery

As Auburn did not have as fall to far (in price and sales volumes) as compared to Atlanta metro, it does not have as far to climb back to return to a balanced market. Market recovery for Auburn is expected to take up to two years, as compared to 2.6 years for Atlanta. This return to an in-balance market will mean a normal housing market without significant numbers of foreclosures or distressed sale pricing, and new housing demand for non-distressed properties.

Home Age

Auburn's stock of homes are largely new – 85% of all owner-occupied housing has been built since 1980, and just over half (53%) of all owner-occupied homes have been built since 1990. This is very similar to Gwinnett County, where 83% were built since 1980 and 58% since 1990. Just over a quarter of occupied housing in Auburn (26%) has been built in the last decade (2000 or later).

Although these numbers are quite similar to Gwinnett County, Auburn's stock of homes is a more value-priced market. The bulk of Auburn's homes were valued between \$100,000 and \$200,000 (75% of 2009 homes), and less than 9% were valued above \$200,000. In contrast, in Gwinnett County over 41% of owner-occupied homes in 2009 were valued over \$200,000.

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MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

The following sections summarize the market potential and opportunities in Auburn. For more details, including assumptions and additional data, please refer to the Full Market Feasibility Report by Noell Consulting located in the Appendix.

Residential

Auburn has traditionally been a relatively low-volume and affordable single-family residential market, and there currently lacks a variety of housing options. Strong demand potential exists for a wider variety of for-sale and rental housing products, and Auburn can take advantage of this demand through proactive planning and placemaking efforts, including:

- Providing adequate infrastructure supportive of multi-family and higher density single-family
- Creating an attractive and vibrant town center
- More dining, retail, and personal services in close proximity
- More parkspace, civic and cultural assets

TABLE 2.8: RESIDENTIAL HOUSING DEMAND, 2010 - 2035

		Estimated Average Annual Demand				
Product Type	Home Value	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025	2025-2030	2030-2035
Condos	From \$150k	--	--	--	--	--
Townhomes	\$150k- \$225k	3	4	5	7	8
	\$225k- 350k	3	3	4	6	7
	\$350k+	2	2	3	4	5
Single-Family	\$175k- \$250k	13	15	18	21	23
	\$250k-\$350k	13	14	17	20	22
	\$350k- \$450k	7	8	9	11	12
	\$450k+	9	10	12	14	16
Apartments	\$600- 800/mo	19	22	30	40	51
	\$800+/mo	46	55	75	99	125

Source: Noell Consulting, Draft Market Feasibility Report, Auburn, GA.



Noell Consulting's Market Feasibility Report for Downtown Auburn, which is summarized in this section is provided in the Appendix to this document.



A greater mix of housing options, such as high-quality townhomes, may be supportable in Auburn in the near future.



Providing amenities such as trails or shared greenspace will help draw residents.

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Senior Housing

Independent Living

Currently, there are no senior independent living facilities in Barrow County. The City of Auburn has a strong opportunity to respond to the need for senior housing choices in the downtown area by pursuing an independent living facility. Using applied national propensity and preference statistics to local senior populations, the demand indicated for Auburn is up to 238 senior independent living rental units by 2035, given a proactive approach to planning within the city going forward. Current demand is as high as 127 units, given an independent senior living facility that would be the first in Barrow County. The progression of demand is shown at right in Table 2.6. The 'proactive' scenario shows higher demand potential based on concerted efforts of proactive planning and placemaking in downtown Auburn to increase demand, whereas the 'base case' scenario shows simply a projected fair share of the market without efforts to improve downtown.

Age-Restricted

Auburn's demand for age-restricted senior apartments is slightly less than for independent living units, and is unlikely generate enough support for entire development; therefore, the demand would be best accommodated through a building or phase within a larger community. Age-qualified senior apartment demand is currently as high as 60 units, with a total of up to 114 units supportable by 2035. To the right is Table 2.7, showing age-qualified demand compared to overall housing demand for 55+.

TABLE 2. 9: Senior Independent Living Demand, 2010 - 2035

Year	UNITS	
	Fair Share, Base Case Scenario	Proactive Scenario
2010	26	127
2015	30	144
2020	34	163
2025	38	185
2030	44	210
2035	49	238

Source data: Claritas, U.S. Census, HUD, Nat'l Assoc. of Home Builders.

TABLE 2. 10: Age-Restricted/Qualified Demand, 2010-2035

Year	UNITS	
	Age-Qualified or Age-Restricted Apts.	Total Apt. Demand 55+
2010	29	60
2015	33	68
2020	38	78
2025	43	89
2030	49	101
2035	56	114

Source data: Claritas, U.S. Census, HUD, Nat'l Assoc. of Home Builders.

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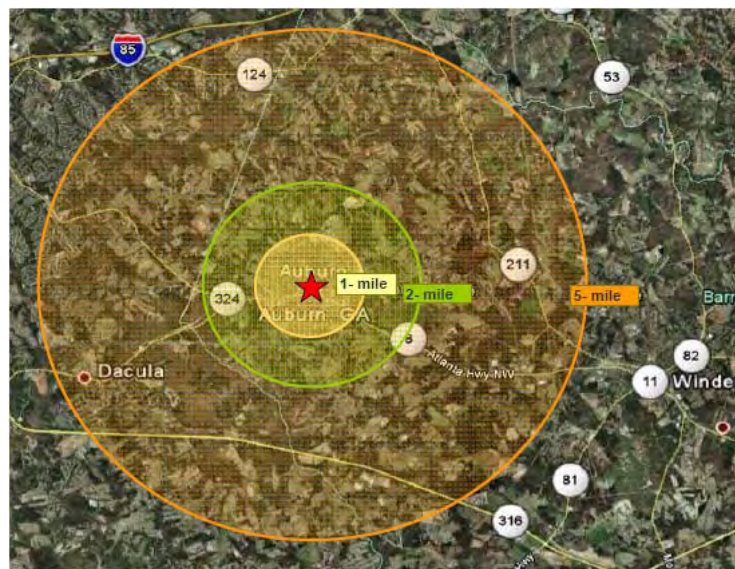
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Retail Opportunity

Currently, there are very few retailers in downtown other than a scattering of grocery and convenience stores, gas and auto service, and a few restaurants. There is also very little retail space currently available for occupancy. Without other types of retail available in the area, Auburn is missing opportunities to capture a large amount of retail sales, and therefore sales tax revenue for the City. The map below shows the 1-mile, 2-mile and 5-mile trade areas for downtown Auburn. The inset at right ('Escaping Revenues') shows an estimate of how much revenue is being lost by not capturing retail demand.

The trade area is purposefully limited to 5 miles. Just beyond the 5-mile radius are numerous existing and potential shopping opportunities made available by access to: downtown Winder, State Route 316, and Interstate 85. Despite these limitations, the 5-mile trade area is achievable by downtown Auburn and supported by similar trade zones that were realized by other downtowns (Norcross, Woodstock and Suwanee) that were used as case studies for this report.

FIGURE 2.1: RETAIL TRADE AREA MAP



MAP KEY		Potential Anticipated Capture (2009)
★	Downtown Auburn	
Yellow Circle	1-Mile Trade Area	50%
Green Circle	2-Mile Trade Area	15%
Orange Circle	5-Mile Trade Area	3%



Street level retail along the street in downtown Acworth.

Escaping Revenues

Excluding gas, automobile, and grocery demand and supply, approximately:

- \$5.6 million worth of expenditures annually are leaving the 1-mile trade area,
- \$29 million leaving the 2-mile trade area, and
- \$120.3 million leaving the 5-mile trade area

because there are no retailers within those areas to provide the particular goods and services demanded by residents in those trade areas.



Standalone restaurant space in downtown Norcross.

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The most appropriate new businesses for downtown Auburn are full and limited service restaurants, and boutique retail tenants. Home goods, gift stores, furniture, and specialty food retailers have shown staying power in similar downtown settings. These types of retail tenants may also prove successful downtown Auburn. On the other hand, apparel stores have struggled in the same types of settings and would likely be unsuccessful in this area.

It is estimated that approximately 24,000 to 25,000 square feet of retail space is supportable in downtown Auburn, and as shown by demand and success in other small downtown areas. Over half of this space could be restaurants and eateries, with 2 full-service and 3 casual eateries supportable.

Given a proactive approach by the City of Auburn, there is a potential demand of up to 75,900 square feet in downtown retail by 2035. The base scenario of fair share retail demand would support only 47,500 square feet of retail in downtown Auburn. The following table shows a breakdown of retail types supportable under the proactive scenario from current conditions through 2035. More detailed breakdowns of both scenarios are available in the Appendix.



Sidewalk retail in Suwanee Town Center.

Table 2.11: Retail Opportunity in Downtown Auburn, 2009 - 2035

Downtown Retail Demand	2009		2015		2035	
	# of Stores	Retail Sq.ft.	# of Stores	Retail Sq.ft.	# of Stores	Retail Sq.ft.
Furniture Stores	1	2,400	2	4,800	2	4,800
Home Furnishing Stores	0	0	1	2,400	2	4,800
Electronics & Appliance Stores	1	2,400	1	2,400	2	4,800
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	0	0	0	0	1	2,500
Health & Personal Care Stores	1	2,500	1	2,500	3	7,500
Clothing Stores	1	2,000	2	4,000	3	6,000
Jewelry, Luggage, Leather Goods Stores	0	0	1	2,000	1	2,000
Sporting Goods/Hobby/ Musical Instrument Stores	0	0	1	2,000	1	2,000
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores	1	2,000	1	2,000	1	2,000
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	0	0	1	2,000	2	4,000
Full-Service Restaurants	2	7,000	2	7,000	5	17,500
Limited-Service Eateries	3	6,000	4	8,000	8	16,000
Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)	0	0	0	0	1	2,000
TOTAL	10	24,300	17	39,100	32	75,900

Source: Noell Consulting

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Office

There is currently a lack of services available in Auburn today. This is more likely due to a low volume of office space provided, rather than a lack of demand for business services.

Local-serving professional and personal services will be most appropriate to generate demand for downtown office space and storefront space. This means small scale businesses generally with fewer than 25 employees that do not require a large operational footprint, and provide services to local residents rather than regional business needs. This is generally the case for most successful downtown areas. These small businesses also work well in combination with small retail along a downtown streetfront. Additionally, Auburn is well suited for providing office services within historic homes or other detached units.

By 2015, there is a potential to introduce up to 45,000 square feet of office space in downtown Auburn. This is likely to come from financial and professional services such as lawyers, accountants, investment advisors, architects, dentists and other similar businesses; as well as establishments providing personal services, including beauty salons and child day care. Much of this growth includes existing demand (2009), as currently there is a significant lack of services.

With a proactive approach to improving the town center, downtown Auburn could attract up to 85,000 square feet of additional office space by 2035. Table 2.10 summarizes potential office demand through 2035, with both a proactive and base case scenario provided. A more detailed table - with individual types of business listed - is included in the full report, located in the Appendix.

Table 2.12: Downtown Office Opportunity Summary, 2009-2035

	2009	2015	2035 Base Case	2035 Proactive
Estimated Demand (sf)	36,000	44,900	65,700	84,800
Auburn % Capture of Total Local-Serving Employment Space	34%	35%	27%	26%
Estimated Jobs Accommodated in Downtown Auburn	144	180	263	339
Estimated Average Annual New Office Demand	--	--	1,200	2,000

Source: Noell Consulting, 2010



Professional office spaces in downtown Duluth, GA.



Downtown Offices, Norcross, GA.



Example of a historic home converted to office use.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Lodging Demand

Currently, there are no hotels, inns or other lodging types located in the downtown area or in the City of Auburn. Barrow County is located in the tourist portion of the state designated the Georgia Mountain Region. From 2002 - 2008, Barrow County did not capture its fair share of the region's tourism expenditures (relative to population % of the region). This is likely due to a lack of major leisure attractions and Interstate accessibility.

Despite the lack of tourism in Barrow County, downtown Auburn is well suited for small, boutique inns or bed & breakfasts because of the small town character, intimate atmosphere, and types of local amenities available. Additionally, boutique lodging is a better fit for the type of character Auburn is seeking to achieve in its town center.

Larger scale hotels (50+ rooms) and national chain hotels/motels are generally not compatible with small downtowns unless there is a strong presence of conference and convention facilities in the area, as well as adequate roads and parking to accommodate significant influx of traffic. Areas outside of downtown and west of Mt. Moriah Road will provide the best support for large national chains in the long-term.

The following table shows potential lodging demand for Auburn. The population-to-rooms ratio from Winder is used because of its proximity to Auburn and similarities characteristics in small-town character and accessibility (no interstate connectivity, location along Atlanta Hwy).

Table 2.13: Potential Demand for Lodging in Auburn

	Base Case	Proactive
2009 Auburn Population	8,602	8,602
Population to Rooms	171	171
2009 Estimated Rooms Supportable (Auburn)	50	50
2009 - 2035 Projected Growth Rate (Auburn)	2.3%	3.5%
2035 Rooms Supportable (Auburn)	92	124

Source: Noell Consulting



Glenn Ellen Inn - Clarkesville, GA



Magnolia Inn, Clarkesville, GA.



Veranda Inn - Senoia, GA.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS:

- **Visibility:** Location on Atlanta Highway with relatively high traffic counts.
- **Demand Generators:** Downtown is already established as a destination for community events that have demonstrated significant draw (peak attendance events) in excess of ten thousand visitors.
- **Ingress/Egress:** Downtown Auburn is somewhat removed from high traffic on SR 316 and does not have unfettered access to Atlanta Hwy, so it is insulated from congestion and more pedestrian friendly on the north side.
- **Perception:** Existing perceptions of Auburn residents include: quaint, small town, manageable pace, peaceful, family oriented.
- **Surrounding Land Uses:** Ample vacant and underutilized parcels that are ripe for development; existing National Register Historic District provides advantageous incentives and preservation tools.
- **Existing Character:** No true resounding character.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Visibility:** Development will not be large-scale. Opportunity to utilize placemaking principles to create an intimate, human-scale town center in downtown Auburn.
- **Demand Generators:** Auburn can capitalize on the significant draw to downtown already generated by events and start implementing placemaking efforts to create a town center in downtown, increasing services, retail, dining, and civic uses available to residents. Such efforts will make Auburn a more attractive place to live and influence higher household growth.
- **Ingress/Egress:** Use pedestrian connections across the railroad tracks to improve connectivity; establish higher density with a greater concentration of commercial uses on the north side of the tracks, with greater concentration of residential on the south side. With less traffic, downtown commercial district can be more insulated and quaint; on the south side, most residents will be able to get in and out without tremendous difficulty.
- **Perception:** No negative perceptions to combat; capitalize on small-town charm and quaint atmosphere to drive the placemaking efforts in downtown.
- **Surrounding Land Uses:** A unique opportunity for Auburn to establish its character and downtown with mostly new development intermixed with historic structures.
- **Existing Character:** Auburn has an opportunity to establish an identity through a town center created with the Downtown Overlay. While it is easier to define than redefine, caution must be applied to make sure that activities are deliberate, intentional, and appropriately promote the determined vision for downtown.

WEAKNESSES:

- **Visibility:** Not located along or directly off of State Road 316 or I-85.
- **Demand Generators:** The City has been capturing less than its fair share of Barrow County household growth and has a very low concentration of jobs, the majority of which are low-wage.
- **Ingress/Egress:** Removed from high-traffic corridors; railroad track bisecting downtown with only at-grade crossings inhibits vehicle/pedestrian flow.
- **Perception:** Auburn is perceived as 'sleepy, and generally lacks an identity or perception in the Atlanta area; 'GA' qualifier needed to distinguish the town from Auburn, AL.
- **Surrounding Land Uses:** Lacking historic structures despite the NRH district; downtown too sparse to have defined boundaries and tangible character; railroad splitting the downtown presents challenges for developers.
- **Existing Character:** No true, resounding character established.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

SECTION 3. LAND USE & URBAN DESIGN

A community's character can be revealed through a look at existing land use and development patterns. The types of land use, their arrangement, the intensity of those uses, and the density and quality of development all greatly influence the look, feel and quality of life in a community. Haphazard development and homogenous land use patterns often lead to either unattractive or at least unmemorable places. On the other hand, foresight in urban design and creating an appealing mix of uses can create truly attractive and vibrant places with a quality of life that attracts residents, businesses and visitors.

