

## SECTION 1

November 2019

PREPARED FOR:



**DeKalb County, Georgia**



**Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority**

PREPARED BY:



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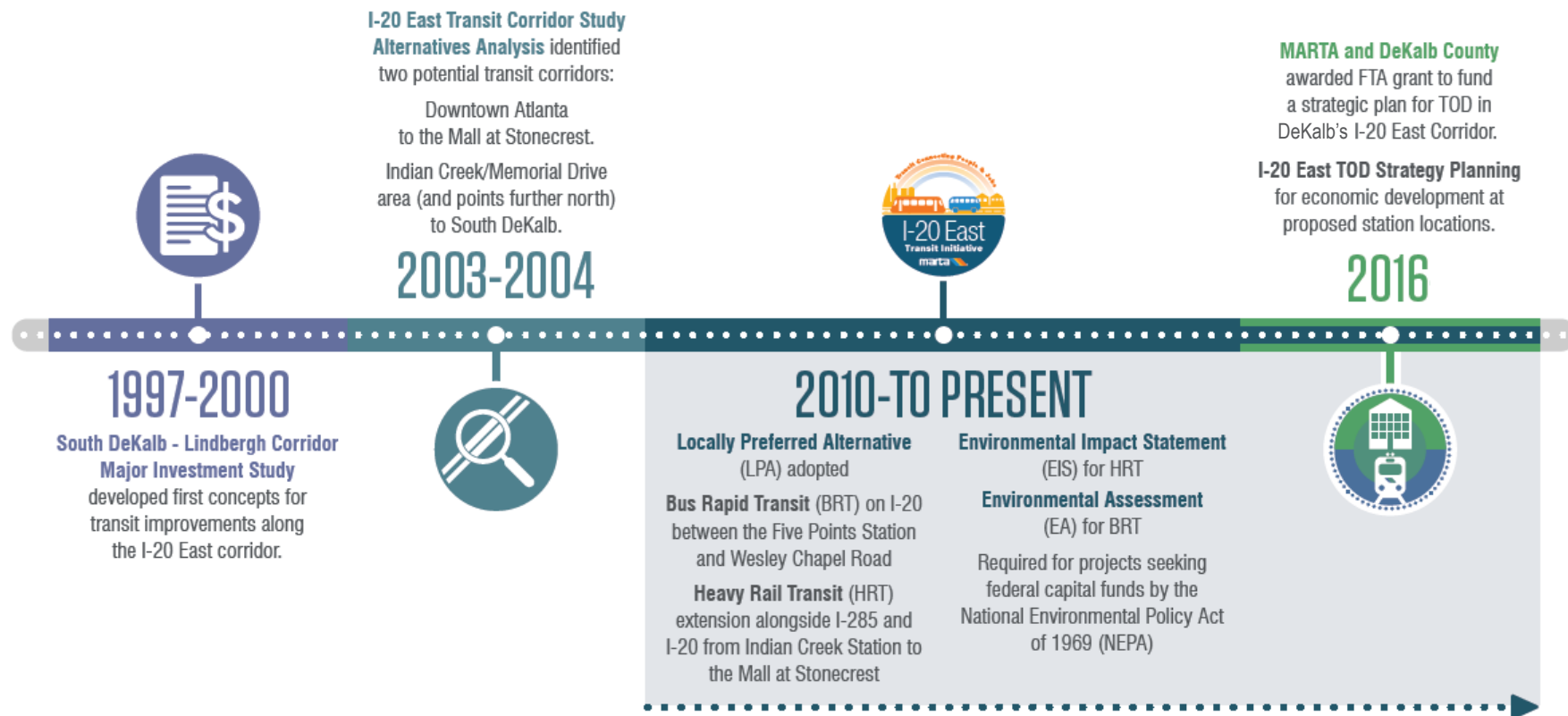
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# SECTION 1: SETTING THE STAGE FOR TRANSIT- ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)

Section 1 of the I-20 East Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Community Plan consists of the numerous analyses conducted during the planning process to set the stage for the TOD vision of the I-20 East High Capacity Transit Corridor. It includes key issues and opportunities identified during the existing conditions analysis and public outreach and an overview of the current social and economic background of this corridor that impacts the development vision. From the analyses in Section 1, Section 2 outlines the development vision for the I-20 East High Capacity Transit Corridor and the implementation strategies to help realize it.



**Figure 1-1:** Timeline of Previous Plans Leading to the TOD Community Plan

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The I-20 East TOD Community Plan was supported by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) TOD Pilot Program and matching funds from the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and DeKalb County, Georgia. The TOD Community Plan sets forth a vision for the I-20 East High Capacity Transit Corridor (I-20 East Corridor) that could spur equitable economic development and create more livable communities around quality transit.

Although transit is a key aspect of a TOD, other elements are needed for TOD to be successful. Just as transit alone does not always spur development or re-development, TOD can take root before transit improvements are constructed. The timing of this TOD Community Plan is critical; analyzing the potential for TOD along the corridor before the final alignment and station sites are decided will allow the implementing agencies to expand the criteria for station location and alignment to include the TOD considerations presented in the TOD Community Plan. Planning for TOD prior to or in conjunction with planning for transit infrastructure will help to maximize development potential and better anticipate future ridership generated by TOD.

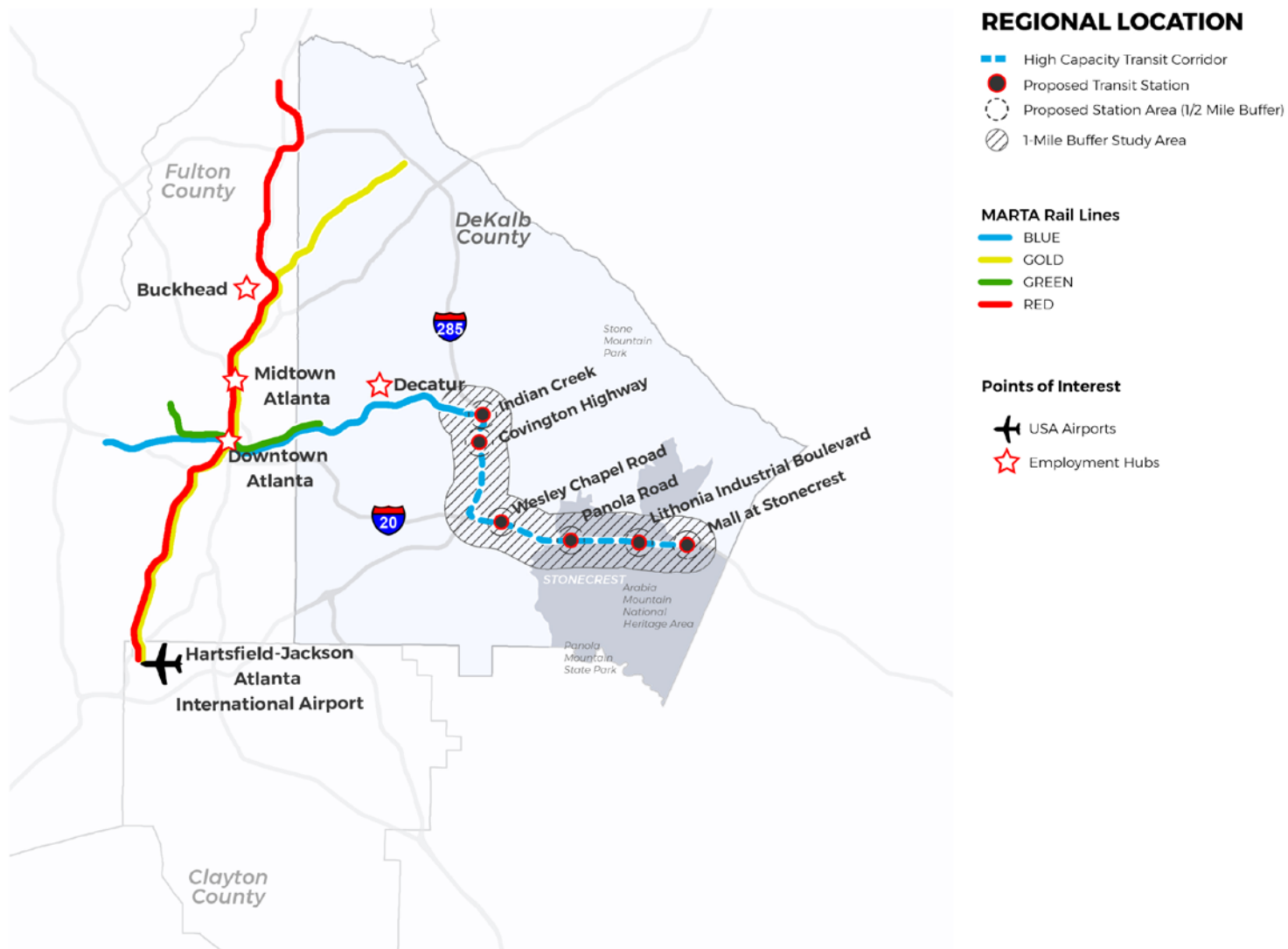
### 1.1.1 PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

MARTA and DeKalb County have gone through extensive planning efforts to study the transit network for the I-20 East Corridor prior to the TOD Community Plan. The recommendations put forth by these plans and studies were the starting point for the development of the TOD vision. Figure 1-1 shows a time-line of the previous plans leading up to the TOD Community Plan.

Both MARTA and DeKalb County are considering new high-capacity transit investments in the corridor, but no funding source has been identified. Therefore, this plan assumes a high-capacity transit investment in the corridor, but makes no assumption as to mode.

### I-20 EAST TRANSIT INITIATIVE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

This TOD Community Plan builds on the recommendations developed by MARTA in the 2012 I-20 East Transit Initiative Alternatives Analysis, which resulted in the current Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The LPA includes a 12-mile extension of the existing heavy rail system from the existing Indian Creek Station to a new station at the Mall at Stonecrest, running alongside I-285 and I-20, shown in Figure 1-2. The LPA proposed a relocated Indian Creek Station and five new stations: Covington Highway, Wesley Chapel Road, Panola Road, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and the Mall at Stonecrest. The current MARTA board-adopted LPA also includes a new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line in High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes from the MARTA Five Points heavy rail station to a multimodal transit station at Wesley Chapel Road along I-20 E.



**Figure 1-2:** The I-20 East Corridor

## DEKALB COUNTY TRANSIT PLAN (DCTMP)

The DeKalb County Transit Master Plan (DCTMP) was adopted in July 2019.

The DCTMP proposes four transit investment scenarios for DeKalb County. Each of these includes high-capacity transit investment in the I-20 East corridor, as follows:

The Plan's four proposed scenarios are:

- **The Previously Adopted Scenario**
- **Full Penny Scenario:** Proposes building a wide network of new transit investments throughout the county, including light rail and BRT projects, supported by an additional penny sales tax in DeKalb County. BRT is proposed in managed lanes on I-20 East from Covington Highway out to Stronecrest.
- **One-Half Penny Scenario:** Proposes building a wide network of new transit investments throughout the county, including BRT and Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) projects, supported by a new one-half-penny sales tax in DeKalb County. BRT is proposed in managed lanes.
- **The Existing MARTA Scenario:** No additional funding or expansions.

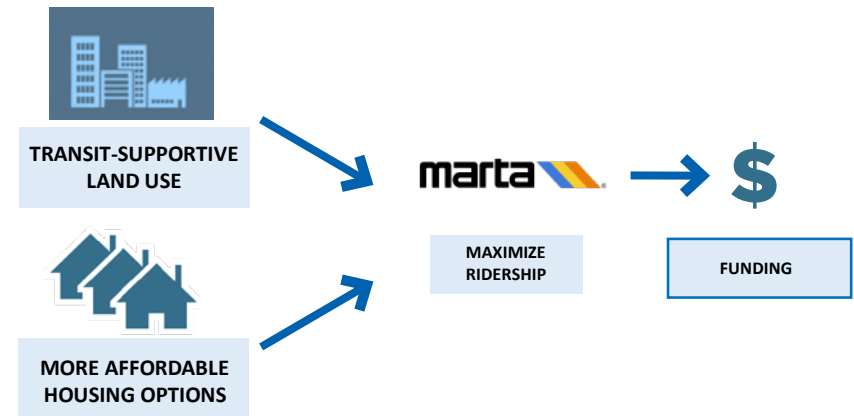
## 1.2 PROJECT GOALS

The overarching goal for the TOD Community Plan was to catalyze equitable development corridor-wide to increase future potential transit ridership along the proposed High Capacity Transit Corridor. TOD focuses on land use elements that create density and generate higher ridership. TOD forms communities with ridership demand and creates destinations that support the development of a future transit system when supported by land use regulations, economic development incentives, workforce training, and through partnerships with private developers,

Transit-supportive land use planning at station areas would also contribute to the project by scoring more competitively in the Federal New Starts process to make TOD a reality. This process, illustrated in Figure 1-3 is typically how new transit systems secure funding for implementation. The TOD Community Plan identified specific policies and incentives to put in place around the station locations identified in the 2012 LPA to attract context-sensitive, private development. In addition, a key goal was to foster and build relationships between developers, public agencies, and surrounding communities that will catalyze future private development around stations over a 10- to 20-year buildout period.

There were several project objectives that informed the planning process:

- Develop frameworks to transform communities into livable, walkable and transit-friendly places
- Develop a corridor-wide TOD strategy
- Support economic development by applying equitable TOD programs and policies
- Define how a new high-quality transit service can connect jobs to anchor institutions and create new economic opportunities while supporting existing resources



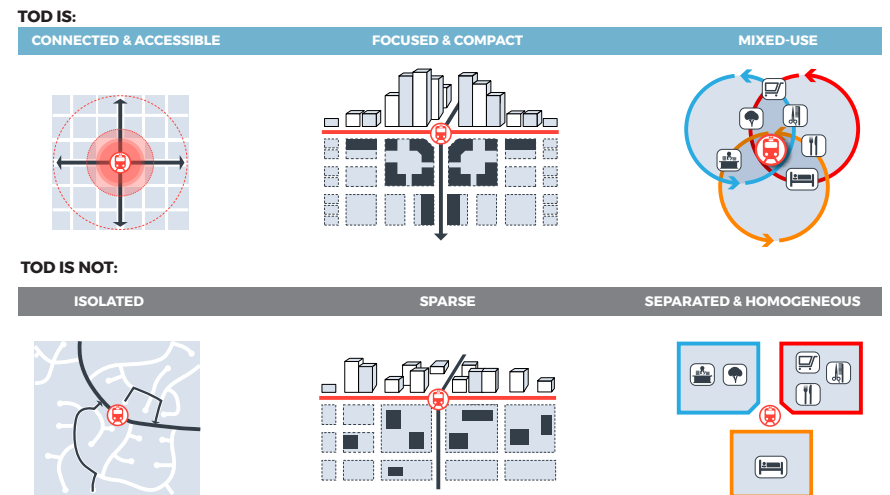
**Figure 1-3:** The Path Forward for a New Transit Corridor

While the TOD Community Plan set out to develop partnerships to spur private development around potential stations, it does not identify properties for MARTA to acquire or develop. This is done through recommending policies and incentives that attract developers and support TOD implementation.

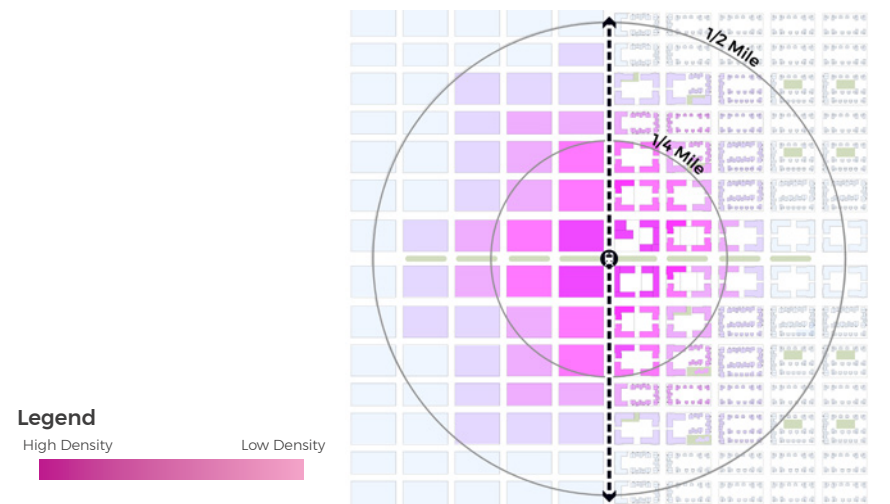
## 1.3 TOD OVERVIEW

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is pedestrian-oriented, compact, mixed-use development that is centered around quality public transportation. TOD often includes a mix of residential, office, and retail supported by neighborhood amenities. TOD creates connected, focused, and mixed-use communities, as illustrated in Figure 1-4. It is generally denser than the development surrounding it or often includes higher densities and multifamily housing options. The typical arrangement of TOD density is presented in Figure 1-5 with development focused at the center of a one-quarter to one-half mile radius area, which is estimated to be a 5 to 10 minute walk from transit. The characteristics of TOD include an emphasis on the public realm, public space, planning at the pedestrian scale, providing freedom of mobility choice, ensuring development is sensitive to community context, and reducing and/or incorporating shared parking requirements.

The form of TOD is highly dependent on context. Density and mix of uses depend not only on the type of transit, but also on the context of the surrounding areas, input from the community, and the value of the land. TOD is adaptive, and the look and feel should consider the desires of the existing community to ensure a good fit and to avoid displacement of current residents.



**Figure 1-4:** TOD Principles



**Figure 1-5:** Typical Distribution of Development Density in TOD



### 1.3.1 BENEFITS OF TOD TO DEKALB COUNTY AND CITY OF STONECREST

There are many direct benefits county residents would experience from the implementation of TOD along the I-20 East Corridor. As communities who have long been without access to the level of transit that other communities in DeKalb County have, a direct benefit is access to a new, high-quality and more frequent transportation option that connects residents to the greater Atlanta region. With new access to transit, there is an opportunity to leverage that investment to transform communities along the corridor. TOD is a method to maximize the potential of both the new transit system and the land around it. There are key benefits TOD can provide communities throughout the corridor:

#### INCREASE TRANSIT RIDERSHIP

To secure funding to implement a new transit system, it is crucial to demonstrate that the new system will have enough ridership demand. Implementing TOD along the I-20 East Corridor can provide an environment that attracts new residents, workers, high quality jobs, and public and private investments to the station areas, thus increasing the potential ridership for the new transit system. In the case of the I-20 East Corridor, implementing TOD may help the project compete successfully for future funding for transit infrastructure implementation by meeting Federal Transportation Authority (FTA) evaluation criteria.

#### SUPPLY ALTERNATIVE TRAVEL METHODS

TOD can provide nearby residents alternative travel methods, such as HRT or BRT, to reach new and familiar destinations. TOD also supports bicycling and walking by providing a connected and walkable complete streets network. Residents will have reliable and direct access to other modes of transit, which will reduce automobile dependence, daily vehicle trips per household, and ultimately mitigates traffic congestion in the corridor and Atlanta region.

#### GENERATE NEW ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

TOD along the I-20 East Corridor can result in economic programs and policies that promote increased opportunity for DeKalb County residents and businesses. Existing retail in the corridor is generally homogeneous with many dollar stores and strip-mall retail. TOD provides an environment that attracts an increased quantity and quality of retail to both improve quality of life for existing residents and potentially attract additional residential and commercial development.

Equitable TOD strategies focus on providing the environment to support land use programs that will generate jobs for the workforce in this corridor. Working with local land owners, business owners, and developers, the TOD Community Plan identifies key opportunities to strengthen and complement existing industries, and proposes the land use programs in the station areas to accommodate them. The new job opportunities created by TOD will benefit communities within the reach of the I-20 East Corridor, increase their household income, and decrease their commute time.

Additionally, TOD in the I-20 East Corridor can attract and retain younger workers, as younger workers seek to live and work in areas where there are amenities such as restaurants, cafes, entertainment options, and access to transit – all of which are elements of TOD. Implementing TOD that improves walkability and safety, enhances schools and parks, and retains affordable housing options and key services like childcare will attract both a younger and more experienced workforce.

## FOSTER COLLECTIVE VISION

The communities along the corridor will benefit from the planning process, which brought together stakeholders from all interest areas, including residents, business owners, elected officials, economic development organizations, local staff, community agencies, developers, and others to form a common vision for the future of the I-20 East Corridor. This process also educated and informed local stakeholders to be better prepared for the implementation of the future transit infrastructure. Kick-starting momentum, interest, and investment in the corridor will help create long-lasting partnerships between local agencies and private developers.

## PROVIDE GREATER LIFESTYLE CHOICES

TOD can provide more transportation and housing choices, increase the flexibility for residents to shop, work, and entertain themselves close to their homes, provide options for active lifestyles for a convenient, affordable, and active community, and facilitate accessibility to all ages and income levels for the communities located along the I-20 East Corridor. TOD also promotes an active lifestyle by enhancing the environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. By improving community amenities and creating more destinations, TOD creates a sense of community and place that can cater to everyone.

These TOD benefits of can have a significant impact on communities along the I-20 East Corridor. The TOD Community Plan provides recommendations and a vision to realize these benefits for communities throughout the I-20 East Corridor.

## 1.3.2 MARTA'S APPROACH TO TOD

MARTA adopted a set of TOD Guidelines in 2010. These guidelines aim to help TOD stakeholders, including transit agencies, local governments, developers, and others, to achieve TOD. The Guidelines are based on four foundational principles of TOD (see Figure 1-6), which have helped to guide the strategies used in this TOD Community Plan. MARTA has an established TOD program and has redeveloped many of their surface parking lots into mixed-use developments surrounding existing heavy rail transit stations. Examples include TOD around King Memorial Station, Chamblee Station, and Lindberg Station.

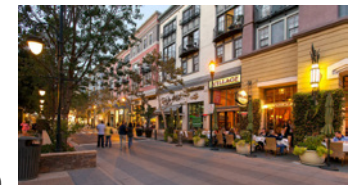
Station Area Development That Is Compact And Denser  
Relative To Its Surroundings



A Great Public Realm



A Rich Mix Of Land Uses



A New Approach To Parking



### MARTA TOD PRINCIPLES

**Figure 1-6:** MARTA TOD Principles

### 1.3.3 TOD STRATEGIES

Key public and private investments and strategies need to be coordinated and implemented to facilitate and accelerate TOD. The opportunity for TOD may vary in different regions, and for different station typologies. However, certain universal strategies should be considered as a starting point when planning station area TODs:

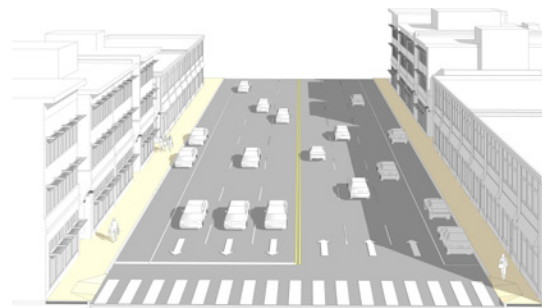
- “Complete Streets” Improvements
- Great Neighborhood Spaces and Stations
- Prioritize Places Over Parking
- Mixed-Use Development
- Strategic Growth Near Transit

These strategies are illustrated in Figure 1-7.

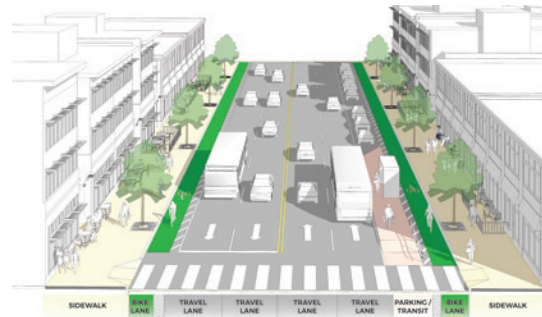
#### “Complete Streets” Improvements

create a safe, convenient and comfortable environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. Complete Streets design enhances the unique character of the neighborhood, encourages the use of transit, and improves mobility for all users of the street. Continued expansion of Complete Streets should be focused in station areas to enhance first/last mile connection and support TOD.

*Example of a Street that is Not Transit-Supportive or a Complete Street*



*Example of a Street that is Transit-Supportive and a Complete Street*



#### Great Neighborhood Spaces and Stations

Plazas and open spaces at the immediate area around a station makes the transit experience more convenient and interesting. Plazas and open spaces create a sense of place and improves the user experience. They also attract active uses such as restaurants, markets and community facilities, which further activate the station area.

*Example of an Un-Engaging Station Area*



*Example of an Engaged Station Area with a Plaza and Open Space*



**Figure 1-7:** TOD Design Strategies

**Prioritize Places Over Parking** to reduce the amount of space dedicated to parking, while still meeting the needs of the community, local businesses, and residents. It reduces the amount of land lost to surface parking lots and encourage shared parking between uses to maximize TOD and create publicly available spaces. Surface and structured parking should be placed at the rear of buildings, allowing building frontages along streets.

*Example of Over-Supplied Parking*



*Example of Reconfiguring Surface Parking to Provide an Opportunity for New Business Frontage*



**Mixed Use Development** provides a mix of residential, retail, office, commercial, and community facilities that create a “Live, Work, Play” environment surrounding a station, reinforcing the use of transit. It promotes walking by making the streets more interesting with active ground floors, and encourages a more efficient use of land and infrastructure.

*Example of Single-use Building and Inactive Street*

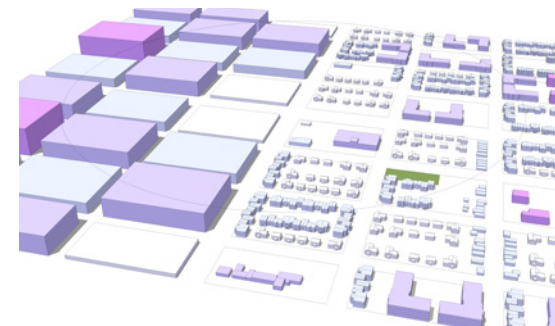


*Example of Mixed Use Building with an Active Ground-Floor Use*

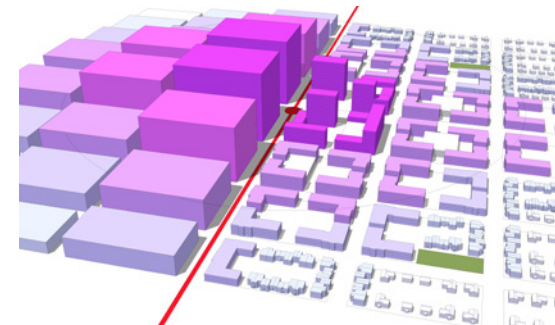


**Strategic Growth Near Transit** makes transit easier to access for more people by placing the tallest buildings with the most people closest to the transit station. TOD density and compactness is not uniformly high, but varies based on its community context, transit capacity, and distance from the transit station. The greatest density is encouraged in areas immediately surrounding the station.

*Example of Sparse and Low-Density Development*



*Example of a TOD Density Distribution from a Station Area*



## 1.4 HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The TOD Community Plan contains two sections. The first section of the plan is “Setting the Stage for Transit Oriented Development.” This section outlines the information collected and analyses conducted to understand the I-20 East Corridor’s ability to support equitable TOD corridor-wide and at each station. The Public Involvement process, a process that was carried out throughout the entire project, is documented in the next chapter followed by the Existing Conditions, Urban Design Analysis, Corridor Market Study and Equitable TOD Assessment chapters.

The second section is the “Redevelopment Vision,” which uses the research, data collection, and the input provided by stakeholders and communities to develop a TOD vision for the corridor and for each of the six stations. It also identifies which of the station area TODs should be prioritized and how to fund, finance, and implement TOD and the various elements of the plan.



# 2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

## 2.1 OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Stakeholder and public involvement was recognized as an essential component of the I-20 East TOD Community Plan from the project's beginning. One key initial task was to identify three main guiding principles to inform methods and activities of the involvement program. These principles were mutually agreed upon by MARTA, DeKalb County, the project team, stakeholders and the public; documented in the engagement strategy for the study; and used to monitor the effectiveness of the program. The principles are:

- Establish meaningful ongoing, two-way communication between MARTA, DeKalb County, the stakeholders, and the public.
- Inform the public of the progress of the study and of new opportunities to participate in the planning process.
- Inform and involve stakeholders in setting the project's goals and objectives, determining its potential outcomes, and directing its implementation once this effort has concluded.

With these guiding principles in mind, a dialogue with stakeholders and the public was initiated early and continued throughout the study. Development and implementation of a comprehensive and far-reaching outreach approach, using a combination of online and in-person tools, allowed multiple two-way engagement opportunities and promoted inclusion of residents, businesses, developers, elected officials, and agency and municipal planning staff. The connections established and nurtured through the study are expected to continue beyond completion of the I-20 East TOD Study and will be beneficial as the recommendations are implemented and future initiatives are introduced.

As shown in the list below, a wide range of formats, meetings and interactive strategies comprised the overall public and stakeholder involvement process.

- Four Advisory Committee meetings
- Two online surveys
- Three developers Forums
- Two stakeholder interviews
- Four stakeholder workshops
- Four public meetings
- Six pop-up meetings and kiosk displays
- Selected other public involvement strategies.

The following sections provide a summary of each of these strategies, focusing on the level of participation, the topics introduced and issues discussed, and the specific outcomes and recommendations that emerged from each strategy.

## 2.2 SUMMARY OF PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

### 2.2.1 ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AC)

An Advisory Committee was convened at the start of the project, to serve as one key vehicle for connecting and communicating with project stakeholders.. The AC comprised stakeholders from state, regional and local agencies, as well as business people and residents appointed by MARTA and DeKalb County. The committee met a total of four times throughout the project to identify issues and opportunities in the study area, provide feedback on public and stakeholder engagement and the planning process, and collect project information to share with the communities and agencies they represented.

#### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #1 - JULY 27, 2017

The first AC meeting was held during the Corridor Visioning phase. A total of 26 stakeholder representatives from the public and private sectors attended, including several DeKalb County agencies and interest groups. An overview of the project was presented, along with study objectives and desired outcomes. Educational material on TOD was included, as well as initial findings from the market assessment and transportation patterns in the corridor. The meeting included a facilitated discussion on corridor vision, issues and opportunities. Lastly, participants were asked to commit, as committee members, to providing insight and feedback, engaging and educating their constituents, and helping identify champions for the project. The study approach to public involvement was adjusted in response to information gathered at this meeting. An open house and survey were added to the start of the public involvement program to involve the community in the visioning process and to educate the public about the purpose of the Community Plan. At the committee's urging, the study team began coordination with the City of Stonecrest.

#### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #2 - DECEMBER 13, 2017

The second Advisory Committee meeting was held on December 13, 2017, following the first round of public open houses, business and community surveys, and Developers Forum. A total of six participants, all from public agencies, attended the meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to review the results of public engagement to date; present initial findings on corridor conditions, such as zoning, community facilities and resources, connectivity and barriers, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, station area opportunities, and density precedents; present the team's proposals for station area land use typologies, including general land use and development characteristics; and collect feedback from the group, specifically, whether the ideas presented so far were realistic and appropriate. From discussions at this meeting, the study team began to reach out to landowners at station areas.

#### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #3 - APRIL 25, 2018

The project's third Advisory Committee meeting was held on April 25, 2018 during the station area planning phase. A total of thirteen attendees were present and represented such organizations as DeKalb County, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA), and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), neighborhood and business groups, and the Partnership for Southern Equity. The attendees provided feedback on the materials for the public workshop. Input from this meeting was used to prepare for the Public Design Workshop the following day. The study team developed a glossary to explain the TOD and planning-related terms used by the Community Plan. Materials regarding the connection between density and successful transit were prepared for the public workshop.



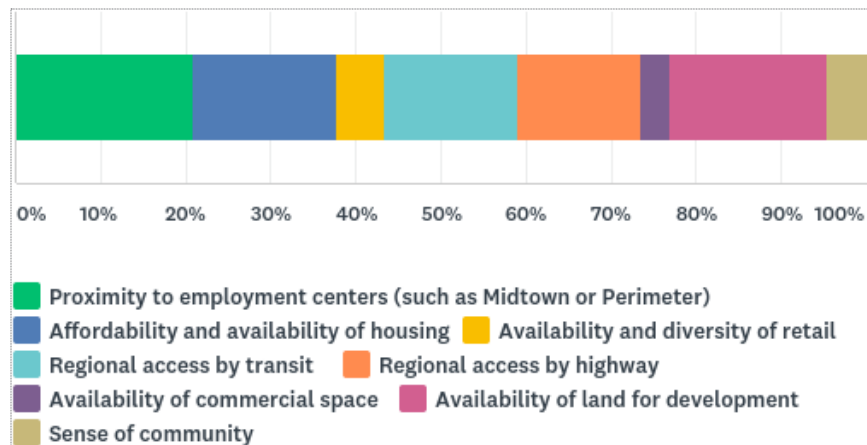
## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #4 – JUNE 19, 2018

The project's fourth Advisory Committee meeting was held on June 19, 2018. A total of 11 attendees were present and represented such organizations as DeKalb County, MARTA, ARC, GDOT, City of Stonecrest, Decide DeKalb, and NAACP. The attendees were provided an update on the status of the project; results from the April public workshops; overviews of draft I-20 corridor-wide strategies and station-by-station approaches; a deeper analysis of the design concepts for the priority stations of Indian Creek and Stonecrest; and an overview of the initial zoning review and analysis. Attendees were then asked to give feedback on potential challenges to implementation. Input from this meeting was used to fine tune materials for the Public Open Houses in August 2018. The study team also began coordination with the then-new DeKalb County Transit Master Plan and the Stonecrest Comprehensive Plan.

## 2.2.2 COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS SURVEYS

Two online surveys were developed to solicit input that could be used to inform goals and priorities for the TOD strategy and to collect feedback on the proposed desired outcomes. The surveys were conducted from November through mid-December 2017. The first survey sought input from the business community and asked respondents about the nature of their business and their thoughts on economic development, redevelopment, and the impact of transit and TOD on their business. The second survey was directed at residents of the corridor, stakeholders, and the general public. It sought help identifying study area assets and challenges, as well as the attitudes toward and desires for development in the corridor and at the proposed station areas.

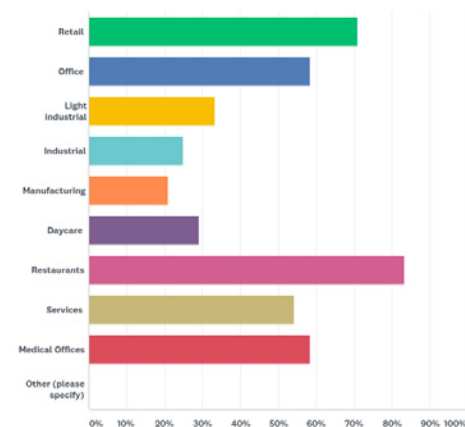
The surveys were promoted widely throughout the study area. Fliers and postcards were distributed at corridor businesses, and emailed to the project database; a link to the survey was posted on MARTA and DeKalb County social media outlets. Paper versions of the surveys were also available at first round of public open houses in November, 2017. As a special incentive for participation, MARTA offered 30-day MARTA Breeze cards to winners of a random drawing of respondents. A total of 288 responses were received for the community survey, and a total of 25 responses were received for the business survey.



**Figure 2-1:** Responses to "What is the I-20 East Corridor's top asset?"

Highlights of the Community Survey results include:

- Top assets of the I-20 East Corridor: proximity to employment centers (such as Midtown and Perimeter) and availability of land for development.
- Top challenge in the I-20 East Corridor: transportation issues (traffic, access to transit, etc.)
- Top categories for jobs needed in the corridor: technology and professional.
- Future types of development desired: greenspace; film/TV studio; retail; healthcare/medical; manufacturing/light industrial; technology campus/incubator; class A office space; and residential.
- Top objective for this study: Institute economic development programs and initiatives to create jobs and encourage businesses to locate in the corridor.



**Figure 2-2:** Responses to "What type of business would complement yours?"

Highlights of the Business Survey results include:

- Top corridor attractors for business: Access to I-20; availability of space; and good customer base.
- Top desired uses to complement existing businesses: restaurants; retail; services; medical; and office.
- Transportation-related considerations were rated "Very Important" for respondents, including: access to an interstate; access to a transit station; and shorter commute times for employees.

## 2.2.3 DEVELOPERS FORUMS

The development community was an important partner in the crafting and successful implementation of a TOD strategy for the I-20 East corridor. Developers and economic development groups were engaged in a series of three Developers Forums. At the forums, developers were invited to discuss candidly the challenges they encounter in the study area and their ideas for potential solutions; opportunities they see in the corridor; and their feedback on the study's outcomes.

### DEVELOPERS FORUM #1 – NOVEMBER 8, 2017

The first Developers Forum was held on November 8, 2017. A dozen developers and economic development groups were represented, including the East Metro CID, Decide DeKalb, Integral and Seven Oaks Company. Attendees were given an overview of the project and TOD concepts and then asked to share their impressions of development along the corridor; suggest ways to make the corridor more attractive to developers; share ideas on how to support future TOD; and discuss ways to address equity issues. Attendees suggested that the community be educated about TOD and its benefits, and reassured that vulnerable communities would be protected. As a result of this forum, the study team:

- Sought a vision that would support development along the entire corridor through the creation of destinations along its entirety
- Considered adding as a final deliverable materials that would market the vision for the corridor to developers.
- Included the identification of priority catalyst developments
- Explored developer incentives that would help overcome the inadequacy of the existing market.
- Confirmed that equity concerns are a real issue; developer suggested land banks and property tax abatement to retain affordability

### DEVELOPERS FORUM #2 – JUNE 18, 2018

On June 18, 2018, a second Developers Forum was held, with six attendees from the development community participating, including representatives from ADP Solutions, HJ Russell and Company, Integral, Stryant Investments, and Stream Realty. Project staff from DeKalb County and MARTA were present as well. The attendees viewed a presentation that included a detailed update on the status of the project; results from the April 2018 public workshop; overviews of draft I-20 corridor-wide strategies and station-by-station approaches; and an overview of the initial zoning review and analysis. Attendees were then asked to give feedback on potential challenges and strategies for implementation; improvements and investments to make development more feasible; and catalytic projects/early wins.

Attendees noted several challenges, including water and sewer infrastructure capacity and cost of improvements; the DeKalb County School District's historic reluctance to participate in Tax-Allocation Districts; uncertainty of station implementation timing and realistic development timeframe; and antiquated parking requirements. Regarding zoning, the developers suggested universal TOD zoning to make station requirements consistent, and emphasized the need to communicate fairness. They also proposed that a streamlined zoning process would reduce the need for multiple meetings with the community on desired development and would also speed up implementation. They further suggested that early catalytic projects include job centers with office space, but that not be limited to office-based jobs should. Attendees also advocated for clear definition of the public and private sectors' roles, and advised that investment should be concentrated in areas that will have the greatest returns. The study team focused the Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station area on its role as a freight corridor, envisioned as a workforce center where the ridership consists mainly of employees. The study team agreed to direct residential development to other stations.

## DEVELOPERS FORUM #3 – OCTOBER 3, 2018

A third Developer's Forum was held on October 3, 2018. This meeting was attended by East Metro CID, Capital Residential and Seven Oaks Company. The purpose of this forum was to discuss the range of potential implementation strategies and get input on what economic development incentive tools might be successful in the I-20 corridor. The attendees expressed enthusiasm for TOD development in the corridor, particularly the opportunities that exist at the Indian Creek and Stonecrest station areas, and declared a willingness to participate in further discussions with DeKalb County, MARTA, and the City of Stonecrest. The study's funding and financing team used the developer input to determine which development incentives would be feasible in the corridor.

## 2.2.4 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

To complement the perspectives heard from the Advisory Committee meetings and Developers Forums and gain a broader understanding of the area's opportunities and challenges, stakeholder interviews were conducted as part of the planning process. The interviews provided an opportunity to discuss issues and opportunities in the corridor with individual stakeholders. Interviews were conducted with Decide DeKalb and the Housing Authority of DeKalb County. The study team gained an understanding of the need for more workforce housing in the county, and incorporated DeKalb County's existing economic development incentives into the plan.

## 2.2.5 STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

A series of stakeholder workshops were held to actively engage key stakeholders in the planning, design, and decision-making process for the I-20 East TOD Community Plan. These workshops enabled a more detailed discussion of the study's analysis and outputs, such as the market assessment, vision themes, development opportunities, and potentially catalytic areas, and to vet station area proposals based on viability and alignment with organizational goals.

### STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP, DEKALB COUNTY – APRIL 4, 2018

On April 4, 2018, a stakeholder workshop was held with staff from DeKalb County Planning, Decide DeKalb and the Atlanta Regional Commission. The purpose of the workshop was to present a project status, station TOD typologies, and the station area analysis. A station area working session followed, with a discussion on the desire and readiness of the TOD in the corridor. Among the topics discussed were the physical suitability of the station area; current plans in place; and market strengths, including current issues, opportunities and incentives. Also discussed were potential local champions.

### STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP, CITY OF STONECREST – APRIL 5, 2018

On April 5, 2018 a stakeholder workshop was held with staff from City of Stonecrest. The purpose of the workshop was to present a project status, station TOD typologies, and the station area analysis. A station area working session followed, with a discussion on the desire and readiness of the TOD at the Panola Road, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Mall at Stonecrest stations. Among the topics discussed were the physical suitability of the station area; market strengths, including issues and opportunities, and potential local champions.

## STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP, DEKALB COUNTY - APRIL 24, 2018

A stakeholder workshop was held on April 24, 2018 with City of Stonecrest staff, area property owners, Discover DeKalb, and Atlanta Sports City. Attendees were presented with a status update on the project, station TOD typologies, and station area analysis; the presentation was followed by a discussion of issues, opportunities, current plans and proposals, and future potential of the stations areas located within the City of Stonecrest, including Panola Road, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Stonecrest Mall.

## STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP, DEKALB COUNTY AND CITY OF STONECREST - OCTOBER 4, 2018

A stakeholder workshop was held on October 4, 2018 with staff from DeKalb County Planning and City of Stonecrest, including Mayor Lary and Stonecrest Economic Development Authority. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss potential economic development implementation tools and strategies. The City and the County discussed the current state of development in the corridor, what tools are currently offered, and opportunities and constraints on developing new tools and strategies..

## 2.2.6 PUBLIC MEETINGS

A series of public open houses were held at critical milestones in the study's development. The first round of open houses focused on TOD education and visioning; the second round was a hands-on interactive exercise for station area planning; the third round sought input on the approaches and draft proposed plans for each of the station sites; and the fourth round presented the final comprehensive I-20 East TOD strategy. The meetings were advertised through a variety of means, including local newspaper advertisements, paper and electronic fliers and postcards, social media posts, DeKalb County and MARTA communication channels, and stakeholder groups.

### ROUND 1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES: NOVEMBER 8 & 9, 2017

Public open houses were held in the corridor on November 8 and 9, 2017, at the Lou Walker Senior Center and the Community Achievement Center. The senior center meeting, which was held in the daytime, had 139 attendees; the evening meeting drew 43 attendees. Attendees included members of the general public, county and City of Stonecrest staff, elected officials and other stakeholders.

