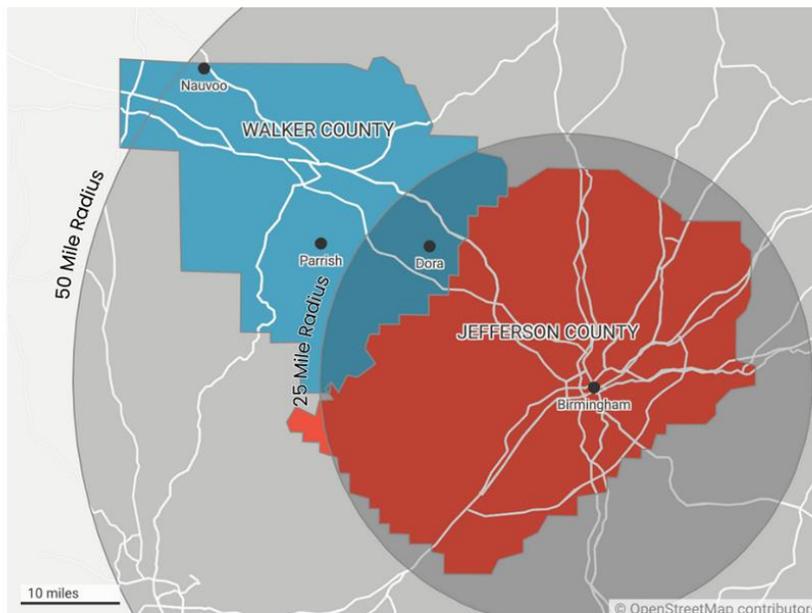


ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING: WALKER COUNTY, AL

USDA RD RPIC FINAL REPORT (DECEMBER 2025) - THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

Context

In 2022, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) was awarded funding through USDA Rural Development’s Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC) Grant Program to complete individualized Economic Development Strategic Plans (EDSPs) for three communities in rural Walker County – Parrish, Nauvoo, and Dora. Set in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in northwest Alabama, Walker County is one of the most rural counties in the RPCGB’s service area and had just 65,344 residents at the 2020 U.S. Census. Walker County sits atop the Warrior Coal Field, the largest, southernmost coal-producing area in North America and the county has historically been economically dependent on the extractive industries of timber and coal. Walker County coal was an essential ingredient in Birmingham’s rise as a major iron and steel producing market and the center of the industrial revolution in the South.



Created with Datawrapper

In the 1970s and 80s, Birmingham’s mining and metals industries contracted due to rising labor costs, safety regulations, foreign competition, and environmental regulation, but Walker County coal continued to produce the largest share of electric power generation in the state until the early twenty-first century. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, however, many of Alabama’s older coal-fired power plants closed. Since 2013, the state has seen a reduction of 4,900 megawatts of coal-fired generating capacity. The impact of loss of coal jobs and population decline have been further compounded by the opioid epidemic. Between 2006 and 2012, Walker County was flooded by more than 66 million opioid pills coming into the county through legal prescriptions. Today, Walker County has a poverty rate of 16.4% and an estimated 30.9% of adults are not working, according to the Economic Innovation Group’s Distressed Communities Index. Median Household Income in 2020 was \$46,519, \$8,171 lower than Alabama’s MHI and \$21,002 lower than the national MHI that year.

The EDSP program and funding from USDA’s RPIC grant program has allowed RPCGB to provide a greater degree of place-focused technical assistance to Nauvoo, Parrish, and Dora – as these communities strategize recovery with the goal of achieving diversified economies that can weather shocks that hit certain sectors. The EDSP program was created to help these rural communities leverage local assets to build stronger quality of place and more resilient economies, in the process laying a foundation to attract long-term growth and achieve economic attainment. These EDSPs align with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region, and they also define a set of specific priorities for continued collaboration between RPCGB and the communities. Each EDSP considers opportunities for outdoor recreation/ecotourism and broadband expansion to facilitate growth in the community.

Critical for the development of the EDSPs was RPCGB’s partnership with the Walker Area Community Foundation, a 28-year-old trusted boots-on-the-ground nonprofit grantmaking organization that has become one of the fastest growing community foundations in the United States. Without this partnership, and engagement by the mayors of Nauvoo, Parrish, and Dora, this initiative would not have been possible.

About the EDSPs

Each EDSP (all three are included at the end of this document) is intended to provide a place-based Economic Development action plan based on the strengths, opportunities, challenges,

and priorities of that specific community. The EDSPs were developed through the following steps of data collection, analysis, and strategy development:

- Needs Assessment and existing economic and workforce conditions report based on data from the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, Esri, ArcGIS, and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)'s [Alabama Connectivity Map](#).
 - a. Existing Conditions
 - b. Market Analysis
 - c. Existing and Prospective Land Use Maps
 - d. Broadband Infrastructure Analysis

This data informs the recommendations made in each plan.

- Stakeholder Engagement – A strategy committee was created in each community, and we held multiple public meetings and distributed surveys to encourage as much community input as possible. A SWOT analysis was completed for each community and included in EDSP. During community meetings, we used Mentimeter as an online tool to enable participants to respond to prompts on their phones, with results captured and shared in real time during the meetings.

Strategy Committee Meeting, Dora, AL



Word Clouds created with Mentimeter during Parrish and Dora Community Meetings.

What do you love about Parrish?

34 responses



What do you love about Dora?

24 responses



- EDSP Action Plan Development based on learnings from community meetings and developed iteratively, with feedback from the municipality. EDSP's include:
 - a. Long and short-term action items, including "low hanging fruit" with the goal of creating momentum and spurring local enthusiasm.
 - b. Peer communities with similar characteristics to show possibilities for outdoor recreation infrastructure development, placemaking, and creative strategies toward economic development.
 - c. Focus on infrastructure development needs to support economic growth – not just physical infrastructure but also city capacity, healthcare infrastructure, broadband infrastructure, outdoor recreation infrastructure, etc.
- Final publication and presentation to the municipality.

Challenges

Parrish (population 982 in 2020), Nauvoo (population 185), and Dora (population 2,287) are all small, rural, remote communities with dispersed populations. These characteristics pose challenges for data collection and analysis and community engagement. We largely relied on U.S. Census Bureau data to provide local data on population, demographics, employment, and needs, however data for smaller communities tends to be less reliable than that for larger communities due to small sample sizes and a higher margin of error. When our team held a meeting in Parrish to share data about the community, residents felt that the US Census data was inaccurate and challenged some of the assumptions we had made.

Upon reflection, we realize that we should have begun with the process with community and stakeholder engagement, focusing first on building trust with and learning from residents and local leaders before engaging the quantitative data available from third party sources. We also should have done a more thorough review of alternative paid data sources, like Placer.ai, JobsEQ, and Lightcast, at the beginning of our work. During this process, we have found Placer.ai data and JobsEQ data can provide more granular, local data about traffic flows, employment, jobs, etc. For example, we were able to use Placer.ai data to achieve a more precise estimation of the number of visitors travelling to the Dora Horse Creek Golf Course, which is owned by the City of Dora, by visitors from Walker County and the Birmingham-Hoover MSA.

A second challenge, related to small populations, was limited local capacity to fully engage in the planning process. Ensuring that community members attended public meetings and completed surveys so that we could achieve statistically significant results was a challenge for our qualitative data collection in the smaller two communities. Understandably, residents are busy, city councilors and mayors have other jobs, and a few individuals carry the load of city government. In Parrish, the part-time mayor works full-time as an educator. In Dora, a new mayor took office in the middle of the EDSP planning process and needed to be onboarded to the project. Ideally, our stakeholder engagement would have included individuals representing diverse sectors, including but not limited to city hall, city council, local business owners, local nonprofit leaders, public school leadership, as well as the local community leaders that have no official title. This level of engagement is difficult to sustain in small communities where individuals are often over extended. Local patterns of communication can also impact community meetings, where certain voices dominate and steer conversation towards individual rather than shared priorities.

We also found that our own organizational capacity was occasionally strained during the process of executing this initiative. The economic development director who initiated this project took another position in May of 2024. A new director joined the organization in August of 2024, and this gap in leadership caused some delays in development of the final EDSP.

Despite these challenges, in each community we met engaged individuals who were passionate about sustaining the communities and people that made their cities special. Elevating what was unique about each community was an essential starting point for planning for future growth.

What We Learned

Not surprisingly, due to the challenges described above, we saw the most consistent engagement from the city and community members in Dora, a city with a population more than double the size of Parrish and more than ten times the size of Nauvoo. Located in East Walker County, Dora sits 25 miles from downtown Birmingham on Interstate 22. Its proximity to the Birmingham-Hoover MSA means that it can count one million residents within a 50-mile radius of the city, an important metric for recruitment of industry and commercial development. All of these factors have positioned Dora for long-term growth, and the community is seeing increased interest from commercial, industrial, and residential developers. The City of Dora wanted to use this process to define what they valued about their community now – while taking steps to be better prepared for future growth. The EDSP process enabled them to set community priorities, which will help them engage with developers and advocate for community-supported development.

In response to what we learned during community engagement, we shifted the structure of the last EDSP to prioritize community input over quantitative data. Our last EDSP foregrounded the action plan and placed greater emphasis on qualitative data. The quantitative data continues to be a critical element of the planning process and the EDSP, but it is provided later in the document, as support for the action plan rather than as the driver for decision making.

Unexpected Outcomes

Working closely with community leaders in Dora, Nauvoo, Parrish, and across Walker County in development of these EDSPs has built a stronger working relationship between RPCGB and these stakeholders. The partnership and planning process facilitated with USDA support enabled us to achieve the other unexpected outcomes during execution of this grant:

- RPCGB received an Appalachian Regional Commission POWER grant to develop a county-wide EDSP for Walker County, which will be completed March 2025

- Town of Nauvoo secured a CDBG grant for demolition of two city-owned structures with the goal of supporting redevelopment of these properties. This project will be completed by the end of 2025.
- RPCGB executed an EPA Brownfields Assessment grant and executed Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments on multiple properties in Walker County. We have applied for a subsequent EPA Brownfields Coalition Grant with the Walker Area Community Foundation as one of our two coalition members.

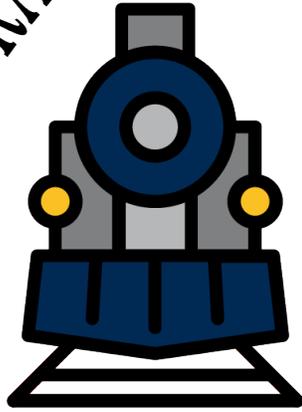
Our hope is that the place-based priorities defined in the EDSPs can help these communities continue to apply for and leverage federal grants to accomplish the goals outlined in those documents. With limited local resources, these communities rely on state and federal grants to support their efforts to improve quality of place in ways that can attract and retain residents and encourage visitors/support development of an ecotourism economy. These communities can succeed in securing and executing these grants when they have a plan that aligns with the CEDS and they have engaged regional partners – like RPCGB and WACF - committed to their success.

Advice to Others

Trust is the cornerstone of partnership, and we had to build working relationships with leaders in small, rural communities that had experienced sustained economic distress. These communities are also struggling with a host of more urgent issues related to economic distress – including high poverty levels, food access challenges, food insecurity, high levels of substance abuse, uneven quality of public schools, vacant and blighted properties, and limited local revenue to address these challenges in a comprehensive way. As a result, asking community members to trust our organization – and dedicate the time needed to plan for future economic growth – was a big ask.

Our advice would be to foreground listening and trust building at the beginning of the process. One-on-one meetings with local stakeholders and developing avenues for the community to provide input on the front end is critical not just for collecting data but also for building trust. Another way to build trust was to identify the low-hanging fruit, or small wins/immediately actionable goals that could be put into motion immediately – even before the plan was completed. We were able to execute some projects that met local priorities while we were executing the EDSP. Our hope is that evidence of immediate progress can help ensure that these plans don't just "sit on a shelf."

CITY OF DORA



ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIC
PLAN 2024



Regional Planning Commission
of Greater Birmingham

CITY OF DORA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Prepared by Regional Planning Commission of Greater
Birmingham (RPCGB)

and Walker Area Community Foundation (WACF)



Horse Creek Trail (City of Dora Website)

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Dora is a rural community in Walker County that was formed more than 130 years ago on Horse Creek, a tributary of the Black Warrior River. With a population of 2,297 (US Census 2020), Dora is a small town, where residents have access to quality local public schools and economic opportunity with a low cost of living. The municipality has made significant investments in outdoor amenities, including public parks, walking trails, a lake, and a city owned and managed golf course that draws an estimated 30,000 visits per year. The city has two active rail lines and immediate access to Interstate 22, which connects Birmingham to Memphis, TN. The I-22 corridor, completed in 2016, was conceived in part to spur economic development in some of the most rural parts of Alabama and Mississippi.

Walker County sits atop the Warrior Coal Field, which was the primary source of jobs in the county for most of the twentieth century. Used in the production of iron and energy, Walker County coal helped fuel Birmingham’s industrial revolution, and it continued to be an important source of regional energy production well into the twenty-first century. Many of the state’s older coal-fired power plants have closed, and contributions to net power generation by coal in Alabama have [reduced by half](#) since 2013. Today Dora now has no coal-related jobs and continues to recover from the widespread economic impact of contraction of the mining industry.



Dora City Hall (City of Dora Website)

CITY OF DORA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Near the eastern border of Walker County, Dora is well-positioned due to proximity to the Birmingham-Hoover MSA, the largest MSA in the state of Alabama based on population and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). More than one million individuals reside within a 50-mile radius of the community, so commercial and industrial sites in and around Dora can draw from a populous region to meet workforce needs. Residents enjoy access to world-class health care, good paying jobs, nationally ranked institutions of higher education, arts and cultural organizations, and restaurants and entertainment venues. Dora's proximity to the Birmingham central business district (less than 25 miles) is similar to that of Alabaster (Shelby County), Leeds (mostly Jefferson County), and Moody (St. Clair County), all growing communities in the metropolitan region.

Dora further benefits from a strong county-wide economic development organization, the Walker County Development Authority (WCDA), which is actively pushing forward several new economic development projects in east Walker County. WCDA has purchased property south of I-22 and has broken ground on a new industrial park. It has also been engaged in the Heritage Landing commercial development, discussed in this document, which will create jobs and increase revenue for the municipality.

Dora's community leaders are working to build the quality of place needed to attract and retain residents and ensure long term economic diversification, resilience, and vitality. This Economic Development Strategic Plan is intended to support local efforts to encourage sustainable and high-quality development and build the quality of place that attracts and retains residents. It was developed in consultation with the mayor, city staff, and community members. RPCGB staff gathered qualitative and quantitative data on current conditions in Dora, distributed an online survey, met individually with local leaders, and held open community meetings with the goal of hearing from as many residents as possible.

Section I: Action Plan

The action plan was developed in response to what we learned through community engagement, providing a series of recommendations for short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions that align with community needs. In addition to recommendations to improve quality of place and support commercial and industrial recruitment, the action plan evaluates outdoor recreation and broadband connectivity as primary areas of focus.

Section II: Strategic Analysis – Qualitative Assessment

This section details our learnings through a variety of community engagement activities, including a community survey shared with the public in June 2024; conversations with local officials, municipal employees, and community leaders; and meetings with the public and with an advisory committee.

Section III: Strategic Analysis – Quantitative Assessment

This section draws upon U.S. Census and Esri data to identify historic trends and current characteristics of Dora’s local economy and workforce. This data, along with the Qualitative Assessment, directly informs the recommendations made in the Action Plan.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) program was designed by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) to assist its member governments in developing long-term strategies that capitalize on local strengths and address economic challenges. This strategic plan was supported by funding from USDA’s Rural Development through the Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC) grant program. The Walker Area Community Foundation (WACF) was a partner in community engagement and strategy development. This Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) is intended to support local economic development decision making and encourage capital investment.

It is, however, only a plan and is not legally binding upon the City of Dora. For more information about this report, please contact Allie Haynes, Economic Development Specialist, at ahaynes@rpcgb.org.

SECTION I: ACTION PLAN

Located in East Walker County with immediate access to I-22 and proximity to the Birmingham-Hoover MSA, Dora is currently attracting commercial, housing, and industrial development within or near the city limits. As a result, Dora is in the process of evolving from a relatively isolated rural community to a place that looks more like the growing suburban communities captured in the Birmingham-Hoover MSA. The following projects are currently underway and on track to be completed in 2025 and 2026:

- Expansion of the Lockerbie residential neighborhood with approximately 50 new homes that are affordable for those at or near the median household income.
- Redevelopment of an aging strip mall in Dora’s commercial district on Highway 78.
- Phase I of a multi-purpose surface mine reclamation commercial development led by Drummond Company on I-22 at Exit 78. This project includes a large-scale Love’s Travel Stops & Country Stores travel center that will create 60 jobs by the end of 2025.
- Development of a new 200-acre Heritage Industrial Park, owned by the Walker County Development Authority, adjacent to Heritage Landing.

To facilitate these catalytic projects, Dora has annexed Heritage Landing into the city limits and is in the process of annexing multiple residential properties to connect the city with the Heritage Landing Site. The municipality is expanding city sewer and water infrastructure to serve this new development.

Goal 1 of this Action Plan is focused on facilitating municipal decision-making to prepare for continued growth and to encourage sustainable and community-supported development.



Horse Creek Golf Course (Horse Creek Golf Course Website)

Goal 1: Strengthen Physical Infrastructure and Build Municipal Capacity to Support Development

Like many small municipalities, Dora needs quality infrastructure to support growth and sustain a strong local economy. Improving and rehabilitating existing physical infrastructure is critical to ensuring the city attracts quality commercial and housing development, new businesses, and job-creating industry. This section identifies priorities, focusing not only physical infrastructure but also the municipal capacity needed to support sustainable, impactful, community-supported economic growth.

1.1 Evaluate and Prioritize Road, Sewer, and Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements

Current interest from developers is high, but Dora has historically struggled to attract developers that can meet the community's commercial and housing needs. Dora has a tight housing market and very low inventory, particularly for housing that meets the needs of those at the Median Household Income. Walker County also more generally lacks the executive housing needed to support industrial recruitment. The area in and around Dora has seen very limited housing development or revitalization since the 2008 housing crisis.

To grow as a bedroom community to Birmingham, Dora needs to continue attracting new quality commercial housing development while also encouraging revitalization of existing properties. Below is a list of immediate infrastructure priorities, as well as long-term recommendations focused on ensuring the city is positioned to support sustained growth.

- Address flooding on Sharon Blvd through federal and state funding sources.
- Prioritize paving needs of secondary roads in Dora.
- Continue to evaluate system loads for water and sewer and make projections for what is needed to sustain new development (residential, commercial, and industrial).
- Conduct traffic and housing demand studies to evaluate infrastructure needs for continued growth and to support interest from developers.
- Leverage state and federal funding sources, alongside new revenue from commercial development, to increase capacity of local infrastructure over time.

1.2 Support Targeted Broadband Expansion to Ensure Access for All

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the importance of broadband access, as well as the unique benefits of allowing workers and students to work from anywhere. When high-speed internet allows residents to access good, high-paying jobs, coursework, medical care, and other critical services from home, they are no longer limited to the resources solely available in their community. Equitable and comprehensive broadband infrastructure is a critical component of building economic opportunity across a community.

ACCESSIBILITY & CONNECTION SPEEDS

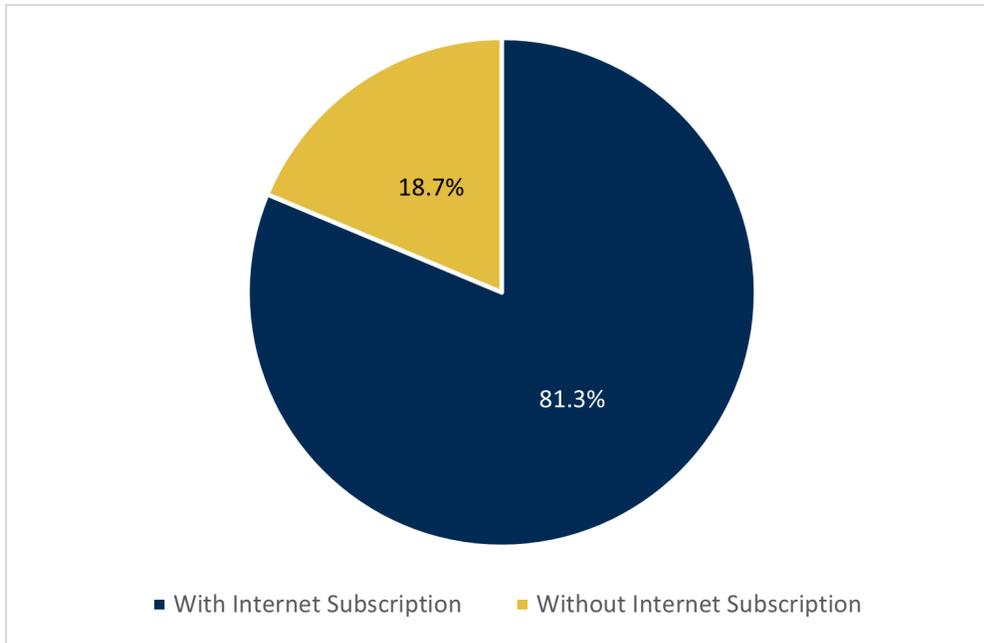
Broadband is defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as high-speed internet that allows users to access the Internet or Internet-related services at significantly higher speeds than those available through “dial-up” services. Broadband speed is determined by megabits per second (MBPS), which measures the download and upload speed of the connection.

Broadband can be accessed through a variety of transmission technologies, including satellites, fiber, cable, wireless, or a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL). Faster speeds are associated with cable broadband and fiber, compared to slower satellite and DSL connections. The FCC’s current minimum standard set for broadband is 100/20 mbps, or the ability to download 100 megabits per second and upload 20 megabits per second. This standard has been set by new federal funding programs for broadband, which provide support for areas without a minimum of 100/20 mbps. Before March 14, 2024, the minimum standard was just 25/3 mbps, and the [increased standard](#) allows more areas to be eligible for federal funding for improvements.

EXISTING BROADBAND CONDITIONS IN DORA

Data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey (2022) and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)’s Alabama Connectivity Map show that Dora households making over \$20,000 annually have much stronger service than those with incomes below \$20,000. According to the United States Census data, 81.3 percent of total households (801 of 985) in Dora have internet subscriptions of some type, while 18.7 percent of households do not have access to internet at their homes. These numbers are similar to [state numbers](#); about 20 percent of Alabama households do not have access to the internet.

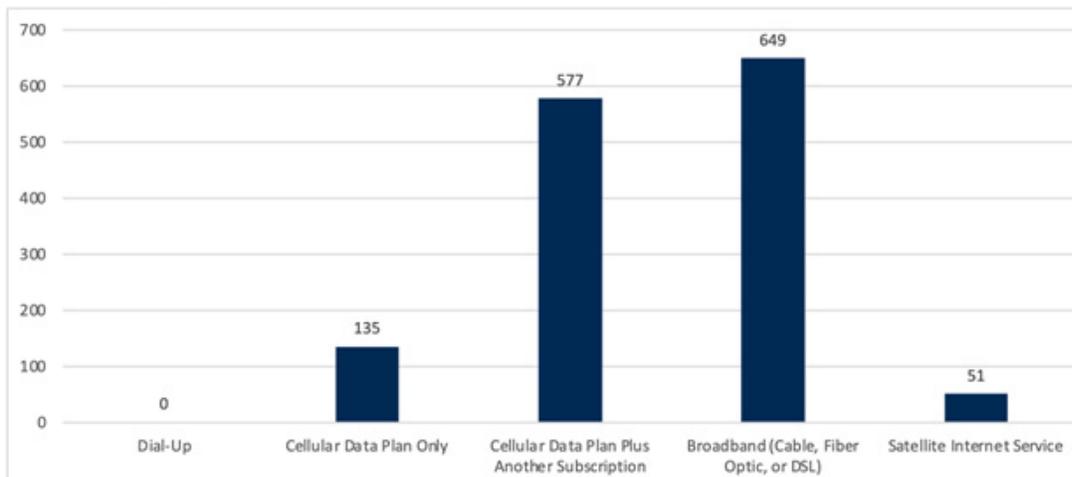
Figure 1: Internet Connection in Dora, 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)

While the City of Dora has a relatively average number of households that are accessing the internet, types of connections vary, likely due to factors including infrastructure cost and accessibility. Of the 1,382 households with an internet subscription, 649 households are accessing through broadband infrastructure. The remaining 763 households are relying primarily on cellular or satellite internet services.

Figure 2: Types of Broadband Connections Utilized by Dora Households, 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)

Broadband connectivity and internet access correlate with household income across Dora. Data from the U.S. Census illustrates the percentage of internet subscriptions across three income groups. The income groups, the percentage of total households within each group, and the percentage of households within each income bracket with an internet subscription are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Dora Household Internet Subscriptions by Income Bracket, 2022

Income Level	Percent of Total Households	Percent with an Internet Subscription
Less than \$20,000	16.5%	62.6%
\$20,000 to \$74,999	55.8%	86.4%
\$75,000 or more	27.6%	82.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)

Most Dora households that make over \$20,000 annually have access to the internet, and these access levels remain consistent among higher income levels. Households making less than \$20,000 have a much lower level of access to internet, which could either be due to inability to afford service or inability to live in areas with service options.

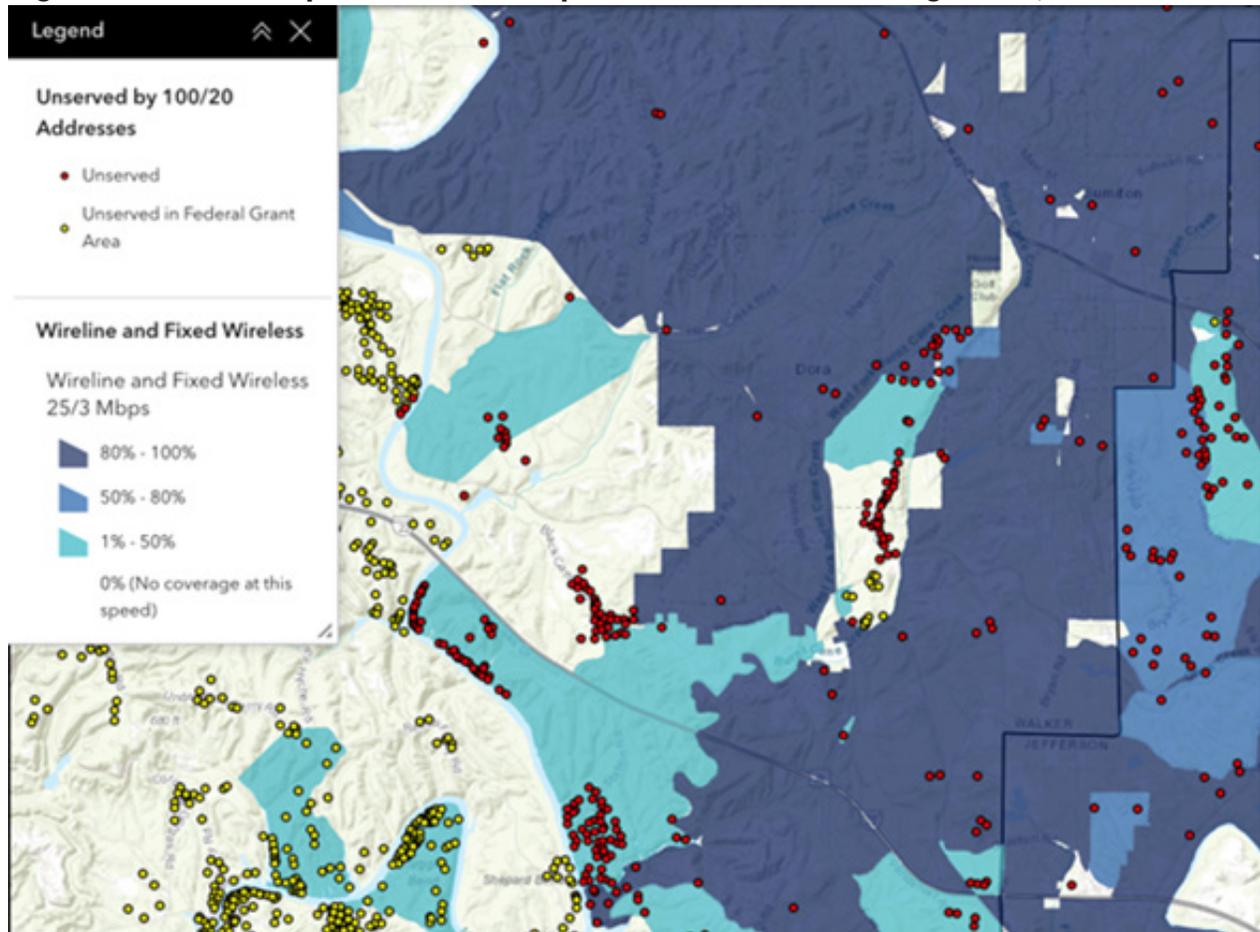
This inequality is especially important to consider for county growth, as those with lower incomes could significantly benefit from internet for online education or remote work opportunities. Many low-income households also struggle with limited digital skills as a result, impacting job accessibility, knowledge about how to identify fraud and misinformation, and access to remote and digital medical services.

CENSUS BLOCK ANALYSIS

The Alabama Connectivity Map, designed and implemented by ADECA, categorizes census tracts by broadband connection levels for 25/3 mbps and 100/20 mbps speeds. These maps illustrate the percentage of addresses within a census block that have access to the speed that has been selected. The connection levels used for the analysis were divided into four groups: 0% (where no address has connection or access); 1%-49% (less than half of addresses have connection or access); 50%-80%; and 81%-100%. Areas with no access are not colored on the maps.

The Alabama Connectivity Map helps gauge the level of connection for the census tracts within the town. There is some variation between areas with access to 25/3 mbps and areas with access to 100/20 mbps, as shown in Figures 3 and 4. This indicates that most current infrastructure can be used to support either speed level, however, the areas that are only covered on the 25/3 mbps map would require infrastructure improvements to achieve faster internet speeds.

Figure 4: 100/20 Mbps Broadband Map of Dora and Surrounding Areas, 2023



Source: Alabama Connectivity Map, ADECA (2023)

In community meetings, Dora residents and community leaders generally concluded that broadband connectivity across the city is uneven, with some neighborhoods well connected and others fully lacking broadband access, including Crystal Lane and Parr Parkway (adjacent to Horse Creek Golf Course), portions of Sellars Road, and the Hickory Ridge subdivision. We encourage prioritizing access for these neighborhoods, using resources from the Alabama Department of Community and Economic Affairs (ADECA), the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and additional funding made available in 2021 through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) - also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) - to support consistent access across all residential neighborhoods.

Table 2: Dora Household Internet Subscriptions by Income Bracket, 2022

Funding Agency	Funding Programs	Funding Range	Match Requirement	Typical Due Dates
Appalachian Regional Commission	Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative	Up to \$2,000,000	50% Match	April
U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development	Community Connect Grant Program	Up to \$3,000,000	15% Match	December
U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development	ReConnect Loan and Grant Program	Up to \$25,000,000	25% Match	November
Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs	ARC Area Development Program	Up to \$200,000	50% Match	August
Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs	Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant*	Up to \$5,000,000	20% Match	November

**Eligible applicants for the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant are cooperatives, corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships, or other private business entities or units of governments that currently provide broadband services.*

1.3. Adopt Municipal Zoning Ordinance & Implement Zoning and Code Enforcement

Currently, Dora has no comprehensive plan or municipal zoning ordinance. Although properties are required to conform to the International Building Code (IBC) or International Residential Code (IRC), the municipality lacks capacity for comprehensive code enforcement. As a result, developers do not need to receive city approvals for plans; instead, they approach the city when they have a specific need, like infrastructure upgrades or tax abatements.

Code enforcement and zoning ordinances, when implemented consistently and fairly and in the best interests of the residents, can help encouraging neighborhood revitalization by identifying nonconforming properties and penalizing absentee landlords that contributing to local blight.

CITY OF DORA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Ideally, Dora will have plans and ordinances in place to guide land use now and in the future, with the goal of ensuring the city sees high-quality developments that align with city priorities and local economic development needs (i.e., creation of good paying jobs, development of small businesses, generation of more and improved workforce housing). The following recommendations are intended to build this municipal infrastructure:

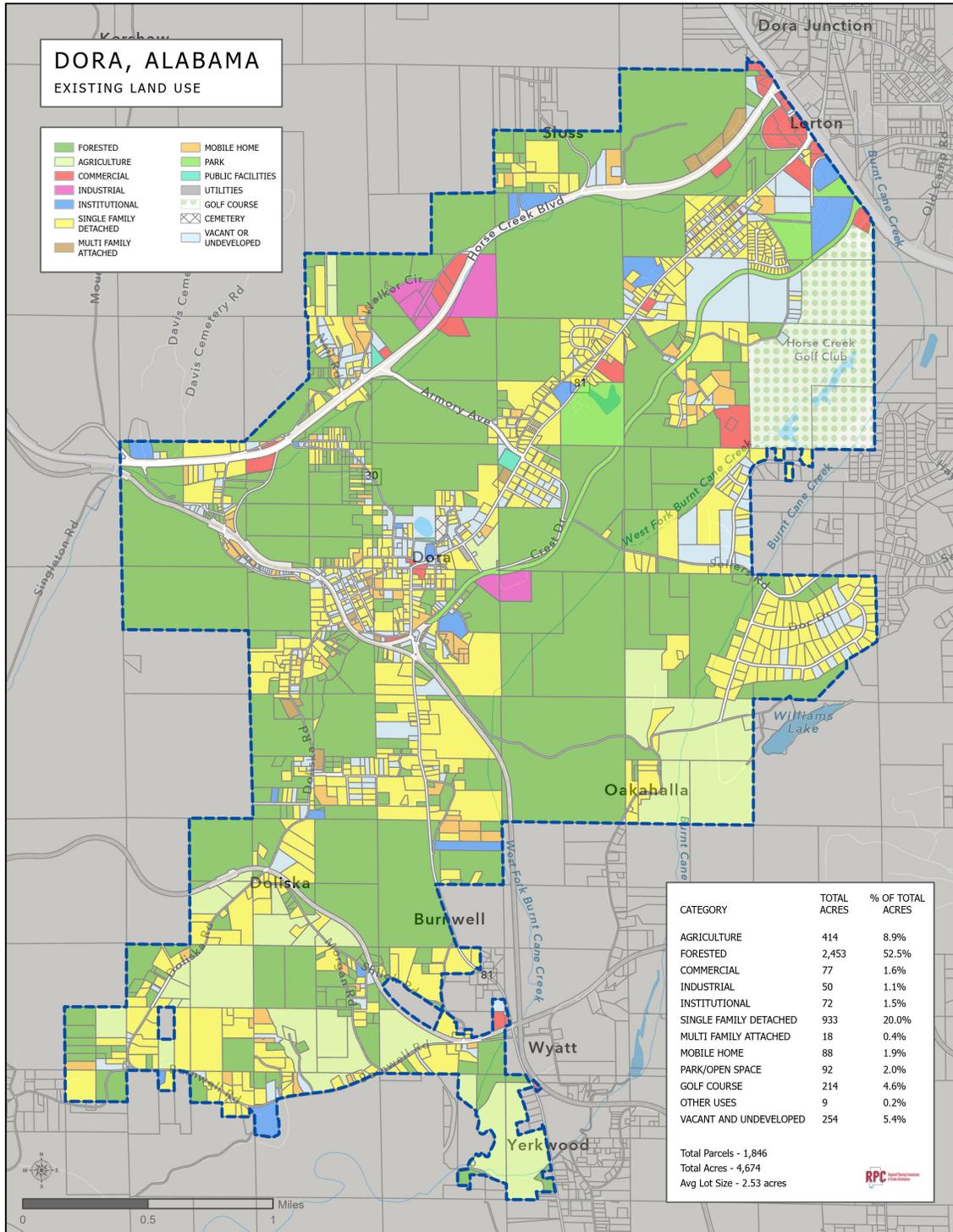
- Develop and adopt a city-wide comprehensive plan, which considers short- and long-term housing and commercial development needs. Consider the potential to accommodate gentle density through multi-family housing, including town homes, duplexes, accessory dwelling units, etc.
- Develop and adopt a city-wide zoning ordinance with clear land use policies to encourage quality development and discourage predatory or absentee landowners. Consider proximity of commercial districts to schools and residential areas and encourage alternative transportation infrastructure.
- Build city capacity to review and approve development plans and implement code enforcement practices.
- Once a zoning ordinance is in place, create and manage a volunteer Board of Zoning Adjustments that reviews and approves or denies development plans that do not conform to zoning ordinance.



City of Lights, a local nonprofit, uses a former school building to support a residential program, youth services, a thrift store, and more. Creative reuse of existing assets can help the community. (City of Lights Facebook Page)

CITY OF DORA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Map 1: Existing Land Use



Goal 2: Strengthen Placemaking & Quality of Life

Most residential development in Dora is located in neighborhoods on Sharon Boulevard and commercial development is primarily located on Hwy 78, on the city's northeast boundary. New commercial and industrial development is underway on Interstate 22 which, due to annexation, will sit at the southernmost point of Dora's city limits. Unlike many Alabama communities of its age, Dora has no historic downtown business district, and patterns of development have created disparate, disconnected spaces across the city. During conversations with community members, we heard that residents wanted a stronger sense of place in the city.

Dora has a strong foundation of outdoor recreation assets to build upon to create a sense of place and quality of life for its residents. Several outdoor recreation amenities that have received public investment over the last three decades, including but not limited to:

- Horse Creek Trail (2.5 miles), Walker County's only rails-to-trails conversion project, traverses much of the city.
- Horse Creek Golf Course (opened in 2000), owned and managed by the city, attracted more than 34,000 unique visits from 14,000 visitors over the last year.
- A centrally located greenspace on Sharon Boulevard, which includes pickleball courts, tennis courts, walking trails, a lake, and pavilion.

The city can continue investing in infrastructure that supports pedestrian access and connectivity, particularly emphasizing connections between residential neighborhoods, Dora Park, City Hall, the Horse Creek Golf Course, and Horse Creek Trail. This would encourage development of what urban designers call "third spaces," informal gathering places like parks and coffee shops that provide an alternative to home and work, where individuals connect with others and build community. Third spaces strengthen local ties, build community, and even support growth of the local economy. [Research](#) conducted by professors at the Columbia University's Business School found that the introduction of a new Starbucks Cafe increased entrepreneurship in the surrounding neighborhood by between 2.3 and 11.8%.

Community art projects, farmers markets, and pollinator gardens are also low-cost ways to improve quality of place. In Birmingham, the “Vulcans on Parade” community art project led by Vulcan Park and Museum’s Junior Board brought seventeen miniature Vulcan replicas to public spaces throughout the city of Birmingham. Community leaders in Fayette, AL brought a local farmer’s market to a downtown community area to encourage foot traffic in the city center. Local leaders in Atmore, AL constructed a Water Conservation and Butterfly Pollination Park with funding through a T-Mobile grant to encourage foot traffic and community engagement in the downtown district. The following recommendations focus on enhancing connectivity, building a walkable environment, encouraging wellness, and supporting daily interactions:

2.1 Strengthen Recreational Facilities near City Hall and Connect Public Spaces

Dora Park, Dora Police Station, and City Hall – all located near the geographical center of the city - collectively occupy a site where modest public investments could support increased use by residents. The following recommendations can be funded through grants, business and industry sponsorships, and other types of philanthropic funding:

- Update and improve playground equipment to encourage daily usage
- Install lighting, benches, tables, shade structures to encourage community use
- Install sustainable landscaping to enhance environment for humans and other life
- Improve access from Dora Park to the walking trail around the lake
- Implement community artwork and branding to define Sharon Boulevard, City Hall, and Dora Park. For example, host a Walker County artist competition, in partnership with an entity like the Walker County Community Foundation, to commission local artwork for the park.
- Dedicate municipal-owned spaces for community gardens, pollinator gardens, a farmer’s market, and other outdoor activities.



Dora Playground (City of Dora Facebook Page)

2.2 Connect Neighborhoods to Public Spaces with Sidewalks and Infrastructure that Supports Alternative Transportation

Many residential areas along Sharon Boulevard are walking distance from the park, the high school, and Horse Creek Golf Course but lack sidewalks and crosswalks. In figure 1, we illustrate places where improved pedestrian access and bike lanes could support connection between residential neighborhoods, greenways, and destinations like the Mining Museum, Dora High School, Horse Creek Golf Course, and businesses on Highway 78. We recommend that Dora prioritize:

- Completion of sidewalk expansion project to increase walkability, connecting residential neighborhoods on Sharon Avenue with other amenities
- Expand alternative transportation infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling along corridors like Sharon Avenue. Grant funding could be leveraged to develop bike lanes, traffic calming measures, cross walks, and other safety measures for pedestrians. ALDOT's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants could be a source of funding to enhance the built environment for residents.

2.3 Improve Infrastructure for Parks and Recreation and Community Events

Dora has limited human and financial resources to invest in Parks and Recreation and similar city-led programming. Identifying cost-effective, sustainable ways to invest in youth sports programs and other services that improve quality of life can help the community attract and retain residents, which is critical for long term economic development. Our recommendations include:

- Hire a full-time Parks and Recreation Director and/or explore ways to partner with neighboring Sumiton to provide more comprehensive regional services.
- Expand youth sports offerings to include soccer, football, golf, etc. Explore the potential for sponsorship by local businesses and industry for youth sports programs.
- Assess existing city-owned properties for indoor recreation. The current Community Center next to City Hall is underutilized but well-positioned next to Dora Park. A renovated Community Center could accommodate a Parks and Recreation department with offices, indoor recreation equipment for residents, programs for Dora's growing senior population, and space for meetings or events. The national guard property could be repurposed as a gym to support activities like youth basketball and volleyball.

- Build capacity for festivals, farmers markets, and community gatherings in the parking lot of City Hall. This centrally located site is ideal for outdoor events. By investing in tents and supporting access for food trucks, Dora could host 2-4 events per year. This site could also accommodate seasonal vendors, like Christmas tree and pumpkin vendors.
- Explore the potential to engage Main Street Alabama as a Network or Designated Community to build local capacity.
- Bring an annual local health fair to the Community Center to provide baseline wellness information to residents.
- Work with the Walker County Auburn Cooperative Extension System (ACES) to see what other programs and resources could be brought to the Community Center, including programs like OnMed health care station to provide free telehealth services.
- Explore potential to attract other rural medical services, like Capstone Health or Cahaba Medical Center to east Walker County.
- Encourage local nonprofits like Backyard Blessings and City of Lights to utilize the Community Center and adjacent outdoor spaces for special events; large fundraisers; food distribution; and holiday toy, clothing, book, or food drives.

2.4 Maximize Impact of Horse Creek Golf Course on the Local Economy

Horse Creek Golf Course is on Highway 78, near the Marathon Gas Station (in Dora) and the Walmart (in neighboring Sumiton), providing easy access for visitors. The golf course is walking distance from Dora High School, a large residential neighborhood, and the Horse Creek Trail. Placer.ai geofencing data, which tracks cell phone data of visitors to and from a defined location, estimates that Horse Creek Golf Course attracted more than 34,000 unique visits from an estimated 14,000 visitors over the last year. A detailed summary of this data can be found in the appendix. Many of these users travelled from the greater Birmingham metro area. Users of the golf course are, as a demographic, predominately male with high levels of educational attainment and higher per capita income than the population of Walker County. The gas station and the Walmart see a high number of visits from individuals going to or leaving the golf course. Placer.ai data estimates that 13% of visitors stop at the Marathon in Dora on their way to or immediately after visiting the golf course.

CITY OF DORA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

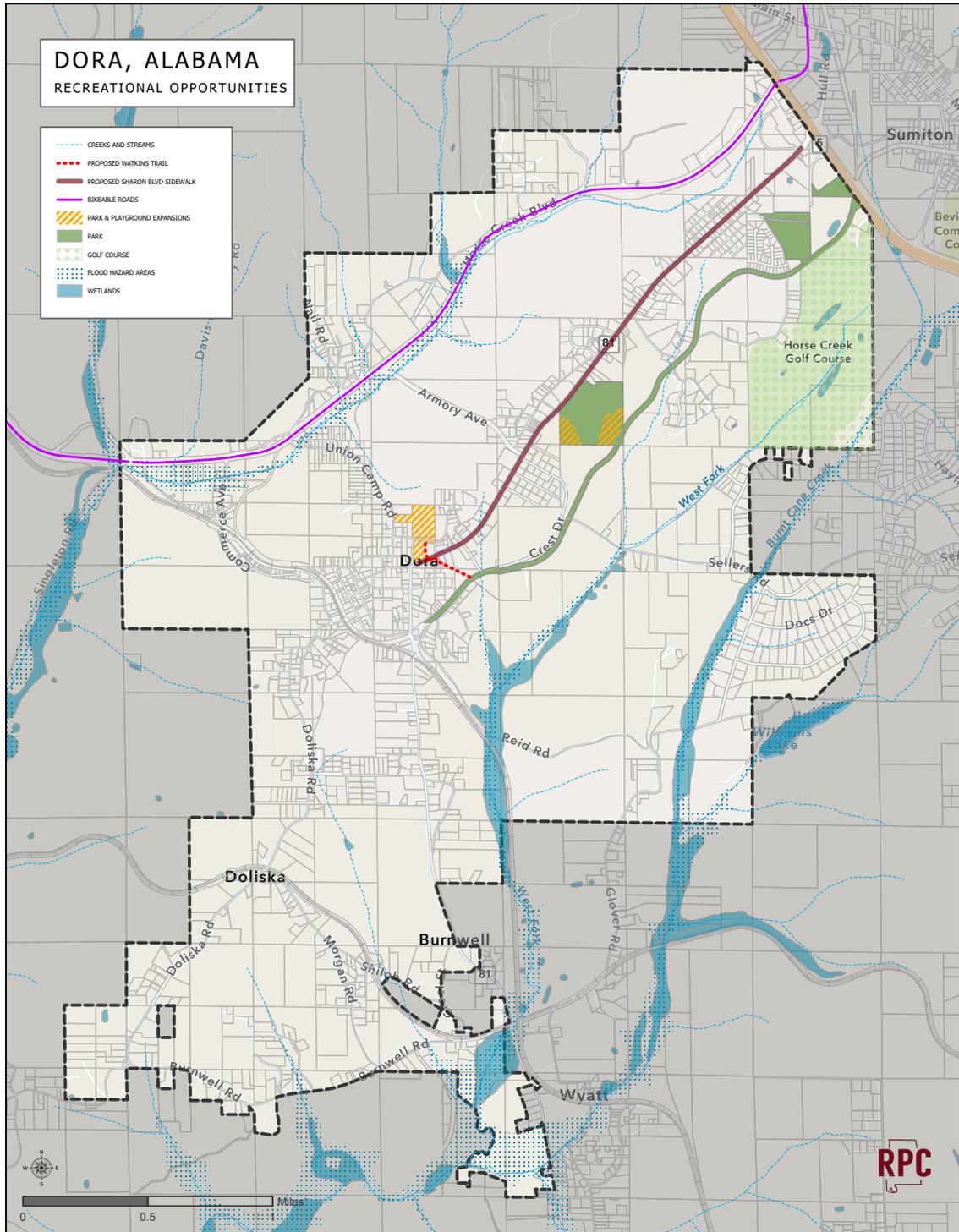
Below are recommendations to encourage greater use of the golf course and maximize its impact on the local economy:

- Encourage use for golf course for more regional corporate golf tournaments.
- Develop youth golf programs to serve Walker County families and encourage greater use by Walker County residents.
- Strengthen name, branding, and marketing of onsite restaurant so that visitors know that it exists and offers full meal service.
- Encourage development of a local restaurant or food truck site near golf course.
- Develop additional amenities to serve entire families.



Horse Creek Golf Course (Horse Creek Golf Course Website)

Map 2: Outdoor Recreational Opportunities



Goal 3: Maximize Local Impact of New Developments

Proposed commercial, retail, hotel, and industrial development along I-22 at Exit 78 has potential to significantly grow revenue – particularly through sales tax – for the City of Dora. Commercial development is a significant indicator for local revenue and municipalities with a high ratio of commercial development to residential development report high tax revenue per capita. Alabama cities heavily depend on sales tax for their revenue – 60% of municipal revenues statewide come from sales tax. This is because Alabama has some of the lowest property tax rates and some of the highest sales tax rates in the nation.

According to a [2022 report](#) by the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, Oxford and Homewood ranked in the top five cities in the state for tax revenue per capita due to their unusually high ratio of commercial property to residential. Both communities have large commercial developments positioned on major interstate corridors. Oxford has expanded its footprint on I-20 considerably through annexation. In 2022, 77% of the city’s revenue come from sales tax, with a greater proportion of that revenue spent on Parks and Recreation programs than any other city in Alabama. Homewood, which also benefits from high property taxes, generates more total tax revenue than other city in the state (\$2,674 per capita). Homewood receives 51% of its annual revenue from sales tax, much of which is generated by the Wildwood Shopping Center off I-65 where Walmart, Sam’s Club, Lowes, and Hobby Lobby are tenants.

In 2023, Dora annexed the Heritage Landing commercial development as well as a number of residential properties adjacent to the site. Heritage Landing, owned by the Drummond Company, is a more than 200-acre surface mine reclamation project. Currently, 50 acres are cleared, leveled, and prepped for commercial development, and Love’s Travel Stops & Country Stores has committed to development of a large-scale travel center on 20 acres that will create 60 jobs. The project, which includes more than 100 gas pumps and two in-house restaurants, is of a scale similar to a Buc-ee’s. An additional 11 commercial lots, adjacent to the Love’s site, are available for development and the owners hope to attract additional retail, restaurants, and hotels. Industrial development, approximate to this site, is also currently in the planning stages.

By annexing properties into the city limits, Dora stands to benefit from sales tax revenue. The city is also facilitating this development by investing in extension of water and sewer infrastructure to the site. The city has leveraged CDBG and Appalachian Regional Commission funding to support these investments.

Below, we provide a series of recommendations to ensure that revenues from this site have a direct and meaningful impact on the City of Dora:

3.1 Leverage Low-Cost Financing and SEEDS Grants to Reduce Burden of Infrastructure Investments

The City of Dora is familiar with funding from the state small cities CDBG grant program and the Appalachian Regional Commission's Area Development program to support municipal investments in infrastructure to support growth. Two additional sources of funding that could be valuable for future investments are the USDA's loan guarantee program and the Alabama SEEDS Act grant program. USDA's loan guarantee credit enhancement program allows municipalities and counties in rural areas to secure low interest rates for major investments in the kind of infrastructure that supports economic development. Through the loan guarantee program, USDA backs a significant portion of the loan, enabling the borrower to negotiate favorable rates with the lender. The Alabama SEEDS Act grant program could further assist the City of Dora in reducing the cost of its investments in infrastructure to support development of future economic development sites along I-22.

3.2 Levy Local Diesel, Sales, Lodging, and/or Ad Valorem Taxes to Support Critical City Needs, like Investments in Education

We heard consistently from residents that improvement of the local public schools is a critical step for attracting residents over time. Although Dora is part of the Walker County School System, the community benefits from the presence of Dora High School within the city limits. Plans are already underway for the development of a new high school on the property and renovation of the current high school into a local middle school. Elementary age students attend school in neighboring Sumiton.

Immediate access to local schools makes Dora an attractive place for young families, and leveraging new developments for greater investment in these local schools can help build a stronger school district. One way to leverage prospective development on I-22 would be to dedicate future revenues – through marginal diesel, sales, lodging and/or ad valorem taxes – for long-term investment in Dora High School and Middle School, public preschool programs, after school programs, and other local

3.3 Execute Targeted Strategy for Commercial Development on Highway 78

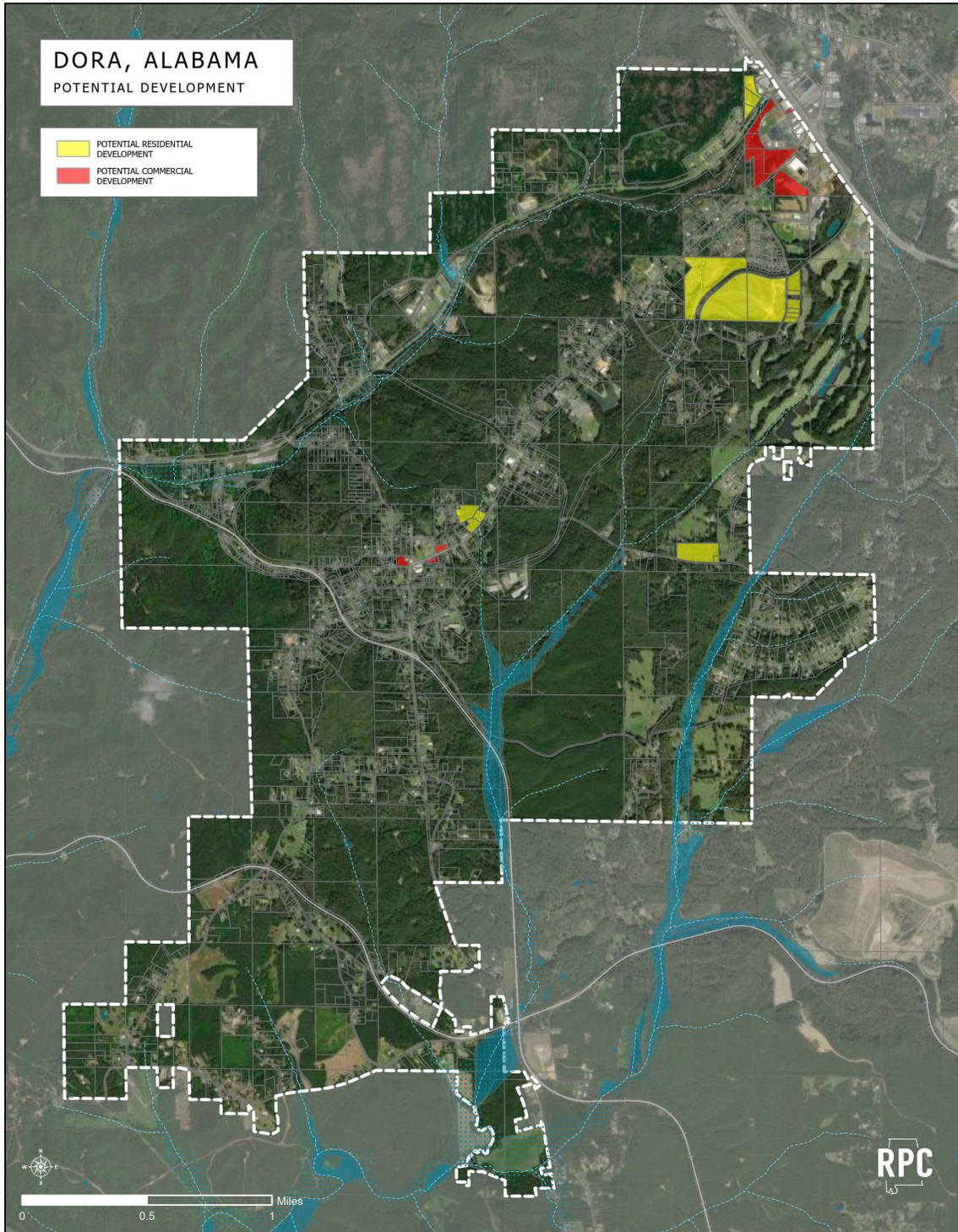
Historically, Dora's commercial development has all been located on Highway 78. Dora Utilities owns an aging strip mall property on Highway 78 that is in need of redevelopment. The following steps can help lay a foundation for future quality commercial development, bringing increased revenue to the city while also serving the needs of local residents:

- Comprehensive zoning and code enforcement to facilitate redevelopment of this site in a way conforms with city priorities, including recruitment of retail that can generate local sales tax revenue and creating spaces where local small businesses can thrive.
- Comprehensive planning to identify future land use strategies to encourage the type of future development that is of interest to the city. For instance, the area around Horse Creek Golf Course sees the greatest amount of visitor traffic. It may be valuable to assess development potential for properties in immediate proximity to this site.
- Engagement with an entity like Retail Strategies to explore the potential for Hwy 78 to attract the kind of retail that can serve residents throughout Walker County and west Jefferson County.



