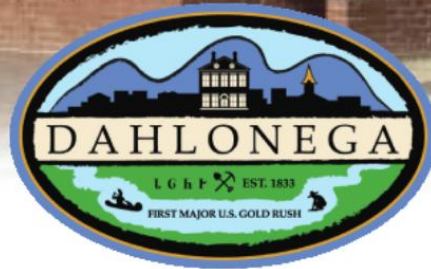




Photo by: GA Dept. of Natural Resources



# DAHLONEGA

## Revitalization Plan

Prepared for:  
City of Dahlonega  
April 2025

Prepared by:



**KB** | ADVISORY GROUP

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# Executive Summary

A community revitalization plan is a strategic initiative designed to enhance the long-term sustainability, livability, and economic vitality of a community. By addressing critical infrastructure improvements, housing affordability, and economic growth, such a plan ensures that the community can **thrive while preserving its unique character**.

As Dahlonega continues to grow, key infrastructure improvements are necessary to support sustainable development. Roadways, particularly Morrison Moore Parkway, face **increasing traffic demands** and safety concerns. Event parking demand presents ongoing challenges for residents, visitors, and businesses. Additionally, high costs associated with sewer tap installations create barriers to development, further exacerbating affordability concerns. Between 2013 and 2016, instances of heavy monthly rainfall occasionally overwhelmed the wastewater system’s capacity, underscoring the need for **continued sewer infrastructure upgrades** to accommodate future expansion.

The **share of cost-burdened renters**—those who spend more than a third of their income on housing—has **risen dramatically from 25% in 2017 to 85% in 2023**. With renters making up a significant portion of the target area, many households are increasingly vulnerable to rising housing costs, making affordable housing solutions a critical priority.

On February 27, 2025, a community meeting was held to engage and inform the public, providing citizens with an opportunity to voice their concerns on various issues. Feedback from the community highlighted several key concerns, including:

- Housing affordability and divided opinions on multifamily housing development
- Workforce retention and economic diversification
- Traffic congestion and inadequate infrastructure
- Balancing growth with historical and cultural preservation
- The need for additional community spaces and cultural opportunities

This revitalization plan aims to address these concerns through strategic investments, policy updates, and community collaboration. By taking proactive measures, we can ensure that our community remains a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable place for all residents and businesses.

## Recommendations

### Balance Growth with Preservation

Promote sustainable development strategies that support growth while preserving Dahlonega’s historic charm and character, including collaboration with UNG to responsibly accommodate university expansion.

### Diversify the Economy

Attract year-round businesses and professional industries to reduce economic dependency on tourism, supporting local entrepreneurship and business diversity.

### Prioritize Infrastructure Investments

Upgrade water, sewer, stormwater, and waste management systems to sustain growth, mitigate flooding, and minimize road damage; further collaborate with GDOT to enhance transportation safety and reduce congestion.

### Enhance Affordability and Workforce Housing

Implement housing strategies that ensure affordability for local employees and young professionals, balancing short-term rental needs with the demand for diverse, long-term housing solutions.

### Improve Mobility and Accessibility

Expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, optimize downtown parking, and develop alternative transportation options to reduce congestion, increase walkability, and enhance public spaces.





# Background & Purpose

## | Introduction

As a historic gem in North Georgia, Dahlonega has long been recognized for its vibrant downtown, strong tourism industry, deep connections to Georgia’s gold rush history, and home to the University of North Georgia. However, like many small communities, the city faces challenges related to aging infrastructure, housing affordability, and economic diversification. This CRP seeks to address these issues through targeted investments in infrastructure, business development, historic preservation, and community engagement.

A tool to leverage local, state, and federal resources, the Dahlonega CRP aims to create a thriving, resilient community where businesses flourish, residents enjoy a high quality of life, and the city’s historic and natural assets are protected for future generations.

Through collaboration with stakeholders—including local government, businesses, and community members—this plan will serve as a roadmap for sustainable revitalization and long-term prosperity.

### Dahlonega Vision Statement:

*“To be an open, honest, and responsive city, balancing preservation and growth, and delivering quality services fairly and equitably by being good stewards of Dahlonega’s resources.”*

### What is a Community Revitalization Plan?

A **Community Revitalization Plan (CRP)** in Georgia is designed to guide the redevelopment and improvement of distressed or underdeveloped areas. It serves as a strategic framework for economic growth, infrastructure improvements, housing development, and social services enhancement within a specific community.

#### Key Purposes of a CRP in Georgia:

- **Economic Development:** Encourages investment in local businesses, job creation, and commercial revitalization.
- **Affordable Housing:** Addresses housing needs by improving existing homes, promoting new development, and ensuring affordability.
- **Infrastructure Improvement:** Enhances transportation, utilities, parks, and public spaces.
- **Historic Preservation:** Protects and restores significant cultural and historic sites.
- **Public Safety & Quality of Life:** Reduces crime, promotes community engagement, and improves public health.
- **Funding & Grants:** Positions the community to apply for state and federal funding, including grants from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and federal programs like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).

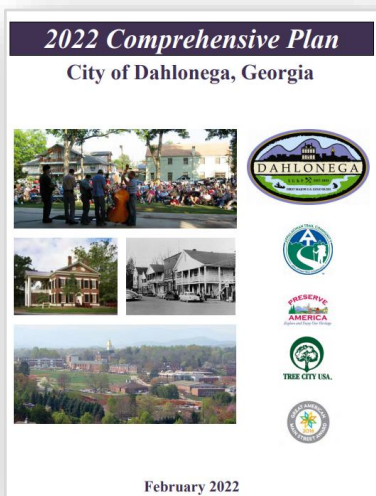
CRPs often bolster a city’s ability to be competitive within programs such as **Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)** and the **Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH)**.



# Background & Purpose

## Previous Work

The foundation of this Community Revitalization Plan, including its background, goals, and recommendations, is rooted in and expands upon previous planning efforts by KB Advisory Group, the City of Dahlonega, Lumpkin County, and the Georgia Department of Transportation. Primary plans include the Dahlonega City Comprehensive Plan, the Dahlonega Downtown Master Plan, the Yahoola Creek Reservoir Master Plan, and the Dahlonega Housing Needs Assessment.

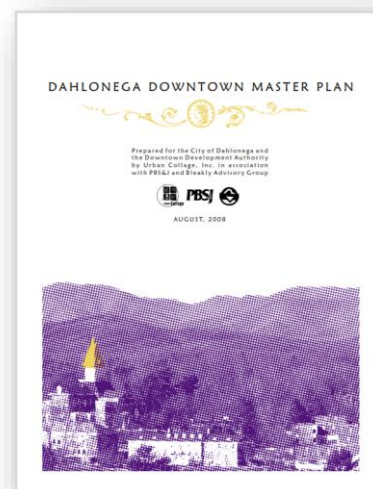


## Dahlonega City Comprehensive Plan (2022)

The purpose of the City of Dahlonega Comprehensive Plan was to provide a roadmap for the city's future development, created through a public and stakeholder driven process. Key needs, opportunities, and necessary actions to sustain growth and maintain Dahlonega's character were identified. Additionally, the plan aligns with Georgia's planning standards and serves to maintain the city's Qualified Local Government (QLG) status.

## Dahlonega Downtown Master Plan

Though the Public Square remains as a tourist destination with tremendous appeal, the city recognized the need to strive for sustainability and future vitality. Dahlonega's Downtown Master Plan was designed to provide a strategic vision to balance economic growth, historic preservation, and the needs of the community. The plan outlines key development opportunities, improvements, and infrastructure enhancements to shape and ensure a bustling year-round destination.



## Sidewalk Master Plan

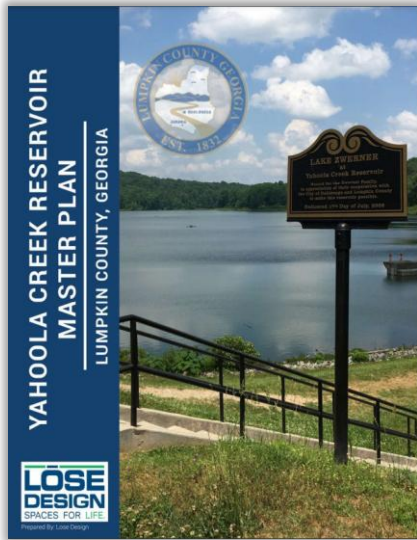
The Sidewalk Master Plan aims to improve pedestrian accessibility and safety throughout Dahlonega. According to the plan, sidewalks are required for all developments within a mile from an existing or proposed school, park, or community center, and should also be provided along public streets for various types of development. The plan identifies areas with sufficient sidewalk coverage and those with limited access, prioritizing construction through an eight-phase approach based on the area and priority.

Source: City of Dahlonega



# Background & Purpose

## Previous Work

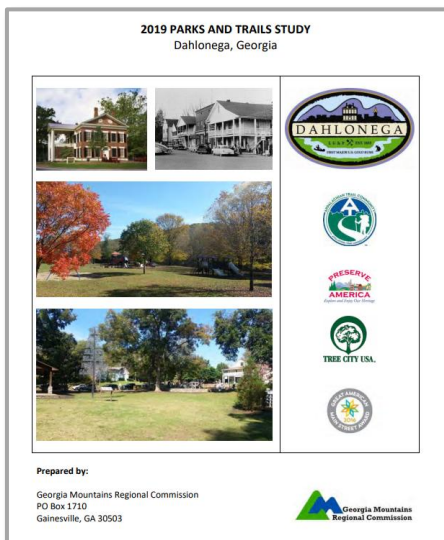
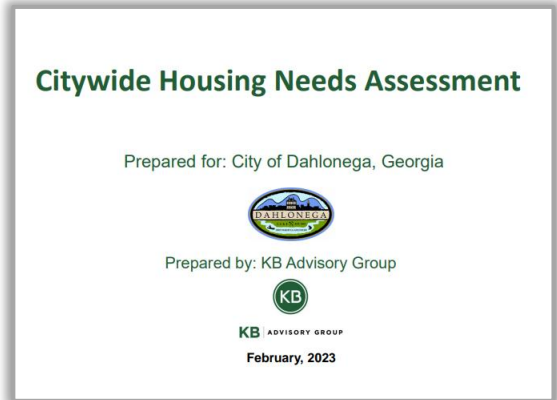


### Yahoola Creek Reservoir Master Plan

The Yahoola Creek Reservoir Master Plan was created to provide a strategic vision for the 200-acre property surrounding Lake Zwermer and enhance the quality of services provided to residents. Through an integration of public input, demographic research, and facility assessments, plans were set in place to guide infrastructure improvements. The approach also highlights the community's desire to balance the preservation of natural beauty and character while also expanding accessibility and recreation opportunities to meet evolving community needs.

### Dahlonega Housing Needs Assessment

The Citywide Housing Needs Assessment was designed to evaluate the current and future housing market trends to guide policy decisions based on land use and residential development. Through a data driven analysis of various factors including housing supply, demand, and affordability, the study serves as a foundation for long term housing strategies to create a balanced housing market that meets the needs of residents, workers, and students.



### Parks and Trails Study (2019)

The Parks and Trails Study was designed to find ways to enhance Dahlonega's reputation and appeal by creating a high quality and cost-effective parks and trails system. It was founded on the 2007 Trail and Greenway Study. The study lists the values and benefits of parks, trails, and other recreation infrastructure and lists various specific goals that the community would like to work towards.



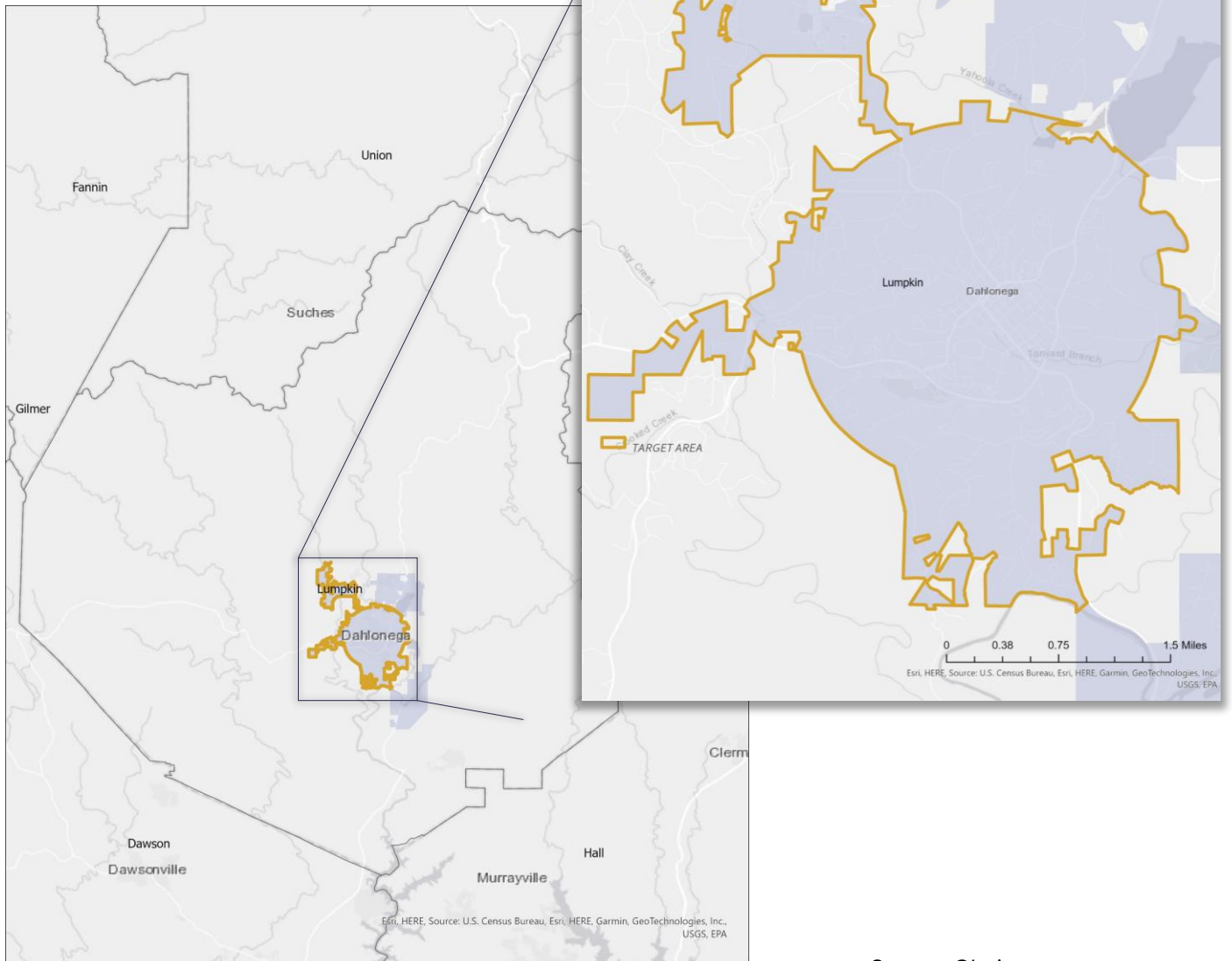
Source: City of Dahlonega, Georgia Mountains Regional Commission

# Background & Purpose

## Target Area

A large portion of Dahlonega, Georgia is the Target Area. The Target Area is the defined boundary that this Community Revitalization Plan focuses on for evaluation and recommendations. The City of Dahlonega serves as the primary market area for comparison purposes to the target area. Dahlonega is the county seat of Lumpkin County and home to the University of North Georgia. Lumpkin County is bordered by Hall, Dawson, Fannin, White, and Union Counties. Much of northern Lumpkin County is within the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests. On average, a one-way drive from Dahlonega to Atlanta via Highway 19/SR 400 and I-85 takes 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete.

