

# Creating Successful Corridors

## Gratiot Avenue Pilot Corridor

March 2014



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- Providing data and unbiased analysis for informed decision making affecting Southeast Michigan and its local governments;
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- Delivering direct assistance to member governments in the areas of transportation, environments, and community and economic development;
- Solving regional issues that go beyond the boundaries of individual local governments; and
- Advocating on behalf of Southeast Michigan in Lansing and Washington.

# Creating Successful Corridors Gratiot Avenue Pilot Corridor

**March 2014**

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## **Abstract**

SEMCOG conducted work on the Gratiot Avenue Pilot Corridor as part of its *Creating Successful Corridors* redevelopment initiative. SEMCOG launched *Creating Successful Corridors* in order to assist communities and others who want to redevelop areas along and adjacent to transportation corridors. Under this initiative, SEMCOG created a Web-based toolkit that provides information to assist communities and others with corridor redevelopment efforts. Additionally, Gratiot Avenue – from downtown Detroit to M-59 – was selected as a pilot corridor in which to apply and test the toolkit. SEMCOG worked with government representatives and other corridor stakeholders in applying some of the tools on a corridor-wide and segment-level basis.

The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by grants from and in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, as well as local membership contributions. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. SEMCOG is solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the federal agencies funding this work.

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# Introduction

SEMCOG launched *Creating Successful Corridors* in order to assist communities and others who want to redevelop areas along and adjacent to transportation corridors. Corridors are key contributors to the economic vitality and livability of Southeast Michigan and the communities they serve. Beyond providing a means for connecting people with places and transporting goods, they generate commerce, help create community identity, and contribute to the desirability of a place to live or conduct business.

Under this initiative, SEMCOG created a Web-based toolkit that provides information to assist communities and others with corridor redevelopment efforts. The toolkit is located at [www.semcog.org](http://www.semcog.org). Additionally, Gratiot Avenue – from downtown Detroit to M-59 – was selected as a pilot corridor in which to apply and test the toolkit. SEMCOG worked with government representatives and other corridor stakeholders in applying some of the tools on a corridor-wide and segment level basis.

This report presents an overview of Gratiot Avenue and documents SEMCOG's analysis of Gratiot Avenue segments. It demonstrates how parts of the toolkit were applied to those segments and outlines recommended improvements that may be achieved by using additional tools. These assessments also illustrate how the character of a location and community desires are considered when applying each tool.

## Getting to Know Gratiot Avenue

Gratiot Avenue has a storied history.

It was developed as part of Judge Augustus Woodward's plan to rebuild Detroit following the Great Fire of 1805. It is part of the plan's system of six primary avenues and is currently designated as state highway M-3<sup>1</sup>. Originally a trail in the wilderness, Gratiot has served as a military road connecting Detroit with Fort Gratiot, located in modern-day Port Huron, as well as a wooden plank toll road for travelers between Detroit and Mount Clemens<sup>2</sup>.

Photo 1

### Downtown Detroit Looking North on Gratiot



Today, Gratiot Avenue continues to be a regionally significant transportation corridor that advances economic opportunities and social well-being. It has morphed from its days as a plank toll road to being one of four transportation corridors identified for future rapid transit service in the legislation creating the Regional Transit Authority.

Source: SEMCOG

Did you know that from Downtown Detroit to M-59 in Macomb County:

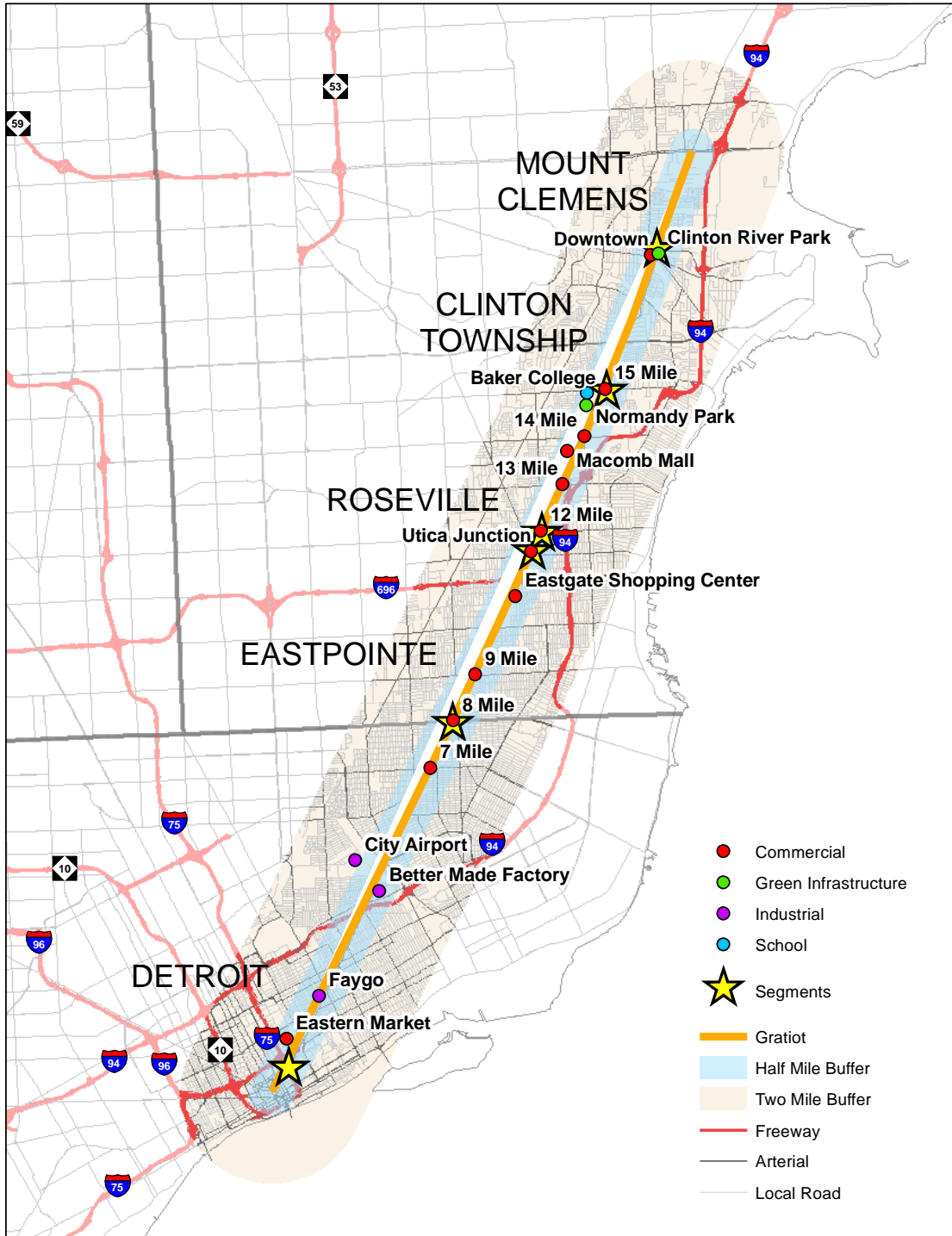
- Gratiot Avenue is 23 miles long?
- Gratiot runs through two counties and five communities?
- Over 106,900 people live within ½ mile of Gratiot, including a school age (5-17) population of over 19,000?
- The daytime population within ½ mile of Gratiot increases to almost 137,000?

Source: SEMCOG's analysis of the 2012 American Community Survey 1-year estimates

<sup>1</sup> LSL Planning, Inc. and Parsons Brinckerhoff Michigan. (September 2009). *Gratiot Avenue Corridor Improvement Plan*. Prepared for SEMCOG in conjunction with MDOT, Macomb County Planning & Economic Development, and Road Commission of Macomb County. Retrieved from <http://www.semco.org/uploadedFiles/PlanReport.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> East Detroit Historical Society (2011, October 5). My modern suburban city was once a village of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://edhs1929.blogspot.com/2011/10/my-modern-suburban-city-was-once.html>

Figure 1  
**Gratiot Avenue Study Area (Downtown Detroit to M-59)**



The story of Gratiot unfolds as one travels the pilot corridor study area from downtown Detroit north to M-59 (see Figure 1).

Gratiot begins in downtown Detroit near Campus Martius Park, the scene of many seasonal public activities. Detroit's Point of Origin, from which the region's mile roads are measured, is also located here. Development in this area is increasing as investment is brought into downtown.

Photo 2

## **Greektown**



Source: Vito Palmisano via meetdetroit.com

The area now called "Greektown" started as a primarily German residential neighborhood. In the early 1900s, when German residents moved away from downtown, Greek immigrants began to move in and establish small businesses<sup>3</sup>. Today, Greektown is a destination district, with many restaurants, several hotels, and a casino.

North of Greektown, I-375 links Gratiot with the I-75 north-south corridor. A planning study is being launched to define future alternatives for I-375.

Gratiot connects with I-75 in Detroit. I-75, the primary north-south freight artery through Michigan, links Detroit with Toledo to the south and the Upper Peninsula and Canada (via Sault Ste. Marie) to the north. It also provides a freeway connection via the Ambassador Bridge to Canada.

In existence since 1891, Eastern Market is the largest historic public market district in the United States. The market district contains more than 150 restaurants, retailers, businesses, and institutions. Additionally, it is the largest open-air flowerbed market in the country<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Detroit Historical Society. *Encyclopedia of Detroit: Greektown Historic District*. Retrieved from <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/greektown-historic-district>

<sup>4</sup> Detroit Historical Society. *Encyclopedia of Detroit: Eastern Market Historic District*. Retrieved from <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/eastern-market-historic-district>

Photo 3  
**Eastern Market**



Source: Eastern Market Corporation

Photo 4  
**Dequindre Cut**



Source: SEMCOG

Formerly part of the Grand Trunk Railroad, the Dequindre Cut is now a paved walking and biking path. Running from the Detroit Riverfront, it connects with Eastern Market and several residential neighborhoods. Plans call for extending the greenway from Gratiot Avenue north to Mack Avenue. This is part of a larger Detroit project called the Inner Circle Greenway.

Photo 5  
**Faygo**



Source: Google Maps

Faygo began in 1907 as Feigenson Brothers Bottling Works. In 1935, Faygo moved bottling operations to its current location along Gratiot Avenue<sup>5</sup>. Today, Faygo Pop comes in more than 50 flavors, including Root Beer, Redpop, and Rock & Rye<sup>6</sup>, and is distributed in many states east of the Mississippi River.

Gratiot connects with I-94 in Detroit. The I-94 corridor is the primary east-west freight artery through the State of Michigan. I-94 also links Detroit with Chicago to the west and Canada (via Port Huron and Sarnia, ON) to the northeast.

Photo 6  
**Better Made**



Source: Google Maps

Better Made was established in Detroit in 1930 with the goal of creating a better potato chip<sup>7</sup>. Today, Better Made continues to manufacture several varieties of potato chips as well as other snack foods including popcorn, salsa, pretzels, and cheese puffs. It is also the largest producer of shoestring potatoes in the United States<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Detroit Historical Society. *Encyclopedia of Detroit: Faygo Pop*. Retrieved from <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/faygo-pop>

<sup>6</sup> Faygo Beverages, Inc. *Flavors*. Retrieved from <https://www.faygo.com/Display.aspx?id=19>

<sup>7</sup> Better Made Snack Foods. *About Better Made*. Retrieved from <http://www.bmchips.com/about>

<sup>8</sup> Detroit Historical Society. *Encyclopedia of Detroit: Better Made Snack Food Company*. Retrieved from <http://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/better-made-snack-food-company>

At Gratiot Avenue and Eight Mile Road, two counties, two communities, and two transportation corridors converge. Both roads are major regional transportation corridors, with over 60,000 vehicles a day traveling through the intersection.

Eastpointe's downtown is centered at Gratiot Avenue and Nine Mile Road. Eastpointe was originally known as Halfway, as it marked the halfway point in the journey from Detroit to Mount Clemens. Until the incorporation of the Village of Halfway in 1924, it was part of Erin Township, which encompassed the modern-day cities of Eastpointe, Roseville, St. Clair Shores, and part of Fraser.

Photo 7

### **City of Eastpointe**



Source: City of Eastpointe

Like Eastpointe, Roseville was also part of Erin Township. The area first became known as Roseville in 1840, when William Rose established the Roseville Post Office, named after his father Denison Rose, who fought in the War of 1812. Development spread along Gratiot, as it was the main road through the community. The junction of Gratiot Avenue and Utica Road was once the location of a tollgate when Gratiot was a wooden plank toll road. Today, Utica Junction marks Roseville's traditional downtown area and is characterized by a variety of small businesses.

Photo 8  
**Utica Junction**



Source: City of Roseville

Photo 9  
**Macomb Mall under Construction**



Source: City of Roseville

Just south of 14 Mile Road, Gratiot runs past Macomb Mall. The mall is a major commercial anchor on Gratiot. Plans are underway to update the mall with an extensive reconstruction totaling over \$8.4 million. This investment will have a positive impact on Gratiot and the surrounding area.

Photo 10

### Clinton Township



Source: Clinton Township

In Clinton Township, the Gratiot Downtown Development Authority district stretches from 14 Mile Road more than three miles north to the Clinton River. Nearly 60,000 vehicles a day travel through some part of the district. More than 200 shops, restaurants, and other businesses are located along this stretch of Gratiot.

The Macomb County Hike/Bike Trail, also known as the Freedom Trail, cuts through Clinton Township at Metropolitan Parkway (16 Mile Road). This trail runs 11 miles through three communities and connects pedestrians and cyclists with Lake St. Clair Metropark.

Photo 11

### Downtown Mount Clemens



Source: City of Mount Clemens

Mount Clemens, once called "High Banks" due to its location along the Clinton River, is the county seat of Macomb County. It was founded by Christian Clemens and was first incorporated as a village in 1837. During the late 1800s, mineral waters were discovered in Mount Clemens, and it became distinguished for its health spa industry. Its traditional downtown is near riverfront parks and bordered by residential neighborhoods.

M-59 is a major east-west state highway that extends from Howell to I-94. East of I-94, the road continues as William P. Rosso Highway to Lake St. Clair.

Note: The *Getting to Know Gratiot* section of this document was adapted from a Gratiot Avenue story map created for this project. Please see the *Creating Successful Corridors* toolkit at [www.semcog.org](http://www.semcog.org) to learn about the story map tool and view the Gratiot story map.

## Gratiot Pilot Corridor Project

In launching the Gratiot Pilot Corridor Project, SEMCOG met individually with representatives of each of the communities in the study area. The community representatives also served as members of the Advisory Group that helped guide the project. Initial work focused on reviewing existing plans, studies being conducted concurrently, and potential developments that relate to Gratiot Avenue. This helped ensure that work conducted under the Gratiot Pilot Corridor Project complements these plans and studies and recognizes the community input reflected in them. Listed below are examples of plans and studies, listed by geographic location, that were considered:

- City of Detroit:
  - Detroit Future City (Detroit Strategic Framework Plan, December 2012)
  - Bloody Run Creek Greenway Redevelopment Project (July 2011)
  - Eastern Market District Economic Development Strategy (September 2008)
  - Eastern Market 360° Capital Improvement Program for Eastern Market (January 30, 2009)
  - Detroit Eastern Market Healthy Metropolitan Food Hub (November 2011)
  - City of Detroit Water and Sewerage Department: Near Eastside Green Infrastructure Project
- Eight Mile Road:
  - Eight Mile Boulevard Association *8 Mile Framework for Unifying Elements* (July 2005)
  - Michigan Department of Transportation *M-102 Conceptual Framework Study Grand River to I-94* (September 2009)
- City of Eastpointe:
  - Master Plan Update (2010)
  - Downtown Development Authority Plan (October 2007)
- Roseville:
  - Work being conducted on Gratiot Avenue/Groesbeck Reinvestment Plan (Anticipated conclusion early 2014)
  - Redevelopment Ready Opportunity site plan for vacant property at Utica Junction (Summer 2013)
- Clinton Township:
  - Gratiot Avenue Corridor Redevelopment Plan (August 2005)
- Macomb County:
  - Gratiot Avenue Corridor Improvement Plan (SEMCOG, September 2009)

The input and guidance of the members of the Gratiot Pilot Corridor Advisory Group and plan review helped inform corridor-wide considerations and selection of five segments along Gratiot for assessments that apply some of the tools in the *Creating Successful Corridors* toolkit. As noted in Figure 1, the five segments along Gratiot are:

- Downtown Detroit from Woodward Avenue to St. Aubin
- Gratiot Avenue and Eight Mile Road area
- City of Roseville
- Clinton Township from 14 Mile to 16 Mile
- Downtown Mount Clemens

The assessments for each of the five segments, and corridor-wide considerations for the Gratiot Avenue study area, are described in the following chapters.

# **Downtown Detroit Walkable/Bikeable Assessment: Woodward Avenue to St. Aubin**

## **Background**

This segment of the Gratiot Corridor, from Woodward Avenue to St. Aubin, has many assets and is home to some good nonmotorized (bicycle and pedestrian) treatments. Still, many institutions recognize a lack of consistency and the need to better plan future improvements in a more comprehensive way as the area continues to develop.

Among the many planned improvements are:

- Numerous improvements to the Eastern Market area.
- Plans to extend the Dequindre Cut into Eastern Market and beyond.
- A planning study to define the alternatives for I-375.
- Gratiot is one of four corridors being considered for Rapid Transit (e.g., Bus Rapid Transit).
- The Gratiot Avenue Business Association has expressed interest in bike lanes on Gratiot Avenue.
- MDOT has also expressed interest in on-road bicycle facilities but feels that on-street parking needs to be reconsidered in some areas.
- New development at the Wayne County jail site.
- Ways to educate cyclists and motorists on the rules of the road as bicycle travel in the corridor, as well as across Detroit and Southeast Michigan, has grown tremendously.

SEMCOG held an initial meeting with the City of Detroit's Planning and Development Department (DPDD) and the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC) to discuss the Walkability/Bikeability assessment. After an initial field visit by SEMCOG, major stakeholders met on October 15, 2013, to discuss the findings and tour the corridor together. Institutions represented include City of Detroit Planning & Development, Eastern Market Corporation, Crain Communications, Detroit Future City, MDOT, Detroit Department of Public Works-Traffic Engineering (DPW-TE), and Detroit Riverfront Conservancy.

The summary and observations sections below reflect the collective opinion of issues and potential action items of these stakeholders.

## **Goals**

The city would like to foster a more complete street along the corridor. The intent is to design and incorporate features such as sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and transit to enhance safety and accessibility for all users. This will better connect Downtown Detroit, Eastern Market, the Dequindre Cut, and the new burgeoning retail/offices within the corridor.

Figure 2  
**Detroit Walkable/Bikeable Assessment Study Area:  
Gratiot Avenue from Woodward to St. Aubin**



## Summary

Overall, the corridor can be characterized as having:

- Good pedestrian circulation
- An important role as a vehicular thoroughfare and gateway into Detroit's Central Business District
- Many great assets
- Real infill development potential
- A need to address bicycle circulation
- Some hotspots requiring in-depth analysis
- Opportunities to address stormwater runoff and pedestrian crossing locations via use of green infrastructure techniques

Photo 12

### Cyclists along Gratiot



Left & Right: The Gratiot Corridor is full of many people bicycling.

## Observations

Greater Downtown Detroit can be characterized as a pedestrian environment, compared to other areas in the region that can be characterized as more automobile oriented. As such, there should be greater emphasis on the pedestrian crossings, ensuring all legs of an intersection have a marked crossing, whenever it is safe and feasible to do so.

Overall, Gratiot has good pedestrian circulation. Eighty-five percent of all intersection legs have marked crosswalks, with over half of roadway intersections having all legs of the intersection marked.

Given the great assets located in or near the corridor such as Greektown, Campus Martius, Foxtown and Stadia district, Paradise Valley, Eastern Market, and the Dequindre Cut, as well as development opportunities like the former jail site, the former Price Waterhouse complex, and former Joe Muer

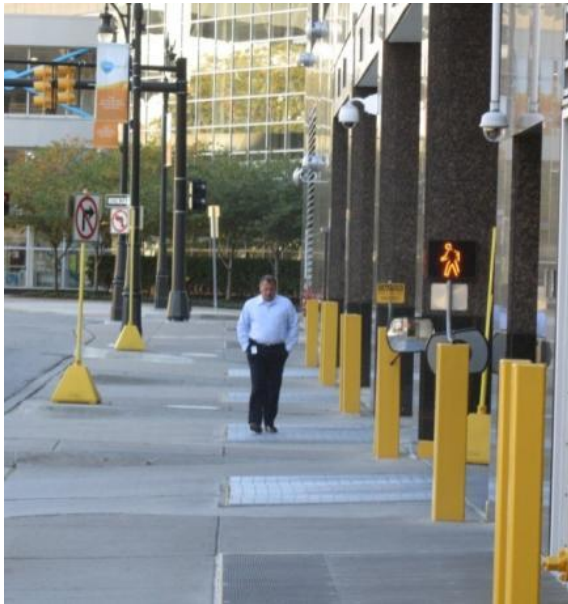
restaurant redevelopment site, there will be even greater demand for a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly road corridor.

Please use the maps at the end of this chapter to identify the geographic locations of the observations below. The images included in this document can also be used for reference.

1. In the heart of downtown, from Woodward to Broadway, the Gratiot Corridor generally has good pedestrian crossings, buildings that address the sidewalk, and traffic control devices that mitigate potential conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles exiting parking lots.

Photo 13

### **Pedestrian Facilities along Gratiot**



Left & Right: Examples of good pedestrian facilities.

2. The intersection of Gratiot and Farmer has crosswalk markings on all legs but the western one. Yet, most people are crossing at this leg to access the garage at the former Hudson's location. The Detroit DPW should consider adding a crosswalk on this leg as well.

Additionally, the crossing of Gratiot at Library Street has no marked crosswalks or ramps. Many pedestrians were observed crossing the avenue midblock. Crosswalk markings may better guide pedestrians and alert drivers on where people should be crossing.

3. This area of Greektown has seen new development including two new restaurants. A parking structure is also located in this area. Present conditions and future development increase the demand for additional pedestrian and bicycle crossing amenities in the Gratiot Corridor (at Randolph & Broadway) in order to traverse greater downtown Detroit.
4. The intersection of Randolph/Broadway and Gratiot has complicated roadway geometry and should be improved for all roadway users. The current design discourages proper pedestrian crossing behavior, provides no accommodations for on-road bicycling, has sight distance issues for motor vehicle drivers, and has all users waiting longer than desired for their turn to travel through the intersection. Some legs of the intersection are eight vehicle lanes wide, all of which are not needed

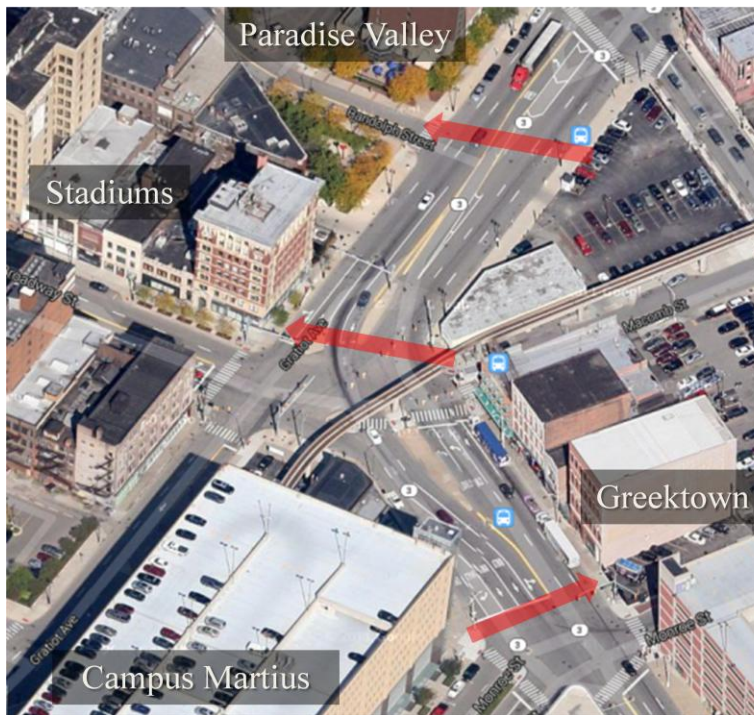
to accommodate traffic volumes of 15,000 cars per day. The existing People Mover infrastructure and potential rapid transit require even more consideration for any new intersection design.

Past workshops in the corridor anecdotally identified a roundabout or median refuge islands as potential solutions; however, any proposed improvements to this intersection will need to be thoroughly analyzed as part of a comprehensive engineering traffic study.

A meeting should be held between MDOT Detroit Transportation Service Center (TSC), DPW, DPDD, DEGC, and other staff to identify next steps in performing such a study.

Figure 3

### Gratiot and Broadway



There are many activity centers and desired crossing movements near Gratiot and Broadway. (Source Google Maps)

5. It is good practice to have defined spaces that do not bleed into the pedestrian walkway and travel zone. The parking lot on the east side of Gratiot Avenue abuts the sidewalk allowing for the free flow of pedestrians (and potentially cars) onto the sidewalk. Many people who park here want to access Paradise Valley and the stadium district via Randolph Street, yet the nearest crosswalk to the south is 660 feet out of the way and the nearest crosswalk to the north is 470 feet out of the way. Many of these pedestrians cross midblock (near Randolph) without the benefit of any traffic control devices.

Landscaping and hard-scaping materials, located between the sidewalk and parking lot such as trees, bushes, and brick walls can channel pedestrians to specific outlets on the sidewalk, closer to preferred crossing locations. Such standards could be included in the city's zoning ordinance or in a form-based code. Planters could also be used in the short-term.

Medians on Gratiot Avenue can also deter jaywalking (via incorporation of non-traversable vegetation in the median), while also providing safe refuge at preferred crossing locations.

Such a median exists on Gratiot Avenue, north of Brush Street. In the future, such a median may be possible in this section, if properly designed (to allow for left turning vehicles).

Figure 4

### Gratiot and Randolph

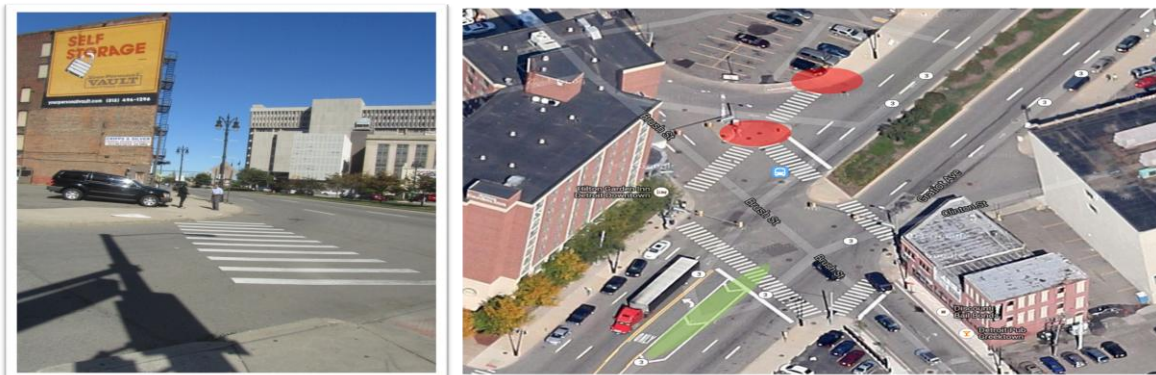


Example of median and parking lot landscaping to potentially deter jaywalking and give pedestrians refuge at preferred crossing locations. (Source: Google Maps)

6. The northwest leg of the Brush Street intersection is missing several pedestrian signal heads for pedestrians heading northbound or southbound on Gratiot. A pedestrian could get confused as to when they can safely cross the street. The southern crossing of Gratiot could benefit from a median refuge island, similar to the one on the northern crossing.

Figure 5

### Gratiot and Brush



Left: No pedestrian signal head on northwest corner of Brush.

Right: Locations of needed pedestrian signal heads (red) and possible median refuge (green). (Source: Google Maps)

7. The Paradise Valley district, anchored by Beatrice Buck Park, is a center of restaurants and other night life. The redevelopment of the Harmonie Club building into a 24-hour music and dance studio will continue this trend. This area will likely attract pedestrians from other nearby destinations including Greektown and Campus Martius, impacting the pedestrian crossing situation on Gratiot Avenue.
8. In several intersections, including Beaubien, the crosswalks going across Gratiot are not perpendicular to the street, increasing the time a pedestrian spends exposed to traffic in the street. In many cases these crosswalks are aligned the way they are due to driveways that are too close to the intersection. The length of these crossings is somewhat mitigated by the use of the median as a pedestrian refuge spot. These refuges could be enhanced by ensuring the median extends into the crosswalk, instead of ending just before it. Crossing distances could also be decreased by the use of curb extensions and bulb outs, especially where there is on-street parking and where they will not negatively impact turning movements of motor vehicles.

When these parking lots redevelop, there is potential for these drives to either be closed or relocated, allowing for shorter crosswalk lengths. The city could potentially incorporate these driveway closures into an access management plan for the Gratiot Corridor.

Figure 6

### **Gratiot and Beaubien**



The southwest corner of this intersection could be tightened up with a curb extension, shortening the time needed for a pedestrian to cross the street, potentially giving more green time to motor vehicles on Gratiot. (Source: Google Maps)

9. Within the medians along this stretch of Gratiot Avenue, are tall grasses that provide an interesting aesthetic and potentially impact traffic patterns. It appears that where these grasses are planted, there are less pedestrian jaywalking issues. Where there are no grasses, there are more crossings. Due to its proximity to the courthouse, the area has high use of its on-street parking which adds to the pedestrian crossing issue.

Medians in this area could be enhanced with green infrastructure elements like rain gardens or native plantings to serve as a barrier to illegal and dangerous pedestrian crossing behavior while addressing stormwater runoff. Pedestrians could be channeled to designated crossings, while enhancing the area's aesthetics.

