



Downtown District Plan
Mount Clemens, Michigan

FINAL DOCUMENT

APRIL 2011

Downtown Mount Clemens

Mount Clemens, Michigan

Downtown District Plan

Prepared for
Mount Clemens
Downtown Development Authority

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URBAN PLANNING PRACTICUM

The Michigan State University Urban and Regional Planning Practicum course is a senior level course that planning students must take to earn their American Planning Association accredited degree. Urban and Regional Planning students completing this capstone course utilize skills, knowledge and experience obtained over the duration of their planning education. This course gives students real world experience in urban and regional planning. Students are paired with individual clients who represent cities throughout Michigan. Students are required to review specific urban and land use issues and develop feasible recommendations for their client in the form of an extensive research report. Students meet with planning professors regularly throughout the course and receive feedback on their work in progress. The final recommendations and documents are then presented for final review by clients and professors.

FOREWARD

Many downtowns have experienced levels of disinvestment over the past half a century due to an exodus to outlying suburbs and shopping malls. Downtown Mount Clemens is an area that has experienced this hardship. Though the downtown has been negatively affected by vacancy and a reduction of its commercial base, the city has been successful in maintaining its historic downtown character. This includes the preservation of historic structures and continued efforts to include public artwork within the downtown.

This district plan will be a guiding tool for downtown Mount Clemens and include recommended strategies for development based on research findings and public input obtained in the planning process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mount Clemens Downtown District Plan was created to be a resource for the client, the Mount Clemens Downtown Development Authority. The purpose of this document is to provide an assemblage of data relevant to the downtown planning area as well as to provide a series of specific recommendations based on data that look to improve the downtown and guide future development.

The initial step in creating the plan was research on the history and geographic significance of Mount Clemens. As the report progresses, research and data collection topics become increasingly intensive and specific. Initial demographic analysis was largely drawn from the 2000 U.S. Census as well as reports and projections from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). Notable demographic trends included a projected population loss in Mount Clemens, while Macomb County as a whole continued to grow. (See Figures 2.7 and 2.8). In addition to city-county population comparisons, additional information was analyzed, such as levels of educational attainment, unemployment statistics and the representation of different occupations. A socioeconomic index was also utilized to develop a more holistic demographic profile of the planning area. Detailed demographic information can be found on under the heading “Demographic Profile” beginning on page 14.

Initial demographic data collection and analysis represented the foundation of an information-driven understanding of downtown Mount Clemens. To further this understanding and to steer future research efforts, a public meeting was held on February 16, 2011. This meeting allowed residents, business owners and government employees to express their opinions on the current state of the downtown, as well as to share ideas for future development. Public participation information was collected using three methods: individual surveys, small group discussion and a large group meeting. This meeting resulted in the identification of both current assets and future opportunities for the downtown. Concepts developed from this study, such as the poor connectivity between the downtown with the Clinton River or the potential threat of commercial vacancy, guided future research efforts. Detailed information on the public participation process can be found under the heading “Participants and the Planning Process” beginning on page X.

Additional research following this meeting included the creation of multiple land-use maps. These maps were created using both existing data and data collected from an independent walking survey. These maps provide detailed information about the planning area, such as building height, current land use, vacancy, floor area ratio and current zoning designations.

The next phase consisted of specific research categories that resulted from the consideration and refinement of the initial data collected. These sections included detailed studies of traffic patterns and a street inventory analysis, a walk score/walkability study and an assessment of business conditions conducted using potential consumer spending trends, tapestry segmentation trends and a retail market gap analysis. This second phase of data collection was important because it provided specific insight that would be instrumental in the creation of recommendations and findings.

The recommendations and findings segment of this document is a distillation of all data collected and analyzed and presented in the form of strategies to make improvements to the downtown planning area. Detailed descriptions of recommendations can be found in page 54 of the plan. These recommendations included:

- Promotion of the Clinton River as a downtown asset through the creation of gateways and the development of vacant land near the river.
- Strengthening of the downtown through the redevelopment and reuse of vacant structures and though infill development
- Using wayfinding and marketing to connect Oakland Universities new campus with the downtown
- Façade design standards as a means to maintain sense of place within historic downtown
- Promoting commercial growth and future development by identifying top retail prospects within the trade area.
- Improve pedestrian safety on Gratiot Avenue by reducing automobile speeds and by constructing necessary infrastructure to support pedestrians and non-motorized transportation
- Promotion of transit through the addition of new or improved bus shelters and route maps

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Purpose and Objectives of the Plan

