



# GRESHAM ROAD STUDY AREA 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 help 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 these 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 Gresham Road Active Living Plan is one of eight plans created in 2013 under MALP.

## The Gresham Road Study Area

Located in southern DeKalb County, the Gresham Road Study Area encompasses the area surrounding Interstate 20 (I-20) where it passes under Gresham Road. According to U.S. Census 2011 population estimates, the study area population is 11,728. The age distribution of the population is very similar to that of DeKalb County as a whole, but there is a much larger percentage of African-Americans and the median household income is lower.

Physically, the Gresham Road Study Area is characterized by a few large commercial strip malls and suburban-style, single-family neighborhoods. In its Comprehensive Plan, DeKalb County designated the study area a future Town Center, which is defined as "a focal point for several neighborhoods with a concentration of activities such as retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and open space." The study area is one of only 15 Town Centers identified in the county.

In order for the study area to evolve into a Town Center, it will need to become more dense. Although some larger, multi-family communities existing around Flat Shoals Road and I-20, residential uses in the study area are mostly single-family homes built in the 1960s and 1970s. Commercial uses are also suburban-style strip malls, many of which are aging and underutilized. One exception is the relatively new Walmart Supercenter, which attracts a number of shoppers. Other destinations include two public schools and a parochial school, the Gresham Branch of the DeKalb County Library, and the NH Scott Recreation Center and Pool.

Over time, the study area can evolve into a more active community through thoughtful redevelopment. Because of multiple large lots and aging commercial infrastructure, several parcels have the potential to redevelop in the future. The greatest potential for redevelopment centers along I-20, particularly if plans move forward to construct a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line with a station at Gresham Road. Most of the study area parcels with redevelopment potential are zoned C-1, RM-75, or RM-85.

Positive trends in the local real estate market point to future redevelopment opportunities in the study area. Strong residential growth in the East Atlanta neighborhood has had some spillover into the study area, and the Walmart Supercenter is a strong anchor for more retail. The Gresham Road Study Area is also directly in the path of a strong wave of redevelopment that has already swept through the areas along I-20, closer to the City of Atlanta. However, blighted commercial property near Interstate 20 will need to be addressed, as will the deteriorating conditions of some homes in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Additionally, transportation infrastructure will need to be upgraded. To become more attractive to new, active living-oriented development, the Gresham Road Study Area's pedestrian and bicycle networks will also need to improve. Similar to many other areas of DeKalb County, the study area's street network is characterized by having a few major arterials and collector streets with many disconnected local streets. Although there are no dedicated bicycle facilities, the arterials and collectors of the study area—Gresham Road, Flat Shoals Road, Tilson Road, Brannen Road, and 2nd Avenue—all have fairly complete sidewalk networks. Beyond these major streets however, sidewalks are limited or non-existent. Four MARTA bus lines currently serve the area.

## Public Involvement

On the evening of Thursday, March 14, a public meeting was held at the Gresham Park Recreation Center. Most attendees were supportive of projects that improved opportunities for active living. Concerns were mostly centered on the issue of timing and the project time-frame for long-range projects.

## Recommendations

This plan identifies 35 projects that can help the community overcome physical barriers and encourage active lifestyles. Key projects will enhance the pedestrian environment of Gresham Road, take advantage of open space opportunities, and position commercial parcels for future redevelopment. With the potential construction of the I-20 BRT in the future, it is essential that DeKalb County begin to make these upgrades now to capitalize on this transportation investment.

## 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 developing a usable park space in front of the DeKalb County branch library. Other projects, such as the redevelopment of commercial areas and construction of trail corridors, are longer term. Funding for these projects can come from a variety of sources, but most would need to be programmed in the county's 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 helping the Gresham Road area grow into a healthy, active community.



# 1.0 Study Area Overview

## 1.1 The Study Area

Located in southern DeKalb County, the Gresham Road Study Area is focused on Gresham Road where it crosses Interstate 20. The study area is characterized by a few large commercial strip malls and suburban-style, single-family neighborhoods.

### Past Studies

There have been no recent planning initiatives that focused primarily on the study area, but MARTA has identified Gresham Road as a future stop on the proposed I-20 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor.



--- Area of Influence



First Baptist Church on East Side of Gresham Road



Flat Shoals United Methodist Church



Gresham Park at Clifton Church Road and Gresham Road



Gresham Park Elementary School



Wal-Mart on West Side of Gresham Road

## 1.2 Community Context : Demographics

### Population Characteristics

The 2011 U.S. Census estimates that there are 11,728 individuals living within the Gresham Road Study Area. The female population slightly outweighs the male population. Children under five years of age make up nearly eight percent of the population, which is comparable to county and state statistics. However, there are slightly fewer youth between the ages of 5 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 bulk 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

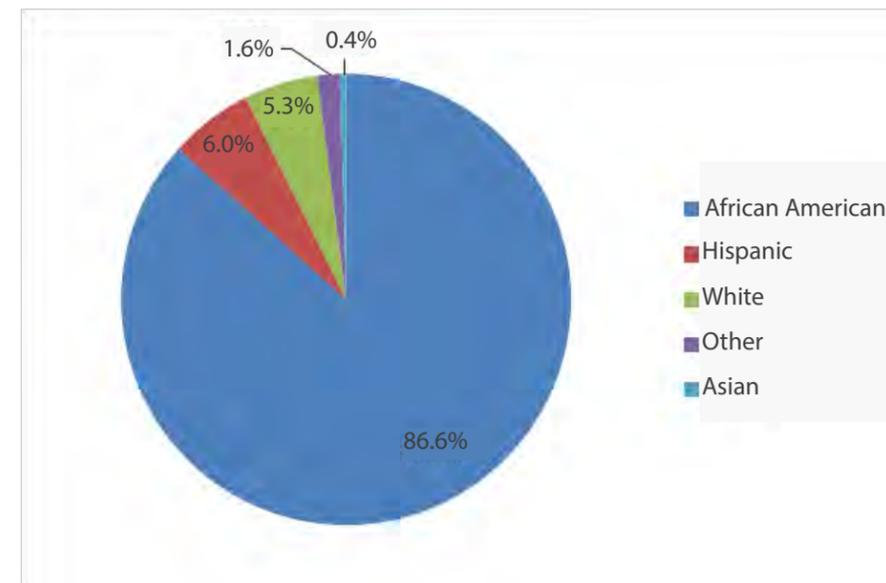
| Population Characteristic | Study Area    | DeKalb         | Georgia          |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| <b>Total Population</b>   | <b>11,728</b> | <b>699,893</b> | <b>9,919,954</b> |
| Female Population         | 51.4%         | 51.9%          | 51.1%            |
| Male Population           | 48.6%         | 48.1%          | 48.9%            |
| Age under 5               | 7.8%          | 7.4%           | 7.0%             |
| Ages 5 - 17               | 18.5%         | 23.9%          | 25.4%            |
| Ages 18 - 64              | 62.4%         | 59.3%          | 56.6%            |
| Ages 65+                  | 11.3%         | 9.4%           | 11.0%            |

2011 U.S. Census estimates show that the study area is mostly comprised of African American residents (86.6 percent). All seven block groups that make up this study area have African American populations that exceed 50 percent. The Hispanic, white and Asian populations are all significantly lower than what is typically found in DeKalb County and statewide.

Figure 2: Study Area Race & Ethnicity

| Race/Ethnicity   | Study Area | DeKalb | Georgia |
|------------------|------------|--------|---------|
| African American | 86.6%      | 54.4%  | 31.0%   |
| Hispanic         | 6.0%       | 9.8%   | 9.1%    |
| White            | 5.3%       | 37.8%  | 63.2%   |
| Asian            | 0.4%       | 5.2%   | 3.4%    |
| Other            | 1.6%       | 2.7%   | 2.4%    |

Figure 3: Study Area Race & Ethnicity



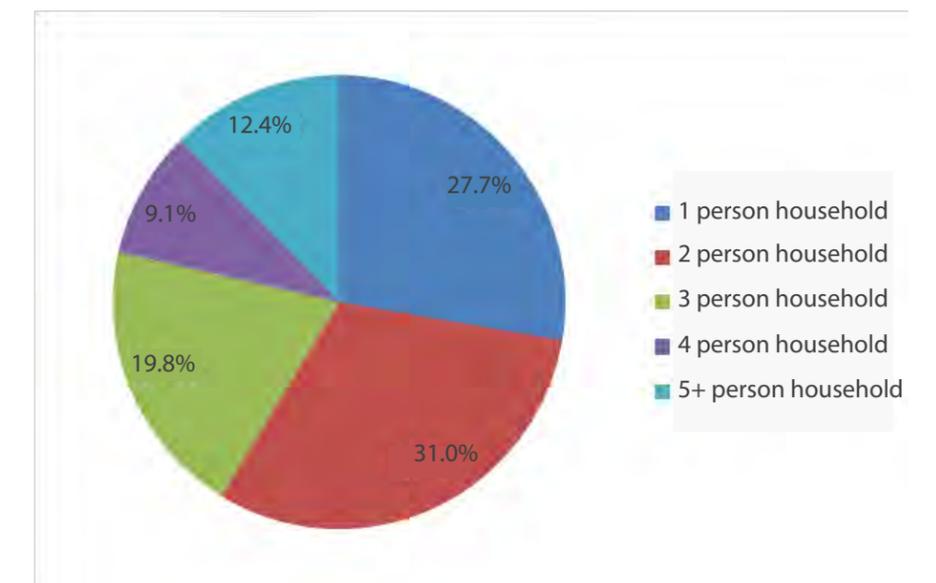
### Household Characteristics

There are 4,114 housing units in the Gresham Road Study Area. Most residents (61.3 percent) own their homes, which is comparable to homeownership rates in DeKalb County (58.2 percent) and the State of Georgia (66.8 percent). The study area is also home to many families. While less than one-third of households are single person households, the balance are families of two persons or more. The median household income in the study area is \$35,179 which is approximately \$15,000 less than the median incomes for DeKalb County and Georgia.