Given the abundance of off-street parking, and a likely increase as the area redevelops, the pedestrian crossing issue, the desire for both bike lanes and rapid transit along Gratiot Avenue, and a lack of enough right-of-way (according to MDOT), the city may want to work with businesses in this area to consider feasibility and impact of removing on-street parking. This could eliminate a primary generator of pedestrian crossing issues while also providing room for bike lanes and potential rapid transit infrastructure.

Photo 14

### Gratiot Avenue Median



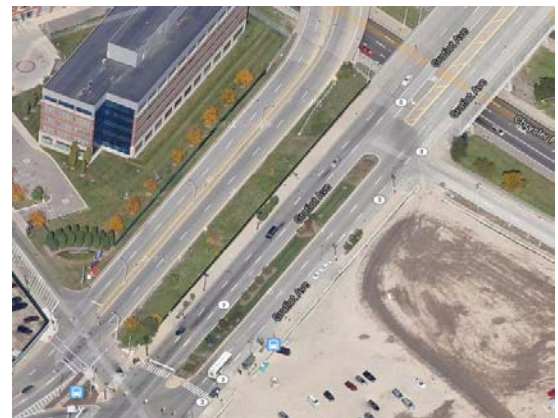
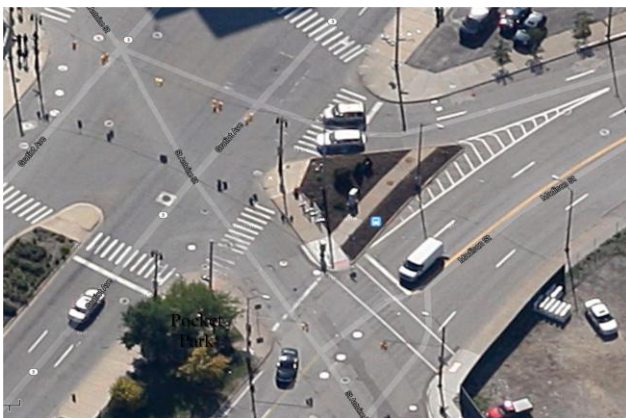
A great example of vertical mass within a median, potentially deterring jaywalking at undesired locations and channeling pedestrians to preferred locations. Such mass may also have a traffic calming effect on motor vehicles. Plants that can mitigate stormwater runoff could provide additional benefits (known as green infrastructure).

At the intersection of Gratiot Avenue, Madison Street, and St. Antoine Street, there is a pedestrian refuge island with a sidewalk that does not connect to any crosswalks. This sidewalk appears to be a remnant from a previous road design. DEGC, through the DDA, is working with MDOT and the stakeholders on the Madison streetscape plan that could remedy this problem. It is planned to start in 2014.

10. This area is also home to the former Wayne County jail site, which has many interested developers looking to create a mixed-use site. Proposals call for a mixed-use entertainment district, which would likely include additional retail, offices, residential, and new off-street parking garages.

Photo 15

### Intersection of Gratiot, Madison, and St. Antoine



Left: Notice the sidewalk on the right side of traffic island that leads out into traffic.

Right: The huge lot of the former jail site could one day transform this part of the corridor. (Source: Google Maps)

Pedestrian crossing and parking issues may be mitigated or increased depending on the layout of the new development. Such a development presents an opportunity to potentially mitigate them by being active with the site design. When possible, stakeholder participation in this process can contribute to improved walkability.

11. On the northwest side of the St. Antoine intersection is an area that could be aesthetically improved. If the fence along Gratiot (which is in need of some repair) were to be moved about 20 feet west, this area would allow for a green space that could use native plantings and other green infrastructure techniques to mitigate stormwater runoff. The City of Detroit DDA should be consulted as to whether the Madison streetscape plan includes this provision, or could incorporate this into the plan.

Photo 16

### **Gratiot at St. Antoine**



Left: Potential pocket park. A great spot for a bench.

Right: The fence needs to be moved in order to facilitate easier maintenance and potentially activate this public space. Sunflowers or other native landscaping could be great green infrastructure.

12. The pedestrian walkway on the bridge over I-375 is sufficient for safe pedestrian travel, yet the space could be improved by providing additional green space, breaking up the expansive concrete/asphalt surfaces. Vehicular speeds noticeably increase in this segment thereby creating a more uncomfortable pedestrian environment than segments to the northeast and southwest with their landscaped medians.

The stakeholder group feels that a median can work at this location as well. If a median is deemed feasible, this area could provide space for vegetation, thereby improving aesthetics, and have a traffic calming effect on motor vehicles.

There is the possibility that this bridge will become an intersection with an at-grade roadway, if I-375 is not rebuilt as a freeway. Such a possibility could also transform the space. The stakeholder group should pay close attention to the MDOT design study and help influence the roadway to accommodate all roadway users.

Photo 17

**Pedestrian Walkway over I-375**



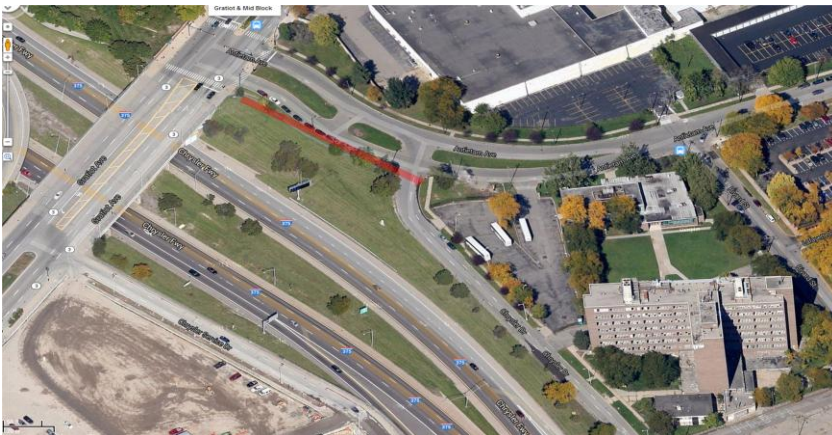
The bridge might feel more comfortable to cross if there was more green space. A median would green the space and possibly have a traffic calming effect and serve as a gateway treatment into downtown Detroit.

13. Desire lines (i.e., dirt paths/foot paths, etc.) were observed along the southwestern side of Antietam Avenue showing the need for a sidewalk to Chrysler Drive (where there is a sidewalk connecting to the Woodward Academy) and Rivard Street (connecting to Lafayette Park).

The stakeholder group suggests that DPW look into the feasibility of filling this sidewalk gap.

Figure 7

**Gratiot and Antietam**



A dirt path exists on Antietam, shown in red.  
(Source: Google Maps)

14. Just north of Russell Street, on the east side of Gratiot, is a burgeoning new artisan business district. Music, coffee, and art venues are repopulating the storefronts creating life both on the Gratiot side and alley side of the block. This activity center will most likely continue to grow, attracting more pedestrians and bicyclists via connections to Lafayette Park and other residential areas to the south and east.

Photo 18  
**Artisan District**



All: Pictures of the alleyway of the new artisan district along the east side of Gratiot Avenue, across from Eastern Market.

Local businesses alerted SEMCOG to an existing potential pedestrian crossing issue. Many people cross Gratiot midblock to either access this new district or Eastern Market, particularly Central Market. In addition to the high-traffic speeds and volumes on this segment of Gratiot, steam is often released from the sewers located in the street, potentially obscuring sight distances for all roadway users.

It should be pointed out that most of these crossing locations are where there was little to no vertical mass vegetation within in the median. In some cases, there were remnant curb ramps going out into the street at these crossing locations with no pedestrian crossing treatments on the other side of the road. Such issues may be resolved with similar median treatments as previously suggested in item 9.

Photo 19

### **Pedestrian Crossing Challenges**



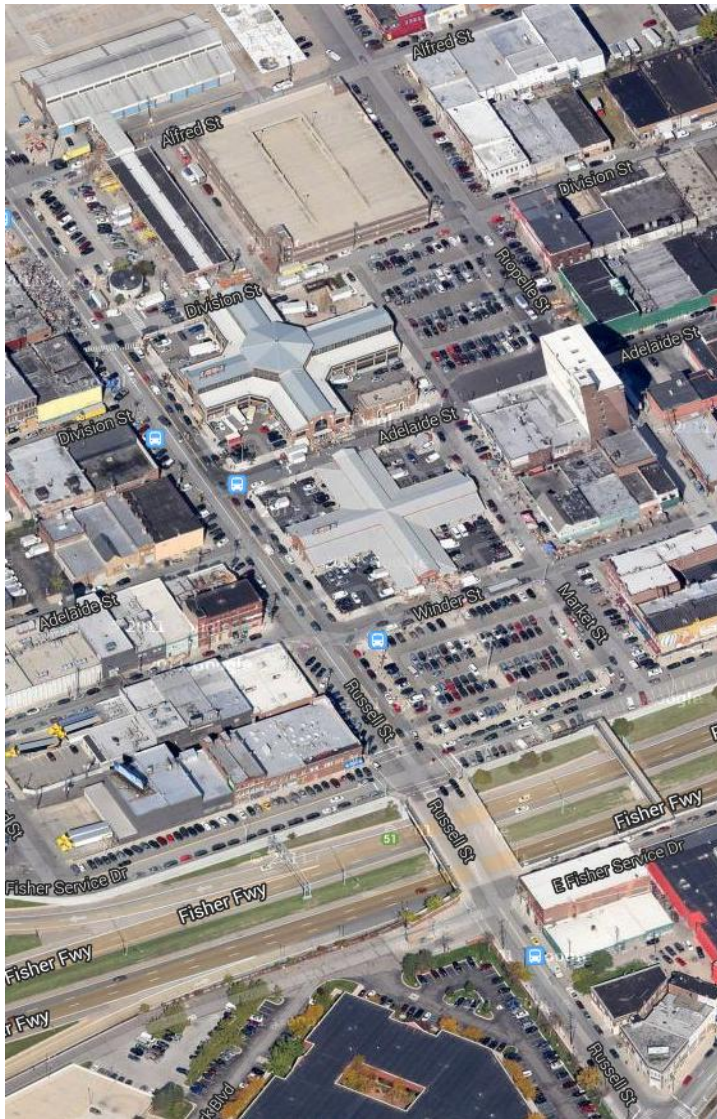
Top: A mother taking her baby out of a parked car and jaywalking to the west side of Gratiot Avenue.

Bottom: Steam coming out of the sewer on Gratiot Avenue.

15. During the initial field visit, SEMCOG observed that there was a lack of pedestrian crosswalk markings across Russell Street near the I-75 overpass. Yet, it was observed, particularly on market Saturdays, it is common for pedestrians to cross. It was noted at the stakeholder meeting that there are plans for these crosswalks to be implemented, enhancing the safety of a move made by many visitors to Eastern Market and other retail establishments.
16. Weekend traffic patterns at Eastern Market are much different than most weekdays, given the number of people visiting the market. Often streets are closed, or partially closed, to motor vehicles with the exception of local freight. Eastern Market representatives and SEMCOG indicated that there may be ways to better facilitate pedestrian circulation and green up the alleyways, providing better delineation between nonmotorized, freight, and passenger car traffic movements. Eastern Market and Crain Communications representatives expressed interest in meeting with SEMCOG and MDOT representatives in order to consider circulation projects that might be fundable through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Monitoring the planning and implementation process of the greater Detroit Bike Sharing may also be fruitful.

Photo 20

**Eastern Market Aerial View**



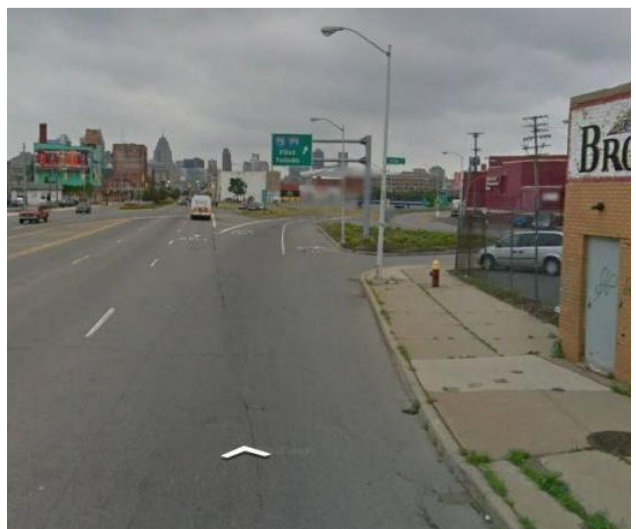
An aerial image of Eastern Market, I-75, Crain Communications (lower left) and the connection of Russell Street to Gratiot Avenue. (Source: Bing Maps)

17. On the west side of the intersection of Gratiot Avenue and I-75 Service Drive/Jay Road, there is a marked crosswalk leading out to a vegetated traffic island that has no pedestrian amenities. There is no safe way to cross the southbound Gratiot/I-75 interchange, nor a crosswalk to cross Gratiot.

Furthermore, north of the interchange, there are high traffic volumes, speeds and many illegal northbound left turns into Eastern Market. This creates a very unsafe environment for all users of the roadway on southbound Gratiot Avenue, whether they are pedestrians, bicyclists, or drivers of motor vehicles.

Photo 21

**Gratiot at I-75**



Top Left: Crosswalk leading to traffic island at I-75 Interchange.  
Top Right: A man on the traffic island attempting to cross southbound Gratiot at I-75.  
Bottom Left: An aerial of the interchange. (Source: Google Maps)  
Bottom Right: Photo of roadway interchange from vantage point of southbound on-road cyclist.

It is the opinion of the stakeholders that pedestrian and bicycle movements along the western side of Gratiot in this part of the corridor should not be encouraged, but actually deterred. The stakeholder group feels that there should be strong consideration of removing the crosswalk from the west side of the intersection of Gratiot Avenue and I-75 Service Drive/Jay Road and landscaping the area to deter people from traversing the island.

Additionally, the stakeholders feel that a wayfinding signage plan for addressing bicycle circulation to downtown, midtown, the riverfront, and beyond through the Gratiot corridor could be implemented to detour southbound cyclists off of Gratiot and around the I-75 interchange, perhaps via the north I-75 service drive in Eastern Market. Such a plan may be part of a larger integrated wayfinding plan for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Figure 8  
**Southbound Bicycle Detour Option**



Example of southbound bicycle detour around interchange. (Source: Google Maps)

18. The Dequindre Cut is one of the jewels of Southeast Michigan’s nonmotorized transportation system. The Cut currently connects the Detroit Riverwalk, Tricentennial Park, and Downtown Detroit with Lafayette Park and the Gratiot Corridor. While the Cut currently ends at an unofficial trailhead at Gratiot, just south of Eastern Market, the trail is currently being extended under Gratiot Avenue and up to Mack Avenue where it will connect to the future Hamtramck Connector and existing Midtown Loop. There will be direct access to Eastern Market via the trail as well.

While this news is very exciting, it does not lessen the need for some form of crossing of Gratiot. The trail has a ramp to Gratiot Avenue and many cyclists in the corridor will likely continue to use this ramp to access the Cut, especially if they would like to head south toward the riverfront. Many users will consider it too much of an inconvenience to go out of their way to Eastern Market in

order to get across Gratiot, as well as head back down the ramp on the south side of the roadway. Transit users who walk or bike as part of their commute may want to access the trail as well.

The stakeholder group believes that there should be subsequent meetings with the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, MDOT, DPW, DEGC, and transit providers to further consider the feasibility of some form of protected crossing of Gratiot at this trailhead/ramp.

The property just east of the ramp, commonly called the Muer development site (because of the Joe Muer Fish restaurant that once occupied the site) could be a good opportunity for bicycle-oriented residential/retail/restaurant development and include an official trailhead for the Dequindre Cut.

There should be careful consideration of some sort of traffic control device for bike and pedestrian travel at this important intersection due to the extension of trail itself.

Photo 22

### **Access to Dequindre Cut from Gratiot**



A southbound on-road cyclist turning around to access Dequindre Cut.

Photo 23

### **Gratiot at Dequindre Cut**



Existing Dequindre Cut, ramp, and Muer development site.  
(Source: Google Maps)

19. The area north of the Dequindre Cut, especially on the west side of the road, is one of the few areas of the corridor that lacks a defined pleasant walkway. Trash has accumulated in the area and there is little delineation to where driveways begin or end, allowing for motor vehicles to infringe upon the pedestrian zone.

This can be solved via simple streetscape design as these underused buildings redevelop as Eastern Market/Rivertown/Downtown Detroit revitalizes.

Photo 24

### **Gratiot Avenue North of Dequindre Cut**



Picture of conditions on west side of Gratiot, north of Dequindre Cut.

20. The intersection of Gratiot, Vernor, St. Aubin, and Adelaide is complex. The geometry of northeast bound Gratiot to Vernor and southbound Vernor to southeast Gratiot is built for vehicular speed, which makes crossing dangerous. While the signals in this area are good, a lack of enforcement on red for northbound Gratiot traffic turning onto Vernor presents a problem. While the roadway geometry could be improved to be more bike and pedestrian friendly, no real safety concerns at the intersection were identified, largely due to a lack of pedestrian movement on that side of Gratiot.

Pedestrian signal heads at Adelaide are obscured by vegetation. This can easily be fixed by pruning the trees at least annually.

Due to the convergence of the roads, this area experiences a lot of activity which will likely increase as the Eastern Market and Gratiot area continues to redevelop. Perhaps as this area redevelops, given its proximity to Eastern Market, the Dequindre Cut, and the potential for a proposed rapid transit stop, the area might become a transit-oriented development. If so, it will prove fruitful to redesign this intersection to make it safer and more convenient for all roadway users.

Photo 25

**Gratiot at Adelaide**



Left: Vegetation obscuring pedestrian signal head.

Top: Photo of Muer development site and Gratiot/St. Aubin/Vernor Intersection. (Source: Google Maps)

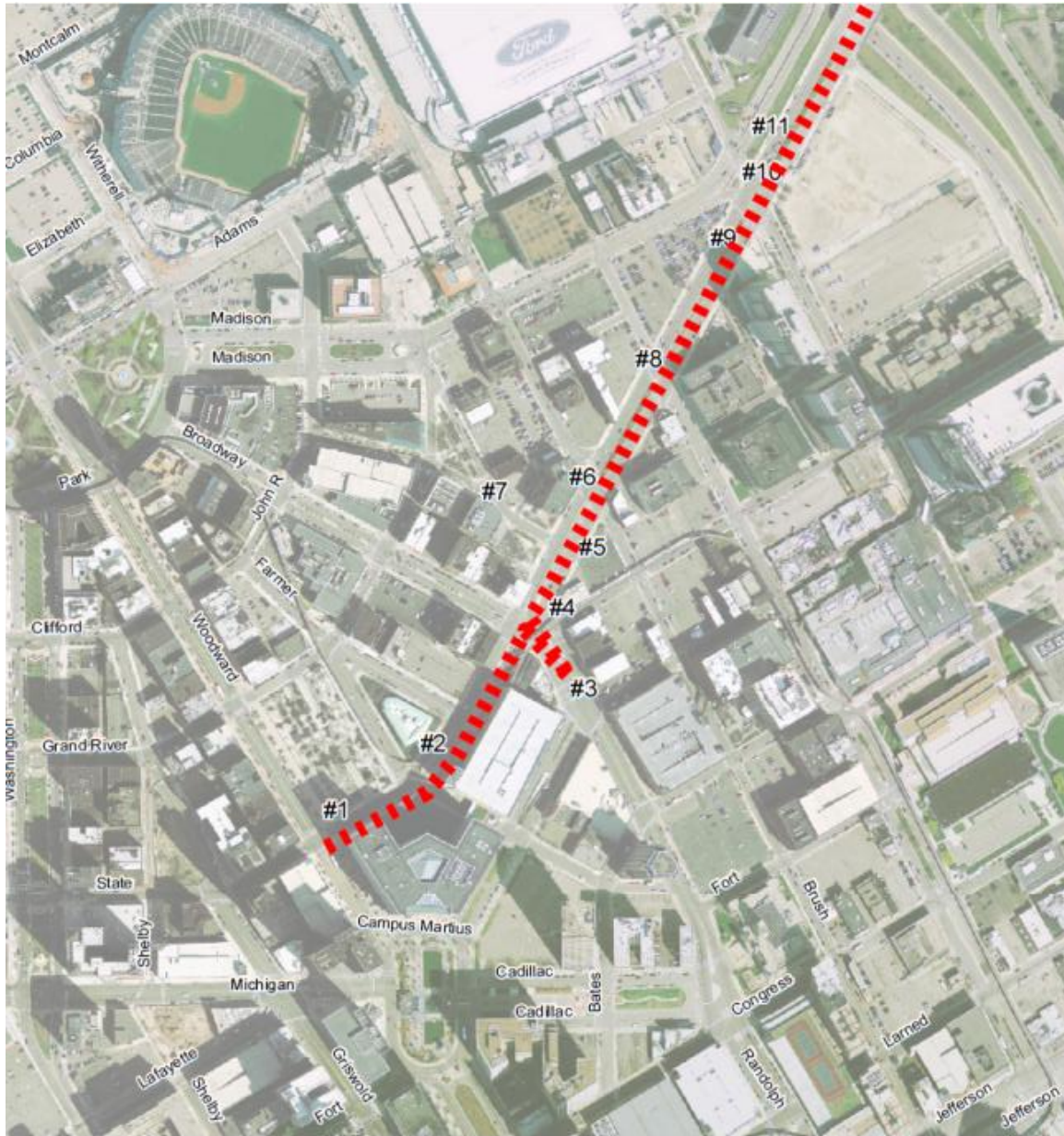
## Recommendations

The recommendations identified within the previously discussed 20 improvement areas can be summarized into the following next steps, generally beginning with less expensive and/or easier to implement steps and progressing to longer and/or more expensive to implement steps.

- Consider adding crosswalk markings on the west leg of Gratiot at Farmer and both legs of Gratiot at Library. Signage that warns drivers of pedestrian crossing could be added.
- Consider removing the crosswalk from the west side of the intersection of Gratiot Avenue and I-75 Service Drive/Jay Road and landscaping the area to deter people from traversing the island.
- Cut vegetation away from pedestrian signal heads and consider adding new signal heads at crossings where they are now absent (most notably Brush).
- Consult the Madison Avenue streetscape plan to identify any new treatments proposed within the corridor and potentially integrate proposals from this assessment into its plans (i.e., removing the sidewalk from the traffic island, the pocket park, or better fencing materials/location).
- Consider removing the curb ramp from the south side of Gratiot near Central Market.
- Consider placing planters in between the sidewalk and existing surface parking lots to encourage vehicles and pedestrians to enter and exit the lots at the appropriate locations.
- Meet with the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, MDOT TSC, DEGC, and other stakeholders to consider adding an at-grade crossing of Gratiot Avenue at the Dequindre Cut for cyclists and pedestrians not wanting to back track into Eastern Market (north side) or the Dequindre Cut (south side) as part of Dequindre Cut Phase II. Also consider formalizing the trailhead at this location.
- Coordinate public education initiatives in the corridor with Detroit Greenways Coalition Safety Education Task Force and other stakeholder groups to encourage on-road cyclists to adhere to the rules of the road and teach motorists to share the road. Please also consider using the SEMCOG Brochure: “Be Aware. Be Safe. Be Seen,” as part of any education campaign.
- Consider a wayfinding signage plan for addressing bicycle circulation to downtown, midtown, the riverfront, and beyond through the Gratiot corridor. This plan should detour southbound cyclists off of Gratiot and around the I-75 interchange. Such a plan may be part of a larger integrated wayfinding plan.
- Consider implementing an access management plan that controls the number and location of driveways for properties abutting Gratiot Avenue. Such actions will increase the attractiveness of the corridor and the safety of all roadway users.
- Coordinate future bicycle related projects with the greater downtown bike sharing project to look for ways to increase bicycle access between Eastern Market, downtown, and surrounding areas.
- Consider a pedestrian and bicycle circulation plan for Eastern Market that addresses both the market and the surrounding area such as Brewery Park and the artisan district across Gratiot. Proposed pedestrian projects may be eligible for TAP funding.
- Continue dialogue with MDOT TSC, Detroit DPW, and the Gratiot Avenue Business Association on the issues related to on-street parking and on-street bike lanes. Any considerations should take into account the nature of potential rapid transit within the corridor.

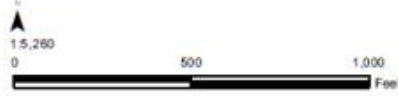
- Consider a detailed engineering study of Gratiot Avenue at both Broadway and the I-75 interchange that better accommodates bicycle and pedestrian movements and increases safety for all roadway users.
- Consider filling the sidewalk gap on Antietam Avenue, between Gratiot Avenue and Rivard Street.
- Consider adding medians on Gratiot where they are now absent in order to increase safety of all roadway users. Ensure landscaping plans for all medians are designed to channel pedestrians to preferred crossing locations. Consider using green infrastructure techniques where possible and practicable. Proposed pedestrian projects may be eligible for TAP funding.
- Consider a streetscaping project on Gratiot between the Dequindre Cut and St. Aubin to increase the pedestrian experience and increase the attractiveness of the abutting parcels for redevelopment.
- Consider adding curb extensions to intersections especially where on-street parking is present, to decrease the amount of time pedestrians are exposed to traffic and decrease vehicle waiting times (like at Beaubien Street).
- Consider restriping crosswalks so they are perpendicular to the intersection, minimizing their length, the amount of time pedestrians are exposed to traffic, and vehicle waiting times.
- Continue to monitor the progress of the I-375 design study and consider ways that various alternatives would affect Gratiot's walkability, bikeability, and economic development potential of existing parcels.
- Monitor the status of the potential rapid transit analysis of Gratiot Avenue, led by the newly formed Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan. Such analysis will let stakeholders know where transit stops (and, subsequently, pedestrian crossings) will be, as well as future development opportunities.
- Consider mixed uses, form-based codes, and other relevant zoning changes for new development sites that will advance the walkability and bikeability of the corridor. Look at the feasibility of bicycle-oriented development of the Muer site since it is a part of an unofficial trailhead of the Dequindre Cut. If mixed-use, off-street parking garages could be added to new development sites, it may lessen the need for on-street parking, freeing up space for transit and bicycle facilities on Gratiot Avenue. Restoring a street grid to superblock parcels can help facilitate walkability, bikeability, and provide congestion relief to motor vehicles on Gratiot.
- Consider a redesign of the Gratiot/Vernor/St. Aubin intersection if the Muer site is deemed to be suitable for transit-oriented development.

Figure 9  
**Walking Tour Route (One of Four)**



**SEMCOG**

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State Plane NAD83 HARN  
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Figure 10  
**Walking Tour Route (Two of Four)**



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Figure 11  
**Walking Tour Route (Three of Four)**



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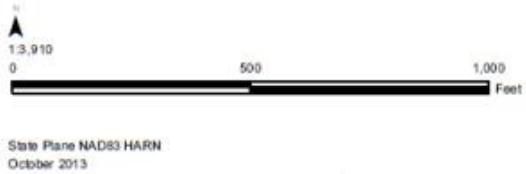
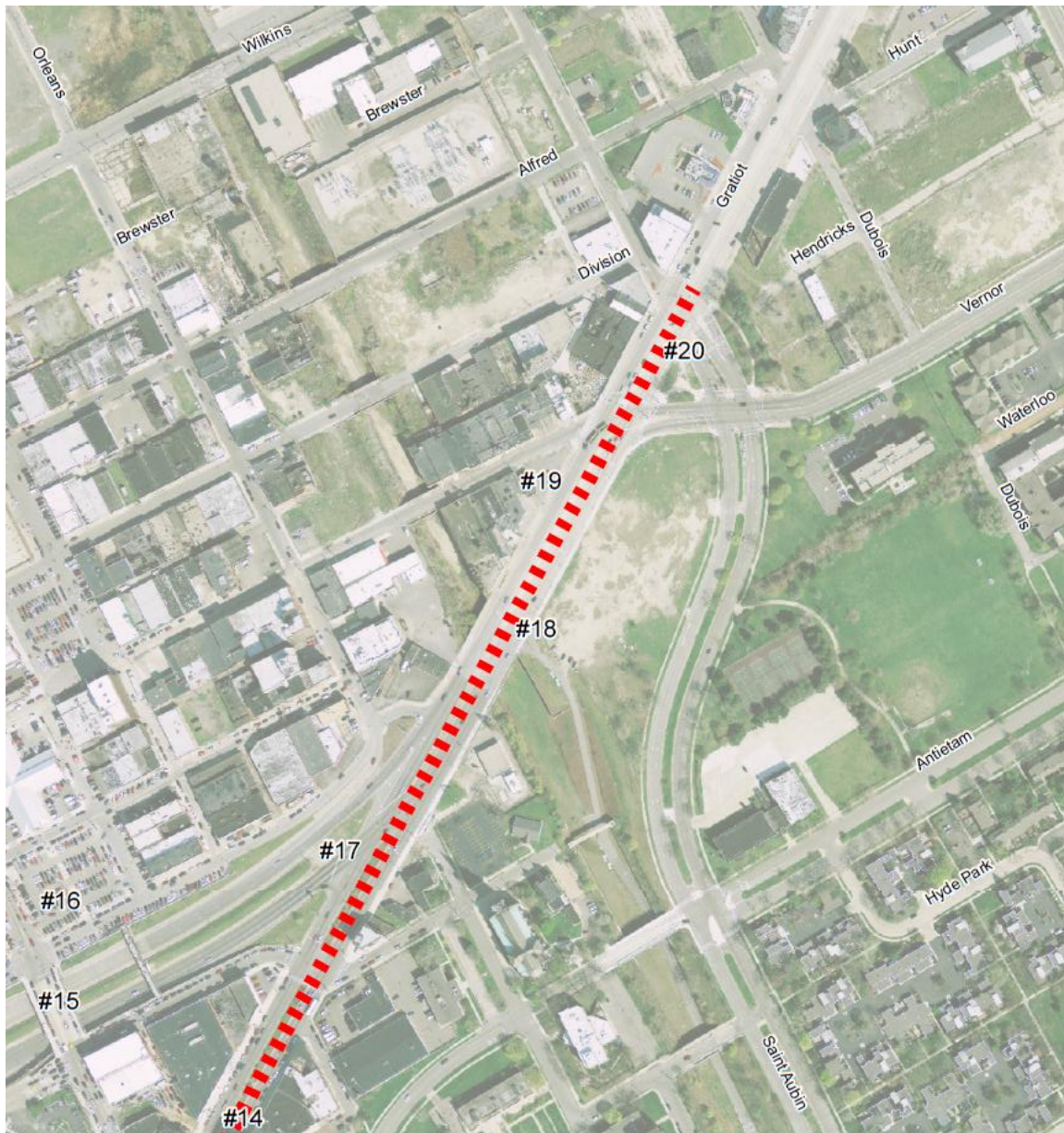


Figure 12  
**Walking Tour Route (Four of Four)**



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# **Eight Mile Road and Gratiot Avenue Neighborhood and Housing Assessment**

## **Introduction**

Strong neighborhoods and housing support strong vibrant corridors and vice versa. Connecting transportation corridors with surrounding neighborhoods can contribute to economic development along the corridor, help create a sense of community, make a community more livable, and further individual access to employment and needed services. Strong neighborhoods and housing are likely to include one or all of the following indicators of “neighborhood confidence”:

- homeowners and renters are continually investing in their property;
- values are increasing over time;
- there is a mix of housing types; and
- there is a mix of renter/owner occupancy.

