



## **CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING – STAFF REPORT**

December 18, 2023 at 4:00 pm | 100 US Highway 80 SW, Pooler, GA 31322

### **Agenda Item:**

Main Street Master Plan

### **Meeting Date:**

December 18, 2023

### **Department:**

Planning & Zoning

### **Background & Discussion:**

The City contracted with firm TSW for the creation of a master plan for the City's Main Street. The intent of the project was to establish achievable goals and potential projects in furthering growth and redevelopment along Main Street. TSW and Planning staff held various engagement opportunities throughout the plan's development process to ensure input and feedback on the various plan components. The plan builds off the 2015 Main Street Vision Plan and the Pooler 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The Main Street Master Plan provides a refined vision and goals for Main Street's future. The vision and goals coincide with recommendations related to a proposed land use framework, an illustrative concept plan of key opportunities for appropriate development, and various strategic actions and projects for advancing the plan and its vision.

### **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends approval of the Main Street Master Plan.

### **Attachments:**

Main Street Master Plan

# POOLER MAIN STREET MASTER PLAN

December 4, 2023



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## CONSULTANTS

- TSW
- Arnett Muldrow & Associates

## CITY OF POOLER

- Mayor Rebecca Benton
- Councilwoman Shannon Black
- Councilman Aaron Higgins
- Councilman Tom Hutcherson
- Councilman Stevie Wall
- Councilman John Wilcher
- Councilwoman Karen Williams

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS</b>	<b>01</b>	Key Opportunities	46
Site Context	02	Parks and Open Space Plan	54
Demographics & Economic Conditions	04	Business Development	56
Community Resources	06	Transportation Improvements	58
Transportation / Connectivity	08	Street Sections	60
Existing Zoning	10	<b>CHAPTER 4: IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>65</b>
Future Land Use	12	Implementation Program	66
Comprehensive Plan Character Areas	14	Funding Sources	67
Susceptibility to Change	16	Action Matrix	68
Market Conditions	18	<b>CHAPTER 5: APPENDIX</b>	<b>74</b>
Previous Plans	20	Pooler Branding & Marketing Conditions	76
<b>CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC OUTREACH</b>	<b>23</b>		
Overall Strategy	24		
Public Kick-Off Meeting	25		
Stakeholder Interviews	28		
Online Survey	30		
3-Day Design Workshop	32		
Draft Public Open House	36		
<b>CHAPTER 3: RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>39</b>		
Vision + Goals	40		
Framework Plan	42		
Concept Plan	44		



# EXISTING CONDITIONS



Site Context	02
Demographics & Economic Conditions	04
Community Resources	06
Transportation / Connectivity	08
Existing Zoning	10
Future Land Use	12
Comprehensive Plan Character Areas	14
Susceptibility to Change	16
Market Conditions	18
Previous Plans	20

# SITE CONTEXT

## AN OVERVIEW OF POOLER

Pooler is located in unincorporated Chatham County and is bordered by Port Wentworth, Garden City, Bloomingdale, and Savannah. US Highway 80 runs directly through the City of Pooler and is considered the 'main street'. Highway 80 splits into two roadways in the historic core and has created an island of parcels in between them.

Pooler was originally founded in 1838 and was officially incorporated in 1907. Pooler was known as the last railroad station stop before Savannah on the Central of Georgia Railway during the Civil War.

In the early years of Pooler's development, dairies played a vital role in the economy and eventually a post office, gas stations, a theater and a drug store were built in town. Today, Pooler is known as the commercial center of Chatham County (Source: City Town Info).

The market conditions in the study area are stable – stores in the study area had \$59.1 million in sales over the past year, approximately a third of which came from motor vehicle and parts dealers. Retail growth in the study area is expected to grow in these categories: restaurants, health and personal care, food and beverage, building materials, and furniture and home furnishings.

## STUDY BOUNDARY REVIEW

The Pooler Main Street Master Plan study boundary, shown with the black outline on the adjacent map, focuses on the US Highway 80 corridor (highlighted in yellow) that runs through Pooler's historic center (between Chestnut and Reed). Approximately 1.75 miles in length, the route is also known as Louisville Road (historic name) and referred to as Pooler's Main Street. The primary focus of this study is between Pooler Parkway and Interstate 95. The primary frontage along Main Street is commercial with limited residential where vehicular circulation is prioritized over pedestrian scale development and safety.

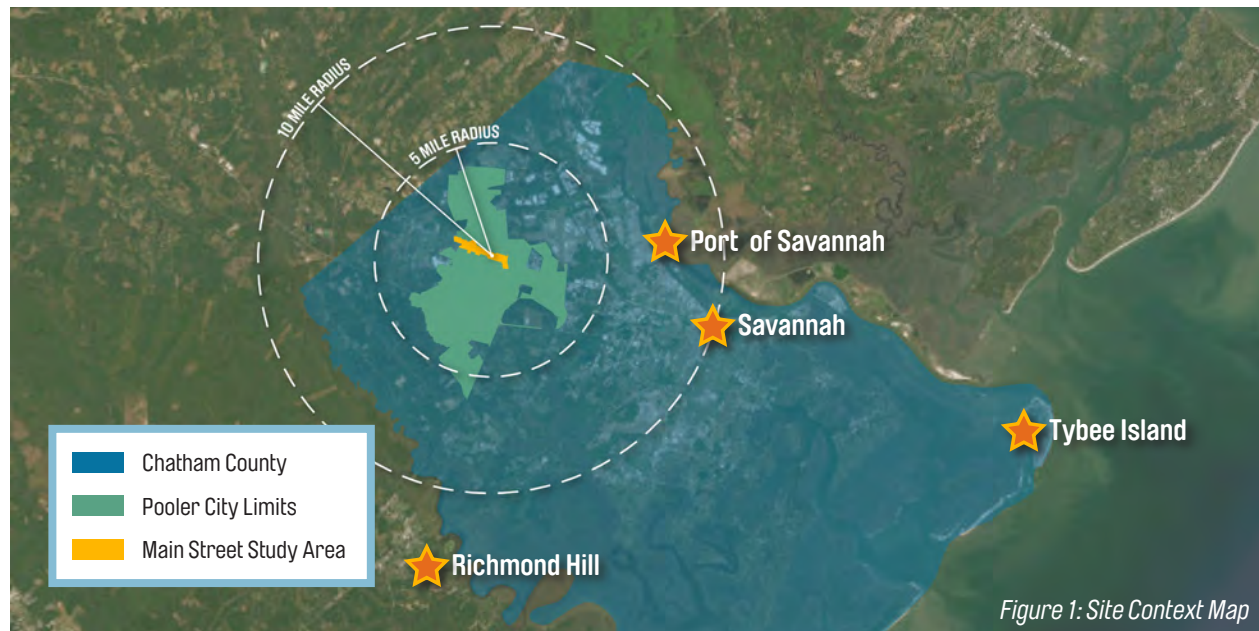


Figure 1: Site Context Map

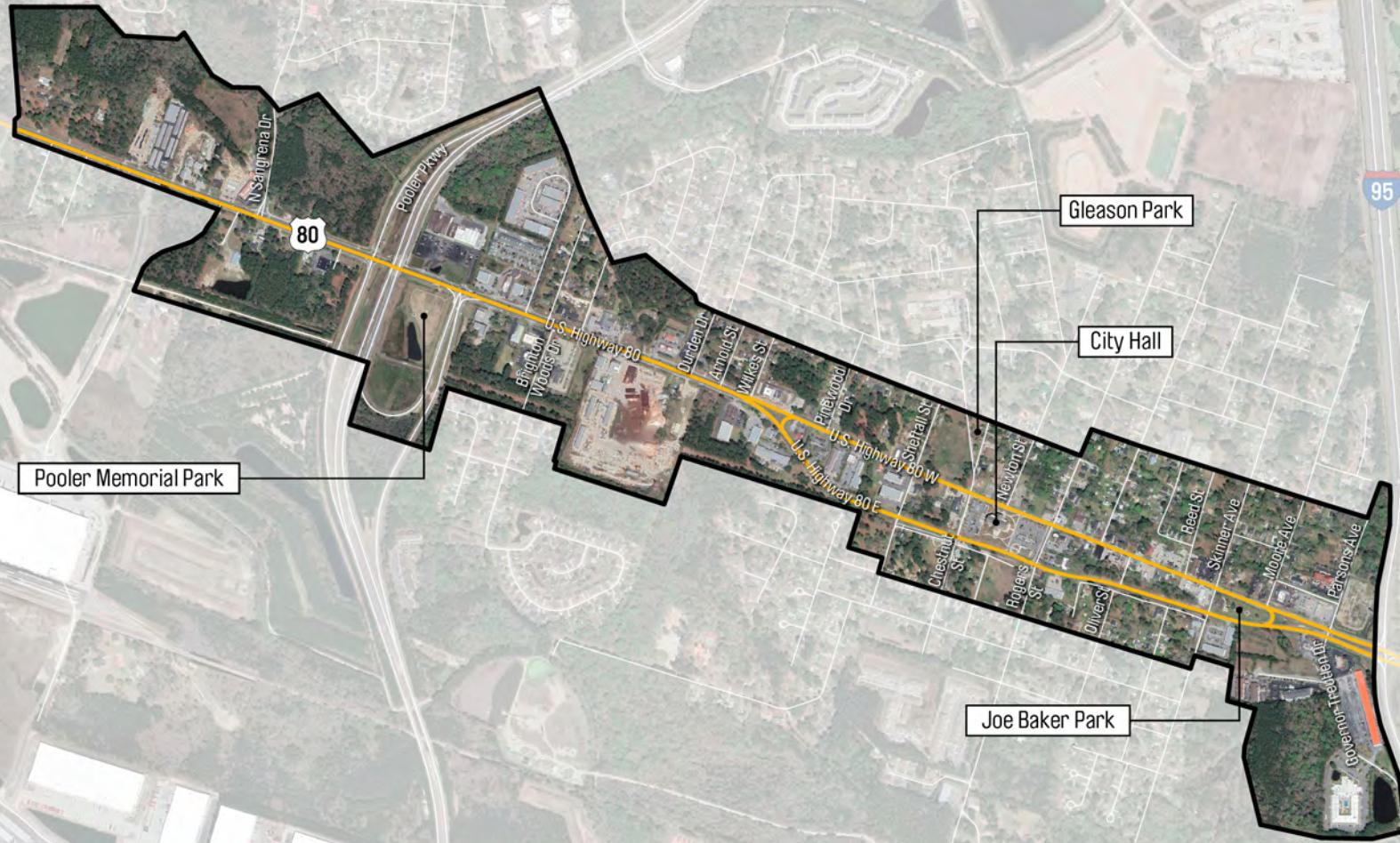
## THIS PLAN'S PURPOSE

This plan is an opportunity to establish achievable goals that will serve as a guide in further growing the historic main street. The master plan will serve as a blueprint to:



- Leverage area history, resources, and recent development success;
- Attract businesses, jobs and people along main street;
- Recommend improvements and encourage quality design and development along main street

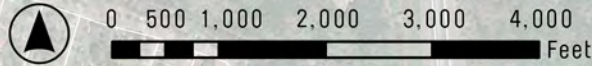
# STUDY BOUNDARY

Figure 1



**LEGEND**

-  Study Boundary
-  Main Street / US 80





# DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

## POPULATION

Pooler has seen tremendous growth over the past two decades with nearly 243% population increase between 2000 and 2020. This is over three times that of the very healthy growth that the Savannah metro saw during the same time (72%). Since the previous Census, Pooler is estimated to have grown to 27,578 people with a projected change of an additional 10% in the next five years.

### CLARITAS ESTIMATES THAT APPROXIMATELY 483 PEOPLE LIVE IN THE MAIN STREET STUDY AREA.

*Claritas is a demographic data collection company that provides statistics for age, race, household size, income, ethnicity, occupation, etc.*

### DEMOGRAPHICS SNAPSHOT

**2023 POPULATION EST.**  
26,840

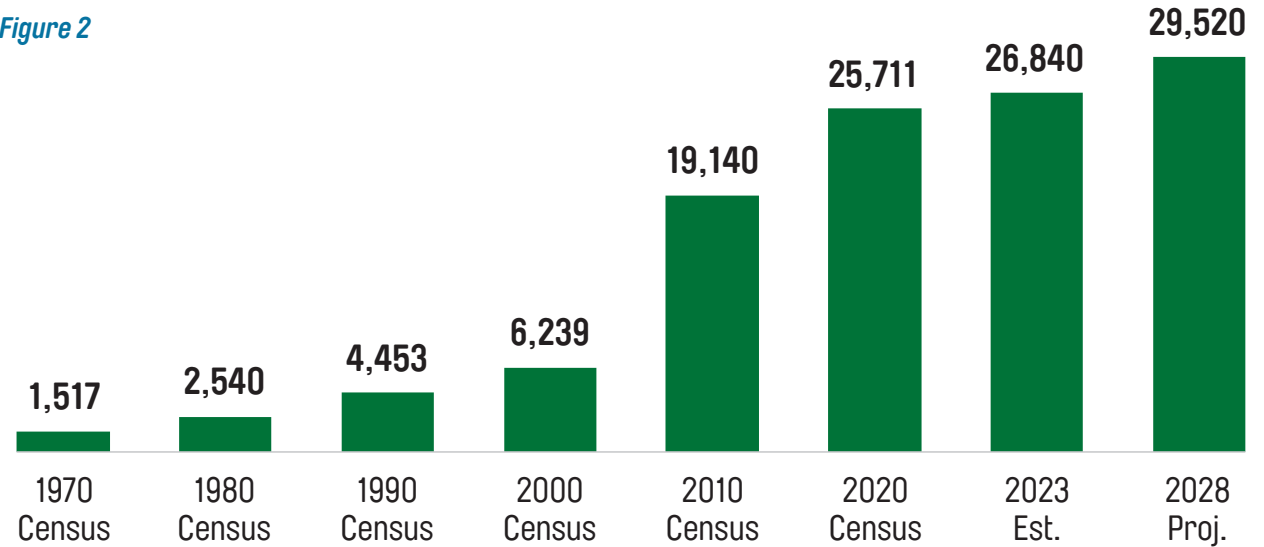
**POPULATION GROWTH RATE (2000 - 2020)**  
243%

**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**  
\$84,500

**AVERAGE RESIDENT AGE**  
35.9

## POOLER POPULATION: 2000 - 2028

Figure 2



## AGE & ETHNICITY

Median age in Pooler is 35.9, younger than Chatham County at 37.6 and Savannah's 37.2. Pooler has a balance of age groups, with the largest segment being ages 35-54 (27%). The Main Street study area is a bit older at 43.5 years of age.

Pooler is 52% white and 27% black. 9% of the population is Hispanic or Latino, while 6% are Asian.

## POOLER RACE/ETHNICITY

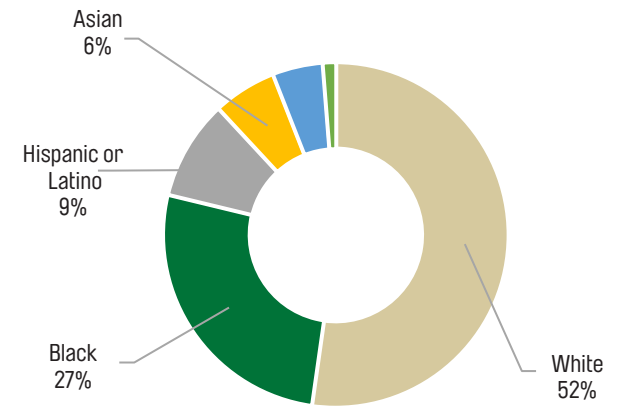


Figure 3

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Pooler's median household income is \$84,500, significantly higher than Chatham County (\$63,921) and the metro area (\$67,921). For the households in the main street study area, the median income of \$63,553 are on par with the county.

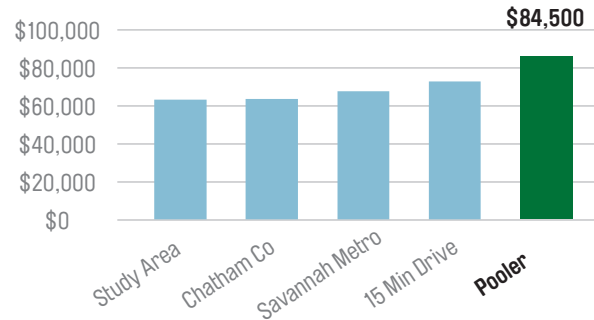
## CURRENT BUSINESS CLIMATE

The City of Pooler is a growing community and is a major economic center for the greater Savannah Metro. With Tanger Outlets and Godley Station, the city is a retail magnet providing commerce and jobs for the entire region and beyond. This is due both to its proximity to Savannah, but also to its position on both I-95 and I-16. I-95 forms the eastern boundary of the Main Street corridor study area. It brings thousands of people to and through Pooler. Highway 80 is also a major connector from Savannah and the Georgia coast to Statesboro and Central Georgia.

Pooler has seen rapid growth over the years with projections of steady population change over the next five years. As the City has grown, the Godley Station area has served the regional market, while the main street study area has proven to serve Pooler's local residents with commerce, services and jobs. It also serves as the oldest residential area in Pooler. Today, it retains a quaint, connected residential atmosphere with homes that are more modest and affordable in a regional and nationwide home market that has seen significant price increases over the past five years or more. Single-family homes in the study are average

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

Figure 4



around \$206,000 while the local market is seeing homes sell for an average of \$318,000 or more.

While it is a mature city center with older residences, businesses and structures, the Main Street district has still seen new quality investment in recent years. The City displayed its dedication to the district five years ago when it invested in a new city hall complex. Recent private developments include Peacock Plaza, OMS Dental facility, and others. These new investments have begun to define a new, more up-to-date aesthetic to the main street environment.

Pooler is a retail center that serves a broad area, but still shows opportunity for commercial growth based on local demand. These opportunities in several key categories suggest at least 26,000 square feet of new space that could be directed into main street. This does not account for the potential to grow destination-based businesses such as independent restaurants, entertainment, or destination retail.

With the exception of a couple of underutilized and dated sites, there is very limited vacant space in the main street area. Like other older commercial centers, rental rates vary from site to site depending on age, location and condition, and range from \$12 to \$20+ per sf.

With limited vacancy and pricing more favorable than the region, the main street area has the potential to attract additional office and commercial. There is limited amount of space formally on the market in the main street area however, so new space could be created through infill and mixed-use redevelopments of key sites.

The Hyundai plant currently under construction in nearby Ellabell will prove to be a game changer for the entire region, but in particular Pooler as it is the closest full-service city to the plant within the metro area. The 16 million square foot plant will ultimately have over 8,000 direct hires, with untold employees working for suppliers. The workers will make an average of \$58,000 per year and will need places to live, eat and shop. This will impact all of the city of Pooler, but will most certainly increase demand for business, residential and mixed-use in the main street study area.

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community resources include places where people can gather, such as schools and parks, or public amenities that serve the community (government departments, schools, libraries). These resources play a crucial role in shaping the quality of life for residents. Figure 5 illustrates the community resources in the study area and shows their proximity to each other by the 1/4-mile walking radius, representing a typical 5-minute walk, from City Hall.

There are many civic buildings located in the center of the study area, like City Hall, Pooler Library, Police Station, and the Municipal Court. Many of these facilities are within a 5-minute walk of each other, however, sidewalk conditions and lack of pedestrian safety measures along Main Street today discourage people from walking.

Along with the civic buildings, this study has identified 6 faith-based organizations and one private school within the study area. The faith-based organizations and the private school are spaced throughout the corridor adjacent to or within a 5-minute walk from one of the established single family residential areas.

At either end of the study area, there are two parks. Pooler Memorial Park is more than a 15–20 minute walk (1-mile) from the center of the study area. Bounded by Pooler Parkway, the Pooler Parkway exit ramp, and Main Street/US 80 the

functionality of this park is severely limited due to lack of pedestrian and vehicular access. Joe Baker Park, within the historic core, is confined between the west and east bound travel lanes of US Highway 80 and a gas station. Regardless of these current constraints it is more easily accessible to pedestrians than the larger Pooler Memorial Park. A smaller neighborhood pocket park is also located within the study area; located near First Baptist Church and adjacent residential uses. Its location is also on a common route for children walking to Pooler Elementary located just outside the study boundary.

Based on the City of Pooler 2040 Comprehensive Plan (reference page 246 of the Comprehensive Plan document), Pooler has 2 properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. A National Register Historic District has not been established in Pooler. More importantly, Pooler lacks a local historic district that, unlike a National Register Designation, provides communities with the means to make sure growth, development, and change takes place in ways that respect the area's historic resources. The properties listed on the National Register today are important cultural resources for the community, as they represent important aspects of Pooler's history, but the current designation does not provide these properties with any protection.



