

## CHAPTER 6 TRANSPORTATION

### OVERVIEW

#### Major Road System

The roads carrying the most traffic in Flowery Branch are Interstate 985, Atlanta Highway (SR 13), Spout Springs Road (including Phil Neikro Boulevard), McEver Road, Hog Mountain Road, and Jim Crow Road. Thurmon Tanner Parkway has comparatively low volumes but is another important artery in the City, especially in terms of future economic development.



**Thurmon Tanner Pkwy. Northbound  
from Phil Neikro Blvd**

#### Areawide Transportation Planning

Flowery Branch lies within the jurisdiction of the Gainesville-Hall County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Hall County was designated in 2002 as part of the 20-county, 8-hour ozone air quality non-attainment area. As a part of the MPO, Flowery Branch is expected to comply with regional transportation plans and work toward implementation of the State Implementation Plan. Road projects that add capacity must undergo the MPO's process to ensure they meet Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) standards. Flowery Branch defers to the MPO in terms of proposed improvements to the arterial and collector road system, although the City can propose projects for inclusion in the MPO transportation improvement program.

#### Railroad

The Norfolk Southern Atlanta/Gainesville Railroad parallels US Highway 23 (SR 13) and bisects Old Town Flowery Branch. Trains travel through the City frequently, and the railroad raises numerous issues. In particular, the gradients of streets crossing the railroad right-of-way pose complications for boat trailers and through-truck traffic, and at-grade intersections pose potential safety hazards and inconveniences to residents and travelers alike since no grade separated access way exists in Flowery Branch.

#### Alternative Travel Modes

Because of very limited pedestrian facilities, few bike facilities,<sup>1</sup> and limited public transit service,<sup>2</sup> Flowery Branch's residents will continue to depend on the automobile for mobility. Without any significant public transportation available or planned, it will become increasingly important for the City to develop systems that allow for alternative modes of travel (i.e., bicycle and pedestrian mobility).

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<sup>1</sup> State Bicycle Route 55 runs north-south along Atlanta Highway (US 23/ SR 13) north to Gainesville.

<sup>2</sup> Residents of Flowery Branch do have access to public transportation under the rural demand response service (Dial-A-Ride) operated by Hall Area Transit (HAT). However, statistics show very small levels of ridership (2000 Census as reported in the Community Assessment).

The comprehensive plan adopted in 2006 recommended an aggressive and substantial program for adding pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the city. The proposed programs included 51,185 linear feet of sidewalk improvements, 8,894 linear feet of greenways and multi-use trails, 86,014 linear feet of bikeways, and a 44,310 linear foot long bikeway loop within the City. However, the city has not had and continues to lack the financial resources to implement such an aggressive multi-modal improvement program. For this reason, the city is considering a systematic approach to prioritizing investment in sidewalks and bicycle facilities (see Downtown Transportation Study for further details).

