

APPENDIX F:

BETHESDA SMALL AREA PLAN



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

BETHESDA

SMALL AREA PLAN

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

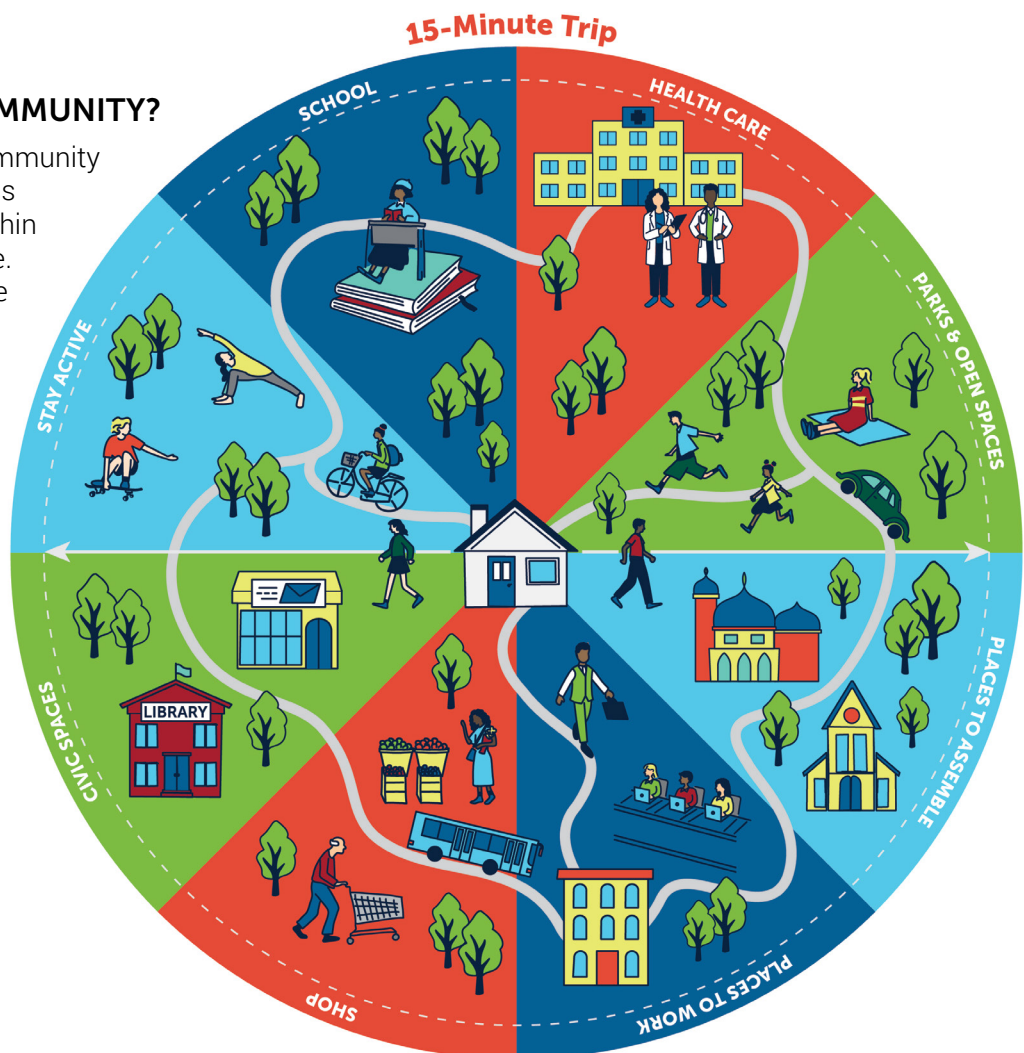
IMAGINING A DAILY COMMUNITY FOR GWINNETT

Gwinnett County's communities are looking to reach their full potential. While the County's predominant development pattern — suburban strip-style retail centers surrounded by single-family neighborhoods — suits some residents' needs, the Gwinnett County 2045 Unified Plan indicated that this form of development is not flexible or dense enough to accommodate Gwinnett's projected population growth. Moreover, residents have shared through public engagement activities that they would like to have goods, services, entertainment, public space, and other amenities closer to where they live. They seek a true Daily Community.

The features comprising a Daily Community vary across Gwinnett. As envisioned by the 2045 Unified Plan, some Daily Communities are more urban, characterized by a rich mix of dense housing, retail, and workplace uses. Several Daily Communities in Gwinnett consist of a central, mixed-use core surrounded by neighborhoods, supported by pedestrian, transit, and trails that improve connectivity within and between each area. Every Daily Community looks different, based on its size and scale, as well as its location and anticipated access to infrastructure.

WHAT IS THE DAILY COMMUNITY?

The Daily Community is a community in which a resident can access work, goods, and services within a 15-minute trip of their home. The 2045 Unified Plan's future development framework uses this concept as its foundation, making space for the diversity of residents and places within Gwinnett County.

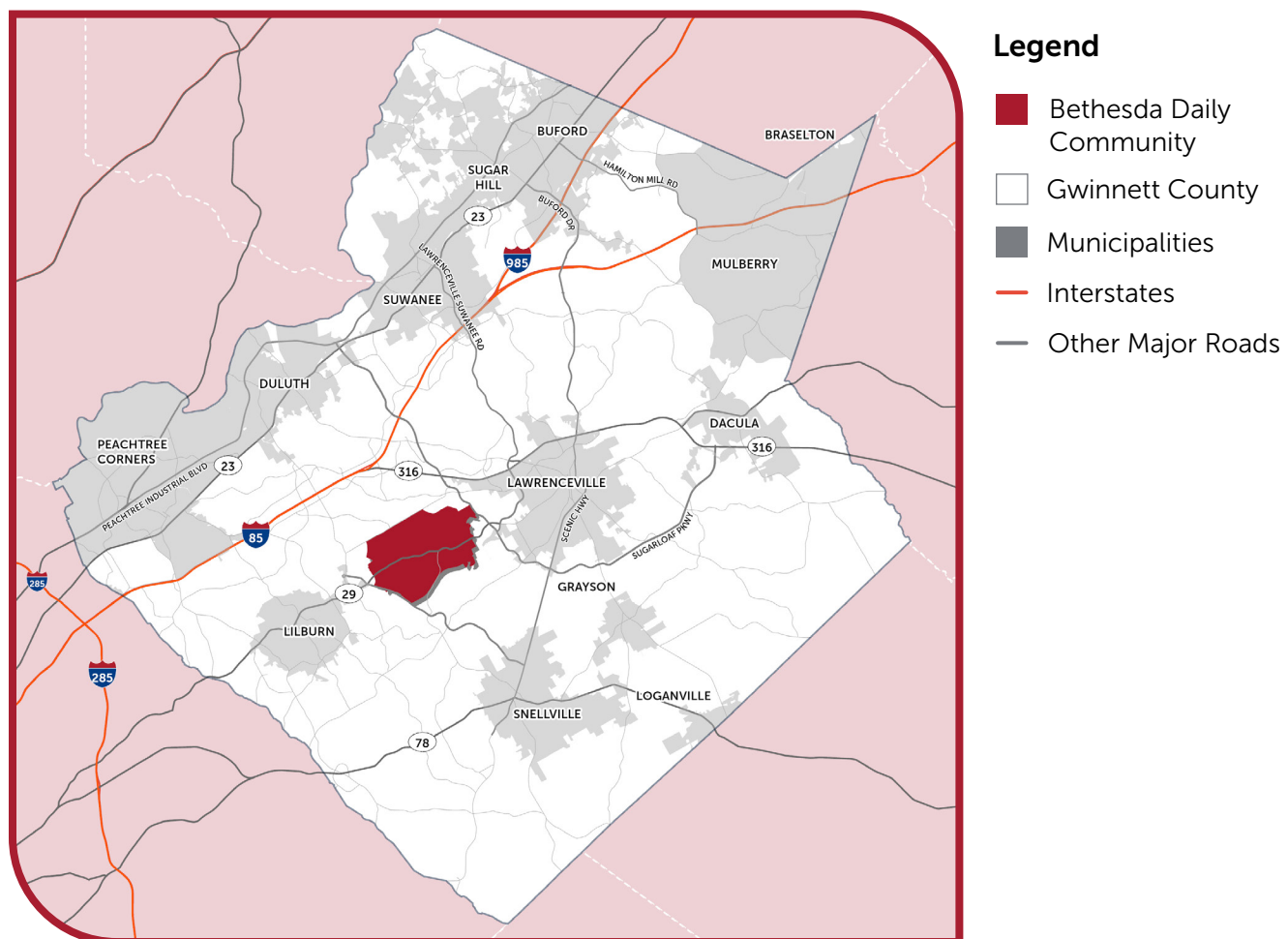


WELCOME TO BETHESDA

The 2045 Unified Plan uses the Daily Community Framework to provide clear, specific guidance for development in order to create great places, accommodate growth, and strengthen communities. Through the 2045 Unified Plan process, 87 unique Daily Communities were identified within unincorporated Gwinnett County. The Bethesda community, encompassing the section of Highway 29 between Lilburn and Lawrenceville, is one of these Daily Communities.

Promoting redevelopment efforts on underutilized land within central parts of these Daily Communities can address multiple growth-related needs, including housing, retail, open space, transportation infrastructure, job opportunities, and other desired components of a community. Focusing development in these areas can also reduce growth pressure on Gwinnett's undeveloped land and maintain the integrity of existing neighborhoods.

As Gwinnett grows, creative solutions will be necessary for building strong communities. This small area plan provides information, ideas, and potential implementation steps to develop a healthy Daily Community in Bethesda.



Community Profile

The Bethesda Daily Community is centered along Highway 29, also known as Lawrenceville Highway, between Lawrenceville and Lilburn. Most of Bethesda was developed throughout the 1970s and 1980s, earlier than many areas within unincorporated Gwinnett. Nonresidential uses are concentrated along Highway 29, surrounded mostly by established neighborhoods north and south of the main thoroughfare.

Bethesda is home to approximately 30,000 Gwinnettians. The area has 9,448 households with an average size of 3.2 people per household, above average for Gwinnett County (2.96). Of Bethesda's estimated 9,675 housing units, few are vacant. The median household income of \$68,892 is significantly less than the countywide median of \$82,296.

This area of Gwinnett is considered minority-majority, with over a quarter of the population identifying as African American, 17% identifying as Asian, and 35% identifying as another race or two or more races.

Residents have access to several nearby community resources. Two elementary schools are situated along the main corridor in addition to nearby middle and high schools. Two parks and one fire station are within a half mile of the study area's core.

Highway 29, the main thoroughfare in Bethesda, carries a high volume of through traffic. The high speed of these vehicles, combined with a lack of pedestrian and multimodal connections, make it challenging — and often dangerous — for Bethesda residents to reach the center of the community without access to a car.

WHO IS BETHESDA*?



