

3. Area Characteristics

Historical Context

Prehistoric and Archaeological History

The roots of West Mesa can be traced back to a settlement, currently known as the Hohokam; of which the Salt River Indian Community to our north and the Gila River Indian Community to our South share a common ancestry. The Hohokam people settled in the Valley and Mesa until the 1400's. It is still unclear as to why they disappeared from the Valley, but their vast civilization is being rediscovered through archaeological research conducted at construction sites in and around Mesa Grande in Mesa and other parts of the Valley. The Hohokams left behind a vast irrigation system. The ability to irrigate the desert land led settlers in the mid-19th century to once again prosper in and around the Mesa Grande Area.

Settlement History

Mesa, as we know it today, began to be settled in 1877, 1878, and 1879 by the First and Second Mesa Companies. These settlers were from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and were seeking arable land and prosperity (A Brief History of Mesa, Arizona, 2003). These first two groups settled in the Lehi area and what is now downtown Mesa. In 1880, the Pew, Rogers, and Standage families came to the area and established a settlement

called Stringtown along the modern day Alma School Road. The Standage Farm, located along Main Street between Alma School and Dobson, later became the University of Arizona's Experimental Farm. The farm is now the location of East Valley Institute of Technology and a large shopping center. Stringtown's fourth ward church, originally named Alma Ward and now the Landmark Restaurant, was constructed in 1910.



There is little information on this area after initial settlement of Stringtown; however, the land use patterns and platting show the earliest platting of neighborhoods in 1908 in an area known as Vineyard Place. Additional platting of subdivisions occurred in the 1940's and 1950's. During this time, the area began to change from agriculture and

farmland to primarily residential in nature due to construction of housing units throughout the area. At that time, West Main Street was also developing as a residential street. There are at least two homes still along West Main Street, bungalow style. These buildings represent all that is left of the once more pedestrian, less thoroughfare feel of the small town atmosphere that once existed along West Main Street.

After WWII, Mesa's population, along with the rest of the Valley and many other western states, exploded. West Main Street, however, began to experience a much faster growth because of its designation as part of Route 60. Commissioned in 1926, Route 60 stretched from Virginia Beach, Virginia to Los Angeles, California and reached through Mesa in 1931. Because of the Route 60 designation, Main Street became a major thoroughfare for the thousands of travelers that moved westward. The character of Main Street changed from being a residential street to that of a commercial area catering mainly to travelers. Travelers passed through Mesa for decades, staying in the many lodges, motels, and RV parks. As can be seen from the majority of the hotels located on the north side of Main Street;



Motel along Main Street

Many of these signs, as well as commercial

buildings, still exist on this road even though Route 60 has been moved further south. West Main Street became a regional destination with the opening of Tri-City Mall in 1968. Tri-City Mall was the first air-conditioned mall in the east valley. The mall has been replaced with



Tri-City Mall, Mesa

newer uses over time. A portion of this site is now the site of a Park and Ride lot for the light rail station at Sycamore/Main Street. West Main Street still has the rich history of the adventurous American family traveling across the country looking, admiring, and occasionally making it home.

South of West Main Street, the area between Broadway and Union Pacific Rail line, attained an industrial character over the years. Major employers like Motorola have been part of the history of this industrial area. In recent years, the Motorola site and other areas in the industrial corridor have been redeveloped as business park subdivisions, creating more light industrial and office uses in the area.

Land Use

Mesa 2025 General Plan Land Use Map

The Mesa 2025 General Plan, Land Use Plan Map illustrates the desired land use pattern for this area. This land use pattern was established primarily based on previous land use plans and existing land use and zoning. Generally, the map for this area includes a variety of industrial, commercial, semi-public and residential land use categories (Figure 3.1).

The area between the railroad tracks and Broadway Road is designated as General Industrial. This designation is the most intense industrial land use category in Mesa. Much of the Main Street frontage is designated as Mixed-use/Residential. This land use category allows up to 30% of the land to be used for residential purposes at a minimum 15 dwelling units per acre. The existing lot and zoning pattern do not, however, make a mix of commercial and residential likely in this area. Most of the area north of the frontage on Main Street is designated as medium-density residential 4-6. There are two pockets of high-density Residential 15+ in the planning area. These areas allow for multi-family development at 15 or more dwelling units per acre.

Zoning District Map

The West Main Street Area is zoned with mix of single residence (R1-6), multiple residence (R-3, R-4), commercial (C-2, C-3), industrial (M-1, M-2) and public facilities (PF) zoning districts (Figure 3.2). R1-6 zoning

district allows smaller lot, single residences including conventional detached housing and mobile home subdivisions. The Restricted Multiple Residential District (R-2) allows low-density multiple residence dwellings and the Limited Multiple Residence District (R-3) allows for medium-density, multiple residence dwellings. The Limited Commercial District (C-2) allows indoor commercial uses that serve the community and the General Commercial District (C-3) allows general indoor as well as outdoor commercial uses. The Limited Industrial District (M-1) allows for light manufacturing warehousing and other industrial activities that are indoors. The General Industrial District (M-2), however, allows intensive industrial activities as well as outdoor storage.

The current Zoning Ordinance development standards have limited provisions for redevelopment of narrow lots and older commercial development in the area. Setbacks and landscape provisions limit the possible re-use of some of these small, narrow lots.

The development standards and procedural requirements of the zoning ordinance for the R1-6 zoning district discourage the modification of homes to accommodate a wider range of lifestyle, life-cycle and family living options. This is a disincentive to property maintenance and improvement.

The current development standards encourage suburban-style, auto-dependent uses and site design near the light rail station. R-2, R-4, C-2, C-3, and M-1 zoning districts near the future light rail station are single-use districts and do not allow mixed-use development. Mixed-use development, if allowed, would encourage transit patronage and pedestrian activity. Also, the current

