

PART THREE - EXISTING CONDITIONS

Demographics

The population within the city limits of Walton has slowly, but continually, increased since 1950 when it was 1,358 according to the U.S. Census Bureau (see **Figure 6**). The latest estimate for the population of the incorporated City of Walton (as of July 1, 2014) is 3,870 people. That is an increase of 2,512 people over the past 65 years and 235 since the official Census in 2010. The population will continue to increase thanks to residential developments annexed by Walton over the past decade.

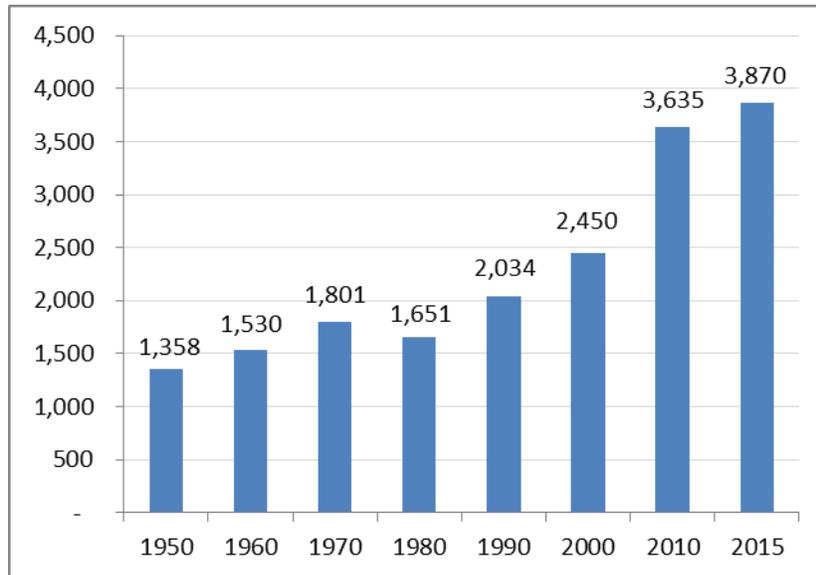


Figure 6 - Walton historical population

As these subdivisions build out the City will see a continuation of this steady population increase. There are approximately 30 businesses and a dozen public service destinations within the study area with the largest draws being the City Building, Senior Center, Library, and the few businesses in the core of the business district. These destinations draw from the surrounding population beyond the City limits. Although the peak times of increased population occur primarily during weekday business hours, occasional events held in and around historic downtown Walton attract far greater numbers of people during traditionally non-peak hours. These events include Walton Old Fashioned Days, Pig Fest, and other events in and around Main Street. Sunday mornings are also peak times for pedestrian activity due to the presents of several churches along Main Street.

Property Inventory

As a result of the planning process, it was determined that an inventory of the buildings and lots in the study area along Walton's Main Street was needed to provide a snapshot of existing uses, locations of vacant buildings and/or lots, and potential sites for future development and/or redevelopment. Students from the Business Management class walked the study area and helped

Planning Commission staff to document and describe the design and use of all the structures as well as identifying vacancies. This information can provide the backbone of an updateable property inventory spreadsheet that should be valuable in helping connect potential businesses with the owners of appropriate vacant buildings or leasable spaces in the study area.

A total of 104 primary buildings were identified among the 129 parcels in the study area. Many parcels have additional buildings or structures (e.g., garages, sheds) and there are two instances where a single parcel contains two primary buildings with separate street addresses. Commercial uses are located primarily toward the north end of the study area, which is almost exclusively residential in nature to the south of Needmore Street. With the exception of the 1901 Walton High School building (now multi-family housing), buildings range between 1 and 2.5 stories in height. The oldest building in the study area is the 1860s Norman House occupied by Chambers & Grubbs Funeral Home. Most of the primary buildings were built between c. 1870 and c. 1960 and less than 10% of the building stock appears to be less than 40 years old.

