



DEKALB COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH  
Master Active Living Plan

# ASHFORD DUNWOODY STUDY AREA

DeKalb County, Georgia | 2013



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# Executive Summary

## What is Active Living?

Active living is a growing concept that recognizes the important connection between physical activity and the built environment. It seeks ways to make physical activity safe, convenient, and pleasant by creating a community where people will want to walk, bike, and become more active.

Participating in regular physical activity reduces the risks of chronic diseases like heart disease, high blood pressure, and some cancers. According to the DeKalb County Board of Health's "2010 Status of Health in DeKalb," the top three leading causes of death in the county are cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory diseases. Among adults in DeKalb County, approximately 35 percent were considered overweight and 24 percent were obese from 2005 to 2007. In 2009, approximately 19 percent of DeKalb County high school students were overweight, and 13 percent were obese.

Although there are many factors that contribute to community health in DeKalb County, the physical environment can have a major impact on lifestyle choices. Creating opportunities and enhancing existing community structures to support physical activity helps us all—from children who need safe routes for walking and biking to school, to active seniors who would choose to walk if they had pathways to local destinations.

## Purpose of Study

The goal of the Master Active Living Plan (MALP) process is to improve the integration of physical activity into the daily routines of DeKalb County residents. Rather than one county-wide plan, MALP is comprised of multiple small area plans that focus on specific places of need. These plans will guide future redevelopment and transportation improvements by identifying opportunities to improve bicycle and pedestrian connections between key activity centers and nearby neighborhoods, parks, schools and other public facilities. These plans will also emphasize mixed-use, compact development, interconnected streets, multi-modal accessibility and increased public space. The Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is one of eight plans created in 2013 under MALP.

## The Ashford Dunwoody Study Area

Located in the north of the county, the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is centered on the intersection of Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road. According to U.S. Census 2011 population estimates, the study area population is 14,479. Compared to the rest of DeKalb County, the study area has fewer residents under the age of 18 and more residents aged 65 or older. The population is also higher income, and has a greater percentage of white and Asian residents than the county average.

Physically, the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is characterized by single-family homes, strip commercial uses, park space, and a handful of relatively new multi-family residential communities. The study area is one of 29 Neighborhood Centers,

defined by DeKalb County as "a neighborhood focal point with a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and public and open space." Commercial uses in the study area are limited and provide mostly local services, with two primary nodes of activity at the intersections of Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road. Other destinations of note include the Cowart/Ashford Dunwoody YMCA, the Marist School, Blackburn Park, and Peachtree Golf Club.

Because the study area is primarily composed of single-family residential neighborhoods, most of it is unlikely to change in the coming years. However, two potential areas of change are the commercial areas at Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road. Currently zoned C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) and NS (Neighborhood Shopping), these areas have the greatest opportunity to redevelop and kickstart the creation of a community more oriented towards active living. These redevelopment opportunities are supported by a strong local retail market and the study area's proximity to Perimeter Center, a major employment and retail node for metro Atlanta. The area can likely support specialty retail in addition to the convenience retail that is now available. However, it is key that any additional retail space be developed in a more urban, walkable form that integrates into the adjacent neighborhoods.

To become more attractive to new development, the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area's pedestrian and bicycle networks will need to improve. Although the 2.5 mile Nancy Creek Trail is a popular corridor for walking and bicycling, the study area's sidewalk network is incomplete, with significant gaps on both Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road and very little network on local roadways. Additionally, streets follow a suburban pattern of a few major arterials with a loose, disconnected network of local streets. Because of the lack of a well-connected local system of streets, most trips are forced onto Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road. Only one MARTA bus line currently serves the study area.

## Public Involvement

A public meeting to discuss the study area was held on Monday, March 11, 2013 at the Ashford Parkside Senior Residences. Approximately 12 members of the public participated and provided input. In general, participants supported projects that improved the sidewalk and bicycle trail network, but had reservations about intersection improvements discussed for Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road.

## Recommendations

This plan identifies 17 projects that can help the community overcome physical barriers and encourage active lifestyles.

A primary recommendation is to create safe, strong pedestrian crossings on Ashford Dunwoody Road, particularly at Blackburn Park, the Nancy Creek Trail, and the Dunwoody YMCA. The proposed plan identifies potential locations for pedestrian

crossings along the corridor utilizing landscaped pedestrian islands in the center left turn lane. There is also an opportunity to enhance the pedestrian environment through the development of outparcels on a portion of the Cambridge Square Shopping Center. Additionally, existing crossings can be improved such as the crosswalk over Ashford Dunwoody Road at Kadleston Way.

One of the biggest challenges is addressing the difficult double intersection of Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road. It may be possible to rebuild these intersections as roundabouts, thereby slowing down vehicle speeds and creating opportunities for safe pedestrian crossings. Constructing roundabouts in these locations is physically possible, but will require additional study to examine feasibility.

## Implementation

The projects identified in this plan can be implemented over the short-, mid- and longer term. Some projects are "easy wins" and can be accomplished relatively quickly, such as filling in key sidewalk gaps and installing safe crossings on Ashford Dunwoody Road. Other projects, such as the redevelopment of commercial areas and realignment of the intersections of Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road, are longer term. Funding for these projects can come from a variety of sources. The recent incorporation of the City of Brookhaven is an opportunity to place many of these projects in the municipality's first Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Other agencies and programs, such as Safe Routes to Schools and Kaiser Permanente Community Health Initiatives, may also act as resources to help Ashford Dunwoody grow into a healthy, active community.



# 1.0 Study Area Overview

## 1.1 The Study Area

Located in north DeKalb County, the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is centered on the intersection of Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road. Its primary features are strip commercial uses, Blackburn Park, relatively new multi-family residential development, and single-family homes. The study area is located between two major hubs of activity: Perimeter Center to the northwest and the City of Chamblee to the southeast.

This overview provides a summary of key components of the study area's demographics, land use and zoning, real estate market, and mobility. It also details the public engagement process and shares key findings that set the stage for active living recommendations.

### Past Studies

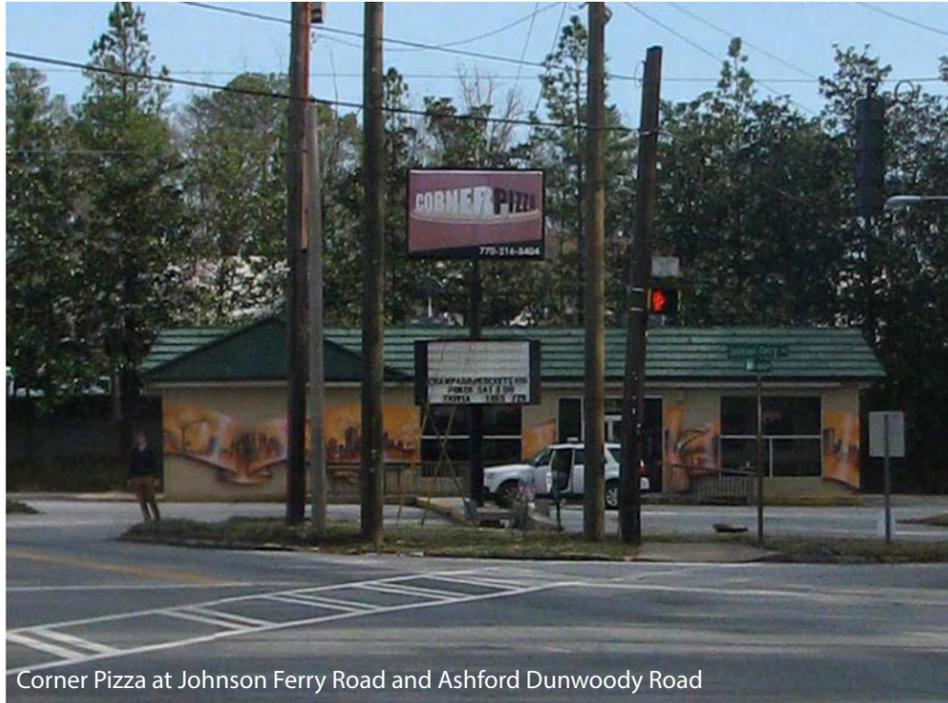
The most recent planning effort in the area was the redevelopment of the Johnson Ferry East public housing community. Originally the plans included retail but currently only residential aspects have been realized. There are no other recent studies of note.



