

Tom Town Neighborhood

Introduction

The Tom Town Community is named for Tom Simmons, a former slave who worked for the prominent Myddleton family. Mr. Simmons and his wife purchased most of the land that forms the Tom Town Community. The Simmons labored in the Myddletons' fields in exchange for the land. A small pocket park in the community also bears Tom's name, Tom's Corner.

General Condition

The Tom Town community is largely residential with commercial uses on the western edge of the community along the North Ashley Street corridor. The southeastern section of the community is dominated by industrial uses as shown on the Land Use Map. Ora Lee West, a public housing facility owned and operated by the Valdosta Housing Authority, is located in the northwestern section of the community. The City has an automobile maintenance center, the water/sewer department, and several offices in the heart of the community. The Future Development Map calls for Tom Town to develop into five character areas: Park/Recreation/Conservation, Established Residential, Transportation/Communication/Utilities, Neighborhood Activity Center, and Regional Activity Center.



The southwestern corner of Tom Town is in the Valdosta Local Historic Districts and includes seventeen documented historic resources. The portion of Tom Town not included in the Valdosta Local Historic District includes 185 documented historic resources. Care should be taken when rehabilitation or redevelopment projects are undertaken to preserve the traditional rhythm of the streetscape. A wide variety of options are available for rehabilitation and new construction that protect historic character while maintaining affordability. For example, new construction should look to the Valdosta Historic District Design Guidelines and the surrounding housing stock for direction on issues such as roof style and pitch, fenestration (the arrangement of windows and doors), building setbacks, etc. The historic resources of Tom Town are shown on the Historic Resources Map.

Census Data

The Tom Town neighborhood is included in parts of four Census Block Groups; however, for purposes of this plan only the Block Groups with the largest percentage of land in Tom Town were analyzed. Those include:

- Census Tract 110; Block Group 1 (92.24%)
- Census Tract 110; Block Group 2 (7.66%)

The Census data indicates that there are 256 families and 329 households in Tom Town. The average income of Tom Town residents is \$11,308 per year and 353 people are living below the poverty line. There are 340 people enrolled in school though only .43% have graduated from high school and .05% have a Bachelors degree or higher. Table TT-1 shows the age distribution of Tom Town residents and Table TT-2 reflects the racial composition of the community.

Table TT-1 Tom Town- Age Distribution	
Age	Number
0-4	125
5-9	106
10-19	231
20-49	411
50-64	84
65 and up	98
TOTAL:	1055

SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2000

Table TT-2 Tom Town- Race Distribution	
Race	Number
White	226
African American	822
Hispanic	0
Indian	0
Asian	7
Other	0
TOTAL:	1055

SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2000

According to the Census figures there are 150 owner-occupied housing units and 180 renter- occupied housing units in Tom Town. This data should not be confused with the data collected as part of the housing inventory as the purpose, and therefore the data collection and analysis, was very different.

Crime

Based on crime data obtained from the SGRDC for calendar year 2006, 35 percent of all crimes in the Tom Town community were larcenies and 22 percent were simple assault. These were mostly west of North Troup Street and with a concentration on East Ann Street as shown on the Community Crime Map. In an effort to reduce these crime occurrences, police could work with residents in these areas to form neighborhood watch groups to increase visibility in the problem areas. Drug related crimes were more spread out in the Tom Town community than in other communities. Thus, a more broad vigilance is required than in the other communities.

The detailed crime statistics are outlined in Table TT-3 below.

Table TT-3 Tom Town Crime Statistics - 2006		
Crime	No. of Incidents	Percent of Total Crime
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	8	4.17%
AUTO-THEFT	8	
BURGLARY	32	4.50%
DRUG VIOLATIONS	45	
LARCENY	91	3.80%
ROBBERY	7	6.48%
SIMPLE ASSAULT	58	6.51%
WEAPONS VIOLATIONS	12	
TOTAL:	261	4.90%

SOURCE: SGRDC and Valdosta Police Department

Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities



The Tom Town community only has one park, Tom's Corner, which is located at the corner of East Mary Street and North Troup Street. The park is 0.8 acres and has a pavilion and a playground. The park is well maintained and provides needed recreational opportunities, yet the park is very small. The park is centrally located yet is quite a distance for residents in the eastern section of the community.

Vallotton Park is located a few blocks north of the community boundary. The park is 12.7 acres and has a large open field for baseball/softball practice uncovered picnic areas. Thus, Vallotton Park is accessible for residents in northern Tom Town. The City should study areas in and around Tom Town for future parks as the community has the fewest recreational facilities easily accessible, in comparison with the other pilot communities.