Figure 4: Study Area Household Characteristics

| Variable                | Study Area | DeKalb   | Georgia  |
|-------------------------|------------|----------|----------|
| Owner Occupied          | 61.3%      | 58.2%    | 66.8%    |
| Renter Occupied         | 38.7%      | 41.8%    | 33.2%    |
| Median Household Income | \$35,179   | \$51,712 | \$49,736 |

Figure 5: Study Area Household Size



### Mobility Characteristics

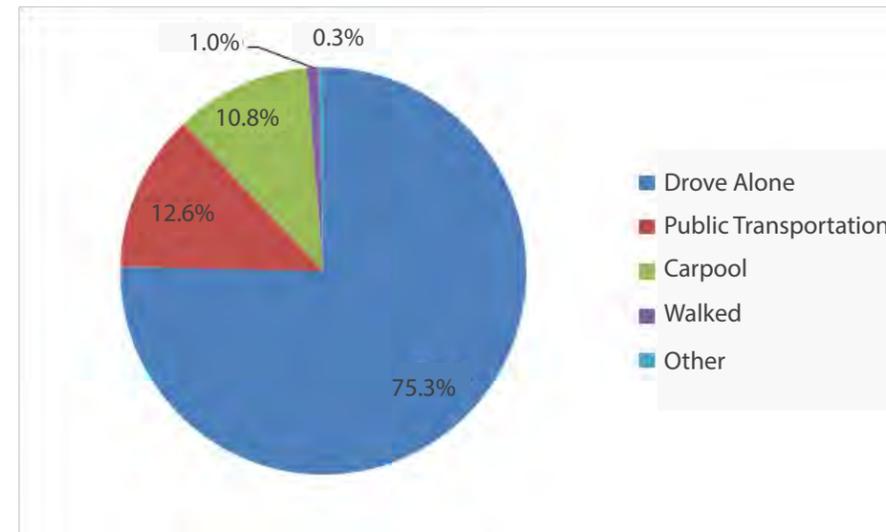
The U.S. Census estimates that 4,193 individuals from the study area were employed in 2011. The majority of workers (73.6 percent) travel alone and 10.6 percent take advantage of a carpool to get to and from work. More than 12 percent of working individuals rely upon public transportation as their primary means of transportation to work. When compared to the county and the state, fewer working individuals walk to work and very few use some other means of transportation. The number of zero-car households is slightly higher when compared to the DeKalb County (11.9 percent versus 9.4 percent) and is nearly double when compared to the state.

Figure 6: Study Area Mobility Characteristics

| Means of Transportation to Work | Study Area | DeKalb | Georgia |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------|---------|
| Drove Alone                     | 73.6%      | 72.6%  | 78.8%   |
| *Public Transportation          | 1.0%       | 8.5%   | 2.4%    |
| Carpool                         | 10.6%      | 10.4%  | 11.1%   |
| Walked                          | 0.7%       | 1.8%   | 1.6%    |
| Other                           | 0.3%       | 1.6%   | 1.4%    |
| Zero-car Households             | 11.9%      | 9.4%   | 6.7%    |

Public transportation includes bus, rail/subway, and taxi

Figure 7: Study Area Means of Transportation to Work



<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).

### Health & Wellness Characteristics

Chronic diseases like heart disease, some cancers, and diabetes account for 7 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.

Youth are especially 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, cancer illnesses, diabetes and asthma cases are among the highest in DeKalb County. Heart disease rates are also among the highest in the county. When examining hospital discharges within the defined McNair-Cedar Grove Community Health Assessment Area (CHAA)<sup>1</sup>, the highest percentage of hospital discharges are due to cardiovascular diseases at approximately 13.5 percent. The second highest percentage of hospital discharges within this CHAA for the years 2006 to 2010 is for diabetes (2.8 percent), followed closely by discharges for diabetes related issues (2.3 percent). Hospital discharges during this same timeframe due to asthma number 1.8 percent.

### 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 Study Area, there are four major future land use designations: Town Center, Suburban, Conservation and Open Space, Institutional, and the I-20 Corridor Overlay.

These categories are defined as follows:

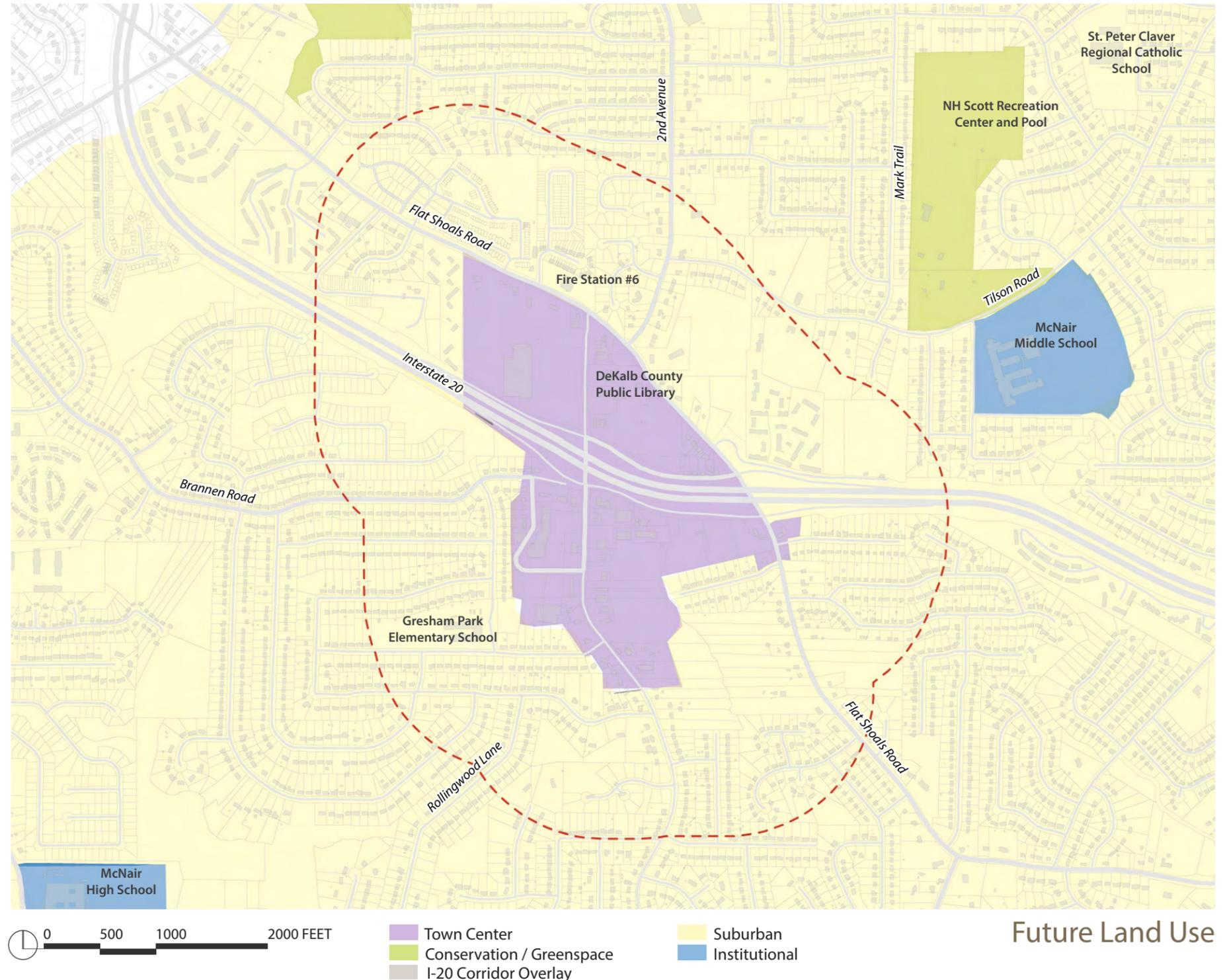
- **Town Center.** A focal point for several neighborhoods with a concentration of activities such as retail, service commercial, professional office, higher-density housing, and open space. Applicable land uses include High Density Residential and High Intensity Commercial.
- **Suburban.** Areas where 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.
- **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 - Housing

In transportation planning, the starting point of a trip is called its origin. Typically, most origins are people's homes. Residential uses in the study area are primarily single-family homes built in the 1960s and 1970s, but larger, multi-family communities are also present, particularly around Flat Shoals Road and I-20.

#### Destinations - Civic/Parks/Commercial

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.



Future Land Use



Property for Sale on Flat Shoals Road



Restaurant on Gresham Road across from Wal-Mart

*Civic Destinations*

- **DeKalb County Public Library.** The Gresham Branch of the DeKalb County Public Library is within the study area on Gresham Road. Its hours are limited to Monday-Thursday.
- **Fire Station #6.** DeKalb County Fire & Rescue’s Fire Station #6 is located on Flat Shoals Road within the study area. It is one of 26 stations within the county.
- **Gresham Park Elementary School.** Gresham Park Elementary School closed in 2011 and is currently vacant. DeKalb County School District intends to tear down the existing structure in 2013 and rebuild a new 900-seat elementary school in its place.
- **McNair Middle School.** McNair Middle School is part of the DeKalb County Public School System. It currently has 740 students in grades 6-8. The School District has plans to tear down the existing building and re-build a 1,200-seat school on the same site.
- **McNair High School.** Located immediately southwest of the study area, McNair High School is part of the DeKalb County Public School system. Currently it enrolls 865 students in grades 9-12.
- **St Peter Claver Regional Catholic School.** Founded in 1961, St Peter Claver Regional Catholic School is a parochial school serving students in grades Pre-K through 8. Enrollment is 125 students.

*Parks and Open Space Destinations*

- **NH Scott Recreation Center and Pool.** Owned and managed by DeKalb County, NH Scott Recreation Center and Pool is a 46-acre park. Recreation facilities include baseball fields, football fields, a multi-use field, basketball court, tennis courts, a swimming pool, a recreation center, playgrounds, and picnic areas.

*Commercial Destinations*

- **Walmart Supercenter.** The Walmart Supercenter opened in 2006, and is a primary destination of local trips.
- **Unnamed Shopping Centers.** Most of the other commercial uses in the study area are in older, unnamed shopping centers that provide limited local services and fast food restaurants.

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.

