



PUBLIC WORKSHOP

06/26/2025

1 Introduction

2 What Has Been Done?

3 Where We Are

**4 Where We Are
Going**



AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

Project Team



Jan Watson-Greer
Downtown Development Director

Christine Tucker
DDA Chair



Sharyn Dickerson
City Manager



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Lead Designer, HQ

Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

DDA BOARD MEMBERS

Christine Tucker
City Council

Dan Elder
Service - Oconee Well Drillers

Paul Lancaster
Office - Law firm

Mellony Adkins
Restaurant- Chops & Hops

Robert Griffith
Retail - Golden Pantry

Erika Pfluke
Retail - Bird & Brass

Brock Toole
Special Events Facility - Satisfied Properties

WHAT IS THE DDA?

The DDA is a dependent component of the City of Watkinsville with a Director that serves the DDA Board, but who is a fulltime city employee and reports to the City Manager.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

DDA MISSION

*The DDA is to serve as an advocate for **economic growth and vitality** while engaging community members and guests to come, connect, and create.*

DDA VISION

*Downtown Watkinsville is a vibrant center for Oconee County with a mixture of businesses, service, parks, residences, restaurants, and venues for the arts. A place where people can truly **come, connect, and create.***



Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

The DDA also serves to:

- Promote quality development within the Downtown District.
- Plan and implement events to draw visitors to downtown Watkinsville to promote economic vitality and community.
- Promote downtown Watkinsville as a great place, to live, work, play, and pray.
- Ensure downtown Watkinsville is inviting, by maintaining historic and small-town aesthetic:
 - Streetscape projects, to include historic lamp posts, landscaping, banners, way-finding signs, other signage, etc.
 - Maintain community gathering spaces
 - Support creation of a Historic Preservation Committee
- Ensure diversity in funding sources to achieve long term goals.



Project Introduction

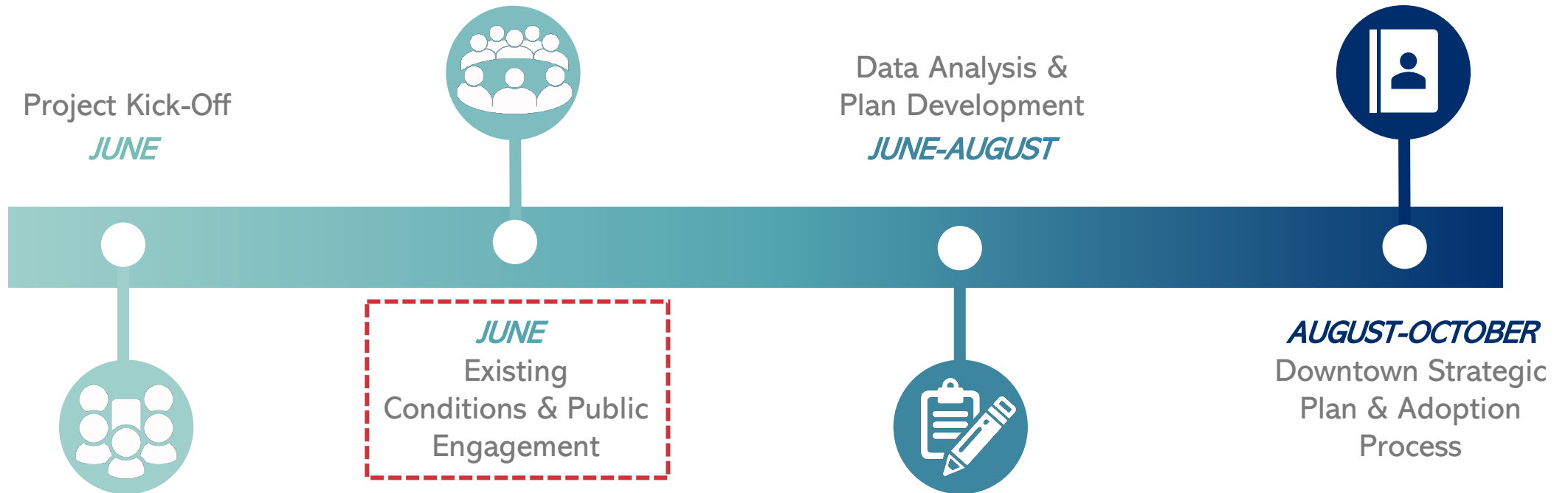
What is a Downtown Strategic Plan?

A document designed to guide the future actions of the DDA for the next 3 to 5 years. It will support the DDA's mission for the redevelopment and revitalization of Downtown Watkinsville, while preserving the area's character.

The Downtown Strategic Plan also serves to:

- Help residents identify their vision for the future of the community
- Coordinate local decision making
- Provide guidance to business owners and developers to help attract more economic activity

Timeline



What Do We Want to Know?

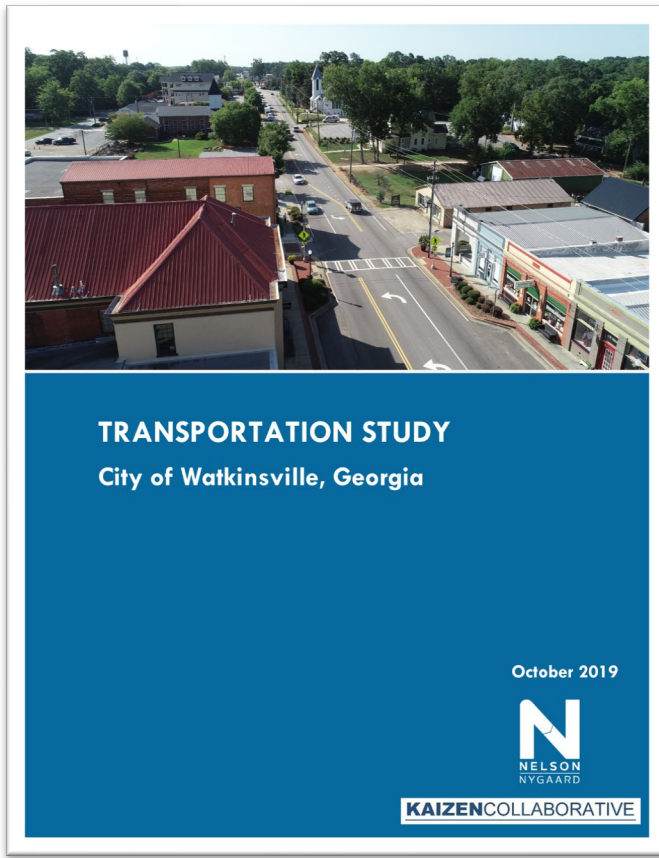
- A Community Visual Preferences
- B Community Idea Wall
- C Areas of Interest
- D Budget Priorities
- E Any Additional Comments

**WHAT HAS
BEEN DONE
PREVIOUSLY?**

What Has Been Done Previously?