Additionally, the strategic arrangement and density of land uses can greatly increase the efficiency of public services and infrastructure. Low to medium-low density sprawl can create a challenge for providing good standards of services at reasonable costs. For these reasons, it is important to look at the land uses, development patterns and zoning practices of a community.

Existing Land Use vs. Zoning

Whereas existing land use indicates the current state of development and types of use occurring on the land, zoning provides the legal framework for what can be developed on a particular piece of property, regardless of the existing use. For instance, a property may be currently occupied by a single-family detached dwelling currently (existing land use), but zoned for Commercial use (e.g., C-2). This provides that a commercial structure may be built on this property, within the design and use parameters indicated in the local zoning and development codes.

Future Land Use & Zoning

When doing a comprehensive plan, local governments develop a Future Land Use Map, indicating desired future land uses within the municipality. Often, land owners misinterpret a future land use category for a change in the zoning of their property, which is not the case. However, the future land use map influences future decisions on rezoning that property. A land owner wishing to rezone their property to a zoning category consistent with what is indicated by the Future Land Use Map is likely to be approved, and vice versa likely to be denied if the requested rezoning is inconsistent with the future land use category shown on the map.



Single family residential uses are the predominant land use type in Downtown Auburn.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

EXISTING LAND USE

Citywide, Auburn is primarily a community of single-family homes with commercial uses located along Hwy 8/U.S. 29 Business. A closer look at the downtown area of Auburn reveals an area with more variety in land use types. Single-family residences are the most common land use in the area, however there is greater mix of commercial, institutional and parkspace, and occasional office space in the area. Additionally, there are large tracts of agricultural or undeveloped land adjacent to or in close proximity to the downtown area, representing opportunities for either conservation areas or future development potential.

The next page contains a map of observed existing land uses in the downtown area (Figure 3.1). Downtown Auburn does not necessarily have a distinct pattern of development, other than it is primarily a single-family residential area with a commercial core centered on Atlanta Highway.

Residential

Single-family residences are the dominant form of development in Auburn. Downtown residences are generally modest-sized, one-story ranch or cottage homes. Several of the downtown area homes are within the National Register Historic District, and built in the early 20th Century. This differs from other areas in Auburn, especially areas between downtown Auburn and I-85 where custom homes and subdivision homes are very large and generally have two stories plus basement. These homes are found in new developments with curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs, and typically have front-facing garages, whereas traditional homes in the downtown area have detached garages or no garage at all.

Typical residential lots within the downtown area are approximately ½ acre in size, with 1-acre+ lots located further out in the city. There are however, a handful of historic residential structures located on very large properties. There are some examples of this along 4th Avenue and Atlanta Highway.

There are a few scattered mobile homes in the downtown area, but most are located in mobile home parks in other parts of the city. There is one mobile home park bordering the downtown area on the south-east.



Homes in and surrounding the downtown Auburn area tend to be one-story and modest in size.



Outer limits of the City of Auburn typically has newer and larger homes - often built on cul-de-sac streets.

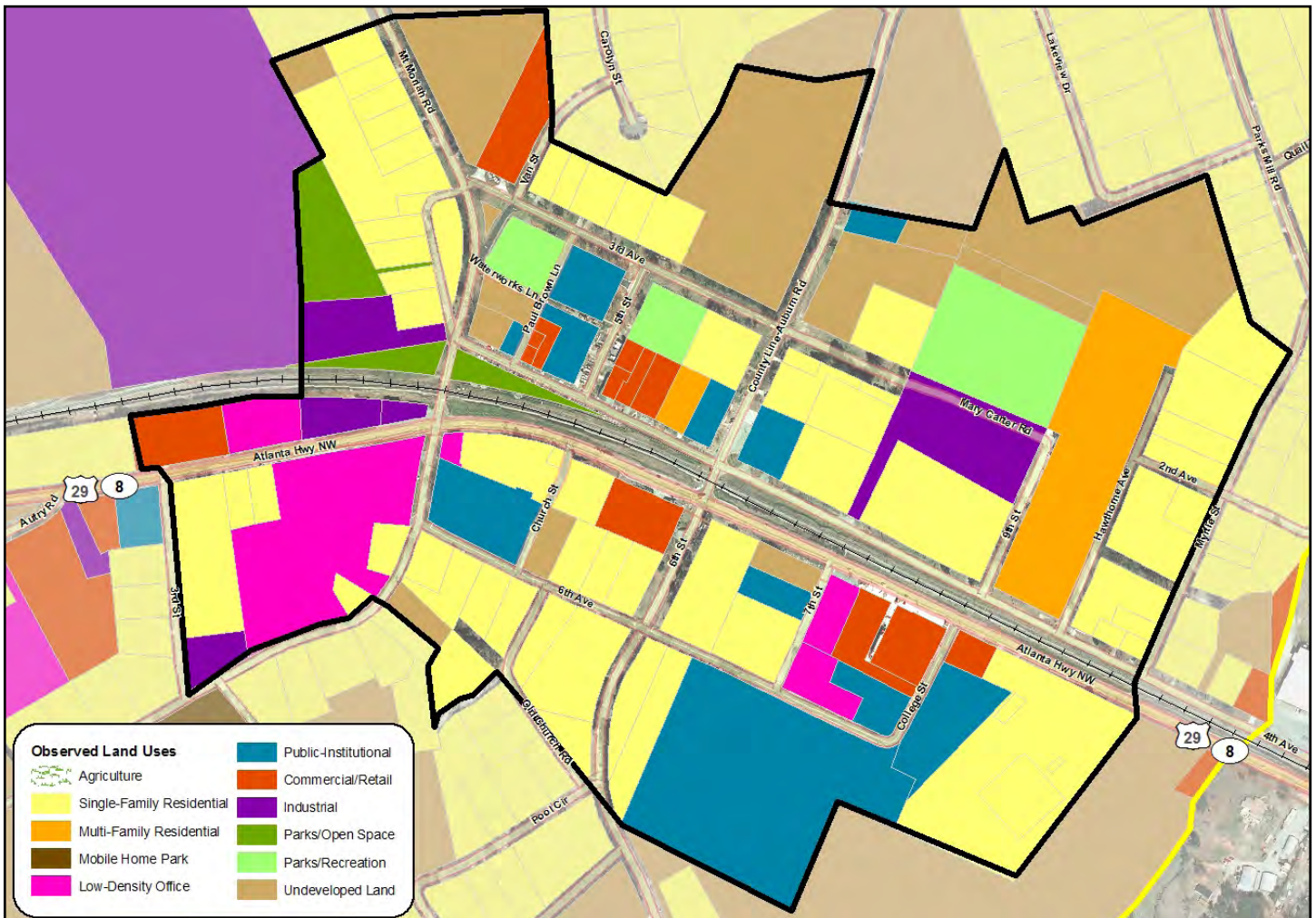


A mobile home park off Main Street bordering the downtown area.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

FIGURE 1.2: EXISTING DOWNTOWN LAND USES



Land Use Category	Description
Agricultural	Lands actively being used for forestry, crop cultivation, or raising of livestock. Also includes large tracts of agricultural land that may have a residence on the property.
Single Family Residential	Single-family detached or attached housing.
Multi-Family Residential	Residences containing two or more dwelling units, including duplexes and apartments.
Mobile Home Park	Land occupied by mobile or manufactured home parks or communities.
Low Density Office	Non-residential development occupied by establishments primarily providing services, rather than the sale of goods or merchandise.
Public-Institutional	Public buildings housing government and quasi-public uses, including government offices and facilities, schools, churches, libraries, post offices, and other similar uses.
Commercial/Retail	Commercial developments predominantly occupied by establishments that offer goods or merchandise for sale or rent and commercial uses that do not operate in "office" settings.
Industrial	Lands with manufacturing, processing, warehousing and distribution functions.
Parks/Open Space	Natural preserves, public open space and passive parks
Recreational Parks/Facilities	Sports fields, courts and other recreational facilities.
Undeveloped Land	Raw land for which there appears no development or occupied land use.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Commercial/Office

Commercial uses occupy a small percentage of the development in Auburn citywide, but make up a larger portion of downtown development. Most of the development along Atlanta Highway is commercial, with some residential properties scattered in between. Commercial uses in downtown Auburn occupy small, standalone buildings within a surface parking lot. The exception to this is along 4th Avenue, where there is a small row of traditional storefront commercial properties and parking is accommodated by on-street spaces.

Institutional Uses

Institutional buildings include churches, schools, libraries and other public oriented buildings. The block bounded by 4th Avenue, 3rd Avenue, 5th Street, and Mt. Moriah has the highest concentration of Institutional uses. Within this block are City Hall, Auburn City Council Chambers, the police station, Auburn Library, and Public Works facilities. Other institutional buildings are scattered in the downtown area, including Auburn Elementary, Barrow County Fire Department Station #, and the J.D. Withers building. There are two churches inside the downtown area – one at Church St. and 6th Avenue, another on 4th Avenue at County Line Road, across from the fire station. The city is currently planning to rehabilitate two older structures that are currently vacant to provide artists' community centers. More information on this is provided in Chapter 7, Community Facilities.

Industrial.

The downtown area is mostly devoid of industrial uses; however the Boise building adjacent to downtown is a major distribution center. Industrial uses in downtown Auburn are involved in distribution, rather than manufacturing or processing. Therefore, there are not the typical smokestacks and noxious uses associated with heavier industrial use.

Parks/Preserves

Auburn has three park spaces within the downtown area. The city ballparks on Mary Carter Road provided four fields for youth baseball. There are two passive park spaces flanking the railroad on opposite sides of Mt. Moriah Road - Whistle Stop Park on the west and R.H. Burel Park on the east in front of City Hall. There are no dedicated natural preserves within the downtown boundaries, but there are large undeveloped land parcels that could be dedicated as such in the future. Additional information on parks and public spaces is provided in



Atlanta Highway is predominately occupied by standalone or strip commercial development with parking adjacent to the sidewalk.



This area along Fourth Avenue provides the only area of traditional shopfront commercial development.

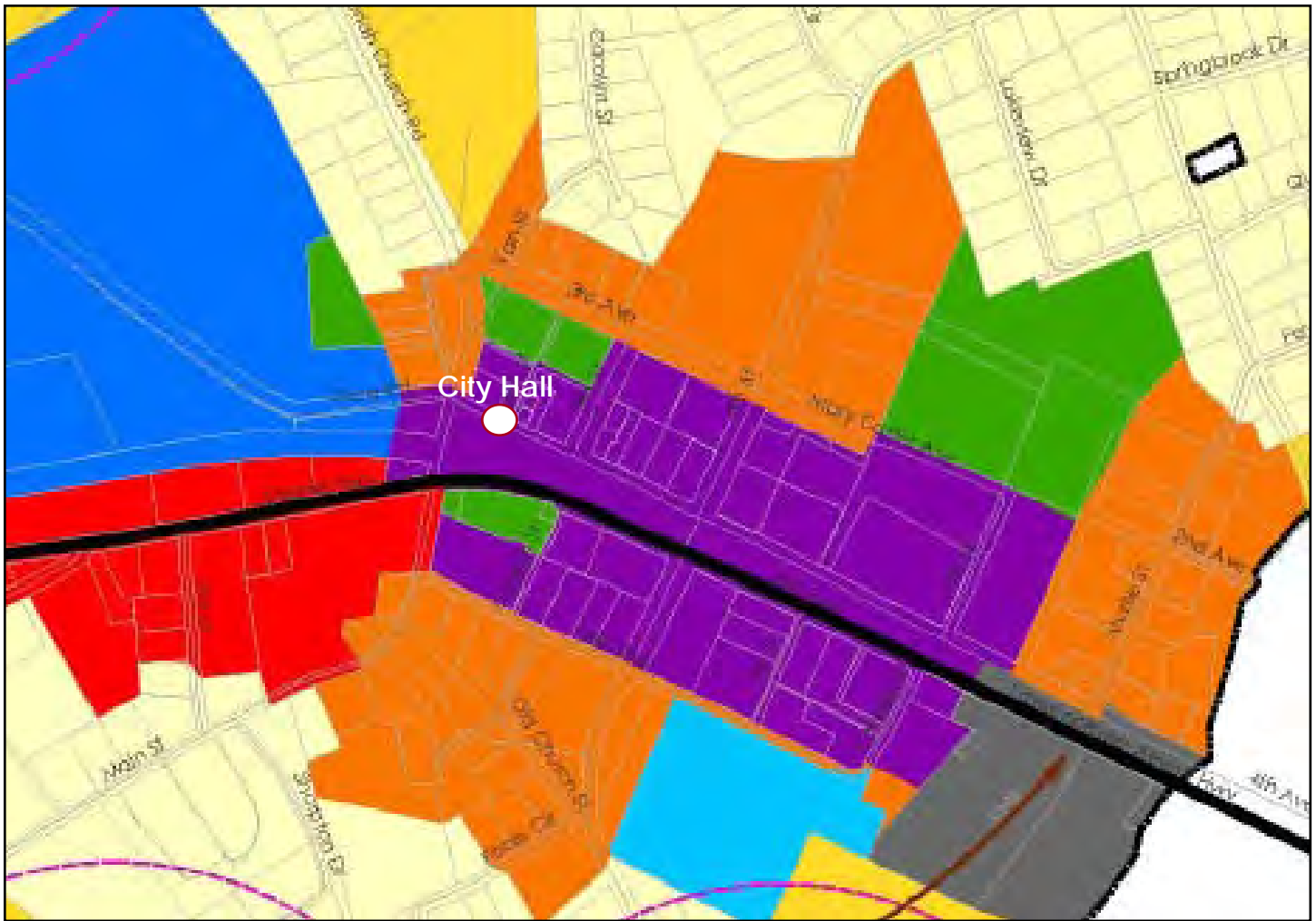


Boise is an industrial property located adjacent to downtown; however, it is a distribution facility rather than heavy manufacturing.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

FIGURE 1.3: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT MAP



FUTURE LAND USE

Auburn's 2007 Comprehensive Plan, uses a future development map to categorize future land uses as 'Character areas' which focus on the general nature and characteristics for future development in different areas of the city, rather than just the intended land use for each parcel.

Most of the downtown study area falls within the Downtown/Town Center, Traditional Neighborhood, or Preserve character areas. The intent of the Traditional Neighborhood is the preservation of residential character through rehabilitation of existing homes and new construction that respects traditional styles. The Downtown character seeks to reinforce downtown as the community's focal point by providing traditional, pedestrian scale development patterns with a mix of uses and visually attractive buildings and store-



Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

ZONING

Zoning indicates the permitted development that may occur on a property, and helps determine the physical form that the community will take over time. Generally, the city has fairly generic zoning categories, with little accommodation for mixed use and design standards. There are, however, special districts and overlays that help promote better development and design going forward. The following are Auburn’s current zoning categories and descriptions (Table 3.2). A map of these districts is located on the next page in Figure 3.3, Citywide Zoning.