30,464
residents



9,448
households



3.2
*average
household size*



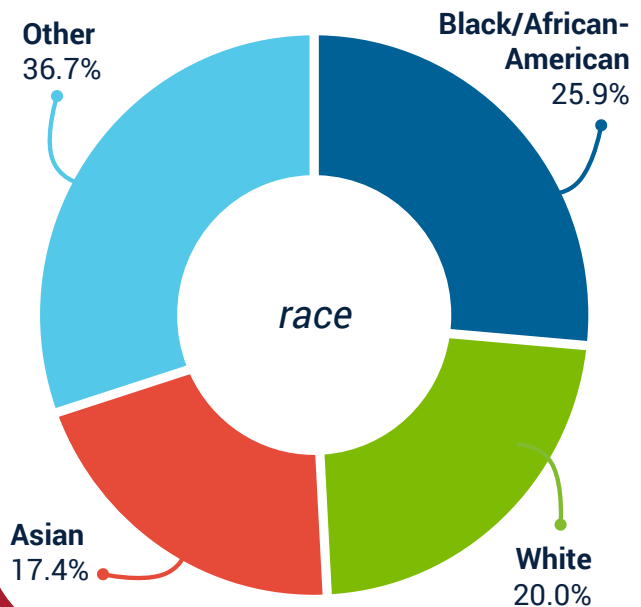
9,675
housing units



\$68,892
*median
household
income*



38%
*graduated from
college*



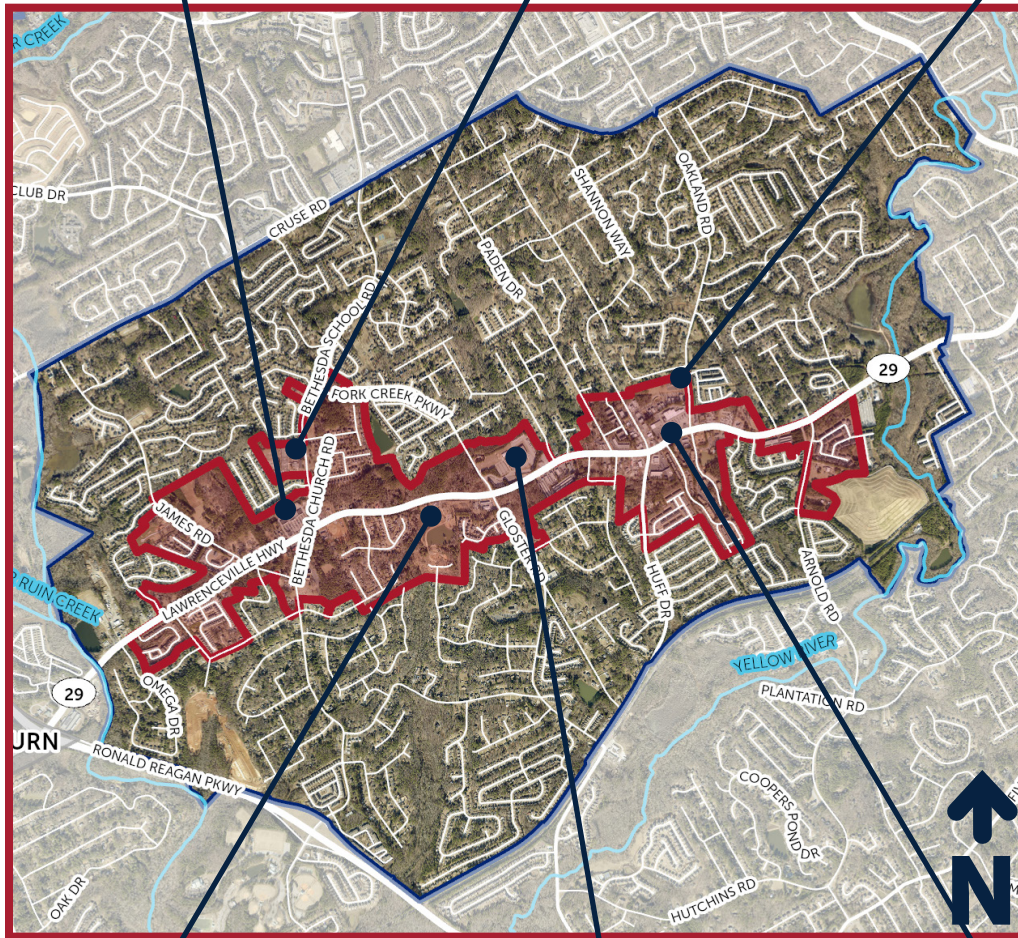
Bethesda Walmart Market



Bethesda Elementary School

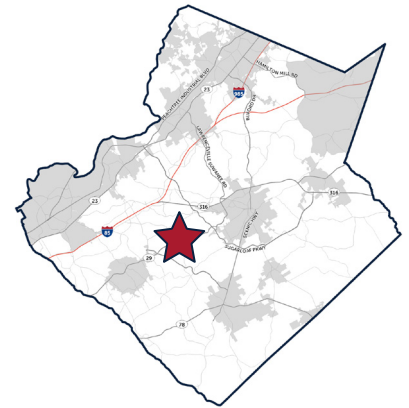


GracePointe Community Church



Bethesda Study Area

- Study Area Boundary
- Study Area Core



Auto-Oriented Uses on Highway 29



Alford Elementary School

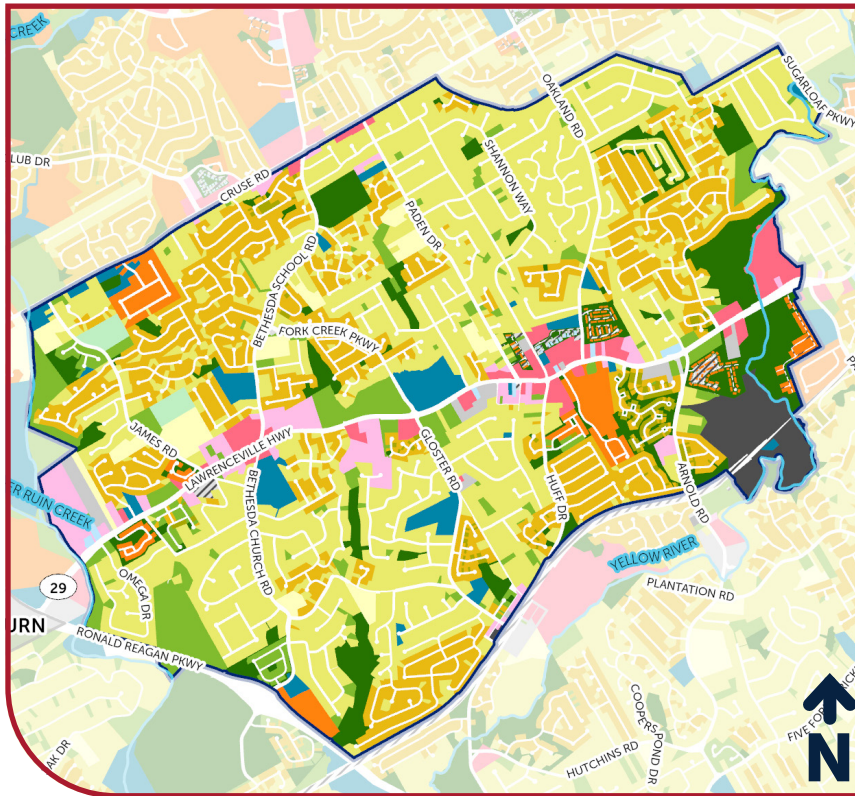


Shannon Oaks Shopping Center

EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

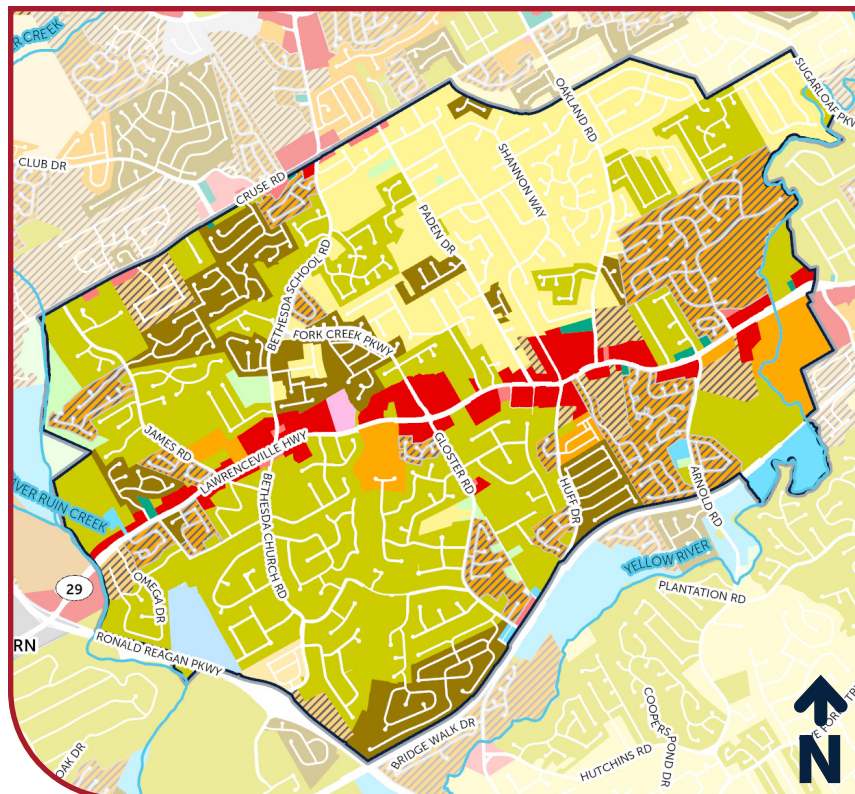
EXISTING LAND USE

Commercial uses proliferate along Highway 29, including several gas stations, auto repair shops, and other auto-oriented uses. Two shopping centers with grocery store anchors and smaller tenants provide goods and services for Bethesda. Alford and Bethesda Elementary Schools are the primary institutional uses along the corridor. The heavy industrial parcels represent the landfill, which is capped. Low-density residential and medium-density residential extend to the north and south of Highway 29, with the northern neighborhoods being less dense overall.



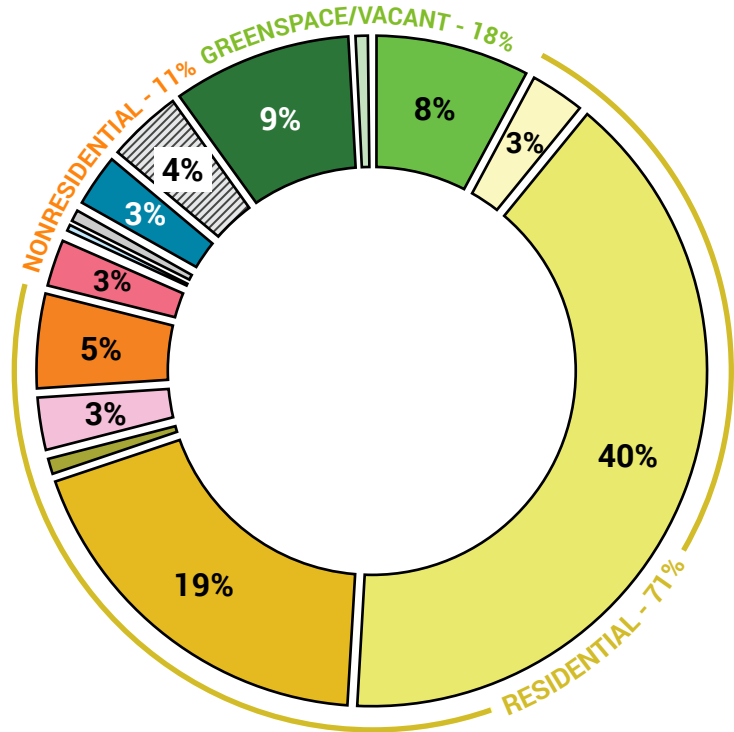
CURRENT ZONING

The primary zoning district in Bethesda is R-75, although several subdivisions zoned R-100 are located between Highway 29 and Cruse Road. Several townhouse developments have been built closer to Lawrenceville, some zoned R-TH while others are zoned RZT, an inactive district that must follow the provisions of the R-TH zoning district. Commercial zoning is concentrated on Highway 29 and mostly consists of C-2 (General Business) with some C-1 (Neighborhood Business) present. Industrial land is mostly confined to the area near Huff Drive, adjacent to the railroad tracks.



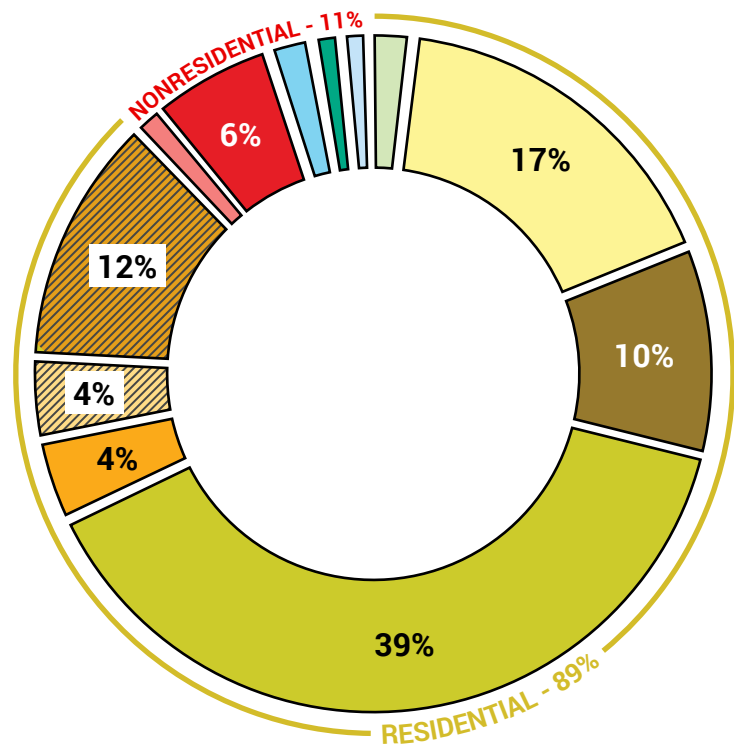
Existing Land Use Legend

- Estate Residential
- Low-Density Residential
- Medium-Density Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Mixed Use
- Multifamily
- Commercial/Retail
- Office/Professional
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Institutional/Public
- Transportation/Communication/Utility
- Park/Recreation/Conservation
- Agriculture
- Undeveloped



Zoning Legend

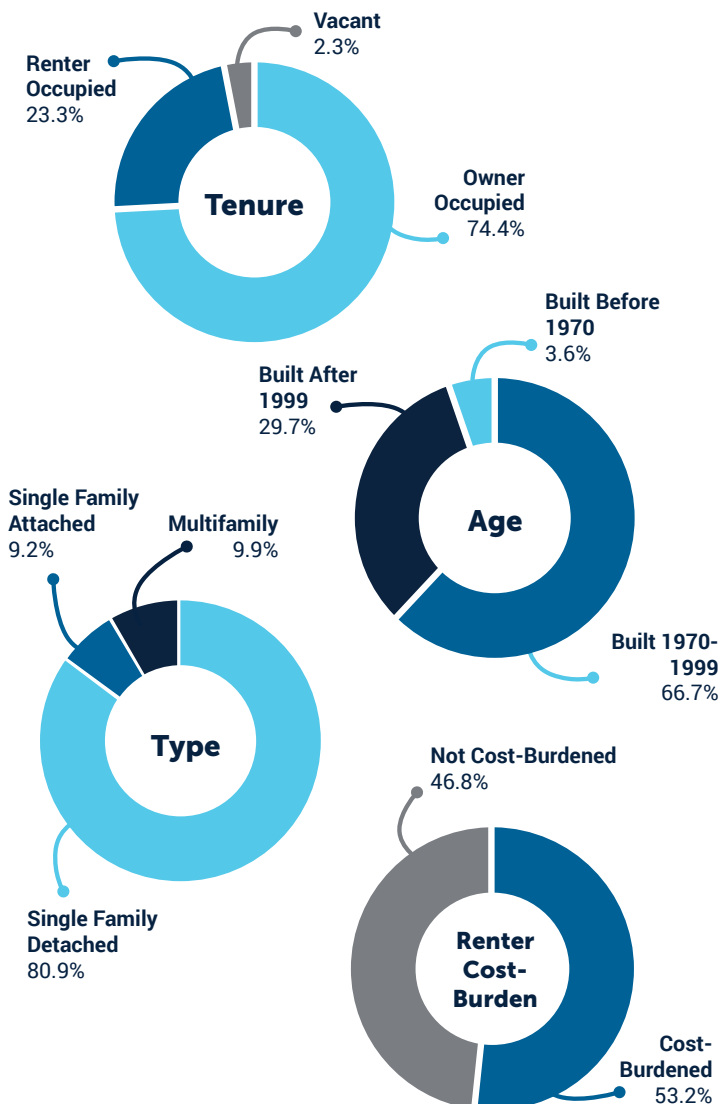
- RA-200 (Agriculture-Residence)
- R-100 (Single-Family Residence)
- R-75 (Single-Family Residence)
- R-60 (Single-Family Residence)
- R-TH (Single-Family Townhouse Residence)
- RM (Inactive)
- R-ZT (Inactive)
- C-1 (Neighborhood Business)
- C-2 (General Business)
- M-1 (Light Industry)
- O-I (Office-Institutional)
- OSC (Open Space Conservation)



HOUSING AT A GLANCE

Housing in Bethesda is primarily single family detached and built between 1970 and 1999. Most of this housing is also owner-occupied. While some single-family detached homes were built after 2000, most new development between 2000 and 2020 has consisted of townhouses.

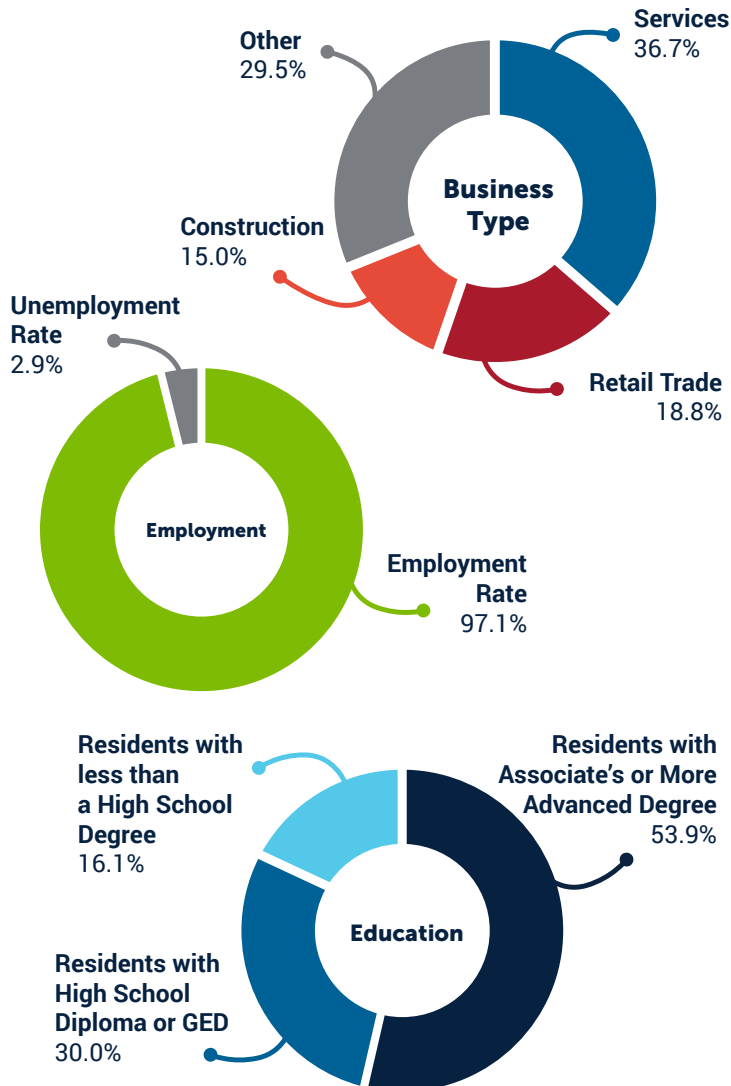
This area faces challenges related to housing affordability, especially for renters. Over half of renters in Bethesda spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs. This percentage is similar to Gwinnett County's overall statistic for cost-burdened renters.



BUSINESSES AND JOBS

Businesses in Bethesda mostly fall into the services and retail sectors. Small- and medium-sized shopping centers are anchored by grocery stores, with auto-oriented services and some restaurants located nearby. Over a quarter of Bethesda's employees work in education services.

Bethesda is highly competitive in two industries: administration/support/waste management (location quotient* of 2.05) and construction (1.96). Bethesda is less competitive in health care and tech, two industries that employ a significant amount of the community's workers but are not prominent in the study area.

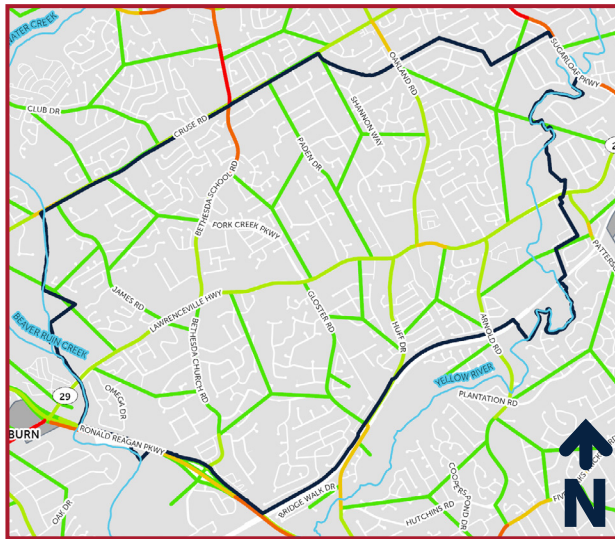


*If the location quotient is greater than 1, it indicates that the industry or occupation has a higher employment concentration in the specific region compared to the national average.