**1 hour 15 minutes- The average one-way drive from Dahlonega to Atlanta**



Source: Claritas



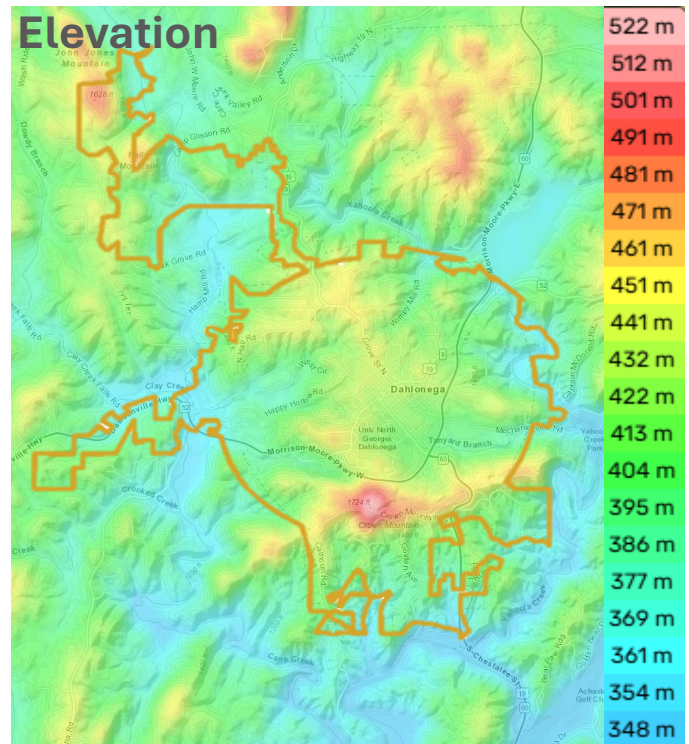


# Existing Conditions

## Geography & Environment

The City of Dahlonega is characterized by mountainous topography, which is extremely impactful in terms of development and environmental conditions. Coined as the “Heart of the Georgia Mountains”, the city’s rugged terrain presents a mix of challenges and opportunities.

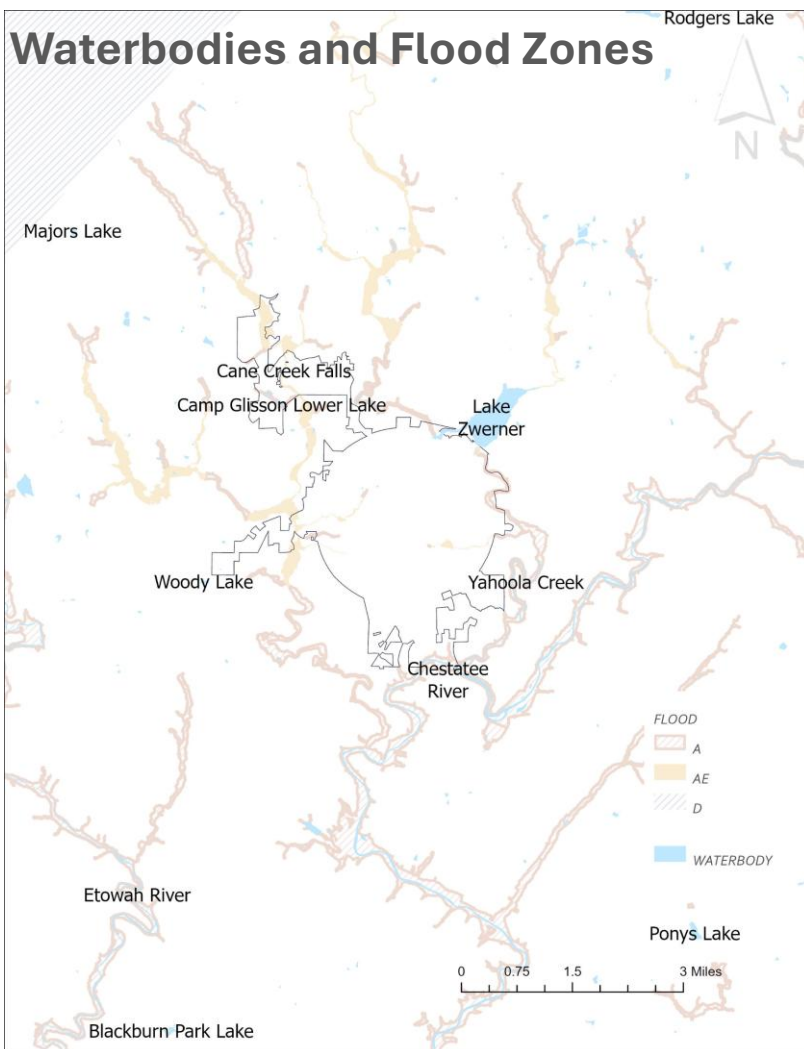
While Dahlonega’s landscape makes certain commercial development difficult due to its limited availability of flat land, most of the surrounding waterbodies lie outside of the Target Area. The majority of the Target area is classified as low flood risk. Areas near bodies of water and at lower elevations, however, are high risk flood areas( Zone A, AE). These area can create obstacles for development and infrastructure. Additional flood insurance is likely needed in these areas.



The Yahoola Creek Reservoir is a critical asset for the community. In addition to being a popular destination for recreation and tourism, such as fishing, hiking, and boating, it serves as a drinking water reservoir for the city.

Regarding water quality challenges, **Dahlonega has five stream segments that are listed as Not Supporting their designated use**, showing that ongoing monitoring and future mitigation is necessary to ensure the water quality doesn’t become so impaired that it harms wildlife or people.

Dahlonega places a strong emphasis on sustainability and environmental conservation. The city is committed to protecting their water quality and preserving the city’s natural beauty. The community’s commitment to balancing conservation with community growth is apparent through the city’s previously adopted plans.



Source: Claritas





# Existing Conditions

## Community Resources

### Community Services

The Target Area is home to; Dahlongega City Hall – and City Hall Park, the Lumpkin County Community Center, Lumpkin County Courthouse, Lumpkin County Sheriff's Office, Lumpkin County Senior Center, Lumpkin County Library, and the Lumpkin County Health Department – many of which are located near each other - north of Downtown Dahlongega.

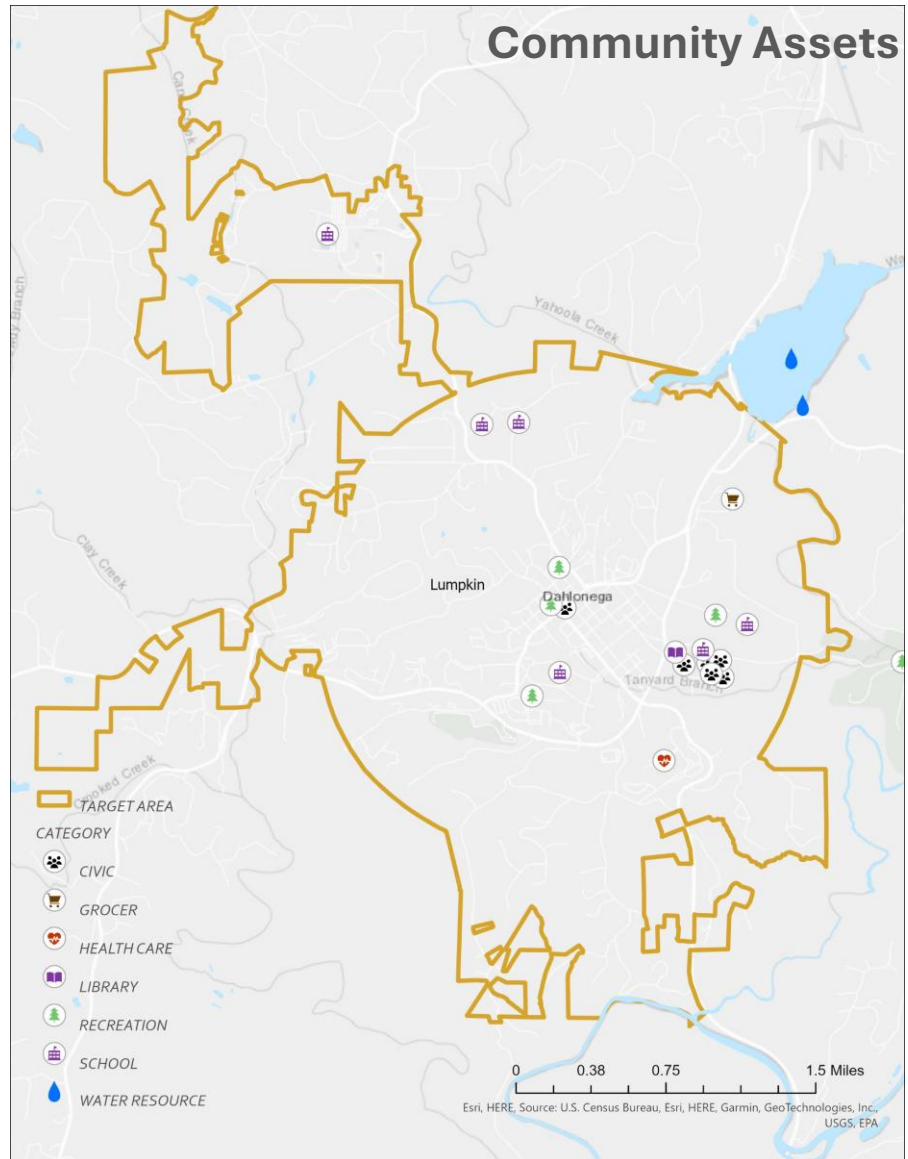
### Education

The Target Area has six schools located within its perimeter; Cottrell Elementary School and Lumpkin County HeadStart on the eastside, Lumpkin County Middle School and Mountain Education Charter High School just North of Downtown Dahlongega, and Lumpkin County High School on the northwestern part of Dahlongega. The University of North Georgia, just south of Downtown, is a staple institution as both an educational asset and major employer.

### Recreation

Dahlongega enjoys places like Hancock Park, the Conner Memorial Garden near the Public Square, and the Wimpy Mill Picnic Area – to name a few. Lake Zwerner and the Yahoola Creek Reservoir have outdoor recreation opportunities.

Many of these local places have historic and cultural attractions, playgrounds, lending libraries, and events for Dahlongega residents and visitors to enjoy the community together.



**The Target Area is home to six schools, including Lumpkin County High School and the University of North Georgia.**



Source: Claritas

# Existing Conditions

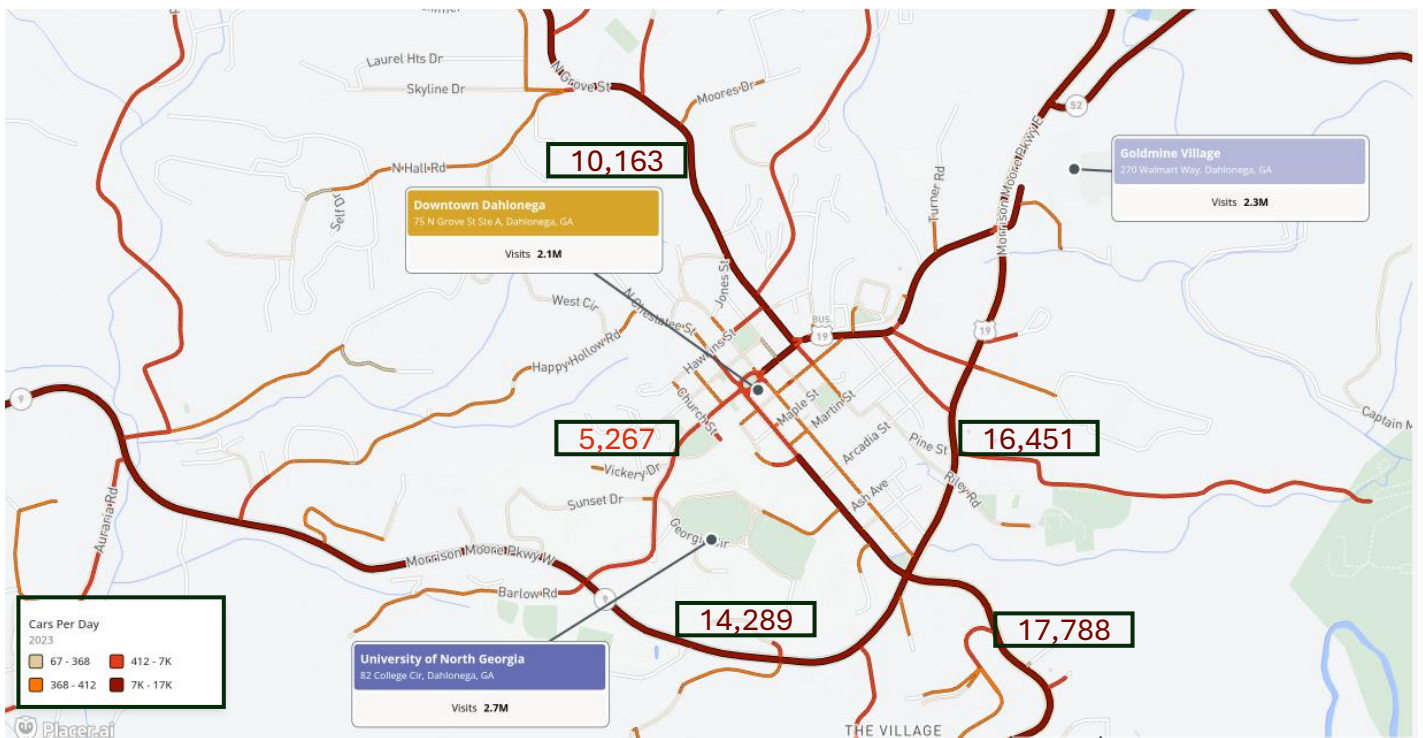
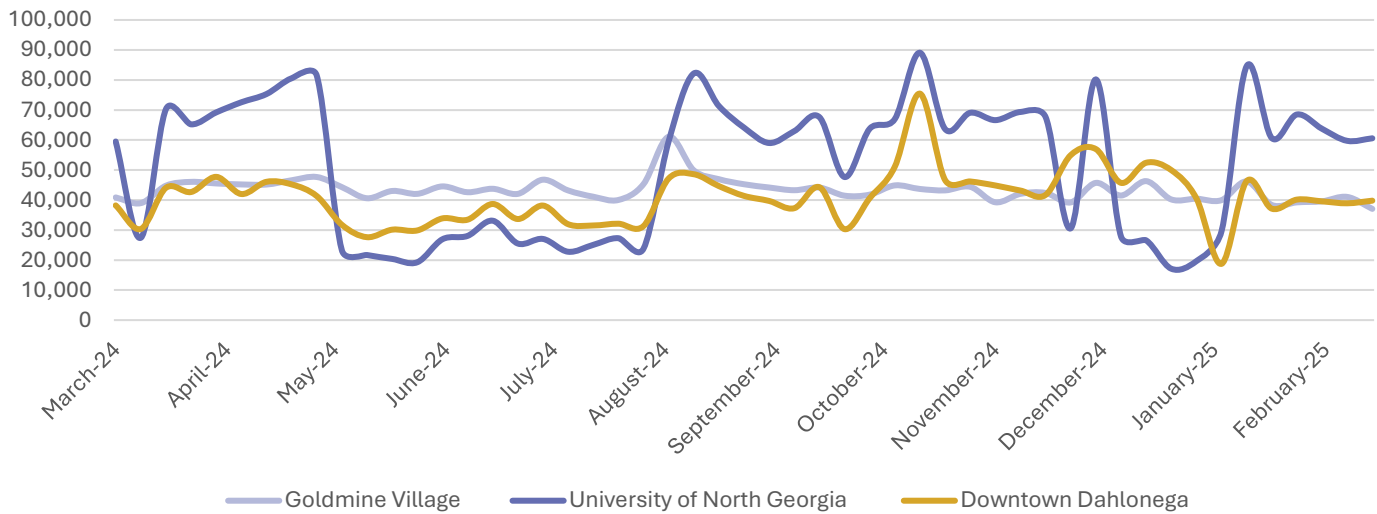
## Transportation Infrastructure

Dahlonega is primarily serviced by SR 60, 129, and US 19. All roadways on Morrison Moore Parkway are narrow, two-lane roads that may struggle to accommodate increased traffic demands. Concerns have been raised regarding a lack of capacity, affecting their ability to support future growth.