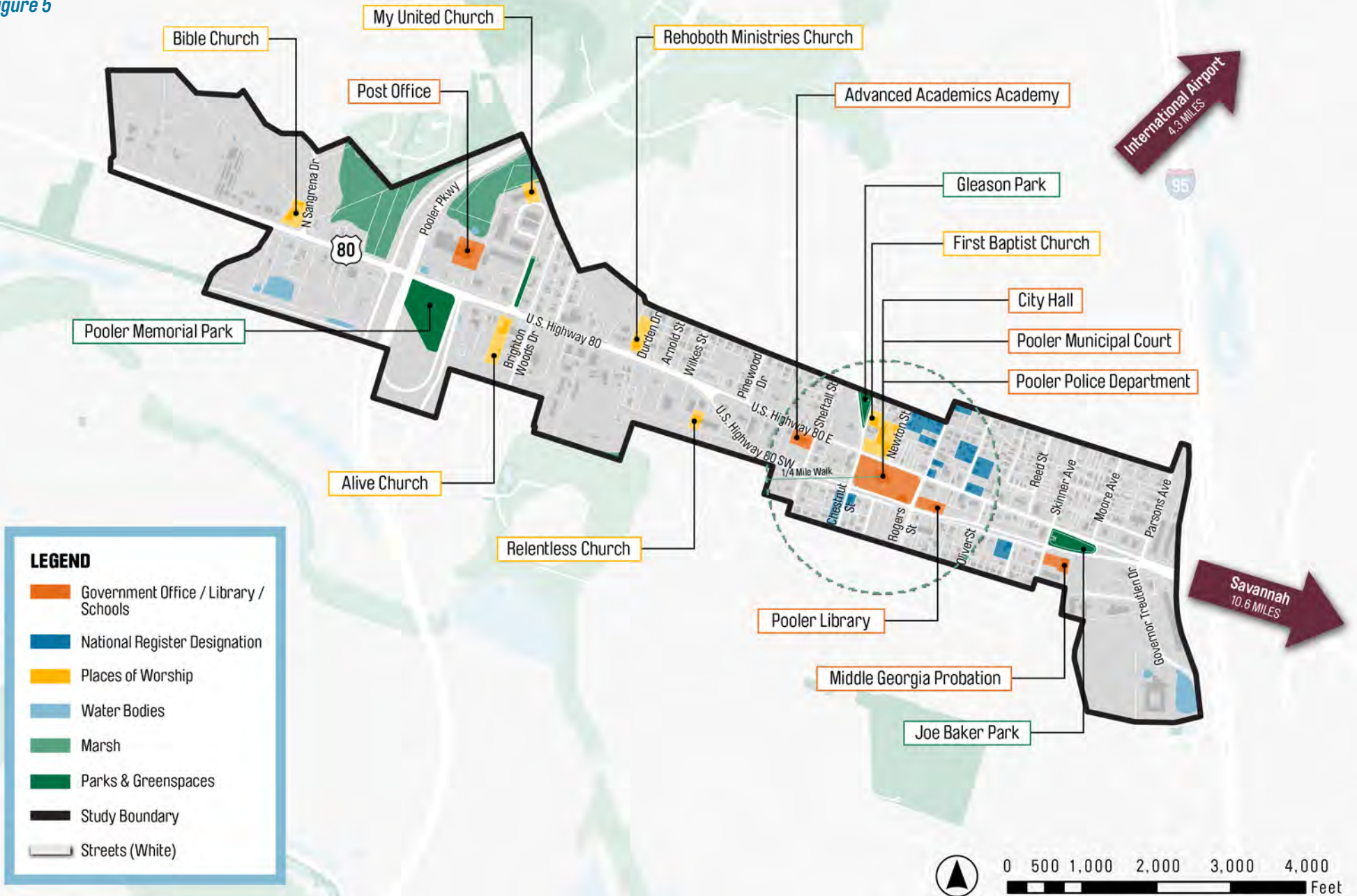
Top: Joe Baker Park

Middle: Pooler City Hall

Bottom: Three Tree Coffee Shop building is on the National Register of Historic Places

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Figure 5



# TRANSPORTATION / CONNECTIVITY

The street framework within the study area reflects development trends over the course of Pooler's history. The oldest area of Pooler, around City Hall, has a typical 1920's downtown grid with ~430'–460' east/west block faces fronting Louisville Road / US 80. The north/south block faces (~800–900 feet) are oriented to be perpendicular to Louisville Road for mostly residential lots. It should be noted that sometime in the late 1980's, GDOT implemented a one-way split that shortened the north/south block faces on the southern side to ~430 feet. This decision by GDOT also created challenging parcels for development in the center of the split.

Left: Some existing sidewalks on US Highway 80 E are pulled off the road which gives pedestrians a sense of safety.

Middle: Incomplete sidewalk

Right: Inappropriate landscape strip width



Another major influence on the street framework occurred in the 1950's and 70's with the implementation of more curvilinear streets reflective of the preferred development style of the time. This pattern is identified just west of the tighter formalized street grid around City Hall. As you continue to move west along US 80 the street framework becomes more fractured as evidenced by the continued focus on accommodating the automobile over walkability.

This study identified 3 challenges with pedestrian and vehicular circulation. These included:

- **Lack of Sidewalks.** The diagram on the opposite page identifies all block faces without sidewalks. In some cases, sidewalks are not warranted on both sides of the street, such as local residential streets, however, it is worth noting the lack of infrastructure within the core of Pooler, specifically along Main Street. Many



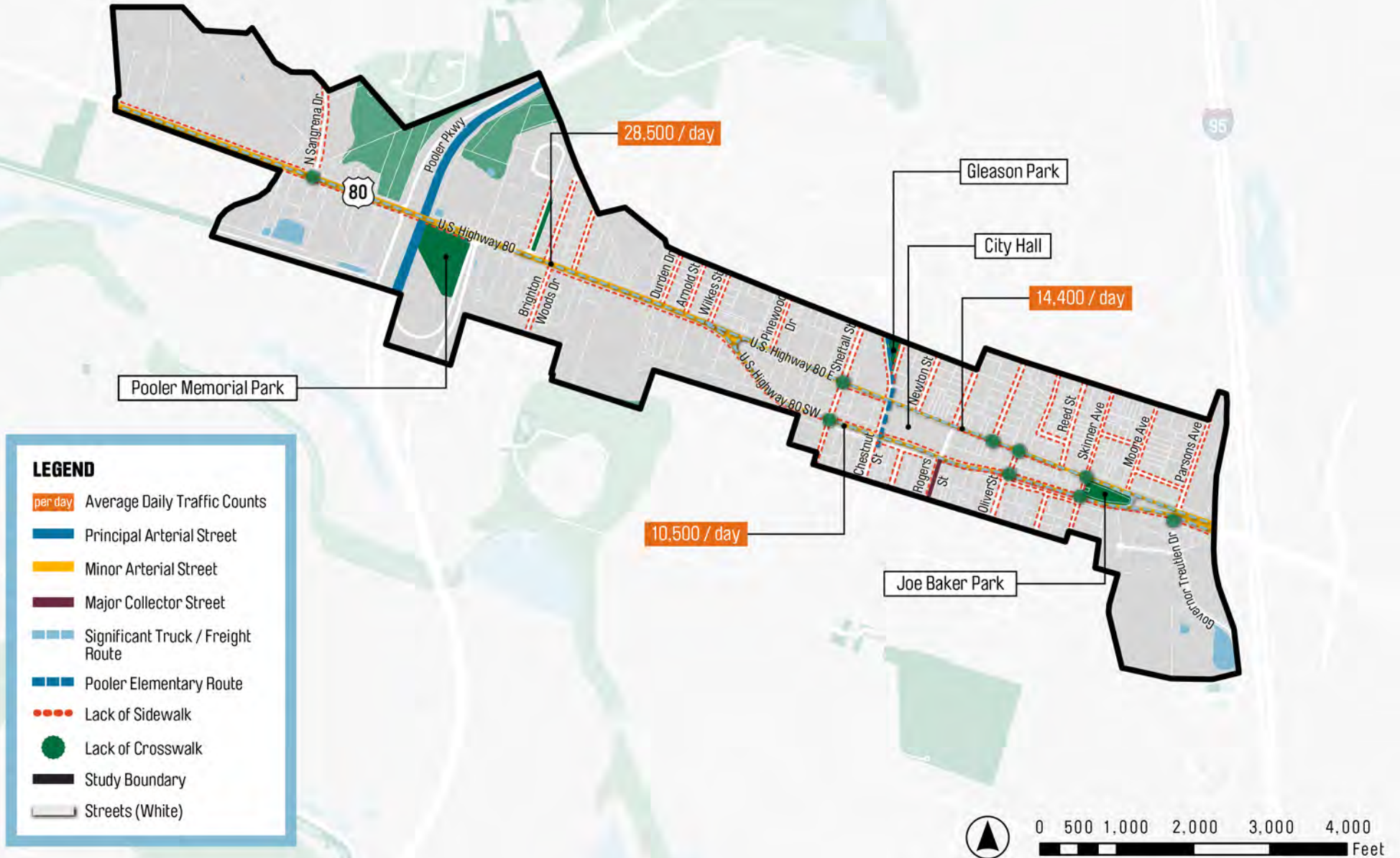
of the existing sidewalks are in need of repair or should be relocated as noted in the existing conditions photos.

- **Truck Traffic.** According to an SR 26/US 80 Corridor Study presentation dated December 19, 2022, 11% of 26,200 (approximately 2,880) vehicles per day on US 80 in the Main Street Master Plan study area is due to trucks. This is the lowest percentage found within the study that looked at US 80 between Bloomingdale and Garden City.
- **Pedestrian Safety.** The diagram on the opposite page identifies key intersections that lack crosswalks at the time of this study. A particular concern is the lack of pedestrian safety measures along a heavily used route used by children walking to Pooler Elementary. Currently crossing guards are stationed at Chestnut Street and US 80 east and Chestnut and US 80 West to help children safely cross the street.



# TRANSPORTATION / CONNECTIVITY

Figure 6



# EXISTING ZONING

There are 6 zoning designations and one overlay district identified within the study area. Much of the area is zoned Commercial, as shown in orange on the opposite page. When combined, the three residential zoning districts including Single Family Residential, Two Family Residential, and Multi-Family Residential designations are the second most prominent in the area. The residential districts are primarily found along the northern and southern study area boundary lines. There is one area designated Industrial just west of where US 80 splits.

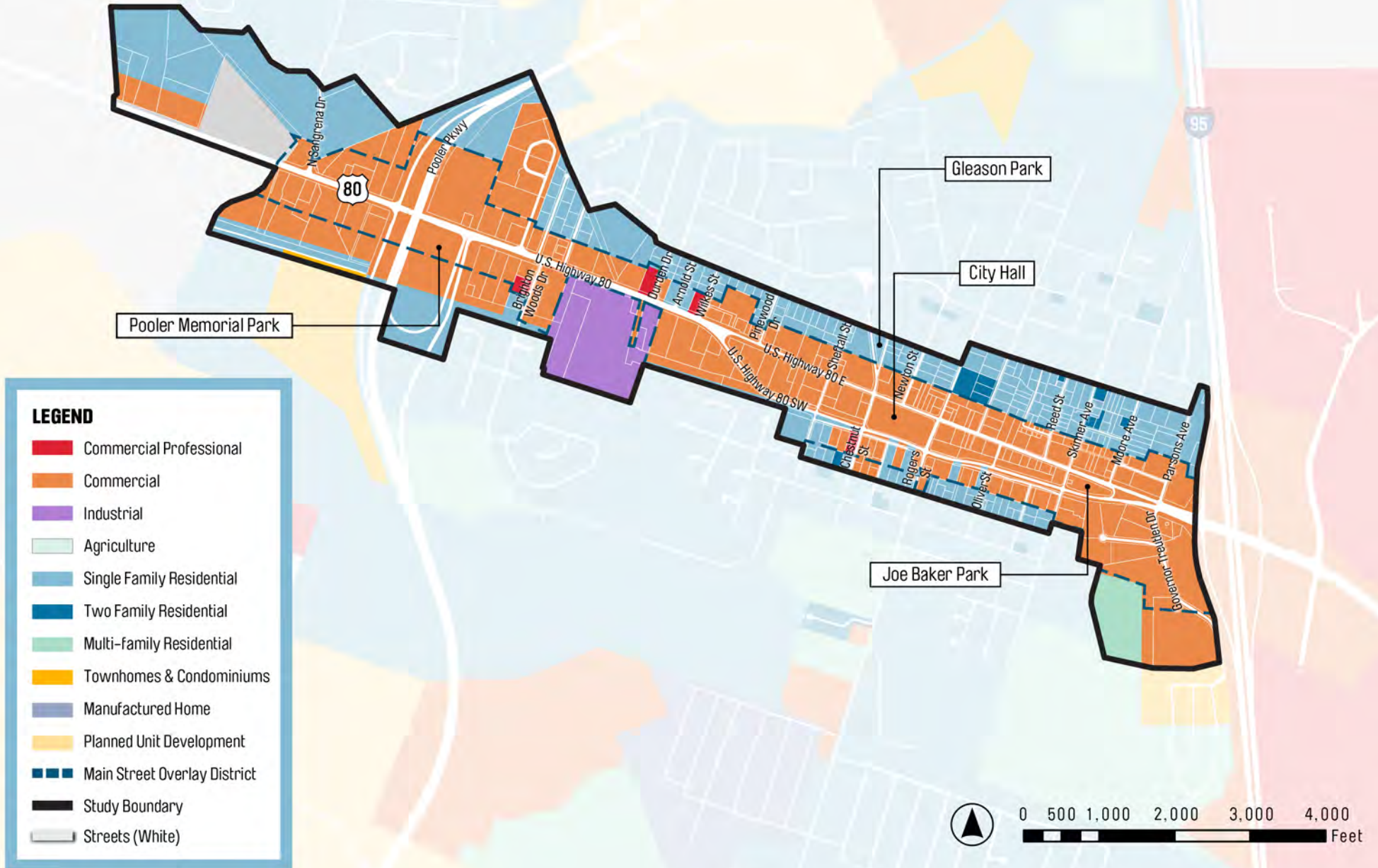
The Main Street Overlay mostly applies to properties with frontage along US 80. Some variation in the overlay boundary is evident such as split zoned parcels and extending south adjacent to interstate 95. At the time of this study, the overlay district has certain standards that are optional, such as those related to parking, while other provisions are mandatory, such as architectural standards. The recommendations chapter of this study will take a closer look at parcels that front onto Main Street to suggest appropriate land uses that reflect the preferred Main Street vision identified during the public process. This analysis can be used to assist with better defining the Main Street Overlay.



Above: The Chamber of Commerce , located on Highway 80 E, is on the National Register of Historic Places

# EXISTING ZONING

Figure 7





# FUTURE LAND USE

A Future Land Use map provides directions for zoning decisions through the specific land use categories. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use (FLU) map identifies 7 land use types, and the 1.75 mile study area contains 5 of them. The land use types in the study area are:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Public
- Industrial
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation

The current Future Land Use (FLU) map conflicts with the existing built environment and existing base zoning. Because FLU maps are used to identify

## WHAT IS “FUTURE LAND USE”?

While zoning regulations vary, the Future Land Use map is a standardized approach to planning for preferred scenarios. Inconsistencies between future land use designations, existing land use or zoning maps may occur because future land use presents a blueprint for what is to come.

Proposed projects should be generally consistent with the Future Land Use designation for an area to help advance the goals for the type of development within the community.

how areas should be developed in the future, this is not uncommon to see, however, this situation is quite dramatic and should warrant re-evaluation. Below identifies the initial concerns related to this study.

- **Commercial Designation.** Has been broadly applied to properties north of US 80. This area consists of established residential uses which would likely not be appropriate for future commercial uses.
- **Public Designation.** Municipal properties such as City Hall, Municipal Court, and existing Pooler Library are identified as Commercial and not Public as they should. The proposed site for the new Library does have a Public designation.
- **Parks/Recreation/Conservation.** Three of the four city parks within the study area are inappropriately identified as Commercial. The fourth park is identified as residential, but due to the extreme wetland and flood area associated with the parcel the Parks/Recreation/Conservation designation is most appropriate.

The Future Land Use map identifies most of the study area as Commercial – including the current residential neighborhoods bordering Highway 80. Identifying the current residential areas as Commercial could lead to several harmful impacts on the community. The development patterns for

the area has catered toward redevelopment of appropriate commercial frontage and rehabilitation of existing residential properties. The preservation of the existing residential character and uses should be preserved and incentivized. Any potential commercial development should ensure the character of the area is protected and any impacts mitigated.

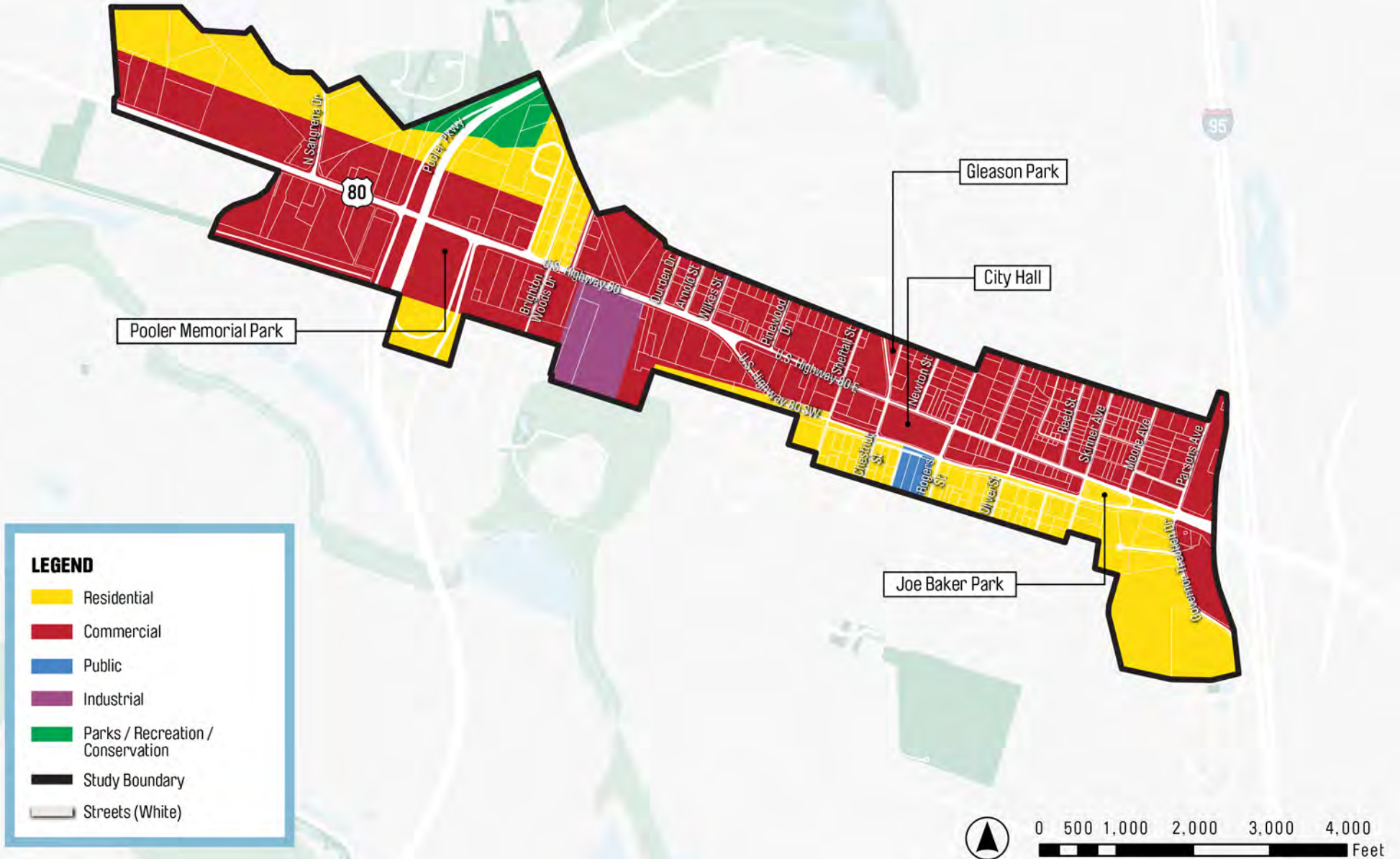
Given the inconsistencies between the FLU and existing zoning, it is recommended to reevaluate the Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use map.



Above: The Pooler Library has plans to construct a new building across the street to cater to the large number of visitors they receive.

# FUTURE LAND USE

Figure 8



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CHARACTER AREAS

A Character Area map provides developmental identities to specific areas of a community. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan Character Area map identifies 8 land use types, and the 1.75 mile study area contains 6 of them. The land use types in the study area are:

- Historic District
- Shopping & Dining
- Commercial
- PUD Mixed Use
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Residential

There are discrepancies with how these character areas were placed, including:

- The Traditional Neighborhood character area excludes the traditional residential area found between Durden Drive and Newton Street, currently identified as Commercial to the north of US 80.
- The Historic District Character Area suggests commercial activity should not take place and the Current Zoning classification is R-1-A. This should be reevaluated to better reflect the existing built environment.
- In addition, the Commercial character area includes current residential and should be reevaluated.

## WHAT IS A “CHARACTER AREA MAP”?

Character Area Maps are intended to provide development guidance for both public and private decision-making. Character Areas are identified by focusing on the way an area looks and how it functions. Character Area Maps and Future Land Use maps are intended to be used jointly.

