

CITY OF YPSILANTI

Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan

2010-2015



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Table of Contents

SECTION I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 2: Status | 7 |
| Chapter 3: Process | 21 |
| Chapter 4: Vision and Goals | 25 |

SECTION II: OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

| | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Chapter 5: Administer | 27 |
| Chapter 6: Maintain | 37 |
| Chapter 7: Coordinate | 41 |
| Chapter 8: Build | 45 |
| Chapter 9: Promote | 55 |

SECTION III: ACTION PLAN

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Chapter 10: Prioritize | 57 |
| Chapter 11: Fund | 59 |
| Chapter 12: Implement | 65 |

APPENDICES

- I. Recommended Ordinance Language
- II. Survey & Results: 2009 Non-Motorized Planning Process
- III. Survey & Results: 2007 YDDA "toDowntown" Study
- IV. Huron/I-94 Non-Motorized Crossing Study
- V. Huron River Drive Right-of-Way Constraints
- VI. Promoting Active Communities Self-Assessment, Completed September 2009
- VII. PA 33 of 2008 & Adoption Timeline
- VIII. Documentation of Adoption Process
- IX. Washtenaw Avenue Right-of-Way Information
- X. Border-To-Border Trail Map

Table of Figures

SECTION I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.1: Housing Age | 7 |
| 2.2: Land Use | 8 |
| 2.3: Population per Acre | 11 |
| 2.4: Percent of Residents with a Disability | 12 |
| 2.5: Percent of Households without a Car | 14 |
| 2.6: Number of Children Below Poverty per Square Mile | 15 |
| 2.7: Commute Source of Over-16 Workers | 16 |
| 2.8: Ypsilanti Commute Data Geographic Comparison | 17 |
| 2.9: Ypsilanti Commute Data Trends | 17 |
| 2.10: Ypsilanti Traffic Crashes Involving Pedestrians or Bicyclists | 18 |

SECTION II: OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

| | |
|---|----|
| 7.1: Parking in the Downtown Development Authority district | 43 |
| 8.1: Non-motorized Park Connector Route | 47 |

SECTION III: ACTION PLAN

| | |
|--|----|
| 11.1: Act 51 Spending in Ypsilanti from FY1999 to FY2008 | 59 |
|--|----|

Table of Tables

SECTION I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 2.1: Population and Households | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 9 |
| 2.2: Age Distribution of Residents | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 13 |
| 2.3: Income Characteristics | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 13 |

SECTION II: OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 8.1: Pedestrian Infrastructure Deficiencies | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 48 |
| 8.2: Bicycle Infrastructure Deficiencies | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 51 |

SECTION III: ACTION PLAN

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 10.1: Prioritization Questionnaire | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 57 |
| 12.1: Administer | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 65 |
| 12.2: Maintain | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 67 |
| 12.3: Coordinate | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 68 |
| 12.4: Build | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 69 |
| 12.5: Promote | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | . | 71 |

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PLAN ADOPTION

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City of Ypsilanti

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Executive Summary

This plan is a policy document, identifying the means to establish a built and cultural environment that supports and encourages safe, accessible, comfortable, and convenient non-motorized and multimodal transportation options for both people and goods throughout the City and into the surrounding communities. A multimodal transportation system will result in a greater number of individuals choosing alternative transportation modes, including not only walking and bicycling, but also taking public transportation. This increase will lead to a safer transportation system, a more environmentally sustainable City, an increased quality of life of residents and visitors, and neighborhoods and business districts that are more attractive.

City of Ypsilanti Planning & Development staff, with aid and input from stakeholders and after careful review of demographic data, developed this plan in mid-2009. From that planning process came four goals: first, cultivate and maintain an accessible, equitable, and practical multi-modal transportation system that provides for the effective movement of people and goods within and through the City; second, to provide a safe transportation system for all transportation system users; third, to protect the environment, including the City's significant historic, natural, and scenic resources; and finally, to increase awareness of the ways all users can integrate motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation.

Ypsilanti's dense, historic land use pattern and gridded transportation network contribute greatly to the ready achievement of these goals. However, as with any system, improvements can be made. Five primary areas of improvement were identified and presented in **Section II** of the plan: administration, consisting of modifications that will help ensure that future development minimizes adverse impacts on accessibility; maintenance, ensuring that responsibilities are clear, consistent, and enforced; cooperation, ensuring that improvements throughout the can be similar, continuous, and based on a shared vision; building, to close infrastructure gaps and complete the physical network ; and promotion, with strategies for educating current and potential users about how to use and interact with Ypsilanti's transportation network.

The plan presents a rough implementation schedule, identifies several funding opportunities, and presents a prioritization mechanism for projects not identified within the plan in **Section III**.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This plan is a policy document to guide future policy and infrastructure decisions, and can be used to help Ypsilanti strategically apply for funding for projects it identifies. It identifies the means to establish a built and cultural environment that supports and encourages safe, accessible, comfortable, and convenient transportation options, focusing on non-motorized means such as biking and walking, for both people and goods throughout the City and into the surrounding communities. Such a multimodal transportation environment will result in a greater number of individuals choosing alternative transportation modes, including not only walking and bicycling, but also taking public transportation. This increase will lead to a safer transportation system, a more environmentally sustainable City, an increased quality of life of residents and visitors, and neighborhoods and business districts that are more attractive.

The Role of Multi-Modal Transportation

A comprehensive transportation system is vital to the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Ypsilanti. Improvements to non-motorized facilities, such as those for bicyclists and pedestrians, and multimodal facilities, those points where two or more types of transportation interact, are improvements for not only the eight percent of the U.S. population that does not have access to a personal vehicle¹ and the 13.6%² of Ypsilanti's households that do not own a vehicle, but all individuals, as almost all trips begin and end as a pedestrian. The benefits of a comprehensive transportation system extend beyond the users of the system to the public as a whole.

Multimodal: The availability of transportation options using different modes within a system or corridor.

¹ United States Census Bureau. *Journey to Work: 2000*. , 2004. Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/c2kbr-33.pdf>>.

² United States Census Bureau. *2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*. 2004. Web. 1 Sep 2009.

Washtenaw County's traffic fatalities currently average over thirty per year.

A reduction in overall motor vehicle traffic could help reduce this number. ⁱ

Mobility: the time and costs required for travel. Mobility is higher when average travel times, variations in travel times, and travel costs are low. Indicators of mobility are indicators of travel times and costs and variability in travel times and costs.

A well-implemented transportation system will:

Increase Transportation Options

- Provide transportation alternatives for all individuals who are capable of independent travel.
- Improve access and mobility for not only the 15%³ of Ypsilanti residents who have a disability, but also Ypsilanti's aging population. ⁴
- Support public transportation, such as buses and trains.
- Provide transportation choices that respect an individual's religious beliefs, moral convictions, or uneasiness in driving.

Improve health and safety

- Create a stronger social fabric by fostering the social interaction that takes place outside of the car.
- Encourage healthy lifestyles and help to prevent chronic disease by promoting active transportation.
- Improve safety, especially for the very young and very old, who are often dependent on non-motorized facilities and connections between multiple modes of travel.
- Add "eyes on the street," which not only foster community but also serve to deter crime.
- Reduce the number of traffic crashes and fatalities by reducing the necessity for passenger car and light-truck vehicle use.

Conserve natural resources

- Reduce the local air, water, and noise pollution from automobile use by providing excellent alternatives to automobile travel.
- Reduce congestion by reducing the overall number of automobile trips taken.
- Reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

³ United States Census Bureau. 2005-2007 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates. Disability.

⁴ Waldrop, Judith, and Sharon M. Stern. "Disability Status: 2000." *U.S. Census*. 2003. U.S. Census, Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-17.pdf>>.

ⁱ "FARS Encyclopedia." *Fatality Analysis Reporting System*. 2008. Federal Highway Administration, Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/main/index.aspx>>.

Stimulate the local economy

- Reduce the costs associated with automobile parking, automobile maintenance, and fossil fuels, making this money available for other goods and services.⁵
- Increase workers' access to job sites, ability to reliably reach those jobs, and the employment pool from which potential employers may choose.
- Make Ypsilanti's many commercial districts attractive and easy places to visit and do business through improvements to the whole transportation network.
- Sustain and increase property value throughout Ypsilanti.⁶

AAA estimates the cost of owning the average automobile at \$5,783/year, even before driving costs such as gas and maintenance are considered.^{iv}

⁵ Liao, Yihua. "Vehicle Ownership Patterns of American Households." *Urban Transportation Center at University of Illinois*. 2002. University of Illinois, Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.utc.uic.edu/~fta/Information%20Briefs/vehicles3.pdf>>.

⁶ Cortright, Jon. "Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in U.S. Cities." *CEOs for Cities*. Aug 2009. CEOs for Cities, Web. 1 Sep 2009. <http://www.ceosforcities.org/files/WalkingTheWalk_CEOsforCities.pdf>.

