

2017

Sidewalk Inventory Report



Prepared by the Gainesville-Hall
Metropolitan Planning
Organization

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Intended for In-House Reference

Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Gainesville	6
Oakwood	8
Flowery Branch.....	10
Braselton & Jackson County.....	12
Hall County	14
Hall Area Transit	16
Conclusions.....	18

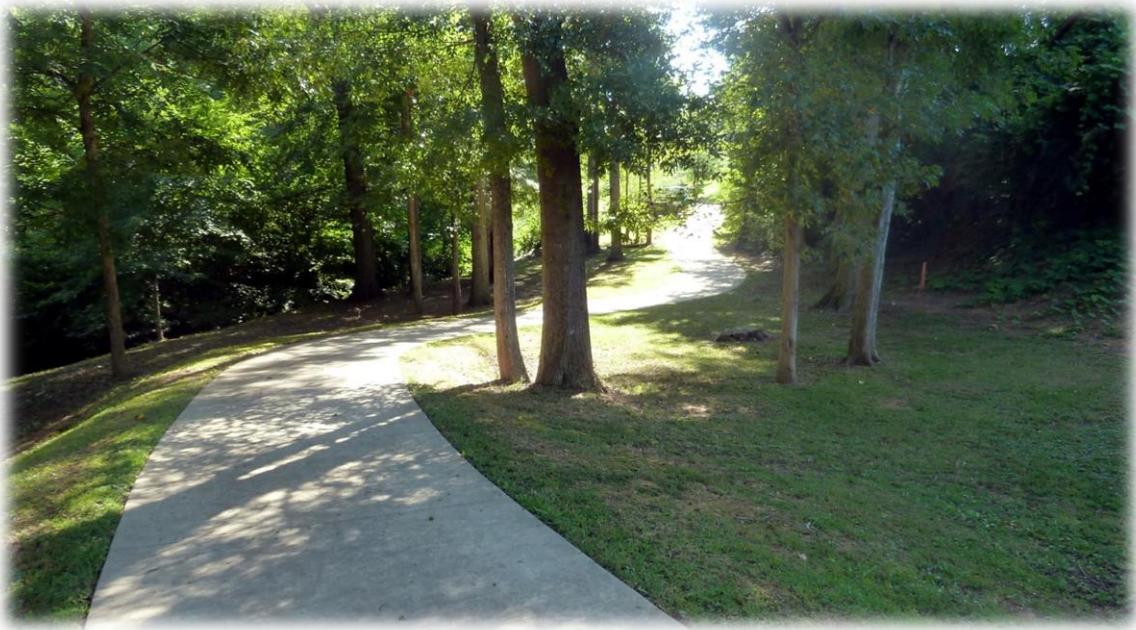


Figure 1: Rock Creek Greenway in Gainesville

SUMMARY

GHMPO Sidewalk Inventory

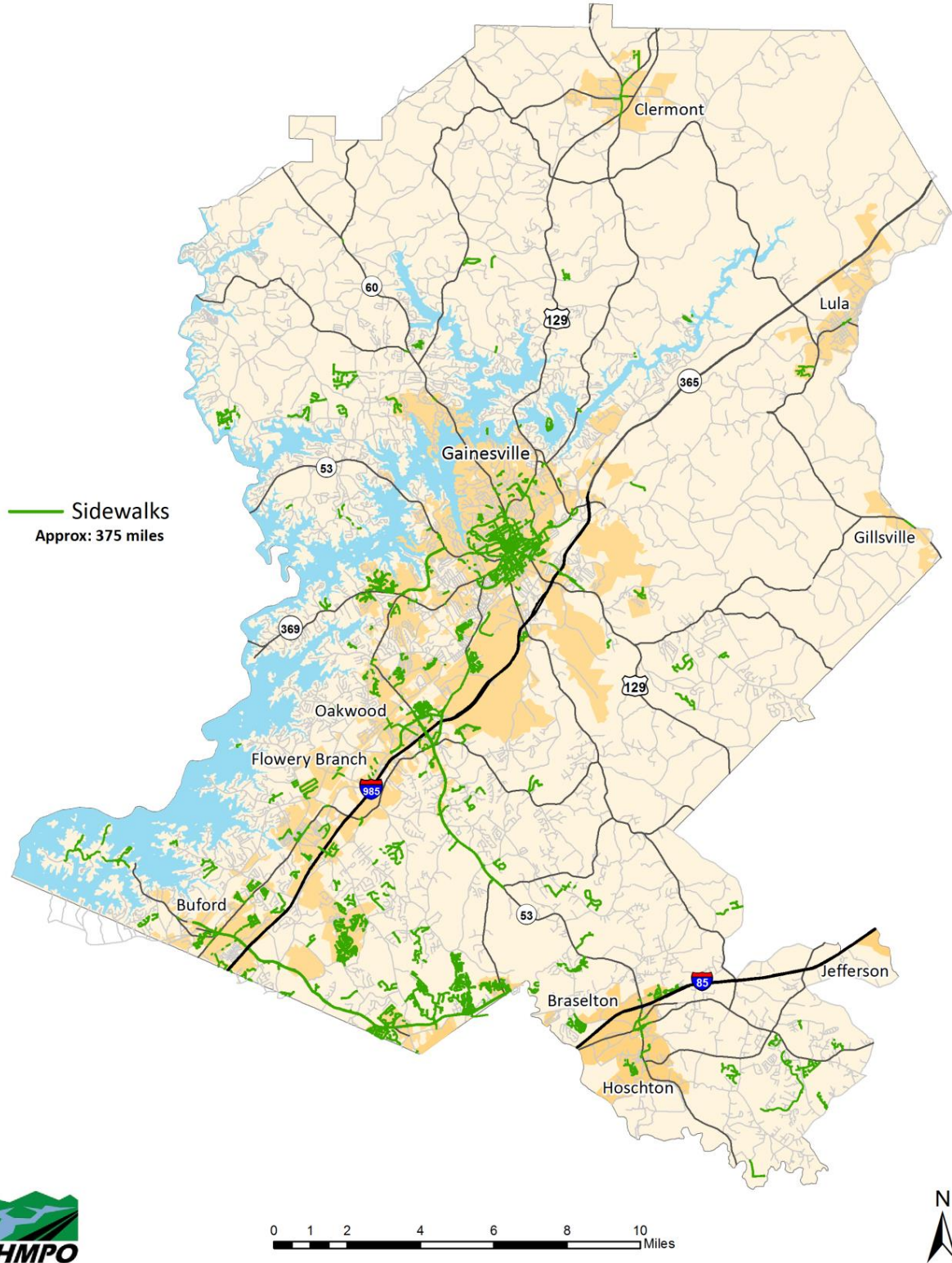


Figure 2: GHMPO Planning Area with Sidewalk Inventory

INTRODUCTION

GHMPO Planning Area

The Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) is the intergovernmental transportation planning body for Hall County and a portion of western Jackson County. The GHMPO conducts the federally mandated transportation planning process for the Gainesville Urbanized Area and portions of the Atlanta Urbanized Area, as identified in the 2010 U.S. Census.