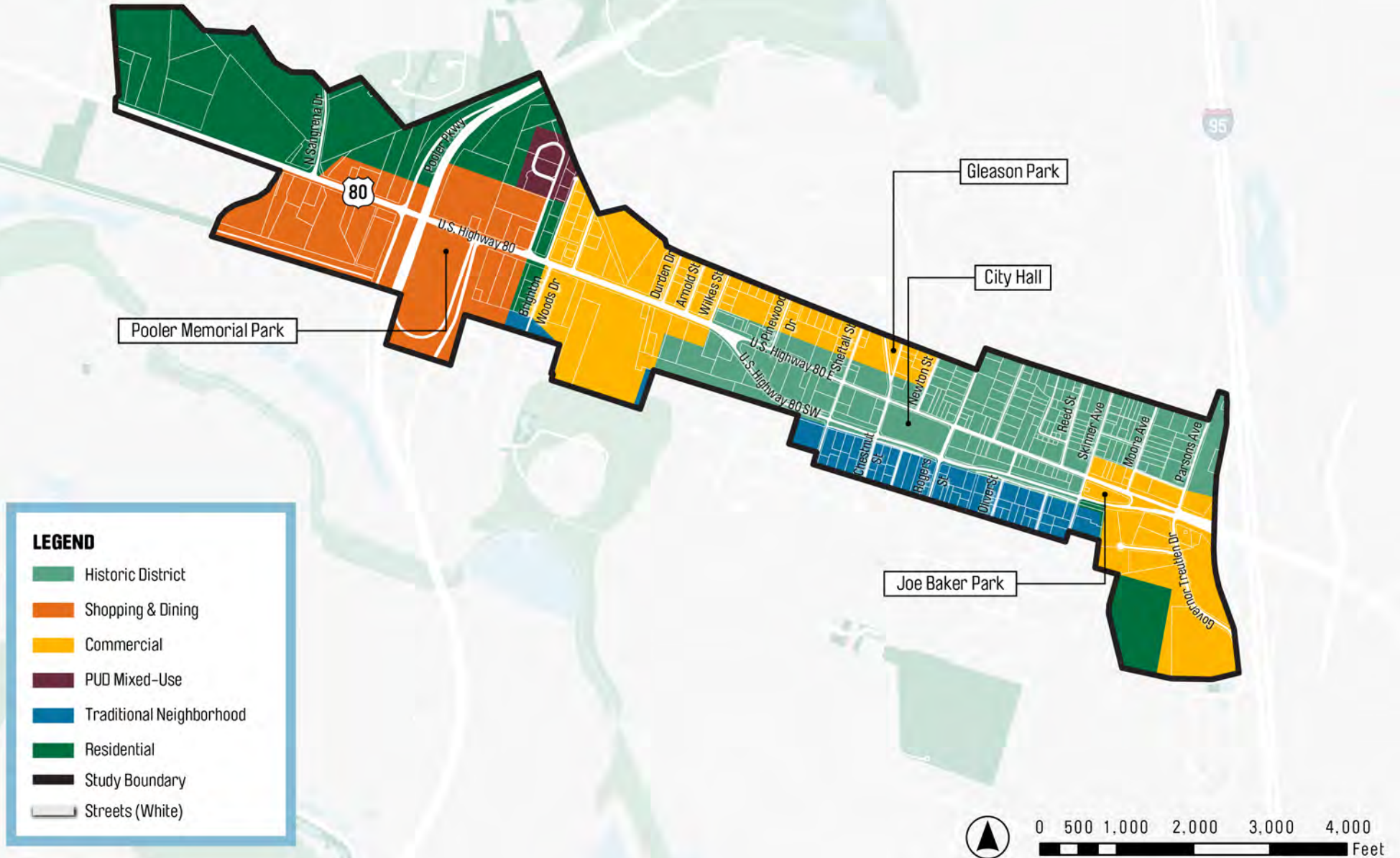


Left: Tattoos by L.A. Pete storefront on Highway 80 is part of the Historic District on the Character Area Map.

Right: Pinewood Dr is full of single-family residential homes yet it is part of the Commercial district on the Character Area Map.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CHARACTER AREAS

Figure 9



# SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE

Many opportunities exist to change the use of specific parcels within the study area as development occurs. In order to spark this development, it is helpful to identify the parcels that are susceptible to change. Mapping the susceptibility to change is helpful to understand where development is most likely to occur, as shown on the map to the right. This study area map does not guarantee parcels will be redeveloped as that is up to the private sector. The susceptibility is based on the physical building and land condition of a parcel. The susceptibility to change is divided into three categories:

- Not Susceptible to Change
- Somewhat Susceptible to Change
- Highly Susceptible to Change

## NOT SUSCEPTIBLE TO CHANGE

Parcels not susceptible to change either have newly constructed buildings on them, historic buildings, single-family housing, or civic uses such as parks and city services. Although historic buildings are marked as “not susceptible to change”, underutilized structures could offer potential for adaptive reuse.

## SOMEWHAT SUSCEPTIBLE TO CHANGE

Parcels that are somewhat susceptible to change include structures that are not



historically significant, have renovations that are inappropriate, land uses that can easily relocate, or buildings that show signs of deterioration.

## HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO CHANGE

Parcels marked as highly susceptible to change include vacant/undeveloped land, structures that are in poor condition, surface parking lots, or developments that don't reflect the best use for the community.

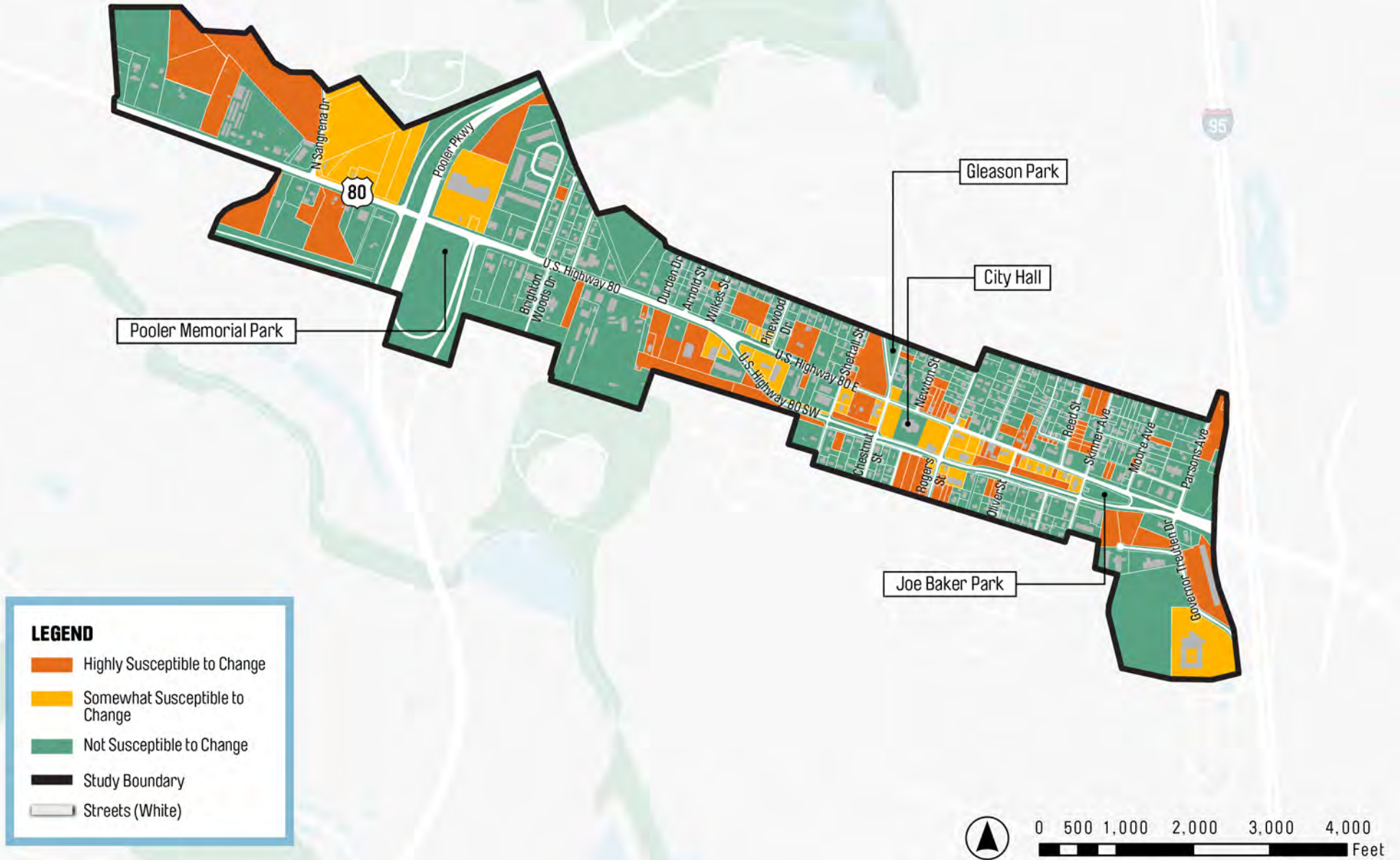


Left: Parcels that are not frequently used are likely to change.

Right: Chazito's is a popular restaurant for the community so it is not susceptible to change.

# SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE

Figure 10



# MARKET CONDITIONS

## HOUSING

The Main Street study area has an estimated 483 residents who live in predominantly single-family homes. There is a limited amount of multifamily in the form of duplexes. The homes are generally modest one and two-story structures built from the early 1900s to the late 1990s. Average date of construction is 1987.

The study area is mostly built out, but there are a number of single-family vacant lots, and a few larger vacant or redevelopment sites that could accommodate mixed-use with residential. Still, an overview of the larger Pooler market may help to understand the potential for residential uses in the study area.

Pooler is predominantly single-family detached (67%) and owner-occupied (57%). The median

Below: Housing in the study area is primarily single-family detached with an average year built of 1987.



home value in Pooler is \$254,000. The Zillow Home Value Index for Pooler shows homes for sale averaging \$318,000, an 11.9% increase in value over the previous year. In the study area, housing is more affordable with a median value of \$206,000. The median rent in the City of Pooler is \$1,315 per month. As of June 2023, there are no existing residential properties for sale in the study area, however there are 8 homes for sale on adjacent streets, ranging from \$199,000 to \$499,000. Similarly, there are 6 units for rent in the vicinity, ranging from \$1,495 to \$1,800 per month.

Finally, while housing in the study area is more affordable in terms of value, overall affordability in the City of Pooler is a challenge. 36% percent of renters and 16% of homeowners are cost-burdened. This means they spend greater than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs (rent or mortgage, utilities, etc.)

### MEDIAN VALUE OF HOUSING

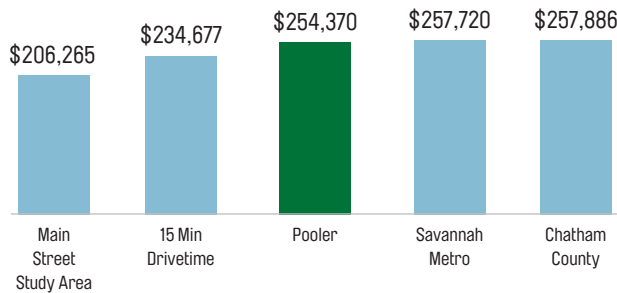


Figure 11

## EMPLOYMENT

In 2019, there were approximately 13,963 jobs in Pooler, concentrated along Highway 80 within the study area and the Godley Station area on Pooler Parkway. The largest sectors of employment are Accommodations and Food (20%) as well as Retail Trade (20%).

The unemployment rate in Pooler is 2.6%, similar to that of the County (3.2%) and Savannah Metro (3.1%).

### EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR IN POOLER, 2019

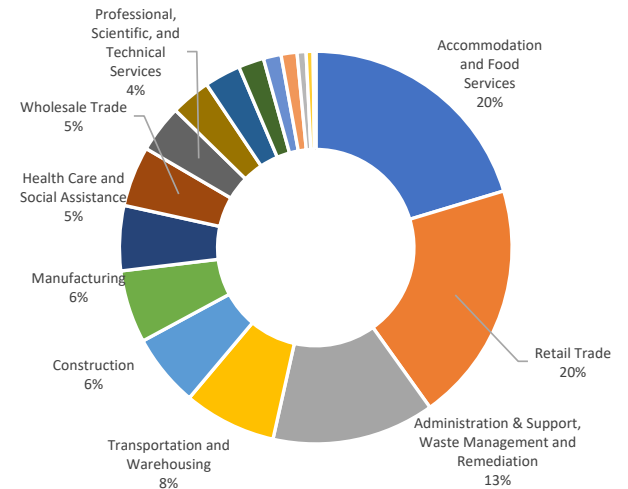


Figure 12

With a significant number of jobs in the Godley Station area, Pooler is a net importer of jobs, meaning that more people living outside of Pooler commute into town than residents who commute outside. 91.2% of the jobs in Pooler are filled by non-residents. By the same token, 88.5% of Pooler’s workforce commutes outside, primarily going to Savannah.



Above: Employment in the study area is primarily retail, service, and government.

## RETAIL

Pooler serves as a primary retail magnet in the greater Savannah region, and had a \$1.06 billion retail market last year. Pooler residents spent \$568 million in 2022, meaning that the city gained \$496 million in retail sales from outsiders. This is due in part to its location on both I-95 and I-16, as well as Tanger Outlets and Godley Station. Within a 15-minute drive of the study area, there was nearly \$1 billion in retail gain.

By comparison the Main Street study area had approximately \$50.4 million in gain, representing a very healthy retail environment.

While this level of commerce is certainly good for Pooler, it does illustrate that the current retail mix more than serves the needs of local residents. Still, there are a number of retail categories that show leakage (demand) for growth based on local needs. Opportunities exist to capture some of the retail leakage in the categories below: With a 20% capture rate and projected growth over the next

five years, this translates to at least 26,248 square feet of space that could be directed to main street. This does not account for the potential to grow destination-based businesses such as independent restaurants, entertainment, or destination retail. Demand includes:

- Women’s Clothing Stores: \$4,746,200 in demand.
- Nursery & Garden Centers: \$4,940,417 in annual demand.
- Hardware Stores: \$3,493,326 in leakage (demand) from local trade area.
- Jewelry Stores: \$2,279,262 in demand.
- Drinking Places: \$1,717,132 in demand.
- Fruit & Vegetable Markets: \$977,027 in demand.
- Meat Markets: \$627,365 in demand.
- Pet Stores: \$466,796 in demand.

	Main Street Study Area	Pooler	15-Minute Trade Area	Chatham County	Savannah Metro
<b>Retail Sales</b>	\$59.1 M	\$1.06 B	\$2.37 B	\$7.99 B	\$9.21 B
<b>Consumer Expenditures</b>	\$8.7 M	\$568 M	\$1.45 B	\$5.9 B	\$8.08 B
<b>Retail Gain</b>	\$50.4 M	\$496.4 M	\$926 M	\$2.08 B	\$1.13 B

Figure 13: Consumer Expenditures, Retail Sales, and Retail Leakage/Gain in Pooler and Region (Source: Claritas)



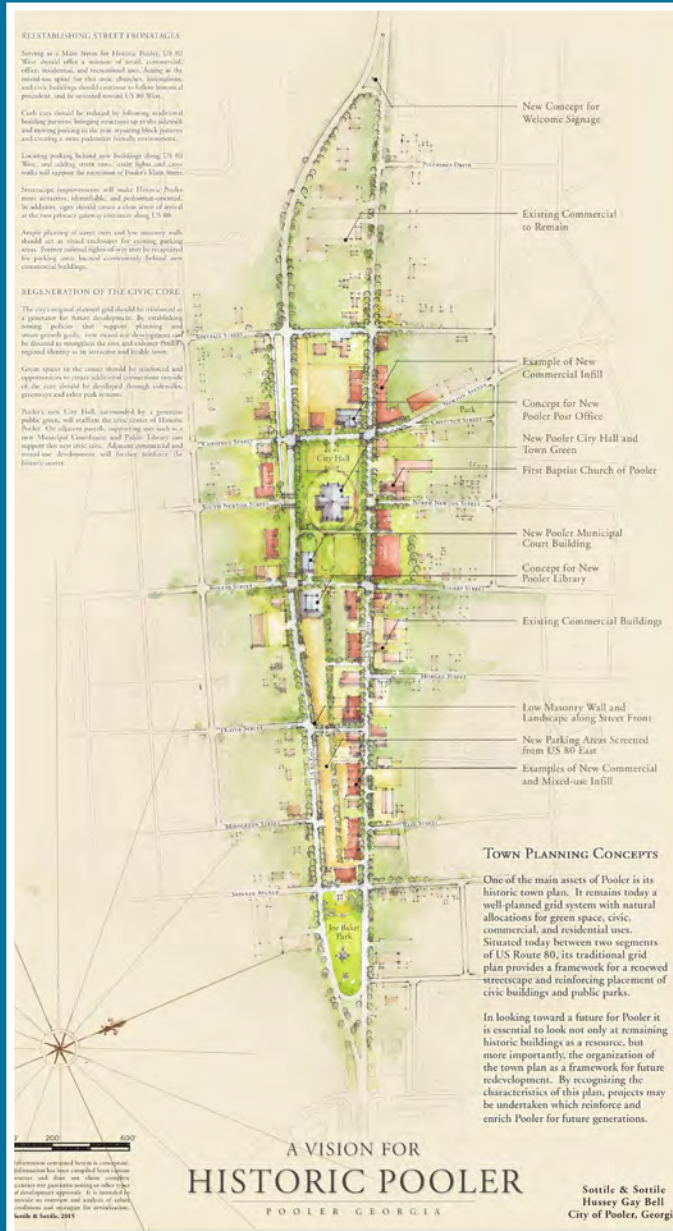
# PREVIOUS PLANS

There are a few previous planning efforts that impact the study area and were reviewed prior to starting the planning process for the Main Street Master Plan. The following pages are a brief overview of these plans and how they affect the study area.

## A VISION FOR HISTORIC POOLER (2015)

The Vision for Historic Pooler focuses on the area between the two Highway 80 segments. It includes an illustrative concept plan for main street Pooler that includes the recently constructed City Hall, accent landscaping along street fronts, and identifies locations for new commercial and mixed-use infill. The Vision provides general ideas and best practices that reflect the traditional building patterns of Pooler. In addition, the illustration is the genesis of the Main Street Overlay District adopted shortly after the creation of this Vision.

The Main Street Master Plan will build on the ideas established by the Vision for Historic Pooler by recommending a path forward that guides and allows for implementation.



## HOW PREVIOUS PLANS EFFECT THE MAIN STREET MASTER PLAN


- The Main Street Master Plan will consider the previous recommended projects that are currently planned and/or under construction.
- The master plan will provide recommendations that link to current projects to create a cohesive vision for Main Street.
- Previous plans and projects provide a starting point for recommendations.



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040

The recently completed 2040 Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2021. The plan focuses on Chatham County, Garden City, Savannah, and Pooler together to establish a cohesive vision. This plan was reviewed thoroughly as a part of the existing conditions process of this study (pages 12–15). The Character Area map can be found on page 120 and the Future Land Use map can be found on page 130 of the Comprehensive Plan document.

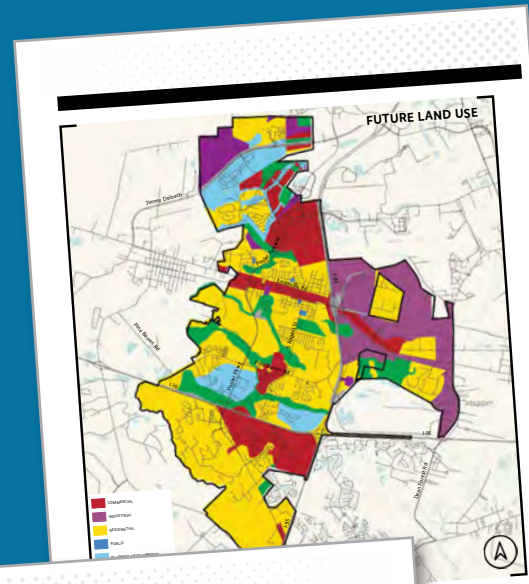
## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040

CITY OF POOLER  
2020 UPDATE



Adopted by Pooler City Council  
October 18, 2021



## TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

As required by federal law each MPO must develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). A TIP is essentially a list of upcoming transportation projects covering a period of at least four years. The list below consists of programmed and conceptual infrastructure projects throughout Pooler.

The Pine Barren Road Corridor Traffic Study and the Chasco Road Widening Study, listed in Figure 5.10, have been developed such that the pertinent findings will be taken into account when land development decisions are being made by the City's Planning and Zoning Board as well as the Pooler City Council.

Information presented in these two studies include trip generation, trip distribution, capacity analyses, and recommendations for transportation improvements required to mitigate anticipated traffic demands produced by the potential development along the various roadway corridor.

