

Downtown Utica Sub-Area Plan

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Development

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Overview

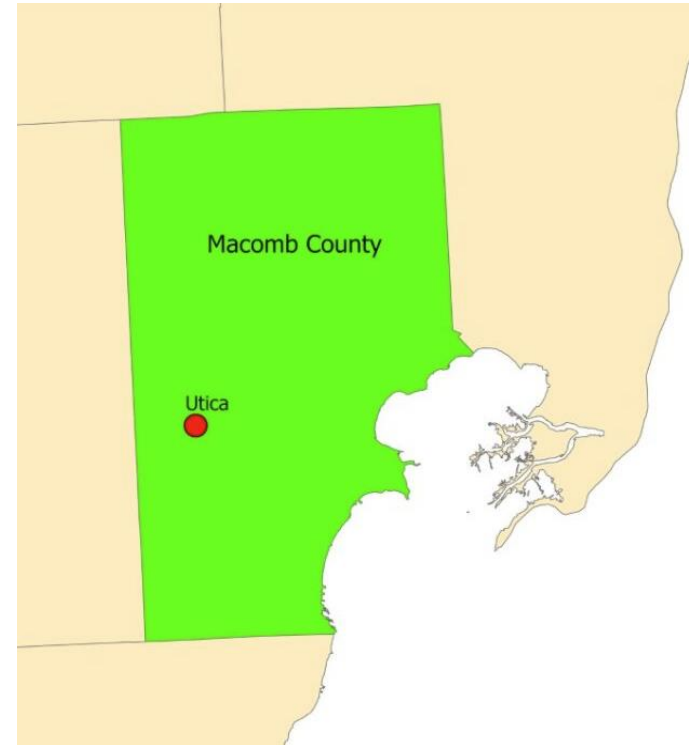
- I. Background
- II. Socioeconomic Profile
- III. Land Use, Zoning, & Current Establishments
- IV. Existing Conditions
- V. Community Outreach
- VI. Recommendations

Background

City of Utica

- ❖ Located in Macomb County
- ❖ 21 miles northeast of Detroit
- ❖ Approximately 5,000 residents
- ❖ 1.78 square miles
- ❖ Neighboring cities include Sterling Heights and Shelby Township
- ❖ Amenities include the Iron Belle Trail, Clinton River, Memorial Park, Jimmy John's Field, & shops and restaurants

City of Utica Location





Project Goal

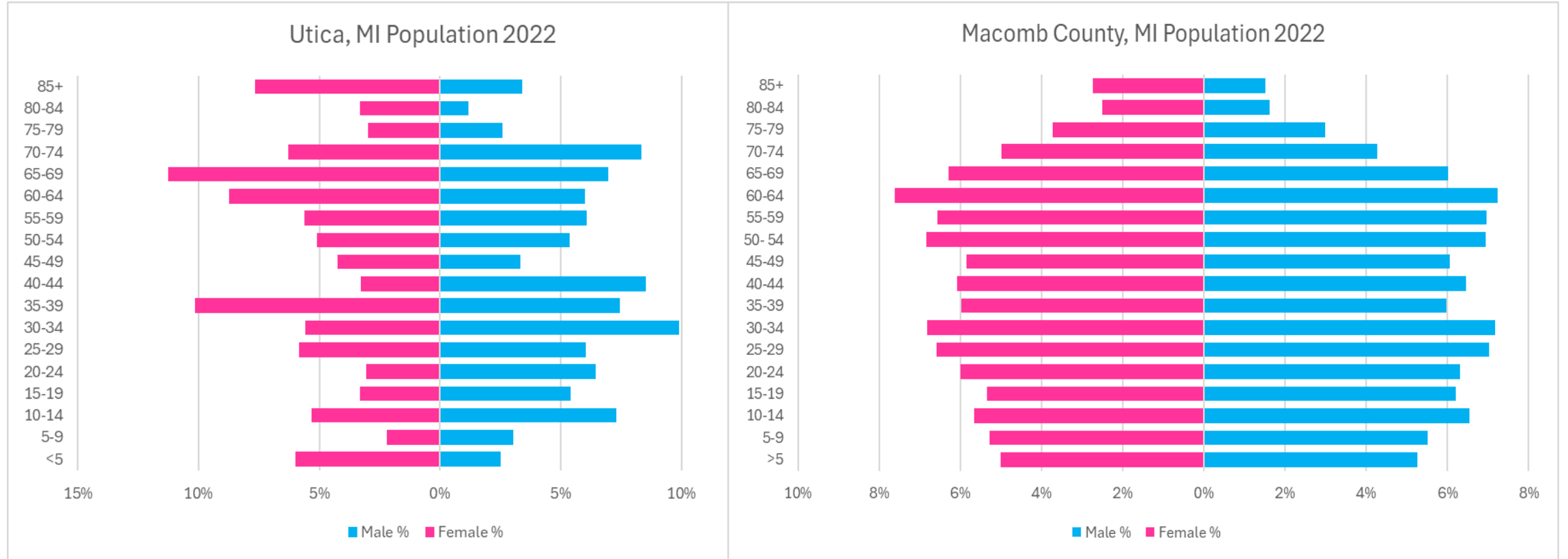
- Downtown District Revitalization
- Objectives
 - Attract a younger demographic to downtown area
 - Increase safety and walkability by implementing complete streets
 - Enhance overall aesthetics of the city
 - Improve connectivity between downtown to Jimmy John's Field