Parking in downtown can be limited and contribute to congestion and other challenges, especially during peak tourism season and large events. Major destinations – UNG, Downtown Dahlonega, and Goldmine Village – each see over 2 million visits annually. This visitation, however, is seasonally uneven.

**2 million+  
visits  
annually**

### Weekly Visitation by Destination

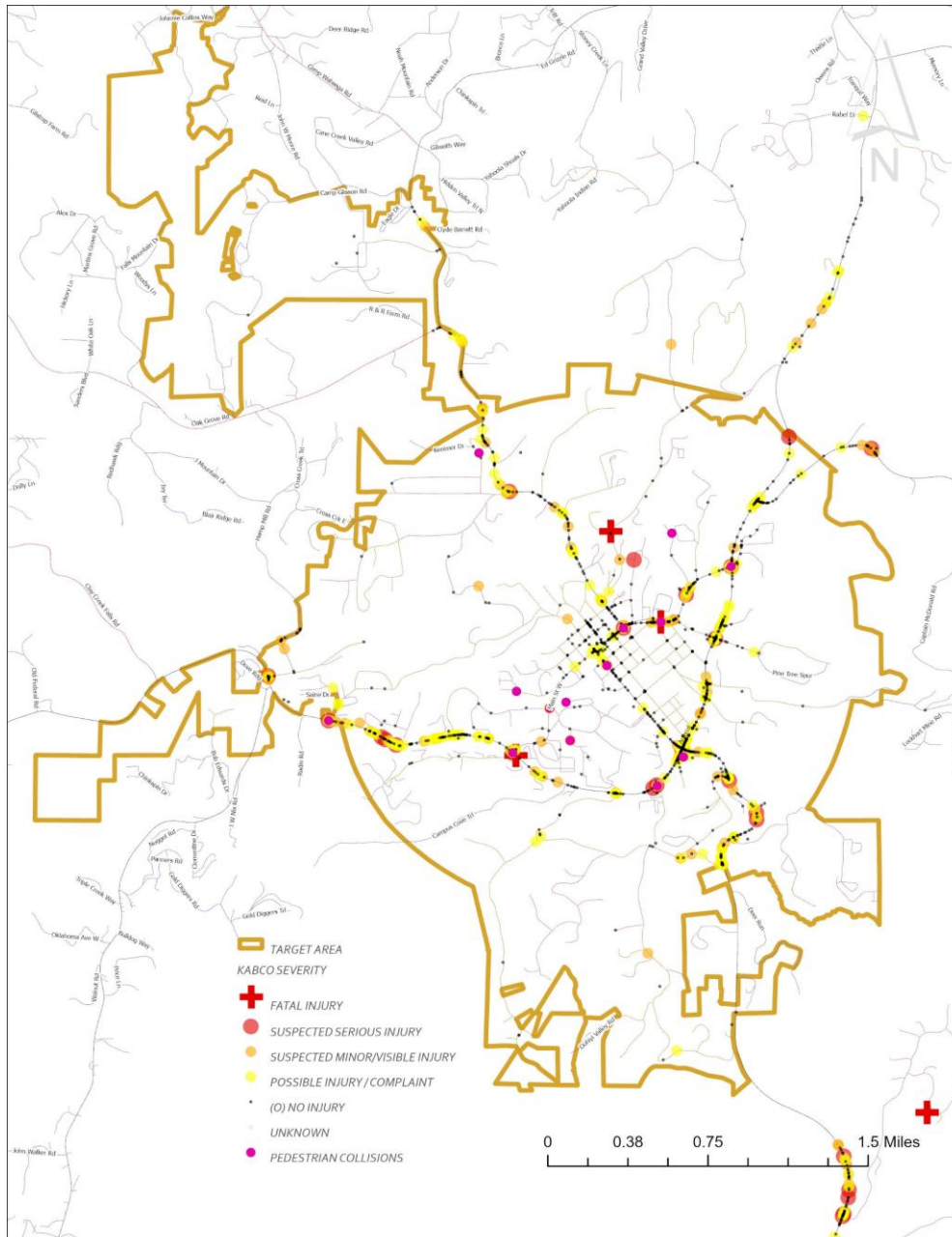


Source: Placer.ai

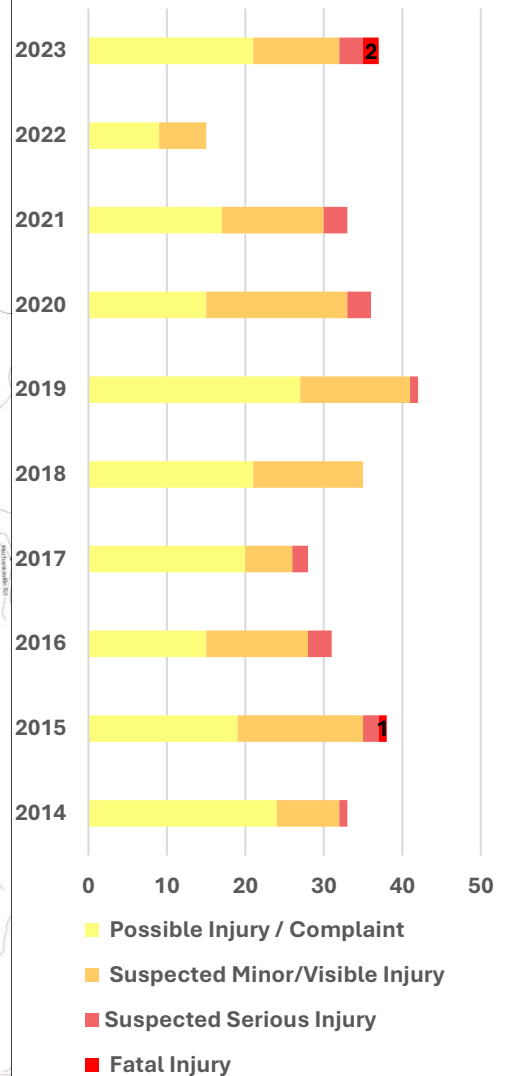


# Existing Conditions

## Transportation Safety



**Vehicular Collisions with Injuries, 2014-2023, Target Area**



Considering vehicular collisions within the target area, the majority of incidences occur on the highest trafficked roads - US 19, Morrison Moore Parkway, and within the core of Downtown Dahlonega. On average, there are 177 collisions annually with nearly 20% resulting in injury.

**Since 2014, there have been 19 collisions involving pedestrians, one of which resulted in a fatality. The City of Dahlonega is working closely with GDOT to address transportation safety. Safety and the perception of safety are important factors contributing to connectivity between major activity centers, whether on bike, foot, or by car.**



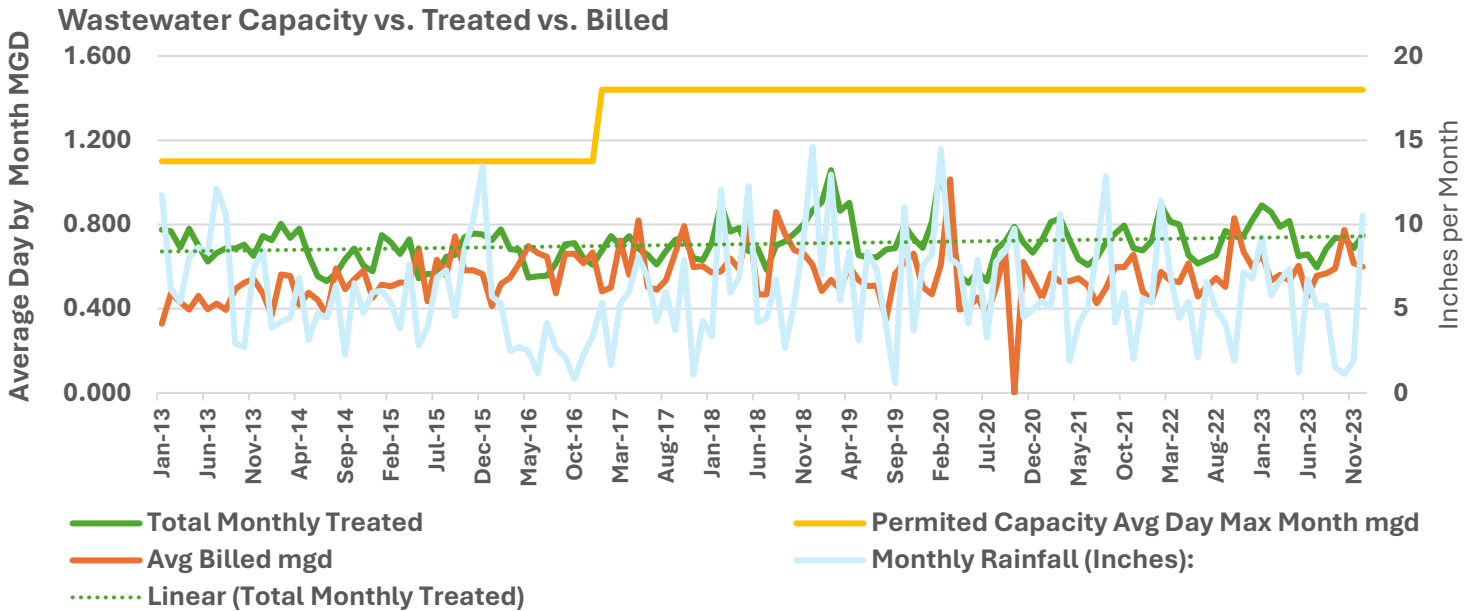
Source: Claritas



# Existing Conditions

## Utilities Infrastructure

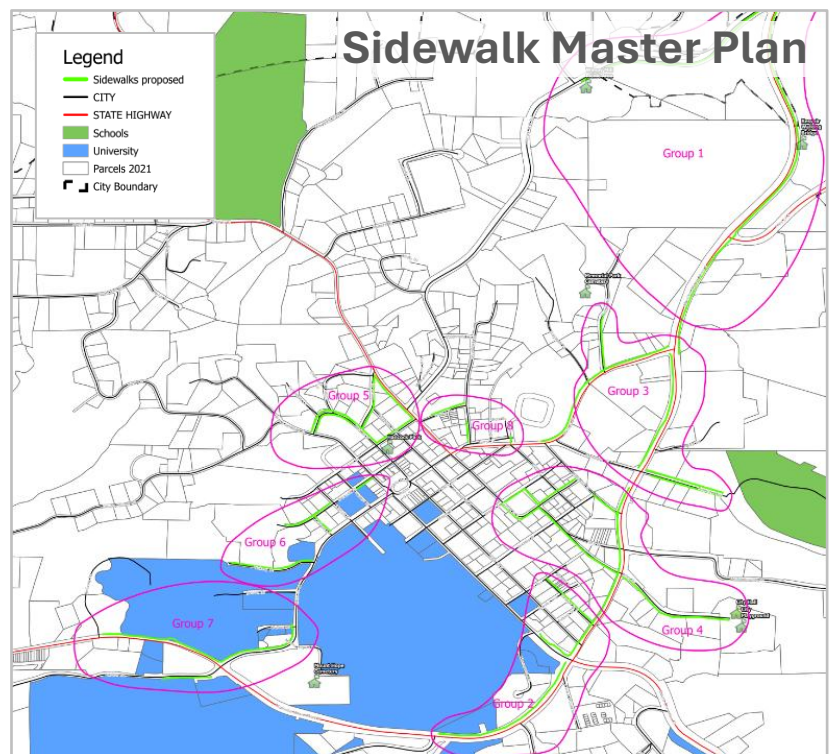
In addition to serving as a destination for natural sight seeing and tourism, the Yahoola Creek serves Dahlonega as a drinking water reservoir. The City of Dahlonega Water Works (WSID#: GA187000) community drinking water met all quality standards set by the State of Georgia and EPA during 2023; nonetheless, sewer taps are expensive, which is an obstacle for affordable housing development. From 2013 – 2016, there were occasional instances of monthly rainfall exceeding wastewater capacity. In January of 2017, total permitted wastewater capacity increased from 1.1 MGD to 1.4 MGD after expansion. Water capacity has held consistent to 1.4 MGD from 2017 – 2023.



## Sidewalks

**Dahlonega currently has 54,618 feet of existing sidewalks;** walkability and building structures that are close to their street front is necessary to create the ease of activity, and mobility Dahlonega aims for.

**Dahlonega’s Sidewalk Master Plan outlines 8 Groups of proposed sidewalks;** while implementing new sidewalks, Dahlonega could create connections between residential areas and retail areas, as well as pocket parks and trails, to advance connectivity and alleviate congested roads.



Source: City of Dahlonega

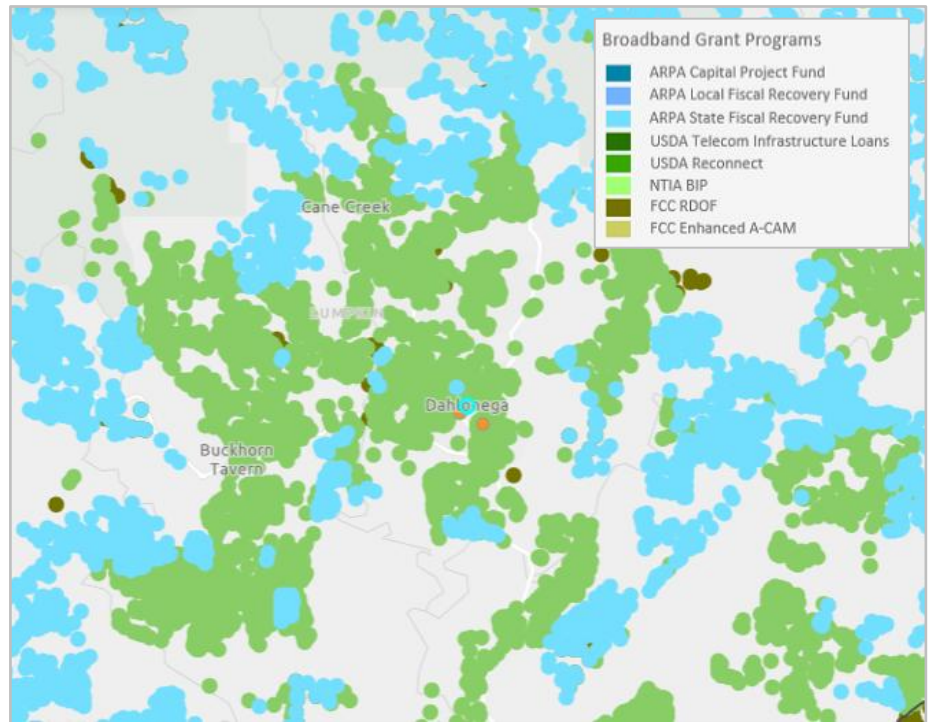


# Existing Conditions

## | Utilities Infrastructure

### Broadband Grant Opportunities

Along with much of Dahlonega having access to broadband connection, there are broadband grant programs that the City of Dahlonega could leverage to increase access if needed.