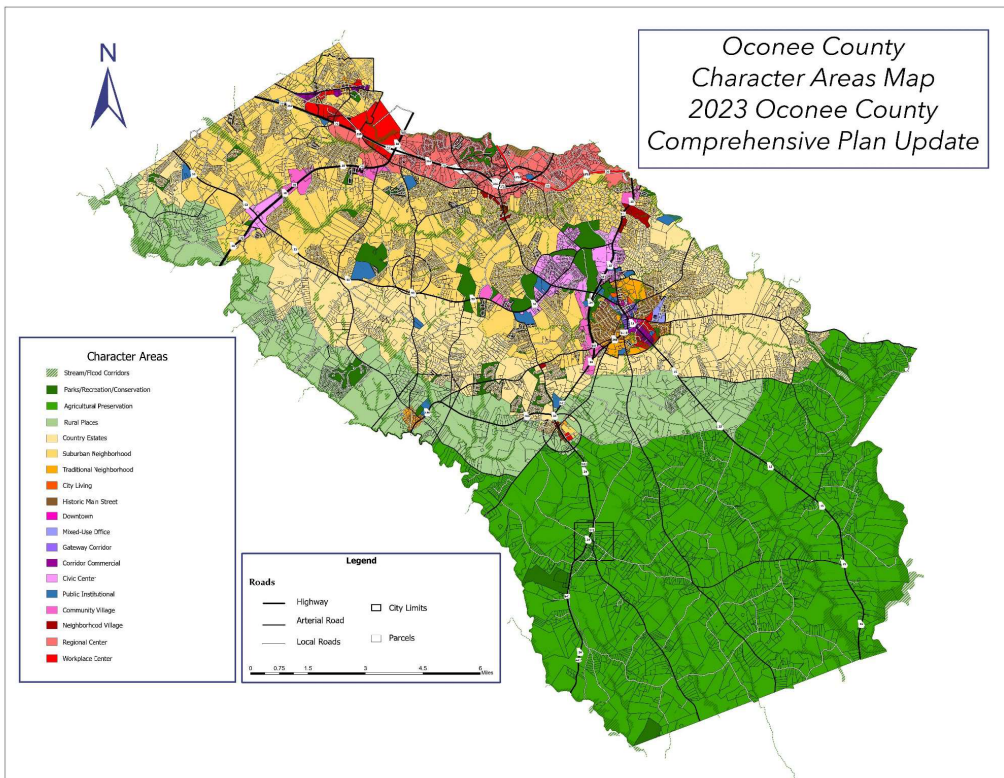
Transportation Study

- Transportation Study was adopted in October 2019.
- Additional changes have been made after adoption.
- The objectives included:
 - Identifying improvements to safety and connectivity throughout the City.
 - Diversifying modes of transport and increasing accessibility by creating multi-modal pathways.
- Recommendations included, but were not limited to:
 - Proposing new sidewalks throughout the downtown area.
 - Creating car- and people-oriented connectors, such as those to Thomas Farm Preserve.



What Has Been Done Previously?

OCONEE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



2023 UPDATE

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Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive Plan Update was adopted in June 2023.

The plan serves as a:

- Guide for local-decision making, to help communities balance economic development and "small town" character.
- Basis for regulatory actions and maintaining consistency throughout the County.

Include the following key actions:

- Character Area Categories/FLUM (Future Land Use Map)
- Watkinsville Community Work Plan

Previous Engagement Workshop

Top Priorities for Participants



Pedestrian Experience



Greenspace Improvements & Expansion



Beautification Initiatives & Design



Historic Preservation & Authenticity

Participant Ideas



Food & Retail



Community Events



Building Restoration



Intact Historic Facade

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY DOWNTOWN WATKINSVILLE 2022 STRATEGIC WORK PLAN



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[Need for Planning](#)

[Findings](#)

[Process for Planning](#)

[Vision](#)

[The Strategic Work Plan](#)

WHERE WE ARE

Demographics

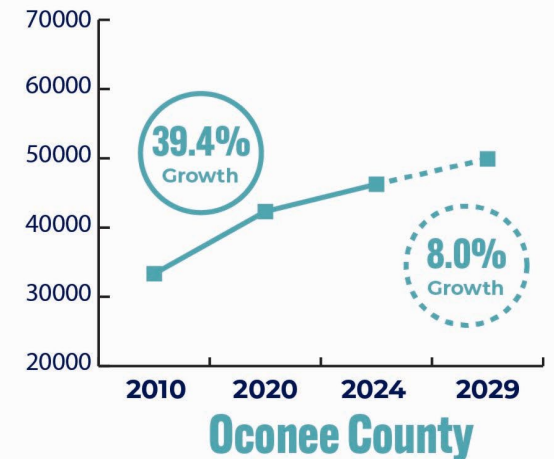
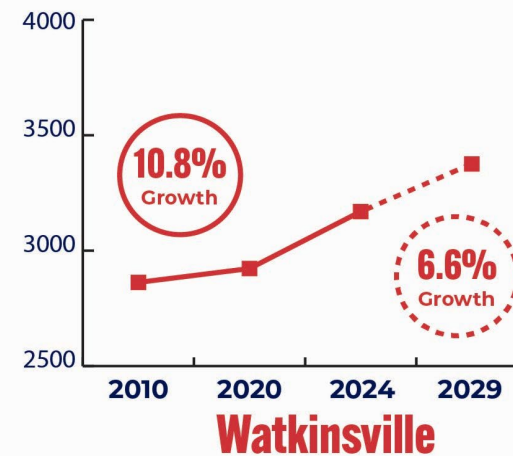
Population

- **Since 2010, Watkinsville's population has increased by 10.8% to reach 3,143 residents in 2024.**
- Oconee County has seen a very large increase in population over the past fourteen years, adding over 12,000 residents, and outpacing both the City and MSA growth.
- Watkinsville has a relatively young population, with a median age of 40.6.
- **Children under the age of 14 represent the largest age group, comprising 20.4% of the city's 2024 population.**
- The second-largest group includes middle-aged residents between 45 and 54 years old.
- Both young adults and seniors have seen slight increases in their population shares in recent years.

Total Population Change and Projected, 2010-2029

Data Source: ESRI, 2025

Total Population Change, 2010-2024	2010	2020	2024	Δ 2010-2024	
				Count	%
City of Watkinsville	2,836	2,896	3,143	307	10.8%
Oconee County	32,808	41,799	45,736	12,928	39.4%
Athens-Clarke-MSA	192,574	215,415	224,497	31,923	16.6%



Demographics

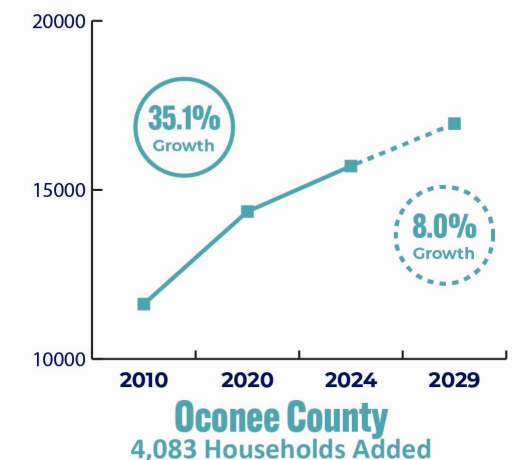
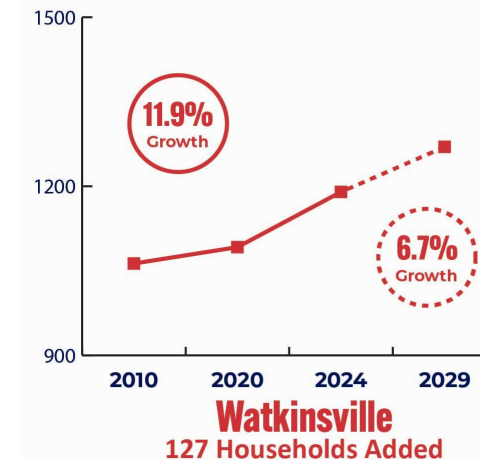
Households

- Since 2010, households in Watkinsville have increased by 11.9% to reach 1,190 households in 2024.
- Oconee County has seen a very large increase in households over the past fourteen years, adding over 4,000 households, and outpacing both the City and MSA growth.