Project Location

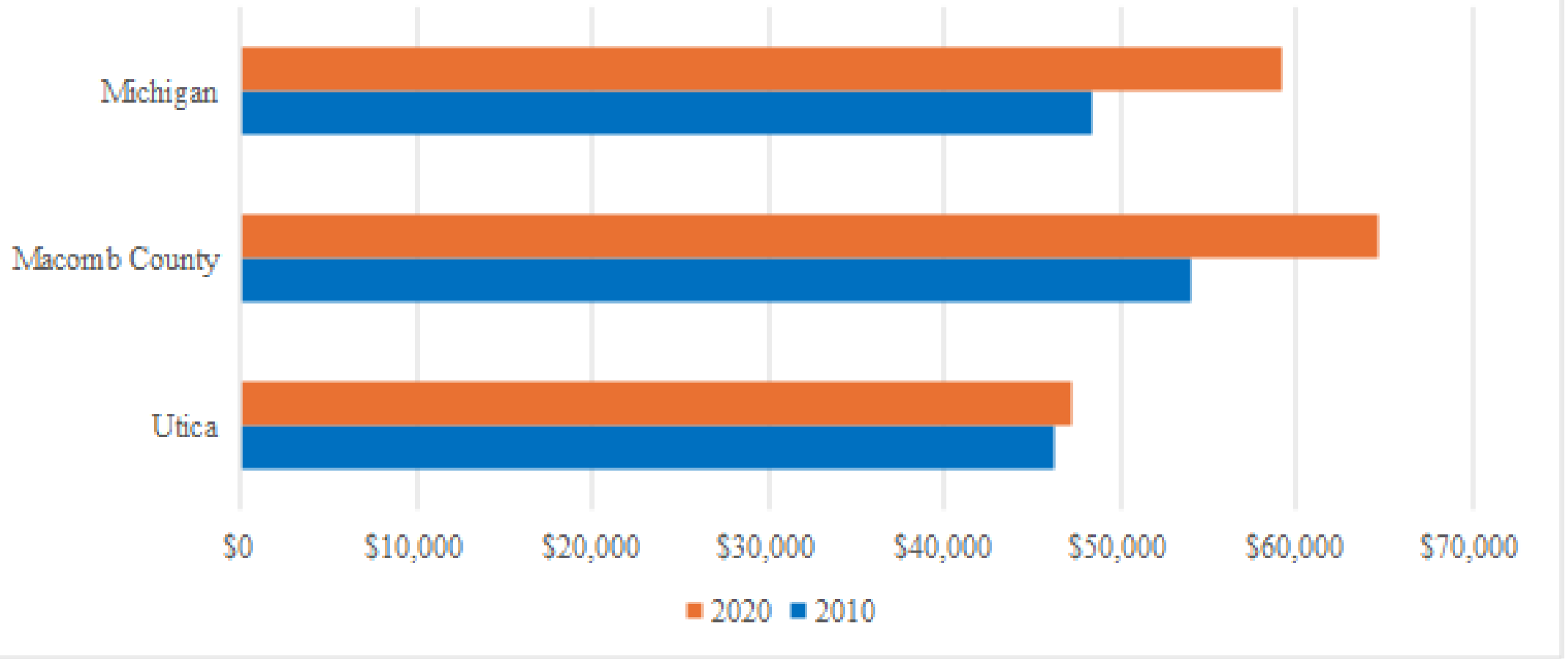


Socioeconomic Profile