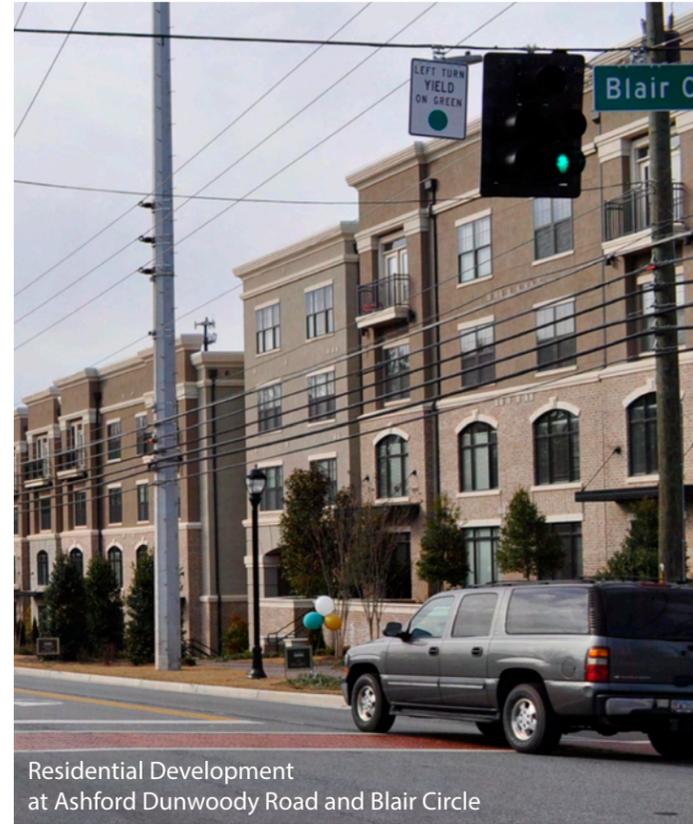
--- Area of Influence



Study Area



Corner Pizza at Johnson Ferry Road and Ashford Dunwoody Road



Residential Development at Ashford Dunwoody Road and Blair Circle



Commercial Development on Johnson Ferry Road



Ashford Dunwoody Road, looking north



Blackburn Park Entrance from Ashford Dunwoody Road



Existing Bank on Johnson Ferry Road

## 1.2 Community Context : Demographics

### Population Characteristics

According to U.S. Census 2011 population estimates, there are 14,479 individuals living in the Ashford-Dunwoody study area. The male and female populations are similar at 50.3 percent and 49.7 percent, respectively. Children under five years of age make up nearly 9 percent of the population, which is comparable to DeKalb County and Georgia statistics. However, there are fewer youth between the ages of five and 17 years old in the study area when compared to DeKalb and Georgia. Similar to the county and state, the 18 to 64 year old age group makes up the majority of the population. The study area exceeds the county and state percentages for individuals over the age of 65.

Figure 1: Study Area Population Characteristics

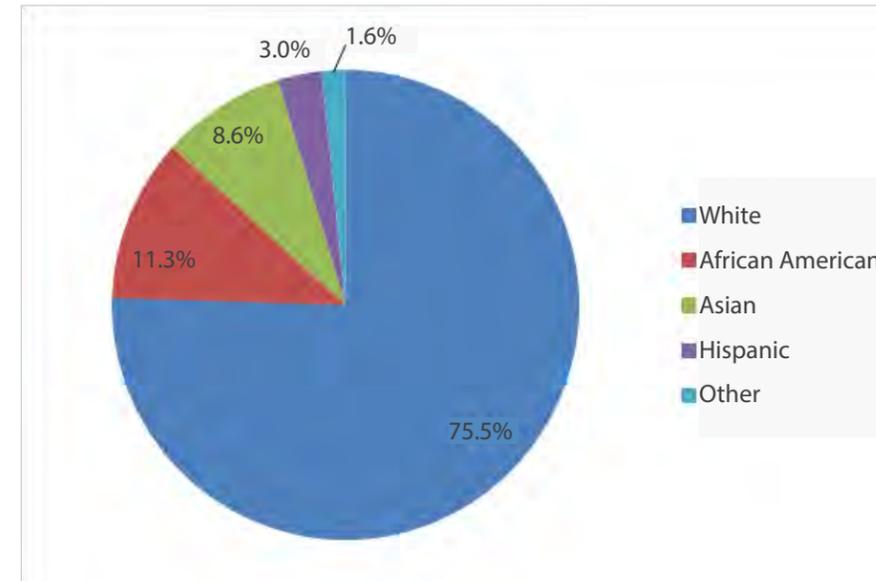
Population Characteristic	Study Area	DeKalb	Georgia
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>14,479</b>	<b>699,893</b>	<b>9,919,954</b>
Female Population	49.7%	51.9%	51.1%
Male Population	50.3%	48.1%	48.9%
Age under 5	8.7%	7.4%	7.0%
Ages 5 - 17	11.5%	23.9%	25.4%
Ages 18 - 64	62.8%	59.3%	56.6%
Ages 65+	17.1%	9.4%	11.0%

U.S. Census 2011 estimates show that the study area's white population is twice as large when compared to DeKalb County, but is comparable to state-wide numbers. The Asian population is also significant in the study area. African Americans, Hispanics and other minority populations are far less prevalent and are below county and state estimates.

Figure 2: Study Area Race & Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Study Area	DeKalb	Georgia
White	75.5%	37.8%	63.2%
African American	11.3%	54.4%	31.0%
Asian	8.6%	5.2%	3.4%
Hispanic	3.0%	9.8%	9.1%
Other	1.6%	2.7%	2.4%

Figure 3: Study Area Race & Ethnicity



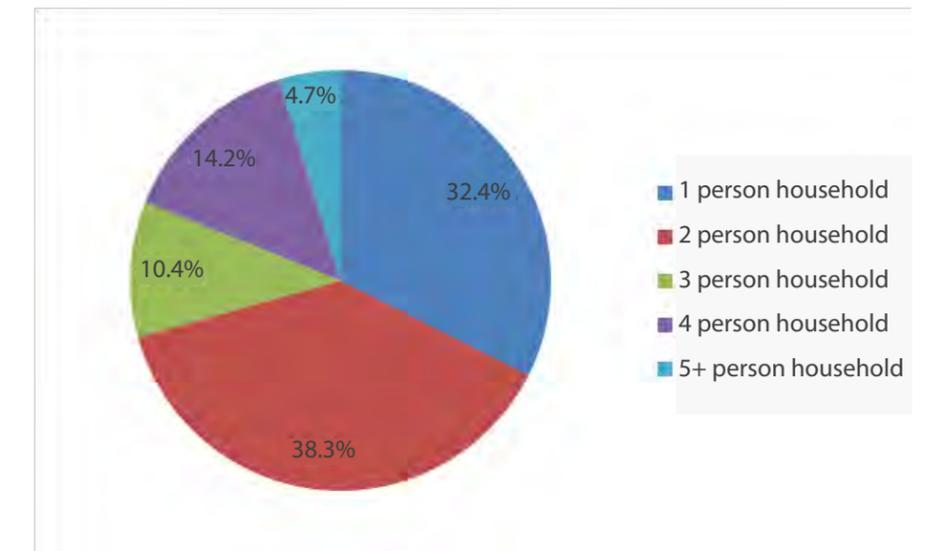
### Household Characteristics

There are 6,377 housing units in the study area. Among them, nearly 70 percent are owner-occupied and 30 percent are rental units. Approximately one-third of occupied housing units are one person households. Two person households make up the second largest family size, and almost 20 percent of total housing units are occupied by four or more persons. Households in DeKalb and Georgia average at 2.5 and 2.7 persons each. Families in the study area are considerably more affluent--the median household income is almost twice as high as that of the County and State.

Figure 4: Study Area Household Characteristics

Variable	Study Area	DeKalb	Georgia
Owner Occupied	69.8%	58.2%	66.8%
Renter Occupied	30.2%	41.8%	33.2%
Median Household Income	\$98,815	\$51,712	\$49,736

Figure 5: Study Area Household Size



### Mobility Characteristics

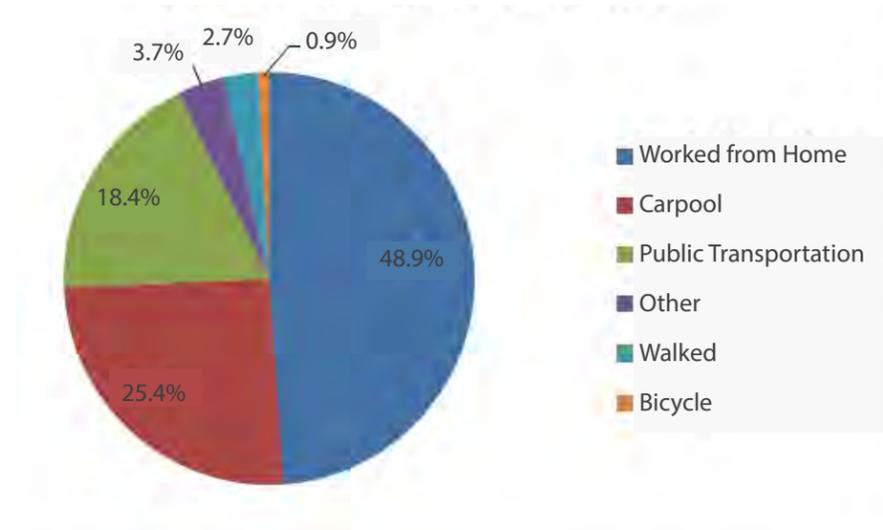
There are 7,290 workers in the study area. Most travel to and from work alone by car, truck or van. Approximately 12 percent work from home and 6.1 percent carpool. A small proportion of the working population uses public transportation. Fewer than 2 percent of employed study area stakeholders walk, bicycle or use some other means of transportation to work, combined. The number of zero car households is 8.3 percent, which is lower than DeKalb County as a whole.

Figure 6: Study Area Mobility Characteristics

Means of Transportation to Work	Study Area	DeKalb	Georgia
Drove Alone	76.0%	72.6%	78.8%
Worked from Home	11.8%	4.8%	4.6%
Carpool	6.1%	10.4%	11.1%
*Public Transportation	4.4%	8.5%	2.4%
Other	0.9%	1.6%	1.4%
Walked	0.7%	1.8%	1.6%
Bicycle	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Zero-car Households	8.3%	9.4%	6.7%

Public transportation includes bus, rail/subway, and taxi

Figure 7: Study Area Means of Transportation to Work



Young people in DeKalb County are particularly at risk. In 2009, approximately 19 percent of DeKalb County high school students were overweight, and 13 percent were obese. Between 2002 and 2007, African American youth under the age of 12 years old were three times more likely to have asthma than white youth of the same age. In 2009, only 35 percent of DeKalb County high school students participated in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on five or more days per week.