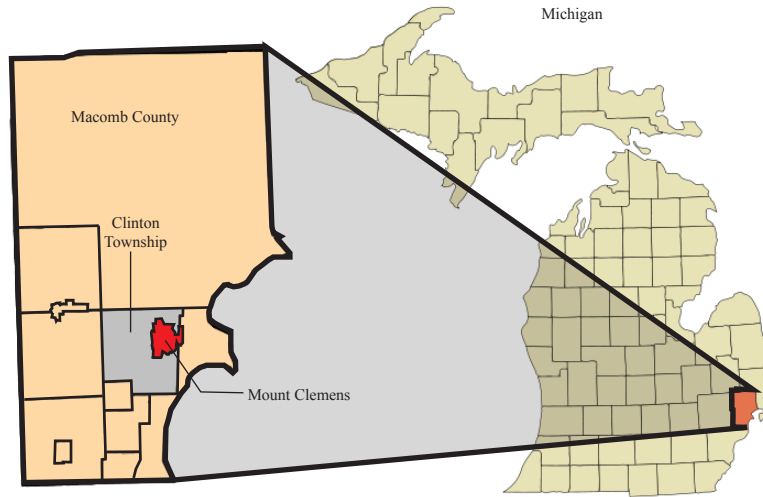
The Mount Clemens Downtown Development Authority contacted Michigan State University to hire a team of urban and regional planning students to create a downtown district plan to supplement the city's 2009 citywide master plan. The purpose of this district plan was to specifically consider the unique needs of the downtown.

As a plan specific to the city's downtown core, this document considers the input of citizens, employees, and business owners that interact with the downtown. In addition to public input, demographic, economic and land use data have been analyzed in order to develop an informed direction for future downtown development plans.

The objective of this document is:

1. To collect information and create an inventory of demographic, economic, transportation and land use data specific to the downtown planning area.
2. To develop recommendations based on data analysis for the improvement of downtown.

