A.1 - Project Goals

The purpose of the Dover Transit Center Neighborhood Plan is to use the new transit center as an impetus for redevelopment that will transform and energize the surrounding area. The Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Downtown Dover Partnership (DDP) conceived the plan.

The effort offers an opportunity for the community to influence the future of the neighborhood and downtown by exploring simple urban design questions such as appropriate building height, the pedestrian experience, the character of neighborhood roads and streetscapes, and building setbacks. To have the area develop using transit-oriented design, with the new transit center as the focal point, and to drive growth and economic opportunity in the area are additional goals.

The MPO and DDP are committed to working with the City of Dover and the State of Delaware to put the necessary tools in place, such as reviewing and revising existing codes and ordinances to entice redevelopment, encourage public-private investments, partnerships and forums, and utilize key community stakeholders in generating changes that are needed to help fulfill the project's mission.

This master plan, created through a public charrette process, serves as a vehicle to implement the community's vision through the following series of specific strategies:

- Develop a downtown neighborhood plan with community and stakeholder involvement
- Leverage the transit center to encourage downtown revitalization
- Identify context sensitive, adaptive use, and infill development options
- Promote walkability and integrate multimodal transportation solutions
- Improve the gateways and entrance corridors to the downtown area with buildings, coordinated signage, and streetscapes that frame views and provide a sense of arrival
- Strengthen key North-South and East-West road connections to area activity centers, such as Wesley College, the St. Jones River, Eden Hill and the Bayhealth Medical Center campus
- Reinforce the architectural character of downtown Dover through the rehabilitation and redevelopment of key downtown buildings, lots, and intersections
- Create a network of parks, civic squares, and public gathering spaces within the neighborhood plan area that will enhance the downtown and lead to increased public use
- Create an identity for the future that builds on Dover's history
- Develop an orderly framework for growth (including community design guidelines and standards) that enhances economic development
- Identify the codes and policies needed to foster growth and redevelopment that are consistent with the master plan's goals and overall vision

A.2 - Community Vision

Dover, as the capital of Delaware, is growing and evolving to meet the challenges and opportunities that come with serving as the center of the region and the home of the legislature. The city provides a range of regional services, uses, and governmental functions, and must provide access to these services.

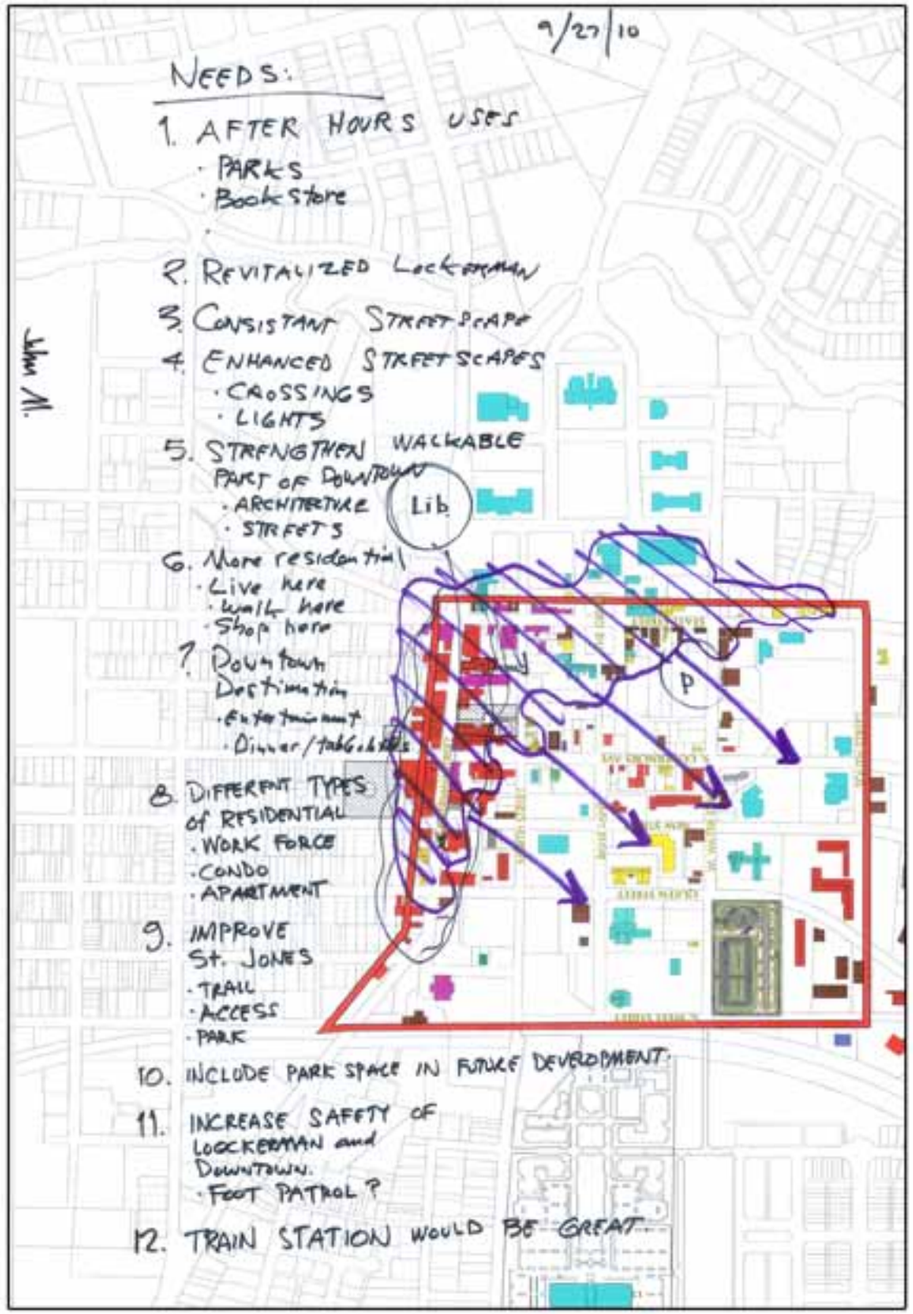
The Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) sought community input on what the future of the neighborhood should be, with special focus on the activities that were adjacent to the new transit center. The Downtown Dover Partnership, whose mission is to promote development and economic growth within downtown Dover, expressed an interest in the planning process and served as a cosponsor to the MPO's neighborhood plan study.

The MPO promotes alternative modes of transportation as a function of its program. The downtown Dover neighborhood depicted in the plan is the center of transit in Kent County. For several years, Dover's transit hub stood on Water Street between State Street and Governor's Avenue. In 2010, the state relocated the transit hub less than a mile away to a larger site at Queen and Water streets. The new transit center represents a great opportunity to revitalize downtown and reconnect parts of the city that do not function cohesively. The new location also creates a broader opportunity for the transit hub to serve the region.

While no single characteristic represents the community's vision, there were several important themes and goals for Dover that reoccurred during the process that led to the neighborhood plan. The following points represent the most important items to consider:

- The plan needs to look several generations ahead
- City residents and business people are anxious to see new development
- The downtown area does not have a cohesive layout
- Underground pollution and brown field sites need to be addressed
- The population around the transit center is not dense enough
- The transit center should be a destination and not just a transfer station
- New construction should complement the scale and context of downtown Dover's historic buildings
- The area at the edge of the St. Jones River – access, parking, trails and activities should be improved
- Walkability of downtown should be improved through architecture and streetscapes
- Build a train station near the transit center
- Rail right-of-way designs should improve to create more defined and attractive edges
- People agree that parking is a perceived problem, not an actual problem
- Develop shared parking facilities and district-wide parking
- Create consistent streetscapes with crosswalks and lighting, and consider burying utility lines
- "Mixed-use" should include retail on the first floors of buildings and residential on upper floors
- The residential mix needs to include student and workforce housing, such as apartments, townhomes, small, single homes and condominiums.
- North Street needs to have "fronts" of buildings and include office, service, and residential uses
- Create new "rules" for the area and incentives for development
- Integrate new green areas to link pedestrian pathways
- Reconnect Water Street across railroad tracks to Eden Hill Farm

A.3 - Public Planning Process



The charrette took place during the week of September 27, 2010. More than 100 participants attended the various meetings including Dover City Council members, city, county, and state agency staff, Downtown Dover Partnership representatives, community leaders, developers, business owners, and citizens. The design team worked more than 450 hours during the charette. The major events that contributed to the process were as follows:

- An opening presentation was held on September 27, 2010 at the Eden Hill Medical Center conference room. The project's design principles, planning context, overview of the study area's constraints, strengths and challenges were provided in a PowerPoint presentation and numerous, large printed displays. Participants engaged in roundtable discussions, which provided the design team with feedback and direct citizen input.

- Numerous stakeholder and focus group meetings, as well as individual and group discussions, were held at the Becker Morgan Group offices September 27, 2010 through September 29, 2010.