TABLE 3.2: City of Auburn Zoning Categories

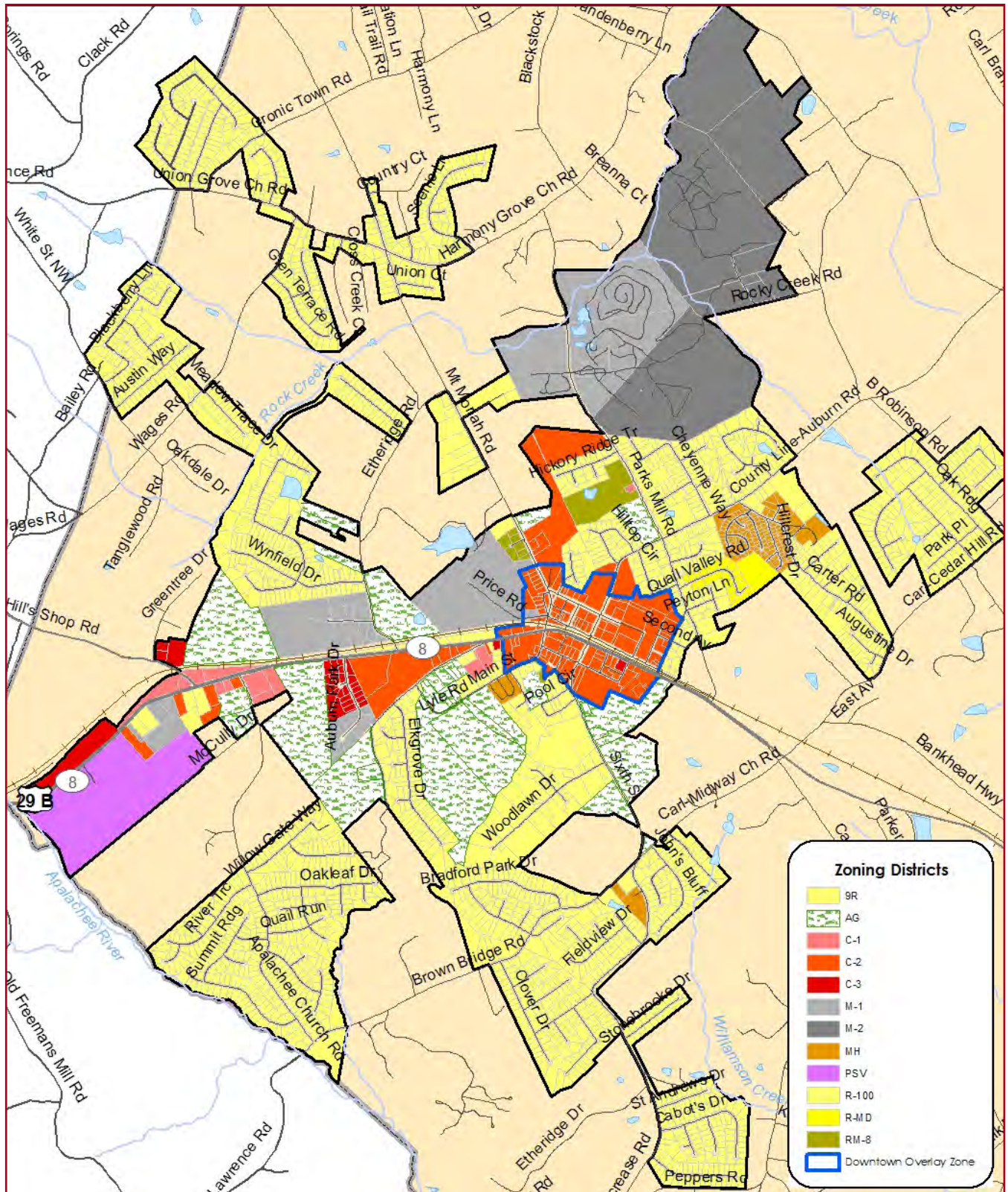
Code	Title	Intent/Description
AG	Agricultural District	Agriculture and very low density residential development, and to ensure that open and/or sparsely developed areas of the city are protected at the property owner's request.
R-100	Single Family Residential District	Low density residential areas and vacant or open areas where similar residential development is appropriate.
RM-D	Residential Multifamily Duplex District	Provides for attached or detached two-family lots located where public water supply is available and where there is convenient access to collector streets, major thoroughfares or state highways.
RM-8	Residential Multifamily Apartment District	Provides for apartments and multifamily development located where public water supply and public waste water facilities are available, and where there is convenient access to collector streets, major thoroughfares or state highways.
MH	Mobile Home Park District	Zoning district for existing manufactured housing (mobile homes) within city limits. Mobile homes outside these established areas are prohibited.
OI	Office-Institutional District	Locations for offices, institutions and limited related retail business and service activities in buildings of high character in attractive surroundings.
C-1	Neighborhood Business District	District provides for convenience goods and services for people in nearby residential neighborhoods.
C-2	General Business District	Provides adequate space in appropriate locations along major streets, thoroughfares and at intersections for various types of business use.
C-3	Central Business District	Intended for business uses which require a location accessible to major highways and arterials that serve significant portions of the community
M-1	Light Industrial District	Light manufacturing located on or have ready access to a major street or state highway and are well adapted to industrial development, but whose proximity to residential makes it desirable to limit industrial operations and processes to those that are not objectionable by reason of the emission of noise, vibration, smoke, dust, gas fumes, odors or radiation and that do not create fire or explosion hazards or other objectionable conditions
M-2	Heavy Industrial District	The M-2 heavy manufacturing/industry district provides a location for those industrial operations and processes that are not public nuisances and are not dangerous to the health, safety or general welfare of the inhabitants of the city.
PUD	Planned Urban Development	Provides for the possibility of relatively large scale, mixed-use planned developments, which incorporate innovative concepts of efficiency in land use, public services delivery, energy conservation, and environmental preservation
PSV	Planned Suburban Village	Provides for appropriately scaled and designed mixed-use developments for communities that are not in a major urban center.

Source: City of Auburn Code of Ordinances; available at www.municode.com.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

FIGURE 1.4: CITY-WIDE ZONING



Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Overlay Districts

In addition to the primary zoning districts, Auburn's zoning ordinance also incorporates the following Overlay Districts:

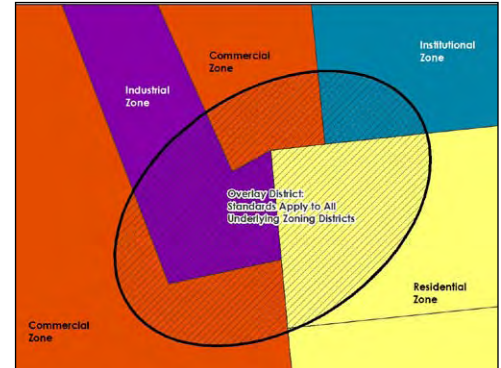
- Floodplain Overlay District
- Downtown Auburn Overlay District
- Groundwater Recharge Protection District
- Wetland Protection Overlay District

Overlay districts provide additional regulations to, or relax regulations of the underlying zoning districts. This accomplishes uniformity district wide of certain conditions to accomplish particular types of protection or development goals. The Floodplain Overlay District, for instance, requires uniform protection of floodplain areas from development regardless of the zoning district. The addition of a commercial corridor overlay may help provide better design and access management along Atlanta Highway.

Downtown Overlay District

The Downtown Overlay District marks the primary study area boundaries for this report, but it is also a specified zoning overlay district. The intent of the district is to preserve and rehabilitate historic structures and their elements where feasible and enable new development in a creative manner where appropriate. The overlay provides greater flexibility in use over the underlying zoning districts (primarily C-2), allowing a wider variety of uses, including single-family and multifamily residential, and the ability to provide a vertical mix of uses on a single property. Residential units are permitted on the second floor of a building above retail or service uses. This is not permitted outside of the overlay in the C-2 district.

The overlay requires additional development standards beyond what is required in the underlying zoning, including standards for architecture, lighting and signage. These additional regulations are in place to achieve development that is more compatible with a downtown areas. As written, only three architectural styles are permitted - Victorian, Craftsmen, and Art Deco. This may be overly-restrictive, considering that existing commercial development is not associated with specific styles, and it may be wise to consider restricting unwanted elements or styles, rather than only allowing three styles. The overlay may also benefit from incorporating separate standards tailored for existing or new single family residences.



Function of overlay districts: an overlay zone laps over multiple zoning district. It applies or relaxes standards which are uniform throughout the overlay district

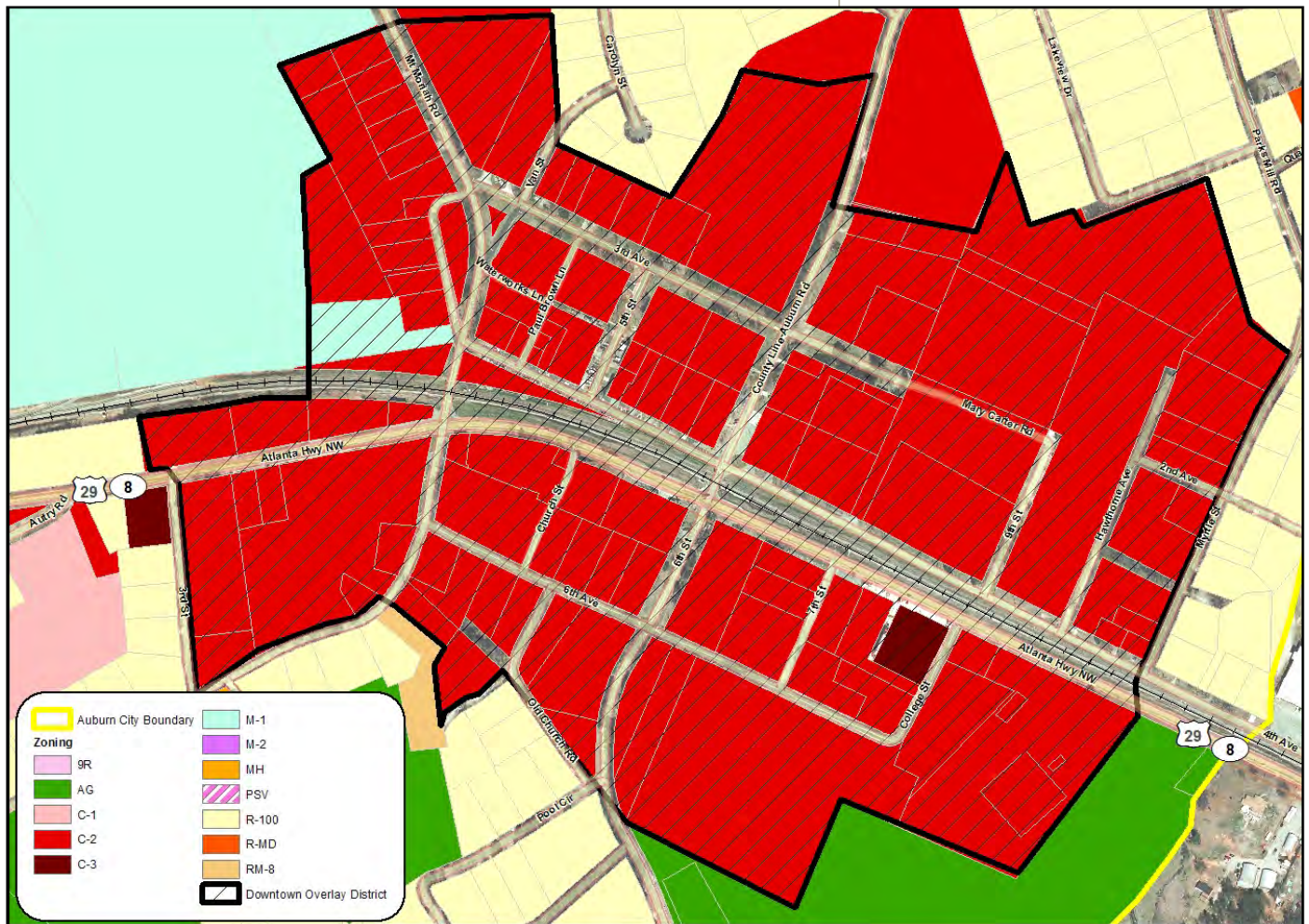


The Downtown Overlay District would allow mixed use development such as this in Du-luth's Town Center.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Planning & Economic Development Department

FIGURE 1.5: DOWNTOWN ZONING



Zoning Within the Study Area:

Currently almost all of the Downtown Overlay is zoned C-2, General Business District. The exceptions to this are two parcels: the Boise property, zoned M-1 for light industrial use, and one property along Atlanta Highway zoned C-3, Central Business District.

This differs a great deal from the actual uses that are currently in place. A large number of properties within the overlay are single-family residential, institutional, professional, recreation and open space.

Immediately surrounding the Study Area are primarily areas zoned residential (R-100); however there are two large lots adjacent to the boundary - one large undeveloped parcel between the Study Area and the City of Carl's western boundary zoned Agricultural (AG) and the Boise distribution center, which is an industrial property zoned M-1.

As shown on the map above (Figure 3.4), the entire Study Area falls within the Downtown Overlay District, which will provide for mixed use in future development, and preservation of existing residences.

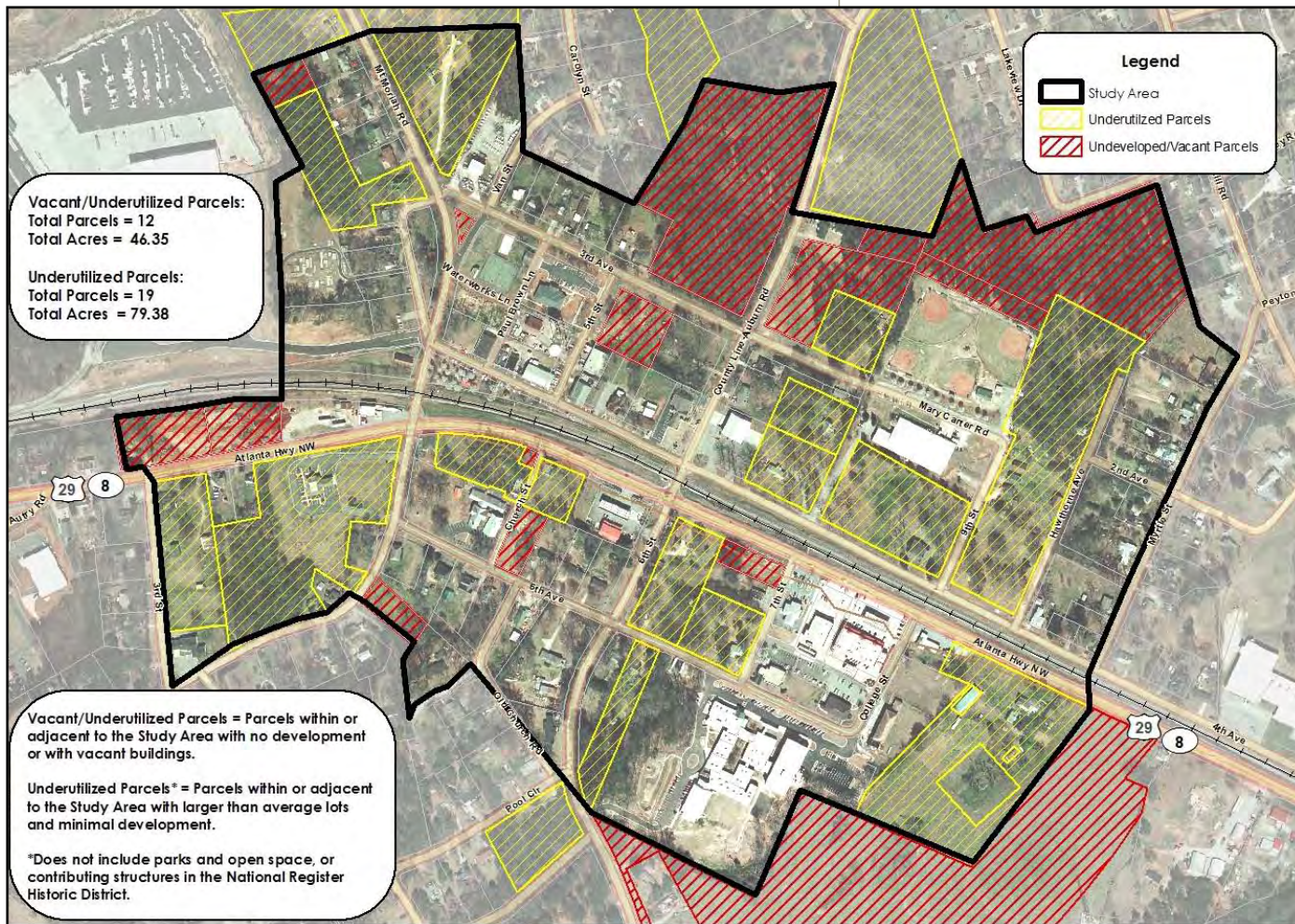


Areas like this along 6th Avenue are zoned C-2 General Business District, despite being residential neighborhoods.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

FIGURE 1.6: VACANT & UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES



Vacant & Underutilized Lots

Whereas the street pattern and mix of downtown Auburn resemble traditional neighborhood development, the size of the lots and densities of development do not resemble the same. Many homes in the study area are on very large lots, and there are several underutilized or vacant lots that provided future development potential for higher and better uses in the future.

Having such a large amount of acreage that is underdeveloped provides both a disadvantage and an advantage for downtown Auburn. The disadvantage is it creates an empty void in the downtown area, preventing a truly vibrant atmosphere. The advantage is there is plenty of land available to accommodate desirable future development and public open spaces. Future development of these land areas should be developed at higher densities to achieve downtown vibrancy.

