BANTAM TOWNS OF GEORGIA: SMALL TOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A Thesis
Presented to
The Academic Faculty

by

R. Dawn Riley

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degrees
Master of Architecture and Master of City and Regional Planning in the
Schools of Architecture and City and Regional Planning

Georgia Institute of Technology
August 2014

COPYRIGHT 2014 BY R. DAWN RILEY

BANTAM TOWNS OF GEORGIA: SMALL TOWN

REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Approved by:

Professor Richard Dagenhart, Advisor
School of Architecture
Georgia Institute of Technology

Jason Chernock
Director of Programs and Procurement
Medshare International

Dr. Nancey Green Leigh
School of City and Regional Planning
Georgia Institute of Technology

Katherine Moore
Sustainable Growth Program, Manager
The Georgia Conservancy

Date Approved: May 06, 2014

For Lee, whose love for the place he is from and commitment to the people and culture that live there are contagious.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

SUMMARY

In 2010, over 80-percent of the U.S. population lived in urban areas that occupied a mere 3-percent of the country's total area. Development problems and infrastructural stress caused by urban overpopulation can already be seen in the nation's largest cities. Scattered across North America are small towns that, at one time, were largely sustained by agriculture or industry, but have watched as farming and manufacturing operations leave them behind. Rooted in these economic conditions is the growing gap between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The high concentration of rural lands and high poverty rates in the South makes this region particularly vulnerable to the effects of rural economic distress, and put it in desperate need of solutions. For many small towns in Georgia, the last two decades have brought either rapid population growth, as seen in the areas surrounding Atlanta, or great population decline, most clearly depicted in the southeastern region of the state. Each condition produces a host of different challenges for these small communities, illustrating no simple solutions. It is the focus of this research to determine what proximities, economic assets, and formal characteristics are necessary for small towns in Georgia to successfully revitalize and grow. Furthermore, it is the aim of this research to present a means of analyzing the assets of small towns in order to determine where outside investment is most likely to make a difference, and how resources can best be utilized.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Condition of Small Towns in the United States

In recent decades, the United States has seen an unprecedented shift in its urban and rural populations. The most recent U.S. census, conducted in 2010, reported that over 80-percent of the nation's population lived in urban areas that occupied a mere 3-percent of the country's total area (Bureau *2010 Percent Urban and Rural by State*). Evidence shows that this trend is only growing. In the last ten years, the national urban population grew by over 27-million people, and the development problems and infrastructural stress caused by urban overpopulation can already be seen in the nation's largest cities (Bureau *2010 Percent Urban and Rural by State*). Nonetheless, cities are magnetic, drawing multitudes from rural areas and small towns with promises of employment, education and higher quality of life. The question is raised: What will happen to the places left behind? The other 97-percent of the country?

Scattered across North America are small towns that, at one time, were largely sustained by agriculture or industry, but have watched as farming and manufacturing operations leave them behind. While cheaper overseas production costs have made it nearly impossible for rural communities to compete for the low-skill manufacturing businesses that had traditionally been located in such areas, rural residents with limited access to education and training are commonly unqualified for domestically located, high-technology manufacturing jobs.

Similarly, agricultural employment has been disappearing since the 1960s, when farming mechanization and then automation, making it possible for one man to complete the work of 100, reduced the need for high volumes of farm-workers.

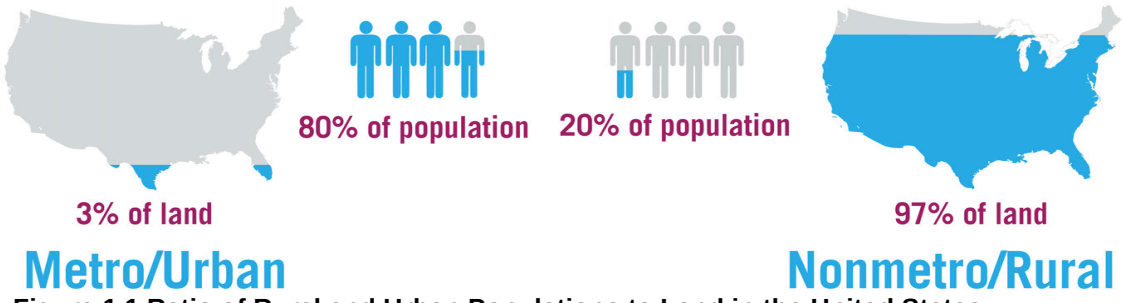


Figure 1.1 Ratio of Rural and Urban Populations to Land in the United States

Mid-sized family farms in rural areas have also been lost to so-called “progress.” Increased automation, foreign competition, and the integration of agriculture into larger-scaled farming enterprises have siphoned off revenue that would have otherwise returned to rural farming communities through workers’ wages and local spending. Rooted in these economic conditions are a host of inequalities between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas and a growing gap with regards to the quality of life and access to basic services they offer.

Failing economies, high unemployment rates, dwindling populations, poor school systems and low wages are symptoms of the economic distress suffered by rural areas, and are challenges that affect a significant portion of the population in many regions. Nearly 20-percent of the total U.S. population, or 62.8 million Americans, are living in rural or nonmetropolitan areas, and are

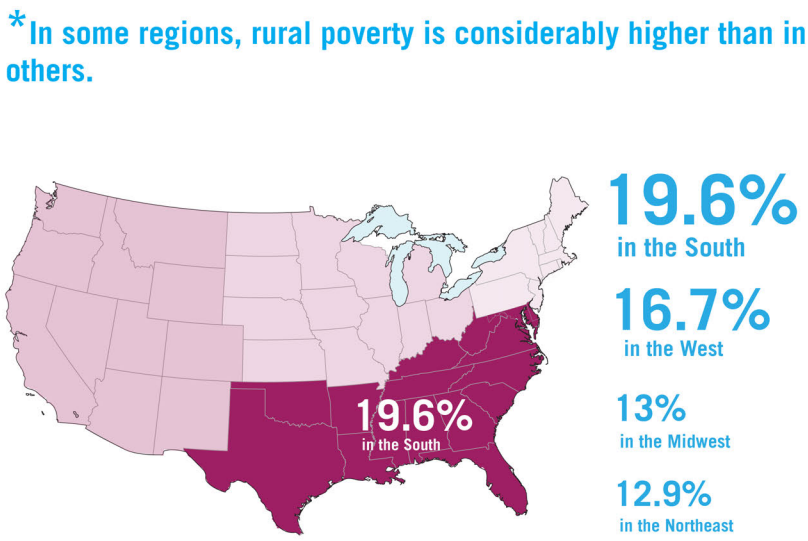


Figure 1.2 Percentage of People in Poverty by Region in the United States

subject to these economic and social hardships. Since 1960, when poverty rates were first recorded, the poverty rate in rural areas has consistently been higher than that of urban areas. Today, 16.6-percent of the total U.S. rural population, 8.1 million people, are living below the poverty line, and, in some regions, rural poverty is considerably higher than others. In the South, 19.6-percent of people living in rural areas are poor, a figure considerably higher than that of any other region, with the closest comparison being the West with 16.7-percent . The high concentration of rural lands and high poverty rates in the South makes this region particularly vulnerable to the effects of rural economic distress, and put it in desperate need of solutions.

The Condition of Small Towns in Georgia

For many small towns in Georgia, the last two decades have brought either rapid population growth, as seen in the areas surrounding Atlanta, or great population decline, most clearly depicted in the southeastern region of the state. Each condition produces a host of different challenges for these small communities, illustrating no simple solutions.

In the small towns surrounding Atlanta, Savannah, Augusta and Macon, pressure grows to accommodate an influx of new residents looking for cheaper living within commuting distance of the city. In these small towns along the urban fringe, poorly planned new developments—built quickly and usually with little regulation—threaten the character and quality of life in these once rural areas. Without viable comprehensive visions and plans to manage rapid growth, these towns on the urban fringe may lose control over their futures as cities sprawl over them.

Vastly different from towns on the urban fringe are those in more rural areas of Georgia that each year are losing large percentages of their already small populations. As most of these communities lack employment opportunities, many youth leave for jobs and education, and do not return. Small town officials struggle to create jobs, maintain aging infrastructure, and attract new business and residents, but they too often lack the resources and knowledge necessary to plan and take control of their futures.

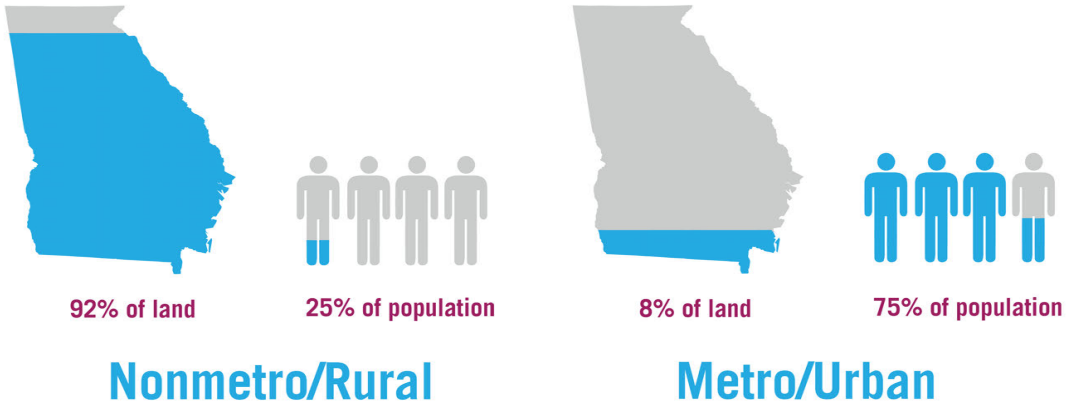


Figure 1.3 Ratio of Rural and Urban Populations to Land in Georgia

While certain proximities–larger urban areas, major regional employment centers and natural resources–are obvious economic assets to small, rural towns, other physical characteristics of the towns themselves may greatly influence whether or not these communities can endure the recent and ongoing shifts in development and urbanization patterns. It is the focus of this research to determine what proximities, economic assets, and formal characteristics are necessary for small towns in Georgia to successfully revitalize and grow. Furthermore, it is the aim of this research to present a means of analyzing the assets of a small towns in order to determine where outside investment is most likely to make a difference, and how resources can best be utilized.

Methodology

Beginning as an independent study project in the summer of 2012, the *Bantam Towns* research project initially sought to study small, rural towns, of less than 5,000 people, in Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia (full report available at http://www.georgiaconservancy.org/bantamtowns). The initial report consisted of an overview of the scope of challenges in rural America, qualitative and quantitative information on rural areas of Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia, a review of others' work on related topics, and brief case studies on four small towns that have been successful in revitalization efforts. The research within this first report, limited to the Deep South, primarily focused on identifying: where these tiny towns are; how many there are in existence; and the defining conditions and characteristics of those that have seen successful revitalization and growth. Knowledge gained from this study, in many ways, supported the notion that successful small-town development has largely moved away from traditional strategies, and now is being driven by smaller, more inward-looking, local efforts.

Information largely gained from reviews of literature and from the four towns selected as case studies, for this suggests that small towns in the Deep South that have been able to redefine and redirect their economies have done so by utilizing practices that leverage place-based resources like social-capital, downtown character, creativity, entrepreneurship, historic architecture, and

culture. Through this brief investigation, it became evident that there is great desire to improve the quality of life and economic stability in the rural Deep South from within the communities themselves, and there is evidence that, with the appropriate tools, small towns can make great improvements.

In order to look more deeply and completely at issues impeding revitalization and economic growth in small rural towns, this research, *Bantam Towns of Georgia*, restricts the study area to only include towns in Georgia of around 5,000 people, not within U.S. Census Bureau defined urban areas or urban clusters of greater than 5,000 (see appendix for definition). From May 2013 to May 2014 a representative sample list was compiled of Georgia towns to represent the various issues and situations across the state. Over 400 communities were screened and 65 were chosen to create a varied image of small towns that exist in different geographic regions, economic conditions, and with varied morphological typologies.

This study was designed mainly to be a broad qualitative research assessment, although some quantitative means of evaluation are used to support findings and describe bigger picture concepts. Additionally, this research is not a study of best practices, for that would imply a rigorous analysis and the ability to uniformly apply findings to all situations. Rather, it is a framework for understanding the most critical components necessary for a small town to build on their place-specific assets and revitalize both culturally and economically.

This compiled list of suggestions was screened to ensure an accurate and diverse picture of the strengths and challenges of small towns in Georgia. First, geographic diversity was considered. The list of towns was compiled and edited to proportionately represent the total number of small towns that exist in each geographic region—for our purposes— defined as the coast, plains, highlands and piedmont. Secondly, the communities were evaluated by proximity to potential economic and cultural assets such as larger urban areas, highways, railroads, and institutions—like universities, military bases, and hospitals.

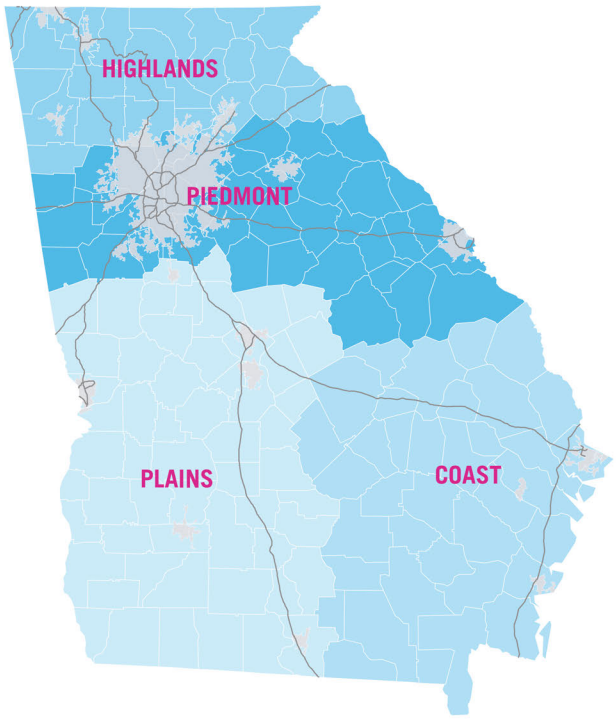


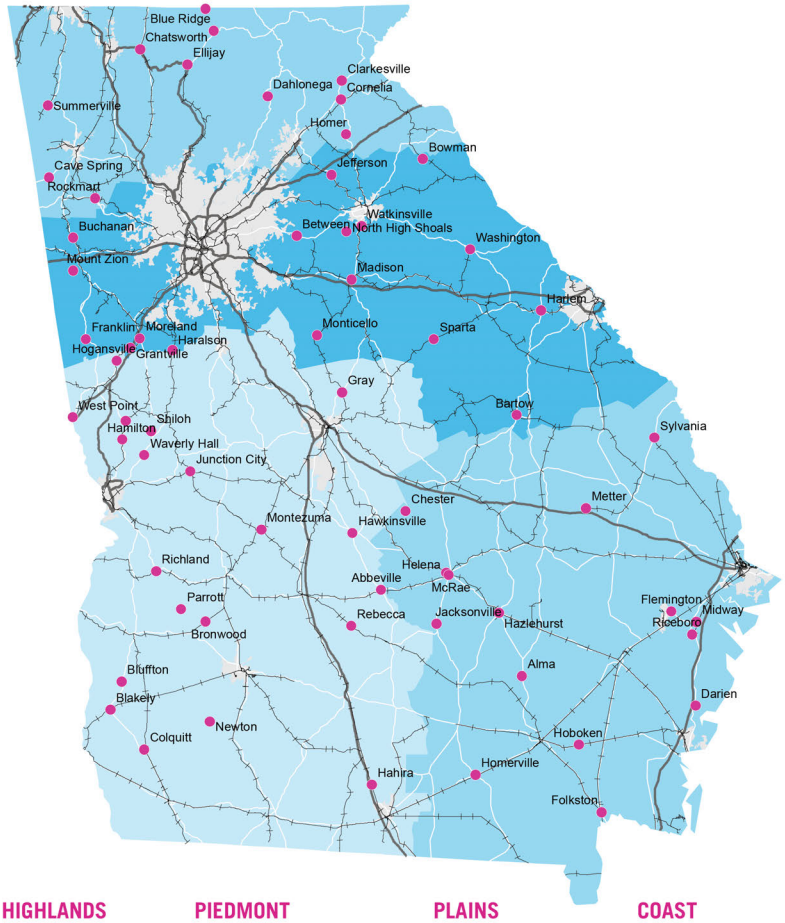
Figure 1.4 Map of Georgia Regional Classifications Used in This Study

This step in the process ensured examples of towns with varied assets and challenges. Towns were also screened to guarantee diversity in population growth rate over the last twenty years. Lastly, median income level was considered to provide a varied and robust image of small town conditions.

Using qualitative and quantitative means this study provides a system for analyzing the economic and physical assets of small towns under three major criteria: economic drivers, leadership capacity and identity, and formal and morphological qualities. After an initial study of small towns that have been successful in their revitalization efforts and a review of works on the topic, it has been my discovery that these areas of consideration are the most important in determining the viability of revitalization in a struggling small town.

In the following paper, the 60 selected towns of the research sample are investigated through the above-mentioned four areas of assessment, and examples are given for each of well-positioned towns and poorly positioned towns. Information used to determine the towns' rankings in each of the four criteria, was gained through interviews, both in person and over the phone, data analysis, site visits, and GIS software. The intent of this research is not to discourage efforts in towns that rank low in any one category, but the begin a conversation within communities and at the state, regional and, even, national level about how we can measure the potential of the communities effected and allocated resources in ways that can make an impact.

BANTAM TOWNS SAMPLE SET



HIGHLANDS
BLUE RIDGE
CAVE SPRING
CHATSWORTH
CLARKESVILLE
CORNELIA
DAHLONEGA
ELLIJAY
HOMER
LA FAYETTE
McCAYSVILLE
ROCKMART
SUMMERVILLE

PIEDMONT
BARTOW
BETWEEN
BOWMAN
BUCHANAN
FRANKLIN
GRANTVILLE
HARALSON
HARLEM
JEFFERSON
MADISON
MONTICELLO
MORELAND
MOUNT ZION
NORTH HIGH SHOALS
SPARTA
WASHINGTON
WATKINSVILLE

PLAINS
ABBEVILLE
BLAKELY
BLUFFTON
BRONWOOD
COLQUITT
GRAY
HAHIRA
HAMILTON
HAWKINSVILLE
HOGANSVILLE
JUNCTIONS CITY
MONTEZUMA
NEWTON
PARROTT
PINEMOUNTAIN
REBECCA
RICHLAND
SHILOH
WAVERLY HALL
WESTPOINT

COAST
ALMA
CHESTER
DARIEN
FLEMINGTON
FOLKSTON
HAZELHURST
HELENA
HOBOKEN
HOMERVILLE
JACKSONVILLE
McRAE
METTER
MIDWAY
RICEBORO
SYLVANIA

Figure 1.5 Map and List of 65-Town Sample Set

CHAPTER 2

THE SITUATION OF SMALL TOWNS IN GEORGIA

History of Georgia Town Planning

It should not come as any surprise that Georgia, historically and currently, has strong ties to agriculture, and that this, along with the railroads that crisscross her mountains, marshes, pine forests and fields, has had the greatest influence on the state's development. It was only in the 1950s, resulting from a dramatic shift in population, that Georgia saw the majority of her citizens living in urban areas for the first time. This agrarian heritage, and the consequent patterns of development, illustrate two important points made by Darlene Roth in her study, "Georgia Community Development and Morphology of Community Types": that "truly urban centers" have been few in number and distinctly different in character from the rest of the state; and that, in the first two hundred years of the state's history, the overwhelming majority of inhabitants "lived in very small towns situated in rural surroundings" (Roth). The formation of these towns is crucial to this research, for it will forever influence their economy, morphology and geographic position, as well as the culture that remains in them.

Georgia can be divided into reasonably distinct geological regions. Typically, researchers, simply looking at the geological difference across the state, will divide it into the three most clearly defined areas: the Coastal Plain, the Piedmont, and the Highlands. However, for our purposes, we will define the first, the Coastal Plain, more specifically as two regions, due to the differences in

economic position and vegetation from east to west. The four regions that this paper will use to describe the state are: the Coast, the Plains, the Piedmont, and the Highlands.

The Coastal Region

Once completely covered by ocean, the Coastal region, bounded by the Fall Line to the north and west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east, stretches to the middle of the state, covering nearly one-fourth of Georgia. The many rivers in this region drain to the Atlantic Ocean, while the rivers in the neighboring southwestern Plains region drain south to the Gulf of Mexico. The oldest settlements in Georgia, dating back to colonial times, are located in what is called the Tidewater area of the Coastal region along the Atlantic coast. This low-lying terrain is broken by four major rivers and is often swampy. Being malarial and prone to flooding and storms surge, life in these early settlements was often hard. Nonetheless, the land proved profitable for rice and indigo farming, and its position along the coast and major inland waterways gave significant economic growth to many coastal towns through shipping and trade (Sears). Today many small towns in the coastal region have significant ties to the major ports of Savannah and Brunswick, serving as inland support for cargo handling and trucking.

Also in the Coastal region is the Pine Barren area, just west of the coastal settlements. This area was thought to be worthless until the end of the nineteenth century, when pine lumber came into high demand (Sears). The close proximity

of the lumber forests to the shipping ports made logging in this part of the state particularly profitable, since lumber could be easily taken by boat down one of the four major rivers and shipped further north or overseas from one of the coastal ports. Logging in this part of the state became so popular, in fact, that it was brought to a screeching halt when forests were overcut, leading to the industry's collapse in 1915 (Sullivan). Today, timberland is still present in the Pine Barren area, but timber is by no means the most prominent or profitable industry.

South of the Pine Barren is the Wire Grass region, which was mostly used as cattle range by North Carolinians who settled there in the early nineteenth century. Both the Wire Grass and Pine Barren regions were sparsely inhabited within the first century of Georgia's history. The counties there were large, and the courthouse towns few and far between, a development pattern borne out by the relatively low population density still present today.

The Plains Region

Moving west to what we will call the Plains region of the state, we come to some of the richest farmland in Georgia. Inhabitants of this area would be scarce until the mid-1820s, since its indigenous tribes were effective at keeping immigration from the North at a minimum. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, many Georgians and coastal Virginians settled here, and saw great fortune through agriculture as large cotton plantations gorged themselves on the rich Georgian soil (Sears).

The Piedmont Region

The Piedmont region, located north of the Fall Line and bounded roughly by the Chattahoochee River to the north and west, is characterized by rolling hills and the most consistently fertile land. Historically, this area has had the highest population concentrations and the greatest economic prosperity. After the American Revolution, the Piedmont region was settled largely by Virginians and Carolinians with small farms. In this era, its main products were tobacco, grains, and livestock. However, in the early nineteenth century, the Georgia state government, realizing the economic potential of the centrally located, rich farmland, encouraged cotton production. By 1830, the small farms had been replaced by large plantations almost entirely growing cotton (Sears).

Atlanta, by far Georgia's largest and most prosperous city, exists in the Piedmont region by no coincidence. However, the rich farmland of the region alone is not what resulted in the development we see today. Just as it does presently, Atlanta benefited in the mid 1800s from its position as a major transportation node. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Atlanta and the surrounding region were tied directly to the emerging national market through an interregional rail network (Weiman). David Weiman, in his article "Urban Growth on the Periphery of the Antebellum Cotton Belt," explains that Atlanta's rapid growth in this period is a testament to the importance of "special characteristics in determining the location and timing of metropolitan growth in the Lower South" (Weiman). Major railroad construction in the early 1850s greatly enlarged the

geographic scope of Atlanta’s market area, connecting the Piedmont region to way stations in northern Georgia and to routes in Alabama and Tennessee. By 1860, only a little more than a decade after its founding, Atlanta proved to give heavy competition to river and even coastal port cities in facilitating trade with the expanding interior agricultural regions of the country (Weiman). Today, the Atlanta Metro Area, encompassing a large portion of the Piedmont region and stretching into the Highlands region, is economically based on the city’s logistic activities (Dablanc). Atlanta and the surrounding region’s position as a major logistics hub draws from the city’s long history in freight shipping, but also relies on its large and growing international airport, multiple highway connections, extensive rail system, and close proximity to the major port of Savannah, which will become even more important with the expansion of the Panama Canal ("Port of Savannah's Growth Lies Overseas"). The effects of the metro area on the surrounding Piedmont region cannot be overstated. In fact, many of the major manufacturing operations even hours outside of the Metro Area have located there for the logistical benefit of being near the city.

The Highlands Region

The northernmost part of the state, the Highlands region, is where the Appalachian mountain chain enters Georgia—as the Blue Ridge Mountains in the east, and the Cumberland Mountains in the west. The North Georgia mountains were first inhabited by the Mississippian Indians, and then by the Cherokee until 1838 when they were forcefully removed. Afterwards, the land in the Highlands

was awarded to white settlers through a land lottery, with the best and most valuable land along main watercourses settled first. Nonetheless, most of the heavily wooded land was left forested (Davis). The major crops in the area were corn, oats, rye and wheat, but animal husbandry was also a large part of the Highlands' economy, including sheep, hogs, horses, mules, oxen and beef cattle. After the Civil War, industry from the North brought land speculators and timber barons into the mountains. The copper industry was one of the first to exploit the natural resources in the region. Needing large amounts of timber to fuel its smelters, the industry did tremendous damage to the mountainous landscape. In fact, by 1878, forty-seven miles of timber had been eliminated (Davis). The great devastation of the North Georgia mountains in part inspired the national forests movement; mountain lands in the Highlands region were among the first acquisitions made in 1911 with the U.S. Government's purchase of a 31,000-acre tract from Gennett Land and Lumber Company of Atlanta (Davis). Both the Federal Government and private timber companies, through their acquisition of mountain land, greatly reduced the number and size of farms in the Highlands region.

Today, this region is popular for second-home community development, largely due to the scenic surroundings preserved by the early conservation efforts of the national parks movement. Tourism plays a big role in its economy, due to its many opportunities for outdoor activities. Still, much manufacturing and

industry is located in the region, particularly in the western part, where rail and interstate are more accessible.

Georgia Small Town Typology

In creating a morphological typology of small towns in Georgia, five categories emerge to reflect the State's history and early development, as well as the varied circumstances in each region. The basic formal qualities these communities acquired in their early days have endured economic upheavals, infrastructural shifts and land development, and now set the stage for these small towns' futures. This research does not posit that any one type is better than another. The purpose of identifying and defining these five major types is to gain a basic understanding of the morphological structures at work in the small towns we will analyze, and to provide a general understanding of why they developed the way they did.

Crossroads Towns

In many ways, the most basic morphological structure is that of the Crossroads Town: a community developed around the meeting of two or more roads. Before the arrival of the railroad, this type of community was the most common in Georgia and elsewhere in the United States. The basic shape of this community type is often a cross, a T-shape, or a wide V shape, surrounded by a cluster of structures serving non-residential uses. In most definitions of crossroad towns, and as is true in this research, they typically include neither a courthouse

nor a railroad. The development surrounding the “cross” will usually contain some combination of the following public buildings and businesses: a bank, several storefronts, small office building(s), church(es), school(s), a post office, and possibly some kind of industry (Roth) 68. Adjoining the above-described development cluster is usually residential development, typically ranging from most-dense, closer to the town center, to least-dense, farther away from the crossroads.

Crossroads Town Example: Midway

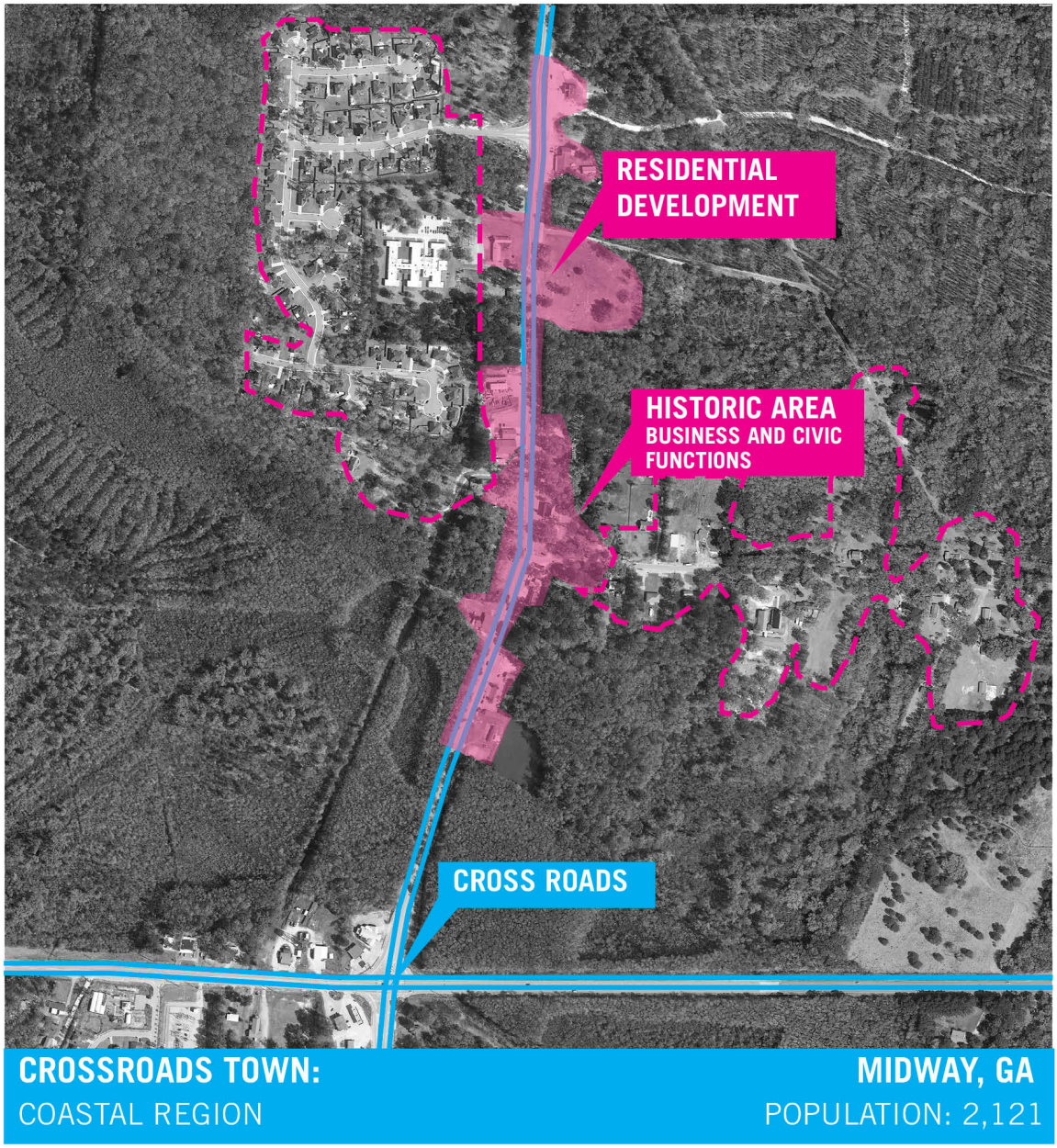


Figure 2.1 Midway, GA located in the Coastal Region of Georgia is an example of a crossroads town typology. Although the oldest development is not located at the road crossing, all the historic functions—courthouse, cemetery, church and school—exist in a compact nucleus not far from the crossroads.

Coastal Port or River Towns

The Coastal Port or River Town type does not apply to many small towns in Georgia today, as most towns serving a port function have long since moved beyond our scope of towns with less than 5,000 people. Nonetheless, some small towns of this type still exist. This typology, when applied to small towns, refers to towns located on actively navigable waters along the coast or interior rivers. Typically, in these towns, the older parts are oriented to the water and an industrial and/or commercial district exists along the waterfront (Roth) 29. Remnants of whatever industry was prominent in the community—shipping, fishing, textiles or other manufacturing—might also be visible along the waterfront. However, most existing retail and business will be located parallel to the water, but on some higher point towards the interior of the town. It is common for this type to have multiple and varied focal points due to changes in industry and economy, and to a de-emphasis on the waterfront.