On the flip side, strong corridors provide commercial, employment, social, and other quality-of-life amenities that support the vibrancy and desirability of the surrounding neighborhoods. Because of this distinct correlation, there is a need to assess and develop strategies to maintain and improve neighborhoods and housing stock adjacent to and along corridors such as Gratiot Avenue. The tool used to meet this need is the Neighborhood and Housing Assessment, which has these major components:

- Determine geographic boundary;
- Define neighborhood typology; and
- Policy and local action recommendations.

SEMCOG’s Creating Successful Corridors Redevelopment Toolkit (located online at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)) includes the Neighborhood and Housing Assessment tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors.



## Determining Geographic Boundary

Since all neighborhoods are unique and rarely can be identified by a specific boundary, it is important to understand how surrounding neighborhoods interact with a corridor and, even more importantly, to determine a scale in which there is both synergy between households as well as reasonable access to the corridor. Generally, determining a neighborhood's boundary and size is based upon both local input (how residents and the community view neighborhoods along a corridor), as well as what is observed both through personal observation in addition to local, census, and other sources of data. Incorporated into this determination is a consideration for a reasonable distance residents are willing to walk (rather than drive) to a transit stop and/or to commercial/business patronage along the corridor. In many cases, this distance is unlikely to be much greater than a half-mile radius from a predetermined center.

There are several past plans and studies that provide an initial understanding of the current opportunities and challenges of the Eight Mile segment along Gratiot Avenue. Examples of these existing plans include:

- City of Eastpointe's Master Plan Update (2010)
- City of Eastpointe's DDA Plan (2007-2008)
- Detroit Future City Plan (2012)
- SEMCOG's Gratiot Avenue: Corridor Improvement Plan (2009)
- MDOT's M-102 Conceptual Framework Study, Grand River to I-94 (2009)
- Eight Mile Boulevard Association – Rethinking 8 Mile: A Framework for Unifying Elements (2005)
- City of Eastpointe's Redevelopment Ready Communities Assessment Report (February 2014)

With local demographic and neighborhood information, as well as analysis and recommendations included in the reviewed existing plans, SEMCOG used the "neighborhood block-walk technique" to obtain an initial understanding of the housing and neighborhood dynamics in the residential areas adjacent to the intersecting corridors. Each neighborhood was assessed by specific criteria, such as quality and type of housing stock, walkability and, most importantly, how they were or were not accessible to the commercial areas buffering Gratiot and Eight Mile.

It was determined that the selected neighborhood's accessibility to the intersection/node of Eight Mile and Gratiot Avenue should meet two generally accepted walkability criteria:

- a person is willing to walk between one-quarter and one-half mile to access transit; and
- a comfortable walk zone benchmark is five to 10 minutes to access quality-of-life amenities.

After conducting the block-walk technique and analyzing neighborhood-level data (including vacancy rates, housing density, and population change), the area displayed in Figure 14 was selected as containing qualities of intriguing housing and neighborhood characteristics, as well as reasonable accessibility to potential commercial and transportation amenities along the two corridors. Perhaps most importantly the selected neighborhood crosses jurisdictional boundaries (City of Detroit and City of Eastpointe). Despite the selected area including housing and neighborhoods in two different cities, the quality, type, maintenance levels, occupancy, and accessibility to the corridors are similar. For the purposes of this assessment, the neighborhood displayed in Figure 14 will be analyzed as a singular area, as opposed to two separate neighborhoods within two separate jurisdictions.

Figure 14

**Selected Assessment Neighborhood**



Direct observations from the block-walk technique for this area include the following:

- Primarily brick single-story homes and two-story bungalow style homes (vast majority are ranch-style homes).
- Traditional neighborhood by design – primarily grid pattern.
- Structure of majority of housing is “frame” or “wood/aluminum siding.”
- Majority of housing have detached/set-back garages.
- Relatively dense neighborhood – vast majority is single-family housing.

- Multi-family housing (duplexes) is located in the southwest portion of the area, as well as a single, multi-family apartment building complex along Gratiot.
- Relatively stable and consistent housing maintenance levels throughout the neighborhood (most homes are very well maintained structures and landscape; however there are pocket signs of decline and neglect beginning to appear).
  - There is a significant decline in housing maintenance east of Hayes, south of Eight Mile.
- A good number of sidewalks have been upgraded with the addition of ADA improvements at intersections.
- Area is largely walkable, but road configuration is disconnected along several “side streets” to either Gratiot or Eight Mile.
- Good transit access (DDOT and SMART shelters along Gratiot and Eight Mile).

## Defining the Neighborhood Topology

Once a neighborhood boundary is determined, the next step is to *Define the Neighborhood Typology*, which is based upon three criteria.

The first is “Desirability,” which consists of a mixture of data collection and analysis, such as occupancy and vacancy rates, housing value, and household income levels and changes; code enforcement statistics, as well as a block-walk audit technique. (A block-walk is a block-by-block walk through the neighborhood making note of the quality of the housing stock, activity of residents on the street, local points of pride, and general confidence levels residents show towards their housing and the neighborhood).

The second criterion is “Diversity,” which primarily consists of the “choices” available to both current and potential future residents.

- Is there a good mix of housing types, values, and tenures available?
- Are there housing choices that serve an aging population or a population likely to have school-age children?
- Is housing accessible to residents with differing physical abilities?

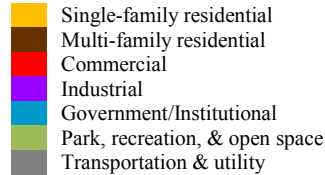
The third criterion is “Accessibility/Connectivity,” which looks specifically at how the neighborhood interacts within itself, the corridor, and how it is connected to the larger community and region. This includes:

- How walkable or bikeable is the neighborhood?
- How are the connections with the corridor?
- Are there barriers such as large parking lots, or fences, or other barriers that make walking or biking between home and the commercial area along the corridor difficult?
- Are transit options available? If so, what are the distances between the neighborhood and the stops?

Before the three criteria necessary to define the neighborhood’s typology can be assessed, it is important to understand land use and inventory the structures within its boundaries. Figure 15 displays land-use data for the neighborhood. As shown, the majority of the neighborhood consists of single-family residential units, with the commercial, institutional, and industrial land uses along Gratiot and Eight Mile.

Figure 15

### 2008 Land Use: Assessment Neighborhood



For a better picture of the current types of structures and uses of the individual parcels within the neighborhood, 2010 Building Footprint data can be used. Using Building Footprint data (Figure 16), it is determined that within the selected neighborhood there are a total of 2,355 individual buildings. These individual buildings include:

- 1,152 single-family detached houses;
- 1,081 accessory dwellings (primarily detached garages);
- 70 retail and office buildings (primarily along Gratiot);
- 19 multi-family and attached condominium buildings;
- 17 leisure and hospitality buildings;
- five manufacturing and warehouse buildings;
- five medical buildings;
- four institutional buildings; and
- two transportation and utility buildings.

Although the vast majority (over 95 percent) of the buildings are residential (single-family, multi-family, or accessory dwellings), the proximity within the assessment neighborhood to several quality-of-life, cultural, and potential “third-place” amenities, including large and historic churches, places of worship, and schools are positive attributes. Third-places are defined as “other” gathering places within a community that promote public life (in contrast to the first and second places of home and work).

Figure 16  
**Building Footprints for Eight Mile & Gratiot Assessment Neighborhood**



- Orange Single-family detached house
- Light green Accessory building
- Yellow Multi-family/attached condominium building
- Pink Transportation and utility building
- Red Retail and office building
- Blue Institutional building
- Purple Manufacturing and warehouse building
- Green Entertainment building
- Light blue Medical building

Six attributes were attached to each building footprint used in the neighborhood and housing assessment for this selected area:

- building type;

- median building height;
- year structure was built;
- building square feet;
- number of stories in the building; and
- number of housing units contained within structure.

Table 1 provides an overview of the data analyzed for the neighborhood.

Table 1  
**Analysis of Structures in Neighborhood**

Building Type	Number	Average Square Feet	Total Square Feet
Institutional	4	8,699	34,794
Retail and Office	70	6,060	424,224
Leisure & Hospitality	17	3,281	55,785
Manufacturing & Warehouse	5	53,806	269,030
Residential	1,171	1,152	1,348,423
Medical	5	10,148	50,742
Transportation & Utility	2	2,741	5,482
Accessory	1,081	453	489,820
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,355</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>2,678,300</b>

Table 2 provides a deeper dive into the data specific to the housing within the neighborhood. Additionally, it divides the neighborhood into four quadrants (Figure 18 provides a map of the quadrants).

Table 2  
**Single-family Housing data by Neighborhood Study Area and by Quadrant**

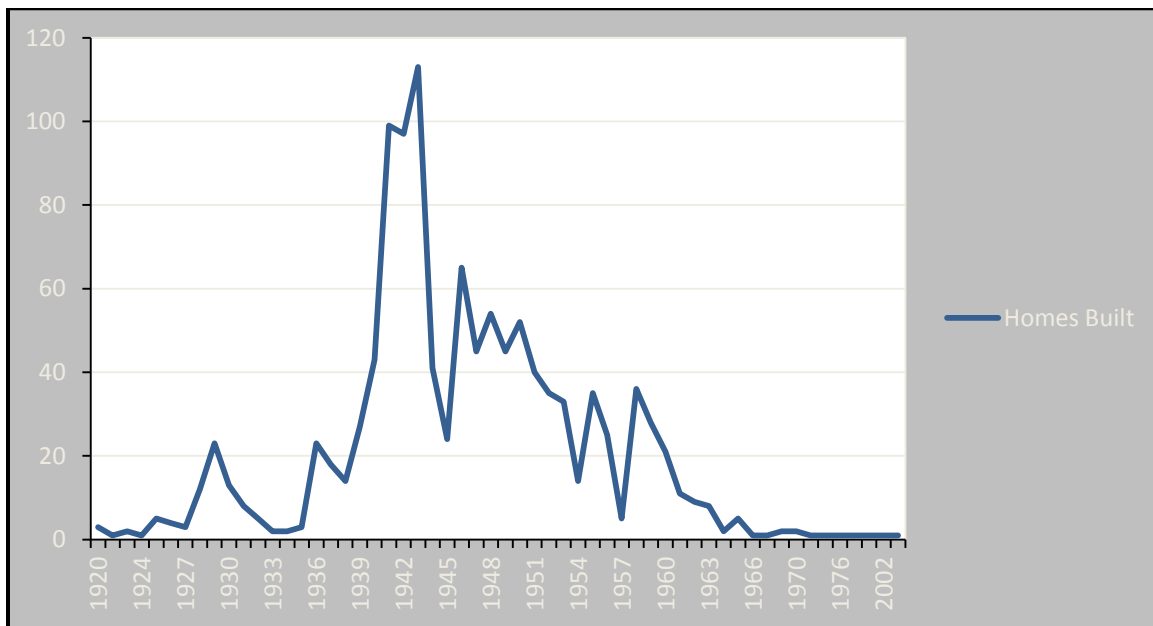
	Average Square Feet	Average Year Built
Complete Neighborhood	1,122	1946
Quadrant 1	1,095	1943
Quadrant 2	1,313	1953
Quadrant 3	1,051	1948
Quadrant 4	1,105	1944

Of particular interest is the average age of the structures within the neighborhood, which provides the greatest insight into the stability of the housing stock and likely recommendations. The average housing unit within the neighborhood is 68 years old (constructed in 1946). This means that without ongoing maintenance and investment into these structures, the physical quality may be deteriorating, which may result in blight. While it is likely that many homeowners and landlords will maintain the aging housing stock at a high level, other factors that may lead to neglect and obsolescence are changes in the economy,

personal income, and overall confidence in the neighborhood. Additionally, without updates and rehabilitation, the size, accessibility, and overall amenities contained within these structures may not meet the demands of the current homeowner or renter. However, the fact that the majority of the houses within the neighborhood are of brick construction is a significant strength for the lasting quality of the housing stock with consistent maintenance. Since 1970, nine new homes have been constructed in the assessment neighborhood; only two homes have been constructed since 1990. This emphasizes the fact that the neighborhood is largely built out, and it is unlikely that any additional housing units will be added in the near future. Figure 17 provides a graph of housing by year built within the neighborhood. However, depending upon the market demand currently exhibited in the neighborhood and potential future demand, there may be reason to look at the potential need for multi-family units based along Gratiot and/or Eight Mile with access to transit and walkable amenities.

Figure 17

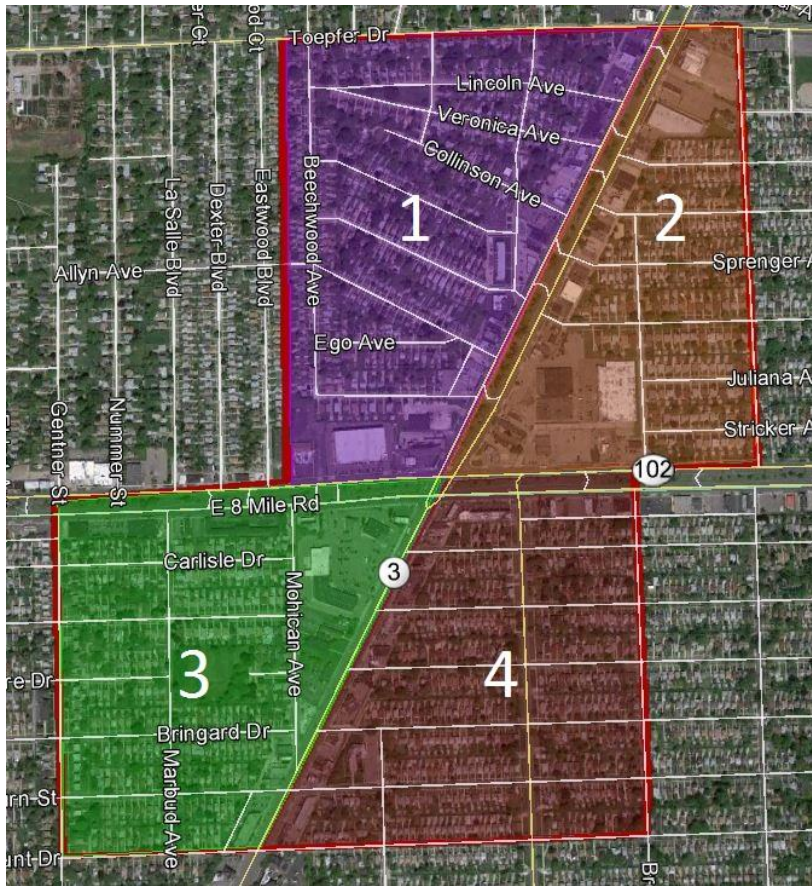
**Housing by Year Built: Eight Mile & Gratiot Neighborhood**



Not surprisingly, the larger homes, which are found in Quadrant 2 (Eastpointe, east of Gratiot and north of Eight Mile), are also the most recently built. The homes in Quadrant 2 are also almost exclusively ranches and bungalows of brick construction.

Figure 18

**Eight Mile & Gratiot Neighborhood by Quadrant**

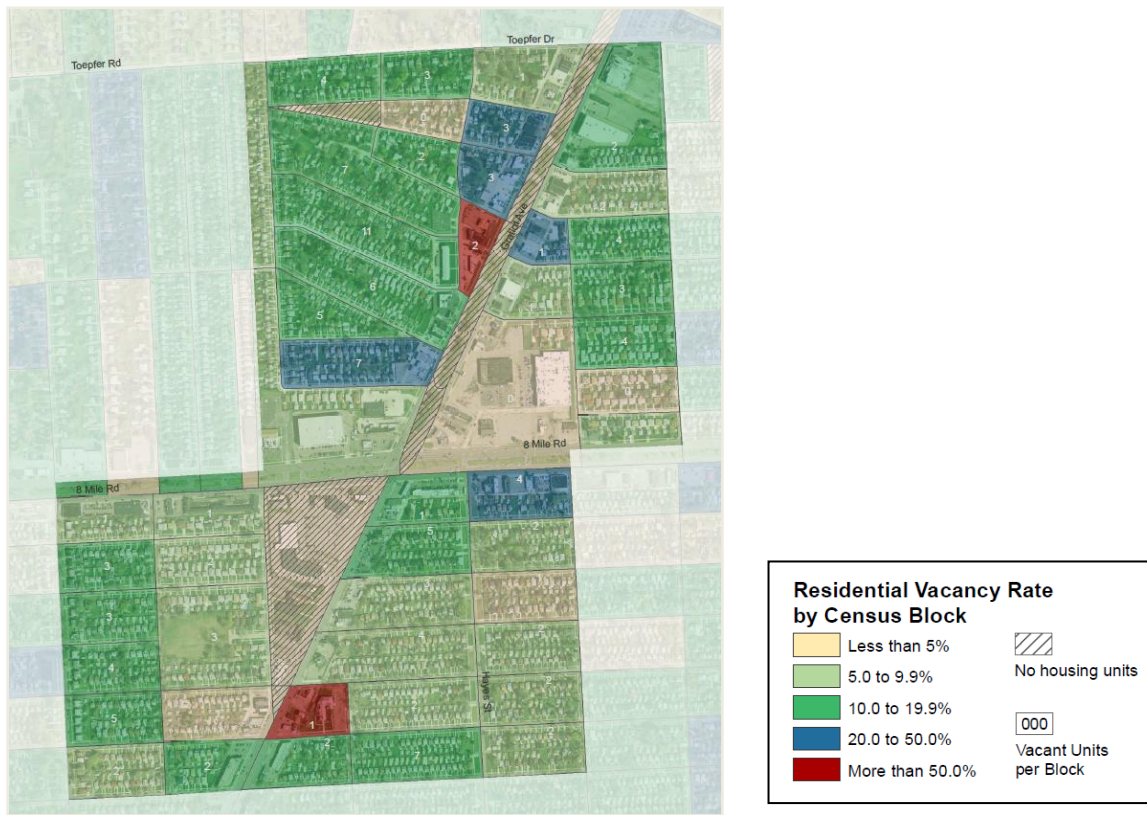


**Desirability**

The “desirability” of a neighborhood is based upon attributes that both attract new residents and retain current residents. A sample of data analyzed for desirability includes population changes (2000-2010), vacancy changes, overall “neighborhood stability,” as well as more general observational and aesthetic qualities, such as curb appeal, maintenance standards, and presence of and access to quality-of-life amenities such as parks, cultural institutions, and gathering places.

In 2010, the residential vacancy rate for the City of Eastpointe was nine percent; while the City of Detroit’s residential vacancy rate was 23 percent. Figure 19 provides the residential vacancy rate for the assessment neighborhood. As displayed, the majority of census blocks have a residential vacancy rate between five and 10 percent south of Eight Mile and between 10 and 20 percent north of Eight Mile. However, these numbers need to be placed into context by looking at how the residential vacancy has changed over time.

Figure 19  
**Residential Vacancy Rate, 2010**



Between 2000 and 2010, the City of Eastpointe’s vacancy rate more than tripled – from 2.6 percent to 8.9 percent. This percentage rate change of 6.3 percent was greater than both Macomb County (3.5 percent) and the SEMCOG region (5.0 percent). The City of Detroit’s vacancy rate more than doubled from 10.3 percent in 2000 to 22.8 percent in 2010. This increase was also significantly greater than the vacancy rate for both Wayne County and the SEMCOG region. As displayed in Figure 20, within the selected assessment neighborhood, several block groups experienced vacancy increases of more than 10 percent, with three block groups along Gratiot Avenue and one along Eight Mile having more than a 20 percent increase in vacancy. By understanding how certain blocks within a neighborhood are individually impacted by vacancy, the community may be able to strategically deploy resources to meet the specific challenges and opportunities each possesses. For instance, the residential areas directly adjacent to Gratiot Avenue have generally experienced a greater increase in vacancy and loss of population, as compared with the areas farther away from the corridor. This may be a result of limited housing located within these areas, and any change in vacancy has a greater impact.

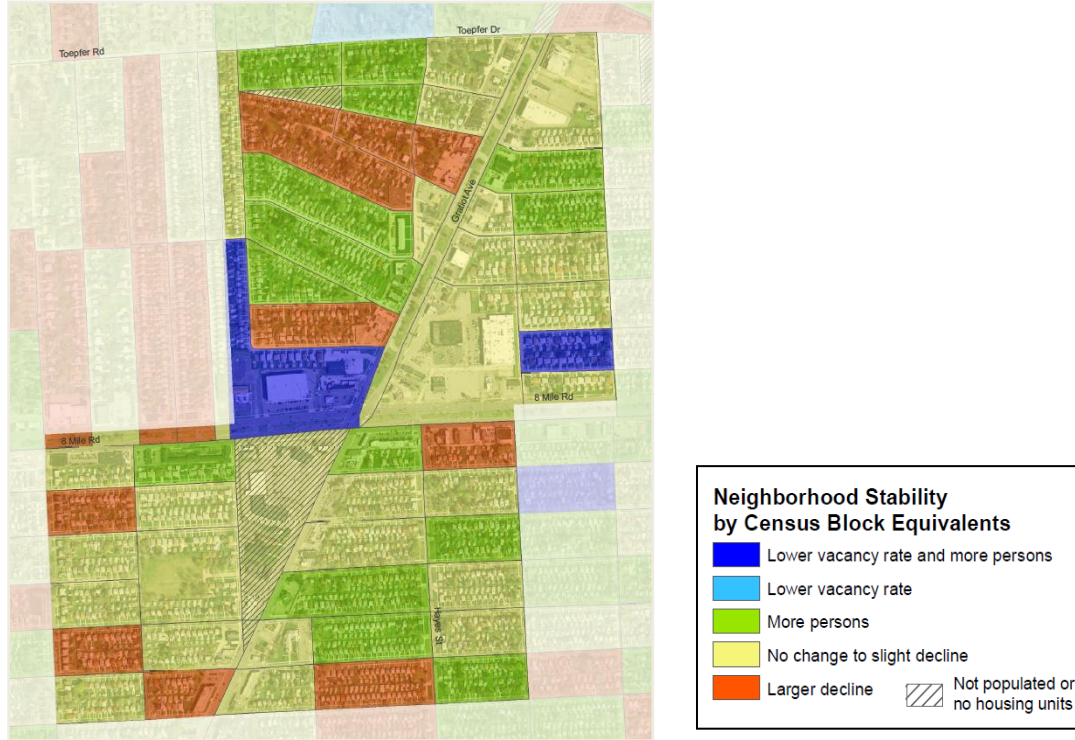
Figure 20  
**Vacancy Rate Change, 2000-2010**



By analyzing both vacancy change and population change, a neighborhood’s general stability may be assessed. Figure 21 displays neighborhood stability at the block group level. The dark blue blocks display an increase in both population and occupancy over the last decade and, as such, can be considered areas with “lower vacancy rate and more persons.” These are generally the stronger blocks within a neighborhood. The light blue blocks show improving areas, which means that these areas increased in occupancy (less vacant housing), but experienced little to no change in population. The green areas show the opposite – blocks that experienced an increase in population, but saw little to no change in occupancy. The yellow areas experienced either no change or a slight decline in both population and occupancy. Finally, the orange blocks are areas that experienced significant declines in both population and occupancy. Again, efforts to stabilize the neighborhood from the community and local stakeholders may be strategically implemented to align with the challenges and opportunities of each block. Overall the neighborhood has remained stable between 2000 and 2010. While some decline has been experienced, considering the challenges of the economic recession and lasting impacts of the national foreclosure crisis, the neighborhood appears to have weathered the impacts better than many similar communities in the region. This is likely due the overall quality of the housing stock and continued maintenance by residents. Unfortunately, there are signs of significant blight and housing neglect in adjacent neighborhoods, which needs to be monitored.

Figure 21

**Neighborhood Stability (2010) at Block Group Level**



Within the neighborhood there is a pretty stable level of housing maintenance (i.e., majority of homes and landscapes are very well maintained, with few having visible signs of neglect). However, there is a noticeable decline in maintenance levels and increase in blight towards the southernmost areas of the neighborhood.

Photos 26, 27, and 28 illustrate examples of the high quality and maintenance levels of the housing stock found within the assessment neighborhood. The density, size, and accessibility of the housing stock to the major north-south and east-west corridors of Gratiot and Eight Mile are all positive attributes for retaining and attracting current and future residents.

Photo 26

**General Neighborhood Housing Stock (1)**



Photo 27

**General Neighborhood Housing Stock (2)**



Photo 28

**General Neighborhood Housing Stock (3)**



There is a mix of brick, frame, and wood/aluminum siding homes included in the assessment neighborhood. While the majority of housing units have detached and set-back garages (displayed as accessory building in Figure 16), several do not have a garage. The street layout within the neighborhood is primarily a grid pattern, which provides for quality walking opportunities. However, several of the streets do not have direct or easy access to either Gratiot Avenue or Eight Mile. This is particularly the case on the west side of Gratiot, just south of Eight Mile. The design of the neighborhood streets make easy and direct access to commercial amenities and transit options difficult. Initiatives to create and encourage additional connections between the neighborhood and its residents and the commercial activity along the two major corridors should be considered.

There has been significant investment in the sidewalks and crosswalks throughout the neighborhood. As road and sewer improvements have been made, upgrades and improvements to the walkability and accessibility for pedestrians have also been accommodated. Photos 29 and 30 provide examples of the

updated and improved sidewalks found along several streets within the neighborhood boundaries. These photos also display the general quality of the landscaping and well-maintained aesthetic of the public and private areas along the roadway.

Photo 29

**Recently updated and improved crosswalks**



Photo 30

**Well-maintained and landscaped properties**



There are two significant public and potentially active gathering places for social and community interaction in the neighborhood. The first is the Goetz Park (Photo 31), which is uniquely situated as a triangular pocket park between Lincoln and Veronica Avenues in the northern end of the neighborhood. This green space park provides families within the adjacent blocks an active space for sports, leisure, and family and friend gathering activities. Access to this park and the amenities it offers is a strength of the neighborhood and a benefit to the residents living nearby. It is difficult to determine how the park is currently used, but its location, size, and shape provide significant opportunities for events and community building.

Photo 31

**Pocket park**



The second public gathering place for social and community interaction in the neighborhood is Edmore Marbud Park, which is located almost directly in the center of the southwest quadrant of the assessment neighborhood. Photos 32 and 33 display the challenges present at Edmore Marbud Park, which include lack of maintenance and uninviting entrances and equipment. Improvements to the park can be both low cost and locally driven (i.e., formation of a local neighborhood committee focused on park maintenance, cleanup, and organization of events). Both parks provide green space and informal gathering opportunities for the neighborhood. The locations of these green spaces are especially conducive to community building, as they are centrally located with easy access for residents.

