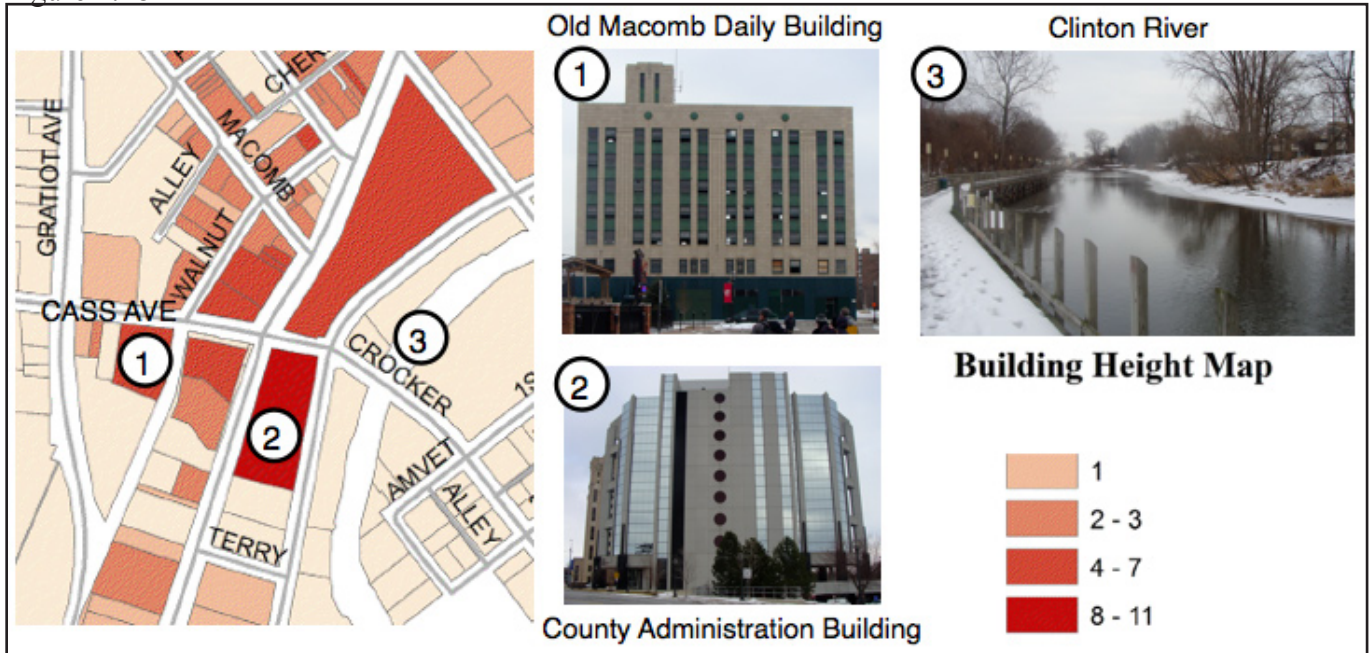


Survey responses included multiple buildings or landmarks that contributed to the character of the downtown. Three features that were consistently referenced in survey responses were the County Administration Building, the Macomb Daily Building, and the Clinton River. The Macomb Daily Building and County Administration Building are both located along Cass Street with the Clinton River directly across north-bound Gratiot to the east.

**Downtown Needs**

Figure 2.18



Participants also contributed to a needs assessment by creating a list of the needs they identified for Downtown Mount Clemens. The most prevalent response to this question was the need for more businesses. More specific examples were given such as niche shopping and a dry goods grocery. Other recommendations were listed, such as the creation of a Downtown Business Association and the inclusion of downtown businesses in the decision making process for downtown development. The second most prevalent response was the need for higher levels of safety, this stemming from both real or perceived public safety concerns. The third most frequent need was for more recreational programming and family oriented activities within the downtown. Current activities and events, such as the Stars and Stripes Festival, have been deemed successful and survey participants indicated a need for more of these activities.

**Downtown Assets**

The assets of downtown Mount Clemens were very clear in the survey feedback. The greatest asset identified being the historical downtown fabric. This historical downtown fabric provides a walkable infrastructure that is interconnected and allows for easy access of downtown amenities. Another asset identified was the Clinton River which is located East of the downtown. Currently the downtown lacks a strong connection to the waterfront. The third most important asset was listed as the entertainment and nightlife of downtown Mount Clemens.