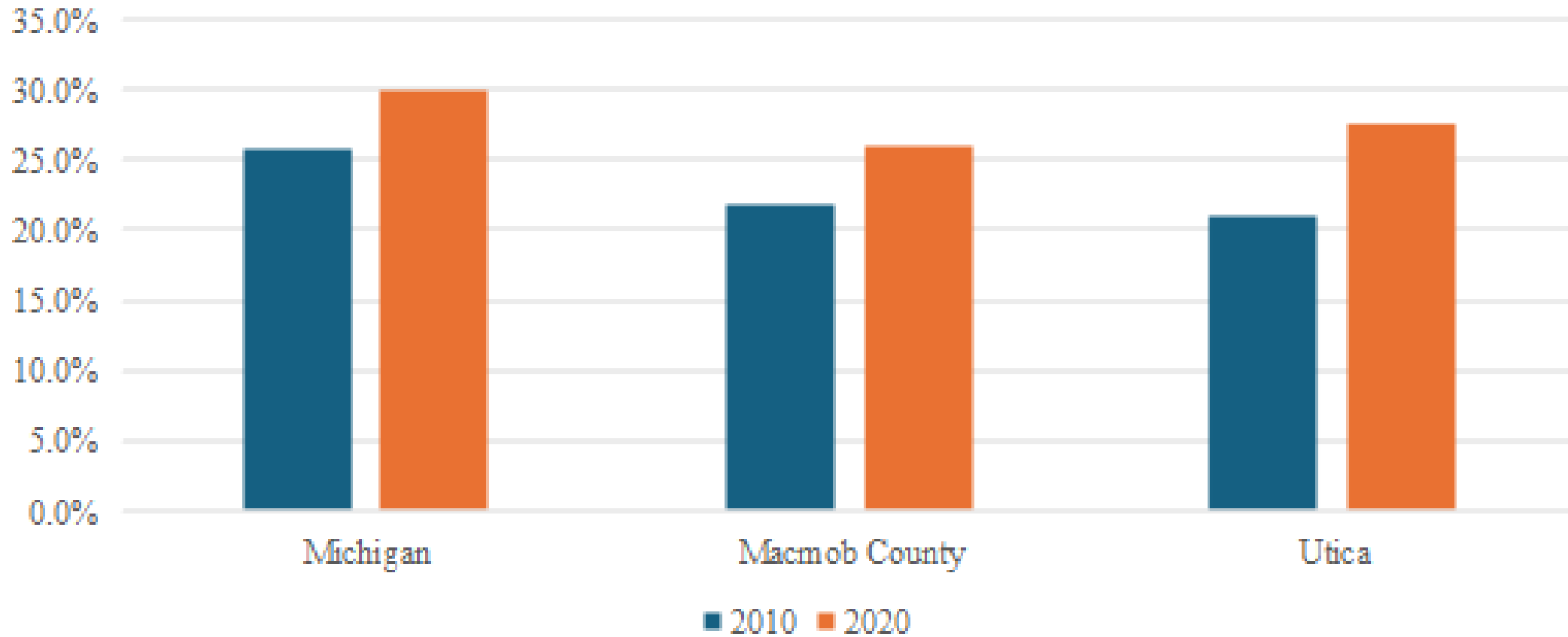
Population Pyramid



Median Household Income

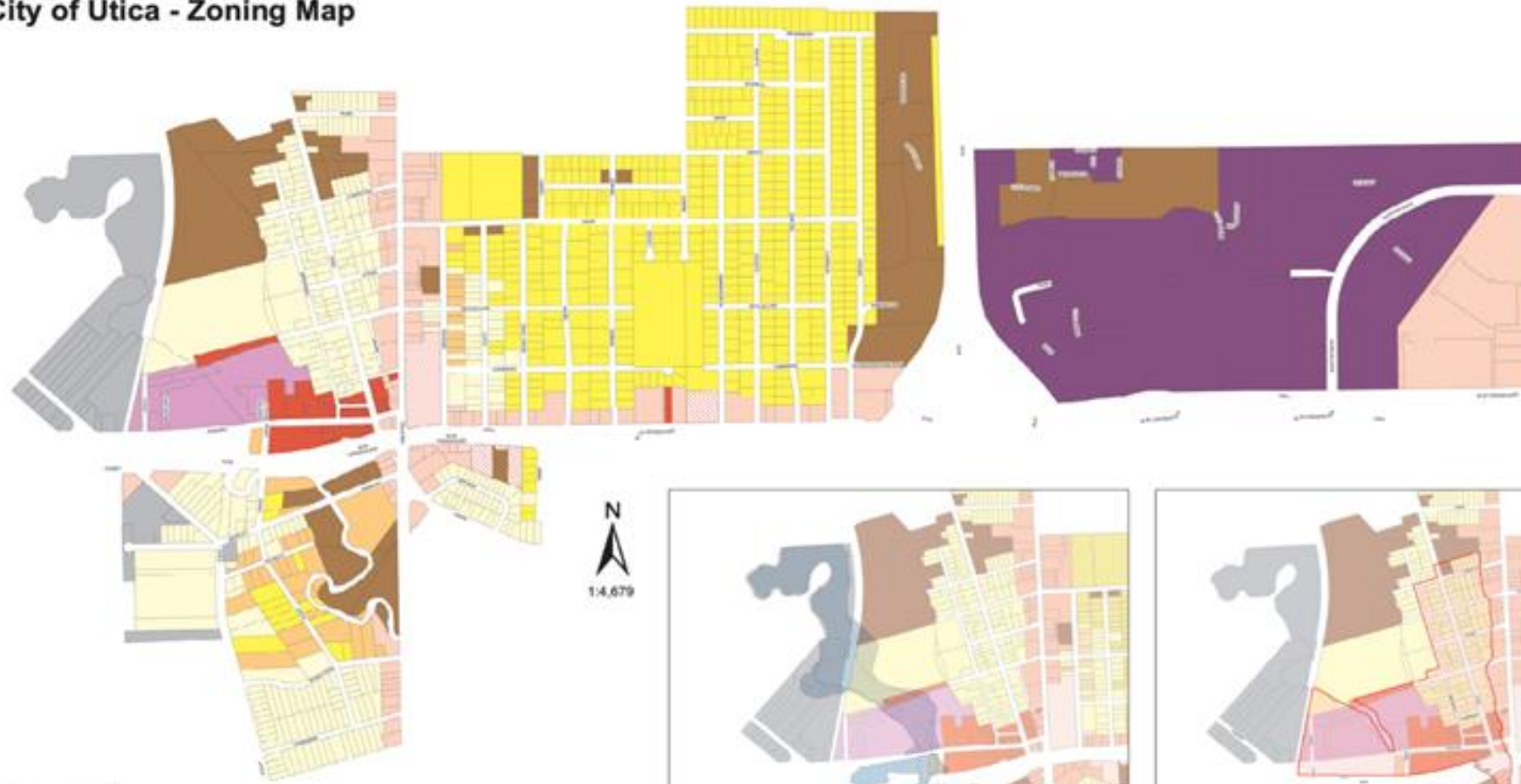


Percent of Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher (25 and Older)