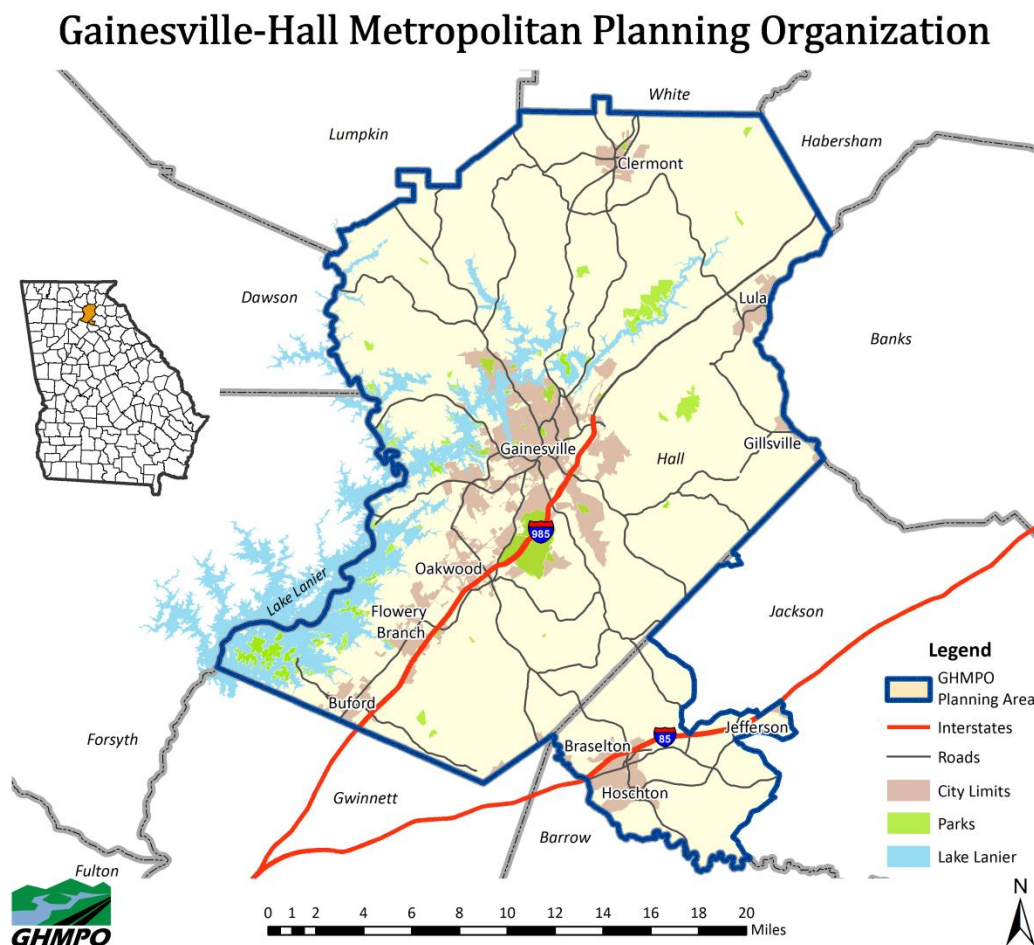


Figure 3: The GHMPO Planning Area and Surrounding Counties

Purpose of Sidewalk Inventory Study

Though the private automobile is the dominant form of transportation in the United States, more and more communities are increasing their planning efforts for alternate modes of transportation. Every trip taken by an individual throughout their day begins and ends with walking, even if it is just to and from their vehicle. Sidewalks are the pedestrian backbone to any community, allowing for easy movement on foot between home, work, and places of leisure and commerce. Many in today's communities do not have access to a private automobile, leaving walking, biking, and public transportation as their primary mode of travel.