### **Threats**

The greatest threat listed for the downtown is its negative perception and safety concerns, such as the amount of vacant storefronts as well as aging infrastructure and blight. The second threat was the prohibitively high rent costs and taxes that may make it difficult to develop new business opportunities. The third highest threat listed was that certain downtown commercial uses threatened the downtown’s traditional sense of place, specifically that there exists a redundancy of bars and similar establishments

### **Opportunities**

Meeting attendees and survey participants were asked what opportunities they saw for the improvement of the downtown. The greatest opportunity was seen as the riverfront, and the development of new assets and activities to attract and retain visitors in the downtown. Opportunities discussed in the SWOT analysis also included a bike path along the river. The second greatest opportunity for improvement for the downtown was redevelopment of underused buildings for new residential units. Opportunities included the adaptive reuse of vacant office properties. For example, new residential lofts could be developed in preparation for possible new residents as a result of the opening of the Oakland University campus. The third greatest opportunity was to brand and market the downtown in a different way to attract new visitors and residents while addressing the perception of poor safety within the downtown.

### **Focus Group Input**

Focus groups discussed the same questions encompassed in the survey thoroughly and shared ideas together building a greater consensus among participants. The three groups discussed the downtown area and all decided that it was defined by Northbound and Southbound Gratiot, which also created a barrier for connectivity to surrounding areas. Solutions to this barrier were discussed, among them were more and better traffic lights, as well as pedestrian bridges over Gratiot. Groups listed many of the same landmarks that were listed in the individual surveys such as the County Buildings and the Old Macomb Daily building. Groups voiced the need to create Mount Clemens as a greater destination spot with the improvement of public seating and greenspace, as well as better branding for the downtown. Opportunities also included the new Oakland University campus and the improvement of retail within the downtown.

### **Summary of Public Input**

Key themes were identified through group discussions and survey input. Public input data analysis showed that participants placed importance on the existing downtown and its sense of place. When participants were asked to describe threats to the downtown, they identified issues such as vacancy and a lack of connectivity between the Clinton River and downtown because of walkability issues associated with northbound and southbound Gratiot. Participants also discussed opportunities to improve the downtown, such as the development of the riverfront, the reuse of vacant properties, and preparing for new visitors resulting from Oakland University’s new downtown campus.

## CURRENT CONDITIONS IN THE PLANNING AREA

### Existing Land Use and Zoning

When planning for future land use, it is important to know current land use as well as existing zoning designations. Land use and zoning information was gathered using a variety of sources. Broad land use and zoning data for the downtown was made available by the Downtown Development Authority. Current land use data for the downtown planning area was unavailable, so this information had to be gathered through an independent analysis. A walking survey was conducted in March of 2011 in which all 468 parcels within the planning area were reviewed.

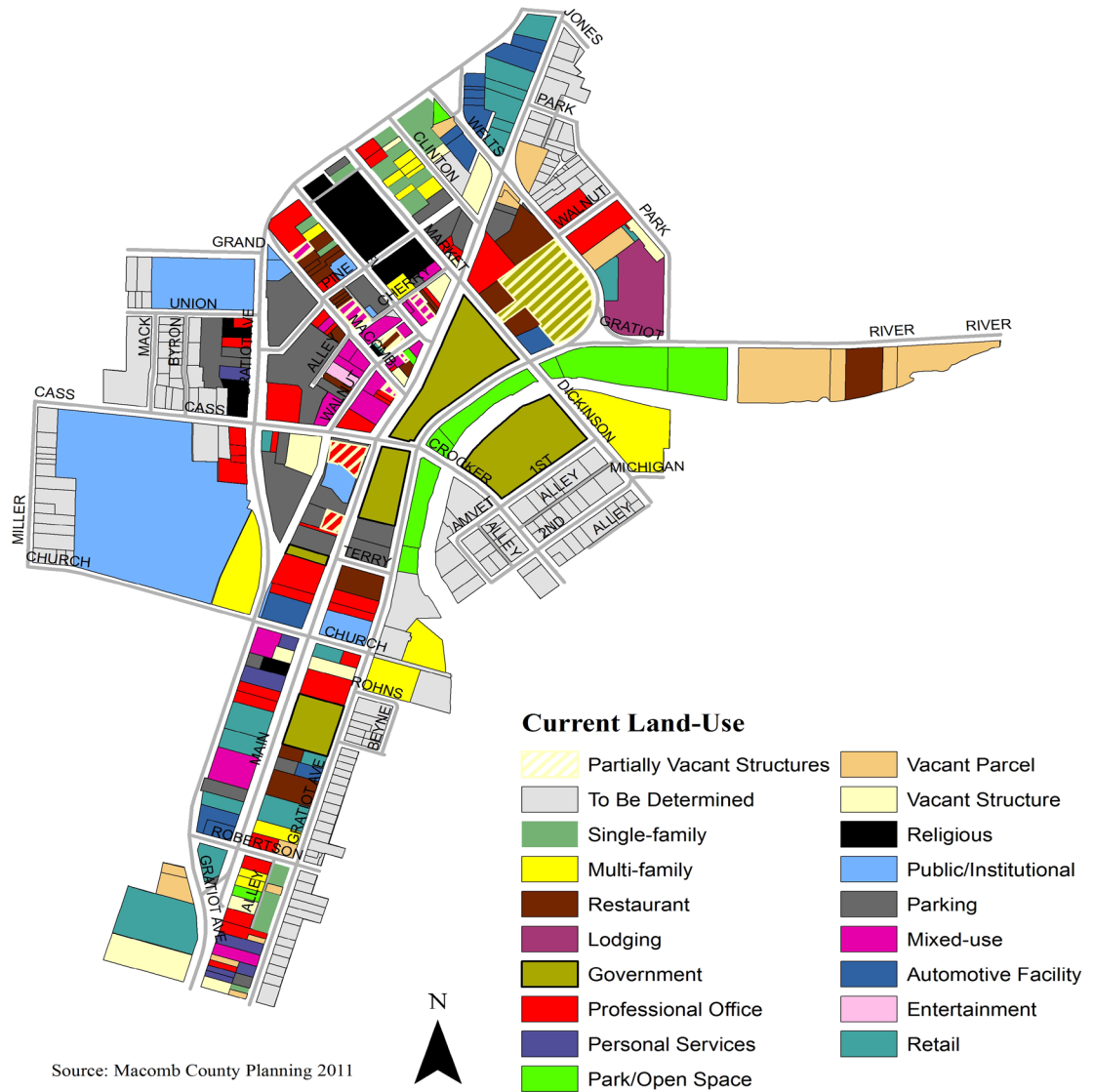
Parcels were categorized into 19 land use designations that were created based on the diversity of land uses within the downtown. This data was then placed into GIS to create a map (See Map 6). The data was also categorized in broader designations and placed into another land use map (See Map 5). This map displays a more general idea of which land uses dominate different areas of the downtown.

