

## 2. Research and Analysis

# Demographic and Economic Analysis

## Introduction

As part of the planning process, Urban Advisors researched the economic factors of demographic change, local employment, household income, housing and retail spending and markets, as well as wider area demographic trends that could have an impact on Jena’s local economy. Local citizens and business owners shared their thoughts on Jena, and their goals for Jena’s Vision. The results of this research are summarized in this section.

Jena is not a large town, but does draw from a larger area to support local businesses. There are existing employers who have plans to expand and there are resources available to help them do that. In addition, there are opportunities and funding to help expand the open space network, provide housing near downtown, and build new necessary infrastructure that could make Jena an even more attractive and accessible destination.

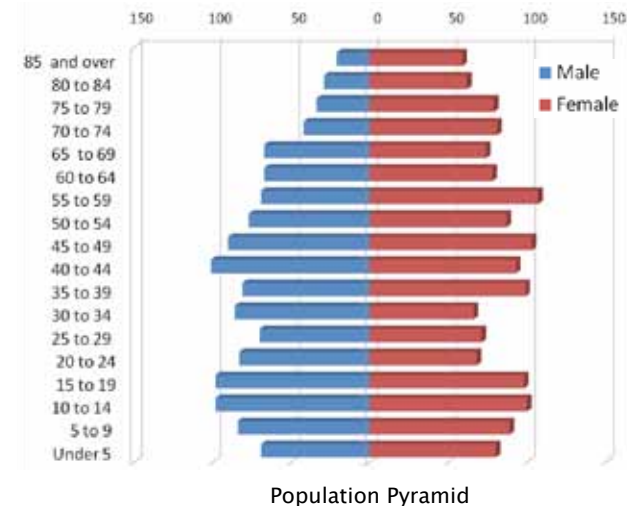
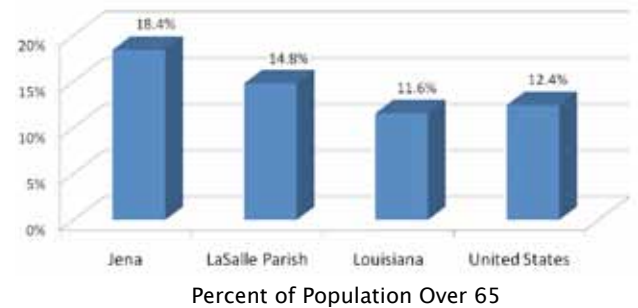
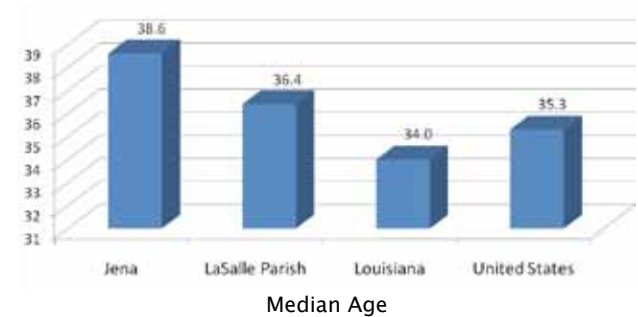
Jena also has the qualities that are desired by many retirees: community, housing affordability, access to modern medical facilities unusual for a town of its size, recreational opportunities, and a spirit of civic involvement that welcomes participation. There is a wave of demographic change coming as the baby boomer generation

reaches retirement age and Jena can be well positioned to take advantage of it to add new residents and welcome back previous residents.

As Jena changes, every accomplishment needs to be publicized and celebrated. It will be important to pursue a complete marketing strategy to let Louisiana and the rest of the country become acquainted with Jena. Jena offers real character, community and natural beauty. These are assets that are valuable and cannot be duplicated anywhere else. There is a hunger for genuine community and authentic environments; moving forward to enhance its assets and fix what needs to be repaired, Jena can achieve its goals.

## Population

A review of the 2000 Census reveals a variety of issues facing Jena. The following demographic information highlights specific aspects of Jena’s demographic make-up that may be relevant currently or in the near future. In 2000, Jena’s population was older than other comparable areas, implying a need for facilities and services that support an aging population. The population pyramid supports this conclusion, along with the need to retain or attract residents in the



years immediately after they have left high school. A high percentage of residents (53%) are married couples living together, which can be seen as factor in the stability of the community.

In 2000, the median age in Jena (38.6) was substantially higher than that of the parish (36.4), state (34.0) or entire US (35.3). This means on average Jena has an older population than the rest of the country. Jena also had a higher percentage of population over 65 years of age.

Jena’s population pyramid reveals the typical pattern of a higher percentage of females over age 70. The numbers are low for the age brackets from 20 to 29, demonstrating the often-found “brain drain” caused by children moving away for school and jobs in other communities and not returning.

## Housing

Jena provides a low-cost single-unit lifestyle to a substantial portion of its population. The high incidence of home ownership implies stability in the community. The low cost of entry housing means most of the community can afford to own a home. The lack of multifamily residential units means that many newcomers and those with lower incomes often live in other housing types, including manufactured homes and hotels.

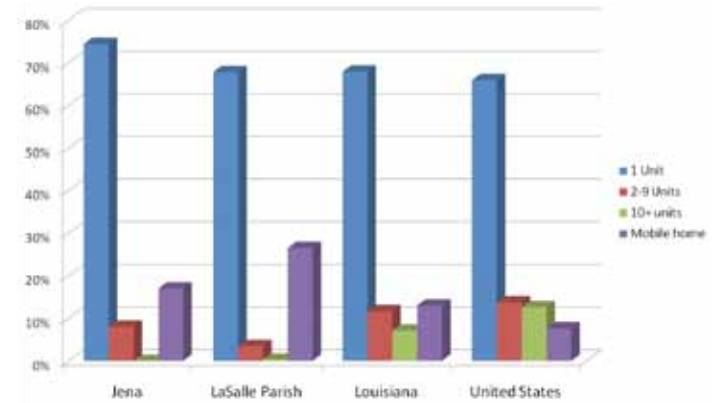
Jena is dominated by single-family houses. Jena has almost no multifamily options. In 2000, Jena had no multi-

family complexes with more than 10 units. Untapped markets exist for additional housing products such as apartments, townhouses, cottage courts and assisted living facilities. Jena has a very high incidence of owner occupancy (78%) compared to the parish (42%), state (68%) and US (66%). Jena’s owner-occupied housing is inexpensive, even by Louisiana standards.