In the study area, the rates of cancer illnesses, diabetes and asthma cases are among the lowest in DeKalb County. The rate of heart disease is the second lowest compared to other areas in the county. However, when examining hospital discharges within the defined Chamblee-Cross Keys Community Health Assessment Area (CHAA)<sup>1</sup>, the highest percentage of hospital discharges are due to cardiovascular diseases at 8.55 percent. The second highest percentage of hospital discharges within this CHAA for the years 2006 to 2010 is for cancer (2.5 percent). Less than one percent of hospital discharges during this same timeframe were for asthma and diabetes related incidences.

Health & Wellness Characteristics

Chronic diseases like heart disease, some cancers, and diabetes account for seven out of every 10 U.S. deaths annually – approximately 1.7 million deaths each year. According to the Board of Health’s “2010 Status of Health in DeKalb” report, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory diseases are the top three leading causes of death in DeKalb County. Between 2002 and 2007, cardiovascular diseases were the second leading cause of premature death, second only to injuries (homicide and motor vehicle crashes). When examining cause of death by race and ethnicity, cardiovascular diseases and cancers were the first and second leading causes of death (respectively) for African American, Asian, Hispanic, and white populations. The highest rates of cardiovascular diseases and cancers occur among African American residents.

<sup>1</sup>CHAAs conform to census tract boundaries that are the ‘best fit’ to the high school districts. There are 13 CHAAs within the County used to define geographic areas for the purposes of assessing and reporting health data between Status of Health in DeKalb reports over time. Data source: Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS), Miner, Georgia Department of Public Health, Office of Health Indicators for Planning (OHIP).

## 1.3 Community Context : Land Use and Zoning

### Future Land Use

In its Comprehensive Plan, DeKalb County has created a streamlined approach to future land use based on broad categories. Within the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area, the county has identified four major future land uses: Suburban, Neighborhood Center, Conservation and Open Space, and Institutional. These categories are defined as follows:

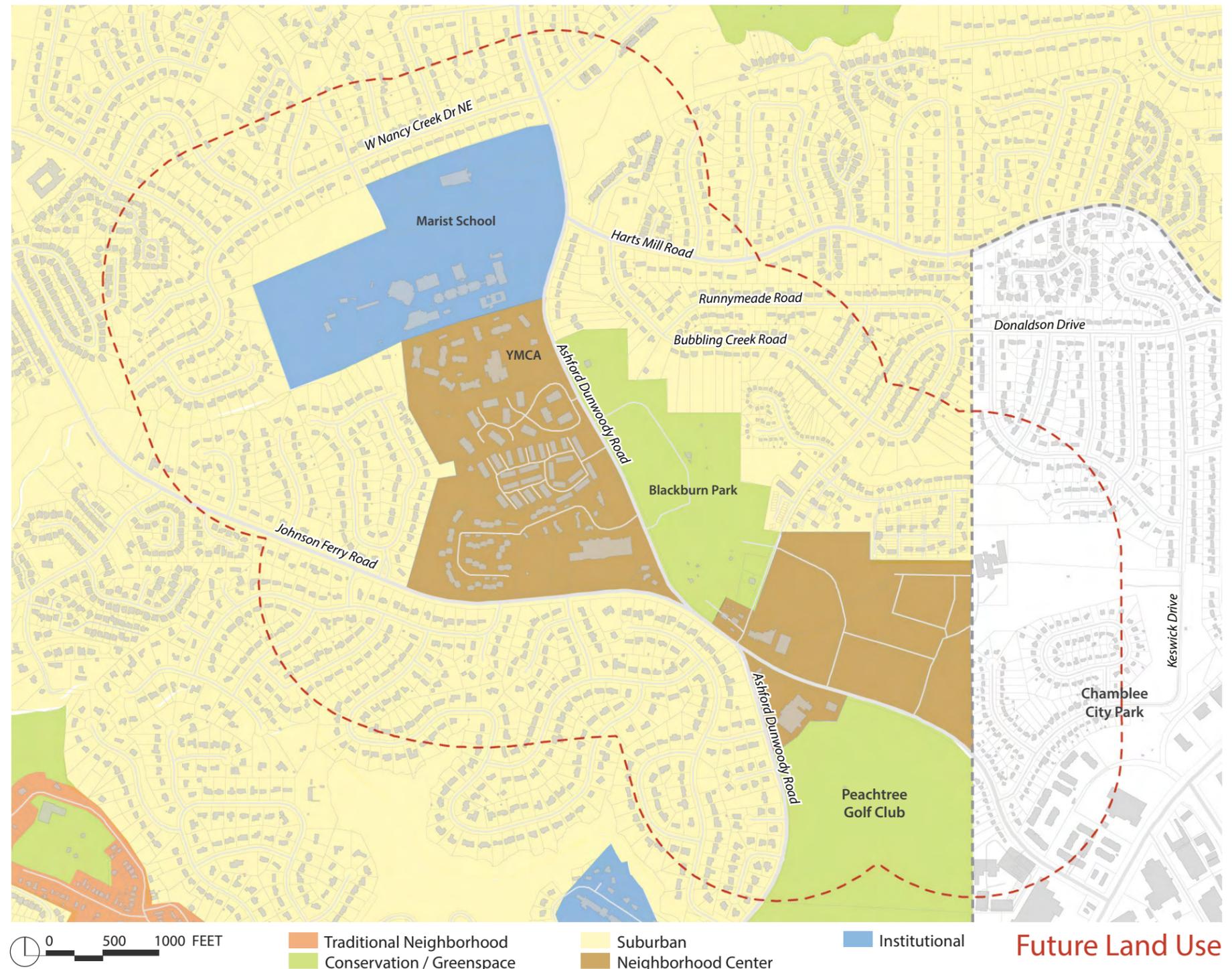
- **Suburban.** Areas where typical suburban residential subdivision development has occurred and where pressures for suburban residential subdivision development are greatest. The only applicable land use is Low-Medium Density Residential.
- **Neighborhood Center.** A neighborhood focal point with a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and public and open space. The Study Area contains one of only 29 Neighborhood Centers identified within the county. Applicable land uses are Medium-High Density Residential and Low-Intensity Commercial.
- **Conservation and Open Space.** Primarily undeveloped and environmentally sensitive lands not suitable for development and areas of protected open space that follow linear features for recreation, and conservation. It also includes lands used for active recreational purposes that provide a wide range of activities. The only applicable land use is Public and Private Parks and Open Space.
- **Institutional.** Large areas used for religious, civic, educational and governmental purposes. The only applicable land use is Institutional.

### Origins

In transportation planning, the starting point of a trip is called its origin. Typically, most origins are people's homes. The predominant type of housing in the study area is single-family, suburban-style neighborhoods. In recent years, however, the amount of multi-family housing has increased, particularly along Ashford-Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road, where there are now multiple large-scaled communities of multi-family structures.

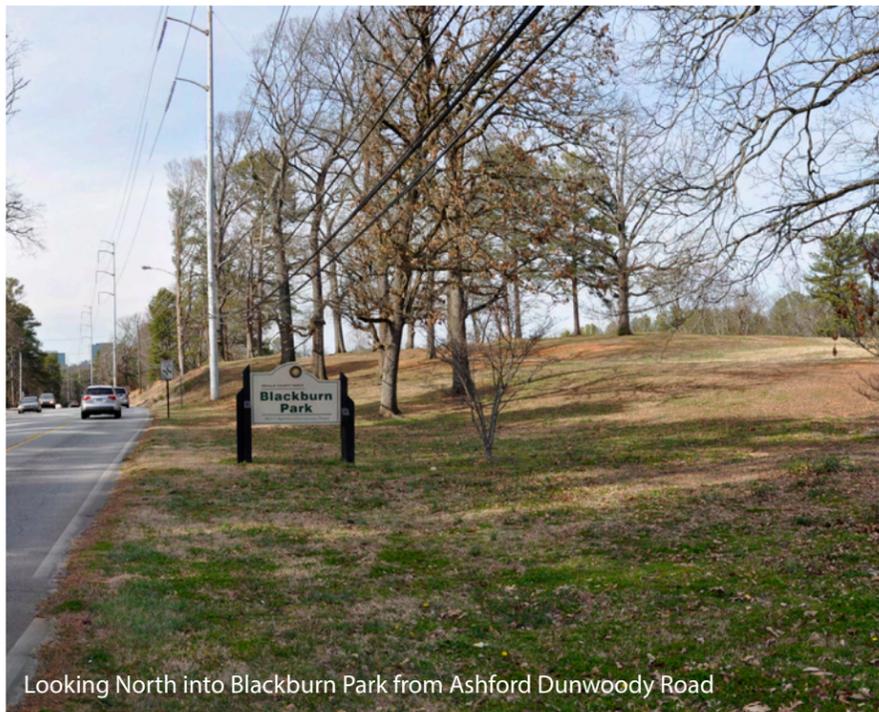
### Destinations

The destinations of local trips are typically places with civic functions, such as a school or library, parks, or commercial areas. Within the study area, there are multiple destinations within each of these categories.