## **DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION STUDY**

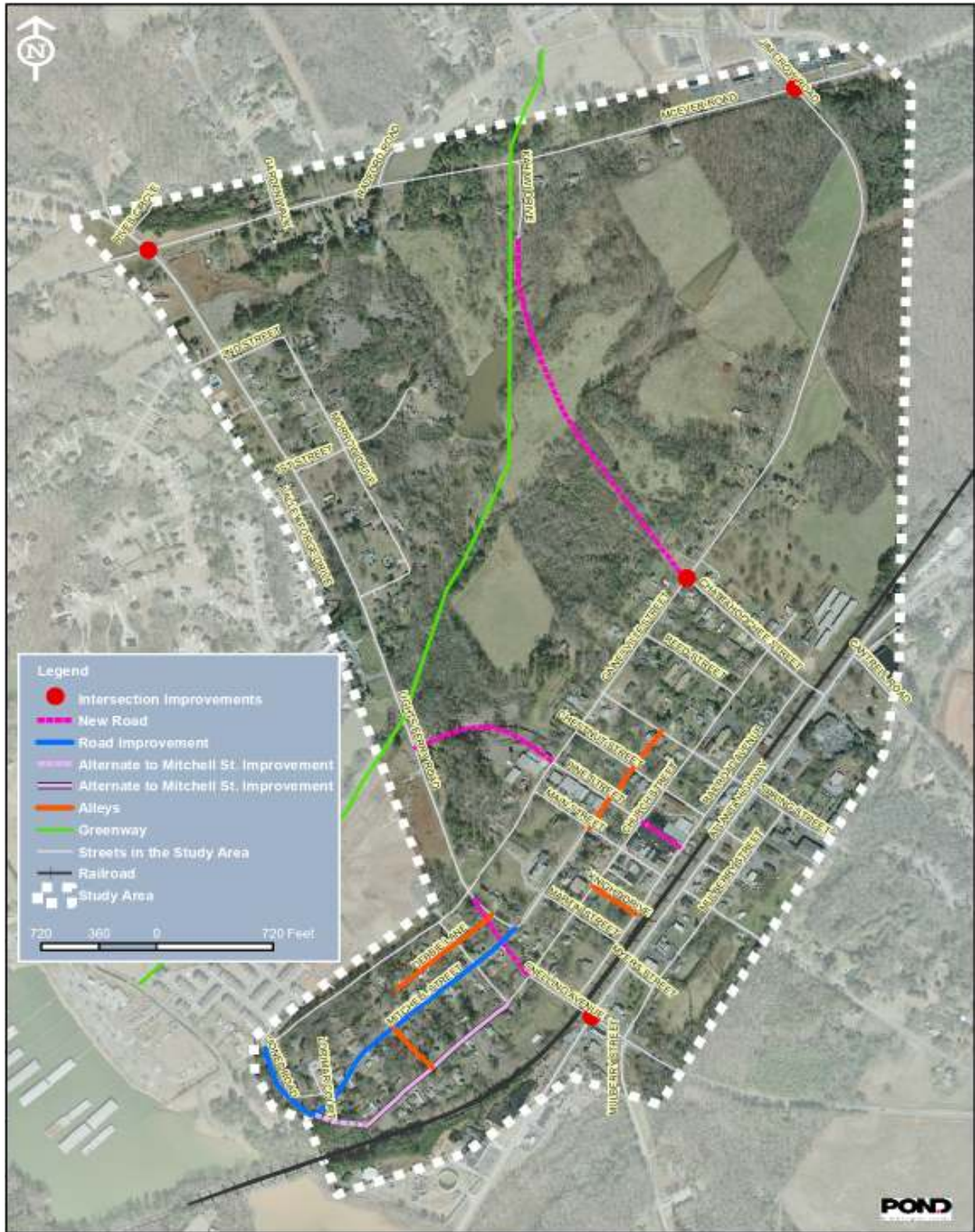
### **Background, Purpose and Scope**

In 2010, Flowery Branch with support from the Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) completed a downtown transportation study. The purpose of the study was to identify vehicular and pedestrian system improvements within a 543 acre study area bounded by McEver Road to the north, Lights Ferry Road to the west, Atlanta Highway (SR 13) and Mulberry Street to the south, and Gainesville Street to the east. The study area is expected to undergo both Greenfield development and redevelopment of Old Town according to a redevelopment plan (see Chapter 10 of this Community Agenda). The study includes a detailed existing conditions inventory (provided in an appendix to the study) addressing the following considerations: speed limit (if posted), number of lanes, pavement type, right-of-way width (if available), roadway width, condition of pavement and striping, safety issues, and traffic directional flow (i.e., one-way or two-way traffic). The study also included the collection of traffic counts and analyses of travel speeds. The study primarily provides recommendations which are focused on reconciling existing deficiencies and addressing mid-term needs (10 years), but other recommendations also address long-term needs (summarized on the following map).