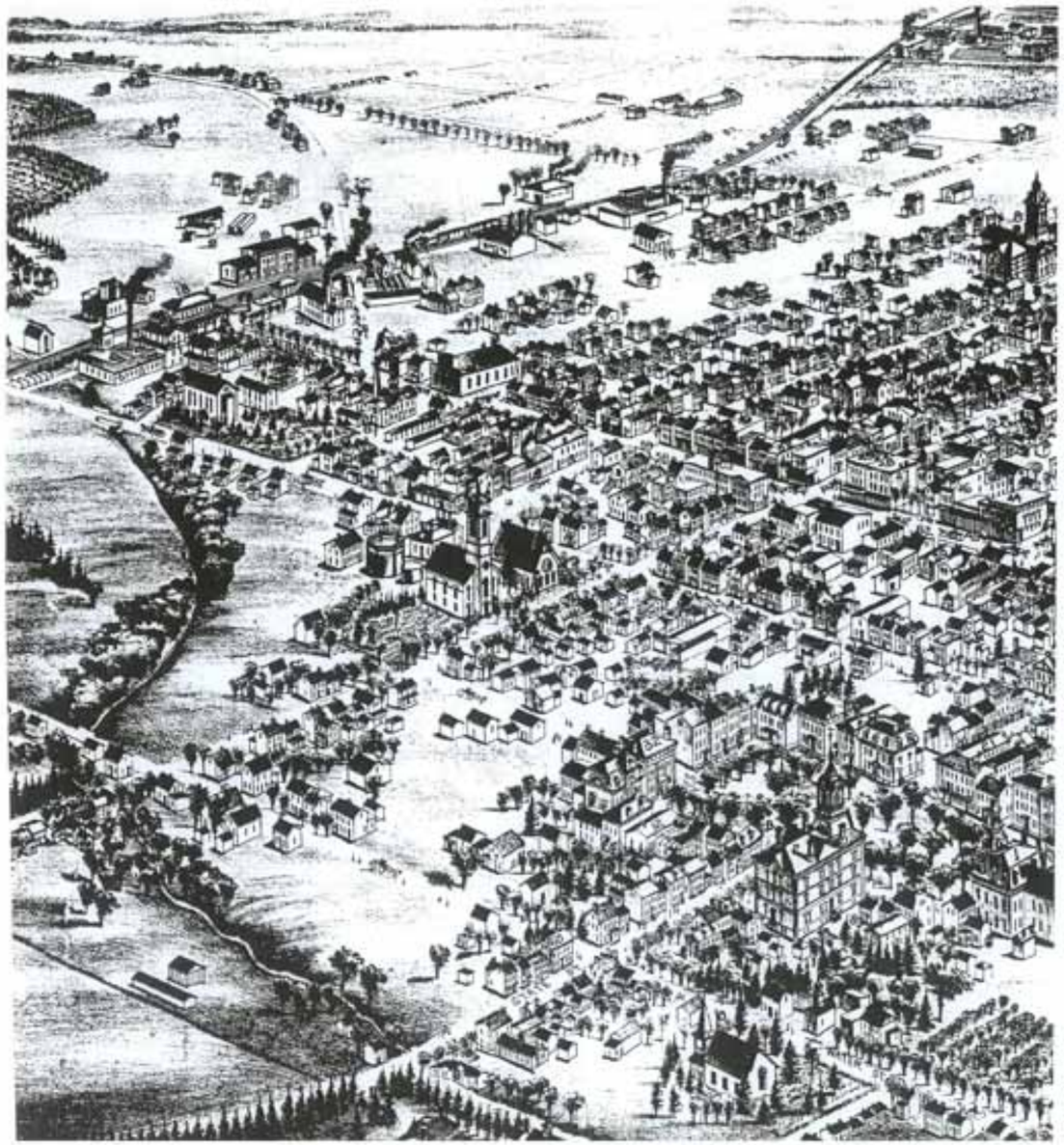
- An open house was held on September 29, 2010, at the Becker Morgan Group office. The design team presented its work from the previous three days, as well as preliminary neighborhood plan and development goals derived from feedback it received during stakeholder and roundtable discussions. The open house was well attended and community members provided additional feedback.

- A closing presentation was held on October 1, 2010 at the Eden Hill Medical Center conference room. The neighborhood vision plan, action plan framework, proposed urban design framework, opportunity plans and sites, demographic study, state capital comparison, and plan implementation recommendations were presented through a PowerPoint presentation and numerous large printed displays. The team held a question and answer session after the presentation to gain further feedback and public input.

The final component of the MPO's planning process will be to create a document that catalogs the work completedprior to and during the charrette in written and visual formats. This document will serve as a road map for downtown development and implementation of the vision plan, as well as a marketing tool to showcase the development potential of downtown Dover for private and public stakeholders.

History, Background & Analysis

B.1 - History of the City of Dover



City of Dover Aerial Rendering - Circa 1885

The first official settlement in the area of Dover was in 1680 when Governor Edmund Andros saw need for a county court that would be safer and easier to travel to than the existing court in what is now the town of Lewes. The governor created St. Jones County (now called Kent County) and the first court and county seat were established in the home of a Justice of the Peace, near the mouth of the St. Jones River. In 1683, William Penn was deeded the land grant to what is now Delaware by the Duke of York and authorized "the surveyor to lay out for the Governor a town to be called Dover," somewhere in the middle of the county. Around 1690, the county seat was moved to a tavern at the head of the river, near where Dover was to be established. The land for the town of Dover was purchased in 1694, and in 1697 the original courthouse for the county was built in the location of the existing courthouse.

In 1717, the original town of Dover was laid out, comprising the area that is presently bounded on the north by North Street, on the south by what is now Water Street, on the east by King Street, which used to run in front of the Old State House, and on the west by what is now Governors Avenue. This remained the extent of the settlement in and around Dover for some time. By 1730, there were said to be no more than 40 families in Dover.

In 1777, the British captured Delaware's colonial capital, New Castle. The State Assembly fled south to Dover to begin meeting in the county courthouse. Soon thereafter, Dover was designated the capital of the state and state officials shared the undersized courthouse until 1792 when the Old State House was completed. It served as both the county seat and state capitol until 1873, when the county courthouse was built.

Still, reflective of its setting in the center of a rural, agricultural region, Dover remained more of a market and government town than a city in which to live. By 1838, there were no more than 600 inhabitants within the city limits.

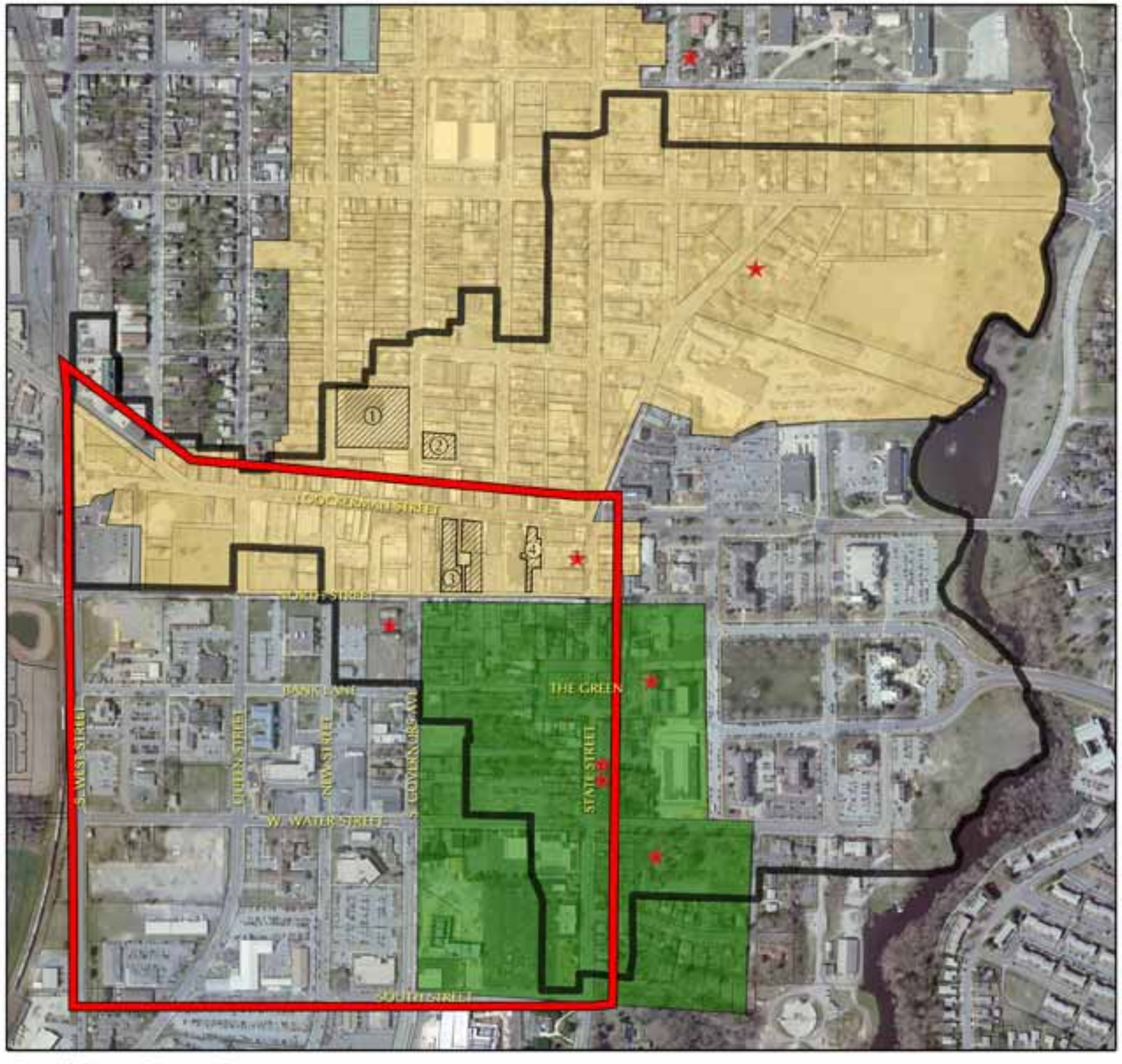
When the railroad extended to Dover in 1855, the city was ideally situated to support industries such as the Richardson and Robbins Cannery which could provide large markets with local agriculture and aqua culture products. Several industries located in Dover around mid-century, requiring a stable labor force and housing, were generating a significant amount of wealth. The Green, which had always been a market square, was gentrified and turned into the park-like setting it is today. Commercial growth began to occur north of The Green along State Street. When the Civil War ended, Dover flourished.