Each open house included four information stations: . An Overview Station contained a study area map, timeline, and transit funding educational information. An I-20 East TOD Community Plan Overview Station included the study purpose; goals and schedule; benefits and basics of TOD, and Atlanta-based examples. A Visioning Station offered boards with aerial views of stations, where attendees were asked to mark their preferred land uses and development types for each of the station sites . Finally, a MARTA Service Station was staffed by MARTA to provide information, answer questions, and collect input about existing MARTA service. Comment forms and paper copies of the community online survey were also made available.



**Figure 2-3:** Round 1 Public Open House

Attendee feedback included: a need for transportation to transit within the station area, including sidewalks connecting to existing schools, community facilities and bike paths; desire for improvement in the quality of the retail in the station areas; request for inclusion of affordable and senior housing; need to improve safety and security; request for improvements to existing infrastructure; and desire for high-quality development with an attractive look and feel.



**Figure 2-4:** Round 2 Public Design Workshop

## ROUND 2 - PUBLIC DESIGN WORKSHOP: APRIL 26, 2018

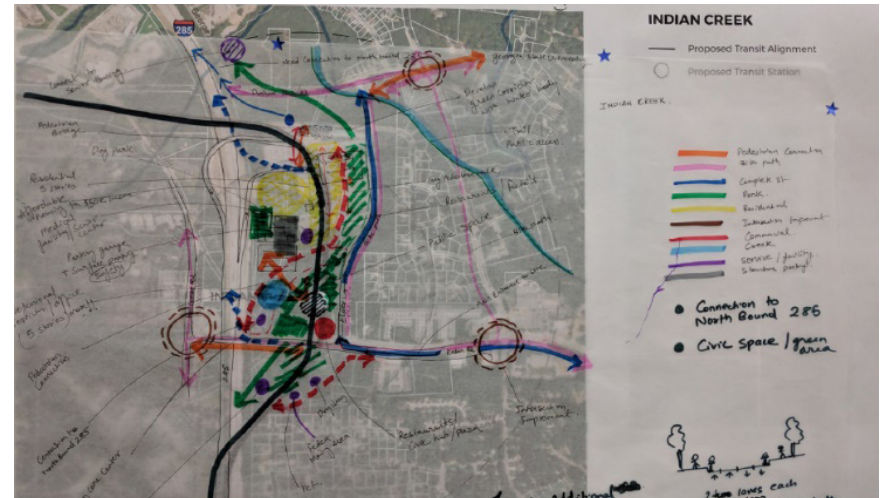
A Public Design Workshop was held on April 26, 2018; there were 85 participants. The attendees viewed a presentation that included a status update on the project and review of its objectives, descriptions of TOD, its benefits, characteristics, and how it might be applied in the corridor. Attendees were then invited to participate in guided table discussions for each of the station areas. Each table was staffed by a designer who helped participants craft a vision and drew sketches of how future development might be shaped.





**Figure 2-6:** Round 2 Public Design Workshop

The resulting station visions and sketches displayed creativity incorporated many of the principles of TOD. While the specifics differed slightly from table to table, overall, attendees were seeking development that is high-quality, safe, well-connected to the surrounding areas with sidewalks and trails, and that provides much-needed amenities in the project area, such as grocery stores, sit-down restaurants, and specialty services. In addition, pedestrian bridges across I-285 at the Indian Creek and Covington Highway stations were suggested. Concerns were also raised about increased traffic, especially in proximity to residential areas, and the need for increased security against crime. The specific station area designs and connectivity wants/needs gave designers a starting point for creating renderings, building massing diagrams, and showing specific land use compositions.



**Figure 2-5:** Public Open House Station Vision Sketches

### ROUND 3 - PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES: AUGUST 28, 2018

Two Open Houses were held on August 28, 2018 at Stonecrest Library (daytime) and Porter Sanford Performing Arts Center (evening). A total of 97 individuals attended the open houses. Among the attendees were staff and elected officials from the City of Stonecrest; staff from DeKalb County; developers; business owners; citizen activists; and residents of the area. Through an open house format, the attendees were provided an update on the status of the project; overviews of draft I-20 corridor-wide strategies and station-by-station approaches; design concepts for the stations; and an introduction to the discussion of Equitable TOD. Additionally, representatives from the DeKalb County Transit Master Plan project were available to provide information on the study and collect input via an online survey. Following the open houses, a project website ([www.I20etod.com](http://www.I20etod.com)), was launched to house project information such as background; the latest project fact sheet; meeting display boards; and a survey on Equitable TOD.





**Figure 2-7:** Indian Creek Station Area Aerial View

**ROUND 4 - FINAL PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE: DECEMBER 10, 2019**



**Figure 2-8:** DeKalb District 4 Community Break fast Kiosk

## 2.2.7 KIOSKS

Kiosks provided opportunities for the project team to interact informally with corridor residents and stakeholders. Kiosks were set up throughout the study area at various points in the study process to publicize the study, inform attendees about the process, and to receive feedback from community members about their vision for development. Materials presented at the kiosk included a map of the project study area, project fact sheets, and public meeting announcements.

### DEKALB DISTRICT 4 COMMISSIONER STEVE BRADSHAW'S COMMUNITY BREAKFAST: JANUARY 31, 2018

Approximately 50 people attended the quarterly breakfast hosted by Commissioner Bradshaw. Participants learned about the project and were asked to share their vision for the I-20 East corridor. The breakfast meeting was held near Indian Creek Station, so most of the conversation centered on this station area. The project team used Avondale Station's TOD plans as a point of reference.



**Figure 2-9:** Stonecrest Library Kiosk

### STONECREST LIBRARY: FEBRUARY 3, 2018

Approximately 17 people visited the kiosk. Comments included: use Stonecrest Mall as an initial mixed use development site to encourage economic growth; multifamily housing is good, please provide housing for different age groups; and, consider bus connectivity from the station areas to other key locations, like residential subdivisions and direct access to the North/South line.



**Figure 2-10:** Commissioner Mereda Johnson and Congressman Hank Johnson at the Lithonia Old School Fish Fry Kiosk

### LITHONIA OLD SCHOOL FISH FRY: JUNE 30, 2018

Approximately 15 people visited the kiosk, including elected officials US Congressman Hank Johnson, State Representative Vernon Jones, DeKalb Commissioner Mereda Johnson, DeKalb Commissioner Gregory Adams, and Lithonia Mayor Deborah Jackson. Feedback included: general support of station area concepts; use Stonecrest Mall to create economic stability; and multifamily housing around the station areas will be important.

### DEKALB COUNTY COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS: JULY AND AUGUST, 2018

Staff attended the community council meetings for districts 3, 4 and 5 (in the study area) to advertise the upcoming public meetings and provide exposure for the project. The community councils are volunteer citizens appointed by the Board of Commissioners (BOC); they provide zoning recommendations to the BOC. Approximately 100 people attended the

three meetings. Comments included enthusiasm for renewed economic vitality in the study area and an eagerness to see transit implemented along the I-20 corridor.

### INDIAN CREEK MARTA STATION KIOSK EVENT: 7:00 AM TO 9:00 AM, AUGUST 24, 2018

Staff handed out more than 100 newsletters to MARTA riders at the Indian Creek station. The outreach was designed to bring awareness to the study process and encourage participation in the August 28th public meetings. Staff heard that riders wanted a mix of commercial, residential and retail uses at the station. There was support for multifamily housing options and providing pedestrian connections to surrounding residential areas. At the station, riders urged more lighting and maintenance of current parking capacity.

### LOU WALKER SENIOR CENTER: AUGUST 16 AND 23, 2018

Staff attended the senior center during lunchtime to advertise the August open houses and provide exposure for the project. Approximately 25 folks engaged with staff at the kiosks. Attendees had questions about the timeline for the project; MARTA service routes; and the amenities that could be located at the station areas. Attendees were excited at the possibility of having more retail options and destinations in the corridor.

The Kingsgate Homeowner's Association and the Communications Workers of America hosted a gathering to allow the project team to provide information on the I-20 East TOD and DeKalb County Master Transit Plan projects. The TOD team provided collateral materials, discussed the preliminary project recommendations of the TOD plan, and addressed next steps with the attendees.

## 2.2.8 PROJECT DATABASE

The project team developed a contact database of interested parties to receive information about the project, including fact sheets and newsletters, and promotion of upcoming events, public meetings and surveys. The database includes residents, agency and local planning staff, participants at kiosks and meetings, businesses and economic development groups, neighborhood associations; residents; employers; and other interested stakeholders.

## 2.2.9 COLLATERAL MATERIALS

Two versions of a fact sheet, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) handout, meeting fliers, postcards and display boards were developed by the project team to educate and inform stakeholders and the public on the project's initiation, process, status, public events, and information on how to stay involved. The materials were distributed at stakeholder meetings and public events, kiosks, and briefings and interviews. Materials were also available on the project webpage on MARTA's website and at [www.I20ETOD.com](http://www.I20ETOD.com).

## 2.2.10 ONLINE RESOURCES

Postings for DeKalb County's and MARTA's social media channels were developed and submitted for the clients' use to advertise the surveys and public meetings. At the onset of the project, a study webpage was developed and housed on the MARTA website. Technical difficulties mid-project necessitated moving the webpage to its own website, [www.I20ETOD.com](http://www.I20ETOD.com). The website includes information about the study and its objectives; educational information on TOD; the station area frameworks; and ways to stay involved in the project.

## 2.2.11 MEETING IN A BOX

A “meeting in a box” was created for stakeholder groups in the study area to use at their own gatherings, to facilitate deeper understanding of and discussions about the I-20 East TOD Community Plan. The meeting in a box provided background information, group discussion questions and activities, and a form for providing group feedback to the planning team. The meeting in a box was made available following the August 28th open houses. More than 30 packets were distributed.

## 2.2.12 SPECIAL BRIEFINGS

### ARC’S TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE: JUNE 22, 2018

Project staff presented an overview of the project at the June meeting of the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) (held June 22, 2018). Fourteen members of the TCC were present, including representatives from ARC, DeKalb County, MARTA, GDOT, GRTA/SRTA, City of Atlanta, Cobb County, Newton County, Gwinnett County, Rockdale County, and Fayette County. The project team summarized the study’s purpose, scope and schedule; the process to date; and the next steps. The team informed attendees that the planning process has completed the kick off/open house, the existing conditions and site analysis, and the public workshop focusing on station area assessment and visioning. The next step is to finalize the station area plan and implementation strategies. After that, the team will hold an open house to review the draft concept plan and then conclude the project with a final public meeting to present the final plan. The team also explained that this study is happening concurrently and coordinating with other planning efforts in the area, such as the Stonecrest Comprehensive Plan and the DeKalb County Transit Study.

### MARTA BOARD PLANNING AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING: SEPTEMBER 6, 2018

At the September MARTA Board Meeting (held September 6, 2018), an update on the project was given as part of the Planning and External Relations Committee Meeting. Greg Floyd, Senior Land Use Planner, presented the history of the project and described its relationship to other planning initiatives, particularly the DeKalb County Transit Master Plan. The MARTA Board expressed support for the study’s emphasis on creating places that could more easily be served by transit and supporting additional investments in underserved areas.

### COORDINATION WITH DEKALB COUNTY TRANSIT MASTER PLAN

In May 2018, DeKalb County initiated a county-wide transit planning effort to develop a comprehensive 30-year vision for transit service in the County. The project team for the I-20 East TOD study was advised to begin coordination with the Transit Master Plan team, given the similarities in scope and membership in stakeholder groups involved in both projects. It was also acknowledged that the public would appreciate coordinated information, given the complementary nature of the two studies.

Coordination has taken many forms, including public involvement efforts. At the August 28, 2018 public open houses for the I-20 East TOD study, the DeKalb Transit Master Plan hosted a station with project information and online surveys. Similarly, at the October 2018 open houses for the Transit Master Plan project, the TOD team hosted a station with display boards. Additionally, two kiosk events were held jointly in December 2018, at the Kingsgate Homeowner’s Association and the Communications Workers of America meetings, to provide project information on both projects.

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# 3 STUDY CORRIDOR EXISTING CONDITIONS

This I-20 East Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Community Plan (TOD Community Plan) is intended to establish a framework for encouraging TOD in the I-20 corridor. The goal of this plan is to identify strategies necessary to encourage compact, walkable, mixed-use development that supports the community and transit ridership in the corridor.

This chapter describes the existing physical conditions for the I-20 East corridor. It also provides a high-level view of the characteristics of the six proposed station areas in the corridor to support an understanding of how the station areas relate to each other and to their larger context. Understanding the unique strengths of each station area within the corridor will support the creation of a complementary TOD land use strategy across the station areas. A corridor-wide land use strategy can capitalize on each station area's strengths, while supporting a comprehensive mixed land use strategy across the corridor.

The I-20 East corridor is located southeast of Atlanta in southern DeKalb County, as shown in the map below. The corridor's proximity to I-20 and I-285 makes it accessible to and from major employment centers such as Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and downtown and midtown Atlanta. The existing I-20 East corridor is mostly residential, made up primarily of single-family neighborhoods with significant concentrations of multifamily housing. Several of the station areas are located at existing commercial nodes, most notably Mall at Stonecrest—a large regional shopping destination. However, the study area contains underdeveloped retail centers and industrial buildings, and some large, vacant parcels of land as well.



## 3.1 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### 3.1.1 LAND USE

DeKalb County adopted its 2035 Comprehensive Plan in 2016. The 2035 Comprehensive Plan includes details about existing land use and future development plans by defining high-level character areas. The 2035 Comprehensive Plan also includes strategies and recommendations to address existing concerns in the county while encouraging future growth.

Land use for the corridor was summarized using parcels within one-half mile of the transit corridor. While TOD will largely focus on areas near the proposed transit stations, land use composition in the overall corridor must work with the more dense development near stations. Having the right land use mix in the corridor can support and make the TOD more successful in the short term and sustain it over time. The following table summarizes the 2035 Comprehensive Plan's various land uses—density, primary uses, and permitted zoning—in the corridor.

**Table 3-1:** Descriptions of Land Use Character Areas in the Corridor

LAND USE/ CHARACTER AREAS	MAXIMUM DENSITY (DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE)	DESCRIPTION	PRIMARY USES
Regional Activity Center	Over 60, no max	A Regional Activity Center is intended to encourage concentration of regional serving activities to a centralized location that allow for a variety of uses such as regional commercial, office, employment areas, high density residential and higher-education facilities. Concentration of various land uses with high intensity is intended to reduce automobile travel, promote walkability and increase transit usage.	Townhomes; condominiums; apartments; retail and commercial; office; park & recreation; institutional; civic; entertainment & cultural; healthcare, technology centers
Town Center	Up to 60	A Town Center character area promotes concentration of residential and commercial mixed-use developments to serve many communities and acts as a catalyst in reducing automobile travel, improve walkability and increase transit use. The Town Center character area includes a multitude of land uses such as general retail, commercial, offices, high-density residential, and pedestrian-accessible parks & open spaces. The core of a Town Center may have density as high as 60 dwelling units per acre.	Townhomes; condominiums; apartments; retail and commercial; office; park & rec; institutional; civic; entertainment & cultural; healthcare, technology centers
Commercial Redevelopment Corridor	18	A Commercial Redevelopment Corridor is intended to promote redevelopment and in turn improve the economic vitality of the area. It also includes recommendations for aesthetic and functional design improvements. A commercial Redevelopment Corridor includes healthcare, offices, institutional, entertainment, residential, and parks and recreational land uses.	Commercial and retail; office; condominiums; townhomes; mixed use; apartments; institutional



LAND USE/ CHARACTER AREAS	MAXIMUM DENSITY (DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE)	DESCRIPTION	PRIMARY USES
Traditional Neighborhood	12	The intent of the Traditional Neighborhood character area is to preserve the style and appeal of older traditional neighborhood communities. These areas primarily consist of residential areas in older parts of the community that were typically developed before World War II. The characteristics include higher pedestrian orientation, sidewalks, and more grid-like street patterns.	Traditional single-family homes; apartments; assisted living; neighborhood retail; schools; institutional
Highway Corridor	30	Highway Corridor characteristics include areas along major highway corridors, which include a mix of uses such as retail, high-density residential, commercial, and office..	Commercial and retail; office; condominiums; townhomes; mixed use; apartments; institutional
Suburban	Up to 8	Suburban characteristic areas are intended to recognize existing suburban uses in the area while promoting new development to have improved accessibility and connectivity.	Single-family detached homes; townhomes; assisted living facilities; neighborhood retail; schools; libraries; parks and related; health care; civic
Conservation/ Open Space	N/A	Conservation/Open Space areas are intended to preserve areas with significant natural or ecological resources and to also protect environmentally sensitive areas for public use.	Passive parks; nature trails; flood plains, wetlands, watersheds; golf courses; athletic fields, amphitheaters
Light Industrial	Up to 120	The Light Industrial character area identifies areas appropriate for industrial uses while preserving the appeal and appearance of surrounding residential or commercial uses. Light Industrial uses include activities that do not generate excessive nuisance characteristics such as noise, vibration or air pollution among others.	Warehouse distribution; wholesale/trade; automotive; entertainment;
Institutional	N/A	The intent of the Institutional character area is to designate specific areas that consist of large areas used for religious, civic, educational and governmental purposes.	Colleges and universities, hospitals and rehabilitation centers, emergency service centers, churches and religious institutions, government buildings civic facilities, cemeteries

Source: DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan

EXISTING LAND USES AND CHARACTER

The 2035 Comprehensive Plan identifies most (54.3 percent) of the corridor as Suburban land use character as shown in the table below. Town Center, Regional Center and Highway Corridor are the next three most common land uses in the corridor.

For more detailed analysis the transit corridor was divided into five segments, with each segment bookended by consecutive stations. These segments were identified to help understand how land use patterns differ throughout the corridor.

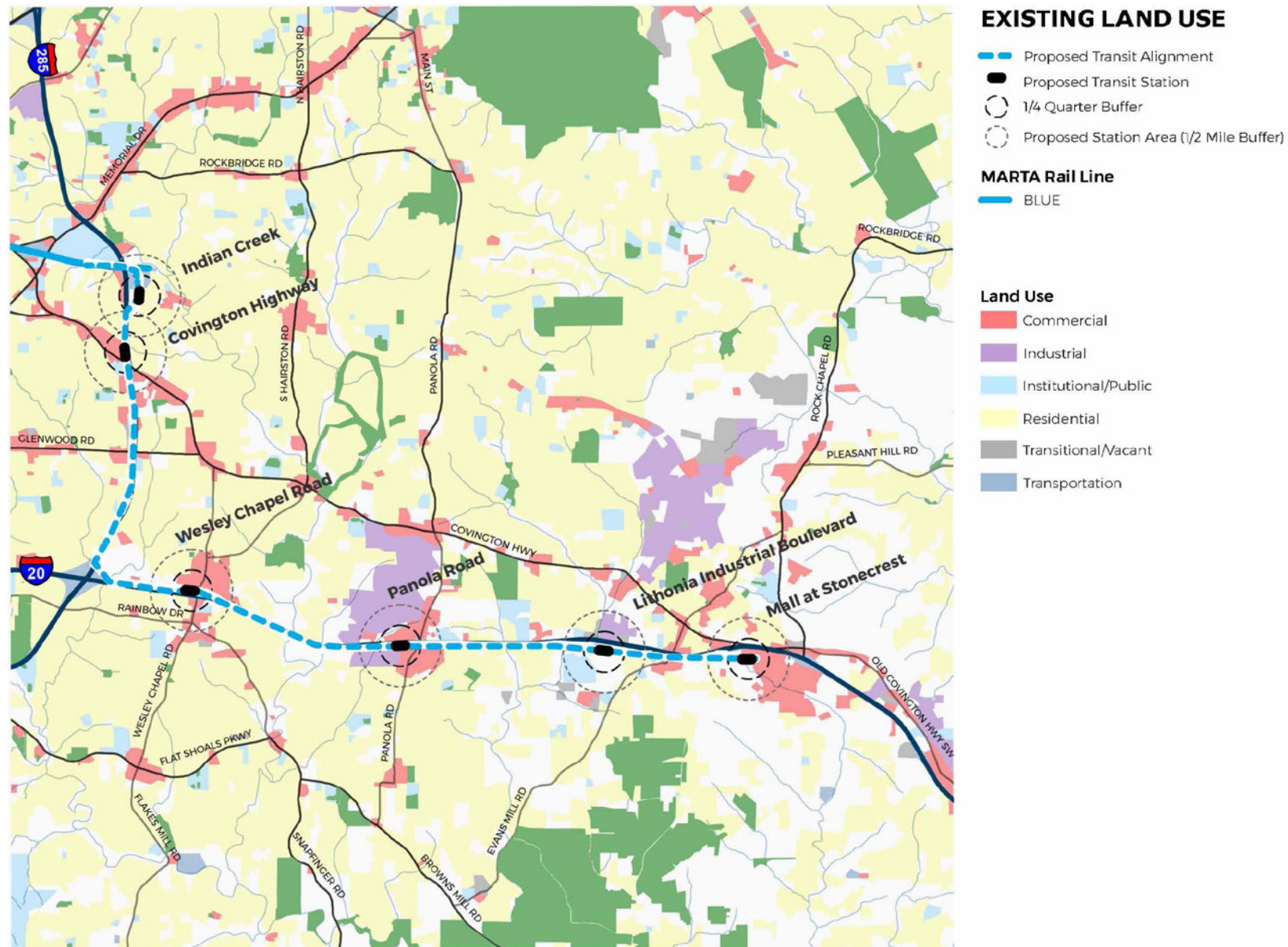
While the primary land use characteristic in the corridor is Suburban, segment analysis indicates that there is an overall range of land uses that provide a mix of uses across the corridor. In the northern portion

of the corridor, the Indian Creek Station to Covington Highway Station segment contains sizable portions with Town Center and Commercial Redevelopment Corridor land uses. The segment area between Covington Highway and Wesley Chapel Road Stations has large portions of Highway Corridor and Commercial Redevelopment Corridor land use character areas. The segment between Wesley Chapel Road and Panola Road Stations has several manufacturing/distribution facilities, resulting in Light Industrial uses being the second largest land use character area in the segment, closely followed by Town Center as the third-largest land use. Since the segment between Panola Road and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Stations has several large institutions such as New Birth Missionary Baptist Church and DeKalb Medical at Hillandale, Institutional land uses were the third most common land use, with a nearly 23 percent share of the segment. For the segment between Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Mall at Stonecrest Stations, the Regional Center character area formed most of the area.

Table 3-2: Shares of Existing Land Uses in the Corridor

LAND USE CHARACTER AREA	TOTAL	INDIAN CREEK TO COVINGTON HIGHWAY	COVINGTON HIGHWAY TO WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD TO PANOLA ROAD	PANOLA ROAD TO LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BLVD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BLVD TO MALL AT STONECREST
Conservation/Open Space	0.7%	1.3%	N/A	N/A	1.0%	1.9%
Commercial Redevelopment Corridor	5.0%	8.9%	13.3%	N/A	N/A	0.7%
Highway Corridor	7.8%	0.0%	15.1%	5.6%	5.4%	7.3%
Institutional	5.3%	N/A	2.1%	N/A	22.7%	2.9%
Light Industrial	4.6%	N/A	N/A	17.8%	0.6%	2.2%
Regional Center	9.3%	3.7%	N/A	N/A	N/A	50.9%
Suburban	54.3%	63.2%	63.2%	60.4%	45.9%	34.2%
Town Center	12.8%	22.8%	6.3%	16.2%	23.2%	N/A
Traditional Neighborhood	0.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.2%	N/A

Source: DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan



**Figure 3-1:** Existing Use in the Corridor

## FUTURE LAND USES AND CHARACTER

The 2035 Comprehensive Plan presents future land uses for DeKalb County. Few changes are planned or foreseen for land uses in the corridor, and the corridor is slated to preserve a similar mix of land use character areas as under existing conditions. The Suburban land designation is expected to make up most of the future land uses, with Town Center, Regional Center and Highway Corridor land uses being the next most common.

It should be noted that, while the table below seems to indicate growth in the amount of land in the corridor designated as Conservation Green space from existing land uses (0.7 percent) to future land uses (8 percent), this increase is illusory. It is due to the different sizes at which land use data and Conservation / Green space data are available in GIS.

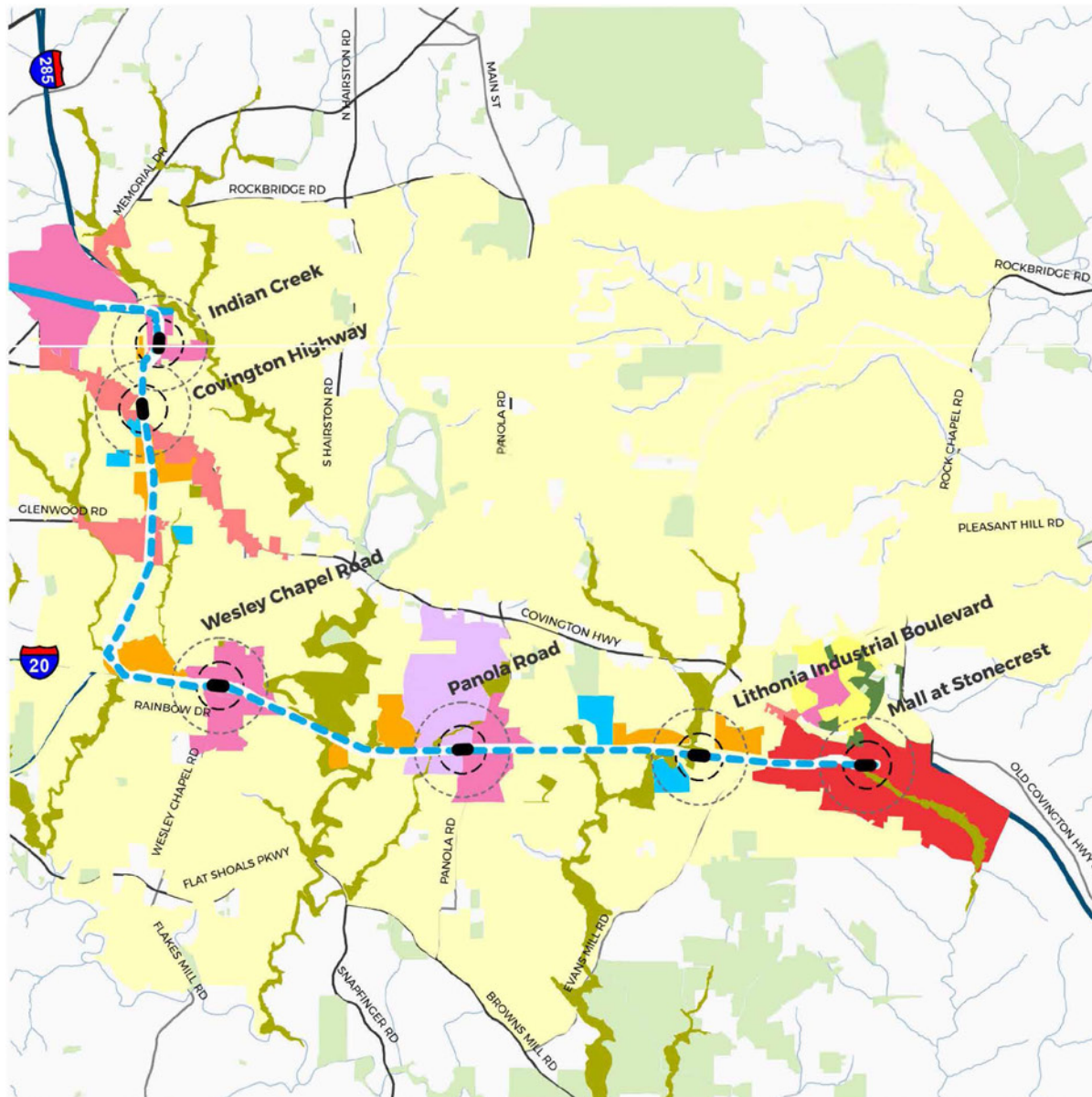
Of the six station areas, three are located in unincorporated DeKalb County and three in the city of Stonecrest, which was formed in 2016.

**Table 3-3:** Shares of Future Land Uses in the Corridor

FUTURE LAND USE CHARACTER AREAS	TOTAL	INDIAN CREEK TO COVINGTON HIGHWAY	COVINGTON HIGHWAY TO WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD TO PANOLA ROAD	PANOLA ROAD TO LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BLVD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BLVD TO MALL AT STONECREST
Agriculture Area	0.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.1%
Conservation/Green space Area	8.0%	7.7%	3.9%	16.2%	11.0%	1.8%
Commercial Redevelopment Corridor	4.4%	8.2%	11.3%	N/A	N/A	0.2%
Highway Corridor	7.9%	0.8%	13.7%	7.5%	5.7%	6.1%
Institutional	2.6%	N/A	2.7%	N/A	9.9%	N/A
Light Industrial Area	3.7%	N/A	N/A	16.9%	N/A	N/A
Regional Activity Center	8.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	46.2%
Suburban	54.9%	66.1%	62.4%	43.4%	60.5%	42.8%
Town Center	9.9%	17.2%	5.9%	15.9%	12.9%	0.8%

Source: DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan





## FUTURE LAND USES

- Proposed Transit Alignment
- Proposed Transit Station
- 1/4 Quarter Buffer
- Proposed Station Area (1/2 Mile Buffer)

### MARTA Rail Line

- BLUE

- Existing Greenspace

### Future Land Use

- Regional Activity Center
- Town Center
- Commercial Redevelopment Corridor
- Suburban
- Suburban Area Built Out
- Highway Corridor
- Institutional
- Light Industrial
- Conservation/Greenspace Area
- Agriculture Area

**Figure 3-2:** Future Land Uses in the Corridor

## 3.1.2 CURRENT ZONING AND REGULATIONS

This section examines at zoning across the six proposed station areas. Zoning has a direct and local impact on form and function development. Because the impact of zoning is local, this section presents zoning at each station area rather than for segments of the corridor. Corridor information presented for zoning is an average of all station areas.

The 2035 Comprehensive Plan illustrates permitted zoning in each land use. The following table illustrates land uses in the transit corridor with the zoning areas allowed for each land use. Most of the land use character areas allow for areas with a mix of other uses along with their traditional character. For example, the Light Industrial character area allows for areas zoned for High-Density Residential, and Office – Distribution.

**Table 3-4:** Allowed zoning designations by character areas

ALLOWED ZONING - CHARACTER AREAS	DESCRIPTION	REGIONAL CENTER	TOWN CENTER	NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER	COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR	TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD	HIGHWAY CORRIDOR	SUBURBAN	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL	INSTITUTIONAL
C-1	Local Commercial	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
C-2	General Commercial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A
HR-2	High-Density Residential - 2	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A
M	Light Industrial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MR-1	Medium-Density Residential - 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes
MR-2	Medium-Density Residential - 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes
MU-1	Mixed-Use Low Density	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
MU-4	Mixed-Use High Density	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
OD	Office – Distribution	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A
OI	Office – Institutional	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes
R-100	Residential Medium Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes
R-60	Residential Small Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes
R-75	Residential Medium Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes
R-85	Residential Medium Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes
RE	Residential Estate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A
RSM	Small-Lot Residential Mix	N/A	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes

Source: DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan



DeKalb County adopted its zoning ordinance in 2015. The zoning plan provides details such as allowed uses, any restrictions about space utilization, and height of development about each zoning district. Even though the Panola Road, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Stonecrest Station Areas are in Stonecrest, DeKalb County managed jurisdictions over land use and

zoning at the time this zoning ordinance was adopted. As of 2017, the City of Stonecrest handles any zoning amendments and code enforcements in its jurisdiction. The following tables summarize and provide the relevant details for the zoning character areas within the six station areas.

**Table 3-5:** Description of Zoning Designations Allowed in the Corridor

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	ALLOWED USES	SUMMARY
C-1	Local Commercial	Automobile/boat/trailer sales and service, office, recreational, services, retail, housing/lodging, institutional	Minimum lot size of 20,000 sq ft. Maximum lot coverage 80% (90% for Regional Center/Town Center. Maximum height: 2 story/35 ft. Minimum open space requirements: 10-20%.
C-2	General Commercial	Automobile/boat/trailer sales and service, office, recreational, services, retail, housing/lodging, institutional	Minimum lot size of 30,000 sq ft. Maximum lot coverage 80% (90% for Regional Center/Town Center. Maximum height: 2 story/35 ft. Minimum open space requirements: 10-20%.
HR-2	High-Density Residential - 2	Single-family, townhouse, two- to three-family dwelling, multifamily, high rise. Community facilities, offices/retail/restaurant/services as accessory use.	Maximum dwelling units: 40-60 per acre; Maximum lot coverage: 85%; Minimum Open Space requirement: 15%; Minimum lot area: 1,000 sq ft for single family; Height maximum: 4-8 stories (60-100ft) for density up to 40 du per acre, 6-10 stories for density above 40 du per acre and up to 60 du per acre.
M	Light Industrial	Industrial, automobile/boat/trailer sales and service, recreation and entertainment, services, transportation and storage, institutional/public. Also allows for some retail, restaurants, offices, agricultural.	Minimum lot size of 30,000 sq ft. Maximum lot coverage 80%. Maximum height: over 3 stories - based on fire department approval. Minimum open space requirements: 15-20%
MR-1	Medium-Density Residential - 1	Single/multifamily residential, nursing home/day care center community garden, government facilities. Office and commercial uses as accessory/special permits.	Minimum lot size: 1,000-5,000 sq ft (depending on type). 8-12 dwelling units per acre. Maximum lot coverage of 55%-80%. Open space requirement: 20%. Height Maximum: 35 ft – 60 ft or 4 stories (by type).
MR-2	Medium-Density Residential - 2	Single/multifamily residential, nursing home/day care center community garden, government facilities. Office and commercial uses as accessory/special permits.	Minimum lot size: 1,000-5,000 sq ft (depending on type). 12-24 dwelling units per acre. Maximum lot coverage of 55%-85%. Open space requirement: 15%. Height Maximum: 35 ft – 70 ft or 5 stories (by type)
MU-1	Mixed-Use Low Density	Residential, retail, recreational, restaurant, services, office, mixed use, institutional,	Maximum 4-8 dwelling units per acre. Minimum open space required: 10%; Minimum non-residential use: 10%;

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	ALLOWED USES	SUMMARY
MU-4	Mixed-Use High Density	Residential, commercial, office, mixed use	Minimum site size: 0 sq ft. Minimum non-residential use: 20%. Minimum open space requirement: 10%.
MZ	MultiZone	N/A	N/A
OD	Office - Distribution	Office, retail, services. some uses related to institutional, industrial, lodging.	Minimum lot size of 30,000 sq ft. Maximum lot coverage 80%. Maximum height: 2 story/35 ft. Minimum open space requirements: 15-20%
OI	Office - Institutional	Office, community facilities, education, multi family. Some uses related to housing/lodging, retail, restaurant, recreation.	Minimum lot size of 20,000 sq ft. Maximum lot coverage 80%. Maximum height: 5 story/70 ft. Minimum open space requirements: 15-20%
R-100	Residential Medium Lot	Single-family detached; community garden/ livestock, community facilities, accessory uses. Home occupation and commercial services with special permits	Minimum lot size of 15,000 sq ft. Maximum lot coverage of 35%; Maximum height: 35 ft; Minimum open space requirement: 20%
R-60	Residential Small Lot	Single-family detached; community garden/ livestock, community facilities, accessory uses. Home occupation and commercial services with special permits.	Minimum lot size of 6,000 sq ft/3,500 sq ft for cottage. Maximum lot coverage: 35%. Maximum height: 35 ft. Minimum open space requirement: 20%
R-75	Residential Medium Lot	Single-family detached; community garden/ livestock, community facilities, accessory uses. Home occupation and commercial services with special permits.	Minimum lot size of 10,000 sq ft. Maximum lot coverage: 35%. Maximum height: 35 ft.
R-85	Residential Medium Lot	Single-family detached; community garden/ livestock, community facilities, accessory uses. Home occupation and commercial services with special permits.	Minimum lot size of 12,000 sq ft. Maximum lot coverage of 35%; Maximum height: 35 ft; Minimum open space requirement: 20%
RE	Residential Estate	Single-family detached; community garden/ livestock, community facilities, accessory uses. Home occupation and Commercial services with special permits.	Minimum lot size of 1 acre. Maximum lot coverage of 25%; Maximum height: 35 ft; Minimum open space requirement: 20%
RSM	Small Lot Residential Mix	Single-family, townhouse, two- to three-family dwelling; community garden, community facilities.	Maximum 4-8 dwelling units per acre. Minimum open space required: 20%; Maximum lot coverage: 50-70%; Maximum height: 35 ft – 3 stories/45 ft.

Source: DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan

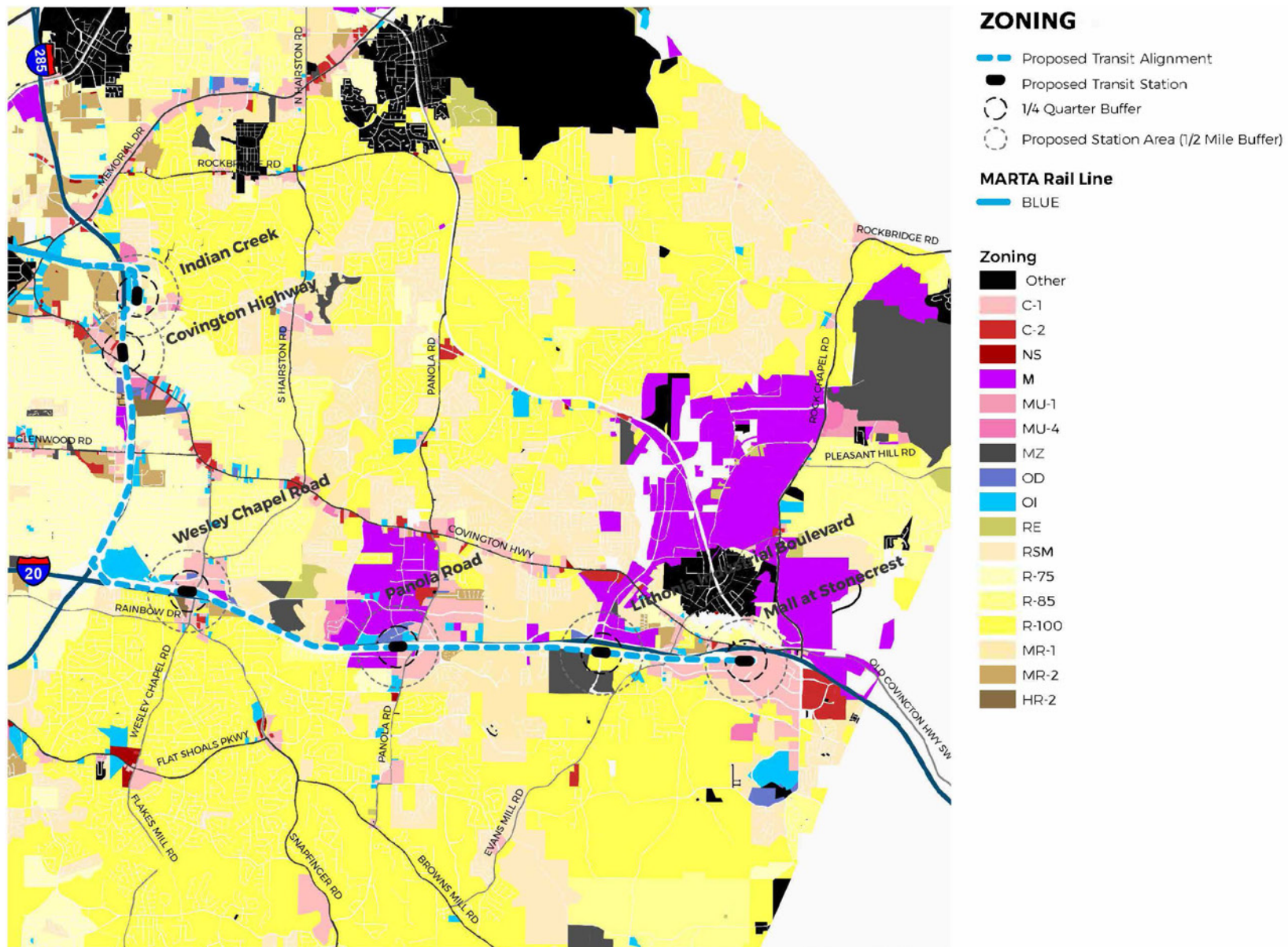


Figure 3-3: Zoning in the Corridor

Over 30 percent of the combined area for the six stations is zoned as Residential Medium Lots (R-75, R-85 and R-100), while over a quarter (26.6 percent) is Local Commercial (see Table 3-6). In the Indian Creek and Covington Highway Station areas, medium-density residential zoning forms most of the station area. In Wesley Chapel Road Station area, a combination of local commercial and medium lot residential zoning covers most of the area, while for Panola Road Station, local commercial and light industrial zoning districts cover most of the station area. Medium-lot residential, multi-zone, and light industrial form much of the Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station area, while local commercial forms most of the Mall at Stonecrest Station area. Details about zoning in each station area are explained further in the Station Area Analysis. Details for each zoning designation are assessed further in the following sections of this report to determine its suitability for TOD characteristics in each station area.

Some station areas are also subject to DeKalb County overlay districts (see Table 3-7). Overlay district areas offer a possibility of a denser developments than what is traditionally feasible with the local zoning, while providing a general character to the area. Each station is covered, at least partially, by some overlay district, which provides a good opportunity to integrate a TOD appropriate scale of development and mix of uses in the corridor.

Tier I and Tier III of the Memorial Drive Overlay District partially cover Covington Highway and Indian Creek Station areas, respectively. Tier I and Tier III of the Memorial Drive Overlay District were approved in September 2017.

- Tier I: Covington Gateway district focuses on providing walkable access and building healthy communities. It is intended to be a gateway to three communities: Avondale Estates, Belvedere-East Lake and Decatur. Covington Gateway district recommends small- to medium-center level of development ranging from one to six stories. The overlay district recommends restaurants, retail, office and institutional buildings, residential, and parks and recreational uses.

- Tier III: The purpose of this district is to capitalize on existing MARTA stations to promote higher-density TOD. It also focuses on health-oriented development by creating walkable communities that connect residents with walkable amenities. The proposed scale of development in this district is expected to be small to medium (one to six stories).

On the other hand, the I-20 Overlay District covers large portions of Wesley Chapel Road and Panola Road Stations. It contains the following three tiers for scale of development:

- Tier 1 – High Intensity (height up to 20 stories and density up to 60 unit dwelling per acres),
- Tier 2 – Medium Intensity (height up to 8 stories and density up to 40 unit dwelling per acres)
- Tier 3 – Low Intensity (height up to 4 stories and density up to 40 unit dwelling per acres).

The I-20 Overlay District also includes transitional areas where these tiers merge.

Similarly, large parts of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Mall at Stonecrest Stations are covered by Stonecrest Area Overlay District.

- Tier I suggests a high-rise mixed-use zone (no specific limit on the number of stories, and the floor area ratio (FAR) is not to exceed 6, including FAR bonus).
- Tier II indicates a mid-rise mixed-use zone (maximum height of 10 stories and FAR not to exceed 4, including FAR bonus).
- Tier III includes a low-rise mixed-use zone (maximum height of 3 stories and FAR not to exceed 2, including FAR bonus).
- Tier IV includes a transitional mixed-use zone (maximum height of 5 stories and FAR not to exceed 3, including FAR bonus).