^{iv} "Your Driving Costs." *AAA Exchange*. 2009. AAA, Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.aaaexchange.com/Assets/Files/200948913570.DrivingCosts2009.pdf>>.

Building upon past work

This project gathers the work of recent Ypsilanti transportation-related initiatives into one whole. Past work has included the *2006 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan for Washtenaw County*, the recommendations of the *Ypsilanti Downtown Blueprint 2008*, the *2008 Transit Plan for Washtenaw County*, Promoting Active Communities assessments, and the *2008-2012 Parks & Recreation Plan*. This plan addresses, consolidates, and builds upon this work.

The *2006 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan for Washtenaw County* includes an inventory of existing sidewalk and bicycling facilities, provides a list of capital improvements needed to complete the networks, and notes several potential sources of funding, but does not prioritize these improvements or include recommendations for policy improvements.

The City of Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority (YDDA) created the *Ypsilanti Downtown Blueprint 2008* to develop an economic enhancement strategy for downtown Ypsilanti. This strategy, part of the Cool Cities initiative, was crafted to strengthen downtown Ypsilanti and guide its future development in keeping with the community's vision. This blueprint advocated for increased walkability downtown, as well as linkages to any future commuter rail project.

The City participated in the State of Michigan's Promoting Active Communities Self Assessment Program in 2006, 2007, and 2008, earning the silver award each time. Key areas in need of improvement include changes in zoning and parking standards to encourage more biking and walking, a lack of trails and shared use paths, few bike lanes, limited bicycle parking facilities, the need for more education and promotion regarding biking and walking safely, and the need for better connectivity to, from, and through neighborhoods and shopping areas.

Furthermore, the *2008-2012 Parks & Recreation Plan* lists improving and expanding non-motorized transportation networks as one of the five primary goals to focus on in the next five years. This was the top priority identified in a survey of 450 Ypsilanti residents during the Parks and Recreation planning process.

Additionally, a 2007 YDDA survey of 250 downtown and Depot Town employees on commuting behavior found that a high percentage of these employees walk or bike to work, almost double the national average. Thirty-four percent of those surveyed live within five miles of their workplace, and therefore could, given the infrastructure, walk or bike to work. Some of the issues cited that prevented these respondents from biking or walking to work could be corrected in a relatively short period, including a lack of routing information.

Socio-cultural impetus

Ypsilanti benefits from its early history as a commercial center in southeast Michigan. The development of the City's core before automobile use became common gave rise to a dense grid pattern that encourages biking and walking to key destinations like parks, schools, and the central commercial areas of Downtown and Depot Town. Later, as automobiles became more popular, major streets shifted away from this pedestrian focus. Street improvements increased road capacity, allowing for more and quicker motor vehicle access to, from, and through Ypsilanti – in some cases even removing sidewalks in the process. In particular, the four major streets cutting through the center of the city, Washtenaw Avenue (MI 17), Michigan Avenue (Business Route US 12), Hamilton, and Huron, fail to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians. However, Ypsilanti's compact, historic form still provides the opportunity for people to live near work, shopping, and recreation – an option not available in many new-growth communities.

This dense grid pattern also gives Ypsilanti another advantage: such a system is not only historic and easily navigable, but also less resource-intensive. A dense downtown requires less infrastructure per business or residents, and thus less maintenance despite often more intense use, than does a less-dense area.⁷ Due to their smaller per capita demand on these municipal services, denser areas are often more environmentally friendly than their less dense counterparts, if well-designed. By capitalizing upon Ypsilanti's existing density, we can complete its already-extensive multimodal transportation network at a lower cost than newer cities with lower density.

Furthermore, communities with robust multimodal transportation networks appeal to cost-conscious creative professionals. Creating an excellent multimodal transportation infrastructure that works with Ypsilanti's residential density can meet both the needs of the population that is unable to afford a personal vehicle as well as the population that chooses to live without one. Such a network would also appeal to young, creative talent from the area's universities, who may have initially come to the area without a personal motor vehicle. Although there are challenges to improving connectivity, creating more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly corridors, and improving accessibility for people with disabilities, the City's extant non-motorized infrastructure provides an excellent framework for future improvements.

⁷ Burchell, Robert, and Anthony Downs. *Sprawl costs*. Island Pr, 2005. Print.

Future directions: Land use drives transportation choice

While this plan focuses on policies and infrastructure that are directly part of the transportation system, land use patterns determine whether non-motorized options are even available. Transportation impacts should be considered during any future Master Plan amendments, zoning map changes, or similar actions. Whether or not someone can walk to their destination depends not only on the presence and condition of sidewalks and crosswalks, but also on the distance. If the beginning and end of a trip are close together, non-motorized options become much more reasonable for that trip.

Zoning and land use decisions determine this critical distance factor. Neighborhoods with higher residential density place more households close to their schools, jobs, and other amenities, making non-motorized options possible (as well as transit options). Permitting office and retail uses to be combined with residential uses places these destinations close to the people who need to access them, again supporting non-motorized travel.

Research is increasingly showing that households are willing to pay a premium to live in such compact, walkable, mixed-use areas, and sources ranging from the National Association of Realtors to the American Planning Association expect demand for small lot and multi-unit residential living to grow over the next few decades. The Center for Disease Control specifically addresses land use in their "Healthy Places" initiative, recommending, "Encourage mixed land use and greater land density ... so people can walk or bike more easily." The most important land use decision, though, appears to be not "encouraging" but "permitting" – reviews of local zoning ordinances typically find that regulations push density downwards and restrict mixed use patterns.

Ypsilanti already has the basic structure of "traditional" neighborhoods in place, due to its age. However, the last several decades of zoning amendments and enforcement have been generally in the direction of reduced residential density and increased separation of uses. Most of these actions have been in response to nuisance conditions perceived to be linked to dense, mixed-use patterns. This plan does not have space to thoroughly examine the goals and outcomes of those actions. However, any future zoning amendments should be carefully examined to ensure they do not reduce vital transportation options, and the zoning ordinance should be further examined to determine how appropriate infill development, neighborhood-scaled businesses, and other land use options can be used to support non-motorized transportation.

Littman, Todd. "Where We Want To Be: Home Location Preferences and Their Implication for Smart Growth." *Victoria Transport Policy Institute* 22 Nov 2009: n. pag. Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.vtpi.org/sgcp.pdf>>.

"Healthy Community Design." *Designing and Building Healthy Places*. Jun 2008. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces>>.

Levine, Jonathan. *Zoned Out*. Washington D.C.: RFF Press, 2006. Print.

Chapter 2: Status

Land Use

Ypsilanti has a rich heritage, reflected both in its pattern of land use and architecture. Commercial uses adjoin the main local thoroughfares, such as Cross Street, Huron Street, Washtenaw Avenue, and Michigan Avenue. Industrial uses are adjacent to regional distribution points, both historic and contemporary, including the railroad, the Huron River, and I-94. Housing development clustered at first near commercial areas, then became more dense, then spread out as the physical necessity of being adjacent to these commercial areas gave way to the convenience of automobile use. These patterns are shown in **Figures 2.1** and **2.2**. The current zoning ordinance and master plan, developed in the last half of the previous century, perpetuate this less-dense, single-use, auto-oriented pattern of land use, shown in **Figure 2.2**.

Eastern Michigan University (EMU) has also had a major impact upon land use in Ypsilanti. Not only is it a major employment center, but it is also an important destination, for both non-motorized transportation users and transit and motor vehicle users. Retail and dense housing adjoin the campus. This clustering of uses- employment, education, retail, and housing- indicate a strong potential for heavy non-motorized use.