TRANSPORTATION

Legend

- Study Area
- A/B
- C
- D
- E
- F

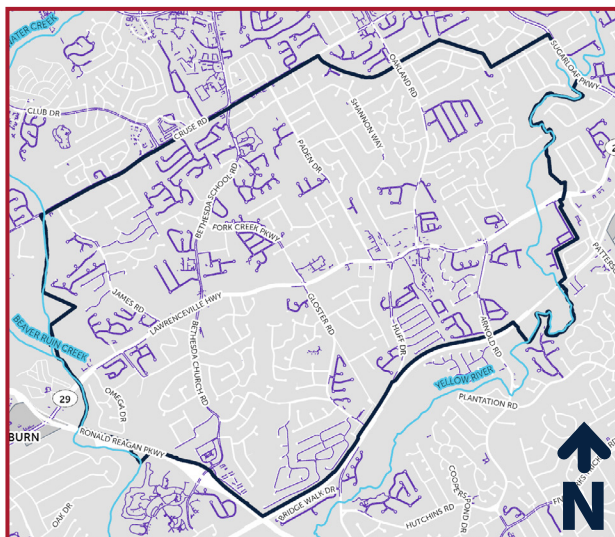


LEVEL OF SERVICE (PEAK PM)

Level of Service is a grade assigned to various degrees of traffic delay. Most of Highway 29, Bethesda's main road corridor, operates at an LOS of C during peak evening hours. This means traffic flow is mostly stable, with roads close to capacity. Portions of Bethesda School Road operate at an LOS of E or F near Cruse Road. An LOS of E or F signifies traffic flow is disrupted and the road is at capacity.

Legend

- Study Area
- Sidewalks

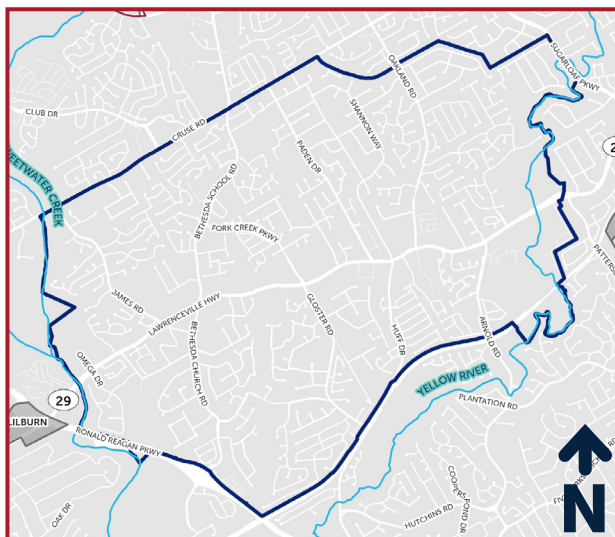


SIDEWALKS

The sidewalks in Bethesda are concentrated in some of the residential neighborhoods, but they do not provide connectivity between those neighborhoods. The longest segment of connected sidewalks is along Bethesda Church Road and Bethesda School Road. These sidewalks connect residents along those two roads to the commercial center at their intersection with Highway 29, as well as Bethesda Elementary School.

Legend

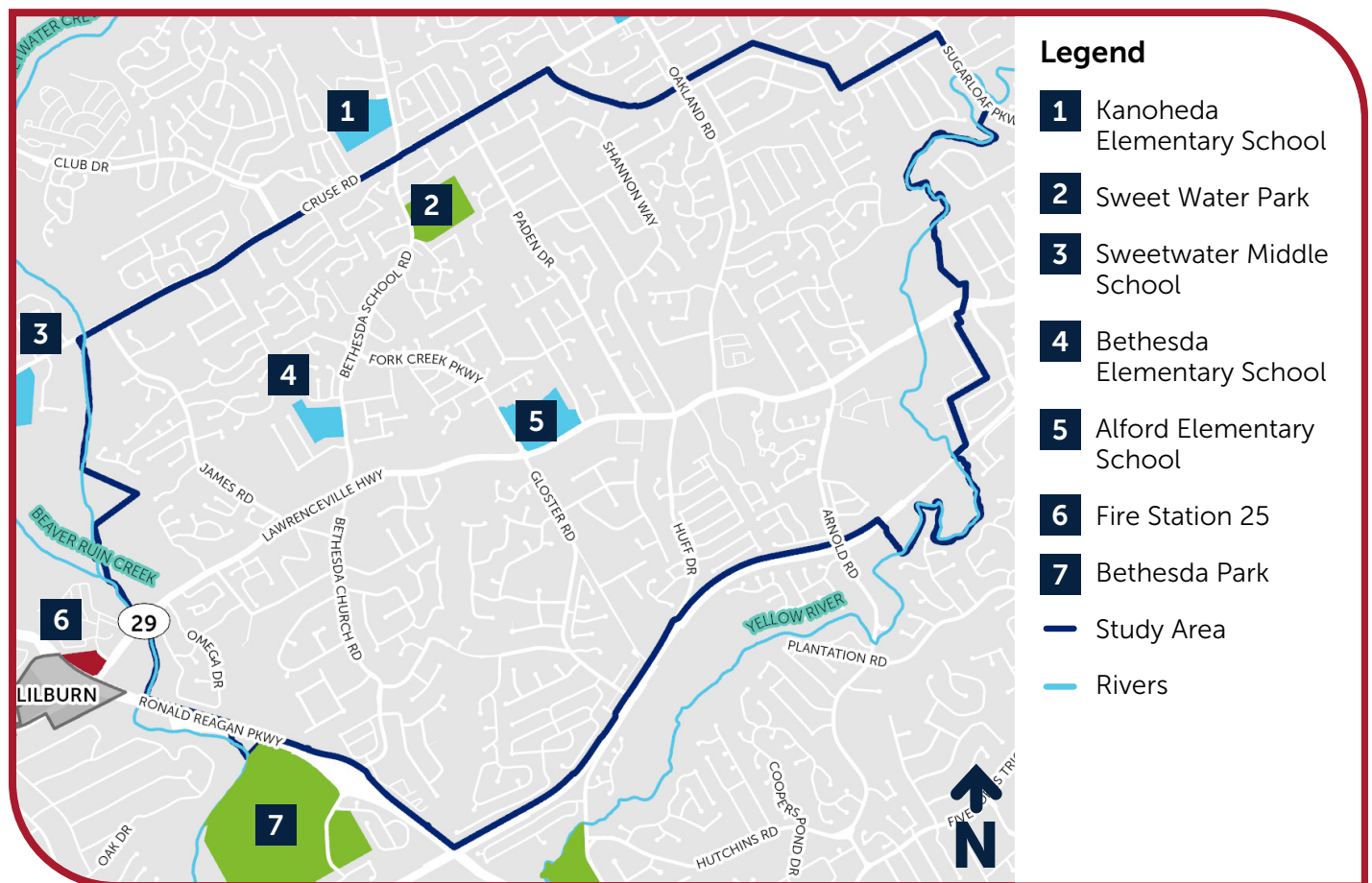
- Study Area



CURRENT TRANSIT

Ride Gwinnett does not currently operate any transit lines within or near the Bethesda Daily Community. Combined with the lack of sidewalk connectivity, the lack of transit options causes residents in the area to be highly dependent on owning personal vehicles.

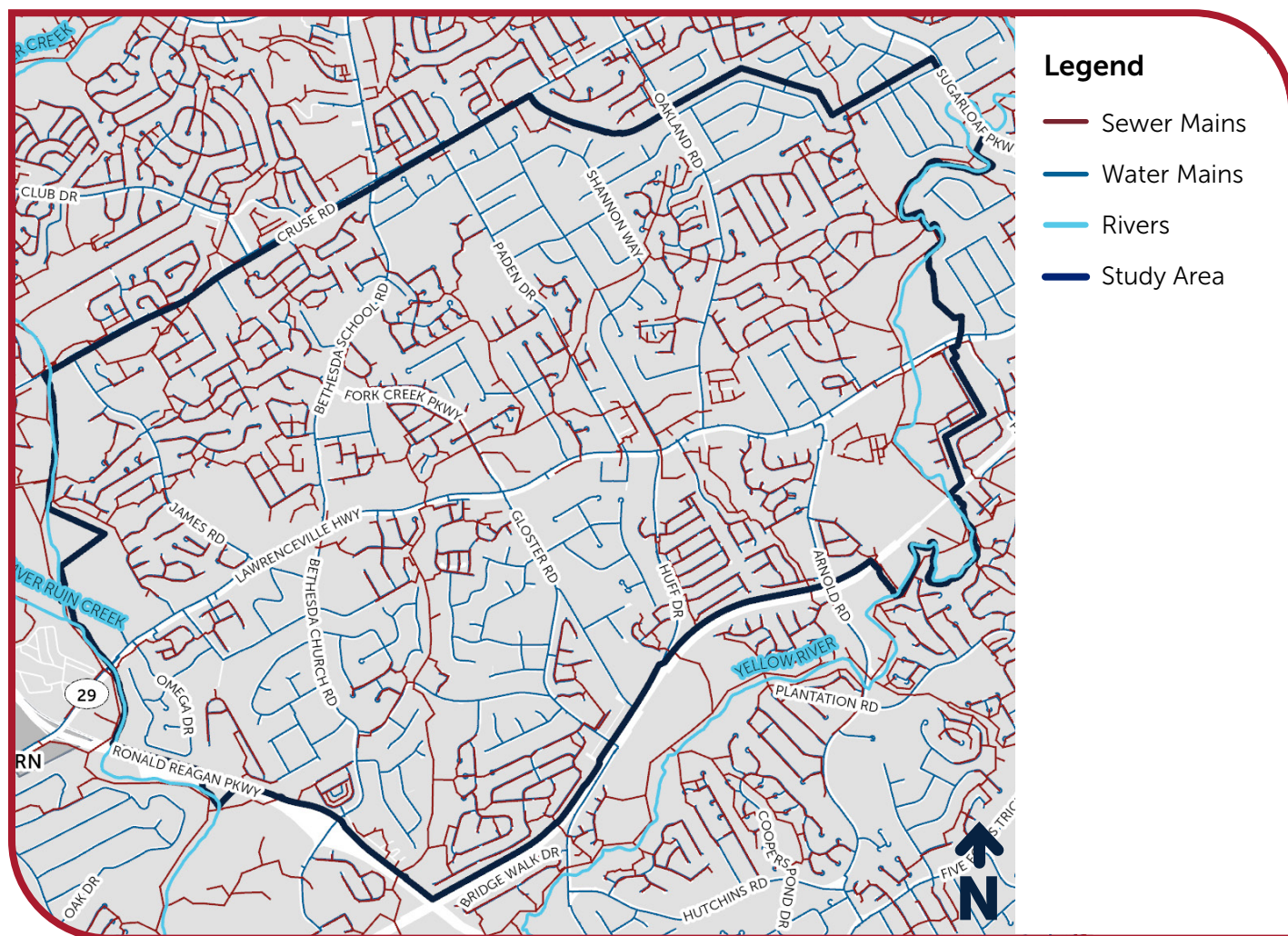
COMMUNITY RESOURCES



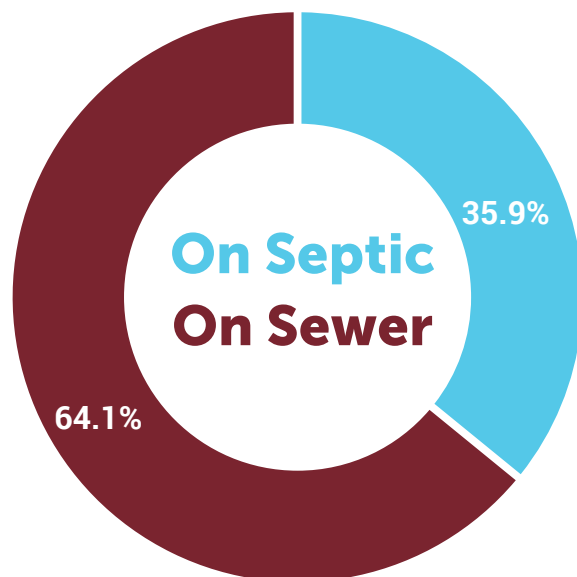
Bethesda's primary community resources are its parks and schools. There are two parks within or near this Daily Community — Sweet Water Park in the north and Bethesda Park just to the southwest of the boundary.

Two elementary schools, Bethesda and Alford, are in this area. Several other schools in the Berkmar and Discovery clusters are also nearby. Fire Station 25, located just northeast of the city of Lilburn's boundary, provides fire safety and emergency services for Bethesda.

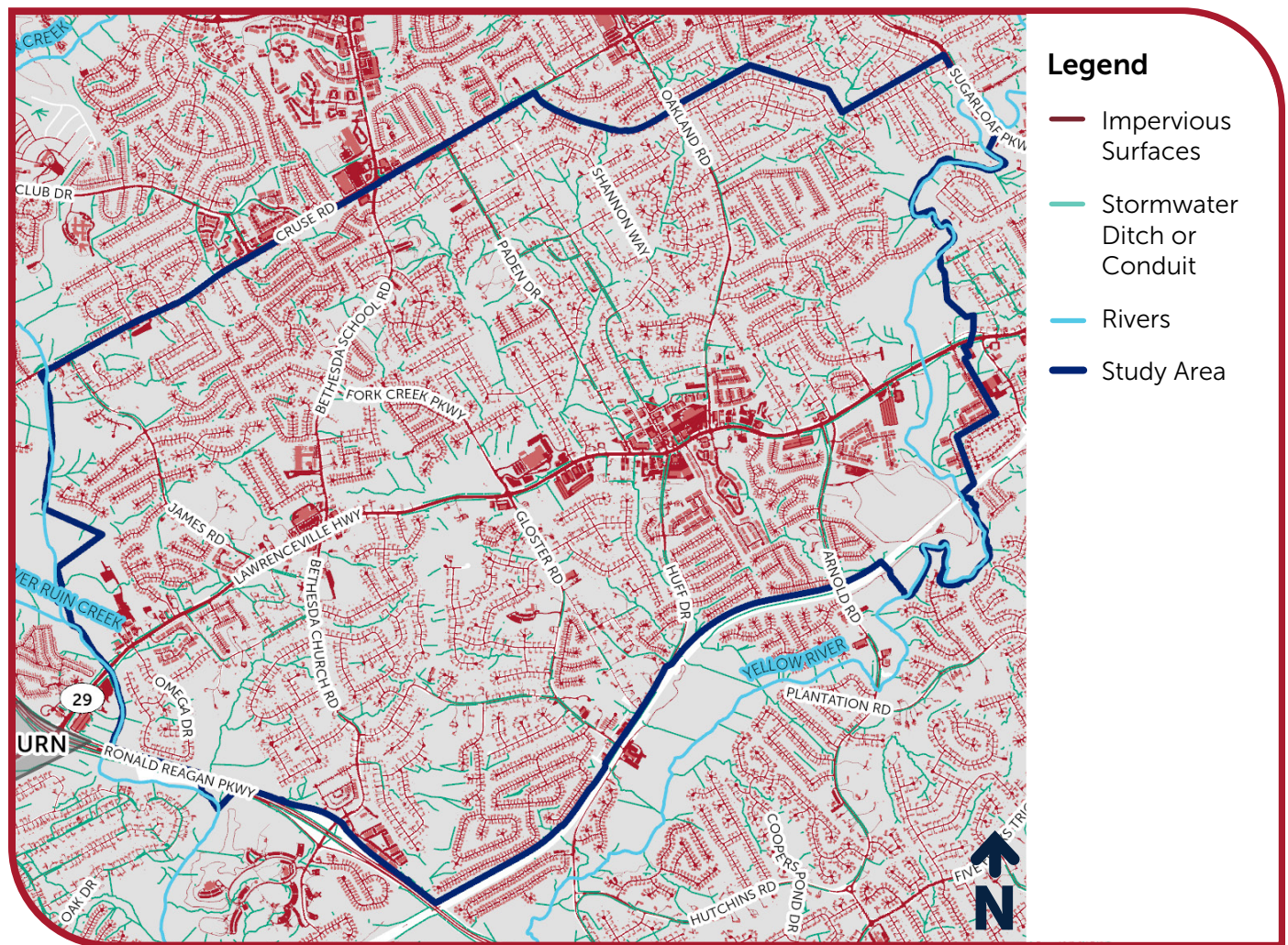
WATER AND SEWER



The majority of structures within Bethesda have access to sewer infrastructure. This is especially true of newer subdivisions north of Highway 29. Several neighborhoods between Ronald Reagan Parkway and Bethesda Church Road, between Gloster Road and Huff Drive, and between Paden Drive and Shannon Way are serviced by private septic tanks. The lack of sewer infrastructure in these areas limits opportunities for more dense development.