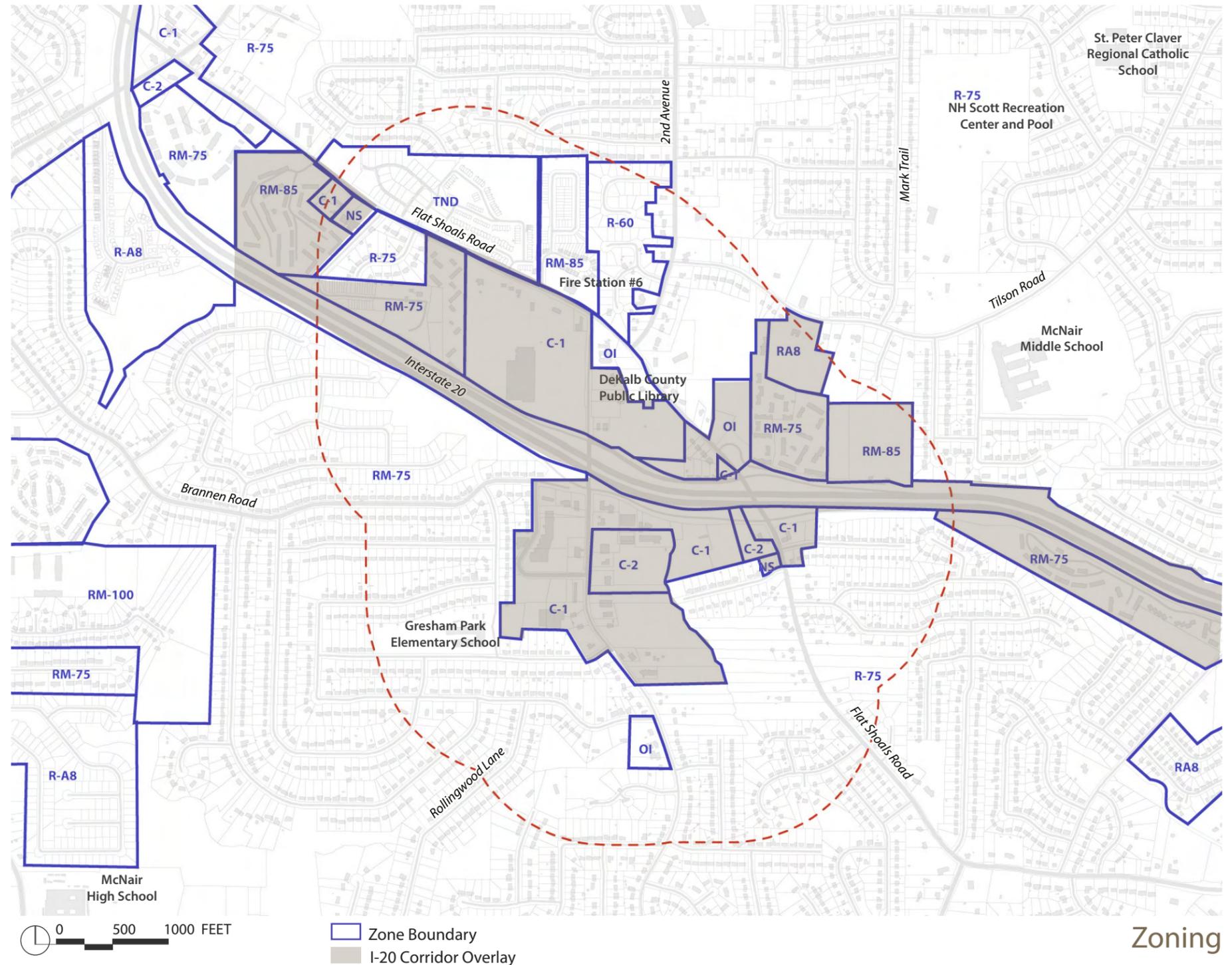
Currently, DeKalb County is in the process of updating its zoning code. The most predominant zoning designations in the Gresham Study Area are C-1 (Local Commercial), R-75 (Single Family Residential) and RM-75 and RM-85 (Multi-Family Residential). Figure 8 contains the basic regulations for zoning districts 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 by 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 require 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 Gresham Road Study Area were analyzed for their alignment with these active living components. The only zones that support active living principles are TND and I-20. The I-20 Overlay supports high intensity, mixed use development including retail, office, and residential on single large parcel to decrease the need for vehicular

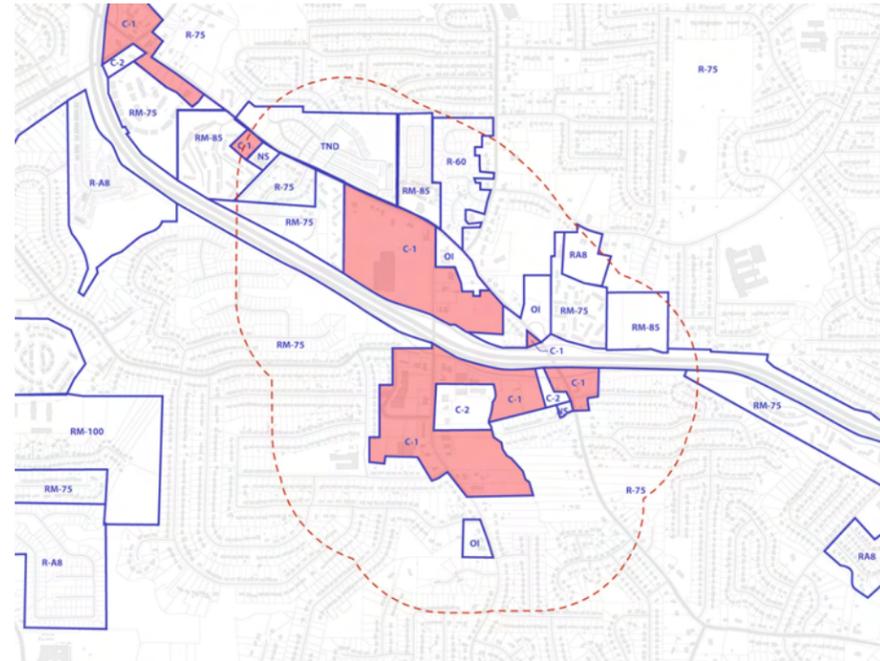
Figure 8: Zoning in the Gresham Road Study Area

| ZONING DISTRICT | LOT WIDTH (min) | LOT AREA (min)     | FRONT YARD (min) | SIDE YARD (min) | REAR YARD (min) | HEIGHT (max) | FLOOR AREA (min) | LOT COVERAGE (max) |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------|
| R75             | 100'            | 6,000 sf           | 30-35'           | 15-20'          | 30-40'          | 4 floors     | 300-1,000 sf     | 35%                |
| R60             | 60'             | 8,000 sf           | 30-45'           | 30-45'          | 40'             | 35'          | 1,200 sf         | 35%                |
| 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%                |
| RM85            | 60-100'         | 6,000 sf - 2 acres | 20-35'           | 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%                |
| TND             | 100'            | -                  | 20'              | 15'             | 20'             | 35-45'       | -                | 60%                |
| OI              | 100'            | 20,000 sf          | 50'              | 20'             | 30'             | 70'          | 650-1,000 sf     | 80%                |
| C1              | 100'            | 20,000 sf          | 75'              | 20'             | 30'             | 35'          | -                | 80%                |
| C2              | 100'            | 30,000 sf          | 75'              | 20'             | 30'             | 35'          | -                | 80%                |
| I-20            | -               | -                  | 0'               | 10-25'          | 10'             | 20 floors    | 3.5 FAR (max)    | -                  |

Areas of Change

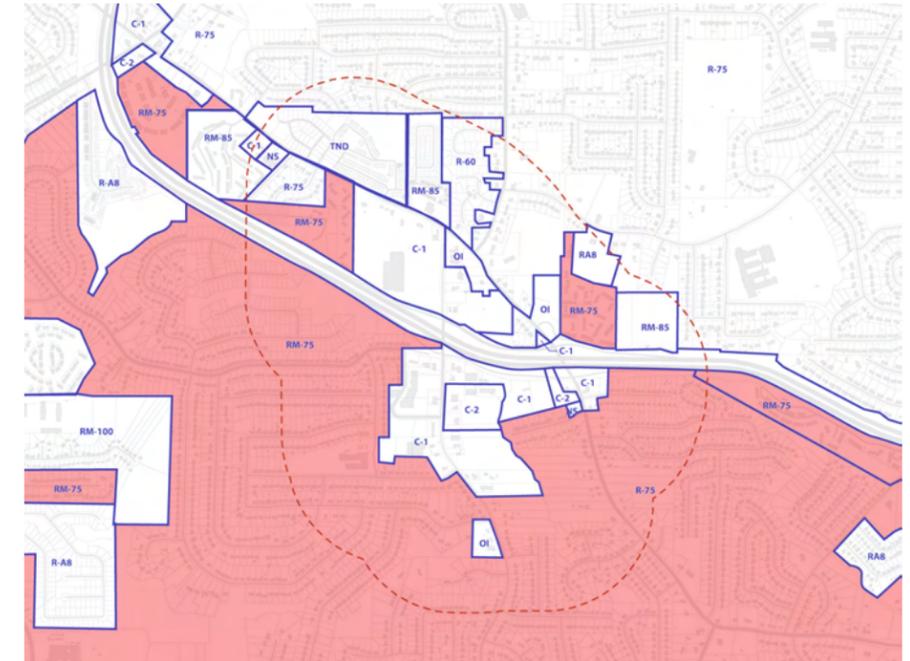
Over time, the study area can evolve into a more active community through thoughtful redevelopment. Because of multiple large lots and aging commercial infrastructure, several parcels within the study area have the potential to redevelop in the future. The greatest potential for redevelopment centers along I-20, particularly if plans move forward to construct a Bus Rapid Transit Line with a station at Gresham. Most of these parcels are zoned C-1, RM-75, or RM-85.

These parts of the Gresham Study Area have the potential to change, but the exact nature of their development will hinge on the conditions of the local real estate market.