The City's Azalea City Trail, a multi-use trail, also snakes through the northwestern section of the Tom Town community. The trail stretches from the Craig Center to the Vallotton Youth Complex following East Ann and Marion Streets in the community. The separated paved trail provides an enjoyable and safe place for bicycling, walking, jogging, and other recreational activities. The needed sidewalks discussed above will better connect the trail with the community and produce a welcoming pedestrian environment. The City plans to expand the Azalea City Trail in the future and better integrate it with the City and various destinations.

The Tom Town community possesses an adequate number of childcare facilities. The community has eight, as seen on the Community Facilities Map. These eight facilities are spread rather evenly throughout the community making childcare accessible to most residents in the community. Further, nine childcare facilities are located just outside the community boundaries.

The Tom Town community does not have a community center located in the community boundaries. However, the Craig Center is fairly close to the Tom Town community and is convenient for residents

on the western edge of the community. Community centers provide a meeting area and a location for various community social services. A long term goal for the City should be that every resident will have access to a community center. Community centers are costly to build and maintain, so the City should research and spread the centers out evenly.

Infrastructure Conditions

Sidewalks are present on Ashley Street and most of East Gordon Street, except the section of East Gordon Street between North Troup Street and Broad Street. This section of East Gordon Street needs a sidewalk to provide a safe means for pedestrian travel along the corridor. The sections of streets that surround the Ora Lee West housing facility also have a sidewalk. However, none of these sections extend far enough or connect to other pedestrian routes. Sidewalks do not connect the housing facilities with the local IGA a few blocks away. Like the Pinevale community, Tom Town has several main north- south thoroughfares, and these need sidewalks for pedestrian safety. These include North Lee Street, North Troup Street, and North Forrest Street. A sidewalk on North Lee Street and North Troup Streets would connect with the current sections of sidewalk around the Ora Lee West housing facility discussed above.

The City has an automobile maintenance center, the water/sewer department, and several offices in the heart of the community. Myrtle Street dead ends and becomes a private entrance for City employees, and this causes connectivity problems. Further, the facility feels isolated from the surrounding area, and this is significant as the property is quite large. The City is highly unlikely to relocate the departments and maintenance center, but the City must work to better integrate the facilities into the surrounding area.

Housing

According to the U.S. Census, the median year of construction of homes in Tom Town is 1960. Though this housing stock is a bit older, it is very feasible to consider these structures as candidates for rehabilitation.

The housing team surveyed 329 parcels in Tom Town. 265 structures, 1 park, and 63 vacant lots were inventoried. The results of the inventory are summarized in Table TT-4 and shown on the Housing Conditions Map. While only three churches were specifically identified in the inventory, there are at least four churches in the community as shown on the Community Facilities Map. The Unused Lot Conformity Map provides specific information about the size and location of vacant lots.

Table TT-4 Tom Town- Neighborhood Survey Summary	
Business	60
Churches	3
Multi-Family	6
Manufactured Home	3
Single Family	179
Vacant Lots	63
Valdosta Housing Authority	14
Park	1
Total parcels inventoried	329

SOURCE: SGRDC Housing Inventory 2006

Of the 265 structures inventoried, 236 are occupied. The break-down of occupied units is detailed in Table TT-5 below.

Table TT-5 Tom Town - Occupancy			
Use	Occupied	Vacant	Abandoned
Business	57	2	1
Churches	3	0	0
Multi-Family	6	0	0
Manufactured Home	3	0	0
Single Family	153	23	3
Valdosta Housing Authority	14	0	0
TOTAL:	236	25	4

SOURCE: SGRDC Housing Inventory 2006

Of the 265 structures inventoried, 84 were found to be in acceptable condition – 60 businesses, 6 multi-family units, 3 manufactured homes, and only 12 single family homes. Fortunately, only six structures were deemed dilapidated or in an uninhabitable condition. The vast majority of the single family residences (98) only need minor repair while 63 are in need of major repair. A summary of the condition of the inventoried structures is found in Table TT-6 below.