Retirees have not, in the past been, viewed as a group that could engender economic development, but recent research has challenged that view. Of retirees who relocate, one of the groups is the “returnees,” people who grew up in places with limited employment opportunities and now, after productive lives, wish to return to their roots and their home. Jena has already seen some of this migration. Returnees bring skills, financial assets, and a willingness to help their community.

The key to attracting these groups are a sense of community, housing affordability coupled with good medical facilities, and a high quality of life, as evidenced in amenities such as a vital downtown and outdoor recreation options.

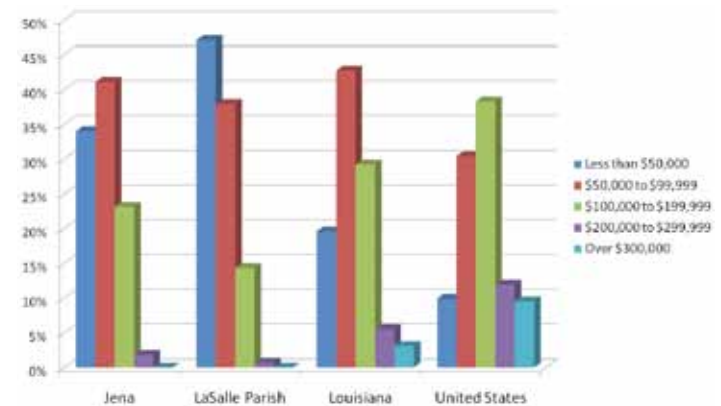
What all of this means to Jena is that by aggressively pursuing downtown redevelopment, and marketing to age groups in the pre-retirement range in Louisiana, and by reaching out through social networks to



Housing Units by Type



Percent of Units Owner Occupied



Value of Owner Occupied Units

connect to those who grew up in Jena, the Town could capture new wealth and new residents who contribute more to the tax base than they cost, spend more than their apparent income would indicate, and who are far more likely to volunteer to improve the Town than working age people who are still engaged full time with the responsibilities of jobs and family.

### Projected Household Growth

To understand population change over time, the future household projections for Jena, the surrounding area, and the state were analyzed. For the purposes of the study, a 15-minute drive time from downtown was looked at as opposed to the Town boundary because Jena comprises a market area wider than the Town limits.

	2000	2009	2015	Change 09 to 15
15 minutes	7,358	7,434	7,465	107
Wider Area	76,671	79,335	79,987	652
Louisiana	1,656,053	1,678,332	1,768,086	89,754

Source: ESRI BIS

Within a 15-minute drive of downtown (bottom right), 107 new households can be expected in the next five years. Within the larger region (top right), 652 new households are anticipated between 2009 and 2014. The state as a

whole is expected to grow by 89,754 households over the five year period. These growth figures suggest that if Jena can position itself effectively, then some increment of the regional and state growth could be captured by the Town.

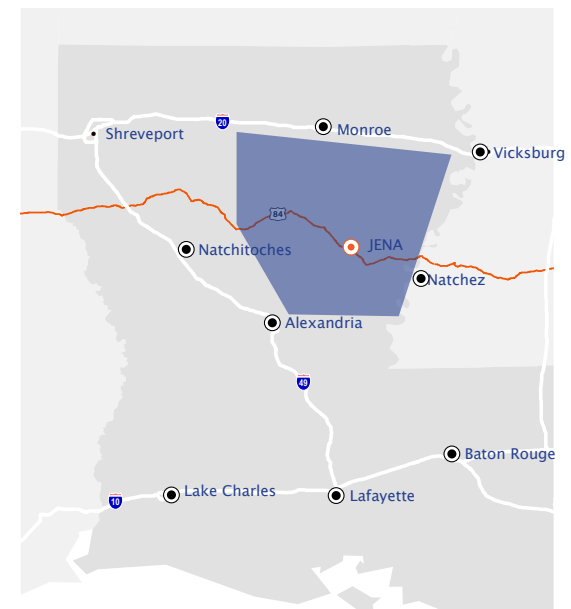
### Education

Jena’s educational attainment reflects the current industries in the community. With the growth and expansion of the hospital and related medical facilities, more highly-educated residents are likely.

Jena’s older population means a lower portion of its population is in the earliest school grades, and since there is no significant higher education in the area, the number of residents in college or graduate school is low.

The following schools serve Jena:

- Jena High, Grades 9 to 12;
- Jena Junior High, Grades 7 to 8;
- Good Pine Middle, Grades 4 to 6;
- Jena Elementary, Grades Pre-K to 3;
- Fellowship Elementary, Grades Pre-K to 8;
- Nebo Elementary, Grades Pre-K to 8; and
- Temple Christian Academy, Private, Grades Pre-K to 8.



Map showing geographic extent of wider area.



Map showing geographic extent of 15-minute drive time.

As reported in USA Today, “When retirees move, they bring money from elsewhere in the form of private pensions and Social Security payments, as well as savings and investments. That’s money spent locally, like the money paid to plant employees. But this money costs the new community nothing to generate—no relocation “bonus,” no tax break, no polluted air. And just like plant salaries, this new money creates jobs. Gene Warren, president of Thomas, Warren & Associates, a Phoenix-based company that advises public and private-sector organizations on economic development, says, “The ratio of jobs created varies. But I would say the ratio is about 1.5 to 2.5 jobs per retiree family. You get the service people in restaurants and retail stores. But you also get the store owners and managers. You get doctors and medical technicians.”