The purpose of this Sidewalk Inventory Report is to identify where current sidewalk infrastructure exists within the GHMPO planning area. Many locations, such as within the city of Gainesville, already had existing sidewalk infrastructure data while other areas within the GHMPO did not. This data was collected by GHMPO staff using a mix of on the ground inventory collection and analyzing high quality aerial imagery recently obtained in 2015.

Using this inventory, the hope is for a more accurate discussion of what is currently available for pedestrian use as well as identifying potential areas for improvement in pedestrian access and connectivity moving forward. Furthering connectivity will allow for an easier movement of people, goods, and jobs throughout the region.



Figure 4: A Winding Pathway through the Sterling on the Lake subdivision

GAINESVILLE

Current Inventory

Of all the areas studied in the GHMPO region, Gainesville has the most evidence of an existing sidewalk network. The downtown square, which is the location of many shops, restaurants, and the Gainesville City Hall, has an excellent array of sidewalks, crosswalks, lights, and benches. This leads to a very pleasant pedestrian experience as a whole. Directly south of the square is a large and attractive pedestrian bridge that currently spans over busy Jesse Jewell Parkway, allowing easy access to the square from the south for bikers and pedestrians alike.

Sidewalks continue to in the blocks surrounding the square on all sides, eventually leading into the campus of Brenau University to the northeast and connecting to the Wilkshire Trails Park, Gainesville High School, and Lake Lanier area to the northwest via the Rock Creek Greenway.

From the Square, pedestrians can also access the Frances Meadows Aquatic Center, Northeast Georgia Health Systems & Medical Center, Lake Shore Mall, and the Gainesville Amtrak Station all via the existing sidewalk network.

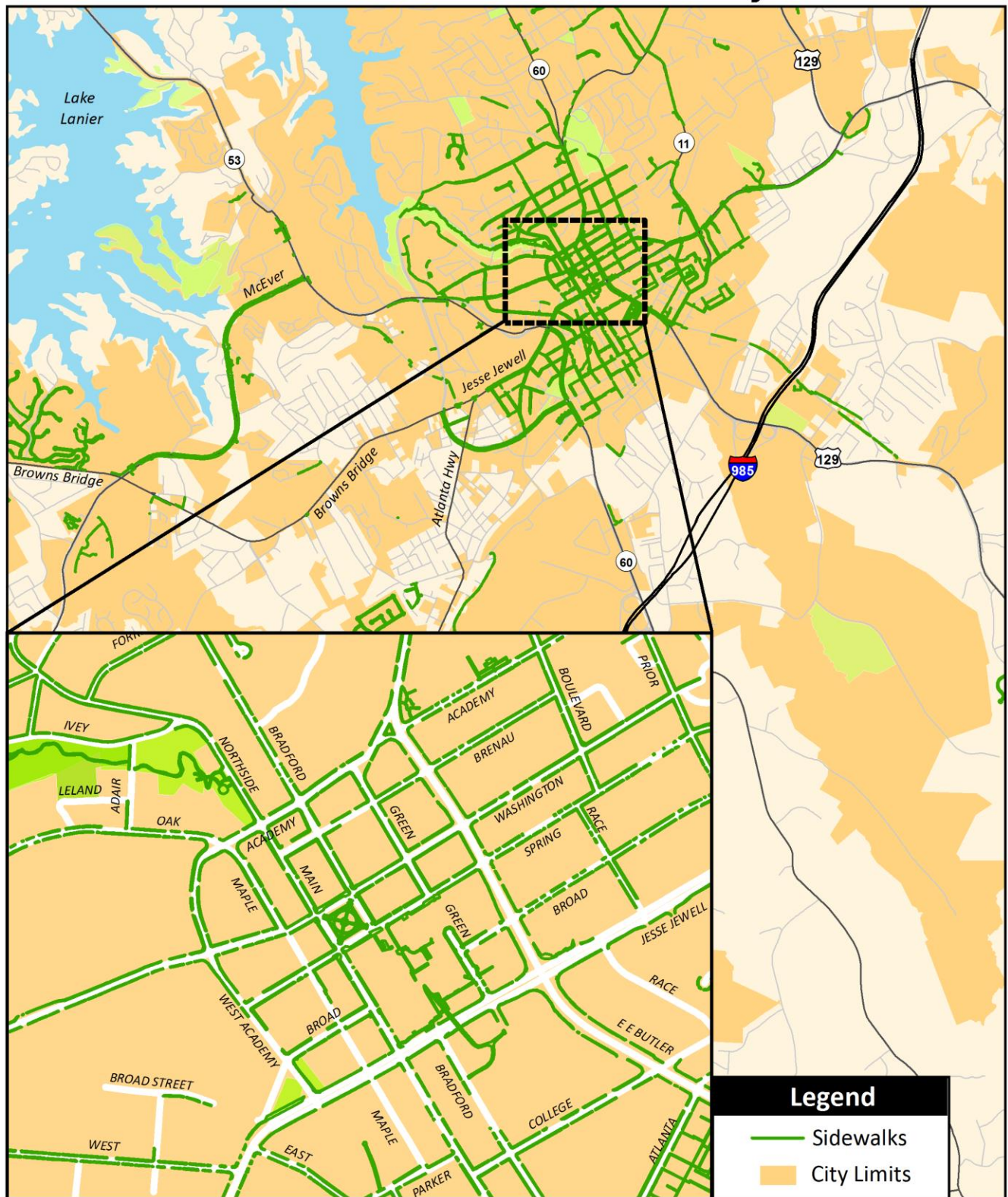
Futures Areas of Consideration

A lack of connectivity is noticeable along Browns Bridge, Atlanta Highway, Highway 53, Highway 60, and Highway 129. The sidewalk network along these routes away from the city center is spotty or completely nonexistent. Appropriate pedestrian crossings also become sparser, leading to long distances between pedestrian signals, especially along Browns Bridge and Atlanta Highway.