New Townhomes along Ashford Dunwoody Road



Looking North into Blackburn Park from Ashford Dunwoody Road

*Civic Destinations*

- **Cowart/Ashford Dunwoody YMCA.** Located in the northwest section of the study area, the Cowart/Ashford Dunwoody YMCA is one of 21 YMCAs in the Atlanta region. This location offers a number of recreation programs including gymnastics, swim classes, sports, wellness, kids and family programs, and summer camps.
- **Marist School.** Also located in the northwest section of the study area, the Marist School is a private Catholic secondary school with 1,081 students. The school grounds contain a number of recreation facilities, including a football stadium, a track, baseball/softball fields, and practice fields for football and soccer.
- **North DeKalb Senior Center.** Currently under construction, ground was broken for the North DeKalb Senior Center in November of 2012. When completed later in 2013, the Center will have a commercial kitchen, community meeting rooms, a fitness room, and access to the Nancy Creek Trail.

*Parks and Open Space Destinations*

- **Blackburn Park.** Blackburn County Park is a 49-acre facility owned and managed by DeKalb County. Its facilities include softball fields, soccer fields, a multi-use field, tennis courts, a tennis center, picnic areas and trails. With the exception of the Nancy Creek Trail, there is little internal circulation within the park.
- **Keswick Park.** Operated by the City of Chamblee, Keswick Park is a 45-acre facility that is primarily oriented around Keswick Drive. Recreation facilities include walking trails, a dog park, an adult softball field, a tee-ball field, a soccer field, two tennis courts, a basketball court, and an ADA-accessible playground. The walking trail connects to the park to Chamblee’s Mid-City District.
- **Peachtree Golf Club.** Consistently ranked among the Top 100 golf courses in the world, Peachtree Golf Club is a members-only, 18-hole golf course in the southern section of the study area.
- **Other recreation facilities.** Ashford Parkside Senior Residences has a 2.8-acre multi-purpose green space with a walking trail at the heart of its community. In the southwest of the study area, the Brittany Club is a private recreation club on the western shore of Silver Lake. Its facilities include tennis courts, a six-lane swimming pool, and a pier. Other multi-family housing communities in the area have private recreation facilities as well.

*Commercial Destinations*

There are two primary commercial nodes within the study area. At the northern intersection of Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road, there is a gas station and a fast food restaurant. Behind these uses is the Cambridge Square Shopping Center, which is anchored by a Kroger grocery store. Other businesses in the shopping center are primarily local services. At the southern intersection of Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road is another commercial node characterized by local restaurants, gas stations, and businesses providing local services.

### Zoning

Most communities in the United States use zoning to regulate how land is used, and what characteristics a structure can have within these zones.

Currently, DeKalb County is in the process of updating its zoning code. Additionally, the City of Brookhaven is also developing its first code, which will impact many parcels within the study area. This analysis is based on the code currently in place in DeKalb County.

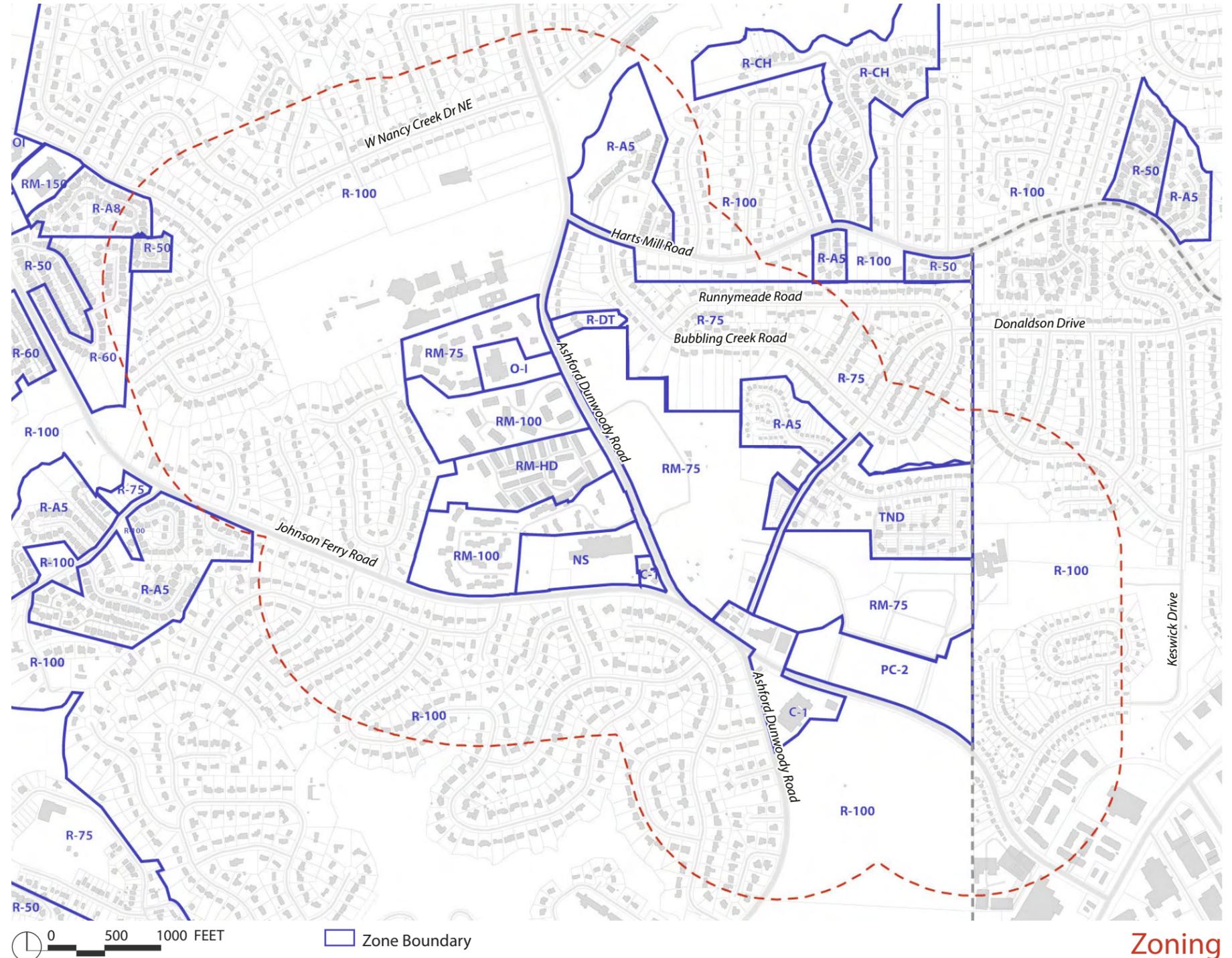
The most predominant existing zoning designation in the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is R-100 (Single Family Residential), which is consistent with the future land use designation of Suburban. The rest of the study area is a mosaic of other Single Family Residential designations (R-A5, R-A8, R-DT) R-50, R-75), Multi-Family Residential (RM-75, RM-100, RM-HD) and some commercial (C-1) and industrial zones (O-1). Figure 8 contains the basic regulations for zoning districts present in the study area.

Zoning can have a significant impact on a community's ability to enable active living. To understand the relationship between DeKalb County's current zoning regulations and active living, the project team analyzed each zone's regulation of the following:

**Active Uses.** Typically, the higher the density and variety of uses, the more conducive the regulations are to active living. By increasing density in land use and moving away from low-density uses such as surface parking lots, this concentration of uses encourages active modes of transportation such as walking and bicycling. Other ways that zoning can influence active uses are encouraging or requiring street-level uses such as storefronts; limiting or prohibiting drive-through uses; limiting or prohibiting chain restaurants; and allowing farming, greenhouse and nursery uses.

**Connectivity and Accessibility.** Connectivity and accessibility can be greatly influenced by zoning regulations that are related to mobility and walkability. Examples of this include regulations that limit the length of blocks, thereby improving the number route options for both pedestrians and vehicles; placing utilities underground; requiring landscape zones along streets that contain trees, lighting and benches; limiting or prohibiting cul-de-sacs; and requiring the construction of sidewalks and convenient pedestrian systems.

**Open Space.** Zoning regulations sometimes contain requirements for open spaces and environmental features. Accessible, usable open spaces can provide opportunities for active recreation and enhance the pedestrian and bicycling environment. Regulations that require functional greenspace and/or provide density bonuses for increasing green space are typically supportive of active living goals.



Zoning

**Building Design.** The way buildings are designed and placed on lots can have a major impact on an area’s ability to support active living. For example, buildings that are close to the street and have many windows and doors create a more attractive environment for walking than buildings that are set back on their lots and lack doors and windows. Some communities are also requiring that office buildings over a certain size provide shower facilities for employees to encourage active modes of commuting.

**Parking.** Zoning regulations typically contain requirements for parking. In general, the less off-street parking that a zoning regulation requires, the more conducive to creating active communities. This is because off-street parking can often take the form of surface lots, which make communities less friendly to walking and bicycling. Additionally, the easier it is to park a vehicle, the more likely people are to use vehicles as their primary mode of travel. Regulations can support active living by not requiring offstreet parking, limiting or prohibiting surface parking lots, and requiring the provision of bicycle parking.