Figure 3.1: General Plan Land Use-West Main Street Area

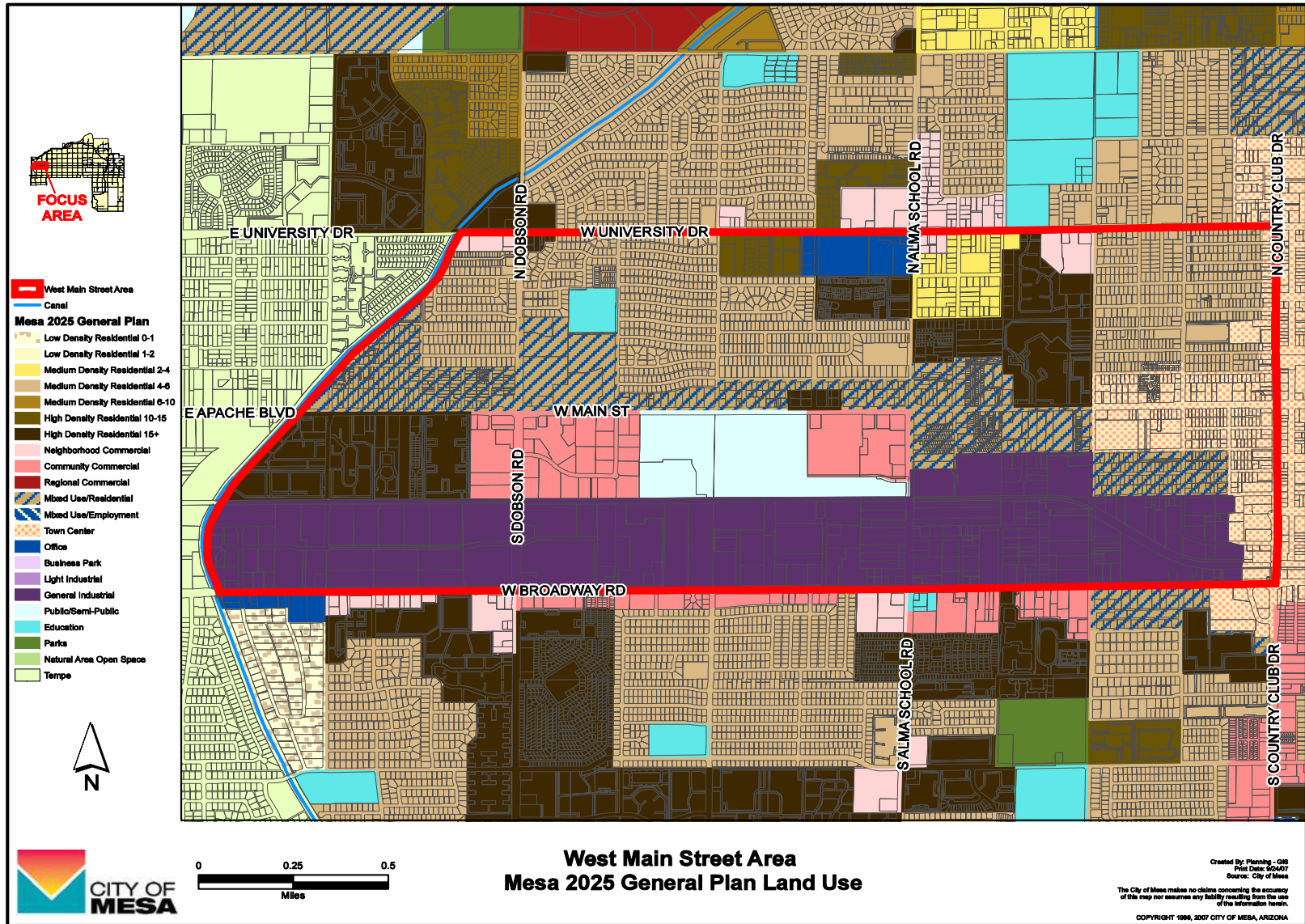
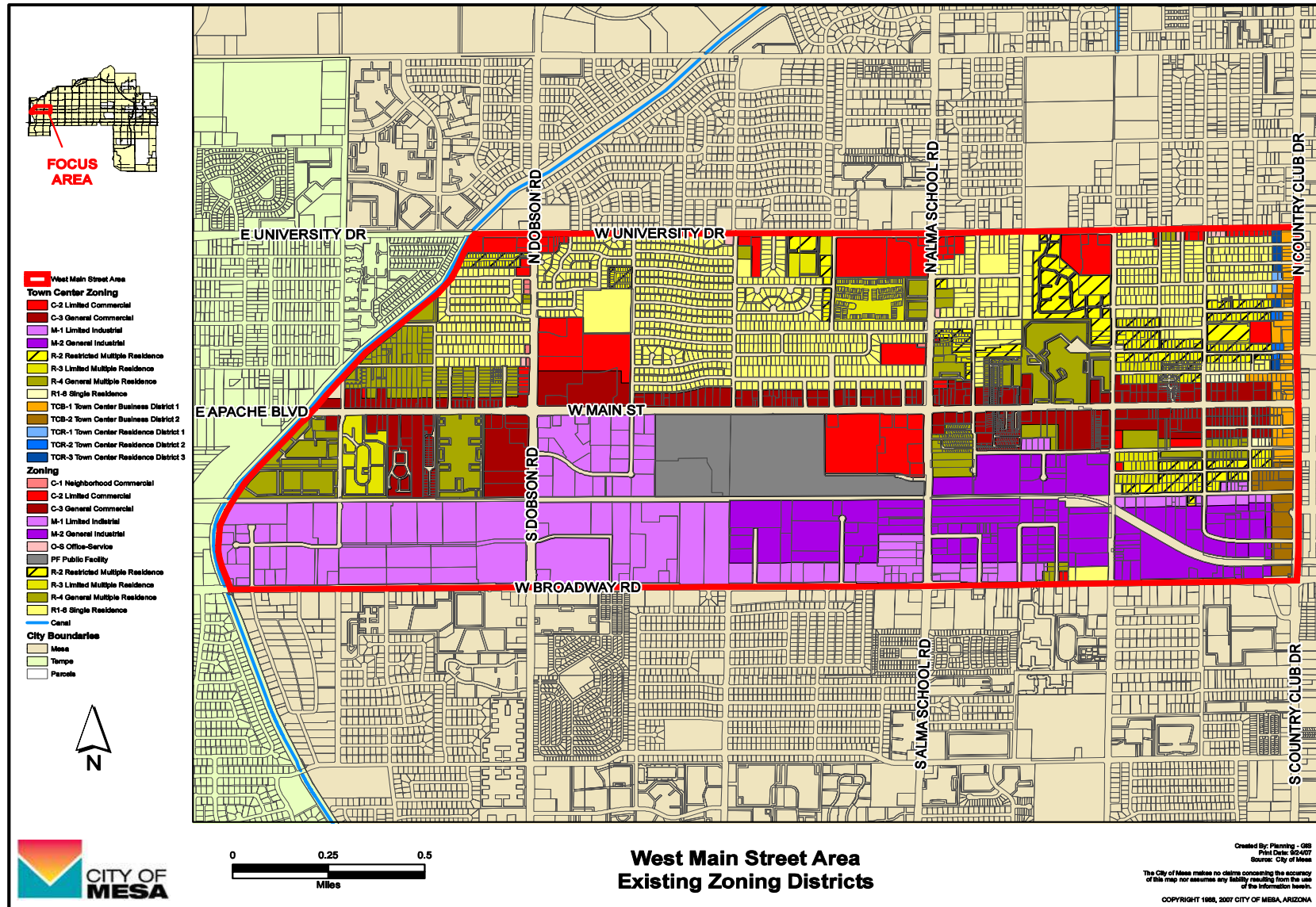


Figure 3.2: Existing Zoning Districts-West Main Street Area



setback, density and height standards don't allow for a transit-oriented development pattern in the station area.

Processes, zoning districts, and zoning overlays districts exist to obtain entitlements for mixed-use and transit-oriented development, but are too cumbersome to encourage this pattern of development. Current development standards preclude "as of right" vertically integrated mixed-uses. Permitted height and number of stories allow two different stacked uses, and residential uses require a Council Use Permit in commercial districts.

Existing Land Use and Development Pattern

The existing land uses in the West Main Street Area are a mix of residential, commercial, semi-public and industrial uses. Single-residence accounts for 20.9% of all land uses within the planning area (Figure 3.3). Multi-residence uses (apartment complexes, condominiums, duplexes, manufactured homes/mobile home parks and RV parks) account for another 10.3% of the area. The percentage share of commercial as well as industrial is higher when compared to a citywide land use distribution. Commercial uses including retail, as well as offices, account for 20.66% of the planning area. The industrial area accounts for another 18.84%. When compared to the citywide land use distribution, the share of existing commercial and industrial use is merely 4% and 10% respectively. The planning area clearly shows concentration of employment activities, especially south of Main Street. The majority of area is developed, with only 34.57 acres (2% of planning area) as undeveloped/vacant.

Spatial analysis of existing land use shows a concentration of single and multi residential in the northern portion of the planning area (Figure 3.4).