<u>Coastal Port or River Town Example: Darien, Hawkinsville</u>

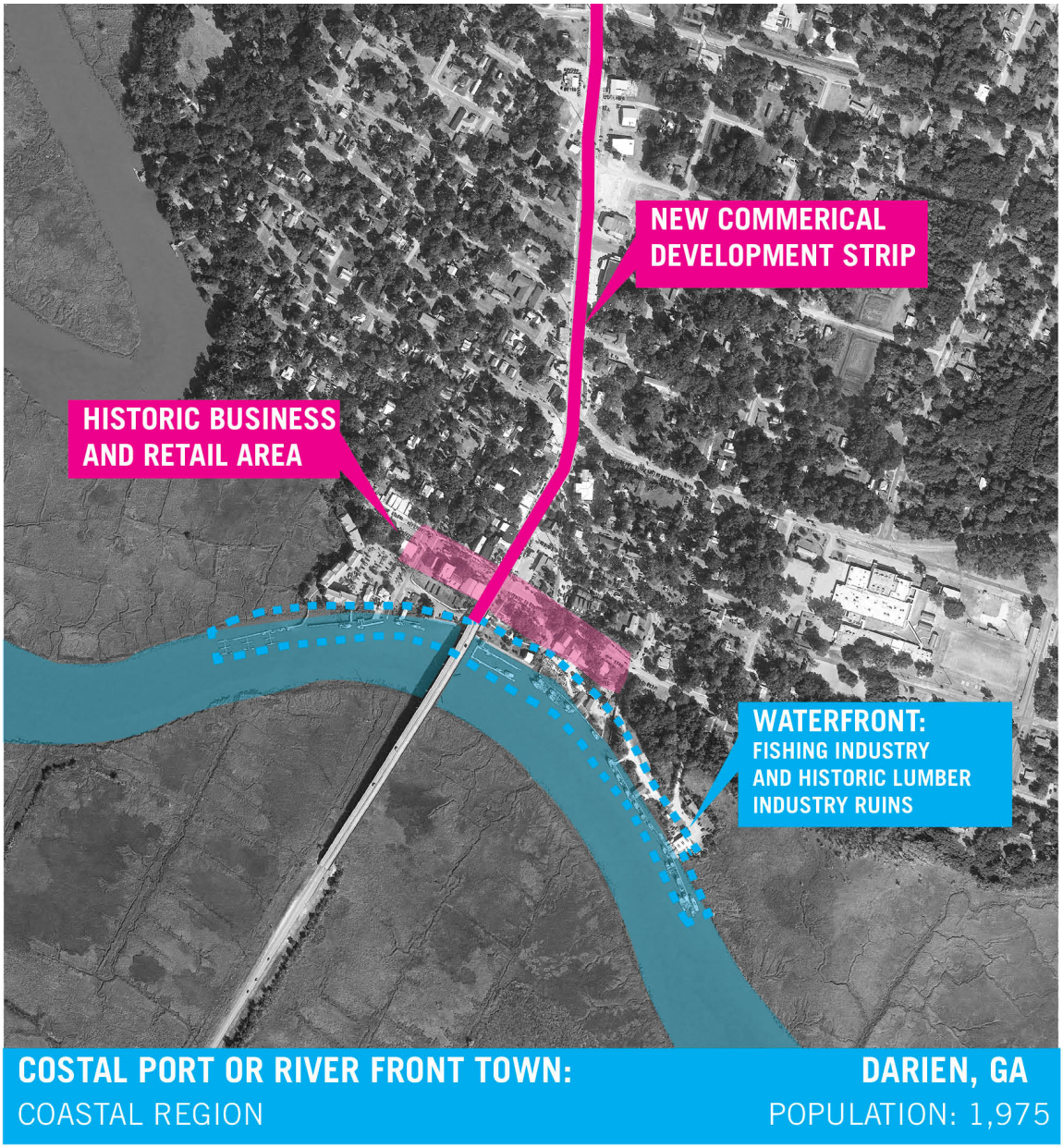


Figure 2.2 Darien, GA located an hour south of Savannah in the Coastal Region of the state along the Atlamaha River, is an excellent example of the coastal port or river town typology. Along the waterfront are remnants of the once thriving lumber industry as well as the functioning fishing industry that has made a name for the town. Just north of the waterfront, on higher ground, sits the historic retail and business district. Further inland, are is the residential areas, split by the newer commercial strip development.

Courthouse Towns

This typology, maybe one of the most picturesque, is a staple in Southern identity and imagery. As Darlene Roth describes it, “The Courthouse square is as common a southern image as is the communal commons to New England” (Roth) 40. In the early years of the State, Georgia adopted very aggressive land policies, and engaged in a practice known as “planting” towns. In this way, the State government would plan and build infrastructure in rural areas, often before there were developed markets or populations there. For this reason, the planned Courthouse Town is frequently the oldest in a given county, and often considered the most beautiful. In such a town, the courthouse and its namesake square are the focal point of the community. While there are many variations on the type, with varying degrees of emphasis on the courthouse structure, the primary characteristic among them is the existence of the structure and its significance to the town’s function and purpose.

Courthouse Town Example: Chatsworth, Sparta

Figure 2.3 Chatsworth, GA located in the Highlands region of the state, embodies the basic elements of a Southern Courthouse town with the Courthouse Square positioned on the most prominent at the intersection of two major roads. Furthermore, the railroad is situated fairly close to the downtown grid signifying that the community developed after the railroad.

Railroad Towns

Before the advent of the automobile, the railroad had tremendous influence on the morphology and economy of Georgia towns. For many towns, the railroad was their *raison d'etre*, for some it brought prosperity, and still for others being passed over by it meant their demise. For these reasons, the Railroad Town type has many variations. In crossroads towns that were retrofitted with a rail line, the majority of development is not oriented toward the railroad. Even here, though, there are often collections of rail-related structures—a depot, a warehouse, service buildings—that exist along the tracks. In many of the towns where the railroad post-dates the town's founding, the railroad is located away from the main center of town, or otherwise cuts across a preexisting street grid (Roth)85. In towns that were developed along intact rail lines or were formed simultaneously with the railroad, the morphologies relate more intricately to their particular railroad, the tracks being an intricate part of town's layout, rather than an accessory or interference to it. The main characteristics of railroad towns developed in this way are: the roads holding precedence in the street plan; the railroad being secondary, and the relationship between the two being based on right angles (Roth) 97. This type varies still from the railroad towns planned by the railroad companies themselves. In this variation, the roads run parallel to the railroad with commercial development running along it and often oriented to it. Street crossings in this alternative are at a minimum and usually occur outside of the town center (Roth) 114.

Example: Riceboro, Harlem, Junction City, Pine Mountain

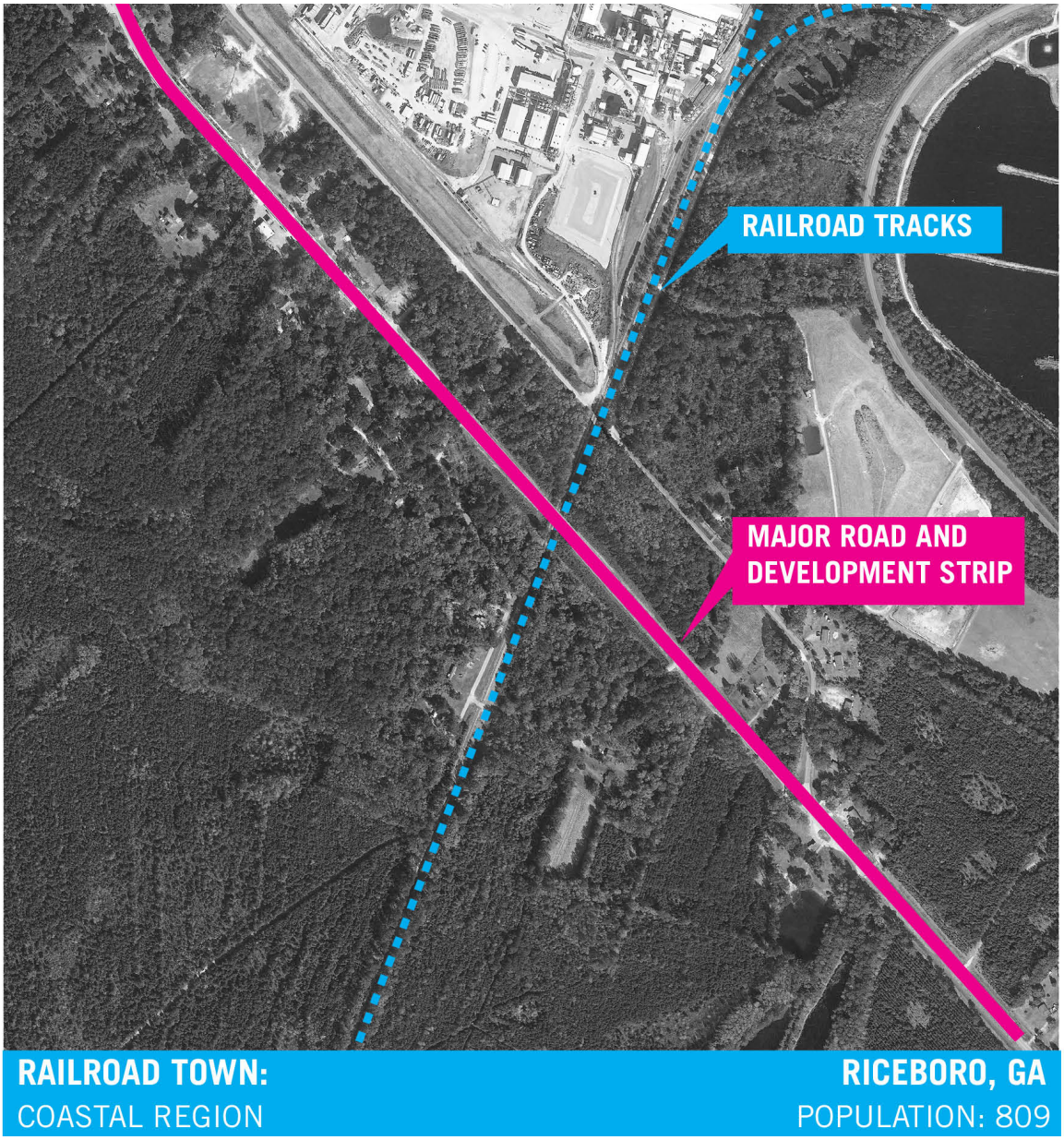


Fig. 2.4 Riceboro, GA a fairly small town in the Coastal Region of the state, appears as little more that a roadside community, but is a good example of a railroad town.

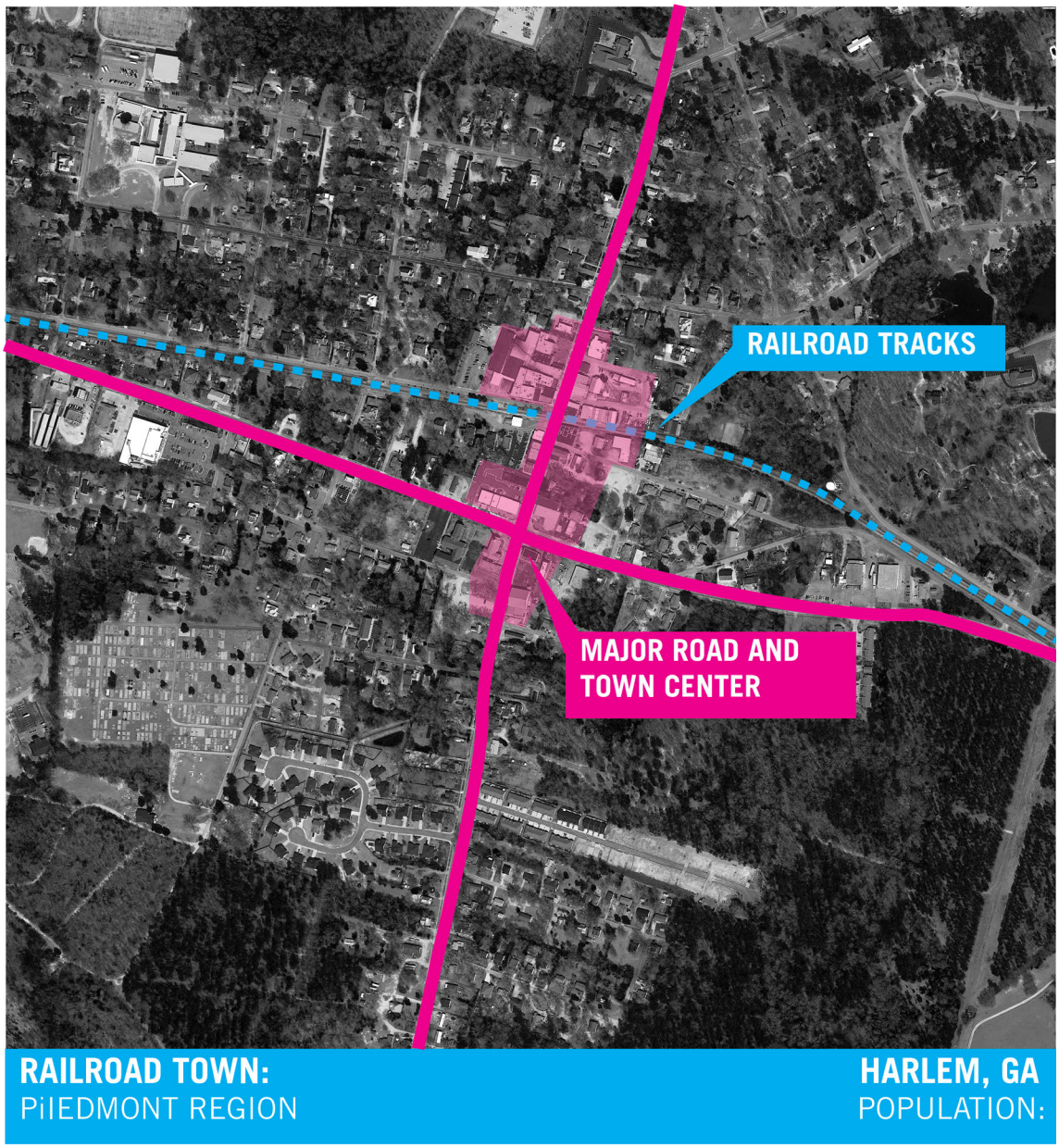


Figure 2.6 Harlem, GA located in the Piedmont Region of the state is an example of a railroad town that more than likely developed along side the railroad as its morphology intricately relates to the tracks passing through the town center.

Mountain Towns

Unlike many of those mentioned above, the Mountain Town type is influenced very heavily by topography and surrounding landscape. As one can imagine, most small towns falling under this category are located in the mountainous Highlands region. In Mountain Town communities, major roads are primarily built on ridgelines, which can make development off of these main roads difficult, due to drastic changes in topography. Secondary roads, when they run perpendicular to the main road, are often distorted, and do not form an orthogonal grid. For example, when secondary streets run downhill, they frequently form elongated blocks, but, when running uphill, they are foreshortened by the changing topography. Additionally, in order to navigate steep slopes, roads often meander and wind, a pattern not seen in any other type (Roth) 136.

Example: Dahlonega

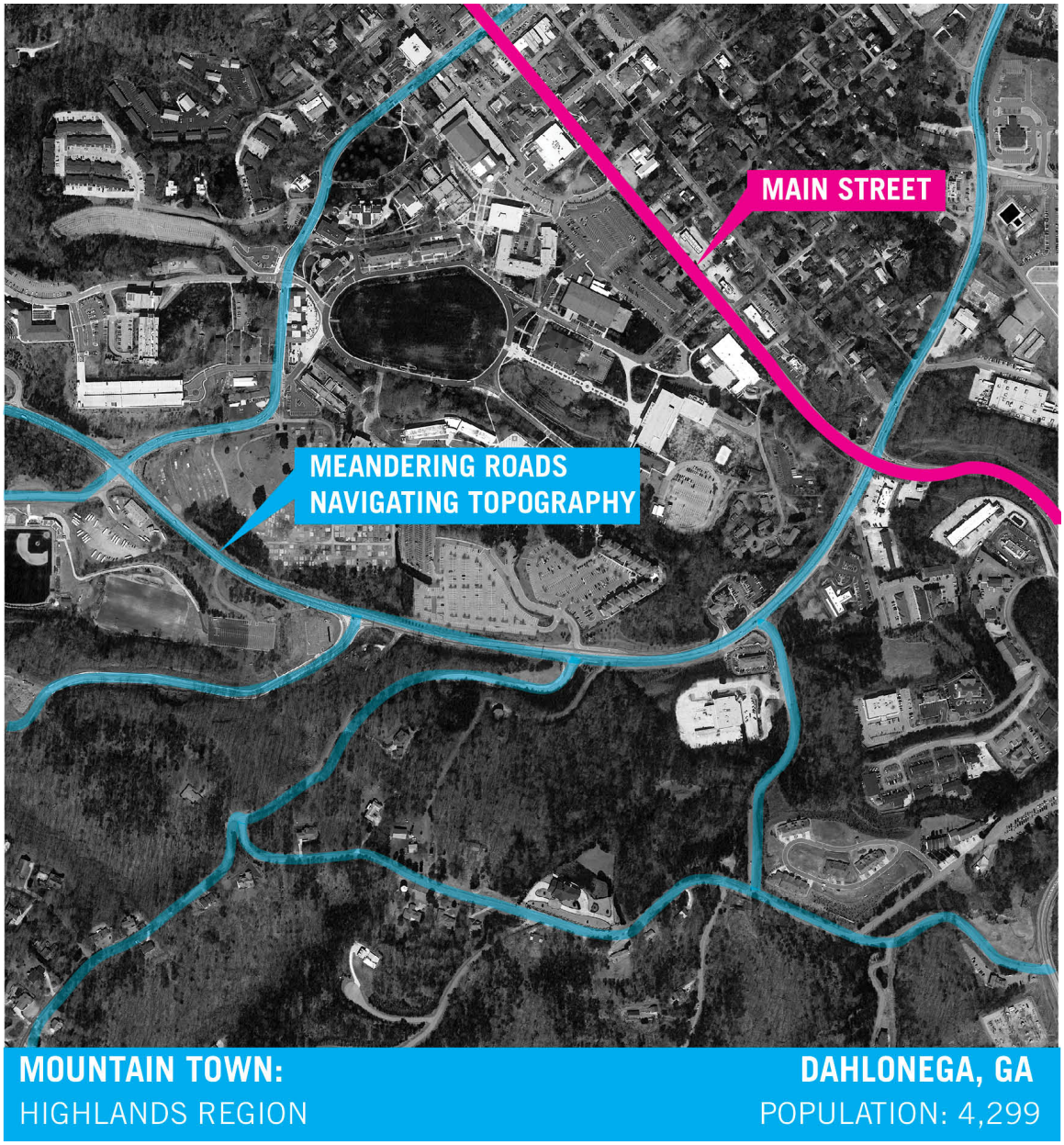


Figure 2.6 Dahlonega, GA located in the Highlands region of the State is an example of many characteristics that define a mountain town typology. Although at its town center the topography is relatively flat and the block structure orthogonal, the roads that surround exemplify the type of meandering necessary to navigate the mountain terrain.

Socioeconomic Conditions of Georgia Small Towns

Discussed early were the overarching issues that the majority of small, rural towns in the United States are facing—population decline, high poverty rate, high unemployment rates, and fewer well-paying jobs. As these conditions exist for many small towns in Georgia, it is important to understand that these struggles effect communities to varying degrees and indifferent ways. In an effort to understand the conditions of small towns at a statewide and regional level, this section examines the towns in our research scope by four criteria to identify basic social and economic development patterns. The following sections and accompanying maps analyze small Georgia towns of less than 5,000 people, existing outside of major Metropolitan Areas, by population growth rate from 1990-2010, median household income for 2010, poverty rate for 2010, and unemployment rate for 2010. Additionally, the regional averages for small towns under each criteria are included to provide an overview of how small communities fair in each region. It is important to note that the regional averages do not include larger cities or towns; however, statistics on major cities and metropolitan areas are mentioned to provide a comparison.

Population Growth Rate

Population growth rates for small towns across Georgia vary drastically depending on their locations. Between 1990 and 2010, the highest and most concentrated growth rates exist in a band just east of the Atlanta Metro Area and continuing north into the eastern Highlands region. Other areas of high growth

rates are mainly located along interstates throughout the state, or in areas adjacent to major cities: Savannah, Augusta, Columbus, and Albany. The areas of the most significant population decline and stagnation are located in the southern half of the state—in the Plains and Coastal regions—with the exception of towns located in close proximity to I-75, which creates a band of faster growing towns down the center of the southern half of the state. While small towns in the Coastal region have an average growth rate of 6-percent, the average for small towns located in the Plains region have an alarming negative 1-percent growth rate. These averages provide a stark contrast with small Piedmont towns' 15-percent growth rate and small Highlands towns' booming 25-percent growth rate (Bureau "U.S. Census 2010").

As a pattern emerges showing disproportionate growth in small towns between the northern regions and southern regions of the state, it is important to note that Georgia's major cities cores are also experiencing slow population growth or even decline while their surrounding metro areas amass larger populations. Since 1990 to 2010 Savannah had a negative 1-percent growth, Macon a negative 14-percent , and Columbus a 6-percent and Atlanta a 7-percent as most of the metro areas around these cities have seen booming growth. For example, while the City of Atlanta only grew by seven-percent between 1990 and 2010, the Atlanta Metro Region expanded its population by about 60-percent, and was named third in overall growth in the nation between 2000 and 2010, only being surpassed by Dallas and Houston, a pattern

undoubtedly responsible for the small town growth to the east and north of the city (Commission). However, high growth rates are not limited to Atlanta, they are seen in all major metropolitan areas in Georgia except for Macon, which declined by 20-percent in between 1990 and 2010. Further examples include—the Augusta-Richmond County Metro Region growing by 27-percent, the Savannah Metro Reion by 35-percent, the Albany Metro Region by 40-percent, and the Columbus Metro Reion by 13-percent. (Bureau "U.S. Census 2010").

Median Household Income

Reflecting a pattern similar to that of the population growth rate, the range of median household income for 2010 is unevenly dispersed across the state with a concentration of higher incomes in the small towns surrounding Atlanta, and in particular to the east between the City and Athens. In this area lies the city of Jersey, with the highest median household income of any small town within our scope of study at $94,792. This, contrasted against the town of Dooling, located in the Plains region, with the lowest median household income, at $6,635, shows the vast range of economic conditions for those living in small towns across the state. The regional average median household income for the towns in our scope reflects the pattern discovered in the analyses of the population growth rate. However, the Piedmont Region average, $34,108, surpasses that of the Highlands, $33,671, by over $1,500, showing again the influence of the Atlanta metro area on surrounding smaller towns. The Plains and the Coastal regions have comparable median household income levels with the Coast’s being just

slightly higher at $26,676. Nonetheless, all the regional averages for small towns in Georgia are a great deal lower than the median income of the entire state, at $49,347, and the U.S., at $51,914 (Survey).

Poverty Rate

Poverty rates for small towns across the state are fairly uniform, but once again the Plains and Coastal regions demonstrate a more distressing economic situation, with the Coastal average for small towns equaling 19-percent poverty rate and the Plains average equaling 23-percent. These averages compared to those of the northern regions—the Highlands at 14-percent and the Piedmont at 16-percent—illustrate, yet again, a disparity in the distribution of wealth across the state. Even in the largest cities in the southern regions, poverty rates were much higher than that of the City of Atlanta, which has an 8-percent poverty rate. In the Plains and Coastal Regions, the cities ranked as follows: Columbus at 18-percent, Savannah at 24-percent, Macon at 30-percent, and Albany at 32-percent. Even more alarming are the numerous small towns in the two regions that had poverty rates equaling over 50-percent (Survey). Analysis of this map clearly shows high rates of poverty in the small towns of every region of the state, laying aside the area within a tight radius of the Atlanta Metro Area.

Unemployment Rate

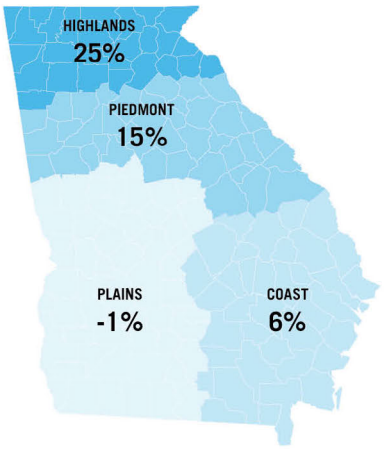
Unemployment rates for small towns in Georgia were also dispersed relatively evenly across the state, ranging from 8-percent in the Highlands and

Coastal Regions to 12-percent in the Plains Region. The area southwest of Atlanta and north of Columbus hosts a concentration of slightly higher unemployment rates, the highest being the city of Williamson's at 28-percent. The Piedmont region's unemployment rate in small towns is the second highest at 10-percent. The city of Bartow, located in one of the southernmost counties of the Piedmont region, had the highest unemployment rate for towns within our scope at a staggering 41-percent. Surprisingly, the Coastal region's unemployment rate remain relative low at 8-percent, however the northern area of the region, close to the Piedmont boarder, shows a concentration of higher unemployment. While unemployment rates for small towns in Georgia appear to be less severe than some other criteria assessments, It is important to note that unemployment in small towns in Georgia across all regions is higher than the recorded state average of 5.7-percent and national average of 5.1-percent for 2010 (Survey).

GEORGIA SMALL TOWNS BY 2010 POPULATION GROWTH RATE

Dawn Riley, MArch + MCRP, GA Tech

Based on 2010 U.S. Census data, the map below depicts the population growth rate for small Georgia towns of less than 5,000 people. The map to the right shows the regional average for population growth rates for small towns of less than 5,000 people.



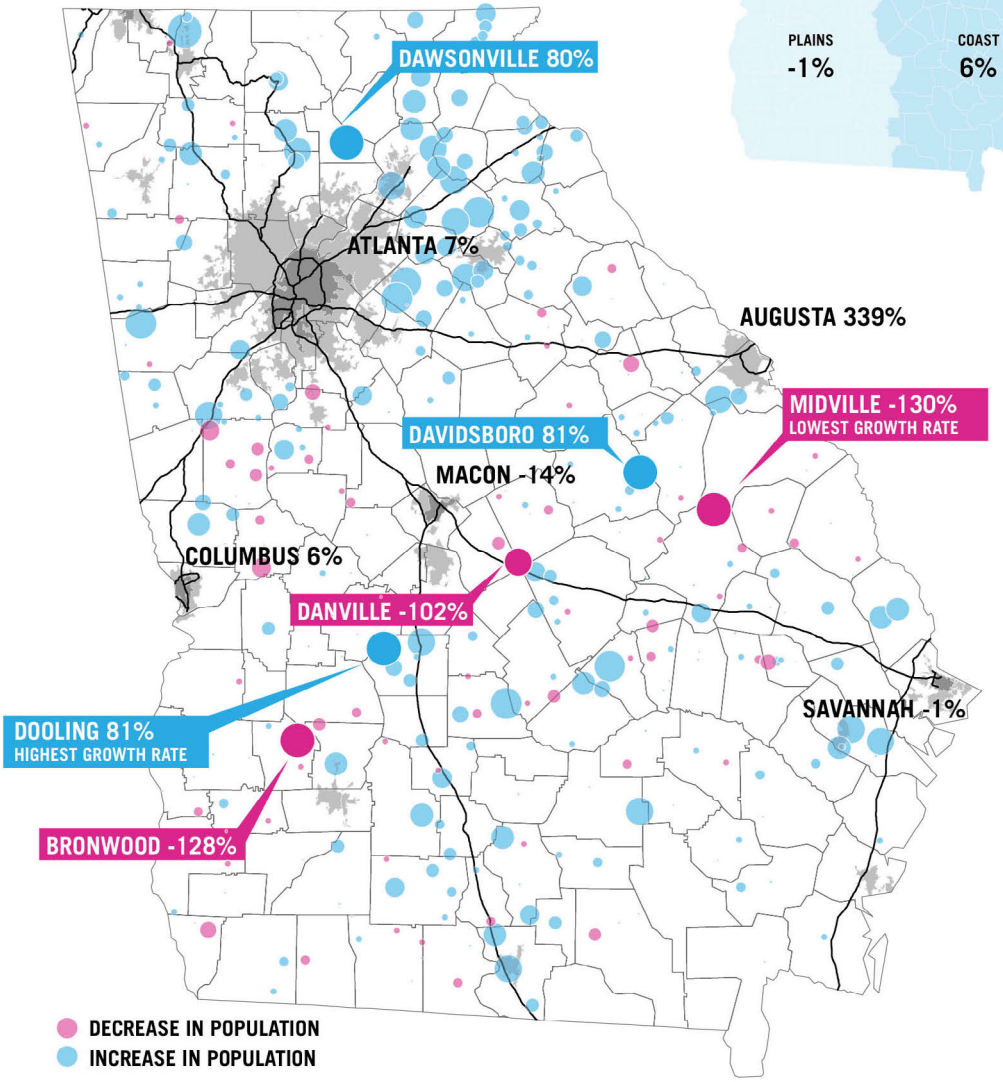
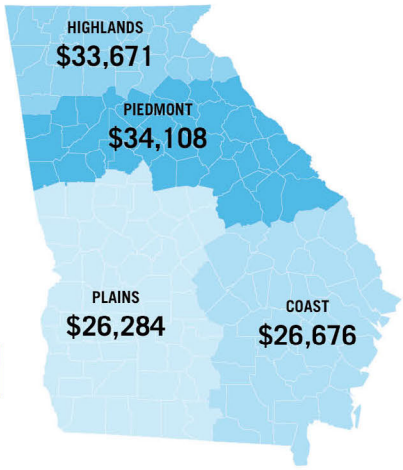


Figure 2.7 Georgia Small Towns by 1990 to 2010 Population Growth Rate

GEORGIA SMALL TOWNS BY 2010 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Dawn Riley, MArch + MCRP, GA Tech

Based on U.S. 2010 Census data, this map depicts the Median Household Income for small Georgia towns of less than 5,000 people. The map to the right shows the average Median Household Income for small towns in each region.