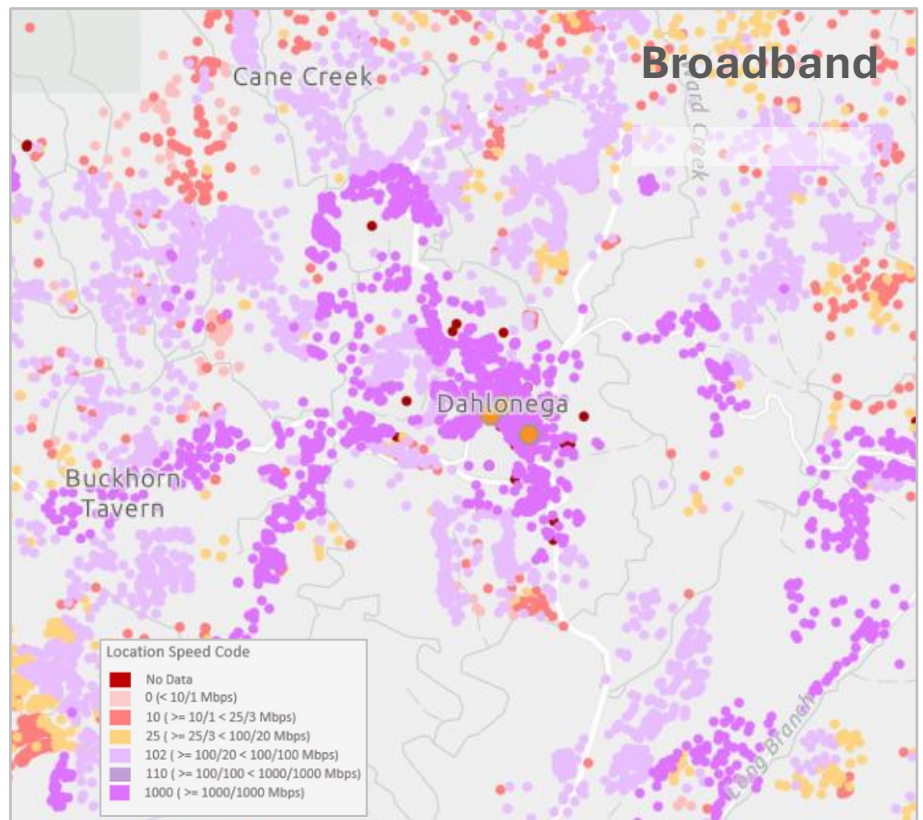
### Broadband Usage

Much of Dahlonega currently has broadband access or is 'Broadband Ready'.

#### Location Speed Code:

Dark Pink (■) shows speeds that are performing at 1,000 megabits per second or greater. Primary internet service providers include North Georgia Network, Windstream, Comcast, and other options for residents.

Generally, the core area of Dahlonega is well served in terms of speed and coverage.



Source: Georgia Technology Authority









# Existing Conditions

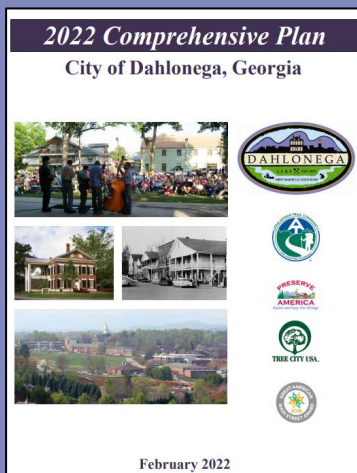
## | Land Use & Zoning

The 2022 Comprehensive Plan for Dahlonega identifies several character areas within the Revitalization Area that align with the city's vision of enforcing historically compatible designs.

### Key consistencies across these recommended character areas include:

- **Preservation of Historic Character:** Emphasizing the maintenance and enhancement of Dahlonega's unique historical and cultural identity.
- **Promotion of Compatible Architectural Styles:** Ensuring that new developments and renovations harmonize with existing historic structures in terms of scale, materials, and design elements.
- **Encouragement of Mixed-Use Development:** Supporting a blend of residential, commercial, and institutional uses to create vibrant, walkable communities that reflect the city's traditional development patterns.
- **Enhancement of Pedestrian-Friendly Environments:** Improving sidewalks, crosswalks, and public spaces to foster walkability and strengthen the connection between different areas within the city.
- **Implementation of Streetscape Improvements:** Incorporating elements such as street trees, lighting, and signage that are consistent with the historic character, enhancing the aesthetic appeal and functionality of public spaces.

### Land Use Designations



#### Public Square

- Natural/ historic preservation of eligible sites – with physical upgrades to market expectations, and new infill on suitable sites.

#### Park/ Recreation/ Conservation

- Parks, recreation areas, trails or other accessible lands with minimal impervious surfaces.

#### Residential

- Preservation of existing structures where possible, or context sensitive infill development. 1-2 story structures oriented close to the street front.

#### Village Commercial

- Neighborhood-scale commercial, office or institutional use, minimal on-site parking and pedestrian accessibility where possible.

#### Mixed Use Residential

- Primarily residential but neighborhood commercial uses allowed, 1-2-story structures oriented close to the street front, with on-site parking.

#### University of North Georgia

- Context sensitive infill development, mixed use structures or variety of campus, residential, commercial and institutional uses.

#### Gateway Corridors

- Regional to sub-regional scale industrial, retail, office or institutional uses. Careful evaluation of ridge top sites offering possible mountain views above tree line. Mixed use structures or variety of residential, commercial and institutional uses.

#### Office/ Institutional/ Conference Center

- Neighborhood to sub-regional scale office, commercial and institutional uses, with preferences for low/no-impact research centers and no-impact industrial operations.
- Attached units permitted.

#### Industrial

- Low impact industrial uses, distribution and data centers, technology incubators, office complexes.
- Appropriate buffering from adjoining properties.

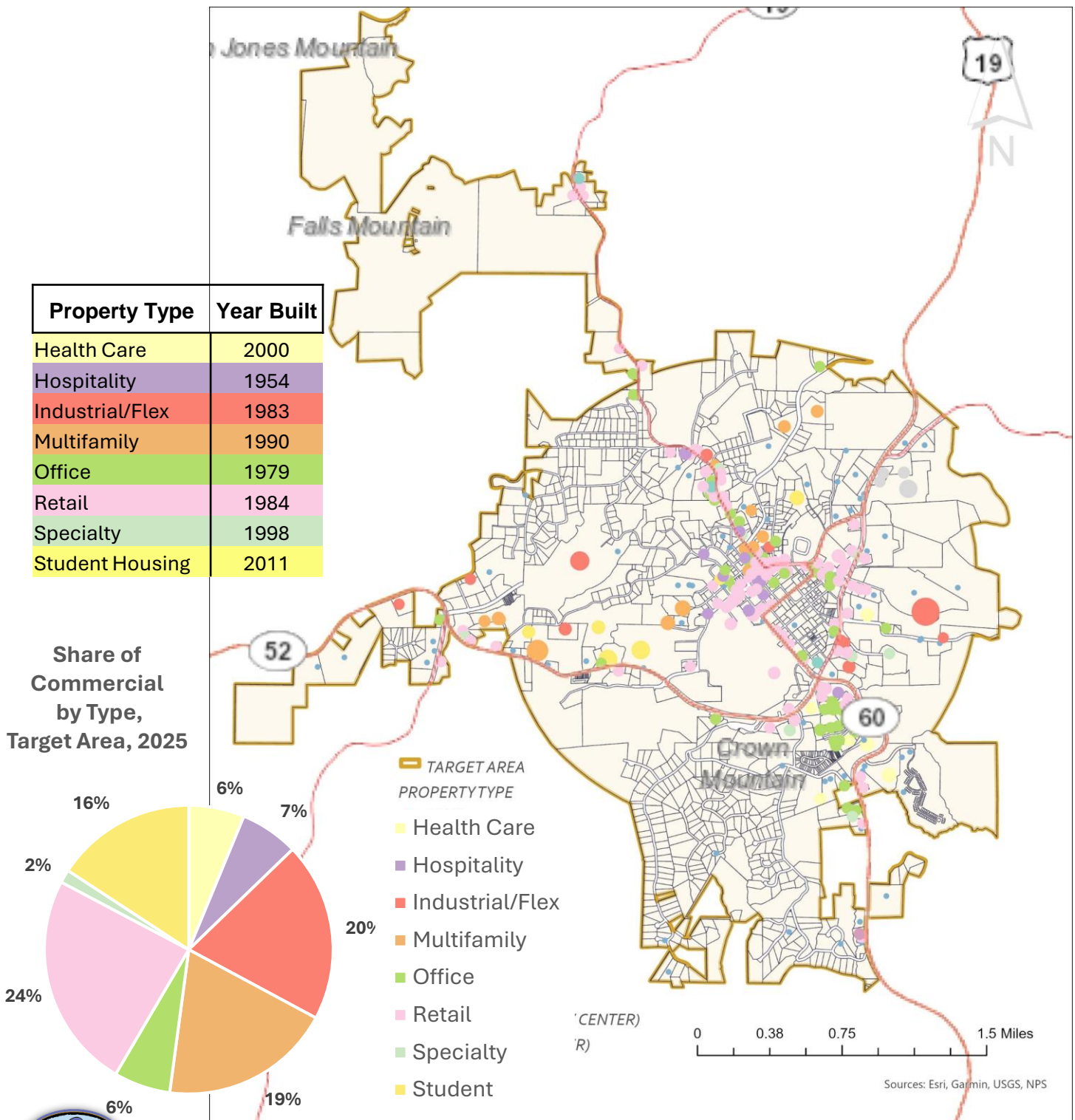
Source: City of Dahlonega



# Existing Conditions

## Commercial Inventory

Currently, the existing commercial real estate within the Target Area is diverse with no one use representing more than a fourth of the total share. Multifamily and Student Housing, however, do represent 36% of all existing inventory. Retail space, concentrated in Downtown and along corridors, represents 24% of all commercial space. Office, Hospitality, and Healthcare space each represent less than 10% of all inventory. Finally, there is a significant concentration of Industrial inventory (20%) and located on large, more fringe tracts on the east and west sides of the Target Area.



# Existing Conditions

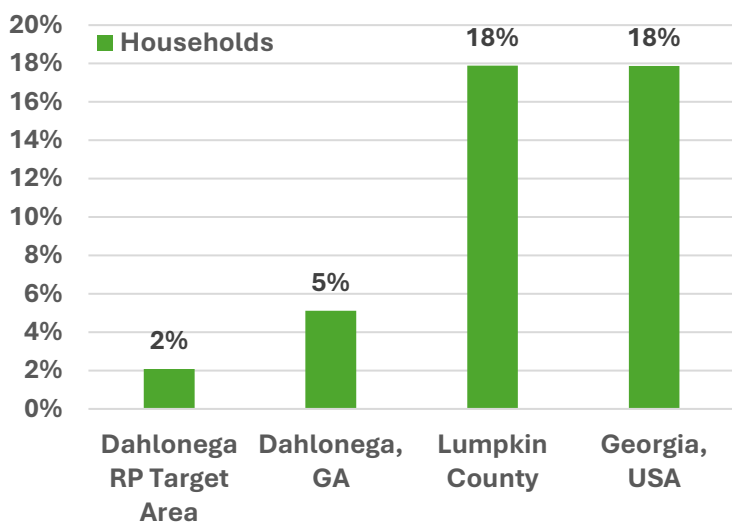
## Demographic Trends

### Population

The Target Area includes 6,598 total residents and 1,271 households. The median age in the Revitalization Area is 22 years old – this low median age is a showcase of the University of North Georgia’s presence and impact on the population.

Between 2020 – 2025, the Target Area’s population grew 2% – half as fast as the growth in the city overall and nearly 5 times slower than Lumpkin County.

Household Growth, 2010 - 2025



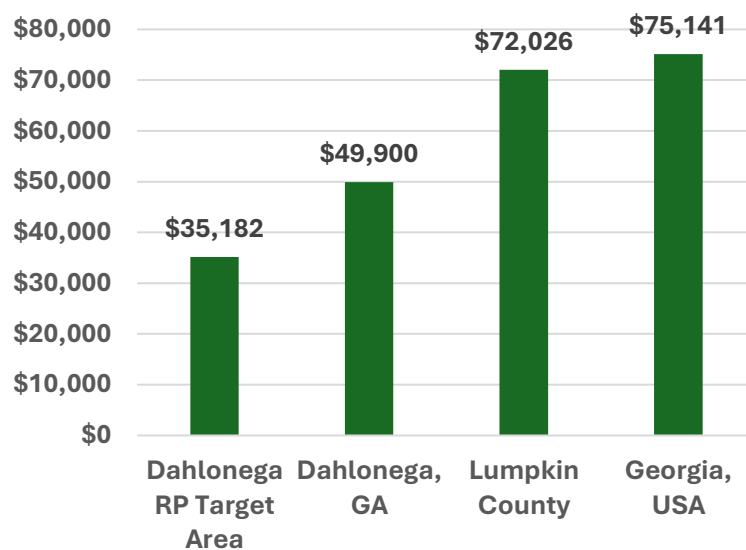
### Median Income

The Target Area has a median income of about \$35K; this is almost \$13K less than the whole City of Dahlonge’s median income (\$49K).

At \$72K, Lumpkin County’s overall median income is far beyond median incomes in the Target Revitalization Area or the City as a whole. There’s significant income disparity within Dahlonge as a whole (and Lumpkin).

While some of the income gap can be explained by the presence of UNG students, these disparities may result in material disadvantages for the residents especially inside the Target Area.

Median Household Income, 2025



Population	Dahlonge RP Target Area	Dahlonge, GA	Lumpkin County	Georgia State
2010 Census	4,166	5,337	29,964	9,686,545
2020 Census	6,481	7,537	33,488	10,714,049
<b>2025 Estimate</b>	<b>6,598</b>	<b>7,829</b>	<b>36,477</b>	<b>11,220,516</b>
2030 Projection	6,819	8,124	39,312	11,677,798
<b>Percent Change: 2020 to 2025</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>
Percent Change: 2025 to 2030	3.4%	3.8%	7.8%	4.1%

\*The U.S. Census Bureau counts students based on their "usual residence," which is where they live and sleep most of the time.



Source: Claritas



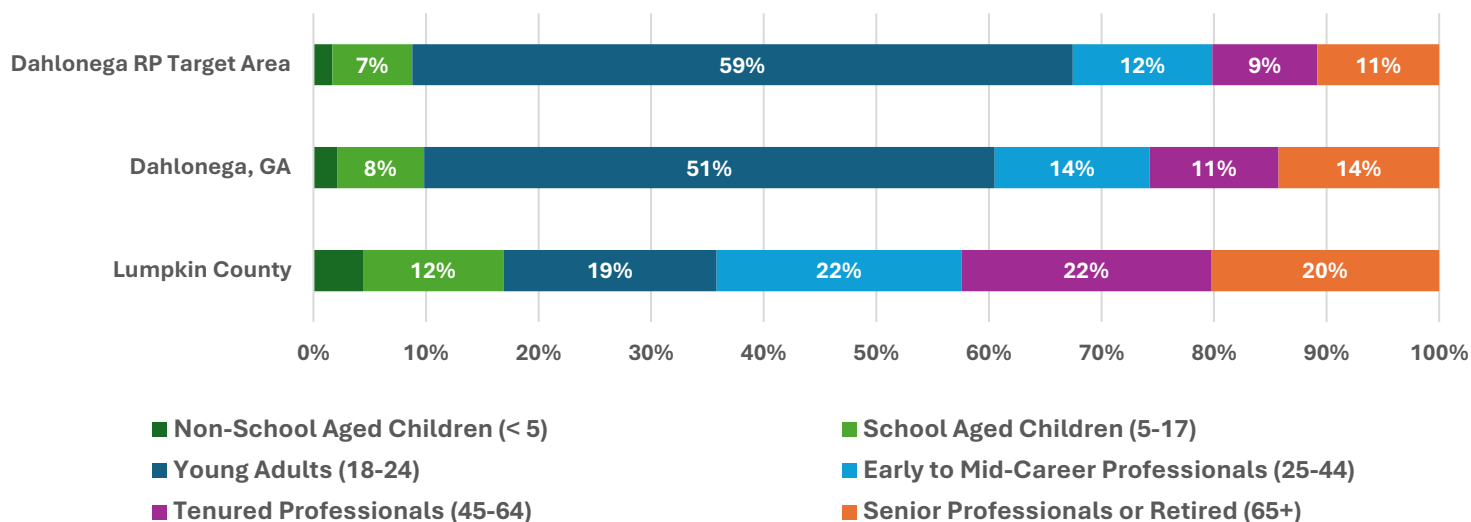
# Existing Conditions

## Demographic Trends

### Age

A strong majority (59%) of Target Area residents are between 18 – 24, Dahlonega overall isn't far off, at 51%. Dahlonega's population trends very young, due to the presence of the University of North Georgia. This much of the population being Young Adults impacts demand for different product/ service types within the area. Growing job opportunities for UNG graduates could shift this trend overtime, as more students stay and enter long-term careers within Dahlonega and the Target Area.