Figure 5: Pedestrian Bridge over Jesse Jewell Parkway

Gainesville Sidewalk Inventory



0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

Figure 6: Gainesville Area Sidewalk Inventory

OAKWOOD

Current Inventory

The city of Oakwood has done an excellent job of providing sidewalk infrastructure along the main thoroughfares. Sidewalks are present along the main portion of the business district of Mundy Mill. Almost five miles of continuous linear sidewalks on both sides of the roadway are present from Walmart down to Chestnut Mountain.

The University of North Georgia has a wide network of sidewalks that wind their way through its campus which provide good connectivity to the sidewalks along the business district as well as to those on the southern portion of Atlanta Highway. Though not complete, the sidewalks on campus will eventually connect into the Highlands to Islands Multi-Use path which will connect Lake Lanier, Gainesville, Brenau, the Elachee Nature Center, the University of North Georgia, and Oakwood.

Futures Areas of Consideration

Other portions of sidewalks are present throughout the region but without much connectivity to the main network. Sidewalks connecting to the actual downtown portion of Oakwood as well as to the Elachee Nature Science Center could be potential projects in the future that could yield even better connectivity within the city.



Figure 7: Newly Completed Chicopee Section of Highlands to Islands Multi-Use Trail

Oakwood Sidewalk Inventory

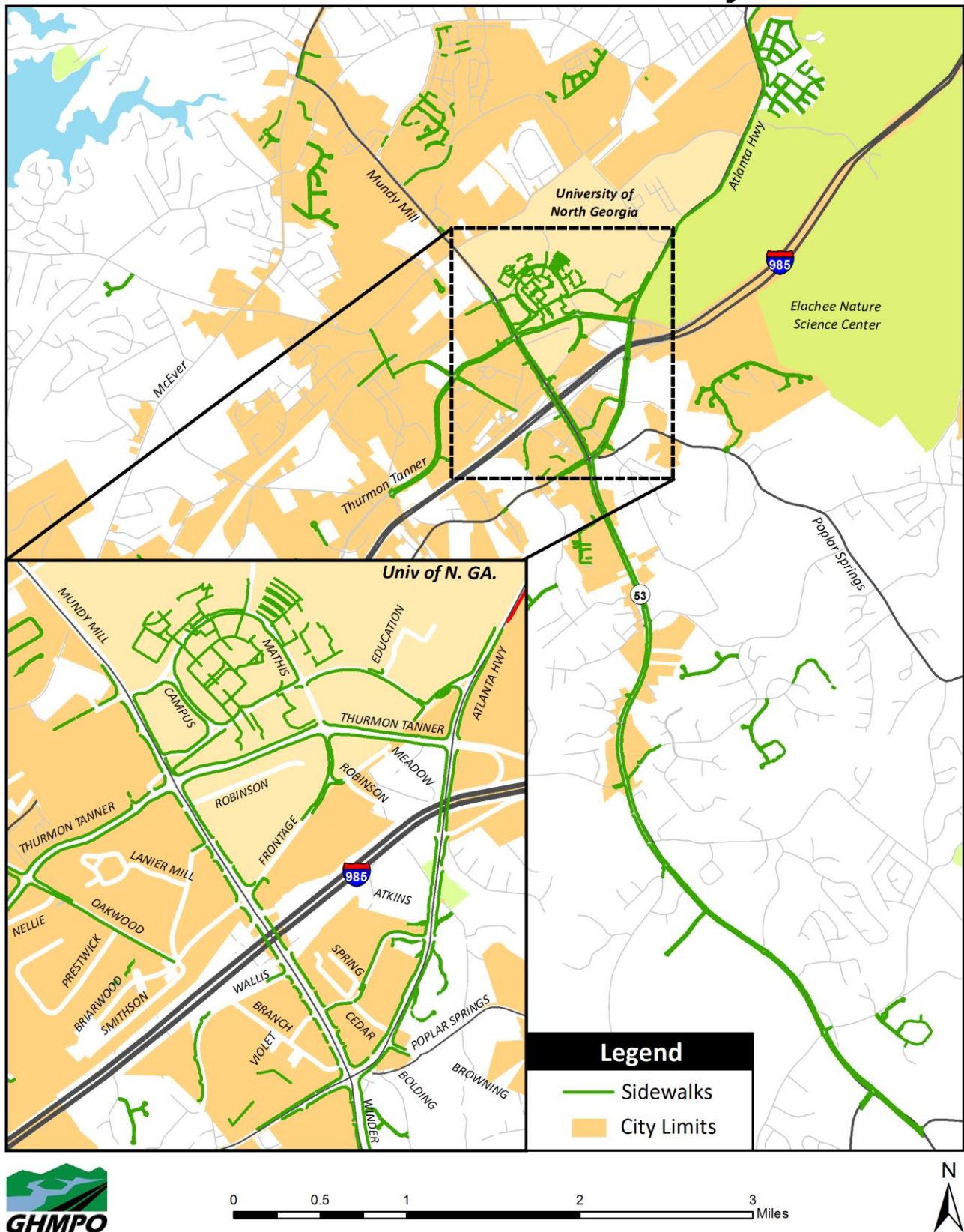


Figure 8: Oakwood Area Sidewalk Inventory

FLOWERY BRANCH

Current Inventory

The City of Flowery Branch sees sidewalks around downtown and along many major routes and neighborhoods. Downtown has sidewalks lining both sides of the historic Main Street business district where restaurants, stores, and city hall are located. Sidewalks also run along the western edge of Railroad Avenue down to the intersection of Snelling Avenue. Just west of the intersection of Snelling and Railroad is the new roundabout that has nice pedestrian infrastructure surrounding and across the interchange.