Total Household Change and Projected, 2010-2029

Data Source: ESRI, 2025z

Total Household Change, 2010-2024	2010	2020	2024	Δ 2010-2024	
				Count	%
City of Watkinsville	1,063	1,092	1,190	127	11.9%
Oconee County	11,622	14,360	15,705	4,083	35.1%
Athens-Clarke-MSA	73,204	83,071	87,455	14,251	19.5%



Demographics

Household Size

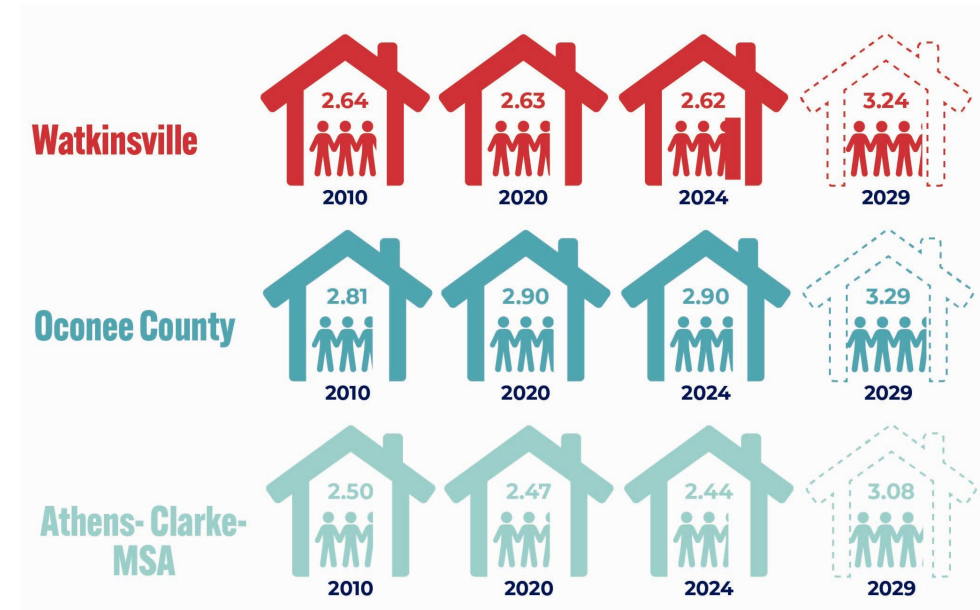
- The average household size in the City of Watkinsville is smaller than Oconee County's but slightly larger than the MSA's.
- **The presence of larger households and a significant number of children under age 14 suggests that Watkinsville attracts families and reflects family-oriented development patterns.**
- Tapestry data from ESRI Business Analyst classifies residents of Watkinsville into the two tapestry segments of Middleburg & Workday Drive. See table below with more demographic information:

	Middleburg	Workday Drive
Characteristics	• Families living in semirural subdivisions beyond large metropolitan cities. • Majority of residents in this tapestry have a high school diploma or some college education. • High labor force participation. • Traditional values – faith, country, and family. • Prefer to buy American goods.	• Affluent, family-oriented market within a more country/rural setting. • Residents prefer to new housing away from the busy city, but close enough to commute to professional job centers. • High education and high labor force participation.
Spending	• Family-oriented spending. • Entertainment: TV and movie rentals or theme parks and family restaurants. • DIY projects. • Sports include hunting, fishing, bowling, and baseball.	• Family-oriented spending and activities. • Entertainment: TV, movie purchases or rentals, children's apparel and toys, and visits to theme parks or zoos. • Outdoor activities and sports – bicycling, jogging, golfing, and boating.

Data Source: ESRI, 2025

Average Household Size and Projected Size, 2010-2029

Data Source: ESRI, 2025



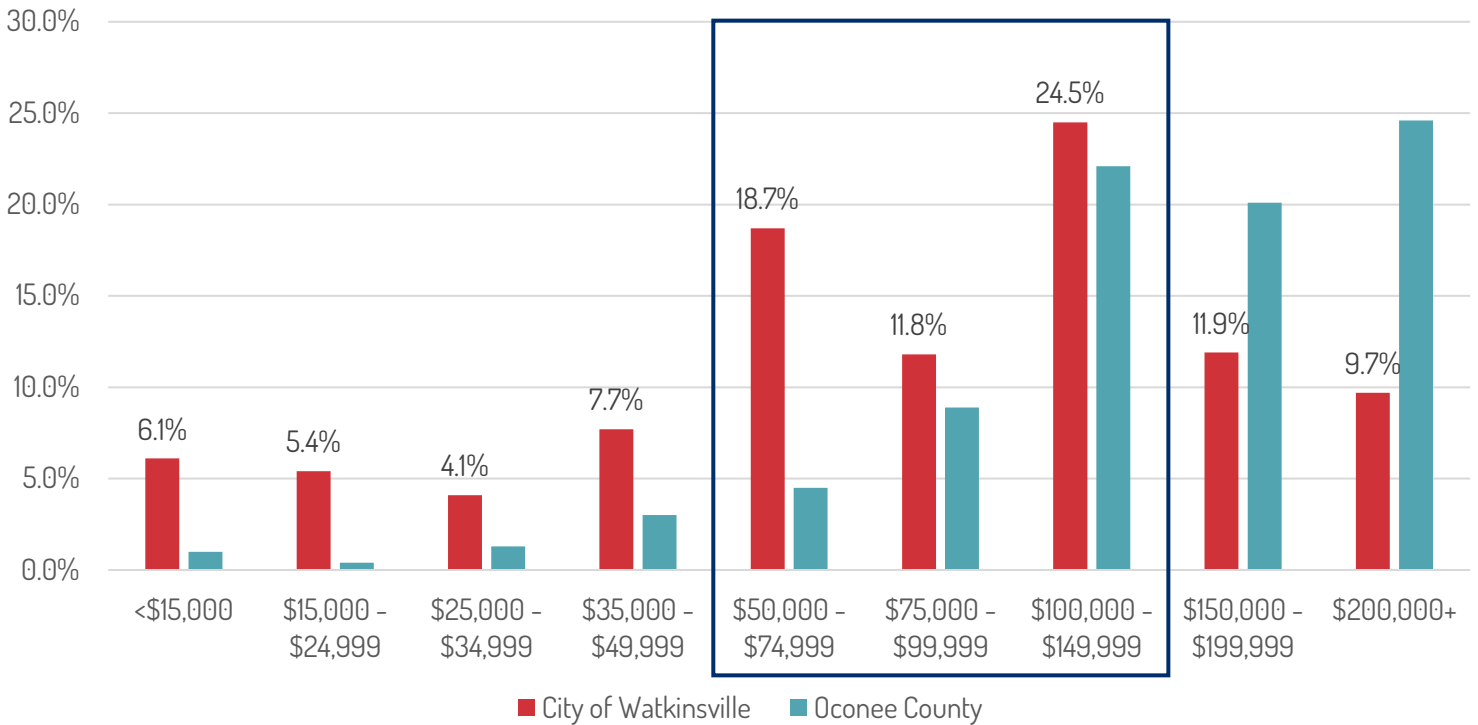
Demographics

Household Income

- **The median household income in the City of Watkinsville is \$90,178, which is much higher than the MSA, as well as national trends.**
- **55.0% of Watkinsville residents earn from \$50K to \$150K.**
- Oconee is one of the wealthiest counties in Georgia, and the median household income is \$120,381.
- Both the city and the county are projected to experience increases in median household income in the coming years.
- Because Watkinsville is the county seat of Oconee County, the majority of residents work in public administration positions. There are also a significant number of people that work in service, manufacturing, construction, and educational fields.

