



ADOPTED
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Downtown
Austell

LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE STUDY



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The opinions, findings, and conclusions in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of the Department of Transportation, State of Georgia or the Federal Highway Administration.

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Chapter 1

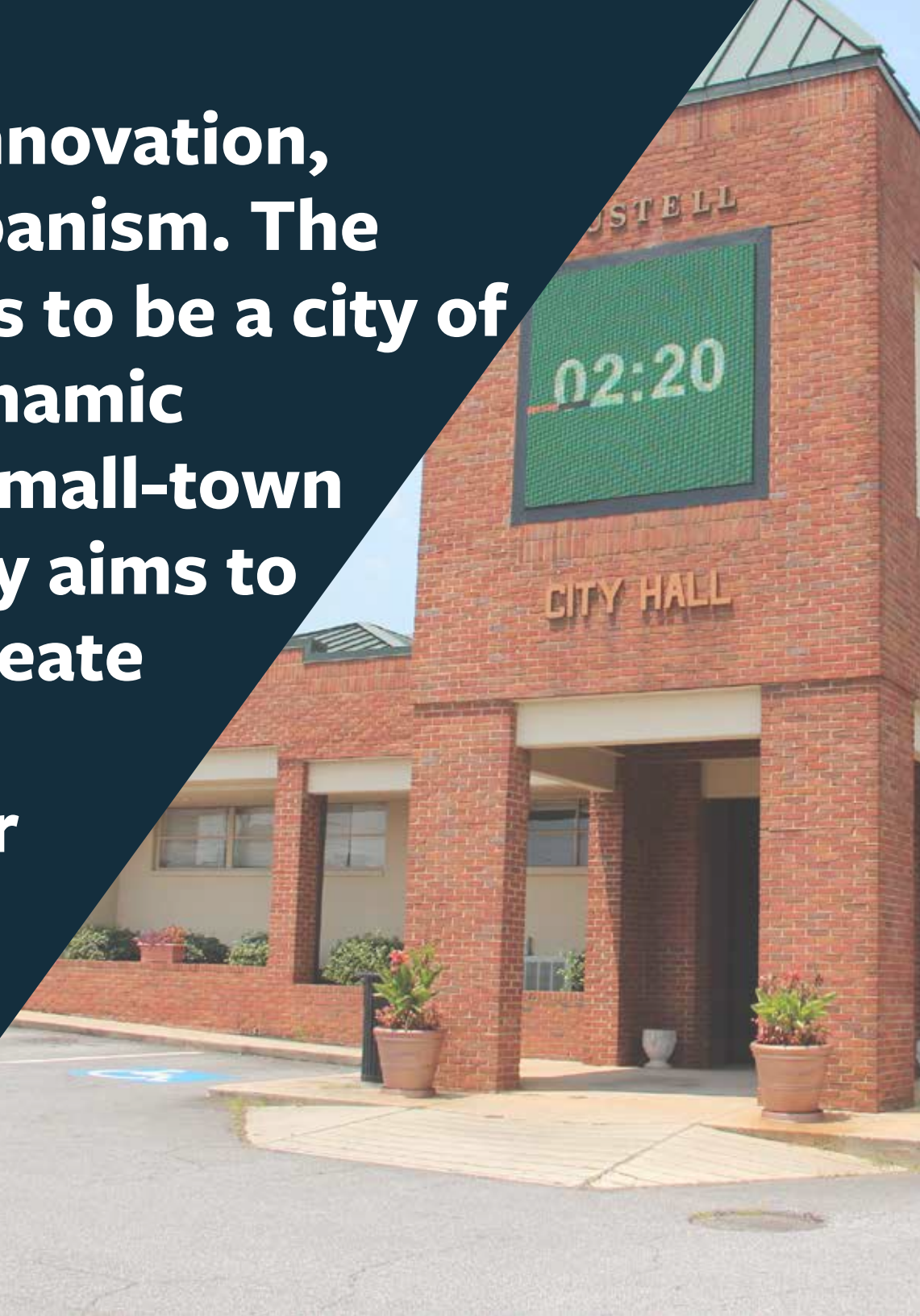
Planning Context



Downtown
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“Austell embraces innovation, opportunity, and urbanism. The City of Austell strives to be a city of opportunity with dynamic communities and a small-town atmosphere. The City aims to revitalize itself, to create attraction and bring growth prospects for businesses and citizens.”

- Envision Austell Comprehensive Plan



PROJECT OVERVIEW

About Austell

“Nestled in southwest Cobb County, Austell is a small southern city located 18 miles west of the city of Atlanta. The city is 5.7 square miles, with a relatively flat topography and the Sweetwater Creek flowing through. Famous as a natural health resort, the city boasts a serene, picturesque setting of parks and oak trees making it an ideal place for not only visitors but also residents.

Historically recognized as a therapeutic city, the City of Austell was founded in 1885, after the neighboring Lithia Springs earned prominence by game hunters for its curative properties in the early 1800s. The emergent popularity of the spring resulted in an increased migration of people, forcing the owner of the property around Austell, Mr. G.O. Mozeley, to subdivide and sell forty acres of his lot, leading to the creation of the City of Salt Springs. The old Georgia Pacific railways added to the eminence of the city by not only making it a transit station, but also a division node for the two routes of Birmingham and Chattanooga. To honor the work of General Alfred Austell in establishing railway networks in the south, the city was later named ‘Austell.’

Strategically located 4 miles north of Interstate 20, the city of Austell is well connected with major cities like Marietta, Douglasville, Hiram, and Atlanta. The city continues to be a significant station division terminal, hosting several trains and transferring passengers each day.”

- City of Austell Website

Purpose of this Plan

This plan is an opportunity to prepare a major update to the 2002 Downtown Austell Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) plan. These plans, sponsored by the Atlanta Regional Commission focus on creating vibrant, walkable communities. The 2002 study included recommendations for land use, downtown function, housing and employment, transportation, parking, street continuity, traffic calming, transit routing, linkages, entryway treatments and signage.

Planning Process

This study officially kicked off in December of 2020. The diagram on the next page outlines the process.

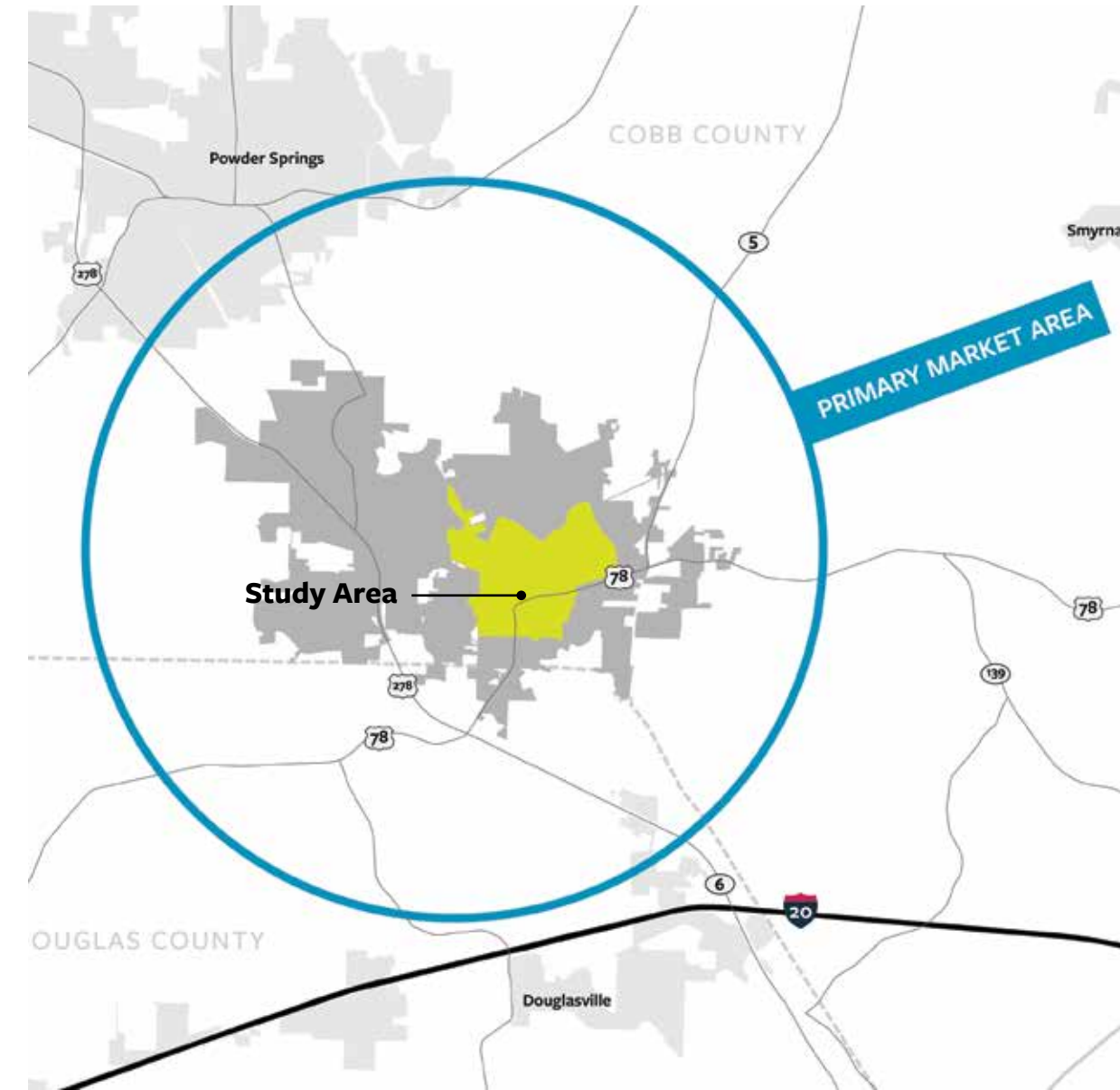
What is an LCI?

The Atlanta Regional Commission’s Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) is a grant program that incentivizes local jurisdictions to re-envision their communities as vibrant, walkable places that offer increased mobility options, encourage healthy lifestyles and provide improved access to jobs and services.

Since 2000, the LCI program has invested \$254 million in over 120 communities throughout the Atlanta region, helping pay for planning studies and the construction of transportation projects, such as sidewalks and intersection improvements, to bring those visions to life.

The LCI program is funded with federal transportation dollars. The grants cover 80% of the cost of each study or transportation project, with the recipient making a 20% match.

PROJECT OVERVIEW



Study Area

The LCI study area includes the original study area from the 2002 study, but is expanded to include areas that have been developed or have been heavily impacted by development since 2002. The study area includes about 600 acres of land in and around Downtown Austell, and a portion of Austell-Powder Springs Road. The study area is bisected by an active railroad line, and includes the City's police department, City Hall, several parks including Legion Field, and Austell Elementary School. The real estate assessment on pages 42-43 includes four layers of analysis areas: the LCI study area, Austell, a three-mile radius around the intersection of Powder Springs Road and Veterans Memorial Highway called the Primary Market Area (PMA), and Cobb County. The full real estate assessment can be found in the Appendix of this report.

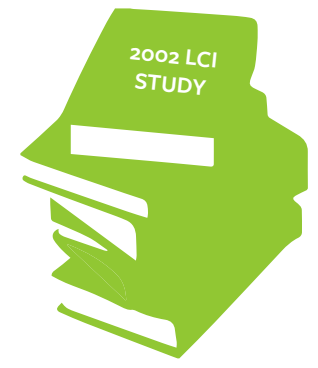


Study Area

PREVIOUS PLANS SUMMARY

Overview

Some previous planning efforts form the foundation for the Downtown Austell Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Plan.



2002 Austell LCI Study

Austell's first LCI study was completed in 2002. The study proposed design guidelines, parks (including a Town Green concept), housing strategies, pedestrian improvements, streetscape improvements, parking improvements, and transit routing guidelines. The project list contained \$9.6 million of improvements.

Opportunities

The previous plan identified the following opportunities for Downtown Austell:

- » Having a compact downtown core coupled with adjacent residential development also affords the opportunity to focus on establishing this area as the city's primary town center.
- » Residential development near downtown shops, offices and service institutions creates an opportunity to provide improved pedestrian access to Downtown Austell.

Downtown
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LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE STUDY

Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the

PREVIOUS PLANS SUMMARY

- » There are residential properties that can be rehabilitated and several vacant residential lots are available for infill development.
- » The presence of incompatible heavy commercial and industrial uses is an opportunity for redevelopment of these areas as mixed-use developments.
- » Redesigning Collar Park can create a focal point for festivals, events, and a place for downtown patrons and visitors to congregate.
- » Vacant land is a great opportunity to attract new development that is compatible with a small downtown.
- » There are several entryways to the downtown that can be enhanced by signage and landscaping that will let visitors know they are approaching the downtown area.
- » The railroad has the potential of serving as a linear greenspace extending the entire width of the town center.

- » A continuous pedestrian system is needed in downtown with links throughout the community that connect parks, schools, churches, neighborhoods, and shopping.
- » A convenient link is needed between downtown and the Threadmill Complex including potential shuttle service, bikeways, and completion of pedestrian links.
- » Bike and pedestrian facilities are needed in the majority of retail, office, and commercial establishments that are within walking distance of downtown.
- » Pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks, crosswalks, a railroad underpass, signalization, and signage that facilitate creation of a “pedestrian shed” where residents of Downtown Austell have walking access that does not exceed ten minutes.
- » The northern and southern sections of downtown should be linked to improve continuity and pedestrian flow.

Key Recommendations

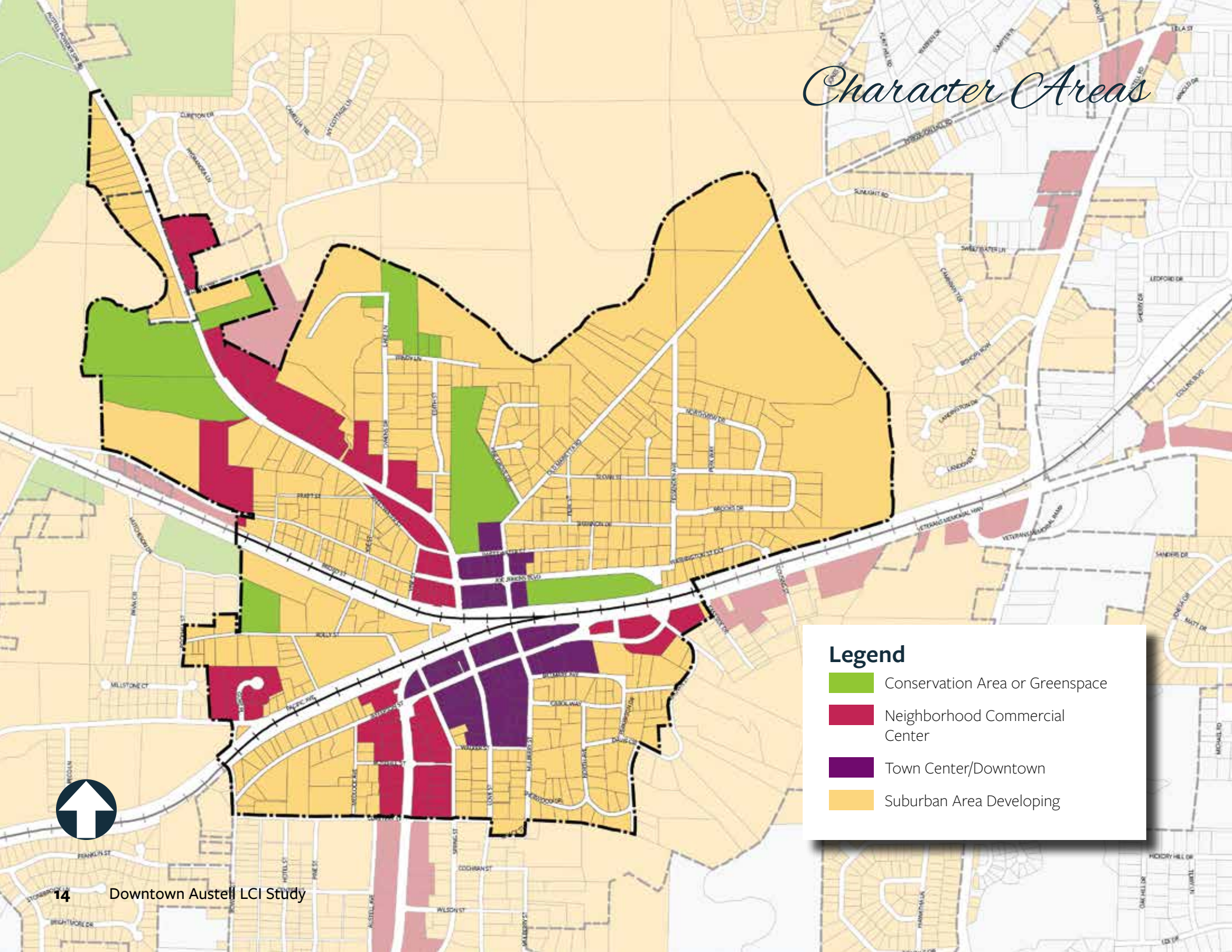
- » A town green at Collar Park
- » A park-and-ride lot and pocket park at the base of the overpass.
- » Public parking and park at the corner of Jefferson Street and Mulberry Street.
- » Housing strategies that included utilizing low-interest loan programs to rehabilitate deteriorating units
- » Creation of traditional neighborhood developments.
- » Infill development on existing vacant residential parcels.
- » New six-foot-wide sidewalk along Bankhead Highway.
- » Pedestrian crossings across the railroad tracks at Powder Springs Road and Mulberry Street.
- » Streetscape improvements for Bankhead Highway, Jefferson Street, Love Street, Powder Springs Road, and Broad Street.
- » Bike facilities along Jefferson Street.

- » New transit routes and commuter rail.
- » Parking improvements including on-street spaces along Broad, Mulberry, Spring, and Love Streets; redesigning parking facilities; the creation of a parking map; parking signage; and parking time limits.
- » Traffic calming measures.

Completed Projects from 2002 LCI Study

- Purchase of new shuttle equipment (2 vans)
- Variable message signs
- Parking signage
- New light poles
- Broad Street streetscape project
- Wetland garden at Post Office (retrofit of existing detention pond)
- Comprehensive Plan modifications
- Zoning ordinance modifications





PREVIOUS PLANS SUMMARY

Envision Austell Comprehensive Plan (2017)

Envision Austell, the City's comprehensive plan, presents a vision for the City's progress and provides a framework for the execution of this vision.

Character Areas

Character areas were also developed as part of this plan. Each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the community vision.

The map on the facing page shows the character areas. All four character areas are represented in the study area:

- » **Conservation Area or Greenspace Character Area.** This character area notes that the city's parks and green space contributes to the character of the city. The City should continue to preserve and expand these areas and will work at making these spaces high quality, active, and passive recreation spaces. Trails and multi-use trails were identified as future development, design, and uses items to support the conservation and greenspace character area.
- » **Neighborhood Commercial Character Area.** Every neighborhood needs a focal point with concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians. A key goal for this character area is a pedestrian-oriented design that has strong walkable connections between different uses.

- » **Town Center / Downtown Character Area.** The Austell downtown area, is currently an underdeveloped area that is fragmented by a very active railroad line. The City should focus on redevelopment of the area, while maintaining the historic structures and character of the area. The active railroad should be considered as a focal point and efforts should be made to promote the area. The City should also focus on bringing in retail activities and restaurants to create unique and active public spaces. A key goal of this character area is connecting it to trail networks and encouraging pedestrian-oriented design.
- » **Suburban Area Development.** The City of Austell intends to nurture a stable and established suburban neighborhood in the future, building on the existing housing mix and creating newer housing types.

PREVIOUS PLANS SUMMARY

Transportation Objectives & Policies

Directly relevant to pedestrian and bicycle improvements is the plan's goal that reads "Promote transportation safety, connectivity, and accessibility by expanding multi-modal opportunities throughout the City including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities. Objectives and policies from this goal that are relevant to pedestrians and bicycle improvements include:

- » Objective: Advocate safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle networks in the city.
 - » Policy: Identify measures to ensure safe and efficient pedestrian access across the railroad
 - » Policy: Create pedestrian friendly spaces by identifying grade separation measures
 - » Policy: Expand sidewalk connectivity on all roads to encourage walkability
 - » Policy: Provide landscaping, pedestrian buffers and street furniture to create urban walkable spaces

- » Objective: Promote multi-use trails in the city.
 - » Policy: Build multi use trails to ensure connectivity, including the Silver Comet Trail and use of multi modal options.
 - » Policy: Construct multi use trail on Austell-Powder Springs Road to ensure non-vehicular movement in the area.
- » Objective: Transportation Safety
 - » Policy: Install street lights, stop signs, speed signs in necessary areas especially in school zones to ensure safe movement of traffic and promote walkability to school
 - » Policy: Safeguard access to neighborhood services and local businesses
 - » Policy: Initiate programs for regular updates of signage in all areas to promote traffic safety

Cobb County Greenway and Trails Master Plan (2018)

The Cobb County Greenway and Trails Master Plan serves as a roadmap for Cobb County, providing guidance for building upon and expanding the existing network to make greenways and trails more accessible to everyone and to encourage more people to bike and walk.

Goals

The master plan included eight goals that were used to inform proposed corridors as well as identify priority projects. These goals were:

1. Improve connectivity
2. Improve mobility and accessibility
3. Ensure comfort and safety
4. Support and drive economic development
5. Protect and enhance the natural environment
6. Foster healthy behavior

7. Maintain a state of good repair
8. Increase awareness of greenway and trails.

Priority Projects

This first-ever county greenways and trail master plan prioritizes the development of five types of safe, comfortable facilities for people of all ages and abilities. It also proposes the implementation of eight priority projects over the next ten years. Guiding principles, design guidance, and best practices are used to support the recommended priority projects.

The recommended eight priority projects will likely be funded partially via the next SPLOST, with additional support from grants and other funding sources as they become available. As a whole, implementing the Plan will provide connectivity from Lakes Acworth and Allatoona to Kennesaw Mountain to the Chattahoochee River. Eventually, it will connect Town Center to Cumberland and Acworth to Austell.

Recommended Projects

Four trail projects were recommended in the City of Austell. The four identified trails included a trail along Austell Powder Springs Road, along Sweetwater Creek, Olley Creek, and Noses Creek. The City's Comprehensive Plan Update also recommended a trail along Austell Powder Springs Road. This trail was identified as one of the eight priority projects in the County. This designation means that there is support and momentum for the project and that it should be prioritized in terms of funding for design and construction. It represents a strategic priority because it meets multiple stated plan goals, has support from partner agencies, and will confer significant benefits to the overall trail network and community in general.

The Austell Powder Spring Road Trail would be the first formal multi-use trail in the City of Austell. The 4.16 mile 12-wide paved side path is proposed to run alongside Austell Powder Springs Road between Joe Jerkins Boulevard and Marietta Street/ Powder Springs Road, where it would jog slightly east to connect to the Silver Comet

Trail and Linear Park at the end of Lindley Road in Powder Springs. It will connect multiple schools, parks, and businesses, and increasing access to the Silver Comet Trail.

As illustrated on the map on page xx, two major trail heads are proposed along the Austell Powder Springs Road Trail. One in Clarkdale Park and the other at Legion Field Park.

In order to achieve the desired outcomes of the plan, strategic investments to grow and improve the network of greenways and trails throughout the County were proposed in specific focus areas. These focus areas represent opportunities for investments in biking and walking infrastructure and places to consider for gap-filling and network expansion.

Using data on propensity for biking and walking; Equitable Target Areas; designated regional activity centers; county-level activity centers; proximity to schools and to transit stops; and opportunities to fill gaps in the current trail network, the plan identifies geographic areas in which to focus future gap-filling and network expansion projects. Downtown Austell was identified as one of those areas.



Chapter 2

Existing Conditions



“I love the small town feel and the fact that Downtown Austell has so much potential.”

- Survey Respondent



DEMOGRAPHICS

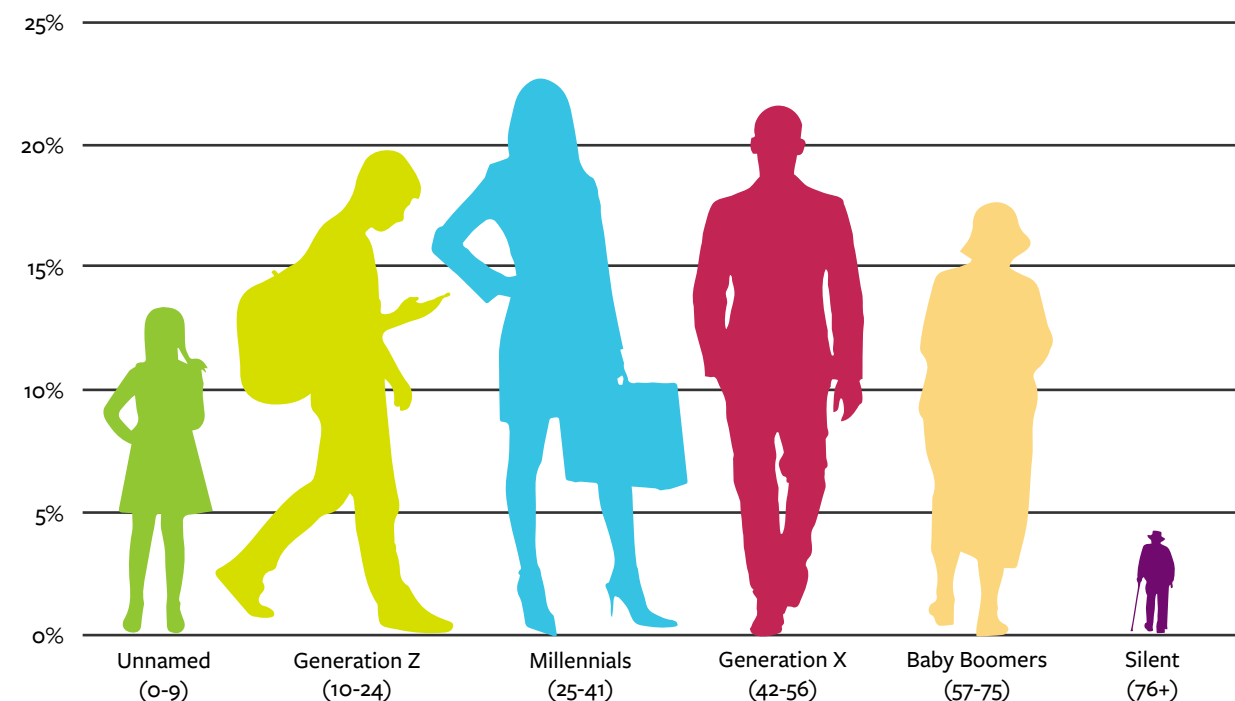
Population

The LCI study area has an estimated 775 residents, about 10% of the city's residents. Austell has an estimated 7,218 residents. Population growth in Austell has been steady, but it lags behind Cobb County's growth.



Age Distribution

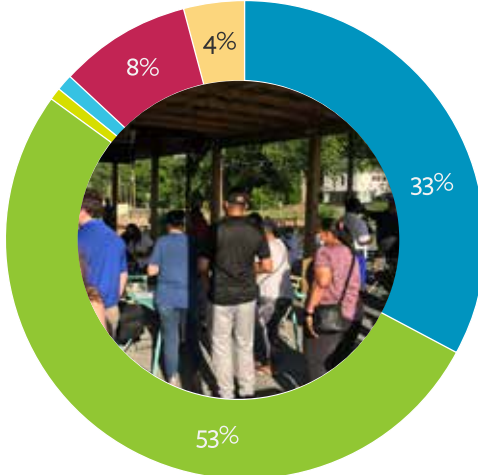
Austell has a higher presence of those who belong to Generation X and people under 10 years of age. A third of Austell's residential population consists of people age 24 or younger. Approximately one out of every five people in Austell is older than age 57. Overall, these age distribution patterns point to an opportunity to expand the housing stock in downtown Austell to provide a wider variety of options, like loft apartments for singles and young professionals, housing for families with children, smaller homes for empty-nesters, and age-restricted senior housing.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Race & Ethnicity

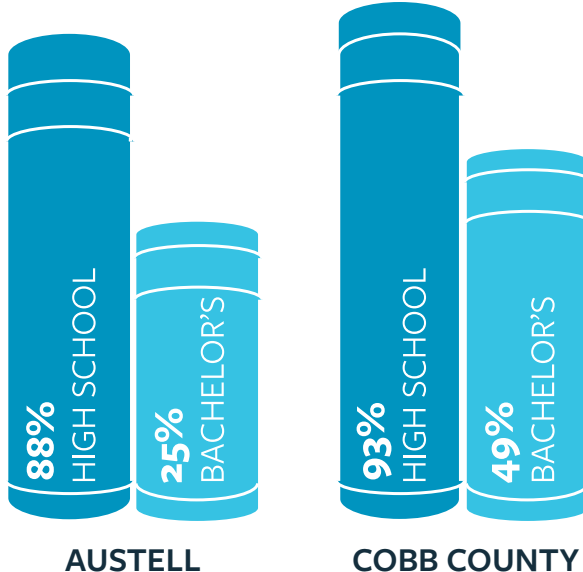
Austell's racial composition is much more diverse than that of Cobb County. The study area, city, and PMA have a very similar demographic breakdown with Black / African Americans making up a majority of the population.



- White Alone
- Black/African American Alone
- American Indian/Alaskan Native Alone
- Asian Alone
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Alone
- Some Other Race Alone
- Two or More Races

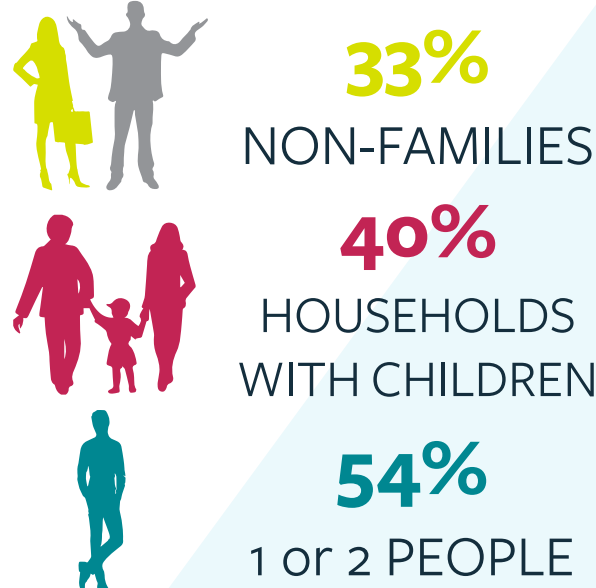
Educational Attainment

Austell lags behind Cobb County in terms of higher levels of educational attainment. Approximately 55% of Austell's residents have earned a two-year degree or higher, compared to 75% in Cobb County. Cobb County has a higher percentage of their population with four-year and advanced degrees.



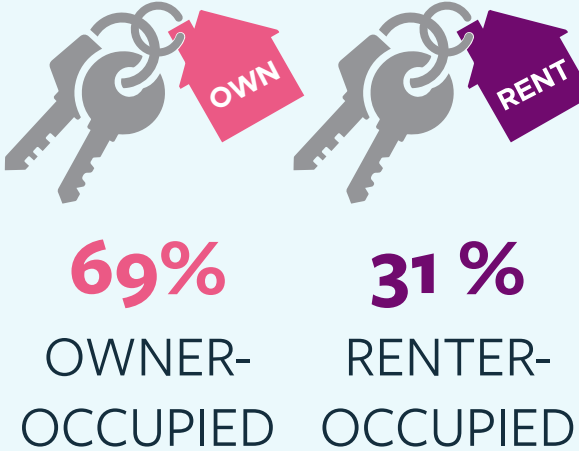
Household Size

A third of households in Austell are made up of non-family households where unrelated people reside (singles, roommates, unmarried couples, etc). 40% of households have children. A slight majority of households in Austell are smaller households consisting of one to two people. While 46% of Austell households have more than three people, an overwhelming 76% of houses in Austell are single-family detached homes, which points to a potential demand for smaller housing units or multi-family.



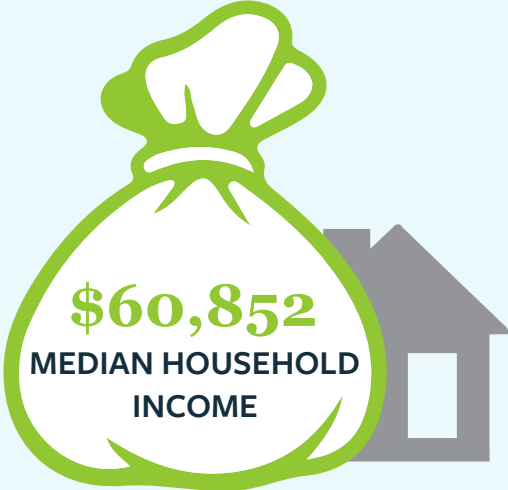
Housing Tenure

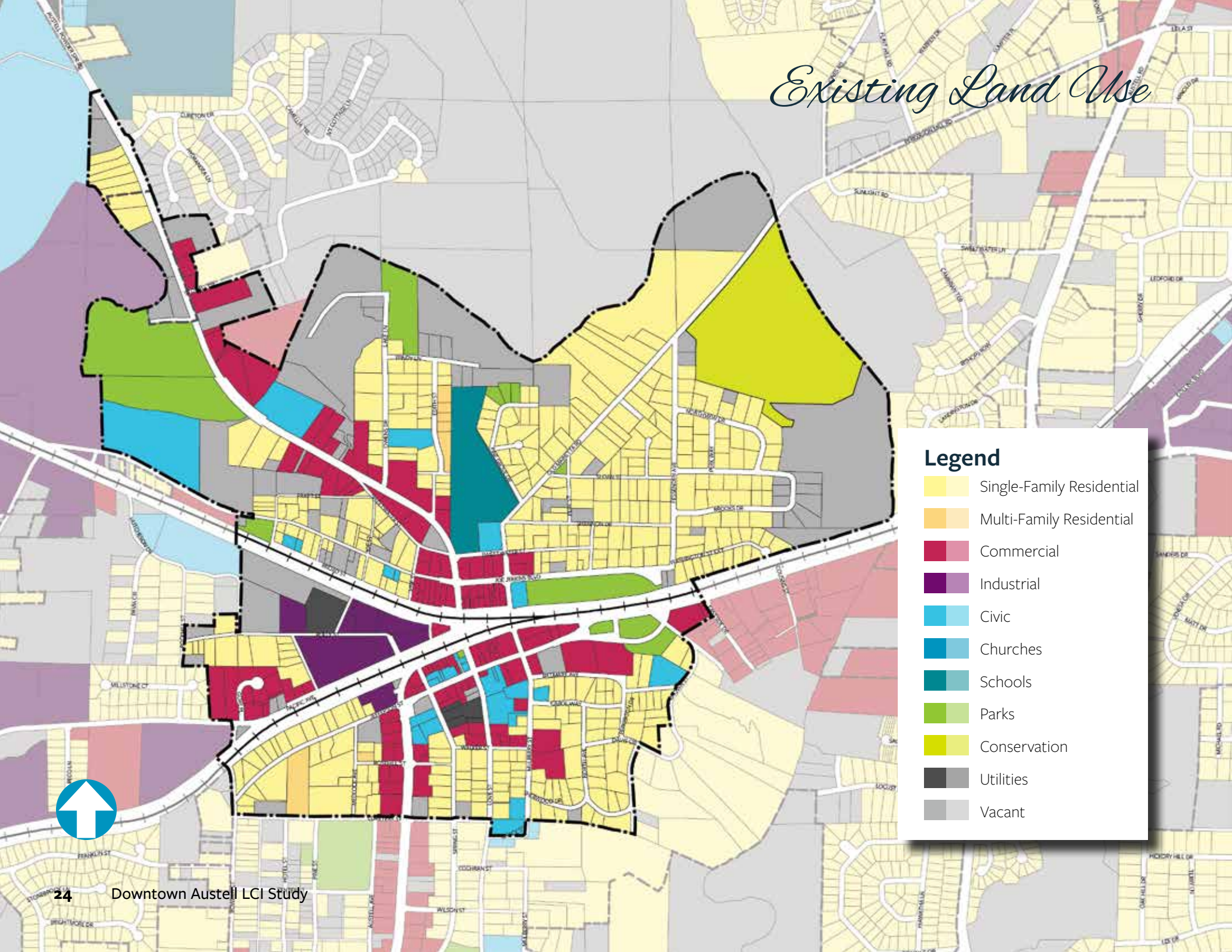
Austell has 2,633 total occupied housing units consisting mostly of owner-occupied households. The tenure composition among the study area, Austell, the PMA, and Cobb County are all dominated by owner-occupied units. However, Austell has a slightly higher rate of owner-occupied housing units (69%) than the PMA (64%) and Cobb County (66%). The study area has a higher percentage of renter-occupied units because of its downtown character compared to the more suburban nature of other parts of the city.



Household Income

The median household income in Austell is \$17,000 less than Cobb County. 42% of Austell households earn less than \$50,000 annually, compared to 27% in Cobb County. Austell has a robust middle class: 39% of Austell's households earn incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000. 2% of Austell households earn more than \$100,000 annually, compared to 44% of Cobb County households.





LAND USE

Land Use Mix

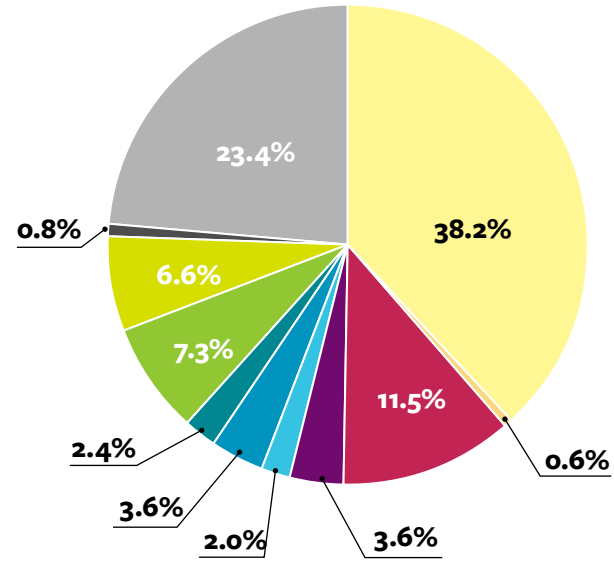
The two land uses that dominate the study area are single-family residential (38.2%) and commercial (11.3%). Commercial lands include mostly include restaurants, antique stores, auto repair shops and garages, warehouses, and some offices. They are most concentrated along the main road corridors, including Austell-Powder Springs Road, Veterans Memorial Highway, Broad Street, Jefferson Street, and Joe Jerkins Boulevard.

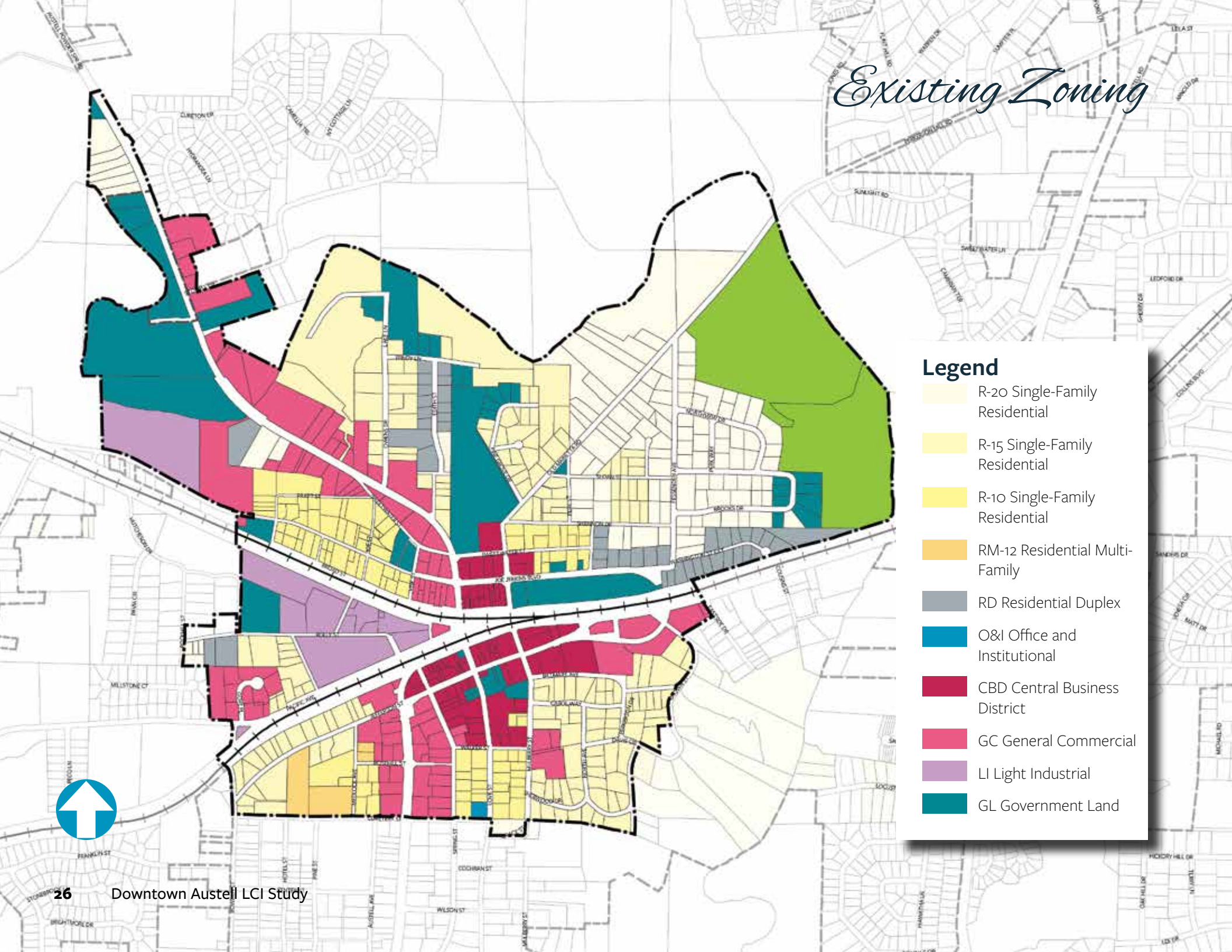
Although industrial land and utilities currently make up about 4.5% of land, they have a massive impact on perceptions of the downtown area and the overall look and feel. Vacant land without buildings makes up about 23.4% of all study area. However, most of this land is not developable due to the presence of floodplains and stream buffers. The vacant lands that are not located in a floodplain or stream buffer are limited and scattered throughout the study area.

Industrial uses like what is seen in the study area are not as ideal because they can be perceived as a nuisance to residents and businesses. About 22% of the study area is made up of lands devoted to public uses: schools, churches, public parks, land set aside for conservation, and civic uses. While these places provide reasons for people to patron downtown (business at city hall, attending worship services on Sundays, visiting the parks, etc.), these lands are often tax-exempt and do not generate the revenue that is necessary to fund capital improvements. There could be more land devoted to residential and mixed-use development in order to create more tax revenue and a critical mass for both new and existing businesses.

Analysis

This land use mix could be improved. Ideally, each parcel would house its highest (densest) and best use. Having commercial uses at the core and residential uses at the periphery is a good arrangement of uses, however, the majority of non-vacant land parcels are at their best use, but not at their highest use. For example, many commercial parcels have one-story buildings that do not generate much activity or tax dollars. If those buildings had additional stories with usable commercial or residential space, then they would be considered a higher use.





LAND USE

Zoning

Development in Austell is regulated through a city-wide zoning ordinance. Understanding the current zoning and what it allows / does not allow illustrates what is possible for new development today and what needs to change in order to fulfill the vision set forth in this plan.

Zoning Districts

The study area is regulated by nine zoning districts: five residential, three commercial, and one industrial. Some areas are designated “GL - Government Land” which means they are owned by a governmental body, such as the City of Austell, Cobb County, the State of Georgia, or the federal government. The residential districts allow a spectrum of housing types and densities, ranging from single-family detached dwellings on half-acre lots to multi-family residential up to twelve units per acre in density. The three main commercial districts (O&I Office Institutional, CBD Central Business District, and GC General Commercial) allows a mix of uses.

Analysis

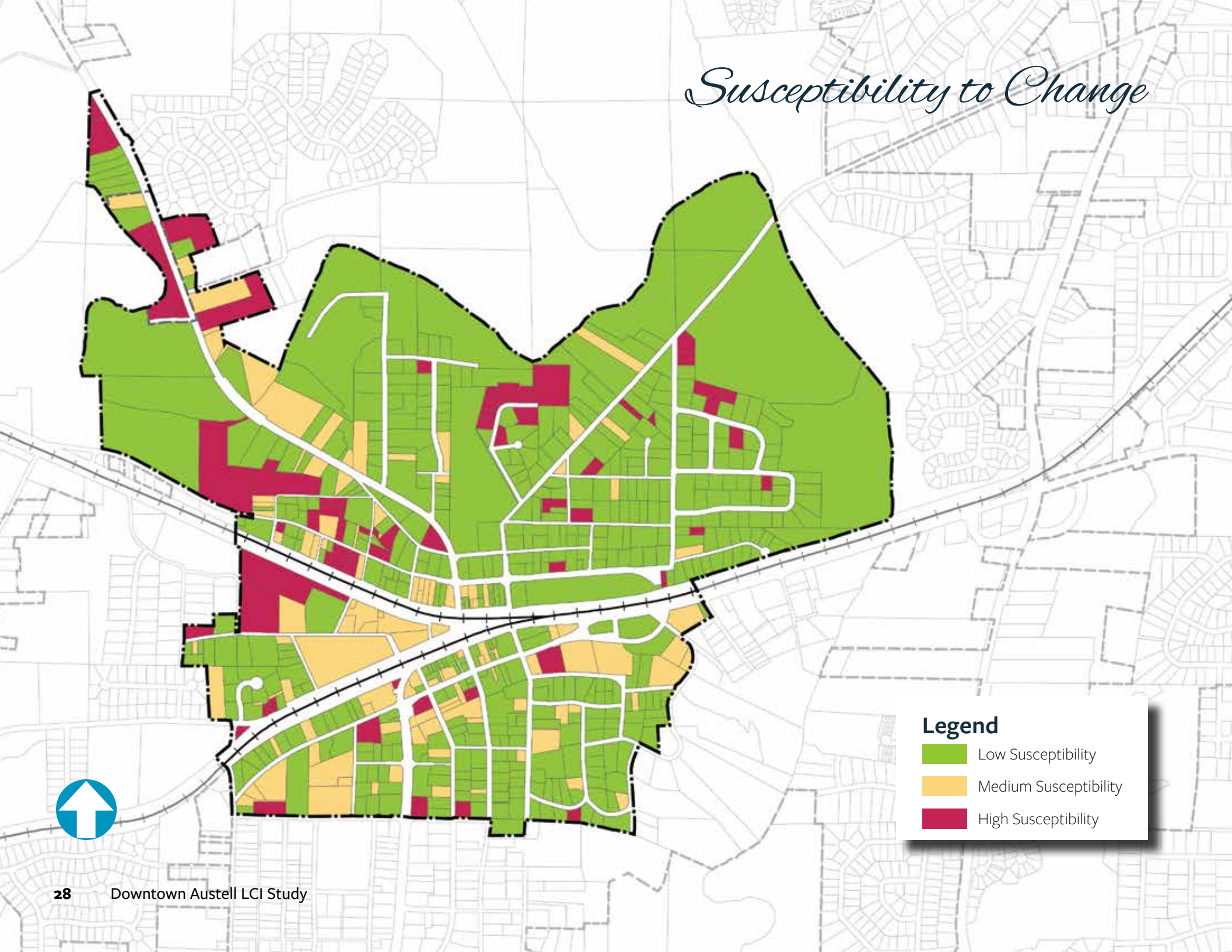
Overall, there are aspects of the zoning ordinance that could be addressed to better support any new development or redevelopment:

- » Downtown Austell will need higher residential densities than those permitted in order to get the critical residential mass required for a vibrant downtown. Currently, the maximum residential densities are not conducive to downtown residential development. The R-20 district permits density of up to 1.75 units per acre for single-family detached homes, R-15 allows up to 2.1 units per acre, and R-10 allows up to 3.5 units per acre. RD allows up to 4 units per acre for duplex developments. However, RM-12 allows up to 12 units per acre for multi-family developments, which is a step in the right direction, but, it could stand to be increased.
- » Some of the lot standards for residential districts encourage more suburban-style development, which

is appropriate for the rest of Austell but not for the downtown area.