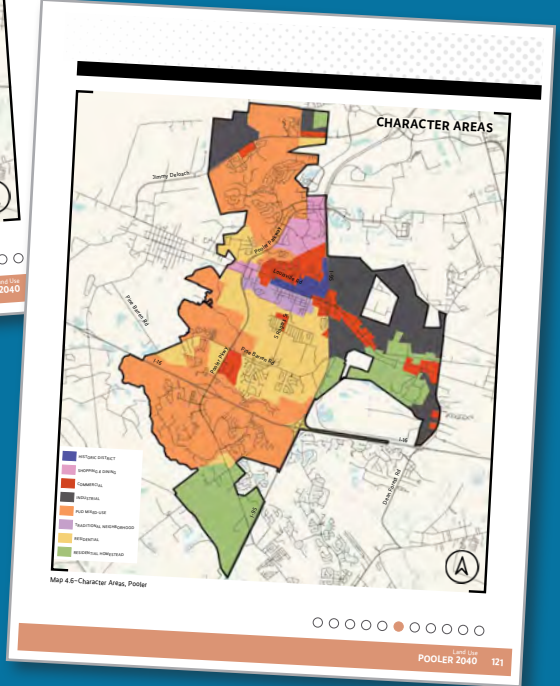
Additional Projects	
Project	Investment
1. Oval Left Lane on 2nd Avenue at Pooler Parkway	\$200,000
2. US 95 Shoulder Repavement	\$3,700,000
3. Roundabout at Sargent Center, Residential and Sargent Center Multi-Use Area	\$2,000,000
4. Roundabout at 2nd Avenue and East Street	\$1,000,000
5. Extension of Sargent Park Roundabout from Parkway	\$400,000
6. Transportation Improvements at Sargent Parkway and Sargent Park Roundabout from Parkway	\$4,200,000
7. US 95 Road Shoulder with 10k MPH Roundabouts	\$4,200,000
8. Gating Sargent Parkway from Sargent Roundabout	\$3,100,000 (B/T)
9. Three Center Roundabout and Median Drive	\$900,000
10. Median Drive and Turnpike Blvd	\$300,000
11. Median Drive and Turnpike Blvd	\$300,000

Infrastructure Project Studies	
Project	Investment
Project at Sargent Roundabout and Target Outlet East to Bridge at US 95	\$1,000,000
Overpass from Park Avenue	\$1,000,000
US 95 and US Highway 95	\$1,000,000
Sargent and US Highway 95	\$1,000,000
Median Choke System Modification on Blue Mass Crossing at Westside Lane	\$1,000,000
Pooler Road Corridor Safety Study	\$1,000,000
Chasco Road Widening Study	\$1,000,000

Figure 5.9-Additional Transportation Improvement Projects  
City of Pooler, Municipal Planning Department (2020, 2021)

Figure 5.10-Conceptual Infrastructure Projects  
City of Pooler, Municipal Planning Department (2020, 2021)

154 POOLER 2040



Activity #2b

# FRAMEWORK PLAN

POOLER MAIN STREET MASTER PLAN - DESIGN WORKSHOP

## GATEWAY DISTRICT

An attractive suburban form that provides areas suitable for uses such as:

- Medium to high density residential
- Retail/commercial (including big-box)
- Office, restaurants, and gas stations
- Civic buildings

Place a dot on the type of development you would like to see in this district.



Commercial / Mixed-Use



Commercial

Multi-Family



Public Gathering Space



Single-Family Housing

## HISTORIC MAIN STREET

A walkable core that provides a mix suitable for uses such as:

- Low to medium density residential
- Small scale mixed-use, retail, commercial, and office buildings
- Civic buildings

Place a dot on the type of development you would like to see in this district.



Commercial / Mixed-Use



Multi-Family

Commercial



Residential

Public Gathering Space



Residential

## COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

A transitional district that provides a mix suitable for uses such as:

- Medium to high density residential
- Medium to high density commercial, and office uses
- Civic buildings

Place a dot on the type of development you would like to see in this district.



Commercial / Mixed-Use



Multi-Family

Commercial



Residential

Public Gathering Space



Residential

# 2



# PUBLIC OUTREACH



Overall Strategy	24
Public Kick-Off Meeting	25
Stakeholder Interviews	28
Online Survey	30
3-Day Design Workshop	32
Draft Public Open House	36

# OVERALL STRATEGY

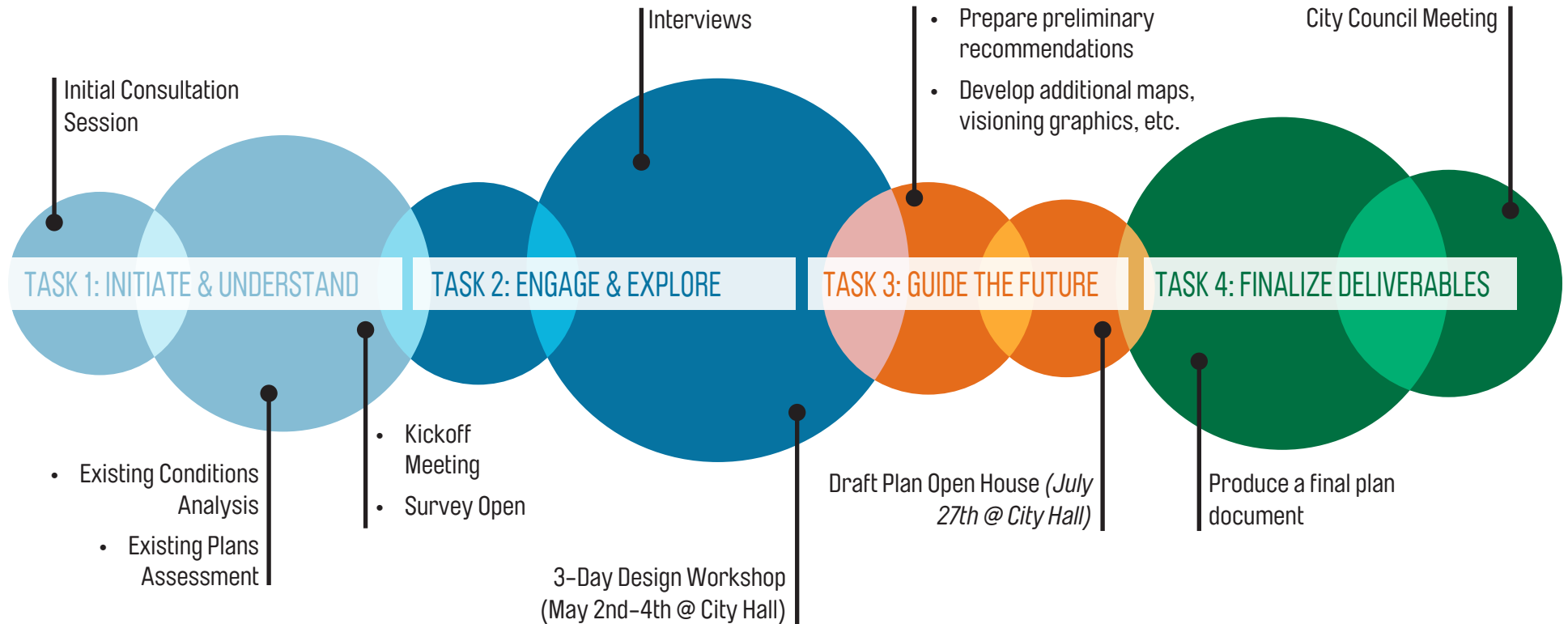
Public engagement is an essential part of any planning process to ensure comprehensive and inclusive decision-making; to guarantee that a diverse set of voices are heard, multiple engagement methods are carried out. For this study, the outreach process involved stakeholder interviews, project marketing, an online survey, public kick-off meeting, a 3-day design workshop, and a final public open house to share the final recommendations.



Walking Tour from the 3-Day Design Workshop



Public Open House Presentation



# PUBLIC KICK-OFF MEETING

The planning team and the City of Pooler hosted the Public Kick-Off Meeting on March 30, 2023 at Pooler City Hall. There were around 25 people in attendance to this meeting. After Brian Crooks, the City Planner, gave introductions, the planning team gave a presentation describing the master planning process, sharing existing conditions findings, market analysis, ideas for the future of Pooler, and gave instructions for the input activities.

## OUR POOLER MAP ACTIVITY

This activity was designed to get feedback only locals would be able to share. Participants were given a set of stickers that were blue, orange, and teal. They would take the sticker marked with an “A” and place it on the map. They would then place the sticker marked with a “B” and write on the corresponding board their comment about the location.

The results on the map are shown to the right.

### What is your untold story about this place?

- The old fire towers used to be here!
- The Pooler Library has so many great activities and events that my kids love to attend. I wish the parking access was improved here.

### If I were Mayor, I would focus on . . .

- I would improve vehicular safety at the Pooler Parkway and Louisville Rd intersection. There are unfortunately too many car accidents here.
- I enjoy this greenspace a lot and I would add sidewalks to access it.
- I would stop improving residential construction and fix the existing infrastructure.
- I would improve the pedestrian and vehicular safety at the Highway 80 and Brighton Woods Dr intersection. It is a hazard!
- I would create an accesible park that is further from highway traffic.

### Why do you enjoy Pooler?

- My children attend the Advanced Academics Academy and love it.
- Lovezolla’s is my favorite restaurant in Pooler!
- I enjoy getting my produce from Polk’s Plus Market.

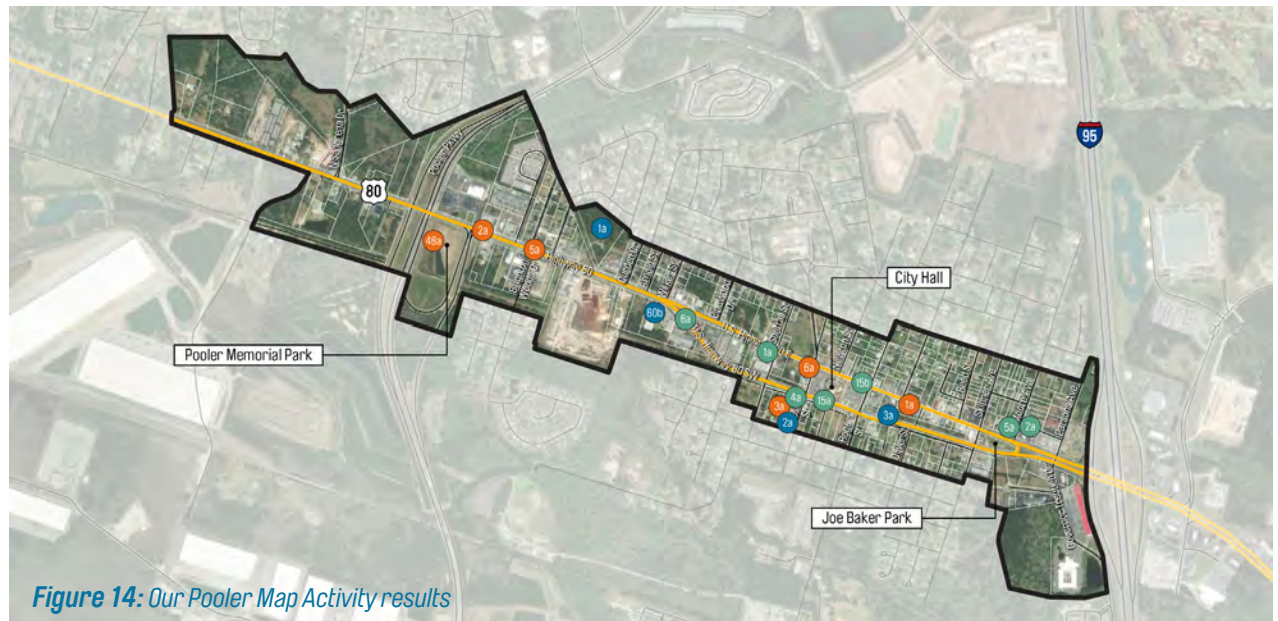


Figure 14: Our Pooler Map Activity results

# PUBLIC KICK-OFF MEETING

## VISUAL PREFERENCE BALL TOSS SURVEY

The planning team set up 5 boards with improvement elements and baskets in front of them. Participants were asked to toss a ball in the basket of the element they thought would make the most impact in improving Pooler's Main Street.



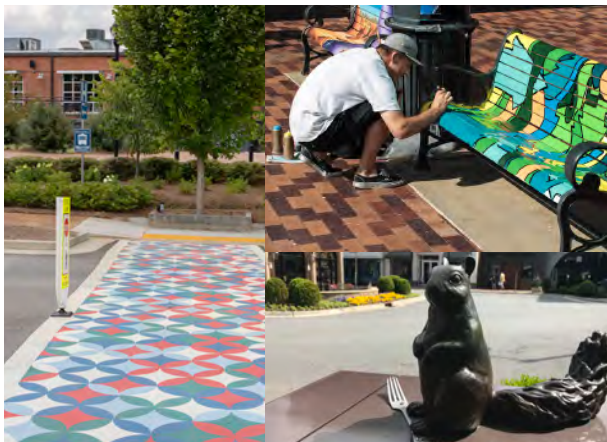
Historic Main Street Style Development



Improve Sidewalks / Pedestrian Safety



Activate Parks with more Community Events



Creative Branding / Placemaking



New Housing Types

### BALL TOSS RESULTS

Historic main street style development	17
Improve sidewalks / pedestrian safety	13
Activate parks with more community events	13
Creative branding / Placemaking	7
New housing types	4

## SWOT ANALYSIS

Participants were asked what the greatest Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats are in the study area and placed their answers on the corresponding boards. Below are the public comments received:

<b>STRENGTHS</b> Characteristics that add to the quality of life on Main Street and should be preserved.	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> Characteristics that detract from the quality of life and should be addressed.	<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> Features that could become strengths on Main Street if they are enhanced.	<b>THREATS</b> Features that could become weaknesses on Main Street if not addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community feels very safe</li> <li>• Visibility</li> <li>• There is a lot of available land</li> <li>• Visiting all the local businesses that have been around a long time</li> <li>• Small town = sense of community</li> <li>• Geographic location</li> <li>• The new Chamber of Commerce area is beautiful</li> <li>• Traditional grid layout</li> <li>• The Pooler community has the desire to figure out a future plan</li> <li>• Rich history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of traffic from existing businesses</li> <li>• Lack of walkability</li> <li>• No pedestrian walk or bike path</li> <li>• Parking availability</li> <li>• Sidewalks</li> <li>• Impacts on residents if typical zoning transitions are not used</li> <li>• Truck traffic on US-80</li> <li>• Narrow roads</li> <li>• Home values dropping</li> <li>• Highway 80 is often used as a bypass when 95 or Pooler Pkwy is backed up</li> <li>• Need sidewalks and lantern style lighting along the corridor</li> <li>• Land underutilized due to off street parking</li> <li>• Speed limit on Highway 80 is 35 MPH</li> <li>• Small businesses have no parking</li> <li>• Memorial Park has no accessible parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lamps on Main Street should have community banners attached to create a sense of place</li> <li>• Public parks</li> <li>• Build upon existing incomplete sidewalks</li> <li>• Capitalize on existing businesses and their influences, large and small</li> <li>• Community events for all ages</li> <li>• Continue the effort and add more crosswalks</li> <li>• The library</li> <li>• More street facing development</li> <li>• More street landscaping like large trees for shade</li> <li>• More café's and small restaurants</li> <li>• Raised crosswalks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old aging buildings</li> <li>• 18 wheeler traffic on Highway 80</li> <li>• Increased criminal activity</li> <li>• New warehouse developments putting more trucks on the street</li> <li>• Increased traffic on streets in residential neighborhoods especially near the Highway 80 split</li> <li>• Resistance to change</li> <li>• Growing too fast</li> <li>• Cost per square ft for new business</li> <li>• Multi-story buildings near residents = residents losing privacy</li> </ul>



# STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

## THE CITY IDENTIFIED 50 STAKEHOLDERS.

Stakeholder interviews allow the planning team to identify the specific needs, priorities, and concerns of different stakeholders. Through these conversations, the team can gain a deeper understanding of the issues that are most important to the community.

The stakeholders were identified by the City of Pooler based on their roles in the community. The members included local business owners, council members, and community group leaders. The planning team individually interviewed selected stakeholders virtually the week before the 3-Day Workshop. During the 3-Day Workshop, the team held two in person group interviews. The first group consisted of local business owners in the study area to gather their input on market conditions and future predictions of Pooler. The second group included local community leaders of churches, schools, and libraries.

Right: Quotes from key stakeholders.



# ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey was available from March 30, 2023 through May 11, 2023.

## A TOTAL OF 202 SURVEY RESPONSES WERE RECEIVED

The survey included questions about how people use Main Street Pooler today, what people want to see more of, what should be prioritized to revitalize Main Street, and where transportation improvements are needed. One of the first questions in the survey was “How long have you lived in Pooler?”. About 35% responded “0–5 years” and 23% of the respondents said “11–20 years”.

There was an optional set of questions that asked respondents about their demographic background. About 96% of survey takers answered the optional demographics section. Based on the feedback received, a mix of age groups participated in the survey, however, 86% of respondents are White/Caucasian. About 65% of respondents earn \$75,000 or more a year. Most of respondents are part of a two-person household (45%) and approximately 19% are part of a four-person household. The infographics on the following pages illustrate the survey results.

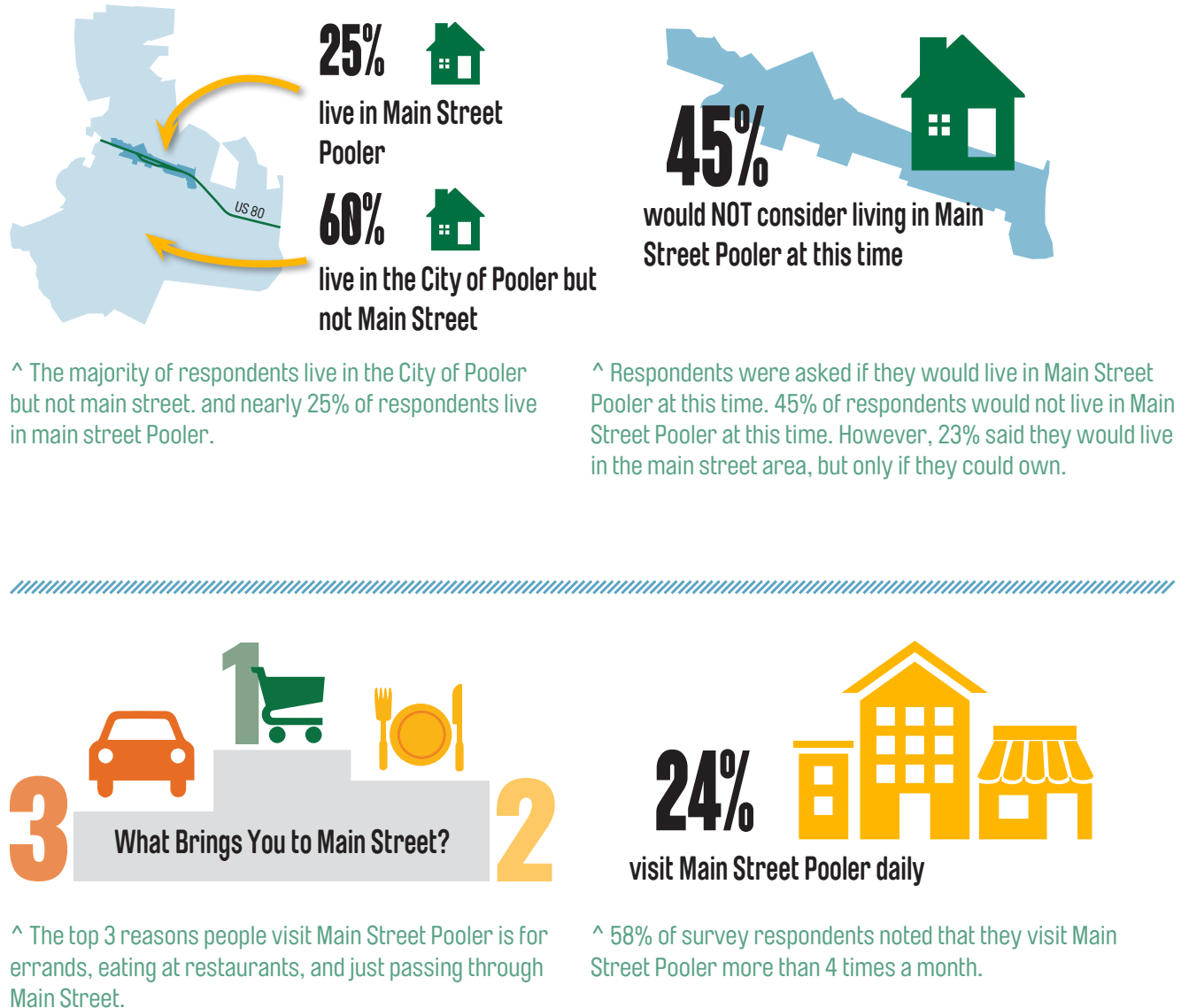
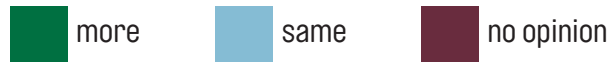


Figure 15: Online survey results

# ONLINE SURVEY

## MORE, THE SAME, OR NO OPINION?

Multiple questions asked what respondents would like to see more or the same of in Main Street Pooler, or if they had no opinion.