POTENTIAL REDEVELOPABLE LAND:

Vacant: 12 lots; 46.35 ac.
Underutilized: 19 lots; 79.38 ac.
Total: 125.73 acres on 31 lots



Vacant lot on Atlanta Highway @ 6th Street.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

URBAN FORM ANALYSIS

Street & Block Pattern

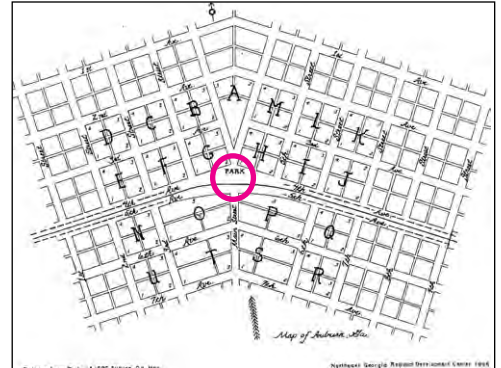
Street and block patterns are one of the most permanent features in a community, and often considered the 'bones' of an area. Development and changes to buildings, land uses and populations occur relatively rapidly, but the layout of the street pattern is likely to remain intact for decades or more without major road projects. The City of Auburn as a whole reflects a suburban street pattern. There is a street hierarchy and some large grid connections, but overall, there are a lot of dead-end and cul-de-sac roads, with little connectivity except on main arterial routes.

Downtown Auburn exhibits more characteristics of a traditional street grid in the core of the town center in proximity to the CSX rail line. The original city plan, laid out in 1890, was never fully realized, but there are traces of this plan in the downtown street pattern. See the accompanying comparison between the current street grid in downtown (middle image) and the original plat (top). As opportunities become available to make new road connections in the future, they should try to follow this original pattern, where possible.

Apart from the partial grid in the core of downtown, and the small traditional-style storefront row along 4th Avenue, there are not significant enough differences in street patterns, lot sizes and density to truly define a unique character for the downtown area.

Benefits of Small Blocks and Grid Pattern

There are certain patterns and scales that provide greater pedestrian scale and mobility. Generally, the smaller the block size the better for pedestrians – small blocks break up the monotony of a walk. When planning for a pedestrian-friendly area, the best practice is to generate blocks that are no greater than 1,600 feet in total perimeter, and no more than 500 on any side of the block from one intersection to the next. Small blocks measuring 250-300 feet from intersection to intersection are the most ideal for urban and downtown settings.



Historic plan for downtown Auburn, showing a grid pattern with bisecting alleys. This plan was mostly unrealized, as shown in the image below.



Current street pattern in Auburn, the pink circle indicating approximately the same center as the historic town plan.



Long blocks with no sidewalks are not conducive to generating pedestrian activity.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Only a few blocks in downtown Auburn fit this criteria, whereas the original town plan shown previously was laid out in a pattern of blocks and alleys that achieved this objective. There are four blocks in downtown that measure approximately 500 feet on all four sides. This small area, not surprisingly, is the easiest to navigate by foot. The block bounded by 5th Street, 4th Avenue, 3rd Avenue, and Mt. Moriah is one of the four, and is further sub-divided by functional alleys.

For traffic circulation, a grid of well-connected streets is also beneficial. This is because it provides more alternate routes, which is less subject to congestion than that of a network that feeds most traffic onto only one or two routes.

Auburn has a great opportunity to develop into a walkable, pedestrian scale district. Most people, including children and seniors, are comfortable taking at least a 5-minute walk - approximately a quarter of a mile - to their destination without using a car - and many people are comfortable with half-mile or full mile walks if that walk is well accommodated and interesting.

The quarter mile, 5-minute walk radius is often referred to as the 'pedestrian shed' or 'pedshed', and downtown Auburn from the center outward to its edges is just about within a single pedshed. This is shown in the picture to the right. This means that most people should be able to walk comfortably just about anywhere within downtown Auburn. However, this requires the proper urban environment, and adequate provision of sidewalks, trails and other pedestrian amenities.

Edges, Nodes, Gateways

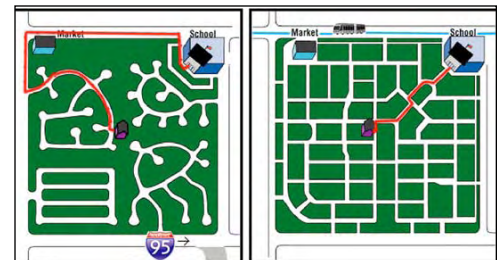
Edges, nodes, and gateways are key components of a community character. Districts are another urban design component that is looked at in larger areas. Downtown Auburn is itself a district of a larger area, the City of Auburn.

Edges

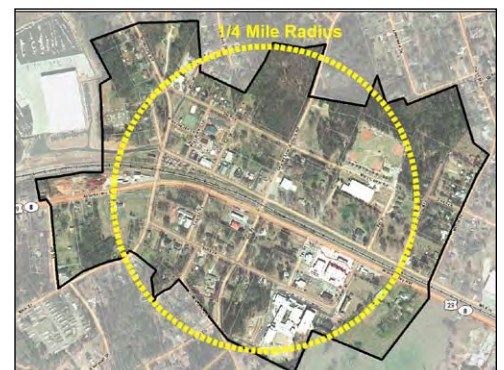
Edges are the physical or mental boundaries of an area. 'Hard edges' are clear or abrupt separations of one area from another, while 'soft edges' are less obvious, and usually are political-defined and only seen on a map. Natural and man made separations that form hard edges usually include water bodies, steep topography, interstate highways, railroads, or just abrupt changes in density or development character,



Alleys like this one off of Atlanta Highway help create smaller blocks and form a tighter street and block pattern.



Comparison of suburban street networks (left) to those of a traditional grid (right).
Source: Congress for the New Urbanism, 2010.

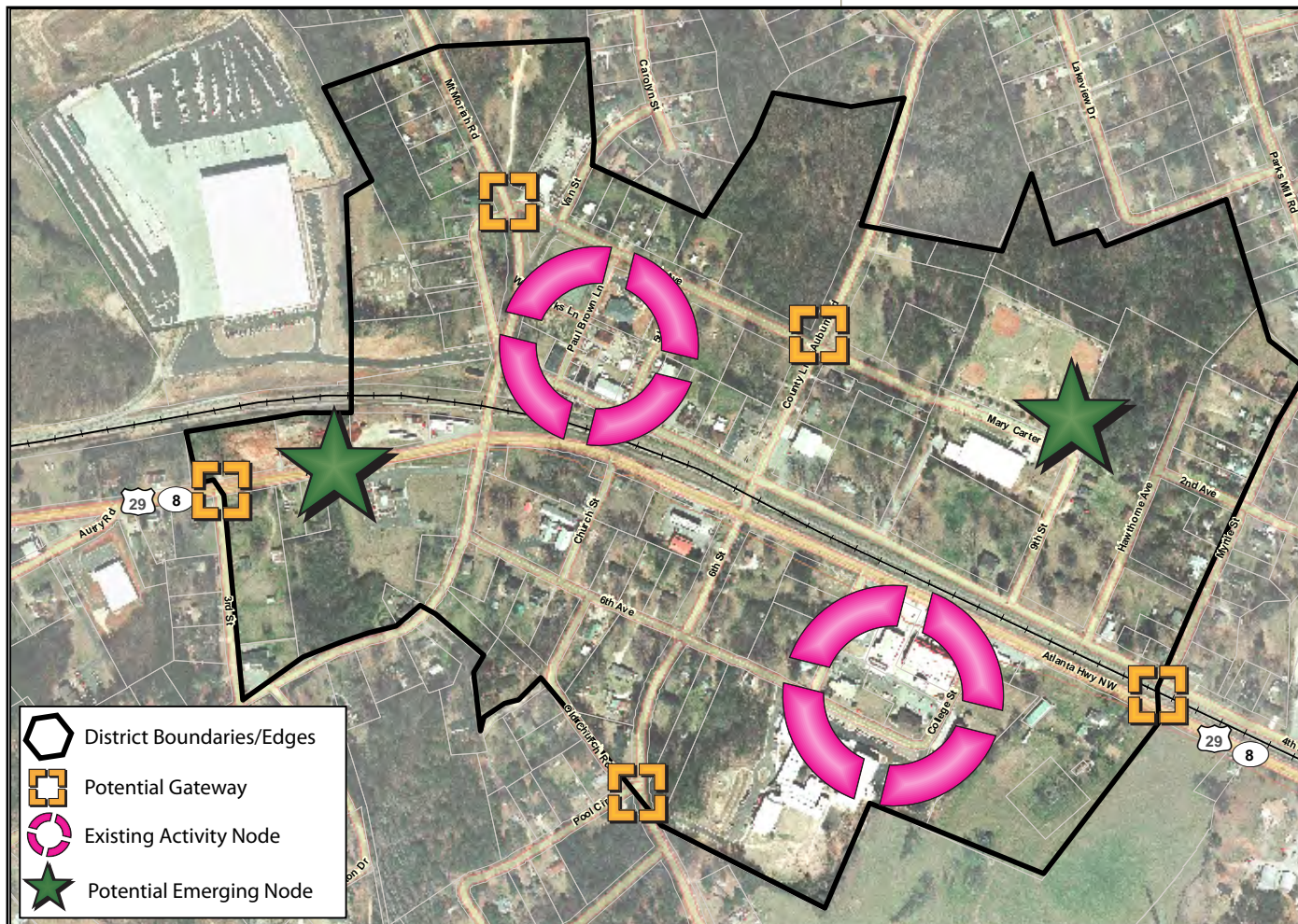


Most of downtown Auburn fits within a 1/4 mile (5 minute walk) radius.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

FIGURE 1.7: EDGES, GATEWAYS & NODES



The boundaries, or edges, of downtown Auburn are not well defined. There is a slightly higher density within the downtown area than outside it, and there is a partial grid of streets in the core area, but it is hard to tell where the transitions occur. What is often a separating 'hard' edge - a railroad track, runs through the center of town in Auburn. Lacking hard edges to define the boundaries of a community is not a bad thing - however it places more emphasis on the need to distinguish the character of downtown from surrounding areas. This can be done through higher densities, good urban design, tree preservation, and consistency in signage, architecture, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities.

Gateways

Gateways are places where people enter a community. Good gateways are well defined and will let a traveler know he or she has arrived at a place. This can be naturally occurring, or can be enhanced through welcome signage, an arch or other means.



Without a distinct change in character, it is hard to tell where the downtown boundaries are.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Generally, downtown Auburn does not have clear gateways, although the city has been actively engaged in installing city-branded wayfinding signage that helps as a clue that you are in the downtown area. There are some areas at the edge of downtown that are ideal locations for adding signage and/or monuments or public art that can define entrances into the area. These areas are indicated on the map on the preceding page (Figure 3.6).

Nodes

Nodes are centers of activity and development. These are the central gathering areas, whether it be for work, shopping, or leisure activities. A city or town's highest amount of foot traffic and vibrancy will usually occur at these points.

There are two well-defined areas in downtown Auburn that are clearly nodes of the community. The first occurs in the general vicinity of Auburn City Hall. Within this node you also have R.H. Burel park, the police station, and a handful of businesses along 4th avenue; but the node also extends down 5th Street to the new playground and library. This presents a good mix of public services, business, and leisure activities all within a concentrated area.

A second node occurs in the block adjacent to Atlanta Highway, between 7th Street and College Street. Within this small area there is a bank, medical office, Auburn Elementary School, the U.S. Post Office, Dakota's Bar & Grill, J.D. Withers Community Building and Auburn Express gas & convenience. Again, a good mix of public and private services and activities. Adjacent to Auburn Elementary School is the R&R building on College Street, which is slated for future use as a cultural arts and community center - this will further develop this area as a node of activity in the near future.

Other areas have potential to generate additional nodes of activity as future development occurs. The City of Auburn Ballparks on Mary Carter Road have an opportunity to generate additional activity if the park is expanded and some additional variety of denser land uses occurs adjacent to them. Atlanta Highway between Autry Road and Main St./Mt. Moriah is another area that could emerge as a center of retail activity, especially if The Shoppes of Auburn commercial development proves successful.



An example of Auburn's wayfinding signage.



This row of commercial and public buildings on 4th Avenue across from Burel Park, helps create one of downtown's nodes of activity.



Dakota's bar & grill and Auburn Express form the north half of another activity node off of Atlanta Highway.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Lots & Setbacks

Lots in the downtown area are typically about ½ acre for residential properties. Although these lots are much smaller than in the rest of the city, this is still considerably larger than a lot of traditional neighborhood development, and well above the size of most neo-traditional lots that are being built today. Smaller lot development in the future may be necessary to generate enough support for local business and to provide a concentrated atmosphere with moderate or heavy foot traffic in the downtown area.

Setbacks are required yard areas between the home or structure and the property lines. Typically front, side and rear yard setbacks are required in the zoning code. Front yard setbacks have a lot of influence on the streetscape character of a roadway corridor. Large front yard setbacks are common in suburban or rural areas, whereas most downtowns or urban areas seek small setbacks so that building fronts help provide a streetscape enclosure, which lends to pedestrian scale.

Residences within downtown Auburn have a wide variety of front yard setbacks, from 25 feet to 100 feet, but most are within the range of 40 to 65 feet. This is generally much larger than most downtown areas. While these large front yards do not help create a sense of streetscape enclosure, they do provide a nice 'greenscape' that lends well to the wide-open countryside feel of the town.

Streetscape

Downtown Auburn lacks the type of streetscapes that are inviting for pedestrians to enjoy and lend vibrancy to the area. Effective urban design creates places that are scaled to the pedestrian, and provide an interesting, comfortable, and safe place to walk. The only consistent sidewalk in the city is along Atlanta Highway, from Autry Road to the City of Carl. Otherwise, pedestrians must share the roadway with motorists. This is not a safe or ideal situation for walkability, even on roads that don't see a lot of traffic. Several of the roads in downtown are used as cut-throughs to Hwy 316, Hwy 124, and I-85, or to avoid train crossings, which results in motorists that are in hurry and often breaking the speed limits.

A successful downtown Auburn will need a Complete Streets approach - a concept where roadways are built for all modes of transportation - including pedestrians, bicycles and public transit - rather than just for personal automobiles.



Auburn residences have large front yard setbacks. This lends to the rural, small town feel, but does not create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.



Residential Street (6th Avenue): Large front yard setbacks lend to a more wide-open streetscape character.



A 'complete street' incorporates all modes of travel - vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle.
Source: National Complete Streets Coalition.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

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LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS

- Residential character with older, modest size housing helps preserve the small town atmosphere that helps define Auburn.
- The National Historic Register District is a valuable asset for preservation of historic properties.
- Downtown has a greater variety of land uses than the rest of the city.
- Downtown has a convenient concentration of institutional and public uses within a small area.
- 4th Avenue provides a traditional, pedestrian friendly shopfront area for business and public services.
- Existing overlay districts and planned development districts (PUD, PSV) within the zoning ordinance should help provide better development in the future.
- There are no heavy industrial or noxious land uses within or adjacent to the downtown.
- The downtown area is walkable in scale - almost all of the downtown is within a half-mile radius from the center to the edges.

WEAKNESSES

- Much of the existing commercial is unattractive (poor design, low quality materials) and geared around the automobile (front side parking, lack of sidewalk areas).
- Existing residential areas in downtown are currently zoned C-2, General Business District.
- There are several vacant structures and undeveloped or underutilized land parcels within the study area. This makes the downtown feel empty and without vibrancy.
- There's a lack of clear transition of character between downtown Auburn and surrounding areas. It's hard to identify the boundaries, entries and exits to downtown, and prohibits a true sense of place.
- There are a few parks in the area, but downtown lacks a good, large open space for community events, which are becoming increasingly popular in the city.
- The city's zoning ordinance is not generally conducive to quality development and design.
- Blocks and street segments are too large to en-

OPPORTUNITIES

- Adjustments to the Downtown Overlay District in the zoning ordinance may more effectively encourage good downtown design without being overly restrictive.
- The addition of a Commercial Corridor Overlay to the zoning ordinance for Atlanta Highway would address better quality of design, access management, and uniformity in signage and landscaping.
- Numerous vacant structures and underutilized properties are available for quality redevelopment in the future.
- Undeveloped land parcels provide opportunities for additional parkspace or natural preserves - amenities that will encourage additional development in downtown.
- There are opportunities to create better roadway connectivity by adding street segments or alleyways to form smaller blocks. This will also help the urban and pedestrian environment.
- Beautification and signage should be used to create gateways into the downtown area at strategic locations. Gateways will let the visitor know they have arrived in a true 'place'.
- The city should take a Complete Streets approach to downtown corridors, providing bike lanes, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian amenities to accommodate all forms of travel. This will help make the downtown area a more desirable place to visit, shop in, and live in.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

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SECTION 4: HISTORIC RESOURCE FINDINGS & STUDY

INTRODUCTION

In 2009 Auburn, Georgia embarked on a study for a vision for the future of its city center and a strategic implementation master plan to reach goals that might come out of previous planning, public engagement and a market study.