- » The CBD Central Business District does not permit as many uses as would be appropriate for a downtown district. For example, it does not permit any residential uses, particularly townhomes, duplexes, multi-family, and high-rise apartment buildings, nor does it permit churches, some restaurant types, neighborhood-scale retail, enclosed farmers markets, some office types, and nightclubs, to name a few examples. Many of these are permitted in GC General Commercial (except for residential uses), which much of the study area is zoned.
- » Nothing in the zoning ordinance explicitly promotes vertical mixed use development. There are two ways this could be addressed: the CBD Central Business District could be rewritten to include language permitting mixed-use developments, or a new zoning district specific to mixed use development could be written.

Susceptibility to Change



LAND USE

Susceptibility to Change

The map on the left shows which parcels are most susceptible for either new development or redevelopment. Parcels that have low susceptibility to change include lands that are located in floodplains and therefore constrained for development, structures not in need of rehabilitation,

newly constructed or renovated buildings, high quality single-family housing, and civic uses like the churches, some City buildings, and historic buildings.

Medium susceptibility, in this case, indicates buildings that are incompatible in their use or appearance in relation to their surroundings, land uses that can relocate or change, or buildings starting to show signs of deterioration or in need of cosmetic

changes. Underutilized structures in this category could represent opportunities for adaptive reuse.

Parcels that are highly susceptible to change include parcels where the land value exceeds the building's value, vacant land or buildings, structures that are distressed or failing, surface parking lots, incompatible or unwanted land uses, or any development that is not likely to remain for the foreseeable future.



Low Susceptibility

- » Good appearance
- » Relatively newer
- » Important community resource
- » No signs of decay
- » Unique character
- » Difficult to develop or redevelop



Medium Susceptibility

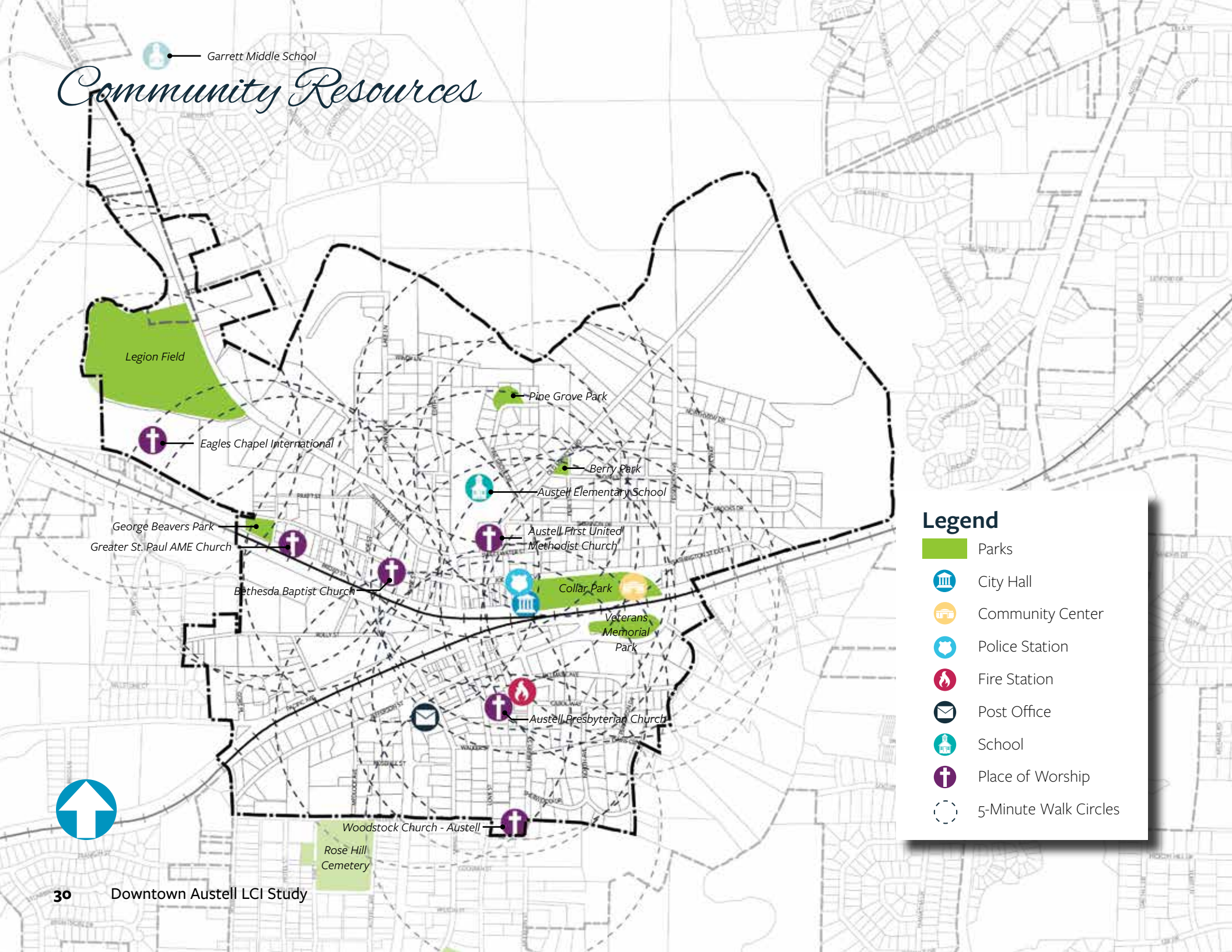
- » Average to fair condition
- » Cosmetic decline or signs of deterioration
- » Potential change in use of structure or the land



High Susceptibility

- » Distressed or failing
- » Highly visible decay
- » Land value exceeds building value
- » Vacant land or building

Community Resources



LAND USE

Community Resources

Community resources include places where people gather, such as schools, churches, parks, and public facilities that provide important and necessary services for everyday life. Austell has a diverse collection of community resources within its downtown.

The analysis map to the left shows how the railroad disconnects many community resources away from each other. City Hall, the police station, Collar Community Center, and Austell Elementary School are located to the north, and the post office and fire station are to the south. While many of these resources are less than a half-mile apart (geographically), they feel disconnected from one another.

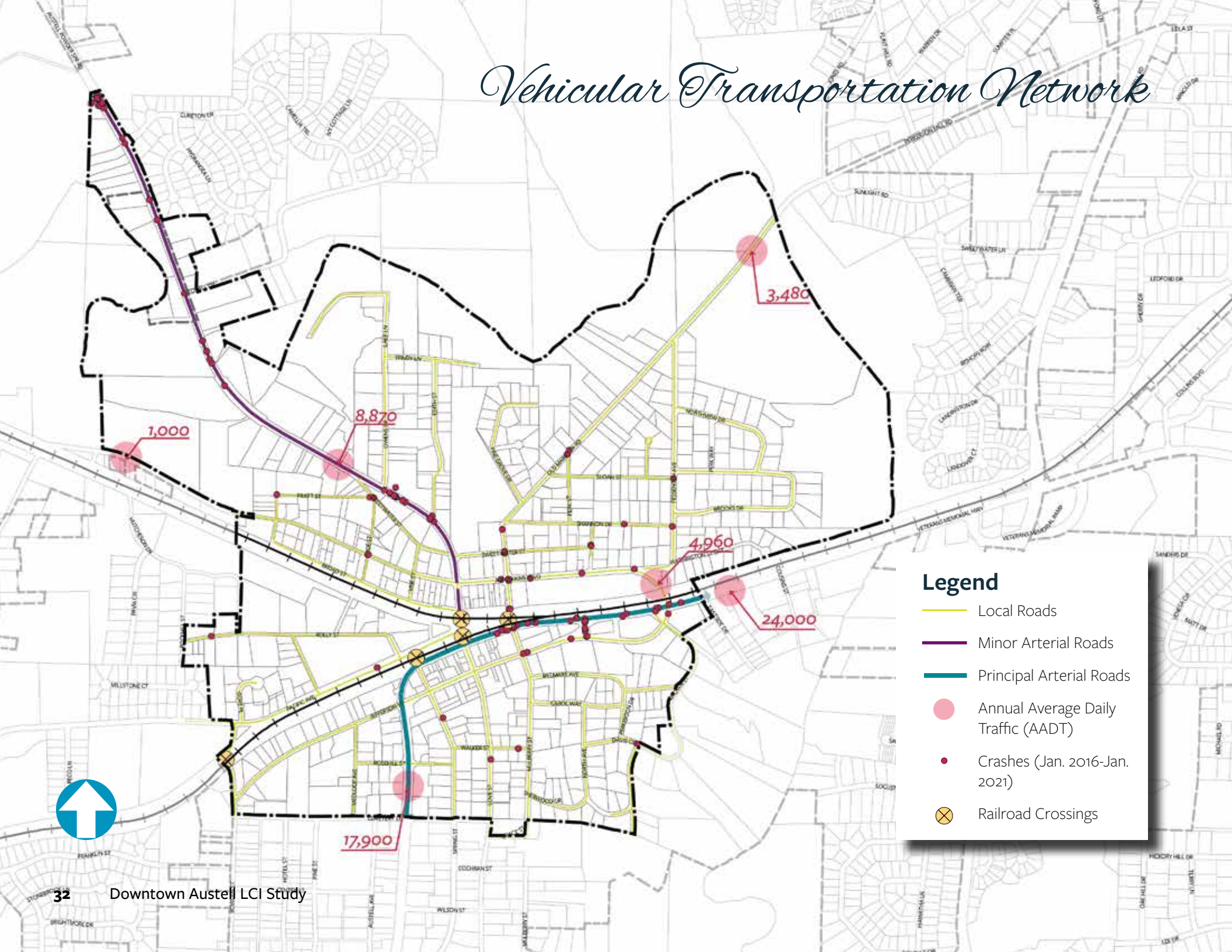
The study area has six public parks all located north of the railroad tracks: Legion Field, Collar Park, Veterans Memorial Park, George Beavers Park, Pine Grove Park, and Berry Park.

Each park provides amenities to not only Downtown Austell, but the rest of the city:

- » Legion Field features a sand volleyball court, green space, a gazebo, covered pavilion, playground area for children, and outdoor gym. Its walking trail has a scenic view of Sweetwater Creek.
- » Collar Park has a covered pavilion and a newer restroom facility to host both public and private events, as well as a playground and tennis court.
- » Veterans Memorial Park is a passive park dedicated to veterans of all wars. Its focal point is a granite monument with all seven branches of service represented.
- » George Beavers Park is an active park with a playground, pavilion, and basketball court.
- » Pine Grove park is a small neighborhood park with a playground with swings.
- » Berry Park is a passive, pocket park with areas to set up camping chairs and enjoy nature.

The map on the facing page shows how close many of these resources are to each other. The walk circles represent a quarter-mile radius (geographically) which reflects about five minutes of walking. Most of the study area is within a five minute walk of a community resource. This shows that Downtown Austell has many pockets of walkability, but connecting is challenging because of the railroad.

Vehicular Transportation Network



Legend

- Local Roads
- Minor Arterial Roads
- Principal Arterial Roads
- Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)
- Crashes (Jan. 2016-Jan. 2021)
- ⊗ Railroad Crossings

TRANSPORTATION

Overview

In order to determine Downtown Austell's transportation needs for the future, the existing vehicular and non-vehicular network needed to be studied. The existing roadway classifications, traffic counts, crash data, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and public transit for the city were examined within the study area.

Vehicular Network Roadway Classifications

Understanding the classification of roadways is an important step when seeking to make pedestrian and bicycle improvements within the right-of-way (ROW). The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) provides a ranking system for roads based on their number of lanes and traffic volume known as functional classes. The map on the facing page shows the roads within the study area based on this classification system.

Within Downtown Austell study area, three types of roads were identified:

1. Principal arterial: Veterans Memorial Highway
2. Minor arterial: Austell-Powder Springs Road
3. Local streets: Remainder of the study area

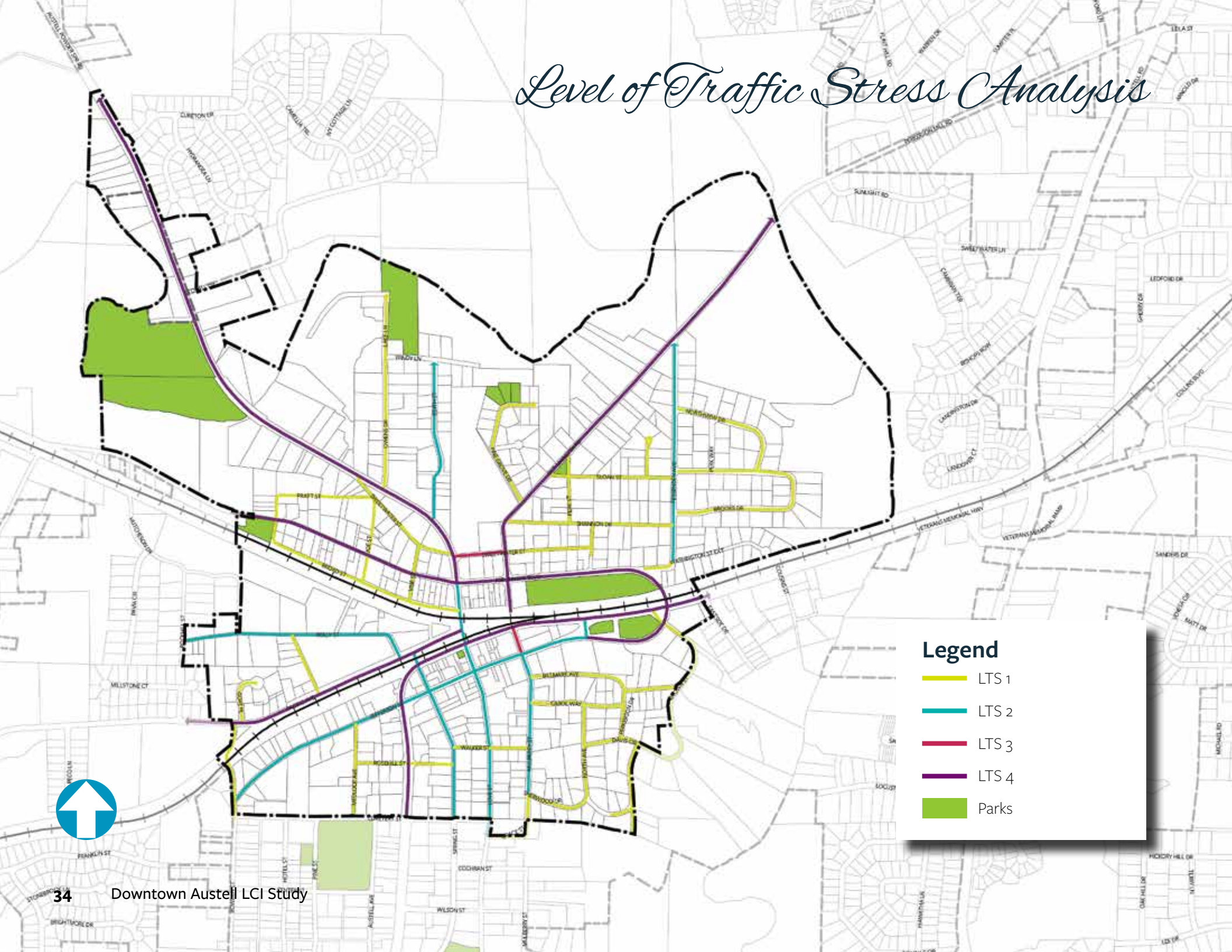
Traffic Counts

Additionally, GDOT has six traffic counting devices that provide Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) information within and near the study. The data from these counting devices are also illustrated on the map to the left. The data showed Veterans Memorial Highway having the highest traffic volume in the study area with an AADT of 17,900. Powder Springs Road had an AADT of 8,870, and Joe Jerkins Boulevard had an AADT of 4,960. While facilitating mobility in and out of downtown, these streets also have the potential to serve as pedestrian and bicycle barriers due to their high traffic volume and potential vehicular speeds. The findings from this analysis are used to develop a Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) discussed on pages 34-37.

Crash Data

Crash data from between January of 2016 and January of 2021 was collected to build a better understanding of which areas had the greatest need for safety improvements. With 422 collisions reported in that timeframe, Veterans Memorial Highway proved to be an area of concern moving forward, especially near its intersections at Spring Street, Love Street, and Jefferson Street Connector in Downtown Austell. Another area of concern was Austell-Powder Springs Road near its intersections at Garrett Middle School, Joe Jerkins Boulevard, and Veterans Memorial Highway.

Level of Traffic Stress Analysis



Legend

- LTS 1
- LTS 2
- LTS 3
- LTS 4
- Parks

TRANSPORTATION

Non-Vehicular Network Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities

The pedestrian and bicycle existing conditions analysis included a Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) analysis. This analysis helps identify streets that are most suitable for bicycling with traffic by classifying streets into four categories. These categories range from LTS 1, which suggests streets that are suitable for bicycling by users of all ages and abilities, to LTS 4, which suggests streets that are suitable for only the most experienced and confident riders. The findings from this analysis are then used to explore the appropriate bicycle facilities to use to ensure users of all abilities are able to safely and comfortably travel within the study area.

Level of Traffic Stress Criteria

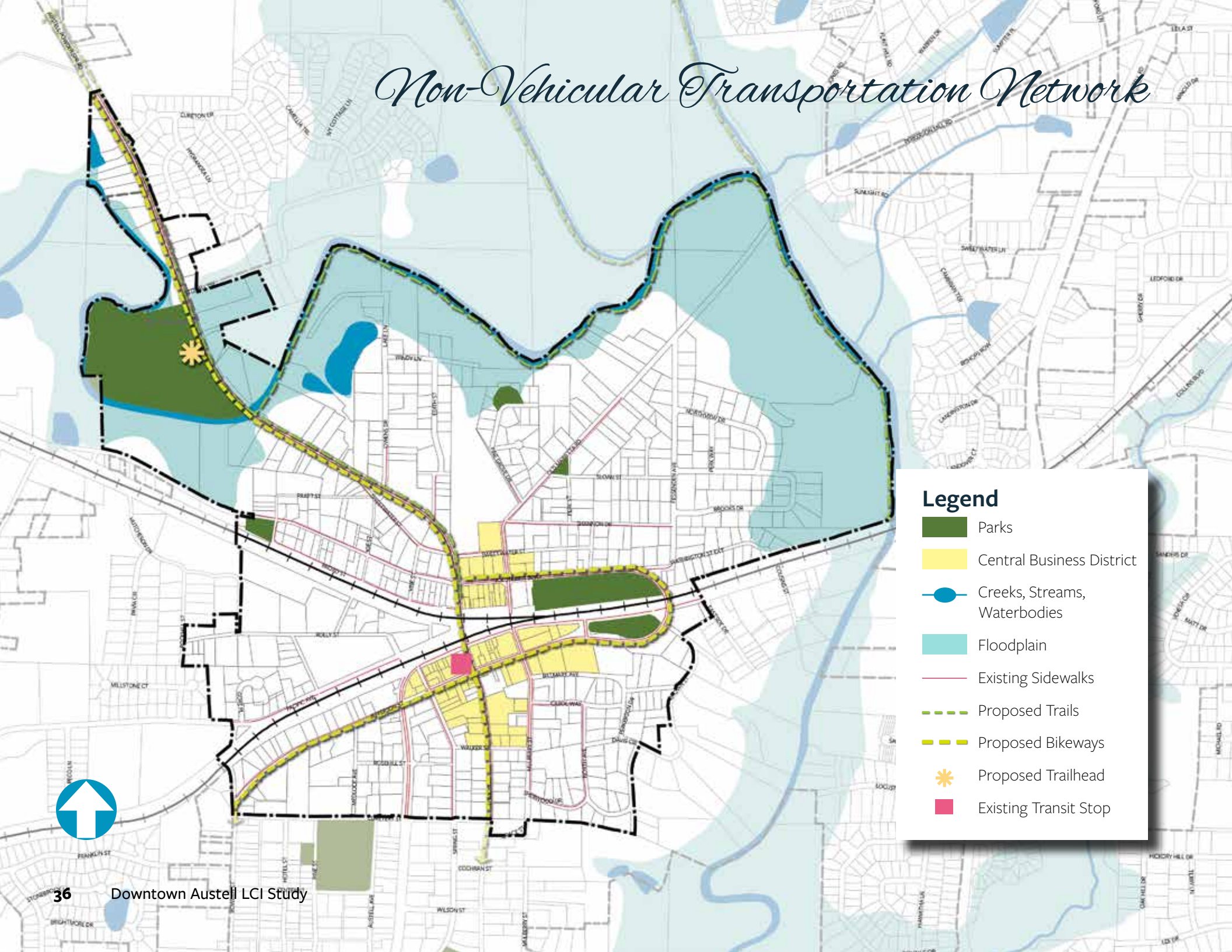
	LTS 1	LTS 2	LTS 3	LTS 4
Through lanes per direction	1	1	≤ 2	Any
Traffic volume (AADT)	≤ 2,000	≤ 6,000	≤ 14,000	Any
Functional class	Local	Local	Collector (or less)	Arterial
Speed limit	≤ 25 mph	≤ 30 mph	≤ 55 mph	Any

The table above identifies the LTS criteria used and the map on the facing page illustrates this criteria based on available data provided by the City of Austell and collected by the consultants. It is important to note that since traffic volume data was not available for local roads, this criterion was not included in the analysis of these streets. Additional analysis would have to be completed to confirm the results.

This analysis shows that a few of the key streets that penetrate the downtown core appear to have a high level of traffic stress. For example, Austell-Powder Springs Road, Old Marietta Road/Mulberry Street, Jefferson Street, Veterans Memorial Highway, and Humphries Hill Road appear

to have an LTS of 4. Sweetwater Street between Powder Springs and Mulberry Street/Old Marietta Road and Mulberry Street between Veterans Memorial Highway and Jefferson Street appear to have an LTS of 3. This suggests that current traffic conditions in these streets are suitable for the most experienced bicycle riders to share the road with vehicles. In order for these streets to be suitable for all users, either traffic volumes and speeds need to be reduced, or bicycle facilities should be separated from traffic. Separated facilities to consider may include a multi-use trail/shared-used path or protected cycle track.

Non-Vehicular Transportation Network



TRANSPORTATION

The remainder of the streets within the study area appear to have an LTS of 1 and 2. Streets with an LTS of 2 suggest the need for some type of on-road separated bicycle facility such as a buffered bike lane or a bike lane to facilitate bicycling along the street for users of all abilities. Streets with an LTS of 1 suggest the need for sharrow markings and potential traffic calming measures to ensure that bicycle riders of all abilities can share the road safely with vehicles. The potential to provide these facilities within Downtown Austell was explored during the visioning phase of this LCI study.

Public Transit

Cobb County has a transit service that connects Cumberland Transfer Center to MARTA's H.E. Holmes Station. The CobbLinc, Route 25, runs weekdays from 5:00am to 11:00pm, Saturday from 7:00am to 10:00pm, and Sunday from 7:00am to 6:00pm. The transit has six stops within the city limits of Austell.

Cobb County has a bus service that provides curbside pick-up at a collection point at each hour. The CobbLinc Flex bus runs weekdays from 7:00am to 7:00pm. The bus operates only in the designated zone, which is Zone 3 for Downtown Austell. The bus will stop anywhere within the designated zone, as well as connect to CobbLinc's Route 30.

EMPLOYMENT & WORKFORCE

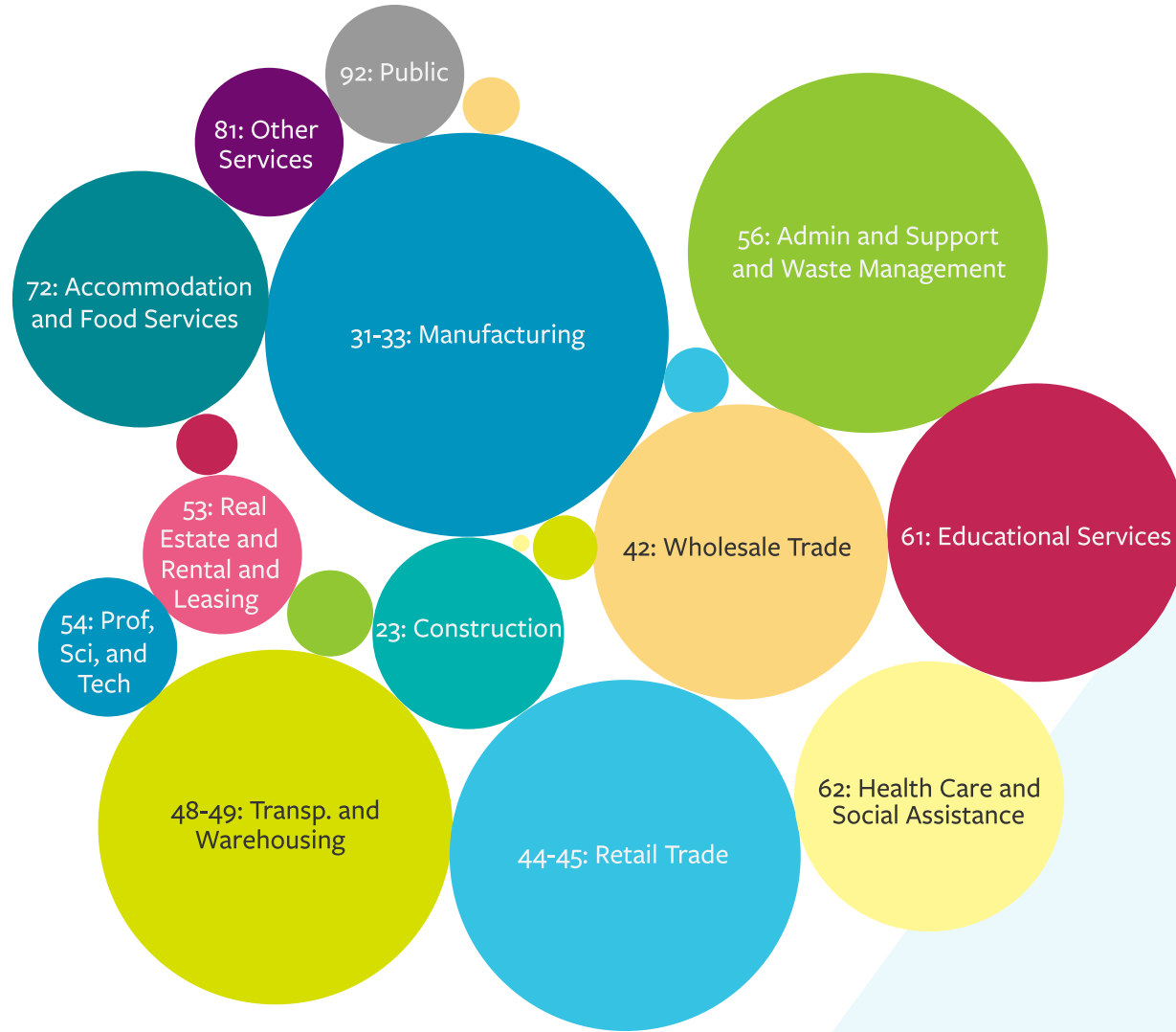
Employment Estimate by Sector

Approximately 13,283 people, or 4% of Cobb County’s workforce, work within the PMA. Manufacturing is the top sector, representing over 2,182 jobs or 16.4% of the PMA’s primary jobs.

The graphic to the right illustrates the size of the Market Area’s employment sectors, which correspond with the number of jobs in each sector.

The PMA’s top four employment sectors can be attributed to the surrounding warehouses for Coca-Cola, Amazon Fulfillment Center, Staples Fulfillment Center and Distribution Warehouse, Amware Fulfillment Center, and TJ Maxx Distribution Center.

Many of the jobs that make up most of the PMA’s workforce are at the middle to lower end of the average annual wage spectrum. The largest employment sector in the PMA, manufacturing, has an average annual wage of over \$76,000.



Employment Growth by Sector

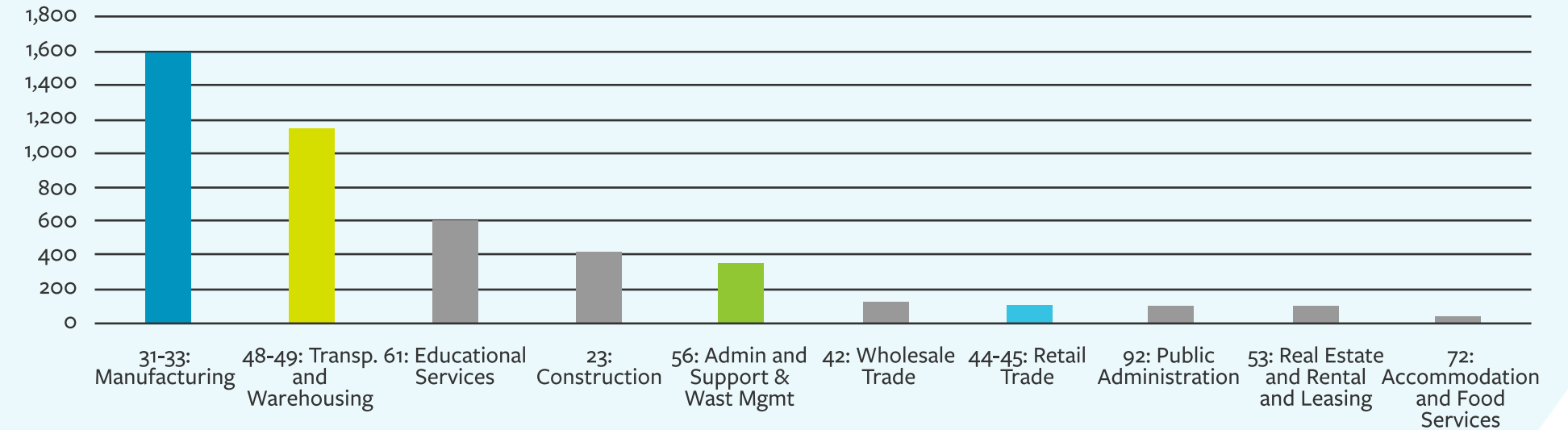
The manufacturing and transportation and warehousing sectors made up 60% of the PMA’s employment growth in the last decade. Since 2010, these are the two employment sectors that have grown the most, followed by educational services and construction. The growth in manufacturing and transportation and warehousing sectors has impacted the PMA’s employment market, attracting a portion of metro Atlanta’s growth in the logistics sectors.

Employment by Sector: Share of Cobb County Jobs

While the PMA is home to only 4% of Cobb County’s overall jobs, many employment sectors in the area garner greater than their “fair share” of the county’s jobs. These industries hold a competitive advantage locally because their employment productivity exceeds the local market’s needs. Many of these industries are already present in Downtown Austell. The current and future built environment and

market dynamics in the study area can nurture the industries’ local competitive advantages, attracting more new companies and jobs into the area, strengthening the local economy and driving demand for real estate. The variety of these “target industries” for Downtown Austell bodes well for the potential growth of retail and office markets. The key to turning the competitive advantage into a more active downtown is to provide amenities, incentives, operational support, and a built environment that positions Downtown Austell as a “preferred location” for these industries.

Top 10 Employment Sectors by Growth, 2010-2020



HOUSING

Residential Assessment Housing Type

Austell’s housing distribution is heavily oriented toward single-family detached homes. The housing composition of the study area and Austell are similar, while Cobb County has more similar compositions. The most considerable difference is in the amount of large multi-family buildings in each geography.

While large multi-family buildings make up 6% of the total housing stock in Austell, they make up more in the County. This aligns with recent post-Recession development trends, including robust growth of multi-family units in other parts of Cobb County, whereas Austell continues to develop single-family detached housing.

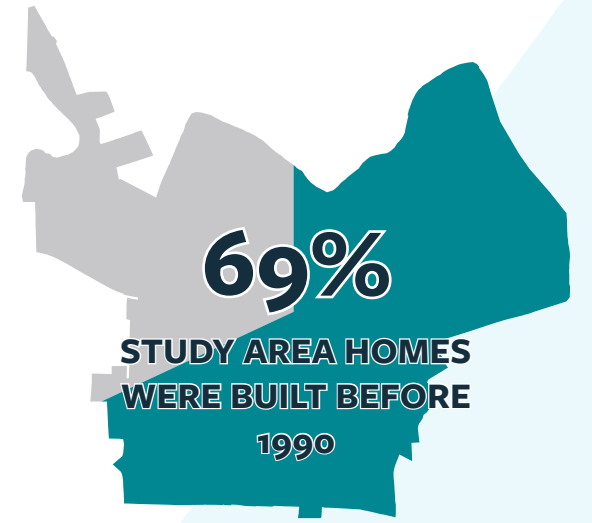
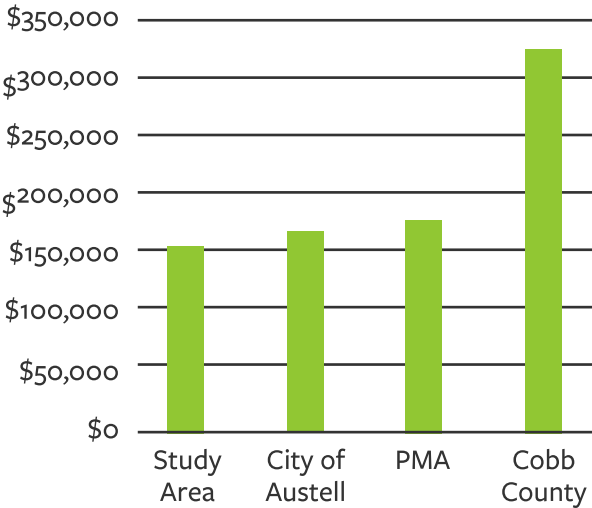


Value & Age

A vast majority of Austell’s for-sale homes are valued at less than \$200,000, which is similar to that of the study area, but vastly different than Cobb County. Cobb County’s housing market skews towards the higher end with almost a quarter of all for-sale homes valued at more than \$500,000, compared to 1% in Austell.

The age of housing in the study area and the rest of Austell is consistent with larger county-wide development trends. The development patterns are likely so similar because the nature of suburban development is so closely tied to larger economic cycles. The development boom of the 2000s was met with the Great Recession, which undoubtedly impacted the scale and pace of development since 2010.

Median Home Value



Apartment Market Pricing & Vacancy Trends

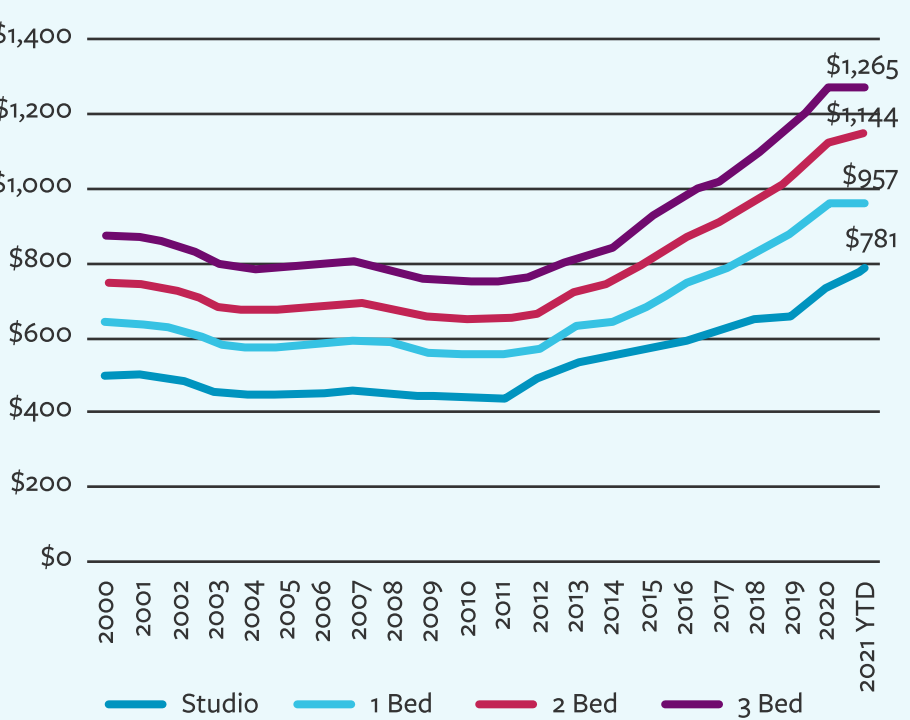
There has been little significant change in Austell’s multi-family inventory during the past two decades, despite the growth of multi-family units in the Atlanta region over that same timeframe. The newest Austell apartment units were delivered in 2003. The decline in the number of multi-family units since then is likely due to demolition.

Since 2000, the vacancy rate has trended downward, despite the consistency in the number of multi-family units. As a rule of thumb, a “healthy” vacancy rate should be between 4% and 6%. One reason for the changes in vacancy rate over the last decade could be the growth of multi-family in other parts of metro Atlanta, which gives potential households more options and housing variety from which to choose.

Apartment Inventory Overview

Multi-family rents have increased dramatically in Austell since 2010. The increase in multi-family rents is likely due to two reasons: first, the regional growth in multi-family demand since the end of the Great Recession puts upward pressure on prices, and second, the supply of multi-family units in Austell has not grown since 2003. The multi-family market could be supply-constrained with insufficient supply to meet demand. This situation would also put upward pressure on Austell’s multi-family rents.

Average Rent Per Unit



REAL ESTATE ASSESSMENT

Multifamily	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	9	40	387
Existing Units	228	5,703	72,390
Vacancy Rate	5.6%	5.6%	7.6%
Average Rent/SF	\$0.71	\$1.07	\$1.26
Retail	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	98	290	3,576
Existing SF	552,424	2,222,144	48,095,699
Vacancy Rate	0.8%	2.3%	5.0%
Average Rent/SF	\$7.21	\$10.40	\$15.26
Office	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	36	112	2,445
Existing SF	140,151	792,501	42,352,823
Vacancy Rate	1.3%	6.1%	12.2%
Average Rent/SF	\$18.00	\$9.91	\$23.77
Industrial/Flex	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	100	245	1,586
Existing SF	1,904,841	7,166,984	63,492,733
Vacancy Rate	0.1%	4.9%	5.3%
Average Rent/SF	N/A	\$4.79	\$6.52

Commercial Assessment

Real Estate Inventory Comparative Overview

The study area and Austell have seen very little new commercial real estate development in the last two decades. Since 2000, there has been:

- » No new multi-family;
- » A net increase of two new office developments;
- » A net increase of two new retail developments; and
- » A net increase of 10 new industrial/ flex developments.

Vacancy rates in the city tend to be relatively low, showing that space is well utilized, with few empty spaces. However, vacancy rates that are too low ensure that new businesses can find it difficult to access space in the area. Average commercial rental rates within Austell lag both the PMA and Cobb County, except for office:

- » Retail – 112% lower than average rents
- » Office – 32% lower than average rents but 82% higher than the PMA

Retail Inventory

The retail space within Austell has a lower vacancy rate than the PMA and Cobb County overall. Over the past decade, there has been a net increase of two retail developments built in Austell, and there are currently no buildings under construction.

Retail uses make up the most frequent commercial real estate type in the PMA. The PMA’s retail sector tends to be smaller and older.

Most of the new retail development since 2000 has been spearheaded by regional or national chains and franchises. Clear retail patterns surround the most accessible corridors in the area, especially Veterans Memorial Highway and segments of Austell-Powder Springs Road.

Office Inventory

Office rents in Austell command higher prices than in the PMA but are still lower than rents in Cobb County. There is more than a \$6 per square foot difference between Austell office rents and the PMA. The price difference between Austell and the surrounding three miles is likely due to Downtown Austell’s presence, which the real estate market clearly sees as an amenity.

Office vacancy rates in the PMA are much lower compared to Cobb County. The increase in office vacancy rates in the last year could be related to a rise in teleworking and working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The largest concentration of office space in Austell is in the downtown area. Outside of the study area, most of the total office square footage lies outside of Austell along Austell-Powder Springs Road. The office space located in Austell is smaller and older than office space along Austell Road and Austell-Powder Springs Road. The PMA makes up less than 2% of Cobb County’s total office space.

Industrial & Flex Inventory

Employment sectors related to industrial real estate have grown significantly since 2000, which has caused rents to increase and vacancy rates to remain low.

Industrial and flex uses combine to make up most of the square footage of commercial real estate types in the PMA. The increase of manufacturing jobs and transportation and warehousing jobs is associated with the rise in industrial and flex developments. The concentration of industrial uses in the study area and the rest of Austell run directly along the rail line that bisects the city.

REAL ESTATE DEMAND FORECAST

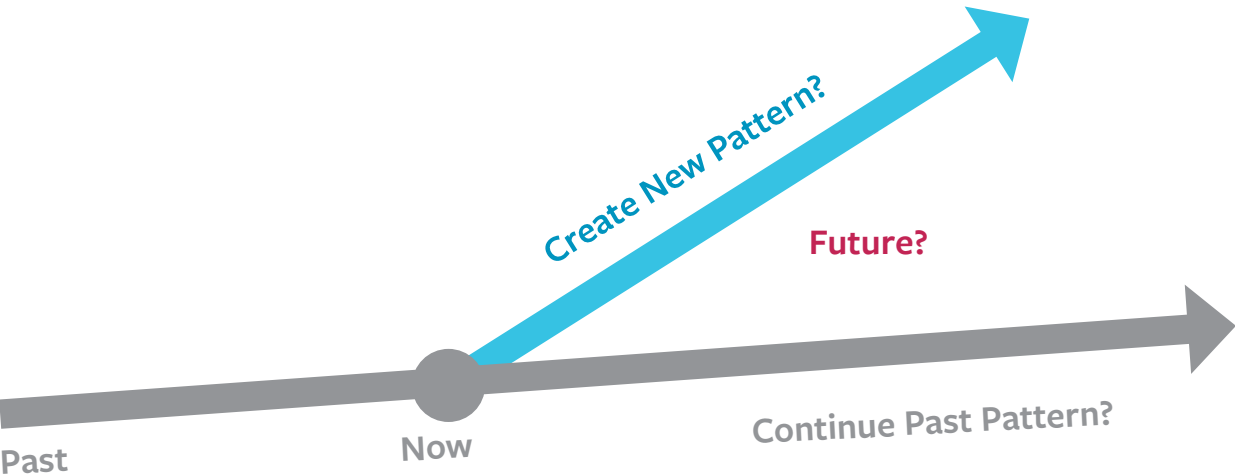
Overview

Located in one of the fastest-growing counties in metro Atlanta with a base of dedicated local commercial tenants and an engaged population, Downtown Austell is well-positioned for strategic intervention and investment. These factors signal the potential for the study area to build momentum and capture a larger share of growth and market demand that is happening in Cobb County.

Currently, the annual demand for new residences and retail space in the study area is modest. A continuation of the same trend will result in similar outcomes of the past 20 years.

This analysis details the demand for residential, retail, and office space as the best uses for Downtown Austell. Demand for industrial space was considered for this analysis, but ultimately not included based on the envisioned character of Downtown Austell and the variety of industrial uses that already exist in the PMA.

Choices for Austell



Demand Overview and Summary

The study area can catalyze both residential and commercial growth. Thoughtful interventions throughout the study area, expanded bike and pedestrian options, and quality placemaking initiatives, can drive demand in Downtown Austell.

Through household and employment growth, the study area has the potential to add over 330 residential units in the next five years and up to 25,000 square feet of commercial space over that same period of time. There is significant demand for housing types outside of the traditional single-family detached home and the ability to add multi-family.

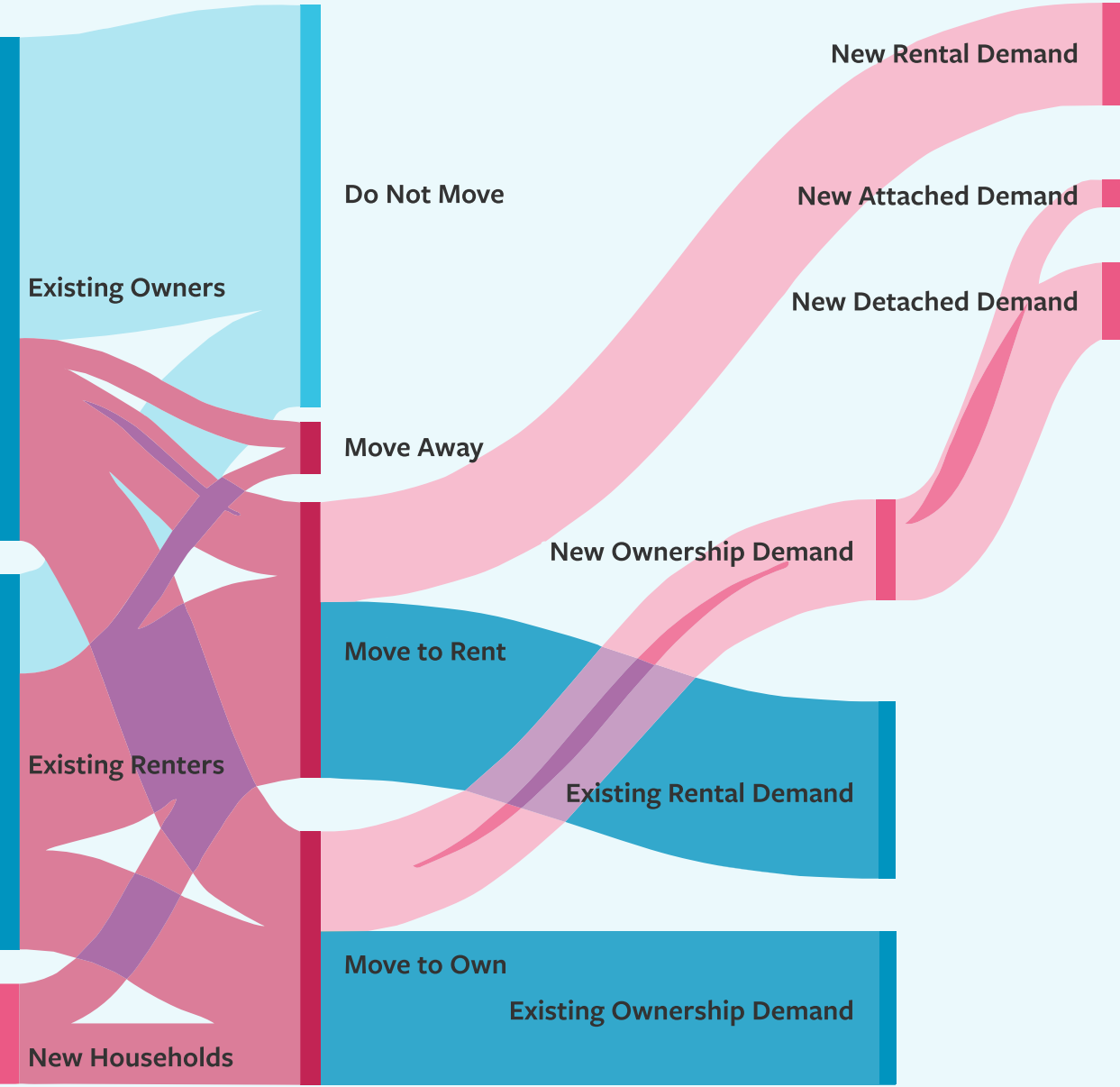
Combined, annual demand for new retail and office space is over 4,800 square feet of new space, with restaurants making up a significant portion of the retail demand.