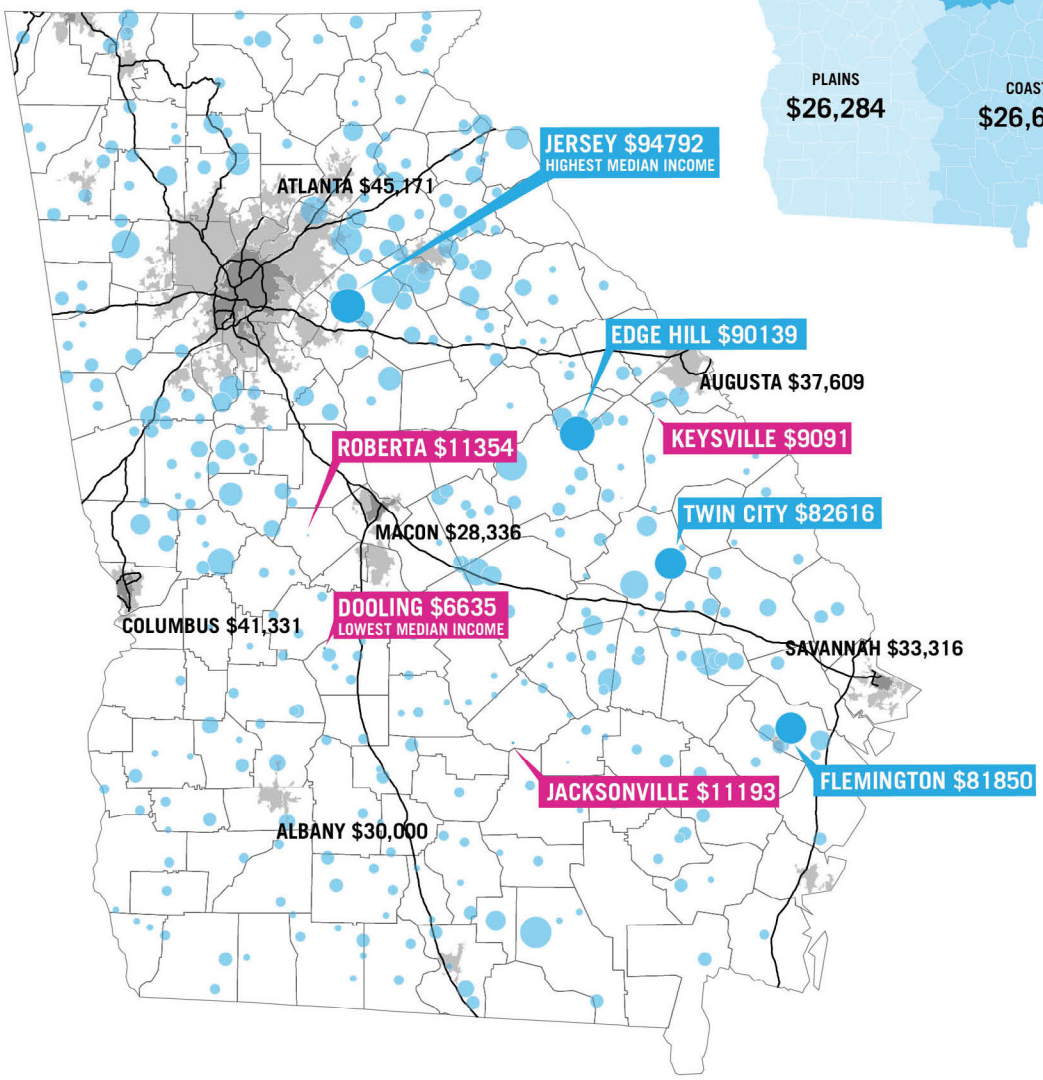


Fig.ure 2.8 Georgia Small Towns by 2010 Median Household Income

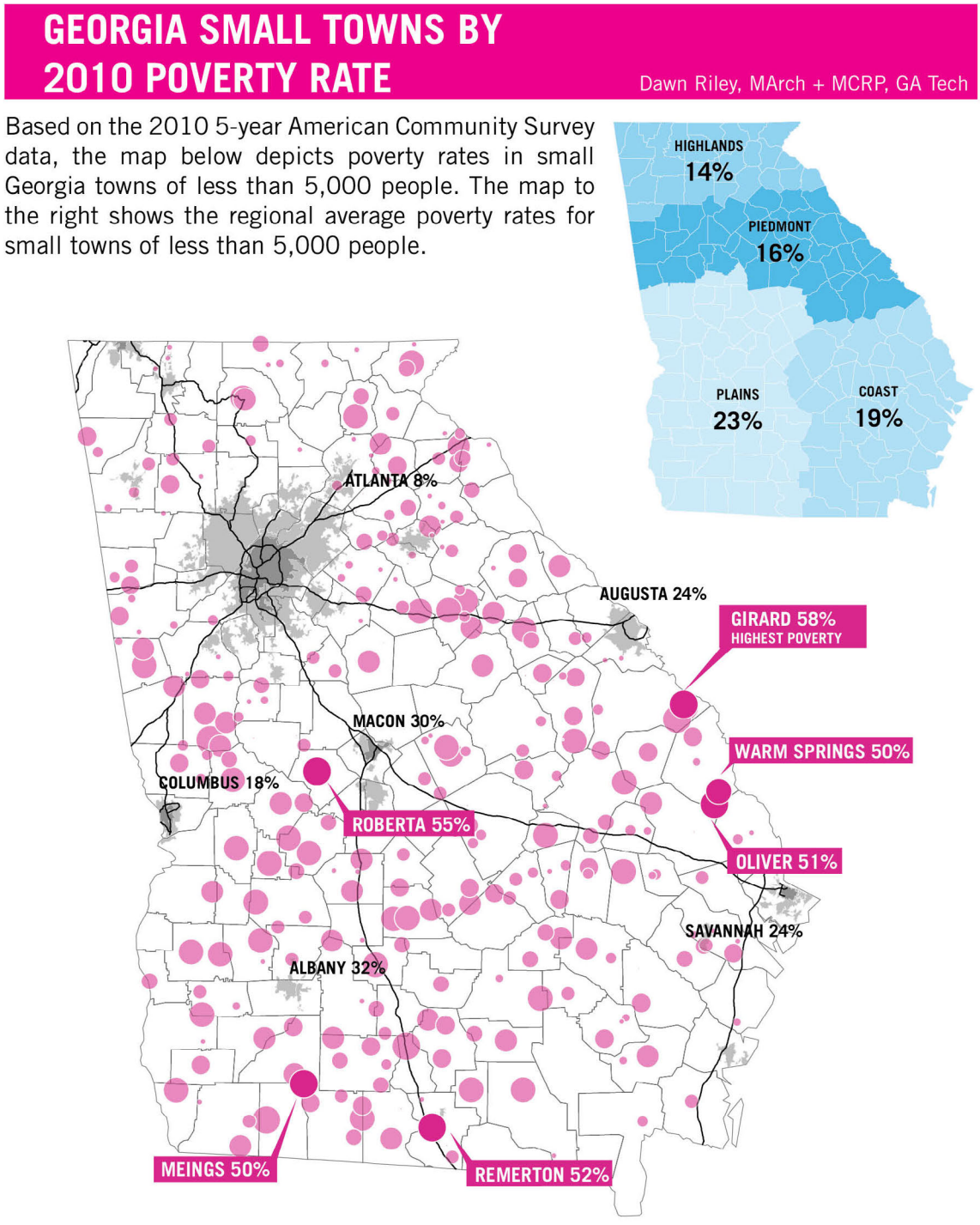


Figure 2.10 Georgia Small Towns by 2010 Poverty Rate

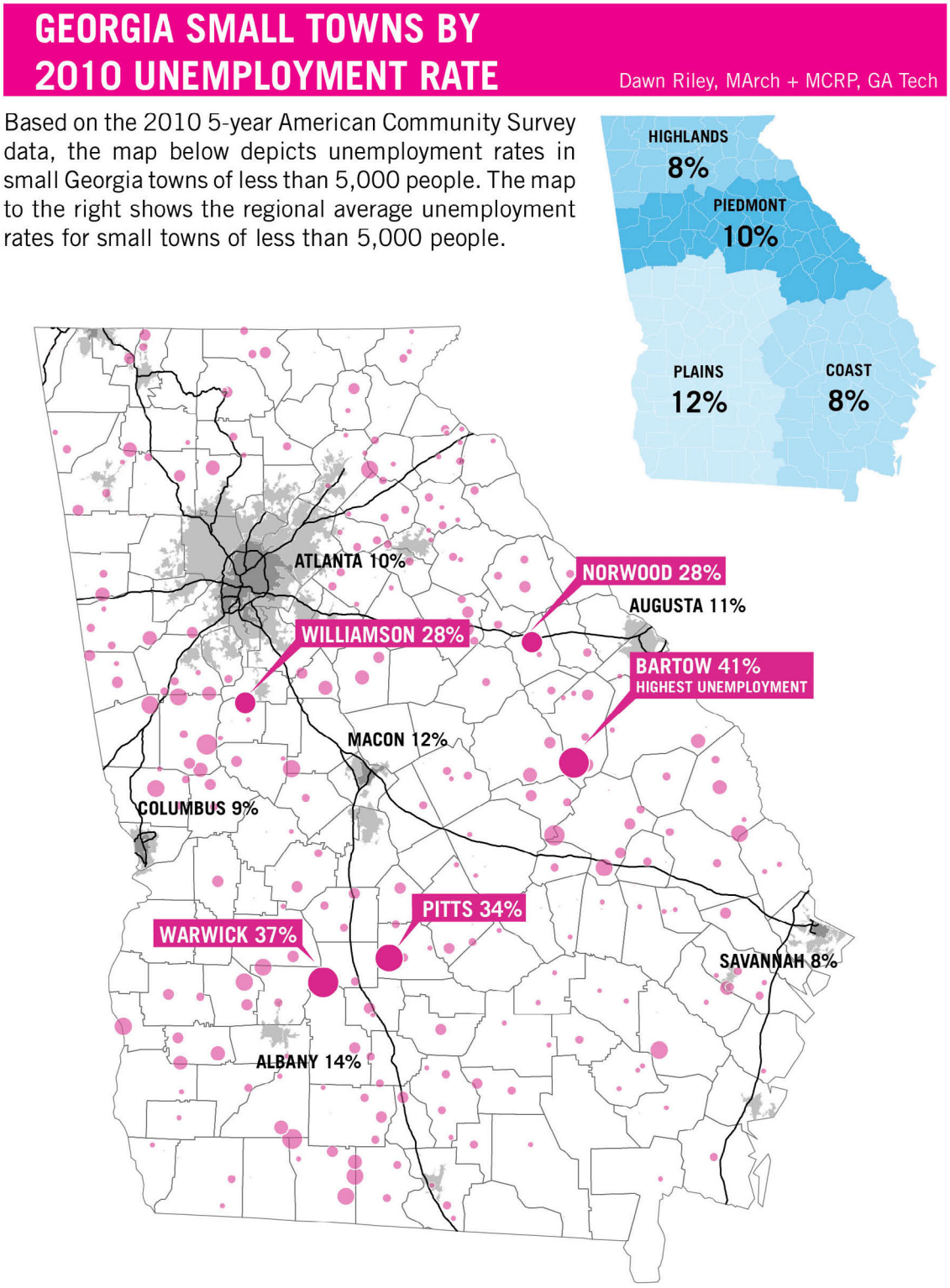


Figure 2.11 Georgia Small Towns by 2010 Unemployment Rate

CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC DRIVERS IN BANTAM TOWNS

Method of Economic Evaluation

"Sadly, I think the greatest issues that influence a small municipality are outside, external things, that they have no control over," explains the Mayor of Harlem, Georgia, Bobby Culpepper (Culpepper). Mayor Culpepper is talking about externalities like nearby employment centers—hospitals, military bases, and larger urban areas. His outlook is common to many small-town citizens, and, in many ways, is true; the most powerful influences on a small town's economy are infrequently within the jurisdiction of the town. It should not come as a surprise that more traditional need-based economic development strategies, ones that focus on attracting new investment and industry, are out of reach for most small communities, due to lack of resources, available incentives and, sometimes, a skilled workforce (Read). However, small towns that define their assets broadly and think creatively about how to capitalize upon them can find a surprising amount of success. This chapter looks at five of the most significant economic influences on Georgia small towns—major employment centers, public education, higher education, local employment, and tourism—to create a means of measuring the economic potential of small towns. In the following chapter, the sample set of 65 towns is analyzed with attention to these economic drivers in order to reveal the towns with the strongest and weakest economic assets.

Proximities to Major Employment Centers

Because this research examines towns with populations near 5,000 people, and some whose populations number in the hundreds, it is necessary to look at the economic assets both within the town's borders and those nearby in order to create a complete picture. In this chapter, we look at the assets that towns gain by their locale, something over which they have no control. Nonetheless, proximity to major urban areas and major employment centers, such as military bases and hospitals, has a huge impact on the economy of a small town. For example, an analysis of our 65-town sample set showed that, in 2010, communities within 25 miles of a military base boasted a median household income 12-percent higher than that of other towns. While towns within 25 miles of a major Level I Trauma Center with capacity between 400 and 700 beds had a median household income 25-percent higher than those near smaller hospitals. This data analysis shows a correlation between the average earnings of small-town residents and their communities' proximity to such major employment centers. Within our sample set, proximity to urban area revealed a clear correlation with median household income; towns that were located within 25 miles of an urban area enjoyed nearly a $10,000 increase in median household income over towns that were not within 25 miles. Also, statewide data supports this correlation, as explored in the earlier section "Socioeconomic Conditions of Georgia Small Towns," and also represented in Figure 9. While the direct relationship between a small town and an urban area can be difficult to

qualify thanks to myriad variables, this study looks at the small town's potential to benefit economically, educationally and culturally from being located relatively near a larger urban area.

Proximity to a Major Urban Area

Towns located near a major urban area, in what is called the "urban fringe," often experience rapid population growth that puts stress on infrastructure and drives increasing demands for housing that are difficult for the town to accommodate without resorting to quickly constructed, low-quality developments. However, this proximity can also have positive economic effects on small towns. Proximity to urbanized areas can provide jobs for those who live in small towns, supply a base population for day-tourism to the town, and increase cultural and educational opportunities. For these reasons, this study considers towns within 25 miles of a census-designated "urbanized area" (see appendix for definition) to be at an economic advantage over towns more than 25 miles away.

To establish this criterion in the economic analysis section of this research, the sample towns were mapped in GIS, and subjected to a select-by-location command in order to identify towns within 25 miles of the mapped urbanized areas. All urbanized areas that were mapped are within the state Georgia, aside from one. Chattanooga, Tennessee was included in the analysis due to the fact that parts of its metro area are contained within Georgia's state boundaries. Furthermore, it was found feasible that residents of Georgia would travel to Chattanooga for work, recreation, et cetera, and vice-versa.

Once the towns within 25 miles of an urbanized area were identified, each urbanized area was assigned a rating depending on its population and perceived value in terms of cultural assets, tourism, and employment opportunities. For example, towns within 25 miles of metro Atlanta, being by far the largest urbanized area as well as an international city, are ranked Tier One, while the small towns outlying much smaller cities like Brunswick, Dalton, and Warner Robins are ranked Tier Six. This system allows towns to be ordered by the most important nearby urbanized area, with towns more than 25 miles from any urbanized area being ranked at the bottom, Tier Seven.

Proximity to Military Bases

Georgia has twelve military bases located across the state. The towns in our sample set were located near seven of them. For decades, and across the country, the effects that military bases have had on rural communities have been prodigious. In some ways similar to major private employers, military bases can provide employment to civilians in the area, bring in new residents to communities, and, in some cases, raise the median income. For example, Harlem, Georgia, located in the Piedmont region between Atlanta and Augusta, has benefited from its proximity to U.S. Army base, Fort Gordon; highly skilled and well paid military officers move to the community, often settling there when they retire. Mayor Bobby Culpepper, explains that the base has been one of the greatest influences on the town's success and growth, as the residents it brings to Harlem have helped to raise property values, better fund schools, offer

employment, increase the population growth rate, and create a more diverse population (Culpepper). This narrative is common to many rural communities, as is the devastation caused when bases close, since many of these communities depend heavily on the benefits derived from their proximity to base. Because of this direct relationship, this analysis includes proximity to a military base as an economic driver.

The methodology for this criterion is straightforward. The twelve military bases located in Georgia were mapped in GIS, and towns from the sample set were selected by location. Towns that were within 25 miles of a military base were considered to potentially benefit from the proximity. This metric of 25 miles was chosen as a feasible distance for a person to commute to work without financial difficulty or unreasonable time dedication. Of the sample set, 24 towns were within 25 miles of a military base, thus being noted as receiving economic benefit from that proximity.

Proximity to Hospitals

Hospitals, like military bases, can have large impacts on small communities, particularly in rural areas. They, of course, raise the quality of life of those in the community by providing necessary healthcare, but also provide employment opportunities as well as attract new residents. However, all hospitals are not created equal; a hospital's size and the level of care it provides can determine the degree of benefit it offers nearby communities.

In Georgia, hospitals and major healthcare centers are dispersed relatively evenly across the state. In fact, in the analysis of our sample set, none of the 65 towns were found to be more than 25 miles away from a hospital. However, the sizes of the hospitals did vary a great deal. The largest hospitals, between 400 and 700 beds, were fewest in number, and were largely located in larger urban areas, while midsized hospitals, 200 to 400 beds, were more numerous and dispersed more evenly. The hospitals most commonly located near the towns in our sample set were smaller, with fewer than 200 beds.

Towns near a large hospital, of 400 to 700 beds, were ranked Tier One, while towns near a midsized hospital were ranked Tier Two. The remaining towns, near a smaller hospital, were perceived to have no additional benefit, due to the fact that all 65 sample towns were within 25 miles of a hospital. In all, 32 towns were determined to enjoy economic benefit from being within 25 miles of a midsized-to-large hospital.

Local Employment

While proximity to a major urban area and regional employers, like hospitals and military bases, can be major economic assets to a small town, local employment can be just as important, if not moreso, when determining economic stability and potential for growth. In a worker inflow-outflow analysis, over half of the sample set showed more people leaving the towns for work than coming into them. The towns that showed more people coming into them for work were

determined to have more potential for future growth and greater economic independence.

To measure the amount of local employment in each of the 65 sample communities, this criterion of the economic drivers assessment looked at the worker inflow and outflow data for each community. Data used in this analysis was gathered from the U.S. Census sponsored site www.onthemap.ces.census.gov, and includes all primary job counts in each of the 65 communities for 2010. In this data set, “inflow” numbers represent all workers traveling into the town from outside in order to work. Conversely, “outflow” numbers account for the number of workers living inside the community and traveling outside for work. Also included is the number of workers who both live and work within the community, but this number was small relative to the other two.

To analyze this data, the difference was taken between the worker inflow and outflow numbers; towns with higher inflow than outflow were assumed to have at least one major local employer. Then, the towns with higher inflow numbers were ranked by the number of inflow workers plus the number of workers living and working within the town, thus showing what towns in the sample have the strongest local employment. This method of analysis does have its limitations, as it does not recognize the types of industries where people are employed, or the income levels of those who work in the town versus those who

work outside of it. However, it does present a plausible measure of which towns have, at the very least, a foundation for local employment.

Tourism

For many small towns, boosting their economies through tourism is an enticing prospect, as most of them have some historic buildings or historic significance upon which to build a tourism-based economic development plan. However, this approach is not feasible in every town, and, often, efforts to promote tourism fail to furnish expected results. For this reason, when considering tourism as a planning option, communities should proceed with caution and dampen their expectations. Simply put, a small town's ability to derive substantial revenue from tourism depends on the town's wealth of, or proximity to, tourist attractions (Walker 127). For example, a small town in North Georgia adjacent to the Chattahoochee National Forest has the potential to develop a profitable tourism development plan as a gateway to that natural amenity. Additionally, towns that are part of a regional marketing effort, such as a cultural or heritage trial—like the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor, which includes all of the Georgia and South Carolina Coasts and runs from northern Florida to southern North Carolina—also stand a better-than-average chance of building a successful tourism market. Of the sample set, there are many communities that fall under these two definitions; however, there are also towns that have their own draw either through local festivals, natural wonders, or historic buildings. There are also towns included in this study that rely on their

location along a major travel corridor; they are simply a good place to stop, have a bite, and fill-up on the way to somewhere else. Tourism in Georgia has many forms, and, if captured successfully, can make a difference in small communities.

Tourism Potential

While the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Tourism Division does not collect tourism industry data on individual communities, it does collect countywide data. In order to determine which towns might have active and vibrant tourist industries, this study looks at the following data on tourism at the county level: travel expenditures, travel-generated employment, travel-generated payroll, and travel-generated state and local tax revenue. The first data set, travel expenditures, accounts for the total amount of money spent by travelers during their trips. This spending can take place at their destination or en route to their destination. In this analysis, the travel expenditure data for each town's county was ranked from greatest to least. The towns in counties with the highest expenditure values were then screened for destinations within the counties that might skew data. Finally, towns in counties with the highest travel expenditures were considered to have vibrant tourism industries, or at least the potential for one.

Education

Regardless of whether a small town is located at the urban fringe or in a deep rural area, the town's economic development capacity is directly related to its residents' ability to attain quality employment and decent compensation,

which, in turn, is directly tied to the availability of quality education in that community. A longstanding and largely undisputed link exists between an individual's earning power and education level. In Scheke's article referenced in Leigh and Blakely, it was found that, with every year of additional education, a person's earning power is raised by 10-percent (314). For this reason, as well as many others described below, higher education institutions are often regarded as major assets in communities. However, it is important to note that quality primary and secondary schools are necessary to generate higher quantities of students who qualify and have the tools to succeed in advanced education (Leigh & Blakely 314).

Aside from promoting economic equality through a higher standard of living, quality schools can influence many other aspects of a small town's economy. Quality K-12 schools can be the deciding factor for potential residents and even potential employers considering relocation to the area. Many advanced technology employers make schools a priority when seeking locations, since their highly skilled workforce will be reticent to move to a community where their children will not receive a good education. Of course, firms also value an educated and skilled potential workforce. Additionally, quality public schools, especially among low-income communities, increase the likelihood that students will complete high school, thus reducing their risks of committing crimes, later incarceration, and welfare dependency (Leigh & Blakely 314). For all these

reasons, this study considers the strength of the public school system a major economic driver, and uses it as an indicator of a town's economic potential.

Institutions of higher education not only offer educational benefits to small towns, but also provide employment opportunities and cultural enrichment. As there are several different forms of post-secondary education, however, their benefits are varied. For example, a community college, vocational or technical school can offer necessary job skill training, boosting the town's biggest resource: its residents. High schools that initiate dual-enrollment programs in conjunction with community colleges and vocational schools also prepare local students to achieve more, and to reach further in their educational goals. On another level, higher-education institutions can benefit adjacent small towns by offering employment and attracting new residents. Undoubtedly, the proximity of an institution of higher learning can be of great benefit to a small town and is considered, along with the public school system, an indicator of the economic potential.

Quality of Public Schools

As an indicator of the strength of the public school system for each town, this analysis looks at the percentage of students enrolled in public schools versus private schools. The rationale for this metric is that, with better public schools, fewer students will be enrolled in private schools. The data set used in this analysis was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates for 2010, and depicts the total percentage of

students aged three and older enrolled in public schools and private schools. This data, compared against the state average for public school enrollment (84.7-percent), yields a list of towns that have public school enrollment percentages that exceed Georgia's total percentage, signifying that a significant portion of parents have enrolled students in public schools. However, it is important to consider the limitations of this analysis, as it does not consider factors like families' financial ability to enroll students in private school, or the availability of the private-school option. Nevertheless, the chosen metric offers a broad idea of public school strength.

Proximity to Higher Education Institutions

To evaluate the sample set of towns by their perceived benefit gained from proximity to higher education institutions, all public, private, technical and for-profit schools in Georgia were mapped in GIS, and towns from the sample set were selected by location within 25 miles of the institutions. This distance was chosen as a feasible distance for a person to commute to school or work without financial difficulty or unreasonable time dedication. Then, the towns were listed alongside the institutions within the described radius. The institutions in each town's proximity were counted. Additionally, the public institutions were ranked according to the Georgia Board of Regents tiers—the first tier being larger research universities, the second being comprehensive universities, the third being state universities, and the fourth being state colleges. Technical schools were not included in this ranking. First, the sample set was sorted by the Georgia

Board of Regents tier system, then by the number of institutions in the towns' proximities. Towns within 25 miles of a first-through-third tier public institution were considered to have the most benefit, while towns that were not near a higher ranked institution but near multiple unranked schools were still considered to gain moderate benefit. Towns that were not within 25 miles of a higher-education institution were considered to have no benefit.

Economic Drivers Sample Set Ranking

The seven identified economic influences—primary and secondary public education, higher education, local employment, proximity to major urban areas, military bases, hospitals, and tourism—included in this study were chosen based on evidence that they can powerfully shape the economies of small towns in Georgia and elsewhere. However, they are by no means the only factors, and are not intended to be presented as such in this research. They do, however, offer a plausible means of measuring the economic potential of small towns. When applied to the selected sample set of small towns in Georgia, the result is a seven-tier ranking system, with Tier One being the best-positioned towns and Tier Seven being the worst. The following figures show the 65 sample towns alphabetically and by region with their perceived economic assets listed alongside them. In *Figure 3.5*, all towns are listed by number of assets, revealing the towns with the most economic potential and those with the least. Following these charts are descriptions of the highest-ranking towns.

Table 3.1 Economic Drivers Matrix: Coastal Region

Table 3.2 Economic Drivers Matrix: Piedmont Region

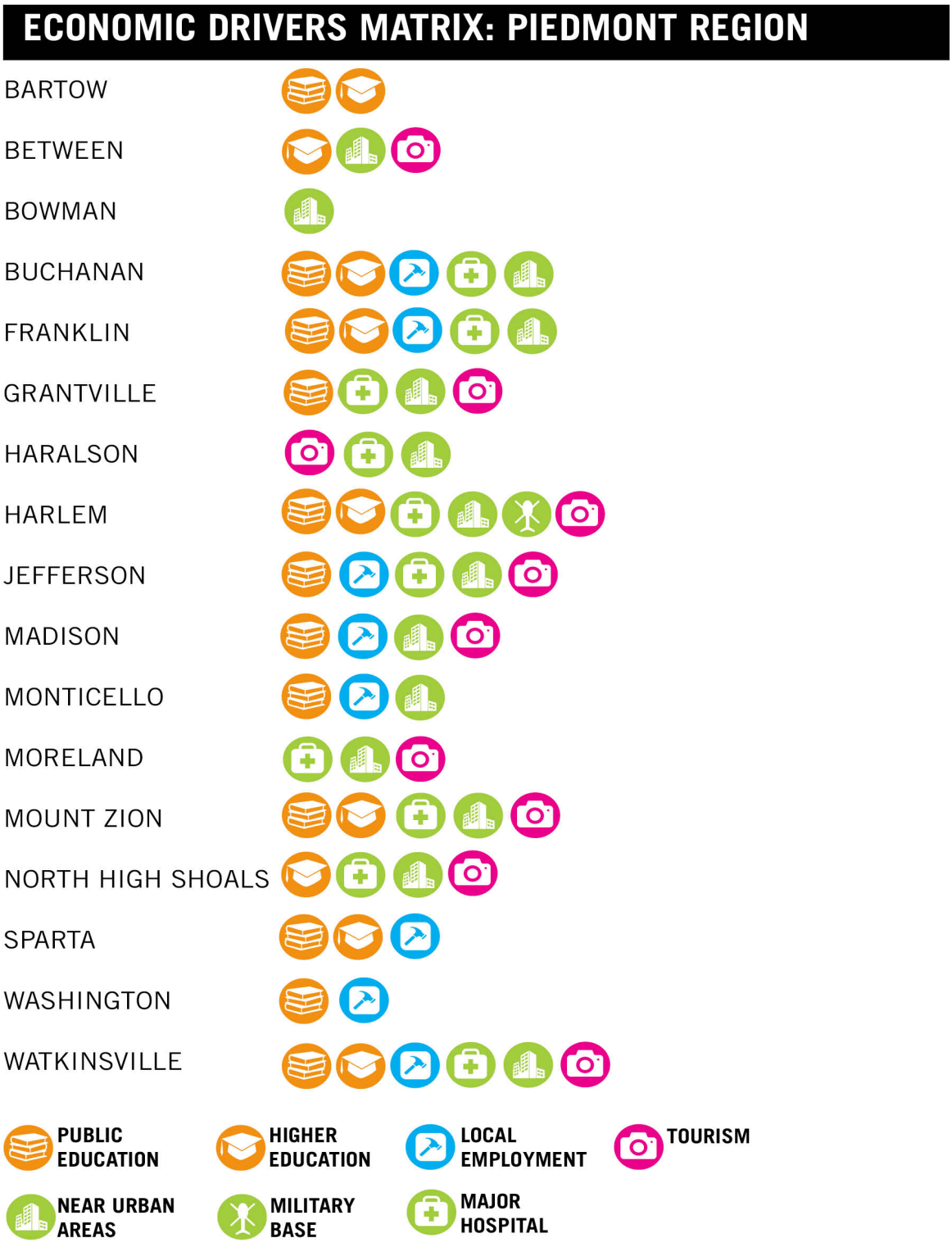


Table 3.3 Economic Drivers Matrix: Plains Region

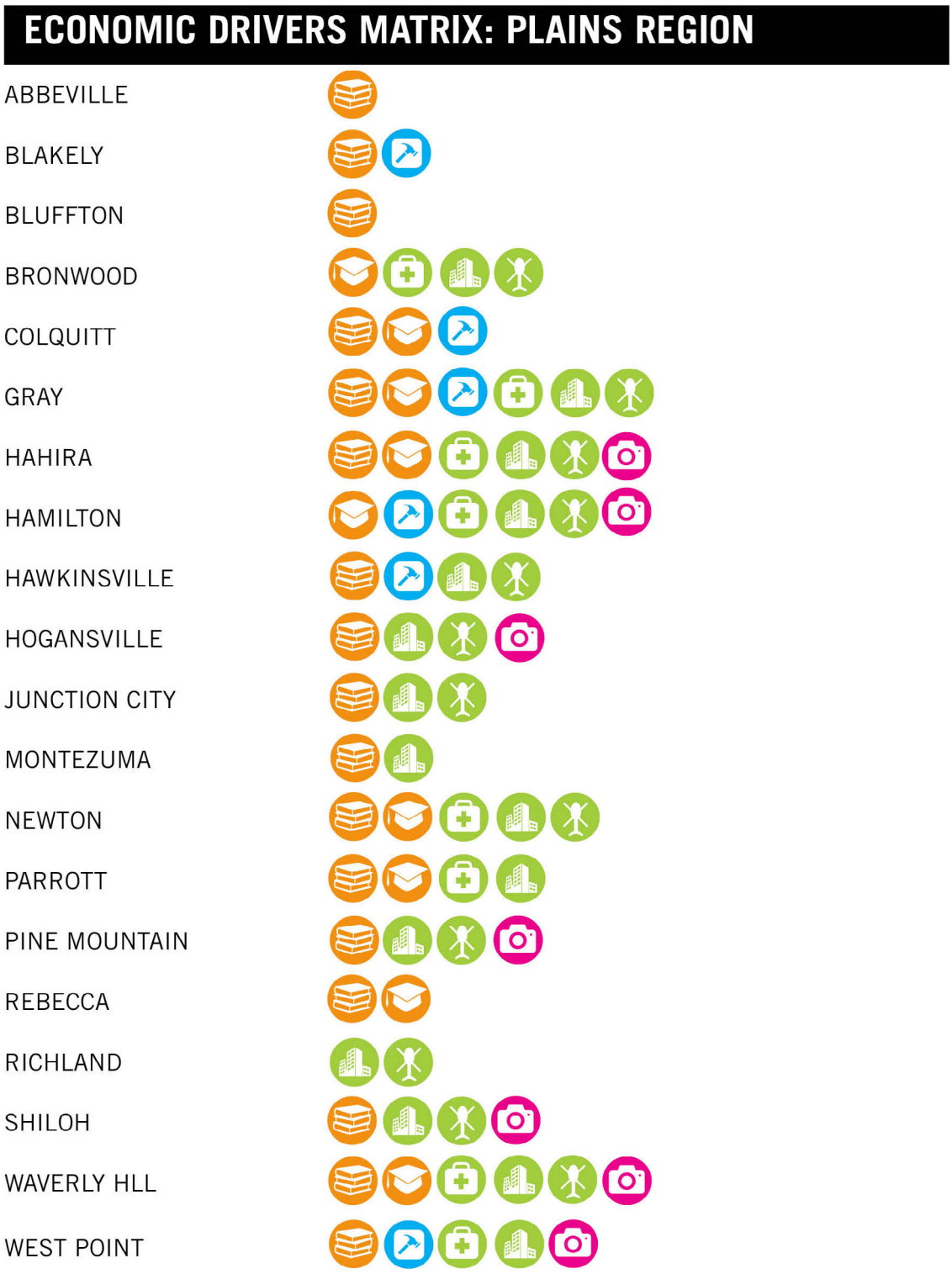
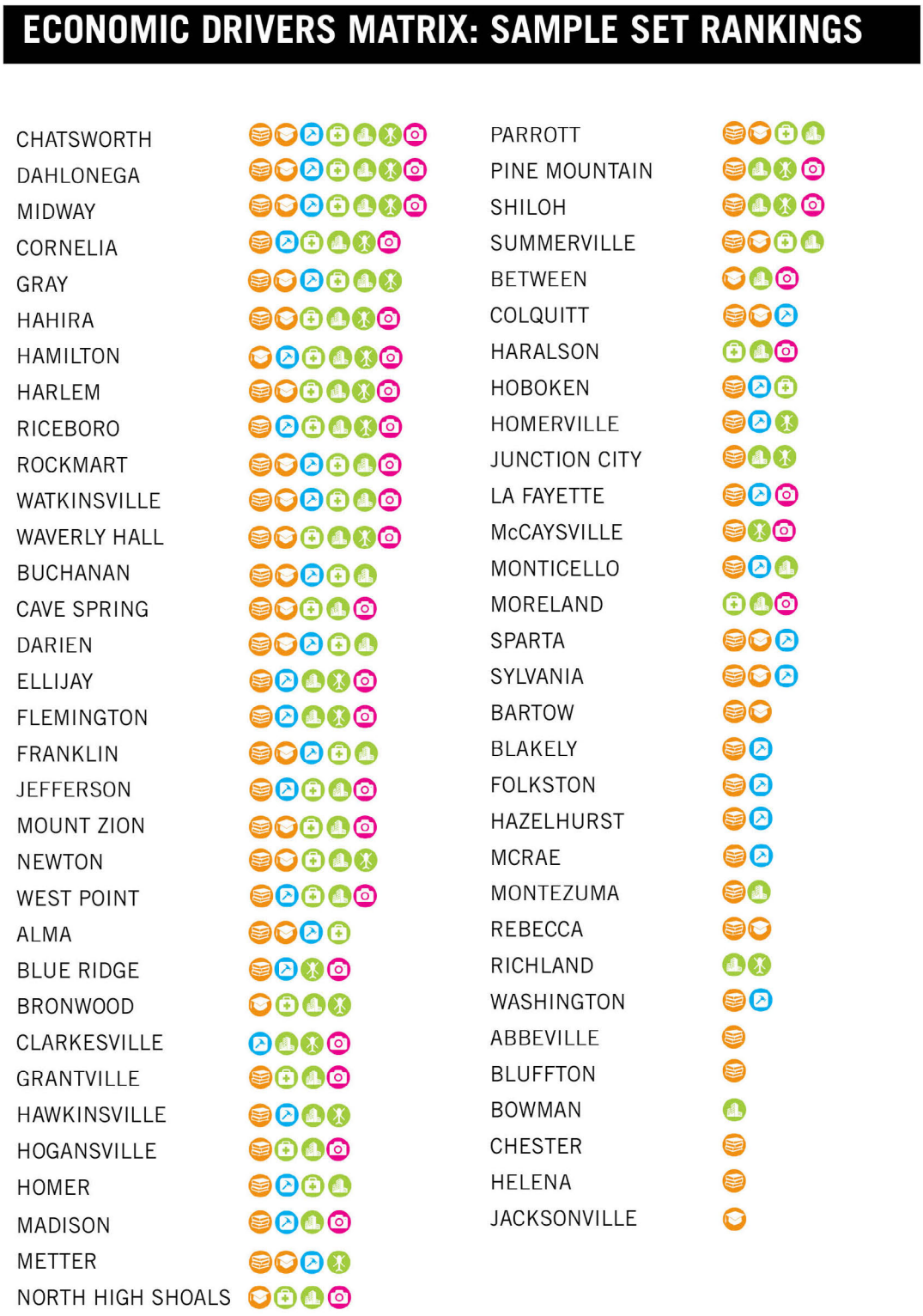


Table 3.4 Economic Drivers Matrix: Highlands Region

Table 3.5 Economic Drivers Matrix: Sample Set Rankings



Economic Driver Matrix: Highest Ranking Towns

Table 3.5 shows all 65 towns in the samples set ranked by number of economic assets, and reveals three towns that meet all seven criteria proposed in the section above as indicators of economic potential. Two of these three Tier-one towns are located in the Highlands Region of the state. This finding is consistent with the statewide-small town analysis presented in chapter two that showed small towns in the Highlands region were economically better-positioned than towns in any other region based on four criteria—population growth rate, median household income, poverty rate, and unemployment rate *(Figures 2.8 - 2.11)*. On average, small towns in the Highlands Region showed better economic promise than the small towns in other regions of the state in three of the four categories analyzed. In follow sections, the two tier-one towns located in the Highlands Region are described in more detail, as is the third Tier-one town, which is located in the Coastal Region.