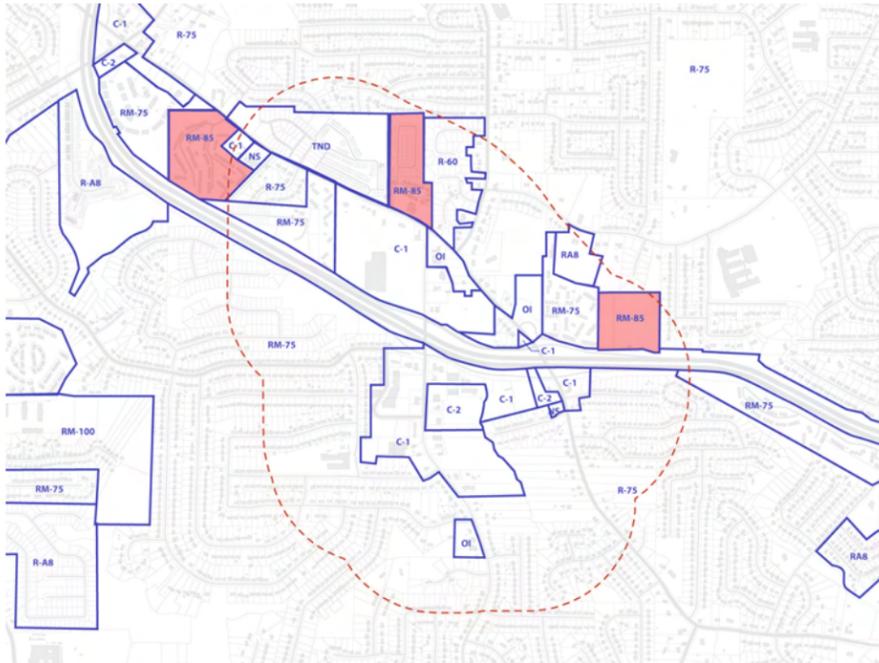
C-1- Local Commercial District

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 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  |



RM-75 Multi-Family Residential District

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| PURPOSE              | To provide for development of multi-family neighborhoods (18 units/acre) and compatible infill  |
| USES ALLOWED         | Range of residential uses, lodging, and personal services   |
| FORM                 | Medium-density suburban-style residences  |
| Setbacks from Street | Minimum of 35 feet in front and 40 feet in rear (multi-family dwellings); minimum of 30 feet in front and rear (single-family detached) |
| Lot Width            | Minimum of 100 feet   |
| Lot Area             | Minimum 2 acres   |
| Density              | Maximum of 18 dwelling units/acre   |
| Parking              | 1.75 - 4 off-street spaces required for residences depending on density; varies for other uses  |
| Lot Coverage         | Maximum of 35 percent coverage  |



*RM-85 Multi-Family Residential District*

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| PURPOSE              | To provide for development of multi-family neighborhoods (14 units/acre) and compatible infill  |
| USES ALLOWED         | Range of residential uses, lodging, and personal services   |
| FORM                 | Medium-density suburban-style residences  |
| Setbacks from Street | Minimum of 35 feet in front and 40 feet in rear (multi-family dwellings); minimum of 20 feet in front and rear (single-family detached) |
| Lot Width            | Minimum of 100 feet   |
| Lot Area             | Minimum 2 acres   |
| Density              | Maximum of 14 dwelling units/acre   |
| Parking              | 1.75 - 4 off-street spaces required for residences depending on density; varies for other uses  |
| Lot Coverage         | Maximum of 35 percent coverage  |

## 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 Gresham 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. The higher the growth rates, usually the better from a development perspective. However, the overall composition of the market is critical, and the primary factor they are looking for is a stable population base. Growth trends in the study area are characterized by the following:

- There was a population loss (-3.3 percent) between 2000 and 2010, but a gain (2.4 percent) between 2010 and 2013. The current population base is basically at the same level as in 2000.
- Over the next five years, a population growth is expected in the study area, which is especially notable given the loss over the past decade. This rate of growth is above the national average, on par with DeKalb County, but below the Atlanta MSA average.
- There was a gain in total households (12.0 percent), while there was a population loss (-3.3 percent) between 2000 and 2010. This is an indicator of an area that is transitioning from a larger average household size (i.e., family) to a smaller average household size (i.e., singles or couples). There was a higher growth in households than in population over the last three years, which supports the preceding explanation, and a similar projection for the next five years.

#### Age Structure

Most developers, builders, and retailers desire age diversity, with strong youth populations, as it is many times 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. Key age structure trends include:

- The study area is on par with the DeKalb County and national averages, and below the Atlanta MSA proportion for those aged under 18.
- The proportion of residents aged between 25 and 35 is on par with the county average, and above the MSA and national proportions.
- The study area is above the county and Atlanta MSA, and just below the national proportions for those aged over 65.

#### Income Levels

Typically, developers, builders and retailers believe that the higher the income levels, 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. Income levels in the study area characterized as follows:

- The average household income is \$39,557. This household income is well below the county, metro area, and national averages. The study area's average household income is 57 percent of the national average.
- The study area's average household income has decreased since 2000 at a rate slightly faster than the county average. While the study area has experienced a decline in average household income since 2000, gains were made in the metro and national averages.
- The proportion of households earning less than \$15,000 in the study area is well above the county, metro Atlanta, and national proportions. The study area's proportion of households earning less than \$15,000 is twice the proportion for both the Atlanta MSA and the nation.
- At the other end of the spectrum are the households earning over \$100,000; the study area's proportion of these households is well under the county, the metro area, and the nation's proportions. The study area's proportion of households earning over \$100,000 is one-quarter of the proportion for both the Atlanta MSA and the nation.

#### 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. Key daytime population figures include:

- The daytime population (employees) for the study area is 2,049. This accounts for a negligible proportion of the County's employment, with about one-half percent of total employees for DeKalb County.
- There are a total of 153 businesses in the study area.

<sup>1</sup>Study Area statistics are for a 1-mile radius from Gresham Road and Interstate 20 intersection.

<sup>2</sup>The Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is made up of 28-counties: Barrow, Bartow, Butts, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dawson, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Haralson, Heard, Henry, Jasper, Lamar, Meriwether, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton.



Entry into Brighton Village



Back of Homes along Flat Shoals Road



Home on Gresham Road near Vicki Lane

**Real Estate Market: Retail**

*Submarket*

In terms of submarket performance, the Gresham Study Area is located within the Southeast Atlanta retail submarket.

The Southeast Atlanta retail submarket has a total of 386 retail buildings, reflecting approximately 3.4 million square feet of retail space. The vacancy rate is 7.7 percent, which is below the metro average. The average rental rate is below the metro average, at \$8.26 per square foot. The net absorption for 2012 was negative for the Southeast Atlanta retail submarket, at -79,540 square feet, according to CoStar.<sup>3</sup>

*Study Area*

The only significant retail space in the study area is a large Walmart Supercenter located just north of I-20. It is approximately 215,000 square feet and opened in 2006, which made it the first Walmart Supercenter inside I-285 in Atlanta. Often the opening of a Walmart leads to the construction of smaller, shadow shopping centers nearby. However, up to this point, this Walmart has not brought significant retail development to the area. There is one fairly new commercial building located directly across the street from the Walmart. It is an 8,000 square foot, two-story building with retail space on the first floor and office space on the second floor. The building has been successful, with only 1,000 square feet currently available, according to the leasing agent.

South of I-20, there are several older, vacant commercial properties. Most of these properties were built during the 1960s, which means they are about 50 years old and are likely at or nearing the end of their life cycle. There are two somewhat dilapidated shopping centers with very high vacancy rates and no anchor stores. There are also several former fast food restaurants that have been converted to other uses.

**Real Estate Market: Residential**

*Submarket*

Since 2006, the number of home sales and the sales prices have decreased in the zip code the Gresham Study Area is located in. The amount of home sales has declined 40 percent between 2006 and 2011 and the sales prices have declined about 55 percent over the same time period.

The median sales price for the DeKalb portion of the 30316 zip code (located in both DeKalb and Fulton counties) in 2011 was \$80,000.<sup>4</sup> There were a total of 382 homes sold in 2011, a continued decrease over the previous five years. The overwhelming majority (97 percent) of sales were resales; with only 10 new home sales in the 30316 zip code (DeKalb County portion). The sales price of new sales (\$174,500) was markedly higher than the resales (\$76,250) in 2011. The 2011 sales prices were lower than previous years.

*Study Area*

While the study area consists mostly of commercial properties or vacant land, there is a great deal of housing in the surrounding area. Most of this housing stock is from the 1960s and 1970s, but there has been a resurgence of new single-family development over the last decade. This is largely the result of spillover development from the nearby East Atlanta neighborhood, which has seen a great deal of gentrification and rising home prices over the last several years.

The housing downturn of the last few years has significantly slowed residential development in the area surrounding the study area. Most of the vacant lots in the new subdivisions went through foreclosure and are now owned by lenders. One exception is The Preserve East Atlanta, a new neighborhood of single-family homes that is still owned by its original developer. This is a fairly large community with 131 lots. Development began in 2005 and approximately 100 homes have been completed and sold. Construction continues today, but at a much slower pace than before the housing downturn. Typically, one or two houses sell each month with prices ranging from \$200,000 to \$219,000, according to the on-site agent.

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

<sup>4</sup>Source: Atlanta Journal-Constitution Home Sales Report and Market Data Center

Real Estate Market: Office

*Submarket*

In terms of submarket performance, the Gresham Study Area is located within the I-20 East/Conyers office submarket.

The I-20 East/Conyers office submarket has a total of 578 office buildings, reflecting approximately 4.0 million square feet of office space. The vacancy rate is 12.0 percent, which is below the metro average. The average rental rate is on par with the metro average, at \$18.77 per square foot. The net absorption for 2012 was positive for the I-20 East/Conyers office submarket, at 40,760 square feet, according to CoStar.

*Study Area*

While the study area does not have a significant office sector, there are a few local-serving office tenants located along the Gresham Road corridor.

Real Estate Market: Industrial

*Submarket*

In terms of submarket performance, the Gresham Study Area is located within the Snapfinger industrial submarket.

The Snapfinger industrial submarket has a total of 413 industrial buildings, reflecting approximately 15.8 million square feet of industrial space. The vacancy rate is 6.4 percent, which is below the metro average. The average rental rate is below the metro average, at \$3.43 per square foot. The net absorption for 2012 was positive for the Snapfinger industrial submarket, at 401,580 square feet, according to CoStar.

*Study Area*

There is no significant industrial use within the study area.

Opportunities & Challenges

*Opportunities*

- Strong residential growth in the East Atlanta neighborhood has had some spillover into the Gresham Road area. Several new neighborhoods have brought additional middle-income homeowners to the area.
- The Walmart Supercenter has removed the former blight of an abandoned Kmart. It also serves as a retail traffic generator for the area and a potential anchor for additional retail.
- The Gresham Road area is directly in the path of a strong wave of redevelopment that has already swept through the areas along I-20, closer to the City of Atlanta.
- The area along Gresham Road, south of I-20, has a great deal of blighted commercial property that provides an opportunity for large-scale redevelopment.