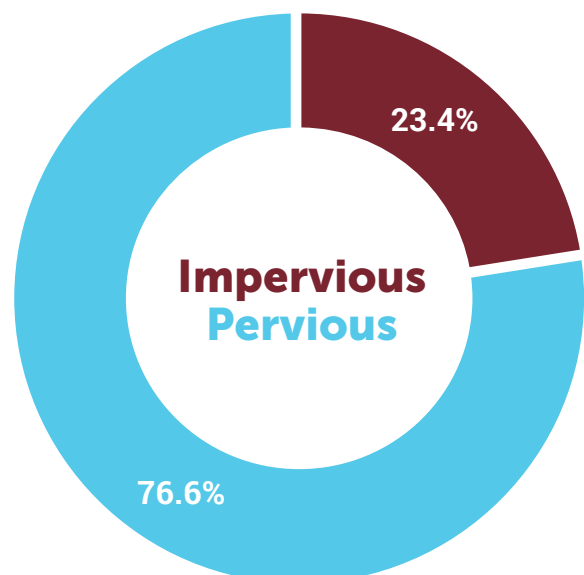


STORMWATER AND IMPERVIOUSNESS

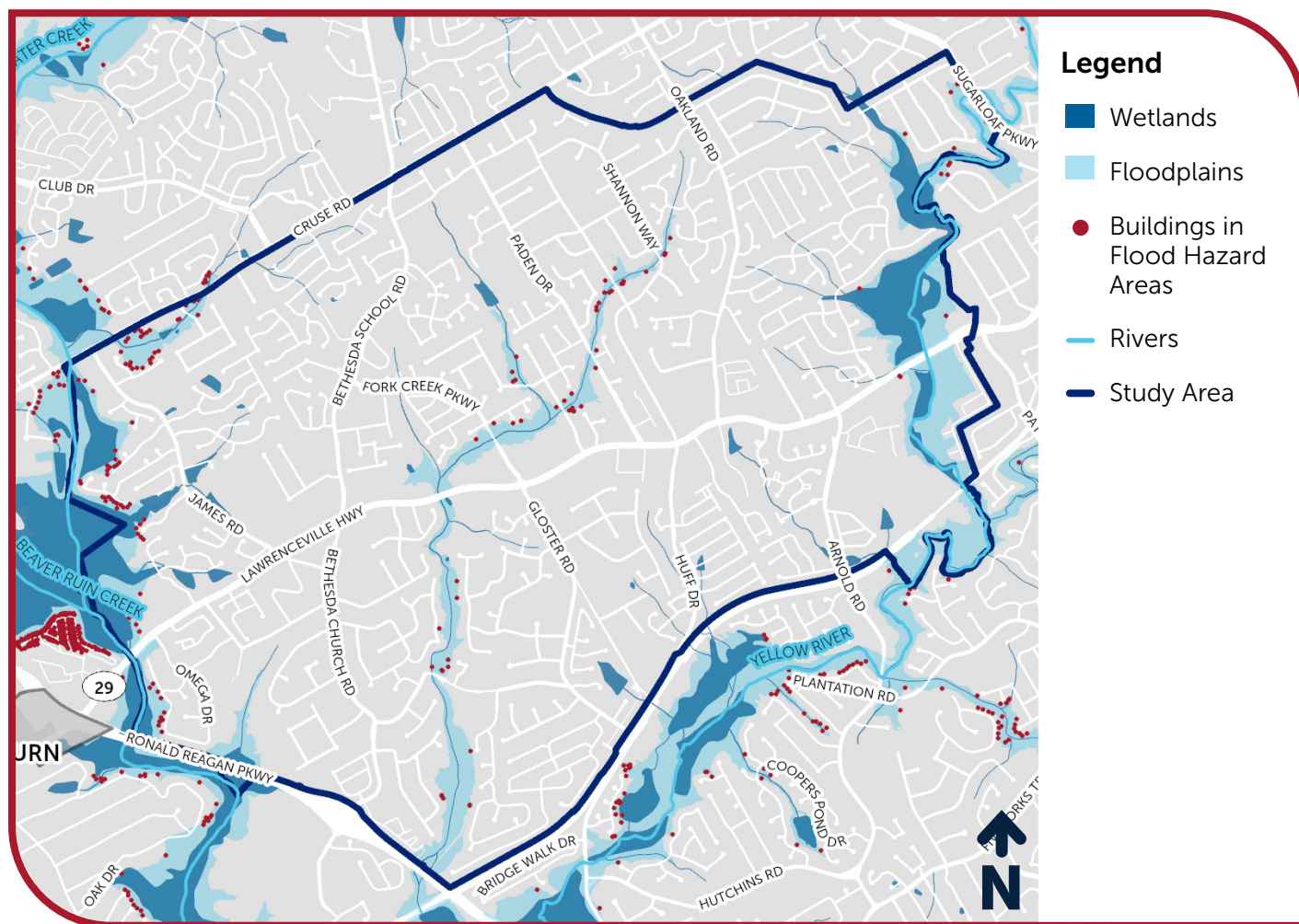


An impervious surface is a hard area that doesn't allow water to seep into the ground. Bethesda's surfaces are 23.4% impervious, much of which is concentrated in its two commercial shopping centers, where Highway 29 intersects with Bethesda Church Road and Shannon Way.

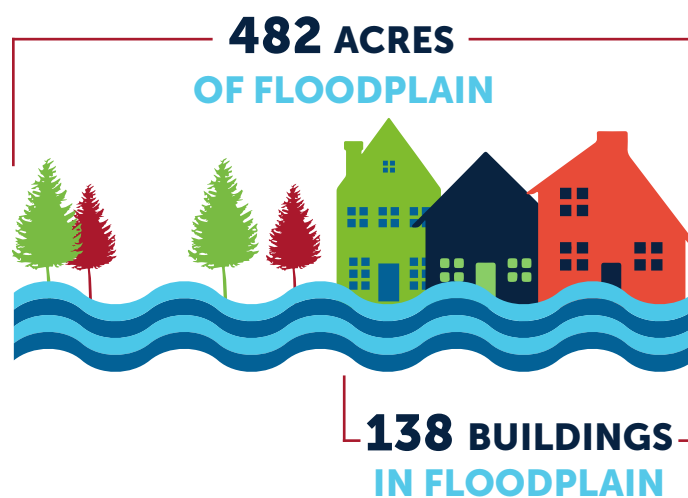
Stormwater ditches or conduits are present throughout and around the study area to convey stormwater runoff into local waterbodies, such as Beaver Ruin Creek and the Yellow River.



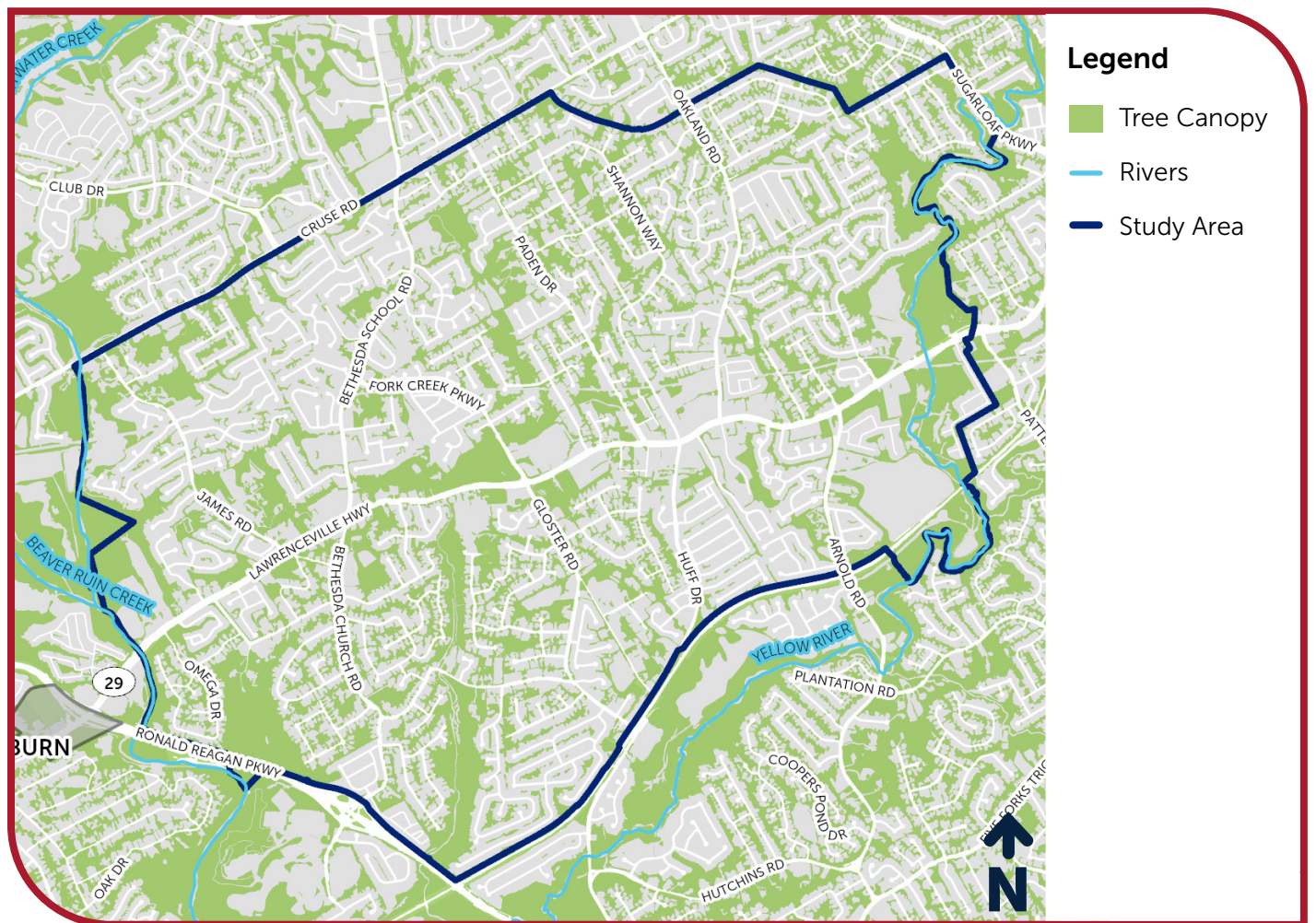
WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAINS



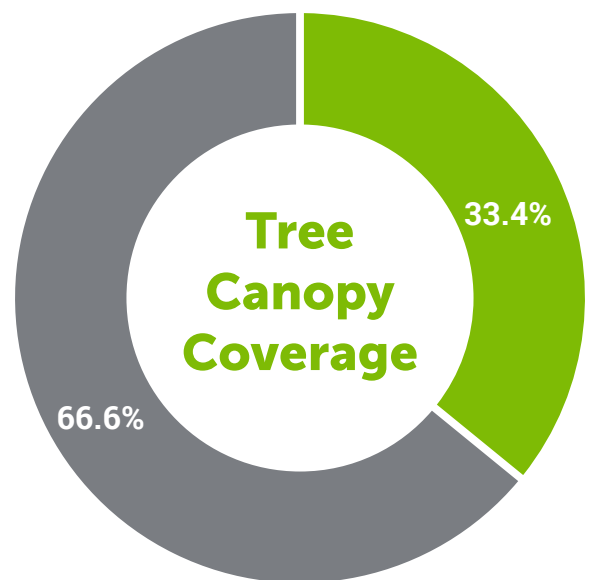
Bethesda is situated between three notable bodies of water — the Yellow River, Sweetwater Creek, and Beaver Ruin Creek. These waterbodies feature extensive floodplains and wetlands, some of which are protected on County property. An unnamed tributary of the Yellow River and its floodplain runs up the middle of Bethesda as well. There are 138 buildings located within these floodplains.



TREE CANOPY



The Bethesda Daily Community's tree canopy covers 33.4% of the study area, exceeding the countywide coverage of 28%. Significant portions of Bethesda's tree canopy are located on private residential property, within protected buffers along Bethesda's waterways, and other wetlands and floodplains.



Opportunity Scan

PLANNED PROJECTS

Destination 2050: Comprehensive Transportation Plan

Gwinnett's Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) proposes several projects in the Bethesda Daily Community. Three intersection improvements are recommended within the short term project phase, along with roadway improvements to Cruse Road along the northeast border of the study area. Ronald Reagan Parkway to the southwest could see roadway improvements in the mid-term phase.

Key Projects:

- 1 Roadway improvements along Cruse Road
- 3 Improvements at James Road and Cruse Road
- 5 Safety improvements near Bethesda Elementary
- 9 Improvement at Gloster Road and Huff Drive

Transit Development Plan

The Transit Development Plan calls for a modest transit investment in this community. A Quick Ride bus route is planned to provide service along Highway 29, providing connectivity to Lilburn and Lawrenceville, while a County Ride bus line would extend along Sugarloaf Parkway. Quick Rides could provide high-frequency service through roadway improvements that prioritize bus movement along high traffic roads. The TDP also calls for county-wide microtransit zones.

Key Projects:

- 2 County Ride (local service)
- 6 Quick Ride

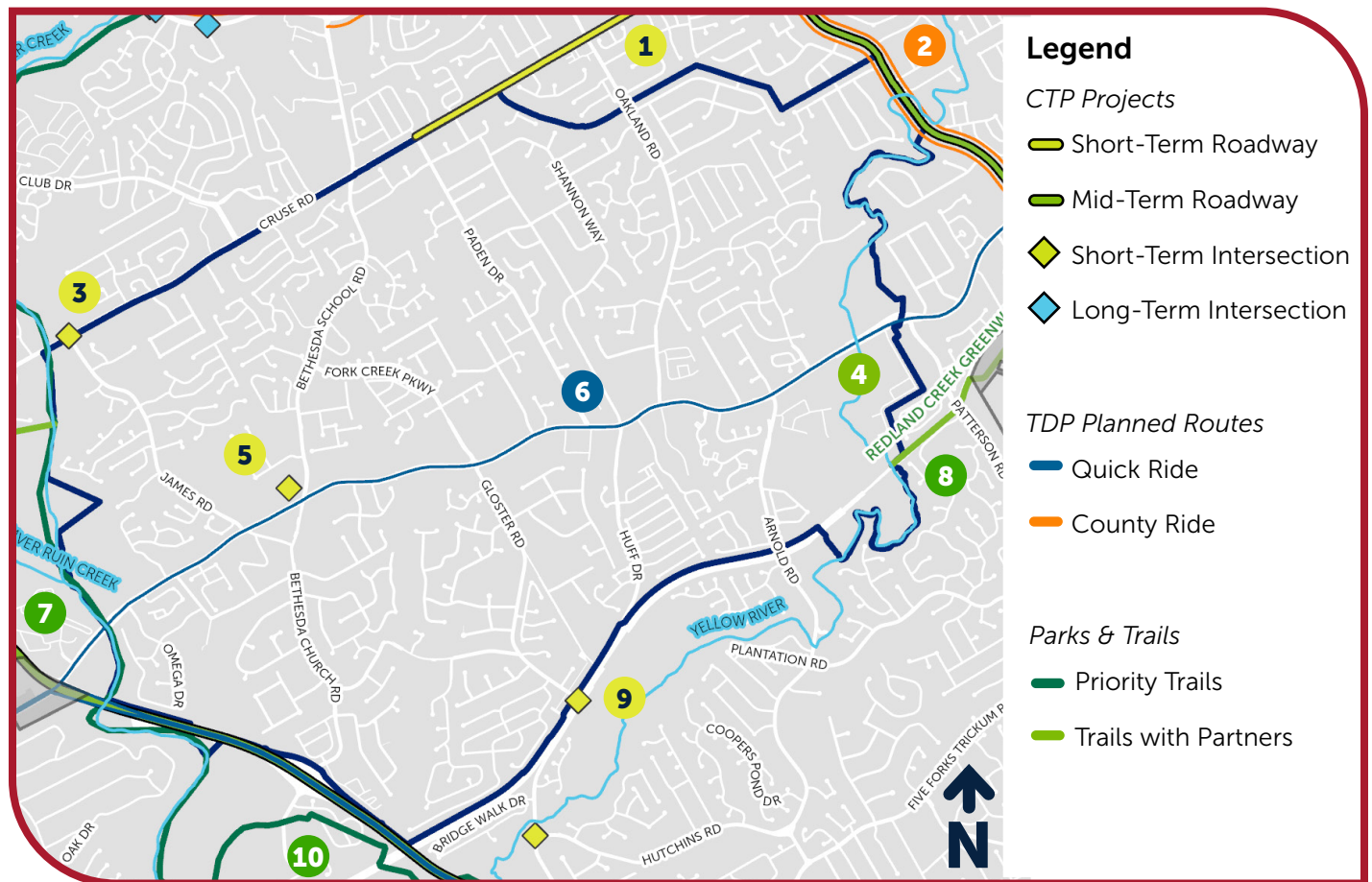
Gwinnett Countywide Trails Master Plan (2018)

Gwinnett County plans to expand its trail network in Bethesda through two main trail corridors. The Redland Greenway could potentially connect eastern Bethesda to Lawrenceville; initial outreach for that trail alignment is beginning soon. The Bethesda Greenway is part of the core network and is proposed to connect several parks south of Bethesda to Bethesda Park and the Sweetwater Creek Greenway, an aspirational trail along Beaver Ruin Creek. An update to the Countywide Trails Master Plan is currently underway and expected to be complete by the end of 2025.