The Downtown Planning Area

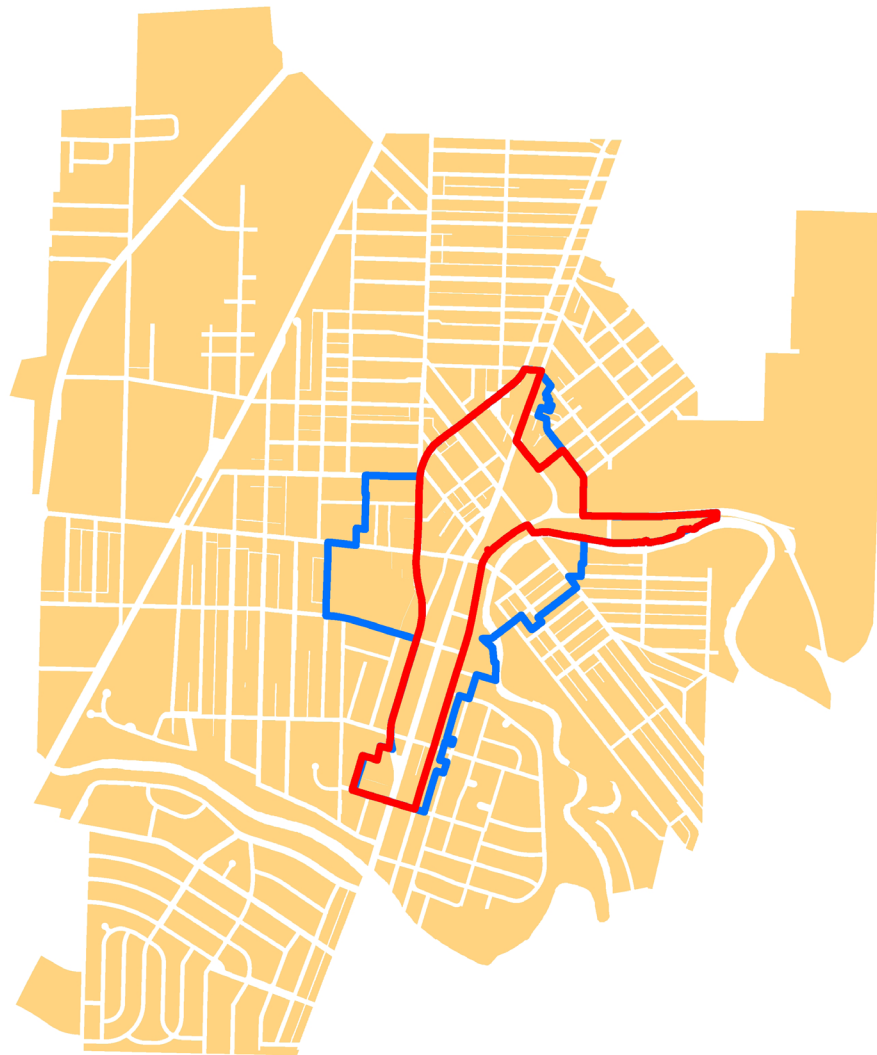


The City of Mount Clemens is located in Macomb County, Michigan. Mount Clemens is approximately 30 miles northeast of Detroit, MI- the largest city in Michigan. Macomb County is part of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), which includes Livingston, Washtenaw, Oakland, St. Clair, Wayne and Monroe Counties. I-94 runs north and south just east of Downtown Mount Clemens. M-3 runs directly through the Mount Clemens Downtown District and defines the downtown boundary. Converted to one-way pairs in the late 20th century, Gratiot (M-3) was redirected around the city forming what is now known as northbound and southbound Gratiot Avenues.

The planning area discussed in this district plan is referred to as the “downtown.” The planning area is an expansion of the Mount Clemens Downtown Development Authorities’ boundaries. The original DDA boundaries were defined as the areas between north and southbound Gratiot, with a southern border at Colonial and Kibbee. The northern boundary being the respective intersections of northbound Gratiot and southbound Gratiot with Jones St. The western boundary was marked by southbound Gratiot, and the eastern boundary included areas east of northbound Gratiot, such as parcels south of N. River Road, and a small area east of northbound Gratiot bounded by the intersections of Walnut and Park. (See Map 1)




Arthur Mullen, AICP Executive Director of the DDA, expanded the geographic definition of the downtown district to include areas outside of the DDA’s boundary. In addition the DDA area, the planning area includes areas west of southbound Gratiot. The additional areas west of southbound Gratiot included a large section north of Church, with a western boundary of Miller and a northern boundary of Cass, a small section north of this lies between Cass and Grand. The southwest corner of downtown was expanded to include an area bordered by South and Colonial. Areas east of northbound Gratiot were also included in the planning area, including a narrow strip between northbound Gratiot and the Clinton River. This included a section across the Clinton River and additional areas both west and north of Park. (See Map 1)

Map 1: Planning Area



Source: Arthur Mullen DDA 2011



-  DDA
-  Downtown District
-  Mount Clemens

BACKGROUND

General History of Downtown Mount Clemens

Mount Clemens was settled on land purchased by Christian Clemens in the late 1700's. In 1818, the land was platted as a village and named Mount Clemens. The village was then chosen as the Macomb County seat that same year, when the County was first established. Construction of county buildings, churches, and new businesses soon followed. An interurban streetcar connected downtown Detroit to Mount Clemens during the 1800's, which allowed residents access to retail and entertainment that was absent in Mount Clemens. Early industries included a distillery built by Christian Clemens and his partner John Brooks, as well as bathhouses, due to an abundance of mineral baths within the village. After the immigration of new residents, the village was incorporated as a city in 1879. The bathhouses flourished and Mount Clemens was soon regarded as the "Bath City of America". The city attracted tourists from all over the country to its elegant spas and hotels to experience the healing properties of the baths. Other businesses eventually located in Mount Clemens, offering diverse goods and services in the city. Small businesses had difficulty surviving the competition of shopping malls in the late 20th century and Mount Clemens experienced a loss of retail in the downtown. After many of the bathhouses and stores closed, Mount Clemens began to attract visitors with bars and restaurants, and has become the nightlife and entertainment hub for Macomb County. The last remaining bathhouse, St. Joseph's Sanitarium, is slated to be restored with the help of state and federal funding in coming years.



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2





Figure 2.3

Picture Sources:

<http://www.friendsofhistoricpreservation.org/>

Downtown Adjacent Institutions

Map 2: Downtown Adjacent Institutions

-  Schools
-  Higher Education (Oakland University)
-  Community and Faith Based
-  Libraries
-  City and County Government Buildings
-  Federal Government (U.S. Post Office)



Essential landmarks and destinations within the downtown include schools, churches, city and county government buildings, and federal government facilities. These adjacent institutions are important to the community that surrounds them by providing services such as public education, higher education, mail delivery, government services provided by Macomb County and the city of Mount Clemens, and places of worship. The locations included on the map of adjacent institutions were obtained by reviewing aerial maps of the downtown provided by the Google Earth application. The accuracy of these maps were verified through comparing the stated locations with data provided by the city, information from individual institutions and by conducting a current use survey of the downtown. 19 sites were deemed to be institutions that were within the boundaries of the downtown or were within close proximity to the downtown. (See Map 2)

