



## Department Report

Report Title: Downtown Development Authority & Main Street Program – October 2025  
Report Highlight: Housing Presentation Highlights  
Name and Title: Ariel Alexander, Downtown Development Director

- Attended the Dahlonega Downtown Business Association meeting.
- The last First Friday Concert, Farmers Market, and Appalachian Jam events of the year were held.
- Hosted site visit for the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing selection committee.
- Reviewed draft parking study.
- Permitted Scares on the Square scarecrow decorations downtown. This event is operated by local business owners, and proceeds from the program are donated back to the Downtown Development Authority to support downtown events.
- Attended a Georgia Academy for Economic Development Session on “Home Grown Housing”. Separate Report Attached.
- Held pre-event meeting for Gold Rush Days Festival and assisted in planning and logistics of the event.
- Attended Economic Development Partnership meeting. Reviewed the hotel feasibility study with the group and local leaders.
- Met with a prospective home developer interested in affordable housing.
- Planned for Veterans Day celebrations in November.
- Operated trick-or-treating event on October 31 with Dahlonega Police and Public Works.
- Booked food truck vendors for the Old-Fashioned Christmas season.
- Facilitated the DDA grant program and assisted seven businesses with applications for the Small Business Improvement Grant.
- Mailed renewal notices for the downtown wayfinding sign program.
- Took feedback from the downtown business survey and business input session in preparation for the annual planning session in January.
- Performed weekly downtown walkthroughs to speak with business owners.

### **Georgia Academy for Economic Development: Home Grown Housing Report**

#### Why is Housing Important?

- Median Georgia home prices have risen approximately 50% since 2019, while incomes lag.
- Employers across the state cite housing as a top barrier to hiring.
- Teachers, police officers, nurses, etc., cannot afford to live where they work.
- Stable, attainable housing supports schools, local businesses, and tax digest health.

#### Understanding the Housing Crisis:

- 80% of American households are not traditional nuclear families, yet 72% of existing American housing units cater to traditional nuclear families.
- Affordability: The traditional measure of affordability recommends that housing costs be no more than 30% of household income.

### The Rise and Fall of Small-Scale Housing

- Duplexes, triplexes, and accessory dwelling units used to be normal, but post-1950s zoning and minimum lot rules outlawed them.
- Financing and building codes began to favor large, detached homes coming out of World War II (Baby Boom).
- The result: reduced housing variety and higher entry costs.
- Small home construction has dropped significantly since 1975 (1,400 square feet or smaller). In 1975, they accounted for about 40% of new home construction nationwide; now, they account for only about 8% (US Census).
- The Economics of Development:
  - Go to Zillow.com
  - Enter Dahlonega, Georgia
  - Under "Home Type" choose "Lots/Land"
  - Find a lot of 1 acre or less
  - Divide price by 0.14
  - What's the housing cost?
- The High Cost of Urban Sprawl
  - Suburban Development Pattern: for example, one house per one acre:
    - Consumes more land
    - Demands more infrastructure
    - Places a higher burden on public services
    - Generates less value per acre
  - Compact Development Pattern: townhouses, ADUs, etc.
    - Consumes less land
    - Demands less infrastructure
    - Public service area is more concentrated; less infrastructure required
    - Generates more value per acre
    - Variety of housing types and multiple land uses
  - Twenty-minute neighborhoods are in demand: Most people will walk or bike 5-10 minutes for daily goods and services.
    - Providing housing near your downtown helps support your downtown.
    - If someone must get in a car to go  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, they can keep going right out of your community.
  - Housing Choice Matters
    - An indicator of inclusivity
    - Enhances quality of life for all
    - Increases the amount of disposable income for the community
    - It is a sign of strong planning and effective leadership
    - **Aids in the ability to attract and retain local workforce/talent**
    - **Is a marketable industry recruitment tool, an Economic impact multiplier**

### Strategies That Actually Work

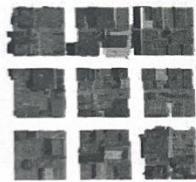
- Focus on Existing Stock and Adaptive Reuse
  - Code "Education"
  - Maintenance grants and incentives

- Land banking and active acquisition of abandoned properties
- Small-scale “placemaking”
- Empowerment of local housing authorities
- Revitalize blighted areas and preserve historical character
- **Existing infrastructure = more affordable**
- **Less density generates LESS tax value!**

### Less Density Generates LESS Tax Value

#### Nine downtown blocks

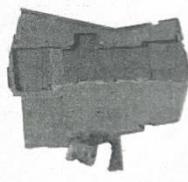
- 16 taxable acres
- Net value per acre: \$1,310,830



\$20,973,280 for 16 acres

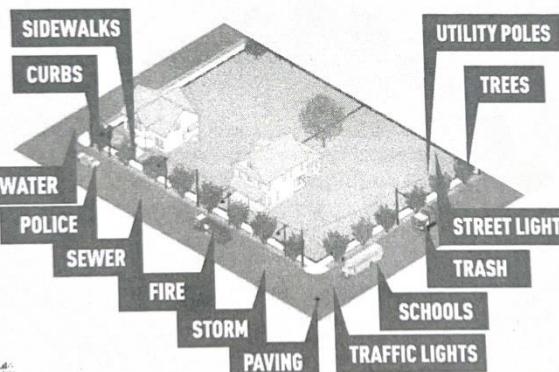
#### Shopping mall

- 23 taxable acres
- Net value per acre: \$281,128



\$6,465,944 for 23 acres

### Housing Infrastructure + Service Needs



- Legalize Different Types of Homes
  - Accessory Dwelling Units (Attached or detached)
  - Single-Family Home
  - Duplex/Triplex/Fourplex
  - Townhouse
  - Tiny Home
  - Cottage Court/Pocket Neighborhood
  - Live/Work Unit
- Consider Removing Parking Minimums
  - Reduces development costs
  - Encourages walkability
  - Improve affordability
- Streamline Permitting
  - Reduce delays
  - Lower development costs and risks
  - Increase housing supply
  - E-permitting system and concurrent reviews
- Plan for Infill Infrastructure
  - Support high density in appropriate areas
  - Reduce development costs
  - Encourage sustainable growth
- Policy Myth-Busting

“Apartments cause crime.”	Neighbors look out for each other.
“Density = Towers”	Affordability can look like single-family.
“Tiny Homes”	Cottages
“Modular”	Can be quality and luxury!

- ✓ Homes that local workers who serve our community can afford.
- ✓ Home choices young people from our community can afford.
- ✓ Affordable choices for local seniors to downsize.
- ✓ A mixture of homes of all sizes and prices will give people a chance to own their home, build wealth, and provide solid foundations of economic stability and opportunity for themselves and the next generation.