Photo 32

**Underutilized and under maintained park (1)**



Photo 33

**Underutilized and under maintained park (2)**



**Diversity**

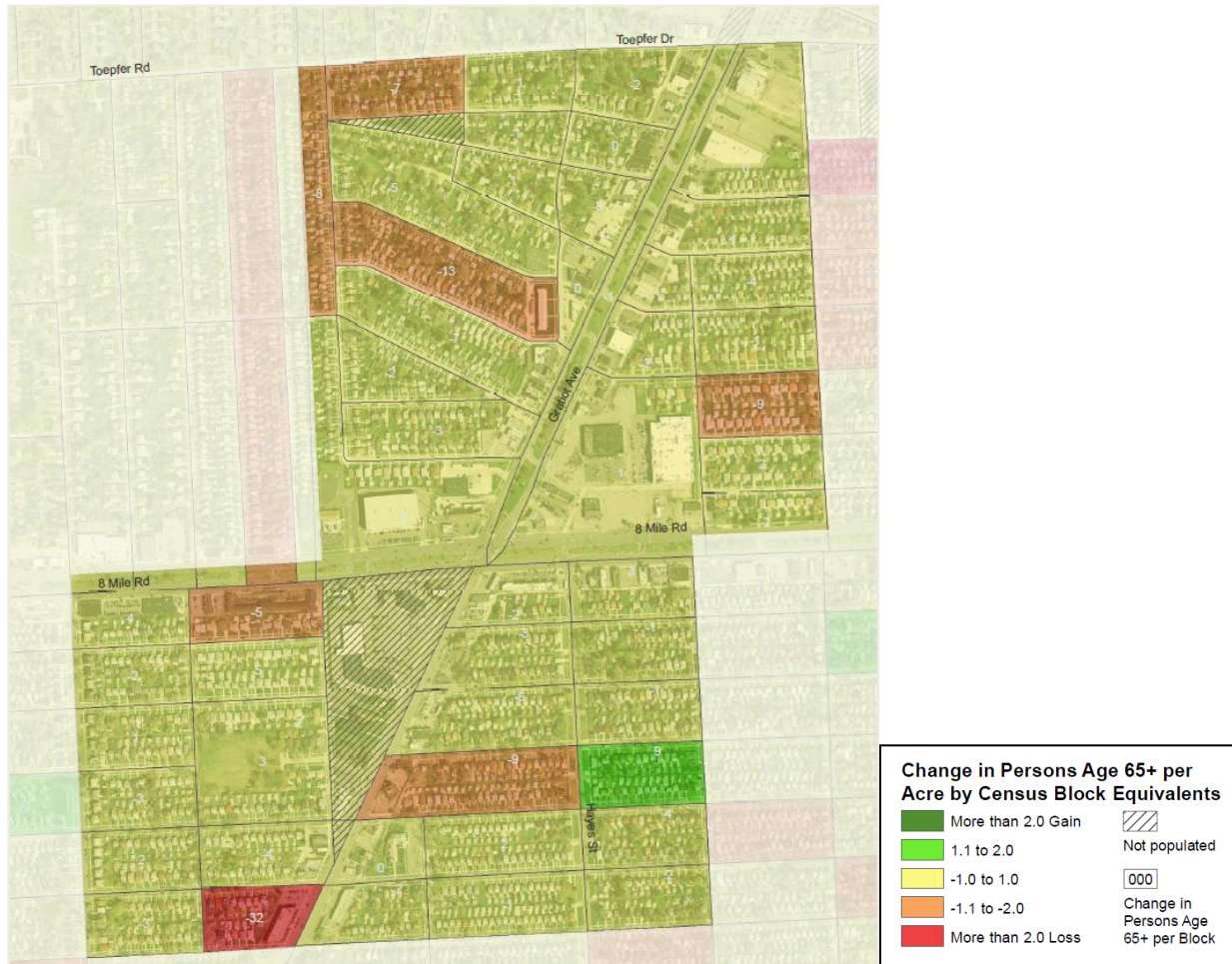
The diversity of a neighborhood primarily consists of the “choices” available to both current and potential future residents. Questions to be asked when assessing a neighborhood include:

- Is there a good mix of housing types, values, and tenures available?
- Are there housing choices that serve an aging population or a population likely to have school-age children?
- Is housing accessible to residents with differing physical abilities?

The vast majority of housing stock in the neighborhood is composed of single-family homes on relatively small lots; this enables a dense, walkable atmosphere. There are several duplex housing units on the southwest side of the neighborhood, as well as a medium-sized apartment complex, located just west of Gratiot on Hayes Avenue in the northwest quadrant.

Figure 22 shows the change in senior residents in the neighborhood. Although there has not been a substantial change, without modifications the majority of housing stock may not be ideal or suitable for an aging population.

Figure 22  
**Senior Population Change, 2000-2010**



Additionally, there is likely to be changing housing demand that may support an increase in choices and diverse housing options within the assessment neighborhood and, more importantly, with easy access to downtown Detroit via Gratiot Avenue for young professionals. Figure 23 displays the change in youth population between 2000 and 2010. There is a significant difference in the youth population south of Eight Mile, as opposed to north of Eight Mile. The households north of Eight Mile actually increased in population for youth 17 years and under, while south of Eight Mile was more similar to the region as a whole and experienced a decline in youth population. The ability of the neighborhood to see gains in youth population is encouraging since it likely means that families have moved in or remained in their home over the last 10 years.

Figure 23  
**Youth Population Change, 2000-2010**



**Accessibility/Connectivity**

Analysis of accessibility/connectivity looks specifically at how the neighborhood interacts within itself, the corridor, and how it is connected to the larger community and region. This includes how walkable or bikeable the neighborhood is; the connections within the corridor; and barriers such as large parking lots, fences, or other obstacles that make walking or biking between home and commercial activity along the corridor difficult. Are transit options available? What are the distances between the neighborhood and the stops?

One of the greatest opportunities and challenges in strengthening the selected assessment neighborhood is the accessibility and connectivity between housing and the commercial opportunities along both Gratiot and Eight Mile. A particular challenge is the excess amount of underused parking and large vacant spaces dominated by cars making it difficult for pedestrians to navigate. Figure 24 displays the major commercial connections along Gratiot (blue) and Eight Mile (orange) that are likely walkable destinations for residents of the assessment neighborhood. The two red circles highlight major redevelopment opportunities. Currently, these spaces are not walkable and, in many ways, difficult for families living in the neighborhood to access and enjoy by foot.

Figure 24

**Connectivity and accessibility between neighborhood and corridors**



Commercial connections are highlighted in blue along Gratiot and in orange along Eight Mile. The red circles highlight major redevelopment opportunities.

Photos 34 and 35 show the general challenges facing pedestrians as they try to safely cross the surface parking lots located on the east side of Gratiot. These parking lots serve as visual and physical impediments to accessing both the commercial and transit destinations. Additionally, although the assessment neighborhood is primarily a grid pattern, which encourages walkability, several blocks within the study area are long (consisting of two, three, and even four traditional blocks). This hinders pedestrian accessibility to and from the commercial area.

Photo 34

**Underutilized parking lot**



Photo 35

**Uninviting parking lots**



The relatively densely populated residential housing and neighborhoods that are located in close proximity to a walkable, commercial district are assets that encourage walking and biking. However, the current configuration of Gratiot Avenue, Eight Mile, and the surface parking lots are obstacles for pedestrians, bicyclists, and even transit riders in the assessment neighborhood. The cities are encouraged to consider conducting a Walkability/Bikeability Audit, which would provide a thorough analysis of potential roadway changes and traffic-calming measures that could improve pedestrian safety. Photo 36 displays the challenges of safely crossing Eight Mile Road, traveling south along Gratiot.

Photo 36

**Eight Mile and Gratiot Avenue Intersection**



## Recommendations

### Strategies for neighborhood resiliency

#### Use strategic and targeted code enforcement and property maintenance policies

Code enforcement is the primary way communities attempt to ensure that properties are maintained to minimum quality standards. When used proactively, code enforcement can help local governments identify, halt, and reverse the negative impacts of vacant, abandoned, and problem properties. Code enforcement policies should be transparent and consistently enforced to prevent substandard housing from becoming nuisances and to encourage property owners to maintain properties to a high standard. A successful code enforcement system offers incentives for responsible ownership along with disincentives or penalties for irresponsible behavior. Effective code enforcement and property maintenance policies should be:

- Targeted and proactive, rather than reactive (complaint-driven);
- Integrated with other abandonment and blight prevention strategies; and
- Coordinated with residents and businesses within the community who have a vested interest in maintaining a quality neighborhood and who can easily report code or blight issues.

Although code enforcement activities and standards need to be imposed on all properties in a community, limited resources and capacity make geographic targeting of code enforcement more effective. This may include:

- Linking enforcement to other neighborhood revitalization and development activities, such as those that were targeted through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP);
- Aligning enforcement to areas with concentrations of foreclosures, crime activity, and shifts in owner-occupied to rental-occupied properties; and
- Focusing on specific building types (i.e., small, multi-family buildings) or on specific problems (i.e., illegal dumping or abandoned cars).

Using decorative or artistic boarding as a method of making vacant properties appear occupied should be considered when possible, as opposed to the more traditional boards. Decorative boarding may be as simple as painting a window with a lamp or some other decorative feature behind it.

The City of Eastpointe is actively engaged in proactive code enforcement. Its code enforcement efforts include long grass and weeds, junk vehicles, blight, and exterior building violations (see best practice example below). It also has a vacant structure registration and inspection program in place that also requires boarded up windows to have the boards painted to match the structure. The city is also using a creative approach to improve vacant commercial storefronts by displaying the artwork of East Detroit High School students. The Cities of Eastpointe and Detroit are encouraged to further engage residents living within this assessment neighborhood to proactively monitor, report, and take ownership of the neighborhood.

Examples of regional best practices include:

- City of Eastpointe – Uses three part-time code enforcement officers who work 32 hours a week, as well as using the rental and building inspectors to identify violations. Part of the [city's code enforcement](#) efforts include long grass and weeds, junk vehicles, blight, and exterior building violations. The city is about to launch “Web Q & A” which will allow complaints or violations to be filled out through the city's website and tracked by the complainant for progress.

- City of Warren – [Neighborhood Clean Sweep Program](#) is a neighborhood-by-neighborhood, street-by-street, and house-by-house inspection effort that targets residential and commercial buildings for blight violations. This unique blight-fighting program began in 2008; inspectors have issued over 60,000 warning notices to businesses and residences to clean up their properties or face \$1,000 fines. The result: only 800 tickets issued because the vast majority of those who receive five-day warning notices correct the violations.

### **Utilize a Sidewalk Improvement Program**

In order to promote safety in neighborhoods and improve the appearance of the community, municipalities adopt a sidewalk improvement ordinance and/or program. Typically, as part of the city’s Capital Improvement Plan, a sidewalk improvement program may include developing and enforcing a sidewalk repair ordinance that authorizes the municipality to require homeowners and companies to comply and indicate who is financially responsible for maintenance and repairs. In older, established communities, the quality and accessibility of public sidewalks within neighborhoods is often in less-than-acceptable condition. This can include cracked, gapped, uneven elevation, and/or grass and weed intrusion within the pedestrian pathway. As replacement and repairs of sidewalks are scheduled and implemented, they are often aligned with development, upgrade, or compliance with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements.

As mentioned earlier, the City of Eastpointe has used its Sidewalk Replacement Program to upgrade and enhance the walkability and accessibility of the sidewalks in the assessment neighborhood. The city’s program is in line with other best practices in the region.

- City of Eastpointe – The city’s Sidewalk Replacement Program has been in place for over 20 years and is run on a seven-year cycle. Every year, approximately 1/7 of the city is surveyed and inspected for sidewalk violations. Letters are sent to property owners regarding their options and sidewalks are replaced to eliminate trip hazards and concrete deterioration.
- [City of Royal Oak](#) – The city’s Sidewalk Improvement Program addresses and replaces deficient public sidewalks over a six-year period.
- [Canton Township](#) – The township inspects sidewalks in designated neighborhoods on an annual basis in order to determine if any portion of the sidewalk is in need of replacement. If, after inspection, the township determines that a homeowner’s sidewalk is in need of repair, the homeowner is notified accordingly.

### **Implement a Curb Appeal Challenge**

Typically, this is an annual challenge in which the community encourages households to “compete” in specific challenges – such as best landscaping, most improved property, best restoration, or even best Halloween display/decoration. This is often a fun approach in which the community highlights those individuals that make a special effort to enhance their home and, therefore, their neighborhoods. Awards for those selected could range from an award plaque, to a local media story, citation by the city council, or even a cash gift or coupon to a local restaurant or commercial entity within the community.

A successful program often encourages household participation by providing training and workshops in landscaping, home repairs, paint color selection, proper installation of improvements, or other skills that increase curb appeal. These workshops are a great way to increase interest and to build neighborhood camaraderie.

The City of Eastpointe Parks and Recreation Department currently manages an adopt-a-flowerbed and memorial tree program, as well as beautification and holiday decoration award programs. Each of these provides for great neighborhood and family interaction and creates a sense of community.

An example of a block challenge program is:

- [City of Jamestown, NY](#) – The city established a Neighborhood Renaissance Block Challenge, which encourages neighborhood groups to collaborate on exterior improvements to their properties in order to boost pride in Jamestown’s neighborhoods and inspire others to reinvest.

**Provide residents throughout the study area with information and encouragement to use private social network sites designed to promote neighborhood engagement and resources**

Private social network sites such as [Nextdoor](#) provide a medium for neighbors to engage with one another to discuss neighborhood-level issues and opportunities ranging from crime notices to services needed, to gathering events, to property maintenance and home improvement idea exchanges. Similar to other social network sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn; *Nextdoor* focuses at the micro-neighborhood level so that neighbors have a password-secured venue to exchange any and all social challenges and opportunities present within the neighborhood.

Examples of what *Nextdoor* has been used for include:

- Tracking down a trustworthy babysitter;
- Organizing a Neighborhood Watch Group;
- Finding contact information for quality home improvement providers;
- Quickly getting the word out about a break-in;
- Providing contacts for up-to-the-minute services such as snow removal, lawn cutting, or auto-maintenance;
- Finding a new home for a outgrown bike; and
- Putting the word out for a neighborhood barbeque, garage sale, or social gathering at a nearby park.

Example cities and neighborhoods within Southeast Michigan currently utilizing *Nextdoor* to build local relationships and engage neighbors to promote and enhance their neighborhoods include Ferndale, Huntington Woods, and Cody/Rouge-Brightmoor, Detroit.

**Create a neighborhood branding image building and marketing program**

Neighborhood marketing builds a positive image that attracts the desired investments of time, money, and energy that support the neighborhood’s revitalization goals. Successful neighborhood marketing and branding is very clear about what it hopes to accomplish, who its target markets are, and the messages that will cultivate the desired response from those target markets. Due to its history, a neighborhood branding initiative could have traction in the study area. For more information, please see the [Center for Community Progress’ Marketing the Neighborhood Tool](#).

## **Strategies for connectivity and accessibility**

### **Walkability/Bikeability Audit**

SEMCOG's Creating Successful Corridors: Redevelopment Toolkit (located online [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)) includes the Walkability/Bikeability tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors.

### **Road Safety Audit**

SEMCOG's Creating Successful Corridors: Redevelopment Toolkit (located online at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)) includes the Road Safety Audit tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors.

### **Corridor Green Infrastructure Assessment**

SEMCOG's Creating Successful Corridors: Redevelopment Toolkit (located online [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)) includes the Corridor Green Infrastructure Assessment tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors. Green infrastructure techniques may specifically align well with redevelopment and repurposing the parking lots and roadways along Gratiot Avenue and Eight Mile Road.

## **Potential funding and technical assistance sources**

**Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** – SEMCOG's Creating Successful Corridors: Redevelopment Toolkit (located online at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)) includes the TAP tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors.

**HUD's Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) 203(k) Program** is HUD's primary program for the rehabilitation and repair of single-family properties. In neighborhoods with an oversupply of vacant homes in need of rehabilitation, a 203(k) mortgage provides willing and able buyers with enough money to both buy the house and fix it up. 203(k) mortgages are only available to homeowners, not investors, and require only licensed contractors to provide services of rehabilitation. While individuals have the ability to access these loans, they can potentially be used by municipal housing authorities to rehabilitate properties and add them to the affordable housing stock. An advantage of 203(k) loans is that they are assumable; once a property is rehabilitated and ownership is transferred to another property, responsibility for the loan is transferred with it.

**MI Neighborhood Program** works with neighborhood, local, and statewide organizations to identify and address neighborhood needs based on the premise of the Main Street Four-Point Approach®. The program connects existing and emerging opportunities to leverage resources in support of neighborhood revitalization. The underlying premise of MI Neighborhood is a multi-faceted approach that encourages community revitalization in four areas:

- **Design** – Enhancing the neighborhood's physical environment by capitalizing on its best assets and creating an inviting atmosphere through attractive parks, home improvements, streetscapes, and landscaping.
- **Events/Marketing** – Creating a positive image of the neighborhood and traditional commercial district or traditional downtown to attract residents, visitors, customers, and investors, as well as to rekindle community pride.
- **Organization** – Organizing neighborhood stakeholders to get residents working toward a common goal to implement MI Neighborhood, a volunteer-based program.

- **Neighborhood Reinvestment** – Create opportunities for residents to live in affordable homes, improve their lives, and strengthen their communities.

**MIPlace Target Market Analysis** supports the State of Michigan’s Placemaking initiative. It provides communities with the cost of undertaking a market study that incorporates target market analysis methodologies in underwriting/planning activities. These analyses identify trends and potential for a geographic area which will serve as a platform for a more localized project.

For more information see [MSHDA’s PowerPoint presentation](#) at the 2013 Michigan Association of Planning Conference. Please contact Jess Sobel (MSHDA) at [sobelj@michigan.gov](mailto:sobelj@michigan.gov) for additional questions and details.

**PlacePlans** is a joint effort between MSHDA, Michigan State University (MSU), and the Michigan Municipal League (MML) to help communities design and plan for transformative placemaking projects. Projects are based on a number of criteria including potential for implementation and potential to support private-sector investment in housing redevelopment. This is primarily a technical assistance program valued at up to \$30,000. There is a 1:1 match requirement. MSU and MML teams jointly develop conceptual design plans and implementation recommendations based on public meetings and interviews with key influencers in the community. The reports include recommendations for funding sources, ordinance changes, and public/private partnerships the city leadership should pursue. In the first two years of the program, two Southeast Michigan communities were selected – the City of Dearborn for a transit-oriented development and the Southwest Detroit Business Association for a new retail development. For more information, contact Luke Forrest at Michigan Municipal League at [lforrest@mml.org](mailto:lforrest@mml.org).

**[MSHDA’s Property Improvement Program \(PIP\) loans](#)** are low-interest, home-improvement loans for eligible homeowners and landlords. The loans are originated through authority-approved participating lenders and community agents working with lenders.

**[MSHDA’s Rental Rehabilitation Program](#)** provides quality, safe, and affordable rental housing through financial resources. This funding is targeted to areas with multiple building types such as mixed-use buildings, town homes, row houses, and duplexes often found in downtowns and other vibrant areas. Funds are targeted to moderate or substantial rehabilitation of existing occupied or vacant rental housing or conversion of vacant space to rental units. This may include repairs to meet new construction or rehab standards or energy related improvements.

**[MSHDA’s Homeowner Rehabilitation Program](#)** provides assistance to improve the principal residence of *income-eligible homeowners*. Improvements may include abatement of lead-based paint, energy-related repairs or improvements, and improvements for persons with disabilities.

**[MSHDA’s Homebuyer Program](#)** provides assistance that can be used to expand homeownership opportunities for *income-eligible homebuyers* through acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of single-family housing units. Funds are generally used to help buyers qualify for conventional financing or to rehabilitate existing units for sale in the local market. The two main programs are Homebuyer Purchase with Rehabilitation (HPR) and HOME-Funded Acquisition Development and Resale (ADR).

# Roseville Building Footprints

## Introduction

The City of Roseville was originally part of Erin Township. The area first became known as Roseville in 1840, when William Rose established the Roseville Post Office. Development spread along Gratiot, as it was the main road through the community. At one point, Gratiot was a wooden plank toll road with a toll gate located at the junction of Gratiot Avenue and Utica Road, which is commonly known as “Utica Junction.”<sup>9</sup>

Photo 37

### Utica Junction Marker



Source: City of Roseville

Today, Gratiot Avenue extends from the city’s southern border at 10 Mile Road to its northern border at 14 Mile Road (Figure 25), and continues to serve as a major transportation corridor. Within the city, Gratiot connects with two interstate highways that serve personal and freight travel:

- I-696 which provides a connection with many suburban Detroit communities, as well as links to I-96, I-275, I-75, and I-94; and
- I-94 which is the primary east-west freight artery through the State of Michigan. I-94 also connects Detroit with Chicago to the west and Canada (via Port Huron and Sarnia, ON) to the northeast.

Gratiot is primarily a commercial corridor. Roseville’s Master Plan Update (February 1, 2010) notes that the vast majority of the city’s commercial acreage is on Gratiot and the majority of offices are located on Gratiot and Utica Road. It further notes that much of Roseville’s public land is located in the city’s government complex on Gratiot. This concentration of activity highlights the important role Gratiot plays

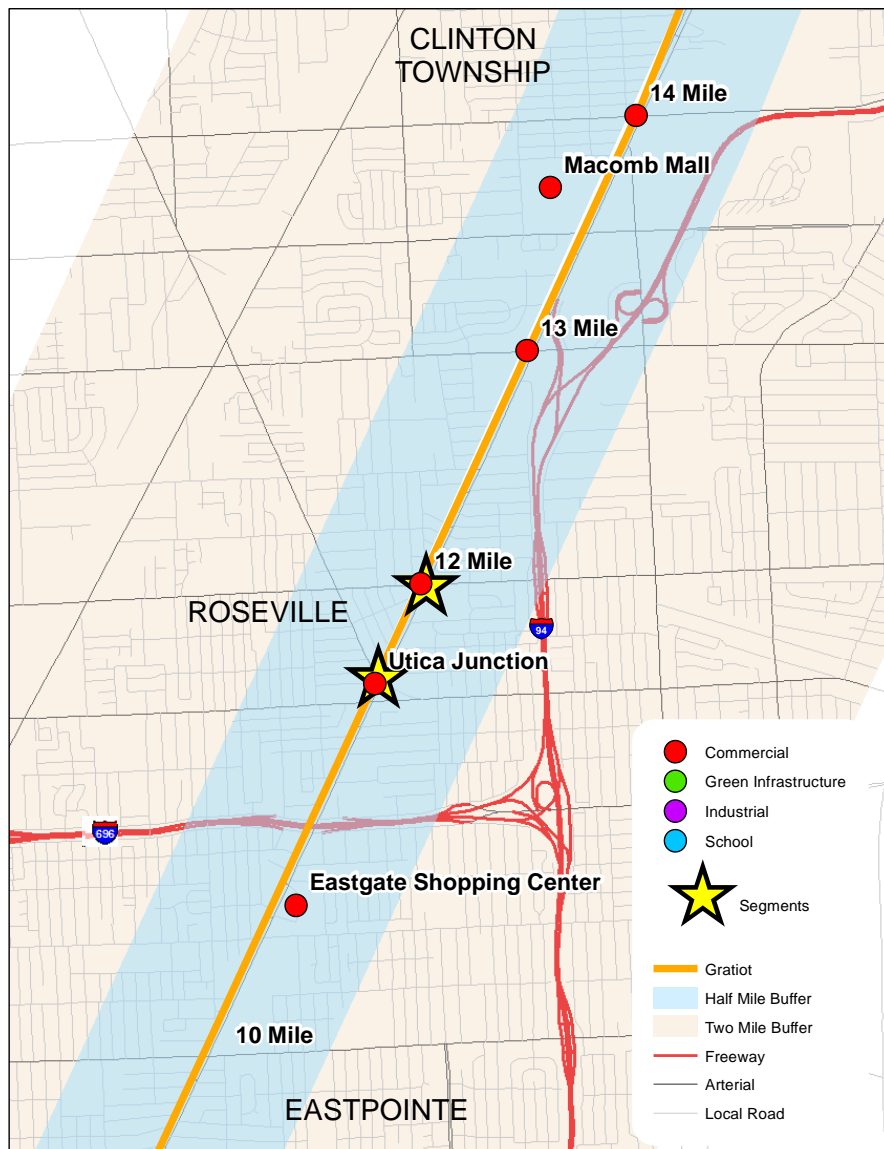
<sup>9</sup> City of Roseville. *About Us*. Retrieved from <http://www.ci.roseville.mi.us/AboutUs.aspx>

in Roseville’s economy and quality of life. In this regard, the City of Roseville has a number of efforts underway to promote redevelopment and investment along, and in areas adjacent to, Gratiot Avenue.

As of January 2014, the city is engaged in creating a reinvestment strategy for Gratiot Avenue, as well as Groesbeck, which runs parallel to, and is approximately one mile west of, Gratiot. The reinvestment strategy will build upon and further the recommendations set forth in the 2010 Master Plan Update. Additionally, Roseville is pursuing Redevelopment Ready Communities certification from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. This effort also involves enacting policies and engaging in work specific to Gratiot Avenue, or work that impacts Gratiot Avenue and the surrounding neighborhoods. As part of its Creating Successful Corridors initiative and Gratiot Pilot Corridor project, SEMCOG worked with Roseville and conducted building footprint assessments that support the city’s efforts to redevelop Gratiot Avenue. Following is more information on the assessment.

Figure 25

**Study Area: Gratiot Avenue in the City of Roseville**



Source: SEMCOG

## **Building Footprints**

SEMCOG recently introduced building footprints, a new geographic information systems (GIS) dataset. Building footprints have a wide variety of applications and can help inform corridor redevelopment, market assessments, marketing, green infrastructure planning, land use planning, and other activities.

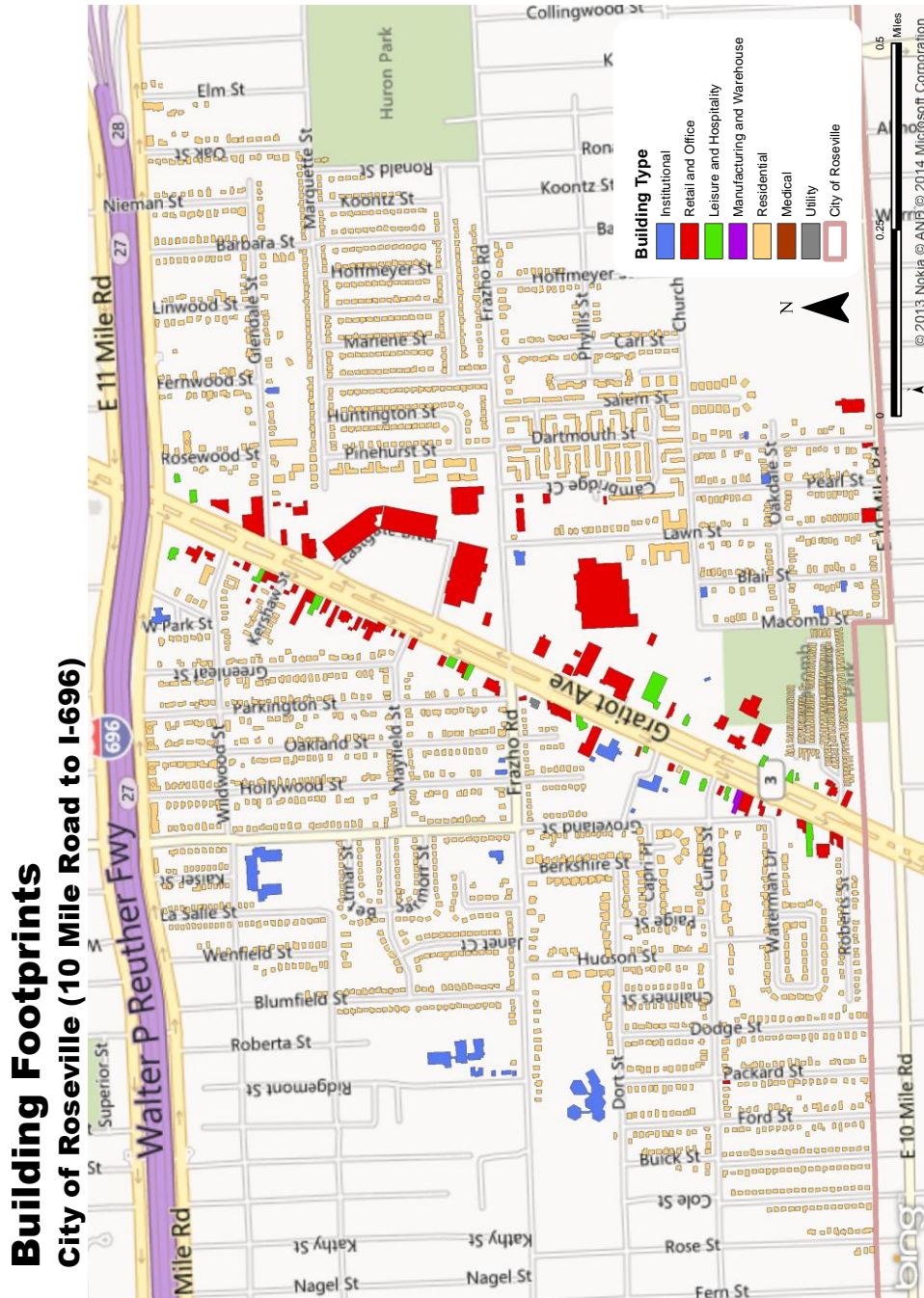
Building footprints were developed using a combination of SEMCOG 2010 aerial photography and light detection and ranging (LiDAR) data. They display the horizontal projected area of built structures from the roof down to ground level, including roof overhangs. Building footprint data includes assessing attributes, such as tax ID and jurisdiction; location attributes, such as building address and mailing zip code; and physical attributes, such as median height and square footage.

### **Applying Building Footprints along Gratiot**

SEMCOG overlaid building footprints on both aerial imagery and a street network on one-half mile of either side of Gratiot Avenue in Roseville, to create maps displaying building type. The Gratiot corridor was divided into the following three sections in order to provide useful analysis of the building footprints, including residential information, which will assist Roseville with its redevelopment efforts:

1. 10 Mile Road to I-696
2. I-696 to Common Road
3. Common Road to 14 Mile Road

Figure 26  
**Building Footprints: 10 Mile Road to I-696**



Footprints within 1/2 mile of Gratiot

Table 3

**Building Footprint Analysis: 10 Mile Road to I-696**

<b>Building Type</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Square Feet</b>	<b>Average Size</b>
Institutional	24	233,737	9,739
Retail and Office	82	868,710	10,594
Leisure and Hospitality	19	85,959	4,524
Manufacturing and Warehouse	1	7,165	7,165
Residential	2,414	3,534,688	1,464
Medical	1	1,750	1,750
Transportation and Utility	1	3,484	3,484
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,542</b>	<b>4,735,493</b>	<b>1,863</b>
<b>Housing Units</b>	<b>3,166</b>		

Analysis for footprints within 1\2 mile of Gratiot

Figure 27  
**Building Footprints: I-696 to Common Road**



Footprints within 1/2 mile of Gratiot

Table 4

**Building Footprint Analysis: I-696 to Common Road**

Building Type	Number	Square Feet	Average Size
Institutional	33	554,113	16,791
Retail and Office	145	1,322,324	9,119
Leisure and Hospitality	28	127,568	4,556
Manufacturing and Warehouse	6	37,622	6,270
Residential	3,798	4,640,030	1,222
Medical	9	68,351	7,595
Transportation and Utility	2	10,410	5,205
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,021</b>	<b>6,760,418</b>	<b>1,681</b>
<b>Housing Units</b>	<b>4,160</b>		

Analysis for footprints within 1/2 mile of Gratiot

This section of Gratiot includes Roseville's traditional downtown area known as Utica Junction. As discussed in a subsequent section of this document, Utica Junction is characterized by a variety of small businesses.