Source: Google, Walk Survey



Figure 2.4 YMCA



Figure 2.5 TLC City Garden



Figure 2.6 Macomb Co. Admin. Bldg

Demographic Profile

City and County Comparison

General Characteristics

Mount Clemens is experiencing declines in almost all major characteristics of its community, creating a variety of challenges for the city. Since 1990, population, the number of households, average size of households and the number of owner occupied housing have all decreased. Projections undertaken by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) have also shown declines in these categories for the years 2010 and 2015. Conversely, between 1990 and 2000, Macomb County experienced a growth in population and all other categories (aside from household size) that is expected to continue in 2010 and 2015.

Figure 2.7

	1990	2000	2010	2015
Population	18,490	17,312	16,864	16,474
Households	7,323	7,023	7,041	6,906
Families	4,300	3,852	3,712	3,594
Average Household Size	2.34	2.21	2.16	2.14
Owner Occupied Housing	4,118	4,295	4,204	4,124
Renter Occupied Housing	3,205	2,778	2,837	2,782
Median age	32.8	36.3	38.5	39.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000 Census of Population and Housing. ESRI forecasts for 2010 and 2015.

Figure 2.8

	1990	2000	2010	2015
Population	717,400	788,149	839,369	843,369
Households	264,991	309,203	334,182	337,108
Families	195,549	210,867	225,127	225,876
Average Household Size	-	2.52	2.49	2.48
Owner Occupied Housing	-	243,964	260,022	262,442
Renter Occupied Housing	-	65,239	74,160	74,666
Median age	-	37.0	39.4	39.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000 Census of Population and Housing. ESRI forecasts for 2010 and 2015.

The median age of Mount Clemens in 1990 was 32.8. In the 2000 U.S. Census the median age rose to 36.3. The Environmental Systems Research Institute projected that the 2010 median age will be 38.5 and that the 2015 median age will be 39.1. (See Figure 2.1) Median age in Macomb County also increased from 37.0 in 2000, to a projected 39.9 in 2015. Macomb County showed continued increases in renter and owner occupied housing respectively while long term projections showed an overall decrease in both categories in Mount Clemens between 1990 and 2015 (See Figure 2.7 and 2.8)

Race and Ethnicity

In 2000, the largest racial groups in Mount Clemens were black and white residents, making up 95.4% of the total population. White residents comprise 75.8% of the city’s population and black residents comprise 19.6%. The ESRI report estimated significant changes in Mount Clemens’ racial demographic for 2010. The most dramatic change was the decrease of the white population to an estimated 55.7% of the total and an increase in the black population to 39.7% of the total population.(See Figure 2.9)

According to ESRI data, Macomb County is expected to experience similar change with the white population decreasing from 92.4% of the total population in 2000, to an estimated 85.4% of the total in 2010. The black population is expected to increase from 2.6% of the total population in 2000 to 8.27% in 2010. Both the county and the city have experienced an increase in Asian, Pacific Islander, and Hispanic populations and decreases in American Indian and other race populations. (See Figure 2.10)

Educational Attainment

Figure 2.9

MOUNT CLEMENS POPULATION BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN			
Race	1990	2000	2010
White	14,541 (78.6%)	13,121 (75.8%)	9,397 (55.7%)
Black	3,233 (17.5%)	3,395 (19.6%)	6,698 (39.7%)
American Indian	129 (0.7%)	127 (0.7%)	116 (0.7%)
Asian	78 (0.4%)	85 (0.5%)	102 (0.6%)
Pacific Islander	2 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)	3 (0.0%)
Some Other Race	148 (0.8%)	132 (0.8%)	134 (0.8%)
Total	18,490 (100%)	17,312 (100%)	16,864 (100%)
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	335 (1.8%)	404 (2.3%)	431 (2.6%)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000 Census of the Population and Housing. ESRI forecasts for 2010.