Sidewalks are present along the eastern edge of Atlanta Highway for the majority of the in city portion of the roadway. They are also found along the Spout Springs Road business district and throughout the business complex that houses Kohl's, Chick-Fil-A, and Chili's.

Futures Areas of Consideration

Potential future investments could include providing connectivity from downtown Flowery Branch to the Hideaway Bay Marina and Lake Lanier front, the shopping center at the intersection of Spout Springs and Hog Mountain, as well as north/south connections to Oakwood and Buford. Potential connectivity to the Highlands to Islands Trail in Oakwood should also be considered moving forward, as that would provide direct connectivity for multiuse travel from Flowery Branch to downtown Gainesville.



Figure 9: Multi-Use Pathway along Friendship Road

Flowerly Branch / South Hall Sidewalk Inventory

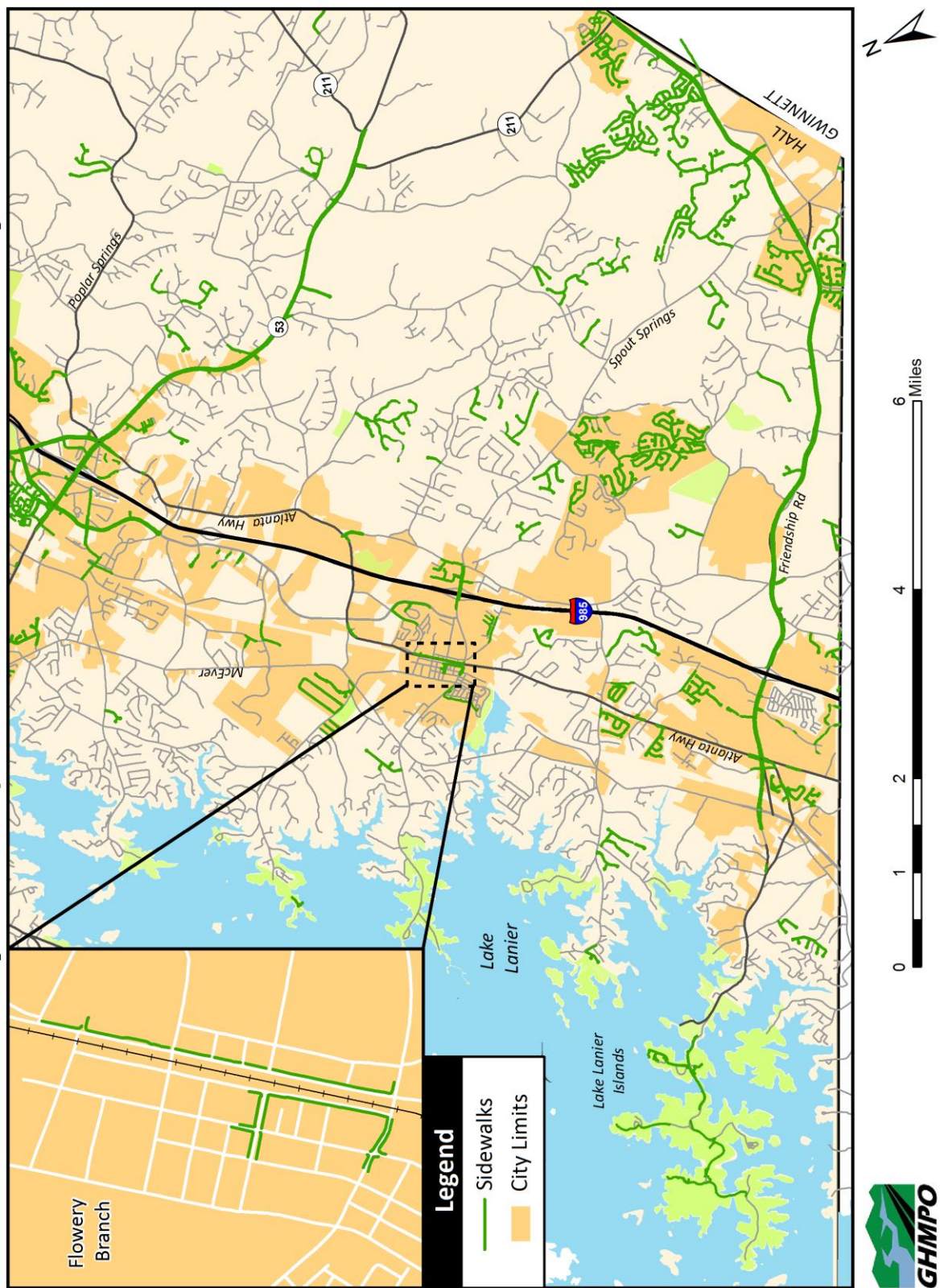


Figure 10: Flowerly Branch & South Hall Area Inventory

Braselton & Jackson County

Current Inventory

The downtown portion of Braselton has the most concentration of sidewalks, shown lining the street along Highway 53, Broadway, Lewis Braselton, and Davis streets. In Hoschton, sidewalks are mainly only seen along portions of Jefferson Street and small portions of Highway 53.