Land Use, Zoning, & Current Establishments

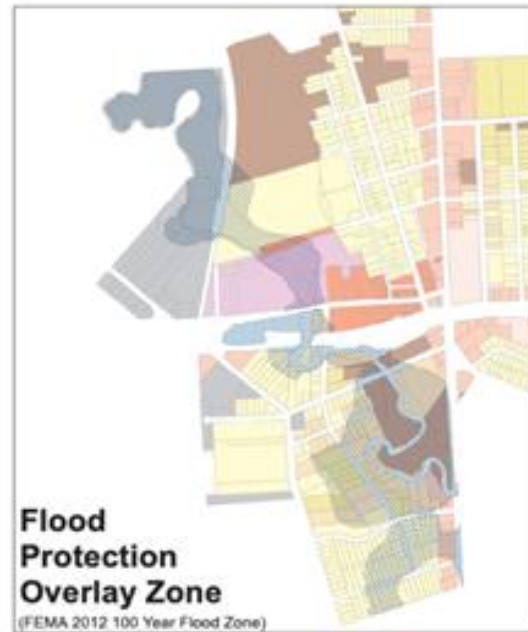
City of Utica - Zoning Map



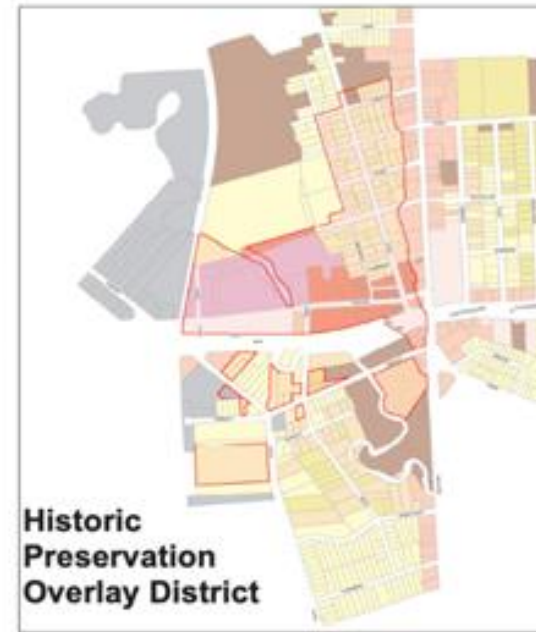
Legend

 R-1A	 C-1	 MXD
 R-1B	 C-2	 P-1
 R-2	 O-1	 I
 R-3	 DMXD	

Parcel information - Summer 2014



Flood Protection Overlay Zone
(FEMA 2012 100 Year Flood Zone)



Historic Preservation Overlay District

Land Use Map 2020, Project Area



Land Uses

landuse20

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| AGRICULTURAL / RURAL RES | ATTACHED CONDO HOUSING | MEDICAL | PARKING | TCU |
| INDUSTRIAL | MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING | MIXED USE | RECREATION / OPEN SPACE | VACANT |
| INSTITUTIONAL | RETAIL | OFFICE | SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING | WATER |
| | | | | <all other values> |

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Existing Condition and Businesses Downtown Utica



Legend

- ▲ Retail Stores
- ◆ Services
- Restaurant
- Office Spaces
- ◆ Social Club
- ★ Recreation
- Downtown Area

Existing Conditions

Downtown Form



Eastern End of
Auburn Road



Western End of
Auburn Road



Streetscapes



Auburn Road Bridge



Open Space



Wayfinding Signs



Community Outreach



Overview

- Community Engagement Meeting
 - Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at the Utica Public Library
 - Meeting included a short survey, presentation, & two activities
 - 32 residents and stakeholder in attendance
- Online Survey
 - Available from February 13-17
 - 41 total respondents



Results

- Relevant Responses

- 44% of residents visit downtown 1-2 days per week
- Over half of respondents do not visit more than one business when going downtown
- Temporary/seasonal events and new stores would make residents spend more time downtown
- Over 50% of residents walk when coming to downtown, while just under 50% of residents drive a car and park

Recommendations

Overall Recommendations



Bridge and
Connectivity
Enhancements



Open Space
Utilization



Streetscape and
Wayfinding
Improvements



Downtown
Form



Bridge and Connectivity Enhancements

- 1) Traffic Calming & Pedestrian Safety
- 2) Connecting Jimmy John's Field to the Downtown

1) Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety



- Implement pedestrian activated flashing lights at the crosswalk after the bridge.
- Reduce bridge speed limit to 10 or 15 mph.
- Consider turning the crosswalk to the east of the bridge into a raised crosswalk.
- Widen the bridge sidewalks to allow for greater pedestrian accessibility.
- Reposition the current light posts that impede the walkway closer to the curb or edge of the bridge.