Households by Income, 2024

Data Source: ESRI, 2025



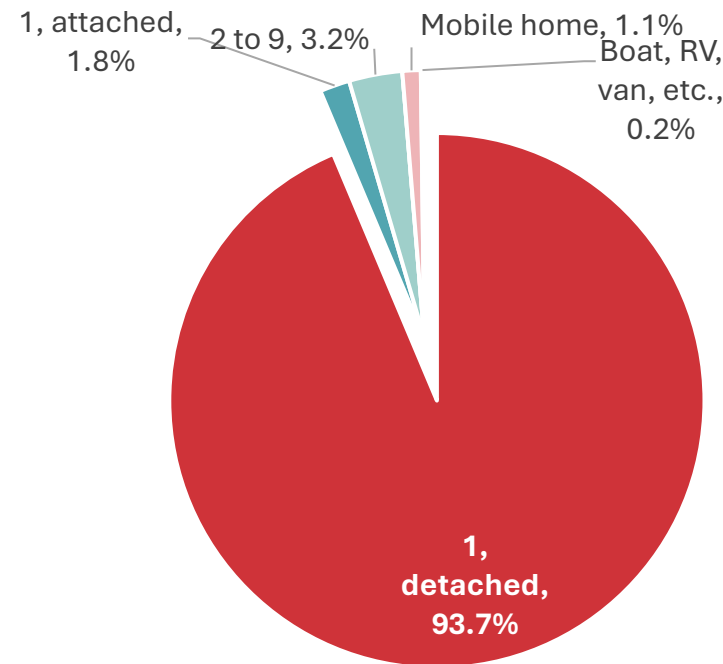
Demographics

Housing Stock

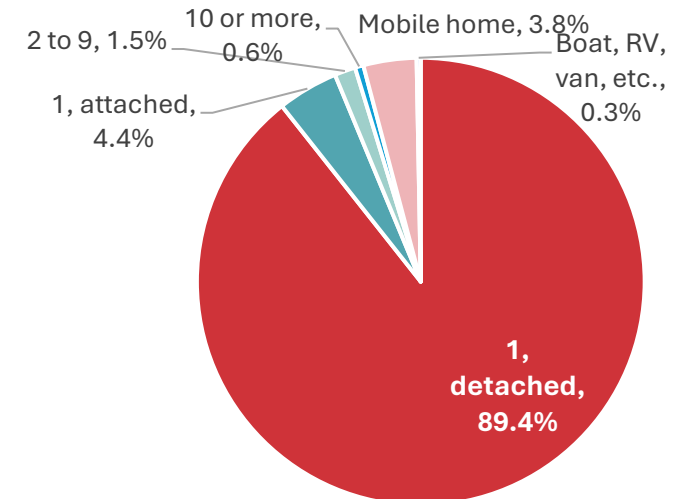
- The majority of Watkinsville's housing stock consists of single-family homes. There is a smaller share of townhomes, small multi-unit buildings (2 to 9 units), mobile homes, and alternative housing such as boats, RVs, or vans.
- Oconee County has a similar housing mix but includes a slightly higher proportion of townhomes, large apartment buildings (10+ units), and alternative housing types.

Housing Stock by Type, 2024

Data Source: ESRI, 2025



City of Watkinsville



Oconee County

Downtown Conditions

- **Watkinsville's downtown corridor features a mix of commercial spaces, including retail shops, restaurants, and general services such as banking.**
- The historic Main Street features small-scale retail and office spaces designed to be pedestrian-oriented. Despite this, the current pedestrian experience is often uncomfortable and unpleasant due to fragmented and narrow sidewalks, a lack of landscape medians, and challenging intersections.
- **Recent developments like Wire Park reflect a growing interest in mixed-use projects that combine retail, office, and residential spaces—offering a more integrated and dynamic environment for residents and visitors alike.**
- Other notable employers and cultural spaces downtown include Oconee State Bank, the Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation, and locally- owned shops like Empire South.
- Numerous parks and existing pedestrian infrastructure create a strong network of public spaces throughout the City of Watkinsville.
 - These areas serve as valuable nodes and links that can be further expanded upon to enhance overall community connectivity and pedestrian safety.
 - Of particular importance are Harris Shoals Park, Rocket Field, and the Thomas Farm Preserve. These parks offer recreational opportunities alongside public programming such as sports events and festivals, presenting an opportunity to integrate green corridors with surrounding neighborhoods.

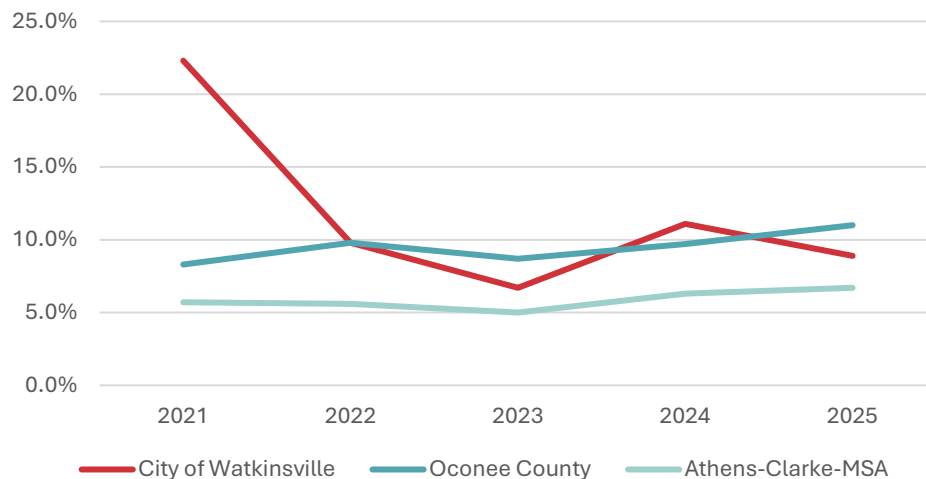
Downtown Conditions

Office

- **After the COVID-19 pandemic, the office market in Watkinsville has recovered and is performing well.**
- Vacancy rates have fallen and are currently lower than the County's.
- The rent per square foot peaked in 2023 at \$30.90 and is now hovering just below the County and the MSA. This is most likely due to having an aging office product in the market.
- The majority of existing office space (70%) was built in the 1960s, with additional buildings constructed between the 1980s and early 2000s.
- **The Oconee State Bank Corporate Headquarters building was delivered in 2021, adding 12,752 square feet of office space to the market that was absorbed into the market.**