Heritage Landing Site (Jason Homan)

Map 3: Potential Development



Goal 4: Build Local Workforce and Small Business Development Programs

Dora's educational attainment levels are slightly lower than those of Walker County and Alabama more broadly. According to the ACS 5-Year estimates in 2022, high school graduates made up approximately 37% of adult residents. An additional 14% of residents have not completed high school, and 17% of residents have attended some college but received no degree. At the same time, Dora is fortunate to have a high school within the city limits and will soon have a local middle school. Both schools will be located within one mile of the campuses of Bevill State Community College, located across Hwy 78 in Sumiton.

Building stronger ties between the Dora High School and Bevill State Community College and identifying ways to expand workforce training for residents may have a meaningful impact on local incomes and spending power. Other ways to expand wealth creation could include programs to support entrepreneurship and small business development. Our recommendations are to:

- Expand workforce training opportunities and trades programs through local entities like the Dora High School and Bevill State Community College
- Encourage greater adoption of dual enrollment at Bevill State by Dora High School Students
- Prepare to leverage new state resources that will be made available through implementation of Alabama's landmark "Working for Alabama" legislation, including the Alabama Workforce Transformation Act, the Alabama Growth Alliance Act, the Alabama Career Pathways Act, the Childcare Tax Credit, the Housing Tax Credit and legislation to create research and development corridors.
- Engage the new Walker County Innovation Center to encourage residents to participate in digital upskilling and other pathways to jobs in the innovation economy. Programs and services that encourage participation in the innovation economy could be eligible for grant funding from Innovate Alabama and the U.S. Economic Development Administration.
- Partner with regional entities that support workforce development and small business entrepreneurship, like the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama's Builders and Backers Workshops, Central Six, the Birmingham Business Alliance, Central Alabama Redevelopment Alliance (CARA), and Co.Starters.
- Form a Chamber of Commerce or local Main Street organization to support existing and emerging small businesses (including food trucks and cottage businesses) seeking brick and mortar locations in and around the Hwy 78 commercial district.

Action Plan Resources

Table 3: Placemaking Strategies Resources

Strategy	Schedule	Resources
Outdoor Recreation Amenities	Mid-term	Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Freshwater Land Trust (FLT), Recreational Trails Program (RTP), and partnerships with local businesses for sponsorship opportunities.
Connectivity around City Hall	Long-term	Main Street Alabama, Opportunity Alabama, ADECA Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grants for pedestrian/bicycle projects, partnerships with local contractors.
Community Center Activation	Short-term	Local volunteers, CAWACO Resource Conservation and Development Council grants, Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging (M4A), Bevill State students for marketing and events, AARP Community Challenge Grants, Alabama Power Foundation, and partnerships with local civic organizations.
Farmer’s Market	Mid-term	Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), Alabama Farmers Market Authority, USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Walker Area Community Foundation, local growers and artisans, and potential partnerships with the Alabama Farm Credit or Alabama Agribusiness Council.
City Website	Short-term	Bevill State students (IT and marketing programs), Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM), and partnerships with local tech companies or web developers.
Education > Workforce Development	Long-term	Dora High School, Sumiton K-8, Bevill State (dual enrollment and workforce training), Alabama Career Centers, Alabama Workforce Development Board (AWDB), Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT), Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and local businesses/industries.
Community Events/Festivals	Short-term to Mid-term	Alabama Tourism Department, Walker Area Community Foundation, local sponsors, Alabama State Council on the Arts, Main Street Alabama, civic organizations, and city funds.

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Table 4: Infrastructure Resources

Strategy	Schedule	Resources
Roads/ Transportation/ Sidewalks	Mid-term	ADECA CDBG, Congressman Aderholt, Walker County Action Agency, Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) grants, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and local contractor partnerships.
Healthcare	Long-term	Cahaba Medical Center, OnMed telehealth services, Community Action Agency, Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) grants, Walker Area Community Foundation, and potential collaborations with universities for health programs.
Broadband	Mid-term	ADECA Broadband Accessibility Fund, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) programs, AT&T, Spectrum, Charter, Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) broadband funding, and Rural Utilities Service (RUS).
Residential Diversity	Long-term	Local realtors, HUD (HOME Program and Housing Choice Vouchers), Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Alabama Housing Finance Authority (AHFA), and partnerships with developers.
Utilities	Mid-term	ADECA CDBG, Economic Development Administration (EDA), Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), utility providers (e.g., Spire, Alabama Power), and private sector partnerships for large projects.
Buildings (Mining Museum, Storm Shelter)	Long-term	Local representatives, FEMA grants (e.g., Hazard Mitigation Grant Program), Alabama Historical Commission (if applicable to historic buildings), and Walker Area Community Foundation.
Fire/Police	Mid-term	Local representatives, state appropriations, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) Law Enforcement Grants, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grants.

Table 5: Infrastructure Resources

Strategy	Schedule	Resources
Heritage Landing	Short-term	Retailers, Economic Development Administration (EDA), Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Walker County Development Authority, City, Alabama Tourism Department, local investors.
Existing Business Development	Long-term	Opportunity Alabama, Main Street Alabama, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Alabama Department of Commerce (Made in Alabama initiative), local chambers of commerce.
Job Opportunities	Long-term	Walker County Development Authority, City, Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT), Alabama Career Centers, Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

SECTION II: STRATEGIC ANALYSIS – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

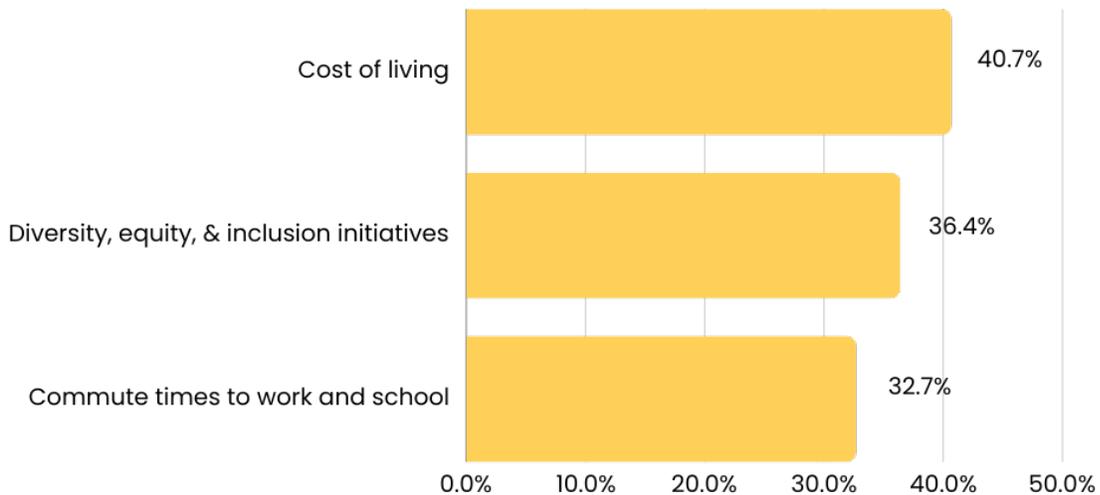
This section outlines the responses provided by residents and community leaders through public meetings and surveys. The input received through the community engagement process was critical for the development of the Action Plan. Below, we summarize responses regarding the community’s economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strengths

Some of Dora’s greatest strengths relate to quality of life. From both community and survey feedback, residents agreed that the city feels safe and welcoming. With access to educational opportunities and a focus on inclusion, the city has great potential to be a bedroom community for Birmingham. The graph below shows survey results about aspects of life in Dora.

Figure 5: Dora’s Strengths

More respondents rated the following categories satisfied/very satisfied than unsatisfied/very unsatisfied



Source: Dora EDSP SWOT Survey

In addition to those listed in Figure 5, Dora's strengths include proximity to railways, river access, and two major highways, which means potential for outdoor recreation and economic development. Residents generally need a car to get to work, go shopping, and attend appointments but expanded greenways can support access for those with limited transportation.

Finally, Dora benefits from the presence of strong nonprofits and churches that actively support the community in unique ways. Clothing and food are distributed periodically by the Mission of Hope. Backyard Blessings ensures school children have food for the weekends. Regional entities that have a profound impact on economic opportunity in Walker County include the Walker County Development Authority and the Walker Area Community Foundation. These are just a few community-serving organizations doing meaningful work in the city.

Weaknesses

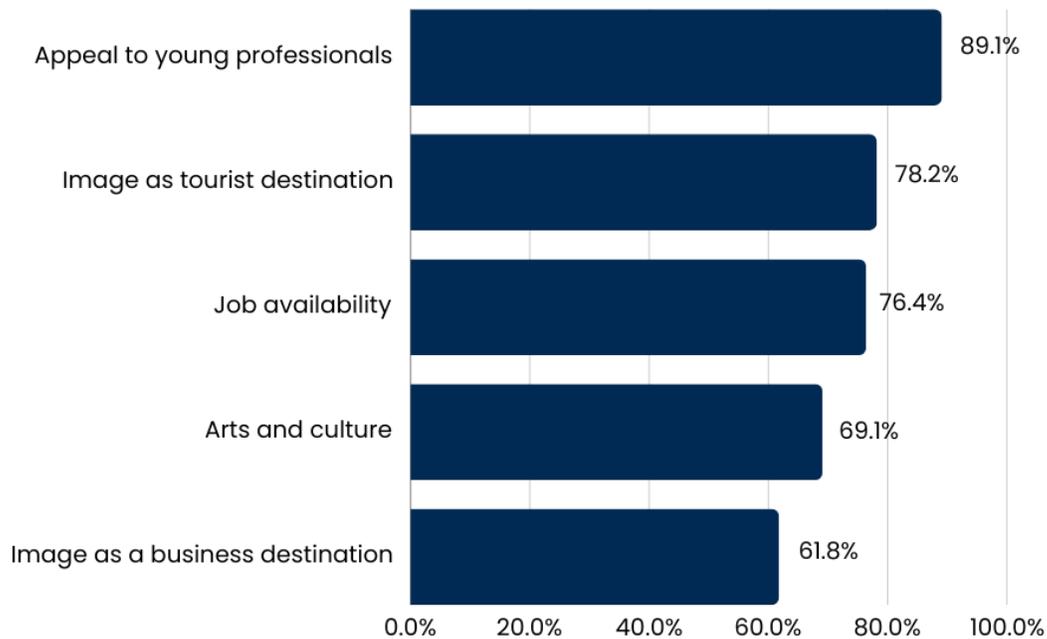
According to residents, the top weaknesses are limited career opportunities, a challenging environment for sustaining small businesses and recruiting new ones, and a lack of interest from tourists and young professionals. Residents expressed a desire for more retail, commercial and industrial development. Heritage Landing will bring much of that, but residents also desire new and stronger small businesses closer to the city center.

Dora's "downtown" commercial districts have historically tended to follow development of new traffic corridors (e.g., Highway 78 and Interstate 22). Entities like Mainstreet Alabama and Opportunity Alabama, which support many rural and economically distressed places, could help Dora leaders implement a strategy to maintain its small-town feel while supporting business growth. New and growing local businesses create jobs, help establish the city as a business and leisure destination, and appeal to younger families. The graph below illustrates survey results related to Dora's attractiveness as a destination for tourists, residents, and businesses.

Several community members wanted to see more utilization of the community center, which is used for private events, but in the past, it has been used to distribute medical supplies and hold holiday fairs. It could also be used for gatherings for children and senior citizens, reinforcing community.

Figure 6: Dora’s Weaknesses

The majority of respondents are unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with:



Source: Dora EDSP SWOT Survey

Opportunities

Dora and east Walker County have several development opportunities on the horizon. Heritage Landing will bring new jobs, quick-service restaurants, and revenue. Additional planned industrial development promises more jobs in the immediate vicinity. The vacant shopping mall by Piggly Wiggly could be filled with businesses that support quality of life, like coffee shops, clothing stores, and hair salons. Residents see opportunity for improved healthcare access and the kind of local restaurant that can provide a good steak for an anniversary or celebratory event. One example of creative mixed-use development by a local entity is the old high school, now used by the City of Lights nonprofit as a recovery center, thrift store, and learning academy.

Maximizing engagement with the Walker County Development Authority, Walker Area Community Foundation, and Beville State would increase opportunities for workforce development, business support, and regional partnerships.

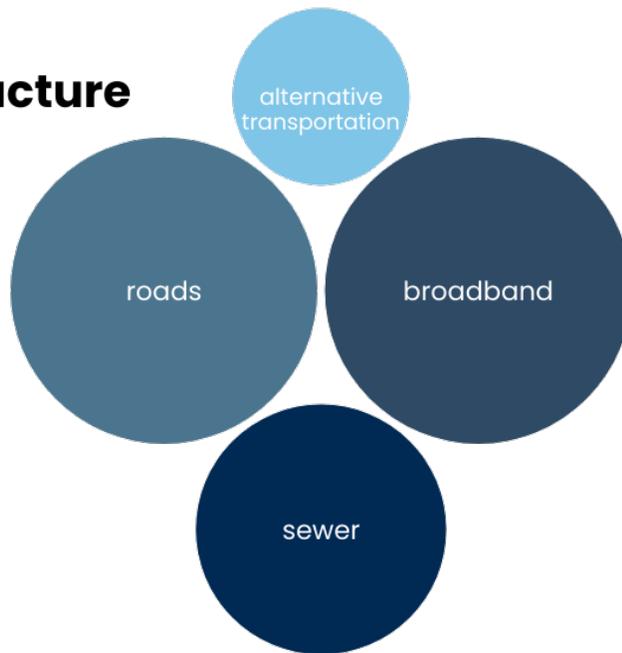
Threats

The “threats” section of a SWOT analysis is meant to reveal things to look out for as decisions are made about the future. Survey and community responses to this topic revolved around two topics-- infrastructure and economic resilience.

The committee expressed that roads, broadband, sewer, and alternative transportation are all infrastructure needs, in that order (see Figure 7). It should be noted that many of these infrastructure needs are also listed as assets in the “strengths” section, so nuances are important. For example, Dora is connected to two major highways, but minor roads could be improved, a common need for rural communities. According to ADECA maps and data, broadband is mostly accessible to the community, except for a few neighborhoods. These neighborhoods have not yet found an internet service provider to serve their area. Sewer is available, but more was needed to supply Heritage Landing, which came at a significant cost. Lastly, there are trails that could be used for alternative transportation, but there are not designated bike lanes or transit systems.

Figure 7: Dora’s Infrastructure Needs

What is Dora's biggest infrastructure need?



Source: Dora EDSP Committee Feedback

Economic resilience is a key component to successful communities across time. The SWOT revealed that residents feel that attracting and retaining a workforce and having ample job opportunities are critical. Additionally, residents felt that overreliance on a single industry or employer has negatively impacted the community in the past. Many cities in Walker County feel similarly about this topic as the coal industry continues to decline.

In terms of economic development, residents have expressed that there is room for growth. Figure 8 shows that the average score a resident would give for the city's economic performance over the last five years is 2.5 out of 5. The chart at the end of this EDSP lists potential projects with their corresponding resources.

Figure 8: Dora's Economic Performance

How would you rate the city's economic performance/growth over the last 5 years?



Source: Dora EDSP SWOT Survey

When the Dora EDSP committee was asked which specific businesses they would like to see start up, they ranked sit-down restaurants as most important, with coffee shops at the bottom of the list. However, many said that they ranked coffee shops last because there is a newer coffee option in town.

Figure 9: Dora's Business Preferences

How would you rank the businesses you would most like to see?



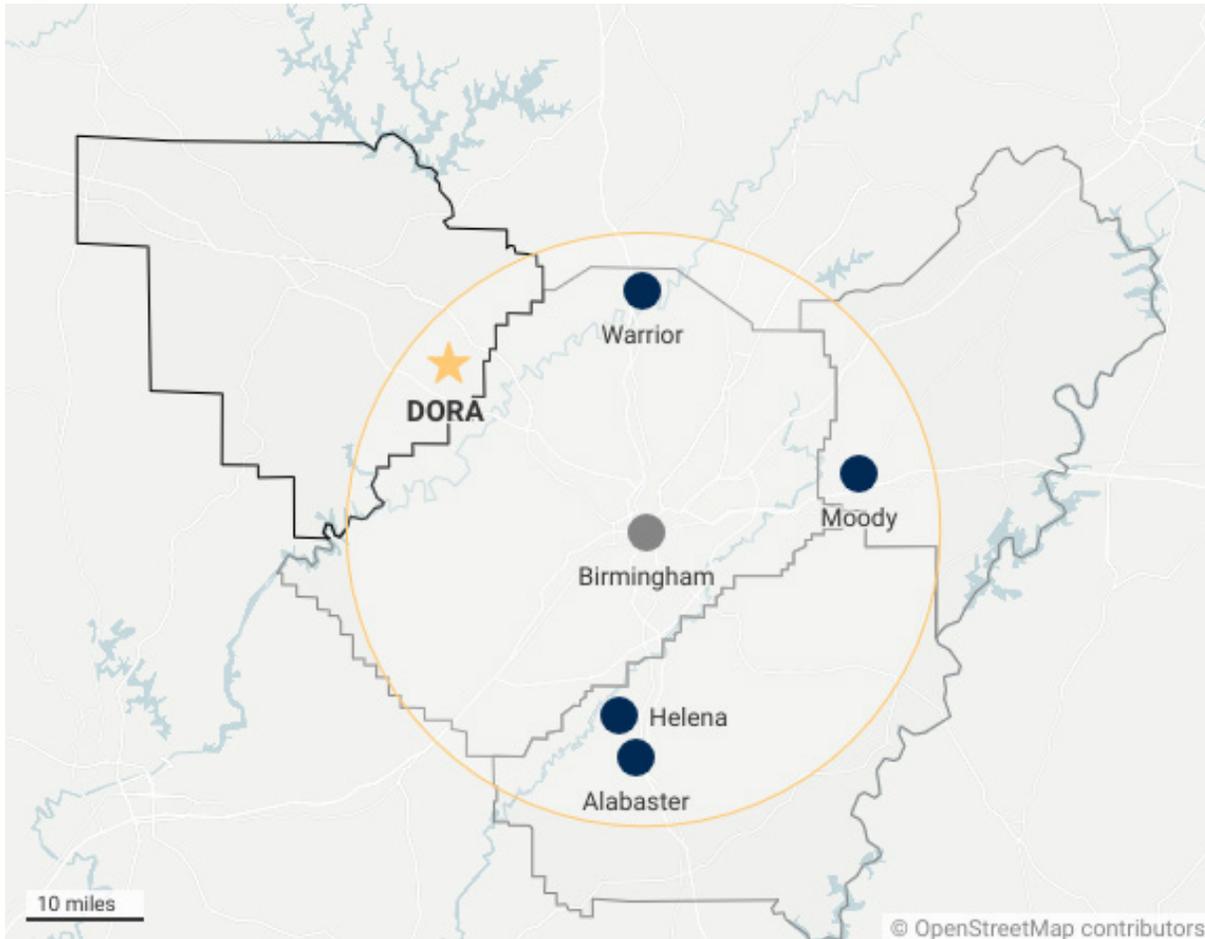
Source: Dora EDSP Committee Feedback



Green Top Barbecue, an existing Dora restaurant (Alabama Travel Website)

Peer Communities

Figure 10: Dora's Business Preferences



- Growing City
- ★ Focus City
- 25 Mile Radius from Birmingham

Source: Datawrapper

Dora can draw valuable insights from peer communities, like Moody, Helena, and Alabaster, that have used their proximity to Birmingham to local advantage, leveraging geographic location in distinct ways.

Moody has been successful with strategic planning and industrial growth. Through initiatives like “Moody at the Crossroads,” the city has integrated land use, transportation, and economic goals. Developments like Kelly Creek Commerce Park have brought investments and jobs to the area. Dora can emulate Moody’s approach by prioritizing comprehensive planning, identifying potential sites for industrial development, and seeking grant funding for the infrastructure needed to attract businesses.

Helena has focused on preserving community identity while fostering growth. The city’s revitalization of its historic downtown has combined preservation with new business opportunities. Although Dora lacks a traditional downtown, it can create a central gathering space—such as the area around City Hall—to host events and foster engagement. By celebrating its heritage and promoting unique community activities, Dora can strengthen its identity and attract visitors.

Alabaster has achieved its growth by balancing residential and commercial development, strongly leveraging its proximity to I-65. Projects like the Colonial Promenade and District 31 have brought retail and dining options to the city while supporting residential growth. Dora’s affordability and location on I-22 make it a strong area for attracting retail and business growth that can generate greater municipal revenue while being an ideal destination for families seeking alternatives to crowded suburbs and congested traffic corridors.

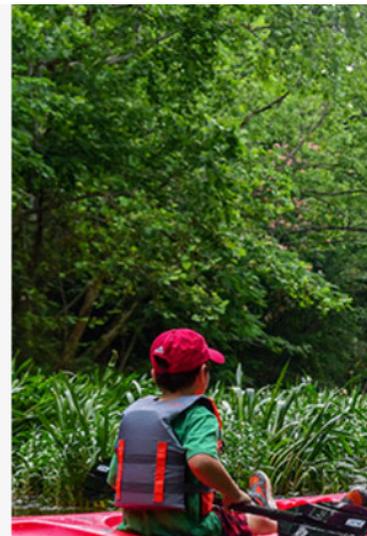
Lights on the water, the delights of a small town

Rippling water, a soft trail of lights and laughter drifting from balcony overlooks might well be your first experience in a town full of warm and welcoming people.

The City of Helena is a vibrant place ideally positioned central to neighboring communities just south of Birmingham.



HELENA
ALABAMA



Example from Helena, Alabama Website

SECTION III: STRATEGIC ANALYSIS – QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

This section provides background and baseline data trends to help understand Dora’s current market conditions. The EDSP was developed with an eye towards how to improve existing conditions and build long-term economic resilience.

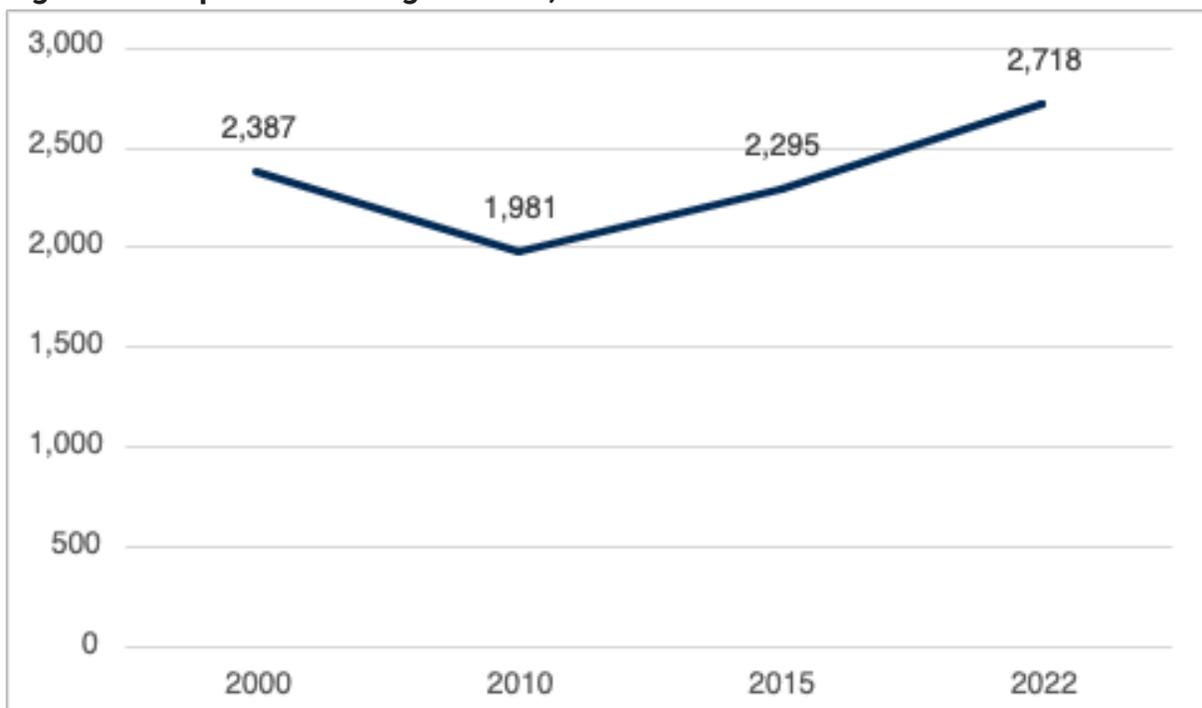
Existing Conditions

Population Characteristics

POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD TRENDS

As of 2022, the City of Dora has a total population of 2,718. The number of residents declined by 20.5% in 2010 but recovered steadily in the years between 2010 and 2022 (see Figure 11). The number of residents increased by 37.2% from 2010 to 2022. Some recent population growth should be attributed to the city’s annexation of new properties to the south, including annexation of residential properties in the Yerkwood neighborhood.

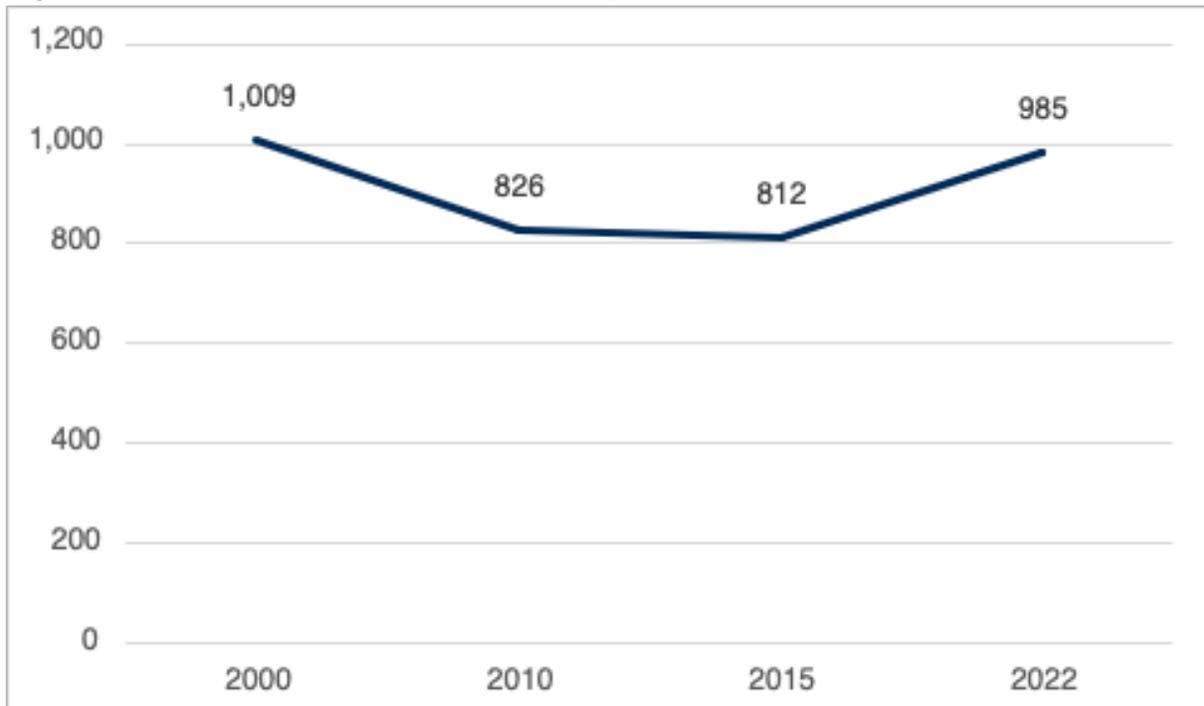
Figure 11: Population Change in Dora, 2000 to 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2010 to 2022)

The number of households in the City of Dora fluctuated similarly to the population. From 2000 to 2015, the number of households in the City of Dora decreased by 19.5 percent, from 1,009 to just 812. That number has rebounded, with 985 households in 2022 (see Figure 12). While this increase may be attributed in part to annexation, the city has almost reached the number of households it had in 2000.

Figure 12: Number of Households in Dora, 2000 to 2022

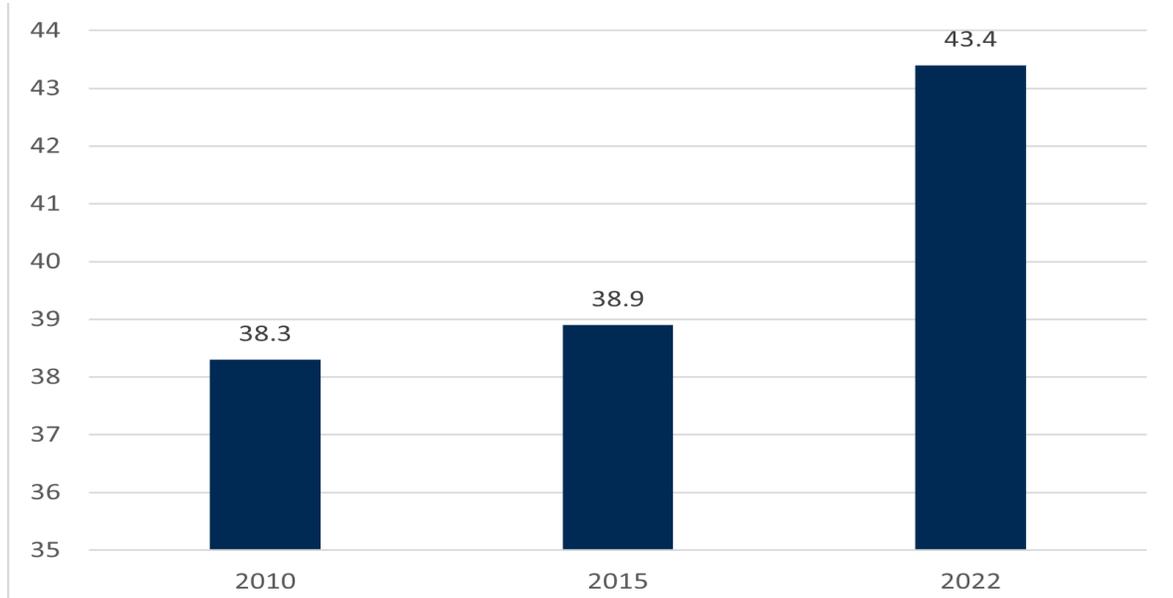


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2010 to 2022)

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION

The median age in Dora in 2022 was 43.4, higher than Alabama’s median age of 39.8. Dora’s population is older and aging at a faster pace than the state as a whole (see Figure 13). Dora has also been aging more rapidly than the U.S. population. Since 2010, the city’s median age has increased by 5.1 years, while the median age of the nationwide population increased by only 1.6 years.

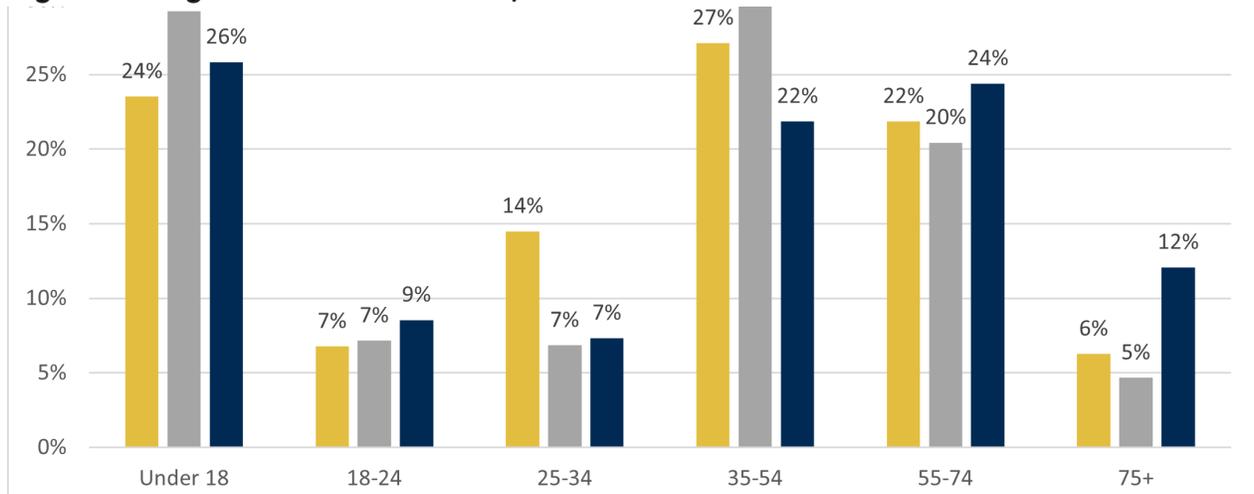
Figure 13: Median Age in Dora, 2010 to 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2010 to 2022)

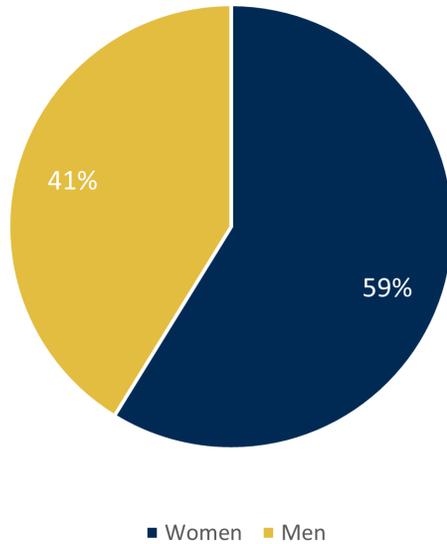
The largest source of Dora’s recent population growth has been in residents aged 55-74 and 75+, as illustrated in Figure 14. The 75+ population increased by 206.5 percent between 2015 and 2022, and the 55-74 age range increased by 41.4 percent. Dora has also seen 44% growth of residents under the age of 18, suggesting the city is becoming increasingly attractive to young families.

Figure 14: Age Distribution in Dora, 2010 to 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2010 to 2022)

Figure 15: Distribution of Population by Sex, 2022



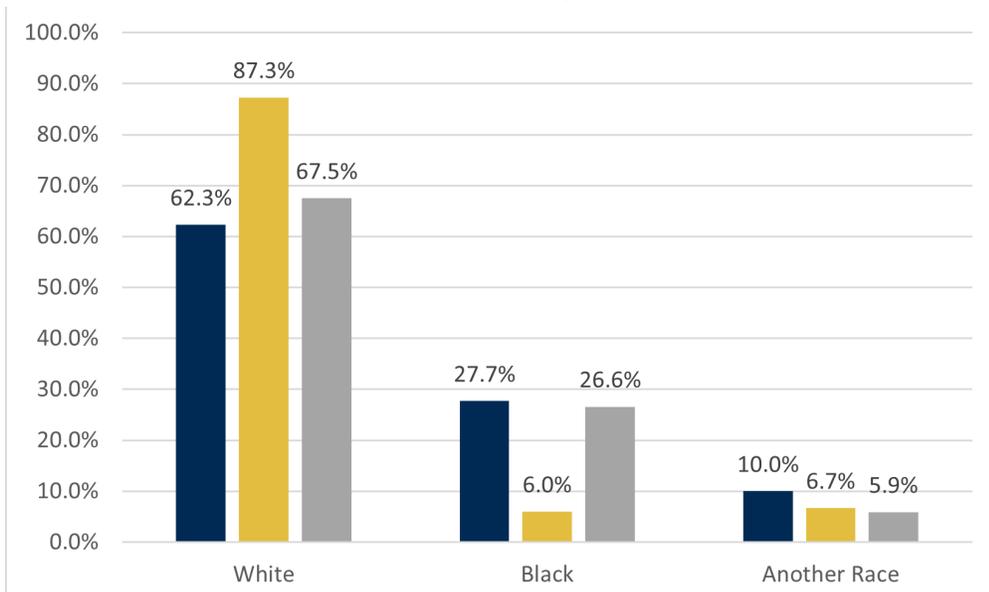
Dora has more female residents than male. 58.8 percent of Dora’s population is female, compared to 51% of the nationwide population (see Figure 15).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

Dora’s population is more diverse than statewide levels and significantly more diverse than Walker County. In 2022, about 62% of Dora’s population was white while about 28% was black, compared to statewide percentages of 67.5% and 26.6%, respectively (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Distribution of Population by Race in Dora (2022) and Alabama (2020)



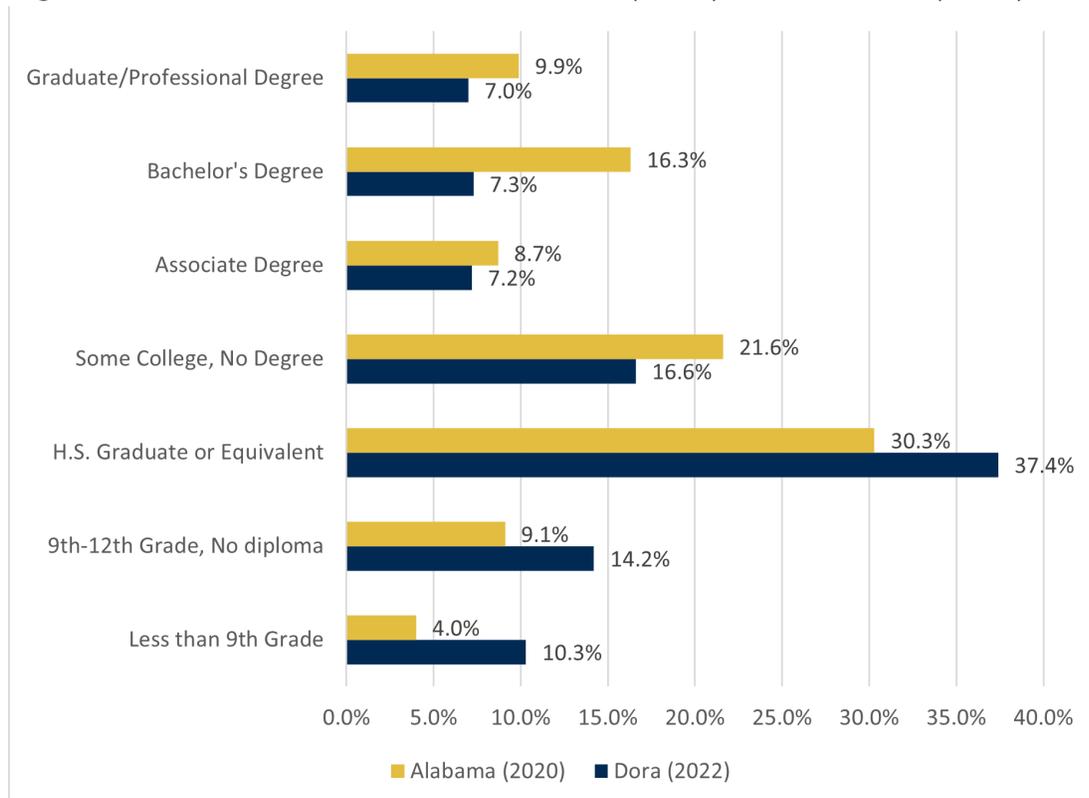
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2020 to 2022)

Educational Characteristics

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Figure 17 illustrates how educational attainment of Dora’s working-age population (those 25 years and older) compares with that of the State of Alabama. Dora’s working age population has lower levels of education than the state more broadly with 37.4% of Dora’s working age population having a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of education. An estimated 24.5% of Dora adults do not have a high school degree or equivalent, higher than Alabama’s rate of 13.1%. Just 16.6% of adult residents have some college credits without a college degree, and just over 7% have a bachelor’s degree as their highest education credential.

Figure 17: Educational Attainment in Dora (2022) and Alabama (2020)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2020 to 2022)

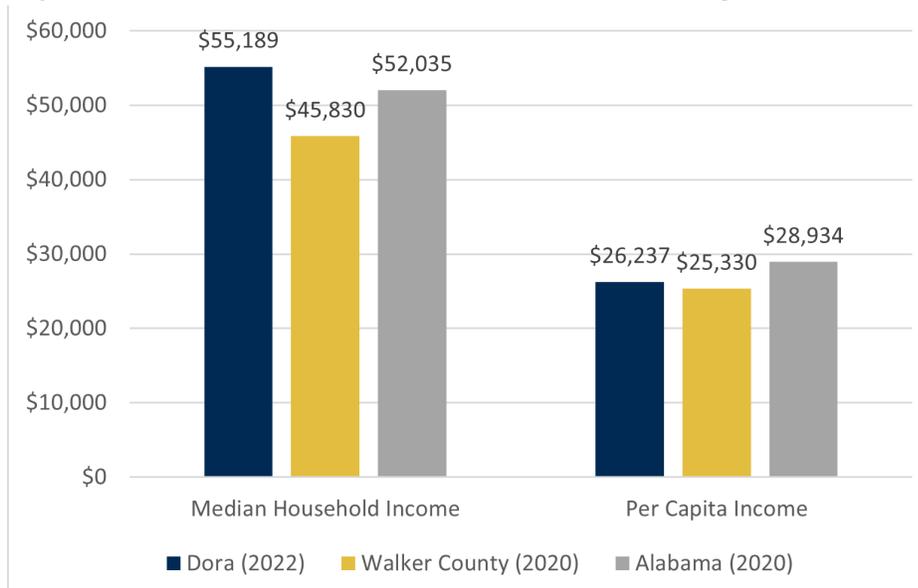
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dora has one high school, and Dora students attend schools in Sumiton for elementary and middle school. In the 2021-2022 school year, Dora High School had 445 students enrolled, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Sumiton students attend Dora High School as well.

Dora’s median household income is close to the statewide level, but the city’s per capita income remains much lower than the statewide rate.

- Median Household Income is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families, including those with no income, to describe the “middle” of the income range of household earnings within Dora. The median divides the income distribution into two equal parts: half of the cases falling below the median income and half above the median.
- Per Capita Income represents the mean income computed for every man, woman, and child within the town and is derived by dividing the aggregate income earned from the town’s income-earning population by the town’s total population. Per capita income can be used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population.

Figure 18: Median Household Income and Per Capita Income for City, County, & State



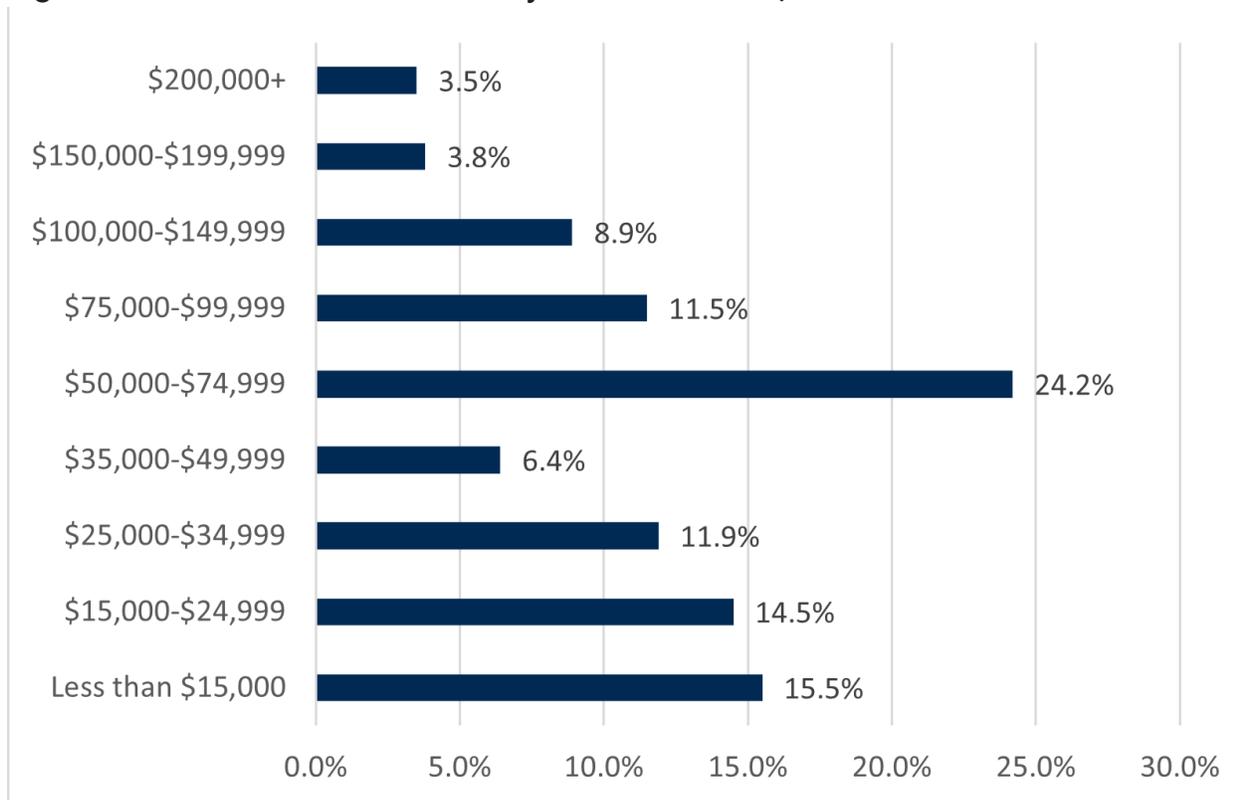
The city’s median household income in 2022 was \$55,189, higher than Walker County’s (\$45,830) but lower than the State of Alabama’s (\$52,035). Dora’s 2022 per capita income was \$26,237, slightly higher than 2020 Walker County’s per capita income of \$25,330 but below the 2020 statewide per capita income of \$28,934.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2020 to 2022)

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION BY BRACKET

Figure 19 outlines the percentages of Dora households within each income bracket. The largest income bracket in Dora was between \$50,000 and \$74,999 (2021), which includes 24.2% of households. The next largest bracket, however, was less than \$15,000, which included over 15% of households, suggesting that poverty is a significant challenge for this community. The smallest income bracket was over \$200,000, with just 3.5% of households falling in the high-income range.

Figure 19: Household Distribution by Income Bracket, 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2022)

Poverty

The U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines provide income thresholds which scale up depending on the size of the household – as the number of people in a household increases, the minimum amount of income necessary for that household to remain out of poverty also increases.

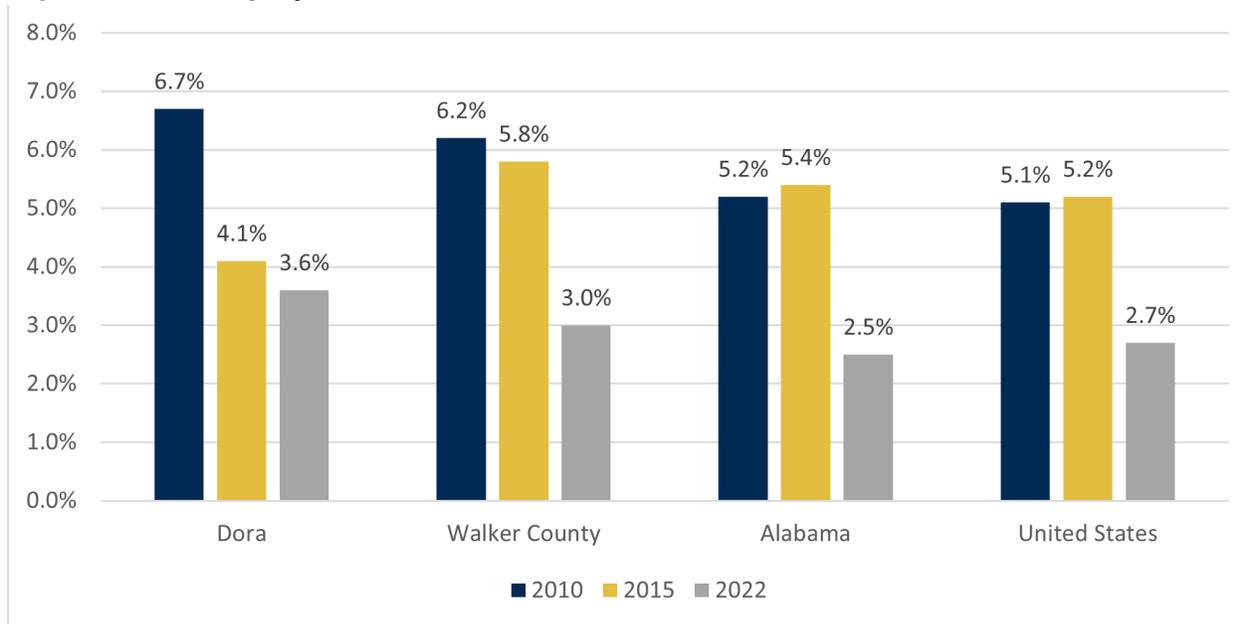
According to Census estimates from 2022, more than 15 percent of Dora’s residents lived below the poverty line. The average household size in Dora in 2022 was approximately 3 people. For this household size, the median household income for the poverty threshold is \$23,030. The city’s median household income of \$55,189 is above this threshold and would meet the income requirements necessary for a household with over 8 people.

Labor and Employment Characteristics

UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The unemployment rate in Dora was 3.6% in 2022. Although the COVID-19 Pandemic likely impacted employment levels, this metric has been steadily decreasing over the last decade from an unemployment rate of 6.7% in 2010 (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Unemployment Rates, 2010 to 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2010 to 2022)

The unemployment rate only measures the population within an area actively seeking work, not discouraged workers who have left the workforce.

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The labor force participation rate measures the percentage of the total working age population (or those over 16 years old) against the number of these residents who are actively engaged in the workforce, whether they are employed or looking for work. Dora's labor force participation rate has fallen between 2010 and 2022, suggesting that, despite low unemployment rates, many working age adults in Dora may be having difficulty finding good employment (see Table 6).

Table 6: Labor Force Participation Comparison

Region	2010	2022	% Change
Dora Labor Force Participation Rate	54.9%	47.5%	13.5%
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	6.7%	3.6%	46.3%
Walker County Labor Force Participation Rate	53.4%	52.4%	1.9%
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	6.2%	3%	51.6%
Alabama Labor Force Participation Rate	60.1%	58.6%	2.5%
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	5.2%	2.5%	51.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2010 to 2022)

COMMUTER-ADJUSTED POPULATION AND LABOR FLOWS

The commuter adjusted population represents the number of people, residents or commuters, who are within the city limits during regular working hours (otherwise known as daytime population). This metric is calculated by subtracting the number of workers leaving the area for work from the summation of the city's population and the workers working within the city. The equation is listed below:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Total resident population} \\
 & + \text{Total workers working in area} \\
 & - \text{Total workers living in area} \\
 & = \text{Commuter-adjusted population}
 \end{aligned}$$

Commuter-adjusted population measures can help define the consumer base for the city, since often there are commuters within an area that are attracted to the city for work or school. Including commuters in a market analysis can help establish spending patterns and illustrate potential demand for industry, especially retail or food and beverage stores.

Table 7: Total (Residential) Population vs. Commuter-Adjusted Population, 2022

Population Category	Number of Individuals
Total Population	2,718
Worker Population	+ 712
Workers Living in Area	- 930
Commuter-Adjusted Population:	= 2,500

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022)

Analyzing the labor flow of workers in Dora can help determine the extent Dora supplies labor force resources to external areas and/or attracts labor from surrounding areas into the jurisdiction. Since commuter-adjusted population includes the total number of people, including those who are not in the labor force (children, retirees, etc.), evaluating labor flows can help determine the number of commuter-adjusted population that is represented by workers.

There are two ways to evaluate labor flows within the area. The first includes analyzing the municipality’s “Employment Efficiency,” or the local employee characteristics. The second analyzes “Labor Force Efficiency,” or the residential labor force characteristics within the area. These rates are listed in Tables 8 and 9. The most recent data for this information is from 2021 through the U.S. Census OnTheMap tool.

Table 8: Employment Efficiency in the City of Dora, 2010-2021

Employment Efficiency	2010		2021		Percent Change
	Count	Share	Count	Share	
Employed in the Selection Area	345	100%	515	100%	49.3%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	24	7%	36	7%	50%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	321	93%	479	93%	49.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application (2010 to 2021)

Table 9: Labor Force Efficiency in the City of Dora, 2010-2021

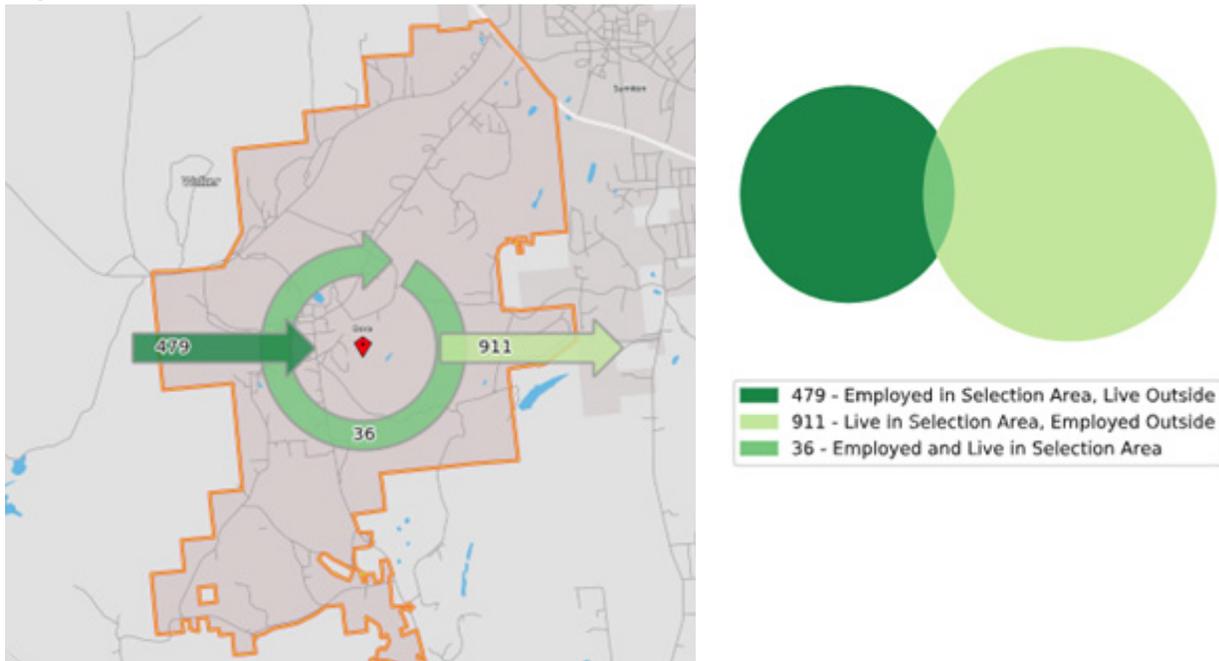
Region	2010		2021		Percent Change
	Count	Share	Count	Share	
Living in the Selection Area	833	100%	947	100%	13.7%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	24	2.9%	36	3.8%	50%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	809	97.1%	911	96.2%	12.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application (2010 to 2021)

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Since 2010, Dora has experienced a substantial increase in employment within the city. However, though employment opportunities have increased, only 36 workers live and work in the city limits. 93 percent of the employment opportunities in the city are filled by workers commuting into the city for their jobs, which is calculated as inflow, and Dora is supplying 911 workers for jobs in other areas, which is measured as outflow. The Net Labor Flow for Dora is illustrated in Figure 21.