An analytical model evaluated the potential housing outcomes of three household groups that will drive housing demand in the study area, as well as the rest of the city:

- » Turnover of owner-occupied households;
- » Turnover of renter-occupied households; and
- » New households.

For each demand pool, data from numerous sources was used to forecast outcomes that, taken as a whole, determine the level of local demand potential for new housing of various types at various price points.

The results provide local-level forecasts of achievable annual new-home production of for-rent and for-sale housing. The diagram to the right illustrates the process undertaken in the housing demand modeling process. This analysis factors in the forecasted demand for the study area that implements strategic intervention and investment.



REAL ESTATE DEMAND FORECAST

Residential Housing Demand

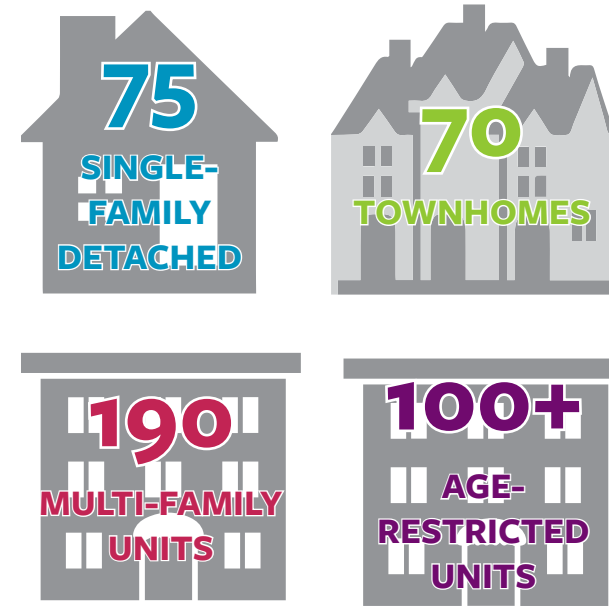
Given the need for additional housing to serve a variety of household types, there is an opportunity for new residential development in the study area. There is demand for approximately 70 new residential units annually for the next five years distributed among various housing types. The downtown residential market stands to gain momentum as new housing options are added and as thoughtful strategic intervention and investment are implemented as a result of this LCI study.

The demand for multi-family units will equal to one large multi-family development or several small to medium development in the next five years. Residential growth downtown in the next five years will impact future residential demand, gain momentum, and grow as downtown gains more units, commercial space, and amenities.

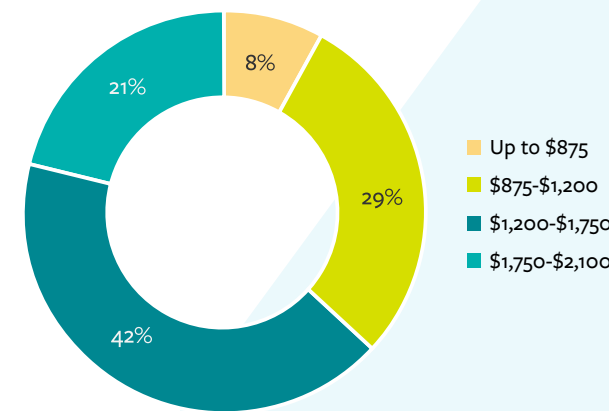
A majority of the new rental demand in Austell has monthly rents above \$1,200. This number is just above the current average rent of a 2-bedroom multi-family unit in Austell. However, as previously mentioned, the newest rental options in Austell are now at least 20 years old.

While this analysis identifies demand for market-rate units, it acknowledges that additional demand for housing exists from a segment of the population that cannot afford most market-rate housing options. Additional rental supply can help ease the upward pressure from the supply-constrained rental market.

Sufficient opportunity likely exists to add 150-200 naturally affordable or subsidized rental units over the next five years. Additionally, there is the opportunity for 100-150 age-restricted units (for households 55+) over the next five years.



Rental Cost Demand



Retail Demand

Based on expected growth in households, employment, and visitors, Austell's retail sector could support over 2,300 square feet of new or re-envisioned retail annually, or up to 12,000 square feet of retail over five years. Downtown Austell will support additional retail as new residential units and office space is developed because such development will generate more built-in spending power downtown and attract more visitors by making the downtown area more of a destination. These projections are

based on the premise that various market segments will drive additional retail support downtown.

Additional restaurant and food options are the most likely to capture future retail demand in Downtown Austell. Almost two-thirds of retail demand comes from eating and drinking establishments. Chef-centered restaurants are suitable tenants for downtown brick-and-mortar retail in a period when consumers buy most of their general goods through e-commerce or "big box" stores. A small local food market

(3,000-5,000 square feet) could likely find support once additional residential units are added nearby.

Office Demand

Based on the forecasted growth in employment by industry from the Atlanta Regional Commission, Austell could support approximately 2,500 square feet of new office space annually, or up to 13,000 square feet over 5 years. This net new space could be new construction or in refurbished spaces.

25,000 SF



Eating and Drinking Establishments



Food Market

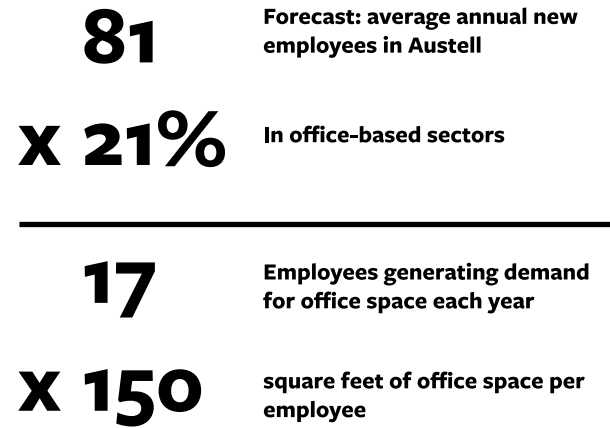


Office Space

REAL ESTATE DEMAND FORECAST

New Office Supply Character

The slow, incremental growth in new office space demand is likely too small to support a new stand-alone office building of significant size until Downtown Austell generates substantial redevelopment momentum. Instead, demand will likely be satisfied through smaller additions to supply — such as adaptive reuse of existing (non-office) buildings, live-work buildings, or office components incorporated into larger mixed-use projects.



12,000–13,000 square feet of net new office demand downtown over 5 years



SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Demographics

- » In the past two decades, population growth in Austell has been steady but is less than Cobb County's growth.
- » Austell's proportion of Cobb County's population has declined over the past two decades.
- » Austell has a robust middle-class that makes up a significant number of households but has fewer higher-earning households than Cobb County.
- » Austell's population is relatively younger than Cobb County.
- » The age distribution patterns point to an opportunity to expand the housing stock in downtown Austell to provide a wider variety of options for the households in various life stages.
- » Most of the households in Austell consist of 1 or 2 people.
- » Owner-occupied units dominate Austell's housing inventory.

- » To accelerate growth, the study area could benefit from a renewed mix of renter and owner options that appeals more to current and future households' characteristics.
- » Austell's racial composition is much more diverse than that of Cobb County's.
- » The majority of Austell residents have at least a high school diploma, but a smaller portion of residents have attained higher education levels.

Land Use

- » Downtown Austell's land use mix could be improved. Ideally, each parcel would house its highest (densest) and best use.
- » There could be more land devoted to residential and mixed-use development in order to create more tax revenue and a critical mass for both new and existing businesses.
- » (Re)development in Downtown Austell should focus on building more revenue-generating commercial space in the form of restaurants and boutique retail and increasing both the quality and quantity of residential units through increased density.
- » There are aspects of the zoning ordinance that could be addressed to better support new development or redevelopment, such as permitting higher residential densities, improved lot standards, and more permitted uses in the CBD Central Business District.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Transportation

- » Veterans Memorial Highway has the highest traffic volume in the study area with an average annual daily traffic count of 17,900.
- » While facilitating mobility in and out of downtown, these streets also have the potential to serve as pedestrian and bicycle barriers due to their high traffic volume and vehicular speeds. The findings from this analysis were used to develop a Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) analysis.
- » There are pockets of walkability in Downtown Austell, however, the presence of the railroad tracks makes walks longer and more cumbersome.
- » 422 collisions were reported between January 2016 and January 2021. Many of them were located along Veterans Memorial Highway, especially near the intersections at Spring Street, Love Street, and Jefferson Street Connector.
- » The LTS analysis shows that a few

of the key streets that penetrate the downtown core appear to have a high level of traffic stress. This suggests that current traffic conditions in these streets are suitable for the most experienced bicycle riders to share the road with vehicles. In order for these streets to be suitable for all users, either traffic volumes and speeds need to be reduced, or bicycle facilities should be separated from traffic.

Employment & Workforce

- » Approximately 55% of all the jobs in the PMA are within the sectors of manufacturing, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, administration and support, and waste management.
- » The PMA's surrounding presence of Coca-Cola, Amazon, Staples, and TJ Maxx and their accompanying distribution facilities contribute to the growth in logistics-related jobs in the area.

- » A tremendous change in manufacturing, transportation, and warehousing along with large losses in the utilities sector and other "white-collar" sectors occurred in the last decades. Despite losses, there was a net growth of approximately 2,513 jobs.
- » The largest employment sectors in the PMA tend to have middle- to low-paying average annual wages.
- » Approximately 13,283 people work within the PMA, representing 4% of all jobs within Cobb County.
- » Most people who work in of Austell and the PMA commute to work from outside the area.
- » Within the PMA, only 4% of residents are employed in that same area. Within Austell city limits, less than 2% of residents are employed inside the city.
- » The study area is uniquely positioned to capture, as residents, some of the employees who commute into the PMA for work.

Real Estate

- » Single-family detached homes are the dominant residential product type in the study area in Austell.
- » Austell's single-family market provides less expensive options for home buyers but lacks high-end housing options that are found elsewhere in the county.
- » Most residential real estate in Austell was built before 2000, and there have been relatively few new units built in the last decade.
- » Single-family permitting has increased since the end of the Great Recession, but multi-family permitting has been absent since 2003.
- » Residential permitting levels have not yet recovered to pre-Recession levels.
- » Prices on newly constructed detached housing have increased tremendously since 2014.

- » Austell's multi-family inventory has not grown since the early 2000s, despite the dramatic growth of multi-family units in the Atlanta metro region over the past 20 years.
- » Multi-family rents have increased substantially in the last decade.
- » Retail is Cobb County's slowest growing commercial market segment. Austell's retail inventory has grown over 20 years, but at a slower rate than that of the overall county.
- » Austell has added only two net new office buildings over the past 20 years.
- » The growth rate for industrial and flex space within the city and the PMA was substantial but still lags behind Cobb County's growth in this sector.

- » Given the regional market dynamics and lack of new supply locally, it is likely that new multi-family and some new office space could be absorbed into a redeveloping Downtown Austell. If these additions were to occur, it could help drive demand for some new retail space downtown.
- » Thoughtful interventions throughout the LCI study, notably expanded bike and pedestrian options, as well as quality placemaking initiatives, can drive demand in Downtown Austell.



Chapter 3

Public Engagement

“Overall, Downtown Austell has the potential to become a desirable and welcoming city center with more enjoyable places to dine, recreation with access to the Silver Comet Trail, and unique places to shop.”

- Survey Respondent

OUTREACH PROCESS

The diagram on the next page summarizes the public outreach through each state of the planning process. Throughout the process, marketing materials for each meeting were distributed, including flyers, business cards, yard signs, utility bill inserts, and continuously updating information on the City’s social media pages. The consultants managed a project website using Social Pinpoint, which was used for virtual engagement and hosted information about the process.

Outreach Dates

- » **February 8-11, 2021 //** Stakeholder interviews
- » **February 9, 2021 //** Core Team Meeting #1
- » **March 4, 2021 //** Kick-Off Meeting & survey launch
- » **March 4-April 30, 2021 //** Kick-Off Workshop
- » **April 27, 2021 //** Core Team Meeting #2
- » **May 19, 2021 //** Survey ends
- » **May 20, 2021 //** Visioning Workshop
- » **June 24, 2021 //** Core Team Meeting #3
- » **July 22, 2021 //** Draft Plan Open House



OUTREACH PROCESS



SURVEY RESULTS

154 survey responses

Lives in Austell
114 respondents

Works in Austell
14 respondents

Owns property in Austell
13 respondents

Occasionally visits Austell
9 respondents

Overview

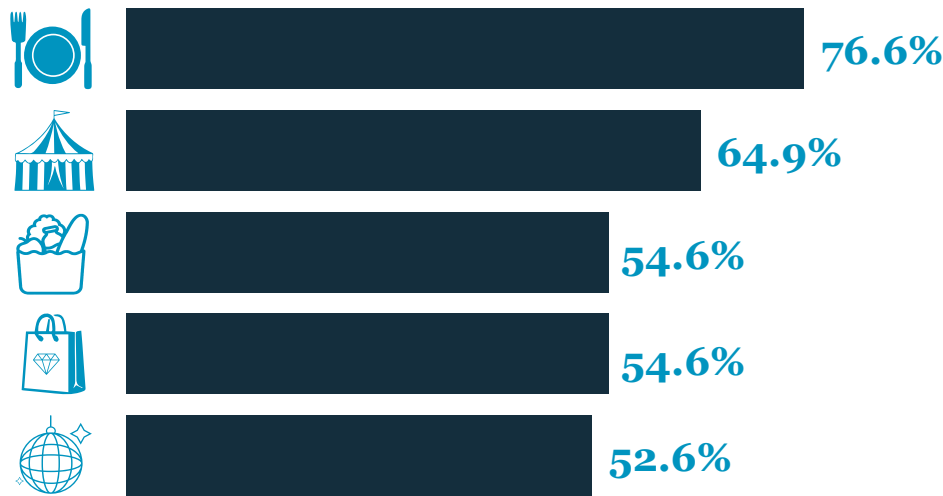
An online survey was available from March 4th through May 19th, 2021. The City offered a paper survey available to those without internet access that could be picked up and returned to City Hall. A total of 154 surveys (paper and online responses) were received. The survey included questions about how people view Downtown Austell, what brings them to the area, what people want to see more of downtown, and the extent of improvements needed. An optional section asked respondents demographic questions about themselves. Approximately 96% of respondents answered at least one of those questions. Based on the data received, the city's population composition is not well represented by those who responded to the survey. The infographics on the next pages illustrate the survey results.

SURVEY RESULTS



Why Are People Coming Downtown?

Nearly 45% of respondents reported restaurants being the number one reason they come to Downtown Austell. Nearly a quarter of respondents said that shopping, running errands, visiting parks, or coming to special events downtown also attracts them. Broken out between Austell residents and occasional visitors, both were equally as likely to patron restaurants and shop. Visitors were more likely to come downtown to run errands or just pass through downtown while residents were more likely to come to the area because their children attend either Austell Elementary School or Garrett Middle School, or to attend special events.



What Would Enhance Downtown?

Three-quarters of respondents indicated that more restaurants would enhance their experience when they visit downtown. Nearly two-thirds of people want to see more festivals and events. The top five responses also indicate that people want to see more attractions that will encourage more patronage, such as more retail options that cater to everyday needs (grocery, pharmacy, etc), boutique and leisure shopping, and nighttime entertainment options.



What About Transportation?

Survey takers were asked to share their primary mode of transportation while they are traveling to or moving around downtown. Like most Atlanta suburbs, an overwhelming majority of people said that they currently drive. When asked what mode(s) (other than the one they already use) they would like to use while traveling or moving around downtown, 24% said they would still like to drive, but 58% said they would like to be able to walk and nearly one-half said they would like to bike. The other options on the survey included transit and using ride-sharing services, which received a total of 11% of responses.

Respondents were asked to rate transportation improvements from 1 to 5 based on how important they thought they were to them and to Downtown Austell's success. The results are below:

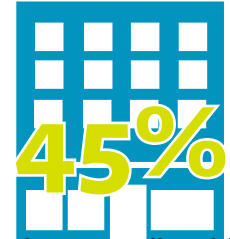


All of the answers were closely centered at "3," which meant "neutral." Ratings of these improvements show that these improvements are, more or less, equally supported by stakeholders. However, respondents thought that the top improvements for downtown include connecting to the Silver Comet Trail, increasing pedestrian and bicycle connections, and safety.

SURVEY RESULTS



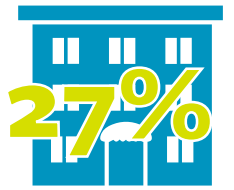
47%
Small-Lot Single-Family



45%
Above-Retail Multi-Family



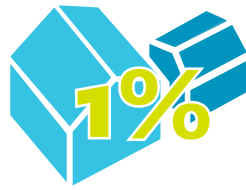
35%
Townhomes



27%
Small Multi-Family Buildings



10%
Duplexes / Triplexes



1%
Accessory Dwelling Units



What About Housing?

When asked about what kinds of housing they felt were most appropriate for downtown residential development, there was no clear “favorite.” Nearly half of respondents indicated they would like to see small single-family detached housing or townhomes. Less than half of all respondents who selected small-lot single-family homes did not indicate any other housing types they would want to see downtown. Townhomes and above-retail apartments in mixed-use developments also ranked higher. Smaller condo / apartment buildings, duplexes/triplexes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) did not get many responses. Only 11% of respondents said that they would not want any of these types of housing in Downtown Austell. Seven respondents selected “other,” stating senior housing, tiny homes, and larger homes (4+ bedroom) for rent as appropriate housing types

What About New Development?

Survey takers were asked to choose as many options as desired for what types of new development should be prioritized in Downtown Austell. The top four responses are mixed-use buildings, breweries / bars / distilleries, and commercial and parks and greenspace tied for third place. The results to this question are similar to those of how to enhance the experience of going to Downtown Austell. Respondents want to see a variety of attractions that will draw people in and keep them there for a longer time, and understand that Downtown Austell needs a catalytic development to make that happen. Choices that ranked higher included building rehabilitation / adaptive re-use and a recreation center.

Other Thoughts From the Survey

I think expanding sidewalks throughout Austell would encourage families to spend more time and money downtown.

Vacant, older, and historic buildings need to be renovated and reused before any new construction happens.

Focus on safety. Nothing is more important than safety!

I would like to see Downtown Austell one day become a place to spend the day, just like Downtown Smyrna or Marietta Square.

It would be great to turn some of the vacant stores and buildings into retail space and lofts...if we want a younger demographic, then we need to build things like that.

I envision a safe downtown where it is very walkable between all the parks, shops, and restaurants.

**Some comments were edited for clarity.*

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Key Points from Stakeholder Interviews

- » The city needs more opportunities for recreation, and downtown could be an idea place for them.
- » Connecting to the Silver Comet Trail is important.
- » There are too many auto shops and buildings in disrepair, making Downtown Austell look run-down.
- » There is not a lot attracting patrons to Downtown Austell.
- » More housing, especially senior housing, is needed.
- » People are visiting Powder Springs, Dallas, Hiram, Douglasville, or Marietta for shopping and restaurants, instead of staying in Austell.
- » The train tracks attract trainspotters, and could be capitalized to draw in more visitors.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted virtually over Zoom over a four-day period in February 2021. Stakeholders were identified by the City based on their roles in the community and included a diverse group of people, ranging from residents to City employees to elected officials. During the one-on-one interviews, the consultants asked specific questions regarding stakeholders' thoughts on existing policies, new development, housing, experiences, etc. Some of the key takeaways from those conversations are on the left.

Core Team

Many of the individuals interviewed in February 2021 served on a 36-member Core Team of stakeholders. The Core Team consisted of residents, property owners, developers, leaders of local churches, business owners, key City staff members, and City Council members. Core Team meetings were held in advance of all public meetings to learn about local preferences, receive feedback on recommendations to-date, and to receive comments on all aspects of the draft plan. Additionally, the Core Team was charged with spreading the word about the study to their respective communities. Throughout the process, the Core Team met three times.

Core Team Meeting #1

The first Core Team meeting was held virtually on February 9, 2021 over Zoom. The meeting began with an overview of the study's scope and existing conditions. Then, the consultants conducted an activity where Core Team members were asked "What should be prioritized in Downtown Austell?" Responses were given and recorded using Miro, an online mind-mapping tool. Then, both consultants and Core Team members worked together to go through each item and identify common themes. Seven themes were identified: housing choice, business recruitment, public spaces, placemaking, accessibility, connectivity, and job creation. Below is a diagram showing responses and their respective categories.



MEETINGS & EVENTS

Core Team Meeting #2

The second Core Team meeting was held virtually on April 27, 2021 over Zoom. The meeting began with an update on progress and schedule. Then, the consultants reviewed results and participation from the virtual public workshop.

The Core Team heard from the consultants about preliminary goal statements and recommendations based on the seven

themes discussed at the previous Core Team meeting. Using Zoom polls, the consultants asked Core Team members to grade the goals and recommendations on scale of A to F. Overall, each set of goals and recommendations received an A or B grade, however, the Core Team made helpful suggestions on how to improve them.

Lastly, the consultants presented two scenarios for redevelopment: one that

showed a more conservative framework and one that showed a more aggressive framework. Using Zoom polls, the Core Team graded each scenario on a scale of A to F and voted on their favorite, if they had one. Both scenarios received B grades, but the more aggressive plan received more A and F grades than the more conservative scenario. In the end, a majority voted on the more aggressive scenario being the preferred plan.



Core Team Meeting #3

The third and final Core Team meeting was held virtually over Zoom on June 24, 2021. The meeting began with an update on the study's progress. Then, the results from the second public meeting and the online survey were shared and reviewed. Before discussing updated recommendations, the highlights of the Market Analysis (see Chapter 2) were presented in order to give an overview of the basis of the updated development recommendations.

The Core Team was presented with illustrated graphics of four concept plans recommended for different areas of Downtown Austell: the post office, the Town Green, the Maxway shopping center, and the industrial site. Using Zoom polls, the Core Team members graded each concept plan on a scale of A to F. Across the board, the concept plans received B grades. The industrial site concept plan received the most A grades, and none of the plans received lower than a C grade.

Next, the consultants discussed the draft transportation project list, highlighting their timeframes and possible costs. After discussing these projects, the Core Team was presented with each short-term project and was asked to select up to three projects they would like to see prioritized in the first year of the plan's implementation. The results can be found on the right.

Before adjourning, the consultants presented three different design concepts for signage and wayfinding for Downtown Austell: the first had an industrial theme, the second had a lot of bright colors, and the third theme was more modern. Overwhelmingly, the industrial theme received the most votes.



Priority Projects

1st Veterans Memorial Highway Road Diet (80%)

2nd Implement Quiet Zone for Downtown (70%)

3rd Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail (60%)

4. Veterans Memorial Highway at Love Street/Humphries Hill Road Intersection Improvements (50%)

5. Veterans Memorial Highway at Spring Street Intersection Improvements (40%)

6. Update Pedestrian Facilities to be ADA Compliant (40%)

7. Wayfinding Signage (40%)

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Public Meetings

Three public meetings were held throughout the process. The purpose of these meetings were to get consensus on issues and opportunities and community buy-in on recommendations.

Kick-Off Meeting & Workshop #1

On March 4, 2021, the consultants hosted a presentation over Facebook Live to “kick off” the process and give an overview of existing conditions and what the consultants had learned about Downtown Austell to-date. The presentation had, at its peak, 26 live viewers and participants. It is estimated that the presentation reached 320 people total.

Live Polling Results

During the live presentation, several polls were conducted. The first question asked which of the seven themes identified by the Core Team should be prioritized, and viewers could choose up to three. Top

priorities identified by participants were business recruitment (22%), public spaces (22%), and housing choice (17%). The second question was open-ended, and asked participants to list as many “big ideas” as they could think of.

Before concluding, the consultants walked viewers through the workshop that stayed open through May 19th. Lastly, viewers were polled about their preferred method(s) of outreach. Viewers indicated that they preferred to learn about opportunities through Facebook, and were split between in-person and virtual meetings.



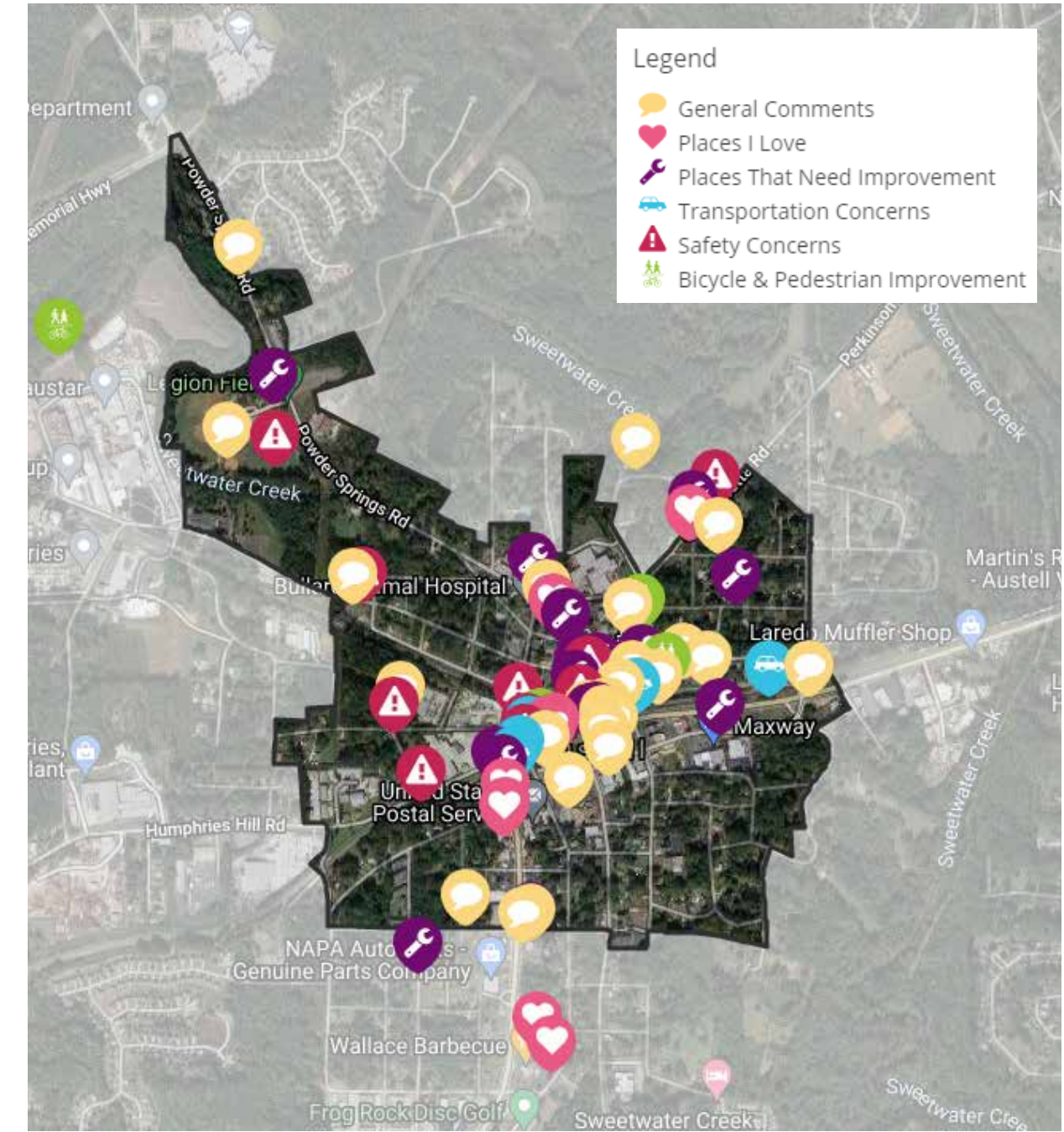
Big Ideas

- » Performing arts studio
- » Revamp old buildings
- » Outdoor entertainment
- » Art festivals / flea market
- » Brewery / distillery
- » Road diet for Veterans Memorial Highway
- » A grocery store
- » Urban farming
- » A town green

Workshop Results

Along with the survey, the online mapping activity was open to the public between March 4, 2021 and May 19, 2021. Total, 21 people left 67 comments on the map. Participants had six categories of comments they could leave: general comments, places they love, places that need improvement, transportation concerns, safety concerns, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

The map on the right shows where comments were placed. General comments included ideas such as a parking garage, improvements to parks, and types of new businesses. Places that people love included existing parks and restaurants. Participants indicated that they wanted to see some areas “cleaned up” and some buildings torn down or redeveloped. Transportation concerns included noise from the railroad tracks, truck traffic, and problematic intersection designs.



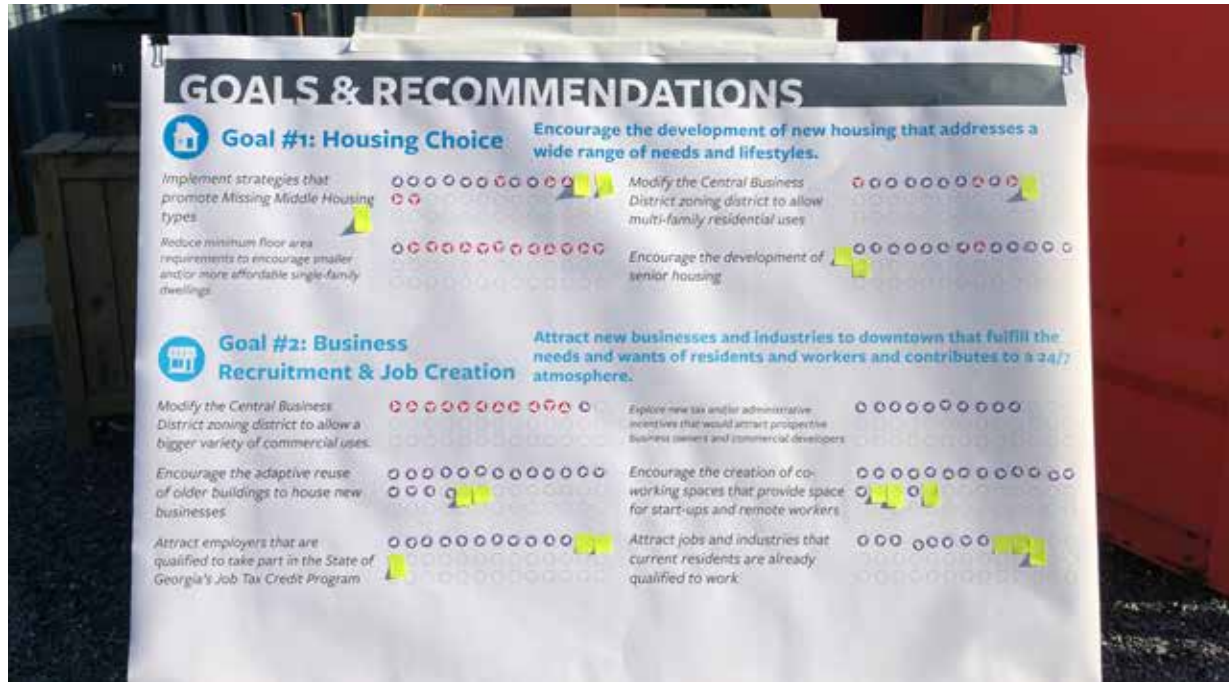
MEETINGS & EVENTS

Workshop #2

On May 27, 2021, the consultants and the City of Austell hosted the second public workshop at Volkstuin’s patio area. 55 people were in attendance. The patio was set up with boards displaying draft goals and recommendations, a preliminary development framework plan, transportation and trail recommendations, and a visual preference survey (VPS) on development styles.

Workshop Results

Meeting attendees gave feedback using coded dots. Heart dots meant “I like this,” and caution dots meant “I don’t like this.” Overall, feedback from the community was positive. See the sidebar on the right for a list of what the community said they preferred and what they felt consultants needed work. The next page shows the top answers from the VPS.



Confirmed Wants

- » Senior housing
- » Adaptive reuse strategies
- » Tax and administrative incentives for new businesses
- » Co-working spaces
- » Jobs for existing residents
- » A new recreation center
- » Improved uses for Legion Field
- » A town green
- » More festivals and events
- » Public art
- » A visual brand for Downtown Austell
- » A Quiet Zone for the railroad
- » A network of multi-use trails

What Needs Work

- » Proposed housing policies
- » Proposed zoning modifications
- » Shared streets designs

Visual Preference Survey Results



Sidewalk-oriented retail



Retail with nearby parking



Small-lot single-family



Two-story mixed use



Farmers' markets



Branded signage

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Draft Plan Open House

On July 22 2021, the consultants and the City of Austell hosted the Draft Plan Open House at the Collar Park Community Center. 35 people were in attendance. The community center was set up with boards displaying the recommendations and a priority funding exercise. A fact sheet about the study and project list were provided for those interested.

Workshop Results

Just like the previous meeting, attendees gave feedback using coded dots. Heart dots meant “I like this,” and caution dots meant “I don’t like this.” Comment cards were made available to give additional feedback.

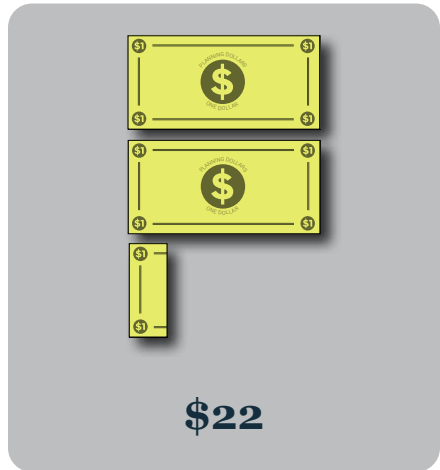
The consultants chose four short-term projects for attendees to weigh in on what they felt should be the main priorities for the City in 2022. Everyone received ten “planning dollars” to fund any combination of four potential priority projects. The results are shown below.

Overall, feedback from the community was positive, but there were some concerns:

- » Some were concerned that the “transitional zone” shown on the framework plan would not be helpful in preserving historical homes and structures.
- » Others did not support the proposed Sweetwater Creek trail because of either flooding concerns or concerns that the trail alignment would run through residents’ backyards and bring unwanted activity.



Acquire the remainder of the land needed for the Town Green



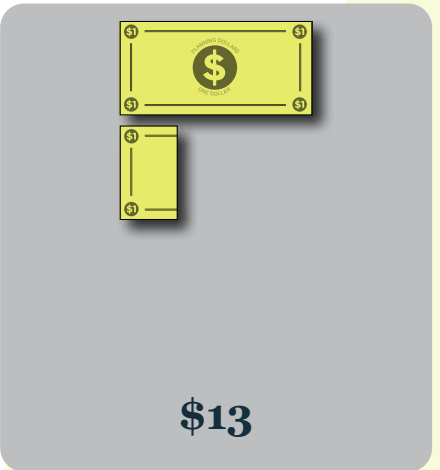
Zoning Updates



Implement the Quiet Zone for the Railroad



Enroll in the Georgia Main Street program and hire a director



SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the process, the consultants learned the following from the community:

- » People are visiting Powder Springs, Dallas, Hiram, Douglasville, or Marietta for shopping and restaurants, instead of staying in Austell.
- » The number one reason people currently visit Downtown Austell is for the restaurants.
- » A larger variety of restaurants and shopping, as well as more special events programmed, would bring more people to the area.
- » Over half of community members would like to be able to better walk and bike around Downtown Austell.
- » The transportation improvement people felt to be most important to Downtown Austell is connecting to the Silver Comet Trail via Austell-Powder Springs Road, followed closely by pedestrian and bicycle improvements and increasing safety.
- » Small single-family detached housing and townhomes are the two most

preferred housing choices. Above-retail apartments in mixed-use developments are also desired by the community as a way to reinforce the downtown character.

- » Community members were not as receptive to smaller condo / apartment buildings, duplexes/triplexes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- » The community expressed wanting to see mixed-use buildings, breweries / bars / distilleries, commercial buildings, and parks and greenspace prioritized for downtown.
- » The community wants to see a variety of attractions that will draw people in and keep them there for a longer time.
- » The Core Team identified seven priorities for Downtown Austell: increasing housing choice, business recruitment, public spaces, placemaking, increasing accessibility, increasing connectivity, and job creation.

- » Redevelopment should be aggressively pursued.
- » A running wish list of items was kept throughout the process, which included:
 - » A parking garage;
 - » A town green;
 - » Improvements to parks;
 - » New businesses;
 - » Clean up in key areas;
 - » Redevelopment (or tear down) of some downtown buildings;
 - » Senior housing;
 - » Jobs for existing residents;
 - » A new recreation center;
 - » More festivals and events;
 - » Public art;
 - » A visual brand for Downtown Austell;
 - » A Quiet Zone for the railroad; and
 - » A network of multi-use trails





Chapter 4

Community Vision



Downtown
Austell
LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE STUDY

What Makes a Successful Downtown?

In addition to having some areas of commercial activity, the City of Austell has invested in creating numerous parks and open spaces throughout the downtown district and has spent time and energy programming numerous events to attract visitors. In order for Downtown Austell to be successful, it needs to continue to reinforce, maintain, and add to the assets they already have. However, downtown is missing five of the eight important "keys" that makes a successful downtown: walkability, feeling of safety, day and night activity, anchoring attractions, and residential density. These are the basis of the recommendations outlined in this plan.

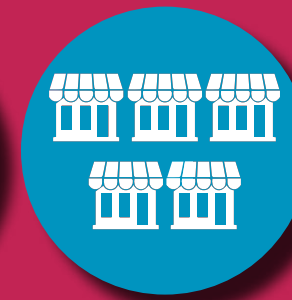
8 keys to a successful downtown district



Programming & Events



Parks & Open Space



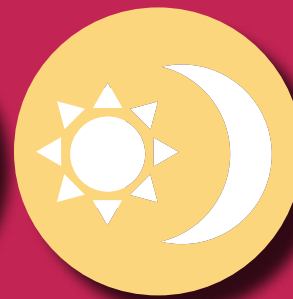
Commercial Clusters



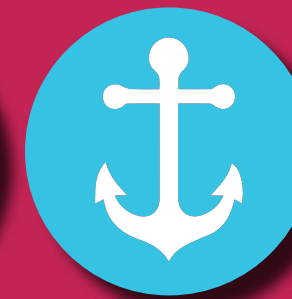
Walkability



Feeling of Safety



Day & Night Activity



Anchoring Attractions



Residential Density

What Downtown Austell needs

Three of the eight keys that naturally come hand-in-hand are day and night activity, commercial clusters, and anchoring attractions. A successful downtown has plenty of retail and attractions that bring in patrons and visitors on weekdays and weekends, mornings, afternoons, and evenings. The list below shows the uses that could bring these three important elements together.

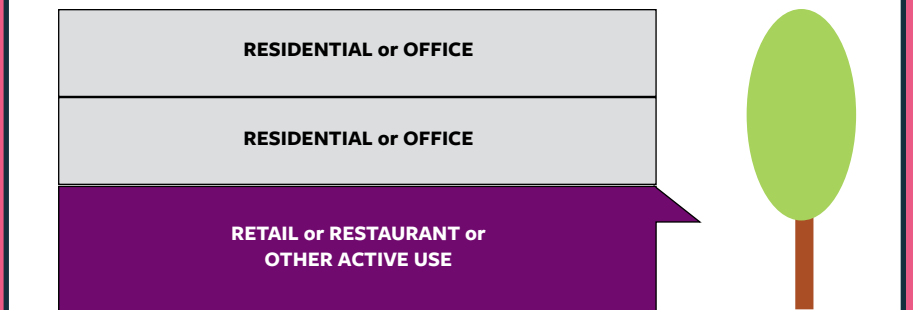
Use	Activity Time			
	Weekday Morning	Weekday Afternoon	Weekday Night	Weekend Activity
Daily needs shopping	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leisure shopping		✓	✓	✓
Apparel stores		✓	✓	✓
Neighborhood-serving offices	✓	✓		
Professional services	✓	✓		
Medical services	✓	✓		
Salons and barbershops		✓	✓	✓
Cultural facilities and event venues			✓	✓
Restaurants	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bars and breweries			✓	✓
Cafes	✓	✓		
Banks	✓	✓		

What do the streets look like?

- » Wide sidewalks (6' or more)
- » Street trees & street furniture (bike racks, benches, trash receptacles)
- » Adequate lighting
- » Buildings right next to the sidewalk
- » Slower vehicle traffic
- » Safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings

What about the buildings?

- » Continuous ground-floor commercial spaces with few or no interruptions from vacancy or other uses.
- » High ground floor ceiling heights of 12 to 14 feet.
- » Transparent storefronts.



VISION

The City of Austell aspires to develop and maintain a central, vibrant downtown district with a high quality of life for residents and unique destinations for visitors.



GOALS

Housing Choice



Encourage the development of new housing that addresses a wide range of needs and lifestyles.

Business Recruitment & Job Creation



Attract new businesses and industries to downtown that fulfill the needs and wants of residents and workers and contributes to a 24/7 atmosphere.

Public Spaces



Create new spaces that can be used for public gatherings, recreation, and enjoyment for residents and visitors

Placemaking



Encourage placemaking through public art, landscaping, and signage.

Connectivity & Accessibility



Promote connectivity and accessibility throughout Downtown Austell by increasing walkability and bikeability through transportation network improvements and quality urban design.



Goal 1: Housing Choice

Objectives

- » **Work with developers to create housing that will attract new residents to Downtown Austell.** The study area has approximately 475 housing units, most of them single-family detached housing. This equates to about 2 units per residential acre. This is not enough residential density to give downtown a critical mass to generate new retail demand that is also needed downtown.
- » **Preserve naturally-occurring affordable housing (NOAHs).** Naturally occurring affordable housing (known as “NOAHs”) are residential properties that maintain low rent or ownership costs *without* public subsidy. It is the most common form of affordable units in the United States. NOAHs are typically Class B and Class C buildings, complexes, or detached housing units that have been built between 1940 and 1990. Monthly

housing costs are lower ranging, generally between \$600 and \$1,200, depending on the location and the quality of the unit. These housing units are affordable to most low- and moderate income households (those that earn between 50-80% of the median household income). NOAHs are the housing at the greatest risk of being lost due to market speculation and upgrades that result in higher prices and lost affordability. While upgrading poorer quality units is often desired and can boost community development, it is important to maintain a healthy inventory of naturally affordable units.

- » **Modify residential zoning districts.** The City of Austell is interested in creating housing that can meet needs that are not met by traditional, suburban-style single-family detached homes or large, multi-family housing complexes. The City’s residential zoning districts could be amended to allow for different housing types and forms.

- » **Modify the Central Business District zoning district.** The Central Business District (CBD) zoning district is limited in what uses it allows. At present, it does not permit any residential uses. For Downtown Austell to be vibrant, there needs to be as many opportunities as possible to create residential development.
- » **Encourage the development of senior housing.** Analyses uncovered that the segment of the population aged 55 and over is increasing and will continue to increase over the next couple of decades, creating a need for senior housing. The public engagement process revealed a desire from the community for more senior housing. As the City begins to receive proposals from developers for new housing developments, filling the demand for senior housing should be a priority.

Action Items

- ☑ Encourage the development of “missing middle” housing types.
- ☑ Give financial and / or administrative incentives to developers building new residential units within the study area.
- ☑ Enter public-private partnerships with residential developers to help purchase and clear targeted redevelopment properties and jump-start development.
- ☑ Adopt an affordable housing policy.
- ☑ Encourage the elimination or renovation of substandard or dilapidated housing in the LCI area through financial and / or administrative incentives.
- ☑ Increase code enforcement and cite owners that are in violation to encourage owners of poor- to medium-quality homes in the LCI area to fix up their units.
- ☑ Create or tap into existing financial sources to help property owners fix up poor- to medium-quality homes in the LCI area.
- ☑ Give financial and / or administrative incentives to developers who set aside at least 10% of their units as affordable market-rate.
- ☑ Give financial and / or administrative incentives to new housing developments where the average rent is affordable to those making 80-120% of the Area Median Income (AMI).
- ☑ Include “missing middle” housing types as uses in the zoning ordinance.
- ☑ Modify the R-15 and R-10 residential districts to permit smaller setback requirements if a property is located within the LCI area.
- ☑ Modify the all residential districts to permit smaller minimum lot sizes and dwelling sizes and increase the prescribed units per acre / maximum FAR if a property is located within the LCI area.
- ☑ Modify the RD residential district to allow for reduced minimum lot size and setbacks when a property is located within the LCI area.
- ☑ Modify the CBD zoning district to allow for vertical mixed-use buildings that permit residences above ground-floor office and retail uses.
- ☑ Modify the CBD zoning district to allow multi-family residential buildings.
- ☑ Encourage the development of “missing middle” housing types, specifically the ones that most attract seniors, like cottage-court housing, and small-lot single-family detached homes.
- ☑ Give financial and / or administrative incentives to developers building senior housing or age-restricted communities within the LCI area.



Goal 2: Business Recruitment & Job Creation

Objectives

- » **Update the zoning ordinance.** Revisions to the City of Austell's zoning ordinance to a more modern and relevant standard streamlines the development process and requirements for using space to do business generally. This will make the overall city and downtown specifically more vibrant, as new retail and restaurant locations have a clearer, and therefore less risk-prone path, to operation. This will in turn enhance the reputation of the city as a place to do business.
- » **Engage with organizations such as the Georgia Downtown Association and other third parties to gain additional insights into best practices for developing a downtown area.** Members of the Georgia Downtown Association benefit from connections to experienced downtown managers, elected officials, state level staff, consultants, and legislative advocates

from across the state. Such individuals possess an immense wealth of knowledge and may have ideas of practices and policies that would be applicable to revitalizing Downtown Austell. Other third parties such as the Georgia Municipal Association, Urban Land Institute, and the Council for Quality Growth are able to bring further expertise and contacts through their various programs as well.

- » **Promote downtown as a filming location for movie and TV productions.** The filming industry for movies and television can provide tax revenue, local economic activity, and exposure for smaller downtowns such as that of Austell. The Georgia Department of Economic Development maintains an office of staff specifically tasked with attracting and retaining filming to Georgia communities, and they could be a key partner in this particular effort.

- » **Utilize the Enterprise Zone to provide incentives to private businesses with the purpose of creating jobs and investing in the LCI area.** As noted on the City's website, in the Austell Enterprise Zone, local ad valorem taxes, occupational taxes, license fees, and other local fees and taxes, except local sales and use taxes, or any combination thereof, may be exempted or reduced. This tool can be used to attract new investment in the LCI area, with the likely largest upside for a new business being the exemption or reduction of county and municipal ad valorem taxes (excluding school taxes).
- » **Consider a Tax Allocation District (TAD) for the area.** According to the Georgia Main Street program, TADs are a popular mechanism for revitalizing underutilized areas such as brownfields, declining commercial corridors, and industrial sites. The process involves designating a district, establishing its current tax

base floor and then dedicating future taxes over and above that floor for a given period of time to pay the costs of the infrastructure, buildings or other improvements needed to spur new development. TAD funds may be used for a variety of development activities.

- » **Utilize the Downtown Development Authority.** Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs) are used in cities throughout Georgia as a mechanism to revitalize and redevelop municipal central business districts. Austell has already done the work necessary to create a DDA. It should make use of grant funding and bonding (if necessary) to encourage private entities to improve facades of businesses around downtown to make it a more attractive place to visit and do business and to create the impression of progress and activity. Moreover, the DDA has the authority to buy and sell land and provide bond-for-title tax abatements to attract new development in the LCI area.

- » **Ensure that the Downtown Development Authority is staffed and empowered to act.** The Downtown Development Authority is tasked with undertaking projects that would have a catalytic effect on redeveloping downtown, and it has the jurisdiction to dispose of city-owned assets. These tools can be very helpful in attracting developers to Austell. In order to ensure that no opportunities are missed, a fully staffed DDA is crucial.
- » **Increase staffing power.** A Main Street coordinator or director would be responsible for creating and directing a Main Street program, and as such would serve as a single point of contact for efforts related to promoting downtown and managing events. As such, this staff member would be able to bring together multiple partners that could have a positive impact on downtown.