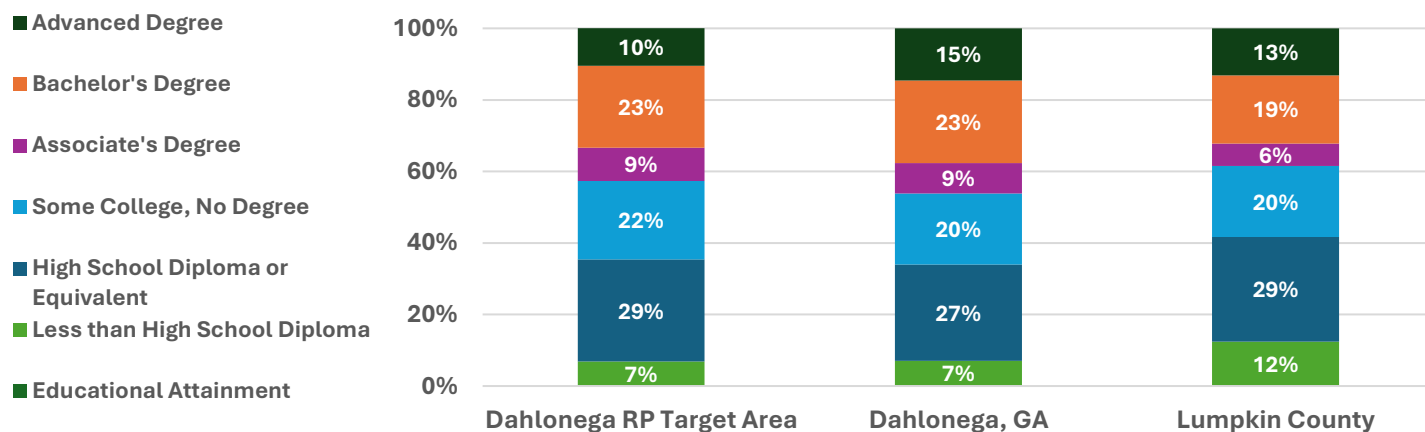
Population by Age Cohort, 2025



### Education

33% of the population in the Target Area has Bachelor's degree or higher – comparatively, the overall city has 38%. Both the Target Area and the overall city of Dahlonega have 32% of their population with a Bachelor's or Associate's Degree; but the Target Area has 3% more people with only a High School education, and Some College, but No Degree when compared to the city overall.

Population 25+ by Highest Level of Educational Attainment, 2025



Source: Claritas



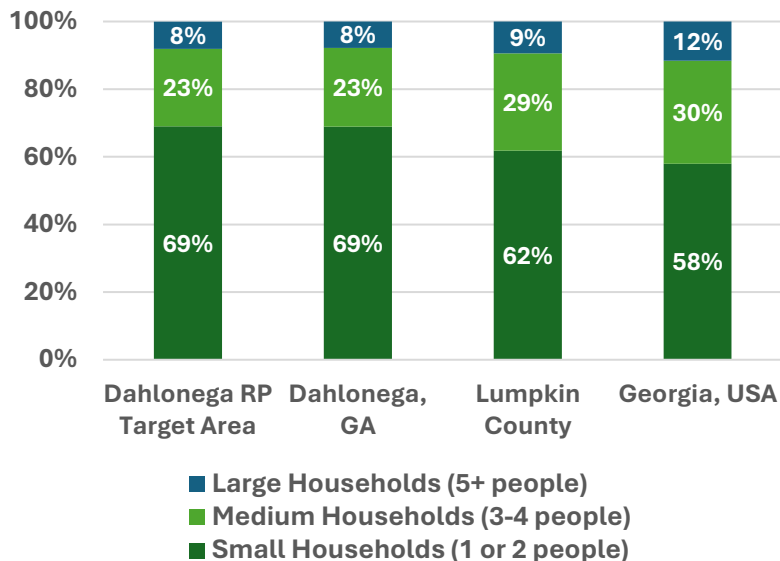
# Existing Conditions

## | Demographic Trends

### Household Size

The Revitalization Area, and Dahlonega overall have the same household composition make-up; the overwhelming majority (69%) of households are small (1 or 2 people), 23% are medium (3-4), and large households with 5+ people make up just 8%. The prevalence of small households shows signs for demand potential for new products/ services including experiential retail, infill public places where for both family’s and singles to enjoy; and on the housing front – a range of housing options to sustain job growth.

Share of Households by Size, 2025

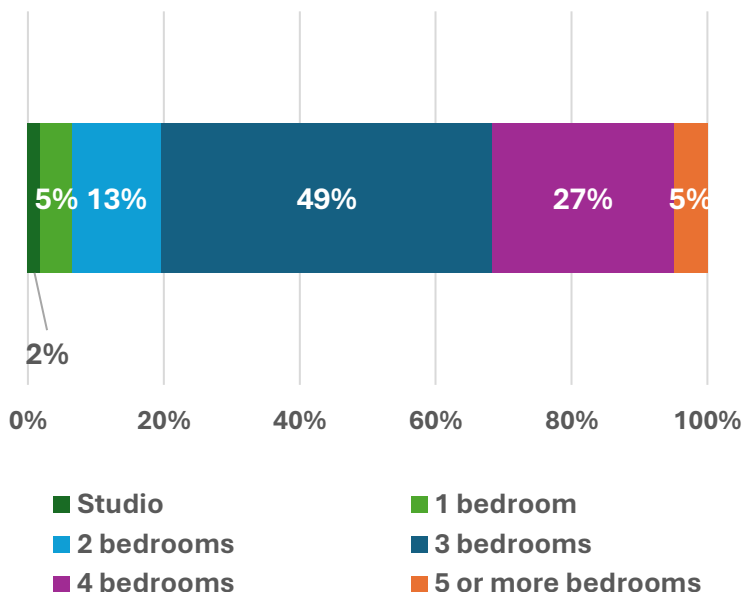


### Housing by Bedroom

Dahlonega’s housing supply is dominated by 3-bedroom units – making up 49%. Another 27% of housing units have 4 bedrooms. 1- and 2-bedroom units (including studio) collectively make up just 20%.

There’s a mismatch of product when looking at the needs of the majority Young Adult and Small Household population of Dahlonega.

Share of Housing Units by Bedroom, 2025 est.



Source: Claritas, ACS Census

# Existing Conditions

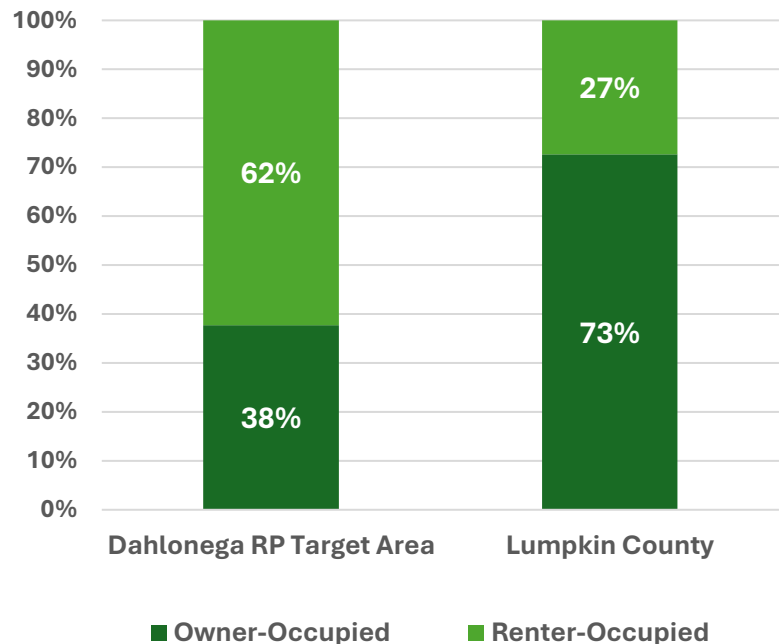
## | Housing

### Tenure

The Target Area is comprised of **1,271** Households. At **38%**, **homeownership is 12% less prevalent in the Target Area** than in the City overall. This can indicate product or lifestyle preferences that lend themselves to rentership.

The City of Dahlonega’s adopted plans have made clear that there’s interest in adding to the housing supply, with one of the desired product types being townhomes. Including more of this product type in the range of housing units built going forward has the potential to boost homeownership in the Revitalization Area, and Dahlonega as a whole.

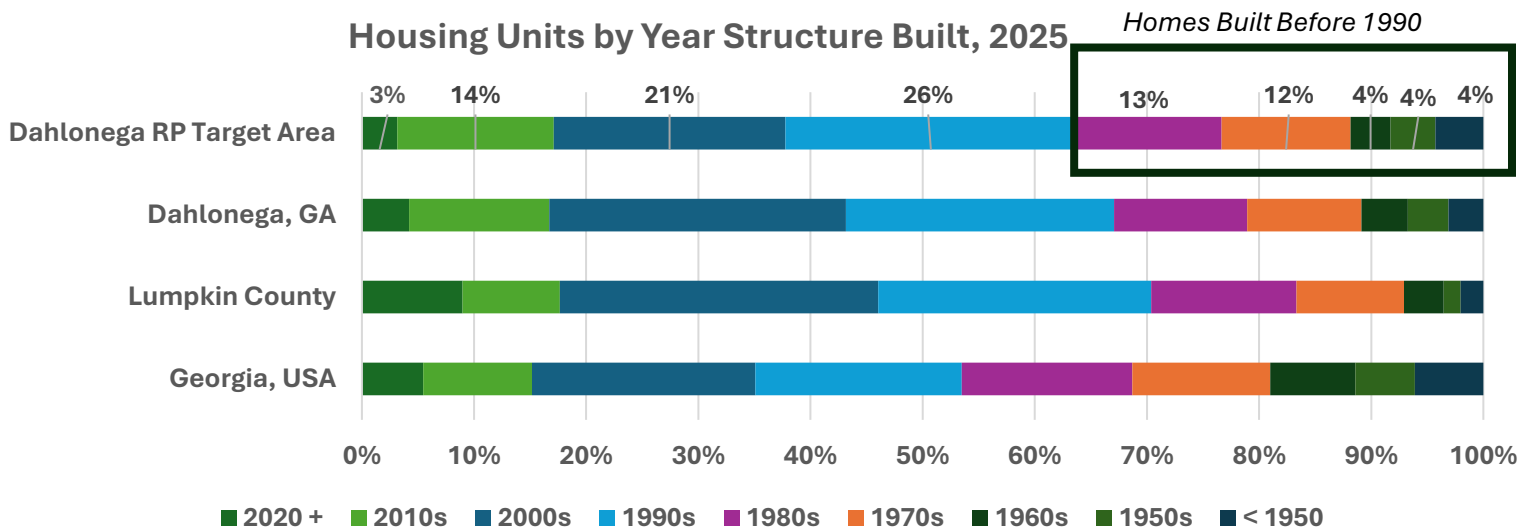
Housing Units by Tenure, 2025



### Housing Inventory Age

36.4% of Target Area homes were built before 1990, and 37.8% of Target Area homes were built after 2000. On average, homes in the Target Revitalization Area are slightly older than in Dahlonega overall and Lumpkin County. Lumpkin County particularly built more homes in the 2000s, and 2020s; and while the Revitalization Target Area did get a competitive share of the new housing development during the 2010’s, the homes that were built in Lumpkin County during the 2000s and 2020s were concentrated outside of the Target Area.

Housing Units by Year Structure Built, 2025



Source: Claritas





# Existing Conditions

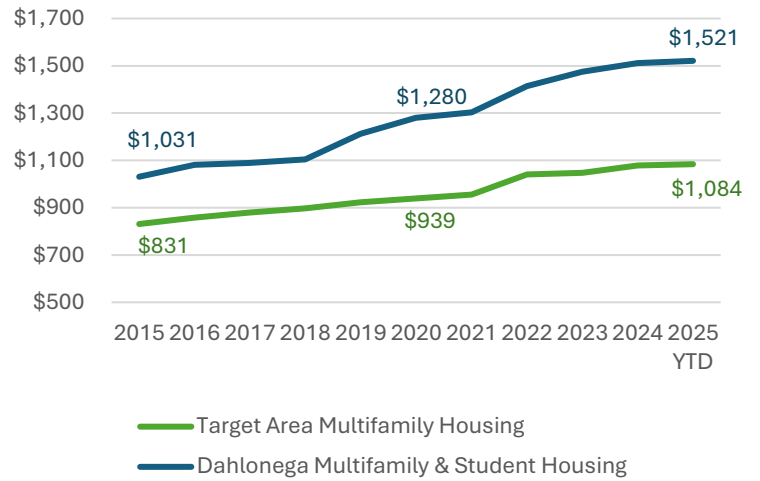
## | Housing

### Rental Rates

Since 2015, traditional multifamily rents have increased 30% while traditional and student multifamily housing has increased nearly 50%. New student housing delivered in 2023 has contributed to rent growth, however, the prevailing lack of housing to satisfy demand is the most significant pressure fueling rent growth.

The majority of rental housing within the Target Area is market rate housing built, on average, 35 years ago. On- and Off-campus, student housing represents close to 40% of all rental inventory within the Target Area.

### Multifamily Rent Target and Dahlongega 2015-2025 YTD

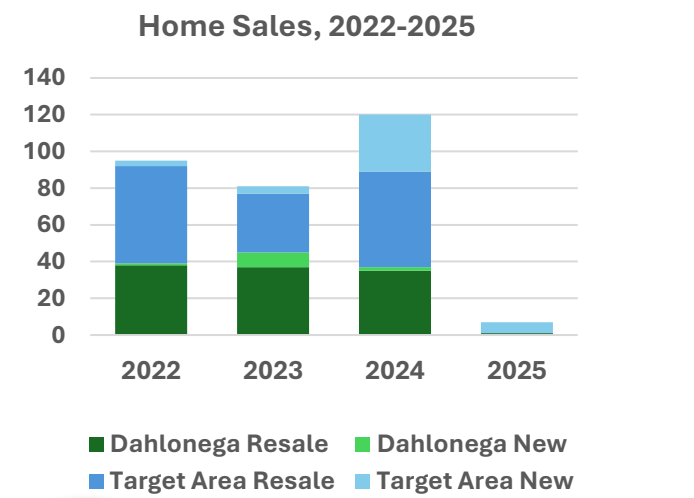


### Home Price

#### Average Home Price by Type, 2022-2025

	Target Area	Dahlongega (excluding Target Area)
Single Family	\$433,440	\$590,340
Townhouse	\$337,784	\$734,300
Condominium	\$270,000	\$372,583
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$400,100</b>	<b>\$585,447</b>

On average, **Target Area homes are a 38% discount to the city overall.** Home size is a significant driver of this discount as the average home sold in the past four years is close to 60% smaller by square footage. New, attached villa homes in Achasta account for the increase in townhome pricing above and beyond SFD homes. New homes which achieve a smaller footprint can achieve attainability as well as adding greater housing choice as most target area households are less than two people.