Some of the key statistics related to primary buildings are presented below in (see **Figure 7**). . At the time of the inventory (June 2015) the Occupancy rate stood at 85%, with 13 vacant buildings and 3 others of indeterminate status. Two-thirds of the building stock is in Good or better condition, while 27% might be considered to be in Fair condition. Just seven buildings were noted to be in a Poor or dilapidated state. However, the block between Needmore Street and Mary Grubbs Highway has a noticeable number of poorly maintained buildings. One house has garbage piled on its front porch, which produces a strong odor easily detected by pedestrians. Residential uses (single and multi-family) represent 57% of the 104 primary buildings in the study area. One quarter (25%) of the total was commercial in nature at the time of the inventory, including barber/beauty shops, retail, childcare, banking, professional services, funeral services, and others. There are also 3 restaurants and 3 buildings which are mixed use residential/commercial. Six buildings are in use at least part-time for religious purposes and 6 others are public, including the Walton City Building and Walton Branch of the Boone County Public Library.

Figure 7: Primary Building Statistics from the Property Inventory (104 Total)

OCCUPANCY STATUS	#	CONDITION:	#	CURRENT USE:	#
Occupied	88	Excellent	6	Single Family Residential	53
Vacant	13	Good	63	Multi-Family Residential	7
Unknown	3	Fair	28	Commercial	26
		Poor	7	Mixed Commercial/Residential	3
				Public	6
				Lodge/Church	6
				Restaurant	3

Most of the land area in the historic downtown area is devoted to a viable land use and therefore leaves little potential for new development without directly replacing existing land uses and/or buildings. A detailed printout of the inventory is attached to this document as **Appendix A**.

Walton has a unique “small-town” character that can be seen in its many historically and architecturally significant buildings in the downtown area. However, most of the historic properties in and around Walton have not been assessed for inclusion in the Kentucky Historic Inventory, in part because the last county-wide inventory was conducted in the mid-1990s.

There is little potential for establishment of a National Register district along Main Street in the downtown area because so many historic buildings have been lost or altered. However, a number of buildings in the study area have National Register potential as individual properties. Three residences on (or adjacent to) North Main Street were added to the National Register in 2005, including the Tomlin House (109 N. Main), Mayhugh House (133 N. Main), and Blau House (15 Alta Vista). **Figure 8** lists other properties in the study area which have good potential for listing in the National Register in their current condition.

Figure 8: Historic Properties in the Study Area with National Register Potential

Historic Name	Address	Style	Date	Current Use
Old Walton Equitable Bank	19 N Main	Neoclassical	1929	US Bank
Norman House	45 N Main	Italianate	1860s	Chambers & Grubbs Funeral Home
Walton Graded School	85 N Main	Neoclassical	1901	Apartments
Dudley House	91 N Main	Queen Anne	1890s	Single Family Home
Berry Johnson House	93 N Main	Queen Anne	1890s	Single Family Home
Alan Gaines House	95 N Main	Queen Anne	1890s	Single Family Home
House	110 N Main	Queen Anne	1890s	Duplex Home
Walton Hall	10 S Main	Neoclassical	1906	Law Office
Commercial Building	12 S Main		1910s	Mixed Use
Dixie State Bank	14 S Main	Neoclassical	c. 1928	Commercial
Professor Gordon House	22 S Main	Craftsman	1910s	Single Family Home
William Brittenham House	32 S Main	Craftsman	1910s	Single Family Home

There is value in encouraging retention and rehabilitation of properties in the existing National Register District as well as listing of other potentially eligible properties elsewhere along Main Street. While the original purpose of the National Register was to offer a level of protection from federally funded or permitted projects, there is some financial benefit as well. National Register properties in Kentucky are eligible for two types of rehabilitation tax credits. Income producing properties (restaurants, apartment buildings, etc.) are eligible for the 20% Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit. Kentucky offers a state-level 20% tax credit for income producing properties. Kentucky is one of a number of states which offers Rehabilitation Tax Credits (30% with a minimum \$20,000 investment) for residential properties.

Zoning

As mentioned in the Introduction, the northern half of the study area is zoned Walton Downtown (WD). The south half of the study area is primarily zoned Suburban Residential One (SR-1) (see **Figure 9**). These two halves of the study area are quite opposite of each other in terms of character with one being a downtown business district with mixed uses and the other being an historic single-family residential stretch. The two, however, complement each other such that local businesses in the north half can be supported in part by the residents in the south half.