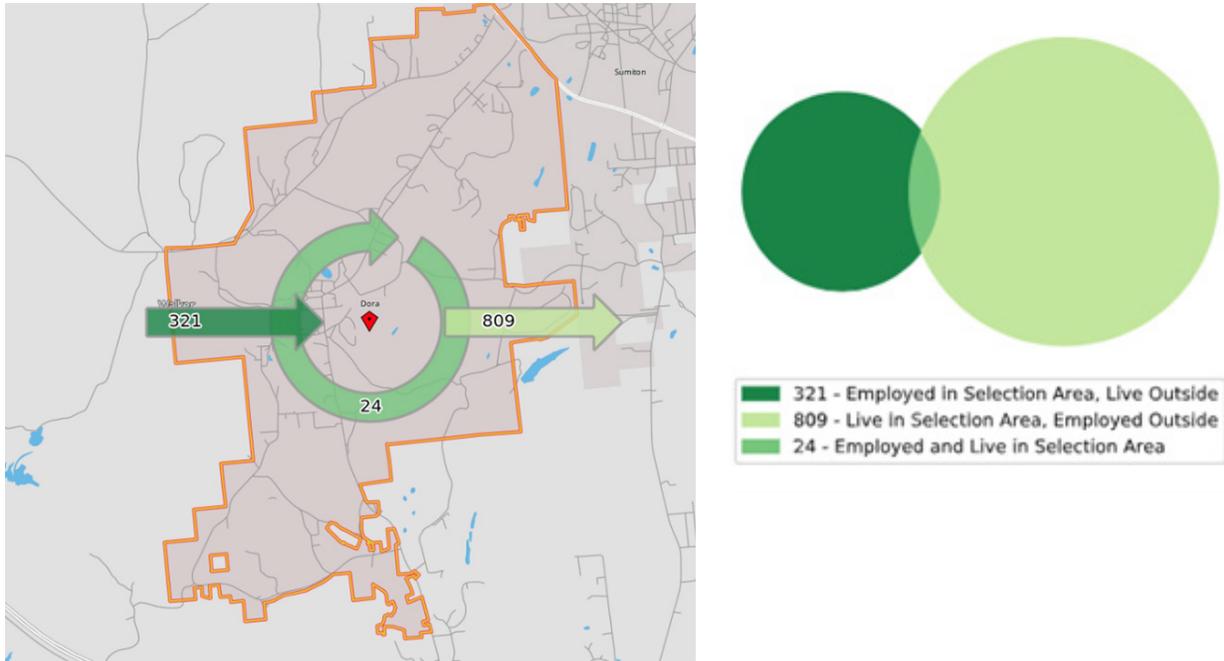
Figure 21: Net Labor Flow in Dora, AL, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application (2021)

The net labor flow in Dora has increased in all three categories since 2010, which is indicative of a growing population. The number of individuals traveling into Dora for work, however, is growing at a more significant rate, a result of growing employment opportunities in the area. The net labor flow in 2010 is illustrated in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Net Labor Flow in Dora, AL, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application (2010)

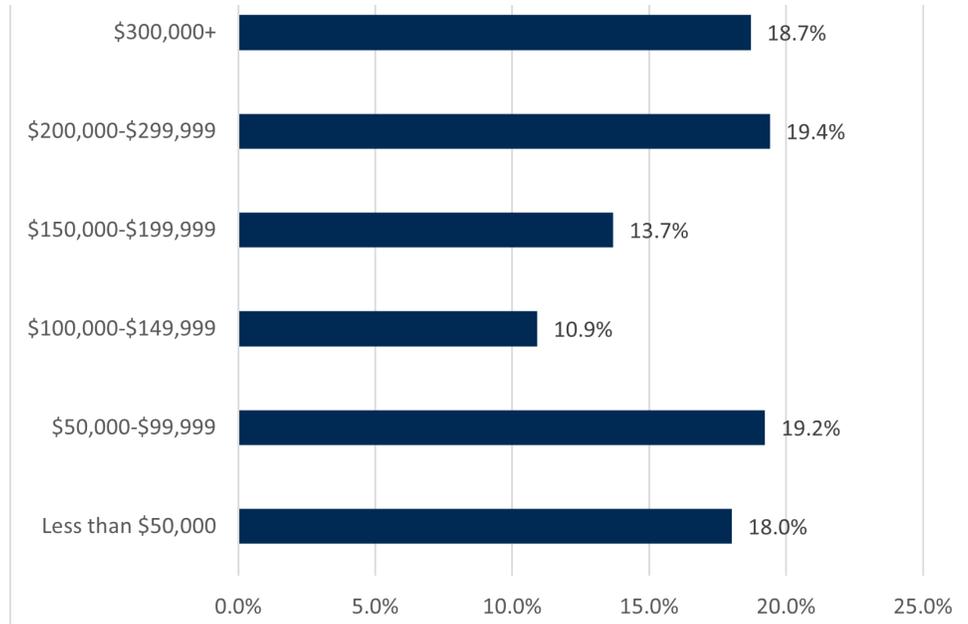
Housing Characteristics

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The median home value in Dora in 2021 was \$127,100, which was higher than the median home value in Walker County (\$109,600). A large share of homes in Dora (nearly 25%), however, are valued at less than \$50,000, as illustrated in Figure 23. On the upper end of home values, nearly 20% of homes are valued at over \$300,000.

According to the most recent Census data, more than half of Dora homeowners are spending less than 20% of their income on their mortgages. About half of renters (48.6%) spend between 15 and 19.9% of their income on rent. This indicates that rent or mortgages for households in Dora are generally affordable.

Figure 23: Housing Units by Market Value, 2022



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2022)

HOUSING AGE

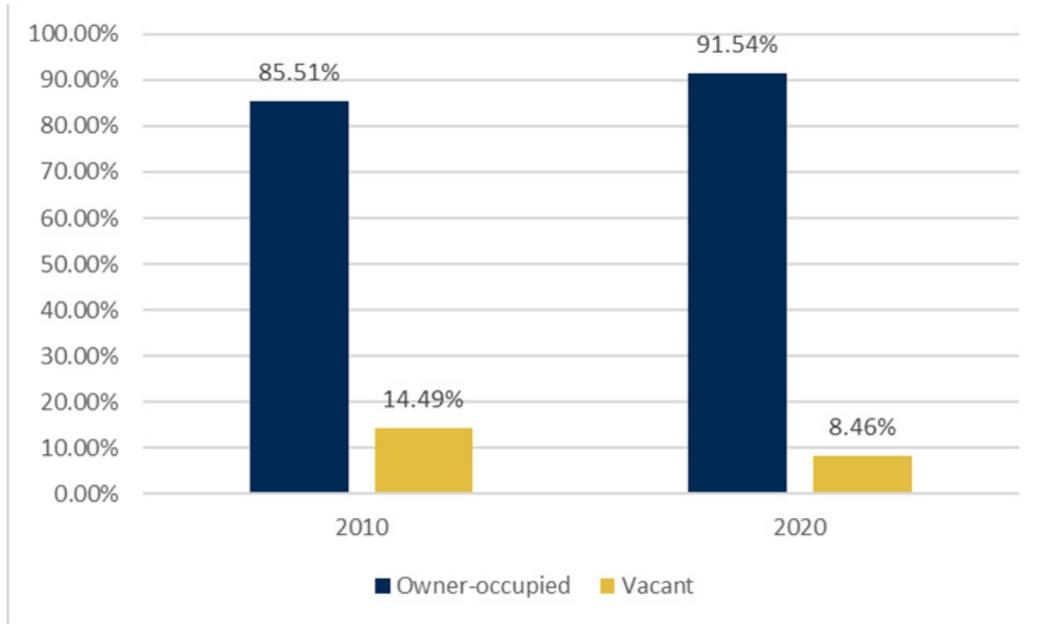
The value of Dora’s available housing units is likely impacted by the age of existing housing. The median year in which all housing units in Dora were built is 1970, twelve years higher than the county-wide median of 1982 and the state-wide median of 1984.

Over 11% of houses were built before 1940, while over 28% of houses were built between 1940 and 1960. Almost 25% of houses were built between 1960 and 1980, and over 25% of houses were built between 1980 and 2000. Dora has seen little recent housing development, with just 9.9% of houses built between 2000 and 2010, and only 0.3 percent of houses built in 2010 and after.

HOUSING OCCUPANCY

However, though housing units are older, the occupancy rate is high. Nearly 92% of homes in Dora are owner-occupied, and the housing vacancy rate is 8.5%. This rate has shrunk in the last decade, decreasing from 14.5% (see Figure 24). The decreasing vacancy rate indicates growing demand for housing, which impacts the overall local housing market and local property values.

Figure 24: Housing Units by Status, 2010 to 2020



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey (2010 to 2020)

Rental properties are important as they provide a flexible and convenient option for residents who may want to own a home or are not financially able to purchase a home. In Dora, 17.5% of housing units are rented. Including a variety of housing options in future development can help Dora diversify its housing base and increase its future resiliency.

Market Conditions

In this section, we provide a Market Analysis that evaluates Dora’s market and local consumer behavior and spending patterns. The Segmentation Profile subsection describes the socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyle preferences of the community’s residents.

Although the economic terms used in this section are clarified within the narrative, Table 10 provides definitions of each term for ease of reference.

Table 10: Definition of Terms Used

Population Category	Number of Individuals
LifeMode Group	A market category that generally describes an area’s residents based on shared common experiences or relevant demographic traits.
Market Potential	A measure of the likelihood of adults or households in a market area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the US average.
Index (MPI)	A measure of the likelihood of adults or households in a market area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the US average.
Spending Potential Index (SPI)	A comparison of local spending to US averages. Any increase or decrease from a value of 100 indicates difference in spending compared to the national average.
Tapestry Segments	A measure that provides greater detail into a community’s distinctive characteristics, including residents’ lifestyle choices and consumer purchasing preferences.

Consumer Behavior

CONSUMER SPENDING

Table 10 shows consumer spending in Dora in 2023 across various spending categories. The categories are not mutually exclusive; instead, they are broad enough to capture a more complete depiction of expenses. Both the total and average amount spent per household represent annual figures. Although this table represents spending by Dora households, each value includes money spent outside of Dora as well as within the city.

However, it is important to compare local spending levels to a broader average to compare Dora’s market conditions to a larger context. The Spending Potential Index (SPI) is a measure that compares local spending to the national average, which is represented by a value of 100. Any increase or decrease from 100 indicates how much more or less spending occurs in Dora compared to the national average. For example, an SPI of 90 for a certain category of goods or services would indicate that consumers in Dora spend 10 percent less than the national average on the items within that category.

The largest spending category for residents in Dora was Shelter, at over \$1,000 per month, which includes expenses such as mortgages and rent payments. The SPI for this category, however, was just 52, indicating that residents in Dora spend 48% less on Shelter than the national average and have a low cost of living. The smallest spending

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category was Personal Care Products & Services, with an average spending amount of \$540 per household annually and an SPI of 56.

All spending categories for residents in Dora have an SPI rate of at least 20 points lower than the national average, indicating that consumers who reside in Dora spend at least 20% less in every category than the average amount spent nationally. This could be an indication of lower prices of goods, overall lower spending levels, or lower household income levels.

Table 11: Consumer Spending by Residents of Dora, 2023

Spending Category	Total	Average Spending per Household	SPI
Shelter	\$11,939,49	\$12,935.53	52
Health Care	\$5,450,309	\$5,904.99	80
Food at Home	\$4,472,353	\$4,845.45	71
Food Away from Home	\$2,132,050	\$2,309.91	62
Entertainment/Recreation	\$2,430,092	\$2,632.82	70
Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind	\$2,107,640	\$2,283.47	73
Household Furnishings & Equipment	\$1,758,586	\$1,905.29	64
Travel	\$1,233,472	\$1,336.37	59
Apparel & Services	\$1,141,599	\$1,236.84	56
Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs	\$888,211	\$962.31	73
Education	\$702,003	\$760.57	42
Personal Care Products & Services	\$497,740	\$539.26	56

Source: Esri (2023)

CONSUMER PURCHASING PATTERNS

One way to analyze consumer behavior is by measuring the percentage of the population that consumes specific goods and services, which signifies the potential demand for the good or service within the area. It is important to note, however, that even if a large segment of the population consumes a product, the purchased product is not necessarily desired over another, potentially unavailable, option. This phenomenon is the reason the Market Potential Index (MPI) is an important indicator for actual demand in an area.

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The MPI measures the relative likelihood that the adults or households in a specific trade area will exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the national average, which is represented by an MPI of 100. Comparing local consumer behaviors with national averages provides details about the products and services consumers want and the civic attitudes they have, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the different investments that are prospering or could eventually prosper in an area.

Consumer spending is divided into 3 categories for this analysis: Individuals, Households, and Market Potential Index (MPI). Consumer behavior is shown for both individuals and households because individuals tend to consume different goods and services than households. Separating individual consumer behavior from household consumer behavior allows for more a more comprehensive analysis. The MPI, as stated previously, measures the relative likelihood of consumers in a trade area to exhibit certain consumer behaviors or purchasing patterns compared to the national average, and this analysis is separated from individuals and households to determine trends.

INDIVIDUALS

As illustrated in Table 12, individuals in Dora have a strong demand for smartphones, as 91.2% of the population owns one. About 95% of the population bought gasoline in the last 6 months, indicating that individuals generally use their vehicles for travel. All top spending categories have MPI scores near 100, indicating that residents of Dora spend near the average of U.S. consumers.

Table 12: Top Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Individuals, 2023

Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected Number of Adults or Households	Percent of Adults or Households	MPI
Bought gasoline within the last 6 months	1,734	94.7%	105
Own or used any credit/debit card in the last 12 months	1,686	92.1%	99
Have a Smartphone	1,670	91.2%	97
Personally Carry Any medical/hospital/accident insurance	1,558	85.1%	100
Read Magazine (paper/electronic Versions) in last 6 months	1,535	83.8%	96

Source: Esri (2023)

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Individuals in Dora had the least demand for travel and vacation spending out of all examined goods and services. Each of the five consumer preferences with the lowest rate of spending was travel related, and three of them had to do with taking vacations, both foreign and domestic. These categories also had low MPI scores, indicating that Dora’s population has a low demand for such services compared to the general U.S. population.

Table 13: Bottom Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Individuals, 2023

Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected Number of Adults or Households	Percent of Adults or Households	MPI
Spent \$1500-1999 on domestic vacations in last 12 months	49	2.70%	70
Used general travel site for foreign trip in last 3 years	47	2.60%	40
Spent \$3K+ on foreign vacations in last 12 months	36	2.00%	46
Took 3+ foreign trips by plane in last 3 years	32	1.70%	24
Spent \$1K-2999 on foreign vacations in last 12 months	24	1.30%	43

Source: Esri (2023)

HOUSEHOLDS

The goods and services with the highest demand from households in Dora included staple grocery items that are similarly prevalent in households throughout the United States, as indicated by their MPI scores. Vehicle lease/ownership has an MPI of 104, with 94.8% of households in Dora having a vehicle. In Dora, 78.3% of households have a computer, which is shy of the national average with an MPI of 91.

Table 14: Top Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Households, 2023

Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected Number of Adults or Households	Percent of Adults or Households	MPI
Household purchased bread in last 6 months	889	96.30%	102
Household owns or leases any vehicle	875	94.80%	104
Household purchased fresh milk in last 6 months	791	85.70%	104
Household used fresh fruit or vegetables in last 6 months	781	84.60%	96
Household owns a computer	723	78.30%	91

Source: Esri (2023)

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The five household consumer preferences with the lowest amount of spending in Dora were technology related. Only 2.2% of households subscribe to fiber optic TV, and only 2.5% spent \$2K+ on a recent home computer. The fiber optic category had a particularly low MPI score, with a rate of 41. This indicates that households in Dora are mostly using other forms of broadband connection, such as cellular plans.

Table 15: Bottom Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Households, 2023

Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected Number of Adults or Households	Percent of Adults or Households	MPI
Household spent \$1K-1499 on most recent home computer	78	8.5%	70
Household purchased video game system in last 12 months	48	5.2%	65
Household spent \$1500-1999 on most recent home computer	30	3.3%	71
Household Spent \$2K+ on most recent home computer	23	2.5%	46
Household subscribes to fiber optic TV	20	2.2%	41

Source: Esri (2023)

Market Potential Index (MPI)

This section will analyze the top five most and least prevalent consumer spending patterns and preferences in Dora based on only MPI scores. As discussed previously, the MPI rate measures the relative likelihood of consumers in a trade area to exhibit certain consumer purchasing patterns compared to the United States average.

As shown in Table 16, residents in the county are much more likely than the rest of the U.S. population to buy cigarettes at convenience stores and spend at convenience stores generally. These rates do not necessarily indicate a large portion of the residents are purchasing these products, only that the percentage of the population making these purchases is greater than U.S. average. Owning a pet is also very prevalent in the county, with dogs and cats both having an MPI score of 147 and 159, respectively.

Table 16: Top Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Individuals and Households by MPI, 2023

Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected Number of Adults or Households	Percent of Adults or Households	MPI
Bought cigarettes at convenience store in last 30 Days	203	11.1%	182
Household owns a cat	339	36.7%	159
Spent \$100+ at convenience store in last 30 days	563	30.7%	147
Household owns a dog	535	58%	147
Agree Completely: "Buying American is important"	839	45.8%	143

Source: Esri (2023)

Data Note: Agree Completely: "Buying American is important": This metric represents a measurement of the number of residents who selected "agree completely" with the statement "Buying American is Important." Therefore, 43 percent of county residents on average agree completely with that statement, which represents 35 percent more responses than the US average.

Table 17: Bottom Five Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Individuals and Households by MPI, 2023

Product/Consumer Behavior	Expected Number of Adults or Households	Percent of Adults or Households	MPI
Spent \$1K-2999 on foreign vacations in last 12 months	24	1.3%	43
Member of a frequent flyer program	211	11.5%	42
Household subscribes to fiber optic TV	20	2.2%	41
Used general travel site for foreign trip in last 3 years	47	2.6%	40
Took 3+ foreign trips by plane in last 3 years	32	1.7%	24

Source: Esri (2023)

Segmentation Profile

The Segmentation Profile illustrates characteristics of Dora’s residents that cannot be derived from quantifiable factors alone. To show these characteristics, the population is arranged into different LifeMode Groups and Tapestry Segments.

- LifeMode Groups arrange individuals into different markets based on shared common experiences or significant demographic traits.
- Tapestry Segments are subcategories of LifeMode Groups that provide greater detail and specificity into a particular community’s distinctive characteristics.

Together, these characteristics give insight into residents’ general lifestyle choices, consumer purchasing preferences, and preferred leisure activities and can be used by analysts to more effectively market goods and services within a market area.

Note: Narrative on the LifeMode Groups and Tapestry Segments comes directly from the Esri, Regional Data, Tapestry Segments webpage located here: <https://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/latest/regional-data/tapestry-segmentation.htm>. The RPC staff does not claim any intellectual credit for any information that appears beyond this point in this section (Section IV: Segmentation Profile) in this report.

LIFEMODE GROUP: RUSTIC OUTPOST

The City of Dora is categorized under one LifeMode Group: Rustic Outpost. Rustic Outposts represent rural American communities, where life is deeply intertwined with the land and local traditions. These areas are typically home to middle-aged and older families residing in established homes. The local economy often hinges on sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and local businesses. Residents of Rustic Outposts value self-reliance, tend to be homeowners with vehicles, and prefer traditional methods of payment and news consumption. Outdoor activities like gardening, hunting, and fishing are common pastimes. Employment is centered around skilled labor and service roles, with a lower overall labor force participation rate.

Rooted Rural

Rooted Rural is heavily concentrated in the Appalachian Mountain range, as well as in Texas and Arkansas. Employment in the forestry industry is common, and Rooted Rural residents live in many of the heavily forested regions of the country. This group enjoys time spent outdoors, hunting, fishing, or working in their gardens. Indoors, they enjoy watching television with their spouse and spending time with pets. When shopping, they look for American-made and generic products. These communities are heavily influenced by religious faith and family history.

Other characteristics of Rooted Rural communities include:

- A housing market dominated by married couples, few with children at home, and around 80% of homes owner-occupied.
- A “do-it-yourself” mentality where residents grow their own produce, work on their cars, and own a riding lawn mower. Residents also tend to avoid the internet with payment transactions, preferring to pay bills in person.
- A consumer base that views clothes as a necessity, not a fashion statement, that tends to buy new clothes when old clothes wear out.

Rural Bypasses

Open space, undeveloped land, and farmland characterize Rural Bypasses. These families live within small towns along country back roads and enjoy the open air in these sparsely populated neighborhoods. Their country lifestyle focuses on the outdoors, gardening, hunting, and fishing. They are more likely to own a satellite dish than a home computer. Although most households do have a connection to the internet, use is very limited. Those who are not yet retired work in blue-collar jobs in the agriculture or manufacturing industries. Other characteristics include:

- An older housing market, with more married couples without children and single households, the average household size is slightly lower at 2.55 and most residents own single-family homes.
- Residents primarily live in rural areas, and this tapestry segment is almost entirely located within the South.
- Labor force participation is less than 50%, so income is primarily derived from wages and supplemented with Social Security and Supplemental Security Incomes.

Appendix: Horse Creek Golf Course Data Findings

Horse Creek Golf Course serves as a valuable community and economic asset. Insights from Placer.ai data provide actionable information to understand visitor trends, demographics, and opportunities to enhance the role of the golf course in advancing Dora’s economic development objectives.

Key Insights and Observations

VISITOR TRENDS

Horse Creek Golf Course hosted 34,100 visits in the past year, with a year-over-year growth rate of 15.8%. Attendance remains consistent throughout the week, peaking during midday hours. Visitors spend an average of 49 minutes per visit, with a median stay of 28 minutes.

The steady growth and consistent weekly attendance highlight the golf course’s potential as a stable economic driver and community anchor. Strategies to increase dwell time and visitation frequency can further amplify this impact.

VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS

The primary age groups of visitors are 65+ (largest cohort) and 25-34 years old. Over 43% of visitors hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, significantly exceeding Alabama’s average of 27.6%. The median household income of visitors is \$71,800, compared to the state median of \$61,000.

The affluent and educated visitor base presents opportunities to develop premium offerings and align with community development goals for higher-value tourism.

Figure 25: Horse Creek Golf Course Visitor Demographics

Audience Overview

Summary					
Property	Median Household Income	Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	Median Age	Most Common Ethnicity	Persons per Household
Horse Creek Golf Dora, AL	\$71.8K	43.1%	36.9	White (71.9%)	2.35
Alabama	\$61K	27.6%	40.1	White (64.5%)	2.44

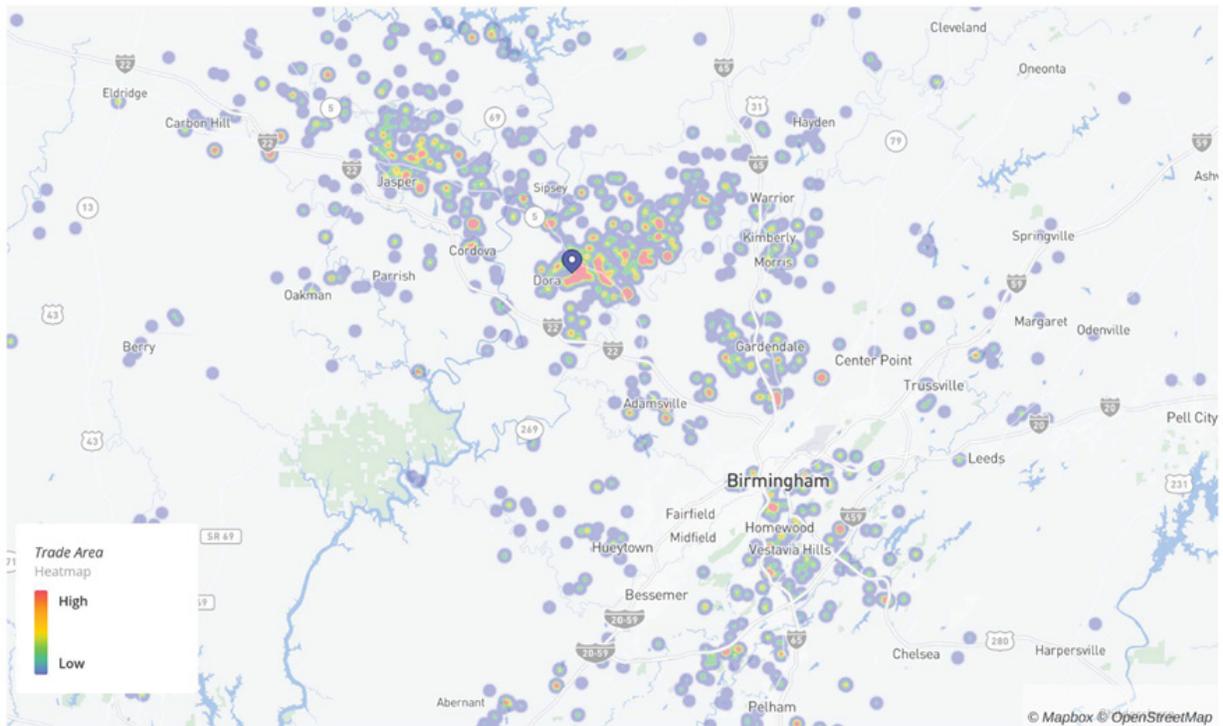
Source: Placer.ai (2024)

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGINS

Visitors primarily come from Dora, Jasper, and nearby areas. Birmingham, despite its proximity and size, contributes relatively few visitors.

This geographic distribution suggests an untapped market in and around Birmingham. Expanding advertising efforts to this metropolitan area could increase foot traffic and diversify the visitor base.

Figure 26: Horse Creek Golf Course Geography
Market Landscape



Home locations are obfuscated for privacy and randomly placed within a census block. They do not represent actual home addresses.

Source: Placer.ai (2024)

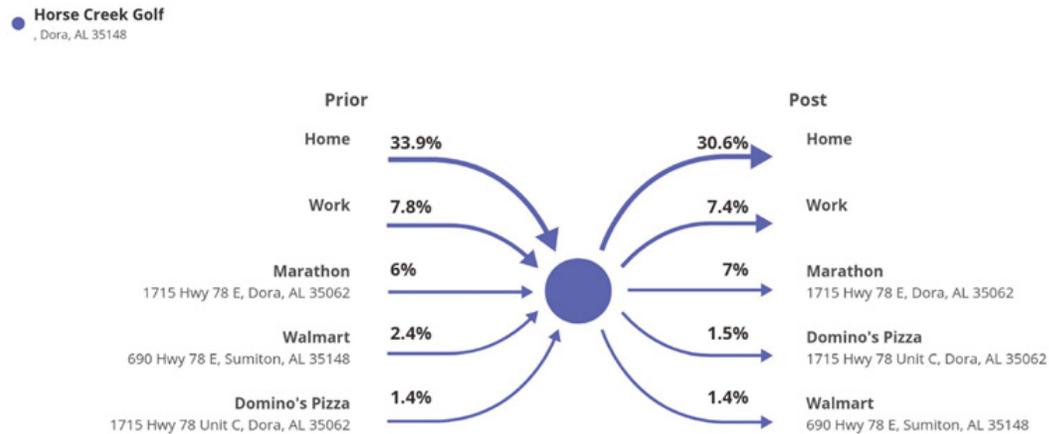
ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SURROUNDING BUSINESSES

Approximately 6-7% of visitors frequent nearby businesses, such as the Marathon gas station, Walmart, and Domino’s Pizza, before/after their trip to Horse Creek Golf Course.

Collaborative promotions with local businesses can create a stronger economic network, reinforcing the role of the golf course as a hub for regional activity.

Figure 27: Horse Creek Golf Course Visitor Journey

Visitor Journey



Source: Placer.ai (2024)

COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

Horse Creek Golf is a local recreational asset visited alongside prominent regional destinations, such as Riverchase Galleria and The Summit in Birmingham. Positioning the golf course as part of a broader regional itinerary could attract visitors seeking diverse recreational and retail experiences.

Opportunities for Action

ENHANCE MARKETING AND OUTREACH

- Develop targeted advertising campaigns in and around Birmingham (Galleria, Summit, Birmingham Convention Center) to showcase Horse Creek Golf Course’s accessibility, amenities, and scenic appeal.
- Collaborate with regional attractions to cross-promote itineraries and day-trip packages.

Figure 28: Horse Creek Golf Course Potential Advertising Locations

Favorite Places

Horse Creek Golf / Dora, AL			
Rank	Name	Distance	Visitors
1	Horse Creek Golf Course / 1745 Highway 78, Dora, AL 35062	0 mi	13.8K (99.6%)
2	Riverchase Galleria / 2000 Galleria Cir, Hoover, AL 35244	29.4 mi	8.1K (58.6%)
3	The Summit Birmingham / 214 Summit Blvd, Birmingham, AL 35243	28 mi	7.8K (56.8%)
4	Marathon / 1715 Hwy 78 E, Dora, AL 35062	0.2 mi	6.8K (49.3%)
5	Patton Creek Shopping Center / 4445 Creekside Ave, Hoover, AL 35244	29.3 mi	6.2K (44.9%)
6	Buc-ee's / 6900 Buc-ee's Blvd, Leeds, AL 35094	30.6 mi	6.1K (44.5%)
7	Jasper Mall / 300 Highway 78 East, Jasper, AL 35504	14.2 mi	6.1K (44.2%)
8	Magnolia City Place / 659 Fieldstown Rd, Gardendale, AL 35071	15.1 mi	6K (43.6%)
9	Walmart / 690 Hwy 78 E, Sumiton, AL 35148	1 mi	6K (43.3%)
10	Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex / 1001 19th St N, Birmingham, AL 35203	20.9 mi	5.9K (42.6%)

Source: *Placer.ai* (2024)

IMPROVE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- Introduce amenities and programs to increase dwell time, such as an expanded café, pro shop, or guided golf experiences. This can help tap into the relatively high spending potential of visitors.
- Design events tailored to key age groups, such as senior tournaments or young professional networking events.

STRENGTHEN LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Partner with nearby businesses for co-branded promotions or bundled offers (e.g., ‘Play and Dine’ packages).
- Highlight the economic benefits of Horse Creek Golf Course in marketing materials to foster community buy-in.

BUILD CAPACITY FOR GROWTH

- Assess current infrastructure to accommodate increased visitation without diminishing service quality.
- Explore membership programs or loyalty initiatives to retain frequent visitors and encourage repeat visits.

CONCLUSION

The Placer.ai data underscores Horse Creek Golf Course’s potential to be a cornerstone of Dora’s economic development. By leveraging these insights, the city can enhance the golf course’s appeal, drive economic activity, and position it as a premier destination within the region. These efforts align with the broader goals of the Dora Economic Development Strategic Plan to create a vibrant, connected, and thriving community.

Town of Parrish
**Economic
Development
Strategic Plan
2023**



Town of Parrish

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

August 2023

Prepared by Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
Walker Area Community Foundation

Cover Photo by Ginger Ann Brook



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INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) program was designed by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) to assist its member governments in developing long-term strategies that capitalize on local economic strengths and address its challenges. The EDSP planning process determines market advantages and challenges through data analysis and stakeholder input, as well as identifies potential opportunities and obstacles for local economic and community development within the selected market area. The *Town of Parrish EDSP* is divided into three sections:

Section I: Needs Assessment—This section identifies the historic trends and current characteristics of Parrish’s local economy and workforce, and it is composed of 3 chapters:

Chapter 1: Existing Conditions— Provides the background and baseline data trends necessary to help understand Parrish’s current market conditions.

Chapter 2: Market Analysis— Evaluates Parrish’s consumer spending habits to establish supply and demand patterns and assess historical market trends.

Chapter 3: SWOT Assessment— Outlines the responses given through community engagement and input and outlines the residents’ perspectives of Parrish’s economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Section II: Strategy Framework Development— This section describes the development opportunities within the community based on the Needs Assessment Analysis and community input. It outlines overarching development themes, and it evaluates the outdoor recreation potential and broadband connectivity of the town as primary development initiatives for the town. This section is also divided into 3 chapters:

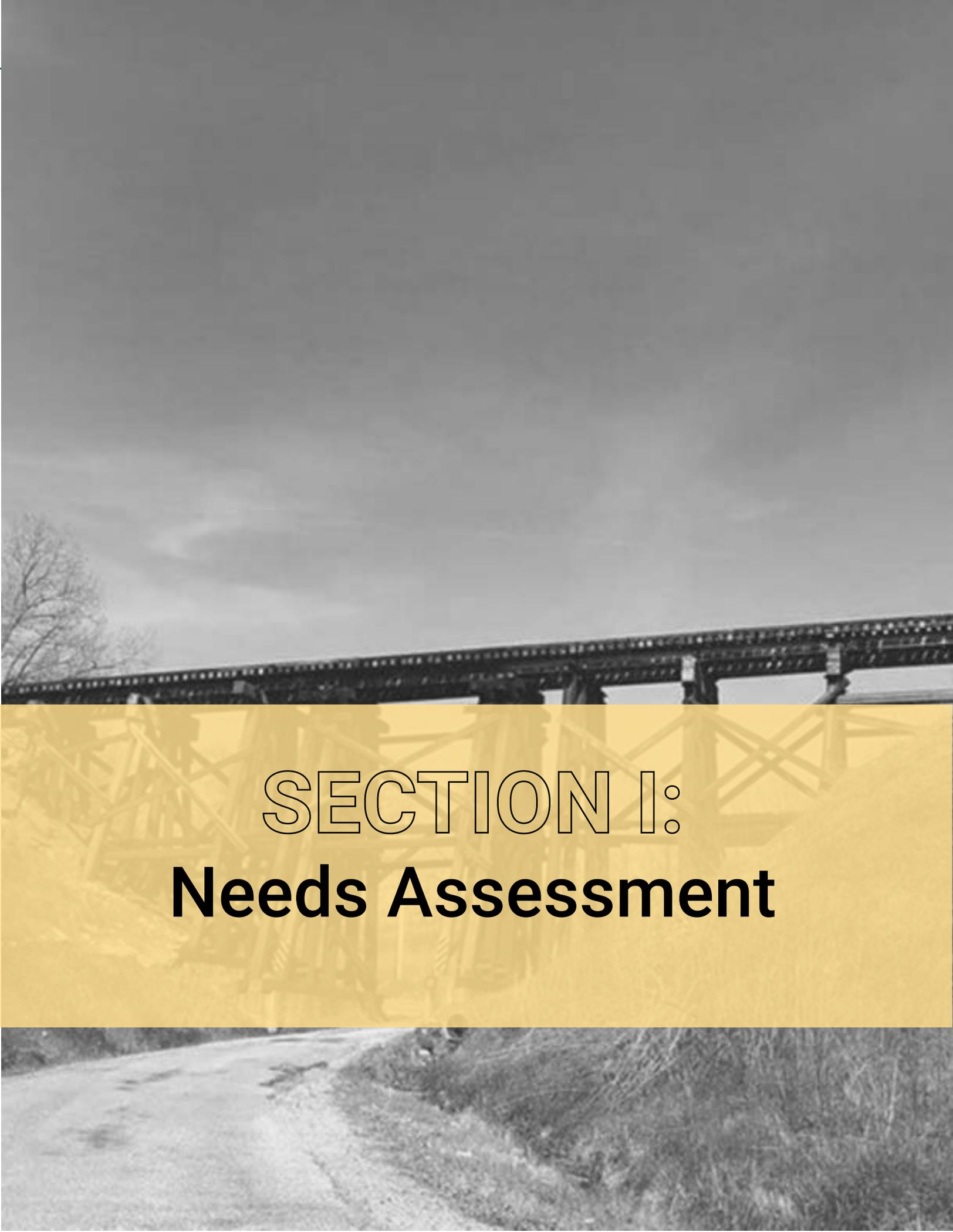
Chapter 1: Priority Development Themes & Focus Areas— Outlines the overall development themes for Parrish’s future development based on findings in Needs Assessment.

Chapter 2: Outdoor Recreation in Parrish— Evaluates the potential activities Parrish can undertake to support outdoor recreation development within the community.

Chapter 3: Broadband Connectivity— Outlines the current conditions of the town’s broadband infrastructure, identifies areas of prominent need, and lists possible sources of funding support for future projects.

Section III: Action Plan— The Action Plan for the EDSP will be developed in accordance with the responses of the SWOT survey published in March 2023 and guidance of local officials. The Action Plan will offer economic goals and strategies for future implementation, and its contents will be created to correspond with the goals described in the RPCGB’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), as well as the targets of Walker County and the Town of Parrish as a collective.

This project was supported by funding from the USDA Rural Development division through the agency’s Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC) grant program. The contents of this Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) will reflect the Town of Parrish’s community vision and serve as a guide to transforming Parrish’s goals into future economic development decisions and capital investments. As a plan, however, this EDSP is not legally binding upon the Town of Parrish. For more information about this plan or its contents, please contact Jesslan Wilson, Director of Economic Development, at jwilson@rpcgb.org.



SECTION I: **Needs Assessment**

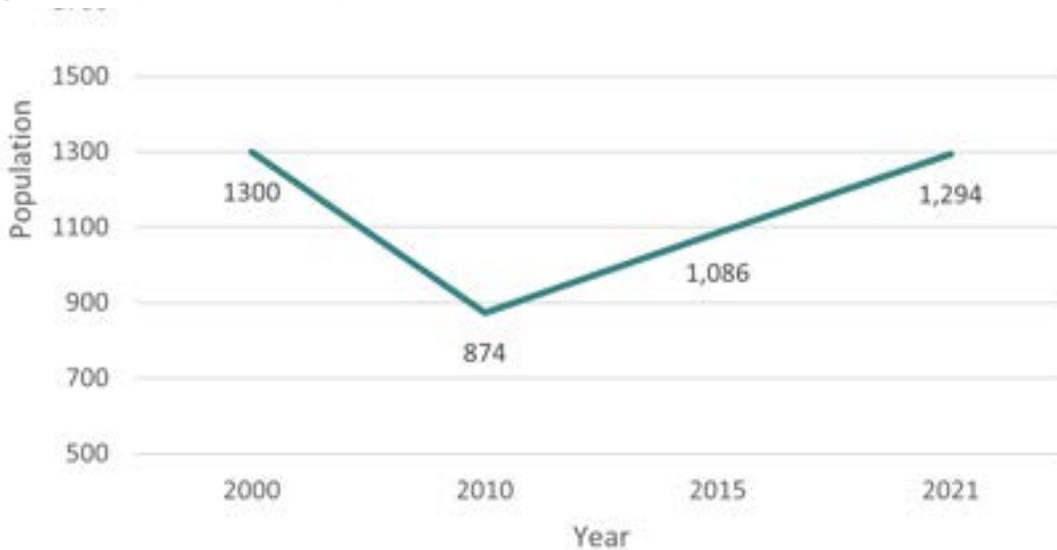
CHAPTER 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

1. Population and Household Trends

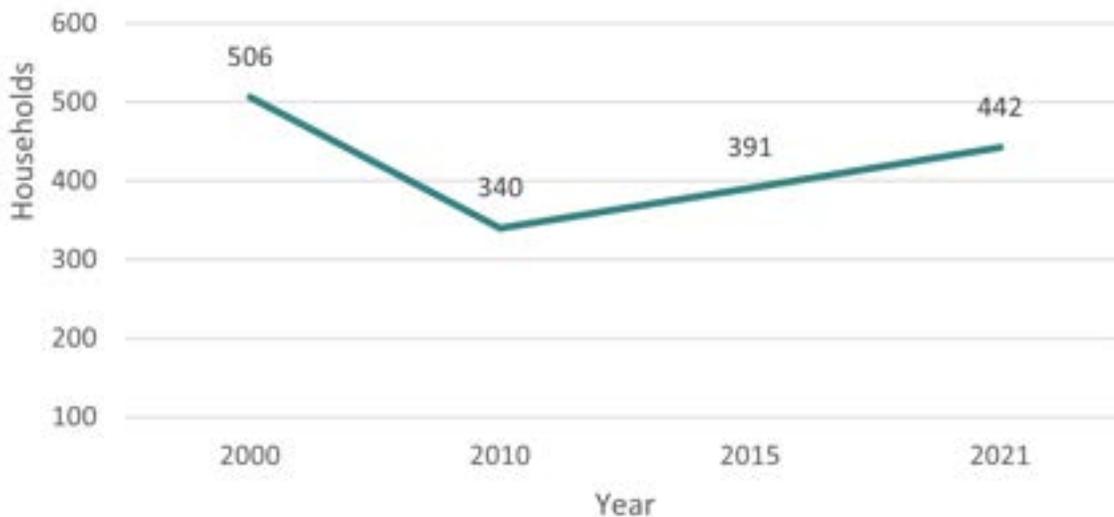
As of 2021, the Town of Parrish has a total population of 1,294. The number of residents has remained relatively stagnant since 2000, declining slightly in 2010 but recovering steadily to 2000 levels (see Figure 1). These rates are reflected in the number of households within Parrish, which have also remained relatively stagnant since 2000 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Population Change, 2000 to 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

Figure 2: Number of Households, 2000 to 2021

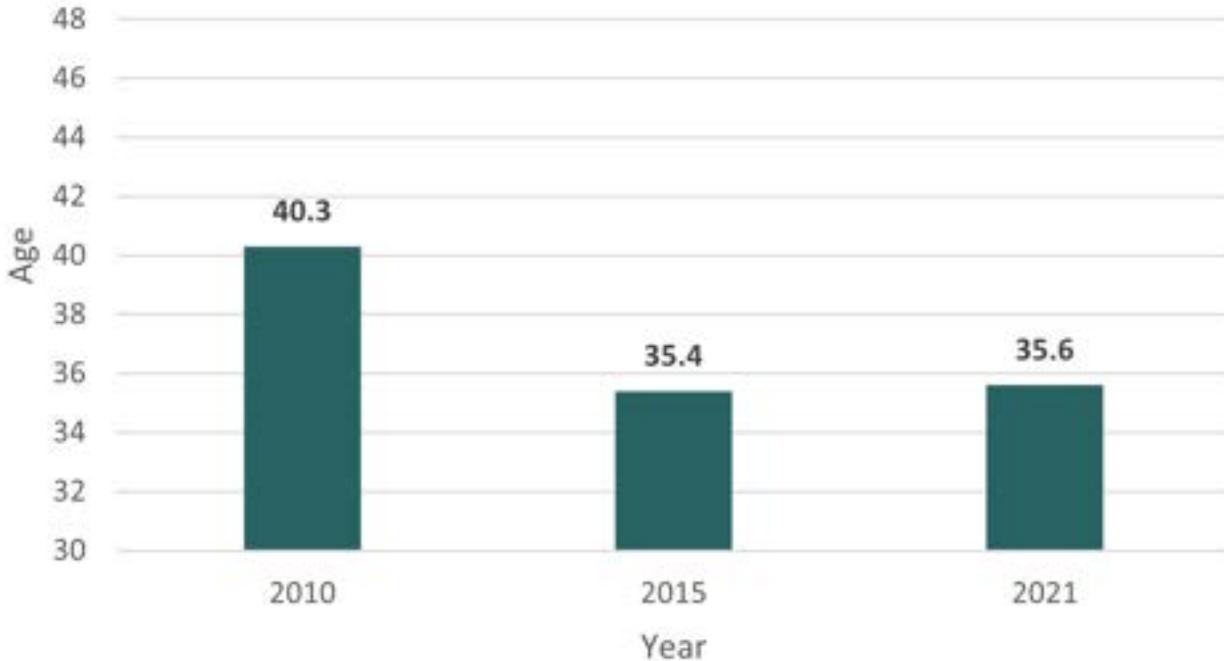


Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

2. Age and Sex Distribution

The median age within the Town of Parrish was 35.6 in 2022, which was lower than Alabama’s median age rate of 39.8. This gap signifies that Parrish’s population is younger and aging at a slower pace than the average Alabama rate (see Figure 3). Parrish has also been aging less rapidly than the U.S. population. Since 2010, the town’s median age has increased by only 0.2 years, while the median age of the nationwide population increased by 1.5 years.

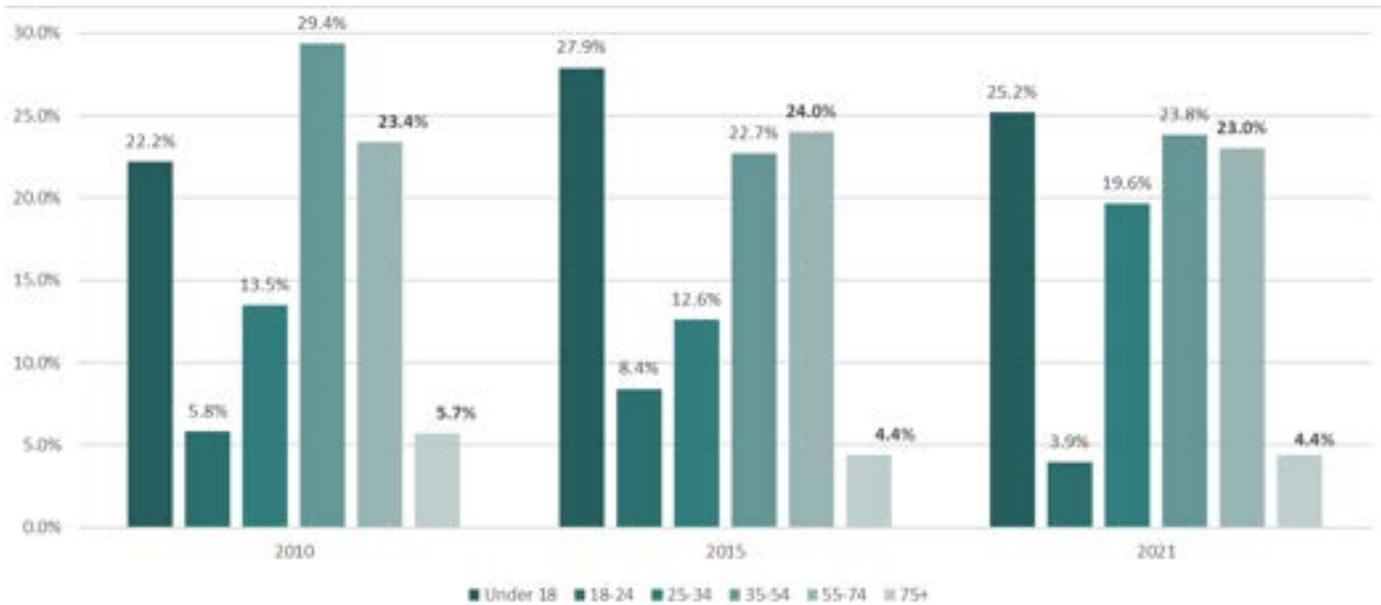
Figure 3: Parrish Median Age. 2010 to 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

The largest source of Parrish’s population incline is among young and working-age individuals, or those between 25 to 34 years old, as illustrated in Figure 4. This age group increased by 7 percentage points between 2015 and 2021, while groups with 55 years and above remained stable. Increases in younger age groups poses a potential economic and workforce development opportunity for Parrish. The attraction of young people and families is necessary for supporting current industry through a strong workforce and consumer base, and these trends could also catalyze new economic development initiatives within the town due to growing market demand.

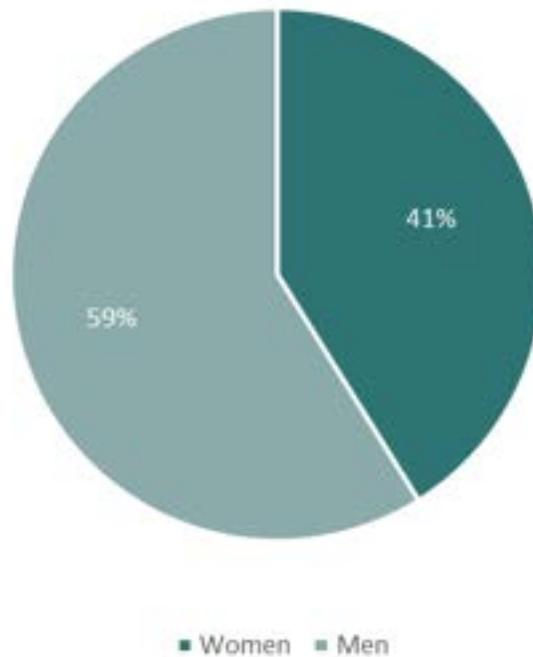
Figure 4: Age Distribution by Percentage, 2010 to 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

In terms of sex distribution, Parrish has more males than the US population rates; 59 percent of Parrish’s population is male, compared to slightly above 49 percent of the nationwide population (see Figure 3).

Figure 5: Distribution of Population by Sex

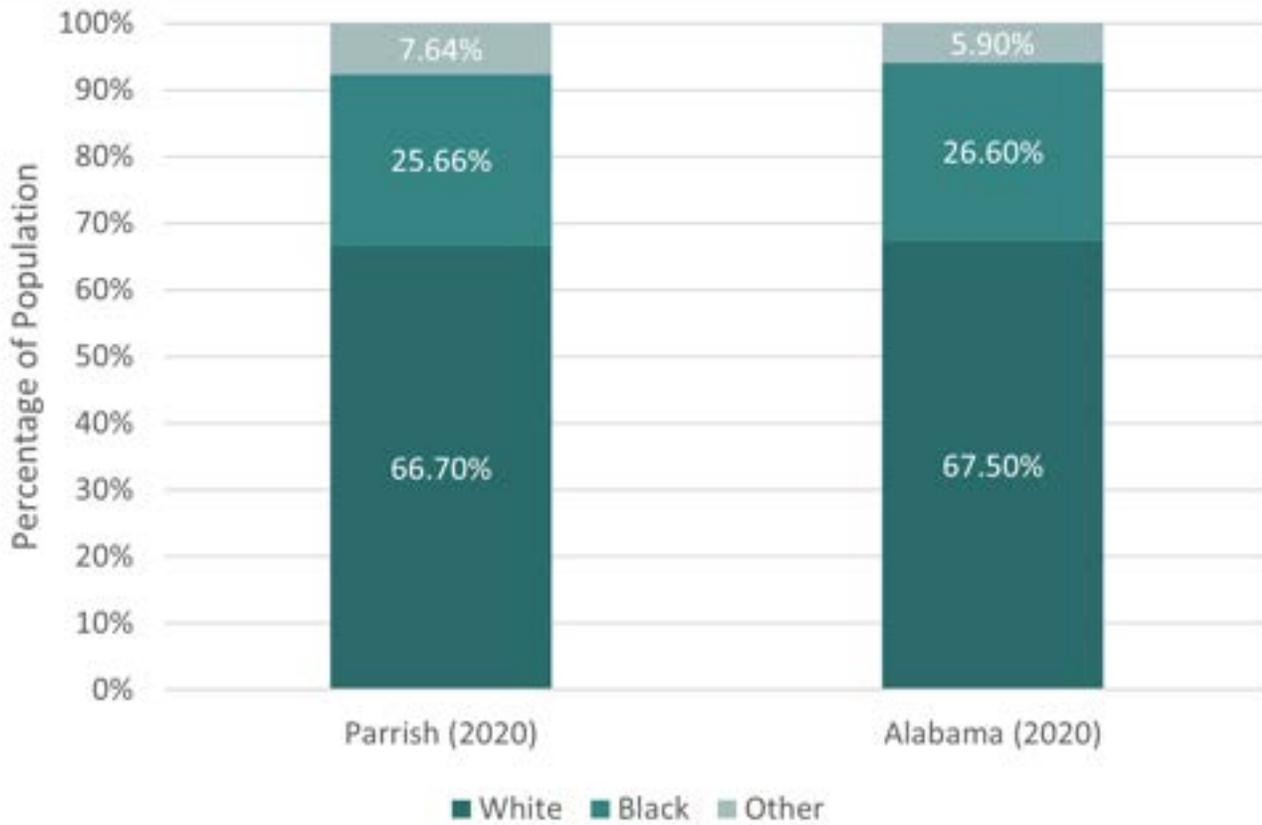


Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

3. Racial Distribution

Parrish’s population is reflective of statewide diversity levels. In 2020, nearly 67 percent of Parrish’s population was white while almost 26 percent was black, compared to 2020 statewide percentages of 67.5 percent and 26.6 percent, respectively (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Distribution of Population by Race in Parrish (2020) and Alabama (2020)



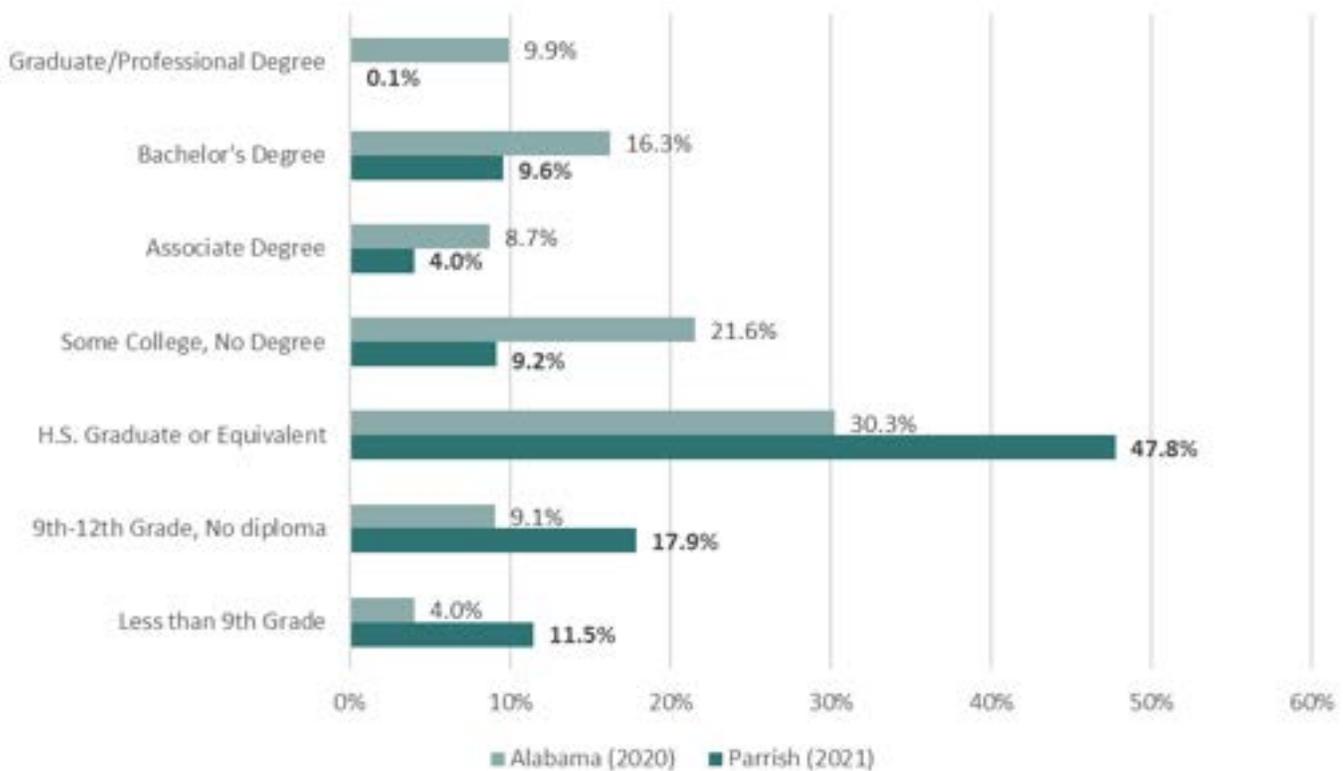
Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2020

EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. Educational Attainment

Figure 7 compares the educational attainment of the working population, or those 25 years and older, within Parrish and the State of Alabama. About 48 percent of Parrish’s working age population have a high school diploma as their highest level of education. However, almost 30 percent do not have a high school degree or equivalent, which is higher than the Alabama rate of 13 percent. In addition, 9 percent of residents have some college credits without a college degree, and almost 10 percent have a bachelor’s degree as their highest education credential. The percentage of individuals with a graduate/professional degree is much lower than the state’s average.

Figure 7: Educational Attainment in Parrish (2021) and Alabama (2020)



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2020-2021

2. Public School Enrollment

Due to the town’s high school closing 2014, Parrish’s only public school is the Parrish Elementary Middle School (pre-K through 8th grade). In 2021, 303 students were enrolled (see Table 1).

Table 1: Public School Enrollment, 2016 and 2021

Public School	2021
Parrish Elementary Middle School	303

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2021)

INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

1. Household Income

Parrish’s median household income and per capita income remain low compared to county and statewide levels. These terms are defined below:

Median Household Income: This metric is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families, including those with no income, to describe the “middle” of the income range of household earnings within Parrish. The median divides the income distribution into 2 equal parts: half of the cases falling below the median income and half above the median.¹

Per Capita Income: This measure represents the mean income computed for every man, woman, and child within the town and is derived by dividing the aggregate income earned from the town’s income-earning population by the town’s total population.² Per capita income can be used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population.³

The town’s median household income in 2021 was \$33,594, compared to \$45,833 in Walker County and \$52,035 in the State of Alabama in 2020. In addition, Parrish’s 2021 per capita income was \$17,016. This figure is significantly lower than both the 2020 Walker County per capita income of \$25,330 or the 2020 statewide per capita income of \$28,934. Table 2 lists Parrish’s median household and per capita income rates, compared to Walker County and Alabama levels.