*Challenges*

- Blighted commercial property near I-20 weakens the housing market in the area.
- Currently, the study area does not have the walkability that has been a strong drawing feature of the closer-in communities that are adjacent to the study area.
- Some of the newer homes in neighborhoods that were never completed are beginning to show signs of disinvestment.
- While there has been new single-family construction in the last decade, there does not appear to be much renovation taking place in the existing neighborhoods. Many of these homes are now over 50 years-old and will require substantial investment to remain viable and stable.

Future Development Trends

Before the economic downturn, a great deal of new single-family housing was under construction in the neighborhoods surrounding this study area. This new construction has slowed dramatically. While the study area's residential market is slowly resuming infill and reinvestment, the strength of future development in the area, both residential and commercial, will depend largely on the redevelopment of the Gresham Road commercial corridor directly south of I-20. Currently, this area suffers from disinvestment, vacancy, and blight. These run-down commercial properties serve as a deterrent to future residential growth in the immediately surrounding neighborhoods. However, these properties also provide an opportunity for growth through infill development, and could be an appropriate site for a mixed-use development, which could greatly improve the appearance and walkability of the area. Potential uses could include multi-family housing and retail.

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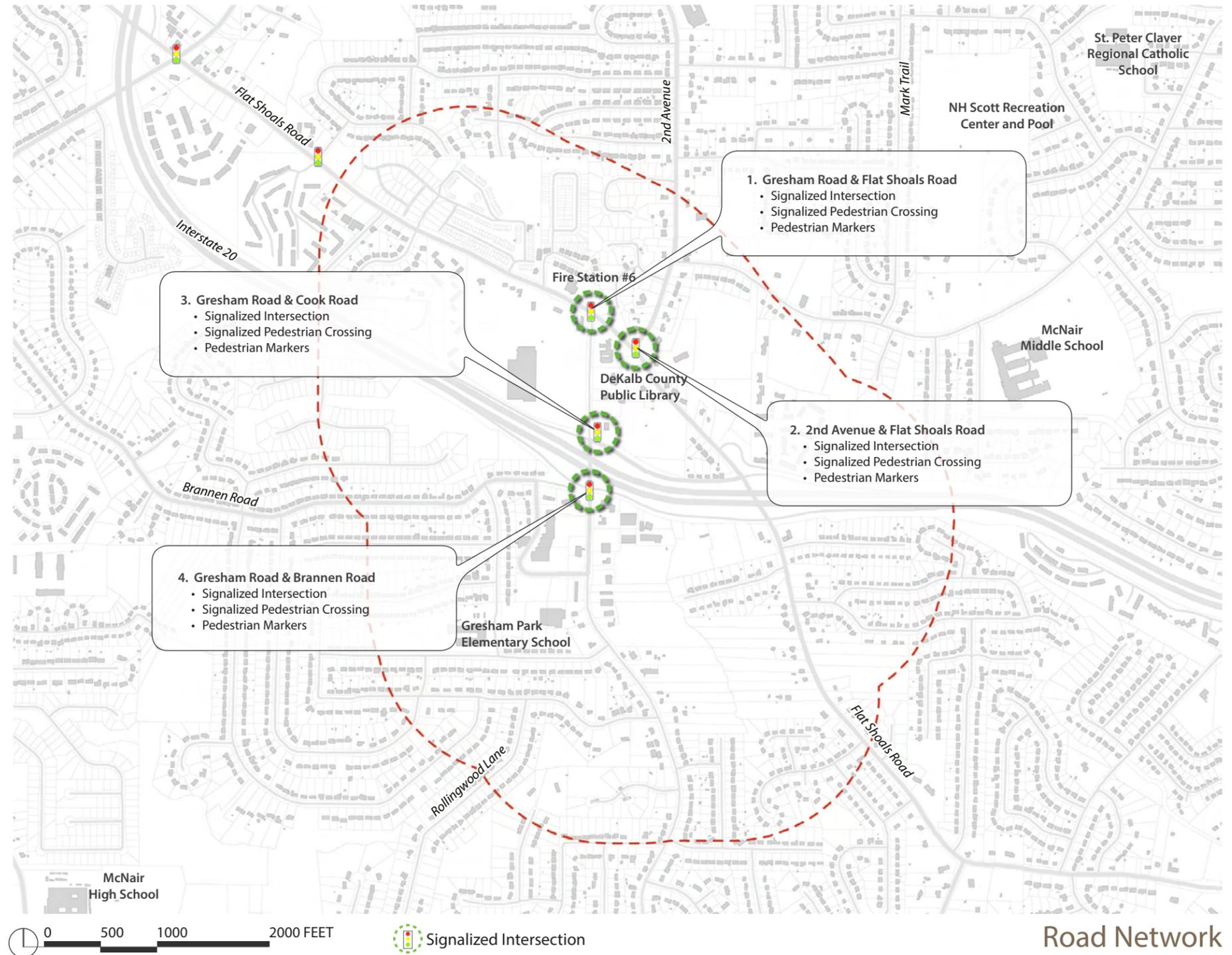
## 1.5 Community Context: Mobility

### Street Network and Connectivity

Similar to many other areas of DeKalb County, the study area's street network is characterized by having a few major arterials and collector streets with many disconnected local streets. The local street network is particularly sparse near the study area's major commercial uses, but the suburban residential neighborhoods have comparatively better connectivity.

There are four major intersections of note within the study area:

- **Gresham Road and Flat Shoals Road.** Gresham Road terminates at Flat Shoals Road SE. To accommodate pedestrians, a small island was constructed to facilitate crossing both streets. The intersection has traffic signals, pedestrian signals and crosswalks.
- **2nd Avenue and Flat Shoals Road.** Like Gresham Road, 2nd Avenue also terminates at Flat Shoals Road. The intersection is signalized, has pedestrian signals and crosswalks, but does not have a crosswalk for the eastern crossing of Flat Shoals Road.
- **Gresham Road and Cook Road.** Cook Road serves as a feeder for I-20. Its intersection with Gresham Road can be challenging for pedestrians due to the higher speeds of vehicles exiting and merging onto the Interstate. The presence of right-turn lanes also makes crossing difficult. The intersection is signalized, has pedestrian signals, and has two crosswalks, but there are no crosswalks for the southern crossing of Gresham Road or for the western crossing of Cook Road.
- **Gresham Road and Brannen Road.** Like Cook Road, Brannen Road also acts as a feeder road to Interstate 20. Its intersection with Gresham Road is signalized, and has some pedestrian facilities but they are incomplete—some crossing points lack crosswalks and/or pedestrian signals.





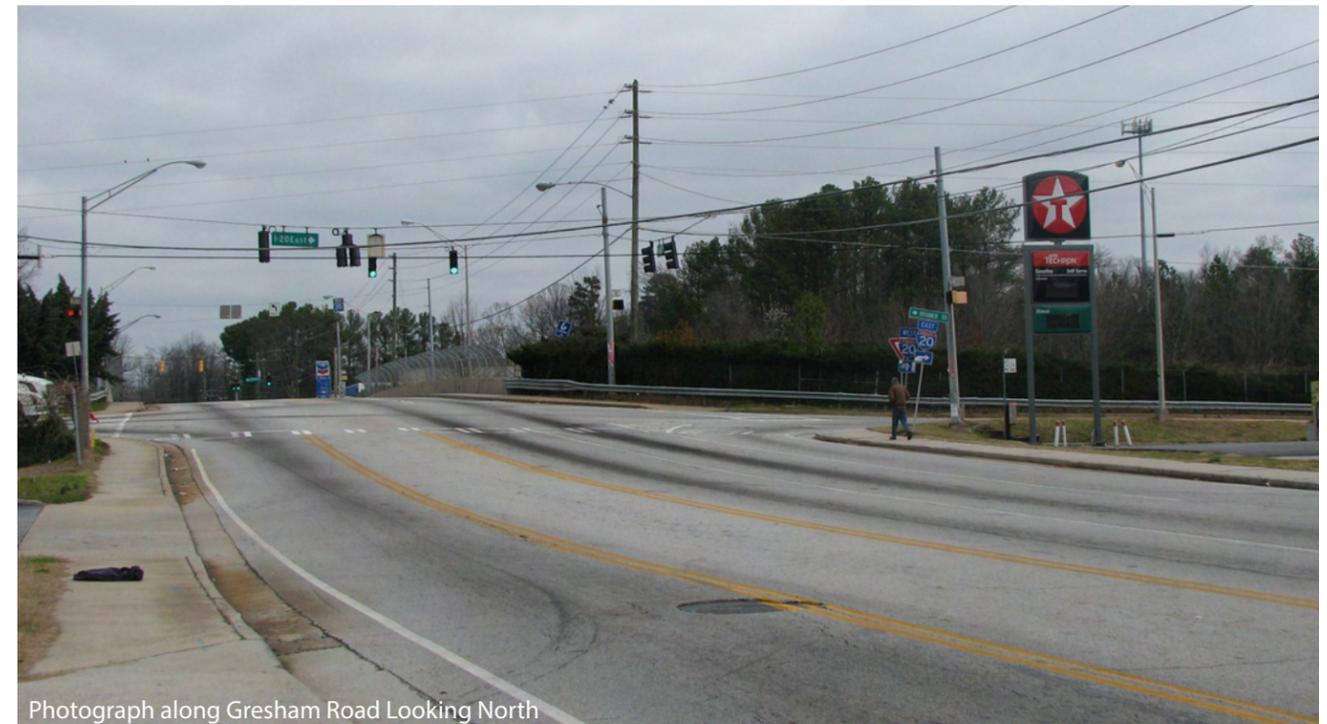
Photograph of Flat Shoals Road Looking Southeast