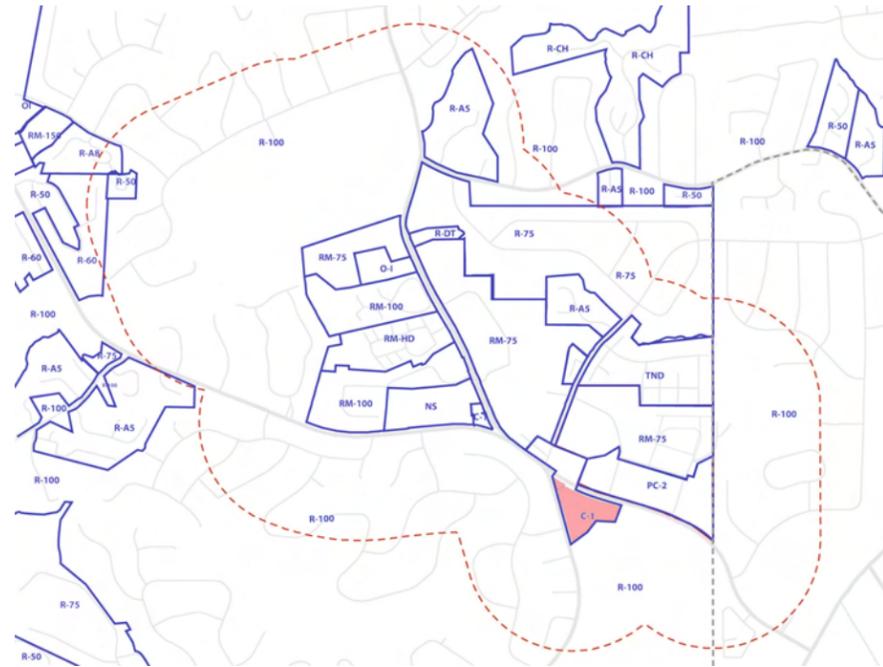
As part of the planning process, the current zoning regulations within the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area were analyzed for their alignment with these active living components. With the exception of TND and PC2 zones, none of the current zoning regulations within the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area support active living.

**Figure 8: Zoning Districts in the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area**

ZONING DISTRICT	LOT WIDTH (min)	LOT AREA (min)	FRONT YARD (min)	SIDE YARD (min)	REAR YARD (min)	HEIGHT (max)	FLOOR AREA (min)	LOT COVER-AGE (max)
R100	100'	15,000 sf	30-45'	10'	40'	35'	2,000 sf	35%
R60	60'	8,000 sf	30-45'	30-45'	40'	35'	1,200 sf	35%
R50	60'	8,000 sf	30-45'	30-45'	40'	35'	1,200 sf	35%
RA5	60-100'	6,000 sf	5-20'	15'	30'	35'	2,400 sf	50%
RA8	60-100'	6,000 sf	5-20'	15'	30'	35'	1,200 sf	60%
RM100	60-100'	6,000 sf – 2 acres	30-35'	15-20'	30-40'	4 floors	300-1,000 sf	35%
RM75	75'	10,000 sf	30-45'	30-45'	40'	35'	1,600sf	35%
RMHD	60-100'	6,000 sf – 2 acres	30-50'	15-20'	30-40'	5 floors	300-1,000 sf	65%
TND	100'	-	20'	15'	20'	35-45'	-	60%
OI	100'	20,000 sf	50'	20'	30'	70'	650-1,000 sf	80%
NS	100'	20,000 sf	50'	20'	30'	25'	100,000 sf (max)	80%
C1	100'	20,000 sf	75'	20'	30'	35'	-	80%
PC2	-	-	-	-	-	35-60'	650-1,200 sf	-
OI	Office Institutional District	Office	100'	20,000 sf	50'	20'	30'	70'
OIT	Office Institutional Transitional District	Office	100'	20,000 sf	40'	20'	30'	35'
OCR	Office Commercial Residential District	Mixed Use	100'	2 acres	50'	20'	40'	35'
NS	Neighborhood Shopping District	Commercial	100'	20,000 sf	50'	20'	30'	25'
C1	General Commercial District	Commercial	100'	20,000 sf	75'	20'	30'	35'
C2	General Commercial District	Commercial	100'	30,000 sf	75'	20'	30'	35'
M	Industrial District	Industrial	100'	30,000 sf	75'	20'	30'	5 floors
PC2	Pedestrian Community District	Mixed Use	-	-	-	-	-	35-60'

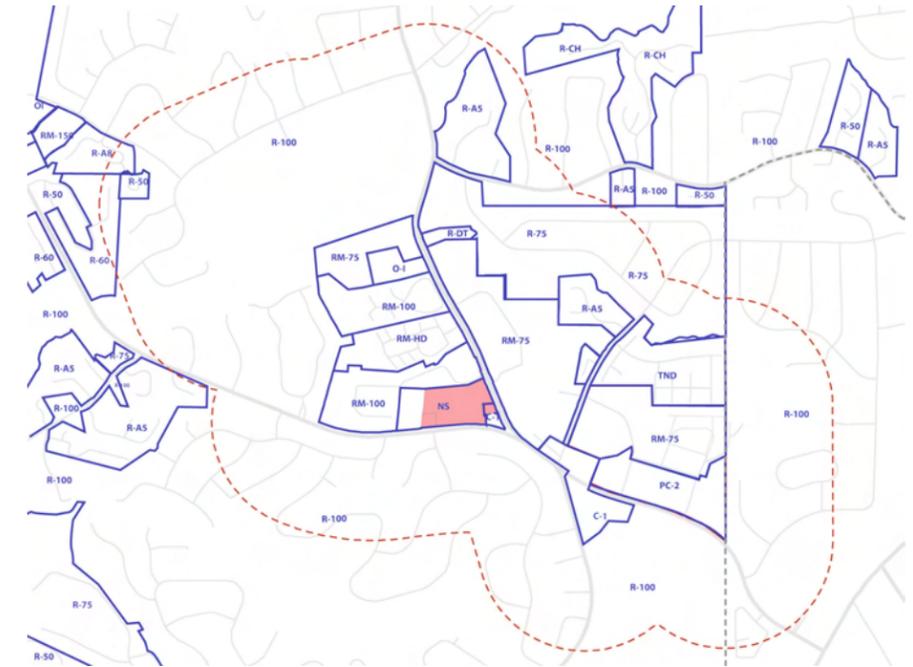
### Areas of Change

Over time, the study area can evolve into a more active community through thoughtful redevelopment. The most likely parts of the study area to change are the two commercial nodes located along the intersections of Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road. These areas are subject to change due to their current use of strip commercial and the designation of a “Neighborhood Center” in the county’s future land use map. Zoning designations within these areas are C-1 and NS. The charts at right contain current regulations on uses and building forms for these two areas.



C-1- Local Commercial District

PURPOSE	Provide convenient, close-to-home shopping and services
USES ALLOWED	A diverse variety of commercial uses, and some community facilities. No residential uses are allowed.
FORM	Low-density, suburban-style development with significant space between the street and the front of buildings and substantial requirements for providing off-street parking.
Setbacks from Street	Minimum 75 feet from public street for a front yard, minimum of 50 feet for a side yard
Lot Width	Minimum of 100 feet along a public street
Lot Area	Minimum of 20,000 square feet
Height	Maximum of 2 stories (35 feet)
Parking	Offstreet parking required, varies by use type and size of building’s floor area.
Lot Coverage	Structures can cover up to a maximum of 80% of the lot



NS - Neighborhood Shopping

PURPOSE	Provide convenient, close-to-home retail shopping and service areas that are compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods
USES ALLOWED	Retail, restaurants, local services, and professional offices, places of worship, and art galleries. No residential is allowed, nor are other commercial uses.
FORM	Low-density, small scale, suburban-style development with some setback minimums and off-street parking requirements.
Setbacks from Street	Minimum 50 feet from the street in a front yard, minimum of 50 feet for a side yard, and 30 feet for a rear yard.
Lot Width	Minimum of 100 feet along a public street
Lot Area	Minimum of 20,000 square feet
Height	Maximum of 2 stories (25 feet)
Parking	Offstreet parking required, varies by use type and size of building’s floor area.
Lot Coverage	Structures can cover up to a maximum of 80% of the lot

## 1.4 Community Context: Real Estate Market

The purpose of this overview is to briefly review socioeconomic and real estate market trends that affect the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area. This information will help to determine how these trends may impact the potential for improvement and redevelopment.

### Socioeconomic Trends

When considering what developers, builders, and retailers are looking for when they make decisions to invest in a community, there are several important factors. Among the key determinants are growth rates, age structure, income levels, and daytime population.

#### Growth Rates

Growth is a key factor in what developers, builders, and retailers consider. From a development perspective, higher growth rates are typically more attractive. However, the overall composition of the market is critical, and the primary factor they are looking for is a stable population base. Key growth findings in the study area include:

- There have been consistent population gains since 2000.
- Over the next five years, population growth is expected in the study area at a rate higher than the past decade. While this rate of growth is just below the Atlanta MSA average, it is above the national average and on par with the county average.
- In terms of households, the study area reports similar trends to the population changes cited above, though in larger proportions. The increase between 2000 and 2010 was much larger in households than in population, suggesting an increase in housing density.

#### Age Structure

Most developers, builders, and retailers desire age diversity. They also tend to favor areas with strong youth populations, as it is often an indicator of families in the area. Workforce-aged residents of 25 to 35 years usually represent young professionals and those starting families and they indicate a potential diversification in the marketplace. Age structure in the study area can be summarized as follows:

- The proportion of those aged under 18 is lower than DeKalb County, the nation, and Atlanta MSA.
- The study area is above the county, MSA, and national proportions for those aged between 25 and 35.
- The study area is well above the county, MSA, and national proportions for those aged over 65.