Action Items

- Update the zoning ordinance.
- Utilize the Enterprise Zone to provide incentives to private businesses with the purpose of creating jobs and investing in the LCI area.
- Consider a Tax Allocation District (TAD) for the LCI area
- Ensure that the Downtown Development Authority is staffed and empowered to act.
- Hire Main Street coordinator, or add similar responsibilities to existing staff roles



Goal 3: Public Spaces

Objectives

- » **Include usable open space and parks into new developments.** While there are plenty of parks in the study area, open space and parks are amenities that promote a higher quality of life. New development, especially residential developments, should have some space set aside for courtyards, dog runs, athletic facilities, and other outdoor amenities. New commercial developments should incorporate plazas and outdoor seating for restaurants. Additionally, the City of Austell should explore opportunities to convert City-owned land into a town green.

- » **Create spaces suitable for people of all ages, including children and the elderly.** Accessible public spaces are key to creating vibrancy in a downtown districts. Public spaces should feel welcoming to all people. Public engagement revealed a need for spaces in Downtown Austell that were suitable for people of all ages and lifestyles: families with or without children, singles, youth, empty-nesters, and seniors. Efforts should be taken to ensure that public spaces offer something to each age group and generational cohort and that they are accessible to people of all ability types, including those in wheelchairs or using other types of mobility aids.

Action Items

- ✓ Write and implement a parks and recreation master plan that identifies places for new parks in the City and makes improvements to downtown parks.
- ✓ Use the Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail as a means to connect the park to the Silver Comet Trail.
- ✓ Amend the zoning ordinance to require new developments to include a prescribed amount of open space.
- ✓ Ensure that all existing and future public facilities, including parks and sidewalks, are up to compliance via the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- ✓ Design and construct a Town Green that features a soundstage, public art, a splashpad, and space for large events.
- ✓ Repurpose a building already owned by the City or other public entity into a recreation center for the community.



Goal 4: Placemaking

Objectives

- » **Continue to program festivals and events to keep bringing visitors to Downtown Austell.** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Austell hosted many regular events downtown. Events like these bring foot traffic to downtown which benefits many of the retail businesses. As the City re-opens, there will be opportunities to restart these regular events and add new programming.

- » **Develop a visual “brand” for Downtown Austell.** Many cities across the country create logos and visual branding to differentiate areas, particularly downtown districts. Visual branding is a powerful marketing tool that can help establish “awareness” of a company or organization (or place, in this case) and communicate its values and personality to the customer (or visitor). Downtown Austell’s visual brand should be attractive, consistent, unique, and memorable while capturing the community’s essence.
- » **Expand signage and wayfinding.** As Downtown Austell starts to redevelop, there will be a need for improved and uniform signage and wayfinding that directs pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicular traffic to destinations.





Goal 4: Placemaking

- » **Identify the appropriate art mediums and locations for public art.** One of the best ways to create a sense of place is through public art installations. Conversations with the community revealed a desire for more public art throughout Downtown Austell to make the area more attractive to visitors and prospective residents and businesses.
- » **Create a cohesive look and feel throughout the downtown area.** For Downtown Austell to have a sense of place, different design elements need to be standardized. Buildings facades should have similar materials, there should be a palette of hardscape materials, street trees should be appropriate to the environment, and street furniture should look the same.

Action Items

- ✓ Establish a Town Green to serve as a passive recreational area and a space to host outdoor community events.
- ✓ Create more downtown-specific programming.
- ✓ Coordinate with downtown businesses to create promotions that tie into events, such as discounted food/drink and one-day sales, to promote foot traffic into Downtown Austell's businesses.
- ✓ Create a recognizable logo and visual brand identity that is reflective of downtown's character; and
- ✓ Incorporate a visual brand into signage and wayfinding, public design standards, and marketing materials.
- ✓ Commission a formal study that determines the best locations to install new signage and wayfinding.
- ✓ Commission an Arts Master Plan that recommends art mediums and identifies locations for public art installations throughout Downtown Austell.
- ✓ Work with local visual arts organizations to identify local and regional artists with whom to commission art, identify funding sources, and host arts-centered events.
- ✓ Create and implement a set of standards that inform streetscape design, signage and wayfinding locations, street furniture, and the look of new buildings.



Goal 5: Connectivity & Accessibility

Objectives

- » **Create a unified, connected downtown.** Veterans Memorial Highway and the Norfolk Southern Railroad serve as disruptive barriers between the north and south sides of Downtown Austell. The City should continue to explore opportunities to eliminate these barriers and enhance accessibility between both ends to make it feel like one downtown.
- » **Enact a Quiet Zone for the portion of the railroad that crosses Downtown Austell.** Establishing a Quiet Zone in downtown emerged as a high-priority during the public engagement process. This zone will not only help enhance leisure activities near the railroad and around downtown, but is also very important to facilitating new residential development downtown.

» **Encourage the creation of innovative street networks that accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.** Part of the charm of living in a small downtown is the ability to safely and comfortably walk and bike to local parks, restaurants, and shopping. Identifying creative strategies to achieve comfortable and safe pedestrian and bicycle mobility, such as adding branded crosswalks, creating shared/plaza streets with paint and furnishings, or creating bike lanes with paint and plastic bollards is not only cost-effective but can also add to the unique character and appeal of the downtown.

» **Create a network of multi-use trails that connect to destinations.** Studies have shown that multi-use trails are one of the most desirable bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Austell residents are no different as trails also emerged as a popular amenity during the public engagement process. Cobb County is currently in the process of completing a scoping study for the Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail which will connect Downtown Austell to the Silver Comet Trail. The City of Austell should build off this project and develop additional trails throughout the downtown that safely connect residents to parks, natural areas, schools, restaurants, and shops.



Goal 5: Connectivity & Accessibility



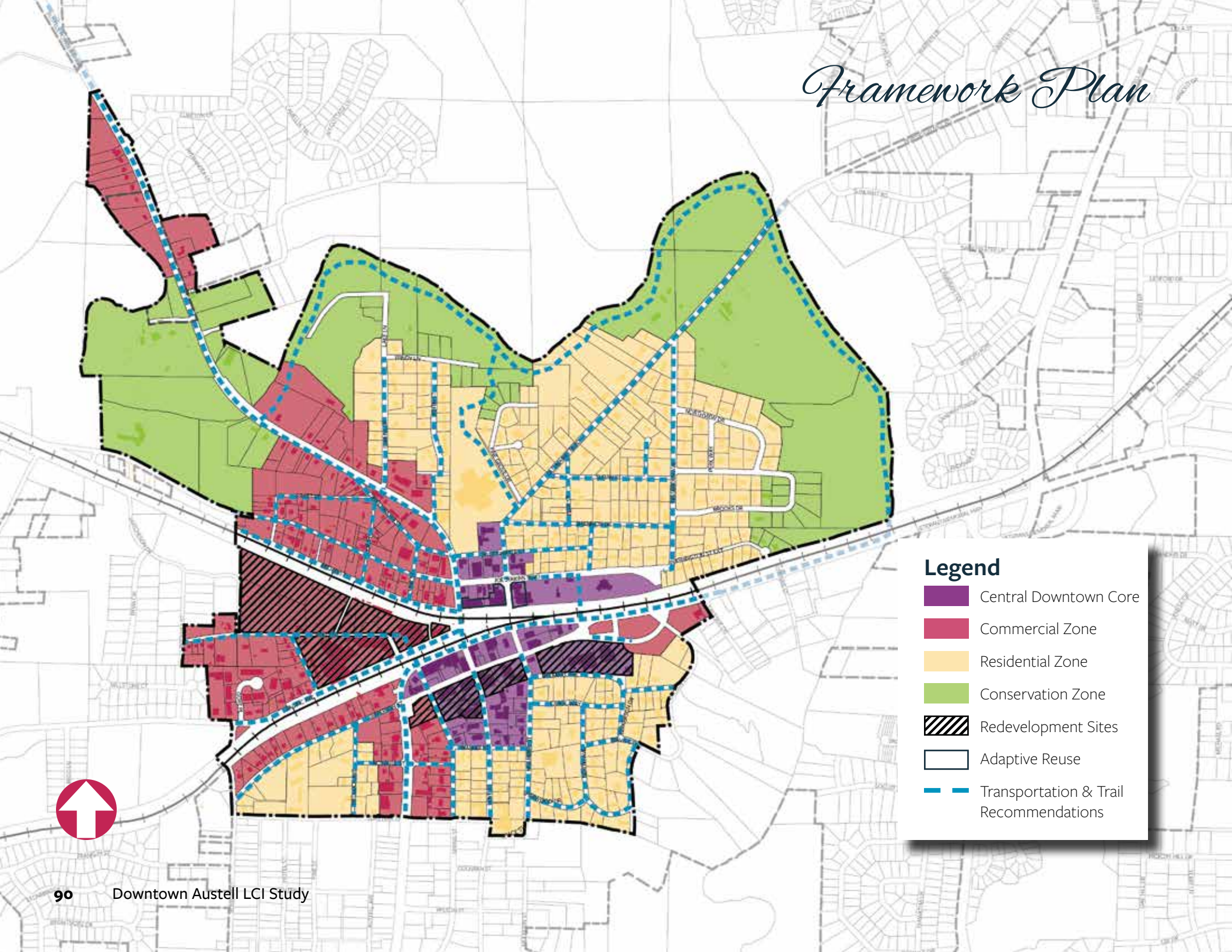
» **Ensure that there is enough parking for auto-oriented uses and those requiring ADA accessible spaces.** Although the vision for Downtown Austell is to create a vibrant and walkable environment, there will be a number of visitors who will need to access downtown using a vehicle and they will need a place to park. It will be important that each new development has enough parking spaces to accommodate seniors, wheelchair users, and other persons with disabilities. Signage and wayfinding should also be used to communicate where public parking is located.

» **Develop and implement urban design and streetscape standards that contribute to a walkable, pedestrian-oriented environment.** Creating a high-quality, pedestrian-oriented public realm does not happen by chance. It requires thoughtful design considerations that include materials, textures, colors, amenities, furnishings, and dimensions that prioritize human scale. Developing and slowly implementing these over time will help Downtown Austell achieve its full potential.

Action Items

- ✓ Enact a Quiet Zone for the portion of the railroad that crosses Downtown Austell.
- ✓ Adopt a Complete Streets policy to encourage the development of streets that harmoniously accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.
- ✓ Adopt the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Bike Guide.
- ✓ Update pedestrian facilities to be ADA compliant per ADA Transition Plan.
- ✓ Enhance pedestrian connections along existing railroad crossings.
- ✓ Create and implement a wayfinding and signage plan that also includes where the signs should be located.
- ✓ Create and implement a set of standards that inform streetscape designs.
- ✓ Complete construction of the Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail.
- ✓ Prioritize and implement the proposed transportation framework including shared streets, bike lanes with sidewalks, complete streets, and appropriate intersection improvements.
- ✓ Complete a feasibility study to build a multi-purpose trail tunnel under Norfolk Southern railroad to enhance the connectivity and accessibility
- ✓ Complete a feasibility study with Cobb County to develop trail along Sweetwater Creek from Powder Springs Road to Veterans Memorial Highway and along Austell-Powder Spring Road and from Old Marietta Road to Sweetwater Creek
- ✓ Implement interconnected traffic signalization.
- ✓ Mark on-street parking spaces throughout downtown.
- ✓ Explore the adoption of policies that require the establishment of public access easements along all utilities for the use of these linear corridors as walking and biking trails.
- ✓ Explore the adoption of a policy that requires that bicycling needs be considered whenever major maintenance, utilities, or transportation projects are to be tackled.
- ✓ Explore the implementation of bicycle anti-harassment ordinance designated to protect people bicycling from harassment by drivers.
- ✓ Explore the implementation of a Stop as Yield Signs for Bicyclist, which allow bicyclist to continue through an intersection without coming to a complete stop.
- ✓ Explore a policy that requires new development or substantial remodeling to provide bicycle parking and amenities.
- ✓ Consider creating a bicycle friendly business district in downtown that highlights the availability of bicycle parking, special discounts or promotions for customers who arrive by bike, and other bike friendly features to help encourage biking as a form of transportation.
- ✓ Consider scheduling bicycle and walking events where select streets are closed to vehicular traffic on certain days to allow unencumbered use by pedestrians and bicyclists.

Framework Plan



FRAMEWORK PLAN



Overview

The Framework Plan on page 90 visualizes key redevelopment and transportation recommendations for Downtown Austell. The study area is divided into four zones: the Central Downtown Core, the Commercial Zone, the Residential Zone, and the Conservation Zone. It is important to note that this framework plan only applies to new development and redevelopment, and not private properties where the owners have no present intent to develop.

The recommendations outlined on pages 92-95 and the concept plans on pages 96-105 serve to address four of the five missing keys for a successful downtown: feeling of safety, day and night activity, anchoring attractions, and residential density. They also reinforce the assets that Downtown Austell does currently have, like adding parks and open space, creating more commercial clusters, and creating more opportunities for programming and events to occur.

FRAMEWORK PLAN

Central Downtown Core

Downtown Austell's central core is already the City's center of activity. The vision of this area is to build upon its assets by redeveloping under-utilized areas to accommodate new development, adapting older buildings to accommodate new uses, creating housing opportunities to draw in new residents, and attracting businesses that will contribute to a successful, 24/7 district.



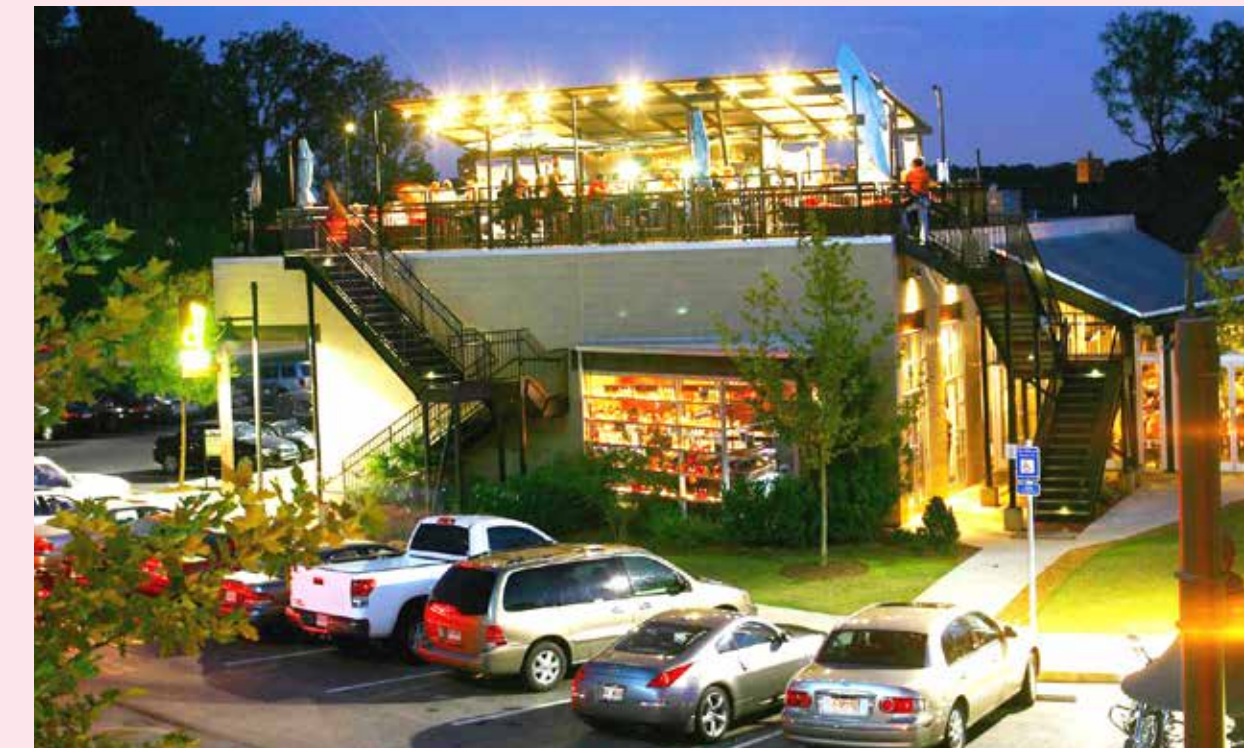
Best Development Types

- » A blend of traditional and contemporary architecture;
- » Adaptive reuse;
- » Infill development;
- » Civic buildings;
- » Vertical mixed-use buildings with ground floor commercial and upper-story office or residential lofts;
- » Horizontal mixed-use;
- » Multi-family buildings (up to 3 stories);
- » Sidewalk-oriented development
- » Pocket parks; and
- » A town green.



Commercial Zone

The Commercial Zone is intended to provide areas for new and updated commercial development. These areas will provide spaces for new businesses, like restaurants, leisure and daily needs shopping, and offices in a variety of settings and development styles.



Best Development Types

- » A blend of traditional and contemporary architecture;
- » Adaptive reuse;
- » Sidewalk-oriented commercial;
- » Offices;
- » Retail (shops and restaurants); and
- » Horizontal mixed-use.



FRAMEWORK PLAN

Residential Zone

For Downtown Austell to be successful, creating residential density is key. In order to do that, higher residential development will need to occur. As properties reach the end of their lifespan, it will create opportunities for both large- and small-scale residential developers to renovate or build brand-new dwellings in their place. The goal of the Residential Zone is to balance the preservation of historical and higher-quality existing homes with updated, higher-density housing options that appeal to a wide range of prospective residents.



Best Development Types

- » Preservation of historical homes;
- » Traditional single-family detached residential;
- » Small-lot single-family detached residential;
- » Townhomes;
- » Infill development; and
- » Neighborhood parks and green spaces.



Conservation Zone

Sweetwater Creek runs around the edge of the study area and with it brings concerns of flooding and wetland protection. Historically, heavy flooding has occurred in the area. Since these lands are environmentally sensitive, they are to be protected from intrusive development. However, these areas may also provide informal recreational opportunities that consider and protect natural resources.

Best Development Types

- » Paved and unpaved multi-use trails;
- » Passive recreation;
- » Parks; and
- » Nature preserves.



Redevelopment Plan



REDEVELOPMENT SITES

Overview

The concept plans on the following pages show potential redevelopment sites that could act as catalytic projects in Downtown Austell. More public and private investment will promote future development in the area.

Included in these concepts are:

- » 2 parks;
- » 32 single-family detached homes;
- » 22 townhomes;
- » 527 new multi-family units;
- » 84,150 SF of new commercial space;
- » 4,250 SF of renovated commercial space; and
- » 28,600 SF of civic space

The following pages show specific redevelopment sites in more detail and discuss how they can be implemented. **It should be noted that these concept plans are ideas for the future of Downtown Austell; they show the potential but do not guarantee that development will occur or that the final site designs will be exactly as shown.**





REDEVELOPMENT SITES

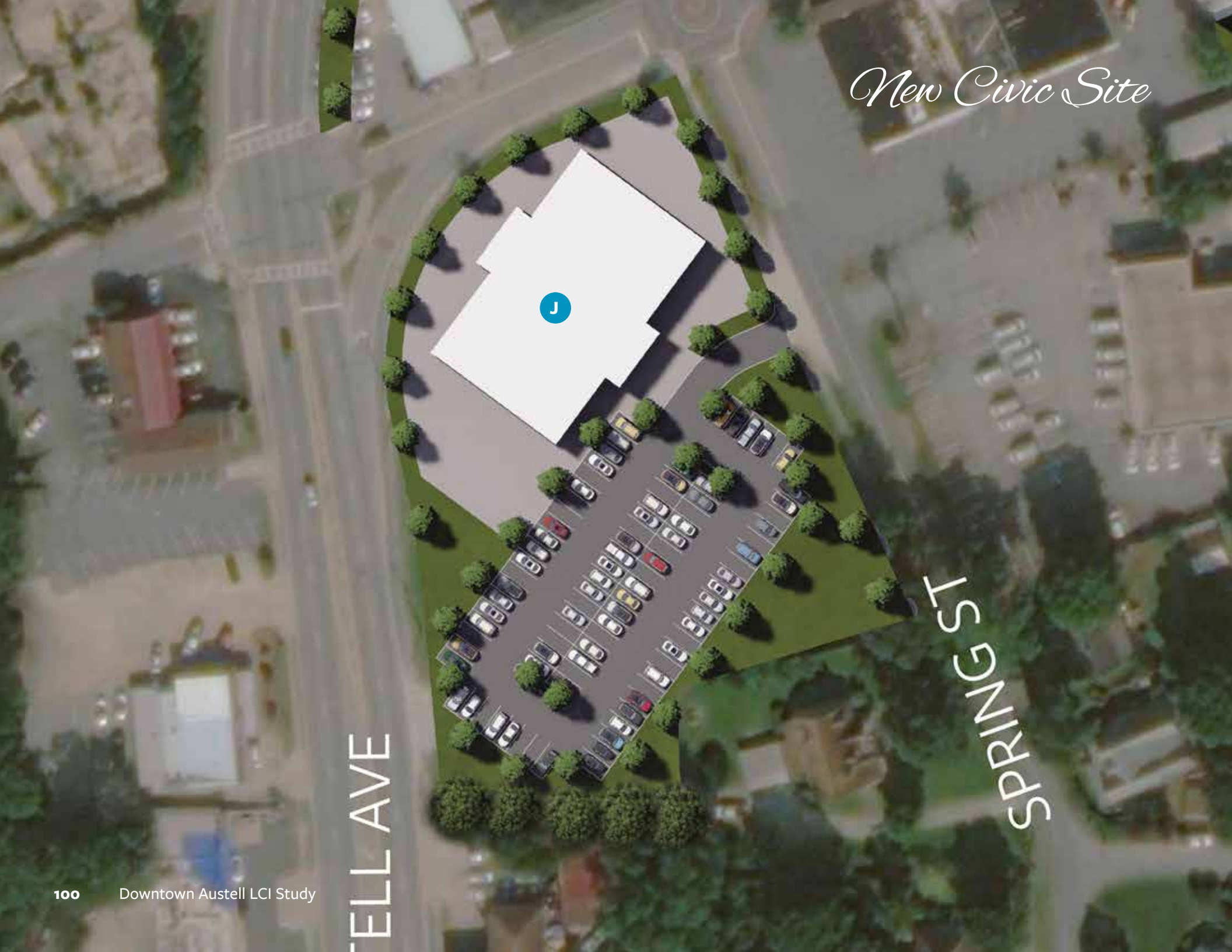
Site 1: Industrial Site

Site 1 is an industrial site currently occupied by Sweetwater Lumber and Land Company. This is the largest redevelopment area with a total area of 34.4 acres. This concept plan shows a mix of residential uses that could support additional retail and office spaces. A large central park that would be built under a public-private partnership with a restaurant on the corner of the park would provide amenities for residents and patrons. The park is programmed with a sand volleyball court, playground equipment, a basketball court, a splashpad, and passive green space.

Land Use Summary

- A** Single-family detached front-loaded units: 12 units
- A** Single-family detached rear-loaded units: 20 units
- B** Multi-family complex: 132 units
- C** Townhomes: 22 units
- D** Retail building: 6,000 SF
- E** Mixed-use building: 11,000 SF retail and 22 units
- F** Mixed-use building: 7,800 SF retail and 14 units
- G** Multi-family complex: 57 units
- H** Multi-family complex (senior living): 120 units
- I** Adaptive re-use retail building: 4,250 SF





New Civic Site

AUSTELL AVE

SPRING ST

REDEVELOPMENT SITES

Site 2: New Civic Site

Site 2 is the existing Austell United States Post Office building which is located on a prominent corner in the downtown area. There is potential for the post office building to close and this concept shows a possibility for the 1.9 acre site should that happen. The concept plan shows a building that can be used for civic activities (for example, City offices, a civic center, community center, etc.) that addresses the street at a key gateway into Downtown Austell.

Land Use Summary

- J Civic building: 28,600 SF





Downtown Infill

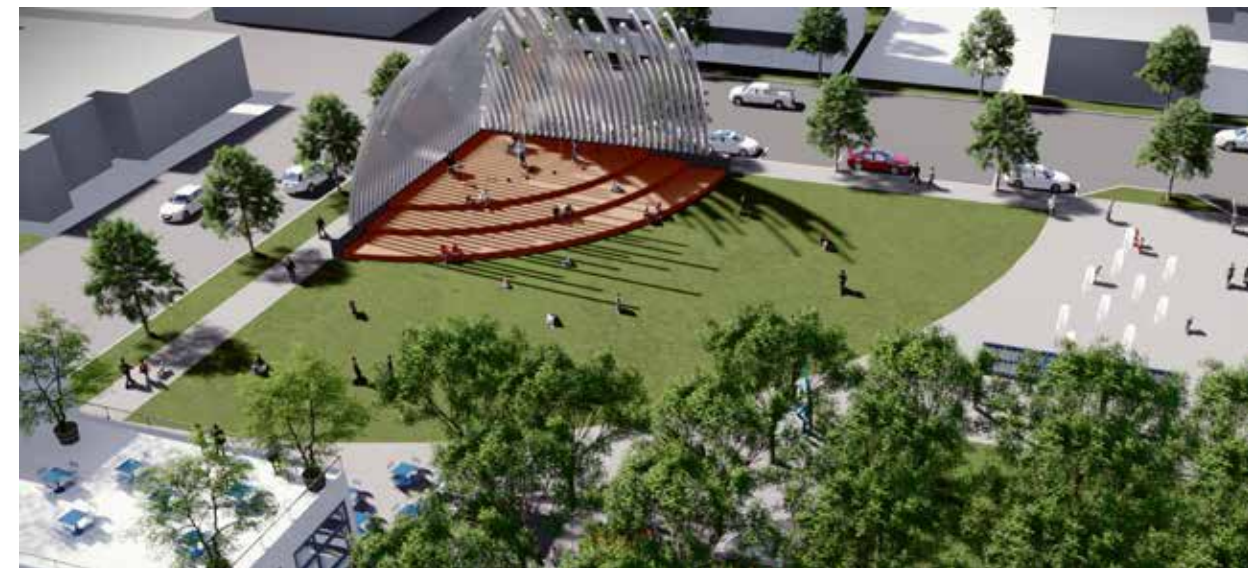
REDEVELOPMENT SITES

Site 3: Downtown Infill

Site 3 includes some infill sites located in the downtown core. Buildings K, M, N, O, and P are proposed new commercial buildings that could fill in some of the existing parking lots. Building L is an existing building that could be renovated into commercial space. Included in this concept plan is a Town Green surrounded by these proposed new buildings to frame the space. The park features a splashpad, stage, playable art, and space for events which would spark economic activity in Downtown Austell.

Land Use Summary

- K** Infill retail building: 2,250 SF
- L** Retail building: 6,400 SF
- M** Retail building: 4,000 SF
- N** Retail building: 5,000 SF
- O** Retail building: 4,000 SF
- P** Retail building (possible restaurant): 1,800 SF
- Q** Mixed use building with 11,200 SF of retail and 22,400 SF of upper-story office space



New Residential & Mixed-Use



REDEVELOPMENT SITES

Site 4: New Residential & Mixed-Use

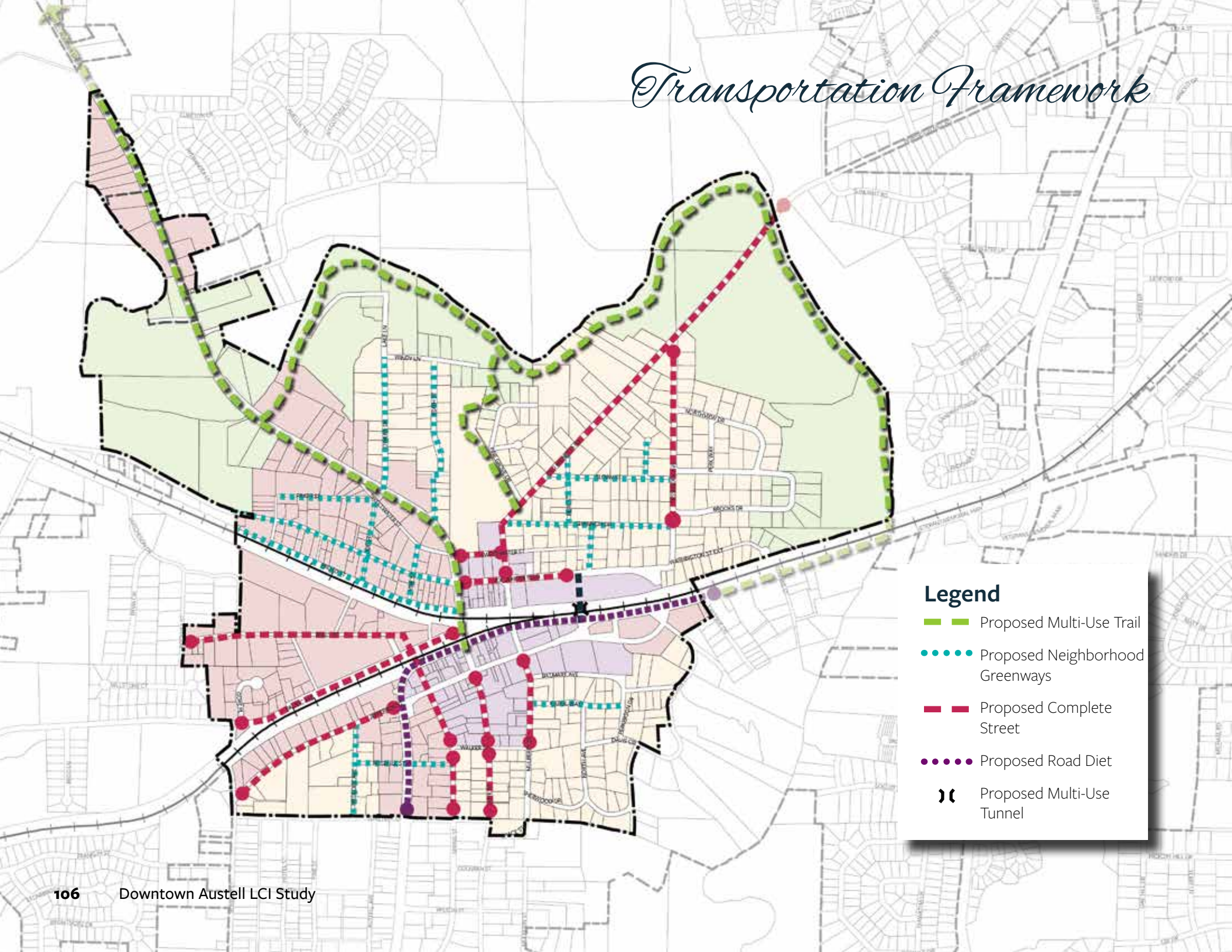
The concept plan for Site 4 consists of redeveloping the Maxway shopping center. The site is approximately 5 acres. The concept plan shows primarily multi-family development, however, building R.1 would be mixed-use with multi-family above ground-floor commercial. Adding more residences in and around Downtown Austell will help support any new commercial development.

Land Use Summary

- R** Mixed-use building with 4,500 SF of ground-floor retail with upper-story residential units
- R** Multi-family complex: 182 units



Transportation Framework



Legend

- Proposed Multi-Use Trail
- Proposed Neighborhood Greenways
- Proposed Complete Street
- Proposed Road Diet
- Proposed Multi-Use Tunnel

TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

A robust, accessible transportation network that provides effective mobility for all users is a core element for the economic, social, and environmental prosperity of any community. Residents and visitors must be able to access Downtown Austell easily and safely on foot, with bikes or other modes, and in vehicles. With walkability as one of the missing keys to a successful downtown district in Austell, creating a transportation network that encourages walking is a primary focus.

The following transportation recommendations were developed based on a variety of factors, including the Level of Traffic Stress Analysis, available space in the existing road right-of-way, and the context of surrounding land uses. A range of new roadway designs and infrastructure is proposed throughout the study area, including:

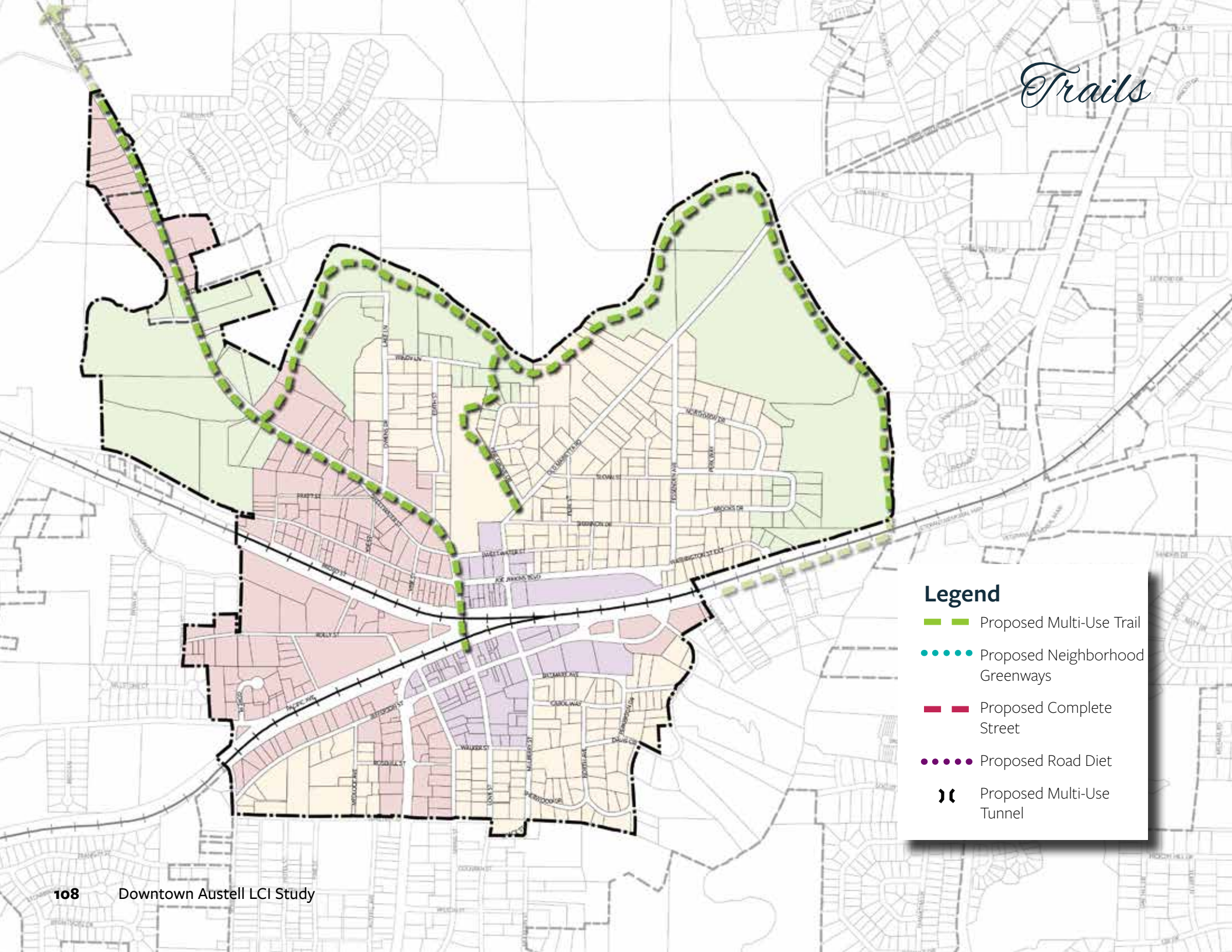
- » **Multi-Use Trails.** These are paved paths separated from roadways that are large enough to accommodate a range of non-vehicular users, from walkers to bikers, scooters, skateboards, and more.

- » **Complete Streets.** These streets are designed to maximize safety and access for all types of users, generally in mixed-use areas with higher traffic volumes. Depending on the available space, complete streets typically include sidewalks as well as bike lanes, but they may also include traffic calming elements (speed humps) and shared lane bikeway markings. One way to achieve complete streets, which are proposed in this plan, is through road diets, which look at decreasing the size and / or number of lanes of an existing roadway to make streetscape design improvements that maximize the safety and comfort for all users.

- » **Neighborhood Greenways (Shared Streets).** These are smaller, primarily residential streets where traffic calming designs and bikeway markings provide a safe, calm experience for local users, whether in vehicles or on foot or bike.

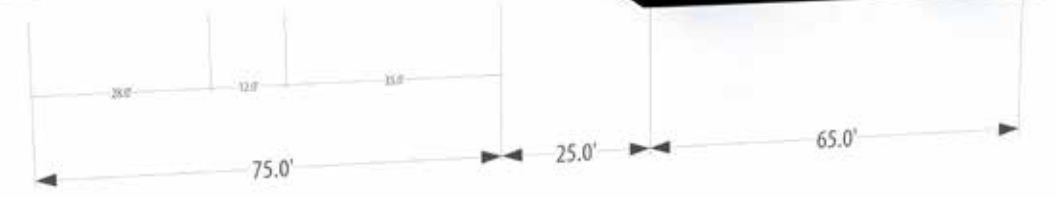
- » **Multi-Use Tunnel.** This proposed tunnel will allow pedestrians and other users to safely cross under the Norfolk Southern railway tracks, connecting downtown to Collar Park

All of these different elements work together to improve safety, comfort, and overall quality of life for residents and visitors traveling to and through Downtown Austell. The implementation of proposed transportation improvements focuses on Downtown Austell, starting with projects in the downtown core that would elevate the experience of visiting Downtown Austell. From there, the projects work outwards from downtown to the surrounding areas, such as residential areas, schools, and Sweetwater Creek. These projects would be completed after the initial downtown projects in order to create easier accessibility and connectivity for all transportation modes to downtown. This method was designed to focus on the importance of having a desirable, livable downtown community and having the connectivity from the surrounding areas.



TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Trails



Multi-use trails are paved paths, typically 8-12 feet wide that are designed for two-way traffic and to be shared by all non-vehicular transportation modes, including walking, biking, skating, etc. Over the last few years, a variety of new motorized vehicles—like e-bikes, electric scooters, and electric skateboards—have become popular for use on multi-use trails. However, larger motorized vehicles, including ATVs, golf carts, etc. are typically prohibited on multi-use trails. Multi-use trails are always separated from roads,

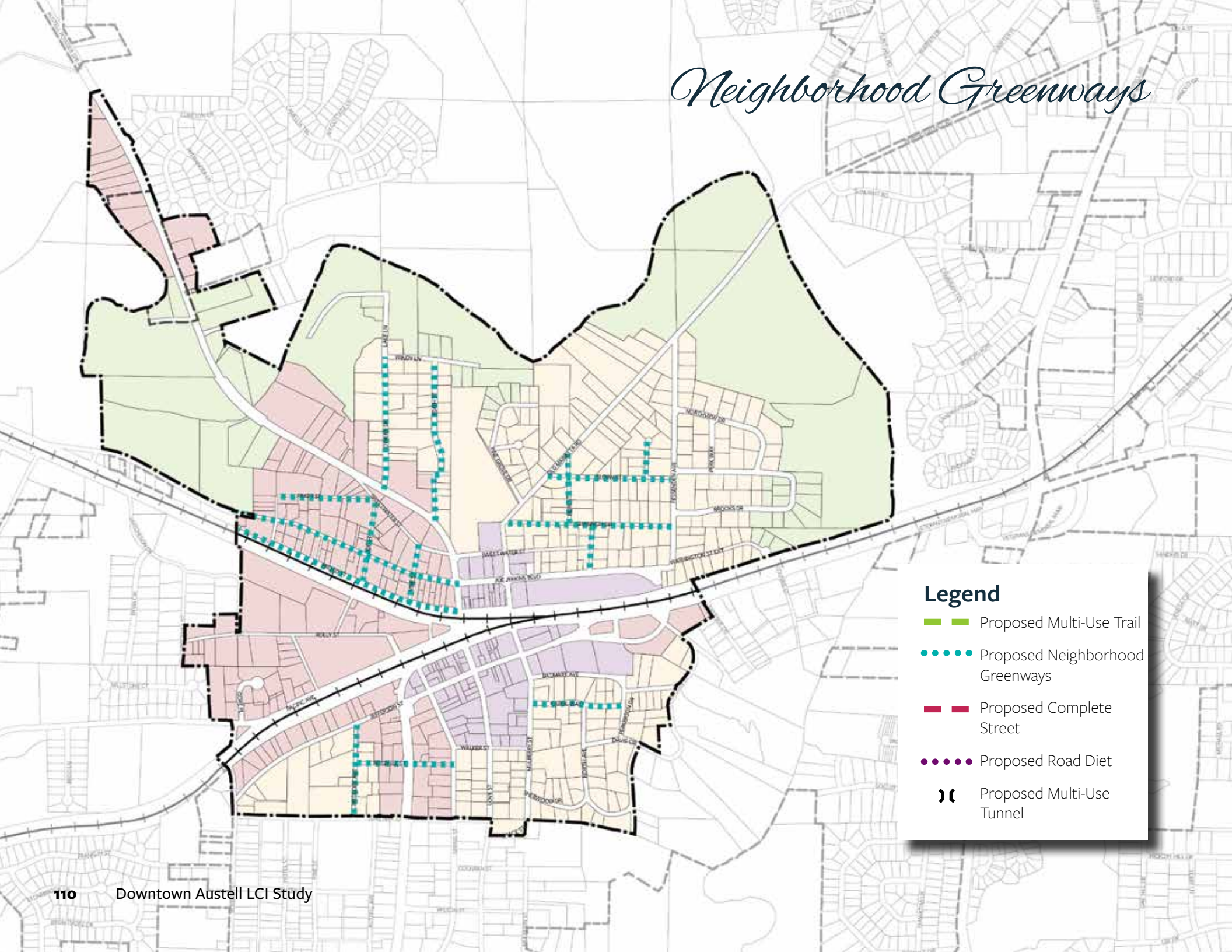
either by a curb or an area of grass, and they may be located in their own right of way in parks or other areas removed from any existing road network.

The Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail forms the backbone of the proposed transportation framework, connecting all areas north of Veterans Memorial Highway to the heart of downtown. Much of the other network elements build off this central connection. The trail was proposed as part of Cobb County's Greenways and Trails Master Plan (2018) and

identified as a priority project. The County has recently released a Request for Proposals to develop a scoping study for the project, signaling further progress on this project

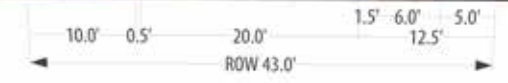
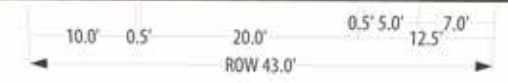
The Sweetwater Creek Trail would branch off from the Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail where it crosses Sweetwater Creek. The trail would travel east along the stream, providing a connection at Pine Grove Park and Old Marietta Road. It would end at the proposed trail along Veterans Memorial Highway. This trail would provide an experience in the existing forests along Sweetwater Creek. However, the trail's route runs through private property and would require each property owner to either sell a portion of property or grant an easement for the trail to pass through their land. Additionally, the trail would be located in a flood zone and would require further study to determine its feasibility.

The Veterans Memorial Highway Trail would connect the Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail with the Sweetwater Creek Trail, traveling along the north side of Veterans Memorial Highway, and providing a critical link across the railroad tracks at the proposed tunnel at Jefferson Street.



TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Neighborhood Greenways



Existing Conditions

Narrow travel lanes (roughly 9 feet each) with center striping, a 6 to 10-foot planting strip, and a 5-foot sidewalk.

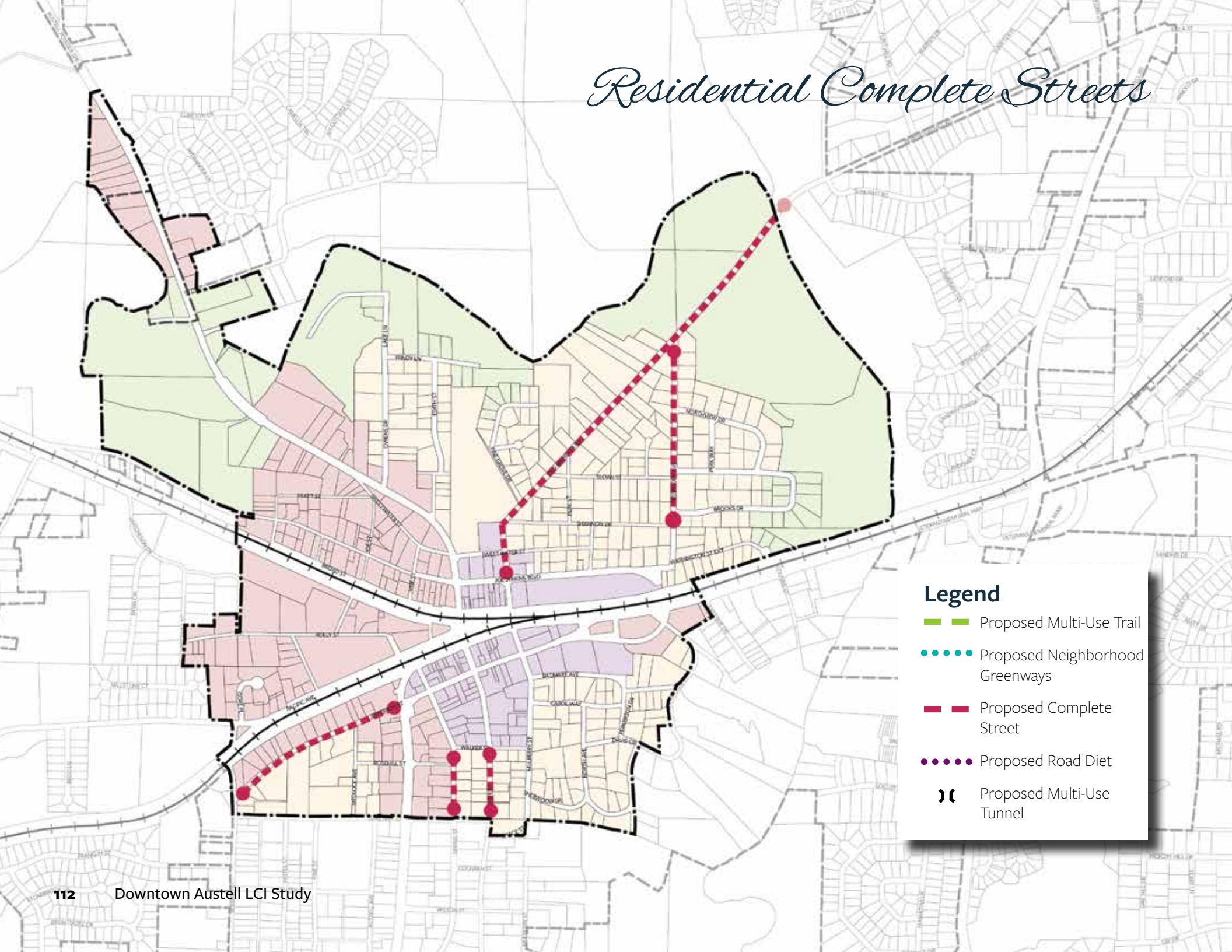
Proposed Condition

Speed humps or tables are proposed to ensure that vehicle speeds remain below 20 mph. Additionally, shared roadway bike markings in the center of each travel lane (sometimes called “sharrows”) along with signage, indicate that bikes are welcome. In some streets, the center striping can be removed. Where possible, new street trees will be planted.

