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Assignment 1

Depot Town Ypsilanti

Located just a few blocks from the campus of Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan, Historic Depot Town is considered by many to be a bright spot, full of potential in an uncertain economic climate. Historic Depot Town consists mainly of West Cross Street, between Huron Street and River Street, and directly adjacent to Frog Island Park and Riverside Park. The close proximity to these parks and the historic atmosphere has made Depot Town an ideal place to hold community-oriented events. It is through these community events and recognition as a historical district that Depot Town is able to sustain its economy based largely on unique antique shops, museums, and restaurants.

Downtown commercial development is important to Depot Town, and the Depot Town Community Development Corporation is dedicated to promoting “economic development, housing, parks and recreation” in the downtown. The CDC is also very involved with the business community, forming local business partnerships that are an attempt to stimulate the downtown. The CDC also organizes Depot Town events that are attempts to bring people down to the commercial area and create a sense of community. The CDC promotes historic preservation, education, and pride as well, which together add character and a sense of a unique place. Lastly, the CDC has put significant effort into maintaining Frog Island and Riverside Parks, which provide open space and recreation for the nearby community.

The quantitative demographic and retail spending information for the Depot Town area tells an interesting story and is representative of the Depot Town character. Demographics Now, which relies on Census information and some scientific projections, provides information about population data, retail consumption, and businesses activity among other things. Our analysis uses this resource and focuses on .25, 1, and 4-mile radii around the corner of West Cross Street and Huron Street. We found that within a .25-mile radius around the aforementioned intersection, people tend to be in the 15-24 year old age group, with an income generally under \$50,000, and generally white and single. This varies significantly from the 1-mile radius, and is drastically different from the 4-mile radius, which is assumed to be more suburban, and is shown to make a

median household income that almost doubles that of the .25-mile radius population (figure 1). Figure 2 demonstrates that Depot Town tends to be denser than other areas in Ypsilanti, especially in the 1-mile radius (which could be considered walking distance) around the center point. It is also interesting to point out that those living closer to Depot Town (within the .25 and 1 mile radii of the intersection) tend to spend more of their annual income on alcoholic beverages, apparel, and entertainment than those within the larger 4-mile radius. All of these numbers seem to fit the characterization of Depot Town as a young college hot spot, with a concentration on local nightlife and entertainment.

However, Depot Town has not gone unscathed in the recent economic down turn. Upon walking down Cross Street it is hard not to notice the “For Rent” signs hanging up in a few vacant storefronts. The most obvious sign of the economic down turn is the large “For Lease” banner hanging from the building located on the northeast corner of River Street and Cross Street. Only a few months ago this banner replaced the large sign of JC Beal Construction Company advertising the high end loft apartments that they were planning to construct in the historic build that used to be soldier barracks during the Civil War. Other stores seem to be weathering the slowing economy in stride. An example would be to step into the Sidetrack Bar and Grill, a local favorite. It is easy to see that they still maintain their regular client base. The restaurant seemed to be relatively busy for 3:00pm on a Tuesday afternoon, with five or six people sitting at the bar having a drink and another four or five tables eating a late lunch. Therefore, although the area isn’t without its problems, Depot Town seems to be a bright spot in relatively dark times for the economy and Ypsilanti.