#### Income Levels

Most developers, builders, and retailers believe that the higher the income level of an area, the better from a development perspective. But, what is also important is the breakdown within the income levels, particularly in terms of informing diversity of product in the marketplace. In the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area:

- The average household income is \$98,335, which is well above the county, metro area, and national averages.
- The average household income has not only increased at a much more aggressive rate than the metro and national rates; it is counter to the county's net loss since 2000.
- The proportion of households earning less than \$15,000 in the study area is lower than county, metro, and national proportions.
- At the other end of the spectrum are the households earning over \$100,000; the study area's proportion of these households is higher than the metro area and the nation. The study area's proportion of households earning over \$100,000 is more than double the county average.

#### Daytime Population

The daytime population is another important component for development decisions made by developers, builders, and retailers. Businesses desire customers during both daytime and evening hours, so residents and employees are both important. In the study area,

- The daytime population (employees) is 3,347. This accounts for a very small proportion of the county's employment, with just under one percent of total employees for DeKalb County.
- There are a total of 275 businesses.



Cambridge Square Shopping Plaza



Multifamily Residential Development along Blair Circle



Single Family Residential on Kadleston Way NE at Ashford Dunwoody Road

**Real Estate Market: Retail**

*Submarket*

In terms of submarket performance, the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is located within two retail submarkets, Sandy Springs/North Central and Chamblee/Doraville. The Sandy Springs/North Central retail submarket has a total of 503 retail buildings, reflecting approximately 10.6 million square feet of retail space. The vacancy rate is 8.4 percent, which is below the metro average. The average rental rate is above the metro average, at \$16.38 per square foot. The net absorption for 2012 was positive for the Sandy Springs/North Central retail submarket, at 220,500 square feet, according to CoStar.<sup>3</sup>

The Chamblee/Doraville retail submarket has a total of 398 retail buildings, reflecting approximately 4.7 million square feet of retail space. The vacancy rate is 11.1 percent, which is above the metro average. The average rental rate is above the metro average, at \$13.41 per square foot. The net absorption for 2012 was positive for the Chamblee/Doraville retail submarket, at 53,730 square feet, according to CoStar.<sup>4</sup>

*Study Area*

Retail in the study area consists almost entirely of convenience retail serving the immediate area. There are two major shopping centers, one anchored by Kroger and

the other by Publix. Both are 100 percent occupied. There are national retailers in the shopping centers and in freestanding buildings within the study area. There is also a small cluster of ethnic eateries that do brisk business. According to leasing agents, the area is popular and easy to lease.

The original plans for redevelopment of the Johnson Ferry East public housing community called for a retail component. Because of the downturn in the economy, the plans for this new retail have been delayed, with no specific start date known at this time.

Just outside the study area is a great deal of larger-scale retail development. Perimeter Mall is located to the north of the study area along Ashford Dunwoody Road and is one of the largest shopping destination areas in metro Atlanta. To the east is the Peachtree Industrial corridor with several major retailers, including Lowe's and Walmart.

**Real Estate Market: Residential**

*Submarket*

Since 2009, the number of home sales has increased slightly, but the sales prices have decreased slightly in the zip code the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is located in. The amount of home sales are less than half the high seen in 2007, but the sales prices have only declined about 10% over the same time period.

The median sales price for the DeKalb portion of the 30319 zip code in 2011 was \$295,000.<sup>5</sup> There were a total of 589 homes sold in 2011, a marked increase over the previous two years. The vast majority (83 percent) of sales were resales; with only 98 new home sales in the 30319 zip code (DeKalb County portion). The sales price of new sales (\$287,450) was slightly lower than the resales (\$299,000) in 2011. The 2011 sales prices were lower than previous years.

*Study Area*

The study area includes several multi-family communities. The two oldest apartment complexes, Aventine at Ashford and The Ashford, were built in 1988 and 1975, respectively. Even though they are older, both of these communities have remained successful because of their proximity to the major employers at Perimeter Center and because of the strong reputation of the local elementary school. The occupancy rate for Aventine at Ashford is almost 97 percent, and rents range from \$800 to over \$1,200 per month. The occupancy rate for the Ashford is also 97 percent, with rents ranging from \$895 to over \$1,800 per month.

Over the past two years, four new multi-family communities have been built in the study area. All four are located in Brookleigh, a redevelopment of the Johnson Ferry East Apartments. Johnson Ferry East was a DeKalb County public housing community with 498 units. Three of the new apartment complexes at Brookleigh—Ashford Landing, Ashford Parkside, and Hearthsides—are senior communities, with a total of 389 units. The fourth apartment development is The Heights Brookleigh, a market rate property with 205 units. Construction on The Heights is not yet com-

<sup>3</sup>Source: *The Retail Report: Atlanta Retail Market*, CoStar Group, Fourth Quarter 2012.

<sup>4</sup>Source: *The Retail Report: Atlanta Retail Market*, CoStar Group, Fourth Quarter 2012.

<sup>5</sup>Source: Atlanta Journal-Constitution Home Sales Report and Market Data Center.

<sup>6</sup>Source: *The Office Report: Atlanta Retail Market*, CoStar Group, Fourth Quarter 2012.

<sup>7</sup>Source: *The Industrial Report: Atlanta Retail Market*, CoStar Group, Fourth Quarter 2012.

<sup>8</sup>Source: *The Industrial Report: Atlanta Retail Market*, CoStar Group, Fourth Quarter 2012.

plete, but 115 apartments have been leased. Rents range from \$1,200 to \$1,845 per month.

Site work is currently underway for the next phase of Brookleigh, which will include townhomes and single-family homes. Called The Reserve at Brookleigh, this phase will be built by Ashton Woods Homes and will have 28 single-family homes and 67 townhomes.

### Real Estate Market: Office

#### Submarket

In terms of submarket performance, the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is located within the Central Perimeter office submarket. The Central Perimeter office submarket has a total of 709 office buildings, reflecting approximately 33.7 million square feet of office space. The vacancy rate is 18.2 percent, which is below the metro average. The average rental rate is below the metro average, at \$20.07 per square foot. The net absorption for 2012 was positive for the Central Perimeter office submarket, at 1.7 million square feet, according to CoStar.<sup>6</sup>

#### Study Area

There is no significant office development within the study area, with the exception of local-serving office tenants located in the existing retail centers.

### Real Estate Market: Industrial

#### Submarket

In terms of submarket performance, the Ashford Dunwoody Study Area is located within two industrial submarkets, Central Perimeter and Chamblee. The Central Perimeter industrial submarket has a total of 37 industrial buildings, reflecting approximately 914,380 square feet of industrial space. The vacancy rate is 26.6 percent, which is above the metro average. The average rental rate is above the metro average, at \$8.19 per square foot. The net absorption for 2012 was positive for the Central Perimeter industrial submarket, at 40,030 square feet, according to CoStar.<sup>7</sup>

The Chamblee industrial submarket has a total of 401 industrial buildings, reflecting approximately 11.0 million square feet of industrial space. The vacancy rate is 8.2 percent, which is below the metro average. The average rental rate is above the metro average, at \$5.65 per square foot. The net absorption for 2012 was positive for the Chamblee industrial submarket, at 67,810 square feet, according to CoStar.<sup>8</sup>

#### Study Area

There is no significant industrial use within the study area.

### Market Opportunities & Challenges

#### Opportunities

- The local retail market is very strong and there are few vacancies.
- The study area is located just south of Perimeter Center, a major employment and retail node for metro Atlanta. This provides strong demand for residential product in the area.
- The new residential development at Brookleigh is increasing the population of the study area, which should allow for additional retail development.
- The trail system and parks in the area contribute to the overall quality of life and strengthen the residential market. Increased accessibility to these assets would be an even more significant amenity.

#### Challenges

- The retail areas of the study area have not yet developed into an urban, walkable form; they are in separate commercial centers with primarily auto access and orientation.

### Future Development Trends

The commercial and residential markets in this study area are very strong. While it is likely that most properties in the area are developed for their highest and best use, some of the older apartment communities may be candidates for redevelopment at higher densities in the long-term. The area can likely support specialty retail in addition to the convenience retail that is now available. However, if the retail component is ultimately removed from the Brookleigh development plan, it may be difficult to find other land in the study area that is suitable for retail development. It is key that any additional retail space be developed in a form more integrated into residential uses. This would both improve access for existing customers and support the increasing number of retailers that desire that kind of space.

## 1.5 Community Context : Mobility

### Street Network and Connectivity

The study area's streets follow a suburban pattern, with a few major arterials and a loose, disconnected network of local streets. Because of the lack of a well-connected local system of streets, most trips are forced onto Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road.

There are three major intersections within the study area:

- **Ashford Dunwoody Road and Harts Mill Road.** Harts Mill Road is one of the few collectors in the study area. Its intersection with Ashford Dunwoody Road is signalized and there are crosswalks and pedestrian signals at each crossing point. However, the right-turn lane from Ashford Dunwoody Road into the Marist School has necessitated the presence of a small, unprotected pedestrian island within the roadway.
- **Johnson Ferry Road and Ashford Dunwoody Road (North intersection).** The northern intersection of the study area's primary arterials has an unusual geometry. For north-south traffic, the intersection is signalized, but east-west is free-flowing. There are no crosswalks or pedestrian signals.
- **Johnson Ferry Road and Ashford Dunwoody Road (South intersection).** The southern intersection of these two arterials also has a challenging geometry. It is signalized for traffic, and there are two crosswalks for pedestrians. The crosswalk from the north of Johnson Ferry Road to Ashford Dunwoody Road is over 120 feet long, approximately three times the roadway width. This elongation of the crosswalk creates a more dangerous situation for pedestrians, who must cross vehicular traffic for a longer period of time and at an unusual angle.