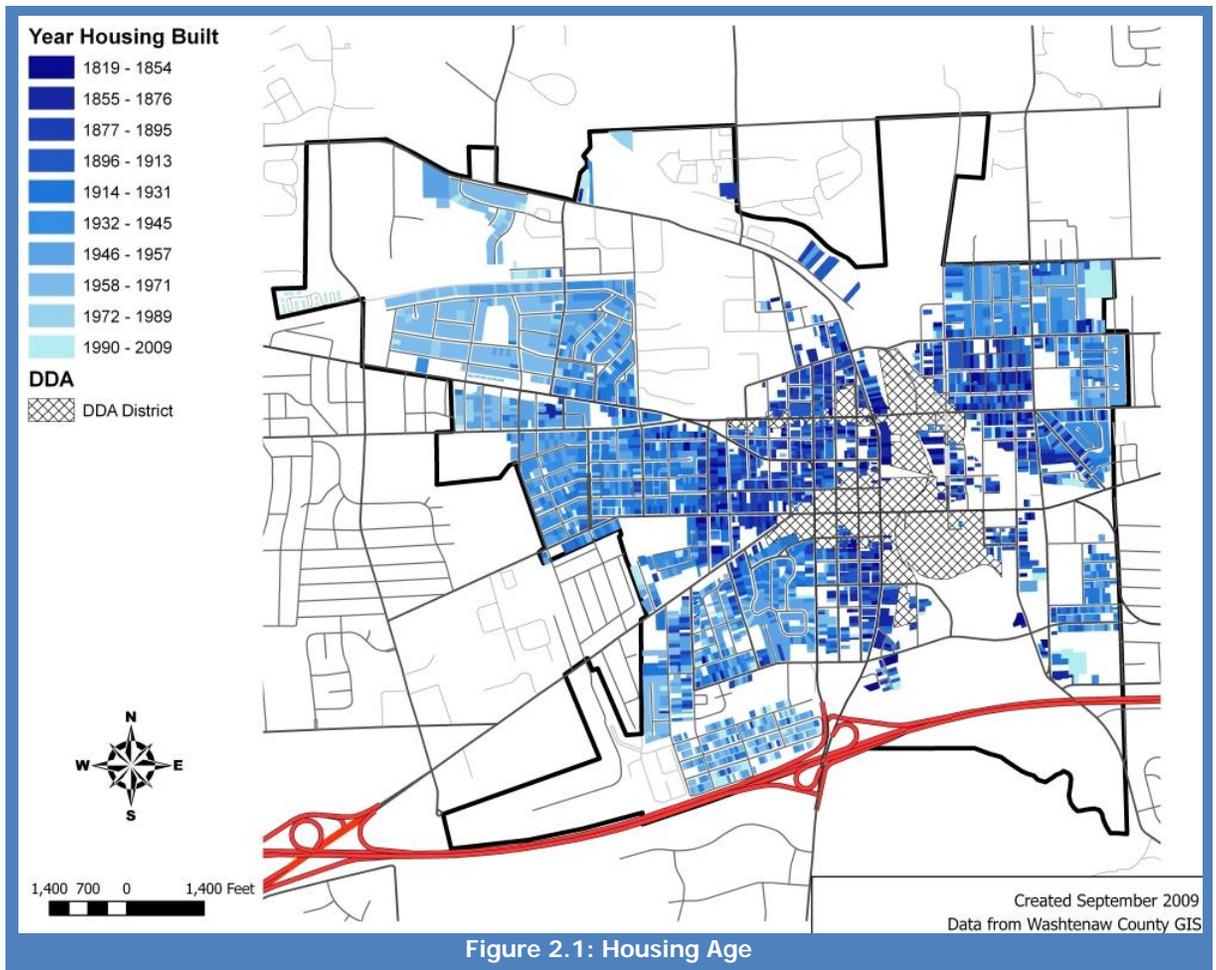
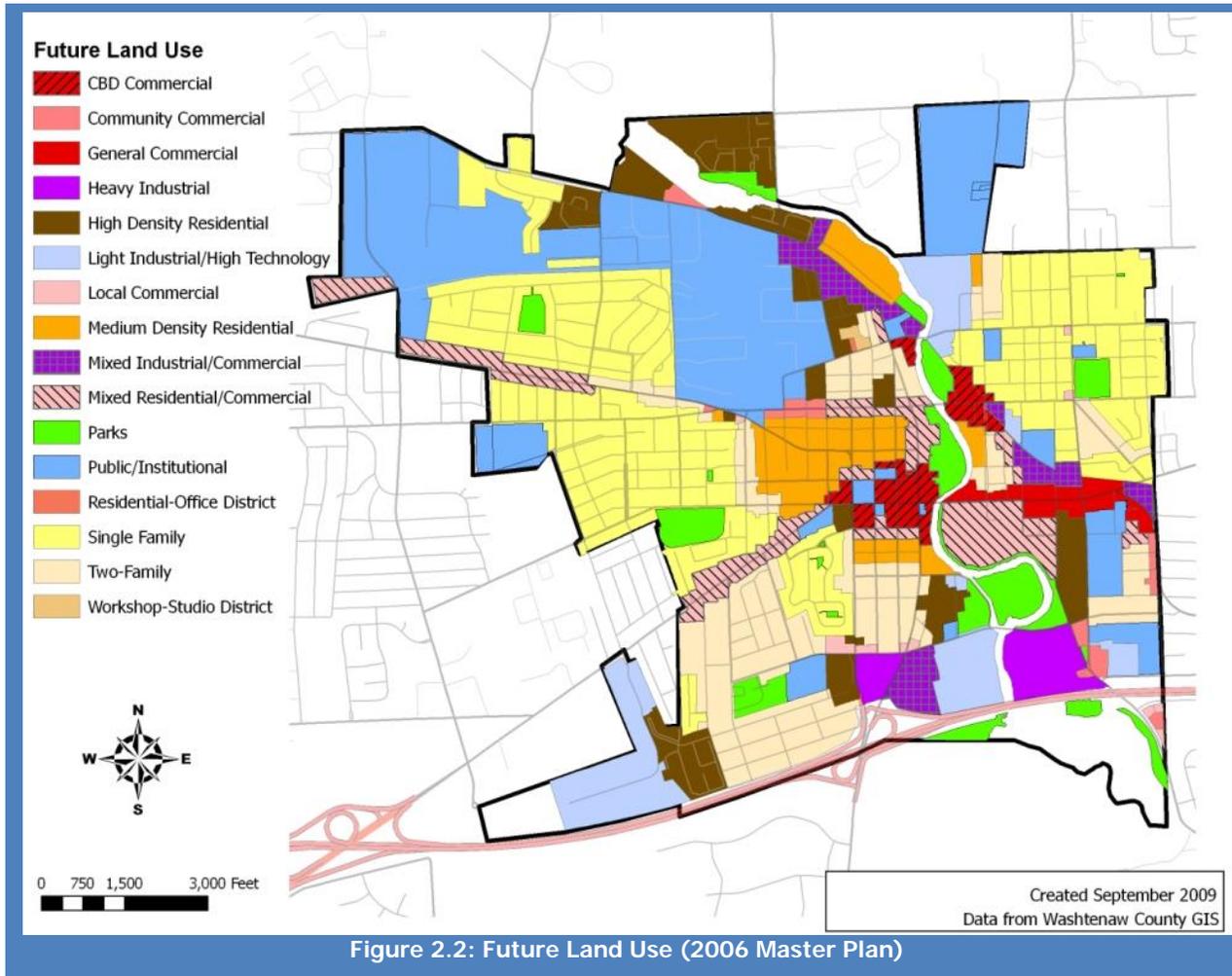


Figure 2.1: Housing Age

Much of the area of these central business districts and neighborhoods make up the Ypsilanti Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places and one of the largest municipal historic districts in Michigan. Further from the core

are more automobile-dependent land uses: uniform neighborhoods of single-family use; commercial bands along major road corridors, and larger industrial uses. This pattern of land use is relatively stable, as changes of use typically occur on a parcel-to-parcel basis over time.



Population

After a few decades of decline from its peak in the 1970s, Ypsilanti's total population is expected to remain fairly constant in coming years.⁹

| | Census 1960 | Census 1970 | Census 1980 | Census 1990 | Census 2000 | SEMCOG 2009 | SEMCOG 2035 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Total Population | 20,957 | 29,538 | 24,031 | 24,818 | 22,237 | 20,437 | 22,247 |
| Households | n/a | 7,519 | 8,451 | 8,539 | 8,551 | 8,687 | 8,996 |
| Average Household Size | n/a | 2.81 | 2.4 | 2.38 | 2.16 | 1.98 | 1.94 |
| Approx. % of Population in Households | n/a | 71.5% | 84.4% | 81.9% | 83.1% | 84.2% | 78.4% |

Unlike rapidly growing areas, the City does not need to plan for entirely new roads or systems to serve future population, but demographic characteristics can help the City focus its limited resources on improvement and extension of existing facilities. Several of these factors are identified in **Table 2.1**, including overall population distribution, age, income level, and disability status.

Ypsilanti's population loss is analogous to general demographic trends seen across the United States. As **Table 2.1** shows, Ypsilanti's average household size has dropped in recent decades, and is predicted to continue dropping. The City of Ann Arbor and surrounding Townships have also experienced this shrinking household size, as have communities around the state and nation.

In the face of declining household size and little developable land, total population can be maintained by adding households. Although common wisdom in Ypsilanti hints at decline, the number of total households in the City has in fact risen somewhat in recent years. The Census reports that the City's population dropped by 2,400 residents from 1990 to 2000, but the City gained occupied housing units. SEMCOG postulates that this seeming incongruity occurred because households have not been added quickly enough to compensate for shrinking average household size. SEMCOG forecasts developed in 2008 show that Ypsilanti's population will stabilize in coming years, as household size reaches around two people per

⁸ Data from US Census, SEMCOG Population Estimates (July 2009), and SEMCOG 2035 Regional Development Forecast (2008).