This design applies to the following streets:

- » Alabama Street
- » Broad Street
- » Edith Street
- » Joe Jerkins Boulevard west of Austell-Powder Springs Road
- » Joe Street
- » Medlock Avenue
- » Perk Street
- » Pratt Street
- » Owens Drive
- » Rosehill Street
- » Shannon Drive
- » Sloan Street
- » Vine Street
- » Virginia Drive

Residential Complete Streets



TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Complete Streets



Within the study area, a complete streets design is applied to key corridors that may experience moderate to high vehicle traffic and provide important connections between residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, or other destinations like schools. Design techniques vary slightly depending on the available right-of-way and the surrounding land use.

Residential Areas Existing Conditions

Narrow travel lanes (roughly 9 feet each) without center striping and a sidewalk that meets the curb.

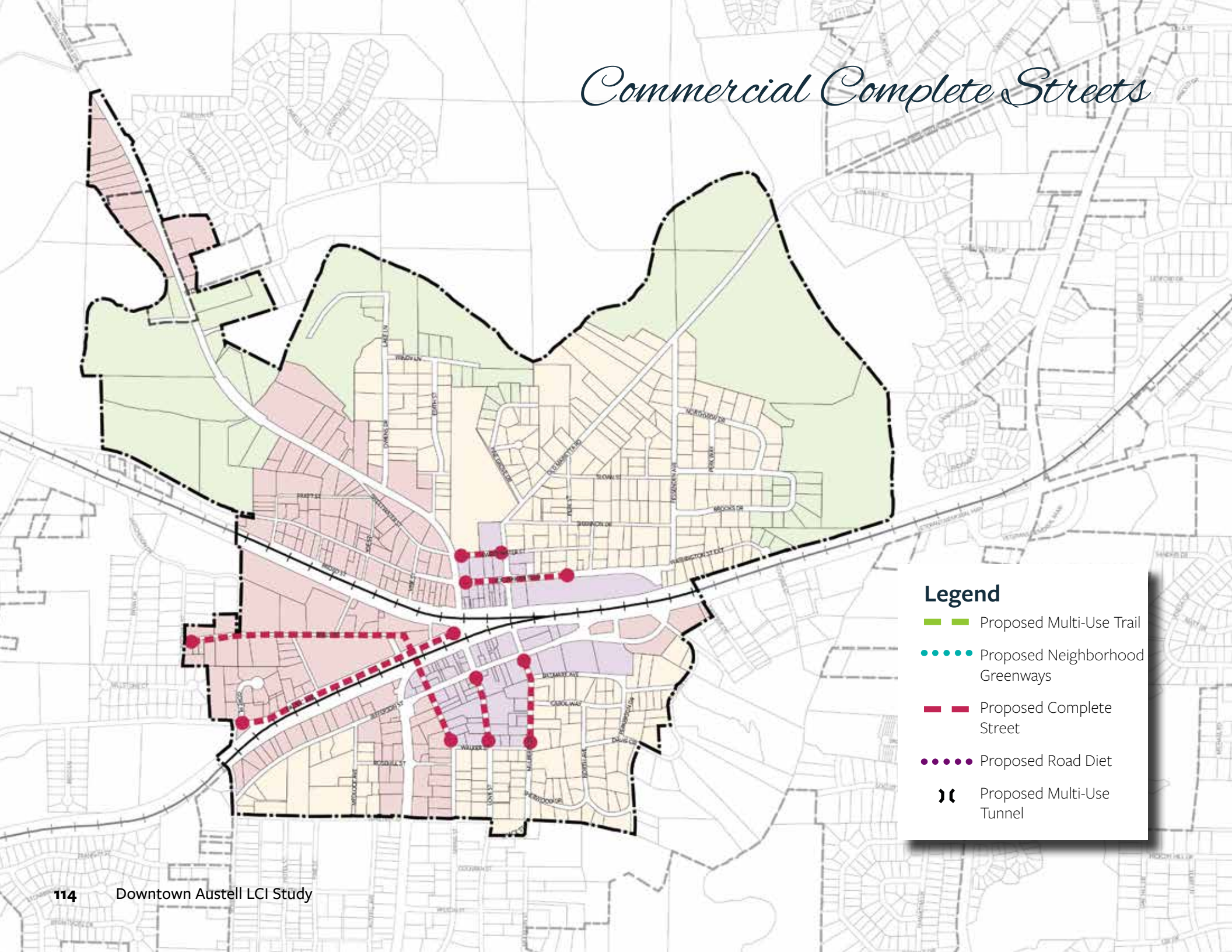
Proposed Condition

The introduction of 4-foot bike lanes, one-way in each direction to the outside of the vehicle travel lane is proposed. Maintain narrow travel lanes but provide center striping. Additionally, it involves creating a new 5-foot sidewalk to replace the existing sidewalk on at least one side of the street. Where possible, new street trees will be added. Due to the limited right of way and in order to create a high-quality pedestrian environment, a development setback is suggested.

This design applies to the following streets:

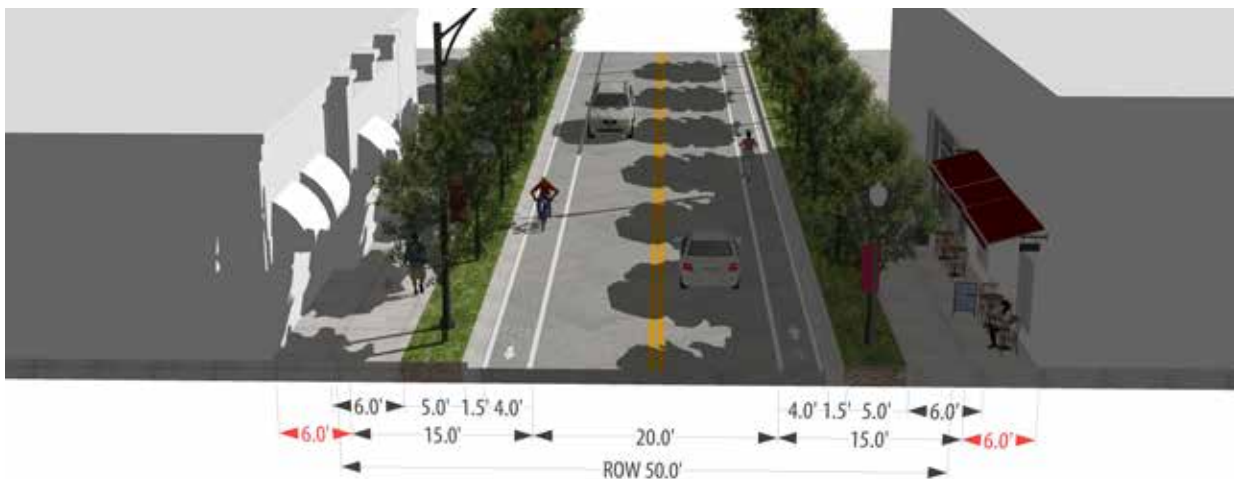
- » Jefferson Street
- » Old Marietta Road
- » Spring Street south of Walker Street
- » Love Street south of Walker Street
- » Fessenden Avenue

Commercial Complete Streets



TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

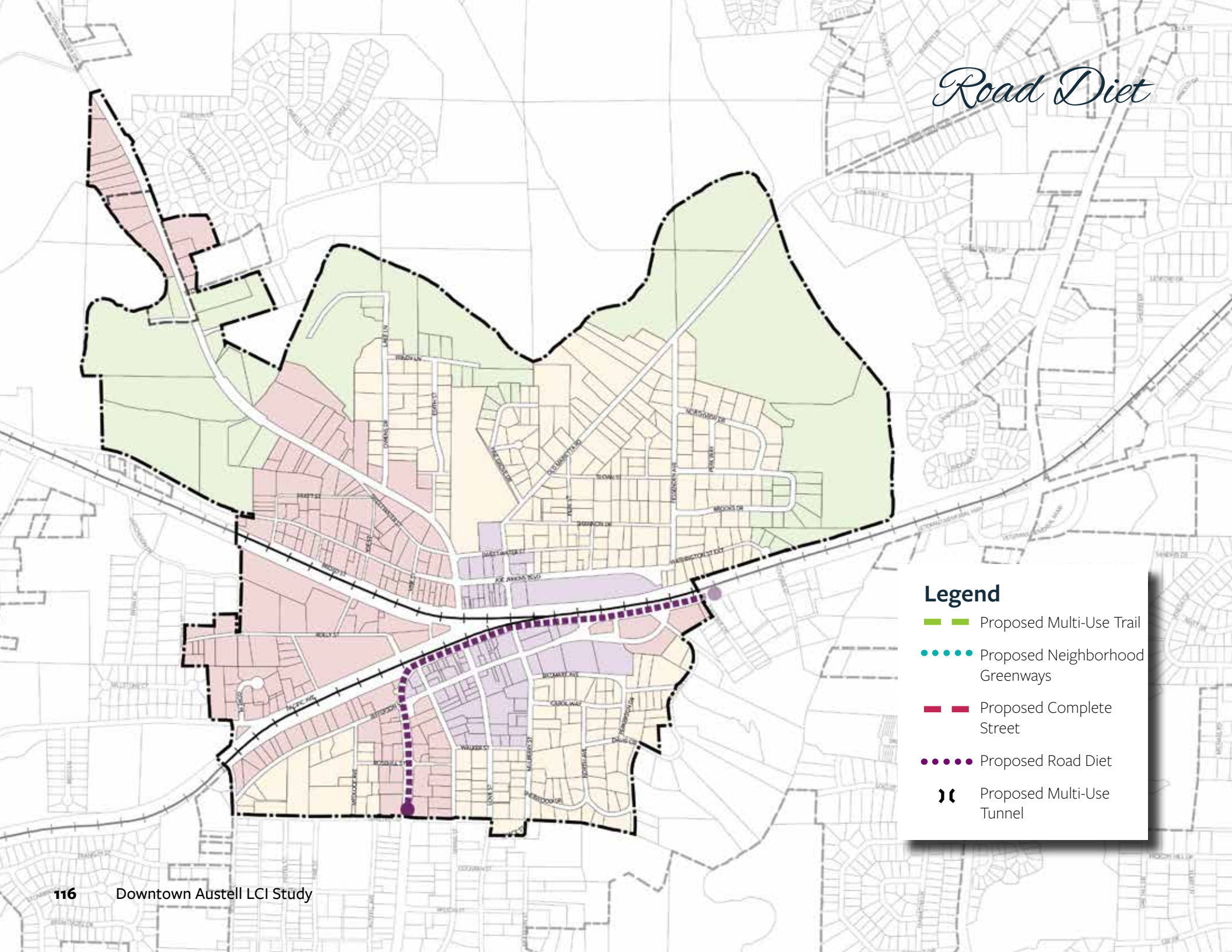
Complete Streets



Commercial Areas

In commercial and mixed-use areas, 4-foot one-way bike lanes will be added to the outside of each travel lane. New street trees will be added in the planting strip, where possible, and sidewalks will be expanded to a minimum of 6 feet and, if possible, building facades should be setback another 4 to 6 feet to provide space for outdoor dining. Additional pedestrian amenities, including street lights, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, etc. will be installed where appropriate. Where space permits, on-street parking should be added.

- This design applies to the following streets:
- » Mulberry Street north of Walker Street
 - » Spring Street north of Walker Street
 - » Love Street north of Walker Street
 - » Joe Jerkins Boulevard east of Austell-Powder Springs Road
 - » Sweetwater Street
 - » Rolly Street
 - » Humphries Hill Road



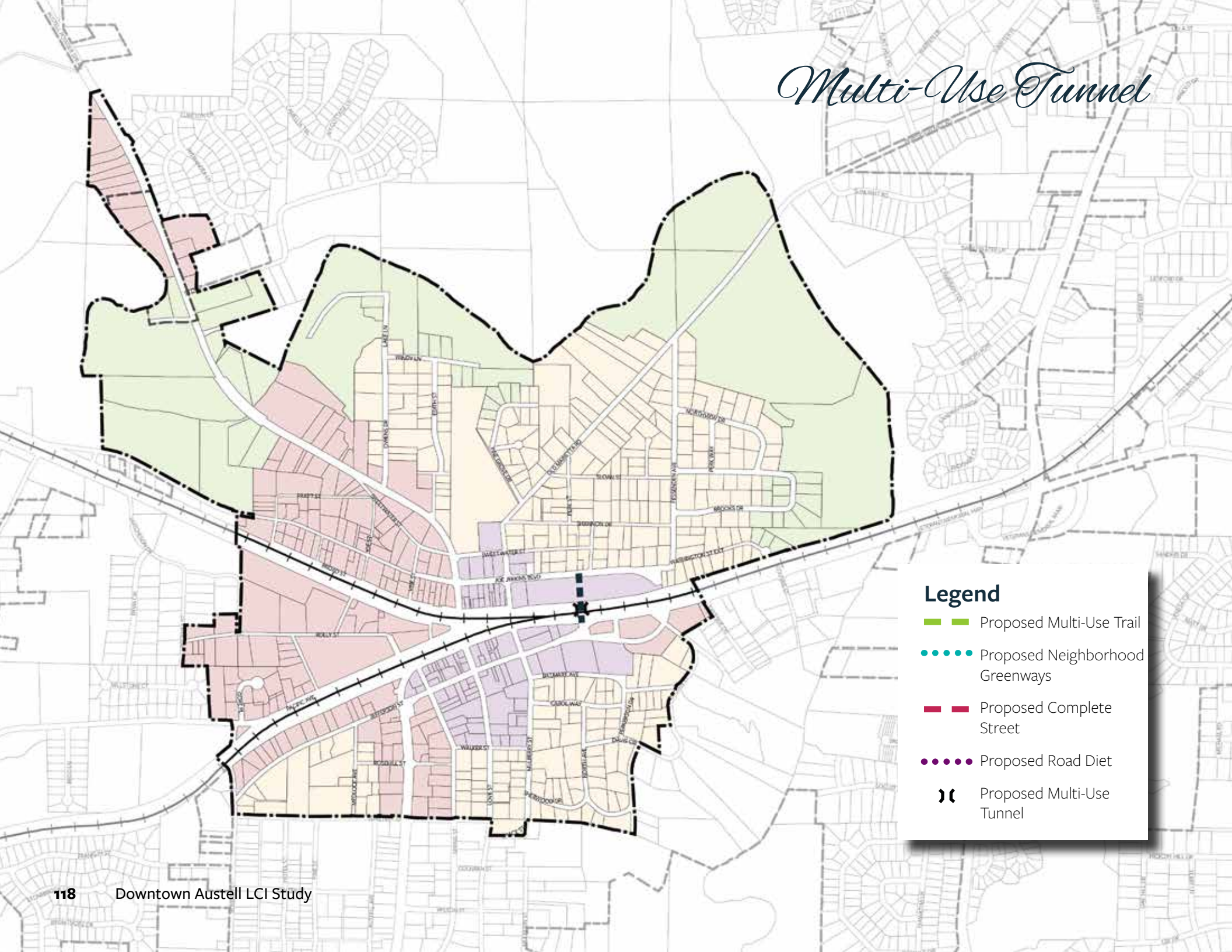
TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Road Diet



The road diet is a proposed Complete Street redesign of Veterans Memorial Highway. It would involve reducing the road lanes from the existing five (two in each direction, plus a center turn lane) to four, by eliminating the outer travel lanes in each direction and providing on-street parking in the second eastbound lane, while maintaining a center turn lane. This arrangement would allow for the creation of the 10-foot multi-use trail and a 5-foot planting strip on the north side of the road, as well as expanded tree planting areas and outdoor seating on the south side of the road. The new arrangement would encourage slower vehicle speeds and provide a much-improved pedestrian experience.

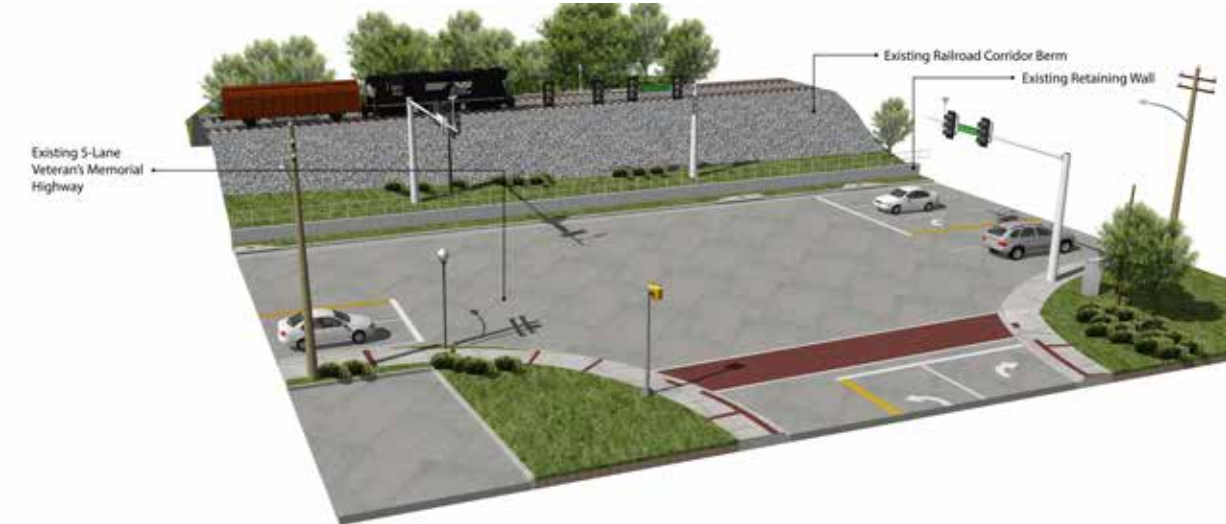
Multi-Use Tunnel



- Legend**
- Proposed Multi-Use Trail
 - Proposed Neighborhood Greenways
 - Proposed Complete Street
 - Proposed Road Diet
 - Proposed Multi-Use Tunnel

TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Multi-Use Tunnel



The multi-use tunnel would provide a safe and direct connection for pedestrians and bikers beneath the heavily used railroad tracks at the intersection of Veterans Memorial Highway and the Jefferson Street Connector. The tunnel would serve to increase the ease of access between the north and south sides of downtown and provide a direct connection to Collar Park. New crosswalks and ADA curb ramps, additional street trees, and pedestrian lighting would signal the arrival into Downtown Austell, along with the potential for public art within the tunnel itself.

SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

Overview

The identity of Downtown Austell shall be enhanced through signage that matches the character and history of Austell.

The City is named after Alfred Austell, who brought the railroad system to the town which caused the popularity of the town flourish. Both historical and present-day Austell still have an industrial character since the railway system still exists.

The purpose of entry signage is to provide clear directions to guide visitors through downtown with ease. The signs are integrated to fit seamlessly with the rest of the town. Materials like rusted and black metal refers to the modern industrial identity, all while enhancing the current buildings and surrounding areas.

Theme

The inspiration for downtown signage stemmed from both industrial and modern themes. Materials like rusted and black metal fit with the identity and the dark green compliments those materials.



Downtown Entry Signage

An entrance monument will establish a sense of arrival into Downtown Austell. Monuments are used to communicate a tone and expectation of what the visitor will experience once they arrive.



Option 1. This option features a gabion basket as the structure - to bring in natural materials to represent the springs and land that originally attracted people to the area. This has an 1/8" thick rusted metal plate on the front and has laser cut lettering.



Option 2. This design uses 3/16" thick black metal to form "Austell". It features a rusted metal box as the base.

Artistic Monument

By bringing in an artistic monument, it will encourage public art in the community. Public art can add value to the cultural and economic vitality of a community. It helps reflect the identity of the citizens which attracts people to its uniqueness.



This design uses 3/16" thick metal to form the iconic "A" for Austell.

Light Post Directional Signage & Flag Banner

The light post directional signage features 1/8" thick rusted metal with laser cut lettering. The banner features black and white photos of historic and present day Austell with the city seal at the bottom.





Chapter 5

Implementation



Downtown
Austell
LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE STUDY

“I am interested in understanding how these efforts are being incentivized and I would like to see local and underserved business owners be given the opportunity to fulfill their needs.”

- Survey Respondent



THE STRATEGY

Overview

In order for the City of Austell to successfully implement this plan, collaboration between many different groups will be required. The image on the right shows which of these groups will be involved.

Implementers

Citizens

The citizens of Austell will be the top group involved in implementing this LCI plan. They are the end-user of every product that comes through downtown. Citizens come to public meetings and participate in planning processes. They, along with other groups, have the power to influence the direction of a city with their votes and voices.

Elected Officials

Not only do elected officials vote to adopt local plans, they are important in the timeline and implementation of individual projects, whether they are publicly or privately funded.



THE STRATEGY

City & Staff

Most public projects will be managed by the City of Austell's staff in various departments, specifically:

- » Administration;
- » Community Development; and
- » Public Works

Community Partners

Community partners may include non-profits, local agencies, and county and regional agencies. They can help provide funding for projects or, in some cases, provide the staffing needed to complete various City initiatives. These community partners may include the following organizations:

- » Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC);
- » Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT);
- » Cobb County;
- » Cobb County Schools;
- » Cobb Chamber of Commerce;
- » Volunteer groups; and
- » Neighborhood associations.

Interest Groups

Interest groups rally around common ideas. They work to advance goals, influence public policy, and provide advocacy for unheard voices. They may show up to community meetings to show support for ideas or to protest them. The City of Austell should make sure to include these groups as stakeholders as much as possible. While not every project may warrant their participation, care should be taken to involve the appropriate groups when necessary to address their goals and gain their support as this plan is implemented. Examples of interest groups include, but are not limited to:

- » Environmental groups;
- » Economic interest groups;
- » Religious organizations;
- » Historic preservationists;
- » Affordable housing advocates;
- » Civil rights and social justice groups;
- » Business associations; and
- » Arts and cultural organizations.

Private Sector

Some of the ideas set forth in this plan will require the participation from the private sector, including donors and real estate developers. Donors can provide funding for public projects or volunteer time toward initiatives. Real estate developers can fund and construct projects including buildings, sidewalks and trails, and parks that the City or its community partners cannot fund and / or construct themselves. The City would encourage the participation of not only large-scale commercial and residential developers who can fund and construct huge projects, but they would also encourage smaller scale developers to participate, especially with infill development, renovations and re-use projects, and smaller real estate undertakings.

Funding Sources

Some of the projects in this plan do not have a known cost yet, as they will depend on the funding sources and the size and magnitude of the project itself. The Action Matrix currently accounts for around \$64 million of projects to be implemented over a ten-year period, although the final cost is likely to increase taking into account unknown costs and inflation. Nearly 80% of this total is made up of transportation projects alone, at least 20% of which will be funded through City funds. The following text explains the different funding sources that may be utilized to pay for the recommendations outlined in this plan:

General Fund. The City's general fund is a principle source of funding for city-wide improvement projects. This source takes in funding from property taxes, business taxes, franchise fees, licensing and permitting fees, special purpose taxes, fines and forfeitures, and other revenues. It is anticipated that many of the projects identified in the Action Matrix would utilize the general fund as a funding source. The capital improvements program that is a part of the LCI implementation program should be adopted

into the City's Short Term Work Program and operating budget, and funds within the General Fund set aside on an annual basis for project implementation.

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). GDOT provides funding to maintain and improve their highways. They also provide funding to local projects through grants.

Special Purpose Local Option Sales Taxes (SPLOST). SPLOSTs are used in Georgia to pay for a variety of capital projects within a county or municipality. When voters approve the one percent sales tax for a particular project or projects, the revenues created from that tax can be used to pay back bonds issued to complete various capital projects in the near term. The City of Austell is currently participating in Cobb County's SPLOST which runs through 2023. Under this SPLOST, the City receives less than 1% (around \$3 million) of the total funds for municipal projects. Those funds will be allocated towards park improvements and transportation projects. On the next SPLOST renewal referendum to be voted on in 2022, the County plans on building a new recreation center that may be located either

in the city or close by. A future SPLOST may include the new tunnel under the railroad tracks.

Local Maintenance Improvement Grants (LMIG). LMIG is a program funded by GDOT that provides funds to local governments to improve their roadway system. The funding is allocated based on the total centerline road miles for each local road system and the total population of each town as compared to the total statewide centerline road miles and total statewide population.

Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG). STBG is a federally funded block grant that provides funds to local governments for projects that support the goals and objectives of the Atlanta Region's Plan. This program includes funds designated for Transportation Alternatives, the Livable Centers Initiative, and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) programs.

LCI Funds. The ARC has various programs, including the Livable Centers Initiative, that can provide technical assistance and funding for other studies. The program provides preliminary engineering funds to local governments for projects that support the

THE STRATEGY

goals of the LCI program which are to create vibrant, walkable communities across metro Atlanta. Eligible transportation projects will receive funding through the ARC's LCI funds to cover 80% of the project's total costs with 20% coming from the City via whatever funding sources are available at that time.

Enterprise Zone. In 1997, the General Assembly enacted the Enterprise Zone Employment Act, recognizing the need for revitalization in many areas of Georgia. The State Enterprise Zone program intends to improve geographic areas within municipalities that are suffering from disinvestment, underdevelopment, and economic decline, encouraging private businesses to reinvest and rehabilitate such areas. In Austell's enterprise zone, local ad valorem taxes, occupational taxes, license fees, and other local fees and taxes, except local sales and use taxes, or any combination thereof, may be exempted or reduced. This tool can be used to attract new investment in the LCI area, with the likely largest upside for a new business being the exemption or reduction of county and municipal ad valorem taxes (excluding school taxes).

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The Department of Housing & Urban Development sponsors the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. CDBG provides 100% grants for the acquisition, rehabilitation or construction of certain public facilities. Grants are highly competitive, and use of the funds is restricted to projects that would benefit lower and moderate-income persons. This program is a potential funding source for community and recreation centers and pedestrian facilities.

Redevelopment Fund (RDF). Recognizing that redevelopment projects can be the most challenging projects a local government may undertake, the Redevelopment Fund (RDF) was created as a set-aside of Georgia's non-entitlement CDBG Program and is administered through the state Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The RDF finances locally initiated public/private partnerships to leverage investments in commercial, downtown, industrial redevelopment, and revitalization projects. Unlike other DCA CDBG programs, the RDF uses the CDBG national objective of "eliminating slums or blight." As a result,

many smaller scale projects (in downtown areas or blighted industrial areas) may be competitive for RDF financing.

Public/Private Partnerships One of the most efficient means of implementing town center projects is through development of public/private partnerships. If key parcels of vacant land can be acquired either by the City, or by the DDA, the City would prepare a request for proposals to provide turnkey services for development of the site and advertise/distribute these to major development companies. This is a most effective way to facilitate development of larger, contiguous parcel, like the Industrial Site. It is recommended that the City develop relationships with large residential and commercial developers that are actively participating in "smart growth" developments throughout the Atlanta area. Local governments would seek formal partnering agreements where developers could exchange significant tracts of land and in return receive development concessions. Corporations could provide funding assistance for portions of streetscape/landscape, signage, lighting, and recreation projects. In exchange for their participation, the City would appropriately could extend additional incentives.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

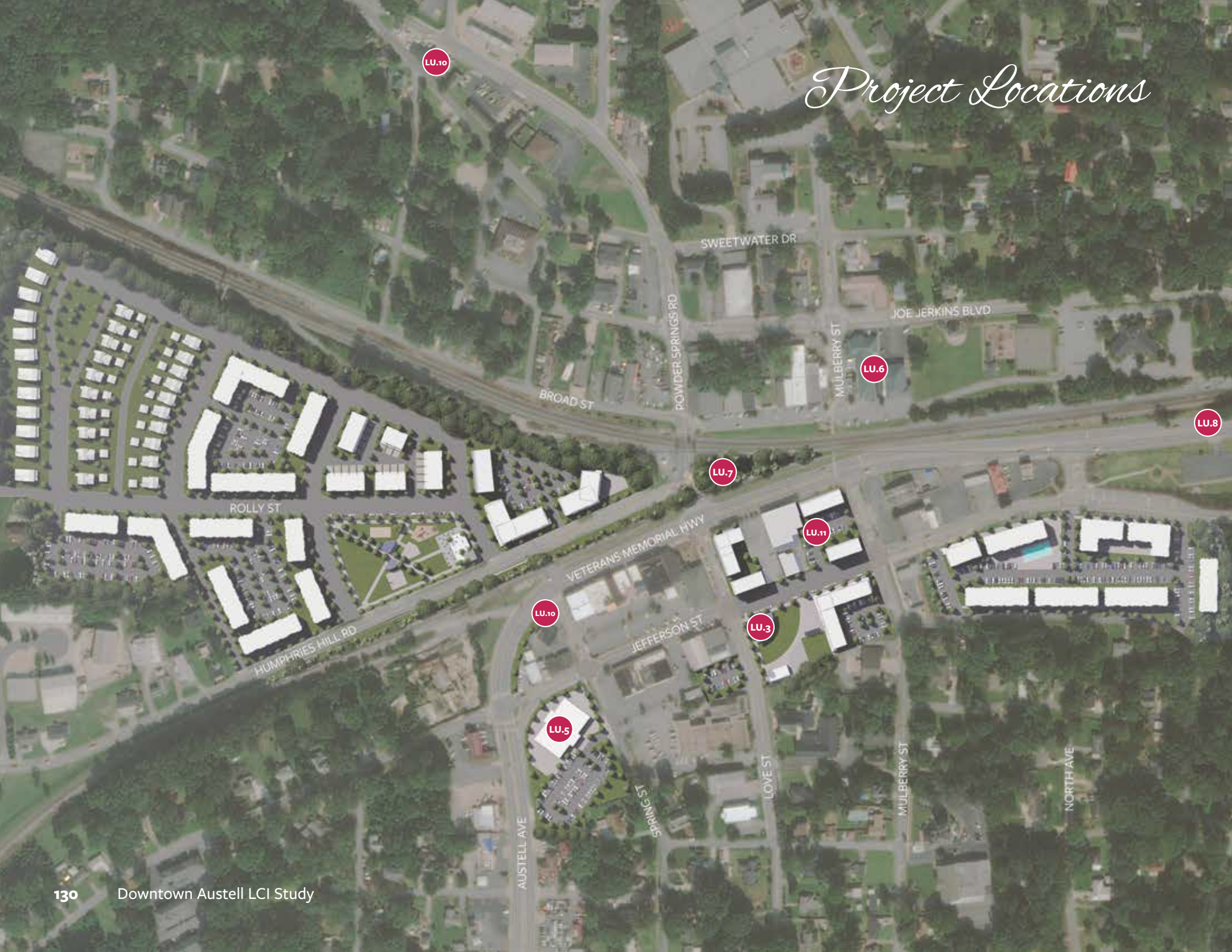
While many of the recommendations of this plan reflect long-term actions, short-term actions can build momentum for Downtown Austell and catalyze larger projects in the future. Throughout the process, a set of priority projects were identified.

One thing the City could **begin is the Town Green.** To complete this, first the City needs to acquire the remaining property where the Town Green will be located. After that, the design process can be started.

Another thing the City should prioritize is the **activation of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA).** The DDA would be the implementation arm of many downtown projects. In addition to activating the DDA, great care should be taken to ensure that it has the legal power to act and it has the staff it needs.

Lastly, the City should continue to work toward **enacting the Quiet Zone** for the railroad. This was identified by the community as a top priority. There are many actors involved, including GDOT and Norfolk Southern, and there may be trade-offs involved that will need to be addressed as it moves forward.





Project Locations

ACTION MATRIX

#	Project	Start Year	Est. Cost	Responsible Parties	Funding Sources	Notes
Land Use & Development						
LU.1	Main Street program, full time director	2022	\$300,000	Community Affairs	General fund	Carried over from the previous LCI plan; estimated cost reflects yearly salary and expenses over a 5-year period
LU.2	Zoning updates	2022	Staff	Community Affairs; Code Enforcement	N/A	May serve as a "Phase 1" of further city-wide zoning code updates
LU.3	Acquisition of 5859 Love Street	2022	\$120,000	Community Affairs	General fund	Remaining Town Green property
LU.4	Implement downtown design guidelines	2022	Staff	Community Affairs	N/A	
LU.5	New civic building	2027	\$2,000,000	Community Affairs	SPLOST	
LU.6	Adaptive reuse of City Hall	2027	\$1,000,000	Community Affairs	SPLOST	
LU.7	"Ghost" depot structure in railroad right-of-way (sculptural focal point in CBD)	2030	\$175,000	Community Affairs	General fund, CDBG	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.8	Eastern gateway at Joe Jerkins overpass	2025	\$60,000	Community Affairs; DDA	General fund, DDA	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.9	Northern gateway at Powder Springs Road	2025	\$45,000	Community Affairs; DDA	General fund, DDA	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.10	Southern gateway at Bankhead Highway and Jefferson Street	2025	\$60,000	Community Affairs; DDA	General fund, DDA	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.11	Land acquisition of South Block at the corner of Jefferson Street and Mulberry Street	2022	\$500,000	Community Affairs; DDA; Developer	General fund, RDF, TAD, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan

Project Locations



ACTION MATRIX

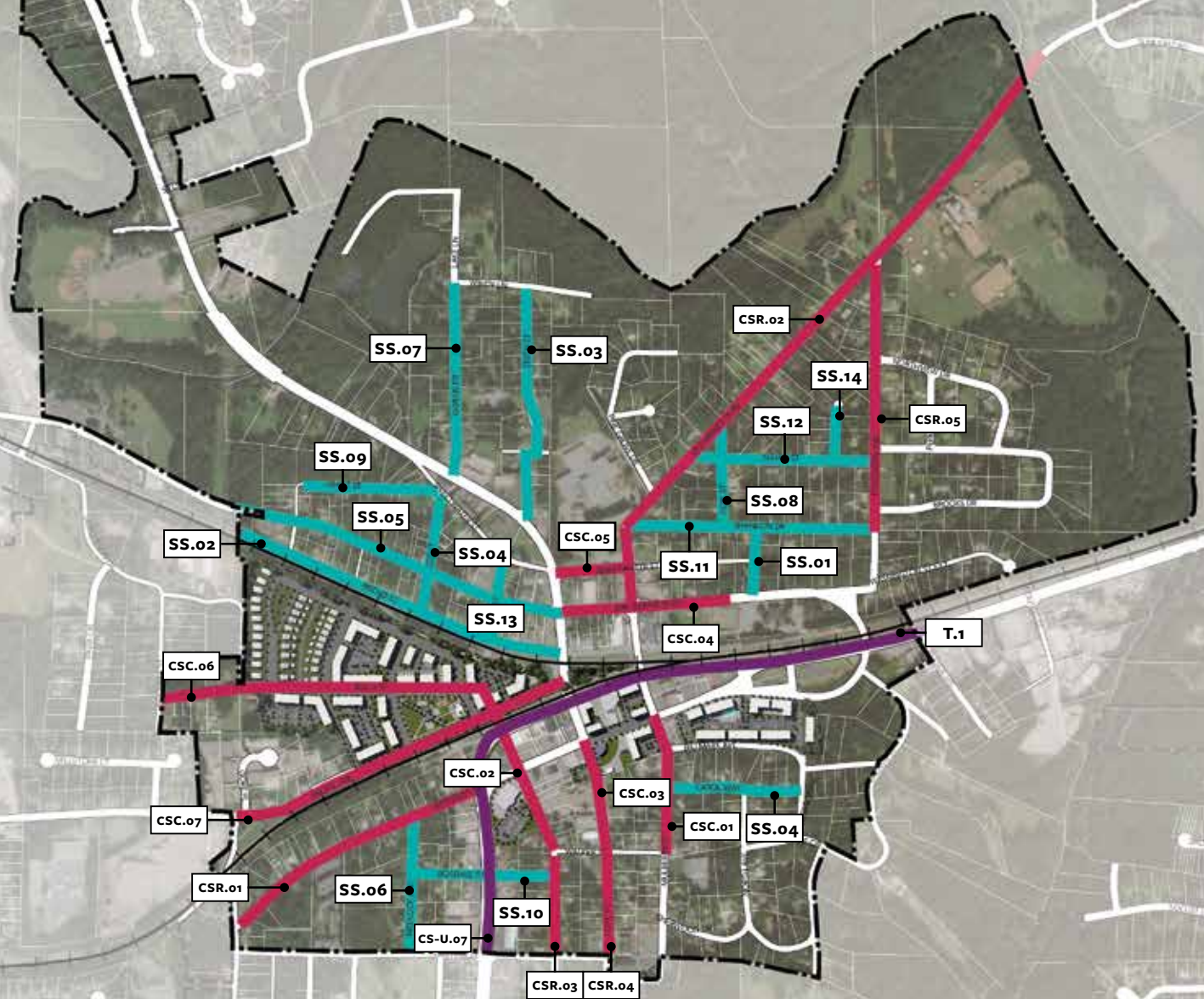
#	Project	Start Year	Est. Cost	Responsible Parties	Funding Sources	Notes
Land Use & Development (con't)						
LU.12	Land acquisition of North Block on Broad Street	2023	\$1,350,000	Community Affairs; DDA; Developer	General fund, RDF, TAD, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.13	Land acquisition of Triangular Block between railroad	2024	\$125,000	Community Affairs; DDA; Developer	General fund, RDF, TAD, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.14	Development of South Block (building and site construction)	2024	TBD	Community Affairs; DDA; Developer	General fund, RDF, TAD, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.15	Development of North Block (building demolition/rehabilitation/construction)	2025	TBD	Community Affairs; DDA; Developer	General fund, RDF, TAD, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.16	Development of Triangular Block (landscaping)	2024	TBD	Community Affairs; DDA; Developer	General fund, RDF, TAD, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.17	Rehabilitation of former Austell Ritz for theater use	2025	\$1,000,000	Community Affairs; DDA; Developer	General fund, RDF, TAD, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
LU.18	Rehabilitation of Austell Variety	2022	\$550,000	Community Affairs; DDA; Developer	General fund, RDF, TAD, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan

ACTION MATRIX

#	Project	Start Year	Est. Cost	Responsible Parties	Funding Sources	Notes
Economic Development						
ED.1	Activate the Downtown Development Authority and ensure that they are legally empowered to act	2022	\$50,000	Administration; Community Affairs; DDA	General fund	Estimated costs reflect potential yearly administrative budget and discretionary funds for projects
ED.2	Join the Georgia Main Street program	2022	\$1,000	Community Affairs; DDA	General fund	
ED.3	Creation of a Tax Allocation District to fund development activities	2023	Staff	Administration; Community Affairs; DDA	TBD	
ED.4	Signage and wayfinding study	2023	TBD	Community Affairs	General fund, RDF	
ED.5	Installation of signage and wayfinding	2024	TBD	Community Affairs	General fund, RDF	Cost to be determined based on selection design alternatives listed in the downtown design guidelines and prices quoted by manufacturers
ED.6	Public Art Master Plan	2025	TBD	Community Affairs; DDA	General fund; grants	This study would determine the appropriate mediums and locations of public art within the downtown area

#	Project	Start Year	Est. Cost	Responsible Parties	Funding Sources	Notes
Parks & Recreation						
P.1	Recreation Needs Assessment Study	2023	\$25,000	Parks & Recreation	General fund, local development fund	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
P.2	Master plan and planting concepts for railroad land	2023	\$12,000	Parks & Recreation; DDA	General fund, local development fund	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
P.3	Greening of railroad right-of-way (soil amendments and plantings)	2024	\$30,000	Parks & Recreation; DDA	General fund, public-private partnership	Carried over from the previous LCI plan
P.4	Design and construction of the Town Green	2025	\$1,000,000	Community Affairs; DDA; Parks & Recreation	General fund; TAD	
P.5	Recreation center	2025	\$2,500,000	Community Affairs; Parks & Recreation	SPLOST, general fund	
P.6	Master Plan and Improvements to Collar Park	2026	\$1,500,000	Parks & Recreation	SPLOST	
P.7	Improvements to Legion Field Park	2026	\$1,500,000	Parks & Recreation	SPLOST	

Project Locations



Project Locations



ACTION MATRIX

#	Project	Type of Improvement	Engineering Year	Engineering Cost	ROW Year	ROW Cost
T.1	Veterans Memorial Highway Road Diet and Intersection Improvements	Vehicular/Bicycle/Pedestrian	2022	\$1,440,300	2023	\$250,000
T.2	Update Pedestrian Facilities to be ADA Compliant per ADA Transition Plan	Bicycle/Pedestrian	Varies	\$35,000	N/A	N/A
T.3	Wayfinding Signage	Vehicular/Pedestrian	2023	\$62,500	N/A	N/A
T.4	Railroad Quiet Zone for Downtown	Vehicular	2024	\$312,500	N/A	N/A
T.5	Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2024	\$1,560,000	2026	\$390,000
T.6	Neighborhood Greenways	Bicycle/Pedestrian	Varies	\$1,070,660	N/A	\$0
SS.01	Alabama Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2028	\$28,130	N/A	\$0
SS.02	Broad Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2026	\$130,880	N/A	\$0
SS.03	Edith Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2028	\$106,500	N/A	\$0
SS.04	Joe Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2027	\$55,130	N/A	\$0
SS.05	Joe Jerkins Boulevard (from Austell-Powder Springs Road to Landers Street)	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2026	\$140,250	N/A	\$0
SS.06	Medlock Avenue	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2028	\$61,500	N/A	\$0
SS.07	Owens Drive	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2028	\$126,000	N/A	\$0
SS.08	Perk Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2027	\$46,500	N/A	\$0

Construction Year	Construction Cost	Total Project Cost	Responsible Parties	Funding Sources	Local Source	Match Amount
2027	\$7,201,500	\$8,891,800	GDOT, Public Works	General Fund; LCI	Public Works	\$1,778,360
Varies	\$175,000	\$210,000	Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works	\$210,000
2024	\$312,500	\$375,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$375,000
2028	\$1,562,500	\$1,875,000	GDOT, Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works	\$1,875,000
2028	\$7,800,000	\$9,750,000	Public Works	General Fund; STBG; SPLOST	Public Works	\$1,800,000
Varies	\$5,353,160	\$6,424,100	Varies	Varies	Varies	\$2,569,640
2029	\$140,630	\$168,800	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$67,520
2027	\$654,380	\$785,300	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$314,120
2029	\$532,500	\$639,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$255,600
2028	\$275,630	\$330,800	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$132,320
2027	\$701,250	\$841,500	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$336,600
2029	\$307,500	\$369,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$147,600
2029	\$630,000	\$756,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$302,400
2028	\$232,500	\$279,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$111,600

ACTION MATRIX

#	Project	Type of Improvement	Engineering Year	Engineering Cost	ROW Year	ROW Cost
SS.09	Pratt Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2027	\$63,750	N/A	\$0
SS.10	Rosehill Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2028	\$57,380	N/A	\$0
SS.11	Shannon Drive	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2027	\$111,380	N/A	\$0
SS.12	Sloan Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2028	\$82,130	N/A	\$0
SS.13	Vine Street	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2027	\$37,130	N/A	\$0
SS.14	Virginia Drive	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2028	\$24,000	N/A	\$0
T.7	Complete Streets	Bicycle/Sidewalk	Varies	\$909,500	N/A	\$0
CSR.01	Jefferson Street (from Bowden Street to Veterans Memorial Highway)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2026	\$127,500	N/A	\$0
CSR.02	Old Marietta Road	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2028	\$351,500	N/A	\$0
CSR.03	Spring Street (from Walker Street to Cemetery Street)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2027	\$47,250	N/A	\$0
CSR.04	Love Street (from Walker Street to Cemetery Street)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2027	\$48,380	N/A	\$0
CSR.05	Fessenden Avenue (from Shannon Drive to Old Marietta Road)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2028	\$124,500	N/A	\$0
CSC.01	Mulberry Street (from Jefferson Street to Walker Street)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2026	\$81,000	N/A	\$0
CSC.02	Spring Street (from Veterans Memorial Highway to Walker Street)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2026	\$76,500	N/A	\$0

Construction Year	Construction Cost	Total Project Cost	Responsible Parties	Funding Sources	Local Source	Match Amount
2028	\$318,750	\$382,500	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$153,000
2029	\$286,880	\$344,300	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$137,720
2028	\$556,880	\$668,300	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$267,320
2029	\$410,630	\$492,800	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$197,120
2028	\$185,630	\$222,800	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$89,120
2029	\$120,000	\$144,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$57,600
Varies	\$4,547,500	\$5,457,000	Varies	Varies	Varies	\$2,182,800
2027	\$637,500	\$765,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$306,000
2029	\$1,757,500	\$2,109,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; LCI	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$421,800
2028	\$236,250	\$283,500	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$113,400
2028	\$241,880	\$290,300	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$116,120
2029	\$622,500	\$747,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST; CDBG; LMIG	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$298,800
2027	\$405,000	\$486,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; LCI	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$97,200
2027	\$382,500	\$459,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; LCI	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$91,800

ACTION MATRIX

#	Project	Type of Improvement	Engineering Year	Engineering Cost	ROW Year	ROW Cost
CSC.03	Love Street (from Jefferson Street to Walker Street)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2026	\$65,000	N/A	\$0
CSC.04	Joe Jerkins Boulevard (from Austell-Powder Springs Road to Collar Park)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2026	\$108,500	N/A	\$0
CSC.05	Sweetwater Street (from Austell-Powder Springs Road to Mulberry Street)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2026	\$40,500	N/A	\$0
CSC.06	Rolly Street	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2027	\$203,000	N/A	\$0
CSC.07	Humphries Hill Road (from Austell-Powder Springs Road to Gore Place)	Bicycle/Sidewalk	2026	\$210,500	N/A	\$0
T.8	Trail along Sweetwater Creek from Powder Springs Rd to Veterans Memorial Highway and along Austell-Powder Spring Rd and from Old Marietta Rd to Sweetwater Creek	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2030	\$1,987,500	2032	\$496,880
T.9	Pedestrian Tunnel connecting Veterans Memorial Highway to Joe Jerkins Blvd	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2030	\$437,500	2032	\$0
T.10	Jefferson Street streetscape and bikeway (between Veterans Memorial Park and Love Street)	Bicycle/Pedestrian	2025	\$171,000	N/A	\$0
T.11	Construction of new public parking lot at 5878 Love Street	Parking	2026	\$25,000	N/A	\$0
T.12	"Park & Ride" Lot (commuter parking, exact location TBD)	Parking	2029	\$30,000	N/A	\$0
T.13	Parking lot redesign (2 lots)	Parking	2026	\$50,000	N/A	\$0
T.14	Parking map and distribution	Parking	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$0
T.15	Parking signs (7)	Parking	2026	\$2,500	N/A	\$0

Construction Year	Construction Cost	Total Project Cost	Responsible Parties	Funding Sources	Local Source	Match Amount
2027	\$325,000	\$390,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; LCI	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$78,000
2027	\$542,500	\$651,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; LCI	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$130,200
2027	\$202,500	\$243,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; LCI	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$48,600
2028	\$1,015,000	\$1,218,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; LCI	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$243,600
2027	\$1,052,500	\$1,263,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; LCI	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$252,600
2034	\$9,937,500	\$12,421,900	Public Works	General Fund; LCI	Public Works	\$2,484,380
2034	\$2,187,500	\$2,734,400	GDOT, Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST; LCI	Public Works	\$546,880
2026	\$855,000	\$1,026,000	Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works	\$1,026,000
2027	\$125,000	\$150,000	Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works	\$150,000
2031	\$150,000	\$180,000	Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works	\$180,000
2028	\$250,000	\$300,000	Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works	\$300,000
2026	\$25,000	\$25,000	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$25,000
2026	\$25,000	\$27,500	Public Works, Community Affairs	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works, Community Affairs	\$27,500

ACTION MATRIX

#	Project	Type of Improvement	Engineering Year	Engineering Cost	ROW Year	ROW Cost
T.16	Interconnect traffic signalization	Vehicular	2024	\$60,000	N/A	\$0
T.17	Shuttle operating cost (mileage of 2 vans)	Transit	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$0
T.18	Marking on-street spaces	Parking	2025	\$5,000	N/A	\$0
T.19	Allowance for drainage and utility improvements	Roadway	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$0

Construction Year	Construction Cost	Total Project Cost	Responsible Parties	Funding Sources	Local Source	Match Amount
2025	\$300,000	\$360,000	Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST; LMIG	Public Works	\$360,000
2025	\$12,500	\$12,500	Public Works	General Fund	Public Works	\$12,500
2026	\$25,000	\$30,000	Public Works	General Fund; SPLOST	Public Works	\$30,000
Varies	\$125,000	\$125,000	Public Works	General Fund	Public Works	\$125,000
Total Transportation Project Costs		\$50,375,200				

LCI CONSISTENCY

The Downtown Austell LCI Study is consistent with the components of the Livable Centers Initiative as described below.