**Table 3-6:** Existing Zoning by Corridor + Station Area

ZONING	ALL STATION AREAS COMBINED	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON HIGHWAY	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD	MALL AT STONECREST
C-1	26.6%	5.5%	14.1%	40.0%	32.6%	N/A	66.2%
C-2	0.8%	0.2%	1.8%	2.0%	N/A	N/A	0.9%
HR-2	0.5%	N/A	N/A	3.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
M	10.8%	N/A	N/A	4.0%	40.8%	19.0%	0.3%
MR-1	6.4%	15.1%	2.9%	1.2%	2.2%	8.0%	8.5%
MR-2	6.1%	20.5%	11.3%	5.2%	N/A	N/A	0.1%
MU-1	<0.1%	N/A	N/A	0.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A
MU-4	1.4%	4.1%	4.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MZ	5.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	36.0%	N/A
OD	3.0%	N/A	6.0%	2.3%	8.4%	2.0%	N/A
OI	5.0%	9.6%	2.2%	8.0%	8.6%	2.0%	N/A
R-100	9.4%	6.4%	N/A	20.0%	N/A	30.0%	1.0%
R-60	0.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.3%
R-75	21.4%	33.0%	56.9%	12.1%	7.3%	3.0%	15.1%
R-85	0.8%	N/A	N/A	0.4%	N/A	N/A	4.5%
RE	<0.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.2%
RSM	1.3%	5.6%	N/A	1.2%	N/A	1.0%	N/A

**Table 3-7:** Overlay Districts in the Corridor

OVERLAY DISTRICTS	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON HIGHWAY	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD	MALL AT STONECREST
Memorial Drive Overlay District – Tier I: Covington Gateway		X				
Memorial Drive Overlay District – Tier III: Indian Creek Wellness Community	X					
I-20 Overlay District			X	X		
Stonecrest Area Overlay District					X	X



### 3.1.3 OWNERSHIP

Most of the parcels within the proposed six station areas are privately owned. Proposed locations for Indian Creek Station and Panola Road Station have publicly owned parcels in their immediate vicinity, which might provide some opportunity for joint development. The Station Area section provides further detail on the extent of publicly owned parcels in each of the station areas.

### 3.1.4 RESOURCES

The Arabia Mountain National Historic District overlaps with the Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Mall at Stonecrest Station areas. While in some cases historic preservation can add some restrictions as to what can be developed, preserving historic properties and implementing TOD can

complement each other. Developers have integrated historic properties in their plans to add character to the area. However, challenges and opportunities presented by existing historic properties and historic areas near proposed stations would need to be explored further. Individual historic resources at station areas are included in the Station Area Existing Conditions Chapter.

The corridor lacks significant open greenspace or parks for residents. The following table lists the available parks, greenspace, or recreational facility in the transit corridor along with their locations relative to the station areas. The table also notes if the park is located within a station area. The Panola Road, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Mall at Stonecrest Station areas do not have parks within a walkable distance.

**Table 3-8:** Parks + Greenspace in the Corridor

PARK OR GREENSPACE	AREA (ACRES)	SEGMENT	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON HIGHWAY	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BLVD	MALL AT STONECREST
Public Park - Avondale Dunaire Park	22.5	Indian Creek to Covington Highway	X					
Public Park - Wesley Chapel Park	2.0	Covington Highway to Wesley Chapel Road			X			
Recreational Facility (Assembly of God Tabernacle)	11.2							
Recreational facility (Towers High School)	1.5			X				
Recreational facility - Baseball field (Towers High School)	4.4			X				
Dawn Memorial Park	15.0	Panola Road to Lithonia Industrial Boulevard						
Public Park - Fairington Park	14.6							
Recreational Facility (Fairington Elementary School)	1.9							

Note: X indicates the facility is located within a station area



The availability of quality schools can be an attractor for new development. The following table lists schools and colleges within the corridor along with their relative positions in the corridor and if school or college is in a station area. The Station Area Analysis section presents this information based

on proximity to respective station areas. While the segment between Indian Creek Station and Covington Highway Station has a predominantly suburban character, it has fewer schools than some of the other segments.

**Table 3-9:** Educational Facilities in the Corridor

SCHOOL OR COLLEGE	SEGMENT	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON HIGHWAY	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BLVD	MALL AT STONECREST
Schools							
Rowland Elementary School	Indian Creek to Covington Highway	X	X				
Love Thy Children	Covington Highway to Wesley Chapel Road			X			
Sparks Christian Urban Academy							
Towers High School			X				
All Gods Children Academy							
Rainbow Elementary School				X			
DeKalb Preparatory Academy	Wesley Chapel Road to Panola Road		X				
Discovery Academy							
Kingdom Group					X		
Sparks Christian Academy	Panola Road to Lithonia Industrial Boulevard						
Miller Grove High School						X	
New Birth Christian Academy							
Fairington Elementary School	Lithonia Industrial Boulevard to Mall at Stonecrest				X		
Bits & Bytes Learning Center						X	
Stoneview Elementary School							
Colleges							
Everest Institute	Wesley Chapel Road to Panola Road			X			
Gupton Jones College of Funeral Service					X		
Luther Rice University	Lithonia Industrial Blvd to Mall at Stonecrest					X	

Note: X indicates the facility is located within a station area

## 3.2 MULTIMODAL CONNECTIVITY

The existing corridor roadway network reflects the suburban nature of the existing development. Much of the network is made up of two-lane roads that feed into four-lane north-south arterials. However, most travel in the corridor is east-west, with the highest concentrations of trip destinations found in Downtown and Midtown Atlanta. I-20 serves the bulk of east-west traffic. To a lesser degree, four-lane Covington Highway also serves east-west traffic as a principal arterial. Even though there is a lack of multilane east-west roads parallel to I-20 to relieve traffic, other east-west arterial routes within the study area function as minor routes. Programmed roadway capacity projects are focused on north-south facilities. Limited east-west movement is projected to remain a concern.





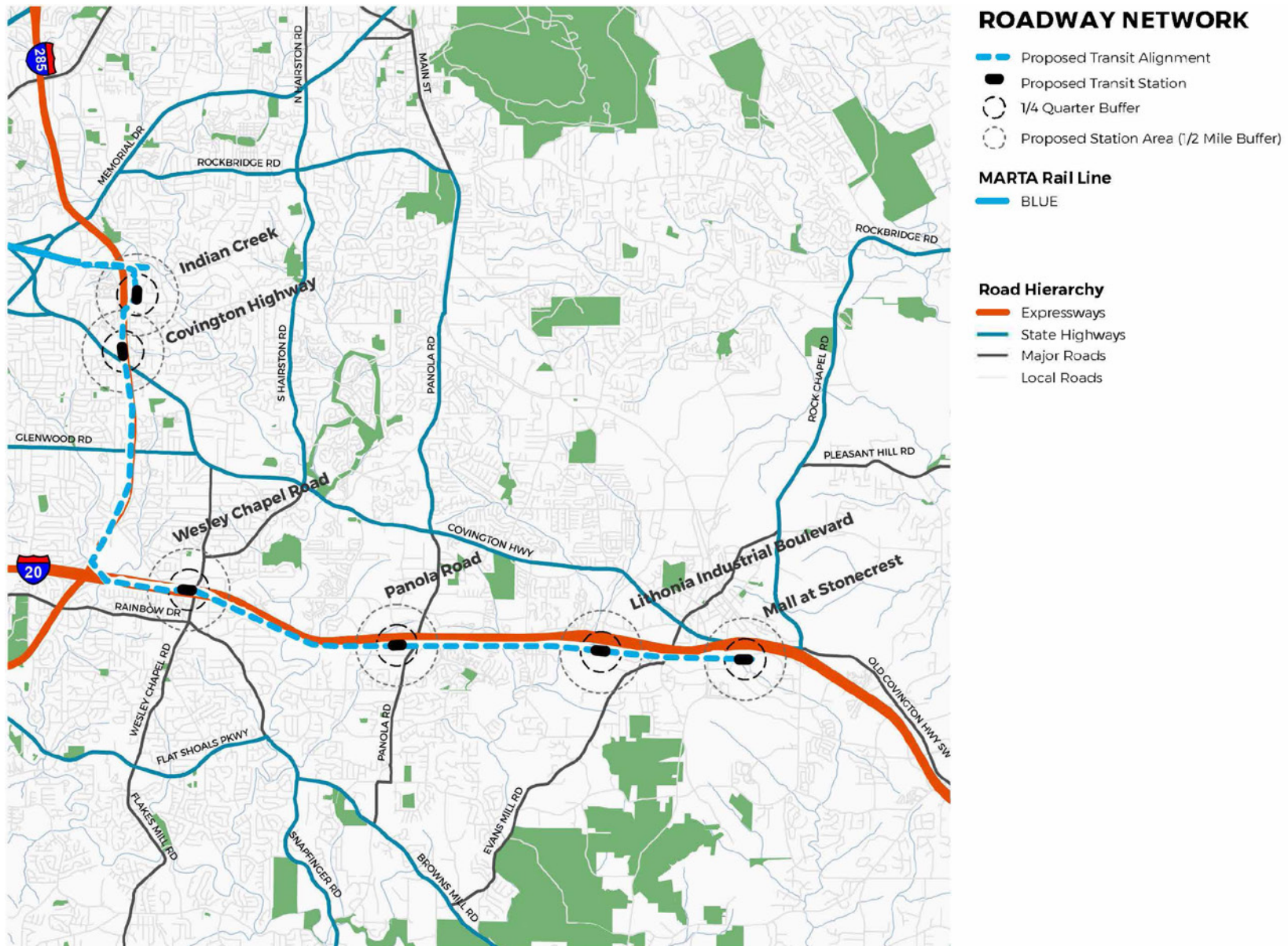


Figure 3-4: Roadway Network in the Corridor

## 3.2.1 TRANSIT

Bus service typifies the corridor's transit network. MARTA's east-west rail service terminates at Indian Creek Station, the only rail station in the corridor. MARTA buses connect the nodal interchange development along I-20 and I-285 to rail stations and central activity centers. MARTA bus service in the corridor is found almost exclusively north of I-20.

The Georgia Regional Transit Authority (GRTA) offers three commuter (Monday–Friday service) Xpress bus routes, connecting the park-and-ride lot at Panola Road with Downtown Atlanta and Perimeter Center. MARTA and GRTA Xpress buses share the 7-acre 600-space park-and-ride lot south of I-20 on Panola Road.

MARTA and GRTA Xpress bus routes operating in the I-20 East corridor can be found in the following matrix along with the proposed station areas they service. Existing bus routes and service would be revised with the implementation of the I-20 East Transit Initiative



**Table 3-10:** Existing Bus Service in the Corridor

BUS ROUTE NUMBER AND NAME	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON HIGHWAY	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD	MALL AT STONECREST
MARTA Bus Routes						
Route 24 – East Lake/Hosea Williams	X					
Route 86 – Fairington Road/McAfee Road			X	X	X	X
Route 107 – Glenwood Road	X	X				
Route 111 – Snapfinger Woods Drive/Stonecrest	X		X	X		X
Route 115 – Covington Highway/South Hairston Road		X				X
Route 116 – Redan Road/Stonecrest	X					X
Route 117 – Rockbridge Road/Panola Road				X		
Route 119 – Kensington/Hairston Road	X					
Route 186 – Rainbow Drive/South DeKalb			X			
GRTA Xpress						
423 - East Conyers/West Conyers/Panola Road to Midtown				X		
426 - East Conyers/West Conyers/Panola Road to Downtown				X		
428 - West Conyers/Panola to Perimeter Center				X		



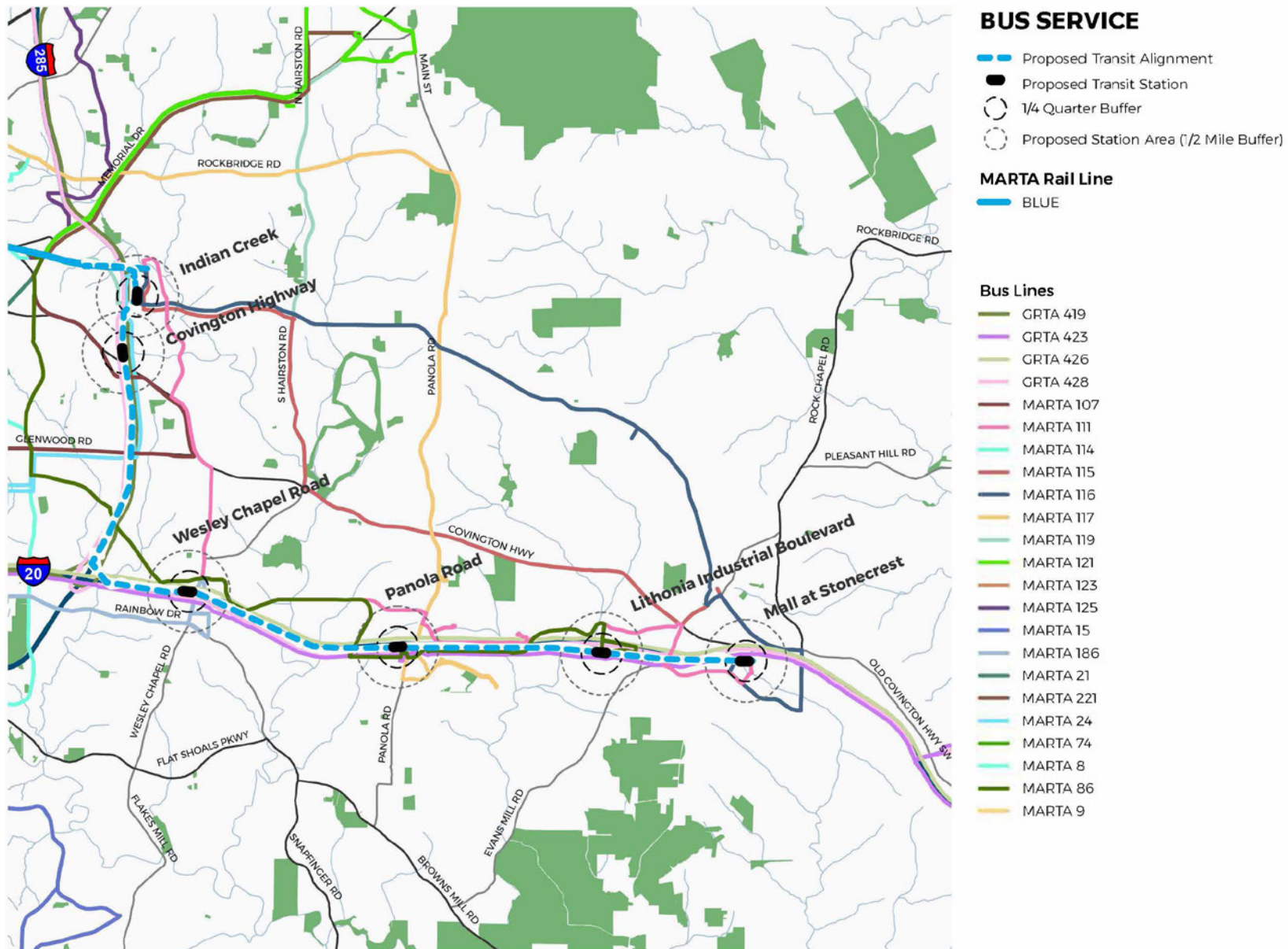


Figure 3-5: Bus Service in the Corridor

### 3.2.2 BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

According to the Atlanta Regional Commission, two existing recreational trails of regional significance are accessible from the corridor. The Stone Mountain Trail to the north lies outside the corridor and traverses east-west from west of I-285 to Stone Mountain State Park. The Arabia Mountain PATH connects Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area to the corridor at the Mall at Stonecrest Station area and continues north to its terminus in Lithonia.

Bicycle and pedestrian networks are not continuous through the corridor. Sidewalks are found on many, but not all, major roads and rarely on local roads. Bicycle facilities are generally not available except as noted in the Station Area Existing Conditions report.

### 3.2.3 FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

Several transportation improvements are planned in the corridor as a part of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). In addition to the planned high-capacity transit improvement along the I-20 East corridor, the RTP also includes several major interstate improvements that will affect the corridor:

- I-285 East Managed Lanes: New managed lanes are planned for I-285 from I-20 East to I-85 North. Two lanes, one for each direction, will be added along the 10- and 13-mile segment. The project was originally in the long-range plan but was expedited through the Major Mobility Investment Program (MMIP) by the Georgia Department of Transportation and is expected to be completed by 2025.
- I-20 East Managed Lanes: New managed lanes are planned for I-20 East between I-285 and SR 124/Turner Hill Road. Two lanes, one for each direction, will be along the 13-mile segment. The project is in the long-range plan.
- I-285 at I-20 Interchange Improvements
- Panola Road at I-20 Interchange Improvements

Furthermore, north-south travel connecting to I-20 in the corridor will be facilitated by the planned significant expansion of capacity through the following projects:

- Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Extension (Phase III) from Hillandale Drive to Woodrow Road
- Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Extension (Phase IV) from Woodrow Road to Evans Mill Road
- Wesley Chapel Road Widening to four lanes from Boring Road to SR 155/Flat Shoals Parkway
- Turner Hill Road Widening to four lanes from Mall Parkway to 1,500 feet west of McDaniel Mill Road
- Panola Road (Segment 2) operational improvements from SR 212/Browns Mill Road to Thompson Mill Road
- Panola Road Widening (Segment 5) to four lanes from Snapfinger Woods Drive to SR 12/Covington Highway

Some relief is planned for east-west travel in the corridor through the following operational and capacity improvements on Old Covington Highway:

- Old Covington Highway widening to four lanes from Evans Mill Road to Sigman Road
- US 278 (Covington Highway) and Evans Mill Road signal upgrades at 10 locations

GDOT's Major Mobility Improvement Program includes programmed bridge improvements in the corridor that will support improved traffic operations over I-285:

- Replacement of the bridge on Covington Highway over I-285
- Replacement of the bridge on Redwing Circle over I-285
- Replacement of the bridge on Glenwood Road over I-285
- Durham Park Bridge Improvement



The following matrix lists these projects and the station areas they affect or address.

**Table 3-11:** ARC RTP Projects in the Corridor

PROJECT NAME	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON HIGHWAY	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD	MALL AT STONECREST
I-285 East Managed Lanes	X	X				
I-20 East Managed Lanes			X	X	X	X
I-20 East at I-285 Managed Lane Interchange	X	X	X	X	X	X
I-285 East Interchange Improvements at Panola Road				X		
Old Covington Highway Widening						X
Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Extension: Phase III					X	
Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Extension: Phase IV					X	
Turner Hill Road Widening						X
Wesley Chapel Road Widening			X			
Panola Road: Segment 2 Operation Improvements				X		
Panola Road Widening: Segment 5				X		
US 278 (Covington Highway) And Evans Mill Road Signal Upgrades			X			

Note: X indicates the facility is located within a station area

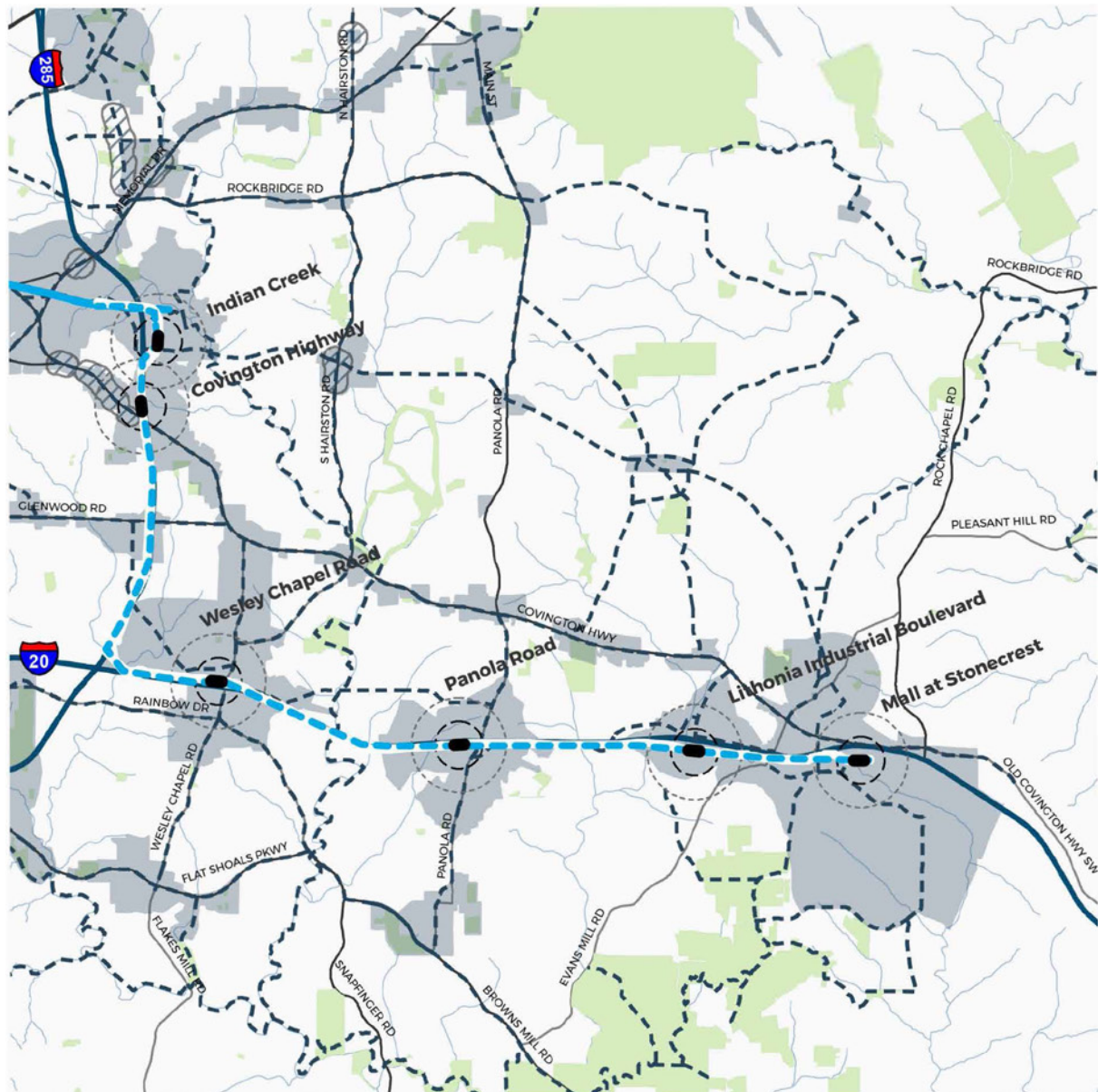
DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan recommended roadways and multimodal projects to address transportation needs and priorities in the I-20 East Corridor through the plan's 2040 horizon year. The plan presents projects in two tiers: Tier 1 projects could be implemented with the existing limited funding available, and Tier 2 projects could be prepared for possible future sources of funding.

Several of the recommendations from the plan address deficiencies in the bicycle and pedestrian networks:

- The Arabia Mountain Trail project would expand the PATH Foundation trail system with a new multiuse path that would extend approximately 5 miles from Kondike Road to Stonecrest Square.
- The MARTA Kensington Station road diets would remove two vehicular lanes and add bicycle lanes to Kensington Road and Mountain Drive.
- The Covington Trails projects would create a trail system to connect the MARTA Kensington Station to the MARTA Indian Creek Station and surrounding neighborhoods.
- The MARTA Indian Creek Station Trails project would create a new trail system to connect this station to surrounding neighborhoods.
- The Snapfinger Trail PATH project would expand the PATH Foundation Snapfinger Trail with a new multiuse path from Stone Mountain Trail and Clarkston to South River Trail.
- The Wesley Chapel Road Pedestrian Improvements project would will install sidewalks and pedestrian crossing improvements along the Wesley Chapel Road from Covington Highway to Flat Shoals Parkway.
- The Rainbow Drive Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements project would improve access for bikes and pedestrians along Rainbow Drive to the west of Wesley Chapel Road.

Several more recommendations address vehicular circulation with roadway widenings with or without additional multimodal improvements:

- The Heritage Corridor Study would consider roadway, bike, and pedestrian improvements to connect Stone Mountain and Lithonia downtowns.
- The Covington Highway at I-285 Bridge Improvement project would replace the Covington Highway bridge crossing I-285. The project would consider bicycle and pedestrian improvements to improve multimodal access across the interstate.
- The Panola Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements from Snapfinger Woods Drive to Covington Highway project would include operational improvements like incorporating center turn lane, bicycle lanes and sidewalks into the existing two-lane road.
- The Panola Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements from Thompson Mill Road to Fairington Road would widen the existing roadway from four to six lanes and incorporate access/mobility improvements such as bicycle lanes and pedestrian features as well as intersection improvements as appropriate.
- The Panola Road Widening from Browns Mill Road to Thompson Mill Road project will widen the existing roadway from two to four lanes while incorporating access/mobility improvements such as bicycle lanes and pedestrian features as well as intersection improvements as appropriate.
- The Redan Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements would widen Redan Road from two lanes to four lanes and include a management plan, as well as bike and pedestrian improvements.



# BICYLCE + PEDESTRIAN NETWORKS

- Proposed Transit Alignment
- Proposed Transit Station
- 1/4 Quarter Buffer
- Proposed Station Area (1/2 Mile Buffer)

## MARTA Rail Line

BLUE

## Bicycle Priority Network

Bicycle Priority Network

## Pedestrian Priority Areas

Pedestrian Priority Areas

## Bike-Ped Activity Centers

Bike-Ped Activity Centers

Figure 3-6: Bicycle + Pedestrian Network in the Corridor

Finally, the plan recommends advanced traffic management systems (ATMS) upgrades to convert existing signals to Ethernet at the following corridor locations:

- Flat Shoals Parkway/Flakes Mill Road/Snapfinger Road/Wesley Chapel Road ATM
- Panola Road/Fairington Road ATMS
- Turner Hill Road/Mall Parkway ATMS (Klondike Road to Rock Chapel Road/Union Grove Road)

Projects resulting from this plan but not included in the existing Atlanta Regional Commission Plan are cross referenced with station areas in the following matrix. Additional project details are available in the Station Area Existing Conditions Report.

While the corridor has several multimodal transportation projects planned in its extent, some additional transportation improvements might be needed in the corridor to improve vehicular, pedestrian, and transit access to station areas. Need for such improvements would be discussed in further detail in other sections of this report.

**Table 3-12:** DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) Projects in the Corridor

	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON HIGHWAY	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD	MALL AT STONECREST
Pedestrian and Bicycle Projects						
Arabia Mountain Trail - PATH - Phase I					X	X
Covington Trails	X	X				
Covington Highway Multimodal Corridor Improvements - Phase I						X
Indian Creek MARTA Station Trails	X					
Kensington MARTA Station Road Diets	X					
Rainbow Drive Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements			X			
Wesley Chapel Road Pedestrian Improvements			X			
Roadway Projects						
Covington Highway at I-285 Bridge Improvement		X				
Heritage Corridor Study						X
Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Extension - Phases III and IV					X	
Panola Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements				X		
Panola Road Widening				X		
Panola Road Widening				X		
Redan Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements	X					
Snapfinger Trail PATH	X					
ATMS Projects						
Flat Shoals Parkway/Flakes Mill Road/Snapfinger Road/Wesley Chapel Road ATMS			X			
Panola Road/Fairington Road ATMS				X		
Turner Hill Road/Mall Parkway ATMS						X

### 3.3 PRIOR STUDIES, PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS, AND INVESTMENTS

Plans from the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)—including two Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) studies, and the Urban Growth Policy Map (UGPM)—support and guide transit-oriented development in the corridor.

The LCI studies support communities as vibrant, walkable places by offering increased mobility options, encouraging healthy lifestyles, and providing improved access to jobs and services. The two LCI funding studies in the corridor—at Wesley Chapel and Stonecrest—recognize the need for better pedestrian connections to support new transit stations in the future and recommends improving walkability at those locations. Additional information about these studies can be found in the Station Areas Existing Conditions Report.

The ARC developed the Unified Growth Policy Map (UGPM) to provide direction for future growth in the region based on local plans and regional forecasts. The UGPM recognizes the I-20 East corridor as having areas of Mature Neighborhoods, Established Suburbs, and Developing Suburbs. It also recognizes the I-20 interchanges at Wesley Chapel Road, Panola Road, and Mall at Stonecrest as Community Activity Centers from a regional perspective. Designations for each station area can be found in the following matrix.

Maturing Neighborhoods were developed primarily before 1970. The ARC recommends the following TOD-applicable strategies within this designation:

- Building heights should range 1-10 stories.
- Provide alternatives for end-of-trip facilities (such as bicycle racks) and sidewalks and/or shelters adjacent to bus stops to improve safety and quality of transit options.
- Promote mixed use in areas served by existing or planned transit.
- Develop policies and design standards to ensure new and infill development is compatible with existing neighborhoods.

Established Suburbs are generally areas of residential development that occurred after 1970 to around 1995. Developing Suburbs are areas that were constructed from around 1995 to today. The ARC recommends the following TOD-applicable strategies within these designations:

- Building heights should range from 1-10 stories
- New development should support a continuous and connective roadway network.
- Create open space by eliminating vacant or under-utilized parking areas.
- Develop places of centralized location such as town centers or village centers.

Community Activity Centers attract people from surrounding communities for employment, retail, and entertainment. UGPM also notes that these centers need good connections with regional transportation network and transit service. Prior studies in the corridor provide a background for community's shared vision of the corridor. This study will build off of the prior studies to develop a framework to support TOD in station areas.

**Table 3-13:** ARC UGPM Designations in the Corridor

	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON	WESLEY CHAPEL	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD	MALL AT STONECREST
Maturing Neighborhoods	X	X	X			
Established Suburb				X	X	X
Developing Suburb				X	X	
Community Activity Center			X	X		X



# 4 STATION AREA EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter presents the existing physical, social, and market conditions for the proposed station areas along the I-20 East corridor. Station areas—defined as one-half mile from the proposed station sites—are presented in terms of their built environment, multimodal connectivity, and previous studies and planned projects. The goal of the TOD Community Plan is to identify strategies necessary to encourage compact, walkable, mixed-use development at the station areas to support transit ridership and spur economic development in the corridor. A thorough understanding of each station area—including what has been built and what the area is prepared to support—is necessary for crafting policies and strategies that can be tailored to each area's conditions and potential. Later TOD planning and strategies will use the existing conditions to identify and capitalize on the unique strengths of each station area.

Most of the existing I-20 East corridor is residential in nature, well-located in the Atlanta metro area, and well-served by the interstate system (as detailed in the Corridor Existing Conditions Report). Each of the station areas, except for Indian Creek, is a commercial node with an existing concentration of business uses. Most of the station areas have uses that are already attractors and destinations, albeit not to the extent that this strategy intends to develop.

Station areas vary in stage and style of existing development. While some station areas (like Wesley Chapel and Panola Road) serve their surrounding neighborhoods with retail and restaurants, and the Mall at Stonecrest station area serve large regional retail and service markets, others (like Indian Creek, Covington Highway, and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard) remain commercially underdeveloped but house important community resources. Each of these station areas is described in detail on the following pages.

## 4.1 INDIAN CREEK

The Indian Creek Station is the existing eastern terminus of MARTA heavy rail service. The station area is characterized by the large surface parking lots that provide 2,350 spaces for end-of-the-line commuters. Indian Creek station is located east (or “outside”) of I-285, the roadway that forms Atlanta’s “perimeter,” and serves as a barrier between the eastern and western communities in the station area. Unlike many of the other proposed station sites, the Indian Creek Station is not located near a full interchange with an interstate. The existing station can be accessed directly via slip ramp from I-285 by northbound traffic only; slip ramps also allow southbound traffic to return to I-285 southbound. Other traffic accesses the site via local roads. Apart from some strip development along Redan Road, the proposed station area is surrounded by residential development, much of it single family.

### 4.1.1 STATION AREA CONTEXT

#### LAND USE

The Indian Creek Station area is in unincorporated DeKalb County. DeKalb County adopted its 2035 Comprehensive Plan in 2016. The Comprehensive Plan illustrates existing as well as future land use in unincorporated DeKalb County as well as that in the city of Stonecrest. According to the Comprehensive Plan, most of the station area is considered suburban (57.5 percent). To the east of I-285, low-density, single-family homes sit along local, two-lane roads. The suburban areas to the west of I-285 typically consist of slightly denser, multifamily apartment complexes, such as Redan Cove Apartments, or single-family residential developments. Station area land uses and community resources can be found in Figure 4-1.

The station area also contains retail, office, and commercial opportunities that make up a Town Center area (42.1 percent of station area) located to the east of I-285 and Redan Road. Redan Road contains mostly local offices and retail opportunities, including grocery stores, banks, and







restaurants. The town center also includes the existing Indian Creek Station and parking lot, as well as the large undeveloped parcel to the south. The Indian Creek Station area has Kensington Station on its west area, which is considered a regional center in the Comprehensive Plan. The Covington Highway Corridor is to the south of Indian Creek station area.

## ZONING

The Indian Creek Station area's zoning typically reflects the existing land use. Most of the station area is zoned as residential (about 80 percent, highlighted in the table below), with residential complexes to the west of I-285 zoned as Medium-Density Residential. The existing transit station and parking lot as well as the location of the proposed station relocation is zoned as Office-Industrial.

**Table 4-1:** Indian Creek Station Area Zoning

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	PERCENTAGE SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
C-1	Local Commercial	5.5%
C-2	General Commercial	0.2%
MR-1	Medium-Density Residential - 1	15.1%
MR-2	Medium-Density Residential - 2	20.5%
MU-4	Mixed-Use High Density	4.1%
OI	Office-Institutional	9.6%
R-100	Residential Medium Lot	6.4%
R-75	Residential Medium Lot	33.0%
RSM	Small Lot Residential Mix	5.6%

Source: DeKalb County GIS

Tier III (Indian Creek Wellness Community) of the Memorial Drive Overlay District was approved in September 2017. The purpose of this district is to capitalize on existing MARTA stations to promote higher-density TOD. It also focuses on health-oriented development by creating walkable communities that connect residents with walkable amenities. Proposed scale of development in this district is expected to be small to medium (one to six stories), while the area of Tier III stretches north-south along the east side of I-285 from Redan Road to Memorial Drive and east-west along Redan Road from Holcombe Road to South Indian Creek Drive. The core of the area is between the existing MARTA station and Redan Road.

## OWNERSHIP

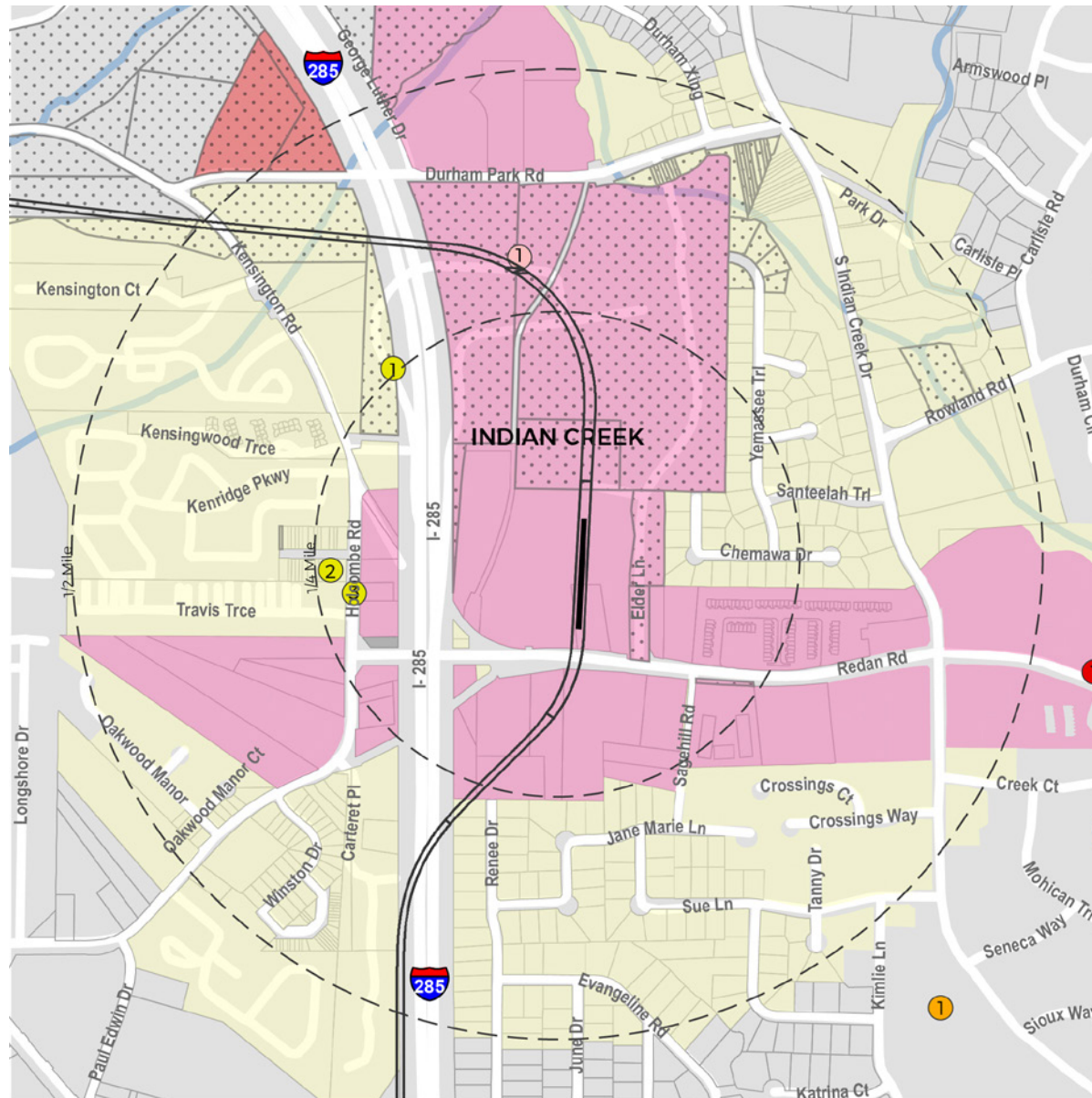
Most of the station area (80.6 percent) is privately owned. MARTA owns the existing Indian Creek Station, parking lot, and surrounding undeveloped parcels to the south of Durham Park Road and along Elder Lane. Additionally, parcels to the northwest of the station area are publicly owned by DeKalb County, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and the State of Georgia and include the Georgia Army National Guard Recruiting School, Transportation Department, and DeKalb County Sanitation.

## RESOURCES

The station area contains community institutions that include the DeKalb County Fires Services Station 24 on Redan Road, Rowland Elementary School on S. Indian Creek Drive, and the MARTA Police Department just south of Durham Park Road. The station area is also home to the following three historic resources:

- 3900 Kensington Road: Type – Single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1956
- 3854 Redan Road: Type – Single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1934
- 3851 Redan Road: Type – Single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1935





## INDIAN CREEK

- Proposed Transit Alignment
- Proposed Transit Station
- Proposed Station Area

### Current Land Use

- Regional Center
- Commercial Redevelopment Corridor
- Highway Corridor
- Institutional
- Light Industrial
- Suburban
- Town Center
- Traditional Neighborhood

### Resources + Facilities

- Historic Resources
  1. 3900 Kensington Road
  2. 3854 Redan Road
  3. 2851 Redan Road
- Educational Institutions
  1. Rowland Elementary School
- Fire Stations + EMS
  1. DeKalb County Fire Services Station 24
- Solid Waste
  1. MARTA Police Department
- Law Enforcement
  1. MARTA Police Department

### Ownership

- Publicly owned

**Figure 4-1:** Indian Creek Land Use and Community Resources

Source: DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal

## 4.1.2 MULTIMODAL CONNECTIVITY

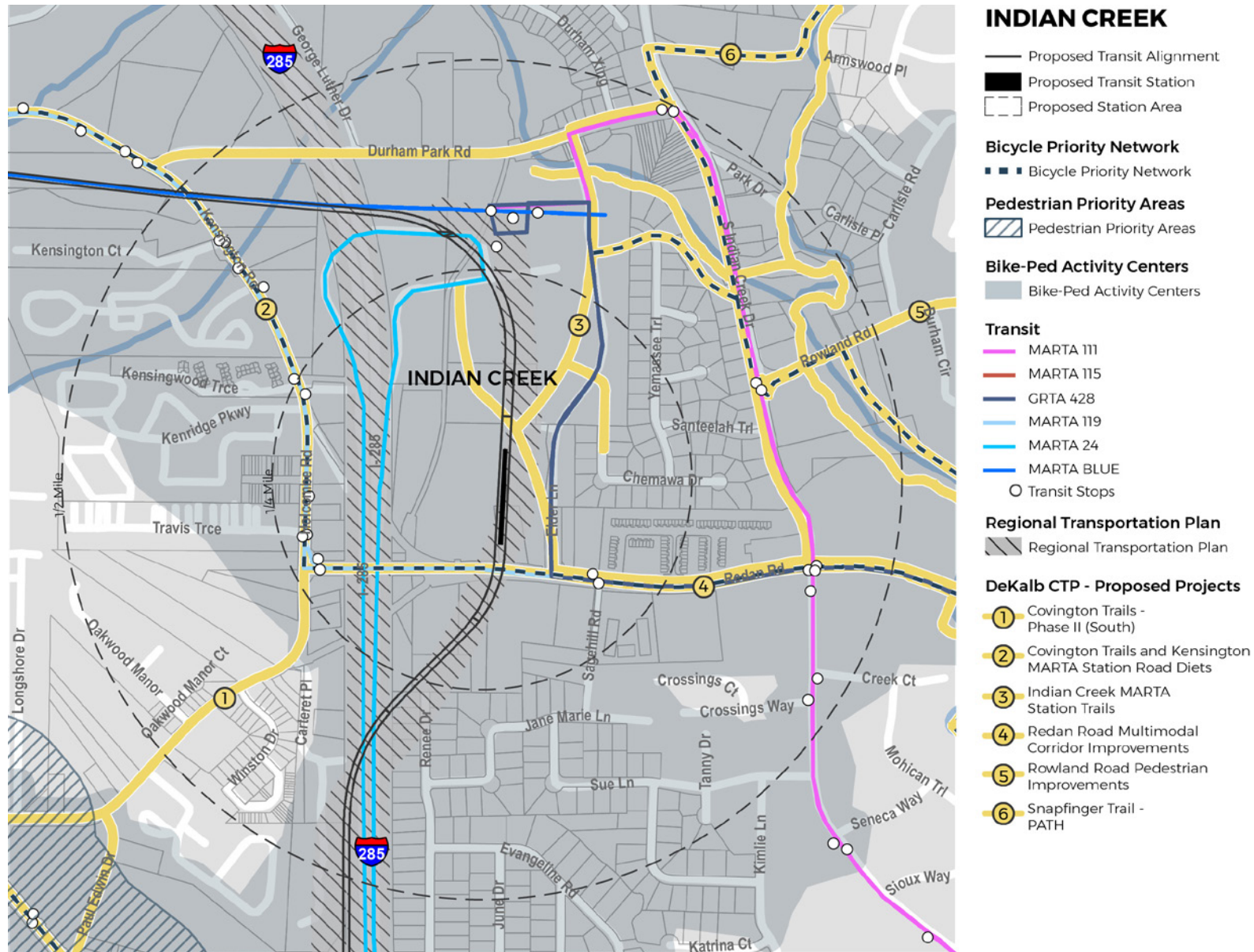
Running up to eight lanes and framed by sound barriers in some areas, the I-285 divides the station area, with Durham Park Road and Redan Road serving as the only east-west connections. To the west of I-285, Kensington Road serves as the major north-south connector and provides access to lateral local residential roads. To the east of I-285, Durham Park Road and Redan Road serve as the major east-west roadways and connect with the north-south running South Indian Creek Drive. These three roadways serve as the collector roads for the local residential roads. Most of this road network lacks pedestrian or cyclist infrastructure, limiting connectivity within the station area, as well as access to transit opportunities. Existing and planned multimodal connectivity within the station area is illustrated in Figure 4-2.