Notes:

1. Total population includes population in "group quarters", such as dormitories and assisted living facilities; household data does not include group quarters.
2. Numbers in italics are SEMCOG projections.
3. Percent change columns for 2010 are calculated from 2000 base
4. Changes in collection methods between 1970 and 1980 may account for some residents measured as "group quarters" in 1970 being measured as "households" in 1980.

⁹ "Population and Household Estimates for Southeast Michigan." *Southeast Michigan Council of Governments* Jul 2009: n. pag. Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.semco.org/Population.aspx>>.

household. Should this trend continue, it is unlikely that Ypsilanti will again approach the population peak seen in 1970. However, if Ypsilanti pursues strategic densification, reinforces its infrastructure to support that density, and distinguishes itself with compelling amenities, it is possible that both population levels and number of households will increase.

Population Distribution

Ypsilanti has a dense core residential area concentrated in the Riverside and Midtown neighborhoods, between downtown and the EMU campus area. These older neighborhoods have smaller lots, houses divided into apartments, and small apartment buildings. The neighborhood to the north of EMU, between Huron River Drive and Clark on LeForge Road, has several large apartment complexes. In the southwest portion of the city, the neighborhoods feature mostly dense single family and duplex houses, with a few larger housing complexes.

Figure 2.3 shows population per acre throughout the City, divided by Census tract.

The lower density shown in the southwestern and southeastern-most tracts, as well as in the tract containing EMU, is likely due to the expanses of single-use non-residential land uses in those areas, such as light manufacturing, Ford Lake, and educational facilities. There are, however, significant concentrations of multi-family and single-family housing within those tracts.

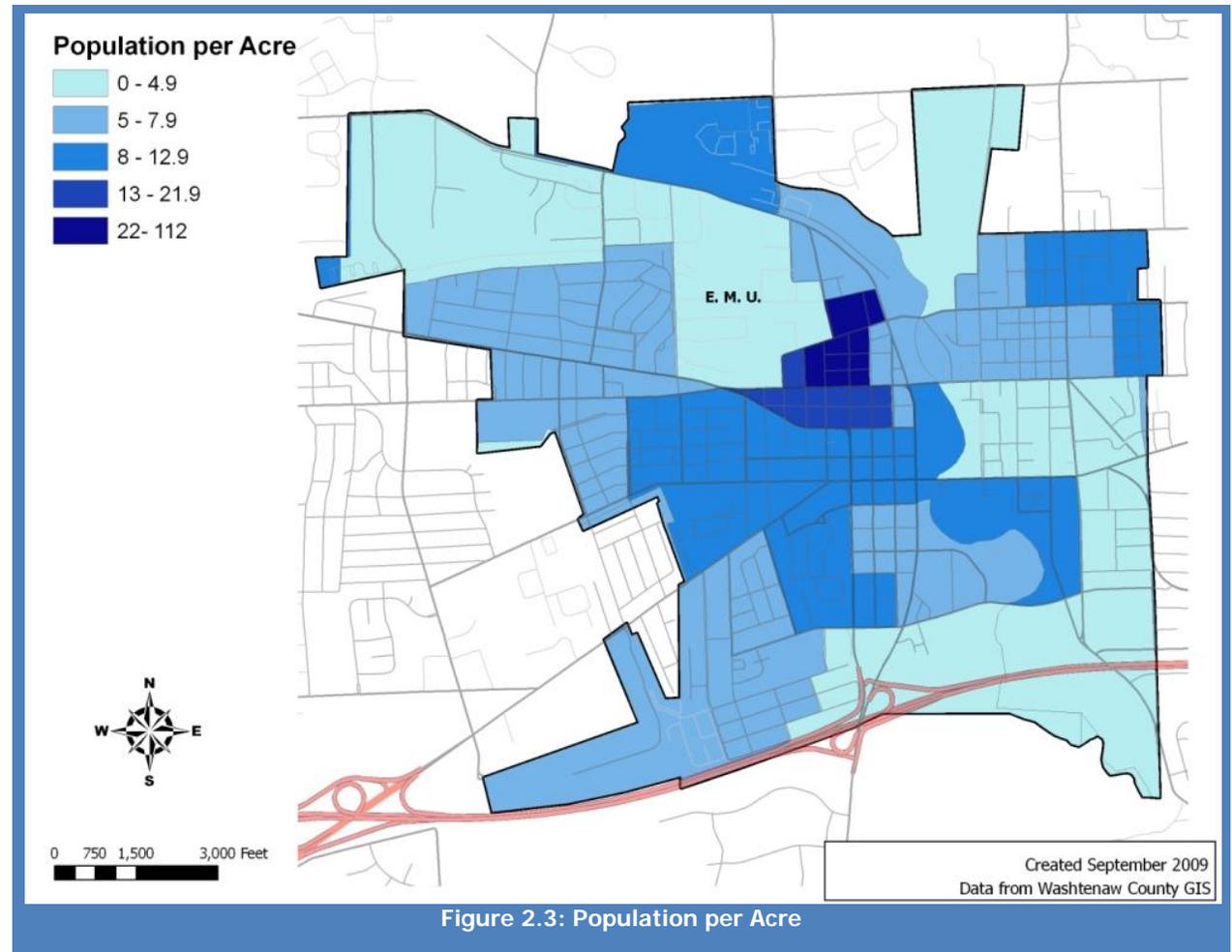


Figure 2.3: Population per Acre

Persons with Disabilities

Disability is defined by the U.S. Census bureau as having one or more of the following long-lasting conditions: a sensory, physical, or mental disability, any of which must consist of the condition lasting six months or more and making it difficult to

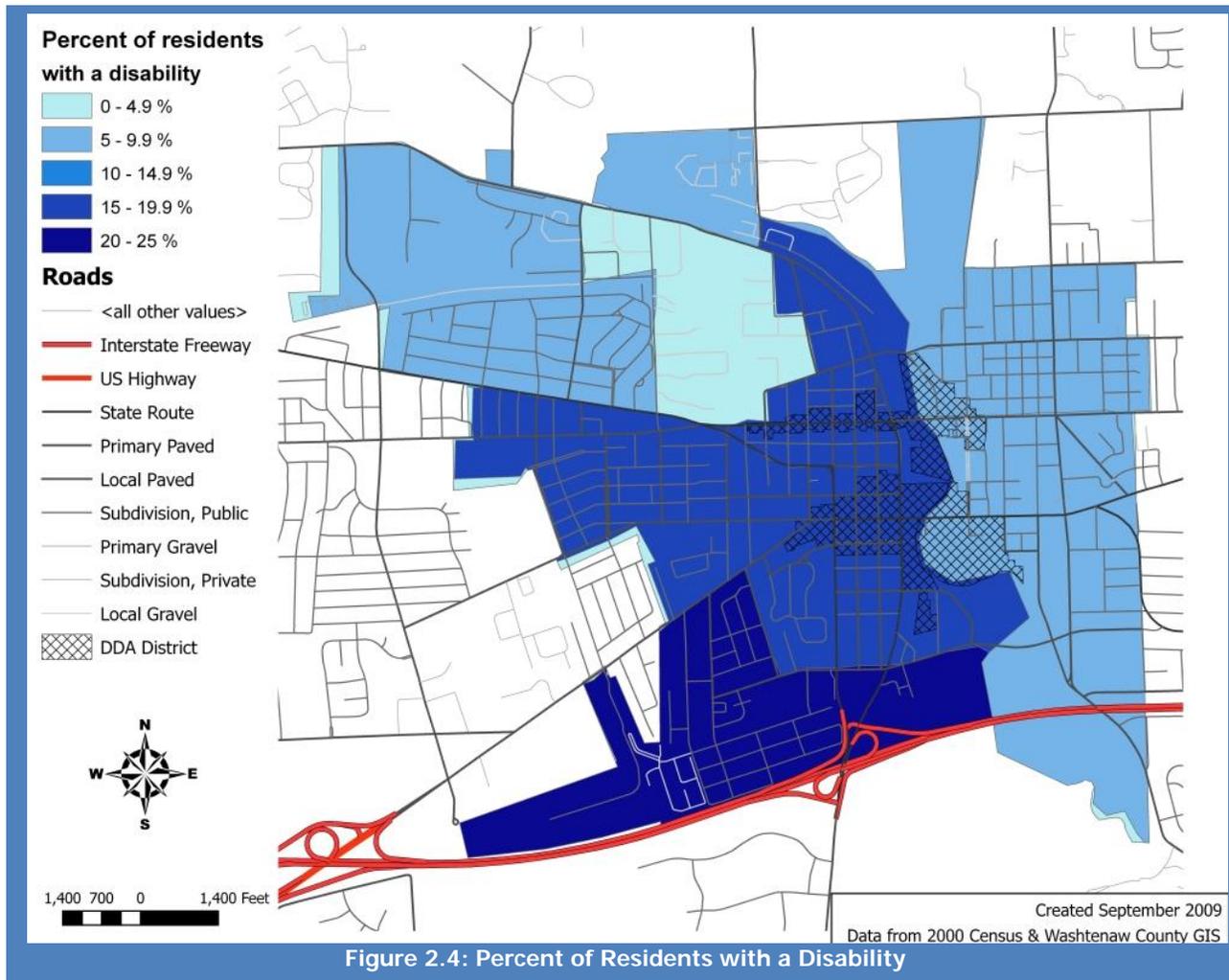


Figure 2.4: Percent of Residents with a Disability

perform care for one's self, go outside the home, or maintain employment. According to the 2000 Census, nearly 32% of Ypsilanti residents suffered some disability by this definition. The more recent American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2005-2007 show a lower percentage of disabled residents, at 15%, a drastic change resulting from both a change in the survey instrument and the fact that the ACS does not include residents in non-institutionalized group quarters, such as college dormitories.¹⁰ However, it is notable that even with these data comparability issues,¹¹ the ACS asserts that 41% of those 65 and older are likely to have some sort