Chatsworth, GA

Located in the Highlands region, in Murray County, Chatsworth is a small mountain town whose population was close to 4,300 in 2010 (Bureau "U.S. Census 2010"). The closest urbanized areas are Dalton, Georgia, 13 miles to the west, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, 43 miles northwest. Chatsworth is located between two of Georgia’s best preserved forest areas, the Cohutta Wilderness Area and Johns Mountain Wildlife Management Area. Therefore, it is no surprise that Murray County received 22.8 million dollars in tourism expenditures in 2010,

supporting over 270 tourism-related jobs (GGDECD Tourism Division). In terms of local employment, more than 5,800 people commuted into Chatsworth for their primary jobs in 2010, adding up to 6,113 jobs in the town (U.S. Census Bureau "Inflow/Outflow Data "). The largest industry in Chatsworth in 2010 was manufacturing, with at least six different firms in the area, making products ranging from carpet to radiation shielding used in nuclear medicine (ACS 5-Year Estimates). The public school system in Chatsworth ranked highly in this study with a 98-percent public school enrollment (ACS Five-Year Estimates). Additionally, Dalton State College offers local residents advanced education options as a fourth-tier public institution in the University System of Georgia (Georgia Board of Regents). Also, the town benefits from being located near a military base, Camp Frank D. Merrill in Dahlonega, and several hospitals, in town and in nearby Dalton.

Although Chatsworth does rank highly in the outlined criteria for economic growth potential, its 2010 median household income and poverty rate show that it may not be utilizing its potential to the fullest capacity. The median household income for 2010 was $29,763, almost $4,000 lower than the small-town Highlands regional average of $33,671(*Figure 9*). Additionally, the poverty rate for Chatsworth was 21.5-percent, much higher than the small-town Highlands regional average of 14-percent (*Figure 10*) (ACS Five-Year Estimates Survey). Chatsworth did, however, experience more than a 50-pecent population growth rate between1990 and 2010 (Bureau "U.S. Census 2010").

Dahlonega

In a similar situation to Chatsworth, Dahlonega is located 60 miles southeast in Lumpkin County, and also shows great economic promise for a small town. Also in the Georgia Highlands Region, Dahlonega was home to 5,242 people in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau "U.S. Census 2010"). The largest urbanized areas nearby are Gainesville, Georgia, 21 miles southeast, and Metro Atlanta, 40 miles southwest. Like Chatsworth, Dahlonega acts as a gateway to some of the best-preserved Georgia wilderness, the Chattahoochee National Forest, and is also located in a county with high tourism expenditures. In 2010, over 30 million dollars was spent by tourists in Lumpkin County, supporting nearly 300 jobs (GGDECD Tourism Division). As Dahlonega has long since marketed itself as a North Georgia tourist destination, and is the largest city in Lumpkin County, it is reasonable to assume that most of the county's tourist spending occurs in Dahlonega. Therefore, it is not surprising that in 2010 the second largest industry in the city was arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services, with 306 jobs, and that the third largest industry was the retail trade, with 222 jobs. These industries trail educational services, healthcare and social assistance, which together account for 711 jobs. As stated before, Dahlonega is the largest city in Lumpkin County, and therefore has a magnetic draw for those seeking employment in surrounding areas. A 2010 worker inflow/outflow analysis for the city showed that 3,045 people commuted into Dahlonega to work at primary jobs, a number that climbs to 3,302 total jobs

with the inclusion of people who both live and work in the city (U.S. Census Bureau "Inflow/Outflow Data "). Education in Dahlonega also looks promising with 98-percent of students, ages three to eighteen, having been enrolled in public schools in 2010. Additionally, two higher education institutions are located within 25 miles of the city, The University of North Georgia, a second-tier public university, and the North Georgia Technical College (Georgia Board of Regents). The city also benefits from its proximity to U.S. Army training facility Camp Frank D. Merrill, and the many healthcare centers and hospitals in the area.

As Dahlonega does rank highly in the outlined criteria for economic growth potential, it is not surprising that its economic strength is reflected in its 2010 median household income, poverty rate and population growth rate. Dahlonega's median household income in 2010 was $34,931, just above the state's highest small-town regional average, at $34,108 in the Piedmont region (*Figure 9*) Additionally, Dahlonega's poverty rate was 10.3-percent in 2010, lower than that of the small town regional averages for all regions in the state (*Figure 10*) (ACS Five-Year Estimates Survey). With a 69.86-percent population growth rate between 1990 and 2010, Dahlonega seems to have a good combination of economic assets and population growth to plan for a successful future (Bureau "U.S. Census 2010").

Midway

Midway, located in Liberty County in the Coastal region, is almost 12 miles southeast of Hinesville and 25 miles southwest of Savannah. Midway

undoubtedly benefits from its proximity to the Georgia coastline and barrier islands. Tourism expenditures in Liberty County in 2010 amounted to a whopping 86.66 million dollars (GGDECD Tourism Division). However, it is important to note that most of this spending more than likely occurred nearer to the coastline, as Midway is not along the shore. Nonetheless, it is along two major travel corridors for beach goers, I-95 and state highway 84, and would feasibly be able to capture a portion of that tourism spending. Similar to the added benefit of being near the coast, Midway benefits from its proximity to U.S. Army base Fort Stewart, as well as several midsized-to-larger hospitals in Hinesville and Savannah. In fact, the second-largest industry in the town for 2010 was educational services, healthcare and social assistance with 122 jobs, only following public administration with 137 jobs. The third largest industry was transportation, warehousing, and utilities with 116 jobs, suggesting a connection to the port in Savannah (U.S. Census Bureau "U.S. Census 2010"). Worker inflow/outflow analysis conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau shows that, in 2010, only eight more people came into Midway to work than left it, illustrating that employment in the town has steady competition from outside. This is not necessarily negative, as it could mean that decent compensation and employment options exist both within and outside for town residents. Education opportunities in the town seem to be high, as the public school system had 95-percent enrollment for students aged three to eighteen. Also, the town is located near seven advanced education institutions, including the third-tier public

university Savannah State University, Savannah Technical College, and, the private institution, Savannah College of Art and Design (ACS 2010 5-year Estimates).

The benefits of Midway's proximities are seen in its 2010 median household income, poverty rate, and population growth rate. With its $54,792 median household income for 2010, Midway greatly exceeds the small-town average for the Coastal region, at $26,676, and for the rest of the regions in the state, as well (*Figure 9*) (ACS Five-Year Estimates Survey). Furthermore, poverty rates in Midway were less than half the small-town regional average of 18-percent (*Figure 10*) (ACS Five-Year Estimates Survey). Also, in 2010, Midway's population grew to 2,121, reaching a booming145-percent growth rate over the last twenty years (U.S. Census Bureau "U.S. Census 2010"). For a town of its size, Midway certainly exhibits signs of economic potential and growth, however evidence shows that the community's economy is directly tied to the larger urban areas nearby.

CHAPTER 4

ECONOMIC CAPACITY IN BANTAM TOWNS

Method of Economic Capacity Evaluation

In their book, Planning Local Economic Development, Leigh and Blakely posit that the basis of most economic theory can be expressed in a simple equation:

Local and regional development = *c* x *r*

In this equation, where *c* equals a community's capacity for development (in economic, social, technological, and political terms) and *r* equals its resources (in reference to natural resources, location, workforce, technology, size, and economic situation), a direct relationship between the two is presented: the increase of either or both the variables improving the local or regional economy (Leigh and Blakely 76 -80). For our purposes, the *r,* or resources variable, represents the economic assets explored in Chapter Three. By and large, these assets lie outside the control of the small towns in our study; they include assets gainedby proximity, for instance, to a military base, or a county education system controlled by larger municipalities, or a major local employer. In most traditional economic development approaches, emphasis is placed on increasing the *r* value while neglecting the *c* value. According to Leigh and Blakely, these conventional development approaches ultimately fail because even towns with abundant resources, if they have not the capacity to manage them, see little to no improvement.

To illustrate this point, the authors give the example of location theory when applied to the situation of inner cities. Location theory emphasizes the benefits that come from being located near markets; however, as is often the case in central cities, a location close to markets is rendered useless without the social and political capacity to take advantage of that proximity (Leigh and Blakely 80). The situation described here is similar to that of our small towns. For example, communities with economic assets like the ones described in Chapter Three of this report are certainly better off than those without, but will never really see dramatic improvements until they develop their capacity to take advantage of their resources. Furthermore, Leigh and Blakely argue that communities lacking in resources can compensate by developing their capacity. For this reason, this chapter focuses on measuring the capacity for economic development of the 65 towns in our sample set.

As Chapter Three did for economic assets, this chapter outlines criteria for measuring the development capacity of each town in the sample set. Because capacity is difficult to quantify and, in many ways, intangible, this study examines each community for evidence of: engaged local leadership actively working to improve the community; a framework in place to implement change; and marketing efforts being made to promote the community's unique identity. These were measured by the eight following characteristics: planning personnel on staff; local chamber of commerce; membership in Georgia Municipal Association; membership in Georgia Main Street/Better Hometowns; registered historic

buildings; local festivals; community website; and advertisement in the Georgia Travel Guide.

Strong Local Leadership and Framework to Implement Change

For many small communities, local leadership starts with the local government, but it can involve other entities, as well. In fact, communities often benefit more from the contributions of multiple leaders that represent different sectors and interests. For each of the towns in our study, the elected officials in the local government consisted of a mayor and city council (or board of commissioners) at its core, with other elected officials sometimes included. Other forms of leadership include: those representing private business, like a local chamber of commerce; religious leaders and clergy of local places of worship; community development organizations; and local branches of statewide organizations like the Georgia Main Street Program. The more people invested in what happens to the town, the better, even though it might make negotiations more difficult at times. Most critical is that leadership remains proactive and future-oriented.

Being proactive, as opposed to reactive, is often measured by a town's ability to anticipate challenges, and their willingness to act on them before they become problems. To successfully do this, a town not only needs strong local leadership, but also an established framework to implement change, a supportive community, and willingness to try new things (Lambe 4). The criteria used in this study is by no means the only method of measuring leadership capacity for a

small town, and does exclude some forms of guidance and invested parties. The criteria used were chosen based on information that was uniformly available for all towns included in the sample set.

Planning Personnel on Staff

Lasting change in a community comes from a series of short-term plans and overarching long-term goals, as well as from a well-conceived comprehensive plan. It also requires dedication from the local government as well as support from the citizens. Keeping a town moving toward its goals is a full-time endeavor, and one that requires much more than creating an illustrative vision of what the town would like to be. Towns that have been successful in initiating positive change are able to incrementally reach short-term goals that, over time, amount to the realization of a greater vision. This process is difficult to undertake, however, without dedicated and trained staff, which can be a challenge to find and retain, particularly for small towns with limited budgets.

This study looked at each of the 65 municipalities included in the sample set of towns to determine with ones had a dedicated planning person on staff. Twelve communities had either a planning professional or a community development official on staff. Thirty towns employed a code-enforcement or zoning official. Although having a means to enforce zoning and codes does contribute to a town's capacity, it does not provide the necessary framework to proactively plan for the future. Therefore, towns that were found to have

dedicated planning personnel were considered to be at an advantage to those that did not.

Local Chamber of Commerce

While the local municipality is often regarded as the driving force of change in a small community, it is not always the only force, and often not the only player with skin in the game. In fact, the more varied the types of leadership and capacity a community has, the more likely they will be to turn their unique assets into economic development opportunities (Leigh and Blakely 81). Economic development organizations that focus on bringing the public and private sectors together are just as important as a strong and future-focused local government. Organizations like business associations and local chambers of commerce can help bring stakeholders together, address problems, and plan for successful development. In this study, we looked at how many towns had a local chamber of commerce in order to measure the diversity of development capacity in the town. Towns that listed a local chamber of commerce were considered to have a more varied leadership and a stronger framework to implement change.

Georgia Main Street/Better Home Towns

The National Main Street Program, managed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and operated by the National Main Street Center (NMSC), is arguably the largest economic development and revitalization program for small communities in the country. Currently, there are over 1,000 Main Street Towns in the U.S. and 43 state Main Street programs. Georgia has had its own

affiliated Main Street program, coordinated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Office of Downtown Development, since 1980. The Georgia Main Street Program currently includes 92 Main Street communities and 39 Better Hometown communities, a subsidiary program serving towns of 5,000 or less.

At the heart of the Main Street philosophy is a four-point approach to downtown revitalization: organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring. Being a member of the Georgia Main Street and Better Hometowns programs offers multiple benefits to a community through training and education, design services, and networking opportunities. Nonetheless, the process to becoming a part of this organization is rigorous. Initially, a screening process of interested communities is used to identify “communities with a downtown vision and the planning tools necessary to learn Main Street concepts”. When a community is selected, they begin a two-year training process that includes courses and workshops in sustainable downtown development, downtown design, marketing, and networking with other Georgia Classic Main Street Communities. The hope of this training is to arm communities with the tools necessary to succeed and the capacity to enact positive change.

Of our 65 sample set towns, 19 were members of either the Main Street or the Better Home Towns programs. Because of the rigorous process involved and training offered through these programs, towns that were members of the Main Street or Better Hometowns were considered to have a tremendous advantage in

terms of local leadership and capacity for economic development and revitalization. Furthermore, these towns typically scored highly in other criteria, showing a correlation between their memberships in these programs and the presence of other attributes. For this reason, this criterion is considered one of the best signifiers for a community's leadership strength and capacity, as well as marketing and identity.

Member of Georgia Municipal Association

The Georgia Municipal Association, or GMA, is a statewide organization that represents municipal governments in Georgia. Membership in the GMA is voluntary for municipalities in Georgia, and offers benefits to its members, such as legislative advocacy, training and education, as well as, employee benefit and technical consulting services. There is a small fee associated with joining GMA, but 99-percent of Georgia municipalities are members. Such was also true of our sample set of towns; only two of the 65 towns are non-members. Membership in this organization was taken as a sign of interest, on the part of the town leaders, to proactively plan for their communities' futures.

Registered Historic Buildings/Districts/Sites

The first chapter of this paper discusses the early development of the economies and morphologies of towns in Georgia, and points out that much of the state was historically agricultural and rural with development nodes scattered throughout. For many of the small towns in this study, not much has changed since these development patterns; historic downtowns and main streets persist,

and include many intact historic buildings. Towns that regard historical structures and original morphologies as assets (and work to preserve them) are often more successful in their revitalization efforts. Furthermore, registering its historic buildings, sites and districts shows that a town has strong leadership that has taken an interest in preserving some of the town's most valuable physical assets.

This study looks at two types of historical registrations. The first, the National Register of Historical Places, lists only 236 items in our sample set of towns. The second type is the less exclusive, state-maintained Georgia Register of Historic Places, which is much more extensive with close to 5,000 historical buildings, sites and districts listed within our sample set. For a property to be listed on the National Register, the property must meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, which evaluates the property based on its age, integrity and significance. The benefits of registering a property with the National Register are: eligibility for certain state and federal tax incentives and preservation grants; preservation easements; involvement of an advisory council on historic preservation; and national recognition. National Registry status is coveted, due to the many resources it can provide, monetary and otherwise (National Park Service). However, registration with the Georgia Register of Historic Places, which is maintained by the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, can provide similar benefits to the National Register, and includes a somewhat less rigorous process. Recognition by the

Georgia Historic Register makes structures eligible for state property tax incentives and state-funded improvements (The Georgia Trust).

For this study, we looked for towns listed both on the National Registry and the State Registry, giving credit to towns that have at least one building listed on the national list and at least ten on the state registry. Of the sample set, 56 towns were noted as meeting these requirements. Thus, they are regarded as profiting from their community leaders' registration of their historic buildings in order to receive benefits and assistance in protecting and restoring these valuable resources.

Marketing and Identity

If a place intends to compete in any capacity, whether for tourists, residents or businesses, it needs to market itself and present its best qualities. In small towns, marketing is often confused with creating catchy slogans, or creating an idealized image of what the town would like to be (instead of what it actually is). That is not to say that a good slogan cannot help to communicate the quality and identity of a town, but it is no substitute for an in-depth analysis of the town's strengths and an actual marketing plan that plays on those resources. Therefore, successful marketing starts with an honest survey of the community's greatest strengths (Leigh and Blakely 360).

Usually, for small towns, these assets will include much of what was mentioned in Chapter Three, and is mentioned in this chapter: local employment, an educated workforce, proximity to major employment centers, and dedicated,

forward-thinking community leaders. However, assets can also include physical characteristics, like those that help to create the town's character, such as streetscapes and historic buildings, and like infrastructural elements, such as wastewater treatment and transportation connectivity. As the study "Small Towns, Big Ideas," performed by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, found in its investigation of 45 small communities across the United States, a small town that defines its assets and opportunities broadly can find creative ways to capitalize on its competitive advantage. In this study, the 45 small towns were chosen based on some degree of perceived success in revitalization. Some of the assets upon which towns were able to capitalize included natural beauty, historic buildings, museums, individual people, local festivals, and nearby large universities (Lambe 6).

Once a town takes inventory of its assets, it is important that it then craft a coherent message that promotes these strengths. When communicating the marketing message, it is just as important to reach community members as it is to reach outsiders (Leigh and Blakely 360). After all, there is no better advertisement than a resident who loves and believes in their town.

With these concepts in mind, this study looks at three criteria that signify marketing efforts and identity-building within the 65 sample towns: local festivals, community websites, and advertisement in the Georgia Travel Guide. The chosen criteria are used because they suggest that the community supports marketing and branding efforts. This criterion is limited, however, as it does not,

for the most part, quantify the success of marketing efforts. Nonetheless, the third criterion, advertisement in the Georgia Travel Guide, does suggest that some success and notoriety has been gained through the towns' marketing schemes and identity building, as they are being recognized by an outside source as noteworthy for those traveling throughout the state.

Local Festival

The Vidalia Onion Festival, The Georgia Apple Festival, The Grits Festival. The small, local, peculiar festival is not only an iconic and enduring tradition in small Southern towns, but it is an event that often brings a community together and boosts pride, as well. A local festival is usually the biggest event of the year for many a small community, attracting the most tourism and out-of-town spending. For example, in Darien, Georgia, a town of less than 2,000 people located in the Coastal Region just south of Savannah, the three-day Blessing of the Fleet Festival is the largest annual event, and has historically brought over 35,000 people to the town (Spratt). The festival, which is held to bless the town's many fishing boats to have a safe and bountiful season, holds great significance for the residents of the town, many of whose families have been fishermen for generations. Another example is the Laurel and Hardy Festival in Harlem, Georgia. Harlem, a town of around 3,000 people, happens to be the birthplace of silent-film comedian Oliver Hardy and the location of the Laurel and Hardy Museum. Annually, the city throws a festival in Mr. Hardy's honor, attracting between 25,000 and 40,000 people (Culpepper).

While the increased activity that comes from these annual festivals can certainly be a boost to the local economy, the enduring benefit is that they can help to build town identity, to advertise the town to potential residents and businesses, and to develop community support and planning capacity. Successfully planning a festival for more than 30,000 people requires a lot of preparation and effort from many citizens, who are often unpaid. Rallying this kind of support for an annual event is no easy task, and signifies a strong, supportive community, as well as strong local leadership. For this reason, our study looked at towns that had a local festival as benefiting from the support of active citizens, as well as having a strong capacity for planning and development. Of the 65 sample set towns, 45 of them advertised an annual local festival. The sizes of these festivals were not recorded, and are presumed to vary. Nonetheless, towns that did advertise a local festival were assumed to receive the above-mentioned planning and capacity benefits.

A Community Website

With increasing emphasis being placed on the online presence of people, places and products, it is more important than ever for small communities to put their best faces forward, and market themselves through a community website. A Web destination may seem ephemeral, but it is often the first representation of the town that a potential resident, tourist or business owner will see. A good community website can help build the town's reputation and promote its identity and unique assets. Additionally, websites do not have to serve only outsiders;

they can be powerful organizational tools, helping to build support within the community. Furthermore, they are inexpensive to start, and easy enough to put together.

This study regards a community website as an indication that efforts are being made to market and promote the community, as well as an indication of organization within the community. The majority of the sample set, 46 communities, did have some form of a community website, and therefore were assumed to be working actively to market their communities, and build upon their unique assets to create community identity.

Advertisement in Georgia Tourism Guide

Each year, the Georgia Department of Economic Development produces a Travel Guide that promotes travel destinations throughout the state. The guide divides the state into nine regions—The Historic High Country, North East Mountains, Atlanta Metro, Historic Heartland, Classic South, Presidential Pathways, Magnolia Midlands, Plantation Terrace, and the Coast (GDOED Tourism Division). Included in the guide are destinations both selected by the Department of Economic Development and advertised by the towns themselves. As the publication is widely circulated both online and at Georgia Visitors centers and rest stops, being featured in it can represent important exposure for a small town looking to boost its economy with tourism and establish a community identity in the public eye. Of the 65-town sample set, 38 towns were highlighted by the Department of Economic Development in the Georgia Travel Guide. Some

were mentioned multiple times, and ten of those 38 had additional paid advertisements. Information about the towns in the travel guide covered: mentions of local festivals, images of historic architecture, and plugs for museums, local restaurants, and businesses. While the process used to select the towns and attractions included in the guide is unknown to this study, it can be assumed that the towns included have worked to achieve some level of distinction that would warrant the attention of the Department of Economic Development and justify a feature. For this reason, the sample-set towns mentioned in this travel guide were credited with having put forth some effort into developing a marketable identity, and having achieved some success.

Outside Investment

While there are only eight categories included in this chapter's assessment of capacity criteria assessment, nine categories were examined. The ninth category investigated was assistance received from the Georgia Cities Foundation. The Georgia Cities Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization started by the Georgia Municipal Association to "assist cities in their community development efforts to revitalize and enhance underserved downtown areas by serving as a partner and facilitator in funding capital projects" ("About Georgia Cities Foundation "). To date, the foundation has assisted 47 different cities with 96 projects through its Revolving Loan Fund and its State Small Business Credit Initiative (GCF-SSBCI) loan programs. Competition for these funds is steep; applications are evaluated based on "leadership, accountability, long-term

sustainability, and potential for private investment” ("About Georgia Cities Foundation "). Furthermore, community projects funded by the Georgia Cities Foundation are expected to work as catalysts for positive change in their communities by encouraging spin-off development, adding jobs, promoting downtown housing, and adding to the cultural enrichment of the community. Based on these many requirements, it is not surprising that only five towns, and nine different projects, in our sample set of communities have received funds from this organization. Because so few cities statewide receive assistance from the foundation, the criterion was excluded from the final capacity matrix, but it is important to mention here, as it a tremendous resource for small rural towns. The towns that have received funds illustrate a strong capacity for development and proactive, forward-thinking leadership. The five towns included in our sample set that received funds from the Georgia Cites program are: Clarkesville, Metter, Dahlonega, Ellijay, and Blue Ridge.

Table 4.1 Economic Capacity Matrix: Coastal Region

Table 4.2 Economic Capacity Matrix: Piedmont Region

Table 4.3 Economic Capacity Matrix: Plains Region

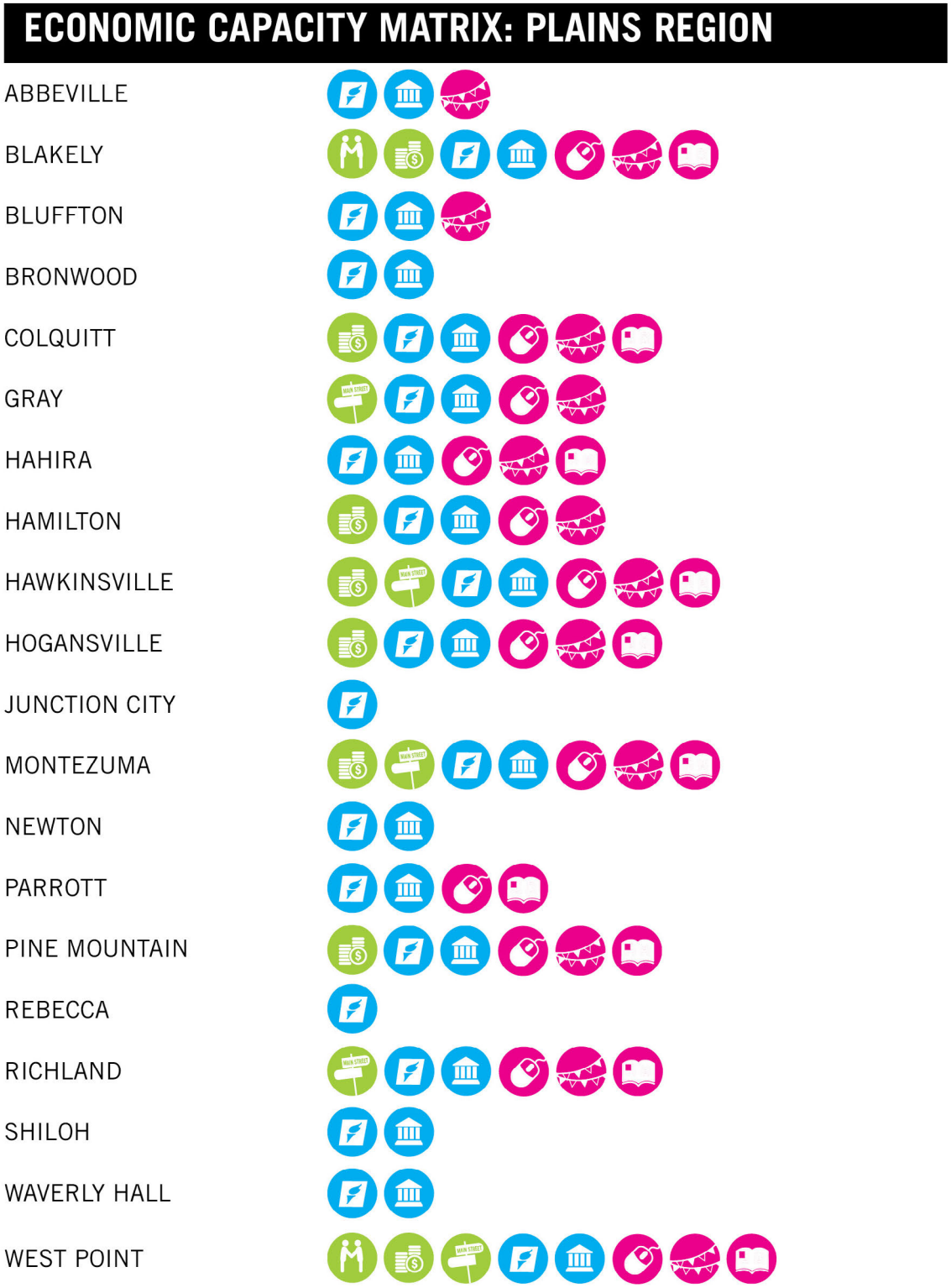
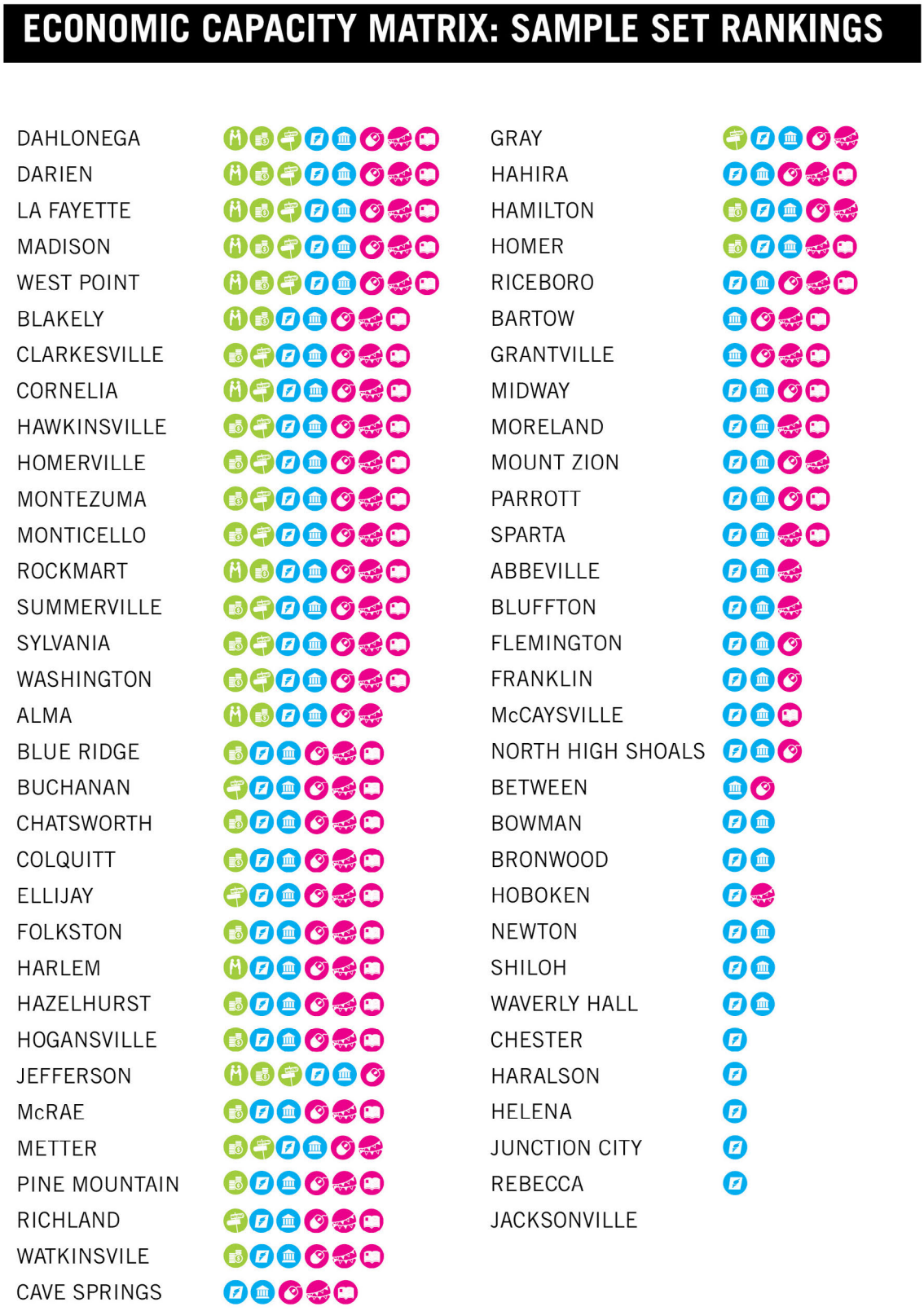


Table 4.4 Economic Capacity Matrix: Highlands Region

Table 4.5 Economic Capacity Matrix: Sample Set Ranking



Economic Capacity Matrix: Highest Ranking Towns

Figure 4.5 shows all 65 towns in the sample set, ranked by the number of criteria met in the economic capacity matrix. The matrix reveals five towns that meet all eight criteria proposed as indicators of strong economic capacity. Two of these Tier-One towns are located in the Highlands Region, further reinforcing the previously observed pattern suggesting that small towns in the Highlands Region are economically better positioned than those in any other part of the state. However, the assets ranked in this matrix seem to be more evenly distributed throughout the four regions than those measured in the economic resources matrix; each region had at least one town ranked as Tier-One. The only town evaluated as Tier-One in both the economic-resources and economic-capacity matrices was Dahlonega, showing that its economic development potential exceeds that of the other towns in our study. The economic-capacity potential of four Tier-One town in this matrix are discussed in more detail below, along with more detailed information about their overall socioeconomic condition.

Dahlonega

Located in the Highlands Region, Dahlonega benefits from multiple economic resources, as well as a well-developed network of community leaders, a strong framework for change, and a supportive community. At the core of its local leadership is a strong local government, a member of the Georgia Municipal Association. Leading the local municipality is the mayor, Gary McCullough, and six elected city council members. Assisting the city in proactively planning for its

future are two staff members in the planning department, one holding the position of Planning & Zoning Administrator, and the other, Building Inspection & Code Enforcement Officer ("City of Dahlonega").

Additional leadership in economic development, marketing and revitalization comes from the Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority, or DDDA, the local branch of the Georgia Main Street Program. The DDDA is comprised of a board of seven volunteers, most of whom own businesses in the downtown, as well as two full-time staff members, Director Joel Cordle and Project Coordinator Rebecca Shirley. This organization serves many economic development functions in Downtown Dahlonega including: recruiting new businesses and performing market analysis research; leading design initiatives by developing vision plans and procuring funding for projects; marketing through promotional events; and facilitating cooperation among downtown stakeholders. Additionally, the Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority has helped to connect public and private funds to improvement projects in the community. The DDDA considers among its greatest resources the many historic buildings in the town, 138 of which are registered with the Georgia Registry of Historic Places and 11 with the National Registry, and has many active grant programs to prevent fire hazard. Currently, the organization has two improvement grants programs: a wire and sprinkler grant program, aimed at helping to protect the community’s historic buildings from fire; and a facades grant program, which works to improve the character of buildings downtown (Dahlonega Downtown

Development Authority). Furthermore, the DDDA has helped to bring in other funds for revitalization projects, such as those from the above-mentioned Georgia Cities Foundation. The Georgia Cities Foundation has awarded nearly $750,000 in funds to the Dahlonega DDA for two different projects: the Smith House Restaurant Renovation in 2007, and the McGuire House in 2013 ("About Georgia Cities Foundation "). Finally, the Dahlonega DDA helps to build its capacity by partnering with other local, regional, statewide and even national organizations, thus keeping the community connected across municipal boundaries.