Outside of the town centers, public sidewalks are nearly non-existent. Although several large neighborhoods scattered throughout the area have sidewalks throughout, but many do not. There is virtually no connectivity between the pockets of sidewalk infrastructure currently in place.

Future Areas of Consideration

In future sidewalk and pedestrian consideration, connectivity between the downtown sections of Braselton and Hoschton should be explored, especially considering it would only require approximately half a mile of sidewalk extension.

Connectivity to surrounding communities should also be taken into consideration with future plans, especially northward towards the recently completed multi-use paths along Friendship Road. Connectivity to Friendship presents the opportunity to connect with not only other parts of southern Hall County, but to Gainesville and Gwinnett County as future pedestrian projects are constructed.



Figure 11: Construction along Highway 53 in Braselton

Braselton / Jackson County Sidewalk Inventory

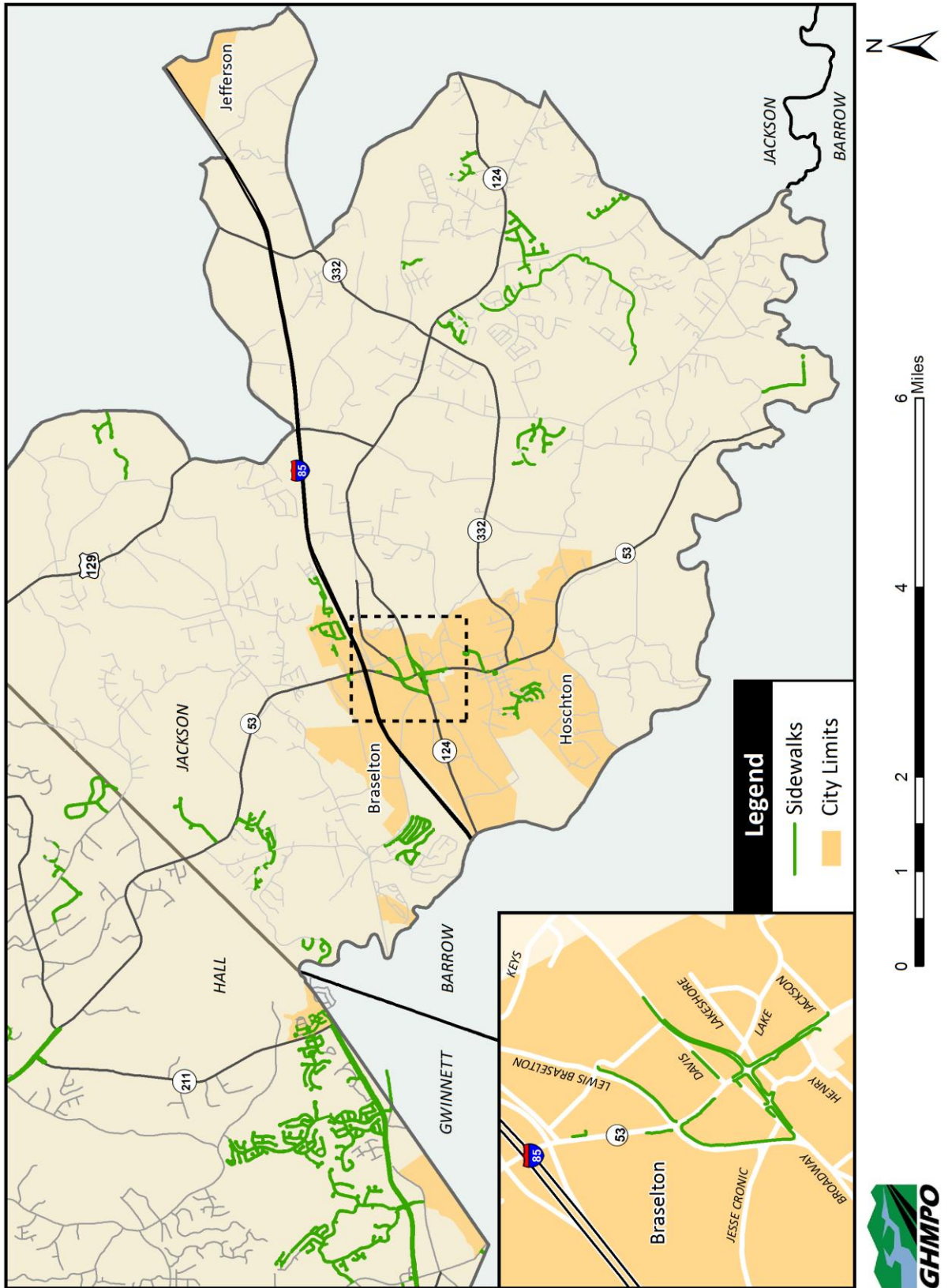


Figure 12: Braselton & Jackson County MPO Area Sidewalk Inventory

HALL COUNTY

Current Inventory

Hall County has approximately 350 miles of sidewalk as of Fall 2016, mostly concentrated around the downtown cores of Gainesville, Oakwood, and Flowery Branch, along with long sections on the Highway 53 and Friendship Road corridors. Over 200 miles of residential sidewalks have also been accounted for, mostly concentrated within neighborhoods or along business fronts. The heaviest concentration of sidewalks exist on the southern end of the county, with more isolated segments appearing in Clermont, Lula, and Gillsville.