¹⁰ Waldrop, Judith, and Sharon M. Stern. "Disability Status: 2000." *U.S. Census*. 2003. U.S. Census, Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-17.pdf>>.

¹¹ United States. *American Community Survey: 2005 Subject Definitions*. , 2005. Web. 1 Sep 2009. <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/2005/usedata/Subject_Definitions.pdf#page=33>.

of disability.¹² These data, when taken together with ever-lengthening life expectancies, emphasize the importance of putting in place measures that encourage accessibility for and independent mobility of both the elderly and the disabled.¹³

As shown in **Figure 2.4**, the southwest portion of the City had the highest percentage of residents who had some sort of disability; the downtown area and neighborhoods immediately to the west had the next highest. Thus, the southwest and central areas of the city, as well as their connections to commercial areas, health care, and employment centers, are areas where accessible infrastructure upgrades should be prioritized.

Employment and Income

The City of Ypsilanti has a lower median income and higher level of poverty than many communities in the area. As shown in **Table 2.3**, the 2005-2007 ACS reported the median income of Ypsilanti households as \$34,959, 72% of the State-wide median and 70% of the nation-wide median of \$50,007; however, as these data were gathered prior to the recent economic downturn, it is quite likely that current income levels are significantly lower.

The current county-wide jobless rate, 5.9%, is re currently in line with the national rate of 5.8%, but significantly lower than the Michigan rate of 8.4%.¹⁴ At the time of this writing, Michigan unemployment rates are among the highest in the nation.¹⁵

Table 2.2: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDENTS

| Age Group | Census 2000 | SEMCOG 2035 | Change |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| Over 65 | 1,571 | 5,335 | 240% |
| 35-64 | 5,046 | 6,184 | 23% |
| 18-34 | 12,187 | 7,658 | -37% |
| 5-17 | 2,438 | 2,138 | -12% |
| Under 5 | 1,120 | 932 | -17% |

Table 2.3: INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

| | State | County | Ypsilanti |
|--|----------|----------|-----------|
| Median family income | \$60,269 | \$80,779 | \$60,207 |
| Median household income† | \$48,642 | \$59,887 | \$34,959 |
| Per capita income | \$24,966 | \$31,002 | \$19,734 |
| Families below poverty level | 13.7% | 13.9% | 13.0% |
| Children below poverty level | 18.9% | 12.3% | 22.8% |
| Residents 65+ below poverty level | 8.4% | 5.5% | 9.0% |

Data from American Community Survey 2005-2007
 † The Census defines a "household" as any occupied housing unit. A "family" is defined as a household with a number of related occupants.

¹² United States Census. *American Community Survey: 2008 Data Release*. Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/index.html>>.

¹³ Beck, Graham T. "Streets Safe for Walking: How cities are making their byways user-friendly." *AARP Bulletin Today* 23 Mar 2009: n. pag. Web. 1 Sep 2009. <http://bulletin.aarp.org/yourworld/gettingaround/articles/streets_safe_for_walking.html>.

¹⁴ State of Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, & Economic Growth. *Labor Market Information*. , 2009. Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.milmi.org/>>.

¹⁵ United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Unemployment Rates by State*. , 2009. Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://data.bls.gov/map/servlet/map.servlet.MapToolServlet?survey=la>>.

Two particular income-related measures important to transportation planning are the numbers of children in poverty and the number of households that do not have access to a personal automobile. Both of these demographic measures indicate

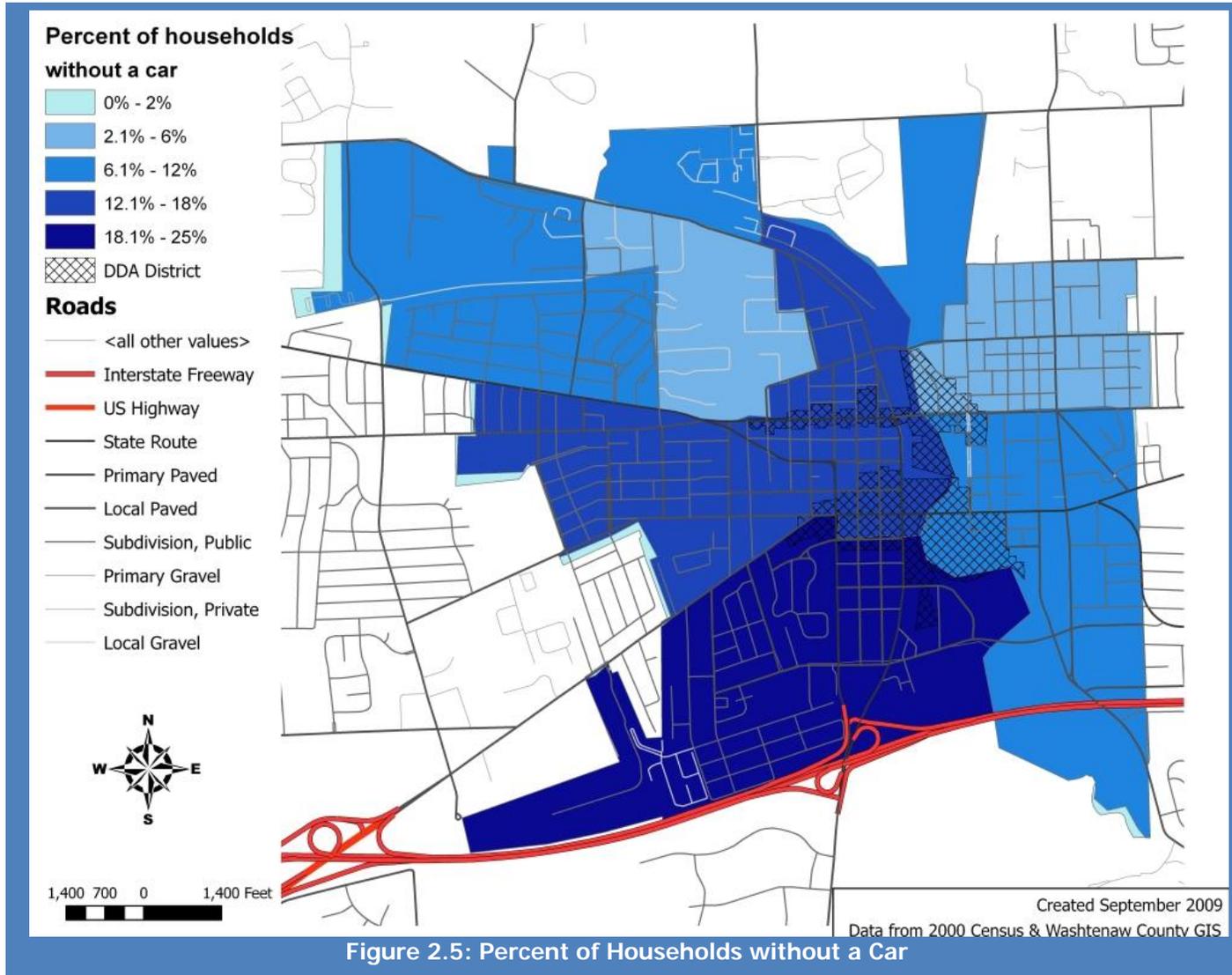
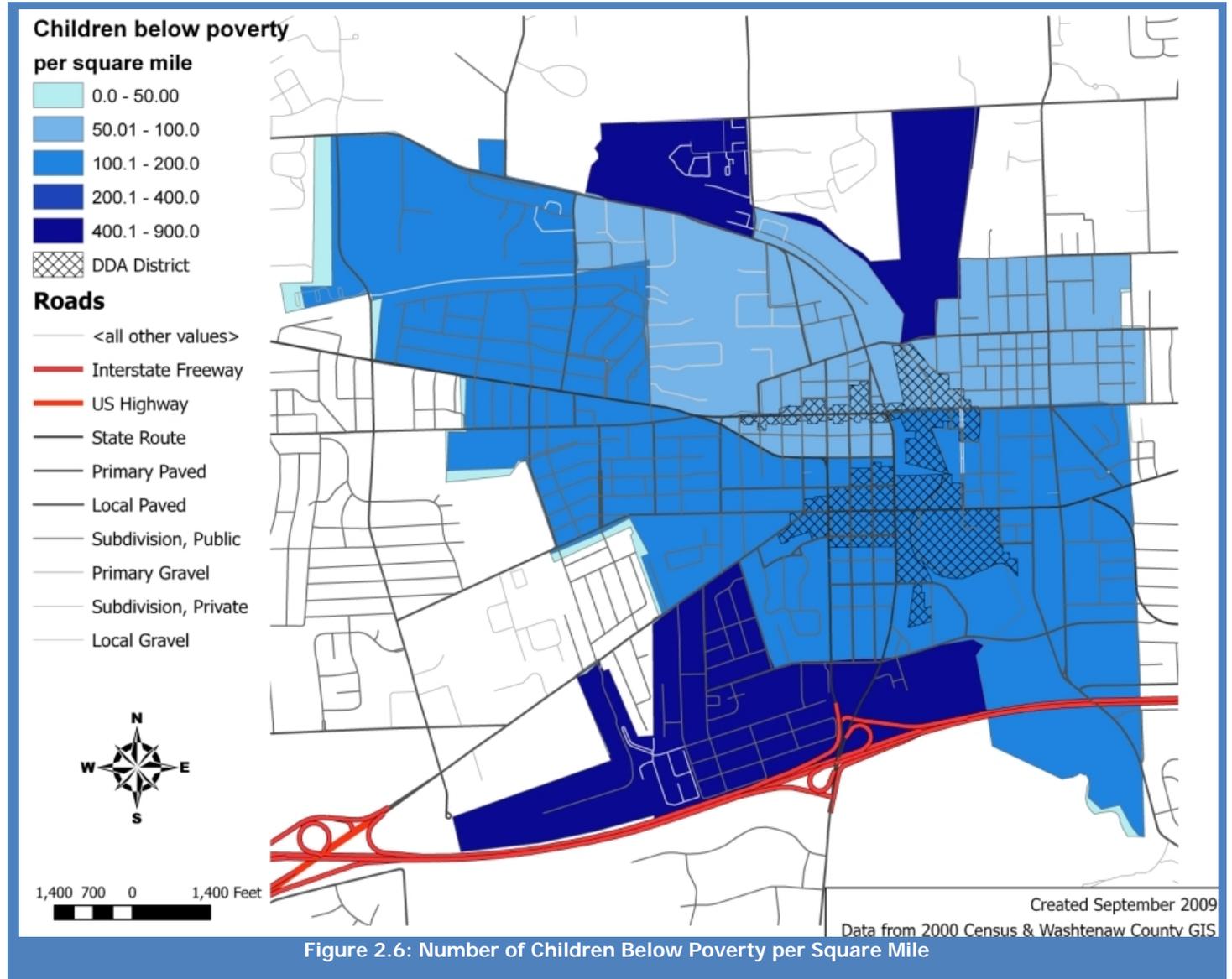