In addition to the tremendous efforts being made by the DDDA, the Dahlonega local Chamber of Commerce is very active and, as it describes itself, “very forward thinking” in its approach to economic development in the community and surrounding Lumpkin County. Of the chamber’s many efforts to actively plan for the future are various leadership-training workshops, networking events, and campaigns to attract visitors and new businesses to the area (Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of D.-L. C. C. o. Commerce). The robustness of the local chamber shows that the town is the center of economic development for the region—a powerful force of change.

With both the local Chamber of Commerce and the DDA working to promote tourism in Dahlonega, it is not surprising that the town was mentioned five times in the 2014 Georgia Travel Guide, and had an advertisement funded by the Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce. Undoubtedly, the community values the business brought by tourism, and has put much effort into

building a clear identity and marketing it to the public. Some of the mentioned attractions center on outdoor adventure activities, which take advantage of surrounding wilderness areas and beautiful mountain landscape. Other attractions include tours of nearby wine production, and those that highlight more historical aspects of the community, like its mining history and historic architecture. Also a major draw for the town, are its many festivals throughout the year ranging from a bluegrass festival in the spring to the Georgia Wine Festival (Georgia Department of Economic Development).

Darien

Darien is one of the oldest settlements in Georgia, located in the Coastal Region of the state, along the mighty Altamaha River, in McIntosh County. Savannah lies 60 miles to the north of the town, and Brunswick lies 20 miles to the south. In Chapter Three, Darien was ranked as a third-tier town, scoring five out of seven in the economic-resources matrix. The two categories missed in Chapter Three were proximity to a military base and countywide tourist spending. In 2010, McIntosh County only received 11.4 million in tourist expenditures that supported only 130 jobs. This is very low for counties located along the Coast, as compared, for instance, to the 86.6 million in tourist expenditure in Liberty County (GGDECD Tourism Division). However, the town does have many economic resources such as education opportunities, proximity to an urban area and large hospitals, and local employment. These resources, coupled with the town's strong capacity for economic development, position it well for positive change.

At the core of Darien's local government are the mayor, Hugh "Bubba" Hodge, and four council people, representing two districts. The local municipality is a member of the Georgia Municipal Association. Additionally, Darien benefits from several local boards and commissions including: the Darien Downtown Development Authority and Better Hometown Organization, a local branch of the Georgia Main Street Program; the Darien Planning and Zoning Board; the Historic Preservation Commission; the Altamaha Byway; Historic Darien, Inc.; and the Darien and McIntosh County Chamber of Commerce (City of Darien). Although there are many stakeholders in Darien, a central focus for all of them seems to be preserving the town's history and historic structures, and building the tourism industry.

Darien, like Savannah 60 miles north, was settled by James Edward Oglethorpe, and remnants of his famed original plan can still be seen today in two of the historic squares, as can many of the large historic homes from the town's peak development period between the early and mid 1800s (Sullivan). Additionally, historic Fort King George, established in 1721 as the first English Settlement in Coastal Georgia, is located a mile north of the downtown (City of Darien). With this rich a history it makes sense that much attention would be focused on preserving and leveraging the historic resources of the town. On the state registry there are 101 historic buildings, two historic districts and 10 historic sites listed in Darien (Georgia Department of Natural Resources "Georgia National, Archaeological, and Hostoric Resources Gis"). In the national registry,

there are three listed historic structures (National Park Service). The numerous listings on both registries signify a vested interest in protecting these assets, as does the multiple boards dedicated to historic preservation.

Efforts by the local chamber of commerce and others to encourage tourism in the community mainly focus on promoting the town's history and historic architecture, as well as the surrounding natural landscape and potential for outdoor adventure along the Altamaha River. Darien was mentioned twice in unpaid advertisements in the 2014 Georgia Travel Guide, and had two ads funded by the Darien and McIntosh County Chamber of Commerce. These mentions focus on promoting eco-tourism in the town and surrounding marshes, marsh hammocks and Altamaha River, as well as local festivals and historic sites and buildings (Georgia Department of Economic Development).

Darien has many festivals and events each year, both in the historic downtown and surrounding area. The largest and most celebrated is the annual Blessing of the Fleet, which brings over 35,000 people to Darien each year (Spratt). Other events include: a St. Patrick's Day Parade, NGA Golf Tournament, Darien Heritage Festival, a blues festival, a fall festival, and the Fort King George Encampment event (Georgia Department of Economic Development). With so many tourism-focused events and activities, Darien's local leaders work hard to market the city as a coastal destination all its own. Still, there is more earth to cover with the traction they have gained; competition for tourism is steep in this

region, replete with so many oceanfront towns, island getaways, and eco-adventure destinations.

While Darien has made less headway in the development of the industrial and manufacturing sector, it is important to note that tourism is not the only focus of those invested in Darien's development. While fishing, and more specifically shrimp fishing, has been one of the most prominent industries in the town for the last several decades, shrimpers have fallen on hard times in recent years due to high fuel costs and a shrimp disease called black gill. With shrimp fishing in Darien much less profitable than it has been in the past, many fishermen cannot afford to stay in the business (Adler). This not only hurts the economy of the town, but also damages a large aspect of the town's identity as a small fishing community. While some fishermen have resourcefully found other fisheries to keep them in business—most notably jellyball fishing, which has higher yields than shrimp but sees much less profit—others have gotten out of the business entirely. To respond to this change in the economy, the Tidewaters Industrial Complex was built to try to attract other industries. This complex has yet to take off, however, as there was only one tenant in 2013, when this information was compiled (Spratt). Hopefully, the strong and varied leadership in Darien will continue to build on the town's many assets to navigate through these times of change, and construct a more robust economy.

Madison

Madison, Georgia, located in the Piedmont Region of the state, just off of interstate I-20, is 30 miles south of Athens, 60 miles east of Atlanta, and 90 miles west of Augusta. While Madison was ranked a Tier-Four town in Chapter Three's economic-resources matrix, due to the fact that is it not quite within the defined 25-mile proximity to a military base, hospital or higher-education institution, it is important to recognize that the town is within 30 miles of both a major hospital and the University of Georgia, UGA, in Athens. Furthermore, the town is located in Morgan County, which had high tourism spending in 2010, almost 36 million, supporting 380 jobs (GGDECD Tourism Division). Additionally, the town benefits from a strong public school system and more than 3,800 local jobs, of which the largest industry in 2010 was healthcare, education and social assistance (ACS 2010 5-year Estimates).

In terms of economic capacity, Madison is a Tier-One community, and shows long-standing extraordinary local leadership, a strong framework for change, a unique identity, and huge marketing efforts. The local municipality is a member of GMA, and consists of a mayor, currently Mayor Fred Perriman, and five elected council people. Additionally, Madison employs an entire planning staff including Planning Director Monica Callahan, GIS Planner Bryce Jaeck, Preservation Planner Ken Kocher, and Staff Planner Molly Bogle. The Madison planning staff works to ensure quality growth and development within the

community with forward-thinking proactive comprehensive planning, community development, and citizen engagement (City of Madison).

Working with the city-funded planning department is the full-time Madison Main Street Director, currently Ann Huff. Unlike some Georgia Main Street Towns, Madison benefits from having the local Main Street Program work as a supporting entity to an intact municipal planning staff, instead of a main driving force for economic development. In addition to insuring quality development in downtown Madison and the preservation of the historic downtown, Madison Main Street promotes tourism to the town, and coordinates special events. Furthermore, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) selected Madison as one of six pilot BOOMTown communities in 2012. The DCA sponsored BOOMTown program is a pilot program aimed at “enhancing job creation in Georgia's Main Street communities through encouraged and improved use of economic development tools” (City of Madison).

The Madison-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce also has a strong presence in the community, working to promote economic development in Madison and the surrounding area across multiple sectors: agricultural, industrial, commercial, and institutional. The Chamber works with the local Industrial Development Authority Board to provide revenue bonds to assist with qualifying development projects (M.-M. C. o. Commerce). Also of note, Morgan County is a Tier-Three County for Job Creation Tax Credits, meaning that it receives the

maximum amount of tax credits, as it has the highest percentage of residents whose incomes are below the poverty level (Gretchen Corbin, DCA).

Madison, settled in 1809, derives much of its character from the many antebellum homes and historic buildings in the community. In fact, more than 50 historic buildings and two historic districts were found to be registered with the Georgia Register of Historic Places (Georgia Department of Natural Resources "Georgia National, Archaeological, and Hostoric Resources Gis"). Six buildings are registered with the national registry (National Park Service). Although these numbers are less than those in some of the other towns mentioned, it is important to note that the homes included are exceptional in historic integrity, preservation and size, making quite an impact on the community's character as a whole.

As mentioned before, tourism in Madison is big business, largely because of the quantity and quality of the many antebellum homes and historic structures in the town, as well as its proximity to Atlanta, Athens and Augusta, allowing for easy day trips. The town was mentioned three times in the 2014 Georgia Travel Guide, most of those mentions being focused on such historic attractions (Georgia Department of Economic Development). Throughout the year, Madison hosts events, such as an antiques show, a black history parade and festival, a chamber music festival, and an annual tour of homes. Many of these events are sponsored and coordinated by the Madison Main Street program, which strives to

create community engagement and activity throughout the year (City of Madison).

West Point

West Point is located in the Plains Region of the state, 16 miles south of LaGrange and 40 miles northwest of Columbus, along the Georgia-Alabama state line and the banks of the Chattahoochee River. In Chapter Three, West Point was ranked a Tier-Three town in the economic-resources matrix, because it is not located within 25 miles of a military base and is only within 25 miles of one higher-education institution, the private school, LaGrange College. However, in the Economic Capacity Matrix, West Point was ranked as a Tier-One town, meeting all criteria.

West Point shows signs of strong leadership with a municipal staff dedicated to community development, the West Point Development Authority which is focused on economic development and job creation, a local chamber of commerce, the West Point Historic Commission, and a membership in the Georgia Municipal Association. The elected officials in West Point include Mayor Drew Ferguson and six elected council members (City of West Point). The West Point Development Authority (WPDA), created in 1969, consists of a Chairman and four members, as well as an Executive Director. The WPDA has had many development accomplishments, including the West Point Technology Park, a business park employing over 1,500 workers and occupied by a variety of companies, from carpet manufacturer InterfaceFLOR to highly technical

companies such as InterCall and Knology. WPDA is a member of the Valley Partnership and the Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce, both regional economic development organizations. The Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce works with four cities across the Alabama and Georgia state line to create positive economic development opportunities in these communities. One of the biggest economic development accomplishments for these organizations has been the KIA Automotive plant, located in West Point (G. V. C. o. Commerce).

While West Point only has two buildings registered with the Georgia Registry of Historic Places, it has eight on the National Registry (National ParkService, Georgia Department of Natural Resources). However, historic architecture does not seem to be as big a draw for this community as it has been for the other towns profiled. The town is only mentioned once on the 2014 Georgia Travel Guide, but is touted as having many outdoor activities like the ones located on West Point Lake and the Chattahoochee River, as well as hikes around Fort Tyler, the last Confederate fort to fall in the Civil War (Georgia Department of Economic Development). Unlike many of the towns previously described in this chapter, West Point appears to focus much less on tourism for economic development, and puts more time and resources into regional efforts to recruit industry and manufacturing.

Like our other towns, West Point does work to build community involvement through local events and festivals, though. The West Point Winter

Festival is currently the largest event of the year, but smaller community events are frequently held at the West Point Depot event facility, including a Super Bowl party, back-to-school event, and St. Patrick's Day music festival (City of West Point). It was found that most large-scale events were focused on community participation instead of attracting tourists.

CHAPTER 5

FORM AND MORPHOLOGY IN BANTAM TOWNS

Method of Form and Morphology Analysis

The greatest asset that most of the small towns covered by our study—and in the state or country, for that matter—is their unique character and a sense of emotional attachment either by visitors and/or residents. This attachment is what keeps people there, attracts outsiders, and, in most cases, what inspires a desire to save the town through revitalization. As Richard Florida, the inventor of the term of “Creative Class” and author of the book Who’s Your City? puts it, “the only way to retain talent is to offer a place that provides emotional attachment” (Florida). What Florida is describing is often referred to as place-based economic development strategy, and is the theory basis for this chapter and for the criteria used in our form and morphology analysis. In place-based economic development, an emphasis is placed on creating or enhancing the unique identity and culture of a town or city, often through the improvement or preservation of physical features. For example, most people experience the identity of a place through an authentic and memorable experience, which is intrinsically linked to the local history, environment, and culture of a particular place. In many ways, the intangible elements that comprise the identity of a place, such as the culture and history, are expressed through the place’s physical setting. The physical setting is reinforced by the design of elements like streets, public buildings, surrounding landscape, housing and historic structures that provide the stage for

local events like festivals and farmers' markets, as well as everyday activities (Rangwala). For this reason, our analysis examines towns by qualitatively measuring the six physical elements in our sample set: the street grid, historic buildings, streetscape, housing stock, public buildings, and surrounding landscape. In the following chapter, the criteria that was used to evaluate our 65-town sample set is discussed.

Connective Street Grid

In nearly every city in the United States, the organization of territory predates the buildings that populate it and the functions within those buildings. The lots, blocks and streets in all communities were, for the most part, decided before the buildings. This underlying organization, commonly called urban morphology, is usually the first physical element in place within a settlement, has the biggest impact on the form of that settlement, and is the longest-enduring physical component of a community as well as the most difficult to change. From the gridiron patterns common in the Midwest and the Northwest to the more unique city plans like Oglethorpe’s in Savannah and L’Enfant’s in Washington, D.C., we see examples of how the underlying street structures, block sizes and lot sizes have determined the character of every American city (Dagenhart 37) However, this is not limited to large cities; the same applies to smaller cities and even to tiny towns, such as the ones in this study. For this reason, the connected street grid was evaluated in each town in our sample set based on block size,

number of intersections, and connectivity extent. The following sections discuss the reasoning behind these criteria.

Tissue Analysis

As previously discussed, the small towns in this study—and in Georgia, for that matter—vary in their economic condition, history, and form. Some are on the edge of major areas and are being affected by these cities' suburban sprawl, while others are located in very rural areas, fighting against dwindling populations and economic decline. The various forces acting on these towns have affected and are still shaping their morphology. Sheer explains in the article *The Anatomy of Sprawl* that, in cases where suburban growth has occurred in previously rural, agricultural areas and along the pre-urban fabric (like farm roads and fields), extremely scattered, disordered development often occurs. The suburban-invading morphology becomes a big problem in the communities, the quality of the place deteriorating as the result. Furthermore, once this kind of piecemeal development takes root, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement serious formal change, making it particularly important for small towns to have a preexisting organization and a plan to manage growth (Sheer 29).

Take for instance, the example of the crossroads-town type mentioned earlier, and compare it to the courthouse-square type. In the instance of the crossroads town, there is little regulating development; one lot or several lots could be purchased, and any building or buildings, large or small, could be built with any number of orientations (assuming they are in compliance with whatever

zoning laws may exist). However, in a courthouse-square town, there is typically a block structure--a series of roads that regulate the block sizes and lot sizes--positioning this town type at a morphological advantage. Sure, the street grid alone will not ensure responsible and aesthetically pleasing development, but it certainly limits variation, and helps to relate the different elements of the town to each other.

Static Tissue

From the conclusion that the size and shape of the preexisting superstructure is what ultimately has the greatest impact on a place, Sheer discusses the different types of morphologies or "tissues" that occur in communities: static, campus, and elastic. The first type, "static tissue," is primarily characterized by its inability to change and accommodate different uses or structure. This is what is typically seen in suburban subdivision development, where streets and blocks are planned with attention to maximizing the number of lots. This type of tissue is inflexible, as it will not easily be converted to accommodate any other use (Sheer 34). Even as the needs of the community change and buildings age, this tissue type will not be able to evolve.

Campus Tissue

The second type, "campus tissue," is usually developed from large tracts of land that are owned and developed by one owner (e.g., a shopping center, airport, or college campus). This tissue type is differentiated by its private drives, which bisect the large site, and by having more than one large building (Sheer

33). The drawback of this morphology from a community standpoint is that these developments are usually very privatized and disconnected from the rest of a town, whether by perceived boundaries or actual ones. In most cases, campus tissue developments create rifts in the urban fabric that are difficult for communities to overcome.

Elastic Tissue

The third type of tissue that Sheer explains is “elastic tissue.” Elastic tissue most commonly occurs in rural areas that have no regulating plan. It appears along pre-urban paths and is not pre-planned (e.g., commercial corridors populated with fast food, gas stations and strip centers). This form of development changes rapidly as lots are often split or combined to accommodate whatever use is imposed upon them. Secondary streets and paths are built individually instead of being planned in logical networks (Sheer 34). The drawback to this type of tissue is a complete lack of cohesion and, often, human scale and walkability, as they are typically oriented toward automobile travel.

Resilient Tissue

As Sheer describes and categorizes the three different types of morphological tissues that negatively impact rural and suburban development, it is important to look at a fourth type of tissue, “resilient tissue,” which works to bring different urban elements together to create a cohesive and flexible network. Similar to static tissue in that it is planned and relatively stable, this type of morphological tissue is common in many large, dense American cities. The most

striking difference between resilient and static tissue is that static tissue is planned for a specific use, usually single family homes, while resilient tissue is not (Word 11). Take for example Oglethorpe's plan for Savannah; when he laid the foundation of lots, blocks, and streets over the new territory, there was no demarcation of what uses would be allocated to what area. Instead, uses were fit into the plan, which was capable of accommodating varied uses in similarly sized lots and blocks. The same applies to the Commissioners Plan of 1811 for Manhattan, as well as those of so many gridded cities. An underlying framework of resilient tissue is considered to be a huge advantage for our small towns, as it ensures some cohesion and control over future development, as well as mitigating the possibility of other types of morphological tissues being introduced.

Block Size

The size of the blocks in a resilient tissue morphology is also important, and was a consideration of this study. Jane Jacobs writes, "most blocks must be short; that is, streets and opportunities to turn corners frequent" (J. Jacobs 233). Although Jacobs is talking about her experience mainly in Manhattan, the basis of her argument is relevant here. She emphasizes the importance of connecting elements together with a network of streets. The need for more corners, or intersections, speaks to the way that these spaces offer multiple path choices and increased points of activity. Larger blocks, or long blocks as they are called in New York, suffer due to the isolation of their central elements, and typically have less foot traffic than shorter blocks, wherein elements are related by

proximity to one another and to nearby streets (J. Jacobs 236). In a small town, where businesses and people are fewer, it makes senses to connect existing components to create a greater sense of place. This is most effectively done with a fine-grain morphology, or smaller block structure. For this reason, block size was included as a criterion for ranking the sample set of towns by their connected grid patterns.

Streetscape

Streets are often simply seen as automobile thoroughfares, a means of driving your car from one place to another. However, they can, and should, be much more than that. In days before the car, small-town main streets bustled with pedestrian activity; the main street was the place where people met, talked and had celebrations, or where goods were sold and trades were made, an important public space in the lives of small town residents. In the 1950s, when the personal automobile fundamentally changed the way people got around, and, consequently, the way they built cities, emphasis on the pedestrian right of way diminished, and priorities shifted to mechanisms like parking and increased speed limits, thus reducing the informal interaction of people on the street. Allan Jacobs explains why this interaction is so important:

"You don't meet other people while driving in a private car, nor often in a bus or a trolley. It is on foot that you see people's faces and statures and that you meet and experience them. That is how public socializing and community enjoyment in daily life can occur (A. B. Jacobs)."

Planners in small towns are realizing that community interaction, identity, and pride starts, by and large, in the street. While things will never return to the way they were in pre-automobile days, considerations can be made to the design of a streetscape that allow safe and leisurely walking in downtown areas, and even encourage it. Furthermore, public investments into small-town streetscapes can leave a larger impact on a broader area for less money than funding individual improvement projects. If a municipality funds a streetscape improvement project in its downtown, as opposed to supporting a singular project, it can raise the property value of all the buildings on the street, thereby creating a sense of place and identity in the district. In short, these types of improvement projects offer more bang for your buck—important to small towns with limited resources.

Unlike some of the other formal qualities discussed in this chapter, some of which a local municipality with limited funds cannot easily implement and change, streetscaping is within the reach of most communities, and can drastically change a town's physical character for the better. Because of the great impact that pedestrian infrastructure and street improvements can have on a small town, this study looks at the quality of the streetscapes in our 65 sample towns, and ranks each town based on a combination of criteria: physical comfort and safety, vertical and horizontal boundaries, visual quality and buildings, and street trees and greenery.

Physical Comfort and Safety

According to Allan Jacobs, a good streetscape “invites leisurely, safe walking,” which sounds simple enough, but Jacobs’s suggestion entails more qualities than most have considered (A. B. Jacobs). First of all, sidewalks need to be wide enough to allow many people to walk comfortably at different paces. This width can vary depending on the expected flow of pedestrian traffic, but is usually wider than the typical required sidewalk minimum—often three to six feet. Furthermore, the pedestrian right of way needs to be protected from vehicles, the most common way of doing which is by using a combination of curbs and sidewalks. Some narrower streets with slower moving traffic, however, can forego the use of curbs. This can create a vibrant atmosphere wherein the pedestrian and car are of equal importance, but is certainly not advised on heavily trafficked thoroughfares. On streets where vehicular traffic is a priority, it is important to separate uses and keep pedestrians safe. This can be accomplished by adding layers or barriers in between the cars and the pedestrians, often with street trees and on-street parking.

These elements—trees, greenery, lighting and on-street parking—along with creating the feeling of safety, also address the issue of physical comfort. While one cannot expect unreasonable levels of comfort from streetscapes—say to be warm walking down the street in January in Minneapolis—a person can expect some protection from the elements. For example, a good streetscape can shade pedestrians on a hot July day in Atlanta, or allow for sunshine and warmth on a cool day. Making considerations for the comfort level that streets can

provide to pedestrians can make the difference between whether or not people will choose to travel along the street. After all, we have all walked down a street that did not feel safe, or that was just unpleasant, and, when given another option, have avoided it. Creating safe and pleasant streets is the first step to increasing pedestrian street traffic (A. B. Jacobs).

Vertical and Horizontal Boundaries

In The Life and Death of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs explains, “A city sidewalk by itself is nothing. It is an abstraction. It means something only in conjunction with the buildings and other uses that border it, or border other sidewalks very near it” (J. Jacobs 37). What the author is describing is the importance of the street’s boundaries, the vertical elements that contain and activate the public thoroughfare between. The presence of these boundaries creates a clear definition between the public and private spaces, and makes the street more comfortable and pleasant to engage. A street is defined by both vertical and horizontal elements. The buildings, trees, and fences on either side of the street form the vertical boundaries or “walls” of a street, while the horizontal definition deals with the spacing between these elements. Both the horizontal and vertical components that define a street also help to create the sense that one is in a place. They can constitute the difference in feeling as if one is in an open field or in a plaza (A. B. Jacobs).

Proportion also plays a role in creating a sense of place through the use of vertical and horizontal elements. In places with well-defined streets, there is a

direct correlation between the width of a street and the height of the buildings that define its edge. Jacob explains that, “the wider a street gets, the more mass or height it takes to define it, until at some point the width can be so great that the real street definition, not necessarily space definition, stops, regardless of [building] height” (A. B. Jacobs). A disproportionate relationship between street width and the height of edge buildings was a common problem in many of the towns in our sample set. In particular, the major highways that ran through some of our towns proved to be large obstacles in the way of creating a sense of place and comfortable streets for pedestrians.

Visually Interesting

Being visually interesting is also a crucial quality in a street. This is not necessarily hard to achieve; light moving over varied surfaces usually keeps eyes moving from one thing to another. In designing a streetscape, it is important to keep this in mind, allowing for diverse surfaces, separate buildings, and many different doors, windows, and signs. While complexity is desired, though, it is best that it not escalate to the point of chaos (A. B. Jacobs). Many communities have achieved a balance between visual complexity and chaos by devising form-based codes that build in variety. For example, in the New Urbanist community of Seaside, Florida, the code calls for every yard to have a picket fence, but requires that no two houses have the same style on any one block. The result is visual complexity with sense of coherence.

Street Trees and Greenery

In Making Great Streets, Allen Jacobs posits that the single best investment in improving the quality of a street is street trees. He explains, “Given a limited budget, the most effective expenditure of funds to improve a street would be on trees. Assuming trees are appropriate in the first place and that someone will take care of them, trees can transform a street more easily than any other physical improvement” (A. B. Jacobs). Although we have already discussed the function of street trees in defining the street, providing visual variance and texture, and creating a comfortable and safe street for pedestrians, the benefits provided by trees cannot be overstated, as they have myriad functions.

When planting trees along a street, there are a few considerations to remember. The first is the type of tree. Deciduous trees usually function better than evergreens, as their shape allows for light to penetrate the sidewalk in the winter and their shape does not interfere with the necessary functions below. The second consideration is the placement of the trees. To be most effective at defining space, creating barriers, and offering protection from elements, trees should be placed relatively close together. Typically, 15 to 25 feet apart is a good rule of thumb.

Public Buildings and Anchor Institutions

In earlier times, before automobile use was widespread, and most Georgians lived in rural agricultural communities where their social and economic lives centered on the main street or downtown of their small town, community

institutions, such as churches and lodges, and public buildings, such as city halls and courthouses, were the anchors, both morphologically and socially, of the town. These buildings often served many functions other than their primary ones. Churches acted as day cares, while city halls were used for dances and club meetings. In small communities where people were often spread out, these buildings were important meeting and social spaces. In addition to being the backdrop to most community activities, they served as the physical focal point of towns. They were usually the largest buildings in town, and, often with iconic chimneys, domes, spires, columns, and water towers, these institutions shaped and continue to shape the meager skylines of their towns. They are landmarks, and help to anchor community, conveying a sense of permanence and continuity that has endured to the present (Morrish and Brown).

In small towns where the physical form has not drastically changed, this is still true of the anchor institutions; they endure as focal points and morphological assets. Earlier, in Chapter Two, we discussed town typology in Georgia, and explained that the courthouse town was one of the most iconic images of rural, Southern communities. Sitting stately, in the middle of town, usually the largest and most recognizable building, in the main square, surrounded by bustling businesses, the courthouse served as the center of all social, economic and municipal activity. This is the commonly held image of the small-town courthouse, and, often, is an accurate one. Several rural towns in Georgia are fortunate enough to have such a building anchoring their town's aesthetic character. In

fact, 19 of the towns in our sample set of towns were found to have exactly this condition. The remaining towns have variations on this theme: ranging from similar forms to having no courthouse or public building at all.

Because of the formal and community benefits that can be gained from having at least one anchor institution like the ones described above, this study looks to measure the quality of these buildings in each of the sample set towns. To assess the quality and morphological benefit gained from the anchor institutions and public buildings of our sample set towns, this study considers the following physical characteristics of the public structures in each town—visual prominence, geographic prominence, contextual fit, defining features, and historical significance—in order to determine the effect that the building has on the community's formal quality.

Visual Prominence

As described in the Courthouse Town typology section in Chapter Two, the location and context of the public building is just as important as the structure itself. When looking at Oglethorpe's iconic plan for Savannah and what it produced—streets ending into public squares, thus making them the focal points of neighborhood wards—one can see that it is not what is in the squares that makes them significant; it is where they are located in the urban fabric, and how other elements relate to them. This is also true in our small towns; if a courthouse is located in the center square of the downtown business district, like in figure X, it undoubtedly creates a stronger sense of place, and holds a more prominent

position than a courthouse that is located, say, at the end of main street, away from the central business district, like in figure XX. In this way, the location of a public building not only enhances the building's own visual prominence, but also allows the buildings near it to gain prominence by sheer proximity (Morrish and Brown 69).

Geographic Prominence

A structure's geographic prominence, how its importance is communicated through location, can also influence the way public buildings are perceived, and therefore how they affect the identity of the surrounding community. If the institution is located on a hill, perhaps the only hill or the highest hill in downtown, it gives the structure a certain geographic prominence. If it is on or near an important historical site or memorial, its significance can be reinforced (Morrish and Brown 69).

Contextual Fit

Many public and institutional buildings in our sample set either predate the development of the commercial core or main street, or were built in the same time period, and, therefore, are in a similar or complementary style. Some public buildings in our study, however, were built much later and in a contrasting or post-era architectural style, often creating a sense of visual dissonance. While newer structures can often be quality buildings, they do not help to create town identity and cohesiveness the way historic structures do. Furthermore, it is important to note that, unlike cities where there are multiple building styles from

many different eras, in small towns, where the majority of the residential and commercial buildings were built in the same era, constructing a prominent public building or institution in a contrasting style creates a rift in an otherwise fairly cohesive urban fabric. This can make it harder to create a feeling of place, identity, and cohesiveness. Therefore, contextual sensitivity was considered when ranking the anchor institutions in our study.

Defining Features

While it is not desirable for an anchor institution to be in visual conflict with the other formal elements of a town, it is important for it to have a defining architectural feature—such as a dome, a spire, grand columns, or a clock tower—that set it apart from the rest of the buildings in the community. These types of features also help give the institution prominence and add character to the surrounding buildings.

Historical Significance

As many of the public buildings reviewed in this section were themselves historical structures, it can give an anchor institution even more importance and character if it has some tie to historical events. For example, the historic Midway Church, built in 1792 to replace an earlier church that was burned by the British in the Revolutionary War, is the most prominent building in the community, and holds greater significance due to that narrative.

Ranking Public Buildings and Anchor Institutions

These aspects were considered when ranking the public structures and anchor institutions—including churches, post offices, city halls, courthouses, depots, and community pavilions—of our sample set of towns. Towns received a ranking from zero to four based on how well their community structures met these criteria, four being the best and zero being worst. Towns that received a zero had no public structures within their municipal boundary, while towns that were given a four had structures that exemplified all the qualities mentioned above.

Historic Buildings

Jane Jacobs makes the case for “old buildings” being a vital part of a vigorous and healthy city because of the diversity they bring to the real estate market and, in turn to local commerce (J. Jacobs 244). She explains that older buildings often provide lower-rent options that help diversify the economy of the city by enabling small businesses to establish themselves. While Jacobs was talking about her observations mainly in Manhattan and other Northeastern Cities, the claim still holds true in our small towns; many towns that have been successful in revitalizing have been able to cultivate their historic business cores or main streets as hubs of locally owned, small businesses. These older buildings are where town residents start their local grocery store, art gallery or restaurant. These historic buildings offer smaller spaces with often lower or flexible rents, and economically benefit from each other by being clustered together, allowing for more foot traffic and a stronger sense of place.

Fortunately, many of the small towns in this study, as well as several others scattered across Georgia and the Deep South, have at least some historic buildings, usually located in the original business core or main street of the town. In terms of morphology and character, this collection of buildings and the existing infrastructure that surrounds them are some of a given town's biggest assets and can be the starting point for revitalization. Unfortunately, these buildings have often been neglected and sit deteriorating, as they were written-off thirty years ago with the emergence of shopping malls, subdivisions and big box retailers. The value of these buildings is their distinctive character, human scale, and organization. Inherent in their design and organization are walkability, a sense of identity, and authenticity, all of which coalesce to form a place where people want to be. To evaluate the benefits that our sample towns glean from their historic structures, this study used the Georgia Historical Society's online database, Georgia Natural, Geological, Archeological, and Historic Resources Geographic Information System (NAHRGIS), to estimate the number of historic buildings in each town, and the concentration of historic buildings in the downtown area. This estimate was later verified by satellite imaging. The towns were then ranked from one to four by the quantity, quality and condition of their historic buildings.

Housing Stock

Quite possibly the most important physical quality of a small town, in the minds of potential residents, is the amount of quality housing; a varied and plentiful stock of quality housing can place a small town at a competitive

advantage when it comes to both population and economic growth. Among the towns in our study that were the most successful in all three major areas of evaluation, most offered good housing options, often including a substantial number of historic homes. The historic homes in these towns varied from very large plantation houses to modest bungalows, and most towns had a mix of type and style. Much like quality education, good housing is an attribute that firms seek in a potential location; without desirable places for their employees to live, a business cannot consider a town as a viable option. Additionally, better housing can mean higher property values and taxes, which can, in turn, help to spur funding for more public-space improvements in the town. From an economic standpoint alone, good housing stock is a big asset to a small town, but it also adds to physical character and placemaking as well. In this study, the towns in the sample set were ranked on a one to four scale based on the quality, quantity, condition and variety of housing options available, with the assessment of quality and variety being based largely on what types were available.

Housing typology can be difficult to understand, as most people confuse it with housing style. While housing style refers to a particular architectural aesthetic (usually tied to a certain time period), housing type deals with the basic shape or form of the structure. Much like diversity in historic buildings, as discussed earlier, diversity within housing options and sizes provides for a more engaging and interesting aesthetic. There are many housing types common to Georgia, and most houses found in the towns in our sample set fall into one or

more of these. In our study, the towns with the most impressive housing stock had a range of the following types:

Four Square

Bungalow

Pin or Double Pen

Shotgun

Plantation

Morphological Elements of Concern

While the above section outlines the physical elements that create a sense of place and value in small towns, there are also elements that were found to dramatically hinder the development of the communities in our study. That is not to say that one or more of these conditions will doom a town, but they can certainly be impediments to creating vibrant and valuable places. For this reason, they have been noted as formal disadvantages to the towns in our sample set.