### **Existing Problems and Issues in the Downtown Study Area**

The study documents numerous transportation issues and concludes the state of existing transportation infrastructure in the study area is poor. Problems include the following:

- Pavement marking is faded or non-existent.
- Road signs are missing and in some cases the heights are too low to meet standards.
- Pavement of roads is worn and cracked in several places.
- There are significant safety concerns with the road system due to narrow travel lanes, deep drainage ditches, and fixed objects such as trees too close to the roadways.
- Sidewalks are mostly lacking, and there is not a connected system for pedestrian mobility. There are no designated bike lanes or biking facilities.
- Few roads in the study area are wide enough to accommodate bike lanes.
- There are no transit routes within the study area (or in Flowery Branch generally).
- The existing level of service for roads in the study area is presently acceptable. However, by the year 2019 if no improvements are constructed, Atlanta Highway (SR 13) at Snelling Avenue will experience an unacceptable level of service “E” during a.m. and p.m. peak periods. Restriping the northwest bound Snelling Avenue approach is expected to improve the level of service from “E” to “D” by 2019.



**Recommendations of the Downtown Transportation Study**  
 (Source: Pond & Company)

### **Connectivity Recommendations for Downtown**

The following recommendations are articulated in the Downtown Transportation Study (2010) with regard to improving connectivity:

- Connectivity between McEver Road and I-985 through the study area is poor but needs to be facilitated by extending Lights Ferry Road to connect to Snelling Avenue, a two-lane project recognized in the 2006 community agenda.
- A connection (2-lane road) is needed from Gainesville Street to Lights Ferry Road. A roundabout should be considered as an option for the Pine Street/Gainesville Street/Connector Road intersection.
- A connection (2-lane road) is needed between McEver Road and Gainesville Street, preferably connecting at Chattahoochee Street.
- Mitchell Street is under-designed and needs a better connection to the Lights Ferry/Snelling/Phil Neikro corridor.
- Pine Street should be extended as already approved and reflected in redevelopment plans for Old Town.

### **Other Study Area Recommendations**

Most of the existing streets in Old Town Flowers Branch (i.e., the downtown area inside the original circle of the City) are quite narrow, and a few are designated for one-way travel. These “skinny” existing streets form a grid pattern and contribute substantially to the character of the downtown.

The following recommendations are also provided in the Downtown Transportation Study with regard to horizontal and vertical alignments and other considerations:



**Knight Street, A Narrow  
Two-Way Street**

- A separation of Snelling Avenue and the railroad tracks, as previously contemplated in the Community Agenda, would be too expensive and would have unacceptable impacts on the character of downtown Flowers Branch.
- Vertical alignment improvements are needed for Snelling Avenue west of the railroad tracks.
- Vertical alignment improvements are needed for Chattahoochee Street at Gainesville Street.
- The intersection of Lights Ferry Road and McEver Road needs a modification of horizontal alignment and left-turn lanes (identified by Hall County but not funded).
- Mitchell Street’s horizontal and vertical alignment needs improvement and a sidewalk should be added.
- Jones Road is too narrow to continue serving two-way traffic and needs to be widened for two-way travel from Mitchell Street to Lorimar Court and designated as one-way travel from Lorimar Court to Gainesville Street.
- Designate and sign Debbie Lane, Knight Drive, Mitchell Street (Main Street to Spring Street) as alleys.

- Preserve a future right-of-way for a greenway/multi-use trail between Alberta Banks Park and City Park.
- Adopt a systematic approach to prioritizing investment in sidewalks and bicycle facilities.