### TRANSIT

The station area contains the following transit routes:

- MARTA Blue Line: Indian Creek Station is the eastern terminus of the existing Blue Line of MARTA's rail service. The Blue Line runs between Hamilton E. Holmes Station, as western terminus, and Indian Creek Station every 10 minutes during peak and every 20 minutes during off-peak hours of operation. The Blue Line connects Indian Creek Station with major destinations such as Downtown Atlanta, Georgia State University, Mercedes Benz Stadium, Phillips Area, and Decatur. The Blue Line also provides a transit connection to the Red/Gold Lines at Five Points Station, which provides transit connection to major destinations such as the airport, midtown, and Buckhead.
  - MARTA 111 – Snapfinger Woods Drive/Stonecrest: This route operates from Indian Creek Station to Stonecrest Mall. This route also serves DeKalb Medical Center and Alice Williams Towers.
  - MARTA 115 – Covington Highway/South Hairston Road: This route operates every 15 to 25 minutes between Indian Creek Station and Lithonia Plaza Shopping Center. This route also serves Hidden Hills Village Shopping Center, Miller Grove Middle School, and Miller Grove High School.
  - MARTA 116 – Redan Road/Stonecrest: This route operates between Indian Creek Station and the Mall at Stonecrest every 15 to 30 minutes depending on time of day. This route also serves Redan Village, Crow's Crossing, Hairston Crossing Branch Public Library, Redan high School, and East DeKalb Health Center.
  - MARTA 119 – Kensington/Hairston Rd: This route operates between Kensington and Indian Creek Stations and Goldsmith PNR every 30-45 minutes, depending on time of day. This route also serves DeKalb County Animal Services, DeKalb County Central Transfer Station, Hairston Square, Hairston Park, Redan Village, Crow's Crossing, Rockbridge Crossing, Spring Mill Village, Stonewood Village, and Hairston Village.
  - MARTA 24 – East Lake/Hosea Williams: This route operates between Edgewood Candler Park and Indian Creek Stations. This route serves MLK Jr Middle School, Atlanta DeKalb Human Services Complex, Kirkwood Library, and Columbia High School.
  - MARTA's paratransit service covers the station area.
- MARTA 116 provides access from the Indian Creek Station to the surrounding neighborhood. MARTA 24 provides east-west connections in the station area, running along Kensington Road and Redan Road to cross I-285.





**Figure 4-2:** Indian Creek Station Area Multimodal Connectivity

Source: DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2014); DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal; MARTA

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

The station area contains limited resources for safe pedestrian and cyclist access and connectivity. Of the major roadways in the area, S. Indian Creek Drive, Redan Road, and Kensington Road have sidewalks; however, they are located only on one side of the street, and safe crossings are sparse and limited to spaced intersections. The primary access routes to the existing Indian Creek Station, including Elder Lane, do not contain sidewalk or cyclist infrastructure.

The lack of safe pedestrian and cyclist connectivity has been recognized, and most of the station area has been classified as a Bike-Ped Activity Center by the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Unified Growth Policy Map. Kensington Road, Redan Road, and portions of S. Indian Creek Drive have been designated as a bicycle priority network. These designations represent a priority for future facilities and improvements; however, there are no specific projects or plans in place.

## FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

The GDOT is planning several transportation improvements in the station area as part of the *Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)*. These projects are described in greater detail in the Corridor Area Existing Conditions chapter.

- I-285 Managed Lanes: The project is likely to be built concurrently with the Stone Mountain Freeway Interchange rebuild. The station area will have managed lanes access through partial managed lanes interchanges on Durham Park Road and Redan Road.
- Durham Park Bridge Improvement as a part of GDOT's Major Mobility Improvement Program that will support improved traffic operations over I-285.

Additionally, *DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan* identified the following recommendations and projects within the station area to address transportation needs and priorities for the county:

- Covington Trails – Phase II (South): This phase will create a trail system to connect the MARTA Kensington Station to the MARTA Indian Creek Station and surrounding neighborhoods. Estimated at approximately \$7 million, the project is prioritized as a Tier 2B project that will be funded when new revenues are generated.
- Covington Trails and Kensington MARTA Station Road Diets: The first phase of the project will create an approximately 3.25-mile trail system to connect the MARTA Kensington Station to the MARTA Indian Creek Station and surrounding neighborhoods. The project also consists of a road diet on Kensington Road and Mountain Drive, and includes removing two vehicular lanes and adding bicycle lanes. Estimated at \$4 million, the project is classified as a Tier 1 priority.
- MARTA Indian Creek Station Trails: The project will create a 3.47-mile trail system to connect the MARTA Indian Creek Station to surrounding neighborhoods. Estimated at \$4.7 million, the project is prioritized as Tier 3 and will be funded when new revenues are generated.
- Redan Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements: The project will widen Redan Road from two lanes to four lanes and includes a management plan, as well as bike and pedestrian improvements. The 4.13-mile project is estimated at \$46 million and is a Tier 2C prioritized project that will be funded when new revenues are generated.
- Snapfinger Trail PATH: The project will expand the PATH Foundation trail system (Snapfinger Trail) from Stone Mountain Trail and Clarkston to South River Trail. A multiuse path was assumed for the entire 17.1-mile project, but a detailed corridor study is needed to determine recommended improvements. Estimated at \$26.9 million, the project is classified as a Tier 3 project that will be funded when new revenues are generated.

### 4.1.3 PRIOR STUDIES

*DeKalb County's 2035 Comprehensive Plan* includes details about future characteristic areas for the unincorporated parts of the county, which suggests the future land use in the county. The immediate vicinity of the existing Indian Creek Station is planned to be a town center. However, most of the Indian Creek station area (62.5 percent) is planned to be a suburban area around Redan Road. Between Holcombe Road and I-285 is planned to be a highway corridor. The area around Indian Creek and Snapfinger Creek is planned as conservation/green space area.

**Table 4-2:** Indian Creek Station Area Future Land Uses

FUTURE LAND USE	PERCENTAGE SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
Conservation/Greenspace Area	7.73%
Highway Corridor	1.75%
Suburban	62.48%
Town Center	28.05%

Source: *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*

The following studies have been completed for the area near Indian Creek Station:

- *Unified Growth Policy Map (UGPM)*: As discussed in the Corridor Area Existing Conditions chapter, ARC has developed the UGPM to provide direction for future growth in the region based on local plans as well as regional forecasts. It illustrates ARC’s vision for future development in the region. The UGPM recognizes the area around Indian Creek Station as a maturing neighborhood. Maturing neighborhoods on the UGPM were primarily developed before 1970. These areas are mostly adjacent to the region’s core and employment corridors, and together they encompass 49 percent of the region’s jobs and 18 percent of the population. The UGPM also notes that the area around Indian Creek Station is already urbanized.
- *Indian Creek Master Active Living Plan (MALP)*: The framework plan for the Indian Creek Station area was completed in 2013. The goal of the framework plan was to set a framework to improve public health by improving bike/pedestrian access to nearby neighborhoods, parks, schools, public facilities and other amenities, and by encouraging development with an emphasis on mixed-use, compact development with interconnected streets and improved multimodal accessibility with increased public space. Apart from recommending appropriate land use and transportation policies, the MALP also recommends trails and sidewalks in the station area. The MALP also recommends various policies to improve health in the surrounding communities by addressing some of the major health issues through urban design.



## 4.2 COVINGTON HIGHWAY STATION

The Covington Highway Station is proposed for the northwest corner of the Covington Highway interchange with I-285. The station area is characterized by two largely vacant shopping centers and Peace Baptist Church, which draws up to 1,400 worshipers to its services. West of I-285, the station area includes multifamily/medium-density apartments along Covington Highway, and east of I-285, the station area consists mostly of single-family, low-density residential subdivisions long local, winding roads, including Mountain Brook, Meadowdale, and others.

### 4.2.1 STATION AREA CONTEXT

#### LAND USE

The Covington Highway Station area is in unincorporated According to the *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*, most of the station area (over 60 percent) is residential, consisting mostly of low-density, single-family homes. These homes sit along local, winding roads that connect to larger collector streets that typically provide access to residential subdivision entrances.

The remaining non-residential uses run parallel along Covington Highway and I-285. Parcels running east-west along Covington Highway are designated as a Commercial Redevelopment Corridor, and include gas stations and automobile-oriented businesses, hotels, fast food restaurants, and other retail uses, interspersed with entrances to residential developments. Parcels backed to I-285 but south of Aldea Drive are considered a Highway Corridor and include retail and religious uses that can be accessed with local parallel roads. North of Aldea Drive—the triangle formed by the intersection of Redwing Circle and Covington Highway—contains institutional uses, including a church and the DeKalb Preparatory Academy. Station area land uses and community resources can be found in Figure 4-3







## ZONING

The station area land uses typically reflect the permitted zoning. Residential areas are zoned as Residential Medium Lot (R-75) and Medium-Density Residential (MR-1, MR-2). Parcels running along Covington Highway within the Commercial Redevelopment Corridor are zoned a variety of local and general commercial (C-1, C-2), office (OI, OD), and residential (R-75). While the Highway Corridor along I-285 consists of office (OD), commercial (C01), and high-density mixed use (MU-4). The following table shows the zoning breakdown of the station area.

The Tier I - Covington Gateway Overlay district of the Memorial Drive Overlay, which covers a part of the Covington Highway Station Area, was approved in September 2017. The Covington Gateway district focuses on providing walkable access and building healthy communities. It is intended to be a gateway to three communities: Avondale Estates, Belvedere-East Lake, and Decatur. The Covington Gateway district recommends small to medium center level of development ranging from one to six stories. The overlay district recommends uses such as restaurants, retail, office and institutional buildings, residential, parks and recreational uses.

**Table 4-3:** Covington highway Station Area Zoning

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	PERCENTAGE SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
C-1	Local Commercial	14.1%
C-2	General Commercial	1.8%
MU-4	Mixed-Use High Density	4.8%
OD	Office - Distribution	6.0%
OI	Office - Institutional	2.2%
R-75	Residential Medium Lot	56.9%
MR-1	Medium-Density Residential - 1	2.9%
MR-2	Medium-Density Residential - 2	11.3%

Source: DeKalb County GIS

## OWNERSHIP

All parcels within the station area are privately owned, with the exception of a parcel fronting Covington Highway Drive that is owned by DeKalb County.

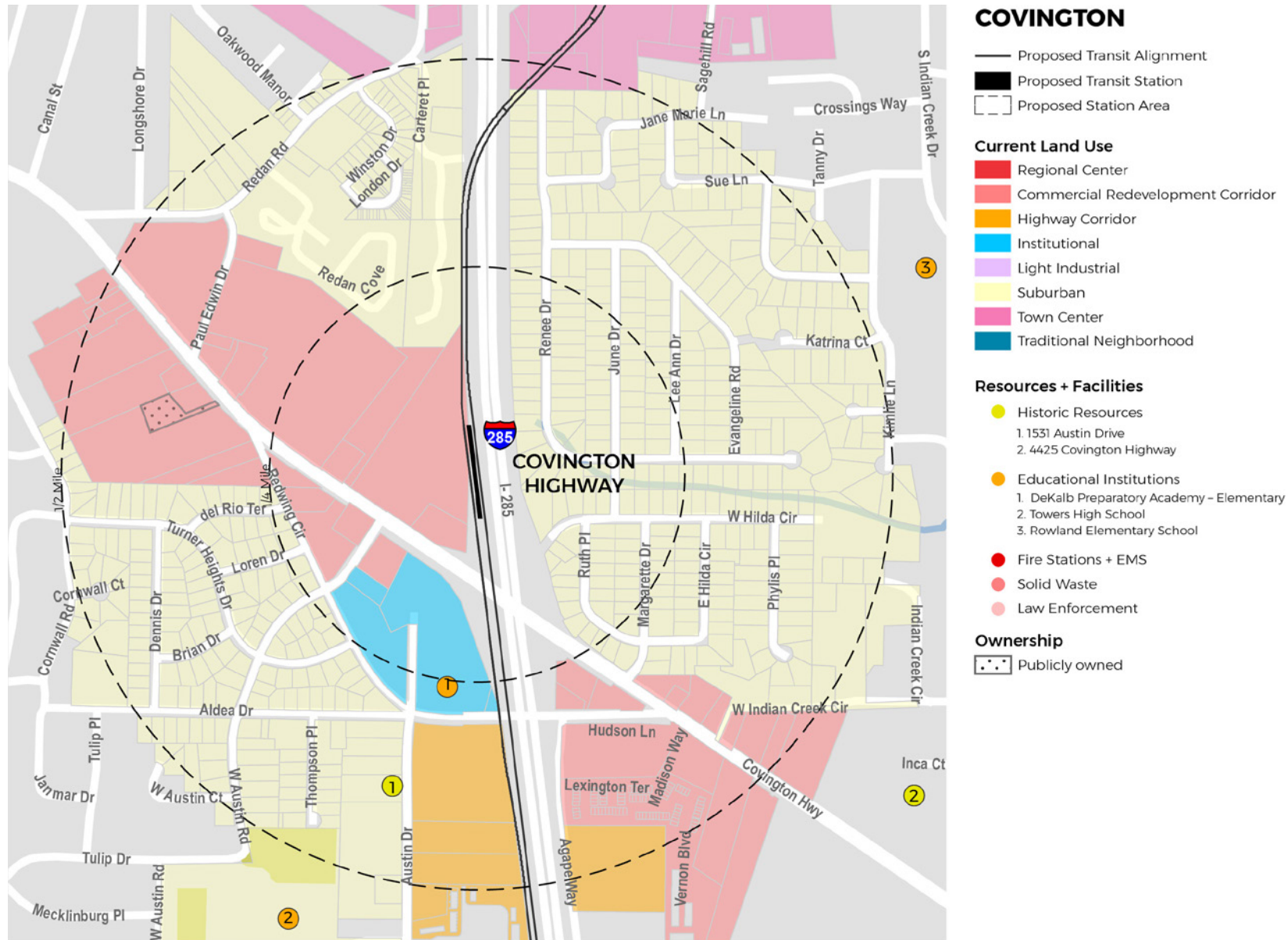
## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Covington Highway Station area contains three educational institutions, DeKalb Preparatory Elementary Academy, Towers High School, and Rowland Elementary School. Places of worship feature prominently in the immediate vicinity of the proposed station location. The station area has two places of worship, Peace Baptist Church near the proposed station site and The Hand of the Lord on Redwing Circle.

The station area also contains the following historic resources:

- 1531 Austin Drive: Type - Single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1934
- 4425 Covington Highway: Craftsman style Single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1940





**Figure 4-3:** Covington Land Use and Community Resources

Source: DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal

## 4.2.2 MULTIMODAL CONNECTIVITY

The proposed Covington Highway Station is situated at the intersection of two major roadways, Covington Highway and I-285, that connect into the regional roadway network. I-285 is an interstate highway loop that encircles Atlanta. The highway runs north-south through the center of the station area. Direct access to I-285 provides the station area with an excellent vehicular connection with the region. On the other hand, I-285 creates a physical barrier, dividing the community and limiting vehicular, pedestrian, and cyclist east-west connectivity within the station area. Covington Highway and Redwing Circle are the only two east-west connections within the station area. There are no planned access improvements to/from I-285 at this location. Existing and planned multimodal connectivity within the station area is illustrated in Figure 4-4.

### TRANSIT

The station area is serviced by the following transit routes:

- MARTA 107 - Glenwood Road: This route operates between Inman Park/Reynoldstown and Kensington Stations every 20 to 30 minutes. This route also serves Edgewood retail district, Branan Towers, and East Atlanta Village.
- MARTA 111 - Snapfinger Woods Dr/Stonecrest: This route operates from Indian Creek Station to Stonecrest Mall. This route also serves DeKalb Medical Center and Alice Williams Towers.
- MARTA's paratransit service covers this station area.

MARTA 111 runs north-south along I-285. MARTA 24 runs along Covington Highway and crosses I-285 via Redwing Circle, serving as an east-west connector through the station area.

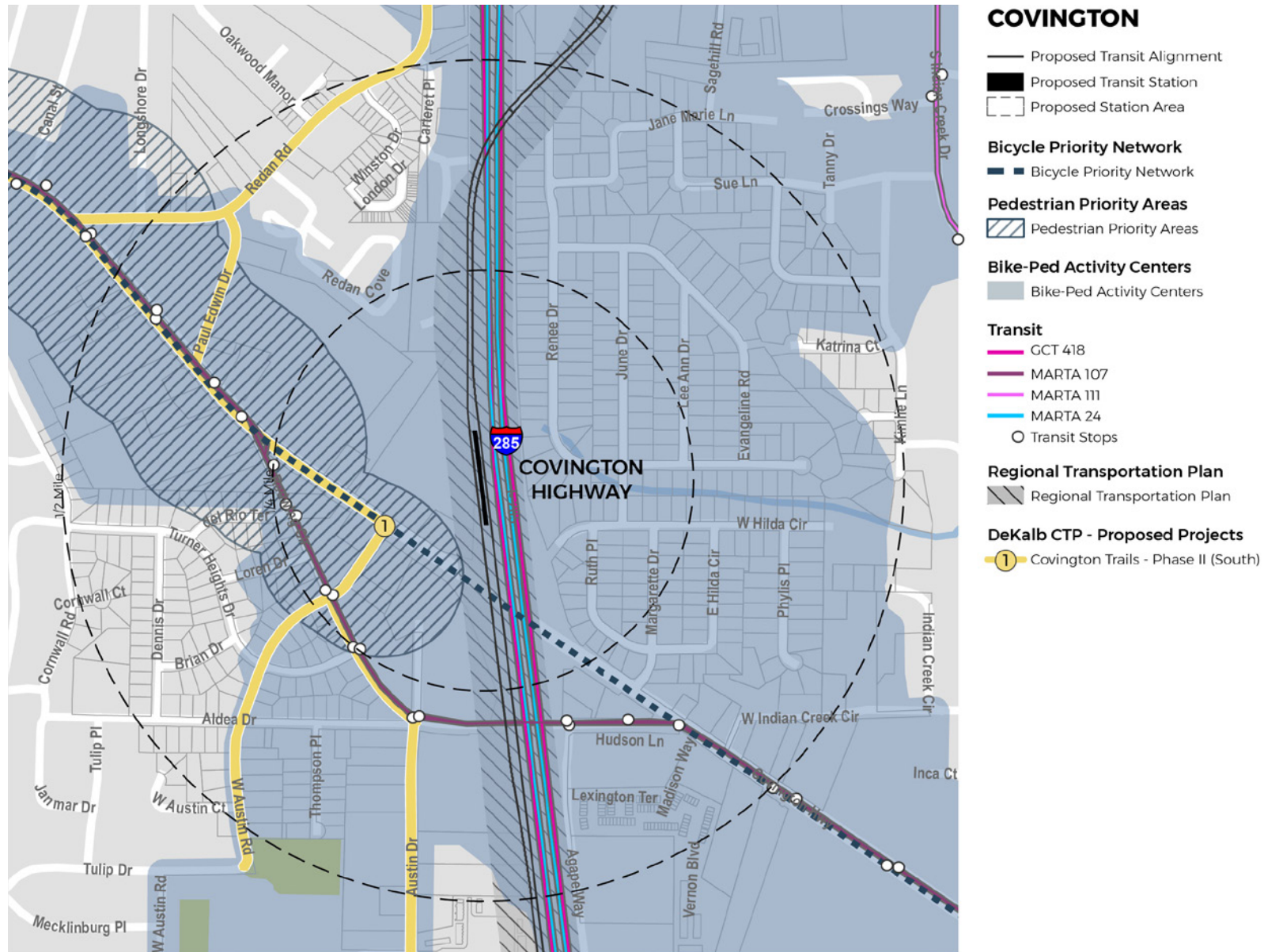
### BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN

The proposed station's location at the intersection of two regional roadways impacts bicyclist and pedestrian infrastructure. I-285 lacks bicyclist and pedestrian infrastructure and crossings, limiting mobility between the western and eastern halves of the station area. Covington Highway west of I-285 has sidewalks on both sides; however, the east side of I-285 sidewalk connectivity is limited and safe crossings along the highway remain spaced out.

Much of the station area, specifically along Covington Highway and I-285, was recognized as a bicyclist/pedestrian activity center by *DeKalb County's Comprehensive 2014 Transportation Plan*. Covington Highway to the west of I-285, as well as additional side streets to the north and south, have been designated as pedestrian priority areas.

While bicyclists can use non-interstate road infrastructure, the station area does not have any specific bike infrastructure such as bike lanes or sharrows. Covington Highway is recognized as a bicycle priority network and is therefore a priority for future facilities and improvements, but does not currently have specific projects or plans in place.

While Covington Highway Station area is fairly car dependent, it has areas with a higher percentage of households without access to a vehicle than the county average. Some census block groups between Covington Highway and I-285 have 31 percent or more households without access to a vehicle. Low vehicle availability in a car-dependent area can affect access to opportunities for residents. These households would benefit from redevelopment that includes improvements to bike and pedestrian infrastructure.



**Figure 4-4:** Covington Station Area Multimodal Connectivity

Source: DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2014); DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal; MARTA

FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

The following transportation improvements are planned in the station area as a part of the RTP, and described in greater detail in the Corridor Area Existing Conditions Chapter:

- o I-285 East Managed Lanes: The Covington Highway Station is not expected to have direct access to managed lanes near the interchange with I-285. Nearest access to managed lanes would be through direct ramps on Durham Park Road and Redan Road near Indian Creek Station and through slip ramps south of Glenwood Road

Additionally, *DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan* identified the following recommendations and projects within the station area to address transportation needs and priorities for the county:

- o Covington Highway at I-285 Bridge Improvement: This \$8.6 million project will replace the Covington Highway bridge crossing at I-285. The project includes consideration for bicycle and pedestrian improvements to improve multimodal access across the interstate. The project is prioritized as a Tier 1 project; however, it is not featured on the programmed list of projects for the region.
- o Replacement of the bridge on Redwing Circle and on Glenwood Road over I-285 as a part of GDOT's Major Mobility Improvement Program that will support improved traffic operations over I-285.
- o Covington Trails - Phase II (South): This project would create a trail system to connect the MARTA Kensington Station to the MARTA Indian Creek Station and surrounding neighborhoods. The project is estimated at \$7 million and is prioritized as a Tier 2B project that will be funded when new revenues are generated.

The Covington Highway Station area does not have projects to improve I-285 Interchange. Since this area is not expected to have a direct managed lanes access, an increase in vehicle activity at this interchange would likely result in adverse impacts on traffic in this area.

4.2.3 PRIOR STUDIES, PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS, AND INVESTMENTS

DeKalb County's Comprehensive Plan recognizes parts of Covington Highway Station area as one of the employment centers in the county with characteristics of a highway corridor and a commercial redevelopment corridor. While the areas along Covington Highway are expected to comprise land uses akin to commercial redevelopment corridor (CRC), large portions of the station area are expected to have suburban land uses. The CRC is intended to promote redevelopment and in-turn improve economic vitality of the area. It also includes recommendations for aesthetic and functional design improvements. The CRC includes land uses such as healthcare, offices, institutional, entertainment, residential and parks and recreational. Suburban characteristic areas are intended to recognize existing suburban uses in the area while promoting new development to have improved accessibility and connectivity.

Table 4-4: Covington Highway Station Area Future Land Use

FUTURE LAND USE	PERCENTAGE SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
Commercial Redevelopment Corridor	23.8%
Highway Corridor	5.4%
Institutional	4.0%
Suburban	66.4%
Town Center	0.4%

Source: DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan



The proposed station location is near the Covington Place Shopping Center, which contains businesses that have experienced some challenges in maintaining economic vitality. The future land use plan recognizes these challenges and identifies these following areas for redevelopment:

The following studies have been completed for area near Covington Highway Station:

- *UGPM*: The UGPM recognizes the area around Covington Highway Station as a Maturing Neighborhood. Maturing Neighborhoods on the UGPM were primarily developed prior to 1970. These areas are primarily adjacent to the Region's Core and Employment Corridors and together they encompass 49 percent of region's jobs and 18 percent of population. The UGPM also notes that the areas around Covington Highway Station is already urbanized.
- *Covington Highway Corridor Master Active Living Plan (MALP)*: This framework plan proposed a mix of uses geared toward improving economic vitality and quality of life in the corridor:
  - Redevelop vacant and underutilized commercial properties and creating public parks/open spaces with active uses such as paths, running tracks, playgrounds, and sports courts in existing and new development.
  - Provide appropriate transitions between higher-density development and existing single-family neighborhoods.
  - Amend subdivision regulations to improve inter-parcel connectivity.
  - Adopt health promoting urban design standards.
  - Produce quality design rather than specific architectural style in the corridor.
  - Incorporate crime prevention through environmental design principles.



## 4.3 WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD

Wesley Chapel Road Station is proposed for the northwest corner of the Wesley Chapel Road interchange with I-20. As wide as 10 lanes in some areas, I-20 runs east-west through the center of the station area, separating the communities to the north and south. Most of the station area consists of large-scale and big-box retail connected through parking lots and collector roads. The remaining residential land is divided mostly into developments containing communities of low-density, single-family homes along local roadways.

### 4.3.1 STATION AREA CONTEXT

#### LAND USE

The Wesley Chapel Road Station area is in unincorporated DeKalb County. According to the *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*, over two-thirds of the station area is classified as Town Center with much of this land use concentrated to the west of Snapfinger Road. To the north of I-20, the station area contains Wesley Chapel Square, Wesley Chapel Crossing, and Chapel Hall Shopping Centers. The shopping centers are all fronted by large parking lots and contain a mix of retail uses, with many storefronts occupied by national chains and big-box retailers such as Home Depot, Kroger, and Dollar Tree. Additional retail and commercial storefronts and strip malls line Wesley Chapel Road, including many chain and fast-food restaurants such as Subway, Taco Bell, Waffle House, and Chick-Fil-A. These storefronts can be accessed directly from Wesley Chapel Road and are serviced by surrounding parking lots. While a retail corridor, much of the town center remains underdeveloped with vacant storefronts and parking lots that are typically not filled to capacity. To the south of I-20, retail continues to line Wesley Chapel Road and includes some more local uses including banks, restaurants, and automobile-dependent uses.

The remaining station area is mostly (30 percent) residential with low-density, single-family homes situated within development communities.







Within these developments, homes often sit along winding local roads; however, the developments themselves are typically accessed via main entrances along Wesley Chapel Road or other major thoroughfares.

Lastly, 3 percent of the station area, located north of I-20 to the west of Snapfinger Road, is considered a highway corridor and remains mostly wooded and undeveloped. Station Area land uses and community resources can be found in Figure 4-5

## ZONING

Residential areas to the north of the station area are mostly zoned as R-75, while those to the south are R-100. These zones are both residential and vary only slightly in regards to minimum size lot and open space

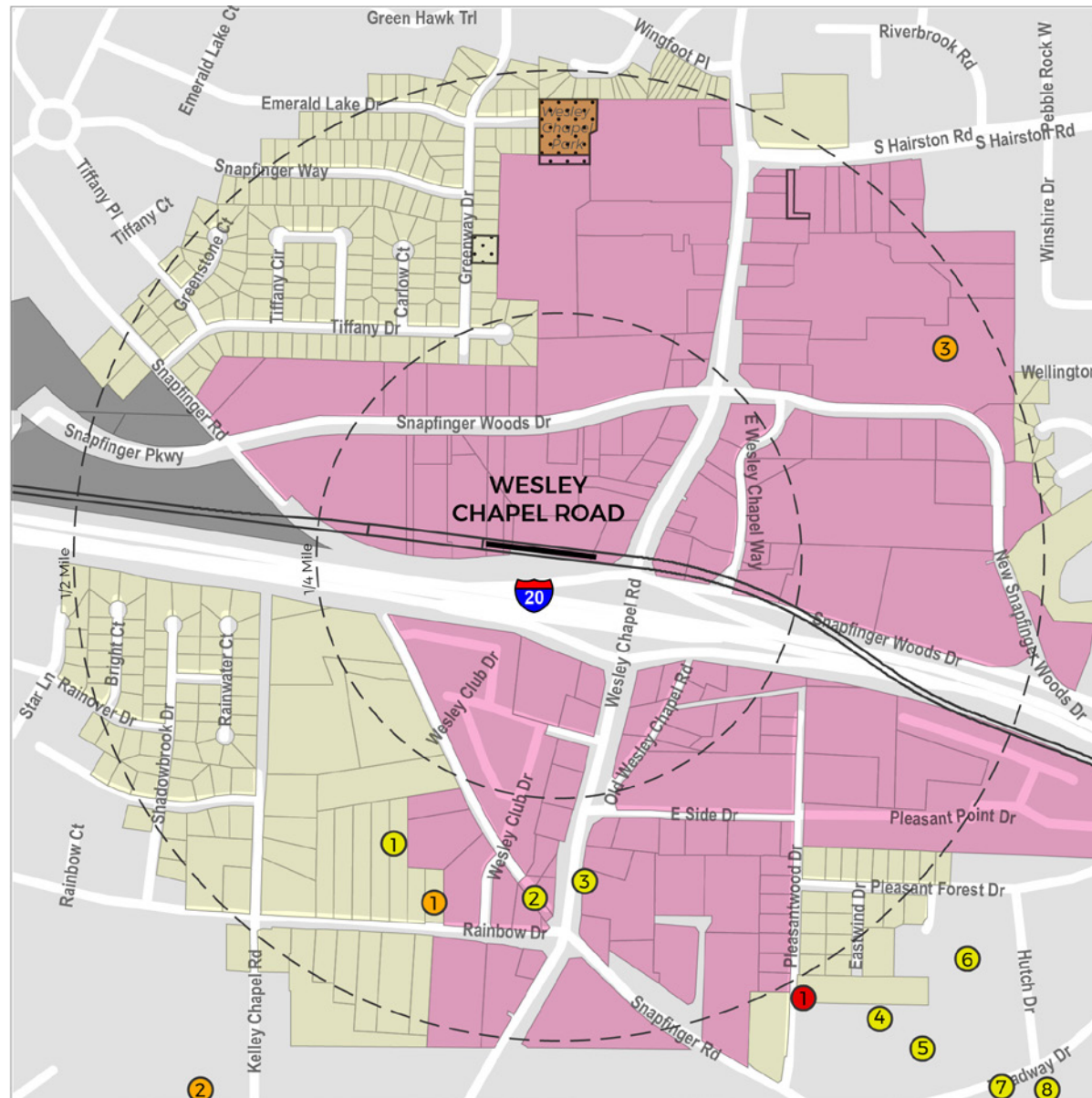
requirements. The town center includes an array of zoning including commercial, industrial, office, and residential. The following shows the zoning breakdown of the station area:

Large parts of the Wesley Chapel Road Station area near the interchange with I-20 East are included in the I-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District. It contains three tiers for the scale of development, including Tier 1 – High Intensity (height up to 20 stories and density up to 60 units dwelling per acres); Tier 2 – Medium Intensity (height up to 8 stories and density up to 40 units dwelling per acres); and Tier 3 – Low Intensity (height up to 4 stories and density up to 40 units dwelling per acres). The station area also includes transitional areas where these tiers merge.

**Table 4-5:** Wesley Chapel Road Station Area Zoning

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	PERCENT SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
C-1	Local Commercial	40.0%
C-2	General Commercial	2.0%
M	Light Industrial	4.0%
MU-1	Mixed-Use Low Density	0.2%
OD	Office – Distribution	2.3%
OI	Office – Institutional	8.0%
RSM	Small Lot Residential Mix	1.2%
R-75	Residential Medium Lot	12.1%
R-85	Residential Medium Lot	0.4%
R-100	Residential Medium Lot	20.0%
MR-1	Medium-Density Residential - 1	1.2%
MR-2	Medium-Density Residential - 2	5.2%
HR-2	High-Density Residential - 2	3.4%

Source: DeKalb County GIS



## WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD

- Proposed Transit Alignment
- Proposed Transit Station
- Proposed Station Area

### Current Land Use

- Regional Center
- Commercial Redevelopment Corridor
- Highway Corridor
- Institutional
- Light Industrial
- Suburban
- Town Center
- Traditional Neighborhood

### Resources + Facilities

- Historic Resources
  1. 4147 Rainbow Drive
  2. Ranch house west of Wesley Chapel Road
  3. Wesley Chapel Methodist Church
  4. Hall-Parlor
  5. American small house
  6. 2871 Treadway Drive
  7. American small house
  8. 2726 Snapfinger Road
- Educational Institutions
  1. Love Thy Children
  2. Rainbow Elementary School
  3. Everest Institute
- Fire Stations + EMS
  1. DeKalb County Fire Department Station
- Solid Waste
- Law Enforcement

### Ownership

- Publicly owned

**Figure 4-5:** Wesley Chapel Road Land Use and Community Resources

Source: DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal

## OWNERSHIP

Most of the station area is privately owned with the exception of three parcels accounting for less than 1 percent of the station area. Located on Greenway Drive, Emerald Lake Drive, and S. Hairston Road, DeKalb County owns these parcels.

## RESOURCES

The Wesley Chapel Road Station area contains a public park spread over 2 acres: Wesley Chapel Park. It has a multiuse playing field, playground and picnic area. The Wesley Chapel Road Station area has three educational institutions, including Love Thy Children (private school), Rainbow Elementary School and Everette Institute (an Associate Degree level technical and trade school).

The Southeastern boundary of the station area includes a fire station and emergency medical services (EMS). The station area also includes several places of worship such as the Wesley Chapel Methodist Church, Restored Life Bible Church and Bahai Unity Center. The outskirts of the station area also include places of worship such as New Beginnings Worship Center, Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church and New Piney Grove Missionary Baptist Church.

The Wesley Chapel Road Station area also includes the following historic resources:

- 4147 Rainbow Drive: Craftsman-style single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1932
- Ranch house west of Wesley Chapel Road: Single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1954
- Wesley Chapel Methodist Church (2792 Wesley Chapel Road): Colonial Revival-style religious facility; constructed in 1884
- Hall-Parlor (2654 Snapfinger Road): Craftsman-style single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1950
- American small house, south side of Snapfinger Road: Single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1952
- 2871 Treadway Drive: Craftsman-style single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1928
- American small house (2705 Snapfinger Road): Single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1949
- 2726 Snapfinger Road: Craftsman-style single dwelling (single living unit); constructed in 1930



### 4.3.2 MULTIMODAL CONNECTIVITY

The proposed Wesley Chapel Road Station is located along the north side of I-20. Running up to 10 lanes and framed by sound barriers in some areas, I-20 cuts through the station area and divides the area to the north and south. Westley Chapel Road, a regional retail corridor, serves as the only north-south running connection in the Station Area. Existing and planned multimodal connectivity within the station area is illustrated in Figure 4-6.

#### TRANSIT

The station area contains the following transit routes:

- MARTA 86 - Fairington Rd/McAfee Road: This route operates between Kensington Station and Mall at Stonecrest. This route also serves Snapfinger Elementary School, DeKalb Medical Center at Hillandale, and GRTA PNR lot at Panola Rd. This route operates every 20-25 minutes.
- MARTA 111 - Snapfinger Woods Dr/Stonecrest: This route operates from Indian Creek to Stonecrest Mall and serves DeKalb Medical Center and Aluce Williams Towers. This route operates every 20-40 minutes, depending on time of day.
- MARTA 186 - Rainbow Dr./South DeKalb: This route operates between Five Points Station and Wesley Chapel Road and serves Georgia State Station and Gallery at South DeKalb. This route operates every 15-30 minutes depending on time of day.

MARTA's paratransit service covers the station area. The station area to the north of I-20 is serviced by MARTA 86 (which runs east-west along Snapfinger Woods Drive) and MARTA 111 (which provides north-south access along Wesley Chapel Road and east-west access along New Snapfinger Woods Drive). MARTA 186, which runs east-west along Snapfinger Road before turning onto Wesley Chapel Road, is the only transit option providing north-south connections across I-20.

#### BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN

The proposed station's location along I-20 would affect bicyclist and pedestrian access and connectivity within the station area. I-20 is a through highway, lacking opportunities for pedestrian or cyclist access and crossings with an exception at Wesley Chapel Road. Wesley Chapel Road has sidewalks on both the east and west sides of the street; however, safe crossings across the busy road are sparse and limited to spaced out intersections. Sidewalks are also found on Snapfinger Road and S Hairston Road. However, sidewalks on Snapfinger Woods Drive Eastside Drive can be found only on one side of the street.

Most of the station area was recognized as a Bike-Ped Activity Center by the *DeKalb County 2014 Comprehensive Transportation Plan*. In particular, Wesley Chapel Road, S Hairston Road, Snapfinger Road, and Snapfinger Woods Road to the west of Wesley Chapel Road have been designated a bicycle priority network.

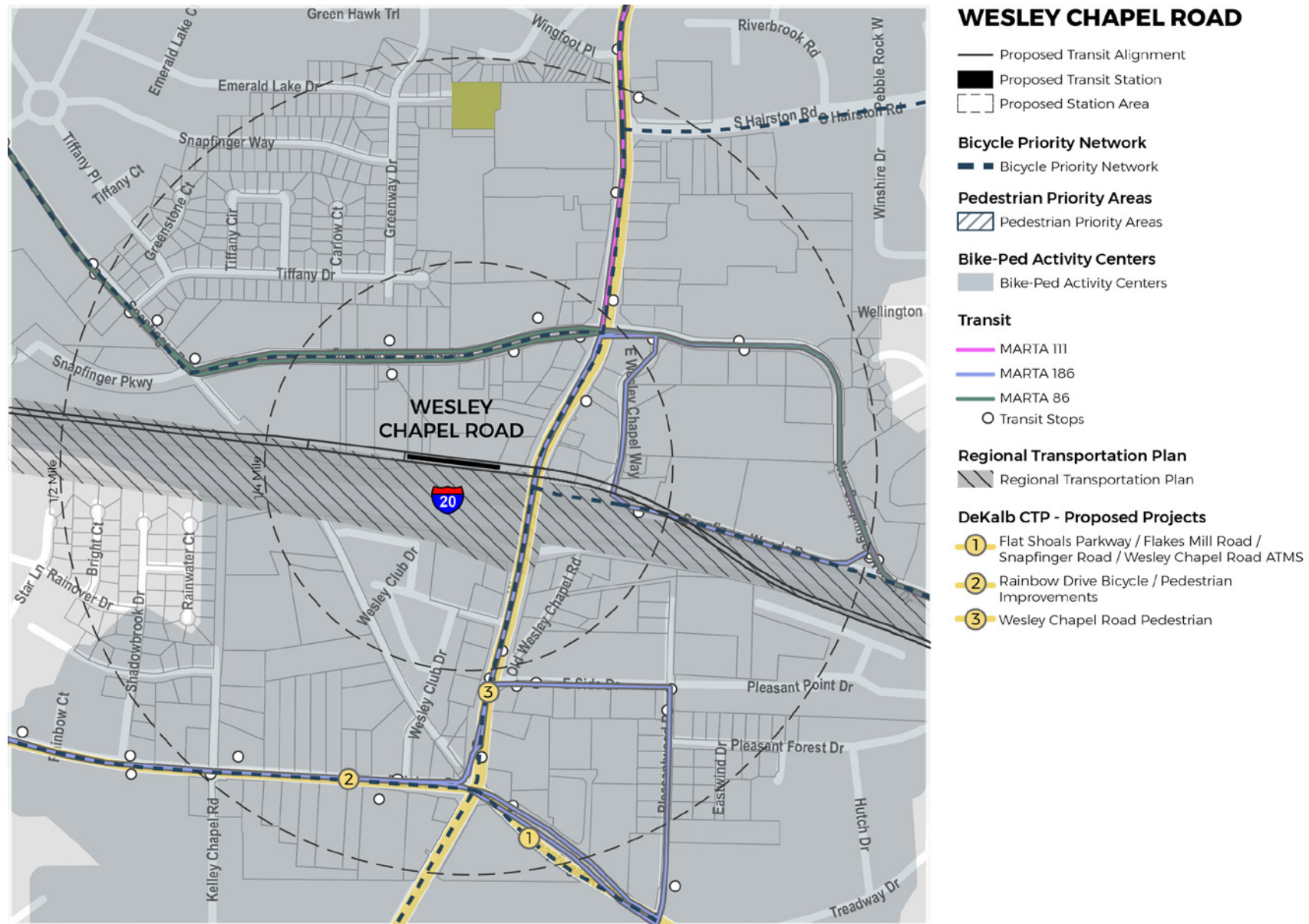
## FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

The following transportation improvements are planned in the station area as a part of the RTP, and described in greater detail in the Corridor Area Existing Conditions Report:

- I-20 East Managed Lanes: This project, in the long range plan, would construct one managed lane in each direction of travel on I-20 east of I-285

Additionally, *DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan* identifies the following recommendations and projects within the station area to address transportation needs and priorities for the county:

- Wesley Chapel Road Pedestrian Improvements: This project would install sidewalks and pedestrian crossing improvements for over 3.5 miles along the Wesley Chapel Road from Covington Highway in the north to Flat Shoals Parkway in the south. The improvements are estimated at approximately \$1.4 million and are prioritized as a Tier 2B project that will be funded when new revenues are generated. For example, a Special Options Sales Tax, which is to be on the 2018 election ballot, would be a possible source of funding.
- Rainbow Drive Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements: Running along Rainbow Drive to the west of Wesley Chapel Road, the Rainbow Drive improvements would improve access for bikes and pedestrians along this corridor. The full project is planned for 2 miles from Columbia Drive to Wesley Chapel Road, with a cyclist side path on one side of the road and a sidewalk on the other. The improvements are estimated at approximately \$4.9 million and are identified as a Tier 2C project that will be funded when new revenues are generated.
- Flat Shoals Parkway/Flakes Mill Road/Snapfinger Road/Wesley Chapel Road ATMS: Covering approximately 8 miles, the project would convert dial-up to Ethernet via fiber along I-20 from Wesley Chapel Road connecting to Panola Road. Estimated at approximately \$200,000, the project is classified as a Tier 2C project.



**Figure 4-6:** Wesley Chapel Road Station Area Multimodal Connectivity

Source: DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2014); DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal; MARTA

### 4.3.3 PRIOR STUDIES, PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS, AND INVESTMENTS

*DeKalb County's 2035 Comprehensive Plan* recognizes the area around Wesley Chapel Road interchange with I-20 East as an employment center with characteristics of a town center. The future character area of the town center forms the majority of the Wesley Chapel Road Station area. The town center character area concentrates residential and commercial mixed-use developments to serve many communities and act as a catalyst in reducing automobile travel, improving walkability, and increasing transit use. The town center character area includes a multitude of land uses such as general retail, commercial, offices, high-density residential, and pedestrian accessible parks & open spaces. The core of a town center may have density as high as 60 dwelling units per acre. The Comprehensive Plan also recognizes a sizable part of the station area as suburban.