*(Ben Brown, USA Today, April 19, 2004)*

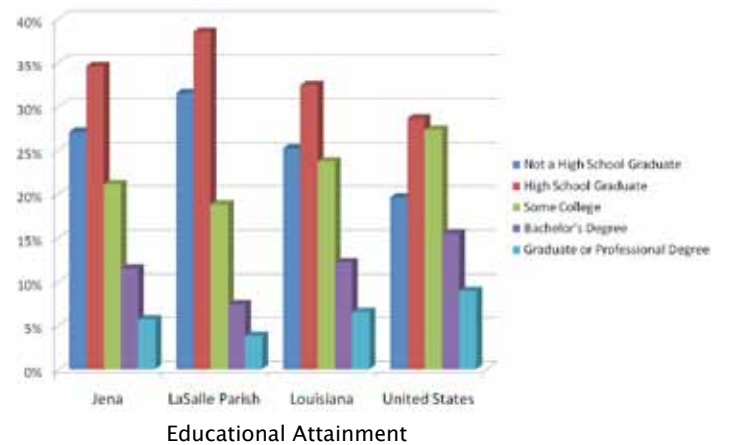
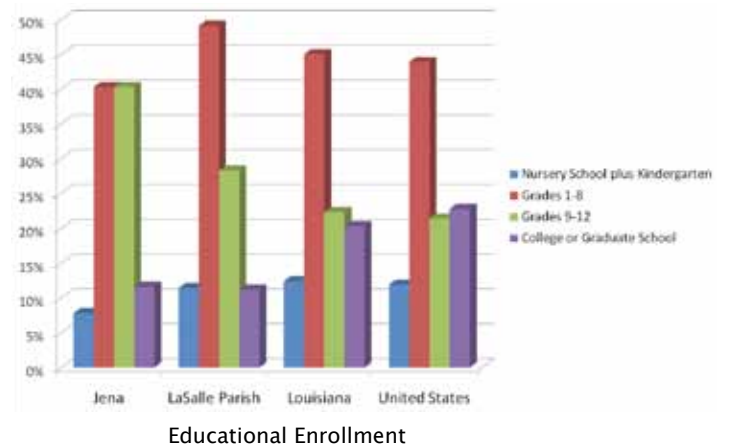
A high number of Jena’s residents have not graduated from high school, although the percentage is even higher in the surrounding parish. A limited number of residents have college or graduate school degrees.

The Rod Brady Vocational Technical College is located in Jena. The state funded vocational-technical school offers courses in automotive technology, carpentry, medical office assistant, nursing assistant, office systems, practical nursing and welding. Many colleges or universities are located near Jena. These institutions are nationally and internationally recognized as sponsoring extensive research activities. Northwestern State University offers some night classes at the Jena High School and also at their branch in Jonesville. Nearby colleges and universities include: Louisiana College in Pineville; Northwestern State University, in Jonesville; Louisiana State University in Alexandria; and the University of Louisiana in Monroe.

### Employment

Jena has a balance of occupations in the community except (as expected) for farming, fishing and forestry. Residents of Jena are commuting just about as long as their counterparts in the state or across the country. With a significant concentration of businesses in the Town, ap-

proximately half of the employees must be traveling as far as Alexandria and Monroe. In 2000, the median household income was \$30,938. 10% of families and 15% of the



population were living below the poverty threshold.

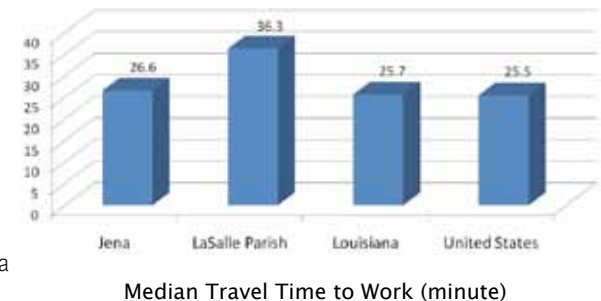
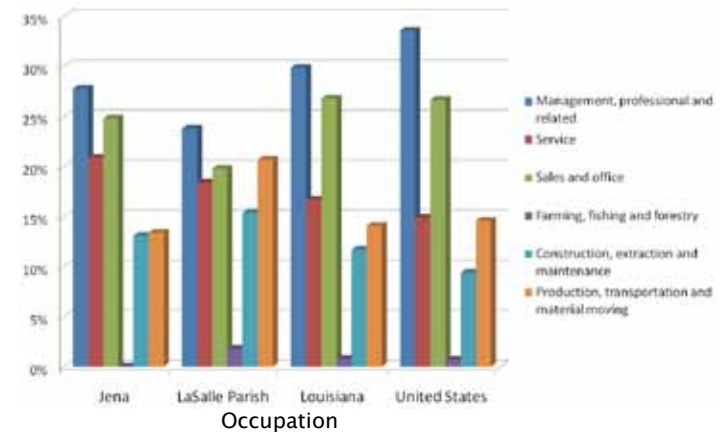
Wal-Mart recently built a 100,000 square foot Super-center just west of downtown. Ace Hardware opened a new 28,000 square foot store just east of downtown. Southern Heritage Bank opened its new two-story, 12,000 square foot building. Jena Town Hall has moved into the old Southern Heritage Bank building in downtown. Homeland Federal Saving Bank of Columbia, Louisiana, has opened a new branch in Jena. Dresser Rand opened a new expansion and now employs more than 100 people. Dollar General has relocated to a larger facility across from McDonald's. GEO Group has recently expanded the former Wackenhut Corrections Facility to house illegal alien detainees, at a cost of \$30 million dollars. LaSalle Detention Center is complete with courtroom facilities to process detainees for deportation to their country of origin. LaSalle General Hospital recently opened a new medical office building.