Photo 38

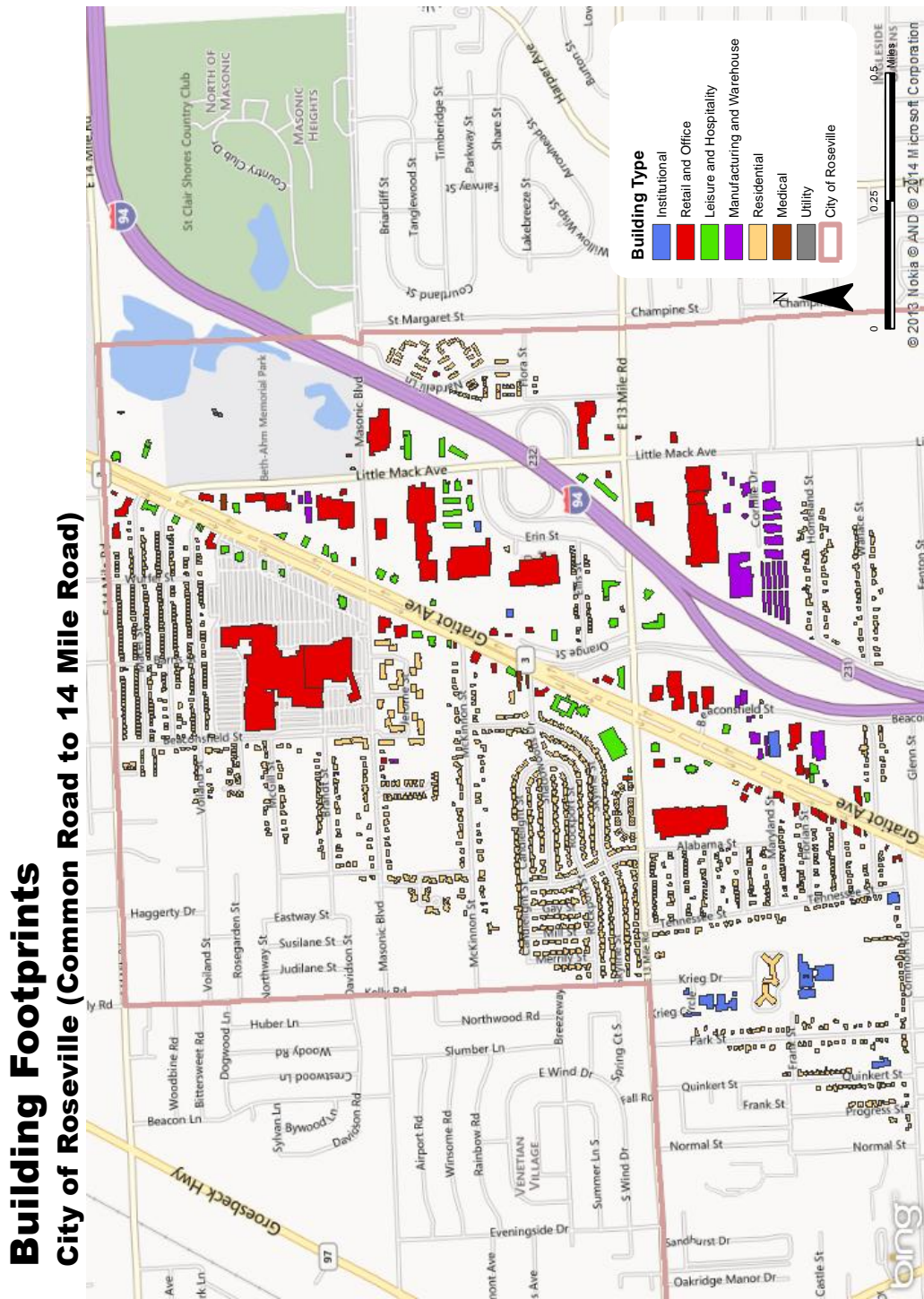
**Chester Boot Shop near Utica Junction**



Source: City of Roseville

Figure 28

### Building Footprints: Common Road to 14 Mile Road



## Building Footprints City of Roseville (Common Road to 14 Mile Road)

Footprints within 1/2 mile of Gratiot

Table 5

**Building Footprint Analysis: Common Road to 14 Mile Road**

Building Type	Number	Square Feet	Average Size
Institutional	11	193,263	17,569
Retail and Office	66	3,196,302	48,429
Leisure and Hospitality	55	672,786	12,232
Manufacturing and Warehouse	37	453,662	12,261
Residential	1,555	2,552,904	1,642
Medical	5	25,722	5,144
Transportation and Utility	4	5,128	1,282
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,733</b>	<b>7,099,767</b>	<b>4,097</b>
<b>Housing Units</b>	<b>2,206</b>		

Analysis for footprints within 1/2 mile of Gratiot

This section of Gratiot includes a number of big box stores. Just south of 14 Mile Road, Gratiot runs past Macomb Mall. The mall is a major commercial anchor on Gratiot. Plans are underway to update the mall with an extensive reconstruction totaling over \$8.4 million. This investment will have a positive impact on Gratiot and the surrounding area.

Photo 39

**Macomb Mall Construction**



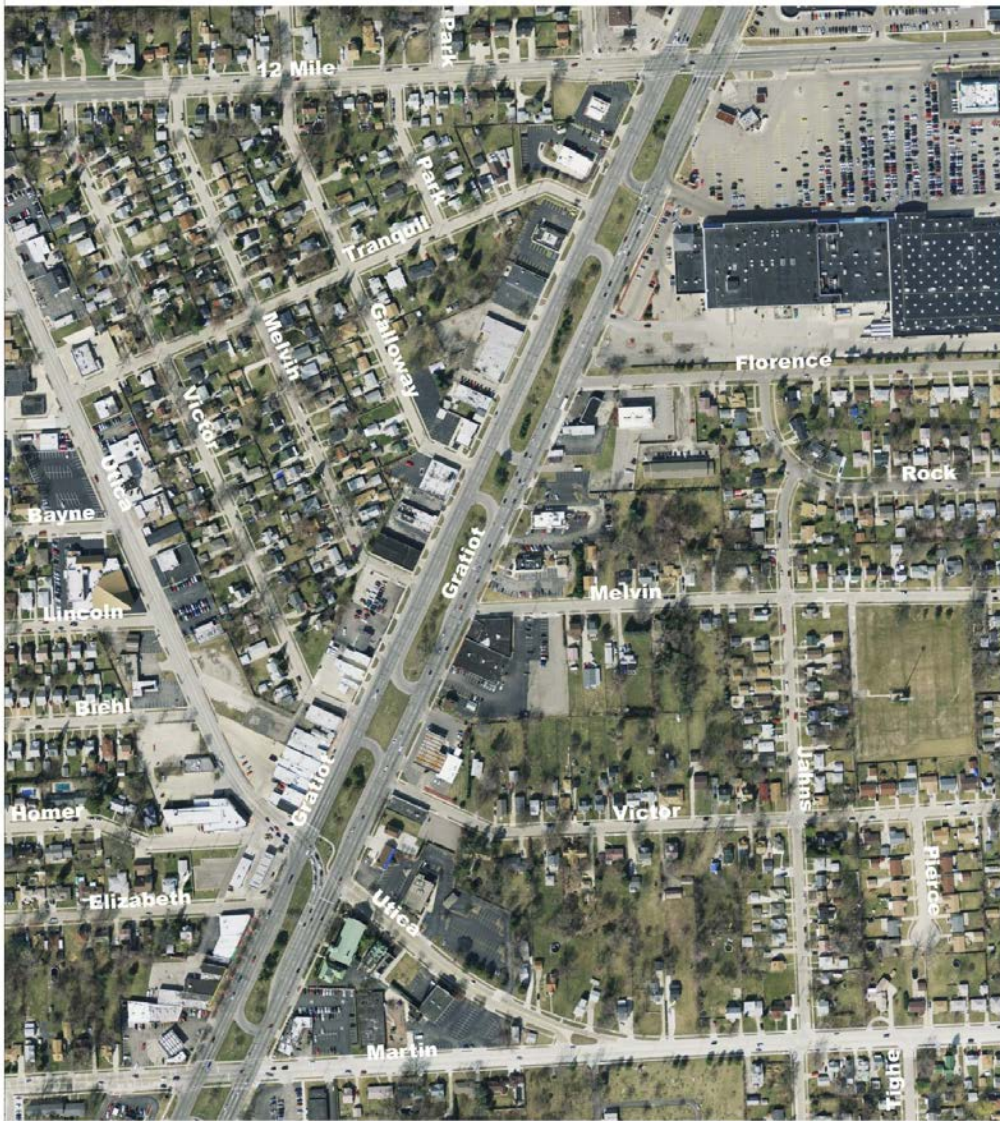
Source: City of Roseville

## Customizing Building Footprints

A more in-depth exploration of building footprints was also done in Roseville. In consultation with city officials, a more focused study area was identified on Gratiot near Utica Junction – Roseville’s traditional downtown area. The study area is bounded by Martin Road to the south and 12 Mile Road to the north.

Photo 40

### Martin Road to 12 Mile Road



Source: SEMCOG

Figure 29

**Building Footprints: Martin Road to 12 Mile Road**



Screen capture: Esri ArcGIS Explorer

Analysis of the 57 building footprints along Gratiot Avenue from Martin Road to 12 Mile Road shows a large amount of retail and office space that is complemented by various institutional and hospitality uses, such as churches and restaurants.

Table 6

**Building Footprint Inventory Analysis: Martin Road to 12 Mile Road**

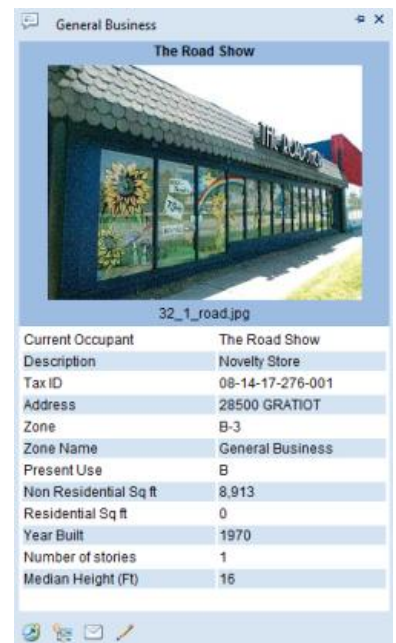
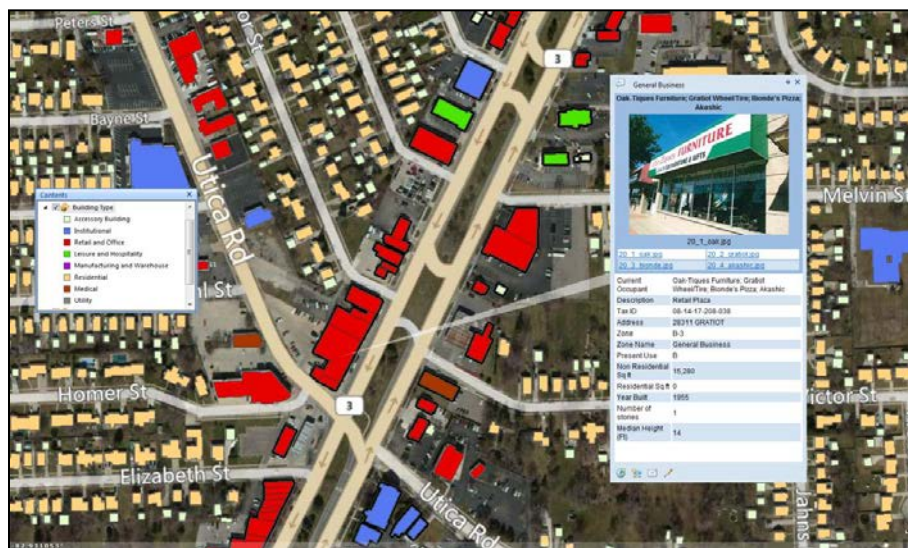
Building Type	Number	Average Square Feet	Total Square Feet
Institutional	7	8,504	59,527
Retail and Office	45	13,984	629,282
Leisure and Hospitality	4	3,700	14,798
Medical	1	4,320	4,320
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>12,420</b>	<b>707,927</b>

Analysis for footprints directly fronting on Gratiot

This area is of particular interest, as the City of Roseville intends to focus redevelopment efforts here. Previously, the city conducted an inventory of properties along this stretch of Gratiot, including compiling photos and other property-specific information. SEMCOG combined this inventory data with building footprint data.

The resulting map displays the building footprints and informational pop-up boxes for each footprint in the study area. By clicking on a building footprint, users can view an image and information from this combined dataset.

Figure 30  
**Informational Map Pop-ups**



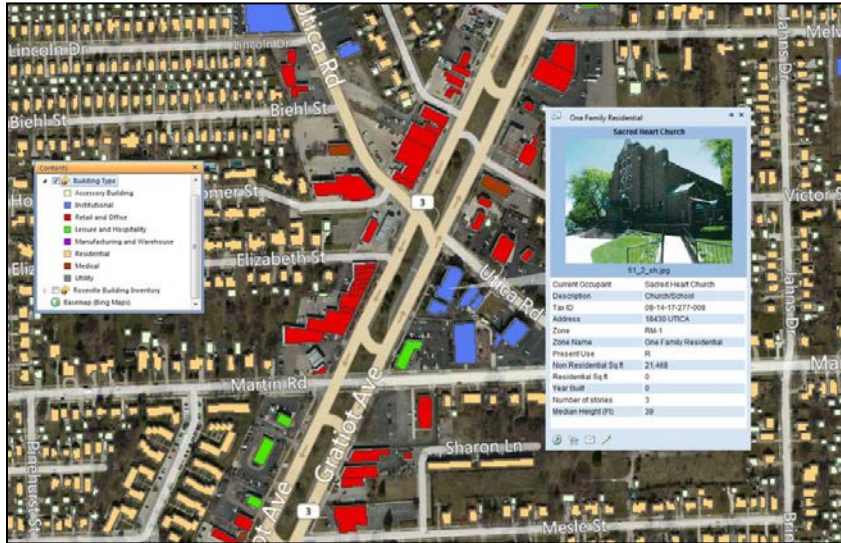
The box above is an enlargement of the one in the image at left.

The title reflects the zoning and the text above the image describes the current occupant.

Screen capture: Esri ArcGIS Explorer

Instead of viewing the building footprints categorized only by type, users are also able to see what each building looks like to a passerby on the street. This provides a better understanding of the character of development within this study area.

Figure 31  
**Institution: Sacred Heart Church**



Screen capture: Esri ArcGIS Explorer

In this way, combining survey data and photos with building footprints creates a resource that Roseville and others can use to market a particular site for redevelopment, to potential businesses, and for other community and economic development purposes. It can also be useful in land use planning, as it provides a central map for multiple datasets.

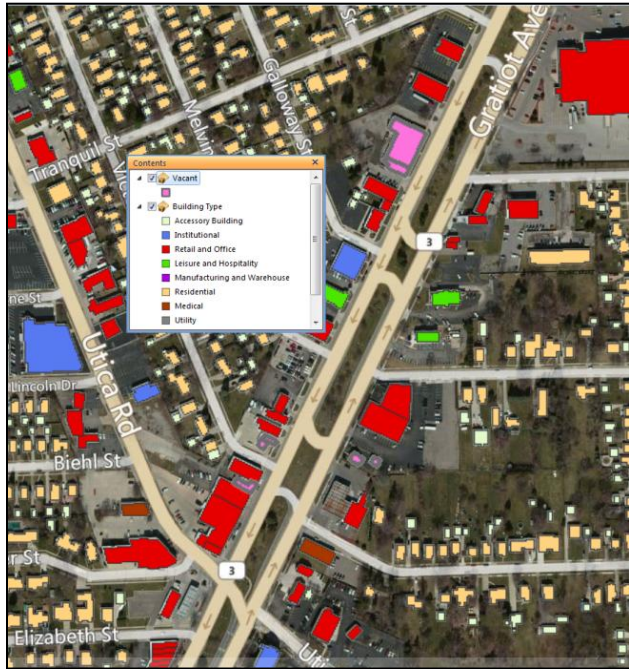
Figure 32  
**Leisure and Hospitality: Noni's Grill**



Screen capture: Esri ArcGIS Explorer

Roseville identified a specific interest in tracking vacancies. Using the inventory information collected by Roseville, which included vacancy information, SEMCOG created a separate vacancy layer for their use.

Figure 33  
**Vacancy Map Layer**



Screen capture: Esri ArcGIS Explorer

This layer highlights the location of current vacancies in pink and aids in identifying any vacancy patterns. Additionally, this layer may be particularly helpful when performing a site search for business location and marketing purposes.

Figure 34  
**Retail and Office: Vacancy**



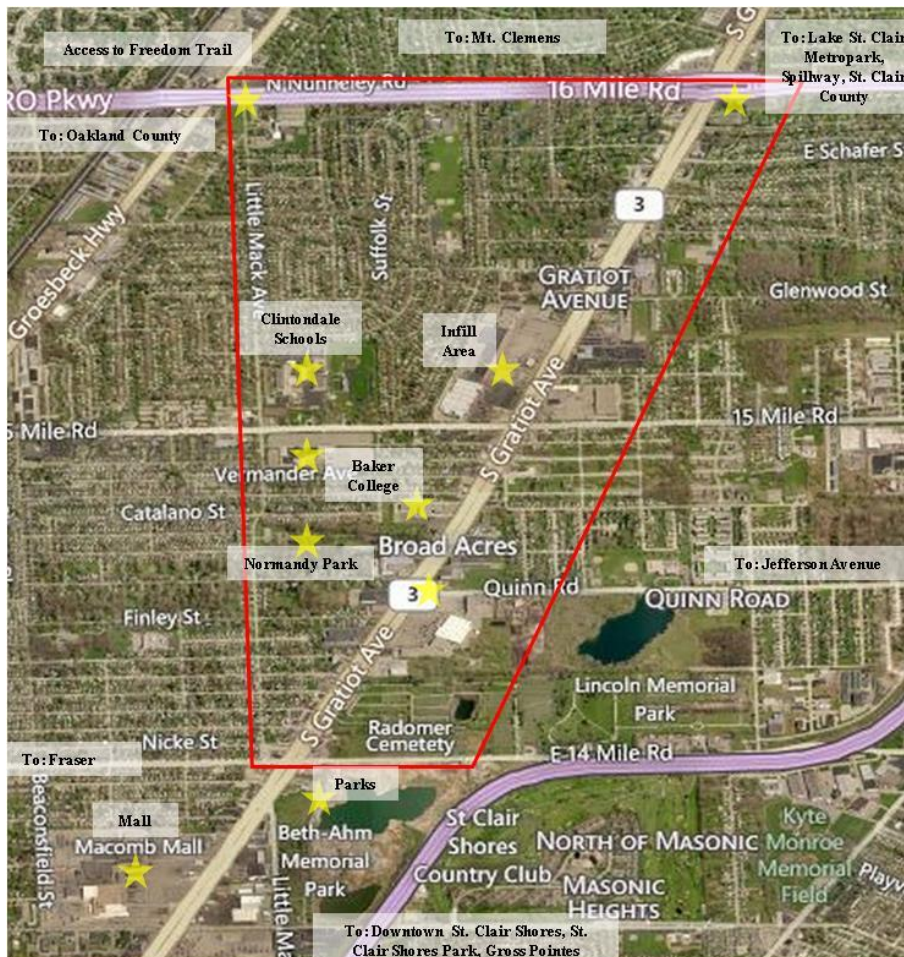
Screen capture: Esri ArcGIS Explorer

# Clinton Township Walkable/Bikeable Assessment: 14 Mile Road to 16 Mile Road

## Background

This section of Clinton Township is defined by many major roadways that serve different user needs, including Gratiot Avenue – the main multimodal arterial road, connecting to the urban centers of Detroit and Mt. Clemens; 15 Mile Road – the main east-west transit corridor, between Oakland and Macomb Counties; Metropolitan Parkway – home of the Freedom Trail; and Little Mack Avenue – a north-south minor arterial roadway connecting the township to southeast Macomb County and Lake St. Clair.

Figure 35  
**Clinton Township Study Area**



Outlined in red, the study area is home to many activity centers and connections.  
Source: Google Maps

The study area has many unique assets including:

- Regional bicycle and pedestrian travel via the Freedom Trail along Metro Parkway
- Recently redeveloped parcels that are more pedestrian and bicycle accessible
- Clintondale Schools
- Baker College of Clinton Township
- Normandy Park
- Good pedestrian, bicycle, and transit activity along Gratiot
- Soon-to-be installed high-intensity activated crosswalks (HAWK) signals
- Older shopping centers and residential parcels, ripe for redevelopment
- Potential for rapid transit
- Close access to downtown Mt. Clemens, Lake St. Clair Metropark, Macomb Mall, Fraser Center, and other regional assets

Stakeholders are looking for ways to increase walkability and bikeability in the area as a means of economic development, potentially bringing more people to the Gratiot Downtown Development Authority (DDA) area.

SEMCOG held an initial meeting with the Clinton Township to discuss the Walkability/Bikeability Assessment. After an initial field visit by SEMCOG, major stakeholders met on October 31, 2013, to discuss the findings and hear from the group about other issues and opportunities. Institutions represented included Clinton Township Planning and Community Development and Police Departments, Gratiot DDA, Baker College of Clinton Township, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Clintondale Schools, and Macomb County Department of Roads (MCDR).

The summary below reflects the collective opinion of issues and potential action items of this SEMCOG/stakeholder group.

## **Goals**

The township would like to enhance bicycle and pedestrian access in the Gratiot Corridor, better connecting the DDA to the surrounding neighborhoods and regional nonmotorized system, in hopes of activating the corridor and economic development for local businesses, residents, and schools.

## Summary

The Gratiot corridor in Clinton Township is the spine of mobility, connecting to Mt. Clemens to the north and Detroit to the south. While the corridor can be characterized as primarily vehicle oriented, it has a good pedestrian sidewalk network and the busiest single bus line in the region. There are plenty of bus shelters within the corridor that are connected to the sidewalk system. For these reasons, many people can be seen walking or riding their bikes to access transit and businesses, even in late October.

Photo 41

### Images along Gratiot from 14 Mile to 16 Mile



Examples of the multi-modal nature of the corridor

The following areas stand out within the corridor for opportunities to expand upon Clinton Township's multimodal potential:

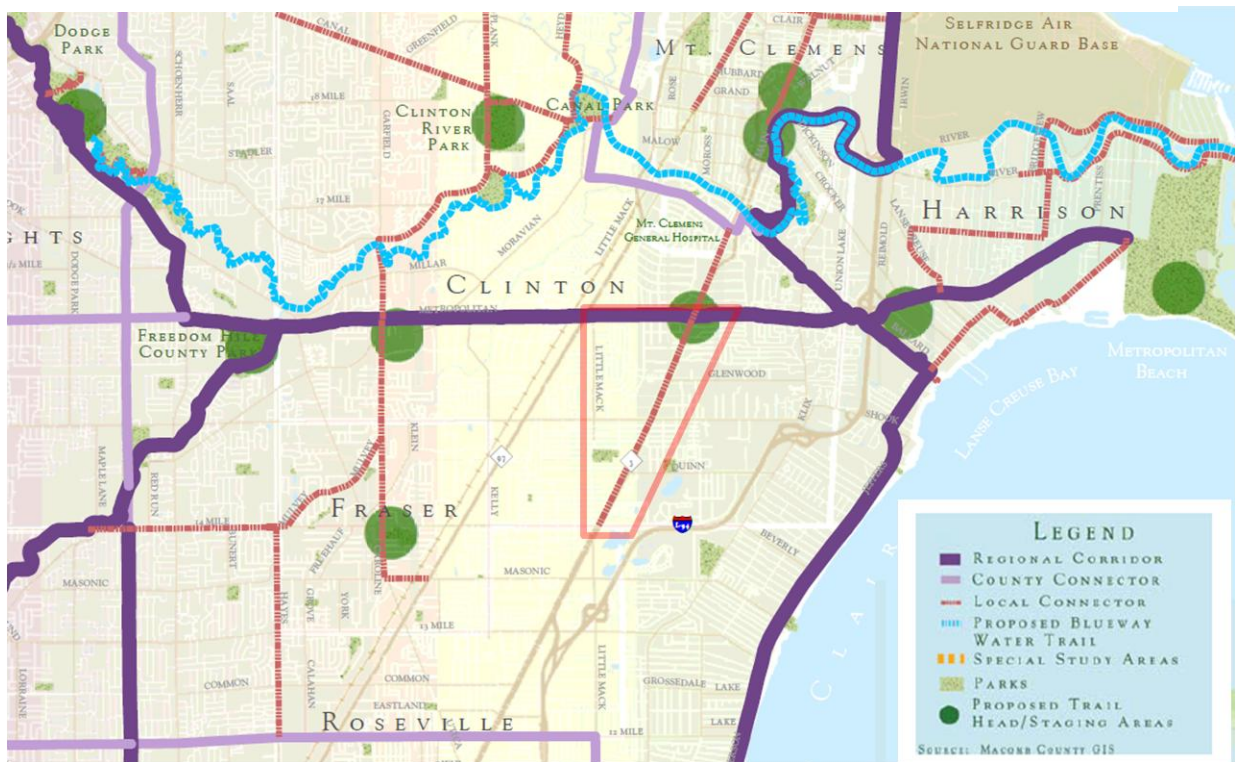
1. Via the 2004 Macomb County Trailways Master Plan, the Gratiot corridor was identified as a local connector to the Freedom Trail (regional trail), with a proposed trail head/staging area at Gratiot and Metro Parkway. Such a plan is consistent with the DDA's desire to bring people off the trails and into their businesses.

Yet, it is likely there is not enough room for wide shared-use side paths along Gratiot that would be conducive for bikes. Sidewalks in the area work great for pedestrians, but are built for people traveling near 3.5 mph, not bikes traveling 10-25 mph. There could be potential safety concerns with promoting additional bicycle travel on the sidewalks. While there is potential for on-street bike lanes, such an initiative would best be suited for when there is significant structural roadwork planned for Gratiot and using a comprehensive complete streets approach. Such an approach

considers how to best accommodate all desired uses of the corridor, from land use to aesthetics, to safety and various transportation modes.

Interestingly, the Trailways Master Plan calls for a “county connector” via 14 Mile and Little Mack, connecting Warren to St. Clair Shores and the Jefferson Avenue/Lake St. Clair Regional Trail. Within the study area, Little Mack tends to be more bikeable compared to Gratiot, yet it still connects the DDA, Baker College, Clintondale Schools, Normandy Park, and the neighborhoods to the Freedom Trail.

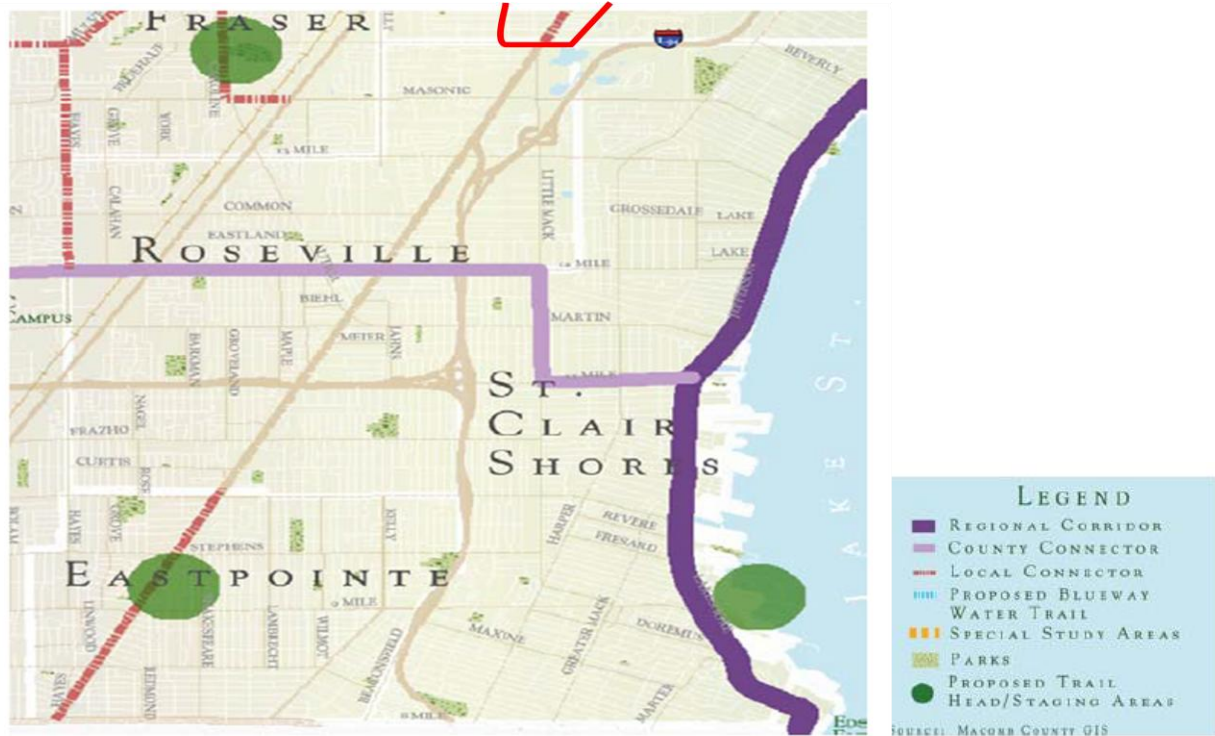
Figure 36  
**2004 Macomb County Trailways Master Plan**



2004 Macomb County Trailways Master Plan with the study area overlay (red quadrangle).  
 Source: Macomb County Trailways Master Plan

Figure 37

### Proposed Warren-St. Clair Shores County Connector



Close-up map of the proposed Warren-St. Clair Shores county connector and its proximity to the study area (in red) via Little Mack.