Key Projects:

- 7 Sweetwater Creek Greenway
- 8 Redland Creek Greenway
- 10 Bethesda Greenway

CURRENT PLANNED PROJECTS



2020 Gwinnett Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Master Plan

This plan proposes a high level of investment for the Bethesda area. The Long Range Parks and Recreation System Vision proposes a series of High-Medium density area parks along Lawrenceville Highway, several of which could be located within Bethesda. The plan also identifies the Yellow River Wetlands as a future community park. The County currently owns the land for this park but has not yet developed plans.

Key Projects:

- 4 Yellow River Wetlands

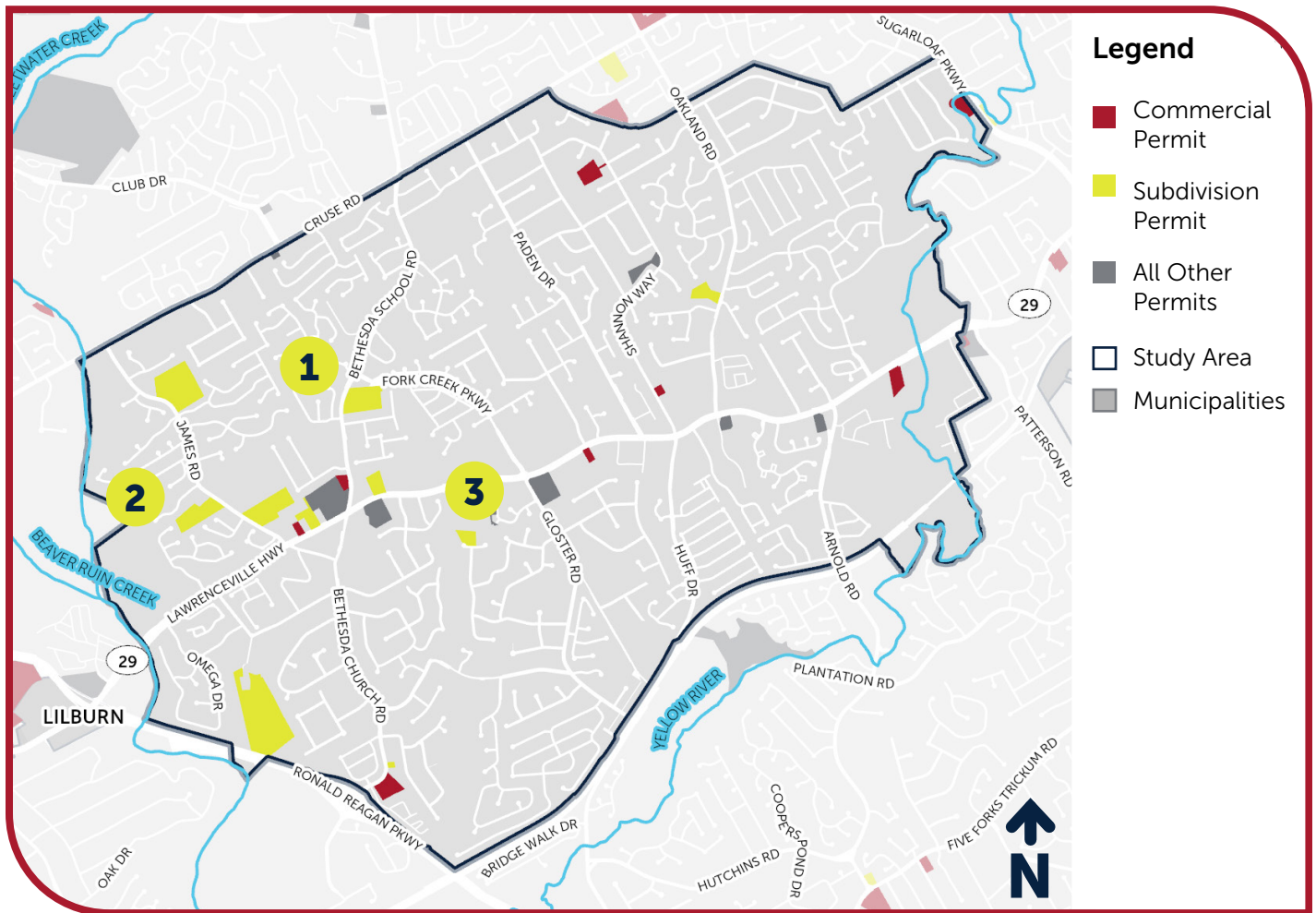
Sewer Infrastructure Expansions

While the Sewer Basin Master Planning efforts are ongoing, at this time there are no identified expansions to sewer infrastructure planned for Bethesda.

Key Projects:

Sewer Basin Study

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



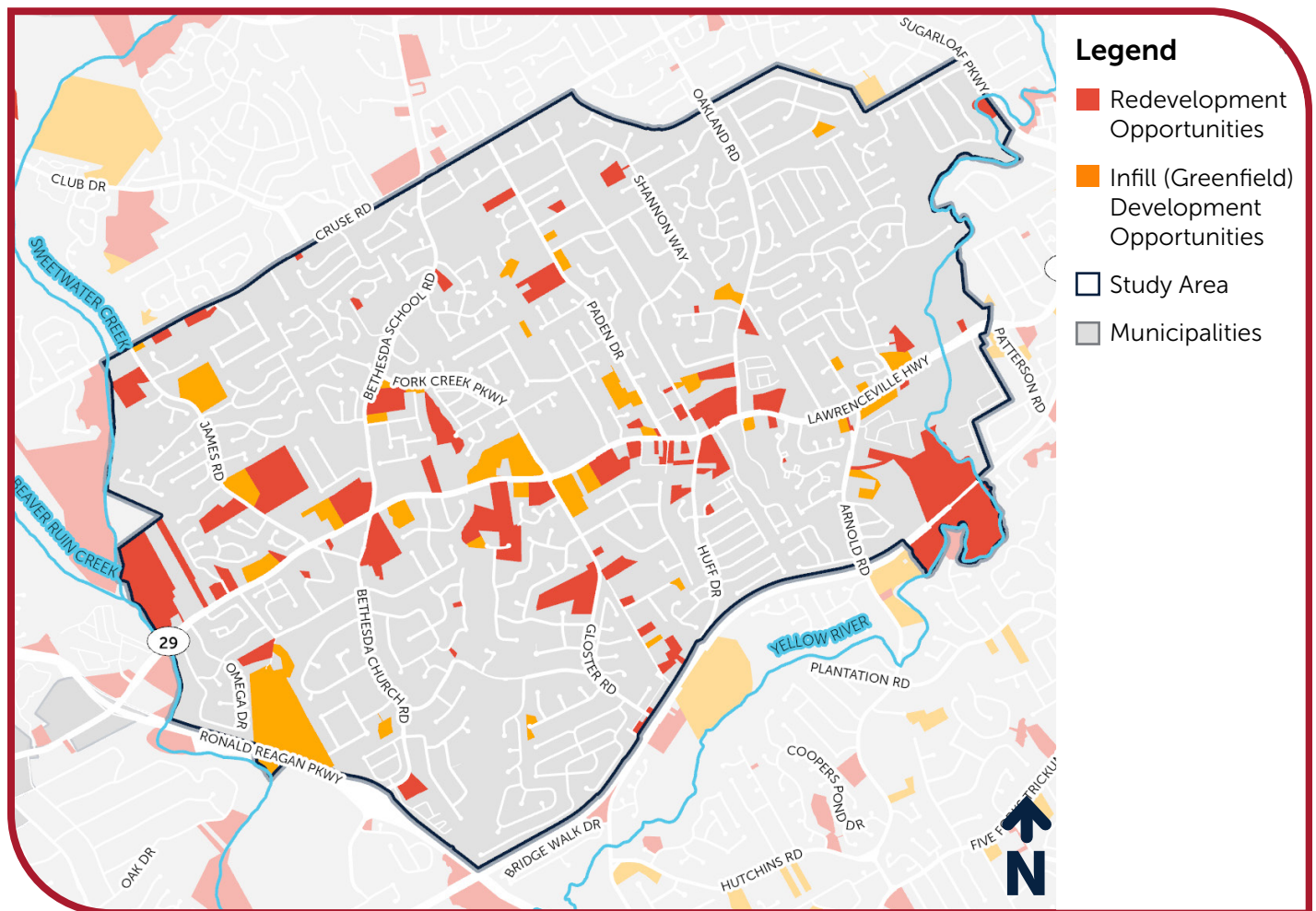
Bethesda has seen a modest amount of applications for new development in recent years. Most permits filed are for subdivision developments, either single family or townhouses. Three significant projects are:

- 1 Alford at Bethesda Subdivision**
A 41-lot single-family subdivision is currently under development along Bethesda School Road.
- 2 Orion Subdivision**
A 19-lot single-family subdivision has been approved for a 7-acre site off James Road.
- 3 Townhouse Development**
Property off Highway 29 at Harrison Drive was recently rezoned to allow for 237 new townhomes.



Site of New Subdivision off James Road

REDEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL



What qualifies as a redevelopment opportunity?

Parcels marked as redevelopment opportunities typically have better access to infrastructure, are underutilized relative to their size, or both. These opportunities were identified based on their proximity to future transportation improvements, access to water and sewer mains, the presence of a parking lot over one acre in size, or lower land values. Redevelopment opportunities include parcels with existing structures, while greenfield development opportunities are restricted to undeveloped land.

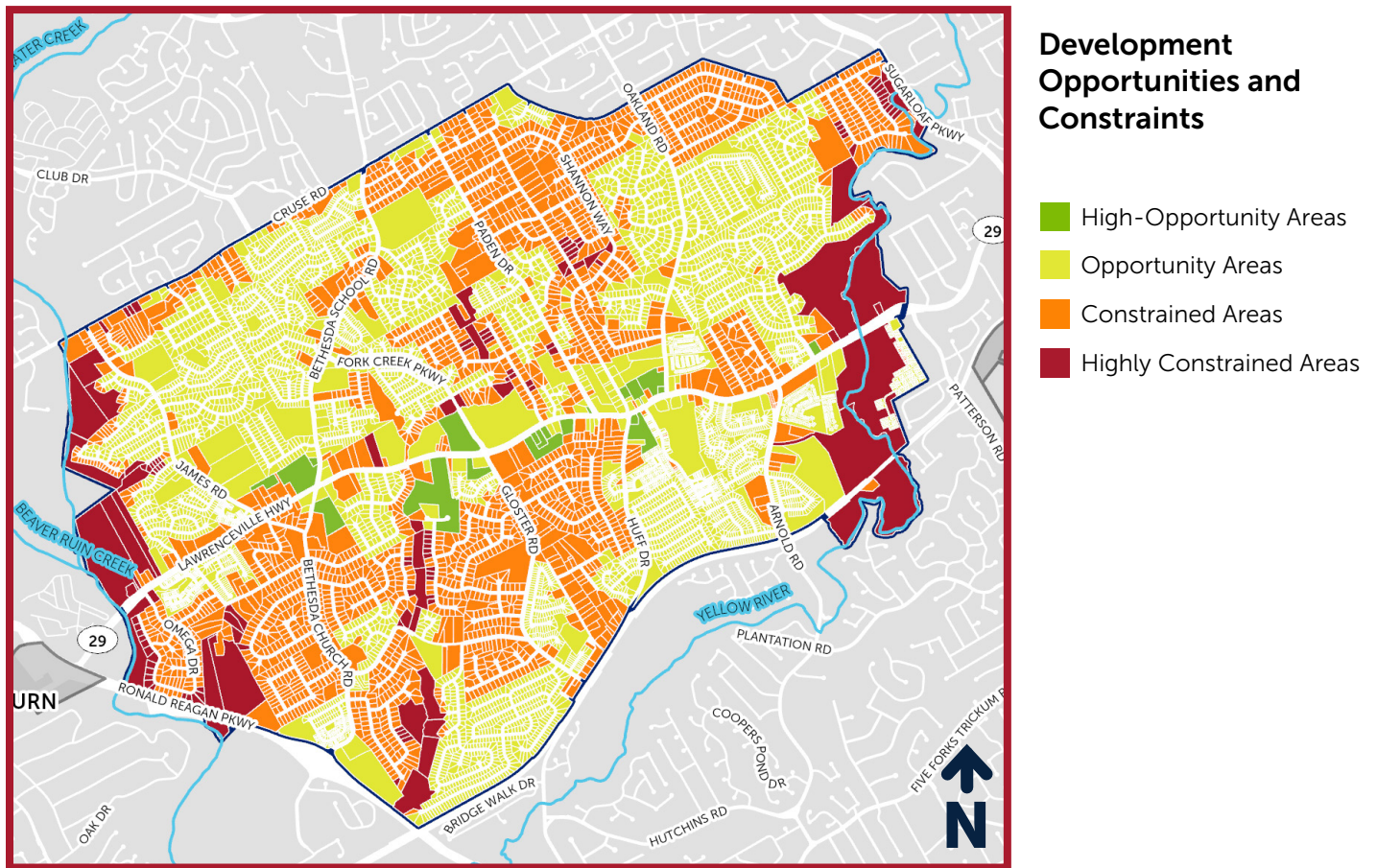
Redevelopment Opportunities

The redevelopment opportunities in Bethesda are found mostly within its aging strip-style commercial and auto-oriented retail buildings, especially closer to Lawrenceville. These redevelopments could range from simple facelifts to modestly-sized mixed use buildings, depending on the opportunity.

Greenfield and Infill Development Opportunities

Opportunities for infill development are scattered throughout Bethesda, with several located along Highway 29. Parcels at the intersection of Highway 29 and Fork Creek Parkway have been subject to development proposals over the years, though each site has challenges. Other opportunities for infill development can be found on James Road and Paden Drive.

The Future of Bethesda



Existing conditions in the Bethesda Daily Community present opportunities and challenges for redevelopment. Public investments in transit and trails could spur new forms of development that prioritize density and walkability. Meanwhile, large floodplains and a lack of sewer infrastructure limits the feasibility of large-scale development.

The greatest potential for redevelopment can be found in Bethesda's centrally located **high-opportunity areas**. Many of these properties located along Highway 29 feature auto-oriented uses with large parking lots and wide curb cuts, reinforcing the corridor's status as a thoroughfare. Underutilized land on these parcels could be redeveloped to provide a variety of uses. Greater housing variety would serve this area especially well, given its low vacancy rate. The future Quick Ride bus route proposed along the Highway 29 Corridor would support varied housing types that allow for greater walkability and use of transit.