Several local landowners to the north of the oldest section of the city began to sub-divide their lots and extend the city grid with new streets. Commercial development moved west along Loockerman Street and the city itself expanded in 1868 to annex the new sub-divisions. By 1885, the new section of the city was well on its way to being fully developed. It is obvious from the number and quality of the houses that were built at this time that Dover had become a very prosperous place for many inhabitants.

Dover's growth slowed somewhat around the turn of the century. During the Depression, the Works Projects Administration produced the new Capital Square area. Large industries began to locate around Dover, but beyond what is now the historic area. After World War II, suburbs were built and the city continually expanded to annex what had been agricultural land. Earlier developments continued to be infilled with new construction.

Today, there are several strip developments on the outskirts of Dover that have a distinctly 'suburban' character. The historic area of the city is somewhat isolated from this kind of development. While social characteristics have changed, such as where people do most of their shopping and go for entertainment, the appearance and character of the historic sections of the city have been largely unaffected by 'modern' development. The center of Dover remains an attractive and appealing place to live.

B.1 - History of the City of Dover



City of Dover Historic Districts

Dover has three historic districts: The National Register Historic Districts and one local Historic District zone, established by the City of Dover Zoning Ordinance.

The two National Register districts are known as the Dover Green Historic District and the Victorian Dover Historic District. These districts are separate but share a boundary along North Street. The Dover Green Historic District recognizes the significance of the evolution of Dover during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when its population was less than 600 people and development was concentrated within the original city boundaries. The Victorian Dover Historic District recognizes the significance of Dover's rapid post-Civil War development when the city boundaries expanded northward to provide land for rapid residential development that took place during the late nineteenth century.

The City of Dover Historic District zone is a local historic district that overlaps parts of each of the National Register Districts and includes properties that are outside of the National Register Historic districts.

LEGEND

- MPO Study Boundary
- DDP Sites
  1. Acme Site
  2. Harry Louie Site
  3. Collegian Site
  4. DDP Building
- National Register of Historic Places Victorian Dover Historic District
- National Register of Historic Places Dover Green Historic District
- City of Dover Historic District Zone
- National Register of Historic Places Listing

There are important distinctions between the National Register Historic Districts and the Dover Historic District zone. When a district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it is given official and professional recognition that it is significant to the history of its region, and for the historic integrity it has retained. Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, agencies of the federal government must take into consideration the historical significance of listed buildings, objects, or areas when they are undertaking projects that might affect them. However, listing on the National Register places no restrictions on private owners or on what private owners may do with their properties.

Local Historic District zones, in contrast to National Register Districts, are authorized by state statutes and enacted via local ordinances. Local Historic District zones are created to preserve not only individual historic buildings that are considered significant but also to preserve the historic character of the district as a whole. They frequently involve design controls on private property concerning changes to exterior architectural and landscape features. The design review process, often abetted by design guidelines, are important tools in that process.

The City of Dover Historic District zone was established in 1961. Construction projects within the local historic district have been subject to design review by way of the Architectural Review Certification process since its inception. The Design Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District zone are intended for use as a general reference by the community and a basic reference for the Historic District Commission and/or the Planning Commission in their deliberations as they review applications for Architectural Review Certificates.

Text excepted from "Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone," undated, Section 1, Page 2, 4.

B.2 - Transit Center Neighborhood Plan Study Area

Transit Center Neighborhood Plan Study Area

LEGEND

- MPO Study Boundary
- New Transit Center Site
- DDP Sites
  1. Acme Site
  2. Harry Louie Site
  3. Collegian Site
  4. DDP Building

The study area is defined by Loockerman Street, State Street, South Street, and West Street, as highlighted within the red border in the aerial overlay on this page. Both sides of the street were included in the study area so the character of the street and streetscape could be better studied and understood. The study area represents roughly 16 blocks and includes a major North-South thoroughfare (S. Governors Avenue) as well as other important streets such as North Street and Water Street. North Street provides one of the main gateways and access points into the city from west of downtown and was identified prior to the charrette as an important access street that could benefit from improvement. Water Street has significance as the historical connection between downtown Dover commerce, Eden Hill Farm, and the St. Jones River. Water Street is also important as the access to both the new and old transit center sites and as the northern boundary to the Bayhealth Medical Center campus and other medical uses to the south.

The streets within the study area form a traditional urban grid that transitions to a more suburban pattern south of Water Street. It should be noted that the urban fabric, with regard to density, street presence of buildings, and context, is divided along North Street, S. Governors Avenue and Water Street. The character of the streetscapes and buildings east and north of these streets feels very urban and active while the areas to the south and west are less dense and more suburban in character, especially in regard to how parking and pedestrian access is handled. The new transit center site has an advantageous location on the edge of downtown and Eden Hill Farm, which will be the largest new growth area of the city in the next 10-20 years. The rail line, which serves as a divider between downtown and Eden Hill Farm, is adjacent to the transit center and represents an opportunity for better connectivity in the future.

B.3 - Land Use / Zoning

Current Land Use

Current Zoning

The study area consists of 258 parcels on 89 acres, with a variety of existing land use categories. The Loockerman Street corridor represents the primary downtown retail district and its primary land uses are mixed-use and commercial retail. State Street also has a well established urban fabric and features a variety of uses, including institutional, business/office, mixed-use and some residential. The rest of the study area is not as well defined in character as these two areas. Institutional uses make up the majority of the land use in regards to the remaining portion of the study area especially to the south and west of State and Loockerman streets. Large public facilities are prominent, such as the City of Dover police station, Justice of the Peace Court 7, Bayhealth Medical Center campus, and the J. Allen Frear Federal Building. There are also residential, commercial and business uses throughout this area, including senior housing along Queen Street and commercial uses along S. Governors Avenue.