Figure 2.5: Percent of Households without a Car

residents who have limited mobility, often relying upon inadequate non-motorized or transit options, and cannot easily access amenities that are further away. **Figures 2.6 and 2.7** show concentrations of these demographic groups by Census tract as of the 2000 Census. Both metrics showed the greatest concentration in the southwest portion of the City. The northern part of the City also had above-average concentrations of these populations.



Transportation

The City of Ypsilanti benefits from a location convenient to a major north/south highway (US-23) and a major east/west expressway (I-94), providing residents with easy access to amenities around the region and carrying visitors to Ypsilanti’s

various special events, though posing challenges to non-motorized travel by creating walls of fast-moving vehicle traffic to cross. Washtenaw Avenue (Business Route US-23) and Michigan Avenue (Business Route US-12) also run east and west through the heart of downtown. The traditional, easily-understood grid pattern generally followed by Ypsilanti’s streets lends itself to both motorized and pedestrian traffic, and the AATA serves to connect downtown Ypsilanti with its neighbors. The city features approximately 98 miles of pedestrian infrastructure, 5.55 miles of off-road bike routes, 3.71 miles of bike lanes, and many bus transit stops.

Commute Source of Over-16 Workers
(Census 2000)

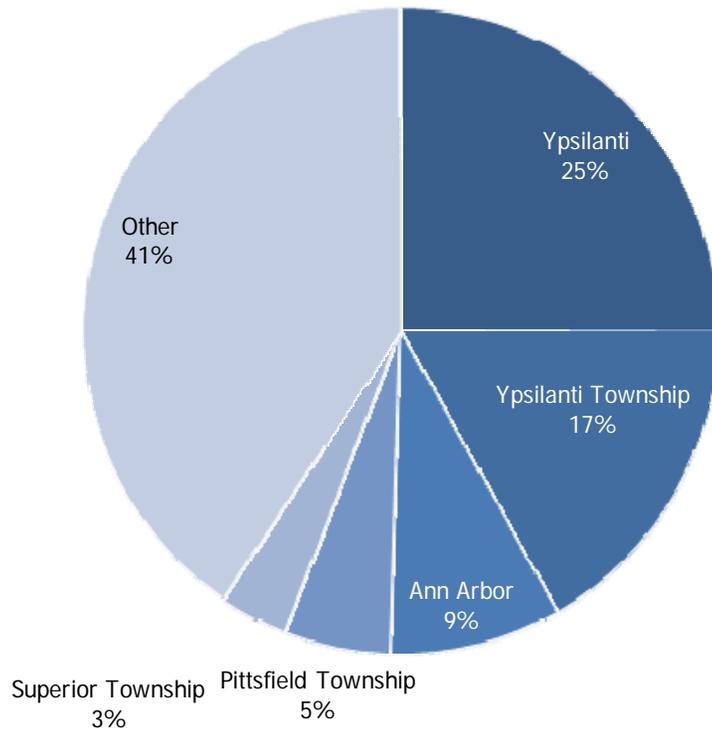
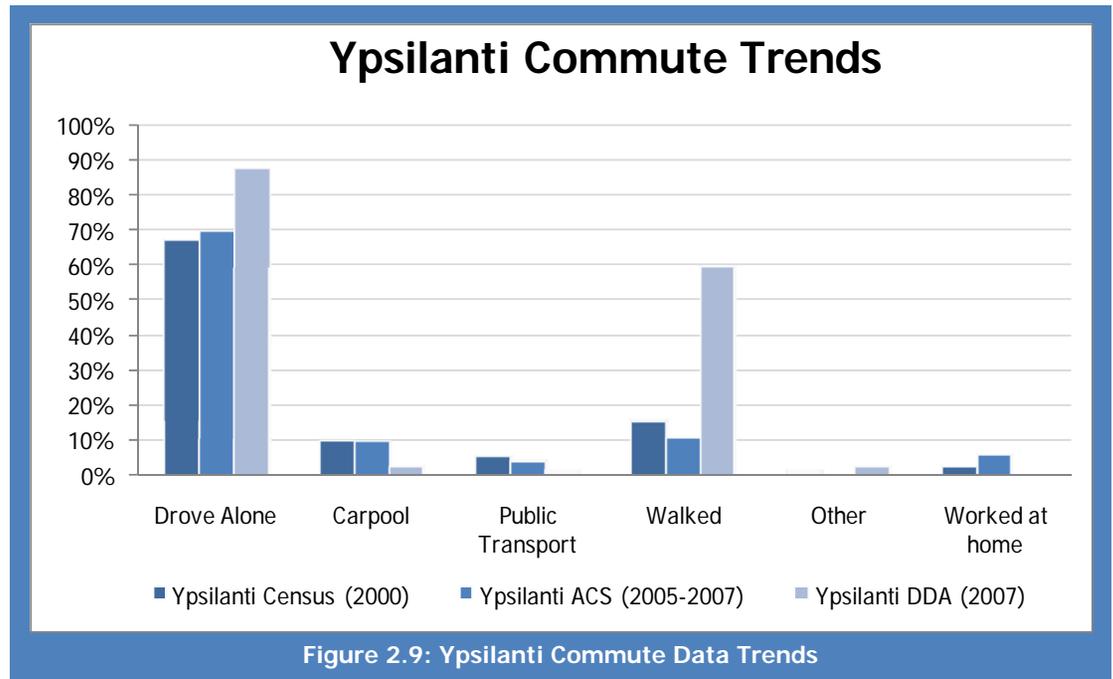
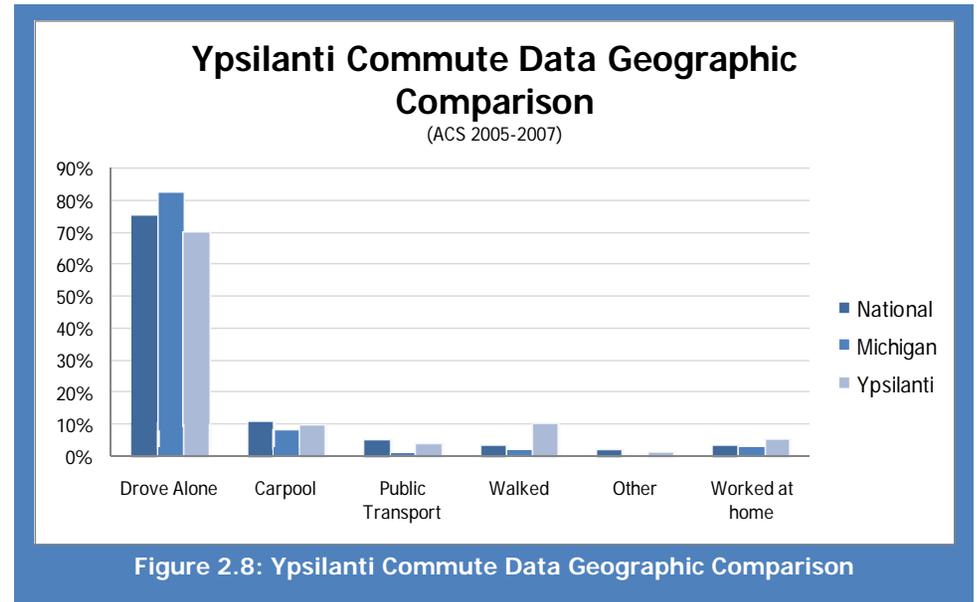