### **Downtown Streetscape Enhancement**

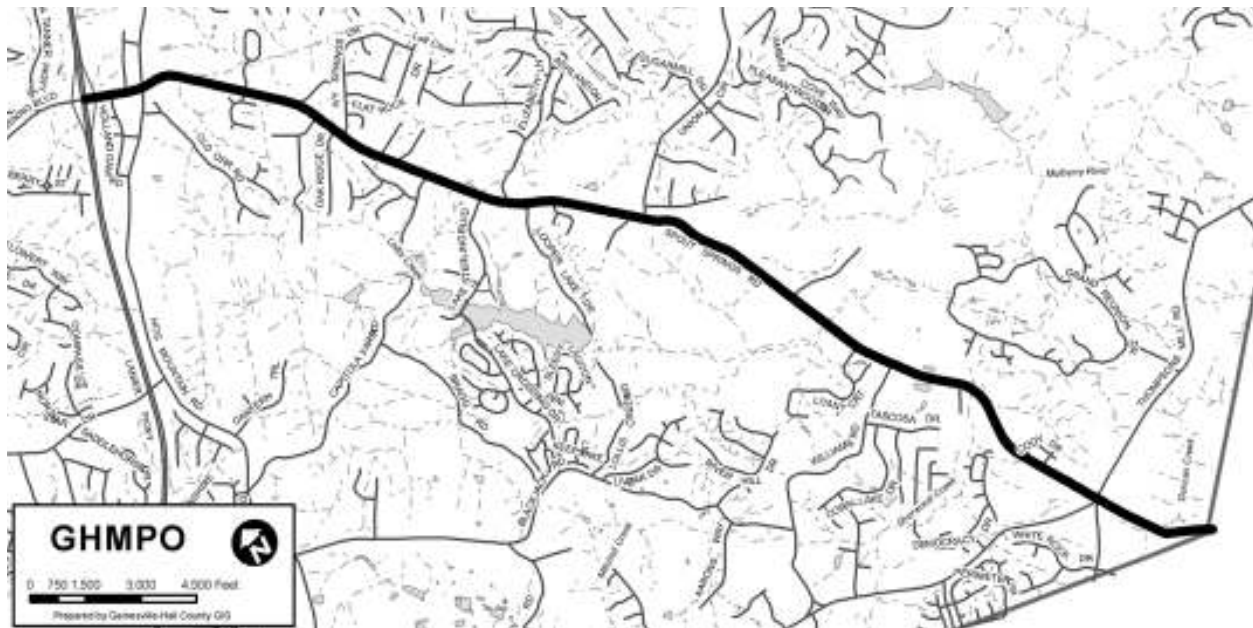
The Flowery Branch Main Street Streetscape (Phase I) was completed at a cost of \$502,000 using TEA-21 federal funds and general fund reserves. The city is currently working on Phase II of the same project that will include a sidewalk extension along Railroad Avenue and a portion of Church Street. Phase II is expected to be completed by October 2011.

### **PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS OUTSIDE DOWNTOWN**

The following projects are supported in this Community Agenda. Descriptions are taken from the Gainesville-Hall County MPO's 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. That plan is in the process of being updated. Given funding shortfalls, many of the proposed construction completion dates (referenced below) have been deferred.

### **Spout Springs Road**

Spout Springs Road will be widened from two to four lanes from Hog Mountain Road to the Gwinnett County line by 2015. Most of this project lies east of Flowery Branch, except for the area around the Sterling on the Lake development. The project already has some funding from the County for preliminary engineering and is being considered for inclusion as a project in the Regional Transportation Tax Project program (HB 277).



Source: Gainesville-Hall County MPO, 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, Appendix A, Project Worksheets.

### **Thurmon Tanner Parkway Extension**

Thurmon Tanner Parkway is currently being extended northward through Oakwood to intersect with Mundy Mill Road (SR 53). Though this improvement lies well north of Flowery Branch, this project will expand the importance of the existing segment of Thurmon Tanner Parkway in Flowery Branch with regard to future economic development.

### **Friendship Road (State Route 347)**

State Route 347 (Friendship Road) is proposed to be partially relocated and widened to four lanes from Interstate 985 to SR 211. The MPO's plan shows the road improvement east of I-985 is slated for construction in 2010 and open to traffic in 2011. West of I-985, Friendship Road is also proposed for widening to four lanes to McEver Road (construction called for in 2012).

### **McEver Road Intersection Improvements**

Intersection improvements along McEver Road, including Lights Ferry Road, Gaines Ferry Road, and Jim Crow Road/Gainesville Street, are also called for in the MPO's transportation plan. These improvements are projected to be open for traffic by 2012. The city is currently working with Hall County to start work on the Jim Crow Road/Gainesville Street intersection by June 2011.