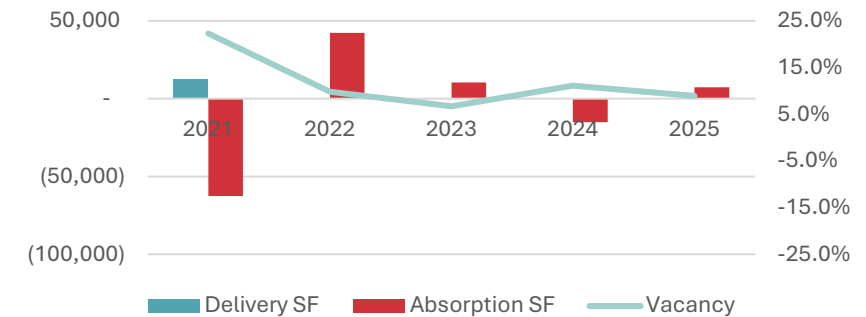
Vacancy Rate Comparison, 2021-2025

Data Source: CoStar, 2025



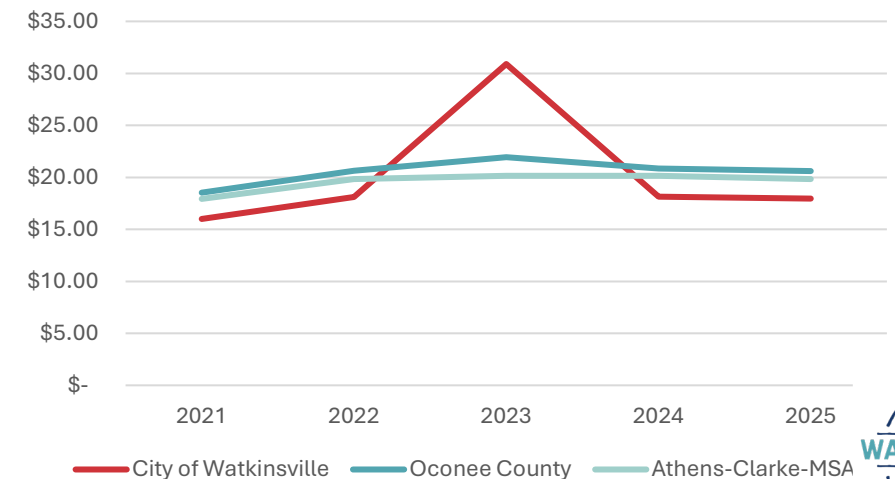
Watkinsville Office Deliveries and Absorption, 2021-2025

Data Source: CoStar, 2025



Rent per Square Foot Comparison, 2021-2025

Data Source: CoStar, 2025



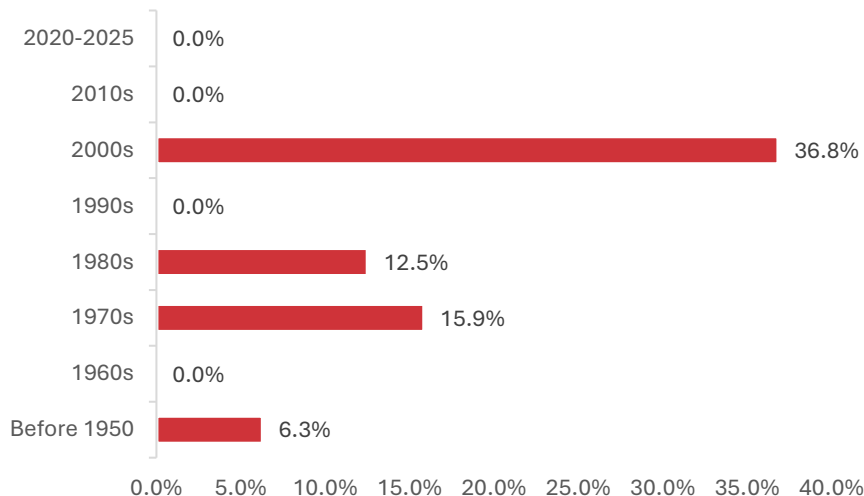
Downtown Conditions

Retail

- **Watkinsville has approximately 91,895 square feet of retail space across 18 buildings, with an average year built of 1963 - though most of the space was constructed in the early 2000s.**
- Retail vacancy remains low and stable, with spaces typically absorbed quickly when leases end or vacancies arise.
- The retail vacancy rate is below that of the County and MSA.
- Retail rent per square footage was not available.

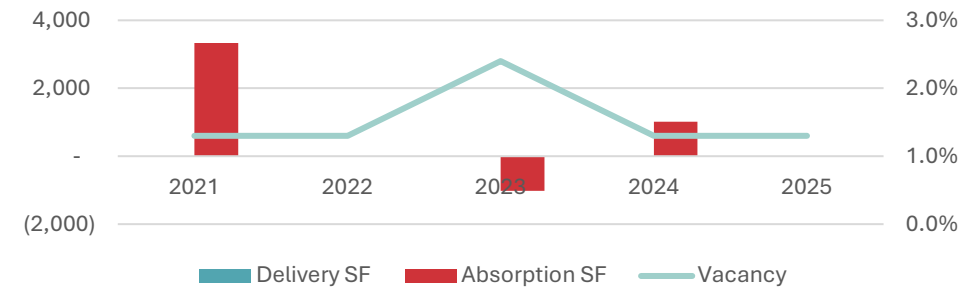
City of Watkinsville Retail Stock by Year Built

Data Source: CoStar, 2025



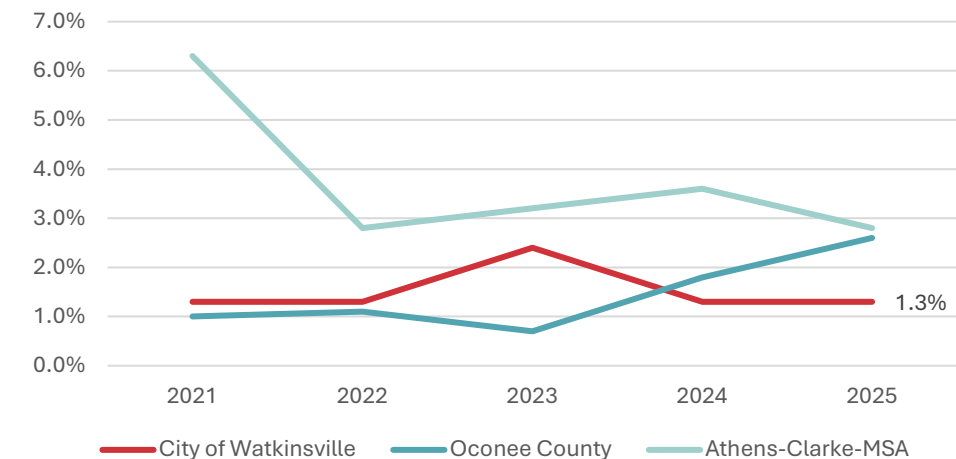
Watkinsville Retail Deliveries and Absorption, 2021-2025

Data Source: CoStar, 2025



Vacancy Rate Comparison, 2021-2025

Data Source: CoStar, 2025



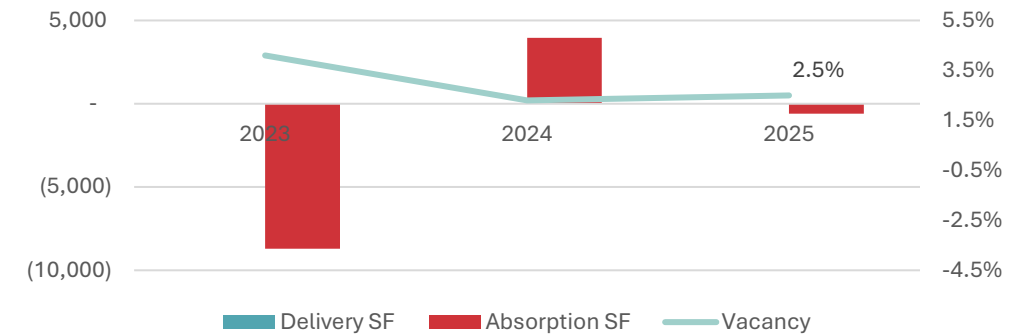
Downtown Conditions

Industrial/Flex

- **Watkinsville has approximately 209,816 square feet of industrial/flex space across 26 buildings.**
- The average year built is 1995 with most of the space built in the early 2000s.
- **Industrial/Flex vacancy was reported for the last three years hovering just over 2.0%, very closely aligned with the MSA.**
- There are no proposed industrial/flex buildings within the City.
- Rent per square foot was not reported for industrial/flex.