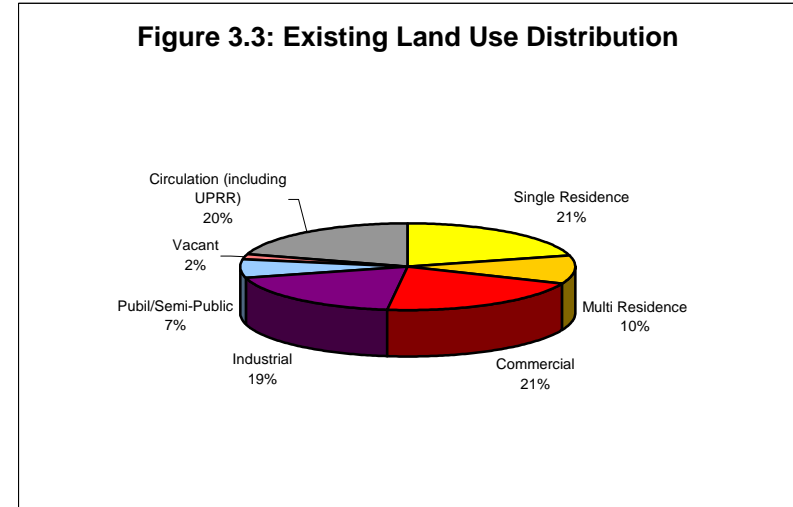
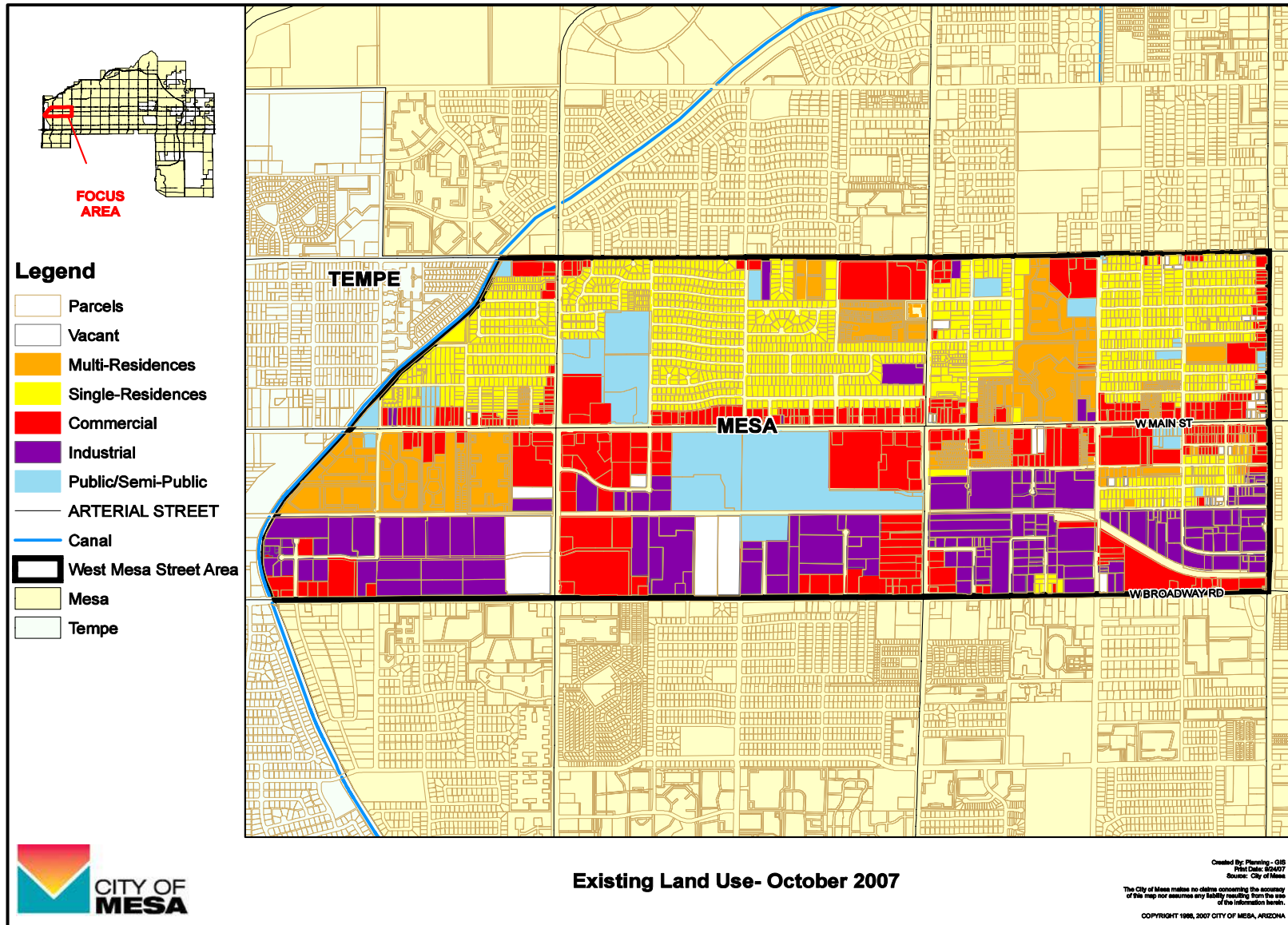


Table 3.1: Existing Land Use Distribution

Land Use Category	Area (Acres)	%age Share
Single Residence	344.19	20.92
Multiple Residence	169.92	10.33
Commercial	339.94	20.66
Industrial	309.94	18.84
Public/Semi-Public	115.07	7.00
Vacant	34.57	2.10
Right-of-Way (including UPRR, streets)	331.37	20.14
Total	1645.00	100.00

Figure 3.4: Existing Land Use



The existing land use along Main Street is primarily commercial, including freestanding retail, motels, and automotive dealerships. These types of commercial uses encourage high dependency on automobiles. Proliferation of these auto-dependent uses and auto-dependent site design along Main Street creates an environment unfriendly to pedestrians. The area between the Union Pacific rail line and Broadway Road is a mix of freestanding retail and industrial. This area at present is also highly auto-dependent in nature due to the type of land uses as well as site design.

The existing subdivision pattern and strip commercial development pattern along Main Street results in frequent curb cuts that increase vehicle conflict points, with a corresponding reduction in safety and efficiency of traffic operations.

Single-family residential uses adjacent to and oriented towards University Drive encourage frequent curb cuts. This results in an increase in vehicle conflict points, with a corresponding reduction in safety and efficiency of traffic operations. Single-family residential uses adjacent to and oriented towards University Drive are experiencing the pressure of commercial traffic volumes and other activity that favor commercial uses. Some conversion of residential structures to office, retail, and service uses is apparent. The area at present has very limited land under parks and open space. This discourages pedestrian friendly environment in the area.

Given the history of the area, it is not surprising to find a wide range of structure types and quality. A survey of the planning area found an eclectic mix of architectural styles from the modern look of the East Valley Institute of

Technology (EVIT) to the “historic” motels. The residential streets are well maintained and include sidewalks. There are few properties in the area that are showing signs of decay and are in need of upgrade.

[Inconsistencies of Existing Land Use and General Plan Land Use Map](#)

The intent of the Mixed-Use/Residential District as designated in the General Plan Land Use Map has not been realized in current land uses along Main Street. Much of the land use designated for General Industrial use in the area is used for commercial functions. Partially, this is related to the permitted uses within industrial districts. However, market realities have historically suggested uses of a character quite different from the General Industrial land use designation. Residential use along Broadway Road in the southeast portion of the West Main Street Area is inappropriately located adjacent to an industrial land use designation.