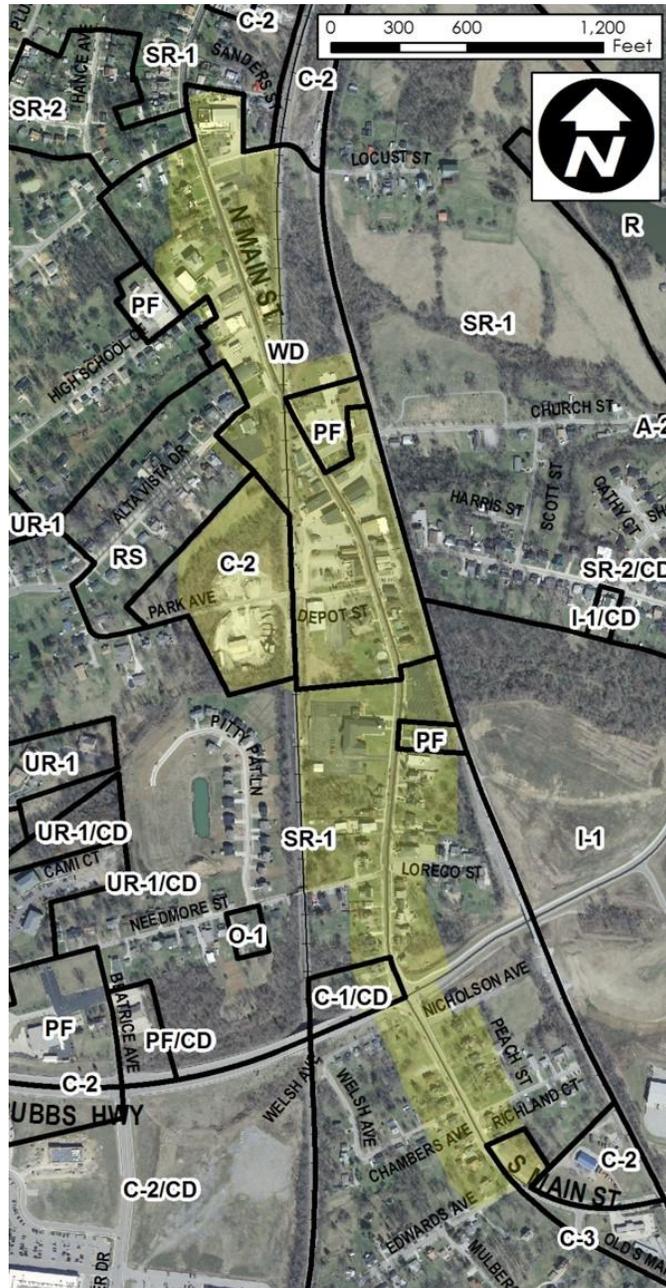


Figure 9 - Zoning

Comprehensive Plan

The 2010 Boone County Comprehensive Plan recognized the importance of the historic Main Street portion of Walton. In the Land Use Element (p. 172), local commercial infill development is encouraged to occur along Dixie Highway in Walton. The 2010 Comprehensive Plan also recognized the need to protect Walton’s “historic resources and its small town character,” and added that “Walton’s Main Street is the most functional business district with a small town

character in the county.” Over the years, private demolition of buildings has called attention to the fact that Walton’s historic Main Street will continue to see dramatic changes and that a strategic plan is needed.