Table 2: Median Household Income and Per Capita Income for Town, County, and State

Region	Household	Per Capita Income
Parrish (2021)	\$33,594	\$17,016
Walker (2020)	\$45,833	\$25,330
Alabama (2020)	\$52,035	\$28,934

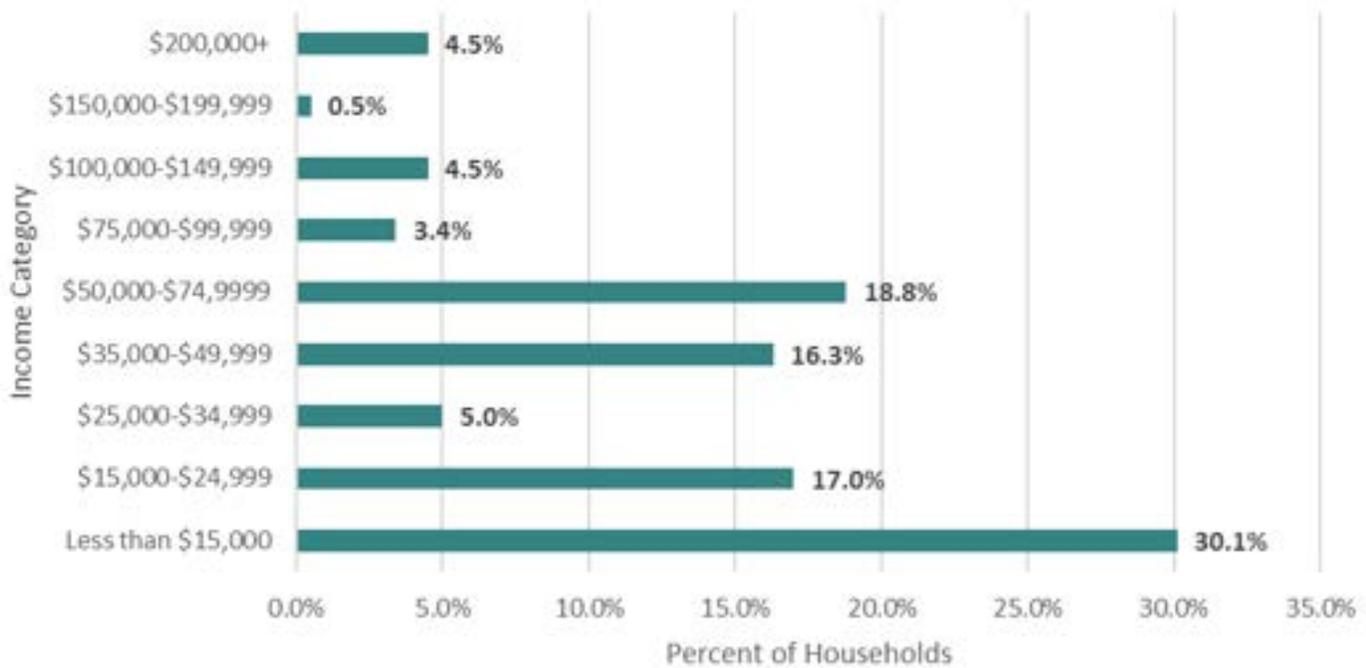
Source: U.S.Census, American Community Survey, 2020 to 2021; Town-Data.com

2. Household Income Distribution by Bracket

Figure 8 outlines the percentages of Parrish households within each income bracket. The largest income bracket in Parrish was less than \$15,000, in 2021, which includes 30.1 percent of households. The next largest bracket was \$50,000-\$74,999, which included over 16 percent of households. The smallest income bracket is the \$150,000 to \$199,999 range, with only 0.5 percent of households falling in that range.

1 U.S. Census, QuickFacts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/INC110220>
 2 U.S. Census, QuickFacts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/INC910220>
 3 Kenton, Will. "What Is Income Per Capita? Uses, Limitations, and Examples".

Figure 8: Household Distribution by Income Bracket



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

Poverty in Parrish

The U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines provide income thresholds which scale up depending on the size of the household – as the number of people in a given household increases, the minimum amount of income necessary for that household to remain out of poverty also increases.

The average household size in Parrish in 2022 was 3 people. For this household size, the median household income for the poverty threshold is \$23,030, according to these guidelines. The town’s median household income of \$33,594 is above this threshold and would meet the income requirements necessary for a household as large as five people (\$32,470). However, despite these rates, US Census estimates from 2021 record that over 16 percent of Parrish’s residents live below the poverty line.

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS

1. Unemployment And Labor Force Participation

The unemployment rate in Parrish was 11.9 percent in 2021. Although the COVID-19 Pandemic likely impacted employment levels within the town, this metric had been increasing over the last decade (with a rate of 7.6 in 2015) at levels higher than both the county and state. However, the unemployment rate only measures the population within an area actively seeking work, not discouraged workers who have left the workforce. The labor force participation rate measures the percentage of the total working age population (or those over 16 years old) against the number of these residents who are actively engaged in the workforce (employed or looking for work).

As illustrated in Table 3, Parrish’s labor force participation rate has increased substantially since 2010, though the unemployment rate has also been on rise. This could be due in part to the decline in general population, which could have increased the concentration of residents within the workforce. In addition, Parrish’s participation rate has mirrored levels at the state and county level, which have both experienced mild decline since 2010.

Table 3: Labor Force Participation Comparison

Region	2010	2021	Change
Parrish	38.0%	56.0%	47.4%
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	3.5%	11.9%	240.0%
Walker County	53.4%	52.6%	-1.5%
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	6.2%	3.7%	-40.3%
Alabama	60.1%	57.2%	-4.8%
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	5.2%	3.1%	-40.4%

Source: U.S. Census, 2010-2021

2. Daytime Population and Labor Flows

Daytime Population

The daytime population within a market area represents the number of people, residents, or commuters, who are within the town limits during regular working hours (otherwise known as commuter-adjusted population). This metric is calculated by subtracting the number of workers leaving the area for work from summation of the town’s population and the workers working within the town:

$$\text{Commuter-adjusted population} = \text{Total resident population} + \text{Total workers working in area} - \text{Total workers living in area}^4$$

Commuter-adjusted population measures can help define the consumer base for the town, since often there are commuters within an area that are attracted to the town for work or school. Including commuters in a market analysis can help establish spending patterns and illustrate potential demand for industry, especially retail or food and beverage stores.

Despite relatively stable population rates, Parrish’s daytime population was 1,196, meaning that an additional 93 people were present in Parrish during regular business hours (see Table 4). Because a daily influx of nonresidents can boost the consumer base for local businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops, and gas stations, this net positive daytime population illustrates potential demand throughout the local market and provides an opportunity for the Town of Parrish to capture additional sales tax revenues.

4 U.S. Census Bureau: “Calculating Commuter-Adjusted Population Estimates”

Table 4: Daytime vs. Residential Population

Population	Number of Individuals
Total Population	1,294
Worker Population	+ 330
Workers Living in Area	- 428
Commuter-Adjusted Population:	= 1,196

Source: U.S.Census, 2021

Labor Flows

Analyzing the labor flow of workers in Parrish can help determine the extent Parrish supplies labor force resources to external areas and/or attracts labor from surrounding areas into the jurisdiction. Since daytime population includes the total number of people, including those who are not in the labor force (children, retirees, etc.), evaluating labor flows can help determine the number of daytime population that is represented by workers.

There are two ways to evaluate labor flows within an area, and those include analyzing the municipality’s “Employment Efficiency”, or the local employee characteristics, and “Labor Force Efficiency”, or the residential labor force characteristics within the area. These rates are listed in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Employment Efficiency, Town of Parrish, 2010 – 2020

Employment Efficiency	2010 Count	2010 Share	2020 Count	2020 Share	Change
Employed in the Selection Area	73	100.0%	187	100.0%	156%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	7	9.6%	7	3.7%	0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	66	90.4%	180	96.3%	173%

Source: U.S. Census, OnTheMap Application 2010 -2020

Table 6: Labor Force Efficiency, Town of Parrish, 2010-2020

Labor Force Efficiency	2010 Count	2010 Share	2020 Count	2020 Share	Change
Living in the Selection Area	407	100.0%	343	100.0%	-16%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	7	1.7%	7	2.0%	0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	400	98.3%	336	98.0%	-16%

Source: U.S. Census, OnTheMap Application 2010 -2020

Since 2010, Parrish has experienced a substantial increase in employment within the town. However, though employment opportunities have increase, only 7 workers live and work in the town limits. Over 96 percent of the employment opportunities in the town are filled by workers commuting into the town for their jobs, which is calculated as inflow, and Parrish is supplying 336 workers for jobs in other areas, which is measured as outflow. The Net Labor Flow for Parrish is illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Net Labor Flow, Parrish, Alabama



Source: U.S. Census, OnTheMap Application 2010 -2020

3. Employment by Home Area

Measuring employment by home area identifies the industries residents of Parrish are employed in, regardless of where their job is located. In 2019, the most recent year this data was available, residents within Parrish held 376 total jobs, which was an 11 percent decline from 2010 rates. Health Care and Social Assistance was the largest employment for residents, with almost 70 employees. The next largest were Manufacturing and Retail Trade with over 40 employees. The smallest industries per employment were Management of Companies and Enterprises, Information, and Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, with only 3 employees each.

Table 7 (page 17) outlines the employment levels of each industry for 2010 and 2019, and then calculates the percent change in employment between those years in the last column. Ten industries contributed to the decline in residential employment since 2010, with the largest decrease occurring in Transportation and Warehousing, though this category is small relative to other industries. Some of the industries representing a larger portion of the population, such as Manufacturing and Retail Trade, also experienced a decrease. The reductions in employment in these industries may be impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic, which impacted employment trends across the country.

However, 10 industries have also increased over the past decade. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation technically experienced the largest growth, but with only making up 1 percent of total employment, the jobs in this industry are still relatively low. The industry with the largest advancement in both percent change and percentage of employment was Finance and Insurance, followed by Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting.

4. Employment by Work Area

Evaluating employment by work area identifies the employment opportunities within the Town of Parrish. In other words, this metric describes the industries and jobs available in Parrish, regardless of where workers live. As shown in Table 8 on page 18, 9 of the 20 measured industries are not present within the town, yielding no jobs in those industries; those industries are shaded in gray. However, a component of economic growth is analyzing what the community's strengths and assets are and capitalizing on those, so just because an industry is not present does not mean it should be. It may not be viable in the area, and resources would be better spent supporting industries that are.

According to U.S. Census Data, the Town of Parrish had 165 jobs available within the jurisdiction, an increase of nearly 90 percent since 2010. The most significant growth in terms of percent change and percentage of employment was Transportation and Warehousing, which increased by 173 percent over the past decade. However, this industry makes up a small portion of the workforce. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; and Health Care and Social Assistance experienced the biggest declines over the past decade, with a decrease of 100 percent. These rates may have also been exaggerated due to the pandemic.

Table 7: Industry by Home Area

Industry	2010	2019	Percent Change
TOTAL JOBS	423	376	-11.1%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.5%	0.8%	60.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	4.0%	3.7%	-7.5%
Utilities	4.0%	4.0%	0%
Construction	4.3%	4.8%	11.6%
Manufacturing	14.2%	11.4%	-19.7%
Wholesale Trade	4.0%	6.1%	52.5%
Retail Trade	14.4%	11.2%	-22.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	5.0%	2.1%	-58.0%
Information	0.7%	0.8%	14.3%
Finance and Insurance	0.7%	1.9%	171.4%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1.9%	1.3%	-31.6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4.0%	3.2%	-20.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.7%	0.8%	14.3%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	4.7%	4.0%	-14.9%
Educational Services	6.6%	8.2%	24.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	14.7%	18.6%	26.5%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.2%	1.1%	450.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	8.0%	10.4%	30.0%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	2.6%	2.1%	-19.2%
Public Administration	4.7%	3.5%	-25.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

Table 8: Industry by Working Area

Industry	2010	2019	Percent Change
TOTAL JOBS	87	165	89.7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Utilities	6.9%	4.8%	-30.4%
Construction	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Manufacturing	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Wholesale Trade	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Retail Trade	56.3%	27.9%	-50.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	1.1%	3.0%	172.7%
Information	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Finance and Insurance	0.0%	1.2%	N/A
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2.3%	0.6%	-73.9%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1.1%	0.0%	-100.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	3.4%	0.0%	-100.0%
Educational Services	0.0%	28.5%	N/A
Health Care and Social Assistance	28.7%	0.0%	-100.0%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	0.0%	24.2%	N/A
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	0.0%	9.7%	N/A
Public Administration	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

According to this data, the number of jobs in Parrish has increased by 90 percent since 2010. However, though this increase is substantial, there are less than 200 employment opportunities within the town, with one third of those opportunities being within the Educational Services sector. Additionally, the number of workers from Parrish has decreased by 11% during the same time period; however, this could be partially attributed to more work from home and part-time opportunities.

The data points for Employment by Home Area and Employment by Work Area varied significantly as the workforce that makes up each group also varies. There are many more workers leaving Parrish to go to work than the inflow of workers coming into Parrish. Here are some distinctions between those working in Parrish and those traveling outside the town for work:

- There are more Educational job opportunities in Parrish than residents of Parrish who work in Education. This means that many Educational workers are coming in to work in Parrish from other areas.
- Many residents of Parrish work in Manufacturing, Construction, and Wholesale Trade, but these jobs opportunities have not existed in the town in the past decade.
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation jobs are not available in Parrish, but some residents of Parrish work in these areas. This shows that there are Parrish residents with expertise in this area. This is especially important as Parrish works to expand Outdoor Recreation as a development priority for the town.
- There are now more Retail Trade opportunities in Parrish than Parrish residents working in Retail Trade. More workers are being hired from outside the Parrish area to fill these jobs.
- Accommodation and Food Service job opportunities in Parrish have increased substantially from 2010 to 2019 from developments such as the addition of Jack's Family Restaurant, LP. There are now 40 jobs available in this industry in Parrish. This number will continue to grow with additional restaurants and coffee shops, which residents have expressed as priorities for the future.
- Real Estate job opportunities have decreased both in town and for Parrish residents. This fits with recent increases in housing prices and a shift away from purchasing.



Source: RPCGB, 2023

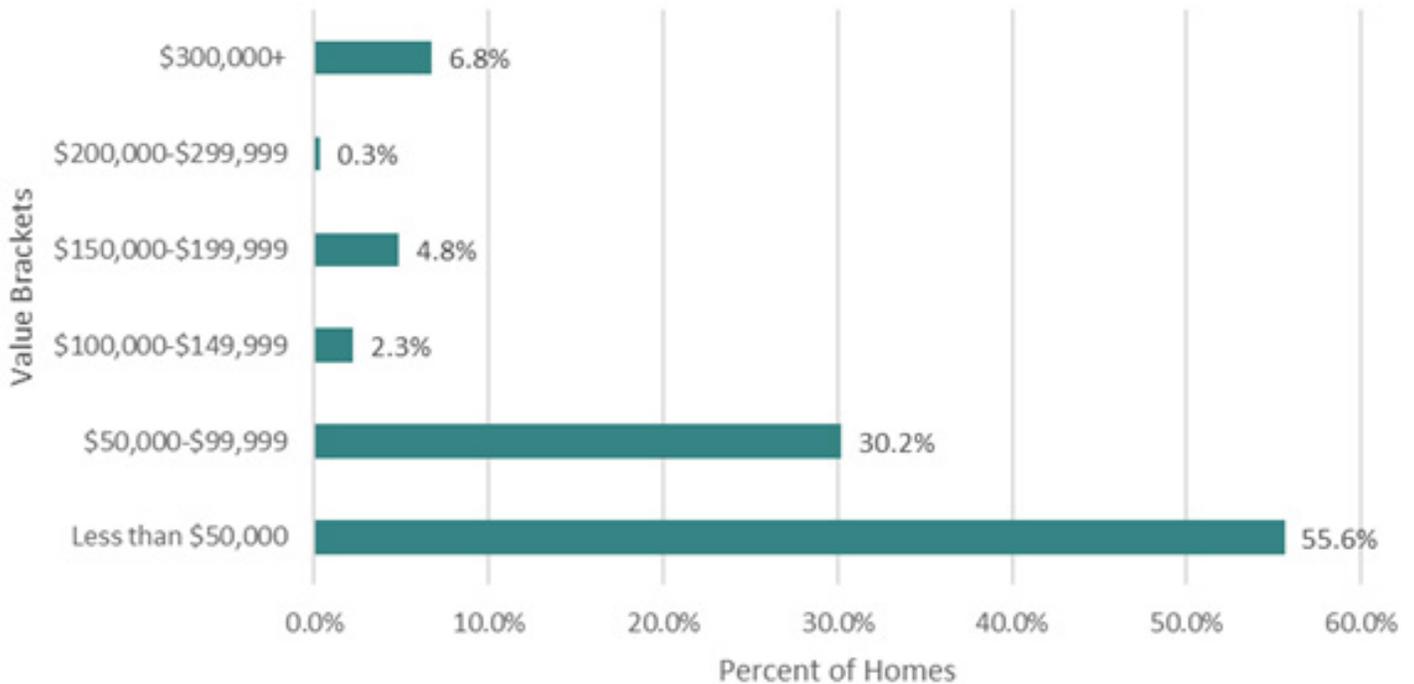
HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

1. Housing Affordability

The median value of homes in Parrish in 2021 was \$46,100. This rate is much lower than the median home value in Walker County, which is estimated to be \$109,600. The share of homes valued below \$50,000 makes up the majority of the available housing units in the town, as illustrated in Figure 10. Approximately 30 percent of homes are valued between \$50,000 and \$99,999, and only 12 percent of homes are valued at over \$100,000. Over 85 percent of the current housing units in Parrish are valued at less than \$99,999.

According to the most recent Census data, residents in Parrish are spending only 16.3 percent of their income on their mortgages. As a result, the population’s overall housing affordability index value of 168 is high, indicating that families earning the median income have more than enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan on a median-priced home. However, these affordability numbers are potentially inflated due to the prevalence of older homes, many of which may be vacant and/or in poor condition.

Figure 10: Housing Units by Market Value, 2022



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

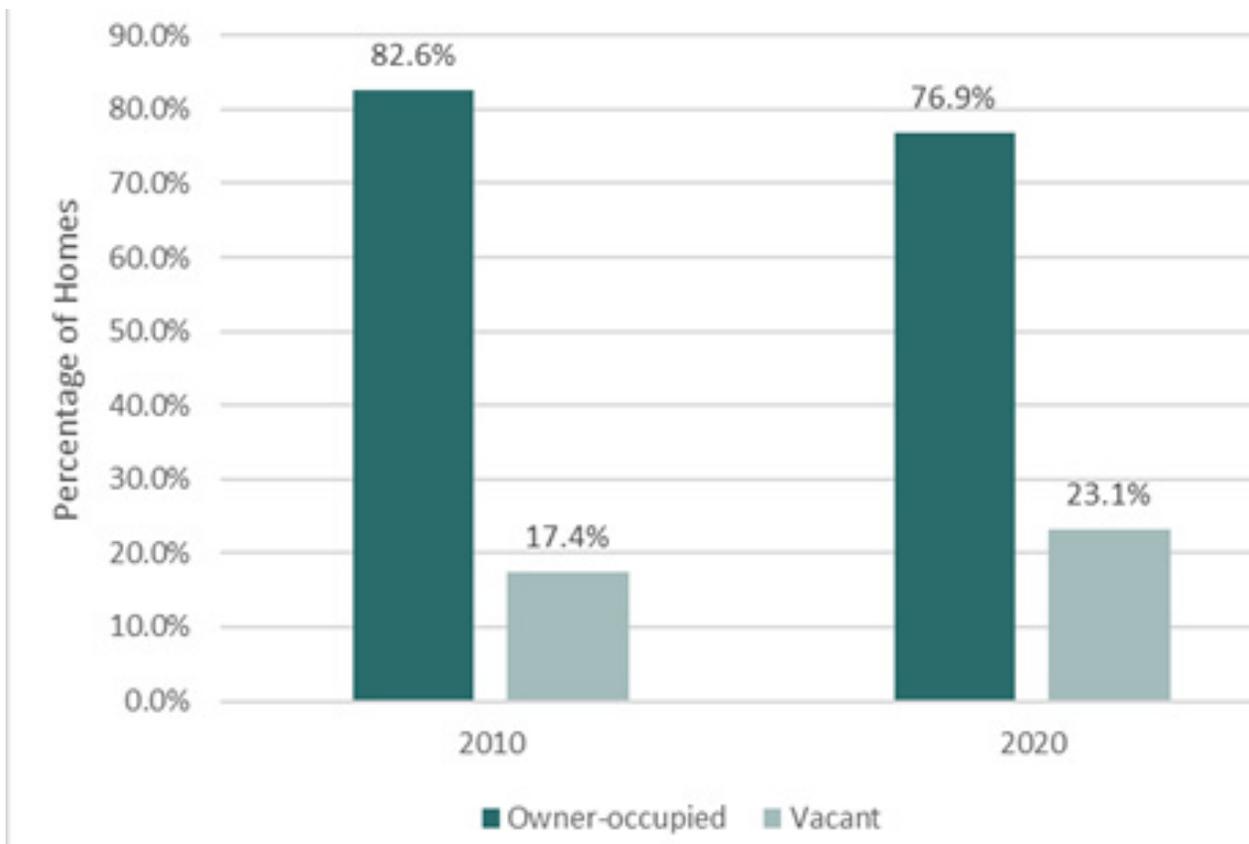
2. Housing Age

The value of Parrish’s available housing units is likely impacted by the age of its existing housing base. The median year in which all housing units in Parrish were built is 1957, 25 years older than the county-wide median of 1982 and the state-wide median of 1984. Over 17 percent of houses were built before 1940, while 36.2% of houses were built between 1940 and 1960. Almost 25% of houses were built between 1960 and 1980, and 13.8% of houses were built between 1980 and 2000. Only 7.7 percent of houses were built between 2000 and 2020, and no houses have been constructed since then.

3. Housing Occupancy

However, though housing units are older, the occupancy rate for Parrish is relatively high. Nearly 77 percent of homes in Parrish are owner-occupied, and the housing vacancy rate is 23.1 percent. This rate has grown in the last decade, increasing from 17.4 percent (see Figure 11). The increasing vacancy rate indicates a low demand for housing, which impacts the overall local housing market and local property values.

Figure 11: Housing Units by Occupancy Status, 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

In addition, there are currently no rental properties within the Town of Parrish. Rental properties are a flexible and convenient option for residents who may not want to own a home or are not financially able to purchase a home. Including a variety of housing options in future development can help Parrish diversify its housing base and increase its future resiliency.

CHAPTER 2: MARKET ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the Market Analysis is to evaluate Parrish’s economic market and give officials and stakeholders a better understanding of local consumer behavior and spending patterns. This section is divided into three different subsections.

1. The **Consumer Behavior** subsection presents data showing local consumer spending and preferences.
2. The **Industry Gap Analysis** subsection shows supply and demand estimates across individual industries, including surplus/leakage data indicating the ratio of nonresident spending in Parrish to resident spending outside Parrish.
3. The **Segmentation Profile** subsection describes the socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyle preferences of the community’s residents.
4. The **SWOT Assessment** subsection analyzes the responses given by Parrish residents and stakeholders about the town’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, as well as identifies development priorities derived from public input.

Although the economic terms used in this section will be clarified within the narrative, Table 9 provides definitions of each term for ease of reference.

Table 9: Definition of Terms Used

Term	Definition
LifeMode Group	A market category that generally describes an area’s residents based on shared common experiences or relevant demographic traits
Market Potential Index (MPI)	A measure of the likelihood of adults or households in a market area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the US average.
Retail Gap	The difference between Retail Potential (demand), and Retail Sales (supply). If the difference is positive, then demand outweighs supply, creating a “retail leakage.” If the difference is negative, then supply outweighs demand, creating a “retail surplus.”
Retail Potential	The amount of spending by an area’s residents on retail goods and services. Includes spending both inside and outside of the trade area in which they reside.
Retail Sales	The number of sales of retail goods and services by establishments in area.
Retail Surplus/Leakage	A retail surplus occurs when establishments in a community are selling more than is demanded in the community. A retail leakage occurs when residents of a community are spending on retail goods and services at establishments located outside the community.
Spending Potential Index (SPI)	A comparison of local spending to US averages. Any increase or decrease from a value of 100 indicates difference in spending compared to the national average.
Surplus/Leakage Factor	A measure of the balance between the volume of supply (Retail Sales) generated by an industry and the demand (Retail Potential) in the same industry, within a geographic trade area.
Tapestry Segments	A measure that provides greater detail into a community’s distinctive characteristics, including residents’ lifestyle choices and consumer purchasing preferences.

I. CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

1. Consumer Spending

Table 10 shows consumer spending for Parrish in 2021 across various spending categories. These categories are not mutually exclusive; instead, they are broad enough to capture a more complete depiction of expenses. Both the total and average amount spent per household represent annual figures. Although this table represents spending by Parrish households, each value includes money spent outside of Parrish as well as within the town. However, it is important to compare local spending levels to a broader average to compare Parrish's market conditions to a larger context. The **Spending Potential Index (SPI)** is a measure that compares local spending to the national average, which is represented by a value of 100. Any increase or decrease from 100 indicates how much more or less spending occurs in Parrish compared to the national average. For example, an SPI of 90 for a certain category of goods or services would indicate that consumers in Parrish spend 10 percent less than the national average on the items within that category.

The largest spending category for residents in Parrish was Shelter, at over \$800/month, which includes expenses such as mortgages and rent payments. However, public input suggested this figure is closer to between \$300 and \$700 per month, citing low home values. However, the SPI for this category was 44, indicating that residents in Parrish spent 56 percent less on Shelter than the national average, which further signifies the low value of homes. The smallest spending category was Personal Care Products & Services, with an average spending amount of \$771 per household annually and an SPI of 39. Notably, all spending categories for residents in Parrish have an SPI rate of at least 32 points lower than the national average, indicating that consumers who reside in Parrish spend at least 32 percent less in every category than the average amount spent nationally. This could be an indication of lower prices of goods, overall lower spending levels, or lower household income levels.

Table 10: Consumer Spending by Residents of Parrish, AL in 2021

Spending Category	Total	Household	SPI
Shelter	\$4,092,479	\$10,129.90	44
Health Care	\$1,926,990	\$4,769.78	67
Food at Home	\$1,621,824	\$4,014.41	65
Food Away from Home	\$992,337	\$2,456.28	57
Entertainment/Recreation	\$921,521	\$2,280.99	62
Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind	\$699,992	\$1,732.65	64
Household Furnishings & Equipment	\$580,528	\$1,436.95	56
Travel	\$526,479	\$1,303.17	45
Apparel & Services	\$518,912	\$1,284.44	53
Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs	\$346,780	\$858.37	68
Education	\$311,638	\$771.38	39
Personal Care Products & Services	\$311,638	\$771.38	39
Total Spending/Average SPI	\$12,748,585	\$31,555.91	56

Source: ESRI, 2022

2. Consumer Behavior

Another vital component of market analysis is evaluating consumer behaviors and identifying specific products and industries supported by local consumers. One way to analyze consumer behavior is through measuring the percentage of the population that consumes specific goods and services, which signifies the potential demand for the good or service within the area. However, even if a large segment of the population consumes a product, the purchased product is not necessarily desired over another, potentially unavailable, option. This phenomenon is the reason the **Market Potential Index (MPI)** is an important indicator for actual demand in an area. The MPI measures the relative likelihood of the adults or households in a specific trade area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the national average, which is represented by an MPI of 100. Comparing local consumer behaviors with national averages provides details about the products and services consumers want and the civic attitudes they have, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the different investments that are prospering or could eventually prosper in an area.

Consumer spending is analyzed in 3 categories for this analysis: Individuals, Households, and Market Potential Index (MPI). Consumer behavior is shown for both individuals and households because individuals tend to consume different goods and services than households, and separating individual consumer behavior from household consumer behavior allows for more a more comprehensive analysis. The MPI, as stated previously, measures the relative likelihood of consumers in a trade area to exhibit certain consumer behaviors or purchasing patterns compared to the national average, and this analysis is separated from individuals and households to determine trends.

INDIVIDUALS

As illustrated in Table 11, individuals in Parrish have a strong demand for fast food establishments, as 88.8 percent of the population have gone to a fast food or drive-in restaurant in the last 6 months. About 89 percent of the population bought gasoline in the last 6 months, indicating that individuals generally use their vehicles for travel. Smartphone ownership is also prevalent, at 88.7 percent of individuals. All top five consumer preferences had MPI scores close to the U.S. average.

Table 11: Most Popular Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Individuals

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Bought gasoline in last 6 months	695	89.3%	101
Went to fast food/drive-in restaurants in last 6 months	691	88.8%	98
Have a smartphone	690	88.7%	96
Read any magazine (paper/electronic version) in last 6 months	659	84.7%	96
Own/used any credit/debit card in last 12 months	656	84.3%	95

Source: ESRI, 2022

Individuals in Parrish had the least demand for travel and vacation spending out of all examined goods and services. Each of the five consumer preferences with the lowest rate of engagement was travel related, and three of them had to do with taking vacations, both foreign and domestic (see Table 12). These categories also had low MPI scores, indicating that Parrish’s population has a low demand for such services compared to the general U.S. population. These numbers could be impacted by the pandemic, as travel in general has declined over the past couple of years, as well as the overall income levels for residents within the town.

Table 12: Least Popular Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Individuals

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Took 3+ foreign trips by plane in last 3 years	18	2.3%	29
Spent on domestic vacations in last 12 months: \$1,500-\$1,999	18	2.3%	61
Domestic travel in last 12 months: used general travel website	19	2.4%	41
Spent on foreign vacations in last 12 months: \$1,000-\$2,999	19	2.4%	63
Foreign travel in last 3 years: used general travel website	22	2.8%	43

Source: ESRI, 2022

HOUSEHOLDS

The goods and services with the highest demand from households in Parrish were mainly staple grocery items that are similarly prevalent in households throughout the U.S., as indicated by their MPI scores (see Table 13).

Table 13: Most Popular Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Households

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Households used bread in last 6 months	386	95.5%	101
Households owns/leases any vehicle	365	90.3%	101
Households used fresh milk in last 6 months	327	80.9%	97
Households used fresh fruit/vegetables in last 6 months	317	78.5%	90
Households owns a computer	300	74.3%	91

Source: ESRI, 2022

The household consumer preferences with the least demand were technology related. As listed in Table 14, only 2 percent of households subscribe to fiber optic Internet services, and only 5 percent purchased a video game system in the last 12 months. These categories also had low MPI scores, with fiber optic subscription particularly far below the U.S. average, at 37.

Table 14: Least Popular Consumer Preferences and Behaviors for Households

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Households subscribes to fiber optic	8	2.0%	37
Households spent \$2,000+ on most recent home computer	10	2.5%	52
Households purchased video game system in last 12 months	20	5.0%	64
Households spent \$1,500-\$1,999 on most recent home computer	22	5.4%	104
Households bought/leased new vehicle in last 12 months	32	7.9%	82

Source: ESRI, 2022

MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX (MPI)

According to the MPI metric, consumers in Parrish are much more likely than the rest of the U.S. population to buy cigarettes at convenience stores, spend at convenience stores generally, only use coupon brands, and place importance on buying American. However, these rates do not necessarily indicate a sizable portion of the residents are purchasing these products, only that the percentage of the population that are making these purchases is larger than U.S. average. The top 5 categories with the largest MPI are listed in Table 15.

Table 15: Most Popular Consumer Preferences/Behaviors for Individuals and Households by MPI

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals/ Households	Percent of Individuals/ Households	MPI
Bought cigarettes at convenience store in last 30 days	92	11.8%	165
Spent at convenience store in last 30 days: \$100+	230	29.6%	145
Only use coupons brands: usually buy	151	19.4%	142
Buying American is important	387	49.7%	140
Household owns any dog	213	52.7%	133

Source: ESRI, 2022

In addition, as listed in Table 16, residents in Parrish are far less likely to take foreign trips and take domestic vacations, subscribe to fiber optic Internet services, and go to a bar/night club. Many of these consumer behaviors are likely explained by lower income levels in Parrish compared to the general U.S. population, and therefore might not reflect underlying preferences.

Table 16: Least Popular Consumer Preferences/Behaviors for Individuals and Households by MPI

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals/ Households	Percent of Individuals/ Households	MPI
Took 3+ foreign trips by plane in last 3 years	18	2.3%	29
HH subscribes to fiber optic	8	2.0%	37
Domestic travel in last 12 months: used general travel website	19	2.4%	41
Went to a bar/night club in last 12 months	55	7.1%	42
Member of any frequent flyer program	80	10.3%	42

Source: ESRI, 2022

II. INDUSTRY GAP ANALYSIS

The industry gap and its corollary leakage/surplus factor can help identify opportunities for local retail expansion or provide evidence that certain expansions could potentially hurt local businesses in specific industries. The retail gap represents the difference between Retail Potential, or demand, and Retail Sales, or supply. Therefore, it statistically measures whether a given industry is experiencing a leakage or surplus. If demand is greater than supply, the retail gap will be positive, indicating that a leakage is occurring, and residents of the community are spending on retail goods and services at establishments located outside the community. In this case, expansion of industry may be beneficial to the area by encouraging local consumers to remain in the community to shop and by drawing in consumers from other areas.

If supply is greater than demand, the retail gap will be negative, indicating that a surplus is occurring, and establishments in the community are selling more goods and services than what is demanded within the area. This can mean that consumers from outside the community are coming to the community to buy certain goods and services. By analyzing sources of surplus, expansion strategies can be created around supporting current industries and their supply chains.

Data Note: Leakage Surplus Factor

The leakage/surplus factor presents a snapshot of the retail opportunity available for a specific industry or subsector, based on its retail gap. It measures the balance between the volume of supply (Retail Sales) generated by the industry and the demand (Retail Potential) within the same industry. The factors range from -100 (a total surplus) to 100 (a total leakage). A negative value represents a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area, while a positive value represents a leakage of retail opportunity outside the trade area.

Table 17: Supply and Demand of Industries in Parrish

Industry	Demand	Supply	Leakage/Surplus Factor
Alcoholic Beverages	\$124,530	\$0	100.00
Apparel & Services	\$518,912	\$0	100.00
Computer	\$39,566	\$0	100.00
Entertainment & Recreation	\$921,521	\$0	100.00
Food Away from Home	\$992,337	\$1,013,000	2.04
Financial	\$23,021,583	\$0	100.00
Grocery Stores	\$1,621,824	\$15,798,000	-89.73
Health	\$229,509	\$1,179,000	-75.83
Home	\$4,856,269	\$1,313,000	26.25
Household Furnishings & Equipment	\$377,421	\$0	100.00
Household Operations	\$510,462	\$0	100.00
Insurance	\$2,116,722	\$1,375,000	53.94
Transportation	\$2,144,005	\$617,000	38.22
Travel	\$406,773	\$0	100.00
Uncategorized	N/A	\$3,028,000	N/A

Source: ESRI, 2022

Overall, the community’s demand for goods and services outweighs its current supply. The total Parrish market area possesses approximately \$37.9 million in Retail Potential (demand) and \$24.3 million in Retail Sales (supply), resulting in a positive overall retail gap of about \$13.6 million and a leakage factor of 55.7. The low ratio of businesses to households in Parrish likewise suggests that a small number of industries are inflating the overall supply, because residents have no choice but to leave Parrish for many goods and services. Therefore, the town likely has several opportunities for expansion and/or recruitment.

Only two industries in Parrish possess a surplus: Grocery Stores and Health Stores. There are two additional businesses that contribute to the economy but are uncategorized: Case Knife Outlet and Wayne’s Pawn. Son’s Grocery and Gross Drug Company not only meet local demand but also provide resources for many consumers outside the community. Grocery Stores have a surplus of \$14.2 million, with a surplus factor of -89.7, and Health Stores have a surplus of about \$950,000, with a leakage/surplus factor of -75.8. These surplus rates show that much of Son’s Grocery and the Gross Drug Company’s customer base live outside Parrish town limits.

Every other industry in Parrish possesses a positive retail gap, indicating a leakage. In addition, nearly all these industries have leakage/surplus factors of 100, indicating that no businesses in those industries exist in the community. The largest retail gaps exist in the Apparel, Computer, Entertainment & Recreation, Financial, Household Furnishings & Equipment, Household Operations, and Travel industries. These industries have great potential as no competition in these categories currently exists. Additionally, residents in community meetings have expressed interest in having retail options in these categories, and demand for these products clearly exists.

In addition, the large gap for Entertainment & Recreation supports the idea for more outdoor recreation opportunities in Parrish. Residents in Parrish are spending close to \$1 million on recreation-related activities outside of Parrish. More information on outdoor recreation opportunities can be found in Section II.

Categories with low, positive leakage/surplus factors include Food Away from Home, Home, Transportation, and Insurance. This means that there is greater demand than Parrish businesses are able to supply. Additional businesses are needed to close this gap if Parrish wants to contain this spending to the town limits.

The industry for Food Away from Home has a leakage of only \$20,000 and leakage factor of 2.0. This does not mean that there is no room for another restaurant. Only two restaurants currently exist – Granny Pooh’s Kitchen and Jack’s, so greater diversity in food options could lead to greater demand. In this instance, greater supply could lead to greater demand. The leakage/surplus factor also shows that some of the demand for Jack’s and Granny Pooh’s Kitchen comes from areas outside of Parrish.

The Home Industry has a leakage of \$345,000 with a leakage factor of 26.3, and these rates are mostly driven by the Mortgage Payment and Maintenance/Remodeling subsectors. Parrish Water Works is the only business contributing to this sector. In addition, Alfa Insurance is the only business contributing to the Insurance industry, which has a leakage of \$972,000 and leakage factor of 53.9.

The Transportation industry has a leakage of \$235,000 and leakage factor of 38.2. However, Son’s BP is the only gas station in this industry and there are no contributing businesses for Vehicle Maintenance and Repairs.

Due to their large retail gaps and surplus/leakage factors, increasing the number of local businesses in these industries would likely benefit Parrish’s market area. However, while these industries represent the greatest opportunities for expansion, they do not necessarily represent industries in which investment is most attainable. Other industries presented in Table 17 have similarly high surplus/leakage factors, but smaller dollar-amount leakages may serve as lower-hanging fruit for investment.



Source: RPCGB, 2023

III. SEGMENTATION PROFILE

The Segmentation Profile illustrates characteristics of Parrish’s residents that cannot be derived from quantifiable factors alone. To show these characteristics, the population is arranged into different LifeMode Groups and Tapestry Segments. LifeMode groups arrange individuals into different markets based on shared common experiences or significant demographic traits. Tapestry Segments are subcategories of LifeMode Groups that provide greater detail and specificity into a particular community’s distinctive characteristics. These characteristics give insight into residents’ general lifestyle choices, consumer purchasing preferences, and preferred leisure activities, and are therefore used by analysts to more effectively market goods and services within a market area.

Table 18: Population of Parrish, AL by LifeMode Group and Tapestry Segment

LifeMode Group / Tapestry Segment	Percentage of Population
LifeMode Group: Rustic Outpost	100%
Tapestry 1: Rural Bypasses	52.7%
Tapestry 2: Rooted Rural	47.3%

Source: ESRI, 2022

1. Rustic Outpost Life Mode Group

Communities defined as “Rustic Outpost” are characterized by country living. They are typically comprised of older families living in older homes, and their local economies are often dependent on manufacturing, retail, and healthcare industries, with pockets of mining and agricultural jobs. Most residents own their homes as well as at least one vehicle, live within their means, prefer to pay their bills in person, and like to read the newspaper, rather than rely on a digital source of news. Residents in Rustic Outpost areas are also likely outdoor enthusiasts, who grow their own vegetables, love their pets, and enjoy hunting and/or fishing. However, labor force participation is usually low within these areas, and jobs are usually concentrated in skilled and service occupations.

RUSTIC OUTPOST TAPESTRY SEGMENTS:

A. Rural Bypasses

Open space, undeveloped land, and farmland characterize Rural Bypasses. These families live within small towns along country back roads and enjoy the open air in these sparsely populated neighborhoods. Their country lifestyle focuses on the outdoors, gardening, hunting, and fishing. They are more likely to own a satellite dish than a home computer. Although most households do have a connection to the internet, use is very limited. Those who are not yet retired work in blue-collar jobs in the agriculture or manufacturing industries. Other characteristics include:

- An older housing market, with more married couples without children and single households, the average household size is slightly lower at 2.55 and most residents own single-family homes.
- Residents primarily live in rural areas, and this tapestry segment is almost entirely located within the South.
- Labor force participation is less than 50 percent, so income is primarily derived from wages and supplemented with Social Security and Supplemental Security Incomes.

B. Rooted Rural

Rooted Rural is heavily concentrated in the Appalachian Mountain range as well as in Texas and Arkansas. Employment in the forestry industry is common, and Rooted Rural residents live in many of the heavily forested regions of the country. This group enjoys time spent outdoors, hunting, fishing, or working in their gardens. Indoors, they enjoy watching television with their spouse and spending time with their pets. When shopping, they look for American-made and generic products. These communities are heavily influenced by religious faith and family history. Other characteristics of Rooted Rural communities include:

- The housing market is dominated by married couples, few with children at home, and around 80% of homes are owner-occupied.
- Residents have a “do-it-yourself” mentality, and they grow their own produce, work on their cars, and own a riding lawn mower. They also tend to avoid the internet with payment transactions, preferring to pay bills in person.
- The consumer base views clothes as a necessity, not a fashion statement, so they tend to only buy new clothes when old clothes wear out.

Figure 12: Parrish Town Sign



Source: WVTM 13 Birmingham, 2018

CHAPTER 3: SWOT ASSESSMENT

The EDSP planning process included an assessment of Parrish’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). The assessment includes input gathered through an online survey provided to local stakeholders and residents to identify the most pressing economic issues facing the town’s economic trajectory, as well as feedback from a public meeting held in Spring 2023. The purpose of the SWOT Assessment section is to outline the development priorities as determined by Parrish’s residents and stakeholders through analyzing survey responses.

SWOT RESPONSES OVERVIEW

This section includes the top five Strengths, Weaknesses, opportunities, and Threats facing the Town of Parrish’s local economy per the SWOT survey responses. The areas that residents are most and least satisfied with are also identified below. The SWOT survey responses were collected from March 2023 to May 2023.

STRENGTHS

- Cost of Living
- Geographic Location
- Lifestyle and Quality of Life
- Commute Times
- Government/Political Leadership

WEAKNESSES

- Limited Career Opportunities/Trajectories
- Business Environment
- Business Sites/Real Estate
- K-12 Schools
- Natural Environment Limitations

OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve Critical Infrastructure (such as Roads, Water/Sewer, and Broadband)
- Focus on Programs to Recruit/Attract Business
- Provide More Business Support
- Improve Outdoor Recreation Initiatives

THREATS

- Inadequate Housing Supply/Housing Affordability
- Lack of Recreation Activities
- Inadequate Water/Sewer Infrastructure
- Vacant Downtowns/Lack of Resources for Downtown
- Plant Closures/Relocation

RESIDENTS ARE MOST SATISFIED WITH:

- Commuting Times to Work and School
- Local and Regional Leadership
- Cost of Living
- Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Initiatives

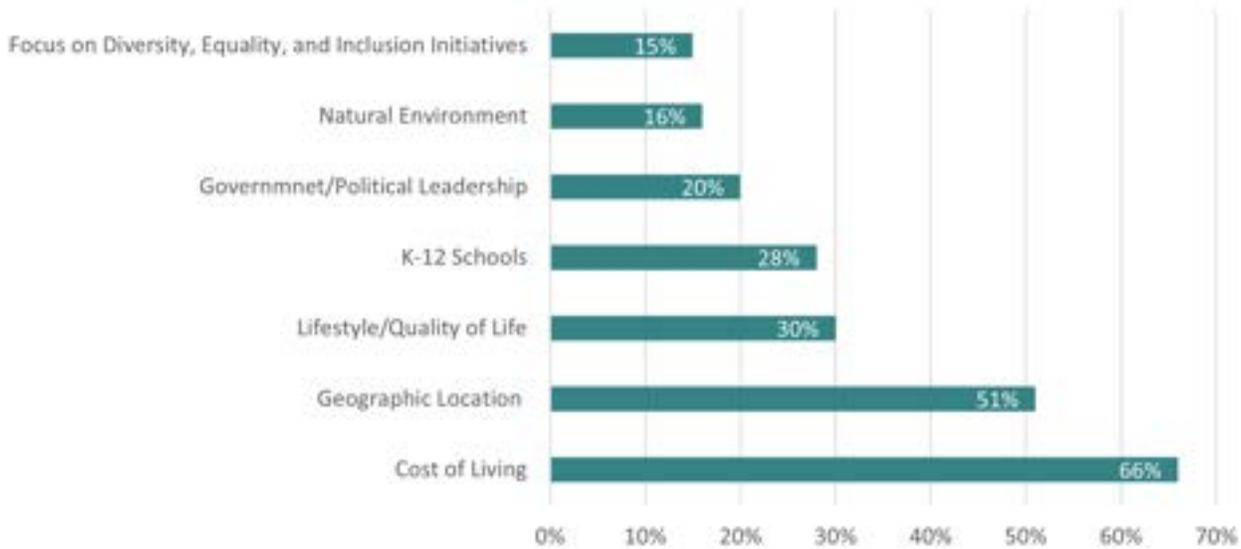
RESIDENTS ARE LEAST SATISFIED WITH:

- Image as Tourist Destination
- Appeal to Young Professionals
- Apprenticeship Availability
- Access to Training/Skills Building Programs
- Pedestrians/Bicycle Routes

1. Strengths Summary

The strengths identified by respondents included a strong consensus around the cost of living in the area, the town’s geographic location, and the lifestyle/quality of life the town offers. Figure 13 outlines the responses recorded for the question “What are the town’s top competitive strengths, or assets?” Respondents were allowed to choose up to three answers.

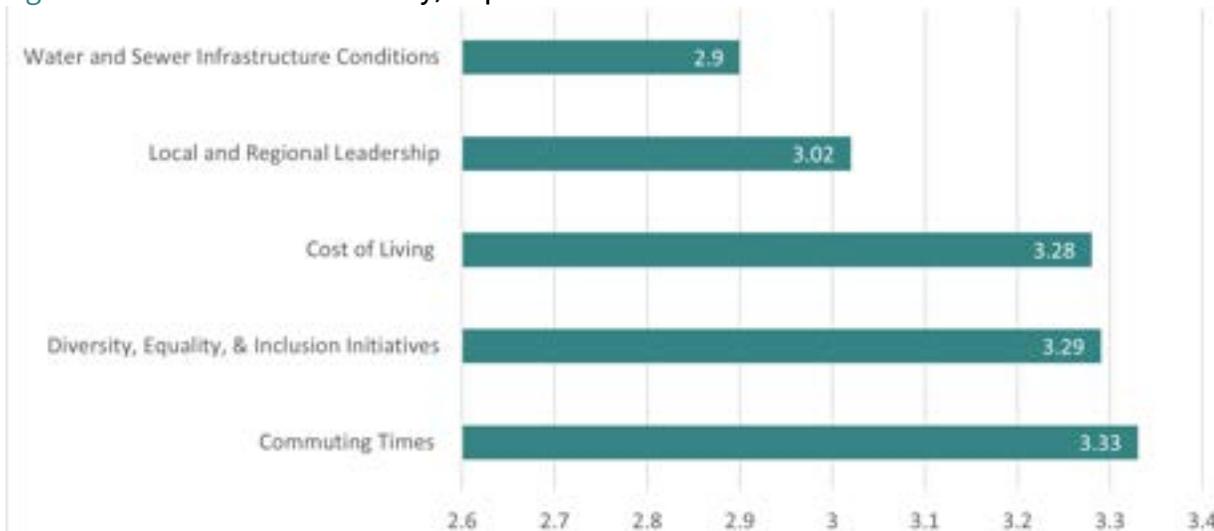
Figure 13: Parrish SWOT Survey, “What are the town’s top competitive strengths, or assets?”



Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

Residents and stakeholders were also asked to record their perspectives on how well their expectations were met regarding a variety of interest areas divided between Economic Areas and Quality-of Life Areas. The top five weighted responses for Economic Areas are depicted in Figure 14 and include commuting times to work and school as well as diversity, equality, & inclusion initiatives and cost of living.

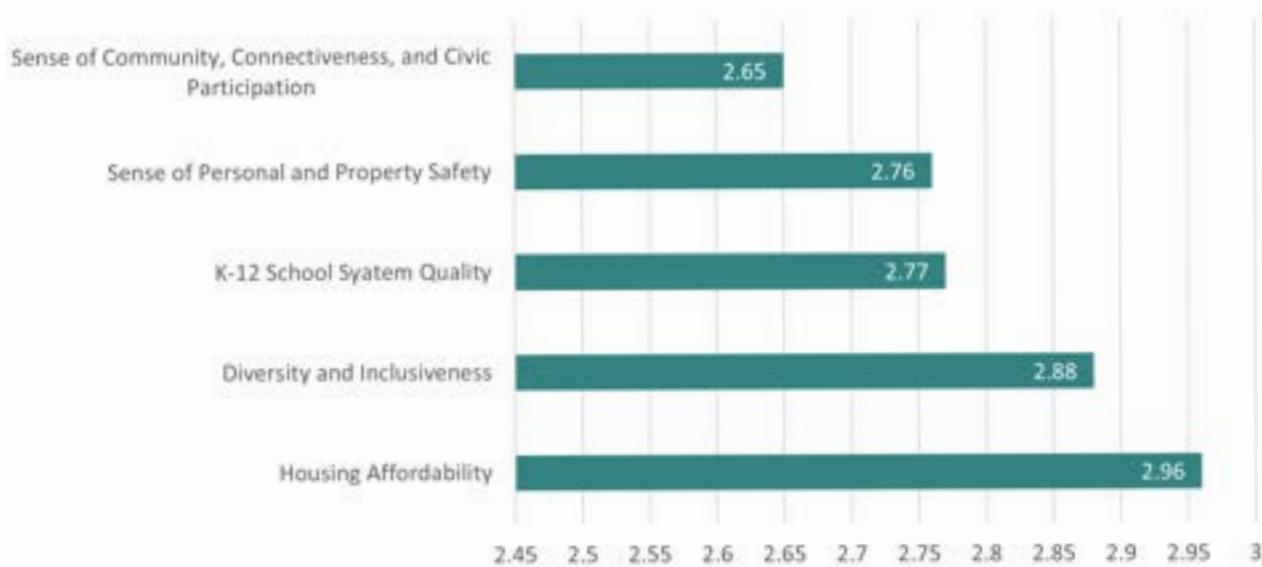
Figure 14: Parrish SWOT Survey, Top Five Ranked Economic Areas



Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

The five top weighted responses for Quality-of-Life Areas are depicted in Figure 15, with the largest weighted responses including housing affordability and diversity and inclusiveness.

Figure 15: Parrish SWOT Survey, Top Five Ranked Quality-of-Life Areas

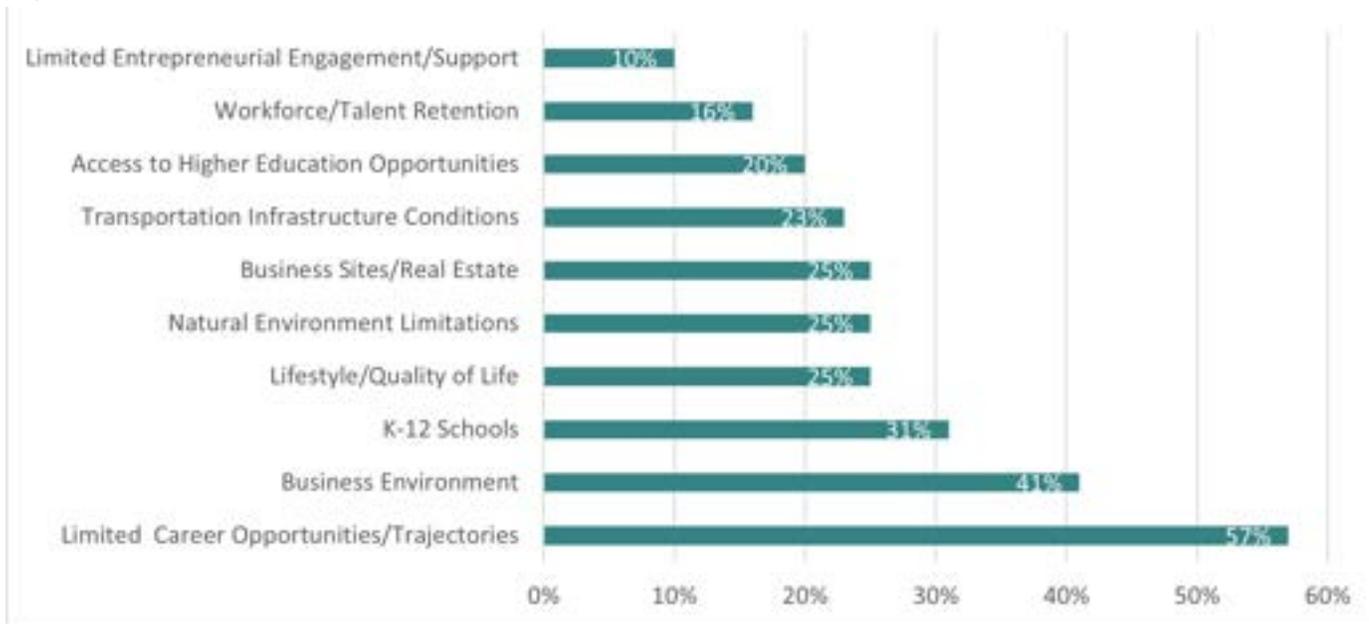


Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

2. Weaknesses Summary

The weaknesses identified by respondents included limited career opportunities/trajectories and the local business environment as the town’s largest drawbacks. The list of the top ten weaknesses is illustrated in Figure 16.

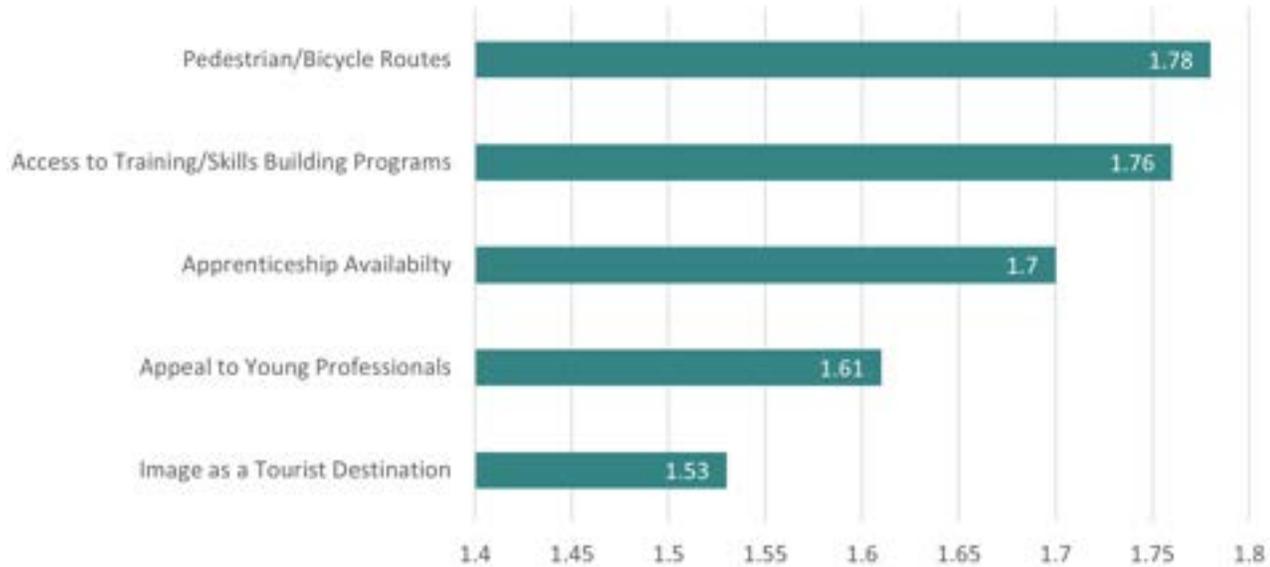
Figure 16: Parrish SWOT Survey, “What are the town’s top weaknesses, or constraints?”



Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

As for expectations in Economic Areas, image as a tourist destination was listed as the least ranked area, followed by appeal to young professionals and apprenticeship availability. The least ranked areas are listed in Figure 17.

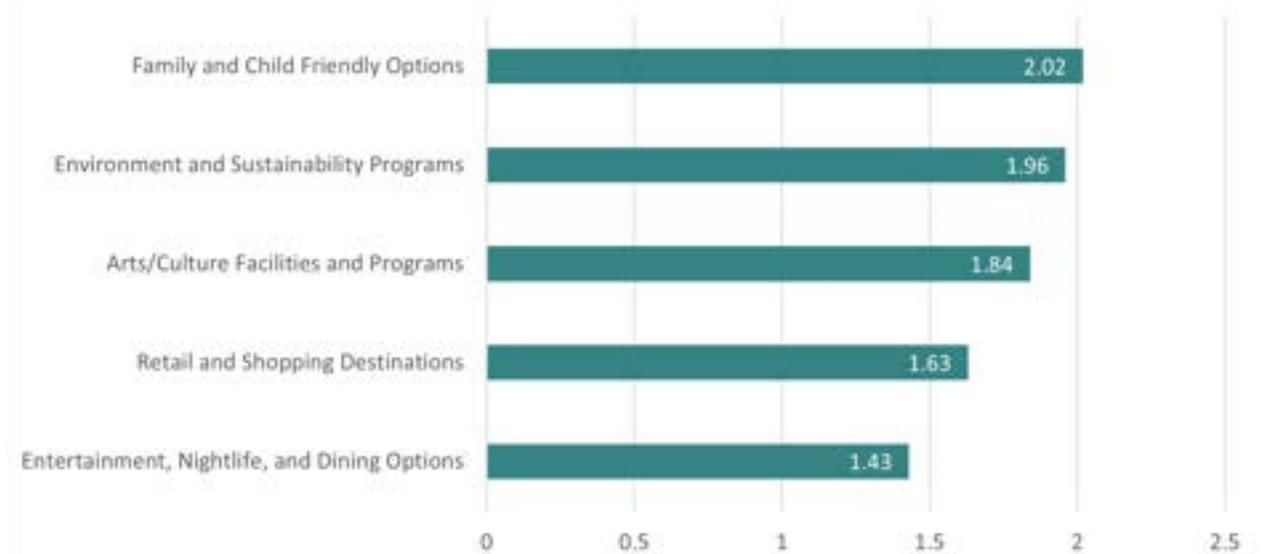
Figure 17: Parrish SWOT Survey, Least Ranked Economic Areas



Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

The least ranked Quality-of-Life areas included Entertainment, Nightlife, and Dining Options as the lowest ranked. The least ranked Quality-of-Life areas are listed in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Parrish SWOT Survey, Least Ranked Quality-of-Life Areas



Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

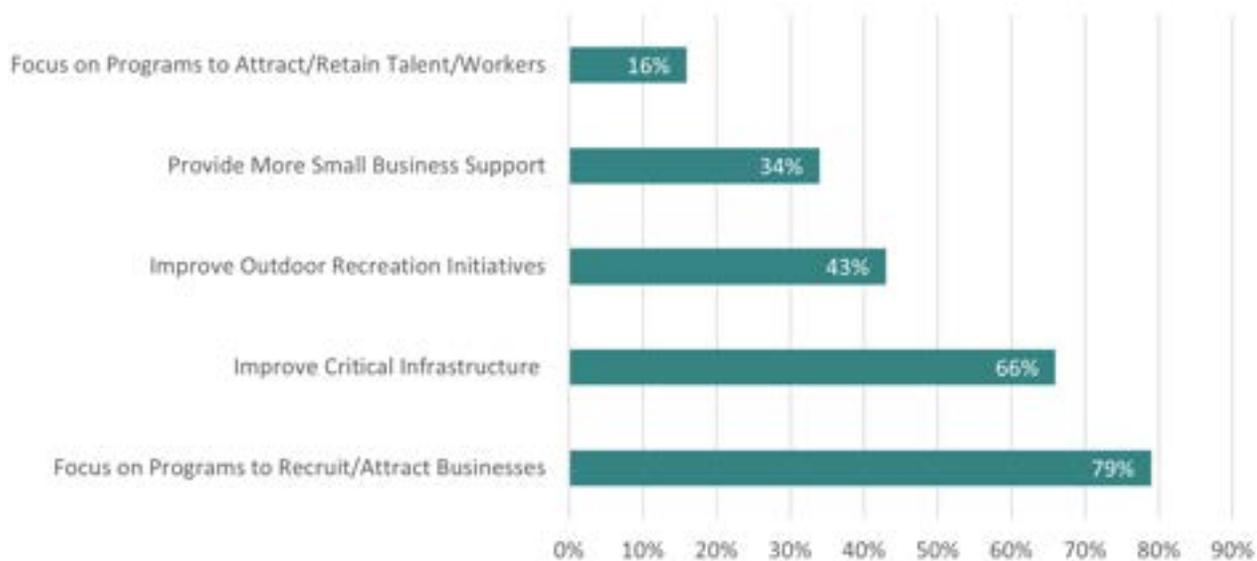
3. Opportunities Summary

Respondents were given a chance to list opportunities they saw within their community unprompted. This open-ended question received an array of responses and a number of opportunities for Parrish’s future development. However, most were centered on initiatives the town could take to improve the quality of life for current residents and attract new residents. This included a focus on the creation or expansion of outdoor recreational assets in Parrish, as well as fixing old infrastructure. Some specific responses are listed below:

- “There is nothing new under the sun. Study other small towns that have bounced back from economic problems and work on changing the community mindset. Persistent baby steps in the right direction will be rewarded in the future.”
- “Expand town limits north to I22 and south to Nelson Brothers. Retire the debt from the splashpad. Capitalize on the hundreds of acres of brownfields and grayfields on the campus of the century old Gorgas Steam Plant. Create a “town center” somehow around the 4-way stop on Hwy 269.”
- “The people make this town. Smiling faces and laughter. We just need the funds to fix these awful roads and have a place like a park with a track and picnic tables. Let’s bring this community together.”
- “We have an enormous amount of potential within the town for business once some of the property is developed. We have several nonprofit groups that are working to improve the quality of life. We will need more defined parking for businesses upon development. We need cleaner waterways in order to enjoy different opportunities that our community has to offer.”

In addition, residents were asked to select their top three most important development priorities for the town’s local economy. A wide majority, or 80 percent, ranked improving employment/job opportunities in the top three most important development needs, followed on focuses to retail and recreation opportunities. Figure 19 lists the top 5 selected development priorities for SWOT survey respondents.

Figure 19: Parrish SWOT Survey, Top Five Development Priorities

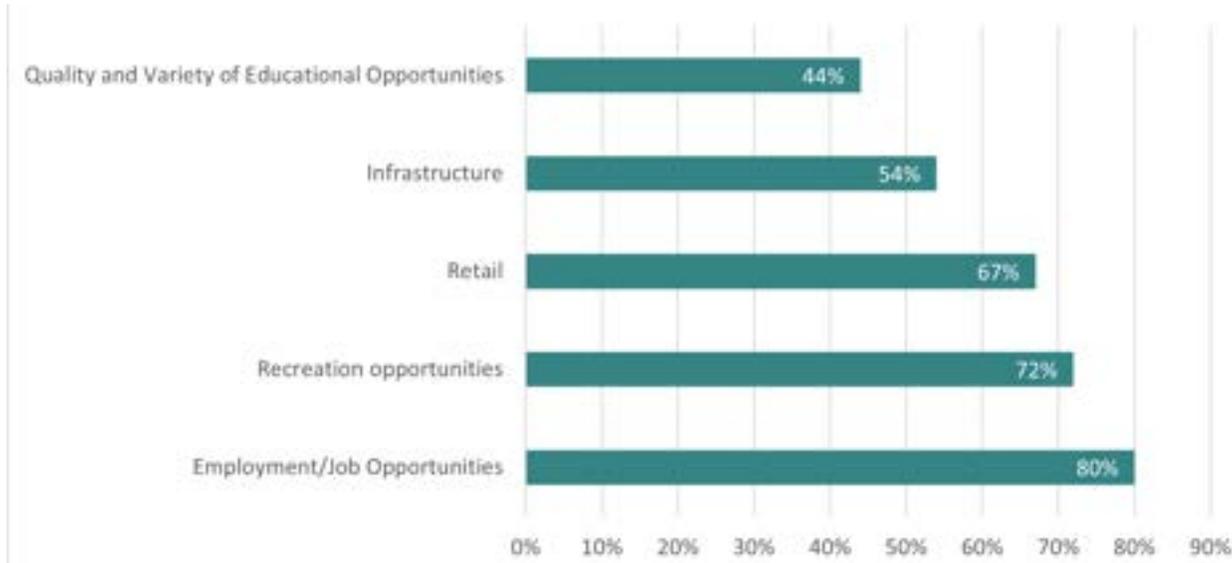


Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

4. Threats Summary

Respondents were asked to identify risks and threats to the local economy, too. One of the questions in the SWOT survey asked respondents to identify the economic assets Parrish lacked in comparison to other towns nearby. Figure 20 lists the top five development gaps selected for Parrish.

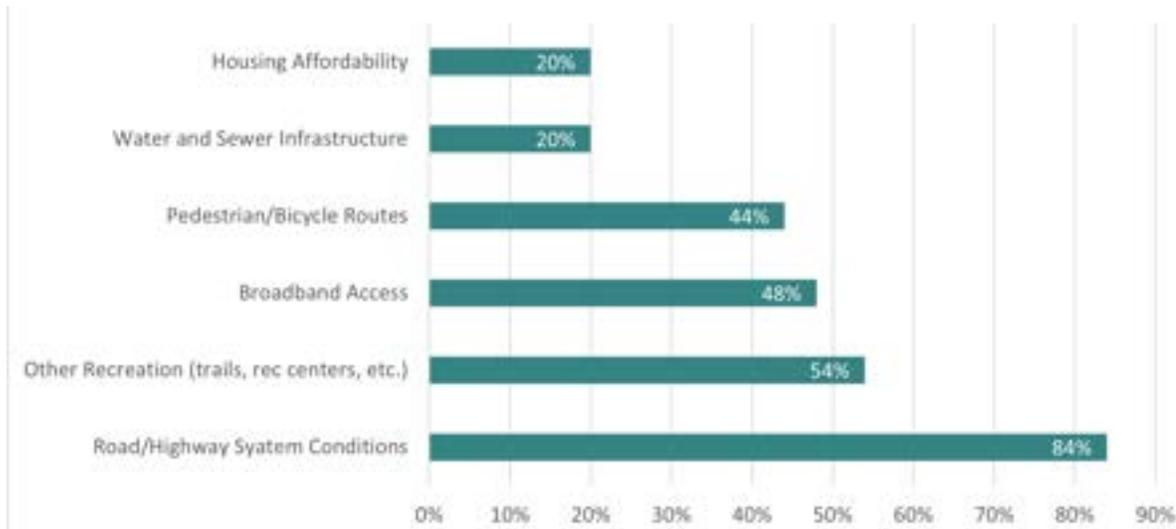
Figure 20: Parrish SWOT Survey, “Where is the town lacking in development when compared to other towns nearby?”; Top Five Development Gaps



Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

Residents and stakeholders also ranked the infrastructure development improvements the town needs in order to grow. The largest improvement areas were related to transportation and included road and highway system conditions, pedestrian and bicycle routes, and other recreational infrastructure (such as trails and recreation centers). Broadband Access was also identified as one of the top five infrastructure needs within the town; access to reliable broadband is critical to economic and community development.

Figure 21: Parrish SWOT Survey, Top Five Infrastructure Needs



Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

The SWOT survey also included an inquiry regarding the threats to local economic resiliency, and respondents were asked to rank a list of threats from most to least threatening to Parrish. The weighted responses are listed in Figure 22. The inability to attract or retain population and workforce ranked as the number one threat to Parrish’s local economy, and limited/lack of job growth or employment opportunities was recorded as the second largest threat.

Figure 22: Parrish SWOT Survey, Resiliency Threats Rankings

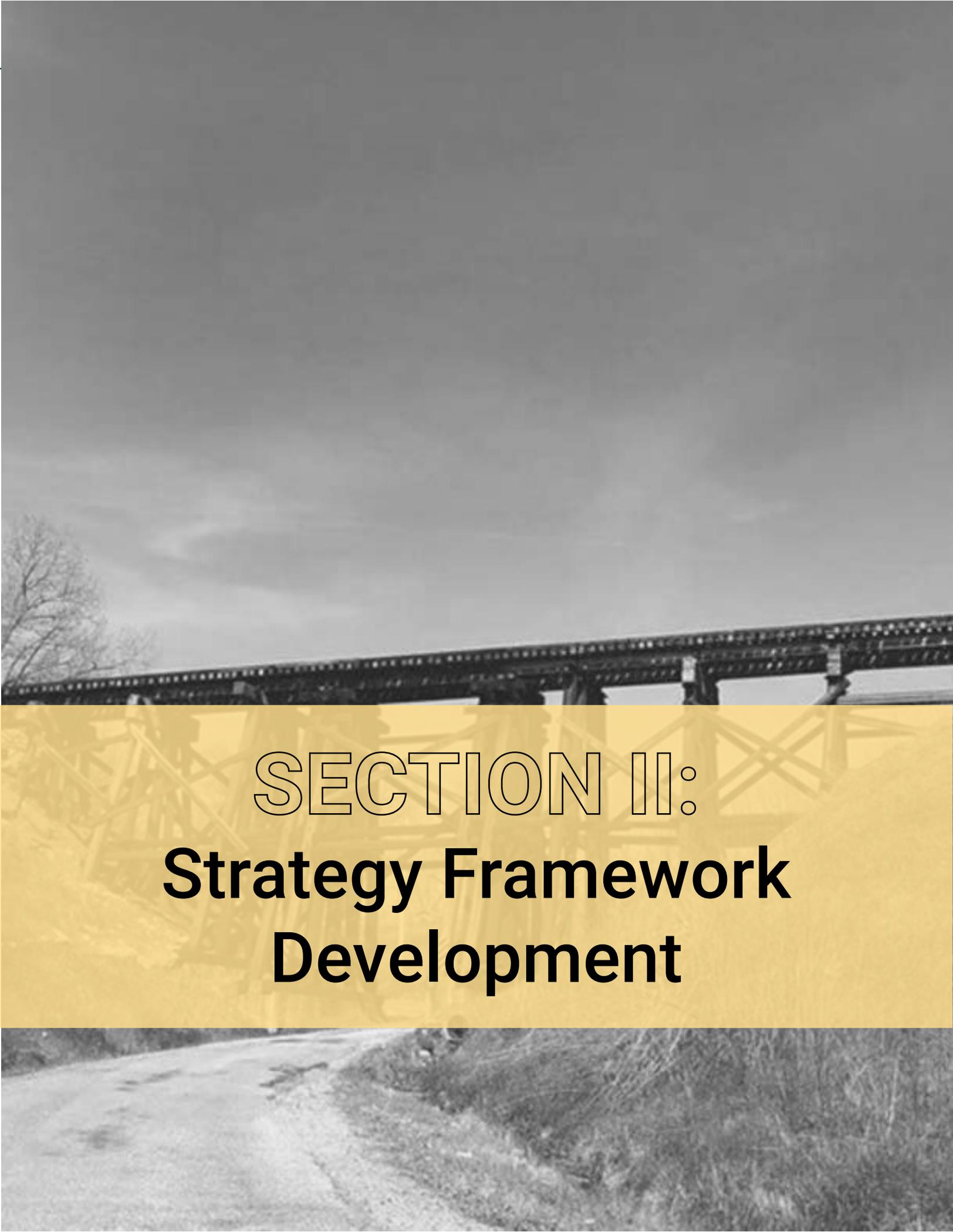


Source: Parrish SWOT Survey, 2023

5. Community Feedback

There was also a public community meeting in April 2023 that generated public feedback on a variety of topics. Community members were excited about future economic development within their town. Residents want more things to do after work, including increased options for restaurants and entertainment, and they also want small businesses, like clothing and shoe stores, to be available within town. Attendees also cited a desire for increased housing development and more affordable housing options, like apartment buildings. There are several vacant buildings that need to be demolished and could be used as sites for housing investment to attract young people to the town. Residents discussed that the town has the capacity to expand their sewer system to both businesses and residential homes, which is an asset for Parrish.

Residents loved the local churches, low cost of living, and close-knit community aspects of living in Parrish. Some challenges cited by residents include road conditions, lack of job opportunities, broadband infrastructure, and closure of the high school, which led to a decline in town pride. However, the town has been utilizing the resources it does have. A local nonprofit is currently using part of the old high school building to open a free store. Since the campus is large, there are many other opportunities for development; some suggestions cited at the meeting included using the building to host community events, create and support a local business incubator, and provide recovery resources to local residents.



SECTION II:
**Strategy Framework
Development**



Source: RPCGB, 2023

The Strategy Framework Development section aims to outline the development opportunities within the community based on the data gathered and analyzed in the Needs Assessment as well as input provided by the local community. The plan's strategy framework will describe the town's development themes resulting from the data analysis and stakeholder input, and it will evaluate the potential of Outdoor Recreation and Broadband connectivity as primary development initiatives for the town. This section is divided into 3 different chapters:

- **Chapter 1 – Priority Development Themes & Focus Areas**
- **Chapter 2 – Outdoor Recreation in Parrish**
- **Chapter 3 – Broadband Connectivity**

CHAPTER 1: PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT THEMES & FOCUS AREAS

Several themes became apparent concluding the Needs Assessment, which included data analysis, a SWOT assessment, and community meetings with the public and town leadership. The town wants to focus on redeveloping its identity to better serve its residents and attract newcomers. In addition, the town's infrastructure is in need of critical repairs and improvements. This chapter will further outline these major themes and identify focus areas correlated with each theme.

- **Theme 1 – Enhance Parrish's Sense of Community**
- **Theme 2 – Update & Improve Infrastructure**
- **Theme 3 – Retain Residents and Attract Opportunities**

THEME 1- ENHANCE PARRISH’S SENSE OF COMMUNITY

One of the most prominent ideas conveyed through survey responses and public input was the desire for Parrish to enhance the local sense of community. Parrish is known by its residents as a communal small town, and there is a desire to provide more community gatherings and public spaces for current residents. This section will outline a list of the Focus Areas relating to this theme:

A. Placemaking

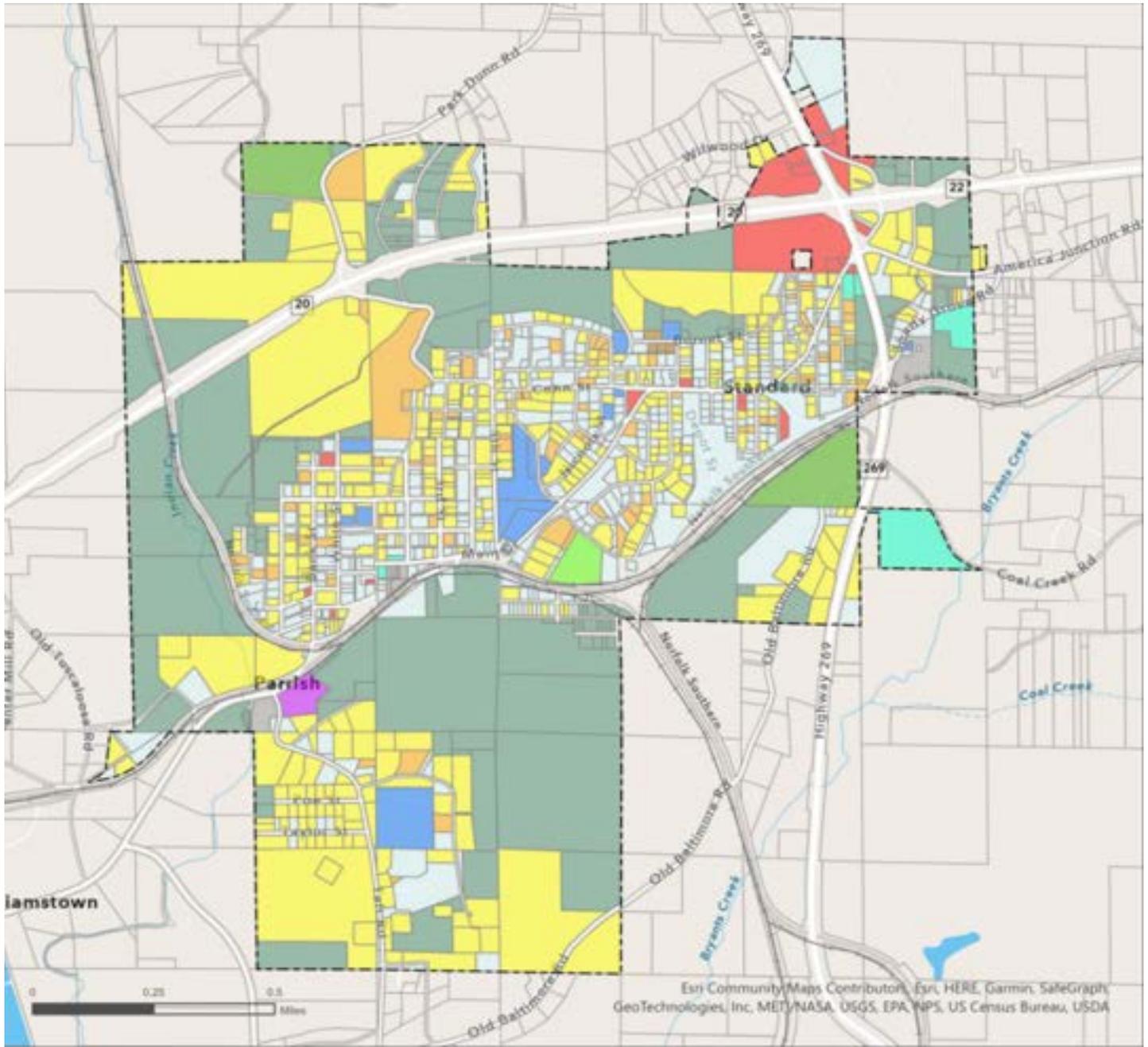
Placemaking has become a popular term that describes establishing a stronger sense of community by harnessing local resources, and this can be put into practice in a variety of ways depending on the vision of the community. A great place to start would be by bolstering the town identity with beautification and branding. Branding and marketing strategies can seem daunting, but there are approachable steps to accomplish these ends on a community level. For example, Parrish may want to consider updating the town sign, especially since it is usually the first thing residents and visitors see as they enter town. In addition, creating a recognizable logo and Town of Parrish website could help residents access town information and updates while providing a way for others to learn more about the community and what it has to offer.

In addition to beautification and branding, there are some designations the town can make to enhance the sense of place within Parrish. Though there is currently no zoning in the town, the town can evaluate its existing land uses and designate an area as the downtown as an investment priority and development focus area. The Town of Parrish does not currently have an identified downtown, and therefore there is no natural “heart” of the community. Identifying a downtown would create a sense of place and pride for residents. The town could add murals and a space for community engagement, like a pavilion or picnic tables, to this area. The chosen downtown would need to be in an area that has room for the development of new businesses, as well as a central location for residents and visitors. Once the downtown is determined, the town can decide if other designations are necessary or needed, such as business districts, historic districts, etc. A map of Parrish’s existing land uses can be found on Map 1, and Table 19 includes a list of project and implementation ideas for the Placemaking Focus Area.



Source: RPCGB, 2023

MAP 1: EXISTING LAND USES



PARRISH, ALABAMA
EXISTING LAND USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- FORESTED
- INDUSTRIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- MOBILE HOME

- MULTI FAMILY
- PARK AND OPEN SPACE
- PUBLIC USE FACILITIES
- SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED
- UTILITIES
- VACANT AND UNDEVELOPED

Total Parcels - 1,141
Total Acres - 1,168
Avg Lot Size - 1.02 acres

CATEGORY	TOTAL ACRES	% OF TOTAL ACRES
Agriculture	5.43	0.46%
Commercial	32.07	2.75%
Forested	429.22	36.75%
Industrial	3.95	0.34%
Institutional	25.80	2.21%
Mobile Home	44.14	3.78%
Multi Family	1.22	0.10%
Park/ Open Space	28.05	2.40%
Public Use Facilities	17.31	1.48%
Single Family Detached	378.81	32.44%
Utilities	6.96	0.60%
Vacant/ Undeveloped	194.94	16.69%

Residential land uses - 36.31%
Commercial land uses - 2.75%
Industrial land uses - 0.34%
Vacant/Undev/Forested - 53.44%



Table 19: Project Ideas- Placemaking Focus Area

Project	Description	Resources
Beautification Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create official beautification committee consisting of engaged and passion residents who care about Parrish and its future; make a list of desired improvements for implementation and present to town council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town residents Neighboring communities
Logo & Website Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the town logo if desired; create partnerships with local community college or technical school for “logo competition” for local students to design and submit to town. RPCGB can also provide assistance. Create town website; assign task for updating website to town employee or involved volunteer. If funding is needed to implement, consider seeing if CAWACO is a feasible option. RPCGB can also provide assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RPCGB; partnerships with local community college or high schools RPCGB; CAWACO Resource & Development Council (RC&D)-has small grants to assist communities with community development initiatives.
Town Sign Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the beautification committee to design town signs for updates; CAWACO can also be a grant source for this project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beautification Committee; CAWACO RC&D
Downtown Designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An option identified for the downtown included in this EDSP is the Main Drive area that connects 1st Street to 5th Street. This was selected as an option because this was the location of the old downtown, and the senior center and waterworks board already have facilities there. The community garden is also located in the area. Once confirmed, Parrish can focus its redevelopment focuses there, and the town can conduct visioning sessions with residents and stakeholders regarding what priorities residents have and what they would like to have in their downtown district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once determined, RPCGB can provide mapping services or technical assistance to help begin development or visioning processes.
Sidewalk Installation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many students walk to the elementary/ middle school, but there are very few sidewalks in town. In addition, creating safe, walkable pathways through town would encourage development and utilization of the designated downtown area as well as attendance at local events. In addition, there is an opportunity to improve the connectivity of and enhance the safety of walkability between the town’s assets, such as the school, the primary residential area, and the local grocery store. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once determined, RPCGB can provide mapping services or technical assistance to help illustrate the location of sidewalks within the town’s priority areas. RPCGB can also help the town find funding sources to assist with the construction costs.

B. Strategic Partnerships for Development

Though the Town of Parrish is ready to take steps toward its future, it is important to note that the town will need assistance with developing projects. Especially as a small, rural community with limited capacity, creating strategic partnerships with local and regional agencies will connect Parrish to resources, assist with project implementation, and enhance opportunities. Table 20 lists organizations the Town of Parrish can connect with to establish relationships and acquire project support.

Table 20: Local and Regional Resources for Strategic Partnerships

Agency	Description	Website
CAWACO RC & D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource Conservation & Development Council: A nonprofit organization that connects Central Alabama communities to the resources and partnerships needed to drive economic development in an environmentally sustainable way; has a host of programs dedicated to providing technical assistance & resources to local communities. 	www.cawaco.org
The Healing Network of Walker County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UA nonprofit organization comprised of a coalition of organizations committed to making Walker County a healthier place to live, work and play; goal is to create a comprehensive network of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery resources related to mental and substance use disorders. 	www.hnwc.org
Health Action Partnership – Walker County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A nonprofit organization comprised of a coalition of organizations committed to making Walker County a healthier place; helps foster community-based collaborations and mobilized local support to drive community change. 	www.healthactionpartnership.org
Walker County Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build upon the existing relationship with county level officials, including District 3 Commissioner. 	www.walkercountyal.us
Walker Area Community Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A nonprofit, grantmaking organization building the permanent capital needed in the Walker County area to daily facilitate community conversations, inspire action, and empower partners. 	www.wacf.org
Walker County Economic & Industrial Development Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walker County’s Economic Development agency dedicated to supporting economic development projects in the county. 	www.wceida.com
Walker County Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walker County’s chamber organization comprised of local businesses; provides programs and partnerships to support economic development and business growth in Walker County. Partnership could also create a way to strengthen relationships with current businesses in Parrish. 	www.walkerchamber.us
Central Six Alabama Works!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The regional workforce development council serving Walker County; has a host of services that coordinate private, public, and nonprofit/ philanthropic sectors toward creating clear and contiguous pathways to living-wage employment. 	www.centralsix.org
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The regional council of government serving Walker County; can provide technical assistance & support for project development & implementation, grant proposal development, and planning services. 	www.rpcgb.org

C. Community Enhancement

While economic development activities focus on the economic well-being of the town, community development and enhancement provide the building blocks for economic development to occur. In other words, community enhancement strengthens local assets, relationships, and capacities to increase economic opportunities and market growth. Though this report has prioritized initiatives for economic development, there is a strong desire in the town to invest in constructing a firm foundation for the next phase of Parrish’s history. An example of a community development project could be maximizing the resources available to senior citizens. The senior center already has a community garden nearby, and the town could place picnic tables and other amenities by the garden so seniors and other citizens can have a space to visit, rest, and enjoy the garden. In addition, the town could also establish pocket parks in various areas around town, especially within residential areas, to provide more green space for residents to enjoy near their homes. Table 21 gives a list of community enhancement activities to bolster community involvement and support.

Table 21: Potential Community Enhancement Activities

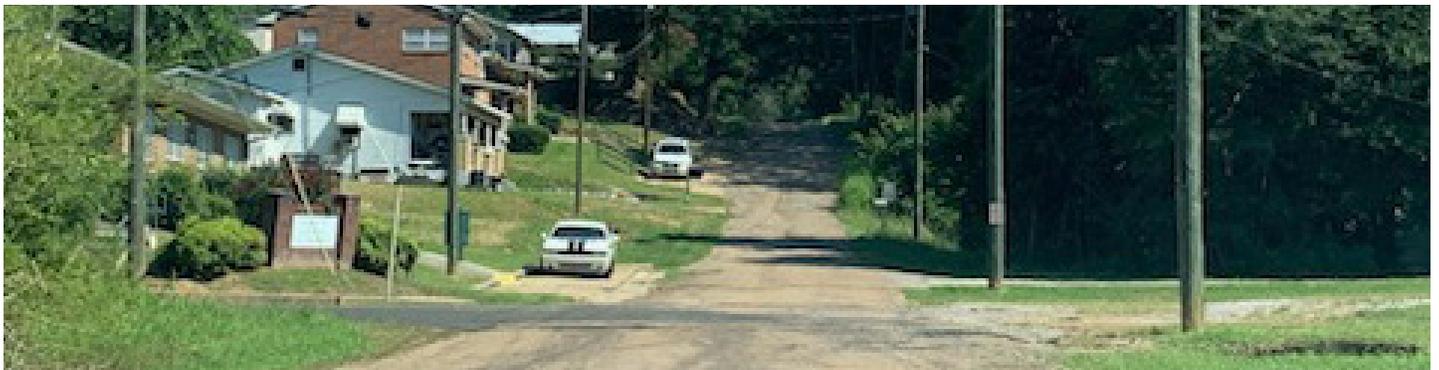
Event Idea	Description
Maximizing Resources for Senior Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the residential population ages, it will become increasingly important to invest in resources for senior citizens. The town has a senior center located near the center of town, by the community garden. Amenities such as picnic tables or an outdoor pavilion could be added to this area to make spending time outdoors more comfortable for seniors. The town could also publish a survey for residents using the senior center to gain additional ideas on how to best serve and meet the needs of these residents.
Community Events/ Festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents cited feeling a decrease in town pride since the closure of the High School. Parrish could evaluate potential events/festivals to hold that center around Parrish’s history or prominent features to increase community involvement and bolster local pride and support.
Food Truck on Special Events or Weekends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents noted that Parrish has few restaurants in town. The town could invite food trucks to attend events or on weekends to provide a variety of food options for residents and introduce food truck owners to the Parrish market. The town could identify areas for food trucks to gather (old downtown area, near existing businesses, etc.) based on walkability and accessibility to residents and visitors.
Housing Development & Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents noted, and the data analysis highlighted, that Parrish’s housing base consisted primarily of older homes, of which many are dilapidated and/or vacant. This means housing options are limited, and new development is needed to attract and support residential growth. The town could invest in an array of housing options, including apartments and tiny homes, that are both affordable and feasible for current residents, while also attractive to future residents.
Town Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents and stakeholders mentioned not having a local library as a need for the community; the town could identify one of the vacant houses/buildings in town, or possibly a room in the old high school, as a location for a library. The Alabama Library Association and the Alabama Public Library Service may have resources available for communities looking to create a new public library.
Pocket Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pocket parks have become more popular as they create small community spaces throughout a larger community area. These spaces do not need to be fancy; simple additions like benches and/or flower beds can make outdoor space usable for local residents. These spaces can be utilized not only for beautification purposes but can also be used to establish the identity and pride of Parrish.

THEME 2- UPDATE & IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE

The conditions of the Parrish’ existing infrastructure were a priority area for the town’s residents. This theme consists of activities and priorities around the built environment in Parrish that need to be improved for the town to reach its development potential. Each of the Focus Areas are listed and described below:

A. Roads

At the Parrish Community Meeting in April 2023, residents cited the need for infrastructure improvements, especially referring to the town’s roads. Many residents must drive over deep potholes on the way to school and work, which negatively impacts driving and local vehicle conditions. The town has worked to repave main roads in recent years and is still prioritizing funding toward road improvements, but additional resources are needed for repaving efforts. However, there are resources that can assist Parrish in conducting these repairs, as well as some project development activities to prioritize areas to assist with grant planning and application. Tables 22 and 23 outline these resources and tasks.



Source: RPCGB, 2023

Table 22: Project Resources: Road Improvements

Name	Granting Agency	Funding Activities
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA)	Wide range of infrastructure projects, including road paving activities. More information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/cdbg/
Rebuild Alabama Act Annual Grant Program	Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT)	Project applications may be submitted for improvements to any classified road or bridge open to public traffic. More information can be found at www.dot.state.al.us/programs/RAAGrantProgram

Table 23: Project Development Tasks: Road Improvements

Activity	Description
Road Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of roads with details regarding need; use inventory to prioritize funding opportunities.

B. Vacant Buildings & Lots

In addition, there are many vacant structures in the town, including businesses and residential housing. These structures are not only unsound, but they create blight in the community and present a negative perception of the town’s business and residential areas. Investments in demolishing or rehabilitating these structures would not only relieve the town of these negative perceptions, but it would also provide available, open lots for redevelopment opportunities for business and residential growth.

These lots, though dilapidated at the moment, are opportunities for the town to utilize for economic and community development. A project opportunity for a current vacant building is the Bank of Walker County building, located on Highway 78. There are several reuses this facility can have to assist the town, given its location and accessibility. In addition, there are resources available to assist the town in demolition and clearance activities, as well as activities the town can conduct to prepare for these projects, and they are listed in Tables 24 and 25.

Table 24: Project Resources: Vacant Buildings & Lots

Name	Granting Agency	Funding Activities
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA)	Wide range of infrastructure projects, including demolition & clearance; more information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/cdbg/ .
Brownfields Redevelopment Program	RPCGB Program funded through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	The RPCGB was awarded an EPA grant to fund environmental assessments (EA) on eligible properties in 2022. This program helps communities overcome the cost barriers for EAs on vacant properties and can catalyze local development.

Table 25: Project Development Tasks: Vacant Buildings & Lots

Activity	Description
Vacant Buildings Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of vacant buildings with details regarding past use and location; use inventory to prioritize funding and development opportunities.
High School Rehabilitation & Reuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The previous Parrish High School is no longer used for academic purposes, but it has a lot of potential to be reused for community engagement. Jubilee House, a local nonprofit, is opening up a free store in part of the building. Other ideas described by residents include spaces for tutoring, AA/NA group meetings, music classes, and the library. The space could also be used for new programs to serve residents, such as adult education or GED certification classes.
Friendship Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with the current landowner to develop reuse plans for properties; utilize partnerships and public input to determine best use. Once plan is determined, the site can be enrolled in programs to conduct site assessments or rehabilitation.

C. Drainage & Flooding Issues

Another infrastructure issue within the town is drainage and flooding. Drainage issues can block streets and houses while damaging roads. A drainage assessment needs to be completed for the town to identify projects, design an action plan to create solutions, and address areas of need. Alleviating drainage and flooding issues will help maintain roads and other areas of critical infrastructure, as well as improve residential and commercial properties that are currently prone to flooding. Resources and tasks for this focus area are listed in Tables 26 and 27.

Table 26: Project Resources: Flooding & Drainage Issues

Name	Granting Agency	Funding Activities
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA)	Wide range of infrastructure projects, including drainage and flooding improvements; more information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/cdbg/ .

Table 27: Project Development Tasks: Flooding & Drainage Issues

Activity	Description
Drainage Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A detailed analysis of the existing drainage systems, which identifies the risks and sensitivities within the town and provides comprehensive drainage solutions to safeguard the development and surrounding area.
Drainage & Flooding Areas Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of areas prone to flooding or with drainage blockages; use inventory to prioritize for funding and development opportunities

D. Broadband

The town’s broadband infrastructure needs to be built out to enhance connectivity throughout town. It was noted in the community meeting in April 2023 that citizens have had to work from and attend classes in local parking lots because they do not have broadband access at home. However, the state and county have declared broadband as a major focus, so there are many funding sources available. Chapter 4 will analyze the town’s broadband connectivity in depth, as well as provide resources available for Parrish to improve the community’s access.

THEME 3- RETAIN RESIDENTS & ATTRACT OPPORTUNITIES

Parrish has opportunities it can utilize for redevelopment efforts. Several strengths were identified in the SWOT survey, and these areas, in coordination with its market gaps, can be used to determine and prioritize economic development projects. In addition, Parrish has available land for development within its jurisdiction, which can lead to partnerships with landowners and future development prospects. When preparing for economic development initiatives, it is important to not only consider the ways a community can grow, but municipalities must also contemplate ways to bolster and support the quality of life for its current residents. Connecting retention of residents to the recruitment of visitors and workforce can bolster Parrish’s development potential and provide additional job opportunities to local community members. The focus areas for this theme are described below.

A. Prioritize Quality of Life

The term “quality of life” generally refers to the “standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or group” (Oxford Dictionary). It aims to capture the overall wellbeing of residents and the community within a local area. However, the overall wellbeing of residents and community has economic impacts for local economies. A recent Brookings report suggests that, in smaller communities especially, having a higher quality of life through activities such as recreation opportunities, cultural activities, and public services is a better indicator of economic success than traditional economic development metrics.* This is likely due to changes in preferences from both workers and the businesses that employ them. People increasingly want to live in an area that they feel will enhance their wellbeing, and investing in activities that support community health and involvement will not only set Parrish up for future success, but these investments will also serve the needs of current residents. A wide range of development activities can be considered when evaluating quality of life factors. For example, outdoor recreation activities have a positive correlation to both health outcomes and attracting visitors. Residents and stakeholders expressed interest in the construction of walking trails around town, which could positively impact health outcomes as well as bolster the town’s sense of community. Parrish already has notable assets in the community, such as existing ballfields and the splash pad, that could be further utilized to attract visitors to the area. In addition, residents also conveyed a desire for additional entertainment options in town, such as restaurants.

*Austin, Weinstein, et al. “Improving quality of life—not just business—is the best path to Midwestern rejuvenation”. January 26, 2022. Brookings.edu.

Investments in small businesses would not only meet the needs of current residents, but it would also provide employment opportunities for workers in Parrish and the surrounding area. The town already has assets like a grocery store, gas station, and pharmacy, and businesses that could further support these existing ventures could be prioritized to strengthen the business community in the area. Tables 28 and 29 list resources and activities that could be considered when evaluating implementation options for this theme.

Table 28: Project Resources: Quality of Life

Name	Granting Agency	Funding Activities
Recreational Trails Program	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA)	Funding for development and construction of recreational trails with an 80/20 match rate. More information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/trails/ .
Land & Water Conservation Fund	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA)	Funding program available for nearly all public outdoor recreation activities, from park and ball field improvements to picnic areas and splash pads. Grants have a 50/50 match rate. More information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/lwcf/ .

Table 29: Project Development Tasks: Quality of Life

Activity	Description
Quality of Life – Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a list of quality of life assets and gaps within the town; use to guide conversations with partners regarding business recruitment, service gaps, and funding needs.
Asset Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify assets that need updating (ball parks, sidewalks, community centers, etc.) and prioritize updates for implementation funding.
Walkability Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize partnerships to create a plan for increasing walkability and connectivity within the town around major assets; use plan to establish implementation priorities for funding support.
Volunteer Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop volunteer opportunities for residents and stakeholders to engage with projects; can engage different community groups to promote activities (clean-up days, etc.)
Support Existing Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and support for existing programs, such as Little Libraries or Food Pantries conducted by local nonprofit groups.

B. Utilize Existing Assets

Attracting workers and employers to rural areas requires a different approach when compared to larger, more populous areas. Small, rural communities must harness and capitalize on their unique strengths to market their properties and communities. Lower real estate prices, low costs of living, and proximity to major metro areas are all strengths Parrish can leverage to attract investment. The proximity to surrounding town hubs is an asset not only for drawing in visitors, but it also gives Parrish leverage to brand itself as a residential bedroom community for workers who may desire to live in a small-town atmosphere but require a shorter commuting time to work or other necessities. As remote working becomes more popular, it is likely more residents will begin to move farther outside the hubs of major cities as housing costs within major areas continues to increase.

The Town of Parrish also has potential development opportunities within the town limits and surrounding area. Privately owned parcels within the town and right outside limits could be evaluated for development, and some development suggestions are outlined in Map 2 (page 51).

A couple of undeveloped parcels are large enough to be used for commercial development, a sector with the largest gap of industry activity within the town, and the proximity of these properties to the town limits would increase the feasibility of extending existing infrastructure, such as water and sewer, to the sites. Partnerships with existing landowners can be a great way to catalyze economic development, especially in smaller communities. In addition, there are parcels along State Highway 269 North, near the Dollar General, that could be engaged for development. In addition to large parcels of land, the old downtown area has flat land along Main Drive that could be used for development. These parcels are smaller and could be used to invest in local businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops, or other small businesses. Over the past decade, the Retail industry has declined within the community; however, Retail establishments in particular were highly requested through public input. These types of establishments not only provide tax revenue for the town, but they also provide employment opportunities for local residents and support the local sense of community. Parrish has large retail gaps in Apparel, Computer, Entertainment & Recreation, Financial, Household Furnishings & Equipment, and Household Operations, as noted in the Needs Assessment, so these types of retail are opportunities the town has for engagement. Lastly, the town has many vacant parcels within its existing residential area that could be evaluated for additional housing development. These parcels could be utilized for a variety of housing types, depending on existing demand and future residential potential. Providing new housing development opportunities could not only provide current residents with different choices for housing, but it could also increase the opportunities for population growth within the town.

Evaluating areas for businesses and development plays a key role in strategic economic development. By identifying these areas, the town can prioritize their investments and coordinate partnerships to develop projects. Parrish could also partner with agencies like the Chamber of Commerce of Walker County to help attract new businesses and strengthen their relationships with existing businesses. In addition, Parrish could utilize relationships with the Walker County Economic and Industrial Development Authority (WCEIDA) to discuss commercial and industrial possibilities. Tables 30 and 31 list resources and tasks the town can consider when planning for business and workforce attraction.

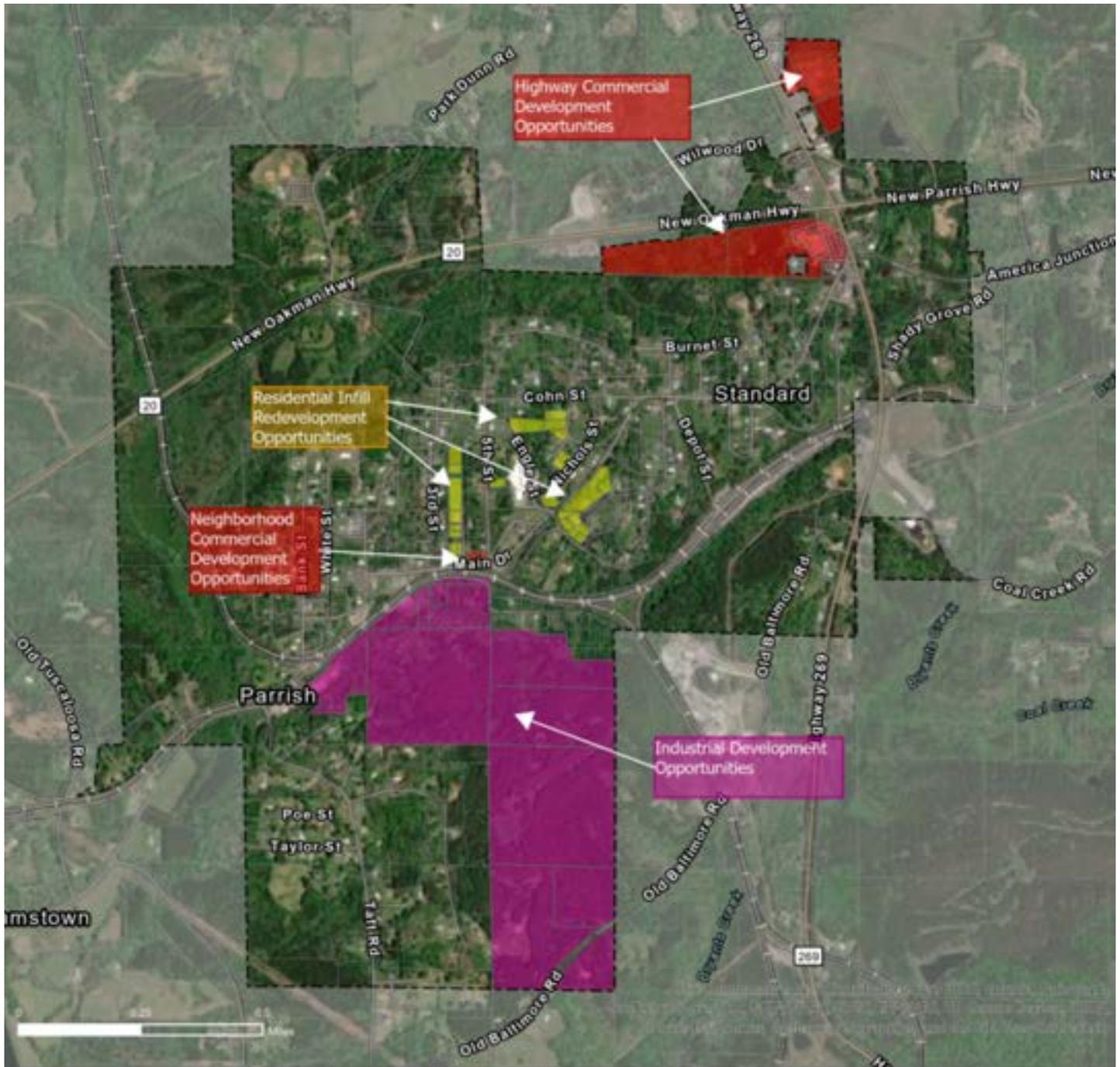
Table 30: Project Resources: Attraction

Name	Description
Walker County Economic and Industrial Development Authority	Can support Parrish with creating public/private partnerships that leverage community resources to support marketing and recruitment efforts.
Chamber of Commerce of Walker County	Can utilize county-wide partnerships to support Parrish’s recruitment and job growth initiatives by helping promote sites and attract businesses.
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham	Can assist with mapping available parcels and helping developing market materials for sites.

Table 31: Project Development Tasks: Attraction

Activity	Description
Online Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing an online presence for the town can create awareness of Parrish and the assets the municipality has to offer its residents and future visitors; the website can have a landing page for resources as well as potential sites for development.
Identify & Support Local Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to identify local talent pool (potential entrepreneurs, training needs, etc.); determine skills gaps and training resources needed to fill gaps and coordinate with existing programs to upskill workers.
Available Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an inventory process for tracking available parcels/properties in town available for development; work with partners to market sites to potential developers.

MAP 2: POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



PARRISH, ALABAMA
POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
SITES

- Potential Sites**
- POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
 - POTENTIAL INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
 - POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL INFILL



CHAPTER 2: OUTDOOR RECREATION IN PARRISH

Outdoor recreation is becoming increasingly popular as an economic driver in local communities, particularly in rural areas. Opportunities for outdoor-related activities exist throughout the Town of Parrish and surrounding areas. Walker County has acknowledged this asset and has developed partnerships with local agencies like the Walker Area Community Foundation (WACF) to create a county-wide initiative to develop and sustain this industry throughout the area. This chapter will focus solely on the outdoor assets and potential within the Town of Parrish as a means to identify strategies to increase this industry within the town, which can contribute to the success of county and state initiatives, and is divided into 3 sections:

- **Outdoor Recreation: Industry Overview**
- **Outdoor Recreational Development Opportunities**
- **Peer Communities: Case Study Analysis**

OUTDOOR RECREATION: INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Parrish officials and leaders have recognized the town's potential for growth and resiliency through the development and investment of outdoor recreation. The expansion of this industry is not only important to the town, but local residents and stakeholders also recognize the need for these outdoor opportunities. *In a local community meeting held in April 2023, 100 percent of the attendees felt that having outdoor amenities available was "Very Important" to keep current residents and attract new ones.* This section will identify the town's identified outdoor recreation assets and priority activities as next steps for the implementation of this industry.

The Outdoor Recreation industry is comprised of the entire supply and value chains associated with outdoor and ecotourism activities. This includes consumer spending on gear and equipment for participation in outdoor pursuits, but it also includes the costs and demand for travel associated with these and other related activities. Outdoor recreation covers a wide variety of interests and activities, from boating and fishing, to hiking and bicycling. The flexibility offers communities a sustainable and resilient community development tool that can utilize an area's natural assets, making it a strong economic development option, especially for areas where industrial and commercial development options and assets are few and far between.

This industry has made significant gains in rural areas in recent years, as long-term resiliency of smaller communities has been threatened by economic downturns and declines in major industries. Outdoor recreation can provide an avenue for small towns to increase economic diversification. Diversifying the local market base can support communities and leave them less susceptible to economic fluctuations, while retaining things like heritage and culture that are traditionally important to rural towns and cities.

Investing in outdoor recreation not only supports local economies by increasing consumer spending through tourism, enhancing property values, and attracting new talent; it also has proven to improve health outcomes and overall quality of life for the local community as having access to outdoor recreational assets increases physical activity. Improving these health outcomes can also lead to lower healthcare costs and have positive impacts on the overall well-being of residents.

These factors are important because the overall quality of life of residents is imperative for not only the current community, but also in recruitment efforts for future businesses and residents. However, it is also important to current residents. Enhancing quality of life initiatives was listed as a priority for Parrish’s citizens according to public input. When asked what successful development means in the EDSP SWOT survey, 45 percent of survey respondents listed “Improving Quality of Life/Lifestyle Amenities” as their answer choice.

Small communities across the country have invested in creating a local outdoor recreational economy; a case studies analysis of peer communities to Parrish that have harnessed outdoor recreation to benefit their local economies can be found in this chapter beginning on page 55.

OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Parrish has a variety of naturally occurring assets and competitive advantages that could be utilized to develop and support an outdoor recreation development, including its advantageous location and existing infrastructure. The town also has access to a couple waterways that could be evaluated for fishing potential. This section will give an overview of Parrish’s existing outdoor assets and development opportunities, as illustrated on Map 3 (page 54).

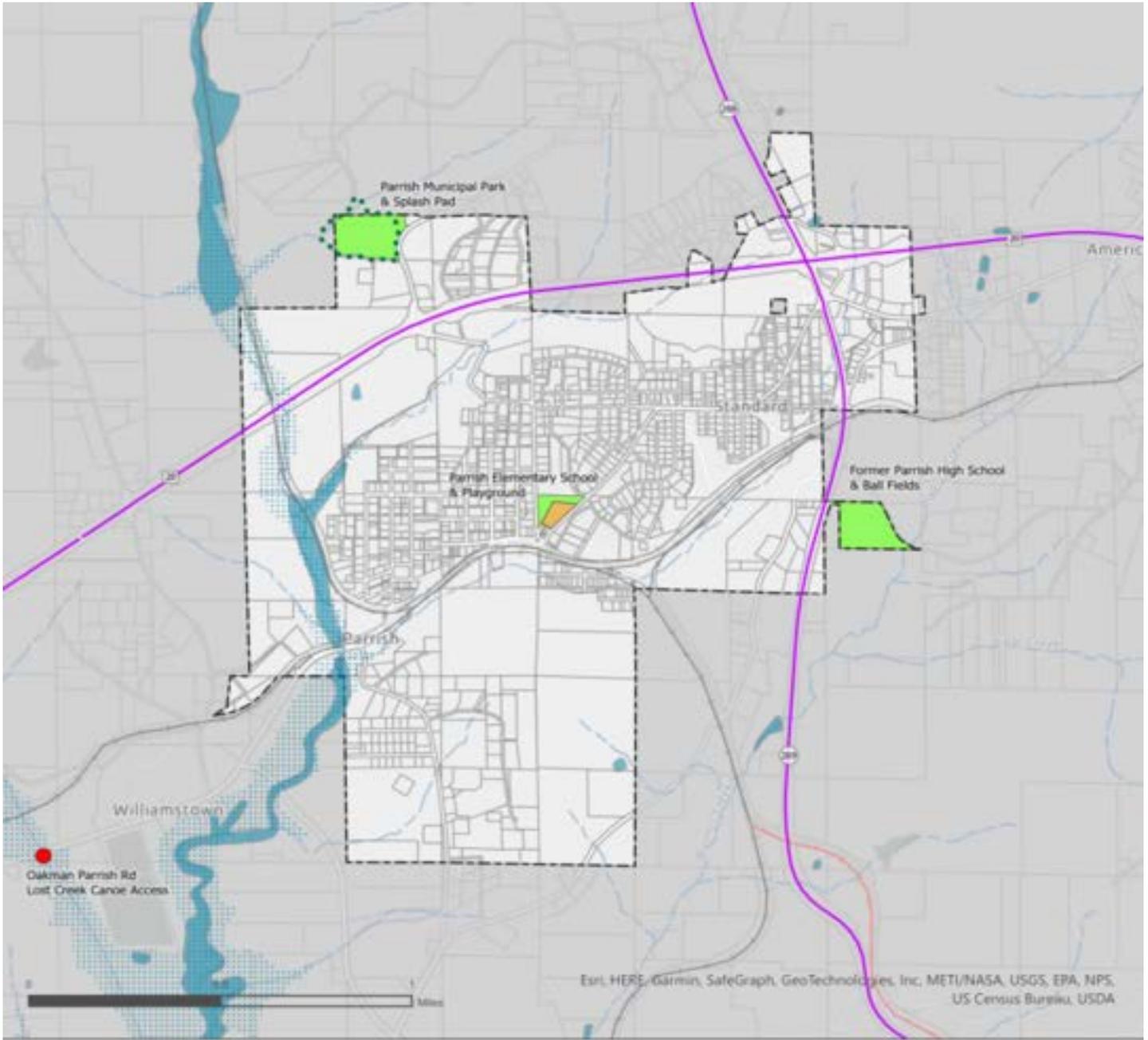
Parrish has a splash pad at its municipal park, along with ball fields and playground equipment. There is also an old walking track that encircles the property. This parcel could be the focus of outdoor recreation for the town in the short term. Several funding opportunities exist to support park updates and outdoor recreational activities. These investments would serve both current residents and attract visitors, since one area of focus for Parrish’s Parks and Recreation Department is ensuring the ballfields are utilized. Additionally, a football stadium and basketball gym are attached to the old high school and could be evaluated for further recreational use once priorities and needs are determined.