Table TT-6 Tom Town - Condition				
Use	Acceptable	Minor Repair	Major Repair	Dilapidated
Business	60	0	0	0
Churches	3	0	0	0
Multi-Family	6	0	0	0
Manufactured Home	3	0	0	0
Single Family	12	98	63	6
Valdosta Housing Authority	0	0	0	0
TOTAL:	84	98	63	6

SOURCE: SGRDC Housing Inventory 2006

Economic Development Opportunities

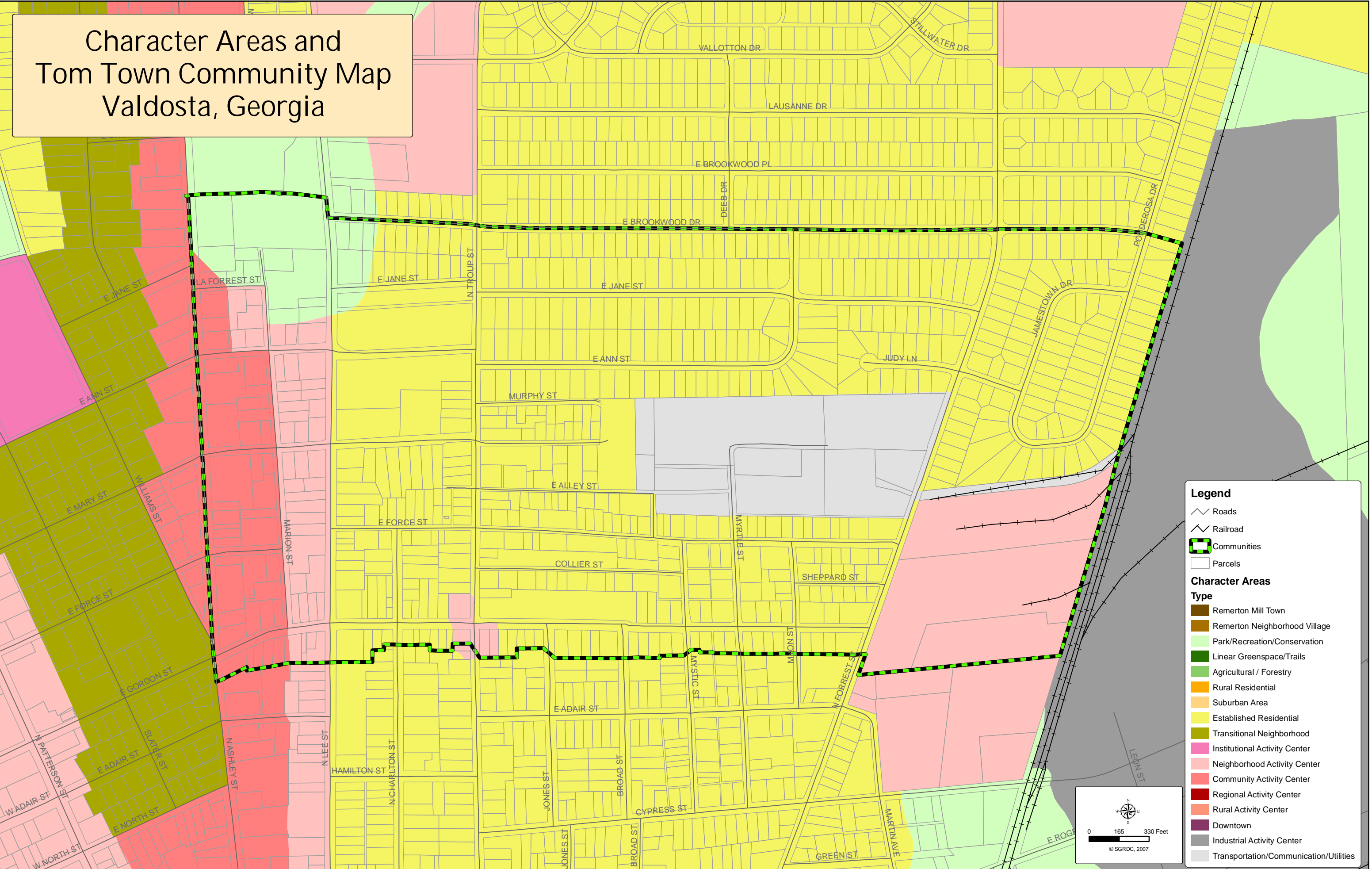
The North Ashley Street corridor in the Tom Town community is a major hub for commercial activity. However, this corridor is underutilized and could be used more intensively. Encouraging redevelopment of these unused and underutilized lots would aid in the economic revitalization of these areas and contribute positively to the tax base. Redevelopment could provide accessible employment for residents in the community, while providing convenient services for those in the area. The corridor should be accessible yet not disruptive to nearby residential areas.