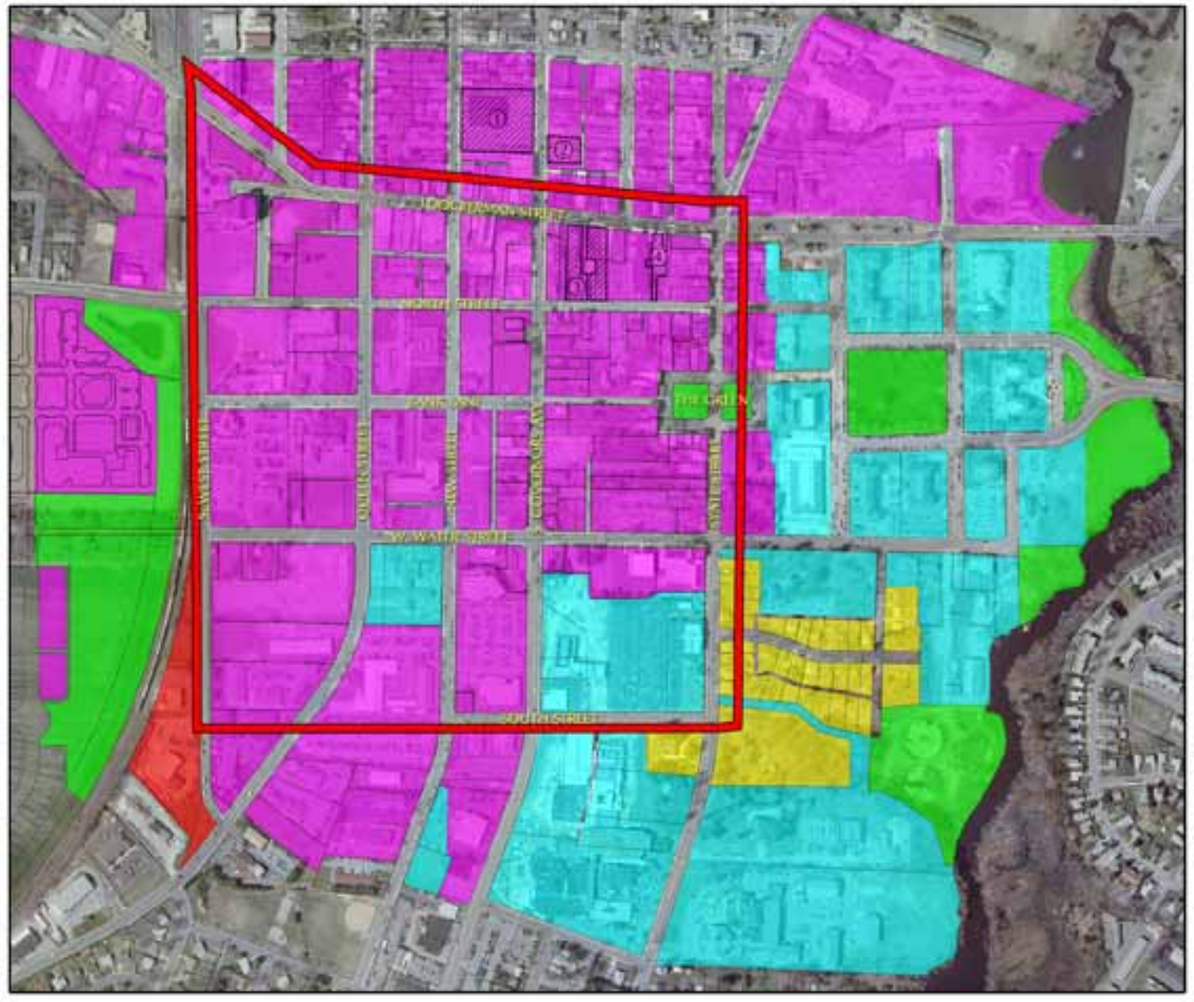
USE LEGEND

- Mixed Use
- Institutional
- Industrial
- Business / Office
- Commercal / Retail
- Residential
- Open Space
- Vacant
- Study Boundary
- DDP Sites
  1. Acme Site
  2. Harry Louie Site
  3. Collegian Site
  4. DDP Building

ZONING LEGEND

- RGO- General Residence and Office
- IO - Institutional and Office
- C-1A - Limited Commercial
- C-2 - Central Commercial
- C-2A - Limited Central Commercial
- C-3 - Service Commercial
- CPO - Commercial Professional Office
- RG-1 - General Residence
- RG-4 - Multi-Story Apartments
- R-8 - One-Family Residence
- TND - Traditional Neighborhood Design
- ROS - Recreational and Open Space

B.3 - Land Use / Zoning



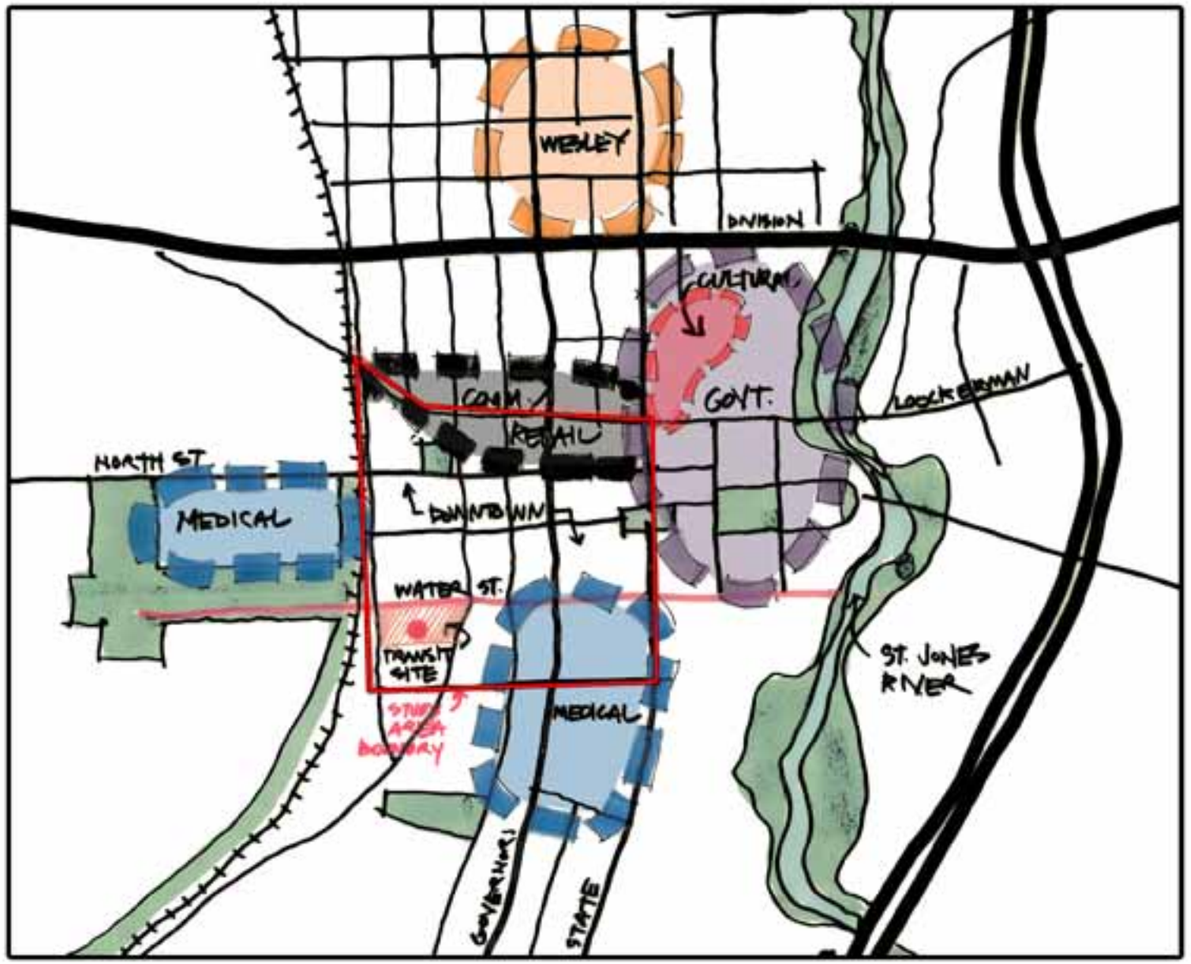
Proposed Land Use

USE LEGEND

- Mixed Use
- Institutional
- Industrial
- Business / Office
- Commercal / Retail
- Residential
- Open Space
- Vacant