Source: Macomb County Trailways Master Plan

Given the low traffic speeds and volumes (i.e., 25 mph, approximately 5,000 cars per day), with minimal improvements in wayfinding signage and potential traffic calming measures, the section of Little Mack within the study area could become a bicycle boulevard<sup>10</sup> (often called a neighborhood greenway). Such a road is ideal to a wide array of bicyclists and is favorable to homeowners who like the traffic calming effect on neighborhood streets. South of 14 Mile Road, additional facilities may be necessary as the traffic volumes are approximately 10,000-12,000 vehicles per day.

If Clinton Township is interested, stakeholders, including those in Roseville, should hold a meeting to investigate the feasibility of creating bike facilities on Little Mack, potentially giving Clinton Township residents (as well as those in Mt. Clemens and Roseville) access to Warren, Detroit, St. Clair Shores, and the Grosse Pointes.

Such a facility would likely promote cycling and bicycle accessibility within the corridor in the near term. It would also complement any future on-road bicycle facilities on Gratiot.

2. The 15 Mile corridor, between Gratiot and Little Mack, has good multimodal activity. 15 Mile Road serves as one of the main east-west transit routes, connecting Macomb and Oakland Counties. Many people were observed either boarding or waiting for buses.

<sup>10</sup> A bicycle boulevard is a local residential roadway, generally only two lanes wide, where bicycles and motor vehicles share the road and travel at similar speeds. Lower traffic volumes and speeds, coupled with the tree canopy and vegetation typically found in residential neighborhoods, create a more relaxed travel experience, similar to the feel of a greenway. Bicycle boulevards, like any bicycle facility, work best when they provide a distinct advantage over other parallel routes including wayfinding signage, traffic calming measures (to ensure motor vehicle-bicycle speed parity), safer crossings of major roads, less delay at intersections, and access to major activity centers.

There is also considerable pedestrian traffic, partly because of the transit lines, but also because of nearby Clintondale Schools. Many school children live within the walk zone of the school system. Crossing guards help ensure kids safely get across Gratiot Avenue.

One known issue is that many vehicles turn right on red, making it more difficult for pedestrians to comfortably cross the street. During school hours, crossing guards place traffic cones in the middle of the right lane, in order to discourage vehicles from turning right on red until the pedestrians have safely crossed the street. This low-cost solution helps mitigate the problem when crossing guards are present; however the issue remains outside of school hours.

Given the level of transit activity at this intersection, and the pedestrian crossing activity typically found around bus stops, MDOT and the Macomb County Department of Roads (MCDR), should consider the feasibility of eliminating the right turn on red traffic movement for all legs of this intersection. Such a consideration should include a traffic study that examines the intersection's level of service under the proposed solution and may be the first step in a larger multi-community complete streets plan that provides full analysis of the Gratiot corridor for all modes of travel. If feasible, look to include more signage indicating "no turn on red" and targeted enforcement campaigns to ensure motorists are complying with the law.

Photo 42

### Road Crossings at Schools



Top: School children crossing Gratiot Avenue.

Left: A crossing guard with traffic cone.

3. Recent development along the intersection of 15 Mile and Gratiot Avenue, while characteristically more auto-orientated, does a good job of accommodating pedestrian movements by providing a

connected sidewalk network equipped with ADA curb ramps, and bus shelters for those people waiting for the next bus.

Yet, there is more opportunity for a pedestrian-oriented center via redevelopment opportunities. A new library will be located in the area and the DDA plan calls for more development closer to the road, with pedestrian walkways through the parking lots to connect to the buildings farther back on the lot. The DDA also has interest in future development of the southeast quadrant of 15 Mile and Gratiot. This would present opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure within the parking lots that could mitigate most stormwater run-off.

Photo 43

### Images at Gratiot and 15 Mile Road



Top & Bottom Left: The parking lots have great potential for infill development.  
Source: Google Maps

Top Right: Newer development has included more use of landscape islands within the parking lots.

Bottom Right: The intersection has a good sidewalk network that connects to transit shelters.



This commercial node, which seems on track for great pedestrian enhancements, may also be a potential rapid transit (e.g., bus rapid transit or BRT) stop, if it is implemented on Gratiot Avenue. Typically, rapid transit stops are one-to-two miles apart in suburban areas and are placed near larger activity centers and/or where major bus routes intersect. The township should follow the progress of any potential rapid transit analysis and consider an overlay district for this area with form-based

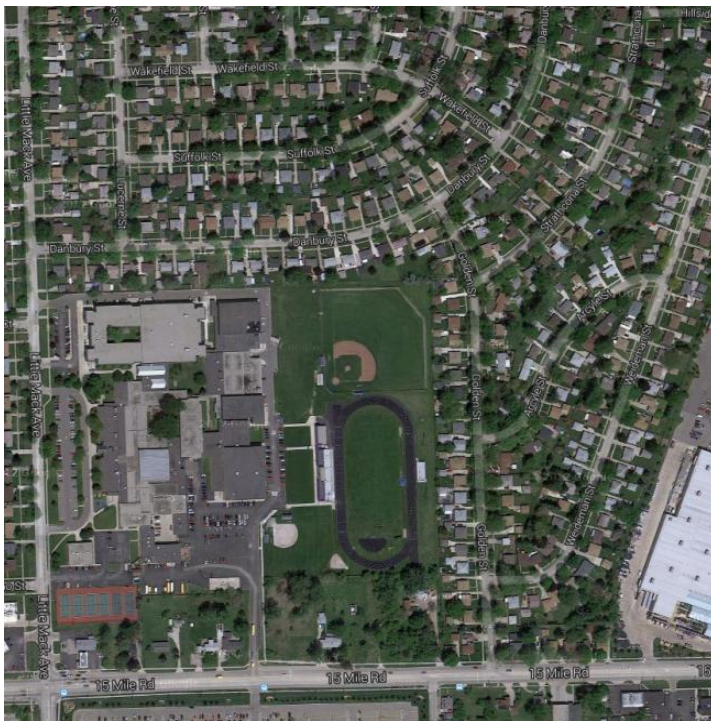
code or other regulations that would promote a denser, more walkable, transit-oriented development.

4. The Clintondale School District indicated that they intend to promote the use of school facilities via afternoon recreational and or educational activities for the community, including a farmer’s market.

The school district could also benefit from a comprehensive safe routes to school program that includes ongoing education activities. The concept of a bike rodeo, where students (and adults alike) learn about the rules of the road, proper nutrition, and exercise, could help educate residents and give them a vehicle for learning more about the other afternoon activities being offered.

Photo 44

### Clintondale School Campus



Left: The Clintondale School campus anchors the western side of the study area.

Source: Google Maps

Right: Many students walk or bike to school and may need more education on the rules of the road.

5. Metropolitan Parkway, one of the main east-west roads in Macomb County, provides access to Troy and the rest of Oakland County to the west, and Harrison Township, I-94, and Lake St. Clair Metropark to the east. It is also one of Macomb County’s main nonmotorized routes. A shared-use side path, located on the south side of Metropolitan Parkway, runs from Freedom Hill County Park in Sterling Heights to the road’s terminus in Lake St. Clair Metropark, connecting to the Clinton River Spillway Trail along the way. Macomb County has plans to connect the trail to the internal pathways of Clinton River Park, Dodge Park, and eventually the Macomb Orchard/Clinton River Trail systems.

The Freedom Trail is used often and is considered a regional trail by the Macomb County Trailways Master Plan. As mentioned previously, the plan calls for trailheads along the route, most notably at Gratiot. Anecdotaly, many people use local business along the trail for unofficial trailheads. An official trailhead, complete with maps and wayfinding signage, could be a useful resource in bringing more cyclists into Clinton Township’s DDA.

Based on the evidence and testimonies mentioned above, SEMCOG looked at this area for a potential trailhead location, finding the McLaren Building, on the southeast side of the intersection, a potentially suitable place for a trailhead. Locationally, being closer to the roadways with direct pedestrian connections to building entrances and parking to the rear, the design of the office building has good form. SEMCOG noted that there appeared to be surplus parking spots, especially near the back of the parking lot, closer to the Freedom Trail. If Clinton Township is interested in pursuing this concept, the stakeholder group suggests that a meeting with the owners of the McLaren Building be arranged to gauge the feasibility of a trailhead.

One issue, regardless of the feasibility of using the parking lot as a trailhead, is the Freedom Trail crossing at Nunneley Road. This crossing is very close to the intersection of Nunneley Road and Gratiot Avenue, but outside the sight distance of most drivers on Gratiot Avenue. Motorists turning onto Nunneley Road from Gratiot Avenue will be doing so at high speeds (based on the design of the intersection), and may not have enough reaction time to safely stop for bicyclists or pedestrians crossing Nunneley Road. Such sight distance issues are not uncommon on side paths.

Based on the number of cars potentially going through this intersection to access the McLaren Building, SEMCOG feels that these sight distance issues are valid safety concerns and should be remedied. In the short-term, high visibility crosswalk markings could be installed on Nunneley Road, as well as some advanced signage letting drivers know about the upcoming trail crossing. Longer-term solutions include conducting a future design study to determine the feasibility of moving the crossing farther south on Nunneley Road or redesigning the intersection so that turning movements are performed at slower speeds (such as tightening the turning radii of the intersection).

Photo 45

### **Aerial View of Freedom Trail**



An aerial view of the McLaren Building, Freedom Trail, and the Nunneley Road crossing. Source: Google Maps

Photo 46

## Freedom Trail and McLaren Building



Top: View of Freedom Trail from NB Gratiot. Source: Google Maps

Middle: View of McLaren Building and sidewalk network via Gratiot.

Bottom: The Freedom Trail crosswalk is not easily viewable for EB Metropolitan Parkway vehicles turning right onto Nunneley Road.

Farther west on Metropolitan Parkway, is an unsignalized midblock pedestrian crossing that is hard to see when traveling by car, until the vehicle is very close to it. This section of Metro Parkway has four lanes, posted speeds of 50 mph, and volumes approaching 15,000 vehicles per day. Macomb County Department of Roads (MCDR) also has plans to expand the road to three lanes in each direction.

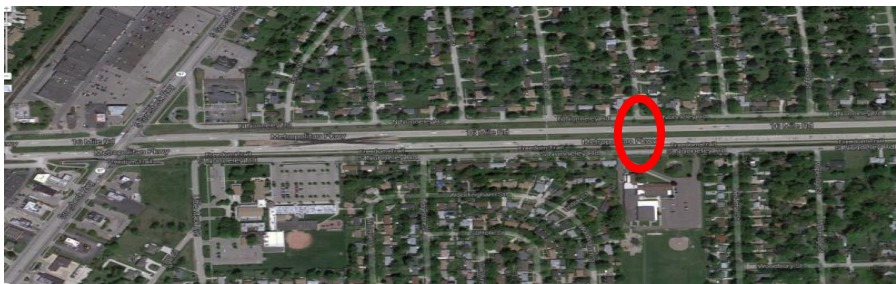
Based on stakeholder comments, few people are using this location to cross, however, there is no desire to remove the crossing. Given that the distance between signalized crosswalks on 16 Mile Road is over one mile, SEMCOG tends to agree with a decision to keep the crosswalk. However, a recent report by Federal Highway Administration, *Safety Effects of Marked Versus Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations*, indicates that marked crosswalks by themselves are not necessarily safer than unmarked crosswalks, especially at uncontrolled crossings of busy multi-lane streets. In fact, they may be less safe by potentially instilling a false sense of security for pedestrians. If there are four or more lanes on a road, traffic speed exceeds 40 mph, and volumes are greater than 15,000 vehicles per day (with a median), more substantial facilities are likely needed to provide safer crossings for pedestrians.

For these reasons, SEMCOG encourages MCDR to investigate the feasibility of installing additional counter measures, as part of the upcoming 16 Mile Road improvement project, such as high visibility crosswalk markings, better lighting at the crossing site, an angled pedestrian walkway within the median, and either a set of rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) or a HAWK signal.

Furthermore, the median in this area could be enhanced with green infrastructure elements like rain gardens or native plantings to serve as a barrier to illegal and dangerous pedestrian crossing behavior while addressing stormwater runoff. Pedestrians could be channeled to designated crossings, while enhancing the area's aesthetics.

Photo 47

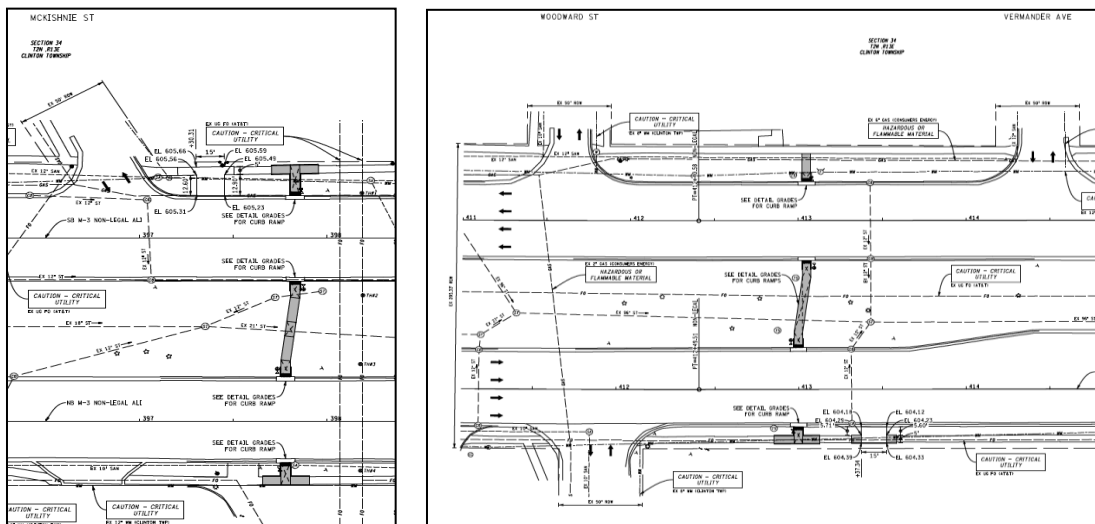
### **Crosswalk at 16 Mile Road**



Top & Bottom: Views of Crosswalk. Source: Google Maps

6. Fronting three of the major roads in the study area, Baker College is a major activity center, as a school, employer, and community institution. The college consists of two campuses separated by less than two city blocks, or one-quarter mile. SEMCOG suggests the school consider a comprehensive multimodal circulation plan that looks at improving connections between the two campuses, providing multimodal access to Gratiot, and potentially pursuing access to Normandy Park (see item 8).
7. MDOT plans to install two HAWK signals in the study area, approximately one-quarter mile apart from each other – at Quinn Road and McKishnie St. and at Woodward St. and Laurel St., as part of a sidewalk-gap-filling project on Gratiot. This creates a crossing every quarter mile between 15 Mile and Quinn and a half mile south of Quinn, and provides crossing access for people going to Baker College or Robbie Hall Parker School.

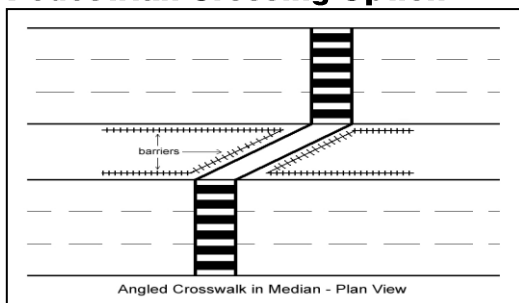
Figure 38  
**HAWK Signal Plan Drawings**



Plan drawings for the two HAWK signals, courtesy of Scott Singer, MDOT

This effort may be improved by providing angled pedestrian paths within the median and adding green infrastructure or other non-traversable vegetation as mentioned previously to ensure pedestrians use the HAWK crosswalks instead of jaywalking in other spots. A similar planting strategy was installed on Gratiot Avenue north of 15 Mile, near the Dorian Ford and Moran Chevrolet Dealerships for the same purpose.

Figure 39  
**Pedestrian Crossing Option**



Left: Diagram of an angled pedestrian path within median Source: FHWA

Right: Example of vegetation that can act as barrier in a median, located on Gratiot in Detroit

Photo 48  
**Vegetation in Median**

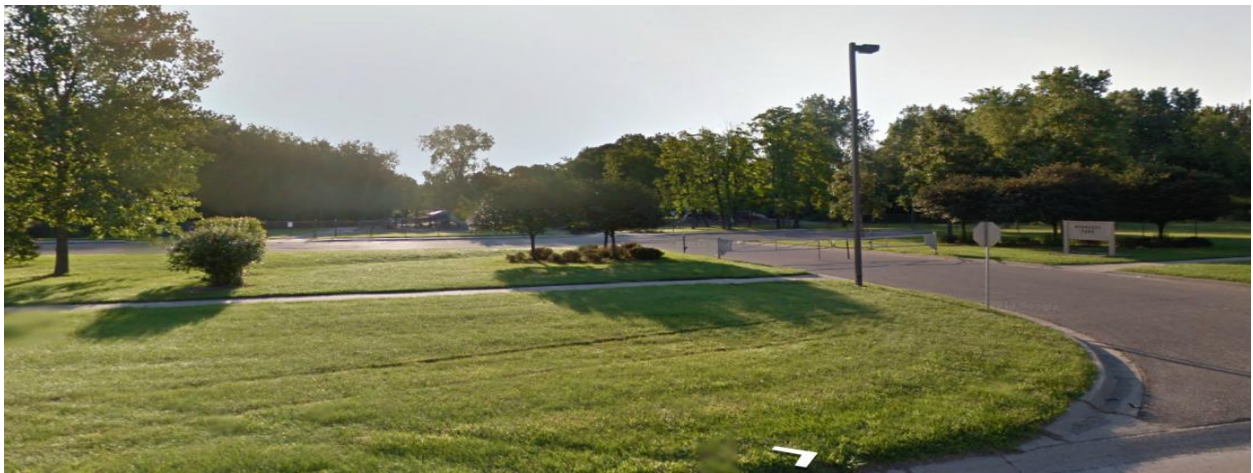


8. Located on Little Mack, Normandy Park serves the local neighborhood, but has the potential to be more of an anchor for the Gratiot DDA. Baker College abuts the park and has indicated that it may want to use it for its students. Kemp Street could provide bicycle and pedestrian access to the park from Gratiot Avenue. Consistent with the Gratiot Avenue Development Plan, as the area redevelops, Normandy Park could be connected with Gratiot. A focal point could be created, such as a promenade lined with commercial establishments that connect with the park, and also serves as way to give cyclists access to Gratiot from the Little Mack Bicycle Boulevard (previously mentioned) into the DDA. Such a project has been called for within the Gratiot DDA Plan.

It should be noted that the park used to be a hotspot for local gangs, but if planned and executed correctly, more people will patronize the park, which has been shown to help deter inappropriate and illegal behavior in other communities.

Photo 49

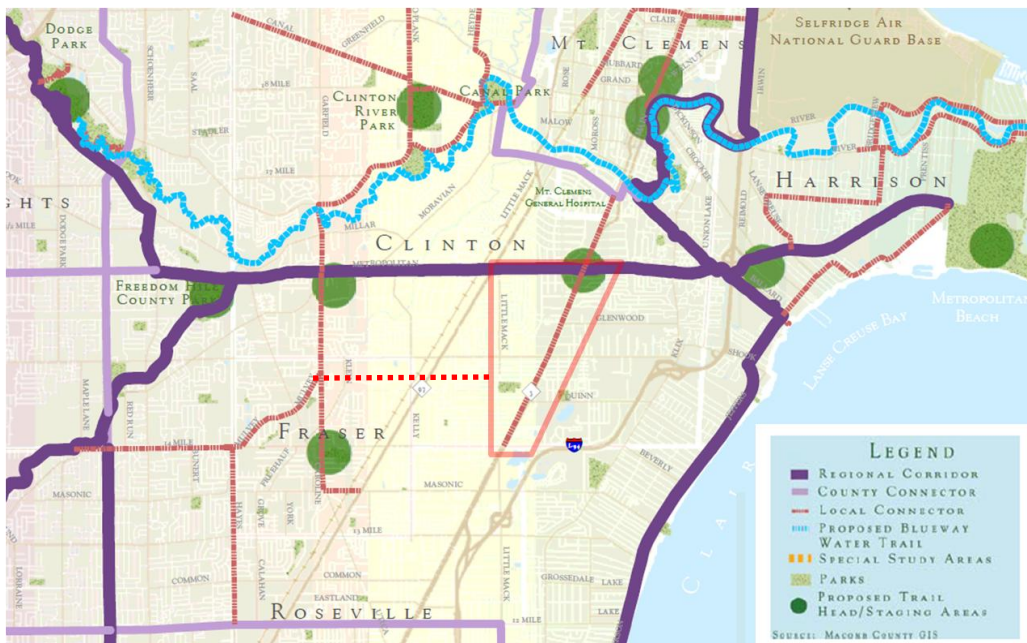
### **Normandy Park**



Normandy Park, set back from Little Mack Avenue, could be a great linkage between the DDA, Baker College, and the surrounding neighborhood. Aerial source: Google Maps

- The southern boundary of the study area is 14 Mile Road, another significant east-west county connector that may benefit from additional nonmotorized facilities. The City of Fraser has interest in connecting Fraser Center with the Freedom Trail to the north via Garfield Road. It would seem that both Fraser and Clinton Township would benefit from a nonmotorized facility at 14 Mile Road, connecting both town centers and creating a local nonmotorized loop that could potentially bring more trail users to both communities.

Figure 40  
**14 Mile Road Connection**



A connection via 14 Mile Road (dashed red line) could connect the study area (red quadrangle) to Fraser Center, another proposed trailhead, creating a local nonmotorized loop.  
 Source: Macomb County Trailways Master Plan

## Recommendations

The recommendations identified within the previously discussed nine improvement areas can be summarized into the following next steps, generally beginning with less expensive and/or easier-to-implement steps and progressing to longer and/or more expensive-to-implement steps.

- Consider marking the Freedom Trail crossing of Nunneley Road with high visibility crosswalk and additional advanced signage to better warn motorists of trail users.
- Consider adding green infrastructure elements, like rain gardens or native plantings, in medians as barriers to dangerous pedestrian crossing behavior while addressing stormwater runoff – especially at or near official pedestrian crossings and areas known for reoccurring jaywalking.
- Consider enrolling Clintondale Schools in the Safe Routes to School Program to support the long-term education of best safety practices and to encourage healthier lifestyles. Some of this program could potentially be part of an afternoon activities program, including bike rodeos or festivals.
- Encourage MCDR to further investigate the feasibility of additional pedestrian counter measures for crosswalks on Metro Parkway, especially in light of the road going from four-to-six lanes of travel.
- Consider working with the City of Roseville, MDOT, MCDR, and others on the feasibility of turning Little Mack Avenue into a bicycle boulevard.
- Consider working with the City of Fraser on a potential nonmotorized facility via 14 Mile Road, connecting the DDA to Fraser Center.
- Consider feasibility of moving the Freedom Trail crossing farther south on Nunneley Road, or tighten the turning radii of the intersection at Gratiot and Nunneley to create a safer trail crossing.
- Consider feasibility of eliminating the right turn on red traffic movement for all legs of the intersection at Gratiot and 15 Mile. If feasible, look to include more signage indicating “no turn on red” and targeted enforcement campaigns.
- Work with MDOT on the possibility of bicycle facilities on Gratiot. MDOT may consider bike lanes on other parts of Gratiot, including in Roseville, and there may be a possibility in Clinton Township, depending on traffic volumes, road right-of-way, and other context-sensitive data.
- Consider working with other Gratiot corridor communities on a complete streets plan, similar to the one being planned for the Woodward corridor, given the multimodal nature of this significant regional corridor.
- Monitor the status of the potential Gratiot Avenue rapid transit alternatives analysis, especially as it pertains to the location of transit stops.
- Consider ways to activate Normandy Park, making it more accessible from both Little Mack and Gratiot Avenues. This could be the gathering space for the DDA. Including more programs and activities can help keep more eyes on the park and may decrease the potential for undesirable activity. Consider a connection to Gratiot, such as a promenade lined with smaller buildings and kiosks, to create a mixing space of cultural, recreational, and retail life.
- Consider denser, mixed-use buildings as part of the redevelopment of larger parcels, especially near 15 Mile Road and Gratiot. Such development could be part of a transit-oriented development and could potentially benefit from form-based code. Green infrastructure could be used in parking lots and alongside roadways to help improve aesthetics, stormwater benefits, and educational opportunities.

# Mount Clemens Neighborhood and Housing Assessment

## Introduction

Strong neighborhoods and housing support strong vibrant corridors and vice versa. Connecting transportation corridors with surrounding neighborhoods can contribute to economic development along the corridor, help create a sense of community, make a community more livable, and further individual access to employment and needed services. Strong neighborhoods and housing are likely to include one or all of the following indicators of “neighborhood confidence”:

- homeowners and renters are continually investing in their property;
- values are increasing over time;
- there is a mix of housing types; and
- there is a mix of occupancy renter/owner.

On the flip side of the same coin, strong corridors provide commercial, employment, social, and other quality-of-life amenities that support the vibrancy and desirability of the surrounding neighborhoods. Because of this distinct correlation, there is a need to assess and develop strategies to maintain and improve neighborhoods and housing stock adjacent to and along corridors such as Gratiot Avenue. The tool used to meet this need is the Neighborhood and Housing Assessment, which has these major components:

- Determine geographic boundary;
- Define neighborhood typology; and
- Policy and local action recommendations.

SEMCOG’s Creating Successful Corridors Redevelopment Toolkit (located online at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)) includes the Neighborhood and Housing Assessment tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors.

## Background

The City of Mount Clemens' downtown and neighborhoods have a unique relationship with Gratiot Avenue. This relationship is distinctive primarily because, as the corridor crosses into the city limits, it splits into a one-way pairing of northbound and southbound avenues. This splitting of the roadway creates a "beltway loop" that separates the downtown district from nearby residential areas. As shown in Figure 41, the city's downtown and principal commercial and shopping district lie within the Gratiot beltway, while the neighborhoods and primary housing options lie on the outside.

Figure 41

### City of Mount Clemens Aerial

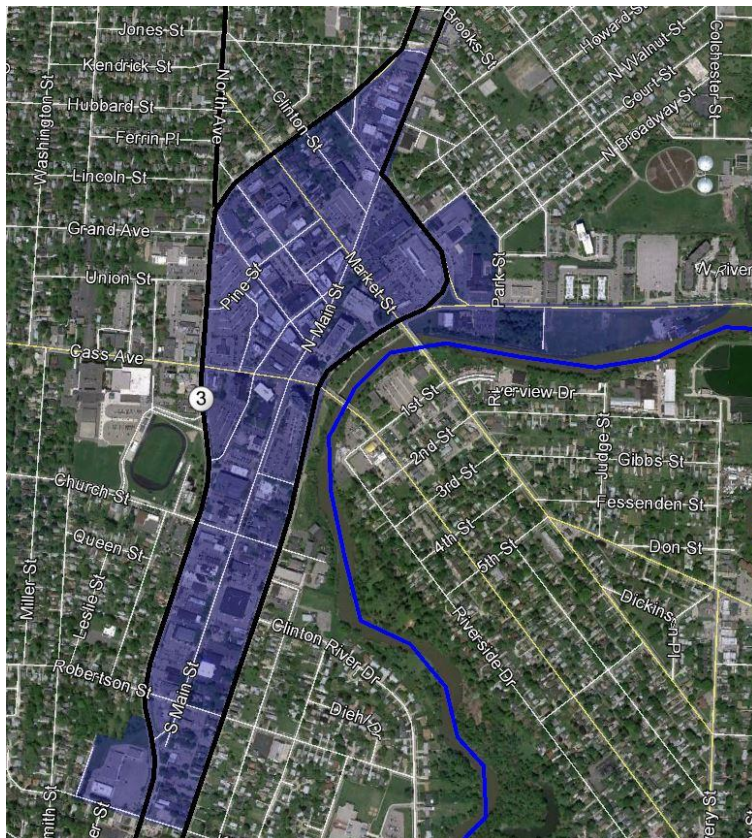


## Determining Geographic Boundary

Since all neighborhoods are unique and rarely can be identified by a specific boundary, it is important to understand how surrounding neighborhoods interact with a corridor and, even more importantly, to determine a scale in which there is both synergy between households as well as reasonable access to the corridor. Generally, determining a neighborhood's boundary and size is based upon both local input (how residents and the community view neighborhoods along a corridor), as well as what is observed both through personal observation in addition to local, census, and other sources of data. Incorporated into this determination is a consideration for a reasonable distance residents are willing to walk (rather than drive) to a transit stop and/or to commercial/business patronage along the corridor. In many cases, this distance is unlikely to be much greater than a half-mile radius from a predetermined center.

SEMCOG met with the city's Community Development Department to determine which neighborhoods adjacent to Gratiot Avenue are of most interest and value to assess and provide recommendations. It was determined that since Gratiot doesn't function as a typical linear corridor in Mount Clemens, the more useful and sensible approach was to use the city's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) boundaries as the focal point. Northbound and southbound Gratiot Avenue, as shown in Figure 42, actually form the east and west boundaries of the majority of the DDA's jurisdiction. During conversations with the city, there was a clear interest in assessing how the surrounding neighborhoods access downtown, particularly for pedestrians, as well as an interest in developing strategies to stabilize and enhance the quality of the housing stock within these neighborhoods.