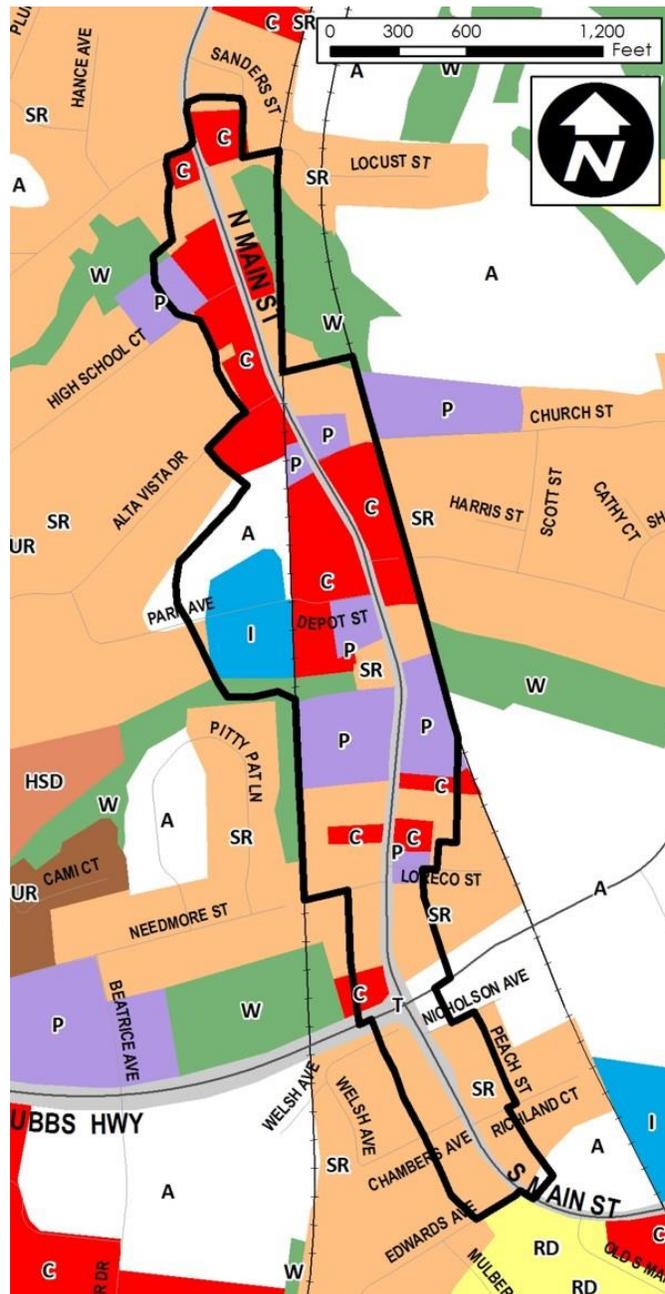


Figure 10 - 2009 Existing Land Use

The 2009 Existing Land Use Map (**Figure 10**) reflects the common knowledge that the northern half of the study area is primarily Commercial (C) while the southern is comprised mostly of Suburban Density Residential (SR) with both halves showing some Public Facilities (P) uses such as churches, the US Post Office, and other government uses. The 2035 Future Land Use Map (**Figure 11**) envisions this to essentially remain the same as the development opportunities are limited.