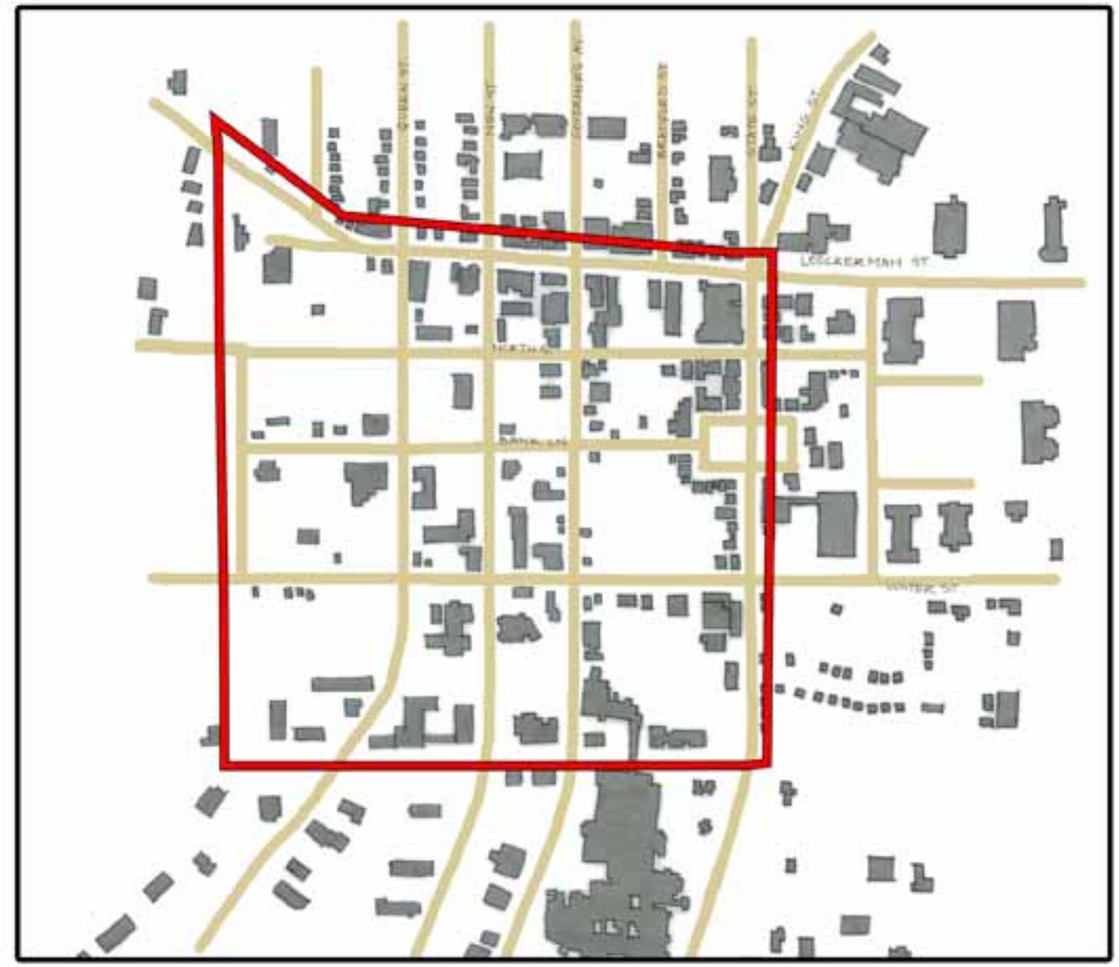
Proposed land use for the study area, as shown in the Dover Comprehensive Plan, is intended to support the existing development pattern as well as add flexibility for future development and redevelopment opportunities. Based on this, the majority of the study area is defined as mixed-use with smaller areas reserved for institutional and residential uses. The institutional uses are primarily related to the Bayhealth Medical Center campus and the existing governmental and legislative uses to the east of State Street. Single-family residential uses are primarily located to the southeast of the study area in the Elm Terrace neighborhood and Sherwood 2 to the southwest.

B.4 - Existing Development Patterns



Existing Activity Centers

For the purposes of developing a neighborhood plan based around the transit center site and the adjacent study area, the design team analyzed activity centers. The identified major activities were medical uses to the south and west, a commercial/retail core area along Loockerman Street, governmental and legislative uses to the east of State Street and the Wesley College campus to the north. There are also cultural uses in the northeast area of the study near State Street, and within the study area along North Street including the Biggs Museum of American Art and the Schwartz Center for the Arts.



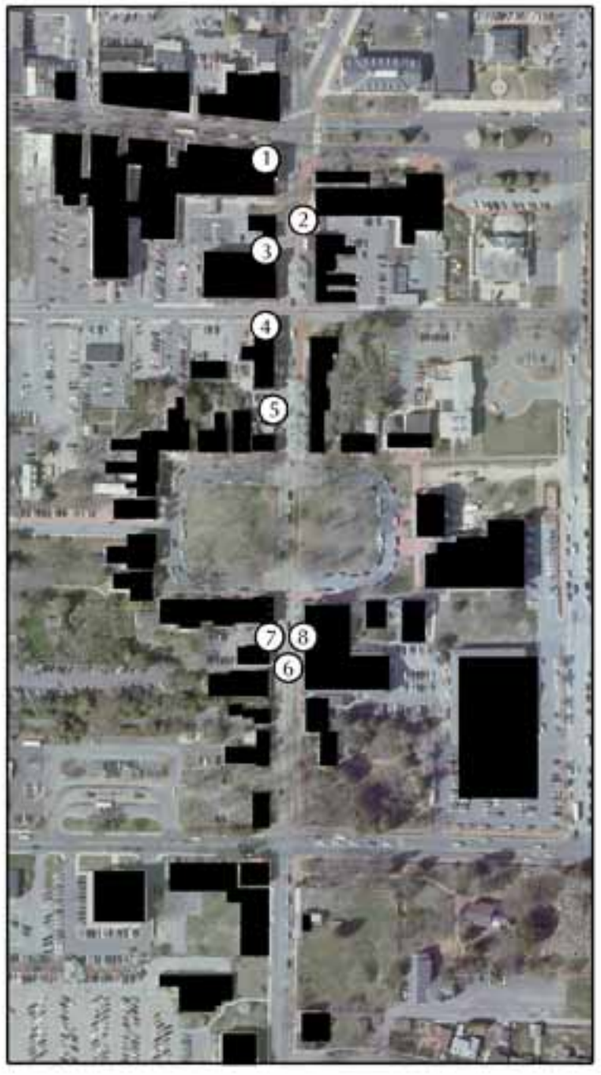
Existing Density and Street Frontages

The center of the study area lacks an identifiable character and activity center. The analysis looked at the existing density and street frontages throughout the study area. As the graphic clearly shows, the buildings along State Street and Loockerman Street are located close to the street edge and create a strong, walkable urban character. The density and street edges diminish outside of these two streets and need improvement to create pedestrian character in this area. There are remnants of street edges along portions of Water Street, North Street and Governors Avenue that infill development could strengthen. Most of the area has a more suburban character with one-to-two-story buildings located in the center of the property and surface parking areas along the edges.

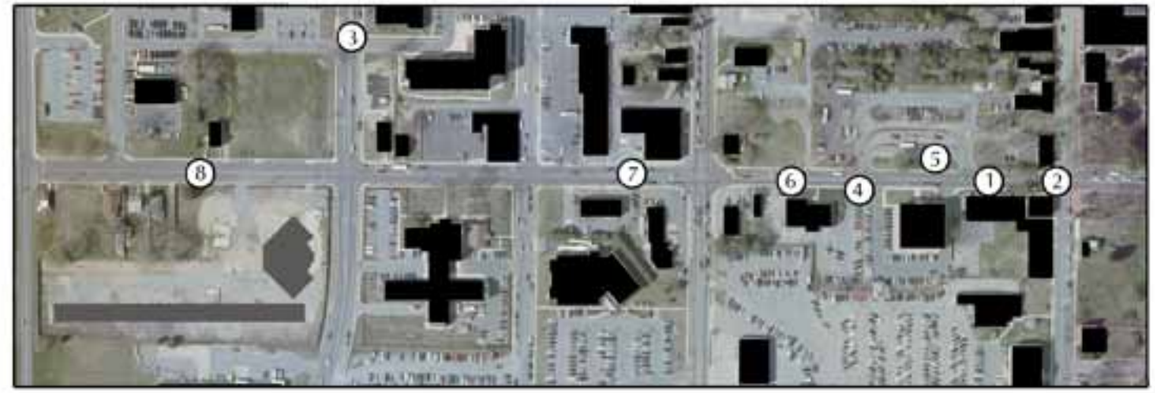
B.4 - Existing Development Patterns

State Street

State Street is home to many of Dover's more historically significant buildings. The tree-lined street features an array of building uses, including government buildings and business offices. Some buildings have been maintained as private residences and are on the National Register of Historic Places.