In the past four years, the Target Area has had 44 new home sales, this represents over 75% of new sales within the city overall. The sales spike in 2024 is fueled by the delivery of new townhomes in Mountain Park.



Source: CoStar, Zillow, Photos from Zillow



# Existing Conditions

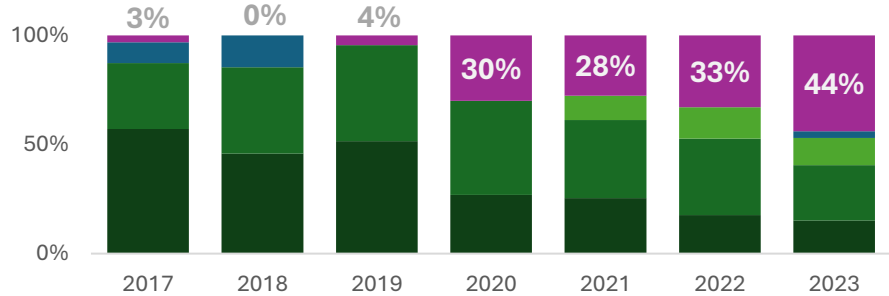
## | Housing

### Housing Vacancy

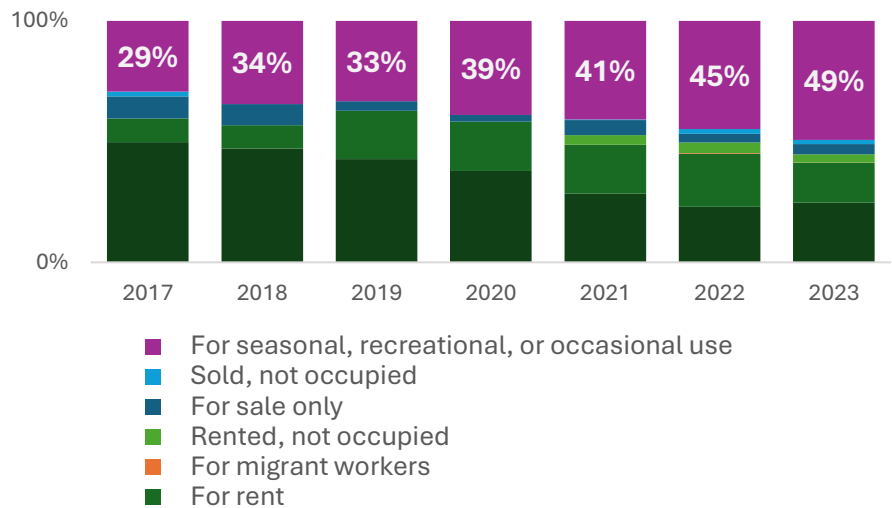
The American Community Survey, administered by the US Census, allows insight into housing vacancy and non-primary residences. Second homes can be estimated by understanding the growth in housing units “for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.”

Both the County and City have seen notable increases in the percent share of second homes out of total vacant units. Prior to 2020, the Census estimates very few second homes comprised the vacant home inventory, though Lumpkin county saw a share of 30%. Following the pandemic, the **City of Dahlonega saw a significant increase in second homes, growing from an estimated 14 homes in 2017 to 131 in 2023.** This trend is also witnessed within Lumpkin County, which has an estimated 961 homes used for occasional use.

**Vacant Housing Units, Dahlonega, 2017-2023 Est.**



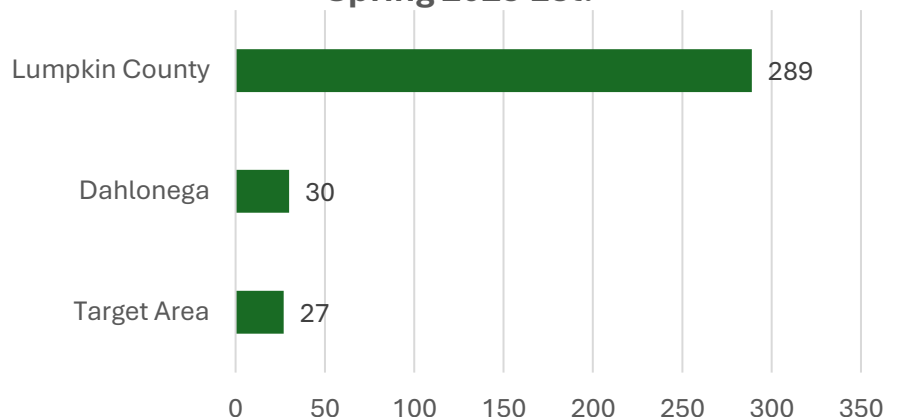
**Vacant Housing Units, Lumpkin County, 2017-2023 Est.**



### Short Term Rental

While not every second home is operated as a short-term rental (STR), there has been a considerable rise in housing units within Lumpkin and the City of Dahlonega used as a secondary residence. According to AirDNA as of March 2025, there are 27 short-term rental listings within the Target Area, 30 listings within the entire City of Dahlonega, and 289 within Lumpkin County. It is important to note that these estimates capture a moment in time and listings are likely to fluctuate.

**Active STRs, Spring 2025 Est.**



Source: ACS Census, AirDNA



# Existing Conditions

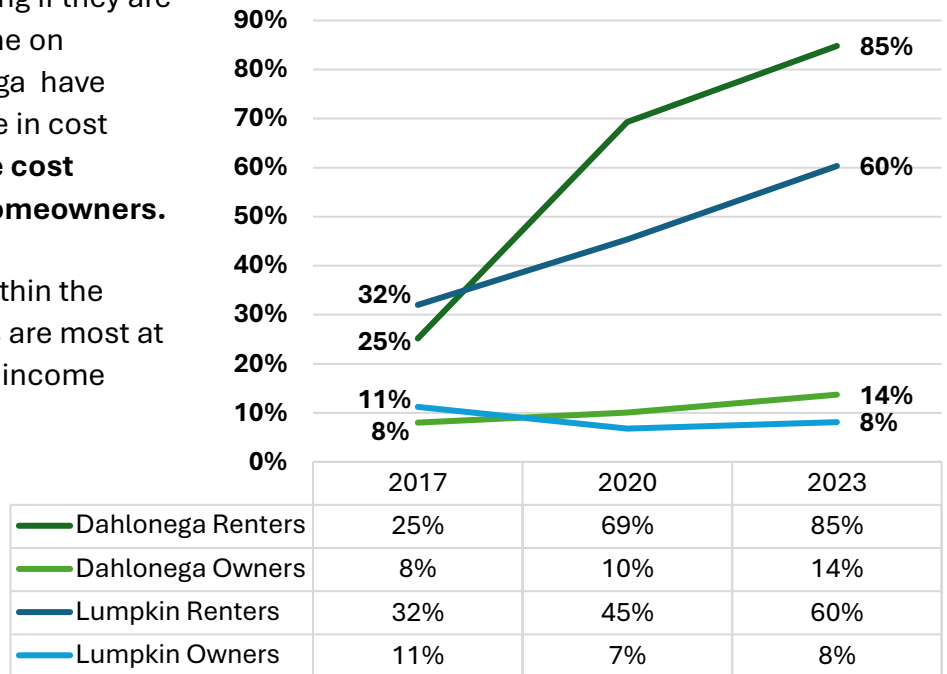
## | Housing

### Cost Burden

A household is cost burdened by housing if they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Renters within Dahlonega have experienced that most intense increase in cost burden. **85% of Dahlonega renters are cost burdened compared to just 14% of homeowners.**

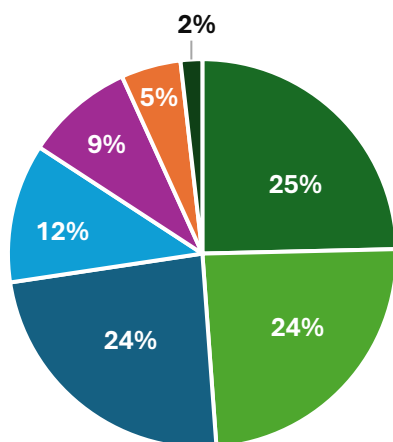
Considering the 62% of households within the Target Area are renters, these residents are most at risk of housing cost growth exceeding income growth.

Cost Burden by Tenure, 2017-2023



### Household Budgets

Average Individual Spending by Category, Target Area, 2025 est.



- Housing
- Food & Personal Care
- Entertainment
- Education
- Transportation
- Healthcare & Insurance
- Savings

Nearly half of the spending from Target Area residents is consumed by Housing (25%) and Transportation (24%). Food and Personal Care also consumes 24% of Target Area residents' spending. Only 9% of spending from these residents' goes to Entertainment.

**There's potential to influence a shift in spending away from Transportation by more walkable infrastructure, in exchange for more resident spending on Entertainment and other retail opportunities that more directly impact local employment.**



Source: Placer.ai, Census ACS



# Existing Conditions

## Economic

### Migration

The three primary origins of migration coming into Dahlonega are from areas much closer to Atlanta: Johns Creek, Georgia; Kennesaw, Georgia, and Suwanee, Georgia. The next 2 primary origins are coming from Kent, Ohio and Appling, Georgia.

Growth of the Northern Atlanta Metro has impacted the North Georgia region as growth continues to move up major corridors like GA-400 and I-75. Many are seeking to find relief from more populated suburbs in North Fulton, Gwinnett, and Cobb counties.

Origin Region	Net Migration In (last 12 months)
Johns Creek, Georgia	27.43
Kennesaw, Georgia	24.76
Suwanee, Georgia	13.28
Kent, Ohio	13.28
Appling, Georgia	13.28
Destination Region	Net Migration Out (last 12 months)
Athens-Clarke County, Georgia	-87.88
Alpharetta, Georgia	-35.36
Sugar Hill, Georgia	-25.87
Peachtree Corners, Georgia	-25.13
Tuscaloosa, Alabama	-24.89

### Most new residents come from Johns Creek, Kennesaw, and Suwanee, GA

### Seasonality



Dahlonega’s economy has strong seasonal influences and swings but is **not entirely reliant on seasonal income**. Though tourism, short-term residents, and ‘weekenders’ are a significant part of Dahlonega’s economy, with most economic activity during February – April and September – November, year-round residents and students at the University of North Georgia provide stability to the local economy through their grocery, restaurant, housing, and retail purchases.

Source: Placer.Ai

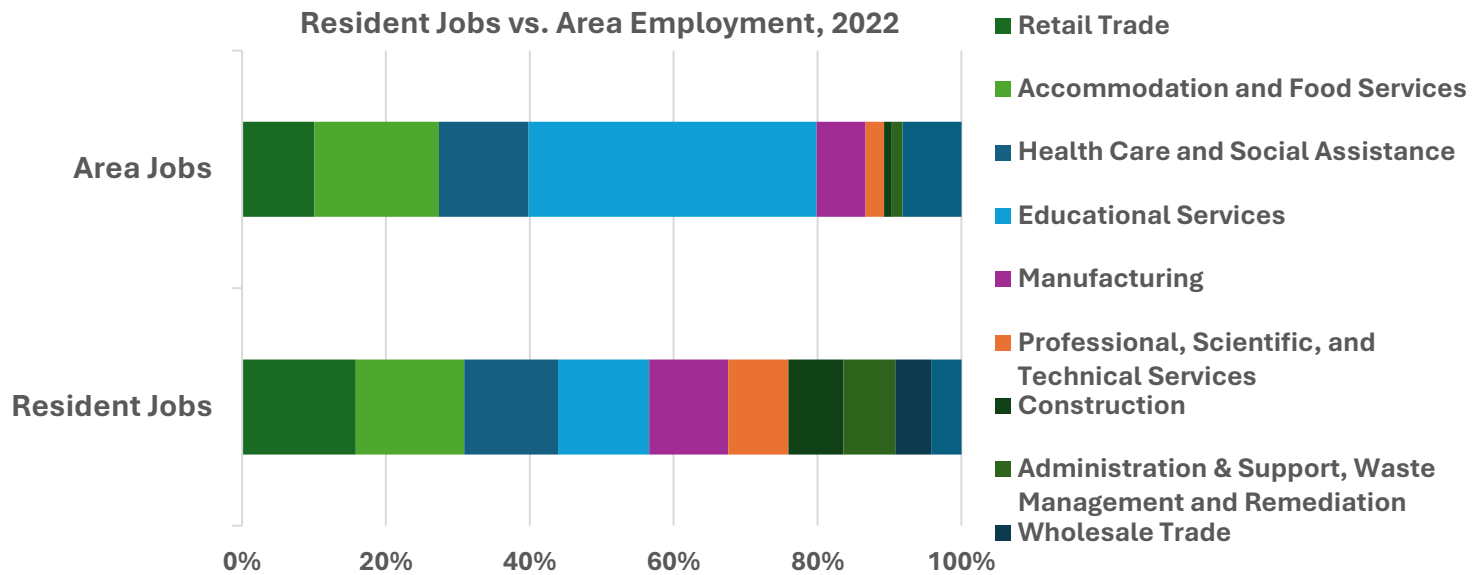


# Existing Conditions

## | Employment

### Jobs

Dahlonega residents have expressed demand for a wider range of job opportunities. Institutional development that supports year-round employment can further expand Dahlonega’s local economic activity beyond tourism; damping some of the undesirable effects of seasonality and helping Dahlonega become the “year-round activity center” that the community aims to be.



Jobs From Top 10 NAICS Industry Sectors	Resident Jobs		Area Jobs	
	Jobs	Percent %	Jobs	Percent %
Retail Trade	244	13%	435	10%
Accommodation and Food Services	232	13%	748	17%
Health Care and Social Assistance	201	11%	538	12%
Educational Services	196	11%	1731	38%
Manufacturing	169	9%	293	6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	129	7%	111	2%
Construction	118	6%	46	1%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	111	6%	65	1%
Wholesale Trade	77	4%	2	0%
Public Administration	65	4%	352	8%

Source: KB Advisory with data from Census On The Map



# Existing Conditions

## | Employment Mobility

### Jobs

The resident population of **Dahlonega’s Revitalization Target Area makes up a workforce of 1,821 total employees.** 1,542 (85%) of Dahlonega’s resident workforce work in the top 10 industry sectors: Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, Educational Services, Manufacturing, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, Construction, Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation, Wholesale Trade, and Public Administration. These industries provide stable employment opportunities and form the backbone of Dahlonega’s economy.

The top two industry sectors among residents are retail trade and accommodation and food services. This is reflective of their significant role in Dahlonega’s economy and tourism focus.