Figure 2.7: Commute Source of Over-16 Workers

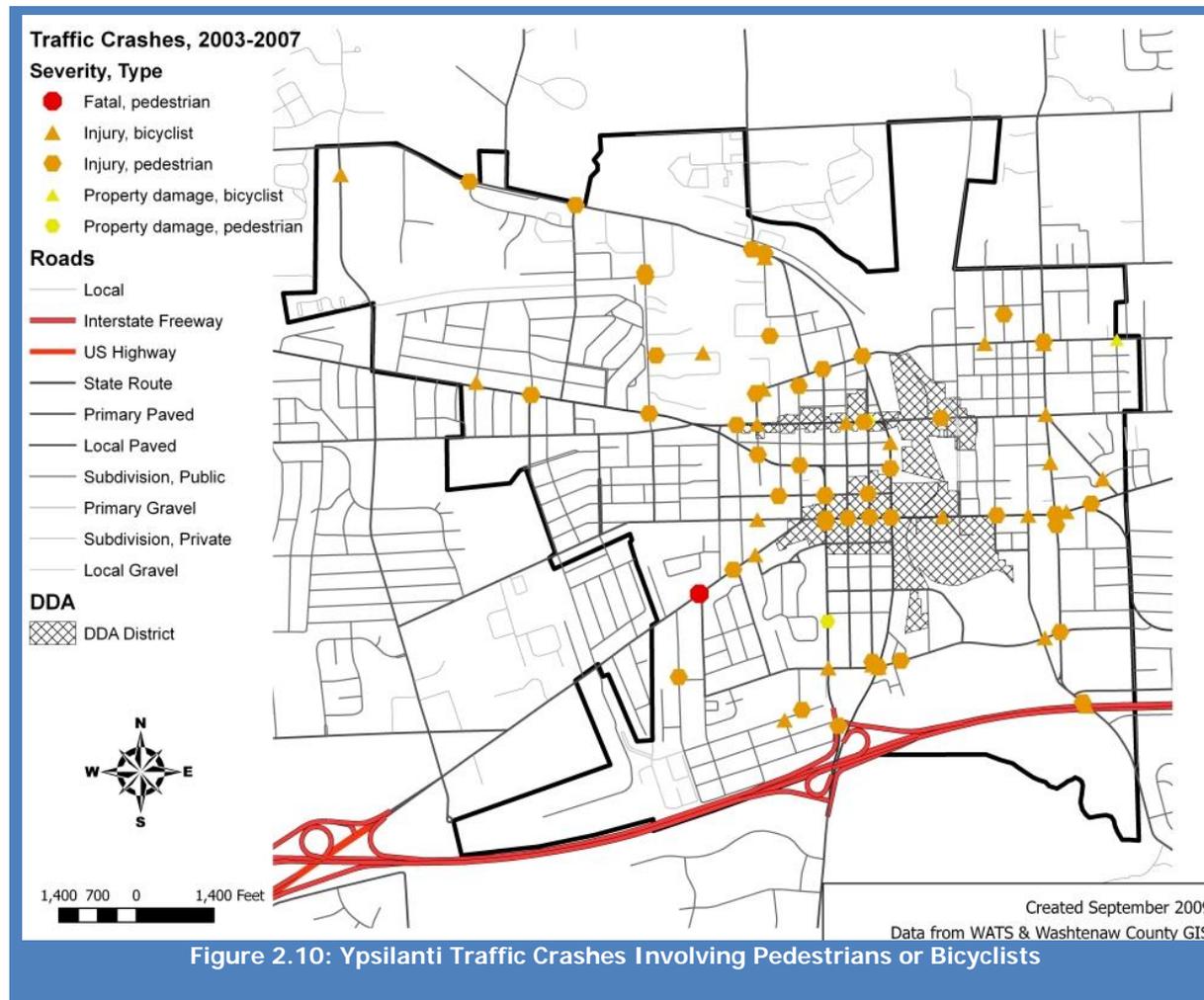
Those who work in the City of Ypsilanti get here through many means, but the majority drive alone. Carpooling and walking are in second and third place, with those who bring their work to them bringing up fourth. The number of those who walk to and from work is very high compared to national and state averages, indicating that Ypsilanti’s pedestrian network is above-average as well. However, the fairly low percentage of people who take public transit show room for improvement in that area. Among those who commuted to work, it took them on average 19.7 minutes to get to work, less than the national average of 25.1 minutes.¹⁶

Non-motorized access

As much of Ypsilanti was platted and developed before widespread use of the automobile, the overall layout of the City is friendly to bicycle and pedestrian traffic. The grid layout of streets, the predominantly complete sidewalk network, the compactness of neighborhoods and business districts, and the distribution of parks throughout the community all contribute to this by putting people close to amenities and providing direct routes to essential destinations.



¹⁶ United States Census. *American Community Survey: 2008 Data Release*. , Web. 1 Sep 2009. <<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/index.html>>.



In pleasant conditions, biking and walking may be by itself a recreational activity, not merely a method of transport, as automotive commuting is generally regarded. The Border-to-Border Trail (see **Appendix X**) aims to build on and expand non-motorized access to parks, to serve the recreational needs of residents who walk and bike for recreation, and to connect communities throughout Washtenaw County.

Bicyclists and pedestrians still encounter barriers to reaching critical destinations, however. The major streets which provide motor vehicle access to, from, and through Ypsilanti are often hostile to bicyclists and pedestrians due to the quantity and speed of traffic, amongst other concerns. Many of these major routes

are predominantly one-way streets, which both prioritizes motorized speed and volume over provision of a good environment for bicycling or walking. At the southern end of Ypsilanti, Huron and Hamilton Streets cross over I-94, but this bridge has no pedestrian facilities, creating a barrier between Ypsilanti Township and the City of Ypsilanti that impedes non-motorized traffic both from the City and from the Township. The City and Township worked with WATS and the Michigan Department of Transportation in 2005 (see **Appendix IV**) to study options for a safe pedestrian crossing.

The perception of unsafe or unpleasant environmental factors can reduce willingness to walk or bike. Recently, local and regional efforts have assessed the environmental and psychological environment for non-motorized travel in Ypsilanti. The *2006 Non-Motorized Plan for Washtenaw County* inventoried existing sidewalk and bicycling routes and provided a list of capital improvements needed to complete these networks. The goals of that plan are presented at left, and the infrastructure deficiencies are extensively referenced in later chapters. The plan encourages thinking of non-motorized transportation options not only on their own but also in the context of a “complete streets” view of roadways as multi-modal transportation systems.