[Inconsistencies of Existing Land Use and Zoning](#)

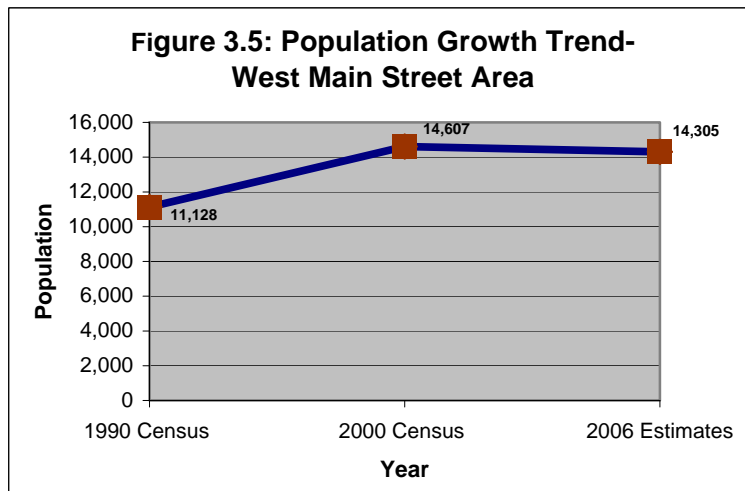
Some C-3 zoning districts in the West Main Street Area are adjacent to single-family residential areas and allow incompatible uses that may have excessive impacts of noise, light, and on-site traffic. Many existing trailer parks and RV parks are not in conformance with the permitted uses and/or development standards of the zoning districts they are within. Many of these parks are in C-3 districts, which has very limited provisions to accommodate residential uses. Residential zoning districts in the southeast portion of the West Main Street Area are inappropriately located adjacent to industrial districts and, more importantly, heavy industrial districts. Chemical

hazards may possibly be present in the area, and impacts related to noise, dust, order and freight traffic are far more likely. Also, some residential zoning districts along the Union Pacific Rail tracks are insufficiently buffered from the railroad tracks in the southwest and southeast corners of the West Main Street Area. Noise impacts are likely to be excessive on such developments. Residential uses in the far southeast portion of the West Main Street Area are inappropriately located near industrial uses.

Demographic Characteristics

Total Population

The total population in the West Main Street Area (14,607) accounts to 3.6% of the population of the City of Mesa (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The total population in the study area is similar to the total population of many towns in Arizona, such as Florence and Payson and indicates the level of complexity that such a vast area presents. The West Main Street Area experienced a significant population increase (31.26%) in the decade between 1990 and 2000 (See Appendix D). The current and projected Census estimates indicates a stable population in the area since 2000 (Figure 3.5).



The population density for the West Main Street Area is generally higher than that of the City of Mesa (8.84 persons /acre compared to 4.90 persons/acre). Fifty-two percent of the West Main Street Area households are family households. The average household size in the areas is 2.59 as compared to the City of Mesa average household size of 2.68.

Age and Sex

The area population is 51% male. As per 2000 Census data, the median age for the area is 28.37, which is lower than the City of Mesa median age of 32 years. The sex-age pyramid in Figure 3.6 shows the predominance of cohorts between age group from 20 to 39 in the West Main Street Area. The deviation in terms of share of cohorts from City of Mesa's population distribution (age and sex) is greatest for cohorts between ages 20 to 39. (Figure 3.6 and 3.7) On the other hand, population share in the cohorts of age 55 and above is very low in the area as compared to City of Mesa population distribution. Between 1990 and 2000, the population in the age group of 18 years and older grew by 54.8%; whereas, the population in the age group of 65 years and older declined by 13% in the planning area.

Racial Composition

The West Main Street Area is more multi-cultural in nature than the City as a whole. In the 2000 Census, out of total population of one race, 67% were Caucasians, 4.6% were African Americans, 3.9% were American Indians, 2.3%

were Asians, 0.3% were Native Hawaiian and 21.4% were other races.

Figure 3.6- 2000 West Main Street Area Population Pyramid

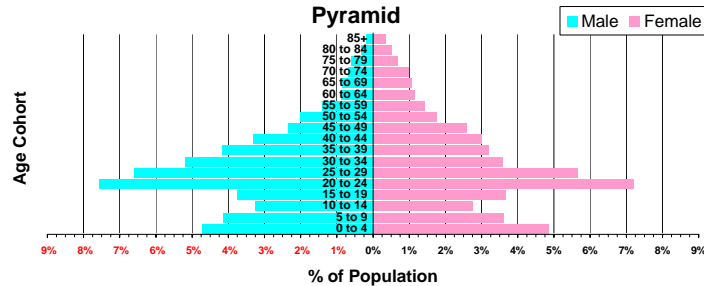
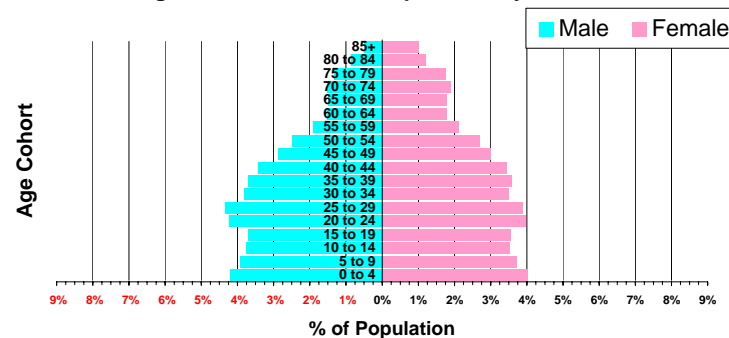


Figure 3.7- 2000 Mesa Population Pyramid



The area is experiencing a rise in Hispanic population over the years. The period between 1990 and 2000 saw an increase in Hispanic population of 208.5%. In the 2000 Census, the planning area had 38% Hispanic population compared to 20% for the City as a whole. According to

2006 Census estimates, the area now has 49.47% Hispanic or Latino population.

Educational Attainment

Among the population 25 years and older, 26.90% (2,197) are high school graduates or GED compared to the City's percentage of high school graduates of 82.5%. Only 10.32%(843) of the population have a Bachelor's degree compared to 21.6% in the City of Mesa a whole. In terms of advanced degrees, 2.6% (213) have Master's degree and 0.13%(11) have a Doctorate degree. The West Main Street Area is served by Webster Elementary, Emerson Elementary and Guerrero Elementary. Junior high schools that serve the area are Carson Junior High and Powell Junior High. High schools that serve the area are Westwood High School and Dobson High School. Alternative schools/programs that are located in the area are T.A.P.P.(Teenage Pregnancy Program), EVIT (East Valley Institute of Technology) and EVA (East Valley Academy).