Efficiency/feasibility of land uses and mix appropriate for future growth including new and / or revised land use regulations needed to complete the development program

The plan sets forth a vision for a more defined mix of land uses that will provide greenspace for passive and active recreation, residences, more space for commercial retail and office, and space for a new civic building, should the existing post office site be vacated and the need arises for it. A framework plan describes the appropriate mix of land uses and development types for each part of Downtown Austell. These changes in land use patterns are feasible given the current market demand, local conditions, and induced demand that will result from this plan's recommendations.

Transportation demand reduction measures

A reduction in the demand for vehicular trips is proposed via a designated connection to the Silver Comet Trail through Austell-Powder Springs Road and other new trails that will attract more cyclists and pedestrians visiting downtown; infill development in the downtown core; and improved streetscapes, some of which with new sidewalks and bike facilities.

Internal mobility requirements – traffic calming, pedestrian circulation, transit circulation, bicycle circulation – including safety and security of pedestrians

The previous 2002 study had recommendations related to streetscape design and the need for more sidewalks, but much of this wasn't implemented. This plan analyzed existing safety of pedestrians and cyclists through a Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) analysis of each street in the study area to determine appropriate recommendations related to streetscape improvements, walkability, and bikeability.

Mixed-income housing, job / housing match, and social issues

The plan sets up a framework plan locating where housing is most appropriate and describes the types of housing that are most suitable for each area. The proposed redevelopment plans show 54 new single-family homes (attached and detached) and 527 new multi-family units. At least 100 of these units could be age-restricted, senior housing. Developers would be encouraged to set aside a percentage of their units as affordable market-rate units. Most importantly, missing middle housing will be better encouraged through zoning ordinance changes, which will help create more naturally-occurring affordable housing units. Since housing and jobs are few in the study area, the jobs/housing balance will mostly be improved by the new housing opportunities described by the framework plan and concept plans as well as by new jobs created by new commercial retail and office space.

Continuity of local streets in the study area and the development of a network of minor roads

Downtown Austell has a fairly well-connected street grid that serves as a great foundation on which to build complimentary transportation recommendations. Transportation improvements focused on creating safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities and trail connections that would include the Silver Comet Trail connection. The presence of the railroad corridor provides challenges in connecting both sides of downtown. The proposal of the tunnel underneath the railroad tracks to connect both sides of downtown will create a connection for both pedestrians and cyclists that hasn't existed before. However, if any of the street crossings over the tracks are ever to close, this will create challenges for vehicles, prompting additional study for how to effectively cross the tracks by car.

Need/identification of future transit circulation systems

Cobb County has a limited transit system, only available to certain members of the community. When asked about transit, the community ranked it as a lower priority. However, as time progresses, this may change.

Connectivity of transportation system to other centers

There are no regional centers within the LCI study area. However, this plan reinforces the connection from Downtown Austell to the Silver Comet Trail. The Silver Comet Trail is about 62 miles long and connects many communities and regional destinations in Cobb, Paulding, and Polk Counties.

Center development organization, management, promotion, and economic restructuring

More effective organization, management, and promotion of existing and proposed assets in Downtown Austell are needed. Recommendations pertaining to

administration, housing, business and job creation, and other forms of economic development begin to address these needs and move toward a more vibrant future.

Stakeholder participation and support

Public participation was solicited throughout the planning process through a combination of interviews, Core Team meetings, and community meetings (both in person and virtual). More information about outreach can be found in Chapter 3.

Public and private investment policy

Successful implementation of this plan will rely on both public and private investments and, in some cases, public-private partnerships. Proposed projects draw from a variety of funding sources, including City, State, and federal dollars, as well as private sources.



Appendix



Downtown
Austell
LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE STUDY

REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Project	Description	Years	Status	Notes
Transportation				
Shuttle equipment (2 vans)	Transit	2006-2007	C	Purchased in 2002 (1 van)
Shuttle operating cost (mileage of 2 vans)	Transit	2006-2007	P	Limited use today
Commuter rail station	Transit	-	N/A	GDOT / Breman line never materialized
"Park & Park & Ride" Lot (commuter parking)	Parking	2003	P	Budget
Marking on-street spaces	Parking	2004	U	
Parking lot redesign (2 lots)	Parking	2004	U	
Development of off-street parking lots (misc. locations)	Parking	2004	U	
Parking map and distribution	Parking	2003	P	Budget
Parking signs (10)	Parking	2003	U	Completed 3
Interconnect	Traffic Signalization	2004	P	Budget
Variable message signs	Traffic Signalization	2004	C	New sign installed above City Hall
Poles / mounting	Traffic Signalization	2004	C	
Bankhead Highway median and streetscape (between overpass and Jefferson Street)	Pedestrian & Bikeway Facilities	2003	P	Mayor / Council
Jefferson Street streetscape and bikeway (between park-and-ride lot and Love Street)	Pedestrian & Bikeway Facilities	2003	P	Mayor / Council
Love Street streetscape and bikeway (between Jefferson Street and Bankhead Highway)	Pedestrian & Bikeway Facilities	2003	P	Mayor / Council
Powder Springs Street streetscape and bikeway (between Bankhead Highway and Broad Street)	Pedestrian & Bikeway Facilities	2005	P	Mayor / Council

Project	Description	Years	Status	Notes
Transportation (con't)				
Bikeway/Segway to Threadmill Complex (between Austell CBD to Threadmill)	Pedestrian & Bikeway Facilities	2006	U	Multi-purpose sidewalk proposed
Broad Street streetscape	Pedestrian & Bikeway Facilities	2005	C	
Sidewalk linkage to county system (Bankhead Highway/CBD east)	Pedestrian & Bikeway Facilities	2003	U	Funding focused on neighborhoods
Land Use Initiatives				
Land acquisition of South Block at the corner of Jefferson Street and Mulberry Street	Land Acquisition	2006	P	Budget / Mayor-Council
Land acquisition of North Block on Broad Street	Land Acquisition	2005	P	Budget / Mayor-Council
Land acquisition of Triangular Block between railroad	Land Acquisition	2005	P	Budget / Mayor-Council
Development of South Block (building and site construction)	New Development	-	P	Budget / Mayor-Council
Development of North Block (building demolition/rehabilitation/construction)	New Development	-	P	Budget / Mayor-Council
Development of Triangular Block (building and site construction)	New Development	-	P	Budget / Mayor-Council
Rehabilitation of Austell Ritz	Rehabilitation	2006	U	
Rehabilitation of Austell Variety	Rehabilitation	2007	U	Cincinnati Junction / mixed-use project

C = Complete

U = Underway

P = Postponed

N/A = Not Applicable

REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Project	Description	Years	Status	Notes
Other Initiatives				
Collar Park Town Green (demo and construction)	Open Space Improvements	2004	N/A	Mayor / Council
Railroad Park and Corridor (improvements to existing park)	Open Space Improvements	2004	N/A	Mayor / Council
Wetland garden at Post Office (retrofit existing detention pond)	Open Space Improvements	2003	C	Green space created
Greening of railroad right-of-way (soil amendments and plantings)	Open Space Improvements	2004	P	Mayor / Council
"Ghost" depot structure in railroad right-of-way (sculptural focal point in CBD)	Open Space Improvements	2007	P	Railroad did not allow
Public parking with parking, southside	Open Space Improvements	2004	P	Budget
Eastern gateway at Joe Jerkins overpass	Gateways & Welcome Signage	2005	P	Budget
Northern gateway at Powder Springs Road and Joe Jerkins Boulevard	Gateways & Welcome Signage	2005	P	Budget
Southern gateway at Bankhead Highway and Jefferson Street	Gateways & Welcome Signage	2005	P	Budget
Allowance for draining and utility improvements	Infrastructure	2004-2005	U	
Main Street program, full time director	Organization	2004-2007	P	Budget / Mayor-Council
Recreation Needs Assessment Study	Planning & Design Services	2004	P	Budget
Comprehensive plan modifications	Planning & Design Services	2003	C	
Zoning ordinance modifications	Planning & Design Services	2003	C	

Project	Description	Years	Status	Notes
Other Initiatives (con't)				
Design guidelines	Planning & Design Services	2004	P	Part of the scope of this LCI update
Master plan for Collar Park	Planning & Design Services	2004	P	Budget / Mayor-Council
Master plan and planting concepts for railroad land	Planning & Design Services	2004	P	Budget / Mayor-Council

COMMUNITY INPUT SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to share what is important to you about the future of Downtown Austell. This survey will help ensure that the planning team understands local issues and opportunities, and make sure the plan best reflects your interests. Your input is important to ensure a successful plan.

Please note that all answers are anonymous and confidential.

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- I live in Austell.
- I work in Austell.
- I own property in Austell.
- I neither live nor work there, but I visit occasionally.
- None of these apply to me.
- Other (please specify): _____

2. What brings you to Downtown Austell? (select all that apply)

- I live downtown
- I work downtown
- I own property downtown
- My children attend Austell Elementary School and/or Garrett Middle School
- Restaurants
- Shopping
- Errands
- Parks/recreation
- Church
- Business at government offices
- Special events
- Just passing through
- None of these
- Other (please specify): _____

3. What is your overall impression of Downtown Austell?

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Neither positive nor negative (neutral)
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

4. What is the one thing you like most about Downtown Austell?

5. What is the one thing you dislike most about Downtown Austell?

6. What would enhance your experience when you visit Downtown Austell? (select all that apply)

- More restaurants
- More boutique/leisure shopping
- Daily needs shopping
- More parks and greenspace
- Active outdoor recreation
- Places for children to play
- More festivals and events
- Nighttime entertainment
- Public art/placemaking
- More landscaping
- Plays, shows, performances
- None of these
- Other (please specify): _____

COMMUNITY INPUT SURVEY

7. What kinds of development do you think should be prioritized to continue Downtown Austell’s revitalization? (select all that apply)

- Residential
- Commercial
- Mixed-use buildings (retail on the ground floor, residential or office on the upper stories)
- Civic buildings
- Bars/breweries/distilleries
- Museums
- Art studios or galleries
- Parks and greenspace
- A large town green
- A recreation center/community center
- Light industrial uses
- Building rehabilitation (i.e. adaptive re-use)
- Infill development
- None of these
- Other (please specify): _____

8. Which types of housing would you like to see downtown? (select all that apply)

- Small single-family homes
- Townhomes
- Duplexes/triplexes/quadplexes (2-4 units per building)
- Small condos/apartment buildings (5-19 units per building)
- Above-retail multi-family units (20+ units per building)
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- None of these
- Other (please specify): _____

9. What mode of transportation do you typically use to go to Downtown Austell and/or get around downtown?

- I drive.
- I walk.
- I ride a bike.
- I use taxis and/or ride-sharing services.
- None of these.
- Other (please specify): _____

10. Other than what you selected in Question 9, what mode(s) of transportation would you like to use to go to Downtown Austell and/or to get around? (select all that apply)

- I’d like to drive.
- I’d like to walk.
- I’d like to ride a bike.
- I’d like to use taxis and/or ride-sharing services.
- None of these.
- Other (please specify): _____

11. What do you think is the biggest transportation issue in Downtown Austell?

12. Rate the following transportation improvements based on how important you believe they are for Downtown Austell’s success.

Transportation Improvement	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Traffic calming					
Pedestrian and bicycle facilities					
Safety improvements					
Street connections					
Streetscape improvements					
Signage and wayfinding					
Additional parking / parking management					
Connecting to the Silver Comet Trail via the Austell-Powder Springs Road Trail					

13. Do you have any other thoughts that should be considered during this planning effort?

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Demographics

Overview

The study area defined for this LCI study is home to about 10% of Austell’s overall population. Due to the limited number of inhabitants in the study area, this analysis focuses primarily on a three-mile radius surrounding downtown and the overall City. The results of this analysis forms conclusions about the opportunities for development and redevelopment in the study area.

Population & Households

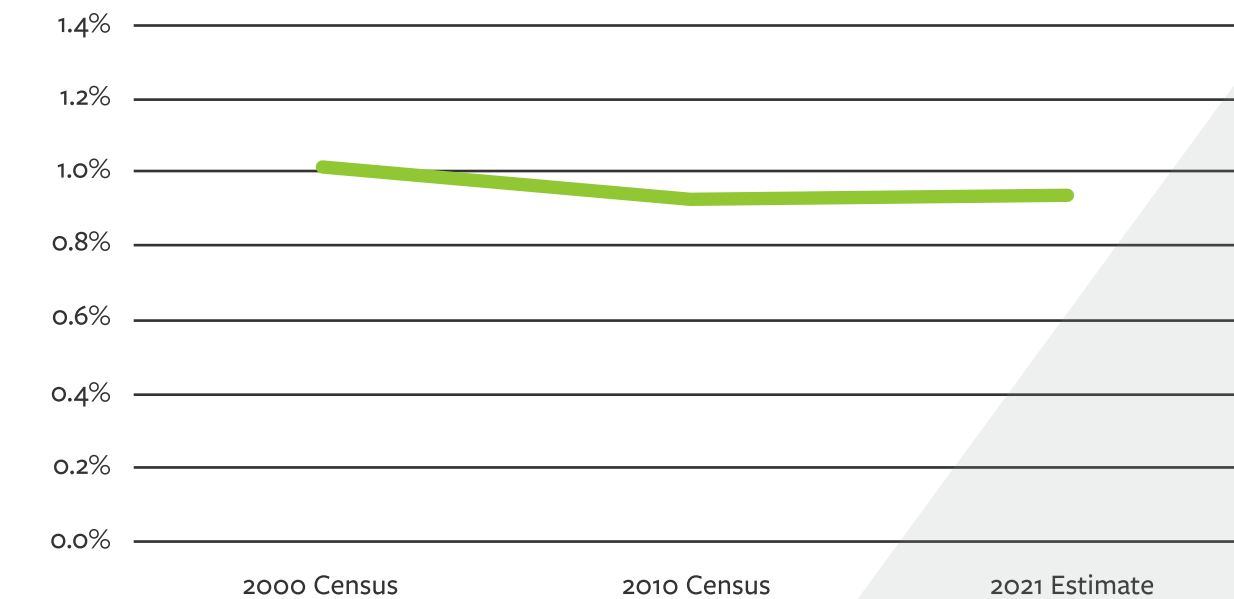
The LCI study area has an estimated 775 residents. The City of Austell has an estimated 7,218 residents, representing 18% of the Primary Market Area (PMA)’s population of 40,749 residents. Population growth in Austell has been steady, but it lags behind the PMA and Cobb County’s growth.

Austell’s population as a share of Cobb County’s population has decreased over time. This shows that the city has not captured its “fair share” of growth in the past two decades. Since 2000, Austell has added 1,062 residents. This amounts to a 0.8% average annual growth rate, while Cobb County has grown at 1.1%.

Population & Household Growth, 2000-2021

Population	Study Area	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
2000 Census	775	6,156	32,974	607,718
2010 Census	685	6,401	36,535	688,078
2021 Estimate	752	7,218	40,749	768,828
Average Annual Growth, 2000-2021	-0.14%	-0.76%	1.01%	1.13%
New Population, 2000-2021	-23	1,062	7,775	161,110

Austell Population as Share (%) of Cobb County



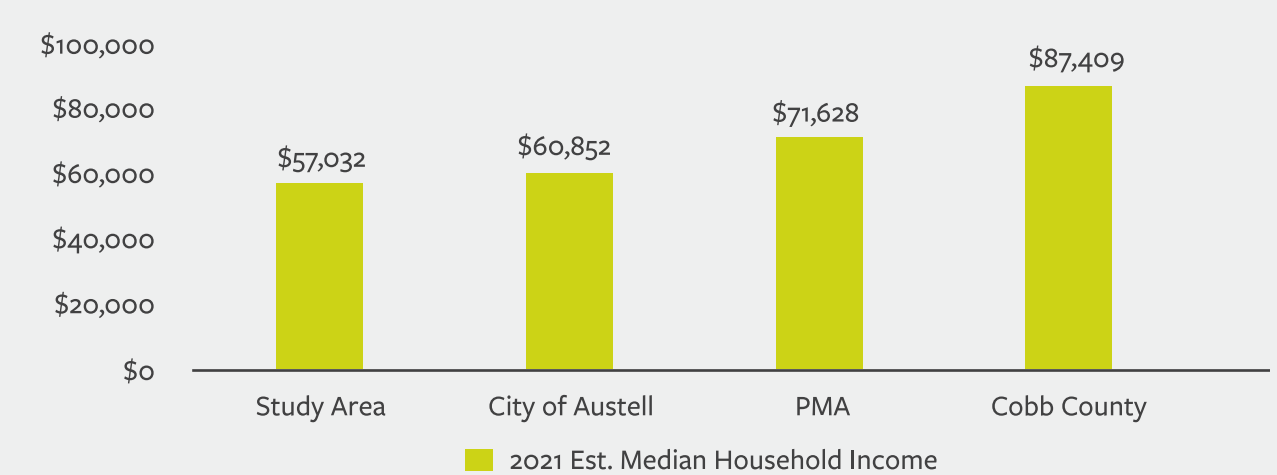
Source: KB Advisory Group, based on data from ARC, US Census, and Claritas

Household Income

The median household income in Austell is much less than that in the PMA and Cobb County. The latest estimates show Austell’s median income is \$11,000 less than the PMA and \$17,000 less than Cobb County. 42% of Austell households earn less than \$50,000 annually, compared to 27% in Cobb County. Austell has a robust middle class: 39% of Austell’s households earn incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000. 2% of Austell households earn more than \$100,000 annually, compared to 44% of Cobb County households.

Source: KB Advisory Group, based on data from Claritas

Estimated Median household Income, 2021



Household Income, 2021

Households	Study Area		City of Austell		PMA		Cobb County	
2019 Est. Median Household Income	\$57,032		\$60,852		\$71,628		\$87,409	
% of Regional Median Income	65%		70%		82%		100%	
Households by Income	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
< \$15,000	18	6%	160	6%	1,031	7%	16,161	6%
\$15,000 - \$35,000	49	17%	428	16%	2,834	19%	31,799	11%
\$35,000 - \$50,000	56	19%	432	16%	2,357	16%	30,039	10%
\$50,000 - \$100,000	116	40%	1,030	39%	5,243	35%	87,121	30%
> \$100,000	53	18%	583	22%	3,685	24%	127,835	44%

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Residents by Generation

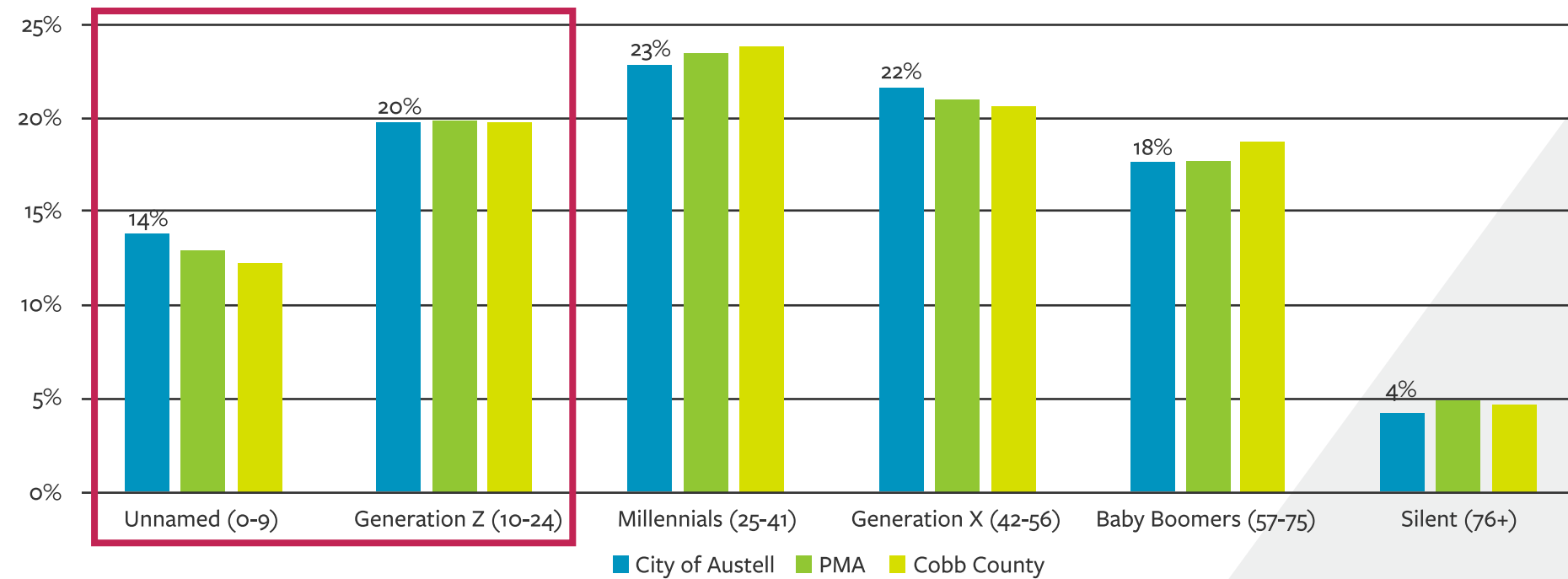
Austell has a higher presence of those who belong to Generation X and people under 10 years of age. 34% of Austell's residential population consists of people age 24 or younger. The high percentage of those under age 24 may be a result of the population segment that consists of older Millennials and Generation X. This

population segment, roughly between the ages of 36 and 56, is the most likely to be raising children in 2021. Approximately one out of every five people in Austell is older than age 57, which points to a need to provide amenities for seniors.

Overall, these age distribution patterns point to an opportunity to expand the housing stock in downtown Austell to provide a

wider variety of options, like loft apartments for singles and young professionals, housing for families with children, smaller homes for empty-nesters, and senior housing.

Age Distribution by Cohort, 2021



Source: Envirionics Analytics 2019, KB Advisory Group. Generations based on Pew Research Center Standards

Household Size

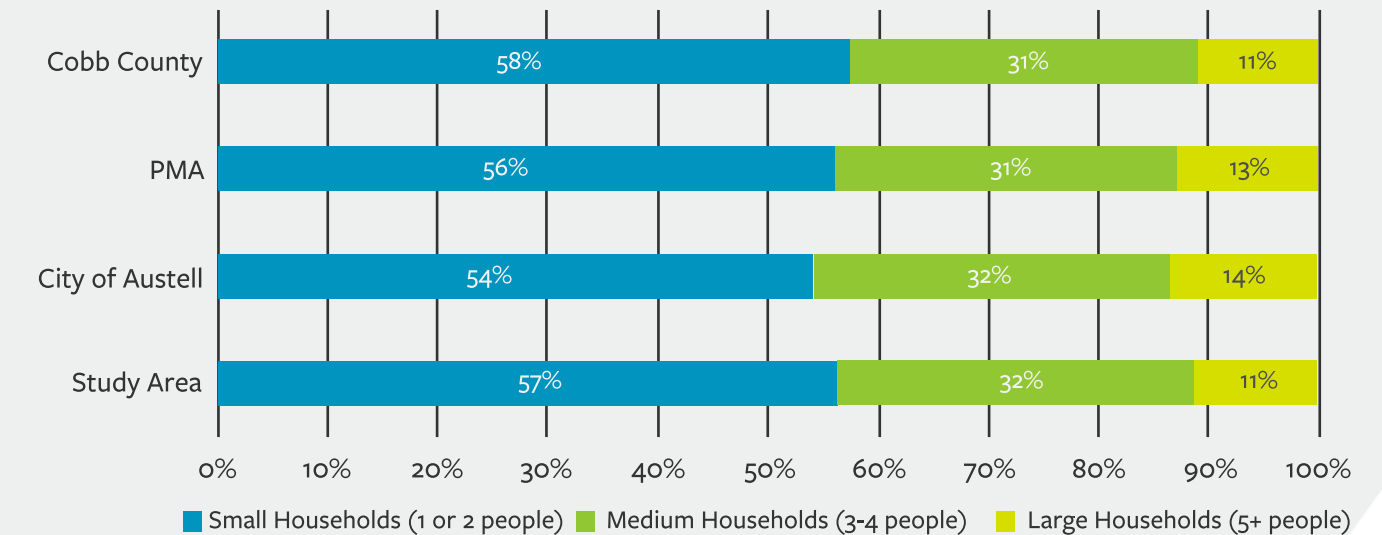
A slight majority of households in Austell are smaller households consisting of one to two people. While 46% of Austell households have more than three people, an overwhelming 76% of houses in Austell are single-family detached homes.

This is a housing trend to consider when matching residential real estate needs in the study area with local household demographics. The study area provides an opportunity for a wider array of housing types that can accommodate the diversity of household sizes in Austell and the PMA.

Households with Children, 2021



Housing by Size, 2021



Source: Envirionics Analytics 2020

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

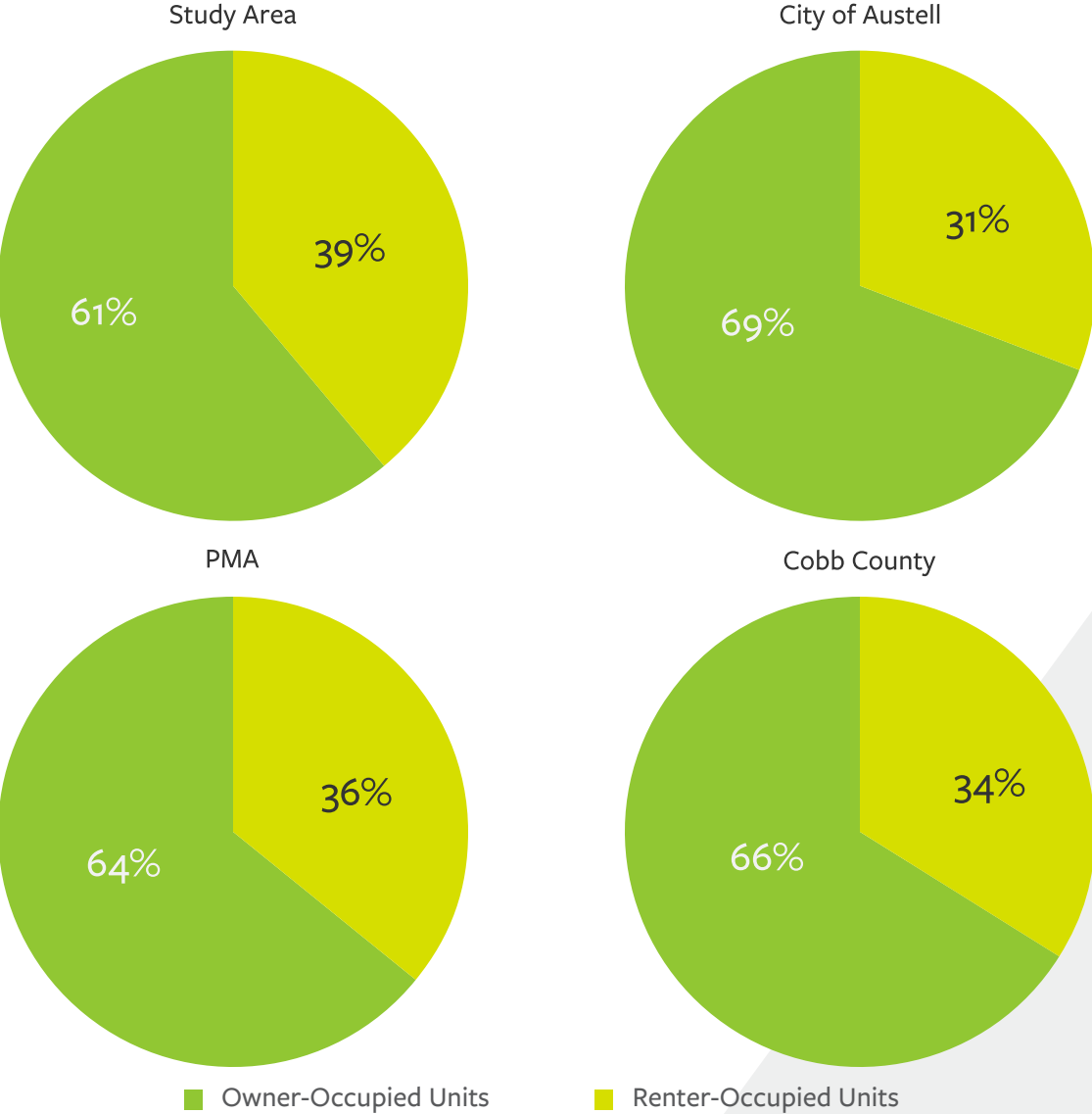
Housing Tenure Preferences

Austell has 2,633 total occupied housing units consisting mostly of owner-occupied households. The tenure composition among the study Area, Austell, the PMA, and Cobb County are all dominated by owner-occupied units, however, Austell has a slightly higher rate of owner-occupied housing units (69%) than the PMA (64%) and Cobb County (66%). The study area has a higher percentage of renter-occupied units because of its “downtown” character compared to the more suburban nature of other parts of the city.

A diverse mix of rental and ownership options in the study area can contribute to the overall health of downtown by adding a critical mass that consists of a steady population of residents, employees, and patrons that will help support local businesses.

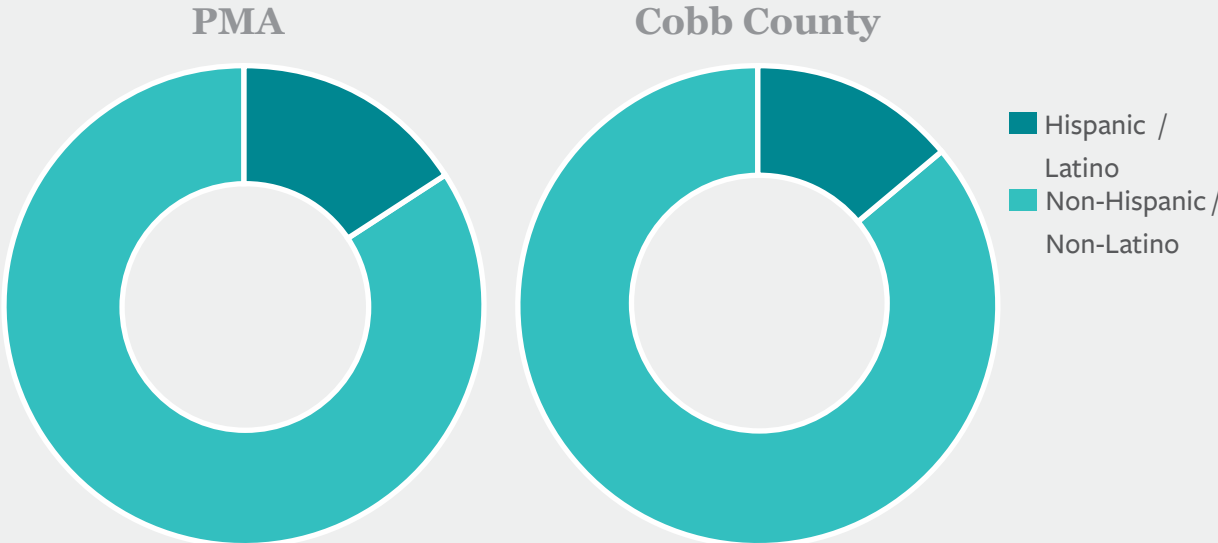
Source: Envirionics Analytics 2020

Housing by Tenure, 2021

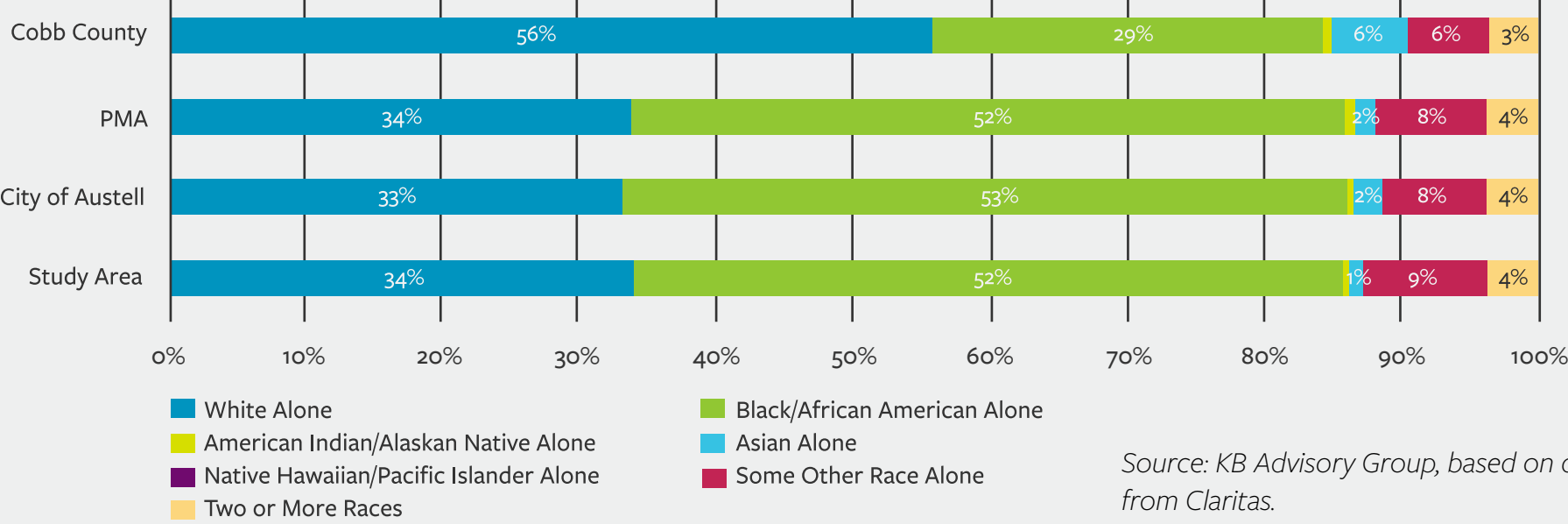


Race & Ethnicity

Austell’s racial composition is much more diverse than that of Cobb County. The study area, City, and PMA have a very similar demographic breakdown with Black / African Americans making up a majority of the population. 16% of the PMA’s residents identify as Hispanic / Latino compared to 14% of Cobb County residents.



Demographic Breakdown, 2021



Source: KB Advisory Group, based on data from Claritas.

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

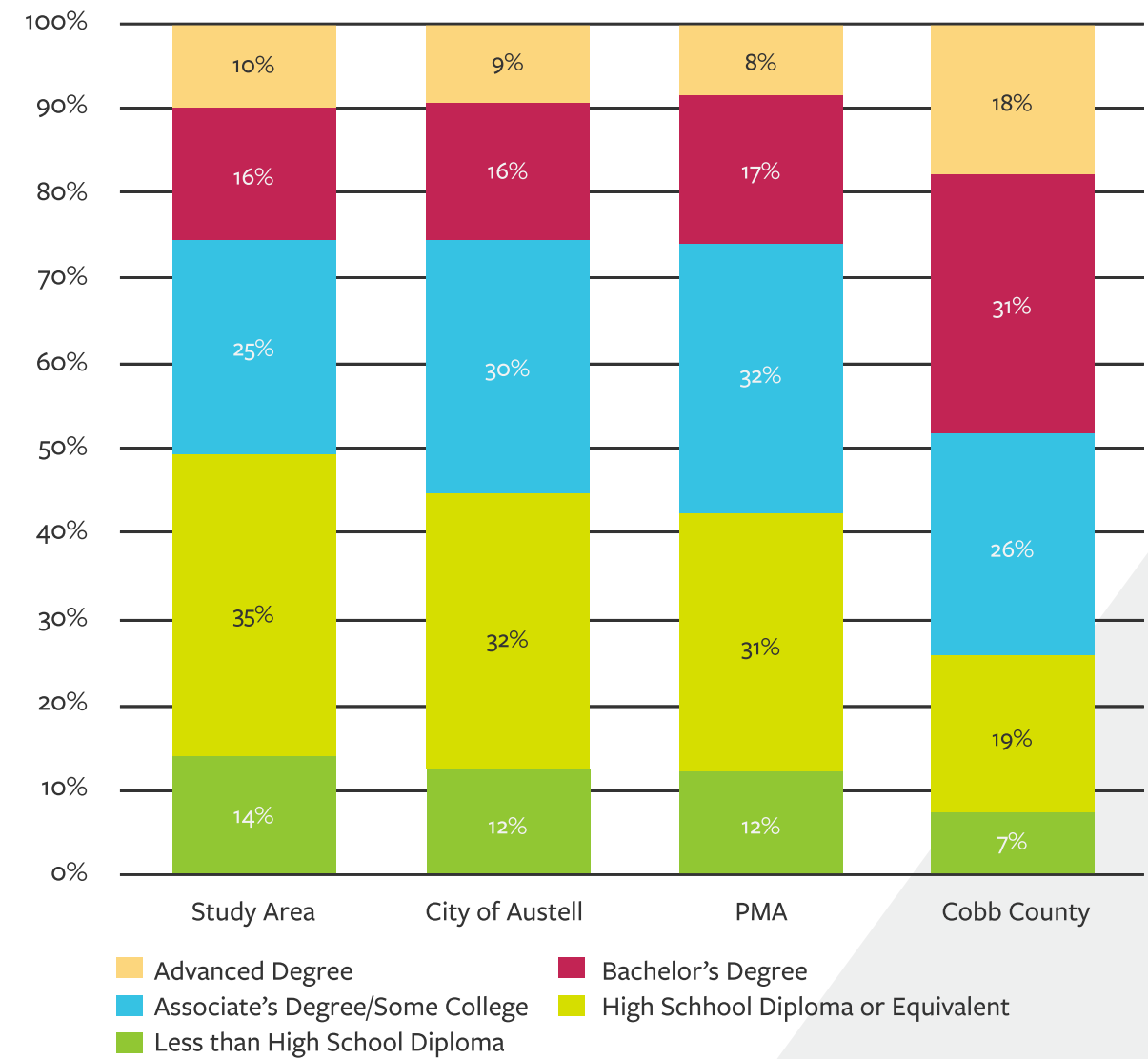
Educational Attainment

Austell and the PMA lag Cobb County in terms of higher levels of educational attainment.

Approximately 55% of Austell’s residents have earned a two-year degree or higher, compared to 75% in Cobb County. Cobb County has a higher percentage of their population with four-year and advanced degrees. Generally speaking, these correlate with higher median household incomes and higher housing prices. 45% of Austell’s residents have a high school diploma / equivalent or less, which is significantly higher than the rest of Cobb County’s.

Source: Environics Analytics 2020

Educational Distribution, 2021



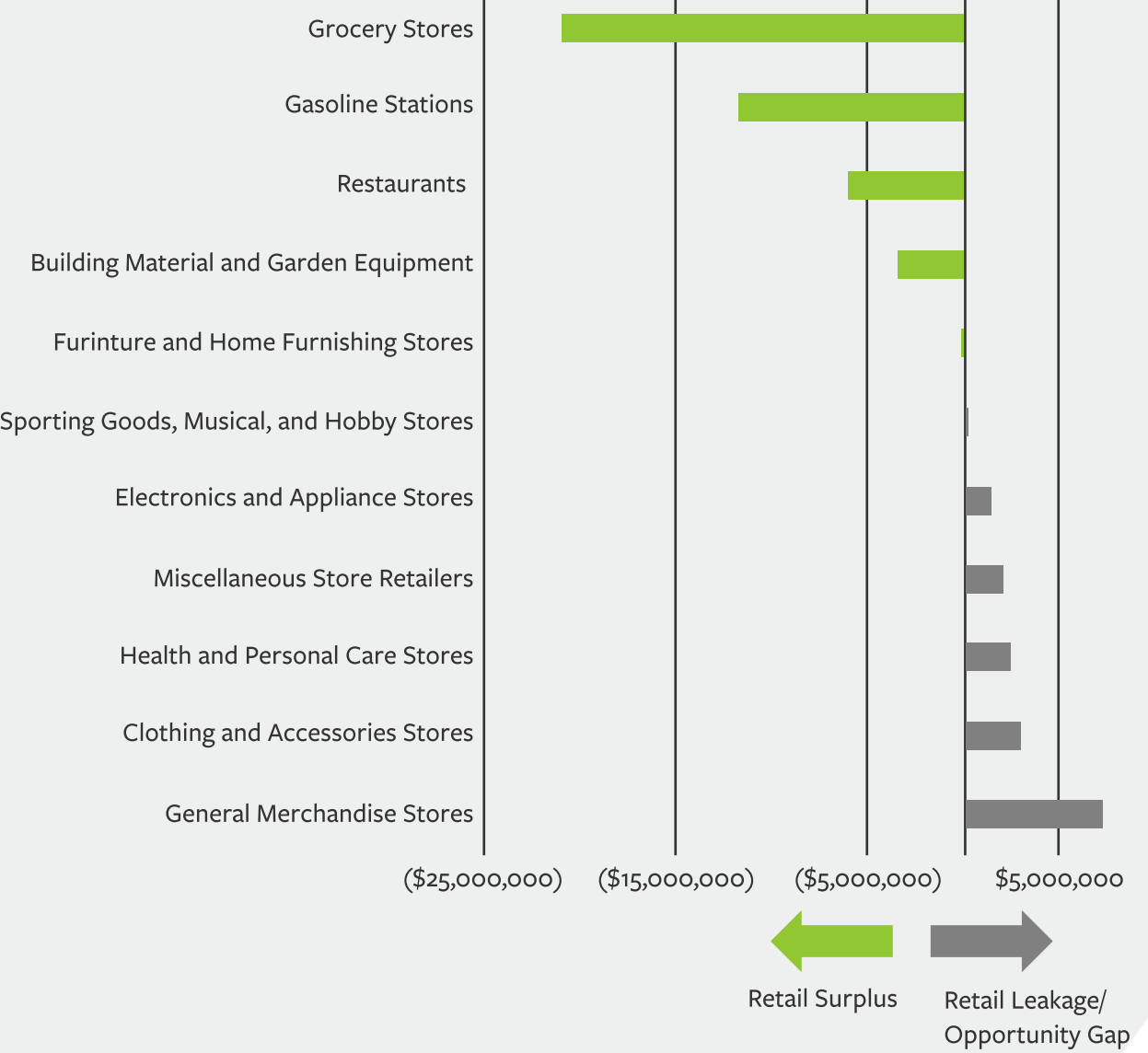
Spending Trends

Shown to the right is a graph of spending trends in the PMA. It shows the difference between demand and supply for retail by store type. A positive value signifies an opportunity gap (“leakage”), while a negative value represents a surplus.

Retail leakage indicates that households often leave the PMA to shop for those particular items. There is a potential for new retail in the area to be supported by local households. In this case, hobby stores, electronics and appliance stores, health and personal care stores, clothing stores, and general merchandise stores would do well in Austell. There is some potential for additional retail in the downtown area, but the offerings need to be limited and targeted. An overall retail surplus in Austell suggests that additional demand (spending from households, workers, or visitors) must be added in the area to support other retail locally. However, the data suggests some store-types are under-supplied in the local area.

Austell households spend over \$95 million on retail goods annually. This spending supports over 300,000 square feet of commercial space located in the PMA.

Primary Market Area Spending Details

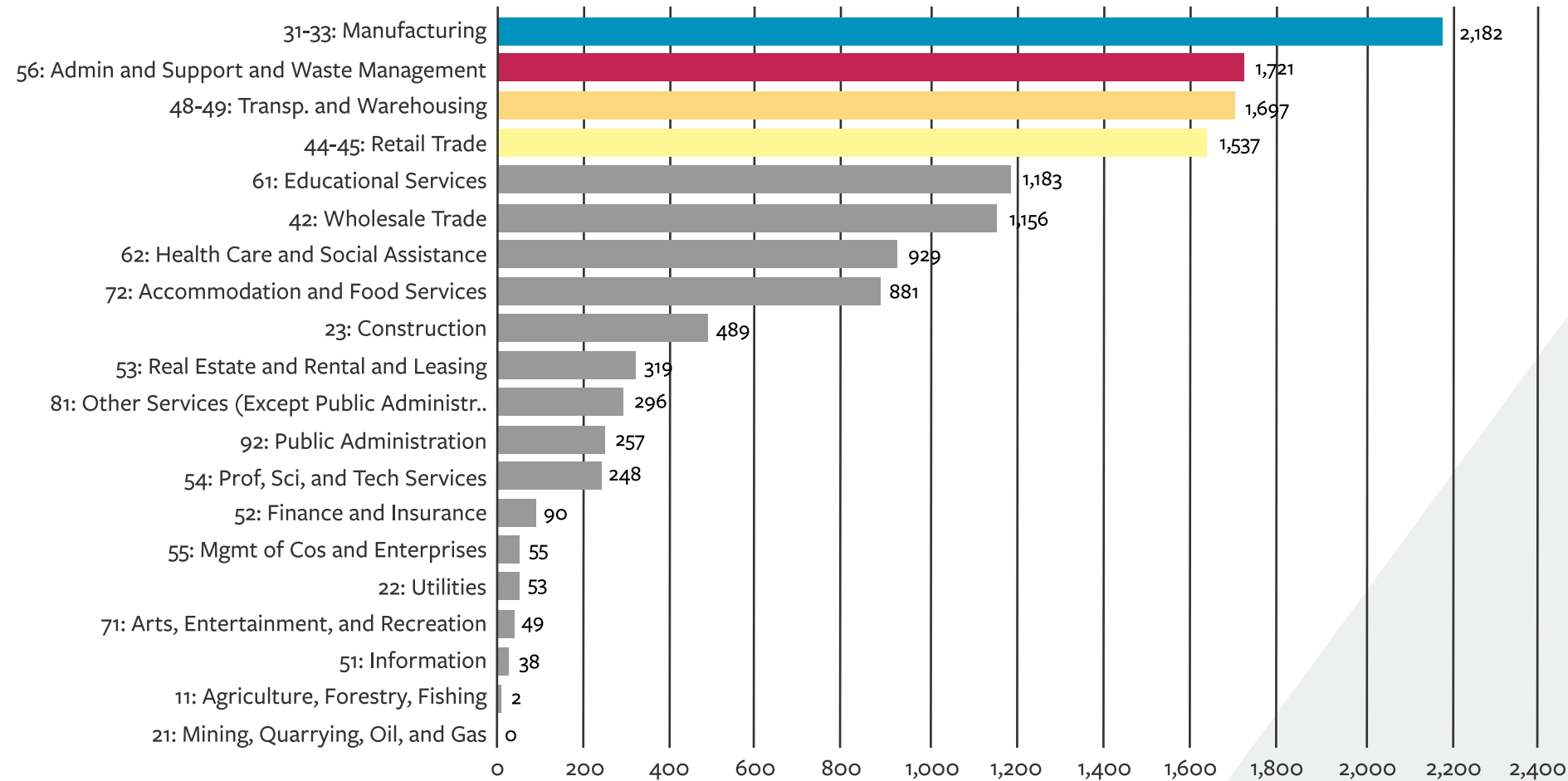


FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Employment & Workforce

Employment Estimate by Sector

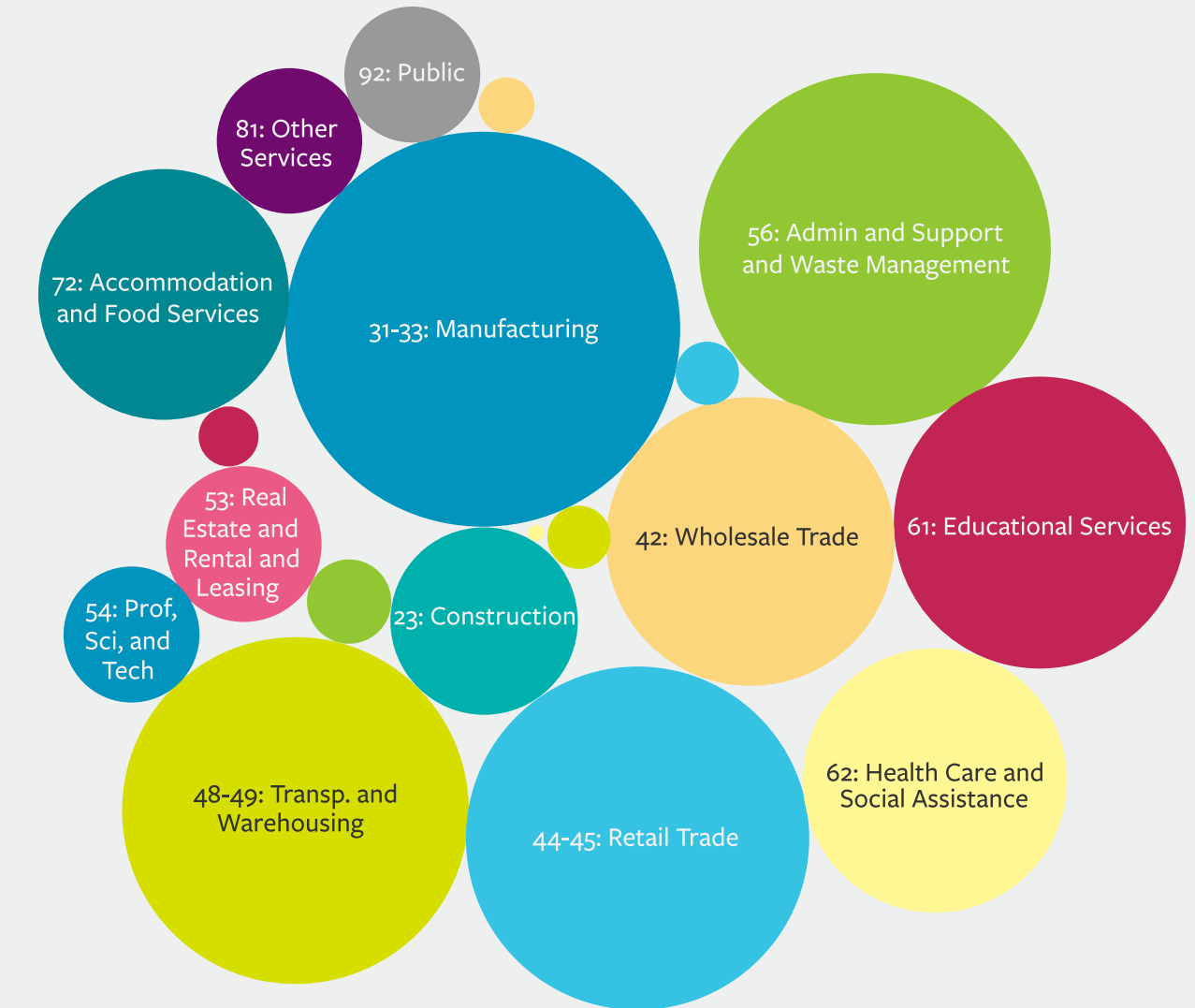
Approximately 13,283 people, or 4% of Cobb County's workforce, work within the PMA. Manufacturing is the top sector, representing over 2,182 jobs or 16.4% of the PMA's primary jobs.