The Auburn community is committed to its history and ideally sees long range initiatives tied into its past. City leaders and citizens have come together during financially challenging times with a strong Downtown Development Authority, a burgeoning arts community, recognition of its location in Gwinnett County and an awareness of the Atlanta, Winder and Athens markets. By acknowledging growing transportation concerns the City of Auburn can use existing (historic) infrastructure, a character-defining built environment and even an original town plan as planning tools at their disposal. Historic preservation can play a large part in future funding and programming for the plan.

Basis/Need For a Cultural Resources Study

The "study area" identified for the project is shown with a solid red line in Figure 4.1. Fit within the boundary of the study area is the Auburn National Register Historic District (NRHD) shown in the thick dashed line, that was filed in 1995. This is on file with the National Park Service and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and relates Auburn's history to other culturally significant sites, places and settings that are special to the history of the area and the region. Places considered "contributing" to the NRHD (determined at the time of the nomination, and located on file at the SHPO – see comparison study later), have significance for national recognition.

The Auburn community will benefit from its awareness of the management and identification of its cultural resources. By understanding the significance of existing resources as a "baseline," the impact of changes made upon them can be weighed and acted upon. Activities such as road widening, insensitive alterations or removing historic material, moving structures and imposed development may cause a potential adverse affect upon the significant traits, or "context," that defines the character of Auburn. Every historic resource has a connec-



The Hawthorne House, located along 4th Avenue, was once a hotel during the early 1900s.

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FIGURE 1.8: NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY



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tion to the “sense of place” of an area. This occurs with both the history of the resource itself as well as through the location and orientation of the resource as experienced from other preserved or documented resources (a historic “district”). When any one part is altered, or the environment surrounding the resources has a significant visual change, then the connection to, and the definition of, the sense of place of the greater whole can be permanently lost. Thus the National Register District nomination can become threatened.

Benefits from Historic District Listing

A National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing does not offer 100% protection for the district, but it has tremendous review, recognition and economic benefits. If any project using any amount of federal funding might threaten a district, individual site or potential archaeological resource listed on the NRHP (or “National Register-eligible”), then the proposed changes to the structure or site may trigger a review process by local, state, and/or federal authorities. This required review process is known as a “106 review,” per Section 4f of the National Preservation Act of 1966. Properties considered “eligible” are those generally 50 years old or older and/or significant to a historic event, person or architect/architecture of an important historic style. Common changes or threats are generally those of demolition, a certain measure of anticipated negative-impact or inappropriate visual distraction that leads to the loss of significance to remaining “contributing” resources in the NRHD.

Benefits for being placed on the NRHP are recognition, general property value increase and ability for either individual properties or the community to apply for special grants and funding, such as grants offered through the Historic Preservation Division (state SHPO) .

There are significant tax advantages and property tax incentives for private (or even civic) owners of properties within a NRHD. “Adaptive-use” of structures is a common preservation-sensitive practice used to save (rehabilitate) notable structures by adding modern functionality while preserving and retaining features. Because Auburn has a recognized NRHD, those structures considered “contributing” to the district (residential or commercial) are eligible to take advantage of state and/or federal historic preservation income tax incentives benefits based on the amount of “qualified” rehabilitation work that is performed on the structure. Recognizing and using these financial tools

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for the long-term economic performance of the district will be incredibly important. (For more information go to www.gashpo.org.) The companion planning document to follow will go into more detail on goals and objectives for Auburn property owners to make the best use of these financial incentives.

A “Local Historic District” with similar, yet potentially larger boundary, can be a good outcome from this study, however one is not in place currently in the City of Auburn or through Barrow County. If a property is also included in an additional local historic district the municipality or county may set local review standards for certain local protections such as granting of building permits, land use and zoning controls, or Certificates of Occupancy. With local review measures there would also need to be a set of criteria or guidelines (of which the research team is aware that Auburn has drafted and is still in process of review and amendment based on this master planning study). As such, it is only on the local level that this in-depth design control can take place.

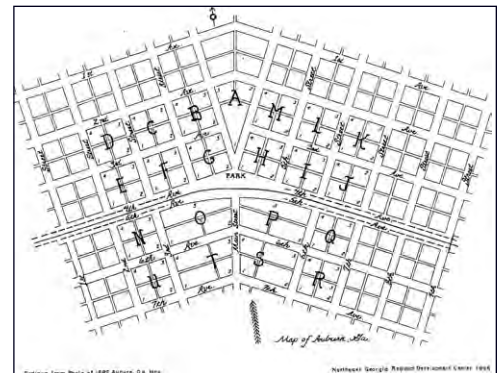
HISTORIC FINDINGS & DOCUMENTATION

Existing National Register Historic District

“Auburn is an example of a late-19th century Georgia town which developed as a result of the railroad. Eight commercial buildings were located on the north side of the tracks and four on the south side. Homes were constructed around this town center, particularly in the blocks south of the railroad and the east and west on the north side of the tracks...The railroad line followed the flat, natural terrain of Auburn, curving to the east at the center of town. The original town plat included a grid pattern laid in square, four-lot blocks that, overall, was rectilinear ...”

(NRHP Inventory – Nomination Form, 1997)

The Auburn Historic District (on file with National Park Service, NRIS record item #97000527) was apparently worked on from 1995 until 1997 and published onto the Register by the NPS on 1997. The historic City of Auburn (and the growth of its town pattern along the rail lines) is representational of a traditional linear Georgia community in the late 1800s along the rail lines, however uniquely positioned at a curve



Map showing the original railroad-oriented town plan of Auburn in 1882.

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where the planned city grid north of the tracks, east and west, was shifted at about 30-degree angles to each half – this becomes very important as a basis for future city-center master planning based on (and protecting) Auburn’s history. The official nomination is on file in the National Register Archives located at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). In Georgia, this is the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Department of Natural Resources. In summary, the “Areas of Significance” that the nomination for inclusion on the NRHP is based on Architecture, Community Planning and Development, and Transportation.

Statement of Significance NRHP Designation

“The Auburn Historic District is significant in ARCHITECTURE because it contains residential and commercial buildings dating from ca. 1890s – 1920s that are typical and representative of small town architecture of the period. Most of the residences are wood frame, one story, with little of no ornamentation except front porches. There are at least three two-story, frame residences, one of which appears to have been a hotel. Several of the remaining historic commercial building are brick or stone. The district is significant in COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT because, although it pre-existed as a community, the advent of the railroad in 1891 brought forth a new community aligned to the railroad tracks which ran east-west through the town. Commercial buildings were built facing the tracks and the city’s new grid pattern plan was developed around the railroad. This plan is still in existence and the railroad tracks are also still existing and in use. The district is also significant because it includes the city cemetery, another function of city planning, laid out as in most cities, on the original edge of town. The district is significant in TRANSPORTATION because the advent of the railroad in 1891 brought a major focus and redevelopment to a pre-existing farming community. The advent of the Seaboard Railroad (originally the Georgia, Carolina and Northern Railroad) in 1891 led to the town’s incorporation in 1892. Since the town became a stop for the railroad, many buildings were built for railroad use. Unfortunately, the depot itself is gone.”

(GA SHPO, National Register Summaries files, Auburn Historic District, Barrow County, Georgia)

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JB+a preservation staff conducted research at HPD on December 9, 2009. The downtown area of Auburn has been studied and photographed by historians, residents (past and current) and families in the community.

Based on the subject areas of significance noted in the National Register nomination (listed above), 20 of the approximately 22 (1995) considered structures and sites in the NRHD can still be considered “contributing” or “eligible” in historic significance, as seen in Figure 4.2. The two structures that were apparently considered contributing having been removed (shown with “X”). The cemetery site is not a structure, but it is still considered contributing. One structure has possibly lost significance (commercial cover up at the intersection of US-29 & Lyles/ Main St.), however this could be offset by the potential new inclusion of one of the commercial structures along Fourth, downtown. Specifically within the Auburn NRHD at least two civic buildings, a tennis court area, a public library, and the Baptist Church addition have been added (City Hall appears to still be in the building which in 1995 was considered contributing but it now has additions and a roof covering, potentially making it non-contributing to the NRHD). Beyond, the existing NRHD there are a number of structures (such as the R & R Building, the Hawthorne House and other residences which could (and should) be considered to be included within an expansion of the boundary or as sites just outside the district tied to the historic period of significance on record.

Neither Auburn nor Barrow County currently have a recognized local historic district or an active Historic Preservation Commission or any officially appointed committee that reviews modifications or infill changes to properties in the City of Auburn.

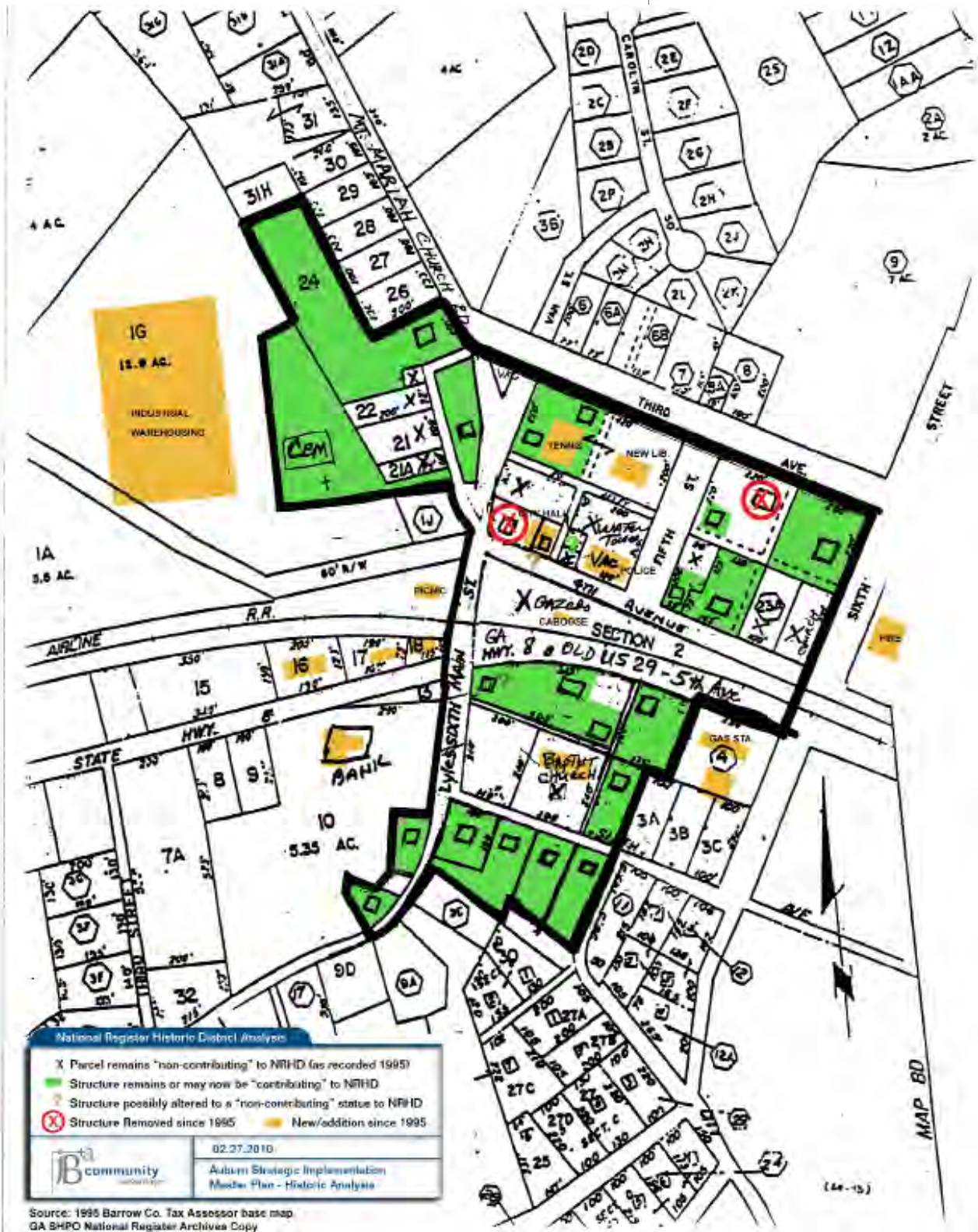


Auburn City Hall, in a contributing historic building, was rehabilitated with new additions and a roof covering.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

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FIGURE 1.9: NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT ANALYSIS



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CHARACTER DEFINING DETAILS

Residences and Social Life

Most of the historic resources within the study area are residential structures. Residences remain largely in tact from the time they were built in the late 1800s, and from a “windshield survey” all but one of the residential resources appear to be in good condition. The one property at the “fork” in North Main Street, is need of repair, but not close in conditions to which many historic homes have been restored from in hundreds of other historic districts.

“Queen Anne-influenced” and “Craftsman-influenced” are listed as significant architectural styles to Auburn, which corresponding with the district “period of significance” from 1890s to 1920s, as stated. In Auburn these styles are represented in simple (or “folk” or “vernacular”) architectural vocabulary – not the “high style” representations of the classification that you would find in larger cities. This is unique to the simple, rural, working-to-middle class character and history of Auburn and should be respected in any new architecture proposed today. An interesting note is that the residences north of the tracks do appear to be older in style (simple, Folk Victorian) and construction than those in the district south of the tracks, which demonstrate more Craftsman detailing. The homes along the current US-29 corridor, facing the tracks, appear to be the larger residences. It appears most structures still contain original windows, wood clapboard siding, roof lines, doors and period details such as the folk Victorian gable-end treatments, trim boards, porch columns and eaves. New roofing materials and coverings have been applied to some historic rooflines and porches, however not to the adverse effect to the resources. Although not a part of this study, the interior finishes and floor plans of the significant historic resources are reportedly intact and in good condition.

In historic residential FORMS there are examples of saddlebag, central hall, bungalow, and I-House building types. The streets are generally wide and individual residential lots are modest in size. Most of the houses have simple lawns without decorative or elaborate gardens – common to working and middle-class families. Records of fires seemed to have destroyed many of the town’s original buildings during the 1920s.



This “Queen Anne-influenced” style home, located on 4th Avenue, contributes to the sense of character of Downtown Auburn.



Three “Craftsman-influenced” style homes, located along 6th Avenue.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

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Commercial Structures

Auburn was, at the turn of the 20th century, a burgeoning center of commerce. This is specifically mentioned in the National Register nomination:

“Although the commercial buildings are not associated with a specific style, they do exemplify late-nineteenth-century and turn-of-the-century commercial buildings found in many towns in Georgia.”

(GA SHPO, National Register Summaries files, Auburn Historic District, Barrow County, Georgia)

The most identified block of “downtown” Auburn today is about a 2 block section of 4th Avenue where buildings from the late 1800s through the 1940s (historically) and some modern-day civic structures face the tracks. These are traditional front parapet, flat roof (although some have had inappropriate gable roof “toppers” added, one-part commercial buildings. Some residential structures are right next to the commercial blocks. All appear to be in fair to good condition. Owners appear to have kept some operations in them and storage over time, however they appear to have limited public access or business hours at best. Due to their age their quality of materials, even though simple in form, these buildings define “downtown” Auburn and from public interviews the area along 4th Avenue, north of the tracks, seems to be where residents identify their “city center.” All of this adds to the quality, uniqueness and sheer value that the resource (as a turn-of-the-20th century commercial railroad district) has gained.