The location of a significant number of businesses within a short drive of downtown implies that many of the remaining residents are driving as far as Alexandria or Monroe (40+ minutes) to their work.

Jena has a significant concentration of service employment, but a modest concentration of management and professional jobs.

Major local employers include: LaSalle Parish School Board (441 employees); Justiss Oil Company (300 employees); GEO Group (250 employees); LaSalle General Hospital (291 employees); Wal-Mart (175 employees); Golden Age Nursing Home (132 employees); Dresser-Rand (100 employees); Hardtner Medical Center (90 employees); LaSalle Nursing Home (90 employees); Garan (69 employees); McCartney Oil Corporation (47 employees); XTO Energy (40 employees); and S.H. Loe Oil Corporation (35 employees).

If the Town is active in assisting local employers in expanding their facilities, there is a good chance that Jena could add 300 to 500 jobs in the next five years. There is at least one company looking for expansion space that could provide between 250 and 500 jobs within five years. In particular, the Town could use industrial revenue bonds available through The Louisiana Public Facilities Authority to assist with the expansion of existing businesses.



## Diversify Employment

Diversifying employment is necessary to add new jobs, keep young people in Jena and strengthen the local economy against economic downturns. Opportunities for diversification include:

**Health and Wellness.** This is a field of medicine that concentrates on offering services for wellness rather than for the treatment of disease. There is already effort underway by the LaSalle General Hospital to offer wellness services to local employers. This field is expected to rise in importance as healthcare changes and boomers enter retirement. Many jobs in this area can be performed by technicians, and certified caregivers who do not have higher degrees. As the base of retirees expands in Central North Louisiana, services delivering at-home care for seniors will also become a new market that will expand and require employees. Jena should seek to become a center for training and a business establishment location for this type of market.

**Building Energy Retrofitting.** There is funding available at the federal level for energy retrofits of existing businesses, residences and public buildings. The job skills required include carpentry, electrical, insulation installation, and

plumbing and mechanical trades. Peripheral jobs created include transportation and warehousing, support services for construction, marketing and advertising. In addition, there are tax credits to allow homeowners to pay for these services right now.

**Green Energy Sourcing.** While the primary industries in the region are oil, gas and timber, it would be wise to consider a complimentary industry, such as pulp wood biomass. This not only provides another source of funds to the existing industry, but it also diversifies the industrial economy by adding a renewable energy source as people become less dependent on oil and gas nationally. The state of Louisiana has a program for the use of biomass to replace coal and petroleum based fuels in generating power. Right now, the extensive forestry industry around Jena is being used for pulp. Paper use is expected to decline over the long term for a variety of reasons. With a ready workforce and existing resources, the forest slash and small trees could be used for biomass production, an industry that, unlike paper, is expected to increase over time.

**Natural Gas Systems and Controls Parts Manufacturing.** The parent company of one of Jena's larger employ-

ers is a parts manufacturer for natural gas hydraulic controls systems and parts. The Town should consider leveraging the success of the Jena branch of this business and make a real effort to diversify the local economy by bringing those functions and jobs to Jena. There are multiple sources of funding from the USDA from tax credits per employee, to infrastructure funding for the Town to pursue development and job creation. With the use of USDA sources and revenue bonds to assist in industry ready locations and advantageous employment incentives, this is an opportunity that should be pursued aggressively. Natural gas use is increasing and replacing older energy sources—as it increases, Jena could benefit for many years.

## Retail Activity

Interviews with local merchants indicate that Jena's market area comprises a much larger area than is usual for a town of Jena's size. Merchants report customers from within a 40 to 50 mile radius of Jena. To understand the local retail trade, market spending within a wider area and within a 15-minute drive of downtown was looked at (see maps on page 12). As downtown continues to expand its retail base, more visitors will undoubtedly be drawn to Jena. Long term, Jena should be able to increase the number of visitors to the area through continued development of tourist attractions (hunting, fishing, culture, history) and marketing programs (tourist brochure, branding or marketing theme) with local, regional and state level tourism organizations.

Many of the consumer spending categories are addressed locally by Wal-Mart, however, the retail analysis indicates several opportunities for additional businesses in downtown Jena. Possible new business opportunities include a quality sit-down restaurant, a men's and women's apparel store, a private health club or gym; and a household furniture store. There could also be a market for some additional convenience services such as dry cleaning/laundry and day care. The addition of a small

Consumer Spending: Wider Area  
(Numbers in Thousands)

Category	2009	2014	Change
Apparel & Services	\$81,341	\$83,397	\$2,056
Computers & Software	\$10,158	\$10,414	\$257
Movie/Entertainment	\$5,874	\$6,022	\$148
TV/Video/Sound	\$59,679	\$61,187	\$1,508
Pets	\$27,240	\$27,929	\$689
Toys, Sports Equipment	\$14,215	\$14,575	\$359
Photographs	\$5,575	\$5,716	\$141
Reading	\$7,349	\$7,535	\$186
Food/Beverage at Home	\$275,592	\$282,558	\$6,966
Restaurant	\$159,669	\$163,705	\$4,036
Drug	\$39,502	\$40,500	\$998
Eyeglasses	\$3,783	\$3,878	\$96
Household Furnishings/Equip/Supplies	\$60,795	\$62,332	\$1,537
Lawn & Garden	\$22,826	\$23,403	\$577
Personal Care Products	\$19,230	\$19,716	\$486
School Books and Supplies	\$4,836	\$4,959	\$122
Smoking Products	\$26,984	\$27,666	\$682
Totals	\$824,647	\$845,491	\$20,844

Source: ESRI BIS

Consumer Spending : Within 15 Minutes  
(Numbers in Thousands)