Interspersed between the high opportunity areas are **opportunity areas** with similar access to critical infrastructure but less potential to redevelop. These opportunity areas include larger parcels adjacent to Highway 29 and other major roadways, as well as single-family neighborhoods connected to sewer lines. Depending on their context, these parcels could be targeted for ambitious redevelopment proposals or incremental housing infill in the form of missing middle housing like quadplexes or duplexes, or backyard accessory dwelling units.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS CRITERIA

TYPE	WITHIN 1/8 MILE OF FUTURE TRANSPORTATION PROJECT	SEWER ACCESS*	HIGH POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT	MORE THAN 25% OF PARCEL IN FLOOD ZONE OR STREAM BUFFER
High-Opportunity Area	YES	YES	YES	NO
Opportunity Area	N/A	YES	NO	NO
Constrained Area	N/A	NO	NO	NO
Highly Constrained Area	N/A	NO	NO	YES

**This category only captures access to sewer, not capacity.*

Parcels marked as **constrained areas** do not face significant barriers to redevelopment but also do not benefit from qualities that accelerate redevelopment. These include existing single-family lots and nonresidential uses without sewer or road access.

Some areas within Bethesda face too many challenges to be realistically considered for redevelopment. These **highly constrained areas** include opportunities that look good on paper, but realistically face too many barriers for redevelopment to be successful. These could include little to no access to transportation infrastructure — including roadways, transit, and future trail corridors — and severe environmental challenges. Floodplains flare outwards from the Yellow River and Sweetwater Creek, resulting in large areas with very high flood risk. Rather than targeting these lands for development, their challenging terrain can be leveraged for greenspace, trail connectivity, and natural stormwater management. The County is already considering some of this land for such improvements.

The following plan presents redevelopment concepts based on and around these high-opportunity areas, using recommendations from the 2045 Unified Plan to create a vision for the future Bethesda Daily Community.

Small Area Plan

This future redevelopment plan applies the 2045 Unified Plan's Daily Community Framework to Bethesda, utilizing existing conditions, planned projects, and community input to design redevelopment concepts that enhance the community. The small area plan is an opportunity to apply some of the big picture goals and recommendations to specific locations of the county.

The planning team conducted a two day charrette (referred to as the Shannon Oaks Small Area Plan Charrette), which took place at GracePointe Community Church on October 26-28, 2023. The charrette featured active work periods as well as public drop in hours advertised throughout the community and Gwinnett County. The charrette also included interviews with community stakeholders and Gwinnett County staff. At the end of the charrette, the concepts were finalized and presented through a Community Fair, an outdoor tactical urbanism installation in the parking lot of the Shannon Oaks Shopping Center. The Community Fair was intended to provide a visual and tactile example of what amenities delivered through redevelopment could look and feel like.



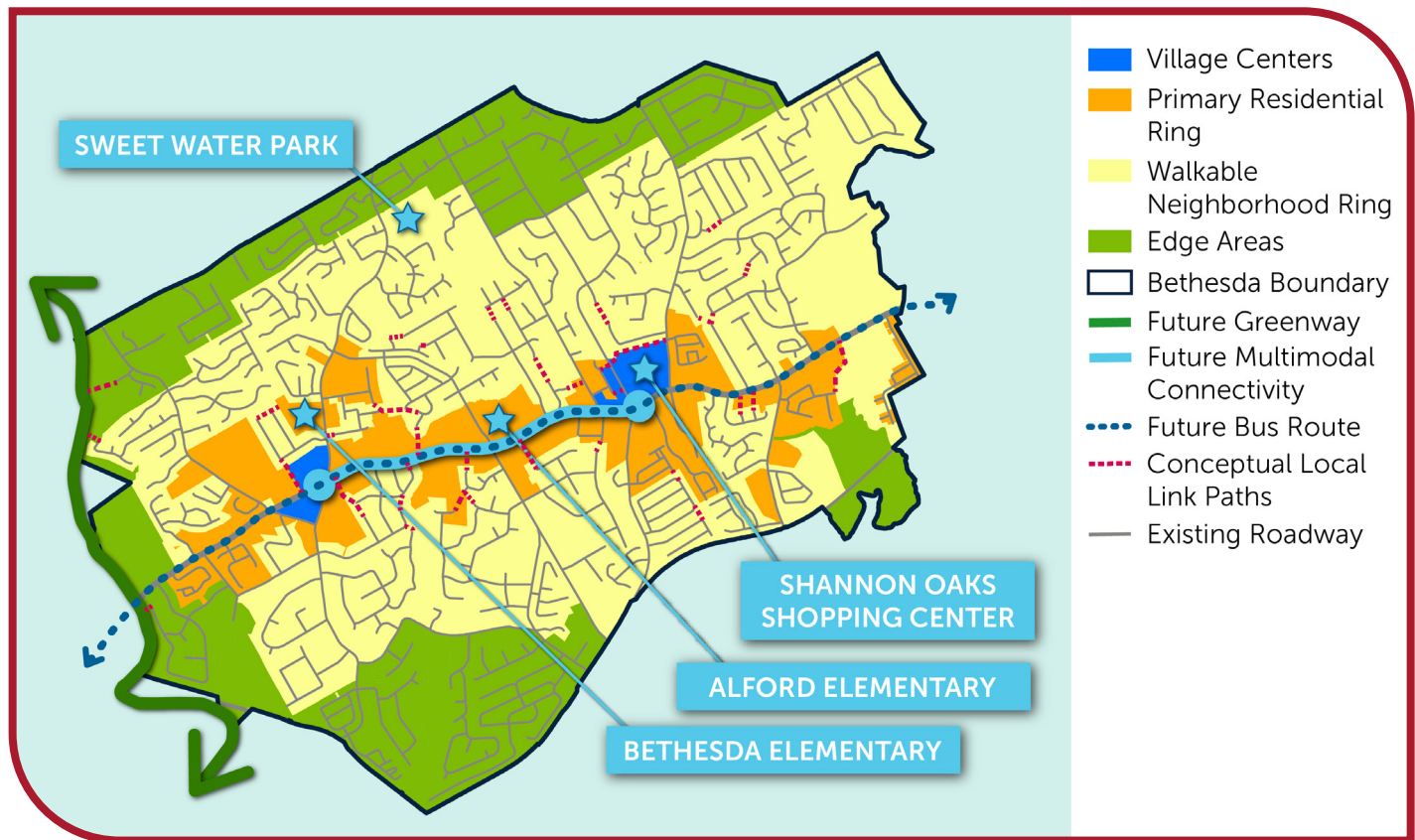
The planning team came to the charrette prepared with a preliminary redevelopment concept for the Shannon Oaks Shopping Center for public feedback. The design priorities for this concept were:

- 1 Redeveloping underutilized properties in central locations
- 2 Aligning development with existing infrastructure and future transit
- 3 Adding significant housing options to promote housing choice and walkability
- 4 Expanding pedestrian connections and safety infrastructure
- 5 Adding community gathering spaces throughout the design

During the public engagement period, residents shared that they take pride in their community and enjoy the opportunities to connect with their neighbors at civic spaces, religious institutions, and retail centers. Feedback included the need for more street lights, sidewalks, and other pedestrian amenities that would make it safer to walk — especially because many residents choose to walk already. New housing and green spaces were also desired.

This feedback, coupled with direction from the Unified Plan and application of the Daily Community framework at a more granular level, provided the foundation for redevelopment concepts throughout Bethesda's core. This chapter explores those long range concepts in detail and offers action steps for its implementation over the next 20 years.

1 DAILY COMMUNITY VISION



The planning team developed a high level vision for Bethesda inspired by community feedback, combined with the Daily Community framework. Visualizing existing and future conditions brought three redevelopment ideas to the forefront:

Stronger Link Between Community Centers

Bethesda is unique in that it has two established retail centers already. Currently, the only way to travel between them safely is by car. Adding transit, sidewalks, and other nonvehicular methods of transportation not only would connect these two centers but would also offer opportunities to add placemaking elements that can make the built environment more pleasant to navigate.

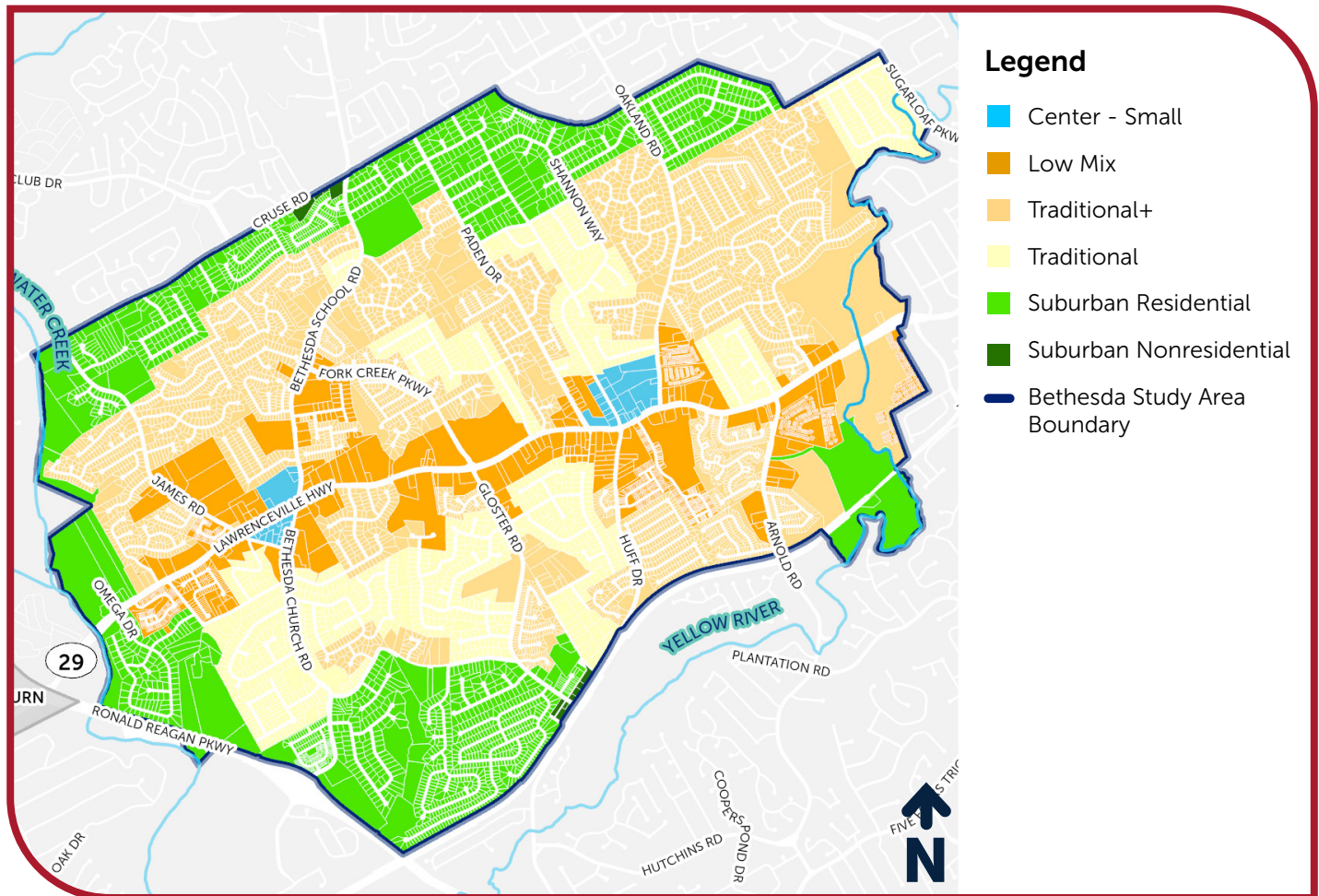
Infill Housing and Mixed-Use Development to Support Walkability

This small area plan proposes redevelopment supporting a mix of uses within the centers, along with new infill housing in specific locations along this corridor. With the right guidelines in place, infill development projects can drive connectivity upgrades and quality of life improvements for residents.

Access to Community Resources

Using the link between centers as a backbone, this plan envisions greater connectivity to specific community resources through a combination of new transit and local pathways connecting single-family neighborhoods. This includes Bethesda Elementary, Sweetwater Creek and Redland Creek Greenways, and connections between residential neighborhoods.

2 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



The Future Development Framework provides recommended design and development guidance for each parcel in Bethesda.

CENTER - SMALL

Bethesda's two **Small Centers** both support mixed use, multifamily, townhomes, quadplexes, triplexes, duplexes, cottages, retail/entertainment, office, institutional, green space, and utilities. The area is recommended for modest density; redevelopment could result in buildings 1-3 stories high. Bethesda's Small Centers would meet the 2045 Unified Plan's goals for transit access through the future Quick Ride bus line along Highway 29. Planned greenway trails to the west and southeast satisfy the trail access goals.

NEIGHBORHOODS

A band of **Low Mix** along Highway 29 connects Bethesda's centers. Parcels here support missing middle housing such as quadplexes, triplexes, duplexes, townhouses, and some small-scale multifamily. Surrounding neighborhoods within 1 mile of either center are designated **Traditional+**, which allows for townhouses, cottage courts, and backyard Accessory Dwelling Units. Remaining neighborhoods are designated **Traditional** and are less likely to change because of their lack of sewer access and should remain primarily as single-family detached housing.

EDGES

Neighborhoods over 1 mile from Bethesda's Centers are **Suburban Residential** and unlikely to change. Nonresidential areas outside the walkable neighborhood ring are shown as **Suburban Nonresidential** and are not considered part of the heart of Bethesda.

CENTER: SMALL



A vibrant community center with clusters of restaurants, retail, and diverse housing options.

NEIGHBORHOODS



Low Mix

Mostly residential consisting of Missing Middle Housing



Traditional+

Townhouses, cottage courts, and smaller footprint single-family attached and detached on sewer with incidental commercial



Traditional

Single family without sewer but with pedestrian connectivity

EDGES



Suburban Residential

Represents existing single family development



Suburban Nonresidential

Parcels that are not residential and over a mile away from a Village Center or Urban Corridor that are unlikely to change.

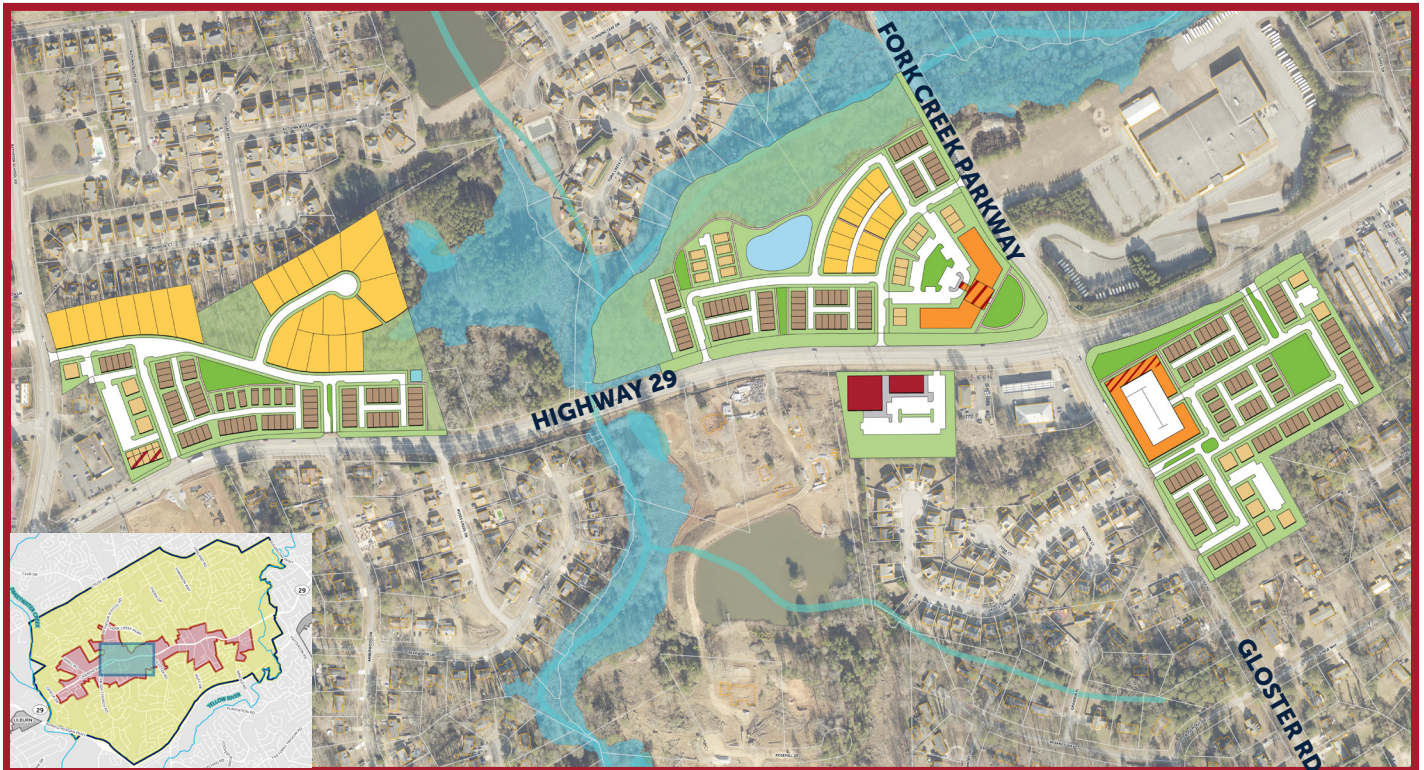


3 CENTER DESIGN CONCEPT

East Bethesda



West/Central Bethesda



KEY COMPONENTS



CENTRAL PLAZA WITH PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

The Shannon Oaks Shopping Center is a frequented retail and commercial center that is likely to remain a fixture of the community for several years. Developing around these retail establishments would improve the pedestrian experience through providing new public spaces and safety improvements in an area where many residents already choose to walk.