Transportation and the Original Town Plan are all linked and can be interpreted in the placement of structures and sites remaining in Auburn today. By the turn of the 20th century, the major road system and railroad corridor (very much the same today, however some of the land lots have merged or gotten confused with the original intended road and alley system) focused patrons, travelers and farmers to the central business district and the railroad provided both a center for warehousing and passengers. Primarily, US-29, Mt. Mariah Church Road, 6th St./ County Line, and Killcrease Road are important to Barrow County and the Atlanta metropolitan area (between Atlanta (growing Lawrenceville area) and the emerging Athens/University of Georgia area). As a transportation corridor to the state of Georgia, US-29 appears to be significant and traffic in the area is sited as becoming overwhelm-



Two historic commercial buildings located at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Fifth Street.

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ing and more of a hindrance to the quality of life in Auburn today. Getting automobiles, industrial traffic and emergency services across the existing original rail crossings is becoming difficult and dangerous.

Many historic cities, such as Savannah, were designed on rigid grid systems of roads (and even land/lot uses) to form an organized, cohesive town plan. A very interesting project as part of this base-line historic study was to look at a current aerial map of the area (shown in Figure 4.3) within the Auburn Strategic Implementation Master Plan Study Area (solid red line) and overlay the historic platting (white image). The four-lot grid (with east-west and north-south lot divisions formed by alleys) can be found in the Auburn environment today – especially in the central blocks of the National Register Historic District (shaded in Figure 4.3). The farther from the town center the existing blocks (and contemporary development) proceeded over the decades the more the originally intended town grid pattern is lost. Cul-de-sac subdivisions do not even connect to each other and an easy to understand (especially urban) environment can lead to sporadic lot development and placement of structures– but not imperceptible, nor out of scope to possibly re-think of Auburn using this plan where it can today.

Identified Land Use

Zoning is directly linked into land and property use, as well as what can potentially be built on each lot. This can have a major positive or adverse affect upon the National Register Historic District legitimacy if too many changes or offsets are made to the visual qualities of what makes the district significant. “De-listing” of a NRHD can negate the ability for any other property owners to take advantage of grants and tax incentives base on historic preservation standards. Technically Auburn could not be recognized as “historic” Auburn for marketing or local review purposes either. Although this study is not an addendum or a planning review to the most recent Barrow County Comprehensive Plan (completed in 2008), it will shed additional light on keeping historic preservation efforts as part of land use for positive growth for the next 12 – 20 years.



Auburn's historic cemetery is located along the western edge of downtown.

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FIGURE 1.10: 1882 PLAN OVERLAY ON CURRENT AERIAL PHOTO OF DOWNTOWN



Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

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HISTORIC RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- Variety of architectural styles and forms of historic buildings.

Weaknesses

- Historic residential and retail space may not meet current demands.
- Alterations made to historic houses for conversion to commercial use may detract from historic integrity of the structures.

Opportunities

- Conversion of historic homes to professional office along 5th Avenue could provide much needed office space for downtown.
- Expanded use of existing façade rehabilitation grants could improve aesthetics of buildings.

Threats

- Continued neglect of vacant buildings could lead to their damage or loss.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

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SECTION 5. TRANSPORTATION & PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

Quality transportation networks should serve the needs of multiple modes of transportation, including automobile traffic, freight traffic, pedestrian systems, and bicycle facilities. While many transportation plans focus almost exclusively on automobile and freight traffic, pedestrian and bicycle facilities constitute an important amenity for town center development.

STREET NETWORK

Figure 5.1 provides a map of the street network organized by roadway functional classification in the City of Auburn and eastern Barrow County as of 2009. Functional classifications group roadways according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Generally, there is an inverse relationship between the roadway functions of traffic mobility and land accessibility. The three major categories within the roadway functional classification are arterials, collectors, and local roads. These major functional classifications are also divided between rural and urban areas according to the census definition of an urbanized area. The City of Auburn and its immediate surroundings fall within the urbanized category. A description of the functional classifications found in eastern Barrow County is provided below.

Arterials

Arterial roads are designed to carry the largest volume of traffic at relatively high speeds. These roadways provide the greatest mobility because access is generally limited, especially on interstate principal arterials. The only interstate principal arterial within Barrow County is I-85, located approximately six miles from downtown Auburn. Principal arterials carry large volumes of traffic at moderate speeds to connect major activity centers and serve statewide traffic. Barrow's principal arterial is GA-316 / US-29, which bisects the southern portion of the county and links the northern suburbs of Atlanta with Athens/Clarke County. While the city limits of Auburn do not currently extend to GA-316, this corridor does contribute to suburban development pressure in the city.

The minor arterial system interconnects with and supplements the principal arterial system and provides service to trips of moderate length.

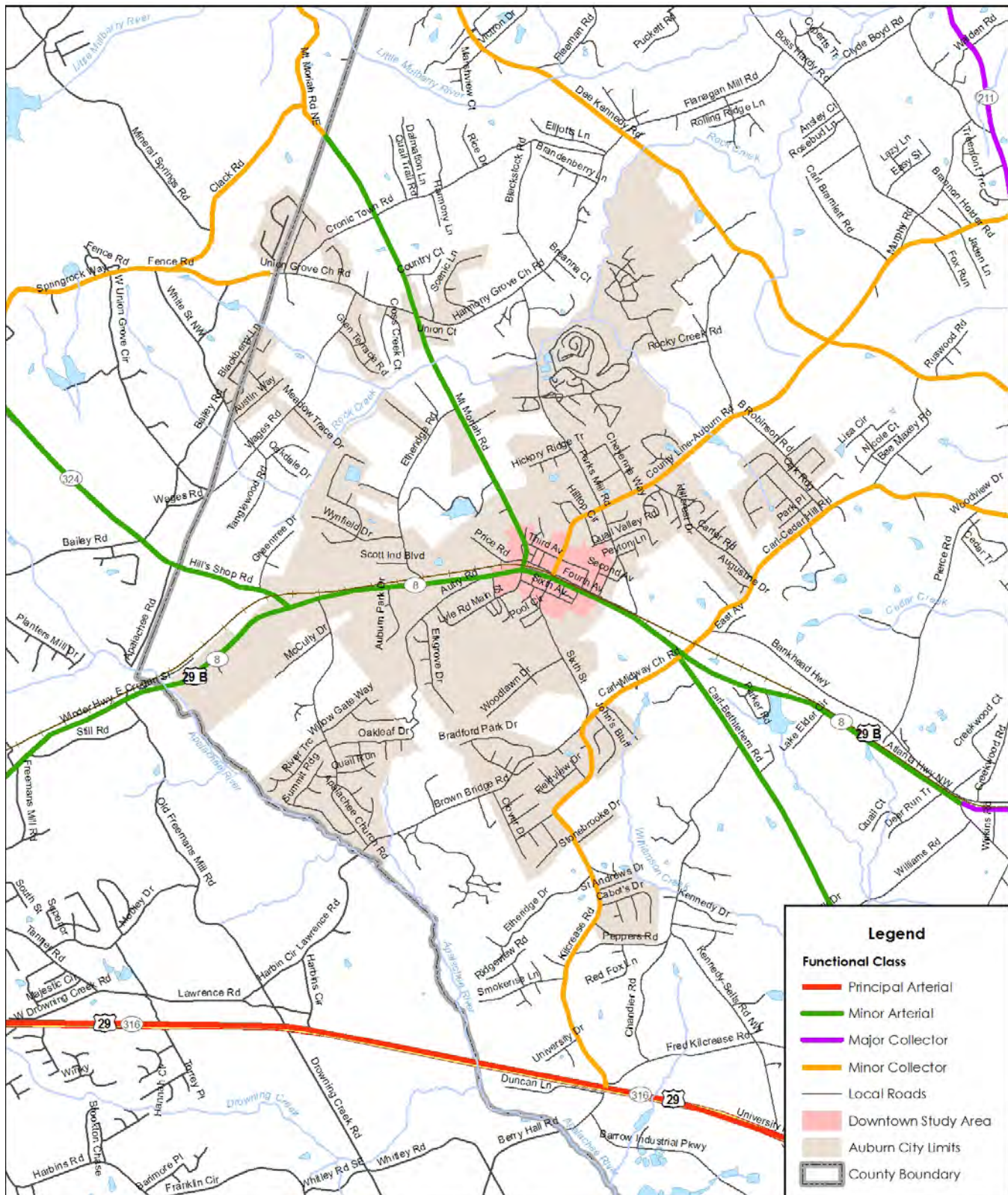


6th Street provides a major connection between Auburn and GA-316.

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FIGURE 1.11: ROADWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASS, CITY OF AUBURN



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Within urban areas, minor arterials provide intra-community connectivity, while rural minor arterials connect cities, towns, and major traffic generators. Minor arterials provide somewhat greater land accessibility than principal arterials, but ideally they should not penetrate identifiable neighborhoods. The City of Auburn historically developed along the US-29 Business / GA-8 minor arterial corridor, which runs parallel to the CSX railway. Mt. Moriah Road and Hill's Shop Road / GA-324 are additional minor arterials serving the City of Auburn.

Collectors

Collector streets connect activity centers and residential areas by collecting traffic from streets in residential areas and commercial areas and distributing it to the arterial system at low to moderate speeds. Collectors serve as a middle ground between the functions of traffic mobility and land accessibility. Collectors serving the City of Auburn include County Line-Auburn Road, Carl-Midway Church Road, and Dee Kennedy Road.

Local Streets

Local streets provide the greatest access but the least mobility. Usually found within subdivisions, local streets feed into the collector system from low volume residential and commercial areas at low speeds. Local streets throughout most of the City of Auburn generally maintain a characteristic suburban street network. Most residential communities in the city have a single access point branching out into a network of cul-de-sacs, with little or no direct connectivity from one residential area to the next. The core downtown area of Auburn is more reflective of a traditional grid pattern with interconnected parallel and perpendicular streets, but this is only true for a small area.

Traffic Volume

Figure 5.2 provides estimates for Annualized Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for DOT traffic count stations around the City of Auburn in the year 2008. The segment of Atlanta Highway / GA-8 / US-29 Business that passes through the downtown study area recorded over 14,000 average trips per day, including both directions of traffic. The highest recorded levels of traffic in Auburn were found along Atlanta Highway near its intersection with Etheridge Road, with an AADT of 18,590. The nearest principal arterial just outside the City of Auburn, GA-316 recorded an AADT of 24,010.

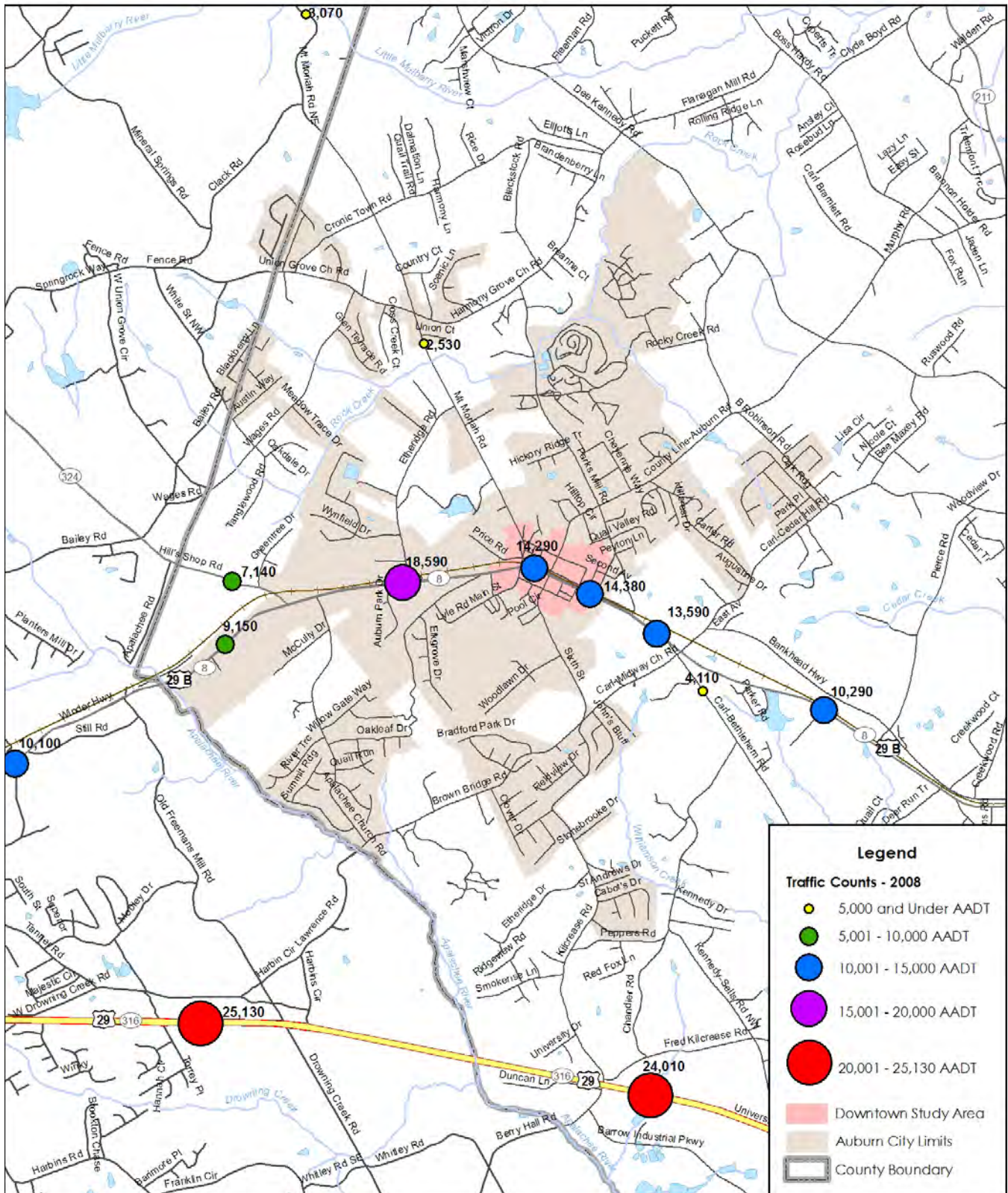


Atlanta Highway (GA-8) is classified as a minor arterial road in Barrow County.

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Part 1: Existing Conditions

FIGURE 1.12: TRAFFIC COUNTS, 2008 - CITY OF AUBURN



Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

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TRAFFIC CONFLICTS

Anywhere vehicular or non-vehicular traffic crosses a railroad at-grade, this presents a conflict, especially if trains run frequently. Trains run through downtown Auburn approximately 29 times per every 24 hours, which is at least once per hour. In downtown Auburn, there are at-grade crossings at Mt. Moriah/Main Street, and at Countyline-Auburn Road. Parks Mill Road also crosses at-grade just outside of the downtown overlay on the east side going towards the Town of Carl. All three railroad crossings are equipped with flashing red lights and cross-arms. Because of the close proximity of these railroad crossings to Atlanta Highway, traffic blocked by trains often backs up to adjacent intersections. The Barrow County CTP also identified the intersection of Atlanta Highway/GA-8 and Mount Moriah Road as a high crash intersection.

There are plans to separate the grade at the intersection of Atlanta Highway/GA-8 and Countyline-Auburn Road through the construction of a bridge or an underpass. Currently, the closest grade-separated rail crossing is Hill Store Road on the far western side of the city near Dacula, where a bridge takes traffic over the train tracks.

Another observed traffic conflict occurs along 6th Street at the back-side entrance to Auburn Elementary. Dropping-off and picking up the kids creates a line of cars that backs up all the way to 6th Street. As a result, cars turning left or right into the entrance have to wait for cars in the driveway to move forward, which in turn backs up traffic on 6th Street because there are no turn lanes.

Roadway Level of Service

Roadway levels of service (LOS) can be calculated based on a comparison of measures such as traffic volume and road capacity. Thus, traffic volume divided by road capacity, or a v/c ratio, can be used to calculate existing and projected levels of service. LOS values are measured on a lettered scale of A to F, with A representing excess capacity and free-flowing traffic and F representing significant excess traffic and delay. Transportation planners often set a target LOS of C as the desired balance between traffic volume and roadway capacity. A roadway with a v/c ratio less than or equal to 0.70 is said to have a LOS between A and C. At a LOS of D, or a v/c ratio between 0.71 and 0.85, drivers begin to experience increased delay due to traffic



Railroad crossings, close to intersections such as Atlanta Highway and Main St., create traffic conflicts several times a day.



Traffic conflicts occur along Main Street at the back entrance into Auburn Elementary during the beginning and end of the school day.