Building heights were also collected during the walking survey and translated into a map to show the distribution of buildings heights across the downtown (See Map 4). To get an idea of the levels of density within the downtown, parcel sizes were calculated in GIS and combined with building footprints, the amount of land covered on a parcel by a building, to form of a ratio. These ratios are represented in Map 8.

Zoning data provided by the Downtown Development Authority was also placed into GIS to create a zoning map. (Map 7). Zoning designations are described in the following section.

These maps give the plan a clear view of the downtown and can contribute to future planning efforts within the city.

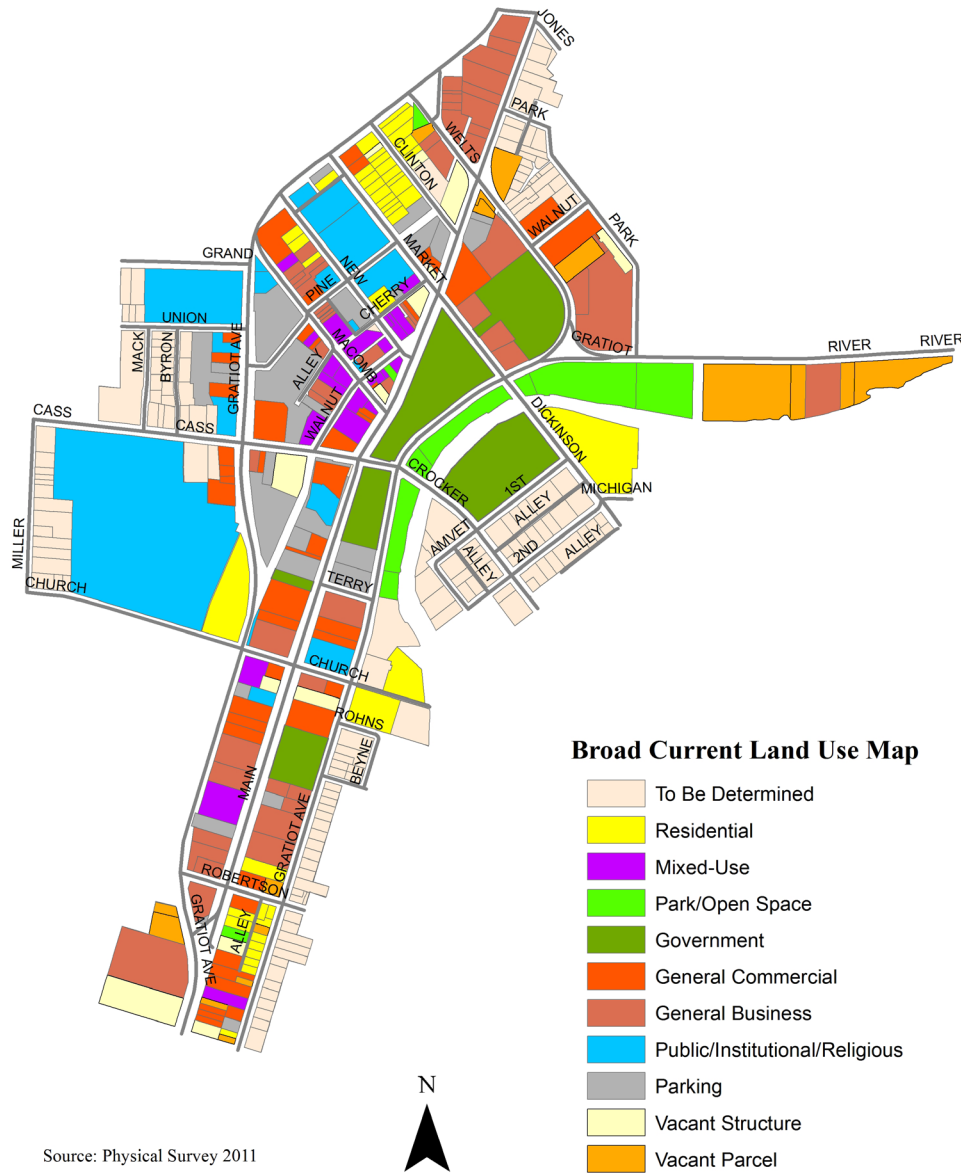
### Map 4: Downtown Current Land Use



Source: Macomb County Planning 2011