Looking Southeast Intersection at Johnson Ferry Road and Ashford Dunwoody Road



Looking Northwest at Intersection of Kadleston Way and Ashford Dunwoody Road



Crosswalks at Blair Circle and Johnson Ferry Road

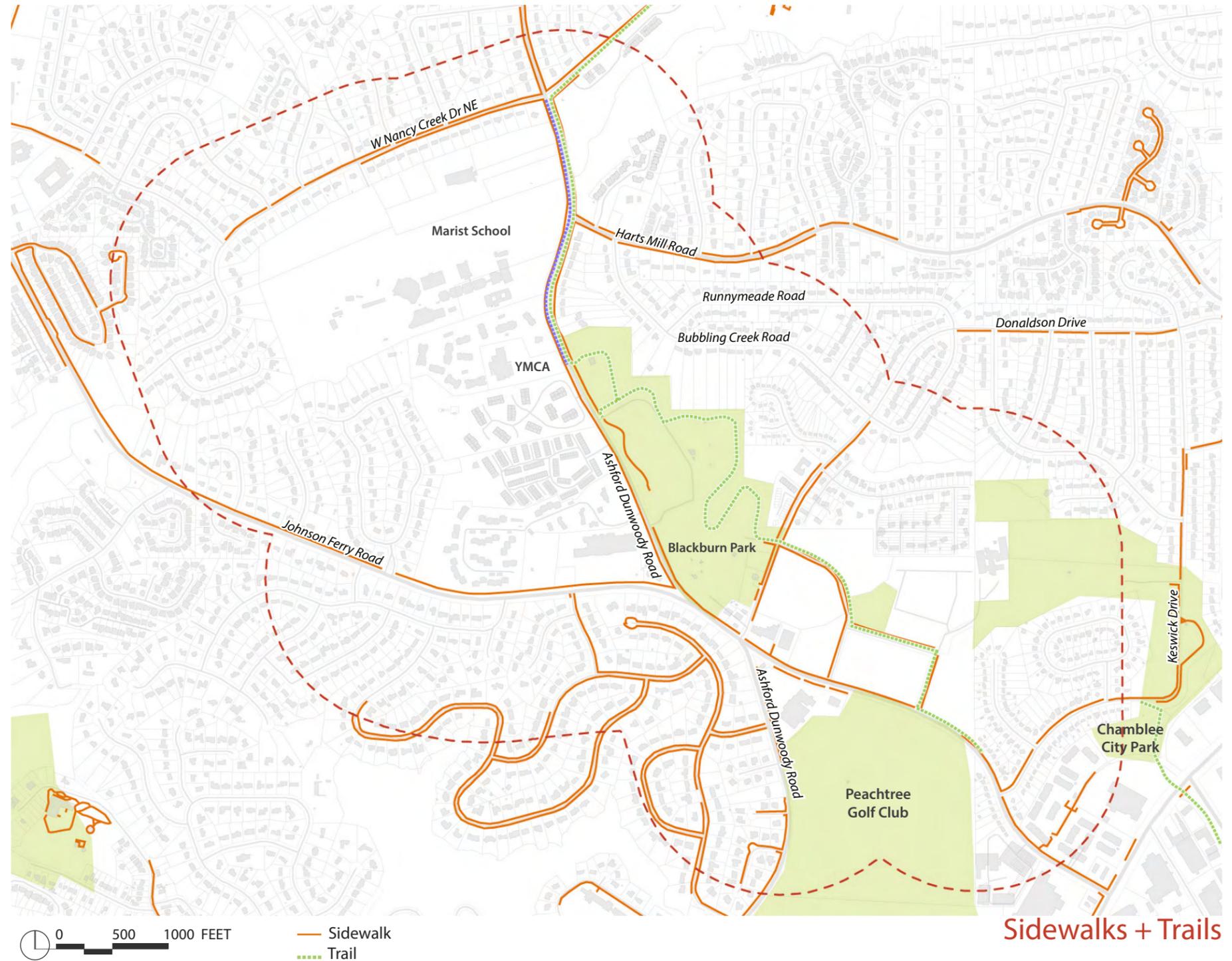
## 1.5 Community Context : Mobility

### Sidewalk, Trail, and Bicycle Networks

Within the study area, there are many gaps in the existing sidewalk network. Most local streets lack sidewalks, with the exception of streets in the Ridgeview neighborhood. Other than this area, sidewalks within the study area are mostly only present on Ashford Dunwoody Road, Johnson Ferry Road, Harts Mill Road, Donaldson Drive NE, and West Nancy Creek Drive. Key links are missing along both Johnson Ferry Road and Ashford Dunwoody Road.

In addition to the sidewalk network, the Nancy Creek Trail travels through the northeastern section of the study area. The trail is approximately 2.5 miles and connects Blackburn Park in the study area to Murphy-Candler Park.

The existing bicycle network within the study area is limited to the Nancy Creek Trail and bike lanes on both sides of Ashford Dunwoody Road that begin near the Marist School and end at W. Nancy Creek Drive.



Sidewalks + Trails



Entrance into Blackburn Park from YMCA on Dunwoody Park



Crosswalk across Donaldson Drive at Johnson Ferry Road Intersection



Sidewalk Looking West at Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road



Looking South on Ashford Dunwoody Road at Exit from Shopping Center

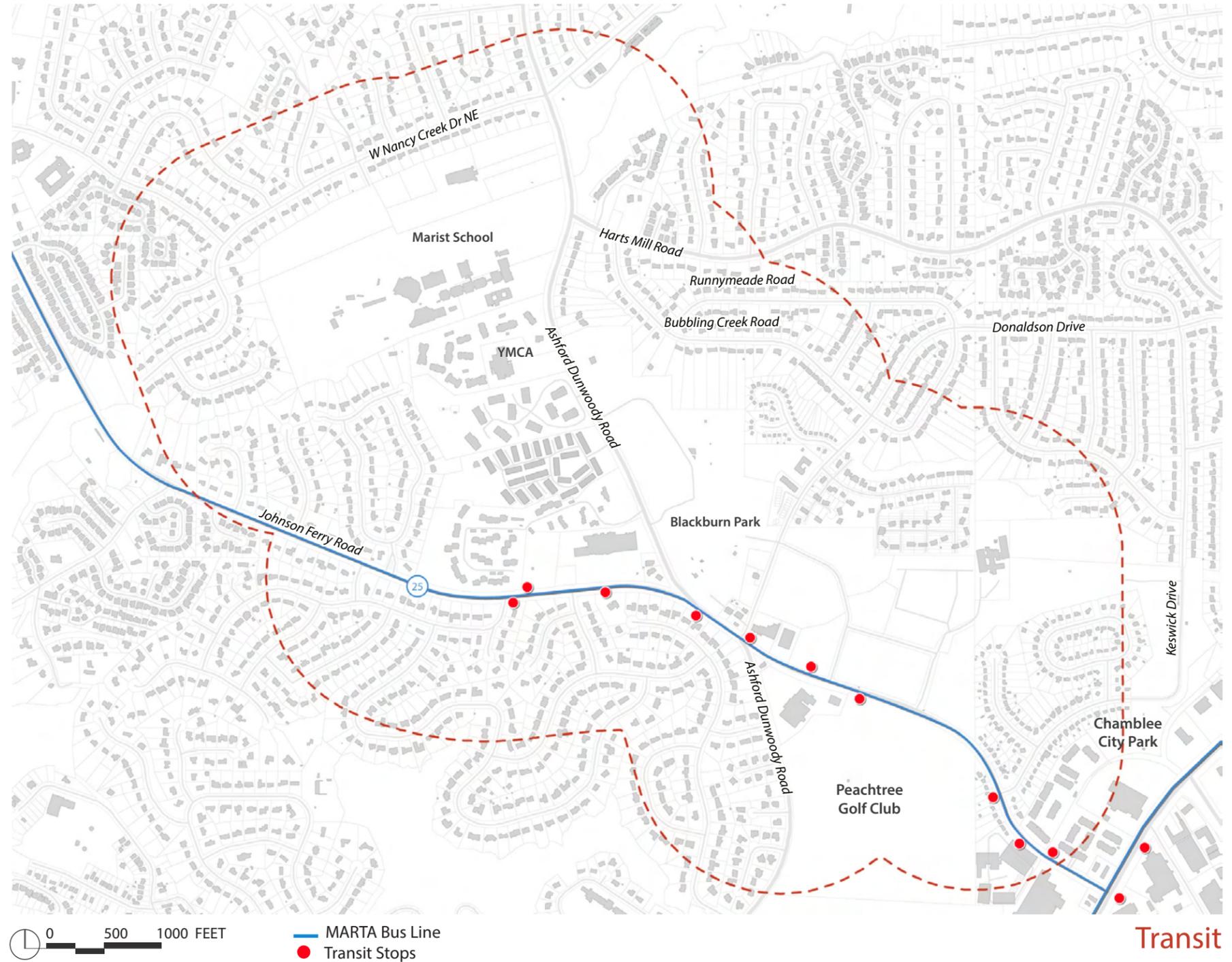


Pedestrian Connection from Johnson Ferry Road to Walgreen's

## 1.5 Community Context : Mobility

### Transit

One MARTA bus line, Route 25, currently serves the study area. Route 25 inbound originates at Doraville Station, and travels briefly on Buford Highway before cutting over to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard via Motors Industrial Way. The route makes stops at Brookhaven Station and at Lenox Station as well, serving three stations on the Gold Rail Line. Major destinations along the route include Brandsmart, Oglethorpe University, Cherokee Plaza, Phipps Plaza, and Lenox Square. On weekdays an alternate trip on the route is available along Johnson Ferry Road, providing access to Children’s Healthcare at Scottish Rite, Northside Hospital, Medical Center Station, and St. Joseph’s Hospital. In the study area, Route 25 travels along Johnson Ferry Road, where it makes four stops west-bound and six stops east-bound.