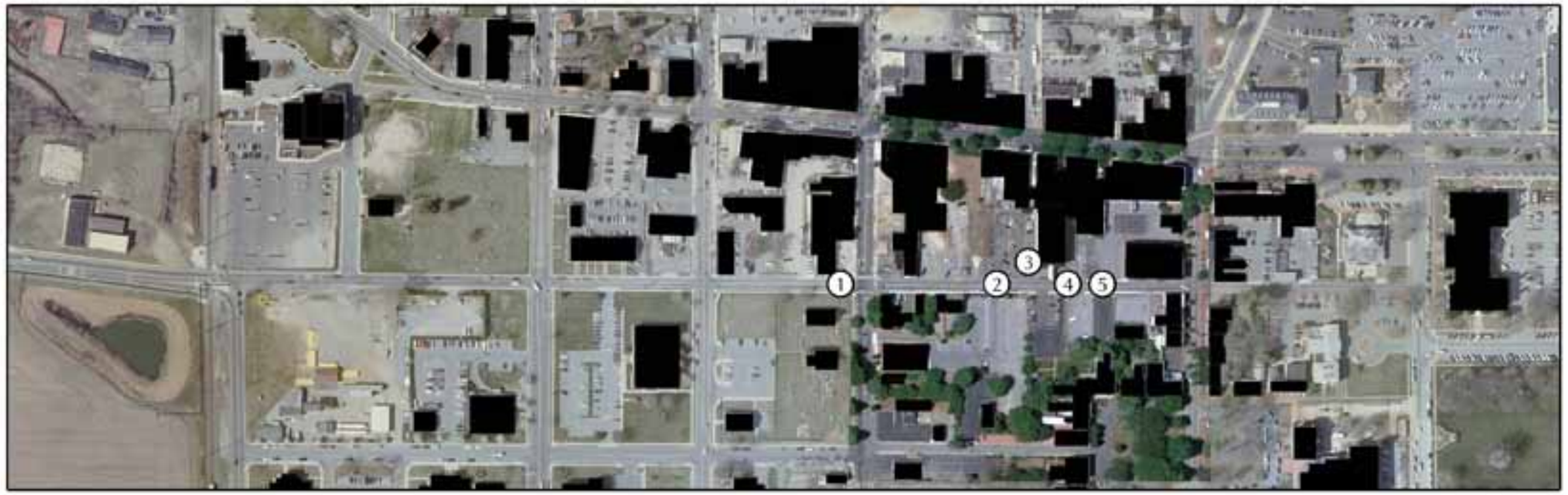
B.4 - Existing Development Patterns



Water Street

Water Street is a mixture of urban uses. At the time of this study, the DART Transit Hub was located along Water Street and the new facility was under construction two blocks west. There are numerous office buildings, including medical offices that are supported by the Bayhealth Medical Center campus, located one block south of the transit hub. A handful of retail shops, multi-family residential, and institutional buildings line the eclectic corridor.

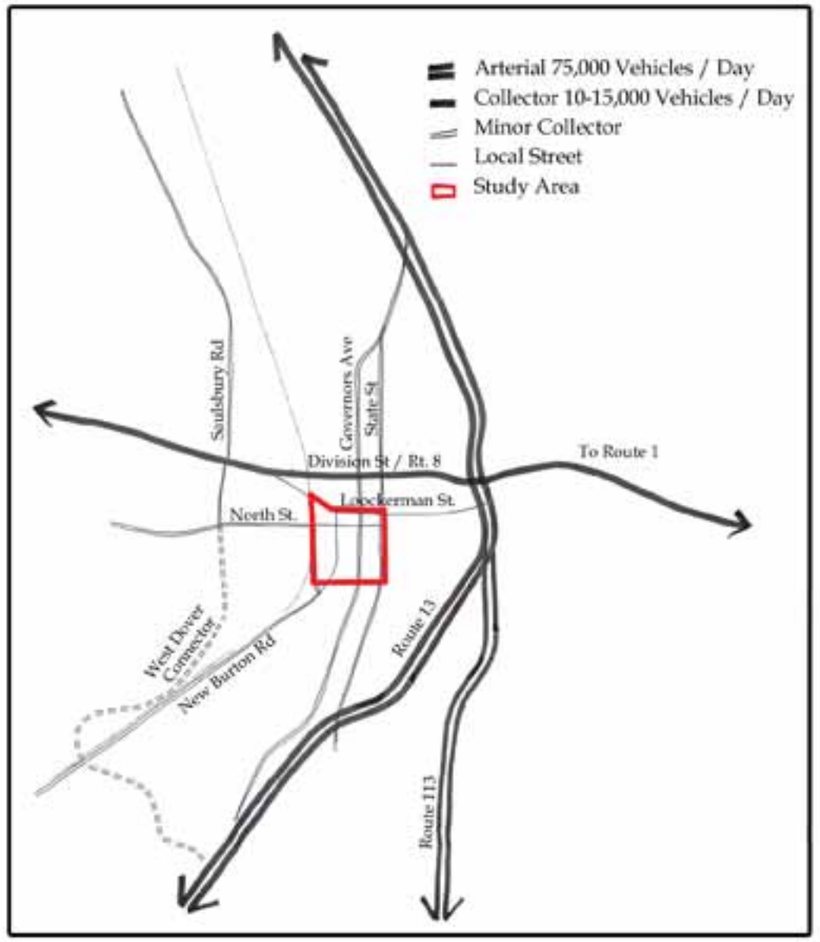
B.4 - Existing Development Patterns



North Street

North Street is utilized as a service alleyway for the buildings that face Loockerman Street, and as a moderately traveled access street from the capital area to many residential subdivisions, stores and restaurants on the west side of the city.

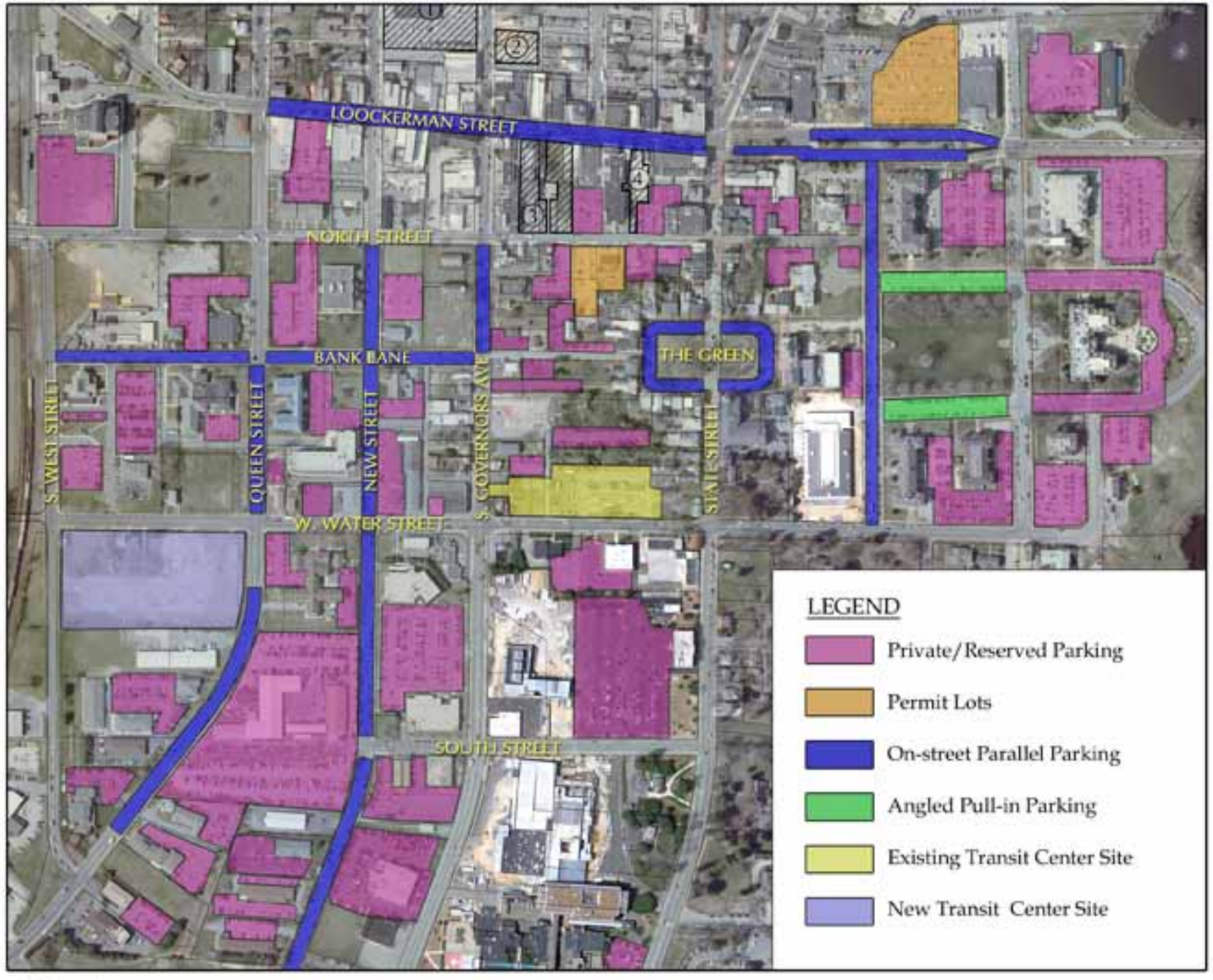
B.5 - Street Network and Parking



Street Hierarchy

The study area, and downtown Dover in general, is located west of the major highways (US Route 13 and DE Route 1) that run north to south. There is also a major bypass (West Dover Connector) planned to the west of the metropolitan area. When constructed, this road will greatly alter traffic patterns on North Street and New Burton Road. North Street is the main gateway into downtown from the west. Division Street, located north of the project area, is the major east-west route running through downtown.

B.5 - Street Network and Parking



Parking Diagram

Multiple Surface Lots along North Street

Parallel Parking along Queen Street

Parallel Parking around The Green

Parking patterns in and around the study area consist primarily of grade-level surface parking lots and on-street parking (both parallel and pull-in). At the time of this study, there was a private, structured parking area under construction associated with Bayhealth Medical Center campus, located in the southeast section of the study area. The charrette design team noted in its parking analysis that there is an opportunity to improve parking throughout the downtown area by implementing an area parking strategy. North Street, shown at the top right, has potential for consolidated surface parking, or a multi-level parking structure.