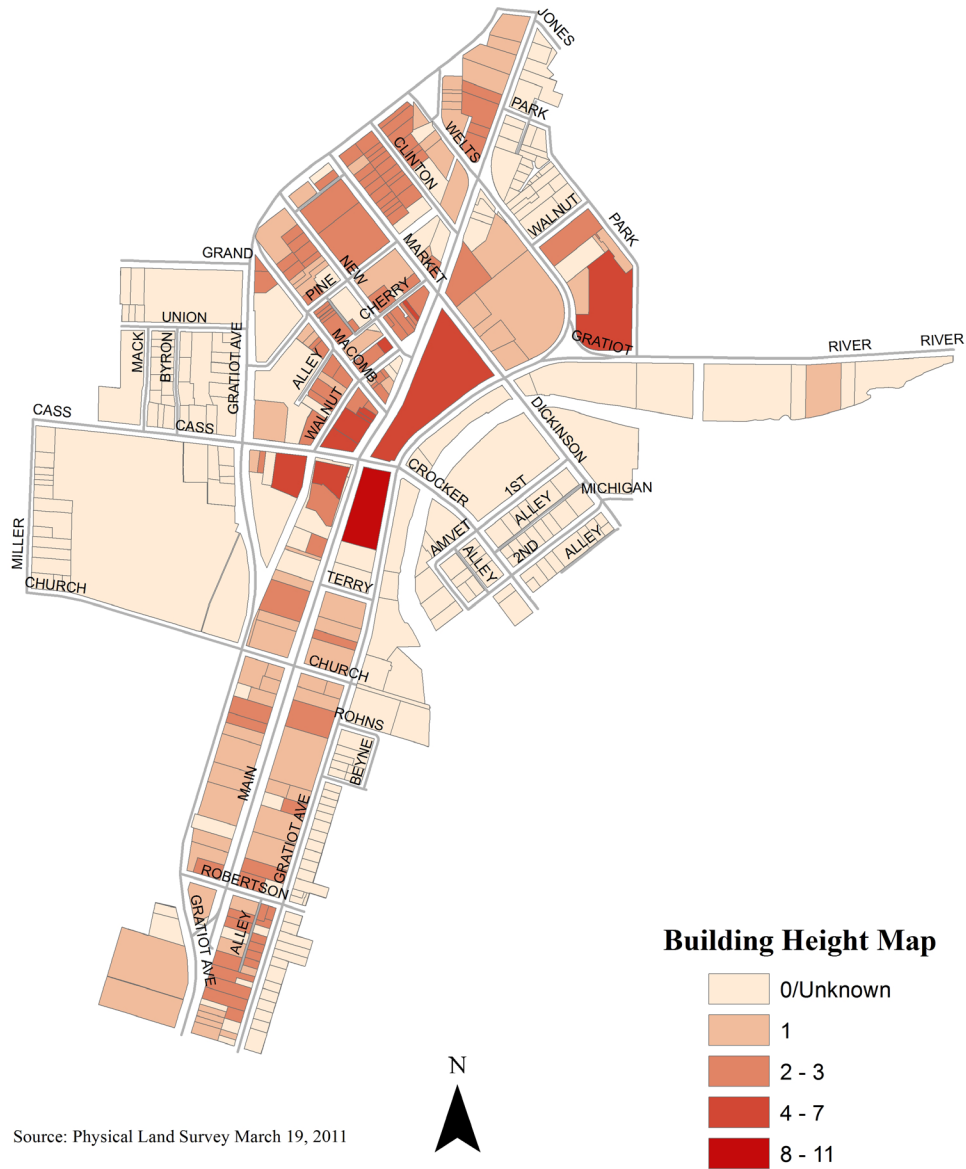
Current land use data was developed through a walk survey of the planning area. Uses and vacancies were recorded and then organized into 19 land use categories. This map represents a valuable tool when analyzing current uses, and considering vacant parcels as sites for future development. The most common land use within the planning area was “Professional Office” with a total of 40 parcels. These parcels can be seen distributed throughout the downtown. When calculating vacancy through this walk survey, three categories were used. Vacant parcels, where no structure is currently built, vacant structures and partially vacant structures. There are 16 vacant lots, 13 vacant structures and 11 partially vacant structures.