Category	2009	2014	Change
Apparel & Services	\$2,733	\$2,789	\$56
Computers & Software	\$340	\$347	\$7
Movie/ Entertainment	\$191	\$195	\$4
TV/Video/Sound	\$2,038	\$2,080	\$42
Pets	\$947	\$966	\$19
Toys, Sports Equipment	\$488	\$498	\$10
Photographs	\$192	\$196	\$4
Reading	\$257	\$262	\$5
Food/Beverage at Home	\$9,521	\$9,716	\$195
Restaurant	\$5,404	\$5,515	\$111
Drug	\$1,428	\$1,458	\$29
Eyeglasses	\$133	\$135	\$3
Household Furnishings/Equip/Supplies	\$2,031	\$2,072	\$42
Lawn & Garden	\$808	\$825	\$17
Personal Care Products	\$650	\$663	\$13
School Books and Supplies	\$162	\$165	\$3
Smoking Products	\$987	\$1,007	\$20
Totals	\$28,309	\$28,890	\$581

Source: ESRI BIS

downtown movie or live theater would add some “after hours” life to the area.

Perhaps the strongest opportunity for a new business downtown would be through the addition of a quality sit-down restaurant. Since Jena already acts as a dining destination, it is reasonable to expect additional restaurants in the area within the next five years. This will be especially likely if there is a new location for the construction of higher quality retail space such as the proposed Third Street Promenade. Since Jena currently lacks a quality sit-down restaurant, local residents are driving to places such as Alexandria to supplement their dining experience. This means local dollars that could be spent in Jena are being spent elsewhere. Currently, in Jena, the sale of alcohol is prohibited at local restaurants. In today’s market, quality sit-down restaurants depend heavily on alcohol sales for a significant portion of their income. If it becomes necessary to attract a quality restaurant, the Town should investigate the general public’s tolerance for allowing low-alcohol content drinks to be sold with meals and local restaurants.

Employees who work in the local area are “captive” in the sense that they are in the area for at least eight hours a day, five days a week and, consequently, are likely to

shop, eat and run errands. Therefore, attracting new employment opportunities will generate additional retail demand. General information on workday shopping behavior from surveys conducted by the International Shopping Centers and other organizations are as follows:

- The major advantage of shopping close to the workplace is convenience;
- Surveys show that daytime workers will drive five to ten minutes to shop or eat;
- Items purchased most frequently include food, cards, stationary, drugstore items, books and magazines, music/CDs, and video rentals;
- With lesser frequency, items purchased include office supplies, apparel and accessories, housewares, sporting goods, and arts and crafts.
- Workers will stop for after work activities (dinner, entertainment, shopping). Some will be inclined to come back to eat and shop on the weekends.
- Most desired entertainment services include restaurants and theaters. Banks and financial services, exercise studios, dry cleaners, office supplies, mail/packaging and copy centers are all perceived as being desired types of personal and business services.

## Conclusion

Within the larger region, 652 new households are anticipated between 2009 and 2014. The state is also expected to grow significantly over the next five years. If the Town can position itself correctly, some of that growth could be captured in Jena. Untapped markets exist for additional housing products such as apartments, townhouses, cottage courts and assisted living facilities. If the Town is active in assisting local employers in expanding their facilities, Jena could add 300 to 500 jobs in the next five years. Opportunities for economic diversification include the health and wellness industry, building energy retrofitting and harnessing alternative energies.

The economic niche for downtown is that of an 18-hour, arts and crafts, dining and entertainment, mixed-use area with people living and working in close proximity to one another. Possible new business opportunities include a quality sit-down restaurant, an apparel store, a private health club or gym; and a household furniture store. The Town should promote affordable, small, higher density buildings with distinctive and efficient design (as opposed to low quality materials). The primary target markets are retirees and young professionals. A pilot project downtown is suggested to aid implementation efforts.

## Existing Condition Photographs

At various times throughout the project, the consultant team toured Jena and its surrounding communities measuring streets; taking photographs; analyzing pedestrian, cyclist, car and truck traffic behavior and movement patterns; identifying development opportunities; and examining the physical and natural constraints. This first-hand, on-the-ground analysis helped the team gain a stronger understanding of the local history and traditions.

### Jena



Looking east down Highway 84 (Oak Street). Buildings pulled up to the street will make it difficult to widen Highway 84 through downtown.



Looking towards City Park across Sycamore. Centrally located within walking distance of downtown. City Park is a major community asset.



Looking west across LA 127 at Richardson Street. An example of a residential house reminiscent of the character and history of Jena.



Looking west down Highway 84 (Oak Street). Since Highway 84 is a main thoroughfare, truck traffic downtown can cause noise and congestion.



LA 127 (N 1st Street) and Southern Ave. Jena has a variety of neighborhood services that extend outside of downtown.



Beautiful, tree-lined streets are evocative of Jena's established residential neighborhoods.

# Existing Condition Photographs (continued)

## Midway



Gas station at the corner of LA 8 and LA 3104. Midway residents have limited access to neighborhood serving retail.



Midway supports a variety of residential neighborhoods within close proximity to downtown Jena.

## Good Pine



LaSalle General Hospital provides health care services to Jena and surrounding communities such as Good Pine, Trout and Midway.



Modest homes in Good Pine sit just to the west of downtown Jena.

## Trout



Looking west down Highway 84 at the LaSalle Veterinary Clinic. The majority of commercial activity in Trout is located on Highway 84.



In Trout, residential houses are located close to Highway 84.



Aerial view looking north across downtown Jena. Highway 84 passes through the core of downtown. Ace Hardware and Mac's Supermarket anchor the east end of downtown with Billy Wood anchoring the west end.



Aerial view of Jena just north of downtown. Christ Temple Pentecostal Church and Catahoula-LaSalle Bank frame the intersection of Southern Ave and LA 127.