B.6 - Existing Environment / Open Space

Existing Open Spaces

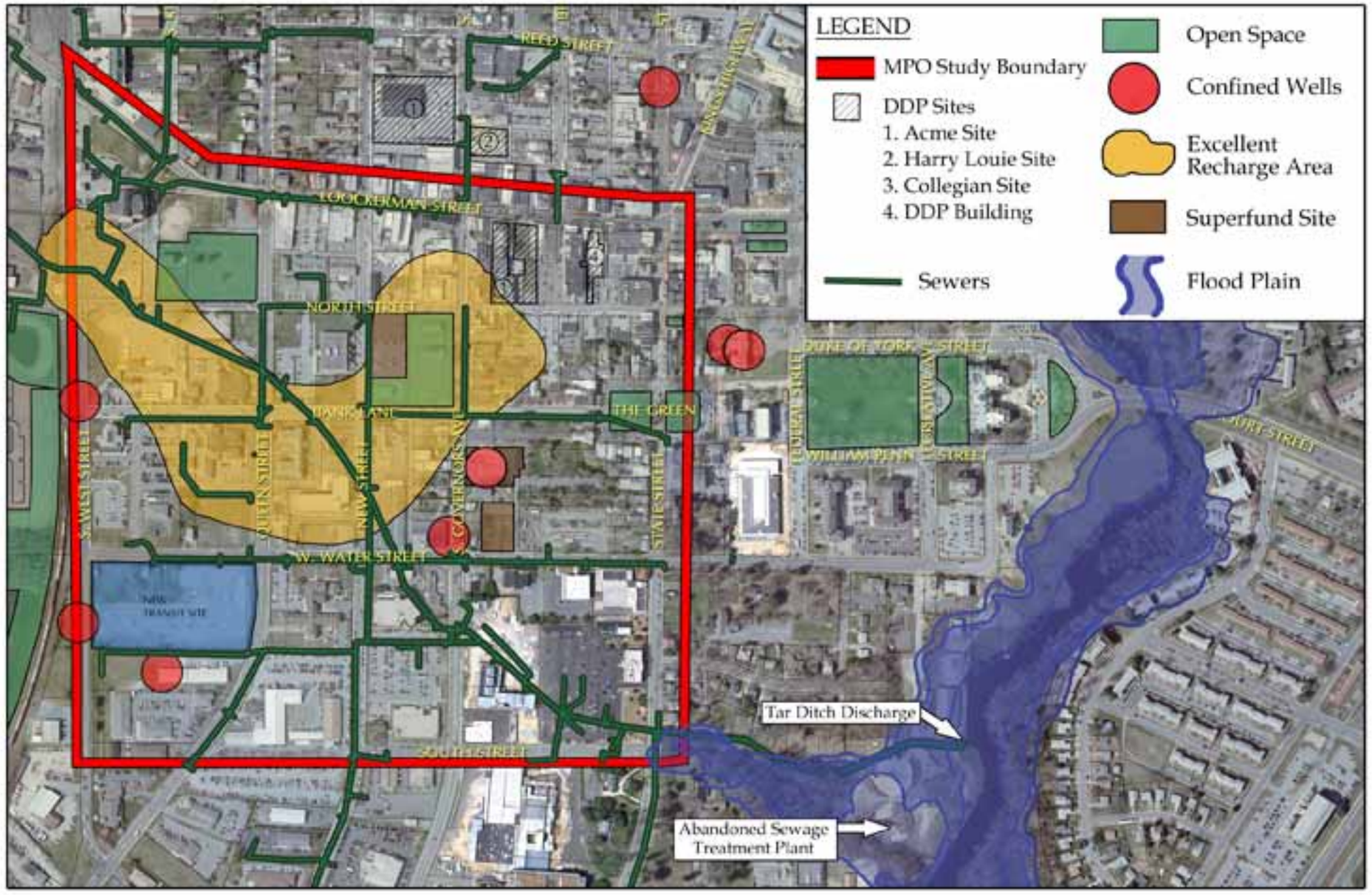
The public open spaces within the study area consist primarily of The Green and a small urban pocket park, named Constitution Park, that is located at the corner of North and State streets. There are also private open spaces within the study area, such as the cemeteries along North Street. The major open spaces outside the project area include the St. Jones River to the east, the perimeter open space at Eden Hill Farm and the central alley that is the western terminus of Water Street, Legislative Mall, the boulevard section of Loockerman Street and Dover Park in the Sherwood 2 neighborhood with a playground and sports fields just two blocks south of the study area boundary.