### Map 5: Broad Current Land Use



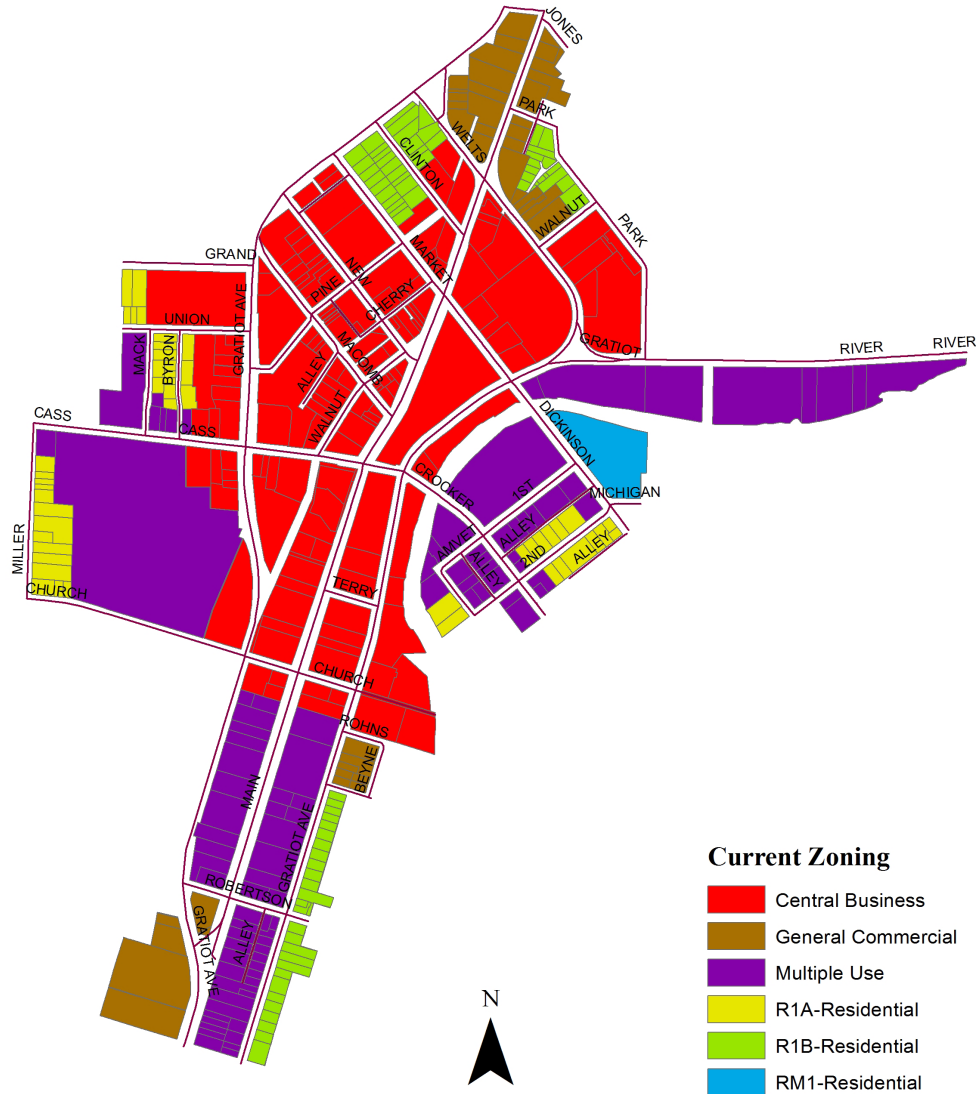
From a broad perspective, “General Business” is the most well represented land use, with 56 parcels in the downtown planning area. Approximately 31 parcels are vacant. Parks and open space within the planning area are situated next to the Clinton River. The majority of residential parcels are located in the northwest corner of the planning area. The least represented use, by number of parcels, is “Government” with six parcels, though some of these parcels are considerably larger than those classified under other uses.

## Map 6: Downtown Building Height



The tallest buildings in the downtown are located along southbound Gratiot and are city and county government buildings. This grouping of structures within the 8-11 stories range helps define the core of downtown Mount Clemens. The area between Cass and Market is largely 2-3 story buildings. This area represents the commercial and business core of the downtown.