Figure 2.10

MACOMB COUNTY POPULATION BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN			
Race	1990	2000	2010
White	694,497 (96.8%)	728,420 (92.4%)	717,641 (85.4%)
Black	10,055 (1.4%)	20,165 (2.6%)	68,503 (8.27%)
American Indian	2,929 (0.4%)	2,604 (0.4%)	2,970 (0.4%)
Asian	8,519 (1.2%)	17,314 (2.2%)	26,868 (3.2%)
Pacific Islander	75 (0.0%)	133 (0.0%)	210 (0.0%)
Some Other Race	-	14,365 (2.0%)	18,846 (2.2%)
Total	717,400 (100%)	788,149 (100%)	839,369 (100%)
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	6,710 (0.9%)	12,510 (1.6%)	18,452 (2.2%)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000 Census of the Population and Housing. ESRI forecasts for 2010.

ESRI’s Census 2000 Summary Profile states that 30.8% of Mount Clemens residents held a high school diploma which was the highest level of educational attainment in 2000. Data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 report showed a similar level of educational attainment in Macomb County, with 32.8% of county residents having received high school diplomas. The second largest segment of Mount Clemens residents is those have attended some college, but have not obtained a degree, this accounts for 27% of the population. The smallest categories of educational attainment are at either end of the spectrum, with 4.5% of Mount Clemens residents having attained post-graduate education (Master’s/Professional/Doctorate Degree) and 4.8% of the population having attained a level of education below the 9th grade. The greatest difference between levels of education when comparing Macomb County and Mount Clemens is in the percentage of residents who have not received a high school diploma but have been educated to 9-12th grade level. 16.7% of city residents and 12.2% of county residents are within this category. A similar difference can be found by looking at the percentage of residents who have Bachelor’s degrees as their highest level of educational attainment with 11.9% of county residents and 9.0% of city residents within this category. (See Figure 2.11)

Figure 2.11

POPULATION 25+ BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT				
	Macomb County		Mount Clemens	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	535,836	100.0%	12,048	100.0%
Less than 9th Grade	25,755	4.8%	581	4.8%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	65,616	12.2%	2,009	16.7%
High School Graduate	175,565	32.8%	3,715	30.8%
Some College, No Degree	132,819	24.8%	3,253	27.0%
Associate Degree	41,936	7.8%	864	7.2%
Bachelor’s Degree	63,603	11.9%	1,087	9.0%
Master’s/Professional/Doctorate Degree	30,542	5.7%	539	4.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000

Occupation

ESRI’s Census 2000 Summary Profile states that 58.4% of Mount Clemens residents are part of the labor force. 54.1% of all residents are employed, 4.2% are unemployed and 0.1% of residents are members of the armed forces. Comparatively, data on Macomb County from the U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000 report shows that 63.1% of residents are employed, 2.7% are unemployed and 0.1% are in the armed forces. (See Figure 2.12)

Figure 2.12

POPULATION 16+ EMPLOYMENT STATUS				
	Macomb County		Mount Clemens	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	618,864	100.0%	13938	100.00%
Labor Force	408,563	66.0%	8,149	58.5%
Civilians Employed	390,791	63.1%	7,545	54.1%
Civilians Unemployed	16,925	2.7%	588	4.2%
In Armed Forces	847	0.1%	16	0.1%
Not in Labor Force	210,301	34.0%	5,789	41.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000

Mount Clemens residents are employed largely by three occupation categories: sales/office and administrative support employs 26.3% of city residents, management/professional category employs 25.9% of residents and production/transportation/material moving employs 21.1% of residents. The smallest occupations represented are construction/extraction/maintenance at 10.9%. Occupation category representation within the county are very similar to Mount Clemens when expressed as a percentage. The greatest difference can be seen in the management/professional category, 120,704 (or 30.9% of) county residents fit within management/professional category compared to the 1,955 (or 25.9% of) city residents. The next largest difference can be observed within the production/transportation/material moving category, with 69,232 (or 17.7% of) county residents holding occupations within this category and 1,595 (or 21.1% of) city residents. (See Figure 2.13)

Figure 2.13

CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16+ BY OCCUPATION				
	Macomb County		Mount Clemens	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total:	390,791	100.0%	7,545	100.0%
Management, professional and related occupations	120,704	30.9%	1955	25.9%
Service occupations	51,220	13.1%	1188	15.7%
Sales and office occupations	110,480	28.3%	1,984	26.3%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	430	0.1%	0	0.0%
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	38,664	9.9%	823	10.9%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	69,293	17.7%	1,595	21.1%