Source: KB Advisory Group, based on data from Bureau of Labor Statistics

The graphic to the right illustrates the size of the Market Area's employment sectors - which correspond with the number of jobs in each sector.

The PMA's top four employment sectors can be attributed to the surrounding warehouses for Coca-Cola, Amazon Fulfillment Center, Staples Fulfillment Center and Distribution Warehouse, Amware Fulfillment Center, and TJ Maxx Distribution Center.

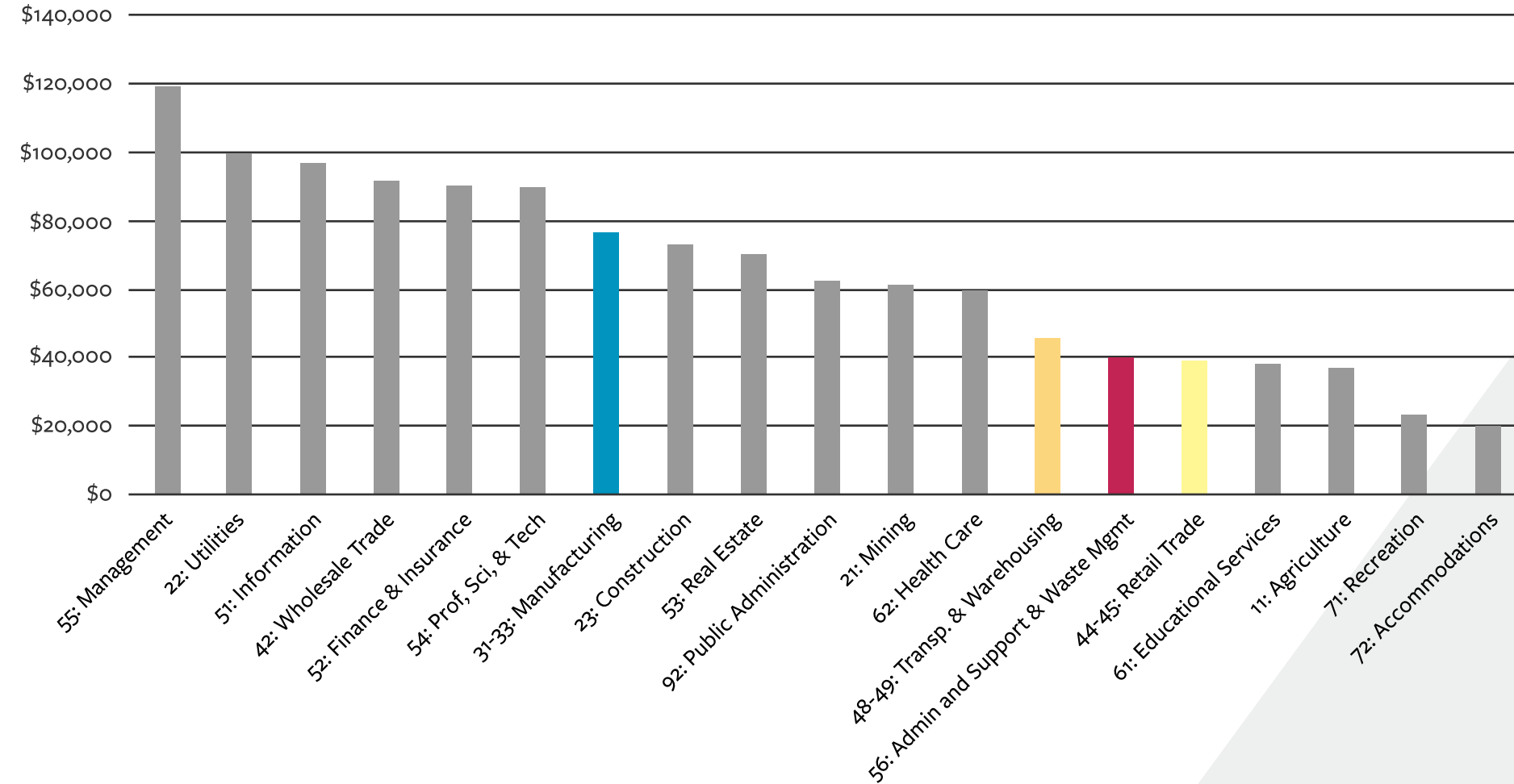


Source: US Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, ARC, Environics Analytics, KB Advisory Group

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Many of the jobs that make up most of the PMA's workforce are at the middle to lower end of the average annual wage spectrum. The colors in the graph below correspond with the top four industries in the PMA on the previous pages. The largest employment sector in the PMA, manufacturing, has an average annual wage of over \$76,000.

Average Annual Wage by Employment Sector, 2019

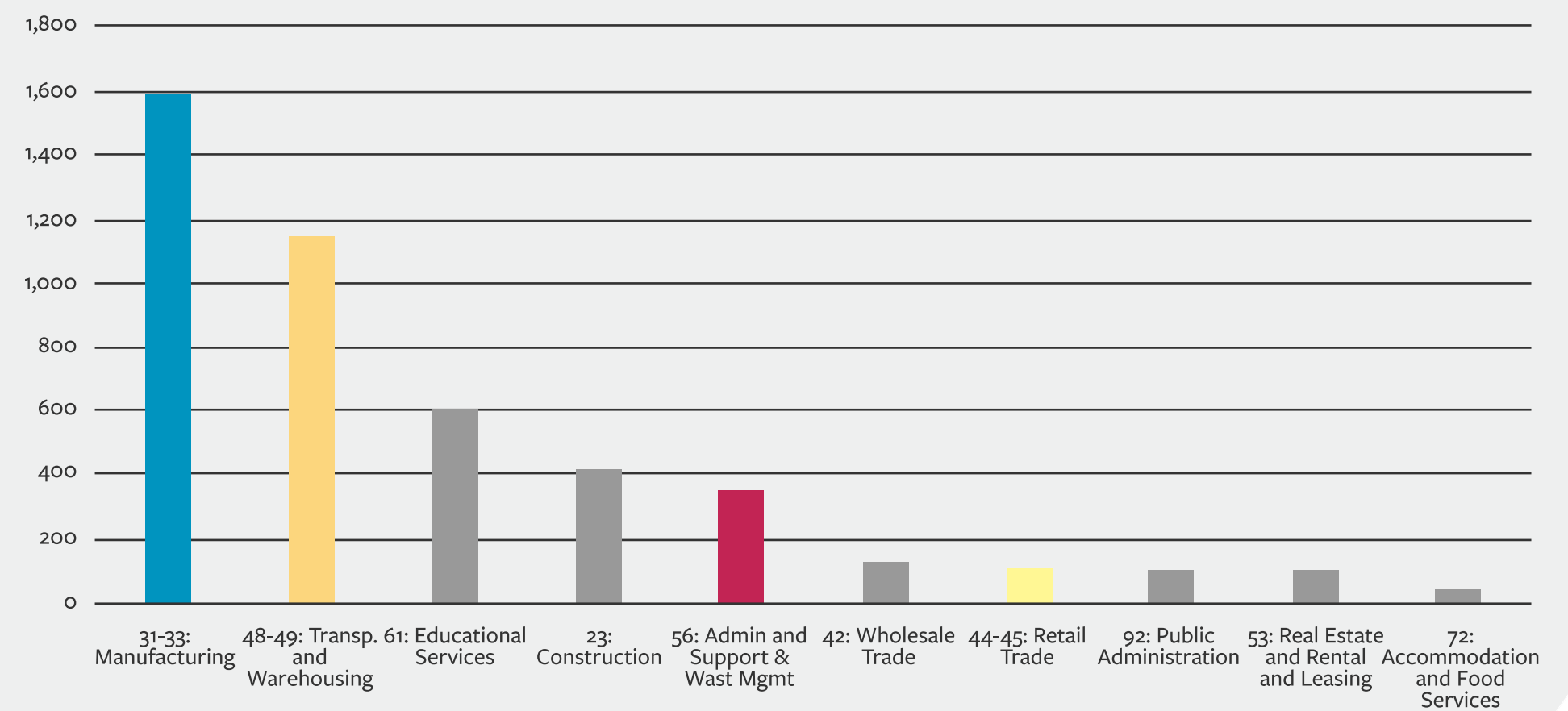


Source: US Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, KB Advisory Group

Employment Growth by Sector

The manufacturing and transportation and warehousing sectors made up 60% of the PMA's employment growth in the last decade. Since 2010, these are the two employment sectors that have grown the most, followed by educational services and construction. The growth in manufacturing and transportation and warehousing sectors has impacted the PMA's employment market, attracting a portion of metro Atlanta's growth in the logistics sectors.

Top 10 Employment Sectors by Growth, 2010-2020

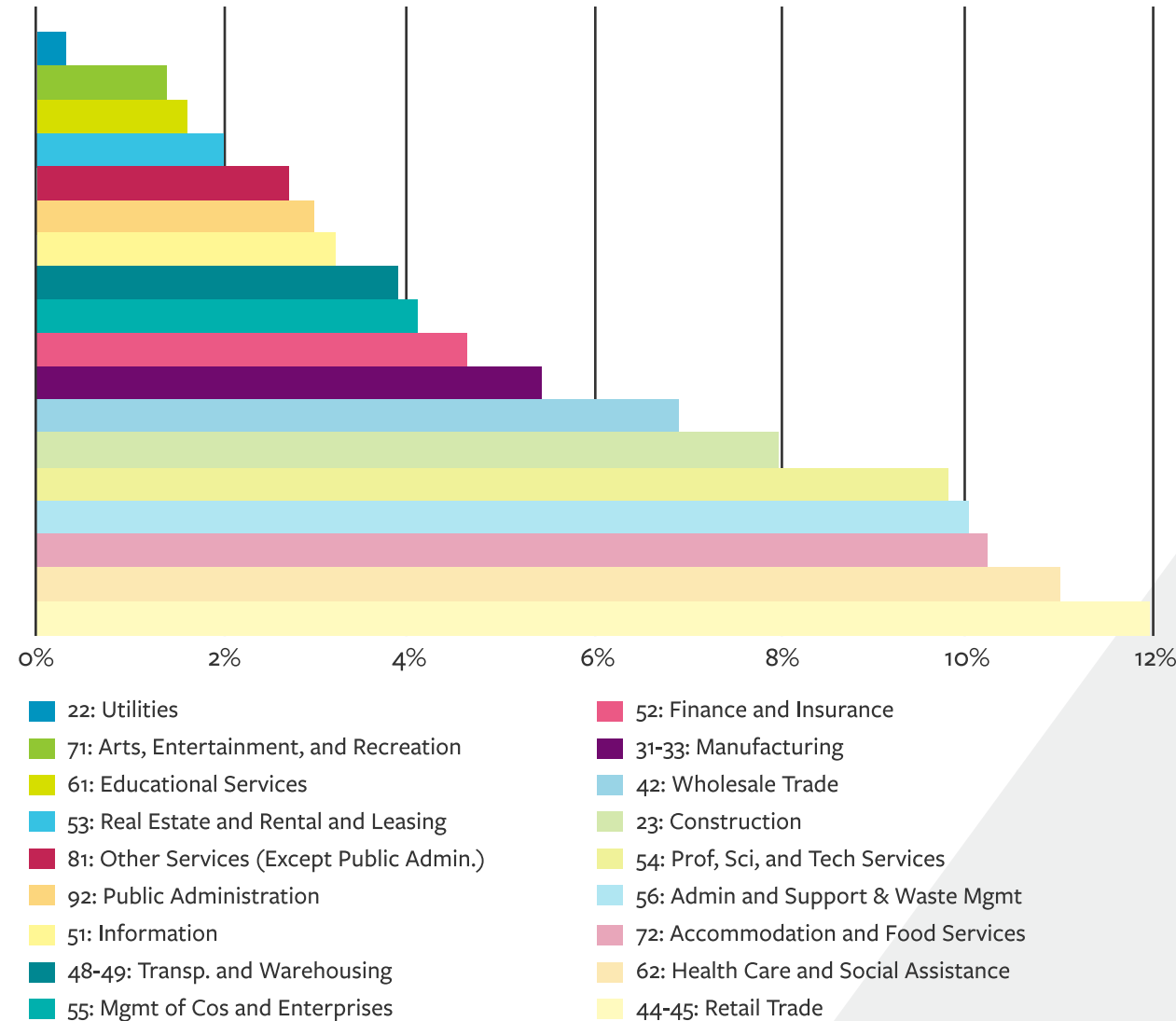


Source: US Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, ARC, Environics Analytics, KB Advisory Group

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Employment by Sector: Share of Cobb County Jobs

While the PMA is home to only 4% of Cobb County's overall jobs, many employment sectors in the area garner greater than their "fair share" of the county's jobs. These industries hold a competitive advantage locally because their employment productivity exceeds the local market's needs. Many of these industries are already present in Downtown Austell. The current and future built environment and market dynamics in the study area can nurture the industries' local competitive advantages, attracting more new companies and jobs into the area, strengthening the local economy and driving demand for real estate. The variety of these "target industries" for Downtown Austell bodes well for the potential growth of retail and office markets. The key to turning the competitive advantage into a more active downtown is to provide amenities, incentives, operational support, and a built environment that positions Downtown Austell as a "preferred location" for these industries.



Source: US Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, ARC, Environics Analytics, KB Advisory Group

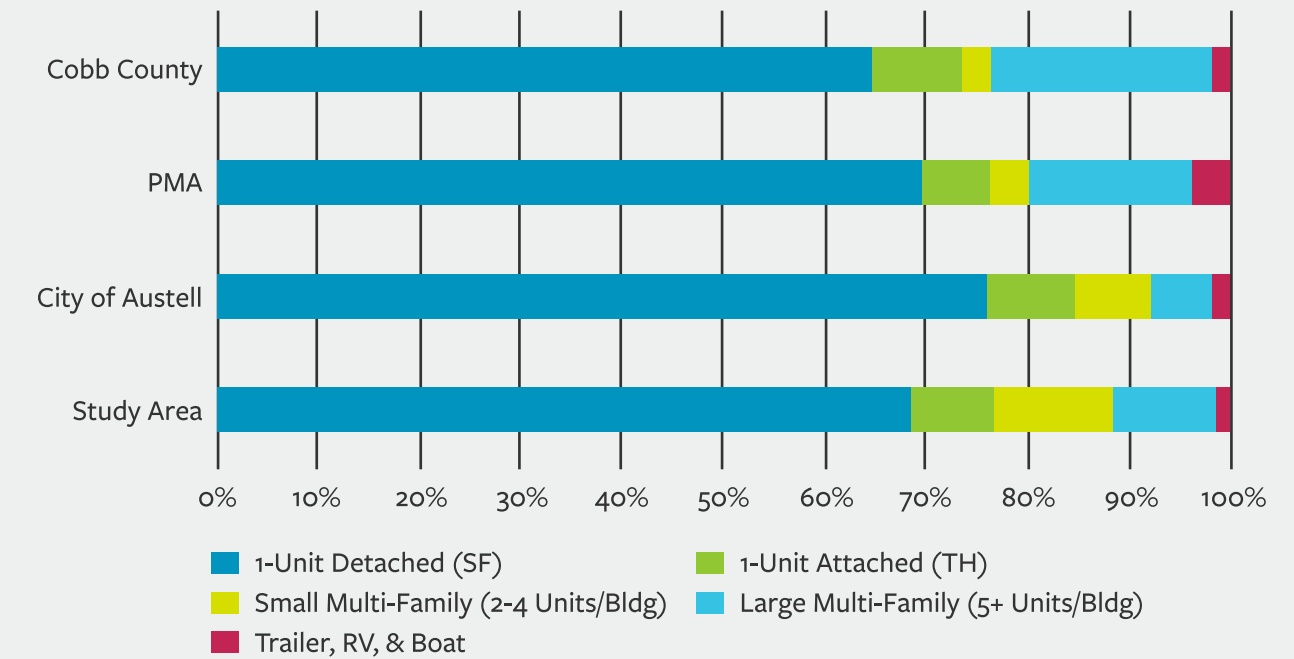
Residential Assessment Housing Type

Austell's housing distribution is heavily oriented toward single-family detached homes. The housing composition of the study area and Austell are similar, while the PMA and Cobb County have more similar compositions. The most considerable difference is in the amount of large multi-family buildings in each geography.

While large multi-family buildings make up 6% of the total housing stock in Austell, they make up 16% in the PMA and 22% in all of Cobb County. This aligns with recent post-Recession development trends, including robust growth of multi-family units in other parts of Cobb County, whereas Austell continues to develop single-family detached housing.

Source: KB Advisory Group, based on data from Claritas.

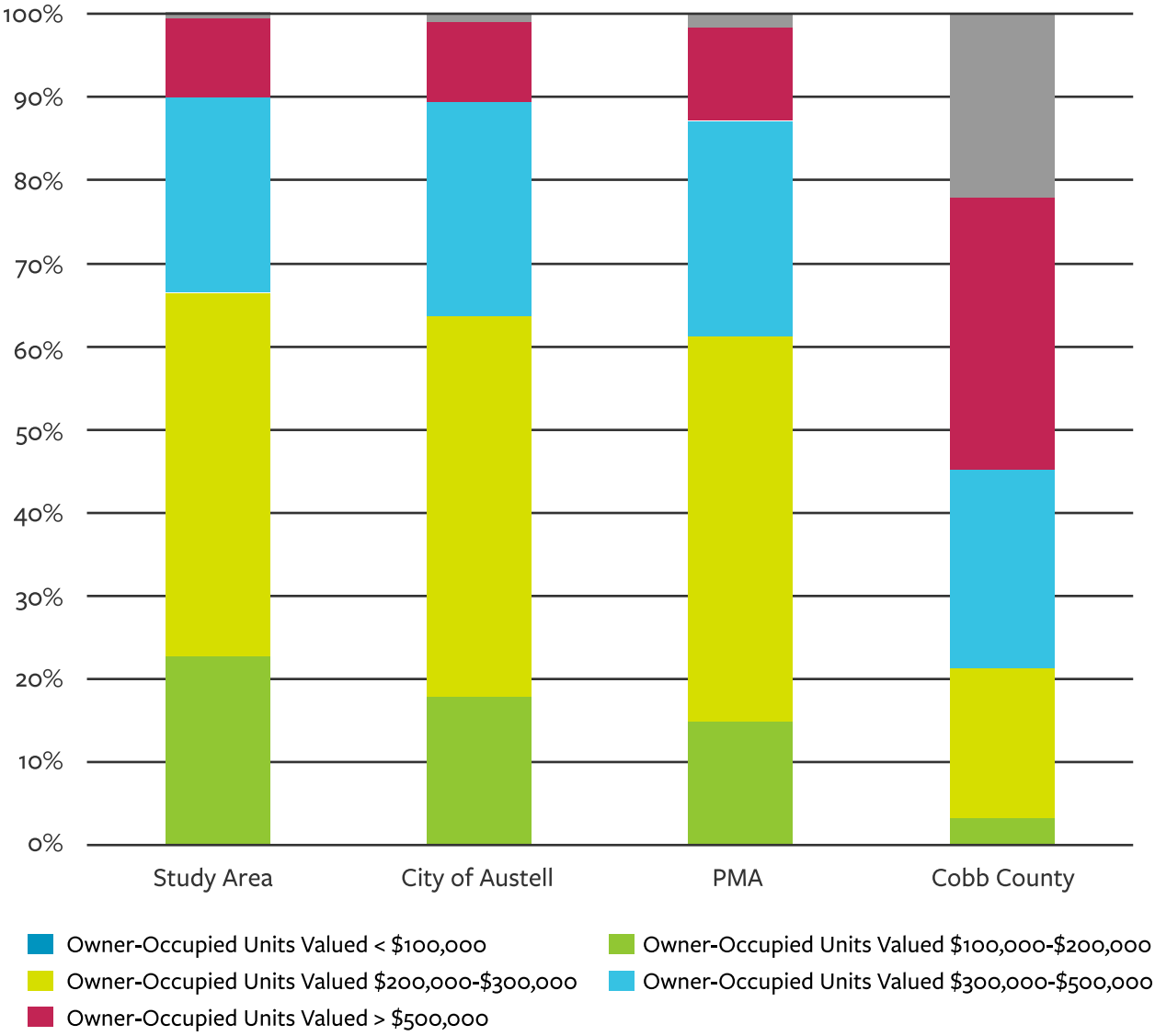
Housing Type



Type of Housing	Study Area	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
1-Unit Detached (Single-Family)	69%	76%	70%	65%
1-Unit Attached (Townhomes)	8%	9%	7%	9%
Small Multi-Family (2-4 Units/ Building)	12%	8%	4%	3%
Large Multi-Family (5+ Units/ Building)	10%	6%	16%	22%
Trailer, RV, Boat	1%	2%	3%	1%

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

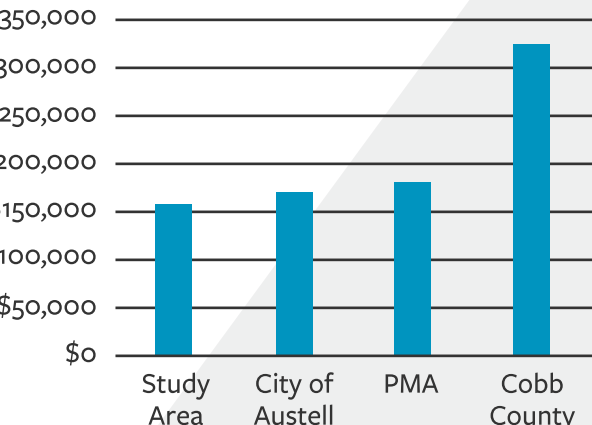
Housing Value Distribution



Value & Age

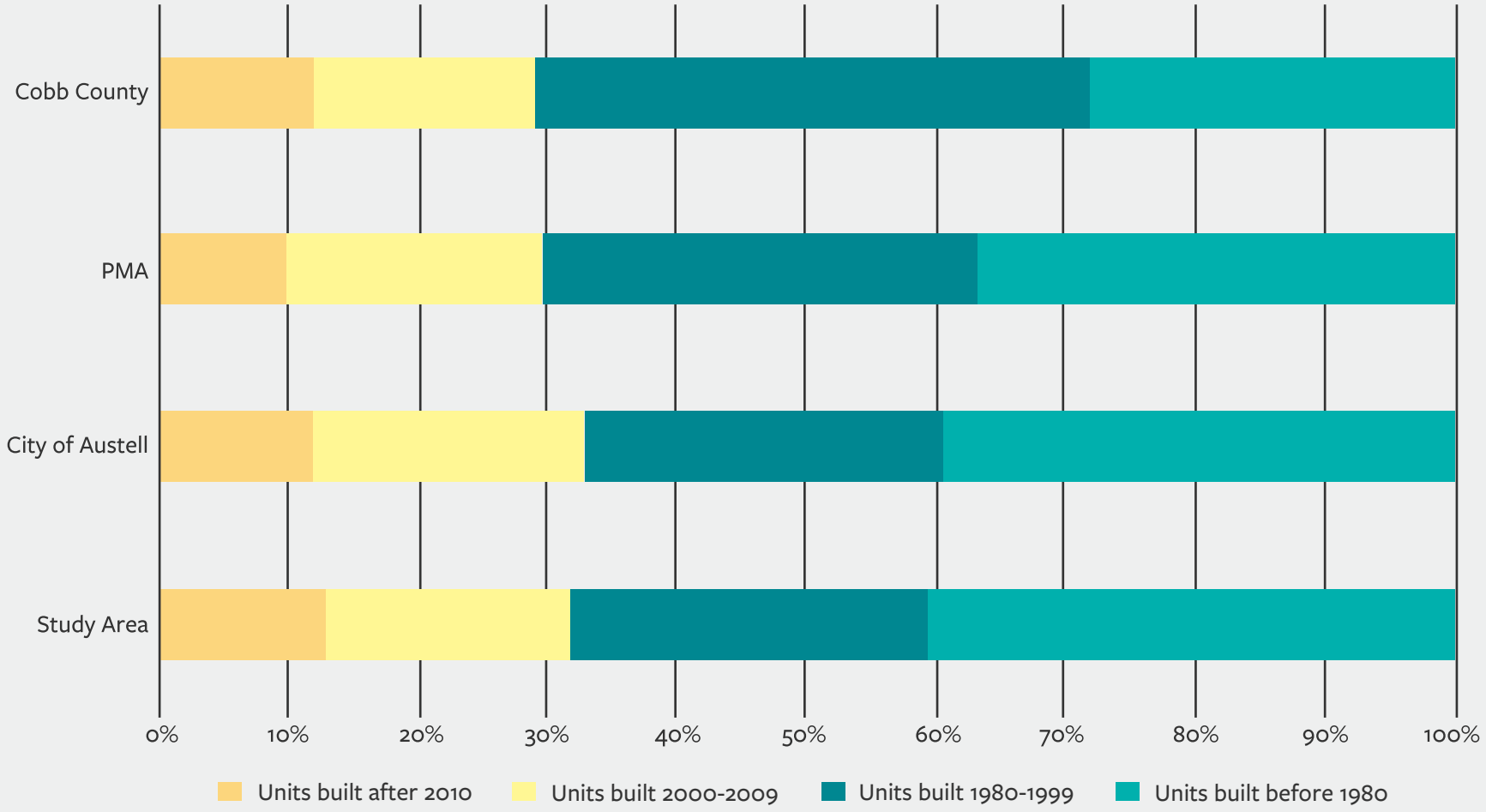
Austell's single-family home market provides options for home buyers in a competitive metropolitan area with increasing prices. However, it also lacks high-end housing options that would attract more affluent households. A vast majority of Austell's for-sale homes are valued at less than \$200,000, which is similar to that of the study area and the PMA, but vastly different than Cobb County. Cobb County's housing market skews towards the higher end with almost a quarter of all for-sale homes valued at more than \$500,000, compared to 1% in Austell.

Median Owner-Occupied Home Value



The age of housing in Austell is consistent with larger county-wide development trends. The development patterns are likely so similar because the nature of suburban development is so closely tied to larger economic cycles. The development boom of the 2000s was met with the Great Recession, which undoubtedly impacted the scale and pace of development since 2010.

Age of Housing



Source: KB Advisory Group, based on data from Claritas.

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

The chart below addresses the values and ages described on the previous page and accompanying estimates in housing units.

Housing Inventory: Value & Age

Owner-Reported Home Values	Study Area		City of Austell		PMA		Cobb County	
Units valued < \$100,000	40	23%	324	18%	1,441	15%	6,912	4%
Units valued \$100,000 to \$200,000	77	44%	828	46%	4,496	46%	34,692	18%
Units valued \$200,000 to \$500,000	58	33%	635	35%	3,561	37%	110,364	57%
Units valued > \$500,000	1	1%	19	1%	179	2%	42,718	22%
Age of Housing	Study Area		City of Austell		PMA		Cobb County	
Units built since 2010	46	13%	373	12%	1,689	10%	38,311	12%
Units built between 2000 and 2009	67	19%	649	21%	3,378	20%	54,413	17%
Units built between 1980 and 1999	98	28%	865	28%	5,759	34%	137,831	43%
Units built pre-1980	144	41%	1,229	39%	6,278	37%	89,294	28%

Source: Environics Analytics 2020

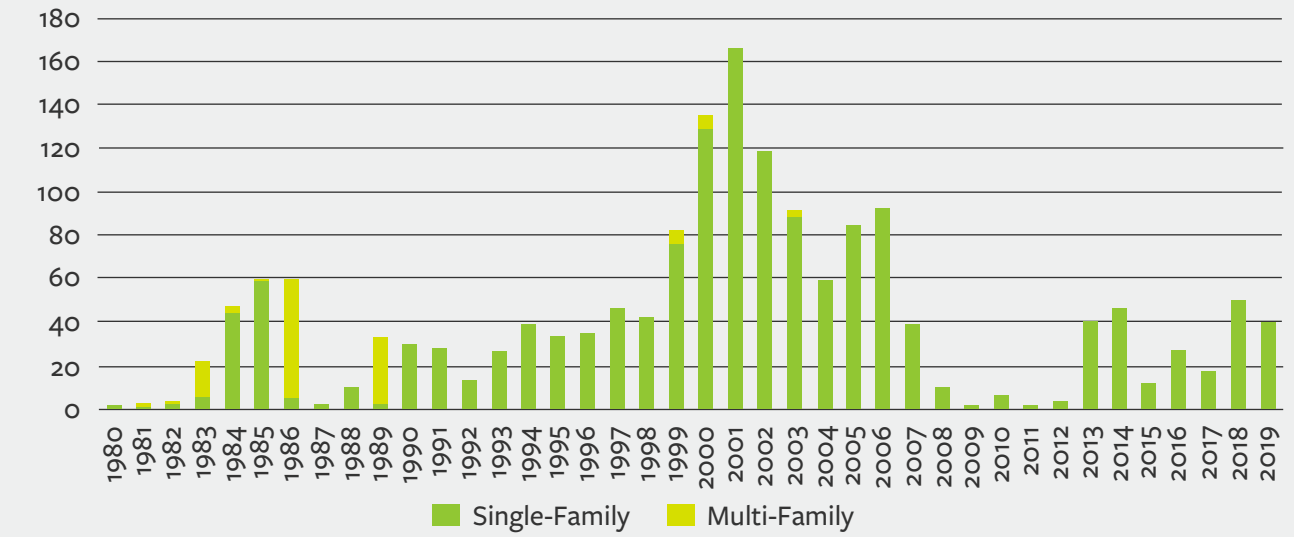
Building Permits

Austell saw a peak in residential permitting in 2001 and continued adding a substantial number of units until the Great Recession in 2007. There has been growth since the Great Recession, but the growth levels are similar to the mid-1980s and 1990s rather than the “boom” period of the early 2000s.

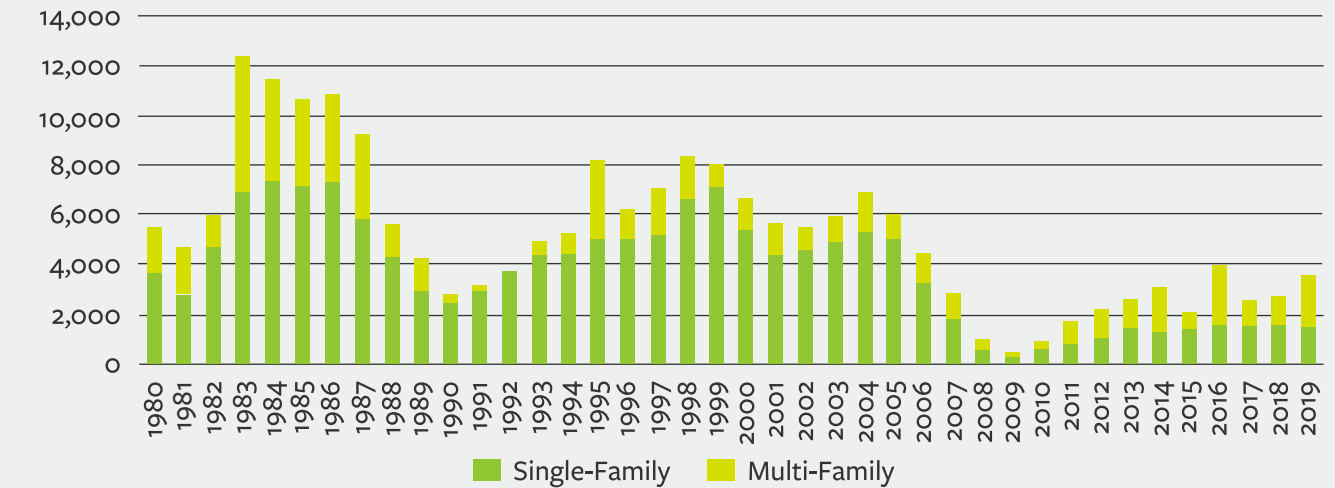
Cobb County’s building permit history is quite different than Austell’s, but some of the same trends emerged, mostly driven by the same larger economic cycles. Similar to Austell, Cobb County had a robust growth period in the early 2000s that ended with the onset of the Great Recession and recovered during the years after, although they are not yet at pre-Recession levels.

One key difference between the city and county is the number of multi-family building permits. In Cobb County, the last decade’s permit history is full of multi-family permits consisting of a much larger percentage of total building permits. In contrast, Austell hasn’t registered a multi-family permit since 2003.

Austell Residential Building Permits by Permit Type, 1980-2019



Cobb County Residential Building Permits by Permit Type, 1980-2019



Source: US Census, SOCDS Building Permit Database

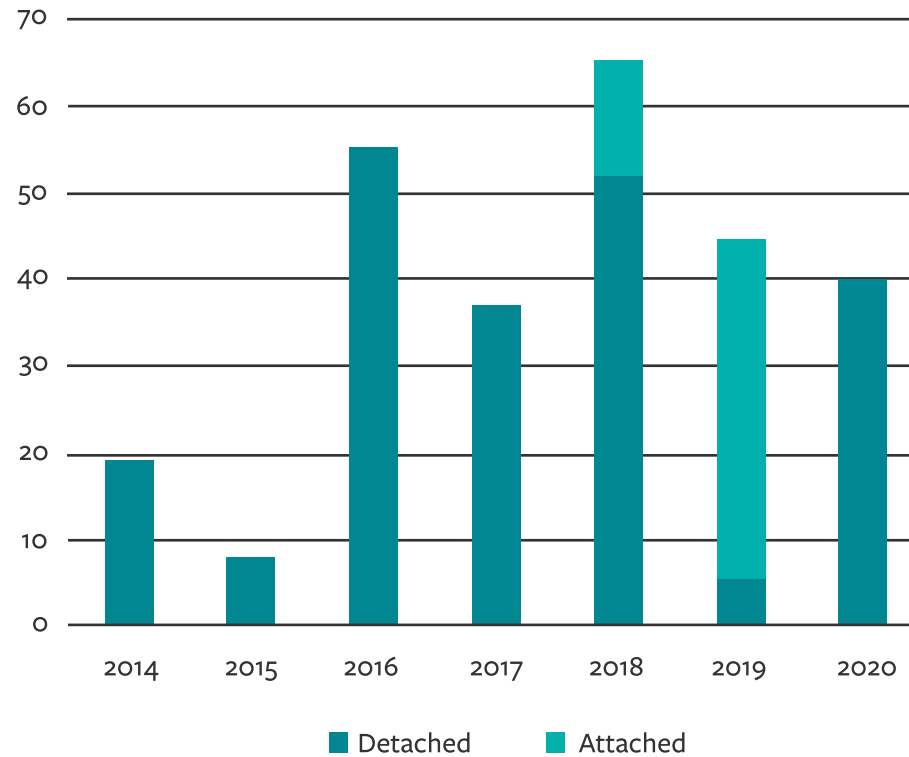
FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Austell New Home Sales

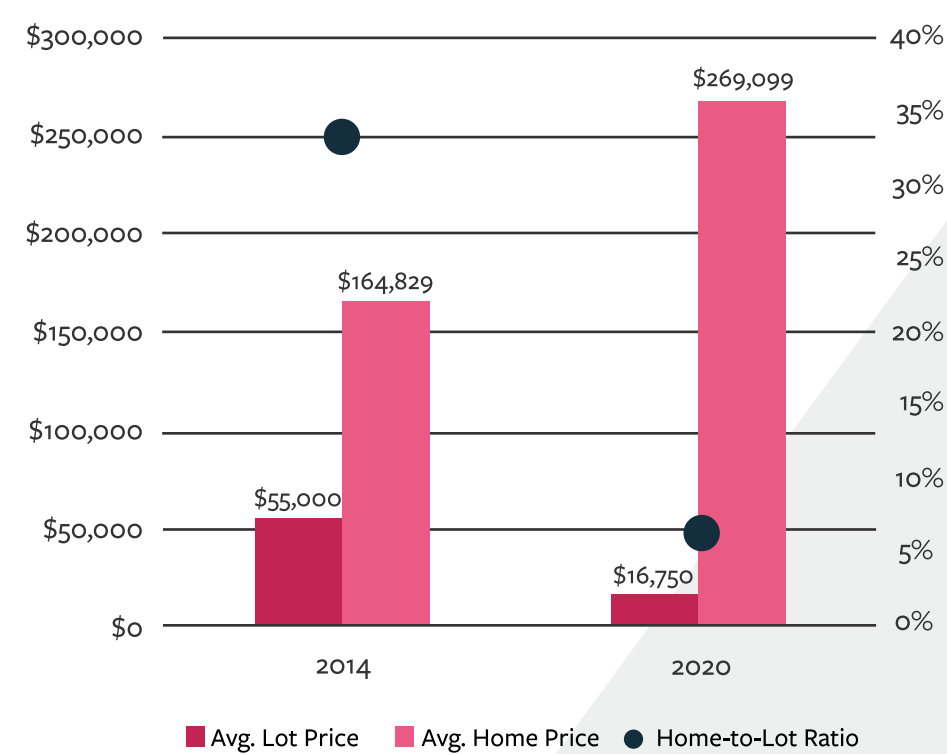
The average price of a newly constructed single-family detached home in Austell increased by \$105,000 since 2014. Since 2014, newly constructed detached homes in Austell have gotten notably more expensive, even though the land appears to have become less expensive.

Typically, homes increase in price due to a substantial increase in land lot prices. However, the data shows that Austell's lot prices have decreased. In 2020, 40 new single-family detached homes were sold in Austell. The average price of a new detached home in 2020 was \$269,099. All but one of the homes were sold for between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

New Construction Homes Sales by Year



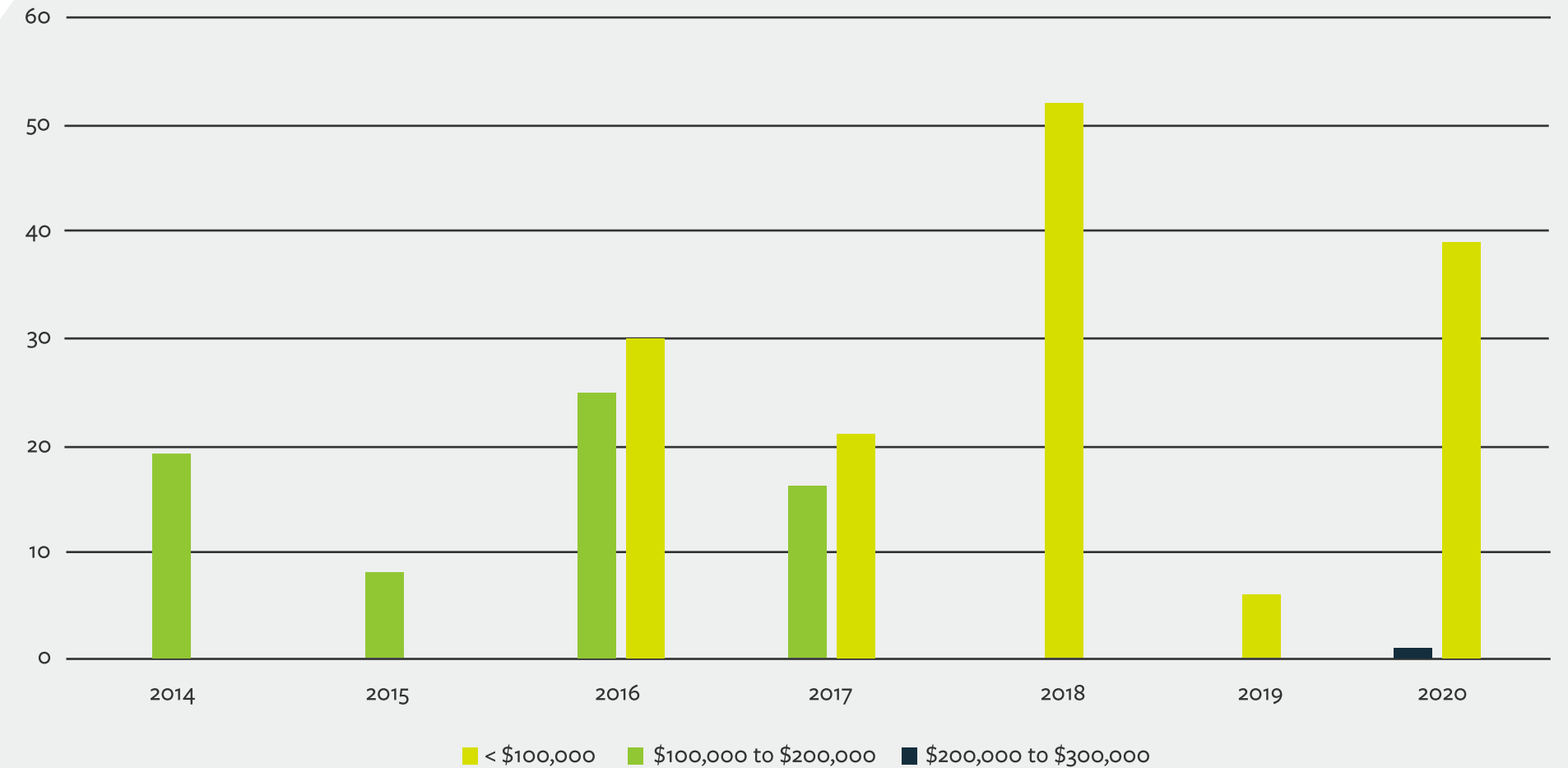
Home-to-Lot Ratio



Source: KB Advisory Group, smartREdata

A shift began toward more expensive homes in the city's new construction market in 2016. Before 2016, homes sold between \$100,000 and \$200,000 made up all the new housing stock. Since 2016, more expensive homes took over a larger percentage of the new home market. Similarly, new home prices across metro Atlanta have increased as well. Generally, increases in housing prices can contribute to rising land and labor costs and a supply not keeping up with demand.

New Construction Detached by Price



Source: KB Advisory Group, smartREdata

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Apartment Market Pricing & Vacancy Trends

There has been little significant change in Austell's multi-family inventory during the past two decades, despite the growth of multi-family units in the Atlanta metro region over that time. The newest Austell apartment units were delivered in 2003. The decline in the number of multi-family units since then is likely due to demolition.

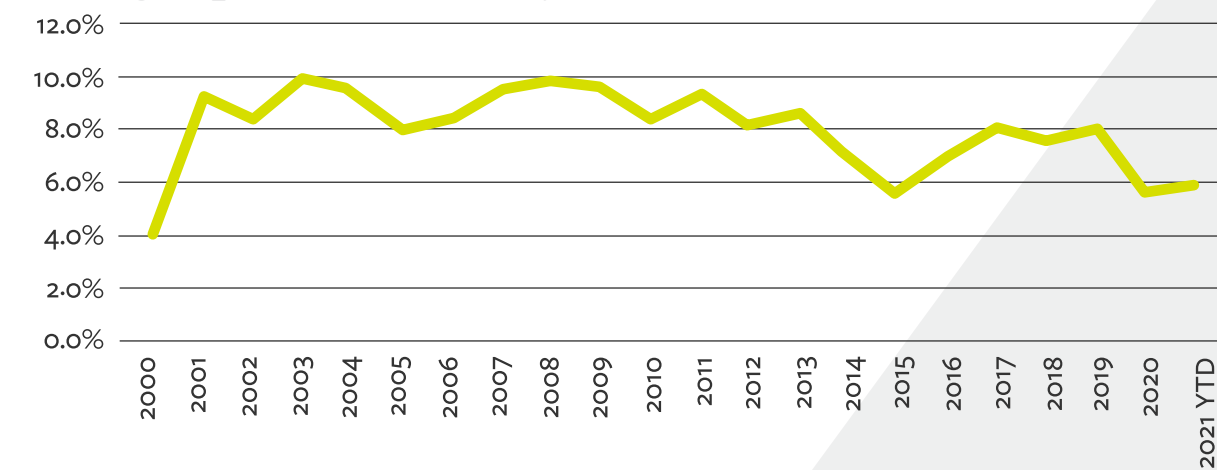
Since 2000, those units' vacancy rate has trended downward, despite the consistency in the number of multi-family units. As a rule of thumb, a "healthy" vacancy rate should be between 4% and 6%. One reason for the changes in vacancy rate over the last decade could be the growth of multi-family in other parts of metro Atlanta, which gives potential households more options and housing variety from which to choose.

Source: KB Advisory Group, based on data from CoStar.