## Map 7: Downtown Current Zoning



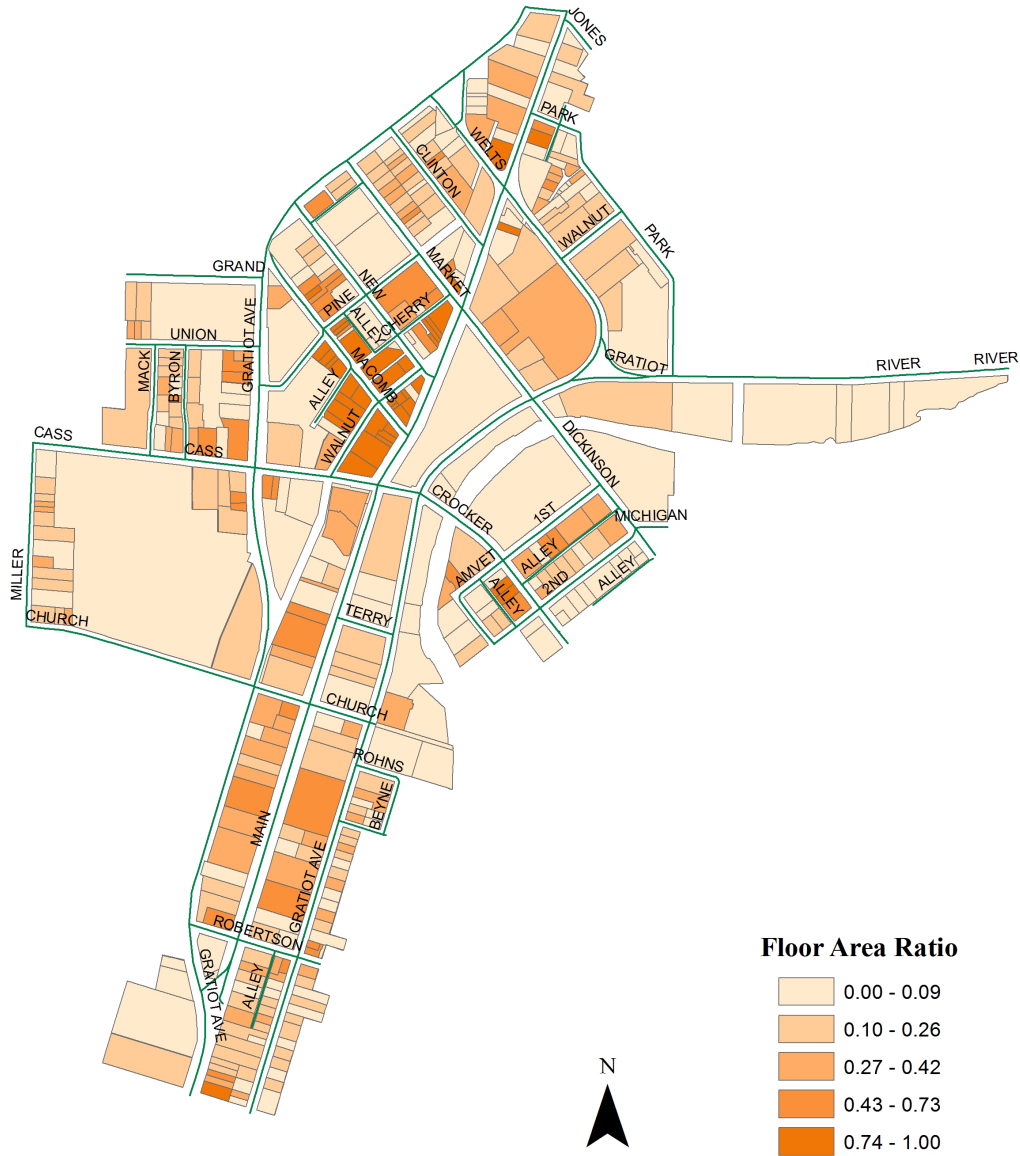
Source: Arthur M. DDA 2011

The majority of the planning area has been zoned as “Central Business”. This designation is defined as: “CB districts encourage a diversity of compatible land uses which include a mix of residential, office, retail and other similar uses within an attractive looking environment that is pedestrian friendly. The central business district is situated along the oneway pairing of the Gratiot Avenue by-pass routes north of Church Avenue and west of the Clinton River. The Downtown Development Authority functions in a large part of this district.”

Residential zones are not prevalent in the planning area, only 42 parcels are within this designation. Residential zones within the downtown fit within three categories: R1-A Single-Family Residential, R1-B Single-Family Residential, RM-1 Multiple Family Residential.

Another well represented zone within the downtown planning area is “Multiple Use.” This designation is meant to represent a transition between commercial and residential areas. These zones can be seen bordering the downtown’s commercial and business core.

### Map 8: Downtown Floor Area Ratio



Source: Aurthur Mullin DDA 2011

Map 8 represents the buildings floor area or footprint in comparison to the lot size. This data demonstrates the density of the built environment and is an important land use consideration. Aside from large municipal parking lots, the areas between Cass and Market (with an east and west border of north and southbound Gratiot respectively) represent a very densely built area. Buildings within this commercial core occupy nearly the entire lot. In comparison, county/government buildings do not occupy the entire lot, though this is largely due to public space and attached parking.