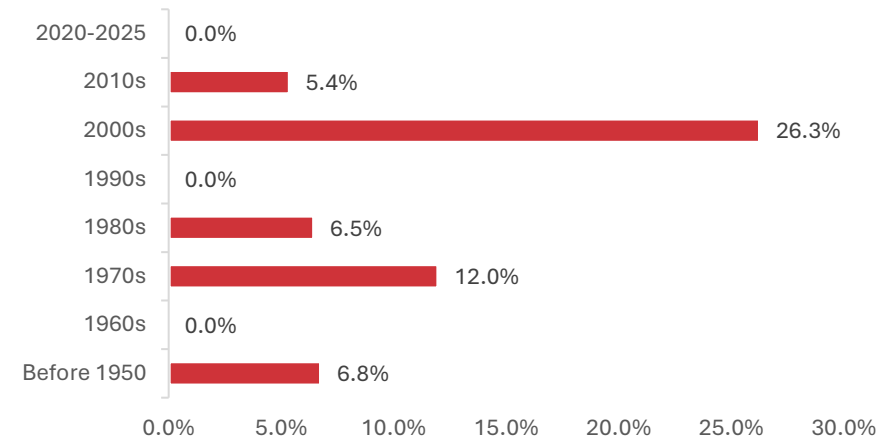
Watkinsville Industrial/Flex Deliveries and Absorption, 2023-2025

Data Source: CoStar, 2025



City of Watkinsville Industrial/Flex Stock by Year Built

Data Source: CoStar, 2025



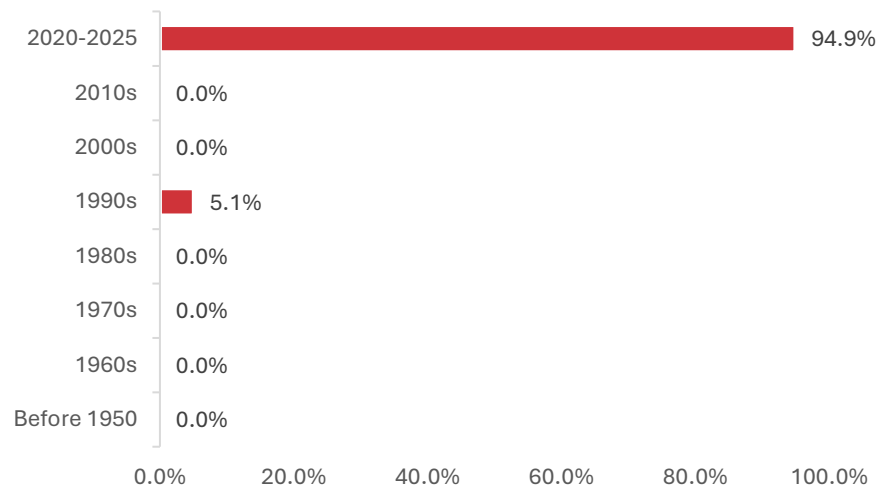
Downtown Conditions

Multifamily

- **Within Watkinsville, there are three multifamily buildings with 158 units.**
- The majority of the units were delivered in the past five years.
- **The multifamily market has a premium on product and cost within the City limits in comparison to the County and MSA.**

City of Watkinsville Multifamily Stock by Year Built

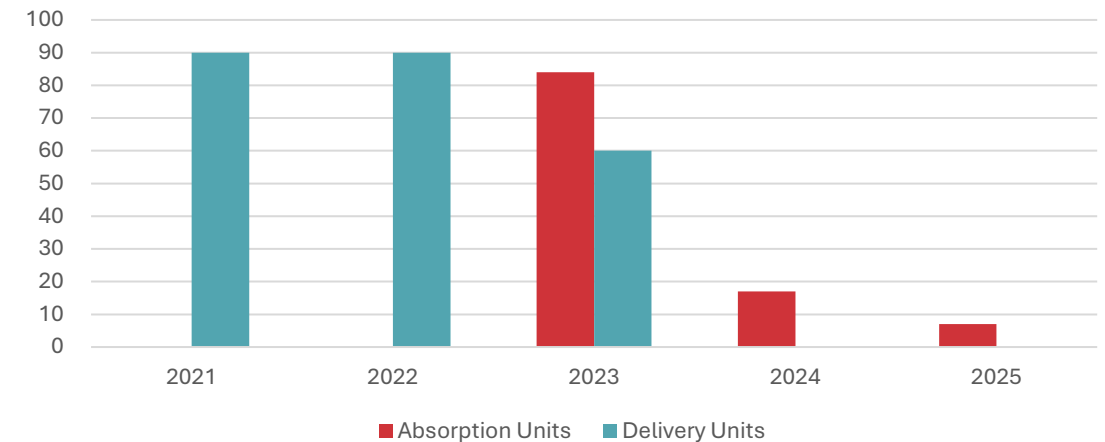
Data Source: CoStar, 2025



* CoStar did not report on the new multifamily units being built behind the Oconee State Bank.

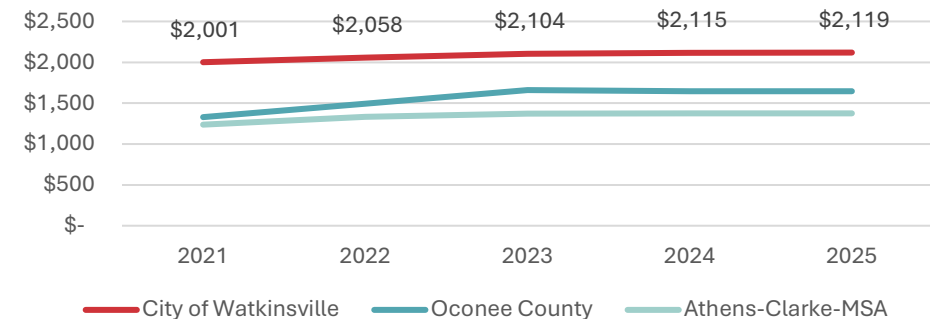
Watkinsville Multifamily Deliveries and Absorption, 2021-2025