Housing Characteristics

The area has 5,397 occupied housing units of which 37.30% (2,013) are owner occupied and 62.70% (3,384) are renter occupied. In the City of Mesa, 64.6% of the total occupied units are owner occupied and 33.6% are renter occupied. Figure 3.8 shows spatial distribution of renter occupied housing. Spatial distribution of housing density (dwelling units per acre) shows a majority of area housing at 7 DU per acre or less (Figure 3.9). There are few pockets along Main Street that show higher densities in the range of 7 to 20 DU per acre. Only 27% of the housing

Figure 3.8: Spatial Distribution of Renter Occupied Housing

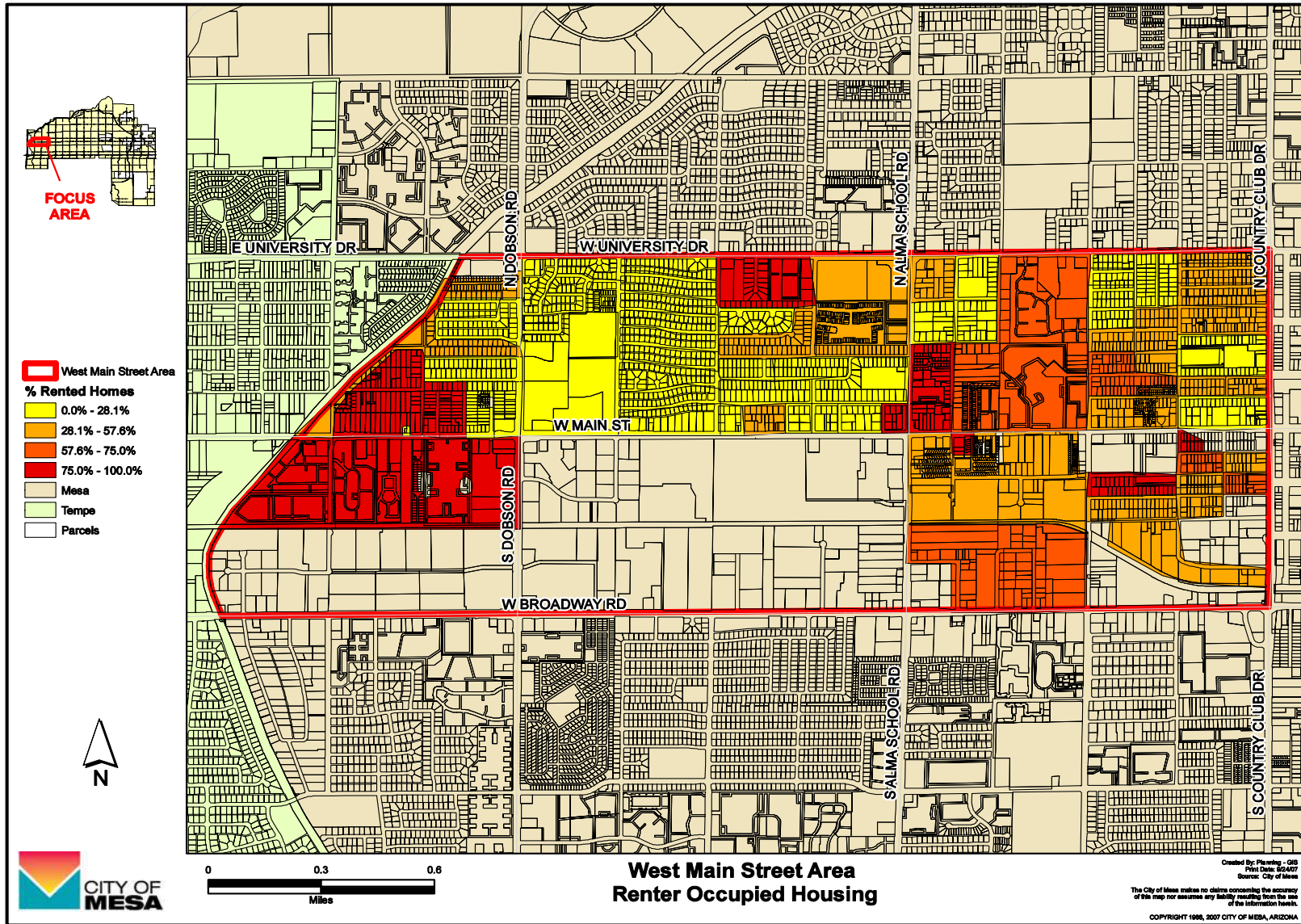
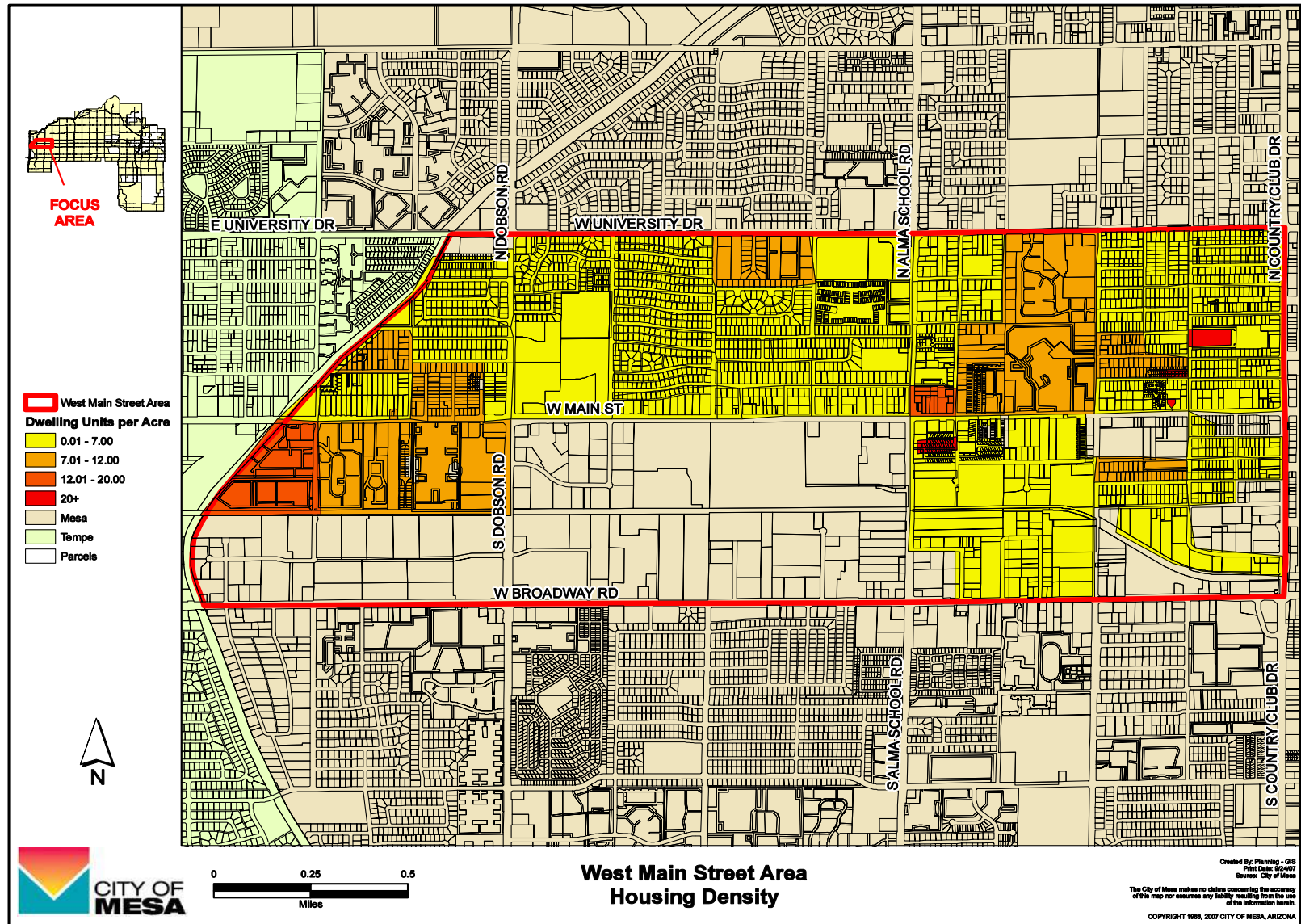
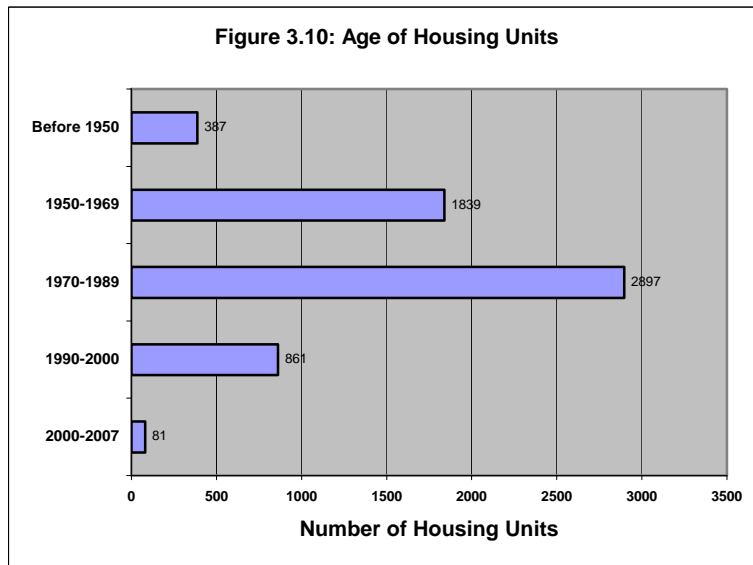