Crosswalk across Ashford Dunwoody Road from Blackburn Park to Cambridge Square



Looking Southwest at MARTA Bus Stop along Johnson Ferry Road by Corner Pizza



Updated MARTA Bus Stop along Johnson Ferry Road



View Southeast along Ashford Dunwoody Road

## 1.5 Community Context: Mobility

### Programmed Transportation Projects

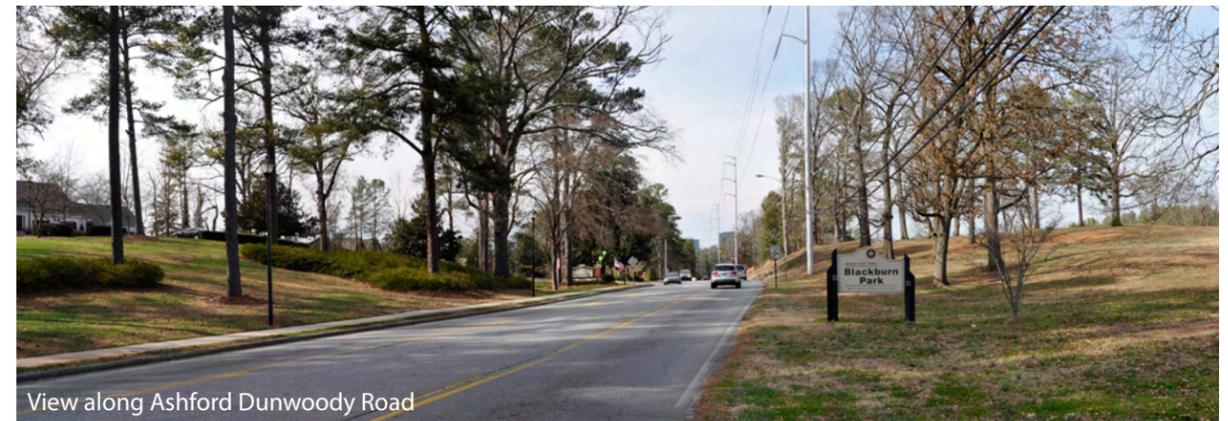
There is one currently programmed transportation project within the study area:

- *Ashford Dunwoody Road from SR 141 (Peachtree Road) to I-285 North Corridor Improvements (TIA-DK-014)*. The project is for a thorough study of the corridor, including a traffic analysis and an environmental screening. Depending on the results of the analysis, the scope of the project may include intersection improvements, sidewalk gap elimination, improvements to pedestrian access/safety, the upgrade of traffic signals, and the addition of bike lanes. The project is intended to connect neighborhoods to local activity centers, provide relief to the interstate system, and improve access to hospitals in Sandy Springs, the Peachtree Road Corridor and the I-285 interchange. It was not included as a line item in Plan2040 but is consistent with the plan's goals. Committed TIA funding is \$5,000,000.





Pedestrian Utilizing Sidewalk along Ashford Dunwoody Road



View along Ashford Dunwoody Road



Crosswalk from Blackburn Park to YMCA on Ashford Dunwoody Road



View West of YMCA Concorde Soccer Complex from Ashford Dunwoody Road



Bicyclist Crossing Ashford Dunwoody Road

## 1.6 Community Context: Public Engagement

### Public Meetings

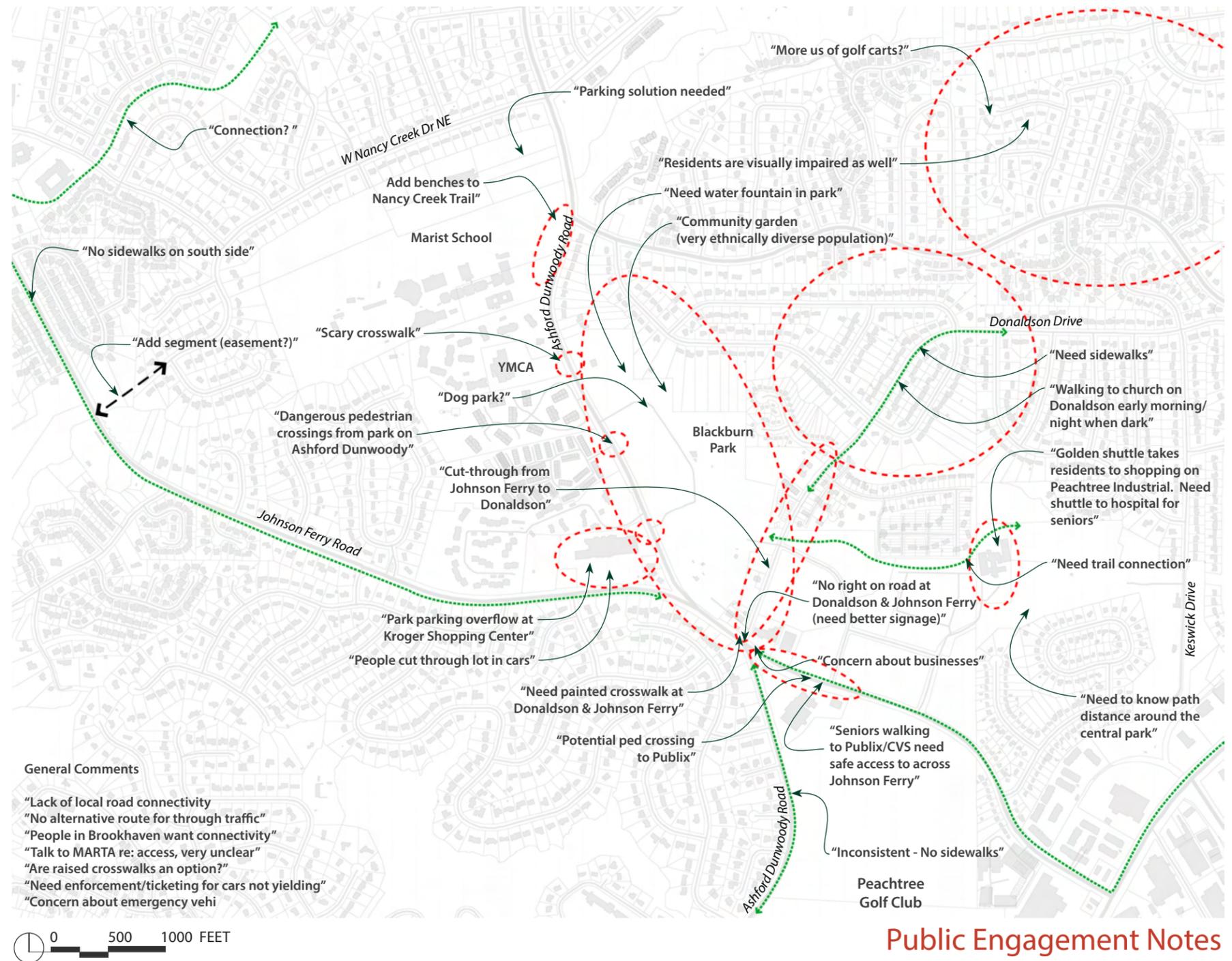
The goal of the public engagement process was to develop an outreach process that promotes the involvement of all stakeholders in the DeKalb County Board of Health Master Active Living Plan study areas, including low to moderate income, minority, and elderly or disabled citizens. The public involvement program included several strategies to solicit participation and feedback. Several advocacy groups focused on healthy living practices were also engaged during the process and assisted with outreach to their constituents for participation including the following:

- Live Healthy DeKalb
- Hispanic Health Coalition of Georgia
- DeKalb NAACP
- Senior Connections
- Atlanta Bicycle Coalition
- Southern Bicycle League
- DeKalb County School System

A public meeting to discuss the study area was held on Monday, March 11, 2013 at the Ashford Parkside Senior Residences. An announcement was hand distributed to a broad list of public locations within each study area including the following:

- Doraville Library
- Chamblee Public Library
- Corner Pizza
- Jo's Grill
- YMCA-Ashford Dunwoody
- Starbucks
- LA Fitness-Brookhaven
- Moon-Indian Cuisine
- Sushi yoShino

Seventeen (17) members of the public participated and provided input. In general, participants supported projects that improved the sidewalk and bicycle trail network, but had reservations about intersection improvements discussed for Ashford Dunwoody Road and Johnson Ferry Road. The map at right documents participants' ideas and concerns expressed at the meeting.



### Public Engagement Notes