**Table 4-1:** Wesley Chapel Road Station Area Future Land Use

FUTURE LAND USE	PERCENT SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
Conservation/Green Space	0.7%
Highway Corridor	3.6%
Suburban	34.6%
Town Center	61.0%

Source: *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*

The following studies have been completed for the area near Wesley Chapel Road Station:

- *UGPM*: The UGPM notes that the area near Wesley Chapel Road interchange on I-20 is a Community Activity Center. Community Activity Centers are similar to Regional Centers, but are smaller in scale. These centers attract people from surrounding communities for a mix of uses such as employment, retail and entertainment. The UGPM also notes that these centers need good connections with regional transportation networks and transit services. The UGPM recognizes the area around Wesley Chapel Road Station as a Maturing Neighborhood. Maturing Neighborhoods on the UGPM were mainly developed before 1970. These areas are primarily adjacent to the region's core and employment corridors and together they encompass 49 percent of the region's jobs and 18 percent of the population. The UGPM also notes that the area around Wesley Chapel Road Station is already urbanized.
- *Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study for Wesley Chapel Road*: The LCI study was completed for the Wesley Chapel Road area in 2011. The purpose of this multidisciplinary planning study was to serve as a blueprint for addressing transportation, land use, economic development, and community design issues near the Wesley Chapel Road area. A summary of recommendations from the LCI study is presented in the following table:

**Table 4-2: Summary Of The Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Wesley Chapel Road Study Recommendations**

RECOMMENDATIONS/IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	NOTES
Catalyst Redevelopment Projects	<p>Three catalyst areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The town green</li> <li>○ An institutional campus</li> <li>○ A transit oriented development (TOD)</li> </ul> <p>Four supplemental redevelopment project areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Covington Highway-Wesley Chapel Road neighborhood commercial node</li> <li>○ The Wesley Chapel Road-Snapfinger Woods Drive Commercial redevelopment</li> <li>○ The Wesley Chapel - I-20 mixed-used redevelopment area</li> <li>○ The Wesley Chapel - I-20 commercial redevelopment area</li> </ul>
Multimodal Transportation Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve local mobility by improving conditions for bikers, pedestrians and transit users.</li> <li>○ Pedestrian bridge over I-20.</li> <li>○ Multiuse path connections to parks.</li> </ul>
Land Use and Community Design Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Update overlay district guidelines to have specific guidelines for Wesley Chapel TOD.</li> <li>○ Improve signage.</li> </ul>
Economic Growth Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leverage existing financial tools and pursuing new and creative funding strategies.</li> <li>○ Create a TAD and a CID along with securing LCI funding.</li> <li>○ Other potential strategies: Opportunity zone tax-incentive program, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Brownfield Redevelopment Programs;</li> <li>○ Utilize new market tax credits financing.</li> <li>○ Promote greater use of Enterprise Zone Program.</li> <li>○ Work with the community for housing and neighborhood preservation.</li> </ul>
Community Organization Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintain and build on relationships formed through efforts to create the overlay district and the Wesley Chapel Community Overlay Committee.</li> <li>○ Leverage existing organizational strength and resources.</li> <li>○ Provide coordination and excitement for redevelopment efforts.</li> <li>○ Tap into county, regional and state resources.</li> <li>○ Form a CID that can represent interests of local businesses.</li> </ul>
Land Use and Zoning Regulatory Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Change properties south of Snapfinger Woods from Tier 2 to Tier 1.</li> <li>○ Consider changing frontage along Snapfinger Road to at least Tier 2.</li> <li>○ Improve sign regulations to allow additional sign for dual frontage lots and for single-lot commercial developments exceeding certain size.</li> <li>○ Amend overlay to impose use restriction and to ensure consistency with design guidelines.</li> <li>○ Develop Wesley Chapel specific design guidelines.</li> <li>○ Grayfield to Greenfield provisions; Requirement for smaller blocks.</li> <li>○ Make the following improvements to the multimodal transportation network: capacity improvements, complete streets and pedestrian improvements, intersection improvements, transit improvements.</li> </ul>

Source: Wesley Chapel Activity Center, LCI, Redevelopment Plan Report (2011)



## 4.4 PANOLA ROAD

The Panola Road Station is proposed for the southwest corner of the interchange of Panola Road with I-20, which runs east-west through the center of the station area, dividing the neighborhoods to the north and south. Panola Road is the only north-south connector in the station area. Aside from the notable Kaiser Permanente Panola Medical Center, most of the station area consists of big-box commercial, fast-food, and office uses along Panola Road,

### 4.4.1 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

#### LAND USE

Most of the Panola Road Station area is in city of Stonecrest. According to the *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*, the Panola Road Station area consists mostly of a light industrial (52 percent) and town center (41 percent) area. The town center runs along Panola Road with a mix of retail and commercial buildings facing the roadway including restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, and other businesses. Additional big-box retailers including a Walmart Supercenter and a Lowe's Home Improvement center are located to the south of I-20 east of Panola Road. The light industrial area runs along Panola Industrial Boulevard located to the north of I-20, and Minola Drive to the south. This area includes a range of uses including Georgia Power and Georgia United Credit Union. Panola Industrial Boulevards is fronted with numerous office parks containing various offices and industrial uses, and surrounding parking areas; however, many office parks remain vacant or underutilized.







A smaller residential area (7 percent) is located to the west of Panola Road. A small residential development—Creekside Crossing Apartment Homes—consists of denser apartment homes and can be accessed from Panola Road while additional single-family homes can be accessed from Thompson Mills Road. Station area land uses and community resources can be found in Figure 4-7.

ZONING

The station area land uses are typically reflective of the permitted zoning. The light industrial area contains a mix of zoning including industrial (40 percent) and office (16 percent). The town center is zoned as local commercial (30 percent). Less than 10 percent of the station area is zoned residential. Northeast portions of the station area have a concentration of healthcare providers such as Kaiser Permanente.

Table 4-3: Panola Road Station Area Zoning

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	PERCENT SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
C-1	Local Commercial	32.6%
M	Light Industrial	40.8%
MR-1	Medium Density Residential - 1	2.2%
OD	Office - Distribution	8.4%
OI	Office - Institutional	8.6%
R-75	Residential Medium Lot	7.3%
R-100	Residential Medium Lot	0.0%

Source: DeKalb County GIS

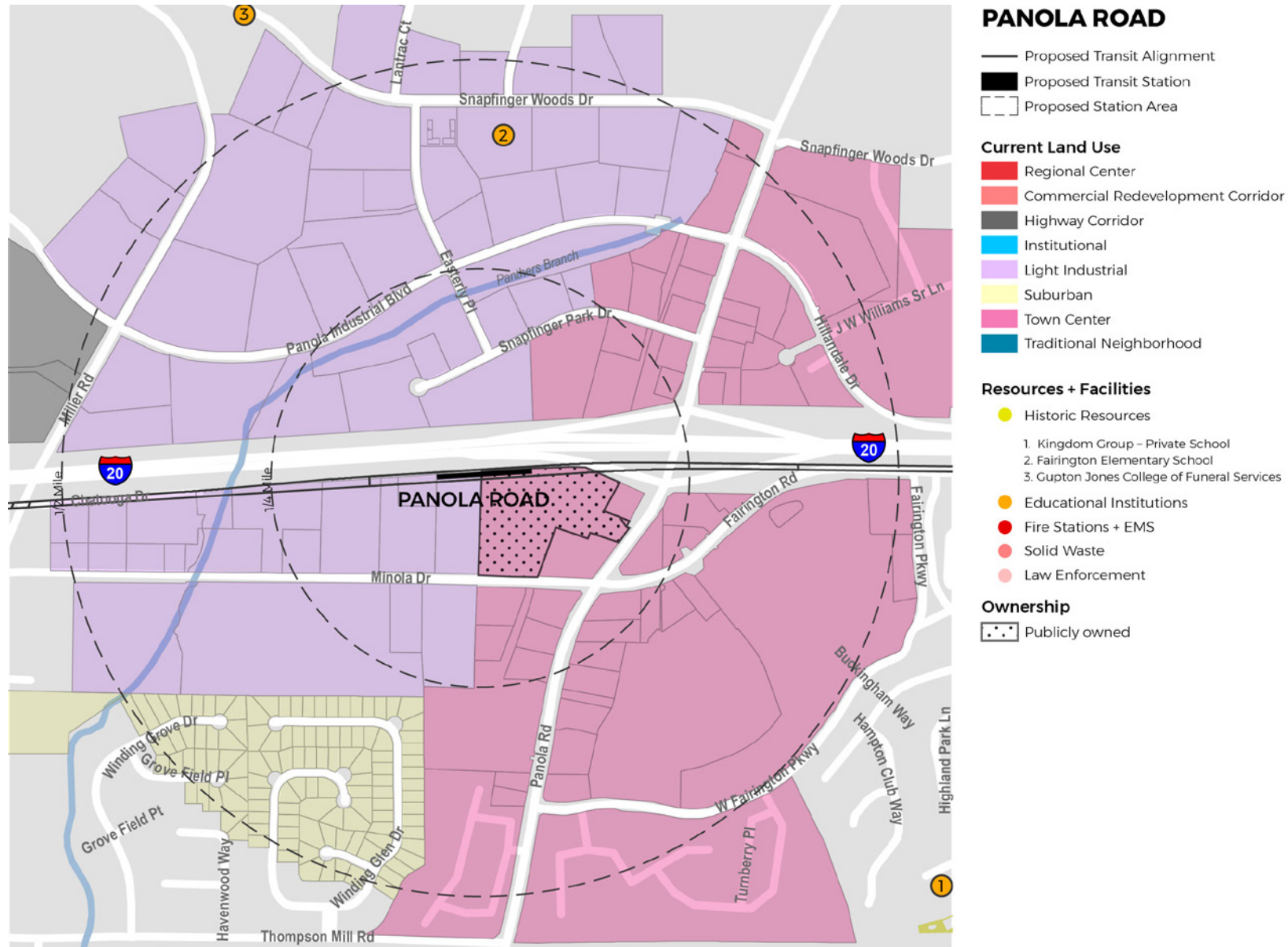
Large parts of the Panola Road Station area near the interchange with I-20 East are included in the I-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District. It contains two tiers for the scale of development: Tier 1 – High Intensity (height up to 20 stories and density up to 60 units dwelling per acres) and Tier 2 – Medium Intensity (height up to 8 stories and density up to 40 units dwelling per acres). It also includes transitional areas where these tiers merge.

OWNERSHIP

All parcels within the station area are privately owned, with the exception of a parcel fronting Minola Drive with I-20 to the north. Located at 5289 Minola Drive, the Panola Road Park and Ride serves two MARTA bus routes (MARTA 86 and MARTA 117) and three regional GRTA Xpress buses (GRTA 423, 426 and 428).

RESOURCES

The station area contains numerous community resources. In addition to the Panola Road Park and Ride, the station area contains three educational Institutions: Kingdom Group, Fairington Elementary School, and Gupton Jones College of Funeral Services. The Fairington Elementary school also has a 1.9-acre recreational facility attached that includes a multiuse field and playground. The station area has various places of worship, including Salem Baptist Church, The Refreshing Place Ministry, and New Life International Family Church.



**Figure 4-7:** Panola Road Land Use and Community Resources

Source: DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal

## 4.4.2 MULTIMODAL CONNECTIVITY

The proposed Panola Road Station is situated at the intersection of I-20 and Panola Road. With I-20 running east-west through the center of the station area, the highway creates a physical barrier, limiting vehicular, pedestrian, and cyclist connectivity to the north and south. Panola Road is the only north-south connections in the station area. Miller Road provides an alternate north-south connection just outside of the station area. To the north, Snapfinger Woods Drive and Panola Industrial Boulevard serve as main east-west thoroughways across Panola Road. While to the south, Minola Drive turns into Farrington Road to cross over Panola Road. Due to large parcel sizes, there are few additional north-south roadways with the exception of local roads in the residential developments found in the southern portion of the station area. Existing and planned multimodal connectivity within the station area is illustrated in Figure 4-8.

## TRANSIT

The station area contains the following transit routes:

- MARTA 86 - Fairington Rd/McAfee Road: This route operates between Kensington Station and Mall at Stonecrest and serves Snapfinger Elementary School, DeKalb Medical Center at Hillandale, the park-and-ride lot at Panola Road.
- MARTA 111 - Snapfinger Woods Dr/Stonecrest: This route operates between Indian Creek and Stonecrest Mall and serves DeKalb Medical Center and Alice Williams Towers.
- MARTA 117 - Rockbridge Rd./Panola Rd: This route operates between Avondale Station and Panola Road Park and Ride, and serves DeKalb Medical Center, T.O. Vinson Health Center, Wade Walker Park, and Lou Walker Senior Center.
- MARTA's paratransit service covers the station area.

- GRTA Xpress 423: This route provides commuter access between East Conyers/West Conyers/Panola Road and Midtown every 15-30 minutes in AM and PM peak periods in the peak direction.
- GRTA Xpress 426: This route provides commuter access between East Conyers/West Conyers/Panola Road and Downtown every 15-30 minutes in AM and PM peak periods in the peak direction.
- GRTA Xpress 428: This route provides commuter access between West Conyers/Panola Road and Perimeter every 35-65 minutes in AM and PM peak periods in the peak direction.

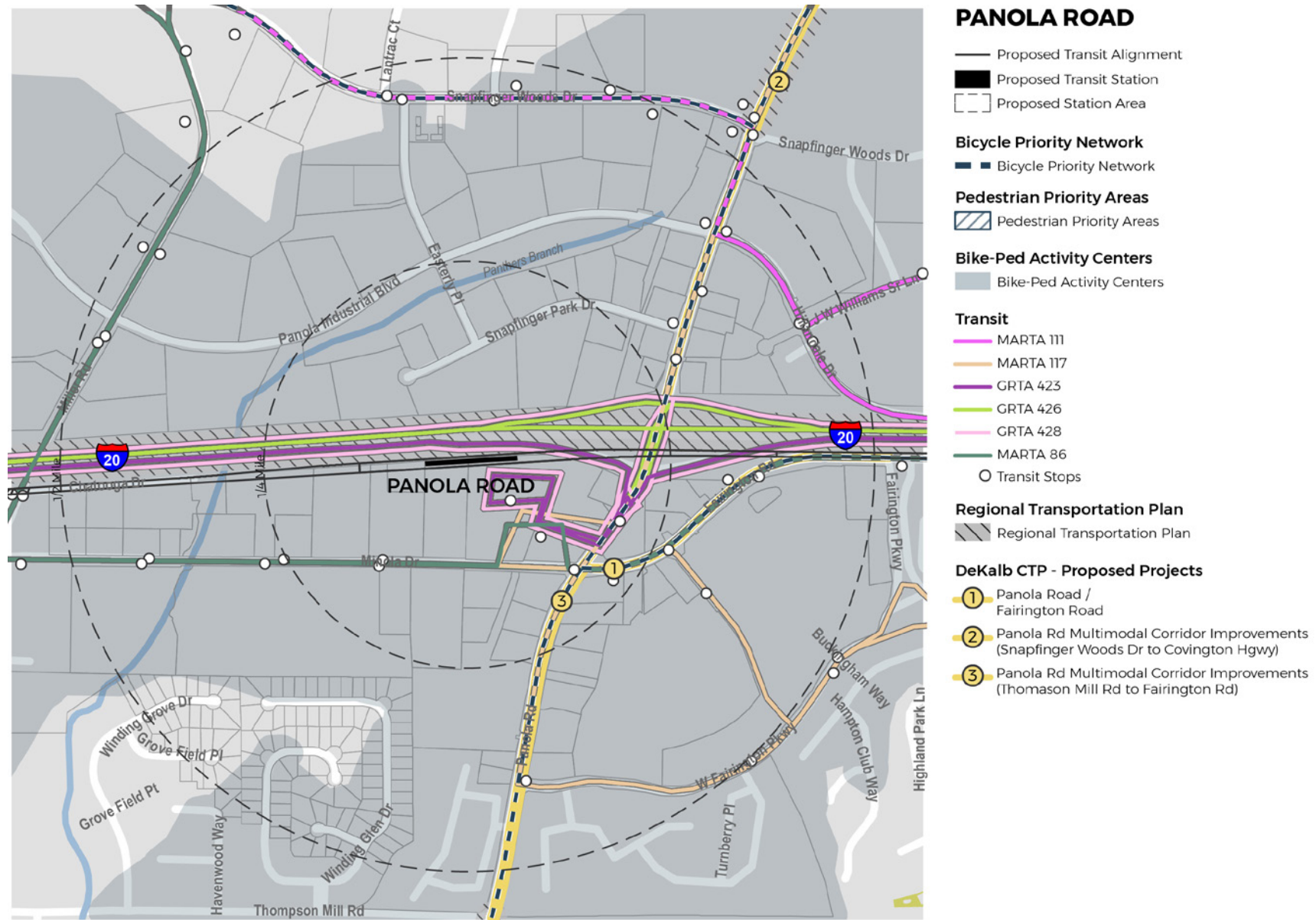
GRTA Xpress 423, 426, and 428 run express along I-20 and stop at the park-and-ride lot on Minola Drive. These routes provide commuter access to business centers at Midtown and Downtown Atlanta and the Perimeter area. MARTA 86 runs north-south along Miller road and east-west along Minola Drive.

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

The proposed station's location along I-20 limits bicyclist and pedestrian access and connectivity within the station area. Panola Road has sidewalks on both the east and west sides of the street from Snapfinger Woods Drive to Thompson Mill Road, as well as along Snapfinger Woods Drive East of Panola Road. Pedestrian crossings and safe access across I-20 are sparse, and continuity in sidewalk infrastructure is limited on most major streets in this area.

Most of the station area was recognized as a Bike-Ped Activity Center by the *DeKalb County Comprehensive 2014 Transportation Plan*. Panola Road and Snapfinger Woods Drive to the west of Panola Drive are designated as a bicycle priority network. .





**Figure 4-8:** Panola Road Station Area Multimodal Connectivity

Source: DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2014); DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal; MARTA

## FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

The following transportation improvements are planned in the station area as a part of the RTP, and described in greater detail in the Corridor Area Existing Conditions Chapter:

- I-20 East Managed Lanes: This project, in the long range plan, would construct one managed lane in each direction of travel on I-20 east of I-285.
- I-20 East Movable Barrier Zipper Lane: The existing typical section along I-20 between Columbia Drive and Panola Road consists of three 12-foot through lanes in each direction. The project will construct a 2-foot Zipper barrier at the inside edge of the second lane. The proposed typical section in the off-peak direction would consist of a minimum of two travel lanes. The first travel lane will be 12 feet wide. The proposed typical section along the peak direction consists of a minimum of four travel lanes. Three of the four travel lanes will match the existing configurations. The fourth travel lane will consist of the lane that is converted from the off-peak direction to travel in the peak direction.
- I-20 East Interchange Improvements at Panola Road: This project is programmed in ARC's 2016–2021 TIP. It is expected to be constructed 2024–2030. This is an interchange rehabilitation project on Panola Road between Fairington Road to Snapfinger Woods Drive including the I-20 interchange. This project includes reconstructing the existing bridge. The project will have two bike lanes—three travel lanes per direction—and two turn lanes per direction of travel, totaling 10 motor vehicle travel lanes and two lanes for people cycling.
- Panola Road Segment 2 Operation Improvement: This segment of Panola Road is from Snapfinger Woods Drive to US 278 (Covington Highway). This project is programmed in ARC's 2016–2021 TIP and expected to be completed by 2019/2020.

- Panola Road Segment 4 Operations Improvement: This segment of Panola Road is between Snapfinger Woods Drive and SR 12 (Covington Highway). Design phase will also include an access managed plan. It is listed in ARC's *Long Range RTP*.

Additionally, *DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan* identified the following recommendations and projects within the station area to address transportation needs and priorities for the county.

- Panola Road/Fairington Road ATMS: This project will convert existing signals to Ethernet from south of Covington Highway to Thompson Mill Road. The improvements are estimated at approximately \$32,000 and are prioritized as a Tier 2B project that will be funded when new revenues are generated.
- Panola Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements (Snapfinger Woods Drive to Covington Highway): This project will include operational improvements including the conversion of the existing two-lane road to incorporate two lanes with a center turn lane, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks. The project is estimated at \$21 million and is prioritized as a Tier 3 project.
- Panola Road Widening (Browns Mill Road to Thompson Mill Road) - Right of Way: This project includes the preliminary engineering and right-of-way (Phase I) for widening the existing roadway from 2 to 4 lanes while incorporating access/mobility improvements, including bicycle lanes and pedestrian features, as well as intersection improvements as appropriate. The project is estimated at \$3 million and is prioritized as a Tier 1 project.
- Panola Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements (Thompson Mill Road to Fairington Road): The project will widen the existing roadway from 4 to 6 lanes and incorporate access/mobility improvements, including bicycle lanes and pedestrian features, as well as intersection improvements as appropriate. The project is estimated at \$17 million and is prioritized as a Tier 2C project.

- Panola Road Widening (Browns Mill Road to Thompson Mill Road) – Construction: This project will begin construction (Phase II) to widen the existing 2-lane roadway to 4 lanes and incorporate access/mobility improvements, including bicycle lanes and pedestrian features, as well as intersection improvements as appropriate. The project is estimated at \$19 million and is prioritized as a Tier 2A project.

### 4.4.3 PRIOR STUDIES, PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS, AND INVESTMENTS

*DeKalb County's 2035 Comprehensive Plan* recognizes the area around Panola Road interchange with I-20 East as an employment center with characteristics of a town center. The plan recommends conducting a market study for the Panola Road area to examine ways to maximize its economic potential.

**Table 4-6:** Panola Road Station Area Future Land use

FUTURE LAND USE	PERCENTAGE SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
Conservation/Green Space	3.0%
Highway Corridor	0.3%
Suburban	7.7%
Light Industrial	47.3%
Town Center	41.6%

Source: *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*

Most of the station area is planned to have a combination of light industrial and town center character areas. These two land uses cover about 89 percent of the station area. The light industrial character area identifies areas appropriate for industrial uses while preserving appeal and appearance of surrounding residential or commercial uses. Light

industrial uses include activities that do not generate excessive nuisance characteristics such as noise, vibration, or air pollution among others.

The town center character area promotes concentration of residential and commercial mixed-use developments to serve many communities and act as a catalyst in reducing automobile travel, improve walkability and increase transit use. The town center character area includes a multitude of land uses such as general retail, commercial, offices, high-density residential and pedestrian accessible parks and open spaces. The core of a town center can have a density as high as 60 dwelling units per acre.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes a small part of the station area in southwest as suburban. The Comprehensive Plan also notes the area near Panthers Branch, a minor perennial stream as conservation/open space

*ARC's UGPM* notes that the area near Panola Road interchange on I-20 is a community activity center. Community activity centers are similar to regional centers, but are smaller in scale. These centers attract people from surrounding communities for mix of uses such as employment, retail, and entertainment. The UGPM also notes that these centers need good connections with a regional transportation network and transit service. The UGPM recognizes parts of the area around Panola Road Station as a developing or established suburb. Established suburbs are generally areas of residential development that occurred after 1970 to around 1995, and developing suburbs are areas that were constructed from around 1995 to today. The UGPM also notes that the area around Panola Road Station is already urbanized.



## 4.5 LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD

The proposed Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station is located south of I-20, at the terminus of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard. To the north of I-20, the station area is home to residential neighborhoods with some retail and commercial destinations along Lithonia Industrial Boulevard. Commercial/Industrial parks have not found much success in the northern parts of the Station Area. To the south of I-20, the station area consists primarily of undeveloped land and the 25,000-member New Birth Missionary Baptist Church. The proposed extension of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard to the south is likely to improve access to and around this proposed station location.

### 4.5.1 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

#### LAND USE

Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station Area is in City of Stonecrest. DeKalb County adopted its 2035 Comprehensive Plan in 2016. The Comprehensive Plan illustrates existing as well as future land use in unincorporated DeKalb County as well as that in City of Stonecrest. The majority of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station Area is considered institutional (45%) due to the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church located just to the south of the station. Surrounded by wooded undeveloped land, the church and its surrounding parking lots are accessed through a single entrance along Woodrow Road. To the east of the Church, low-density, single family homes sit along smaller local roads including Stewart Lake Court, East Glen Road, and Woodrow Road that feed into the north-south running Evans Mill Road. Evans Mill Road is fronted by residential, as well as some retail and community uses including hotels, learning centers, and educational institutions.

The area just to the north of I-20 and south of Chupp Road is classified as a Highway Corridor (18%). This corridor contains a mix of uses including retail and commercial, industrial, and residential. To the west of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, the Highway Corridor includes a laundry, cemetery,









and self-storage unit, while to the east, there is a variety of residential and industrial uses. The residential areas include multi-family apartment complexes, like the Oaks at Stonecrest, which can be accessed from Evans Mill Road. Many parcels to the north of I-20 are undeveloped or vacant and provide opportunities for future development.

To the north of the Highway Corridor, the Station Area contains residential communities, as well as a Commercial Redevelopment Corridor along Lithonia Industrial Boulevard. Most of the residential consists of low-density single-family homes or apartment complexes including Windward Forest, and Arbor Crossings Apartments. Station area land use and community resources can be found in Figure 4-9.

### ZONING

The Station Area contains a mix of zoning including industrial, residential, office, and multi-zone with the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church and surrounding area zoned as multi-zone. Multi-zone areas are about 36 percent of the station area. About 42 percent of the station area is zoned

**Table 4-7:** Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station Area Zoning

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	PERCENTAGE SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
M	Light Industrial	19.0%
MR-1	Medium Density Residential - 1	8.0%
MZ	MultiZone	36.0%
OD	Office - Distribution	2.0%
OI	Office - Institutional	2.0%
R-100	Residential Medium Lot	30.0%
R-75	Residential Medium Lot	3.0%
RSM	Small Lot Residential Mix	1.0%

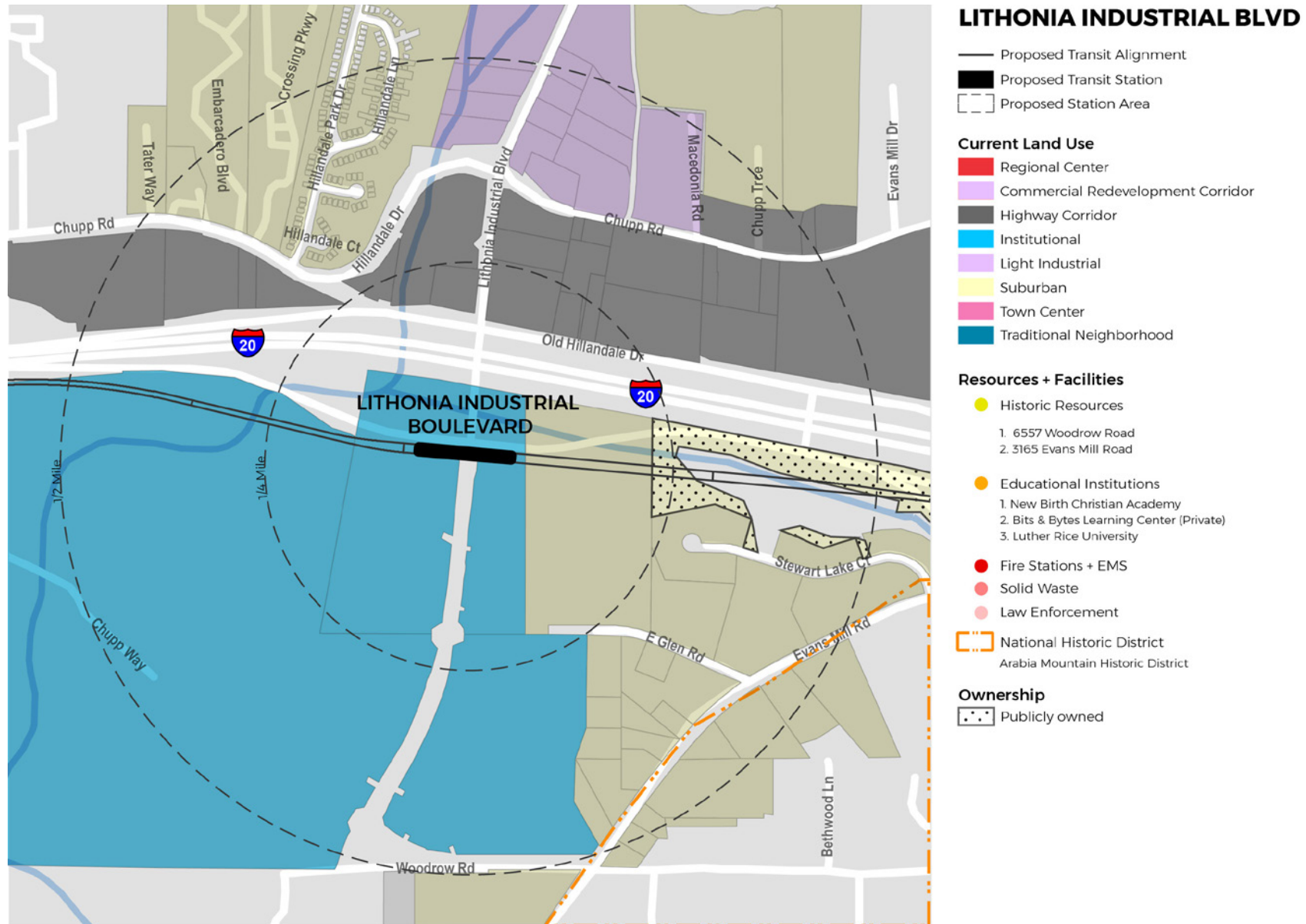
Source: DeKalb County GIS

residential, 33 percent of which is zoned as residential with medium lots. Areas along Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Chupp Road north of I-20 East are zoned as light industrial, which accounts for about 19 percent of the station area.

Apart from residential areas in north-western and south-eastern parts of the station area, most of the station area comes under Stonecrest Overlay Districts – Tier 2, Tier 4 and Mixed or Partial Tier. Tier 2 of Stonecrest Overlay District indicates a mid-rise mixed use zone (maximum height of 10 stories and FAR not to exceed 4, including FAR bonus) while Tier 4 of the overlay includes transitional mixed use zone (maximum height of 5 stories and FAR not to exceed 3, including FAR bonus). Northern parts of station area along I-20 are in Tier 2 of the overlay district. Parts of station area around the proposed station location are in Tier 4 or Mixed or Partial Tier.

### OWNERSHIP

All parcels within the Station Area are privately owned, with the exception of a parcel owned by the GDOT just to the south of I-20 west of Evans Mill Road.



**Figure 4-9:** Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Land Use and Community Resources

Source: DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal

## RESOURCES

The Station Area is home to three educational institutions. Bits and Bytes Learning Center and Luther Rice University both sit along Evans Mill Road, while the New Birth Christian Academy sits within the Church's campus. Additionally, the Station Area contains the following historic resources:

- Craftsman style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 6557 Woodrow Road. Constructed in 1939.
- Craftsman style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 3165 Evans Mill Road. Constructed in 1940.

The Station Area also includes a portion of a National Historic District. The Arabia Mountain Historic District is in the southeastern portion of the Station Area, to the west of Evans Mill Road. The district ensures the conservation and preservation of the area around Arabia Mountain including the greenspace, ecosystem, and historic buildings. The preserve is a resource for the community, providing recreational space, bike paths, and programming.

## 4.5.2 MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY

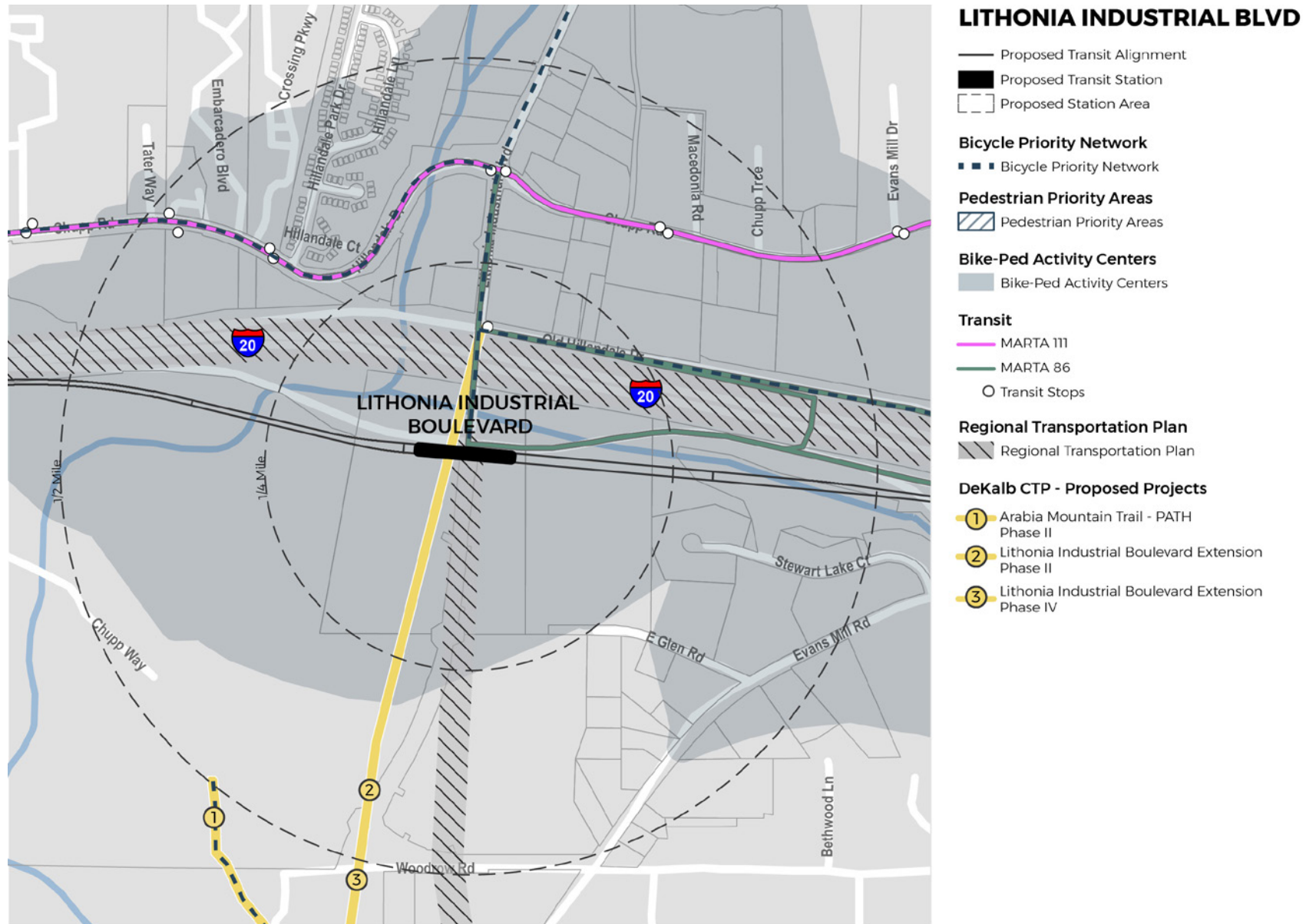
The proposed Lithonia Industrial Boulevard will be situated along the I-20 access road at the southern terminus of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard. To the south of the interstate, there is a limited roadway network due to large parcel and building sizes, in particular the New Birth Christian Academy. Smaller, local roads feed into Evans Mill Road which serves as the main north-south roadway and provides access across I-20. To the north, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard is the main roadway providing north-south access. Chupp road provides the main east-west connectivity across Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and serves as a collector for more local roads. Existing and planned multimodal connectivity within the station area is illustrated in Figure 4-10.

## TRANSIT

The Station Area contains the following transit routes:

- MARTA 86 - Fairington Rd/McAfee Road: This route operates between Kensington Station and Mall at Stonecrest. This route also serves Snapfinger Elementary School, DeKalb Medical Center at Hillandale, GRTA PNR lot at Panola Rd. This route operates every 20-25 minutes.
- MARTA 111 - Snapfinger Woods Dr/Stonecrest: Indian Creek to Stonecrest Mall. This route also serves DeKalb Medical Center, Alice Williams Towers. This route operates every 20-40 minutes depending on time of day.
- Station Area is covered by MARTA's paratransit service

MARTA 86 runs east-west along Chupp Road and Old Hallandale Road, connected by north-south access along Lithonia Industrial Boulevard. Marta 111 runs east-west along Chupp Road. The main roadways in the area including I-20, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Chupp road are all serviced,



**Figure 4-10:** Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station Area Multimodal Connectivity

Source: DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2014); DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal; MARTA

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

The Station Area contains limited resources for safe and connected bicycle and pedestrian access. Apart from sidewalks along portions of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, most major roads do not have sidewalks. While bicycles can use all non-interstate roads in the area, there are no separate bike lanes.

Much of the Station Area is specified as a Bike-Ped Activity Center by the ARC's UGPM. Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Chupp Road to the west of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard have been designated as a bicycle priority network. These designations represent a priority for future facilities and improvements, but do not currently have specific projects or plans in place.

## FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

The following transportation improvements are planned in the station area as a part of the RTP, and described in great detail in the Corridor Area Existing Conditions Chapter.

- I-20 East Managed Lanes: This project, in the long range plan, would construct one managed lane in each direction of travel on I-20 east of I-285
- Extend Lithonia Industrial Boulevard south of Hillandale Drive: The project was planned to add four 12-foot-wide lanes divided by a 20-foot raised grassed median from Hillandale Drive to Woodrow Road. Adding Sidewalk/trails on either side was also a part of this project. This project was completed in 2017.
- Extend Lithonia Industrial Boulevard south of Woodrow Road to Evans Mill Road: This is a long range, the project is expected to be completed sometime between 2024 and 2030. The proposed roadway would consist of four 12-foot-wide lanes divided by a 20-foot raised grassed median. The eastern side of the proposed roadway would have a 5-foot-wide sidewalk, while the western side would have a 10-foot-wide trail from Rock Springs Road to Woodrow Road. The proposed 10-foot-wide trail from Rock Springs Road to Woodrow Road would tie into to a proposed future Arabia Mountain PATH (multi-use) trail in the area, which would connect Turner Hill Road and Stonecrest Mall to the east with the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church to the west and would use several existing roads in the project area. As part of the proposed project, Evans Mill Road would be realigned from just south of its existing intersection with Rockview Way approximately 600 feet westward to a new T-intersection with the proposed Lithonia Industrial Boulevard extension. This realigned section of Evans Mill Road would consist of two travel lanes, one in each direction, and an exclusive left-turn lane onto the Lithonia Industrial Boulevard extension and 12-foot-wide shoulders, including 5-foot sidewalks and 30-inch curb and gutter



on both sides of the roadway. All existing driveway access along Evans Mill Road would be maintained.

Additionally, *DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan* identified the following recommendations and projects within the Station Area to address transportation needs and priorities for the county.

- Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Extension - Phase III (Hillandale Dr to Woodrow Rd): Included in ARC's TIP (DK-328A), this project extends 4-lanes of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard for .62 miles south of Hillandale Drive to Woodrow Road. Estimated at \$9.6M, this project is prioritized a Tier 1 project.
- Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Extension - Phase IV (Woodrow Rd to Evans Mill Rd): Included in ARC's TIP (DK-328B), this project extends 4 lanes of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard south for .57 miles from Woodrow Road to Evans Mill Road. Estimated at \$5M, this project is prioritized as a Tier 3 project.
- Arabia Mountain Trail - PATH - Phase II (Joel's Lake to Arabia Mt Nature Preserve/ Vaughters Farm): This project would expand the PATH Foundation trail system approximately 1.7 miles from Joel's Lake to Arabia Mountain Natural Preserve/Vaughters Farm. The project assumes a multiuse path, however, a detailed corridor study will be needed to determine recommended improvements. The trail is estimated at over \$2.6M and is prioritized as a Tier 3 project that will be funded when new revenues are generated.

### 4.5.3 PRIOR STUDIES, PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS, AND INVESTMENTS

*DeKalb County's 2035 Comprehensive Plan* recognizes most of the station area as Suburban in the future land use plan. Areas around natural resources such as Pole Bridge Creek are planned to be Conservation/Green Space areas, accounting for about 14 percent of the station area. Parts of station area north of I-20 are planned to have characteristics of a Highway Corridor. Highway Corridor includes uses such as mixed use, retail and commercial.

The *ARC's UGPM* recognizes parts of the area around Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station as a Developing or Established Suburb. Established Suburbs are generally areas of residential development that occurred after 1970 to around 1995 and Developing Suburbs are areas that were constructed from around 1995 to today. The UGPM also notes that area around Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station is already urbanized.

**Table 4-8:** Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station Area Future Land Use

FUTURE LAND USE	PERCENT SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
Conservation/Green Space	13.9%
Highway Corridor	16.3%
Institutional	12.4%
Suburban	57.4%

Source: *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*

## 4.6 MALL AT STONECREST

The proposed Mall at Stonecrest Station would be the last station along the I-20 extension, which would terminate at the Mall at Stonecrest. The Station Area is considered an employment center due to the Mall at Stonecrest and surrounding retail and commercial storefronts. Mall of Stonecrest opened in 2001 with total retail floor area of over a million square feet. Mall at Stonecrest has been reported to have some issues with its performance and debt. Recently, Sears announced that their outlet in the mall will close in early 2018. Large parcels of undeveloped and unoccupied land to the west of the Mall represent opportunities for future growth and development. The Station Area also contains residential areas consisting mostly of low-density, single family homes or apartment complexes. The station would serve the existing retail and residential in the area, as well as support potential new development opportunities in the Station Area.

### 4.6.1 STATION AREA CONTEXT

#### LAND USE

The Mall at Stonecrest Station Area, south of I-20, is in City of Stonecrest. Most of the Station Area north of I-20 is in unincorporated DeKalb County, but a small section of the Station Area north-west of the proposed station location is in City of Lithonia. According to the *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*, the Station Area is considered a regional center (85%). The Mall at Stonecrest occupies much of the Station Area to the south of I-20 and is a major employment and retail center in the region. The Mall, and its surrounding parking lots, are encircled and accessed by Mall Ring Road. Additional retail and commercial storefronts surround the mall to the east and south. To the west of the mall, there are a few additional commercial opportunities, including a Hilton Inn just south of I-20 and car dealerships that front Mall Parkway, however, much of the land to the north of Mall Parkway is largely undeveloped or vacant. Additionally, there is a residential community consisting of dense, multi-family apartments, Providence Apartments, that sits off Klondike Road.







To the north of I-20, the Station Area is classified a mix of Regional Center and Suburban. The area west of Cagle Street and north of Swift Street is made up of a low-density, single-family homes along local roads. Additional commercial buildings line Covington Highway including a U-haul dealer, a self-storage unit, car rental companies, and a gas station. Station area land use and community resources can be found in Figure 4-11.

## ZONING

The Regional Center area of the Station Area contains both residential and commercially zoned parcels. Overall, over 67% of the Station Area is zoned as local or general commercial, with the remaining parcels mostly zoned as residential. The unoccupied and undeveloped land to the south of I-20 is zoned for C-1 local commercial.