Aerial view of Trout. Highway 84 cuts through an established residential neighborhood. The LaSalle Veterinary Clinic and the Town and Country General Store are located at the bottom right of image.



Good Pine is located just to the west of downtown Jena. The LaSalle General Hospital (building with the terra-cotta roof) is located on the right of the image.

# Precedent Photographs

To gain an understanding of land use and transportation issues in surrounding communities as well as further afield, members of the consultant team visited Lafayette, Alexandria, Jonesville, Pineville, Nachitoches, New Iberia and Hammond.



Beautiful and historic downtown Nachitoches overlooks Cane River Lake, bordered by an assortment of active shops and boutiques.



A one-way couplet system runs through downtown Hammond. Couplets are usually separated by one city block, allowing travel in opposite directions.



Jonesville is only 40 minutes from Jena. Highway 84 was recently expanded from two to four lanes. This image shows what could happen to Jena if Highway 84 is expanded without due consideration of context.



River Ranch is a traditional neighborhood development in Lafayette that includes variety of housing choices all within close proximity of neighborhood-serving retail.



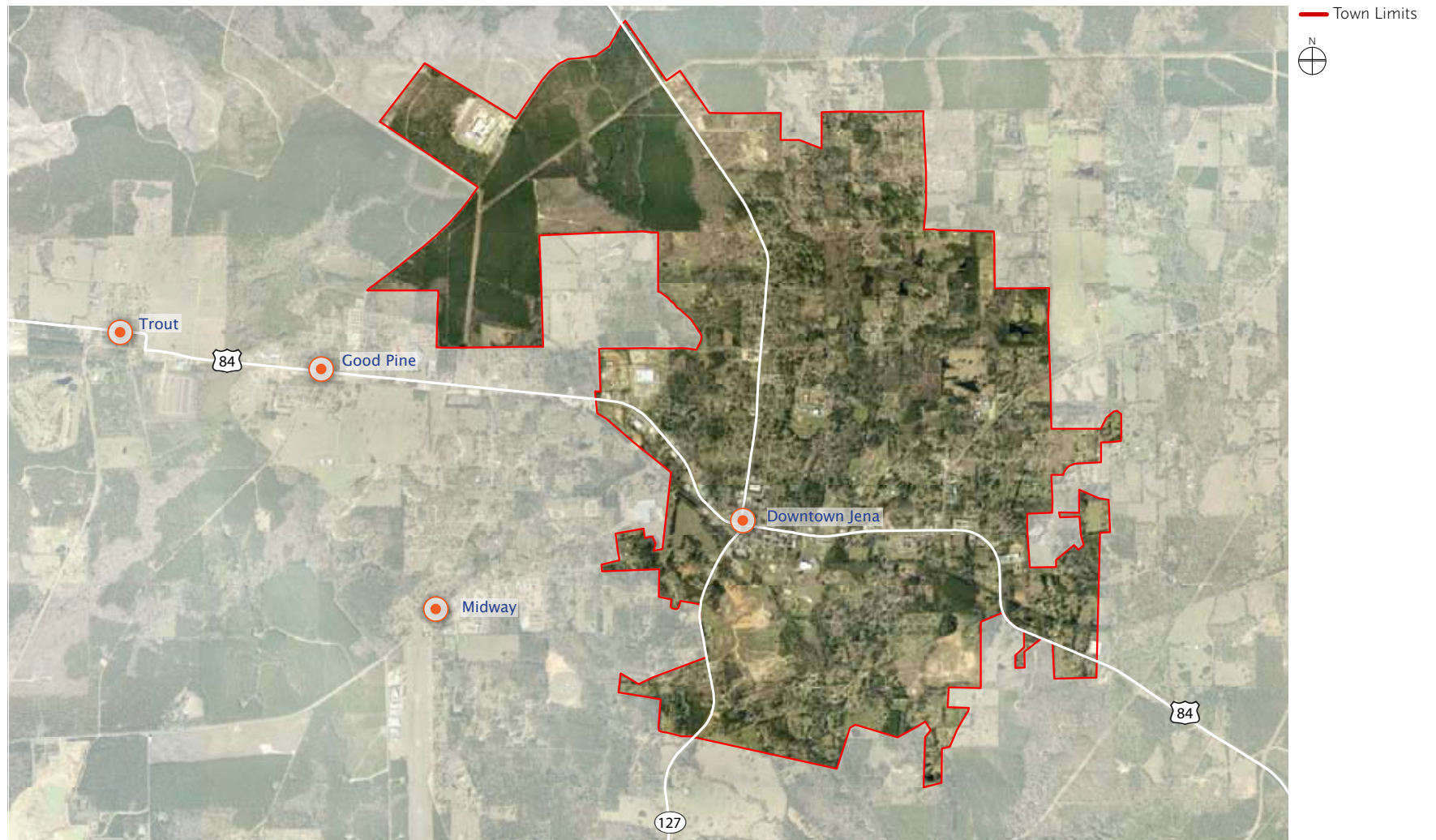
A pair of one-way streets also move traffic through New Iberia's historic downtown.



The expansion of Highway 84 through Jonesville eliminated a significant portion of the historic downtown.