Example: Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)

Design Image 1



Crosswalk Near
Iron Belle Trail
and Clinton River



Design Image 2

Light Pole
Impeding Sidewalk
Over Bridge



Design Image 3



Bridge Over
Clinton River



2) Connecting Jimmy John's Field to Downtown

- Add landscaping in the form of planters and extra lighting along the bridge to make it more aesthetically pleasing.



Example: Hanging Flower Baskets Along Bridge



Open Space Utilization

- 1) Farmer's Market
- 2) Summer Festivals
- 3) Public Space Enhancements



Case Study: Rochester, MI Farmer's Market

1) Farmer's Market

- Consider having a farmer's market on the weekends.
- Join the Michigan Farmer's Market Association (MIFMA).



2) Summer Festivals

- Expand and build upon festivals the city already hosts, such as:
 - The Old Mills Arts and Antiques Festival
 - Food Truck Rally
 - The Weekend Unwind Summer Music

3) Public Space Enhancements



Case Study: Bates Alley in Kalamazoo

- Revitalize Memorial Park with landscaping, lighting, art installation, restrooms, and modern amenities.
- Build an outdoor plaza as a public gathering space.
- Convert the alley north of Auburn Road into a pedestrian-friendly zone.



Streetscape and Wayfinding Improvements

- 1) Sidewalk Improvements
- 2) Traffic Calming Measures
- 3) Signage and Wayfinding Improvements
- 4) Public Art/Murals
- 5) Street Trees and Plants
- 6) Street Furniture

1) Sidewalk Improvements



Case Study: Village of Cassopolis Downtown Streetscape



- Repave sidewalks downtown or consider putting in pavers to make it safer and more aesthetically pleasing.
- Create visible and safe crosswalks through downtown Utica.

Design Image 4



Auburn Road and
Brownell Street



2) Traffic Calming Measures

- Consider a raised midblock crossing between Brownell Street and Cass Avenue on Auburn Road.
- Implement bump outs at crosswalks and intersections to make crosswalks safer for pedestrians.



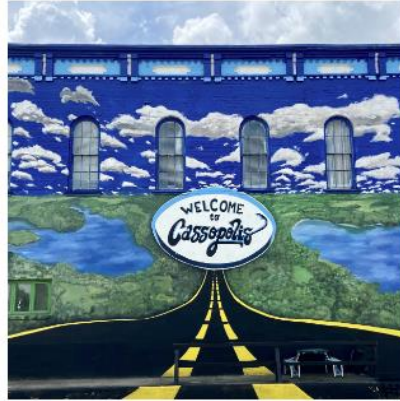
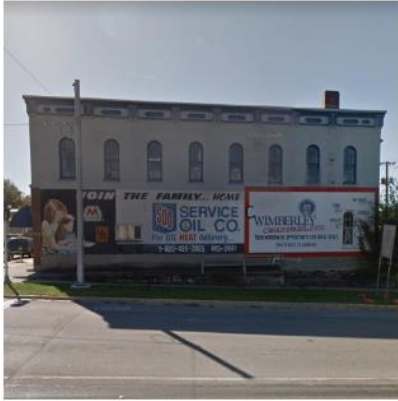
Example: Raised Midblock Crossing & Curb Bump Out

3) Signage and Wayfinding Improvements

- Include a gateway sign at Cass Avenue turning off Hall Road, downtown's southern entrance.
- Place wayfinding signage in a better, more visible location.
- Adequate parking signage should be installed throughout the downtown.



Case Study: Village of Cassopolis Proposed Gateway Sign



Case Study: Village of Cassopolis' "Welcome to Cassopolis" mural

4) Public Art and Murals

- Consider displaying different murals and sculptures in Memorial Park or along the Iron Belle Trail near downtown by local artists throughout the year.
- Build upon the already existing murals on the side of buildings downtown.
- Hire professionals to paint murals in the tunnel along the Iron Belle Trail.
- Consider adding street murals at intersections.