View from Flat Shoals Road Looking South on Gresham Road



View Looking West on Brannen Road



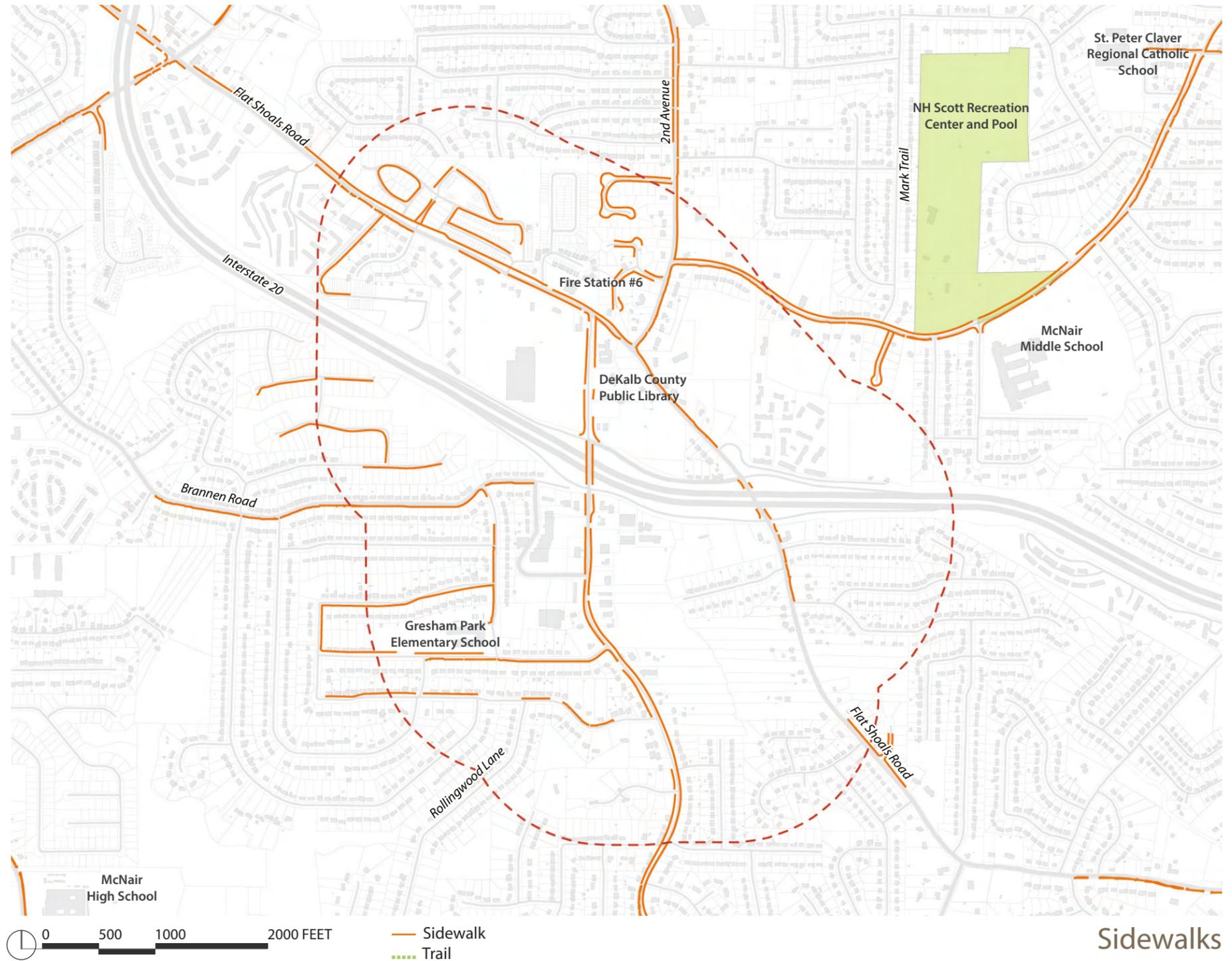
Photograph along Gresham Road Looking North

## 1.5 Community Context : Mobility

### Sidewalk, Trail and Bicycle Networks

The arterials and collector roads of the study area—Gresham Road, Flat Shoals Road, Tilson Road, Brannen Road, and 2nd Avenue—all have fairly complete sidewalk networks. Beyond these major streets however, sidewalks within the study area are limited or non-existent.

There are no trails nor dedicated bicycle facilities within the study area.

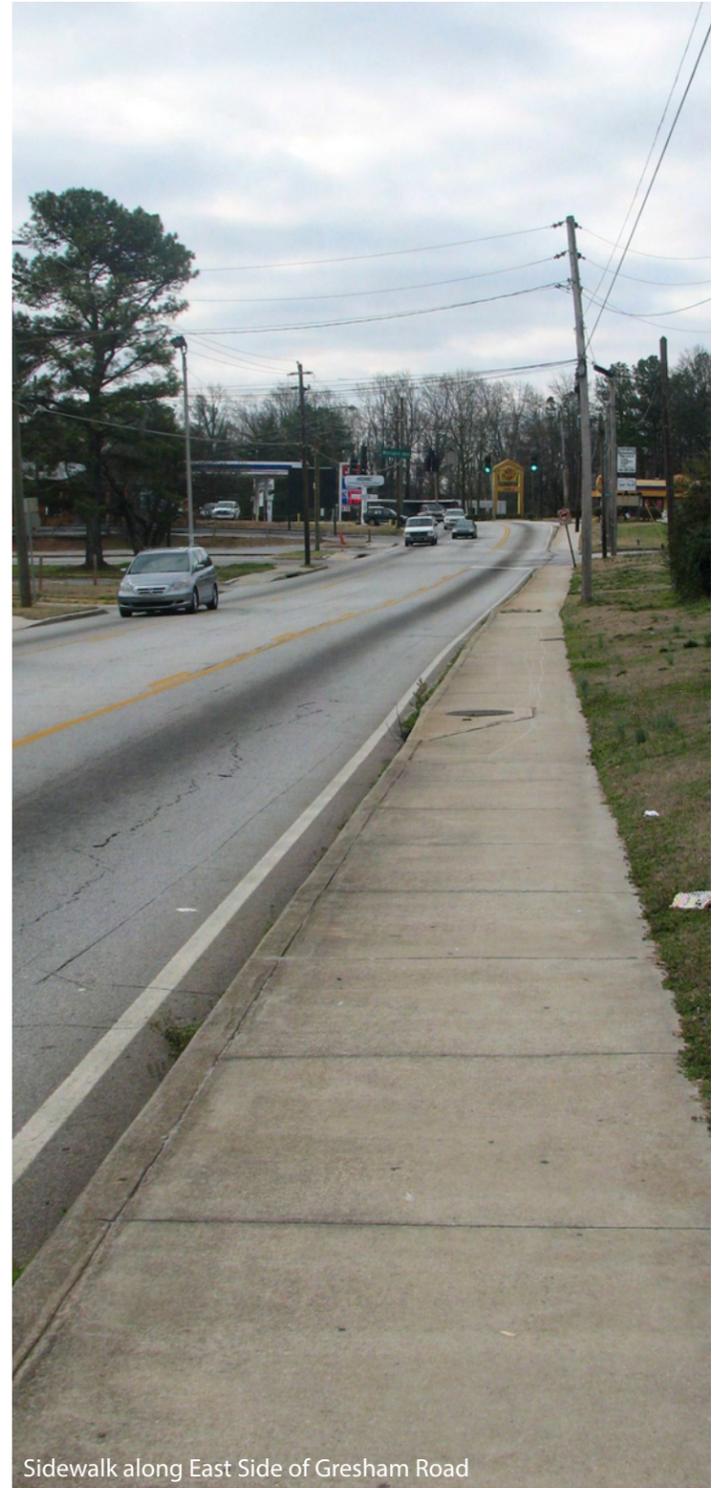




Sidewalk along Gresham Road near Welland Avenue



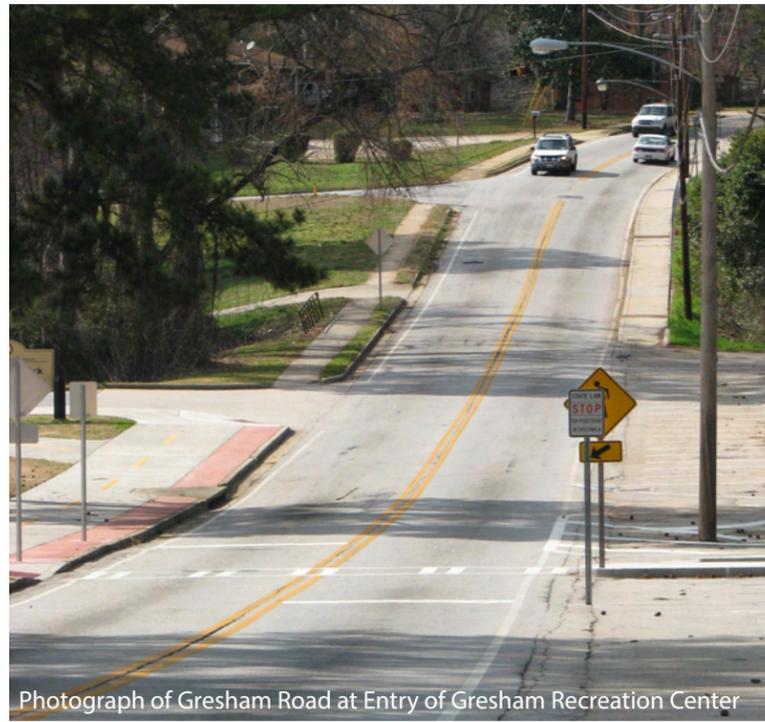
Pedestrian Crossing Gresham Road from Church to Bus Stop