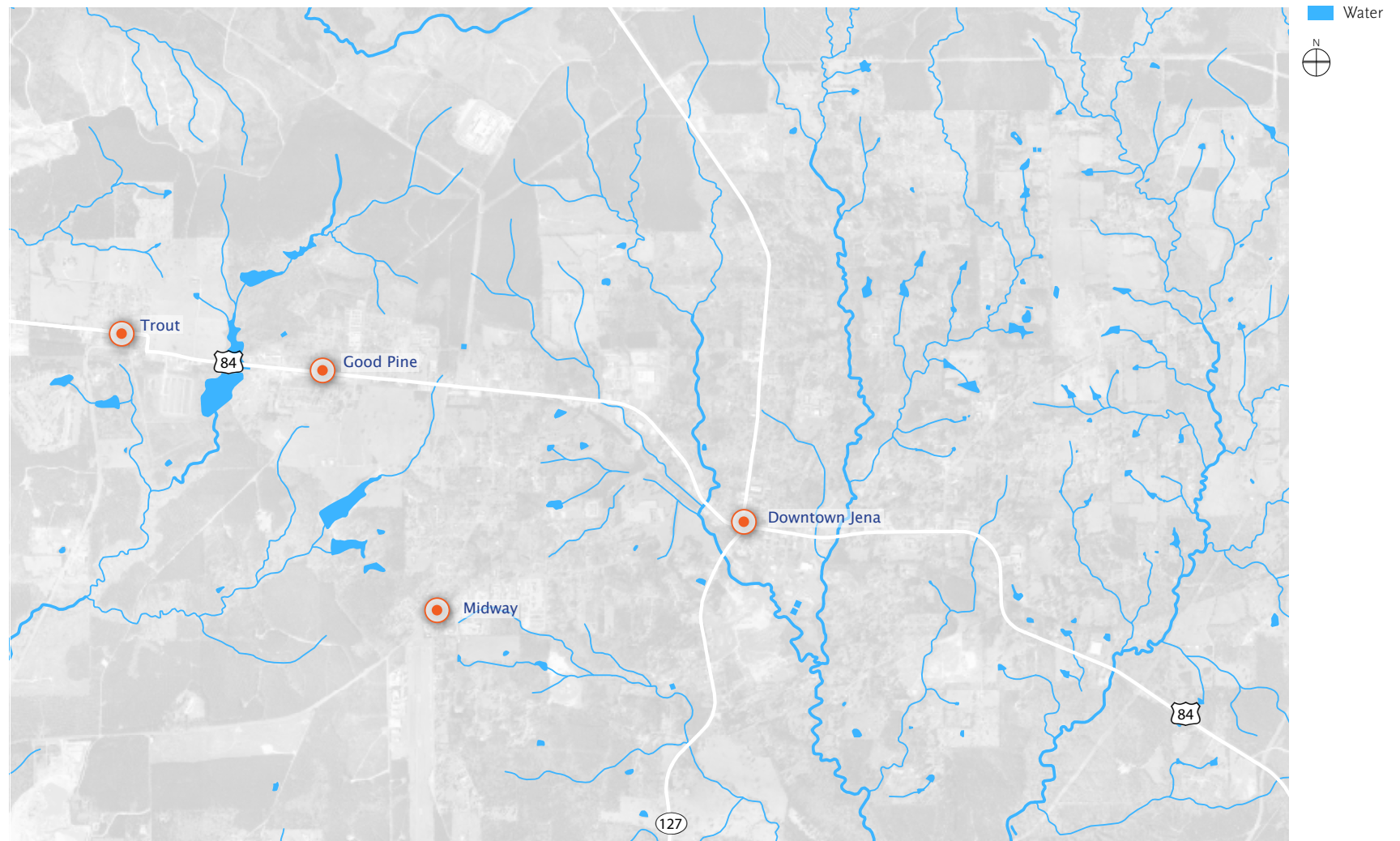
## Analysis Maps

Using GIS data obtained from a variety of sources, a series of analysis maps were prepared to document existing conditions. The analysis was used by the consultant team to gain a better understanding of Jena and the surrounding environment and to inform future planning and design decisions.



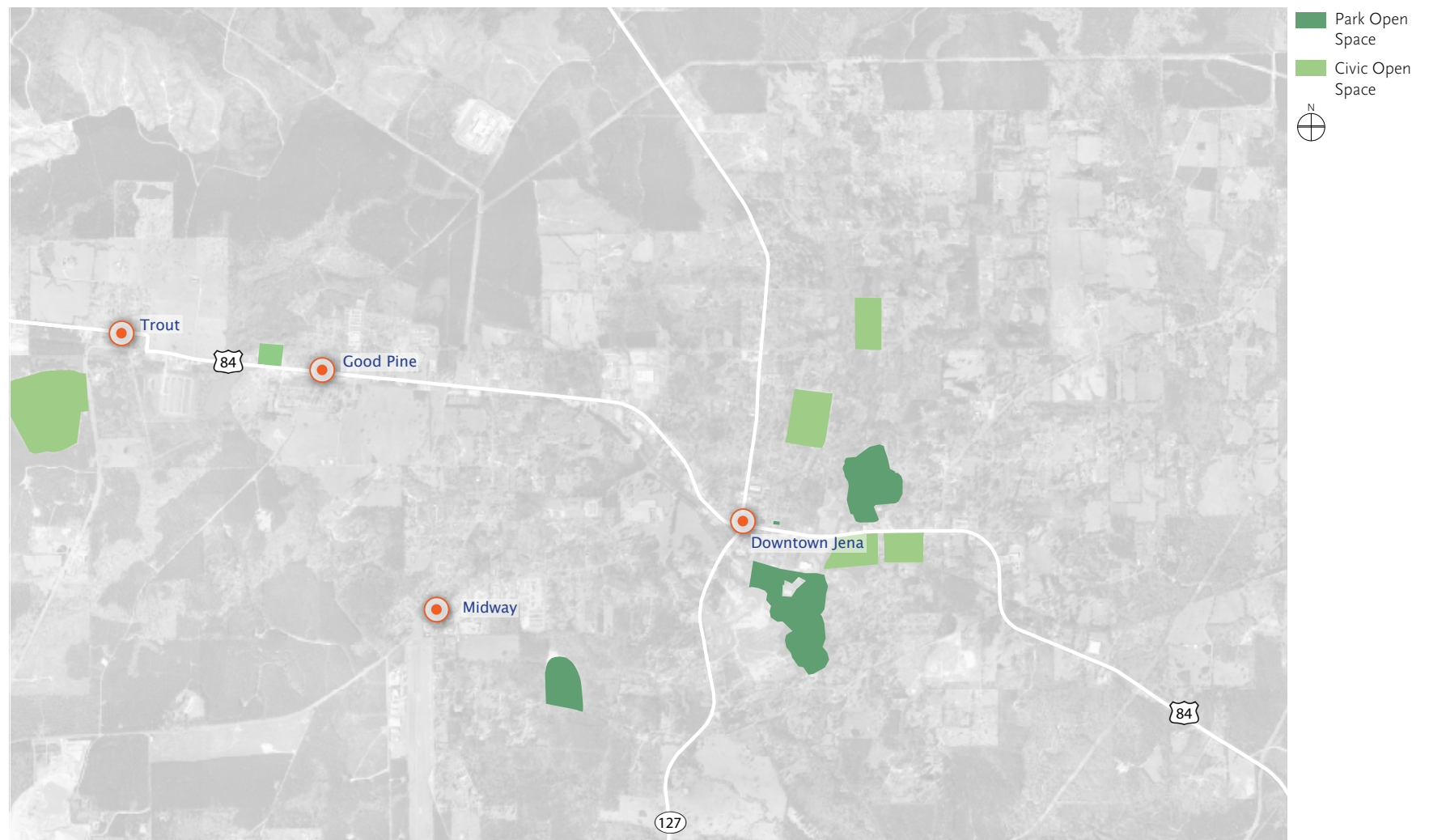
## Existing Water Bodies and Tributaries