In addition to these assets, Table 32 lists other areas Parrish can utilize when evaluating outdoor recreation potential.

Table 32: Potential Outdoor Recreation Project Opportunities

Activity	Description
Trail Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned Rail line (Rails to Trails); develop trail around Municipal Park; can identify trail potential in/around available parcels; trails can also be utilized for All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) and bicyclists.
Volleyball Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify area around existing splashpad/park (example: paved slab next to ball field at Town Park)
Ball Park Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritize improvement needs for existing ball fields at Municipal Park; connect needs to funding opportunities.
Bicycle Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The park could be developed to serve a variety of ages.

MAP 3: OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



PARRISH, ALABAMA
OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL
ASSETS & OPPORTUNITIES

Municipal & Natural Features

- PARRISH TOWN BOUNDARY
- AREA PARCELS
- WETLANDS
- FLOOD HAZARD AREAS
- RIVERS & STREAMS
- RAILROADS

Existing Recreational Assets

- PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS
- BIKEABLE ROADS
- BOAT LAUNCHES

Recreational Opportunities

- PARRISH PARK WALKING TRAIL
- ABANDONED RAIL LINES
- PLAYGROUND EXPANSION



PEER COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Comparing the Town of Parrish to similar communities in other states can help visualize Parrish's options for economic development opportunities. The primary focus for this section is on outdoor recreational ecosystems since Parrish and Walker County have prioritized expanding this industry. Peer towns were selected due to their location in the Southeast region with comparable population numbers to Parrish. Each of these towns has excelled in marketing their assets to both tourists and residents. The selected communities for this analysis are Saluda, North Carolina; Helen, Georgia; and Townsend, Tennessee.

Parrish, Alabama: Overview

Parrish's population comes to just under 1,000 people. The town has a history of coal mines, railroads, and trestle bridges. Anchored by Lost Creek, Parrish has the potential to tap into several outdoor recreation activities like hiking, canoeing, kayaking, and bicycling. OHV/ATV and shooting ranges are also possible activities. Suggestions from a 2018 study by Auburn University include shipping container shops, campgrounds, and OHV grounds near the flood plain by Indian Creek, open bridges for pedestrians and bicyclists, improved bike routes, and family outdoor recreation areas off the highway.

Saluda, North Carolina

Saluda, a town of 630 people, boasts outdoor recreation activities like kayaking, canoeing, ziplining, and hiking. They use their natural environment to create tourist opportunities. There is also a Historic Depot museum that hosts events and volunteer options. The food ecosystem is diverse with seven options for dining. Additionally, there are several art galleries and boutiques in the town. Tourists are welcome to stay in nearby cabins, cottages, campgrounds, and bed & breakfasts. The town hosts several events each month like concerts, art pop-ups, gardening classes, and festivals.

<https://www.visitsaludanc.com/>



Helen, Georgia

The Helen website describes their town as an "outdoor adventure destination." Along with a travel guide brochure, Helen offers several "things to do," such as outdoor adventures, arts & culture, family fun, history & heritage, vineyards & breweries, and spas. Waterfalls and trails are most popular, but there are other outdoor activities like camping, mini golf, horse stables, tubing, water parks, OHV/ATV grounds, horse drawn carriages, golfing, and ziplining. Lodging options include bed & breakfasts, cabins, hotels, vacation rentals, and campgrounds. Helen is only a town of 545 people, but they have 34 restaurants and 50 shops to visit. Real estate in the town is listed on the main website along with contact information for the chamber of commerce and a "plan your visit" section.

<https://helenga.org/>



Townsend, Tennessee

Townsend is half the size of Parrish, with only 550 residents. Called the “Peaceful Side of the Smokies,” Townsend advertises access to the Smoky Mountains, encounters with wildlife, and fun festivals. The town has outdoor experiences like hiking, fishing, cycling, golfing, water activities, camping, scenic drives, and horseback riding available to residents and visitors, as well as indoor activities such as museums and an arts & crafts directory. The website includes lodging, shopping, and dining options, but they also include information about how people can relocate to Townsend. The last sections of the website have a business directory, town map, newsletter, history resources, and ways to get involved.

<https://exploretownsend.com/>



Commonalities

Each of the 3 towns has a helpful and dynamic website with links to all outdoor recreation and tourism activities. Creating a welcoming environment includes signage, landscaping, and beautification. A variety of outdoor activities are offered based on the surrounding landscape. Indoor activities are also prioritized and included. All the websites had specific suggestions of how to spend time in the town so tourists can quickly see what it would be like to visit. The websites also included contact, business, and real estate information. This information encourages interaction with local governance and relocation to the town. Table 33 lists additional commonalities between the three peer communities.

Table 33: Peer Communities Comparison

Resource	Saluda, NC	Helen, GA	Townsend, TN
Town Website	X	X	X
Logo & Branding	X	X	
Social Media Presence	X	X	X
Activities List	X	X	X
Interstate Access	X		
Proximity to Large Metro	X		X
Proximity to State/National Park	X	X	X
County/State Partnership		X	X

CHAPTER 3: BROADBAND: POTENTIAL & FEASIBILITY

Residents have indicated that broadband is an important concern for the community. Many residents need internet to work from home, while many children need internet access to complete their homework. It was noted in the community meeting that some residents have had to sit in Jack's parking lot just to access the internet for work or school. With a quarter of residents having no internet service, broadband has become a development priority for the area.

BROADBAND: OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

As defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), broadband is high speed internet access that allows users to access the Internet or Internet-related services at significantly higher speeds than those available through "dial-up" services. The speed of broadband is determined by megabits per second (mbps), which measures the download and upload speed of the internet connection. These factors are further described below:

Accessibility

Broadband can be accessed through a variety of transmission technologies, including satellites, fiber, cable, wireless, or a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL). However, the technology used in a given area depends on several factors, including locality, availability, and cost. Faster speeds are often associated with cable broadband and fiber when compared to satellite and DSL connections.

Connection Speeds

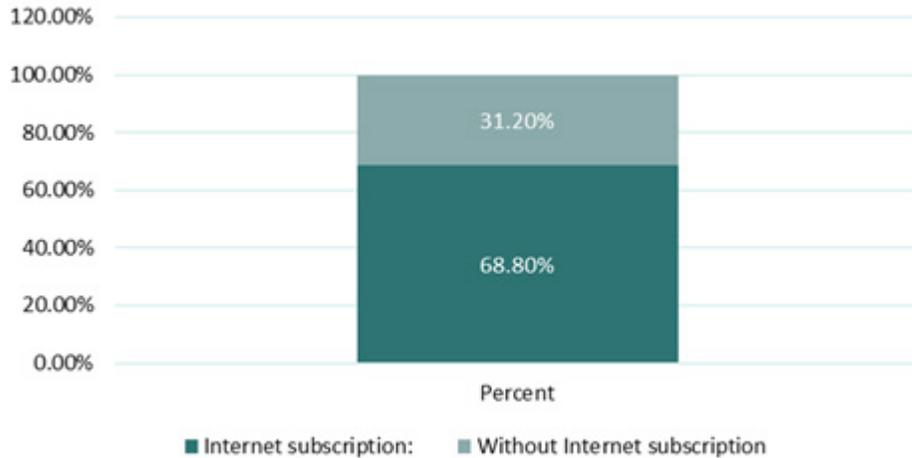
The FCC's current minimum standard set for broadband is 25/3 mbps, or the ability to download 25 megabits per second and upload 3 megabits per second. However, as technology progresses, an emerging definition for broadband connection among the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) has been 100/20 mbps, which is significantly faster than the 25/3 mbps standard. This definition has been set by new federal funding programs for broadband, which provide support for areas without 100/20 mbps.

EXISTING BROADBAND CONDITIONS

Currently, according to US Census data, nearly 70 percent of total households within with town have internet subscriptions of some type, while over 30 percent of households do not have access to internet service at their homes (see Figure 23). This rate is higher than state averages, where about 20 percent of total Alabama households do not currently subscribe to internet services.³ Though a relatively large number of households have access to the internet, the types of connection technology vary, most likely depending on factors such as cost and infrastructure accessibility. The majority of households utilize their cellular data plans for internet access, followed by either cable, fiber, or DSL connections. The least number of users are connected to broadband via satellite services, as illustrated in Figure 24.

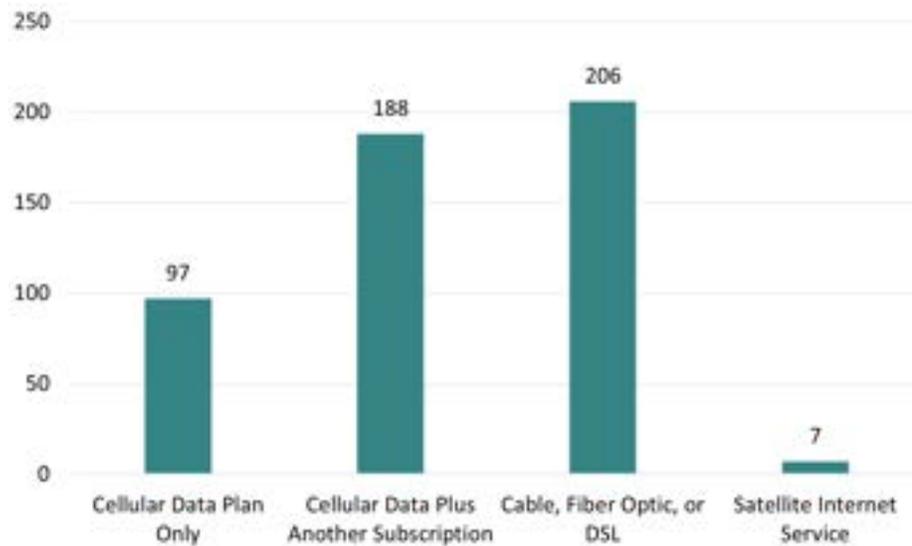
³ *The Alabama Connectivity Plan, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), page 3*

Figure 23: Internet Subscriptions by Total Household, 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

Figure 24: Type of Broadband Connections Utilized by Parrish Households, 2021



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

In addition, broadband connectivity is directly linked to income in Parrish. Data from the U.S. Census analyzed broadband subscriptions between three income groups. The income groups, the percentage of total households within each income group, and the percentage of households with an internet subscription within each bracket is outlined in Table 34.

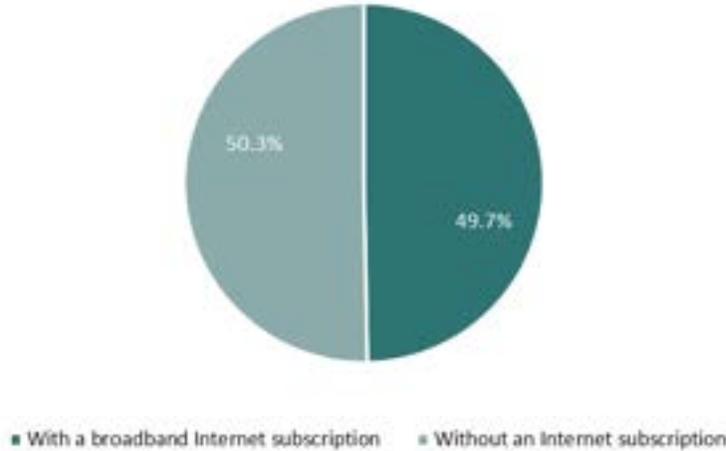
Table 34: Parrish Households by Income Bracket, 2021

Income Level	Percent of Total Households	Percent with an Internet Subscription
Less than \$20,000	36.9%	49.7%
\$20,000 to \$74,999	50.2%	74.8%
\$75,000 or more	12.9%	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

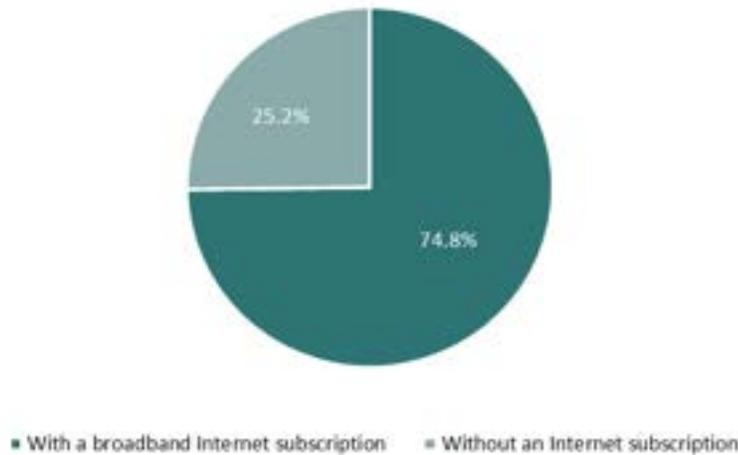
The number of households with internet subscription increased as the household income levels increased. All households earning more than \$75,000, which is only 12.9 percent of the total households within the town, had subscriptions to internet services. The ratios of each income group are illustrated in Figures 25 to 27.

Figure 25: Internet Subscriptions: Household Income Less than \$20,000



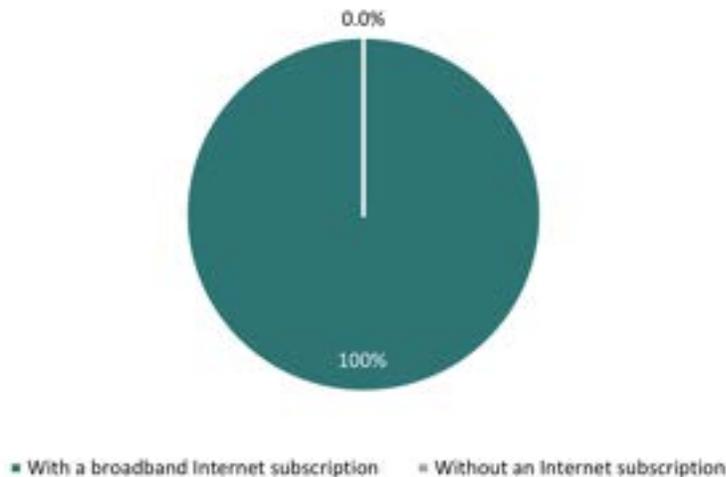
Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

Figure 26: Internet Subscriptions: Household Income, \$20,000-\$74,999



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

Figure 27: Internet Subscriptions: Household Income Greater than \$75,000



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2021

CENSUS BLOCK ANALYSIS

The Alabama Connectivity Map, designed and implemented by ADECA, categorizes census tracts by broadband connection levels for 25/3 and 100/20 mbps speeds. These maps illustrate the percentage of addresses within a census block that have access to the speed that has been selected. The connection levels used for the analysis were divided into four groups: 0% (where no address has connection or access); 1%-49%; 50%-80%; and 81%-100%.

For this section, the Alabama Connectivity Map was used to gauge the level of connection for the census tracts within the town. The connection levels did not change between the two speed groups, likely meaning the current infrastructure can be used to support either speed level. Due to this data note, the 25/3 mbps speed level analysis was used for the basis of this section.

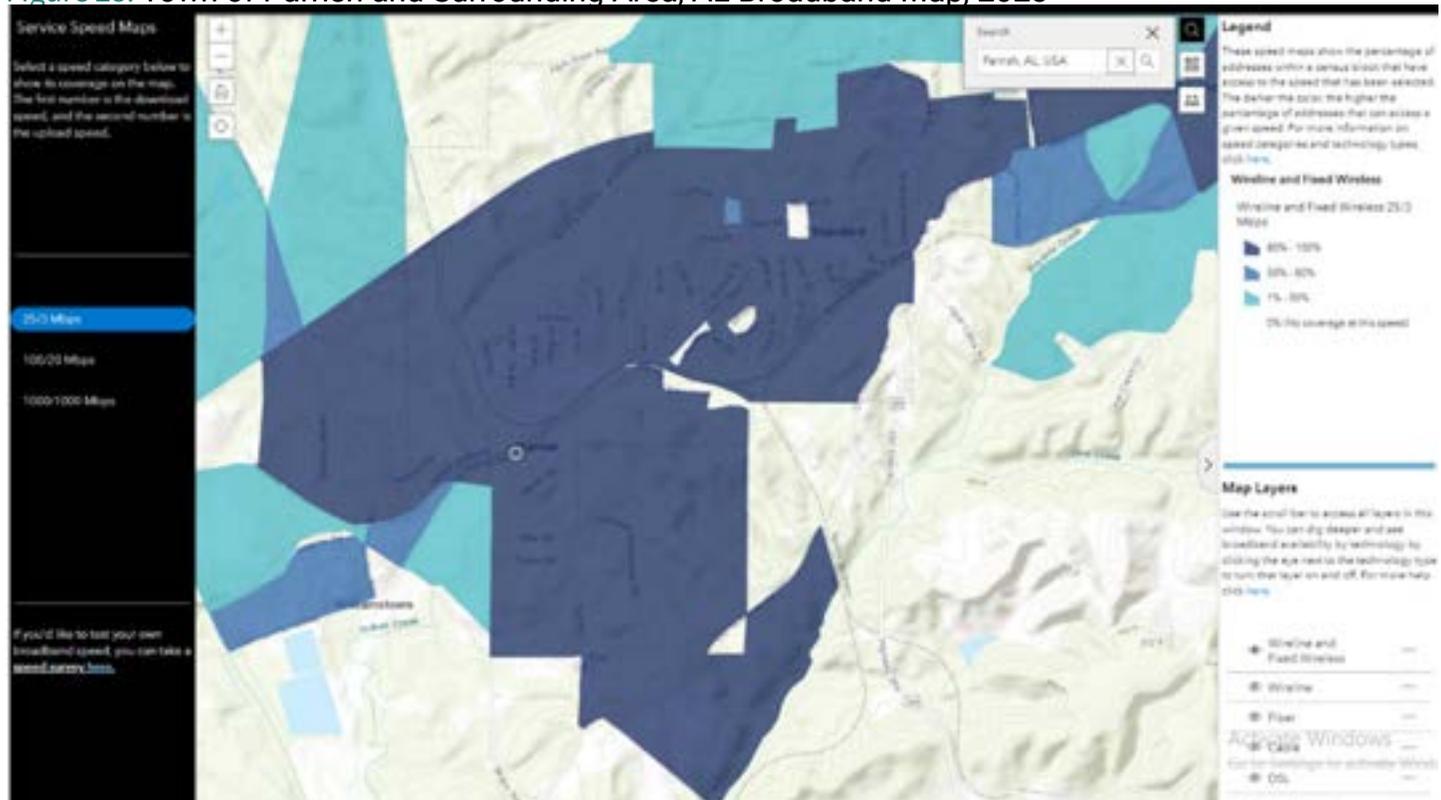
Within the Town of Parrish, 10 census tracts (representing 20 percent of total tracts) have no connection to broadband capabilities. Table 35 shows the percentage of census tracts within each connection range, and Figure 28 shows the connection levels for the Town of Parrish and the surrounding area.

Table 35: Parrish Households by Connection Level

Connection Level	Percent of Census Tracts
0%	20%
1-49%	2%
50-79%	2%
80-100%	76%

Source: Alabama Connectivity Map, ADECA, 2023

Figure 28: Town of Parrish and Surrounding Area, AL Broadband Map, 2023



Source: Alabama Connectivity Map, ADECA, 2023

BROADBAND CHALLENGES

Some inherent challenges exist for municipalities to evaluate when considering expanding and/or improving broadband internet service. This section will be dedicated to outlining those challenges, specifically within the jurisdiction of Parrish. According to the Alabama Connectivity Plan prepared by ADECA, “A complex combination of factors—including affordability, device access, digital skills, and language barriers—can inhibit use of the broadband internet, to the detriment of both economic and community development.”⁴

1. Infrastructure & Availability

The first challenge to consider when evaluating the feasibility of broadband expansion is the conditions and locations of existing infrastructure within the service area. The types of infrastructure available, along with the available connection speeds, determine the costs and feasible expansion alternatives for possible improvements. For the town, nearly 20 percent of residents with an internet subscription used only their cellular data plan for service, meaning many households do not utilize cable or fiber connection options. These households most likely use cell phones or tablets to connect to internet services, rather than relying on a router or other cabled alternative. Cellular service is a more accessible option for many households, especially those without cable or fiber access, since only a wireless cellular plan and device are needed. However, as the definition of broadband improves from 25/3 mbps to 100/20 mbps, it is likely cellular data technologies will not be able to keep up, as they are currently not able to provide speeds faster than 25/3 mbps.⁵

As noted in Figure 24, over 80 percent of residents use other options, like cable or DSL, for their subscriptions in addition to or in place of a cellular data plan. This means that many areas have access to the infrastructure necessary to connect via cable or fiber. Identifying the types and locations of current broadband infrastructure could provide a road map for improvement planning and implementation.

In addition, as listed in Table 35, 20 percent of parcels within the town limits have no access to broadband. A large portion of the unconnected parcels are located within the northwestern portion of the town, as illustrated in Figure 28. This area includes where the splash pad is located, which is a prime recreational resource for the town. The lack of access to broadband capabilities within this area may present a challenge for outdoor recreation expansion in the area.

2. Costs to Update

Another factor to consider when planning for broadband expansion is the cost of improvements to the town, as well as local Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Alabama has estimated that it will cost between \$4 to \$6 billion to bridge the rural broadband divide statewide, which includes constructing line extensions from current infrastructure into unserved areas. Due to the costs of installation and the unguaranteed number of users, sometimes the returns on internet investment from user fees aren't enough to cover private providers' costs of building out their networks. This is leading many public entities to focus on investments within “middle-mile” infrastructure, or the hub of fiber connectivity that connects to “last-mile” infrastructure, or the connecting lines to homes and businesses. Investing in middle mile infrastructure would enable last-mile networks; however, the price will likely be significant. More research needs to be done to analyze the factors, costs, and benefits from middle-mile and last-mile investments.

⁴ *The Alabama Connectivity Plan, ADECA, page 23*

⁵ *The Alabama Connectivity Plan, ADECA, page 37*

3. Affordability

However, the existence and availability of broadband does not necessarily mean broadband is attainable for residents. Affordability refers to residents of the area having the disposable income necessary to purchase and use a broadband service. The Alabama Connectivity Plan cited that even though federal subsidies exist for these programs, awareness regarding these programs was low. The consumer’s cost for broadband should also be considered when planning and implementing broadband expansion.

IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES

Fortunately, the rural broadband gap is an issue at the front of the broadband expansion conversation, on both state and federal levels. This section will outline some possible funding programs the Town of Parrish could utilize during the broadband planning and implementation process. In addition to the resources listed in this section, Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), in 2021. This bill prioritizes investments in broadband within rural areas, and further research will need to be conducted over the coming months to identify funding opportunities created through those programs. As noted previously, the state’s Alabama Connectivity Plan is the roadmap for state funding and investment programs and should be referenced regarding infrastructure expansion projects.

Table 36: Federal Funding Programs for Broadband Projects

Funding Agency	Funding Program	Funding Range	Match Requirements	Typical Due Dates
Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)	Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative	Up to \$2,000,000	Depends on County Designation; Walker County: 50% Match	April
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)	Community Connect Grant Program	Up to \$3,000,000	15% Match Required	December
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)	ReConnect Loan and Grant Program	Up to \$25,000,000	25% Match Required	November

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)

Table 37: State Funding Programs for Broadband Projects

Funding Agency	Funding Program	Funding Range	Match Requirements	Typical Due Dates
ADECA	ARC Area Development Program	Up to \$200,000	Depends on County Designation; Walker County: 50% Match	August
ADECA	Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant*	Up to \$5,000,000	20% Match Required	November

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)

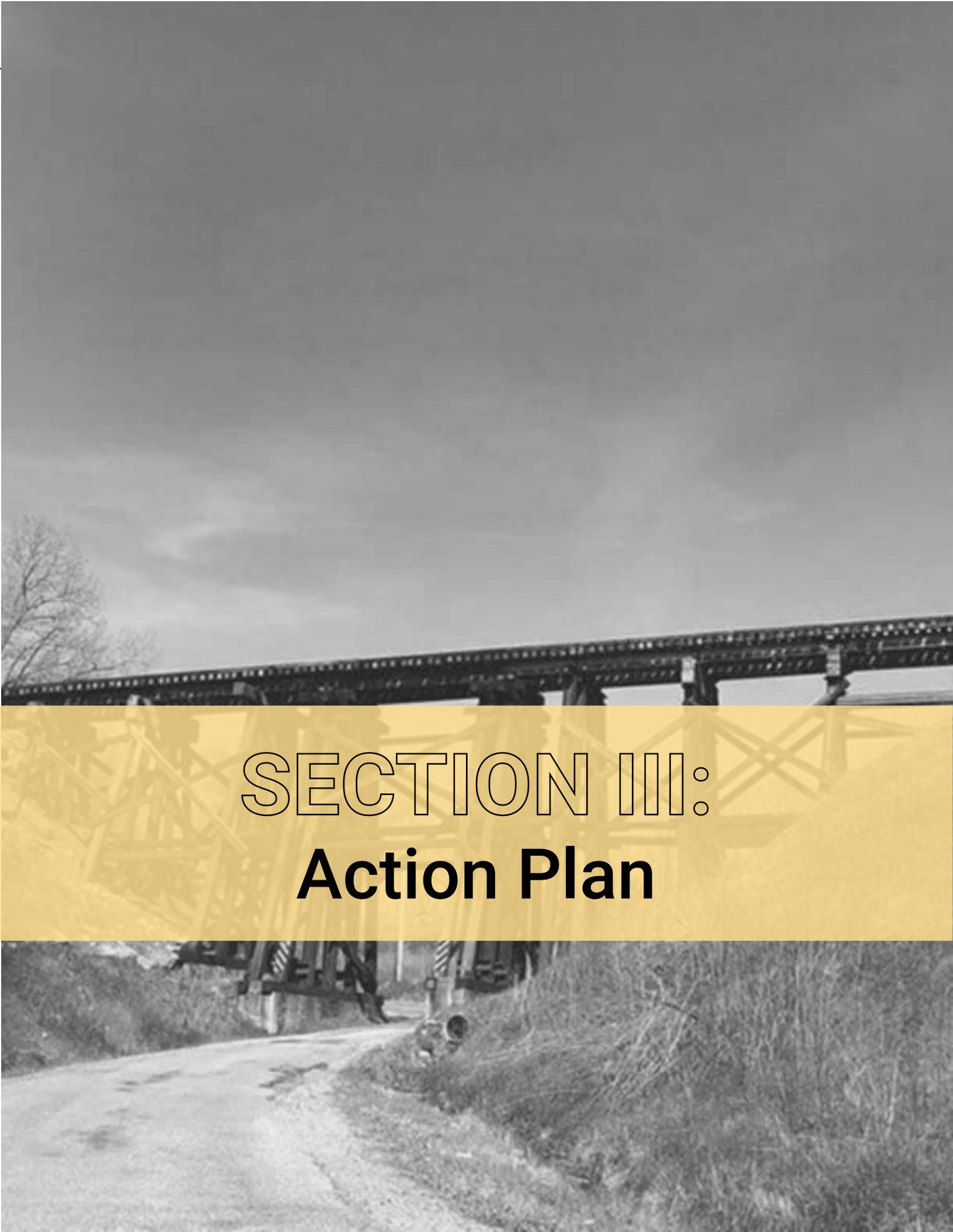
*Eligible applicants for the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant are cooperatives, corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships, or other private business entities or unit of governments that currently provide broadband services.

BROADBAND ANALYSIS CONCLUSIONS

Broadband expansion will likely be needed within the Town of Parrish to improve the quality of life of citizens as well as recruit new businesses and residents. The access to high quality broadband within the town is currently limited, and improvements and increased accessibility will be needed to catalyze economic growth, bolster new industry, and support the town's outdoor recreation initiatives.

Several obstacles should be considered when evaluating the feasibility of infrastructure improvements, such as construction costs and affordability concerns for residents. However, as broadband continues to be an interest area on federal and state levels, support for broadband planning and expansion will remain a prominent focal point for funding programs and technical assistance initiatives.

The town is eligible for several funding programs that could support broadband expansion efforts. In addition to funding, it is recommended that the town establish a connection with ADECA's new Digital Expansion Division, the department charged with improving broadband connectivity throughout the state. The division periodically has specialized funding available for technical assistance projects for municipalities, which could further aid the town with developing a feasible and sustainable plan for improving broadband.



SECTION III:
Action Plan

TOWN OF PARRISH: ACTION PLAN

The Town of Parrish Action Plan was developed in accordance with the responses of community engagement efforts, guidance of local officials, and the findings detailed in this report. The Action Plan is organized between Priority Goals and Strategies, both created from ideas in the previous section. The plan also includes a wide variety of project types, ranging from infrastructure improvements to community-centered initiatives, to ensure a comprehensive approach to improving the local economy and to meet the needs of Parrish's current and future residents.

Action Plan Terms:

The following definitions explain the different terms used to develop the action plan:

- **Action Plan:** The strategic direction derived from the SWOT analysis, which is consistent with other relevant state/regional/local plans.
- **Goal:** The broad outcomes or high-level descriptors of the desired outcomes of the Action Plan. They are described using broad qualitative terms and are often intangible.
- **Strategy:** A plan of action designed to achieve or support the achievement of the associated goal.
- **Short-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take under 2 years to complete.
- **Mid-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take 3 - 5 years to fully implement.
- **Long-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take longer than 5 years to complete.

TOWN OF PARRISH: PRIORITY GOALS

The list of goals below was designed in concordance with the themes and priorities developed in the Strategy Development Framework section of this plan, and they are outlined in detail below. Each goal contains corresponding strategies as well as available resources for implementation.

Goal I: Placemaking in Parrish

Catalyzing economic opportunities is a priority for the town, but there is also a desire to build around Parrish's existing assets and historical roots. This goal includes efforts to build Parrish's future potential around the municipality's strengths and bolster the sense of community for current and future residents to enjoy.

Goal II: Invest in Infrastructure

The town has existing infrastructure assets, such as sewer and water capacity, to support development efforts. However, the town is in critical need of improvements to other sources of foundational infrastructure, such as roads and drainage issues. In addition, this goal includes strategies for improving vacant lots and enhancing the town's broadband infrastructure.

Goal III: Retain Residents & Welcome Workforce

Parrish has an opportunity to become a bedroom community for residents who may work in other places but want to live in an area with a small-town feel. However, the town’s housing base is aging, and there are many housing improvement opportunities around town for new development. Increased housing availability can provide existing residents with quality housing options and attract new residents to the area. In addition, employment within the community has declined in recent years, and there is a desire to bolster the town’s economic opportunities through local business support and retention. This goal will also outline some strategies to enhance Parrish’s employment opportunities within the town.

Goal IV: Optimize Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Investments in outdoor recreation can be utilized not only to attract visitors to Parrish, but it can also enhance the quality of life for residents. This goal will outline ways Parrish can optimize their outdoors assets by focusing on strategies to enhance the connectivity of the town, improve existing infrastructure, and expand current efforts.

TOWN OF PARRISH: EDSP ACTION PLAN

Goal I: Placemaking in Parrish- Strategies & Tasks

No.	Strategy	Potential Tasks	Timeframe	Resources
1	Create Sense of Place through Establishing Online Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Town of Parrish Website. • Update Town Logo. • Establish Parrish branding materials. 	Short-Term	Town, RPCGB, Community Colleges
2	Create Sense of Place through Beautification Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish volunteer Beautification Committee. • Update Town welcome signs. • Prioritize beautification initiatives. • Organize volunteer clean-up events. 	Short-Term	Town, Beautification Committee, Schools
3	Create Sense of Place through Existing Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate land use for downtown designation. • Identify opportunities for residential and commercial development. 	Mid-Term	Town, RPCGB, WCEIDA, Chamber of Commerce
4	Create Sense of Place through Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize areas for sidewalk installation to improve safety and walkability in highly visited areas. • Evaluate opportunities to connect existing outdoor assets and the town’s primary businesses. 	Long-Term	Town, RPCGB, ADECA & ALDOT Grant Funding Opportunities
5	Enhance Community Connectedness through Investing in Town Pride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host community events or festivals. • Establish relationships with food truck vendors for Parrish events. • Evaluate potential opportunities for farmers market and other community-centered activities. 	Mid-Term	Town
6	Enhance Community Connectedness through Investing in Community Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize updates to existing community assets like senior center, community garden, and parks. • Identify areas for additional assets like a library or pocket parks for additional public spaces. 	Mid-Term; Long-Term	Town; Various Grant Resources (Project Dependent)

Goal II: Invest in Infrastructure- Strategies & Tasks

No.	Strategy	Potential Tasks	Timeframe	Resources
1	Improve Infrastructure through Road Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inventory of municipal roads and utilize list to develop priority areas for funding. • Partner with RPCGB and other resources to develop grant applications for funding assistance. 	Short-Term; Mid-Term	Town, RPCGB, County Commission, ADECA & ALDOT Grant Funding Opportunities
2	Improve Infrastructure through Enhancing Vacant Lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an internal inventory of vacant and/or dilapidated lots and evaluate existing and potential use. • Use inventory to prioritize redevelopment activities. • Partner with RPCGB and other resources to develop grant applications for funding assistance. 	Short-Term; Mid-Term	Town, RPCGB, WCEIDA, County Commission, ADECA Grant Funding Opportunities
3	Improve Infrastructure through Flood/Drainage Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish list of primary flooding/drainage issue areas in town and prioritize for improvements. • Partner with RPCGB and other resources to develop grant applications for funding assistance. 	Short-Term; Mid-Term	Town, RPCGB, County Commission, ADECA Grant Funding Opportunities
4	Improve Community's Connectivity through Broadband Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and prioritize areas within town that have limited access to broadband services. • Utilize partnerships to develop broadband projects and apply for grant funding. 	Long-Term	Town, Local Resource Partners; Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
5	Utilize Existing Infrastructure by Redeveloping Existing Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate unused space in high school and determine the highest and best use; partner with landowners in town to evaluate uses for vacant buildings/parcels within town. • Utilize partnerships with resources for programing options and redevelopment support. 	Long-Term	Town, Local Resource Partners; Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)



Source: RPCGB, 2023

Goal III: Retain Residents & Welcome Workforce- Strategies & Tasks

No.	Strategy	Potential Tasks	Timeframe	Resources
1	Support Retention through Bolstering Quality of Life Assets and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of quality of life resources/activities within town to identify current services and gaps. Utilize determined gaps to prioritize service needs and funding opportunities. 	Short-Term	Town, WACF
2	Support Retention through Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish volunteer opportunities for local residents to get involved with town improvement activities. Raise awareness and support for existing programs, such as Little Libraries or Food Pantries, conducted by local nonprofit groups within the community. 	Mid-Term	Town
3	Encourage Retention & Attraction through Housing Diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify lots for residential in-fill to increase housing option availability and diversification. Create an inventory of vacant structures or lots that need to be demolished or cleaned-up for development; use list to determine priority list for funding support. Work with partners to conduct a housing gap analysis to determine most prevalent needs. 	Mid-Term; Long-Term	Town, RPCGB, Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
4	Aid Attraction through Identifying & Supporting Local Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to identify local talent pools and service gaps (potential entrepreneurs, training needs, etc.). Determine skills gaps and training resources needed to fill gaps and coordinate with existing programs to upskill workers. Collaborate with partners to identify barriers to entering the workforce for local residents. 	Mid-Term; Long-Term	Town, Central Six, RPCGB, WCEIDA
5	Aid Attraction through Identifying Available Properties for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an inventory process for tracking available parcels or properties in town available for development. Develop relationships with local landowners and, when applicable, work with partners to market sites to potential developers. 	Short-Term; Long-Term	Town, Local Landowners, WCEIDA, RPCGB, Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
6	Aid Attraction by Planning for Future Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas surrounding town limits for possible annexation and/or development. Partner with local landowners to build relationships for possible development projects. 	Mid-Term; Long-Term	Town, Local Landowners, WCEIDA

Goal IV: Optimize Outdoor Recreation Opportunities- Strategies & Tasks

No.	Strategy	Potential Tasks	Timeframe	Resources
1	Optimize Outdoor Recreation by Investing in Local Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify assets that need improvements and prioritize based on need and resources (ball fields, splash pad, park expansion, improvements, etc.) Use priority list to beginning project development for funding support. 	Short-Term	Town, RPCGB, WACF, Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
2	Optimize Outdoor Recreation by Identifying Expansion Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas for outdoor recreation activities such as walking trails, volleyball courts, or bicycle parks. Determine cost estimates for each and use for project prioritization for funding support. 	Short-Term; Long-Term	Town, RPCGB, WACF, Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
3	Optimize Outdoor Recreation by Identifying Opportunities in the Walker County Outdoor Recreation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize county plan for additional outdoor recreation ideas and partnerships Increase community education of outdoor recreation options. 	Short-Term; Long-Term	Town, RPCGB, WACF, Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)



Source: RPCGB, 2023





Town of Nauvoo

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

March 2024

Prepared by

Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
Walker Area Community Foundation



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INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) program was designed by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) to assist its member governments in developing long-term strategies that capitalize on local economic strengths and address its challenges. The EDSP planning process determines market advantages and challenges through data analysis and stakeholder input, as well as identifies potential opportunities and obstacles for local economic and community development within the selected market area. The Town of Nauvoo EDSP is divided into three sections:

Section I: Needs Assessment—This section identifies the historic trends and current characteristics of Nauvoo’s local economy and workforce, and it is composed of two chapters:

Chapter 1: Existing Conditions— Provides the background and baseline data trends necessary to help understand Nauvoo’s current market conditions.

Chapter 2: Market Analysis— Evaluates Nauvoo’s consumer spending habits to establish supply and demand patterns and assess historical market trends.

Section II: Strategy Framework Development— This section describes the development opportunities within the community based on the Needs Assessment and community input, and it is composed of three chapters:

Chapter 1: Priority Development Themes & Focus Areas— Outlines the overall development themes for Nauvoo’s future development based on findings in Needs Assessment.

Chapter 2: Outdoor Recreation Potential & Feasibility— Evaluates the potential activities Nauvoo can undertake to support outdoor recreation development within the community.

Chapter 3: Broadband: Potential & Feasibility— Outlines the current conditions of the town’s broadband infrastructure, identifies areas of prominent need, and lists possible sources of funding support for future projects.

Section III: Action Plan— The Action Plan for the EDSP will be developed in accordance with the responses of the SWOT survey published in October 2023 and guidance of local officials. The Action Plan will offer economic goals and strategies for future implementation, and its contents will be created to correspond with the goals described in the RPCGB’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), as well as the targets of Walker County and the Town of Nauvoo as a collective.

This project was supported by funding from the USDA Rural Development division through the agency’s Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC) grant program. The contents of this Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) will reflect the Town of Nauvoo’s community vision and serve as a guide to transforming Nauvoo’s goals into future economic development decisions and capital investments. As a plan, however, this EDSP is not legally binding upon the Town of Nauvoo. For more information about this plan or its contents, please contact Allie Haynes, Economic Development Specialist, at ahaynes@rpcgb.org.

SECTION I: NEEDS ASSESSMENT



SECTION I- NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section identifies the historic trends and current characteristics of Nauvoo’s local economy and workforce. Due to Nauvoo’s town limits in comparison to its overall market area, the data used for the Needs Assessment reflects a 5-mile radius around Nauvoo. This radius will be referred to as “Nauvoo” throughout this section. This radial area was used to gain a more in-depth understanding of the current market conditions that impact on the town around the broader area outside the town limits.

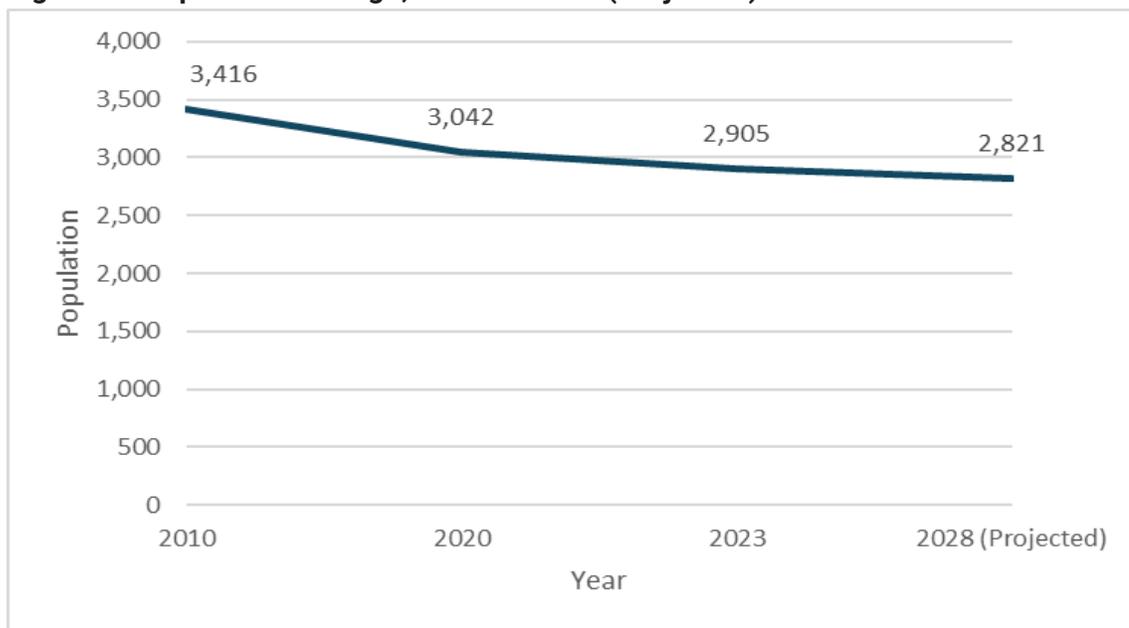
Chapter 1: Existing Conditions

Population Characteristics

1. POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD TRENDS

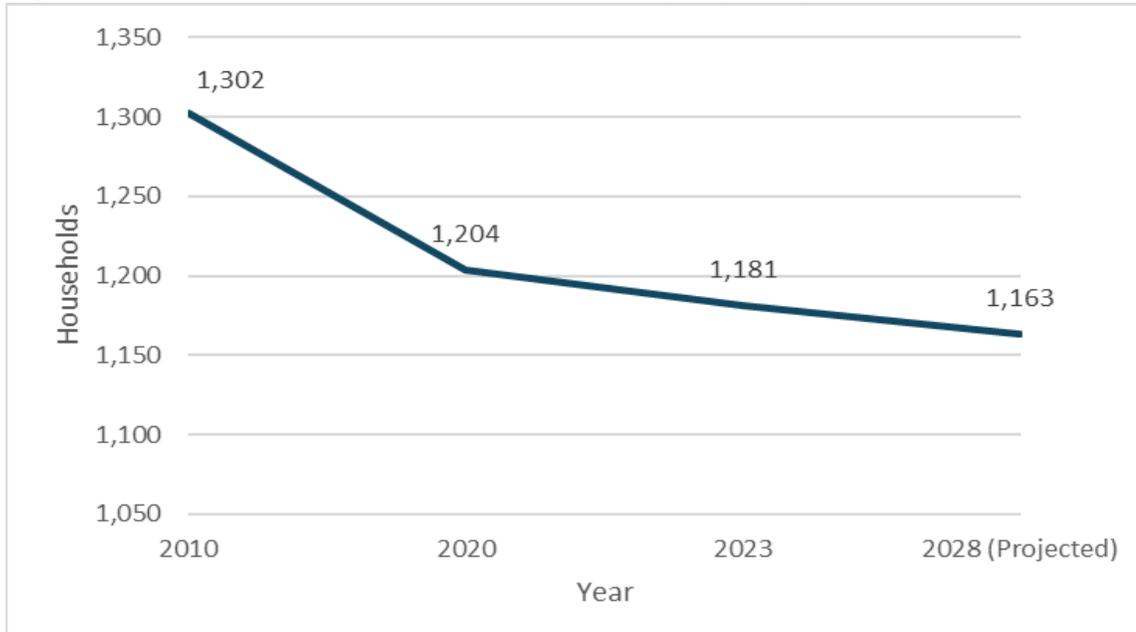
As of 2023, the Nauvoo area has a total population of 2,905. The number of residents has decreased by 15 percent since 2010, and this metric is predicted to continue to decline through 2028 (see Figure 1). These rates are reflected in the number of households within the market area, which have also decreased since 2010 (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Population Change, 2010 to 2028 (Projected)



Source: Esri, 2023

Figure 2: Number of Households, 2010 to 2028 (Projected)

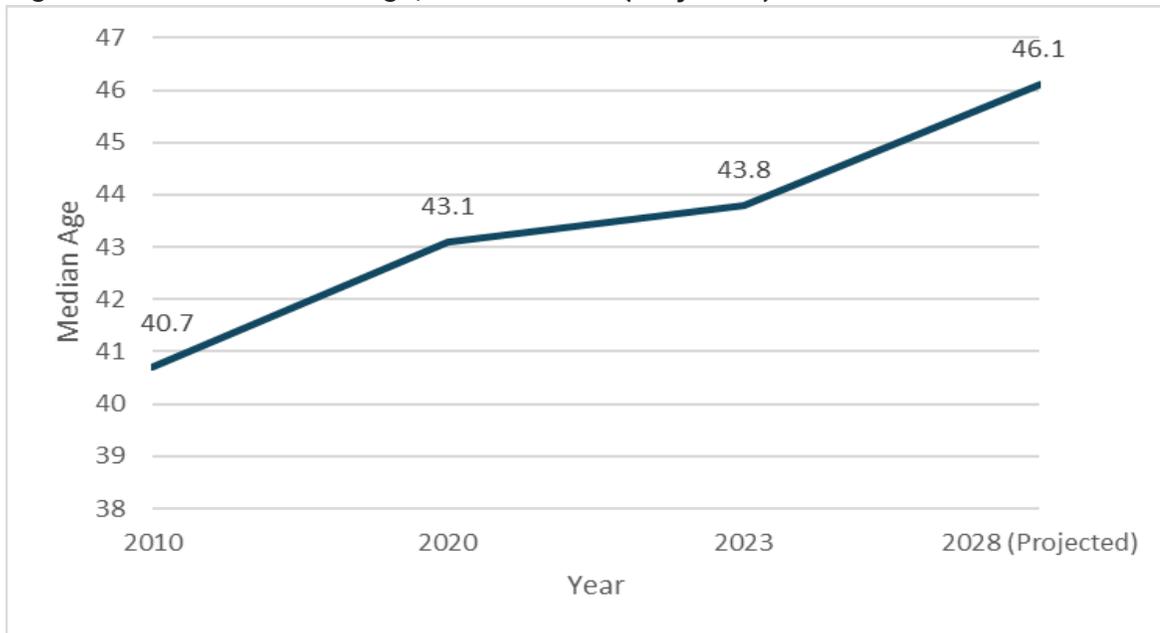


Source: Esri, 2023

2. AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION

The median age within Nauvoo was 43.8 in 2023, which was higher than Alabama’s median age rate of 39.8 (see Figure 3). Nauvoo has also been aging faster than the nationwide population. Nauvoo’s median age has increased by over 3 years since 2010, while the nationwide median age increased by only 1.5 years.

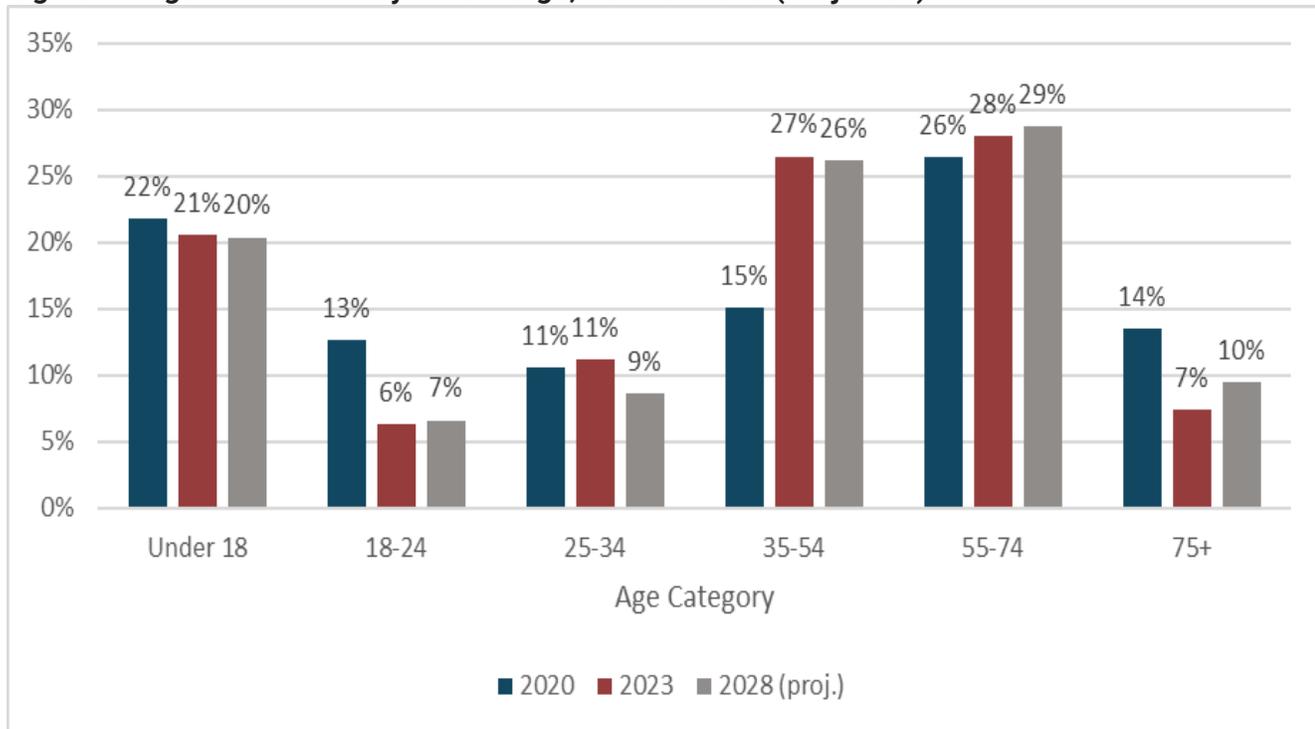
Figure 3: Nauvoo Median Age, 2010 to 2028 (Projected)



Source: Esri, 2023

The largest source of Nauvoo’s population decline is among working-age individuals, particularly those 18 to 24, as illustrated in Figure 4. The 18 to 24 age group declined by 54 percent from 2020 to 2023, while other groups, like those ages 25-34, had a more gradual decline. There was a sharp incline of ages 35-54 in the area since 2020, and residents ranging between 55 and 74 years have remained steady. These population trends show the age groups of current residents and highlight the age groups of people who may choose to move into the area in the coming years. But the 55-74 and 75+ age groups are projected to increase by 2028 as the current population ages.

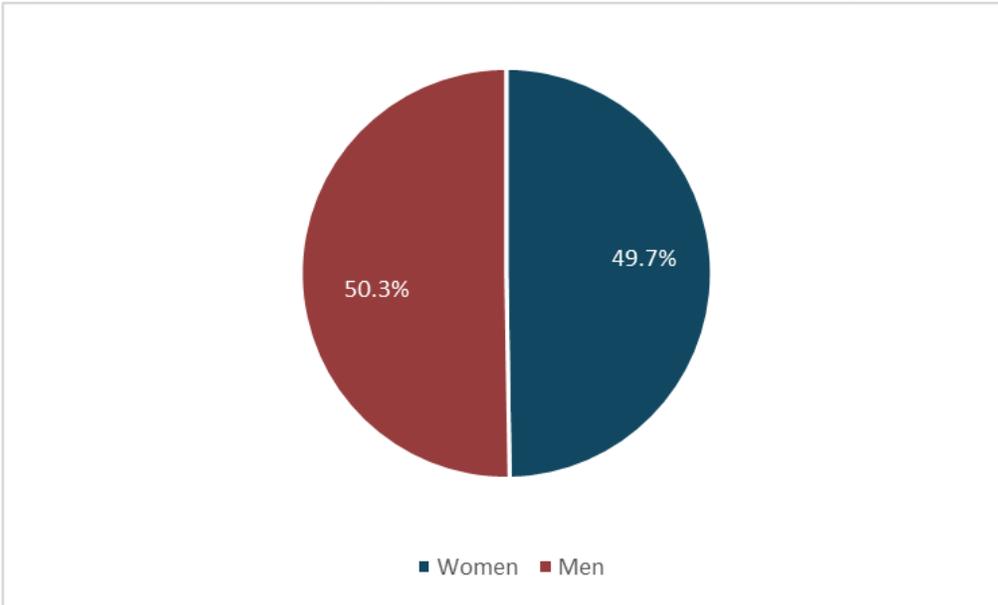
Figure 4: Age Distribution by Percentage, 2010 to 2028 (Projected)



Source: Esri, 2023

In terms of sex distribution, Nauvoo has a ratio reflective of national rates. According to Census data, the US population is 50.4 percent female and 49.6 percent male, which are comparative to Nauvoo’s rates.