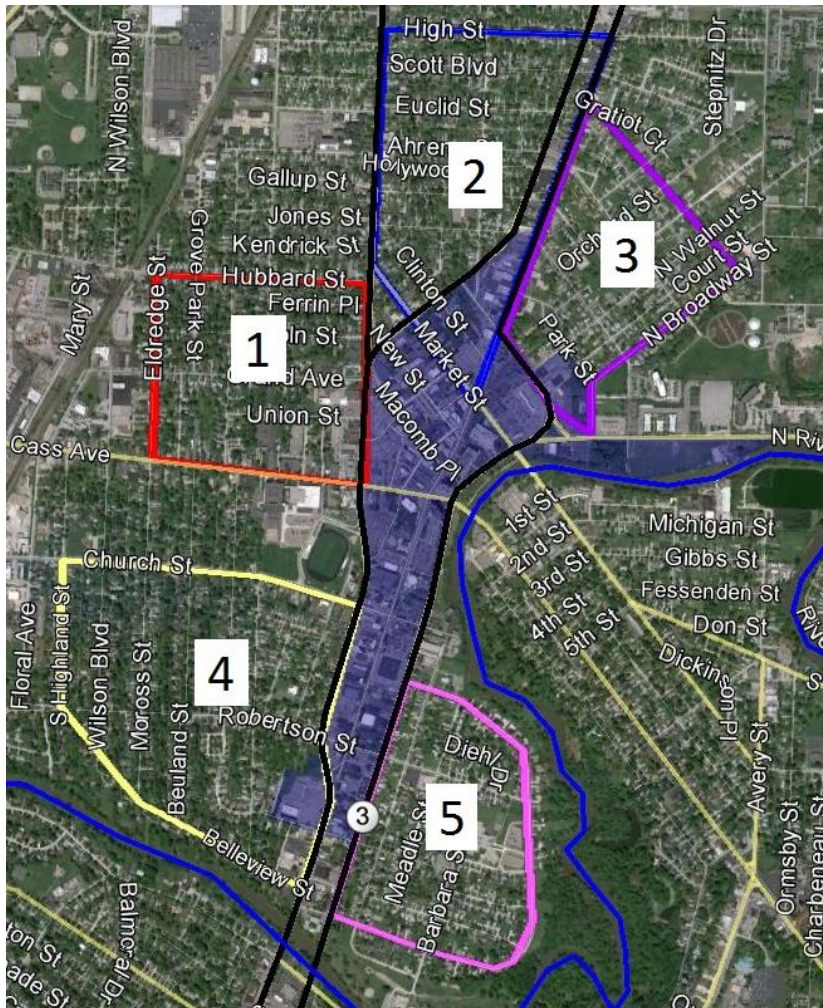
Figure 42  
**DDA Boundaries**



With this information from the city, SEMCOG used the “neighborhood block-walk technique” to obtain an initial understanding of the housing and neighborhood dynamics in five residential areas. Each neighborhood was assessed by specific criteria, such as quality and type of housing stock, walkability, and, most importantly, how they were or were not accessible to the city’s downtown area. Figure 43 is a map and geographic boundaries of the five residential areas assessed through the neighborhood block-walk technique.

Figure 43

### Assessment of Potential Neighborhoods



After conducting the block-walk technique and analyzing neighborhood-level data (including vacancy rates, housing density, and population change), two areas were selected as containing qualities of intriguing housing and neighborhood characteristics – both have a unique mix of housing size, condition, and tenure (owner/rental occupancy). The two areas selected were Neighborhood 1 and Neighborhood 2 (as shown in Figure 43). Direct observations from the block-walk technique for both neighborhoods include the following:

### **Neighborhood 1:**

- Primarily historic housing stock – many with designated historic recognition (year of construction plaques) on residence.
- Traditional neighborhood by design – primarily grid pattern.
- Structure of majority of housing is “frame” or “wood/aluminum siding.”
- Majority is large/multi-story housing (2-3 stories).
- Many larger, historically single-family homes have been converted to multi-family homes (apartments/duplexes, etc).
- Majority of housing have detached/set-back garages.
- Relatively dense neighborhood – both single family and multi-family housing throughout.
- Significant range in housing maintenance levels (some homes are very well maintained structures and landscape, while others have visible signs of neglect).
- Sidewalks in need of maintenance and repair – several curbs in need of ADA improvements (broken, unlevel, difficult walking experience along several streets).
- Downtown is very accessible on foot – this is the most walkable of all the neighborhoods surveyed.

### **Neighborhood 2:**

- Structure of majority of housing is “frame” or “wood/aluminum siding.”
- Majority of housing stock is large/multi-story (2-3 stories).
- Mix of single family and multi-family units.
  - Housing that was likely single-family, owner-occupied structures in previous decades now appear to be multi-unit and rental tenure structures.
- Significant range in housing maintenance levels (some homes are very well maintained structures and landscaped, while others have visible signs of neglect).
- Sidewalks in need of maintenance and repair – several curbs in need of ADA improvements (broken, unlevel, difficult walking experience along several streets).
- Walkable, but largely disconnected from downtown due to the road configuration of Gratiot, North Avenue, and Main Street.
- Good transit access (SMART shelters along Gratiot).
- Noticeable change in character north and south of Ahrens St.
  - North neighborhood – smaller homes, single story, several brick homes.
  - South neighborhood – similar to Neighborhood 1 (by and large).
  - Maintenance levels are similar in both neighborhoods (north/south).

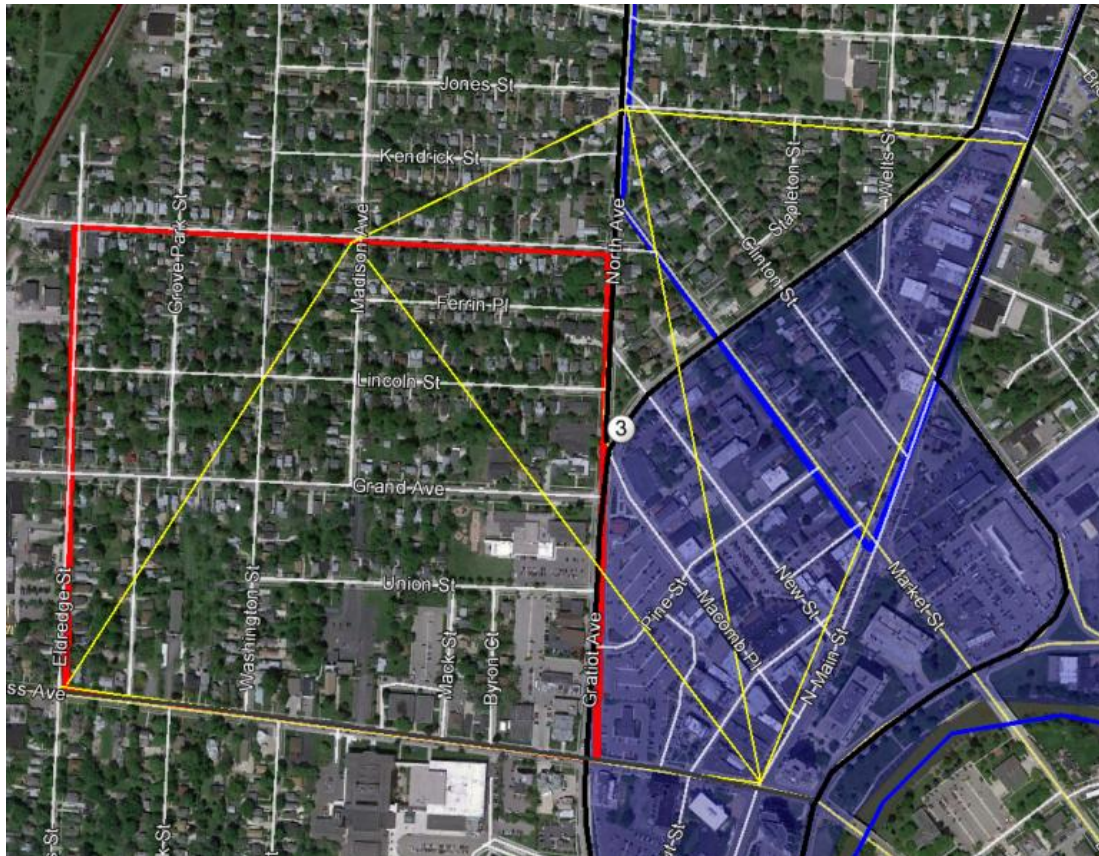
It was apparent from both the block-walk and feedback received from the city that a major component of the neighborhood assessment needed to analyze and provide recommendations on how to increase accessibility between the selected neighborhood and the city’s downtown. Additionally, the housing and neighborhood immediately west and northwest of Southbound Gratiot was identified as the most directly linked and accessible to the city’s downtown. As such, it was determined that the selected neighborhood’s accessibility to the city’s downtown should meet two generally accepted walkability criteria:

- a person is willing to walk between one-quarter and one-half mile to access transit; and
- a comfortable walk zone benchmark is five to 10 minutes to access quality-of-life amenities.

For this assessment, the intersection of N. Main Street and Cass Avenue was selected as a central location. Figure 44 provides the half-mile radii buffer starting at this selected “central city” location and extending out towards the west and northwest neighborhoods.

Figure 44

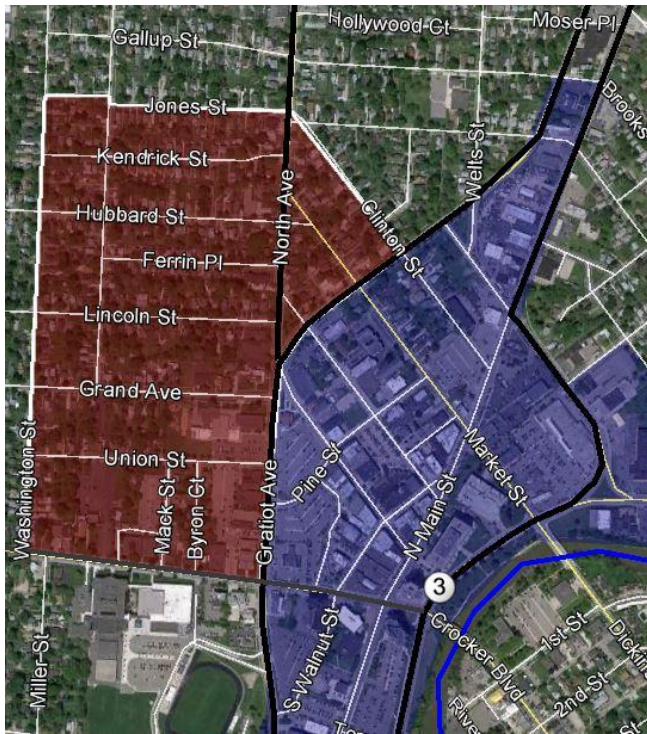
**Walkable Half-Mile Neighborhood Buffer**



Considering these direct observations and input from the city, a neighborhood was selected that is bounded by Washington Street on the west, Jones Street to the north, Clinton Street and Gratiot Avenue on the east, and Cass Avenue on the south. In Figure 45, this selected neighborhood is shaded in red.

Figure 45

### Selected Neighborhood



## Defining the Neighborhood Topology

Once a neighborhood boundary is determined, the next step is to *Define the Neighborhood Topology*, which is based upon three criteria.

The first is “Desirability,” which consists of a mixture of data collection and analysis, such as occupancy and vacancy rates, housing value, and household income levels and changes; code enforcement statistics, as well as a block-walk audit technique. (A block-walk is a block-by-block walk through the neighborhood making note of the quality of the housing stock, activity of residents on the street, local points of pride, and general confidence levels residents show towards their housing and the neighborhood.)

The second criterion is “Diversity,” which primarily consists of the “choices” available to both current and potential future residents.

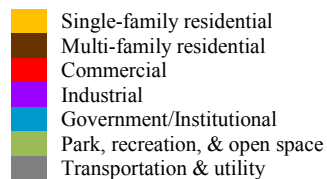
- Is there a good mix of housing types, values, and tenures available?
- Are there housing choices that serve an aging population or a population likely to have school-age children?
- Is housing accessible to residents with differing physical abilities?

The third criterion is “Accessibility/Connectivity,” which looks specifically at how the neighborhood interacts within itself, the corridor, and how it is connected to the larger community and region. This includes:

- How walkable or bikeable is the neighborhood?
- How are the connections with the corridor?
- Are there barriers such as large parking lots, or fences, or other barriers that make walking or biking between home and the commercial area along the corridor difficult?
- Are transit options available? If so, what are the distances between the neighborhood and the stops?

Before the three criteria necessary to define the neighborhood’s typology can be assessed, it is important to understand land use and inventory the structures within its boundaries. Figure 46 displays land-use data for the neighborhood. As shown, the majority of the neighborhood consists of single-family residential units, with the south and west areas consisting of a mix of government/institutional and commercial land uses.

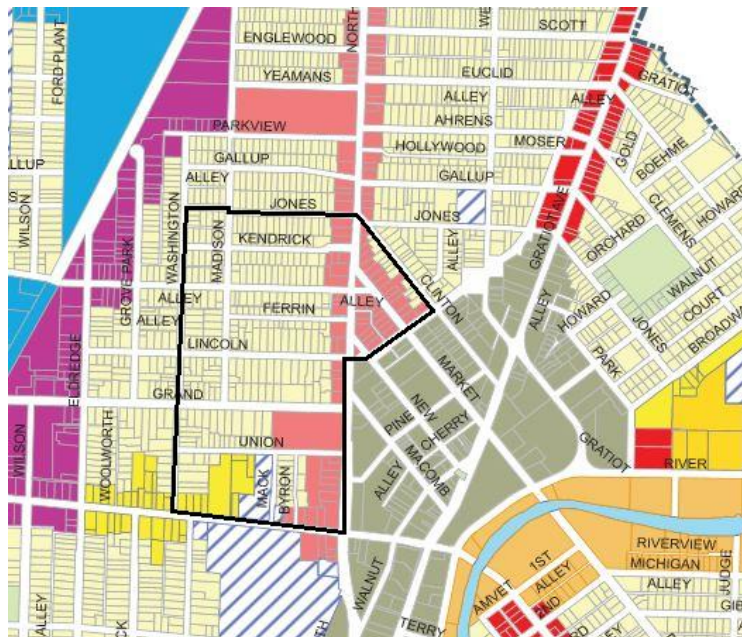
Figure 46  
**2008 Land Use**



The city’s 2010 Land Use Master Plan (Figure 47) includes future land use that alters the current land use definition to focus more upon zone designation and mixed-use development as opposed to more traditional land use zoning. Perhaps of most interest is identifying North Avenue as a mixed-use planning district. This designation would primarily involve future land use consisting of continued mixed development of low intensity, commercial uses that primarily serve the immediate neighborhood, and design standards that enhance the pedestrian-friendly ambiance of the area.

Figure 47

### Future Land Use



- Traditional Single-family residential
- Moderate Density residential
- North Avenue Mixed-Use
- Railroad Redevelopment
- Downtown
- Commercial and Office
- Riverfront Community Mixed -Use

Source: City of Mount Clemens 2010 Land Use Plan

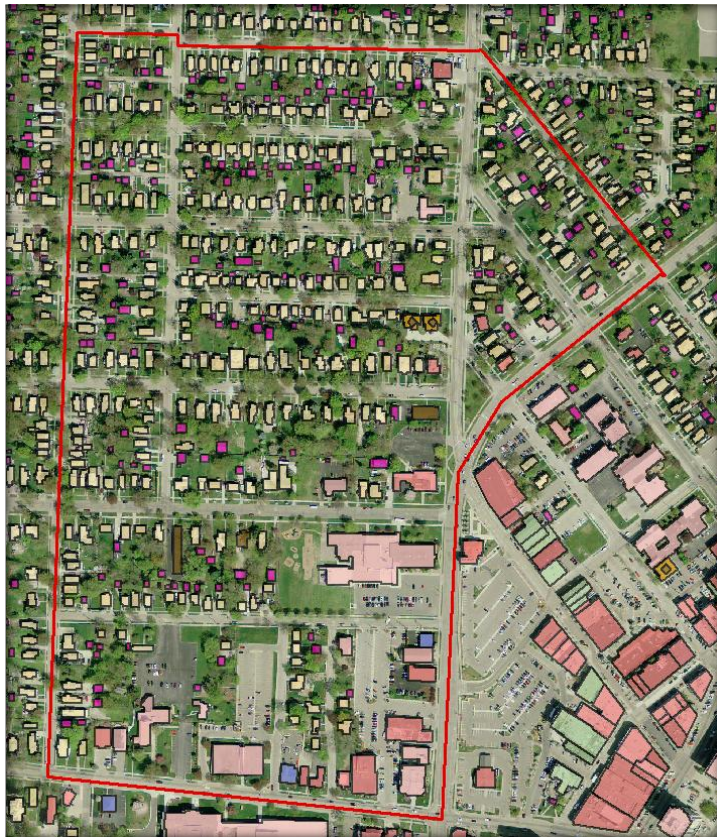
For a better picture of the current types of structures and uses of the individual parcels within the neighborhood, 2010 Building Footprint data can be used. Using Building Footprint data (Figure 48), it is determined that within the selected neighborhood there are a total of 503 individual buildings. These individual buildings include:

- 298 single-family detached houses;
- 169 accessory dwellings (primarily detached garages);
- 10 office buildings (primarily in the southeast corner and along Cass);
- six condominium buildings or duplexes;
- five places of worship;
- five educational/civic buildings (including the city library and primary and secondary schools);
- three multi-family apartment buildings;
- three single tenant retail;
- two general medical offices;
- one government office building; and
- one child daycare or preschool facility.

Although the vast majority (over 94 percent) of the buildings are residential, the proximity within the assessment neighborhood to several quality-of-life, cultural, and potential “third-place” amenities, including the public library, large and historic churches and places of worship, and schools are positive attributes. Third-places are defined as “other” gathering places within a community that promote public life (in contrast to the first and second places of home and work).

Figure 48

### Building Footprints for Mount Clemens Neighborhood



- Single-family detached house
- Accessory building
- Multi-family apartment building
- Educational / Place of Worship
- Office building / signal or multi tenant retail
- General medical office
- Attached Condominium Building
- Entertainment Building
- Restaurant or Bar

Six attributes were attached to each building footprint used in the neighborhood and housing assessment for this selected area:

- building type;
- median building height;
- year structure was built;
- building square feet;

- number of stories in the building; and
- number of housing units contained within structure.

Table 7 provides an overview of the data analyzed for the neighborhood. Of this data, the average age of the structures within the neighborhood provides the greatest insight into the stability of the housing stock and likely recommendations. The average housing unit within the neighborhood is 85 years old (constructed in 1928). This means that without ongoing maintenance and investment into these structures, the physical quality may be deteriorating, which may result in blight. While it is likely that many homeowners and landlords will maintain the aging housing stock at a high level, other factors that may lead to neglect and obsolescence are changes in the economy, personal income, and overall confidence in the neighborhood. Additionally, without updates and rehabilitation, the size, accessibility, and overall amenities contained within these structures may not meet the demands of the current homeowner or renter. Although the most recently constructed unit was in 2002, only six structures have been built since 2000. While the average square footage of residential structures is relatively high (1,809), many of the larger structures, those significantly above the average, have primarily been converted to multi-family over time.

Table 7

**Analysis of Structures in Neighborhood**

Category	Data	Range of data	Number of buildings assessed
Median Height of Building (feet)	15.83	6 – 33	503
Average age of structure (year built)	1928	1875 - 2002	173
Average Square Footage (residential structure)	1809 sq. ft.	725 – 5,560	307
Average Square Footage (non-residential structure)	1446 sq. ft.	104 - 52,483	196
Average Number of Stories	1.33	1 - 2.75	503

**Desirability**

The “desirability” of a neighborhood is based upon attributes of a neighborhood that both attract new residents and retain current residents. A sample of data analyzed for desirability includes population changes (2000-2010), vacancy changes, overall “neighborhood stability,” as well as more general observational and aesthetic qualities, such as curb appeal, maintenance standards, and presence of and access to quality-of-life amenities such as parks, cultural institutions, and gathering places.

Between 2000 and 2010, the City of Mount Clemens’ population declined by 5.8 percent. Over this 10-year period, Macomb County’s population increased by 6.7 percent, while the region saw a 2.7 loss of population. However, it needs to be noted that nearby cities in Macomb County, with similar characteristics to Mount Clemens, show that the city’s population decline was certainly not unique. Population gains in nearby communities, especially neighboring townships, likely reflect the often challenging reality of attracting and retaining residents in older communities and neighborhoods in a metropolitan region that has seen and is forecasted to continue to see very modest gains in population.

Table 8

**Population Change**

	<b>Population 2010</b>	<b>Change 2000-2010</b>	<b>Percent Change 2000-2010</b>
City of Mount Clemens	16,314	-998	-5.8%
Macomb County	840,978	52,829	+6.7%

Like population, the value of Mount Clemens' housing declined three percent from 2000-2010. Over this same time period, the median household income declined significantly, from \$49,548 to \$32,148 (a 35.1 percent decrease). Table 9 shows how the city and county compare in changes in both housing value and median household income.

Table 9

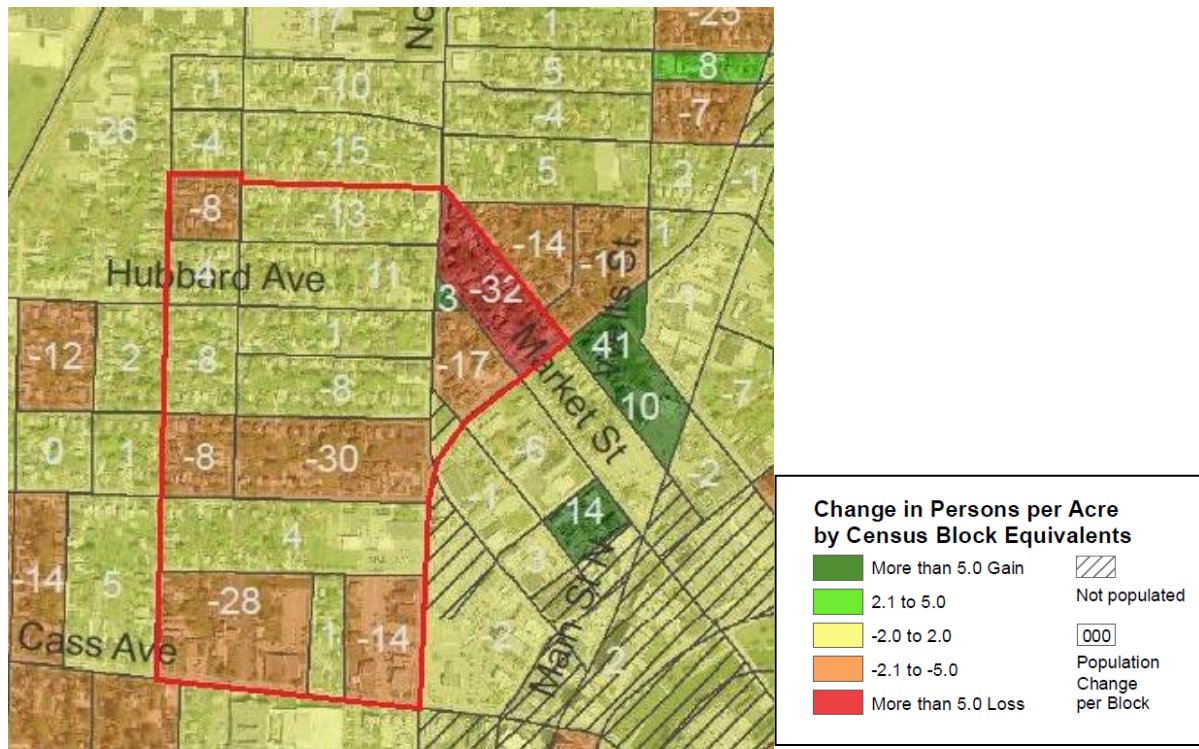
**Changes in Housing Value and Median Household Income, 2000-2010**

	<b>2010 Housing Value</b>	<b>Median Housing Value (% change)</b>	<b>2010 Median Household Income</b>	<b>Median Household Income (% change)</b>
City of Mount Clemens	\$125,500	-3.0%	\$32,148	-35.1%
Macomb County	\$157,000	-11.8%	\$53,996	-20.8%

The great disparity in declines in household income compared to housing value that exists in Mount Clemens should be considered when analyzing the ability of homeowners and landlords to reinvest in their properties. The significant decline in household income, especially compared to neighboring communities, is likely to hinder owners' ability and capacity to adequately reinvest in their housing and, therefore, in the broader neighborhood. While the general standard of investment and upkeep of most housing units shows significant pride, more can be done as evidenced in more stabilized neighborhoods with increasing values.

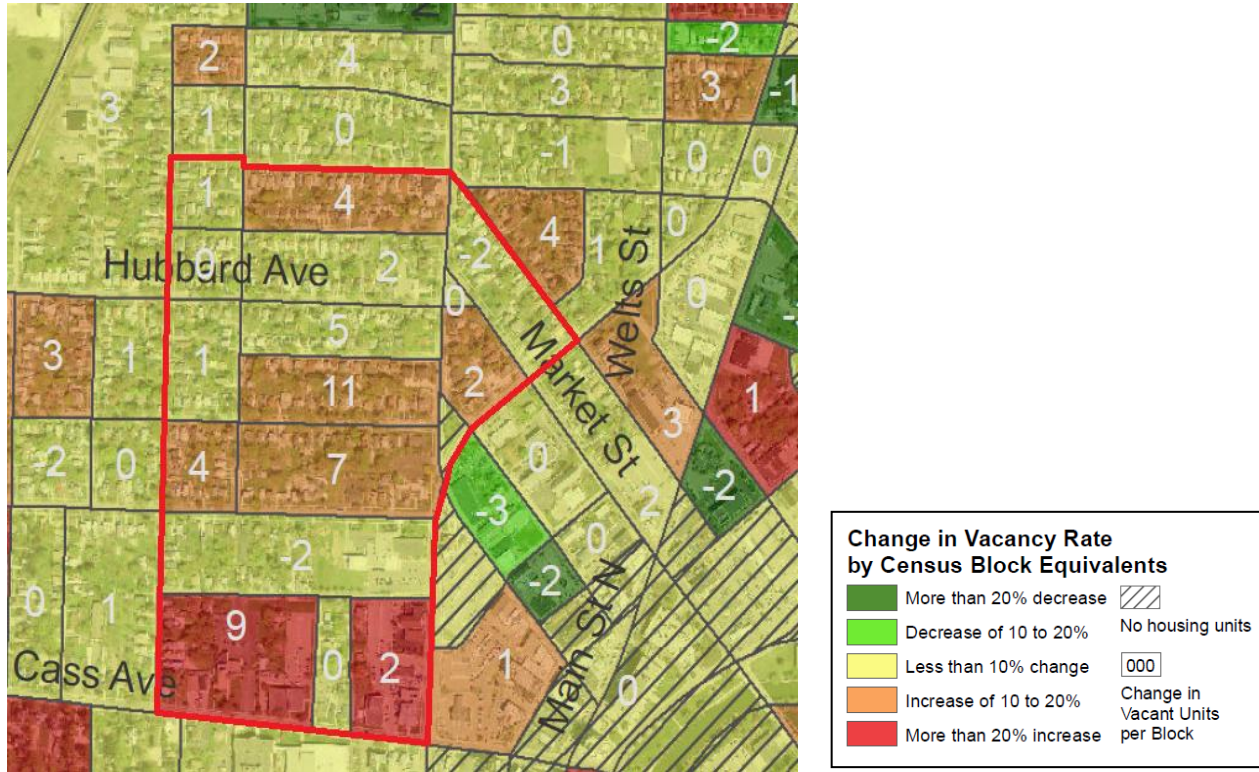
Within the selected assessment neighborhood, the change in population between 2000 and 2010 is relatively similar to the city as a whole. Figure 49 shows that population gains and losses for the neighborhood differ from block to block. For simplicity, the yellow-shaded blocks can be seen as "holding steady" over the last decade, while the orange experienced average-to-above-average losses in population. The red blocks lost significant numbers of people while both shades of green are blocks that experienced significant population increases.

Figure 49  
**Population Change, 2000-2010**



Another measure of a neighborhood’s desirability is its vacancy rate change over a period of time. Between 2000 and 2010, the City of Mount Clemens’ vacancy rate nearly doubled – from 6.2 percent to 11.4 percent. This percentage rate change of 5.2 percent was greater than both Macomb County (3.5 percent) and the SEMCOG region (5.0 percent). As displayed in Figure 50, within the selected assessment neighborhood, several block groups experienced vacancy increases of more than 10 percent, with two block groups along Cass Avenue having more than a 20 percent increase in vacancy. By understanding how certain blocks within a neighborhood are individually impacted by vacancy, the community may be able to strategically deploy resources to meet the specific challenges and opportunities each possesses. For instance, the residential areas directly adjacent to the downtown area (west and north of Gratiot and North Avenue) have generally experienced a greater increase in vacancy and loss of population, as compared with the areas further away from the city’s downtown.

Figure 50  
**Vacancy Rate Change, 2000-2010**



By analyzing both vacancy change and population change, a neighborhood’s general stability may be assessed. Figure 51 shows neighborhood stability at the block group level. The dark blue blocks display an increase in both population and occupancy over the last decade and, as such, can be considered areas with “lower vacancy rate and more persons.” These are generally the stronger blocks within a neighborhood. The light blue blocks show improving areas, which means that these areas increased in occupancy (less vacant housing), but experienced little to no change in population. The green areas show the opposite – blocks that experienced an increase in population, but saw little to no change in occupancy. The yellow areas experienced either no change or a slight decline in both population and occupancy. Finally, the orange blocks are areas that experienced significant declines in both population and occupancy. Again, efforts to stabilize the neighborhood from the community and local stakeholders may be strategically implemented to align with the challenges and opportunities of each block.