Total Apartment Inventory



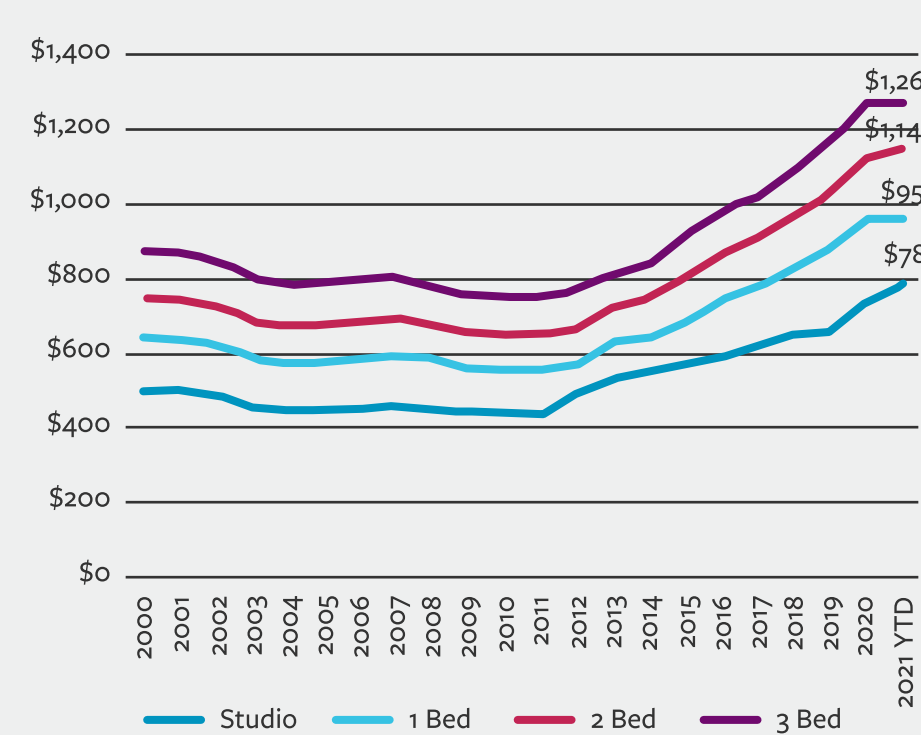
Average Apartment Vacancy



Apartment Inventory Overview

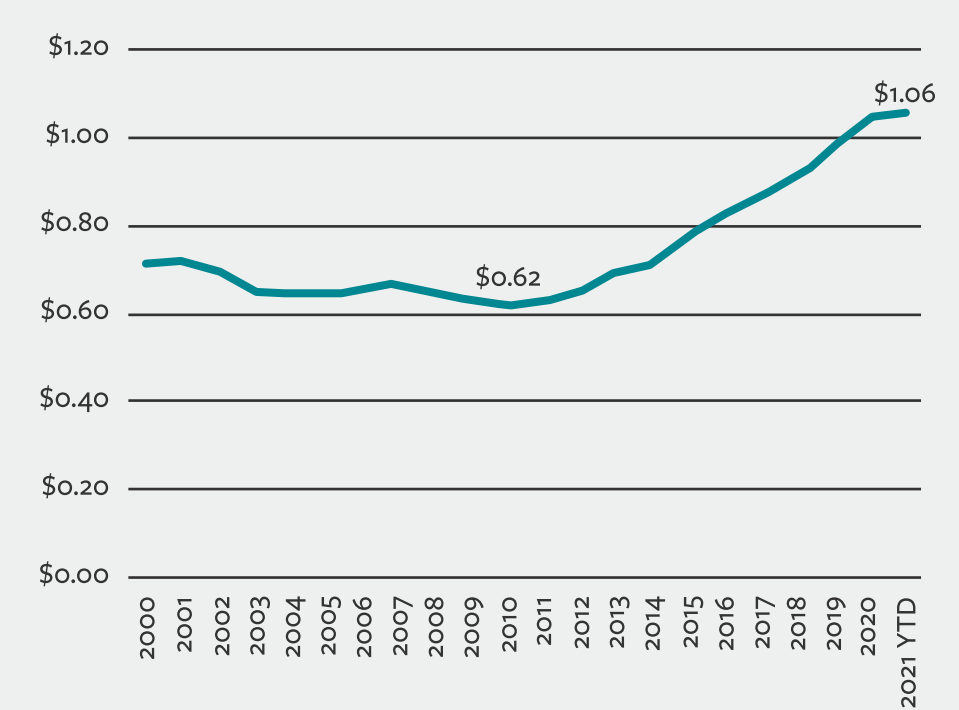
Multi-family rents have increased dramatically in Austell since 2010. The increase in multi-family rents is likely due to two reasons: first, the regional growth in multi-family demand since the end of the Great Recession puts upward pressure on prices, and second, the supply of multi-family units in Austell has not grown since 2003. The multi-family market could be supply-constrained with insufficient supply to meet demand. This situation would also put upward pressure on Austell's multi-family rents.

Average Rent Per Unit



Source: KB Advisory Group, based on data from CoStar.

Average Rent Per Square Foot



FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Commercial Assessment Real Estate Inventory Comparative Overview

The study area and Austell have seen very little new commercial real estate development in the last two decades. In Austell, since 2000, there has been:

- » No new multi-family;
- » A net increase of two new office developments;
- » A net increase of two new retail developments; and
- » A net increase of 10 new industrial/ flex developments.

Vacancy rates in the City tend to be relatively low, showing that space is well utilized, with few empty spaces. However, vacancy rates that are too low ensure that new businesses can find it difficult to access space in the area. Average commercial rental rates within Austell lag both the PMA and Cobb County, except for office:

- » Retail – 112% lower than average rents
- » Office – 32% lower than average rents but 82% higher than the PMA

Multifamily	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	9	40	387
Existing Units	228	5,703	72,390
Vacancy Rate	5.6%	5.6%	7.6%
Average Rent/SF	\$0.71	\$1.07	\$1.26
Retail	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	98	290	3,576
Existing SF	552,424	2,222,144	48,095,699
Vacancy Rate	0.8%	2.3%	5.0%
Average Rent/SF	\$7.21	\$10.40	\$15.26
Office	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	36	112	2,445
Existing SF	140,151	792,501	42,352,823
Vacancy Rate	1.3%	6.1%	12.2%
Average Rent/SF	\$18.00	\$9.91	\$23.77
Industrial/Flex	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	100	245	1,586
Existing SF	1,904,841	7,166,984	63,492,733
Vacancy Rate	0.1%	4.9%	5.3%
Average Rent/SF	N/A	\$4.79	\$6.52



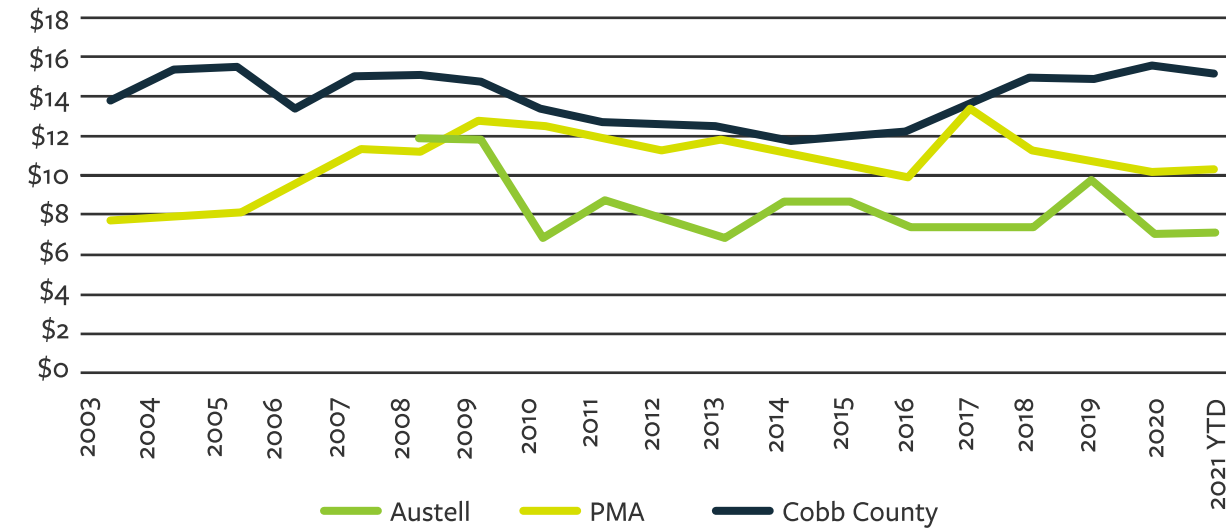
FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Retail Inventory

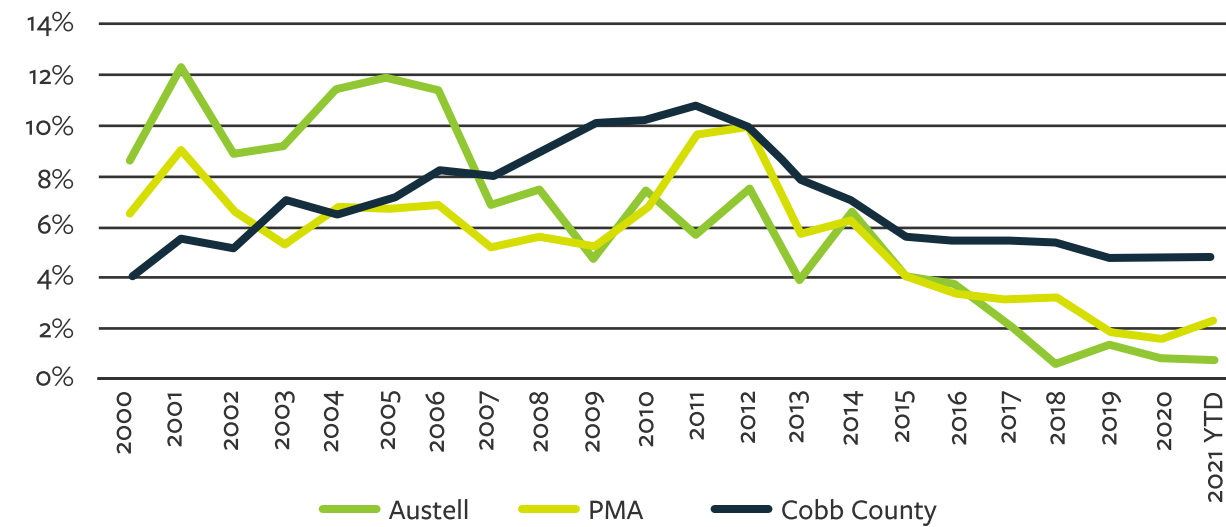
The retail space within Austell has a lower vacancy rate than the PMA and Cobb County overall. Over the past decade, there has been a net increase of two retail developments built in Austell, and there are currently no buildings under construction.

The limited supply of retail space may be artificially depressing the vacancy rate in Austell. While low vacancy rates indicate a healthy market, vacancy rates that are too low mean that new retail businesses can have difficulty moving into the area.

Average Retail Rent Per Square Foot



Retail Vacancy Rate



Source: KB Advisory Group based on data from CoStar

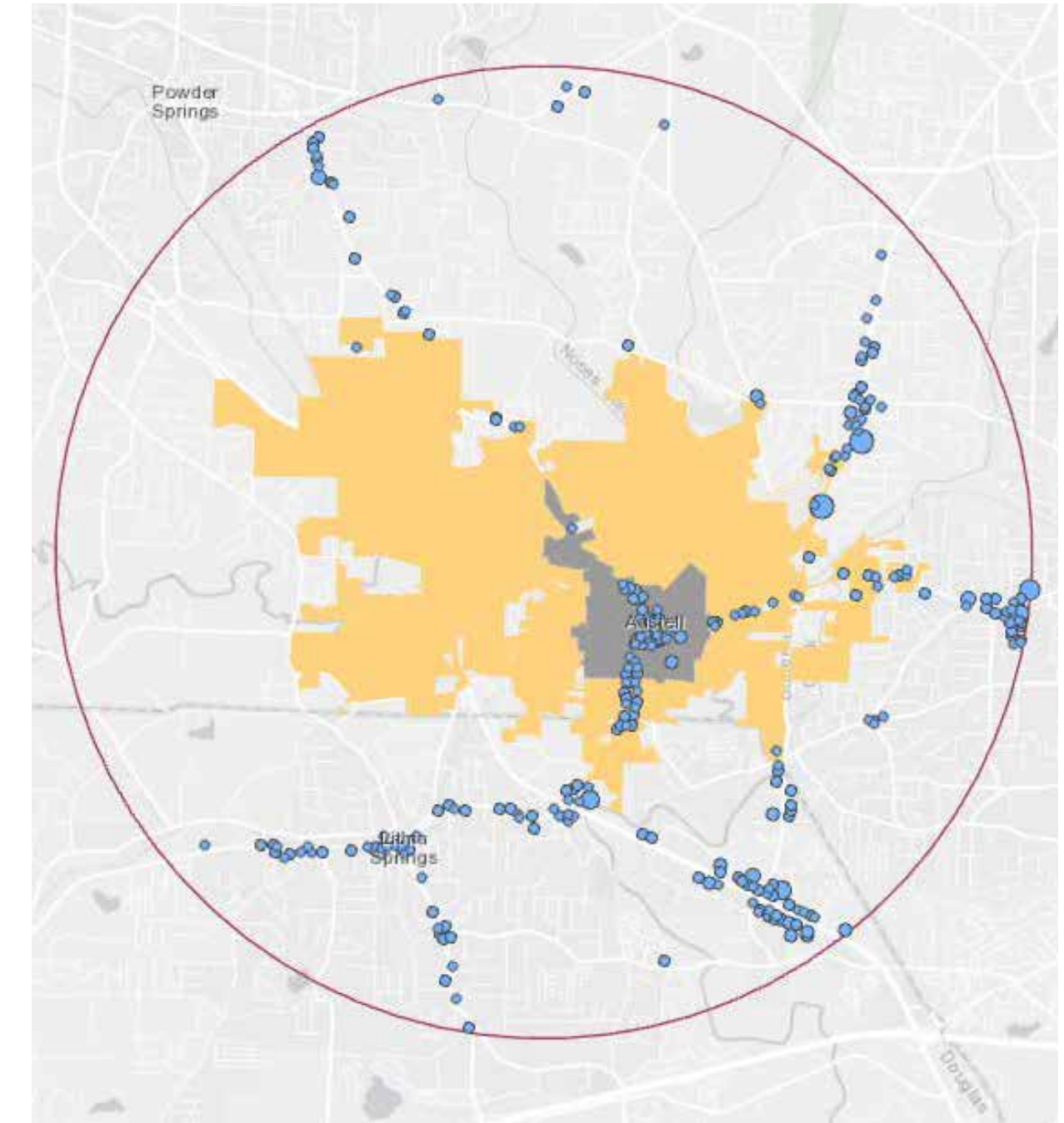
Local area average retail rents per square foot are significantly lower than averages in Cobb County.

Retail uses make up the most frequent commercial real estate type in the PMA. The PMA's retail sector tends to be smaller and older.

Most of the new retail development since 2000 has been spearheaded by regional or national chains and franchises. Clear retail patterns surround the most accessible corridors in the area, especially Veterans Memorial Highway and segments of Austell-Powder Springs Road.

Retail	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	36	112	2,445
Existing SF	140,151	792,501	42,352,823
Vacancy Rate	1.3%	6.1%	12.2%
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FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

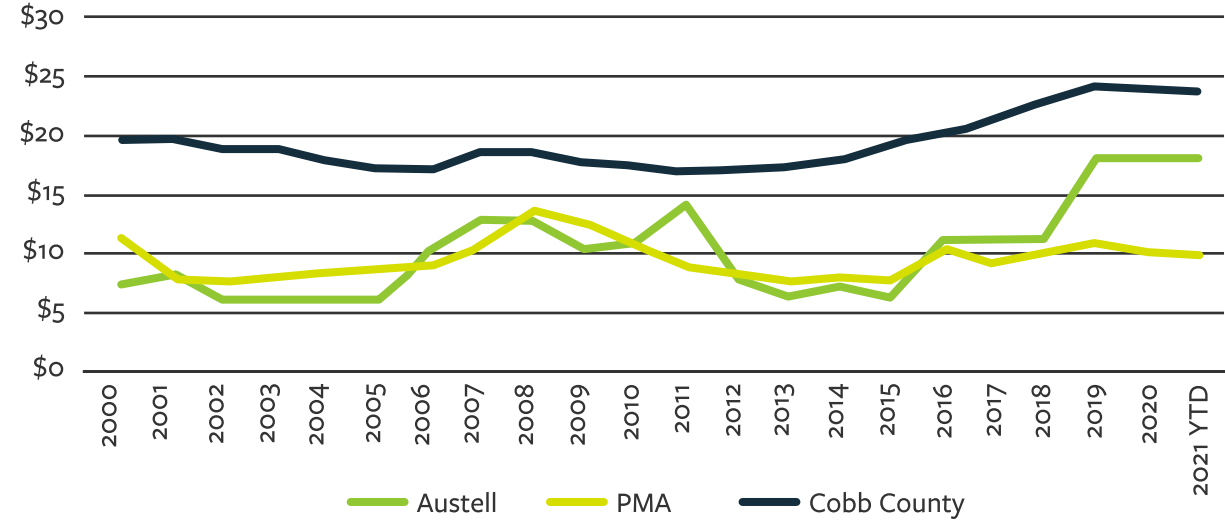
Office Inventory

Office rents in Austell command higher prices than in the PMA but are still lower than rents in Cobb County. There is more than a \$6 per square foot difference between Austell office rents and the PMA. The price difference between Austell and the surrounding three miles is likely due to Downtown Austell's presence, which the real estate market clearly sees as an amenity.

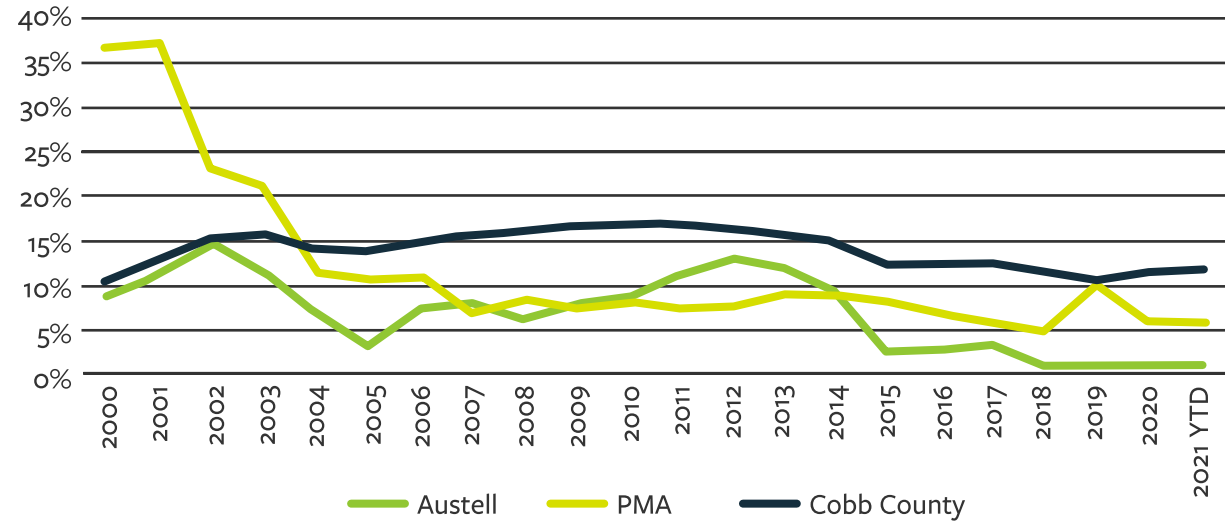
Office vacancy rates in the PMA are much lower compared to Cobb County. The increase in office vacancy rates in the last year could be related to a rise in teleworking and working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: KB Advisory Group based on data from CoStar

Average Office Rent Per Square Foot



Office Vacancy Rate

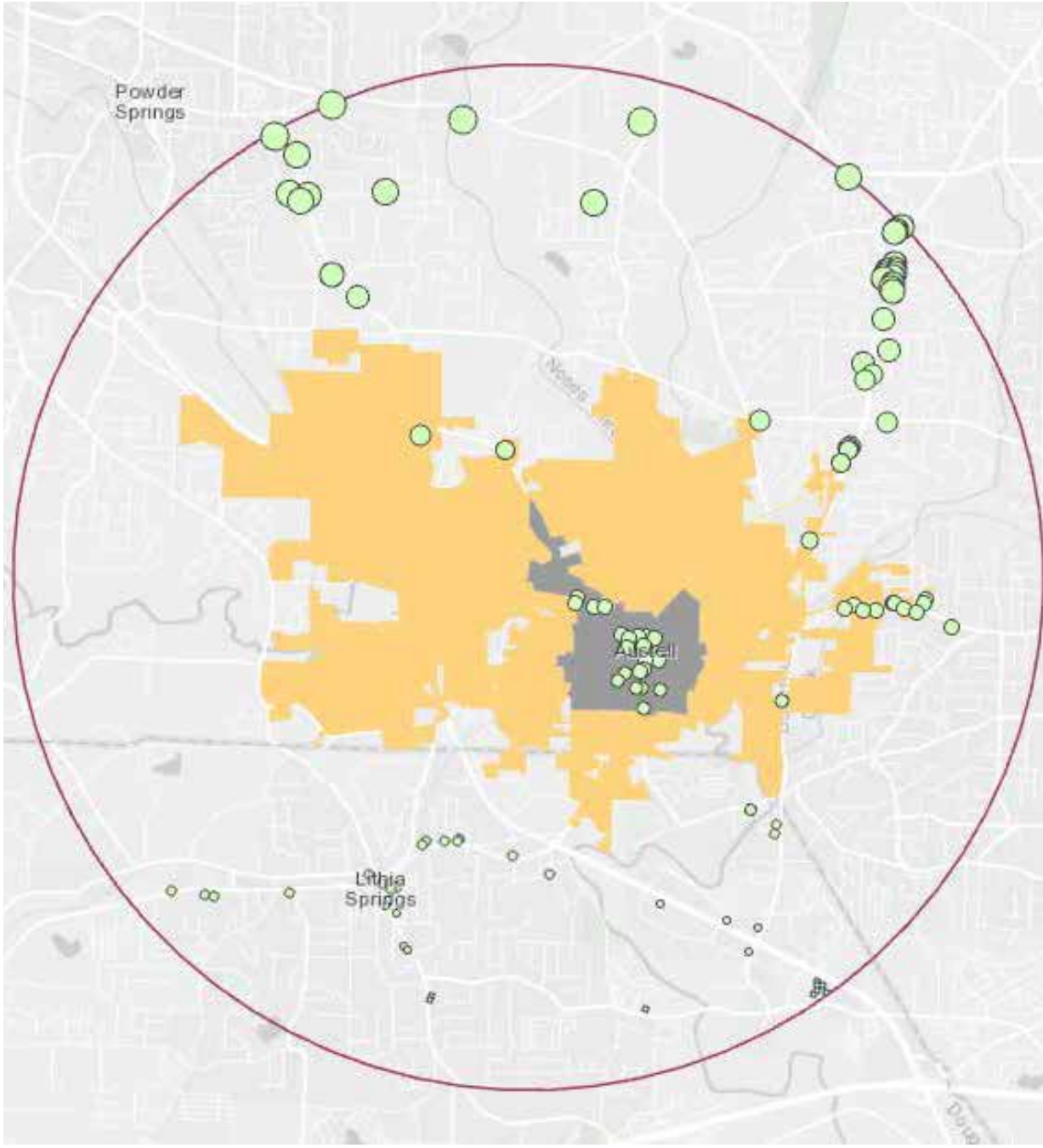


The largest concentration of office space in Austell is in the downtown area. Outside of the study area, most of the total office square footage lies outside of Austell along Austell Powder Springs Road.

The office space located in Austell is smaller and older than office space along Austell Road and Austell Powder Springs Road. The PMA makes up less than 2% of Cobb County's total office space.

Office	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	98	290	3,576
Existing SF	552,424	2,222,144	48,095,699
Vacancy Rate	0.8%	2.3%	5.0%
Average Rent/SF	\$7.21	\$10.40	\$15.26

Source: KB Advisory Group based on data from CoStar



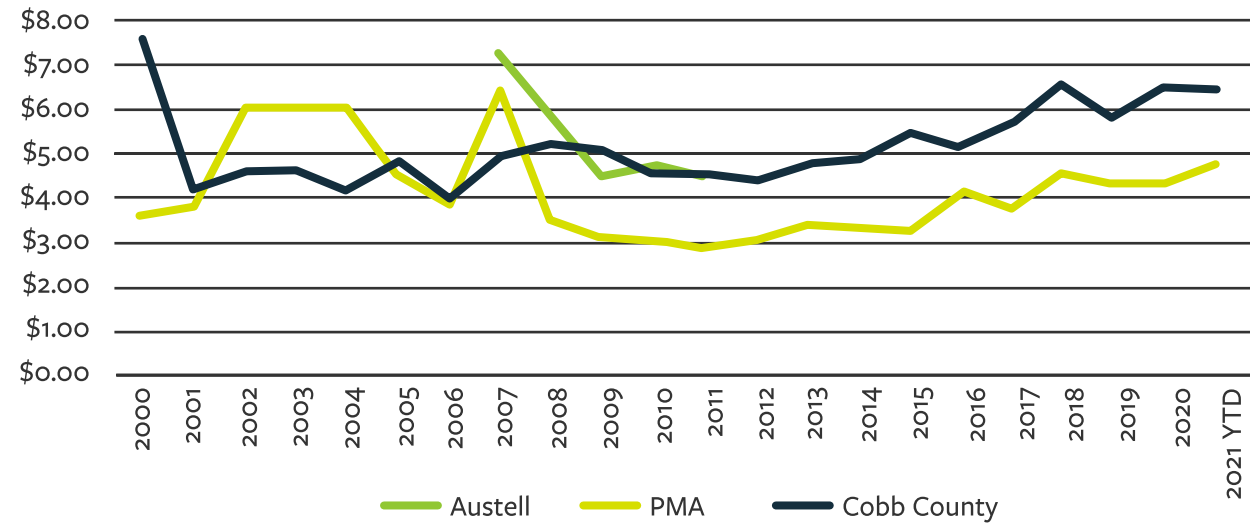
FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Industrial & Flex Inventory

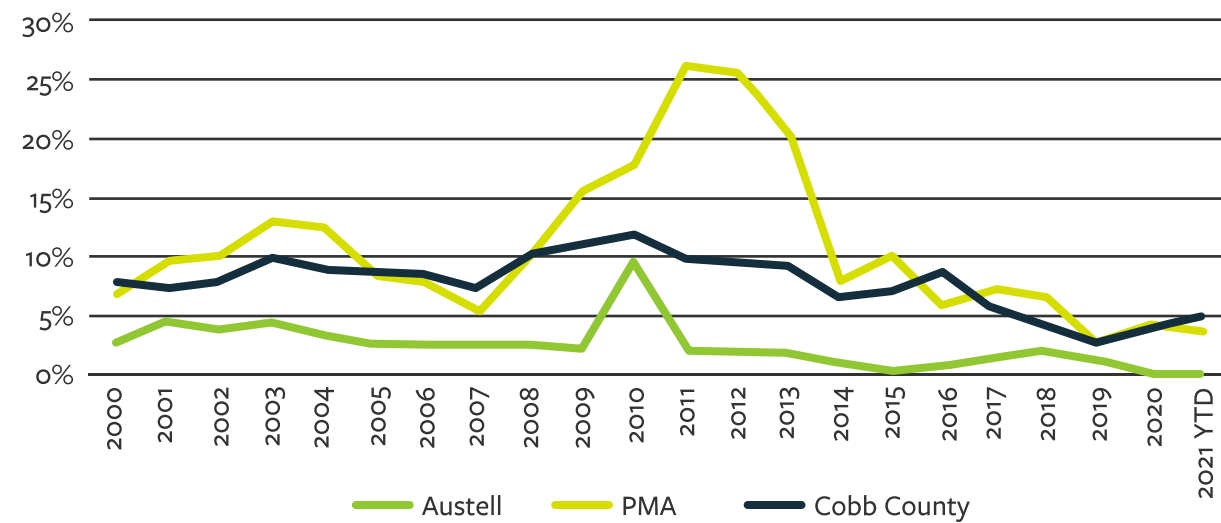
Employment sectors related to industrial real estate have grown significantly since 2000, which has caused rents to increase and vacancy rates to remain low.

Since 2011, the PMA's industrial and flex rent per square foot has continued to increase. Industrial and flex vacancy rates in the PMA have rapidly decreased since 2012 and have remained under what is considered "healthy" vacancy (6%) since mid-2018.

Average Industrial / Flex Rent Per Square Foot



Industrial / Flex Vacancy Rate



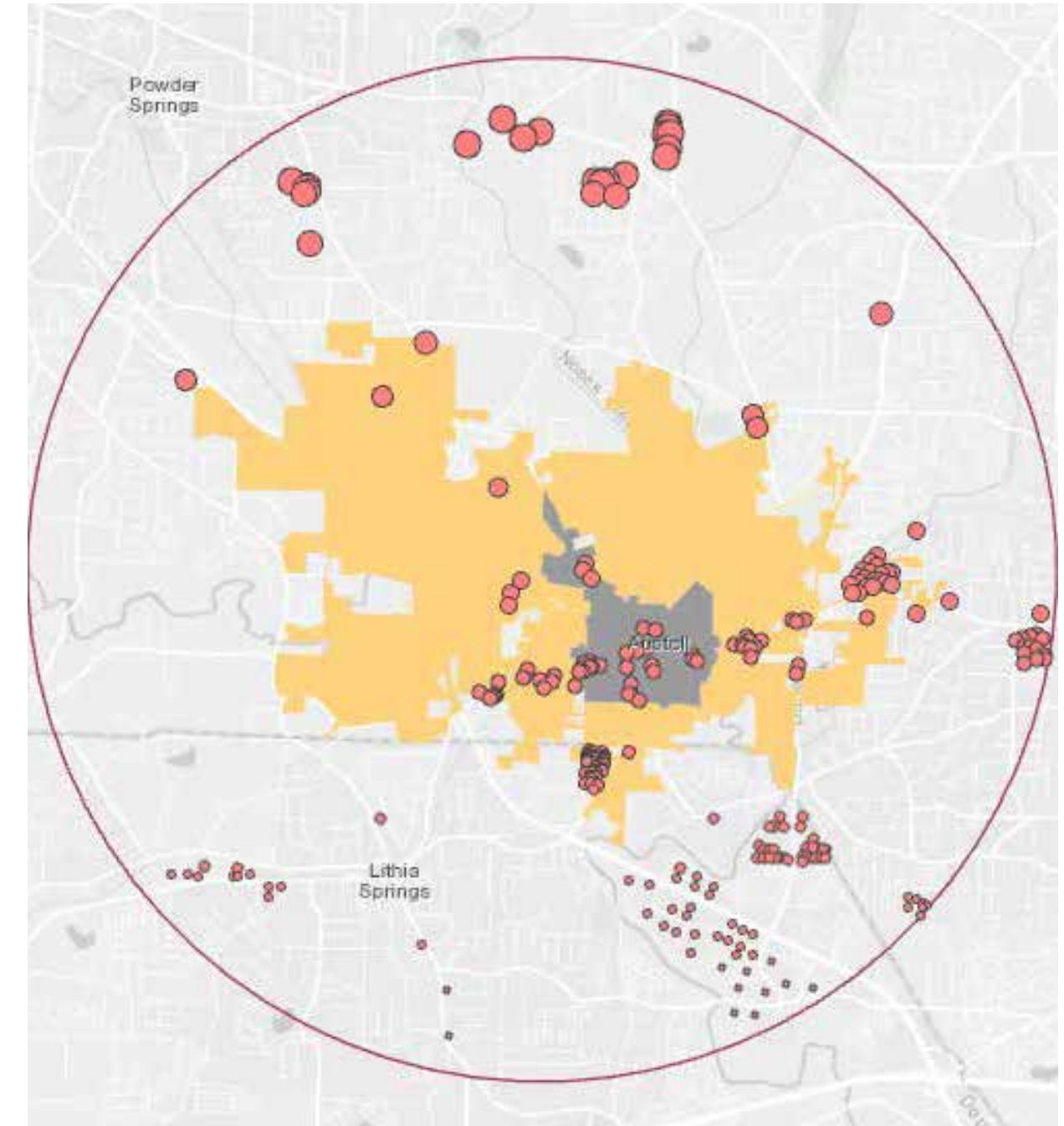
Source: KB Advisory Group based on data from CoStar

Industrial and flex uses combine to make up most of the square footage of commercial real estate types in the PMA.

The increase of manufacturing jobs and transportation and warehousing jobs is associated with the rise in industrial and flex developments. The concentration of industrial uses in the study area and the rest of Austell run directly along the rail line that bisects the city.

Industrial / Flex	City of Austell	PMA	Cobb County
Existing Buildings	100	245	1,586
Existing SF	1,904,841	7,166,984	63,492,733
Vacancy Rate	0.1%	4.9%	5.3%
Average Rent/SF	N/A	\$4.79	\$6.52

Source: KB Advisory Group based on data from CoStar



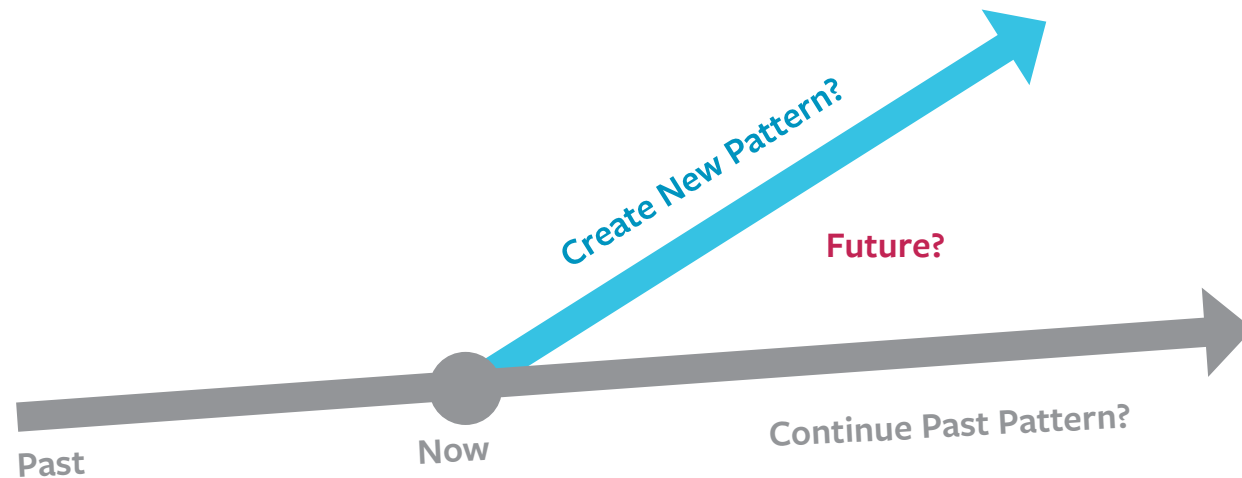
FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Real Estate Demand Forecast

Overview

Located in one of the fastest-growing counties in metro Atlanta with a base of dedicated local commercial tenants and an engaged population, Downtown Austell is well-positioned for strategic intervention and investment. These factors signal the potential for the study area to build momentum and capture a larger share of growth and market demand that is happening in the PMA and Cobb County.

Choices for Austell



Currently, the annual demand for new residences and retail space in the study area is modest. A continuation of the same trend will result in similar outcomes of the past 20 years.

This analysis details the demand for residential, retail, and office space as the best uses for Austell's downtown area. Demand for industrial space was considered for this analysis but ultimately not included based on the envisioned character of Downtown Austell and the variety of industrial uses that already exist in the PMA.

Demand Overview and Summary

The study area can catalyze residential and commercial growth. Thoughtful interventions throughout the study area, expanded bike and pedestrian options, and quality placemaking initiatives, can drive demand in Downtown Austell.

Through household and employment growth, the study area has the potential to add over 330 residential units in the next five years and up to 25,000 square feet of commercial space over that same period of time. There is significant demand for housing types outside of the traditional single-family detached home and the ability to add to multi-family stock.

Combined, annual demand for new retail and office space is over 4,800 square feet of new space, with restaurants making up a significant portion of the retail demand.

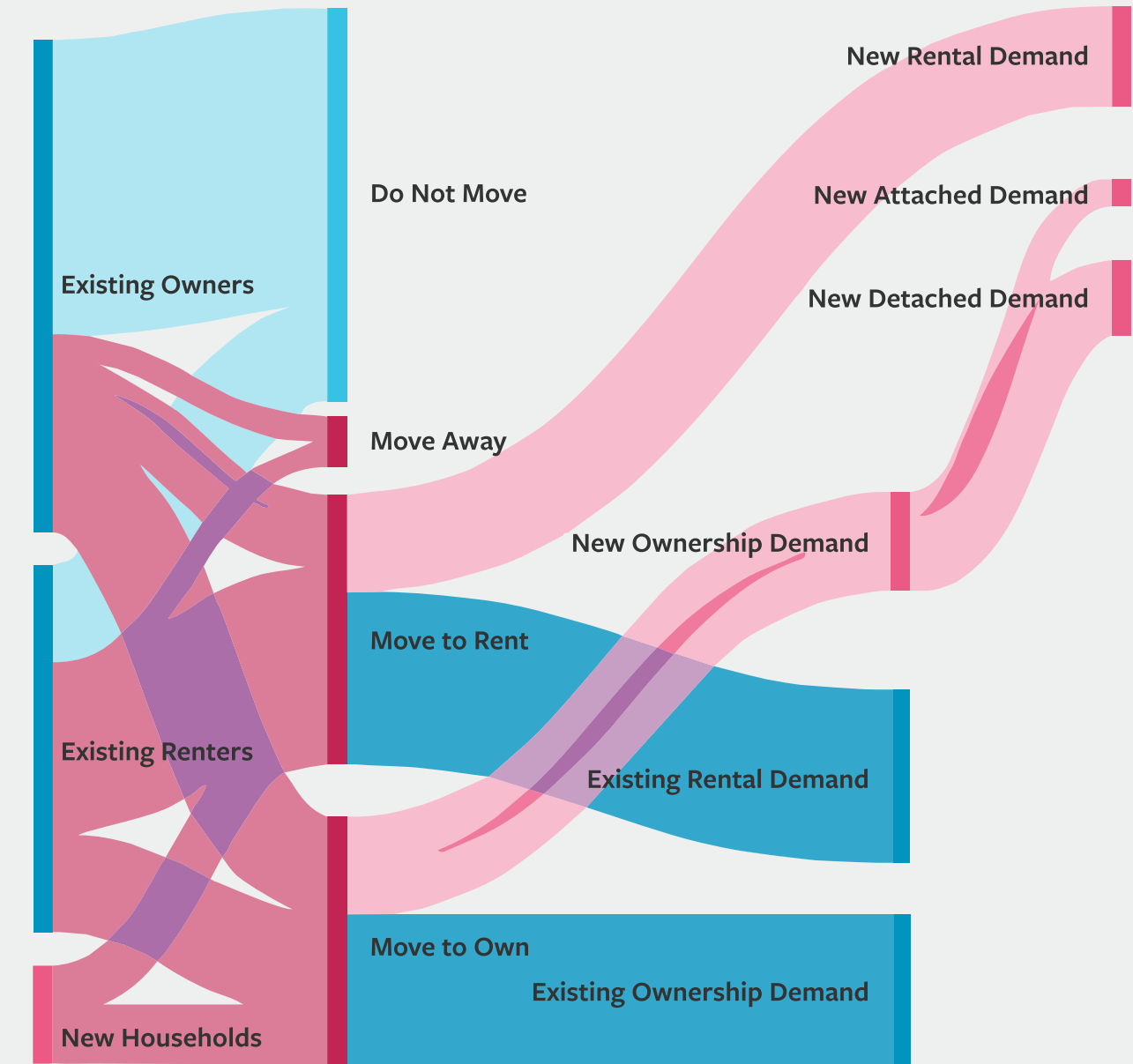
An analytical model evaluated the potential housing outcomes of three household groups that will drive housing demand in the study area, as well as the rest of the city:

- » Turnover of owner-occupied households;
- » Turnover of renter-occupied households; and
- » New households.

For each demand pool, data from numerous sources was used to forecast outcomes that, taken as a whole, determine the level of local demand potential for new housing of various types at various price points.

The results provide local-level forecasts of achievable annual new-home production of for-rent and for-sale housing. The diagram to the right illustrates the process undertaken in the housing demand modeling process. This analysis factors in the forecasted demand for the study area that implements strategic intervention and investment.

Source: KB Advisory Group



FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Residential Housing Demand

Given the need for additional housing to serve a variety of household types, there is an opportunity for new residential development in the study area. There is a demand for approximately 70 new residential units annually for the next five years, distributed among various housing types. The downtown residential market stands to gain momentum as new housing options are added and as thoughtful strategic intervention and investment are implemented as a result of this LCI study. Currently, the annual demand for new residences and retail space in the study area is modest.

The demand for multi-family units will equal to one large multi-family development or several small to medium rental options in the next five years. Residential growth downtown in the next five years will impact future residential demand, gain momentum, and grow as downtown gains more units, commercial space, and amenities.

Study Area Residential Demand Projections

Unit Type	Austell Demand	Study Area Demand	% Share of Units in Study Area
Single-family detached units	61	15	22%
Single-family attached units	29	14	21%
Multi-family units	48	38	56%
Total units	138	68	100%



Source: KB Advisory Group

Multi-Family Demand

A majority of the new rental demand in Austell is above monthly rents of \$1,200. This number is just above the current average rent of a 2-bedroom multi-family unit in Austell. However, as previously mentioned, the newest rental options in Austell are now at least 20 years old.

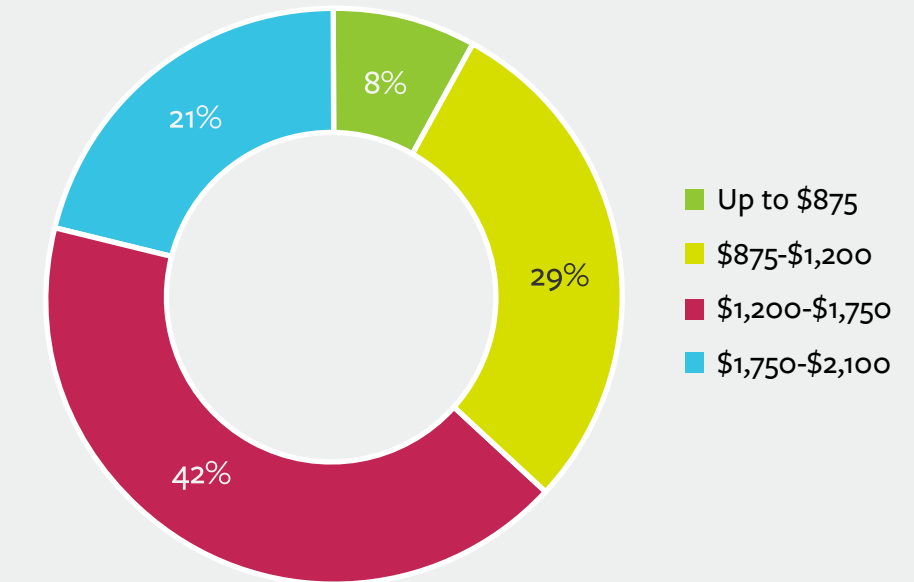
While this analysis identifies demand for market-rate units, it acknowledges that additional demand for housing exists from a segment of the population that cannot afford most market-rate housing options. Additional rental supply can help ease the upward pressure from the supply-constrained rental market.

Sufficient opportunity likely exists to add 150-200 naturally affordable or subsidized rental units over the next five years. Additionally, there is the opportunity for 100-150 age-restricted units (for households 55+) over the next five years.

Source: KB Advisory Group

2021-2026 Average Annual Market Rate Rental Demand

Rental Prices	Number of Units	% of Units
Up to \$875	3	8%
\$875 to \$1,200	11	29%
\$1,200 to \$1,750	16	42%
\$1,750+	8	21%
Total	38	100%



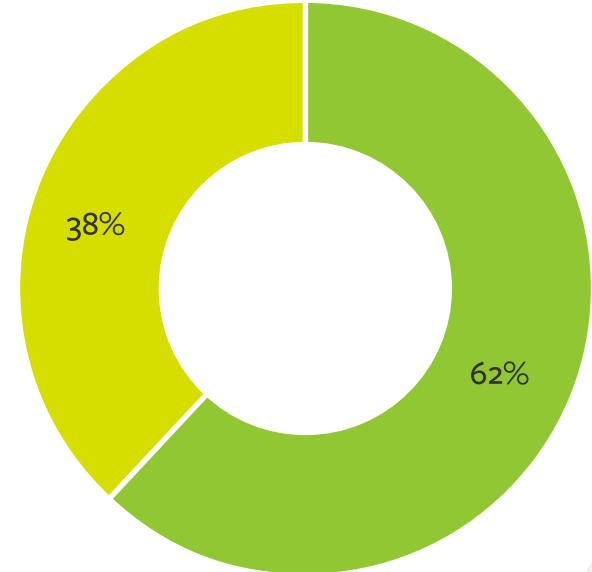
FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Retail Demand

Based on expected growth in households, employment, and visitors, Austell's retail sector could support over 2,300 square feet of new or re-envisioned retail annually, or up to 12,000 square feet of retail over five years. Downtown Austell will support additional retail as new residential units and office space is developed because such development will generate more built-in spending power downtown and attract more visitors by making the downtown area more of a destination. These projections are based on the premise that various market segments will drive additional retail support downtown. The expectations for growth provide forecasts that show downtown Austell can support 12,000 square feet of new or refurbished office space and over 300 units of new residential units over the next five years.

Additional restaurant and food options are the most likely to capture future retail demand in Downtown Austell. Almost 2/3 of retail demand comes from eating and drinking establishments. Chef-centered restaurants are suitable tenants for downtown brick-and-mortar retail in a period when consumers buy most of their general goods through e-commerce or "big box" stores. A small local food market (3,000-5,000 square feet) could likely find support once additional residential units are added nearby. This space would be part of the "other retail," as shown to the right.

Future Retail Demand



- Food Service & Drinking Places
- Other Retail Uses

Source: KB Advisory Group

Stable Office Market

A collection of local, smaller tenants is recommended for a small downtown. Office employees increase a downtown's daytime population, which helps local retailers, particularly restaurants, stay busy during the day when nearby residents are at work. The downtown office market, while already sizeable, is unlikely to get much bigger. Fluctuations in downtown office vacancy have been quickly absorbed since 2015, and the market currently boasts low vacancy rates. 100% occupancy allows no space for future tenants to move in or for current tenants to upgrade as they grow.

Local Dedicated Tenants



80,000 SF of office space
3,500 SF average building size
Local professional services

Source: KB Advisory Group

High Occupancy, Low Growth



Average year built: 1965
Little new construction since 1990s
100% occupancy

FULL MARKET ANALYSIS

Office Demand

Based on the forecasted growth in employment by industry from the Atlanta Regional Commission, Austell could support approximately 2,500 square feet of new office space annually, or up to 13,000 square feet over 5 years. This net new space could be new construction or in refurbished spaces.

81 Forecast: average annual new employees in Austell

X 21% In office-based sectors

17 Employees generating demand for office space each year

X 150 square feet of office space per employee

12,000–13,000 square feet of net new office demand downtown over 5 years

Source: KB Advisory Group

New Office Supply Character

The slow, incremental growth in new office space demand is likely too small to support a new stand-alone office building of significant size until Downtown Austell generates substantial redevelopment momentum. Instead, demand will likely be satisfied through smaller additions to supply — such as adaptive reuse of existing (non-office) buildings, live-work buildings, or office components incorporated into larger mixed-use projects.



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Keck & Wood
Perez Planning + Design
KB Advisory Group