ABUNDANT HOUSING

Bethesda's low vacancy rate suggests a crucial need for new housing. Adding new housing options within centers and between them along Highway 29 would support retail activity, provide a critical supply of new homes, and support future transit ridership.



ACCESS TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND TRANSIT

Many areas with redevelopment potential are located near existing community resources, future transit connections and open spaces, or both. These concepts provide housing and amenities for all ages.



REDEVELOPMENT TARGETS

Redevelopment of Bethesda has the potential to provide this area with:

232,900

square feet of commercial space after redevelopment

19 *acres of new parks and open space*

1,061 *new housing units, including:*

357 *multifamily units*

396 *townhouses*

253 *missing middle housing units**

55 *single-family detached homes*

*Missing middle housing includes quadplexes, triplexes, duplexes, small-footprint single-family cottages, and residential above commercial also known as live/work.

REDEVELOPMENT CHARACTER IMAGES



Townhomes



Redeveloped Retail



Mixed-Use Development

4 CENTER DESIGN CONCEPT



The redevelopment concept for the Shannon Oaks Shopping Center showcases how infill housing and modest site improvements can enhance the experience of visiting an established suburban retail center.



1 Infill Housing

Adding housing near Shannon Oaks Shopping Center supports businesses and community institutions and adds market potential for new retail.

2 Public Plaza

A small plaza across from the shopping center provides a safe alcove for recreation and leisure, surrounded by new housing and retail.



3 Improved Aesthetics

Some community members mentioned aesthetics as an area needing improvement. Aligning outparcel buildings with the street and adding trees could create a more engaging streetscape.

4 Live/Work Units

New live/work units are proposed just outside the main shopping center, offering spaces for different kinds of retail and office establishments along with new housing.



Northeast Corner of Highway 29 and Oakland Road Now



A gas station and small retail building currently occupies the site northeast of Oakland Road and Highway 29. While the building is well-leased and the businesses are popular, this site could transform as shown below.

After Redevelopment



This view shows this area transformed: a mixed use building fronts a wide public plaza with various amenities, connected by a wide sidewalk.

5 INCREMENTAL REDEVELOPMENT

For Bethesda to realize its potential as a true Daily Community, redevelopment will need to occur incrementally over time, with each County-led investment or private redevelopment project contributing to creating a more walkable and vibrant mixed-use center.

Incremental redevelopment involves several factors, including land availability, physical constraints, and overall cost. Based on these factors, some projects present more immediate opportunities than others – including projects currently in progress and those with low barriers to redevelopment.

In addition to private redevelopment opportunities, the County must advance key infrastructure projects in Bethesda that will connect its dual center and set the stage for a more walkable community.

Infrastructure Investments

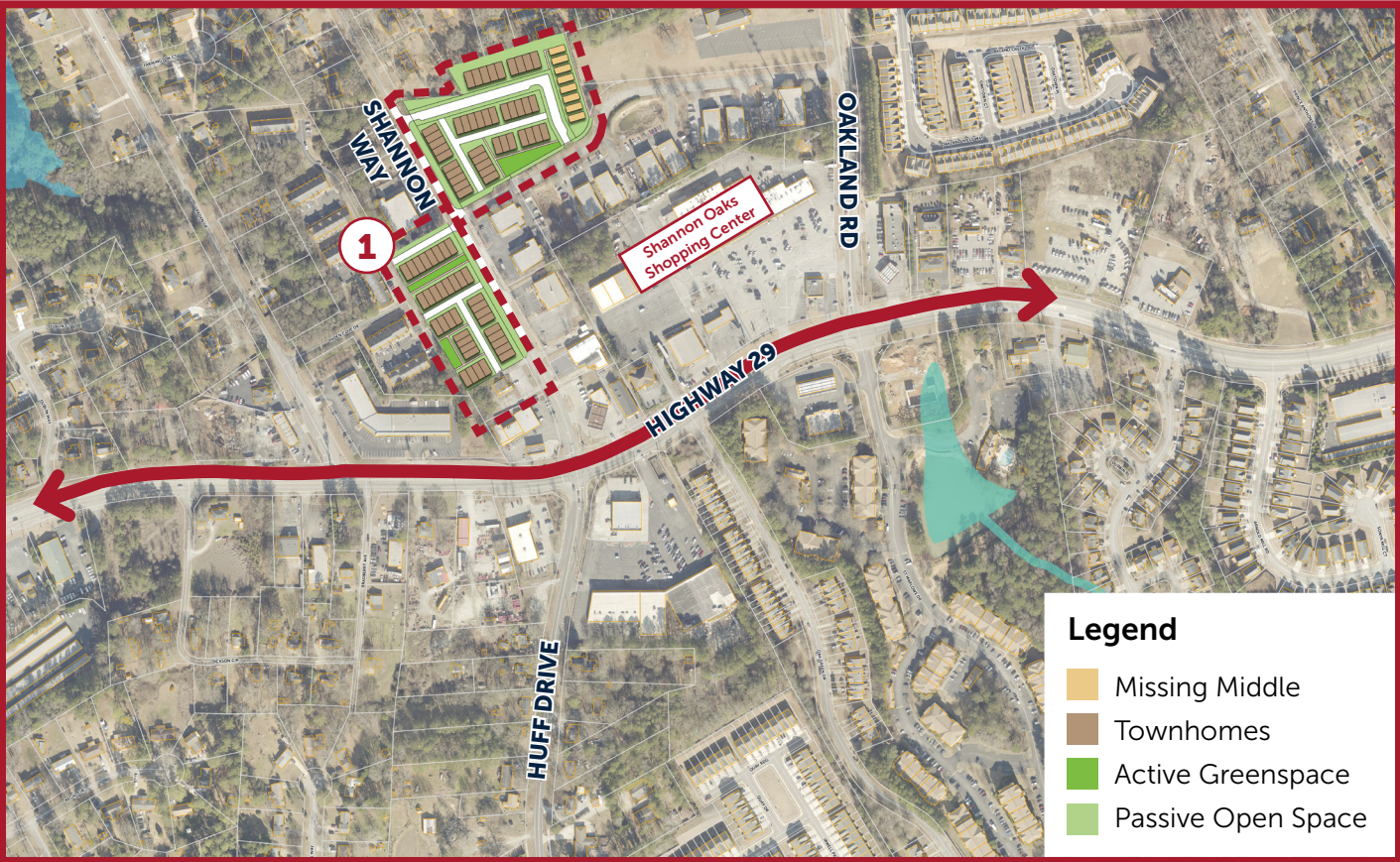
- At the core of the Daily Community vision for Bethesda is the creation of a multimodal corridor along Highway 29. To demonstrate its willingness to invest in multimodal infrastructure connecting Bethesda's two centers, the County could conduct a technical study aimed at designing safer bicycle and pedestrian routes, transforming the Highway 29 corridor into a Complete Street. Special attention could be paid to connecting its two elementary schools and two major retail centers. Redevelopment can drive the buildout of this infrastructure; having a connectivity plan in place can make the addition of sidewalks and other connectivity tools even more likely.

Alongside this technical study, other bicycle and pedestrian improvements could be explored, including safety improvements near Bethesda Elementary School and outreach for the proposed Redland Creek Greenway at the Bethesda Daily Community's southeastern boundary.

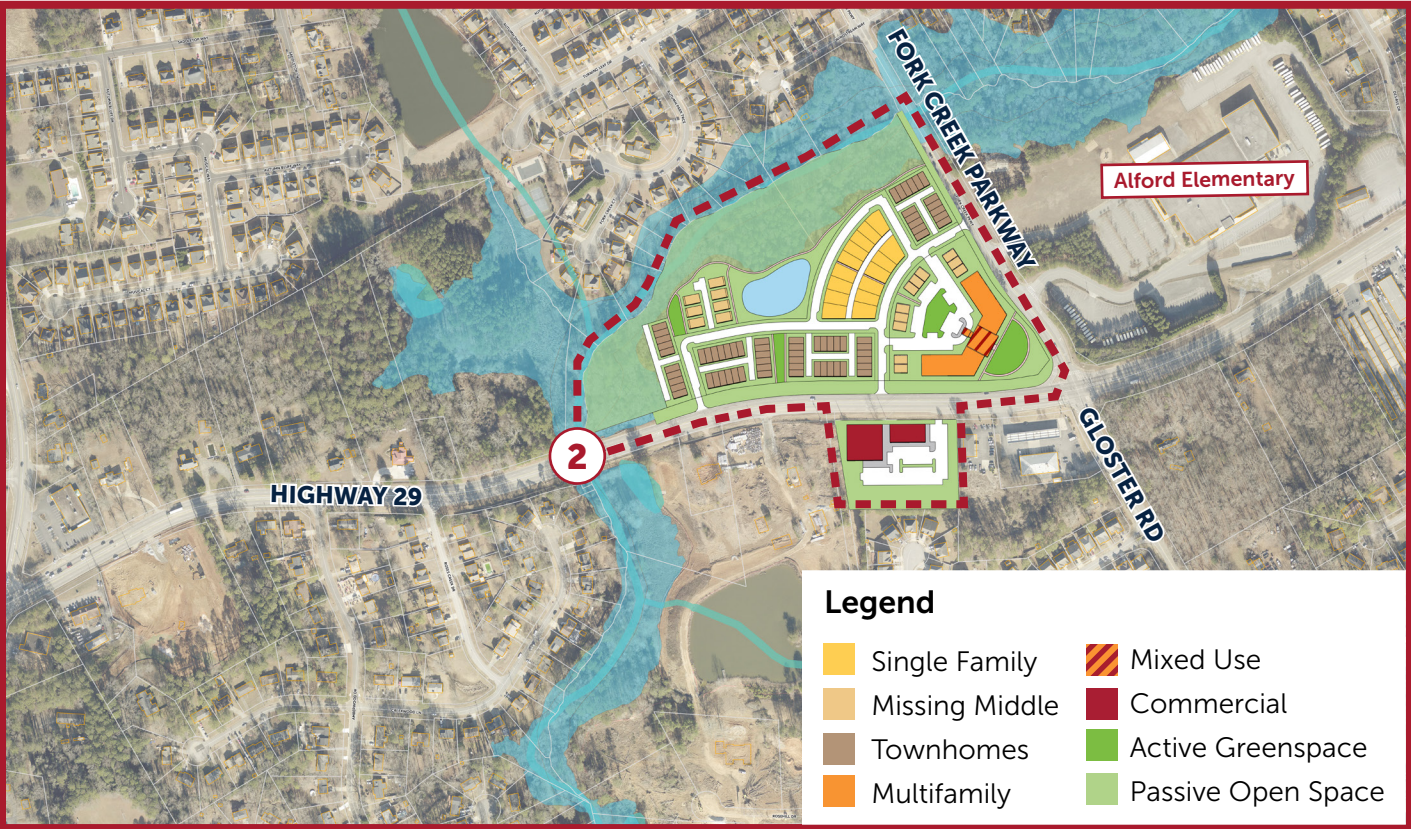
Private Redevelopment

- 1 Early private redevelopment opportunities include converting existing auto-oriented businesses and greenfield sites on Shannon Way into townhouse communities. These new housing units would introduce more foot traffic to local businesses at Shannon Oaks Shopping Center.
- 2 Land at the corner of Fork Creek Parkway and Highway 29 offers a prime opportunity to develop mixed, intergenerational housing. The concept plan proposes a mixed-use development, including multifamily, townhouse, triplex, and duplex units plus additional single-family lots on a 20-acre site. This could be a possible candidate site for senior housing or multigenerational housing, as well as a possible candidate site for green stormwater infrastructure at the rear of the property.

East Bethesda



West/Central Bethesda



6 COMMUNITY PLACEMAKING

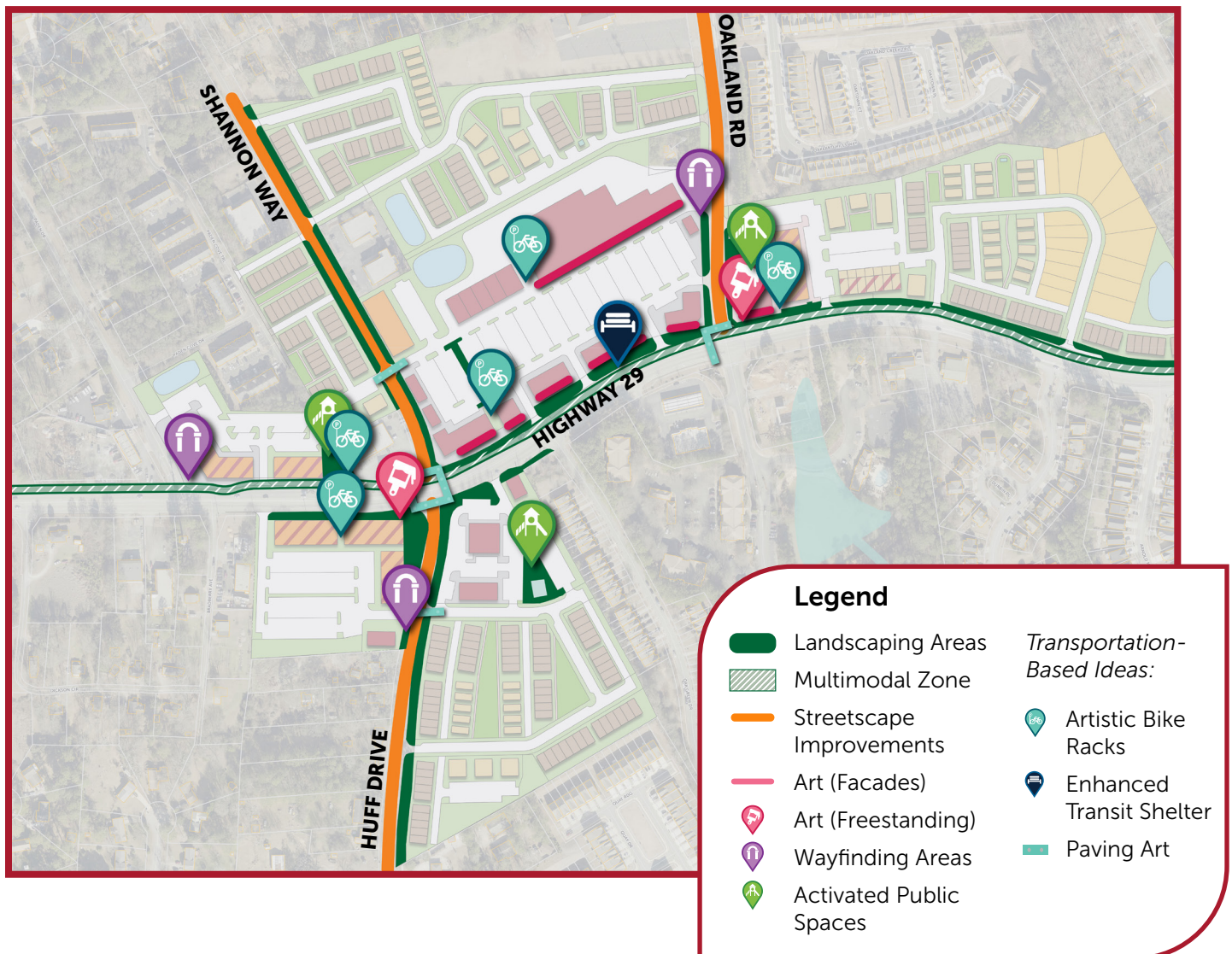
While private redevelopment is a critical component of the revitalization of any area, other investments in the public realm can go a long way toward enhancing Bethesda's character. These investments are known as **placemaking** (see sidebar). Though some of the best placemaking starts at the grassroots level, the County can play a vital role in several ways, including: providing funding and education, incorporating placemaking elements into capital improvement projects, developing projects on public land, and requiring placemaking within new development.