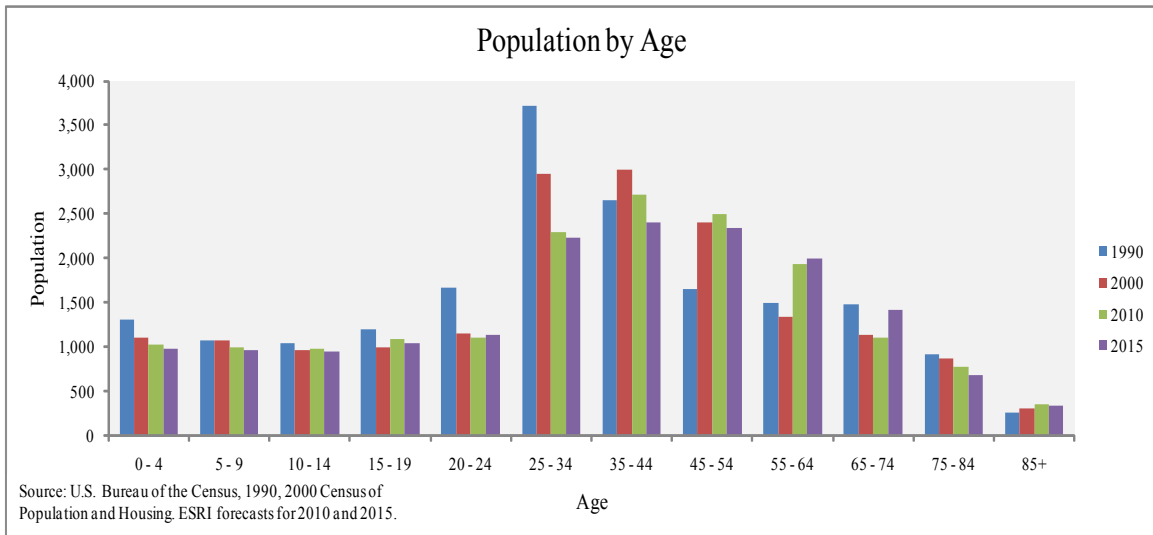
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000

City Demographics: Age and Income

Age

Mount Clemens is characterized by the age groups 25-54, (See Figure 2.7) which contributes to nearly half of its residents. This may produce an aging population in years to come. There is a fairly even distribution among all other age cohorts. A 2030 population forecast done by SEMCOG states that the senior citizen age group will double, as the younger age groups will experience further levels of decline. (See Figure 2.14)

Figure 2.14



Income

According to ESRI forecast data, the greatest change in income brackets between 2000 and 2010 was seen in the \$150,000 and above category, which is projected to increase by 4%. The second largest increase is within the \$50,000-74,999 category, which is predicted to increase by 3%. Another increase is seen in the \$75,000 - 99,999 income bracket, increasing by 2%. All other income brackets are projected to decrease between 2000 and 2010, with the greatest decrease seen in the \$15,000 and under category. (See Figure 2.15 and Figure 2.16)

Figure 2.15

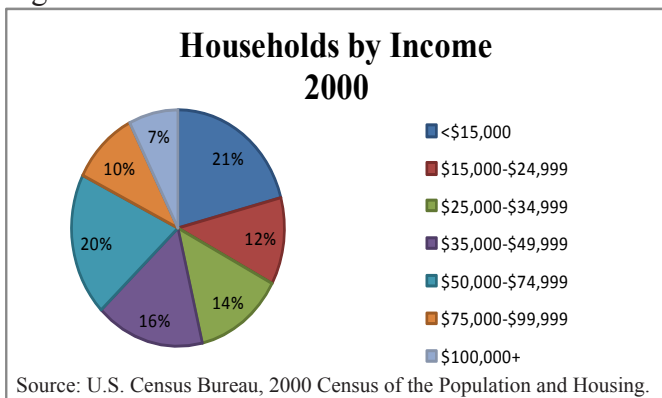
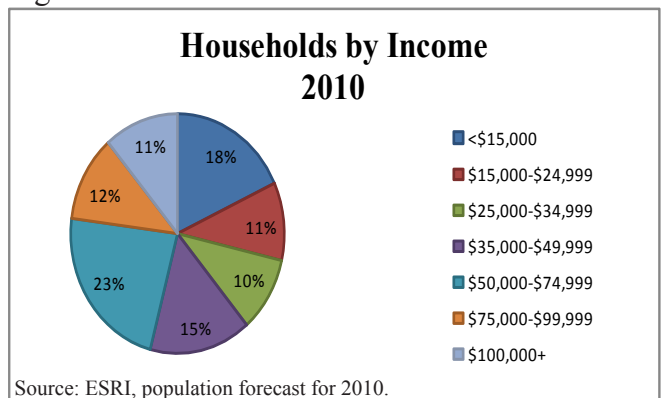