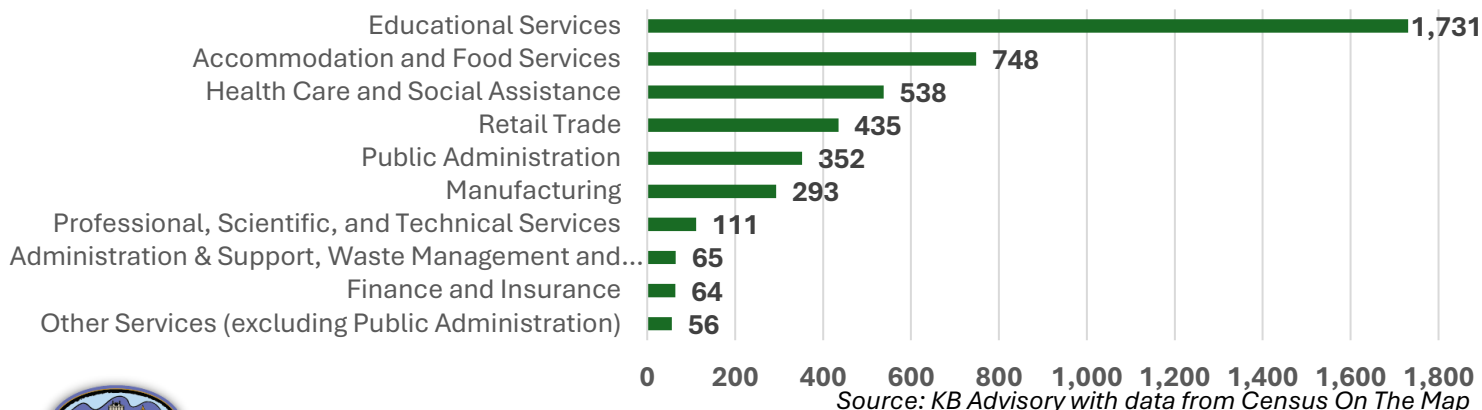
**Top 10 Industries of Employed Target Area Residents, 2022**



**4,221** employees working inside the Target Area don’t live inside the Target perimeter. Of the employees who live outside the target area but work inside the target area; an overwhelming **majority (1,731) work in Educational Services.** The next leading employment sector in the area is **Accommodation and Food Services with 748 employees.** **Healthcare and Social Assistance makes up 538 employees.**

The University of North Georgia is one of Dahlonega’s largest employers, drawing faculty and staff from outside of the target area.

**Top 5 Industries by Employment within Target Area, 2022**



Source: KB Advisory with data from Census On The Map



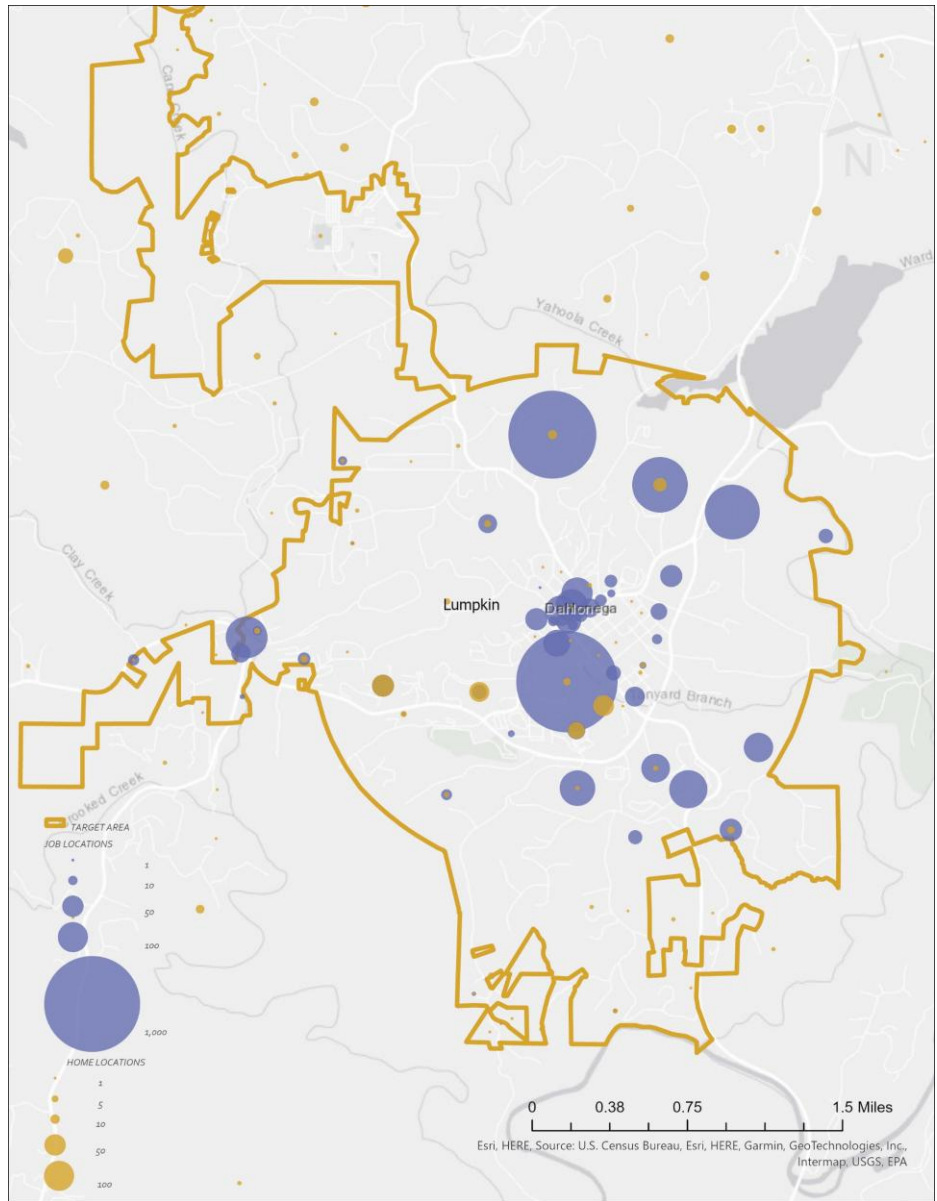
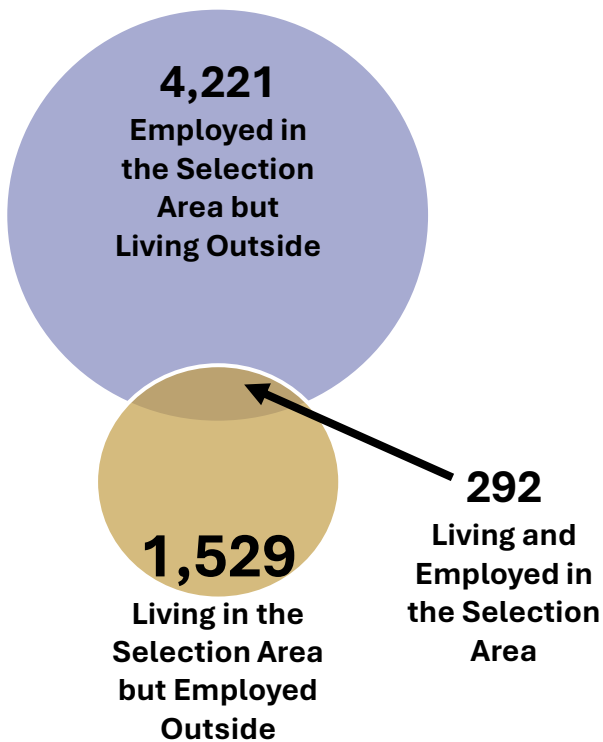


# Existing Conditions

## | Employment Mobility

### Jobs

Only 292 residents both live and work in the Target Area. The Target Area brings in 4,000+ workers to fulfill the needs of the area’s jobs profile, while 1,500+ Target Area residents are working elsewhere in Dahlonega – or even further away.



### Commuting Distance, 2022

Of the Dahlonega Target Area residents who commute out of the area for work, over half travel more than 25 miles to their work locations. Comparatively, those working within Dahlonega are much more local. Just over 40% live within 10 miles from their employment within the Target Area.

	Commuting <b>out of</b> Dahlonega	Commuting <b>into</b> Dahlonega
Less than 10 miles	25%	44%
10 to 24 miles	20%	24%
25 to 50 miles	28%	17%
<b>More than 50 miles</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Source: KB Advisory with data from Census On The Map



# Existing Conditions

## | Employment

### Jobs

Dahlonega residents have expressed demand for a wider range of job opportunities. Institutional development that supports year-round employment can further expand Dahlonega’s local economic activity beyond tourism; damping some of the undesirable effects of seasonality and helping Dahlonega become the “year-round activity center” that the community aims to be.

**Percent of Target Area’s Workforce by Sector, 2022**



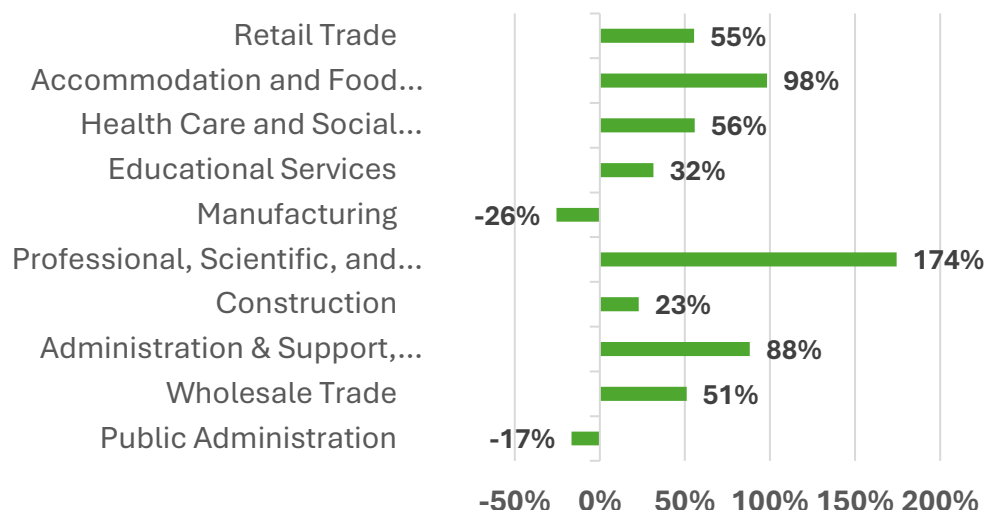
## 26% of jobs in Dahlonega are in Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services

Industries which have seen the greatest absolute growth over the past two decades include:

- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Administration & Support
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Retail & Wholesale Trade
- Health Care and Social Assistance

Only the Public Administration and Manufacturing industries have seen a decrease in employment.

**20-year Percent Change in Employees, 2002 - 2022**



Source: KB Advisory with data from Census On The Map

# Community Input

## | Key Themes

***Community input gathered for this Revitalization Plan reflects the priorities, concerns, and aspirations of Dahlonega residents, business owners, and civic leaders, as gathered at a recent public input session conducted by KB Advisory Group at City Hall.***

### Major Themes from Community Feedback

Through the public engagement process, five critical themes emerged as central to Dahlonega's future:

#### 1. Housing & Economic Sustainability

- Housing affordability is a major concern. Many residents emphasized that limited housing options and high costs are pricing out local workers, young professionals, and families.
- While the concern is widespread, there is a sharp divide in the community over multifamily housing. Some residents believe that diversifying housing stock with townhomes, apartments, and small-scale multifamily housing is necessary for affordability and workforce retention. Others strongly oppose such development, particularly apartments, citing concerns about density, infrastructure capacity, and small-town character.
- Short-term rentals are seen to be exacerbating housing challenges. Many properties are being converted into Airbnb's and vacation rentals, reducing long-term housing supply and pushing prices higher.
- Economic diversification is needed. Dahlonega's economy is heavily reliant on tourism, and there is concern that the city needs to attract more year-round businesses and industries that provide stable, high-paying jobs.
- Workforce retention is suffering. Employers report difficulty hiring and retaining staff because workers can't afford to live in Dahlonega. The service, retail, and hospitality sectors are particularly impacted, with businesses struggling to operate at full capacity.



#### 2. Transportation, Traffic, & Mobility

- Traffic congestion is seen by many community members as worsening, especially downtown. Residents are concerned that traffic is negatively affecting the visitor experience and everyday quality of life. The community voiced concerns that there are too few access points, causing traffic bottlenecks and increasing travel times. Alternative routes into downtown are needed.
- At the same time, walkability and bike infrastructure are inadequate. While the downtown core is compact, there are gaps in sidewalk and bike path connectivity, making it difficult and unsafe to walk or cycle beyond a small area.
- Relatedly, parking remains a persistent, perceived challenge. While there are parking facilities, many visitors and locals find downtown parking inconvenient or insufficient, particularly during peak tourist seasons.





# Community Input

## | Key Themes

### Major Themes from Community Feedback

#### 3. Infrastructure & Public Services

- Residents and business owners expressed frustration with inconsistent broadband access, which hinders economic opportunities, especially for remote workers and digital businesses.
- Aging water and sewer infrastructure needs investment. While Dahlonega has expanded capacity in some areas, older infrastructure is limiting future growth and may need upgrades. Some areas experience flooding and drainage issues, requiring better stormwater planning and infrastructure investments.
- Residents raised concerns about garbage trucks damaging local roads, contributing to maintenance and resurfacing challenges.

#### 4. Land Use & Growth Management

- Balancing growth with small-town character was a common theme of feedback from residents. Many residents support thoughtful, well-planned growth but worry about overdevelopment negatively impacting Dahlonega's charm.
- UNG's expansion is a point of tension. While the University of North Georgia (UNG) is a major economic and cultural asset, some residents feel that UNG is consuming too much real estate in the city, making housing more expensive and limiting space for non-university development.
- Outdoor recreation and green space are sometimes deemed underutilized. The city is surrounded by natural beauty and recreation areas, yet some feel that these assets are not fully integrated into community development efforts.



#### 5. Placemaking & Community Spaces

- While downtown is vibrant, some residents believe that public gathering spaces are limited. The city can enhance and create more plazas, parks, and community-oriented spaces where people can gather and socialize. Some residents believe that better lighting, pedestrian crossings, and outdoor seating would enhance the vibrancy and walkability of the downtown core.
- Residents also expressed interest in more arts, live music, and theater opportunities, suggesting that Dahlonega could better leverage its historic and cultural identity.



# SWOT Analysis

## | Strengths

*This section complements the Community Input Section for a Comprehensive Strategy.*

*This SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) synthesizes public input, stakeholder feedback, and contextual insights to provide a strategic overview of Dahlonega's revitalization potential.*

*It identifies key areas where the city can leverage its assets, address its weaknesses, and navigate challenges while ensuring sustainable growth and preserving its unique character.*

### Strengths (Internal Advantages)

#### 1. Historic Character & Vibrant Downtown

✓ Well-preserved historic downtown is a key economic and cultural asset, attracting visitors and reinforcing local identity.

✓ Strong sense of place and small-town charm makes Dahlonega highly desirable for residents, businesses, and tourists.

✓ Tourism economy is well-established, with a mix of boutique shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

#### 2. University of North Georgia (UNG) as an Anchor Institution

✓ UNG provides a steady economic base, bringing jobs, cultural vibrancy, and a pipeline of young talent to the city.

✓ University programs support entrepreneurship and workforce development, creating opportunities for local business growth.

✓ Potential partnerships between UNG and the city could strengthen infrastructure investment and workforce housing solutions.

### STRENGTH HIGHLIGHTS

- Historic downtown square
- University of North Georgia
- Lumpkin county seat
- Festivals and events=>Tourism tax revenue
- Recreational opportunities
- New medical facility nearby

### 3. Walkability & Compact Urban Form

✓ Downtown is naturally walkable, with a pedestrian-friendly core that enhances the visitor experience.

✓ Existing infrastructure can be enhanced with minimal intervention, rather than requiring a complete overhaul.

### 4. Natural Assets & Outdoor Recreation

✓ Proximity to national forests, rivers, and trails makes Dahlonega a prime destination for outdoor recreation and eco-tourism.

✓ Growing interest in sustainable tourism and agritourism presents new economic opportunities.

✓ Scenic beauty enhances quality of life, attracting both residents and remote workers seeking a balance between nature and urban amenities.

### 5. Engaged & Passionate Community

✓ Residents are highly engaged in civic discussions, with strong community advocacy for thoughtful growth and preservation.

✓ A deep appreciation for local arts, culture, and history provides a foundation for placemaking initiatives.