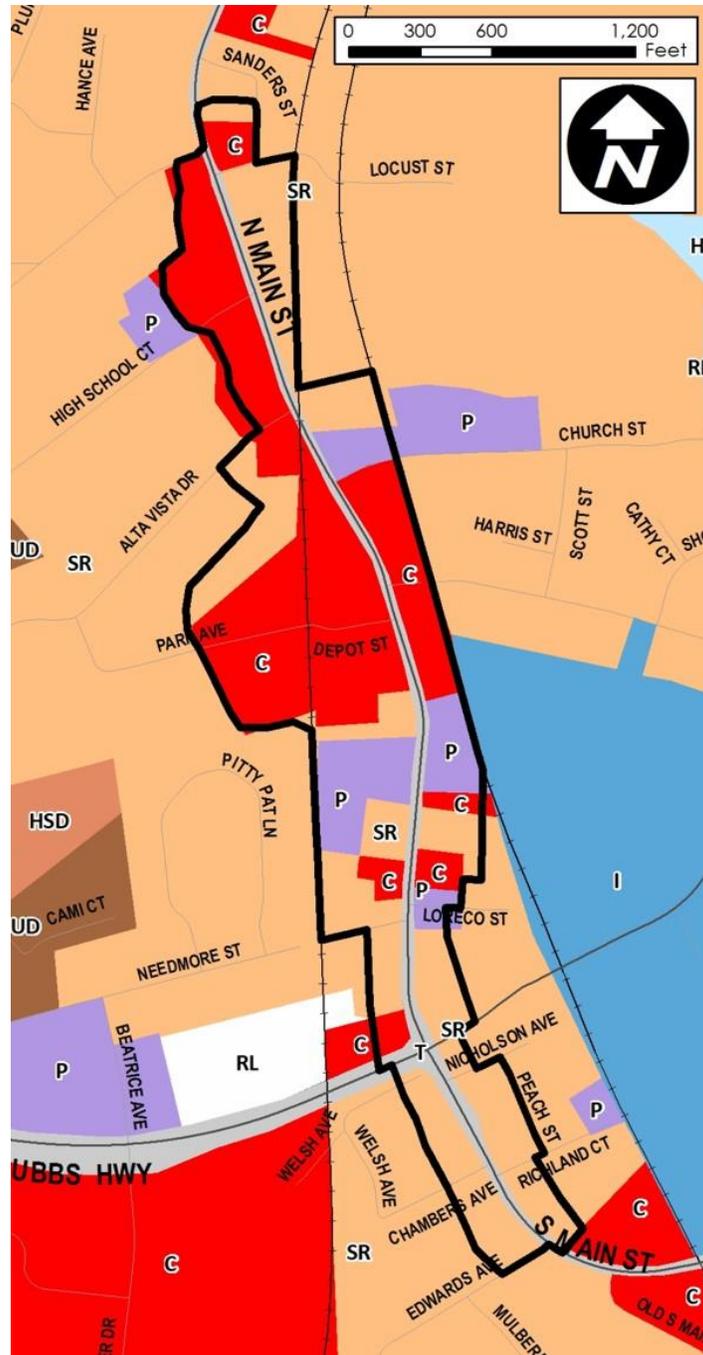


Figure 11 - 2035 Future Land Use

Transportation

The primary transportation corridor in Walton is U.S. 25 (Dixie Highway), or Main Street, which runs down the middle of the historic downtown corridor. This was the main north/south vehicular transportation route until the early 1960s when Interstate 75 (I-75) was constructed and basically bypassed the historic Walton downtown. Since that time, most traffic passes through the Walton

area on I-75 instead of Dixie Highway as it had in the past. In 2008-09, Mary Grubbs Highway was extended eastward towards Kenton County and essentially bisected the study area in two and also claimed several residential properties in the process. Furthermore, in 2006 the condemnation of the High Street bridge leading east over the Norfolk & Southern Railroad tracks cut off a local in-town connection to several residents. The negative transportation impacts of this closure will soon be partially resolved as there are plans to construct a pedestrian bridge over the tracks in the same place thanks to a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant applied for recently.

Parking in the study area has long been a point of contention as to whether or not it is lacking or sufficient. During the process of gaining an inventory of properties and buildings along Main Street, the students from Walton-Verona High School also identified and mapped out parking opportunities in order to better understand this situation (see **Figure 12**). In the study area there are approximately 950 parking spaces either on-street or in private and public lots. There are about 100 on-street parking spaces along Main



Street and these spaces are distributed evenly throughout the study area. Of the 850 parking lot spaces, only 63 are located within public lots such as the City of Walton parking lot and the Library lot. The remaining spaces are in private lots of businesses, churches, or other establishments.

There appears to be plenty of on-street parking during the daytime hours and even several spaces on week nights where people can park and visit the few establishments open late. However, there does appear to be a lack of on-street parking to support weekend night parking needs. There are plenty of private lots in the area but are almost exclusively reserved for the use of patrons to the particular business they are owned by. The fact that in the evenings those parking lots are vastly underused opens up the possibility of creating some sort of public parking agreement between businesses who may need them for evening customers or even with the City of Walton in order to encourage off-hours parking alternatives for hours when professional offices may be closed and are not utilizing them.



Figure 12 - Parking spaces, lots

2015 Survey Results

The survey used to gather data for this plan was made available in paper form and online through Survey Monkey from late February through the end of March 2015. The number of respondents was better than expected with over 350 people taking the survey. The full results of the survey helped staff to understand the needs and opinions of those directly involved with historic Walton Main Street and guide development of appropriate recommendations.