Sidewalk along East Side of Gresham Road



Crosswalk across Clifton Church Road at Gresham Road



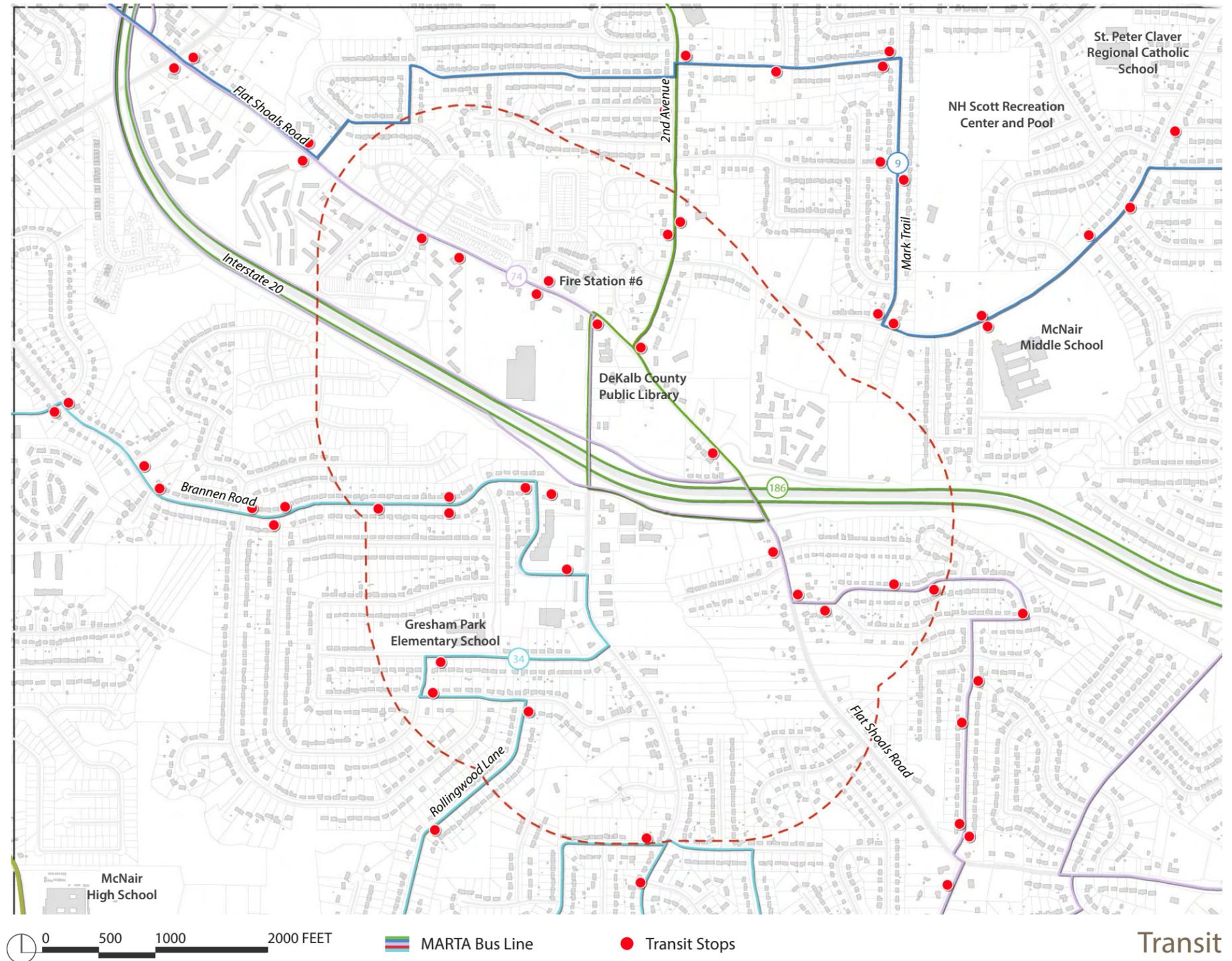
Photograph of Gresham Road at Entry of Gresham Recreation Center

## 1.5 Community Context : Mobility

### Transit

There are currently four MARTA bus lines that serve the study area. A Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line along I-20 is proposed for the future.

- MARTA Route 9 - Toney Valley/Peachcrest Rd.** Route 9 is an east-west route serving southern DeKalb County. Its western terminus is at the intersection of Cook Road and Gresham Road at the Walmart Supercenter. Reached via Brannen Road and Flat Shoals Road, the route travels north on Second Avenue, and jogs east using a series of roadways including Trailwood Road, Mark Trail, Starline Drive, Habersham Drive, Whites Mill Road, Ousley Court, Candler Street, and Valley Ridge Road. From there, it turns east on Miriam Lane, then jogs northeast using another series of roadways including Glendale Drive, Green Forest Drive, Kennard Lane, Shamrock Lane, and McAfee Road. From McAfee Road the route turns north on Columbia Drive, and travels to its eastern terminus at Kensington Station via Peachtree Road, Midway Road, and Memorial Road. At Kensington Station, there is access to MARTA's Blue and Green Rail Lines. Major destinations served by Route 9 include McNair Middle School, Leslie Street Elementary School, Nathaniel Herbert Scott III Park, and Columbia Middle School. There are 16 stops for Route 9 within the study area.
- MARTA Route 34 - Gresham/Clifton Springs.** Route 34 travels southeast-northwest between Fulton County and DeKalb County. Its northern terminus is the Inman Park/Reynoldstown Station, where there is access to the Blue and Green Rail Lines. From the station, the route travels east to Moreland Avenue, where it turns south. It continues to jog southwest, traveling along Glenwood Avenue, Stokeswood Avenue, Greenleaf Road, Cloverdale Drive, and Bouldercrest Drive. The route then travels east along Cecilia Drive and Brannen Road, then cuts over to Gresham Road, where it eventually reaches its southern terminus (via Clifton Church Road and Clifton Springs Road) at Georgia Perimeter College. Route 34 also has two diversions depending on the time of day and direction; these diversions loop around to serve Sombrero Way and Boulderview Drive. Major destinations served by Route 34 include the Edgewood Retail District, Gresham Park, Clifton Elementary School, and Clifton Springs Health Center (on weekdays). There are 17 stops for Route 34 within the study area.



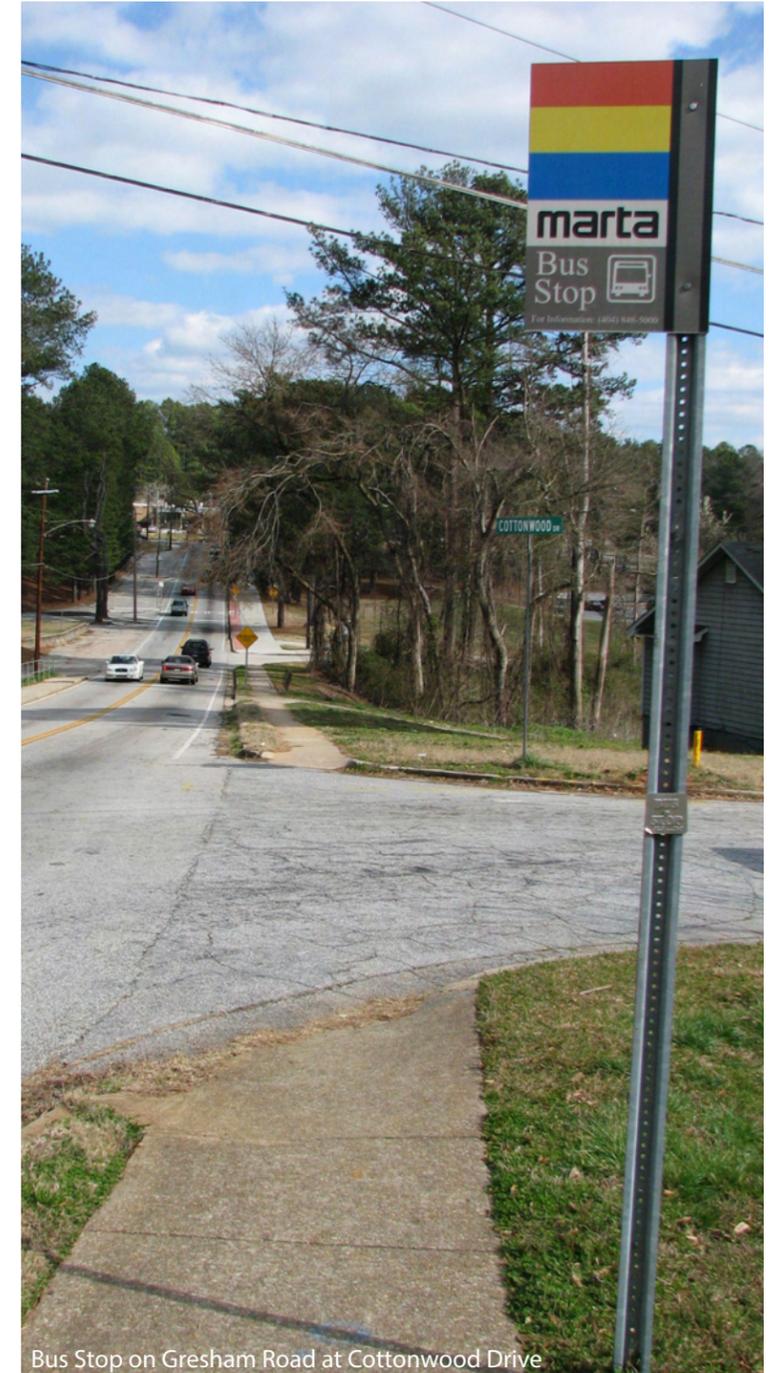
- **MARTA Route 74 - Flat Shoals.** Route 74 travels southeast-northwest from Downtown Atlanta into southern DeKalb County. Its western terminus (Alabama Street and Peachtree Street) is near Five Points Station, where there is access to the Red, Gold, Blue and Green Rail Lines. From Peachtree Street, the route travels east on Mitchell Street, and cuts over to Interstate 20 via Capitol Avenue, Memorial Drive and Hill Street. It continues southeast via Bill Kennedy Way, Glenwood Avenue, and Flat Shoals Avenue. At Doris Drive, it begins to jog east to Laurel Mill Apartments via multiple roads including Clanton Terrace, Sherlock Drive, Clifton Church Road, Clifton Springs Road, Hermosa Drive and Whites Mill Road. From the intersection of Whites Mill Road and Flat Shoals Road, the route completes a loop serving multiple neighborhoods to the east. Aside from Downtown Atlanta, there are no major destinations served by Route 74. There are 16 stops for Route 74 within the study area.
- **MARTA Route 186 - Rainbow Dr/South DeKalb.** Route 186 travels predominantly east-west, linking destinations in southern DeKalb with Downtown Atlanta. Its western terminus is at Five Points Station, where there is access to the Red, Gold, Blue and Green Rail lines. Before heading east, the route does a loop in Downtown, traveling along Pryor Street, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Spring Street and Marietta Street. From there, it travels east on Decatur Street, then cuts down to Interstate 20 via Hill Street. The route exits the interstate east onto Candler Road, then travels northeast on Rainbow Drive/Snapfinger Road to its eastern terminus at the intersection of Wesley Chapel Road and Eastside Drive. In addition to Downtown Atlanta, major destinations served by Route 186 include Georgia State Station and the South DeKalb Mall. Route 186 travels through the study area but has no stops.