Highway Through Town

Fifty or more years ago—when emphasis was placed on the automobile, and efficiency in getting from one place to another became priority—many main streets were widened to accommodate the new age (and new attitudes about travel) without a thought to what moving high-speed traffic through a town center would do to the morphological fabric of the town. In looking at the results of these moves, as reflected in the towns in this study, evidence supports that high-speed highways contribute to the death of activity in a town center. They create a barrier

that is dangerous and difficult to cross on foot, disconnecting elements of a town. Furthermore, they are unpleasant to walk along, and feel unsafe even with appropriate pedestrian infrastructure. There is hope, though, as many towns have begun to retrofit these roads with traffic-calming elements, such as on-street parking and other “road diet” techniques. These methods may create a nuisance for those traveling through town, but make up for the unconvinced with the added value they provide through improving the quality of the place.

Bypass

Another solution to the problem of the automobile was the bypass, which rerouted traffic around towns rather than straight through them. In some cases, like in Rome, Georgia, this solution worked wonderfully, preserving the character of the existing downtown, while keeping outside traffic moving (Parrish). However, this was only the case in towns that already had an established town center with a draw all its own. In smaller towns, the bypass ensured that little or no traffic would travel into the town center, drying up potential business and activity. Because of the detriment it so often causes to the economic and social vitality of the downtown , this study considered the bypass a serious disadvantage to the small towns we researched.

Lack of Sewer

Lack of sewer and waste-water treatment not only limits the potential for manufacturers to locate operations in a town—as such enterprises often have high demands on utilities—but it also has a big impact on the physical character

and form of the town. As successful placemaking depends on the ability to achieve higher density in the downtown business district, septic-system infrastructure limits the proximity of buildings, and controls the lot sizes in a town, inhibiting more dense development. Considering this, our study saw the lack of a sewer system as a disadvantage to the towns in our study. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that many small towns have been able to invest in a sewer system, but at a very high initial cost.

Lack of Broadband Access

It may seem that high-speed Internet access would be an expected amenity anywhere in the country, but, in some rural parts of the state, it is not, and the lack of it can be a hurdle along a small town's path to revitalization. Larger firms and small businesses alike depend on fast and consistent access to the Internet in order to connect to the world, particularly if they are located in a small, rural town; without this option, some might decide against locating to a given town. Therefore, the lack of high-speed internet, meaning a cable Internet provider, was considered a disadvantage for the towns in our study. Information regarding this was gathered from the Digital Georgia Program's broadband map, documenting the available Internet service across the state.

Table 5.1 Formal Qualities Matrix: Coastal Region

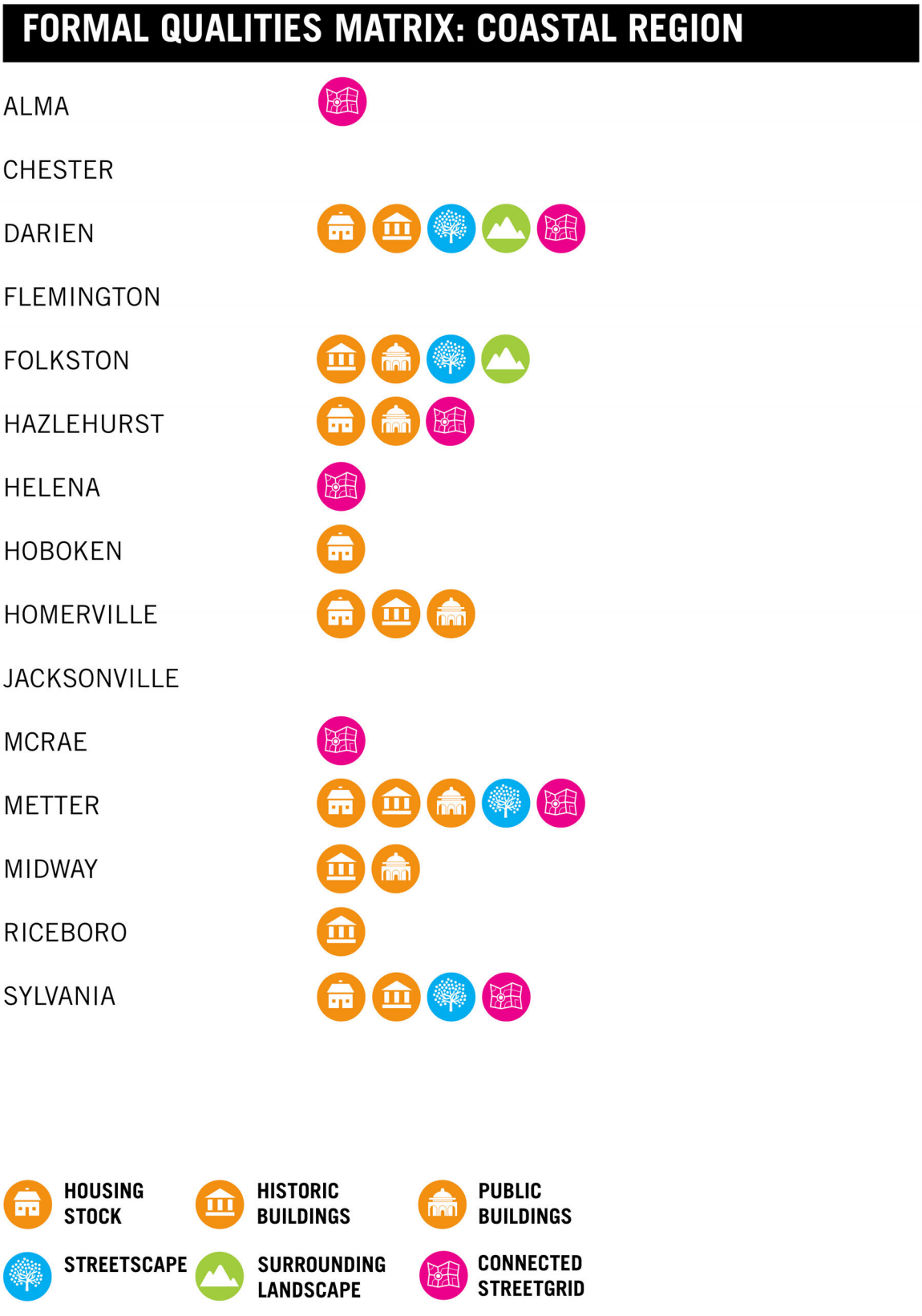


Table 5.2 Formal Qualities Matrix: Piedmont Region

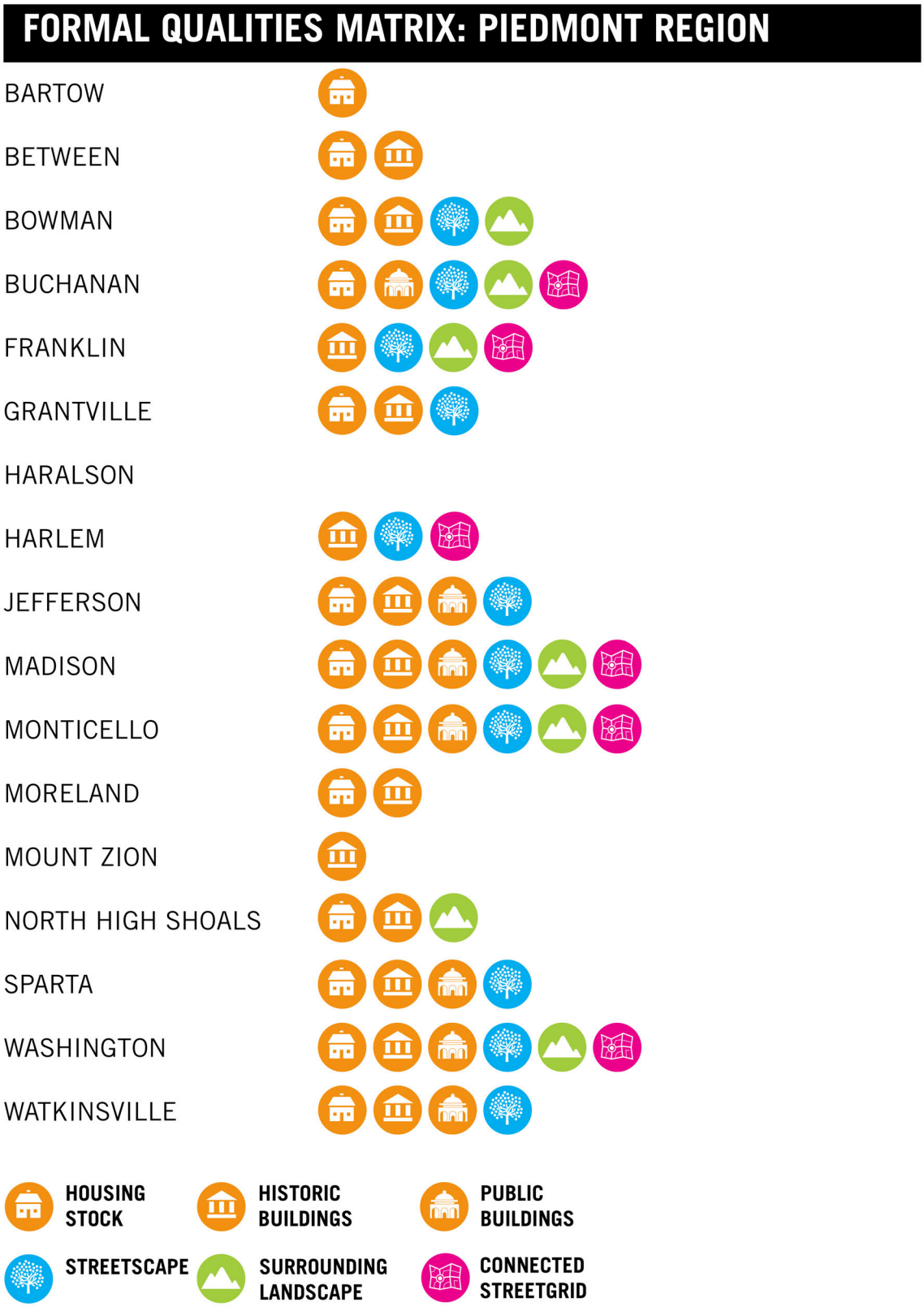


Table 5.3 Formal Qualities Matrix: Plains Region

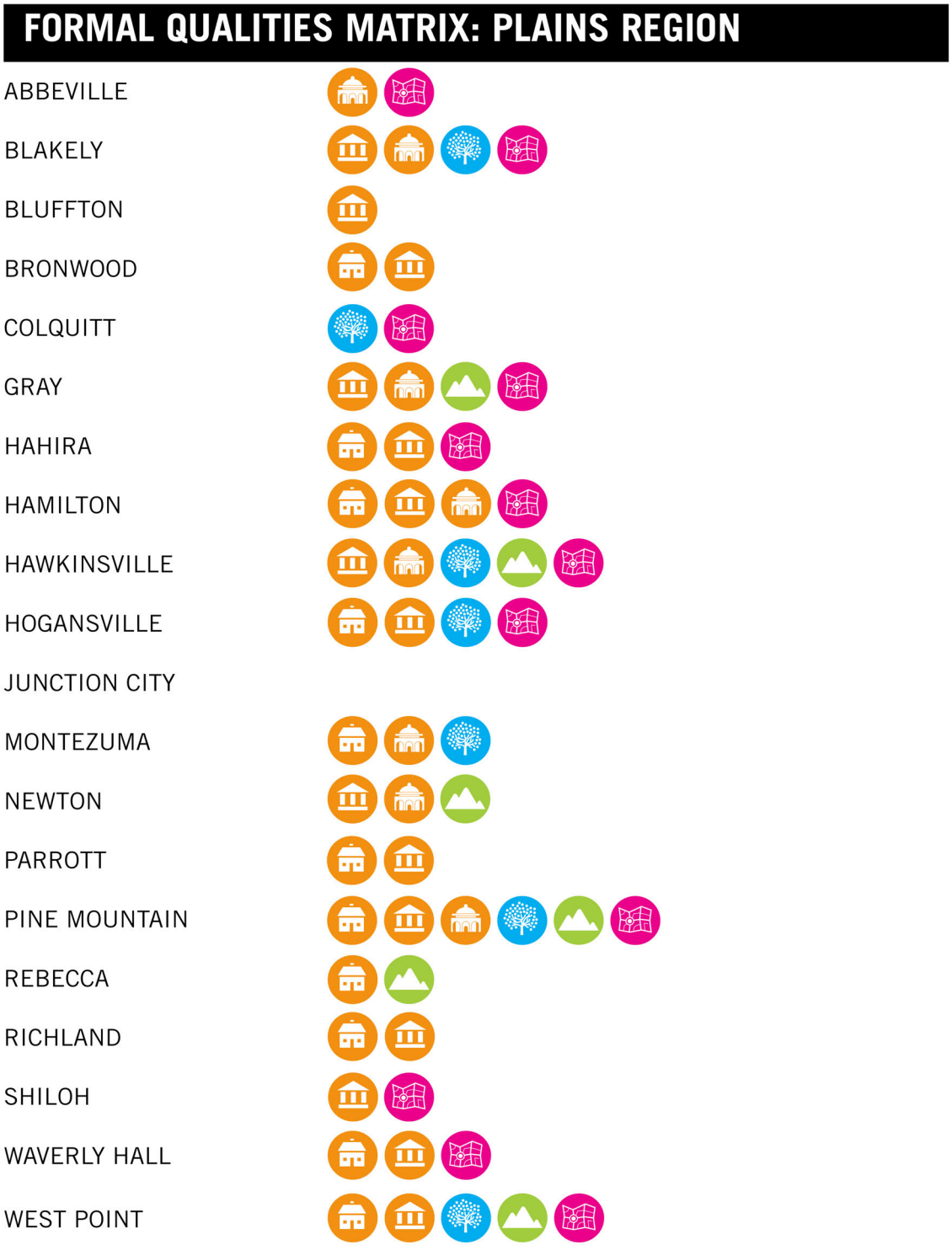


Table 5.4 Formal Qualities Matrix: Highlands Region

Table 5.5 Formal Qualities Matrix: Sample Set Rankings

Morphology Matrix: Highest Ranking Towns

Figure 5.5 shows all 65 towns in the sample set, ranked by the number of criteria met in the form and morphology matrix. The matrix reveals five towns that meet all six criteria proposed as indicators of strong formal and morphological quality. Two of these Tier-One towns are located in the Highlands Region, further reinforcing the previously observed pattern of small towns in the Highlands region possessing more of the necessary assets—outlined in this paper as the three areas of evaluation— to achieve success in revitalization. Another pattern was observed in the remaining three towns ranked as Tier-One, as well. These towns—Monticello, Madison and Washington—are all located in the Piedmont region of the state, and, even more interestingly, are located in the same part of the region, within 75 miles of each other. In our statewide analysis of small towns, this area, to the east and northeast of Atlanta, possessed the highest concentration of large population growth rates (Figure 2.8) and higher median household incomes (Figure 2.9) for small towns in 2010. Undoubtedly the superb formal qualities of the towns in this region result from generations of wealth located in the Piedmont, beginning with the affluence created by mass cotton production and the prosperity brought by the railroad. Many of the towns in this area of the Piedmont—including the three ranked as Tier-One in our matrix—saw their largest periods of growth and construction in the mid- to late-1800s, driven by agricultural prosperity. Looking at the evidence provided by the statewide analysis and the form matrix in this chapter, we can argue that the current

success of this area's small towns has been driven largely by the excellent formal qualities and exceptional historic structures in the area. Furthermore, the area's position between Atlanta and Augusta provides various economic benefits, similar to the advantages enjoyed by Highlands region from its proximity to Atlanta and Chattanooga. Looking at the results of the form and morphology matrix overall, assets were distributed unevenly amongst the four regions of the state, with the Piedmont region having the most highly ranking towns, the Plains region the second most highly ranking towns, the Highlands the third, and the Coast the least. Again, this pattern reveals a correlation between towns' forms, the history of town planning in the state, and the wealth created by agriculture in the 1800s. The formal and morphological characteristics of the five Tier-One town in this matrix are discussed in more detail below, along with more insight on the history of each town's development and growth.

Blue Ridge, GA

Blue Ridge is a mountain town located in the Highlands region of the state. Agriculture, and the businesses that support it, has been a mainstay of the Fannin County economy since its earliest days. After the Civil War, cotton became very important to the area. However, a push for diversification at the start of the 20th century greatly expanded the types of crops raised in and around Blue Ridge. Additionally, mining, like in many towns in North Georgia, became profitable at the middle of the 1800s, and continued through to the beginning of the 1900s. The lumber industry grew from the early 1900s until World War II.

Also, contributing to the town's early economic success was the Marietta and North Georgia railroad lines. The railroad gave Blue Ridge and the surrounding county a market for agricultural products, lumber and mined materials. Providing even better access to Blue Ridge was the construction of U.S Highway 76. Tourism has been big business in Blue Ridge since the 1950s, but, in 1986, with the completion of the scenic Georgia Mountain Parkway, tourism grew from a steady trickle to a flood. Today the Blue Ridge Scenic Railroad provides a major tourist attraction, and influences the town's morphology, since it runs parallel and directly adjacent to Main Street (Fannin County Chamber of Commerce).

Figure 5.1 Blue Ridge, GA

Blue Ridge, like all of the towns ranked as Tier-One in this form and morphology analysis, scored highly in all six areas of evaluation. As you can see in Figure 5.1, Blue Ridge has a fairly extensive street grid with small blocks, the Main Street acting as the central corridor. The town did have a bypass, U.S. Highway 76, around the central business district, but it appears that any detrimental effect is minimal, due to its intersection with a major travel corridor, East 1st Street, facilitating access to the downtown from the bypass. Blue Ridge scored a four out of four in both the public buildings and surrounding landscape criteria. While the original Fannin County courthouse is now used as a community center, is sits intact and in good condition across from the restored train depot and next to the new courthouse, a tasteful building reflecting elements of the original courthouse. The location of the town in the North Georgia mountains adds to the beauty of the town, and enhances its physical character. There are many historic buildings in the downtown area, and the town benefits from having quality housing stock, some of which is historic, located in the connected street grid. There is quality streetscaping through much of the town, with the most attention to pedestrian infrastructure paid in the Main Street. The Main Street features angled on-street parking and sidewalks, but lacks very many street trees.

Dahlonega, GA

Dahlonega is the only town listed as Tier-One in Form and Morphology that has also been listed as Tier-One in the other two categories. The town's

great economic drivers, superior economic capacity and leadership show in its formal qualities. The town scored a four out of four in the public buildings, streetscaping, and surrounding landscape criteria. Located in the town's central square is the old Lumpkin County courthouse, built in 1836 and the oldest surviving County courthouse in the state (Georgia Department of Natural Resources "Dahlonega Gold Museum Historic Site"). Although the Old

Figure 5.2 Dahlonega, GA

Courthouse no longer serves its original function, it now stands as a Gold Mining Museum, and, of course, adds to the physical character of the downtown. The character is further enhanced by the superb streetscaping along the four streets that surround the central square. The town's morphological type can be classified as a mix between a courthouse square town and a mountain town, because of the presence of the central courthouse square in combination with grid distortion due to drastic changes in topography. Adjacent to the main square and business district is a historic residential district that contains a number of large historic homes and quality housing stock. Like Blue Ridge, Dahlonega benefits from the surrounding mountainous landscape, which adds to the character and beauty of the town.

Monticello, GA

Monticello, GA, named after Thomas Jefferson's estate in Virginia, is located in the Piedmont region of the state, in Jasper County. A largely agricultural society, Monticello and the surrounding county relied heavily on cotton production, and grew very prosperous before the Civil War. Many of the large historic homes and commercial buildings were built during this period. Still, manufacturing played a role in the town's economic history through the 1800s.The railroad came to Monticello in 1887, and manufacturing and warehouse buildings were constructed to meet growing commercial demands. In the early 1900s, Jasper County benefitted from the "Peach Boom." Although agriculture has continued to play an important role in the town's economy, many

of the original farms were sold to the U.S. Government to create the Oconee National Forest. The timber industry brought another economic boom to the town after World War II, creating a second wave of wealth. But the scale of the prosperity reached in the pre-Civil War era has not been realized again (Jasper County Historical Society).

Figure 5.3 Monticello, GA

Monticello gains a lot of physical character from its many historic buildings. The town has over 250 registered with the state of Georgia, with seven registered with the National Registry, and has one designated historic district. Many of these buildings are from the prosperous period before the Civil War and through the early 1900s. As Jasper is of the courthouse-town type, the Jasper County courthouse holds a prominent position in the town and is a beautiful historic building. The street grid is less extensive as those of other towns, but the town benefits from its small blocks and courthouse square organization. The streetscaping around the main square incorporates street furniture, as well as angle on-street parking. The sidewalks are of ample width, and crosswalks and curb bulb-outs are in place for pedestrian safety. Also adding to the town's aesthetic appeal and physical character are the many historic homes and other quality housing stock located near the downtown.

Madison, GA

Madison, like Dahlonega, was ranked as a Tier-One town in the Economic Capacity Matrix in Chapter Four due to the extraordinary efforts being made by the town’s leadership to preserve its many assets and build community involvement and economic strength. Also located in the Piedmont region (and in fact only 26 miles away), Madison’s economic history is similar to that of Monticello’s. Agricultural success primarily drove development in Madison before the Civil War. At this time, Madison became the main economic center for Morgan County, a position that was only enhanced by the arrival of the railroad.

Many of the historic homes in Madison are from the Antebellum and Victorian Eras. However, the brick structures in the downtown commercial district were built after 1869, when a fire destroyed all but one building. Although the town was laid out as a courthouse-square style plan, the current courthouse is not located in the central square today. The present courthouse, constructed in 1906, is located off of the square on an adjacent street, while the post office is housed in the square (Morgan County Heritage).

Figure 5.4 Madison, GA

In addition to the numerous historic homes, historic commercial buildings and exceptional public buildings, Madison benefits from very nice pedestrian infrastructure and a fairly extensive street grid. The streetscapes in Madison include wide sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking and street furniture. While the street grid in Madison is not as extensive as those of other towns, the blocks are small and there is an extensive network of commercial buildings with uniform setbacks, creating a great sense of place. Located in the Piedmont region, Madison does not benefit as much from its surrounding landscape as towns that are located in the Highlands, like Dahlonega and Blue Ridge. It does gain some added physical quality however from the surrounding farmland and rolling hills.

Washington, GA

Washington, also located in the Piedmont, in Wilkes County, is only 50 miles from Madison and 72 miles from Monticello. Like these two neighboring towns, Washington has an economic history rich in agriculture and a physical character accented by a large number of Antebellum and Victorian homes. In the town, there are 97 state-registered historic buildings, four historic districts, and 23 nationally recognized historic buildings. Also, like Madison and Monticello, Washington is a county seat for Wilkes County, and benefits from the presence of a beautiful county courthouse, completed in 1904. The streetscape in Washington is well-implemented, and features street trees, on-street parking, wide sidewalks and street furniture. Additionally, the town gains some physical character from the surrounding farmland and rolling hills.

Figure 5.5 Washington, GA

CHAPTER 6

BANTAM TOWNS RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

Combined Matrix Results

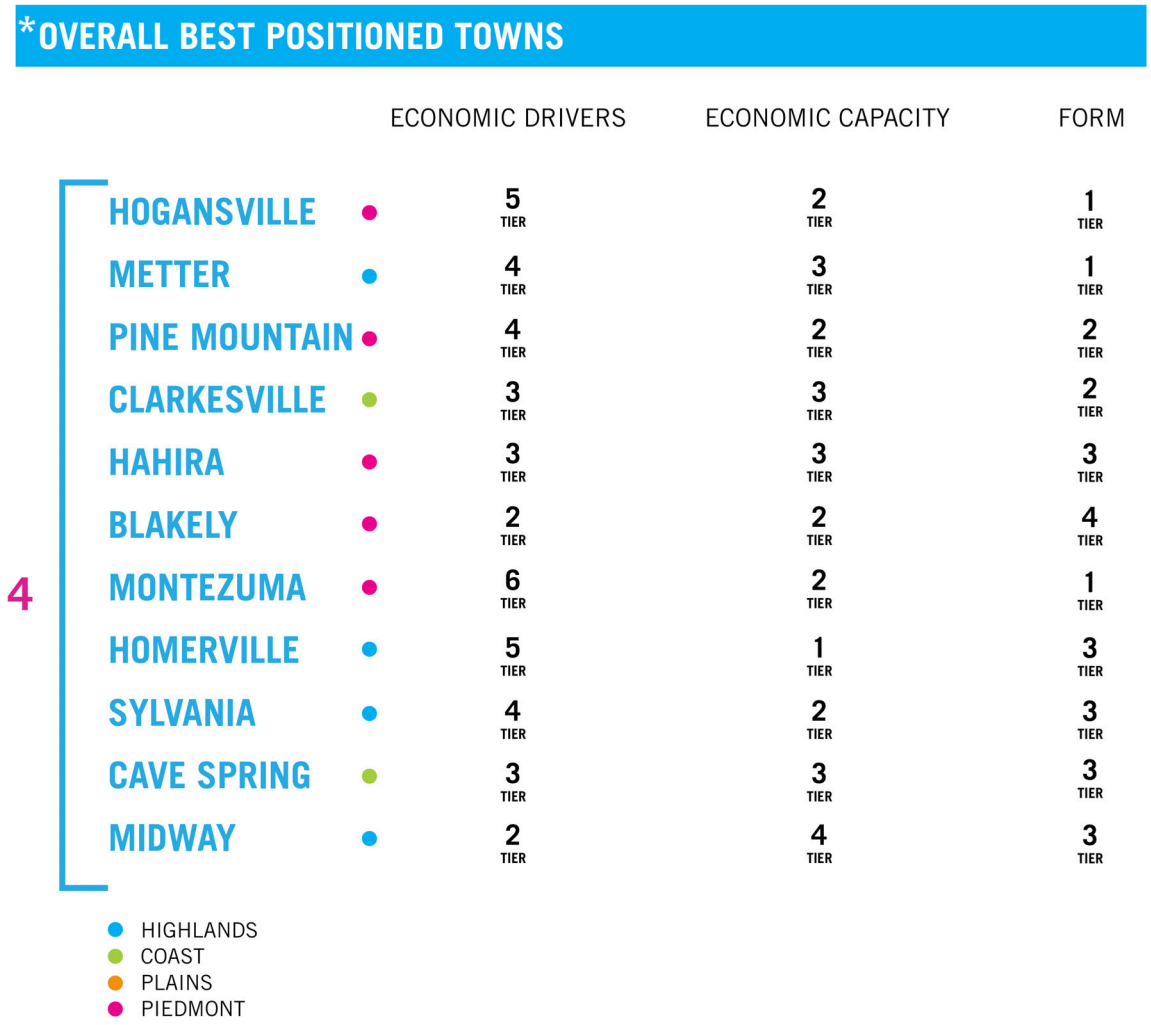
The three previous chapters—Chapters Three through Five—explain the criteria used to measure the potential of the 65 towns in our sample set. The resulting top-ranking towns were then described in more detail with regard to those criteria. As is evident in Figure 6.1, representing the top-ranking towns, Dahlonega comes out ahead of all the towns in our study, being ranked in Tier One of all three major areas of evaluation. After Dahlonega fall six towns that we will classify as Tier Two. These towns—Chatsworth, Madison, Darien, Cornelia, Watkinsville, and West Point—represent the communities in our study that have the most assets across the board. For the majority of these towns, their strengths are allocated fairly evenly across the three categories. However, there are some exceptions that show incredible assets in two categories, but lag a little behind in the third. In the case of Madison, the town excels in both formal characteristics and capacity, ranking in Tier One in both areas, but lacks many of the indicators used to identify economic drivers, placing it in Tier Four. None of the other overall Tier Two towns score below Tier Three in any one category. The Tier Three towns in the combined matrix represent towns that need improvement in either one or two categories. Because the Highlands and Piedmont regions dominate

Tier One and Tier Two, well-positioned towns in the Plains and Coastal regions can best be identified by examining Tiers Three and Four.

Table 6.1 Combined Matrix: Overall Best Positioned Towns from Sample Set

*OVERALL BEST POSITIONED TOWNS		ECONOMIC DRIVERS	ECONOMIC CAPACITY	FORM
1	DAHLONEGA	1 TIER	1 TIER	1 TIER
2	CHATSWORTH	1 TIER	2 TIER	2 TIER
	MADISON	4 TIER	1 TIER	1 TIER
	DARIEN	3 TIER	1 TIER	1 TIER
	CORNELIA	2 TIER	2 TIER	2 TIER
	WATKINSVILLE	2 TIER	2 TIER	3 TIER
	WEST POINT	3 TIER	3 TIER	1 TIER
3	MONTICELLO	5 TIER	2 TIER	1 TIER
	BLUE RIDGE	4 TIER	3 TIER	1 TIER
	HAWKINSVILLE	4 TIER	2 TIER	2 TIER
	BUCHANAN	3 TIER	3 TIER	2 TIER
	ELLIJAY	3 TIER	3 TIER	3 TIER
	ROCKMART	2 TIER	2 TIER	4 TIER
	WASHINGTON	6 TIER	2 TIER	1 TIER
	LA FAYETTE	5 TIER	1 TIER	3 TIER
	SUMMERVILLE	4 TIER	2 TIER	3 TIER
	JEFFERSON	3 TIER	3 TIER	3 TIER
	GRAY	2 TIER	4 TIER	3 TIER
	HAMILTON	2 TIER	3 TIER	3 TIER
	HARLEM	2 TIER	3 TIER	4 TIER

Table 6.1 Continued



Bantam Town Conclusions

Three main conclusions emerged from the *Bantam Towns of Georgia* research. These conclusions are offered here as take-away lessons for communities hoping to learn from this research, as well as for policy makers looking to help struggling small towns.

1. No matter how strong a town is in one, or even two, areas, they will not be able to reach the level of success of a town strong in all three.

The criteria used in this study constitute an objective framework by which a town's potential for revitalization can be evaluated. Based on the findings of this study, we recommend that public and private investment should be allocated to towns that illustrate the greatest potential for success, meaning those evidenced to be strong in all three areas—Economic Drivers, Economic Capacity and Leadership, and Formal and Morphological Characteristics. Abundantly clear from this study is the fact that assets in one category cannot make up for liabilities in the other two. For example, a town that has incredible formal assets—historic buildings, public space, streetscaping, housing stock, etc.—will not see much success unless there are employment and education opportunities in the area, as well as strong leadership to protect those assets and proactively plan for the future. Similarly, a town that has strong economic drivers along with strong leadership and economic capacity will have a difficult time competing regionally for residents if its formal qualities are lacking. The single most

important conclusion here is that small towns that want to succeed need to consider how these three elements work together within their communities. While this research does not make recommendations that could be applied to any small town, or provide a set of best practices, it does supply a means of evaluating small towns' assets, and helps to identify where improvement is most needed.

Also important to remember is that the three areas used to evaluate our sample set of 65 towns interact in complicated ways. Below are some observations, made in our analysis, that illustrate some of the ways in which economic drivers, capacity and form interact in a small town:

1. Proactive planning is the single best indicator of quality of place and overall economic development capacity. The majority of towns in this study that ranked highly in form and overall capacity had a planning person on staff and/or a Main Street program in place.

2. Quality housing stock is a place-making asset, an economic asset and an indicator of potential or existing economic success. Simply put, great housing stock can stimulate property values, thereby generating higher tax revenue, and can be the deciding factor for prospective residents and businesses. Investment made to preserve quality housing is money well spent.

3. High-speed highways and bypasses were found to be the most detrimental morphological move in the small towns that were studied. No town that ranked highly overall had a high-speed highway running through

town. Bypasses, while keeping the urban fabric intact, killed the potential for outside visitors, decreasing revenue for the core business district.

4. Streetscaping and façade grants were shown to be the most potent use of public investment funds in improving business and activity in central business districts and Main Streets.
5. High scores in the Economic Drivers area were not an indicator of place quality, showing that a strong economy does not necessary result in quality place to live.
6. Strong leadership and capacity was often an indicator of good form and place quality.
7. Towns that were most successful in all three categories had many historic buildings, and worked to preserve them through improvement grants and other public/private funding.

2. Results from this study need to be viewed in combination with a larger investment strategy that addresses issues of equitability and need.

The results of our study revealed a bias in the method of evaluation presented in this report. Results from our sample-set analysis favored investment in towns that are already better positioned for success, and discouraged investment in ones that need aid the most. For example, the majority of the towns identified as being the best positioned to succeed, meaning they ranked in Tier One through Tier Four, were located in the two northern regions of the state.

Working off of the belief that not all small towns can be saved, and that the limited funds available should be allocated to where they are most likely to gain traction and effect lasting change, it is important to note that there are additional factors to consider when deciding where resources should be allocated. These additional considerations are largely based in issues of race and social equity. For example, a demographic analysis of our sample set of towns revealed a correlation between the racial makeup of the towns in each region and the overall ranking of the towns. The towns located in the Highlands and Piedmont regions—both of which had the greatest number of overall highly ranking towns and were revealed in Chapter Three to have the best positioned small towns in regards to median household income, poverty rate, unemployment rate, and population growth rate—had the highest percentage of white residents. The towns located in the Highlands Region had an average of 86.3-percent White and only 8.4-percent African-American residents, while those in the Piedmont region had an average of 69.7-percent White and 26.8-percent African-American residents. The other two regions had a more even split with the Plains region's racial makeup being 53.1-percent White and 45.1-percent African-American, and the Coast's being 55.2-percent White and 41.7-percent African American (U.S. Census BureauBureau "Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000").