Survey results revealed several issues that were already assumed as well as others which were not anticipated. One goal of the survey was to reach every age group and in the end, all ages were well represented. Some other observations of note include the fact that twice as many females as males responded. Two-thirds of the respondents lived in Walton and most of those who shop in Walton are from the immediate area. Over half of respondents said they visit Walton less than once a week; including 9% who say they never visit Main Street - most claiming that “there just isn’t anything they we need.” Those who do frequent Main Street do so for banking, government business, church, or to grab a bite to eat. Almost everyone who comes to Walton Main Street attend the special events in town such as Old Fashioned Days. Half attend Pig Fest or Christmas On Main. Twenty percent say the lack of parking keeps them away and almost everyone believes that the town needs more parking.

Of the 25 business owners and operators who responded to the survey, most have had their businesses on Main Street for more than a decade which is indicative of business stability. When asked why they opened in town they said it was because it was close to home and space was available. The great majority of business owners plan on staying in Walton for the long term. Also of note is the fact that patrons and business owners all agree that Walton needs more restaurant choices or a coffee shop in town. For a detailed question-by-question summary of the survey results see **Appendix B**.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

In addition to assisting with the survey and inventory tasks, the Business Management class conducted a “SWOT” Analysis of Walton’s historic Main Street. This process, developed in the 1960s by Albert S Humphrey, identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within and around the study area. What makes a SWOT analysis helpful is that, with a little thought, it can reveal opportunities that may be used to one’s advantage. Furthermore, by understanding the weaknesses of the community, the City of Walton can manage, prepare for, and even eliminate threats that would otherwise catch it by surprise. By using self-examination as well as examining the surrounding elements impacting the city, one can start to develop a strategy that helps distinguish Walton’s historic Main Street from outside “competitors” in order to compete and even thrive.

Walton, as do most older communities do, struggles to maintain its historic charm while embracing the inevitable growth and progress going on in and around it. Walton’s one-time thriving city center, the Main Street Business District, remains intact but has lost traffic and businesses for

many reasons including, but not limited to, the building of the Walton Towne Center and Interstate I-75. A summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are as follows:

Strengths:

- *Walkable business district (.5 mile in length);*
- *Easy access (less than 1 mile from expressway);*
- *Increased local traffic due to Walton Towne Center;*
- *Slow, but steady, growing population in and around the City of Walton;*
- *Historic relevance (Gaines House, National Register District, railroads, etc.);*
- *Strong sense of community;*
- *Co-ordinated community events (Old Fashion Day, Christmas on Main, etc.);*
- *Historic buildings potentially available for business use.*

Weaknesses:

- *Lack of parking (real or perceived);*
- *Limited number and variety of businesses;*
- *Lack of signage/branding;*
- *Lack public gathering areas;*
- *Lack of “destination-type” businesses;*
- *Limited landscaping/curb appeal;*
- *Some areas appear worn and neglected;*
- *Lack of safe pedestrian crossing areas;*
- *Disjointed mix of retail/residential space.*

Opportunities:

- *Available retail space (including historic buildings);*
- *Promote local history (Gaines House, railroad, etc.);*
- *Coordinate/plan with county officials;*
- *Re-establish Main Street as city center;*
- *Draw visitors from Walton Towne Center;*
- *Rejuvenate historic buildings.*

Threats:

- *Walton Towne Center’s existing and future businesses;*
- *Florence retail, dining, and entertainment alternate options;*
- *Potential loss of library;*
- *Potential lack of engagement from or resistance to change from both local businesses and residents;*
- *Possible reluctance by property owners to invest in improvements.*

With many strengths and positive attributes, the Walton Main Street Business District has much to offer both local and visiting patrons. Capitalizing on the prevalent strengths of Main Street, while taking advantage of the many opportunities that are available for growth and improvement is essential for the revitalization of the Walton Main Street Business District. Equally important to the success of Main Street, is to address current weaknesses and potential threats early, both within and outside of Walton itself.