Future Areas of Consideration

The existing public and private sidewalks provide an excellent backbone for a county-wide pedestrian network. When completed, the Highlands to Islands Multi-Use Trail will provide excellent core connectivity within the center of the county that could easily be built upon. Connectivity between the Friendship Road multi-use path to downtown Flowery Branch (possibly using sidewalks or a multi-use pathway along Atlanta Highway), along with connectivity between Flowery Branch and the Highlands to Islands Multi-Use Trail could provide a pedestrian pathway that could connect in the future to the Suwanee Creek and Ivey Creek Greenways in Gwinnett County. This connectivity with Gwinnett could potentially provide pedestrian connectivity from Gainesville to communities in and around the Atlanta region. This same consideration should also be made to communities on all sides of Hall County.



Figure 13: Trails and Sidewalks Wind Through Don Carter State Park along Lake Lanier

GHMPO Sidewalk Inventory

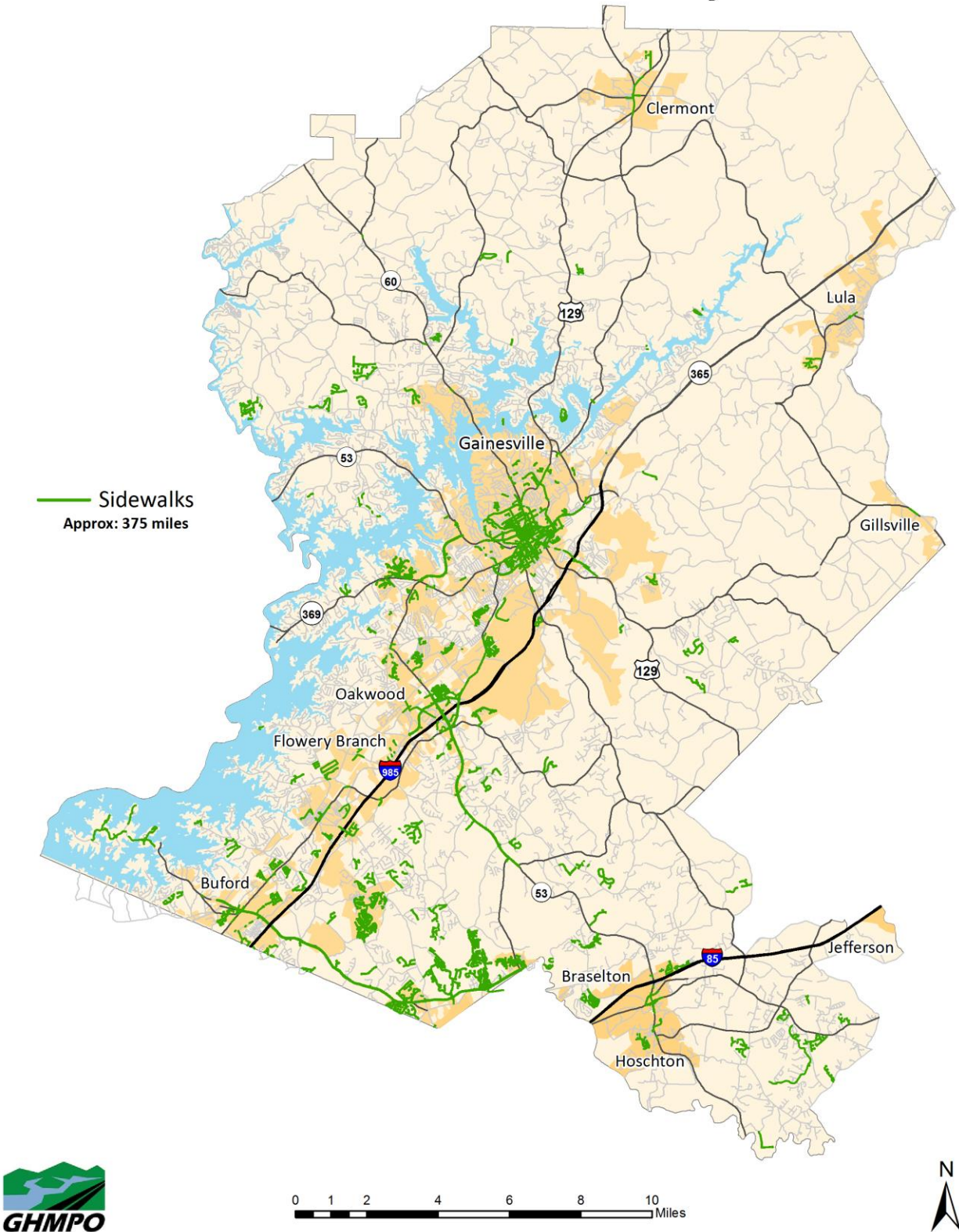


Figure 14: GHMPO Planning Area Sidewalk Inventory

HALL AREA TRANSIT

Figure 16 to the right shows the Hall Area Transit's Gainesville Connection routes laid on top of the existing sidewalk network in the Gainesville and Oakwood areas. The first observation is that all the routes begin and end in downtown Gainesville at the Hall Area Transit Terminal on Main Street just south of the square. The majority of the city core has sidewalks along one or both sides of the roadway, allowing for adequate pedestrian loading and unloading space. However, as the routes move farther away from the city center, sidewalk availability dwindles. Route 30 (in red) appears to have the most sidewalk availability while routes 40 and 50 (purple and green) appear to have the least availability.