Source: Gainesville-Hall County MPO, 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, Appendix A, Project Worksheets.

### **Martin Road/Interstate 985 Interchange**

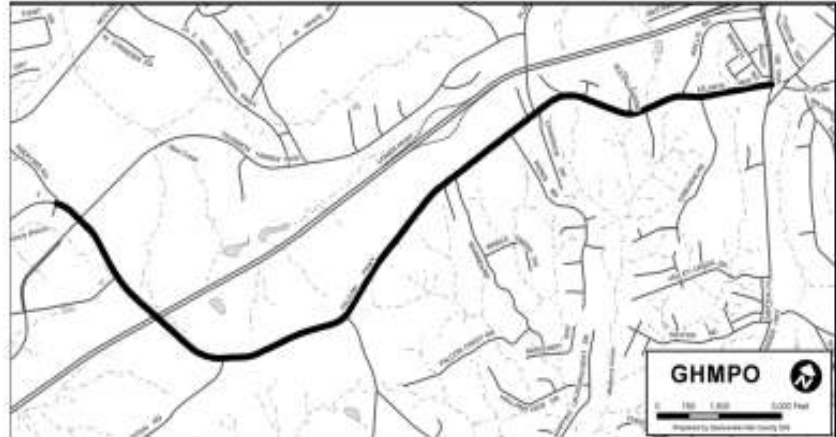
A new interchange (Exit 14) at Martin Road and Interstate 985 is planned. This project will link Falcon Parkway (SR 13) and H.F. Reed Industrial Parkway. The MPO's plan shows this project being completed by 2015. While most of the interchange area is currently unincorporated, Flowery Branch's city limits are close to the project area, and this interchange will definitely influence land use planning in the city. A complementary project in the MPO's plan is the widening of Martin Road east of Falcon Parkway to Winder Highway by 2015.



Source: Gainesville-Hall County MPO, 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, Appendix A, Project Worksheets.

**Atlanta Highway/Falcon Parkway (SR 13)**

The MPO plan calls for the widening of Atlanta Highway (SR 13) and Falcon Parkway (SR 13) from two to four lanes from Radford Road to Winder Highway (SR 53) by 2021. This project will extend some 4.5 miles and will improve north-south access into Flowery Branch. This project is only considered viable following completion of Exit 14 (identified on the previous page).