Figure 5: Distribution of Population by Sex, 2010 to 2028 (Projected)

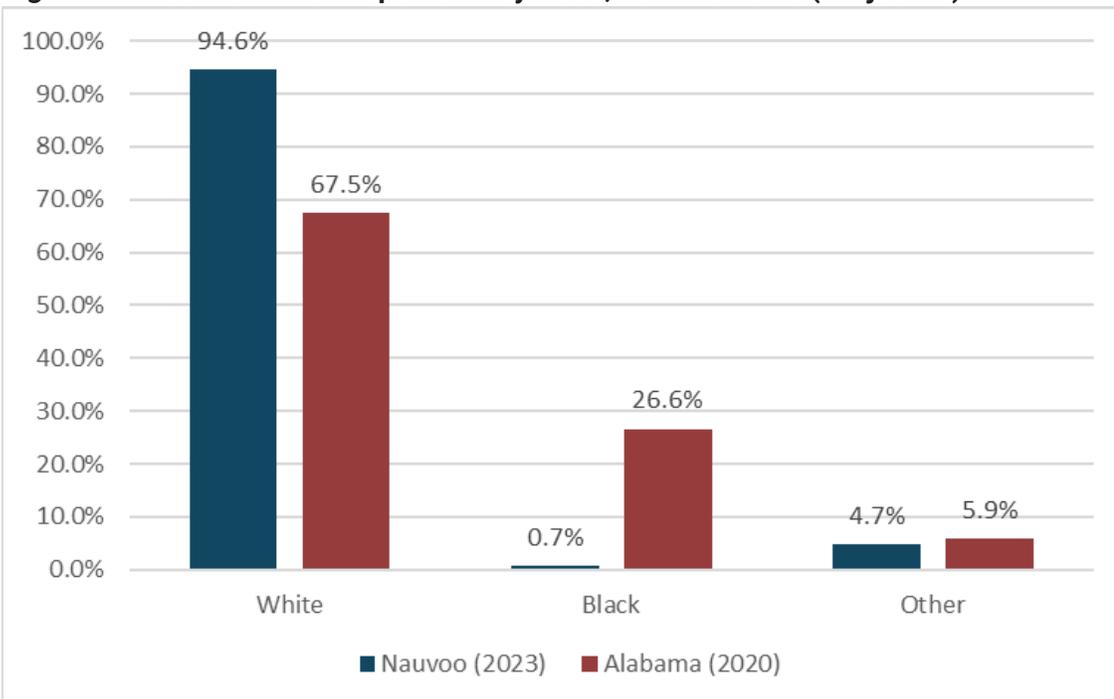


Source: Esri, 2023

3. RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

Nauvoo’s population is more ethnically and racially homogenous than the state as a whole. In 2023, almost 95 percent of Nauvoo’s population was white, compared to the 2020 statewide measure of 67.5 percent (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Distribution of Population by Race, 2010 to 2028 (Projected)



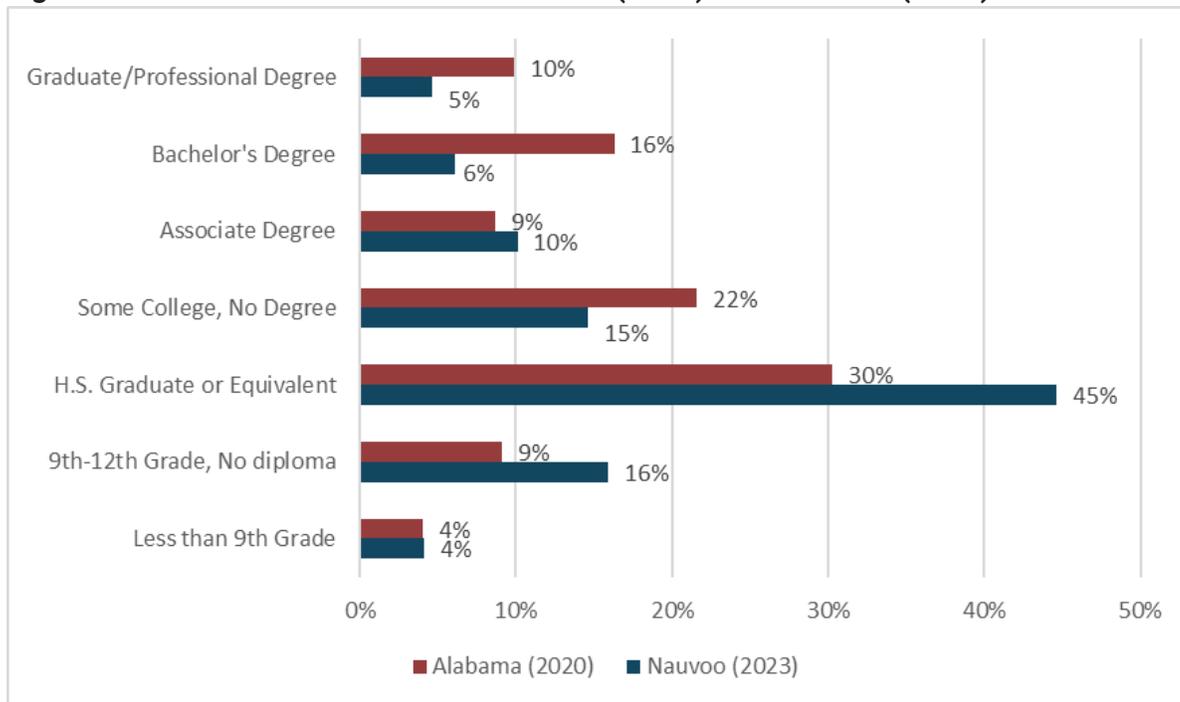
Source: Esri, 2023

Educational Characteristics

1. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational attainment of a community is important to evaluate because it is related to workforce characteristics, income levels, poverty reduction, and overall long-term economic development. Figure 7 compares the educational attainment of those 25 years or older within the Nauvoo area and the State of Alabama. About 20 percent of Nauvoo’s working age population does not have a high school diploma or equivalent, which is higher than the Alabama rate of 13 percent. Forty-five percent of residents have a high school diploma or equivalent as their highest level of education, whereas 16 percent have an associate’s or bachelor’s degree. Only 5 percent of individuals hold a graduate/professional degree.

Figure 7: Educational Attainment in Nauvoo (2023) and Alabama (2020)



Source: Esri, 2023

2. PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

The only public school located in the market area is Lupton Junior High School (pre-K through 8th grade). The school had 416 students during the 2022-2023 school year, and the student population has been decreasing over the past decade. The school is not located within town limits, but students from Nauvoo attend this school.

Table 1: Lupton Junior High School Public School Enrollment

Student Population	Year
523	2014-2015
416	2022-2023

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2023

Income Characteristics

1. MEDIAN & PER CAPITA INCOME

Nauvoo’s median household income and per capita income remain low compared to county and statewide levels. These terms are defined below:

- **Median Household Income:** This metric is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families, including those with no income, to describe the “middle” of the income range of household earnings within Nauvoo. The median divides the income distribution into 2 equal parts: half of the cases falling below the median income and half above the median.¹
- **Per Capita Income (PCI):** This measure represents the mean income computed for every man, woman, and child within the town and is derived by dividing the aggregate income earned from the town’s income-earning population by the town’s total population.² Per capita income can be used to determine the average per-person income for an area and to evaluate the standard of living and quality of life of the population.³

Nauvoo’s median household income in 2023 was \$44,063, compared to \$45,833 in Walker County and \$52,035 in the State of Alabama in 2020. In addition, Nauvoo’s PCI was \$26,161. This figure is close to the 2020 Walker County per capita income of \$25,330, but less than the 2020 statewide per capita income of \$28,934. Table 2 lists Nauvoo’s median household and PCI rates, compared to Walker County and Alabama levels.

Table 2: Median Household Income and Per Capita Income for Town, County, and State

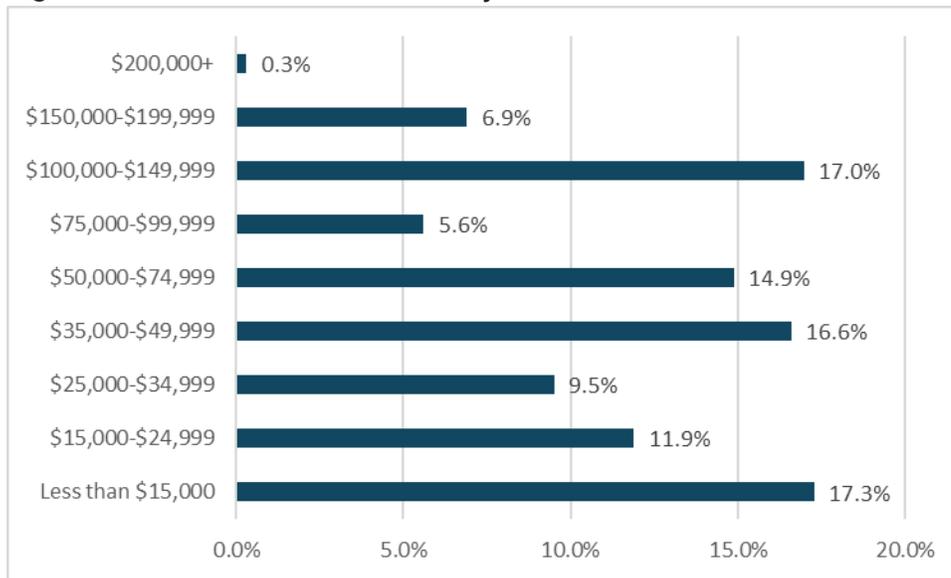
Region	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Nauvoo (2023)	\$44,063	\$26,161
Walker County (2020)	\$45,833	\$25,330
Alabama (2020)	\$52,035	\$28,934

Source: Esri, 2023; US Census, 2020

2. HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION BY BRACKET

Figure 8 outlines the percentages of Nauvoo households per income bracket. The largest income bracket in Nauvoo was less than \$15,000, accounting for 17.3 percent of households. The next largest bracket was between \$100,000 and \$149,999, which included 17 percent of households. The smallest income bracket represented in Nauvoo was over \$200,000.

Figure 8: Household Distribution by Income Bracket



Source: Esri, 2023

Poverty

The U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines provide income thresholds which scale up depending on the size of the household – as the number of people in a given household increases, the minimum amount of income necessary for that household to remain out of poverty also increases.

The average household size in Nauvoo in 2023 was 2.45 people. For this household size, the median household income for the poverty threshold is \$24,860, according to these guidelines. The town’s median household income of \$44,063 is above this threshold and would meet the income requirements necessary for a household as large as six people (\$40,280). However, the income bracket with the highest percentage of individuals were those making under \$15,000, so many individuals likely live in poverty.

Labor and Employment Characteristics

1. UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate in Nauvoo was 8.2 percent in 2023. The COVID-19 pandemic likely impacted these numbers. Additionally, Nauvoo’s rate of unemployment is over two times higher than the county, state, and national averages. See Table 3 for a comparison of these rates.

Table 3: Median Household Income and Per Capita Income for Town, County, and State

Area	Unemployment Rate
Nauvoo (2023)	8.2%
Walker County (2021)	3.9%
Alabama (2021)	3.2%
United States (2021)	3.4%

Source: Esri, 2023; US Census, 2021

2. COMMUTER-ADJUSTED POPULATION AND LABOR FLOWS

Commuter-Adjusted Population

The commuter-adjusted population, also known as the daytime population, within a market area represents the number of people, residents, or commuters that are within the town limits during regular working hours. This metric is calculated by subtracting the number of workers leaving the area for work from summation of the town’s population and the workers working within the town:

$$\text{Commuter-adjusted population} = \text{Total resident population} + \text{Total workers working in area} - \text{Total workers living in area.}$$

Commuter-adjusted population measures can help define the consumer base for the town, since often there are commuters within an area that are attracted to the town for work or school. Evaluating commuter trends can help establish spending patterns and illustrate potential demand for industry, especially regarding retail or food and beverage stores.

Nauvoo’s daytime population was 1,921, signifying that 900 fewer people are normally in the area during regular business hours when compared to the total population. Because a daily outflow of residents can reduce the consumer base for local businesses such as restaurants, coffee shops, and gas stations, this net negative daytime population illustrates decreased demand throughout the local market and represents a potential point of growth.

Table 4: Commuter-Adjusted Population Calculation

Population	Number of Individuals
Total Population	2,821
Workers Employed Inside but Living Outside Area	+484
Workers Living in Area Employed Outside	-1,384
<i>Commuter-Adjusted Population</i>	1,921

Source: US Census, OnTheMap Application, 2020

Labor Flows

Analyzing the labor flow of workers in the Nauvoo area can help determine the extent to which Nauvoo supplies workers outside the town and/or attracts labor from surrounding areas. Since daytime population includes the total number of people in the area, including those who are not in the labor force (such as children and retirees), evaluating labor flows can help determine the number of workers located within the town.

Two types of analyses can be conducted to evaluate labor flows within an area, as defined by the U. S Census Bureau’s Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics program:

1. Employment Efficiency: Evaluates the local employment characteristics in terms of where workers who are employed within the selection area live, whether within or outside Nauvoo.
2. Labor Force Efficiency: Evaluates the local employment characteristics in terms of where residents work, whether inside or outside Nauvoo.

These analyses are outlined and assessed in Tables 5 and 6, and the industries related to these employment analyses are evaluated in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 5: Employment Efficiency, Nauvoo, 2010-2020

Employment Efficiency	2010 Count	2010 Share	2020 Count	2020 Share	Percent Change
Employed in the Selection Area	394	100.0%	553	100.0%	40.4%
<i>Employed and Living in the Selection Area</i>	50	12.7%	69	12.5%	38.0%
<i>Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside</i>	344	87.3%	484	87.5%	40.7%

Source: US Census, OnTheMap Application, 2010-2020

Since 2010, the Nauvoo area has experienced a substantial increase (over 40 percent) in employment within the market area. Though employment opportunities have increased, only 69 people live and work within the Nauvoo area, and over 87 percent of the employment opportunities in the market area are filled by workers commuting into the market area for their jobs. This is calculated as labor inflow, and this trend can be beneficial to the area’s future growth, as incoming workers contribute to the local economy by participating in the labor market and contributing to the growth of local industries, such as grocery stores, gas stations, and restaurants.

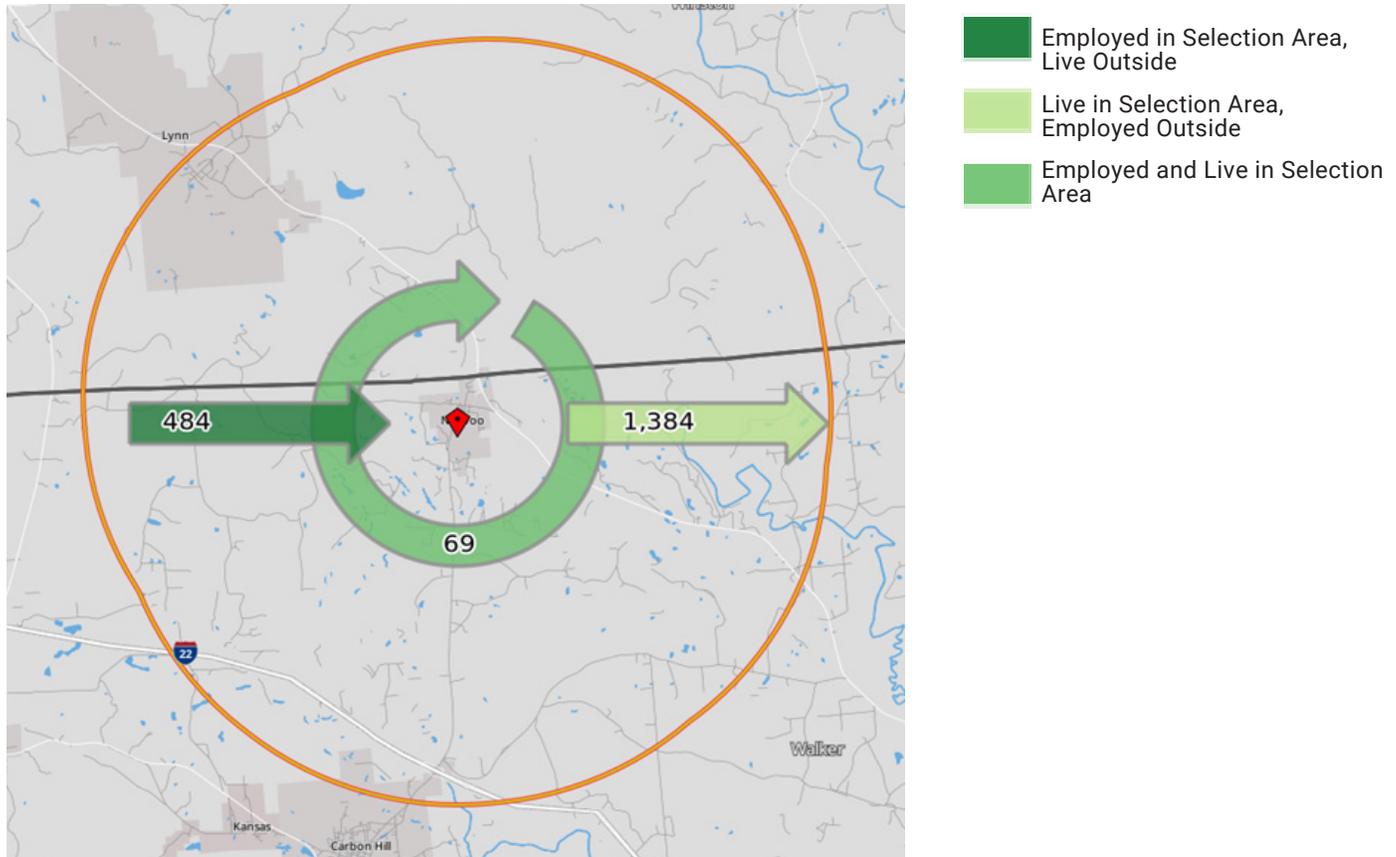
Table 6: Labor Force Efficiency, Nauvoo, 2010-2020

Labor Force Efficiency	2010 Count	2010 Share	2020 Count	2020 Share	Percent Change
Living in the Selection Area	1,571	100.0%	1,453	100.0%	-7.5%
<i>Employed and Living in the Selection Area</i>	50	3.2%	69	4.7%	38.0%
<i>Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside</i>	1,521	96.8%	1,384	95.3%	-9.0%

Source: US Census, OnTheMap Application, 2010-2020

As illustrated in Table 6, Nauvoo is supplying 1,384 workers for jobs located outside the area, which is measured as *labor outflow*. Over 95 percent of workers who live in Nauvoo work outside of the market area. This shows that there are many skilled workers living in Nauvoo who have to commute outside of the market area for work. This outflow of skills and labor can have an impact on the potential competitiveness of the area to recruit industry, but it also signifies that if there were more employment opportunities within the market area, there would likely be enough workers to fill them. The Net Labor Flow for Nauvoo is illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Net Labor Flow, Nauvoo, Alabama



Source: US Census, OnTheMap Application, 2020

3. EMPLOYMENT BY WORKING AREA

Related to the “Employment Efficiency” analysis, evaluating employment by work area identifies the employment opportunities within Nauvoo. In other words, this metric describes the industries and jobs available within the Nauvoo market area, regardless of where workers live. As shown in Table 7, 5 of the 20 measured industries were not present within the town’s market area in either 2010 or 2020; those industries are shaded in gray.

According to U.S. Census data, Nauvoo had 553 jobs available within the area, an increase of over 40 percent since 2010. There were seven industries with growth, including increases over 100 percent in Construction and Manufacturing. These rates may also have been exaggerated due to the pandemic. However, the increase in jobs is significant, especially considering the decrease in population over the past several years.

Table 7: Industry by Work Area

Industry	2010 Jobs	2020 Jobs	Percent Change
Manufacturing	170	394	131.8%
Educational Services	57	36	-36.8%
Wholesale Trade	27	35	29.6%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	10	20	100.0%
Retail Trade	39	20	-48.7%
Construction	5	19	280.0%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	7	40.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3	6	100.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	20	5	-75.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	16	4	-75.0%
Finance and Insurance	2	3	50.0%
Utilities	2	2	0.0%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	16	1	-93.8%
Public Administration	4	1	-75.0%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0	N/A
Information	0	0	N/A
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0	N/A
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	18	0	-100.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0	0	N/A
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0	0	N/A
Total	394	553	40.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, On The Map Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2010-2020

4. EMPLOYMENT BY HOME AREA

Similar to the “Labor Force Efficiency” analysis, measuring employment by home area identifies the industries Nauvoo residents are employed in, regardless of where their job is located. In 2020, residents within the market area held 1,453 jobs, which represented a 7.5 percent decline from 2010 rates. Manufacturing was the largest employment category for residents, with 285 employees. The next largest were Retail Trade and Health Care & Social Assistance, with approximately 220 employees each. The smallest industries per employment were Information and Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation.

Table 8 outlines the residential employment levels of each industry for 2010 and 2020, as well as the percent change in employment over the last decade in each industry. The categories are sorted in descending order based on the number of jobs in 2020. Eleven industries contributed to the decline in residential employment since 2010, with the largest percentage decrease occurring in Information; Educational Services; Mining, Quarrying, Oil, & Gas Extraction; and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation. The reductions in employment in these industries may have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which influenced employment trends across the country. However, eight industries have increased over the past decade. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services experienced the largest growth, while the Construction industry experienced no fluctuations.

Table 8: Industry by Home Area

Industry	2010 Jobs	2020 Jobs	Percent Change
Manufacturing	269	285	5.9%
Retail Trade	212	222	4.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	226	220	-2.7%
Educational Services	153	96	-37.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	105	87	-17.1%
Wholesale Trade	75	71	-5.3%
Construction	69	69	0.0%
Public Administration	97	68	-29.9%
Transportation and Warehousing	55	59	7.3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	33	49	48.5%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	55	44	-20.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	58	38	-34.5%
Finance and Insurance	44	37	-15.9%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	28	30	7.1%
Utilities	25	19	-24.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	14	18	28.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	11	13	18.2%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	11	12	9.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	16	11	-31.3%
Information	15	5	-66.7%
Total	1,571	1,453	-7.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, On The Map Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2010-2020

Overall, Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting and Manufacturing were the only two categories that saw a positive change in employment both by home area and by work area. Mining, Quarrying, Oil & Gas Extraction, Educational Services, Accommodation & Food Services, and Public Administration saw negative changes in employment by home and work areas. A decrease in both home and work areas for Education may be due to the decreasing student population of Lupton Junior High, which has seen a decrease of over 100 students in less than ten years.

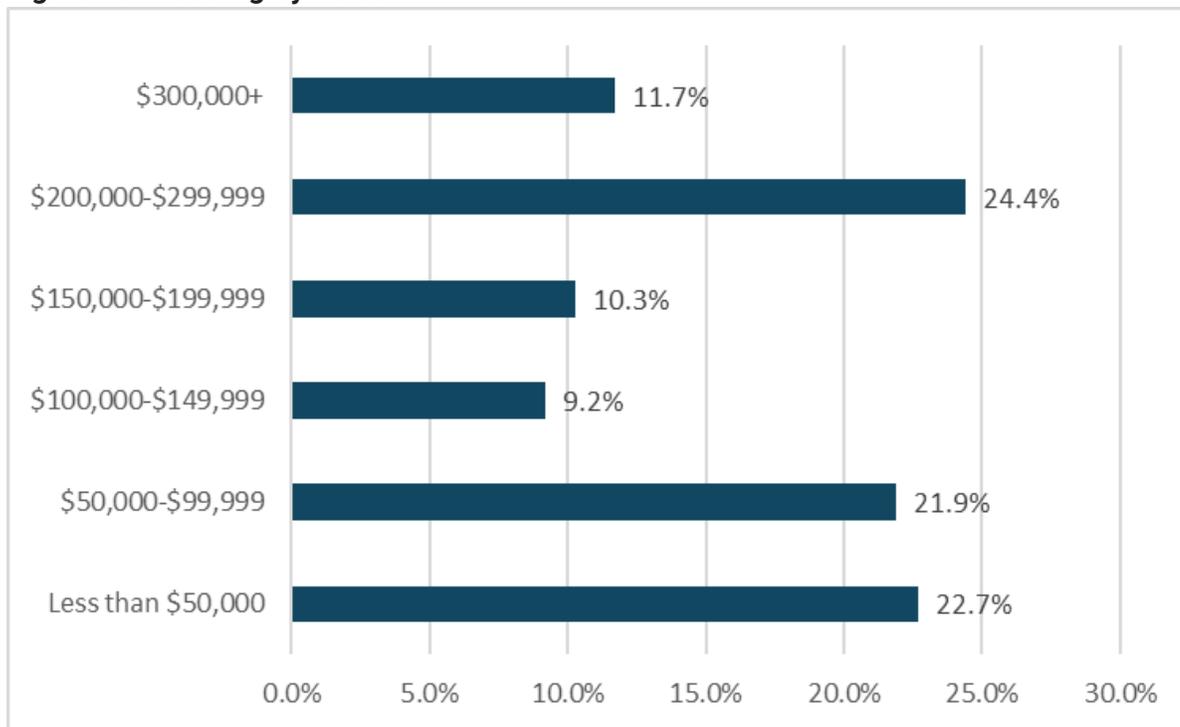
In addition, several industries in Table 7 were shaded in gray since they were not present in either 2010 or 2020. A component of economic growth is analyzing what the community’s strengths and assets are and capitalizing on those; just because an industry is not present does not mean it should be. It may not be viable in the area, and resources would be better spent supporting industries that are.

Housing Characteristics

1. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The median value of homes in the Nauvoo area was \$129,948 in 2023. This rate is higher than the median home value in Walker County, which is estimated to be \$109,600. However, the shares of homes valued under \$99,999 represents over 40 percent of all homes, as illustrated in Figure 10. Only 9.2 percent of homes are valued between \$100,000 and \$149,999, which is the range where the median value lies. The median value could be skewed due to the presence of homes over \$200,000.

Figure 10: Housing by Value



Source: Esri, 2023

According to the most recent Esri data, residents are spending approximately \$1,000 per month on their mortgages or rent. As a result, the population’s overall housing affordability is high, indicating that families earning the median income have enough income to qualify for a mortgage loan on a median-priced home. The affordability could be potentially inflated due to the prevalence of older homes, which may be vacant and/or in poor condition.

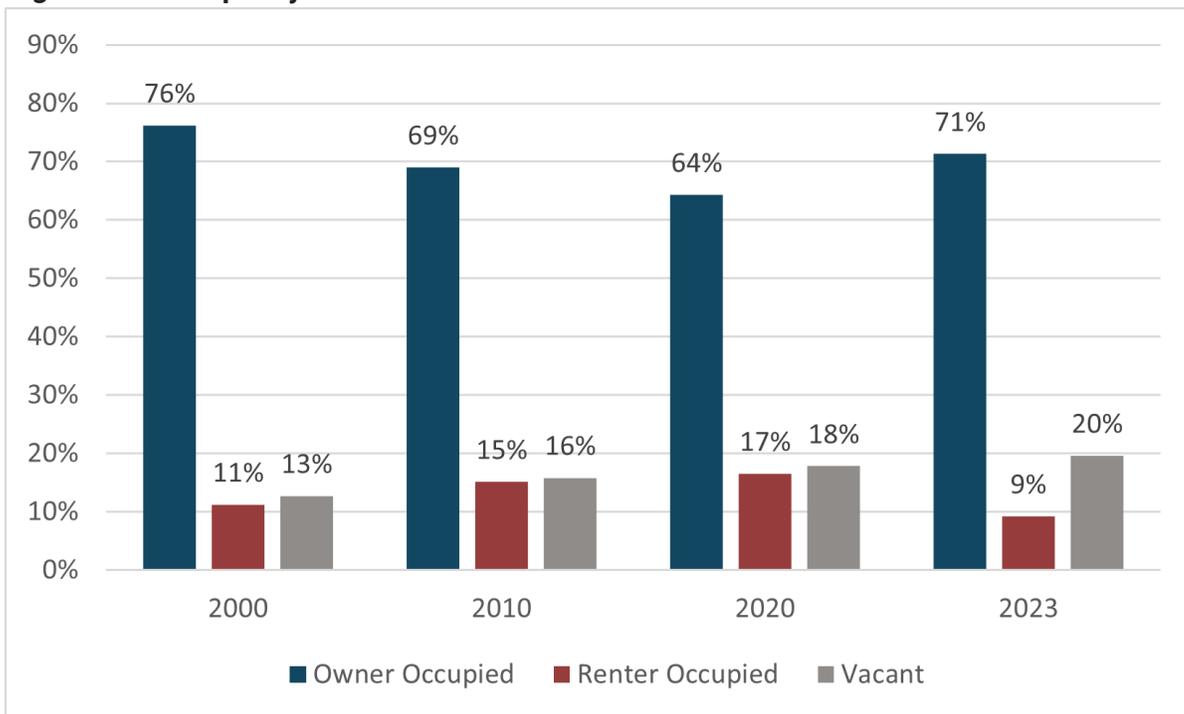
2. HOUSING AGE

The value of the Nauvoo area’s available housing units is likely impacted by the age of its existing housing. The median year in which all housing units in Nauvoo were built is 1981, which is close to the countywide median of 1982 and the statewide median of 1984. Over 10 percent of homes were built before 1939, but the majority of homes were built between 1970 and 1999.

3. HOUSING OCCUPANCY

Vacancy rates in Nauvoo are high. As illustrated in Figure 11, approximately 71 percent of homes in the Nauvoo area are owner-occupied, and the housing vacancy rate is at an all-time high of 20 percent. This rate has increased over the past twenty years; in addition, renter-occupied housing has decreased significantly. These factors may indicate that vacancy rates, largely impacted by absent landowners, have impeded the town’s ability to grow the population due to limited housing options.

Figure 11: Occupancy Rates



Source: Esri, 2023

Chapter 2: Market Assessment

The purpose of the Market Assessment is to evaluate Nauvoo’s market conditions and give officials and stakeholders a better understanding of local consumer behavior and spending patterns. This section is divided into three subsections:

1. The Consumer Behavior subsection presents data showing local consumer spending and preferences.
2. The Retail Gap Analysis subsection shows supply and demand estimates across individual retail categories, including surplus/leakage data indicating the ratio of consumer spending in Nauvoo to actual retail sales.
3. The Segmentation Profile subsection describes the socioeconomic characteristics and lifestyle preferences of the community’s residents.

Although the economic terms used in this section are clarified within the narrative, Table 9 provides definitions of each term for ease of reference.

Table 9: Market Assessment Terms

Term	Definition
LifeMode Group	A market category that generally describes an area’s residents based on shared common experiences or relevant demographic traits.
Market Potential Index (MPI)	A measure of the likelihood of adults or households in a market area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the US average.
Retail Gap	The difference between Retail Potential (demand), and Retail Sales (supply). If the difference is positive, then demand outweighs supply, creating a “retail leakage.” If the difference is negative, then supply outweighs demand, creating a “retail surplus.”
Retail Potential	The amount of spending by an area’s residents on retail goods and services. Includes spending both within and outside the trade area in which they reside.
Retail Sales	The number of sales of retail goods and services by establishments in the area.
Retail Surplus/Leakage	A retail surplus occurs when establishments in a community are selling more than is demanded in the community. A retail leakage occurs when residents of a community are spending on retail goods and services at establishments located outside the community.
Spending Potential Index (SPI)	A comparison of local spending to US averages. Any increase or decrease from a value of 100 indicates a difference in spending compared to the national average.
Surplus/Leakage Factor	A measure of the balance between the volume of supply (Retail Sales) generated by an industry and the demand (Retail Potential) in the same industry, within a geographic trade area.
Tapestry Segments	A measure that provides greater detail into a community’s distinctive characteristics, including residents’ lifestyle choices and consumer purchasing preferences.

1. Consumer Behavior

Consumer Spending

Table 10 shows consumer spending for Nauvoo across various spending categories. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they are broad enough to capture a more complete depiction of expenses. Both the total and average amount spent per household represent annual figures. Although this table represents spending by Nauvoo households, each value includes money spent outside of Nauvoo as well as within the area’s radial limit.

It is important, however, to compare local spending levels to a broader average to compare Nauvoo’s market conditions to a larger context. The Spending Potential Index (SPI) is a measure that compares local spending to the national average, represented by a value of 100. Any increase or decrease from 100 indicates how much more or less spending occurs in the market area compared to the national average. For example, an SPI of 90 for a certain category of goods and services would indicate that consumers in Nauvoo spend 10 percent less than the national average on the items within that category.

Table 10: Consumer Spending by Residents of Nauvoo, AL in 2023

Spending Category	Total	Average Spending per Household	SPI
Shelter	\$14,748,119	\$12,487.82	50
Health Care	\$6,638,498	\$5,621.08	76
Food at Home	\$5,368,357	\$4,545.60	67
Entertainment/Recreation	\$2,994,117	\$2,535.24	67
Food Away from Home	\$2,592,853	\$2,195.47	59
Support Payments/Cash Contributions/Gifts in Kind	\$2,559,470	\$2,167.21	69
Household Furnishings & Equipment	\$2,124,091	\$1,798.55	61
Travel	\$1,519,263	\$1,286.42	57
Apparel & Services	\$1,395,907	\$1,181.97	54
Vehicle Maintenance & Repairs	\$1,076,651	\$911.64	70
Education	\$881,636	\$746.52	42
Personal Care Products & Services	\$604,941	\$512.23	54

Source: Esri, 2023

The largest spending category for residents in Nauvoo was shelter, at around \$1,000/month, which includes expenses such as mortgages and rent payments. The SPI for this category was 50, indicating that residents in the Nauvoo area spent 50 percent less on shelter than the national average. The smallest spending category was personal care products & services, with an average annual spending amount of \$512 per household and an SPI of 54.

Notably, all spending categories for residents in Nauvoo have an SPI rate ranked at least 24 points lower than the national average, indicating that consumers who reside in the Nauvoo area spend at least 24 percent less in every category than the average amount spent nationally. This could be an indication of lower prices of goods, overall lower cost of living levels, or lower household income levels.

Consumer Preferences

Another vital component of a market analysis is evaluating consumer behaviors and identifying specific products and industries supported by local consumers. One way to analyze consumer behavior is through measuring the percentage of the population that consumes specific goods and services, which signifies the potential demand for the good or service within the area. However, even if a large segment of the population consumes a product, the purchased product is not necessarily desired over another potentially unavailable option. This phenomenon is the reason the Market Potential Index (MPI) is an important indicator for actual demand in an area. The MPI measures the relative likelihood of the adults or households in a specific trade area exhibiting certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the national average, which is represented by an MPI of 100. Comparing local consumer behaviors with national averages provides details about the products and services consumers want and the civic attitudes they have, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the different investments that are prospering or could eventually prosper in an area.

Consumer spending is divided into 3 categories for this analysis: Individuals, Households, and Market Potential Index (MPI). Consumer behavior is shown for both individuals and households because individuals consume different goods and services than households, and separating individual consumer behavior from household consumer behavior allows for a more comprehensive analysis. The MPI, as stated previously, measures the relative likelihood of consumers in a trade area to exhibit certain consumer behaviors or purchasing patterns compared to the national average, and this analysis is separated from individuals and households to determine trends.

INDIVIDUALS

As illustrated in Table 11, individuals in the Nauvoo area have a strong demand for fast food/drive-in restaurants, as 93.4 percent of the population have gone to one of these restaurants in the past 6 months. About 95 percent of the population bought gasoline in the last 6 months, indicating that individuals generally use their vehicles for travel. Smartphone ownership by individuals is prevalent, at a rate of 90.5 percent. Most Nauvoo residents also personally carry health insurance. All top five consumer preferences had MPI scores close to the U.S. average.

Table 11: Most Popular Consumer Preferences for Individuals

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Bought Gasoline/6 Mo	2,191	95.0%	105
Went to Fast Food/Drive-In Restaurant/6 Mo	2,154	93.4%	103
Own or Used Any Credit/Debit Card/12 Mo	2,135	92.6%	100
Have a Smartphone	2,087	90.5%	97
Personally Carry Any Medical Insurance	1,960	85.0%	100

Individuals in Nauvoo had the least demand for travel and vacation spending out of all examined goods and services. Each of the five consumer preferences with the lowest rate of engagement was travel related, both foreign and domestic (see Table 12). These categories also had low MPI scores, indicating that Nauvoo’s population has a low demand for such services compared to the general U.S. population. These numbers could be impacted by the pandemic, as travel in general has declined over the past couple of years, as well as the overall income levels for residents within the town.

Table 12: Least Popular Consumer Preferences for Individuals

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Spent \$1K-\$2,999 on Foreign Vacations/12 Mo	35	1.5%	50
Took 3+ Foreign Trips by Plane/3 Yrs	36	1.6%	21
Spent \$3K+ on Foreign Vacations/12 Mo	38	1.6%	39
Used General Travel Site: Foreign Trip/3 Yrs	61	2.6%	42
Spent \$1,500-\$1,999 on Domestic Vacations/12 Mo	66	2.9%	75

Source: Esri, 2023

HOUSEHOLDS

The goods and services with the highest demand from households in Nauvoo were mainly staple grocery items that are similarly prevalent in households throughout the U.S., as indicated by their MPI scores (see Table 13). Households were also likely to own a car and computer.

Table 13: Most Popular Consumer Preferences for Households

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Household Used Bread/6 Mo	1,149	97.3%	103
Household Owns or Leases Any Vehicle	1,134	96.0%	105
Household Used Fresh Milk/6 Mo	1,034	87.6%	106
Household Used Fresh Fruit or Vegetables/6 Mo	997	84.4%	96
Household Owns Computer	925	78.3%	91

Source: Esri, 2023

The household consumer preferences with the least demand were technology related. As listed in Table 14, only 2.1 percent of households subscribe to fiber optic Internet services, and only 4.7 percent purchased a video game system in the last 12 months. These categories also had low MPI scores, with fiber optic subscription particularly far below the U.S. average, at a rate of 40.

Table 14: Least Popular Consumer Preferences for Households

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Household Subscribes to Fiber Optic TV	25	2.1%	40
Household Spent \$2K+ on Most Recent Home Computer	27	2.3%	42
Household Spent \$1500-1999 on Most Recent Home Computer	34	2.9%	63
Household Purchased Video Game System/12 Mo	55	4.7%	58
Household Spent \$1K-1499 on Most Recent Home Computer	102	8.6%	71

Source: Esri, 2023

MARKET POTENTIAL INDEX (MPI)

According to the MPI metric, consumers in the Nauvoo area are much more likely than the rest of the U.S. population to own a cat or dog, buy cigarettes at convenience stores, and have 3 or more vehicles covered by auto insurance. However, these rates do not necessarily indicate a sizable portion of the residents are purchasing these products, only that the percentage of the population that are making these purchases is larger than U.S. average. The top 5 categories with the largest MPI are listed in Table 15.

Table 15: Most Popular Consumer Preferences/Behaviors for Individuals and Households by MPI

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Household Owns a Cat	473	40.1%	173
Bought Cigarettes at C-Store/30 Days	226	9.8%	160
Household Owns a Dog	721	61.0%	155
Spent \$100+ at C-Store/30 Days	715	31.0%	148
Household Has 3+ Vehicles Covered w/ Auto Insurance	458	38.8%	147

Source: Esri, 2023

The consumer behaviors with the lowest MPI included items related to travel and technology. This indicated that consumers within the market area take foreign trips less than the average American. They also subscribe less to fiber optics and spend less on home computers.

Table 16: Least Popular Consumer Preferences/Behaviors for Individuals and Households by MPI

Product/Consumer Behavior	Number of Individuals	Percent of Total Individuals	MPI
Took 3+ Foreign Trips by Plane/3 Yrs	36	1.6%	21
Spent \$3K+ on Foreign Vacations/12 Mo	38	1.6%	39
Household Subscribes to Fiber Optic TV	25	2.1%	40
Household Spent \$2K+ on Most Recent Home Computer	27	2.3%	42
Used General Travel Site: Foreign Trip/3 Yrs	61	2.6%	42

21 Source: Esri, 2023

2. Retail Gap Analysis

Analysis Overview

A retail gap analysis was created to examine the flow of products and services in and outside the market area. A list of terms used to create this analysis is included below:

- A **leakage** means that residents are spending more on products or services outside the market area than at local retail stores.
- A **surplus** means that local retailers are producing more products or services than the residents need. *This analysis can help communities determine where their strengths, gaps, and opportunities are. Leakages can show where a community might benefit from another retailer, while a surplus signifies how a community serves consumers outside the market area.*
- **Demand** represents the number of products or services a community buys.
- **Supply** represents the number of products or services a community produces. (These terms are listed in Table 17.)
- A **retail gap** represents a place where supply and demand are not equal.

Why is a Retail Gap Analysis Helpful?

Conducting a retail gap analysis can help identify opportunities for local retail expansion or provide evidence that certain expansions could potentially hurt local businesses in specific sectors. The **retail gap** represents the difference between Retail Potential, or **demand**, and Retail Sales, or **supply**. Therefore, it statistically measures whether a given industry is experiencing a **leakage** or **surplus**.

What does having a market “leakage” indicate?

If demand is greater than supply, the retail gap will be positive, indicating that a **leakage** is occurring, and *residents of the community are spending on retail goods and services at establishments located outside the community*. In this case, expansion of industry may be beneficial to the area by encouraging local consumers to remain in the community to shop and by drawing in consumers from other areas.

What does having a market “surplus” indicate?

If supply is greater than demand, the retail gap will be negative, indicating that a **surplus** is occurring, and *establishments in the community are selling more goods and services than what is demanded within the area*. This can mean that consumers from outside the community are coming to the community to buy certain goods and services. By analyzing sources of surplus, expansion strategies can be created around supporting current industries and their supply chains.

Table 17: Retail Gap Index

Retail Category	Demand	Supply	Leakage/Surplus Index
Apparel & Services*	\$1,395,907	\$0	0
Computer*	\$169,173	\$0	0
Entertainment & Recreation*	\$2,994,117	\$0	0
Food	\$7,961,210	\$1,304,000	0.16
Health	\$694,132	\$3,184,000	4.59
Home	\$17,105,814	\$282,000	0.02
Household Furnishings & Equipment*	\$1,419,351	\$0	0
Household Operations	\$1,719,354	\$74,000	0.04
Insurance*	\$8,846,778	\$0	0
Transportation	\$6,301,027	\$1,429,000	0.23
Travel*	\$1,199,580	\$0	0
TOTAL	\$49,806,443	\$6,273,000	0.13

Source: Esri, 2023

*Indicates that no supply was present within the market area.

Retail Gap Analysis: Demand vs Supply

Overall, as depicted in the “TOTAL” row in Table 17, the community’s demand for goods and services far outweighs its current supply. The supply was calculated by adding up the sales of businesses in the market area for the retail categories listed in the table above. The demand was calculated using the consumer spending for 2023 in the retail categories. The total Nauvoo market area possesses approximately \$49.8 million in demand and \$6.3 million in supply, resulting in an overall retail gap of 0.13. The low ratio of businesses to households in Nauvoo suggests that residents have no choice but to leave the market area for goods and services. Therefore, the town likely has several opportunities for expansion and/or recruitment.

Retail Gap Analysis: Leakage vs Surplus

The leakage/surplus index was calculated by dividing actual sales by consumer spending. An index greater than 1 represents a surplus, meaning the community’s businesses are attracting sales from outside the trade area. An index less than 1 represents a leakage, meaning that the community is not able to meet the demands of its residents (see Table 18).⁴

Table 18: Leakage/Surplus Definitions

Leakage/Surplus Index	Significance
Less than 1.0	Leakage: greater demand than supply
Greater than 1.0	Surplus: greater supply than demand

Source: Buxton Consumer Analytics

SURPLUS

Only one industry in Nauvoo possesses a surplus: Health. There are two businesses contributing to this industry: Capstone Pharmacy and the Capstone Rural Health Center. These businesses not only meet local demand but also provide resources for many consumers outside the community. The Health retail category produced over \$3 million, while the community demanded close to \$700,000. The high surplus factor of 4.59 shows that many of the businesses’ customers live outside Nauvoo.

LEAKAGE

Every other industry in the market area possesses an index factor of less than 1, indicating leakages. In addition, several of these industries have index factors of 0, indicating that no businesses in those categories exist in the community. The largest retail gaps exist for the Home and Household Operations industries. These industries have market potential as little competition in these categories currently exists.

GAP ANALYSIS EXCLUSIONS

Several businesses contributed to production in the area, but they were not included because they were not considered retail open to the public. Some examples include the Coca-Cola bottling plant, contributing to over \$37 million in production, and financial assets; the value of stocks and bonds totaled almost \$22 million while the value of retirement plans totaled over \$91 million.

3. Segmentation Profile

The Segmentation Profile illustrates characteristics of the Nauvoo area’s residents that cannot be derived from quantifiable factors alone. To show these characteristics, the population is arranged into different LifeMode Groups and Tapestry Segments (see Table 19), as described below:

- **LifeMode Groups** arrange individuals into different markets based on shared common experiences or significant demographic traits.
- **Tapestry Segments** are subcategories of LifeMode Groups that provide greater detail and specificity into a particular community’s distinctive characteristics.

Together, these characteristics give insight into residents’ general lifestyle choices, consumer purchasing preferences, and preferred leisure activities, and are therefore used by analysts to more effectively market goods and services within a market area.

Table 19: Segmentation Profile (Rustic Outposts: Rooted Rural, Southern Satellites, Economic Bedrock)

LifeMode Group/Tapestry Segment	Proportion of Population
LifeMode Group: Rustic Outposts	100%
Tapestry 1: Rooted Rural	88.1%
Tapestry 2: Southern Satellites	6.9%
Tapestry 3: Economic Bedrock	5.0%

Source: Esri, 2023

LifeMode Group: Rustic Outposts

Rustic Outposts represent rural American communities, where life is deeply intertwined with the land and local traditions. These areas are typically home to middle-aged and older families residing in established homes. The economy often hinges on sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and local businesses. Residents value self-reliance, tend to be homeowners with vehicles, and prefer traditional methods of payment and news consumption. Outdoor activities like gardening, hunting, and fishing are common pastimes. Employment is centered around skilled labor and service roles, with a lower overall labor force participation rate.

Tapestry Segment: Rooted Rural - 88.1 Percent of Residents

Rooted Rural areas are notably present in regions like the Appalachian Mountains and parts of Texas and Arkansas. The forestry industry plays a significant role in local employment, and residents often live in forested areas. They enjoy outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing, and indoor leisure includes watching television and spending time with family and pets. Shopping habits lean towards American-made and generic products. These communities are characterized by strong religious beliefs and a deep connection to family heritage. The housing market is primarily composed of married couples, often without children at home, and high home ownership rates. Residents exhibit a DIY attitude, preferring hands-on tasks like gardening, car maintenance, and owning tools like riding lawn mowers. Fashion is viewed as functional rather than trendy, with purchases driven by necessity.

Tapestry Segment: Southern Satellites - 6.9 Percent of Residents

Southern Satellites are found predominantly in the southern United States, characterized by small, close-knit communities with a strong sense of tradition and local culture. The population is a mix of young families and older residents, many of whom work in local industries like agriculture, small businesses, and service sectors. These areas often feature spacious homes with ample land, and residents prefer a simple, self-sufficient lifestyle. Social gatherings, community events, and church activities play a central role in daily life. Shopping preferences are conservative, with an emphasis on value and durability over style.

Tapestry Segment: Economic Bedrock - 5.0 Percent of Residents

Economic Bedrock communities are foundational to the American workforce, predominantly located in small towns and rural areas. These areas are home to multi-generational families, with a workforce engaged in mining, construction, agriculture, and other blue-collar industries. The community is characterized by modest, owner-occupied homes, and a lifestyle that values hard work and self-reliance. This segment also has significant vacancy rates (roughly 1 in 6 housing units). Residents tend to stick to familiar routines and are cautious with their spending, prioritizing practicality and durability in their purchases. Community bonds are strong, with residents often participating in local events and religious groups and supporting local businesses. Education levels may vary, but there's a shared respect for traditional skills and trades.

SECTION II: STRATEGY FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT



SECTION II: STRATEGY FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

The Strategy Framework Development section aims to outline the development opportunities within the community based on the data gathered and analyzed in the Needs Assessment and input provided by the local community. The plan's strategy framework will describe the town's development themes resulting from the data analysis and stakeholder input, and it will evaluate the potential of Outdoor Recreation and Broadband connectivity as primary development initiatives for the town. This section is divided into 3 different chapters:

- Chapter 1-- Priority Development Themes & Focus Areas
- Chapter 2-- Outdoor Recreation: Potential & Feasibility
- Chapter 3--Broadband Connectivity: Potential & Feasibility

Chapter 1: Priority Development Themes & Focus Areas

Several themes became apparent at the conclusion of the data analysis and community meetings with the public and town leadership. The town wants to focus on reshaping its identity to better serve its residents. Much of the town's infrastructure has been abandoned for decades. This new action plan will address ideas to transform the town. The chapter will outline these themes and identify focus areas from the Needs Assessment:

- Theme 1 – Marketing Existing Assets
- Theme 2 – Improving Existing Infrastructure
- Theme 3 – Advancing Quality of Life

Theme 1- Marketing Existing Assets

One of the most prominent ideas conveyed through community meetings was about harnessing and preserving Nauvoo's sense of community. Nauvoo was originally created as a coal town with residents serving the local mines, and the municipality was fueled by a bustling economy. However, impacted by the fluctuation and changes in demand for coal, the industry has dwindled over the years, followed by persistent population decline. Nevertheless, Nauvoo has many assets within its community, and there are many ways to market and utilize Nauvoo's character to prepare for future development opportunities. The focus areas related to this theme are described below:

A. PLACEMAKING

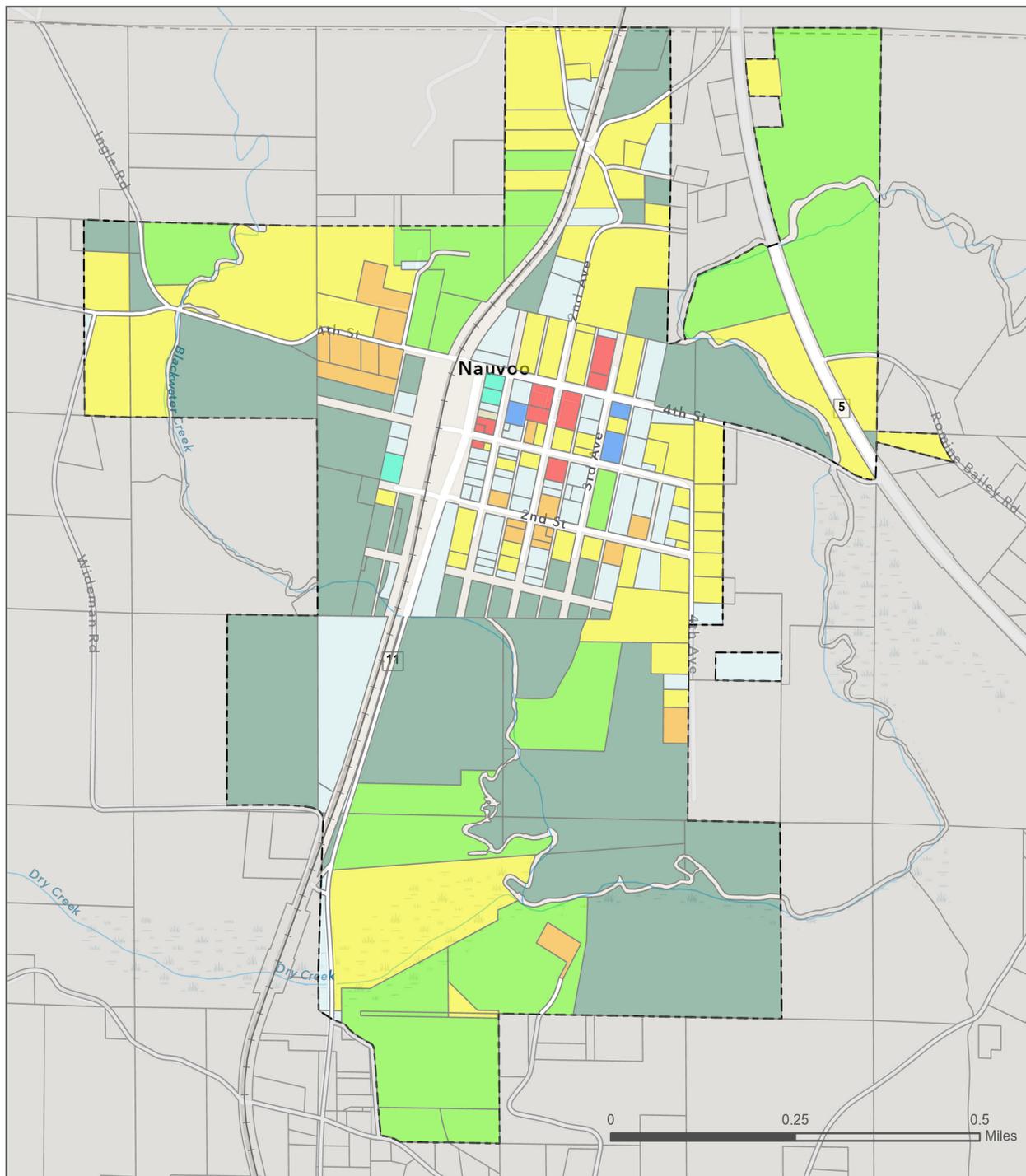
Placemaking has become a popular term that describes establishing a stronger sense of community by harnessing local resources, and this can be put into practice in a variety of ways depending on the vision of the community. A great place to start would be by bolstering the town identity with beautification and branding. Branding and marketing strategies can seem daunting, but there are approachable steps to accomplish these ends on a community level.

For example, Nauvoo may want to consider installing a town sign in the south part of town, especially since it is usually the first thing residents and visitors see as they enter town from I-22. In addition, creating a recognizable logo and Town of Nauvoo website could help residents access town information and updates while providing a way for others to learn more about the community and what it has to offer.

In addition to beautification and branding, there are some designations the town can make to enhance the sense of place within Nauvoo. Though there is currently no zoning in the town, the town can evaluate its existing land uses and designate areas of investment priorities and development focus areas (see Map 1 for Existing Land Use in Nauvoo). The Town of Nauvoo has a downtown area, but most buildings have been vacant for years, and investing in the downtown area would create a sense of place and pride for residents. The town could consider adding murals to buildings downtown, as well as creating a space for community gathering near the downtown area, like a pavilion or picnic tables, to encourage visits. Once the downtown priorities are determined, the town can decide if other designations are necessary or needed, such as business districts or historic districts. Table 20 includes a list of project and implementation ideas for the Placemaking Focus Area.



Map 1: Nauvo Existing Land Use



NAUVOO, ALABAMA
EXISTING LAND USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- FORESTED
- INSTITUTIONAL
- MOBILE HOME
- PARK AND OPEN SPACE
- PUBLIC USE FACILITIES
- SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED
- VACANT AND UNDEVELOPED

CATEGORY	TOTAL ACRES	% OF TOTAL ACRES
Agriculture	119.5	21.2%
Commercial	3.8	0.7%
Forested	256.0	45.5%
Industrial	0.0	0.0%
Institutional	1.4	0.3%
Mobile Home	12.1	2.1%
Multi Family	0.0	0.0%
Park/ Open Space	0.2	0.0%
Public Use Facilities	1.3	0.2%
Single Family Detached	120.5	21.4%
Utilities	0.0	0.0%
Vacant/ Undeveloped	47.7	8.5%

Total Parcels - 252
 Total Acres - 563
 Avg Lot Size - 2.23 acres

Residential land uses - 23.5%
 Commercial land uses - 0.7%
 Industrial land uses - 0.0%
 Vacant/Undev/Forested - 54.0%



Table 20: Potential Placemaking Activities

Project	Description
Beautification Committee	Create official beautification committee consisting of engaged and passionate residents and neighboring communities who care about Nauvoo and its future; make a list of desired improvements for implementation and present to town council.
Logo and Branding	Create a town logo potentially using resident input/submissions and design a website to increase awareness; expand signage to other Nauvoo roads or add murals to downtown buildings.
Local Entrepreneurship Investment	Create and employ a marketing strategy for local businesses and entrepreneurs; aid new and small businesses to expand local offerings, with a potential emphasis on artisan- and produce-related small businesses.
Available Properties Inventory	Establish an inventory process for tracking available parcels/properties in town available for development; work with partners to market sites to potential developers.
Establish Pocket Parks	Using vacant properties and soon to be demolished buildings, pocket parks would add more greenspace for residents to enjoy near their homes, hold community gatherings, or have picnics.

B. HARNESSING HISTORY

The Town of Nauvoo also has unique historical assets it can harness to bolster its sense of identify and community. The Nauvoo downtown has a viable mixed-use capacity, and it would be an excellent location for small businesses, like antique stores and coffee shops, for the community.

In addition, the town is also home to the Nauvoo Railroad museum, which is operated by a local civic group. The museum could be an asset for the town to use as tourist attraction and historical marker, raising awareness of the town’s close ties to the coal and railroad industries.

Nauvoo also already maintains events to draw in visitors into town that can be bolstered and supported to further increase their impact and outreach. One example is the town’s annual Car Show, which has been an event held in the town for several years and attracts visitors to the town every year. This event could be further supported by branding and marketing efforts, as well as engaging with additional vendors to expand the event’s offerings. Table 21 lists some potential investment opportunities the town can consider that would harness what the town already has to strengthen its local economy.

Table 21: Potential Activities to Harness Nauvoo’s History

Investment Opportunity	Description
Downtown & Investment	The historical downtown Nauvoo has potential for expanded mixed-use development. Marketing efforts to attract visitors and investments into filling vacant storefronts could attract visitors and keep local money inside the town.
Car Show	The annual Car Show attracts visitors to the town, but further marketing and event expansion could expand tourism impacts on the local economy.
Food Trucks for Special Events	Nauvoo has few restaurants in town. The town could invite food trucks to attend events or on weekends to provide a variety of food options for residents and introduce food truck owners to the Nauvoo market. The town could identify areas for food trucks to gather (old downtown area, near future community hub property, etc.) based on walkability and accessibility to residents and visitors.

C. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic partnerships will be critical for the town to accomplish its goals. Especially as a small, rural community with limited capacity, creating strategic partnerships with local and regional agencies will connect Nauvoo to resources, assist with project implementation, and enhance opportunities. Table 22 lists organizations the Town of Nauvoo can connect with to establish relationships and acquire project support.