Figure 2.16



Demographic Summary

Demographic comparisons between Mount Clemens and Macomb County reveals two different trends. Population data and projections shows that Mount Clemens will continue to lose population between 1990 and 2015. In stark contrast, Macomb County's population has been projected to continue to increase from 1990 to 2015. The city's continued population loss compared to the surrounding county's continued growth demonstrates the decline of Mount Clemens. Additionally, employment data shows greater unemployment in Mount Clemens in comparison to Macomb County. (See Figure 2.7, 2.8, 2.13)

In other areas, the city and the county are quite similar. Occupational categories and levels of educational attainment suggest that residents of both the city and the county at large have comparable educational opportunities and employment options. (See Figure 2.11 and 2.22) Nevertheless, declines in Mount Clemens's number of households, families, and decreases in both renter and owner occupied housing suggests that new development and planning techniques are necessary to slow population loss and capture some of the future growth predicted for Macomb County.

Composite Socioeconomic Index

Demographic data provides a more holistic understanding of a geographic area when viewed not as a series of individual characteristics, but rather as a group of interconnected attributes. Demographic data exists in much the same way, while the individual characteristic is important in its own right, it is the cumulative effect of each characteristic that paints the bigger picture of the conditions the community is experiencing. The cumulative characteristics that form the bigger picture of a community are often referred to as socioeconomic conditions.

Socioeconomic conditions combine social and economic demographics into one characteristic. The core characteristics of socioeconomic conditions are comprised of income, education and occupation demographics. However, other variables such as, poverty levels, homeownership, vehicle ownership, and employment are also used to describe socioeconomic conditions of a community in addition to the core characteristics listed above. Socioeconomic conditions are important because a high income community may have low educational attainment, high unemployment and low occupational status, resulting in a reduction of socioeconomic conditions.

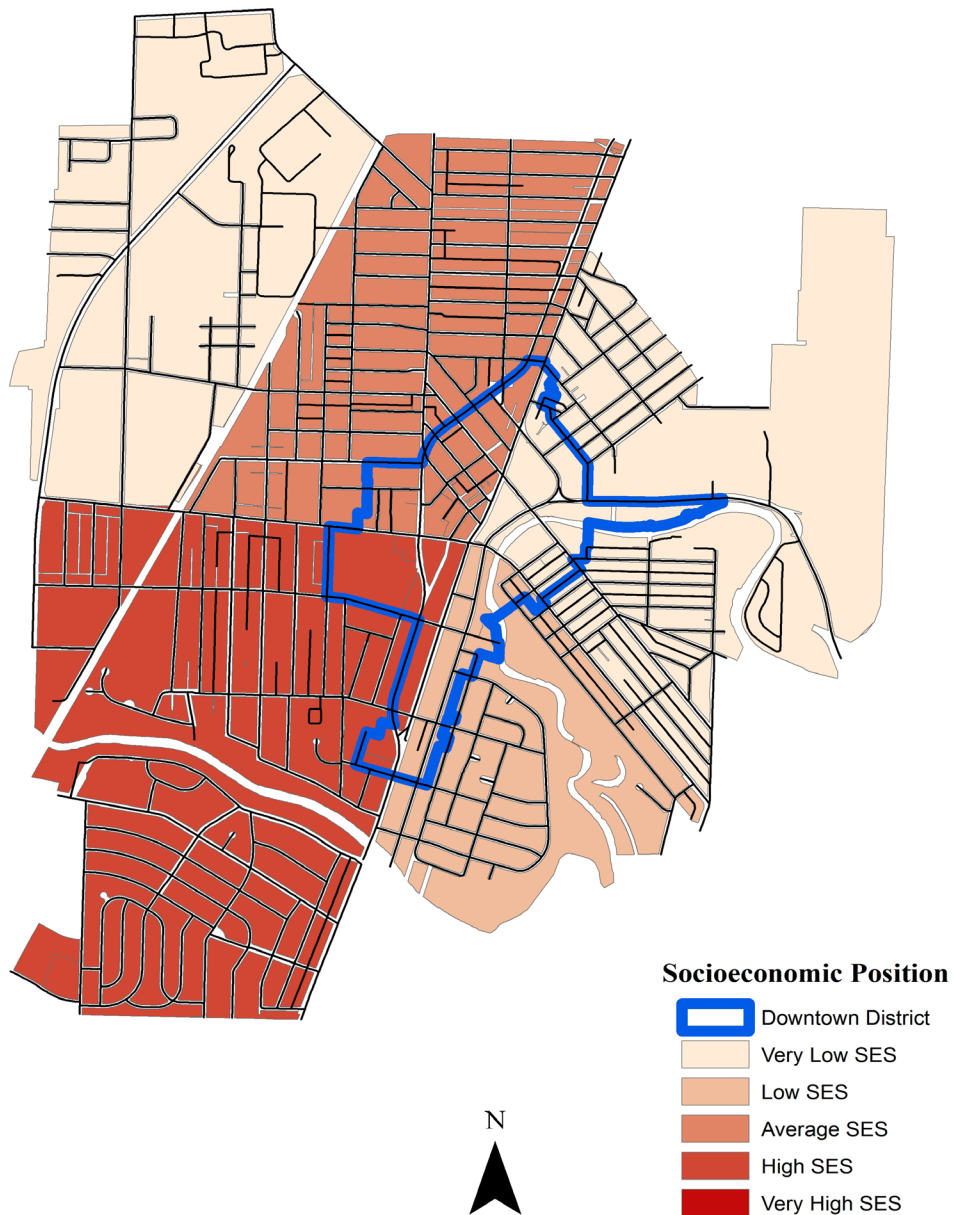
An established method in which to depict socioeconomic conditions is known as a Composite Socioeconomic Index. The Composite Socioeconomic Index takes into consideration 9 demographic variables; educational attainment, median income, family poverty, unemployment rate, median rent, median value of dwelling, vehicle ownership, home ownership, and occupational status. The index works by subtracting a demographic variable within a census tract from the demographic variable of the region (Macomb County). The values of each variable for a census tract are then added together to form an index from very low socioeconomic status to very high socioeconomic status (see Appendix M for CSI method).