Non-Motorized Plan for Washtenaw County Goals (WATS)

1. Create a countywide, non-motorized vision to provide complete sidewalk and bike facility networks and to support public transit service.
2. Increase awareness of non-motorized funding opportunities.
3. Institutionalize road agency and local community thinking regarding incorporation of non-motorized improvements as part of all transportation improvements.
4. Expand and enhance the non-motorized portions of the 2030 Long Range Transportation plan for Washtenaw County and the Washtenaw County Comprehensive Plan.
5. Improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.
6. Identify inter-county non-motorized connections.

The 2007 YDDA survey of downtown workers showed a strong relationship between distance to work and likelihood of walking or biking to work. No such relationship existed for carpooling or using public transit.

Mass Transit

Historically, Ypsilanti has had a healthy public transportation option in commuter rail, the interurban transport, and lately, the AATA bus system. The interurban service and commuter rail have long since been discontinued, but, commuter rail looks to be making a comeback in some form by late 2010. AATA bus service, however, is at risk due to funding difficulties.

The City of Ypsilanti currently has a purchase of service agreement with the Ann Arbor Transit Authority (AATA) to provide bus service to and from Ann Arbor, to and from the surrounding townships, and within the City of Ypsilanti itself. Four routes connect the cities, many currently terminating at the transit center on Pearl Street. The bus system runs seven days a week, but has limited service on weekends and during the evening hours. Door-to-door on-demand services are available through AATA's A-Ride service for people with disabilities, and through Northfield Human Services' People's Express system for those who meet income guidelines. There are several full-rate taxi services available as well.

Transit Plan for Washtenaw County Goals (WATS)

1. Recommend public transit service to promote economic vitality & quality of life in Washtenaw County.
2. Increase quantity and improve quality of transit service.
3. Improve mobility and access for residents using transit.
4. Develop education and advocacy program for transit plan.
5. Increase awareness of transit funding opportunities and identify opportunities for implementation of the plan.

These transit services provide access to crucial resources around the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti area, such as Eastern Michigan University, Saint Joseph Mercy Hospital, the Veterans' Administration Ann Arbor Healthcare System, the University of Michigan, and Washtenaw Community College. As AATA service within Ypsilanti is supported through a contractual payment from the City, however, the City's financial situation has raised questions about how support for this service can be continued in the future, with discussion including a dedicated millage, fare increases, and long-term efforts at building regional support. The *2008 Transit Plan for Washtenaw County* by WATS, the goals of which are presented above, looks to broaden support for and access to transit service through the County.

Chapter 3: Process

This plan was developed from March 2009 to December 2009 by City of Ypsilanti Planning & Development staff and stakeholders, including representatives from the City's Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission. During this period, the stakeholder group typically met once a month, holding a working session devoted to some aspect of the plan.

Initial Analysis

Staff reviewed the *2006 City of Ypsilanti Master Plan*, the *2006 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan for Washtenaw County* and *2007 Transit Plan for Washtenaw County*, and the *2008-2012 Parks & Recreation Master Plan*. Staff also reviewed other related City and regional plans, including the *2008 Ypsilanti Downtown Blueprint*, the *2004 Eastern Michigan University Master Plan*, prior Promoting Active Communities self-assessments, and various student projects, project studies, and other data.

Based on this background information and input from stakeholders, a vision and four primary goals were formulated for the plan, presented in **Chapter 4: Vision & Goals**. Recognizing the importance of maintaining and building upon the efforts of other entities, those goals place the City's role in the transportation system as providing an efficient, safe, and welcoming network in cooperation with non-profits, neighboring communities, and regional entities.

Stakeholder Input

Stakeholder representatives from throughout the City and neighboring communities were invited to take part in the planning process, as were members of community and advocacy organizations. These stakeholders included neighborhood associations, planning professionals, Eastern Michigan University employees, bicycling and walking enthusiasts, and disabled persons, for a total of thirty-seven stakeholder representatives, named on **page viii**. Six group meetings were held with these stakeholders, as well as many one-on-one conversations.

Agendas from these meetings are included in **Appendix II**.

Public Input Surveys

Over the course of July and August, the staff surveyed users of the transportation system. The surveys were designed to gather information about common non-motorized routes through Ypsilanti, as well as to collect feedback about barriers to walking, biking, and taking public transit. The surveys were available to participants interactively online, as a printable PDF, and on paper. The surveys were distributed through email to each neighborhood association as well as members of the public; through Ypsilanti Community Policing Action Council (CoPAC), an association of neighborhood associations; at City Hall; on the City’s website; and at the July 28th Farmers’ Market.



July Public Meeting / City of Ypsilanti

In total, seventeen bikeability and nineteen walkability/accessibility surveys were returned. Future outreach efforts could include distribution at local business, through local schools (when in session), door-to-door surveys, or coordination with non-profit organizations that work with Ypsilanti’s residents. During implementation of major plan elements, such as those outlined in **Chapter 8: Build**, additional work should be performed to identify and engage stakeholders. The complete survey forms and results are provided in **Appendix II**. Results are also referenced throughout the plan.

Farmers’ Market Input

Staff had a booth at the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers’ Market on July 28th, 2009. Surveys were distributed, as were maps, magnets, and other transportation-related “freebies” from the Ypsilanti DDA, the AATA, and the League of Michigan Bicyclists. The public meeting two days hence was advertised. Three large sheets of paper and markers were provided for interested passerby to answer the prompts “I like biking/walking in Ypsi because...”, “I don’t like walking/biking in Ypsi because...”, and “Fantastic Ideas.” A wide variety of feedback was recorded. This feedback is included in its entirety in **Appendix II**, and is referenced in throughout this plan.

Public Meeting Input

A public meeting was held on July 30th. This drew a diverse audience of seventeen members, including residents who use wheelchairs and live in low-income housing, planners from neighboring communities, and bicycling and walking advocates. Participants were divided into groups of three to six participants per table, each with a set of Ypsilanti maps, markers, and scratch paper. They were asked to mark on the map current deficiencies and desired improvements. Primary biking and pedestrian routes, as well as critical inter-neighborhood connections, were identified as part of this process. Participants placed heavy emphasis on snow removal and accessibility as well. Written record of this feedback is presented in **Appendix II**, and is referred to throughout this plan.

Action Plan Generation

From the assessment of current conditions, Vision & Goals, public input process, and community physical and demographic factors, staff and stakeholders generated recommendations for the City's multimodal transportation system and prioritized those recommendations into the action plan presented in **Section III**.

Public Review and Adoption

The draft plan was made available for public comment on 15 December, 2009. Within the City, copies of the draft were placed at City Hall. The plan was available as a PDF for download from the City's website, and a notice of the downloadable copy sent via email to community groups. Copies of the plan were provided to City Council members, the Planning Commission, and the Recreation Commission.

The plan was also sent to a number of regional entities for review, including the Washtenaw County Planning and Environment Department, Public Health Department, and Parks and Recreation Commission; the Ypsilanti Public School District; Eastern Michigan University; Washtenaw Area Transportation Study; the Ann Arbor Transit Authority; local utilities and railroads; Washtenaw County Road Commission; Michigan Department of Transportation; and the Planning Departments of Ypsilanti and Superior Charter Townships. A notice including information on the public hearing was placed in the Ypsilanti Courier, the paper of record, on 04 March, 2010.

On 17 March, 2010, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the draft plan. Comments were heard from community members, and a summary of written comments received was provided to the Commission and the community

members in attendance. As a result of comments received on the draft plan, the Commission recommended adoption. The Commission adopted the plan on 10 March 2010. The notices, resolutions, and minutes for the meetings mentioned above are included in **Appendix VIII** for reference.

Chapter 4: Vision & Goals

Vision

This plan envisions a future in which Ypsilanti has a built and cultural environment that supports and encourages safe, accessible, comfortable and convenient transportation options for people and goods throughout the City and into surrounding communities. Residents and visitors enthusiastically choose to walk, bicycle, and take public transit over using a personal automobile. These choices lead to a safe transportation system, an environmentally sustainable City, a fantastic quality of life for residents, and neighborhoods and business districts that are stunningly attractive.

Goals

1. Cultivate and maintain an accessible, equitable, and practical multi-modal transportation system that provides for the effective movement of people and goods not only within the City, but also to neighboring jurisdictions. The success of this goal will be measured by an increase in lineal bicycle lane miles, an increase in lineal sidewalk feet, an increase in the number of sharrows and Share the Road signage, and an increase in the number of ADA-compliant curb ramps.
2. Provide a safe transportation system for both motorized and non-motorized users. The success of this goal will be measured by a decrease in traffic citations given, a decrease in the number of traffic crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists, and a decrease in snow removal complaints.
3. Protect the environment, including the significant historic, natural, and scenic resources of the City of Ypsilanti.
4. Increase awareness of the ways all users can integrate motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation.

The following chapters address these goals through administrative and legislative means, by setting maintenance standards, and through strategies for building infrastructure and capacity.