## Vacant and Underutilized Parcels

Along Macomb Place (which runs northwest to southeast between North and South Gratiot), there are several vacant areas. This strip of retail and business locations is central to many of the festivals held downtown every year. Another street with multiple vacant properties is Main Street. Completely vacant buildings include the Macomb Mews Building and 85 N. Main on Main Street, as well as 65 Macomb Place and 40 Macomb Place on Macomb Place.

There is underutilized land within the parking lot area directly east of southbound Gratiot and north of Cass Avenue where there is growth potential. Also, vacant parcels north of the Clinton River and south of N. River Road (adjacent to MacArthur Park) have potential for future development.

A January 2011 report provided by the DDA indicated, the Retail Space vacancy rate is significantly lower in the Downtown District than the office rate. It was determined that there were about 65 ground floor retail/restaurant spaces within the Downtown core. Between May 2010 and January 2011, the additional rental of ten new ground floor spaces has improved the vacancy rate from 31% to 15%.

In addition to vacancy information provided by the DDA, an independent walking survey was conducted in March of 2011 to determine the current land use within the downtown. This survey indicated a total of 40 vacant or partially vacant parcels. These parcels were categorized as vacant parcels (16 parcels), vacant structures (13 structures), or as partially vacant structures (11 structures). Map 9 displays the results of the independent walking survey. Because some structures were only partially vacant, the predominant use was also displayed. Yellow hash markings indicate partially vacant structures.

Source: Arthur Mullen, Executive Director, City of Mount Clemens Downtown Development Authority, Walking Survey