Figure 3.9: Housing Density



units in the West Main Street Area are detached single residences. The remaining 73% are multi-residences that include apartment complexes, condominiums, duplexes, manufactured homes/ RV parks and mobile home parks.

The physical fabric of the area represents a mix of old historic housing units and newly constructed housing units. Out of the total 6065 housing units in the area, 6.0% were built before 1950 (Figure 3.10). The majority of the housing units (78%) were constructed between 1950 and 1990. Another 14% of the housing units were constructed between 1990 and 2000. Since 2000 to present, only 1.3% of the housing units (total 81 housing units) have been added to the area.



Socio-economic Characteristics

Income and Occupational profile

The West Main Street Area has a median household income of \$40,262 as compared to City median household income of \$42,817 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The three major occupations of area residents are Administrative and Clinical Support (18.5%), other Services (16.05%) and Professional Safety (12.25%). Refer to Figure 3.11.

Employment Profile

An analysis of businesses in the area shows a predominance of consumer industry, development industry, supplier industry and transportation and distribution industry in the area (Refer to Figure 3.12). These businesses primarily are concentrated along Main Street and Broadway Road.

The East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT) and industrial and commercial establishments along the Broadway Road corridor have the highest concentration of employment in the area (Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.11: Occupation Profile- West Main Street Area

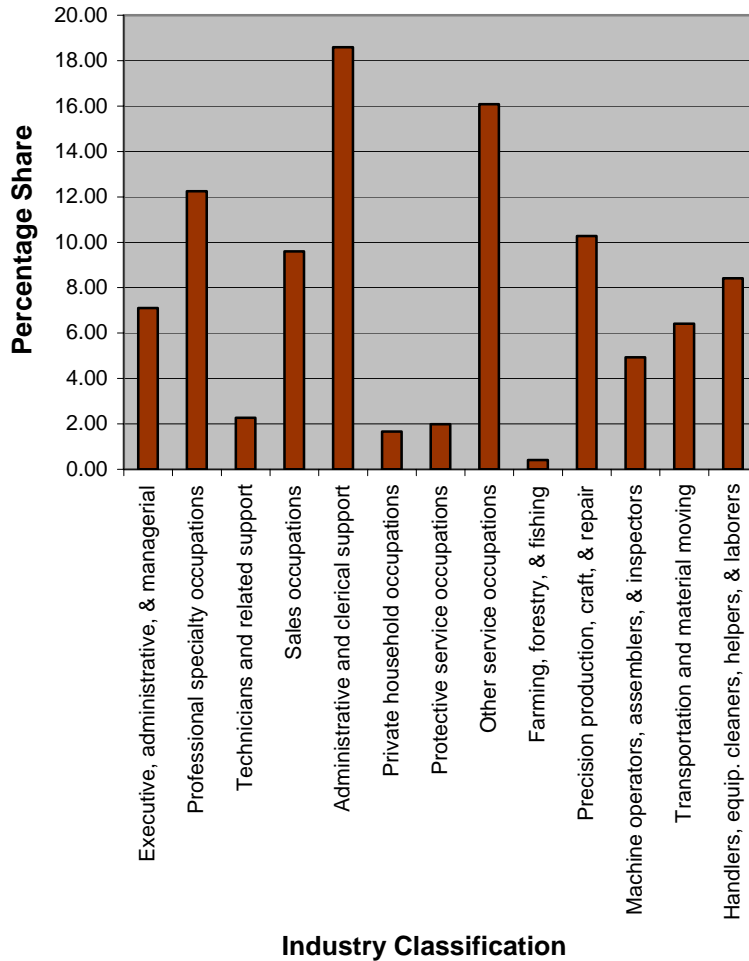
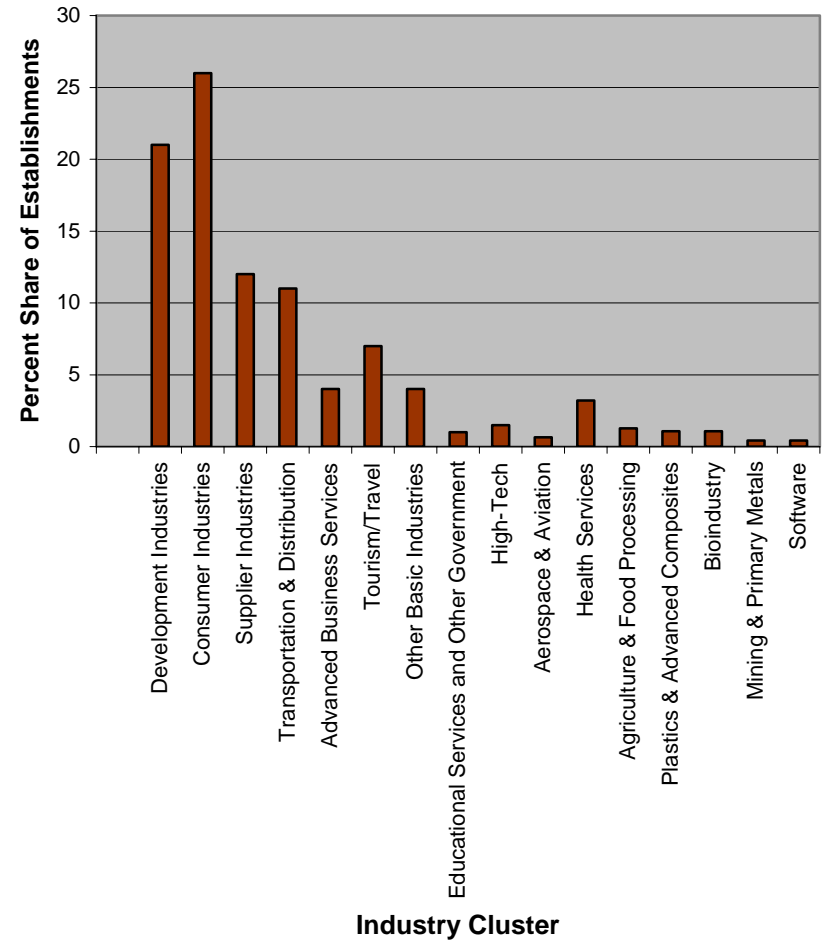
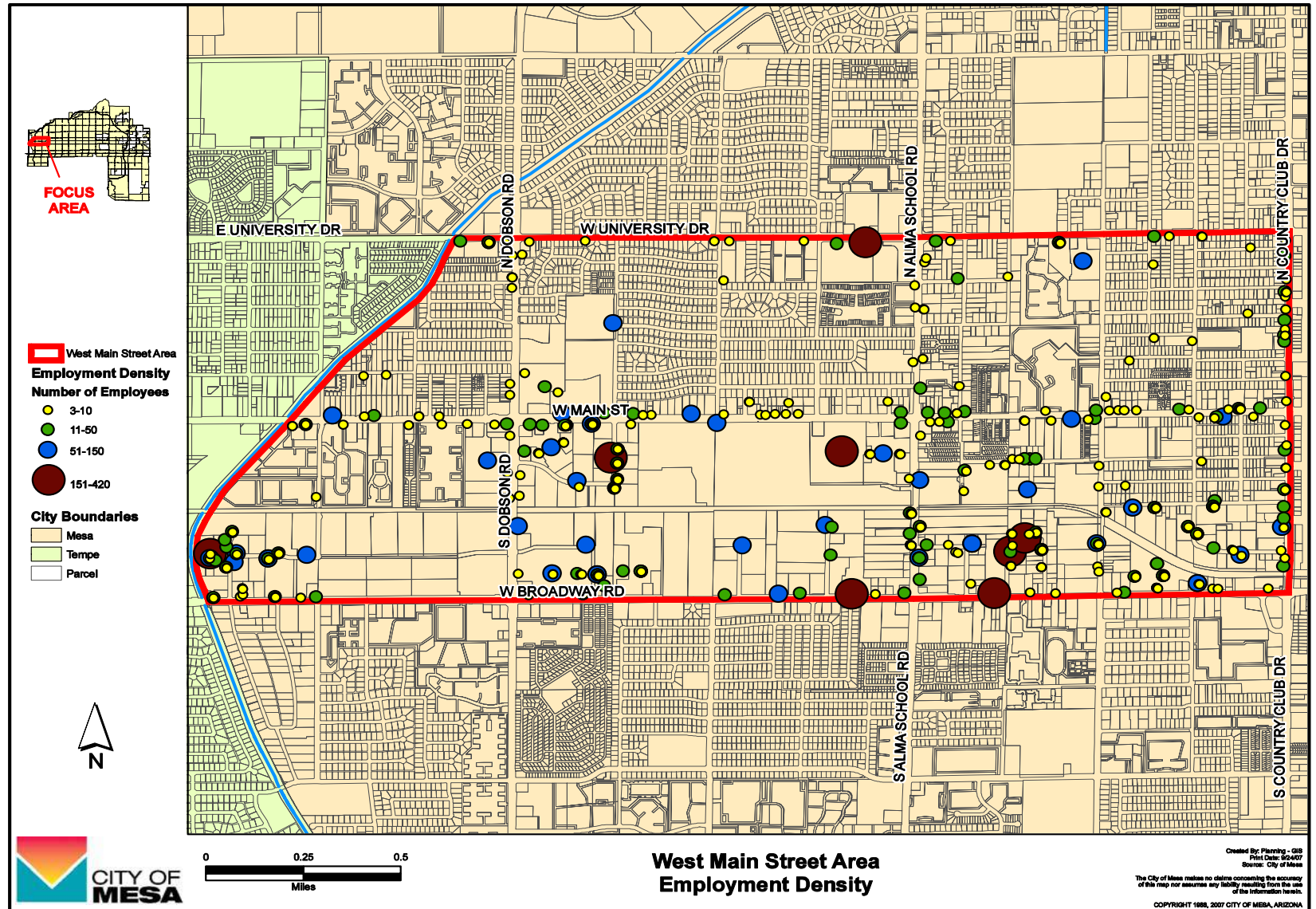