**Table 4-4:** Mall at Stonecrest Station Area Zoning

ZONING	DESCRIPTION	PERCENT SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
C-1	Local Commercial	66.2%
C-2	General Commercial	0.9%
M	Light Industrial	0.3%
MR-1	Medium Density Residential - 1	8.5%
MR-2	Medium Density Residential - 2	0.1%
R-100	Residential Medium Lot	1.0%
R-60	Residential Small Lot	3.3%
R-75	Residential Medium Lot	15.1%
R-85	Residential Medium Lot	4.5%
RE	Residential Estate	0.2%

Source: DeKalb County GIS

Most of the station area, apart from a suburban area in north-east section of the Station Area, is covered by the Stonecrest Overlay District. Mall at Stonecrest and areas along I-20 East south of the interstate are in Tier I of the overlay district. Areas farther from the Mall at Stonecrest are in Tiers II and III of the overlay district. Tier I of the Stonecrest Overlay District suggests a high-rise mixed use zone (no specific limit on number of stories and FAR not to exceed 6, including FAR bonus). Tier II of Stonecrest Overlay District indicates a mid-rise mixed use zone (maximum height of 10 stories and FAR not to exceed 4, including FAR bonus) while Tier III of the overlay includes low-rise mixed use zone (maximum height of 3 stories and FAR not to exceed 2, including FAR bonus).

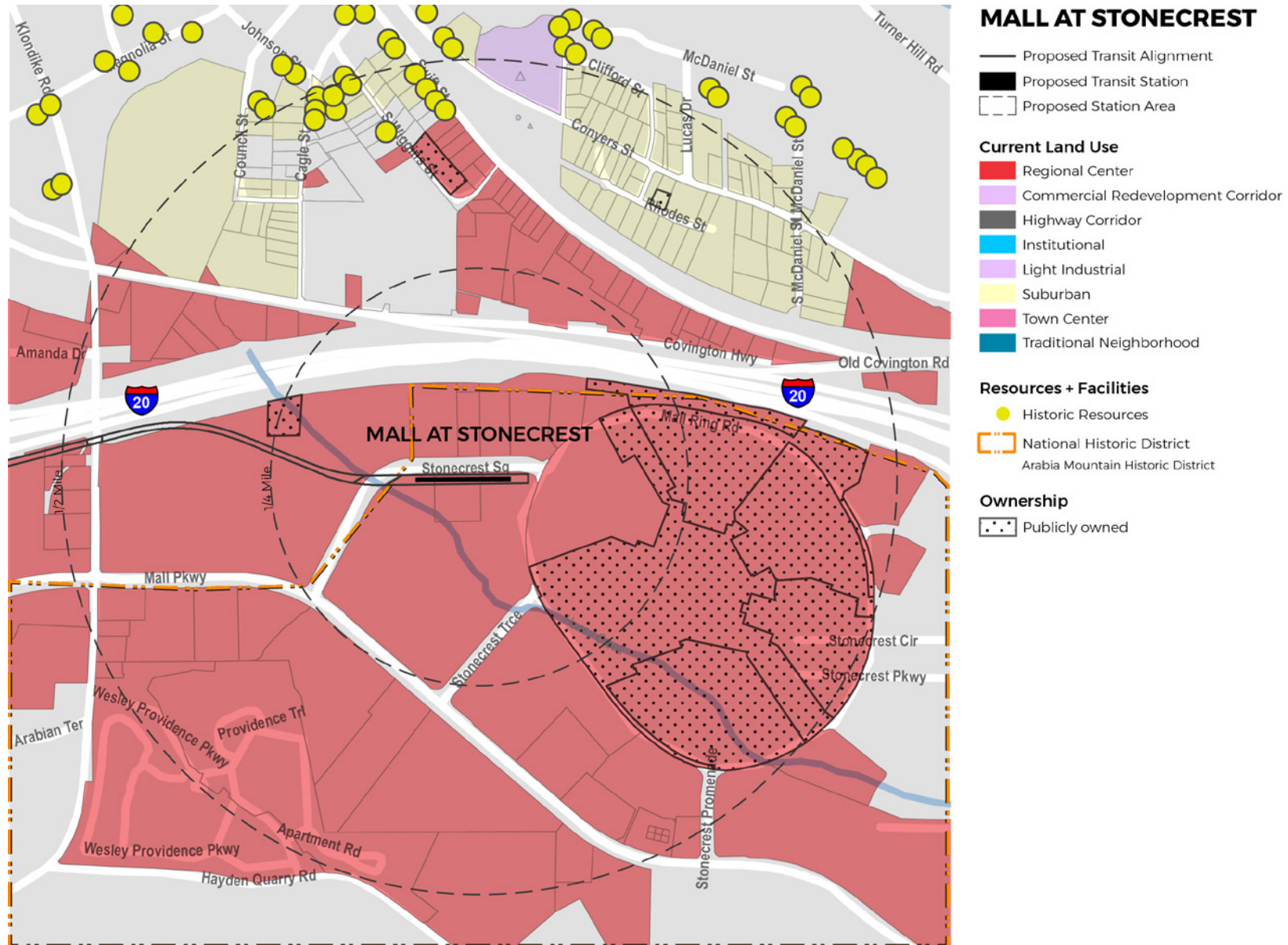
## OWNERSHIP

Most of the parcels within the Station Area are privately owned. DeKalb County owns some additional parcels including undeveloped properties on Rhodes Street and a parcel fronting I-20 to the south, as well as a vacant residential building on S. Wiggins Street. Additionally, the Mall at Stonecrest and surrounding parking lots are owned by the Development Authority of DeKalb.

## RESOURCES

Most of the Station Area to the south of I-20 is classified as the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area and Arabia Mountain Historic District. These districts ensure the conservation and preservation of the area around Arabia Mountain including the greenspace, ecosystem, and historic buildings. The preserve is a resource for the community, providing recreational space, bike paths, and programming. Additionally, the northern portion of the Station Area, including Covington Highway, Conyers Street, Swift Street, Cagle Street, and Johnson Street, contains numerous buildings and homes recognized at the city and state level for their historic character. Following is a list of historic resources and markers around the station area:





**Figure 4-11:** Mall at Stonecrest Land Use and Community Resources

Source: DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal

- Craftsman style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 6557 Woodrow Road. Constructed in 1939.
- Craftsman style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 3165 Evans Mill Road. Constructed in 1940.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7693 Covington Highway. Constructed in 1944.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2726 Council Street. Constructed in 1930.
- Craftsman style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2718 Cagle Street. Constructed in 1920.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7183 Swift Street. Constructed in 1900.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7072 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1920.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7522 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1920.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7516 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1920.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7600 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1920.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7636 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1904.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7244 North McDaniel Street. Constructed in 1920.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7618 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1920.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7688 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1920.
- Store - specialty store/shop at 7111 Swift Street. Constructed in 1921.

- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7133 Swift Street. Constructed in 1890.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7139 Swift Street. Constructed in 1890.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7155 Swift Street. Constructed in 1890.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7163 Swift Street. Constructed in 1890.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7171 Swift Street. Constructed in 1890.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7177 Swift Street. Constructed in 1890.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2635 Cagle Street. Constructed in 1890.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2661 Wiggins Street. Constructed in 1910.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2667 Wiggins Street. Constructed in 1910.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2695 Wiggins Street. Constructed in 1930.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2674 Cagle Street. Constructed in 1910.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2686 Cagle Street. Constructed in 1910.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2690 Cagle Street. Constructed in 1910.
- Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2689 Johnson Street. Constructed in 1890.
- Folk Victorian style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2671 Johnson Street. Constructed in 1890.

- o Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2637 Johnson Street. Constructed in 1890.
- o Queen Anne style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2644 Johnson Street. Constructed in 1890.
- o Neoclassical Revival Style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2644 Johnson Street. Constructed in 1890.
- o Single dwelling (single living unit) at 2633 Council Street. Constructed in 1900.
- o Single dwelling (single living unit) at 6901 Magnolia Street. Constructed in 1890.
- o Single dwelling (single living unit) at 6884 Magnolia Street. Constructed in 1890.
- o Single dwelling (single living unit) at 6865 Magnolia Street. Constructed in 1930.
- o Single dwelling (single living unit) at 6850 Magnolia Street. Constructed in 1920.
- o Single dwelling (single living unit) at 6863 Robinson Street. Constructed in 1890.
- o Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7514 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1890.
- o Craftsman style Single dwelling (single living unit) at 7526 Conyers Street. Constructed in 1890.
- o Religious Facility at 2687 Klondike Road. Constructed in 1929.

## 4.6.2 MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY

The proposed Mall at Stonecrest station will be situated just east of and connecting to the Mall at Stonecrest south of I-20. South of I-20, Mall Parkway connects to Evans Mill Road in the west and Turner Hill Road in the east. Hayden Quarry Drive runs roughly parallel to Mall Parkway between these two arterials south of the station area. Existing and planned multimodal connectivity within the station area is illustrated in Figure 4-12.

### TRANSIT

The Station Area contains the following transit routes:

- o MARTA 86 - Fairington Rd/McAfee Road: This route operates between Kensington Station and Mall at Stonecrest. This route also serves Snapfinger Elementary School, DeKalb Medical Center at Hillandale, GRTA PNR lot at Panola Rd. This route operates every 20-25 minutes.
- o MARTA 111 - Snapfinger Woods Dr/Stonecrest: Indian Creek to Stonecrest Mall. This route also serves DeKalb Medical Center, Alice Williams Towers. This route operates every 20-40 minutes depending on time of day.
- o MARTA 116 - Redan Road/Stonecrest: This route operates between Indian Creek Station and Mall at Stonecrest, every 15 to 30 minutes depending on time of day. This Route also serves Redan Village, Crow's Crossing, Hairston Crossing Branch Public Library, Redan high School, and East DeKalb Health Center.
- o Station Area is covered by MARTA's paratransit service

MARTA 86, MARTA 111, and MARTA 116 all run east-west along Mall Parkway and provide access to the Mall at Stonecrest. However, north-south transit options are limited. The Station Area is connected with the nearest major transit stations such as Indian Creek and Kensington, however, those stations are more than 10 miles away from the Mall at Stonecrest station area and absence of premium transit service limits access to regional business centers.

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

The Station Area contains limited resources for safe pedestrian and cyclist access and connectivity. Klondike Road provides north-south connectivity to pedestrians and bicycles and the Arabia Mountain Trail connects the Mall at Stonecrest with the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area. However, I-20 runs through the center of the Station Area and limits north-south access. Additionally, the Mall at Stonecrest and surrounding parking lots encourage vehicular access and lacks bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Overall, while there is some local sidewalk connectivity, the scale of development and parking priority in the Station Area provide a challenge in making this area truly walkable.

Moving forward, much of the Station Area is specified as a Bike-Ped Activity Center by the ARC UGPM. Mall Parkway, Klondike Road, and Covington Highway have been designated as a bicycle priority network. These designations, however, represent a priority for future facilities and improvements and do not currently have specific projects or plans in place.

## FUTURE PLANS AND PROJECTS

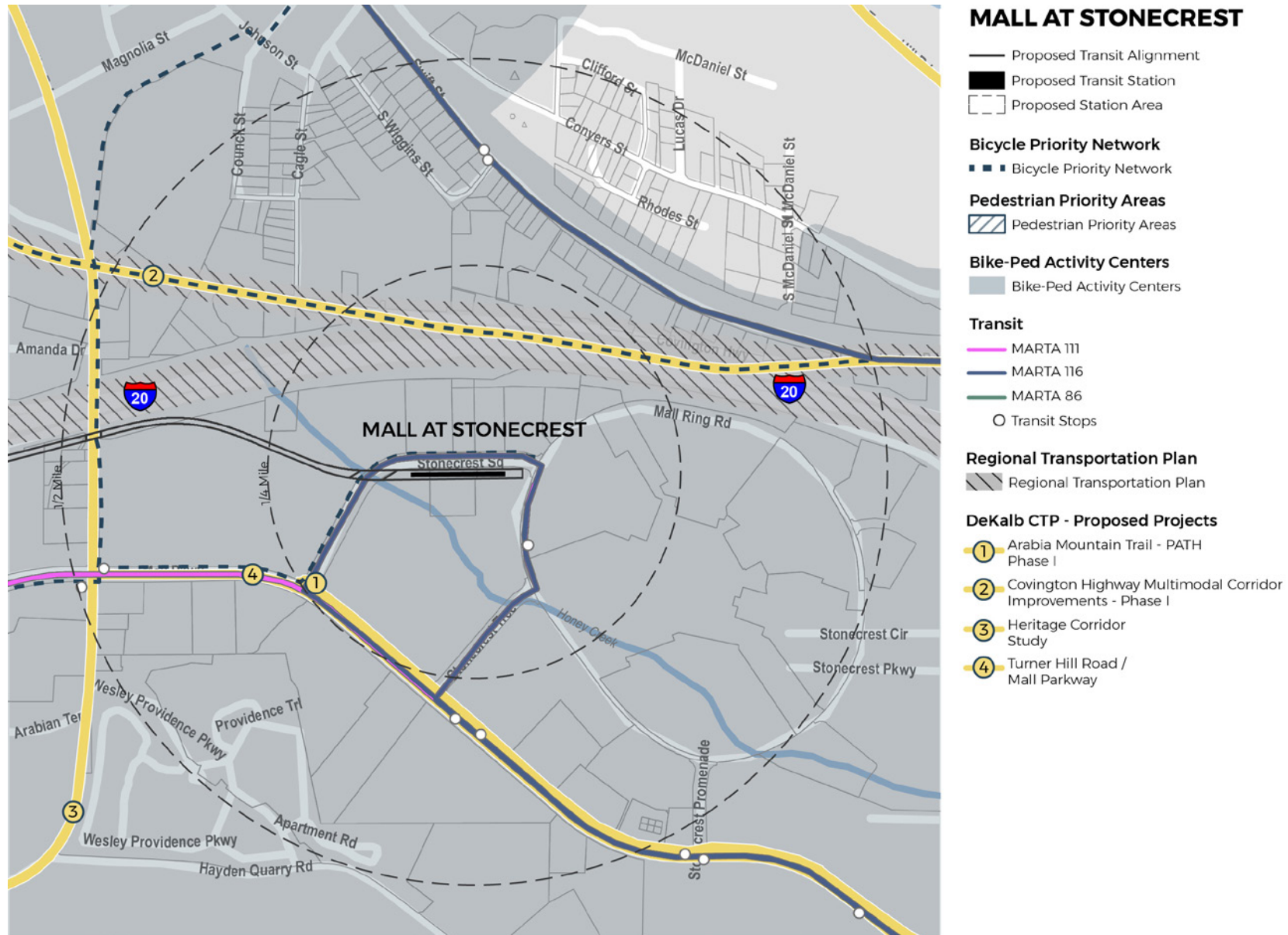
The following transportation improvements are planned in the station area as a part of the RTP, and described in greater detail in the Corridor Area Existing Conditions Report:

- I-20 East Managed Lanes: This project, in the long range plan, would construct one managed lane in each direction of travel on I-20 east of I-285
- Old Covington Highway Widening: This project would widen the existing Old Covington highway from 2 lanes to 4 lanes between Evans Mill Road and Sigman Road. This project is included in the long-range plan and expected to be constructed between 2024 and 2030.

Additionally, *DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan* identified the following recommendations and projects within the Station Area to address transportation needs and priorities for the county.

- Heritage Corridor Study: This multimodal corridor study will consider roadway, bike, and pedestrian improvements to connect Stone Mountain and Lithonia downtowns. The approximately 12 mile study is prioritized a Tier 1 project.
- Covington Highway Multimodal Corridor Improvements - Phase I (Evans Mill Rd to Sigman Rd): The improvements will widen the roadway from 2 to 4 lanes including a center turn lane from Evans Mill Rd in DeKalb County to Sigman Rd in Rockdale County with a median treatment with bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Running approximately 2.65 miles, the project is estimated at approximately \$9M and prioritized a Tier 1 project. The project is also featured in ARC's long range plan (DK-030) and is expected to be completed between 2024-2030.





**Figure 4-12:** Mall at Stonecrest Station Area Multimodal Connectivity

Source: DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2014); DeKalb County GIS; ARC Open Data Portal; MARTA

- Turner Hill Road/Mall Parkway ATMS (Klondike Rd to Rock Chapel Rd/ Union Grove Rd): This project will Install fiber optic interconnect, convert signals to Ethernet, and install fiber optic link to library. Running 3.55 miles, the project is prioritized in Tier 2B.
- Arabia Mountain Trail - PATH - Phase I (Klondike Rd to Stonecrest Sq): The project will expand the PATH Foundation trail system approximately 5 miles from Kondike Road to Stonecrest Square. The project assumes a multiuse path, however, a detailed corridor study will be needed to determine recommended improvements. The trail is estimated at over \$6.6M and is prioritized a Tier 3 project that will be funded when new revenues are generated.

### 4.6.3 PRIOR STUDIES, PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS, AND INVESTMENTS

*DeKalb County's 2035 Comprehensive Plan* indicates that most of the station area is planned to remain a Regional Activity Center. Regional Activity Center is intended to encourage concentration of regional serving activities to a centralized location that allow for a variety of uses such as regional commercial, office, employment areas, high density residential and higher-education facilities. The concentration of various land uses with high intensity is intended to result in reducing automobile travel, promoting walkability and increased transit usage. Northern parts of the Station Area, north of I-20, are planned to be suburban. Area north of I-20 will also have small areas of agricultural land use, accounting for about 3.5 percent of the station area. Area around natural resources such as Honey Creek, a major perennial stream, is planned to be Conservation/Greenspace.

**Table 4-9:** Mall at Stonecrest Station Area Future Land Use

FUTURE LAND USE	PERCENT SHARE WITHIN ½ MILE
Agriculture Area	3.5%
Conservation/Greenspace Area	4.1%
Regional Activity Center	78.4%
Suburban	14.1%

Source: *DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan*

The following studies have been completed for area near Mall at Stonecrest Station:

- UGPM: The UGPM notes that area near Mall at Stonecrest is a Community Activity Center from regional perspective. Community Activity Centers are similar to Regional Centers, but are smaller in scale. These centers attract people from surrounding communities for mix of uses such as employment, Retail and Entertainment. The UGPM also notes that these centers need good connections with regional transportation network and transit service. The UGPM recognizes parts of the area around Mall at Stonecrest Station as a Developing Suburb. Developing Suburbs are areas that were constructed from around 1995 to today. The UGPM also notes that area around Mall at Stonecrest Station is already urbanized.

An LCI study was completed for Mall at Stonecrest Station Area in 2013. The following table summarizes recommendations from the LCI study:

**Table 4-10:** Summary Of The Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Mall at Stonecrest Study Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS	NOTES
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop 3 character areas/Nodes:</li> <li>Stonecrest Lifestyle Center Entertainment Node,</li> <li>Suburban Village Node at Turner Hill Rd and Rockland Rd,</li> <li>Rural Historic Village Node at Pluckett Rd and Rockland Rd</li> </ul>
Stonecrest Lifestyle Center Entertainment Node timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2017: Lifestyle Center and Park &amp; Ride Trail Head;</li> <li>2022: Mixed-use adjacent to Lifestyle Center and Amphitheater;</li> <li>2027: Conference Center; Corporate Office, Multi-cultural Community Center, Theater and Marketplace;</li> <li>2032: Relocate Sports Fields, expand Mixed-use and add Corporate office;</li> <li>2037: Corporate Office, MARTA Plaza with Mixed-use and Shared Parking Deck;</li> <li>2042: Magnet performing Arts High School and Residential Development</li> </ul>
Zoning - Overlay District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update overlay districts to align density with market to accelerate development (a concern that higher density might inflate property values);</li> <li>Greenspace preservation and transfer of development rights;</li> <li>Lot size limits in tier V to support Cluster/Village Development;</li> <li>Consider allowing Outdoor Amusement and Recreation uses in Tier I/II;</li> <li>Consider Single family detached housing in Tier III;</li> <li>Street connectivity requirements to promote walkable, pedestrian friendly environments</li> </ul>
Zoning - Design Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop guidelines for character areas/Nodes;</li> <li>Consider improving signage regulations as per inputs from business owners;</li> <li>Update requirements regarding building finishes and landscaping to better suit businesses</li> </ul>
Future Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Station design to suit surrounding development;</li> <li>Improve street network around station to create a well-connected system for all modes of transportation;</li> <li>Break-up superblock south of Hayden Quarry Rd;</li> <li>Expand Trail System;</li> <li>Streetscape improvement;</li> <li>Turner Hill Bridge Improvements</li> </ul>

RECOMMENDATIONS	NOTES
Green Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Conservation area buffering the river south of Hayden Quarry Rd;</li> <li>○ Promote and develop plan for green branding of the area;</li> <li>○ Trail expansion and access;</li> <li>○ Compact village nodal development;</li> <li>○ Energy and energy conservation;</li> <li>○ Low Impact Development;</li> <li>○ Promote Green Programs;</li> <li>○ Orient buildings for energy efficiency</li> </ul>
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Redevelop vacant and underutilized properties near mall into a mixed-use community, focused on a lifestyle center;</li> <li>○ Develop a trail head/park and ride;</li> <li>○ National Sports Complex;</li> <li>○ Regional Conference Center and Amphitheater;</li> <li>○ Develop a CID;</li> <li>○ Implement a TAD;</li> <li>○ Create an Economic, Marketing and Branding campaign;</li> <li>○ Allow for manufacturing and light industrial uses along I-20</li> </ul>

Source: Stonecrest LCI Plan (2013)



# 5 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

## 5.1 METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS CRITERIA

The analysis in this chapter summarizes the urban design character of each station area, highlights issues or obstacles that could limit the capacity for future development, and identifies the opportunities that could contribute to the success of TOD at the stations.

The urban design analysis synthesizes the issues and opportunities and looks at both public and private elements that will affect the physical character and potential of new TOD investments. Public elements include street character, view corridors, and public space. Elements that establish or enhance the identity of the station area, including landmarks and gateways, are considered in the urban design analysis. Private elements considered include parking, development patterns, and development character such as buildings, open space and landscape treatments. Current land uses, and the condition of existing properties are also considered.

Key findings are organized into Issues and Opportunities and presented through the following three lenses:

- Land use
- Mobility and circulation
- Policy and regulation

### LAND USE

The analysis of land use looks at existing development patterns and land uses to identify key parcels that have the potential to be redeveloped as TOD and/or have placemaking potential. Urban design resources that could be capitalized on to spur or anchor redevelopment, such as activity centers, landmarks, and gateway features, are also identified to provide a focus for future development, public space, and view corridors.

For each station area, key parcels that meet the criteria for TOD are identified as TOD opportunity sites. These parcels are categorized into the following three types based on each station area's respective potential to be redeveloped as TOD:

- Targeted Redevelopment Site – parcels that are at key locations in the station area and / or have been identified by the public stakeholders
- Potential TOD Site – existing developments with auto-oriented layouts, under-performing sites or vacant parcels
- Area under the Influence of TOD – sites located at the edge of the half-mile radius (10-minute walk distance) from the station, and / or are likely to gradually transform into TOD once adjacent sites are redeveloped

## MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

Mobility and circulation assessments highlight issues and opportunities associated with access including major street connections, pedestrian routes and bicycle mobility. Physical barriers that are difficult to cross, such as highway and railroads, are identified to understand challenges to providing access and connectivity.

## POLICY AND REGULATION

The policy and regulation assessment outlines relevant zoning and land use policies that constrain or encourage dense, mixed-use developments adjacent to the stations that influence the quantity and quality of future development.

## CORRIDOR AND STATION AREA ANALYSES

The issues, opportunities and urban design analysis are discussed at two scales. The corridor analysis summarizes high-level, overarching and corridor-wide issues and opportunities that will influence TOD strategies. It also considers how TOD functions across the corridor and how each station can influence the others so that they work together to support an overall vision that increases transit ridership and promotes economic growth. While some land use, urban design, mobility, and circulation issues are similar across multiple station areas, the stations area analysis details specific takeaways that inform the station TOD typology and redevelopment theme unique to each station area. All assessments, those that are similar across the corridor, and those unique to a station area, are included in the station area analysis and were used to develop a strategy tailored to each station.



**Figure 5-1:** Corridor Map

Source: WSP

## 5.2 CORRIDOR ANALYSIS

The Covington Highway, Wesley Chapel Road, and Panola Road station areas are similar in character in that they are each located directly adjacent to a full highway interchange with either I-285 or I-20. This condition has influenced each station areas' pre-existing development and land use patterns, resulting in a mix of small parcel retail, neighborhood strip mall centers and big box retailers. Indian Creek, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Mall at Stonecrest station areas each have unique features or uses that differentiate them in some aspect.

These proposed stations are located in the right of way of I-285 or I-20 and are within a half-mile distance from a highway interchange. The highways are physical and visual barriers which divide each station area. There are challenges in connecting across the highways despite potential development sites on either side. Due to limited access to the station, TOD may be preferable only on the side of the highway where the station is located. Where destinations or parcels with significant development potential are located on the opposite side of the highway from the station, a pedestrian overpass may be appropriate.

Across the corridor, the pattern of development and character of streets are car-centric, a legacy of when the area was developed and from a lack of transit. Low-rise retail or industrial buildings do not engage the street and are surrounded by parking. People tend to favor cars instead of walking or biking because of the lack of pedestrian and / or bicycle-friendly infrastructure, such as crosswalks, bike lanes, and street trees. For TOD to succeed, and to extend the reach of transit, the environment must be more conducive to non-motorized forms of mobility that will require an increased investment in pedestrian and bicycle networks.

The station areas generally lack significant, publicly accessible parks or open space. However, many station areas possess natural areas, particularly along water courses, that, if publicly accessible, could provide needed public open space. Parks and open space are an important component of TOD as they provide balance for denser development. On a corridor-wide scale, newly accessible open spaces could be linked as part of a connected series of parks and natural amenities for the public. This linked network could also provide alternative bicycle and pedestrian paths to complement a high-capacity transit investment.

Existing commercial development is concentrated around highway interchanges. The commercial clusters are generally coincident with the station areas. The typical land use pattern in the station areas consist of commercial (primarily retail), light-industrial uses, and some multi-family residential adjacent to the interchange. Outside this area medium to low-density single-family residential uses are typical with some multi-family and limited commercial uses at the peripheries. There is usually little transition between the commercial or industrial land use and single-family residential.

Across the corridor, this land use pattern has a clearly defined commercial core at each of the station areas. These commercial/retail nodes provide an opportunity to increase the mix of uses and to diversify the station areas beyond their commercial and retail focus with additional office and residential uses. This can be done without impacting adjacent single-family neighborhoods.

Specific issues and opportunities common at station areas across the corridor are highlighted below.

## ISSUES

### LAND USE

- Existing developments throughout the corridor are low-density and do not support transit. Commercial developments in the station area are typically one story buildings with low site coverage. Most residential developments are under four stories.
- Surface parking lots take up most of the existing development sites and create large areas of impervious surface.
- There is a lack of a sense of place. There are few parks, open space, and recreational facilities.
- Existing streets lack streetscape elements.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- I-20 and I-285 divide the station areas and create physical and visual barriers impacting connectivity within the station areas.
- There is a lack of well-connected street grids to provide redundancy. Existing blocks are large with few intersecting local streets dividing the block, limiting pedestrian and bicycle mobility and encouraging continued vehicular use.
- Automobile-oriented street design encourages fast-moving traffic and discourages pedestrian and bicycle activities.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Each of the overlay districts generally seek to make the regulatory environment more transit-supportive; however, any regulation – including uses, densities, or parking ratios -- not specifically addressed in the overlay defers to the existing underlying zoning, which may not be fully supportive of TOD. As an example, the Kensington-Memorial Drive Overlay District offers specific challenges to TOD relative to mixing-uses due to the allowable permitted uses within the M-1 zone. The M-1 zone allows multi-family only within a mixed-use development; but does not allow retail (commercial) uses. While existing zoning generally supports the principles of TOD, attention must be given to areas in overlay districts where control defers to the underlying zoning.
- Land development requirements (within Chapter 14 – Land Development in the Code of Ordinances) adjacent to many stations areas will include regulations to minimize grading changes, reduce soil erosion and increase sedimentation control, protect trees, manage stormwater, control water quality, and recharge groundwater.

### ***Each station area in the I-20 corridor is included within a Zoning Overlay District, as follows:***

- *Indian Creek and Covington Gateway stations are included within the Kensington-Memorial Drive Overlay District*
- *Wesley Chapel Road and Panola Road stations are included within the Interstate-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District*
- *Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Mall at Stonecrest stations are included within the Stonecrest Area Overlay District*



## OPPORTUNITIES

### LAND USE

- Existing low performance parcels and underutilized uses along the corridor are susceptible to change and could accommodate new development.
- Large parcels could support new development at increased densities that could increase ridership for a high-capacity transit investment.
- Surface parking lots around existing commercial and retail represent an opportunity for future development once the demand for parking is reduced due to a shift in travel behavior.
- Major institutions in the station areas could potentially anchor TOD. These anchors, such as Kaiser Permanente Panola Medical Center and New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, provide jobs and/or services and already serve as regional destinations and attractions to draw people to the area.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- A high-capacity transit investment would connect the corridor to the current MARTA heavy-rail system. This will greatly enhance mobility in the half-mile station area and support denser development adjacent to the stations.
- I-285 and I-20 highways provide additional mobility options to supplement transit services.
- Highway rights-of-way accommodate proposed rail tracks and stations with minimal additional land to be acquired for the stations.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Generally, all overlay zoning districts seek to increase density, encourage mixed-uses, and reduce off-street parking ratios to ensure new development is transit-supportive, including more site design and development controls that increase the walkability of streets and public spaces.
- Most issues arise when the overlay districts defer regulations to the underlying zoning. The character of the station area should tie to the intended purposes of the overlay zoning district.
- Most overlay districts offer density bonuses and reductions in off-street parking by sharing or mixing uses, which will encourage TOD by reducing the burden of providing parking for development.
- Portions of four of the six station areas (including Indian Creek, Wesley Chapel, Panola Road, and Lithonia Industrial Blvd Stations) are identified as areas within Opportunity Zones, as defined by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). This program identification qualifies new or existing businesses within those areas for the State's job tax credit when they create two or more jobs as part of a redevelopment or revitalization effort. Overall coordination of the land use strategies with this incentive program will ensure access to the tax credits and expand opportunities for economic development.

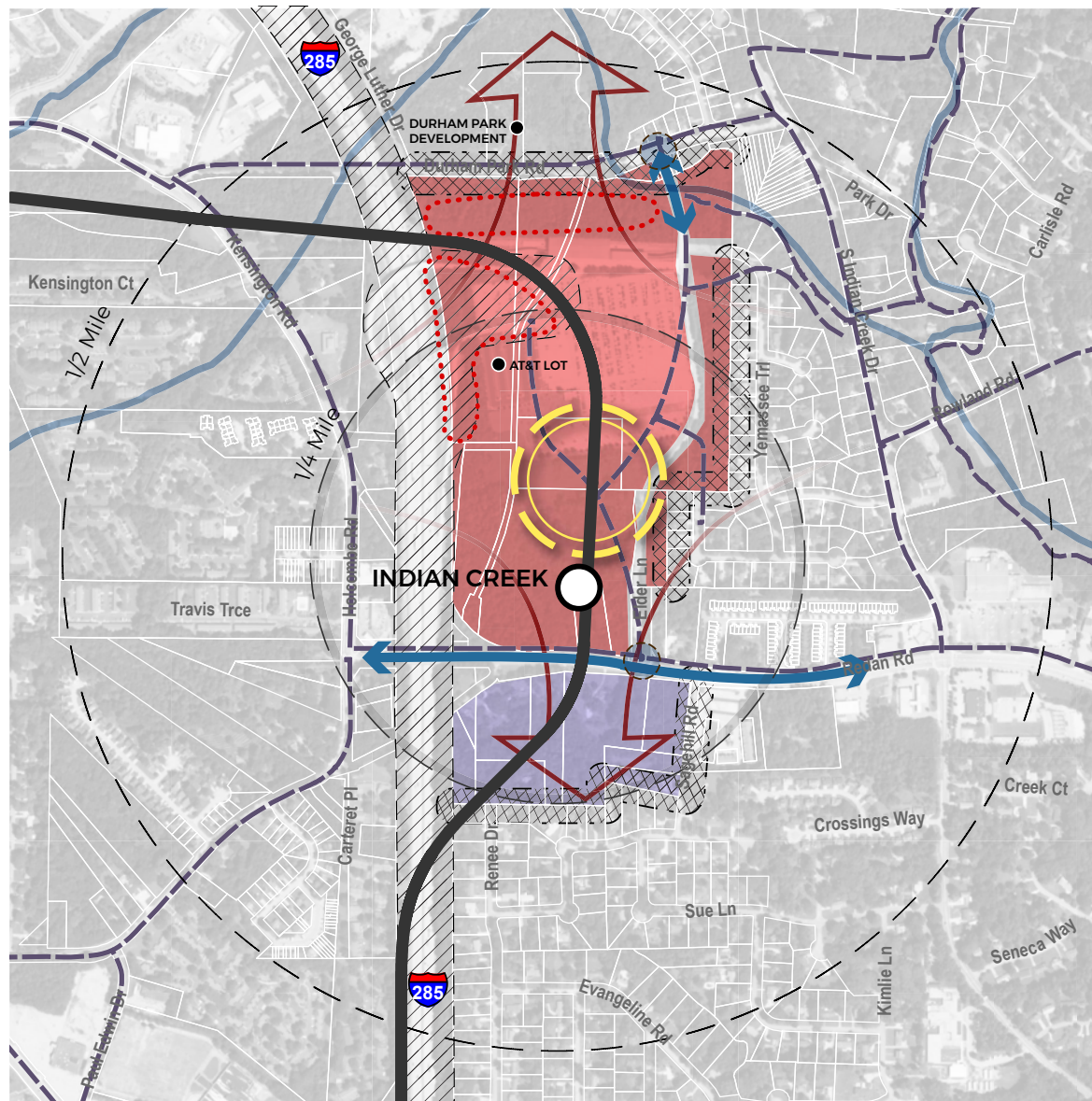
## 5.3 STATION AREA ANALYSIS

### 5.3.1 INDIAN CREEK STATION

Indian Creek Station, the current end-of-line station, is primarily surrounded by a Park-n-Ride lot and undeveloped parcels. The station area is connected to I-285 through a half interchange but is not easily accessible from surrounding homes. The existing station was envisioned as a Park-n-Ride when it was first built in 1993. The station's current design, including the 2,000-car parking lot, emphasizes regional access over local access to the station by encouraging vehicular access and hindering pedestrian and bicycle activities within the station with limited connections to the local community. The densely wooded area surrounding the existing station area and Park-n-Ride lot creates visual and physical barriers that buffer and separate the station area from surrounding neighborhoods. Outside the immediate area around the station, the neighborhood quickly turns into residential areas with low-density single family homes east and north of the station and new multi-family housing being developed north of the station.

The existing Indian Creek Station serves around 5,500 users a day. As the existing terminus on MARTA's Blue Line, Indian Creek Station is known to current riders and the larger community. The existing ridership base provides the opportunity to establish activities and programming beyond the existing Park-n-Ride to create new, safe, community amenities that will serve existing users and attract new ridership. With little existing development context to build on, this station provides an opportunity to create a new community. The proposed station reconstruction along the MARTA HRT extension could be better integrated into the community and connected to its surroundings. The vacant and undeveloped parcels that surround the proposed station location provide an opportunity to create a new pedestrian scaled street network and mixed-use development that will create a new community established around transit and improve access to the station from nearby neighborhoods.

*Existing zoning districts for the area primarily includes MR-1: Medium-Density Residential District, OI: Office / Institutional District, and R-75: Residential Medium Lot-75 District; as well as, the Tier III: Indian Creek Wellness Community in the Kensington-Memorial Drive Overlay District.*



## INDIAN CREEK

- Proposed Transit Alignment
- Proposed Transit Station
- Targeted Development Site
- Area under the Influence of TOD
- ▨ Transition to Lower Density
- ▨ Physical Barrier
- ⋯ Area with Physical Constraints
- Potential Center for Development
- ↔ Key Access
- Key Intersection
- TOD Influence
- Wetlands
- Potential Green Corridor
- Proposed Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Roadway Projects

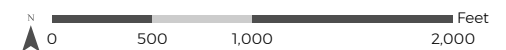


Figure 5-2: Indian Creek Issues and Opportunities

## ISSUES

### LAND USE

- Most of the quarter-mile (a five-minute walk) area around Indian Creek Station currently consists of parking use and open space. There is limited existing context to build on.
- New development will need to transition to existing single-family residential neighborhoods around the station.
- Retail and commercial uses are limited along Redan Road and are typically fronted with parking lots, encouraging automobile usage and creating a challenging walking environment for pedestrians.
- The existing Park-n-Ride can be reconfigured to accommodate TOD but will still need to accommodate a number of spaces for commuters.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- I-285 is a major physical and visual barrier that restricts east-west access and will limit redevelopment potential for sites west of the highway.
- The location of the existing I-285 access ramps will impact the redevelopment of adjacent parcels. Existing infrastructure, such as the existing station, tracks, and I-285 ramps, need to be considered for site preparation and phasing.
- The I-285 interchange only provides southbound on-ramp and northbound off-ramp connections, impeding access to the station and connections to I-285.
- There is a lack of safe, direct, and convenient pedestrian and bike access to the existing and proposed stations, especially along Elder Lane which serves as the main access point to the existing station.
- The existing parking lots surrounding the station area raise security and safety concerns for the community.

- Pedestrian improvements could provide enhanced access to the station at the intersections of Elder Lane at Redan Road and Durham Park Road.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- The Tier III: Indian Creek Wellness Community in the Kensington-Memorial Drive Overlay District regulates properties. While generally transit-supportive; many regulations defer to the underlying zoning districts which may not necessarily support TOD goals. This may lead to the following potential issues:
  - Overlay district does not allow multi-family residential use unless part of a mixed-use development, and some underlying zoning districts do not permit retail (commercial) uses as a principle use.
  - Permitted uses in some underlying zoning districts do not allow denser multi-family and high rise residential uses.
  - Parking ratios in underlying zoning districts have high maximums and minimums.
- Adjacency to Indian Creek will require that new development meet Chapter 14 – Land Development Regulations to minimize grading changes, reduce soil erosion and increase sedimentation control, protect trees, manage stormwater, control water quality, and recharge groundwater.
- Existing wetlands may be subject to wetland regulations, potentially limiting the capacity of development, including considerations for floodplain management relative to both Indian Creek and Indian Creek Tributary B.



## OPPORTUNITIES

### LAND USE

- Large tracts of undeveloped and publicly-owned land adjacent to the proposed station, including the existing station Park-n-Ride lot, provide opportunities for large-scale new development and the potential for joint development.
- Recent multi-family development north of Durham Park Road could support and connect to the future station and surrounding TOD.
- The existing station parking lot and undeveloped land to the south could be built out with higher density and be established as a focal point for future TOD.
- Indian Creek is a continuous natural corridor that could serve as a future amenity or green corridor for the neighborhood.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- Bus lines serving the existing station could continue to provide intermodal transfers to the new station to expand transit.
- Redan Road could be established as a major east-west corridor, connecting existing residential, and future potential development to the station, as well as to areas across I-285.
- Elder Road could be established as a key north-south corridor, providing additional access to the proposed station and surrounding development, and connecting with Redan Road and Durham Park Road across I-285.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- The Tier III: Indian Creek Wellness Community in the Kensington-Memorial Drive Overlay District is generally transit-supportive and intended to develop multi-modal TOD that integrates physical activity

with trails to parks and open spaces, with mixed-use, residential, and senior facilities.

- Opportunities within the Overlay District may include:
  - Heights can exceed six stories with a special use permit.
  - Mixing-of-uses is allowed within the underlying zoning.
  - Permits are prohibited for many auto-centric and less transit-supportive land uses.
  - Site design requirements have maximum setbacks, rather than minimums.
  - Development standards generally support better site layout and parking placement.
  - Street design is required to adhere to Complete Streets Policy.
  - A variety of density bonuses are available within a quarter-mile of a MARTA station.
- Properties located just to the north of Durham Park Road fall within the MU-4 zoning district, which includes transit-supportive use-mix and density requirements.
- Underlying zoning of some sites could be reconsidered to better reflect transit-supportive use-mix and density requirements.
- Majority of the station area falls within an Opportunity Zone, as defined by the Georgia DCA, which qualifies new or existing businesses within those areas for the State's job tax credit when they create two or more jobs as part of a redevelopment or revitalization effort. Ensuring that land use strategies align with the program are an opportunity to unlock this additional incentive for economic development.
- The projects proposed in the 2014 DeKalb County Transportation Plan support and enhance the redevelopment of this station area. The plan proposes projects that will enhance connectivity and promote future TOD including the Indian Creek MARTA Station Trails, Redan Road Multimodal Corridor Improvements, and Covington Trails.

### 5.3.2 COVINGTON HIGHWAY STATION

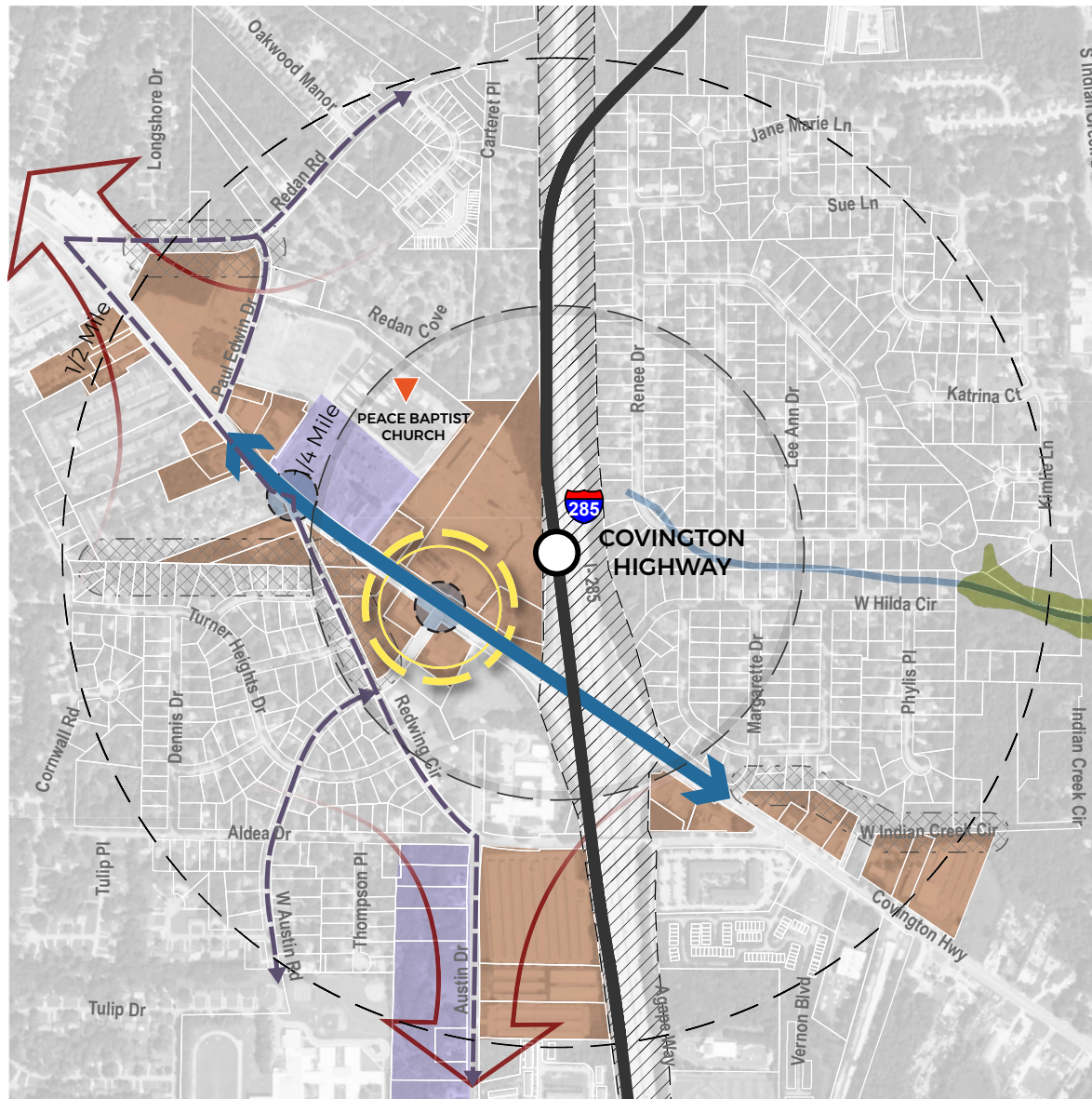
The built environment around the proposed Covington Station reflects the auto-centric nature of the area. The station area is at the intersection of the east-west Covington Highway and north-south I-285, which divides the station area into quadrants, with the proposed station in the northwest quadrant. Covington Highway serves as a spine that shapes the area's existing development pattern, land use, and built form with commercial, retail, higher-density residential, and light industrial land uses lining the roadway. Beyond the main corridors the area quickly transitions to single-family, low-density residential neighborhoods.