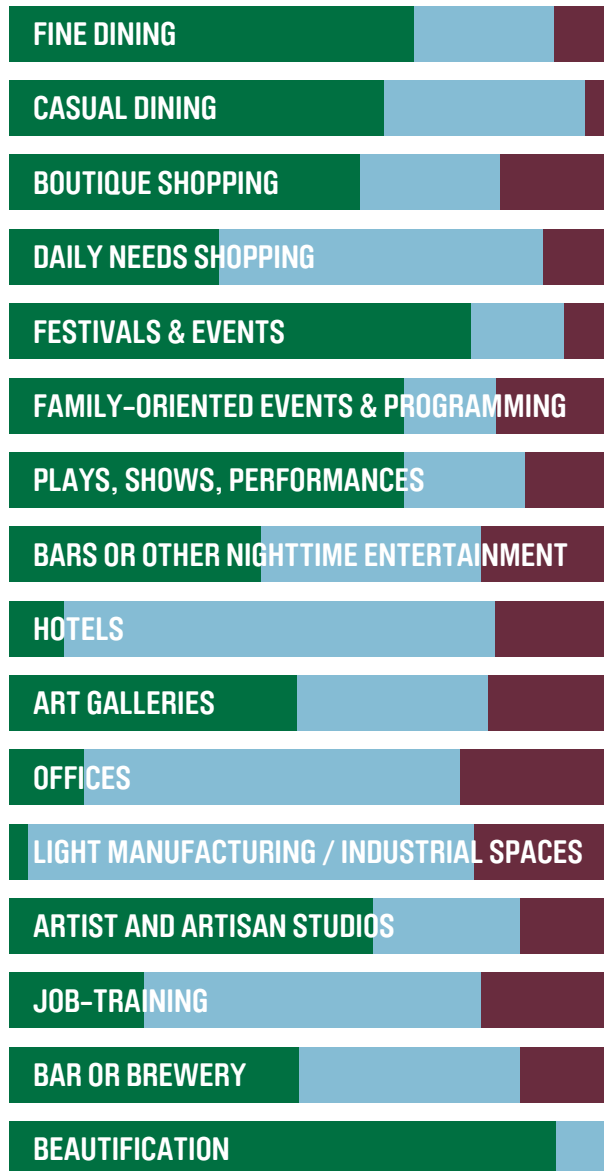


The first set of questions were based on business types on Main Street. Respondents wanted to see more of fine dining, casual dining, boutique shopping, festivals and events, family oriented events, plays/performances, bars and nightlife, art galleries, artisan studios, bar or breweries, and beautification. Respondents wanted to see the same of daily needs shopping, hotels, offices, industrial spaces and job-training.

The second set of questions were based on different housing types. Most respondents wanted the same for single-family homes, apartments condos, housing for seniors, and townhomes. However, they wanted to see more of places for children to play, places to walk or bike, outdoor recreation areas, parks, new street connections, new sidewalks, and streetscape improvements.



## MAIN STREET BUSINESS TYPES



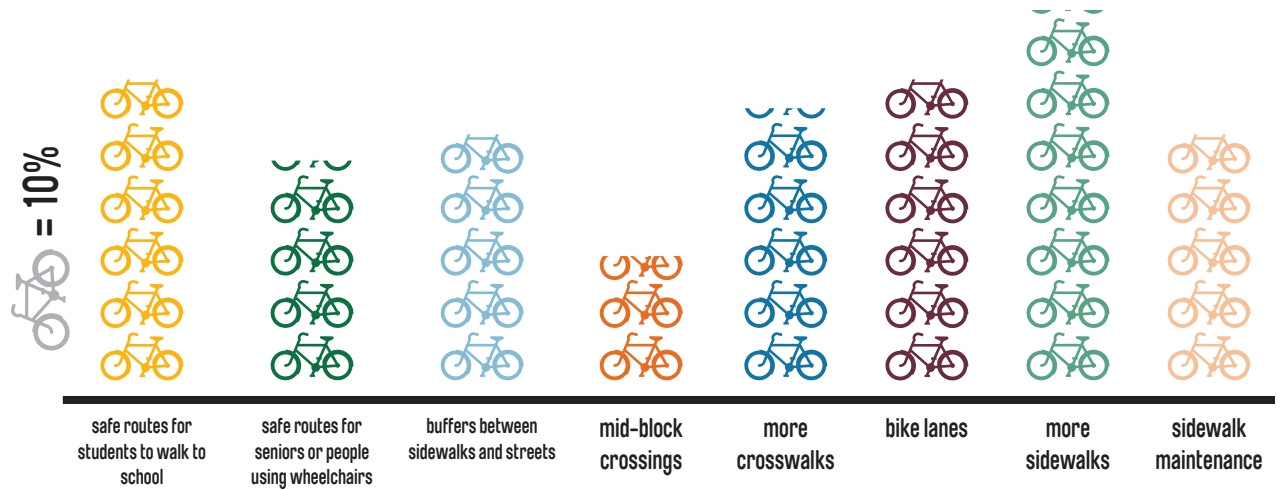
## HOUSING AND QUALITY OF LIFE



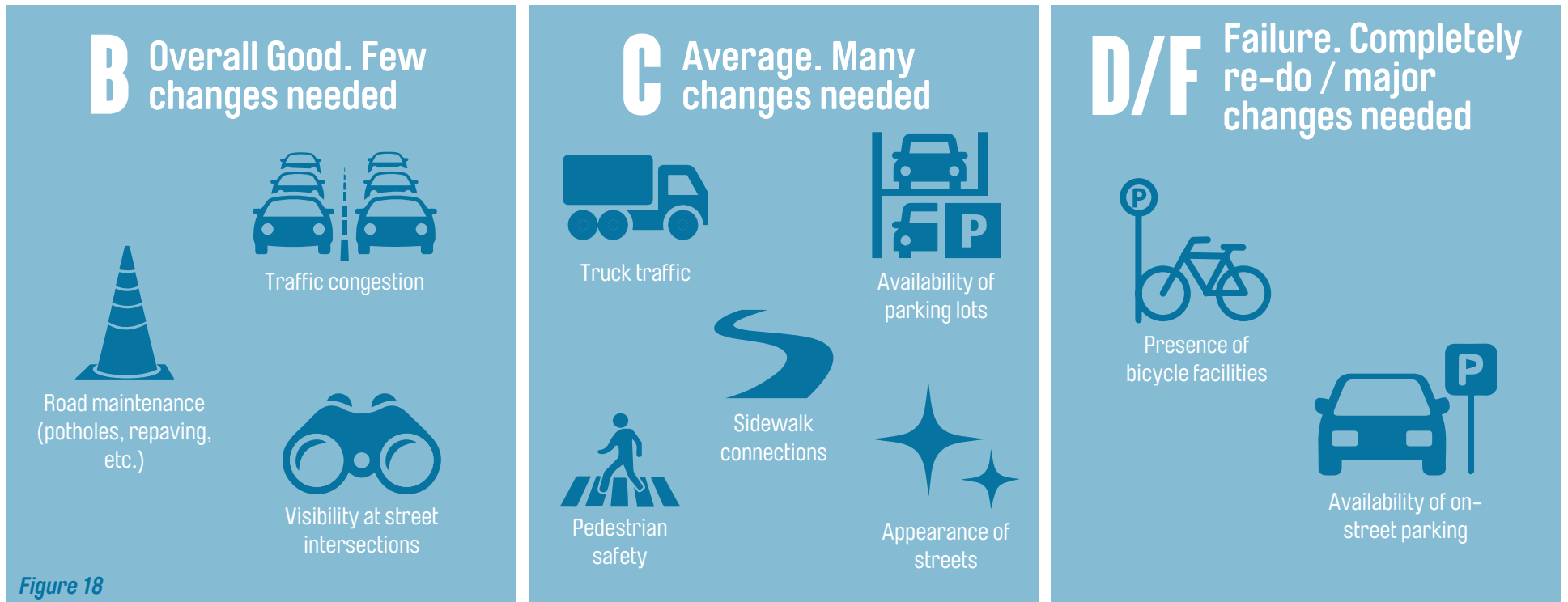
Figure 16

## TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Respondents were asked to grade different components of Main Streets transportation and mobility system. Majority of the components were graded as a “C” indicating they are average and many changes are needed. Only three components were given a “B” which were traffic congestion, road maintenance, and visibility at street sections. The components that received failing grades were presence of bicycle facilities and availability of on-street parking. No components received a perfect grade.



**Figure 17:** Respondents were asked what mobility improvements could make it easier to get around Main Street. The majority of respondents said more sidewalks, about 73%. Other answers included public transportation and protected bike lanes and sidewalks.



**Figure 18**

# 3-DAY DESIGN WORKSHOP

The 3-Day Design Workshop was held from May 2 through May 4, 2023 at Pooler's City Hall. The planning team held a public walking tour on May 2, 2023 at 5:30 PM and met in front of City Hall. There were approximately 12 walkers in attendance and the group walked to 5 different locations along Main Street. The planning team shared with the attendees the areas that lacked pedestrian safety, where park activation was needed, existing building frontage, and streetscape improvement ideas.

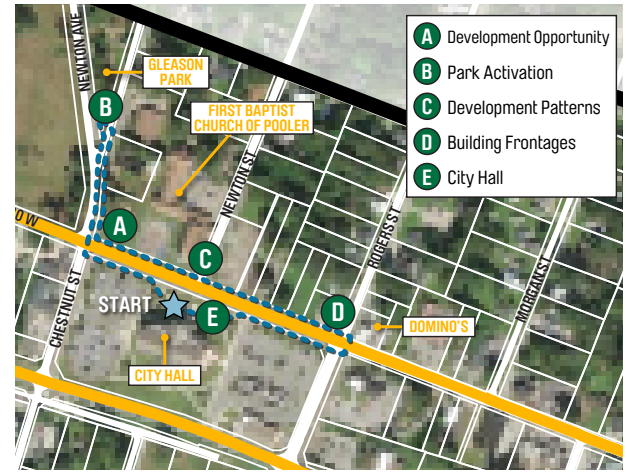
The team held open workshop hours in the Community Room at City Hall where members of the community were invited to sit down with the planning team to give input on the concept plans being developed and to learn more about the planning process. The planning team held a Public Open House on the last day of the Workshop that included a presentation with the survey results to date, workshop findings, and the preliminary branding and concept plans developed over the three day workshop. In addition to the presentation, 3 activity boards were put up around the room for attendees to provide feedback on. The boards included:

- The proposed Framework Plan
- A Visual Preference Survey for different types of development on Main Street
- Preliminary wayfinding concepts

## THE RESULTS

Attendees of the Walking Tour were given handouts with the walking route and a space to write feedback for each stop. The planning team and the attendees also engaged in a small group discussion. Below are comments from the participants:

- Add crosswalk hawks on Highway 80 to increase pedestrian safety.
- Add more speed limit signs on Highway 80.
- Create landscape barriers and street trees between Highway 80 and the sidewalks.
- Activate Main Street to create a vibrant Pooler.
- The community needs accessible parks that are safe and away from busy roads.



Top: Image from the walking tour at the Gleason Park stop.

Bottom: Walking tour map that included the five stops.  
Left: The handouts provided to each walking tour attendee



The Visual Preference Survey allowed participants to place dots on images that reflected their development preferences for the draft framework plan, development types in each district, and wayfinding concepts.

Three signage families were presented to the public for their opinion. Each family consisted of two directional signs and a gateway sign for the main street area. The concepts were developed based on Pooler's brand identity and color palette. Participants preferred options 1 and 2, which both have a traditional style, over the more contemporary signage family, option 3.

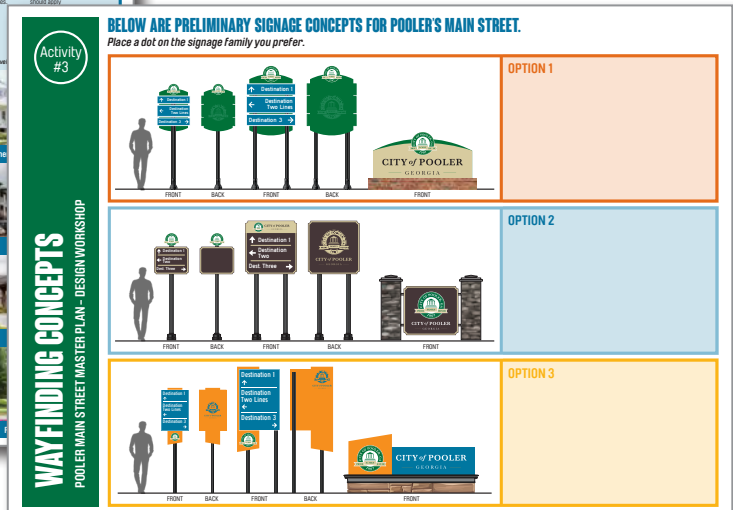
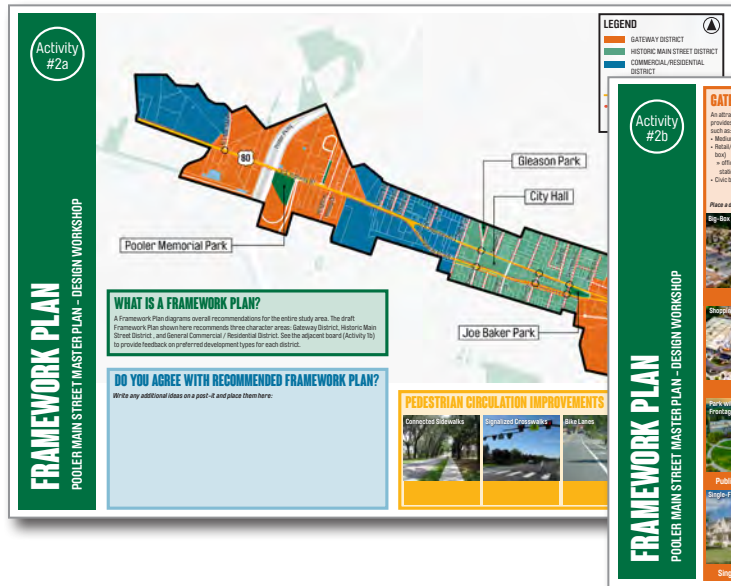
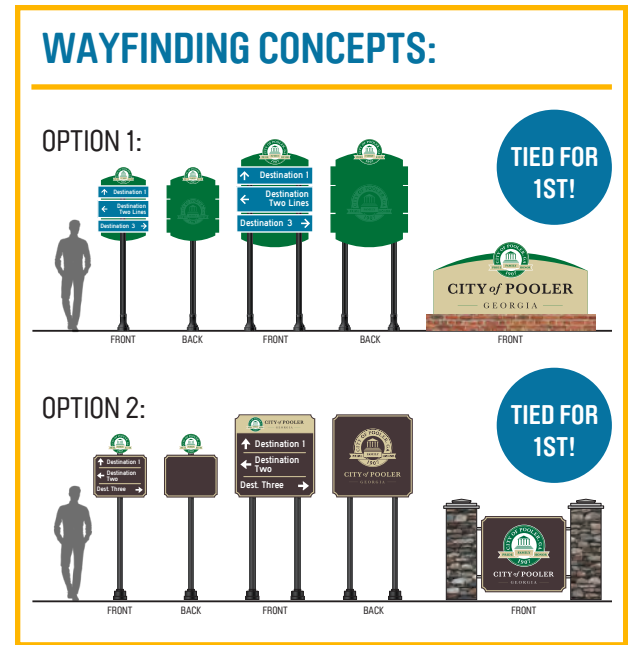
The concepts while simple in design, were selected to help determine the preferred style and color

combination. The results of this activity along with general feedback from the public process will help direct the preferred wayfinding option for Main Street Pooler.

The draft framework plan board displayed the study area and the three proposed districts: the Gateway District, Historic Main Street, and the Commercial/Residential District.

Top Right: The wayfinding concepts preferred by attendees

Bottom: Draft Framework Plan, Visual Preference Survey and Wayfinding activity boards presented to the public



# TOP-RATED VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY IMAGES FOR DEVELOPMENT

## GATEWAY DISTRICT

An attractive suburban form that provides areas suitable for uses such as:

- Medium to high density residential
- Retail/commercial such as office, restaurants, gas stations, and big box retailers.
- Civic buildings



## HISTORIC MAIN STREET

A walkable core that provides areas suitable for uses such as:

- Low to medium density residential
- Small scale mixed-use, retail/commercial, and office buildings
- Civic buildings



## COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

A transitional district that provides areas suitable for uses such as:

- Medium to high density residential
- Includes mixed-use, retail/commercial, and office uses
- Civic buildings

Adaptive Reuse - Existing Commercial



Cottage Court-Residential



SECOND FAVORITE!

Garden Apartments



Assisted Senior-Living



Commercial House



Small Scale Mixed-Use



Community Park/Playground



FAVORITE!

## PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION IMPROVEMENTS

Connected Sidewalks



FAVORITE!

Signalized Crosswalks



SECOND FAVORITE!

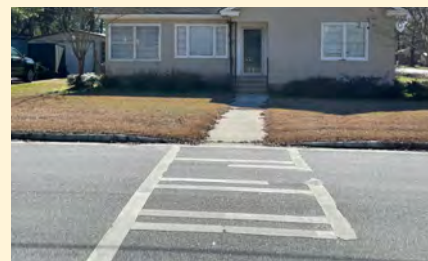
Bike Lanes



Multi-Use Path



## EXISTING CIRCULATION CONDITIONS





# DRAFT PLAN OPEN HOUSE

The Draft Plan Open House was held on July 27, 2023 at Pooler's City Hall. The Open House consisted of a introductory presentation and 6 boards displaying the draft recommendations for public comment. The boards included:

- Framework Plan
- Pooler Central Concept Plan
- Pooler Loop Concept Plan
- Parks & Open Spaces Plan
- Transportation Plan

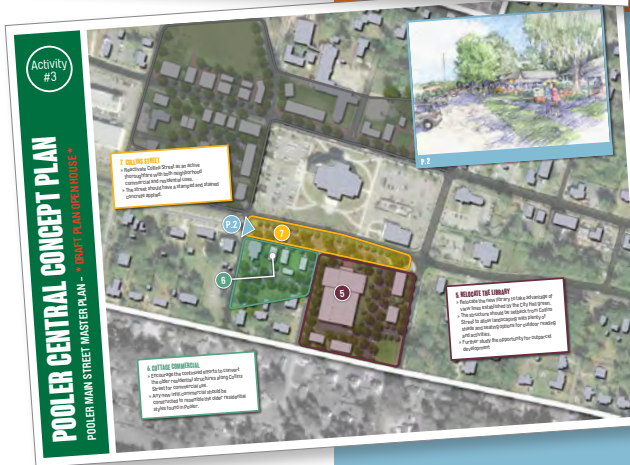
Below: Attendees of the Draft Plan Open House.



“Create usable green spaces.”



“Create safe bicycle paths!”



“Keep the library in close proximity to Main Street.”

**Activity #4**

**POOLER LOOP CONCEPT PLAN**  
POOLER MAIN STREET MASTER PLAN - DRAFT PLAN OPEN HOUSE \*

**1. IMPROVING VISIBILITY**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

**2. IMPROVING VISIBILITY AT THE INTERSECTION**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

**3. IMPROVING VISIBILITY AT THE INTERSECTION**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

**4. IMPROVING VISIBILITY AT THE INTERSECTION**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

“Create synergy between Main Street and the residential area.”

“Include historical directional signage”

“I like the idea of new gateways signs and street banners.”

**Activity #5**

**PARKS & OPEN SPACES PLAN**  
POOLER MAIN STREET MASTER PLAN - DRAFT PLAN OPEN HOUSE \*

**1. MEET WITHIN VISIBILITY**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

**2. MEET WITHIN VISIBILITY**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

**3. MEET WITHIN VISIBILITY**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

**4. MEET WITHIN VISIBILITY**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

“Weekly farmers market at Memorial Park!”

“We need a playground!”

**Activity #6**

**TRANSPORTATION PLAN**  
POOLER MAIN STREET MASTER PLAN - DRAFT PLAN OPEN HOUSE \*

**1. MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

**2. MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80**

- The goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- Through the use of traffic signals and other measures, the goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.
- This goal is to improve visibility at the intersection.

“Rename US 80 to something more inviting and less rural sounding. Something more appropriate to a small city downtown.”

“Sidewalks, trees and ADA parking would be welcome!”



3

# RECOMMENDATIONS



Vision + Goals	40
Framework Plan	42
Concept Plan	44
Key Opportunities	46
Parks and Open Space Plan	54
Business Development	56
Transportation Improvements	58
Street Sections	60

# VISION + GOALS

## VISION

Situated near the City of Savannah and Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport, Pooler's Main Street area has seen recent growth and is projected to continue that growth. The Vision seeks to honor Pooler's history by preserving its character, and create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment that attracts residents, businesses, and visitors.

## GOALS

The Goals (page 41) are created based on input during stakeholder interviews, the Public Kick-Off Meeting, and the Public 3-Day Workshop. The specific goals address the vision and helped guide the creation of the Framework Plan (page 42) and the Concept Plans (pages 44 to 53), each representing a way the goals can be incorporated. In doing so, Pooler may establish a thriving Main Street that reestablishes the heart of the community creating a source of pride for its residents.



Right: The old Pooler Theatre on Highway 80 circa 1950's. The theatre is no longer there.

Top Left: First Baptist Church of Pooler on Highway 80 was founded in 1885.

Bottom Left: Beery's Drug Store was a popular store on Highway 80 in the 1950's. The store is no longer there.

## **VISION**

A thriving revitalized Main Street built on its small-town history and charm, with a connected pedestrian-friendly environment and active business community.

