4.4.2 Inventory Findings

The Old Town Study Area has 197 ground floor addresses. Of those 197 addresses, 159 were occupied commercial addresses, 15 were vacant commercial addresses, 23 were residential addresses, and seven vacant parcels that had no buildings on them (Figure 5).

Figure 5: A map of the study area (teal outline), showing the occupied retail addresses (blue), vacant retail addresses (red), private parking lots (gray hatched), public parking lots (gray), residential addresses (yellow), and vacant parcels (orange).

Comparing the vacant ground-floor retail addresses to the total ground-floor retail addresses, there is an 8.6% ground-floor vacancy rate in the study area. It should be noted that while the study area did not have a high concentration of vacant retail space, there are other vacancies that exist outside the area, most notably along the south side of Third Street.

Figure 6 maps the categories of the 197 addresses, and the largest categories were office spaces and retail spaces occupying over 47% of the total addresses and over 55% of the 169 commercial (non-residential) addresses in the study area (Table 4). Of these categories, 105 addresses are considered visitor-serving under the City's current LCP, just over 53% of the total addresses (Figure 7; Table 5).

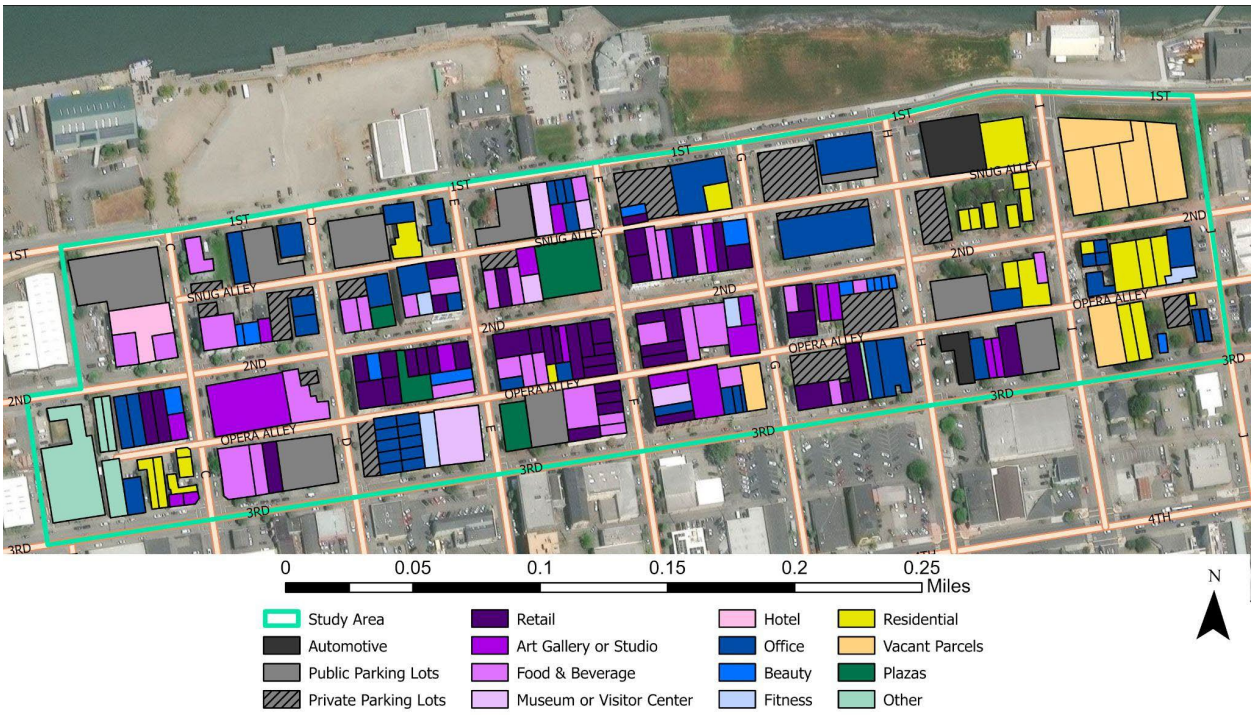

Figure 6: A map of the different categories of addresses in the study area outlined in teal.

Table 4: Addresses of the study area broken down into categories, the percent of each category compared to the total number of addresses, and the percent of each category compared to the number of commercial (non-residential) addresses.