Figure 1

Median Household Income

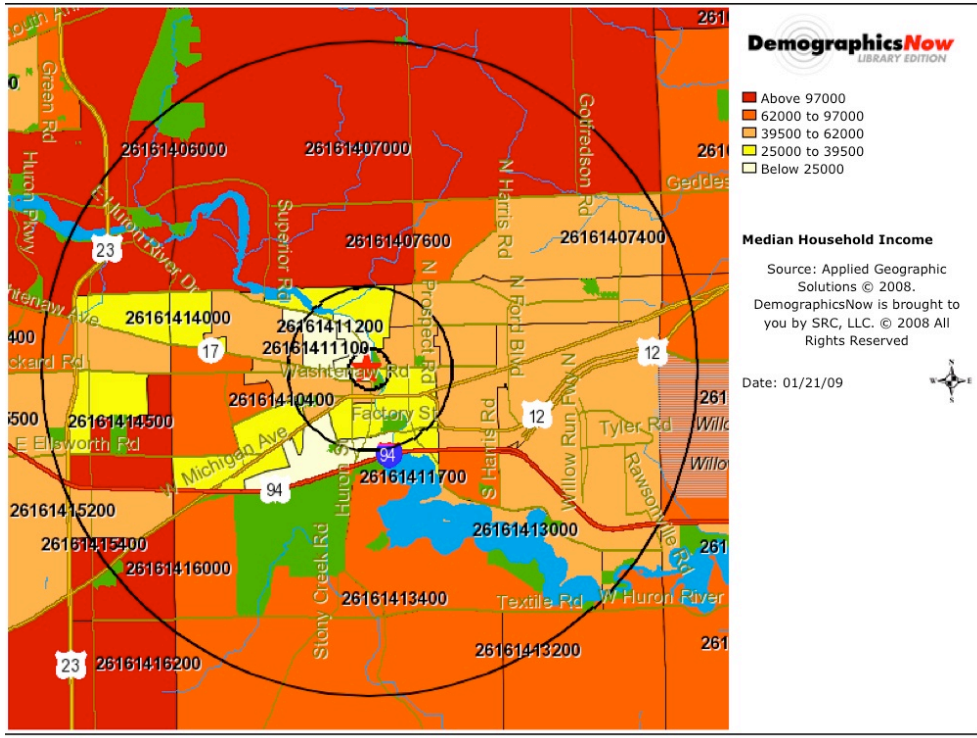
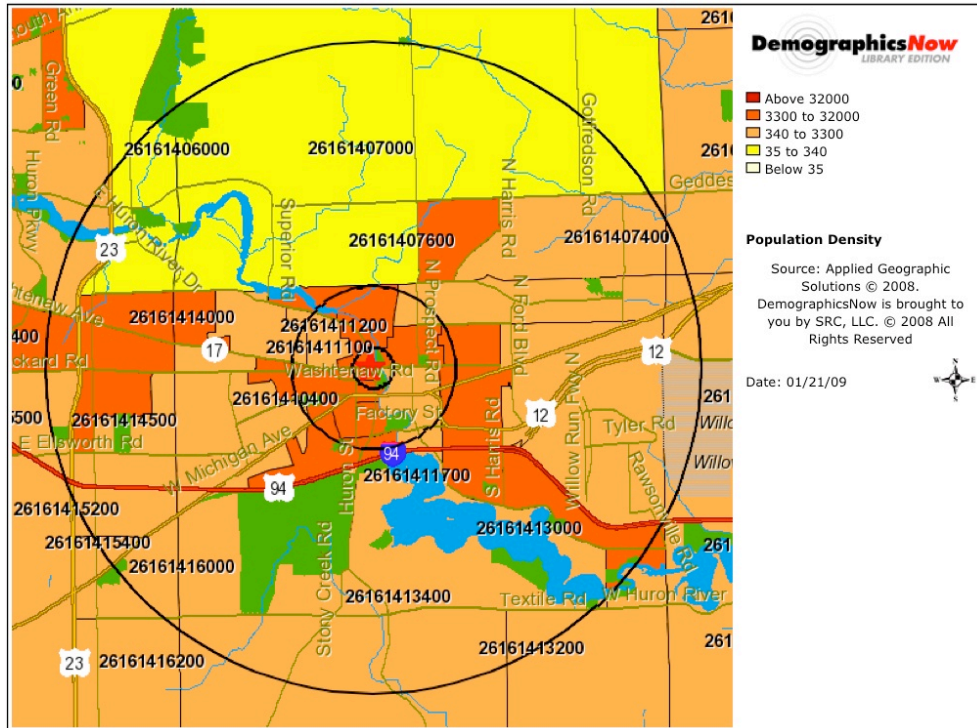


Figure 2



References

Demographics Now. SRC, LLC. 2008. <http://demographicsnow.com/>

Depot Town CDC. The Depot Town Association. 2008. <http://www.depottown.org/>