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congestion. LOS F represents a roadway with traffic volume in excess of the theoretical capacity, resulting in significant delays.

Traffic forecasts and programmed transportation improvements can be used to create projected future levels of service for roadways. This transportation model was applied in the 2007 Barrow County Comprehensive Transportation Plan CTP to generate 2005 and 2030 LOS projections. The Barrow County CTP forecasted the performance of major roadways, while excluding some local roads from the model. As of 2005, the major roads through the City of Auburn had a LOS between A and C, with the exceptions of Atlanta Highway between Hill's Shop Road and Apalachee Church Road (LOS E) and Mount Moriah Road between Etheridge Road and Atlanta Highway (LOS D).

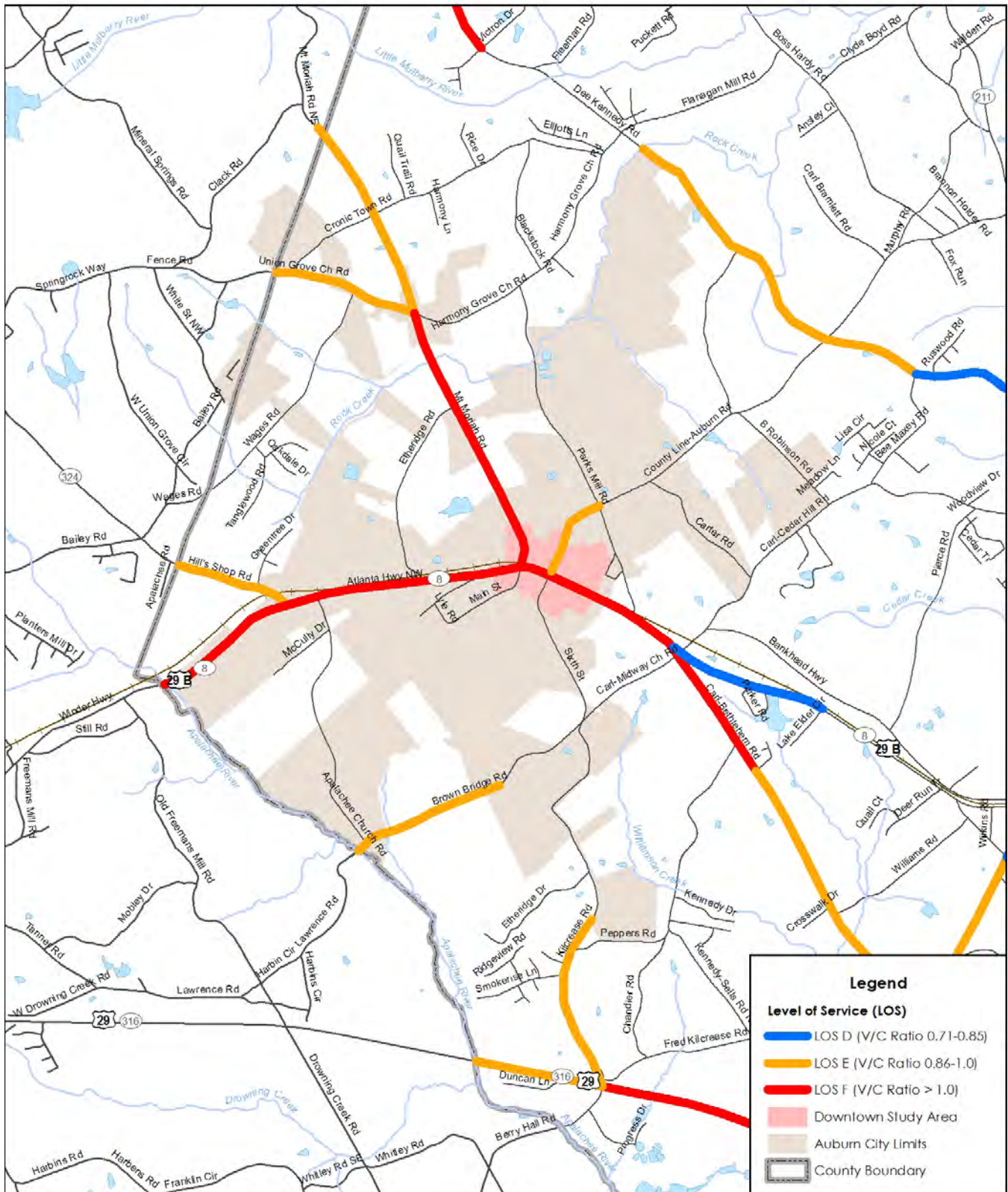
While traffic congestion in the City of Auburn is not currently above roadway capacity, the continued suburban growth trends extending from Gwinnett County are likely to impact the city's transportation network in the future. The 2030 traffic projections for the City of Auburn and Barrow County show several major road segments having an LOS ranging from E to F. Figure 5.3 shows 2030 projected levels of service in and around the City of Auburn. According to this model, the level of service of Atlanta Highway / GA-8 / US-29 Business will decline to an LOS F throughout the City of Auburn. Likewise, Mount Moriah Road is projected to reach a LOS F between Atlanta Highway and Harmony Grove Church Road. County Line-Auburn Road is projected to have an LOS of E from Parks Mill Road to Atlanta Highway. Thus, several of the major corridors passing through the downtown Auburn study area are projected to have traffic levels at or over capacity by 2030.

However, the 2030 LOS projections from the Barrow County CTP assume that only currently programmed transportation improvements will be constructed. The city's traffic congestion will likely be alleviated by additional improvements over the long-range 20 year planning horizon. The CTP identifies several transportation improvements that would alleviate the congestion forecasted in the no-build 2030 LOS scenario. These proposed improvements are described in more detail within the following section on programmed transportation projects. The Barrow County CTP generated a second future LOS scenario that does include additional recommended transportation improvements. Under this scenario, only a small stretch of Auburn-County Line Road north of the CSX railway is projected to have a LOS of F.

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FIGURE 1.13: PROJECTED LEVEL OF SERVICE, 2030 - CITY OF AUBURN



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BICYCLE ACCESSIBILITY

In addition to automobile traffic, a balanced transportation network should accommodate bicyclists. Bicycle facilities can serve as an alternative means of transportation as well as a recreational and fitness amenity. Bicycle facilities can be grouped into the following classes:

Multi-Use Trail (a.k.a. Class I) - A non-motorized facility, paved or unpaved, physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier. Also called Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail, Bike Path, Non-motorized Trail, Multi-purpose Trail or some combination thereof. Multi-use paths must be at least ten feet wide in order to allow for two-way traffic and passing between cyclists, skaters, and pedestrians. Motorized vehicles are typically prohibited from multi-use paths, with the exception of patrols by public-safety officers.

Bike Lane (a.k.a. Class II) - A portion of a roadway that is designated by striping, signing and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Most often these are done in couplets, each one being one way and adjacent to the outside through travel lane.

Bike Route (a.k.a. Class III) - A segment of road designated by the jurisdiction having authority, with appropriate directional and informational markers, but without striping, signing and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

There are currently no bicycle facilities in the City of Auburn. Since there are currently no dedicated bicycle facilities within the City of Auburn, cyclists must rely on on-street travel. A map of bicycle suitability in the City of Auburn is provided in Figure 5.4. These rankings of bicycle suitability rate roadways based on traffic volume, percent truck traffic, travel speeds, functional classification, and shoulder width. Most of the major roadways passing through the City of Auburn are ranked as moderate to difficult for bicycling. However, there are some roadways ranked as favorable to cycling which extend across the city and outside of residential subdivisions.

The proposed Great Rail Trail, will provide a regional bicycle route (Class II bike lane) for residents of Auburn and Barrow County.

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There are several proposals for bicycle facilities that have been included in regional transportation plans. The 2005 Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan proposed the addition of bicycle lanes along Atlanta Highway/GA-8 and Mount Moriah Road as part of a long-range vision for a county-wide bicycle network. Likewise, the ARC's Envision6 Regional Transportation Plan included a proposal for bicycle lanes along Hill's Shop Road between the county line and GA-8. There has also been some interest in developing a multi-use trail along the CSX railroad right-of-way. However, the frequency of active rail traffic along the CSX corridor may limit the viability of this trail proposal.

DOWNTOWN ENVIRONMENT

Figure 5.5 Shows existing conditions within the downtown Auburn study area. Pedestrian accessibility and traffic calming features are important aspects of the downtown environment. In order to create a vibrant downtown, the study area must be safe and inviting for pedestrians as well as being accessible to automobiles.

Traffic Lights

There are three traffic lights in Auburn. All three are located along Atlanta Highway (8), at the intersections of Hill Store Road, Mt. Moriah Road, and County Line-Auburn Road. The latter of two of these are within the downtown study area. These intersections also occur adjacent to the two at-grade railroad crossings present in the downtown study area.

Parking

Parking is primarily provided through off-street, private parking driveways and lots. There are a few areas in downtown that accommodate on-street parking for the public. A mix of diagonal, parallel and perpendicular parking is provided on both sides of the street on 4th Avenue between City Hall and mid-block between 5th Street and County Line -Auburn Road. There is also some perpendicular parking provided along 5th Street and County Line Road adjacent to 4th Avenue.

As 4th Avenue sees new development occur, streetscape improvements with additional parking, sidewalks, and street trees should be implemented along Countyline Road and Myrtle St. Approximately 110 parallel parking spaces can be provided along this road section.



Signalized intersection at the corner of Atlanta Highway and 6th Street.

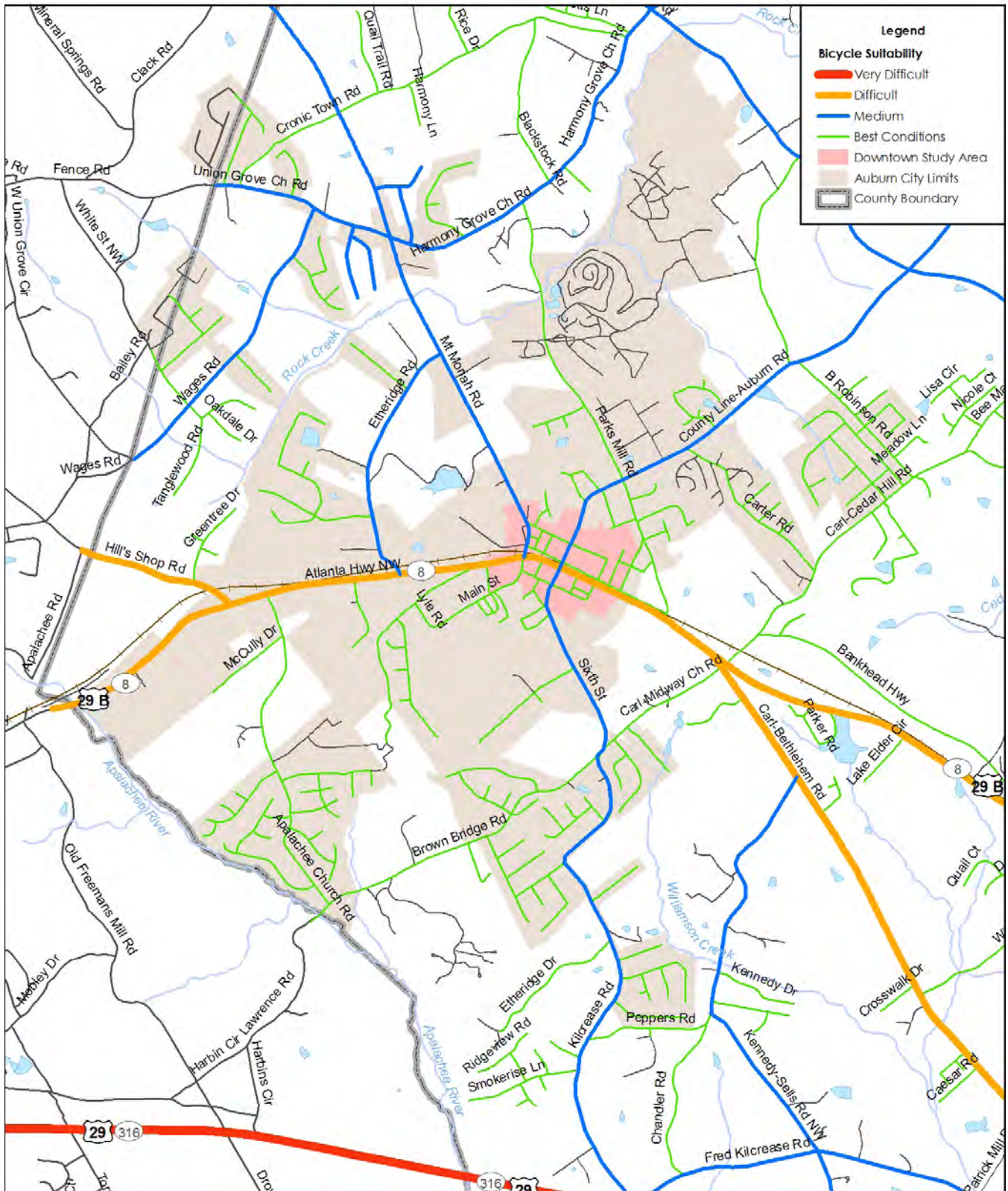


A mix of parallel, perpendicular, and parallel parking spaces along 4th Avenue provide sufficient parking for downtown civic uses and businesses.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

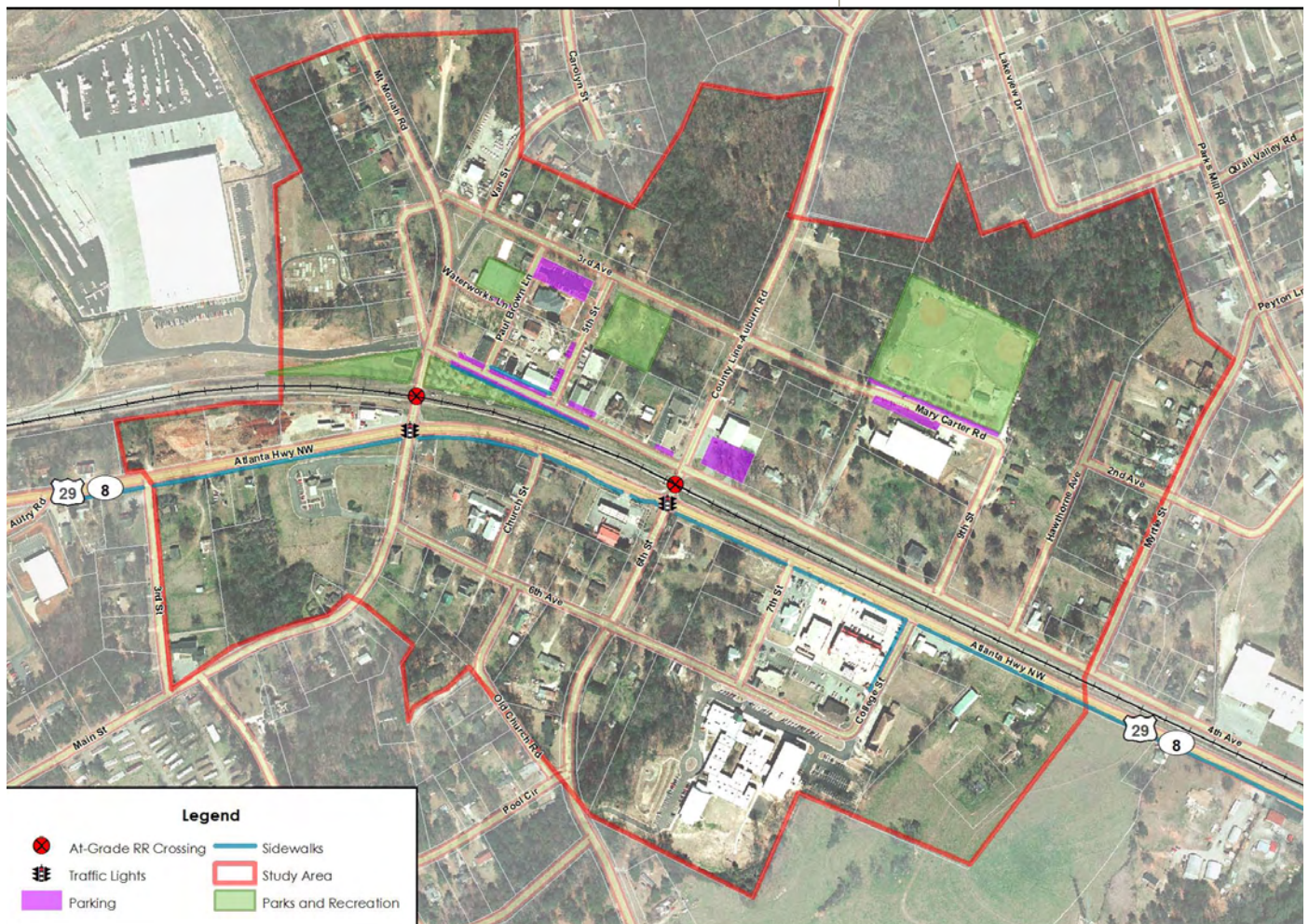
FIGURE 1.14: BICYCLE SUSTAINABILITY - CITY OF AUBURN



Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

FIGURE 1.15: EXISTING CONDITIONS, DOWNTOWN AUBURN



Alleys

Auburn's original town plan indicated the provision of mid-block alleys throughout the downtown area; however, this vision was not realized and there are only a couple areas in the city where alleys are in use. The block bounded by 4th Ave, 5th Street, Mt. Moriah and 3rd Ave is bisected by a north-south alley called Paul Brown Lane. There is also an east-west half-block alley (Waterworks Lane) between Paul Brown and Mt. Moriah, which provides diagonal parking for the adjacent tennis courts and Public Works building.