Categories	**Addresses**	**Percent Total**	**Percent Commercial**
Art Galleries & Studios	18	9.1%	10.7%
Automotive	2	1.0%	1.2%
Beauty	13	6.6%	7.7%
Fitness	4	2.0%	2.4%
Food & Beverage	32	16.2%	18.9%
Hotel	1	0.5%	0.6%
Museums & Visitor Centers	5	2.5%	3.0%
Office	48	24.4%	28.4%
Residential	23	11.7%	-
Retail	46	23.4%	27.2%
Other	5	2.5%	-
Total	**197**	**100%**	**100%**

Figure 7: The addresses of the study area (teal) that would be considered visitor-serving under the City's current LCP (purple) and those that would be considered non-visitor-serving (blue).

Table 5: The addresses and percentages of the study area on whether they would be considered visitor-serving under the City's current LCP.

Type	Addresses	Percent Total
Visitor-Serving	105	53.3%
Non-Visitor-Serving	92	46.7%

5.0 Discussion, Recommendations, & Next Steps

5.1 Discussion & Recommendations

We were tasked with studying Old Town Eureka to determine if a visitor-serving core would be beneficial in enhancing Old Town by reducing zoning restrictions outside of the core in the hopes of reducing vacancies. However, Old Town Eureka has a ground-floor vacancy rate of 8.6%, which is below the national retail vacancy rate of 10.3% (Lasalvia, et al.). Our study has shown that the issues that were described in Old Town Eureka were not an issue of vacancies,

but rather an issue with inactive ground-floor uses. Active ground-floor uses would broadly be considered uses that provide access to the general public and generate foot traffic, such as coffee shops. Inactive ground-floor uses generate less foot traffic with the services they provide, such as professional office spaces.

It is important to note that the California Coastal Act gives priority to visitor-serving uses over residential and other commercial uses. Yet Old Town Eureka is dominated by office spaces that occupy 48 addresses, over 24% of the entire study area and over 28% of the total commercial addresses of the study area. For the above reasons, we believe that a visitor-serving core would be ineffectual in revitalizing Old Town Eureka, and instead it would be better for the City to focus on zoning changes that would make the zoning more generalized than the current zoning restrictions.

Currently, the principally permitted use types of the zoning code for the study area are overly specific, dated, and incomplete, which severely limits the businesses that are allowed without a conditional use permit. The zoning code also designates upper offices and residences as conditional uses, furthering acting as a barrier. For businesses that are not principally permitted, a conditional use permit and coastal development permit is required. To obtain these permits, a business must apply for them, and they are not guaranteed to receive the permit. The process of the permits requires an application fee of $2,845, public notice and hearing, and triggers the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The City is proposing changes to the zoning code that include: allowing residences and offices on upper-floors and non-street-facing ground floors without a conditional use permit and limiting ground-floor, street-facing uses based on performance standards rather than use types. For example, an “Active Ground-floor Dependent Use” designation would be a commercial or public space that is generally open to the public, generates high volume foot traffic, provides interesting ground-floor display windows, sells goods consumed on premises or carried away, and sells personal or recreational services. Rather than the current zoning code which has specific use types, such as “bakeries baking for retail sale on the premises only.” These proposed changes would remove the barriers that the conditional uses impose.

We recommend that the City limit inactive ground-floor uses in the study area to allow for no more inactive ground-floor uses, since it already makes up such a large proportion of the study area. The City should consider the type of inactive use when approving development plans. We recommend the City prioritize resident serving uses, such as doctor's offices or laundromats, over professional offices. We further recommend that the City continues to implement design standards for street-facing windows no matter the use, so that all of Old Town Eureka maintains its active and engaging pedestrian environment. We believe regulations on ground-floor visual interest will help maintain connectivity. We also recommend that the City consider prioritizing pedestrian-friendly development throughout Old Town Eureka. Encouraging developers to consider pedestrian-friendly development, such as interesting store frontages, will encourage visitors to explore all of Old Town Eureka. Table 6 lists the recommendations we have made with a short description of each recommendation.

Table 6: List of the recommendations we have made and a short description of each recommendation.

Recommendation Name	**Description**
No visitor-serving core	We recommend the City of Eureka does not implement a visitor-serving core, because it is a solution for high vacancy rates, not large amounts of inactive ground-floor uses.
Update zoning code	We believe the City of Eureka's proposed zoning code updates will help remove the barriers that conditional use permits and overly specific use types impose.
Design standards for windows	We recommend that the City of Eureka continues to implement design standards for ground-floor, street-facing windows to help Old Town maintain its engaging pedestrian environment.
Prioritize pedestrian-friendly development	We recommend that pedestrian friendly development is prioritized to encourage visitors to explore all of Old Town.