Case Study: City of Saginaw Street Mural

Design Image 5



Iron Belle Trail
Near Clinton River





Example: Native Street Tree in Michigan - Hophornbeam Tree

5) Street Trees and Plants

- Plant street trees on both sides of the street along Auburn Road.
- Install planters throughout downtown along Auburn Road that have flowers or other plants to brighten up the downtown area.
- Consider a buffer between the road and sidewalk by using native plants to make pedestrians feel safer.

Design Image 6



Auburn Road
Crosswalk in front
of Fire Station





Example: Trash and Recycling Bins

6) Street Furniture

- Install benches for pedestrians.
- Provide trash and recycling bins to limit the amount of trash that accumulates downtown.



Downtown Form Recommendations

- 1) Mixed-Use Development
- 2) Design Guidelines and Standards
- 3) Potential Uses for Vacant Lots if Municipal Buildings are Relocated
- 4) Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

1) Mixed-Use Development

- Adjust the current zoning ordinance to encourage mixed-use development along Auburn Road.
- Include different services downtown such as a gym or grocery store.



Example: Mixed-Use Building Being Constructed in Hudsonville, MI



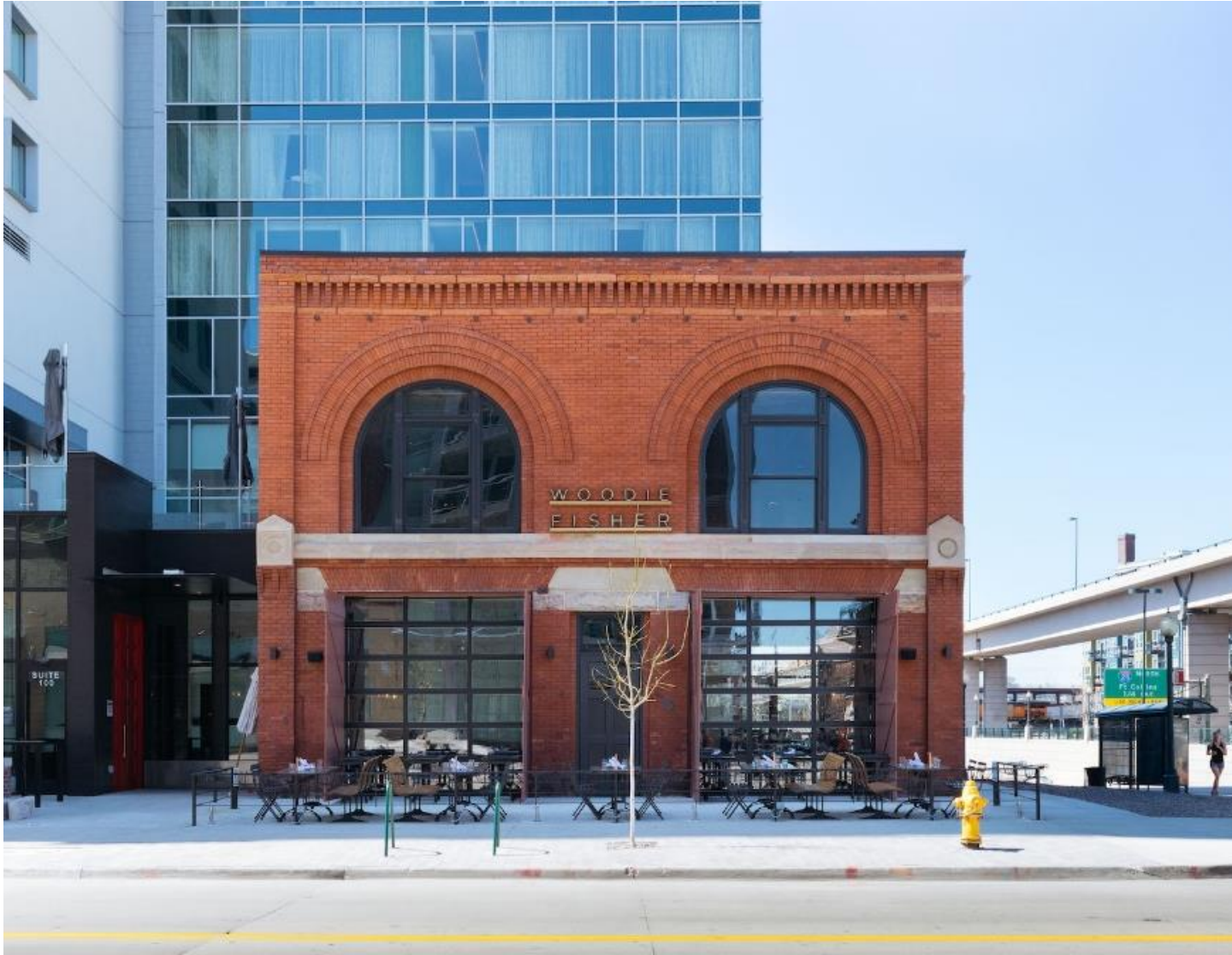
Example: Downtown Lowell, MI

2) Design Guidelines and Standards

- Implement height and density regulations.
- Establish design standards that promote cohesive aesthetics.
- Enforce or establish new setback requirements for future establishments.

3) Potential Uses for Vacant Lots if Municipal Buildings are Relocated

- Consider a mixed-use development with a grocery store and apartments in the location of the current City Hall and Police Department.
- Encourage reuse of the Fire Station, if moved, for a bar or restaurant.



Example: Fire Station in Denver, CO Reused as a Bar



DOWNTOWN
DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY



4) Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

- Establish a downtown development authority (DDA).

Introduction

Utica faces several challenges including connection between downtown and Jimmy John's Field, lacking streetscape and wayfinding signage, minimal open space, and a mismatched downtown. The City of Utica and the Macomb County Department Planning and Economic Development approached Michigan State University for assistance. The result of this is the Downtown Utica Sub-Area Plan, a plan that provides a socioeconomic profile, an existing conditions profile, planning recommendations, and funding assistance examples to implement these recommendations.