When socioeconomic data is applied to a map of Mount Clemens, correlations between status and geography can be observed. Map 3 displays the census tracts within Mount Clemens and each has been assigned one of the five socioeconomic status positions. Looking at this data from a citywide perspective is important because the socioeconomic index summarizes multiple demographic attributes into a single designation. This data impacts the planning area because it provides a broad perspective of the socioeconomic makeup of the city and gives insight into how these groups can impact the downtown.

make up of the city and gives insight into how these groups can impact the downtown.

Socioeconomic groups are largely segregated within the city. “High” and “Average” SES groups occupy census tracts 2453 and 2451 and occupy a broad section through the center of the city. Areas defined as “Low” and “Very Low” SES can be found in tracts 2450, 2452, and 2454. The blue border indicates the downtown planning area. The planning area encompasses portions of tracts within all four socioeconomic categories represented in Mount Clemens. This information is important when planning for the downtown because it shows that the downtown is made up of a variety of socioeconomic groups. This should be taken into consideration during future development because it is important to accommodate the unique needs of a diverse group of downtown residents and patrons.

Map 3: Composite Socioeconomic Index



Participants and the Planning Process

The Planning Process

Figure 2.17



Public Participation

In order for a plan to effectively serve the citizenry, it should reflect the opinions and interest of the public. Public participation has been used in the public decision making process historically to create solidarity in policies and ordinances. Figure 2.17 above illustrates the way public participation is integrated into the planning process through the means of group visioning and community feedback on draft plans and recommendations. This public input is an integral part of creating a strong downtown plan.

Public Input

A public meeting was held on February 16th, 2011 in Mount Clemens to gain input for the Downtown District Plan. In attendance were citizens, business owners, as well as city and county employees. During the meeting a downtown assessment survey was administered, followed by small group discussion, and a SWOT analysis, which assesses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to a certain situation or area. Meeting attendees were asked about their perception of the downtown, as well as their vision for the future, in order to build a consensus on the future direction for the downtown. Additional surveys were submitted by concerned citizens following the public meeting as well. This information is presented separately in appendix A from the surveys collected during the public meeting. The majority of participants in the public meeting were individuals who worked within the City of Mount Clemens for periods ranging from 9 months to 25 years. The majority of participants in the post-public meeting surveys were residents of Mount Clemens and had been living in the area for time periods ranging from 6 to 61 years. Survey topics of interest are presented in the following sections.

Downtown Landmarks

The buildings and landmarks of a city are what help establish an identity. Survey participants were asked to list the building and landmarks that defined the downtown to them. Responses gathered at the public meeting lacked a definitive consensus on a single landmark or building that defined the downtown.