Jena's intricate network of streams and creeks defines the history and character of the community and the natural environment. The two primary creeks are Hemphill Creek and Hair Creek. The Town was originally named after Hemphill Creek before changing its name to Jena in the early 1900's.



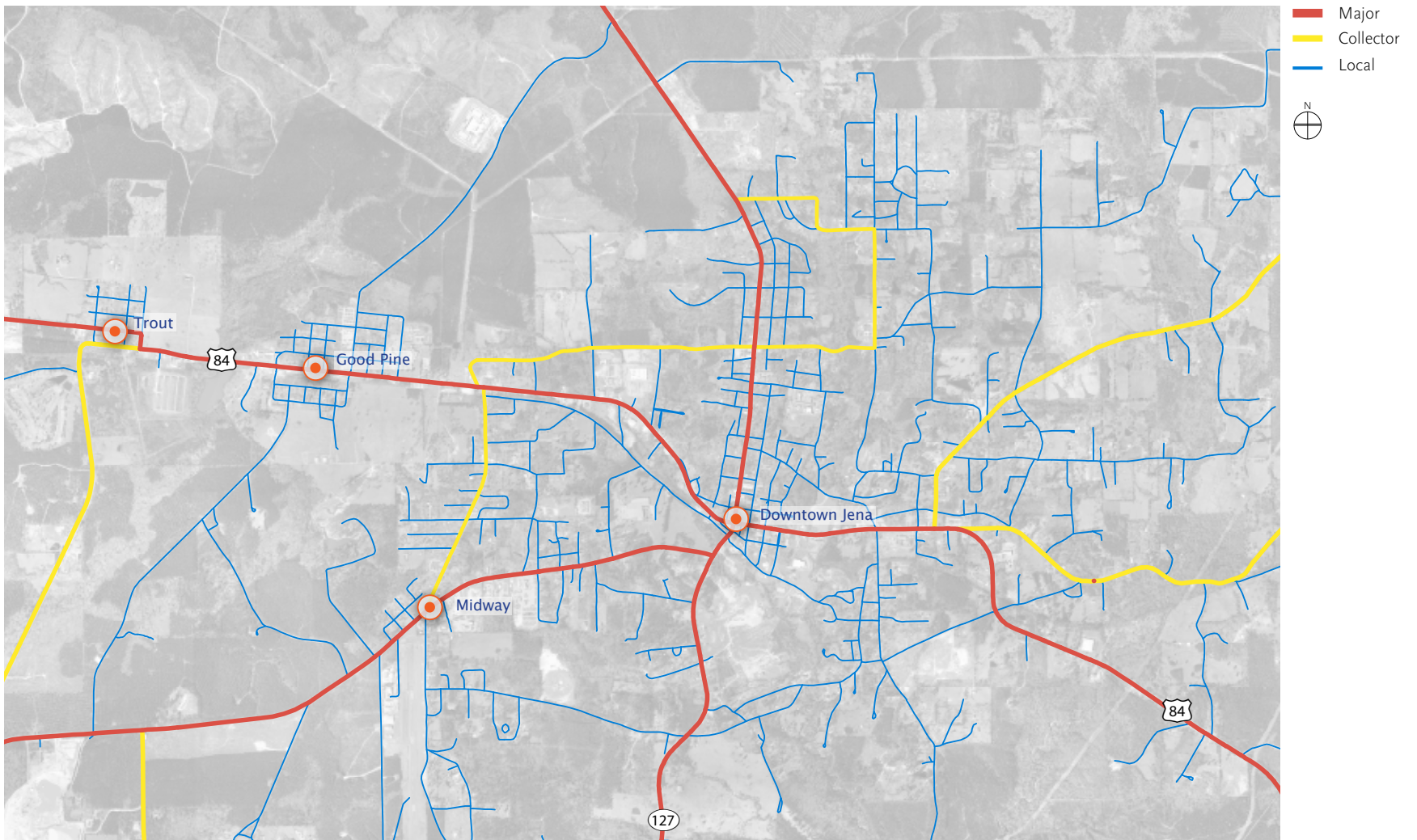
## Existing Parks and Open Space

Town residents currently have access to City Park and the ballfields south of Midway. Many open areas in the floodplain provide passive open space. Civic open spaces (including churches and schools) also provide passive green spaces.



## Existing Street Network

The existing street network has a poor collector system in place, offering few opportunities to move around the community on any facilities other than the major roads.



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