Utica, Michigan

Population: 5,144

Area: 1.78 sq. Miles



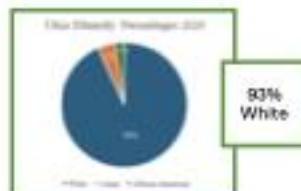
Project Area

The project boundaries for the Downtown Utica Sub-Area plan run along Auburn Road, starting from Jimmy John's Field to the west and ending at Van Dyke Avenue to the east. This includes all parcels along Auburn Road in that area.



Demographics

Utica's population majority identifies as white. The median age in Utica has been consistently increasing. The city is lacking in younger age groups.



Community Engagement

Utica residents participated in an online survey and community visioning meeting



- Concerns of pedestrian safety
- Desire for improved streetscapes
- 41% of respondents visit downtown 1-2 times a week



- 53% of respondents said temporary or seasonal events would draw them downtown more
- 57% of respondents walk when going downtown



Strengths

- Jimmy John's Field
- Memorial Park
- Traditional downtown form
- Small town charm
- River Bend Trail



Bridge Connectivity

- Add rapid flashing beacons at crosswalk
- Repaint crosswalk
- Implement space saving lighting along bridge
- Widen sidewalks and add landscaping to bridge
- Reduce speed limit

Weaknesses

- Boring streetscapes
- Pedestrian safety
- Underutilized downtown space
- Gap between downtown and Jimmy John's Field

Open Space

- Join MIFMA
- Repurpose alley N. of Auburn Rd. into a pedestrian zone
- Revitalize Memorial Park with lighting and art installations



Opportunities

- Highlighting historic downtown
- Improving pedestrian and cyclist amenities
- Temporary uses of downtown space



Streetscapes

- Plant street trees along Auburn Rd.
- Implement pedestrian infrastructure
- Repaint crosswalks and consider raised crosswalks
- Improve and add to current wayfinding signage

Threats

- Limited housing options
- Lack of community gathering space
- ageing population
- Zoning limits potential for mixed-use development

Downtown Form

- Reestablish DDA
- Enforce design standards
- Adjust zoning to prioritize and encourage mixed-use development
- Implement height and density regulations



Recommendations