Placemaking (n.):

the collaborative process of designing and managing the public realm to enhance community character and maximize shared value

The definition of placemaking is broad by design; while some elements are more common, placemaking consists of a wide variety of project types. The following graphics show types and locations of potential projects that would fit within the Bethesda Daily Community, which can provide inspiration for community-led placemaking as this plan is implemented.

Placemaking Opportunities



Shannon Oaks Shopping Center Now



The Shannon Oaks Shopping Center parking lot is in need of renovation, making it the perfect opportunity for appropriate placemaking installations.

With Placemaking



The parking lot could transform into a gathering place for residents who already walk to and from the shopping center. Improved landscaping can create a safe, pedestrian zone, with seating, outdoor dining, shade, and other amenities.

Landscaping and Planting

Plants can add a sense of place, especially through native plantings and other species that are unique to a specific area. Landscaping also provides environmental services, such as stormwater filtration, and support for pollinators. Plantings would enhance the Shannon Oaks Shopping Center parking lot, transforming it from an open expanse of asphalt into a more environmentally-friendly and aesthetic space. Plantings would also enhance the Highway 29 streetscape.



Native Plantings



Landscaped Medians



Environmental Art

Streetscapes

Streetscaping creates comfortable environments for people along roadways. These improvements could be targeted for the multimodal zone along Highway 29, as well as side streets, to create a full walkable network from residential areas to Shannon Oaks Shopping Center. Improvements could include decorative benches, improved lighting, and sidewalk treatments.



Street Trees



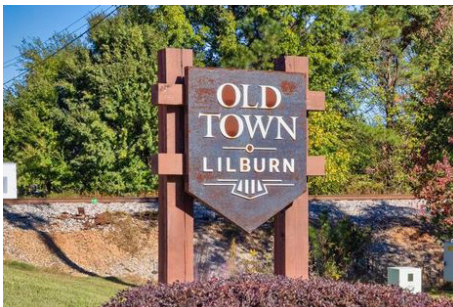
Streetlights



Walkway Surfaces/Markings

Wayfinding and Signage

Wayfinding and signage help people orient themselves and can contribute to a sense of place through branding, logos, color palettes, and fonts. Signage in Bethesda would help people recognize when they have entered Bethesda's center, as well as help them navigate multimodal services.



Gateway Signage



Directional Signage



— Public Art

Adding artistic flourishes to a community's public spaces and buildings is often one of the first forms of placemaking that comes to mind. Public art ranges from large media like sculptures and murals to interactive installations and even painted infrastructure. The redevelopment concepts for Bethesda provide plenty of street-facing facades for creative murals, while public spaces could feature interactive sculptures and other installations.



Mosaics



Murals



Interactive Installations

Activated Public Spaces

Unique play structures make public spaces memorable for both youth and adults. Given Bethesda's high number of families and two elementary schools, this plan's proposed pocket parks and plazas could support play structures of various types, as well as interactive water features like splash pads, to make the area enjoyable for all ages.



Art-Based Playgrounds



Nature-Based Playgrounds



Interactive Water Features

— Transportation-Based

Some of the subtler forms of placemaking are integrated with transportation infrastructure, such as transit shelters, bike racks, or pedestrian walkways. Installing these within the multimodal zone will make it safer and more comfortable for all users of the roadway.



Transit Shelters



Bike Racks



Paving Art

APPLYING THE 2045 UNIFIED PLAN GOALS

This small area plan shows how redevelopment can enhance the Bethesda Daily Community. It utilizes the Daily Community Framework and policy goals from the 2045 Unified Plan to create a unique experience and place in this part of Gwinnett County. The tables below describe how each goal may be advanced.



LAND USE

Goal	Small Area Plan Approach
Expand options for creative redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New housing types added to support existing and new amenities, including mixed use retail and public spaces Connectivity between each center expanded through housing infill
Strengthen administrative controls of development decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality development governed by Bethesda Overlay Zoning District
Maintain high quality of life through investments in community centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central plaza added to provide safe community gathering place Street grid expanded within and between centers Increased pedestrian access to center through neighborhood connections
Develop a framework that protects remaining natural and rural parts of Gwinnett County from overdevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important wetlands preserved on western and eastern edges of study area Investments in greenways proposed to expand access to natural areas



HOUSING

Goal	Small Area Plan Approach
Ensure housing affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,083 units added, incrementally reducing shortage in this area Smaller housing units proposed to provide diverse options
Advocate for housing choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple new housing types added, including multifamily, townhomes, and cottage courts Single-family lots labeled Traditional+ eligible for Accessory Dwelling Unit construction



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal	Small Area Plan Approach
Promote investment at the Daily Community scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated provisions for use by right through Overlay Zoning District Expanded street grid and connectivity through trails and transit Re-orientation of commercial to improve pedestrian experience
Attract new businesses and talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater diversity of retail spaces through mixed use development New pedestrian-oriented retail spaces to promote greater retail activity
Promote economic growth and mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater diversity of retail spaces and flexibility in permitted uses, supporting entrepreneurship and unique businesses



SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal	Small Area Plan Approach
Align water, wastewater, and stormwater planning with Daily Community framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher-intensity development aligned with access to sewer Explore opportunities for shared stormwater to support creative redevelopment
Plan for resilient infrastructure systems that protect natural assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development discouraged in environmentally-sensitive areas Green space expansions targeted for Yellow River Area
Reduce impervious surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrofitting existing parking lots with greenery and stormwater best management practices
Foster green infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New green infrastructure installations potentially offered through public spaces and shared stormwater solutions



TRANSPORTATION

Goal	Small Area Plan Approach
Increase active transportation options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelopment aligned with future transit line along Highway 29 Expanded street network and streetscape improvements to improve pedestrian safety
Ensure private and public projects enable mobility for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional pedestrian connections encouraged through private development, both in centers and throughout neighborhoods
Continue countermeasures to reduce speeding and accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reorientation of commercial buildings to reduce curb cuts, conflict points, and speeds
Improve transit to compete with private vehicle trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New infrastructure provided for transit riders, especially along Highway 29 corridor
Integrate transit into land use and development planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensity of center tied to proposed Quick Ride bus service proposed in Transit Development Plan



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Goal	Small Area Plan Approach
Collaborate between departments and partners to scale up community resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong community desire for new community resources reflected through public space provision and streetscape improvements
Infuse communities with context appropriate greenspace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New public spaces added throughout redevelopment concepts
Strengthen Daily Community identities through arts and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aesthetic improvements in centers proposed, potentially led by local community and religious groups
Invest in schools as community centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger pedestrian connectivity to Bethesda and Alford Elementary Schools
Develop the built environment to increase health and wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial outreach for Redland Creek Greenway trail Greater pedestrian amenities to support active transportation

Implementation

This small area plan represents a vision, supported by community stakeholders, for how Bethesda could redevelop over the next 20 years, realizing its potential as a true Daily Community. Although the vision represents full redevelopment potential, it also attempts to strike a balance between future potential and current conditions. Certain real-world hurdles — including parcel ownership, market swings, and infrastructure capacity — impact how and when redevelopment will occur. It is difficult to predict how many variables will change between now and 2045. Therefore, the County should focus on high-priority actions to ensure a solid foundation is laid for the implementation of the full small area plan. These actions are divided according to four themes and organized into two tiers:

1 Zoning Recommendations

A Unified Development Ordinance amendment (UDO) to incorporate a new overlay district would promote development that supports the community-supported vision outlined in the plan. An overlay district could allow development by right if proposals meet the following UDO standards:

- use standards, providing greater specificity on permitted uses;
- street standards, including street design, sidewalk/trail, streetscape, block length, and driveway/access requirements;
- development standards, including open space, parking, landscaping, screening, signage;
- building standards, including building massing and placement, building design and architectural standards.

The overlay district could also establish a special administrative process to streamline the permitting process in support of the community vision.

2 Community Building

Redevelopment is most successful when it improves quality of life for as many residents as possible. Quality of life includes access to goods and services, easy and safe transportation options, a sense of place, and many other components. To understand what priorities residents of Bethesda hold, the ideas represented in this plan are a good place to start; however, sustained conversations and community ownership of ideas will be crucial for successful implementation.

3 Infrastructure Capacity

Challenges related to water, sewer, stormwater, and mobility must be addressed early in the implementation strategy for this plan. These projects involve many interlocking pieces and require long lead times. Ideally, implementation of this plan should be iterative, with frequent coordination to ensure private redevelopment does not place undue burden on public infrastructure. Completing an Infrastructure Development Plan will ensure adequate infrastructure is in place to support the small area plan.

4 Economic Development

Redevelopment demonstrates interest in other neighborhood investments, which builds support for other forms of economic development. County staff can work with private developers, property owners, and other groups in order to ensure infill and redevelopment projects reflect the vision depicted in this small area plan and could also spur small businesses and other economic stakeholders to consider Bethesda as an attractive place for their operations. There should be a focus on building relationships with property owners and assessing their willingness to potentially redevelop.

Implementation Mechanisms

For Bethesda to transform into a true Daily Community, the County must actively lead in the area's redevelopment. Successful redevelopment must consider all six elements from the 2045 Unified Plan — land use, economic development, housing, sustainable infrastructure, transportation, and community resources — and must span private development and County-led improvements. To support these types of investments, the County should consider supporting Daily Communities in two ways:

Technical Support

This small area plan is designed to apply the high-level policy goals from the 2045 Unified Plan to the Daily Community. Though many of the Tier 1 implementation actions would be led by the Department of Planning and Development, collaboration between departments will be critical for making infrastructure improvements and building partnerships with community members and private sector leadership. Staff from all applicable departments should also identify opportunities to implement other work program tasks from the 2045 Unified Plan, especially related to connectivity and community resources.

Funding Support

Implementation of these small area plans could benefit from a wide range of funding opportunities, including grants, bonds, and other special tax structures like SPLOST. Some programming, such as public art or housing, could also be supported by direct investment from the County's General Operating Budget but should be supplemented by other funding opportunities.

POTENTIAL FUNDING	MAIN FOCUS	TYPE	SOURCE	RANGE*
Tax Allocation Districts for Daily Community Centers	Redevelopment	Bond	County investment	\$\$\$\$
Community Development Block Grants	Redevelopment; housing	Grant	Federal program	\$\$\$\$
Economic Development Administration Grants	Economic development & public facilities	Grant	Federal program	\$\$\$\$
Safe Streets For All (SS4A) Planning Grants	Transportation	Grant	Federal program	\$\$\$
Community Placemaking	Public spaces; infrastructure	Grants	Various sources (Project for Public Spaces, Georgia Council for the Arts, others)	\$

**All cost ranges are estimates. Key: \$ = under \$100,000; \$\$ = \$100,000-\$500,000; \$\$\$ = \$500,000 - \$1 million; \$\$\$\$ = over \$1 million*

TIER 1

1 ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

PROJECT OR INITIATIVE	LEAD	PARTNERS
Create and adopt an overlay zoning district for the Bethesda Daily Community	P&D	-
After an appropriate amount of time, assess the need for additional changes to the Unified Development Ordinance	P&D	-

2 COMMUNITY BUILDING

PROJECT OR INITIATIVE	LEAD	PARTNERS
Empower a community-based organization (CBO) for Bethesda to encourage collaboration on redevelopment projects	P&D	Community groups, homeowners' associations
Meet with staff from Gwinnett County Public Schools, Alford Elementary, and Bethesda Elementary to discuss future student safety needs and initiatives	P&D	GCPS, GCDOT
Work with CBO to identify locations for "low cost/no cost" placemaking projects that can be "tested" using temporary materials, to be considered later for full implementation	P&D	CBO
Include placemaking as an element of infrastructure planning and design	P&D	GCDOT, DWR, DPR

3 INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

PROJECT OR INITIATIVE	LEAD	PARTNERS
GENERAL		
● Prepare an Infrastructure Development Plan to define potential capital projects and studies needed to realize the vision of the small area plan; this plan should be a collaboration between all departments listed here	P&D	DWR, GCDOT, DPR
● Conduct fiscal impact analysis to consider revenue from taxes and fees and costs related to service delivery, infrastructure investment, and maintenance; evaluate development scenarios as needed to ensure long-term financial sustainability	P&D	DWR, GCDOT, DPR, DoFS
TRANSPORTATION		
● As part of the Infrastructure Development Plan, estimate updated traffic demand (both vehicle and pedestrian) using the proposed redevelopment concepts; evaluate potential projects needed to improve connectivity and multimodal transportation options, including transit	P&D	GCDOT
● Commission Complete Streets technical study for segment of Highway 29/Lawrenceville Highway between future Sweetwater Creek Greenway and future Redland Creek Greenway	P&D	GCDOT, GDOT

3 INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

PROJECT OR INITIATIVE	LEAD	PARTNERS
TRANSPORTATION (CONTINUED)		
● Begin conceptual design and outreach for Redland Creek Greenway	DoCS	P&D, GCDOT
● Consider applying for Safe Routes to School funding based on identified student safety needs	GCPS	P&D, GCDOT
SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE		
● As part of the Infrastructure Development Plan, identify necessary capital improvement projects and provide estimated timeline for design and construction	P&D	DWR
● Explore policy that would enable shared stormwater management for redevelopment sites, including assessment and funding structure	P&D	DWR
● Continue monitoring necessary downstream sewer upgrades as new development comes online	DWR	P&D
● Coordinate regularly with DWR on development proposals of significant impact	P&D	DWR

4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT OR INITIATIVE	LEAD	PARTNERS
Identify developers who can deliver quality, creative commercial and residential development and begin building relationships	P&D	private sector
Identify which projects face the fewest ownership, regulatory, and infrastructure challenges and begin building relationships with property owners of those sites	P&D	private sector
Partner with neighborhood committee to host informational seminars for local business owners who would be affected by redevelopment	P&D	private sector, property owners
Develop a list of property and business owners who may be interested in engaging in prototype placemaking projects on their property	P&D	private sector, property owners

TIER 2

General

- Update small area plan and Infrastructure Development Plan every five years

Zoning Recommendations

- Continue monitoring performance of UDO and Bethesda Zoning Overlay District and recommend amendments as needed

Community Building

- Formalize initial placemaking “pop-ups” (e.g. parklets, community art, others) into permanent fixtures
- Work with community members on additional projects with higher financial or time commitment components
- Encourage additional civic engagement opportunities

Infrastructure Capacity

- Begin implementing priority projects identified in the Infrastructure Development Plan; update project status annually
- Begin construction on Redland Creek Greenway
- Begin implementing top-priority safety improvements identified in Highway 29 technical study
- Begin implementing safety and connectivity improvements which enhance access to key destinations, like schools

- Implement new bus routes outlined in Transit Development Plan (accessible via Gwinnett County’s website)
- Implement policy recommendations based on Tier I evaluation for shared stormwater infrastructure serving redevelopment sites

Economic Development

- Continue building relationships with property owners of areas identified for redevelopment
- Update population projections and market forecasts to determine if revisions are needed to redevelopment concepts