Bus Shelter at Wal-Mart Parking Lot along Gresham Road



MARTA Bus Stop on Flat Shoals Road



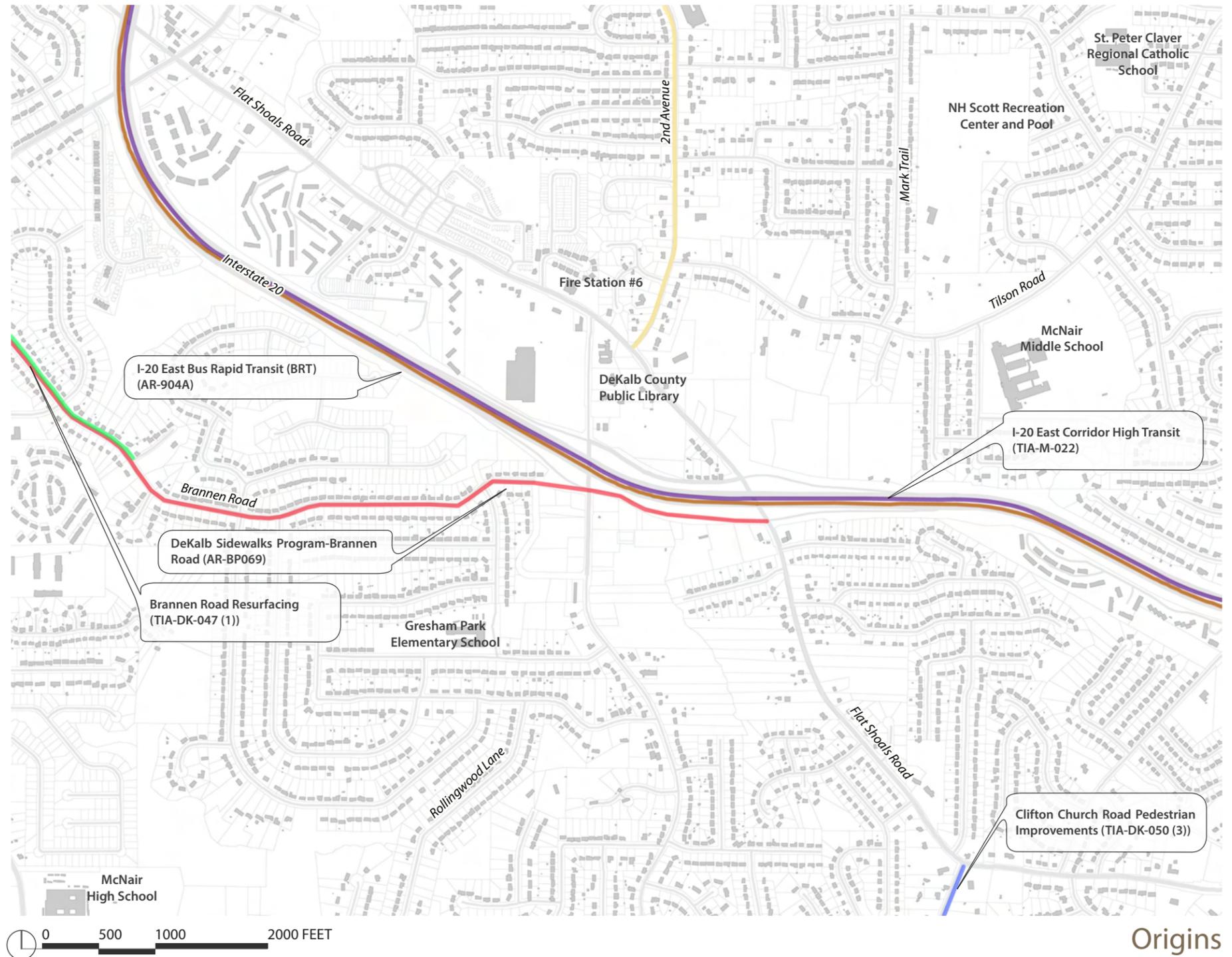
Bus Stop on Gresham Road at Cottonwood Drive

## 1.5 Community Context: Mobility

### Programmed Transportation Projects

There are eight transportation projects in the study area that are already party of long-term plans.

- **I-20 East Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (AR-904A).** Long-range plan for Bus Rapid Transit between Stonecrest Mall and Downtown Atlanta.
- **DeKalb Sidewalks Program—Brannen Road (AR-BP069).** Improvements to sidewalk facilities on Brannen Road between Fayetteville Road and Flat Shoals Road.
- **DeKalb Sidewalk Program Phase 2C (AR-BP067).** Flat Shoals, Henderson and Salem Roads. Pedestrian facility improvements on Flat Shoals Road, Henderson Road and Salem Road. ]
- **Fayetteville Road Pedestrian Improvements (TIA-DK-050 (7)).** Pedestrian improvements (new sidewalks, shoulders) on Fayetteville Road between Flat Shoals Road and Glenwood Avenue.
- **Clifton Church Road Pedestrian Improvements (TIA-DK-050 (3)).** Installation of sidewalks on Clifton Church Road from Bouldercrest Road to Flat Shoals Road.
- **Brannen Road Resurfacing (TIA-DK-047 (1)).** Milling, patching, and resurfacing of Brannen Road between Fayetteville Road to Sugar Creek Place.
- **I-20 East Corridor High Transit (TIA-M-022).** The purpose of this project is to provide transit service to south DeKalb county (Candler Road) that directly connects to downtown Atlanta. This segment will achieve the goal of connecting the South DeKalb area and downtown Atlanta.
- **Second Avenue Resurfacing (TIA-DK-047 (30)).** Milling, patching and resurfacing of Second Avenue from Glenwood Avenue to Flat Shoals Road.





Entry into Brighton Village



Back of Homes along Flat Shoals Road



House along Flat Shoals Road



Home on Gresham Road near Vicki Lane

## 1.6 Public Engagement

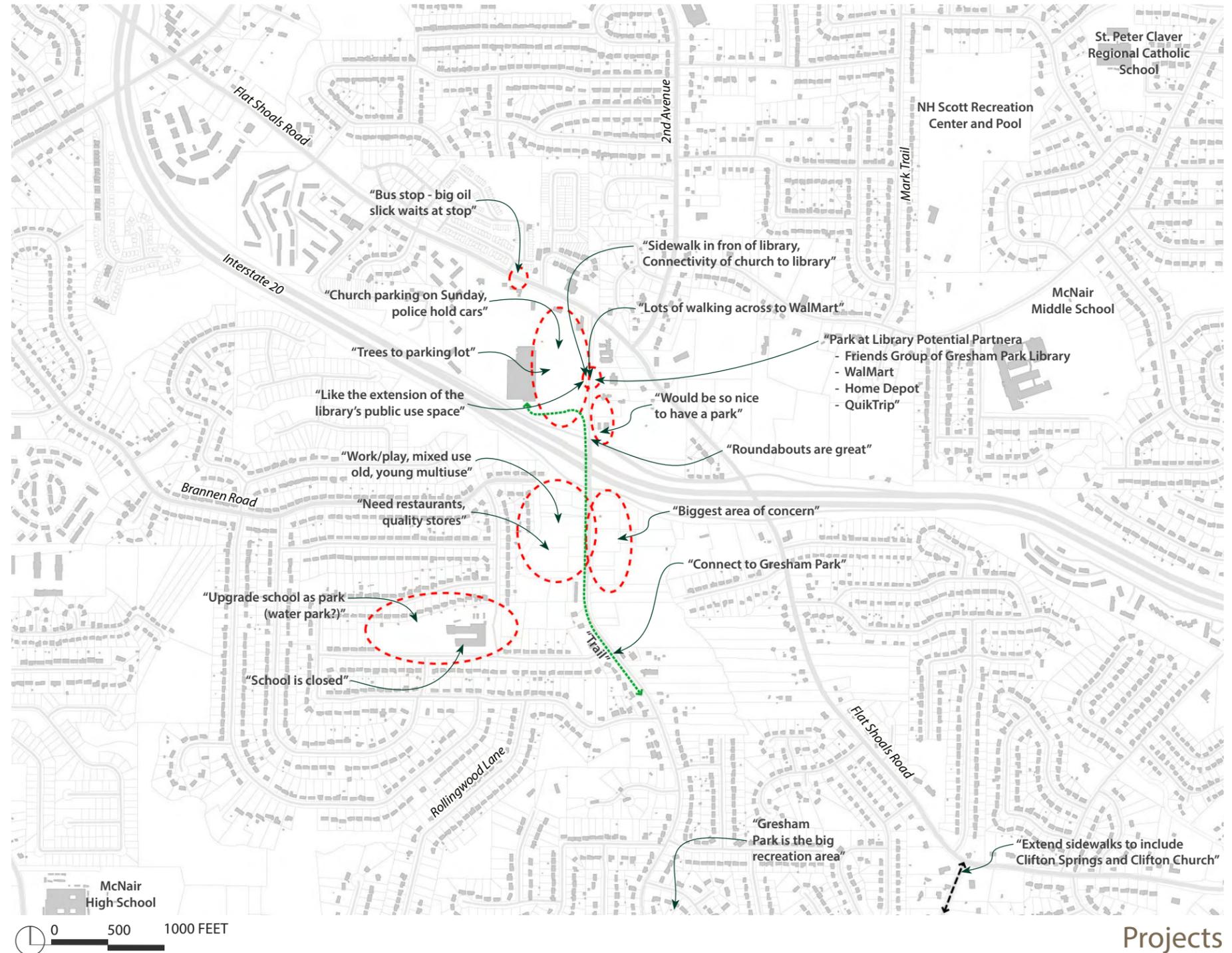
The goal of the public engagement process was to develop an outreach process that promotes the involvement of all stakeholders in the DeKalb County Board of Health Master Active Living Plan study areas, including low to moderate income, minority, and elderly or disabled citizens. The public involvement 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

On the evening of Thursday, March 14, a public meeting was held at the Gresham Park Recreation Center. An announcement was hand distributed to a broad list of public locations within each study area including the following:

- Gresham Library
- Gresham First Baptist
- Clifton Elementary
- Clifton United Methodist
- McNair High school
- Southside Medical Center

Twenty-five (25) members of the public attended. Most attendees were supportive of projects that improved opportunities for active living; concerns were mostly centered on the issue of timing, and how long-range projects may be. The map at right documents participants' ideas and concerns expressed at the meeting.



Projects