Conclusion

The Tom Town community has many assets including the Azalea City Trail and a convenient commercial corridor; however, neither is being used to its full potential. The housing stock in the Tom Town community is aging and many houses in the community need significant repairs. Housing rehabilitation projects along with better linkages to current community assets will help make the Tom Town a vital community once again.

Tom Town Map Appendix

Character Areas and Tom Town Community Map Valdosta, Georgia



Legend

Roads

Railroad

Communities

Parcels

Character Areas

Type

Remerton Mill Town

Remerton Neighborhood Village

Park/Recreation/Conservation

Linear Greenspace/Trails

Agricultural / Forestry

Rural Residential

Suburban Area

Established Residential

Transitional Neighborhood

Institutional Activity Center

Neighborhood Activity Center

Community Activity Center

Regional Activity Center

Rural Activity Center

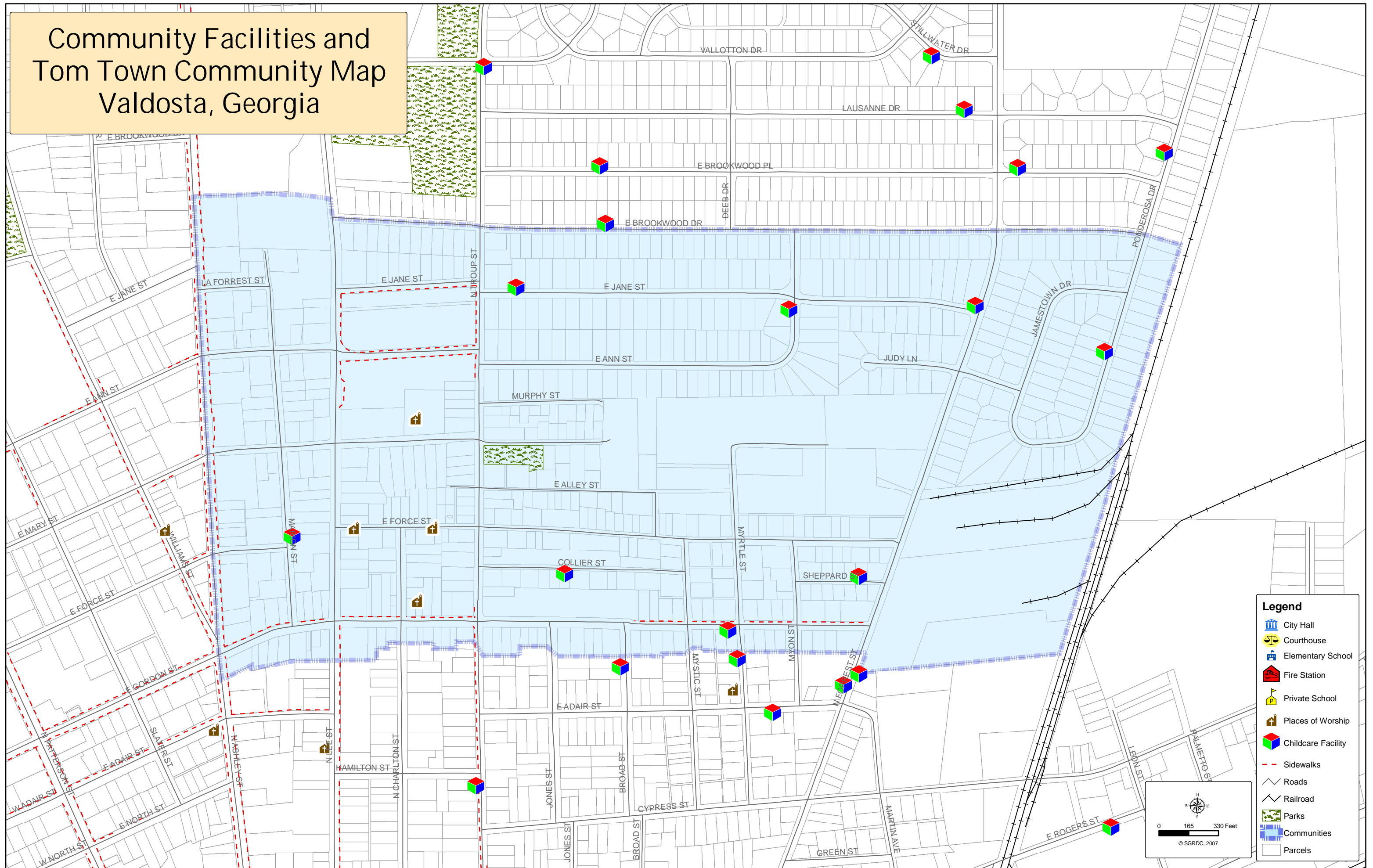
Downtown

Industrial Activity Center

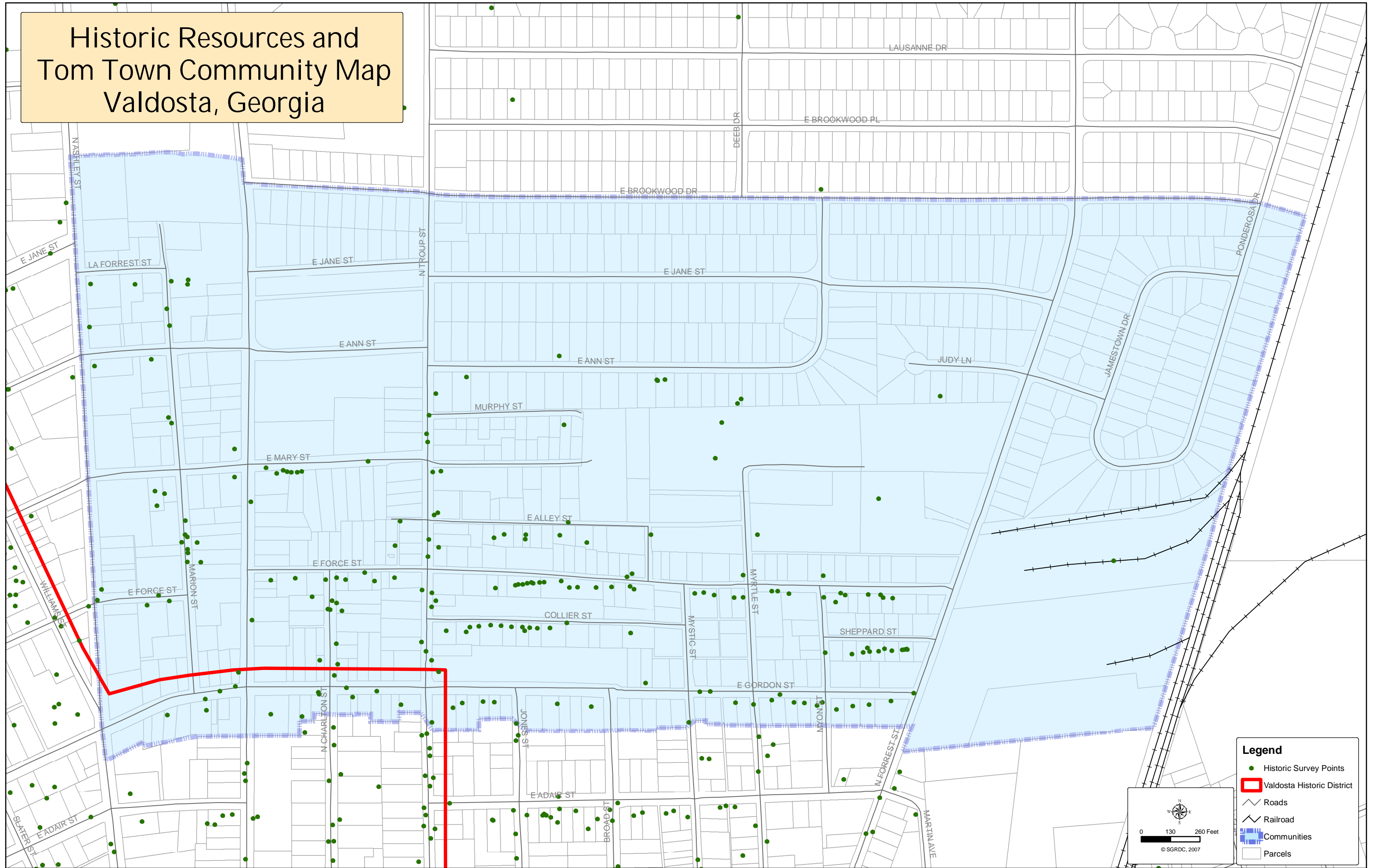
Transportation/Communication/Utilities

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Community Facilities and Tom Town Community Map Valdosta, Georgia



Historic Resources and Tom Town Community Map Valdosta, Georgia



Zoning and Tom Town Community Map Valdosta, Georgia