The commercial and retail uses along Covington Highway sit on large parcels, with low building density and height. Along Covington Highway, heavy traffic and buildings that are typically set back with parking fronting the street combined create difficult walking

conditions. Covington Highway is a heavily used, multi-lane state highway with limited opportunities for safe pedestrian and bike access and crossings. The Covington Highway intersections with West Austin Road and Redwing Circle are key intersections and would benefit from improvements to enhance safety and improve station access from existing residential neighborhoods. Vacant or under-performing parcels are located at key locations and provide the potential for new anchors and amenities.

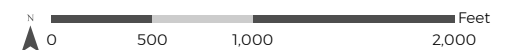
Covington Highway currently is a major arterial in the region, providing access for surrounding uses and serving east-west traffic across south DeKalb County. The proposed station site, situated at the interchange with I-285, is at a gateway location to both the Kensington Memorial Drive overlay district to its west as well as the Covington Highway corridor to its east. This location provides the opportunity to create higher-density, high-visibility development and public space to announce the presence of the proposed station and provide a focus for the surrounding neighborhoods.

*Existing zoning districts for the area primarily include C-1: Local Commercial District, C-2: General Commercial District, MR-2: Medium-Density Residential District, and OD: Office / Distribution District and limited portions that include OI: Office / Institutional District and R-75: Residential Medium Lot-75 District; as well as, the Tier I: Covington Gateway in the Kensington-Memorial Drive Overlay District.*



## COVINGTON HIGHWAY

- Proposed Transit Alignment
- Proposed Transit Station
- Potential TOD Site
- Area under the Influence of TOD
- ▨ Transition to Lower Density
- ▨ Physical Barrier
- ⊙ Potential Center for Development
- ↔ Key Access
- ⊙ Key Intersection
- TOD Influence
- Proposed Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Roadway Improvements
- Wetlands
- ▼ Community / Regional Resource



**Figure 5-3:** Covington Highway Issues and Opportunities

## ISSUES

### LAND USE

- The existing development pattern along Covington Highway is represented by large parcels and low building coverage. The existing density cannot support future transit station.
- Irregularly-shaped blocks challenge development capacity.
- Much of Covington Highway is fronted with large parking lots serving retail and commercial uses, preventing a consistent street wall and creating a challenging pedestrian environment.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- I-285 is a major physical and visual barrier that restricts east-west access within the station area.
- The lack of a hierarchical and well-connected street network impedes connectivity. Residential parcels have limited connectivity to other land uses, including the proposed station. A connected pedestrian grid will be a necessary component of a pedestrian friendly street environment that connects travelers to the proposed station.
- A lack of pedestrian and bike infrastructure on main roads, including Covington Highway, limits multimodal mobility, contributes to car dependency, and does not support transit ridership. Frequent curb cuts along Covington Highway make it difficult to maintain a consistent streetscape and pedestrian realm.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Properties are regulated by the Tier I: Covington Gateway in the Kensington-Memorial Drive Overlay District, which is generally transit-supportive; however, many regulations defer to the underlying zoning districts which may not necessarily support TOD goals. This may lead to the following potential issues:
  - Existing underlying zoning districts do not generally support mixing-uses.
  - Overlay district does not allow multi-family unless part of a mixed-use development, and some underlying zoning districts do not permit commercial uses as a principle use.
  - Permitted uses in some underlying zoning districts do not allow residential uses, including denser multi-family and high rise residential uses.
  - Parking ratios in underlying zoning districts have high maximums and minimums.



## OPPORTUNITIES

### LAND USE

- Several large parcels adjacent to the future station are under-performing and could be redeveloped for TOD,
- The concentration of TOD opportunity sites along Covington Highway provides the opportunity to establish a future main street that could focus higher-density mixed-use development to create an active town center.
- Peace Baptist Church is a community and regional resource and could serve as an anchor for TOD in the area.
- New development could be integrated into the area and meet community needs for quality retail and restaurants, as well as providing new opportunities for gathering spaces, plazas, and other public spaces.
- Parcels south of Covington Highway provide additional opportunities for redevelopment that could extend the influence of TOD south.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- The proposed station location provides convenient access to I-285. Located adjacent to an I-285 and Covington Highway interchange, this station area could be established as a gateway to the neighborhood.
- Covington Highway could be established as a walkable connection across I-285 with the addition of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- The Tier I: Covington Gateway in the Kensington-Memorial Drive Overlay District is generally transit-supportive and intended to revitalize underutilized commercial and multifamily properties into a mix of employment, housing, retail, civic, and open spaces, and make Covington Highway a multi-modal transportation corridor that promotes healthy living.
- Opportunities within the Overlay District may include:
  - Heights can exceed six stories with a special use permit.
  - Mixing-of-uses is allowed within the underlying zoning.
  - Permits are prohibited for many auto-centric and less transit-supportive land uses.
  - Site design requirements have maximum setbacks, rather than minimums.
  - Development standards generally support better site layout and parking placement.
  - Street design is required to adhere to Complete Streets Policy.
  - A variety of density bonuses are available within a quarter-mile of a MARTA station.
- Reconsidering the underlying zoning of some sites could better reflect transit-supportive use-mix and density requirements.
- The plans envisioned in the 2014 DeKalb County Transportation Plan support TOD, including the recommendation to replace the existing Covington Highway bridge across I-285. The planned project includes bicycle and pedestrian improvements that will contribute to making Covington Highway a key east-west corridor that provides access to the proposed station and promotes TOD development. Additionally, the envisioned Covington Trails will increase multi-modal access and enhance north-south connectivity across Covington Highway, creating new connections with potential redevelopment sites and the station.

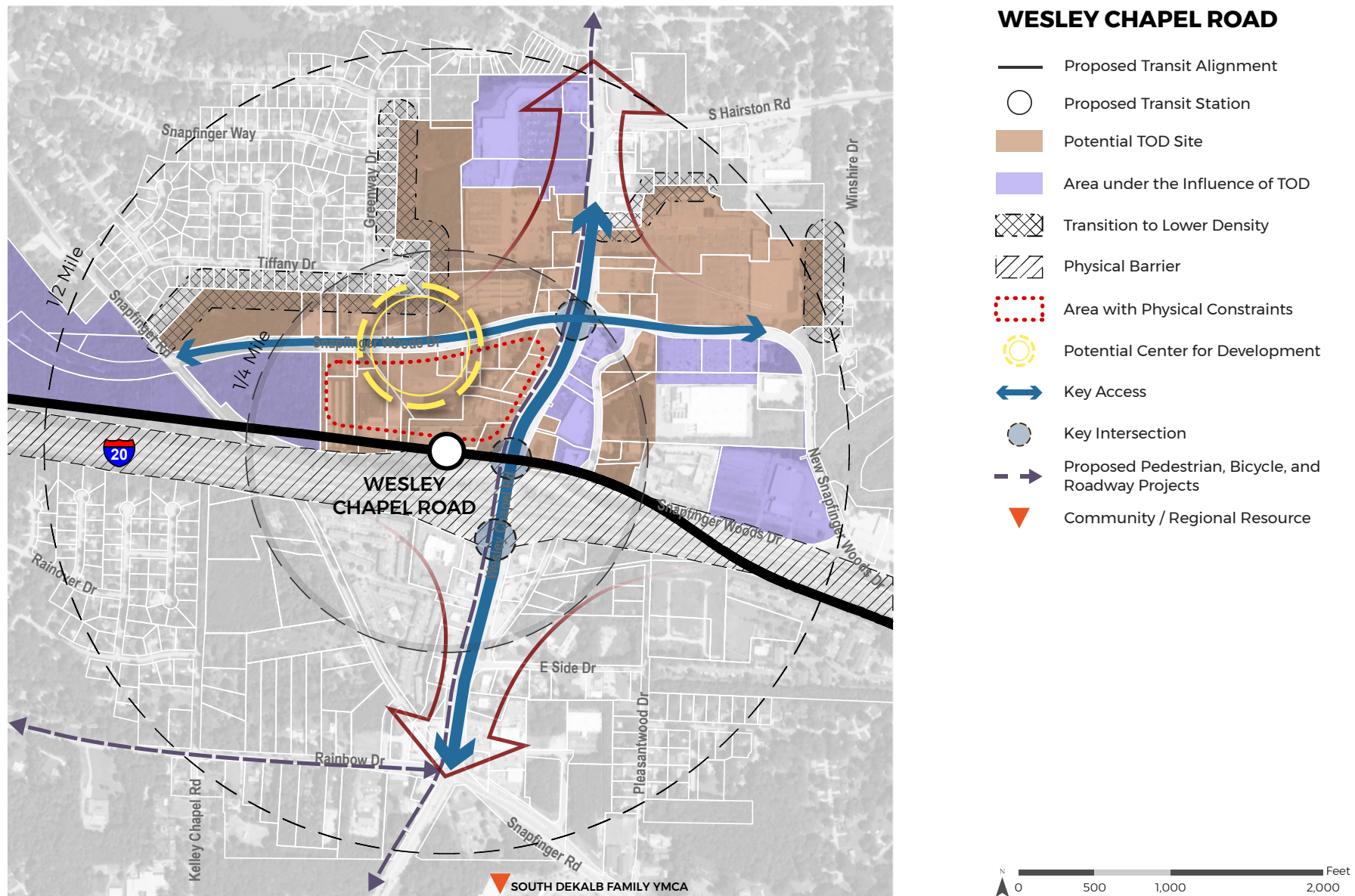
### 5.3.3 WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD STATION

The proposed Wesley Chapel Road Station is strategically located near the interchange of I-285 and I-20, north of and immediately adjacent to the I-20 interchange. The station area is on a heavily traveled, wide segment of I-20. In the station area, low-density, low-height commercial with retail is the predominant use. North of I-20, Wesley Chapel Road intersects with Snapfinger Woods Drive connecting to additional retail and commercial properties lining Snapfinger Woods Drive. Beyond these streets the station area quickly transitions to residential neighborhoods. The parcels nearer to the proposed station tend to be underutilized with the more stable uses further away.

Nearby underutilized and vacant properties north of I-20 and nearer to the station have the potential to be redeveloped as TOD. This would add a mix of uses to

the current primarily retail uses and provide a stronger core to support existing retailers and businesses further from the station. Connectivity to the station would need to be improved for existing businesses to benefit. Despite a lack of redevelopment opportunity among existing land uses south to I-20, there is a potential to improve multi-modal connections between this area and the future station across the highway. The area south of I-20 has concentrations of multi-family residential development and community amenities including the YMCA, Wesley Chapel Church, and Wesley Chapel Branch Library. These residential neighborhoods provide the ridership base needed to create a new commuter town center. Planned BRT along I-20 corridor to the west of this station and the proposed high-capacity transit improvement along I-285 from the north come together at this station, providing opportunity to establish a multi-modal transfer node.

*Existing zoning districts for the area primarily include C-1: Local Commercial District, OD: Office / Distribution District, OI: Office / Institutional District, and limited portions that include MU-1: Mixed-Use Low Density District and M: Light Industrial District; as well as, the Interstate-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District.*



**Figure 5-4:** Wesley Chapel Road Issues and Opportunities

## ISSUES

### LAND USE

- Retail and commercial uses along Snapfinger Woods Drive and Wesley Chapel Road are primarily highway-supportive businesses and are typically fronted with parking lots that create a challenging pedestrian environment.
- The area adjacent to the station consists of numerous small parcels with multiple owners, requiring coordination and cooperation for larger scale redevelopment to occur.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- I-20 is a significant physical and visual barrier that divides the station area and limits redevelopment potential for sites south of the highway.
- Existing residential parcels have limited direct connections to the proposed station.
- The proposed station is not located along the existing street network. New access to the proposed station will need to be created.
- Wesley Chapel Drive is a heavily trafficked, multi-lane principal arterial with limited opportunities for safe crossings. There is a lack of bike and pedestrian infrastructure along the corridor, and frequent curb cuts make it difficult to maintain a consistent streetscape and a walkable pedestrian realm.
- There are key intersections located along Wesley Chapel Road that would benefit from pedestrian, bicycle, and streetscape improvements.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Properties are regulated by the Interstate-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District which is generally transit-supportive and has few barriers facing TOD. The station area is a mixture of Tier I: High-Density, Tier II: Medium-Density, and Tier III: Low-Density land use recommendations. Some regulations defer to the underlying zoning districts.
- Adjacency to Fowler Branch and Fowler Branch Tributary 1 may require that new development meet Chapter 14 – Land Development Regulations to minimize grading changes, reduce soil erosion and increase sedimentation control, protect trees, manage stormwater, control water quality, and recharge groundwater.
- Development may be affected by considerations for floodplain management relative to both Fowler Branch and Fowler Branch Tributary 1.



## OPPORTUNITIES

### LAND USE

- A property adjacent to the proposed station, Chapel Hall Shopping Center, is currently vacant and offers potential for redevelopment.
- Shopping strip malls along Wesley Chapel Road with large surface parking lots represent a low-intensity development type that could be redeveloped and densified.
- Existing YMCA serves as a community resource and can be expanded to include more open space and entertainment uses. The station area can also be linked to a newly constructed amphitheater, situated just outside the station area, to create a network of open space connecting destinations.
- Vacant undeveloped parcels west to the station could support future phases of TOD.
- Multi-family developments south of I-20 could support the future transit station, as well as TOD to the north of I-20, if the connection along Wesley Chapel Road is enhanced.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- The proposed station location provides convenient access to I-20.
- Wesley Chapel Road could be established as a key north-south corridor, providing vehicular, pedestrian and bike access to the station, and connecting to existing multi-family developments across I-20 to the south.
- Snapfinger Woods Drive could be established as a main east-west corridor to concentrate future TOD.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Properties are regulated by I-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District which is generally transit-supportive and intended to achieve a wide variety of mixed-use communities, provide for sidewalks and walkways,

permit and encourage mixed-use development, support high- density housing in office and mixed-use centers, and to encourage development densities that can make productive use of alternative transportation.

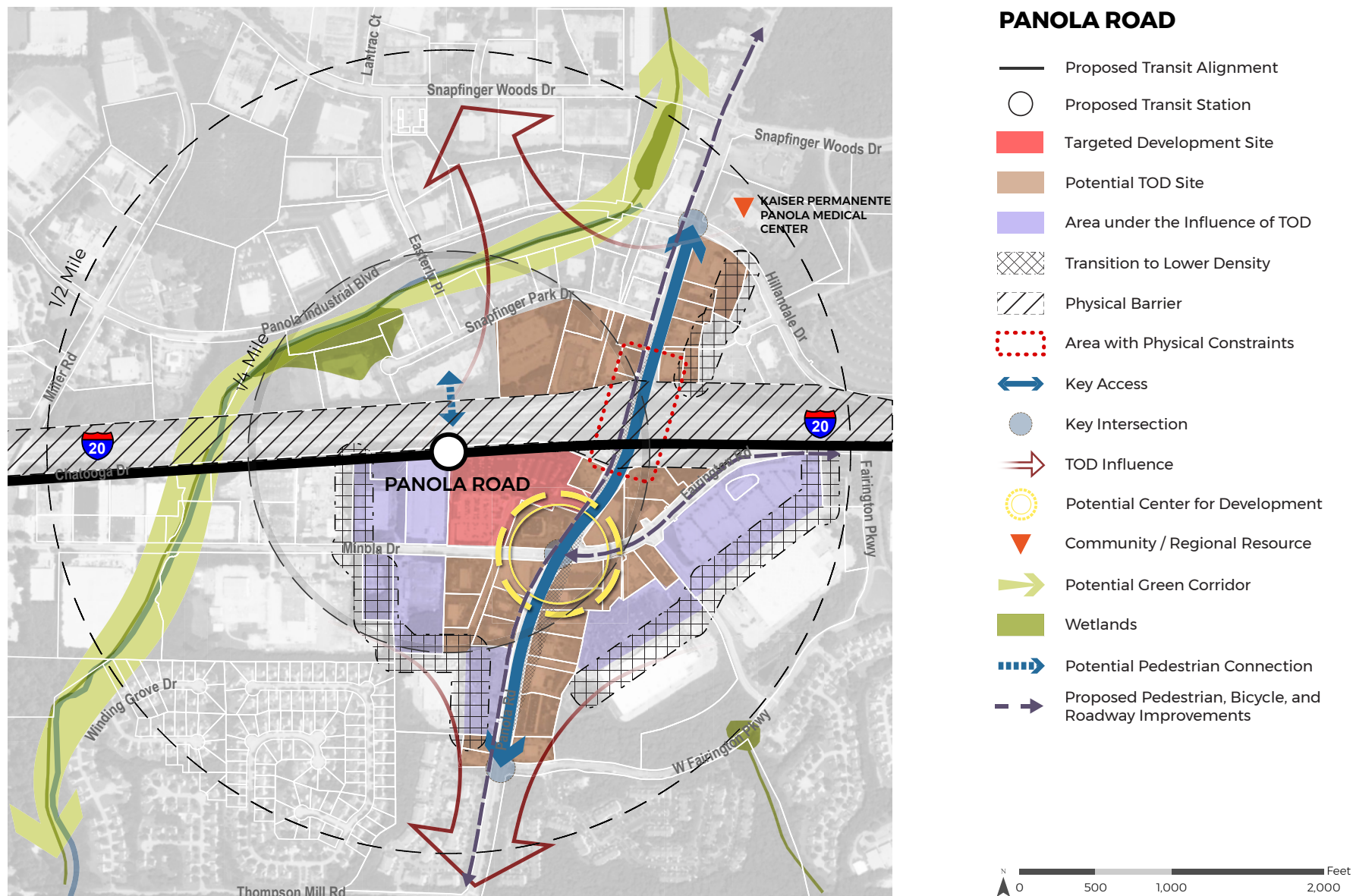
- Opportunities within the Overlay District may include:
  - Very tall heights and densities that are very transit-supportive are allowed, including Tier I: High-Intensity (20 stories / 60 units per acre), Tier II: Medium-Intensity (8 stories / 40 units per acre), and Tier III: Low-Intensity (4 stories / 40 dwelling units per acre).
  - Mixing-of-uses beyond the underlying zoning are allowed, all of which are very supportive of mixed-use and multi-family dwellings.
  - Permits are prohibited for many auto-centric and less transit-supportive land uses.
  - Site design requirements are geared toward walkable building form.
  - Development standards generally support TOD-friendly site layout and parking placement.
  - Parking ratios are lower than elsewhere in the County and well within a transit-supportive range.
  - Street design is required to include placemaking features and landscaping.
  - A variety of density bonuses and increased FAR are available for new development.
- Majority of the station area falls within an Opportunity Zone, as defined by the Georgia DCA, which qualifies new or existing businesses within those areas for the State's job tax credit when they create two or more jobs as part of a redevelopment or revitalization effort. Ensuring that land use strategies aligned with the program are an opportunity to unlock this additional incentive for economic development.
- The 2014 DeKalb County Transportation Plan proposed pedestrian improvement projects along Wesley Chapel Road that would enhance station access and support new development.

### 5.3.4 PANOLA ROAD STATION

The proposed Panola Road Station sits southwest of the I-20/Panola Road interchange. Panola Road is a regional north-south corridor with commercial and retail land uses lining the right of way. The buildings in this station area are active and in-use with low vacancies. Auto-centric uses that predominate include gas stations, fast food restaurants, strip retail centers and big box stores. Land use types tend to be disconnected from each other in quadrants created by the interchange of I-20 at Panola Road. Beyond the core commercial area, the station area transitions to residential neighborhoods consisting mostly of single-family housing developments. Panthers Branch, a stream running across the station area, creates a belt of wooded, natural area through the existing light industrial development.

The station area offers an opportunity to create a mix of uses that complement and enhance existing light industrial, health care, and residential uses. Panola Road is a wide street with little pedestrian infrastructure, and walkability and connectivity between uses would benefit from pedestrian improvements. The proposed Panola Road Station will be south of I-20, near the existing Park-n-Ride operated by the State Road and Toll Authority. Many of the existing uses north of I-20 are employment hubs and businesses that could benefit from enhanced access to transit. Creating better access across I-20 and improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists on Panola Road would break down the barriers between the land use quadrants to strengthen all uses and better support transit ridership.

*Existing zoning districts for the area primarily include C-1: Local Commercial District, and limited portions that include OI: Office / Institutional District and M: Light Industrial District; as well as, the Interstate-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District.*



**Figure 5-5:** Panola Road Issues and Opportunities

## ISSUES

### LAND USE

- At this location light-industrial uses to the west, health care establishments to the northeast, big-box shopping centers to the southeast, and residential development to the south come together with little relationship between them.
- The Panthers Branch is currently not accessible and is surrounded by industrial use, limiting its benefit to the community as a publicly accessible resource.
- The geometry of blocks near the interchange are irregular and may be difficult to development, many have significant topographic change, which may further constrain potential TOD.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- I-20 is a major physical and visual barrier that separates the station area and limits redevelopment potential for sites north of the highway.
- The proposed station is not located on an existing street and will require new access to be created.
- The interchange at Panola Road limits the access and frontage of adjacent sites and may inhibit redevelopment.
- Panola Road is a wide, multi-lane principal arterial with slip ramps and dedicated turn lanes at intersections. The street is heavily used during rush hour and experiences regular congestion issues near the interchange.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Properties are regulated by the Interstate-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District which is generally transit-supportive and has few barriers to TOD. The station area is a mixture of Tier I: High-Density and Tier II: Medium-Density land use recommendations. Some regulations defer to the underlying zoning districts.
- Adjacency to Panthers Branch may require that new development meet Chapter 14 – Land Development Regulations to minimize grading changes, reduce soil erosion and increase sedimentation control, protect trees, manage stormwater, control water quality, and recharge groundwater.
- Development may be affected by considerations for floodplain management relative to Panthers Branch.



## OPPORTUNITIES

### LAND USE

- The large concentration of light-industrial uses and other business uses north and west of the proposed station are significant employment generators and could support ridership and TOD.
- The State Road and Toll Authority currently operates an express service from the existing Park-n-Ride next to the proposed station. This site could be considered for a catalytic TOD project that capitalizes upon its transit adjacency.
- The Kaiser Permanente Panola Medical Center is a regional resource and major employer that could serve as an anchor and attract related uses.
- Panthers Branch is a continuous natural corridor that could be an amenity to the neighborhood.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- Several transportation improvement projects on I-20, Panola Road, and Fairington Road were proposed by RTP and DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan (see Chapter 3 for more information). These public investments will help improve traffic conditions and the pedestrian environment.
- Minola Drive could provide vehicular access to the future station and be established as TOD corridor.
- Multiple existing bus lines have stops in the station area, providing opportunity for inter-modal transfers to extend the reach of transit.
- A bus transfer facility and Park-n-Ride sites need to be maintained at this site. The facility should be connected to the proposed Panola Road.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Properties are regulated by Interstate-20 Corridor Compatible Use Overlay District which is generally transit-supportive and intended to achieve a wide variety of mixed-use communities, provide for sidewalks and walkways, permit and encourage mixed-use development, support high-density housing in office and mixed-use centers, and to encourage development densities that can make productive use of alternative transportation.
- Opportunities within the Overlay District may include:
  - Very tall heights and densities that are very transit-supportive are allowed, including Tier I: High-Intensity (20 stories / 60 units per acre), Tier II: Medium-Intensity (8 stories / 40 units per acre), and Tier III: Low-Intensity (4 stories / 40 dwelling units per acre).
  - Mixing-of-uses above and beyond the underlying zoning are allowed, all of which is very supportive of mixed-use and multi-family dwellings.
  - Permits are prohibited for many auto-centric and less transit-supportive land uses.
  - Site design requirements are geared toward walkable building form.
  - Development standards generally support TOD-friendly site layout and parking placement.
  - Parking ratios are lower than elsewhere in the County and well within a transit-supportive range.
  - Street design is required to include placemaking features and landscaping.
  - A variety of density bonuses and increased FAR are available for new development.

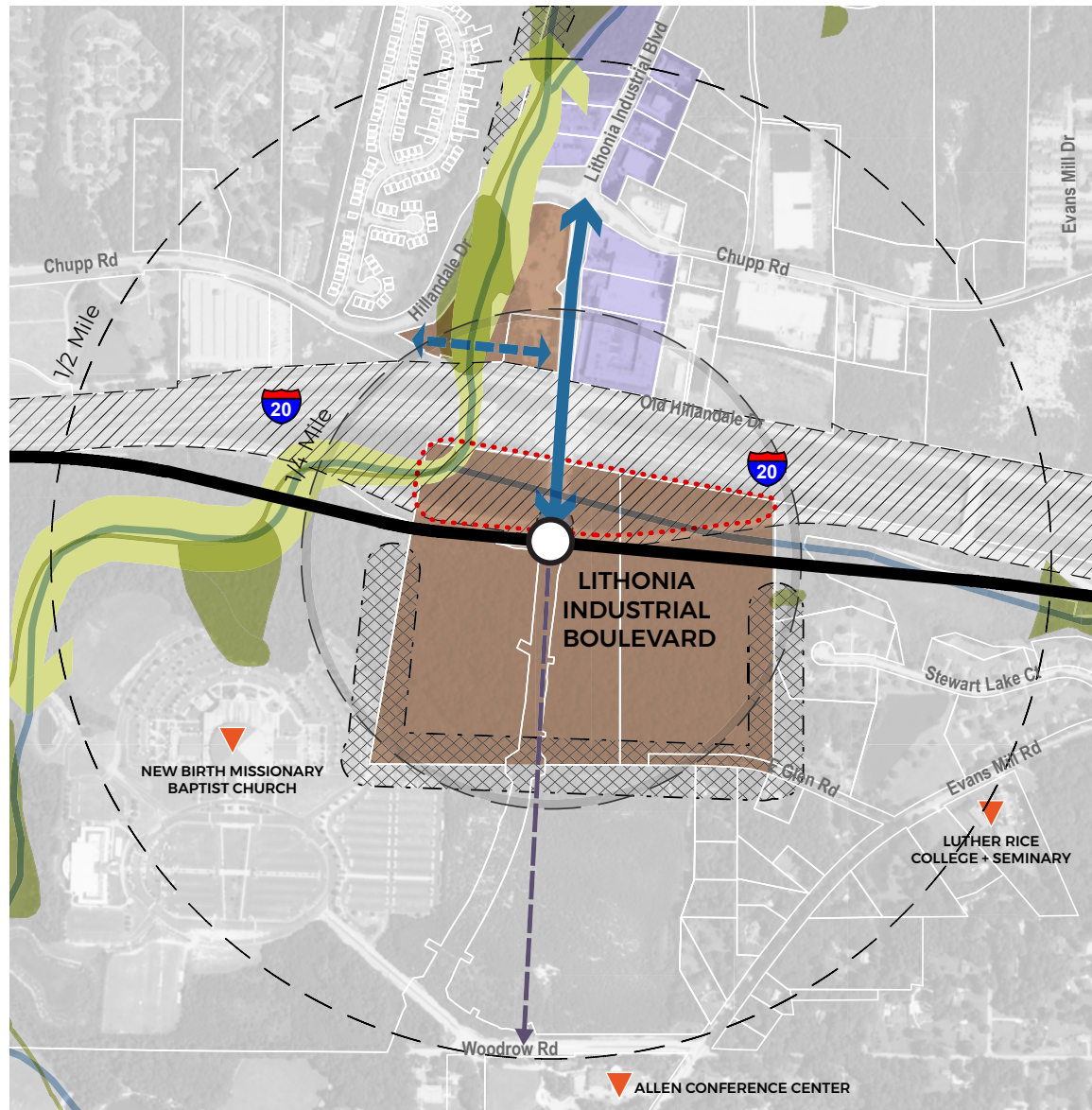
### 5.3.5 LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD STATION

The proposed Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Station is located southwest of the intersection of I-20 and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard. Lithonia Industrial Boulevard is a key vehicular corridor extending north of I-20. It serves as a main access route for a large light industrial zone to the north. As of the writing of this report, the southern extension of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard to Woodrow Road and access to Owens Mill Road is under construction. Part of the station area and the area to its north was originally envired as a light industrial area, which is difficult to support transit. Immediately north of I-20 the parcels to the west are vacant. To the east buildings are low in density and scale, and most are elevated above the right-of-way on embankments. The roadway is wide with few crossings. When the boulevard passes under the interstate, there is a perception of pedestrian safety issues due to the lack of visibility, lighting, and protection infrastructure for pedestrian and bicycles. Together, the lack of street amenities, coupled with existing development patterns, create an unfriendly

pedestrian environment where walking is difficult. The station area to the south of I-20 is defined by the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church. Occupying over 170 acres, the church property occupies approximately 45% of the station area. Despite its size, the church and its property are isolated from the surrounding community, however this will change with the completion of the Lithonia Industrial Boulevard extension.

The redevelopment of the station area presents an opportunity to create complementary uses to support the existing light industrial businesses and institutions. Sites for office headquarters and multi-family housing would both complement and strengthen the existing uses in the station area. Tied to a larger industrial cluster to the north by Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, the proposed station could potentially service a wider area. The extension of the Boulevard is a way to connect to residential neighborhoods to the south. The expanded street network would create new access and mobility within the station area and provide new pedestrian and bike opportunities that would support, serve, and encourage future TOD in the area.

*Existing underlying zoning districts for the area primarily include R-100: Residential Medium Lot-100 District and M: Light Industrial District.*



## LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD

- Proposed Transit Alignment
- Proposed Transit Station
- Potential TOD Site
- Area under the Influence of TOD
- ▨ Transition to Lower Density
- ▨ Physical Barrier
- ▨ Area with Physical Constraints
- ↔ Key Access
- Ongoing Roadway Extension
- Wetlands
- Potential Green Corridor
- ▼ Community / Regional Resource



**Figure 5-6:** Lithonia Industrial Boulevard Issues and Opportunities

## ISSUES

### LAND USE

- The station area contains few existing commercial or retail uses to build from for future TOD.
- While there is a large amount of undeveloped and underutilized land in the station area, the extent of redevelopment may be limited due to the surrounding land uses, and site topography.
- There are just a few property owners in the station area and key stakeholder buy-in would be critical to the success of TOD in this area.
- Much of the land along Lithonia Industrial Boulevard to the north of I-20 is part of a large swath of single use light industrial uses, which is contrary to the tenants of TOD.
- A lack of pedestrian or bike infrastructure, including sidewalks, results in an auto-centric roadway and a poor environment for pedestrians.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- I-20 is a major physical and visual barrier that separates the station area. Due to the highway there is a large physical gap between development sites north and south to I-20.
- Existing highway access at the station does not allow for connection to all directions. The half interchange consists of a westbound on-ramp and an eastbound off-ramp.
- A lack of pedestrian or bike infrastructure, including the passage under I-20, results in an auto-centric roadway and a poor environment for pedestrians. As of the writing of this report pedestrian improvements

are under construction as part of the southern extension of Lithonia Industrial Boulevard.

- The existing I-20 underpass along Lithonia Industrial Boulevard is foreboding and unfriendly pedestrian environment.
- The area is hemmed in by I-20 and its interchange ramps, Pole Bridge Creek, and proposed rail with limited roadway access and frontage, making it challenging to be developed.
- Existing large parcel sizes and a limited number of streets create large blocks that limit mobility throughout the station area.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Properties are regulated by Stonecrest Area Overlay District which is generally transit-supportive and has few barriers to TOD. The station area is a mixture of Tier II: Mid-Rise Mixed-Use Zone and Tier IV: Transitional Mixed-Use Zone land use recommendations. Some regulations defer to the underlying zoning districts.
- Some regulations in the Overlay District may not necessarily support the creation of vibrant commercial frontage. For example, front yard setbacks are a minimum of 15' in all tiers.
- Adjacency to Pole Bridge Creek and Pole Bridge Creek Tributary H will require that new development meet Chapter 14 – Land Development Regulations to minimize grading changes, reduce soil erosion and increase sedimentation control, protect trees, manage stormwater, control water quality, and recharge groundwater.
- Existing wetlands may be subject to wetland regulations, potentially limiting the capacity of development, including considerations for floodplain management relative to both Pole Bridge Creek and Pole Bridge Creek Tributary H.



## OPPORTUNITIES

### LAND USE

- Parcels to the north of I-20 along Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, close to the proposed station, are largely vacant or occupied by under-performing uses and present opportunities for future redevelopment. New development could be integrated to complement, stronger light industrial uses further to the north.
- The currently undeveloped parcels just south of the proposed station are large and under single ownership, making it possible for potential TOD.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- The new Lithonia Industrial Boulevard extension project under construction as of the writing of this report, will enhance connectivity in the station area and allow for the boulevard to be established as a main corridor for future TOD.
- Arabian Mountain Trail is planned to extend into the station area from the south, which will encourage pedestrian and bicycle activities in the station area.
- Existing public right of way allows for a potential pedestrian connection along the north edge of I-20 between Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Hillandale Drive, providing a more direct route to access the station area from the west.
- With most of the opportunity sites south of I-20 vacant, a brand-new street network could be established in this area.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

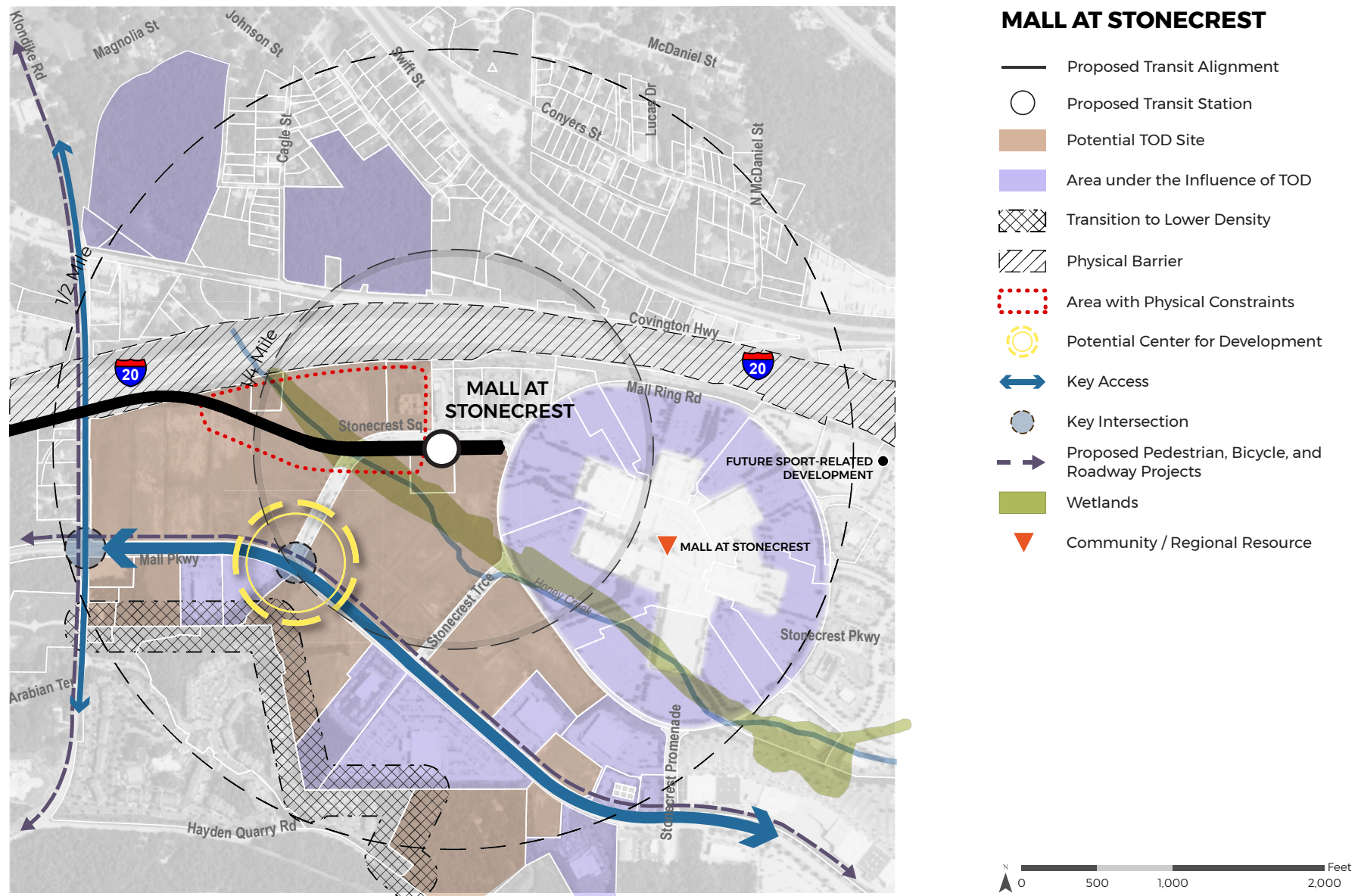
- Properties are regulated by Stonecrest Area Overlay District which is generally transit-supportive and intended to provide a balanced distribution of regional and community commercial and mixed-use centers, support high density housing in office and mixed-use districts, encourage mixed-use developments, and to encourage development densities that can make productive use of alternative transportation.
- Opportunities within the Overlay District may include:
  - Very tall heights and densities that are very transit-supportive are allowed, including Tier II: Mid-Rise Mixed-Use Zone (10 stories / FAR of 2.5) and Tier IV: Transitional Mixed-Use Zone (5 stories / FAR of 1.5 and 30 units per acre).
  - Mixing-of-uses are allowed and uses available are expanded to other existing zoning districts.
  - Permits are prohibited for many auto-centric and less transit-supportive land uses.
  - Parking ratios are lower and well within a transit-supportive range.
  - A variety of density bonuses and increased FAR are available if public space is provided.
- Majority of the station area falls within an Opportunity Zone, as defined by the Georgia DCA which qualifies new or existing businesses within those areas for the State's job tax credit when they create two or more jobs as part of a redevelopment or revitalization effort. Ensuring that land use strategies align with the program are an opportunity to unlock this additional incentive for economic development.

### 5.3.6 MALL AT STONECREST STATION

The proposed Mall at Stonecrest Station, located south of I-20 just west of the regional destination mall, is the proposed future end-of-line station. Divided by the east-west I-20, the station area has developed distinct neighborhood characters to the north and south of the interstate. To the north of I-20, the station area mostly contains low-density, single-family homes. To the south, the Mall at Stonecrest, covering over 80 acres of land, has shaped the built environment, street network, and urban form of the surrounding station area. The mall serves as an anchor for the retail around it and attracts visitors from a wider region. The existing street network was planned around the car with an emphasis on serving the parking lot around the mall and connecting to the surrounding retail pad sites. While destinations are not far from each other, the emphasis is on cars at the expense of pedestrians.

This station has the largest amount of vacant land available for new development of any of the stations. The vacant pad sites near the proposed station provide an opportunity for a significant amount of new development. These sites were planned for and prepared for development that has not occurred. This station area has been subject to various proposals that envision the area surrounding the mall transformed into a more prominent regional destination that promotes multi-day visitor trips. There are developer interests in place to establish area around the mall as a regional and national destination. While an alternate vision could contribute to economic development, they should be incorporated into a larger TOD framework focused on creating a walkable and discernible place that supports transit. Future land uses proposed for the TOD should complement existing primarily retail uses instead of creating redundancy. The Atlanta Sports City proposal, for example, envisions large-scale sport facilities. Coupled with a mixed-use main street, smart parking, and a walkable retail environment that integrates into the existing character of the station area. Uses such as residential, service retail, and community amenities, which are currently lacking in the station area, could help support existing retail, promote a walking as an option to driving, and make this area a true multi-use activity center.

*Existing zoning districts for the area primarily include R-100: Residential Medium Lot-100 District and M: Light Industrial District; as well as, by the Stonecrest Area Overlay District. Some regulations defer to the underlying zoning districts.*



## ISSUES

### LAND USE

- The station area is primarily single use retail.
- The mall and pad site retails surrounding it are low density and set back from the streets. This lack of interaction between buildings and the street encourages automobile usage and creates a challenging pedestrian environment.
- Large parking lots surrounding the mall creates in-active space and frontage that is unfriendly to pedestrians.
- I-20, future rail tracks, and the underground Honey Creek create physical constraints to the development parcels in this area.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- I-20 is a major physical and visual barrier that divides the station area.
- Existing streets in the station are multi-lane throughways designed for vehicles and lack safe, direct, and convenient pedestrian access.
- Turner Hill Road serves as an important corridor for the station area and is a center of activity for the community as a retail corridor, but is a traffic concern.
- Large block sizes limit walkability.
- There is a lack of continuous pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the station area though some streetscape elements are present.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Properties are regulated by the Stonecrest Area Overlay District which is generally transit-supportive and has few barriers facing TOD. The station area is a mixture of Tier I: High-Rise Mixed-Use Zone, Tier II: Mid-Rise Mixed-Use Zone, and Tier III: Low-Rise Mixed-Use Zone land use recommendations.
- Some regulations in the Overlay District may not necessarily support the creation of vibrant commercial frontage, for example, front yard setbacks are a minimum of 15' in all tiers.
- Adjacency to Honey Creek will require that new development meet Chapter 14 - Land Development Regulations to minimize grading changes, reduce soil erosion and increase sedimentation control, protect trees, manage stormwater, control water quality, and recharge groundwater.
- Existing wetlands may be subject to wetland regulations, potentially limiting the capacity of development, including considerations for floodplain management relative to Honey Creek.



## OPPORTUNITIES

### LAND USE

- The Mall at Stonecrest is a major regional attraction that could serve as an anchor for future development.
- The large undeveloped parcel just south of the proposed station allows for large-scale new development.
- Large scale parking lots at Mall of Stonecrest and other underutilized parcels that may fall under the influence of TOD present opportunities for long-term redevelopment.
- Atlanta Sports City, a complex featuring a 15,000-seat stadium and sport fields has been proposed for the area surrounding the existing mall. If this vision plan is realized, it could attract visitors regionally and support ridership of this station and the entire corridor.