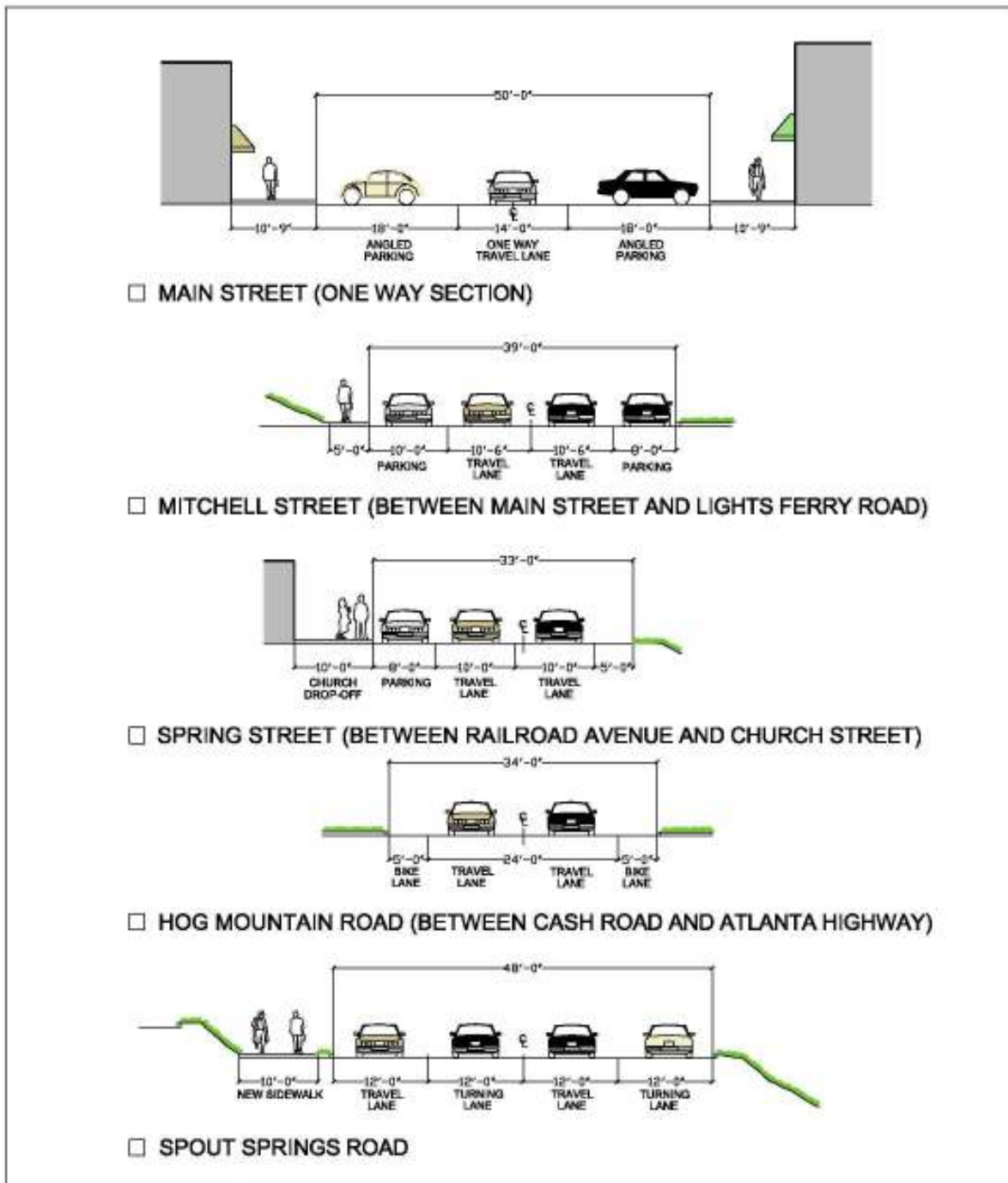
Source: Gainesville-Hall County MPO, 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, Appendix A, Project Worksheets.

**Interstate 985**

The MPO plan indicates that I-985 is proposed for widening from four to six lanes northward from the Hall County/Gwinnett County line. No future date is shown in the plan; therefore, this project is considered long range.

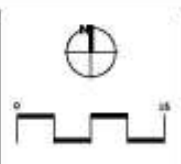
**LOCAL ROAD CROSS-SECTIONS**

The following two graphics illustrate existing and proposed road cross-sections. They were initially prepared and included in the 2006 Community Agenda but modified in this plan update. The first illustration shows existing road cross-sections for Main Street (since improved) and others. The second illustration shows five different options for road cross-sections and can be consulted in terms of providing “context sensitive” designs in the future.