Virtually the entire stretch from Pearl Nix Parkway to McEver Road has no sidewalks, which is an area currently served by both Routes 40 and 41. This is a highly commercial corridor and could benefit from an increase in pedestrian facilities. Route 40 also has little to no sidewalks along Memorial Park and Mountain View, two areas of heavy industry and employment. Route 50 is benefiting by the continuing construction of the Highlands to Islands Multi-Use Trail that will eventually provide pedestrian connectivity along the entire section of the route that runs along Atlanta Highway.



Figure 15: Sidewalks and Pedestrian Facilities are plentiful in the city centers but become less abundant the farther away one travels

Gainesville Connection Fixed Routes & Sidewalks

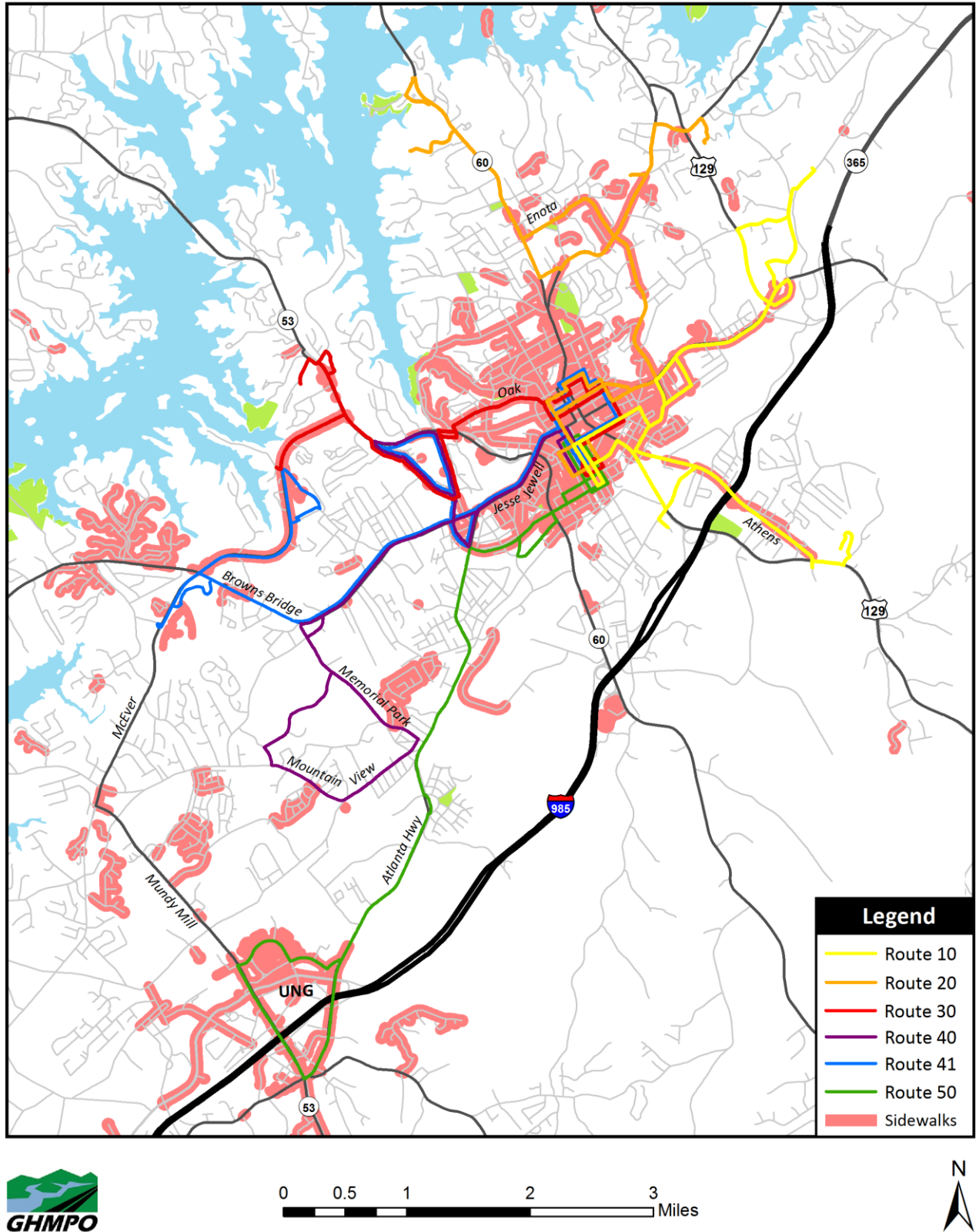


Figure 16: Hall Area Transit Fixed Routes with Sidewalk Inventory

CONCLUSIONS

The GHMPO planning area has a great start for a continuous sidewalk network for a non-urban county. Most of the city centers have sidewalks available and many major corridors have recently installed sidewalks or multi-use paths on one or both sides of the roadways. This allows for pedestrians to move more freely and more comfortably as they try to reach their destinations on foot.

Moving forward, connectivity to this existing network should be considered, especially as roads are widened or new routes are created. The creation of a continuous pedestrian network from Gainesville to Gwinnett and Jackson Counties can very much be a reality if steps are taken to slowly expand the pedestrian network as new roadway projects come online. The increase in connectivity will continue to improve the lives of Hall County residents as they are able to move more freely between home, work, and places of leisure in the coming future.