Furthermore, the statewide research presented in Chapter Three showed that the Plains region of the state has an average 1-percent decline in small town populations, the lowest median household income, the highest poverty rate, and

the highest unemployment rate of all four regions in the state. For these reasons, it is not surprising that only one town in the Plains Region surfaced as a top-ranking town in our analysis. Furthermore, this town, West Point, is very much an anomaly among Plains towns, as it benefits greatly from the Kia manufacturing plant that opened there in 2009. Looking only objectively at the results of our study, investment in this entire region would be discouraged. But the towns of the Plains Region have just as much right to survival and as much reason, if not more, to receive outside support—particularly when one considers the tremendous need for aid there, as well as the growing gap between this region and the northern regions of the state in terms of quality of life, education and employment opportunities. Given this reasoning and evidence, we posit that the Plains region and the Coastal region—which also fell well behind the northern regions of the state in median household income, poverty rate, and population growth rate—might be considered separately and on their own terms.

In a way similar to that of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Job Tax Credit Program, which identifies the counties most in need of economic development and incentivizes the location of businesses within these counties, a statewide policy that identified the relatively well-positioned small towns where aid is most needed could help direct investment into the struggling areas where it could make the largest impact. Towns located in the more disadvantaged areas of the state stand to gain the most from aid and outside investment. This investment must be made wisely and with consideration to the three criteria

outlined in this study, but it would be inequitable to rank the towns in these regions against those in the more prosperous regions.

3. Improvements to a town's formal quality require the most investment and assume the greatest risk. Therefore, in areas of widespread disinvestment, strength in these criteria is the best indicator of potential success.

In the Form and Morphology Analysis in Chapter Five, a set of criteria was introduced that attempted to measure the quality of the towns' physical appearance, quality of place, and general character. The fulfillment of these criteria relied heavily on the historical buildings and morphology of the communities. The criteria were set up in this way due to the large amount of investment it takes to introduce strong formal elements to a town if they do not already exist (not to mention the incredible risk of such an investment in a struggling town). This is not to say that quality infill development and large-scale new construction cannot happen in small communities. They often do, but they usually follow some existing success rather than try to initiate it. With this consideration, we suggest that, in areas of widespread disinvestment and economic distress, like the Plains and Coastal regions, formal characteristics be viewed as the most important indicator of potential for revitalization, and recommend that efforts be made to boost economic drivers and support economic capacity and leadership development for such towns. By focusing efforts on towns that do not need unattainable amounts of investment to reshape

their morphologies, investors will thereby focus on those with a better fighting chance.

With this in mind, investment in the small towns of the Plains is supported by evidence in this report's form and morphology analysis, which suggests that the Plains region is rich in towns that rank highly in this area of evaluation. Out of the 27 towns that ranked at or above Tier Three in the formal analysis, eight were located in the Plains region, eight were in the Piedmont, seven were in the Highlands, and four were in the Coastal region. This statistic aligns with what is outlined in the history of Georgia town-planning described in Chapter One–that, in the first half of the 1800s, the state's greatest wealth grew out of the large plantations spread through the Piedmont and the Plains, and was supported by the railroad, which centered on the Piedmont. And, since small towns gain their greatest morphological assets from their historic structures and existing infrastructure, it make sense that the towns in these regions, which possessed the greatest wealth and experienced the most prosperity through the first half of the 1800s, would stand to have the best formal qualities. Furthermore, the planning history of the state gives reason for the low number of highly ranking coastal towns in the form matrix, as it was so scarily populated through the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. By building off of these towns' strongest existing assets, their forms, and investing in aggressive capacity-building programs and economic-development efforts, our hope is that these bantam

towns can see more equitable growth and development. All they need is a fighting chance.

Top Ranking Bantam Towns

In the following section the seven top ranking towns are discussed in more detail, outing what assets exist within them and where improvement can be made based on the framework for evaluation setup in this research. The observation and suggestions made in this section are intended to be view as illustrative examples of the conclusions made earlier in this chapter, as well as, topics covered in earlier chapters.

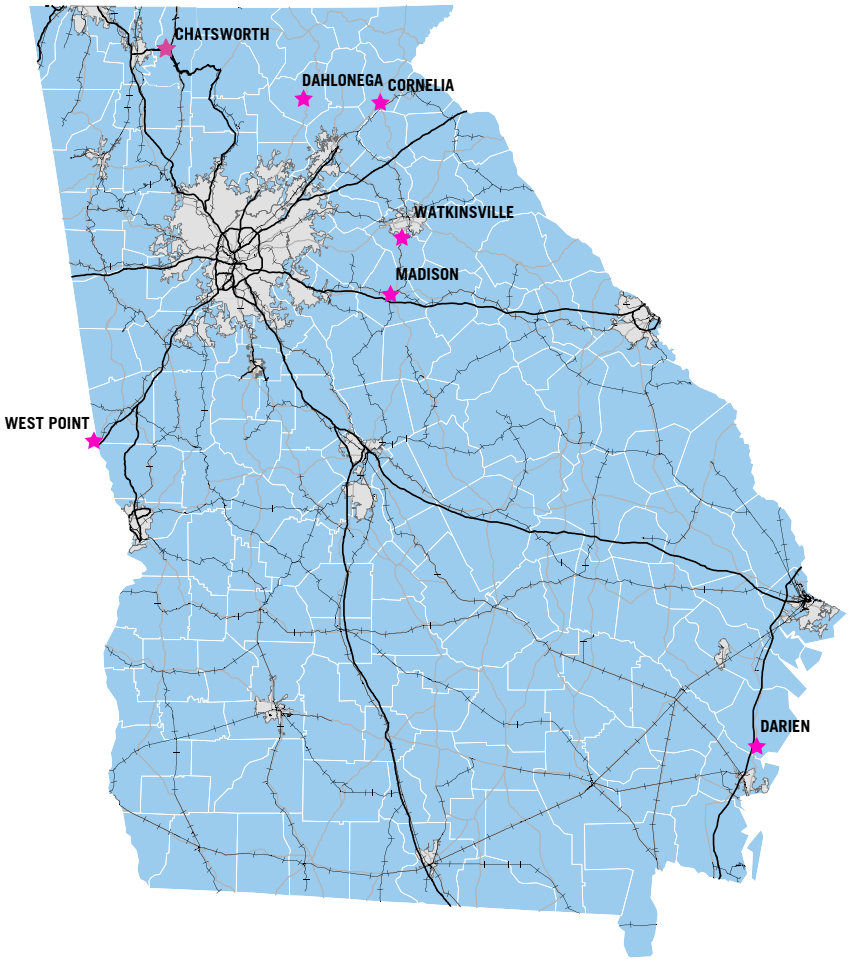


Figure 6.1 Overall Top Ranking Towns Map

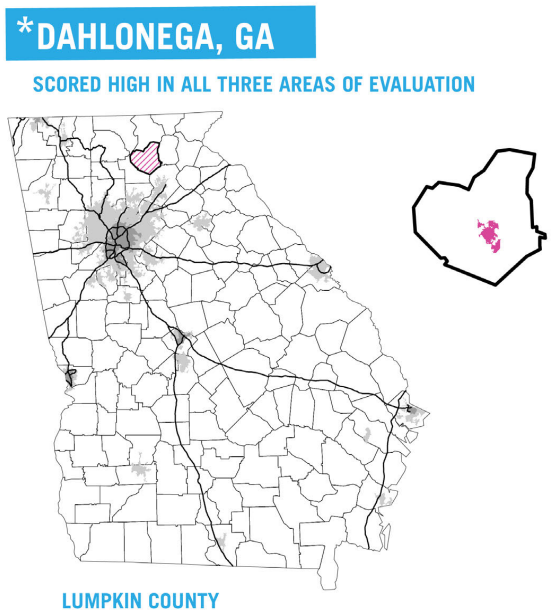


Figure 6.2 Lumpkin County and Dahlonega Boundaries

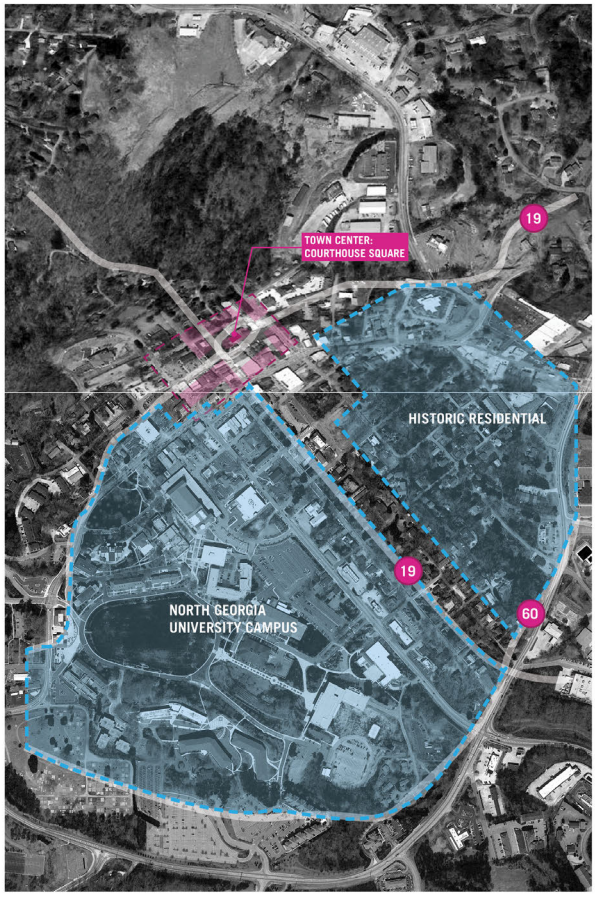


Figure 6.3 Dahlonega Aerial

Table 6.2 Dahlonega Economic Drivers

Table 6.3 Dahlonega Economic Capacity and Leadership

*DAHLONEGA, GA

CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP

PLANNING STAFF
2 Full-Time Planning Staff

COMMUNITY WEBSITE
Great Community Website

LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Dahlonega and Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce

Organize:
Leadership Training Workshops
Networking Events
Host Reporters
Tourism Campaigns

LOCAL FESTIVAL
Multiple Local Festivals Throughout the Year

MAIN STREET BETTER HOMETOWNS
Seven-Member Board
Two Full-Time Staff Members

Two Improvement Grants Programs
Recruit New Businesses
Market Analysis
Design Initiatives
Vision Plan
Procure Funding
Organize Events

GEORGIA TRAVEL GUIDE
Five Mentions in the 2010 Visitors' Guide

One Paid Advertisement

REGISTERED HISTORIC BUILDINGS
11 National Registry
138 Georgia Registry

MEMBER OF GMA
Member of GMA

McGuire House GA Cities Funded

*Received $750,000 for Two Projects from The Georgia Cities Foundation

Figure 6.4 Dahlonega Elevations of Main Square

*DAHLONEGA, GA

MORPHOLOGY AND FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS

PUBLIC BUILDING

STORE SIGNAGE

Figure 6.5 Dahlonega Public Buildings and Businesses

*DAHLONEGA, GA

MORPHOLOGY AND FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS






HOUSING STOCK

Figure 6.6 Dahlonega Housing Stock

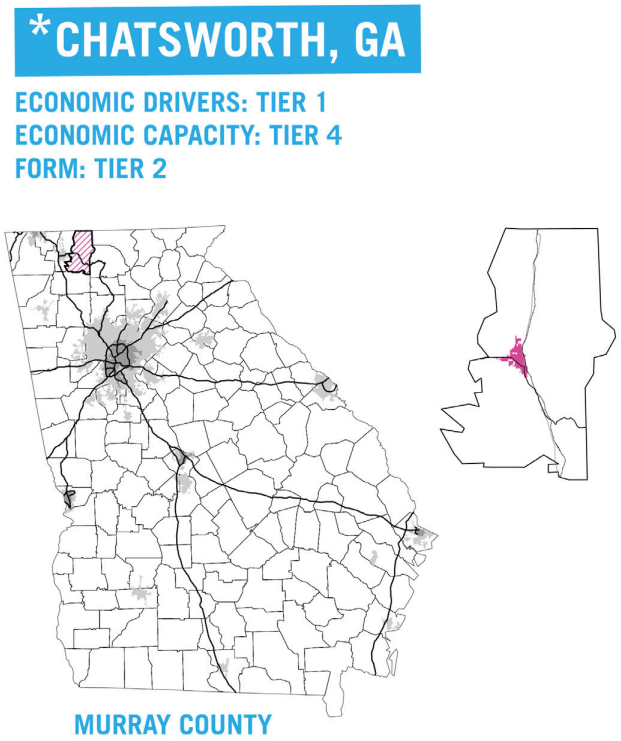


Figure 6.7 Murray County and Chatsworth Boundaries

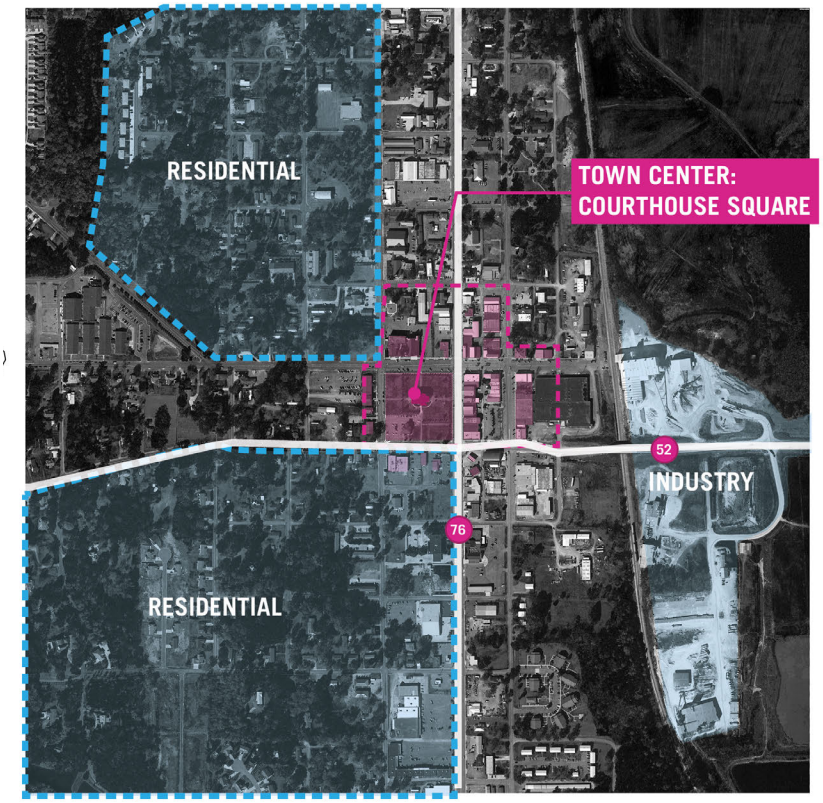


Figure 6.8 Chatsworth Aerial

Table 6.4 Chatsworth Economic Drivers

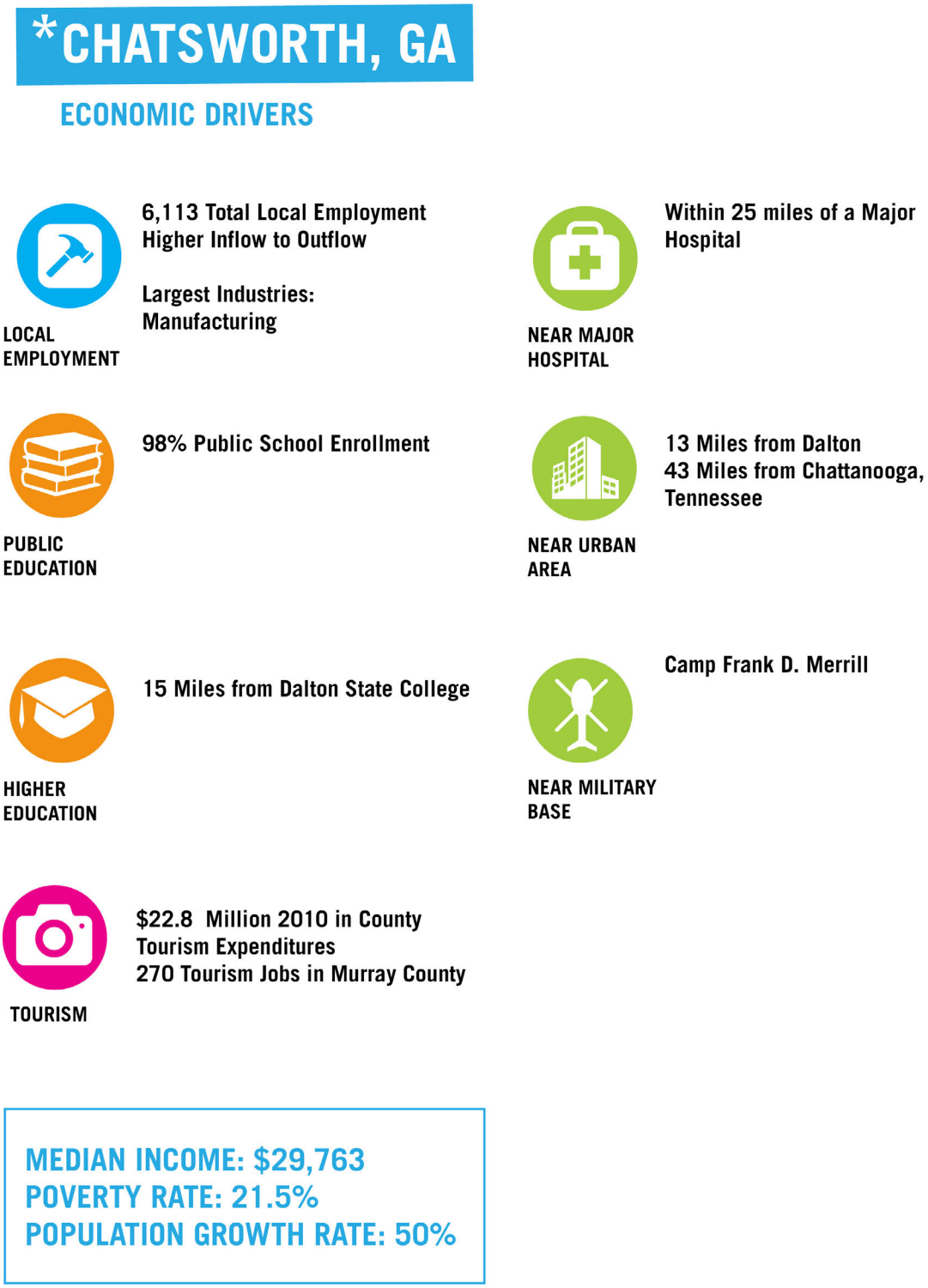


Table 6.5 Chatsworth Economic Capacity and Leadership

CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP

PLANNING STAFF

No planning person on staff

COMMUNITY WEBSITE

Great Community Website

LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Dahlonega and Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce

Organize:
Leadership Training Workshops
Networking Events
Host Reporters
Tourism Campaigns

LOCAL FESTIVAL

Multiple Local Festivals Throughout the Year

MAIN STREET BETTER HOMETOWNS

Not a member of the Georgia Main Street program

GEORGIA TRAVEL GUIDE

Five Mentions in the 2010 Visitors' Guide

One Paid Advertisement

REGISTERED HISTORIC BUILDINGS

11 National Registry
138 Georgia Registry

MEMBER OF GMA

Member of GMA

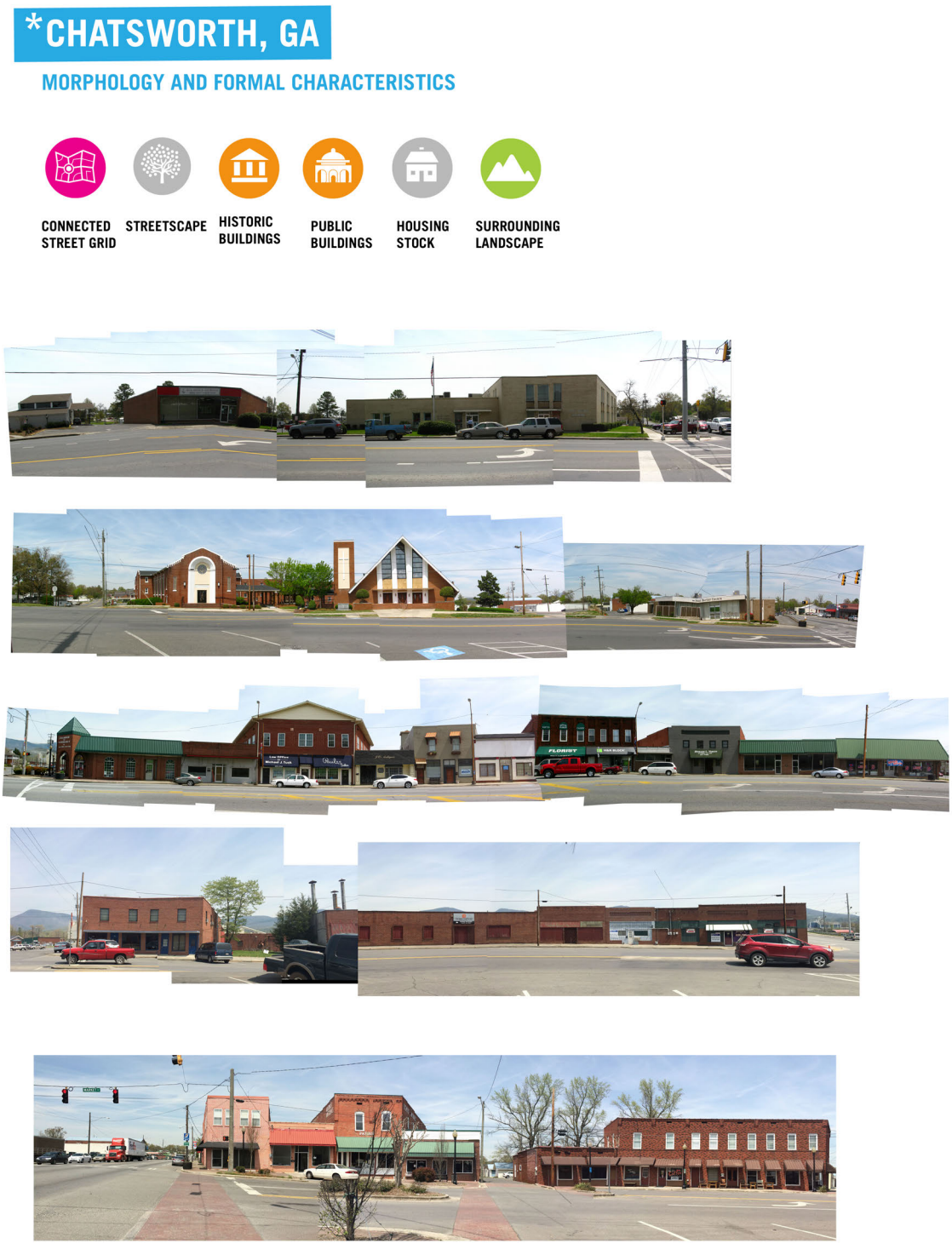


Figure 6.9 Chatsworth Elevations

*CHATSWORTH, GA

MORPHOLOGY AND FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS

HOUSING STOCK

PUBLIC BUILDING

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Figure 6.10 Chatsworth Housing Stock and Public Buildigns

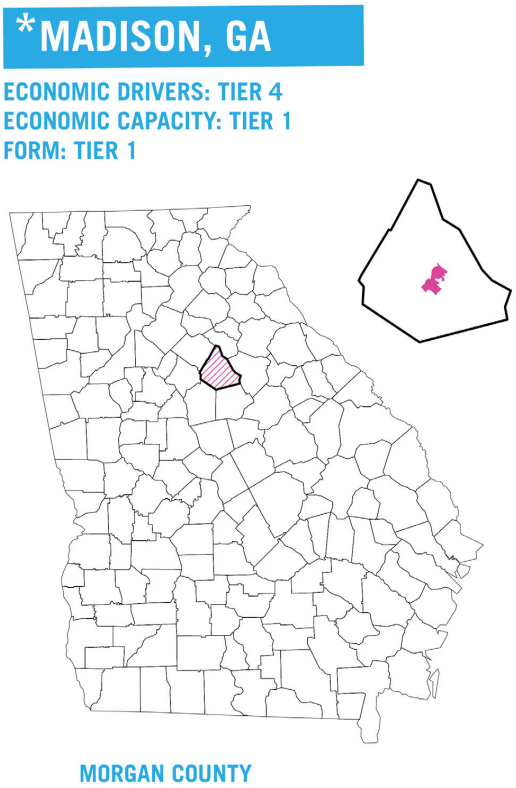


Figure 6.11 Morgan County and Madison Boundaries

Figure 6.12 Madison Aerial

Table 6.6 Madison Economic Drivers

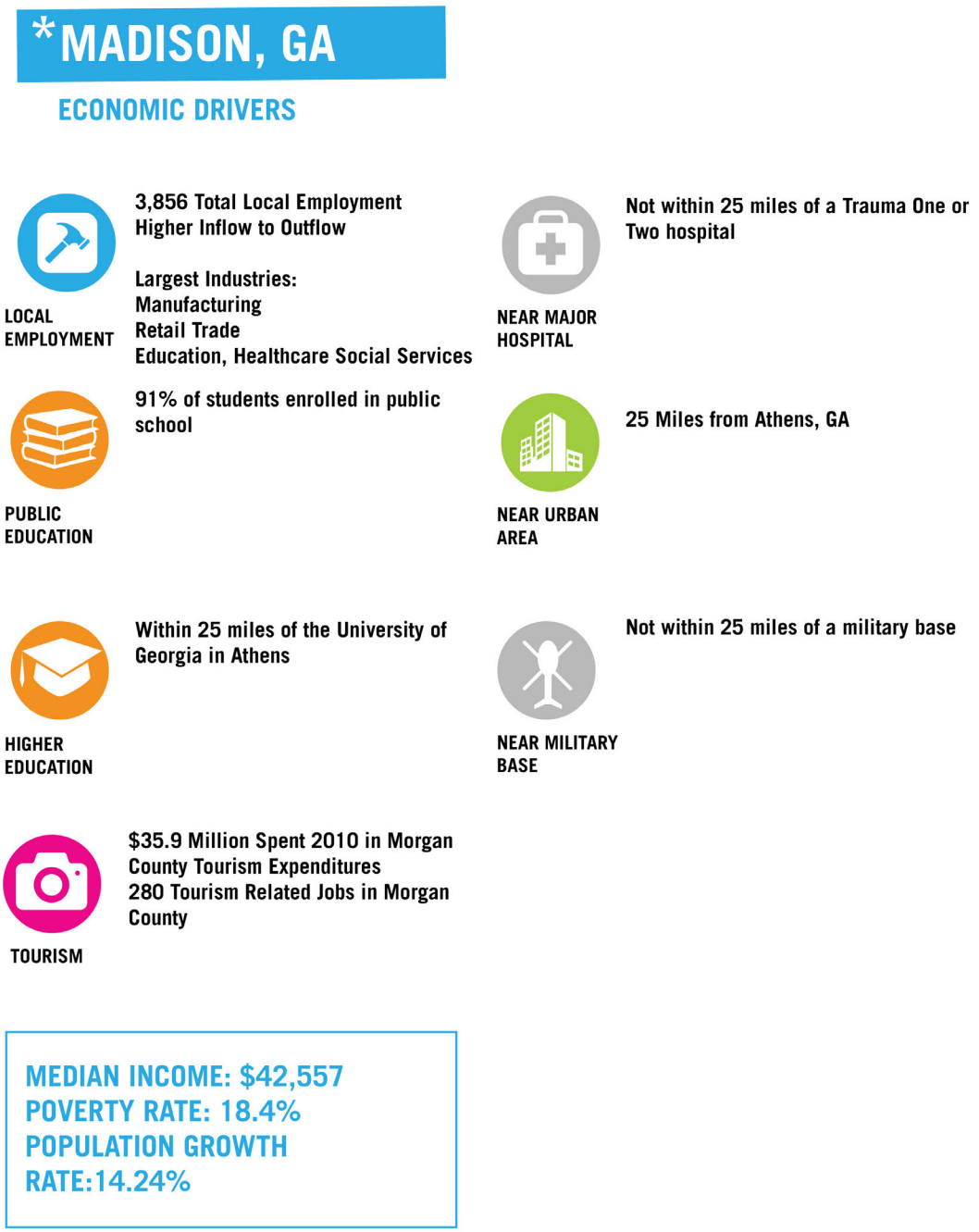


Table 6.7 Madison Economic Capacity and Leadership

Figure 6.13 Madison Elevations

*MADISON, GA

MORPHOLOGY AND FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS






HOUSING STOCK

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Figure 6.14 Madison Housing Stock and Public Buildings