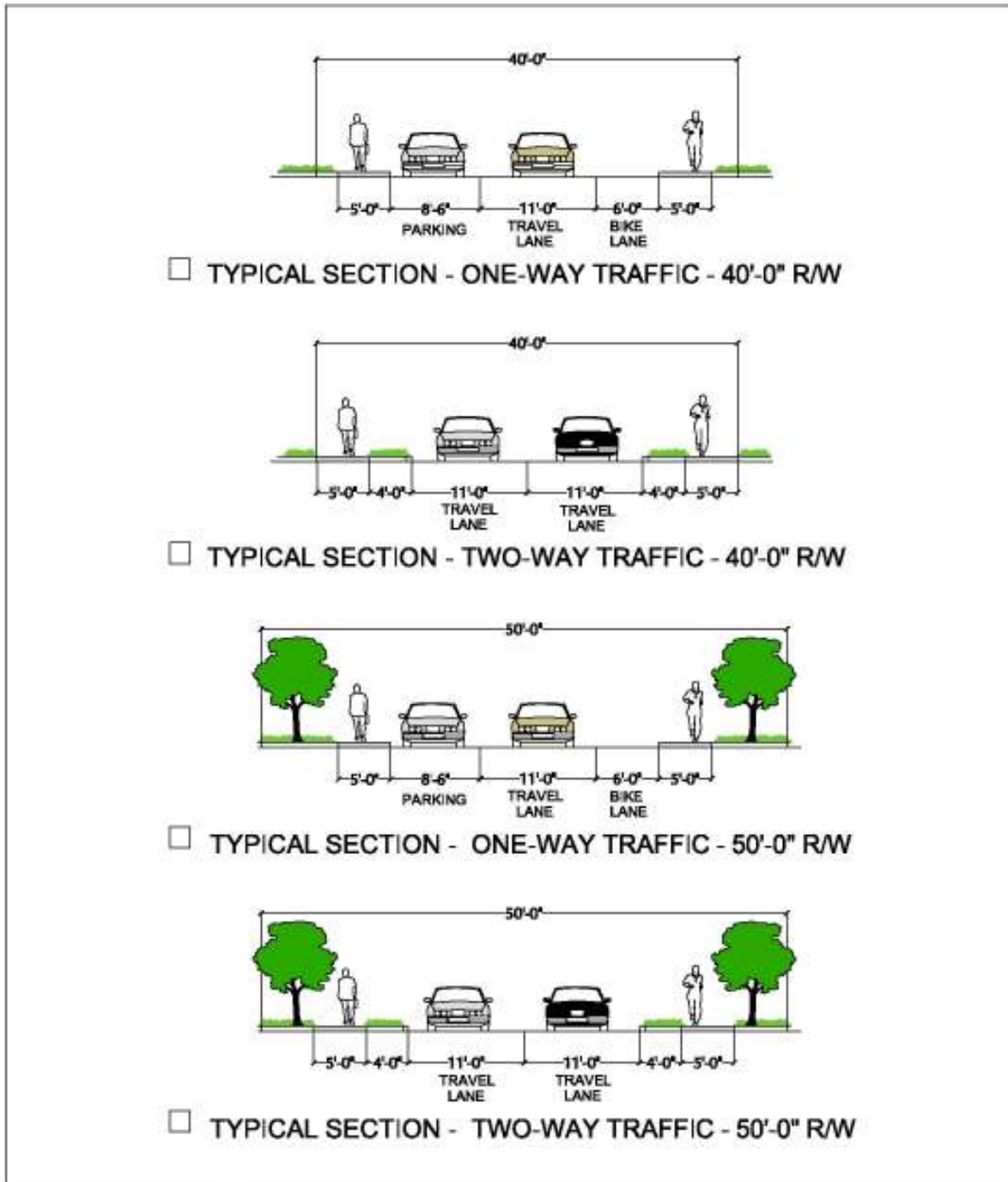


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CITY OF  
 FLOWERY BRANCH  
 FLOWERY BRANCH, GEORGIA

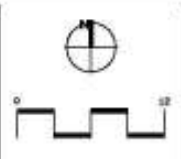


ROAD SECTIONS  
 EXISTING  
 CONDITIONS



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CITY OF  
 FLOWERY BRANCH  
 FLOWERY BRANCH, GEORGIA

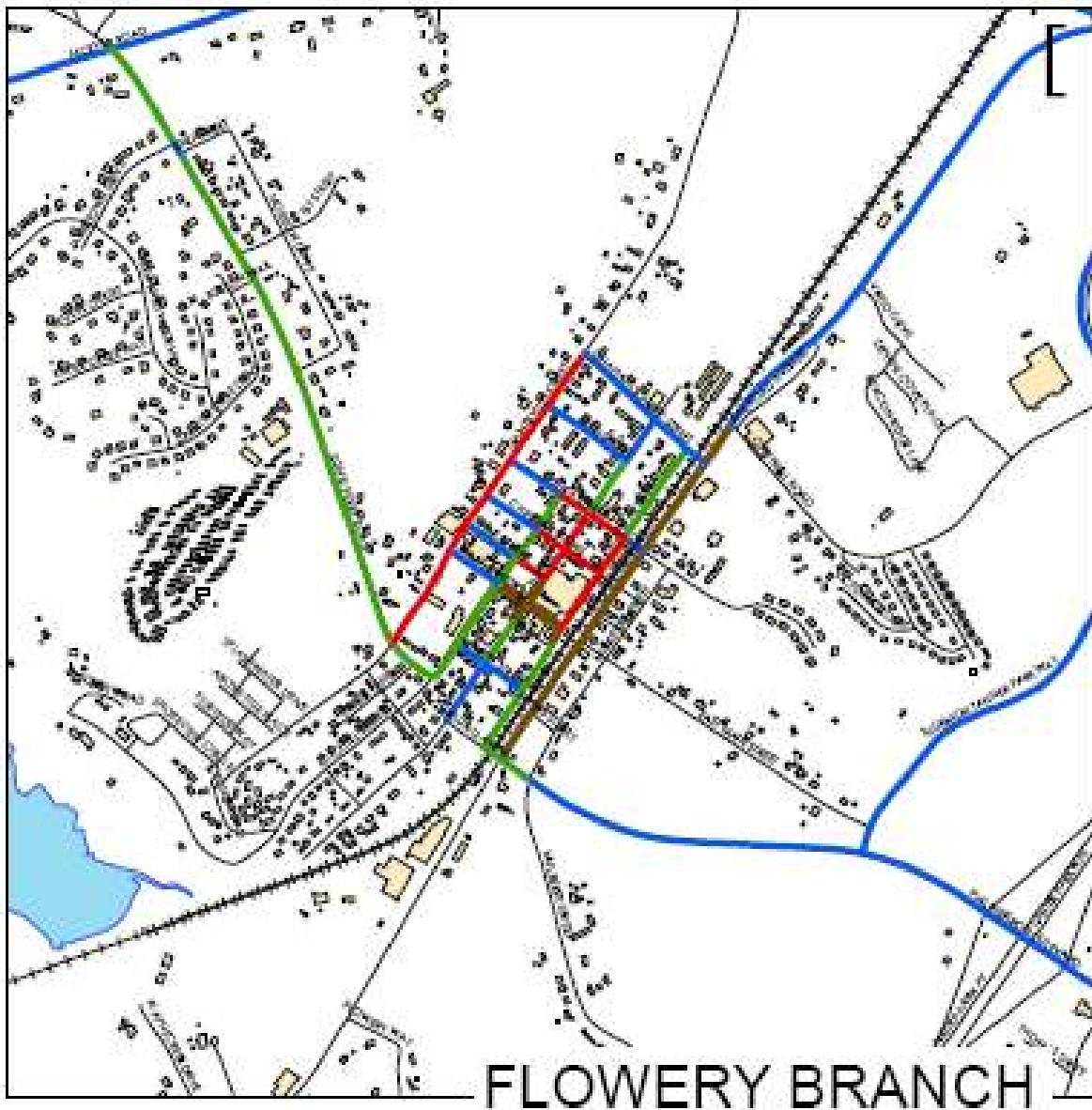


PROPOSED ROAD SECTIONS

### **PEDESTRIAN AND BIKEWAY IMPROVEMENTS**

As noted at the outset of this chapter, Flowery Branch's 2006 Community Agenda recommended an aggressive program of pedestrian facilities, bikeways and greenway trails. However, funding was not available to accomplish that program. The Gainesville-Hall County Metropolitan Planning Organization has prepared and adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan which incorporates many of those recommendations. The graphic below illustrates the MPO's plan for Flowery Branch (see color legend to right).

- Long Term
- Mid Term
- Short Term



Source: Gainesville-Hall County MPO, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.