# SWOT Analysis

## Weaknesses

### (Internal Challenges)

#### 1. Housing Affordability & Workforce Retention Issues

- ✗ Housing costs are high relative to local wages, making it difficult for workers, young professionals, and families to afford living in Dahlenega.
- ✗ Limited availability of diverse housing options, with zoning heavily favoring single-family homes and restricting multifamily development.
- ✗ Short-term rentals (Airbnbs) are reducing long-term housing stock, driving up costs and displacing local renters.

#### 2. Infrastructure Constraints

- ✗ Aging water and sewer systems need investment, with concerns about long-term capacity for growth.
- ✗ Internet and cell service are unreliable in some areas, creating challenges for remote work and business expansion.
- ✗ Stormwater drainage issues in certain locations, leading to flooding concerns and infrastructure wear.

#### 3. Traffic Congestion & Transportation Limitations

- ✗ Downtown traffic congestion is worsening, especially during peak tourist seasons.
- ✗ Limited alternative routes into downtown, leading to bottlenecks and longer commute times.
- ✗ Parking remains a persistent issue, with many residents and visitors struggling to find convenient downtown parking.
- ✗ Lack of pedestrian and bike infrastructure beyond the downtown core, making active transportation difficult.

#### 4. Economic Over-Reliance on Tourism

- ✗ Dahlenega's economy is highly dependent on tourism, creating vulnerabilities during economic downturns or seasonal shifts.
- ✗ Few high-wage job opportunities outside the university and hospitality sectors, limiting career prospects for local residents.
- ✗ Need for business diversification to ensure long-term economic stability.

#### 5. Planning & Growth Management Challenges

- ✗ UNG's expansion is seen as a double-edged sword, with concerns about the university acquiring too much real estate in the city.
- ✗ Resistance to multifamily and infill development, leading to debates over how to address housing affordability.
- ✗ Some areas lack essential services, creating accessibility issues for residents.

## Opportunities

### (External Potential & Growth Areas)

#### 1. Workforce Housing Strategies

- ✓ Introduce "missing middle" housing (duplexes, townhomes, small multifamily developments) in appropriate areas near downtown and commercial nodes to provide affordable options for workers and young professionals.
- ✓ Develop incentive programs for workforce housing that encourage private-sector participation in affordable housing solutions.
- ✓ Implement strategic zoning updates to allow for targeted density in appropriate areas without compromising town character.

#### 2. Infrastructure Modernization

- ✓ Invest in broadband expansion to improve internet and cell service, supporting remote workers and tech-enabled businesses.
- ✓ Upgrade sewer, water, and stormwater systems to accommodate sustainable growth.
- ✓ Enhance bike and pedestrian infrastructure to improve non-car mobility and reduce congestion.





# SWOT Analysis

## Opportunities (Continued)

### 3. Economic Diversification

- ✓ Encourage the growth of professional services, remote work hubs, and creative industries to complement the tourism economy.
- ✓ Leverage UNG partnerships to develop new entrepreneurship and small business incubators.
- ✓ Expand agritourism and outdoor recreation businesses, tapping into the growing demand for sustainable tourism experiences.

### 4. Transportation & Mobility Solutions

- ✓ Develop a comprehensive parking management plan, including new parking facilities and smart technology solutions for real-time space availability.
- ✓ Explore shuttle or micro-transit options to reduce downtown congestion and improve accessibility.
- ✓ Secure funding for a bypass or alternative access routes to alleviate traffic bottlenecks.

### 5. Placemaking & Public Space Enhancements

- ✓ Invest in new public gathering spaces, parks, and plazas to enhance community interaction.
- ✓ Support arts and cultural programming to strengthen Dahlonega's identity as a creative and historic hub.
- ✓ Improve wayfinding and downtown beautification efforts to enhance the visitor experience and local pride.

#### OPPORTUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

- Downtown infill
- Vacant land in residential and Planned Unit Development zones
- Utilization of recently vacated medical building
- Pocket park/ trail development

## Threats (External Risks & Challenges)

### 1. Unmanaged Growth & Development Pressures

- △ Rapid development without infrastructure investment could strain city services and diminish Dahlonega's character.
- △ Resistance to smart growth strategies may lead to continued housing shortages and workforce retention issues.
- △ UNG's continued expansion within Dahlonega city limits- in addition to their properties outside city limits- may create further community tensions.

### 2. Economic Vulnerability

- △ Heavy reliance on tourism means economic downturns, pandemics, or shifts in travel behavior could impact local businesses.
- △ Rising real estate values could push out local businesses, replacing them with national chains and eroding local character.

### 3. Infrastructure Risks

- △ Aging infrastructure, if left unaddressed, could lead to costly failures in water, sewer, and stormwater systems.
- △ Limited road capacity and traffic congestion may worsen, frustrating residents and visitors alike.

### 4. Environmental & Natural Resource Challenges

- △ Climate change and extreme weather events could lead to increased flooding risks, making stormwater upgrades urgent.
- △ Increased development pressure may impact natural resources and greenspaces, reducing the environmental appeal of Dahlonega.



# SWOT Analysis

## Dahlonega, Georgia: Revitalization Target Area

### STRENGTHS

- **Historic Character & Vibrant Downtown**
- **University of North Georgia (UNG) as an Anchor Institution**
- **Walkability & Compact Urban Form**
- **Natural Assets & Outdoor Recreation**
- **Engaged & Passionate Community**

### WEAKNESSES

- **Housing Affordability & Workforce Retention Issues**
- **Infrastructure Constraints**
- **Traffic Congestion & Transportation Limitations**
- **Economic Over-Reliance on Tourism**
- **Planning & Growth Management Challenges**

### OPPORTUNITIES

- **Workforce Housing Strategies**
- **Infrastructure Modernization**
- **Economic Diversification**
- **Transportation & Mobility Solutions**
- **Placemaking & Public Space Enhancements**

### THREATS

- **Unmanaged Growth & Development Pressures**
- **Economic Vulnerability**
- **Infrastructure Risks**
- **Environmental & Natural Resource Challenges**



# Community Priorities

## | Action Plan

***The following community-driven priorities emerged as key focus areas for revitalization efforts.***

***By acting on these opportunities while mitigating potential risks, Dahlonega can position itself for sustained prosperity and community-driven revitalization.***

✓ **Balance growth with preservation** – Develop policies that support smart, sustainable development without compromising the town’s historic character.  
✓ Work with UNG to create a balanced development plan that accommodates university growth without displacing residents or businesses.  
✓ Ensure new development aligns with community values, supporting a mix of housing, retail, and public spaces.

✓ **Prioritize infrastructure investments** – Address water/sewer and transportation challenges to sustain long-term growth.  
✓ Upgrade stormwater and sewer infrastructure to ensure long-term sustainability and reduce flooding risks.  
✓ Optimize waste management to reduce damage from heavy trucks on local roads.  
✓ Continue working with GDOT to improve safety and congestion concerns along major thoroughfares.



# Community Priorities

## | Action Plan

- ✓ **Diversify the economy** – Reduce dependence on tourism by attracting year-round businesses and professional industries.
  - ✓ Support local businesses beyond tourism by encouraging economic diversification and entrepreneurship programs.
  
- ✓ **Enhance affordability & workforce housing** – Ensure that local employees and young professionals can afford to live in Dahlonega.
  - ✓ Reassess short-term rental regulations to balance tourism demand with long-term housing needs.
  - ✓ Develop a workforce housing strategy that allows for diverse housing types, including townhomes, small apartments, and mixed-use developments in designated areas.
  
- ✓ **Improve mobility & accessibility** – Expand walkability, bike paths, parking solutions, and alternative transportation options.
  - ✓ Improve pedestrian-friendly downtown street design, including wider sidewalks, street trees, and enhanced crosswalks.
  - ✓ Enhance alternative transportation options, such as shuttles, park-and-ride lots, and bike-friendly infrastructure.
  - ✓ Improve downtown parking solutions with better signage, technology (apps for parking availability), and potential expansion of facilities. Consider shared parking opportunities for events.
  - ✓ Develop a plan for alternative access routes into downtown to alleviate congestion.
  - ✓ Develop new public spaces, such as plazas, pocket parks, and outdoor gathering areas.





# Appendix

## Public Input

### Provide Your Input at Our Community Meeting!



### Dahlonega Revitalization Plan

The City of Dahlonega is developing a Revitalization Plan aimed at assessing the community's current needs, outlining future objectives, and offering supportive strategies to reach these goals.

#### WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

The Revitalization Plan will explore community needs within:



**Thursday,  
February 27th,  
2025**

Time: 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm  
Location: Dahlonega City Hall

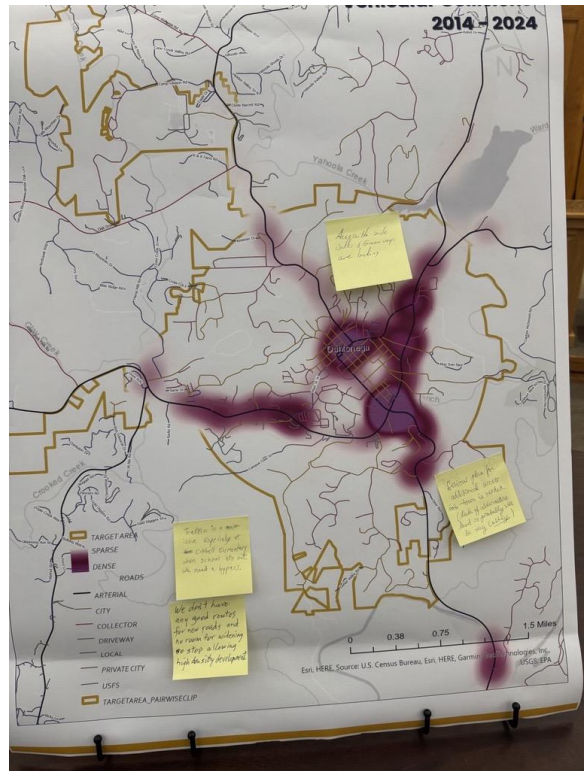
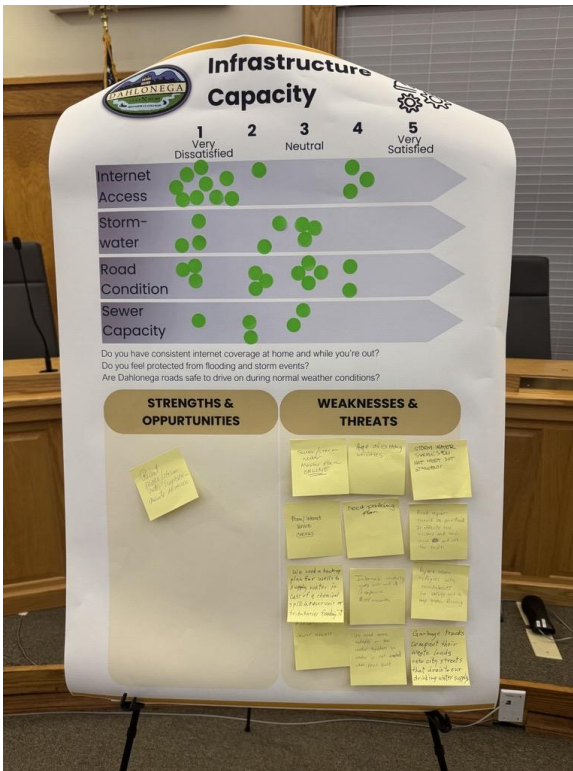
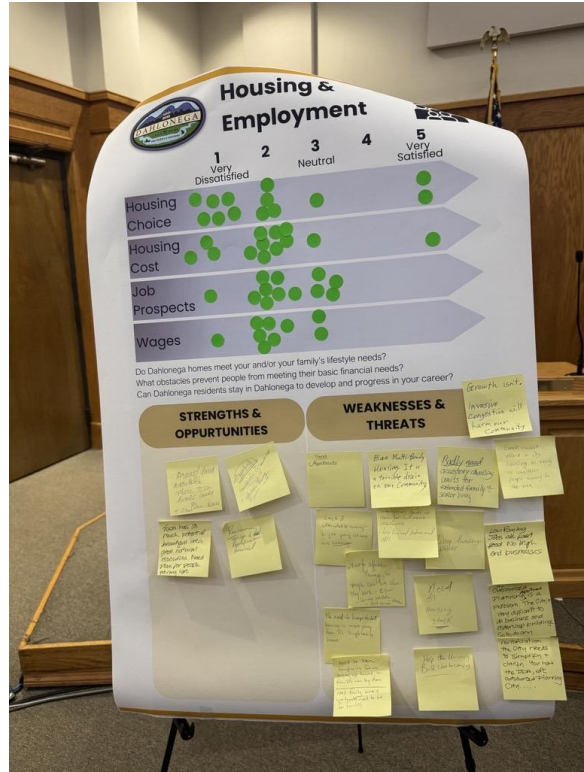
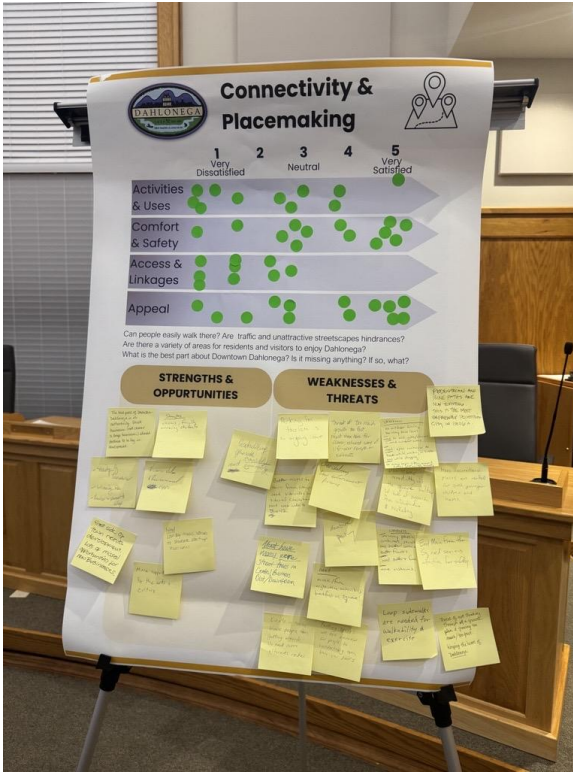


Presented by:



# Appendix

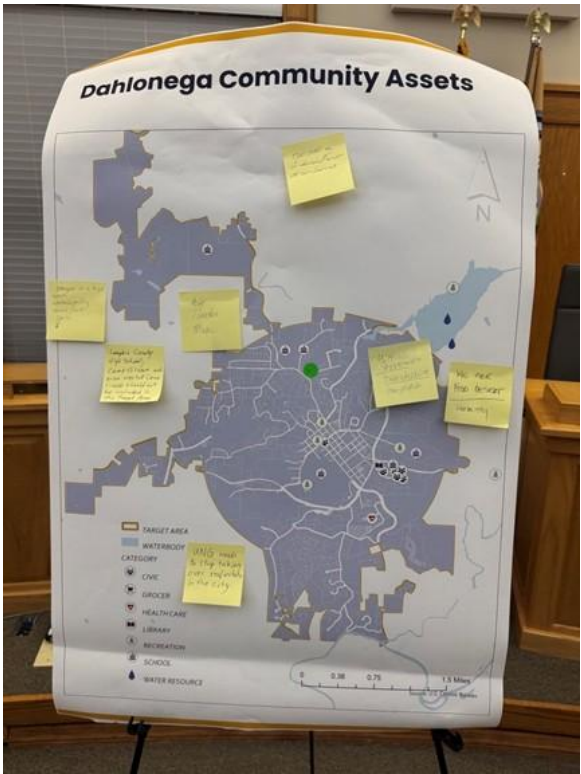
## Public Input





# Appendix

## Public Input



Name:	Email:
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