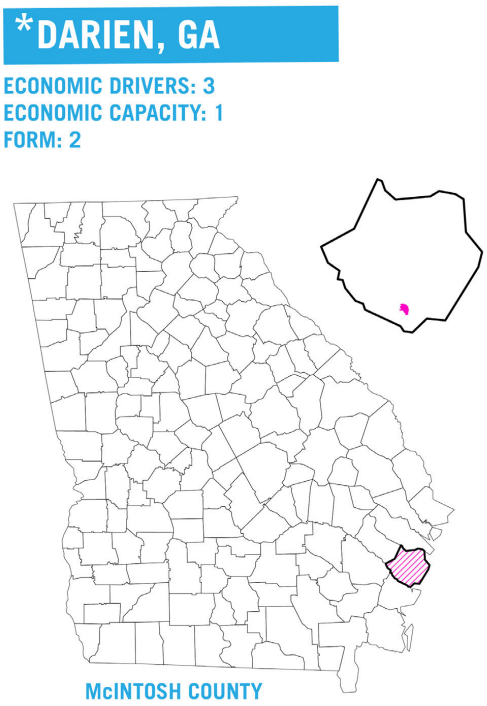


Figure 6.15 McIntosh County and Darien Boundaries

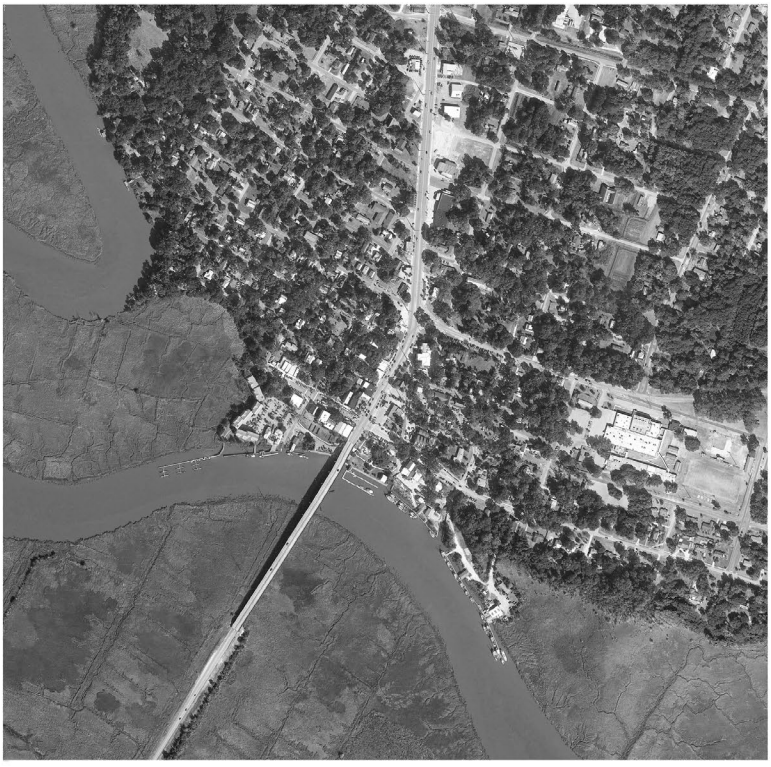


Figure 6.16 Darien Aerial

Table 6.8 Darien Economic Drivers

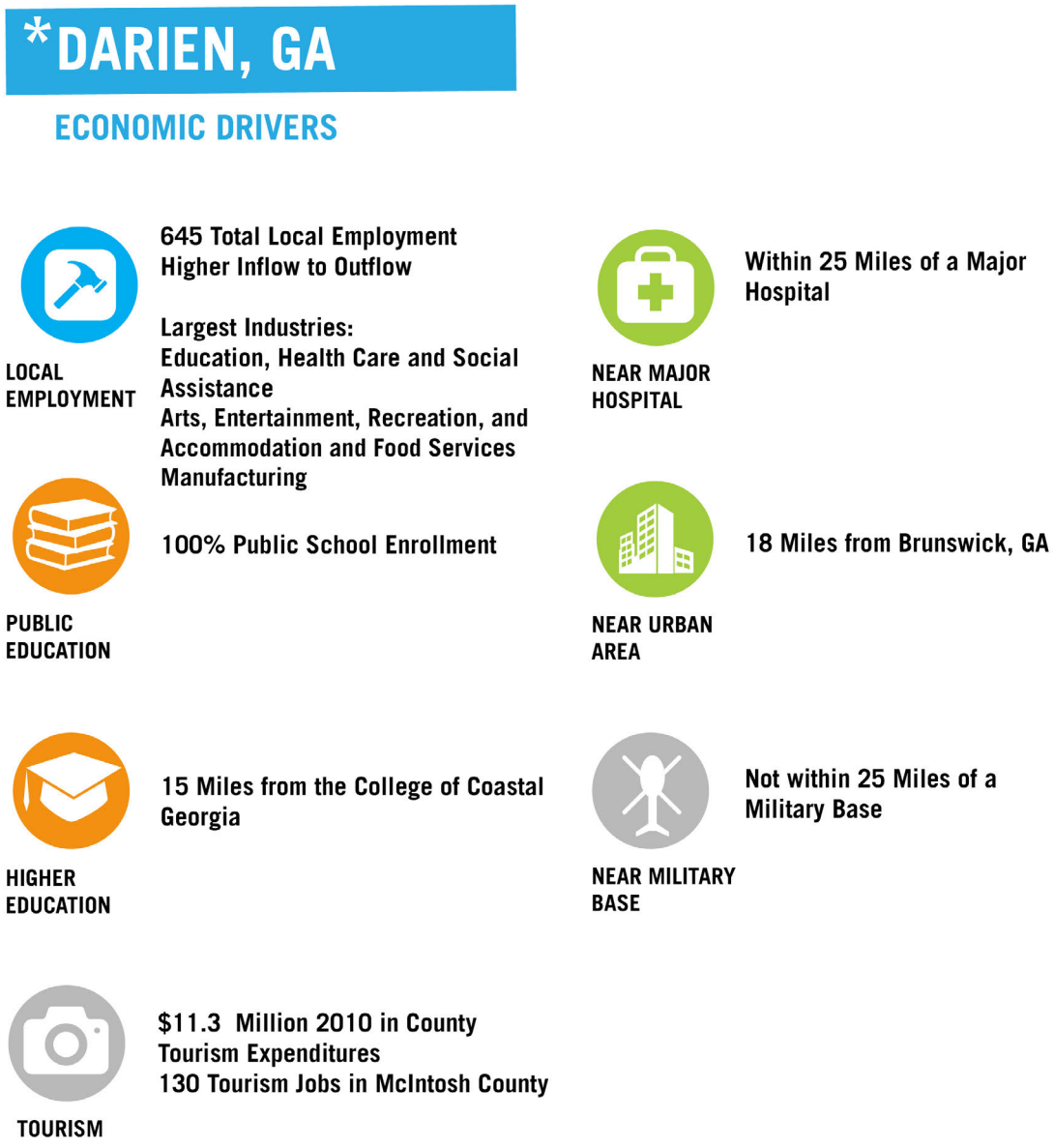


Table 6.9 Darien Economic Capacity and Leadership

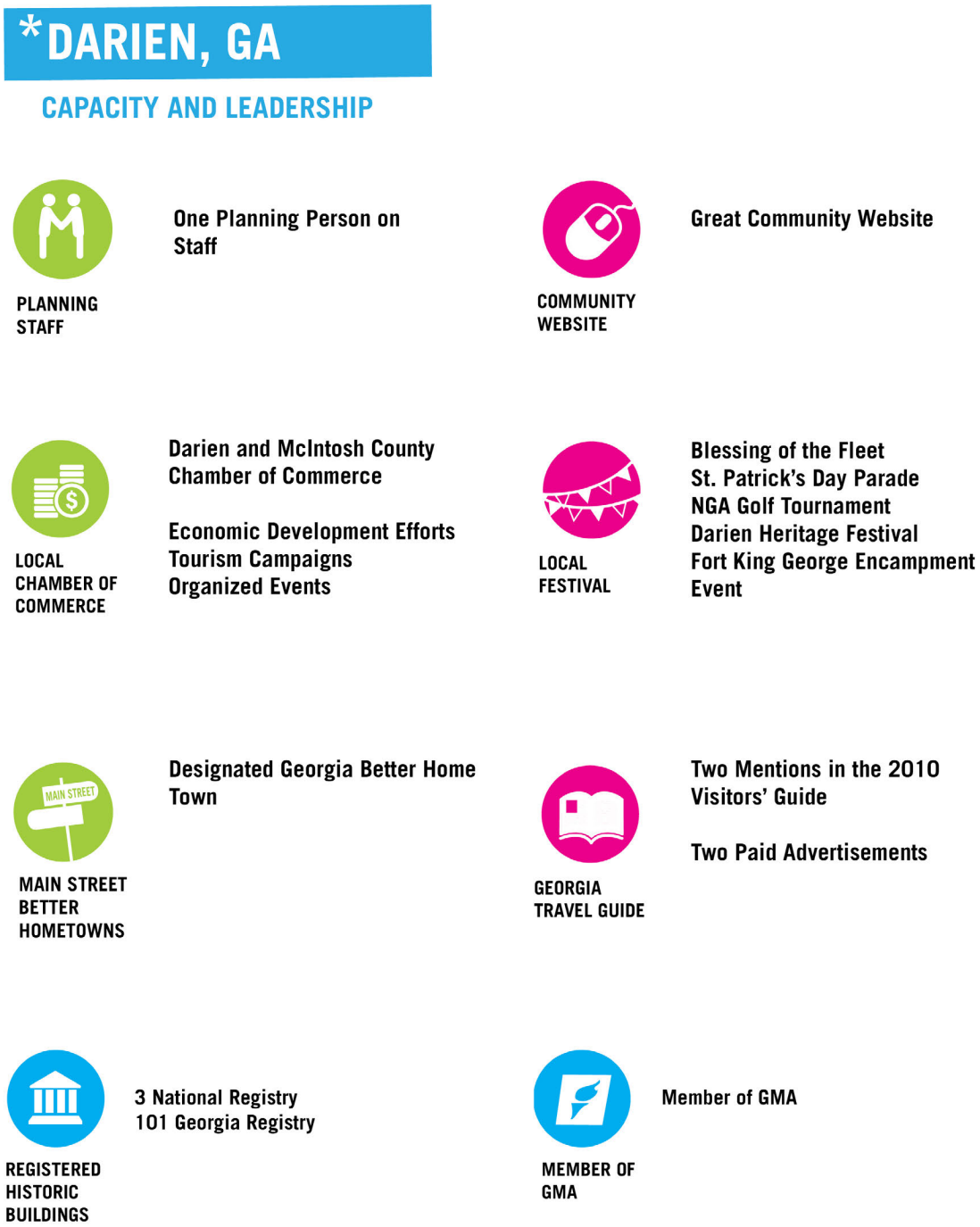


Figure 6.17 Darien Elevations

*DARIEN, GA

MORPHOLOGY AND FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS

HOUSING STOCK

HISTORIC CHURCHES

Figure 6.18 Darien Housing Stock and Public Buildings

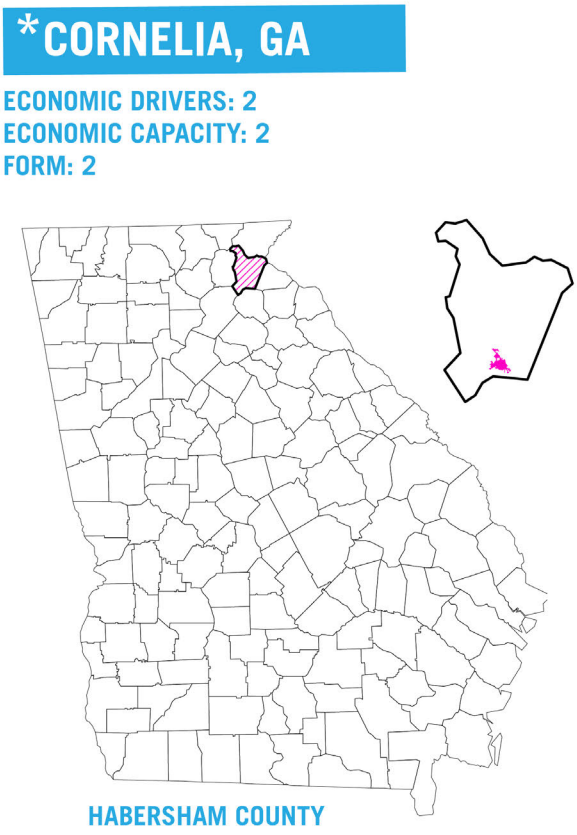


Figure 6.19 Habersham County and Cornelia Boundaries

Figure 6.20 Cornelia Aerial

Table 6.10 Cornelia Economic Drivers

Table 6.11 Cornelia Economic Capacity and Leadership

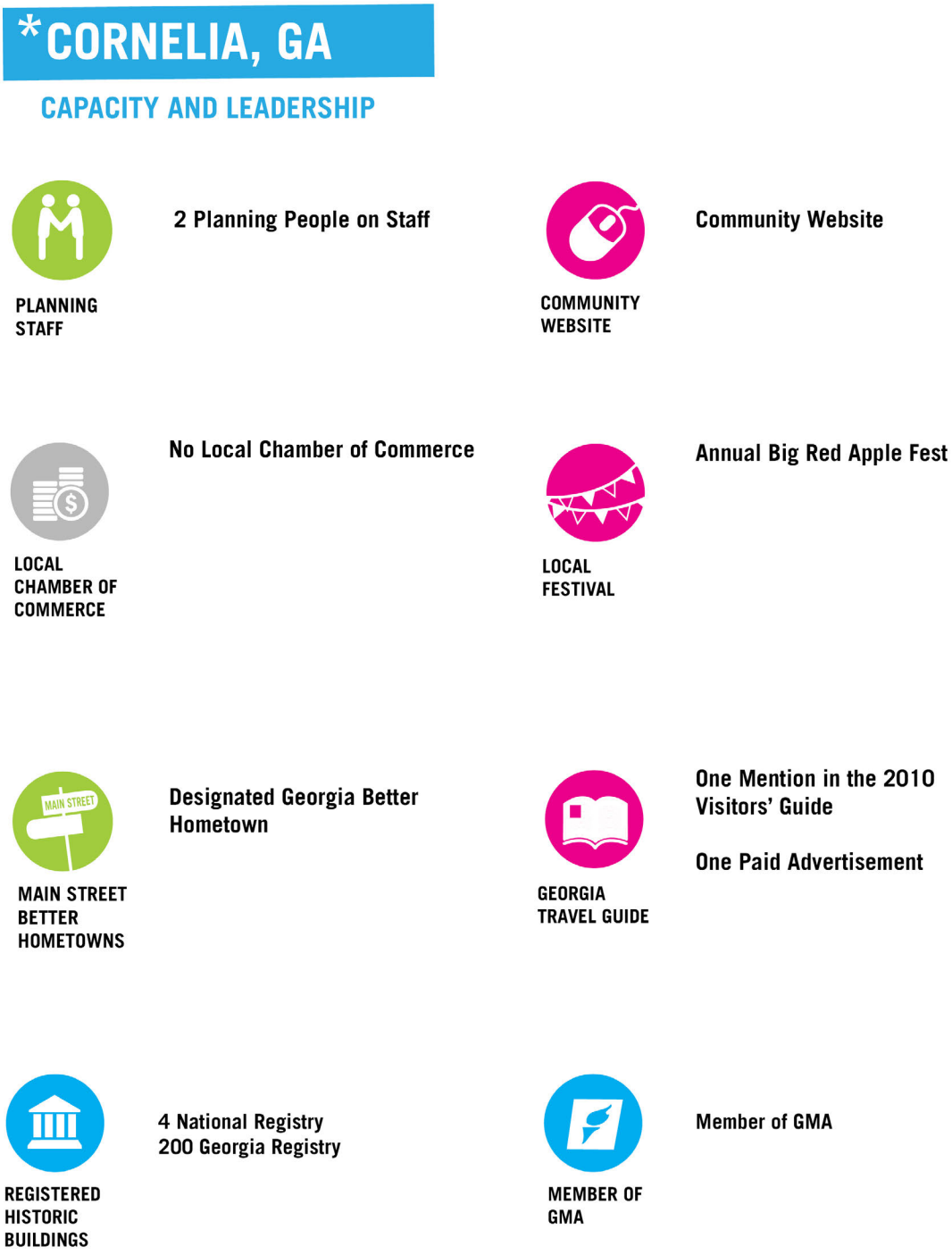


Figure 6.21 Cornelia Elevations

Figure 6.22 Cornelia Housing Stock and Public Buildings

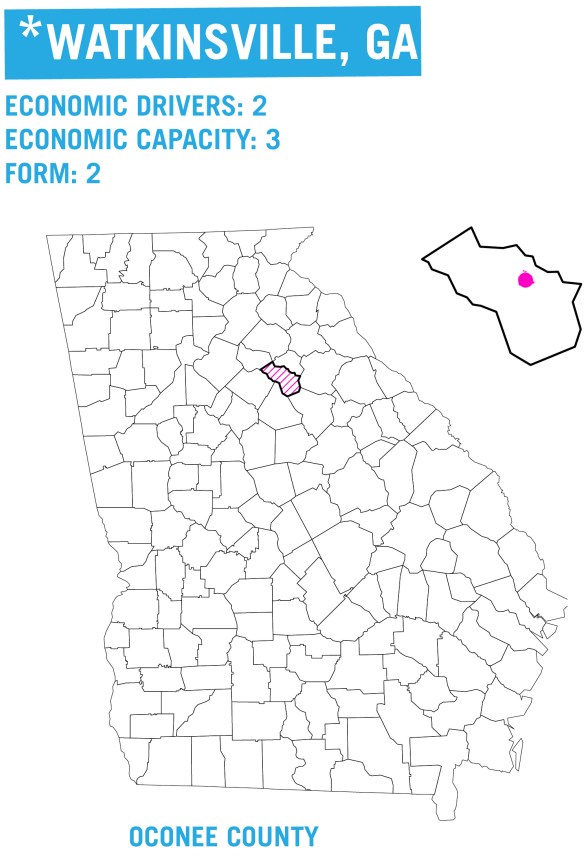


Figure 6.23 Oconee County and Watkinsville Boundaries

Figure 6.24 Watkinsville Aerial

Table 6.12 Watkinsville Economic Drivers

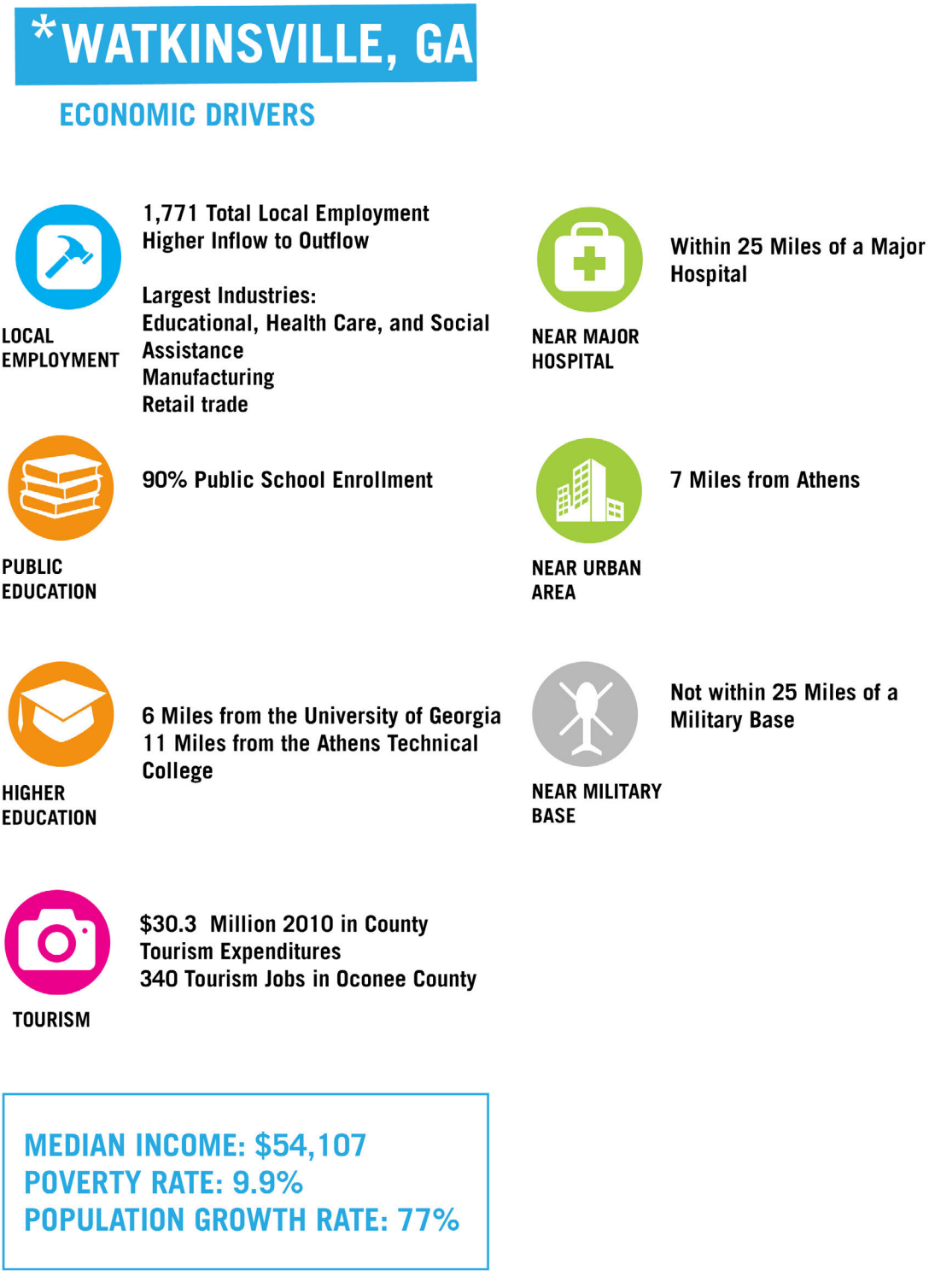


Table 6.13 Watkinsville Economic Capacity and Leadership

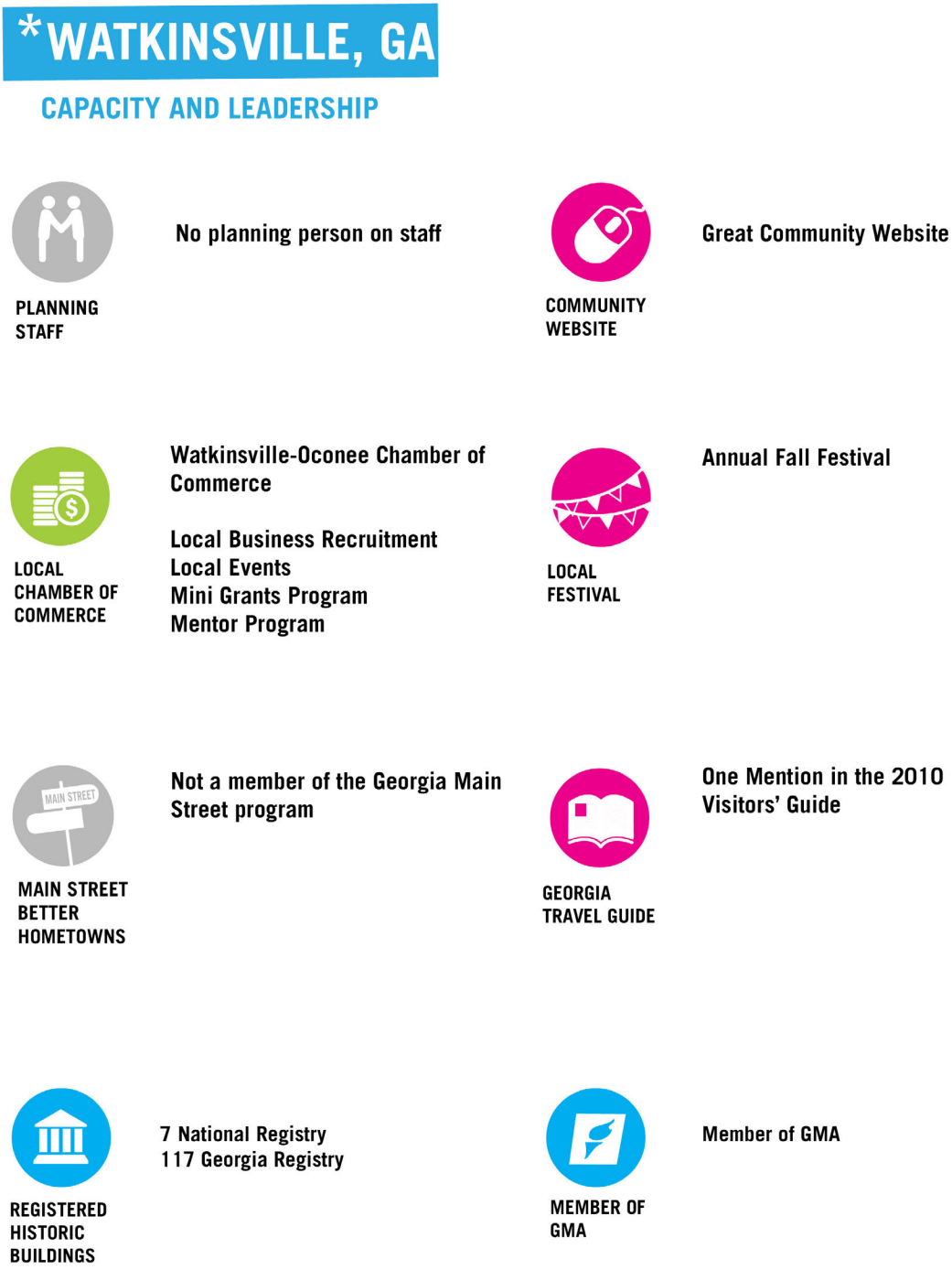


Figure 6.25 Watkinsville Elevations

Figure 6.26 Watkinsville Housing Stock and Public Buildings

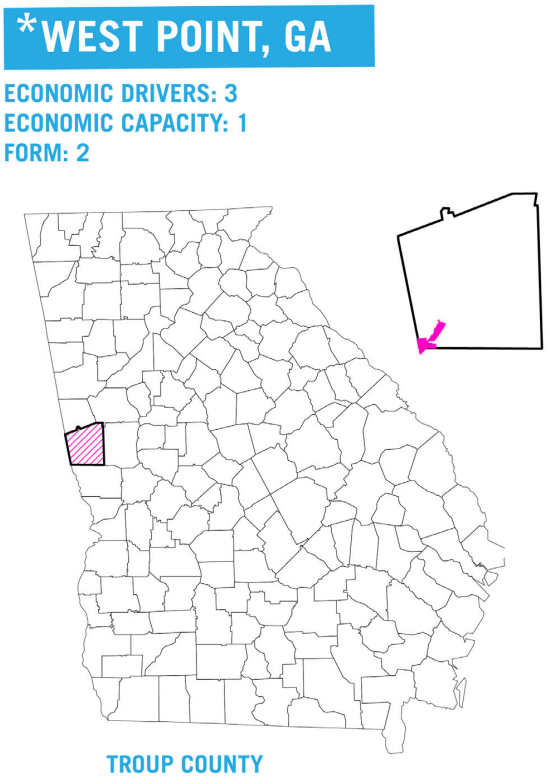
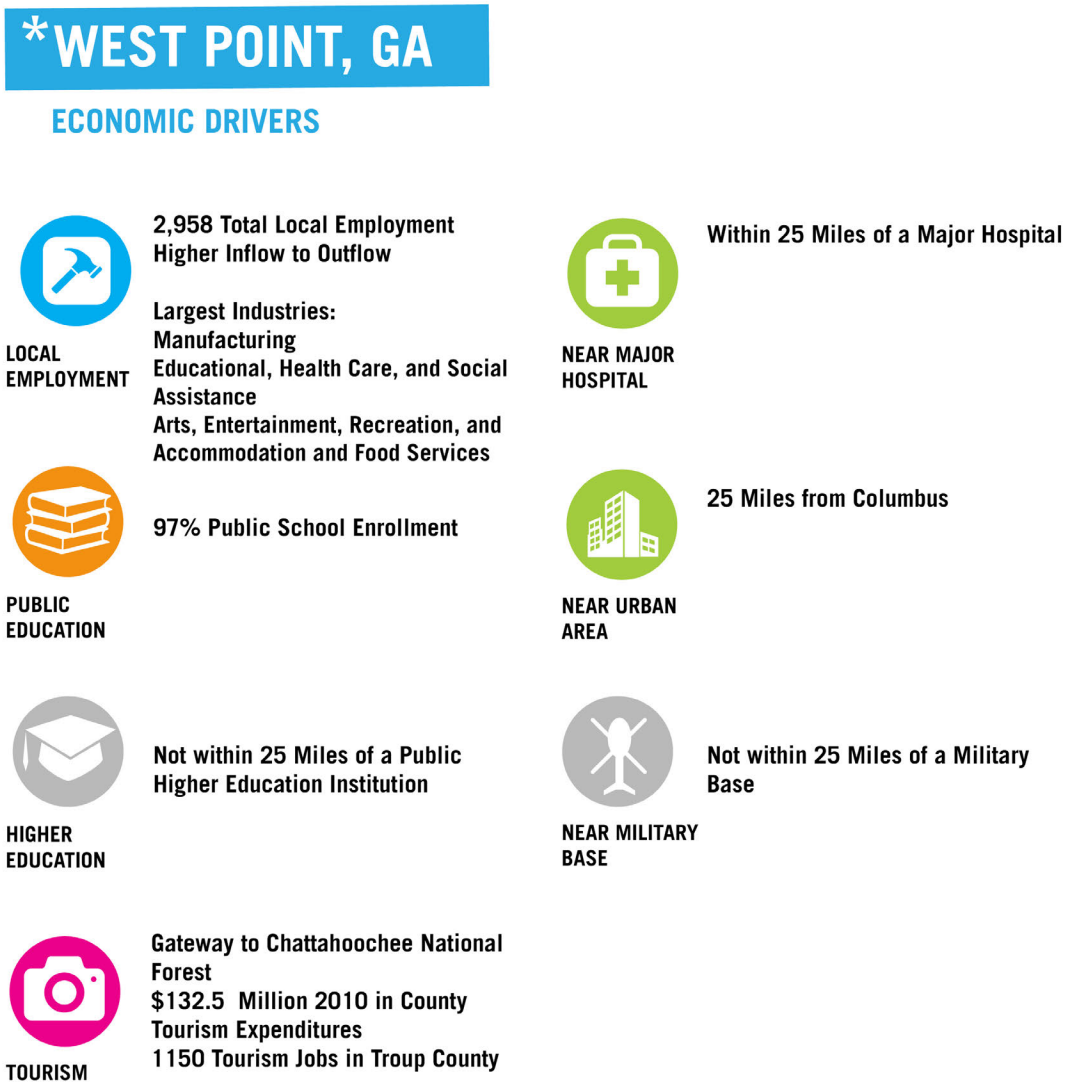


Figure 6.27 Troup County and West Point Boundaries

Figure 6.28 West Point Aerial

Table 6.14 West Point Economic Drivers



*Information included here is from 2010 data and may not fully reflect the impact of the Kia manufacturing Plant that opened in West Point in 2009.

Table 6.15 West Point Economic Capacity and Leadership

*WEST POINT, GA

CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP

PLANNING STAFF

Planning Person on Staff

COMMUNITY WEBSITE

Great Community Website

LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Greater Valley Area Chamber of Commerce -Multijusisdictional Chamber Combining Three Counties in Two States
West Point Historic Commission

Recruit Businesses and New Residents
Job Creation
Promotes Tourism

LOCAL FESTIVAL

West Point Winter Festival

MAIN STREET BETTER HOMETOWNS

Designated Georgia Better Hometown

GEORGIA TRAVEL GUIDE

One Mention in the 2010 Visitors' Guide

REGISTERED HISTORIC BUILDINGS

2 National Registry
8 Georgia Registry

MEMBER OF GMA

Member of GMA

Figure 6.29 West Point Elevations

Figure 6.30 West Point Housing Stock and Public Buildings

REFERENCES

"About Georgia Cities Foundation " 2014. Web. March 21, 2014 2014.

"City of Dahlonega." 2014. Web. March 2, 2014 2014.

"Port of Savannah's Growth Lies Overseas." *Savannah Morning News* 2008. Print.

Adler, T. "God Help the Shrimpers." *Food Arts* May 2009 2009. Print.

Authority, Dahlonega Downtown Development. "Http://Dahlonegadda.Org." 2009. Web. MArch 2, 2014 2014.

Blakely, Nancey Green Leigh and Edward. *Planning Local Economic Development* Fifth ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SagePulications, Inc. , 2013. Print.

Brown, William Morrish and Cathrine. *Planning to Stay*. United States: Design Center for American Urban Landscapes, 1994. Print.

2010 Percent Urban and Rural by State. 2010.

Bureau, U.S. Census. "Inflow/Outflow Data ". Ed. http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/index.html2010. Print.

---. "Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000." Ed. Commerce, U.S. Department of2000. Print.

---. "U.S. Census 2010." 2010. Print.

City of Madison, Georgia "About Madison Georgia " 2013. Web. March 2, 2013 2014.

Commerce. "History of Blue Ridge and Fannin County." Fannin County Chamber of Commerce 2012. Web. May 5, 2014.

Commerce, Dahlonega-Lumokin County Chamber of. "The Chamber Dahlonega, Ga." 2012. Web. March 2, 2014 2014.

Commerce, Greater Valley Chamber of. "Economic Development, West Point Georgia " 2014. Web. March 2, 1024 2014.

Commerce, Madison-Morgan Chamber of. "Morgan County Incentives." 2012. Web. March 2, 2014 2014.

Commission, Atlanta Regional. *Regional Snapshot: 2012 Atlanta Region Population*. Atlanta 2012. Print.

Culpepper, Mayor Bobby. Interview by Riley, R. Dawn. "Interview in Harlem, Ga with Myor Booby Culpepper." July 11, 2013 2013.

Dablanc, Laetitia and Catherine Ross. "Atlanta: A Mega Logistics Center in the Piedmont Atlantic Megaregion (Pam)." *Journal of Transport Geography* 24 (2012): 243-442. Print.

Dagenhart, Richard. "Building Projects Versus Building Cities " *Places*.10 (2) (1996). Print.

Darien, City of. "City of Darien Georgia." 2008. Web. March 2, 2014 2014.

Davis, Donald Edward. "Enviromental History of Georgia Mountains " *New Georgia Encyclopedia* Ed. Staff, NGE2004. Print.

Division, Georgia Department of Economic Development: Tourism. "2010 Tourism Dataset " 2010. Print.

Estimates, American Community Survey 5-year. "Selected Social Characteristics " 2010. Print.

Florida, Richard. *Who's Your City?* New York Basic Books, 2008. Print.

Georgia Department of Economic Development, Tourism Division "Georgia Travel Guide." Atlanta Atlanta Magazine Custom Media, 2014. Print.

Gretchen Corbin, Commissioner. "Georgia County Tax Credits." Ed. Affairs, Department of Communtiy2013. Print.
Heritage, Morgan County. "Madison." 2014. Web. May 14, 2014.
Jacobs, Allan B. *Making Great Streets*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993. Print.
Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* New York: Modern Library, 1961. Print.
Lambe, Will. *Small Towns, Big Ideas: Case Studies in Small Community Economic Development* Chapel Hill, NC: Community and Economic Development Program, School of Government, University of North Carolina, 2008. Print.
Parrish, Billy. Interview by Riley, Dawn. *Georgia Main Street.* 2013.
Point, City of West. "About the City of West Point Georgia " 2012. Web. March 2, 2014 2014.
Rangwala, Kaizer. "Placed-Based Economy " *Economic Development Journal* 9.1 (2010): 42-47. Print.
Read, Ann. *Asset-Based Economic Development and Building Sustainable Rural Communities: Industry and Industry Cluster*: International City/County Management Association 2012. Print.
Regents, Georgia Board of. "Universities Systems of Georgia " 2014. Web. March 10, 2014.
Resources, Georgia Department of Natural. "Dahlonega Gold Museum Historic Site." 2014. Web. May 14, 2014 2014.
---. "Georgia National, Archaeological, and Hostoric Resources Gis." Trans. Resources, Georgia Department of Natural. GNAHRGIS, 2013. Print.
Roth, Darlene R. "Georgia Community Development and Morphology of Community Types." Ed. Section, Historic Preservation. Georiga Georgia Department of Natural Resources 1989. Print.
Sears, Joan Niles. *The First Hundred Years Od Town Planning in Georgia*. Atlanta Cherokee Publishing Company, 1979. Print.
Service, National Park. "National Register of Historic Places Program: Fundamentals " 2014. Web.
Sheer, Brenda Case. "The Anatomy of Sprawl." *Places*.14(2) (2001): 29-37. Print.
Society, Jasper County Historical. *The History of Jasper County*1997. Print.
Spratt, Kelly. Interview by Riley, Dawn. "Interview with Former Darien Mayor and Mcintosh County Commissioner-at-Large, Kelly Sprat." August 24, 2013 2013.
Sullivan, Buddy. "Darien " *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (2013). Web. 02/20/2014.
Survey, American Community. "Selected Economic Characteristics " Rev. of Georgia Ed. Bureau, U.S. Census2006-2010. Print.
Trust, The Georgia. "About the Georgia Trust " 2014. Web. March 20, 2014
Walker, Philip L. *Downtown Planning for Smaller and Midsized Communities* Chicago American Planning Association 2009. Print.
Weiman, David F. "Urban Growth in the Periphery of the Antebellum Cotton Belt: Atlanta, 1847-1860." *Journal of Economic History* 48.2 (1988): 259-72. Print.
Word, Joshua. "Georgia Tech: The Evolution of an American Campus." Georgia Institute of Technology 2012. Print.