## **DESIGN AND POLICY GOALS**

**DESIGN A COMFORTABLE  
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FOR  
PEOPLE OF ALL ABILITY LEVELS.**

**ENSURE APPROPRIATE  
TRANSITION BETWEEN SINGLE-  
FAMILY AREAS AND NEW  
DEVELOPMENT.**

**CREATE USABLE PUBLIC SPACES  
AND ENCOURAGE USAGE AT  
PARKS.**

**ENSURE THAT POLICIES  
SUPPORT DESIRED BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT GROWTH OF  
MAIN STREET.**

**PROTECT HISTORIC STRUCTURES  
AND ENCOURAGE THEIR  
REHABILITATION WHERE  
FEASIBLE.**

**PROMOTE COMPACT INFILL  
DEVELOPMENT TO SERVE THE  
COMMUNITY AND INCREASE THE  
RESIDENTIAL POPULATION.**

# FRAMEWORK PLAN

The following Framework Plan sets forth various land use categories related to the Main Street study area. This Framework Plan refers to certain land use designations as they exist in the City's Comprehensive Plan (see pg 12-15). This framework refines and elaborates on the elements identified within the Future Land Use and Character Maps, helping to better demonstrate the desired land use patterns and character for Pooler's Main Street.

The following framework plan is only a recommendation of this study based on community and stakeholder feedback and does not replace or override the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The City may at its discretion seek to amend the Future Land Use Map or other regulations to reflect potential plan recommendations.

## SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL

Provides for areas that are suitable for low-intensity residential uses, such as single-family detached housing

- Development in this area should:
  - \* Utilize historic architectural types appropriate to the use
  - \* Utilize similar design features related to fenestration, foundations, and roofs
  - \* Utilize historic lot sizes, including lot width
  - \* Maintain consistent setbacks with adjacent properties

## GENERAL RESIDENTIAL

Provides for areas that are suitable for single family detached housing and moderate-intensity residential development, such as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhouses, cottage court developments, garden-style apartments, and other compatible uses. Civic and institutional uses should also be considered

- Development in this area should:

- \* Utilize historic architectural types appropriate to the use
- \* Utilize similar design features related to fenestration, foundations, and roofs
- \* Utilize historic lot sizes, including lot width, where appropriate
- \* Maintain consistent setbacks with adjacent properties, where appropriate
- \* Front a public street or centered around a common greenspace
- \* Provide appropriate buffering/screening between less intense residential uses
- \* Be of an appropriate scale and massing related to nearby uses

## COMMERCIAL / MIXED-USE

Provides for areas that are suitable for commercial and mixed-use development consistent with traditional main street uses. Example uses include restaurants, retail stores, offices, mixed-use residential, and other related uses.

- Development in this area should:
  - \* Utilize historic architectural types appropriate to the use
  - \* Orient buildings towards and adjacent to the street frontage
  - \* Provide parking to the rear of the building, or the side as necessary
  - \* Limit the use of drive-through services
  - \* Include active uses, such as retail or restaurant, along the street corridor and passive uses, office or residence, to the rear and/or upper-stories of buildings

## COMMERCIAL / MULTI-FAMILY

Provides for areas that are suitable for more intense development, such as shopping plazas, office parks, multi-story hotels, gas stations, and multi-family development, in a more traditional suburban style. Mixed-use development is encouraged.

- Development in this area should:
  - \* Utilize historic architectural types appropriate to the use
  - \* Orient buildings towards the street frontage and/or around publicly accessible greenspace
  - \* Provide parking to the rear or side of the building, or screened from the street if provided to the front
  - \* Broadly allow the use of drive-through services so long as they are appropriately screened

## COMMERCIAL COTTAGE

Provides for areas along Main Street and Collins Street that are suitable for the adaptive reuse of residential dwellings to accommodate a mix of commercial and retail uses, such as personal services, offices, restaurant, or other low-impact commercial uses. Live/Work units should be considered, as well as residential mixed-use.

New Commercial development should follow one of the various residential building types found in Pooler prior to 1949.

## CIVIC/INSTITUTION

Provides for civic and institutional uses such as City Hall, Municipal Court, and Pooler Library.

## INDUSTRIAL

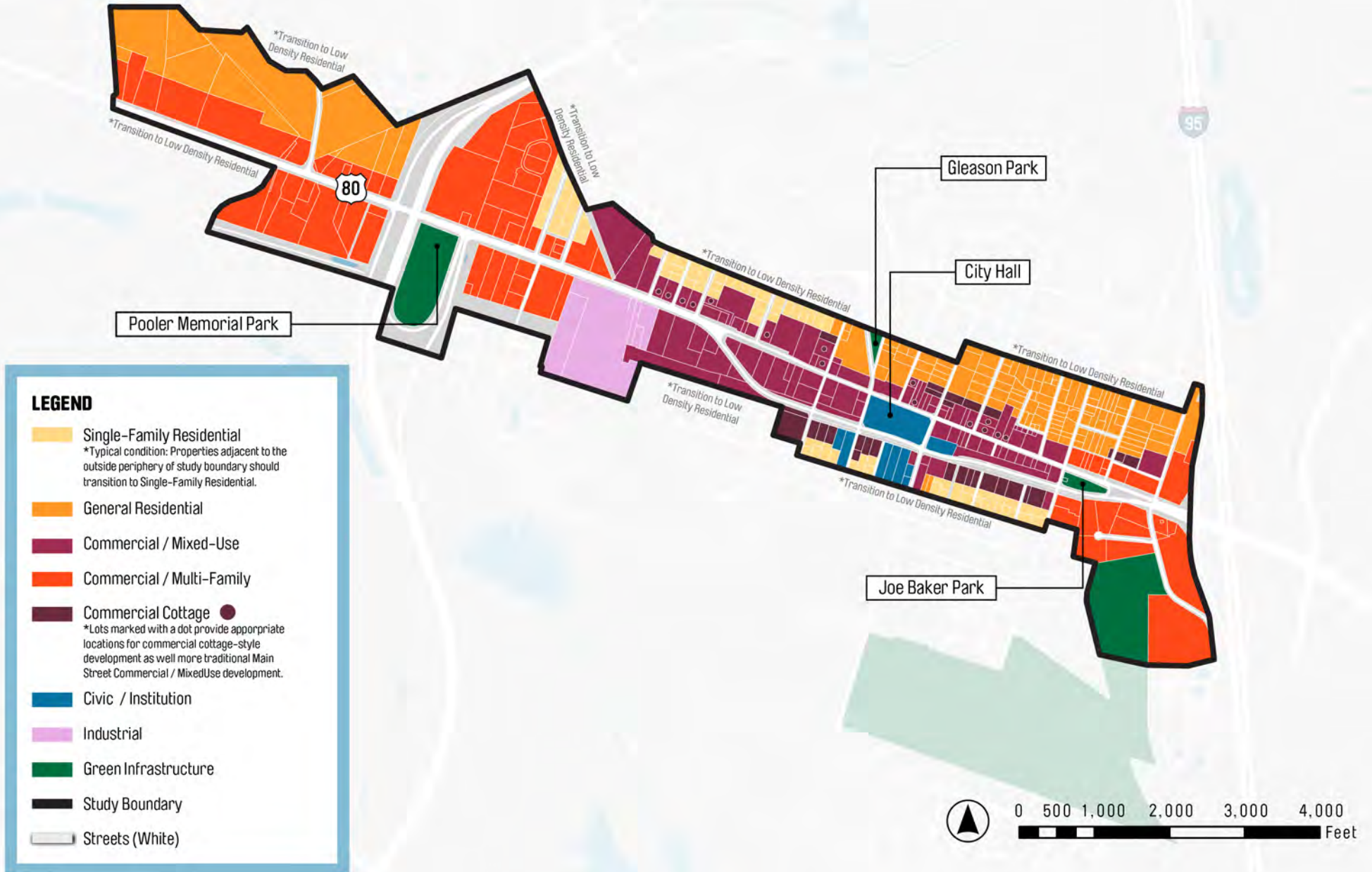
Provides for areas that are suitable for industrial land uses, and in the context of this framework plan, considers the existing lumber yard and the continuance of such use.

## GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Provides for areas suitable for parks, greenspace, or other natural areas.

# FRAMEWORK PLAN

Figure 19





# CONCEPT PLAN

The concept plan as proposed provides possibilities for how redevelopment could occur and is for illustrative purposes only. The concept plan assumes development would occur only through participation and cooperation between landowners, developers, and the City. In consideration of the possibilities for redevelopment along Main Street, appropriate phasing would be critical to the plan's success.

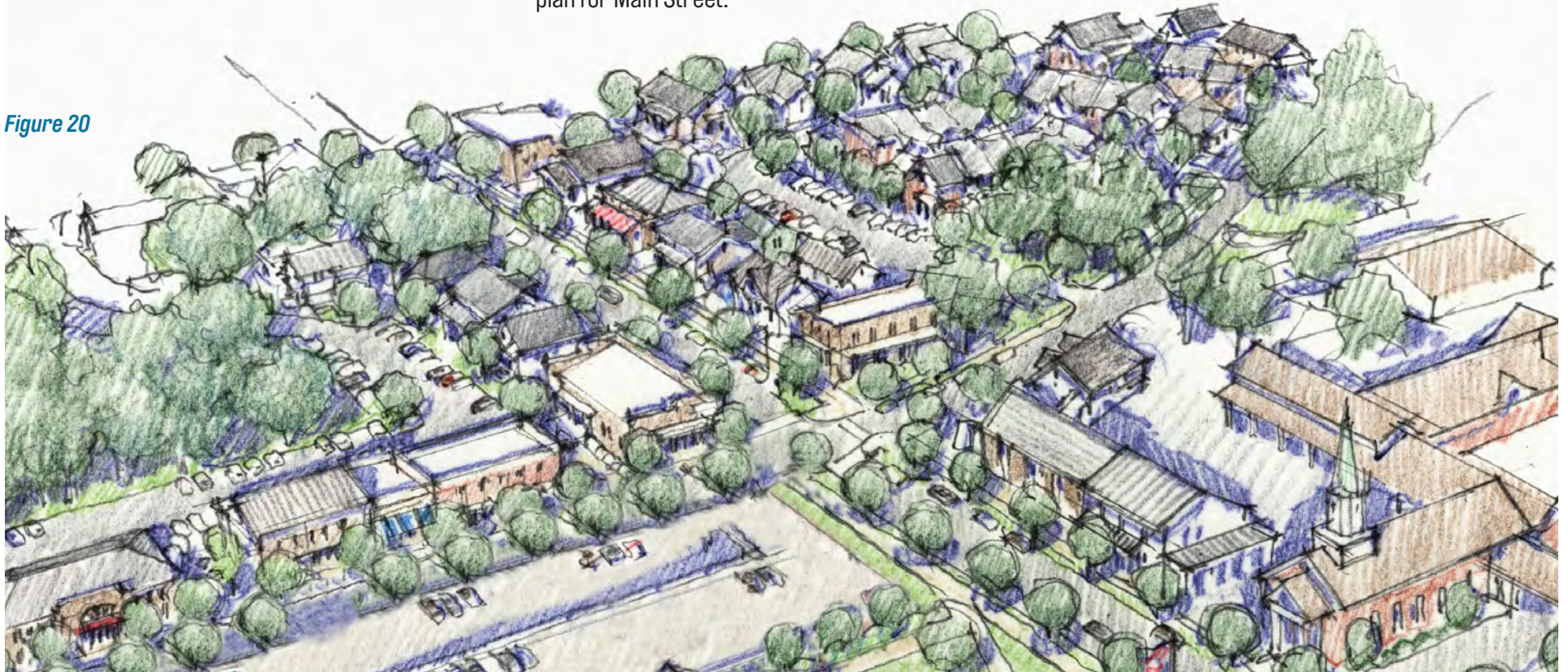
Created over the 3-Day Public Workshop and refined based upon input, the Main Street Concept Plan identifies three areas within the Main Street core that offer unique design opportunities to reactivate the location of Pooler's Historic Main Street.

The goal of this concept plan is to illustrate potential possibilities for appropriate development consistent with the vision, goals, and framework plan for Main Street.

In addition to providing housing options not currently offered on Main Street, the plan recommends strategically placed small office/retail spaces, and improved streetscapes for appropriate pedestrian and improved vehicular connectivity throughout the corridor.

This plan suggests the following opportunities to reinforce and revitalize Main Street. The following pages take a closer look at key opportunities.

Figure 20



### 1. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF POOLER

- » Consider relocation of surface parking on campus.
- » Consider opportunity for leasable income exists at two locations: The corner of N Chestnut Street and Main Street and at N Newton Street and Main Street.

### 2. LOW IMPACT RETAIL

- » Reestablish Main Street with 2–3 story mixed-use structures that provide ground floor uses and office or residential above.
- » Implement traffic calming measures along Main Street, signifying to the driver they have entered a pedestrian friendly area.

### 3. COTTAGE COMMERCIAL

- » Encourage rehabilitation and conversion of existing residential structures on Main Street and Collins Street for commercial or retail use.
- » New construction that resembles residential architecture found in the area is also encouraged for commercial use.

### 4. RESIDENTIAL INFILL

- » Commercial/mixed-use buildings should only be at Main Street frontage.
- » This area should be developed as single family residential – allowing for an appropriate transition from Main Street commercial.

### 5. RELOCATE THE LIBRARY

- » Relocate the new library to take advantage of view lines established by the City Hall green.
- » The structure should be setback from Collins Street to allow landscaping with plenty of shade and seating options for outdoor reading and activities.
- » Further study the opportunity for outparcel development

### 6. COTTAGE COMMERCIAL

- » Encourage the continued efforts to convert the older residential structures along Collins Street for commercial use.
- » Any new infill commercial should be constructed to resemble the older residential styles found in Pooler.

### 7. COLLINS STREET

- » Reactivate Collins Street as an active thoroughfare with both neighborhood commercial and residential uses.
- » The street should have a stamped and stained concrete applied.

### A. APPLY NEW GATEWAY SIGNS

- » Currently, there is only the Pooler sign in the triangle on westbound 80 at the beginning of the Pooler loop.
- » Apply new gateway signs on Highway 80 East and West.



### 8. COMMERCIAL CLUSTER

- » The plan recommends a “hub” type development at two locations.
- » Utilizing property owned by City of Pooler along US80 East for parking lots allows for infill development and revitalization of existing structures along Main Street (US80 West).
- » This development type provides opportunity for small retail and restaurant startups to be grouped around common open spaces.

### 9. POOLER LOOP (PHASE 2)

- » Efforts should be made to redevelop aging sites.
- » Fronting a 2–3 floor office/commercial building at the corner of Skinner Avenue and Main Street will assist in reactivating the park and also establish a gateway building for Main Street.

### B. APPLY BANNERS ALONG MAIN STREET

- » Banners can help to identify key character districts within a community and solidify a community or district brand.



Figure 21

SCALE: NTS

# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## 1 // FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF POOLER

By relocating the First Baptist Church's surface parking on campus, the opportunity to establish leasable income exists at two locations. The corner of N Chestnut Street and Main Street or at N Newton Street and Main Street.

## 2 // LOW IMPACT RETAIL

The intent of this plan is to capture as much of Pooler's future retail and restaurant demand as possible along Main Street and along the streets that bisect the central loop where City Hall is located.

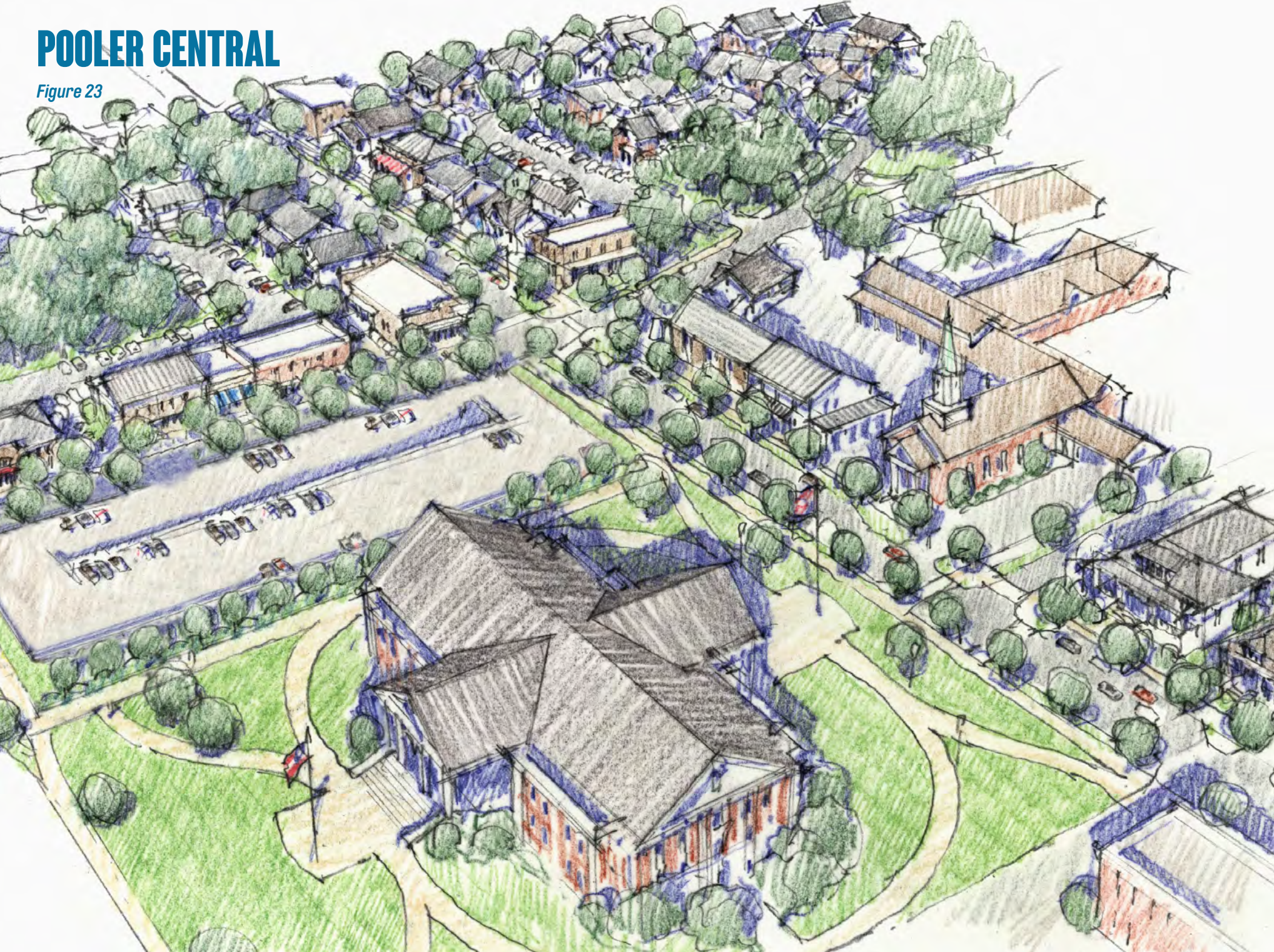
Similar to the previous Vision Plan completed in 2015, the Pooler Main Street Study envisions reestablishing the historic location of the Main Street with 2-3 story mixed-use structures that provide active ground floor uses and office or residential above as applicable. Opportunities for small mixed-use and commercial infill exists on public and privately owned property.

This study recommends traffic calming along Main Street, signifying to the driver they have entered a pedestrian friendly Main Street. Traffic calming techniques should be studied with GDOT to complement the proposed pedestrian scaled frontages along Main Street as illustrated in this plan such as landscaping strips and reduction of travel lane widths.



# POOLER CENTRAL

Figure 23



### 3 // COTTAGE COMMERCIAL

Based on Main Streets historic building pattern, single family residential shared Main Street frontage along with the commercial uses. So to retain authenticity, this study encourages the continued effort to convert these structures for commercial or retail use (including food and beverage establishments).

New construction that resembles residential architecture found in the area is also envisioned for commercial use.



Top Left: Cottage commercial house – Milton, Georgia

Bottom Right: New small scale commercial buildings – Downtown Duluth, Georgia

Top Right: Single-Family residential – Baldwin Park, Florida

Middle Right: Single-Family residential – Habersham, South Carolina

### 4 // RESIDENTIAL INFILL

Just north of Main Street are established residential neighborhoods, typically starting one to three parcels in, it is critical to maintain an appropriate transition from Main Street mixed-use/commercial to pure residential uses.

Opportunity for single family infill exists through the study area. The concept plan in Figure 24 identifies how the vacant parcel may be redeveloped by placing commercial/mixed-use buildings at the Main Street frontage and residential uses fronting the perpendicular streets off Main Street, allowing the development to blend into the established environment.

The proposed residential fronting onto the park also helps activate the underutilized public amenity as well as establish an additional level of security by knowing more people are casually watching after the space.



Figure 24

Figure 19



## 5 // RELOCATE LIBRARY

Prior to this study the City of Pooler purchased land to assist in the relocation of the current Pooler Library located at the corner of Rodgers and Main Street east.

The concept below illustrates how a new library may be sited on the property so to take advantage of view lines established by the City Hall green, allowing opportunity for the library to be viewed by pedestrians on the north side of Main Street.

Also, because the area is more residential in nature, the structure should be setback from Collins Street to allow for lush landscaping with plenty of shade and seating options for outdoor reading and activities.

## 6 // COTTAGE COMMERCIAL

Providing a unique commercial opportunity, this study encourages the continued efforts to convert the older residential structures along Collins Street for commercial use. Any new infill commercial should be constructed to resemble the older residential styles found in Pooler.

## 7 // COLLINS STREET

Today Collins Street may be overlooked by many however it has a unique story to tell and the experience it can offer is just as interesting.