Data Source: CoStar, 2025

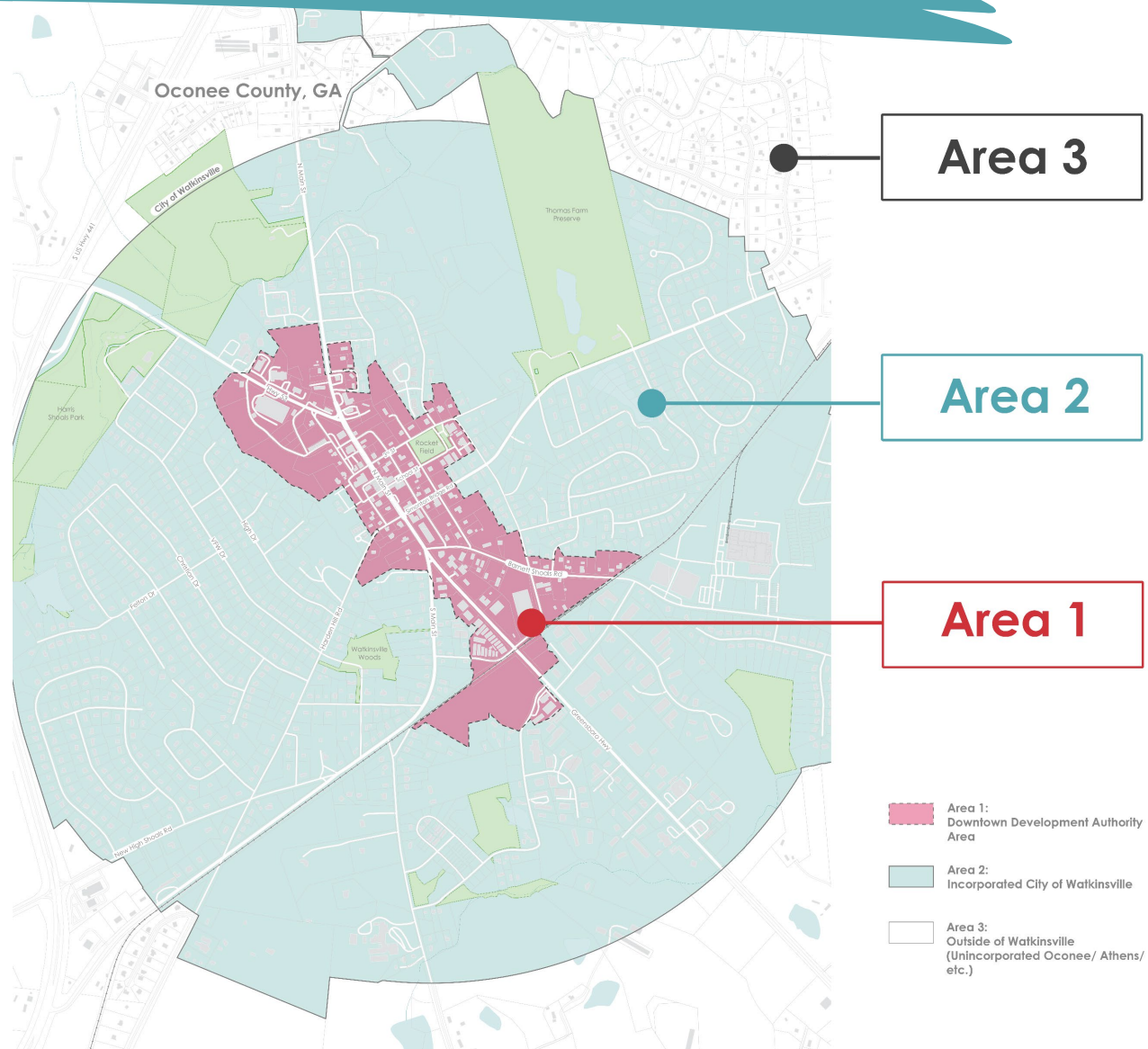


Rent per Unit Comparison, 2021-2025

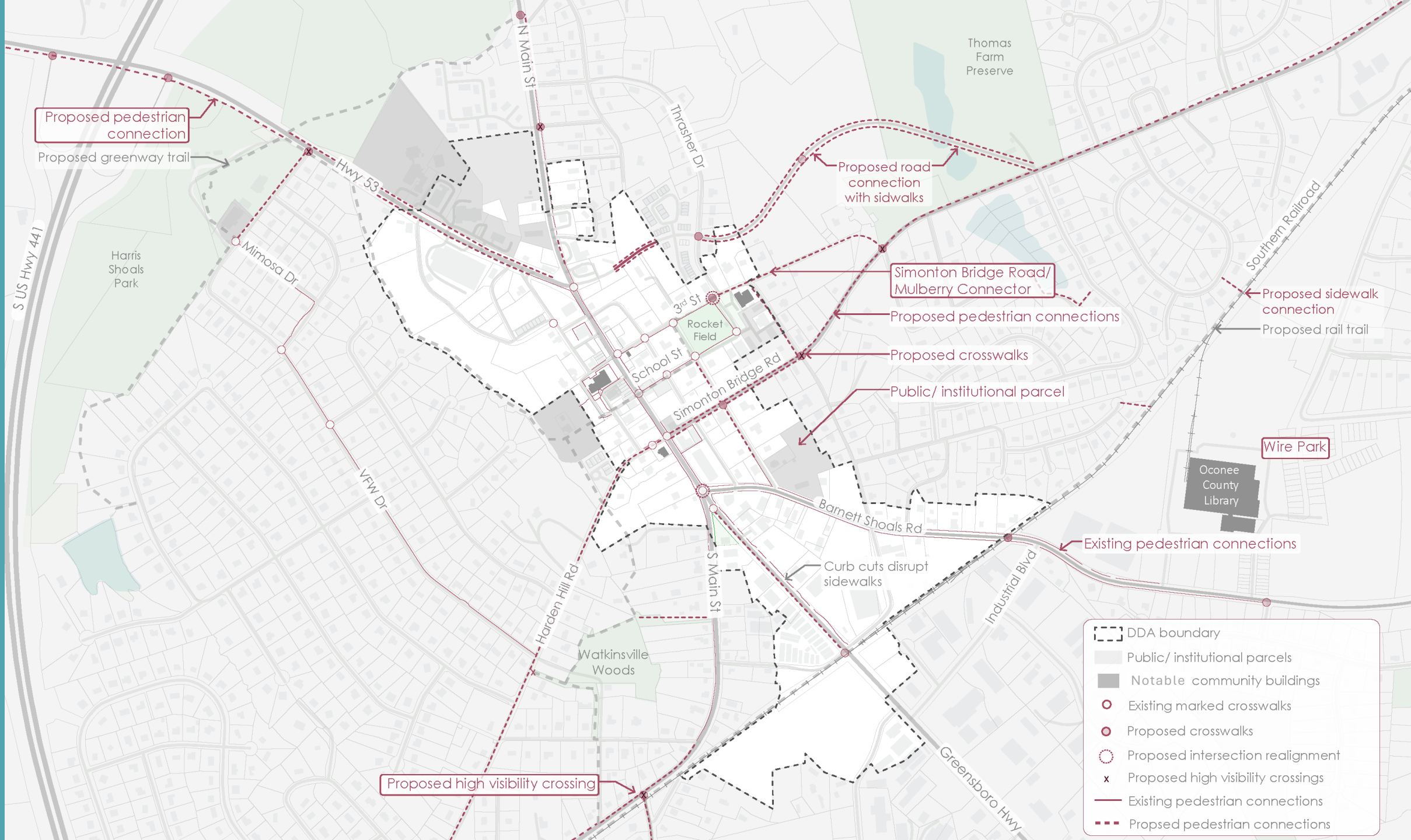
Data Source: CoStar, 2025



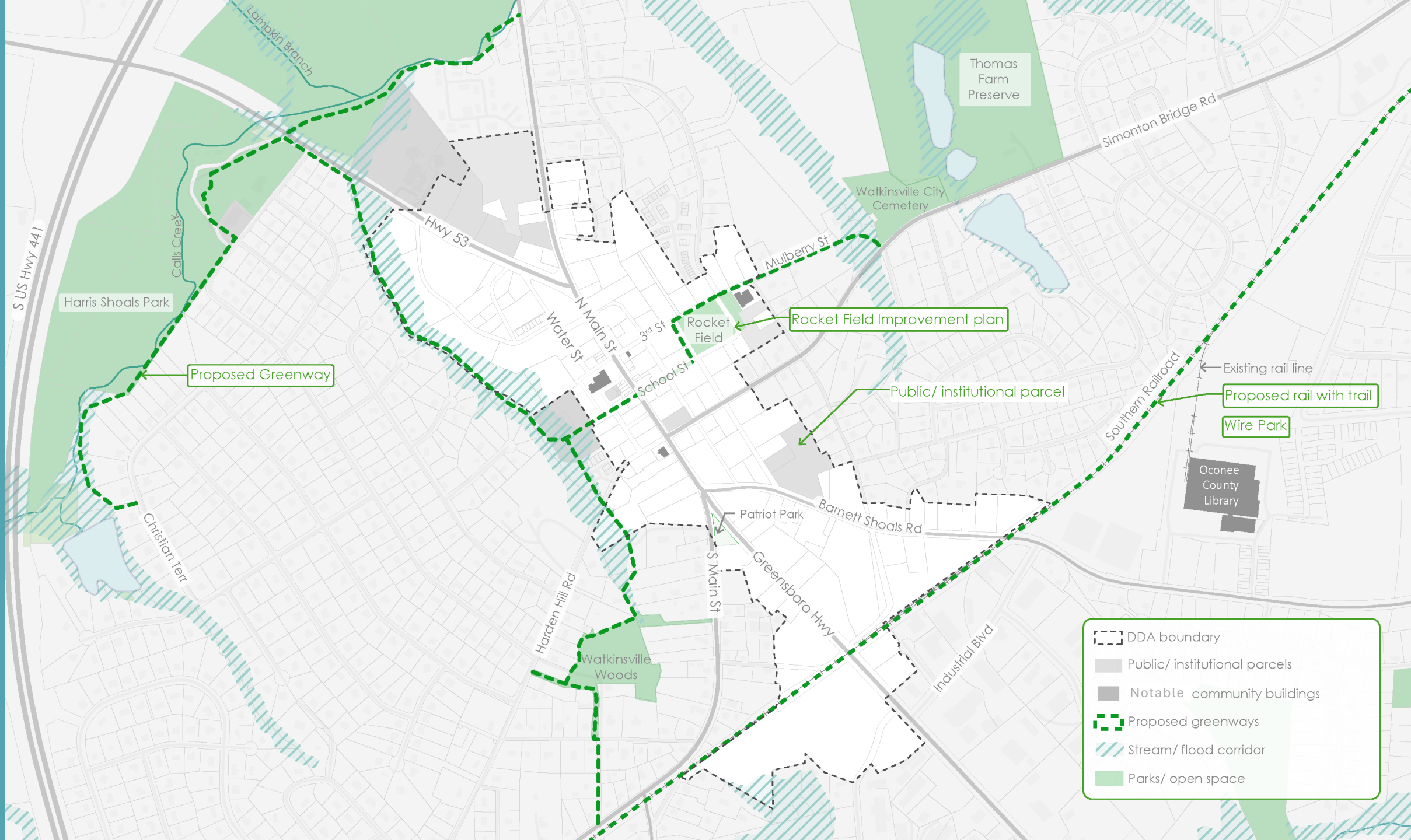
Where We Are



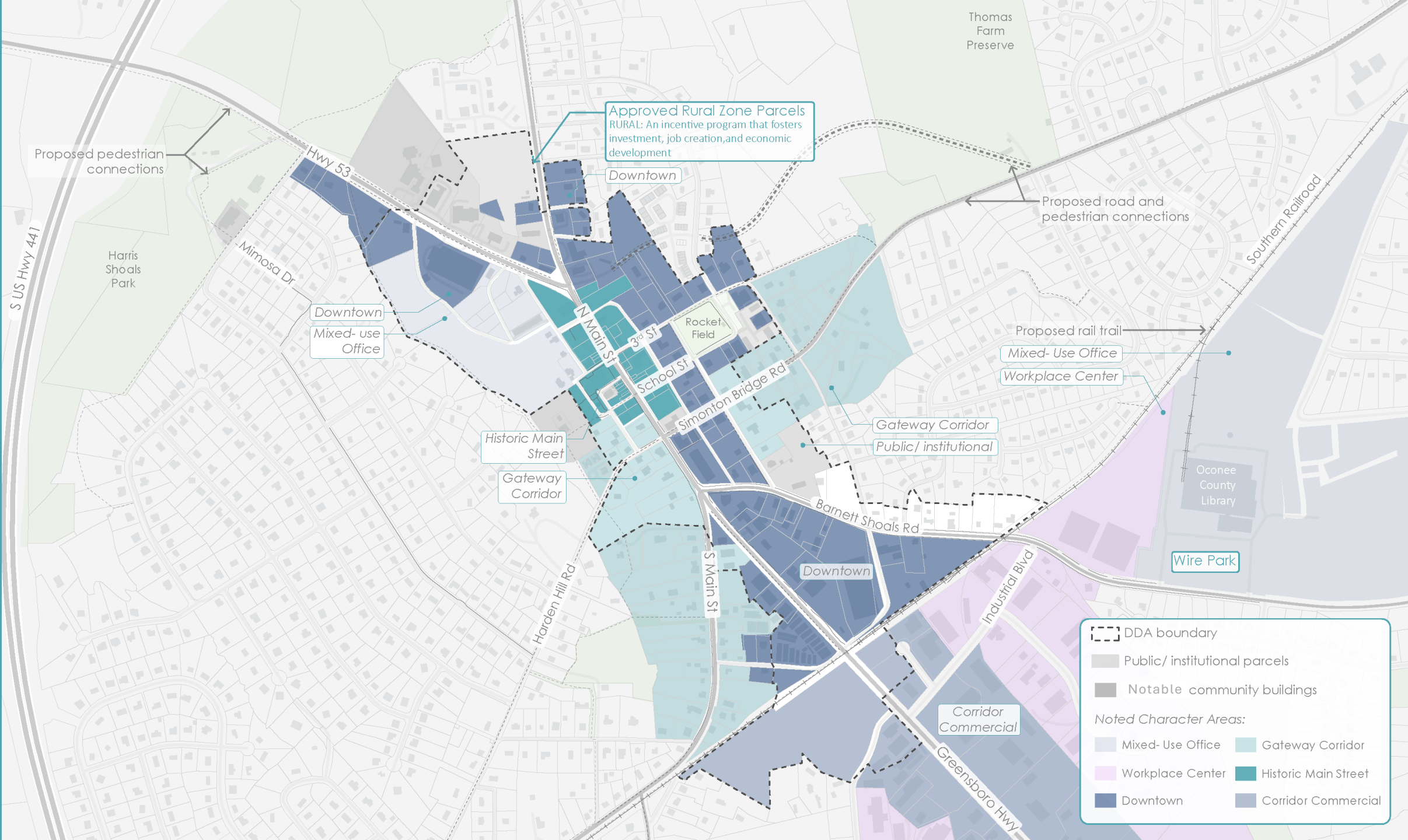
Proposed Projects



Greenspaces



Areas of Interest



**WHERE WE
ARE GOING**

We Are We Going?

- This is where we want your input!

STATION 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Boards cover the key points in our presentation, but for anyone who joins late or wants to explore further, these boards will help provide context and establish precedent.

STATION 2: PREFERENCE BOARDS

- Three preference boards with imagery of different solutions for people to vote on.
- Goal is to narrow in on what direction the public wants and what specific solutions people do and don't want.

STATION 3: BUDGET ACTIVITY

- People assigned a “budget” of 3 coins to vote on their priorities for Downtown.
- Goal is to narrow in on what the public wants the City to focus their funds.

STATION 4: INTERACTIVE MAP

- Opportunity for the public to identify opportunity sites and desired connections, as well as any points of interest.

THANK YOU

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scan for the
project website!

or visit:

<https://www.inspire-engagement.com/watkinsville-strategic-development-plan>