Table 22: Strategic Partnership Opportunities

Agency	Description	Website
CAWACO R&D	Resource Conservation & Development Council: A nonprofit organization that connects Central Alabama communities to the resources and partnerships needed to drive economic development in an environmentally sustainable way; has a host of programs dedicated to providing technical assistance & resources to local communities.	www.cawaco.org
The Healing Network of Walker County	UA nonprofit organization comprised of a coalition of organizations committed to making Walker County a healthier place to live, work and play; goal is to create a comprehensive network of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery resources related to mental and substance use disorders.	www.hnwc.org
Health Action Partnership – Walker County	A nonprofit organization comprised of a coalition of organizations committed to making Walker County a healthier place; helps foster community-based collaborations and mobilized local support to drive community change.	www.healthactionpartnership.org
Walker County Commission	Build upon the existing relationship with county level officials, including District 2 Commissioner.	www.walkercountyal.org
Walker Area Community Foundation	A nonprofit, grantmaking organization building the permanent capital needed in the Walker County area to daily facilitate community conversations, inspire action, and empower partners.	www.wacf.org
Walker County Development Authority	Walker County’s Economic Development agency dedicated to supporting economic development projects in the county.	www.wceida.com
Walker County Chamber of Commerce	Walker County’s chamber organization comprised of local businesses; provides programs and partnerships to support economic development and business growth in Walker County. Partnership could also create a way to strengthen relationships with current businesses in the Nauvoo area.	www.walkerchamber.us
Central Six AlabamaWorks!	The regional workforce development council serving Walker County; has a host of services that coordinate private, public, and nonprofit/philanthropic sectors toward creating clear and contiguous pathways to living-wage employment.	www.centralsix.org
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham	The regional council of government serving Walker County; can provide technical assistance & support for projects & implementation, grant proposal development, and planning services.	www.rpcgb.org

Theme 2- Improving Existing Infrastructure

The conditions of the Nauvoo’s existing infrastructure were a priority area for the town’s residents. This theme consists of activities and priorities around the built environment in Nauvoo that need to be improved for the town to reach its development potential. Each of the Focus Areas is listed and described below:

A. LOCAL ROADS & BRIDGES

The Town of Nauvoo is in critical need for local infrastructure improvements, especially regarding its local roads and bridges. Many residents must drive over deep potholes on the way to school and work, which negatively impacts driving and local vehicle conditions. The town has worked to prioritize funding toward road and bridge improvements, but additional resources are needed to accomplish these efforts. However, there are resources that can assist Nauvoo in conducting these repairs, as well as some project development activities to prioritize areas to assist with grant planning and application. Tables 23 and 24 outline these resources and tasks.

Table 23: Resources for Bridge and Road Infrastructure Improvements

Name	Granting Agency	Description
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA)	Wide range of infrastructure projects, including road paving activities. More information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/cdbg/
Rebuild Alabama Act Annual Grant Program	Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT)	Project applications may be submitted for improvements to any classified road or bridge open to public traffic. More information can be found at www.dot.state.al/programs/RAAGrantProgram

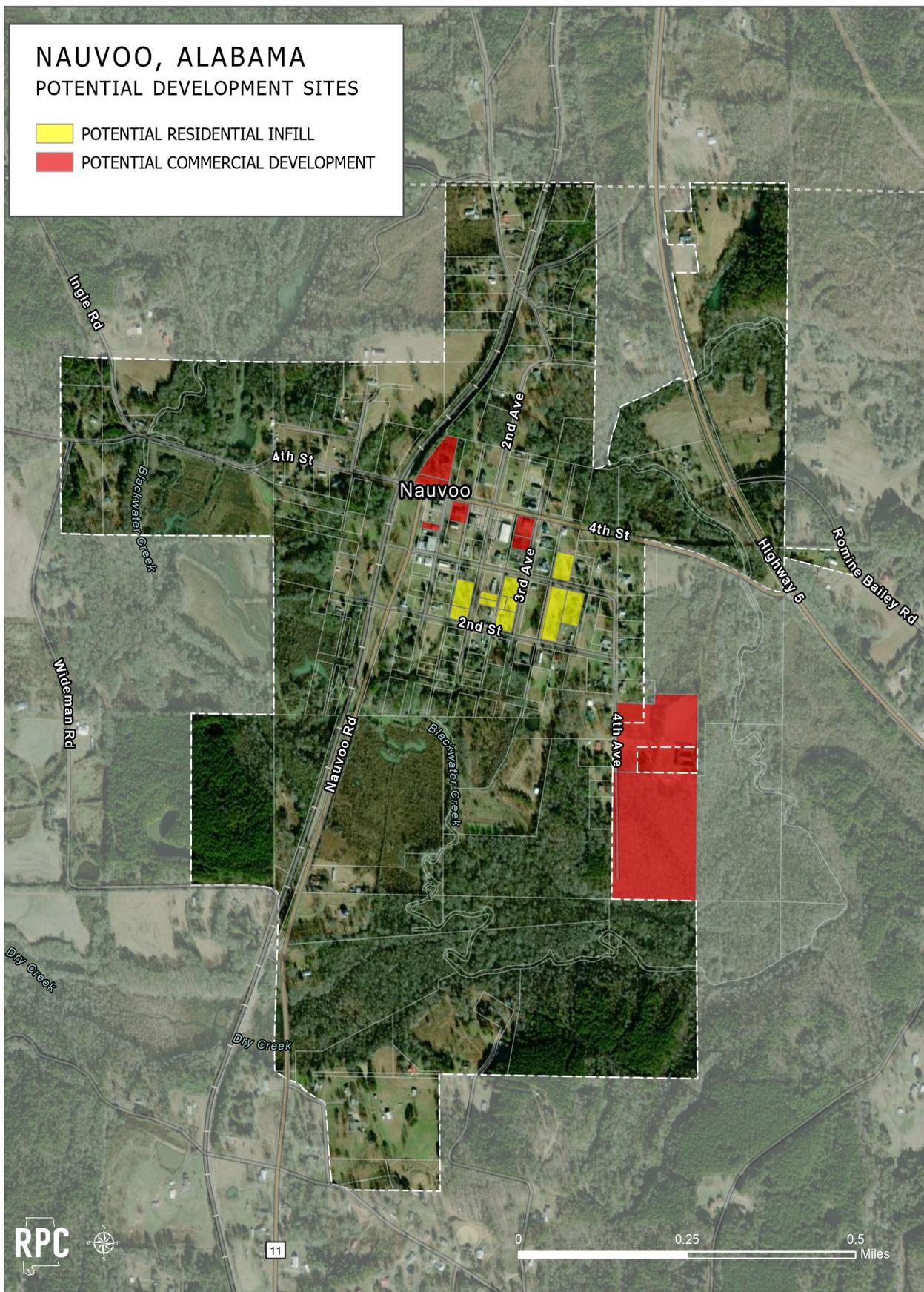
Table 24: Project Development Task for Bridge and Road Infrastructure Improvements

Activity	Description
Road and Bridge Inventory	Create an inventory of roads with details regarding need; use inventory to prioritize funding opportunities

B. VACANT BUILDINGS & LOTS

In addition, as illustrated on Map 1 on page 29, there are many vacant structures and lots in the town, especially within the center of town. Vacant structures are not only unsound, but they create blight in the community and present a negative perception of the town’s business and residential areas. Investments in demolishing or rehabilitating these structures would not only relieve the town of these negative perceptions, but it would also provide available, open lots for redevelopment opportunities for business and residential growth.

Map 2: Nauvoos Potential Development Opportunities



These lots, though dilapidated now, are opportunities for the town to utilize for economic and community development. In addition, there are resources available to assist the town in demolition and clearance activities, as well as activities the town can conduct to prepare for these projects, and they are listed in Tables 25 and 26.

Table 25: Project Resources for Vacant Buildings & Lots

Name	Granting Agency	Funding Activities
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs	Wide range of infrastructure projects, including demolition & clearance. More information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/cdbg
Brownfields Redevelopment Program	RPCGB Program funded through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	The RPCGB was awarded an EPA grant to fund environmental assessments (EA) on eligible properties in 2022. This program helps communities overcome the cost barriers for EAs on vacant properties and can catalyze local development.

Table 26: Project Development Tasks for Vacant Buildings & Lots

Activity	Description
Vacant Buildings Inventory	Create an inventory of vacant buildings with details regarding past use and location; use inventory to prioritize funding and development opportunities
Junior High School Reuse	Once the Nauvoov Junior High School is demolished, the land near a park and ball fields has a lot of potential for redevelopment. The town has a current plan to utilize this site as a community hub, for expanding both community engagement and sports offerings to the local area.



C. BROADBAND

One of the most prominent project needs expressed by residents was access to quality broadband. The town has traditionally had limited network connections, and there is demand within the area for increased connectivity and online accessibility from potential users in the area. In addition, both the state and county have declared broadband as a major focus, so there are many funding sources available. Chapter 3 will analyze the town's broadband connectivity in depth, as well as provide resources available for Nauvoo to improve the community's access.

Theme 3- Advancing Quality of Life

The term "quality of life" generally refers to the "standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or group" (Oxford Dictionary). It aims to capture the overall wellbeing of residents and the community within a local area. However, the overall wellbeing of residents and community has economic impacts for local economies. A recent Brookings report suggests that, in smaller communities especially, having a higher quality of life through activities such as recreation opportunities, cultural activities, and public services is a better indicator of economic success than traditional economic development metrics.⁵ This is likely due to changes in preferences from both workers and the businesses that employ them.

People increasingly want to live in an area that they feel will enhance their wellbeing, and investing in activities that support community health and involvement will not only prepare Nauvoo for future success, but these investments will also serve the needs of current residents. A number of development activities can be considered when evaluating quality of life factors. For example, outdoor recreation activities have a positive correlation to both health outcomes and attracting visitors. Residents and stakeholders expressed interest in the construction of walking trails around town's existing playground area, which could positively impact health outcomes as well as bolster the town's sense of community. This area is also the focus of the town's redevelopment: The town is focused on redeveloping this area into a community hub, complete with a pavilion for community gatherings and events.

In addition to community development projects, Nauvoo could also focus on improving the amenities available to senior citizens to enhance the overall quality of life. As stated in the Needs Assessment, Nauvoo's population is aging at a faster pace than the state, and the town can prepare and support this demographic shift. The town recently acquired a vacant church in town to serve as its community center, and this facility is used for current community programs, including those specifically for seniors.

Table 27 lists activities that could be considered when evaluating implementation options for this theme.

Table 27: Project Development Tasks: Quality of Life

Activity	Description
Asset List	Create a list of quality of life assets and gaps within the town; use to guide conversations with partners regarding business recruitment, service gaps, and funding needs.
Inventory of Needed Asset Updates	Identify assets that need updating (ball parks, sidewalks, community centers, etc.) and prioritize updates for implementation funding.
Maximize Resources for Senior Citizens	<p>As the residential population ages, it will become increasingly important to invest in resources for senior citizens. The town has a community center located near the center of town, and amenities such as picnic tables or an outdoor pavilion could be added to this area to make spending time outdoors more comfortable for seniors.</p> <p>The town could also publish a survey for residents using the senior center to gain additional ideas on how to best serve and meet the needs of these residents.</p>
Expand Community Center Offerings	Utilize the community center to hold events for individuals of all ages to attract new residents and provide senior programming for aging individuals.
Walkability Plan	Utilize partnerships to create a plan for increasing walkability and connectivity within the town around major assets; use plan to establish implementation priorities for funding support.
Volunteer Opportunities	Develop volunteer opportunities for residents and stakeholders to engage with projects; can engage different community groups to promote activities (clean-up days, etc.) or engage with existing programs like the Historical Society or food pantries.
Housing Development & Diversification	The data analysis highlighted that Nauvoo’s housing base consisted primarily of older homes, of which many are dilapidated and/or vacant. This means housing options are limited, and new development is needed to attract and support residential growth. The town could invest in an array of housing options, including apartments and tiny homes, that are both affordable and feasible for current residents, while also attractive to future residents.



Chapter 2: Outdoor Recreation: Potential & Feasibility

Outdoor recreation is becoming increasingly popular as an economic driver in local communities, particularly in rural areas. Town of Nauvoo and surrounding areas have opportunities for investment within outdoor recreation, especially given the town's proximity to the Bankhead National Forest. This chapter will focus solely on the outdoor assets and potential within the Town of Nauvoo, and it is divided into 3 sections:

- Outdoor Recreation: Industry Overview
- Outdoor Recreational Development Opportunities
- Peer Communities: Case Study Analysis

Outdoor Recreation: Industry Overview

The Outdoor Recreation industry is comprised of the entire supply and value chains associated with outdoor and ecotourism activities. This includes consumer spending on gear and equipment for participation in outdoor pursuits, but it also includes the costs and demand for travel associated with these and other related activities. Outdoor recreation covers a wide variety of interests and activities, from boating and fishing to hiking and bicycling. This flexibility offers communities a sustainable and resilient community development tool that can utilize an area's natural assets, making it a strong economic development option, especially for areas where industrial and commercial development options and assets are few and far between.

Outdoor recreation can provide an avenue for small towns to increase economic diversification. Diversifying the local market base can support communities and leave them less susceptible to economic fluctuations, while retaining things like heritage and culture that are traditionally important to rural towns and cities. This industry has made significant gains in rural areas in recent years, as long-term resiliency of smaller communities has been threatened by economic downturns and declines in major industries.

Investing in outdoor recreation not only supports local economies by increasing consumer spending through tourism, enhancing property values, and attracting new talent; it also has been found to improve health outcomes and overall quality of life for the local community, as having access to outdoor recreational assets increases physical activity. Improving these health outcomes can also lead to lower healthcare costs and have positive impacts on the overall well-being of residents. These factors are important because the overall quality of life of residents is imperative for not only the current community, but also in recruitment efforts for future businesses and residents.

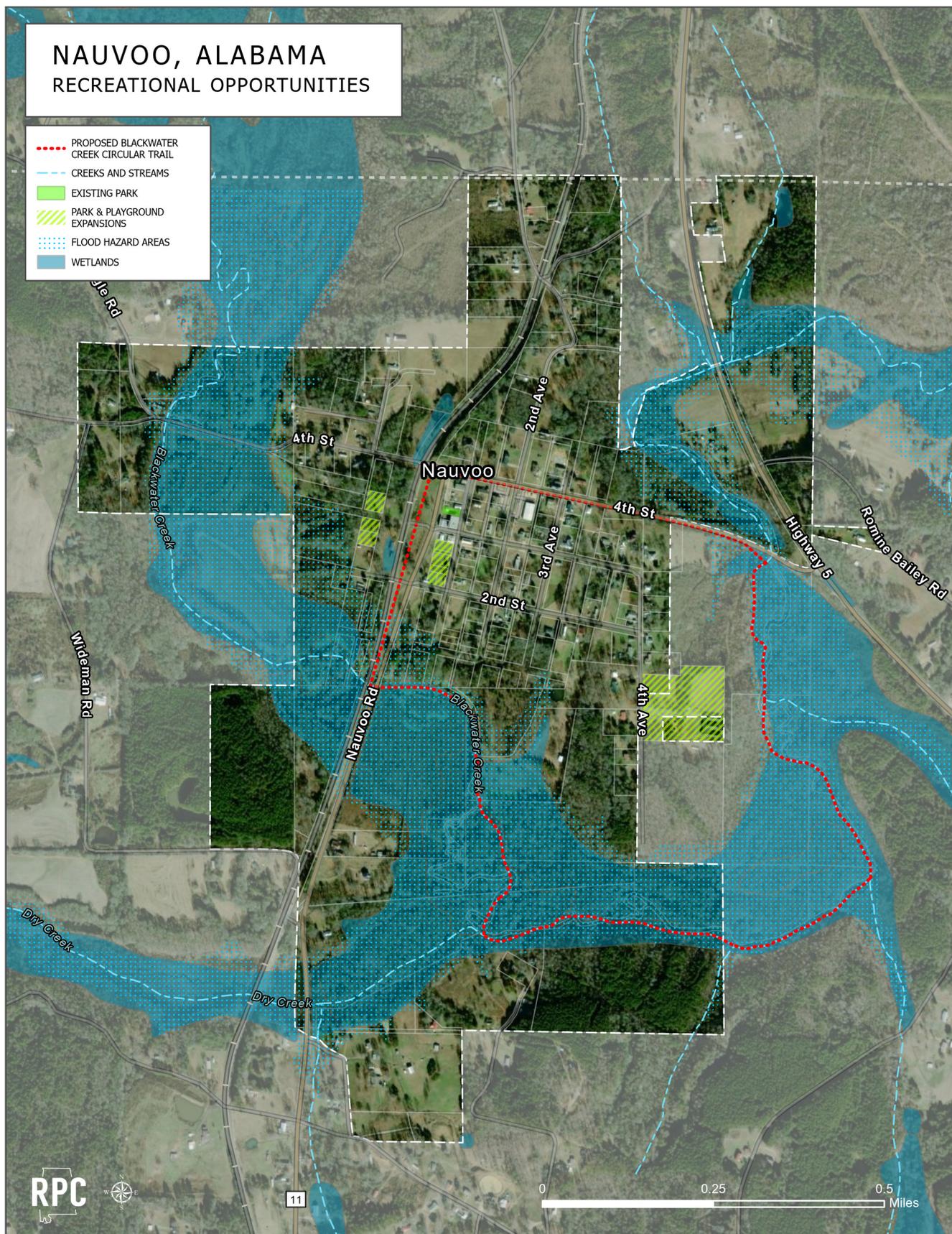
Small communities across the country have invested in creating a local outdoor recreational economy. To outline some examples for Nauvoo to reference, a case studies analysis of peer communities to Nauvoo that have harnessed outdoor recreation to benefit their local economies can be found in this chapter beginning on page 40.

Outdoor Recreational Development Opportunities

As illustrated on Map 3, Nauvoov has a variety of naturally occurring assets that could be utilized to develop and support an outdoor recreation development. The town also has access to a couple waterways that could be evaluated for fishing potential. The town is also heavily forested, as depicted in the Existing Land Use Map on page 29.



Map 3: NauvoO Outdoor Recreation Development Opportunities



Nauvoos currently has one small park, located near the center of town. However, there are opportunities for additional parks throughout the town on currently vacant properties. There is also an opportunity to develop a walking track around town, looping around where the town plans to build the community pavilion next to the existing playground. This parcel could be the focus of outdoor recreation for the town in the short term, and several funding opportunities exist to support park updates and outdoor recreational activities. Table 28 outlines funding resources that can be used to support outdoor recreational activities.

Table 28: Resources for Outdoor Recreation Projects

Name	Granting Agency	Funding Activities
Recreational Trails Program	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA)	Funding for development and construction of recreational trails with an 80/20 match rate. More information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/trails/ .
Land & Water Conservation Fund	Alabama Department of Economic & Community Affairs (ADECA)	A funding program available for nearly all public outdoor recreation activities, from park and ball field improvements to picnic areas and splash pads. Grants have a 50/50 match rate. More information can be found at www.adeca.alabama.gov/lwcf/ .

Peer Communities: Case Analysis

Comparing the Town of Nauvoos to similar communities in other states can help visualize Nauvoos options for economic development opportunities. Peer towns were selected due to their location in the Southeast region with comparable population numbers to the Nauvoos area, and each of these areas have harnessed their close proximities to national parks as well as their unique assets to build an outdoor recreational presence. The peer communities outlined in this section are Townsend, Tennessee, Dante, Virginia, and Clayton, Georgia.

TOWNSEND, TENNESSEE

Called the “Peaceful Side of the Smokies,” Townsend is a town of 500 residents that advertises access to the Smoky Mountains, encounters with wildlife, and fun festivals. Serving as the ‘Entrance to the Great Smokey Mountains National Park’ and ‘Gateway to Cades Cove’, the town has outdoor experiences like hiking, fishing, cycling, golfing, water activities, camping, scenic drives, and horseback riding available to residents and visitors, as well as indoor activities such as museums and an arts & crafts directory.

The town’s website includes lodging, shopping, and dining options, but they also include information about how people can relocate to Townsend. In addition, the town is part of the local “Townsend/Cades Cove Gateway Alliance”, a non-profit organization created to strengthen the Townsend community by securing community support and outside funding for enhancement opportunities.

<https://exploretownsend.com/>



DANTE, VIRGINIA

The community of Dante is a census-designated place located 2.5 hours northeast of Knoxville, Tennessee. Originally built as a coal town, Dante was once the largest coal community in Southwest Virginia, with a population of 4,000 in its prime in the 1930s. After World War II, however, the community declined quickly as the result of the mines closing. In 2016, the Dante Community Association was officially formed as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, with a mission of revitalizing the Dante community. An excerpt from the association's website reads:

"The Dante Community Association was formed with the purpose to transform Dante into a model town for visitors and one in which people will desire to raise a family and grow old in the community. This will be accomplished by building on the extensive history Dante possesses, downtown beautification, expansion of outdoor and youth activities, and beneficial partnerships with neighboring towns and counties. Dante will once again see values in homes, visitors to the town, and a resurrection in sense of hope to ultimately find pride in this great community."

Since its founding, the association has created a website that houses Dante's history, information about the community, and a calendar for upcoming events. The site includes logos and branding for the association, as well as volunteer opportunities and a newsletter subscription. In addition, Dante has also established a downtown historic district in an effort to retain the community's original coal town aesthetic.

<http://danteva.org/>



CLAYTON, GEORGIA

The City of Clayton is located in the north Georgia mountains, approximately an hour and 20 minutes east of Blue Ridge and two hours north of Atlanta. The city serves as the gateway to Black Rock Mountain State Park, or the highest state park in Georgia. Clayton has both historical and outdoor amenities for residents and visitors, including the Foxfire Museum & Heritage Center. There, 20 historical log structures make up an outdoor museum, with each home containing to various artifacts representative of life in the mountains. The city also has whitewater rafting available on the Chattooga River, as well as a variety of local shops and restaurants. Clayton also has a Merchants and Business Association charged with event planning, business networking, and community support. To help advertise the city's amenities and resources, they partner with Explore Georgia, the state's tourism association. Clayton has a webpage dedicated to its attractions and destinations, as well as places to stay and eat while in town to make trip planning easy for visitors.

<https://visitclaytonga.net/>

41 <https://www.exploregeorgia.org/city/clayton>



CASE STUDY ANALYSIS: COMMONALITIES

Each of the 3 towns has a helpful and dynamic website with links to all outdoor recreation and tourism activities. A variety of outdoor activities are offered based on the surrounding landscape, and indoor activities are also prioritized and included. All the websites had specific suggestions of how to spend time in the town so tourists can quickly see what it would be like to visit. The websites also included contact, business, and real estate information. This information encourages interaction with local governance and relocation to the town. Table 29 lists additional commonalities between the three peer communities.

Table 29: Peer Community Comparison

Resource	Townsend, TN	Dante, VA	Clayton, GA
General Town Website	X	X	X
Tourism-Focused Website	X		X
Activities Calendar	X	X	X
Logo & Branding	X	X	X
Connected to Historical Roots	X	X	X
Proximity to Large Metro	X		X
Proximity to State/National Park	X		X
State/Local Partnerships	X		X

Chapter 3: Broadband Connectivity: Potential & Feasibility

Residents have indicated that broadband connectivity is a high priority development need within the town. This section will outline the definitions of broadband connectivity, expand on the current broadband conditions within the town, identify potential broadband challenges, and provide a list of possible resources for broadband project implementation.

Broadband: Operations Overview

As defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), broadband is high speed internet access that allows users to access the Internet or Internet-related services at significantly higher speeds than those available through “dial-up” services. The speed of broadband is determined by megabits per second (mbps), which measures the download and upload speed of the internet connection. These factors are further described below:

ACCESSIBILITY

Broadband can be accessed through a variety of transmission technologies, including satellites, fiber, cable, wireless, or a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL). The technology used in a given area depends on several factors, including locality, availability, and cost. Faster speeds are often associated with cable broadband and fiber when compared to satellite and DSL connections.

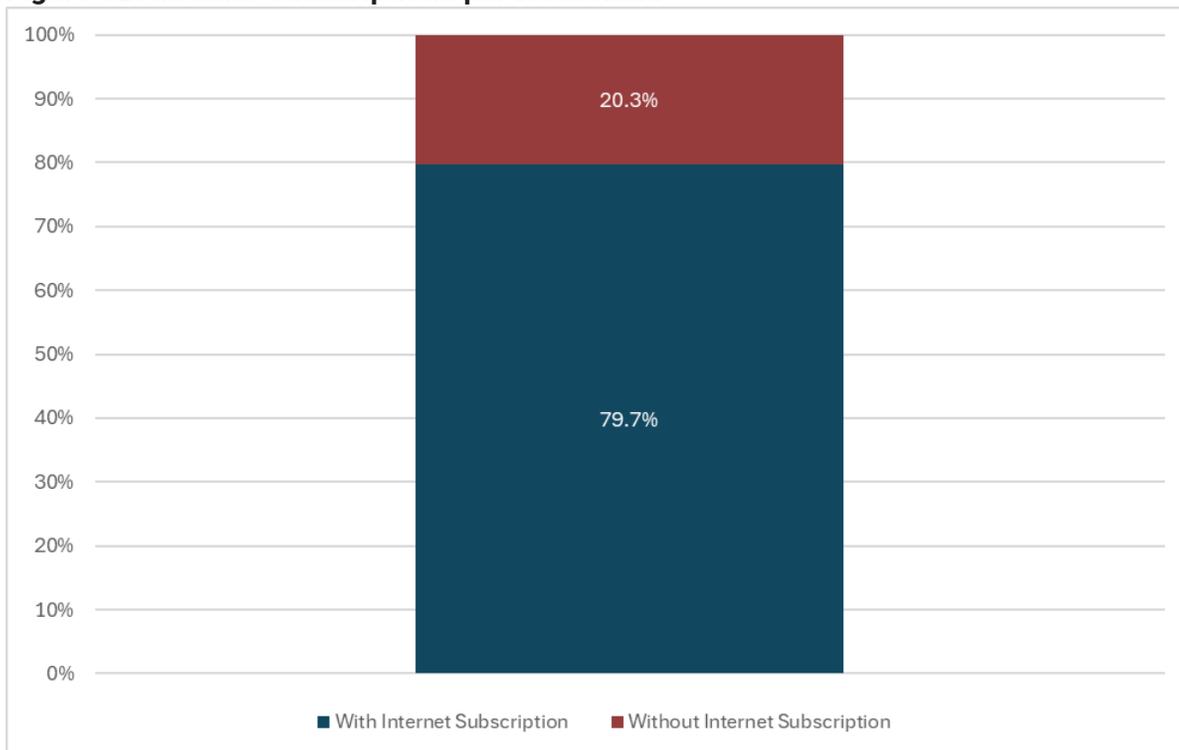
CONNECTION SPEEDS

The FCC’s current minimum standard set for broadband is 25/3 mbps, or the ability to download 25 megabits per second and upload 3 megabits per second. However, as technology progresses, an emerging definition for broadband connection among the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) has been 100/20 mbps, which is significantly faster than the 25/3 mbps standard. This definition has been set by new federal funding programs for broadband, which provide support for areas without 100/20 mbps.

Existing Broadband Conditions

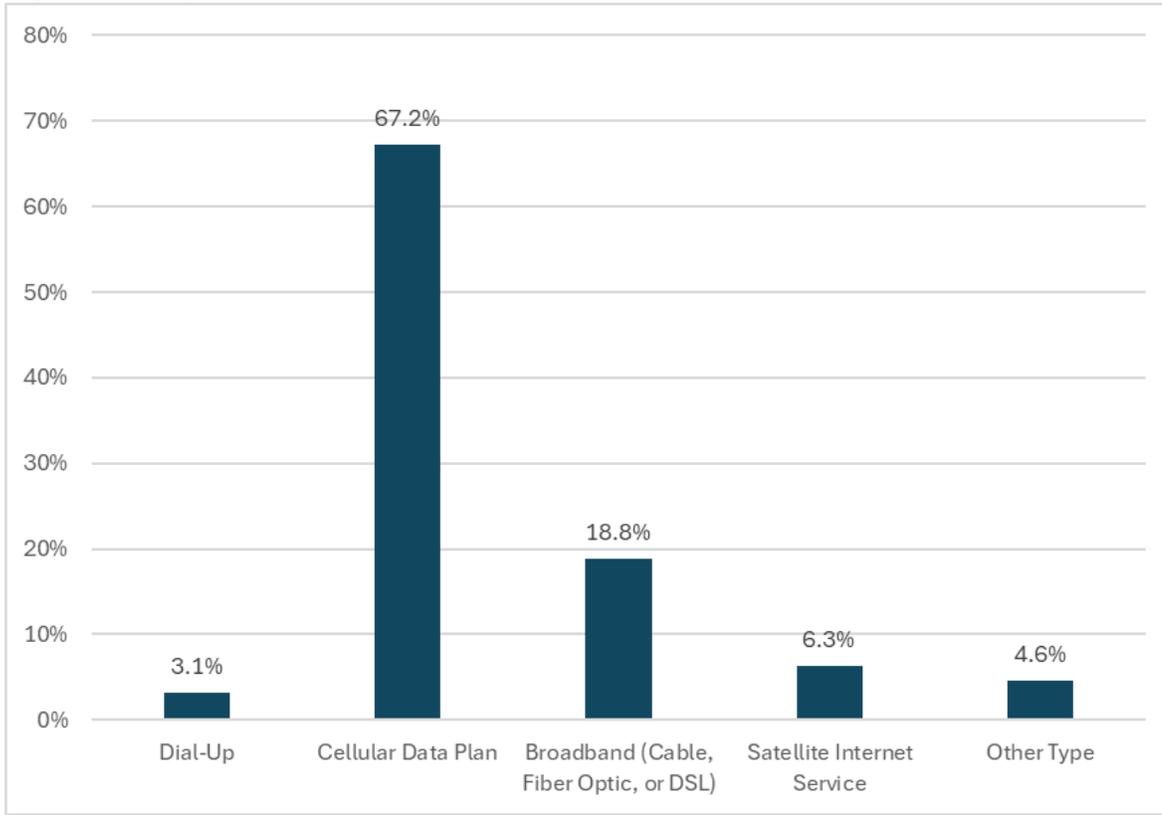
Currently, according to US Census data, nearly 80 percent of total households within the town have internet subscriptions of some type, while over 20 percent of households do not have access to internet service at their homes (see Figure 12). This rate is on track with state averages, where about 20 percent of total Alabama households do not currently subscribe to internet services.⁶ Though a relatively large number of households have access to the internet, the types of connection technology vary, most likely depending on factors such as cost and infrastructure accessibility. The majority of households utilize their cellular data plans for internet access, followed by either cable, fiber, or DSL connections. The least number of users are connected to broadband via satellite services, as illustrated in Figure 13.

Figure 12: Internet Subscriptions per Household



Source: US Census, American Community Survey

Figure 13: Types of Broadband Connections Utilized by Nauvoo Households



Source: US Census, American Community Survey

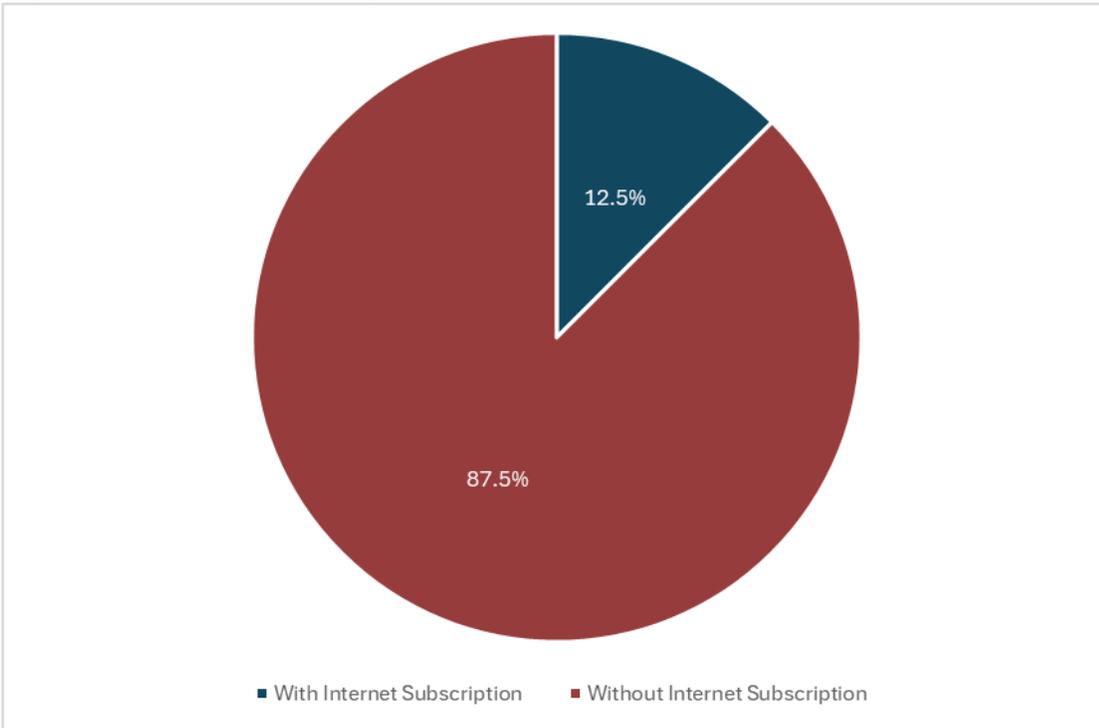
In addition, broadband connectivity is directly linked to income in Nauvoo. Data from the U.S. Census analyzed broadband subscriptions between three income groups. The income groups, the percentage of total households within each income group, and the percentage of households with an internet subscription within each bracket is outlined in Table 30.

Table 30: Nauvoo Households by Income & Internet Subscriptions

Income Level	Percent of Total Households	Percent with an Internet Subscription
Less than \$20,000	12.5%	12.5%
\$20,000 to \$74,999	73.4%	87.2%
\$75,000 or more	14.1%	100.0%

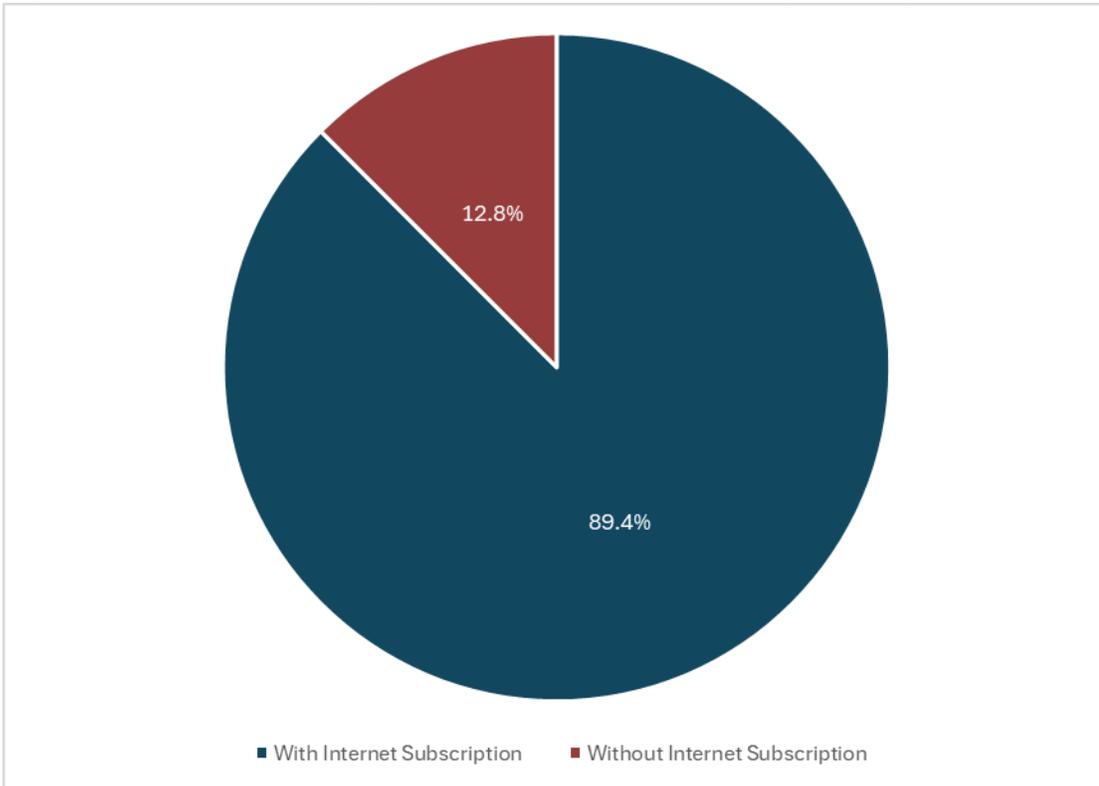
As illustrated in the table, the number of households with internet subscription increases as the household income levels increase. All households earning more than \$75,000, which is only 14 percent of the total households within the town, had subscriptions to internet services. The ratios of each income group are illustrated in Figures 14 to 16.

Figure 14: Internet Subscriptions: Household Income Less than \$20,000

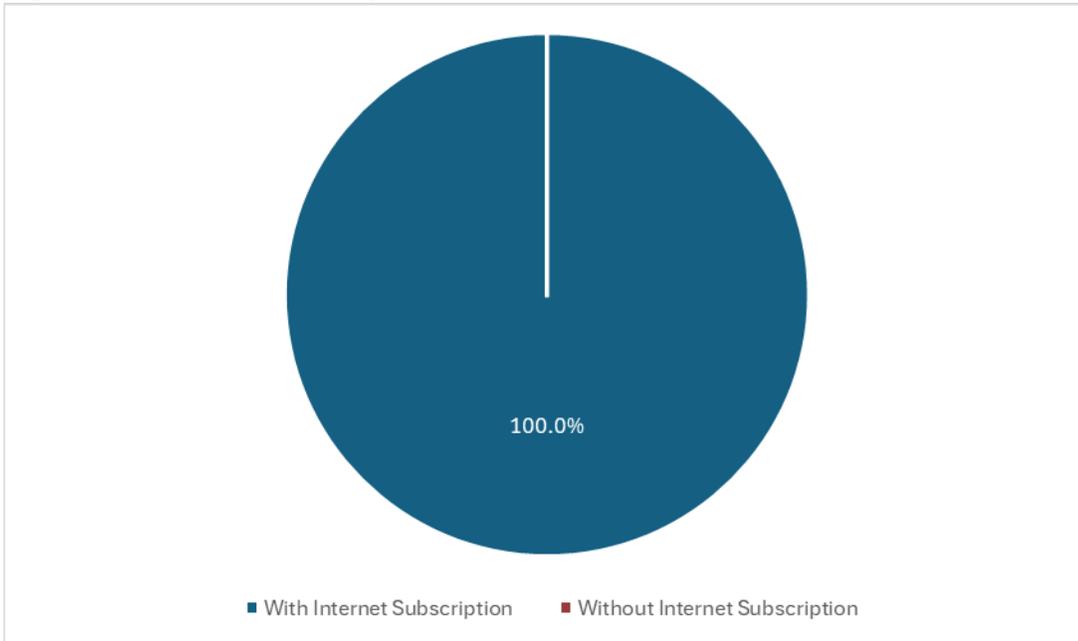


Source: US Census, American Community Survey

Figure 15: Internet Subscriptions: Household Income \$20,000-\$74,999



Source: US Census, American Community Survey

Figure 16: Internet Subscriptions: Household Income \$75,000 and Greater

Source: US Census, American Community Survey

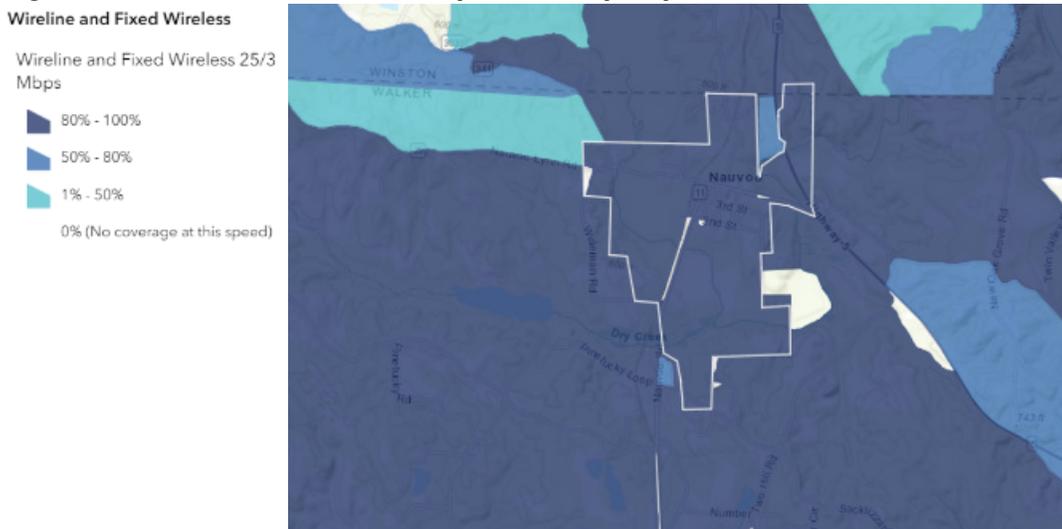
Census Block Analysis

The Alabama Connectivity Map, designed and implemented by ADECA, categorizes census tracts by broadband connection levels for 25/3 and 100/20 mbps speeds. These maps illustrate the percentage of addresses within a census block that have access to the speed that has been selected. The connection levels used for the analysis were divided into four groups: 0 percent coverage (where no address has connection or access); 1-49 percent coverage; 50-80 percent coverage; and 81-100 percent coverage.

For this section, the Alabama Connectivity Map was used to gauge the level of connection for the census tracts within the town and compare the presence and infrastructure availability between the two speeds. These speed maps show the percentage of addresses within a census block that have access to the speed that has been selected. The darker the color, the higher the percentage of addresses that can access a given speed.

Within the Town of Nauvoo, most of the census tracts within the town limits have access to the 25/3 speed of broadband, as illustrated in Figure 17. In addition to having access, all census tracts in town are within the 81 – 100 percent coverage range for this speed, meaning that between 80 and 100 percent of addresses within the town limits can access the 25/3 speed range.

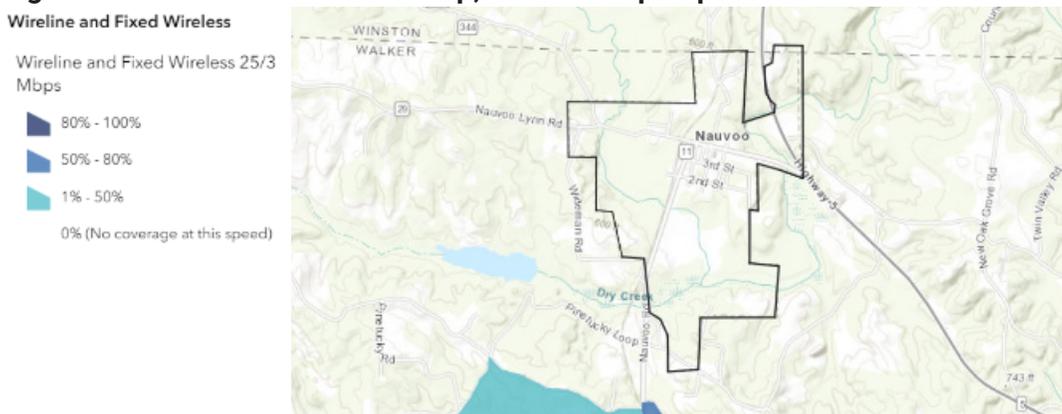
Figure 17: Nauvo0 Broadband Map, 25/3 mbps Speed



Source: Alabama Connectivity Map, ADECA, 2024

However, this coverage differs drastically when analyzing the capacity of the quicker 100/20 mbps speed category. According to the Alabama Connectivity Map illustrated in Figure 18, no census blocks within the Town of Nauvo0 limits have access to the 100/20 mbps speed coverage. This signifies that, while connections to broadband exist and households are utilizing it in some capacity, the quality of that coverage likely is not optimal and there is an opportunity for quality broadband expansion within the town.

Figure 18: Nauvo0 Broadband Map, 100/20 mbps Speed



Source: Alabama Connectivity Map, ADECA, 2024

Broadband Challenges

Some inherent challenges exist for municipalities to evaluate when considering expanding and/or improving broadband internet service. This section will be dedicated to outlining those challenges, specifically within the jurisdiction of Nauvo0. According to the Alabama Connectivity Plan prepared by ADECA, “A complex combination of factors—including affordability, device access, digital skills, and language barriers—can inhibit use of the broadband internet, to the detriment of both economic and community development.”⁷

1. INFRASTRUCTURE & AVAILABILITY

The first challenges to consider when evaluating the feasibility of broadband expansion are the conditions and locations of existing infrastructure within the service area. The types of infrastructure available, along with the available connection speeds, determine the costs and feasible expansion alternatives for possible improvements. For the town, nearly 70 percent of residents with an internet subscription used only their cellular data plan for service, meaning many households do not utilize cable or fiber connection options. These households most likely use cell phones or tablets to connect to internet services, rather than relying on a router or other cabled alternative. Cellular service is a more accessible option for many households, especially those without cable or fiber access, since only a wireless cellular plan and device are needed. However, as the definition of broadband improves from 25/3 mbps to 100/20 mbps, it is likely cellular data technologies will not be able to keep up, as they are currently not able to provide speeds faster than 25/3 mbps.⁸

As noted in Figure 13, around 30 percent of residents use other options, like cable or DSL, for their subscriptions in addition to or in place of a cellular data plan. This means that many areas have access to the infrastructure necessary to connect via cable or fiber. Identifying the types and locations of current broadband infrastructure could provide a road map for improvement planning and implementation. In addition, no census blocks within the town limits have no access to higher quality broadband, or the 100/200 mbps coverage. This lack of service is an opportunity for the town to partner with local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that already exist in and around the area.

2. COSTS TO UPDATE

Another factor to consider when planning for broadband expansion is the cost of improvements to the town, as well as local ISPs. Alabama has estimated that it will cost between \$4 to \$6 billion to bridge the rural broadband divide statewide, which includes constructing line extensions from current infrastructure into unserved areas. Due to the costs of installation and the unguaranteed number of users, sometimes the returns on internet investment from user fees aren't enough to cover private providers' costs of building out their networks. This is leading many public entities to focus on investments within "middle-mile" infrastructure, or the hub of fiber connectivity that connects to "last-mile" infrastructure, also known as the connecting lines to homes and businesses. Investing in middle mile infrastructure would enable last-mile networks; however, the price will likely be significant. More research needs to be done to analyze the factors, costs, and benefits from middle-mile and last-mile investments.

3. AFFORDABILITY

However, the existence and availability of broadband does not necessarily mean broadband is attainable for residents. Affordability refers to residents of the area having the disposable income necessary to purchase and use a broadband service. The Alabama Connectivity Plan cited that even though federal subsidies exist for these programs, awareness regarding these programs was low. The consumer's cost for broadband should also be considered when planning and implementing broadband expansion.

Implementation Initiatives

Fortunately, the rural broadband gap is an issue at the front of the broadband expansion conversation, on both state and federal levels. This section will outline some possible funding programs the Town of Nauvoo could utilize during the broadband planning and implementation process. In addition to the resources listed in this section, Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), in 2021. This bill prioritizes investments in broadband within rural areas, and further research will need to be conducted over the coming months to identify funding opportunities created through those programs. As noted previously, the state’s Alabama Connectivity Plan is the roadmap for state funding and investment programs and should be referenced regarding infrastructure expansion projects.

Table 31: Federal Funding Programs for Broadband Projects

Funding Agency	Funding Program	Funding Range	Match Requirements	Typical Dates Due
Appalachian Regional Commission	Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) Initiative	Up to \$2,000,000	Depends on County Designation; Walker County: 50% Match	Annual Cycle due in April
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)	Community Connect Grant Program	Up to \$3,000,000	15% Match Required	Annual Cycle due in November
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD)	ReConnect Loan and Grant Program	Up to \$25,00,000	25% Match Required	Annual Cycle due in December

Table 32: Federal Funding Programs for Broadband Projects

Funding Agency	Funding Program	Funding Range	Match Requirements	Typical Dates Due
ADECA	ARC Area Development Program	Up to \$200,000	Depends on County Designation; Walker County: 50% Match	Annual Cycle due in August
ADECA	Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant*	Up to \$5,000,000	20% Match Required	Annual Cycle due in November

**Eligible applicants for the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund Grant are cooperatives, corporations, limited liability companies, partnerships, or other private business entities or units of government that currently provide broadband services.*

Broadband Analysis Conclusions

Broadband expansion will likely be needed within the Town of Nauvoo to improve the quality of life of citizens as well as recruit new businesses and residents. The access to high quality broadband within the town is currently limited, and improvements and increased accessibility will be needed to catalyze economic growth and support the town's outdoor recreation initiatives.

Several obstacles should be considered when evaluating the feasibility of infrastructure improvements, such as construction costs and affordability concerns for residents. However, as broadband continues to be an interest area on federal and state levels, support for broadband planning and expansion will remain a prominent focal point for funding programs and technical assistance initiatives.

The town is eligible for several funding programs that could support broadband expansion efforts. In addition to funding, it is recommended that the town establish a connection with ADECA's new Digital Expansion Division, the department charged with improving broadband connectivity throughout the state. The division periodically has specialized funding available for technical assistance projects for municipalities, which could further aid the town with developing a feasible and sustainable plan for improving broadband.



SECTION III: NAUVOO ACTION PLAN



SECTION III: NAUVOO ACTION PLAN

The Town of Nauvoo Action Plan was developed in accordance with the responses of community engagement efforts, guidance of local officials, and the findings detailed in this report. The Action Plan is organized between Priority Goals and Strategies, both created from ideas in the previous section. The plan also includes a wide variety of project types, ranging from infrastructure improvements to community-centered initiatives, to ensure a comprehensive approach to improving the local economy and to meet the needs of Nauvoo's current and future residents.

Action Plan Terms

The following definitions explain the different terms used to develop the action plan:

- **Action Plan:** The strategic direction derived from the SWOT analysis, which is consistent with other relevant state/regional/local plans.
- **Goal:** The broad outcomes or high-level descriptors of the desired outcomes of the Action Plan. They are described using broad qualitative terms and are often intangible.
- **Strategy:** A plan of action designed to achieve or support the achievement of the associated goal.
- **Short-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take under 2 years to complete.
- **Mid-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take 3 - 5 years to fully implement.
- **Long-Term:** Strategies that are expected to take longer than 5 years to complete.

Town of Nauvoo: Priority Goals

The list of goals below was designed in concordance with the themes and priorities developed in the Strategy Development Framework section of this plan, and they are outlined in detail below. Each goal contains corresponding strategies as well as available resources for implementation.

Goal I: Placemaking in Nauvoo

Creating a sense of community is a priority for the town's residents, but there is also a desire to build around Nauvoo's existing assets and historical roots. This goal includes efforts to build Nauvoo's future potential around the municipality's strengths and bolster the sense of community for current and future residents to enjoy.

Goal II: Invest in Infrastructure

The town has existing infrastructure assets, such as water capacity and vacant lots, to support future development efforts. However, the town is in critical need of improvements to other sources of foundational infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, as well as dilapidated structures. This goal includes strategies for improving vacant lots, improving the town's transportation infrastructure, and enhancing the town's broadband infrastructure.

Goal III: Quality of Life

Enhancing the quality of life for residents is paramount for the town, especially in light of changing age groups. This goal focuses on Nauvoo’s community stability and includes strategies around health, senior citizen programming, and outdoor recreational activities.

Town of Nauvoo: EDSP Action Plan

Goal I: Placemaking in Nauvoo- Strategies and Potential Tasks

No.	Strategy	Potential Tasks	Timeframe	Resources
1	Create Sense of Place through Establishing Online Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Town of Nauvoo Website. Update Town Logo. Establish Nauvoo branding materials through partnerships with community colleges. 	Short-Term	Town, RPCGB, Community Colleges
2	Create Sense of Place through Beautification Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bolster community club's beautification efforts by seeking external sources of funding to support projects. Update Town welcome signs. Prioritize beautification initiatives. Organize volunteer clean-up events. 	Short-Term	Town, Community Club
3	Enhance Community Connectedness through Investing in Town Sense of Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bolster existing community events and festivals and identify opportunities for new events. Establish relationships with food truck vendors for Nauvoo events. Evaluate potential opportunities for farmers market and other community-centered activities. 	Mid-Term	Town, Community Club
4	Enhance Community Connectedness through Investing in Community Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize updates to existing community assets like the community center and parks. Identify areas for additional assets, like a library or pocket parks for additional public spaces. 	Mid-Term to Long-Term	Town; Various Grant Resources (Project Dependent)



Goal II: Investing in Infrastructure- Strategies and Potential Tasks

No.	Strategy	Potential Tasks	Timeframe	Resources
1	Improve Infrastructure through Road and Bridge Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inventory of municipal roads and bridges. Utilize list to develop priority areas for funding. • Partner with RPCGB and other resources to develop grant applications for funding assistance. 	Short-Term; Mid-Term	Town, RPCGB, County Commission, ADECA & ALDOT Grant Funding Opportunities
2	Improve Infrastructure through Enhancing Vacant Lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an internal inventory of vacant and/or dilapidated lots and evaluate existing and potential use. • Use inventory to prioritize redevelopment activities. • Partner with RPCGB and other resources to develop grant applications for funding assistance. 	Short-Term; Mid-Term	Town, RPCGB, WCDA, County Commission, ADECA Grant Funding Opportunities
3	Improve Community's Connectivity through Broadband Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and prioritize areas within town that have limited access to broadband services. • Utilize partnerships to develop broadband projects and apply for grant funding. 	Long-Term	Town, Local Resource Partners; Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
4	Utilize Existing Infrastructure by Redeveloping Existing Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inventory of unused and/or underutilized properties within town and determine the highest and best use; partner with landowners in town to evaluate uses for vacant buildings/parcels within town. • Utilize partnerships with resources for programing options and redevelopment support. 	Long-Term	Town, Local Resource Partners; Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)



Goal III: Quality of Life- Strategies and Potential Tasks

No.	Strategy	Potential Tasks	Timeframe	Resources
1	Support Quality of Life through Bolstering Existing Assets and Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an inventory of quality of life resources/activities within town to identify current services and gaps. • Utilize determined gaps to prioritize service needs and funding opportunities. 	Short-Term	Town, WACF
2	Support Quality of Life through Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish & publicize volunteer opportunities for local residents to get involved with town improvement activities. • Raise awareness and support for existing programs, conducted by local nonprofit groups within the community. 	Mid-Term	Town
3	Support Quality of Life through Identifying Available Properties for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an inventory process for tracking available parcels or properties in town available for development. • Develop relationships with local landowners and, when applicable, work with partners to market sites to potential developers. 	Short-Term; Long-Term	Town, Local Landowners, WCDA, RPCGB, Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
4	Support Quality of Life by Planning for Future Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas surrounding town limits for possible annexation and/or development. • Partner with local landowners to build relationships for possible development projects. 	Mid-Term; Long-Term	Town, Local Landowners, WCDA
5	Optimize Outdoor Recreation by Identifying Expansion Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas for outdoor recreation activities such as walking trails or pocket parks. • Determine cost estimates for each and use for project prioritization for funding support. 	Short-Term; Long-Term	Town, RPCGB, WACF, Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
6	Optimize Outdoor Recreation by Identifying Opportunities in the Walker County Outdoor Recreation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize county plan for additional outdoor recreation ideas and partnerships. • Increase community education of outdoor recreation options. 	Short-Term; Long-Term	Town, RPCGB, WACF, Various Grant Opportunities (Project Dependent)
7	Optimize Outdoor Recreation through creating partnerships with local parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and/or bolster relationship with Bankhead National Forrest and Camp McDowell to determine partnership opportunities and potential projects. 	Long-Term	Town

SOURCES

- 1 U.S. Census, QuickFacts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/INC110220>
- 2 U.S. Census, QuickFacts, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/INC910220>
- 3 Kenton, Will. "What Is Income Per Capita? Uses, Limitations, and Examples"
- 4 https://whywaynecounty.com/wpcontent/uploads/migrated/documents/RetailGapAnalysis_Site1_Secondary.pdf
- 5 Austin, Weinstein, et al. "Improving quality of life—not just business—is the best path to Midwestern rejuvenation". January 26, 2022. Brookings.edu.
- 6 The Alabama Connectivity Plan, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), page 3
- 7 The Alabama Connectivity Plan, ADECA, page 23
- 8 The Alabama Connectivity Plan, ADECA, page 37