Currently segmented and acting as a slip lane due to the rerouting of US 80, Collins Street was once an active thoroughfare with both neighborhood

commercial and residential uses.

While this study encourages the reactivation of Collins Street, the streetscape should remain rural in aesthetic with low impact materials and drainage swells. Because of it's adjacency to US80, if this area was paved with vertical curbs it would detract from the unique pedestrian-friendly in-town experience that is currently attainable.

Additional design details, including a street section, are provided on Page 62.



# COLLINS STREET

Figure 26





## 8 // COMMERCIAL CLUSTER

The rerouting of US80 into one way pairs created challenging parcels for redevelopment between the east and west bound traffic. The area between Oliver Street and Skinner Avenue was identified for its unique placemaking potential. Utilizing property owned by City of Pooler along US80 East for shared pervious, low-impact material parking lots allows for infill development and revitalization of existing structures along Main Street (US80 West).

Because it is unlikely for the properties to be re-developed with sidewalk oriented commercial, the concept plan recommends a “hub” type development at two locations. Offering smaller commercial

footprints then proposed at Pooler Central, this development type provides opportunity for small retail and restaurant startups to be grouped around common open spaces creating an attractive energy for users.

## 9 // POOLER LOOP - PHASE 2

Opportunities exist for redevelopment near Joe Baker Park. Fronting a 2-3 floor office/commercial building at the corner of Skinner Avenue and Main Street will assist in reactivating the park and also establish a gateway building at one of the most predominant corners along Main Street.



# POOLER LOOP

Figure 28



# PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

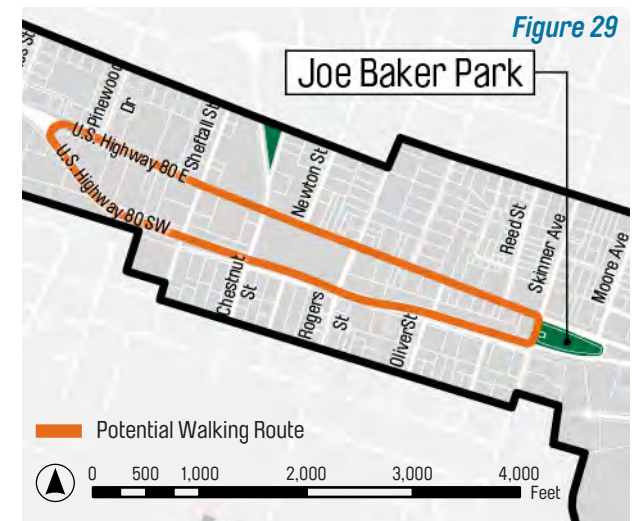
The three parks in the study area are currently not activated because there are no amenities and residents do not feel safe visiting them. The key to increasing park usage is through well planned programming.

## 1. HOST OUTDOOR FITNESS CLASSES AT GLEASON PARK AND JOE BAKER PARK

Partner with a local yoga studio and /or a local gym (CrossFit, Pilates, Barre, etc.) monthly to promote local business and co-host a free community yoga/workout class. The classes could be held at Gleason Park or Joe Baker Park.

## 2. HOST A WALKING GROUP THAT MEETS AT JOE BAKER PARK

Find volunteers to lead a walking group that would meet at Joe Baker Park once a week to walk the entire loop between Main Street/Highway 80 East and West. This is roughly a 1.5 mile walk round trip and attendees have the option to turn around at any point. This group will encourage residents to use Joe Baker Park and create opportunities for people to live a healthy lifestyle.



## CASE STUDIES

### FITNESS IN THE PARK – SAN ANTONIO, TX

The City of San Antonio offers free outdoor fitness classes through their Fitness in the Park program. The program offers boot camp, stroller barre, circuit training, yoga, strength training, walking groups and more. The instructors are either volunteers or instructors from local gyms and studios that they partner with to promote local businesses.



### WE WALK PHL – PHILADELPHIA, PA

The free walking group, We Walk PHL, meets several times a week and meets at various parks. The walking group leaders are recruited from the local community and receive training from the We Walk PHL staff. Each walk covers about a mile at a moderate pace which makes the group attractive to seniors. The goal of the program is to increase park use and create opportunities for people to meet their neighbors.



### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION – BOISE, ID

In partnership with the Boise Urban Garden School and the Foothills Learning Center, the City of Boise offers summer classes to children that focus on environmental education. Children spend class in the gardens outside where they gain hands on experience in a fun environment through garden exploration.



### MUSIC IN THE PARK – ANOKA, MN

The City of Anoka hosts a free Music in the Park event every Wednesday from June through August. Local Anoka musicians take the stage to perform for residents and visitors for 2 hours. Attendees bring their own lawn chairs, blankets, and picnic baskets. They strive to partner with local food trucks and concessions to attendees can grab food while they are enjoying the music.



### 3. ADD NATIVE LANDSCAPING AT POOLER MEMORIAL PARK

Focus on landscape beautification by adding a mostly native plant palette that provides seasonal interest. Native plants provide habitat and increase biodiversity. Establish a routine maintenance schedule to regularly clear out invasive plants and keep plants well managed.

### 4. HOST A FREE SUMMER CONCERT SERIES AT POOLER MEMORIAL PARK

Host a family friendly Summer Concert Series at Pooler Memorial Park. Seek local musicians to perform once a month during the summer. Attendees should be encouraged to bring a picnic blanket, lawn chairs and coolers. Partnering with local restaurants and/or food trucks will provide food for attendees and market the local businesses.

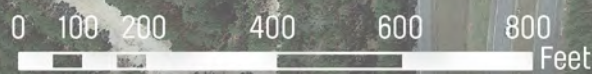


CREATE PARKING LOT FOR EASY ACCESS

ADD NATIVE LANDSCAPING

FREE CONCERT SERIES AT MEMORIAL PARK

Figure 30



# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The recommendations below are based on community input, team observations during the project, as well as the comprehensive market analysis. The first series of strategies are focused on solidifying the business environment in the study area while the second focus on promoting and marketing Main Street and larger community.

## 1. ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION FROM POOLER DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The City should encourage the active participation of the Pooler Development Authority (PDA) in pursuing redevelopment activity in the main street district.

## 2. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN MAIN STREET ORGANIZATIONS

The PDA and City should seek becoming affiliated with the Georgia Main Street program, a statewide initiative to reinvigorate aging downtowns, and the Georgia Downtown Association.

## 3. ENCOURAGE REDEVELOPMENT OF UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES THROUGH INCENTIVES

There are a number of vacant and underutilized properties throughout the study area. These properties have the potential to be redeveloped for retail/residential mixed-use, cottage commercial, and other infill development. The City and PDA

should create and establish incentives encouraging and prioritizing the re-use and redevelopment of underutilized properties along Main Street.

## 4. ADVERTISE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Pooler Chamber of Commerce should coordinate with the PDA and City to create an economic development marketing package with any available incentives, market data, and opportunity sites along Main Street for existing and prospective businesses and property owners.

## 5. RECRUIT LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES IDENTIFIED AS NEEDED IN THE MARKET ANALYSIS

The Chamber of Commerce should work with partners and stakeholders to target retail recruitment efforts to bring in businesses that are missing on Pooler's Main Street. This includes women's clothing, nursery and garden centers, hardware, specialty foods, and a number of other specialty categories.

## 6. SHARE MARKET DATA WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES AND PARTNERS

The City should work with the Chamber of Commerce and PDA to make this report and accompanying information easily available to existing businesses, prospects, potential entrepreneurs, property owners, and any partners that may find the data relevant.

# BRANDING & MARKETING

## 1. CREATE UNIFIED MARKETING BRAND FOR POOLER

The City currently uses its city seal as a community logo which is not an effective way to tell Pooler's unique story. Pooler should create a brand that includes a graphic identity, theme, palette, typography, and overall message beyond the corporate brand.

## 2. CREATE DISTINCTIVE BRAND FOR POOLER CENTRAL

Part of the unified brand should be creating a unique but connected identity to promote the main street district, Pooler Central.



## 3. CREATE DISTINCTIVE BRAND TO POOLER LOOP

Similar to 30A in Florida, creating a unique brand identity for the Highway 80 corridor can help market the area for investment, and promote existing businesses along the road.

## 4. APPLY BANNERS ALONG HIGHWAY 80 FROM I-95 TO POOLER PARKWAY

Banners can help to identify key character districts within a community and solidify a community or district brand. The City should consider installing identifiable banners through the district.

Right: Comprehensive Wayfinding concept.

Middle: Branding concepts for Pooler Central.

Bottom: Banners that would signify people are entering the Main Street area.



## 5. APPLY BRAND TO NEW GATEWAY SIGNAGE ON EAST AND WEST HIGHWAY 80

Currently, there is only the Pooler sign in the triangle on westbound 80 at the beginning of the Pooler loop. This signage should match the design of a comprehensive wayfinding program and could be replicated at key entrances.

## 6. ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE WAYFINDING PROGRAM

Wayfinding signs direct locals and visitors to the different civic, cultural and recreation resources in a community. Pooler currently has no wayfinding short of its gateway signs and should facilitate a wayfinding plan to design signs, content and locations for a citywide system of signage. This should include branded signage identifying parking at City Hall, the chamber/visitor center, and events in the main street core.



# TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

This study proposes a variety of changes to the transportation and pedestrian network. The City of Pooler should continue their engagement with existing and future transportation studies to further refine recommendations related to

1. Install rapid flashing beacons to crosswalks on Main Street/Highway 80 at strategic locations to improve pedestrian safety.
2. Infill the disconnected links in the current sidewalk network to improve walkability in the study area.
3. Establish a safe walking route to Pooler Elementary.
4. Implement intersection improvements along Main Street/Highway 80.
5. Install screening measures to surface parking lots that occupy Main Street/Highway 80 frontage.
6. Streetscape improvements on Main Street/Highway 80 East Bound, West Bound, and Collins Street.

## PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Figure 32 shows proposed sidewalk additions and a walking route to Pooler Elementary. Improving pedestrian safety along Main Street was a key priority for the community. Installing crosswalks on Main Street will increase visibility to drivers

and allow links to crossings that are currently disconnected. There are several areas on Main Street with no sidewalks making it impossible for pedestrians to walk to the core, which is a key characteristic of any main street area. The walking route to Pooler Elementary begins at Chestnut Street and crosses over Main Street/Highway 80 in both directions. A crossing guard will remain at these intersections Monday–Friday from 8 AM through 3:30 PM. The City should continue working with transportation consultants to ensure pedestrian safety measures along Main Street / Highway 80.

## INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

Figure 32 shows where some intersection improvements are needed. The improvements include installing creative crosswalks and landscaping to the surrounding ramp.



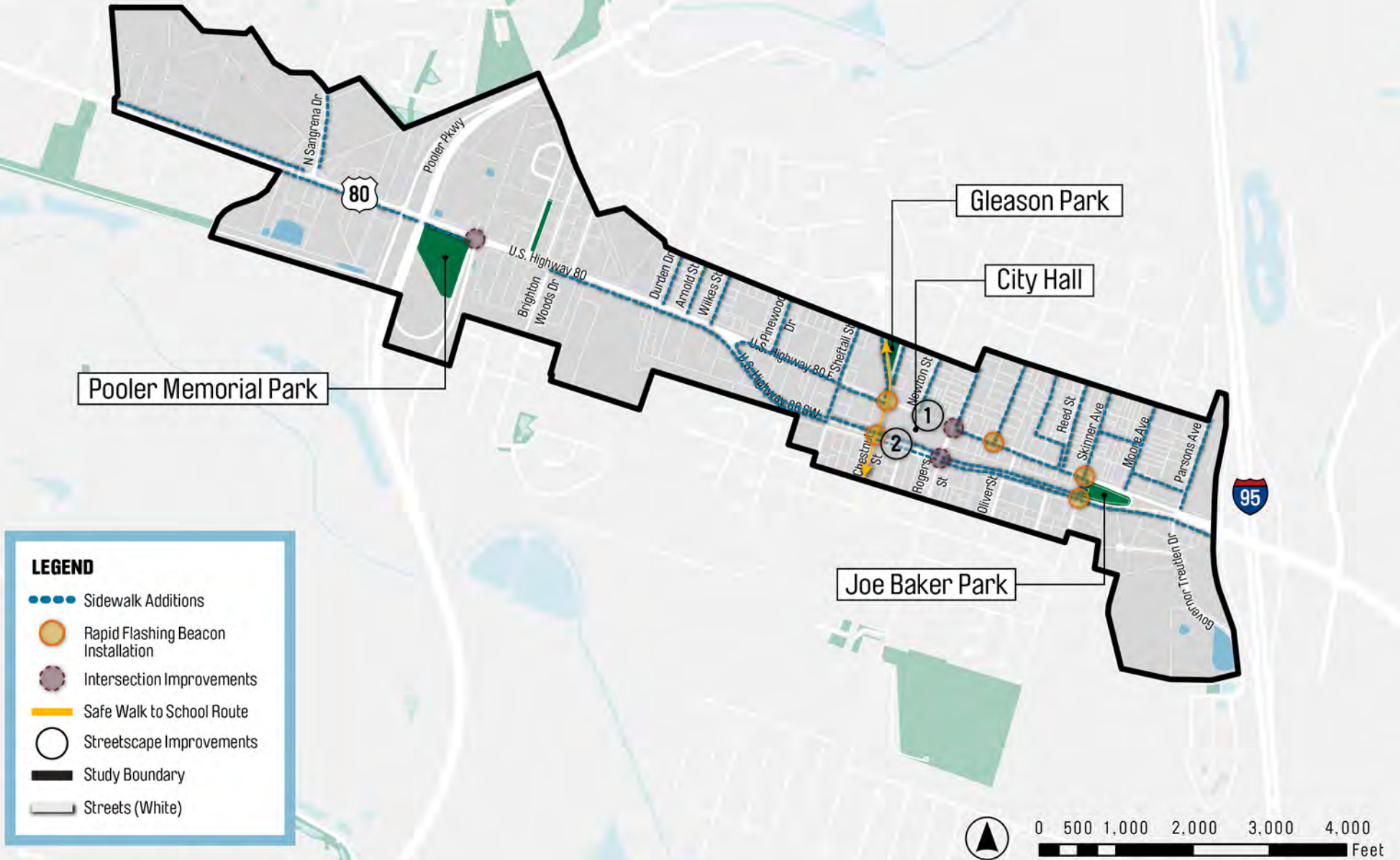
Image courtesy of Karen Huppertz for the AJC



- Top Right: Example of rapid flashing beacon.
- Above: Example of improved brick crosswalk.
- Left: Example of hedgerow screening for surface parking lot.

# TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

Figure 32

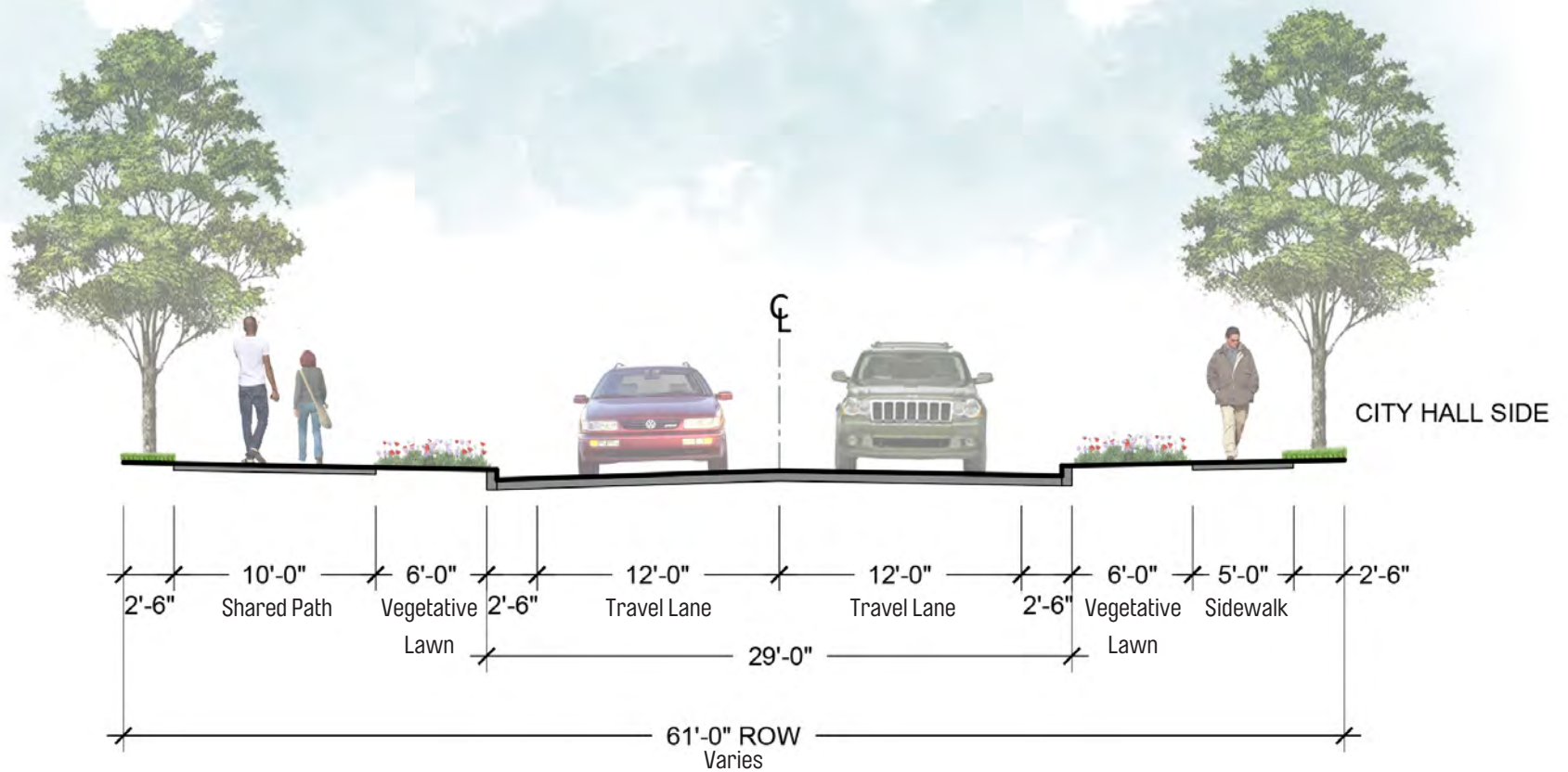




# STREET SECTIONS

## 1 MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80 WEST BOUND

Figure 33



Main Street / Highway 80 West Bound | Facing East, North of City Hall

## MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80 WEST BOUND

- Uses existing right-of-way
- Improve sidewalk connectivity on both sides
- Reduce excess curb-to-curb width when feasible
- Encourage tree planting adjacent to sidewalks
- Near-Term: Provide an additional 10-foot vegetation lawn on the north side.
- Long-Term: Multi-use trail /cycling route to replace vegetative lawn

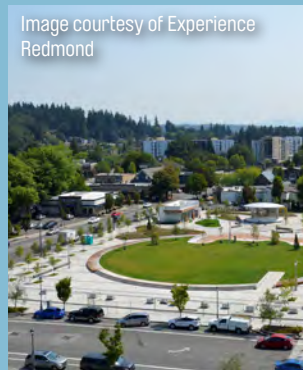


EXISTING CONDITIONS ON MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80 WEST BOUND, FACING WEST

## HOW TOWNS WITH STATE ROUTES AS THEIR MAIN STREET FUNCTION

Thousands of towns in the United States have Main Streets that double as state highways and only a handful of states have specific guidance for these circumstances. The goal is to have equal precedence of main street functions and state highway functions. The key characteristics implemented in successful main street and state route combinations include:

- **Few to no curb cuts:** Adding multiple driveways immediately erodes the ability for pedestrians and cyclists to negotiate the area. It makes it a car oriented street.
- **Reducing Speed Limits:** Implementing lower speed limits within main street areas.
- **Adding street banners, planters, and street furniture:** Helps create a walkable street environment by “announcing” to the public that they are in a pedestrian friendly area.