Figure 3.12: Establishments by Industry Cluster- West Main Street Area



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Figure 3.13: Employment Distribution



Crime and other issues

Police calls per 1000 residents in the West Main Street Area are twice in volume as compared to other parts of the City of Mesa (Appendix E). Code violations in the area are concentrated in the north of the planning area (Figure 3.14). Code Violations per square mile are generally higher than the City's average for a majority of the planning area.

The area has vacant lots that often collect trash and litter and are a magnet for crime. Streets are also congested with traffic. There are many abandoned alleyways in the area that are both visually uninviting and provide locations for crime related activities. Some pockets in the area have blight and dilapidated building conditions that need improvement.

Surrounding Area Characteristics

The **Mesa Grande area**, north of the West Main Street Area Plan boundaries, is characterized by high and medium-density residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, parks, historic and archeological sites, canals, schools, and wide streets. The Mesa Grande area takes its name from the Mesa Grande Ruins Archeological site.

The Mesa Grande area is home to many residents who choose to live in an older neighborhood because of its convenient location, nearness to extended family, and vibrant culture. The Mesa Grande area is a mature area of the City of Mesa and has social issues such as pockets of poverty, dilapidated buildings and crime.

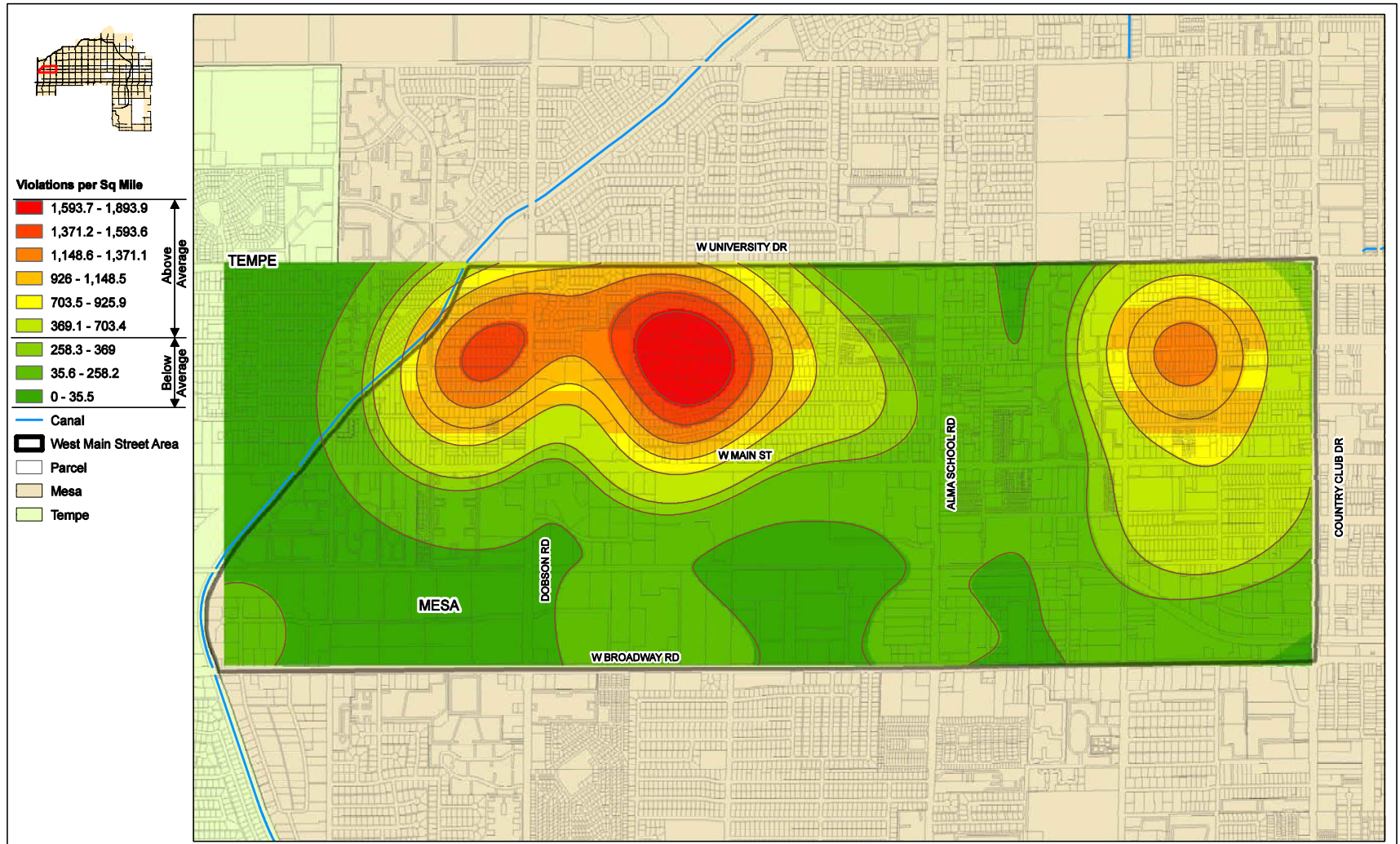
Southeast of the West Main Street Area Plan boundaries is the **Central Broadway area**. This is a community that has strong cultural and historic ties to the area. However, due to growth in Mesa focused on the eastern reaches, the area has experienced lack of significant investment in the recent past.