Legislative Mall

Constitution Park

The Green

B.6 - Existing Environment / Open Space



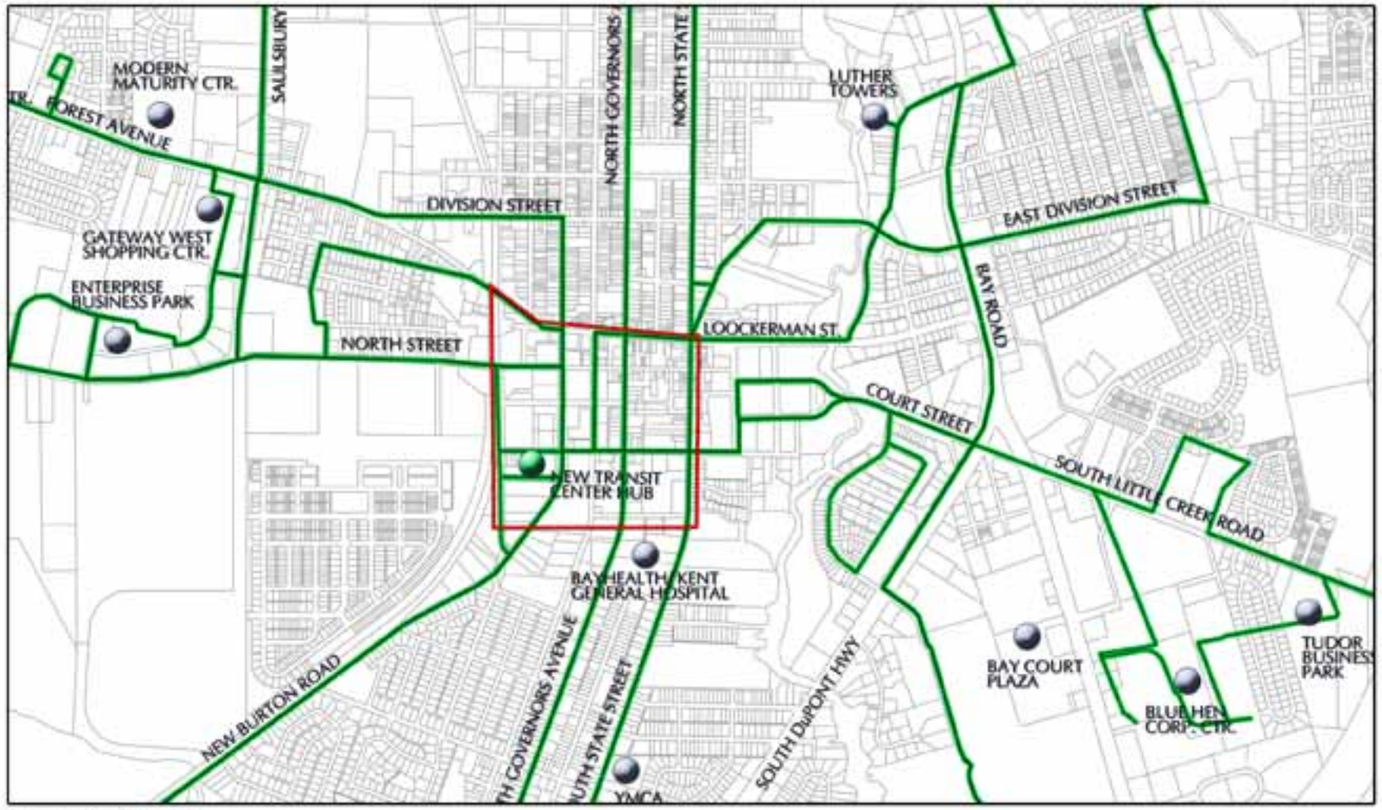
Environmental Constraints

Cemetery

St. Jones River

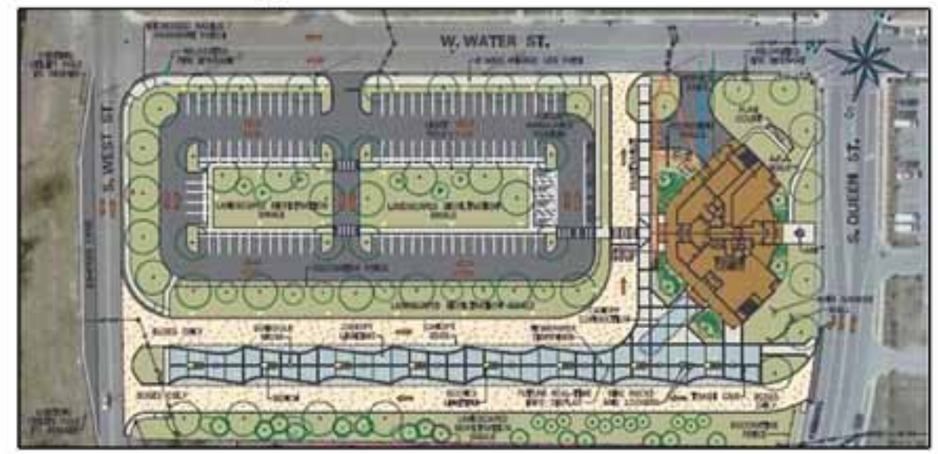
There are some environmental constraints affecting redevelopment in the study area. These constraints include the edge condition formed by the Norfolk-Southern railroad spur that runs adjacent to West Street, three brownfield sites (Braun Property, former Capitol Cleaners Site and the former Dover Gas Light Company site) and underground contamination from a tar ditch. The tar ditch runs from the northwest corner of the study area and discharges into the St. Jones River south of Water Street. The underground ditch often floods streets due to the deteriorating condition of the outdated infrastructure. Project costs, environmental concerns associated with opening the ditch, and locations of major flooding have prohibited remediation. At the south terminus of Legislative Avenue are an abandoned sewer treatment facility, trash incinerator and other city infrastructure. This area along the edge of the St. Jones River presents an opportunity to repurpose and redevelop into a riverwalk park.

B.7 - Transit



New Bus Routes

Aerial View of Existing and New Transit Site



Proposed Transit Site Plan

LEGEND

- Study Area
- Bus Route
- Destination
- New Transit Center Hub

The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), through a public/private partnership, is building a new facility adjacent to the bus lanes and parking lot to act as the center of transit services in Dover. It shall serve as a central distribution point for the DART system in Dover. It will also house the interstate buses and taxi companies that serve Dover. The facility will include an interior waiting area with vending capacity, restrooms and a retail outlet for bus passes and tickets. There will be tenant space available for other organizations and companies.

The MPO has a responsibility to promote alternative modes of transportation as a function of its program. The neighborhood outlined in this study is the functional center of transit in Kent County. The City of Dover and DelDOT have begun promoting bicycle facilities to serve riders. This neighborhood is walkable with some minor limitations. One preferred outcome from the process is to identify improvements to walkability and to eliminate impediments.

New Transit Bus Terminal

B.8 - State Capital Comparisons / Demographics

Jefferson City, Mo.

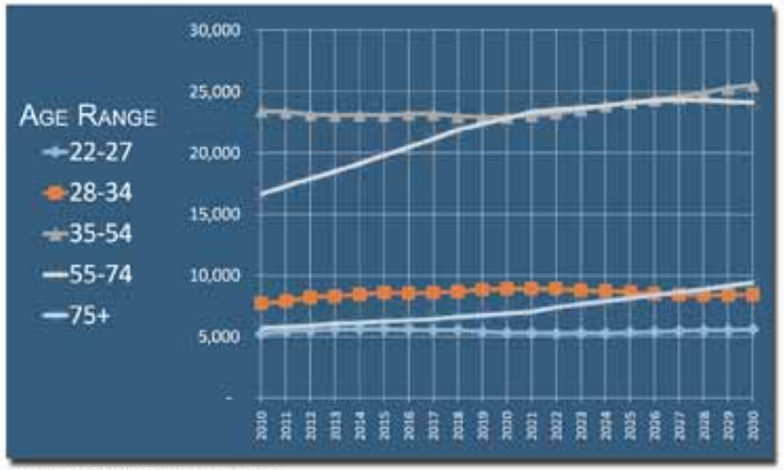
Concord, N.H.

Annapolis, Md.

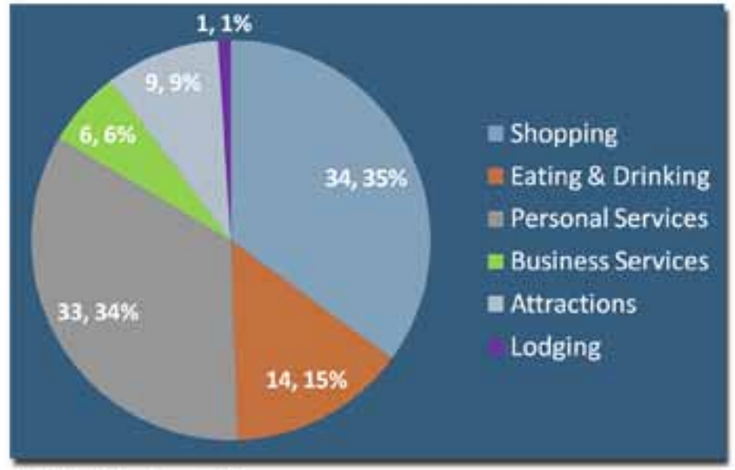
State Capital	Population	Legislature Size	Legislative Staff	Downtown Jobs
Dover, DE	36,560	62	125	9,713
Annapolis, MD	36,879	188	732	5,301
Concord, NH	42,546	424	179	n/a
Frankfort, KY	27,382	138	679	6,330
Helena, MT	29,939	150	237	12,487
Jefferson City, MO	41,297	197	509	12,342
Juneau, AK	30,796	60	460	6,075

Downtown Dover boasts much economic strength, similar to those of other state capitals of comparable size such as Annapolis, Md, Concord, N.H., and Jefferson City, Mo. While greater Dover has seen its share of suburban sprawl, it retains its rich, historic architecture. Within the downtown, and within proximity of the study area, there are major economic anchors, including state, city, and county government, as well as Wesley College and the Bayhealth Medical Center campus. The city also offers amenities to its residents and visitors, including a new public library under construction. Many churches are located throughout the city, as well as numerous museums and galleries. The city is host to a number of organized special events throughout the year including First Night Dover, Dover Days, and the Dover 4th of July celebration. Dover also has a decorative fountain downtown, which is another example of the cultural amenities that the city could build upon to create a desirable destination for locals and visitors.

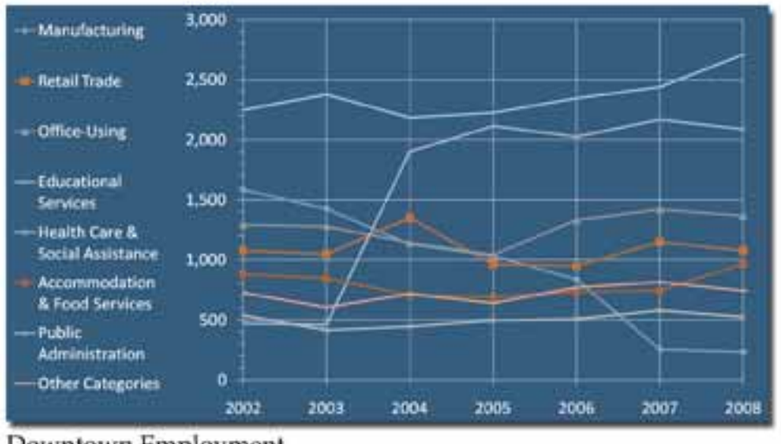
B.9 - Development Marketing & Program Brief



Kent County Household
Projections Through 2030



Existing Business Mix



Downtown Employment
By Sector

PRIMARY RETAIL NEEDS

Coffee Shops	Florist
Sandwhich Shops	Optical
Ice Cream	Drugstore
Candy	Toys / Hobbies
Urban Grocery	Cigars
Specialty Food	Restaurants - All Types
Furniture and Decor	Boutique Hotels

Potential Funding Sources:

- Funds raised from existing property owners
- Business Improvement District – ad valorem tax
- Special Development District – ad valorem tax or special assessment
- Parking Authority Benefit District - assessment
- Recurring downtown revenues
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)District – regular property tax
- Broad-based recurring revenues
- Realty transfer tax
- Hotel tax (collected by state)

Financing Source Issues:

- Assessments and new ad valorem taxes burden existing property owners and could discourage investment
- TIF revenue generation is relatively weak due to a low tax rate and assessments, and ability to only capture the city's share of the tax bill
- Realty transfer tax may be committed to the city's general government needs
- Hotel tax would need to be allocated to the city by the state through an agreement

Recurring Revenue Sources:

- Finding a recurring revenue source would be ideal
- Adds stability in funding; could be bonded
- Allow for upfront investment in public improvements
- Realty Transfer Tax
- Twenty years of pledged revenue could potentially support a bond of up to $13 million
- Hotel Tax
- Twenty years of the state's general fund share could potentially support a bond of up to $55 million