## REDMOND, WASHINGTON

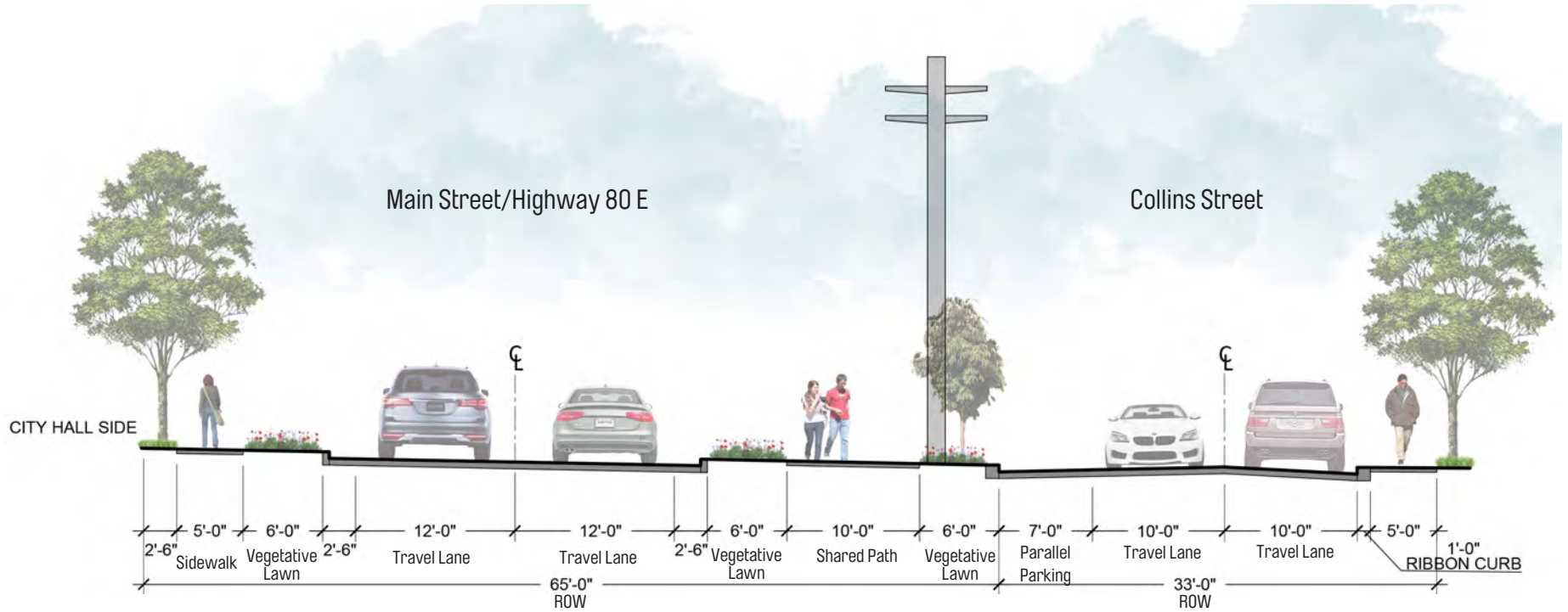
The City of Redmond split their Main Street/State Route 202 in 1986 and made them one-way streets. In 2016, the City decided to change the Main Streets to carry two-way traffic. They also implemented streetscape improvements to create a vibrant, connected, pedestrian friendly district. These changes have spurred development in the city.



# STREET SECTIONS

## 2 MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80 EAST BOUND & COLLINS STREET

Figure 34



Main Street / Highway 80 East Bound & Collins Street | Facing West, South of City Hall

Drainage Swale

## MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80 EAST BOUND

- Uses existing right-of-way
- Improve sidewalk connectivity on both sides
- Encourage tree planting adjacent to sidewalks
- Reduce excess curb-to-curb width when feasible

## COLLINS STREET

- Uses existing right-of-way
- Adds a sidewalk on the south side
- Provides parallel parking on the north side
- Resurface with low-impact materials

EXISTING CONDITIONS ON MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80 EAST BOUND, FACING EAST



EXISTING CONDITIONS ON MAIN STREET / HIGHWAY 80 EAST BOUND & COLLINS STREET, FACING WEST



EXISTING CONDITIONS ON COLLINS STREET, FACING EAST



4



# IMPLEMENTATION



Implementation Program	66
Funding Sources	67
Action Matrix	68

# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

In order to successfully implement this Master Plan, the City of Pooler will need to bring together many people and organizations.

## ACTION MATRIX

The Action Matrix, starting on page 68 guides the implementation of the recommendations. The matrix identifies the timeframe of each project along with the potential funding source and parties responsible for implementation.

## REGULATIONS

Zoning regulations are most likely to be influential in implementing the recommendations. In cases where projects do not meet the criteria set forth in the City of Pooler's regulations, policy recommendations suggest where changes may be made.

## ELECTED OFFICIALS

Local elected officials vote to adopt local plans and are important to the timeline and implementation of public and private projects.

## CITY STAFF & AGENCIES

Most public projects will be managed by the City of Pooler staff in various departments including Planning and Development, Public Works, and Development Authority.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Community partners can include agencies outside of Pooler, non-profits, special interest groups, and advocacy groups. Not every project will require their participation, but efforts should be made to involve the applicable group when necessary. These community partners include, but are not limited to, the following organizations:

- Greater Pooler Chamber of Commerce
- Like Oak Public Libraries

- GDOT
- Savannah Economic Development Authority
- National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force
- Churches and neighborhood and civic associations, organizations, and groups

## PRIVATE SECTOR

Some of the projects and concepts in this Master Plan will require involvement from the private sector, which mainly include real estate

## HOW WILL THESE RECOMMENDATIONS BE IMPLEMENTED?

Implementing these recommendations will involve many actors working both independently and together to fulfill the City's vision and goals.



Figure 35

# FUNDING SOURCES

Potential funding sources could include:

- **General Fund:** The major sources for this fund are sales taxes, property taxes, franchise fees, business license and permit fees, fines and forfeitures, interest income, and investment earnings.
- **Water & Sewer Fund:** Accounts for the operation of the water and sewer system, including all revenues from system operations and all its expenses.
- **Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST):** This fund is made up of Pooler's portion collected from a 1% sales tax in Chatham County. These funds are used for capital projects.
- **Hotel/Motel Tax Fund:** Funds collected from hotels and motels occupancy taxes to promote tourism and facilitate economic vitality.

The following outside sources have been identified to supplement the City's government funds:

- **Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA).** The DCA has several resources to help communities fund projects and prepare for economic development.
  - **Redevelopment Fund (RDF).** Recognizing that redevelopment projects can be the most challenging economic and community development projects a local government may undertake, the RDF was created as

a set-aside of Georgia's non-entitlement CDBG Program. The RDF provides local governments access to flexible financial assistance to help them implement projects that cannot be undertaken with the usual public sector grant and loan programs.

- **Coastal Incentive Grant (CIG).** Each year, the Georgia Coastal Management Program (GCMP) allocates a portion of its federal funding to the CIG, it's subgrant program. These subgrants may be awarded to qualified county or municipal governments, regional commissions, or state agencies within the eleven-county service area of the program. The CIG program area includes Brantley, Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Charlton, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh and Wayne counties.
- **Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (DDRLF).** DDRLF assists cities, counties, and development authorities in their efforts to revitalize and enhance downtown areas by providing below-market rate financing to fund capital projects in core historic downtown areas and adjacent historic neighborhoods. The maximum loan is \$250,000 per project.
- **Local Maintenance Improvement Grants program (LMIG).** This GDOT-funded program aids local governments for maintenance and repair of streets off of the state system.
- **Tax Allocation District (TAD).** A TAD is a specially defined area where local

governments sell bonds to fund infrastructure and other redevelopment costs within the defined area.

- **United States Economic Development Administration (EDA).** The EDA's investment policy is designed to establish a foundation for sustainable job growth and the building of durable regional economies throughout the United States. In 2019, the EDA announced that it intended to invest \$960,000 in sewer infrastructure improvements needed to support the growth of manufacturing and other businesses in the town along with a \$240,000 local match from the Town.
- **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).** The USDA offers many programs and services for communities to fund improvements ranging from improvements to community facilities and infrastructure, to attracting new business and industry. Funding comes in the forms of grants and low-interest loans.



# ACTION MATRIX

PROJECT #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES	FUNDING SOURCES	NOTES & ACTION STEPS
<b>PUBLIC SPACE PROJECTS</b>					
A.1	Relocate Pooler Library to the parcel south of Collins Street.	Mid-Term	Live Oak Public Library; City	General Fund	City currently owns identified land. Continue partnership with Live Oak Public Library to ensure implementation.
<b>PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS</b>					
B.1	Relocate First Baptist Church parking lots to take advantage of Main Street frontage.	Short-term	First Baptist Church of Pooler	First Baptist Church of Pooler	Location of existing lots: N Chestnut Street and Main Street, and N Newton Street and Main Street. Near-term solution: implement evergreen hedgerow to screen parking lots.
B.2	Mixed-use development at Main Street and N Chestnut .	Mid-Term	City; Private Developer; DA	Private Developer	
B.3	Cottage Commercial development along Main Street.	Mid-Term	City; Private Developer; DA	Private Developer	Encourage rehabilitation of existing residential structures for commercial use along Main Street.
B.4	Residential development on N Chestnut Street across from Gleason Park.	Long-Term	City; Private Developer; DA	Private Developer	Addition of residential units at this location will help revitalize Gleason Park.
B.5	Cottage Commercial development on Collins Street.	Mid-Term	City; Private Developer; DA	Private Developer	Encourage rehabilitation of existing residential structures for commercial use along Collins Street.
B.6	Mixed-use development between Oliver Street and Read Street.	Long-Term	City; Private Developer; DA	Private Developer	
B.7	Mixed-use development west of Joe Baker Park.	Long-Term	City; Private Developer; DA	Private Developer	Proposed redevelopment to assist with the revitalization and activation of Joe Baker Park.

PROJECT #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES	FUNDING SOURCES	NOTES & ACTION STEPS
<b>PARKS AND OPEN SPACES PROJECTS</b>					
C.1	Host outdoor fitness classes at Gleason Park and Joe Baker Park.	Short-Term	City; Parks & Recreation	General Fund	
C.2	Host a walking group that meets at Joe Baker Park.	Short-Term	City; Parks & Recreation	General Fund	
C.3	Implement a fence around Joe Baker Park to protect users from adjacent heavy traffic.	Short-Term	City; Parks & Recreation	General Fund; SPLOST	Fence should be between 36–48 inches tall and be of similar style to the one existing at City Hall.
C.4	Add native landscaping at Pooler Memorial Park.	Short-Term	City; DA	General Fund; SPLOST	As part of this a heavy evergreen tree screen should be planted to establish a buffer between Pooler Parkway and the park.
C.5	Add a parking lot at Pooler Memorial Park.	Mid-Term	City; DA	General Fund; SPLOST	In collaboration with GDOT, study and identify location for curbcuts.
C.6	Implement a fence around Pooler Memorial Park to protect users from adjacent heavy traffic.	Short-Term	City; DA	General Fund; SPLOST	Fence should be between 36–48 inches tall and be of similar style to the one existing at City Hall.
C.7	Host a free summer concert series at Pooler Memorial Park.	Short-Term	City; Parks & Recreation	General Fund	
<b>BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS</b>					
D.1	Encourage active participation from pooler development authority.	Short-Term	City; DA	General Fund	Encourage the active participation of the Pooler Development Authority (PDA) to focus on growth of Main Street.
D.2	Encourage participation in main street organizations.	Short-Term	City; DA	General Fund	See Appendix

PROJECT #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES	FUNDING SOURCES	NOTES & ACTION STEPS
D.3	Encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties through incentives.	Short-Term	City; DA	General Fund	See Appendix
D.4	Advertise economic development incentives and opportunities.	Short-Term	City; DA; Chamber	General Fund	See Appendix
D.5	Recruit locally owned businesses identified as needed in the market analysis.	Short-Term	City; DA; Chamber	General Fund	See Appendix
D.6	Share market data with local businesses and partners.	Short-Term	City; DA; Chamber	General Fund	See Appendix
<b>BRANDING &amp; MARKETING PROJECTS</b>					
E.1	Create unified marketing brand for Pooler Main Street.	Short-Term	City	General Fund	See Appendix
E.2	Create distinctive brand for Central Pooler.	Short-Term	City	General Fund	See Appendix
E.3	Create distinctive brand for Pooler Loop.	Short-Term	City	General Fund	See Appendix
E.4	Apply banners along Highway 80 from I-95 to Pooler Parkway.	Short-Term	City	General Fund; Public Works	See Appendix
E.5	Apply brand to new gateway signage on East and West bound Highway 80.	Mid-Term	City	General Fund; Public Works	See Appendix
E.6	Establish comprehensive wayfinding program.	Mid-Term	City	General Fund; Public Works	See Appendix

PROJECT #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES	FUNDING SOURCES	NOTES & ACTION STEPS
<b>TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS</b>					
F.1	Install rapid flashing beacons on Main Street/Highway 80 as part of establishing a safe walking route to Pooler Elementary.	Short-Term	City; GDOT	Public Works; SPLOST; GDOT	Location: At Chestnut and Main Street East; Chestnut and Main Street West
F.2	Infill disconnected links in the current sidewalk network.	Mid-Term	City	Public Works; SPLOST	
F.3	Establish a safe walking route to Pooler Elementary.	Short-Term	City; Pooler Elementary	General Fund; GDOT; Pooler Elementary	
F.4	Install creative crosswalks on Main Street/Highway 80.	Mid-Term	City; GDOT	Public Works; SPLOST; GDOT	Reinforce Main Street branding with crosswalk art as approved by GDOT.
F.5	Implement evergreen hedgerow or decorative fence where surface lots occupy Main Street/Highway 80 frontage.	Short-term	City	Public Works; SPLOST	
F.6	Main Street/Highway 80 West Bound Streetscape project.	Short-Term	City	Public Works; SPLOST	
F.7	Main Street/Highway 80 East Bound Streetscape project.	Short-Term	City	Public Works; SPLOST	
F.8	Collins Street Streetscape Project.	Mid-Term	City	Public Works; SPLOST	

PROJECT #	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES	FUNDING SOURCES	NOTES & ACTION STEPS
<b>LAND USE</b>					
G.1	Code Audit	Short-Term	City	General Fund	Study existing code to ensure the preferred vision established by this study may be implemented with a specific focus on the Main Street Overlay; for additional notes see pg. 10-11 and 42-43
G.2	Update Future Land Use Map	Short-Term	City	General Fund	Update plan to reflect the preferred Main Street vision established by this study; for additional notes see pg. 12-13 and 42-43
G.2	Update Comprehensive Plan Character Areas	Short-Term	City	General Fund	Update plan to reflect the preferred Main Street vision established by this study; for additional notes see pg. 14-15 and 42-43
G.3	Establish incentives to encourage adaptive reuse of properties within the study area	Mid-Term	City	General Fund	See pg. 42-43 and 48-50



5



# APPENDIX



Pooler Branding & Marketing Conditions

76



# POOLER BRANDING & MARKETING CONDITIONS

## CITY SEAL

The City of Pooler currently uses the City Seal as its community logo. This seal is supported by a style guide with technical details on colors and type faces. The seal was created in advance of the new City Hall completed in 2017 yet uses a similar design of an institutional building in the center of the logo. The City's motto of "Pride. Family. Honor." adorns the seal in a banner that supports the icon, and the incorporation date of the town is also included in the design.

The seal uses the primary colors of green and tan, along with four secondary colors which are rarely used in application of the seal. The formal fonts for the brand include Baskerville (primary) and Verdana (secondary), however, the secondary font is rarely used in application. The seal is primarily used in application on the city's website, social media, and government forms.



## WAYFINDING

The seal is also used on gateway signage in key entry points in the city including westbound Highway 80 within the study area, as well as westbound on Pooler Parkway at Godley Station. Monument gateway signs are installed at City Hall as well as the City of Pooler Recreation Complex. There is a single, pedestrian-scaled directional sign in the City Hall complex, but no other wayfinding signs exist throughout the City.

Overall, the City's seal is a workable graphic to use to designate City buildings, gateways and the government's digital tools. Currently, the City does not have a community brand identity to promote the city, events and destinations. Often communities create a destination-based logo to market the community, that is unique but connected to its official governmental identity. For example, the City of Savannah has both a city seal and a marketing logo that illustrates the city's iconic squares for which it is known.



## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION FROM POOLER DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The City should encourage the active participation of the Pooler Development Authority (PDA) in pursuing redevelopment activity in the main street district. Similar to nearby Springfield DDA and others, the PDA can facilitate façade grants, purchase and dispose of property, and encourage new investment. The PDA can target key opportunity sites identified in this plan and facilitate redevelopment.

### 2. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN MAIN STREET ORGANIZATIONS

The PDA and City should seek becoming affiliated with the Georgia Main Street program, a statewide initiative to reinvigorate aging downtowns, and the Georgia Downtown Association. These groups focus on business coordination, partnerships with local governments, design, event planning, and promotion of main street. There are over 100 Main Street communities statewide in various tiers of designation. This includes nearby Pembroke, Hinesville, Statesboro, and others. Main Street programs are often 501c3 private non-profits that work hand in hand with local governments facilitating main street revitalization.

The City should host Georgia Main Street in Pooler to facilitate information workshops and gauge interest within the private sector for an independent main street focused partner.

### **3. ENCOURAGE REDEVELOPMENT OF UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES THROUGH INCENTIVES**

There are a few redevelopment sites that could prove to be anchors in the main street area and catalysts for future development of the entire corridor. The PDA should work with partner's and stakeholders to approach each site's property owner to discuss overall vision, but also to identify constraints, establish criteria for development, and determine what, if any, public assistance may be needed to prepare the site for development. Properties such as "Rainbow Row" are mostly vacant and have great potential for redevelopment.

### **4. ADVERTISE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

A branded, economic marketing package could be created to promote investment opportunities in the main street study area. This could include one-sheets for key opportunity sites, community profile, market analysis data, testimonial ads from existing businesses, incentive package, etc. The tool could be distributed directly to prospects as well as indirectly on the City's website.

### **5. RECRUIT LOCALLY OWNED BUSINESSES IDENTIFIED AS NEEDED IN THE MARKET ANALYSIS**

Pooler currently is a retail center serving the metro area as well as travelers on I-95 and I-16. While most of this commerce occurs at Godley Station, main street Pooler could serve as the center of the local community, providing commerce and services to the residents that call Pooler home. The market research shows opportunity for growth in key sectors including women's clothing, nursery and garden centers, hardware, specialty foods, and a number of other specialty categories. The PDA and the Chamber of Commerce should target their recruitment efforts on these businesses that show local demand, solidifying the main street area as the civic and community center for the citizens of Pooler.

### **6. SHARE MARKET DATA WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES AND PARTNERS**

The market study in this plan provides current and up to date information about the Pooler market that should be of use to local businesses. The City should make this report and its market study easily available to existing businesses, prospects, potential entrepreneurs, property owners, and any partner that may find the data relevant. Distributing the report as a .pdf via links on the city website,

or through email lists can get the data out to the largest amount of businesses.

## **BRANDING & MARKETING**

### **1. CREATE UNIFIED MARKETING BRAND FOR POOLER**

The City currently uses its city seal as a community logo with application limited to online portals and gateway signage. The seal represents the official functions of the local government but is not an effective way to tell Pooler's unique story, promote the community as a place to live, visit, or invest. It is a graphic rather than a brand. A "brand" is a promise that is made to a consumer that speaks to the unique value and characteristics of the product. Just like a soft drink or shoe company, this would apply to a community as well. Therefore, Pooler's brand would present the unique characteristics and values that separate it from other communities within the region. This would include a graphic identity with a unique style, theme, palette, typography, and overall message that is applied to a broader system positioning Pooler as a special place. This would be applied to a number of marketing tools to market the community.

### **2. CREATE DISTINCTIVE BRAND FOR POOLER CENTRAL**

Part of the unified brand should be creating a unique but connected identity to promote the

# POOLER BRANDING & MARKETING CONDITIONS CONTINUED

main street district, Pooler Central. The main street district is central to the Pooler community and serves residents with local oriented and independent businesses. It also has the potential be the active center of the community, much like traditional main streets.

## 3. CREATE DISTINCTIVE BRAND TO POOLER LOOP

Similarly, the larger study area from I-95 to Pooler Parkway follows the Highway 80 corridor, a major connector from Savannah and the Georgia Coast to Statesboro and Central Georgia. Similar to 30A in Florida, creating a unique brand identity can help market the corridor for investment, and promote the existing businesses along the road. Giving it an identity that reflects the two one-way roads through Pooler, will give it increased awareness and status.

## 4. APPLY BANNERS ALONG HIGHWAY 80 FROM I-95 TO POOLER PARKWAY

Banners can help to identify key character districts within a community and solidify a community or district brand. They also are strategic for placemaking by creating bright, visual enhancements in an area like Highway 90 that currently have a a great deal of noise with high traffic, overhead utilities, and business signage. Branded banners can even help slow traffic

through a commercial district. The City should consider installing bright, single color banners through the district identifying Pooler Central and the Pooler Loop.

## 5. APPLY BRAND TO NEW GATEWAY SIGNAGE ON EAST AND WEST HIGHWAY 80

Similarly, the City should consider enhancing gateway signage on East and West Highway 80 entering into the district. Currently, there is only the Pooler sign in the triangle on westbound 80 at the beginning of the Pooler loop. This signage should match the design of a comprehensive wayfinding program and could be replicated at key entrances throughout the community.

## 6. ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE WAYFINDING PROGRAM

Wayfinding signs direct locals and visitors to the different civic, cultural and recreation resources in a community. Through gateway signage and banners mentioned above, to branded directional signage, wayfinding can also help to identify distinct districts in a community. Pooler currently has no wayfinding short of its gateway signs and should consider facilitating a wayfinding plan to design signs, content and locations for a citywide system of signage. Wayfinding and gateway signage are a capital cost, so it is recommended

that Pooler first establish a community brand before spending money on design, fabrication and installation of signage. A comprehensive system would include:

- Gateway signage – monument signage at key entries into town and pole-mounted signage at district boundaries.
- Low-speed vehicular trailblazers – signs that include two to three destinations on roadways with speed limits of less than 25 mph.
- High-speed vehicular trailblazers for roadways higher than 25 mph.
- Specialty signage for trails, internal park signage, etc.
- Signage identifying parking at City Hall, the chamber/visitor center, and events in the main street core .