The vision for the Central Broadway area is to become a healthy, stable, culturally diverse, mixed-income community that allows all residents to enjoy a better quality of life.

West of the West Main Street Area Plan boundaries is the City of Tempe's jurisdiction. The area is characterized by a mix of commercial buildings along arterial streets, and multi- and single- family residential. The area has experienced the addition of newer development as well as redevelopment in recent years.

East of the West Main Street Area Plan boundaries, the Town Center Development Area is characterized by historic districts, retail and commercial development. Efforts are ongoing along Main Street and other parts of downtown Mesa to make it more livable and inviting.

Figure 3.14: Code Violations in the Study Area



0 0.25 0.5
Miles

**WEST MAIN STREET AREA PLAN:
2005 Code Violations
per Square Mile**



City of Mesa Public Utilities - Sewer & Water
This map was prepared for the City of Mesa by the City of Mesa Public Utilities Department. It is not intended to be used for any other purpose. The City of Mesa Public Utilities Department is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this map. For more information, contact the City of Mesa Public Utilities Department at (480) 948-2200 or www.cityofmesa.com.

Analysis Summary

West Main Street Area is a unique area that represents an array of intricate issues as well as opportunities for redevelopment. The following sections list the strengths, key issues, opportunities and threats in the area based on secondary data analysis, site visits, community input and future plans/ policies for the area. The proposed policies in the following chapters have been formulated with these strengths, issues, opportunities and threats in mind.

Strengths

- ❑ The area is highly accessible by three freeways (Loop-202, US-60 and Loop-101) surrounding it.
- ❑ The presence of Union Pacific Rail within the area provides connectivity to regional movement of freight traffic.
- ❑ The light rail operation is expected to bring more businesses and people into the area. This will enhance the overall redevelopment effort.
- ❑ The area is served by a network of arterial roadways facilitating north-south as well as east-west connectivity which helps to keep traffic flowing through the area efficiently and makes the area accessible.
- ❑

- ❑ Its proximity to downtown Mesa creates an opportunity to provide a direct flow of commercial and mixed-use activity along Main Street.
- ❑ There is high degree of locational advantage due to nearness to Mesa Community College, Arizona State University, Banner Hospital, Fiesta Area and Riverview.
- ❑ There is a large pool of under-developed land that creates opportunities for redevelopment.
- ❑ The area has comparatively lower land and property values when compared with rest of the Valley.
- ❑ The active community members living in the area share the hopes of better economic opportunities and quality redevelopment in the area.
- ❑ There is a strong cultural and historic sense of the place that provides a sense of character and uniqueness to the area.

Issues

- ❑ The total population in the study area is similar in size to the total population of many small towns in Arizona, such as Florence and Payson, and indicates the level of complexity that exists in such areas.

- ❑ The area has a higher proportion of younger population compared to the city; however, there is a shortage of businesses & facilities that specifically caters to this age group.
- ❑ Existing low-density residential developments as well as non-residential developments are under-utilized and have densities insufficient to support transit-oriented development (TOD).
- ❑ The existing zoning and land use designation do not provide for the mixed-used, high-density environment necessary for a successful transit-oriented development.
- ❑ Mesa 2025 General Plan designates a portion of area along Main Street as Mixed Use Residential with a 30% limit on residential. This limitation creates artificial market barriers and serves as a disincentive to a full vertical and horizontal integration of mixed uses.
- ❑ The development standards and procedural requirements of the current zoning ordinance discourage the modification of homes that are located in well established neighborhoods in this area (as is the case in other parts of the City) to expand and accommodate a wider range of lifestyle, life-cycle and family living options. This acts as a disincentive to property maintenance and improvement.
- ❑ Single-family residential uses adjacent to and oriented towards major arterials such as University Drive allows frequent curb cuts and a low quality living environment. This results in an increase in vehicle conflict points, with a corresponding reduction in safety and efficiency of traffic operations. Thus, it is required to transition such uses into other uses that are designed to overcome such issues.
- ❑ Individual lots along Main Street and University Drive have narrow widths and thus are difficult and less attractive to developers for redevelopment without land assembly.
- ❑ Residential development in the southeast portion of the West Main Street Area is inappropriately located adjacent to industrial development. The low-quality living environment is potentially aggravated by impacts from chemical hazards, noise, dust, smell etc.
- ❑ Residential zoning districts are insufficiently buffered from the railroad tracks in the area. Noise impacts are likely to be excessive in such developments.
- ❑ The area at present has very limited land used for parks and open space. This discourages the desirability of the area for residential uses and results in a less pedestrian-friendly environment.
- ❑ Pockets of deteriorating building conditions throughout the area detract from the quality of the area that make some people and businesses avoid the area.

- ❑ Re-investment in the area has been slow.
- ❑ The area is over-built and zoned for commercial uses. Greater residential density is needed to help make businesses successful.

specific features in the new development, whenever possible.

Opportunities

- ❑ There is an opportunity for densification and infill development due to existing low-density development along the corridor.
- ❑ Redevelopment has the potential to bring in more diversity and people that may attract new businesses and offer the area more diverse business types.
- ❑ There is a possibility of business parks and similar employment centers developing along Broadway Road due to proximity to freeways as well as the existing industrial uses.

Threats

- ❑ Existing single-family residential areas could be impacted by high-density redevelopment along Main Street and other major arterials in the area, unless sufficient consideration is provided to preserve the character of these neighborhoods during redevelopment.
- ❑ Integrating newer development with the existing development creates a threat to unique and iconic features with historic quality existing in the area unless sufficient efforts are made to integrate such