Figure 3.1 75 N. Main Street



Figure 3.2 Macomb Mews Building

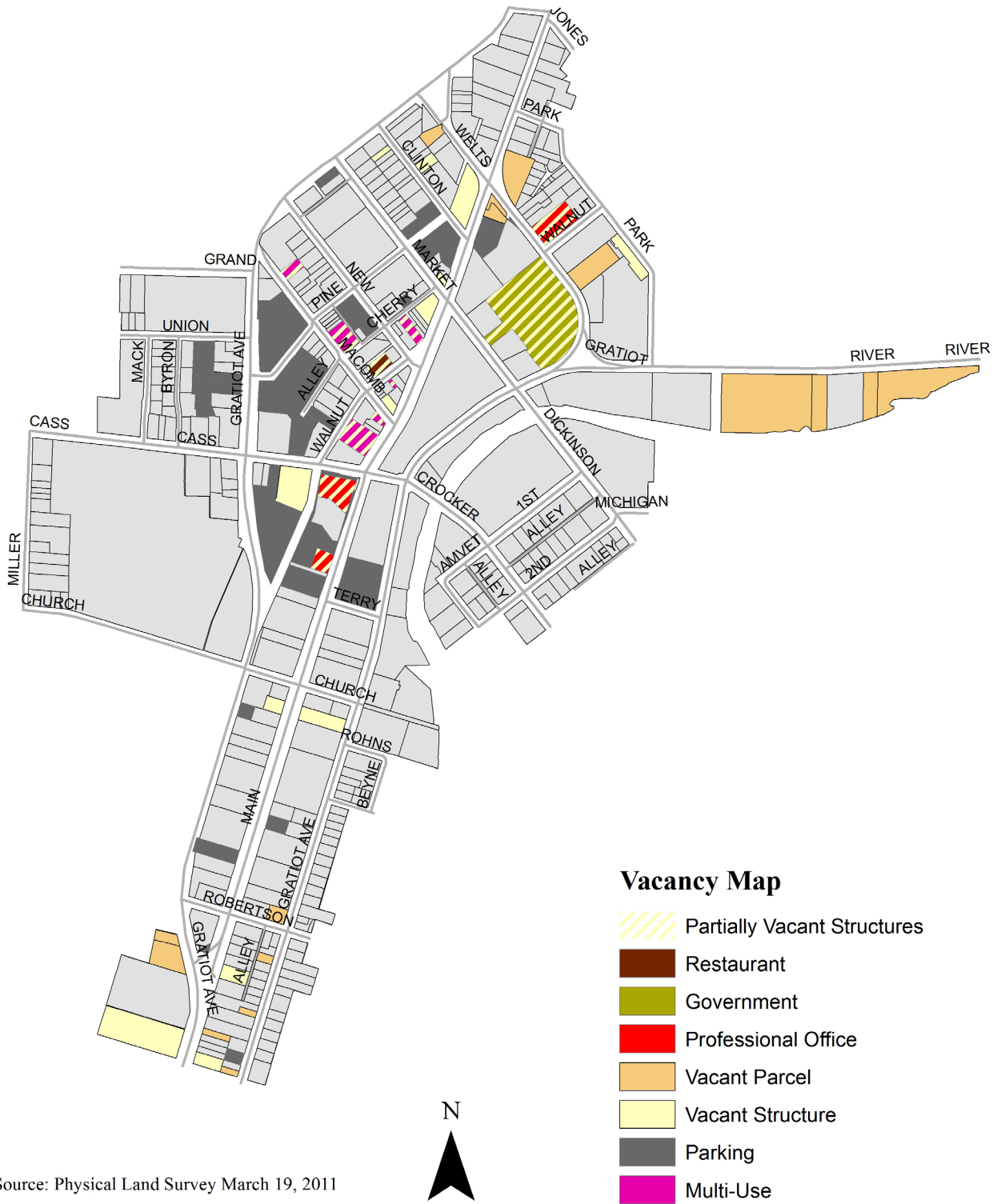


Figure 3.3 85 N. Main Street



Figure 3.4 35 N. Main Street

### Map 9: Downtown Vacancy



Source: Physical Land Survey March 19, 2011

## Traffic and Circulation Patterns

### Street Inventory

#### *Background*

Downtown Mount Clemens consists of 36 roadways with northbound and southbound Gratiot Avenue defining the borders for the majority of the downtown district. Gratiot Avenue is considered a principal arterial road while Main Street is considered an urban collector road. All other streets in the downtown are considered urban local roads. These classifications are based upon the National Functional Classification (NFC) System developed by the Federal Highway Administration to classify all streets, roads, and highways according to their function (Mount Clemens Master Plan).

The downtown streets form an interconnected grid which is highly conducive to pedestrian activity. In the mid-20th century, Gratiot Avenue, once a part of what is now known as Main Street, was converted to two streets functioning as one-way pairs. This conversion was in response to an increase in traffic prior to the completion of I-94 and formed a bypass around the downtown.

#### *Method of Analysis*

The street inventory study contained within this section evaluates the roadway and pedestrian conditions of north and southbound Gratiot Avenues as well as Main Street. Importance was placed on these corridors because they have acted as traditional access routes to the downtown commercial districts. Evaluation and improvement of these corridors was identified as an important consideration for downtown Mount Clemens through both public participation data and the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis. North and southbound Gratiot Avenue is also considered a major principal arterial route for the region and Main Street serves as a major urban collector route for the downtown. Roadway classification and the determination that these areas pose a threat to the future success of downtown were used as a justification to narrow the focus of this section.

Southbound Gratiot from Walnut Street to Cass Avenue, Northbound Gratiot from Terry Street to Market Street, and Main Street from Terry Street to Market Street were evaluated on foot using a survey provided by the National Complete Streets coalition. Each block was evaluated based on the conditions of the following infrastructure categories:

- Sidewalks
- Crosswalks
- Bicycle facilities
- Transit facilities
- Automobile facilities
- Building facades/Landscaping

The survey was modified from its original form to best-fit the needs of Mount Clemens. The survey can be referenced in appendix C. The Complete Streets coalition does not set specific standards for infrastructure and design elements; it is up to individual communities to decide what a “walkable” community looks like. Using information available in the manual *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach* as well as Federal Highway Administration Standards, general standards and

guidelines were set for each set of infrastructure elements. ADA Accessibility Guidelines specific to sidewalk and trail design were unavailable, however, the Federal Highway Administration provides a report that outlines guidelines and recommendations for accessible design in the manual *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access*. The table found in appendix G outlines the origins of definitions and guidelines used to evaluate the focus area conditions. Map 10 shows the roadway and pedestrian facilities evaluated in downtown Mount Clemens. Each section number was based on how many sections or blocks that were evaluated on each roadway. The survey matrix (Figure 3.5) summarizes the evaluated condition of each section. Section numbers listed in this matrix correspond directly to the section numbers displayed in Map 10. A summary of conditions for each roadway can be found below along with an expanded description of conditions not mentioned within the survey matrix. Many of these examples were documented within downtown Mount Clemens but have not yet been widely implemented.

The regional context section summarizes and outlines the Gratiot Avenue Corridor Improvement Plan. The completed plan is available at the following web address: [http://www.lslplanning.com/documents/ALL\\_combined.pdf](http://www.lslplanning.com/documents/ALL_combined.pdf). This plan has many implications for downtown Mount Clemens and contains the most up to date information for the region. The information found in this plan will be taken into consideration in the recommendations section of this report. When implementing report recommendations, this plan should be referred to for standards and guidelines concerning access management and non-motorized facilities. Another plan with implications for downtown Mount Clemens is the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan for Southeast Michigan. However, at the time of the Downtown District Plan's creation, the 2035 Regional Plan has not been completed. As this plan progresses, recommendations presented in the plan for roadways, infrastructure, transit, and non-motorized facilities should be taken into consideration.