Figure 51

**Neighborhood Stability at Block Group Level**



Within the neighborhood there is a significant range in housing maintenance levels (i.e., some homes and landscapes are very well maintained, while others have visible signs of neglect). This range generally changes from one block to another; however, in a few instances the change occurs between neighboring properties.

Photos 50 and 51 illustrate examples of the high quality and maintenance levels of the housing stock found within the assessment neighborhood. The density, size, and accessibility of the housing stock to the city's downtown are all positive attributes for retaining and attracting current and future residents.

Photo 50

**Mount Clemens Housing Stock**



Photo 51

**Mount Clemens Housing Stock**



As noted, the majority of the housing is historic in nature, with many of the homes being constructed as early as 1928. A significant number of houses have designated historic recognition (year of construction plaques) posted on the residence (Photo 52). This indicates both pride in the historic nature of the structure and the surrounding neighborhood, as well as in the broader community.

Photo 52

**Historic Residential Marker**



There is a mix of frame, wood/aluminum siding, and brick homes included in the assessment neighborhood. While the majority of housing units have detached and set-back garages (displayed as accessory building in Figure 48), several do not have a garage. The street layout within the neighborhood is primarily a grid pattern, which provides for quality walking opportunities. There is noticeable deterioration of the concrete sidewalk within the neighborhood, which may make pedestrian travel difficult for those with physical disabilities or small children. Additionally, there are several intersections and curbs that are in need of ADA improvements. Both of these may deter from the walking experience and accessibility in the neighborhood. Photos 53 and 54 provide examples of broken and unlevel sidewalks found along several streets within the neighborhood boundaries. Photos 55 and 56 show the need for curb ramps between the crosswalks at intersections within the neighborhood. Due to the cost of these pedestrian improvements; the city may look to align them with any forthcoming road construction work within the area or neighborhood.

Photo 53

**Deteriorating Sidewalk**



Photo 54

**Deteriorating Sidewalk**



Photo 55

**Sidewalks need curb ramps**



Photo 56

**Sidewalks need curb ramps**



In addition to the close proximity to the city’s downtown commercial district, the neighborhood benefits from several public and active gathering places for social and community interaction. These include traditional places such as parks, the city’s public library (Photo 57), Mount Clemens High School (Photo 58), the Anton Art Center (Photo 59), and less traditional places, such as the “pocket park” located at the intersection of North Avenue and southbound Gratiot (Photo 60).

Photo 57

**Mount Clemens Public Library**



Photo 58

**Mount Clemens High School**



Photo 59

**Anton Art Center**



Photo 60

### **Pocket Park**



### **Diversity**

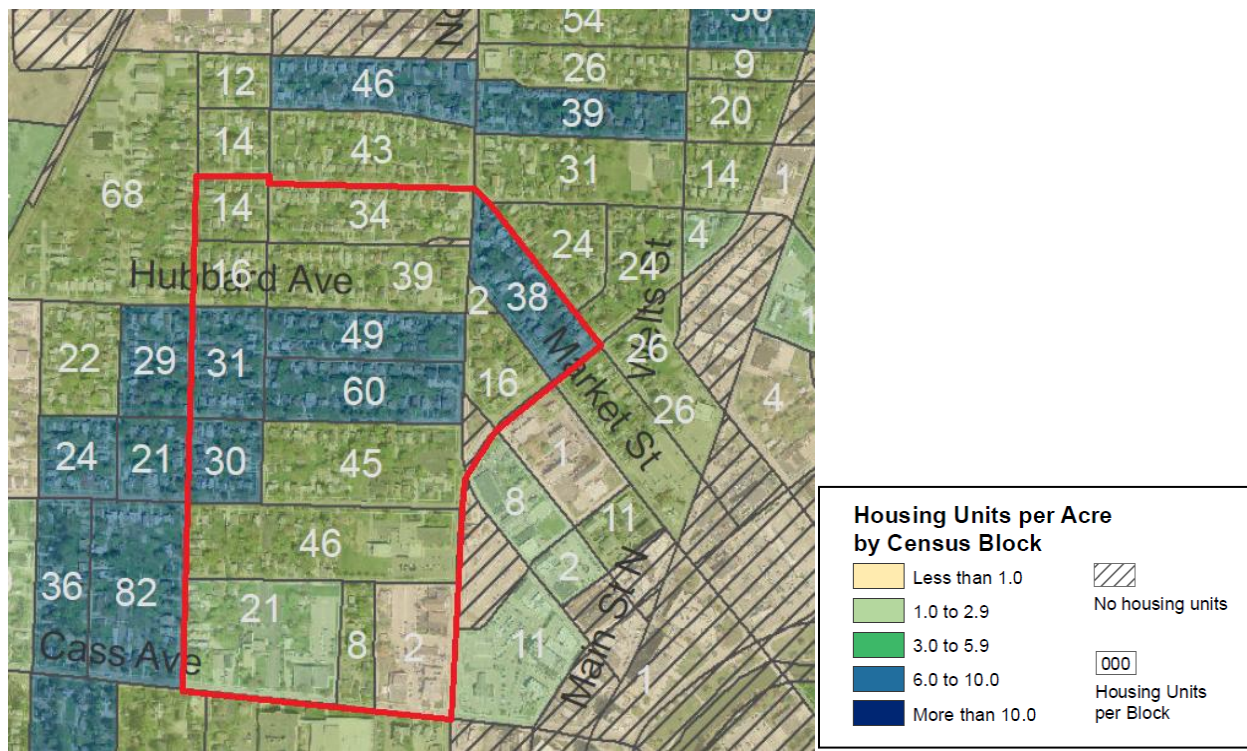
The diversity of a neighborhood primarily consists of the “choices” available to both current and potential future residents. Questions to be asked when assessing a neighborhood include:

- Is there a good mix of housing types, values, and tenures available?
- Are there housing choices that serve an aging population or a population likely to have school-age children?
- Is housing accessible to residents with differing physical abilities?

The vast majority of housing stock in the neighborhood consists of single-family homes on relatively small lots; this enables a dense, walkable atmosphere. Figure 52 shows the housing density of the neighborhood. The assessment neighborhood, as well as the adjacent blocks (as noted on the map), are two of the most densely populated areas of the city. Over time, several previously owner-occupied, single-family homes have been converted to multi-family rental units. This scenario, while providing additional affordable housing choices within the neighborhood, may increase the need for the city to establish programs and regulations to monitor and understand the rental and multi-family housing stock.

Figure 52

**Housing Density, 2010**



A substantial number of larger, historically single-family homes have been converted to multi-family homes (apartments/duplexes, etc) within the neighborhood. Although rental housing is not inherently negative, some neighborhoods are negatively impacted by landlords with little-to-no experience, located great distances from the rental unit, or who lack the incentive or ability to maintain units to proper levels. In fact, in the current knowledge-based economy, well designed, well located, and well maintained rental housing can broaden economic opportunity and provide choices to a wide range of people in all stages of the life cycle. Additionally, there is likely to be changing housing demand that may support an increase in choices and diverse housing options within the assessment neighborhood and, more importantly, within the downtown area for young professionals and aging individuals.

**Accessibility/connectivity**

Analysis of accessibility/connectivity looks specifically at how the neighborhood interacts within itself, the corridor, and how it is connected to the larger community and region. This includes how walkable or bikeable the neighborhood is; the connections within the corridor; and barriers such as large parking lots, fences, or other obstacles that make walking or biking between home and commercial activity along the corridor difficult. Are transit options available? What are the distances between the neighborhood and the stops?

One of the greatest opportunities and challenges in strengthening the selected assessment neighborhood is the accessibility and connectivity it has with the city’s downtown. As illustrated in Figure 53, the ability of residents to access the downtown district by walking and biking is limited due to the speed limits and lack of accessible crossing locations across southbound Gratiot Avenue, as well as the large surface parking lots that buffer the downtown area from Gratiot Avenue. These parking lots serve as visual and physical impediments to accessing the downtown area. The relatively densely populated residential

housing and neighborhoods that are located in close proximity to a walkable commercial district are assets that encourage walking and biking. However, the current configuration of Gratiot Avenue and the surface parking lots are obstacles for pedestrians, bicyclists, and even transit riders in Mount Clemens. The city is encouraged to consider conducting a Walkability/Bikeability Audit, which would provide a thorough analysis of potential roadway changes and traffic-calming measures that could improve pedestrian safety.

Figure 53

### **Connectivity between neighborhood and downtown**



As mentioned, Gratiot Avenue in downtown Mount Clemens is primarily a loop – comprised of one-way, four-lane streets, which physically and psychologically cut off residents from easy, safe access to downtown. The width and one-way nature of the roadway facilitates faster auto traffic, but may deter pedestrian crossing.

Photos 61 and 62 show the general challenges facing pedestrians as they cross southbound Gratiot. Photo 63 shows the challenge of safely crossing the surface parking lots located on the east side of southbound Gratiot.

Additionally, although the assessment neighborhood is primarily a grid pattern, which encourages walkability, several blocks within the study area are long (consisting of two, three, and even four traditional blocks). This hinders pedestrian accessibility to and from the downtown area.

Photo 61

**Challenges for Pedestrians Crossing Southbound Gratiot**



Photo 62

**Challenges for Pedestrians Crossing Southbound Gratiot**



Photo 63

**Safely Crossing Surface Parking Lots on East Side of Southbound Gratiot**



## Recommendations

### Strategies for neighborhood resiliency

#### Use strategic and targeted code enforcement and property maintenance policies

Code enforcement is the primary way communities attempt to ensure that properties are maintained to minimum quality standards. When used proactively, code enforcement can help local governments identify, halt, and reverse the negative impacts of vacant, abandoned, and problem properties. Code enforcement policies should be transparent and consistently enforced to prevent substandard housing from becoming nuisances and to encourage property owners to maintain properties to a high standard. A successful code enforcement system offers incentives for responsible ownership along with disincentives or penalties for irresponsible behavior. Effective code enforcement and property maintenance policies should be:

- Targeted and proactive, rather than reactive (complaint-driven);
- Integrated with other abandonment and blight prevention strategies; and
- Coordinated with residents and businesses within the community who have a vested interest in maintaining a quality neighborhood and who can easily report code or blight issues.

Although code enforcement activities and standards need to be imposed on all properties in a community, limited resources and capacity make geographic targeting of code enforcement more effective. This may include:

- Linking enforcement to other neighborhood revitalization and development activities, such as Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) target areas;
- Aligning enforcement to areas with concentrations of foreclosures, crime activity, and shifts in owner-occupied to rental-occupied properties; and
- Focusing on specific building types (i.e., small, multi-family buildings) or on specific problems (i.e., illegal dumping or abandoned cars).

Using decorative or artistic boarding as a method of making vacant properties appear occupied should be considered when possible, as opposed to the more traditional boards. Decorative boarding may be as simple as painting a window with a lamp or some other decorative feature behind it.

The City of Mount Clemens' recently implemented Proactive Code Enforcement (P.A.C.E) Program is a great step in the right direction and contains many of the strategies and actions referenced above. The city is commended for making strategic code enforcement a priority. As this program continues to be streamlined and implemented, the city look can at examples from other communities in the region. Two such examples are the City of Warren and City of Ferndale, which are both currently implementing similar code enforcement programs.

- City of Warren – [Neighborhood Clean Sweep Program](#) is a neighborhood-by-neighborhood, street-by-street, and house-by-house inspection effort that targets residential and commercial buildings for blight violations. This unique blight-fighting program began in 2008; inspectors have issued over 60,000 warning notices to businesses and residences to clean up their properties or face \$1,000 fines. The result: only 800 tickets issued because the vast majority of those who receive five-day warning notices correct the violations.
- City of Ferndale – [Strategic Code Enforcement](#) has Code Enforcement Officers respond to concerns from citizens that affect the quality of life within the city such as zoning, overgrown lots or yards,

inoperative vehicles, maintenance of structures, illegal signs, and public nuisances. Systematic inspections are also performed throughout the city to ensure properties are in compliance with city code. Citizens are encouraged to submit code enforcement concerns in person, by completing an online request, or calling and leaving a detailed message.

**Implement a Rental Housing Policy (includes Rental Registration, Inspection, and Certification ordinance/regulation) to ensure a minimum standard of housing quality**

A strongly enforced rental housing policy program does not necessarily need to measure success as being the number of rental properties with a noticeable improvement in physical condition, but rather it creates a relationship between owner/landlord and community in which the owner is aware that he/she is known to the municipality and is accountable for his actions with respect to the property.

Once a Rental Ordinance is in place, the municipality must enforce the regulations responsibly; respond to inquiries and complaints; carry out inspections in a timely, constructive fashion; and avoid imposing burdens on landlords not clearly justified by public health, safety, and welfare.

However, imposing financial penalties or fines is encouraged for landlords who, after being given adequate notice and time to comply, fail to comply with requirements. Both the amount of the penalty and the amount of time the landlord has to comply in order to avoid the penalty should be carefully considered and be proportionate to the weight of the violation. Penalties should be used as ways to encourage good practices, just as they are used to penalize continued bad practices.

An effective Rental Housing Policy should include both a registration and inspection/certification component:

- Registration – The process of tracking and identifying owners and properties. A registration ordinance should include:
  - All rental housing types available within the community, including single-family, multi-family, duplexes, etc.
  - Contact information of property owner and local property manager. If the property owner is located outside the area, he/she should be required to provide the contact information for a local property management firm or agent who can respond timely to issues as they arise.
  - A modest registration fee to support maintaining the rental registry and costs of the inspection program. However, penalties for failure to register within a defined time period should be substantial so that registration is timely.
  - A proactive process to identify owners and properties. Typical identification of rental properties include:
    - Self-identification – Owner is responsible for returning a rental registration form either online or through the mail;
    - Neighborhood identification – Residents and neighborhood-based organizations report potential unregistered rental properties; and
    - City/municipality identified – Code enforcement and public safety personnel report potential unregistered rental properties.
- Inspection and Certification – Registered rental properties must be inspected and certified to ensure that any unsafe conditions are corrected and that vulnerable populations are not disproportionately

affected by hazardous housing. An effective inspection and certification program of rental units will likely include:

- Both reactive (based upon complaints) and proactive (targeted inspections based upon accurate data) code enforcement of rental units;
- All rental housing types – Single-family, multi-family, duplexes, etc; and
- A process to continually track down unregistered and uncertified properties.

**Implement a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance that allows communities to inspect, monitor, and require owners to register vacant properties as soon as they become vacant.**

The City of Mount Clemens already implements a Vacant Property Registration ordinance. The following recommendation is for the city to review its implementation and see if there are opportunities to enhance or expand the program.

Communities are encouraged to adopt vacant property registration ordinances that not only enable them to track a property’s status, but also create an additional incentive for property holders to aggressively market and improve property so that it can return to an active use that enhances, rather than detracts from the value of the surrounding neighborhood and market. Enacting a vacant property ordinance can help municipalities keep track of vacant inventories and hold owners accountable for neglect and blight.

An effective vacant property ordinance should include both residential and commercial/industrial properties. It should also include:

- Mandatory contact information of the owner (point of contact for every owner of a vacant building). The local point of contact is someone who can respond to issues in a timely fashion as they arise. If the owner is located outside the region, contact information for a local property manager/servicer should be included.
- Registration and/or annual fees that cover the costs city departments incur when monitoring vacant properties. This fee may be modest to cover the basic costs associated with maintaining the program. However, penalties for failure to register within a defined time period should be substantial as to incentivize timely registration.
- Mandatory maintenance standards should be transparent to owners and must be enforced by the community.
- A designated “vacant property coordinator.” The most successful programs have a coordinator (potentially a code enforcement officer, public safety, or newly created position).

With or without a Vacant Property Registration Ordinance, the city may struggle to inventory its vacant housing stock. Building partnerships with neighborhood groups, community leaders, and municipal workers, such as police, fire, and utility workers, to assist in identifying vacant and abandoned properties and to report code violations are also encouraged.

**Develop and implement a Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**

A CIP document identifies and facilitates the orderly planning of infrastructure improvements in order to maintain, preserve, and protect the city’s existing infrastructure system, and provide for the acquisition or scheduled replacement of equipment to ensure the efficient delivery of services to the community. The CIP is also used to ensure that capital improvements are fiscally sound and consistent with the goals and policies of City Council and residents.

Case examples:

- [City of Ann Arbor](#) – It is the City Planning Commission's goal that the CIP be used as a tool to implement the City Master Plan and assist in the city's financial planning. The Systems Planning Unit prepares the CIP for the City of Ann Arbor. The current CIP in Ann Arbor runs from 2014-2019, and can be viewed at the above link.
- [City of Battle Creek](#) – This document formalizes and consolidates all of the capital improvement projects throughout city departments and component units. It provides a comprehensive summary of the capital needs of the city for a six-year period. The document reflects departmental priorities and helps evaluate projects to be included in the annual budget based on actual available funding. The current CIP in Battle Creek runs from 2014-2019, and can be viewed at the above link.

### **Develop a Sidewalk Improvement Program**

In order to promote safety in neighborhoods and improve the appearance of the community, municipalities adopt a sidewalk improvement ordinance and/or program. Typically, as part of the city's Capital Improvement Plan, a sidewalk improvement program may include developing and enforcing a sidewalk repair ordinance that authorizes the municipality to require homeowners and companies to comply and indicate who is financially responsible for maintenance and repairs. In older, established communities, such as Mount Clemens, the quality and accessibility of public sidewalks within neighborhoods is often in less-than-acceptable condition. This can include cracked, gapped, uneven elevation, and/or grass and weed intrusion within the pedestrian pathway. As replacement and repairs of sidewalks are scheduled and implemented, they are often aligned with development, upgrade, or compliance with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements.

Case examples:

- [City of Ferndale](#) – The city's Sidewalk Replacement Program divides the city into 10 sidewalk districts. One sidewalk district is inspected each year in order to determine if any portion of the sidewalk is in need of replacement. This inspection takes place in the fall prior to the sidewalk district year. For example, the 2013 sidewalk district was evaluated in the fall of 2012. If, after inspection, it is determined that an abutting property owner's sidewalk is in need of replacement, the homeowner will be notified accordingly.
- [City of Royal Oak](#) – The city's Sidewalk Improvement Program addresses and replaces deficient public sidewalks over a six-year period.
- [Canton Township](#) – The township inspects sidewalks in designated neighborhoods on an annual basis in order to determine if any portion of the sidewalk is in need of replacement. If, after inspection, the township determines that a homeowner's sidewalk is in need of repair, the homeowner is notified accordingly.

### **Implement a Curb Appeal Challenge**

Typically, this is an annual challenge in which the community encourages households to “compete” in specific challenges – such as best landscaping, most improved property, best restoration, or even best Halloween display/decoration. This is often a fun approach in which the community highlights those individuals that make a special effort to enhance their home and, therefore, their neighborhoods. Awards for those selected could range from an award plaque, to a local media story, citation by the city council, or even a cash gift or coupon to a local restaurant or commercial entity within the community.

A successful program often encourages household participation by providing training and workshops in landscaping, home repairs, paint color selection, proper installation of improvements, or other skills that

increase curb appeal. These workshops are a great way to increase interest and to build neighborhood camaraderie.

Case example:

- [City of Jamestown, NY](#) – The city established a Neighborhood Renaissance Block Challenge, which encourages neighborhood groups to collaborate on exterior improvements to their properties in order to boost pride in Jamestown’s neighborhoods and inspire others to reinvest.

### **Implement a Landlord Education Program and outreach**

With the increase of rental properties in traditionally owner-occupied neighborhoods, communities are encouraged to provide training programs for landlords that concentrate on:

- tools and techniques in code compliance;
- inspection procedures;
- eviction proceedings;
- tenant/applicant screening and selection;
- applying for repair loans or grants;
- fair housing laws;
- lead poisoning prevention; and
- detecting and preventing drug activity from occurring on rental properties.

Training programs may also be aligned with rental licensing and training.

Case example:

- [City of Milwaukee](#) – The award-winning landlord training program operates out of Milwaukee’s Department of Neighborhood Services. The goal is to teach landlords fundamental ways to keep illegal activity out of their property. This program was a runner-up for the Ford Foundation Harvard Kennedy School of Government Awards program and a 1996 winner of the Innovations In Government award sponsored by the City of Milwaukee Mayor and Common Council. Classes are free and held on a regular basis throughout the year at various locations. They are held on evenings and weekends to accommodate virtually anyone's schedule. The classes are generally either one five-hour session in one day, or two two-and-a-half-hour sessions for two nights. Attendees get a free 100-page comprehensive manual and handouts on a variety of legal and business issues related to managing a property. Training brochures are available at the above link.

### **Create a neighborhood branding image building and marketing program**

Neighborhood marketing builds a positive image that attracts the desired investments of time, money, and energy that support the neighborhood’s revitalization goals. Successful neighborhood marketing and branding is very clear about what it hopes to accomplish, who its target markets are, and the messages that will cultivate the desired response from those target markets. Due to the fact that there are a number of historic residential buildings and an apparent interest and pride in homeowners of these properties, a neighborhood branding initiative could have great traction in Mount Clemens. For more information, please see the [Center for Community Progress’ Marketing the Neighborhood Tool](#).

## Strategies for connectivity and accessibility

- **Walkability/Bikeability Audit** SEMCOG's Creating Successful Corridors: Redevelopment Toolkit (located online at [www.semcog.org](http://www.semcog.org)) includes the Walkability/Bikeability tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors.
- **Road Safety Audit** SEMCOG's Creating Successful Corridors: Redevelopment Toolkit (located online at [www.semcog.org](http://www.semcog.org)) includes the Road Safety Tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors.

## Potential funding and technical assistance sources

- **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** SEMCOG's Creating Successful Corridors: Redevelopment Toolkit (located online at [www.semcog.org](http://www.semcog.org)) includes the TAP tool as well as other tools to redevelop assets along or adjacent to transportation corridors.
- **HUD's Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) 203(k) Program** is HUD's primary program for the rehabilitation and repair of single family properties. In neighborhoods with an oversupply of vacant homes in need of rehabilitation, a 203(k) mortgage provides willing and able buyers with enough money to both buy the house plus enough money to fix it up. 203(k) mortgages are only available to homeowners, not investors, and require only licensed contractors to provide services of rehabilitation. While individuals have the ability to access these loans, they can potentially be used by municipal housing authorities to rehabilitate properties and add them to the affordable housing stock. An advantage of 203(k) loans is that they are assumable; once a property is rehabilitated and ownership is transferred to another property, responsibility for the loan is transferred with it.
- **MI Neighborhood Program** works with neighborhood, local, and statewide organizations to identify and address neighborhood needs based on the premise of the Main Street Four-Point Approach®. The program connects existing and emerging opportunities to leverage resources in support of neighborhood revitalization. The underlying premise of MI Neighborhood is a multi-faceted approach that encourages community revitalization in four areas:
  - **Design** – Enhancing the neighborhood's physical environment by capitalizing on its best assets and creating an inviting atmosphere through attractive parks, home improvements, streetscapes and landscaping.
  - **Events/Marketing** – Creating a positive image of the neighborhood and traditional commercial district or traditional downtown to attract residents, visitors, customers, and investors, as well as to rekindle community pride.
  - **Organization** – Organizing neighborhood stakeholders to get residents working toward a common goal to implement MI Neighborhood, a volunteer-based program.
  - **Neighborhood Reinvestment** – Create opportunities for residents to live in affordable homes, improve their lives, and strengthen their communities.
- **MIPlace Target Market Analysis** This program supports the State of Michigan's Placemaking initiative. It provides communities with the cost of undertaking a market study that incorporates target market analysis methodologies in underwriting/planning activities. These analyses identify trends and potential for a geographic area which will serve as a platform for a more localized project.

For more information, see [MSHDA's PowerPoint presentation at the 2013 Michigan Association of Planning Conference](#). Please contact Jess Sobel (MSHDA) at [sobelj@michigan.gov](mailto:sobelj@michigan.gov) for additional questions and details.

- **MSHDA's Property Improvement Program (PIP) loans** are low-interest home improvement loans to eligible homeowners and landlords. The loans originate through authority-approved participating lenders and community agents working with lenders.
- **MSHDA's Rental Rehabilitation Program** provides quality, safe, and affordable rental housing by providing financial resources. This funding is targeted to areas with multiple building types such as mixed use buildings, town homes, row houses, and duplexes often found in downtowns and other vibrant areas. Funds are targeted to moderate or substantial rehabilitation of existing occupied or vacant rental housing or conversion of vacant space to rental units. This may include repairs to meet new construction or rehab standards or energy related improvements.
- **MSHDA's Homeowner Rehabilitation Program** provides homeowner assistance to improve the principal residence of *income-eligible homeowners*. Improvements may include abatement of lead-based paint, energy-related repairs or improvements, and improvements for persons with disabilities.
- **MSHDA's Homebuyer Program** is used to expand homeownership opportunities for *income-eligible homebuyers* through acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of single family housing units. Funds are generally used to help buyers qualify for conventional financing or to rehabilitate existing units for sale in the local market. The two main programs are Homebuyer Purchase with Rehabilitation (HPR) and HOME-Funded Acquisition Development and Resale (ADR).

# Gratiot Corridor Recommendations

Use SEMCOG's *Creating Successful Corridors* Toolkit ([www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)) to further Gratiot redevelopment efforts.

- The previously discussed assessments – for each of the five Gratiot Avenue segments where tools from the *Creating Successful Corridors* toolkit were applied – lay the foundation for subsequent work that may be undertaken by stakeholders in their respective geographic areas. Collectively, the assessments demonstrate how a range of data can be used for different types of corridor redevelopment efforts. They also set forth a variety of policy and project implementation recommendations.
- Gratiot Advisory Group members and other stakeholders are encouraged to consider how tools that were applied on Gratiot segments outside their respective communities may be used to inform and/or further redevelopment activities in their area(s). This should be done in a manner that considers the unique characteristics of a particular location and community desires (the walkable/bikeable assessments conducted in Downtown Detroit and Clinton Township provide excellent examples of how the character of a location and community desires are considered when applying a tool).
- Advisory Group members may consult, and direct other stakeholders to, SEMCOG's *Creating Successful Corridors* toolkit ([www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)) to find information to assist with corridor redevelopment efforts. This is a comprehensive, Web-based resource that contains tools organized in the following categories: Market Analysis; Transportation and Mobility; Planning and Implementation; Sustainable Development; and Business Assistance Services. It also includes a section with case studies and other resources.

## **Collaborate and engage stakeholders on issues of common interest.**

The Gratiot Advisory Group should consider continuing to work together – and broadening stakeholder involvement – on corridor-wide issues of common interest. Initial targets of opportunity that call for collaboration and broadened stakeholder involvement include:

- **Creating a Gratiot Avenue Communication Strategy:** During discussions with community representatives, the idea of creating a corridor-wide communication strategy emerged. A collaborative approach is needed to creatively communicate along the corridor and entice more people to patronize businesses, attract new businesses, and encourage business expansion. Components of the strategy considered should include:
  - **Branding:** Establish a slogan and common messages that help elevate the profile of Gratiot Avenue and establish a common identity along the corridor, while also recognizing and celebrating the unique characteristics of individual communities and points of interest. Several people mentioned – *M-3, The Place to Be* – as a potential theme.
    - **Getting to Know Gratiot Story Map:** Use the story map developed as part of the Gratiot pilot corridor project to showcase the corridor. The story map may be used for presentations and will be available online.
  - **Wayfaring:** Establish consistent signage along the route. In addition to highlighting Gratiot Avenue as a corridor, consistent signage helps people locate businesses, points of interest, recreational facilities, services, and quality of life amenities. Consider coordinating with other wayfaring needs/opportunities, such as nonmotorized trails that connect with Gratiot.

- **Preparing for Future Rapid Transit Service:** Gratiot Avenue is one of four corridors identified for future rapid transit service in the legislation creating the Regional Transit Authority. In addition, it is anticipated that a portion of the \$6.5 million in federal transit alternative analysis funds that were recently awarded to the region will be targeted on this corridor. Continued collaboration and stakeholder engagement will help communities inform this analysis and derive benefit from opportunities arising from improved transit service.
- **Improving Funding Opportunities:** A collaborative approach may improve the options/ability of communities and other stakeholders to obtain funding. Efforts that are part of a corridor-wide initiative may be viewed more favorably by public- and private-sector funders.

**Incorporate elements of regional plans and/or processes in community plans and processes.**

SEMCOG has a number of regional and sub-regional plans, guides, and assessments that can be used to help further redevelopment efforts in the Gratiot corridor.

- Incorporate elements of the forthcoming SEMCOG/MDOT updated regional nonmotorized plan into community plans. The plan, which is being developed with significant public involvement, can help further trails and connections to Gratiot, including connections with the adjacent neighborhoods, recreational amenities, commercial establishments, other communities, and with various locations in the region.
- Consider using green infrastructure techniques as part of roadway improvement or community development projects. Green infrastructure techniques can encompass elements such as streetscaping, rain gardens, native plantings, and bioswales. Employing these techniques can have numerous benefits such as managing stormwater runoff, discouraging pedestrians from crossing the road at inappropriate locations, making the corridor more attractive, and contributing to placemaking efforts. These techniques can be used in various corridor locations ranging from medians in the roadway to parking lots and vacant lots (examples of how green infrastructure techniques may be used on Gratiot Avenue are presented in the chapters discussing walkable/bikeable and neighborhood assessments).
  - Corridor Green Infrastructure Assessment tool: Advisory Group members and other stakeholders are encouraged to consult the green infrastructure tool in SEMCOG’s *Creating Successful Corridors* toolkit.
  - [Green Infrastructure Vision](#): Consider incorporating recommendations from SEMCOG’s regional green infrastructure vision in community plans and projects.
  - SEMCOG can be a resource for communities and agencies that want to include green infrastructure elements in roadway and community development projects.
- Continue to implement the Corridor Improvement Plan (that covers the Macomb County communities in the Gratiot study area) to help improve the traffic flow, safety, and appeal of corridor.



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