The second area is the block bounded by Atlanta Highway, College St., 7th Street and 6th Avenue. An east-west alley bisects the full block, and a half-block alley runs south from Atlanta Highway connecting to the east-west alley.



Alley located on the block between 5th and 6th Streets in Downtown Auburn.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Pedestrian Accessibility

As with many suburban cities and towns, Auburn is geared mostly towards serving vehicular traffic. Apart from the core of the downtown area, the street and block network is not at a scale of form that promotes walkability, and there are very few accommodations for pedestrians should one choose to move about on foot. Sidewalks are found in only a couple of areas. The longest continuous stretch of sidewalk runs along the south side of Atlanta Highway, starting west at the Autry Road intersection, and continuing through the downtown area all the way to and through Carl. There is a small spur of sidewalk on College St. along the side of the Auburn Express shopping center. There are also some raised sidewalks fronting some of the buildings on 4th Avenue (City Hall area) between Mt. Moriah and 5th Street. A brick walkway is provided which runs through R.H. Burel Park in front of City Hall.

As with vehicular traffic, the CSX rail line also provides a disconnection between the north and south sides of downtown Auburn for foot traffic. There are no pedestrian bridges or underpasses over or under the railroad, so all crossings are at grade.

Programmed Transportation Improvements

With heavy traffic forecast for Atlanta Highway/GA-8 and the key railroad downtown railroad crossings, transportation improvements will be needed in order to maintain the city's Level of Service. Currently, operational improvements and road maintenance are programmed for the City of Auburn. However, the West Winder Bypass may reduce the need for capacity improvements by re-routing traffic passing between GA-316 and I-85. The following projects are programmed into the ARC's Regional Transportation Plan. (See Figure 5.6)

- West Winder Bypass
- GA-8 Resurfacing from Etheridge Road to Russell Cemetery Road – Completed 2010
- GA-8 Operational Improvements – Signal Installation @ SR-324, CR-326, CR-327, CR328
- HOV Lanes on GA-316 – From I-85 to Athens Loop – Feasibility Study
- GA-316 – Widening and ROW acquisition for interchange
- County Line-Auburn Road Resurfacing from Lakeview Drive to Dee



Pedestrian pathways, such as this brick paved sidewalk along the edge R.H. Burel Park, provides good pedestrian connectivity in the northern section of downtown.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Kennedy Road

- County Line-Auburn Road / 6th Street Grade Separation @ CSX RR
- Carl-Bethlehem Road – Capacity Improvement from GA-8 to GA-316
- GA-324 from County Line to GA-8 – Proposed Bicycle Lane - Long Range

The Barrow County Comprehensive Transportation Plan also developed an unconstrained list of potential transportation improvements that did not have specific funding sources allocated. This list includes several improvements within the downtown Auburn study area. Potential additional transportation improvements include the following:

- Mount Moriah Road from Gwinnett County to Atlanta Highway – Capacity Improvement
- GA-324 from Gwinnett County to Atlanta Highway – Capacity Improvement
- SR-8 from Gwinnett GA-324 – Capacity Improvement
- SR-8 from GA-324 to Carl – Operational Improvement
- Downtown Auburn – Sidewalk Connectivity Improvements

TRANSPORTATION ASSESSMENT

The following assessment provides a qualitative examination of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) facing the transportation network in Auburn and its downtown.

Strengths

- The Fourth Avenue stretch of downtown Auburn is isolated from the heavy traffic of Atlanta Highway / GA-8.
- The downtown contains recreational amenities as well as a mixture of civic institutions.

Weaknesses

- Downtown is bisected by the CSX railway and State Route 8 / US-29 Business, creating a barrier for connectivity.
- CSX railroad tracks crossing downtown inhibit pedestrian and vehicular circulation due to a lack of grade-separated crossings.
- Railroad crossings create a traffic bottle neck on Mount Moriah Road and County Line-Auburn Road.
- The downtown lacks an integrated network of sidewalks.
- The downtown lacks parking capacity for expansion, and the existing parking configuration is outdated.

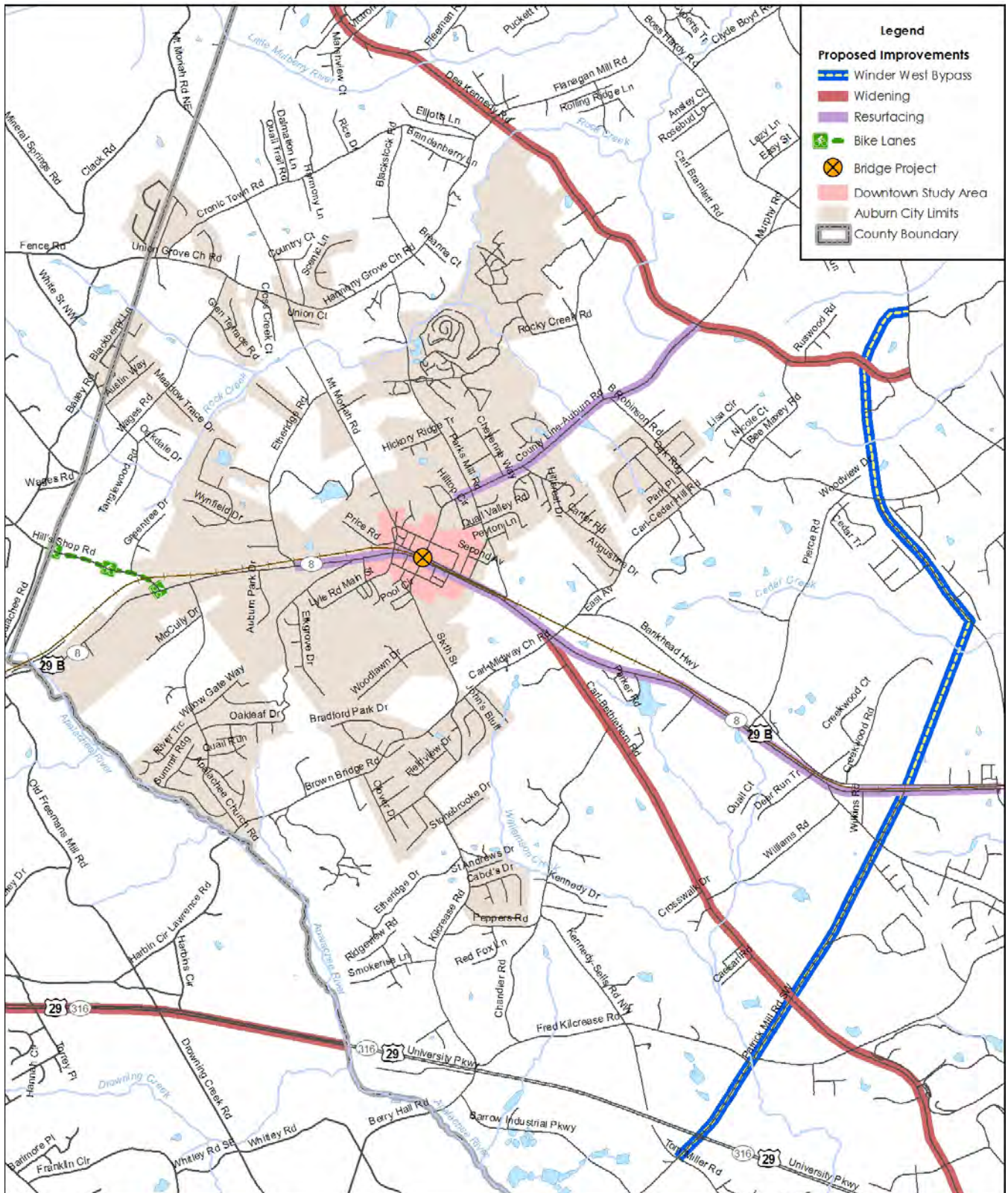


Concrete sidewalk along the south side of Atlanta Highway is separated by a small planting strip. This helps pedestrians feel safe from fast moving vehicles when walking along roadways.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

FIGURE 1.16: PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS - CITY OF AUBURN



Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Opportunities

- Sidewalks connecting schools, civic institutions, recreational amenities, and public gathering areas can encourage pedestrian activity in the downtown. Sidewalk connections in downtown Auburn have been identified within the Barrow County Comprehensive Transportation Plan.
- Pedestrian connections across the railroad tracks can help improve connectivity between the northern and southern sections of the downtown area.
- Railroad right of way may provide an opportunity for multi-use trails.
- Potential bicycle lanes and routes have been identified through downtown Auburn within regional studies.
- The construction of the West Winder Bypass may alleviate traffic through downtown Auburn by providing a new route between GA-316, GA-211, and I-85.
- The grade separation of the railroad crossing at Countyline-Auburn Road could help alleviate the flow of traffic between both sides of the downtown, and improve the safety of the intersection.
- As 4th Avenue sees new development occur, streetscape improvements with additional parking, 5-6' sidewalks, and street trees should be implemented along Countyline Road and Myrtle St.

Threats

- The grade separation of the railroad crossing at Countyline-Auburn Road could create an additional barrier to pedestrian connectivity between both sides of the downtown.
- Frequent rail traffic presents a safety issue for potential multi-use trails along rail right-of-way.
- Without additional transportation improvements, roadway Level of Service and traffic congestion are projected to substantially worsen in downtown Auburn.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

SECTION 6. ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE

ENVIRONMENT

Auburn consists of rolling hills typical of Georgia's upland Piedmont. The downtown study area is located in a low, flat area between two ridges, approximately 1,000 feet in elevation. The study area was largely covered with mature forests of hard and softwood trees, but now has been cleared and fully developed. Significant human impacts on the natural environment in the study area did not begin until the late 1800s, when the railroad brought population growth that spurred the development of land.

There are no significant bodies of water or wetlands within the study area. Auburn lies on the ridge line separating the Mulberry River (a tributary of the Oconee River) and the Appalachian River, another large tributary of the Oconee. The ridge line separating these two drainage basins also provides the basic alignment of State Route 324 from Fence Road in Gwinnett County to the intersection with State Route 8 and the corridor for State Route 8 and the CSX Railroad through Auburn to Carl, Winder, and Statham. Preserving water quality in both watersheds is important to ensuring healthy drinking water and ecosystems.

OPEN SPACE

In close proximity with the downtown study area, there are several small parks and public spaces. These provide greenery and gathering points within a short walk of homes within or close to downtown. Several small public spaces, such as the Whistle Stop greenspace, at 4th Avenue and Main Street, also serve as gathering places or spots of open space. To the south of the study area, Shackelford Memorial Park provides more diverse recreational opportunities and a more significant escape into nature.

R.H. Burel Park

One of the most prominent parks in Auburn, R.H. Burel Park, is located on 4th Avenue in the downtown. It is best known for a bright, red caboose, donated to the city by CSX Railroad and located on the West side of the park. The park includes Knock-out Roses, Lantanas, and Crepe Myrtles.



Mature forests of hard and softwood trees are found on large vacant properties in Auburn.



R.H. Burel Park, located in the center of Downtown Auburn, is a gathering space for residents and visitors alike.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Whistle Stop Park

Named by the students at Auburn Elementary, Whistle Stop Park is located across from R.H. Burel Park and is a community gathering space green with picnic tables, new landscaping, and existing pecan trees. A new pavilion and landscaping improvements are planned for this area.

Roy E. Parks Children's Playground

This playground for small children was recently built in Downtown Auburn. The park is surrounded by a 6' wrought iron fence with vintage-style lighting. The park has brightly colored play equipment and boasts a whimsical mural on a retaining wall. The playground is located on the corner of 5th Street and 3rd Avenue, across from the new library in Downtown Auburn.

Parks Family Sports Complex

Located on Mary Carter Road in Downtown Auburn, the Auburn Ball Park hosts Auburn Dixie Youth Baseball. It currently has four baseball fields and there are plans for expansion of this facility to include a new adult league ballfield, grass parking of over 100 spaces, and a storm-water detention pond.

ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- There is approximately six acres of parks and green space within downtown Auburn.
- Several existing small parks are within easy walking distance of residents in the north area of downtown.

Weaknesses

- There is no public swimming pool in the downtown study area.
- The walking and biking connection between downtown and Shackelford Memorial Park is poor.
- Pedestrian connectivity from the south side of the study area to the parks on the north side of the railroad tracks are poor.



Whistle Stop Park provides table seating for outdoor events and gatherings.



Roy E. Parks Children's Playground, approximately one acre in size, is located at the corner of 5th Street and 3rd Avenue.



The Parks Family Sports Complex, located in Downtown Auburn, currently has four baseball fields.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Opportunities

- A new civic gathering space could benefit new residents and draw visitors to special events and festivals.
- Relocation of tennis courts to the Parks Family Sports Complex may provide land for development of new civic gathering space in the center of downtown.
- Park space could be required in large new developments.
- The proposed Great Rail Trail will provide Auburn a safe pedestrian and bicycle trail along Highway 8.
- “Green” site planning and design techniques could improve environmental performance of new buildings and public infrastructure.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

SECTION 7. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN AUBURN

The City of Auburn benefits from a wide range of community facilities in downtown.

- Auburn City Hall, located along 4th Avenue, was relocated to this location from the J.D. Withers Building.
- Auburn Elementary, the only public school in the study area, serves over 400 students.
- Auburn Library was built in 2007 and has over 17,000 volumes within the building. It is part of the Piedmont Regional Library System and offers many community programs including book clubs (for adults and teens), child programs, family game nights, summer reading programs, and computer classes.
- The J.D. Withers Building is the former city hall of Auburn. It now serves as a community center for small events and gatherings, accommodating up to 40 people.
- The Auburn Police Station, headquartered on 4th Avenue, serves the city with a state certified team of officers.
- Auburn Public Works is located in Downtown Auburn along 4th Avenue and Main Street, behind City Hall. In 2008, the City of Auburn acquired a 20 acre property along Parks Mill Road to build a new Public Works Department building.
- Barrow County Fire Department serves Auburn residents and is located at Fourth Avenue and County Line-Auburn Road.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

Strengths

- The variety of community facilities benefits Auburn and serves as a draw for those outside the town.
- The central location of many community facilities are a short distance from each other.

Weaknesses

- The police and fire station experience delays to accessing the south side of town when the railroad crossing is closed to railroad movement.



Auburn's City Hall is located along 4th Avenue close to Main Street.



The new Auburn Elementary School, located along 6th Avenue, is the only public school in the City of Auburn.



The J.D. Withers Building, located along Atlanta Highway, serves as a community center for small local events and gatherings.

Auburn Strategic Implementation Plan

Part 1: Existing Conditions

Opportunities

- The R&R building, located on College Street, provides an opportunity for adaptive reuse as a new community center for Auburn residents.
- A future location for a middle school serving Auburn residents close or adjacent to the existing elementary school



The vacant R&R Building, located at the corner of College Street and 6th Avenue, provides an opportunity for a new civic use in Downtown Auburn.