### MOBILITY AND CIRCULATION

- New, walkable street grids need to be created to support TOD.
- Mall Parkway could be established as a main corridor for future TOD, providing access and connection between the station, new TOD development, and community resources, including the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area to the South.
- Klondike Road could provide key north-south access across I-20, as well as to downtown Lithonia.
- The intersection of Mall Parkway and Klondike Road could serve as a key intersection or gateway, providing direct, safe, and convenient access to the station.
- As an end the line station Park-n-Ride facilities should be planned to support commuter parking at this station.

### POLICY AND REGULATION

- Properties are regulated by Stonecrest Area Overlay District, which is generally transit-supportive and intended to provide a balanced distribution of regional and community commercial and mixed-use centers, support high density housing in office and mixed-use districts, encourage mixed-use developments, and to encourage development densities that can make productive use of alternative transportation.
- Opportunities within the Overlay District may include:
  - Very tall heights and densities that are very transit-supportive are allowed, including Tier II: Mid-Rise Mixed-Use Zone (10 stories / FAR of 2.5) and Tier IV: Transitional Mixed-Use Zone (5 stories / FAR of 1.5 and 30 units per acre).
  - Mixing-of-uses are allowed and uses available are expanded to other existing zoning districts.
  - Permits are prohibited for many auto-centric and less transit-supportive land uses.
  - Parking ratios are lower and well within a transit-supportive range.
  - A variety of density bonuses and increased FAR are available if public space is provided.
- The DeKalb 2014 CTP identified recommendations and projects that align with future TOD. The Heritage Corridor Study would consider new multimodal improvements to connect Stone Mountain and Lithonia downtowns. Additionally, the Arabia Mountain Trail would expand the current ATH Foundation trail system, creating a multi-use path along Mall Parkway.

## 5.4 CONCLUSION

While there are similarities across the corridor, land use strategies should be tailored to each station's issues and opportunities. There are major land owners, existing anchors, and community facilities in some station areas that could also influence future development. The strategy at each station should be unique to the specific station location but land use should also

be considered across the corridor. A complementary land use strategy across the corridor can better support transit use and to increase economic development by working together to leverage each station area's strength and by each tap a specific market segment, rather than cannibalizing limited demand.

### SUMMARY OF KEY URBAN DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

#### INDIAN CREEK STATION

- Establish activities and programming beyond the existing Park-n-Ride to create new, safe, community amenities that will serve existing users and attract new ridership.
- Create a new community with a pedestrian-scale street network and mixed-use development.
- Better integrate the station area into the community and connect to its surroundings.

#### COVINGTON HIGHWAY STATION

- Establish a gateway to both the Kensington Memorial Drive overlay district and the Covington Highway corridor.
- Create higher-density, high-visibility development and public space to announce the presence of the new station and provide a focus for the surrounding neighborhoods.

#### WESLEY CHAPEL RD STATION

- Improve multi-modal connections between the residential neighborhood south to I-20 and the future station across the highway.

#### PANOLA ROAD STATION

- Create a mix of uses that complement and enhance existing light industrial, health care, and residential uses.
- Enhance access across I-20 and improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists on Panola Road in order to break down the barriers between the land use quadrants.

#### LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD STATION

- Create complementary uses such as office headquarters and multi-family housing to support the existing light industrial businesses and institutions.
- Service a wider area north to the station area.
- Create an expanded street network to provide access and improve mobility within the station area.

#### MALL AT STONECREST STATION

- There is an opportunity to create a significant amount of new development.
- Establish the area around the mall as a regional and national destination.
- Developers' visions should be incorporated into a larger TOD framework.

# 6 CORRIDOR MARKET STUDY AND EQUITABLE TOD ASSESSMENT

This I-20 East Extension Corridor market analysis will inform the I-20 East Extension Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Community Plan. The market study seeks to assess current needs of the corridor's residents and workers as well as projected future needs for the corridor. This particular analysis considers demographic and economic trends to determine the following:

- o Potential implications of TOD, real estate market conditions, and occupancy levels
- o Existing capacity and potential needs, and current and future support for development
- o The type and amount of growth the corridor can support

This analysis will also assess retail leakage to determine pent-up demand and resident access to retail. The information in this study will be used to recommend equitable TOD strategies that will be feasible for this specific area.

This section profiles demographic and economic trends and conditions affecting residents and workers in the I-20 East Corridor to identify their needs and determine the implications for TOD. It presents findings from the market study performed for the I-20 East TOD Strategy. Additional information can be found in the *I-20 East Extension Corridor Market Study and Equitable TOD Assessment Population and Demographic Trends Report* (2018).

## 6.1 ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF TOD

TOD offers a range of direct and indirect economic benefits, as shown in Table 6-1.

**Table 6-1:** Economic Benefits of TOD

DIRECT BENEFITS	
o	Increases transit ridership
o	Increases adjacent property values
o	Generates revenue for the public and private sectors
o	Reduces daily vehicle trips per household & vehicle miles traveled (VMT) = mitigates traffic congestion
o	Captures future market
INDIRECT BENEFITS	
o	Reduces automobile dependence
o	Promotes an active lifestyle
o	Increases "location efficiency"
o	Creates a sense of community and place
o	Improves quality of life

## 6.2 CORRIDOR AND STATION AREA SUMMARY

### 6.2.1 POPULATION, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND INCOME

#### POPULATION

**Corridor:** The I-20 East Corridor's population grew 5.8 percent between 2010 and 2016, to 67,701 residents.

**Station Areas:** The largest share of the corridor's population lives within the Indian Creek station area. This station area experienced the slowest population growth during the 2010 to 2016 study period (0.7 percent). However, with new multifamily units under construction, future growth around the Indian Creek station could be more substantial than over the past six years.

Over the same period, the populations in both the Panola Road and Stonecrest Mall station areas increased by more than 10 percent. As station areas continue to experience growth and build out, there is some risk of displacing residents, particularly once MARTA develops its stations. The Covington Highway and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station areas contain relatively small shares of the overall population and have experienced moderate growth. While the station area could see new development with the addition of a MARTA extension, new development would likely come later than around other station areas (see Table 6-2).

#### HOUSEHOLDS

**Corridor:** In 2016, there were 25,245 households in the corridor, which had more renters (58.8 percent) than owner households (41.2 percent).

**Station Areas:** In 2016, approximately 16 percent of corridor households lived within the Stonecrest Mall station area, while 15 percent lived in the Panola Road station area. The Covington Highway station area, with less than 2,300 households, had the smallest share of households (9.1 percent) in the corridor.

Between 2010 and 2016, Stonecrest Mall and Panola Road station area grew the fastest, with household growth rates of 15.5 percent and 9.8 percent, respectively. The Wesley Chapel Road station area grew the least (2.8 percent), while the Indian Creek (5.0 percent) and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard (5.6 percent) station areas lagged in the corridor's overall growth (6.3 percent).

With an average household size of 2.55 persons, households in the corridor were smaller than that of the region (2.71). In 2016, the Indian Creek station area had the highest average household size, with 2.70 persons per household, which indicates an ongoing need for family housing.

The Stonecrest Mall and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station areas had the smallest average household size, with 2.21 and 2.38 persons per household, respectively. These station areas may be able to support residential units in new TODs.

Only the Indian Creek and Wesley Chapel Road station areas had more owner households than renter households. Nearly three-quarters of all households in the Stonecrest Mall and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station areas were renters, while more than two-thirds of households in the Panola Road area were renters, indicating the need for displacement minimization strategies at these stations (see Table 6-3).



**Table 6-2: Corridor and Station Area Population Trends**

POPULATION*	2010	2016	% CHANGE	SHARE OF CORRIDOR
Corridor**	63,963	67,701	5.8%	
Indian Creek	12,083	12,163	0.7%	18.0%
Covington Highway	5,265	5,661	7.5%	8.4%
Wesley Chapel Road	9,530	9,700	1.8%	14.3%
Panola Road	8,629	9,545	10.6%	14.1%
Lithonia Industrial Boulevard	5,869	6,114	4.2%	9.0%
Stonecrest Mall	7,803	8,934	14.5%	13.2%

Sources: Esri, BAE, 2017

\* Station area is defined as all 2010 census block groups that intersect a half-mile buffer around the proposed reconfiguration of the MARTA Indian Creek station.

\*\*The corridor is defined as all 2010 census block groups that intersect a half-mile buffer around the proposed MARTA alignment.

**Table 6-3: Corridor and Station Area Household Characteristics**

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS	INDIAN CREEK	COVINGTON HIGHWAY	WESLEY CHAPEL ROAD	PANOLA ROAD	LITHONIA INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD	STONECREST MALL	I-20 EAST CORRIDOR
Households	3,419	2,291	3,591	3,793	2,506	4,041	25,245
2010 - 2016 Growth Rate	5.0%	8.6%	2.8%	9.7%	5.6%	15.5%	6.3%
Percent of Corridor	13.5%	9.1%	14.2%	15.0%	9.9%	16.0%	100%
Average Household Size	2.70	2.47	2.69	2.51	2.38	2.21	2.55
Percent Owners	60.9%	42.1%	54.1%	34.9%	25.6%	25.2%	41.2%
Percent Renters	39.1%	57.9%	45.9%	65.1%	74.4%	74.8%	58.8%

Sources: Esri, BAE, 2017

\* The station area is defined as all 2010 census block groups that intersect a half-mile buffer around the proposed reconfiguration of the MARTA Indian Creek station.

\*\*The corridor is defined as all 2010 census block groups that intersect a half-mile buffer around the proposed MARTA alignment.

## AGE DISTRIBUTION

**Corridor:** The corridor's median age of residents who were 33.5 years was lower than the regional median (35.6 years). The corridor also had a higher proportion of residents aged 18-34 than the region. The 18-34 cohorts represent both prime working age adults and the millennial generation, which tends to prefer walkable transit-oriented neighborhoods to traditional auto-oriented areas.

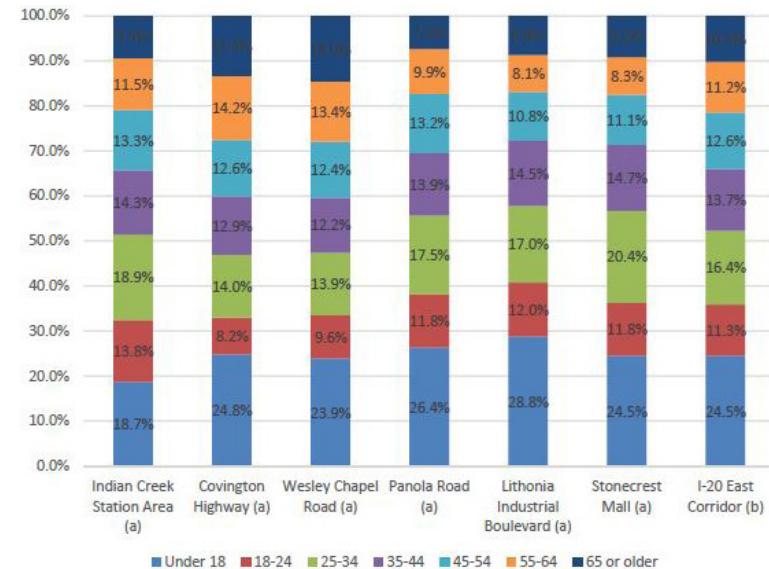
**Station Areas:** Based on average household sizes and age distributions within the station areas, the Panola Road, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Stonecrest Mall station areas demonstrate a need for housing to support families and working age residents, whereas senior amenities are best suited for the Covington Highway and Wesley Chapel Road station areas (see Figure 6-1).

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

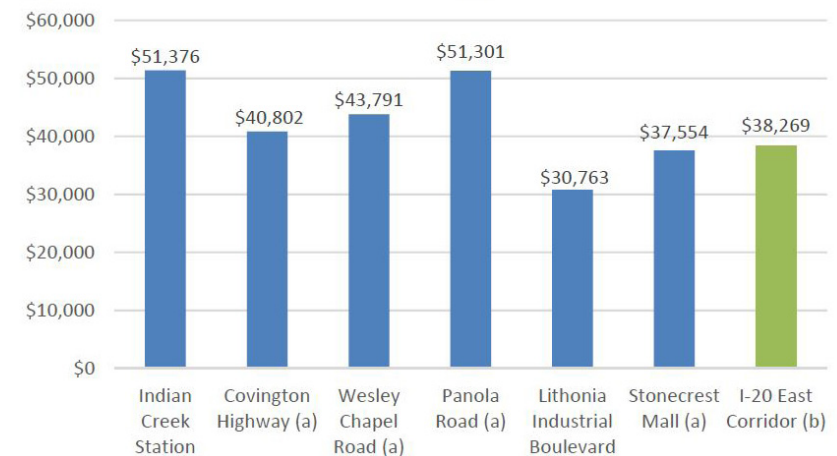
**Corridor:** The median household income for the I-20 East Corridor was \$39,269, which was 33.8 percent lower than the Atlanta region's household median income (\$57,792). In addition, 22.6 percent of households in the corridor were below the federal poverty level, compared to 13.7 percent of Atlanta region households.

**Station Areas:** Station area median incomes ranged from a low of \$30,763 at the Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station area to \$51,376 at the Indian Creek station area. Household incomes in the Indian Creek, Covington Highway, Wesley Chapel Road, and Panola Road station areas were higher than the corridor average (see Figure 6-2).

**Figure 6-1:** Age Distribution by Station Area and Corridor, 2016



**Figure 6-2:** Median Household Income by Station Area and Corridor, 2016



## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

**Corridor:** The number of people who pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing is a key metric used in measuring the extent of housing affordability. In the Atlanta region, 34 percent of the households pay more than 30 percent of their annual income toward housing costs—including rent, mortgage, and property tax payments—and approximately 16 percent of households pay more than 50 percent. Currently, more than 45 percent of I-20 East Corridor households pay more than 30 percent of their annual income toward housing costs, and nearly 23 percent of households pay more than 50 percent. Over 50 percent of renter households in the corridor pay 30 percent or more of their income toward housing.

**Station Areas:** Owner households in the Covington Highway, Panola Road, and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station areas have housing cost-burden rates over the corridor average, and owner households in the Wesley Chapel Road and Stonecrest Mall station areas have housing cost-burden rates lower than corridor average.

Stonecrest Mall is the only station area in which fewer than 50 percent of renter households are cost burdened. Rates of severely cost-burdened renter households are higher in the Covington Highway, Wesley Chapel Road, and Stonecrest Mall station areas than for the overall corridor.

The Covington Highway and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station areas have the highest rates of housing cost burdens in the corridor. More than one-half of all households in these areas are cost burdened, and over one-fourth of households pay more than 50 percent of their annual incomes toward housing costs.

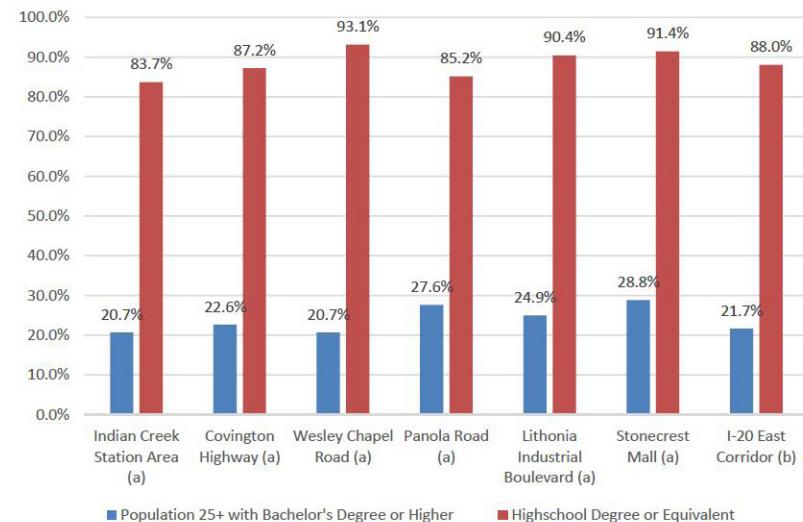
Based on current income levels, residential prices, and projected population growth rates, the Indian Creek, Panola Road, and Stonecrest Mall station areas have the greatest potential for short-term residential and commercial development. MARTA-corridor development will likely benefit development in the Covington Highway and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station areas as well, but this development is projected to take place in the longer term.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

**Corridor:** Educational attainment is an indicator of an area's ability to attract national commercial tenants. While 88 percent of the corridor population ages 25 and older has a high school degree or higher, 21.7 percent of the corridor population has a bachelor's degree or higher, while 36.6 percent of the Atlanta region population ages 25 and older has a bachelor's degree or higher.

**Station Areas:** Wesley Chapel Road station area population has a higher median age, a higher high school graduation rate, and less college attainment than other station areas. The Indian Creek station area population has a higher median income and a lower high school and college attainment rate than other station areas. Conversely, the Covington Highway and Stonecrest Mall station area populations have both higher college attainment and median income levels (see Figure 6-3).

**Figure 6-3:** Educational Attainment of Residents over 25 Years by Station Area and Corridor, 2016



## EMPLOYMENT

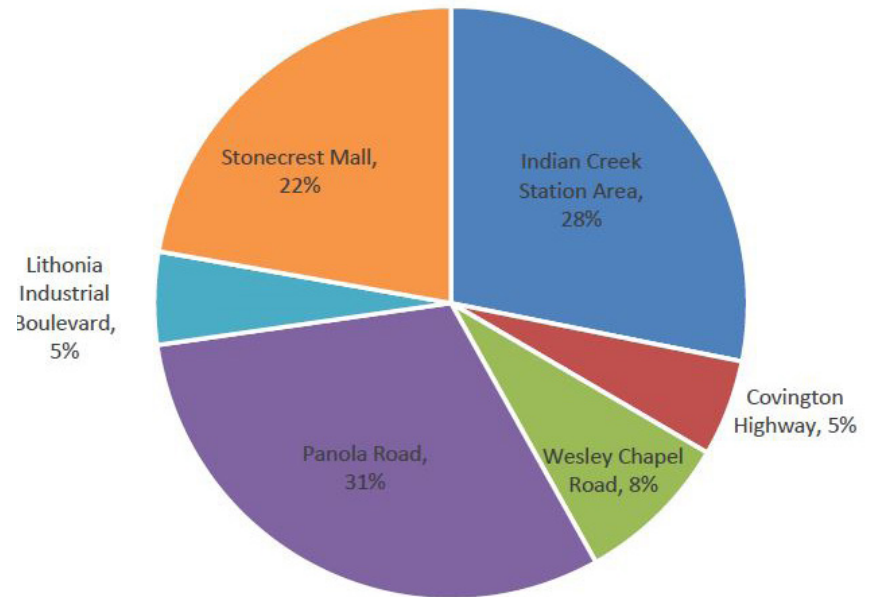
**Corridor:** As in the Atlanta region, the largest percentage of employed corridor residents living near station areas work in office/administrative support occupations, industries in which employees in the Atlanta MSA earn an average of \$37,590 annually. Major employment sectors in the corridor include public administration, retail trade, leisure and hospitality, and health care and social assistance, with more than 10 percent of total corridor employment in each. There is a significantly smaller percentage of working corridor residents and regional residents employed in higher paying sectors such as healthcare practitioner/technician and education/training/library. Training programs that focus on higher paying occupations may help to increase wages in the corridor.

**Station Areas:** Together, the following three station areas contain 81 percent of the corridor's jobs: Panola Road (31 percent), Indian Creek (28 percent), and Stonecrest Mall (22 percent). These areas may be suitable for TODs that build on existing job concentrations.

Most retail jobs are in the Stonecrest Mall and Panola Road station areas (47 percent and 36 percent, respectively). Retail at these locations could anchor new residential and commercial developments. Leisure and hospitality uses likewise increase desirability for new housing and commercial uses and tend to locate within walking distance of retail and restaurants and near hospitals and commercial centers.

More than half of healthcare and social assistance jobs are in the Panola Road station area. Medical campuses often support retail and hotel uses as well as residential and senior housing developments. Hospitals are increasingly taking steps to integrate further into surrounding residential communities; medical facilities are creating more open campuses to facilitate pedestrian access, hosting farmers' markets to provide fresh produce to the area, and restricting ambulance sirens in residential neighborhoods (see Figure 6-4).

**Figure 6-4:** Share of Total Corridor Employment, 2016



## TRANSIT RELIANCE

**Corridor:** In the Atlanta region, 3.2 percent of residents use transit as a means of transportation to work. In comparison, 13.7 percent of corridor residents use transit to get to work.

In the Atlanta region, 59.3 percent of households have at least two available vehicles, and 93.8 percent of households have at least one available vehicle. In the corridor, only 37.7 percent of households have at least two available vehicles, and only 86.5 percent of households have at least one available vehicle.

**Station Areas:** All station areas have at least 10 percent of the resident population taking transit to work, except for the Stonecrest Mall station area, which sees less than 1 percent transit ridership to work.

The Wesley Chapel Road station area has the highest vehicle availability, since 56.7 percent of households have at least two vehicles available, and 92.5 percent of households have at least one vehicle available. The Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station area has the lowest vehicle availability of the corridor, since 27.8 percent of households have at least two vehicles available, and 84.6 percent of households have at least one vehicle available.

## 6.2.2 REAL ESTATE MARKET TRENDS

Real estate market trends, along with vulnerability metrics, determine whether a station area can attract new development in the short term, and whether that new development risks displacing existing residents and/or businesses.

### RESIDENTIAL MARKETS

**Corridor:** Housing prices within DeKalb County are higher than those in the corridor, both among residential sales and rental prices. The median home sale price for the corridor is \$115,000, which is less than the DeKalb County median of \$207,500 Corridor. The average rental price is \$860 per month for the corridor, but \$1,089 per month for the region.

Currently, the corridor contains more renter-occupied (58.8 percent) than owner-occupied (41.2 percent) housing units, indicating vulnerability to displacement as increasing property values cause increased rents.

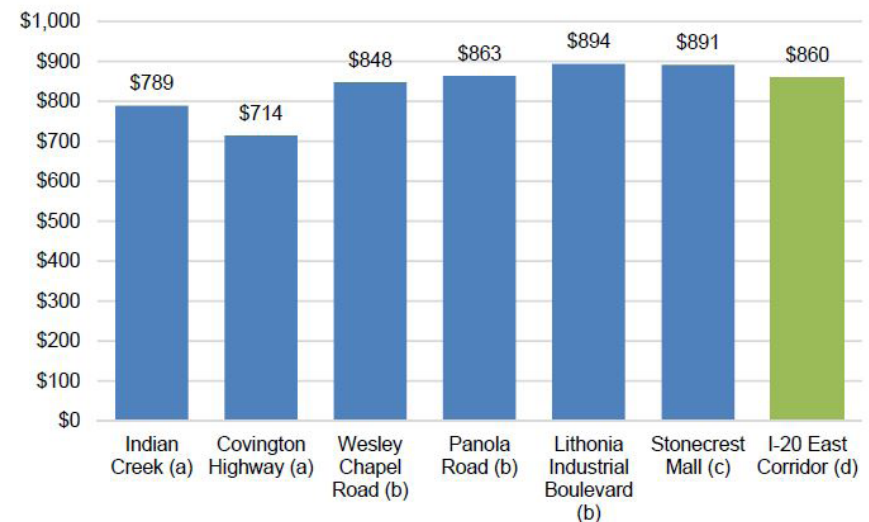
**Station Areas:** Within the I-20 East Corridor, the Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station area has the highest median home sales price (\$134,150),

and all station areas except Stonecrest Mall and Covington Highway have median home sale prices above the corridor average.

The Covington Highway station area has the lowest rents along the corridor (\$714 per month), and rents at the Stonecrest Mall, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Panola Road station areas are higher than the corridor average (\$891, \$894, and \$863 per month, respectively).

Only the Indian Creek and Wesley Chapel Road station areas have more owner households than renter households. Displacement minimization strategies will be especially important in the Stonecrest Mall, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Panola Road station areas (see Figure 6-5).

**Figure 6-5:** Average Monthly Residential Rents, Second Quarter 2017





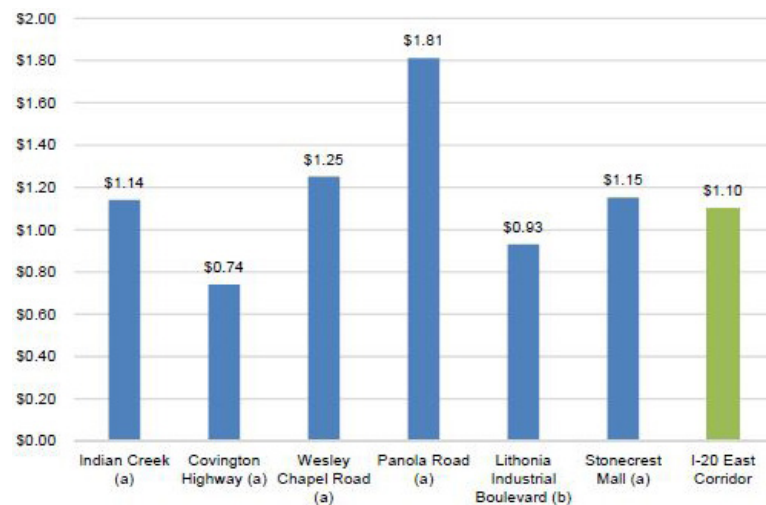
## RETAIL MARKETS

**Corridor:** The average monthly rent per square foot of retail space in both the Atlanta region and the I-20 East Corridor is \$1.10. Within the corridor, the Covington Highway station area has the lowest average retail rent (\$0.74 per square foot) and the Panola Road station area has the highest average retail rent (\$1.81 per square foot).

Retail vacancy rates are not correlated to monthly rents: the Atlanta region has a lower vacancy rate (5.9 percent) than the corridor (6.2 percent).

**Station Areas:** The Panola Road station area has the lowest vacancy rate at 1.1 percent, despite having the highest average retail rent. The Wesley Chapel Road station area has the highest retail vacancy rate at 20.7 percent. Based on rents and vacancy rates, the Panola Road and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard station areas demonstrate demand for additional retail space, but the Wesley Chapel Road station area will likely have trouble attracting additional retail uses (see Figure 6-6).

**Figure 6-6:** Average Monthly Retail Rents per Square Foot, Second Quarter 2017



## OFFICE MARKETS

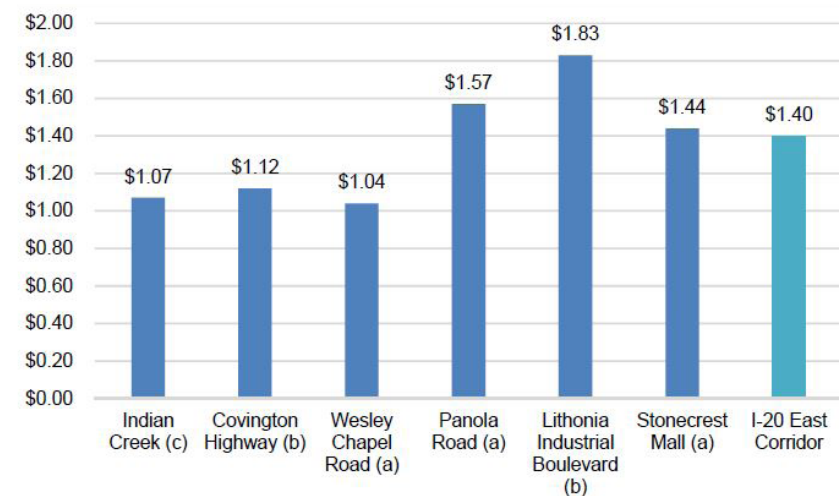
**Corridor:** The average monthly rent per square foot of office space is \$1.86 for the Atlanta region but \$1.41 for the corridor.

Office vacancy rates show similar trends to average office rents; the Atlanta region office vacancy rate (12.5 percent) shows better office space performance than the corridor, which has an 18.5 percent vacancy rate.

**Station Areas:** The lowest average office rent in the corridor is \$1.04 in the Wesley Chapel Road station area; the highest in the corridor is \$1.44 at the Stonecrest Mall station area. Even this highest office rent is significantly lower than the average office rents for the region.

Two station areas within the corridor—Wesley Chapel Road and Panola Road—have vacancy rates lower than 10 percent at 3.2 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively (see Figure 6-7).

**Figure 6-7:** Average Monthly Office Rents per Square Foot, Second Quarter 2017



INDUSTRIAL MARKETS

**Corridor:** Average monthly industrial rents per square foot are similar within the Region and Corridor with rates of \$0.37 and \$0.31, respectively. Additionally, the Corridor has a lower overall vacancy rate (4.7 percent) than the Region (6.9 percent).

**Station Areas:** Three station areas—Indian Creek, Covington Highway, and Lithonia Industrial Boulevard—have zero industrial vacancies despite having a large inventory of industrial square footage. By contrast, the Panola Road station area has a 14.6 percent industrial vacancy rate.

6.2.3 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTIONS

Development projections are based on current unmet demand and projected demand from future growth.

HOUSING, OFFICE, AND RETAIL GROWTH

**Residential:** According to estimates from the ARC, residential demand along the corridor will reach approximately 4,760 to 5,600 units by 2030 and 8,660 to 11,110 units by 2040. This level of demand reflects approximately 12 to 15 percent of DeKalb County’s overall housing unit demand for the next two decades.

**Office:** The corridor currently has a weak office market, comprising low rents and high vacancy rates. However, low estimates show projected demand for 196,050 additional square feet of office by 2030 and 363,700 square feet of office by 2040. This reflects 3.4 percent of DeKalb County’s overall net new office demand.

**Retail:** Based on a retail leakage analysis, the corridor and its associated neighborhood retail trade and community retail trade areas are relatively

well-served by existing retail offerings and will rely on future population and employment growth to support additional retail sales. Based on projected population growth and a 40 percent retail capture rate, the corridor could support 193,190 square feet of retail space by 2040. At an 80 percent capture rate, the corridor could support approximately 461,220 square feet of new retail space by 2040.

**Station Areas:** Within the I-20 East Corridor, the station areas will absorb a predicted 25 to 50 percent of total corridor demand, resulting in up to 2,800 new residential units, up to 150,000 square feet of retail development, and up to 213,100 square feet of office space by 2030 (see Table 6-4).

Table 6-4: Summary of Potential Demand for Housing, Retail, and Office, I-20 East Corridor Station Areas, 2030 and 2040

	LOW ESTIMATE		HIGH ESTIMATE	
	2030	2040	2030	2040
<b>Residential</b>				
Total New Housing Unit Demand	4,759	8,658	5,593	11,114
Station Area Capture Rate	25%	25%	50%	50%
New Housing Unit Demand	1,1190	2,164	2,797	5,557
<b>Retail</b>				
Total New Retail Demand	113,082	193,190	301,000	461,216
Less: Planned and Proposed Retail	25%	25%	50%	50%
New Retail Demand	28,271	48,298	150,500	230,608
<b>Office</b>				
Total New Office Demand	196,047	363,696	426,216	715,045
Less: Planned and Proposed Office (s.f)	25%	25%	50%	50%
New Office Demand (s.f)	49,012	90,924	213,108	357,622
Sources: ARC, 2015; BAE, 2017				

## 6.3 EQUITABLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Equitable TOD requires that all users have safe and equal access to transit, housing, and services. TOD can both improve conditions for current residents and attract new residents and businesses by providing missing services and amenities.

### TRANSIT:

- Of the residential parcels within walking distance of a bus stop, 67.1 percent are within a 10-minute walk, but 10.9 percent are farther than a 15-minute walk.
- Of the residential parcels within driving distance of a commuter transit stop, 95.8 percent in the corridor are within a 10-minute drive—either the Panola Road Xpress Park and Ride lot or the MARTA Indian Creek rail station. All residential parcels are within a 15-minute drive of a commuter transit stop.

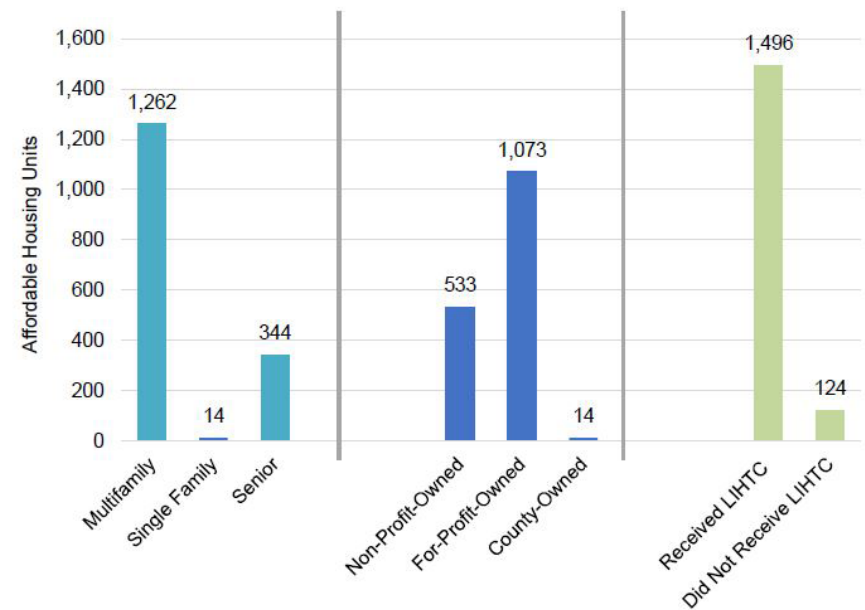
### AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

- Displacement is a threat to current residents along this corridor. Residents tend to be cost burdened, and station areas will be at risk of increased housing costs due to new development and area demand.
- There are 1,620 units of affordable housing in the corridor, most which are in multifamily developments.
- There are no mixed-income apartment buildings; all affordable residential developments are 100 percent affordable.
- Two-thirds of the corridor's affordable units are owned by for-profit entities, and over 90 percent of units were developed using Low

Income Housing Tax Credits. All the privately owned affordable units in the corridor will face expired price restrictions by 2025, so the future quantity of affordable units is at risk.

- Policies and programs that both preserve units and enable renovations will be important in this corridor. Some affordable units are in sub-par condition.
- There are 1,816 voucher recipient households in the corridor who reside in market-rate units, which equates to 4.5 percent of corridor households receiving Housing Choice Vouchers—nearly triple the percentage of Atlanta region households with vouchers (see Figure 6-8).

**Figure 6-8:** Characteristics of Affordable Housing Units in the I-20 East Corridor



## SERVICES:

- More than 90 percent of corridor households are within a 10-minute drive of all facilities and services measured, excluding hospitals. These include health care facilities, emergency safety, workforce training facilities, supermarkets, retail, and banks.
- Proximity does not necessarily indicate quality of facility or service; although 100 percent of residents are within a 10-minute drive of a school, the average corridor school ranked in the 19.8th percentile within the state of Georgia.
- A location is considered well served by greenspace if it is within a half-mile (or a 10-minute walk) of greenspace. Only 59.4 percent of corridor residential parcels are located within a half-mile of greenspace.

### 6.3.1 VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

Vulnerability measures the extent to which residents rely on transit, based on median household income, and percentage of zero-car households, renters, and walk/bike/transit commuters. Depending on the prevalence of each of these factors, station areas are classified as one of the following:

- **High Vulnerability** areas have a high percentage of low-income and transit-oriented vulnerable populations.
- **Moderate Vulnerability** areas have a mix of incomes and a moderate percentage of transit-oriented vulnerable populations.
- **Low Vulnerability** areas have a low percentage of low-income and transit-oriented vulnerable populations.

The I-20 East Corridor falls into the Moderate to High Vulnerability categories. The corridor has a lower median income than the county and Atlanta region: more than half of households rent their units, and 13.5 percent of households do not have access to a vehicle.

### 6.3.2 MARKET STRENGTH AND TOD SUITABILITY

Real estate markets were analyzed—based on demographic trends, employment density, industry wages, median income, and availability of TOD sites—to determine if development pressures could result in displacement. Markets are classified as one of the following:

- **Mature Market** is the most urban with a range of high-density uses over the decades. Transit adds to development potential but is not an essential catalyst.
- **Emerging Market** has urban attributes, and future real estate development will capitalize on transit access to further aid in urban infill.
- **Emerging Potential Market** is positioned to benefit from TOD but has not yet attracted large amounts of mixed-use developments.
- **Lagging Market** lacks the attributes likely to attract developers in a market-rate environment.

The I-20 East Corridor falls into the Lagging Market category based on its weak commercial and residential markets compared to the county and Atlanta region. The corridor has lower prices and rent and higher vacancy rates as well as lower median incomes than the county and region.

## 6.4 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Realizing full development potential in the corridor will require land use policies that focus development densities around the proposed train stations, and jurisdictions should expect to support catalyst projects that will draw a critical mass around each station area. Jurisdictions will also need to evaluate local equity conditions to minimize displacement of residents and businesses.

### HOUSING

Low-income corridor residents tend to be cost burdened, are subject to high foreclosure rates, and often lack capital to purchase a home. Compounding these obstacles, the corridor's affordable-housing developments' price restrictions are set to expire within the next decade and are often in sub-par condition, and will not be numerous enough to meet needs brought on by projected population growth.

Resources should therefore go toward the following:

- Preserving affordable housing stock
- Assisting struggling homeowners with costs
- Assisting potential home buyers with down payments
- Prioritizing the affordable housing developments in greatest need of renovations
- Providing additional housing units of different sizes and affordability levels.

These strategies will help stabilize the corridor, retain residents who could reap the benefits of new transit, and provide for long-term residents who are invested in their neighborhoods.

### EMPLOYMENT

The I-20 East Corridor has relatively high unemployment rates and relatively low median household incomes, and many residents have long commute distances. Increasing well-paying job opportunities will serve to increase incomes as well as decrease commute times for existing residents and will also attract outside employees to grow the retail customer base. The corridor is well suited to increasing job opportunities in the healthcare, logistics, advanced industrial, and film production industries.

The healthcare sector provides well-paying jobs, and 18.2 percent of corridor residents already work in this field. In addition to an already skilled workforce, Emory Healthcare is the Official Sports Medicine Partner in the Sports City project currently under development in the Stonecrest station area and will likely create more industry jobs.

The corridor is located close to the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and has relatively low rents and ample vacant commercial and industrial space. Accordingly, logistics and aviation businesses are well suited to this corridor, especially as e-commerce expands and requires smaller and more geographically distributed warehouse spaces. Low rents and vacant commercial and industrial spaces are also suitable for advanced industrial businesses as well as film and entertainment firms, particularly independent and start-up companies in need of lower-cost industrial spaces.

### HEALTHCARE

The corridor has only one hospital and two walk-in urgent-care centers. Additional medical facilities would ensure increased access to services for residents and would also increase the number of available healthcare jobs.



## TRANSIT

Implementation of a high-capacity transit improvement along the I-20 East corridor will improve transit accessibility within the corridor. However, transit access to locations more than a half-mile away from a transit station may still be an obstacle. Currently, 10.9 percent of corridor residents do not live within a 15-minute walk of an existing public transit stop. MARTA has formed a partnership with the rideshare service Uber to address first-/last-mile transit issues. The corridor and county may consider subsidizing this service for corridor residents to better accommodate lower income residents.

The corridor should include improvements that will benefit pedestrians and bicyclists, including bike lanes and traffic calming measures. This will both encourage active transportation and increase “eyes on the street” to increase public safety. Corridor improvements should also include transportation considerations for seniors; the fastest-growing age group in the corridor comprises people aged 65 and over who would benefit from transportation services to grocery stores and other community services.

## AMENITIES

Existing retail is generally of lower quality, with many dollar stores and mobile-phone retailers. Many corridor residents have limited access to supermarkets owing to lack of vehicle access and geographic distance to a grocery store. Incentivizing development of higher quality retail and grocery stores would both improve quality of life for existing residents and potentially attract additional residential and commercial development.

Small-format stores located on TOD ground floors would cater to existing and new residents as well as transit riders accessing the station. TODs considering grocery stores must allow for appropriate sizing and layout of the retail space.

Because only 59.4 percent of residential parcels are within a half-mile of greenspace, the corridor would benefit from additional parks and other open space amenities. Implementing greenspace at future MARTA rail stations would make the areas more pleasant and benefit the multifamily developments, efficiently providing amenities to a potentially large number of corridor residents.

## EQUITABLE TOD RECOMMENDATIONS

Areas with high vulnerability and weak markets are unlikely to see short-term market-based investments. Investments from the city and region will be required and should emphasize community needs and opportunities. Corridor station areas could benefit substantially from improved access to jobs and destinations via transit, and improving access to these transit stations through infrastructure investments and community assets is most appropriate for the corridor.

The station area-by-station area recommendations are summarized in Table 6-5.

**Table 6-5: TOD Equity Summary Chart**

STATION AREA	RECOMMENDED STATION AREA TYPOLOGIES	PROJECTED TOTAL LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY (SQ. FT.)	KEY DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>*Indian Creek</b>	Main street retail, dense residential	2 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public access to Indian Creek</li> <li>Green corridor</li> <li>Central public space anchor and connection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grow affordable housing stock</li> <li>Increase retail options</li> <li>Improve connectivity between residential parcels and parcels with other land uses</li> <li>Create safe and pleasant connections between Indian Creek MARTA station and destinations inside I-285</li> </ul>
<b>Covington Highway</b>	Town center, retail anchor	2 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase Anchor on Covington Highway</li> <li>New retail uses and gathering space</li> <li>Public spaces to focus development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement equitable TOD (may require public subsidies)</li> <li>Increase multifamily affordable housing stock</li> <li>Upgrade retail options</li> <li>Prioritize existing obsolete commercial spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Wesley Chapel Road</b>	Business center, commuter center	4 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business center/job-creating uses</li> <li>Redevelop retail in a 21st century business destination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in preserving housing affordability, especially of the Wesley Club Apartments whose LIHTC expires December 2018</li> <li>Upgrade existing office space, increase retail selection and quality, especially the Chapel Hall Shopping Center</li> <li>Make the area more pedestrian-friendly</li> <li>Increase greenspace</li> </ul>
<b>Panola Road</b>	Support existing employers	4 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance industrial and business area</li> <li>Bridge gaps between quadrants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preserve the affordability of existing non-profit developments, especially Alice Williams Towers</li> <li>Increase retail options</li> <li>Provide safe pedestrian crossing locations on I-20 and Panola Road</li> <li>Increase greenspace</li> </ul>
<b>Lithonia Industrial Blvd.</b>	Corporate headquarters, dense townhouse	2 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a campus for corporate headquarters</li> <li>Plan for high-density housing to complement corporate headquarters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement equitable TOD (will require public subsidies)</li> <li>Invest in preserving affordable housing</li> <li>Expand employment, including at Lithonia Industrial Park</li> </ul>
<b>*Mall at Stonecrest</b>	Live, work, play	4 Million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate Sports City facilities with mixed-use main street</li> <li>Complement existing uses and connect with pedestrian networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase and diversify employment in sectors other than retail</li> <li>Implement dense, mixed-use development</li> <li>Promote station area walkability</li> </ul>

\* Priority stations for early development

# I-20 EAST TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) COMMUNITY PLAN

## SECTION 1

November 2019

